

HISTORIC AND DESIGN REVIEW COMMISSION

January 07, 2015

Agenda Item No: 13

HDRC CASE NO: 2015-013
ADDRESS: 115 E TRAVIS ST
LEGAL DESCRIPTION: NCB 120 BLK 1 LOT A1 & A2
ZONING: D HE RIO-3
CITY COUNCIL DIST.: 1
LANDMARK: Milam Building
APPLICANT: Texas Historical Commission
TYPE OF WORK: Review of National Register Nomination
REQUEST:

The applicant is requesting review and concurrence of the nomination of the Milam Building at 115 E Travis Street to the National Register of Historic Places.

APPLICABLE CITATIONS:

FINDINGS:

- a. As a participant in the CLG Program, the City of San Antonio's chief elected official, the mayor, and the local historic preservation review commission, board or committee must comment on properties nominated to the National Register of Historic Districts within their jurisdictions.
- b. This application will be considered by the State Board of Review on January 24, 2015.
- c. The nomination is provide in the exhibits for this request. The Milam building was constructed in 1927. It was designed by architect George Willis and built by L.T. Wright Construction Company. The building was fully air conditioned upon its completion. The Milam building is nominated in the areas of commerce and architecture under the National Register Criteria A and C.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends concurrence with the nomination of the Milam Building at 115 E Travis Street to the National Register of Historic Places.

CASE MANAGER:

Cory Edwards

SBR DRAFT**National Register of Historic Places Registration Form****1. Name of Property**

Historic Name: Milam Building
Other name/site number:
Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

2. Location

Street & number: 115 East Travis Street
City or town: San Antonio State: Texas County: Bexar (029)
Not for publication: ☐ Vicinity: ☐

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 at the following levels of significance:

☐ national ☐ statewide ☒ local

Applicable National Register Criteria: ☒ A ☐ B ☒ C ☐ D

Signature of certifying official / Title State Historic Preservation Officer

Date

Texas Historical Commission

State or Federal agency / bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency / bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

____ entered in the National Register
____ determined eligible for the National Register
____ determined not eligible for the National Register.
____ removed from the National Register
____ other, explain: _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

SBR DRAFT

Milam Building, San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Private
<input type="checkbox"/>	Public - Local
<input type="checkbox"/>	Public - State
<input type="checkbox"/>	Public - Federal

Category of Property

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	building(s)
<input type="checkbox"/>	district
<input type="checkbox"/>	site
<input type="checkbox"/>	structure
<input type="checkbox"/>	object

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

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions: COMMERCE/TRADE: Business = office building

Current Functions: COMMERCE/TRADE: Business = office building

7. Description

Architectural Classification: Late 19th and Early 20th Century American Movements: Skyscraper

Principal Exterior Materials: brick, cast stone

Narrative Description (see continuation sheets 7-7 through 7-10)

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	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.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	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; Architecture

Period of Significance: 1927 to 1964

Significant Dates: 1927

Significant Person (only if criterion b is marked): N/A

Cultural Affiliation (only if criterion d is marked): N/A

Architect/Builder: George Willis (architect); L.T. Wright Construction Company (builder)

Narrative Statement of Significance (see continuation sheets 8-11 through 8-22)

9. Major Bibliographic References

Bibliography (see continuation sheet 9-23)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☒ 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
- ☐ Other -- Specify Repository:

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): N/A

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10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property: 0.3613 acres

Coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: N/A

1. Latitude: 29.427789 Longitude: -98.492956

Verbal Boundary Description: The site is comprised of part of NCB 120 in San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas. It is bounded on the north by Salinas Street, on the south by Travis Street, on the east by separately owned property and on the west by Soledad Street.

Boundary Justification: The site includes all property associated with the building since 1933.

11. Form Prepared By

Name/title: Maria Watson Pfeiffer, Historian
Address: 213 Washington Street
City or Town: San Antonio State: Texas Zip Code: 78204-1336
Email: ampfeiffer@sbcglobal.net
Telephone: (210) 222-1586
Date: August 28, 2014

Additional Documentation

Maps (see continuation sheets Map-24 through Map-25)

Additional items (see continuation sheets Figure-26 through Figure-38)

Photographs (see log on pages 5-6; also continuation sheets Photo-39 through Photo-51)

Milam Building, San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas

Photographs

Name of Property: Milam Building
City or Vicinity: San Antonio
County, State: Bexar County, Texas
Photographer: Diane Coliz
Date Photographed: October 2014
Number of Photo(s): 23

For reference, the following images are included at the end of this document, beginning on page 39.

TX_Bexar County_Milam Building_0001.tif	east and south elevations looking west
TX_Bexar County_Milam Building_0002.tif	south elevation looking north
TX_Bexar County_Milam Building_0003.tif	west elevation looking southeast
TX_Bexar County_Milam Building_0004.tif	west storefront looking south
TX_Bexar County_Milam Building_0005.tif	west elevation, mezzanine detailing looking east
TX_Bexar County_Milam Building_0006.tif	east elevation, adjoining building, looking northwest
TX_Bexar County_Milam Building_0007.tif	north elevation, northwest corner, window detail
TX_Bexar County_Milam Building_0008.tif	18th floor detailing looking northwest
TX_Bexar County_Milam Building_0009.tif	21st floor looking northwest
TX_Bexar County_Milam Building_0010.tif	cast stone detailing
TX_Bexar County_Milam Building_0011.tif	cast stone detailing
TX_Bexar County_Milam Building_0012.tif	south elevation looking north
TX_Bexar County_Milam Building_0013.tif	west elevation looking east
TX_Bexar County_Milam Building_0014.tif	north elevation looking east
TX_Bexar County_Milam Building_0015.tif	lobby looking north
TX_Bexar County_Milam Building_0016.tif	lobby looking west
TX_Bexar County_Milam Building_0017.tif	original Carrier equipment
TX_Bexar County_Milam Building_0018.tif	original Spencer boiler

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TX_Bexar County_Milam Building_0019.tif	typical stairwell
TX_Bexar County_Milam Building_0020.tif	14th floor hallway looking west
TX_Bexar County_Milam Building_0021.tif	original office door
TX_Bexar County_Milam Building_0022.tif	original office door and hardware
TX_Bexar County_Milam Building_0023.tif	former location, fire suppression tank ("22nd floor")

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

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Narrative Description

The Milam Building is a 21-story reinforced concrete and brick-clad structure with elaborate cast stone decoration. Constructed during the 1920s building boom that transformed downtown San Antonio prior to the Great Depression, the Milam Building was completed in late 1927 and opened in January 1928. The three-part building is U-shaped in plan and consists of sixteen-story towers flanking a vertical center slab. The ground-level of the two-story base is faced in polished granite, and the mezzanine level is clad in decorative cast stone. Above the base, the upper floors to the 16th-story level are of uniform tan brick. The 17th through 21st floors are clad in elaborately decorated cast stone. The cast stone decoration throughout is primarily Spanish Revival in character. The north (rear) elevation that faces a service alley is undecorated. Fenestration is original and consists of Browne center-opening steel frame windows. The window arrangement is uniform on the south (primary), east and west facades and varies on the north (rear) façade. On the interior, the lobby is decorated with glazed tiles, molded plaster and features a coffered ceiling. Bronze lighting fixtures are original and the lobby finishes have been restored. Interior stairways with bathrooms between floors, as well as office corridors, retain their original configuration. While some original cork flooring remains intact, most corridor flooring has been replaced. Original corridor doors and hardware are found throughout the building. Some office entryways have been modernized. The space known today as the 22nd floor houses the elevator equipment and is otherwise unfinished. Originally, the building's Westinghouse elevators only ran to the 20th floor. One elevator was extended to the 21st floor in 1956 and fully automatic elevators were installed. The building is topped with an approximately 50-foot tall flag pole. Except for storefront changes since the 1970s and interior alterations to office space configurations and materials, the Milam Building retains a high degree of integrity as a 1920s office building that remains viable eighty-seven years after its completion.

The Milam Building, completed in 1927 and opened in early 1928, is situated at 115 East Travis Street at the northeast corner of Travis and Soledad in downtown San Antonio. The site is slightly irregular in shape and encompasses 15,187 square feet. It is bounded by Travis Street (south), Soledad Street (west), Salinas Street (north; now a service alley); and separately-owned property (east). The primary façade of the 21-story reinforced concrete, brick-clad building faces south onto Travis Street (photo 1). The three-part building is U-shaped in plan (photo 2). Sixteen-story towers project south from the taller vertical slab, creating a central light court. The center portion of the building steps to a height of 21-stories. The Milam Building rises to a height of 241 feet and contains 217,359 square feet. The building's foundation extends approximately 25 feet below grade. The building frame is reinforced concrete and the exterior is clad in "Perla" Acme Brick, a variegated mix of cream tones. Fenestration is original and consists of Browne center-opening, Type A steel frame windows. The fenestration arrangement is generally uniform on the south (primary), east and west facades and varies on the north (rear) façade. All windows have rounded, cast stone sills and flat brick headers.

EXTERIOR

The Base

The Milam Building rises from a two-story base comprised of a tall first floor and a mezzanine level (photo 3). The south and west elevations of the base are clad in polished granite to a height of seven feet (photo 4). Above the granite, the mezzanine level is faced in decorative cast stone (photo 5). Mezzanine windows are metal in a

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three-part arrangement and have simple, rounded cast stone sills with classical molded detailing below and headers of decorated cast stone. Pairs of windows are framed in rounded cast stone molding and are separated by flat brick panels. Side panels are decorated with classical cartouches. The base is capped above the mezzanine with a decorative cast stone frieze consisting of rope molding and urns, some of which project to support columns that separate the paired 3rd floor windows above.

The cast stone decoration wraps around one full bay at the building's northwest corner (photo 3). Likewise, though the base of the east elevation is largely obscured by a separately owned 1-story commercial building, the mezzanine's cast stone facing wraps around the building's southeast corner, encompassing one bay (photo 6). Though the adjoining building to the east was constructed in 1929 by Russell Hill and other Milam Building investors, there was never an internal connection between the two buildings. They have been separately owned since 1933.

The Milam Building's Travis and Soledad Street storefronts were first modernized in 1975 (photos 3 & 4). This was typical of the period when downtown building owners and managers were attempting to compete for tenants with newer, more modern structures. Martha Doty Freeman described this modernization in a short history of the building compiled in the late 1980s. "New Glasweld Window Paneling was installed at all windows, all marble at the bulkhead was replaced with Glasweld and new anodized aluminum doors were installed. Extruded aluminum facing panels covering the original stone were installed above all Glasweld windows."¹ Canopies were also added over the building's entrances. One example of the 1927 cast stone and bronze trim remains visible on the building's north elevation at the northwest corner (photo 7). Freeman noted that some effort was made in the 1980s to restore the storefront, but that only aluminum panels over the entrances were removed to facilitate the installation of new awnings. Cloth awnings were also added above the windows on Travis and Soledad Streets. During the 1980s remodeling, the entrance doors "were replaced with spaniel glass with bronze aluminum upper and lower frames." Street level windows were also replaced with the same glass.² More recently, in 2014, new canvas awnings were installed. Care was taken to preserve cast stone detailing. Some damaged cast stone was also repaired. This modernization, while not in keeping with the 1927 structure, does not significantly comprise the otherwise high integrity of the original design.

