

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

050



1. NAME OF PROPERTY

HISTORIC NAME: Dow, Alden B., Office and Lake Jackson City Hall
OTHER NAME/SITE NUMBER: N/A

2. LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER: 101 South Parking Place
CITY OR TOWN: Lake Jackson VICINITY: N/A NOT FOR PUBLICATION: N/A
STATE: Texas CODE: TX COUNTY: Brazoria CODE: 039 ZIP CODE: 77566

3. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this 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 meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Mark Wolfe State Historic Preservation Officer Date 01/04/2010
Signature of certifying official / Title Date
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 the property is:

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> entered in the National Register <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	<i>Jane McCalland</i>	Date of Action <u>3-1-10</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> determined eligible for the National Register <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined not eligible for the National Register.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> removed from the National Register <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> other, explain <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	_____	_____

5. CLASSIFICATION

OWNERSHIP OF PROPERTY: PUBLIC / local

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: COMMERCE / TRADE: architect's office, private offices, barber shop
 GOVERNMENT: U.S. Post Office, Lake Jackson City Hall

CURRENT FUNCTIONS: RECREATION / CULTURE: historical association museum

7. DESCRIPTION

ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION: Modern movement

MATERIALS: FOUNDATION CONCRETE
 WALLS WOOD, CONCRETE
 ROOF ASPHALT
 OTHER BRICK - Chimney

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

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 7 Page 5

Alden B. Dow Office and Lake Jackson City Hall
Lake Jackson, Brazoria, Texas

DESCRIPTION

The Alden B. Dow Office and Lake Jackson City Hall is a single-story, wood-frame commercial building in downtown Lake Jackson, Texas, a company town designed by Dow for his family's business, the Dow Chemical Company. Constructed in 1943, the building is a prime example of Dow's philosophy of architectural design, featuring the linear plan and extended overhangs that he favored. A loggia or arcade on the west side of the building sheltered the entrances to several private businesses and the Lake Jackson Post Office, while a beauty parlor and barber shop occupied the southern end of the building, and Dow's architectural practice occupied the prominent northern end. Although a significant portion of the building was demolished, the Lake Jackson Historical Association has recently restored the remainder, which is in good condition and retains a good degree of integrity. The Alden B. Dow Office and Lake Jackson City Hall is therefore nominated to the National Register of Historic Places at the local level of significance under Criterion A, in the area of Community Planning and Development; and Criterion B, in the area of Architecture, for its association with nationally-acclaimed modernist architect Alden B. Dow, who planned the community of Lake Jackson and designed its major buildings.

Geographic Setting and Site

The Alden B. Dow Office and Lake Jackson City Hall is located in downtown Lake Jackson, Texas, a town planned by Alden B. Dow for the Dow Chemical Company, and is on a city block bounded by Parking Way to the south, Oak Drive to the east, That Way to the north, and South Parking Place to the west. The neighborhood, a commercial area known locally as "Carriage Square," preserves much of its original character and features many large native oak trees. The Alden B. Dow Office and Lake Jackson City Hall is set back from the street approximately 19 feet, consistent with other commercial buildings in this downtown area. The west side of the building faces South Parking Place and, as the street's name suggests, the public right-of-way is lined with many head-in parking spaces. The north and east sides of the property are landscaped with a variety of shrubs and trees between the building and the adjacent streets. On the south side of the property is a privately owned vacant lot where part of the original building once stood.

Building Structure and Exterior Description

The Alden B. Dow Office and Lake Jackson City Hall is a wood-frame, one-story building on a concrete slab foundation, and it is of a linear plan. As originally utilized, the building consists of two general spaces: the small, single-room architectural office of Alden B. Dow, which has outward-sloping east and west walls; and the long, rectangular civic-and-commercial space, which was occupied by Lake Jackson City Hall, the U.S. Postal Service, and private local businesses. Recently the building has been truncated at the south end so that the linear space—originally 9 asymmetrical bays wide—is only 3 bays wide; today Dow's office and the city hall facilities are all that remain of the larger building. A beauty parlor and barber shop once occupied the far south end of this building, connected by a long, open breezeway, but this, too, has been demolished. The civic and commercial spaces are more than 1 foot taller than the architect's office space, and this is legible from the exterior of the building; Dow's office is also 8 feet narrower than the civic spaces, and so his office reads as a separate, smaller volume attached to the north end of a long, low building. Between the two volumes, on the west side, stands a 21-foot-tall chimney of red clay-tile.

The roofs of both the office and the civic building are side-gabled with greatly extended eaves, a feature common to many of Dow's designs throughout Lake Jackson. On the east side, the roof extends across both the large public and small

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Alden B. Dow Office and Lake Jackson City Hall
Lake Jackson, Brazoria, Texas

Section 7 Page 6

private volumes and appears as a single plane, but on the building's west side, the roofs are obviously separate on the taller civic spaces and on the office's smaller volume; this is particularly evident on the north façade, where the two spaces' ridgelines are in different locations, but the roof slopes are clearly parallel. The entire building was originally covered in asbestos shingles, but in 2007 the Lake Jackson Historical Association replaced this material with new concrete shingles, with a closely matching profile and texture, as part of its restoration project.

Elongated eaves extend 10 feet from both the office and the civic spaces, shading the building and its visitors; on his drawing of the west elevation, Dow designated this shaded outdoor corridor or gallery as a *loggia*. To provide visual interest and mark the difference between the two spaces, the overhanging eaves are different: those that extend over the office are not roofed, revealing their structure to signal the location of the architect's office, while the overhanging eaves of the civic building are roofed, to protect the public. Supporting columns are spaced every 8 feet at the ends of the eaves and are painted a dark green to match the trim color for the rest of the building. A concrete walk surrounds the building, except on the east side of the office, which is lined with crushed rock.

The west façade reads as the building's primary elevation due to the presence of two entrance doors that lead into separate office spaces within the civic building; however, before the building was altered, there had been a total of eight entrance doors. On the north side of the civic building, another door faces the chimney of the office; this door served as the entrance to both Lake Jackson's first city hall and Dow's office. The slanted west wall of the office does not have windows, whereas the civic building is lined with 40-inch-by-46-inch, 3/3 double-hung wood windows. These windows are arranged in a group of five to announce the large space occupied by the city hall, and a single window flanks each side of the two entrance doors leading to separate offices. A smaller, 3-pane wood window, measuring 40 inches wide by 24 inches high, rests in the space between the windows flanking the doors.

The east façade, considered the rear of the building, is lined with floor-to-ceiling windows on the wall of the civic spaces. A group of five of the 40-inch-by-72-inch, 6/6 double-hung wood windows marks the city hall section of the building, and three of these windows are grouped at the two separate office spaces. Like the west façade of the architect's office, the east façade does not have any windows on its slanted wall. The only door on the east side of the building is located adjacent to the protruding slanted wall of the office and was the only direct entrance into Alden B. Dow's architectural office. The eaves of the office extend 4 feet over crushed rock, while the rafters continue to protrude another 8 feet, creating a trellis for native plants; this is in keeping with Dow's philosophy that "gardens never end and buildings never begin."¹ The eaves of the civic building extend only 4 feet over the concrete walk.

Although it is not as tall as the civic spaces behind it, the architect's office dominates the north façade of the building due to its outward-slanting walls and resulting pentagon shape. This façade features Alden B. Dow's distinctive office window, the shape of which was used as the city's first graphic symbol and now serves as the Lake Jackson Historical Association logo. The wood window measures 84 inches wide by 90 inches high and is comprised of three windows separated by wood mullions. As a grouping, the window is peaked at its top edge to mimic the building's front-gabled roofline, while the bottom is parallel to the ground plane and the two side edges are perpendicular to it, despite the angled lines of the walls. The central window is fixed in place and is the largest of the three; it is peaked at the center and is of plate glass. A narrow casement window, hinged at the outside edge, flanks the large central window on both sides; each

¹ Sidney K. Robinson, *The Architecture of Alden B. Dow* (Detroit: Wayne State University, 1983), frontispiece; also, Diane Maddex, *Alden B. Dow: Midwestern Modern* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2007), 68. On the same page, Maddex also quotes Dow as saying, "Nature relieves architecture. Architecture relieves nature."

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 7 Page 7

Alden B. Dow Office and Lake Jackson City Hall
Lake Jackson, Brazoria, Texas

casement has a triangular piece of rose-pink glass at its top, separated from the clear plate glass by a wood muntin. The civic building is visible behind the office, as it is significantly larger than the office.

The south façade of the building, because of its larger size, completely conceals the office space at the north end. The 40-inch-by-72-inch, 2/4 double-hung wood windows that line the east façade of the civic building are also used on this section of the building, having been taken from the demolished portion of the historic structure and reused. Two of these historic wood windows are grouped together in the reception area, and three windows are grouped together in the office area.

Interior Description

Today the building is divided into four interior spaces that correspond to the remaining exterior articulations. At the north end is the Alden B. Dow Office, which has been restored to its 1944 appearance. This single room area measures 19 feet by 15 feet and features the slanted walls that are visible on the building's exterior. The west wall is only partially slanted; the bottom 3 feet and the fireplace area, including chimney, are straight walls of exposed brick. The remaining walls are covered with gypsum board. Entrance to this room is through the largest section of the civic building, and not from any exterior door.

An L-shaped row of cabinets is placed to greet visitors entering through the main door on the north side of the civic building. At the end of these cabinets is a small gate that allows passage through the office door into the room that once housed the first Lake Jackson City Hall. Next to the large windows is a small restroom measuring 6 feet by 5 feet; as it was originally in Dow's design, currently this is a public restroom for visitors. Located between the bathroom and the doorway to Dow's office are two small closets measuring 2 feet by 2 feet. Along the southern wall of this room is an entryway that leads to the two remaining office spaces. This entry was not part of Dow's design, but has been added to meet the needs of museum visitors and to allow easy access to the remainder of the building.

The entry way leads into a reception area that was originally accessible only through the door on the west wall. This room measures 10 ½ feet wide by 10 feet deep and leads into the main office space, 13 feet wide by 14 feet deep, which now serves as exhibit space dedicated to Captain Brown, the first sheriff of Lake Jackson. The reception area also leads to small hallway that measures 4 feet by 3 ½ feet and is lined with closets. This entire area, consisting of the hallway and closets, was originally designed as a shared bathroom that was used by both office spaces. The closet on the eastern side of the hallway serves as storage, while the western closet houses the air conditioning equipment. Both closet spaces are inaccessible to the public.

