

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
Registration Form

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

HISTORIC NAME: Settles Hotel  
OTHER NAME/SITE NUMBER: N/A

2. LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER: 200 E. Third Street  
CITY OR TOWN: Big Spring  
STATE: Texas CODE: TX COUNTY: Howard  
 NOT FOR PUBLICATION  
 VICINITY  
CODE: 227 ZIP CODE: 79720

3. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

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

Mark Wolfe State Historic Preservation Officer Date 3/6/13  
Signature of certifying official / Title  
Texas Historical Commission  
State or Federal agency / bureau or Tribal Government

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 / bureau or Tribal Government

4. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that the 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"/> See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> other, explain <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	_____	_____

**5. CLASSIFICATION**

**OWNERSHIP OF PROPERTY**

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	private
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Local
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - State
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Federal

**CATEGORY OF PROPERTY**

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

**NUMBER OF RESOURCES WITHIN PROPERTY**

contributing	noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	total

**NUMBER OF CONTRIBUTING RESOURCES PREVIOUSLY LISTED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER:** 0

**NAME OF RELATED MULTIPLE PROPERTY LISTING:** N/A

**6. FUNCTION OR USE**

**HISTORIC FUNCTIONS:** DOMESTIC/hotel and COMMERCE/restaurant, retail shops

**CURRENT FUNCTIONS:** WORK IN PROGRESS, DOMESTIC/hotel and COMMERCE/restaurant, retail shops

**7. DESCRIPTION**

**ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION:** MODERN MOVEMENT: Art Deco

**MATERIALS:** FOUNDATION CONCRETE  
 WALLS BRICK  
 ROOF OTHER/tar and gravel  
 OTHER OTHER/Cast stone

**NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION** (see continuation sheets 7-5 through 7-12)

**8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

**APPLICABLE NATIONAL REGISTER CRITERIA**

Property:

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>A</b>	is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>B</b>	is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>C</b>	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.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>D</b>	has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

**CRITERIA CONSIDERATIONS** N/A

**AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE:** Architecture, Commerce

**PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANCE:** 1930-1962

**SIGNIFICANT DATES:** 1930

**SIGNIFICANT PERSON:** N/A

**CULTURAL AFFILIATION:** N/A

**ARCHITECT / BUILDER:** Castle, David S., architect  
 E.V. McCright Company, builder

**NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE** (see continuation sheets 8-13 through 8-21)

**9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES**

**BIBLIOGRAPHY** (see continuation sheets 9-22 through 9-23)

**PREVIOUS DOCUMENTATION ON FILE (NPS):** N/A

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

**PRIMARY LOCATION OF ADDITIONAL DATA:**

- State historic preservation office Texas Historical Commission, Austin
- Other state agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other -- Specify Repository: The Tuttle Luther Partnership, Abilene, TX (location of David Castle's original plans and drawings)

**10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

**ACREAGE OF PROPERTY:** less than one acre

**COORDINATES** Latitude: 32.252801  
Longitude: -101.475428

**VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION:** Lots 11 and 12, Block 19, Original Town of Big Spring

**BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION:** Nomination includes all property historically associated with the building.

**11. FORM PREPARED BY** with assistance from Carlyn Hammons, Historian, Texas Historical Commission

**NAME / TITLE:** Peggy Riddle, Kate Singleton, and Norman Alston

**ORGANIZATION:** Cornerstone Heritage Preservation Services

**DATE:** December 6, 2011

**STREET & NUMBER:** 6220 Gaston Ave, Suite 304

**TELEPHONE:** 214-826-2420

**CITY OR TOWN:** Dallas

**STATE:** Texas

**ZIP CODE:** 75214

**ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION**

**CONTINUATION SHEETS**

**MAPS** (see continuation sheet Map-24 through Map-25)

**PHOTOGRAPHS** (see continuation sheet Photo-43 through Photo-44)

**ADDITIONAL ITEMS** (see continuation sheets Figure-26 through Figure-42)

**PROPERTY OWNER**

**NAME:** Settles Hotel Development Company, LLC; Attn: G. Brint Ryan

**STREET & NUMBER:** P.O. Box 1471

**TELEPHONE:** 432-264-2401

**CITY OR TOWN:** Big Spring

**STATE:** Texas

**ZIP CODE:** 79720

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# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Settles Hotel  
Big Spring, Howard County, Texas

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## NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

Constructed in 1930 in Big Spring, Howard County, Texas, the Art Deco massing of the Settles Hotel anchors the town's downtown as a distinctive landmark visible for miles. Designed by David S. Castle, a prominent West Texas architect, the Settles Hotel is a fifteen-story, reinforced concrete and brick building composed with setbacks. The exterior of the building features decorative cast stone details finished to resemble limestone. It is unchanged, in excellent condition, and retains a high degree of integrity. The interior public spaces, although remodeled throughout the century as a working hotel, retain much of their original spatial configuration. Many of the building's interior decorative elements no longer exist, but some details, such as terrazzo flooring, cornice molding, and plaster medallions, remain and reflect the original splendor and glamour. Vacant since the early 1980s, the Settles Hotel is currently the focus of an extensive restoration effort.

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### General Setting

The Settles Hotel is located in downtown Big Spring in west Texas, two blocks east of the Howard County Courthouse square. The building covers 100 by 140 feet on City Block 19. The primary façade (north) faces Third Street and the secondary façade (west) faces Runnels Street. An alley is on the east side of the building and the property line abuts the south side. The tallest and most dominant building in the small downtown, the hotel is surrounded by one- and two-story commercial buildings, many of them currently vacant.

### Exterior

The Settles Hotel is a reinforced concrete and brick building, fifteen stories tall with a basement. The hotel's massing is characteristic of Art Deco architecture; continuous vertical piers and grouped fenestration emphasize the skyscraper proportions; and the general appearance is that of a tower resting upon a broad base. The step-back massing of the hotel reveals the wide-reaching influence of the 1916 New York Zoning Ordinance—although it's manifested here in this small yet spacious downtown for aesthetic, rather than practical, purposes. The façade consists of a light tan brick with cast stone ornamentation finished to resemble limestone. All the windows on the main façades are double hung wood windows using a four-over-two configuration. The transoms use an in-swinging hopper configuration. The stone base extends along the primary front façade (north) and secondary side (west) façade.

The hotel's modernistic massing and modernistic architectural construction (reinforced concrete) is combined with detailing and ornamentation that is much more classical in nature. Classical elements such as arches, pilasters, and ornate floral motifs are paired with geometric design elements such as squares, circles, groupings of parallel lines, and abstracted flora. This combination of both historic and modern components is common to skyscrapers of the late 1920s, demonstrating that the hotel was constructed during that transitional period when classical architectural design was losing favor to early modernism.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Henry, Jay C. *Architecture in Texas, 1895-1945*. Austin, University of Texas Press, 1993, p. 217-221.

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Settles Hotel  
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### *North Elevation, Front Façade – Base Section, Floors One through Three*

The primary facade faces East Third Street. This façade has eleven bay sections on floors one through three, five bay sections that extend from floor four to fourteen and three bay sections on the fifteenth floor. The front façade is symmetrical, with the base of the building extending three bays on each side. The bays are defined by brick pilasters that extend vertically and are capped with stone pediments. The Third Street front is the main entrance into the building. The recessed entrance has a stone arched surround with an ornamented keystone and a large stone spandrel above. This spandrel and the smaller spandrels across the front all have a central stone medallion. The entrance has double doors and single pane sidelights. The doors are wood frame, single-light French doors and glass. Divided light transoms are above the doors and sidelights, two over each sidelight and seven above the doors. Above the spandrel is a decorative grille with a stylized "S." Behind the grille and above the door is a radius head wood window.

First floor windows and doors indicate the original function for the retail spaces. From the west to the east, the configuration of the front bay sections is: display window, double doors, display window with single door located at the side, single pane display window with side, front entrance, display window with side door, display window, display window, double doors, and display window. The double doors on the east end of the building open into a recessed vestibule with another set of double doors. Both sets of doors have decorated spandrels above the transom windows. The other display windows have undecorated transom windows. There is a stone surround between all of the windows and the transoms.

The second floor windows between the pilasters have stone sills and stone surrounds. Above the windows there are divided light transoms with four sections with an in-swinging hopper design. The second floor configuration from west to east is: single window, single, single, double window, double, the entrance, double, double, single, single, single. An engraved stone panel with "Settles" and "1930" is above the central door.

The third floor uses the same window pattern as the second floor. The pilasters that terminate the bay sections at the top of the third floor have stone elements that include bands and small decorative stone squares. The spandrels on bays one to three and nine to eleven have decorative stone rectangular medallions. The middle pilasters have similar stone bands and decorative squares to those of the end bays.

### *North Elevation, Front Façade – Middle and Top Sections, Floors Four through Fifteen*

Floors four through fourteen on the front façade have the same pilaster configuration. Floor four is set in from the length of the third floor (bottom section of the three-part column) by three bays on either side. The window configuration is the same as the third floor. On the fourteenth floor, the pilasters of the east and west bays are capped with stone. The windows have stone headers. The fifteenth floor is inset from the fourteenth floor by the length of one less bay on either side. All of the windows have stone sills. Above, a decorative stone spandrel caps off the building.

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## *West Elevation and Facade*

The west façade of the building is the secondary façade facing Runnels Street. This façade is three-story, similar to the front, but then becomes a long two-story structure as it extends south. The first floor of this façade is also configured for retail spaces with six bays. The exterior decorative elements for this floor and the second floor are the same as the front façade. The first floor bay sections are, from north end to south: display window, display window, single pane sidelight with single door, single pane sidelight, recessed entry with double doors and single pane sidelights, and then three identical sets of large sidelights with double doors. There are transom windows above all of these in the same configuration as on the front façade. The third floor has three bays with double window, a single window and another double window. Starting at the fourth floor the building is inset from the plane of the third floor. Floor four has three bay sections, extends to the fourteenth floor and then is inset again at the fifteenth floor. The decorative elements of the front façade extend around on the upper floors of this façade.

