



1063

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM**

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

HISTORIC NAME: Benjamin Apartments

OTHER NAME/SITE NUMBER: Home Hospital, Physicians and Surgeons Hospital

2. LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER: 1218 Webster Street

NOT FOR PUBLICATION: N/A

CITY OR TOWN: Houston

VICINITY: N/A

STATE: Texas **CODE:** TX **COUNTY:** Harris

CODE: 201 **ZIP CODE:** 77002-8841

3. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this x nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property x meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide x locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

7-22-02

Signature of certifying official

Date

State Historic Preservation Officer, Texas Historical Commission

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register

removed from the National Register

other (explain):

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

9/26/02

5. CLASSIFICATION

OWNERSHIP OF PROPERTY: Private

CATEGORY OF PROPERTY: Building

NUMBER OF RESOURCES WITHIN PROPERTY:	CONTRIBUTING	NONCONTRIBUTING
	1	0 BUILDINGS
	0	0 SITES
	0	0 STRUCTURES
	0	0 OBJECTS
	1	0 TOTAL

NUMBER OF CONTRIBUTING RESOURCES PREVIOUSLY LISTED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER: 0

NAME OF RELATED MULTIPLE PROPERTY LISTING: N/A

6. FUNCTION OR USE

HISTORIC FUNCTIONS: DOMESTIC/multiple dwelling = apartment building

CURRENT FUNCTIONS: COMMERCE/TRADE/business = office building

7. DESCRIPTION

ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION: Late 19th and 20th Century Revivals: Italian Renaissance

MATERIALS: FOUNDATION CONCRETE
WALLS BRICK
ROOF SYNTHETICS = vinyl
OTHER CERAMIC TILE, CAST STONE

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION (see continuation sheets 7-5 through 7-8)

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Benjamin Apartments
Houston, Harris County, Texas

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

The Benjamin Apartments, an early 20th-century quadruplex building, was built in 1923-1924. Designed by Alfred C. Finn, one of Houston's prominent early 20th-century architects, the building features Renaissance Revival detailing, a modified C-plan and a flat roof with parapet. It faces north onto Webster Street, at its intersection with Caroline, in Houston's Midtown area, a mixed-use neighborhood south of downtown. The five by four-bay, brick-veneered, balloon-framed building includes cast stone ornament on the main façade, surrounding a central pair of entry doors and a second-story arched window above. Several characteristic elements, including a soldier-course cornice, 1/1 windows and a regular, rhythmic arrangement, were used consistently on all elevations. The interior floor plan circulates in a horseshoe shape around an inner service core. The site includes a rear porte cochere, a metal fence surrounding the rear parking area and a dumpster and utility enclosure, all of which are recent additions. The Benjamin Apartments, sensitively rehabilitated in 2001 through the investment tax credit program, retains a high degree of integrity.

Houston's Midtown neighborhood, which is home to the Benjamin Apartments, is a mixed-use area south of downtown and north of the Texas Medical Center. The building occupies the southwest corner of Webster and Caroline Streets, two blocks south of the I-45 Pierce Elevated and three blocks east of Main Street. Midtown's streets follow the same grid pattern as downtown Houston, a grid aligned to Buffalo Bayou rather than true north. The building's urban surroundings include commercial concerns, residential townhouses and a multi-family housing complex. The building has two small adjacent parking lots, to the west and south. A large pecan tree, approximately 40 inches in diameter, also lies to the rear (south) of the building. During the recent rehabilitation, new stamped gray concrete paving was added to the parking lot, the perimeter sidewalk, and the building's two driveways (one, on Caroline, accesses the rear parking lot and porte cochere and a second, east of the building, exits onto Webster). Loose pavers, without grout, were used for pervious cover around the pecan tree in the rear. Landscaping on the east and north sides of the building includes small shrubs with seasonal color. (Plan-27)

The five by four-bay, balloon-framed apartment building is sheathed with Acme brick, which varies in color from red to dark brown to black, laid in a stretcher bond pattern. The building features some elements that were typical of Midtown's early 20th-century apartment buildings, including brick sills, metal lintels and cast stone detailing. Two perimeter bands, or belt courses, encircle the building. The first is at grade, just above the concrete pier-and-beam foundation, and the second follows the line of the first-floor window sills. A modest cornice, defined by a change in the brick pattern, is visible on the north, west and east elevations and wraps around the south (rear) side. Terracotta, salt-glazed coping tiles cap the parapet. The roof, originally built-up tar, is now covered with a two-layer vinyl roofing system (Duro-Last) over a Styrofoam sub-system.

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The first, third and fifth bays of the north façade project slightly from the building plane and suggest an “E.” This idea is repeated on the south elevation, with the first and fifth bays projecting significantly more to form a “C.” These rear projections originally housed sleeping porches. All of the building’s windows are wood, 1/1 double-hung sash, most of which are replicas installed during the recent rehabilitation. The windows on the five-bay north and south elevations are grouped in triplet or quadruplet. The windows on the four-bay east and west sides are paired and arranged in a regular pattern, with a small single window between the third and fourth bays. The original window screens had a 9-light upper section with a single light or screen below. The new screens, installed in 2001, have a 6-light upper section and a single light below.

Typical of early 20th-century apartment buildings, the Benjamin Apartments’ details are relatively modest. The central pair of single-light wood entry doors is bordered by a cast stone molding and flanked by large decorative metal lanterns. Directly above is a cast stone nameplate that reads “Benjamin,” a common practice for apartment buildings of this style and era. Above the nameplate is a small cast stone balconet with a metal railing. The window that opens onto the balconet is also surrounded by a cast stone molding and topped with a semicircular decorative relief panel, which features a crest.

The five bays of the north façade are arranged in an A-B-C-B-A pattern, with the first, third and fifth bays projecting slightly forward. The first and fifth bays have triplet-grouped windows on both levels. Flush brick panels, created by a change in the brick coursing, are located between the two window levels in the first and fifth bays only. Also in these bays, a brick band surrounds and groups the windows of both levels. This band is detailed with cast stone cornerstones at the level of the second-floor lintels. The second and fourth bays have quadruplet-grouped windows on both levels with no decorative brickwork. A modest cornice is created by two soldier courses of brick separated by five rows of horizontal coursing, the first of which projects slightly. Small decorative cast iron grills in all but the central bay provide ventilation for the basement.

The four-bay east and west elevations, arranged in an A-A-B-A pattern, are almost mirror images of each other. Both sides have paired windows and a small single window in the third bay, which originally corresponded to the interior bathrooms. Both elevations repeat the banding and cornice of the primary façade. The first bay of the west elevation projects slightly and has an additional slim window facing south on each level. The west side also has hooded, louvered wood attic vents in the second and third bays.

The pattern of the five-bay south (rear) elevation is A-B-C-B-A. The first and fifth bays project from the building plane to create a “C,” and each bay has triplet-grouped windows at both levels. The second and fourth bays have slender, triplet-grouped windows on both levels. Both levels of the third, or central, bay include two wood doors, each with a transom and sidelights, and a pair of windows. All of the doors are wood, with a solid lower panel and a single light above. A metal-framed, brick-veneered porte cochere and balcony were added in the 2001 rehabilitation for egress and handicapped accessibility. This addition extends from the inset of the “C,” between the first and fifth bays, into the rear parking area. The color of the brick on the porte cochere

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differs slightly from that of the historic building. A handicapped-accessible lift was incorporated into the porte cochere. Three cast iron grilles ventilate the basement, and there are two more hooded, louvered wood attic vents near the parapet.

The most significant changes to the building during the 2001 rehabilitation were the replacement of the windows and the changes to the interior floor plan. Approximately 90% of the windows were replaced due to their poor condition. The new windows and the reused original windows were retrofitted with 1/4" laminated glass, a specification needed for sound insulation. Some changes were also made to the fenestration patterns. Originally, each apartment unit ran north to south, one per floor on each side of the service core. Mr. Benjamin Cohen, the first owner and developer of the building, lived in unit 3 (the upstairs east apartment). The original blueprints by Alfred C. Finn are in the collection of the Metropolitan Research Center of the Houston Public Library and show window details of Mr. Cohen's sleeping porch. Notes on the drawings for Cohen's unit 3 sleeping porch read: "This sleeping porch only to be glazed in and to have plastered walls and ceiling, picture mold and base, oak floor." The building's typical sleeping porches included four screened openings facing south and three facing east or west. Mr. Cohen's unit, however, included three, 1/1 double-hung windows, on the second floor of the south elevation's fifth bay. The second floor of the east elevation's first bay was also different, with a pair of windows instead of three screened openings.

All of the sleeping porches' screened openings were later retrofitted with glass. Four windows replaced four screened openings on the south elevation, and three windows replaced three screened openings on the east and west sides. The conversion from screens to windows was done haphazardly and poorly, with glass inserted into screen frames that were not sturdy enough to handle the additional weight. During the recent rehabilitation, all of those converted windows were replaced. The new windows follow the fenestration pattern of the original design for Ben Cohen's Unit 3, with groups of three on the south elevation and pairs on the east and west sides.

The building's floor plan changed several times throughout its history. The apartment units originally ran north to south, with two on each level for a total of four identical units (Plan-17 and Plan-18). Each apartment had two bedrooms, one bathroom, a living room, dining room, breakfast porch, kitchen, sleeping porch and sunroom. Sunrooms faced north, in the recessed second and fourth bays of the front façade. The sleeping porches were on the south side, in that elevation's projecting first and fifth bays. The kitchens were toward the rear of the building, adjacent to the common wall. The dining and living rooms were connected with the sun porches. The bedrooms were along the east and west exterior walls, with a bathroom between them. Each unit had two means of egress, into the central stairway or out onto the rear balcony and staircase.

In the 1940s, the building became a small private hospital and underwent minor changes. Doors were added into the central core to improve circulation between the two halves of the building (Plan-19 and Plan-20). Other changes included dividing each of the sunrooms into two separate rooms. On the whole, the hospital fit nicely into the apartment building and used the spaces without much alteration. In the 1960s, the building was altered

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again, when it was re-opened as a different private hospital. Changes were made to the central core, again to improve circulation, and an HVAC system was added (Plan-21 and Plan-22).

Additional modifications to the floor plan, including the removal of some interior walls, were made prior to and during the 2001 rehabilitation (Plan-23 and Plan-24). When the current owner purchased the building, all but a handful of the interior and exterior doors were missing, the plaster had been removed from the interior, and the staircase balustrade had been removed. The current plan is arranged in a horseshoe shape around the central core, with improved access between the east and west sides of the building so each floor can function as one unit (Plan-25 and Plan-26). Remaining original walls were retained wherever possible. The new circulation plan retired the central boiler chimney and the 1960s HVAC system. New handicapped-accessible restrooms, two per floor, were added to the central core of the building. The hallways were also widened per city fire code.

Despite the building's dire interior condition in 1999, many features did survive, including the tiled entry vestibule, the wood floors, the staircase (minus the balustrade), the brass mailboxes and some of the baseboards and decorative molding. Those elements were retained where possible. Replacements for missing interior items, such as the baseboards and decorative moldings, were replicated from the originals. Access to the original architectural drawings also made reproduction of the staircase balustrade possible. The wood floors were salvaged and reinstalled in the public areas, such as entry rooms and hallways. Some of the new offices also have wood floors, but many are carpeted as there was not enough wood flooring for the entire building. The kitchen has industrial rubber flooring. On the second floor, 6/1 windows were added between perimeter offices and the hallway. New interior doors were modeled after the historic doors, with a solid wood lower panel (with metal interior) and a single-light upper panel with insulated glass.

A black metal fence surrounds the rear of the site. Cars enter the parking area from Caroline and exit onto Webster, both of which are one-way streets. A rear dumpster and utility enclosure is sited along the south property line and has a brick veneer, with a slightly different color than that of the historic building.