To the south is a space identical to the first reception and office area. The reception area in this space also was accessible through a door on the west wall. The room measures 14' wide by 10' deep and leads into the main office area that measures 14' wide by 14' deep. The office area now serves as exhibit space dedicated to 1940s technology and features a linotype printing press in the center of the room. Both this room and the reception area are lined with large wood windows that flood the room with light.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 7 Page 8

Alden B. Dow Office and Lake Jackson City Hall
Lake Jackson, Brazoria, Texas

Preservation and Integrity

In 1981 two residents of Lake Jackson—Gena Weddell and former mayor Vic Vickers—met to discuss the possibility of preserving the Alden B. Dow Office and Lake Jackson City Hall. Their conversation led to the formation of a committee to save the historic building, which subsequently led to the organization of the Lake Jackson Historical Society, later renamed as the Lake Jackson Historical Association. Today this non-profit organization operates the Lake Jackson Historical Museum, the Abner Jackson Plantation Site (a State Archeological Landmark), and the Alden B. Dow Office Museum, the latter of which opened to the public after its recent restoration.

The original fabric, footprint, and architectural integrity of the Alden B. Dow Office and Lake Jackson City Hall building have been compromised over the decades, but it remains the most significant structure in the state of Texas associated with Dow's illustrious architectural career. Since its completion in 1943, the building had been subjected to numerous alterations for the many different local businesses that occupied it. However, efforts began in 2007 to return the building to its 1943 appearance. John May, a general contractor and a board member of the Lake Jackson Historical Association, led the project, which required the reversal of many alterations, the repair of weather damage, and the adaptation of the interior spaces to accommodate exhibit space and public facilities. May took care in remaining true to Dow's original design, using the construction drawings collected in the Alden B. Dow Archives in Midland, Michigan. The building received new electrical work, plumbing, and a new air conditioning unit. Much of the roof structure and roofing materials had been heavily damaged by water, and so the roof was carefully replaced. All of the original wood windows have been restored. The red clay-tile chimney had been painted, and May successfully removed the paint so that the chimney, a prominent sculptural element of the building, now appears as it did during Dow's occupancy.

Despite all of this rehabilitation work, it must be acknowledged that this building is only a portion of what it was originally; the building straddled what would become two separately-owned parcels of land. The portion of the lot that includes the distinctively-shaped Alden B. Dow office and the city hall spaces was donated to the Lake Jackson Historical Association by the property's longtime owner; however, the owner, who now resides in Michigan, did not want to donate the entire lot with full building. The association unsuccessfully attempted to convince the owner to change his mind and donate the entire property, or to find a benefactor to purchase the other portion. After the transaction was completed, the donor demolished the portion of the building that remained on the parcel he kept, and today that land immediately adjacent to this building remains vacant and undeveloped. Nevertheless, in its rehabilitated form, this truncated building stands today as the single building in all of Lake Jackson that most strongly represents the city's origins as a company town designed by Alden B. Dow, and it is therefore nominated to the National Register of Historic Places.

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 VALUES, 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; Community Planning and Development

PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANCE: 1943-1959

SIGNIFICANT DATES: 1943

SIGNIFICANT PERSON: Alden B. Dow

CULTURAL AFFILIATION: N/A

ARCHITECT/BUILDER: Alden B. Dow

NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE (see continuation sheets 8-9 through 8-14).

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES

BIBLIOGRAPHY (see continuation sheet 9-15)

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: *Lake Jackson Historical Museum, Alden B. Dow Home and Studio*

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 9

Alden B. Dow Office and Lake Jackson City Hall
Lake Jackson, Brazoria, Texas

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Constructed in 1943, the Alden B. Dow Office and Lake Jackson City Hall served as the local office for Dow's architectural practice and as the first location of Lake Jackson City Hall, and it also housed many of the city's first businesses. Dow, considered the "Father of Lake Jackson," mapped out the city's streets and designed all of the city's first buildings, making Lake Jackson a true company town for his family's business, the Dow Chemical Company. As an architect, Dow had apprenticed under Frank Lloyd Wright before officially incorporating his own design firm in 1941. The Alden B. Dow Office and Lake Jackson City Hall, a one-story, wood-frame building, is nominated for listing in the National Register of Historic Places at the local level of significance under Criterion A, in the area of Community Planning and Development; and under Criterion B, in the area of Architecture, for its association with the career of modernist architect Alden B. Dow.

The Founding of Lake Jackson in Brazoria County, Texas

Lake Jackson, in the Coastal Bend area of southeast Texas, is approximately 50 miles south of Houston, and is bounded on the west by the Brazos River and on the east by Oyster Creek. The wooded terrain is relatively flat with abundant vegetation ranging from large oak, elm, and cypress trees to shrubs and vines of all varieties.

The founding of Lake Jackson, Texas, began in Midland, Michigan, with the Dow Chemical Company. In 1938 Dow Chemical began to search for new locations to build a magnesium plant because the company could "no longer rely on extracting [magnesium] from the Michigan brine stream in the quantities needed."² With the threat of war looming over the United States and war already raging in Great Britain, the "demand for bromine and magnesium, both of which Dow was the principal U.S. source, was rising rapidly."³ Magnesium was of great importance to the war effort as it was a lightweight metal used to produce airplanes, flares, and other critical military equipment.

Dow executives including Willard Dow—the son of company founder Herbert Henry Dow and older brother of architect Alden B. Dow—and mining and metallurgical engineer A. P. Beutel, who would become the Dow Texas Division General Manager, toured several locations along the Gulf Coast, from New Orleans, Louisiana, to Brownsville, Texas, in search of a site for an expansion plant. Two sites in Texas, Corpus Christi and Freeport, were the selected finalists, and they could not have been more different in late 1939 and early 1940: Corpus Christi was a large town with hospitals, schools, and the infrastructure to support a large influx of plant workers; Freeport was a small town surrounded by marshland, with very few facilities and services in place.

The Dow executives favored Corpus Christi, and a meeting was held there at the Driscoll Hotel to finalize the decision on the proposed plant's location. A bitter cold front blew into town from the north, bringing with it a massive ice storm, and the Driscoll's heating system could not supply enough heat. The Dow Chemical Company's Board of Directors left Corpus Christi and traveled by train to Houston, continuing by automobile to the warmer weather of Freeport. Shortly thereafter, on March 7, 1940, the Dow Chemical Company announced the purchase of 800 acres on the Freeport Harbor Channel that would become the site of the first magnesium plant in Texas. The plant was completed less than a year later

² E.N. Brandt, *Growth Company: Dow Chemical's First Century* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1997), 177.

³ *Ibid.*

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 10

Alden B. Dow Office and Lake Jackson City Hall
Lake Jackson, Brazoria, Texas

in January 1941 and was part of a series of plants in the Dow Texas Division that came to be known as Plant A.⁴

Soon after, the federal government recognized the importance of magnesium to the war effort and contracted with the Dow Chemical Company to build yet another plant in Velasco, Texas, for the federal Plant Defense Corporation. After the attack on Pearl Harbor, the urgency to complete what was to become known as Plant B was intensified and workers were brought in from all over the country to build and operate the plant.⁵

The construction of the new facilities combined with its operational personnel more than tripled the population of the two nearest towns virtually overnight. Freeport and Velasco had a combined population of less than 5,000, and Dow's construction and operational personnel alone peaked at 10,000.⁶

Workers were forced to live in substandard housing, including makeshift shacks, tents, and in their automobiles.⁷ Beutel went before the War Production Board and was granted over \$3 million to construct a temporary town that would house Dow Chemical employees. The temporary town came to be known as "Camp Chemical" and consisted of some 2,000 prefabricated one-room shacks, barracks, a 1,000-seat cafeteria, community store, firehouse, police station, and laundry and bathhouses—all designed by architect Alden B. Dow.⁸ Camp Chemical became the largest city in Brazoria County, but was disassembled in 1945 after the city of Lake Jackson was built.⁹

The Dow Chemical Company needed to provide more adequate and permanent housing for its thousands of plant workers, and so the process of building the City of Lake Jackson began in 1941. The company first sent Johnny Suggs, a Dow engineer who was also a Brazoria County native, to approach the city of Velasco about building new housing that would be funded by Dow Chemical. Velasco officials declined the offer knowing they were unprepared to handle such an influx of people. Beutel then made the decision to build a new town elsewhere, selecting a site in proximity to his own cattle ranch operations.¹⁰

The selected property was once the location of a prosperous sugar plantation owned by Major Abner Jackson, from whom the city derived its name. Founded between 1842 and 1845, the Jackson Lake Plantation site was the second plantation developed by Major Jackson after his arrival from South Carolina in 1839. The Jackson family owned this property until 1872, when it was sold at a public auction by remaining family heir Arsenath Jackson Groce to pay for back taxes. The Jackson Plantation site continued to operate as a sugar plantation with the use of convict labor until 1880. In 1900 the hurricane that devastated Galveston also destroyed the Jackson Lake Plantation site. The site was left ruined and abandoned until Beutel proposed to build a new town there in 1941. Soon after Suggs's meeting with Velasco officials, Beutel and some Dow Chemical associates, including architect Alden B. Dow, drove to an area that is now downtown Lake Jackson and decided that would be the place to build their new town.

⁴ "Dow Chemical C. Will Purchase 800-Acre Site on Freeport Harbor," *The Freeport Facts*, March 17, 1940; also "History of Texas Operations," Dow Chemical Company website, <www.dow.com/facilities/namerica/texops/about/history.htm> accessed on August 5, 2007.

⁵ Whitehead, Don, *The Dow Story: A History of the Dow Chemical Company* (New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1968), 169-172.

⁶ "Velasco, Texas," *Handbook of Texas Online*, <<http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/VV/hvv7.html>>; and "Freeport, Texas," *Handbook of Texas Online*, <<http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/FF/hef3.html>>, both accessed January 30, 2008.

⁷ Whitehead, 172.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 173.

⁹ Brandt, 181.

¹⁰ "John T. Suggs, The Founding of the City of Lake Jackson," Oral History Collection, Lake Jackson Historical Museum, Lake Jackson, Texas, 1993.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 11

Alden B. Dow Office and Lake Jackson City Hall
Lake Jackson, Brazoria, Texas

Alden B. Dow, Architect and Planner (1904–1983)

Alden B. Dow was born in Midland, Michigan, a son of Herbert Henry Dow, the chemical industrialist and founder of the Dow Chemical Company. Although Alden Dow expressed an interest in buildings as a child—designing floor plans out of leaves in the yard, and telling friends that he wanted to be an architect—his path towards this profession began late. In preparation to enter his father's company, as was commonly expected of sons at the time, he first attended the University of Michigan to study engineering; however, after three years there he transferred to Columbia University in New York City, where he became a student of architecture and graduated in 1931. Also in 1931, Dow married Vada Bennett, a daughter of Dow Chemical Company executive Earl Bennett.¹¹

Upon graduation from architecture school, Dow began working for the architectural firm of Frantz and Spence in Saginaw, Michigan. After a year and a half with that firm, Dow and his wife relocated to Spring Green, Wisconsin, where he worked as an apprentice to Frank Lloyd Wright in the Taliesin studio.¹² Dow returned to Midland, Michigan, in 1934 and opened his own architectural practice, which grew until the firm was incorporated as Alden B. Dow, Inc., in November 1941. During these years Dow designed over 60 residences in Midland, in addition to civic, commercial, ecclesiastical, and educational buildings. He designed many new buildings and remodeled existing interior spaces for the Dow Chemical Company; he also designed many smaller commercial buildings, including a flower shop and a filling station with car wash. Dow designed several buildings for college and university campuses in Michigan over the course of his career, including Alma College, Delta College, Hillsdale College, the Interlochen Academy of the Arts, Wayne State University, and the University of Michigan.

