

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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DATE ENTERED

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

Magnolia Building 300097

AND/OR COMMON

Mobil Oil Corporation Building

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

Commerce at Akard (108 South Akard)

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Dallas

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

STATE

Texas

VICINITY OF  
CODE

COUNTY

Dallas

CODE

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

Mobil Oil Corporation

*City of Dallas*

*Herbert McLaughlin*

STREET & NUMBER

1201 Elm Street

*Edward J. ...  
222 ...*

CITY, TOWN

Dallas

VICINITY OF

*STATE  
Texas  
San Francisco, CA*

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Dallas County Court House

STREET & NUMBER

600 Commerce Street

CITY, TOWN

Dallas

STATE  
Texas

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

Drury Blake Alexander, Dallas Historic Landmark Survey

DATE

September 14, 1974

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

Alexander's "Landmark Priority Designation" assigns "First  
Priority" status to both the Magnolia Building and Pegasus.

CITY, TOWN

STATE

## 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED (slightly)	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Begun in 1921, the Magnolia Building (later called the Mobil Building) was completed in August, 1922. It is 29 stories in height, plus two basements. The building's frontage is 100 feet on Akard Street and 160 feet on Commerce Street. The exterior facing is tan-colored Indiana limestone and has a heavy, dentulated cornice.

The building's symmetrical massing has a two part scheme with a recessed central light well on the front (south) facade. Twin pavilions rising from the third story are joined by a flying segmental arch at the 17th story. The main body of the U-shape plan rises 24 stories from the street level. Additional attic stories and cupola tower add 5 stories, but are set back from the main mass of the building. The first three stories are solidly massed, the first two broken only by the fenestration of windows and doors of an inappropriately scaled 1950's facade alteration. The west, north, and east facades are unbroken in massing with the exception of a projecting pavilion (approximately 25' x 25') on the north portion of the east facade. These elevations of the building and attached pavilion also rise the full 24 stories with the upper attic stories recessed above.

Terminating each of the two front pavilions is a set back attic story with a hipped tile roof. A large finial rests at the apex of the front hip. A single round arch dormer projects from each of the front hips of the roofs and three like dormers are on the side slopes of the roofs. Symmetrically spaced single windows penetrate the walls of this first attic story. The hipped roofed attic story intersects a four story massing behind it (to the north) which is the uppermost portion of the main body of the building. A parapet wall with a set back mansard roof tops this portion of the massing. On the east side of the topmost stories a tower is attached and rises another full story above the rest of the structure. It is topped with a pyramidal roofed cupola that breaks and rises to a double tiered cupola, reaching the maximum height of the structure. The first level of the attic story at the rear (north) elevation is flanked by a broken pediment which intersects the recessed portion of the three higher attic stories. The 4/4 sash windows on the 27th story are detailed with classical pediments. Small 1/1 sash windows are on the 28th level.

### ORNAMENTATION-FENESTRATION:

The ornate third story details, the decorative string courses, arches, and highly sculptural cornices and statuary are indicative of an adapted version of Beaux-Arts classicism applied to a 20th century high rise. This ornamentation also indicates the degree of detail that was on the 1st two stories before the facade was altered more than 20 years ago. The intact third story has elaborate moldings above and below window openings. The 1/1 sash windows at this level are smaller in scale than the upper levels and have a transom above them. The remaining top portion of the monumental

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 2

three story entrance arch is coffered and has a tripartite window arrangement inset in the arch. A fluted scroll patterned elaboration is placed at the keystone position of the arch. The statuary supported by the arch is almost a full story high (a grouping of several figures flanking a central medallion with eagle atop). It rests between the two separately rising pavilions which are joined again at the 17th story by a flying segmental arch which supports a pier and beam columnated structure at level 18. Fluted pilasters with Corinthian capitals divide the windows into a ABA pattern (paired-single-paired) on the facade of each pavilion. The windows on the entire front facade follow this arrangement, 1/1 sash windows on the west and east and within the recessed light well are in groups of three, separated by the pilaster strips. Rear window (north elevation) are in a "BBA BB ABB" arrangement (single-single-paired-single etc.) The asymmetrical shaft at the north end of the east facade is detailed as is the rest of the building and has paired 1/1 sash windows. The vertical emphasis of the structure is broken at several points with string courses of various moldings, some discontinuous at the point of intersection with the pilaster elements, and some wrapping around the entire building. A dentiled string course above the 4th story is broken by the pilaster strips. Continuous bracketed string courses above the 8 and a decorative semi-circular motif course above the 9th has a continuous molding crossing the pilasters. The bracketed string course above the 10th story is broken by the pilasters. This pattern repeats on the 16th, 17th, and 18th stories and the first two continuous courses on the 23rd and 24th stories. In the frieze below the cornice are small window openings. The elaborately bracketed cornice terminates the main mass of the building.

