NPS Form 10-900
(Oct. 1990)

OMB No. 10024-0018

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Tower Building

other names/site number Catlett-Prien Tower, Site #PU3550

2. Location

street & number 323 Center Street ☐ not for publication

city or town Little Rock ☐ vicinity

state Arkansas code AR county Pulaski code 119 zip code 72201

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 for 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.)

Signature of certifying official/Title — Date 7/15/11

Arkansas Historic Preservation Program
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 certifying official/Title — 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.
- ☐ other, (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper — Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- [x] private
- [ ] public-local
- [ ] public-State
- [ ] public-Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

- [x] building(s)
- [ ] district
- [ ] site
- [ ] structure
- [ ] object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1		Total

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of Contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE/office building

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE/office building

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

MODERN MOVEMENT/International Style

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETE
walls BRICK, STONE
PORCELAIN
roof TAR/BUILT-UP
other

Narrative Description
(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria
(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- ☐ **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
(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- ☐ **A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ **B.** removed from its original location.
- ☐ **C.** birthplace or grave of a historical figure of outstanding importance.
- ☐ **D** a cemetery.
- ☐ **E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- ☐ **F** a commemorative property
- ☐ **G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Levels of Significance (local, state, national)
Statewide

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)
Architecture

Period of Significance
c.1958-1960

Significant Dates
c.1958-1960

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked)

Cultural Affiliation (Complete if Criterion D is marked)

Architect/Builder
Frank Eugene Withrow & Harold H. Berry, Architects

Narrative Statement of Significance
(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography
(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

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
- ☐ Other State Agency
- ☐ Federal Agency
- ☐ Local Government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other

Name of repository:

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Less than one acre.

UTM References
(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
1	15	566525	3845093	3			
2				4			

☐ See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description
(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification
(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Ralph S. Wilcox, National Register & Survey Coordinator
organization Arkansas Historic Preservation Program date May 24, 2011
street & number 1500 Tower Building, 323 Center Street telephone (501) 324-9787
city or town Little Rock state AR zip code 72201

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items
(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name
street & number telephone
city or town state zip code

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SUMMARY

The Tower Building is an 18-story office building located at the northeast corner of 4th and Center streets in the heart of downtown Little Rock. The composite steel-frame building with flat roof has commercial and office spaces on the first floor with office spaces on most of the remaining floors. The only exception is the seventeenth floor which was recently renovated into a condominium for the building's owner. The building is characterized by ribbons of windows on the north and south facades and blank brick walls on the east and west facades. The south façade is also dominated by the building's elevator tower.

ELABORATION

The Tower Building, which was built in c.1958-1960 and designed by Little Rock architect F. Eugene Withrow and Dallas architect Harold A. Berry, is an 18-story office building located at the northeast corner of 4th and Center streets in the heart of downtown Little Rock. Center Street, which currently connects the Old State House and Arkansas River with the Governor's Mansion has historically been one of the main north-south streets in downtown Little Rock. When constructed, the Tower Building was the tallest building in Arkansas.

The Tower Building rests on a continuous concrete foundation and has a composite steel frame. The building has a flat tar roof. The building currently has commercial and office spaces on the first floor with office spaces on most of the remaining floors. The only exception is the seventeenth floor which was recently renovated into a condominium for the building's owner. Historically, the building has had the same use, although the building's top floor originally housed the Top-of-the-Rock Club, one of Little Rock's finest restaurants.

The building is characterized by ribbons of windows and porcelain-enamel panels on the north and south façade curtain walls and blank brick walls on the east and west facades. The south façade is also dominated by the building's elevator tower, which also contains the mechanical systems for each floor.

South Façade

The west end of the south façade's first floor is recessed and occupied by a storefront. The storefront has large metal-framed, plate-glass windows that flank a pair of plate-glass entrance doors. To the right of the storefront is a semi-circular fountain, which is installed in 1982. To the right of the fountain is the main entrance on the south side of the building, which consists of two plate-glass doors with plate-glass sidelights and transoms.

The east half of the south façade's first floor is comprised of two commercial spaces. Both commercial spaces have central entrances with plate-glass doors flanked on each side by plate glass windows. The western commercial space has two windows on each side of the door while the eastern one only has one window on each side.

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Between the first and second floors is a projecting band comprised of vertical panels of crushed white marble. Towards the west end of the band, it says "CATLETT-PRIEN TOWER." The bays of the first floor of the south façade are separated by brick columns.

The second floor of the building is lined with large plate glass windows with small rectangular transoms. Structural steel columns covered with small square tiles are evenly-spaced along the second floor of the façade. Floors three through seventeen are lined with seven metal-framed plate-glass windows with gray porcelain-enameled panels under each window to the west of the elevator tower and twenty-one plate-glass windows to the east of the elevator tower. The eighteenth floor, which is recessed behind the plane of the façade, is also lined with plate-glass windows. Above the eighteenth floor is a cantilevered roof.

The south side of the elevator tower, which dominates the south side of the building from floors two through eighteen, is covered with rectangular crushed-marble panels that match the band of panels between the first and second floors. Near the top of the elevator tower, towards the left-hand side, is a metal pole with light on top that served as the antenna for Little Rock's first FM radio station, which was located on the building's 17th floor.

West Façade
The first floor of the west façade, beginning at the northern end, is divided into three bays that are fenestrated with large plate-glass windows. The northern two bays have six plate-glass windows while the third bay has four plate-glass windows. The bays are separated by brick columns. Continuing south, the next bay has the main entrance, which is recessed. The entrance has double metal doors with plate glass sidelights and transoms. To the right of the recessed entrance is a two-pane plate glass window.

To the right of the entrance bay are two more bays with fenestration. The left bay has four plate glass windows, two on each side of a panel with the building's logo. The right bay has six plate-glass windows. The final bay on the first floor is open and consists of the west side of the north side's recessed entry. Between the first and second floors is a projecting band comprised of vertical panels of crushed white marble. Towards the south end of the band, it says "CATLETT-PRIEN TOWER."

The second floor of the west façade is fenestrated by nine large plate-glass windows with small rectangular transom windows above. The nine windows are divided into three groups of three that are separated by structural steel columns covered with small square tiles. Structural steel columns covered with small square tiles are also present at the north and south corners of the façade. The third through seventeenth floors are devoid of fenestrations. The eighteenth floor, which is recessed behind the plane of the façade, is also lined with plate-glass windows. Above the eighteenth floor is a cantilevered roof.

The west side of the elevator tower also has no fenestration. On the south end of the elevator tower, a detail of gray horizontal dentils spans the height of the tower. There are also three black squares at the top of the dentil detail.

North Façade
The first floor of the building on the north side abuts the building to the north and has no fenestration or entrances. The second floor of the building is lined with large plate-glass windows with small rectangular transoms. Structural steel columns covered with small square tiles are evenly-spaced along the second floor of the façade. Floors three through seventeen are lined with 35 metal-framed plate-glass windows with gray porcelain-enameled panels under each window. The eighteenth floor, which is recessed behind the plane of the façade, is also lined with plate-glass windows, although the eastern seven windows are bumped out even with the rest of the façade. Above the eighteenth floor is a cantilevered roof. The north side of the elevator tower, which projects above the eighteenth floor, has no fenestration.

East Façade
The east façade of the building has no fenestration with the exception of plate-glass windows on a portion of the eighteenth floor. Each floor on the main portion of the building has a rectangular louvered vent that vents the emergency staircase. There is also a recessed entry with double metal doors in the middle of the first floor that provides access from the alley into the main corridor and lobby area.

The east side of the elevator tower also has no fenestration. On the south end of the elevator tower, a detail of gray horizontal dentils spans the height of the tower. There are also three black squares at the top of the dentil detail.

Interior
The interior of the building has commercial spaces on the first floor along with the main lobby and corridors providing access to the east, south, and west entrances. The main lobby is the most elaborate of the interior spaces, and has tile floors, marble walls, and a partial dropped ceiling concealing recessed lighting. The main lobby also has access to the building's four elevators, which have decorative wire-mesh doors. Decorative marble planters are also located throughout the lobby space.

The upper floors of the building are currently all office spaces. Almost all of the floors have been renovated several times as the building's occupants have changed. However, as a general rule, the elevator tower area on all floors contains each floor's lobby area, mechanical equipment, and restrooms. The main body of the building contains each floor's office space.

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Integrity

Overall, the Tower Building retains good integrity from the time of its construction. The largest changes to the exterior of the building include painting the panels below the exterior windows gray and removing the sun screens above the windows, both which occurred in 1983. With respect to the interior, many of the interior spaces have been renovated, especially the office spaces, as tenants have changed over the years. On the first floor, the lobby was also renovated in 1983, but still reflects the original design of the building. Also in 1983, some former office space was reconfigured to include a mini-mall shopping concourse.

The setting around the Tower Building still reflects the period in which it was built. When the building was built, it was located in the heart of Little Rock's downtown area. Although some buildings in the vicinity of the building have been lost, in order to accommodate more parking, the Tower Building's location still remains the heart of the capital city.

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SUMMARY

Constructed in c.1958-1960, the Tower Building was the first post-World War II skyscraper constructed in Arkansas, and was the tallest building in the state when it was completed, a title it held for almost ten years. When it was finished, the eighteen-story building also symbolized Little Rock's emergence as a modern metropolitan area and was the first International-style skyscraper built in the state. The building is an excellent example of the International style because of its flat roof without a ledge, metal windows set flush with the outer wall, smooth wall surfaces with no decorative detailing at the doors and windows, and its asymmetrical façade. In addition, the Tower Building is significant as the first composite steel-framed building in the area. Due to its importance as Arkansas's first example of an International-style skyscraper and the state's tallest building at the time of its construction, and for its ground-breaking use of composite steel framing, the Tower Building is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places with **statewide significance** under **Criterion C**.

ELABORATION

Although the exact date is unknown, the term "skyscraper" originated in the United States in the late 1880s, approximately ten years after buildings had reached a height of 10-12 stories or about 250 feet.[1] To most people, the height of the buildings made them appear to scrape the sky. However, since skyscrapers at the period were masonry buildings, the maximum height that could be reached was limited because the taller the building was, the thicker the walls had to be at the base to support the weight. (The general rule of thumb for the period was that a one-story masonry building needed a one-foot-thick wall, and the wall had to increase four inches in thickness for each additional story. As a result, a sixteen-story building required walls that were six feet thick at the base.[2]) It would not be until the development of metal framing by William Le Baron Jenney that taller buildings would be possible.

Jenney was born in Fairhaven, Massachusetts, in 1832 and studied at the Ecole Centrale des Arts et Manufactures in Paris where he learned about French research being done on metal-framed and fireproofed commercial buildings. His knowledge of metal's structural properties was further broadened during the Civil War when he became a major in General William Tecumseh Sherman's corps of engineers and studied bridge building and the structural properties of iron. After the war, Jenney went to Chicago where he opened his architectural office in 1868, and it allowed him to further explore the structural qualities of metal. Although he employed combination wood and metal frames early on, he finally employed an all-metal frame for his design of the Home Insurance Building, which was built in 1885. The Home Insurance Building was

[1] John Fleming, Hugh Honour, & Nikolaus Pevsner. *The Penguin Dictionary of Architecture*. London: Penguin Books, 1980, p. 299.
[2] Wiseman, Carter. *Shaping a Nation: Twentieth-Century American Architecture and its Makers*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, c.1998, p. 48.

only ten stories tall – no taller than some of the masonry skyscrapers of the time – but it paved the way for taller buildings to be built in the future.[3] Ultimately, the architectural firm of Holabird & Roche would pioneer the use of an all-steel skeleton for the construction of a skyscraper with the construction of Chicago's twenty-two-story Tacoma Building in 1890-1894, and skyscrapers would eventually reach a height of fifty eight stories prior to World War I with the construction of Cass Gilbert's Woolworth Building in New York in 1913.[4]

Even though the development and construction of skyscrapers originated and flourished in the northern cities of Chicago and New York prior to World War I, a limited amount of skyscraper construction occurred in Arkansas in the early twentieth century, mostly in Little Rock. The Southern Trust Building, designed by architect George R. Mann and built in Little Rock in 1908, is considered to be Arkansas's first skyscraper, and was the tallest building in the state at the time of its construction. The ten-story building, which cost $350,000, was considered to be completely modern by 1908 standards. It had electric and gas lights, steam heat, three electric elevators, and pneumatic mail chutes. The building was also designed so that sunlight would enter the windows of every office during the course of the day. The *Arkansas Gazette* also noted that, "It has been found that mosquitoes and flies do not ascend higher than the seventh story of a building and it is expected that that fact will be an inducement to tenants for the eighth, ninth, and tenth floors of the Southern Trust Building."[5]

The Southern Trust Building would not remain Arkansas's tallest building for long, however. The following year, Arkansas's second skyscraper, the State Bank Building, which was also designed by George Mann, was built. At eleven stories tall, it eclipsed the Southern Trust Building and became Arkansas's tallest building. (A twelfth-floor penthouse story would be added in 1949.) Like the Southern Trust Building, the State Bank Building followed the popular formula for skyscraper design of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries that mimicked a classical column with a distinctive base, shaft, and cap.[6]

In between World War I and World War II, skyscraper construction continued on a limited basis in Little Rock. Most notably, a November 23, 1924, article in the *Arkansas Gazette* announced that a "$1,000,000 Office Building Planned – G. W. Donaghey to Erect Tallest Structure in State on Main Street." Donaghey announced that he planned to erect a 14-story building at the southeast corner of 7th and Main streets. Donaghey further announced that "I have been in consultation with Hunter McDonnell, an architect of New York, who is son of a partner of mine, J.S. McDonnell, and who was reared in Little Rock. Hunter McDonnell studied under both McKine-Mead [sic.] & White and George B. Post, New York architects, prior

[3] *Ibid.*
[4] Fleming, Honour, & Pevsner, p. 299.
[5] Information on the Southern Trust Building in the files of the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program.
[6] Information on the State Bank Building in the files of the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program.

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to engaging in that profession on his own account. Mr. McDonnell…is an architect of much merit, and it is my intention to employ him in a consulting capacity respecting the artistic side of the work."[7]

However, it was not just Little Rock that was getting into the act of building skyscrapers. In between World War I and World War II, the title of Arkansas's tallest building shifted out of Little Rock to Hot Springs with the construction of the Medical Arts Building (NR listed on December 1, 1978) in 1928. Designed by two prominent Arkansas architects, John Parks Almand of Little Rock and Elmer Stuck of Jonesboro, as an office building for medical professionals, the building was designed in the Art Deco style, a popular style during the inter-war period. The Medical Arts Building would remain the tallest building in Arkansas until the construction of the Tower Building.[8]

The development of the Tower Building was the brainchild of Winthrop Rockefeller who believed that Arkansas would never become the "industrialized economy of his dreams without a modern high rise office tower in the capital city." Rockefeller formed a consortium called the Arkansas Realty Company with R. A. Lile, M.E. Moore, and Trammell Crow, a Dallas developer, to build the building. Rockefeller was chairman of the company, Lile was president, Crow and Moore served as vice-presidents, and Glen F. Rogers was secretary-treasurer. Crow also served as general contractor for the building's construction.[9]

The site for the Tower Building, at the northeast corner of 4th and Center streets, was historically a residential area and it was not until the early twentieth century that it obtained its predominantly commercial character. The Sanborn maps for Little Rock, which begin in 1886, show that most of the block was residential, with the exception of a couple of small businesses and a school/synagogue just to the north of the Tower Building's location. (This building would become the Scottish Rite Cathedral by 1897.) However, between 1897 and 1913, the block underwent a dramatic transformation, losing all of its single-family dwellings. Among other things, the block became home to the Pythian Hall Building, the Southern Hotel, and the Lindell Hotel. The Tower Building site was home to a printing company, with a new and second-hand furniture store, in addition to a commercial building with apartments on the second and third floors. The Tower Building's block would retain its commercial character, albeit with the introduction of three parking lots, when the last Sanborn map was done for Little Rock in 1950.[10] By 1958, the site for the Tower Building had been cleared and was occupied by the National Garages Parking Lot, and construction began soon after.[11]

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[7] "$1,000,000 Office Building Planned." *Arkansas Gazette*, 23 November 1924, p. 1.
[8] Miller, John T. "Medical Arts Building, Hot Springs, Garland County, Arkansas." National Register of Historic Places Registration Form. From the files of the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program, 1978.
[9] Plunkett, Bob. "Arkansas's 'First Skyscraper' Undergoes Dramatic Renovation." *Arkansas Gazette*, 20 November 1983, p. 1G.
[10] Sanborn Fire Insurance Company. Sanborn maps for Little Rock, Arkansas, 1886, 1889, 1892, 1897, 1913, and 1950.
[11] *Polk's Little Rock/North Little Rock City Directory*, 1958.

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The design of the Tower Building was the result of the collaboration of Little Rock architect Frank Eugene Withrow and Dallas architect Harold A. Berry. Withrow was born in Little Rock on January 19, 1925, and served in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers between 1943 and 1945 before studying architecture at Washington University. He received his Bachelor of Architecture degree in 1950. In 1954, Withrow organized his own firm and the Tower Building was his first principal work. Withrow would later design a wide variety of buildings around the state including West Hills Elementary School in Little Rock (1967), Newton County Hospital in Jasper (1968), Woodruff County Hospital in McCrory (1969) and an addition to the Lee County Courthouse in Marianna (1969).[12]

Harold A. Berry was born in Texas in 1922 to a family of builders. His father, C. D. Berry was a builder as was his grandfather John Berry. He worked for his father during high school and then went on to pursue a Bachelor of Science Degree in Architecture and Engineering at Texas A&M University. During World War II, like Withrow, Berry served in the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. After World War II, Berry went into practice for six years with Wyatt C. Hedrick. Berry then practiced with Thomas, Jameson and Merrill for one year before going out on his own in 1953.[13]

Unlike Withrow, Berry's practice covered a much wider area. Although much of his practice was centered on the Dallas area, where his designs included "offices and distribution facilities for firms like Safeway, Motorola and Polaroid; commercial buildings such as Buckner Bowling Lanes, Preston Royal Shopping Center, and parking for Continental Trailways; research facilities for firms like Sun and Collins; the Hampton-Illinois branch of the Dallas Public Library, and 10-story Locke Medical," Berry also designed buildings in other cities. For example, he designed high-rise office buildings in Kansas City, Cincinnati, Indianapolis, Augusta, Las Vegas, and Wilmington, Delaware, where his 18-story Farmers Bank Building (now Citizens Bank Center) shows similarities to the Tower Building.[14]

Berry became involved in the work on the Tower Building through his previous extensive work with Trammell Crow in the Dallas area. Withrow, on the other hand, had worked with Rick Lile previously, one of the other partners in the project, and Lile told Withrow to go to Dallas and meet Berry. Withrow and Berry hit it off well, which led to the partnership for the design of the building.[15]

[12] Gane, John F., AIA, ed. *American Architects Directory, 3rd Edition*. New York: R. R. Bowker, Company, 1970.
[13] "Architects Challenged By Economics of It All." *Dallas Morning News*, 27 November 1966, page unknown.
[14] *Ibid.*
[15] Withrow, F. Eugene. Telephone conversation with the author. 21 April 2011

Berry was the lead architect for the Tower Building's design, while Withrow worked mainly on the interior design of the building. Berry based the Tower Building's design on the Simms Building in Albuquerque, New Mexico, a thirteen-story building constructed in 1954 and designed by Flatow, Moore, Bryan, and Fairburn (NR listed 1998). With its projecting first floor, recessed top floor, and windowless brick east and west walls, it is easy to see the similarities between the Simms Building and the Tower Building. Interestingly, when it was completed the Simms Building was the tallest building in New Mexico, a title it would hold for nine years.[16]

Berry likely would have seen press coverage of the Simms Building shortly after it opened in 1955. As the National Register nomination for the Simms Building states, "In September 1955, *Progressive Architecture*, one of the most well-known national architectural magazines, featured the Simms Building. The article opened with the words: 'It is a strange fact that in the smaller cities generally, distinguished commercial architecture seldom appears. An outstanding exception is the Simms Building in Albuquerque,' and was illustrated with photographs by Julius Shulman. *Architectural Forum* [also] featured the building in a 1957 article..."[17]

The construction of the Tower Building allowed Berry and Withrow to use a new technology in the Little Rock area; specifically the Tower Building was the first building in the area to use a composite steel frame. The composite steel frame was developed in Chicago in the late nineteenth century, and was revolutionary in structural technology. It was discovered that encasing cast-iron framing, which was susceptible to fire damage, in concrete greatly increased the iron's resistance to fire. Composite beams are comprised of concrete and steel joined together to behave as a single unit.[18]

The use of a composite steel system had some advantages to a regular steel structural system. By combining the two materials together, it maximized the properties of each material and also made the resulting structural system stronger since it combined the compressive strength of the concrete with the tensile strength of the steel. The system also allowed the building's outer curtain wall to be thinner and filled with more glass that allowed more light into the interior since it was no longer a structural element. The result was that the building could have reduced thicknesses

[16] Not only did the design of the Simms Building influence the Tower Building, it also inspired the design of the Gold Building built just to its east and completed in 1968. Like the Simms Building, the Gold Building also has a projecting first floor and windowless brick east and west walls. Some of the design characteristics of the Tower Building would also be utilized later by Berry in his design for the Famers Bank Building (new Citizens Bank Center) in Wilmington, Delaware.

[17] Armstrong, Krista Lee. "Simms Building, Albuquerque, Bernalillo County, New Mexico." National Register of Historic Places Registration Form. From the files of the New Mexico Historic Preservation Division, 1997.

[18] Information on Composite Steel Construction found at: http://timerime.com/en/timeline/117777/Brief+History+of+Composite+Steel+Construction.

of the outer walls, which allowed an increase in valuable floor space and a reduced weight of the outer skin of the building. This also allowed substantial increases in building heights.[19]

Berry and Withrow chose the International style when they designed the Tower Building, which was not surprising since it was becoming the style of choice for almost all post-war high-rise buildings. However, the use of the International style for a skyscraper was also new to Little Rock. The International style developed between World War I and World War II through the efforts of a group of European architects, including Le Corbusier in France, Oud and Rietveld in Holland and Walter Gropius and Mies van der Rohe in Germany, who were designing buildings that took advantage of the materials and technology of the present day rather than looking back to historic precedents.[20]

The first full expression of the International style was Le Corbusier's 1921 *Citrohan* house model, which was radical from a technical standpoint and novel from an aesthetic standpoint. As Hitchcock and Johnson wrote in their book *The International Style*, "The enormous window area and the terraces made possible by the use of ferroconcrete, together with the asymmetry of the composition, undoubtedly produced a design more thoroughly infused with a new spirit, more completely freed from the conventions of the past than any thus far projected."[21]

The use of the International style for a high-rise building like the Tower Building was also a reflection of the use of more modern technology and building techniques in post-war skyscrapers. Hitchcock and Johnson also recognized this, writing that "technical developments, moreover, are rapidly forcing almost all commercial and industrial building into the mould of the international style."[22]

The use of the International style for the Tower Building also made sense from an economic standpoint. Harold Berry, one of the building's architects, said in 1966 that "We try to create the most spectacular effect within the realm of the dollars we have to work with. ...How many dollars will it take to create how much space? And what rentals will the market bear? You must weigh all against the economics."[23] The idea of economics manifested itself in the International style through the use of regularity in buildings' design. Hitchcock and Johnson explain further:

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[19] Information on Composite Steel Construction found at: http://timerime.com/en/timeline/117777/Brief+History+of+Composite+Steel+Construction.
[20] McAlester, Virginia, and Lee McAlester. *A Field Guide to American Houses*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1994, p. 469.
[21] Hitchcock, Henry Russell, and Philip Johnson. *The International Style*. New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1995, pp. 46-47.
[22] Hitchcock, Henry Russell, and Philip Johnson. *The International Style*. p. 53.
[23] "Architects Challenged By Economics of It All." *Dallas Morning News*, 27 November 1966, page unknown.

> [One] principle of contemporary style in architecture has to do with regularity. The supports in skeleton construction are normally and typically spaced at equal distances in order that strains may be equalized. Thus most buildings have an underlying regular rhythm which is clearly seen before the outside surfaces are applied. Moreover, economic considerations favor the use of standardized parts throughout. Good modern architecture expresses in its design this characteristic orderliness of structure and this similarity of parts by an aesthetic ordering which emphasizes the underlying regularity. Bad modern design contradicts this regularity. Regularity is, however, relative and not absolute in architecture.[24]

Regularity features prominently in the Tower Building's design, from the regularity of the windows and porcelain enamel panels on the north and south façades to the regular spacing of columns on the first and second floors. The regularity of the crushed marble panels in the band between the first and second floors along with the panels on the south side of the elevator tower also reflects this characteristic of the style.

Construction of the Tower Building began in c.1958, and required approximately two years to complete. It is known that construction of the building was likely delayed once. Once the steel frame of the building reached the fourth floor, one of the building's pilings settled. As a result, the piling had to be dug out and redone before the building's construction could be finished.[25] By the time it was finished, the Tower Building had cost a total of $4 million to build.[26]

The finished Tower Building, in addition to being the first building in the area to use composite steel construction, was also the first building in Little Rock to have a fire stair that connected the interior of the upper office floors of the building directly to the outside. The outdoor fountain area on the 4th Street side of the building was also a unique feature among Little Rock's skyscrapers, and the fountain originally featured a bronze and steel sculpture by Sascha Brastoff titled "Quest."[27]

When the Tower Building was completed, it became an instant landmark on the Little Rock skyline. Not only was it the first high-rise in Little Rock to be built in the International style, but it was also the state's

[24] Hitchcock, Henry Russell, and Philip Johnson. *The International Style*. p. 70.
[25] Withrow, F. Eugene. Telephone conversation with the author. 21 April 2011.
[26] *Polk's Little Rock/North Little Rock City Directory*, 1960. Interestingly, when it was finished, the address of the Tower Building was 214-216 West 4th Street, and it would keep this address until c.1998.
[27] Withrow, F. Eugene. Telephone conversation with the author. 21 April 2011. When the fountain was renovated and expanded in 1983 during the Tower Building's renovation, the sculpture was relocated to F. Eugene Withrow's yard. In April 2011, the sculpture was relocated yet again to the Rockefeller Residence on Petit Jean Mountain where it remains today.

tallest building. It was also recognized as one of the most energy efficient buildings in the country, and the aluminum sunscreens that had been installed above all of the windows were the most sophisticated sunscreens available at the time.[28]

The use of porcelain-enamel panels, especially those that were yellow, also enabled the Tower Building to become an instant landmark on the city's skyline. However, the use of the bright color, especially on a building that was introducing a new style to the city's skyline, may have been intentional. As Hitchcock and Johnson wrote in their book *The International Style*, "the earlier use of bright color had value in attracting attention to the new style, but it could not long remain pleasing. It ceased to startle and began to bore; its mechanical sharpness and freshness became rapidly tawdry. If architecture is not to resemble billboards, color should be both technically and psychologically permanent."[29]

The landmark status of the Tower Building when it was finished also made it a prestigious address for office space. By 1960, when the building opened, the first occupant in the building was United Corporation. An article in the January 22, 1960, edition of the *Arkansas Gazette* indicated that United Corporation would move in about February 1. The article went on further:

> Lee Davidson, rental agent for the Tower Building, said construction would be completed and the building ready for the main group of tenants about March 1. This is a month or so ahead of schedule. ...Davidson [also] said all elevators were now installed and operating in the Tower... Many of the firms that have leased Tower Building space will do their own decorating and partitioning, Davidson said, so that there will be some work to be done after March 1."[30]

Interestingly, the dedication of the sculpture in front of the building received more press coverage than the opening of the building. An article in the March 2, 1960, *Arkansas Gazette* stated:

> Probably the coldest art dedication ceremony in Little Rock history took place in a freezing wind at West Fourth and Center Streets yesterday. It also probably was one of the briefest.
>
> The object was one of the most, too; the most of what is left entirely up to the viewer of it.

[28] Plunkett, Bob. "Arkansas's 'First Skyscraper' Undergoes Dramatic Renovation." *Arkansas Gazette*, 20 November 1983, p. 1G.
[29] Hitchcock, Henry Russell, and Philip Johnson. *The International Style*. p. 87.
[30] "First Tower Tenant Due Month Early." *Arkansas Gazette*, 22 January 1960, p. B1.

"Quest" was shed of its red-velvet shield to a smattering of applause by news-people and officials of the Tower Building, under whose ground-floor portico it rises from a pedestal on the side of a 14-foot reflecting pool.

The pool, a ceramic tile basin edged with brick, was dry yesterday. Any water in it probably would have been frozen because the temperature was in the 20s. The base will be landscaped with stones.

"Quest" was designed by F. Eugene Withrow, one of the architects of the Tower Building. It was executed in a variety of metals, including bronze and stainless steel, some polished and some rough, by Sascha Brastof [sic.], a designer-manufacturer of ceramics and sculpture of Los Angeles.

"It doesn't represent any certain thing," said Withrow, a Little Rock architect. "Modern art is hard to explain. It is what you read into it. The outline of the sculpture is in keeping with the building. It complements the building. We named it 'Quest,' which means searching."

R. A. Lile, of the building's owners, summed up its meaning succinctly – if facetiously.

"We're in search of additional tenants," he said, "so we can finish building the building."

Lile said he considered the Tower Building a symbol of the "resurgence of Arkansas."

"Quest" is an abstraction of two spires, the vertical one about five feet tall and another rising from the base in roughly a northeasterly direction, and almost vertical. Both are simply small strips of metal intricately welded together, in spots forming designs of their own. Three circles are prominent on the nearly-vertical part.

It will be spotlighted at night, with the polished metal surfaces giving it "a translucent appearance," according to Withrow.

Withrow said the design reflected "the smooth vertical planes and flowing space enclosed in the Tower Building." It is mounted so that it may be turned, "creating a new composition with each setting."[31]

The 1960 *Polk's Little Rock/North Little Rock City Directory* was the first one that listed the occupants of the building by floor and room number. Interestingly, although the Tower Building was a prestigious address in downtown Little Rock, there was still quite a bit of vacant space. The occupants of the building in 1960 were:

[31] "Little Rock's 'Quest' Aims for the Sky." *Arkansas Gazette*, 2 March 1960, p. B1.

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First Floor:	Merrill Lynch Pierce, Fenner & Smith, Inc.
	Rebsamen & East, Inc., insurance
	Pebble Room, restaurant
	Tower Office of the First National Bank
Room 200:	Arkansas Surplus Line Underwriters, Inc., insurance
	Anderson & Newell Co., insurance
Room 220:	Standard Accident Insurance Company
Room 250:	Tower Building Barber Shop
Room 260:	Iris' LaFrance Beauty Salons
Room 270-75:	The United Corporation, real estate
Room 278:	Vacant
Room 280:	Tower Building Office
Room 285:	Adkins Employment Agency
Room 290:	Air-Land-Sea Travel Agency
3rd Floor:	Vacant
4th Floor:	Vacant
5th Floor:	Vacant
6th Floor:	Vacant
Room 700:	Vacant
Room 730:	Gentry, Dobbs, & Donham, lawyers
Room 740:	Vacant
Room 745:	Vacant
Room 750:	First Security Life Insurance Company
Room 780:	Vacant
Room 790:	J. R. Shepherd Oil & Gas Company, exploration & development
Room 799:	Private Dining Room
Room 800:	Southwestern Life Insurance Company of Dallas, Texas
Room 805:	Vacant
Room 845:	S. W. Factoring Corporation
Room 850:	Vacant
Room 885:	American Accident & Life Insurance Company
Room 895:	"Tak-A-Ltr" Service
Room 935:	Ike T. Murry, lawyer
Room 945:	H. Boyce Stubblefield, lawyer
Room 955:	Reedar Corporation, insurance broker

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Room 965:	John T. Haskins, lawyer
Room 990:	Vacant
Room 999:	Bruce McMullan
Room 1025:	American Accident & Life Insurance Company
Room 1030:	Walter L. Hinton & Associates, appraisers
	Estate Builders, Incorporated, contractors
Room 1035:	Cities Service Oil Company
Room 1040:	Gayle Windsor, Jr., lawyer
	Windsor Audit Company
Room 1050:	Sheffield Division of Armco Steel Corporation
	Armco Drainage & Metal Products, Incorporated
Room 1065:	Conner & Baldwin, real estate
Room 1080:	Vacant
Room 1095:	Two Party System Committee, political organization
11th Floor:	American Foundation – Pioneer Western Life Insurance Company
Room 1200:	Vacant
Room 1220-22:	Equitable Life Assurance Society of the U.S.
Room 1300:	Vacant
Room 1320:	"Chauf Teamsters Warehousemen & Hlprs" Local Union No. 878
Room 1330:	McMath, Leatherman, Woods, & Youngdahl, lawyers
Room 1350:	New York Life Insurance Company
Room 1352:	The Anice T. Henry Agency, insurance
Room 1360:	G. Thomas Eisele, lawyer
Room 1395:	Vacant
Room 1400:	Federal Home Loan Bank of Little Rock
Room 1450:	Warren & Buillion, lawyers
Room 1485:	Federal Home Loan Bank Board
Room 1500:	R. A. Lile & Company, accountants
Room 1550:	House, Holmes, Butler, & Jewell, lawyers
Room 1590:	Vacant
Room 1595:	Board Room
Room 1600:	Wright, Lindsey, Jennings, Lester, & Shults, lawyers
Room 1605:	Brooks-Pollard Company (mailing and storage room)
Room 1610:	Dunaway, Downie, & Downie, lawyers
Room 1700:	F. Eugene Withrow, architect

Room 1720:	Winthrop Rockefeller, investing
Room 1750:	"Ark Soft Pine Bur," business organization
	Keep Arkansas Green Association, civic organization
	Brooks-Pollard Company, advertising
Room 1765:	Winrock Enterprises, Incorporated, investing
Room 1775:	J. Wythe Walker, investing
Room 1780:	Industrial Development Company
Room 1785:	Goff Enterprises
	Arkansas Super Market Service
	Goff Super Market
	Goff Wholesale Grocery
Room 1795:	KNNK-FM, radio station
18th Floor:	Top of the Rock Club[32]

(Interestingly, the Top of the Rock Club, which became known as the Little Rock Club, later moved to the top of the Union National Building, which took the distinction of the state's tallest building from the Tower Building.)[33]

The Tower Building was purchased by the Catlett Tower Partnership in May 1982 from Bruce Bartley. The purchase price, which was over $5 million, also included the Elrock Parking Deck at 4th and Louisiana streets. After purchasing the building, the Partnership invested over $3 million in order to bring new prestige to the building. (At the time of its purchase, the Tower Building had fallen to the rank of the fourth tallest building in Little Rock behind the Regions Center, Bank of America Plaza, and One Union National Plaza.)[34]

The renovations that the Catletts undertook involved both the building's interior and exterior. On the exterior, the most notable change that occurred was the removal of the aluminum sun screens on the north and south facades and the repainting of the yellow porcelain enamel panels a "subtle silver-gray color." The sidewalks were also completely resurfaced and the original fountain on the building's 4th Street side was replaced with a larger semi-circular concrete and ceramic tile fountain. The exterior changes were meant to give the "new" Tower Building a "classy, sophisticated appearance," according to Rebecca Catlett, who was the building's manager.[35]

[32] *Polk's Little Rock/North Little Rock City Directory*, 1960.
[33] Plunkett, Bob. "Arkansas's 'First Skyscraper' Undergoes Dramatic Renovation." *Arkansas Gazette*, 20 November 1983, p. 1G.
[34] Plunkett, Bob. "Arkansas's 'First Skyscraper' Undergoes Dramatic Renovation." *Arkansas Gazette*, 20 November 1983, p. 1G.
[35] Plunkett, Bob. "Arkansas's 'First Skyscraper' Undergoes Dramatic Renovation." *Arkansas Gazette*, 20 November 1983, p. 1G.

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The interior renovations were also meant to dress up the building and keep it a popular place for businesses to lease. New Otis Elevonic 401 elevators were installed, which made the Tower Building the first office tower in the South to have talking elevators. The "microcomputer wizardry" of the elevators, which dispatched cars in response to varying traffic in the building, also supposedly made it so that passengers would not have to wait longer than four seconds for a ride. A synthesized voice, female in the west cars and male in the east cars, announced the floors and other important information. In addition to new elevators, the upper floors received new hallways and restroom facilities, which were handicapped accessible, and a new conference center, lounge, and snack-vending area were installed on the third floor.[36]

Since the building's renovation in 1983, the Tower Building has remained a landmark on the Little Rock skyline. The building remains offices for several companies including several law firms, the Department of Arkansas Heritage, and the Arkansas Attorney General's office. The first floor also houses two restaurants, the Downtown Deli and Your Mama's Good Food, and other retail establishments, just as it did when it opened. As Rebecca Catlett said in 1983, "[The Tower Building] was constructed with the finest materials, and today it's still as sturdy as lead. What we want to ensure is that the Tower Building remains one of our city's premier business addresses." The Tower Building still remains downtown Little Rock's premier example of an International-style skyscraper.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PROPERTY

When the Tower Building was finished in 1960, it was the first skyscraper that had been built in downtown Little Rock in almost three decades. Since it was the first skyscraper built in Arkansas after World War II, it was meant to usher the state into a new era. As Winthrop Rockefeller believed, Arkansas would never become the "industrialized economy of his dreams without a modern high rise office tower in the capital city," and the Tower Building was to help lead Arkansas into the new economy.[37]

Since the Tower Building represented a new era, it was only fitting that the architects would choose a new style and new technology for the building's design. The use of composite steel construction, a first for the area, illustrated that architecture in the state, just like the economy, was headed in a new direction. Unlike the previous skyscrapers built in Little Rock, the use of the composite steel frame allowed new features to be employed in the Tower Building's design. It allowed for a thinner outer wall that could now be filled with walls of windows. It also allowed a lighter outer skin, which was crucial in enabling substantial increases in building heights. It was the use of the new framing system that literally allowed the Tower Building to reach new heights.[38]

[36] Plunkett, Bob. "Arkansas's 'First Skyscraper' Undergoes Dramatic Renovation." *Arkansas Gazette*, 20 November 1983, p. 1G.
[37] Plunkett, Bob. "Arkansas's 'First Skyscraper' Undergoes Dramatic Renovation." *Arkansas Gazette*, 20 November 1983, p. 1G.
[38] Information on Composite Steel Construction found at:
http://timerime.com/en/timeline/117777/Brief+History+of+Composite+Steel+Construction.

The use of the International style for the Tower Building's design was also revolutionary for skyscraper design in Arkansas. The designs of previous skyscrapers in the state were rooted in classically-inspired styles or, in the case of the Medical Arts Building in Hot Springs, in the new Art Deco style. However, the Tower Building brought Arkansas skyscraper design to the present with the use of the International style.

As Virginia and Lee McAlester wrote in their book *A Field Guide to American Houses*, "Functionalism, emphasizing how a building served its inhabitants, was of prime importance; traditional elements…that were merely decorative, rather than functional, were to be discarded." Although this was written with regards to residential architecture, it is still applicable in the case of the Tower Building. The design of the building emphasized the building's various functions. The office areas of the building were delineated by the rows of windows, an integral feature in office design, and an important design element in the International style. The mechanical areas of the building, on the other hand, that contain the elevators, restrooms, and mechanical rooms, are grouped in the building's monolithic tower on the north side.[39]

The regular horizontal bands used in the building's design, including the bands of windows and porcelain panels, along with the horizontal band in between the first and second floors, are also hallmarks of the International style. In addition, the lack of applied ornamentation in the building's design is also one of the characteristics of the style. As Hitchcock and Johnson wrote:

> Absence of ornament serves as much as regular horizontality to differentiate superficially the current style from the styles of the past and from the various manners of the last century and a half. Applied ornament may not have been significant or important in the architecture of the past, but it certainly existed. It is easier to defend the claim that the finest buildings built since 1800 were those least ornamented. The failure of revivalism probably lay quite as much in the inability to recreate the conditions of craftsmanship which once made applied ornament aesthetically valid, as in the impossibility of adapting the spirit of old styles to new methods of construction.[40]

The Tower Building represents the best example of an International-style skyscraper in Arkansas. The International style has become one of the most influential styles since World War II, especially with respect to the design of skyscrapers. As it says in the book *The International Style*, "The principles of the style that appeared already plainly by 1922 in the projects and the executed buildings of the leaders, still control today

[39] McAlester, Virginia, and Lee McAlester. *A Field Guide to American Houses*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1994, p. 470.
[40] Hitchcock, Henry Russell, and Philip Johnson. *The International Style*. p. 81.

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an ever increasing group of architects throughout the world." As the first and premier example of an International-style skyscraper in Arkansas and the first example of composite steel construction in the area, the Tower Building is being nominated to the National Register with **statewide significance** under **Criterion C.**

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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION
Lots 4-5-6 & South 5 feet of West 75 feet of Lot 3, Block 83, Original City of Little Rock.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION
The boundary contains the land that is historically associated with the Tower Building.

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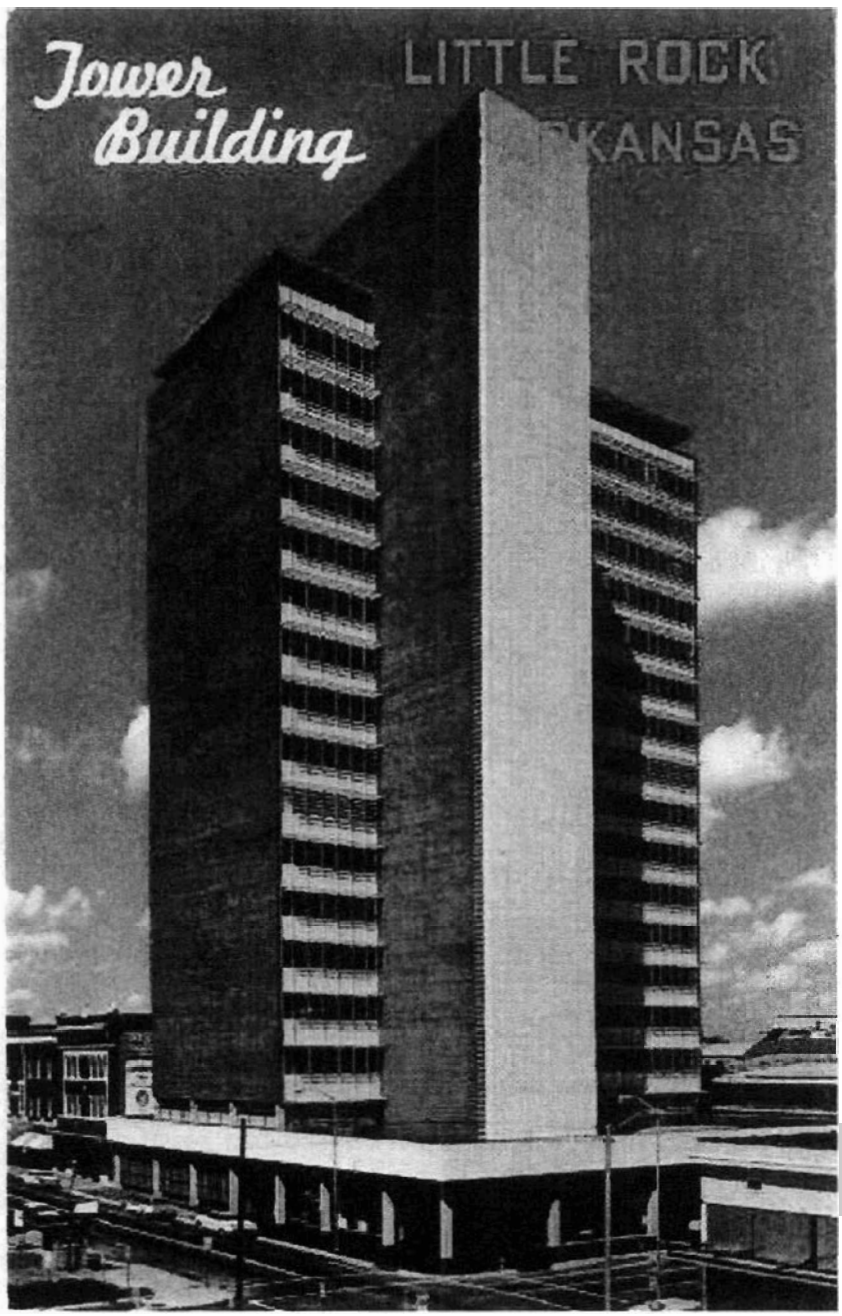

Postcard of the Tower Building, c.1960

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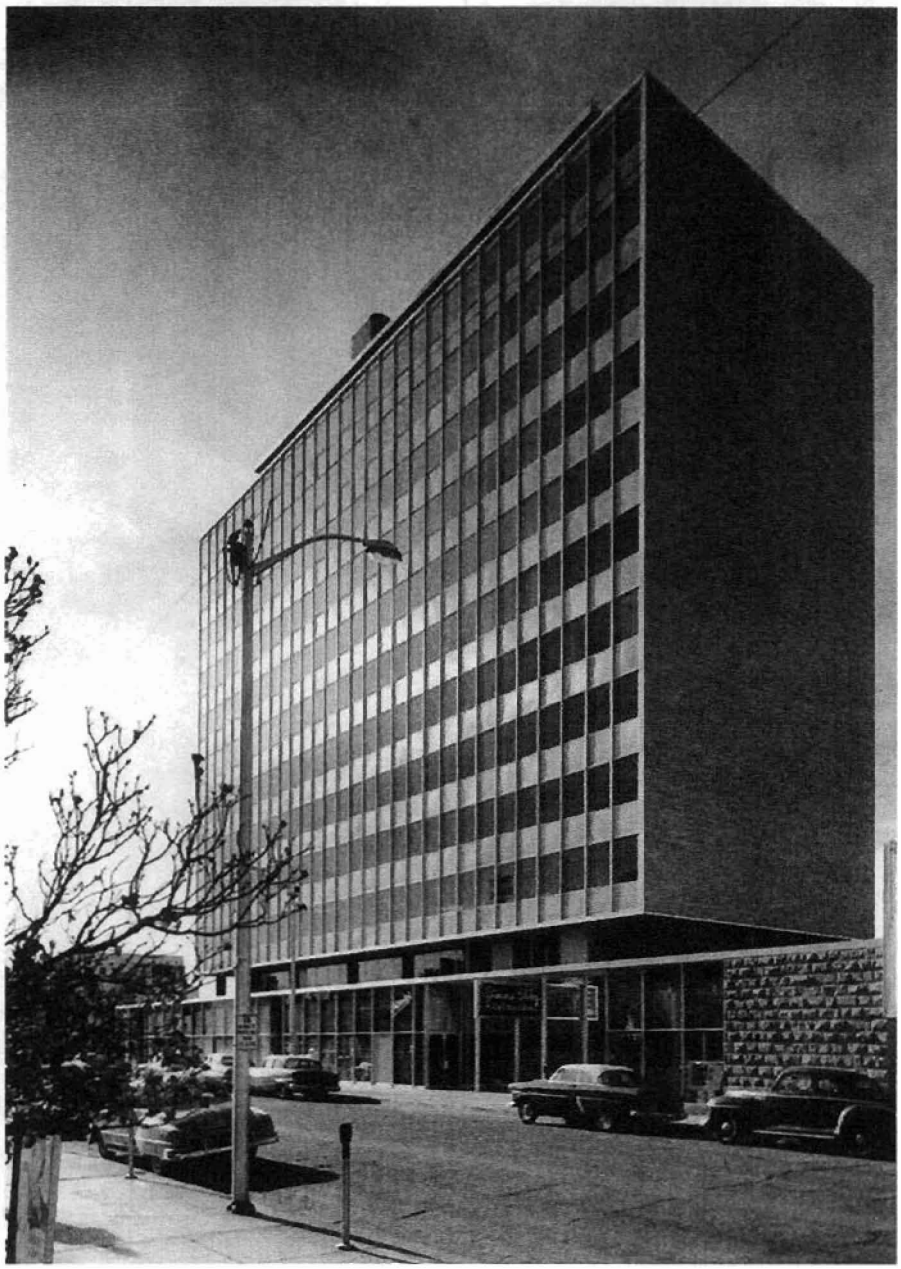
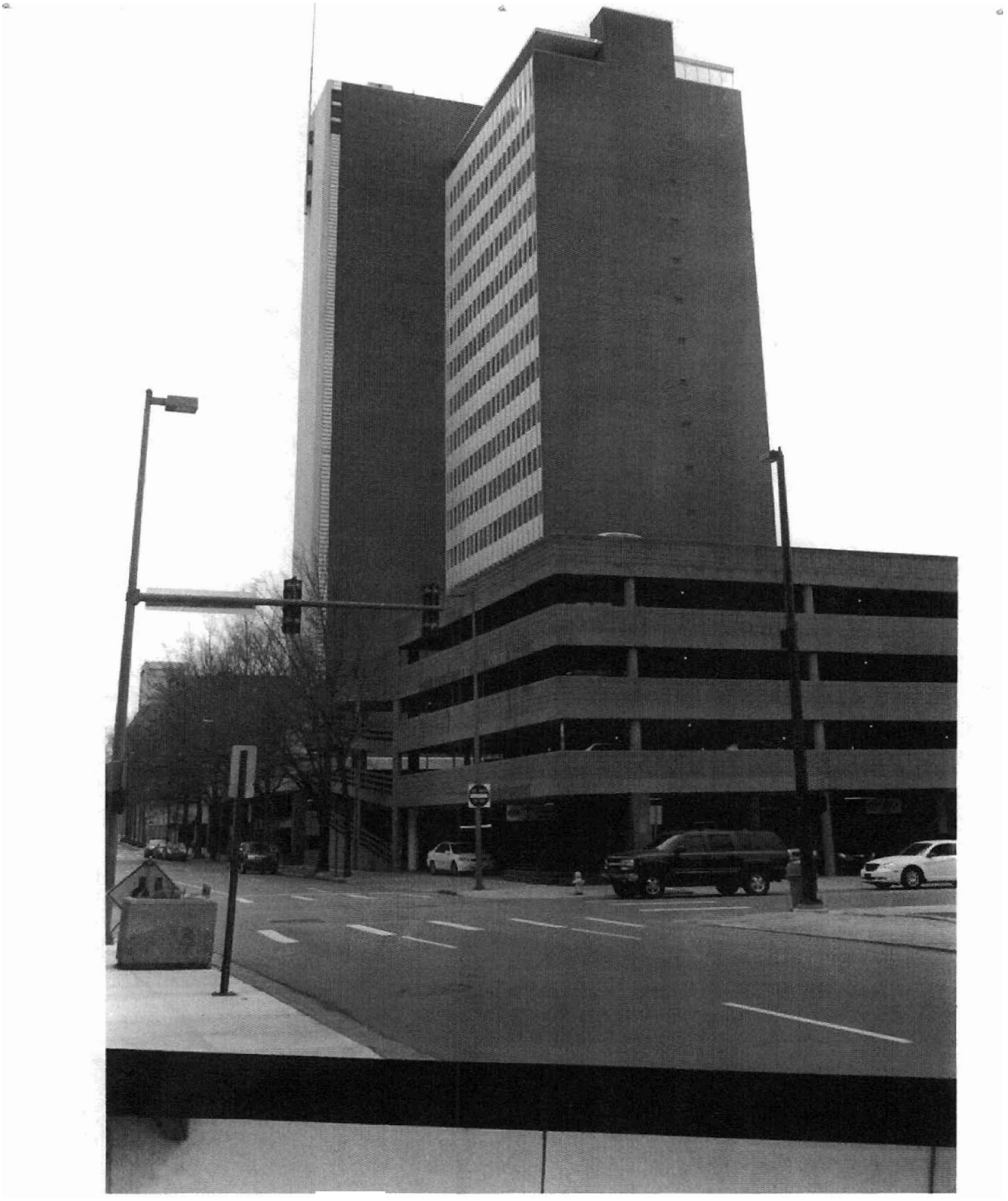
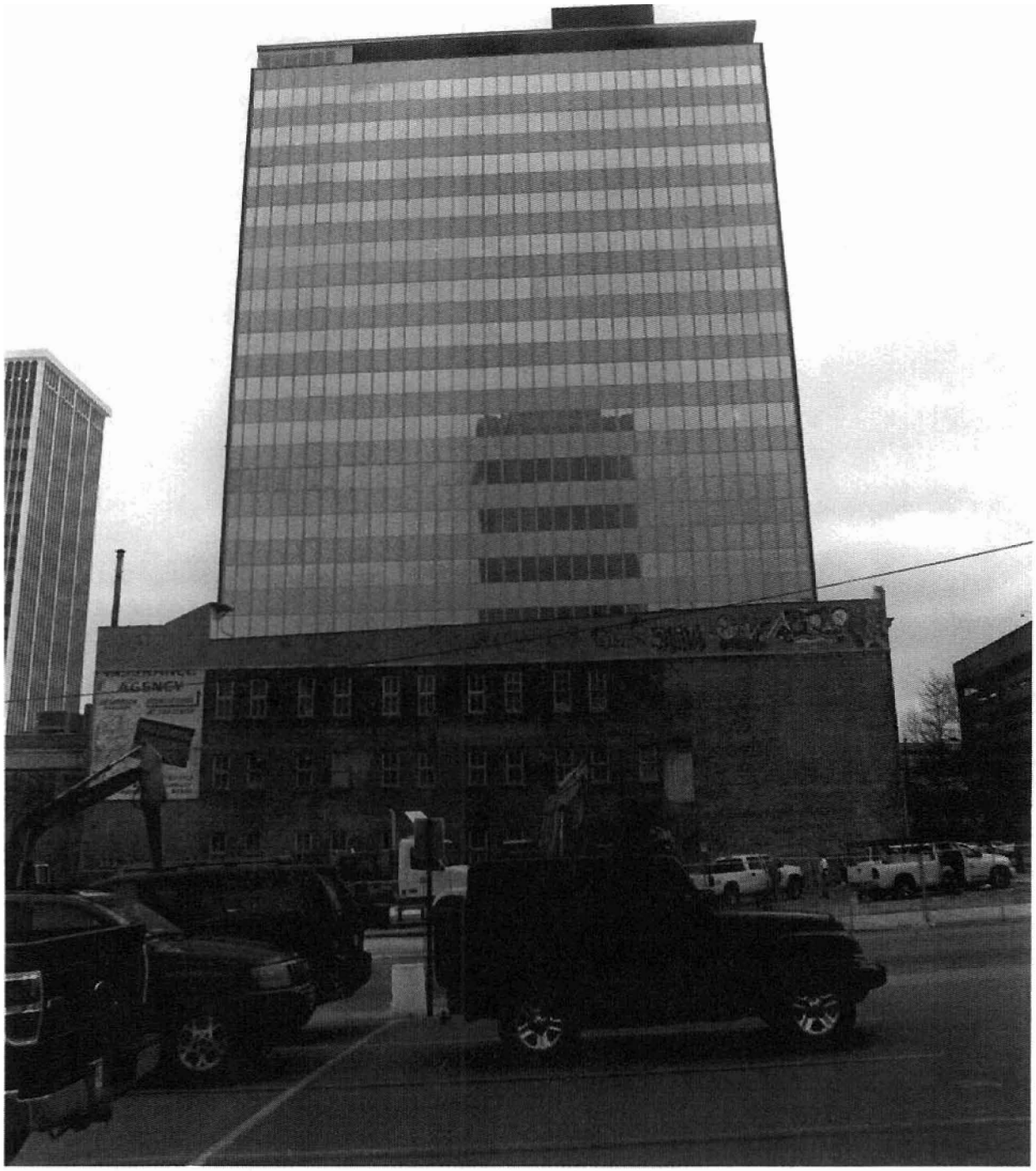


Photograph of the Simms Building, Albuquerque, New Mexico, c.1955. Photograph by Julius Shulman and from the files of the New Mexico Historic Preservation Division.

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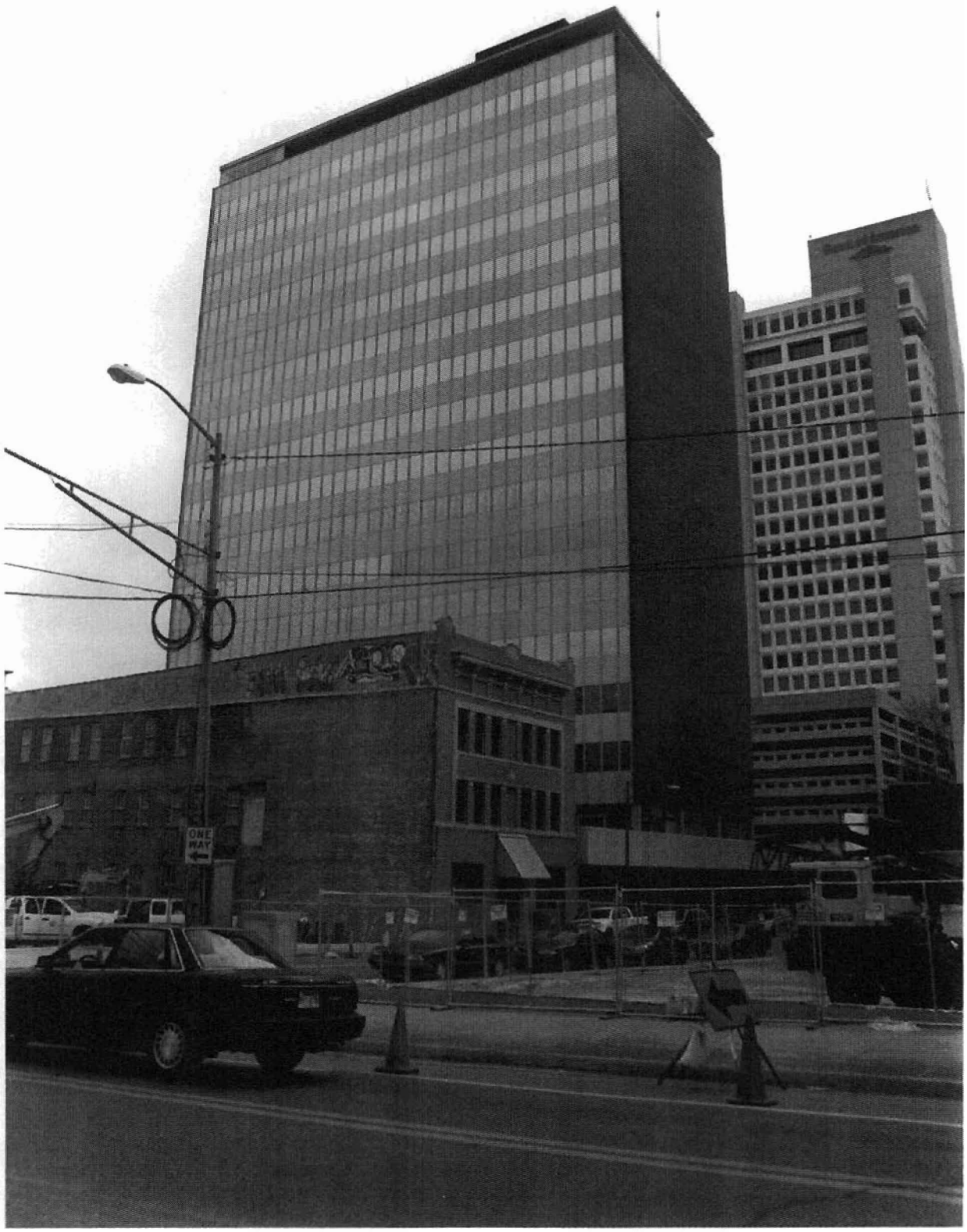
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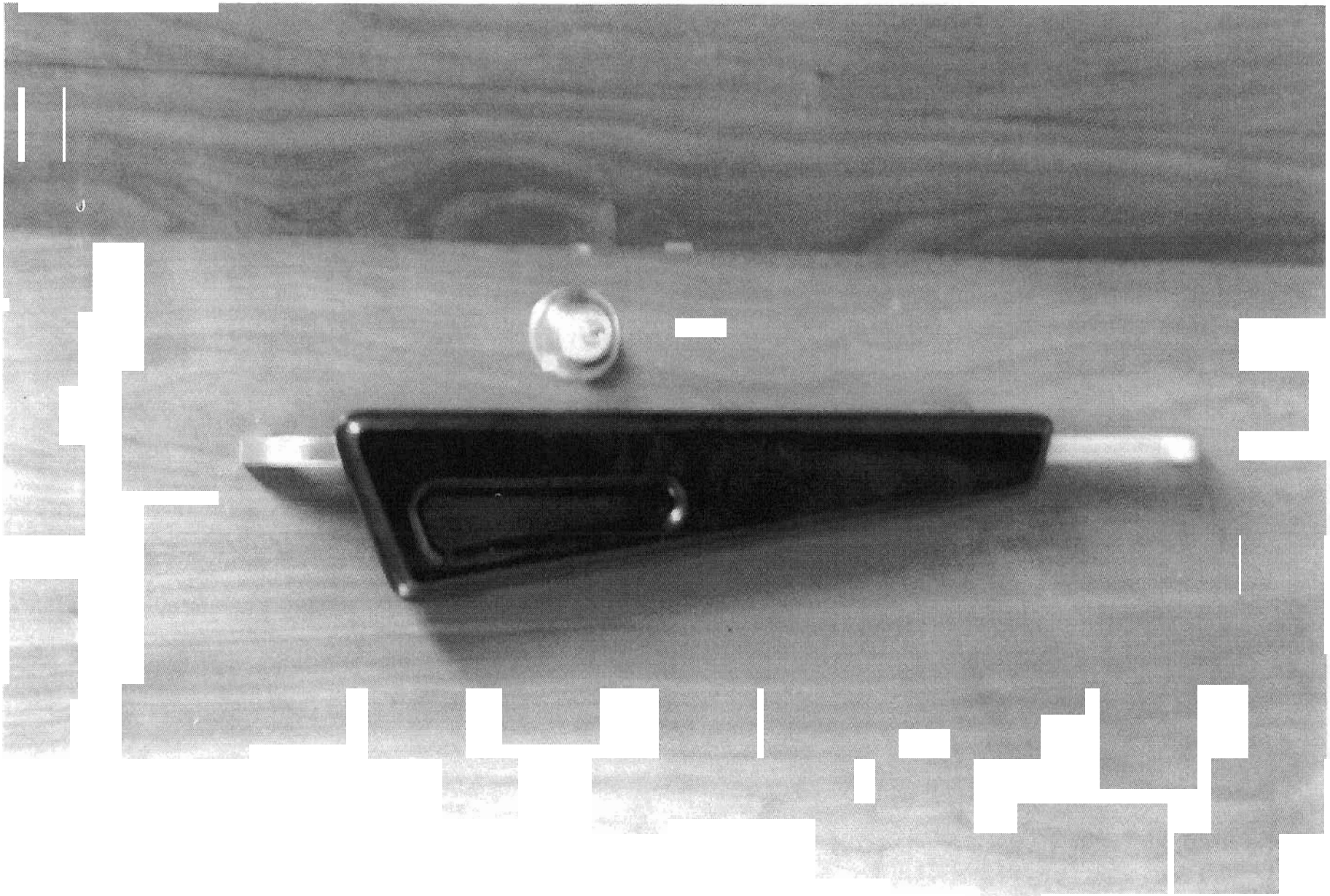
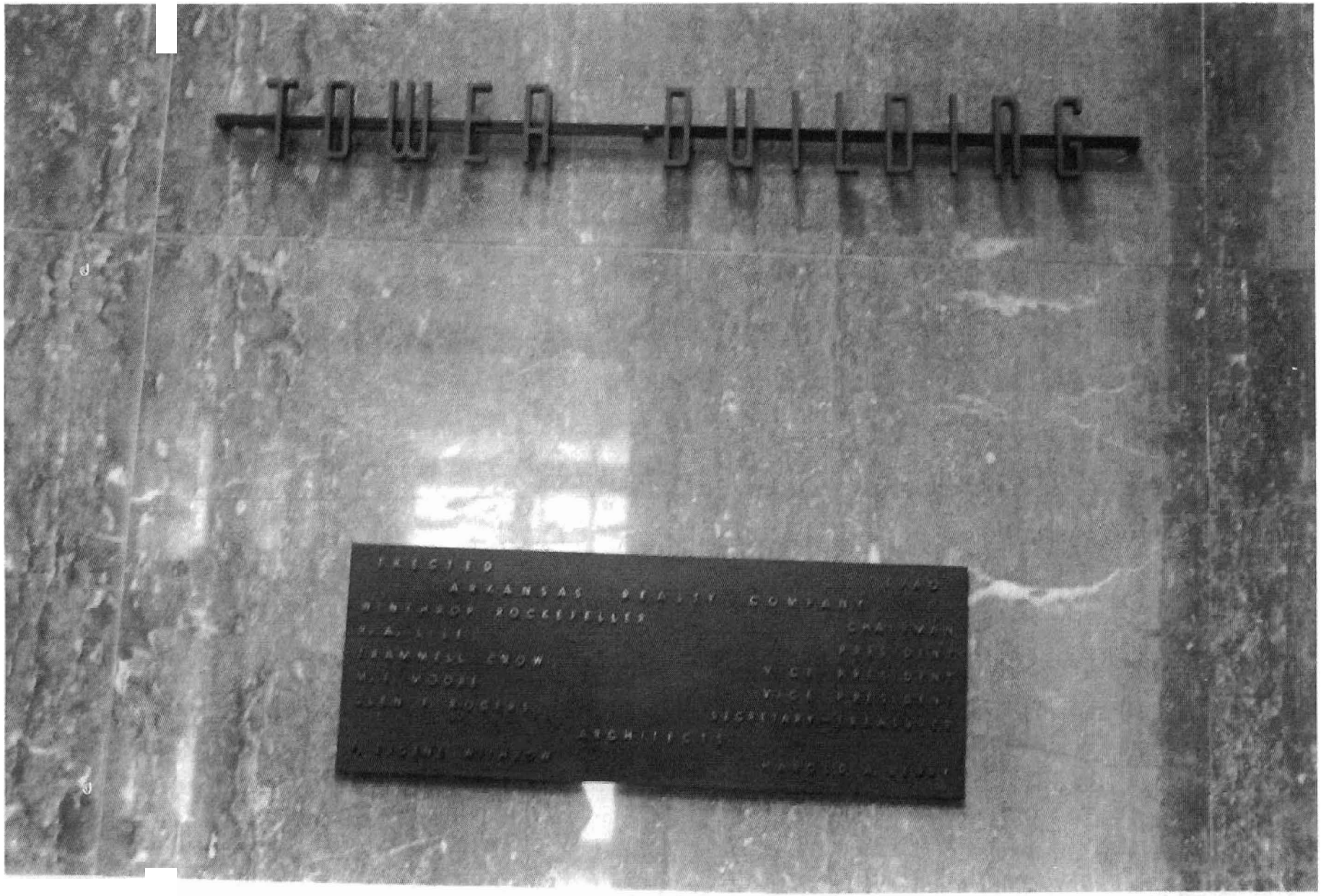
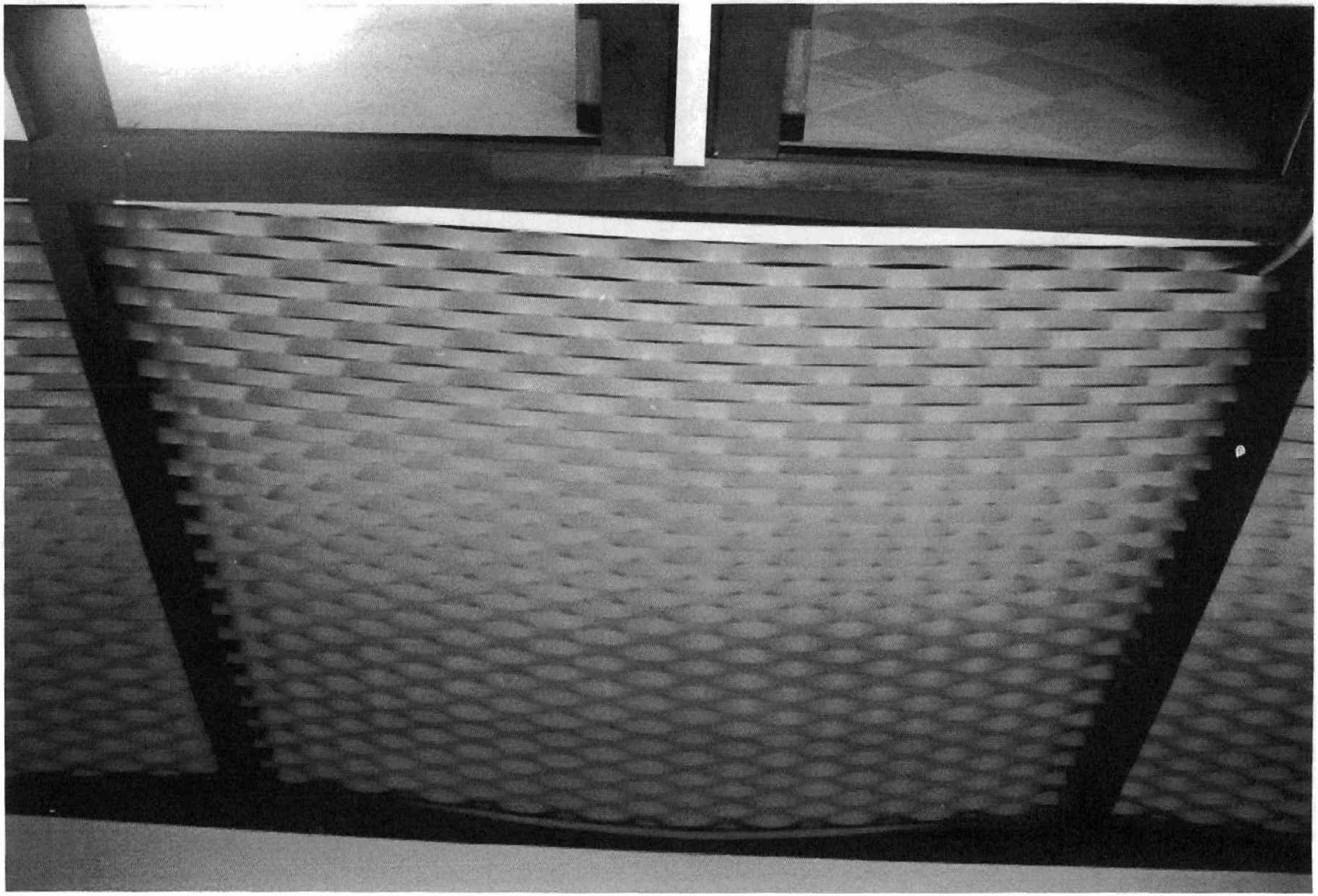
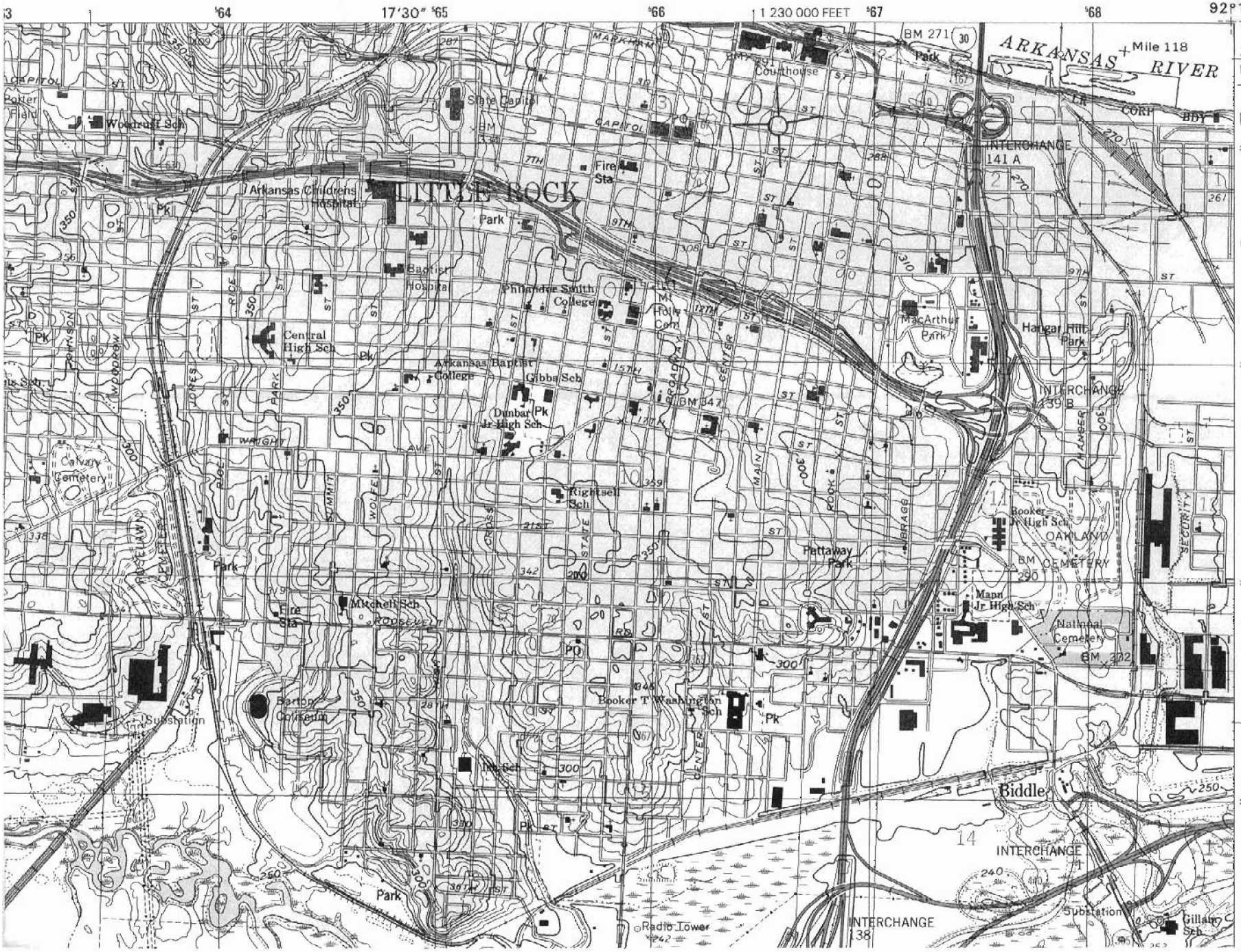



TOWER BUILDING
ARKANSAS REALTY COMPANY
WINTHROP ROCKEFELLER
ARCHITECTS



LITTLE ROCK QUADRANGLE
ARKANSAS
7.5-MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)



TOWER BUILDING
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