Between 1934 and 1938 Dow built his own home and studio in Midland on a sprawling property of more than 23 acres that included an irregularly shaped pond and numerous plantings of pine, spruce, birch, maple, and willow trees. Dow built this house using molded masonry units of his own invention that he called Unit Blocks—six-sided blocks made from cinder ash reclaimed from the Dow Chemical Company furnaces. Alden Dow used these Unit Blocks to construct several other houses, and in 1937 his Unit Block House (the Whitman House) and his Alden B. Dow Studio building earned him the Diplome de Grand Prix at the Paris International Exposition.

Dow, like his mentor Wright, remained devoted to the principles of organic architecture throughout his career. According to architectural historian Dianne Maddex, who has written extensively on both architects, Dow's buildings, like those of Wright, took many of their cues from the natural environment:

From the outside [Dow's] houses hewed to the earth with strongly horizontal lines, fit into—or seemed to grow from—sloping sites, used bold chimneys as vertical counterpoints, contrasted materials and textures, controlled sunshine with wide eaves, secluded entrances for mystery, and integrated the garage or carport with the house via a breezeway. Trellises and water features linked residences with nature.... Space was borrowed visually from adjacent areas to increase vistas.... Broad and tall windows brought the outside in, aided by clerestories and skylights.¹³

Many of these design elements were employed when Dow began his plans for a new community in southeast Texas in 1941. He split his time between his Midland studio and an office space in Houston, which he maintained through 1945; in

¹¹ Robinson, *The Architecture of Alden B. Dow*; Maddex, *Alden B. Dow: Midwestern Modern*; and the Alden B. Dow Home and Studio website, accessed on 20 July 2009 at: <<http://www.abdow.org/t14-alden-b-dow.asp>>.

¹² Nancy Barker and Alden B. Dow, "A Way of Life: Alden Dow Exhibition," Midland Center, Midland, Michigan, 1971.

¹³ Maddex, 73.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 12

Alden B. Dow Office and Lake Jackson City Hall
Lake Jackson, Brazoria, Texas

these locations, Dow designed the first company housing for Dow Chemical employees in Freeport and Velasco, Texas, and later realized his master plan for the company town of Lake Jackson.

Dow was made a Fellow of the American Institute of Architects in 1957, and he continued his practice from his studio in Midland as his firm grew in size. In 1963 the firm of Alden B. Dow, Inc., became Alden B. Dow Associates, Inc., and the larger practice completed numerous projects including the Fleming Administration Building at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, which includes the offices of the university's president. Also in 1963, the University of Michigan granted Dow the honorary degree of Doctor of Architecture.

In recognition of his esteemed 50-year career in architecture, the State of Michigan named Alden B. Dow as its Architect Laureate in 1983; no other architect has received this recognition since then. Shortly after this honor, Alden B. Dow died on August 20, 1983, survived by his wife and their three children. The Alden B. Dow Home and Studio was recognized as a National Historic Landmark in 1989.

Alden B. Dow in Texas

The Dow Chemical Company's Texas plants in Freeport and Velasco were completed between 1941 and 1942, and the corresponding influx of laborers created a housing crisis. The company invested \$15 million to construct its 2,000-acre Texas Division facility in Freeport, and within three months the town saw its population increase 140 percent, from 3,100 residents to 7,500. Willard Dow, the architect's brother and a company executive, called upon Alden B. Dow to help solve the Freeport housing problem, which *Collier's* magazine described in less than glowing terms: "Rough board shanties sprouted like mushrooms after a rain, and trailers clustered around water hydrants like cows around a water hole."¹⁴

In Freeport Dow took his theories of modular construction and affordable housing and realized them through a series of projects. His first Freeport building was a single-story hotel with 23 guest rooms, the construction of which was completed in only three weeks. From his Michigan office, Dow also developed plans for modular houses with 3 and 4 bedrooms; a basic floor plan could be adapted to include potential maid's rooms, porches, and garages. On a flat, treeless site in Freeport, the Dow Chemical Company built 53 of these long, low, wood-frame houses; the company also constructed a 6-family apartment building, a hospital, and a school, all designed by Alden B. Dow.¹⁵

In Velasco, Dow again met the needs of a rapidly expanding community, drawing the plans for "Camp Chemical" in a matter of weeks. This town, built in a salt marsh, featured a water and sewer system covered by roads paved with crushed oyster shells. Two thousand carpenters were able to complete one cottage every ten minutes, six houses every hour, or sixty every day; construction of the town was completed in just one month. Dow designed the cottages' prefabricated walls, roofs, and floors for ease of construction, and the completed town housed 20,000 residents.¹⁶

In 1941 the Dow Chemical Company sent Alden B. Dow and other executives, including A.P. Beutel, to the area to the northwest of Freeport where the Jackson Lake Plantation belonging to Abner Jackson once had been. The property had become a jungle that included cypress, magnolia, pecan, and live oak trees draped with moss. Dow, always interested in landscape and nature, envisioned a town much like a nineteenth-century garden city, where employees could enjoy their

¹⁴ *Collier's* (December 1940), cited in Maddex, 76.

¹⁵ Maddex, 76.

¹⁶ Maddex, 77.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 13

Alden B. Dow Office and Lake Jackson City Hall
Lake Jackson, Brazoria, Texas

homes in a location separate from the place of their labor. The company purchased 5,000 acres containing the crescent-shaped Jackson Lake and three other small lakes, all nestled between the Brazos River and the meandering Oyster Creek.

Following these curves, Dow planned his city streets to accommodate automobiles and allow for surprising vistas and views around every corner. Through streets were designated as “drives” and had botanical names, including Camellia, Holly, Ivy, Jasmine, Laurel, Acacia, Birch, Elm, and Oak. Streets leading to the commercial core were designated as “ways” and given descriptive names or whimsical names: along with Center Way, Circle Way, Winding Way, and Parking Way were thoroughfares named This Way, That Way, and Any Way. Dow explained his design of the town plan:

Traffic hazards have been avoided as much as possible. Through traffic by-passes all areas used by pedestrians and no residences face these through streets. They are lined with one-hundred foot parkways on each side. These park-bordered through streets also separate our commercial area from our residential area.... Newcomers and visitors to Lake Jackson may sometimes find our winding streets confusing. However, they will always find them interesting.¹⁷

Local historian James A. Creighton describes the streets of Lake Jackson in *A Narrative History of Brazoria County*:

The general pattern of the streets leads to a rather regular past-time for visitors—getting lost. Circle Way and Winding Way are two main arteries; if you continue driving on either of them, you will eventually reach your starting point. The naming pattern was interesting also: hardwood tree names for the more opulent residence streets, on down through to shrubs and vines for small courts, duplexes and apartments. In the business section, the street signs “This Way” and “That Way” always bring amused and incredulous comment; unless the sign “Any Way” was seen first.¹⁸

Construction crews, using equipment that ranged from bulldozers to mule teams, began constructing the town in 1942, and the first residents arrived in April 1943. Dow designed over 50 different house plans from which buyers could choose; houses were of wood frame construction with wood clapboard siding and featured wide, overhanging eaves to shield the large expanses of windows from the Texas sun, along with screened porches and carports. The 2- and 3-bedroom houses were set back 25 feet from the street and 10 feet on either side, each on a lot that was a minimum of 78 by 140 feet. The town of Lake Jackson looked like a garden city, with 500 single-family houses and 200 duplexes scattered between trees, lakes, and parks. Two private developers—the Plantation Development Company and the Brazoria Investment Corporation—built and owned the 483 houses designed by Dow, and the federal government subsidized the duplex units and offered FHA loans to potential homeowners. In May 1944, the privately-built houses were available for purchase between \$4,000 and \$5,000, or for rent between \$39.50 and \$47.50 per month; government-built homes cost \$3,000 or rented between \$32.50 and \$38.50 per month.¹⁹ By 1945, the town boasted 2,800 residents and included schools, churches, a shopping center, a small airport, and even a riding club. The Dow Chemical Company relinquished its oversight of the town in the following years, so that by 1950 the town of Lake Jackson obtained a charter, elected a mayor and a city council, and expanded to include 850 houses.²⁰ According to U.S. Census data, the population of Lake Jackson

¹⁷ Alden B. Dow quotation in Maddex, 78.

¹⁸ The Angleton Times, February 18, 1943; and March 25, 1943; Brazosport Facts, July 11, 1971; Plat of Lake Jackson, Plat Records, County Clerk's Office, Courthouse, Angleton, Texas; all cited in James A. Creighton, *A Narrative History of Brazoria County* (Waco, Texas: Brazoria County Historical Commission and the Texian Press, 1975), 370, and n. 16, 407.

¹⁹ George D. Welles, Jr. “It's True—What They Say About Lake Jackson,” Dow Diamond (May 1944), 11-12.

²⁰ Maddex, 79.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 14

Alden B. Dow Office and Lake Jackson City Hall
Lake Jackson, Brazoria, Texas

was 2,987 in 1950, with only 6 African-American residents recorded; only two years later, in 1952, the population of Lake Jackson grew to 5,000.²¹

Significance of the Alden B. Dow Office and Lake Jackson City Hall Building

The Alden B. Dow Office and Lake Jackson City Hall was one of the earliest buildings constructed in Dow's ideal city and is the singular building in all of Lake Jackson most closely associated with him. The long, single-story wood frame building faces South Parking Place and backs toward an open park or green sward that abuts Oak Drive—the first road developed in Lake Jackson and the buffer between the early commercial and residential zones.²² Dow designed the building to serve not only as his office, where he worked with Dow Chemical employees and private developers, but also as an ersatz commercial “district” for local businesses. The building housed many of Lake Jackson's first businesses and government agencies, including the Lake Jackson City Hall, the U.S. Post Office, Tom Vaughan's barber shop, and the telephone company.