The Benjamin Apartments has survived relatively intact, despite years of neglect prior to its 2001 rehabilitation. The building retained most of its design, location, materials, workmanship, feeling and association. The setting of the building has experienced more change, with a significant increase in the number of commercial concerns in the neighborhood. The efforts of the current owner brought back many of the building's historic features, and it is anticipated that the rehabilitation will attract new residents and aid in the overall revitalization of Houston's Midtown neighborhood. The listing of the Benjamin Apartments on the National Register of Historic Places will be a step toward achieving that goal.

8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

APPLICABLE NATIONAL REGISTER CRITERIA

- A** PROPERTY IS ASSOCIATED WITH EVENTS THAT HAVE MADE A SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTION TO THE BROAD PATTERNS OF OUR HISTORY.
- B** PROPERTY IS ASSOCIATED WITH THE LIVES OF PERSONS SIGNIFICANT IN OUR PAST.
- C** PROPERTY EMBODIES THE DISTINCTIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF A TYPE, PERIOD, OR METHOD OF CONSTRUCTION OR REPRESENTS THE WORK OF A MASTER, OR POSSESSES HIGH ARTISTIC VALUE, OR REPRESENTS A SIGNIFICANT AND DISTINGUISHABLE ENTITY WHOSE COMPONENTS LACK INDIVIDUAL DISTINCTION.
- D** PROPERTY HAS YIELDED, OR IS LIKELY TO YIELD, INFORMATION IMPORTANT IN PREHISTORY OR HISTORY.

CRITERIA CONSIDERATIONS: N/A

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE: Architecture

PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANCE: 1924

SIGNIFICANT DATES: 1924

SIGNIFICANT PERSON: N/A

CULTURAL AFFILIATION: N/A

ARCHITECT/BUILDER: Alfred C. Finn = architect, Louis C. Perry = builder

NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE (see continuation sheets 8-9 through 8-13).

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES

BIBLIOGRAPHY (see continuation sheet 9-14).

PREVIOUS DOCUMENTATION ON FILE (NPS): N/A

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

PRIMARY LOCATION OF ADDITIONAL DATA:

- State historic preservation office (*Texas Historical Commission*)
- Other state agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other -- Specify Repository:

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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Benjamin Apartments, at 1218 Webster Street in Houston, Texas, was built in 1923–24, during a building boom spurred by the city's rapid growth and the need to provide housing for the growing professional, trade and business classes. Designed by Alfred Charles Finn, one of Houston's premier early 20th-century architects, the building was commissioned by, and named for, Benjamin Cohen, a Houston businessman who founded The Smart Shop, a fine clothing store, and the Columbia Dry Goods Company. In this neighborhood just south of downtown, brick apartment buildings like the Benjamin began appearing in the 1910s, augmenting what had predominantly been a residential neighborhood of wood-framed, single-family dwellings, with elaborate mansions lining the major north-south thoroughfares. A few examples of these early 20th-century apartment buildings remain in the area, but many have been unsympathetically altered, demolished, or neglected to the point of substantial deterioration. The Benjamin Apartments is one of the best remaining examples of this building type and period of architectural development in Houston, and it is nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C in the area of Architecture at the local level of significance.

Development of Houston's South End

The Benjamin Apartments lies in what is known today as "Midtown," a mixed-use neighborhood south of Interstate 45 (the Pierce Elevated), north of U. S. Highway 59, west of Highway 288, and east of Bagby Street.¹ Midtown is centrally located, south of downtown Houston and north of the Texas Medical Center. The setting is urban with commercial and residential development surrounding the property. Midtown Houston became a Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone, or TIRZ, by city ordinance in 1994. Prior to that time, the neighborhood had large parcels of undeveloped land and scattered commercial and residential developments. Since the introduction of the TIRZ, new development, typically suburban in type, has inundated and transformed the area. Large apartment complexes, low-rise commercial developments and large-scale parking facilities have dominated new construction in Midtown. Some early 20th-century quadruplexes and small apartment buildings are still scattered throughout the neighborhood, and a few are being rehabilitated. Many others, however, are in danger of demolition due to development pressure or unsympathetic alterations.

Houston's Midtown neighborhood today contrasts the neighborhood it was at the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries, when it was known as the "South End." The South End "originated with the establishment of the Fairgrounds and its subsequent residential portion called the Fairgrounds Addition."² "The Agricultural, Mechanical and Blood Stock Association of Texas laid out a fairgrounds on the outskirts of town

¹ Kirwin, Timothy B., "It was like a neglected beauty": The Redevelopment of One Houston Neighborhood - Midtown," Master's thesis, University of Houston, August 2001, page 11.

² Kirwin,, page 10.

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off Main Street in 1871, with a one-mile racetrack, grandstand, and exhibition halls.”³ An economic downturn and lack of citizen interest lead to the closing of The Fairgrounds in 1878, but the accompanying residential development continued. “The Fairgrounds Addition, developed by the Galveston Houston Investment Company in 1891, was a far-end residential neighborhood that occupied ninety-three acres and supported sizable lots.”⁴

Houston’s South End was made up of “small, individual neighborhoods, which included the Fairgrounds Addition, McGregor, Southmore, Westmoreland, Avondale, and Kenilworth Grove, which later became Empire Addition.”⁵ Midtown is currently defined by the major freeways that encircle it, and it does not include all of the historic South End neighborhoods.⁶

The South End initially developed as an exclusive residential enclave, and large homes were constructed in the area as early as the 1850s. In *Houston’s Forgotten Heritage*, Dorothy Knox Howe Houghton, et al, mention one of the first houses in Houston’s South End. Built around 1858, the estate of Edward Hopkins Cushing, which was named “Bohemia,” “sat on a six-block, ten-acre site bordered by [the present day] Elgin, Holman, Austin and San Jacinto streets.”⁷ In the following decades, other notable grand houses were built in the area. “Even though a few individuals built on the open prairie to the south of town as early as the 1850s, it was only after the establishment of the Fairgrounds during the 1870s that widespread residential construction began to take place in the South End.”⁸

Even with the Fairgrounds, however, the area would not fully develop until transportation was available south of town. “In 1871 and 1872 a horse-pulled streetcar transported passengers from downtown to the entrance of the Fairgrounds along San Jacinto Street.”⁹ Service was intermittent, however, and was discontinued later the same year. Subsequent attempts were made over the next several decades, but all failed to provide the city with reliable streetcar transportation. “Progress to Houston’s mass transportation system arrived in 1891,” and on June 12 of that year, “Houston converted from mule and horse cars to electric streetcars.”¹⁰ “The maiden voyage of the electric streetcar carried passengers from downtown to the Fairgrounds Addition taking a two-mile route travelling south down Fannin Street, west on McGowen Street and returning north from Travis Street.”¹¹ The availability of public transportation opened the way for people to live outside the urban core and

³ McComb, David. *Houston: A History* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1969, 1981): 41. Noted in Kirwin’s thesis, p. 10.

⁴ Kirwin, page 10.

⁵ Kirwin, page 10.

⁶ Kirwin, page 10-11.

⁷ Kirwin, page 11.

⁸ Kirwin, page 12.

⁹ Kirwin, page 12.

¹⁰ Kirwin, page 13

¹¹ Kirwin, page 13

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commute to work.

Many wealthy Houstonians relocated to the South End in the three decades following the advent of the electric streetcar. Large mansions lined San Jacinto, Main, Fannin, Travis and Milam Streets. Historic photographs of some of the mansions reveal fanciful high-style Victorian and Beaux Arts houses on large lots. Several of Houston's prominent families, including those of Jesse H. Jones, John Henry Kirby, and Captain James Baker, lived in the South End.¹²

"The South End remained one of the most prominent places in Houston to live until the end of the 1920s and the early 1930s."¹³ Competition from new upscale suburban neighborhoods, such as River Oaks, Montrose, and Courtlandt Place, the expansion of Main Street, and the encroachment of commercial institutions all combined to make the South End less and less desirable.¹⁴ While the newer neighborhoods were quiet and removed from the bustle of town, the South End was now along major traffic arteries clogged with suburban commuters.¹⁵ Commercial establishments catering to the automobile turned Main Street into Houston's "first suburban retail corridor."¹⁶ The South End was "transformed from an elite residential neighborhood around the turn of the twentieth century to a predominately commercial zone between the 1930s and the 1960s" and "certainly lost its grand status, replaced by new, amenable Houston area neighborhoods."¹⁷

The mid-1920s was a transitional time in the neighborhood. Sanborn Fire Insurance maps from 1924 show the then vacant site of the Benjamin Apartments' at Webster and Caroline, surrounded by large, wood-framed houses. (Map-15) Two-story dwellings are shown along Fannin and San Jacinto, and two, one-story chicken coops occupied the west side of San Jacinto, between Webster and Hadley. Two large brick apartment buildings are shown on Main Street, the 1907 Savoy and the 1910 Beaconsfield (NR 1983), the latter of which is still standing. On the same map, however, Main Street already shows evidence of commercial encroachment. Due to the influx of the automobile and the changing nature of the South End, filing stations and other automotive services had begun to appear. The Sanborn map shows a station on the northeast corner of Main and Webster and an auto showroom on the southeast corner of Hadley and Main.

With regards to residential development, apartment buildings were becoming more and more common in the neighborhood. Apartment buildings are shown at several locations on the 1924 Sanborn map, including the

¹² Kirwin, page 13.

¹³ Kirwin, page 13-14.

¹⁴ Kirwin, page 14

¹⁵ Kirwin, page 14.

¹⁶ Kirwin, page 16, as noted by Stephen Fox in Main Street Houston: An Urban Design Charrette and Exhibition, AIA- Houston, Rice University School of Architecture, University of Houston College of Architecture and The Museum of Fine Arts-Houston, 1992.

¹⁷ Kirwin, page 17-18.

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southwest corner of Webster and Smith, the northwest corner of Chenevert and Pierce, the northeast corner of Leeland and Caroline (Leeland Apartments), and the northwest corner of Leeland and La Branch (Miller Apartments). Other apartment buildings in the neighborhood included the Burlington Apartments, on the northwest corner of Webster and Fannin, the Gardens Court Apartments, on the southwest corner of Webster and Fannin, and the Sheridan Apartments (NR 1984), on the southeast corner of Milam and McGowan.

The Benjamin Apartments

Alfred C. Finn first designed the Benjamin Apartments for Mr. Cohen in 1919. The original concept, shown in drawings housed in the architectural archives of the Metropolitan Research Center at the Houston Public Library, was a three-story, elaborately ornamented scheme that was never realized. (Plan-28) Finn's original design, with its rich and fanciful ornament and its Prairie School windows, was clearly drawn from the work of Louis Sullivan and Frank Lloyd Wright. The two-story building constructed four years later is far more restrained and formal, with an overall appearance more closely related to the Italian Renaissance Revival. The building's form is very traditional, as is the cast stone detailing surrounding the entry and balconet. It nevertheless hints at more modern influences, with only a trace of a cornice and divided-light screens derived from the Arts and Crafts.

Architect Alfred Charles Finn, 1883–1964, was born in Bellville, Texas on July 2, 1883, the son of Edwin E. and Bertha (Rogge) Finn. His training as a draftsman began when he worked for the Southern Pacific Railroad, but he later joined the renowned architectural firm of Sanguinet and Staats. Finn opened his own practice in Houston in 1913. He is perhaps best known for his design of the San Jacinto monument (1935–38) and a number of notable Houston buildings, including the 1927–29 Gulf Building (NR 1983), the 1935–38 Sam Houston Music Hall and Coliseum (demolished 2000), and the 1947–50 Ezekiel W. Cullen Administration Building, on the University of Houston's main campus. He was also responsible for many other commercial buildings in Houston, including offices, theaters and hospitals, as well as commercial and residential projects throughout the state. His long architectural career, which spanned 1913-1964, was greatly supported by his association with Jesse H. Hones (1914–1956) for whom Finn worked frequently.¹⁸ The Benjamin Apartments, while not one of Finn's most notable works, is nevertheless a reflection of his widespread influence on the city of Houston.

