

AXTELL COMPANY
(Fort Worth Poultry & Egg)
815 Grove Street
North East corner 8th Street
Fort Worth
Tarrant County
Texas

HABS No. TX-3504

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

FIELD RECORDS

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDING SURVEY
Southwest System Support Office
National Park Service
P.O. Box 728
Santa Fe, New Mexico 87504

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

AXTELL COMPANY
(Fort Worth Poultry & Egg)

HABS No. TX-3504

Location: 815 Grove Street. North East corner 8th Street
Fort Worth, Tarrant County, Texas
Located on the northeast corner of 8th Street in the central
business district of Fort Worth, the building faces west on to Grove
Street

Date of Construction: 1916

Present Owner: The Fort Worth Transportation Authority
1600 E. Lancaster Ave.
Fort Worth, Tarrant County, TX 76102-6720

Present Use: Vacant

Significance: The Axtell Company building is significant both individually and singularly as a contributor to the warehouse district on the eastern edge of downtown Fort Worth. Along with the Montgomery Ward Building (1911), the Hunt-Hawes Grocer (1910), and the Nash Hardware Building (1910) it represented the importance of Fort Worth to West Texas and the Southwest as a shipping and supply center in the early twentieth century.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION:

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1916
2. Architect: Not Known
3. Original and subsequent owners, occupants, uses:

Legal Description: Fort Worth Original Town,
Block 71, Lots 3B, 4B & 11

- a. 1916-1956 Axtell Company, manufactured windmills, drilling machinery, tanks, mill and water supplies
 - b. 1957-1960 Vacant
 - c. 1961- 1962 Weir Leather Mfg., storage
 - d. 1963 Collier & Son Inc.
 - e. 1964-1973 Fort Worth Poultry & Egg Company, offices and warehouse facility for margarine manufacturing
 - f. 1974-1981 Wilsey-Bennett Foods, Collier Industries, Collier & Son
 - g. 1982-1999 Vacant, Owned by Carmyn Collier Sparks
4. Builder, contractor, suppliers:
Builder and contractor are not known.
Manufacturer of package lift elevator system, Gilbert Manufacturing Co. Dallas TX. Fire doors at stairwells manufactured by Richmond Safety Gate Co, Richmond, Indiana.

5. Original plans and construction: Not available.
6. Alterations and additions. The ground floor has been altered by the application of aggregate siding which covers the windows on the west and south sides of the building.

B. Historical context.

The Axtell building is important as one of the last remaining examples of a manufacturing facility in Fort Worth's central business district. From 1916 to the mid 1950s the business activity within the Axtell building illustrated the importance of Fort Worth as a major supplier to West Texas ranching activities. The Axtell Company manufactured windmills; drilling machinery; tanks, mill and water supplies; drinking troughs; cisterns and other equipment. Axtell also supplied oil exploration and recovery equipment that was used to recover the vast oil deposits near the Texas towns of Wichita Falls, Ranger, Desdemona, and Burkburnett.

The Axtell Company was founded by Fred W. Axtell, who was born in Morrow County, Ohio in 1862. He attended Kansas State Agricultural College in Manhattan, Kansas. He came to Fort Worth in 1891 and established an agency for the distribution of windmills, gas engines, well equipment and water supplies. In 1906, the Axtell Company began the manufacture of windmills. The company operated this building from 1916 to 1956 as a manufacturing and distribution facility.

Tarrant County tax records indicate Collier & Son purchased the property in 1963. Their intended use was to expand their offices and storage facility for their margarine manufacturing business. Fort Worth Poultry & Egg Company, processors of dairy and poultry products, was first listed at this address in the 1964 Fort Worth City Directory.

John B. Collier, Jr., began the company in 1920 and became a partner with Armour & Company in 1926. He sold his interest to Armour in 1945 and remained as president and general manager until 1972. Fort Worth Poultry & Egg Company had plants in 31 Texas counties, processing more than 8 million pounds of turkey annually.