The Alden B. Dow Office was described in the May 1944 issue of the *Dow Diamond*, the company's monthly promotional publication, as follows:

If anything were ever modern it is that office. Picture windows, blue-gray walls, a brilliant green ceiling, magenta doors and trim—and the rest, yellow. Dow's city-builder in the functional vest tells you that the color scheme of his office is typical of Lake Jackson. Above his door hang symbolically dulled and rusted relics of a year's hard labor by his company—a double-bitted ax, a cross-cut saw, weed, brush, and cant hooks, a pick, a mattock, a sharpshooter, spades and shovels of all kinds and sizes.²³

The building incorporated many of the design principles Dow would employ in the other commercial and residential structures in Lake Jackson, including light frame structure for quick and easy construction, deeply overhanging eaves for relief from the southeast Texas sun, and open trellises, long porches, and breezeways to allow the indoors and outdoors to meld. The outwardly slanting walls of his office draw attention to his practice and can be found in other projects Dow designed in Michigan, including his 1946 “Small House No. 100.” From within the walls of this office, master architect Alden B. Dow realized his “dream town,” an idealized garden city built for the employees of his father's business during World War II.²⁴ The building serves as a symbol of the city's very beginnings. It is therefore nominated to the National Register of Historic Places at the local level of significance under Criterion A, in the area of Community Planning and Development; and Criterion B, in the area of Architecture, for its association with Alden B. Dow.

²¹ Population statistics from *Texas Almanac, 1952* (reporting U.S. census figures for 1950); cited in Creighton, 370 and n.16, 406. The 1950 census figures indicate that the overall median income reported among Lake Jackson residents was \$4,250, while 65.3% were employed in manufacturing, and the jobless rate was a mere 0.4%

²² Lawhon, David R. “Mud, Mosquitoes, and Magnesium: The Development of the Brazosport Area, 1939–1943,” (Unpublished Master's thesis, University of Houston, Clear Lake, 2000), 70.

²³ Welles, 10.

²⁴ “The Founding Fathers—Alden B. Dow,” in Susan Chester, editor, *The Lake Jackson Chronicles: A History of Lake Jackson, Texas* (Old Ocean: PMMI, Inc., 1993), 14.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 9 Page 15

Alden B. Dow Office and Lake Jackson City Hall
Lake Jackson, Brazoria, Texas

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Alden B. Dow Home and Studio website, accessed on 20 July 2009 at: <<http://www.abdow.org/t14-alden-b-dow.asp>>.
- Brandt, E.N. *Growth Company: Dow Chemical's First Century*. East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1997.
- Barker, Nancy, and Alden B. Dow. *A Way of Life. Alden Dow Exhibition*. Midland, MI: Midland Center, 1971.
- Chester, Susan, ed. *The Lake Jackson Chronicles: A History of Lake Jackson, Texas*. Old Ocean: PMMI, Inc., 1993.
- Creighton, James A. *A Narrative History of Brazoria County*. Waco, Texas: Brazoria County Historical Commission and the Texian Press, 1975).
- "Dow Chemical C. Will Purchase 800-Acre Site on Freeport Harbor." *The Freeport Facts*, March 17, 1940.
- Handbook of Texas Online*, s.v. "Freeport, Texas," <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/FF/hef3.html> (accessed January 30, 2008).
- Handbook of Texas Online*, s.v. "Velasco, Texas," <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/VV/hvv7.html> (accessed January 30, 2008).
- Lawhon, David R. *Mud, Mosquitoes, and Magnesium: The Development of the Brazosport Area, 1939-1943*. Unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Houston Clear Lake, 2000.
- Maddex, Diane. *Alden B. Dow: Midwestern Modern*. New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 2007.
- Suggs, John T. "The Founding of the City of Lake Jackson." 1993. Oral History Collection, Lake Jackson Historical Museum, Lake Jackson, TX.
- Welles, George D., Jr. "It's True—What They Say About Lake Jackson," *Dow Diamond* (May 1944), 1-14.
- Whitehead, Don. *The Dow Story: The History of the Dow Chemical Company*. New York: McGraw Hill Inc., 1968.
- Robinson, Sidney K. *The Architecture of Alden B. Dow*. Detroit: Wayne State University, 1983.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF PROPERTY: less than one acre

UTM REFERENCES	Zone	Easting	Northing
1.	15	261521	3214861

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION: City of Lake Jackson Lot 4

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION: Nomination includes all property historically associated with the building that is currently under ownership of the Lake Jackson Historical Association. An adjacent parcel historically associated with this resource is under different ownership and is not included in this nomination.

11. FORM PREPARED BY (with assistance from Rachel Leibowitz, Historian, Texas Historical Commission)

NAME/TITLE: Jennifer Caulkins, Museum Director

ORGANIZATION: Lake Jackson Historical Association

DATE: August 4, 2009

STREET & NUMBER: P.O. Box 242

TELEPHONE: (979) 297-1570

CITY OR TOWN: Lake Jackson

STATE: Texas

ZIP CODE: 77566

ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION

CONTINUATION SHEETS

MAPS (see continuation sheet Map-16 through Map-18)

PHOTOGRAPHS (see continuation sheet Photo-23 through Photo-32)

ADDITIONAL ITEMS (see continuation sheets Figure-19 through Figure-22)

PROPERTY OWNER

NAME: Lake Jackson Historical Association (Jennifer Caulkins, Museum Director)

STREET & NUMBER: P.O. Box 242

TELEPHONE: 979-297-1570

CITY OR TOWN: Lake Jackson

STATE: Texas

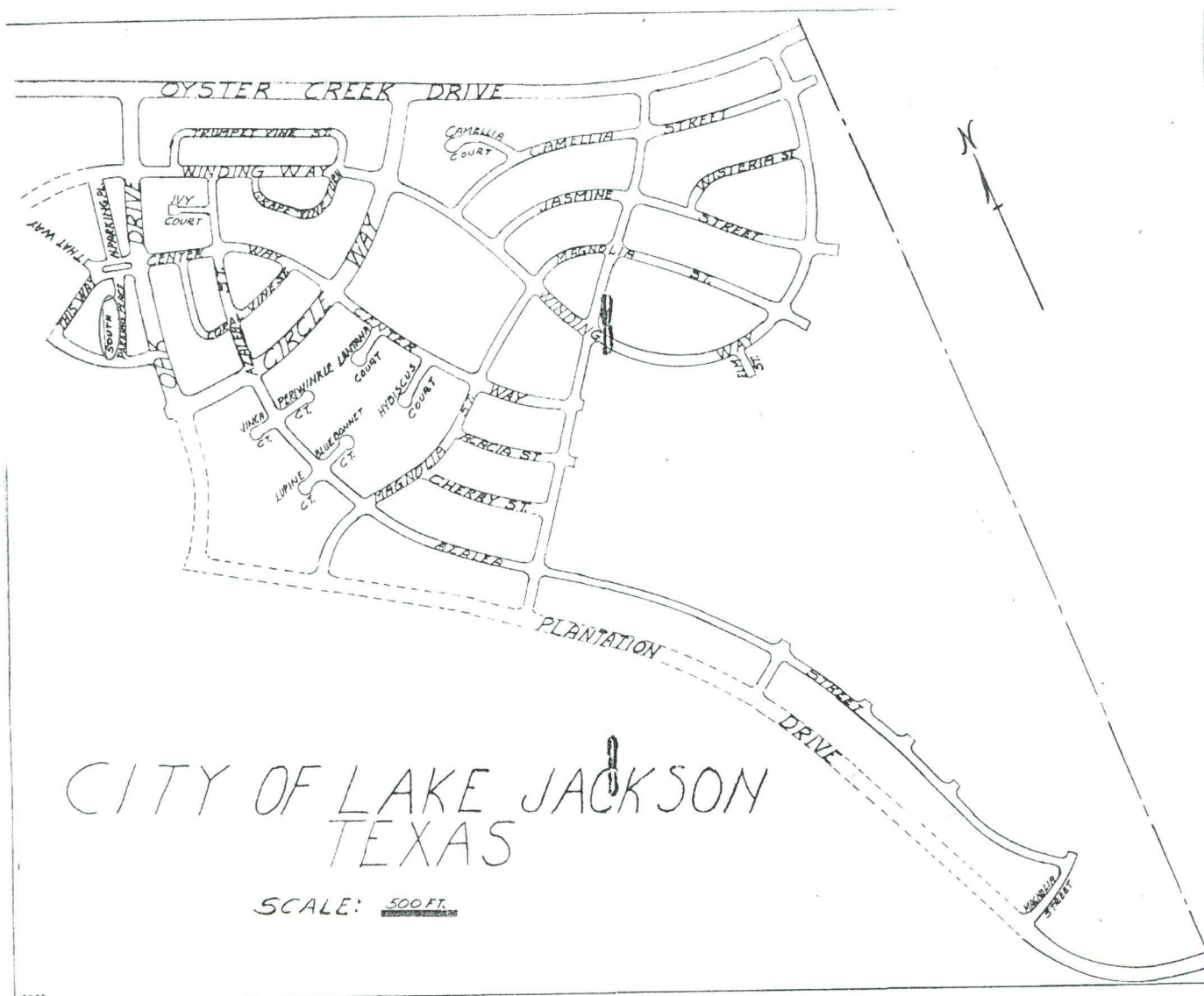
ZIP CODE: 77566

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Alden B. Dow Office and Lake Jackson City Hall
Lake Jackson, Brazoria, Texas