## *East Elevation and Facade*

The east façade of the building faces the alley. The first and second floors both have six double windows, multi-pane (six-over-six) double hung windows. The third floor has a set of double windows, a single window, and another set of double windows. These windows are the four-over-two double hung wood windows used on the rest of the building. The window and bay configuration is the same as the west façade for floors four through fifteen.

## *South Elevation and Facade*

The south (rear) façade of the building extends out on the west end by ten feet more than the east side. This extension has a door on the first floor and a long window on the second floor. The first floor continues with a pair of multi-pane wood windows, a blank area with no openings, a pair of windows, a door into the service corridor and a door into the kitchen. The second floor has a small set of paired multi-pane windows, two sets of paired windows, a set of small paired windows, and three four-over-one double hung windows with transoms and stone sills. Floors four through fifteen have the same window and bay configuration as the front façade, with less ornamentation.

## *Roofs*

The third floor roof is flat and enclosed on three sides with a masonry parapet wall approximately 2'6" in height, topped by glazed terra cotta parapet caps. The fourth and fifteenth floor roofs are also flat and enclosed on three sides by a masonry parapet wall approximately 2 feet in height, topped with cast stone parapet caps. The uppermost roof is also flat and features a masonry parapet wall of varying height with cast stone parapet caps. The original roof sign has been removed for restoration. It consists of individual metal can letters outlined by double red neon tubes and is visible for miles.

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## Exterior Integrity

The hotel's exterior is virtually unchanged since opening in 1930. The hotel operated until the 1980s when it was sold to a new developer for renovation. However, when that project failed to move forward, the building stood vacant and the building and windows were repeatedly vandalized. In 1995, the City of Big Spring (who owned the building by this point) removed the original windows and placed them in rooms relative to their original locations and installed storm windows to help protect the hotel from further damage.<sup>2</sup>

At the time of this nomination, however, restoration of the exterior windows is complete, with approximately 85% of the original wooden, double hung window sashes and frames restored and reinstalled, complete with counterweights and new chains. Those wooden sashes, frames, and transoms that were missing have been replicated in wood to exactly match the profiles and the species of the original. The historic metal windows at the building rear have also been restored and primed. The first floor plate glass windows on the primary facades at Third Street and Runnels Street are in the process of having existing, non-historic tinted glazing replaced by new, single pane clear glazing to match original historic conditions. The original bronze storefront glazing system was replaced previously with a modern, flat aluminum storefront system. This modern system has been retained, but a new cap is currently being installed on the exterior of the aluminum glazing system to more closely resemble the ogee profile of the original bronze system.

As of December 2011, the exterior restoration of the Settles Hotel is nearing completion. Missing stone parapet pieces have been reproduced to restore the historic appearance. Brick and stone masonry have been cleaned through the gentlest means possible, and the building has been repointed everywhere. The exterior entrance doors have been restored and their sidelights rebuilt to match the original profiles, details and finishes exactly. The interior sets of entrance doors were missing and were replicated based on the remaining exterior doors, but their frames and sidelights were intact and have been restored.

## Interior

### *Basement*

Historically, the north side of the basement had a public corridor for guests and traveling salesmen. This corridor has three "sample" rooms, designed for salesman to display their "heavier" sample merchandise.<sup>3</sup> This corridor also accesses a trash lift, the tailor shop, and public toilets and leads to the first floor from a stair behind the elevator. The west end of the corridor has a private corridor that is accessed through a door leading from the public corridor. Along this "private" corridor are five storage areas designed for use by the retail stores, a closet, and a large room noted on the plans as a "basement store." The basement store, in the northwest corner, has a stair that leads to the retail space above.

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<sup>2</sup> Brown, Bill. *Texas Highways Magazine*. "Texas' Ghost Hotels." June 2000, pp. 16-21.

<sup>3</sup> *Big Spring Herald*. "The Architecture of the Hotel Is Modernistic." Vol. 2, No. 311, September 28, 1930, pg. 2.

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The south side of the basement is the “helps” corridor and connects to the public corridor through a door by the elevators. This corridor accesses the boiler room, trash lift, transformer room, ice vault, soiled linen room, trash room, storage room, laundry room, clean linen storage, carpentry shop, refrigeration machine room and vault storage. Kitchen storage is also located here, below the kitchen with a stair access. These rooms had very little finish out and were utilitarian in nature.<sup>4</sup>

The basement level is currently (as of December 2011) being substantially reconfigured to accommodate most of the hotel’s service and support functions. New partition framing is complete and much of the new mechanical, electrical, plumbing, and communications systems are being installed.

### *First Floor*

The first floor of the hotel housed the lobby, the kitchen, coffee shop and six retail spaces. Guests entered the main entrance on Third Street through double wood doors (now restored) into the vestibule, and then through another set of double wood doors (reproduced). There is a wood surround with sidelights and transom windows over the doors. The transoms are divided lights, two over each sidelight and six over the doors. The exterior sidelights have been rebuilt to match the original profiles, details, and finishes exactly. The interior sidelights are intact and have been restored.

All the walls were plaster with decorative plasterwork on the ceiling, entrance columns, and around the mezzanine balcony. This decorative plaster motif was used throughout the lobby and mezzanine areas, though much of it is now deteriorated or missing. Enough remains, however, to give an indication of color, texture and design. The original architectural ink on linen drawings and historic photographs also exist and give details of the wainscot that used to adorn the lobby, as well as the ornamental plaster and other decorative elements.<sup>5</sup> Restoration of the existing gypsum plaster is under way with lathing being installed where plaster is missing and many of the missing decorative plaster elements being currently cast anew through the use of molds taken of remaining historic elements. Wood paneling, most of which was previously removed, will be completely and accurately replaced using the original profiles, wood species (birch), and shellac finish specified in the original construction documents and visible in the few remaining historic examples.

The newspaper account from the Settles Hotel grand opening describes the wall colors above the walnut wainscot as “sponged glazed stippled rust and tan.” The ceiling is described as “highly decorated” in a “combination of old ivory and light buff with white gold as an accent color.” The paneled beams are described as “ivory and old Reagan gold rosette standing out of a French blue back base.”<sup>6</sup>

The first floor lobby is open to the mezzanine level. The reception desk and clerk’s area are on the east side of the lobby directly across from the elevators. A prominent grand stairway at the back of the lobby (south side) leads to the mezzanine floor. At the landing the stair splits, proceeding to the mezzanine. The stair had marble steps and an

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<sup>4</sup> David S. Castle and Company. Original Architectural Drawings, Sheet No. 2, January 1, 1930.

<sup>5</sup> City of Big Spring. David Castle and Company Drawings for the Settles Hotel.

<sup>6</sup> *Big Spring Herald*. “Spacious Lobby is Beautifully Furnished.” September 28, 1930, p. 6.

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ornate metal railing that extended around the interior mezzanine balcony that were removed in the 1980s. The risers were green marble and the treads were a light marble, also removed.<sup>7</sup>

The floors throughout the public areas are a grayish-green terrazzo with a border in a darker shade of the same color. They are in excellent condition, exhibiting only minor cracks and will be repaired and refinished.

The lobby has two elevators, as well as service stairs that lead to the basement. The stairs are concrete with a solid plaster balustrade. The kitchen and a service stair to the basement are located in the southeast end of the floor. A space for the coffee shop occupies the northeast corner.

Restoration of the first floor lobby and public spaces is just beginning. Mechanical, plumbing, and electrical systems are being installed throughout.

### *Mezzanine*

The mezzanine level has an interior balcony area around three sides overlooking the ground floor lobby below. This level includes the original Banquet Room, Men's Lounge, and Club Space. The Banquet Room (also known as the ballroom) is on the east side of the building with a serving pantry and storage area with a staircase to the lower level kitchen. This staircase has a plain pipe railing. There is an entry foyer by the banquet room with a coat checkroom and a small private dining room is located off the foyer. The banquet room, intact and unchanged from original construction, has ornamental plaster on the ceilings and columns. The floor is maple strip flooring applied over wood sleepers and is in fair condition. The newspaper account from the opening describes the banquet room as "highly decorated in pastel colors...in the Italian Modern Renaissance treatment." The walls were a "light pea green and ivory with raised paneled wainscot and pedestals finished in dark gray with elliptical ceiling of light gray and pastel colored plaster ornamentation." Historic photographs show drapes no longer existing.<sup>8</sup>

The Men's Lounge, restrooms, and a room for the beauty parlor are located on the west side of the mezzanine. Part of the Men's Lounge has been divided into smaller rooms but the woodwork and molding of the new additions are similar to the original in the room and are estimated to have been changed around World War II to accommodate wartime activities.

Restoration of this floor is just underway, with most of the mechanical, electrical and plumbing systems installed. Restoration of the existing gypsum plaster is under way with lathing being installed where plaster is missing and many of the missing decorative plaster elements being cast anew through the use of molds taken of remaining historic elements.

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<sup>7</sup> *Big Spring Herald*. "The Architecture of the Hotel Is Modernistic." Vol. 2, No.311, September 28, 1930, pg. 2.

<sup>8</sup> *Big Spring Herald*. "The Architecture of the Hotel Is Modernistic." Vol. 2, No.311, September 28, 1930, pg. 2.

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### *Third through Fourteenth Floors*

The third floor has twelve hotel rooms and six "sample" rooms where salesmen displayed sample wares. The sample rooms measure 20 feet by 21 feet. Each has a bathroom, a large storage closet and a bed closet which had either a rollaway bed or a type of Murphy bed. The closets were built to accommodate large display tables that could then be folded and stored. A small linen closet and chase are located next to the elevators. Also, the corridor contains a linen closet and trash chute. There is a door leading out to the second floor roof at the elevator corridor. This configuration of floor is intact as are the materials.

The third floor has been designated the historic floor in that it is the largest guestroom floor and retains, essentially intact, examples of every type of guestroom historically available at the hotel, including sample rooms. All walls, corridors, and door openings have been preserved except for the addition of an additional fire exit stair. Most historic bathrooms and closets remain and will be restored. Most mechanical, electrical, and plumbing work has been completed on this floor, as well as most of the repairs of the flat gypsum plaster walls and ceilings. Historic wood facings, bases, and chair rails have been retained and restored or replaced with historic salvaged material from upper floors.