Benjamin Cohen himself resided at the Benjamin Apartments through the 1930s, and the building remained an apartment quadruplex until 1945, when it became a small private hospital called the Home Hospital (it was later renamed the Physicians and Surgeons Hospital). A Sanborn map from the 1950s shows the quadruplex building in use as a private hospital. (Map-16) By this time the neighborhood had changed, and several of the nearby residential buildings were listed as "offices" or as rooming houses. The Benjamin Apartments stood empty

¹⁸ "FINN, ALFRED CHARLES," The Handbook of Texas Online.

<<http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/view/FF/ffi32.html>> [Accessed Oct 28, 2001]

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from 1952–59. It was remodeled again in 1960 for use as a hospital, but from 1961–1968 the building again stood vacant. It is presumed that changing code requirements for hospitals and the advent of the Texas Medical Center in the late 1950s detracted from the viability of this small Midtown hospital. In the late 1960s, a single apartment was rented in the building for two years, and in 1970 it became a private residence for Mr. and Mrs. John W. Bankes. Mr. John Bankes died in 1993 and Mrs. Blanche Bankes continued to reside in the building until February 1997. In 1998, a law firm purchased the building from the Bankes Estate, and some interior demolition work was undertaken. Mid-Continent Houston Properties, LTD., the building's current owners, purchased the property in 1999 and have successfully rehabilitated the building for use as a single-tenant office building.

The Benjamin Apartments is a rare remaining example of the early 20th-century apartment buildings constructed in Houston's South End. In a reflection of the city's growth and changing demographics, the building type once proliferated on the neighborhood's streets to provide housing for the increasingly populous professional classes. Aside from the Benjamin and Sheridan Apartments, the South End's remaining examples of early 20th-century apartment buildings are at great risk, due to their poor state of repair and the current development pressures in Midtown.

Alfred Finn's design for the Benjamin Apartments is also an excellent example of early 20th-century architectural trends. It combines Renaissance Revival forms and details with more modern Arts and Crafts elements. In addition to the ornamented entry and bracketed balconet, its significant features include the roof parapet with coping tiles, the modest detailing achieved by changes in the pattern and color of the brickwork, and the abundance of screened windows, which allowed for circulation before air conditioning. The building clearly exhibits the tendency of early 20th-century architects to retain certain traditional elements while simplifying and abstracting them for a cleaner, more modern look.

As a remaining example of early 20th-century apartment buildings in Houston's South End, and for its illustration of architectural trends then prevalent, the Benjamin Apartments is nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C in the area of Architecture, at the local level of significance.

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10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF PROPERTY: less than one acre

UTM REFERENCES	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
	1 14	289280	3399380	3 ##	#####	#####
	2 ##	#####	#####	4 ##	#####	#####

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Lots 4 and 5 and a portion of Lot 11, Block 457, South Side of Buffalo Bayou an unrecorded subdivision in Harris County, Texas being a part of the James Holman survey.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The nomination includes all property historically associated with the building.

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME/TITLE: Anna Mod

ORGANIZATION: Anna Mod Preservation Services

DATE: November 2001

STREET & NUMBER: P.O. Box 15669

TELEPHONE: 713.630.1086

CITY OR TOWN: Houston

STATE: Texas

ZIP CODE: 77220-5669

ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION

CONTINUATION SHEETS

MAPS (see continuation sheets Map-15 through Map-16)

PHOTOGRAPHS (see continuation sheets Photo-29 through Photo-30)

ADDITIONAL ITEMS (see continuation sheets Plan-17 through Plan-28)

PROPERTY OWNER

NAME: Mid-Continent Properties, LTD.

STREET & NUMBER: 1218 Webster Street

TELEPHONE: (713) 289-6216

CITY OR TOWN: Houston

STATE: Texas

ZIP CODE: 77002

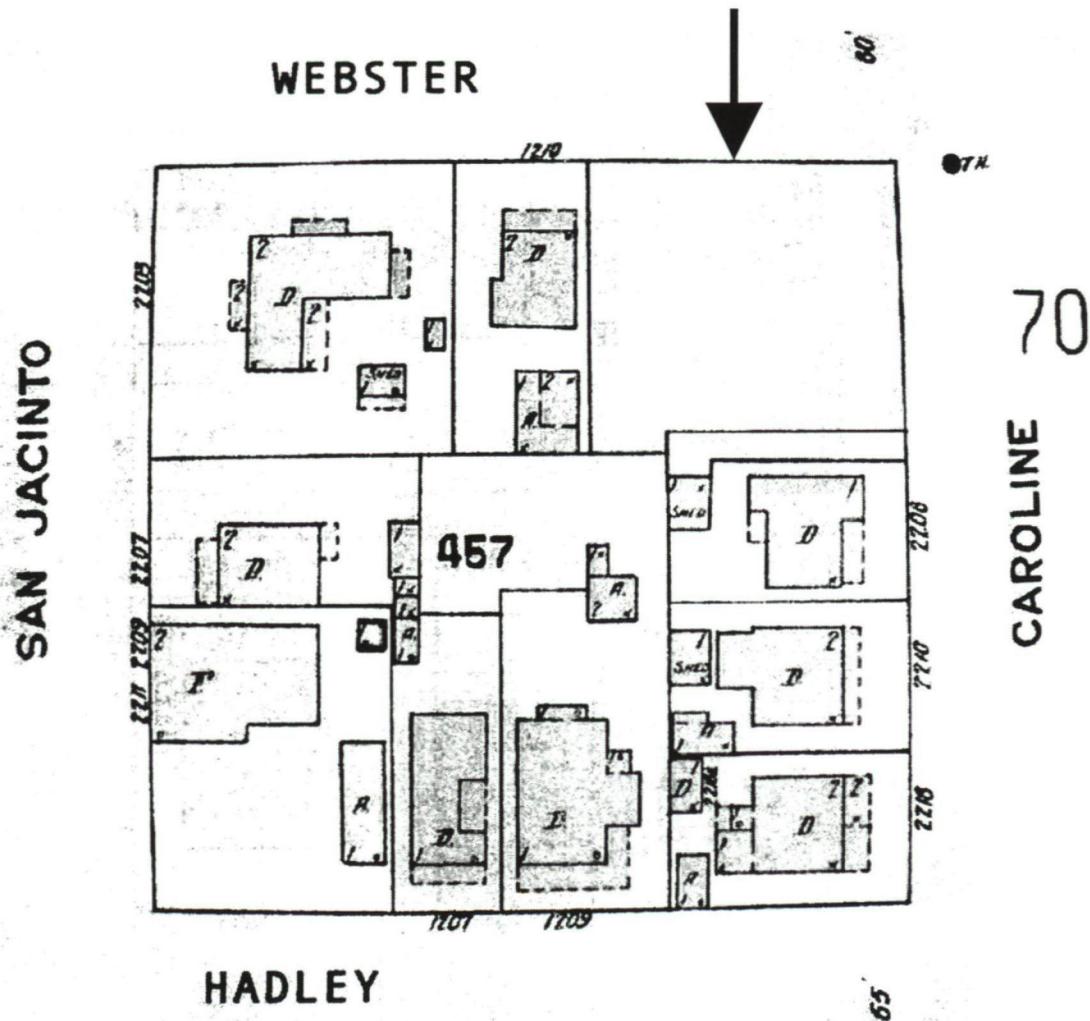
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section Map Page 15

Benjamin Apartments
Houston, Harris County, Texas

Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1924
Benjamin Apartments' site is vacant (indicated by arrow)



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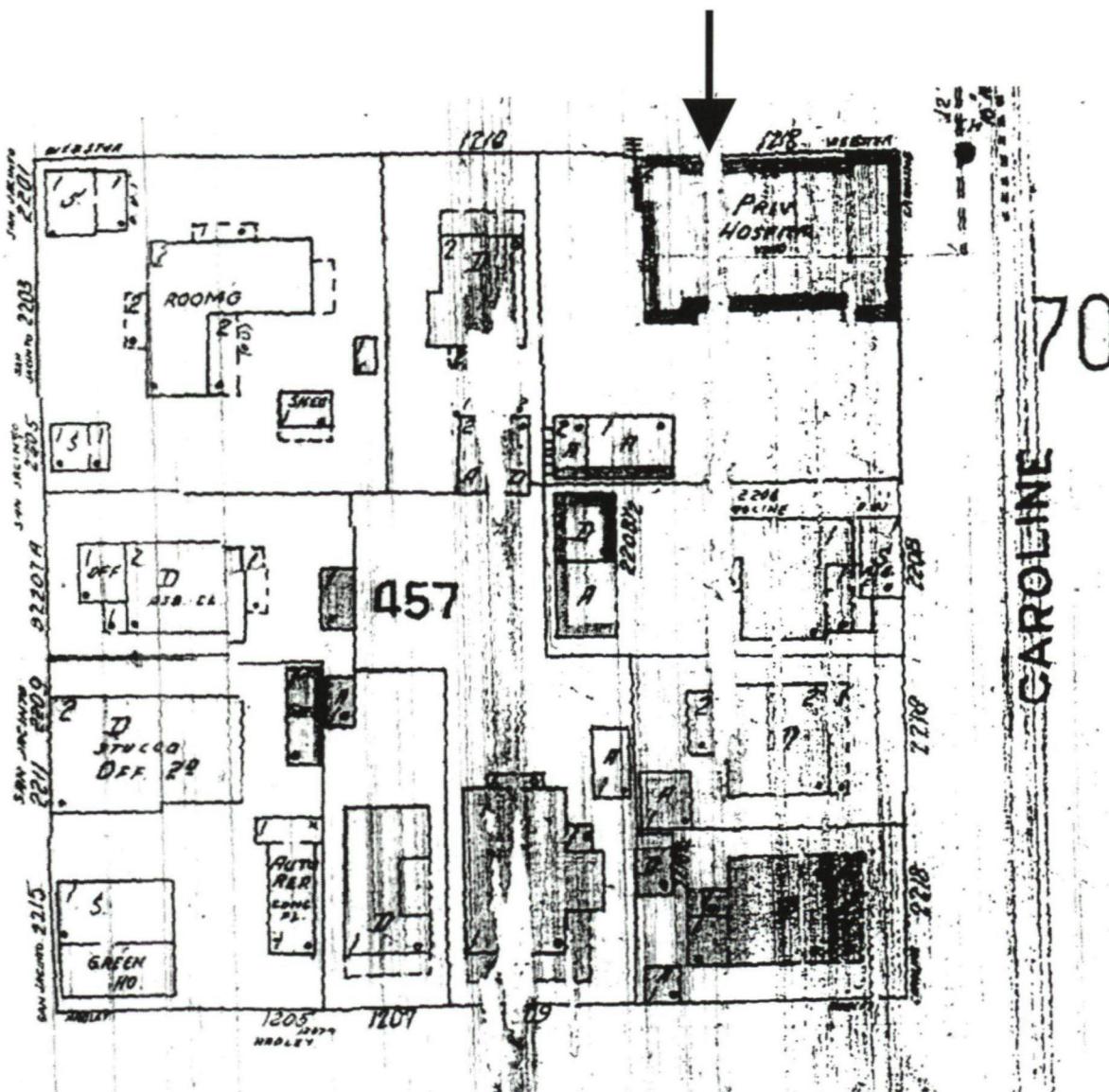
National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section Map Page 16

Benjamin Apartments
Houston, Harris County, Texas

Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, c.1955

Benjamin Apartments shown as Private Hospital (indicated by arrow)