Section MAP Page 16



Map 1. Downtown Lake Jackson
Source: Lake Jackson Historical Museum

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section MAP Page 17

Alden B. Dow Office and Lake Jackson City Hall
Lake Jackson, Brazoria, Texas



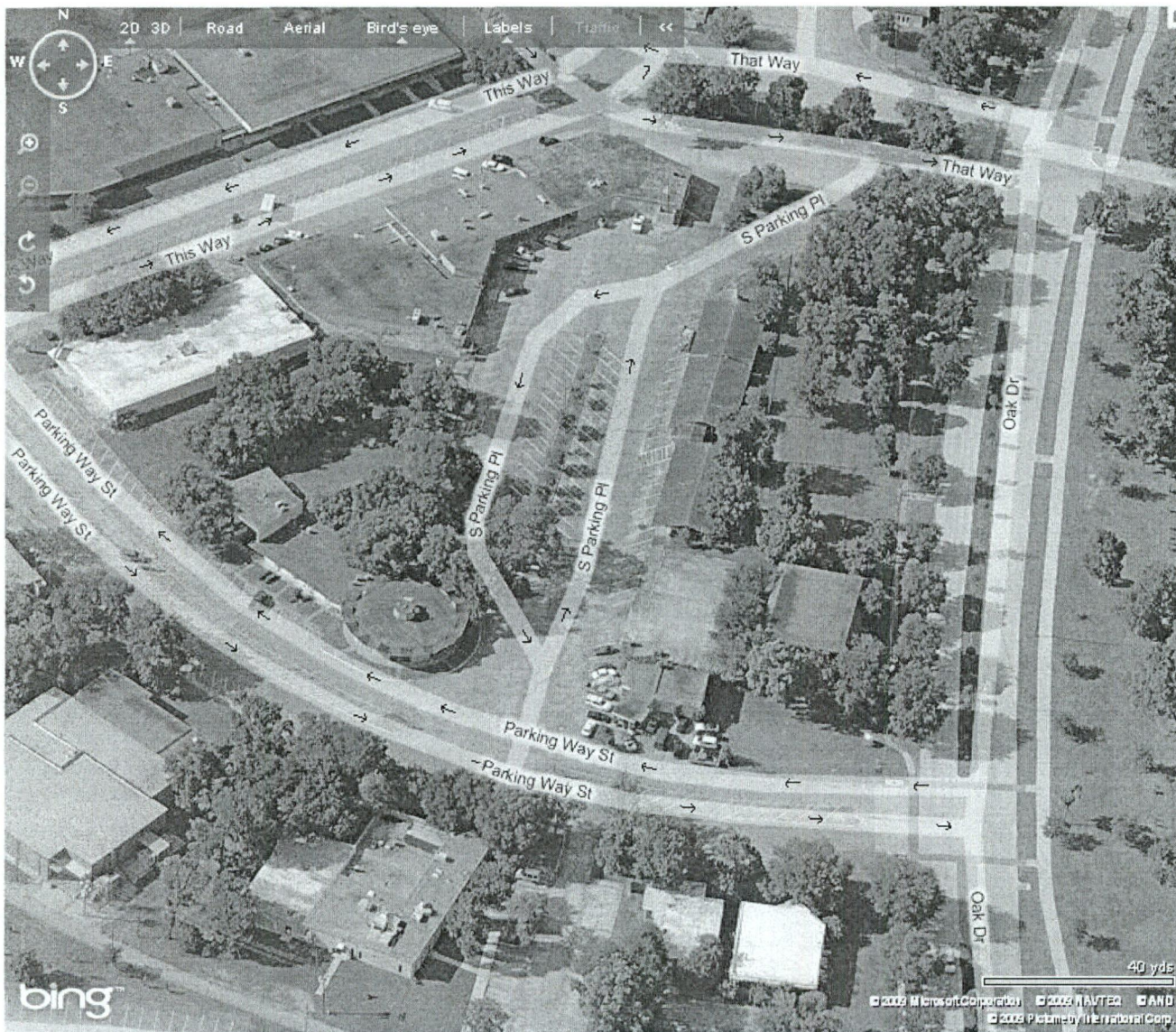
Map 2. Aerial Photo of Lake Jackson, February 9, 1945
Source: Lake Jackson Historical Museum

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Alden B. Dow Office and Lake Jackson City Hall
Lake Jackson, Brazoria, Texas

Section MAP Page 18



Map 3. Bird's eye view of the Alden B. Dow Office and Lake Jackson City Hall. The long building faces South Parking Place and backs onto a green sward or park adjacent to Oak Drive. The southern portion of the building that is closest to the filling station (with numerous parked vehicles) facing Parking Way has since been demolished, but the remaining, northern portion of the structure has been rehabilitated for the Lake Jackson Museum.

Source: Bing Maps, Microsoft Corp.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section FIGURE Page 19

Alden B. Dow Office and Lake Jackson City Hall
Lake Jackson, Brazoria, Texas

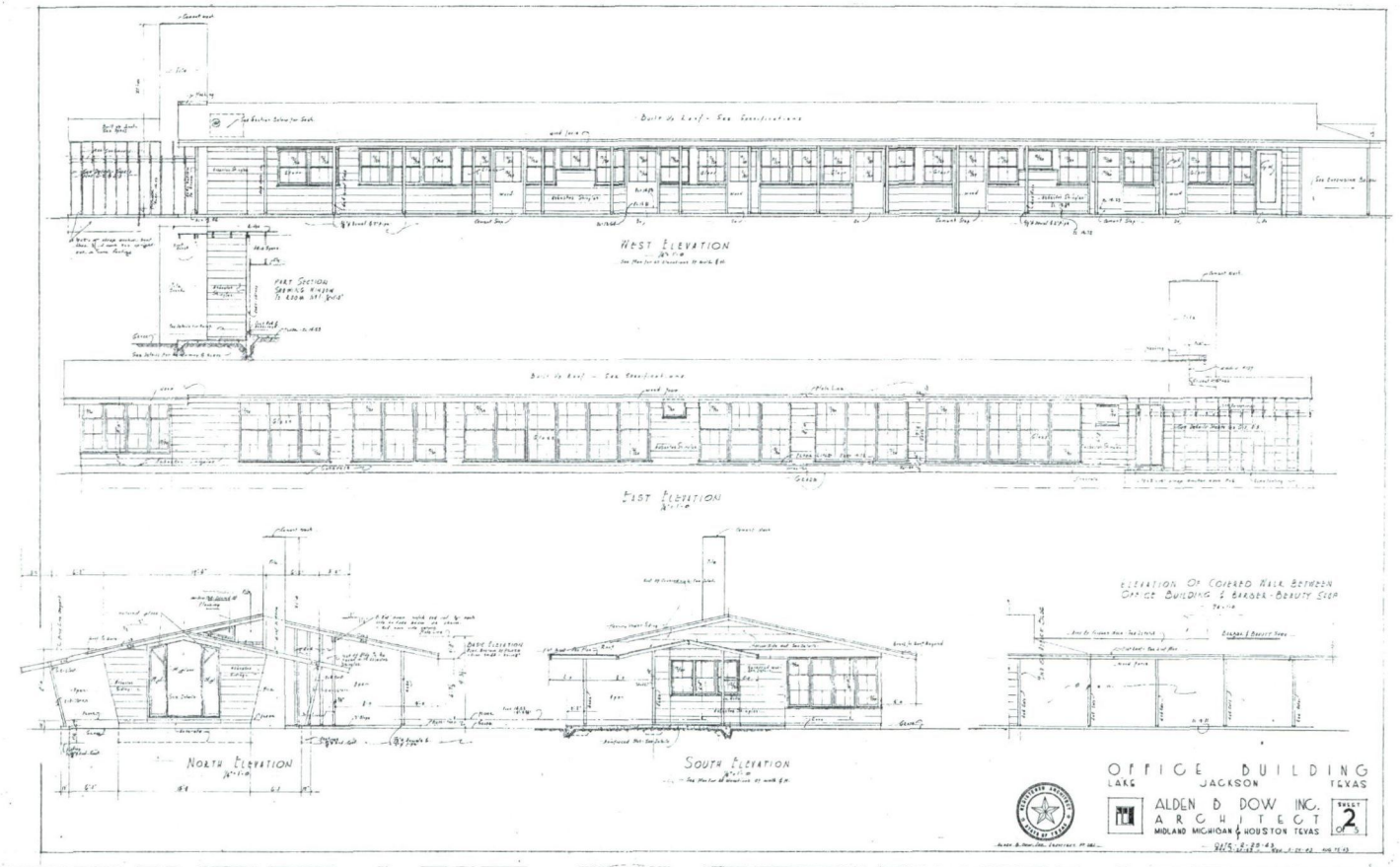


Figure 1. Original Floor Plan – Exterior
Source: Alden Dow Archives, Midland, MI

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section FIGURE Page 20

Alden B. Dow Office and Lake Jackson City Hall
Lake Jackson, Brazoria, Texas

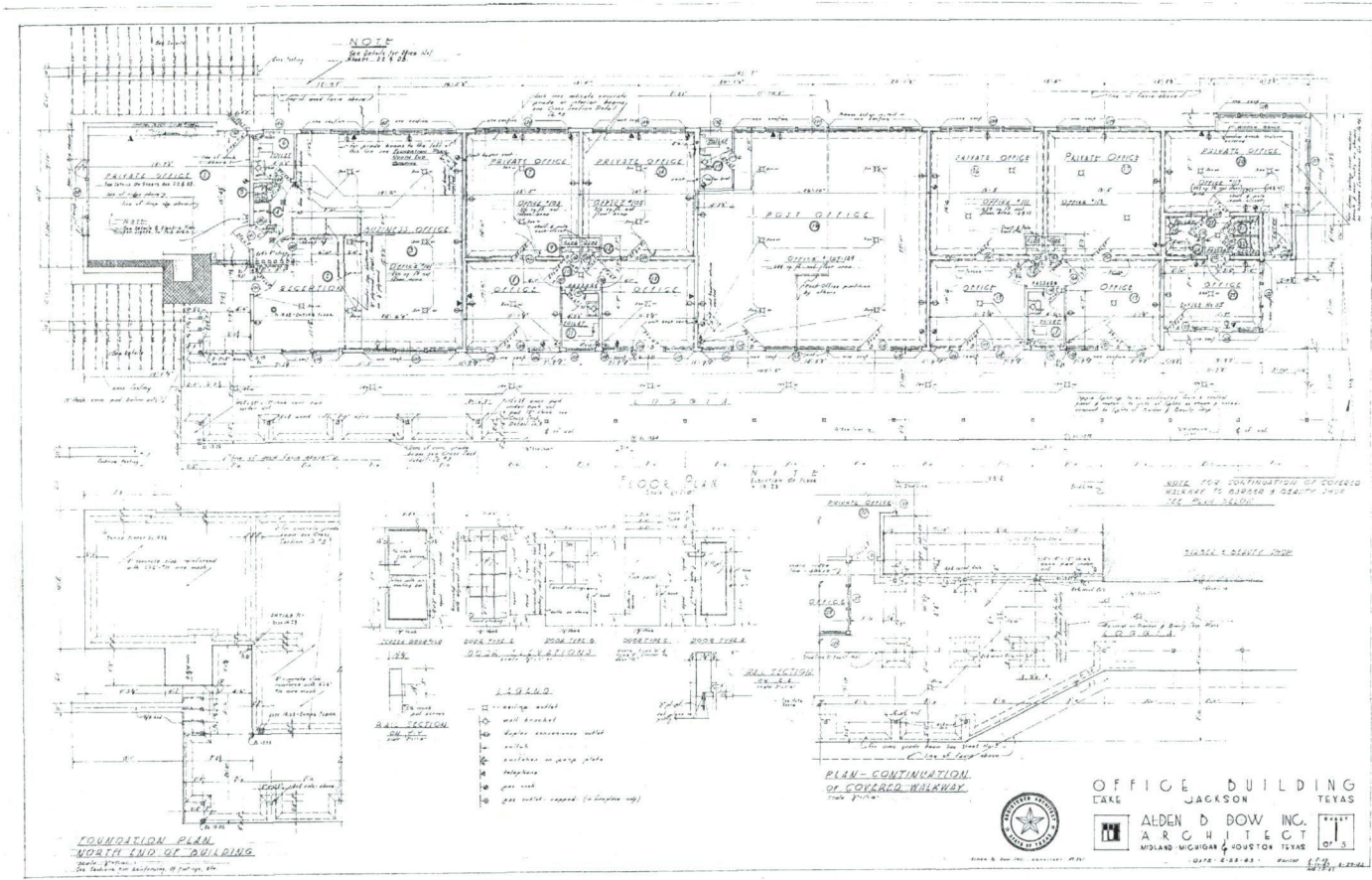


Figure 2. Original Floor Plan – Interior
Source: Alden Dow Archives: Midland, MI

Today the truncated building includes only the spaces to the left of the large central space labeled “Post Office.”
The post office and the commercial spaces to its right have been demolished.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Alden B. Dow Office and Lake Jackson City Hall
Lake Jackson, Brazoria, Texas

