

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**SENT TO D.C.**

5-205

**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 any 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      **The Town House**

other names/site number

**2. Location**

street & number      **718 S. 7<sup>th</sup> Street**       Not for publication

city or town      **Springfield,**       vicinity

state **Illinois**      code **IL**      county **Sangamon**      code **167**      zip code **62703**

**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. (  See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

*Wini L. Wm / SHP*  
Signature of certifying official

*4-1-05*  
Date

**Illinois Historic Preservation Agency**  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. (  See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting or other official

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

\_\_\_\_\_  
American Indian Tribe

Name of Property **The Town House**

County and State **Sangamon County, IL**

**4. National Park Service Certification**

I, hereby certify that this property is:	Signature of the Keeper	Date of Action
<input type="checkbox"/> entered in the National Register <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined eligible for the National Register <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined not eligible for the National Register	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> removed from the National Register	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> other (explain):	_____	_____

**5. Classification**

Ownership of Property  
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property  
(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

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

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u>  2  </u>	<u>  0  </u> buildings
<u>  1  </u>	<u>  0  </u> sites
<u>  0  </u>	<u>  0  </u> structures
<u>  0  </u>	<u>  0  </u> objects
<u>  3  </u>	<u>  0  </u> Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register **0**

Name of related multiple property listing (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)  
**Springfield Multiple Family Dwellings in Springfield, Illinois**

Name of Property **The Town House**

County and State **Sangamon County, IL**

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**6. Function or Use**

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Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

**Domestic Multiple Dwelling**

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

**Domestic Multiple Dwelling**

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**7. Description**

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Architectural Classification  
(Enter categories from instructions)

**Modern Movement/International Style**

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

Foundation **Concrete**

Roof **Tar and Gravel**

Walls **Limestone**

other **Brick**

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

Name of Property **The Town House**

County and State **Sangamon County, IL**

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**8. Statement of Significance**

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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.)

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or a grave.
- 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.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

**Architecture; Community Planning and Development**

Period of Significance **1958**

Significant Dates **1958, 1961**

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above) **N/A**

Cultural Affiliation **N/A**

Architect/Builder **Shaw, Metz and Dolio (Architects)**  
**Evans Construction (Builders)**

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

Name of Property **The Town House**

County and State **Sangamon County, IL**

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### 9. Major Bibliographical References

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(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 **Ryerson-Burnham Library, Art Institute of Chicago**

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### 10. Geographical Data

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Acreage of Property **1.56 acres**

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

Zone Easting Northing    Zone Easting Northing

1 **16 273415 4408293** 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.)

Name of Property **The Town House**

County and State **Sangamon County, IL**

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**11. Form Prepared By**

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name/title **Marcia Salner and Anthony Rubano**

organization **The Town House/ Illinois Historic Preservation Agency**

date **10/15/2004**

street & number **718 S. 7<sup>th</sup> Street**

telephone **(217)525-1562; (217) 544-7491**

city or town **Springfield**

state **IL**

zip code **62703**

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**Additional Documentation**

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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)

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**Property Owner**

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

name **The Town House Home Owners' Association**

street & number **718 S. 7<sup>th</sup> Street**

telephone **(217)544-7491**

city or town **Springfield**

state **IL**

zip code **62703**

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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. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the 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 Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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**The Town House**

**Sangamon County, Illinois**

**Narrative Description**

The Town House, located at 718-720 South Seventh Street in Springfield, Illinois, about a third of a mile from the heart of Springfield's downtown, faces west on the southwest corner of a block. The property occupies the south two-thirds of the block bounded by Cook Street on the north, Lawrence Avenue on the south, 7<sup>th</sup> Street on the west, and 8<sup>th</sup> Street on the east.<sup>1</sup> In addition to the apartment building, the complex includes the parking lot to the east; an underground garage; a gatehouse for the garage; a garden adjacent to the east of the main building; and concrete perimeter walls. The structure of the building and of the underground garage is poured-in-place, reinforced concrete.

Describing the Town House's elevations is somewhat complicated by its complex massing. The building's plan is an ell oriented with its long leg parallel to 7<sup>th</sup> Street. The building's mass is comprised of three interpenetrating rectangular volumes whose relationship is best viewed from the northwest. The 11-story volume along 7<sup>th</sup> Street contains seven apartments per floor on floors 2 and 3 and six per floor on floors 4 through 11. The 13-story volume at the northeast contains a single 3-bedroom unit on each floor with balconies facing south. A 14-story volume, sheathed in buff brick and containing mostly core functions, joins the two together.

Because of its ell shape, the building has six elevations. (Reductions of blueprints showing each elevation are included at the end of this Section.) Beginning at the primary (west) elevation parallel to 7<sup>th</sup> Street and continuing counterclockwise around the building, the west elevation contains the main public entrance and faces downtown Springfield. Sheathed with alternating bands of limestone and steel ribbon windows, this block sits on a single-story base of aqua-blue-glazed bricks.<sup>2</sup> Eleven columns run the length of the base on 7<sup>th</sup> Street, and the glazed-brick exterior wall is recessed five feet from the columns, forming a protective colonnade. Evenly spaced along this wall are six blind windows with "glazing" of white structural glass, frames of

<sup>1</sup> Legal description of the property: The South Two and One-Half (2.50) feet of Lot Three (3), and all of Lots Four (4), Five (5), Six (6), Seven (7), Eight (8), Nine (9), Ten (10), Eleven (11), Twelve (12), Thirteen (13), and Fourteen (14), of Block Fourteen (14) of Elijah Iles' Second Addition to the City of Springfield, Sangamon County, State of Illinois.

<sup>2</sup> The original blueprints list the original texture of the limestone used throughout the project as "sand-sawed."

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white Carrara marble, and architect-designed grilles of cast aluminum. Each window is lit from above by a polished-brass hemispherical sconce (now painted black) and a recessed ceiling fixture with a decorative scrollwork baffle. The lobby entrance is at the north end of the west façade, through a polished-plate-glass vestibule with clear-anodized aluminum framing.

The narrow end elevation of the long leg of the "L" along Lawrence is a thin limestone shaft, flanked by corner balconies and pierced by two stacks of punched windows. Two more white columns mark the base of this elevation, where a secondary public entrance and small glass vestibule are located.<sup>3</sup>

The building presents a short elevation (parallel to Lawrence Avenue) and a long elevation (parallel to 7<sup>th</sup> Street). A private garden is nestled in the corner of the building's ell shape. The east elevation, fronting the garden's west edge, is comprised of continuous runs of ribbon windows and limestone spandrels, exactly like the primary (west) façade. The glazed brick of the base wraps around the building onto the east wall, but is interrupted by large windows, white spandrels, and glass doors for two first-floor garden apartments.

Looking northwest from the garden, the building's three main masses come together, marked at their intersection by a tall one-story, glass entrance pavilion that connects the lobby to the garden and defines the inside corner of the ell. At that corner is the core volume of buff brick containing two rises of punched windows. The mass to the east of the core volume contains the three-bedroom apartments. The south façade (at the north edge of the garden) is defined by a vertical column of 13 punched windows and a stack of cantilevered corner balconies. A grid of punched casement windows within a limestone plane defines the east elevation.

The building's three masses are clearly visible on the north elevation. Unbroken layers of ribbon windows identify the three-bedroom units (the short leg of the ell, to the left), the buff brick wall

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<sup>3</sup> The 13 columns were originally clad with matte white Carrara marble with recessed kick plates of black granite. Over time, the soft, thin marble crept out of plane, gradually pulling away from the metal clips that held them in place. By 2000 they presented a serious safety hazard and were replaced in that year with matte-white, powder-coated aluminum panels that mimic the size, color, and texture of the original marble.



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with its single stack of punched windows marks the core volume, and a grid of punched windows within a limestone plane announces the main mass of apartments (the north end of the long leg of the ell).

The first floor contains the main entrance vestibule, a large lobby, men's and women's restrooms, building-rental offices and service rooms, the Colonnade Room, a south vestibule, and two living units.

Floor-to-ceiling, polished-plate-glass windows in clear-anodized-aluminum frames by Pittsburg Plate Glass comprise the lobby's west wall. Tucked into the lobby's northwest corner is the main entrance vestibule. The building's architects, Shaw, Metz and Dolio, designed the main entrance door's large push plate in polished brass and pink marble. A stainless-steel panel above the annunciator features the script logo of the Town House in white enamel.

The lobby itself is the building's grandest space, measuring approximately 24' x 68' with 11-foot-high ceilings and walls of book-matched Cremo marble with black veining. Brass comes divide its white-terrazzo floor into a 3'-3" square grid, each section of which has a 4" square of black marble inlaid into its center. Four large cylindrical columns covered in a mosaic of red-glass tile jut through the space. Shaw, Metz and Dolio designed polished-brass sconces for the lobby, each with a pierced hemispherical center surrounded by twelve concave brass disks. The sinuous brass chandeliers were combined with anemostat ceiling ventilators, providing both light and ventilation. At the northeast corner, an elaborate marble staircase with terrazzo treads and brass railings rises to a single 3-bedroom unit and serves as a focal point for the lobby.

The two Otis passenger elevators are accessible from the lobby. Their doors, enameled red to match the tiled columns, are trimmed with thick Carrara-marble frames set in mirrored walls. The cabs feature enameled-steel cove lights, Formica laminate walls, and solid-brass trim. Most of each cab interior is sheathed in white Formica, though each has an "accent wall" in a brilliant red that matches that of the tiled columns.

Restrooms and support spaces are located beyond the western half of the lobby's north wall. The men's and women's public restrooms on the west end of this zone feature ceramic-tile walls,

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**The Town House**

**Sangamon County, Illinois**

porcelain-tile floors and stall dividers of thick white structural glass. The women's lounge retains its original Italian, brass furniture by Luberto Design, Inc.

East of the restrooms is a series of building offices divided from the lobby by a large marble counter. The building's service area lies to the north of these offices and includes a service elevator with a cab of stainless steel and blue porcelain enamel.

The Colonnade Room, an opulent community area, is located south of the lobby off the main corridor. Roughly measuring 17 feet wide by 64 feet long, the room is paneled in limed, English brown oak and lit by three-armed brass wall sconces. Brass-trimmed recessed can fixtures provide additional lighting. Four pairs of false French doors with frosted "opal white" glass, lit from behind with fluorescent lights, are evenly spaced along the west wall. A wet bar, with cove lighting, beige and gray glass mosaic tiles, and full complement of original appliances, serves as the focal point to this long, narrow space. When not in use, the bar can be cloaked by large, folding jib doors veneered in the same quarter-sawn English oak as the walls. South of the bar is a large catering kitchen with stainless-steel cabinets, counters, appliances.

South of the Colonnade Room and terminating the main north-south corridor is the south vestibule, smaller than the main vestibule, but with the same high level of finishes. Two garden apartments—a one-bedroom unit and a two-bedroom unit—complete the rest of the first-floor space. (A reduced blueprint of the first floor space can be found at the end of this Section.)

Laundry facilities with washing machines and gas dryers are located in the upper basement, along with several large storage areas for residents, an office for staff, water system, and waste disposal areas. Mechanical rooms are located in the lower basement.

The building contains a storage room near the east entrance which blueprints labeled "Perambulator and Bicycle Storage," indicating that the architects both expected the tenants to utilize bicycles and anticipated families living in the building.

In total, the 87 apartment units of the building consist of 13 three-bedroom units (including the two penthouses), 28 two-bedroom units, 31 one-bedroom units, and 15 efficiency units. Units

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**Sangamon County, Illinois**

are disposed along a single double-loaded corridor lit by conical brass ceiling fixtures whose shades have been perforated with a grid of holes. There are a variety of apartment plans per floor, from efficiencies to three-bedroom units. Floor 1 contains a one-bedroom unit, a two-bedroom unit and a three-bedroom unit. Floors 2 through 11 are comprised of eight or nine living units (depending on the floor). In 1961, three years after the Town House was completed, demand for two-bedroom units led to the conversion of two smaller units into one two-bedroom unit on floors 4 through 11, thus changing the original ratio of efficiency, one-bedroom, two-bedroom and three bedroom units. The new two-bedroom units were given the same interior features (tiles, flooring, amenities, etc.) as the previous units. Floors 12 and 13, part of the short leg of the ell-shaped plan, contain penthouses that enjoy private access from the north passenger elevator and contain fireplaces. The remaining spaces on these two floors include mechanical and storage areas.

The apartments are as stylish as the common spaces. Ceilings are nine feet high, and many of their exterior walls are entirely of glass above knee-high convector units that provide heating and cooling. Kitchens originally featured General Electric stoves, ovens, and refrigerators, and Kitchenaid dishwashers. Many still contain Formica counter tops with stainless steel edging, stainless-steel sinks, and Geneva enameled-steel cabinets. The colors of the counters, appliances, and cabinets were coordinated for each apartment. Bathrooms feature Crane fixtures designed by prominent industrial designer Henry Dreyfuss (1904-1972). The colors of the fixtures matched those of the Suntile ceramic tiles on walls and mosaic porcelain tiles on the floors. Original foyers have Marbelite vinyl floors and Bakelite house phones with model 302 handsets designed by Dreyfuss for Bell Telephone Laboratories in 1937. Other stylish touches include doorways designed without trim molding, full-height louvered closet doors, spherical spun-aluminum doorknobs, conical brass light fixtures, and "Plugmold" baseboard raceway electrical outlets. To reduce sound transference, party walls are five inches thick of two-coat plaster, whereas partitions within units are 2" thick.

The interior common areas of the building are completely intact, except for items subject to wear and tear, such as upholstered furniture, plants, rugs, and a handful of light fixtures in utility areas. The integrity of the individual condominium units varies. Most units preserve the original architectural layout as designed, due to the fact that all interior walls are of steel lath and

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**Sangamon County, Illinois**

cementitious plaster, which discourages all but the most tenacious. Retention of original kitchen and bathroom fittings varies; however, many units contain all, and the majority has at least some of their original elements.

The gatehouse to the underground garage is a one-story, flat-roofed pavilion with floor-to-ceiling windows on its north side, buff brick on its east and west sides, and a grille of slip-glazed, terracotta cylinders on its south elevation. It contains a simple concrete staircase that leads to the underground garage. To the north of the pavilion, a vehicular ramp equipped with a snow-melting system descends to the garage.

A six-foot-high, cast-concrete fence with exposed aggregate surrounds the parking lot. Each fence panel is pierced by a grid of nine cylindrical holes. The two vehicular entrances to the parking lot are defined by lighted steel-and-frosted-glass monitors that sit atop the concrete screen. The ramp that accesses the underground garage runs east-to-west across the parking lot and lines up with the service drive just to the north of the building. On axis with this ramp, a tall concrete ventilator topped with steel louvers rises from the fence along 8<sup>th</sup> Street.

The lobby overlooks a private terraced garden to the east designed in a geometric manner that matches the clean Modernist lines of the building. The ell of the building's plan wraps around the north and west sides of the garden, while pierced Indiana-limestone walls bound the garden to the east and the south. The garden is organized around a rectangular "Sunken Garden," as it was described on the plans. The Sunken Garden retains its original New York bluestone paving and two alleés of pin oak trees. Adjacent to the Sunken Garden to the east and west are two rectangular reflecting pools surfaced with a mosaic of aqua glass tile. Because of leakage, these lighted pools were at some point converted to planters simply by draining them and filling them with soil. An original, still-functioning pool is located in the northwest corner of the garden; it retains its original underwater lights and aqua-blue glass mosaic. Adjacent to this pool is a single cylindrical column that supports the roof of the lobby. Four veined ebony granite benches, whose stone was quarried in Minnesota, dot the perimeter of the garden. A large limestone planter created around an existing elm tree anchors the garden's south end. The tree has since succumbed to Dutch elm disease, and the planter has been filled with rose bushes. Originally paved with limestone squares separated by single rows of bricks, the garden's ground plane was

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changed in 1995 to concrete with exposed pea-gravel aggregate because the limestone had deteriorated enough to pose a safety hazard.

*Exceptional Integrity of Original Features*

The building's interior has many unique features that remain intact. The lobby of the building remains its most dramatic setting, with its high ceiling, marble walls, elaborate light fixtures, terrazzo floor, and several original pieces of furniture designed by Edward Wormley (1907-1995) for Dunbar and Jens Risom (b. 1916). Original lobby furniture includes a black-lacquered wood console table by Wormley, a suite by Wormley of two end tables and a coffee table in black-lacquered wood with white marble tops with black veining, a black planter, two black-lacquered credenzas with brass trim, a large porphyry table lamp, and a black-lacquered bench by Risom.

The Colonnade Room is completely intact, including its spectacular stainless-steel kitchen and several pieces of its original furniture. Original Colonnade Room furniture includes two walnut-veneer Parsons tables, three tall and one short "Sheaf of Wheat" tables of steam-bent walnut splines and travertine tops by Wormley for Dunbar's Hemisphere Collection of 1957, 2 coffee tables with walnut bases and travertine tops by Wormley, four reupholstered scoop-back chairs. The building also had original chairs designed by George Nelson (1908-1994) for Herman Miller in yellow Naugahyde upholstery with walnut frames. Original tags survive which state that they were ordered for the building by the architects, Shaw, Metz and Dolio, who supervised the decorating.

All three elevator cabs are original, as are their "Rotomatic dial" indicators on every floor, and there are numerous small touches of original workmanship throughout the building. For example, the doors to the garbage chutes have the original black and stainless steel emblem of their manufacturer, Williamson Chutes, Inc. of Akron, Ohio. The men's and women's restrooms, located off the lobby area, retain all of their original appliances, including much of their furniture.

Many apartments are completely intact. All windows and heating and cooling convectors remain, while the majority of units still have many of their other original features, such as

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(8-86)

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**The Town House**

**Sangamon County, Illinois**

marbleized vinyl-tiled entryways, louvered closet doors, light fixtures, Bakelite house phones designed by Henry Dreyfuss, and Geneva kitchen cabinets. Many bathrooms are completely intact, retaining their Crane fixtures designed by Dreyfuss (Whirlton flush-valve toilets, bathtubs, and sinks), ceramic tile wainscoting, porcelain tile floors, chrome and mirror medicine cabinets by Miami, and conical brass light fixtures.

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**Narrative Statement of Significance**

Overview/Summary

The Town House is eligible for listing in the National Register under Criterion A for community planning and development. It is locally significant for its association with apartment construction in Springfield after 1920. It was the last "upscale" apartment dwelling built in the historic section of Springfield, as specified in the multiple property document (MPD) form<sup>4</sup>. The Town House is also eligible under Criterion C as an excellent example of an International Style High-Rise apartment, as defined in the registration requirements in the MPD. The history and design of the Townhouse merits its listing in the National Register under Criterion Consideration G, established for buildings achieving significance in the last fifty years.

The apartment building was designed between 1954 and 1958 by the prominent Chicago architectural firm of Shaw, Metz and Dolio and constructed between 1956 and 1958 by Evans Construction Company.<sup>5</sup> The luxurious building was a project of the Franklin Life Insurance Company (founded in Springfield in 1894) under the leadership of its president, Charles E. Becker (1896-1968). By the time the Town House was built, the company had become nationally known and was one of the City's most influential businesses. As such, Franklin Life is part of the general history of Springfield.

The 13-story Town House was conceived as a company investment to provide rental housing for company officers and employees.<sup>6</sup> However, before the building opened, its function changed to that of providing rental apartments to the public. In the 1950s, the construction of the Town House represented a major investment in Springfield's housing future. It is one-of-a-kind in terms of size, expenditure, and luxurious appointments. Becker, who served as Franklin Life's president from 1939 to 1961, was a colorful and driving force in the fortunes of the company,

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4 Shukai, Jeffery. *Multiple Family Dwellings in Springfield, Illinois*. National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form, June 2004.

5 The site was prepared beginning in July of 1955, but building construction did not begin until early 1956.

6 Memo from Charles E. Becker to R.A. Frederick, F. J. O'Brien, and Ray Swartout, March 28, 1958.

*Correspondence Files, 1954-1958, Franklin Life Insurance Co. (now AIG American General).*

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and the Town House was a personal project. Becker and his wife became the first residents of the upper penthouse. The building immediately became a prestigious address, not only for employees of Franklin Life, but also for others who chose to rent an urban-style apartment. Its beauty and unique history remain important features of the Old Aristocracy Neighborhood and of downtown Springfield.

The prestige that Becker wanted the building to lend to its residents is frankly expressed throughout its architecture. Custom architectural details, lavish materials, grand public spaces, and elegantly appointed apartments position the Town House as Springfield's (and, indeed, Central Illinois') premier postwar residential high-rise. It is also perhaps the best residential project of Shaw, Metz and Dolio, a large and important Chicago architectural firm. The Town House perfectly expresses the state of their work in the postwar period as well as accurately encapsulates a typically 1950s populist concept of elegance and modernity.

*Historical significance of the Town House*

*The Town House in Its Neighborhood Context*<sup>7</sup>

The Town House, on Seventh Street between Lawrence and Cook Streets, is located in the Aristocracy Hill Neighborhood, one of Springfield's first residential areas to be settled by people who wished to escape the noise and rowdy behavior found in the center of town. So named because it was settled by the City's first wealthy families, Aristocracy Hill is located south of the central "Old Town," Springfield's early central commercial center along Jefferson Street between First and Third Streets. Residences of the more successful early citizens, such as Elijah Iles, Jacob Loose, and Robert Irwin, began to appear after 1830 and were spread out among several groves of trees marking the City's southern approach. These early homes were not part of the Original Town Plat but were rural in setting, often commanding very large tracts of land. The

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<sup>7</sup> Material for this section is from Mansberger, F. & Stratton, C., *The Architectural Resources of the Aristocracy Hill Neighborhood Springfield, Illinois* (September, 2003) for the Historic Sites Commission, City of Springfield, Illinois, pp. 12-53 and 109-113. This document draws on and integrates most of the many sources of historical information about the development of the City of Springfield in relation to the neighborhood of the Town House.



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neighborhood is referred to as a "hill" because it marks a small rise south of a stream known as the Town Branch, a convenient boundary that marked Springfield's emerging social relations. By 1835, the population of Springfield was a little over 1,400 which was a large enough group of permanent residents to encourage the codification of relationships in terms of visible signs of status. As affluent homes began to be concentrated to the south, an "aristocracy" of wealth, status and leadership began to be formed that would influence Springfield's future development.

In the immediate vicinity of the location of today's Town House, Elijah Iles established a rural estate in 1828 at what is now the intersection of Sixth and Cook Streets. This estate would become known as the Elijah Iles Addition when the first section of the tract was subsequently platted and added to the boundaries of the City of Springfield in 1836. Many of the original lots were block-sized and would have appealed to affluent citizens looking for space to build large homes and gardens. Several more additions of land owned by Iles, Edwards and Allen were eventually platted to make up the boundaries of the current Aristocracy Hill neighborhood.

One year after the construction of the nearby Governor's Mansion in 1856, Elijah Iles laid out his Second Addition of 14 blocks between Sixth and Eighth Streets south of Cook. The Town House is located in Iles Second Addition which encompassed Iles' residence as well as the large estates of Loose and of Irwin. These already established homes retained their large lots, but the remaining land was divided into narrow lots suitable for middle and working class homes. Apparently, sales were not swift because Iles held an auction in 1863 of lots that had not sold.

With the end of the Civil War, development in Springfield, of which Iles Second Addition was now an official part, grew quickly and continued through the early 1870s. A bird's eye view map of 1867 shows that Seventh and Eighth Streets were well developed south to Cook Street beyond which is vacant land. A large Italianate house had recently been constructed as of this date at the southwest corner of Eighth and Cook which is still standing today and is one of two structures remaining on the block occupied by the Town House today.

As the 19th century drew to a close, Springfield's population was growing, and the City was expanding outward in size. Between 1880 and 1910, the City's population grew from

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approximately 20,000 to a little over 50,000.<sup>8</sup> The large tracts of land that had characterized the Aristocracy Hill neighborhood began to be subdivided into smaller lots to allow for more density. Homes were built farther out from the city center. According to Springfield Historian Edward Russo, the process of suburbanization was gradual and continuous, beginning as early as 1870 and continuing through the 1970s as a result of improvements in people-moving technologies – first, horse-drawn carriages, then streetcars, then the automobile.<sup>9</sup> By the 1890s, Aristocracy Hill was a mature neighborhood with few vacant lots, tall trees, curbs, gas lights, and fire hydrants. Mostly single-family dwellings were interspersed with the occasional church, grocery store or tavern. With the development of the State Capitol Complex during this decade and the growth of government activity in Springfield, additional commercial and non-residential building grew apace. More multi-family housing began to be found throughout the neighborhood. As the early, old mansions began to decay many of them were subdivided into apartments. Some were converted to offices, particularly those closest to the Capitol buildings.

In 1910, the Franklin Life Insurance Company built one of the first large office buildings to be found outside and south of the central city on a corner of Sixth and Lawrence Streets. Franklin Life's original headquarters, when the company was founded by seven local business partners in 1884, was built "downtown," but within 30 years or so the company had outgrown its five-story building at Monroe and Fifth Streets. The new headquarters, still standing, is an impressive Beaux-Arts-style building, which opened in 1913. Several old mansions along with middle-class houses were demolished to make way for the building. The company continued to expand its land ownership to provide room for two additions to the original office building soon after World War II. The Town House located diagonally across Seventh Street at Lawrence Street was completed by Franklin Life in 1958. (Additional discussion of Franklin Life's role in Springfield and the building of the Town House follows this section.) With the completion of the Franklin Life Office Complex and the urban high-rise Town House apartment house, the primarily suburban character of the Aristocracy Hill neighborhood was altered forever. The urban nature of the neighborhood was firmly established by 1960.

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<sup>8</sup> Melinda Garvert, Curtis Mann and Edward Russo, *Springfield Home and Family—A Pictorial History*, G. Bradley Publishing, St. Louis, Missouri, 1997, p.154.

<sup>9</sup> Oral Interview with Edward Russo, City Historian and Director of the Sangamon Valley Collection, Lincoln Public Library, February 10, 2004.

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The advent of the automobile and the growth of "car culture" also contributed to changes in the Aristocracy Hill neighborhood. Highways, such as the famous Route 66, which ran along 9th Street, were constructed. Life-styles became both more mobile and more urbanized. Multi-family housing became more respectable and more a part of the planning of the urban community. The numbers of apartment buildings began to increase in Springfield. No longer "left-over" or deteriorated buildings that were turned over to those too poor or unprotected to afford their own houses, apartment buildings began to take on more quality in design and materials to reflect middle-class professional values. Often apartment buildings incorporated the latest in technological efficiency to make renting a more carefree alternative to home ownership. Historical consultants Floyd Mansberger and Christopher Stratton (2003) report on early examples in the Aristocracy Hill neighborhood:

Double houses (containing two side-by-side units) and "two-flats" (with two units over one another) often offered living space comparable to – if not exceeding – single-family homes. One such example was Lubbe Flats at 718-720 East Cook Street, which was built as an upscale rental property for H. S. Lubbe in 1908....Later apartment buildings bridged the economic spectrum. Characteristic of this trend was the sprawling apartment complex constructed by Harris Hickox at the corner of Fourth and Cook Streets in the 1920s. Hickox first constructed a row of three-story buildings about 1920, and then followed with a large five-story courtyard building in 1930. The later building consisted of small efficiency apartments designed for the single professional worker and childless couples....A similar building, named the Capitol View Apartment, was located at 615 South Second Street, immediately north. (pp. 51-52)

Prior to the construction of the 13-story Town House, the largest and most luxurious apartment building in Springfield was the Hickox. Russo writes:

For over a quarter of a century, the Hickox was Springfield's premier apartment complex – recognized as the best address for apartment living in town....Harris Hickox was a well-to-do descendant of a pioneer Springfield family which had been, to a large extent responsible for the city's railroad development...

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Figure 1: Hickox Apartments, ca. 1930.

Being very much a part of Springfield's upper class, with membership in most of its leading clubs...he held many of that group's views regarding the proper atmosphere for home life--the idealized single-family dwelling "with a good size yard."...On visits to Chicago's north shore suburbs he observed the pleasant, domestic-looking family apartments in fashionable areas there and was inspired to introduce replicas of these in Springfield.

The earliest tenants were Hickox friends and acquaintances -- young couples or widowed people who had lived many years nearby and who had sold or closed their large houses. Hickox's experiment proved so successful that he built an addition to the row...and purchased other [adjacent] lots....In 1924,...he built a large apartment with a deep, well-landscaped courtyard facing on Cook Street. This was a completely detached building which totally abandoned the row house effect [of the original structure] and illustrates the transition to the true suburban apartment building with finished facade on three sides and surrounded by green space...Hickox himself drew plans for what would be both the anchor building of his complex and Springfield's most modern apartment to date -- eclipsed only by the Town House hi-rise in 1956.<sup>10</sup>

However, the Hickox apartments lacked something essential to the modern high-rise apartment house when compared to architectural examples in large cities such as Chicago, New York, and Miami: a penthouse. Oral histories of the period relate that when Charles Becker, president of Franklin Life from 1939-1961, began to contemplate retirement, he wanted to retire to a penthouse. There is some evidence that Mrs. Becker was an enthusiastic supporter, perhaps even

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the instigator of this idea. The Town House has been teasingly referred to by those who remember its early days as "Mrs. Becker's Rooming House" because she took such an avid interest in its design and construction.<sup>11</sup> Finding that Springfield did not provide any penthouse, Becker decided that it would be necessary to build one. Whether Becker was influenced by the experience of Mr. Hickox is hard to say; however, both the Hickox apartments and the Town House are powerful examples of the power of money, dedication to a dream, and social status.

The construction of the Town House, beginning in 1956, marked the first and the last of the large high-rise International Style apartment houses to be built as part of the post-war economic boom in Springfield. Becker emulated many of the values and experiences of Mr. Hickox in that the Town House represents what a major power broker and popular citizen of Springfield considers to be desirable housing.



Figure 2: The Town House, ca. 1960

The Town House was modeled on the hotel-style, luxurious apartment houses that were appearing in large developing cities, such as Chicago, Miami, and Kansas City. The hotel-style apartment began to appear in Chicago in connection with preparations for the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition. There were several 8 to 12 story buildings erected along the streets and boulevards between the Loop and the Exposition's Hyde Park location.<sup>12</sup> Architectural historian Susan Benjamin comments about their design:

Stylistically, these buildings were all quite similar. They tended to be block-like in

11 Oral interview with Margaret Younkin by Marcia Salner, March 17, 2004. Mrs. Younkin is a former Town House Board President and wife of the late Glenn Younkin, who was manager of the Town House from 1985-1995.

12 Benjamin, Susan, *Nomination of the Aquitania Apartments in Chicago, Illinois*. United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service, National Register of Historic Places, January 16, 2002, pp. 15-16.

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mass with cylindrical towers and featured oriel windows and simple flat wall surfaces. Many were designed by Clinton J. Warren, the acknowledged leader among Chicago's architects of hotels and apartments and took inspiration from the steel frame Chicago School office buildings that had minimal exterior detailing.

Following World War I the marketing of tall, luxury apartment homes was fairly aggressive in Chicago and other large cities. Many found their way into Albert J. Partridge and Harold Bradley's 1917 *Directory to Apartments of the Better Class along the North Side of Chicago*.<sup>13</sup> The introduction to this directory notes that "apartments are now in existence in Chicago which provide a degree of luxury in respect to spaciousness and number of rooms, bathrooms, high quality of finish and interior decoration which would be found only in private houses costing upward of \$100,000."<sup>14</sup>

The Town Houses differs somewhat from these models in that it was a product of corporate investment coupled with the personal commitment of a charismatic and highly respected company president. Garvert, Mann and Russo describe the Town House as exemplifying "the look of the 'man in the gray flannel suit' in America."<sup>15</sup> Mansberger and Stratton describe it as "the pinnacle of the apartment development in the Aristocracy Hill Survey Area...(I)t also epitomizes modernistic architecture of the 1950s...The Town House's clean, horizontal lines and sharp detail have withstood the test of time, and it remains an icon of the area and of the city itself. The property presents a good candidate for listing on the National Register."<sup>16</sup>

The Town House succeeded in providing that urbane lifestyle previously known only in larger cities. An article about three of the Town House's first residents struck all the right chords regarding convenience, roominess, and a sense of community. Mrs. Joseph Kunz anticipated having a lot of free time because she didn't need to tend a yard. "But I don't," she said. "I'm nearer downtown, and I go more often." From her 10<sup>th</sup> floor, 3-bedroom apartment, Mrs. Kent

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13 Cited in Susan Benjamin, op.cit., p. 17.

14 Ibid, p. 17.

15 Melinda Garvert, Curtis Mann and Edward Russo. *Springfield Home and Family: A Pictorial History*, G. Bradley Publishing, St. Louis, Missouri, 1997, p.156.

16 op.cit., pp. 112-113.

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Fitzgerald said, "I don't have the lonely feeling when I can look out and see the city all lit up at night. I just love it up here... I have about as much room here as I had in that big house on Leland." Mrs. R.L. Lynch said, "You have less work, and no yard to worry about. We're free to go without having to close the house down."<sup>17</sup> The building's very name, The Town House, describes the desire to establish a home within the City.

The Town House remains a "one of a kind" building mainly because at the time it was built the suburban-urban balance in housing choices was beginning to shift in Springfield toward the



*Figure 3: Pasfield Park Apartments*

needs of the baby-boom generation. The increasing sprawl of suburban development into outlying areas, made possible by increasing use of the automobile, lent itself to a different concept of apartment building in Springfield: lower, less pretentious, only two or three stories high, the better to be integrated into neighborhoods of single-family houses without any segregating features. A primarily suburban philosophy about apartment living favored a low-profile unit, resembling as much as possible the single-family home – a philosophy not new to Springfield, but revived in the 1950s. To some extent, the Town House represents a vision of Springfield as a major urban center. However, as the baby-boom generation dominated home building in the 1950s and 1960s, apartment living began to become more family-oriented as young couples with new babies launched their dreams of "a home of our own." An example of a 1950s apartment development resembling the single family house is the Pasfield Park Apartments on Chatham Road between Lawrence and Fayette.

During the 1960s, the building of large apartment houses in Springfield became part of the push for government-supported housing initiatives, encouraged by the Public Housing Act of 1955, which provided funds for low-income housing development and public buildings. While

<sup>17</sup> "Apartment Décor at Will of Occupant," *Illinois State Journal*, Fall 1958, p. 30.

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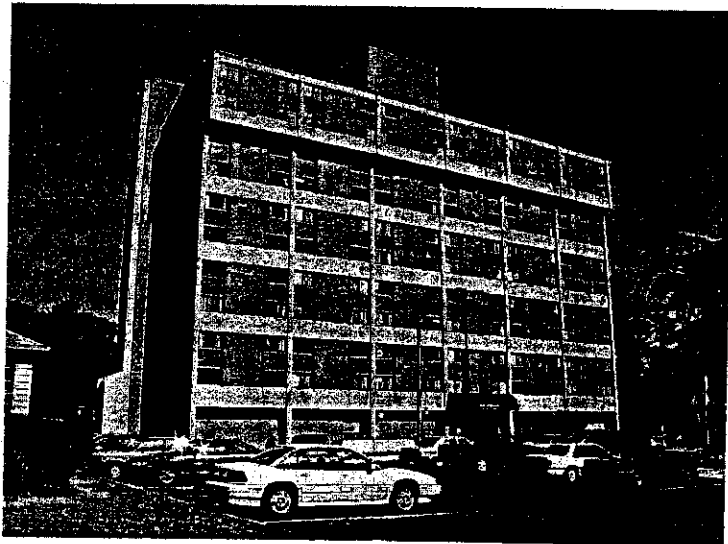
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Springfield has a handful of post-1955 large, boxy, high-rise apartment buildings (i.e., Lincoln Tower, Bonansinga Apartments), they are generally examples of the extent to which Modernist/International Style features were appropriated in subsequent decades – not because of the esthetic appeal but because the features proved functional, and allowed buildings to be erected quickly and economically by using inexpensive and less durable materials. None of these later apartment buildings approach the Town House's uniqueness, luxury, or design sense. Regrettably, the American landscape is dotted with square concrete boxes of various sizes, demonstrating little design innovation or imagination, and constructed of inexpensive, readily available materials that do not endure for long without losing their luster. With its luxurious materials and sophisticated design, the Town House stands out.



*Figure 4: Lincoln Tower*



*Figure 5: Bonansinga Apartments*



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Franklin Life Insurance Company and the Building of the Town House<sup>18</sup>

When seven Springfield businessmen sat down one gray, cold day in March of 1884 and planned the Franklin Life Insurance Company, they would have had no way of knowing just how successful their venture would eventually become. As Francis J. O'Brien closes his history of the company in the year 1970, Franklin Life was pushing the \$8 billion dollar figure for the amount of insurance then in force. Much of this fabulous growth is attributed to the company's seventh and most colorful president, Charles E. Becker, who became Franklin Life's leader and guiding spirit in 1939. He remained at the helm for the next 22 years, when he retired on his birthday, November 13, 1961, at the age of 65.

At 65, Becker had been in the insurance business for over 40 years and had become a nationally known figure. He was already living in the upper penthouse of the Town House when, in 1959, he was honored for his outstanding leadership at a luncheon for 600 civic and company leaders. O'Brien reports: "Congratulatory telegrams from President Dwight D. Eisenhower, Governor Price Daniel of Texas, and the then United States Senator Lyndon B. Johnson and many other notable personalities were read at the luncheon. It was a big occasion in Springfield, and above the front page masthead on the *Illinois State Journal* that morning was printed in bold face type and color: 'THIS IS CHARLES E. (FRANKLIN LIFE) BECKER DAY!'"<sup>19</sup>



Figure 6: Charles E. Becker

Charles Becker was born in 1896, when the Franklin Life was still in its infancy. By the time he assumed leadership, the headquarters in Springfield had moved three times as the company

<sup>18</sup> The chief source for information about Franklin Life comes from *The Fabulous Franklin Story: The History of the Franklin Life Insurance Company, 1884-1970* by Francis J. O'Brien. Copyright 1972 by Franklin Life Insurance Company; printed by Rand McNally and Co.

<sup>19</sup> p. 169 op.cit.

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continued to grow. Its permanent headquarters was built in 1912, and the impressive Beaux Arts building is still standing on 6<sup>th</sup> Street near Lawrence. Three more additions (completed in 1948, 1952 and 1968) all organized under Becker's leadership would bring the headquarters to its present configuration. Today, the buildings are occupied by AIG American General which bought Franklin Life in 2002.

Becker guided Franklin Life through the lean World War II years and into the Post War boom. F.J. O'Brien, Becker's Vice President for Advertising, Public Relations and Sales Promotion from 1940 to 1968, knew him well. He describes Becker as folksy and personal, but always a driving force for innovation, growth and progress. He thrived on challenges.

During the 1940s, the company referred to itself as "the Friendly Franklin Life Insurance Company." By 1946, its assets were about \$93 million – a 21% increase over the previous year. By the end of 1952, Franklin Life would be in 22<sup>nd</sup> place nationally in total ordinary insurance sold. O'Brien quotes an article by Ruth Hahn that was published in the February issue of one of the nation's most prestigious business publications, *Sales Management*. It was a cover feature story captioned "What's Behind the Fantastic Upsurge in Sales at Franklin Life." On the cover was a grinning Charles E. Becker. Ms. Hahn writes,

When a company grows at a rate nearly five times faster than the industry of which it is a part, there is front page news somewhere in its management. This is such a story. It's basically a tale of an old firm brought brilliantly to life when a totally sales-minded management took over... Franklin Life has taken only eleven years to hit the billion dollar mark in outstanding ordinary insurance. (Only 31 companies in the USA were that big as of December 31, 1951)...Inevitably the reaction from the industry has ranged all the way from open admiration and unspoken envy to bitter charges of competitive low punches.<sup>20</sup>

In 1955, Franklin Life was the first non-governmental business in the USA to order a large-scale computer and computerize its operations. The huge Univac had to be hoisted by a crane and

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20 p. 134, *op.cit.*

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moved into the building through a space created by the removal of two windows and their frames. The local Springfield papers carried the story "Franklin Life to Install Million Dollar 'Brain' Machine." For this decision, Becker received international attention. Previously, the Univac had been used by the Bureau of the Census and in the Pentagon, but business leaders were not quick to sense its applications to their own work, except for Charles Becker.

It was into this atmosphere of adventure, daring and ever-increasing corporate wealth that the Town House was conceived. Rationalized perhaps as an investment opportunity for Franklin Life, the Town House as a representation of the success of corporate captains of American business and industry began to take shape.

Franklin Life Introduces the Town House (1955)

Plans for the building of the Town House were unveiled by the Franklin Life Insurance Company in March of 1955. The *Illinois State Journal and Register* article announcing its construction stated that the \$1.5 million project would be the "largest apartment building of its kind in this area offering year round temperature control." Charles Becker predicted that the Town House "will surpass in efficiency and beauty any such type building in the Midwest."<sup>21</sup>



*Figure 7: Houses razed for the Town House on 7<sup>th</sup> Street, taken in May of 1956.*

The site chosen for the Town House was directly northeast of Franklin Life's headquarters at 7<sup>th</sup> Street between Lawrence and Cook Streets. At a time when the 19<sup>th</sup> century mansions of the Aristocracy Hill neighborhood were in decline, Franklin Life committed itself to

<sup>21</sup> "Plan Big Apartment Building," *Illinois State Journal and Register*. March 27, 1955, p. 1, 5.

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the neighborhood by building two large additions to its headquarters in the 10 years previous to the Town House's construction. By the mid 1950s, many of the single-family houses on the block eventually occupied by the Town House had been subdivided into rental units. These properties were gradually acquired by Franklin Life, partially in an effort to stabilize the neighborhood. The clearing of the block to make way for a large, prestigious apartment house under the aegis of Franklin Life was deemed a desirable development by the public.<sup>22</sup> Houses on 7<sup>th</sup> Street were demolished first, with the work scheduled for completion by September 1, 1955, while houses on 8<sup>th</sup> Street were to be removed by November 1. In all, a total of 26 dwelling units in eight buildings were razed for the Town House, whose budget had grown to \$2 million by July of 1955.<sup>23</sup>

By January of 1956, the Town House's budget had swelled to \$2.5 million, no doubt buoyed by Franklin Life's unassailable position in the insurance industry. On January 20, 1956, the contract for the building's construction was awarded to Evans Construction, the firm that erected Franklin's two 13-story additions to its headquarters.<sup>24</sup>

Excavations for the Town House were completed by June of 1956.<sup>25</sup> Caissons were sunk fifteen feet below the lowest level of the basement. Most photos of the time show small crowds of onlookers as construction proceeded. Gary Thompson, the Town House's current Building Engineer, reports watching the building rise from his father's office in the Leland Building downtown. Press coverage was



*Figure 8: Excavations & boiler installation for the Town House, taken in June of 1956.*

<sup>22</sup> Interview with Edward Russo, City of Springfield Historian by Marcia Salner, February 10, 2004.

<sup>23</sup> "Crews Begin Razing Houses to Clear Site for \$2 Million Apartment Building," *Illinois State Register*. July 8, 1955.

<sup>24</sup> "Franklin Life Awards Building Contract on \$2.5 Million Project," *Illinois State Register*. January 20, 1956.

<sup>25</sup> "Boilers Arrive for New Franklin Life Building," *Illinois State Register*. June 5, 1956, p. 2.

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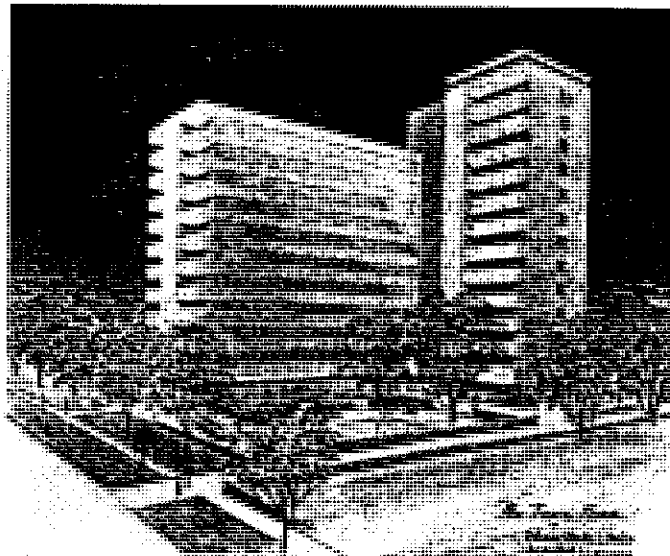
extensive.

Preserved in the files of AIG American General is Shaw, Metz and Dolio's description of the Town House from 1956:

The Town House apartments have achieved the masterful combination of engineered perfection and architectural beauty – in design. This new modern apartment building offers the ultimate in air-conditioned comfort and living efficiency for the apartment dweller.

The bold studied mass of the Town House is broken only by the block of the tower wing and the handsome pattern of the hanging garden balconies. The simple band treatment of the large glass windows harmonizes pleasingly with the limestone. Square windows relieve this horizontal banding and the use of glazed brick in color on the first floor arcade enriches the total effect.

The gardens on the south-east area of the grounds have been planned especially for the enjoyment of the apartment dweller. These gardens have quiet areas – shady and cool, with pools of water and fountains, and landscaped grounds with flowering banks, green hedges and trees. Nearby a recreation area has been provided for small children and here also is located an open air swimming pool



*Figure 9: Rendering of the Town House, drawn in early 1955. Other than a change of material for the core volume and a different garden design, the rendering is remarkably similar to the final design.*

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with its terrace and sunning area.<sup>26</sup>

The main entrance to the Town House is from Seventh Street. The off-the-street driveway provides ample space for arrival and departure while convenient space is provided for waiting cars.

To enter the lobby of the building from the north, one may pass along the blue glazed-brick arcade and approach the large reception lounge. An impression of simple elegance is created as one enters the lobby. The main lounge runs the length of the building and the grouping of the seating areas provides the red and gold accents against the delicate graining of the white marble. The Venetian glass mosaic columns of brilliant red, and the soft colorful draperies, add the final touch of color – all this reflected in a mirror wall along the staircase and elevator entrance. A large part of the east wall is a window wall offering a pleasant view of the terraced gardens and pools. Near the lounge is a specially planned suite which may be used for private parties [eventually called the Colonnade Room] and on the north side of this room are located the manager's office and the mail room and beyond the service and receiving rooms. The building has been planned especially to facilitate service.

The apartments are serviced by two passenger elevators and a service elevator – all fully automatic – which may be operated with or without an attendant. The passenger elevators are located so that each wing of the building is most conveniently serviced.

Upon leaving the elevators at any floor one enters a typical corridor. These corridors are common to all apartments and reflect the elegance maintained throughout the building. They are carpeted and the walls and ceilings are painted plaster, providing a continuity of surface to be effectively relieved by the use of dramatic color accents.

The Town House apartment building provides a total of 94 dwelling units. There are 12 three-bedroom units, 22 two-bedroom units, 30 one-bedroom units and 30 "efficiency" apartments.<sup>27</sup> Well over half of these apartments are provided with

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<sup>26</sup> The swimming pool was eliminated from the final plan.

<sup>27</sup> In 1961, demand for two-bedroom apartments led to the conversion of two adjacent one-bedroom apartments to a

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spacious hanging garden balconies.

Each apartment has been planned carefully to meet the requirements of the most fastidious tenant – spacious, airy – with ample storage space, and every apartment has a magnificent view either of the garden and pool or over the city of Springfield. A unique feature of most of the apartments is the private garden balconies which lead off the living areas. These balconies have been planned as an extension of the living areas and provide that “extra dividend” of being able to step outdoors and relax on a private terrace balcony. Practicality and efficiency, together with satisfying proportions of wall and glass areas, has been the keynote in planning these apartments. Every tenant may achieve the elegance he desires with the use of wall-to-wall carpeting, ceiling-to-floor draperies and colors to harmonize and accent the features of the apartment. Closet space – always a problem – has been amply provided and is augmented with the convenient basement storage areas provided with each apartment.

The typical apartment has an entrance foyer, living-dining area, bedrooms, kitchen and bathroom. The kitchen is provided with the most modern equipment – all electric. Carefully planned, the arrangement of each kitchen has been studied to save the tenants endless steps. It includes the use of color in the Formica counter tops and cabinets, and a double stainless-steel sink is also provided. The color selected vinyl-asbestos floor covering completes the harmonizing scheme. The bathrooms have ceramic tile floors and wainscots, and the painted ceilings and walls will complement the plumbing fixtures in color. Special attention has been given to the use of colored bathroom fixtures; only the efficiency apartments, and a few of the one-bedroom apartments, will have white fixtures. Many of the bathrooms have been provided with excellent storage space and are quite roomy.

Every apartment is sound isolated from the corridors by the kitchen-bathroom and closet band next to the corridor. This provides maximum use of the exterior window-

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wall area and keeps the service areas of the apartment in their proper location.

The entire building is equipped for year-round air conditioning. This is accomplished by means of a high velocity air system which provides that "just right" temperature and humidity control in each room at any seasonal period. A mechanical exhaust ventilation system is provided for the bathrooms and kitchens.

Private parking facilities have been provided at the east of the building. These are conveniently accessible to the first floor lobby and accommodate 164 cars – heated parking for 60 cars, and uncovered parking for 104 cars with possible expansion.

All in all, the Town House fulfills the dream of living in the most convenient and rewarding apartment building in Springfield. It is close to the heart of the city, convenient to the State Capital buildings, the airport and country clubs. A superb location – designed for distinguished, relaxed, easy living with all the comforts provided and a resident manager to supervise all needs.<sup>28</sup>

One of the Town House's featured attractions, the garden, was originally designed by Franz Lipp (1897-1996), the famous Chicago landscape architect, who was commissioned by Shaw, Metz and Dolio to design the garden. The redesign, presumably prompted by a southward expansion of the garden due to a relocation of the garage and ramp facilities to their current position, which resulted in a larger garden space, was completed by September 15, 1955. Unfortunately, it is not possible to say definitively that the redesigned garden is by Franz Lipp. Between the original plan submitted by Lipp to Shaw, Metz and Dolio and the final plan that was actually built under

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28 In 1956, Franklin Life asked Shaw, Metz and Dolio to write this text as part of the preparation of a full-color marketing booklet for the building. Ultimately, this text was rewritten by Franklin Life marketing staff in January of 1957. The above description was attached to a June 13, 1956, memo from Addis M. Osborne, architect with Shaw, Metz and Dolio, to F. J. O'Brien, Vice President of Marketing of Franklin Life Insurance Company, *Correspondence files, 1954-1958*, Franklin Life Insurance Company. The brochure that was finally produced has color renderings executed by the firm of Harold and Preissler. Black-and-white photographic copies of the renderings are included in the Alfred P. Shaw Papers (Ryerson and Burnham Archives, The Art Institute of Chicago) and preserve the signatures of the renderers that were cropped in the final version of the brochure.



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the firm's supervision, numerous changes were made in the location, orientation, and details of the garden. The overall style is in the manner of Lipp; however, some details depart from his typical choices of material or plant species. The two sets of garden plans were submitted for comparison and assessment to Anne Marie van Roessel, researcher in the Department of Architecture of the Ernest R. Graham Study Center for Architectural Drawing at the Art Institute of Chicago and a recognized expert on the work of Franz Lipp. It is van Roessel's opinion that the final as-built version of the garden closely resembles Lipp's work. However, there are features that suggest that while the overall concept was retained, details were altered when the plan was revised to accommodate a necessary expansion the garden. As a result, it is likely that the garden design is by Franz Lipp, though possibly modified by Shaw, Metz and Dolio, all of whom worked together on several previous projects in the Chicago area. The authors were not able to find any correspondence or records that would further clarify this point. However, Lipp's initial involvement in Town House exterior design remains influential and significant.

The Town House continued to receive considerable media coverage throughout its construction. Most of the press releases and information reported in the local Springfield press quoted Charles Becker extensively. As the guiding force of the company, he played a major role in launching the plan for the luxurious Town House and carrying it forward. An ode to Charles Becker written by V.Y. Dallman in July of 1957 nicely captures the local sentiments at the time:

*Nothing he does is surprising  
As he keeps gay Springfield rising.  
Franklin Life, throughout the nation,  
Is acclaimed with jubilation.  
It's the last word of endurance  
In the field of Life Insurance.  
Now, with most superb addresses  
Franklin's Town House Springfield blesses.  
Mighty mountain, architectural,  
Its smile is most effectual.  
Hail to Franklin Life's exchequer  
And great builder, Chas. E. Becker!*

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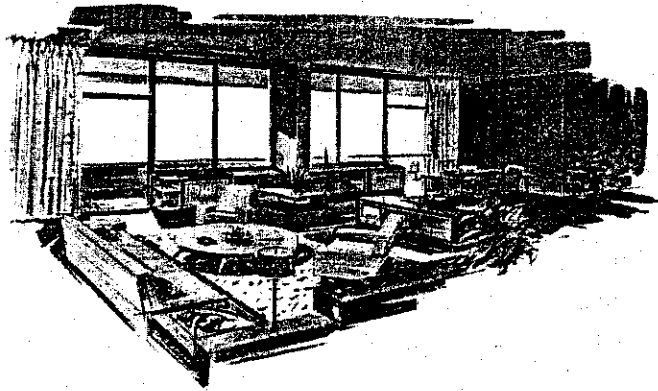
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Dallman went on to describe the Town House solely based on the full-color booklet Franklin Life printed in January 1957. Though effusive, his reaction gives an interesting glimpse into how Springfield likely regarded this most elaborate and urbane building: "We gasp. We're outside looking up. It's like a mountain-high layer cake covered with pink icing [the booklet's rendering was slightly pink]....Now we're in the lobby. The sun beams through areas of glittering glass. Flowers provide a tropical atmosphere...No use to describe the three-bedroom apartment – Just concentrate all of your imagination into a climax of comfort and colors and you have it."<sup>29</sup>

Published material constantly made reference to the generous expenditures that were being lavished on the project. In a collection of newspaper articles from the files of Francis J. O'Brien<sup>30</sup> rests an article from a Chicago newspaper announcing the imminent groundbreaking of the Lake Shore Apartments, a \$10-million, 3-building, luxury apartment development on Lake Shore Drive designed by Shaw, Metz and Dolio. The scale is much larger than that of the Town House (664 units versus 87), while the architectural design is much less distinctive. Perhaps the most interesting comparison between the two projects is the difference in the per-unit construction costs. In the more expensive Chicago construction market, the cost of a Lake Shore unit averages \$15,000, while that of a Town House unit is nearly double the amount.<sup>31</sup>



*Figure 10: Rendering for a three-bedroom apartment in the Town House included in the building's marketing brochure of 1957.*

Executives at Franklin Life, including Becker himself, were aware of other new apartment-

<sup>29</sup> Dallman, V.Y. "Assorted Smiles." *Illinois State-Journal Register*. July 29, 1957.

<sup>30</sup> Franklin Life Insurance Company. *Correspondence Files, 1954-1961*. Courtesy of AIG American General, Office of the Director of Communications, Springfield, IL Group.

<sup>31</sup> "Break Ground Soon for \$10-Million Project." Unidentified Chicago journal, undated. In Franklin Life's papers.

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building developments and sought to emulate how they were being advertised. Two marketing brochures from other luxury apartment buildings were included in the Franklin Life files, one for the Walton-Seneca apartment building in Chicago designed by Shaw, Metz and Dolio in 1954 and one for the Grosvenor House in Delray Beach, Florida, designed by Chicago architect C. Hendrick Hammond in association with the firm of Gamble, Pownall, & Gilray of Fort

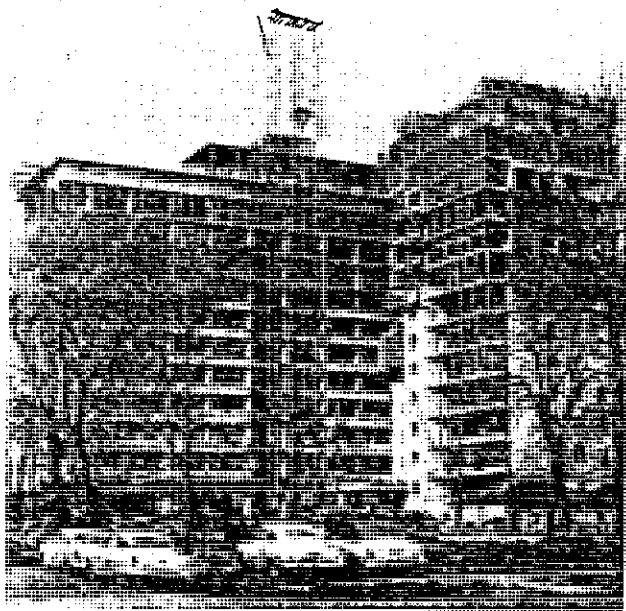


Figure 9: Town House construction photo taken in January of 1957.

Lauderdale, Florida. Perhaps these brochures merely served as models for the marketing of the Town House. However, it is probable that they were saved in the files of Franklin Life because they had played a more significant role in discussions with Shaw, Metz and Dolio about how the Town House design might eventually evolve.

Included in O'Brien's files is an advertisement for a new multi-use apartment/office building in Chicago: "Arthur Rubloff & Co. Proudly Announces a Dynamic New Concept of Business and Residential Living...." O'Brien's handwritten mock-up based on the ad also survives: "FLIC Proudly Announces a Dynamic New Concept in Residential Apartment Living." The *State Journal and Register* sent F. J. O'Brien a full-page advertisement from *The Dallas Morning News* announcing the

availability of units in a new luxury apartment block and clipped to it a note reading, "With a few alterations this undoubtedly could be used by Franklin Life at some future date."<sup>32</sup> These collections of press announcements suggest that Franklin Life officers were interested in linking their local project to wider trends in business and residential development in urban Illinois and around the nation.

<sup>32</sup> "Announcing 3525 Turtle Creek." *The Dallas Morning News*, July 31, 1955, p. 11.

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The building's opening was heavily advertised in local media between August, 1957 and March, 1958. During the fall of 1958, Franklin Life hosted numerous receptions to show the Town House off to various audiences, including its employees, local dignitaries, and the large number of sub-contractors involved in its construction. In addition to Evans Construction (the general contractor), Henson Robinson Company (the heating and air conditioning contractor), and Edwards Plumbing and Heating Company (plumbing contractor), thirty-two additional companies, providing such things as draperies, carpets, kitchen cabinets, marble, furniture, painting, tools, weather-stripping, and tree surgery, were invited to celebratory receptions. Newspaper articles and advertising showcased these firms and their contributions to the Town House to illustrate the project's importance to the community and to its economy.<sup>33</sup>

Upon the opening of the building in the fall of 1958, the *State Journal-Register* printed a special section entitled, "The Town House... The Ultimate in Gracious Living," which documented many of the subcontractors who worked on the building during its long construction. It also did not understate the aura of luxury Franklin Life brought to the project: "The Town House - the 'Address of Distinction' - ...is a 'dream' house... Becker has an apartment in the Town House. What Becker desired in his home, he has had incorporated into the Town House ... The insurance company considers the Town House a contribution to the state and community's cultural life as a sound business venture."<sup>34</sup>

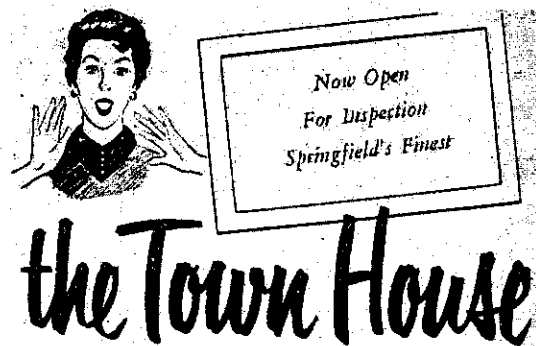


Figure 10: Advertisement for the Town House, February 1958.

Franklin Life owned the Town House until 1978, when it sold the then-unprofitable building to a group of investors.<sup>35</sup> In March of 1979 the building was incorporated as a condominium under the General Not-For-Profit Act of the State of Illinois.

<sup>33</sup> A list of contractors is included as an attachment at the end of this Section.

<sup>34</sup> J. Galloway, "Town House Apartments Distinctive, Luxurious," *Illinois State Journal-Register*, Fall 1958, p. 22.

<sup>35</sup> Interview with Margaret Younkin, *op.cit.*

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GAPW, he designed such magnificent edifices as the Chicago Civic Opera House (1927-1929), the Merchandise Mart (1928-1930), the Field Building (1929-1934), and Chicago's Main U.S. Post Office (1930-1934). After struggling with financial problems in the depths of the depression, GAPW reduced its large staff and dismissed Shaw in 1936. He quickly formed a partnership with former GAPW employees Charles F. Murphy and architectural planner Sigurd E. Naess, establishing Shaw, Naess and Murphy. The firm lasted for 11 successful years and designed, among other things, the Chicago Housing Authority's first construction project, the Ida B. Wells Homes of 1941.<sup>39</sup> In recognition of his lasting contribution to the architectural profession, Shaw was named a Fellow of the American Institute of Architects in 1944.

After the dissolution of Shaw, Naess and Murphy in 1947, Shaw, along with civil and structural engineer Karl A. Metz, ASCE (1892-?) and mechanical and electrical engineer John Dolio, NSPE (1904-?), launched the firm of Shaw, Metz and Dolio. The firm's first major success was the headquarters and factory for the Florsheim Shoe Company in Chicago (1949), described by the *A.I.A. Guide to Chicago* as, "the first major Chicago structure to emphatically embrace the design elements of European modernism."<sup>40</sup> Due to Shaw, Metz and Dolio's wide array of architectural and engineering services, it amassed an impressive and varied résumé of commercial, industrial, and residential work, including the Baha'i Temple interior in Wilmette and several high-rise luxury apartment buildings on Chicago's Gold Coast.

In addition to designing many privately funded residential towers, Shaw, Metz and Dolio was commissioned by the Chicago Housing Authority to design public-housing projects, including Lake Parc Place (1952), and the Grace Abbott Homes (1955). When in 1959 John Dolio split from the firm to form John Dolio and Associates, Shaw, Metz and Dolio changed its name to Shaw, Metz and Associates and retained John Dolio as its consulting engineer. For the next decade, Shaw, Metz and Associates designed such large and important projects as the Morton

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(Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992) 280.

39 Though the CHA had previously managed three projects constructed by the Public Works Administration in 1937-8, the Ida B. Wells Homes was its first construction project.

40 Alice Sinkevitch, ed., *A.I.A. Guide to Chicago* (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1993) 93. The Florsheim Building was widely published in the architectural press, i.e., "Commercial Building: Factory Complex," *Progressive Architecture*, vol. 37, (July 1956), 108-110.

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**Architectural significance of the Town House**

*Shaw, Metz and Dolio and the Modern Movement*

Contributing to the Town House's exceptional significance is its distinctive characteristics of design, construction and form and the extent to which these have been preserved intact. It is not known how or why the architectural firm of Shaw, Metz and Dolio of Chicago was selected by Franklin Life. Charles Becker and his wife traveled widely, had numerous corporate and personal friends around the country, and would have had ample opportunities to view a wide range of architectural styles and residence types in their travels. Shaw, Metz and Dolio had designed several large apartment houses on Chicago's Gold Coast. Some of these may have been known to the Beckers and to the committee he appointed to oversee the initial planning of the Town House project. In any case, the firm of Shaw, Metz and Dolio were selected as the architects for Springfield's pre-eminent Modernist urban apartment house.

Alfred Phillips Shaw, FAIA (1895-1970) was the chief architect of Shaw, Metz and Dolio, the guiding spirit of the firm and the Town House's principal designer. Upon his death, the *Chicago Tribune* declared him, "a driving force in the city's architectural field for more than 40 years. As much as any architect in modern times, he left his mark on the Chicago skyline and in the city's business and high-rise apartment districts."<sup>36</sup> The firm's archives have been accessioned by the Ryerson-Burnham Library at the Art Institute of Chicago, an archive noted for its selectivity.

After receiving his architectural education from the Boston Architectural Club Atelier, Alfred Shaw served in the U.S. military during World War I. After his return, he practiced architecture privately in Chicago until he joined the prominent architectural firm of Graham, Anderson, Probst and White (GAPW) in 1922. He was made chief designer after the death of William Anderson in 1924 and became a junior partner in 1929.<sup>37</sup> According to author Sally A. Kitt Chappell, he brought modernistic Art Deco forms to the firm's work.<sup>38</sup> During his tenure at

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<sup>36</sup> "Alfred P. Shaw", obit. *Chicago Tribune*. December 2, 1970.

<sup>37</sup> Alfred P. Shaw Papers, Ryerson and Burnham Archives, The Art Institute of Chicago.

<sup>38</sup> Sally A. Kitt Chappell, *Architecture and Planning of Graham, Anderson, Probst and White, 1912-1936*

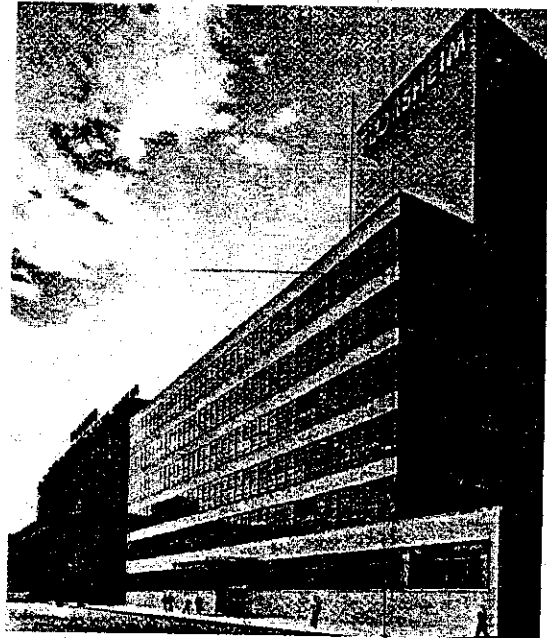
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Wing of the Art Institute of Chicago and the first McCormick Place as well as major public-housing projects like Park Homes (1961), Lake Michigan Homes (1963), and the world's largest public-housing project, the Robert Taylor Homes (1960-1963). In 1966, when Carl Metz left to form the firm Metz, Train and Associates, the firm became Alfred Shaw and Associates. Working with his son, Patrick (b. 1933), Alfred Shaw and his firm were awarded several important commissions, such as renovations to the Chicago Historical Society. Patrick took over the firm in 1969, renaming it Shaw and Associates. Alfred Shaw died on December 12, 1970.

Among Shaw, Metz and Dolio's many projects, the Town House stands out. The firm considered it among its finest work, including it in a portfolio of its best apartment designs.<sup>41</sup> Before construction even began, a spokesman for the firm declared, "This apartment will definitely be the finest we have ever designed."<sup>42</sup> Though the Town House possesses many characteristics of the firm's previous work, it combines them in a richer and more successful manner than its other apartment projects.



*Figure 10: The Florsheim Building.*

In the 1950s, the firm's work did possess an identity, usually including colonnades, horizontal proportions, ribbon windows, and structural columns pulled just inside curtain walls, allowing ribbon windows to stretch without interruption across entire elevations. However, the massing of the Town House is far more sculptural than that of any of the firm's previous buildings. Though the low-rise Florsheim Building of 1949 has a deeper floor plate that begins to allow for some

<sup>41</sup> Alfred P. Shaw Papers, Series V, Box B.

<sup>42</sup> "Franklin Life Awards Building Contract on \$2.5 Million Project," *Illinois State Register*, January 20, 1956.

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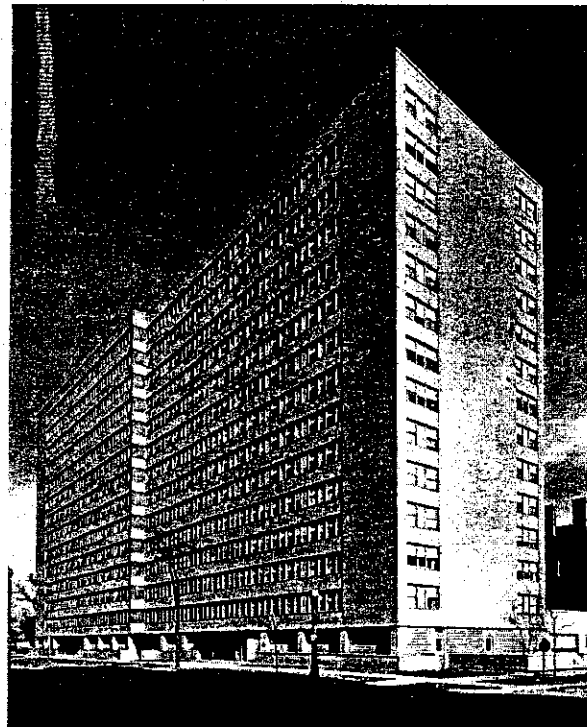
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volumetric variation in elevation, only in the Town House, with its freedom from surrounding visual encroachments, large site, and its skyline-making height, are the building's volumes pulled apart and then reintegrated in a successful composition. There is a certain progression of form apparent in the firm's Chicago apartment buildings of the 1950s. A comparison of four of Shaw, Metz and Dolio's Chicago apartment houses with the Town House illustrates the significant development and elaboration of their approach to urban, modernist design during the period.

First, the Briar-Berry-Sheridan Apartments of 1951 is among the first of Shaw, Metz and Dolio's postwar apartment projects. It is a simple rectangular slab with a small jog in the center. While the structural columns in the shaft are pulled within the floor plates of the building behind the curtain wall, they are expressed as pilasters on a ground floor forming a plinth on which rests the volume above. The ribbon windows read as dark lines against the light brick spandrels, but the fenestration does not extend to the corners of the building as it does in the design of the Town House. They are pulled in from the edges and read like rectangles within a masonry frame.

Second, the Sheridan Towers of 1952 is again a simple slab with alternating bands of window and spandrel pulled in from the corners. The plinth here does not contain pilasters or columns, but square punched windows with thick stone frames, much like the blind windows in the Town House's colonnade. A simple overhang announces the building's entrance. The end walls of Sheridan Towers are nearly blank, communicating the simple double-loaded corridor configuration of the interior.



*Figure 11: The Briar-Berry-Sheridan Apts.*



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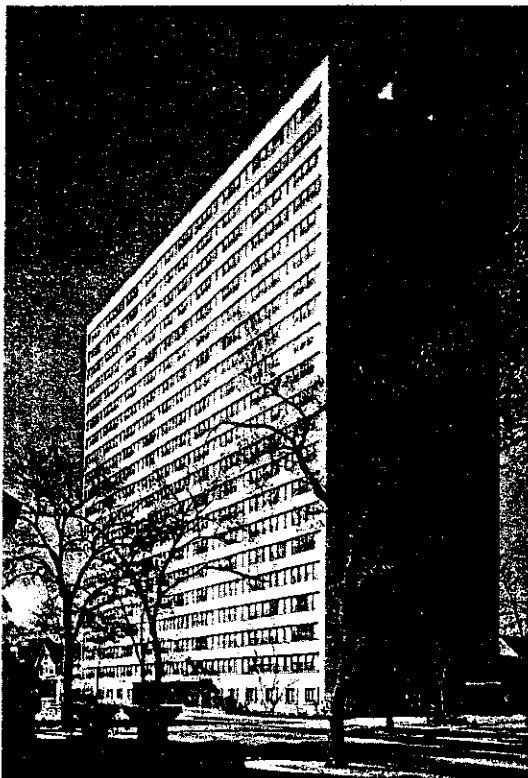
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*Figure 12: The Sheridan Towers*

Third, the Lake Shore Belmont of 1952 is Shaw, Metz and Dolio's first apartment building with the fully formed arcade similar to what distinguishes the main entrance to the Town House. The arcade's back wall of stack-bond brick and the long, thin overhang that



*Figure 13: Lake Shore Belmont*

separates it from the building's shaft are both present on the Town House. However in Lake Shore Belmont, the fenestration is much different, alternating between two bays of punched windows and two of ribbon in an effort to lend interest to the long unbroken façade.

Fourth, and finally, Shaw, Metz and Dolio's 1953 Walton-Seneca shares many similarities with the firm's earlier apartment blocks, described above: slab-like massing with nearly blank end walls, a shaft comprised of alternating strips of ribbon windows and spandrels, a ground-floor arcade with a back wall of stack-bond brick. It was the sales brochure for the Walton-Seneca that provided the model for Franklin Life's brochure for the Town House, even though the designs of the two buildings are quite different.

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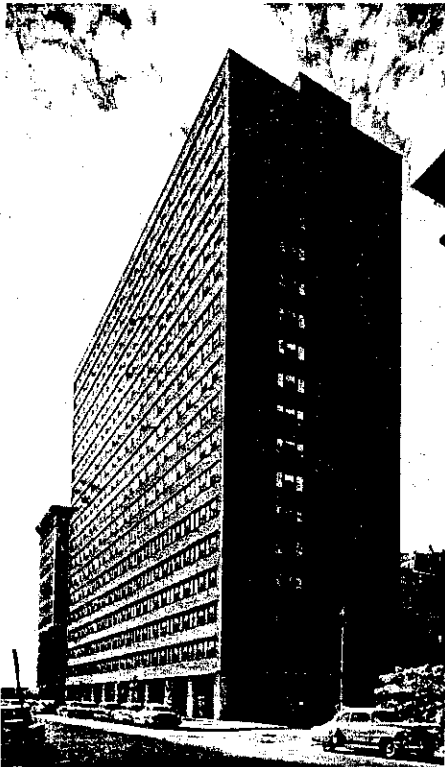
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*Figure 14: Walton-Seneca*

The Town House does utilize some of the elements of these earlier apartment buildings, but combines them in a different, more sophisticated and esthetically pleasing manner. The Town House uses a mixture of strips of ribbon windows, grids of punched windows, and corners of cantilevered balconies to create more dynamic elevations than did previous Shaw, Metz and Dolio designs. As noted in the examples above, the firm's Chicago apartment blocks are, for the most part, bereft of balconies, and their banks of ribbon windows are contained within thick masonry boundaries that emphasize the edges of the buildings' blocky masses. The end walls of these rectangular masses were either blank or simply fenestrated with a column or two of punched windows. The Town House, on the other hand, has ribbon windows that often end in cantilevered balconies that turn the eye around the corners. Zones with punched windows calm the dynamism of the adjacent ribbon windows or cantilevered balconies. One interesting comparison can be made between the southern elevation of the Town House and Shaw, Metz and Dolio's City Parking Facility of 1954 at 11 West Wacker in Chicago (see Figures 15 and 16). Each uses a solid (or nearly so) central mass as a

foil for the cantilevered horizontals that symmetrically flank them. Because it stands alone on a large site, the Town House was designed to be pleasing from every angle. The Town House enjoys more of a dialogue between punched and ribbon windows, resulting in a much livelier composition.

The Town House's massing is far more sculptural than the firm's other high rises, perhaps partly due to the large site with which the firm was fortunate enough to work. Most of their Chicago high rises are on thin, long city lots that do not allow for elaborated massing studies. Gone here is the flat slab that clearly communicates the double-loaded corridor interior organization so common on the earlier towers. The Town House is organized into three interpenetrating volumes

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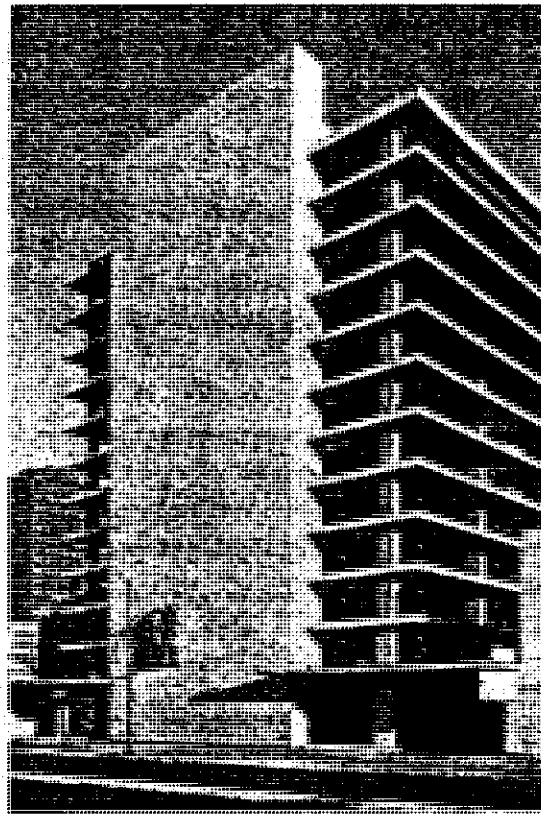
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*Figure 15: The Town House*



*Figure 16: City Parking Facility*

whose relationship is best viewed from the northeast (see the black and white photographs). Taken by itself, the long volume along 7<sup>th</sup> Street is not dissimilar to one of those slab buildings, the Walton-Seneca. The Town House has an 11-story block that sits on a single-story base of glazed bricks with a colonnade that proclaims the primacy of the west elevation. However, a stack of balconies asymmetrically placed towards the north side directly above the building's main entrance dramatically enlivens this mass. The vertical thrust of these balconies help anchor the dynamic horizontal sweep of the ribbon windows that end in corner balconies.

The volume to the northeast rises thirteen stories, its bank of north-facing ribbon windows

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enframed within a limestone perimeter. Three columns of punched windows rise on this volume's east elevation, but its southeast corner is turned by cantilevered balconies that run nearly the length of the volume's southern elevation. These full balconies overlook the lush garden below.

The 14-story third volume, containing core functions and roughly located at the building's northwest corner, joins the other two blocks together. Its buff brick sheathing, in contrast to the limestone of the two apartment volumes, emphasizes its functional difference. It is also taller than the other two volumes, which helps to define it as the visual hinge to which the other two are attached. Other modernist architects in the immediate postwar era tended to camouflage the necessary mechanical systems by placing them on a dedicated mechanical floor and wrapping them in the same curtain wall that enwrapped the entire building.<sup>43</sup> Shaw, however, tended to place mechanicals in large cubic penthouses that often played a role in the overall composition. Such is the case with the Florsheim Building, where it not only anchors one corner of the design, but it also provides a large integrated area for signage. The mechanical penthouse for the Town House was integrated into the top of the brick core volume, heightening the mass and allowing it to read as the hinge to which the other two volumes connect.

By the mid 1950s, high-style architects were using metal and glass curtain walls to wrap their high rises. The ribbon windows within a masonry or stucco wall that were so much a part of the International Style of the 1930s gave way to a sleeker, more skin-like approach to sheathing buildings. Architects who chose to use the ribbon windows within walls did so because this detail tended to be more visually accessible to the current popular tastes. Such buildings retained the solidity of traditional high-rises before World War II, but communicated the fact that an internal skeleton held up the building by recessing the columns behind the curtain wall. One can clearly see the columns through the glazing.

Thin overhangs help to emphasize the horizontality of the overall composition. Shaw, Metz and Dolio often used these knife-like projections in their work to divide a building's base from its

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<sup>43</sup> For example, the Lever House by Gordon Bunshaft (SOM) of 1952; UN Headquarters by Harrison, et al, 1949; Equitable Building by Pietro Belluschi, 1948.

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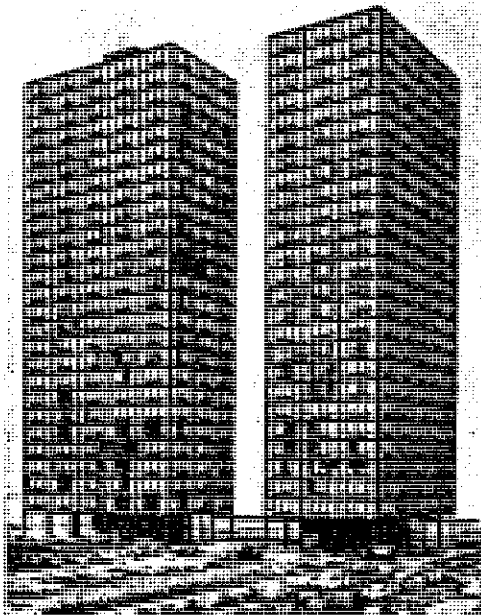
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shaft as well as to top the rise of a volume. They never functioned as sun shades for the ribbon windows, but were instead compositional elements whose shadows provided a visual break to the vertical thrust of the building and lent further plasticity to the elevations. The Town House even sports overhangs on its mechanical penthouses. Emphasizing their use as a visual break between zones, the overhang just above the main entrance on 7<sup>th</sup> Street (at the bottom of the main stack of balconies) was designed to support long planter boxes; however, these were never constructed.



*Figure 17: 860-880 Lake Shore Drive Figure 18: Lake Meadows Apartments*

The overhangs featured in the design of the Town House also indicate the differing direction Shaw, Metz and Dolio was going with its work in relation to other modernist architectural firms. The overhangs are purely visual in effect; they are ornament. This is not so surprising, given Alfred Shaw's Beaux-Arts-based education. The Town House, and much of Shaw, Metz, and Dolio's work at this time, is not an expression of strict Modernism, like Mies van der Rohe's iconic 860-880 Lake Shore Drive of 1948-1951. Nor is it a confirmation of a functionalist

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approach to Modernism, with which the firm of Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill was experimenting, e.g., their Lake Meadows Apartments of 1956-1960. True, these two projects and the Town House are all private, high-rise apartment blocks, all in Illinois, and all designed within 8 years of each other. But the Town House seeks a more popularly accessible form of Modernism, a more approachable, less stark Modernist vision. It is not simply that materials were obviously luxurious, for Mies frequently employed terrazzo, marble, and custom details. It is in the self-consciously opulent expression of those materials.

In its use of materials, the Town House is an excellent example of popular Modernism, confirmed by the presence of coolly stylish applied ornament and frank luxury. The overly thick marble frames around elevator doors and the exterior colonnade's blind windows recall popular contemporary retail design that transformed small square display windows into pictures surrounded by a thick picture frame.<sup>44</sup> The lobby's ornamental marble stair suggests the work of famed hotel and store architect Morris Lapidus, who employed a notorious and similarly obviously luxurious "stairway to nowhere" in his Fontainebleau Hotel of 1954 in Miami. The red columns in the Town House's lobby are almost mannerist in their texture, color, and oversized scale. Shaw betrays his classical training by giving the red columns entasis, a classical Greek correction of a visual illusion whereby tall columns appear to be thinner at their middles than at their bases and capitals. These columns are 2'-4" in diameter at their bases and tops and 2'-6" in diameter at their centers. The lobby's large east wall, visible from 7<sup>th</sup> Street, was originally gilded, announcing the building's opulence to the outside world, while the mirrored walls around the lobby elevators kept the residents on display – as they waited for the cab to descend they saw reflections of themselves pausing in the grand space. The Town House



*Figure 19: Fontainebleau Hotel lobby stair*

<sup>44</sup> Morris Ketchum, Jr. *Shops and Stores*. New York: Reinhold, 1948, p. 53, 176.

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remains smartly elegant, a candid display of America's ideal of luxury in the mid-century.

Many of the 1950s era apartment buildings in Chicago have cyclically undergone remodelings and renovations that have altered their original character, including those by Shaw, Metz and Dolio. In contrast, the Town House remains untouched. One of the reasons that the Town House is so well preserved today is because of the quality of the workmanship and materials that went into its design and construction. It was clearly built to stand as a major statement of the vision of Franklin Life and of Shaw, Metz and Dolio.

### **Conclusion**

The Town House is an exceptionally significant example of 1950s urban, high-rise design and planning. It is rare to find such a large example of stylish, luxurious Modernist design in cities the size of Springfield. A comparison in design can be made between the Town House and both the Stratton Building of State Government Offices of 1954 and the Springfield Municipal Building/City Hall of 1960-61. While they all utilize ribbon windows and limestone spandrels, the similarities end there. Aside from having different programs and functions, their massing and compositions are quite different from the Town House. The City Building has no impressively designed interior spaces, while the grand, marbled lobby of the Stratton Building has much more in common stylistically with 1930s federal Streamlined Classicist buildings than with postwar popular Modernism. There are no residential buildings of similar design, scale, age, or luxury in or around Springfield to compare with the Town House. While Springfield has a handful of large, high-rise apartment buildings from the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, none has the Town House's quality of design or materials. The only other large, private apartment block is the Lincoln Tower of the mid 1970s, a pale, simplistic building, absent of elegant materials and details and without architectural distinction. Public housing towers, like the Bonansinga Apartments, possess no better design or execution than the Lincoln Tower. These are generally examples of the extent to which simplified features, Modernist in name only because of their lack of ornament, were appropriated not because of their aesthetic appeal but because of their expedience and economy. In a discussion of large Modernist buildings in Springfield, a mention must be made of the State House Inn hotel of 1960. A high-rise slab with two full curtain walls

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*CONTINUATION SHEET*

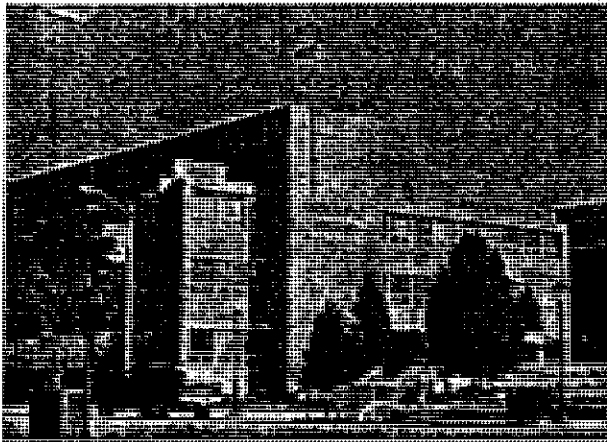
Section 8 Page 42

**The Town House**

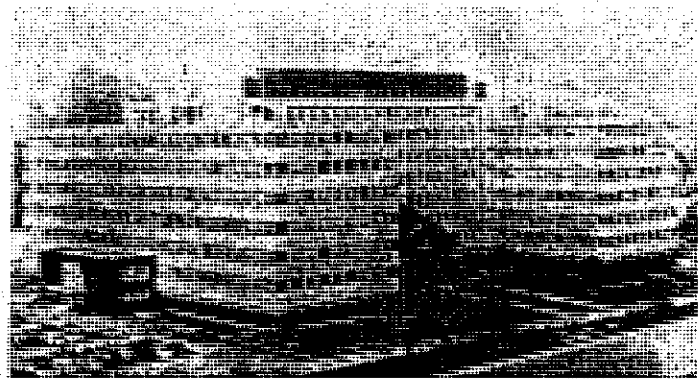
**Sangamon County, Illinois**

of metal and glass, it reflects mainstream contemporary architectural trends that owe a debt to eloquent curtain-wall buildings like Gordon Bunshaft's 1952 Lever House in New York. It does not, however, offer the idiosyncratic brand of popular Modernism that the Town House does.

*Figure 20: Municipal Building*



*Figure 21: Stratton Building*



The American landscape is dotted with boxes of various sizes, demonstrating little design innovation or imagination and constructed of inexpensive, readily available materials that do not endure for long without losing their luster. With its luxurious materials and sophisticated design, the Town House stands out. The building remains a remarkably faithful mid-century Modernist residence, unique to Springfield, to the State of Illinois, and to the work of Alfred Shaw and Shaw, Metz and Dolio.

The design concept of the Town House was carried out with exceptional attention to luxury and permanence. Intended to signify the enduring influence of the Franklin Life Insurance Company on the fortunes of the City of Springfield, the Town House is a permanent and exceptionally significant part of Springfield's architectural history.

It is unique to the history of Springfield housing as well. As the brain child of an exceptionally charismatic and talented company executive, Charles E. Becker, the Town House represents the



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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
*CONTINUATION SHEET*

Section 8

Page 43

**The Town House**

**Sangamon County, Illinois**

charismatic and talented company executive, Charles E. Becker, the Town House represents the play of wealth, confidence and corporate *joie de vivre* that characterized so much of the public spirit of the 1950s. Its exuberant luxury was matched by the astonishing business success of the Franklin Life Insurance Company and that of other Springfield businesses. These were qualities that defined an era, and the Town House stands as eloquent testimony to this spirit.

As part of the history of multiple family dwellings in Springfield, the Town House is unique.<sup>45</sup> Like the Hickox Apartments, which defined apartment living in Springfield in the period between the two World Wars, the Town House is the one post-World War II urban, luxury apartment building. Standing between the push and pull of the forces of urbanization and suburban sprawl, it comes down solidly on the side of urbanity. The fact that its integrity is so intact adds to its value to the community as a historic property. Very little of the original materials and appointments have been changed. Furthermore, the integrity and quality of the original make it likely that the building will stand for another 50 years or more. Its conversion to condominium status with strict limits on the number of allowed rentals means that it has multiple owners who are committed to the property as their investment. It is quite possible that the Town House may remain a splendid habitation into another century.

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<sup>45</sup> Shukai, Jeffery. *Multiple Family Dwellings in Springfield, Illinois*. National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form, June 2004.

NPS Form 10-900-a  
OMB No. 1024-0018  
(8-86)

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National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

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Section 9 Page 43 **The Town House** Sangamon County, Illinois

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National Park Service

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(8-86)

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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Section 9 Page 46 **The Town House Sangamon County, Illinois**

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(8-86)

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES**

**CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 10 Page 47 **The Town House** **Sangamon County, Illinois**

**VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION:**

Legal description of the property: The South Two and One-Half (2.50) feet of Lot Three (3), and all of Lots Four (4), Five (5), Six (6), Seven (7), Eight (8), Nine (9), Ten (10), Eleven (11), Twelve (12), Thirteen (13), and Fourteen (14), of Block Fourteen (14) of Elijah Iles' Second Addition to the City of Springfield, Sangamon County, State of Illinois.

**BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION:**

This is the description given with the original plat of survey when the property was developed by the Franklin Life Insurance Company between 1955 and 1958. The description is contained in the original Declaration of Condominium Ownership filed with the Sangamon County Recorder, March 16, 1979 (amended October 31, 2002) which legally establishes the Town House as a condominium. The boundary includes the building, the garage, and the site historically associated with the property.

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(8-86)

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CONTINUATION SHEET

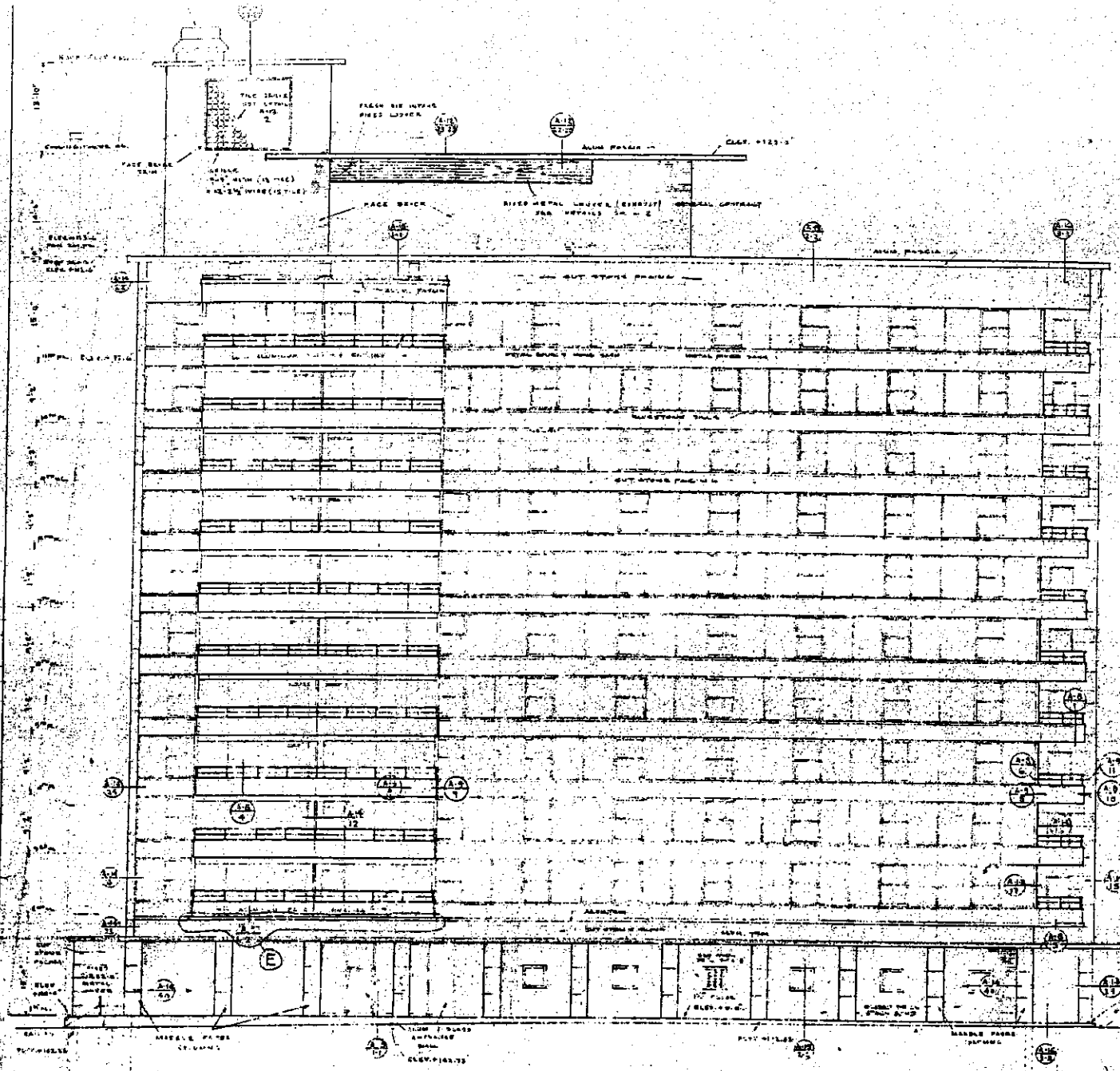
Section Photographs Page 48 **The Town House Sangamon County, IL**

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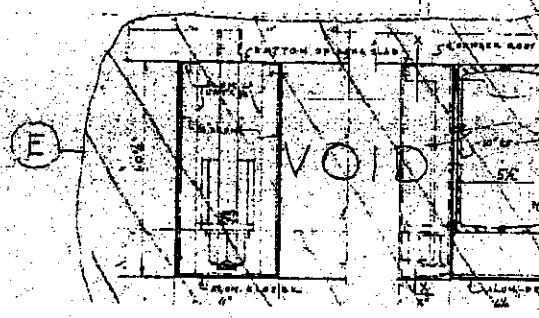
**Key to Photographs for the Town House, Sangamon County, IL**

Photographs were taken by co-author Anthony Rubano in February 2005. The negatives are in the possession of the Town House Home Owner's Association, 718 S. 7<sup>th</sup> Street, Springfield, IL 62703.

1. Entrance, west elevation, facing east
2. Garden bench, facing northeast
3. Looking at garden from inside of lobby, facing south
4. Original light fixture in Colonnade Room
5. Example of a kitchen
6. Bar in community room, facing south
7. Colonnade Room, facing southwest
8. Lobby, facing southwest
9. Lobby staircase, facing northeast
10. Lobby, facing east
11. Detail of cast-aluminum grilles on first floor west elevation, facing east
12. South and east elevations, facing northwest
13. West and south elevations, facing northeast
14. West elevation, facing east
15. North elevation, facing south
16. North and east elevations, facing southwest
17. Gatehouse to underground garage, facing southwest
18. Colonnade on west elevation, facing south
19. Typical kitchen
20. Garden, facing southeast
21. Detail of exterior windows, facing northwest
22. Typical bathroom
23. Typical living room

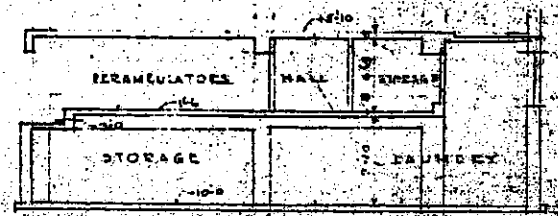
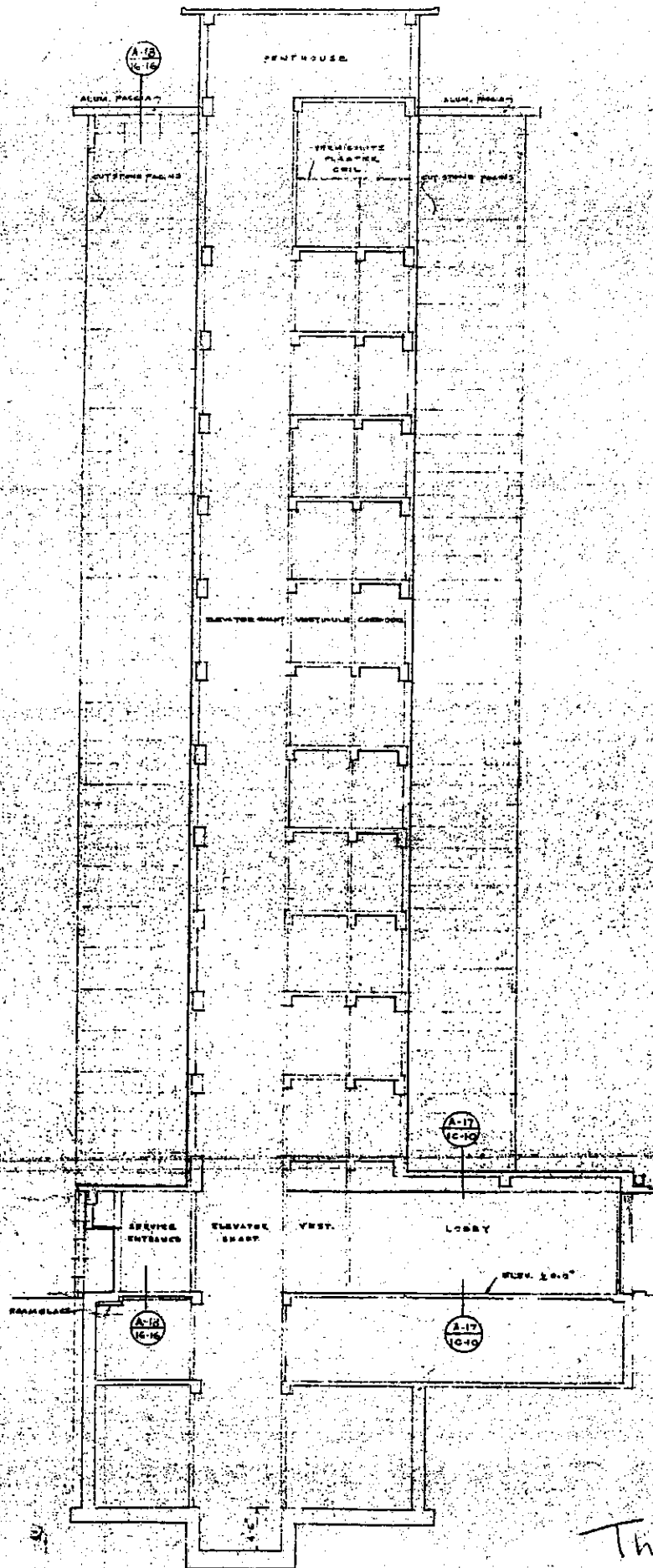


WEST ELEVATION ON LINE 'A-A'  
SCALE 1/8" = 1'-0"



The Town House

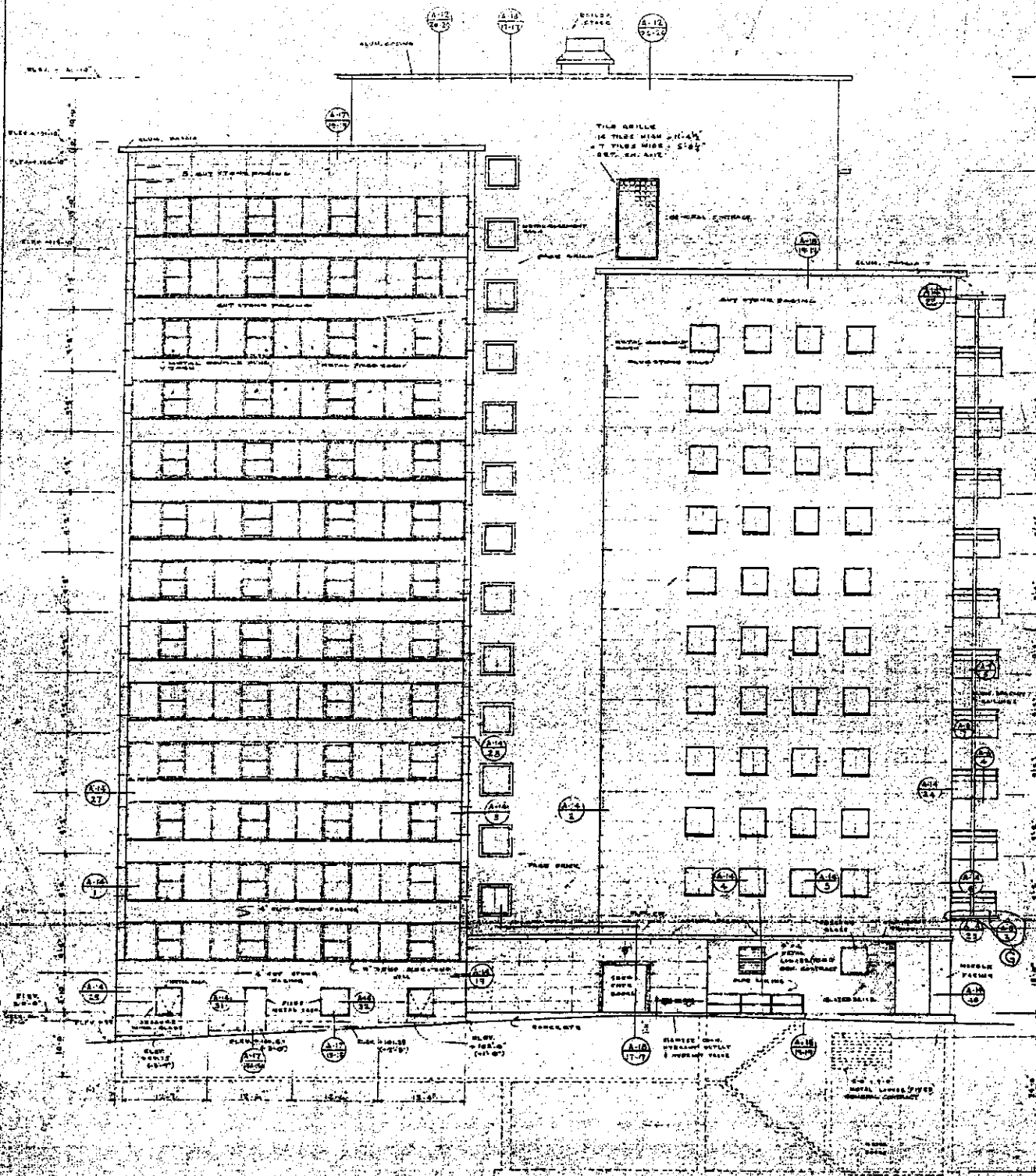




SEC. F-F THRU BASEMENT INTERIORS  
SCALE: 1/8" = 1'-0"

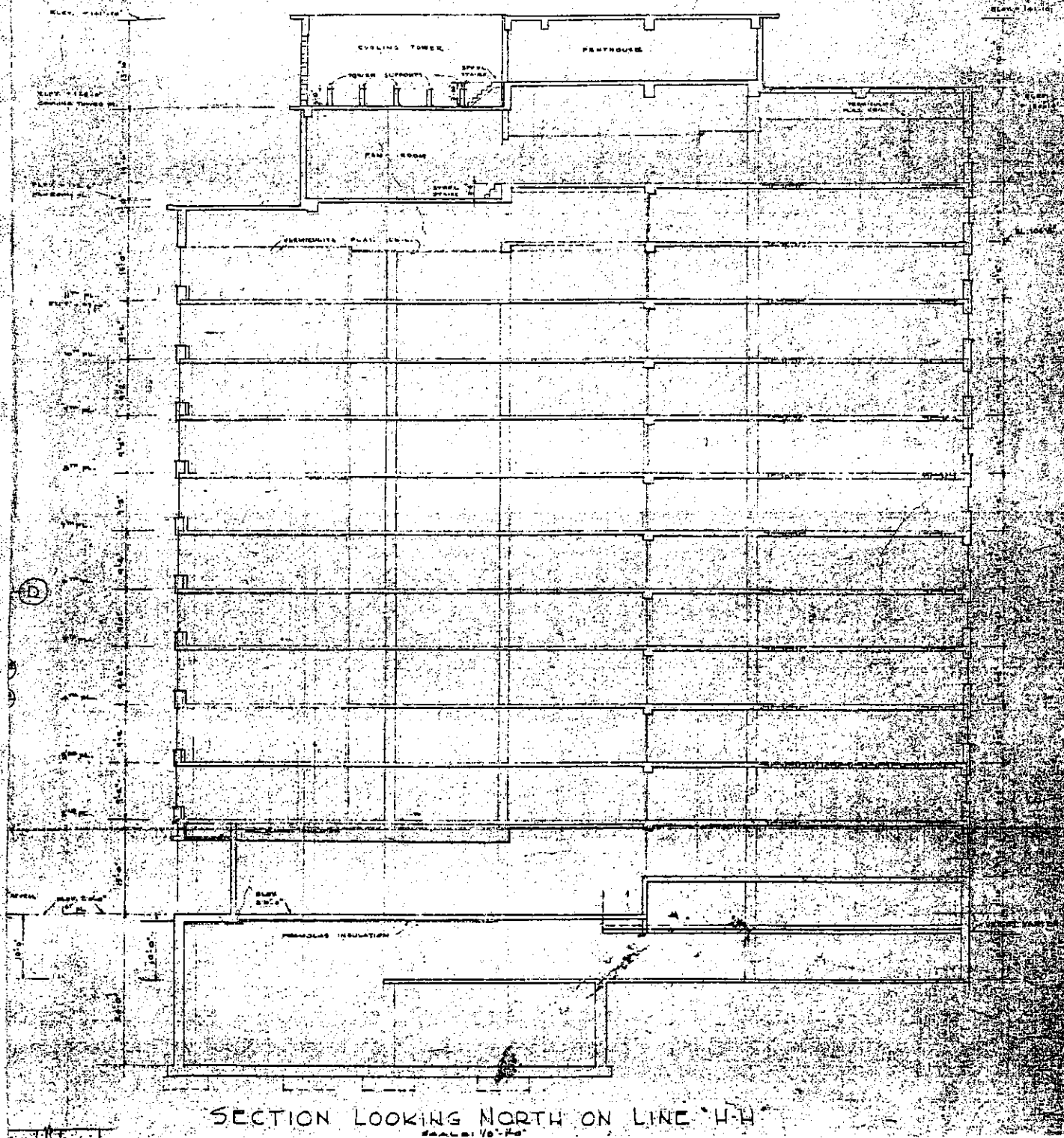
WEST ELEVATION ON LINE F-F

The Town House  
West Elevation



NORTH ELEVATION ON LINE "E-E"

The Town House



The Town House

BLACK FACE BRICK  
PLANE 4" REVEAL

A-12  
ROOF  
SHEATHING  
ALUM. FLASHING

ROOF  
DRY  
BRICK  
3-4-4-2  
METAL  
DOOR

ALUM. FLASHING

607 STONE FACINGS

METAL  
SCREENING  
BRICK  
MASONRY  
WALL

STONE  
FACING  
REPAIRS

REINFORCED  
CONCRETE

GLAZED  
BRICK  
STACK  
BOND

BEARING  
REINFORCED  
WALL

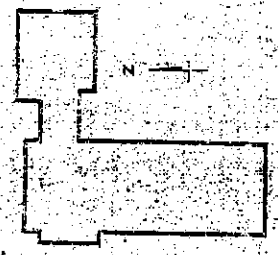
SLURRY  
2 CLASS  
CONCRETE  
WALL

MASONRY  
REINFORCED  
WALL

SLURRY  
2 CLASS  
CONCRETE  
WALL

RAUP TO DETAIL

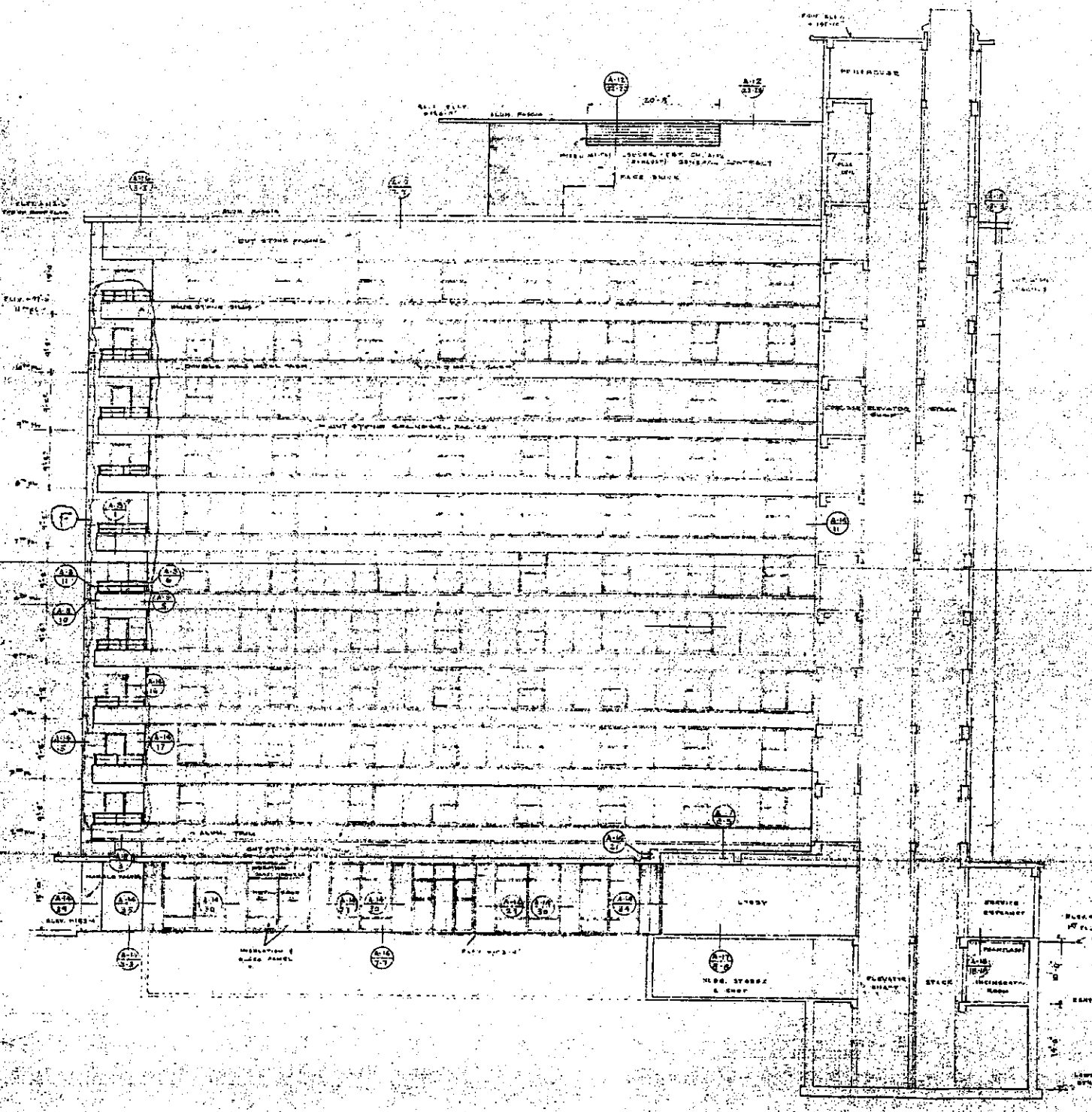
ESSENTIAL VALVE  
ESSENTIAL VALVE  
& SHUTTER COIN



KEY PLAN  
West Elevation, A-A

SOUTH ELEVATION ON LINE "B-B"

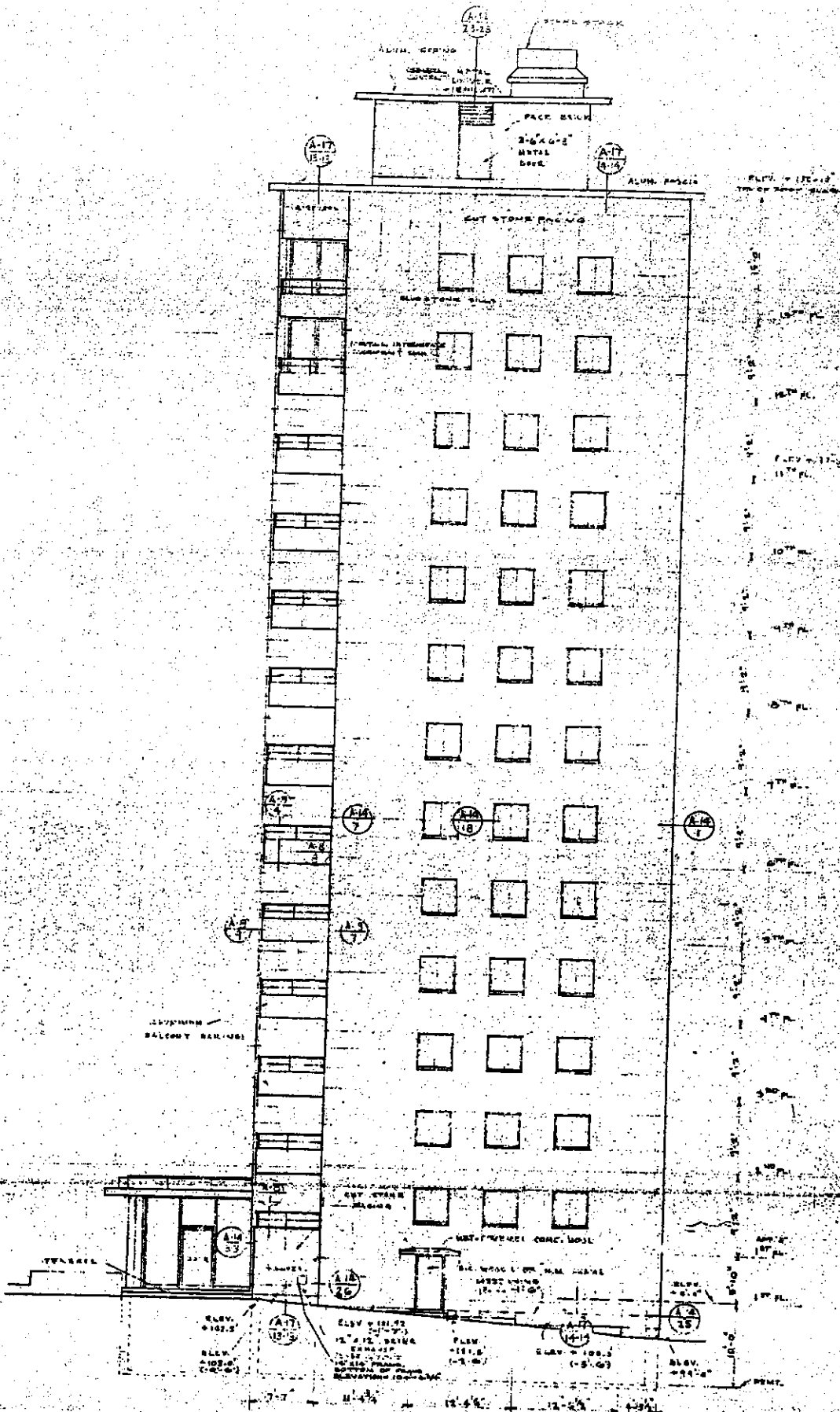




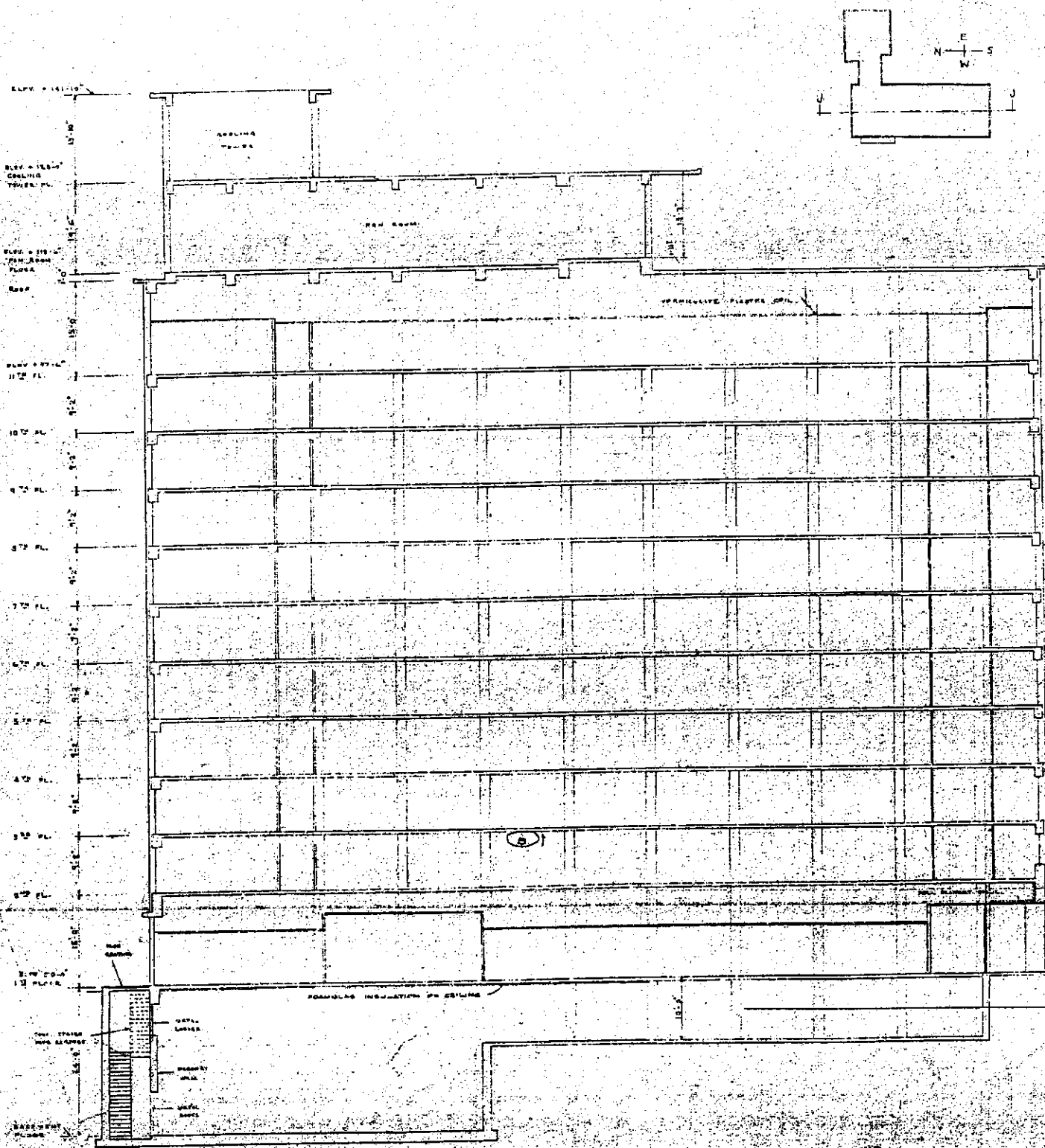
EAST ELEVATION ON LINE 'C-C'

The Town House



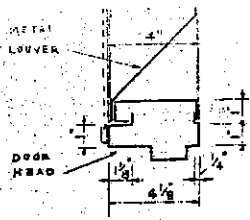


The  
Town  
House

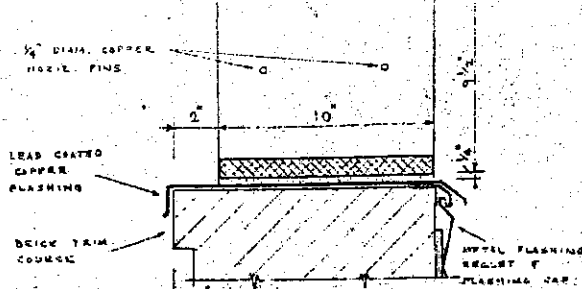


The Town House

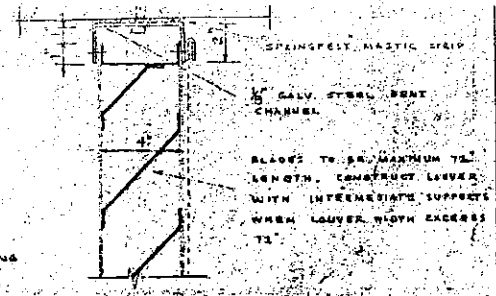




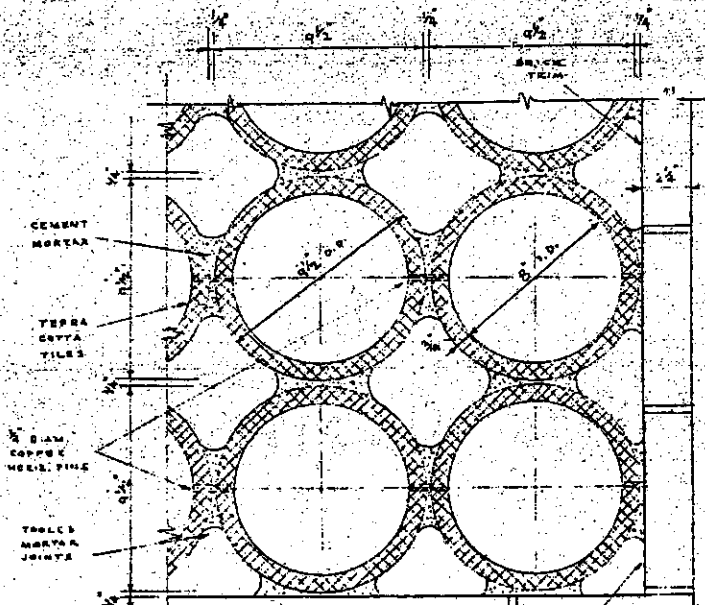
6 LOUVER AT DOOR HEAD



1 SECTION

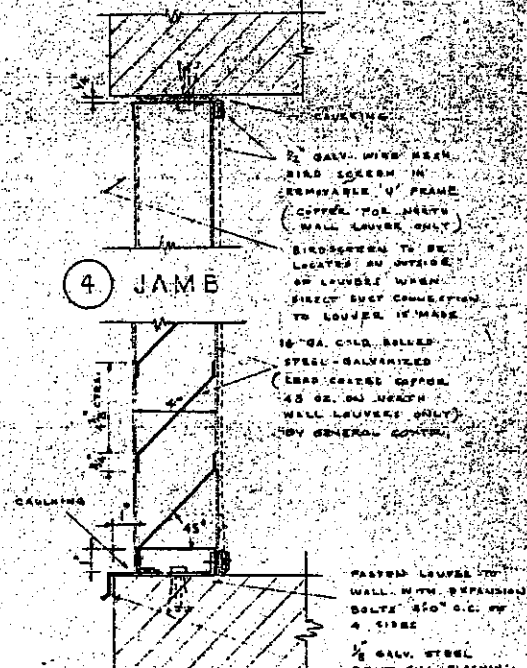


3 HEAD



2 ELEVATION

FILL EXPOSED HOLES IN BRICK WITH MORTAR TO MATCH SURFACE

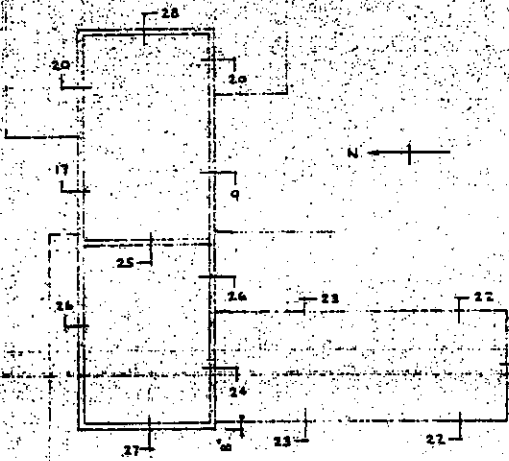


4 JAMB

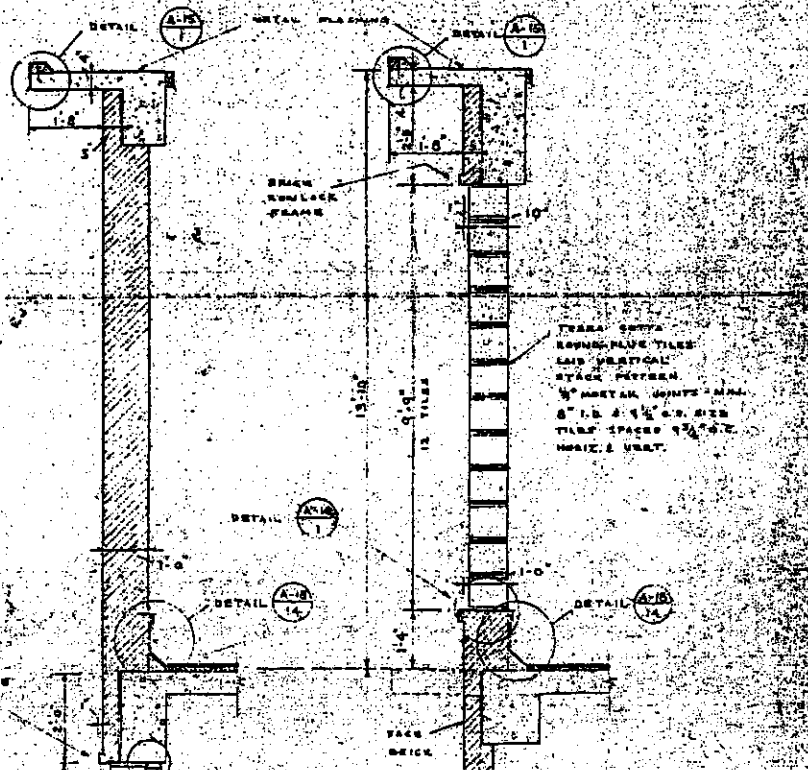
5 SILL

GRILLE & LOUVER DETAILS

SCALE 3/4\"/>



PENTHOUSE KEY PLAN FOR WALL SECTIONS

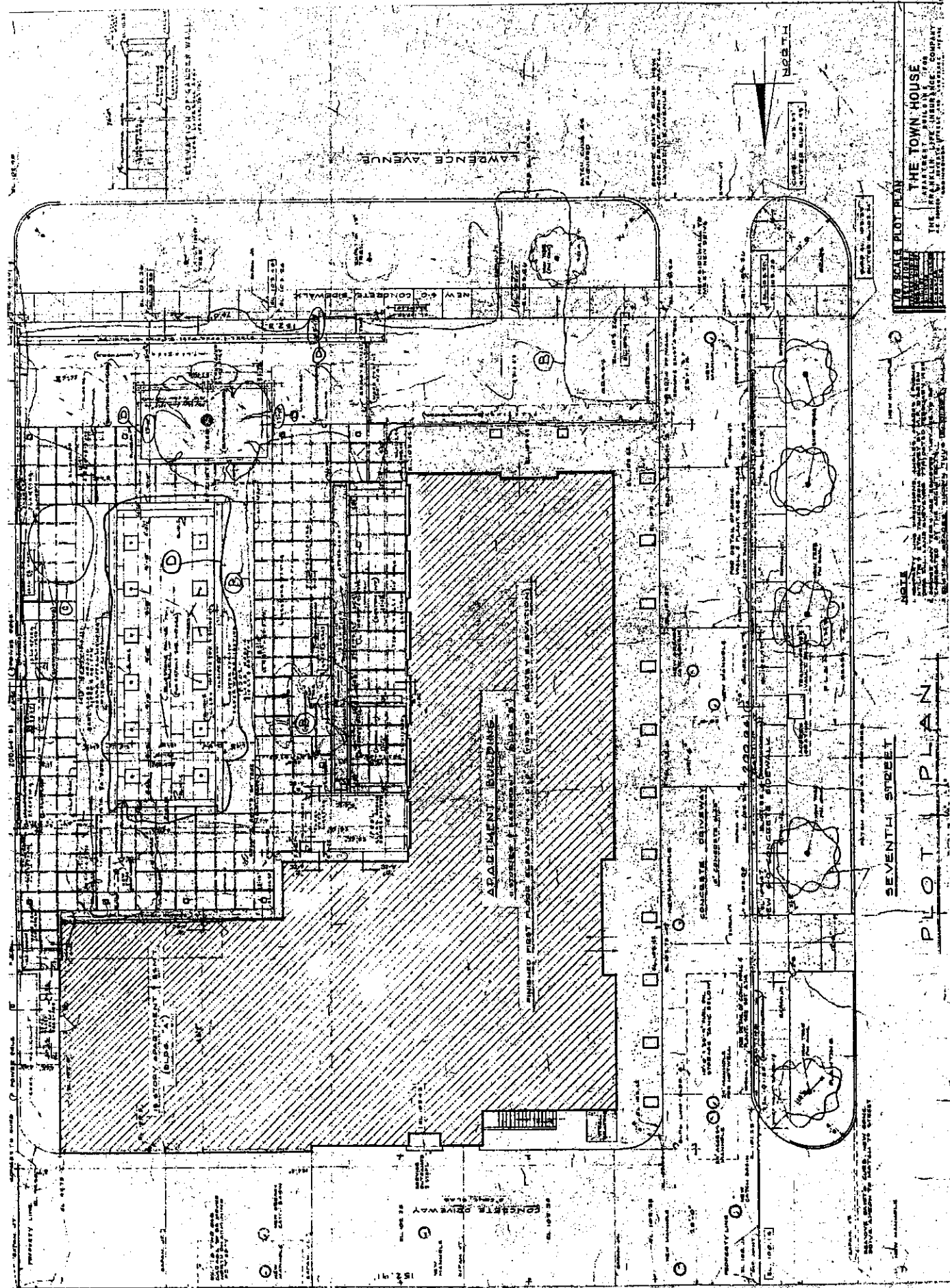


GRILLE IN NORTH WALL

The Town House







1/8" SCALE PLOT PLAN  
 THE TOWN HOUSE  
 ARCHITECTS  
 1500 W. 10TH AVENUE  
 DENVER, CO. 80202  
 THE TOWN HOUSE ARCHITECTS COMPANY  
 IS AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY AFFIRMATIVE ACTION EMPLOYER

NOTE:  
 ALL DIMENSIONS ARE TO FACE UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED.  
 ALL MATERIALS AND METHODS OF CONSTRUCTION SHALL BE AS SHOWN ON THESE PLANS UNLESS OTHERWISE NOTED.  
 ALL WORK SHALL BE IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE LATEST EDITIONS OF THE INTERNATIONAL BUILDING CODES AND ALL APPLICABLE LOCAL ORDINANCES.

SEVENTH STREET  
 PLOT PLAN

Actual Landscape Plan

# Plant Materials for Landscape Plan

## PLANT LIST

### TREES (SEE SHT. A-20 FOR TYPICAL TREES)

QTY	BOTANICAL NAME	COMMON NAME	HEIGHT	CALIPER	REMARKS
24	QUERCUS PALMSTRIS	PIN OAK	4 1/2'	3"	
2	GLEDITSIA TRIACANTHOS	HONEYLOCUST	6'-8'		

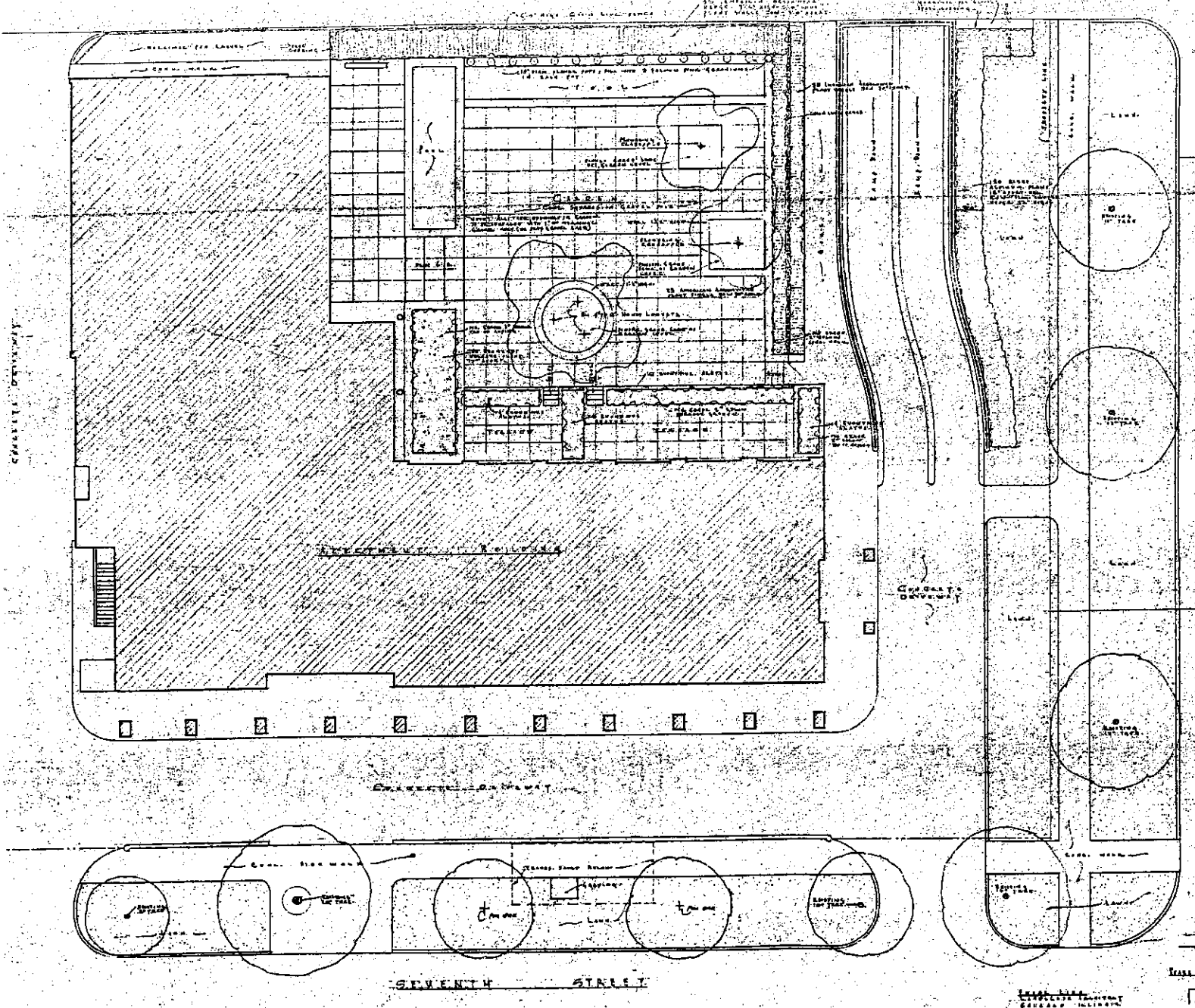
### SHRUBS

24	CRATAEGUS PUNIFOLIA	HAWTHORN	7'-8'		
24	SARSEX S KORRANA	SARSEY	12'-24"		INCLUDES PLANTING AT PERIMETER LOT
20	SARSEX S MENTON	SARSEY	20'-40"		2 ROWS, 20' APART

### VINES & GROUND COVER

9	WISTERIA	WISTERIA			
6	AMPELOPSIS TRICUSPIDATA VIBICNI	BOSTON IVY			8 YK. STOCK
51	EUONYMUS VEGETUS	EUONYMUS	2'-3'		20' APART
102	EUONYMUS COLORATA	EUONYMUS	5'		1/20 FT.

(D)



Proposed  
Landscape Plan of Franz Lipp





TO F. J. O'Brien  
FROM Herbert O. Haaker  
AT Home Office - Investment Department  
SUBJECT Contractors & Suppliers - Town House Apartments

THE FRANKLIN LIFE INSURANCE CO.  
SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS

DATE July 24, 1958

WRITE OF ONLY ONE SUBJECT IN THIS LETTER EACH LETTER SHOULD BE SIGNED

As you requested, listed below are the principal contractors in connection with the Town House Apartments and what they were contracted for. Also listed are major suppliers.

1. Evans Construction Co., 19th & Washington St., Springfield, Illinois  
(General Contracting)
2. Henson Robinson Co., 114 North Fifth St., Springfield, Illinois  
(Heating and air conditioning)
3. Edwards Plumbing & Heating Co., 1006 W. Edwards St., Springfield, Illinois  
(Plumbing)

General Electric Appliance Co., 5021 Fyler Ave., St. Louis 9, Missouri  
(Kitchen units ... stoves, refrigerators, dishwashers, disposals, etc.)

Mark Braun, 1714 South MacArthur Blvd., Springfield, Illinois  
(Kitchen cabinets)

Edwin Raphael Co., Inc., 124 East Sixth St., Holland, Michigan  
(Drapery & Hardware)

McCue Marble, 25 East Washington St., Chicago 2, Illinois  
(Marble for 12th Floor Fireplace)

A. Dirksen & Sons, 406 East Washington, Springfield, Illinois  
(Carpeting and padding for corridors)

M. A. Van Esso, Inc., 154 W. Erie St., Chicago 10, Illinois  
(Lighting fixtures for Lobby)

Decorators Supply, Inc., 2601 South Peoria St., Chicago 8, Illinois  
(Cabinet Work)

Imperial Restaurant Supply, 2323 South Michigan Ave., Chicago 10, Illinois  
(Kitchen equipment for Colonnade Room)

G. H. Schanbacher & Son, 101 West Monroe St., Springfield, Illinois  
(Interior decoration)

Boulevard Interiors, 2110-12 South MacArthur Blvd., Springfield, Illinois  
(Furnishings)

Harry F. Fritsch & Sons, 1021 West Laurel St., Springfield, Illinois  
(Interior painting)



**THE FRANKLIN LIFE INSURANCE CO.**  
SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS

TO F. J. O'Brien  
FROM Herbert O. Haaker  
AT  
SUBJECT Contractors & Suppliers - Town House Apartments (Continued)

DATE July 24, 1958

WRITE OF ONLY ONE SUBJECT IN THIS LETTER EACH LETTER SHOULD BE SIGNED

Sager Weatherstrip & Calking Corp., 672 1/2 S. Ashland Ave., Chicago 36, Illinois  
(Weatherstripping 56 doors)

Sherle-Wagner, 123 East 57th St., New York 22, New York  
(Furnishings)

Wm. H. Jackson Co., 3 East 47th St., New York 17, New York  
(Furnishings)

R. F. Herndon & Co., 321 South 5th St., Springfield, Illinois  
(Kitchen utensils)

Chas. J. Winston & Co., Inc., 515 Madison Ave., New York 22, New York  
(Furnishings)

L. B. Herbst Corp., 325 North Wells St., Chicago 10, Illinois  
(Furnishings)

Watson & Boaler, Inc., 712 North Rush St., Chicago 11, Illinois  
(Wallpaper & curtains)

Frazier, Raftery, Orr & Fairbank, 315 James St., Geneva, Illinois  
(Lighting fixtures & architectural fees)

Hofferkamp Bros. Hardware, 627 East Adams, Springfield, Illinois  
(Maintenance tools)

Madison Fine Furniture, 11th & South Grand Ave., Springfield, Illinois  
(Furnishings)

A. W. Sicking & Co., 116 North 6th St., Springfield, Illinois  
(Appliances)

Design House, 815 West Washington St., Springfield, Illinois  
(Furnishings)

Launderers Exchange, Inc., 220 Reisch Bldg., Springfield, Illinois  
(Appliances .. 3 washers & 1 dryer)

Carl Carter Agency, Inc., 901 South Grand Ave. East, Springfield, Illinois  
(Fuel Oil)

Wolford Morris Equipment Co., Inc., 912 E. Adams St., Springfield, Illinois  
(Kitchen and janitor supplies)

Brye Printing Co., 723 East Adams St., Springfield, Illinois  
(Printing)

Davey Tree Expert Co., Kent, Ohio  
(Tree House garden)

**THE FRANKLIN LIFE INSURANCE CO.**  
SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS

TO F. J. O'Brien  
FROM Herbert O. Haaker  
AT  
SUBJECT Contractors & Suppliers - Town House Apartments (Continued)

DATE July 24, 1958

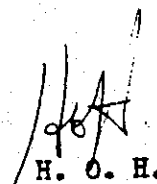
WRITE OF ONLY ONE SUBJECT IN THIS LETTER EACH LETTER SHOULD BE SIGNED

Austin Flooring Co., 5510 West Chicago Ave., Chicago 51, Illinois  
(Wood flooring for one apartment)

Central Illinois Light Co., 4th & Capitol, Springfield, Illinois

Illinois Bell Telephone Co., South Sixth St., Springfield, Illinois

City Water, Light & Power, Springfield, Illinois

  
H. O. H.

HOH:dd

GEORGIA, PICKENS COUNTY,  
Georgia Marble Company and Tate Historic District,  
Centered on GA 53 bet GA 5 and Long Swamp Creek,  
Tate, 05000644,  
LISTED, 6/10/05

ILLINOIS, SANGAMON COUNTY,  
Town House, The,  
718 7th St.,  
Springfield, 05000603,  
LISTED, 6/03/05  
(Multiple Family Dwellings in Springfield, Illinois MPS)

INDIANA, DAVIESS COUNTY,  
Union Church and Cemetery, Old,  
1125 E Approx 3/8 mi. S of jct. with 700 S,  
Alfordsville vicinity, 05000605,  
LISTED, 6/17/05

INDIANA, HOWARD COUNTY,  
Kokomo High School and Memorial Gymnasium,  
303 E Superior St. and 400 Apperson Way N,  
Kokomo, 05000607,  
LISTED, 6/17/05  
(Indiana's Public Common and High Schools MPS)

INDIANA, JACKSON COUNTY,  
Jackson, Joseph, Hotel,  
2420 S. Main St.,  
Vallonia, 05000610,  
LISTED, 6/17/05

INDIANA, LAKE COUNTY,  
Lake County Sanatorium Nurses Home,  
2323 N. Main St.,  
Crown Point, 05000608,  
LISTED, 6/17/05

INDIANA, MARTIN COUNTY,  
Martin County Courthouse,  
220 Captial Ave.,  
Shoals, 05000604,  
LISTED, 6/17/05

INDIANA, MONROE COUNTY,  
Vinegar Hill Historic District,  
E. 1st St. from Woodlawn to Jordan and S. Sheridan to E. Maxwell,  
Bloomington, 05000195,  
LISTED, 6/17/05

INDIANA, WABASH COUNTY,  
Honeywell Studio,  
378 N. IN 15,  
Wabash, 05000609,  
LISTED, 6/17/05

MISSISSIPPI, FRANKLIN COUNTY,  
Lucien Bridge,  
Over McCall Cr, on Stewart Rd., at Lucien,  
McCall Creek vicinity, 05000611,