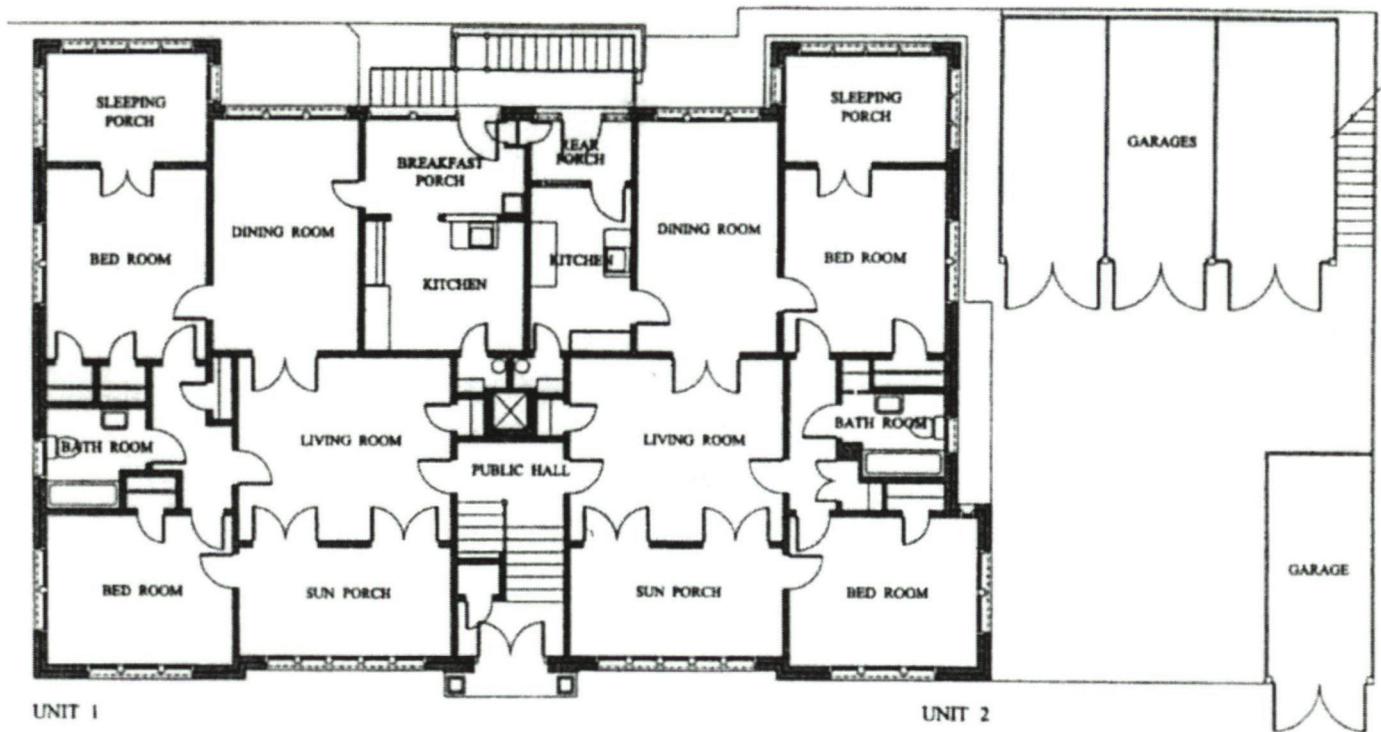
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National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section Plan Page 17

Benjamin Apartments
Houston, Harris County, Texas

First Floor Plan, 1923
Not to scale



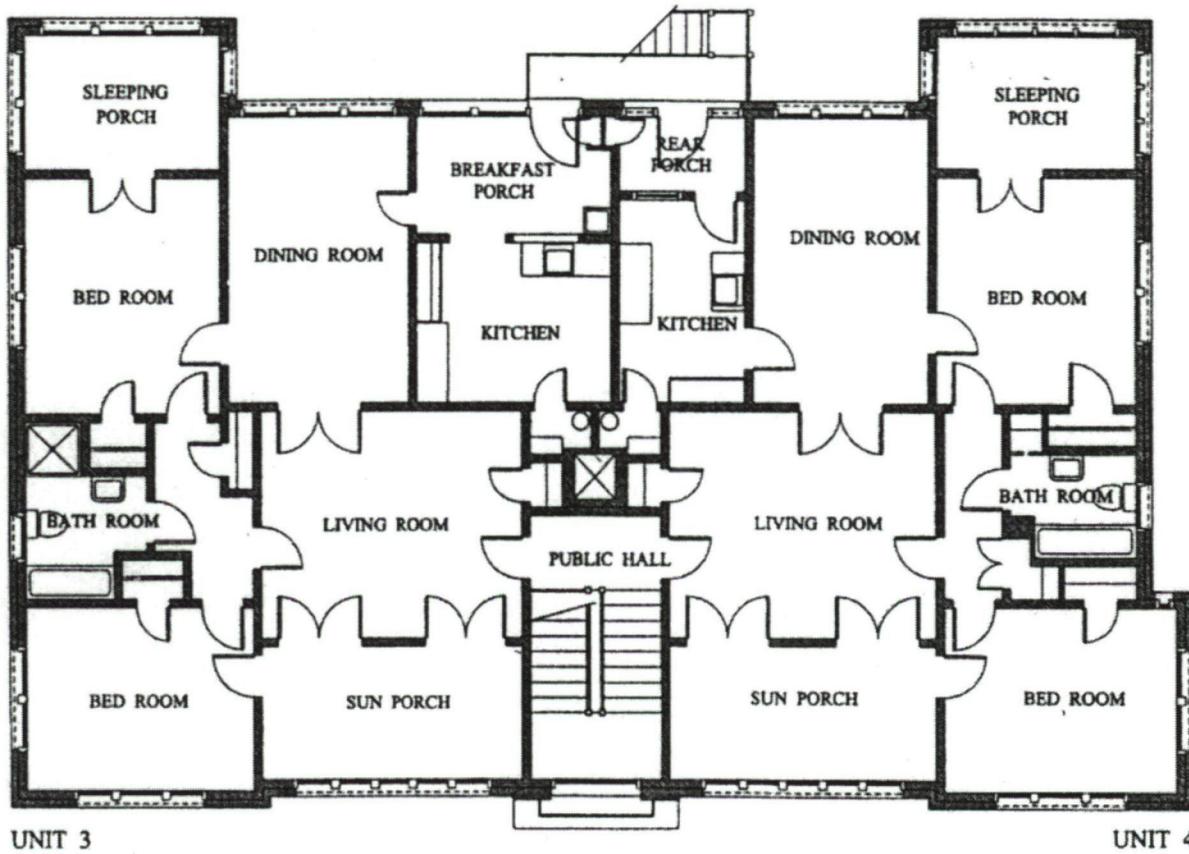
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National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section Plan Page 18

Benjamin Apartments
Houston, Harris County, Texas

Second Floor Plan, 1923
Not to scale



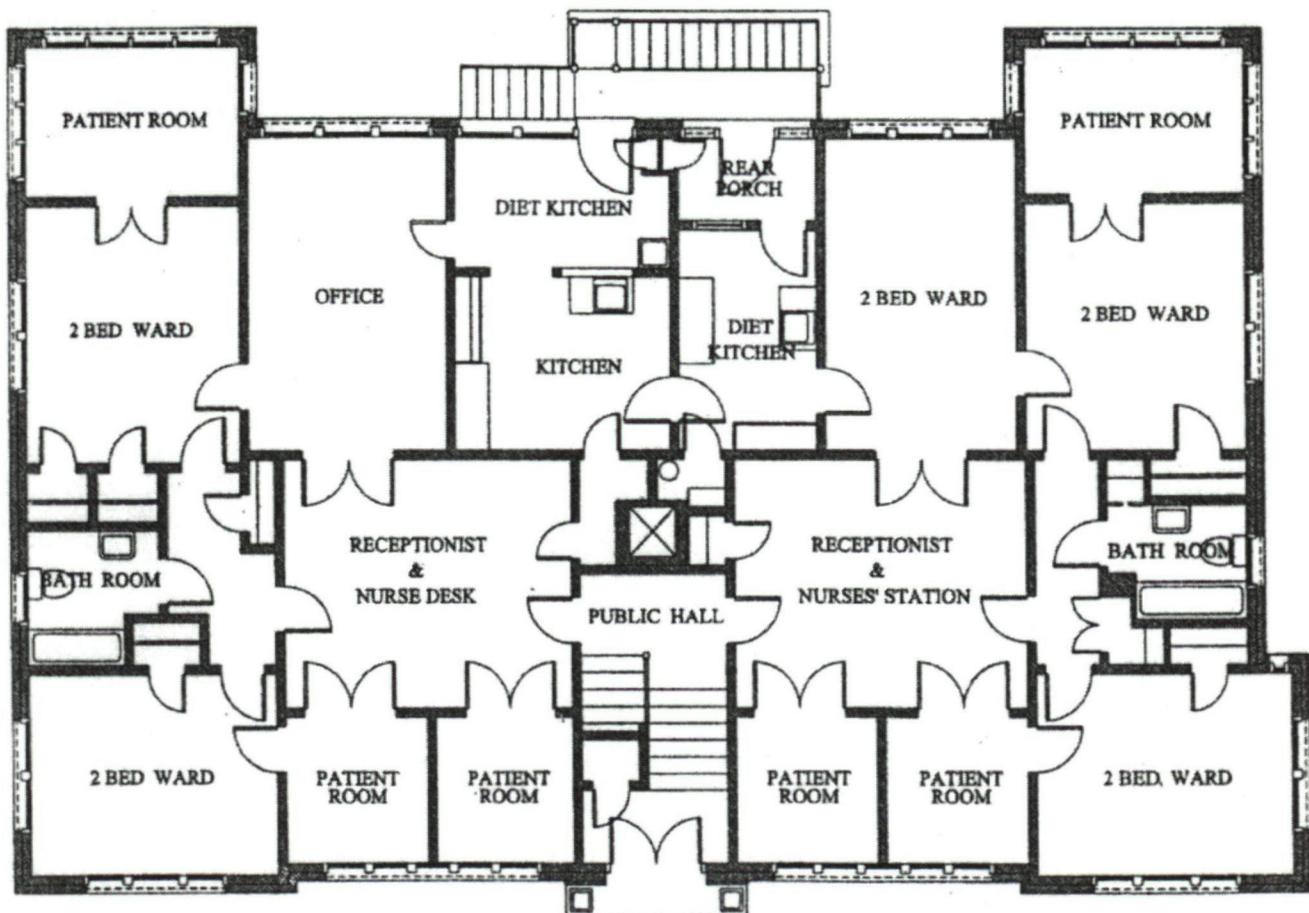
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National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section Plan Page 19

