



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

1849 C Street, N.W.

Washington, D.C. 20240

July 26, 2010

Notice to file:

This property has been automatically listed in the National Register of Historic Places. This is due to the fact that the publication of our Federal Register Notice: "National Register of Historic Places: Pending Nominations and Other Actions" was delayed beyond our control to the point where the mandated 15 day public comment period ended after our required 45 day time frame to act on the nomination. If the 45th day falls on a weekend or Federal holiday, the property will be automatically listed the next business day. The nomination is technically adequate and meets the National Register criteria for evaluation, and thus, automatically listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

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(Expires 5/31/2012)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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National Register of Historic Places
REGISTRATION FORM

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

HISTORIC NAME: Vandergriff Building
OTHER NAME/SITE NUMBER: Vandergriff Chevrolet Building; Thannisch Chevrolet Building

2. LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER: 100 East Division Street
CITY OR TOWN: Arlington VICINITY: N/A NOT FOR PUBLICATION: N/A
STATE: Texas CODE: TX COUNTY: Tarrant CODE: 439 ZIP CODE: 76011

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 6/7/10
 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:

- 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 See continuation sheet.
- other, explain See continuation sheet.

Robert Beall Signature of the Keeper Date of Action 7-26-10

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: COMMERCE / Specialty store = auto dealership

CURRENT FUNCTIONS: COMMERCE / Business = office building;

7. DESCRIPTION

ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION: LATE 19th- and EARLY 20th-CENTURY AMERICAN MOVEMENTS:
Commercial Style

MATERIALS:	FOUNDATION	CONCRETE
	WALLS	BRICK
	ROOF	ASPHALT
	OTHER	

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION (see continuation sheets 7-5 through 7-9)

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Vandergriff Building
Arlington, Tarrant County, Texas

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

The Vandergriff Building, a two-part commercial block designed and constructed in 1928 as an automobile dealership, remains a distinctive landmark in downtown Arlington, Texas, and is the oldest surviving commercial building within the city limits. The 16,900 square foot, 2-story building features a classical-inspired symmetrical exterior of buff-colored brick with restrained cast stone ornamentation and large display windows at the ground floor level on the north and west façades. On the east façade large steel windows, original to the building, have been restored. A recent rehabilitation transformed the interior showroom space into office spaces for a variety of tenants, but the building retains a high degree of physical integrity and remains in commercial use. For its association with the automobile industry and economic growth in Arlington during the first half of the twentieth century, the Vandergriff Building is nominated to the National Register of Historic Places at the local level of significance under Criterion A in the area of Commerce/Trade.

Site

The Vandergriff Building, designed by Fort Worth-based architect Harve D. Withers and constructed in 1928, is the oldest surviving commercial structure within the city limits of Arlington, Texas. Located in the city's Central Business District at the southeast corner of the intersection of Division Street (US Highway 80) and Center Street, the Vandergriff Building is less than one half-mile from the current Arlington City Hall, the Arlington Public Library, and the Arlington Museum of Art.

Along Division Street the building spans 140 feet in length, while it is 70 feet long on the Center Street side; in total volume the Vandergriff Building contains 16,900 square feet of space, with approximately 9,900 square feet on the first floor, and nearly 7,000 square feet on the second floor. The building is set back from the streets by only the width of the sidewalks. The east side of the building now faces an adjacent brick-paved parking lot for tenants and visitors, but this space initially was used for the parking and movement of automobiles sold and serviced by the dealer. The south side of the Vandergriff Building faces an asphalt-paved parking lot. On all sides of the building, small planting beds contain newly planted shrubs and ornamental grasses that require little water.

Building Type: Two-Part Commercial Block

The Vandergriff Building is best classified as a two-part commercial block structure. The western two-thirds of the building is a 2-story volume that originally housed automobile showroom space and sales offices on the first floor, while the eastern third of the building is only 1-story and contained the automobile maintenance or service department.

The two-part commercial block type, common throughout the United States from the 1850s through the 1950s, is defined as a commercial building of two to four stories with a strong horizontal division of two distinct zones.¹ As

¹ Richard Longstreth, *The Buildings of Main Street: A Guide to American Commercial Architecture* (Washington, D.C.: The Preservation Press, 1987), 24.

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is the case at the two-story Vandergriff Building, the lower zone at street level is devoted to public spaces such as retail, while the upper zone is private, typically occupied by residences or small offices, as it is here. These two zones are legible from the street in the articulation of the façade, which is composed largely of buff-colored brick and glass.

Structure

The Vandergriff Building is a simple rectangle—the eastern one-third of which is a 1-story volume, and the western two-thirds of which is a 2-story volume—and the entire building is constructed on a basement with concrete footings. Exterior walls are load-bearing masonry, with a face brick on the north and west elevations and a larger-sized common brick on the south and east elevations. The interior structure is a combination of steel columns and wood framing. The building is flat-roofed and was originally tar and gravel; it is now asphalt as a result of the recent rehabilitation.

At the foundation level of the 2-story portion of the building, five columns support the upper floors, in addition to the steel-reinforced concrete foundation walls and footings. These columns continue to the first floor, but only the two northern columns and the center column on the south continue to the second floor. There are no interior columns on the eastern or 1-story portion of the building.

The foundation or basement level featured a concrete ramp near the southeast corner for the movement of automobiles from the single-story service area to the paint booths and vehicle make-ready departments on the upper floors of the building; the ramp was partially constructed of wood on the upper floor, and the entire ramp structure has been removed during the recent rehabilitation project. In place of the ramp, a stairway and an elevator shaft have been installed.

Exterior

The Vandergriff Building façade is constructed primarily of a rough-textured, buff-colored face brick laid in a running bond on its north and west elevations, while the east and south elevations are of darker buff common brick. As a two-part commercial block building, the second major construction material here is glass, which is featured prominently in the wood-frame, fixed-sash showroom windows along the ground floor on the north and west elevations, and in the operable wood-frame, single-hung windows of the second floor.

Built during the late 1920s, stylistically the Vandergriff Building may best be described as “commercial style,” with a vaguely classical appearance inspired by the *École des Beaux Arts* in Paris. Beaux Arts-inspired commercial buildings constructed in the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries generally appear to lack the excessive exuberance of many Victorian-era romantic revival styles and instead “emphasize unity, order, and balance.”² The Vandergriff Building’s major façades are, indeed, divided into balanced bays.

² Longstreth, 39.

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West Elevation

The Center Street (west) elevation is organized symmetrically into three bays; the central bay is smaller than the others but is accentuated by differences in its ornamentation. Each bay features a grouping of display windows and entrance doors with 3- or 4-light transoms at the ground level, and a set of three single-hung windows at the second floor. The upper story windows in each of the three bays are 6-over-6 on the ends, with a larger 8-over-8 window in the center.

The spacing between the windows of the smaller central bay is compressed on the second floor, but accentuated by stacks of raised brick that appear as broken pilasters. A cast stone frame encloses these three upper windows in the central bay, and a cast stone band or belt course that runs across the length of the façade projects slightly under this bay and features four small cast stone brackets underneath the four broken pilasters. Between the tops of the windows in this central bay and the bottom of the cast stone frame around them are twelve consecutive header courses of brick. Raised patterns of brick laid as headers, 3-by-3 or 2-by-3, sit above the cast stone frame in the central bay. The parapet wall steps up at the central bay as well, with a tripartite cast stone ornament at its very center.