Section FIGURE Page 21

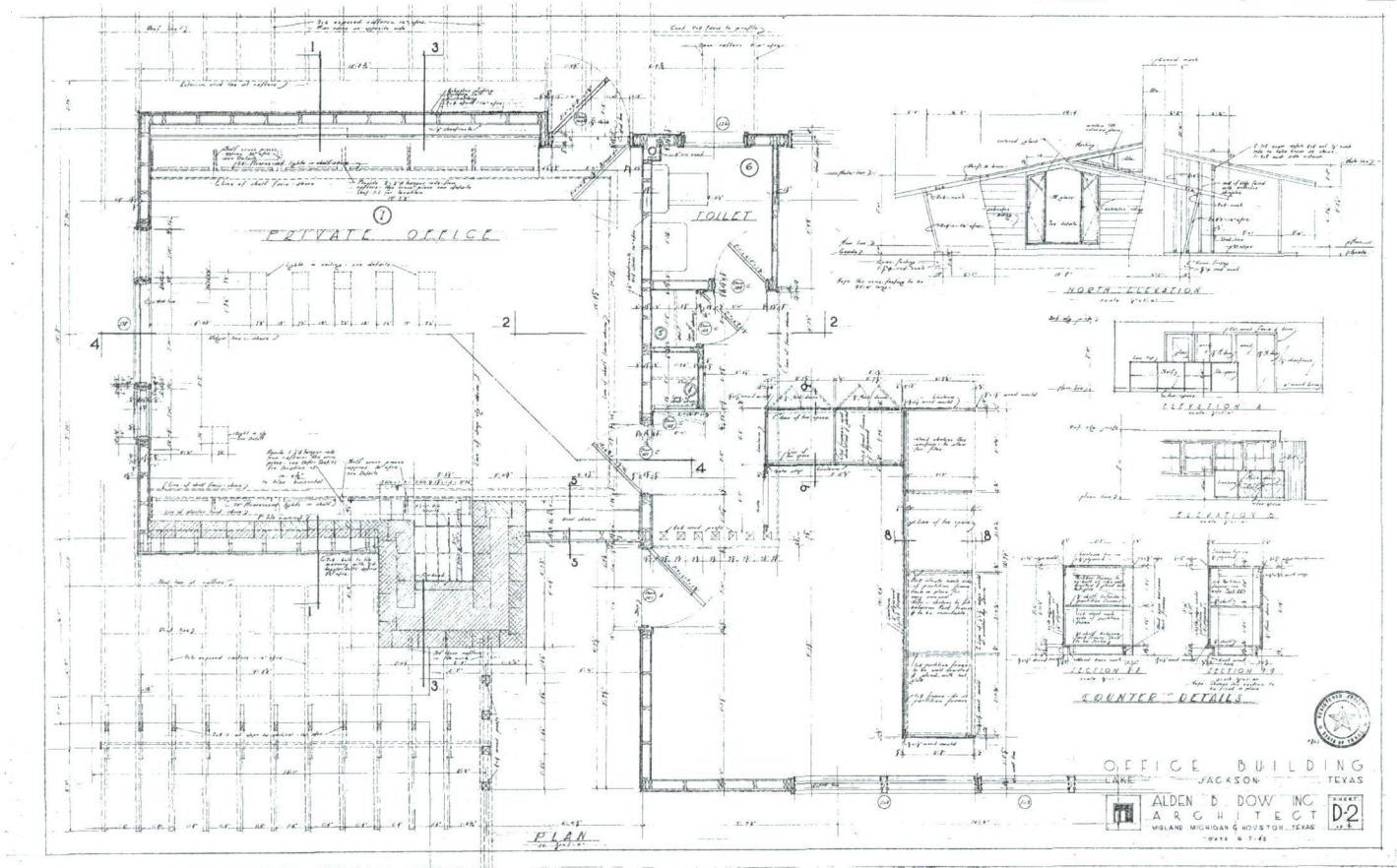


Figure 3. Original Floor Plan – Alden B. Dow Office
Source: Alden Dow Archives: Midland, MI

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Alden B. Dow Office and Lake Jackson City Hall
Lake Jackson, Brazoria, Texas

Section FIGURE Page 22

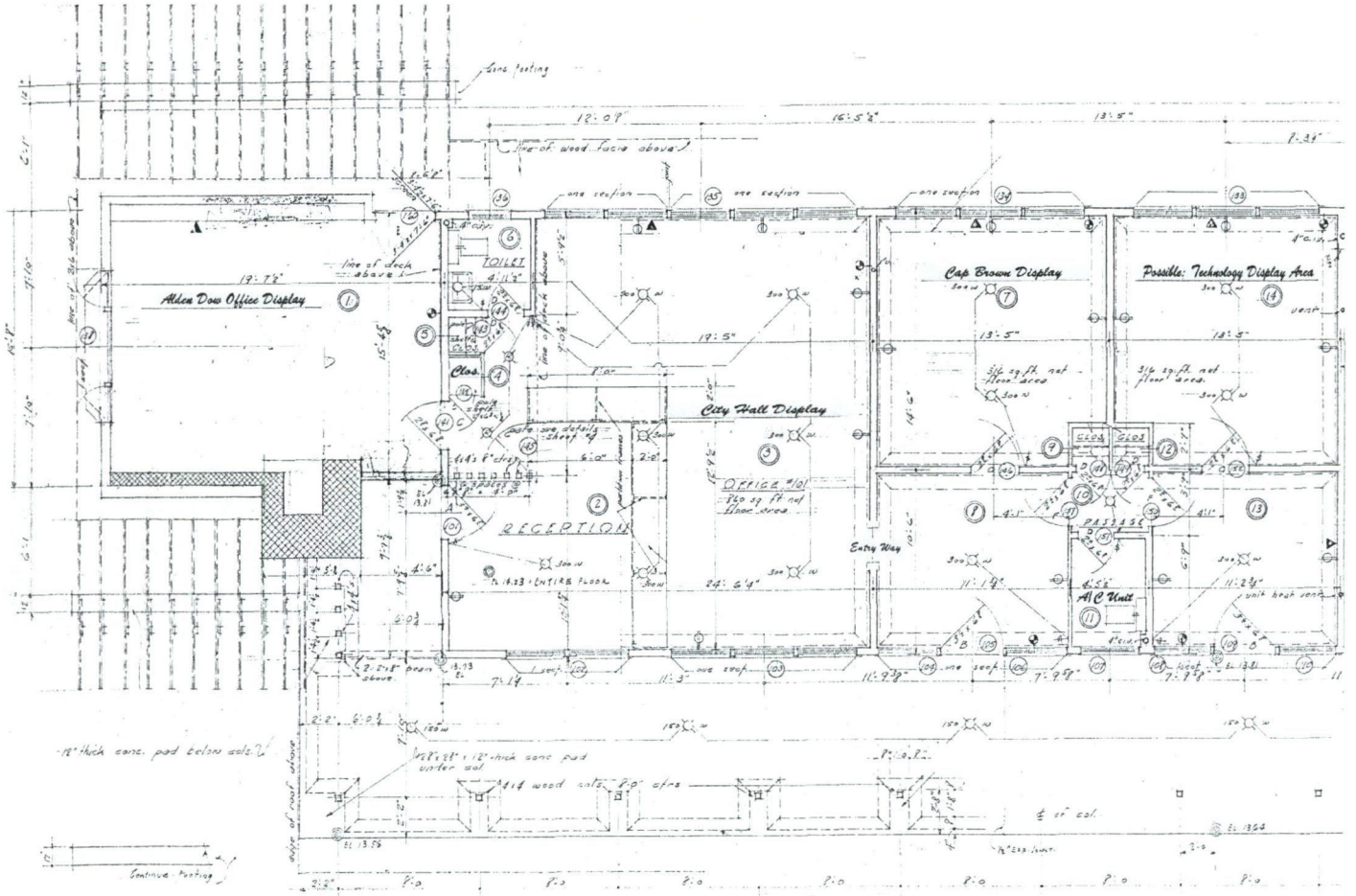


Figure 4. Current Floor Plan – Interior
Highlighted areas note changes
Created by Jennifer Caulkins
February 2008

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section PHOTO Page 23

Alden B. Dow Office and Lake Jackson City Hall
Lake Jackson, Brazoria, Texas



Photo 1. Alden B. Dow Office Building
Northwest Exterior, c. 1943
Source: Lake Jackson Historical Association