The Third through Twenty-First Floors

A decorative frieze with classical detailing separates the 3rd and 4th floors (photo 5). Paired 4th floor windows rest on highly decorated cast stone spandrel panels that culminate in a band of rounded molding that spans the west and south elevations. The decorated spandrels and molding also wrap around the secondary north and east elevations, encompassing the first bay of paired windows on each of those facades.

From the 4th through the 16th floors, the building's façade is uniformly Perla brick, while the 17th through 21st floors are clad in elaborately decorated cast stone (photos 2, 8 & 9). Spandrel panels separating floors sixteen and seventeen and seventeen and eighteen are identical to those at the base of the building. Half-round columns separate two windows within each bay, and the bays are separated by plain, projecting brick piers. The half-round columns and brick piers extend above the top of the parapet and are capped with cast stone. Windows on

¹ Freeman, Martha Doty, unpublished typescript, c. 1986.

² Ibid.

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the 18th floor have decorative cast stone arches and the parapet above each window consists of elaborate cast stone tracery panels (photo 9).

The building's cast stone decoration strongly resembles the work of master craftsman Hannibal Pianta who was the leading practitioner of this art form in San Antonio during the 1920s (photos 10 & 11). Pianta's work is seen on other San Antonio buildings including the Aztec Theater (NRHP 1992), Jefferson High School (NRHP 1983), and the San Antonio Casino Club (NRHP 1980). Attribution of the Milam Building's decoration to Pianta is only speculative, however, as no archival material has been located to prove this theory.

The building's primary façade is comprised of the south elevations of the east and west towers and the south-facing façade of the central slab (photo 12). The face of each tower is divided into three bays with windows arranged in a two-three-two pattern. Slender piers separate windows within each bay, while the bays themselves are separated by wider piers. The central tower's south elevation contains three bays with windows arranged in a three-two-three pattern.

Because the building is slightly irregular in shape due to the configuration of the property, the east elevation is slightly narrower than the west elevation (photos 1 & 13). As a result, the east elevation contains nine bays while the west elevation is divided into ten bays. Each bay on both elevations contains two windows. Consistent with the south elevation, windows within each bay on the east and west facades are separated by slender piers while the bays are separated by wider piers.

The facades of the west and east towers facing into the light well are identical to their south elevations in detailing with the exception of the window arrangement. The elevations of both towers facing into the light well feature five bays, each with paired windows (photo 12).

The north (rear) elevation faces Salinas Street, which now serves as a service alley separating the Milam Building from the neighboring Weston Centre (photo 14). The elevation is largely undecorated brick. The previously noted first floor and mezzanine cast stone detailing wraps around one full bay at the building's northwest corner. In addition, the 17th through 21st floors reflect the same elaborately decorated cast stone that is found on the west, south and east elevations. The ground floor window facing Salinas Street at the northwest corner has been filled in. The remaining ground floor openings on the north elevation are utilitarian, consisting of solid steel doors and overhead, loading dock doors. Small, two-pane steel windows, some of which have been replaced with ventilation grates, are located at the mezzanine level. Above the mezzanine level, reading east from the first bay (with its cast stone detailing), the fenestration is arranged in a six, four, six, four pattern. Fire escapes that rise to the 19th story are accessed from windows near the northwest and northeast corners. The four windows in the second bay from the northwest corner do not align horizontally with the remaining windows on the north elevation. These windows emit light to the stairwell and bathrooms.

Overall, the building exhibits a strong verticality due to its uniform fenestration and raised brick piers that rise from the 3rd floor to the structure's full height on the south, east, and west elevations of the two towers. The building is topped with an approximately 50-foot tall flag pole (photo 9).

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INTERIOR

The primary entrance to the Milam Building's lobby is from the south, while the secondary entrance is located on the west elevation. Each entry leads into a corridor with commercial spaces on either side. The lobby retains its original appearance (photos 15 & 16). The floor is of multi-colored, earth tone glazed tiles. The space is lighted by original decorative bronze light fixtures as well as up-lighting. Walnut paneling defines storefront windows and entrances. The paneling features fluted columns with carved capitals and a molded cornice. Above the paneling, molded plaster braiding runs just below a simple crown molding. The molding and braiding extend around the perimeter of the lobby. The coffered ceiling with cross beams also features molded plaster braiding. A paneled wood stairway descends to the basement from the lobby.

The mechanical and boiler rooms are located in the lower concourse (basement). Some machinery dating to the building's original air-conditioning and heating system remains intact (photo 17 & 18). The basement also includes restrooms, workshops, and some lease space. Original red glazed octagonal floor tiles have recently been uncovered and restored in the public spaces.

Elevators and an internal stairway, both located on the north side of the central structure, rise from the lobby to the 21st floor. Women's and men's bathrooms located on alternating floors are accessed from the stairwell (photo 19). Lease space configurations, changed many times since the building's completion, vary from floor to floor though offices are generally arranged along double-loaded corridors. Corridors retain their original width throughout the building. Original cork flooring is exposed in hallways on the 12th and 14th floors, and is likely intact but covered on other floors (photo 20). Paneled doors are dark wood (likely stained oak) and opaque glass. Base and crown moldings and chair rails are also dark wood. It is estimated that seventy-percent of the original office doors are intact and thirty-five percent of the original hardware including knobs and mail drops remains. Some original doors have louvered lower panels and side panels that functioned as part of the building's air exchange system (photos 21 & 22).

The space known today as the 22nd floor houses the elevator equipment and is otherwise unfinished (photo 23). Originally, the building's Westinghouse elevators only ran to the 20th floor. One elevator was extended to the 21st floor in 1956 and fully automatic elevators were installed. The "22nd" floor was also the location of the building's fire suppression system water tank until it was removed in 2011.

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Statement of Significance

The Milam Building, completed in 1927 and opened in January 1928, was constructed for the Travis Investment Company, a partnership of prominent San Antonio businessmen led by Harry H. Rogers. Named for Texas Revolution hero, Ben Milam, the structure was designed by local architect George Willis who began his career in the studio of Frank Lloyd Wright, and was built by L.T. Wright Construction Company. The concrete, brick and cast stone structure was noted for its modern features, most notably an air conditioning system designed by Willis H. Carrier, founder of the Carrier Engineering Company. The building was completed during a major construction boom in downtown San Antonio that preceded the Great Depression. For a brief time after its completion, the Milam was the city's tallest building. The Milam has housed some of San Antonio's leading business professionals during its history. Most notably, it has been occupied by individuals and firms engaged in oil and gas exploration and production and related fields such as law, real estate and equipment supply. In 2014, the Milam Building remains a prominent address and is occupied by a diverse mix of business professionals. The Milam Building is eligible for the National Register under Criterion A (local level) in the area of Commerce because of its long association with all aspects of the oil and gas industry during the 20th and early 21st centuries. It is also eligible under Criterion C (local level) in the area of Architecture as one of San Antonio's most notable tall structures built during the boom period of the 1920s. It is an important local example of reinforced concrete architecture, as well as an excellent expression of the work of architect George Willis. The period of significance extends from 1927 to 1964.

San Antonio in the 1920s

The Milam Building was constructed on the west bank of the San Antonio River at the northeast corner of Travis and Soledad Streets during the pre-Depression building boom that changed the city's skyline. The land was owned in the early-mid 1800s by Francisco Trevino who sold portions of his property beginning in 1860. One parcel was acquired in 1866 by Jacob Laux who built a grist mill on the land and another portion was purchased by Dr. George Cupples who constructed his home there (figure 1). Soledad Street, which ran north from Main Plaza past Laux's mill and the Cupples' home, was lined with residences and garden lots. Travis Street did not exist at that time.³

Commerce Street was San Antonio's major commercial thoroughfare until the early 1900s. Throughout the 1700s and until the mid-1800s it was the only street that connected the east and west sides of the river. Once the location of residences, Commerce Street transitioned to a densely developed business corridor lined with multi-story buildings. The town continued to grow and undeveloped land was needed for new commercial and residential structures. In the mid-to-late 1800s, residential neighborhoods were built primarily south and east of downtown. The muddy thoroughfare north of Commerce Street was named in 1851 for Sam Houston, and some sparse development occurred there. Unhampered by Commerce Street's older buildings and a narrow, congested right-of-way, Houston Street presented new opportunities for growth. Members of Samuel Augustus Maverick's family invested in land along Houston Street and built modern commercial structures there. By the

³ Bexar County Deed Records (BCDR) H2:415-416; U1:26-27, April 14, 1866. Jacob Laux acquired his property from Bexar County which had purchased it from Francisco Trevino in 1860 for the purpose of building a courthouse and jail. When that plan was not realized, the county sold the land.

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1920s, those early buildings were being replaced by taller retail and business houses. Houston Street's wider right-of-way also allowed horse-drawn vehicles and later automobiles to mix with streetcars. These vehicles brought shoppers and office workers to Houston Street and congested, narrower Commerce Street never regained its preeminence as the city's commercial center. By the late 1920s, Houston Street was lined with structures including the Maverick Building, Burns Building, Central Trust Company Building, Majestic Theater, Brady Building, Gunter Hotel, Gunter Building and Stowers Building to name a few (figure 2).

The growth trend that brought prosperity to Houston Street in the late 1800s did not abate. The population of San Antonio continued to grow in the early 1900s, increasing from 53,321 in 1900, to 161,379 in 1920, to 231,542 in 1930. The resulting need for additional office and retail space led the city to begin an ambitious program to rebuild its obsolete infrastructure. Between 1910 and 1920, new bridges were constructed and streets realigned, widened, and extended. The devastating 1921 flood necessitated further improvements. As a result, many old landmarks were demolished or drastically altered and the character of downtown changed rapidly to accommodate this fast-paced growth.

Renewal of the city's downtown infrastructure in the years following the 1921 flood was accompanied by a building boom that resulted in the construction of major buildings that changed the city's skyline. These included the Nix Hospital (1929), Alamo National Bank Building (1929; NRHP 2006) and the Smith Young Tower (now Tower Life Building) (1929; NRHP 1991)—all built south of Houston Street. Though much of this development and infrastructure work was concentrated east of the San Antonio River, developers began to look west of the river where undeveloped or underdeveloped land was readily available. If the business district was to grow, sites north and west of Houston Street were needed. The renewal of downtown infrastructure in the early 1900s made this possible.