The other two bays each feature a decorative cast stone cornice that appears as a label molding, bracketed with cast stone medallions supported by cast stone volutes as label stops. Directly underneath this cast stone cornice, alternating bricks laid in a header course appear as dentils.

Features that appear across the length of the façade include a cast stone cap at the parapet wall, a cast stone belt course underneath the second-story windows, and a band of alternating raised bricks laid in a soldier course that appear as dentils just above the transoms of the ground-floor showroom windows and entrance doors. These linear features emphasize the horizontality of the building and wrap around to the north façade, where they continue along Division Street. A cast stone base at the building foundation, upon which the display windows rest, also continues to the north elevation.

Separating the three bays of the ground floor are pilasters or quoins of raised brick. The bay on the right (south) features a single-light display window at the right, and on the left are three wood doors, with a single panel in the lower half of each, and an 8-light window in the upper half of each. Transom windows span the entire opening of this bay, with those on the ends being 3-light transoms, and the four central transoms each having 4 lights. The bay on the left (north) features two single-light display windows, with five 3-light transom windows spanning above them.

The central bay at the ground floor features a 2-light display window and, to its left, an entrance door of wood with a 20-light window, with the top four lights in an arch formation. Spanning the door and showroom windows of this central bay are five 3-light transoms.

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North Elevation

The Division Street (north) façade is comprised of a two-story volume to the west, and a one-story volume to the east. The two-story portion is organized symmetrically into five bays and features many architectural details that are identical to those on the west elevation, including the belt course, cornice, and parapet cap of cast stone that wraps around from the west façade; brick detailing is also the same. As on the Center Street elevation, the parapet steps up above the central bay and is similarly ornamented; a cast stone frame also surrounds the three upper-story windows of the central bay. Each of the five bays features a group of three operable, single-hung 6-over-6 wood windows on the second floor.

On the ground floor of the two-story portion, only the central bay features an entrance door, which is identical to the 20-light door on the west elevation. A single-light display window flanks either side of the door, resting directly upon the cast stone foundation. A 4-light transom rests atop each of these display windows, while a 3-light transom sits above the door. The two bays on right (west) side, and the bay immediately to the left (east) side, of this central bay are identical: large 2-light showroom windows rest upon the foundation, with two 3-light transoms over each individual showroom window. The bay to the far left of center features two smaller display windows with a 20-light wood door to their right.

The single-story volume to the east is three bays, with a stepped parapet with a cast stone cap similar to that of the 2-story volume. This single-story volume contained the service department for the automobile dealer, and as such it features a large opening in its center through which automobiles could be driven. This opening now features two pair of wooden doors that appear like the one on the west façade, where there is a single recessed panel in the lower half, and the upper half of each door features an 8-light window. Above these doors are four 3-light transoms. A cast stone medallion appears as an ornament just below the parapet above the central bay. Flanking this large entrance are two large openings with groups of steel windows; to the left are three 20-light windows, and to the right are three 15-light windows.

East Elevation

The east elevation faces toward a new parking lot for tenant use. This façade is utilitarian and with little ornament, faced in common brick. It is divided into three bays, each with two openings. The openings of the right (north) and central bay are filled with steel windows similar to those on the north side of this 1-story volume, but they are 30-light windows. The bay on the left (south) features a similar steel window on the left side, but the opening on the right side is another service entrance of three wood two-panel doors. The upper-floor steel windows of the two-story volume are barely visible from the ground, and there is no architectural ornamentation to be seen.

South Elevation

The south elevation is also utilitarian and without ornament, and it also faces a parking lot for tenant use. The single-story volume features three 30-light windows. The two-story volume to the west features a new entrance door to the commercial space at ground level, with a new steel canopy. Four 20-light steel windows appear at the second floor level, with a door between the two windows toward the west; descending from this door to grade is a new exterior stair of steel.

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Interior

Edward Nelson of Dallas-based ERN Architects, Inc., designed the building rehabilitation project. Although the rehabilitation of the Vandergriff Building required the removal of some historic fabric in order to successfully convert the automobile-oriented structure into leasable office space, the building maintains a high degree of physical integrity.

First Floor

On the first floor, the original 6-by-6-inch red quarry tile floor remains intact in what had been the automobile showroom, while the original floor of poured concrete remains in the former sales offices and the service or shop area. The only new flooring material, a 16-by-16-inch slate tile, has been installed in offset rows from the new lobby space to the south building entrance.

In the former showroom area, the original wood columns remain in place and are intentionally exposed and unaltered. Original wood partition walls, with large glass panels that look out toward the showroom floor, remain in place at the south end of this area. These functioned as offices for automobile salesmen, and only minor restoration work was needed to repair areas of rotted wood trim.

The first floor now contains a conference room to the west of the central lobby space. Inside this conference room is the building's original concrete-enclosed vault, which still displays the original Diebold steel door and framing. The door is 43 inches wide, and the vault measures 11 feet in depth, 6 feet in width, and 8 feet in height.

With the exception of the new lobby area, which has a new drywall ceiling, the first floor has a "tin" ceiling consisting of 18-by-18-inch square tiles with a rolled cornice at the perimeter of sectioned areas. Approximately thirty percent of the original pressed metal ceiling tiles were restored and reinstalled, while seventy percent were replaced with new tiles in a pattern replicating the original.

Second Floor

On the second floor, water damage from years of neglect to the building resulted in complete deterioration of approximately sixty percent of the original wood flooring, necessitating its replacement. The remaining forty percent of the original wood flooring was restored, stained, and reinstalled. Both the original and new wood floors were installed throughout the entire second floor in the same pattern: diagonal rows of 2-¹/₈-inch-wide oak boards placed at a 45-degree angle to the exterior walls.

The ceiling on this floor remains unaltered and displays the original exposed joists and wood roof decking. New drywall partition walls were installed to create private office spaces; they are considered removable features and meet the National Park Service standards.

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: COMMERCE / TRADE

PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANCE: 1928-1960

SIGNIFICANT DATES: 1928, 1938

SIGNIFICANT PERSON: N/A

CULTURAL AFFILIATION: N/A

ARCHITECT / BUILDER: Architect: Withers, Harve D.
Builder: Churchill-Humphreys Company

NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE (see continuation sheets 8-10 through 8-16)

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES

BIBLIOGRAPHY (see continuation sheets 9-17)

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, Austin
- Other state agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University University of Texas at Arlington Library, Special Collections
- Other -- Specify Repository:

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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Vandergriff Building is the oldest standing commercial structure in the original town site of Arlington, Tarrant County, Texas. The building, a two-part commercial block type, was designed in 1928 by Fort Worth-based architect Harve Withers for J.C. Thannisch, a local automobile dealer. While Thannisch was an early pioneer in automobile sales in Arlington, the industry greatly expanded in the city due to the involvement of W.T. "Hooker" Vandergriff, who purchased this building in 1938 for his own Chevrolet dealership; Vandergriff and his son Tom, the city's mayor at the time, brought a General Motors assembly plant to town in 1952. Today the Vandergriff family owns three automobile dealerships in the area, and the General Motors plant remains in operation; this building stands as the earliest physical remnant of the American automobile industry's impact on the city of Arlington. The Vandergriff Building is therefore nominated to the National Register under Criterion A in the area of Commerce/Trade at the local level of significance as a property strongly associated with the growth of the automotive industry and greater commercial development of Arlington; its period of significance begins in 1928 and continues to 1960, the current fifty-year minimum, as the Vandergriff family's Chevrolet business continued to operate from this building until 1966, when it relocated a few miles to the east of this site.