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section PHOTO Page 24

Alden B. Dow Office and Lake Jackson City Hall
Lake Jackson, Brazoria, Texas

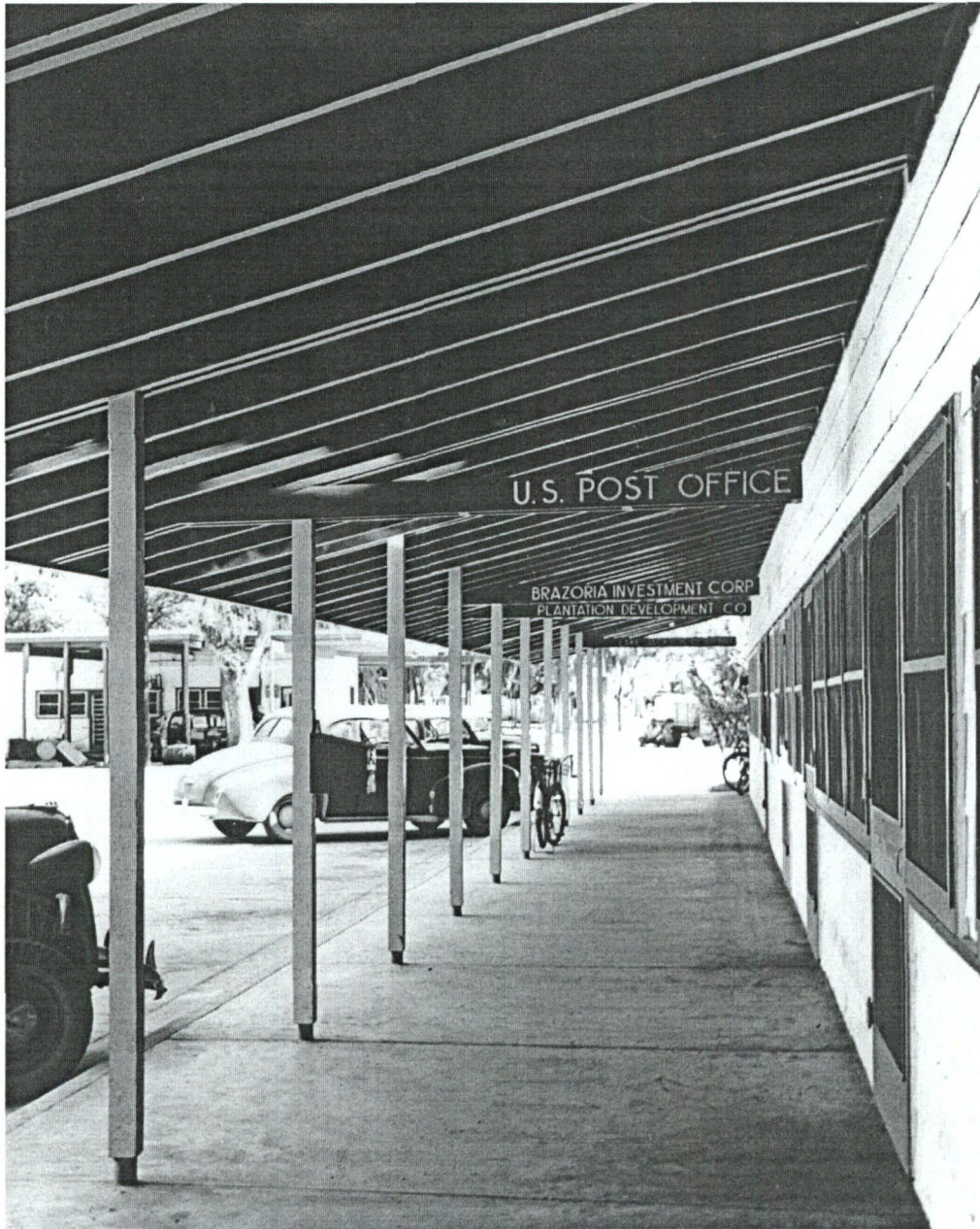


Photo 2. Alden B. Dow Office Building
Northwest Walkway, c. 1940s
Source: Lake Jackson Historical Association

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Alden B. Dow Office and Lake Jackson City Hall
Lake Jackson, Brazoria, Texas

Section PHOTO Page 25



Photo 3. Alden B. Dow Office Building
Northeast Exterior, c. 1943
Source: Lake Jackson Historical Association

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section PHOTO Page 26

Alden B. Dow Office and Lake Jackson City Hall
Lake Jackson, Brazoria, Texas



Photo 4. Alden B. Dow Office Building
Looking northeast from South Parking Place, c. 1945
Source: Lake Jackson Historical Association

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section PHOTO Page 27

Alden B. Dow Office and Lake Jackson City Hall
Lake Jackson, Brazoria, Texas



Photo 5. Alden B. Dow observing the construction of his office
North Exterior, c. 1943

Source: Lake Jackson Historical Association

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Alden B. Dow Office and Lake Jackson City Hall
Lake Jackson, Brazoria, Texas

Section PHOTO Page 28



Photo 6. Alden B. Dow at work in his office, c. 1943
Source: Lake Jackson Historical Association

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Alden B. Dow Office and Lake Jackson City Hall
Lake Jackson, Brazoria, Texas

Section PHOTO Page 29

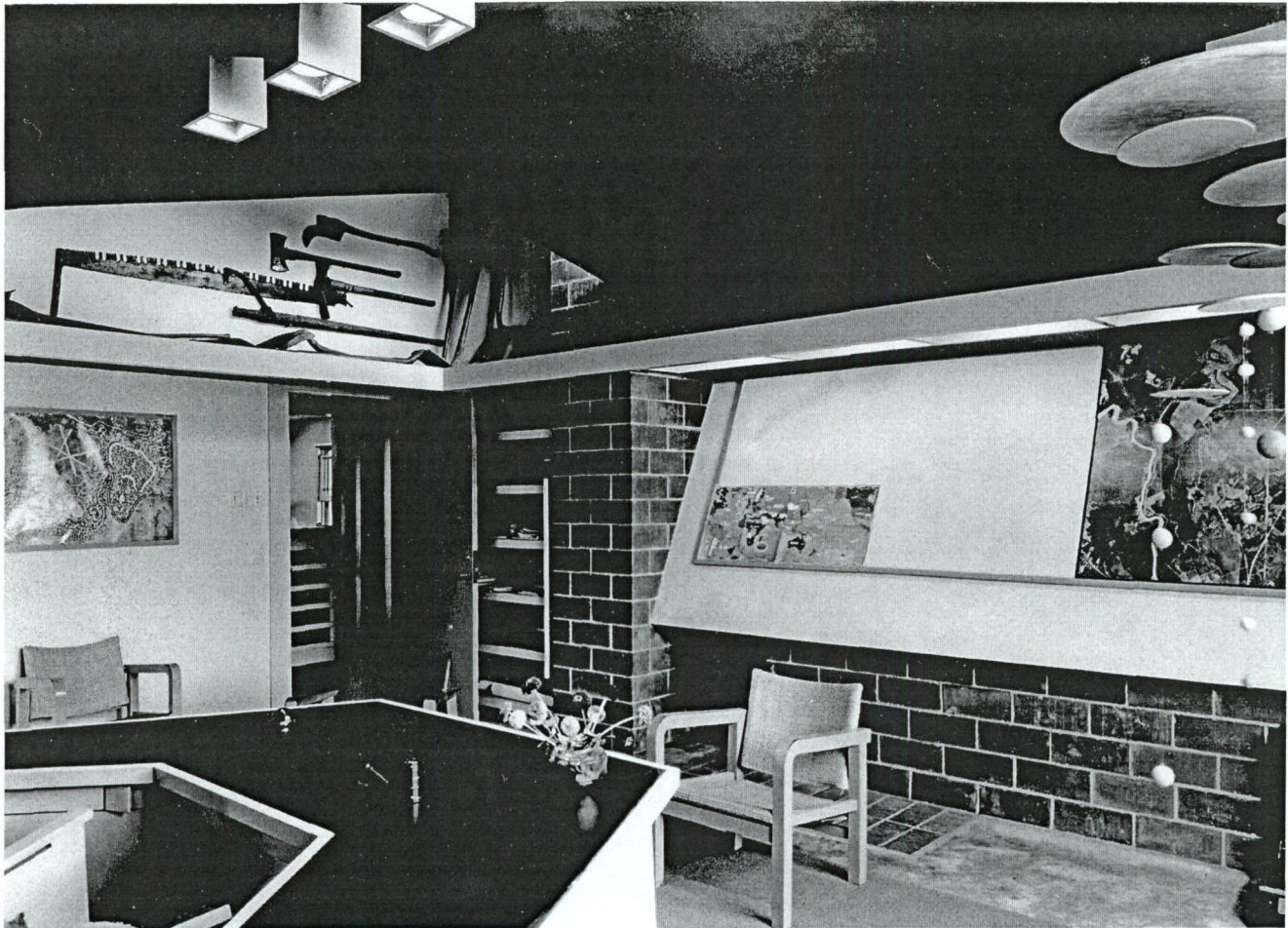


Photo 7. Alden Dow Office
Interior View, c. 1943

Source: Lake Jackson Historical Association

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Alden B. Dow Office and Lake Jackson City Hall
Lake Jackson, Brazoria, Texas

Section PHOTO Page 30



Photo 8. Alden Dow Office Building - Exterior
Lake Jackson, Brazoria County, Texas
Photographed by Jennifer Caulkins
February 2008

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section PHOTO Page 31

Alden B. Dow Office and Lake Jackson City Hall
Lake Jackson, Brazoria, Texas

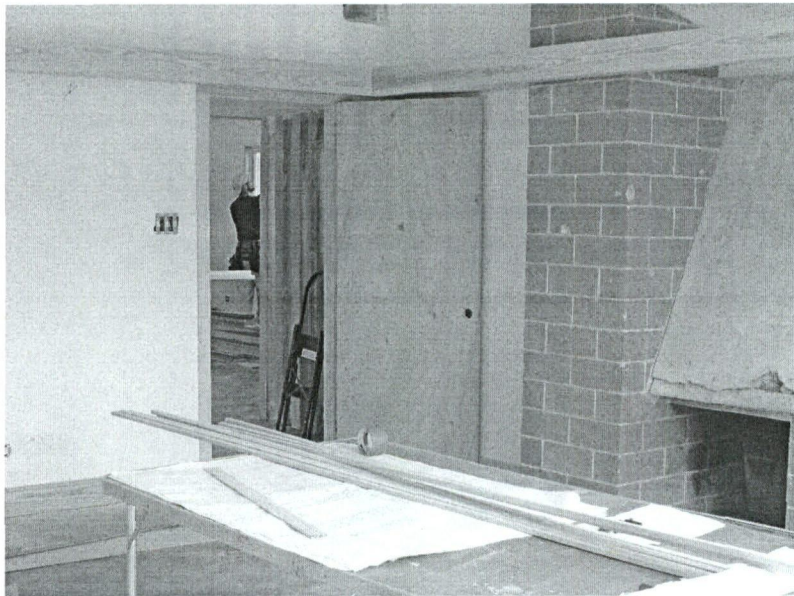


Photo 9. Alden Dow Office Building – Interior
Lake Jackson, Brazoria County, Texas
Photographed by Jennifer Caulkins
February 2008

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section PHOTO Page 32

Alden B. Dow Office and Lake Jackson City Hall
Lake Jackson, Brazoria, Texas

PHOTO LOG

All photographs are credited:

Alden B. Dow Office and Lake Jackson City Hall
Brazoria County, Texas
December 2009
Bryce Carlton, photographer
Digital image files with the Texas Historical Commission, Austin, Texas

1. West elevation
Camera facing east
AldenBDowOffice,_BrazoriaCounty,_TX_0001.tif
2. Northwest oblique
Camera facing southeast
AldenBDowOffice,_BrazoriaCounty,_TX_0002.tif
3. North elevation
Camera facing south
AldenBDowOffice,_BrazoriaCounty,_TX_0003.tif
4. East elevation
Camera facing west
AldenBDowOffice,_BrazoriaCounty,_TX_0004.tif
5. Southeast oblique
Camera facing northwest
AldenBDowOffice,_BrazoriaCounty,_TX_0005.tif
6. South elevation
Camera facing north
AldenBDowOffice,_BrazoriaCounty,_TX_0006.tif
7. Southwest oblique
Camera facing northeast
AldenBDowOffice,_BrazoriaCounty,_TX_0007.tif
8. Interior, Alden B. Dow Office
Camera facing southwest
AldenBDowOffice,_BrazoriaCounty,_TX_0008.tif

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY NAME: Dow, Alden B., Office and Lake Jackson City Hall

MULTIPLE NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: TEXAS, Brazoria

DATE RECEIVED: 1/15/10 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 2/03/10
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 2/18/10 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 3/01/10
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 10000050

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N
REQUEST: Y SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: Y NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

___ACCEPT ___RETURN ___REJECT _____DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

See attached comments

RECOM./CRITERIA Accept A+B

REVIEWER L McClelland DISCIPLINE _____

TELEPHONE _____ DATE 3-1-10

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments (Y/N see attached SLR Y/N)

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.