Until 1851 when the Houston Street Bridge was constructed, the only access between the east and west sides of downtown was along Commerce Street. The downtown construction boom, coupled with development of new suburbs in all directions beyond the historic city center, necessitated additional connections across the river. One of these was the extension of Travis Street to connect St. Mary's Street east of the river to Main Avenue on the west side. To create this connection, the city purchased a portion of the Cupples' property in 1910.⁴ The extension of major thoroughfares enhanced interest in developing land north of the traditional business district that had long-centered on Commerce and Houston Streets and the city's historic plazas. Property began to change hands, and in 1919 Jacob Laux's heirs sold their land to Lane Taylor. Dr. Cupples's remaining land was acquired by W.L. Holder. Both of these tracts were purchased in 1925 by the Travis Investment Company to create a single building site bounded by Salinas (north), Soledad (west) and Travis streets (south) and the San Antonio River (east).⁵

⁴ BCDR 329: 224-225, March 1, 1910.

⁵ Freeman, Martha Doty, unpublished typescript; BCDR 329, 318-319, March 16, 1910; 329:224-225, March 1, 1910; 563:163, April 23, 1919; 844:615, October 24, 1925. Amanda Cartwright Taylor (Mrs. Lane Taylor) was president of the San Antonio Conservation Society from 1931 to 1933.

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The Travis Investment Company

The Travis Investment Company was chartered for fifty years by the State of Texas on June 17, 1922, by Russell Hill, Wallace Rogers and Harry H. Rogers (no relation) for the purpose of purchasing and developing vacant property along Travis Street. The company was capitalized for \$250,000 and its 2,500 shares, valued at \$100 each, were held by the three partners. Hill, Rogers and Rogers were all prominent businessmen in San Antonio.

Russell C. Hill (1891-1975) moved to San Antonio in 1913 from Dallas where he had a successful career in real estate. In San Antonio, he first served as Field Engineer for the Texas State Insurance Department, but continued to engage in insurance, investments and real estate. He formed Rogers, Hill and Company in 1914 with Wallace Rogers to specialize in suburban development before forming Travis Investment in 1922. Hill was a strong advocate for San Antonio's downtown development. In an interview with the *San Antonio Express* in February, 1922, he commented,

It is clear that a business district is spreading north of Houston Street. These facts make Travis Street the logical thoroughfare for the required improvements... Travis Street has several advantages which makes it particularly suitable for a first-class retail thoroughfare. It lies parallel with Houston Street and just one block north. It is situated directly between the most favored residential communities and the busiest retail section. It is intersected by many important streets such as North Flores Street, Main Avenue, Soledad, St. Mary's and Navarro Streets and Avenue C and Avenue D. In view of the rapid rate of development in San Antonio during the last ten years, the retail district should expand considerably within the next decade. There may be temporary lulls, but these will be followed by busy periods of development.⁶

Russell Hill's partner in suburban real estate development, Wallace Rogers (1887-1996), graduated from Baylor University in 1908, and then came to San Antonio. He worked for the San Antonio Public Service Company for five years, beginning as a meter reader and advancing to assistant purchasing agent. Rogers quit his job to enter the real estate business, working alone for one year before joining Hill in 1914. Following the formation of the Travis Investment Company in 1922, Rogers remained with the company until 1923. During that time the company built its first major projects, the Robert E. Lee Hotel (1923; NRHP 1996) and the Travis Building (1923), both on Travis Street.⁷

⁶ *San Antonio Express*, February 26, 1922. Building permits were at an all-time high in San Antonio in the early 1920s. In 1921, the year before the Travis Investment Company was chartered, building permits totaled \$7,515,045, nearly double the prior year's figure of \$4,122,175.

⁷ *Southwest Texans*, 82, 141; *New Encyclopedia of Texas*, 1:437; Robert E. Lee Hotel, National Register of Historic Places nomination; BCDR 723:255; Heusinger, 64. In 1923 Wallace Rogers returned to developing residential real estate with Rogers, Hill and Company which operated until 1930. Rogers then formed Wallace Rogers and Son (later Wallace Rogers and Sons). Among Rogers, Hill and Company's projects was development of the Monte Vista subdivision, one of the major components of the Monte Vista National Register Historic District (NRHP 1998).

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After Wallace Rogers left the firm, the Travis Investment Company was recapitalized in December 1923 for \$500,000 with 5,000 shares divided between preferred and common stock. Shareholders in the recapitalized corporation were Russell C. Hill, Harry H. Rogers and his brother Homer Rogers.⁸

Harry H. Rogers: Oilman, Banker, Developer and Politician

It was Harry Rogers who likely provided the financial capital to fulfill Russell Hill's vision for downtown (figure 3). Harry Hazel Rogers (1877-1957) was a lawyer, oil executive and banker who moved to San Antonio in 1920 from Oklahoma because of his wife's health. Born in Wheatland, Missouri, Rogers was educated at Weadblean Christian College and Warrenburg State Teachers College in Missouri.⁹

Harry Rogers made his fortune in the Oklahoma oil fields. He spent his early career teaching in his home state of Missouri where he also studied law and was admitted to the Indian Territory bar in 1903. Rogers practiced law in Indian Territory for five years before becoming the lawyer for oilmen Robert M. McFarlin and James A. Chapman who had developed the enormously productive Glenn Pool Field beginning in 1903. When McFarlin and Chapman formed McMan Oil Company in 1908, it was Rogers who assured protection of their leasing rights in the Cushing Field. McFarlin, Chapman and Rogers moved to Tulsa and, in addition to their oil interests, established Exchange National Bank. McMan Oil expanded to Texas and Kansas and was sold to Magnolia Oil in 1916. Two years later McFarlin and Chapman formed McMan Oil and Gas Company which they sold to Standard Oil Company in 1920 for \$39 million. Rogers, who remained associated with McFarlin and Chapman, is presumed to have benefitted financially from these sales. He also invested independently in oil.¹⁰

Apart from his oil interests, Harry Rogers served as president of the Oklahoma State Bar Association from 1917 to 1918 and was actively involved in politics. Rogers served in the Oklahoma Legislature in 1917 and received the Republican nomination for governor in 1918.¹¹

In 1920, following the sale of McMan Oil and Gas Company to Standard Oil, Harry Rogers moved to San Antonio, ostensibly for his wife's health. Rogers' timing also coincided with expansion of the Texas oil industry beyond East Texas. With major finds in central and southwest Texas, San Antonio became a new hub of activity for the state's oil and gas industry. Oklahoma's establishment of a state income tax in 1915 and corporate income tax in 1931 provided further impetus for oil producers to establish operations and homes in Texas.¹²

⁸ BCDR 861:88-89. It is assumed but not proven that Harry and Homer Rogers were brothers. In addition to Travis Investment Company, the men were partners in many business ventures including Maverick Clarke Litho Company and Alamo Life Insurance Company (*San Antonio Express*, December 3, 1930, 41; *San Antonio Express*, September 9, 1929, 9).

⁹ *New Encyclopedia of Texas*, 1:306; *San Antonio Light*, December 4, 1957.

¹⁰ "McMan Oil Company," *Encyclopedia of Oklahoma History and Culture*, Oklahoma Historical Society, accessed October 28, 2013. James Chapman was McFarlin's nephew and in 1908, became his son-in-law when he married Leta Mae McFarlin. Another major developer of the Cushing Field was wildcatter Tom Slick, Sr. Slick's son, Tom Slick, Jr. was a noted San Antonio oil man, explorer, and visionary who established Southwest Research Foundation.

¹¹ *New Encyclopedia of Texas*, 1:306.

¹² Olien and Olien (2002), 107-119.

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After moving to San Antonio, Harry Rogers became involved in the real estate business. In his role as president of Travis Investment Company, the San Antonio press credited Harry Rogers with "...bringing about a complete revolution and causing the skyline of San Antonio to change constantly."¹³

In San Antonio, Rogers' diverse business involvements included his presidency of the Uvalde and Northern Railway Company and the Uvalde Cedar Company. He was also an incorporator of the Divide Wool and Mohair Company. Rogers continued his involvement in banking in San Antonio where he was chairman of the Texas State Bank and Trust Company.¹⁴

Harry Rogers' most notable civic achievement was arguably his term as president of Rotary International from 1926 to 1927. The organization at that time consisted of 120,000 members representing thirty-five nations. In 2014 Rogers remains the only Texan to have held this office.¹⁵

Designing and Building the Milam Building

Shortly after acquiring the site at Travis and Soledad streets, the Travis Investment Company hired San Antonio architect George R. Willis (1879-1960) to design its new building (figure 4). Willis was born and raised in Chicago. He studied architecture at Armour Institute of Technology for two- and- a half years before apprenticing for another two- and- a half years in the office of Frank Lloyd Wright. It was during this time that he became acquainted with renowned California architect, Myron Hunt (1868-1952), who was also associated with Frank Lloyd Wright and other Prairie School architects. Hunt, who referred to Willis as "one of Wright's best beloved draughtsmen," moved to Pasadena, California in 1903. Willis followed, and apparently worked with Hunt for about one year. He then moved to Dallas where he was associated with Stewart Moore (1906) and J. Edward Overbeck (1907-1909). After practicing alone in 1910, Willis moved to San Antonio in 1911. He worked with Atlee B. Ayres until 1916 and briefly with Charles T. Boelhauwe before opening his own practice in 1917. Willis and Emmett T. Jackson officed together for several years and the two collaborated on various projects.¹⁶

George Willis designed or collaborated with other architects on numerous commercial and residential projects. These include the following San Antonio structures, the 1926 Bexar County Courthouse addition (with Phelps, Dewees and Jackson; NRHP 1977); the San Antonio Municipal Auditorium (with Ayres, Ayres and Jackson; NRHP 1981), the Builders Exchange Building (NRHP 1994), the Sunken Garden Theater (with Harvey Smith and Charles Boelhauwe; Brackenridge Park NR District 2011), and the L.T. Wright House (NRHP 1983). Willis designed several houses in the Monte Vista National Register District (NRHP 1998).

George Willis worked closely with the Travis Investment Company's general manager, Charles Millard, to plan its still-unnamed building. Charles Millard was working in California when he was hired in 1925 as the company's general manager. Millard reportedly had "fifteen years of experience as a manager of office

¹³ San Antonio *Express*, October 29, 1929, 7.

¹⁴ *New Encyclopedia of Texas*, 1:306; San Antonio *Light*, December 4, 1957.

¹⁵ Thoburn (1929), 35-37; *New Encyclopedia of Texas*, 1:306; San Antonio *Light*, December 4, 1957. Rogers presided at the world convention of Rotary International in Belgium in June 1927 and received the Order of the Cross from King Albert of Belgium (San Antonio *Express*, June 10, 1927, 19).

¹⁶ George Willis, application for membership American Institute of Architects Archives; Kothmann, 3-4.