Benjamin Apartments
Houston, Harris County, Texas

First Floor Plan, 1946
Not to scale



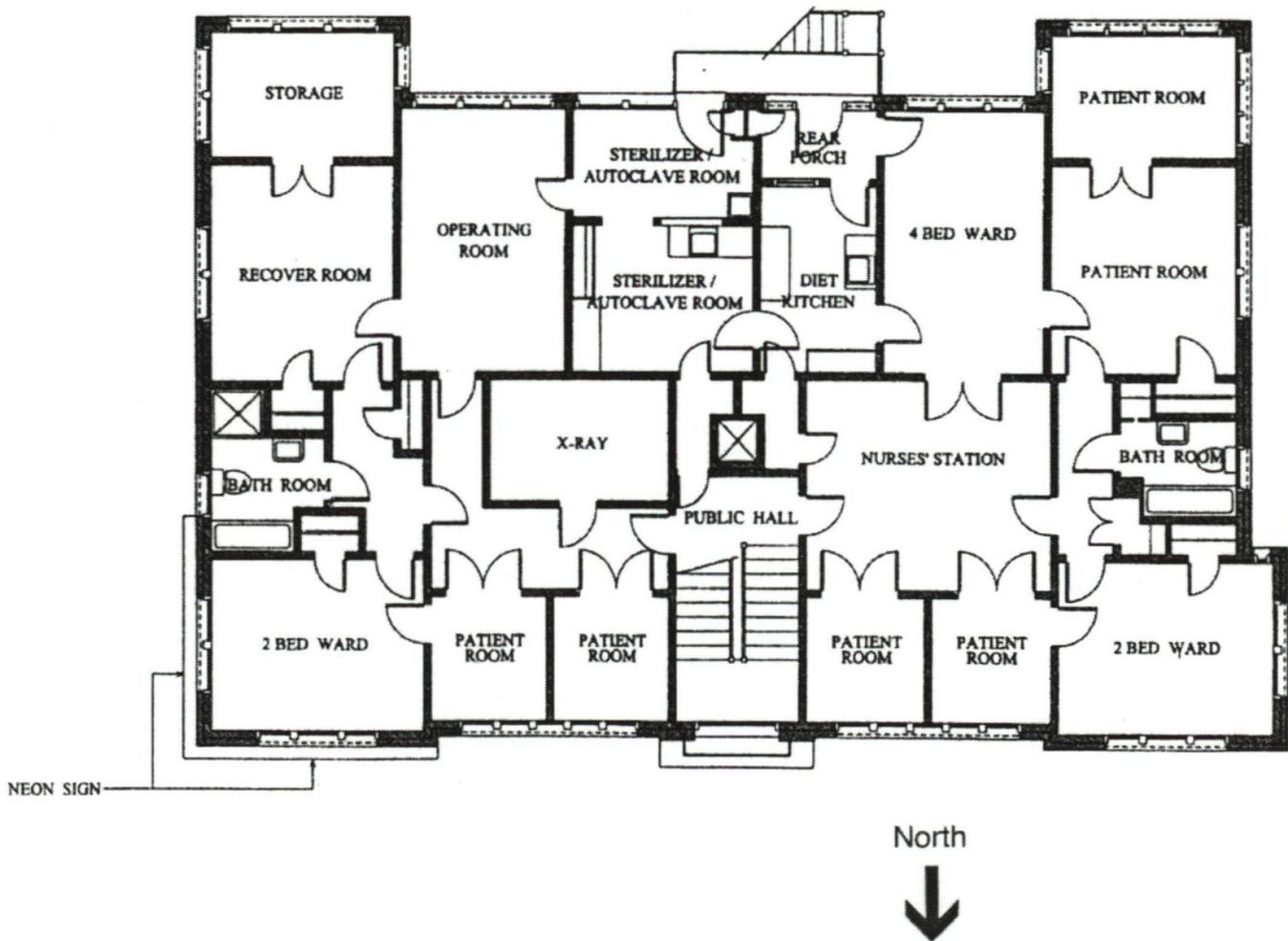
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National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section Plan Page 20

Benjamin Apartments
Houston, Harris County, Texas

Second Floor Plan, 1946
Not to scale



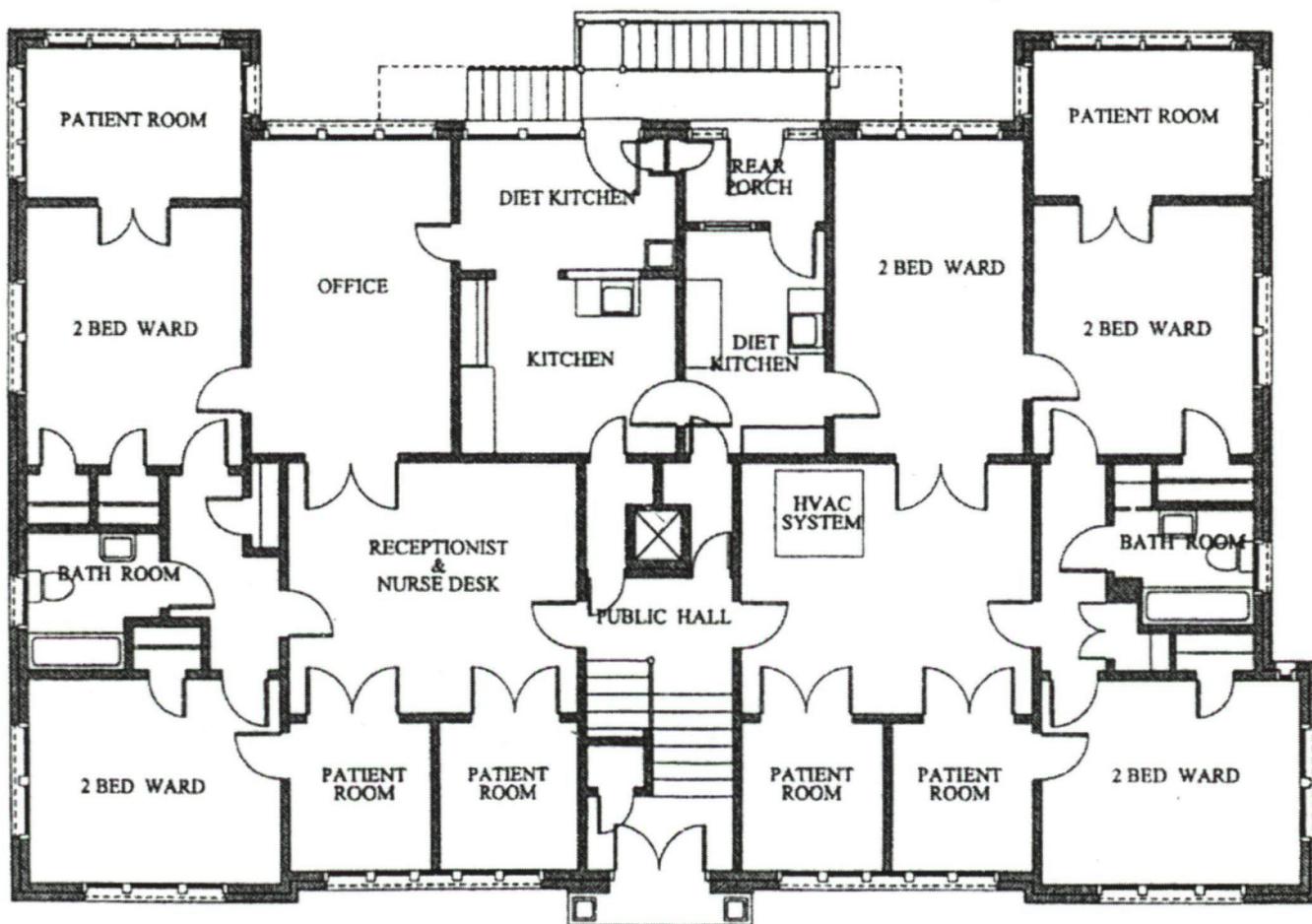
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National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section Plan Page 21

Benjamin Apartments
Houston, Harris County, Texas

First Floor Plan, 1960
Not to scale



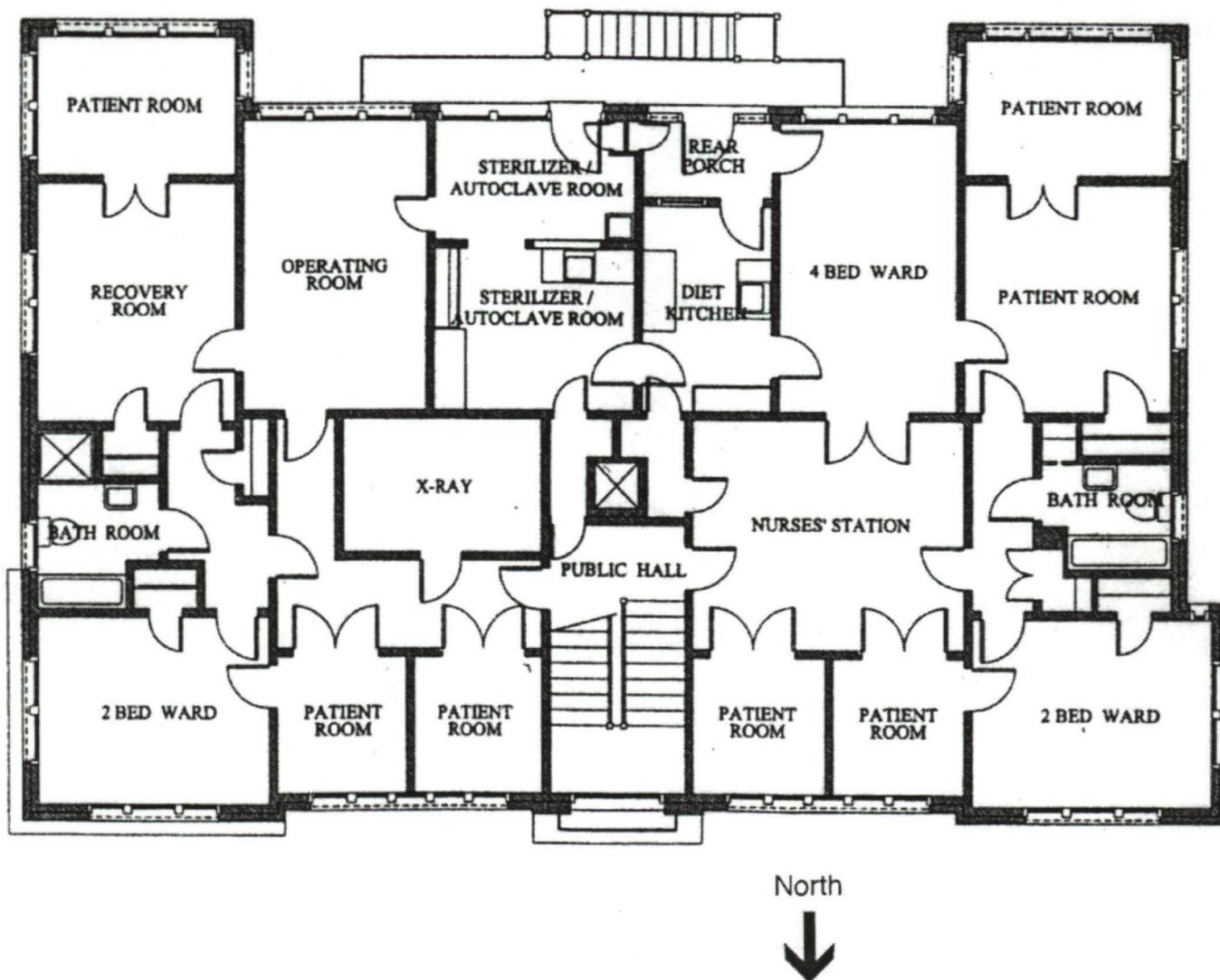
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National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section Plan Page 22