A Brief History of Arlington, Tarrant County, Texas³

Arlington, located halfway between the twin cities of Dallas and Fort Worth in eastern Tarrant County, Texas, was founded in 1876 on the Texas and Pacific Railway Company line as a market town for the surrounding farms. Beginning in the 1840s, the area had attracted farmers because of the fertile blackland soil in the eastern part of the region and the sandy loam, good for growing fruits and vegetables, in the western part; the area also had plentiful water from the Trinity River and its tributaries. Early Euro-American settlements included Bird's Fort, Watson, and Johnson Station, founded by Middleton Tate Johnson.

The area already was home to Caddo, Cherokee, and Tonkawa people, however, making it difficult for white settlers to come in and grab land as they pleased; the Village Creek area, near the site of present Lake Arlington, was one of the region's largest gathering places for these three indigenous tribes. In order to open the area for white settlement, Edward H. Tarrant led a group of sixty-nine volunteers in a violent attack on the Village Creek encampment on May 24, 1841—with only one volunteer casualty, at least twelve Native Americans were killed, dozens more were injured, and the remaining hundreds fled the site. According to the terms of the 1843 treaty negotiated between the Republic of Texas and representatives of the tribes, a trading post was set up at Marrow Bone Spring (in present-day Arlington), near Johnson Station. By 1876, a few more commercial enterprises had been set up in Johnson Station.

Later that year, when the Texas and Pacific Railway Company planned to lay tracks through Tarrant County, a more direct route between Fort Worth and Dallas was chosen to the north of Johnson Station. A Presbyterian

³ This section on Arlington history is closely derived from Gayla Weems Shannon, "Arlington, Texas," in *Handbook of Texas Online*, accessed February 25, 2010 at: <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/AA/hja13.html>; also see Donald S. Frazier, "Village Creek, Battle of," in *Handbook of Texas Online*, accessed February 25, 2010 at: <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/VV/btv1.html>.

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minister, Andrew S. Hayter, was asked by the railway company to survey the area that became Arlington and the land on either side of the tracks, and he is credited with laying out the first town plat. Trading posts, stores, and many of the settlers then made the move north from Johnson Station to the new location. Johnson Station had a post office from 1851 to 1905, and when citizens of the new settlement applied for a post office under the name "Johnson," the request was rejected down because of the new townsite's proximity to Johnson Station. The post office was established under the name "Hayter," after the minister and town surveyor, in 1875; in 1877 the community was renamed Arlington, after the Virginia hometown of the Confederate General Robert E. Lee.

At one time Arlington had five active gins to process cotton, the major source of agricultural revenue. Area farmers also raised hay, oats, corn, peanuts, potatoes, sorghum, and other crops, as well as dairy cattle and other livestock. Arlington became the site of large produce sales and a distribution center for shipment to other towns. Another early source of revenue was the mineral well in the center of town; although excavated as a public water well, it yielded brackish water, from which medicinal crystals were produced and sold. The water was also bottled for sale, and a sanitarium was constructed to treat illnesses utilizing these healing waters. By 1884, the community had an estimated population of 800 people, with churches established for Baptist, Methodist, and Presbyterian congregations. Arlington reported eighteen businesses in 1890, including several stores. By 1910 the citizens had an electric plant, a water system, natural gas lines, telephones, and a public school system.

In 1925 the number of Arlington residents was estimated to be 3,031. Arlington Downs, a racetrack built in 1933, drew thousands of visitors, including many dignitaries, until betting was declared illegal in Texas in 1937. Before World War II the population of Arlington had grown to 4,240. A General Motors assembly plant was built there in 1951—at the suggestion of Tom Vandergriff, whose father was an early dealer of Chevrolet automobiles in town—and the Great Southwest Industrial District was formed in 1956. In 1961 the population was estimated at 44,775, and 122,200 residents were reported in 1978. Tom Vandergriff served as mayor of Arlington through the period of its most rapid growth, from 1951 until 1977; the city has a council-manager type of government.

In 1990 the city was home to two institutions of higher learning, the University of Texas at Arlington and Arlington Baptist College. Recreational, social, and cultural facilities included many public parks, several public swimming pools, public and private golf courses, tennis courts, auditoriums, libraries, theaters, youth centers, seniors' facilities, and a community center. For recreation and water needs, Lake Arlington was developed in the southwest section of the city in 1957. The large amusement park Six Flags over Texas opened in 1961, and it continues to draw thousands to the North Texas area, and Arlington in particular, every year. Restaurants, hotels, motels, and many retail businesses have benefited from this tourist attraction. In 1972, again because of the urging of Mayor Vandergriff—Arlington became the home of the Texas Rangers baseball team, which plays at the Arlington Stadium. In 1988 Arlington had an estimated 213,832 residents and 4,105 businesses; a population of 261,721 in 1990; and by 2000 the population had grown to 332,969.

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The Automobile and Commercial Development in Arlington

The city of Arlington was founded as a townsite of the Texas and Pacific Railway Company, and so transportation has, in a sense, always been the primary factor behind growth and change in the community. The United States numbered highway system was developed in 1926, and as a result of this national program, U.S. Highway 80—also called Division Street—was routed through Arlington, just to the north of the city's center and one block north of the rail line established in the 1870s. U.S. 80, a portion of which is named the Bankhead Highway, was the first coast-to-coast, all-weather route for automobile traffic, providing a direct link between San Diego, California, and Washington, D.C., and it is likely that its development played an important role in the decision of a local automobile dealer to construct a new building there.

In May 1925, J.C. Thannisch opened his first Chevrolet dealership, with only two employees, at a location on East Main Street in Arlington, and as more paved roads were developed throughout the area, demand for automobiles increased. In response, Thannisch decided to build a new automobile showroom—the first such showroom in Arlington—on U.S. 80 in 1928, and construction began that August. The two-part commercial block building, designed by Fort Worth-based architect Harve D. Withers and constructed by the Churchill-Humphreys Company of Dallas, was to be the finest of its type, with the modern features necessary to house all of the dealership's departments—sales, maintenance, and administration. Construction was completed at a cost of \$31,000, and a formal grand opening celebration was held for the public on December 29, 1928. The event, commemorated in an 8-page special edition of the *Arlington Journal*, marked the first showing of Chevrolet's new six-cylinder automobiles in the area. Thannisch was quite successful as an automobile dealer and soon had 15 employees at the Arlington dealership; he also controlled associate dealerships in the neighboring towns of Grapevine (Snow Chevrolet Company), Grand Prairie (Smith Motor Company), and Mansfield (Blissard-Blessing Chevrolet Company).

At the time of the Chevrolet showroom's construction in 1928, numerous commercial buildings and locally-owned businesses filled the downtown. Many of these businesses were transportation-oriented, and soon the highway was lined with garages, filling stations, restaurants, and tourist hotels. The Cooper Hotel, a 2-story brick building that opened one month before the Thannisch showroom to its southeast, became a bus terminal during the 1940s; in 1959, as even more individuals came to own cars, the bus terminal became the home of Woody's Pawn Shop, which claimed to be the first drive-through pawn shop in the United States. Burger stands and dairy marts, also convenient for automobile service, eventually came to line the street in the 1950s and 1960s.