Fort Worth Poultry & Egg Company used the Axtell Company building for offices and warehouse facilities to support the manufacture of margarine. This was made in a building within the block bounded by Grove, 8th, 9th and Jones streets located diagonally across from the Axtell Company building. John B. Collier, Jr., and his son, John B. Collier, III, both had offices in the building. Mr. Collier, Jr. died in a car wreck in 1974. The margarine business was sold to Wilsey-Bennett Foods in 1978. Mr. Collier, III, continued to own the Axtell Company building and to maintain an office there until his death in 1981.

From 1982 to the present the building, owned by Carmyn Collier Sparks, the granddaughter of John B. Collier, Jr., has been vacant with only a few short periods of month-to-month rentals. Fort Worth Police Department used the building occasionally for police officer training.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION:

A. General statement:

1. Architectural character. The four-story reinforced concrete structure has a straightforward structural concrete grid in filled with brick and industrial metal sash windows.
 2. Condition of fabric. The general condition is poor.
- B. Description of Exterior:
1. Overall dimensions: The building's west façade is 100'-0" in width, the north façade is 164'-0" in length, the south façade is 128'-0" in length and the east façade is 106'-4" in length. The building is trapezoidal in shape with the east façade paralleling the BNSF railroad right-of-way.
 2. Foundations: Unknown
 3. Walls: Brick veneer over clay tile in filled between the exposed concrete columns and floor perimeter beams. The west facade ground floor has been altered by application of an exposed aggregate stucco.
 4. Structural system, framing: Formed concrete columns expressed on exterior, exposed at interior with exception of ground floor office area which were concealed by various plaster and drywall partitions. Columns were placed with exposed spread capitals.
Concrete floor deck and roof decks are reinforced with steel reinforcement bars and acts as a two-way flat plate system. Floor decks are typically 7 ½" thick.
 5. Awnings: An awning comprised of miscellaneous steel framing and corrugated metal cover exists at the north façade, second level. The awning is unique due to its curvilinear shape. Observations indicate a similar awning was at one time attached to the second level of the west façade. Two awnings on the façade, first level, appeared to have been added during the application of the exposed aggregate stucco. An original steel frame and metal roof canopy exists over the dock areas at the south façade.
 6. Chimneys: None
 7. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: An assortment of metal doors on exterior.
 - b. Windows: Steel famed awning-type industrial windows.
 8. Roof: Inaccessible
- C. Description of Interior:
1. Floor plans: Floor plans are trapezoidal in shape with column bays at 18'-0" center to center east/west and 19'-7" center to center north/south.
Floor to Floor heights are
 - a. First to Second 12'-4 ½"
 - b. Second to Third 11'-1 ½"
 - c. Third to Fourth 11'-1 ½"
 - d. Fourth to Roof 11'-3 ½"
 2. Stairways: Cast in place concrete treads and risers with steel pipe railings. Access to roof by a severely damaged unusable wooden ladder in elevator host way. Steel exterior fire escape ascends at east façade with ladder to roof, however is currently inaccessible.
 3. Flooring: Exposed concrete and vinyl asbestos tile, and vinyl composition tile.
 4. Wall and ceiling finish:
 - a. Warehouse areas - Ceilings areas exposed cast-in-place concrete; walls are exposed concrete columns in filled with clay tile blocks. Ground floor

warehouse area is separated from the office area with modern concrete block walls.