Benjamin Apartments
Houston, Harris County, Texas

Second Floor Plan, 1960
Not to scale



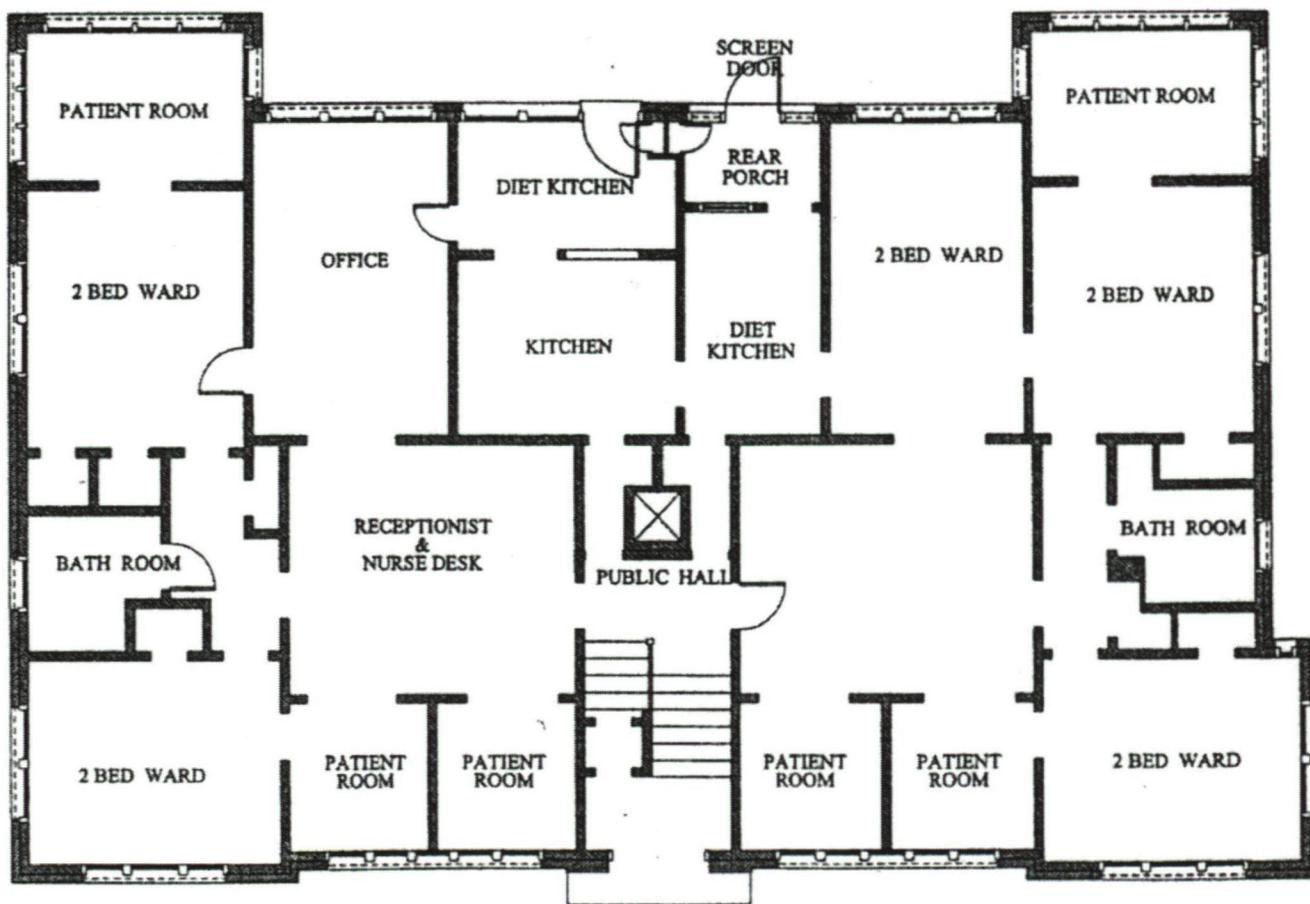
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National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section Plan Page 23

Benjamin Apartments
Houston, Harris County, Texas

First Floor Plan, 1999
Not to scale



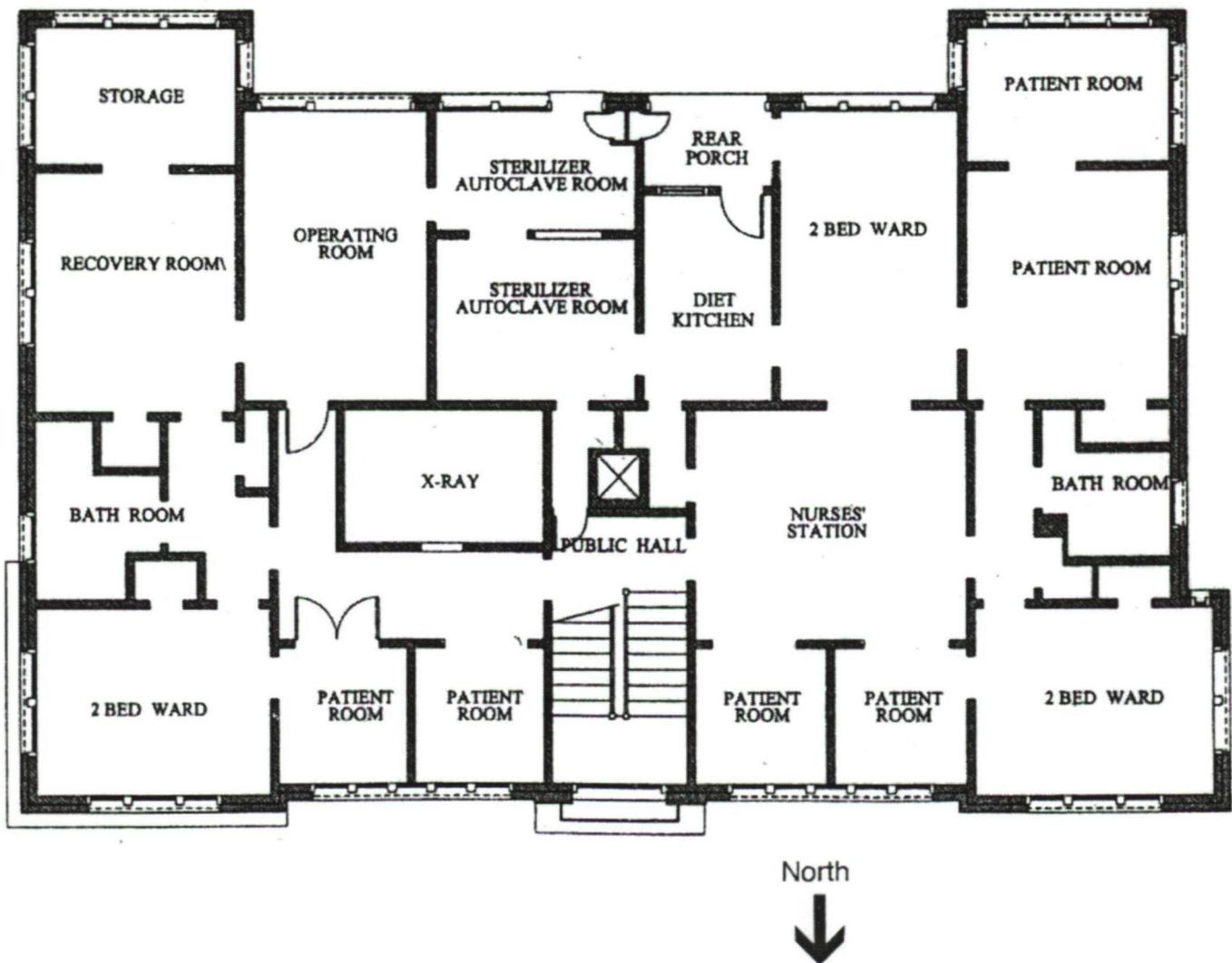
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National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section Plan Page 24

Benjamin Apartments
Houston, Harris County, Texas

Second Floor Plan, 1999
Not to scale



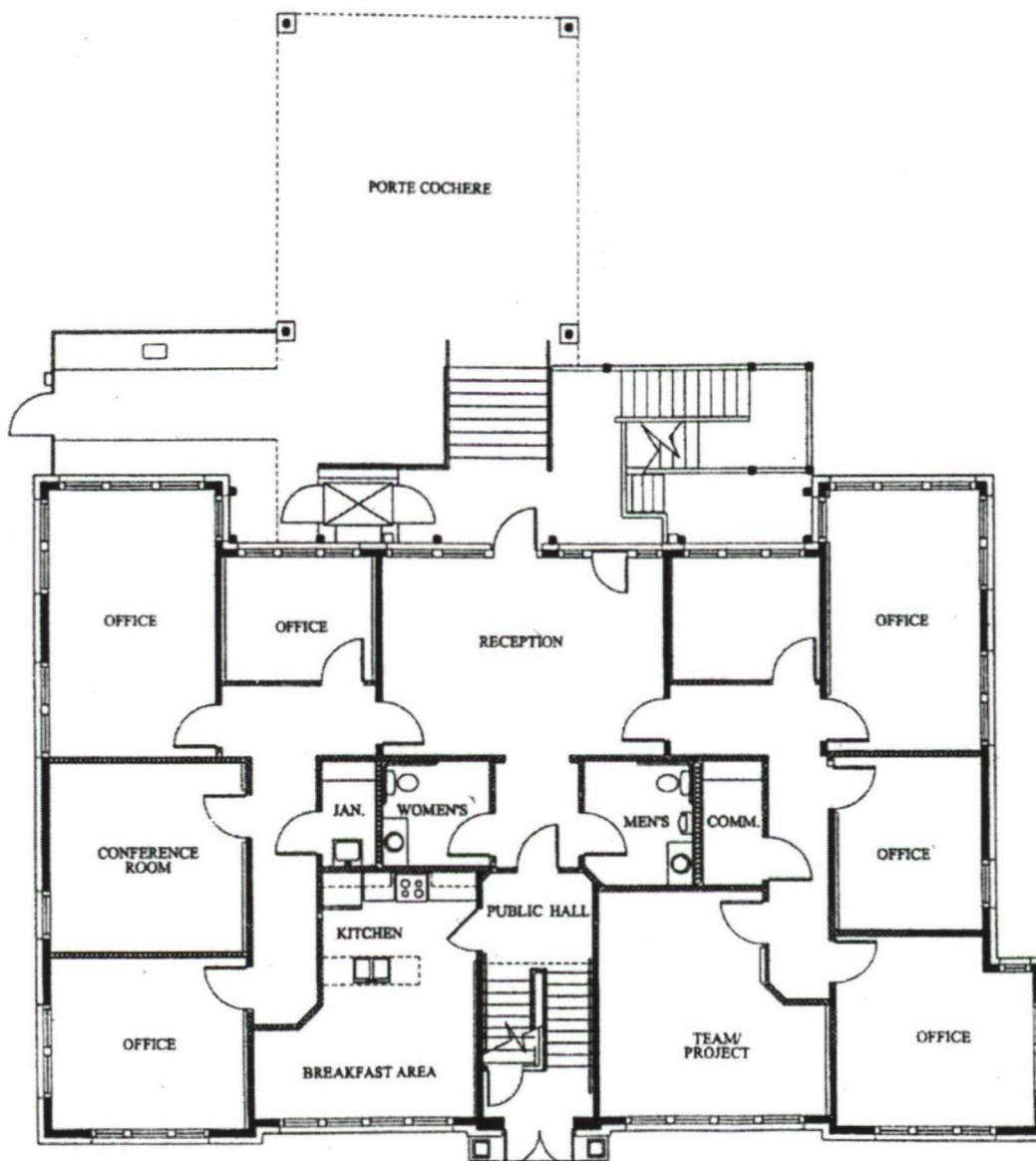
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National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section Plan Page 25