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buildings and hotels, and a structural engineer and building promoter.”¹⁷ He was credited with overseeing the construction and operation of many buildings in both Los Angeles and Dayton, Ohio. Buildings in Los Angeles included the Petroleum Securities Building, W.M. Garland Building, Quimby Building, Guaranty Building and Loan Building, and the Pacific National Bank Building. His work in Dayton included the Commercial Building, Arcade Buildings, United Brethren Building (NRHP), Barney Building, City Trust Building, and the Pythian Castle Building. Other accounts mention the Doheny Building in California and “several structures of note in New York City.”¹⁸

Another key member of the design team was structural and mechanical engineer M.L. Diver. General contractor L.T. Wright, the city’s leading builder in the 1920s, was hired to construct the new building. Lawrence T. Wright (1888-c. 1945) was born in Kansas and received his engineering education at the University of Kansas. He established the firm of Wright and Sanders in San Antonio in 1913. J.T. Haile, Jr. later joined the business and purchased Sanders’ interest in 1921. The firm then operated under the name L.T. Wright and Company. In addition to the Milam Building, the firm’s notable standing buildings include the Travis Building, Aztec Theater (NRHP 1992), Straus-Frank Building, First Baptist Church, Central Fire and Police building and San Antonio Drug Company (NRHP 1994).¹⁹

George Willis’s Milam Building was enhanced with elaborate cast stone decoration that strongly resembles the work of master artisan Hannibal Pianta. While various companies worked in this genre in the mid to late 1920s, Pianta was arguably its most skilled practitioner. Pianta took over a studio founded by his father in about 1911. His portfolio includes cast stone trim and ornamental interior plaster on many commercial and residential structures in San Antonio. These include the Central Trust Company, Jefferson High School, the Empire Theater/Brady Building, Aztec Theater, Casino Club, McNay Museum, Fort Sam Houston Gift Chapel and the Municipal Auditorium, all listed on the National Register of Historic Places. He is also known to have worked on the Travis Development Company’s Travis Building, completed in 1923. Though not conclusive, this lends credibility to speculation that Pianta responsible for the company’s Milam Building. To date however, no archival evidence has been found to establish a connection between Pianta and the Milam Building.²⁰

The San Antonio *Light* announced in late November 1926 that “the largest and tallest building in San Antonio has just been placed under construction at the northeast corner of Travis and Soledad Streets.”²¹ By mid-January 1927, foundation work had begun erect “the highest concrete building in the world.”²² The concrete frame was completed to the fifteen -story height by June. The final story was in place by August and brick work was completed on the building’s lower floors. A 7 -foot tall plaster model was built to promote the building, but

¹⁷ San Antonio *Light*, November 28, 1926, 7:1-2.

¹⁸ San Antonio *Express*, June 21, 1927. One account credits Millard with construction of “the tallest concrete building in the world at Dayton, Ohio.” This refers to the United Brethren Publishing Building (NR 9931210), which remained Dayton’s tallest building until 1931 (Gwen Haney to Maria Watson Pfeiffer, e-mail correspondence, November 14, 2013). Millard’s New York buildings have not been identified.

¹⁹ *New Encyclopedia of Texas*, 4:2629.

²⁰ San Antonio *Express*, September 1, 1924, 17; e-mail correspondence, Charlotte Kahl to Maria Watson Pfeiffer, October 1, 2014. Hannibal Pianta’s body of work also includes Galveston’s Galvez Hotel (NRHP). Charlotte Kahl and her son, Paul Kahl, are compiling a complete inventory of Pianta’s work. The Kahl’s and the compiler of this nomination have all failed to identify the Milam’s cast stone artist.

²¹ San Antonio *Light*, November 28, 1926, 7:1-2.

²² San Antonio *Light*, January 16, 1927, first real estate page.

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unfortunately, no photographs of the model have been located. The claim of the Milam Building being the “world’s highest concrete building” at the time of its construction has not been substantiated (figures 5-10).²³

The Milam Building: A Mechanical Engineering Heritage Site

The Milam’s most innovative amenity was an air conditioning system that served the entire structure. Advertisements proclaimed “Every Day a Perfect Day in the Milam Building,” a boast attributed to the building’s ability to “manufacture its own weather.” This was accomplished “by means of a remarkable new invention which is called an air conditioning system.”²⁴

The design team for the Milam Building’s pioneering cooling system was led by Willis H. Carrier, founder of the Carrier Engineering Corporation. The original system consisted of eleven units to store and cool water that chilled or warmed air and removed or added humidity depending on weather conditions. The building’s artesian well provided the estimated 1,200 gallons of water per minute required to supply the air conditioning system. Individual room controls were used to address variable loads due to movements of the sun, and radiant heat reduction was also achieved through the use of Venetian blinds, cloth window shades and street-level awnings. In recognition of its status as the first high rise air conditioned office building in the United States, the Milam Building was named a National Historical Mechanical Engineering Heritage Site in 1991. The citation stated that the Milam’s “...complex system provided three-hundred tons of refrigeration capacity with chilled water piped to air-handling fans serving all floors.” The original equipment was updated in 1945 and again in 1989. In 2014, approximately eighty percent of the original Buffalo air handlers are still in use as is a one hundred horse power low pressure Spencer boiler (figure 11).²⁵

The Milam Building: 1927-1928

A sophisticated and extensive advertising campaign preceded the Milam Building’s opening (figures 12 & 13). By August 1927, the soon-to-be completed building had been named for Texas Revolution hero Ben Milam. (Milam died a short distance south of the building in December 1835 during the Siege of Bexar.) The Milam Building was designed with the latest features of modern high-rise office building design. Each of the sixteen floors measured 113 X 137 feet, with five floors in the tower above—three for offices and two for mechanical equipment including elevator machinery and a water tank for fire suppression. The building incorporated high speed elevators, Browne center opening steel windows, cork tile flooring, quarter sawed oak detailing and Crane bathroom fixtures. The lobby was paneled in walnut. Described as a “city within a city,” the Milam was supplied with pure water from an artesian well drilled behind the building. In 1937, the City of San Antonio granted permission for the Milam to draw 1,000 gallons of water per minute from the San Antonio River and return it to the river “contamination free” for use in cooling the building’s condensers.²⁶

²³ San Antonio *Light*, November 28, 1926, 7:1-2; San Antonio *Light*, January 16, 1927; San Antonio *Express*, June 5, 1927, 1-2A; San Antonio *Express*, June 21, 1927, 10; San Antonio *Light*, August 21, 1927, 7:14.

²⁴ San Antonio *Light*, November 28, 1926, 7:1-2; San Antonio *Light*, August 21, 1927, 1:4; San Antonio *Express*, August 28, 1927, 2-A.

²⁵ Dedication brochure, “The Milam Building, A National Mechanical Engineering Heritage Site, Designation Ceremony, August 23, 1991”; San Antonio *Light*, October 9, 1927, 5.

²⁶ San Antonio *Express*, June 5, 1927; San Antonio *Light*, October 9, 1927, 7:5; BCDR 1613:129-130.

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Advertisements touting all of these amenities were illustrated with detailed line drawings depicting the building from all angles and at various times of day. The ads were clearly meant to attract sophisticated tenants seeking the most modern and convenient office accommodations. “Location is the most valuable single asset that a business can have” and the Milam was “the axis of the new business district.” The building was “beautiful in color and design, excellent in construction and equipment.” Its elevators were “equipped with every known device to assure speed and safety” and featured “Rolls Royce interiors.” Floor coverings were noiseless cork. The building’s motto, “Every day a perfect day,” referenced the pioneering air conditioning system that provided tenants with cool, dry air. Polished plate glass windows set in steel frames with weather stripping assured “perfect vision plus weather protection.” And there were parking spaces for 3,000 automobiles within 500 feet. Potential tenants were reminded that to be in “good company is an asset of real importance in business or the professions.” The Milam was “a distinguished address.”²⁷

Surprisingly, no formal opening was held for the Milam Building and as a result, it appears that no special newspaper section was published to mark its completion. Such sections were typically published to mark the grand opening of major buildings. Unfortunately, without this resource, little is known about the subcontractors and craftsmen who contributed their skills to the Milam Building. Likewise, newspapers published during the building’s construction reveal few details. It is speculated that Harry Rogers’ financial capability allowed him to finance the building’s construction with his own resources and rather than call for bids, he simply negotiated contractors’ fees.

Advertisements state that the Milam Building was fifty percent leased when tenants began to move in on January 2, 1928. The ground floor retail space at Travis and Soledad streets was occupied by L.C. Beery’s Milam Drug Store, and the Milam Cafeteria opened in the concourse level (figure 14). The upper floors were leased to a variety of professionals and the building became particularly known for the large number of oil and gas operators who maintained offices here. By December 1928, the building was said to house thirty-seven national organizations. Among the earliest tenants were a United States postal substation, telegraph offices, and barber and beauty shops (figure 15).²⁸

The Milam Building: The Center of the South Texas Oil and Gas Industry

Harry Rogers’ move to San Antonio in 1920 coincided with expansion of the Texas oil industry beyond East Texas. With major finds in central and southwest Texas, San Antonio became a new hub of activity for the state’s oil and gas industry. Oklahoma’s establishment of a state income tax in 1915 and corporate income tax in 1931 provided further impetus for oil producers to establish operations and homes in Texas.²⁹

It is clear that Harry Rogers’s widespread business connections within the oil industry were instrumental in securing tenants for the Milam Building. From the time the building opened in 1928, its roster of tenants was dominated by petroleum-related firms. These included major oil companies, independent oil and gas producers,

²⁷ This selection of quotations is drawn from various issues of the *San Antonio Express* and *San Antonio Light* from August 1927 through February 1928. The advertising campaign continued at least until late 1928.

²⁸ *San Antonio Light*, December 18, 1927, Pt. 7:14; *San Antonio Express*, August 29, 1928, 24; *San Antonio Express*, December 16, 1928, C:13; *San Antonio Business Journal*, September 4, 1989, 13-14. The Milam Drug Store eventually evolved into a popular lunch room. Today the space is occupied by Lulu’s Café. The cafeteria closed many years ago and the space has been subdivided.

²⁹ Olien and Olien (2002), 107-119.

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leasing agents, equipment dealers and regulatory authorities. It is not known how many of the Milam's tenant lawyers also engaged in oil and gas work.

YEAR	Oil and Gas related businesses
1938	104
1946	102
1951	139
1958	154

In August 1928, the Petroleum Club of San Antonio was organized and established its headquarters on the second floor of the Milam Building. Tenants from the 1930s through 1950s included the Texas Railroad Commission, Atlantic Refining Company, Standard Oil Company of Texas, Cities Service Oil, Gilcrease Oil Company, and the Post Cambrian Library, a private archive of geological information. Prominent local independent oil operators included George Coates, Tom Slick, Charles Urschel, Lester Nordan, Lewis Moorman, and George Luhn, to name only a few. Prime offices on the building's 20th and 21st floors were initially occupied by Harry Rogers' companies (1931), and in later years by various oil companies including Gilcrease Oil (1938), Lockhart Oil Company (1946), Slick-Moorman Oil Company (1951), and Monterey Oil Company (1958).