The first two floors originally had Ionic pilasters that were 32 feet in height with two Ionic columns at the entrance. The building was "modernized" in the 1950s, and a granite facing was added to the first two floors, covering all limestone details that assuredly remain.

The walls are of heavy masonry construction, approximately 24 inches thick, and encase the steel frame.

The first floor, 7-elevator, circulation lobby remains unaltered with Italian Tavernelle marble walls, Italian Travertine marble floor borders, American walnut woodwork, and a ceiling of hand-painted, polychromatic, plaster of paris rosettes. The office halls have marble wainscoting.

A three-story wing on the Commerce Street side assures that no building will be closer than 20 feet to the upper floors of the Magnolia Building.

Form No 10-300a  
(Rev. 10-74)

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 3

The building is slightly over 400 feet in height,

On the building's roof is the famous double-horse sign, Pegasus,  
a landmark for the entire region.

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES Begun: February 1921  
 Completed: August 1922 BUILDER/ARCHITECT Alfred C. Bossom-N.Y., London  
 Lang & Witchell-Assoc. Arch., Dallas

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Since its completion in 1922, the Magnolia Building has been one of Dallas' most outstanding buildings. Designed by a well known British architect, it has architectural, economic, and industrial significance. It housed the Magnolia (later Mobil) Oil Company, served as an early headquarters for the oil industry, and became a symbol of the city of Dallas. Pegasus, the flying red horse on the building's roof has become a landmark almost as well known as the building itself. Drury Blake Alexander assigns the Magnolia Building, and Pegasus, "First Priority" status in the city.

In 1922 the city of Dallas had a population of over 160,000, making it the second largest city in the state of Texas. In later years, the city spread in all directions, but in the 1920s it was known as the skyscraper center of the Southwest. In 1922 it had 64 buildings from 6 to 29 stories in height, and there were two more scheduled for completion that year. One of these, the Magnolia Building, opened on August 14, 1922, and quickly became the outstanding landmark of the Dallas skyline.

Begun in 1921, the Magnolia Building was designed and built for the Magnolia Petroleum Company, producer of Socony and, later, Mobil petroleum products. The company itself, of course, was a pioneer in the nation's oil business. Starting as a series of smaller companies, it fed on the great Spindletop find in 1901, one of the greatest oil discoveries ever made. Located first in Corsicana, the company soon moved to Dallas, symbolizing the city's burgeoning importance in the oil industry.

(See attached for continuation)

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 2

When completed, the Magnolia Building, publicized as one of the most attractive office buildings in the country, also reflected that growing connection between Dallas and oil.

In 1922, the building was the sixteenth tallest building in the United States, and most of its rivals were located in one city, New York City. Outside of New York City, only three buildings in the country were taller: the City Hall, in Philadelphia; the Travelers' Insurance Building, in Hartford, Connecticut; and the L.C. Smith Building, in Seattle, Washington.

As its architect proudly pointed out, the Magnolia Building was taller than any building in Europe. It remained Dallas' highest structure for almost twenty years. From the top, visitors and tenants could view a broad panorama of the city, the Trinity River bottoms, the surrounding residential areas, the Texas flatlands, and even (with binoculars, on a clear day) the skyline of Fort Worth. Seen from the countryside, the building dominated everything around it. It was, as a reporter said on opening day, "like a great peg driven into the ground holding Dallas in its place from no matter which direction the town is approached."

Renaissance revival in design, it cost \$4,000,000 to build. It included innovative features that today are still unsurpassed. The heavy masonry construction provides excellent resistance to fire. The walls are approximately 24 inches thick, consisting of limestone, brick, plastic plaster, a 3-inch air space and a 4-inch hollow brick wall, encasing the steel frame. A recent renovation study found that the building would withstand any foreseeable fire without serious damage to its structural integrity.

The roof of the building is one of the early uses of green tile over concrete.

The building has its own well, a rarity in Dallas and the region.

It is heated by oil, but the designer also installed a system of coal tunnels and coal storage areas in case the oil

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8

PAGE 3

gave out. The heaters for the building are also capable of conversion into coal-burners.

In an era that doted on sizes and statistics, the new owners pointed proudly to the building's thousands of electric lights, the electric conduit that would stretch from Dallas to Fort Worth, the electric wiring that would stretch from Dallas to Austin, the 1700 telephones, the seven high-speed elevators, the 500 offices, and so on. To maintain the building's purity, the Magnolia Company forbade signs or displays in the windows.

Sir Alfred Charles Bossom, the building's designer, was an internationally-known architect, author, critic, and statesman. A baron in the British nobility, he served as a Conservative member of Parliament until retirement in 1959.

Born in 1881, Bossom trained at St. Thomas School and the Architectural School of the Royal Academy of the Arts. He came to the United States in 1903, already an architect of some reputation, and established offices in New York City, at 680 Fifth Avenue. In a long and successful career, he designed dozens of major buildings across the country, focusing particularly on skyscrapers, a design feature he felt was not suitable for his native England. As his son put it after his death: "He said the light was not right, the temperament of the people was not right and he didn't want to dot up the historical buildings."

In the United States conditions were clearly "right". After arrival, Bossom designed a number of skyscrapers, including the Magnolia Building; the Seaboard National Bank, in New York City; the First National Bank, in Jersey City, New Jersey; the American Exchange National Bank, in Dallas; and the Liberty Bank, in Buffalo, New York. He also designed housing for workers at United States Steel, in Pittsburgh, in 1904; headed the restoration planning at Ft. Ticonderoga, in 1908; planned industrial villages for American munitions plants during World War I; and became supervising architect for the United States Shipping Board, in 1917-1918. In England, he introduced prefabricated housing shortly before World War II.

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 4

Bossom's designs often followed European patterns, especially Spanish and Italian models. He liked columns and ornate designs. He was particularly proud of the Magnolia Building, which he designed with the intent to establish Dallas as the center of the oil industry in the Southwest. When finished, he exclaimed in his exuberant style: "This is the tallest structure ever built south of Washington, D.C., including the Aztecs!"

Toward the end of his career, Bossom was elected chairman of the Royal Society of the Arts (1957-1959).

He also established the Alfred C. Bossom Traveling Scholarship, awarded annually by the Royal Institute of British Architects for architectural study in the United States; and the Bossom Lectures and Scholarship, for investigating new processes in building. The latter indicated his interest in modern technological processes, which he often tried to combine with classical forms. In 1952 Bossom received an honorary degree from the University of Pittsburgh. He published widely, including: Building to the Skies; An Architectural Pilgrimage in Old Mexico; A Bird's Eye View of Europe; Some Reminiscences; and numerous articles on architectural and political subjects.

He died in 1965, at age 83.

The Magnolia Building has remained Dallas' prime landmark until the present day. In June 1934, the Magnolia Oil Company placed a 40-foot long by 30-foot high, red neon sign on top of the building, for the meeting of the American Petroleum Institute Convention in Dallas. (Wags immediately said Dallas was no longer a one-horse town.) The double-horse sign was patterned after Pegasus, the flying stallion of classical mythology. Originally white, Pegasus became red as the emblem of Socony gasoline stations in the 1930s. The sign stood on a 50-foot tower, revolved at  $1\frac{1}{3}$  times a minute, and contained 1,162 feet of neon tubing.

For many years "The Flying Red Horse" remained Mobil Oil's chief advertising vehicle. For seven years, the sign was Dallas' tallest point, and for decades thereafter it remained

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8

PAGE 5

it's most famous landmark. By day, the sign, bright red against the blue Texas sky, was the most impressive feature of the Dallas skyline. By night, its lights were visible for 75 miles around the city. Pilots could see the horse as far away as Hillsboro, and some claimed to see it as far away as Waco.

In 1973, the lights at last were turned off, to conserve energy.

In March 1976, the Dallas Historic Landmark Commission gave first priority status to the Magnolia Building and "The Flying Red Horse."

For than a half-century, the Magnolia Building and its emblem have been the outstanding architectural landmarks of the city of Dallas.

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

See attached list

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 100,13 ft, x 159,11 ft,

UTM REFERENCES

A	1, 4	7 0 6 1 6 0	3 6 2 8 8 4 0	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

NE corner at Akard and Commerce Street

Akard Frontage = 100,13'

Commerce Frontage = 159,11'

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

# 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Joe Williams, Director      Danny Hardy, Architectural Historian

ORGANIZATION

The Office of National Register Programs, Texas Historical Commission

DATE

STREET & NUMBER

P. O. Box 12276, Capitol Station

TELEPHONE

(512) 475-3094

CITY OR TOWN

Austin

STATE

Texas

# 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

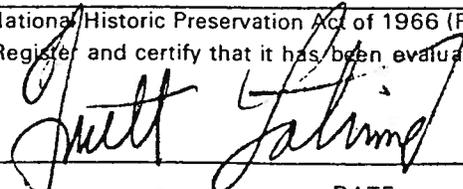
NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE



TITLE

DATE

12-9-77

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

## 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

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6. Dallas, 1 (Jan., 1922), 3.  
Dallas, 1 (Aug., 1922), 7.
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Oct. 7, 1964  
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Oct. 3, 1976.

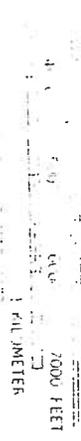
9. Ellis A. Davis and Edwin H. Grobe, eds., The Encyclopedia of Texas, (Dallas, n.d.).
10. Illustrated London News, 231, (July 20. 1957), 119.
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12. Who's Who in America, 4 (1961-1968), 104.

ALL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS  
 COLORADO 80225, OR RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092  
 IF SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

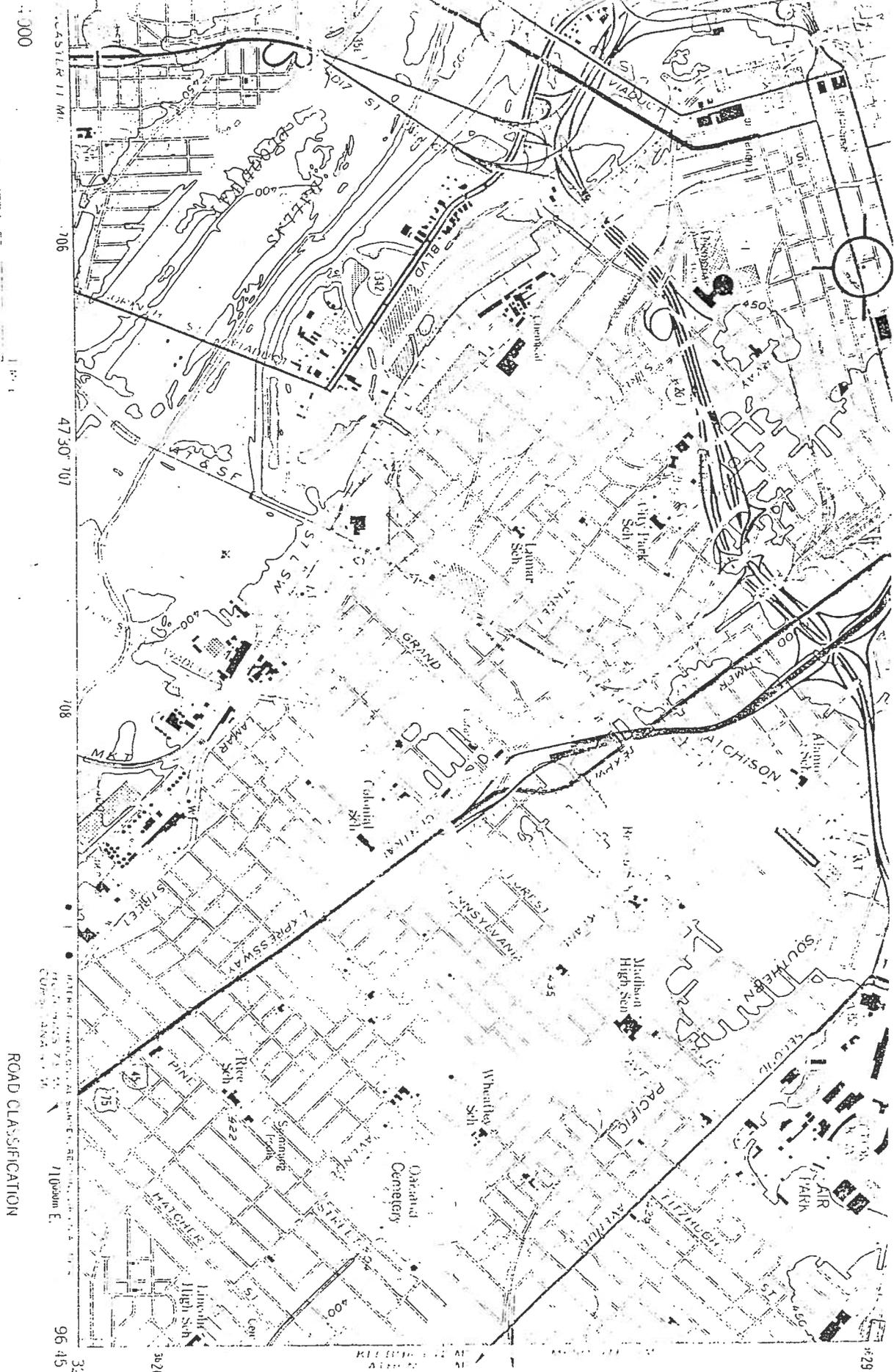
2003-001

1958  
 PHOTOREVISED 1968 AND 1973

SCALE  
 1:10,000



ROAD CLASSIFICATION  
 Heavy duty ———  
 Medium-duty ———  
 Interstate Route ———  
 Light duty ———  
 Unimproved dirt ———  
 U.S. Route ———  
 State Route ———



Magnolia (Mobil) Building  
 Dallas, Dallas County, Texas

DALLAS, TEX.

1:10,000  
 1:32,450 - W9645 / 75

PHOTOCHINA  
 1:10,000