Floors four through fourteen are identical in layout. The corridor in front of each elevator is approximately seven feet wide, and the corridor to the rooms is six feet wide. Floors have twelve rooms each, with a bathroom and closet. The fourth floor has doors at the ends of the corridor to provide guests access to the third floor roof. Floors five through fourteen have a window at this location. Like the guest rooms, the corridors all originally featured carpet flooring, some of which still exists. Owners after 1950 replaced some of the corridor flooring with linoleum.

Floors four through thirteen have had the guestrooms substantially reconfigured to accommodate modern hotel standards, as well as the addition of a new fire exit stair. Historic corridors, original materials, details, and openings have been retained, except for some truncation at each corridor end. These floors are virtually complete, with door installation and painting of walls and trim underway.

Floor fourteen is being reconfigured for Penthouse or Presidential suites, but this work is just beginning with some partition framing in place.

### *Fifteenth Floor*

The fifteenth floor housed the apartment for the hotel manager and is only accessible by a stairway. There is a vestibule area at the head of the stairs that opens into the hall and kitchen with a breakfast room off the kitchen. The dining room and living room face north and are adjacent to each other and both are accessed from the hallway. The apartment kitchen has a door leading onto the west roof of the fourteenth floor and the living room has doors leading to the east roof of the fourteenth floor. There are two bedrooms, one with a closet, with a door in between. Across from the bedrooms are the bathroom and a closet. The fifteenth floor also housed the water house tank and machine room. The stair tower extends to the roof. This apartment has been substantially modified and some of the interior walls have been removed or relocated. Floor fifteen will be reconfigured as a private suite for the hotel owner. This work has not begun.

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## *Elevators*

The American Elevator Company supplied the building's two elevators. The system was described in the local newspaper as a "noiseless type geared to 600 feet per minute."<sup>9</sup> The description goes on to state that the elevators used an automatic leveling device that ensured the cabs would be level with the floor when they stopped and the doors opened. The elevators used a Wagner closing device and stops with interior bronze safety gates. The cabs were finished in "stippled bronze" with "highly ornamental bronze doors on the first and second floors."<sup>10</sup> The original elevators were never modernized and the current owners removed original equipment that had not operated since May 1980. Except for the railings in the hoist way, all remaining equipment was removed due to age and to comply with safety issues. The elevator doors and thresholds were retained.

## **Interior Integrity**

The spatial configuration of the lobby, mezzanine level, and the third floor guest rooms is intact, allowing these floors to retain integrity. Integrity is further supported by the restoration of remaining finishes and decorative elements. Reproduction of missing elements is being based upon historic photos and the architect's original architectural drawings of the building. The loss of historic fabric in the basement and on upper guest floors is necessary in order to accommodate the needs of a modern hotel.

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<sup>9</sup> *Big Spring Herald*. "The Architecture of the Hotel Is Modernistic." Vol. 2, No. 311, September 28, 1930, pg. 2.

<sup>10</sup> *Big Spring Herald*. "The Architecture of the Hotel Is Modernistic." Vol.2, No. 311, September 28, 1930, pg. 1

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Settles Hotel  
Big Spring, Howard County, Texas

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## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Local ranchers W.R. and Lillian Settles constructed the Settles Hotel in 1930 after the discovery of oil on their ranch made them very wealthy. The hotel's construction coincided with the height of the Permian Basin oil boom and the explosive growth in Big Spring's population and economy. Prominent West Texas architect David S. Castle designed the three-part vertical block building in the popular Art Deco style. At the time of its construction, the hotel was the most dominant building in the small downtown. It retains that characteristic to this day. The building is a cultural landmark for the town Big Spring and is visible for miles. The hotel maintains a good degree of integrity and, despite standing vacant for over two decades, is in the midst of a rebirth. The restoration efforts, which began in 2007, should be complete by March 2012.

The Settles Hotel is nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for Commerce as a historically important building to the growth and commercial development of Big Spring and under Criterion C for Architecture as a good example of a three-part vertical block Art Deco building by a prominent architect, both at the local level of significance. Because the hotel operated continuously as such until the 1980s, the period of significance extends to 1962, the cutoff for the fifty year eligibility threshold.

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## Overview History of Big Spring, Howard County, Texas

Big Spring is the county seat of Howard County and is located at the intersection of Interstate Highway 20, U.S. Highways 80 and 87, State Highway 350, Farm Road 700, and the Missouri Pacific Railroad. The spring was a watering place for herds of animals, a campsite for Native American Indians and, later, the U.S. Army. The community of Big Spring was established in the late 1870s as a site for buffalo hunters and ranchers.<sup>11</sup>

Howard County was authorized by the Texas legislature in 1876 but was not organized and established until 1882.<sup>12</sup> Big Spring was made county seat. The county is 584,960 acres and 914 square miles and is characterized by the physiographic sections of Rolling Plains, High Plains and the Edwards Plateau.<sup>13</sup> The Texas and Pacific Railway officially came through the town on May 28, 1881.<sup>14</sup> As often happened, the small community of Big Spring moved to the railroad track. The area experienced a land rush in 1901 after a state ruling that a man could homestead four sections. Both cowboys and farmers fought for land in the county. Big Spring served the county and region as a shipping point for cattle, cotton, and grains. The city population grew to 4,273 in 1920.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Howard County Historical Commission. *History of Howard County, 1882-1982*. Big Spring, Texas: Howard County Historical Commission, 1982, pp. 11-13

<sup>12</sup> Howard County Historical Commission, p. 11.

<sup>13</sup> Bureau of Business Research. *An Economic Survey of Howard County Prepared for the Texas and Pacific Railway*. Austin, Texas: University of Texas, March 1949, 1.01-1.02

<sup>14</sup> Bureau of Business Research, 1.0301-02.

<sup>15</sup> Handbook of Texas, "Big Spring, TX," <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/heb09>. (accessed Dec. 2, 2011).

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## Oil Boom Brings People and Money to Big Spring

Oil was discovered on the G.O. Chalk ranch near Big Spring in 1926 and played a large role in the economic fortunes of Howard County and the town of Big Spring. The town became the center for commercial oil exploration in Howard and Glasscock Counties. Owen and Sloan, who discovered the oil on the Chalk ranch, declined offers of \$500,000 for the well. People realized the potential of the area and began exploration and drilling in earnest.<sup>16</sup>

Among the people to profit from this oil boom were local ranchers W.R. and Lillian Settles. W.R. Settles moved to East Texas from Kentucky in the 1880s and later moved to West Texas and worked for various ranchers. He eventually bought three sections of school land in Howard County about sixteen miles from Big Spring and several additional tracts from the Texas and Pacific Railway.<sup>17</sup> Mr. Settles raised Hereford cattle on the ranch. In 1924, the Humble Oil and Refining Company leased three sections of the ranch for approximately \$1,900.<sup>18</sup> This same year, Mr. Settles was badly injured in a fall from a windmill.<sup>19</sup> Although the Settles decided to move into Big Spring, their ranch and land were about to make them very wealthy. The couple was active in Big Spring, participating in a number of civic organizations and donating funds for various projects. They were active in the First Presbyterian Church as well.

Oil was discovered on the Dora Roberts ranch, adjacent to the Settles ranch, on October 24, 1927 by the Magnolia Petroleum Company. Known as Dora Roberts No. 1, this well produced 3,300 barrels daily. On August 27, 1928, the Henshaw Oil Company drilled Settles No. 1-A, which brought in 4,200 barrels daily.<sup>20</sup> This well became one of the biggest producers in the area. Later, in October of 1928, the well was deepened just nine feet and the well produced 7,419 barrels within 24 hours.<sup>21</sup> These wells and the subsequent leases on their ranch made W.R. and Lillian Settles very wealthy. In 1928, Texas was the largest oil producing state in the U.S. with most of this oil coming from the Permian Basin area of West Texas. In 1929, J.S. Cosden established the Cosden Refinery in Big Spring. The refinery was one of four built in the area. It became the largest plant in the Permian Basin and the only one to survive long term.<sup>22</sup> By 1936, there were 810 wells in production in Howard County.<sup>23</sup>

Fed by the oil boom, the population of Big Spring tripled to 13,375 by 1930.<sup>24</sup> Faced with substantial growth from the moment oil was discovered in 1926, the city of Big Spring began physical improvements, including paving 18 blocks of the business district. Other improvements included installing of electric lights along the public streets, a new water system and fire plugs.<sup>25</sup> The city even constructed an airport; the first scheduled flight was a Texas Air

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<sup>16</sup> Hutto, John R. *Howard County in the Making*. No Publisher, 1938, no page.

<sup>17</sup> Myers, Samuel B., p. 431.

<sup>18</sup> Myers, Samuel B., p. 431.

<sup>19</sup> *Big Spring Herald*, "Settles Hotel Opens Wednesday." p. 2.

<sup>20</sup> Hutto, John R., no page.

<sup>21</sup> Myers, Samuel B., p. 418.

<sup>22</sup> Rundell, Walter. *Oil in West Texas and New Mexico*. College Station: Texas A&M Press, 1982, p. 44.

<sup>23</sup> Handbook of Texas.

<sup>24</sup> Handbook of Texas.

<sup>25</sup> Myers, Samuel B., p. 423.

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Transportation flight on March 16, 1929.<sup>26</sup> The community adopted the city manager form of government during this time.

## The Settles Hotel is Born

Big Spring continued to grow over the next three years. A comparison between the Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps from June of 1922 and February 1930 reveals Big Spring's considerable physical growth.<sup>27</sup> The Texas and Pacific Railway expanded its local offices and facilities. The oil supply companies established branch offices and warehouses in the town. Like many boom towns, Big Spring needed more buildings to house the many businesses associated with the discovery of oil. This construction money rapidly turned over in the local economy.<sup>28</sup> The prices for lots, both residential and business, increased rapidly.