The Vandergriff Family and the Growth of Arlington

W.T. "Hooker" Vandergriff—the owner of Carrollton Chevrolet in the town of Carrollton, north of Dallas and to the northeast of Arlington—purchased the Thannisch dealership on East Main Street in May 1937, and in the spring of 1938 he bought the Thannisch showroom on Division Street. Regarding the purchase of the East Main Street business, the May 14, 1937 edition of the *Arlington Journal* reported:

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[T]he personnel of the [Thannisch] company will remain practically the same. Mrs. Georgia Lowry will be in charge of the office; Harold Wilshire, sales manager; J.E. McMillan, service manager; A.U. Hartwell, H.A. Whittaker, mechanics; Alton Gamman, manager of parts department; Jim Tomlin and Amie Burress, salesmen. The new owner says he hopes he will be able to live up to the slogans of Chevrolet, "Never forget a customer" and "where friends meet friends." Mr. Vandergriff is very much pleased with Arlington and hopes soon to be acquainted with all the people.⁴

Vandergriff Chevrolet sold used cars at the smaller dealership on East Main Street; new car sales, service, reconditioning, administration, and budget departments were located at the Division Street showroom. Within a few months of his purchase of the showroom, Vandergriff's two dealership locations employed twenty-five people, and he also operated a twenty-four hour wrecker service.

Vandergriff began to grow his business by adding other appliances to his inventory; in 1939 he added the "Servel" Electrolux Gas Refrigerator to the expanding number of products for sale at his dealership. In the summer of 1941, he installed the "Road Action Squeak Eliminator" in his service department, an "expensive innovation" that promised to help find the source of auto squeaks. Although the investigative service was provided for free on all cars, even those that were not Chevrolets, the service to actually eliminate the squeak required payment. In December 1941, when Vandergriff Chevrolet had been in operation for three and a half years, the *Arlington Journal* reported that the showroom now had seven departments, including a paint department on the second floor. Vandergriff also sold tires, bicycles, toasters, waffle grills, irons, radios, and auto parts in the "budget" department. World War II made new vehicles scarce, but Vandergriff saw this as a new opportunity for the showroom floor. In February 1942 Vandergriff's dealership joined Chevrolet in supporting the war effort by running advertisements touting the "Car Conservation Plan," in which drivers were urged to have their older vehicles maintained and reconditioned to "keep them serving."

The Vandergriff Building also played host to countless civil and social events over the years. In March 1940, the *Arlington Journal* reported that a "stag party" for the local chapter of Big Brothers was held at Vandergriff Chevrolet, the highlight of which was the showing of several of that year's important national championship football games, including the Sugar Bowl. Also in 1940, the dealership participated in a new Red Cross initiative begun in response to the increasing number of vehicle accidents and injuries. Ten consecutive weeks of first aid training began that fall, with twenty-two Vandergriff employees enrolled, meeting every Wednesday night from 8 to 10 at the dealership. Seventeen employees completed the training, and in January of 1941 a Red Cross First Aid Station operated out of the dealership, with Vandergriff employees acting as volunteer first aid workers.

Informal city council gatherings met at the Vandergriff Building on Division Street during a period when council members did not maintain offices at City Hall. In the 1950s, it was common practice for city council members—all of whom belonged to the Arlington Rotary Club—to walk across the street from the First Methodist Church, where their weekly Rotary Club meeting had ended, to the Vandergriff Building for an impromptu council session, as there was no requirement for open meetings or public notification at that time. Eventually, Vandergriff's civic involvement grew to include his sponsorship of local sports teams, a donation to the First Methodist Church for a chapel addition, and the donation of land for a new YMCA building and several city parks.

⁴ "W.T. 'Hooker' Vandergriff Buys Chevrolet Company," *Arlington Journal*, Friday, May 14, 1937.

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Vandergriff Building
Arlington, Tarrant County, Texas

When Vandergriff's son Tom graduated from the University of Southern California in 1947, he also became involved in the civic life of Arlington. He petitioned the city council for permission to upgrade the softball field in City Park with backstops and bleachers, and the Vandergriff Chevrolet dealership paid for uniforms for the Arlington High School marching band. He also managed the dealership-sponsored softball team and led it to a state championship. Working as a night salesman at the used car lot on East Main, Tom Vandergriff was elected chairman of the Chamber of Commerce in 1949, when he was just 23 years old, and in April 1951 he was elected as the city's mayor, an office he held until January 1977.

Together the Vandergriffs are credited with leveraging their dealerships' considerable success to persuade General Motors (GM) to select Arlington as the location for a new manufacturing and assembly plant in 1952; this plant became a major engine of population growth and is still in operation today. In 1957 Tom Vandergriff developed plans for Lake Arlington to provide water for the city and for the new GM Plant. The popular Six Flags over Texas—the first amusement park of the Six Flags national chain—opened in Arlington in 1961 under the leadership of Mayor Vandergriff, and in 1972 he again proved instrumental to the city's economic development when he succeeded in luring the Washington Senators baseball team to Arlington, where this American League franchise became the Texas Rangers.

All too appropriately, perhaps, it was the further evolution of the region's transportation system that brought about the demise of the Vandergriff Building's utility as an automobile dealership. In 1957 the Dallas-Fort Worth Turnpike was constructed approximately three miles to the north of U.S. 80, allowing people traveling between the two cities to reduce their travel time by avoiding the stoplights and traffic of downtown Arlington. Traffic along U.S. 80 shifted to the turnpike, and many businesses followed suit. Although the business was still growing, it no longer made sense for the Vandergriff Chevrolet headquarters to remain in the two-part commercial block structure at the corner of Division and Center streets. In 1966, the dealership vacated the building in favor of a larger facility to the east, at the intersection of Division and Collins streets; eventually Vandergriff Chevrolet moved to an even larger location along Interstate 20 to the south. In 1993 the Vandergriff family sold the vacant showroom building to the City of Arlington.

The story of the Vandergriff Building is also the story of transportation in the city of Arlington, which has grown to be an "edge city" of 110 square miles. As prominent businessmen and civic leaders in Arlington, Hooker Vandergriff and his son Tom played important roles in the transformation of Arlington from a railroad town of 4,000 people in 1938 to a major industrial, commercial, and entertainment center with a population of 44,775 by 1966; these years coincide with the property's period of significance, which begins with the building's construction in 1928.

The Vandergriff Building: A Two-Part Commercial Block

The Vandergriff Building is a two-part commercial block constructed in 1928 of load bearing masonry with vaguely classical decorative motifs of cast stone and Beaux Arts-inspired symmetry. The ground floor features large showroom windows on the north and west sides, and wood garage doors appear on the north and east sides. The building's architect, Harve D. Withers of Fort Worth, designed several other buildings during that same year, including the Allen Avenue Baptist Church, the Calvary Baptist Church, and another automobile-related building,

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Vandergriff Building
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the Cooke-Teague Motor Company, all in Fort Worth. The general contractor, the Churchill-Humphreys Company of Dallas, also worked on several projects during that same year, including the Southern Ornamental Ironworks in Arlington, Schepp's Bakery in Fort Worth, and the Forest Park Apartment Tower, also in Fort Worth.