Benjamin Apartments
Houston, Harris County, Texas

First Floor Plan, 2002
Not to scale



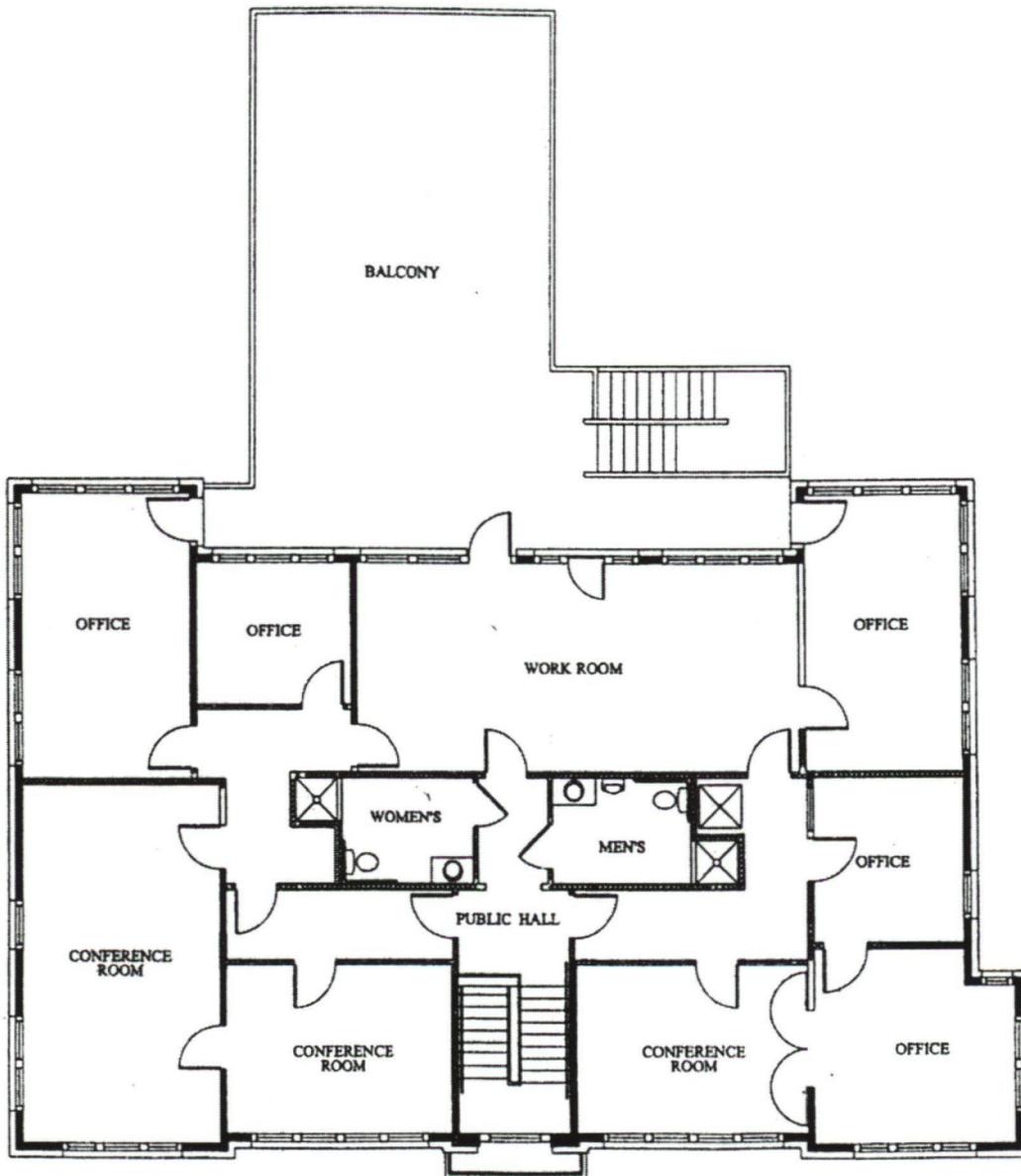
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National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section Plan Page 26

Benjamin Apartments
Houston, Harris County, Texas

Second Floor Plan, 2002
Not to scale



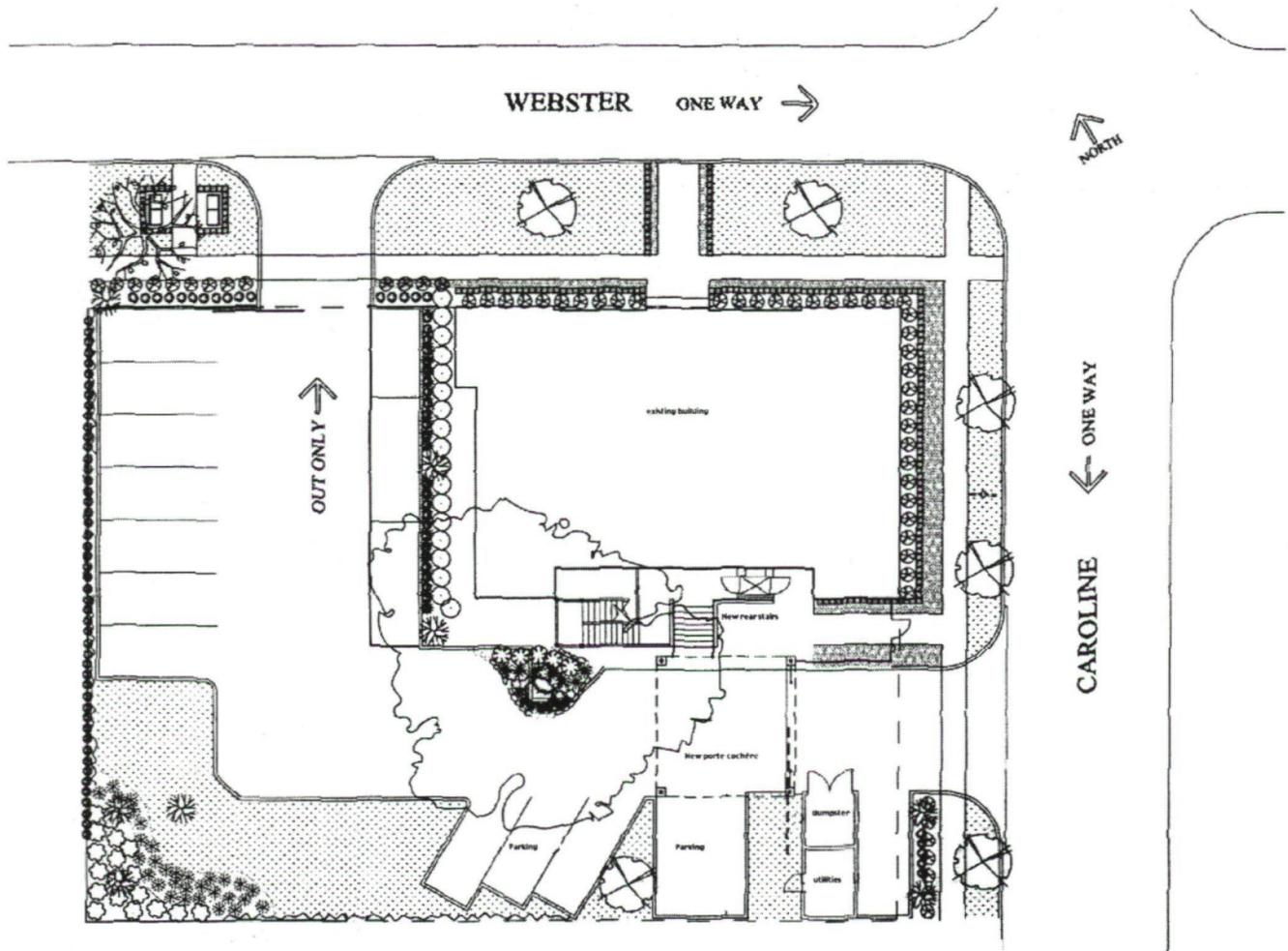
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National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section Plan Page 27

Benjamin Apartments
Houston, Harris County, Texas

Site Plan, 2002
Not to scale



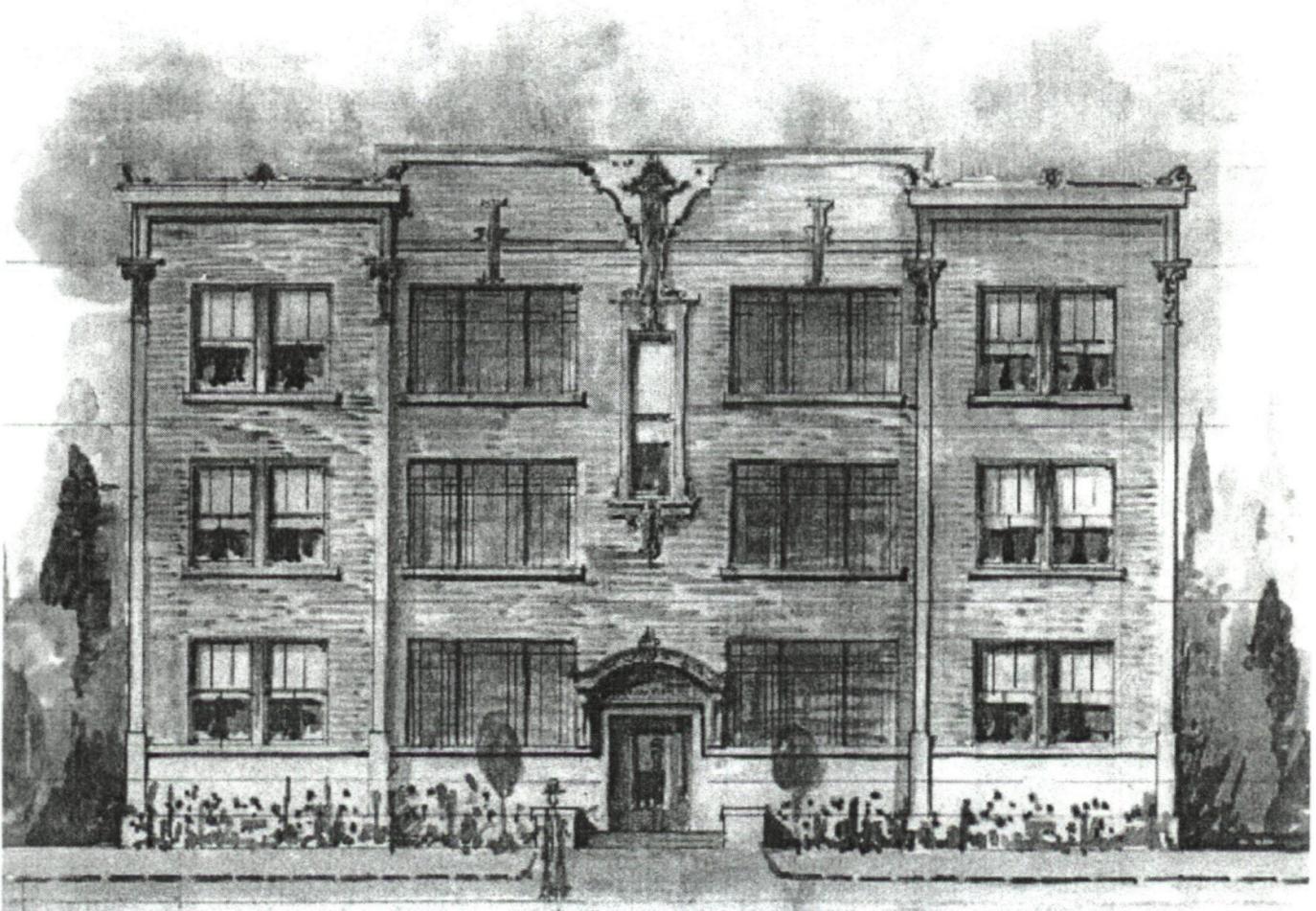
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National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section Plan Page 28

Benjamin Apartments
Houston, Harris County, Texas

Alfred Finn rendering of unrealized design, 1923



**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section Photo Page 29

Benjamin Apartments
Houston, Harris County, Texas

Photo Log

The Benjamin Apartments
1218 Webster Street
Houston, Harris County, Texas
Photographed by David Bray, December 2001 (except where noted)
Negatives on file with photographer (except where noted)

Photo 1 of 12
Northeast oblique, camera facing southwest
Photographer unknown, c. 1950
no negative available

Photograph 2 of 12
Architectural rendering of north and east elevations
Office of Alfred C. Finn Architects, 1923
Negative on file with Houston Metropolitan Research Center, Houston Public Library, Mss 19-1325

Photograph 3 of 12
North façade, camera facing south

Photograph 4 of 12
Detail of north façade, camera facing south

Photograph 5 of 12
Northeast oblique, camera facing southwest

Photograph 6 of 12
Southwest oblique, camera facing northeast

Photograph 7 of 12
Southeast oblique, camera facing northwest

Photograph 8 of 12
Interior staircase and entry vestibule, camera facing north

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section Photo Page 30

Benjamin Apartments
Houston, Harris County, Texas

Photograph 9 of 12
Interior staircase, camera facing north

Photograph 10 of 12
Interior second floor hallway and office windows, camera facing east