All of this growth brought the need for additional hotel rooms. The Douglass Hotel, the main hotel during the 1920s, burned in 1926 and was not rebuilt and opened until spring of 1928. The Crawford was completed in 1927, with two additional floors being added almost immediately after construction.<sup>29</sup> According to newspaper accounts of the time, W.R. and Lillian Settles felt there was a need for a hotel in downtown Big Spring. However, it was Mr. M.L. Tinsley, an oil gauger, who convinced the couple to build the hotel. He became the Settles' business manager and took over all aspects of planning the project.<sup>30</sup>

The construction of the Settles Hotel was noted in a *Dallas Morning News* article describing the economic impact of hotel development around the state. The article noted that the increased agricultural, industrial, and commercial development of the state and its new reputation as a tourist destination helped to spur hotel development.<sup>31</sup> Another factor leading to the construction of the Settles Hotel may have been the regional rivalry between Big Spring and Abilene. Although in different counties, these two cities were in close proximity to each other—Big Spring is approximately 100 miles west of Abilene—and they were rivals in economic development. Abilene was finishing construction of the Wooten, a sixteen-story hotel, at this time. Abilene was the larger of the two cities. In 1920, Abilene's population was 10,274 and Big Spring's population was 4,273. Both cities saw tremendous growth between 1920 and 1930 due to the discovery of oil in West Texas. Abilene's population was 23,175 in 1930 and Big Spring's was 13,375.<sup>32</sup>

W.R. Settles purchased the property for the hotel in early 1929. He allowed his business manager, M.L. Tinsley, to pick the site in downtown Big Spring and begin the planning of the hotel. In August of 1929, Mr. Settles approached the Big Spring Chamber of Commerce to help with the financing of the hotel. The proposal to the Chamber

<sup>26</sup> Bureau of Business Research, 4.1003.

<sup>27</sup> Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps. June 1922, sheet 1; February 1930, sheet 1.

<sup>28</sup> Myers, Samuel B., p. 423.

<sup>29</sup> Myers, Samuel B., p. 424.

<sup>30</sup> *Big Spring Herald*. "This is Big Spring's Settles Hotel." October 11, 1929, p. 2.

<sup>31</sup> *Dallas Morning News*. "Commercial Development of Texas Aided by Investment of Many Millions in Hotels." March 17, 1930, Part 2, p. 17.

<sup>32</sup> Handbook of Texas, "Abilene, TX," <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/hda01> and "Big Spring, TX," <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/heb09>. Accessed December 2, 2011.

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requested that the community participate in financing the cost of the construction by purchasing bonds. The amount of bonds would be \$100,000 at 6 per cent. The Chamber approved the proposal and set about raising the capital.<sup>33</sup> The group of businessmen was successful in raising more than \$100,000 in four hours of work.<sup>34</sup> Soon after, the Settles and Tinsley chose Abilene architect David S. Castle (the architect for Abilene's Wooten Hotel) to design their new hotel.<sup>35</sup> The Settles and Tinsley had formed the Settles Hotel Corporation which in turn established the Settles Hotel Company. The company, organized to run the hotel, included Mr. and Mrs. Settles, Tinsley and Fenton Baker of the Baker Hotel chain.<sup>36</sup> The Baker Hotel chain was a large chain of hotels across the state of Texas and the south. The company, headed by T.B. Baker, owned the Baker Hotel in Dallas; the St. Anthony, Menger and Gunter in San Antonio; the Stephen F. Austin in Austin; the Baker Hotel in Mineral Wells among others across the state.<sup>37</sup>

It is interesting to note that the building permits in Big Spring rose significantly from 1925 to 1930. In 1925, there were \$423,780 worth of building permits and in 1930, there were \$760,351. The Settles Hotel, constructed in 1930, cost approximately \$500,000, indicating the value of the hotel was approximately two-thirds of the permits in that one year. (With the onset of the Depression, building permits fell to only \$68,031 in 1935. The value of permits did not reach the 1930-Settles Hotel level again until 1945, when there was \$761,430 worth of building permits filed.)

Gifford Hill began excavation of the building in October of 1929 and completed soil tests on the site one month later. The tests revealed that the soil and rock underneath the site could not support the load of conventional pier settings that normally preceded foundation placement. The architect and contractors then designed a floating mat for the foundation, measuring 56 by 92 feet and between 23 and 43 inches thick. The foundation was laid using 57 tons of reinforced steel and 733 cubic yards of concrete. In January 1930, contractors poured the basement walls and first floor. The construction frame was completed quickly, between January and March of 1930. Builders used a system of forms for the reinforced concrete frame that was known as the Siegler System. The Elmer Siegler Company from Kansas City had recently developed the system that enabled the concrete to be poured more quickly.<sup>38</sup> Construction of the Settles Hotel was completed a year later. When built, the Settles Hotel was billed as the tallest building between Abilene and El Paso.<sup>39</sup>

The hotel had a private opening celebration on September 28, 1930 filled with enthusiastic visitors and locals, while the formal opening of the hotel was on October 1, 1930. The *Big Spring Herald* published a full section devoted to the hotel opening, describing everything from the architectural style to the music of the evening.<sup>40</sup>

<sup>33</sup> *Dallas Morning News*. "Big Spring Hotel Seems Assured." August 11, 1929, Part: Society News, p. 6.

<sup>34</sup> *Dallas Morning News*. "Raise \$100,000 for New Hotel." August 14, 1929, Part 2, p. 21.

<sup>35</sup> *Dallas Morning News*. "Prepare Plans for Big Spring Hotel." August 27, 1929, Part 2, p. 14.

<sup>36</sup> *Big Spring Herald*. "Settles to be Ready for Dental Meeting: Formal Opening Later." August 25, 1930, Section 1, p. 1.

<sup>37</sup> *Dallas Morning News*. "Baker Hotel Builder Dies; Services Set." June 13, 1972 (Clipping File).

<sup>38</sup> *Big Spring Herald*. "The Architecture of the Hotel Is Modernistic." Vol.2, No.311, September 28, 1930, pp. 1-2.

<sup>39</sup> *Big Spring Herald*. "This Is Big Spring's Settles Hotel." October 11, 1929, p. 2

<sup>40</sup> *Big Spring Herald*. "Settles Hotel Opens Wednesday." September 28, 1930, p. 1.

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## The Devastating Impact of the Great Depression

The Great Depression impacted the oil industry in West Texas and, consequently, Big Spring and the Settles Hotel. The discovery of oil in West Texas had helped to lessen the initial impact of the Great Depression on the region. However, with the discovery of large oil fields in East Texas and overproduction of the West Texas fields, the price of oil fell to 22 cents a barrel and then to 10 cents. Agriculture, still an important part of the local economy, suffered during the Depression. The area was already experiencing a drought and, with the onset of the Depression, crop and livestock prices dropped. Big Spring felt the force of the Depression most notably in the value of building permits. Permits averaged approximately \$100,000 a year, dipping to \$68,000 in 1935. It was not until 1945 that permits in Big Spring reached pre-Depression values.<sup>41</sup>

However, a looming financial crisis was already underway as early as the hotel's grand opening. According to local legend, M.L. Tinsley fleeced around \$100,000 from the Settles. They signed a promissory note for \$125,000 using the ranch and their mineral rights as collateral in June 1930 to cover the shortfall.<sup>42</sup> The promissory note was held by Group No.1 (later Continental Oil Corporation), who held an oil lease on the ranch. The price of oil fell from \$3-\$4 a barrel to 10 cents a barrel. The Settles Hotel Corporation, unable to meet their obligations, lost the hotel. It was sold at auction to Group No.1 for \$75,000, which was applied to the note. This also meant that Group No. 1 now owned the Settles' ranch, as well as all oil and mineral rights, worth millions of dollars.<sup>43</sup>

The hotel was subsequently operated by the Baker Hotel chain, which had hotels in Texas, Mississippi, Alabama, Louisiana, New Mexico, and Oklahoma. The National Hotel Company, owned by W.L. Moody, Shearn Moody and well-known hotelier, Conrad Hilton, owned and managed the Settles Hotel in the mid 1930s along with several other hotels across the state.<sup>44</sup> The Moodys and Hilton ended up in a lawsuit over the control of their company and the Settles Hotel was one of several hotels in the lawsuit that was settled in 1934. Hilton gained control over hotels in Dallas, Lubbock and Plainview; the Moodys took the rest of the hotels, including the Settles Hotel.<sup>45</sup>

The hotel continued to operate during this time period. Many prominent people of the day stayed there while crossing the country. Mrs. Jay Gould had a reception in her honor during her stay at the hotel. Miss Agnes du Pont, of the famed du Pont family from New Jersey also stayed at the hotel. Other guests included Drs. William J. and Charles H. Mayo of Mayo Clinic fame, Mr. and Mrs. Charles Wrigley, Mr. and Mrs. Elliot Roosevelt, and President Herbert Hoover.<sup>46</sup> Through the early years, meetings and conferences were held at the hotel including the West Texas Cotton Ginners Association and the sixth district of the Texas Federation of Women's Clubs.

<sup>41</sup> Bureau of Business Research, 4.07.

<sup>42</sup> Recorded Texas Historic Landmark Application. Settles Hotel. February 1986.

<sup>43</sup> Myers, Samuel B., p. 432.

<sup>44</sup> *Dallas Morning News*. "Receiver Sought for Operation of National Hotels." November 4, 1933, Section 1, p. 5.

<sup>45</sup> Hilton, Conrad. *Be My Guest*. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1957, pp. 160-161; 164-165; 170.

<sup>46</sup> History of Howard County, p. 30

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### Big Spring and the Settles Hotel, 1940 – 1980s

In the 1940s, as preparation for World War II, the Army Air Corps Bombardier School was opened on land southwest of the city. The Settles Hotel often hosted Army officers during this time. During World War II, American Airlines leased a floor of the Settles to house flight crews. American had several flights between Big Spring and Oklahoma City and Los Angeles. The Settles, like hotels across the country, had their room prices frozen during the war, but the hotel was fully occupied. Apparently on VJ Day (Victory in Japan), the soldiers tore the hotel apart. Their revelry included hanging a young woman out a window by her heels.<sup>47</sup> During this time, the Settles Hotel was a well-known gathering place in Central West Texas. The hotel had music in the ballroom on the weekends, including bandleader Wilson Humber and pianist "Jelly" Brooks, and the hotel restaurant was considered one of the finest in the area.

After the war, the military base was closed, but served as the town's municipal airport. There were three airlines, American, Continental and Pioneer, that served the town in 1948.<sup>48</sup> In 1952, the military installation was reactivated and renamed Webb Air Force Base. As the base expanded in the 1950s, so did the population of servicemen. Local lore notes that the Settles Hotel was occasionally known for providing prostitutes that operated in the hotel. Apparently, the hotel manager and doormen received a fee, acting as "pimps" for the women. Texas attorney general Will Wilson pushed local law officials to crack down on prostitution in Galveston, Big Spring, Cuero, Texarkana, and Victoria during this time.<sup>49</sup>

The Settles Hotel continued to host local organizations, weddings, parties, and conferences. Continental Trailways, Kerrville bus line, and Texas-New Mexico bus line had contracts with the Settles to house drivers overnight. The Texas and Pacific trainmen also stayed at the Settles. With the reactivation of the base, the growth of the petrochemical industries, and its role as a banking and distribution center, Big Spring's population grew to 31,230 in the 1950s. The town experienced a decline in population after Webb Air Force base was deactivated in 1977.<sup>50</sup> Patronage of the Settles Hotel began to dwindle soon after.

The Settles Hotel operated under many different owners until it finally closed for good in the early 1980s. Hotelier A.J. Crawford and Fred S. Hofues owned the Settles Hotel in the 1940s. Crawford owned the Hermosa and Beauty Crest Courts in Carlsbad, New Mexico, the Crawford Hotel in Colorado City, Texas, and the Crawford Hotel in Big Spring. Hofues owned the Motor Hotels chain, and eventually bought out Crawford's hotel interests.<sup>51</sup> Hofues and his heirs owned the hotel through the 1950s<sup>52</sup> and various others owned it through the 1960s, 1970s, and early 1980s, when it closed.

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<sup>47</sup> *Big Spring Herald*. "After 42 Years, Settles Still Hub of Activity." July 14, 1973 (Clipping).

<sup>48</sup> Bureau of Business Research, 4.07.

<sup>49</sup> *Handbook of Texas Online*, "Prostitution," <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/jbp01> (accessed December 2, 2011).

<sup>50</sup> Bureau of Business Research, 4.07.

<sup>51</sup> *Dallas Morning News*. "Dallas Hotelman Buys Interests of A.J. Crawford." April 29, 1945, Section 1, p. 14.

<sup>52</sup> Howard County Records. Probate Volume 242, p. 204, May 3, 1957.

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## A New Life for the Settles Hotel

Though purchased by a developer in 1985, the proposed renovation project for the hotel failed to proceed. The hotel went into receivership due to back taxes in 1990 and the City of Big Spring became the owner. After nearly two decades of vacancy and vandalism, however, the Settles Hotel was given the promise of a new life. The newly formed Settles Hotel Development Company, led by G. Brint Ryan, purchased the property on May 15, 2007, and plans for restoration were soon underway. Led by Dallas architect Norman Alston, the project aims for a March 2012 completion date, and the hotel will once again welcome visitors to Big Spring in style.

## Architect David S. Castle and the Art Deco Style

Born on February 13, 1884, in Constantine, Michigan, David S. Castle left home at age 15 and eventually settled in Chicago, Illinois. He worked in the drafting department at the Chicago Telephone and Telegraph Company and went to night school at the Lewis Institute for two and a half years. He later enrolled in the Armour Institute (now the Illinois Institute of Technology) where he graduated in 1909. Castle also attended the Art Institute of Chicago. He returned to the Chicago Telephone and Telegraph Company and provided plans for telephone company buildings. In 1910 he moved to Texas and worked for Southwestern Bell Telephone.<sup>53</sup> He joined the Texas Company (Texaco) Engineering Department in 1911 and two years later became associated with Fort Worth architect M.L. Waller who designed many institutional buildings throughout the state. While employed by M.L. Waller, Castle moved to Abilene to open a branch office and oversee construction of the Oldham Building (razed) at North First and Cypress streets.

The following year, in 1914, Castle established his own firm and soon received several important commissions. He and his firm designed residences for several of Abilene's most prominent citizens, including J.G. Higginbotham, George B. Paxton, C.W. Bacon, T.C. Campbell and George R. Davis. The Abilene School District hired his firm to design practically every school facility erected between 1920 and 1935. He also was architect of all the buildings on the campus of McMurry University, and he designed several buildings at Hardin-Simmons University and Abilene Christian University. He provided plans and specifications for the Hilton Hotel, the Wooten Hotel and the Federal Building, all of which are in Abilene.<sup>54</sup> Two of his best clients were the West Texas Utilities Company (WTU) and J.M. Radford. He reportedly designed about 20 buildings for WTU and 30 for Radford in various communities throughout West Texas. Other important commissions included the Petroleum Building and the Scarborough Building in Midland, and the Burch Hotel in Breckenridge.<sup>55</sup> David S. Castle & Company designed virtually every major building in Abilene from the late 1910s through the 1950s. A prolific architect, many of Castle's buildings are listed in the National Register or designated as Recorded Texas Historic Landmarks.

The Settles Hotel was one of nine hotels that Castle designed by 1930. He had recently finished designing the Wooten Hotel in Abilene when he received the commission for the Settles Hotel. The buildings are very similar on

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<sup>53</sup> *Big Spring Daily Herald*. "Architect of Settles Long a West Texan." September 28, 1930 p. 9.

<sup>54</sup> Cosby, Hugh. *History of Abilene*. Abilene, Texas: Hugh Cosby Co., 1955, pp. 356-359.

<sup>55</sup> *Abilene Reporter*. "Architect David Castle Dies at 72." October 29, 1956, Section A, p. 1.

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the exterior in style and material. However, as the Wooten was designed to be a businessman's hotel, Castle included only modest interior finishes. The Settles Hotel, intended to be a destination hotel for hunting visitors and oil speculators, featured a higher level of interior finish and detailing in the lobby and rooms. The Art Deco design of both hotels represents a stylistic change for Castle. The Hilton (now Windsor) Hotel in Abilene, constructed in 1927, represents the earlier Chicago Commercial style used by Castle.

The Art Deco style came from the *Exposition des Arts Décoratifs* held in Paris in 1925.<sup>56</sup> The Exposition was the influence for change from historical eclecticism in architectural styles to the modern movement. This style epitomized the excitement and wealth of the 1920s. It was also influenced by Eliel Saarinen's second place entry in the 1922 Chicago Tribune Building Design Competition. In 1926, several prize winning modern decorative arts toured museums in the northeast and Midwest. By 1928, national retailers were exhibiting the latest European decorative objects. In 1929, New York's Metropolitan Museum of Art held the now-famous exhibition "The Architect and International Arts" which featured room settings by leading American architects. Art Deco became the rage and was firmly entrenched as the style of the new era, the roaring '20s.

Regionally, architects like Wiley G. Clarkson of Fort Worth, Wyatt C. Hedrick of Fort Worth, and Lang & Witchell of Dallas had begun using the Art Deco style for major buildings in urban Texas cities. Examples include Hedrick's Electric Building (1929; NR 1995) and the Texas and Pacific Terminal Complex (1930; NR 1978), both in Fort Worth; Clarkson's Sinclair Building (1929; NR 1992) in Fort Worth; and Lang & Witchell's Dallas Power and Light Building (1931). Like his contemporaries, Castle was moving stylistically to a more current architectural design, and the Wooten Hotel and Settles Hotel are the most prominent Art Deco examples of his career. Castle's buildings from the mid 1930s are more Moderne in style and include the 1939 Borden County Courthouse (Gail, TX) and the 1938 Sterling County Courthouse (Sterling City, TX).

The Settles Hotel was constructed by the Dallas firm of E.V. McCright. McCright grew up in Big Spring and Abilene, and received a degree in engineering in 1909 from Washington University in St. Louis. He came to Dallas to work on the Union Terminal building<sup>57</sup> and then founded his own engineering firm in 1920. He served as the contractor on the Wooten Hotel and the Paramount Theater, both in Abilene, as well as the Hotel Black and Continental Campbell-Stone Baking building in Oklahoma City.<sup>58</sup> McCright and Castle worked together on many projects in West Texas.

## Conclusion

The Settles Hotel represents an important period of growth for the town of Big Spring. Built during the explosive Permian Basin oil boom, the hotel epitomizes the wealth generated by that industry and is closely associated with the growth and commercial development of the community. This handsome Art Deco high-rise building, designed by prominent West Texas architect David S. Castle, is a visual and cultural landmark for the city. It is located in the heart of historic downtown and is the anchor for current downtown revitalization efforts. The Settles Hotel is

<sup>56</sup> Whiffen, Marcus. p. 235.

<sup>57</sup> *Dallas Morning News*. "Builder-Investor, E.V. McCright, Dies." February 20, 1965, Section 1, p. 7.

<sup>58</sup> *Dallas Morning News*. "McCright Firm Contractor on Big Buildings." May 11, 1931, Section 1, p. 1.

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nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A in the area of Commerce and Criterion C in the area of Architecture, both at the local level of significance.

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Historic Photographs Courtesy of the Heritage Museum, Big Spring, Texas.

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MAP 1: Howard County (shaded) is located in west Texas.



MAP 2: Map indicates the approximate location of the Settles Hotel within the city of Big Spring. Top edge of image is north.



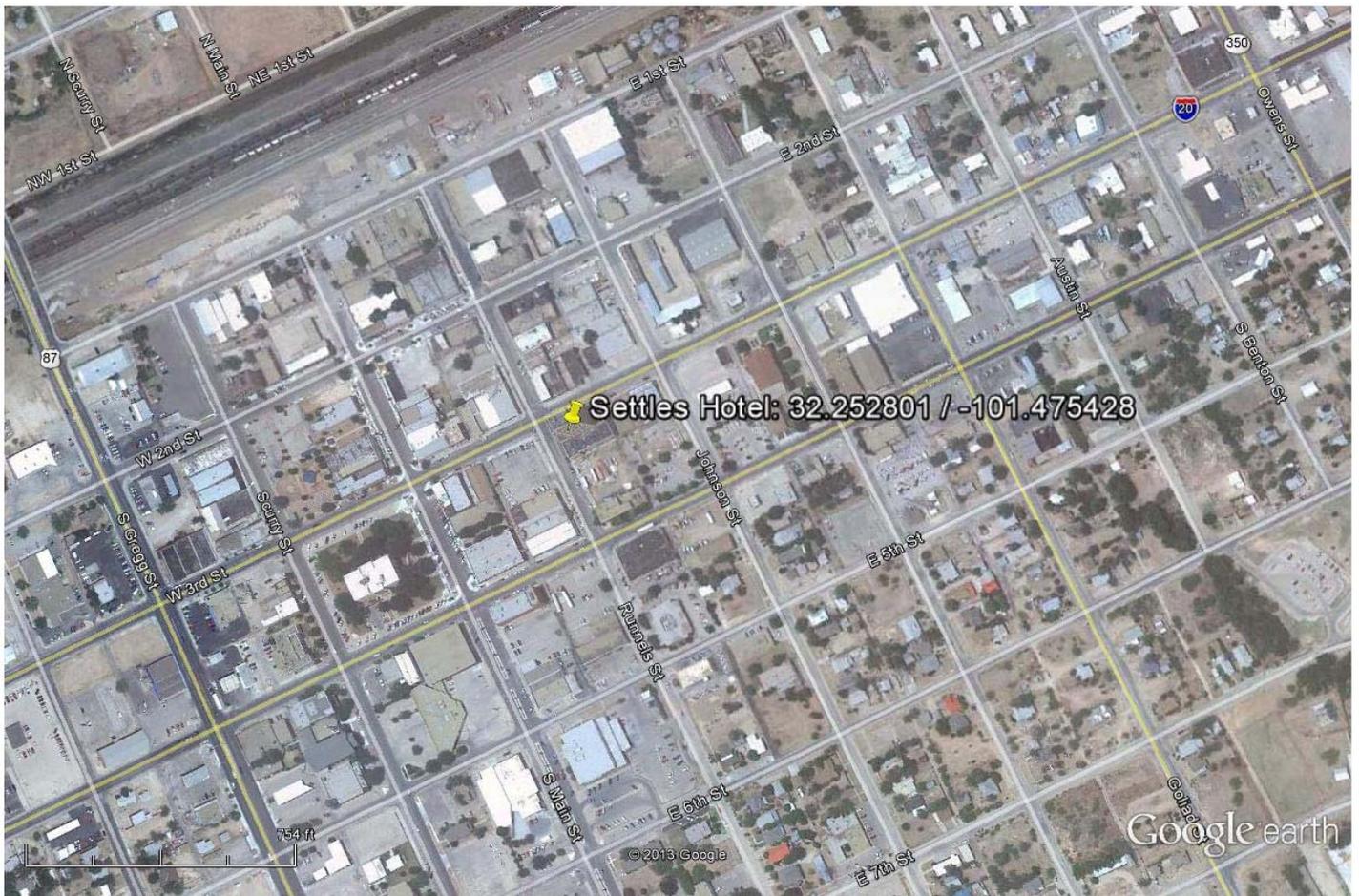
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Settles Hotel  
Big Spring, Howard County, Texas

MAP 3: The Settles Hotel is located at the southeast corner of Third Street and Runnels Street in historic downtown Big Spring. Scaled Google Earth map depicts locational data.





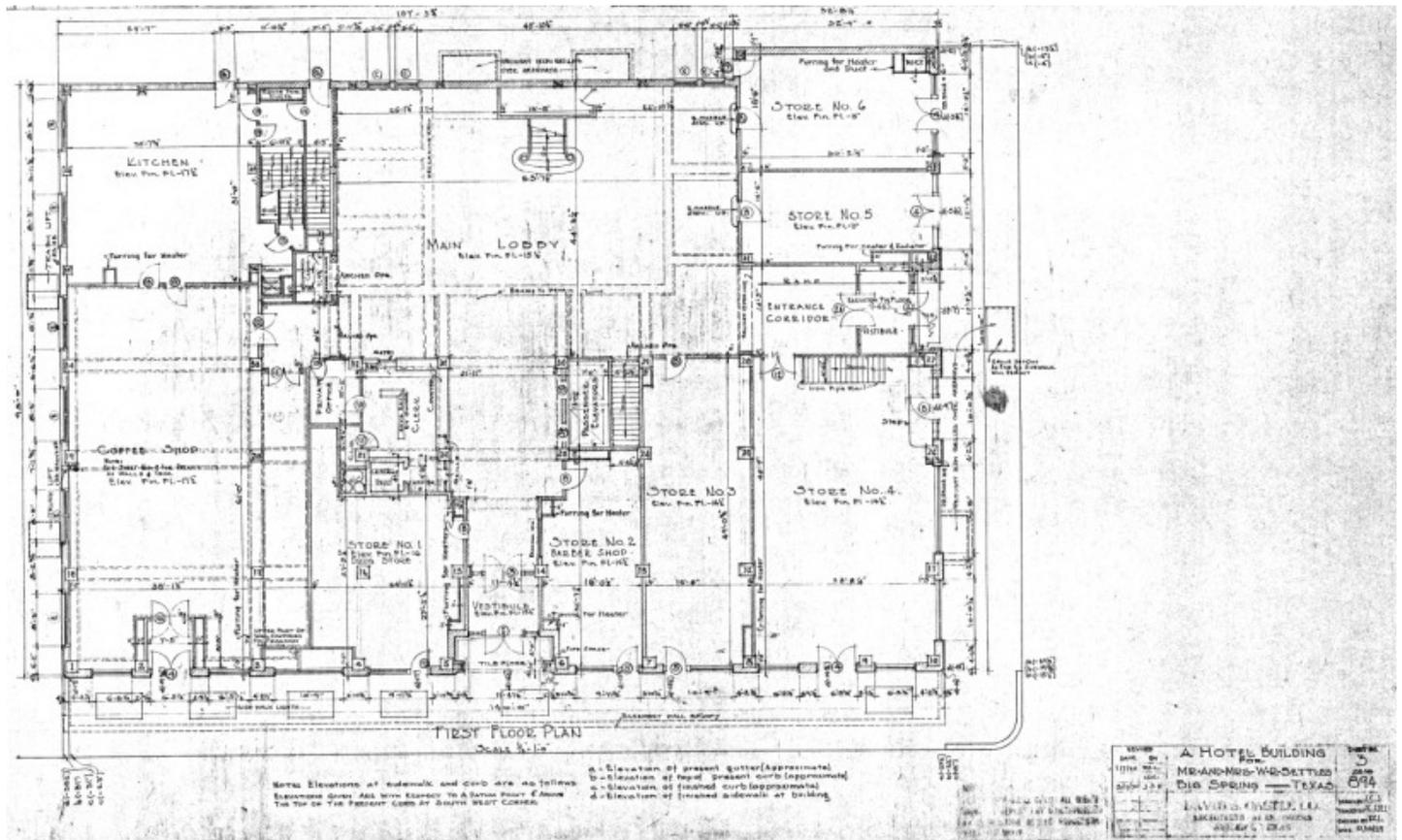
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Settles Hotel  
Big Spring, Taylor County, Texas

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FIGURE 2: Original plan, first floor.







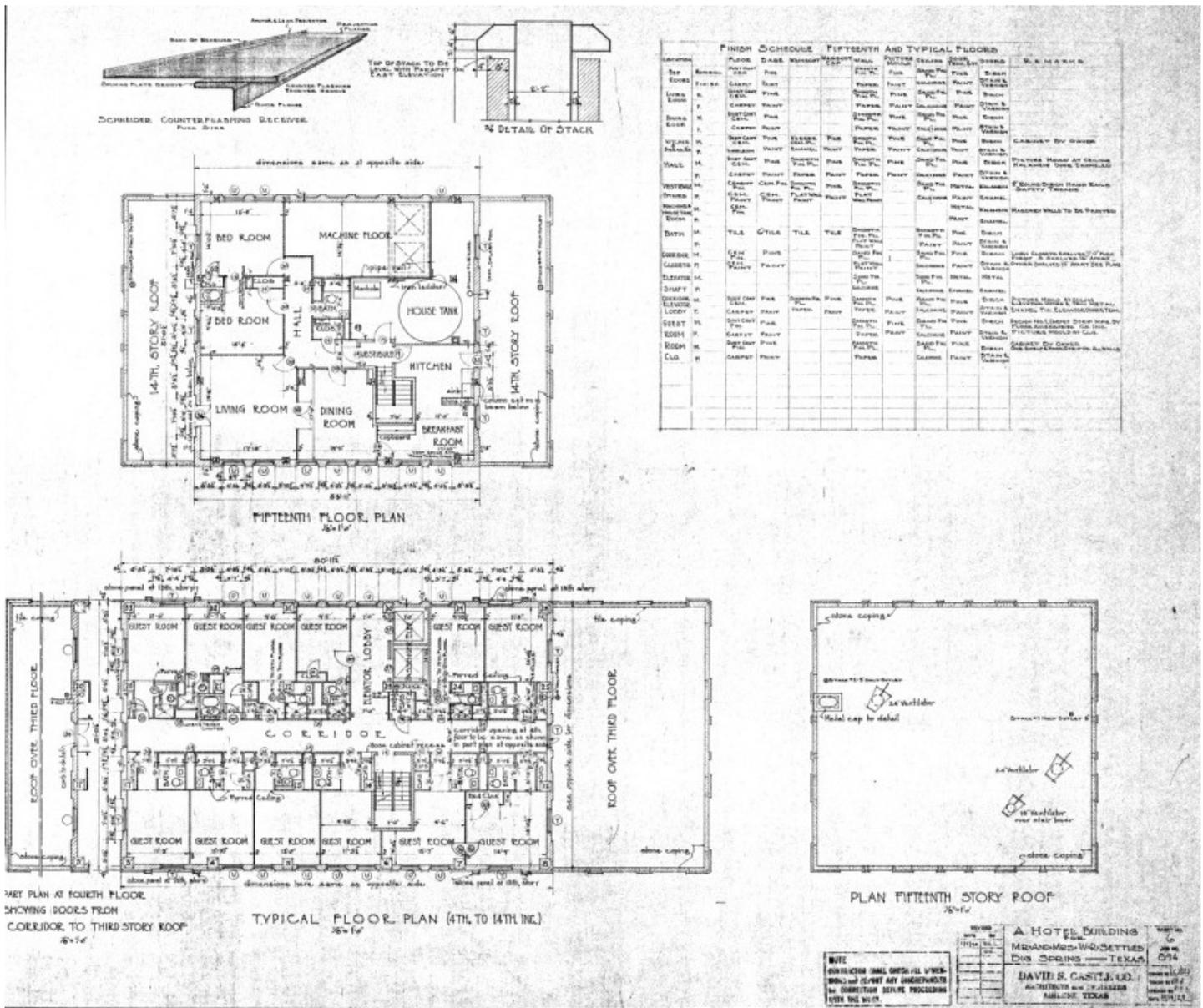
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Settles Hotel  
Big Spring, Taylor County, Texas

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FIGURE 5: Original plans, fourth through fourteenth floor and the fifteenth floor apartment.



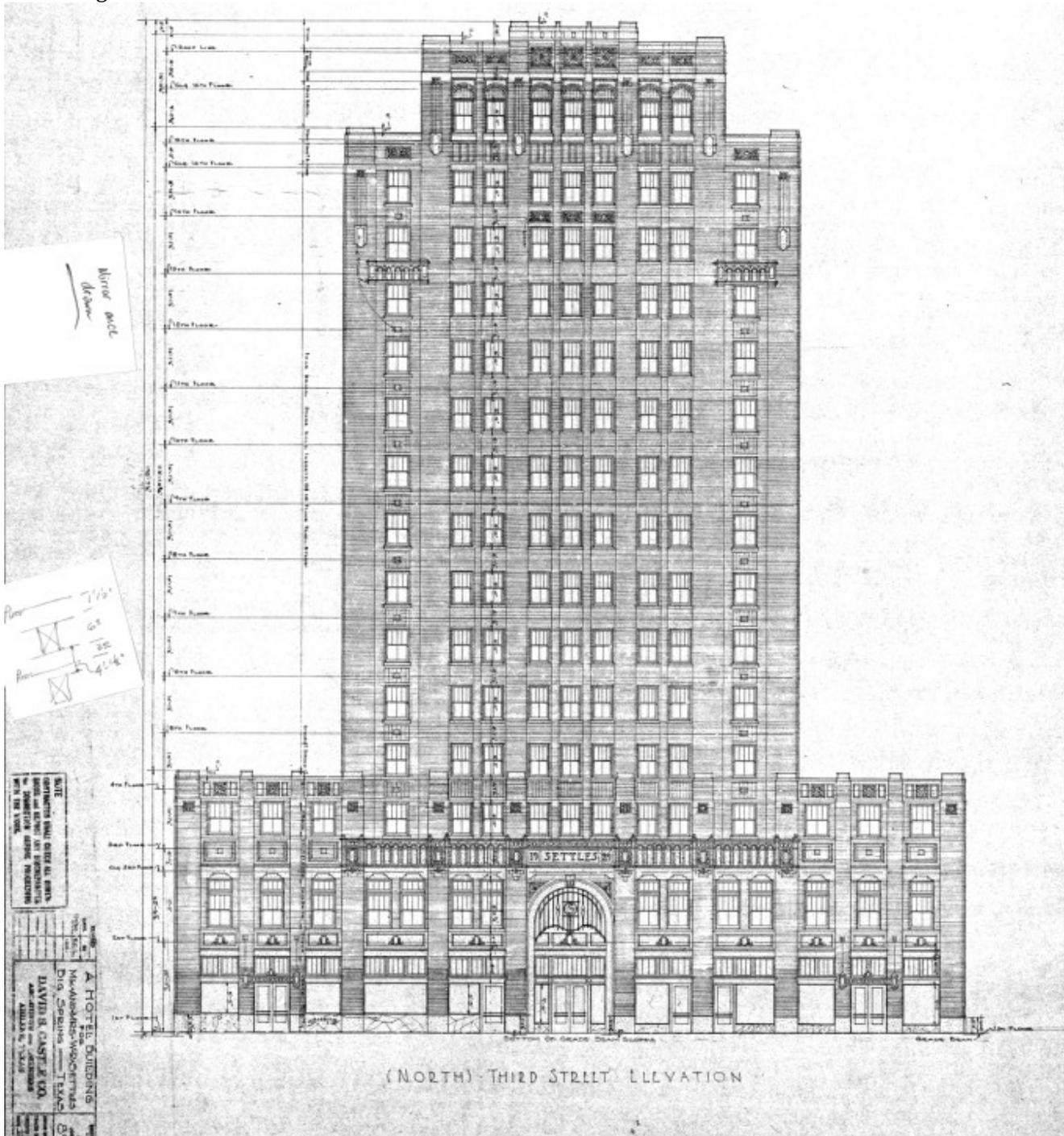
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Settles Hotel  
Big Spring, Taylor County, Texas

FIGURE 6: Original north elevation.



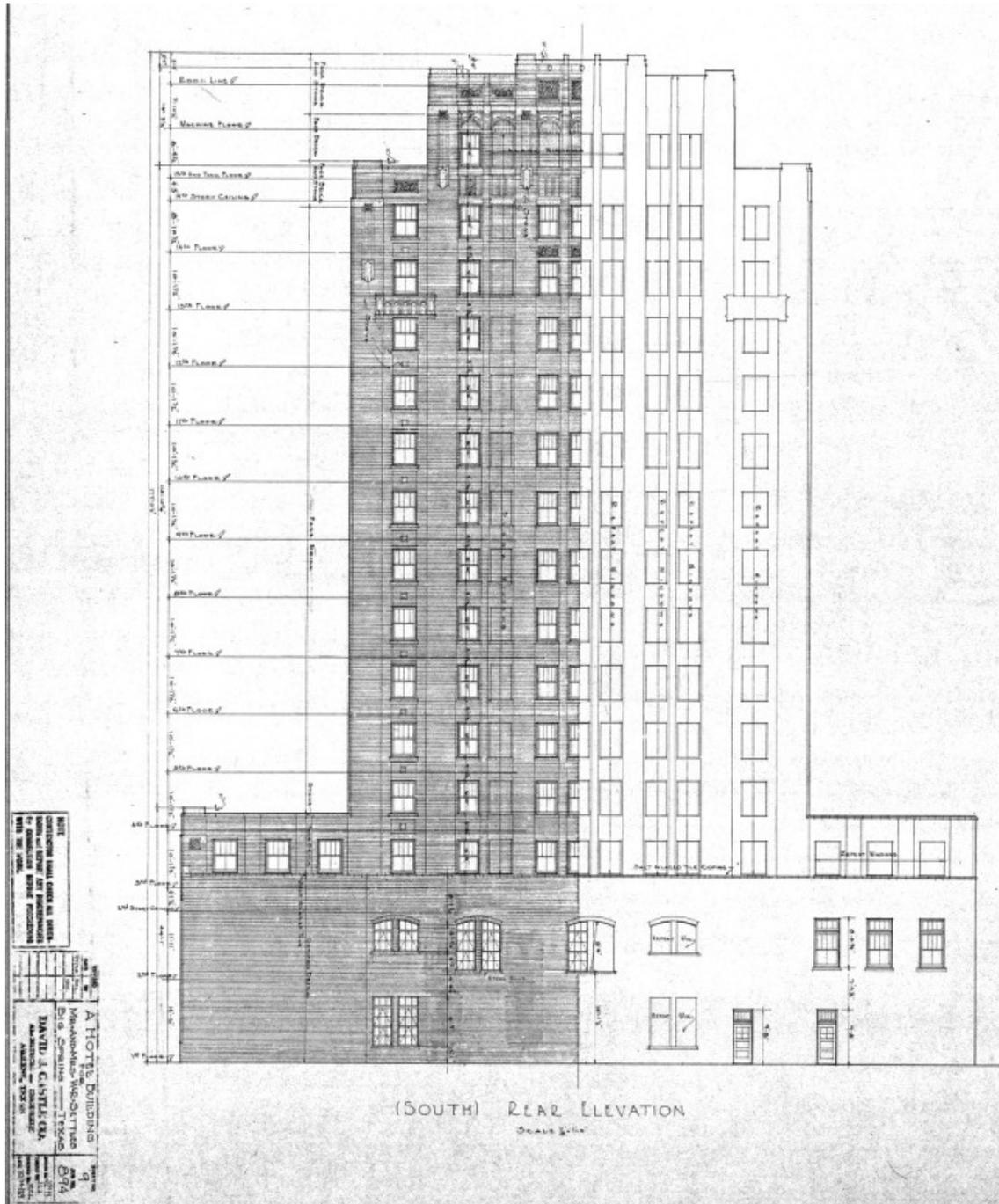
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FIGURE 7: Original south elevation.





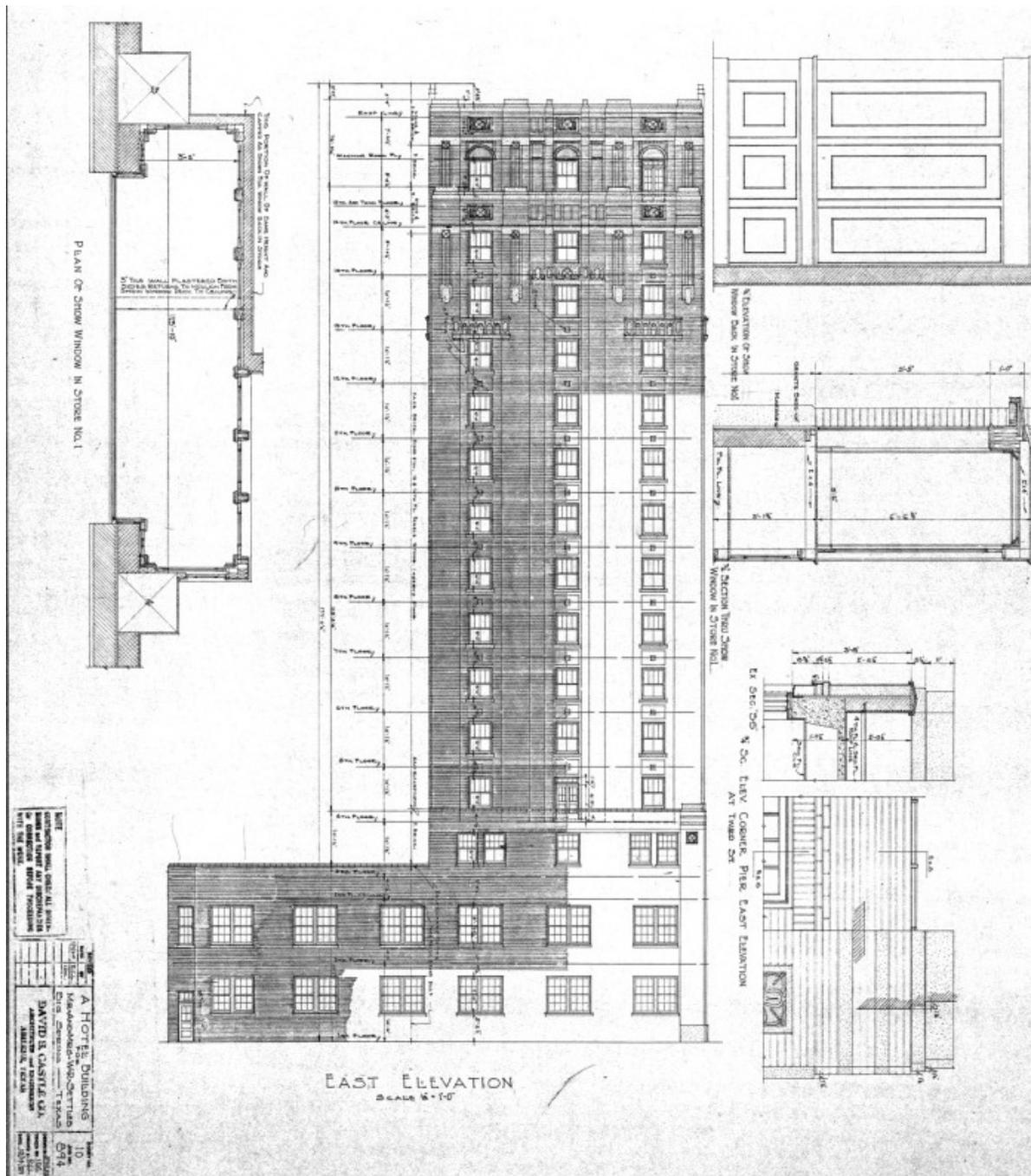
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FIGURE 9: Original east elevation and details.



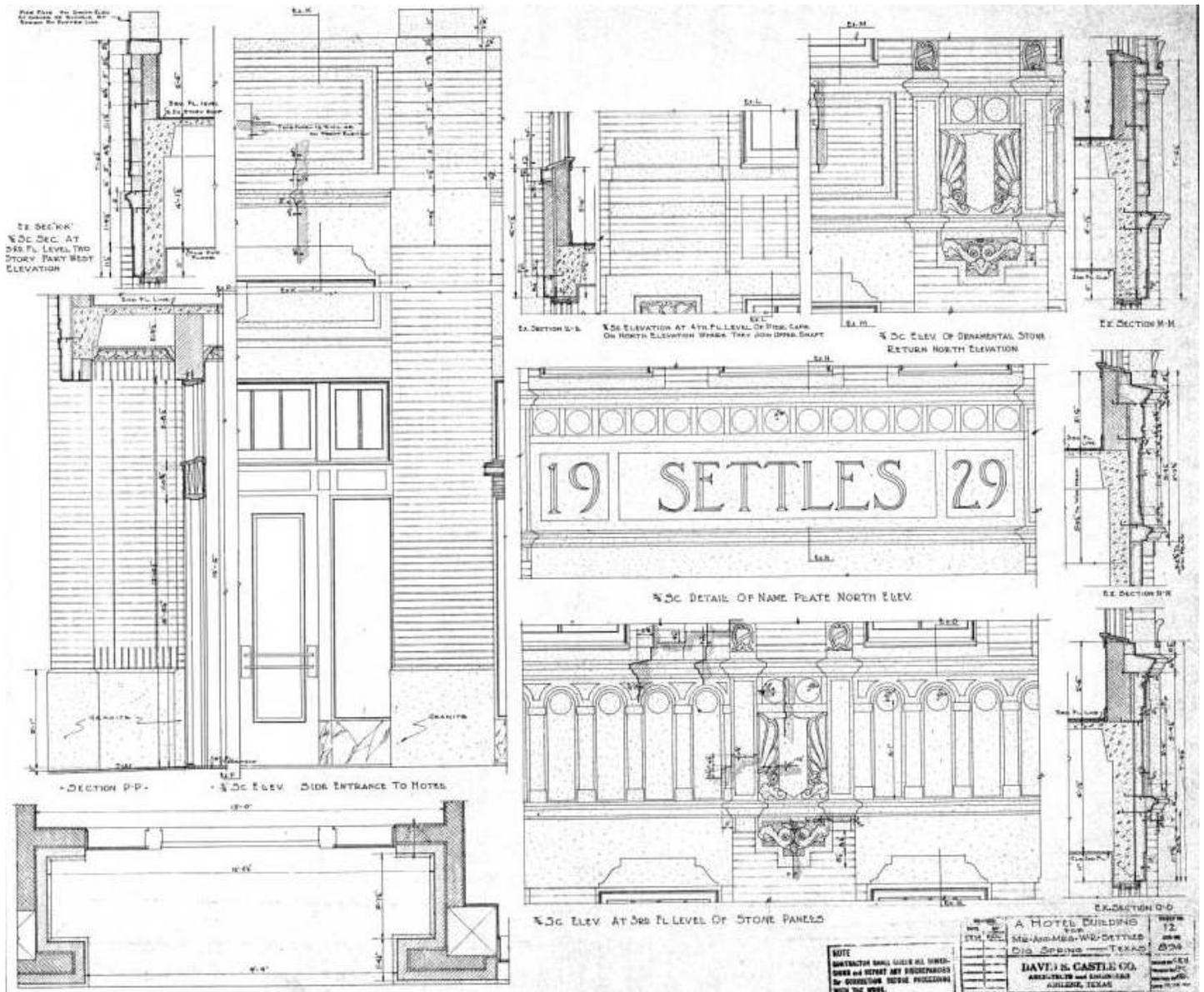
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FIGURE 10: Original detail drawings.





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Big Spring, Taylor County, Texas

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FIGURE 12: Historic 1930 photograph depicting the north and west elevations. Photo courtesy of the Heritage Museum, Big Spring, Texas.



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Big Spring, Taylor County, Texas

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FIGURE 13: Another 1930 view of the north and west elevations. Photo courtesy of the Heritage Museum, Big Spring, Texas.



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Settles Hotel  
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FIGURE 14: The Settles Hotel dominates the Big Spring skyline in this 1950s aerial photograph. Photo courtesy of the Heritage Museum, Big Spring, Texas.



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FIGURE 15: Banquet Room in the Settles Hotel, circa 1950. Photo courtesy of the Heritage Museum, Big Spring, Texas.



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FIGURE 16: The grand lobby staircase as it appeared around the time of the hotel's opening in 1930. Camera is facing south. Photo courtesy of the Heritage Museum, Big Spring, Texas.



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FIGURE 17: A 1930 view of the mezzanine level. Camera is facing north. Photo courtesy of the Heritage Museum, Big Spring, Texas.



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Big Spring, Howard County, Texas

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## PHOTOGRAPH LOG

All photographs are credited as follows:

Name of Property:	Settles Hotel
City:	Big Spring
County:	Howard County
State:	Texas
Photographer:	Norman Alston, AIA
Date:	Multiple; see individual photo data below
Location of digital files:	Texas Historical Commission, Austin

Note: At the time of this nomination, a comprehensive rehabilitation project was actively underway. The following photos depict the property in various phases of construction. Therefore, some exterior photos show the building prior to the re-installation of the historic windows, while others show the building post-installation. All interior photos were taken on the same date.

TX\_Howard County\_Settles Hotel\_0001.tiff

View down Third Street with Municipal Auditorium in the foreground. Camera facing west.  
Photo taken 10/19/2011.

TX\_Howard County\_Settles Hotel\_0002.tiff

East elevation of the tower. Camera facing west.  
Photo taken 10/19/2011.

TX\_Howard County\_Settles Hotel\_0003.tiff

West (Runnels St.) elevation. Camera facing east.  
Photo taken 10/19/2011.

TX\_Howard County\_Settles Hotel\_0004.tiff

Front (3rd St.) elevation of lower 3 floors. Camera facing southeast.  
Photo taken 4/24/2007.

TX\_Howard County\_Settles Hotel\_0005.tiff

Front (3rd St.) elevation of tower. Camera facing southeast.  
Photo taken 4/24/2007.

TX\_Howard County\_Settles Hotel\_0006.tiff

West (Runnels St.) detail elevation of the tower. Camera facing east.  
Photo taken 11/10/2010.

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TX\_Howard County\_Settles Hotel\_0007.tiff

Cast stone and brick detailing at 3rd floor, south west corner. Camera facing northeast.  
Photo taken 11/10/2009.

TX\_Howard County\_Settles Hotel\_0008.tiff

Detail of cast stone medallion at 3rd floor, south west corner. Camera facing northwest.  
Photo taken 2/8/2009.

TX\_Howard County\_Settles Hotel\_0009.tiff

Entrance at north (3rd St.). Camera facing south.  
Photo taken 7/7/2009.

TX\_Howard County\_Settles Hotel\_0010.tiff

Main Lobby and stairs, interior. Camera facing southeast.  
Photo taken 10/19/2011.

TX\_Howard County\_Settles Hotel\_0011.tiff

Decorative plaster frieze in Main Lobby, interior. Camera facing northeast.  
Photo taken 10/19/2011.

TX\_Howard County\_Settles Hotel\_0012.tiff

Banquet Room, interior. Camera facing south.  
Photo taken 10/19/2011.

TX\_Howard County\_Settles Hotel\_0013.tiff

Plaster ceiling medallion in Banquet Room, interior. Camera facing south.  
Photo taken 10/19/2011.