Other tenants included real estate brokers, engineers, lawyers, brokerage firms, and insurance companies. J.C. Penney had its district office there as did the Texas Liquor Control Board. Rosengren's Bookstore, the destination of discerning bibliophiles from throughout the state, operated in the Milam from 1935 until 1951. It was there that literary figures including Robert Frost presented their work (figure 16).³⁰

The Milam Building and its Investors: 1929-1935

Six months after the opening of the Milam Building, Harry Rogers, Russell Hill and Homer Rogers formed "the largest investment banking company in San Antonio."³¹ The Milam Company amalgamated properties and investments held by its partners in Texas and Oklahoma with the goal of trading in securities of other businesses. The new company's capital stock and surplus was valued at \$2,750,00. Among the companies that formed the Milam Company were the Travis Investment Company, Milam Building Company, Maverick-Clarke Litho Company, and Milam Cafeteria Company. Included in the company's assets were substantial stock holdings in City National Bank, Central Trust Company, Central Bond and Mortgage Company and L.T. Wright and Company, the latter serving as the contractor for the Milam Building. Local press reports speculated that through its subsidiaries, the company controlled over \$5,000,000 in local real estate including the Milam Building and Robert E. Lee Hotel.³²

³⁰ San Antonio Light, March 24, 1937, 1-B; University of Texas at San Antonio, San Antonio *Light* Collection, MS 359 L-1544-D. Robert Frost celebrated his 63rd birthday at a party given by Frank and Florence Rosengren in 1937.

³¹ San Antonio *Light*, July 22, 1928.

³² Ibid.

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In November 1928, Milam Building investor Russell Hill, together with Thurman Barrett, D.W. English and M.A. English, incorporated the Radio Company of Texas. The company assumed ownership of San Antonio's 100-watt station KGDR and acquired 500-watt Austin station KUT. The KGDR studio was located nearby in the Blue Bonnet Hotel and a second studio was planned for the Milam Building. KUT had formerly operated under a license issued to the University of Texas. Hill and his partners built a new structure adjoining the Milam to the east to house a radio salesroom and repair shop—the first of several planned outlets for RCA, Majestic, and Zenith radios. The building replaced older structures on the property. The Radio Company of Texas was short-lived and was in receivership by early October 1929. The building at 101-105 West Travis was sold to satisfy judgments in 1933. There is no evidence that the separate building was ever internally connected with the Milam Building. The 1911-1951 Sanborn fire insurance map indicates a twelve inch thick fire wall dividing the buildings and shows a window, presumably sealed, in the east wall of the Milam Building's first floor.³³

The Milam Building remained the city's tallest building until 1929 when two structures surpassed it in height—the Nix Hospital (23 stories) and the Smith-Young Tower (31 stories; NRHP 1991). At 24 stories, the Alamo National Bank Building, begun in 1929 and completed in 1930, also surpassed the Milam Building in height. While the Nix was a medical office building and hospital, the Smith-Young Tower and Alamo National Bank Building both housed general offices and therefore competed with the Milam Building. The Milam Building nonetheless maintained good occupancy during the early years of the Depression.

In spite of retaining many of its tenants during the 1930s, the owner's close ties to banking institutions apparently resulted in foreclosure. An order for the building's sale was issued in October 1935 as a result of a United States District Court judgment in the case of Henry T. Ferris vs. the Travis Investment Company. The judgment totaled \$1,093,500 plus interest accrued from June 1, 1932. The Milam Building was sold to its bondholders represented by W.C. Collins of St. Louis on December 3, 1935 for \$440,000. The new ownership group was named San Antonio Milam Building Inc. Lewis Kayton, the company's vice-president and general manager, assumed management of the Milam Building, a position he held until 1970.³⁴

The Milam Building: 1936-1964

Lewis Kayton (1901- 1976) oversaw the management of the Milam Building through the last years of the Depression and the subsequent era that included World War II, the Korean War, the city's post-war growth, the rise of suburbanization, and decline of downtown. Kayton, a native San Antonian and member of the San Antonio Bar Association, was also prominent in the local social establishment. He was a founding member of

³³ <http://www.corporationwiki.com/p/hlmb5/radio-corporation-of-texas-the>, accessed October 6, 2014; San Antonio *Light*, March 24, 1929, 7:6; San Antonio *Express*, October 10, 1929, 8; San Antonio *Express*, October 20, 1929, 14; Bexar County Deed Records 1372:72-73, July 25, 1933. The failure of Radio Company of Texas occurred just at the beginning of the stock market decline that culminated in the great crash of late October 1929. The space was later occupied by Heirloom Antiques and in the late 1930s by Lucchese Boot Company and the National Cash Register Company. The 1911-1951 Sanborn map indicates that the 101-105 W. Travis Street was "rebuilt in 1929." Milam Building construction photos and the 1926 city directory indicate the adjoining property was occupied by the Rio Vista Apartments, Rio Vista Mexican Restaurant and the Riverside Garage and Driverless Car Company #1.

³⁴ San Antonio *Light*, November 3, 1935, 2:7; San Antonio *Express*, December 4, 1935, 16. BCDR, 1517:165-167, December 29, 1935; Freeman, 6. Joe Sheldon was appointed receiver for Travis Investment Company and began selling assets in the early 1930s. The property between the Milam Building and the San Antonio River to the east was sold to the Central Company in July 1933 (BCDR 1372:72-73). Property adjoining to the north in NCB 139 was sold to Birdella Mae Hudson in June 1937 (BCDR 1591:496-498).

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the Texas Cavaliers, and in 1950, presided as the organization's King Antonio XXVIII during the annual Fiesta celebration. The fact that many of Kayton's tenants in the Milam Building were his social peers likely contributed to his successful management of the building for thirty-five years. Lewis Kayton served as president of the Southwestern Building Owners and Managers Association and when he retired in 1970, was president of the Milam Management Company.³⁵ Kayton oversaw various early modernizations of the Milam Building including the air conditioning system and elevators. Subsequent owners and managers have completed additional work, including Milam Capital Partners, Inc., which has owned the building since 2000.³⁶

E.I. Martin and I.M. Strum, president and secretary respectively of San Antonio Milam Building, Inc. Company, purchased the building as trustees in 1948. A complicated series of sales involving various promissory notes transpired between 1948 and 1979. These transactions and related vendors liens involved Martin and Strum as well as other individuals representing the Frost Brothers Profit Sharing Trust, Straus-Frank Profit Sharing Trust, and First National Real Estate Trust, which later merged to become United National Corporation, a Delaware corporation. The Milam was sold by United National Corporation in September 1979 to Urban Holdings, Inc. based in Colorado. When Urban Holdings declared bankruptcy in 1986, the ownership reverted to the mortgage holder, Principal Mutual Life Insurance Company, based in Des Moines, Iowa. Principal Mutual owned and operated the building until 2000 when it was sold to Milam Capital Partners and Terrance M. Casey. Casey subsequently conveyed his interest to Milam Capital Partners, the owner of the building in 2014.³⁷

The Milam Building continued to be a popular business address during these changes in management and ownership. There was, however, increased competition for tenants from newly constructed office buildings both downtown and in the suburbs. One of these new structures, the Petroleum Center, opened in 1956 far north of downtown at Broadway and Military Highway (later Loop 410). The building was "designed primarily for those engaged in the petroleum industry," potentially competing with the Milam for its tenant base.³⁸ However, an analysis of tenants indicates that the Petroleum Center did not draw a significant number of tenants away from the Milam Building. Comparing the Petroleum Center's tenant roster as it appeared in the 1960 city directory with the Milam Building's roster for 1957, it appears that only one individual moved to the new building. The largest number of oil-related individuals and firms relocated from the Alamo National Building, while a few moved from the Transit Tower (today the Tower Life Building).

In 1958, San Antonio's first major downtown building of the post-Depression era, the National Bank of Commerce (NBC) building, opened one block north of the Milam Building. NBC began to acquire land between the Milam and its building beginning in 1984, and the remaining structures on that property, including

³⁵ Freeman, 6; San Antonio *Light*, May 18, 1976, 12-A. After his retirement, Kayton founded the Building Servicing Company of Texas (San Antonio *Express*, May 10, 1972, 16-A).

³⁶ Ibid, Freeman; Bexar County Deed Records, 8665:121-125, December 4, 2000.

³⁷ Ibid, Freeman; BCDR 2615:209-212, November 20, 1948; BCDR 2502:166-169, February 28, 1948; BCDR 4917:467-471, April 3, 1963; BCDR 1677:580 -584, September 7, 1979; 3878:1685-1694, December 2, 1986; BCDR 8665:112-120, December 4, 2000; BCDR 8665:121-125, December 5, 2000.

³⁸ San Antonio *Express and News*, October 9, 1955, 15-C.

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the structure known as the Milam Garage, were demolished in 1987. The 550,000 sq. ft., \$81 million NBC Bank Plaza and parking garage, now the Weston Centre, was completed in 1988.³⁹

In 2014, the Milam Building remains a prominent address and is occupied by a diverse mix of business professionals. Its tenants still include some individuals and companies engaged in the oil and gas business, retaining a tie to the building's historic past.

The Milam Building is eligible for the National Register under Criterion A (local level) in the area commerce because of its long association with all aspects of the oil and gas industry during the 20th and early 21st centuries. It is also eligible under Criterion C (local level) in the area of architecture as one of San Antonio's most notable tall structures built during the boom period of the 1920s, as an important local example of reinforced concrete architecture, and as an excellent expression of the work of architect George Willis. The period of significance extends from 1928 until 1964.

³⁹ San Antonio *Express and News*, September 11, 1955, 9-G; San Antonio *Express-News*, October 17, 1985, 1-A; July 8, 1992, 1-B. The new NBC building was designed by Cambridge Seven Associates, Inc. NBC was sold to NationsBank and in 1992, project lenders foreclosed on the building. It was purchased by the Weston Family in December 1992 (San Antonio *Express-News*, December 17, 1993, 1-D).