- b. Second Floor Office Area – Walls consist of plaster on clay tile with wood base, wood picture moldings, wood door frames and facings. All wood detailing relatively simple in details.
5. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and doors: Original extant doors are limited to tin-clad metal fire doors at stair openings and at package lift system openings. Modern alterations at ground floor included intrusive hollow core wood doors with metal and wood door frames.
 - b. Windows: Some interior wood windows meant for borrowed light from other interior spaces adjacent to exterior.
 6. Decorative features and trim: none
 7. Hardware: Notable hardware limited to heavy iron hinges and latching devices at tin-clad fire doors.
 8. Mechanical equipment:
 - a. Heating, air conditioning, ventilation: Modern HVAC style serving the office areas on the ground floor
 - b. Lighting: No original extant. One possibly historic alteration fixture exists in a second floor office space.
 - c. Plumbing: Standard cast iron drainage system.
 - d. Materials Handling Systems:
 - 1) Interior freight elevator with roped counter-weighted hoist system.
 - 2) Package lift system composed of a continuous chain link conveyor with racks for small packages.
 - 3) Exterior freight elevator with steel framed guide-rail system at south east corner serving each floor with an intermediate stop for railroad car access. Elevator car includes a folding floor-to-railroad-car leveler mechanism.
 9. Original furnishings: None
- D. Site:
1. Historic landscape design: Concrete walks with iron pipe rails at step down to street level, west facade
 2. Outbuildings: Miscellaneous steel framed carport with corrugated metal cover at south façade

PART IV. SOURCES OF INFORMATION:

- A. Original Architectural Drawings: No original plans or drawings are know to exist
- B. Early Views:

Administrative workers at Axtell Company business office 815 Grove Street, Fort Worth (ca. December 1925) Reprinted August 1, 1980, The News-Tribune, Fort Worth, Texas. Historic Fort Worth, Historic Resources Survey files, Fort Worth, Texas.
- C. Interviews:

Christopher W. Ebert. Interview with Harold S. Sparks, III. Written notes. Fort Worth, Texas. September 29, 1999.

Christopher W. Ebert. Interview with Gary Lavender. Written notes. Fort Worth, Texas. September 30, 1999.

D. Bibliography

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

Tarrant County Texas. Office Tax Assessor-Collector. Assessor's Abstract of City Property Tarrant County, Texas

2. Secondary and published sources:

Morrison & Fourmy Directory Company, Fort Worth City Directory, Fort Worth Public Library, various years.

Paddock, Buckley B. ed. History of Texas: Fort Worth and the Texas Northwest. Chicago, Lewis Publishing Company, 1922, Vol. II, p. 676 and Vol. IV, pp. 391-392.

R. L. Polk Directory Company, Fort Worth City Directory, Fort Worth Public Library, various years.

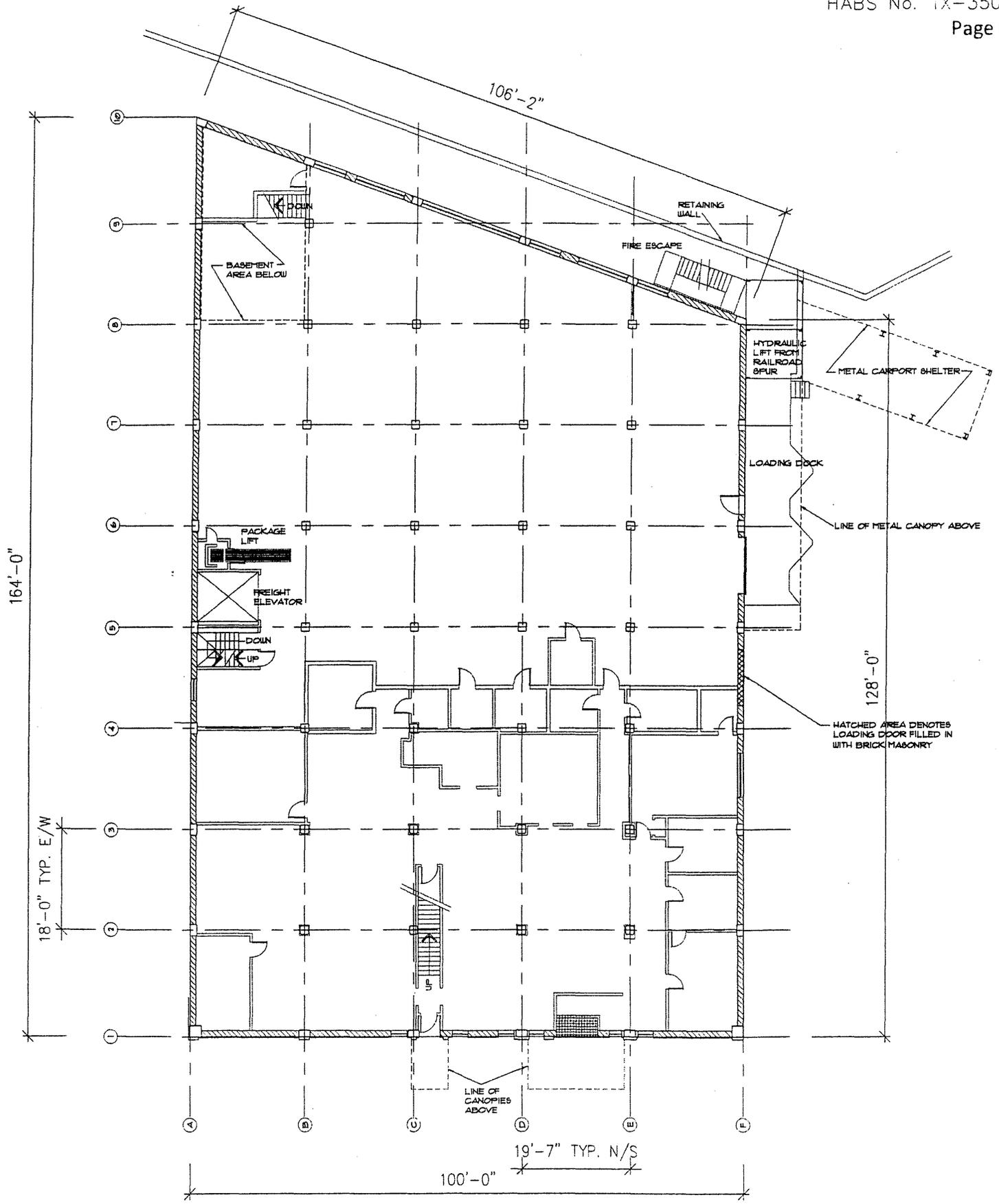
Roark, Carol, Publications Coordinator. Tarrant County Historic Resources Survey – Fort Worth Central Business District. Historic Preservation Council for Tarrant County, Texas. Fort Worth, Texas. 1991.

Sanborn Map Company, Insurance Maps of Fort Worth, Texas. 1927, p. 209. Microfilm. City of Dallas Public Library.

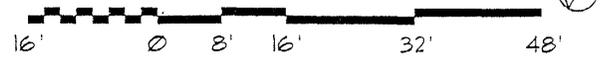
V. PROJECT INFORMATION

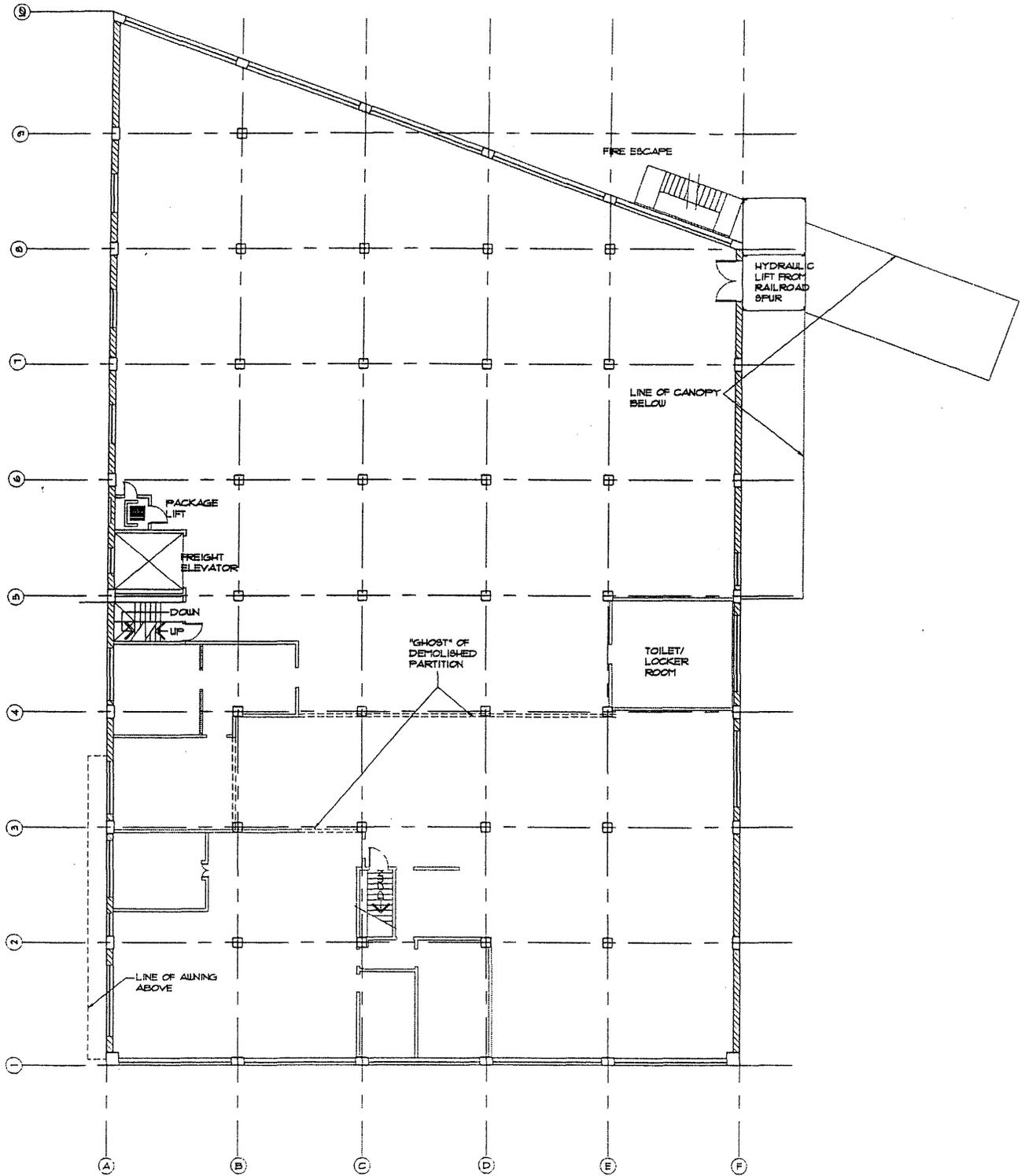
This Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) recording project was required by the Memorandum of Agreement Among The Federal Transit Administration (FTA), The Fort Worth Transportation Authority (FWTA), The Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, and The Texas State Historic Preservation Office Regarding The Fort Worth Transportation Authority Commuter Rail Project Fort Worth, Texas, dated October 21, 1998. The memorandum of agreement stated that even though the Axtell Company building was not eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places, it was of local historic interest. Since the construction of the commuter rail project would require demolition of the building, then documentation to minimum of HABS/HAER Level IV standards would be required.

The field work and sketch drawings were prepared by Historic Design & Development. The recording team consisted of Gordon M. Marchant, Jr. AIA and Christopher W. Ebert. Historical research was conducted by Christopher W. Ebert. The architectural description and sketch drawings were prepared by Gordon M. Marchant, Jr. AIA. Archival photography was produced by Michael Bodycomb of Fort Worth.



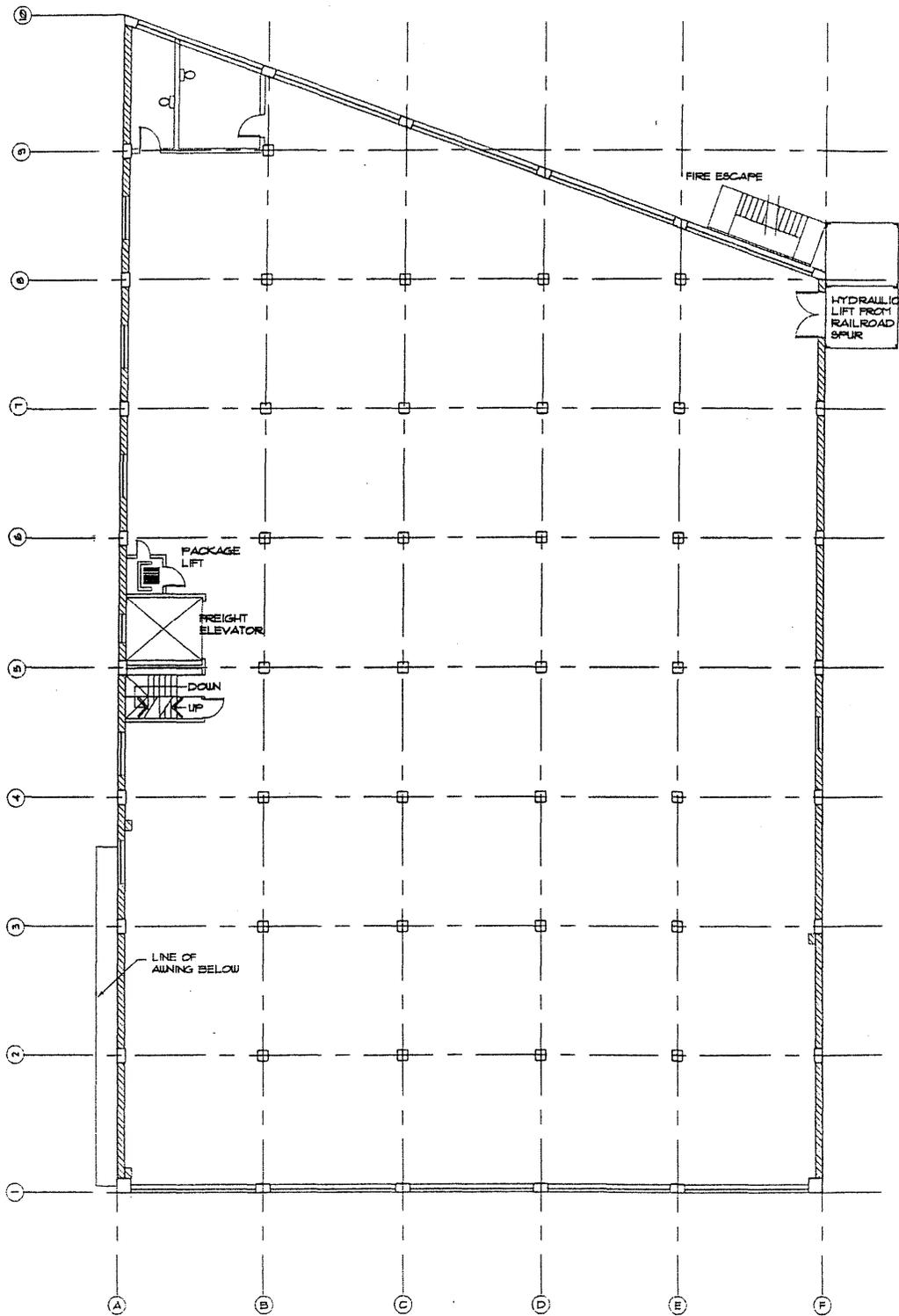
FIRST FLOOR PLAN



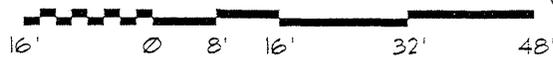


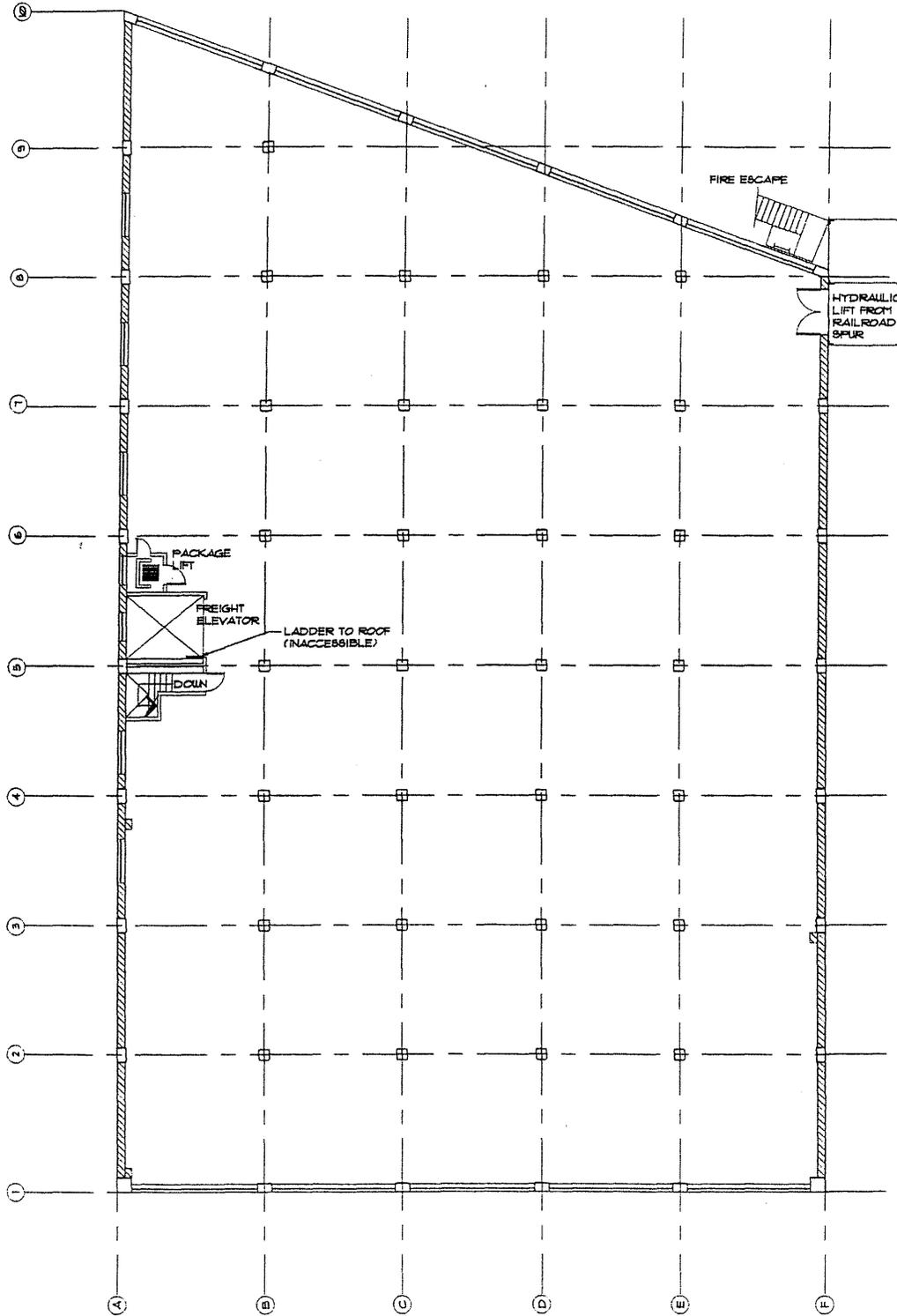
SECOND FLOOR PLAN





THIRD FLOOR PLAN





FOURTH FLOOR PLAN