Photograph 11 of 12
Second floor office interior, camera facing south

Photograph 12 of 12
Second floor office interior, camera facing north

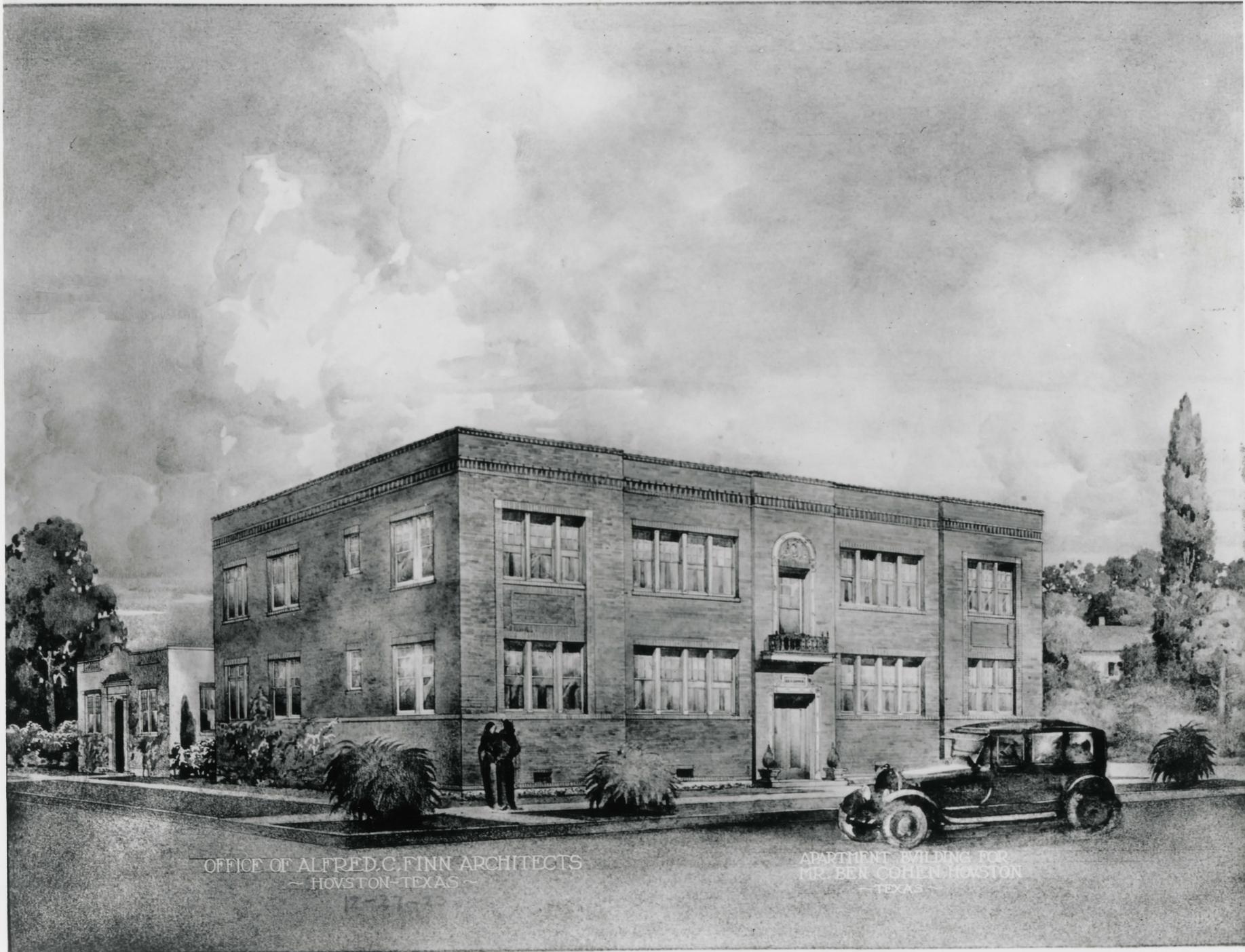


ATLANTA
GEORGIA
PHOTO CO
1900

Order No. Mod. A 119001

2002.6.1.144

THE BENJAMIN APARTMENTS
1218 WEBSTER STREET
HOUSTON, HARRIS CO., TEXAS
PHOTOGRAPH 1 of 12



OFFICE OF ALFRED C. FINN ARCHITECTS
~ HOUSTON - TEXAS ~

APARTMENT BUILDING FOR
MR. BEN COHEN HOUSTON
~ TEXAS ~

Ms 17-1325

HOUSTON PUBLIC LIBRARY
HOUSTON, TEXAS
RECEIVED
APR 10 1964
BOOKS DEPARTMENT

THE BENJAMIN APARTMENTS
1218 WEBSTER STREET
HOUSTON, HARRIS CO., TEXAS

PHOTOGRAPH 2 of 12



53

THE BENJAMIN APARTMENTS

1218 WEBSTER STREET

HOUSTON, HARRIS CO., TEXAS

PHOTOGRAPH 3 of 12



THE BENJAMIN APARTMENTS
1218 WEBSTER STREET
HOUSTON, TEXAS

THE BENJAMIN APARTMENTS
1218 WEBSTER STREET
HOUSTON, HARRIS CO., TEXAS
PHOTOGRAPH 4 of 12



THE BENJAMIN APARTMENTS
1218 WEBSTER STREET
HOUSTON, HARRIS CO., TEXAS
PHOTOGRAPH 5 of 12



photo 6 of 12

THE BENJAMIN APARTMENTS
1218 WEBSTER STREET
HOUSTON, HARRIS CO., TEXAS

PHOTOGRAPH 6 of 12



THE BENJAMIN APARTMENTS
1218 WEBSTER STREET
HOUSTON, HARRIS CO., TEXAS

PHOTOGRAPH 7 of 12



PHOTO 8 of 12
THE BENJAMIN APARTMENTS
1218 WEBSTER STREET
HOUSTON, HARRIS CO., TEXAS
PHOTOGRAPH 8 of 12



PHOTO 9 of 12
THE BENJAMIN APARTMENTS
1218 WEBSTER STREET
HOUSTON, HARRIS CO., TEXAS

PHOTOGRAPH 9 of 12



THE BENJAMIN APARTMENTS
1218 WEBSTER STREET
HOUSTON, HARRIS CO., TEXAS

PHOTOGRAPH 10 of 12



THE BENJAMIN APARTMENTS
1218 WEBSTER STREET
HOUSTON, HARRIS CO., TEXAS

PHOTOGRAPH 11 of 12

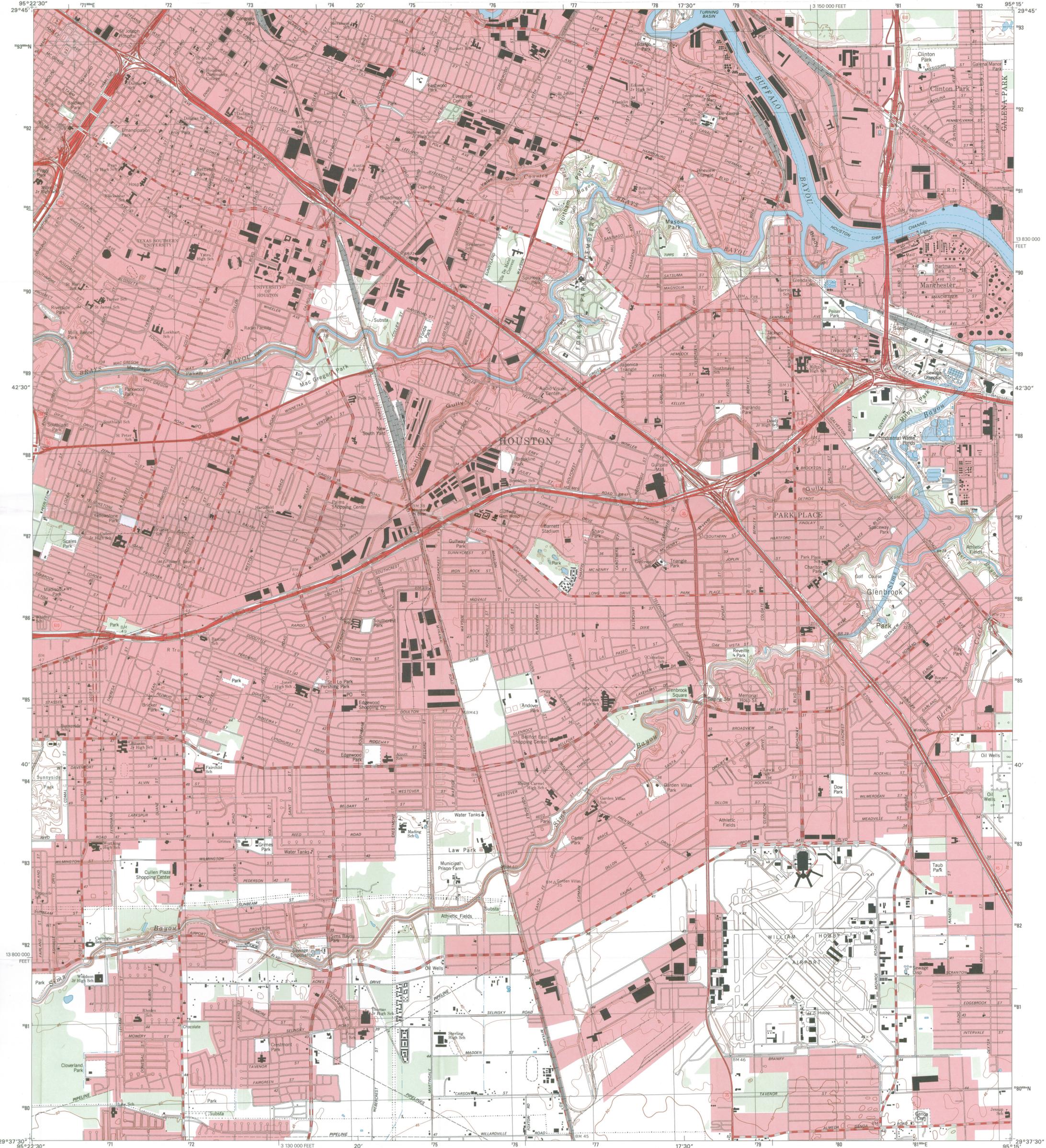


PHOTO 12 of 12
THE BENJAMIN APARTMENTS

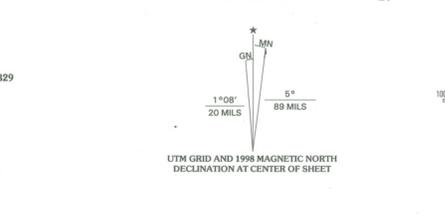
1218 WEBSTER STREET

HOUSTON, HARRIS CO., TEXAS

PHOTOGRAPH 12 of 12



Produced by the United States Geological Survey
Topography compiled 1976. Planimetry derived from imagery taken 1995. Survey control current as of 1976.
Contours and land elevations have not been revised and may conflict with other content.
Selected hydrographic data compiled from NOS/NOAA Chart 11329 (1980). This information not intended for navigational purposes.
North American Datum of 1983 (NAD 83). Projection and 1000-meter grid: Texas Transverse Mercator, zone 15 (south central zone).
10 000-foot ticks: Texas Coordinate System of 1983 (south central zone).
North American Datum of 1927 (NAD 27) is shown by dashed corner ticks. The values of the shift between NAD 83 and NAD 27 for 7.5-minute intersections are obtainable from National Geodetic Survey NADCON software.
This quadrangle covers a subsidence area.
Landmark buildings verified 1976.



SCALE 1:24 000
KILOMETERS
METERS
MILES
FOOT
CONTOUR INTERVAL 5 FEET
NATIONAL GEODETIC VERTICAL DATUM OF 1929
TO CONVERT FROM FEET TO METERS, MULTIPLY BY 0.3048
SOUNDINGS IN FEET-GULF COAST LOW WATER DATUM
SHORELINE SHOWN REPRESENTS THE APPROXIMATE LINE OF MEAN HIGH WATER
THE MEAN RANGE OF TIDE IS NEGLIGIBLE

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1	2	3
4	5	6
7	8	

ROAD CLASSIFICATION
Primary highway hard surface
Secondary highway hard surface
Unimproved road
Light-duty road, hard or improved surface
Interstate Route
U.S. Route
State Route

THIS MAP COMPLES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
FOR SALE BY U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, P.O. BOX 25286, DENVER, COLORADO 80225
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

PARK PLACE, TX
1995
NIMA 6943 III NE-SERIES V882