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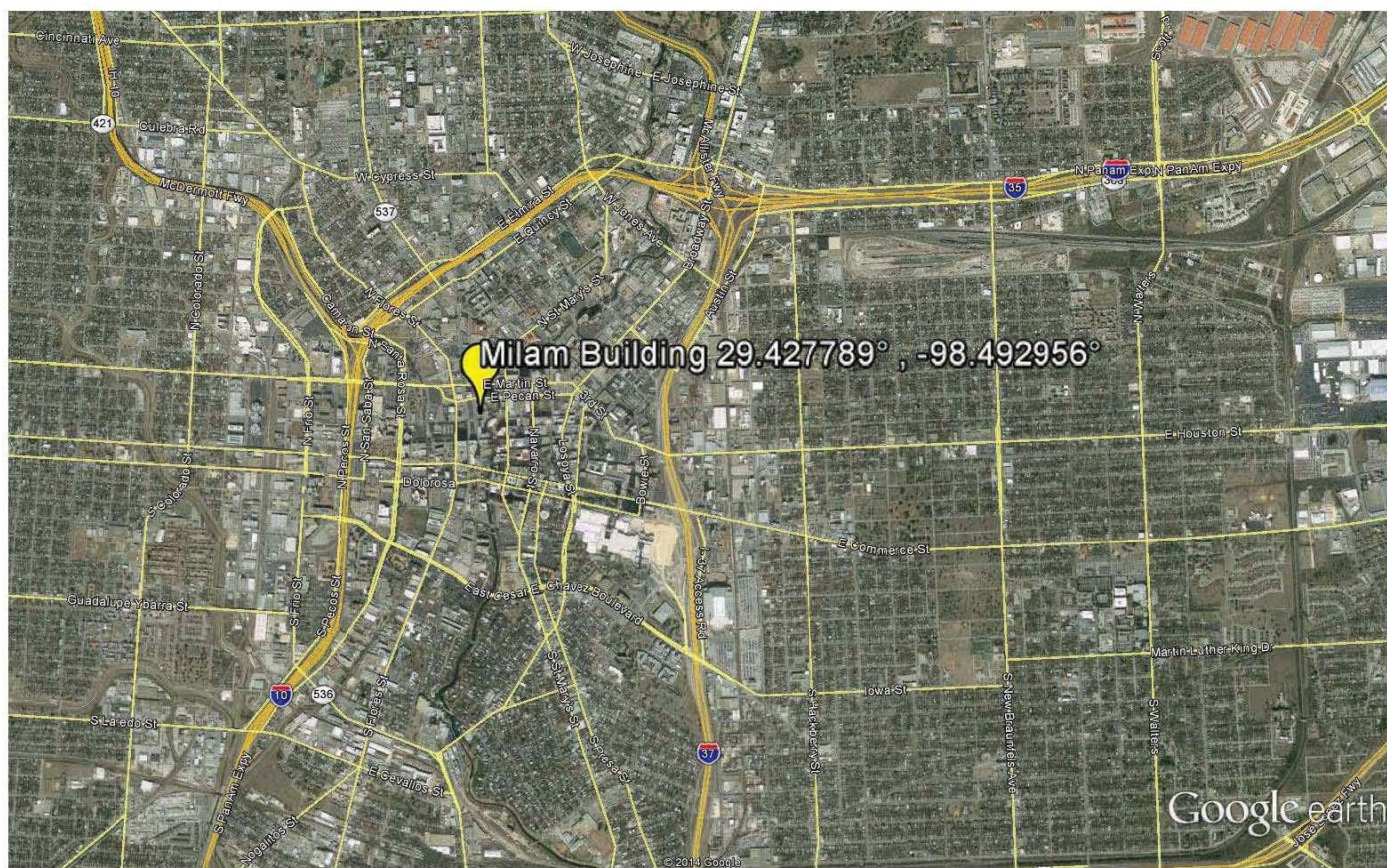
SBR DRAFT

Milam Building, San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas

Map 1: Bexar County (shaded) is located in south central Texas.



Map 2: The Milam Building is located in downtown San Antonio. Scaled Google Earth map depicts location.



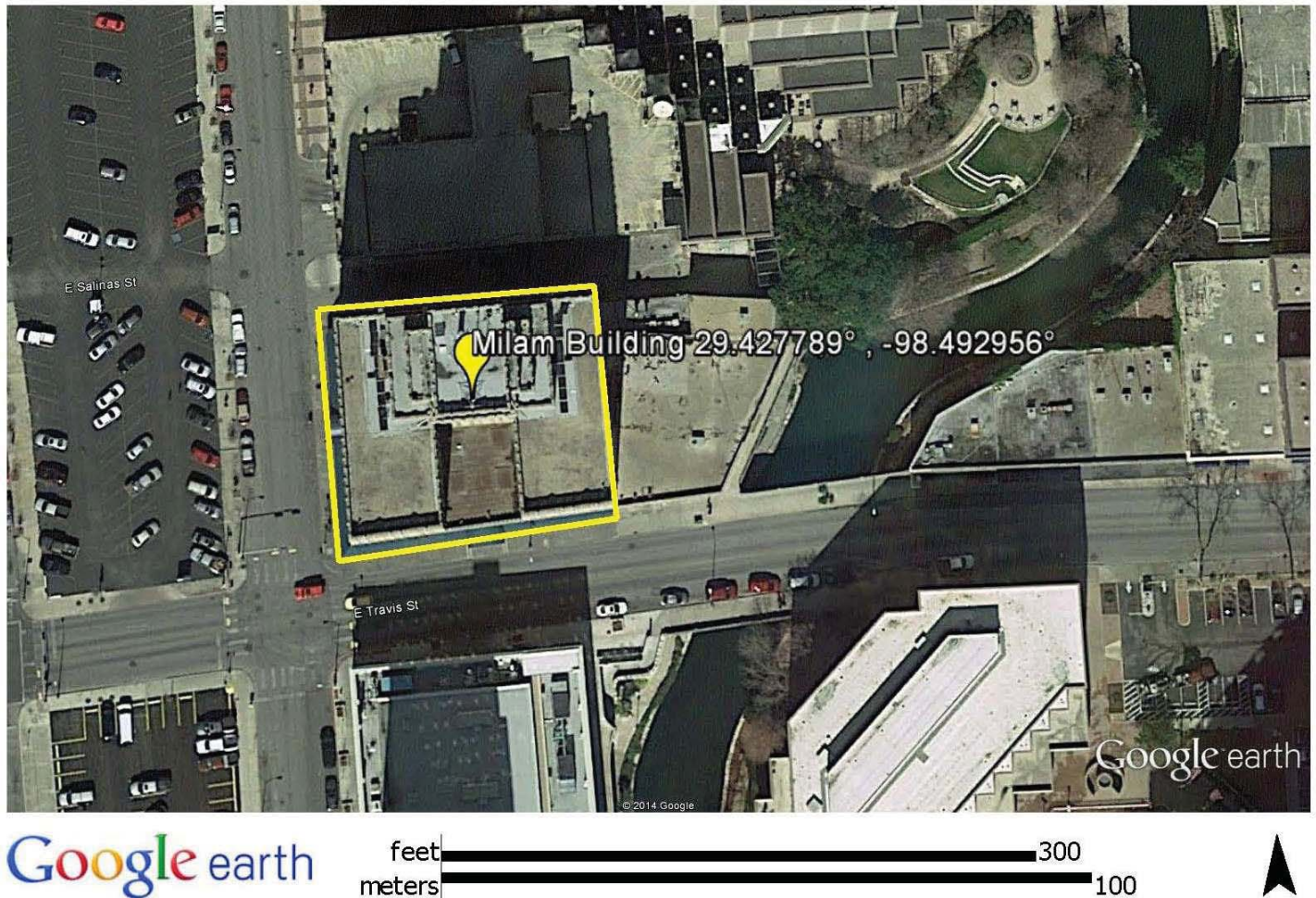
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Milam Building, San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas

Map 3: The Milam Building is located at the northeast corner of Travis Street and Soledad Street. Scaled Google Earth map depicts approximate boundaries and latitude and longitude.



Milam Building, San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas

Figure 1. Site of Milam Building, Augustus Koch's 1873 Bird's Eye View Map of San Antonio (detail)

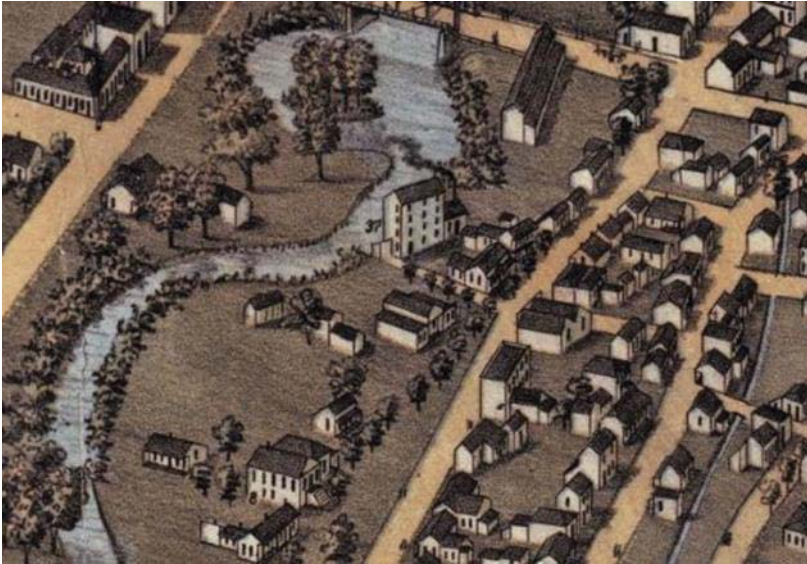


Figure 2. Houston Street looking east, c. 1935. Photograph by Zintgraff. Collection of Maria Watson Pfeiffer

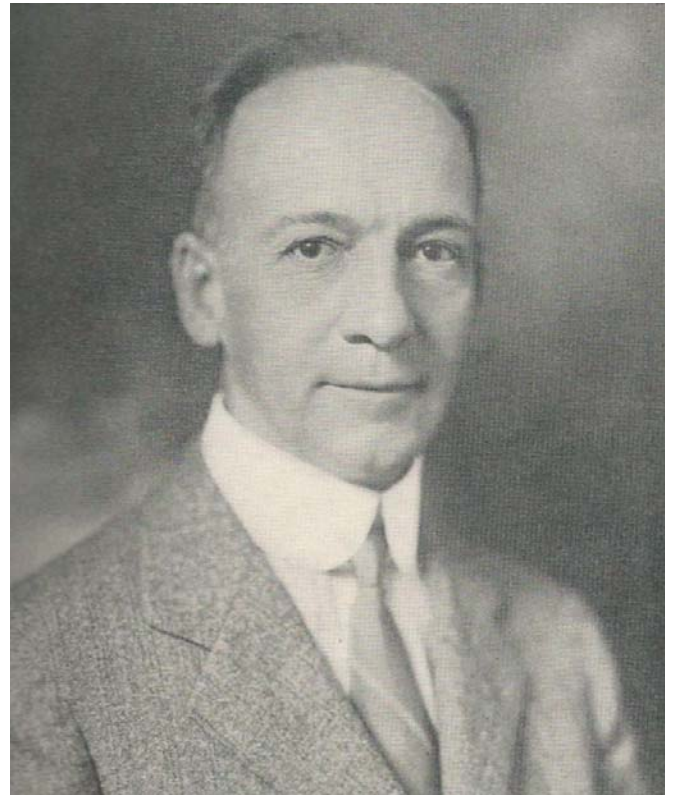


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Figure 3. Harry H. Rogers. *New Encyclopedia of Texas*



Figure 4. George Willis. *New Encyclopedia of Texas*



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Figure 5. Milam Building architectural model.
Milam Building Collection.



Figure 6. Milam Building, July 15, 1927
Milam Building Collection



Milam Building, San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas

Figure 7. Milam Building, August 13, 1927. Milam Building Collection



Figure 8. Milam Building, September 15, 1927. Milam Building Collection



Milam Building, San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas

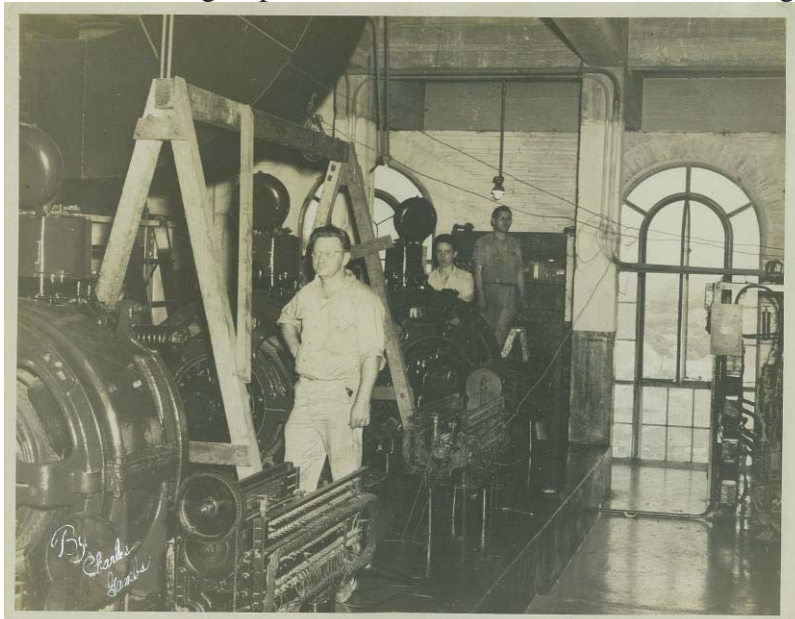
Figure 9. Milam Building, October 1, 1927. Milam Building Collection



Figure 10. Milam Building, November 15, 1927. Milam Building Collection



Figure 11. Milam Building, top floor mechanical room. Milam Building Collection



Milam Building, San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas

Figure 12. Milam Building advertisement. San Antonio *Light*, August 21, 1927, 1:4.



**"Every Day a Perfect Day"
--in the Milam Building**

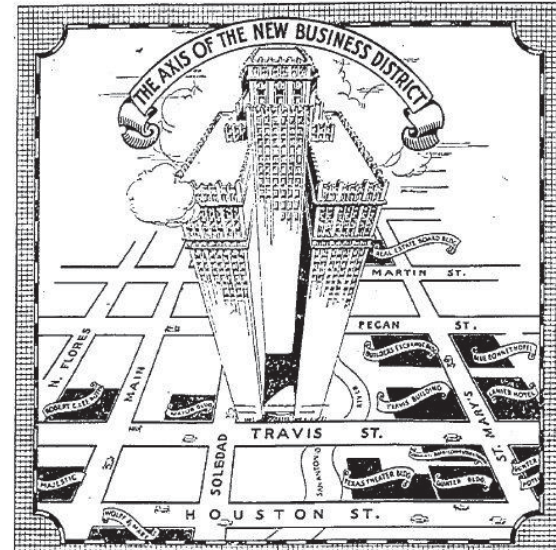
NO MATTER what the weather outside, the atmosphere will always be delightful in the Milam Building. Because this wonderfully up-to-date building will manufacture its own weather! By means of a remarkable new invention which is called an air conditioning system, quantities of fresh outside air will be admitted to every office at all times, having been washed, sterilized and heated or cooled according to the season of the year.

The Milam Building will be the first large skyscraper in the world to use this system throughout. In other major cities some buildings are served on one or more floors by this method but San Antonio is awarded the world distinction of having the first large building completely equipped with this comfort and health giving device.

Information about the Milam Building and floor plans are available at the temporary office, 101 W. Travis Street, Tel. Crockett 1047

The Milam Building

Figure 13. Milam Building advertisement. San Antonio *Express*, October 18, 1927, 3.



LOCATION is the most valuable single asset that a business can have.

Consider the Milam Building in relation to its significant surroundings, and you will see why its location is highly desirable for your business.

Rental arrangements are being made now. To be sure of suiting your individual requirements, an early selection is advised. Inquire at 101 West Travis Street, or telephone Crockett 1047.

The Milam Building

Milam Building, San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas

Figure 14. Milam Cafeteria advertisement. San Antonio *Express*, September 22, 1928, 28-D.

28 D SAN ANTONIO EXPRESS - SUNDAY MORNING, SEPTEMBER 22, 1928

MILAM Cafeterias

Congratulate
GUNTER CAFETERIA



The entry of the great Baker Hotel organization into the Cafeteria field in San Antonio is a real and valuable contribution to the catering industry of this city and a forward step of singular importance that warrants heartiest congratulations from the industry as a whole, in which we join.

**GREATER SAN ANTONIO'S
GREATER CAFETERIAS
SERVING GREATER NEEDS**

Courteous service, ideal surroundings, a great variety of healthful foods deliciously prepared, have combined to bring noteworthy recognition to our Milam Cafeteria, in the Milam Building, where a responsive and appreciative public has made it impossible to serve all the increasing thousands who prefer its service. Hundreds have been turned away. It is in recognition of the conditions that we are now

Announcing

MILAM Cafeterias

MILAM CAFETERIA, ground floor (Houston Street Entrance) of the Central Building. Watch for signs of our formal opening. And then, as now, twice as often to twice as many, we will still be able to give the same splendid MILAM SERVICE at hours which meet your convenience.

Service Hours Meet Your Convenience

MILAM CAFETERIA

CENTRAL BUILDING

Milam Building, San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas

Figure 15. Milam Building barber shop. Milam Building Collection

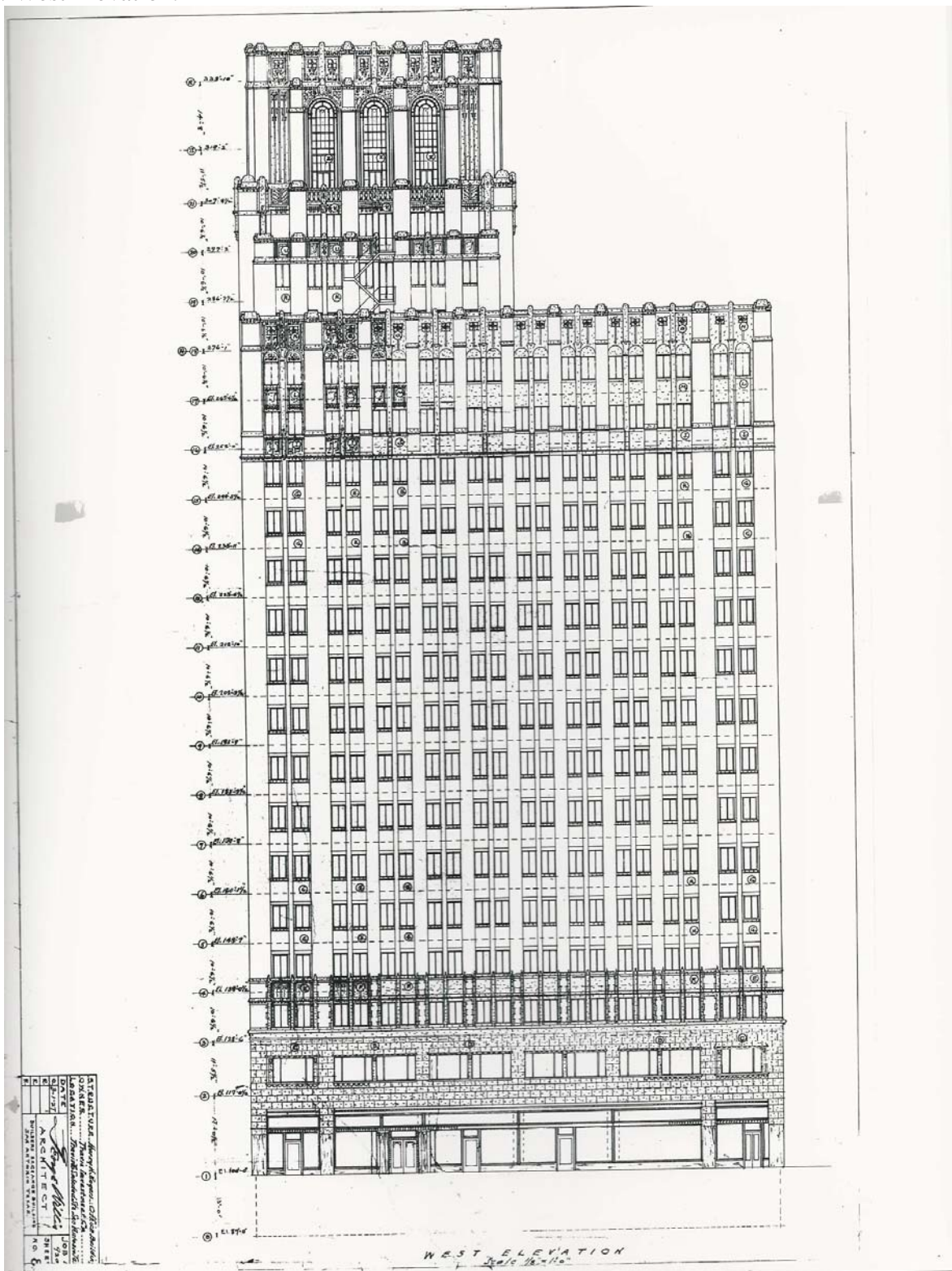


Figure 16. South (primary) Elevation.



Milam Building, San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas

Figure 17: West Elevation.



Milam Building, San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas

Figure 18: North (rear) Elevation.

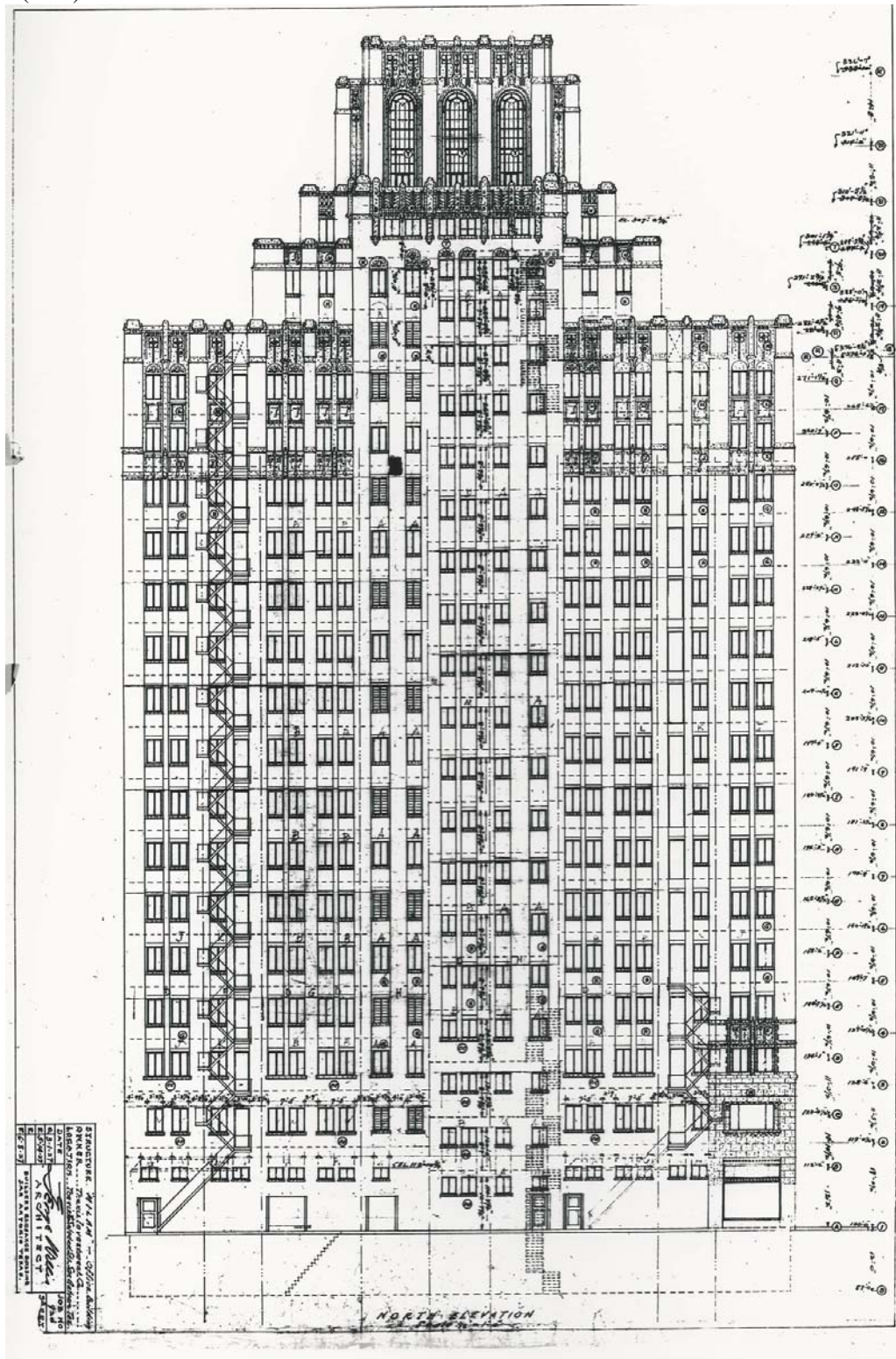
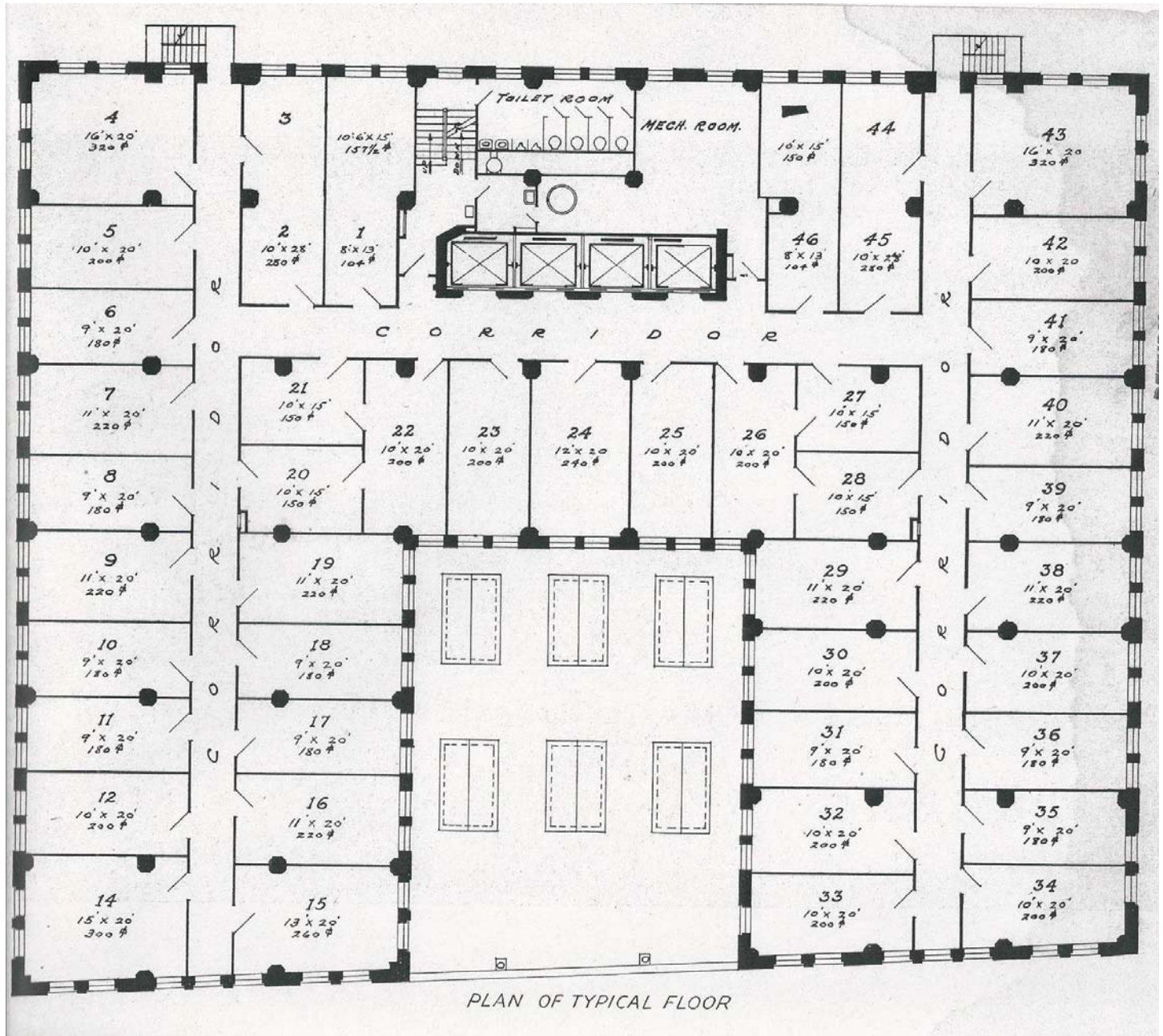


Figure 19: East Elevation.



Milam Building, San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas

Figure 20. Floor plan



Milam Building, San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas

CURRENT PHOTOS OF NOMINATED PROPERTY

TX_Bexar County_Milam Building_0001.tif

east and south elevations looking west



Milam Building, San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas

TX_Bexar County_Milam Building_0002.tif
south elevation looking north



TX_Bexar County_Milam Building_0003.tif
west elevation looking southeast



Milam Building, San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas

TX_Bexar County_Milam Building_0004.tif

west storefront looking south



TX_Bexar County_Milam Building_0005.tif

west elevation, mezzanine detailing looking east



Milam Building, San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas

TX_Bexar County_Milam Building_0006.tif

east elevation, adjoining building, looking northwest



TX_Bexar County_Milam Building_0007.tif

north elevation, northwest corner, window detail



Milam Building, San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas

TX_Bexar County_Milam Building_0008.tif

18th floor detailing looking northwest

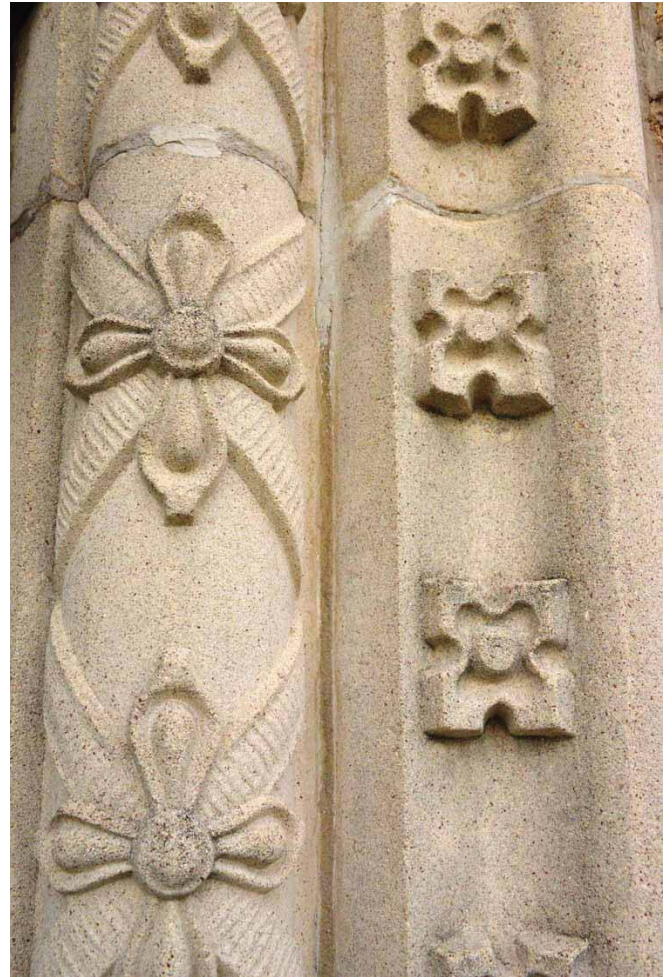


Milam Building, San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas

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21st floor looking northwest



TX_Bexar County_Milam Building_0010.tif
cast stone detailing



Milam Building, San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas

TX_Bexar County_Milam Building_0011.tif

cast stone detailing



TX_Bexar County_Milam Building_0012.tif

south elevation looking north



Milam Building, San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas

TX_Bexar County_Milam Building_0013.tif
west elevation looking east



TX_Bexar County_Milam Building_0014.tif
north elevation looking east



Milam Building, San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas

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lobby looking north



TX_Bexar County_Milam Building_0016.tif

lobby looking west



Milam Building, San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas

TX_Bexar County_Milam Building_0017.tif

original Carrier equipment



TX_Bexar County_Milam Building_0018.tif

original Spencer boiler



Milam Building, San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas

TX_Bexar County_Milam Building_0019.tif

typical stairwell



TX_Bexar County_Milam Building_0020.tif

14th floor hallway looking west



Milam Building, San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas

TX_Bexar County_Milam Building_0021.tif
original office door



TX_Bexar County_Milam Building_0022.tif
original office door and hardware



Milam Building, San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas

TX_Bexar County_Milam Building_0023.tif

former location, fire suppression tank ("22nd floor")