Alden B. Dow Office and Lake Jackson City Hall

Brazoria County, Texas

Recommendation: Accept Criteria A & B

This property is significantly associated under NR Criterion A with the planning and earliest development of the planned community of Lake Jackson, which was constructed by the Dow Chemical Company of Midland, Michigan, in connection with its development of a thriving magnesium industry in southeastern Texas at the beginning of World War II. It is also importantly associated under Criterion B with the career of modernist, master architect Alden B. Dow, who maintained an office here in the 1940s from which he supervised and fostered the town's planning and development. During this time Dow spent considerable time on site as he planned the layout of the community based on garden-city principles, designed its first buildings, and helped orchestrate an ambitious program of home-building and ownership following FHA standards and utilizing innovative methods of prefabrication. Begun as a company town, Lake Jackson attracted the growing number of employees who were working at the new magnesium facilities in nearby Freeport and Velasco.

An early student of Frank Lloyd Wright's, Dow was also the son of the Michigan company's founder Herbert Henry Dow. The Lake Jackson project, as well as an extensive collection of prefabricated housing that Dow designed earlier to provide temporary housing close to the magnesium plants, are among the architect's earliest independent work. Construction of the town center on the land of a former sugar plantation began in 1942 and continued at a rapid pace, with home construction and sales facilitated by the FHA- insured operative builder credits and homeowner loans. By 1950 the town, complete with schools, shopping centers, and an airfield, dropped its affiliation with Dow Chemical, obtained an independent town charter, and elected a mayor and city council.

The existing building is a portion of what was conceived as a large, one-story, linear complex of units with separate entrances off a covered walkway/loggia that ran alongside a parking lot. Dow's office anchored the north end and took the form of a corner unit marked by dramatically angular walls, glass panels, and a hearth wall (that provided an exterior vertical accent to the building's horizontality). The remaining units provided space for a number of town functions, the U.S. Post Office, and stores and shops. Unfortunately the original lot associated with the complex has been subdivided and the centrally located post office and the separate pavilion at the southern end (originally connected by a breezeway) were recently demolished by the adjoining owner. The property being nominated has been meticulously restored, and the nomination makes a strong case for the significance and integrity of the property (consisting of the units that housed Dow's office and the city hall) on the basis that it not only retains its modernistic, character-defining features (reflective of Dow's early work) but also represents the building at Lake Jackson most closely associated with the town's founding and the architect's seminal role in its creation.

--Linda McClelland, NR Historian, March 2010



ALDEN B DOW OFFICE AND LAKE JACKSON CITY HALL
BRAZORIA COUNTY, TX

PHOTO 1 OF 8



ALDEN B DOW OFFICE AND LAKE JACKSON CITY HALL
BRAZORIA COUNTY, TX

PHOTO 2 OF 8



ALDEN B DOW OFFICE AND LAKE JACKSON CITY HALL
BRAZORIA COUNTY, TX

PHOTO 3 OF 8



ALDEN B DOW OFFICE AND LAKE JACKSON CITY HALL
BRAZORIA COUNTY, TX
PHOTO 4 OF 8



ALDEN B DOW OFFICE AND LAKE JACKSON CITY HALL
BRAZORIA COUNTY, TX
PHOTO 5 OF 8



ALDEN B DOW OFFICE AND LAKE JACKSON CITY HALL
BRAZORIA COUNTY, TX

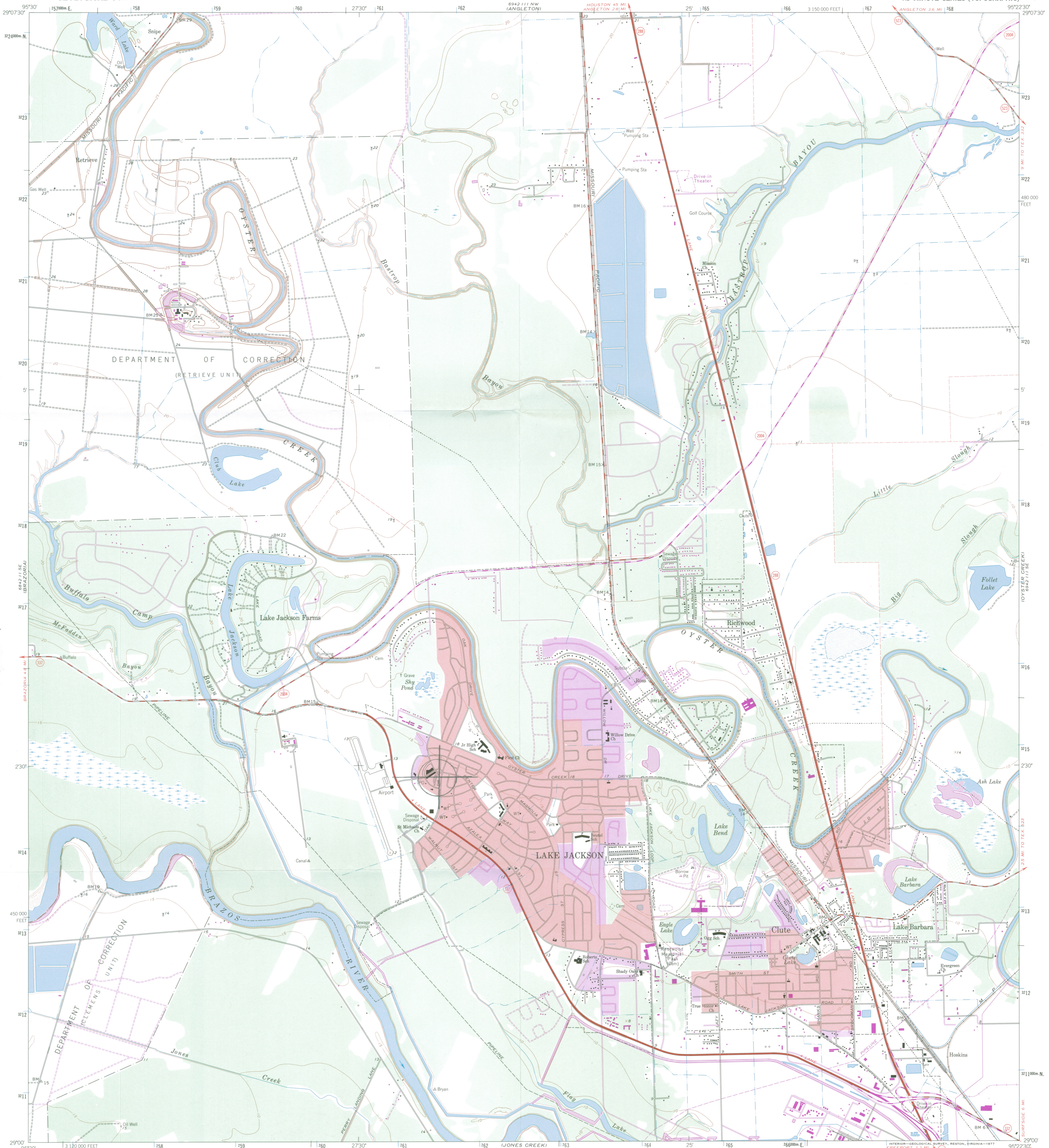
PHOTO 6 OF 8



ALDEN B DOW OFFICE AND LAKE JACKSON CITY HALL
BRAZORIA COUNTY, TX
PHOTO 7 OF 8

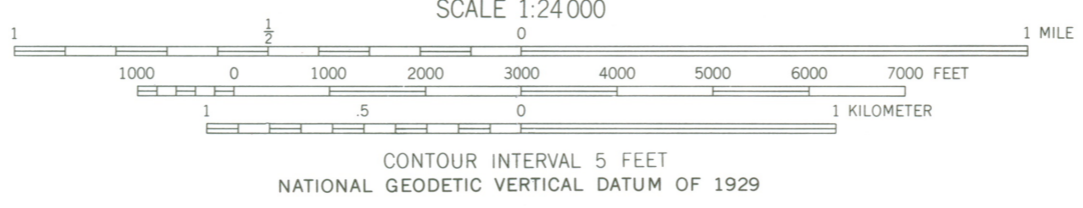
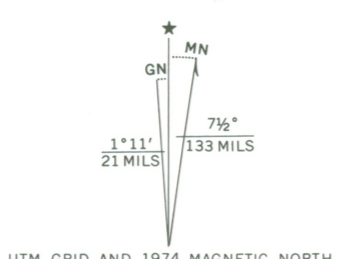


ALDEN B DOW OFFICE AND LAKE JACKSON CITY HALL
BRAZORIA COUNTY, TX
PHOTO 8 OF 8



ALDEN B DOW OFFICE AND LAKE JACKSON CITY HALL
101 S. PARKING PLACE, LAKE JACKSON, BRAZORIA COUNTY, TX
UTM 15 261521E 3214861N

Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey
Control by USGS, NOS/NOAA, USCE, and Tennessee Valley Authority
Planimetry by photogrammetric methods from aerial photographs
taken 1962. Topography from 1:24,000-scale AMS map of Snipe
quadrangle. Original map by photogrammetric methods and
planetable surveys 1943. Revised 1963
Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum.
10,000-foot grid based on Texas coordinate system, south central zone
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks,
zone 15, shown in blue
Red tint indicates areas in which only landmark buildings are shown
Fine red dashed lines indicate selected fence lines
Revisions shown in purple compiled from aerial photographs
taken 1974. This information not field checked



THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
FOR SALE BY U. S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, DENVER, COLORADO 80225, OR RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST



ROAD CLASSIFICATION

Heavy-duty	Light-duty
Medium-duty	Unimproved dirt
State Route	

LAKE JACKSON, TEX.
N2900-W9522.5/7.5
1963
PHOTOREVISED 1974
AMS 6942 111 SW-SERIES 982



TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION
real places telling real stories

MEMORANDUM



TO: Linda McClelland
National Register of Historic Places

FROM: Rachel Leibowitz, Historian
Texas Historical Commission

RE: Alden B. Dow Office and Lake Jackson City Hall Building
101 South Parking Place
Lake Jackson, Brazoria County, Texas

DATE: January 4, 2010

The following materials are submitted regarding [address]:

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Original National Register of Historic Places form
<input type="checkbox"/>	__ Resubmitted nomination
<input type="checkbox"/>	Multiple Property nomination form
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Photographs
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	USGS maps
<input type="checkbox"/>	Correspondence
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Other: Archival CD with digital image files

COMMENTS:

- SHPO requests substantive review
- The enclosed owner objections (do) (do not) constitute a majority of property owners
- Other:

