

<b>LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT</b>
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**LANDMARK NAME:** Battelstein's**AGENDA ITEM:** A**OWNERS:** SWVP JW Houston, LLC**HPO FILE NO.:** HP2024\_0253**APPLICANTS:** Angela Pinto, owner, and Amanda Coleman, agent**DATE ACCEPTED:** Sep-16-2024**LOCATION:** 806 Main Street (formerly 812 Main St), Houston, TX 77002 – JW Marriott Reserve**HAHC HEARING:** Oct-10-2024

**SITE INFORMATION:** Lot 1, Block 1, JW Marriott Reserve, City of Houston, Harris County, Texas (formerly Lot 3, Tracks 11 and 12, Block 92, South Side Buffalo Bayou (SSBB)).\* The lot size was 6,416 square feet and has been replatted with 806 Main Street (S.F. Carter- Second National Bank Building, Landmark). The new total lot size is 19,732 square feet (including former Lots 4, 5, Tract 11A, lock 92 SSBB of the S.F. Carter Building). The proposed nomination is for a 63,960 square foot, ten story commercial mid-century high rise. *\*please see end of the report for meets and bounds.*

**TYPE OF APPROVAL REQUESTED:** Landmark Designation**HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE SUMMARY**

Battelstein's is a ten-story high-rise building completed in its current form in 1950 and was originally addressed as 812 Main Street. It functioned as a high-end department store until the 1980s. The architecture of the building, amidst a transitional period in Houston architecture, represents a melding of natural and man-made materials such as limestone and aluminum that are reflective of Houston's Mid-century Modern period post WWII.

The property began as an early twentieth-century building. Sanborn maps from 1924 and historic photographs indicate that the original 812 Main Street building was a two-story commercial building. The architect for the 1924 building is unknown. In 1934, Battelstein's hired the firm of Joseph Finger to remodel the building.<sup>1</sup> In 1937, the building was enlarged to five floors and is visually represented in a 1948 advertisement for the department store (Figure 3).<sup>2</sup> Under George Rustay, the firm was rehired for another transformation which resulted in the ten-story form seen today and was completed in 1950.

The high-rise has a rectangular plan that measures approximately 52 feet by 128 feet with the shorter span facing east onto Main Street. The north, south and east sides are bound by other buildings, notably the S.F. Carter Building to the north which is a City of Houston Landmark. Only the façade is visible from the street. The building's principal exterior materials are smooth-faced limestone on the east façade and brick on the north and south (side) elevations. The building is a Modern interpretation of the two-part vertical block. The upper eight floors constitute the upper zone and are uniform, identical to one another in design and differentiated from the lower zone of the ground floor storefront and second floor with inset balcony and fluted aluminum clad columns. On upper floors, windows were originally aluminum two-light with two-light transom windows.

<sup>1</sup> Texas Association of General Contractor's Bulletin, various dates; *Jewish Herald*, March 26, 1909, accessed March 1, 2019, <https://www.newspapers.com>.

<sup>2</sup> "Abe Battelstein is a Rarity – He's a Native Houstonian," *Houston Chronicle*, November 7, 1950.

Founder Philip “Pop” Battelstein opened the store location in 1924 and expanded it multiple times to meet increasing retail demand in Houston. The current ten-story iteration was hailed as a “shining example of accomplishment.” The alterations reflected in Battelstein’s were part of a larger trend of retail improvements occurring throughout downtown Houston in the 1940s and 1950s.<sup>3</sup> In 1967, the store ceased to operate as a family-owned business and was acquired by Manhattan Industries Inc., a national company. During the 1960s and 1970s, Battelstein’s remained one of Houston’s top retailers. The fate of the downtown Battelstein’s store became increasingly uncertain as Houston’s population moved away from the city center to the suburbs. In 1979, Battelstein’s contemplated either closing or relocating the downtown operation, and by 1980 had sold the building to Bealls. After this, the building would change ownership several times and short-lived, unsuccessful adaptation efforts occurred. The building was finally abandoned in the late 2000s and has sat unoccupied.

Battelstein’s is listed in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A in the area of Commerce as a one of top high-end department stores that underwent extensive modifications to compete in and serve downtown Houston in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. It is also listed under Criterion C in the area of Architecture at the local level of significance because of its distinctive representation of architectural philosophy occurring between two waves of the Modern Movement in Houston- the first spanning between the 1920s and 1940s, and the second spanning from WW11 to the 1970s. The period of significance is from 1950 to 1967, starting from the completion date of the current form to when the location stopped operating as a family business. Battelstein’s located at 806 Main Street meets Criteria 1, 4, 6, & 8 for Landmark Designation.

## HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE

### *Origins of Battelstein’s*

Battelstein’s was founded by Jewish immigrant Philip “Pop” Battelstein, who immigrated to Houston from Lithuania in 1897.<sup>4</sup> Upon his arrival in Houston, Battelstein opened a tailor shop at 314 Fannin Street.<sup>5</sup> By 1909, Battelstein had relocated to 618 Main Street. Early twentieth-century advertisements for “P. Battelstein & Company” touts their ability to tailor a suit “in any style and cloth you may select at a price that competes closely with factory made clothing.”<sup>6</sup> Listed as a “Tailor and Haberdasher,” Battelstein also sold neckwear, shirts, vests, smoking jackets, “Wright’s Underwear,” overcoats, and hats.<sup>7</sup>

Battelstein’s moved to its permanent home at 812 Main Street in 1924 after the store at 618 Main Street burned down with the Old Capitol Hotel. A grand opening was held at the new location on February 14. The announcement in the *Houston Post* read:

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<sup>3</sup> Tellepsen Construction Company advertisement, “Mid-Century Achievement,” courtesy of Archive.org. and Stephen Fox, *Houston Architectural Guide* (Houston: AIA Houston, 2012), 53.

<sup>4</sup> Find a Grave, “Philip Battelstein,” accessed March 1, 2019, <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/152398802/philip-battelstein>; *Waco- News Tribune*, July 6, 1955, accessed March 1, 2019, <https://www.newspapers.com>.

<sup>5</sup> “Battelstein’s Opens River Oaks Store,” *Houston Magazine*, August 1953.

<sup>6</sup> *Houston Post*, July 18, 1909, accessed February 14, 2019, <https://www.newspapers.com>.

<sup>7</sup> *Houston Post*, October 23, 1910, accessed February 14, 2019, <https://www.newspapers.com>.

With an earnest desire to be of the greatest service to all the men of Houston and vicinity, we present to you with the opening of our new store, every convenience, every comfort, modern appointments and every facility to make the choosing of your clothes a real pleasure. We point to our new home with pride and consider it to be one of the finest and most exclusive men's clothing stores in this section of Texas.<sup>8</sup>

Sanborn maps from 1924 and historic photographs indicate that the building was a two-story commercial building which Battelstein's shared with other tenants (Figures 1, 2, Map 3).<sup>9</sup> The architect for the 1924 building is unknown. By 1933, Battelstein's occupied the entire ground floor of the building and in 1934 hired Joseph Finger to remodel the building.<sup>10</sup> Finger was Houston's foremost Jewish architect at the time and frequently designed buildings for Jewish institutions and clients, including Temple Beth Israel (1925, NRHP 1984), which Finger designed for his own congregation, Beth Israel Mausoleum (1935), and Beth Yeshurun Synagogue (1949).<sup>11</sup> Finger was also contracted by Congregation Adath Yeshurun for various projects, where Battelstein was a member and Secretary Treasurer.<sup>12</sup> In 1937, the building was enlarged to five floors when they began offering a ladies' ready to wear department, a boy's and young men's shop, and a millinery department (Figure 3, 4).<sup>13</sup>

### *Houston Retail Post WWII*

Between 1940 and 1950, the population in Houston increased by 54 percent, a population boom which endured into the 1960s. In 1948, specifically, Houston was rated as the fastest growing city per capita in the county. Leading the corresponding building boom in downtown Houston were the department stores.<sup>14</sup> Among the largest local department stores were Battelstein's, Joske's, Sakowitz, Foley's, and Sears & Roebuck, all of which had a retail presence downtown. While located outside the central business district, Sears & Roebuck initiated a new wave of construction and remodeling when their building on South Main Street was erected in 1939 (Nimmons, Carr & Wright, Alfred C Finn). When it was completed, it was the largest department store in Houston.<sup>15</sup>

Battelstein's hired Joseph Finger & George Rustay to spearhead the "additions to and refacing of" the older 1937 Battelstein's store.<sup>16</sup> Tellepsen Construction Company served as builders. A midcentury departure from the older store's design, Tellepsen called the building "a shining example of

<sup>8</sup> *Houston Post*, February 14, 1924, accessed February 14, 2019, <https://www.newspapers.com>.

<sup>9</sup> Initially, Battelstein's had only "18 front feet" of the building. By 1933, they occupied the entire ground floor of the building. This information comes from an undated and untitled article in the "Battelstein, Philip (Family)" vertical file at the Houston Metropolitan Research Center.

<sup>10</sup> Texas Association of General Contractor's Bulletin, 1934.

<sup>11</sup> *Handbook of Texas Online*, Stephen Fox, "FINGER, JOSEPH," accessed March 14, 2019, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/ffi37>. The 1949 Beth Yeshurun Synagogue is the congregation's earlier synagogue on Southmore, not the congregation's current synagogue on Beechnut (RTHL 2019).

<sup>12</sup> Texas Association of General Contractor's Bulletin, various dates; *Jewish Herald*, March 26, 1909, accessed March 1, 2019, <https://www.newspapers.com>.

<sup>13</sup> "Abe Battelstein is a Rarity – He's a Native Houstonian," *Houston Chronicle*, November 7, 1950.

<sup>14</sup> David G. McComb, *Houston: the Bayou City* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1969), 189-190.

<sup>15</sup> Paul Homeyer, "Unmasking Main Street: A Look at Slipcovered Buildings in Houston," *Houston Review* 3, no. 2.

<sup>16</sup> *Houston Architectural Guide*, 53; City directories indicate that the building had already been altered by 1948, with three more floors shown in the Battelstein's City Directory advertisement. These alterations possibly date to the 1934 Finger remodel. See Figure 3.

accomplishment” (Figure 13).<sup>17</sup> Battelstein’s advertised that they were “proud” to present the public with a “new and delightfully beautiful Battelstein’s for [their] shopping pleasure” (Figure 14).<sup>18</sup> A patron of Battelstein’s recalled that the cosmetics department was on the first floor when you walked through the door. To the left was men’s shirts, hats, and shoes; to the right, women’s shoes. Upper floors were for ladies’ and children’s fashions.<sup>19</sup>

### *Mid-Century Expansion to the Suburbs*

Between 1939 and 1949, Houston achieved the number one ranking for percentage gain in retail sales for cities of over 500,000 people. Following the boom of downtown development, major department stores began to expand to suburban sites, including Battelstein’s.<sup>20</sup> Battelstein’s opened a second store in River Oaks in 1953 and a third location at Sharpstown Mall in 1961.

Although the dollar amount of sales remained the same, the opening of suburban stores drastically affected the share of total retail sales for downtown stores, dropping from 51 percent in 1948 to 28 percent in 1958.<sup>21</sup> Amidst a growing concern that the popularity of suburban stores would spell disaster for downtown retail, merchants asserted, at least publicly, that Houston was an exemption among national trends of downtown store closures and that their volume was up considerably. They attributed this to easy access in and out of downtown, wide streets, ample parking facilities, adequate hotel accommodations, “the comparatively new appearance of downtown stores,” and continued construction of businesses and office buildings.<sup>22</sup>

To compete with the suburbs in the 1950s and 1960s, Battelstein’s continued to invest in and update the image of their downtown store, remodeling the second floor in 1955 and redecorating in 1960. Harry Battelstein, Philip Battelstein’s son and then president of the company, said “the first floor has been designed into a Boulevard of shops...individual shops for stocking accessories, stationary, jewelry, and handbags and gloves are set off from each side of the center aisles so that shoppers may browse.”<sup>23</sup>

### *A New Era for Houston Retail during the 1960s and 1970s*

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, locally owned stores were increasingly competing with national companies. In 1967, Manhattan Industries Inc., a “diversified New York apparel and retail firm,” purchased Battelstein’s from the Battelstein family.<sup>24</sup> In 1969, Manhattan Industries launched a new campaign to “revamp” the image of Battelstein’s and reach out to a more diversified public. Battelstein’s opened twin stores at the Northwest and Almeda Malls, which added 500 employees, bringing the total number of employees to 1,100.<sup>25</sup> In addition to opening their twin stores, Battelstein’s placed Marcia Kober in charge of remodeling their River Oaks, Sharpstown, and

<sup>17</sup> “Mid-Century Achievement.”

<sup>18</sup> Battelstein’s advertisement, “It makes us feel good...” courtesy of Archive.org.

<sup>19</sup> This is a patron’s personal recollections. Photographs confirm that at least the fifth floor was for ladies’ fashions. See Figure 10 & 11.

<sup>20</sup> *Bayou City*, 191.

<sup>21</sup> *Bayou City*, 192.

<sup>22</sup> J.R. Gonzales, “Loss of downtown Macy’s marks the end of an era,” *Houston Chronicle*, January 4, 2013, accessed March 1, 2019, <https://blog.chron.com/bayoucityhistory/2013/01/loss-of-downtown-macys-marks-the-end-of-an-era/#photo-189004>.

<sup>23</sup> “Loss of downtown Macy’s.”

<sup>24</sup> “Levy Sparks Battelstein’s facelifts,” *Houston Chronicle*, July 15, 1979.

<sup>25</sup> “Twin Openings for Battelstein’s,” newspaper unknown, August 3, 1969.

downtown stores. The new décor included “brightly colored carpeting and wall covering and pattern for contrast of design and texture.”<sup>26</sup>

Throughout the 1970s, Houston continued its trend of strong retail sales. In 1973, three million of Texas’ twelve million people lived in the Houston-Gulf coast area, with 78 percent of the area’s total buying income, \$12.4 billion, in Houston alone. Houston ranked fourth in total retail sales in the nation and ranked first in percentage increase of sales over ten years ending in 1973, up 164.8 percent. Battelstein’s was still among the top retailers, which also included Foley’s, Sears, J.C. Penny, Joske’s, Montgomery Ward, and Sakowitz.<sup>27</sup>

While sales during the 1970s were strong, crime increasingly became a problem in downtown Houston. Suburban stores were becoming more and more advantageous to shoppers, with free parking being one of the most important factors.<sup>28</sup> In 1979, Battelstein’s executives stated that the downtown operation would either “move to a location closer to other major retailers or close.”<sup>29</sup> In 1980, Battelstein’s was purchased by Bealls which retained the downtown location.<sup>30</sup> Bealls vacated the building at an unknown date and ownership changed hands several times. After unsuccessful efforts to repurpose the building as a nightclub and condos, it stood abandoned for over a decade. The owner of the adjacent J.W. Marriott Hotel (historically known as the S.F. Carter Second National Bank Building) purchased the building in 2019.

### *Modern Architecture in Houston*

The influence of European Modernism slowly caught on in United States by the 1940s. Modern architecture in Houston, too, reflected local architects’ rather tepid acceptance of modernism. Battelstein’s represents this trend well. Caught between two waves of the Modern Movement—the first spanning between the 1920s and 1940s, and the second spanning from WWII to the 1970s—Houston architecture of the late 1940s and early 1950s went through a transitional period. Architects weren’t fully committed to the “machine esthetic” of emerging Modern designs, specifically the International Style, which was more commonly accepted after WWII. Instead, abstract designs containing both natural and man-made materials resulted in a diluted form of the International Style, which Peter C. Papademetriou describes as “Contemporary” appeared in the 1940s. These buildings were hybrids that embodied both conservative and progressive trends, without fully abandoning eclectic or fully embracing avant-garde characteristics. Often these buildings were designed by architects trained and well versed in eclectic architecture attempting to remain on the cusp of the second wave of modernism.<sup>31</sup> This resulted in transitional buildings that Howard Barnstone identified as “Out-of-Phase.”<sup>32</sup>

<sup>26</sup> “Battelstein’s Opening Twin Stores in Malls,” *Houston Chronicle*, July 31, 1969.

<sup>27</sup> “Minding the Stores,” *Texas Monthly*, August 1975.

<sup>28</sup> “Loss of downtown Macy’s.”

<sup>29</sup> “Battelstein’s facelifts.”

<sup>30</sup> “Loss of downtown Macy’s;” Battelstein’s is listed at 812 Main in the 1980 City Directory. Bealls Department Store is listed at 812 Main in the 1981 City Directory.

<sup>31</sup> <sup>46</sup> Peter C. Papademetriou, “Doldrums in the ‘Forties: Houston Building Design in Transition,” *Texas Architect* (November/December 1979): 28-35; Judith H. Robinson and Stephanie S. Foell, *Growth, Efficiency, and Modernism: GSA Buildings of the 1950s, 60s, and 70s*, (Washington, D.C.: U.S. General Services Administration Office of the Chief Architect Center for Historic Buildings, 2003), 12.

<sup>32</sup> For more on this term see Howard Barnstone, Unpublished manuscript on “Architecture Out of Phase,” c. 1984; Stephen Fox, “...And in the Rest of Texas, Too,” *Cite*, Issue 7, Fall 1984, 15; Stephen Fox, “Transformation: Corporate Imagery in Tall Buildings,” *Texas Architect*, May-June 1986, 24.

Since downtown department stores were constantly looking for new and improved ways to attract customers, it is not surprising that many retailers built or remodeled their buildings during this modern period.<sup>33</sup> Department stores led the building boom in downtown Houston in the 1940s and 1950s, which included an addition and a new façade for Battelstein's executed what could be considered a Contemporary design. While responding to the needs of the client, George Rustay carried out a rather unique conversion of an early 20<sup>th</sup> century building. Upon completion in 1950, the transitional design partially embraced elements of the International Style shown in the flat roof, horizontal ribbon windows, and unified wall cladding in which decorative ornament was largely absent, except for fluted aluminum details.<sup>34</sup> Additionally, the building's curvilinear corners at the inset second floor balcony were elements of a high-fashion retail look at the time. These types of architectural expressions also appeared in Alfred C. Finn's resurfacing of The Fashion, a department store at 917 Main Street (1947).<sup>35</sup> The building similarly features horizontal ribbons of windows and inset balconies. These outdoor terrace spaces "extended" the sales floors. Other similar buildings in Houston include St. Rose of Lima church and School (Donald Barthelme & Associates, 1947), Congregation Adath Emeth (Irving K. Klein, 1946-1948), and Kaphan's (Claude E. Hooten & H. A. Turner, 1949-1950) and the Melrose Building (Lloyd & Morgan, 1952).<sup>36</sup>

### *Finger & Rustay*

From 1910 through the 1940s, Joseph Finger was Houston's foremost architect. Among his most notable buildings is Houston City Hall (1939, NRHP 1990), which represents a shift from the popular revival styles of the 1920s to a more Modern and streamlined style, a style which Finger & Rustay implemented for Battelstein's at 812 Main Street. In addition to City Hall and his Jewish institutional buildings, examples of his work include Jefferson Davis Hospital (1937, demolished), Houston Municipal Airport Terminal (1940, NRHP 2019), and numerous grocery stores for the Weingarten family chain.<sup>37</sup> After he suffered a stroke in 1940, Finger's health began to decline. Finger hired George Rustay in 1944 as a new architectural partner. As Finger's health continued to decline, Rustay took on more of the firm's work, including the project at Battelstein's.<sup>38</sup> Finger & Rustay also designed Beth Yeshurun Synagogue at 3501 Southmore Avenue (1949, now Lucian L. Lockhart Elementary School), and the Harris County Courthouse (1953), which was under construction at the time of Finger's death.<sup>39</sup> After Finger's death, Rustay continued his work in Houston, including the 1962 Federal Office Building and U.S. Courthouse (now the Bob Casey Federal Building) at 515 Rusk Avenue (Staub, Rather & Howze; Rustay & Martin; Harvin C. Moore) and the 1970 Texas Heart Institute Building (Caudill Rowlett Scott; Rustay, Martin & Vale; Staub, Rather & Howze).<sup>40</sup>

<sup>33</sup> Jim Parsons and David Bush, *Houston Deco: Modernistic Architecture of the Texas Coast* (Albany: Big Sky Press, 2008), 17-21.

<sup>34</sup> Virginia Savage McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2013), 616-621.

<sup>35</sup> *Houston Architectural Guide*, 53.

<sup>36</sup> "Doldrums in the 'Forties," 34.

<sup>37</sup> Anna Mod, "Texas State Hotel," National Register of Historic Places, National Park Service, 2008, 17; Josh Levine, "Joseph Finger: The Man Behind Houston's Iconic Architecture," *Houston History* 10, no. 3.

<sup>38</sup> "Houston's Iconic Architecture."

<sup>39</sup> "Houston's Iconic Architecture," *Houston Architectural Guide*, 284.

<sup>40</sup> *Houston Architectural Guide*, 29 and 223.

*Tellepsen Construction Company*

Battelstein's at 812 Main Street was built by Tellepsen Construction Company (TCC). TCC is a Houston-based construction company that has been family owned and operated for four generations. Tellepsen Builders was founded by Tom Tellepsen in 1909 and built their first offices in 1921. Tellepsen Builders incorporated as Tellepsen Construction Company in 1929. Tom Tellepsen's son, Howard Tellepsen, became president of TCC in 1940. Howard Tellepsen was succeeded by his son, Howard Tellepsen, Jr. Tellepsen, Jr. and his four sons: Tadd, Tellef, Trent, and Trevor would go on to run the company. Today, Tadd Tellepsen is CEO. Tellepsen projects include Miller Outdoor Theater (1922), Rice University Chemistry Building (1923), Palmer Memorial Episcopal Church (1927, NRHP 1984), Episcopal Church of the Redeemer (1932), Houston Coca-Cola Bottling Company Plant (1950), Annunciation Greek Orthodox Cathedral (1952), and the Melrose Building (1952, NRHP 2014).<sup>41</sup>

**ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION, REHABILITATION, AND ALTERATION HISTORY**

Battelstein's is a 63,960 square foot ten-story concrete-framed Modern commercial high-rise located at 812 Main Street in downtown Houston, Texas. The property began as an early twentieth-century building. Sanborn maps from 1924 and historic photographs indicate that the original 812 Main Street building was a two-story commercial building (Map 5, Figures 1 & 2). The architect for the 1924 building is unknown. In 1934, Battelstein's hired Joseph Finger to remodel the building.<sup>42</sup> In 1937, the building was enlarged to five floors and is visually represented in a 1948 advertisement for the department store (Figure 3).<sup>43</sup> No finishes that date to this period remain. However, the transition between the older, 1930s portion and the 1950 addition was evident on the interior. The interior stairwell between the sixth floor (the roof level of the 1930s building) and seventh floor transition from concrete to exposed metal. On the interior, exposed structure on the lower floors had ribbed frame formwork construction and exposed structure on the upper floors is board formed concrete construction.

The current iteration of the building was designed by the firm of Joseph Finger and George Rustay and built by Tellepsen Construction Company. Completed in 1950 and under supervision of Rustay, the building is a Modern interpretation of the two-part vertical block. The upper eight floors constitute the upper zone and are uniform, identical to one another in design and differentiated from the lower zone of the ground floor storefront and second floor with inset balcony with curvilinear corners. The high-rise has a rectangular plan that measures approximately 52 feet by 128 feet with the shorter span facing east onto Main Street. The building's principal exterior materials are smooth-faced limestone on the east façade and brick on the north and south (side) elevations. Originally, the predominant window type on the second through tenth floors were a two-light with two-light transom bi-fold aluminum window and these windows have been removed. The original first-floor storefront was reconfigured over the years and has also been lost. The original awning has been removed. Original

<sup>41</sup> "Tellepsen Builders," Wikipedia, accessed January 30, 2019. <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tellepsen>.

<sup>42</sup> Texas Association of General Contractor's Bulletin, various dates; *Jewish Herald*, March 26, 1909, accessed March 1, 2019, <https://www.newspapers.com>.

<sup>43</sup> "Abe Battelstein is a Rarity – He's a Native Houstonian," *Houston Chronicle*, November 7, 1950.

fluted aluminum column cladding is extant on the second-floor balcony columns. After unsuccessful efforts to convert the building to a night club and condos, it *has* stood abandoned for over a decade.

Though the building has been compromised during this time due to neglect, vandalism, and squatters, Battelstein's retains integrity with its location, design, setting, and feeling intact. Current ownership plans to replace the windows with a lite pattern to match the original, an awning to match the original, and a storefront that references the 1950s design. The owner of the adjacent J.W. Marriott Houston Downtown Hotel (historically known as the S.F. Carter Second National Bank Building) purchased the building in 2019 and plans to rehabilitate the building for hotel purposes. The property was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2019.

## SUMMARY

Battelstein's is listed in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A in the area of Commerce as a one of top high-end department stores that underwent extensive modifications to compete in and serve downtown Houston in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. It is also listed under Criterion C in the area of Architecture at the local level of significance because of its distinctive representation of architectural philosophy occurring between two waves of the Modern Movement in Houston—the first spanning between the 1920s and 1940s, and the second spanning from WW11 to the 1970s. The period of significance is from 1950 to 1967, starting from the completion date of the current form to when the location stopped operating as a family business.

Battelstein's possesses character, interest, and value as a visible reminder of the development of Houston (Criterion 1). The building exemplifies the transitional Modern architectural style important to Houston's Main Street post WWII (Criterion 4). The 1950 alterations by Rustay can be identified as the work of a person and a firm that has influenced the heritage of the city (Criterion 6). As the former location of a prominent local business, Battelstein's has value as a significant element of community sentiment or public pride (Criterion 8). Designation of this property will help reactivate this once abandoned building and bring it new life.

## PROPERTY DESCRIPTION MEETS AND BOUNDS:

All that certain 6,416 square feet of land out of Block 92, S. S. 8. 8. Addition. Houston, Harris County, Texas, and being more particularly described by metes and bounds as follows (all bearings referenced to the Texas State Plane Coordinate System, South Central Zone):

Commencing for reference at the City of Houston Engineering Department Reference Marker No. 248, located at the intersection of the centerline of Main Street with the centerline of Rusk Avenue; Thence N 57° 08' 17" W - 45.00', with the City of Houston Engineering Department Reference Line for Rusk Avenue to a point; Thence S 32° 51' 43" W, at 40.00' pass the original most easterly corner of said Block 92, and continue, with the northwest right-of-way line of Main Street, 140.00' to the POINT OF BEGINNING of the herein described tract;

THENCE S 32° 51' 43" W - 50.00', continuing with said northwest right-of-way line of Main Street, to a point for corner;



THENCE N 57° 08' 17" W - 124.95', with the common line of Lots 2 & 3 of said Block 92, to a point for corner;

THENCE N 32° 51' 43" E - 0.39', with a southeasterly line of a called 25,306 square feet tract of land described in deed dated 08-25-1995 from Resolution Trust Corporation to San Jacinto Building, Inc., filed in the Official Public Records of Real Property of Harris County, Texas at Clerk File No. R-558606, Film Code 505-19-2673, to a point for corner;

THENCE N 57° 05' 31" W - 3.42', with a northeasterly line of said 25,306 square feet tract of land, to a point for corner;

THENCE N 32° 56' 40" E - 49.61', with a southeasterly line of a called 18,950 square feet tract of land described In deed dated 05-04-1982 from 801 Travis, Ltd. to Sam Travis Partnership, filed In the Official Public Records of Real Property of Harris County, Texas at Clerk File No. H-434163, Film Code 013-93-2374, to a point for corner,

THENCE S 57° 08' 17" E - 128.30', with the common line of Lots 3 & 4 of said Block 92, to the POINT OF BEGINNING and containing 6,416 square feet of land, more or less.

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*Battelstein's advertisement. "It makes us feel good..."* Courtesy of Archive.org.

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- (2) Whether the building, structure, object, site or area is the location of a significant local, state or national event;
  - (3) Whether the building, structure, object, site or area is identified with a person who, or group or event that, contributed significantly to the cultural or historical development of the city, state, or nation;
  - (4) Whether the building or structure or the buildings or structures within the area exemplify a particular architectural style or building type important to the city;
  - (5) Whether the building or structure or the buildings or structures within the area are the best remaining examples of an architectural style or building type in a neighborhood;
  - (6) Whether the building, structure, object or site or the buildings, structures, objects or sites within the area are identified as the work of a person or group whose work has influenced the heritage of the city, state, or nation;
  - (7) Whether specific evidence exists that unique archaeological resources are present;
  - (8) Whether the building, structure, object or site has value as a significant element of community sentiment or public pride.
- AND**
- (9) If less than 50 years old, or proposed historic district containing a majority of buildings, structures, or objects that are less than 50 years old, whether the building, structure, object, site, or area is of extraordinary importance to the city, state or nation for reasons not based on age (Sec. 33-224(b)).

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION**

Staff recommends that the Houston Archaeological and Historical Commission recommend to City Council the Landmark Designation of Battelstein’s at 806 Main Street, formerly 812 Main Street.

**HAHC RECOMMENDATION [LEAVE BLANK FOR HAHC REPORT – INCLUDE FOR ACTION REPORT]**

The Houston Archaeological and Historical Commission recommends to City Council the Landmark Designation of the [Full Name of Landmark] at [Address].

## EXHIBIT A

### PHOTO

BATTELSTEIN'S

806 MAIN STREET, HOUSTON, TX 77002

Photo 1: East (front) elevation facing Main Street. Camera facing north. Photo by applicant, 2024.



Photo 2: Oblique view of the east (front) elevation facing Main Street. Camera facing west. Photo by applicant, 2024.



Photo 3: Oblique view of the east (front) elevation facing Main Street. Camera facing west. Photo by applicant, 2024.



Photo 4: East (front) elevation facing Main Street. Detail view of inset second floor balcony. Camera facing northwest. Photo by applicant, 2024.





Photo 5: East (front) elevation facing Main Street. Detail view of second and third floor transition. Camera facing northwest. Photo by applicant, 2024.



Photo 6: East (front) elevation facing Main Street. Detail view of limestone façade. Camera facing northwest. Photo by applicant, 2024.



Photo 7: East (front) elevation facing Main Street. Detail view of exterior limestone and brick façade. Three-quarter view, camera facing north. Photo by applicant, 2024.



# CITY OF HOUSTON

Archaeological & Historical Commission

Planning and Development Department

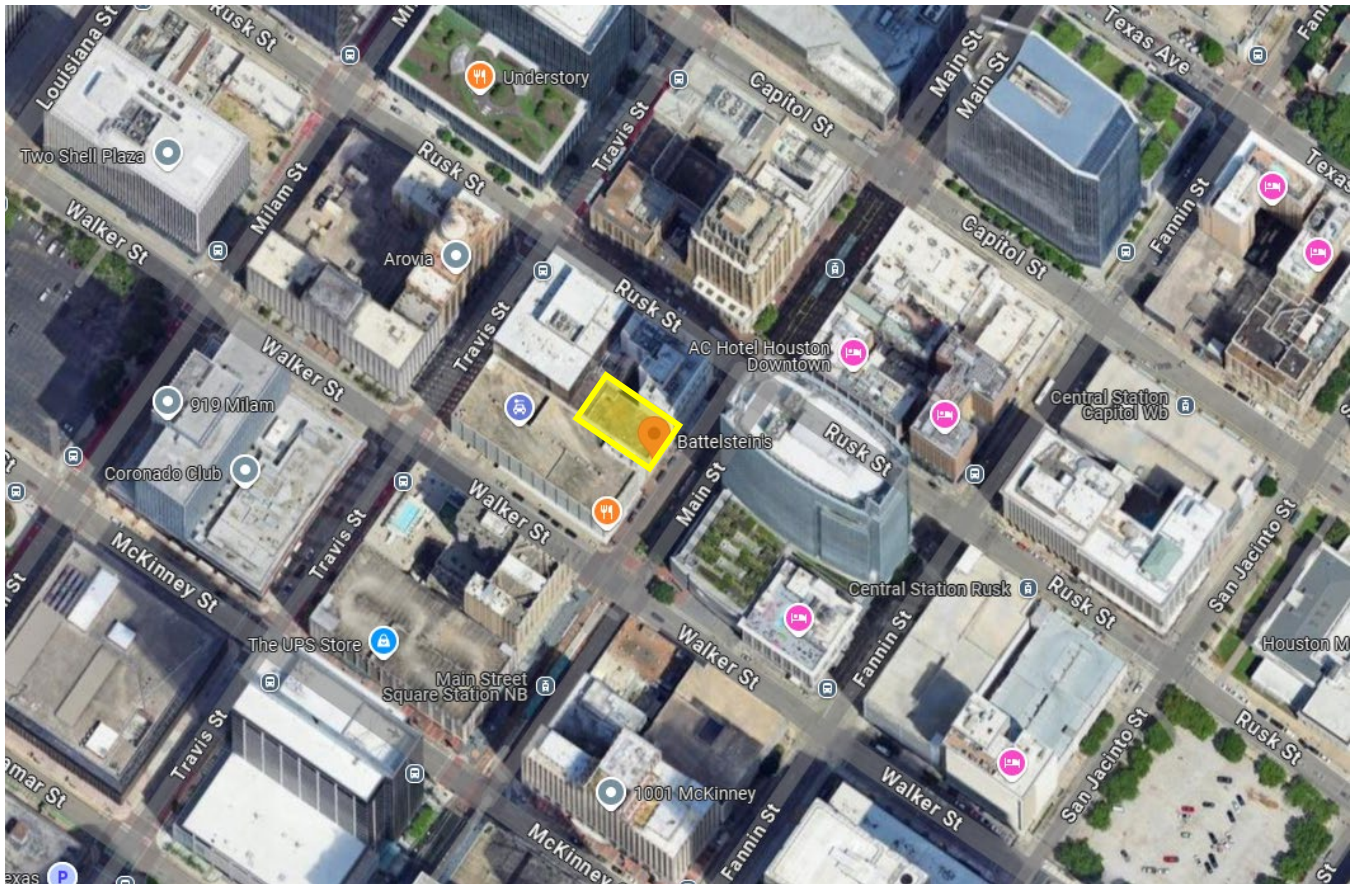
## EXHIBIT B

### SITE MAP

BATTELSTEIN'S

806 MAIN STREET, HOUSTON, TX 77002

Map 1: Google Earth Map, Battelstein's, Houston, Harris County, Texas. Accessed September 19, 2024.



# CITY OF HOUSTON

Archaeological & Historical Commission

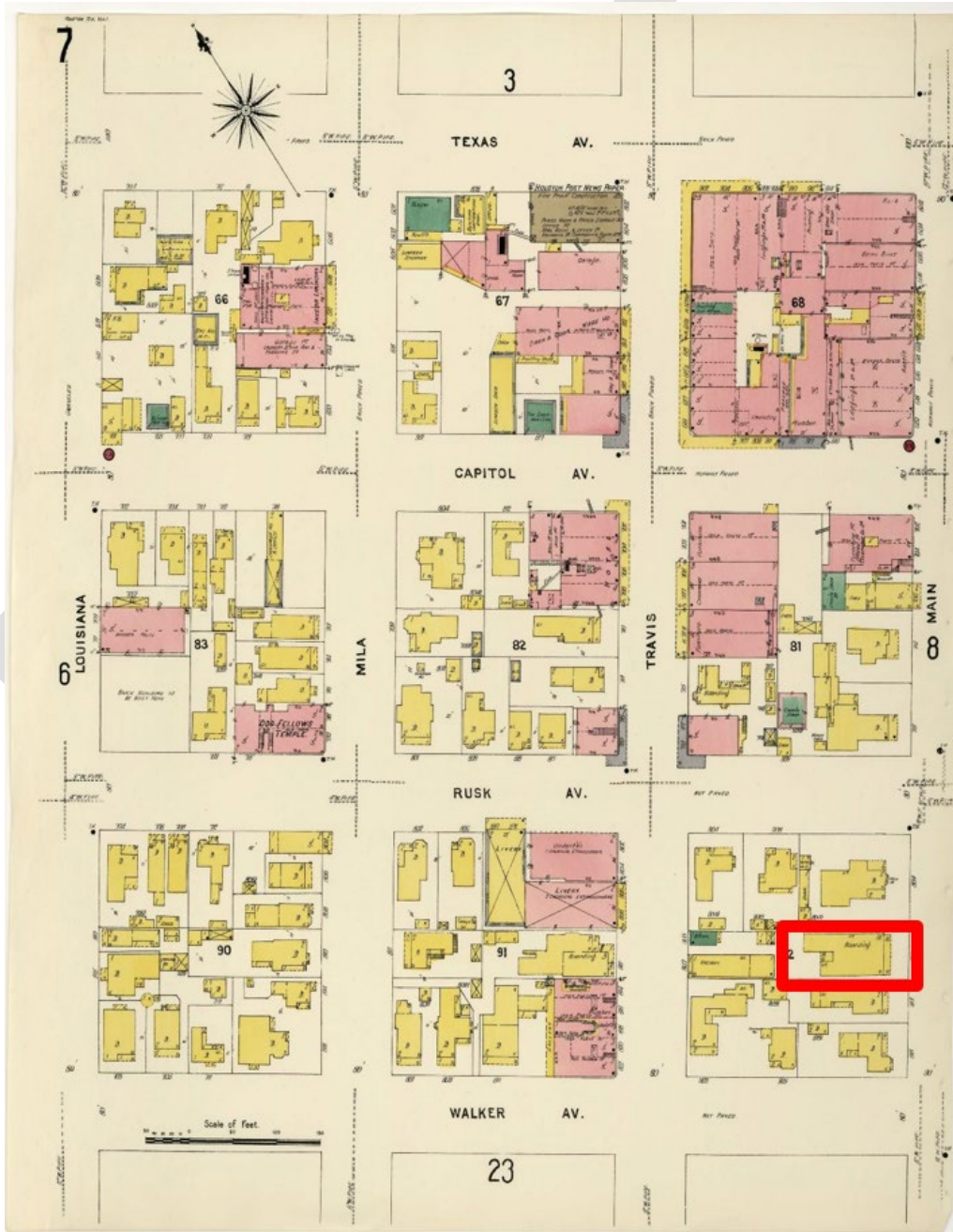
Planning and Development Department

Map 2: Google Earth Map, Battelstein's, Houston, Harris County, Texas. Accessed June 14, 2024.



EXHIBIT C  
HISTORIC DOCUMENTATION  
BATTELSTEIN'S  
806 MAIN STREET, HOUSTON, TX 77002

Figure 1: 1907 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, Volume 1, Sheet 7. Courtesy of University of Texas at Austin, Perry-Castaneda Library Map Collection, Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps – Texas (1877-1922). Accessed September 2024.

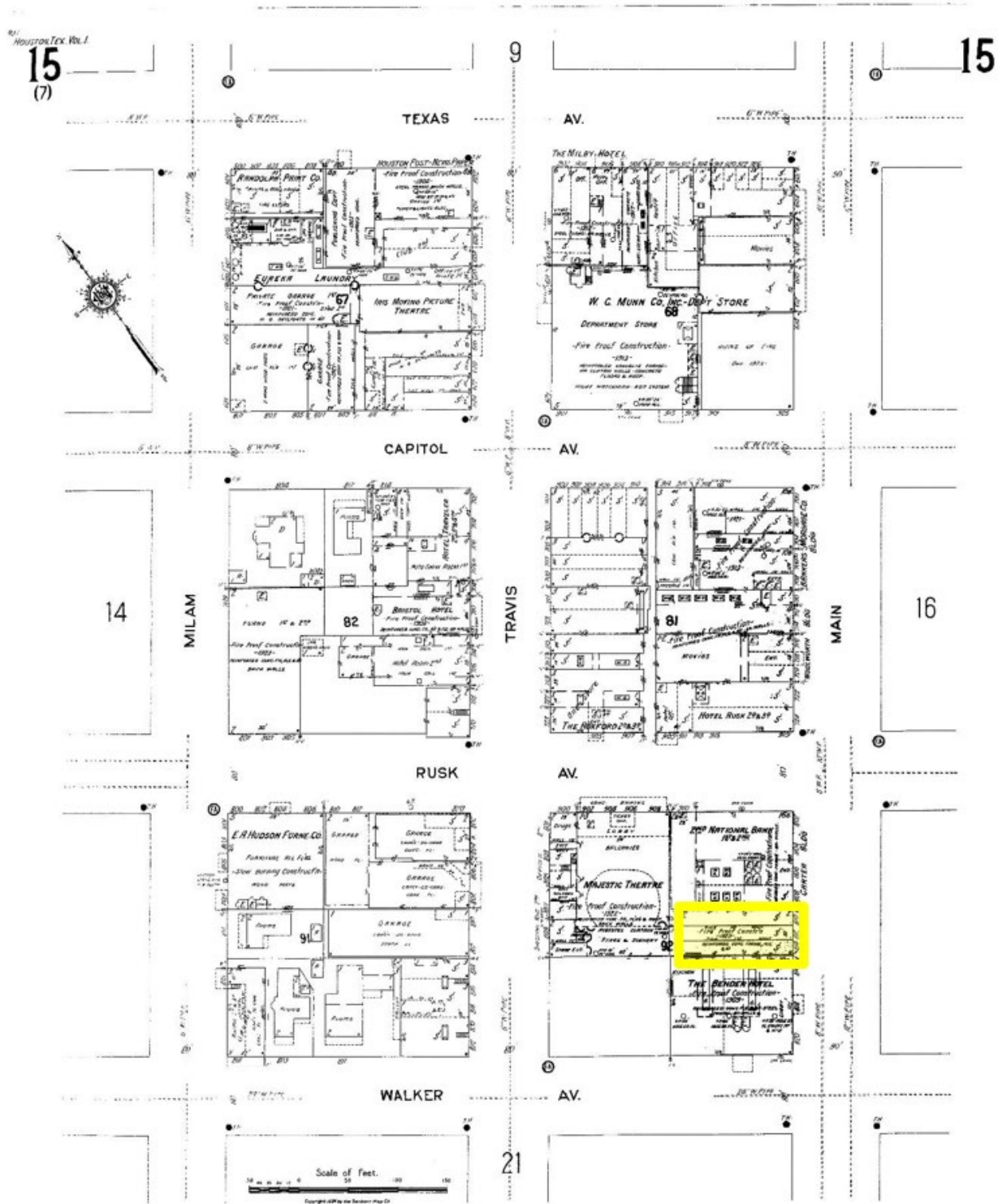


# CITY OF HOUSTON

Archaeological & Historical Commission

Planning and Development Department

Figure 2: 1924-1950 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, Volume 1, Sheet 15. Courtesy of ProQuest: Digital Sanborn Maps, 1867 – 1970. Accessed September 2024.



# CITY OF HOUSTON

Archaeological & Historical Commission

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Figure 3: 1924-February 1951 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, Volume 1, Sheet 15. Courtesy of ProQuest: Digital Sanborn Maps, 1867 – 1970. Accessed September 2024.





# CITY OF HOUSTON

Archaeological & Historical Commission

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Figure 4: 1924-February 1951 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, Volume 1, Sheet 15. Courtesy of ProQuest: Digital Sanborn Maps, 1867 – 1970. Accessed September 2024.

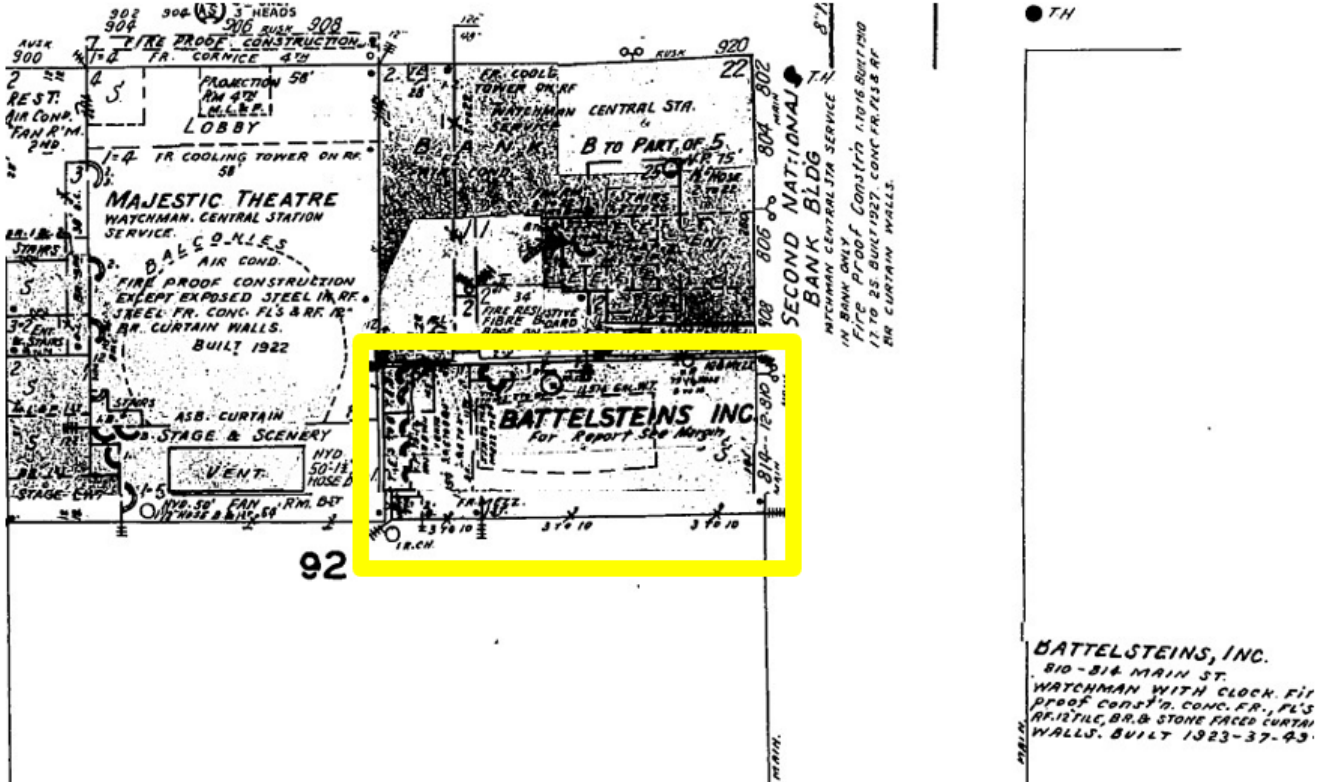


Figure 5: Early Battelstein's building in foreground, date unknown. Courtesy of Houston Metropolitan Research Center, Digital Archives. Accessed September 2024.



# CITY OF HOUSTON

Archaeological & Historical Commission

Planning and Development Department

Figure 6: Early Battelstein's building beyond Second National Bank, date unknown. Courtesy of *Houston Chronicle* online. Accessed September 2024.



# CITY OF HOUSTON

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Planning and Development Department

Figure 7: “Houston. Downtown Street Scene, Main Street looking north from Walker Ave. Shows Walgreen’s, Battelstein’s, South Coast Life Insurance, Gulf Building, Rice Hotel. Bonds store on other side of street,” 1959. Courtesy of Houston Metropolitan Research Center, Photographic Archives. Accessed September 2024.



Figure 8: "Fire at Battelstein's, eighth floor", February 1966. Courtesy of Houston Metropolitan Research Center, Photographic Archives. Accessed September 2024.



Figure 9: Fox, Stephen, "Battelstein's". Houston Architectural Guide. Houston: AIA Houston, 2012, pg.52. Accessed September 2024.



Figure 10: Tellepsen Construction Company advertisement, date and source unknown. Courtesy of Archive.org. Accessed September 2024.

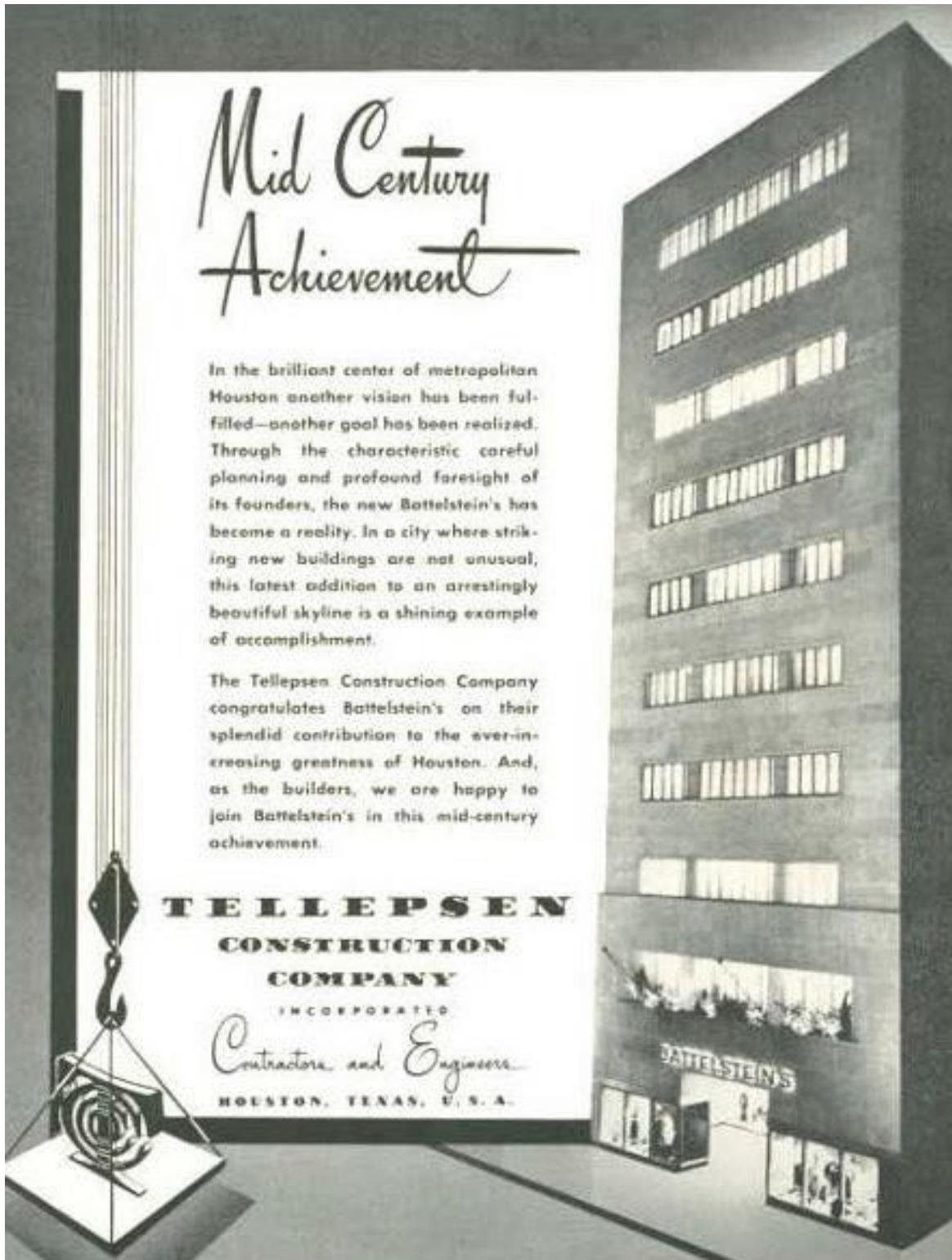


Figure 11: Battelstein's advertisement in the 1948 City of Houston Directory. Courtesy of Houston Metropolitan Research Center, microfiche. Accessed September 2024.

CLOTHING 75



NOW ... more than ever

## Quality Counts

Put your trust in one of the South's Fastest Growing

### FINE STORES!



- MEN'S CLOTHING
  - MEN'S FURNISHINGS
  - NETTLETON SHOES
  - KNOX HATS
  
- WOMEN'S APPAREL
  - WOMEN'S ACCESSORIES
  - WOMEN'S LINGERIE
  - WOMEN'S SPORTSWEAR
  - WOMEN'S MILLINERY
  
- TIM'S STORE FOR BOYS

*Battelstein's*

812 MAIN CAP. 9181

HOUSTON CITY DIRECTORY



Figure 12: Battelstein's advertisement in the 1949 City of Houston Directory. Courtesy of Houston Metropolitan Research Center, microfiche. Accessed September 2024.

66 CLOTHING



10 Complete Floors

## Reflecting Good Fashion

IN ONE OF THE SOUTH'S FASTEST GROWING STORES

**FOR MEN . . . . .** Fashion Park, Botany "500," GGG,  
Hollywood Clothing  
Netleton Shoes  
Knex Hats  
Complete Collection of Men's Furnishings

**FOR WOMEN . . . . .** Fashions by Milgrim, Sophie of Saka, Ben Reig,  
Fox Brownie, Samuel Kasa, Anna Miller, Etc.  
Complete Collection of Sportswear  
Complete Collection of Accessories  
I. Miller Shoe Salon

**FOR BOYS . . . . .** Home of Tim's Club

*Battelstein's*

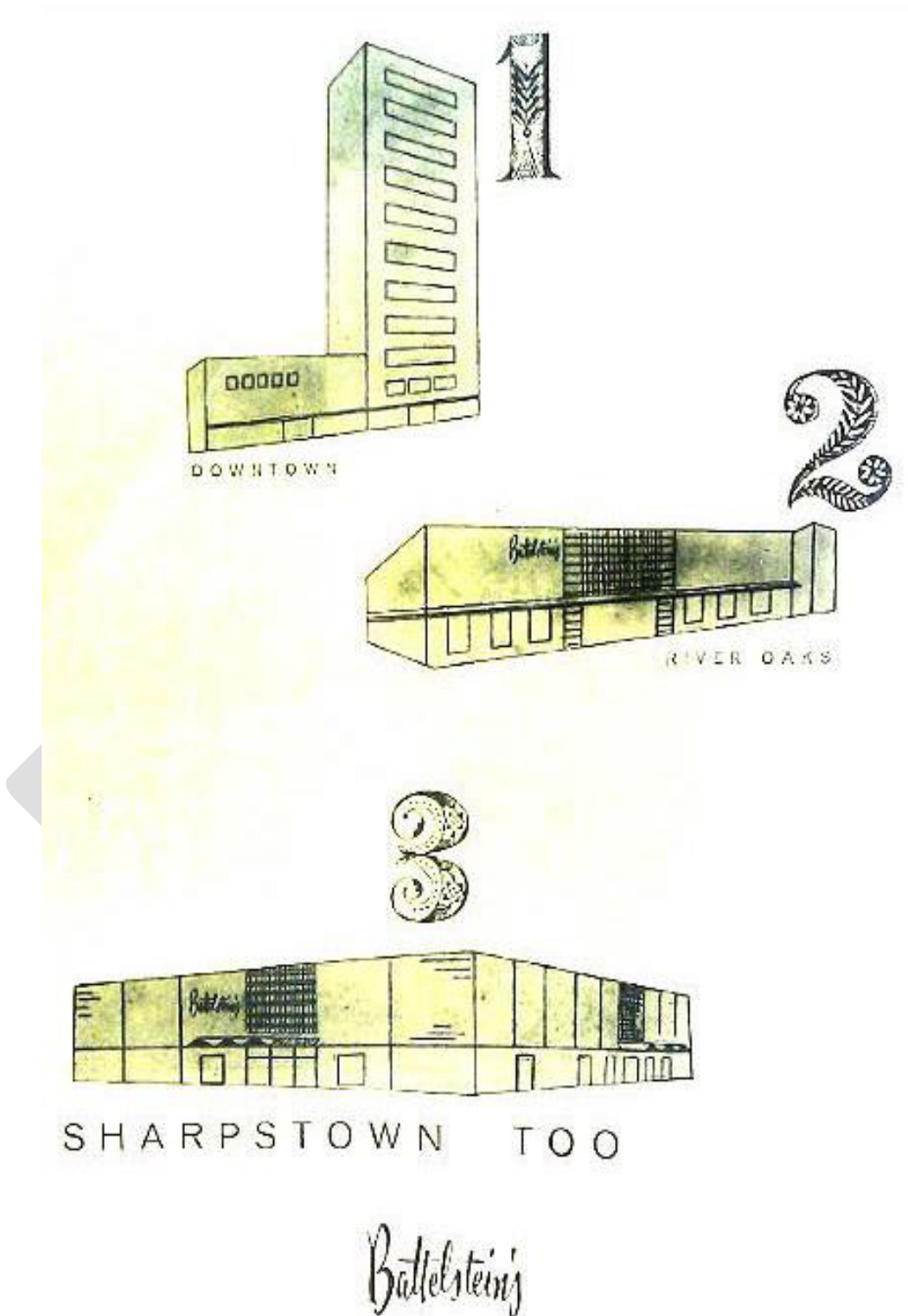
812 MAIN  
TEL. CA. 9181

HOUSTON & COUNTY DIRECTORY CO.'S

Figure 13: Battelstein's advertisement, 1961, source unknown. Courtesy of Archive.org. Accessed September 2024.



Figure 14: Battelstein's advertisement, 1962, source unknown. Courtesy of Archive.org. Accessed September 2024.



# CITY OF HOUSTON

Archaeological & Historical Commission

Planning and Development Department

Figure 15: Building Land Assessment for Battelstein's. Date unknown. Accessed September 2024.

Addition <u>S SBB</u> (16) 92 Lot <u>3-25425-11</u> <u>25425-12</u>		<b>IMPROVEMENTS</b> No. Sq. Ft. <u>30,000</u> Price Per Sq. Ft. <u>425</u> \$ <u>127,500</u>													
OWNER <u>Battelstein Lnw Co O.R.</u> ADDRESS <u>810-812 Main</u>			Percent Good <u>85</u> 108,370												
TYPE OF PROPERTY <u>Occupied</u> OCCUPIED VACANT BASEMENT, Whole Part _____ FLOORING, Pine, Hardwood, Cement, Tile, Marble, Dirt _____ FOUNDATION, Concrete, Stone, Brick, Piers, Posts. _____ INTERIOR TRIM, Plaster, Hardwood, Marble, Metal, Built-in Features _____ WALLS, Brick, Stone, Hollow Tile, Stucco, Metal, Concrete Blocks, Box Weatherboard _____ HEATING, Furnace, Stoves, Fireplace, Chimneys, Gas _____ ROOF CONS., Concrete, Steel, Wood Truss _____ LIGHTING, Electricity _____ ROOF, Hip, Gable, Mansard, Flat _____ PLUMBING, Sewer, Water, Baths _____ ROOFING, Composition, Metal, Slate, Wood, Shingles, Tile, Asbestos _____ ELEVATORS _____ EXTERIOR TRIM, Stone, Terra Cotta, Metal, Wood, Marble, Granite _____ CONDITION, Good, Fair, Bad, Obsolete _____			Total All Bldgs. <u>108,370</u> <u>43350</u>												
PERMIT DATE <u>4/10/37</u> NO. <u>782</u> AMT. <u>65000</u>		<b>LAND VALUE</b> <table border="1"> <thead> <tr> <th>Front x Depth</th> <th>Unit Value</th> <th>Factor</th> <th>Front Ft. Value - - \$</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td><u>50 x 125</u></td> <td><u>8250</u></td> <td><u>110.81</u></td> <td><u>457090</u></td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="3"></td> <td>TOTAL <u>182830</u></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>		Front x Depth	Unit Value	Factor	Front Ft. Value - - \$	<u>50 x 125</u>	<u>8250</u>	<u>110.81</u>	<u>457090</u>				TOTAL <u>182830</u>
Front x Depth	Unit Value	Factor	Front Ft. Value - - \$												
<u>50 x 125</u>	<u>8250</u>	<u>110.81</u>	<u>457090</u>												
			TOTAL <u>182830</u>												
87200-41390 -126590															

# CITY OF HOUSTON

Archaeological & Historical Commission

Planning and Development Department

Figure 16: Building Land Assessment for Battelstein's from 1933-34. Accessed September 2024.

Form 590 **INVESTIGATE**

Map \_\_\_\_\_  
Vol. 1  
Page 92

Feb. 20th. 1933., 19  
Battelstein Inv Co Owner  
Lot 3-25x25'-11 Block 92  
25x25'-12 SSBE Addition

REMARKS:  
City 19000 for 1933 P

County Value.....\$ 17100  
Owners Value.....\$ check  
No. \_\_\_\_\_ Street \_\_\_\_\_

N  
W E  
S

19000  
17100  
17100

Harris County  
BUILDING ASSESSMENT  
Houston, Texas

Form 381

Map No. \_\_\_\_\_ Permit No. 117  
Vol. \_\_\_\_\_ Page 2.8., 1934  
Owner Battelstein Inc  
No. 812 Mann Street or Avenue  
Addition J & B B  
Block 92 Lot 3  
Remodel inside  
new front  
Size of Building  
\_\_\_\_\_ wide \_\_\_\_\_ deep 2 stories  
Size of Garage  
\_\_\_\_\_ wide \_\_\_\_\_ deep \_\_\_\_\_ stories  
Material: Frame, Brick, Veneer, Stucco. Concrete  
Inside Finish: Rough, Plain, Ornamental, Hard Wood, Pine, Plaster.  
Roofing: Slate, Tile, Tin, Shingle, Copper, Composition, Iron, Tar and Gravel, Paper, Asbestos.  
Permit Value, 10600  
No. Sq. Ft. \_\_\_\_\_ Per. Sq. Ft. \_\_\_\_\_  
No. Sq. Ft. \_\_\_\_\_ Per. Sq. Ft. \_\_\_\_\_  
No. Sq. Ft. \_\_\_\_\_ Per. Sq. Ft. \_\_\_\_\_  
Restaurant taken out  
Battelstein has entire  
lower floor.  
Reply has 2nd floor  
1935 P No Inc  
Assessed Value of Building, \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
Rendered in name of \_\_\_\_\_

# CITY OF HOUSTON

Archaeological & Historical Commission

Planning and Development Department

Figure 17: Building Land Assessment for Battelstein's from 1937-40. Accessed September 2024.

The image shows two handwritten forms from Harris County, Houston, Texas, titled "Form 381 BUILDING ASSESSMENT".

**Form 1 (Left):** Dated 1937. Map No. 1, Page 92, Permit No. 782. Owner: Battelstein's Clothing. Address: 812 Main Street. Addition: SSB, Block 92, Lot 16. Size of Building: 120 wide, 57 deep, 3 stories. Material: Frame, Brick, Veneer, Stucco. Inside Finish: Rough, Plain, Ornamental, Hardwood, Pine, Plaster. Roofing: Slate, Tile, Tin, Shingle, Copper, Composition, Iron, Tar and Gravel, Paper, Asbestos. Permit Value: \$4500. Assessed Value of Building: \$26000. Rendered in name of: Battelstein's Inc Co.

**Form 2 (Right):** Dated 1939. Map No. 1, Page 92, Permit No. 714. Owner: Battelstein's. Address: 812 Main Street. Addition: SSB, Block 92, Lot 2575. Size of Building: 120 wide, 57 deep, 3 stories. Material: Frame, Brick, Veneer, Stucco. Inside Finish: Rough, Plain, Ornamental, Hardwood, Pine, Plaster. Roofing: Slate, Tile, Tin, Shingle, Copper, Composition, Iron, Tar and Gravel, Paper, Asbestos. Permit Value: \$1700. Assessed Value of Building: \$26000. Rendered in name of: Battelstein's Inc Co.

# CITY OF HOUSTON

Archaeological & Historical Commission

Planning and Development Department

Figure 18: Building Land Assessment for Battelstein's from 1948. Accessed September 2024.

11-6144  
P992

Harris County  
BUILDING ASSESSMENT  
Houston, Texas

Permit No. 3273

Vol. 1 Page 92

5-5 1948

Owner: Battelstein Inc Co  
No. 812 main Street

Survey or Addition: SSB

Abst. 16 Lot or Trk. 3pt 11-12 Blk. 92

Size of Building

wide deep stories

wide deep stories

Remarks: Permit taken out to add  
5 story masonry

Material: Frame, Siding, Brick, Veneer, Stucco, C/Iron, Asbestos, Tile, Gyplap, Imitation-Brick, Aluminum, Rock Veneer, Reinforced Concrete

Inside Finish: Papered, Pine, Sheet Rock, Plastered, Paneled, Celotex, Plywood, None

Floors: Pine, Oak, Cement, Tile, Asphalt Tile

Roofing: Shingle, Asbestos, Composition, Paper, Tar and Gravel, Slate, Tile, Tin, C/Iron, Copper, Aluminum

Plumbing: With or Without Bath

Foundation: Solid Concrete, Concrete Piers, Concrete Blocks, Brick Piers, Wood Blocks, Solid Brick, Concrete Slab

Permit Value \$ 450,000

No. Sq. Ft. Per Sq. Ft.

No. Sq. Ft. Per Sq. Ft.

No. Sq. Ft. 79602 @ 7.50 Per Sq. Ft. 597010

7-21-49

1950 new total 238800

Assessed Value of Building \$

Rendered in name of

Battelstein's Inc Co

30160 = 1800

37780 @ 700

229460

52

Basement, mezzanine 10 floor  
Rent house 51x50'

Base 66560',  
floor 66560'  
mezz - 4856'  
Rent H - 1550

128

CH 9181

Brick, Steel Reinforced Conc

1st 162400  
2nd 32480

mezz 23400 @ 700

18750700  
10% 131250  
13130  
118120 129920