According to architectural historian Richard Longstreth, "the two-part commercial block is the most common type of composition used for small and moderate-sized commercial buildings" in the United States.⁵ Longstreth claims that buildings of this type can be traced to the Romans, whose urban buildings contained stores at street level with living quarters above them; this combination also was the standard in Europe in the late Middle Ages and eventually found expression in England's American colonies in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries in the shop-house combination. However, the two-part commercial block type was most commonly built in the United States between the 1850s and the 1950s due to the enormous growth of commerce and industry.

Typically buildings of this type are limited to four stories and characterized by a horizontal division into two distinct zones, which reflects the differences in use of the interior space. At ground level, the single-story zone indicates public space, such as a bank, a hotel lobby, or retail stores, as seen here at the Vandergriff Building. The upper zone—here only one additional story—suggests private spaces, including hotel rooms, a meeting hall, small offices, or apartments. When in use by the Thannisch and Vandergriff Chevrolet dealerships, the upper rooms were, indeed, small offices occupied by the different departments of the business. Today the lower floor is leased to tenants as commercial or office space, while the upper floor is occupied by the building owner, a real estate developer, as its administrative headquarters. Attached to the east side of the two-part commercial block volume is a one-part commercial block constructed at the same time using the same methods and materials to form a cohesive whole. This one-story volume originally functioned as the service area of the two dealerships, but now it serves as additional commercial space.

Stylistically, this "commercial style" building may be described as having classically-derived symmetry and vaguely classical ornamentation; the two major façades are divided into three and five balanced bays that employ rather restrained surface ornamentation of cast stone belt courses, cornices, and label moldings, and dentils and quoins of raised brick. The reliance upon classical motifs and balanced appearance during the 1920s can be traced to the influence of the *École des Beaux-Arts* in Paris, France, which dominated the professional training of architects in Europe and the United States beginning in the 1880s through the 1930s. Beaux Arts-schooled architects tended toward a more academic approach to their designs, favoring unity, order, and balance; they were convinced that the classical tradition provided the strongest design principles, and that these principles should be applied not only to individual buildings but to entire cities, creating a more aesthetically dignified, coherent urban landscape of restraint and refinement.⁶

The Vandergriff Building exhibits the qualities of coherence and restraint in its elevations, demonstrating what Longstreth calls "a classical sense of order but exhibiting few, if any, references to past periods." Beyond its balanced façades, the building's nods to classicism include references to dentils, quoins, and other details of earlier Classical Revival styles, including the Georgian Revival, without directly copying them. The stripped ornamentation is, in certain respects, equally inspired by Modernism, as the emphasis here is on the large, machine-made plate-

⁵ Longstreth, 24.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 39.

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Vandergriff Building
Arlington, Tarrant County, Texas

glass windows of the showroom, designed to display the mechanical marvel of the automobile. At one time the Vandergriff dealership added a vertical sign, like an Art Moderne fin, to the building, announcing the merchant's name and product in neon, effectively turning the entire building into an eye-catching advertisement.

The current owner of the property purchased it in 2003 and rehabilitated it as commercial space on both floors. The rehabilitation, designed by Ed Nelson of ERN Architects, Inc., of Dallas, included the removal of some historic material, such as the ramp that moved automobiles up to different levels in the service department, but also restored many original features. The interior partitions of the first floor, including the cashier's window, have been maintained; the original quarry tile floor of the showroom has been restored; the steel windows of the service area have been restored; and new wood windows were installed to match historic profiles that had been unsympathetically replaced with aluminum. Where possible, original wood flooring and "tin" ceilings have been restored; new wood flooring and pressed metal ceiling tiles have been installed where needed. On February 13, 2009, the National Park Service issued a letter stating that the completed re-use project meets the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation

Today this building stands as the earliest physical remnant of the American automobile industry's impact on the city of Arlington, and it is the oldest commercial building in the central business district. The Vandergriff Building is therefore nominated to the National Register under Criterion A in the area of Commerce/Trade at the local level of significance as a property strongly associated with the growth of the automotive industry and greater commercial development of Arlington; its period of significance begins in 1928 and continues to 1960, the current fifty-year minimum.

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Vandergriff Building
Arlington, Tarrant County, Texas

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Section 10 Page 18

Vandergriff Building
Arlington, Tarrant County, Texas

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The boundary of the Vandergriff Building consists of that area described as Lots 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10, Block 10, ORIGINAL TOWN OF ARLINGTON, an addition to the City of Arlington, Tarrant County, Texas, according to the plat recorded in volume 388, page 26, plat records, Tarrant County, Texas.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The lot(s) retain the original property lines and it appears they were sold as a set to Mr. Thannisch.

An official notice from T.F. Yates, Secretary, City of Arlington, published in the *Arlington Journal* on March 2, 1928, states that J.A. Kooken originally owned lots 5, 6 and 7 and that Mrs. Minnie Lawing (widow) originally owned lots 8, 9 and 10. A Sanborn fire insurance map from March 1927 notes a dwelling at the center of the lots.

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Section MAP Page 19

Vandergriff Building
Arlington, Tarrant County, Texas



Map 1. Aerial photo showing context of the Vandergriff Building and new parking area to its south. [Google Maps]

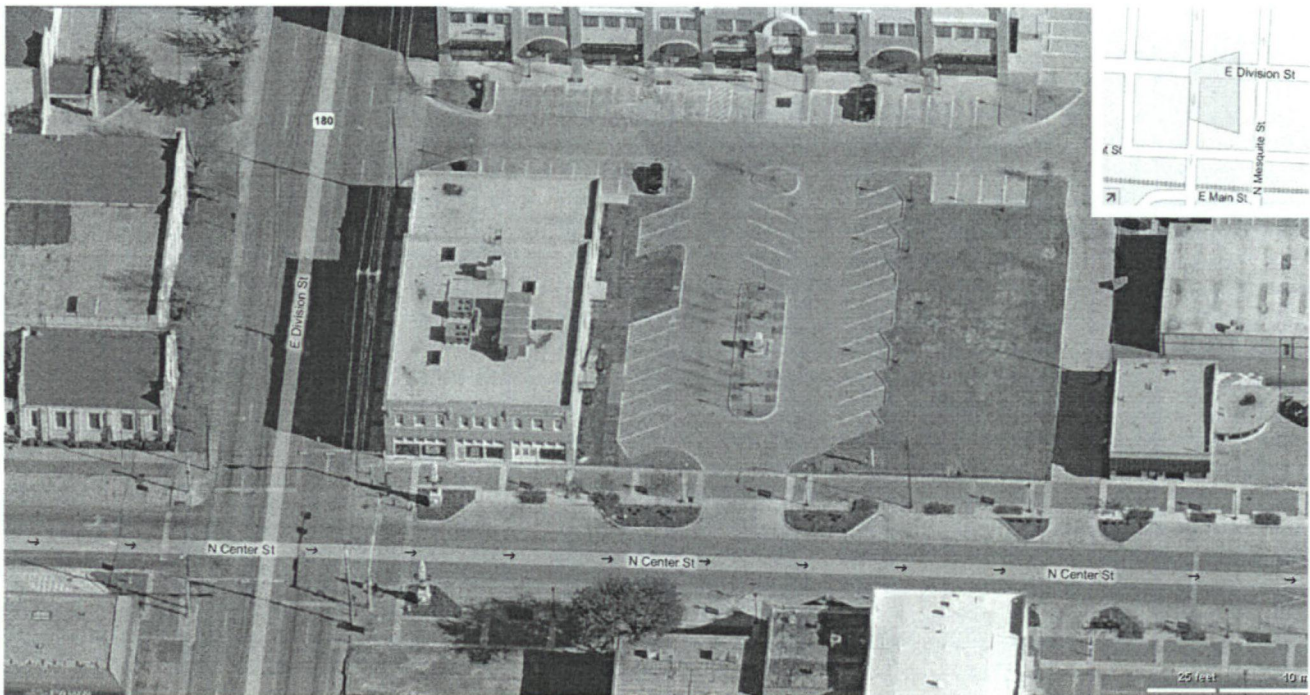
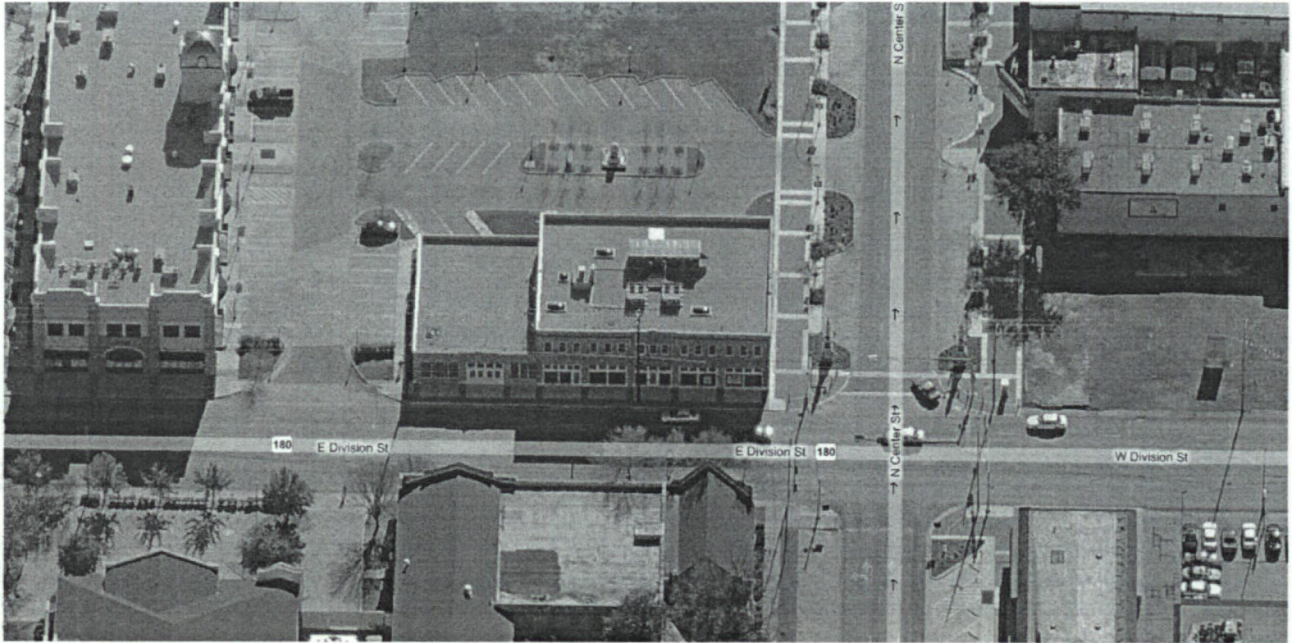
The nominated property is at the southeast corner of the intersection of N. Center Street and E. Division Street (also known as US Highway [Route] 80, and Texas 180).

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Vandergriff Building
Arlington, Tarrant County, Texas



Map 2. Aerial map showing north elevation and lot (above) and west elevation (below). [Google Maps]

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National Park Service

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Vandergriff Building
Arlington, Tarrant County, Texas

Section MAP Page 21



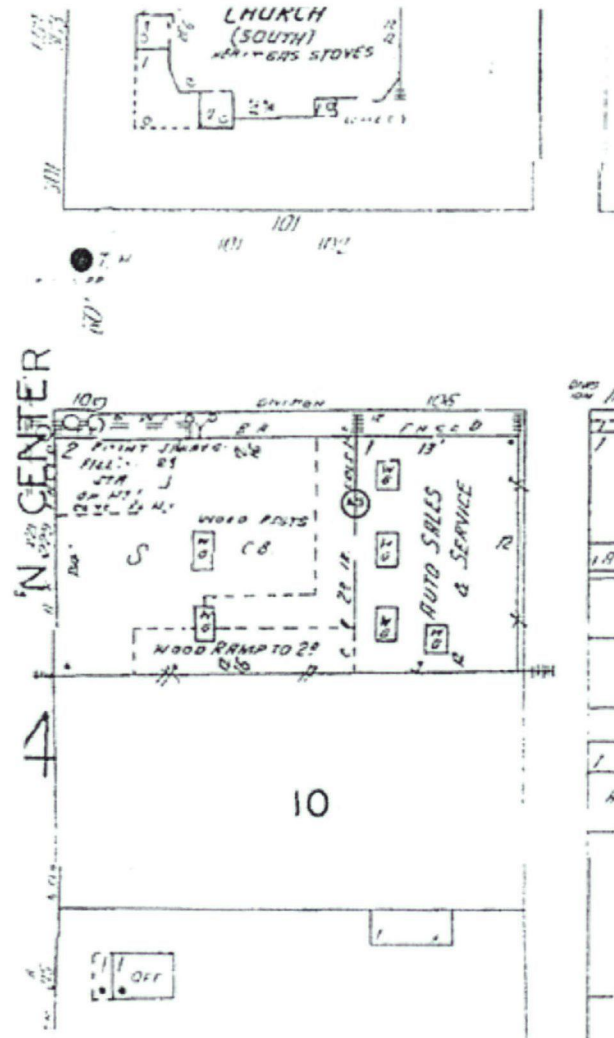
Map 3. Aerial map showing south elevation and lot (above) and east elevation (below). [Google Maps]

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National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Vandergriff Building
Arlington, Tarrant County, Texas



Map 4. Site Plan of Vandergriff Building.

(Sanborn Fire Insurance map, Arlington, Tarrant County, Texas, March 1927; Revised June 1932 and March 1944.)

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Vandergriff Building
Arlington, Tarrant County, Texas



Figure 1. Vandergriff Building, ca. 1940s

Truman Bryce, photographer, courtesy of Fielder House Museum, Arlington, Texas.

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National Park Service

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Section FIGURE Page 24

Vandergriff Building
Arlington, Tarrant County, Texas



Figure 2. Hooker Vandergriff Chevrolet, ca. 1940s.

Truman Bryce, photographer, (#AR437-1-2-46 Vandergriff: Photos - Window Displays-Chevrolet)

University of Texas at Arlington, Special Collections Division

United States Department of the Interior
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Continuation Sheet

Section FIGURE Page 25

Vandergriff Building
Arlington, Tarrant County, Texas

Rejuvenate Your Car With The
“ROAD ACTION”
Squeak Eliminator



Really Lubricates Shackles

New Life for Springs

SENSATIONAL NEW METHOD

Supercedes Old Fashioned Greasing

HERE'S WHAT THIS MARVELOUS MACHINE DOES

1. Takes weight of body off springs and gently rocks your car. (Your car receives the equivalent of 10 miles of travel while it is being lubricated.)
2. Provides perfect lubrication for conventional and "Knee-Action" cars.
3. Separates spring leaves, causing spring oil to be literally pumped thru the springs, forcing out all rust and scale, thoroughly lubricating each leaf.
4. Finds and eliminates those elusive and disconcerting noises which often develop in metal covered springs.
5. Locates imperfectly adjusted or broken shock absorbers.
6. Locates all loose or improperly adjusted shackle bolts and indicates any loose U bolts on springs.
7. Re-arches spring leaves back to their natural position, adds NEW SPRING LIFE . . . Old cars ride like new.
8. Opens up frozen shackles, giving lubricants access to points of greatest wear—THE HIGHEST POINT OF FRICTION.
9. Drains your crank case while car is rocking and flushes old oils and sediments . . . allowing new oil to add life to your motor.
10. Eliminates the use of the obsolete pry bar, the old fashioned method of breaking shackles.
11. Locates those annoying and HIDDEN BODY SQUEAKS while your car is in motion.
12. Lubricant applied while car is swaying. (YOU CANT OIL A HINGE PROPERLY WITHOUT MOVING THE DOOR.)

Give your car a Treat . . . Drive in and SEE IT IN OPERATION

This Road Action Lubricaton Service at no extra cost

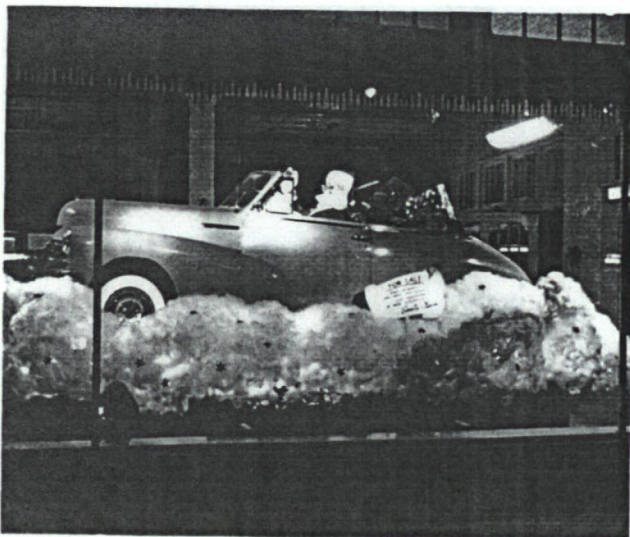


Figure 3. Christmas season window display at Vandergriff Chevrolet, ca. 1946.
Truman Bryce, photographer, (#AR437-1-2-46 Vandergriff: Photos – Window Displays-Chevrolet)
University of Texas at Arlington, Special Collections Division.

Figure 4. Advertisement for the “Road Action Squeak Eliminator” at Vandergriff Chevrolet

gton Library

HOOKER VANDERGRIFF

Sales  Service

ARLINGTON, TEXAS

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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Section FIGURE Page 26

Vandergriff Building
Arlington, Tarrant County, Texas



Figure 5. The Vandergriff Building before rehabilitation, ca. 2003.

Note the aluminum replacement windows on second floor and boarded display windows on first floor.

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Vandergriff Building
Arlington, Tarrant County, Texas

Section FIGURE Page 27

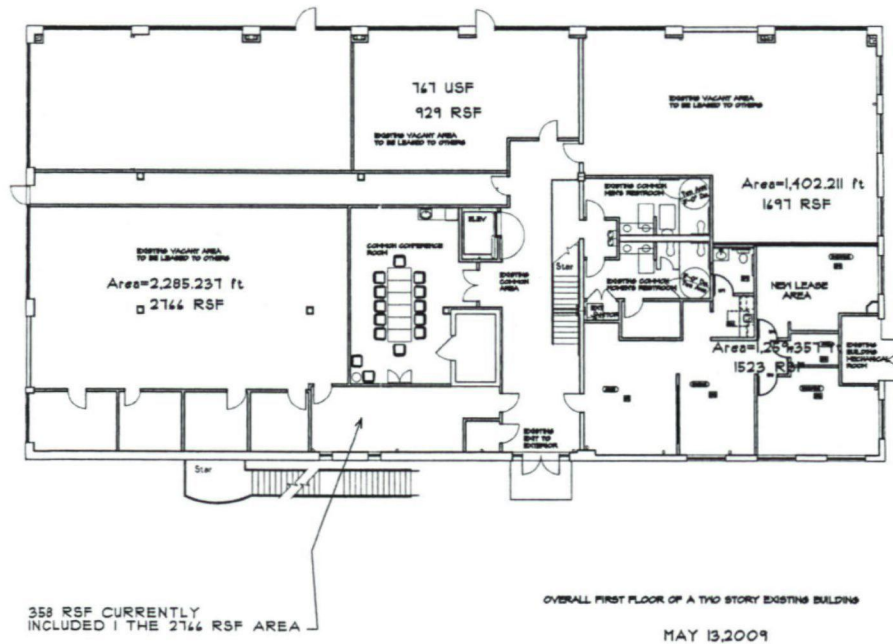


Figure 5. Plan of first floor (below) and second floor (above), after rehabilitation designed by ERN Architects, Inc., of Dallas.

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Section PHOTO Page 28

Vandergriff Building
Arlington, Tarrant County, Texas

PHOTOGRAPH LOG

All photographs are credited:

Vandergriff Building
100 East Division Street
Arlington, Tarrant County, Texas
Renee Guy-Efimoff, photographer
April 2009

Original digital files with author; digital file copies with the Texas Historical Commission, Austin.

West elevation

Camera facing east

TX_TarrantCounty_VandergriffBldg_0001.tif

Southwest oblique view

Camera facing northeast

TX_TarrantCounty_VandergriffBldg_0002.tif

Northwest oblique view

Camera facing southeast

TX_TarrantCounty_VandergriffBldg_0003.tif

South elevation

Camera facing north

TX_TarrantCounty_VandergriffBldg_0004.tif

Exterior window detail

TX_TarrantCounty_VandergriffBldg_0005.tif

Interior window detail

TX_TarrantCounty_VandergriffBldg_0006.tif

Northeast oblique view

Camera facing southwest

TX_TarrantCounty_VandergriffBldg_0007.tif

East elevation

Camera facing west

TX_TarrantCounty_VandergriffBldg_0008.tif

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY Vandergriff Building
NAME:

MULTIPLE
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: TEXAS, Tarrant

DATE RECEIVED: 6/10/10 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 7/14/10
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 7/29/10 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 7/25/10
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 10000500

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: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT RETURN REJECT JUL 26 2010 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

**Entered in
The National Register
of
Historic Places**

RECOM./CRITERIA _____

REVIEWER _____ DISCIPLINE _____

TELEPHONE _____ DATE _____

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.



VANDERGRIFF BUILDING
TARRANT COUNTY TX
PHOTO 1 of 8



VANDERGRIF BLDG
TARRANT COUNTY TX
PHOTO 2 of 8



VANDERGRIF BUILDING
TARRANT COUNTY TX
PHOTO 3 OF 8





VANDERGRIFF BUILDING
TARRANT COUNTY TX
PHOTO 4 of 8





VANDERGRIFF BUILDING
TARRANT COUNTY TX
PHOTO 5 of 8



VANDERGRIFF BUILDING
TARRANT COUNTY TX
PHOTO 6 of 8





VANDERGRIF BUILDING
TARRANT COUNTY TX
PHOTO 7 of 8

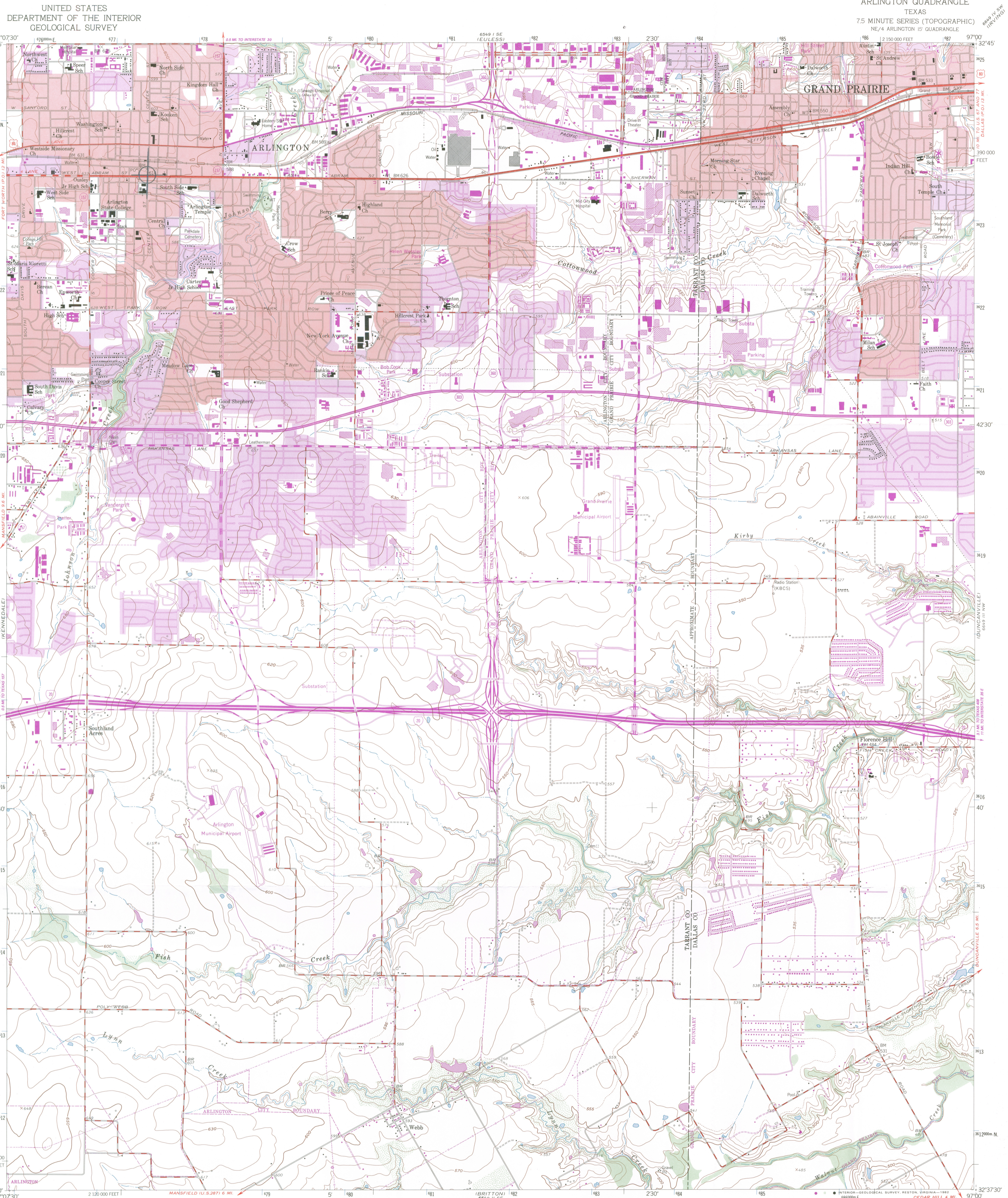




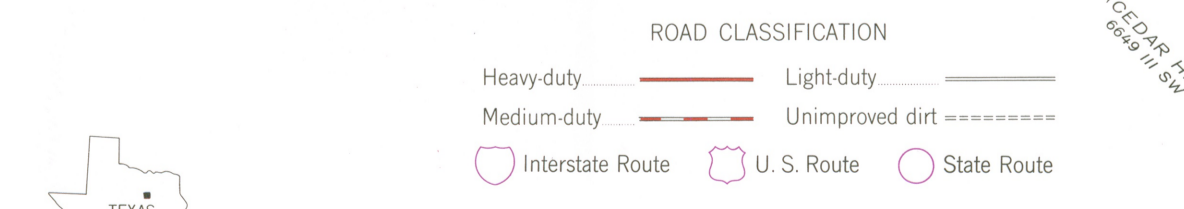
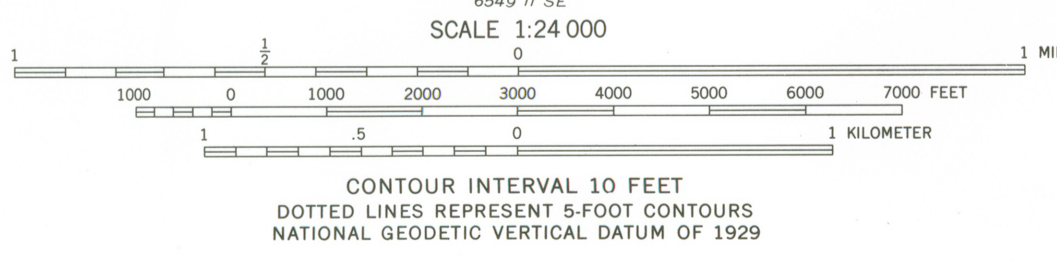
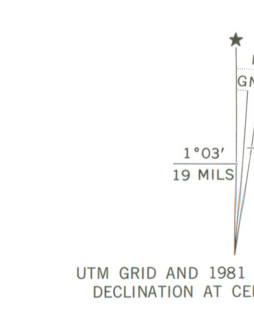
VANDERGRIF F BUILDING
TARRANT COUNTY TX
PHOTO 8 of 8



UTM ZONE 14
677475 E
3624198 N
VANDERGRIFF BUILDING
101 E. DIVISION STREET
ARLINGTON, TARRANT COUNTY, TX



Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey
Control by USGS and NOS/NOAA
Topography by photogrammetric methods from aerial photographs taken 1956. Field checked 1959
Polyconic projection. 10,000-foot grid ticks based on Texas coordinate system, north central zone. 1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks, zone 14, shown in blue. 1927 North American Datum. To place on the predicted North American Datum 1983 move the projection lines 11 meters south and 27 meters east as shown by dashed corner ticks
Red tint indicates areas in which only landmark buildings are shown
Revisions shown in purple and woodland compiled from aerial photographs taken 1978 and other sources. This information not field checked. Map edited 1981
Purple tint indicates extension of urban areas



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

QUADRANGLE LOCATION

ARLINGTON, TEX.
NE/4 ARLINGTON 15' QUADRANGLE
N3237.5 - W9700.7/5

1959
PHOTOREVISED 1981
DMA 6549 II NE-SERIES V882

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: Vandergriff Building
101 E. Division Street, Arlington
Tarrant County, TX

DATE: June 7, 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 gold CD with digital image files (.tif)

COMMENTS:

- ___ SHPO requests substantive review
- ___ The enclosed owner objections (do___) (do not___) constitute a majority of property owners
- ___ Other:

