

# Ford

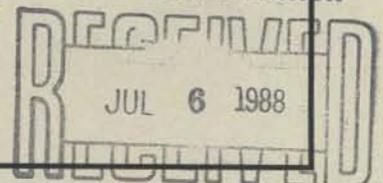
Historic Resources Assessment  
of the  
Old Ford Plant  
Alexandria, Virginia

2137

John Cullinane Associates

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P & CD-ADMINISTRATION





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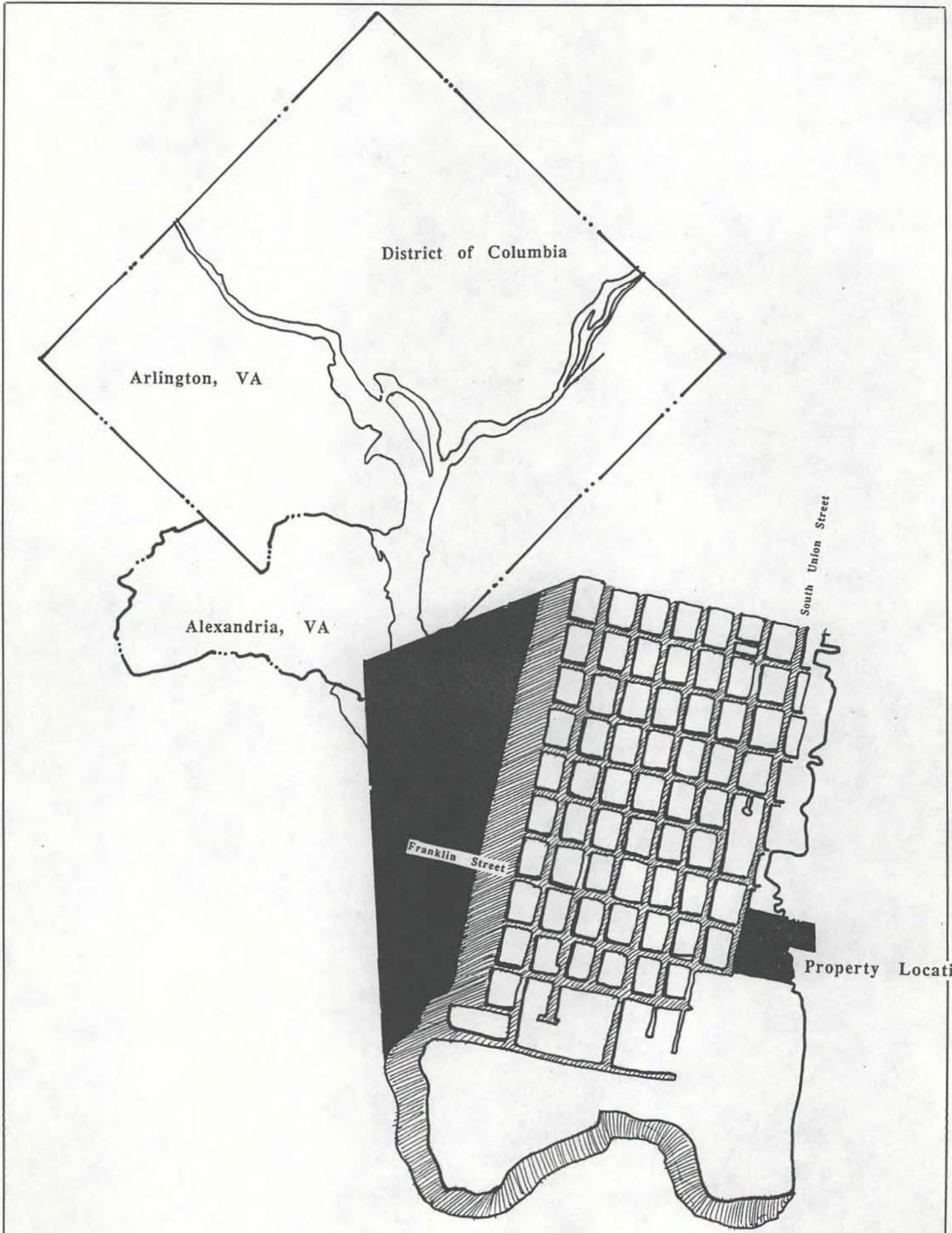
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## Introduction

This is a report on the assessment and evaluation of the architectural and historic significance of the "Old Ford Plant" in Alexandria, Virginia, undertaken by the architectural firm of John Cullinane Associates of Washington, DC. The object of this assessment was to determine what structures presently on the site of the Old Ford Plant contribute to the significance of the Plant and the Old and Historic Alexandria District, a National Historic Landmark. In addition, our study sought to define what elements of the Old Ford Plant structure define the qualities that make that building eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places and to recommend actions to mitigate any effects development of the site may have on that historic resource.

The Old Ford Plant site, which is located on South Union Street at the foot of Franklin Street, comprises approximately 9.5 acres of land, 7.7 acres of which are fast lands and 1.8 acres are submerged. The site currently contains ten structures, all of which were built either by the Ford Motor Company (1932-1942) or the United States Government (1942-1984).

This assessment of the property was limited to 20th century, above-ground structures. A preliminary investigation of below-grade archeological resources was undertaken by John Milner Associates in 1986 and further archeological investigations are being done by Engineer Science, Inc. of Washington, DC. Our work included the identification of all resources located on the site, an evaluation of the significance of the resources as they relate to the Old Ford Plant and to the National Historic Landmark district, the identification of the components of the Old Ford Plant that define its significance, and recommendations for mitigation. In addition, the report contains descriptions of the site and of the modifications made during its use by the United States Government.



District of Columbia

Arlington, VA

Alexandria, VA

South Union Street

Franklin Street

Property Location

## Methodology

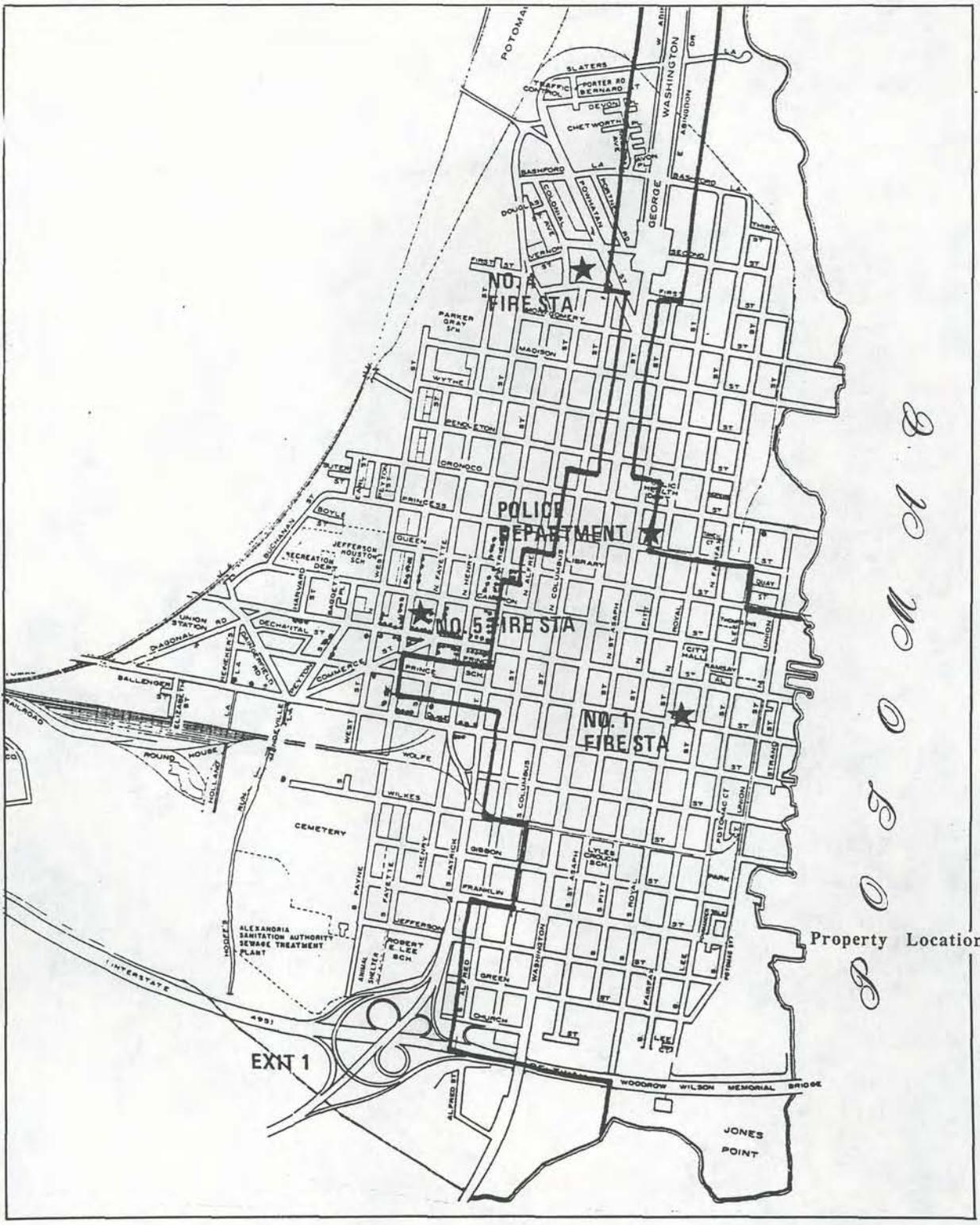
In undertaking the assessment of historic resources located on the Old Ford Plant site, our first activity was to establish the chronology of development of the site; when the site was acquired by the Ford Motor Company, and when it was under control of the United States Government for use by the Department of the Navy.

Each structure that was related to the development and operations of the Ford assembly plant was identified, along with its significant components. All buildings and additions that occurred as part of the Department of Navy operations were also identified, however, we were unable to establish the exact dates of construction of some of the smaller structures.

A number of site visits were conducted by our staff to assess and evaluate the buildings. Investigations were conducted at local archives, including the Alexandria Archeology Office of Historic Alexandria, the City of Alexandria's Department of Planning and Community Development and the Compliance Section of the Building Department, the Lloyd House and the Department of the Navy Planning Office and History Division. A variety of published and unpublished documents were consulted, as well as tax records and maps.

In our evaluation of the significance of structures located on the site and the components of the Old Ford Plant, we utilized the criteria established by the Department of the Interior, National Park Service, in Federal regulation 36 CFR Part 60 and additional criteria published in 36 CFR Part 67; May 23, 1988.

In order to evaluate the resource it was essential to understand the development and evolution of the site, the significance of the Plant when it was originally constructed, the purpose and importance of the additions to the Plant and the site, and the relationship of the Plant to the Old and Historic Alexandria (National Historic Landmark) District. Our evaluations and findings are included in the individual sections of this report.



S O J O M A B

Old and Historic Alexandria District  
 National Historic Landmark Boundaries

Property Location

## Site Development & History

The Old Ford Plant site is located at the corner of Franklin and South Union Streets (Block 139) in Alexandria, Virginia, in the southeast corner of Old and Historic Alexandria District. The site is approximately 9.5 acres of land; 7.7 acres of which is fast land, with the remaining 1.8 acres submerged. Irregular in shape, the site measures 455 feet along its western boundary, Union Street; 700 feet along its northern edge; approximately 625 feet on its eastern boundary along the Potomac River; and, 700 feet as it abuts Jones Point Park.

Prior to the Ford Motor Company's acquisition of the site in 1932, the property was used for a variety of commercial purposes. (A detailed description of those uses and an identification and evaluation of archeological resources on the site can be found in "Archaeological Assessment of the Ford Plant Site", by Alexandria Archaeology, (undated), "A Phase I Archaeological Survey of the Old Ford Plant Property" by John Milner Associates, Inc. 1986, and phase II investigations currently being undertaken by Engineering Sciences Inc, Washington, DC). The Ford Motor Company used the site from 1932 to 1942, at which time the property was taken over by the United States government for use by the Department of the Navy.

At the time that the Ford Motor Company purchased the property there were a number of structures on the site but, available records indicate that the site was cleared of all improvements prior to the Ford Motor Company initiating construction of their automobile service building. Once the site was cleared the Company constructed the building that is currently known as the "Old Ford Plant" as an automobile service plant and distribution facility. This building was built on a pier structure that extended into the Potomac River, allowing ships to dock directly adjacent to the structure. In addition, the Company installed underground fuel storage tanks and a water tower to support their plant activities. (Included in this report in an illustration of a 1937

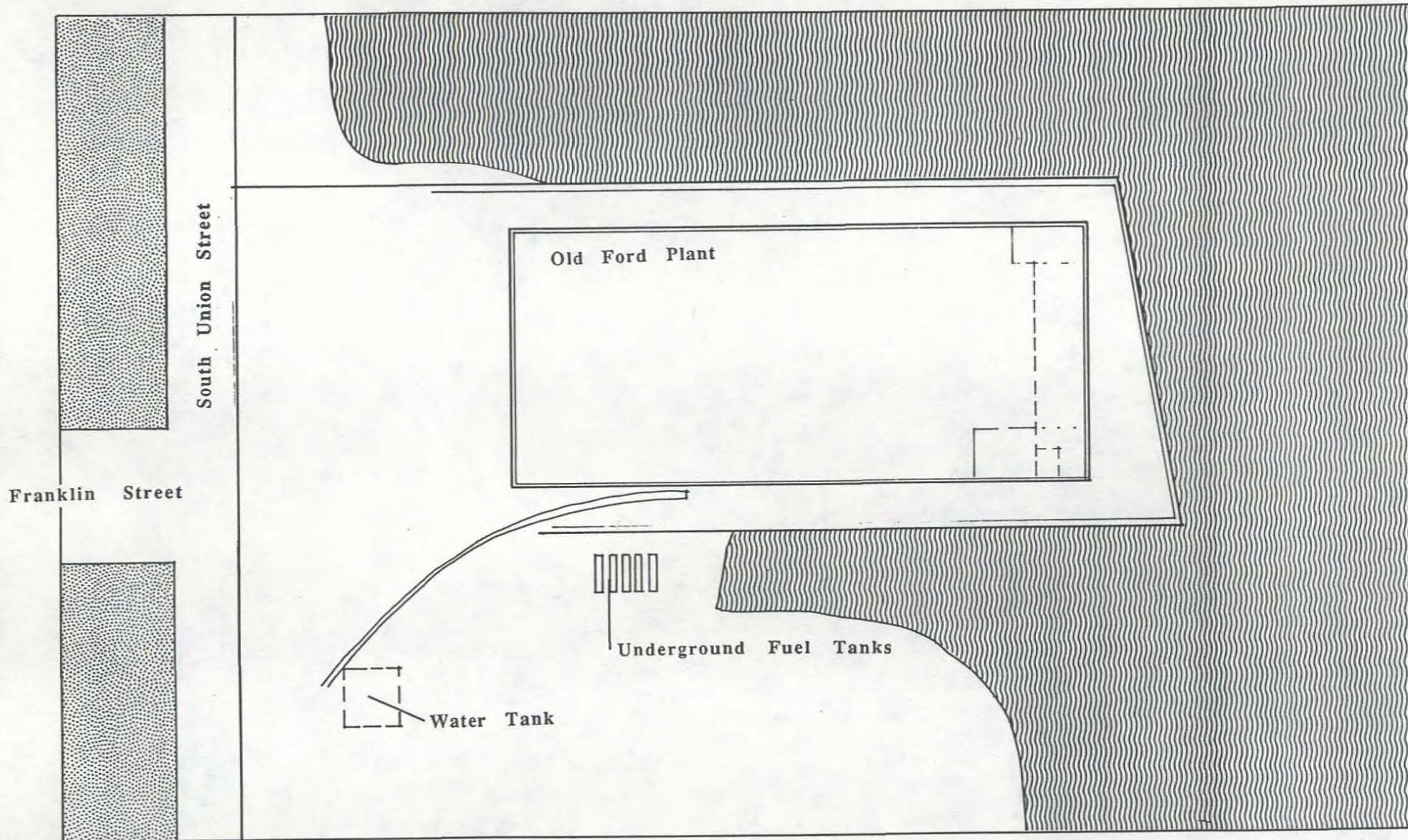


Illustration of a 1937 Sanborn Map

Sanborn Map showing the Ford Motor Company's improvements to the site).

In 1942, ten years after the Ford Motor Company acquired and developed the site, the United States government obtained the property and buildings for use in the war effort. The Department of the Navy adapted the assembly building for use as an annex to its Piney Point, Maryland gun factory.

Once the United States government took control of the property the City of Alexandria ceased keeping records of development on the site. As a higher governmental authority, the Federal government was not obligated to seek zoning approvals or building permits, thus there are no records in City archives which provide information on the Navy's activities on the property. Also, the Department of the Navy itself appears to have kept few records of its improvements to the Old Ford Plant.

From the information we have been able to obtain, and through evaluations done at the site, it appears that the Department of the Navy constructed a number of buildings and structures on the site during its use of the property. The first major addition was undertaken in 1943 and was a new storage building extending from the west facade of the Old Ford Plant building toward Union Street. This structure is a 200' x 200', two story tall monolithic concrete frame building. Apparently, this building was used primarily for storage and administrative support of the activities carried out in the Plant. The construction of this building obliterated the west facade of the Plant and blocked the view of the earlier building from Union Street. (See the illustration of a 1950 Sanborn Map included in this report).

The Navy's second major addition to the site was a 30' x 360' brick building constructed in the early 1950s along the north facade of the Plant. This building was known as the "machinist shop" and was built on the original Old Ford Plant pier. As with the 1943 building, this constructed obliterated the facade of the existing building and partially blocked views of the building from north of the Plant. An illustration of a

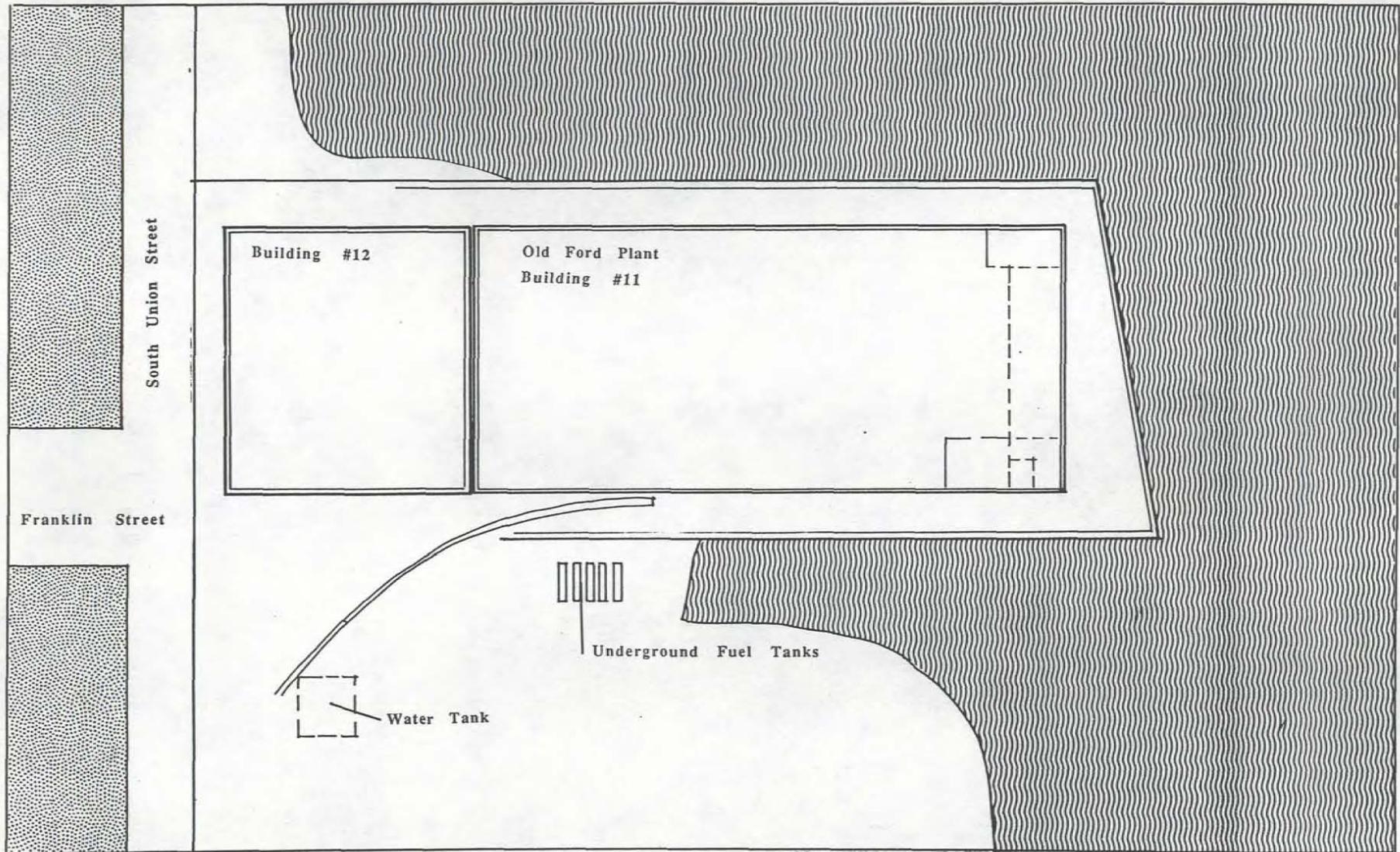
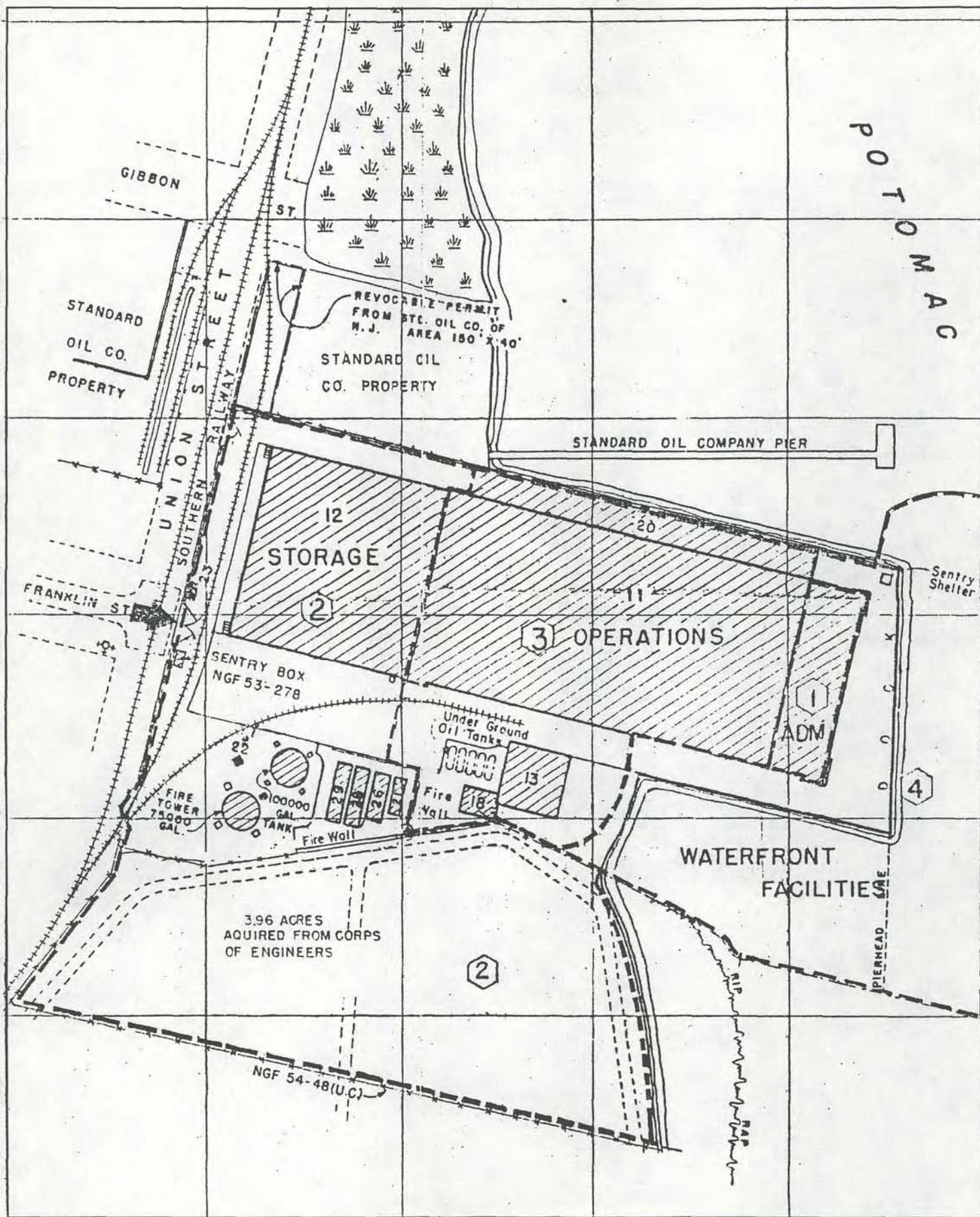


Illustration of a 1950 Sanborn Map



1954 Department of the Navy Site Plan

1985 Sanborn Map shows this addition and other improvement to the site. This Sanborn Map was updated from earlier maps and, in its original form (available for viewing at the City of Alexandria's office of Code Enforcement), shows that no major improvements were made to the site after construction of the machinist shop. Accordingly, it appears that a majority of the remaining structures on the site, buildings 18, 21, 26, 28, 29, and a 100 square foot shed, were constructed sometime around 1953-54.

The Ford Motor Company and the Department of the Navy's construction activities were generally restricted to the north half of the property. There are no records of any major development occurring on the south half of the site.

On April 2, 1969, the Keeper of the National Register of Historic Places, National Park Service, Department of the Interior, entered the "Old and Historic Alexandria District" onto the National Register. The Alexandria historic district was noted for its national significance in architecture and history and was designated a National Historic Landmark. The boundaries of that district are irregular, including all of what is commonly known as Old Town Alexandria, and extends south to the Capital Beltway, incorporating Jones Point Park. The Old Ford Plant site, known in 1969 as a "U.S. Naval Reservation", is within the boundaries of the designated National Historic Landmark district.

There have been amendments and additions to the original 1969 National Register nomination of the Old and Historic Alexandria District and, in a 1984 amendment, the Old Ford Plant building, as designed by Albert Kahn and constructed in 1932, was noted as being a contributing element of the district. (A copy of the original 1969 nomination form and the 1984 amendment is included in this report).

Recent discussions with the office of the Virginia State Historic Preservation Officer confirmed that of all of the structures currently located on the Old Ford Plant site, only the original Albert Kahn building is

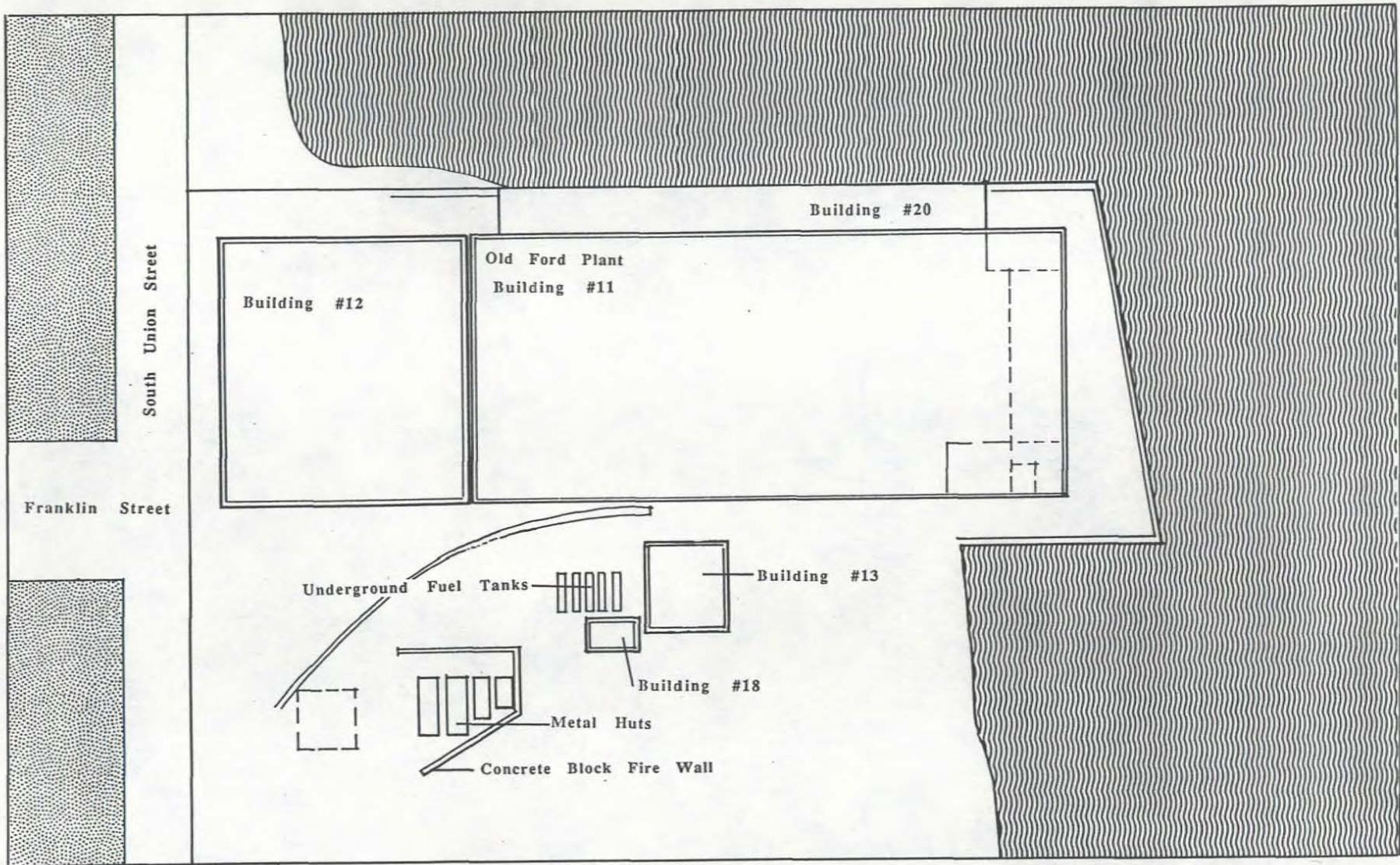


Illustration of a 1985 Sanborn Map  
(up-dated from 1969)

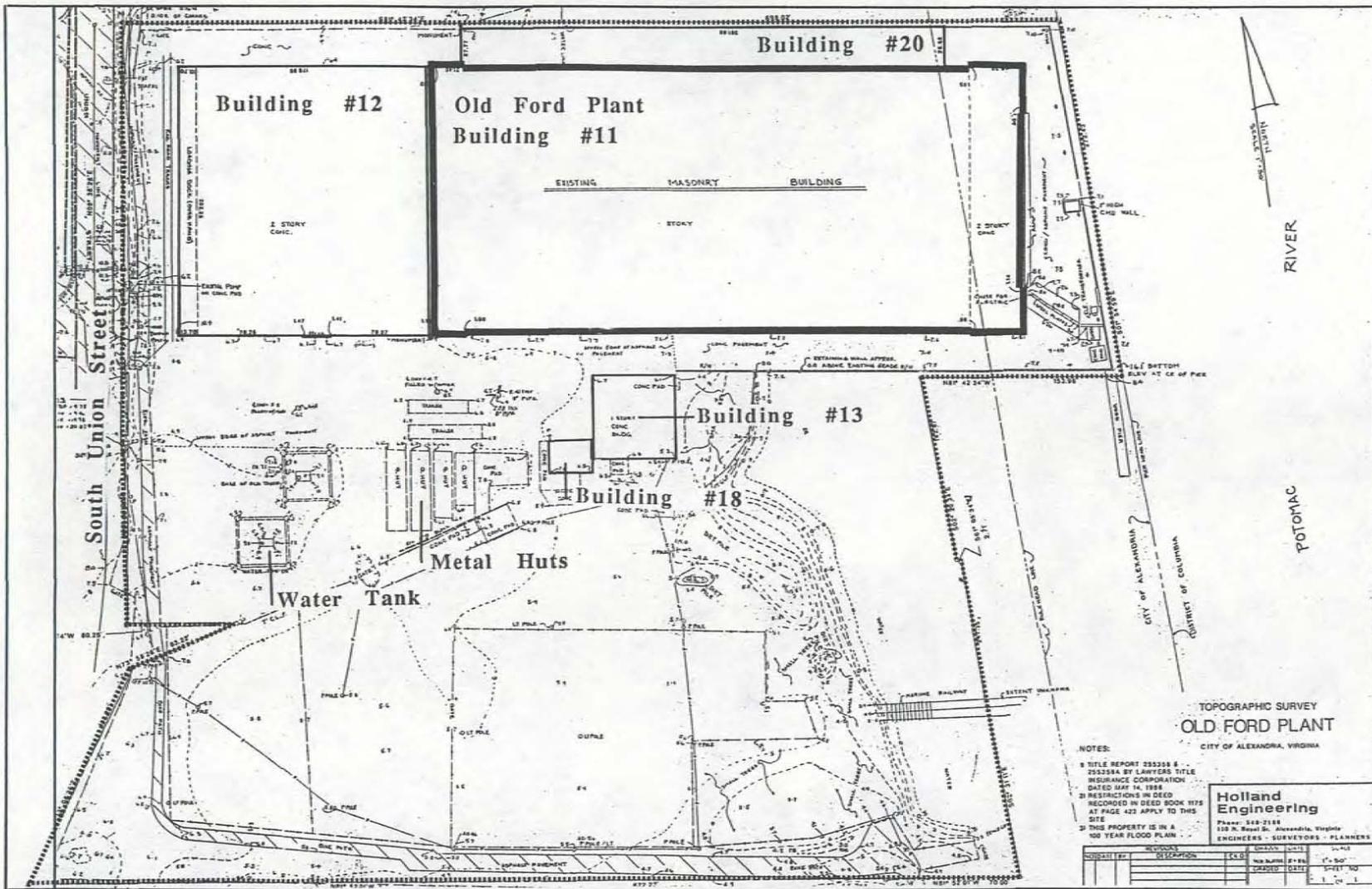
considered as contributing to the qualities that make the Old and Historic Alexandria District eligible for inclusion in the National Register. Although the design of the Department of the Navy's storage building, constructed in 1943, and the machinist shop (ca. 1954) are consistent with the architectural style of their time, the buildings do not represent any of the qualities necessary to be considered eligible for the National Register. A detailed discussion of the individual buildings located on the site is included in the building evaluation portion of this report.

In chronological order, the site appears to have been developed as follows:

- 1931: Acquisition of the site by the Ford Motor Company
- 1932: Construction of the Albert Kahn designed:  
Pier  
Service Building  
Water Tower  
Underground Fuel Tanks
- 1942: Acquisition of the site by the United States government for use by the Department of the Navy
- 1943: Conversion of the Service Building into an annex to the Piney Point, Maryland gun factory
- 1943: Construction of:  
Storage Building (Bldg #12)  
Building #13  
100,000 gallon water tank
- 1953-54: Construction of:  
Building #18  
Machine Shop (Building #20)  
Storage Huts #21, 26, 28 & 29  
Concrete Block Fire Wall

In 1960 the Department of the Navy turned the property over to the General Services Administration, after which the major buildings on the site were used as warehouse

and service facilities. In 1984 GSA held a public auction to sell the property for private development. In fulfillment of their responsibilities under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act, GSA required that some elements of the property be preserved and that the historic 1932 Albert Kahn building be rehabilitated as part of any new development on the site.



TOPOGRAPHIC SURVEY  
**OLD FORD PLANT**  
 CITY OF ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA

- NOTES:
1. TITLE REPORT 252358 E - 252358A BY LAWYERS TITLE INSURANCE CORPORATION DATED MAY 14, 1988
  2. RESTRICTIONS IN DEED RECORDED IN DEED BOOK 1175 AT PAGE 422 APPLY TO THIS SITE
  3. THIS PROPERTY IS IN A 100 YEAR FLOOD PLAIN

**Holland Engineering**  
 Phone: 543-2188  
 110 N. West St., Alexandria, Virginia  
 ENGINEERS - SURVEYORS - PLANNERS

NO.	DESCRIPTION	DATE	BY	SCALE

## Building Evaluation

There are a number of buildings and structures located on the Old Ford Plant site, ranging from a water tower, original to the Ford Motor Company development of the property, to post 1950s metal sheds constructed by the Department of the Navy. This portion of the report will identify and evaluate each of those buildings, which vary greatly in historic and architectural significance.

Of the original Ford Motor Company's development on the site, all three of the components of the facility remain: the water tower, the underground fuel tanks and the main service building itself. In addition, based on the evidence we have been able to obtain, it appears that a majority of the Department of the Navy's additions to the site remain.

Our evaluation of the architectural and historic significance of the structures located on the site assessed the buildings individually and as components of the Old Ford Plant complex, and as contributing elements of the Old and Historic Alexandria District; a National Historic Landmark (NHL).

In 1984 the original nomination form for the Old and Historic Alexandria District was amended by the Keeper of the National Register of Historic Places, Department of the Interior, to include a number of additional structures located within the NHL boundaries. The Old Ford Plant was one of those structures. This action was taken with the recommendation of the Virginia State Historic Preservation and the Virginia Landmarks Review Board.

The form was amended in three different areas; the general resource description, the specific property description and the resource significance. All three of the amendments are, to one degree or another, inaccurate in their description of the Old Ford Plant, but all focus on the importance of the central 1932 Albert Kahn designed building.

In the general resource description the nomination amendment states:

The district also encompasses several factory buildings along Alexandria's formerly active waterfront. The most notable of these structures is the former Ford Plant, designed by Albert Kahn. The major part of this structure is a yellow glazed brick, saw-tooth roofed shed designed in an Art Deco style. Appended to this structure are three concrete additions designed in a rigid, yet sympathetic style.

Based on this description, it appears that the author is referring to the automobile service portion of the Old Ford Plant as the "shed" and to the administration/showroom portion of the historic building as one of the "three concrete additions"; the other two being the Department of the Navy's 1943 storage building to the west of the original structure and their ca. 1954 machine shop at the building's north facade.

In the specific property description the nomination amendment reads as follows:

(Old Ford Plant): concrete; 2 stories; flat roof; 8 bays on main building, 20 bays on annex. Modern. 1920s. Architect: Albert Kahn. The Old Ford Plant is a unique structure in Virginia for it is the only structure in the state designed by the famous factory architect Albert Kahn. The main 8-bay, concrete structure has a 3-story tower at its center. It is adjoined by a 20-plus-bay, concrete structure. All windows are of industrial sash.

In this description, it appears that the writer has mistaken the Department of the Navy's 1943 storage building on the west side of the original structure as the Albert Kahn building, and the historic plant as an "annex" to the Navy construction. The photograph appended to the nomination amendment as part of this description, was of the 1943 addition and did not show any portion of the Albert Kahn plant.

Under the amendment to the significance portion of the nomination form, the following statement was included:

In part due to its excellent rail connections to both north and south, Alexandria became an important industrial and commercial center in Northern Virginia. In fact, the Potomac yards were the largest classification railway yards in the country at the turn of the century. As a result of this transportation system, Alexandria developed a large industrial center along its waterfront adjacent to the railway. The list of industrial enterprises in Alexandria during the early 20th century is rather lengthy, including large lumber yards, leather and shoe factories, coal wharves, ice factories, a brewery, glass works, a tile manufactory, and a gas works. This combination of industrial vitality and excellent transportation facilities led Henry Ford to build a plant along the Alexandria waterfront. Designed by Albert Kahn and completed in 1932, the structure incorporates a saw-tooth roof, and Art Deco facade with a remarkable degree of structural clarity, making it stand today as the most important example of early modern architecture in Alexandria.

Although the term "saw-tooth roof" is not a correct description of the building's roof system, this is the most accurate description of the Old Ford Plant included in the nomination amendment and the one that represents the significant element of the site.

The Old Ford Plant (Building #11)

As noted in the amended National Register form, "...the Old Ford Plant is an example of a master architect, Albert Kahn...", qualifying it for designation as a contributing element of the NHL district.

To understand the significance of this building to Alexandria, and the Commonwealth of Virginia, it is essential to understand the importance of Albert Kahn (1869-1942) as an architect during the early part of the 20th century. Kahn was, undoubtedly, the pre-eminent institutional and industrial architect of the period. His commissions included major universities and corporations in the United States and extensive industrial complexes in other countries. The revolution Kahn started in the design of industrial buildings, especially assembly plants, was based on the development of a light steel-frame truss roof that maximized the allowable clear span within the building and the introduction of natural light and ventilation into the workspace. Up to this period manufacturing plants consisted mostly of small detached components or ill lighted factories whose floor area was interrupted with numerous columns. To counter this situation, Kahn developed the use of butterfly trusses which utilized clerestory windows to provide light and ventilation throughout the plant. From the development of his first building for Henry Ford in 1908 to his death in 1942, Kahn designed and constructed hundreds of similar industrial facilities throughout the United States.

The structure erected on the Alexandria waterfront in 1932 was, according to original documents received from Albert Kahn's office, designed as an automobile service building, not a full fledged assembly plant. However, the structure is typical of Albert Kahn's work at the time. This building was designed in the "International Style", which dominated contemporary architecture in America between World War I and the beginning of World War II. A majority of Kahn's work followed the design detailing common with that style, which can be seen in the brickwork and proportions of the Old Ford Plant.

The Old Ford Plant has two components, the service building itself, which is a one-story steel frame structure, 200 feet wide x 400 feet long x 24 feet tall, and a two-story administration wing attached to the east side of the service building. This structure is 204 feet wide x 44 feet long x 38 feet tall.

The Plant was constructed on a concrete pier which, in turn, was built on concrete encased wood pilings driven into the Potomac River bottom. Accordingly, the Plant does not have a finished first floor, but utilized the top of the pier. The walls and roof of the Plant are supported by a light steel frame consisting of "H" columns placed 40 feet on center in both directions, and butterfly trusses running north and south on 40 foot centers. The exterior wall construction of the Plant is composed of a combination of stone, brick and steel window wall. Albert Kahn utilized cut stone for a building base, simulating a water table around the building; for window sills and as a parapet cap. On the service building itself, a buff colored brick was used as an apron wall. Extending three feet above the stone base, this wall was laid in a combination of running and vertical bond, creating a masonry texture as one approaches the building that is not evident at a distance. Above the brick apron wall, Kahn installed a steel frame curtain wall. This wall is approximately 15 feet high and extends from column to column and up to a brick soldier course which runs complete around the building.

The interior of the service building is visually complex due to the myriad of structural members, crane supports, monorails, electrical conduit and other mechanical systems. The "structural clarity" of this building that was noted in the National Register description refers to the butterfly truss roof system, which is visible through the tangle of mostly added mechanical systems. Although portions of the original clerestory windows have been partially covered over the years, it is still possible to experience some of the quality of light provided in the original Plant.

With the Department of the Navy's construction of building #12 in 1943, the west wall of the Plant was significantly changed. In placing the new storage structure next to the original Plant, the Navy removed all of the steel curtain wall along the west side of the Plant and replaced it with structural clay tile. In addition, the new two-story tall monolithic concrete

structure virtually covered what was the primary public view of the Plant.

Around 1954 the Navy constructed building #20 along the north wall of original Albert Kahn structure, removing a majority of the steel curtain wall and blocking up original openings in the process. This action significantly changed the public view of the building from the north waterfront.

The administration wing of the Old Ford Plant is a two-story tall element facing the Potomac River. Similar to the operations portion of the Plant, this structure has a steel frame structural system with brick infill and steel curtain walls. The wing served as the primary (public) entrance into the Plant, a showroom, and offices for administrative staff. The entrance to the building was through a single door located at the southeast corner of the wing into a wood paneled lobby which led to the second floor offices. A majority of the offices in the wing were enclosed with borrowed light partitions lining a double-loaded corridor and decorated with dark wood paneling. Although a majority of the original interior woodwork remains, a suspended acoustic ceiling was added throughout the second floor.

The northeast corner of the wing contained the original boiler room and chimney for the Plant. The east facade of this portion of the facility has the richest detailing and brickwork in the complex and is the best representation of Albert Kahn's design work.

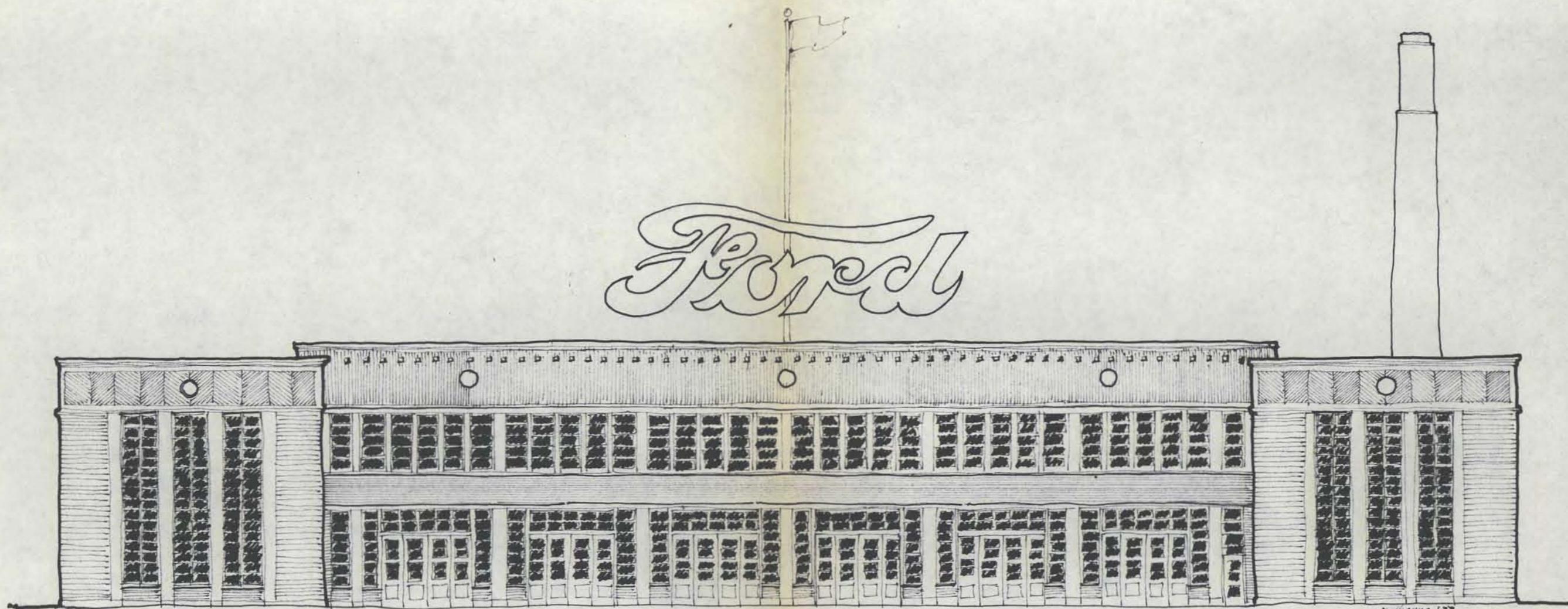
#### Significant Elements of the Old Ford Plant

Although there have been significant changes to the original Old Ford Plant building, its relationship to a master architect, Albert Kahn, and its remaining integrity, make it eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places as a contributing element of the Old and Historic Alexandria District.

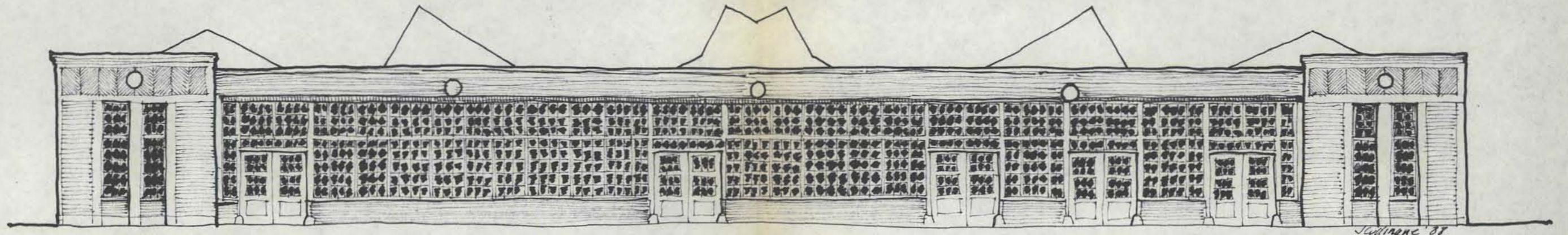
Through our evaluation and assessment we were able to identify a number of character defining elements remaining in the Old Ford Plant that should, if feasible, be retained:

- o the south and east facades of the building, along with their stone and brick detailing and steel curtain wall;
- o the original boiler chimney;
- o the original butterfly trusses;
- o the original aluminum and marble lobby stair, located in the east wing of the Plant; and,
- o the industrial character of the original structure.

In addition, we recommend that, to the extent possible, the west (public) facade of the original building be recovered and restored.

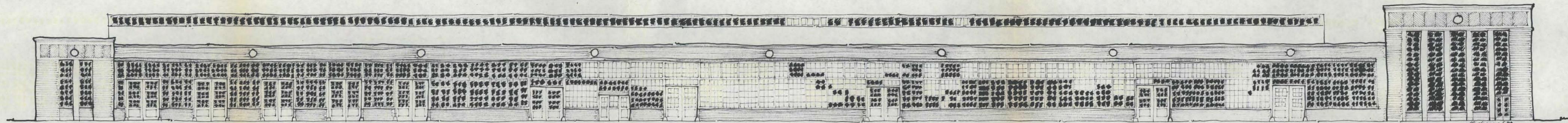


East Elevation

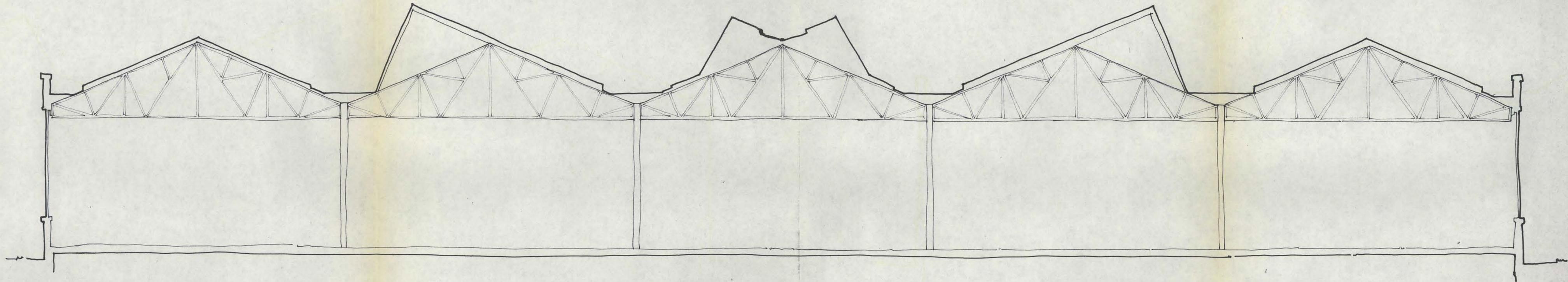


J. L. HARRIS '87

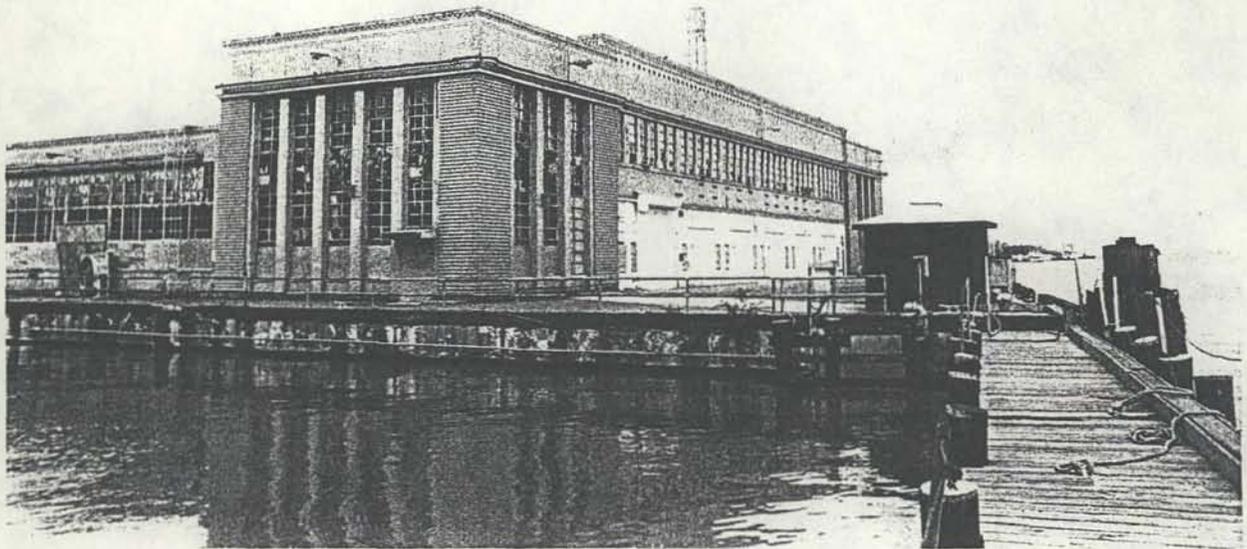
West Elevation



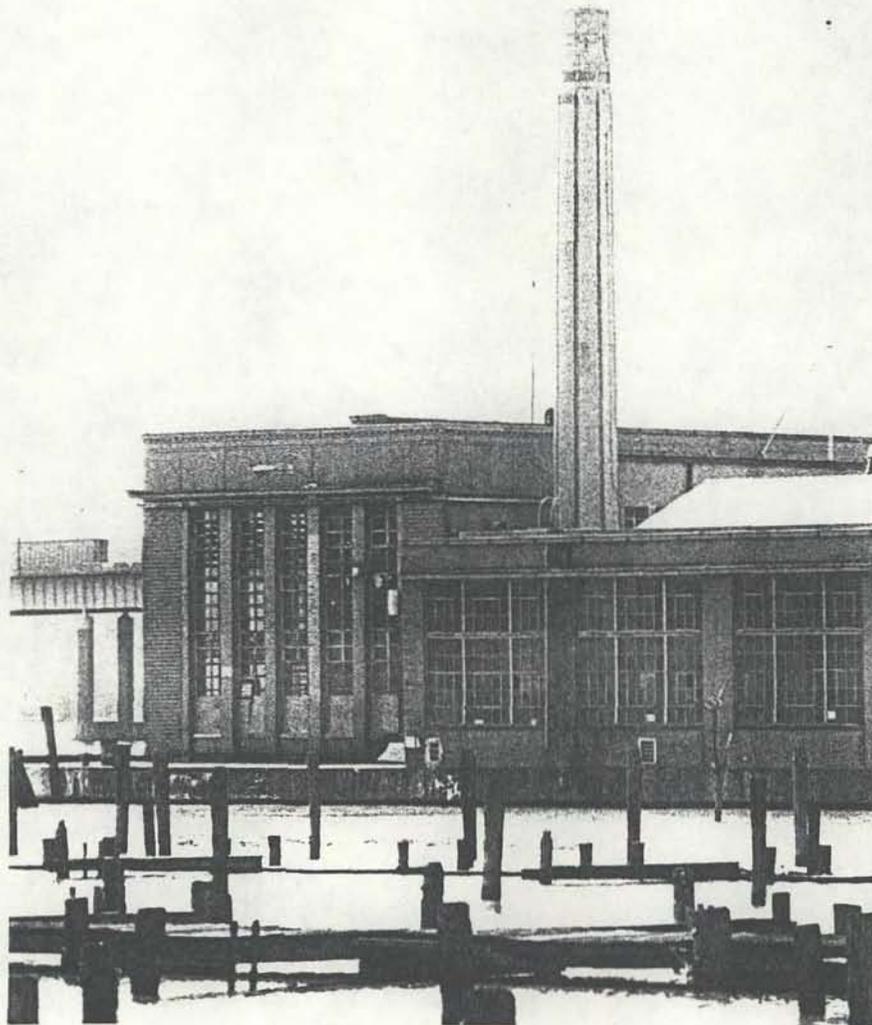
South Elevation



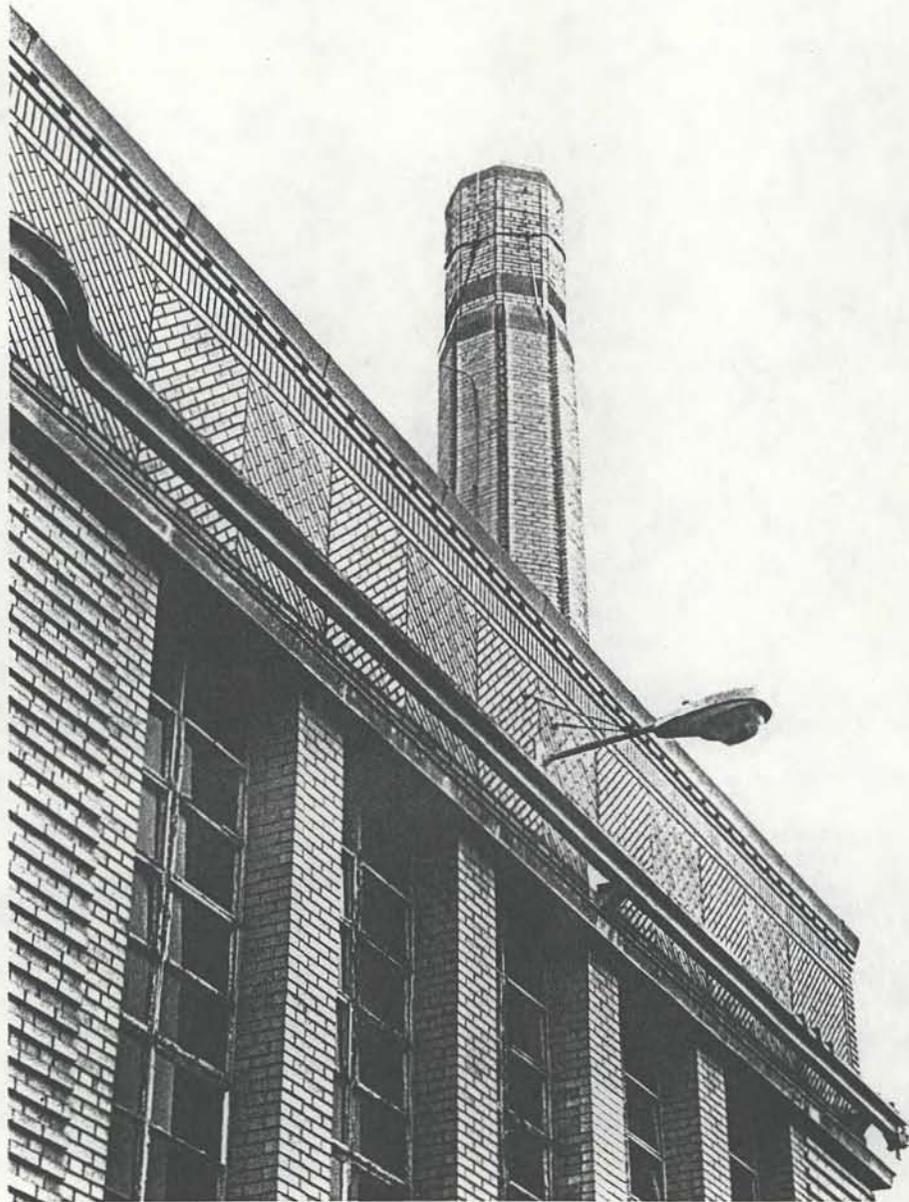
Section



Photograph of the east elevation of the original Albert Kahn Old Ford Plant building.



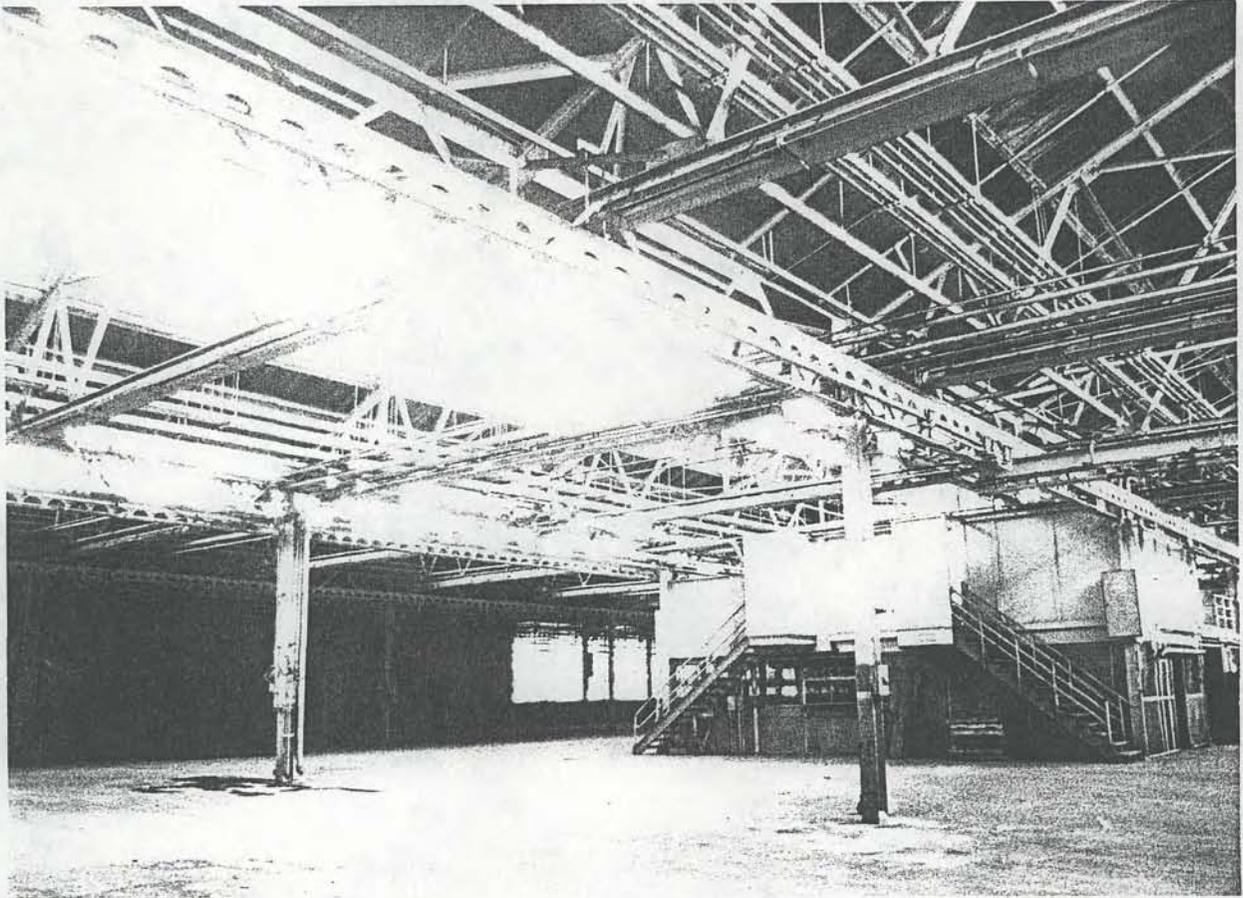
Partial north elevation of Old Ford Plant showing original east administrative wing, boiler chimney and, in foreground, building #20. View looking southeast.



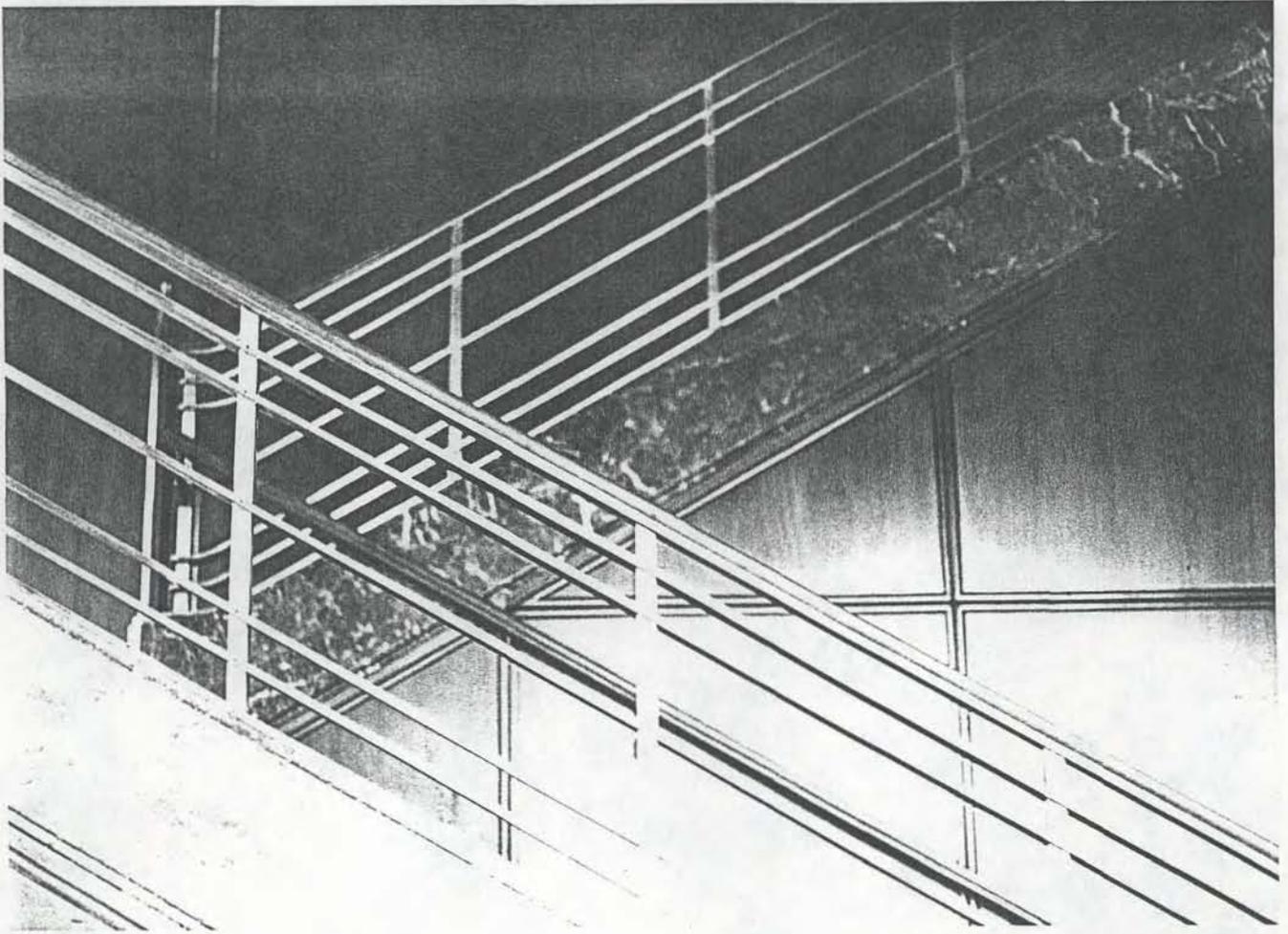
Detail photograph of a portion of the east facade of Building #11, with the original boiler chimney in the background.



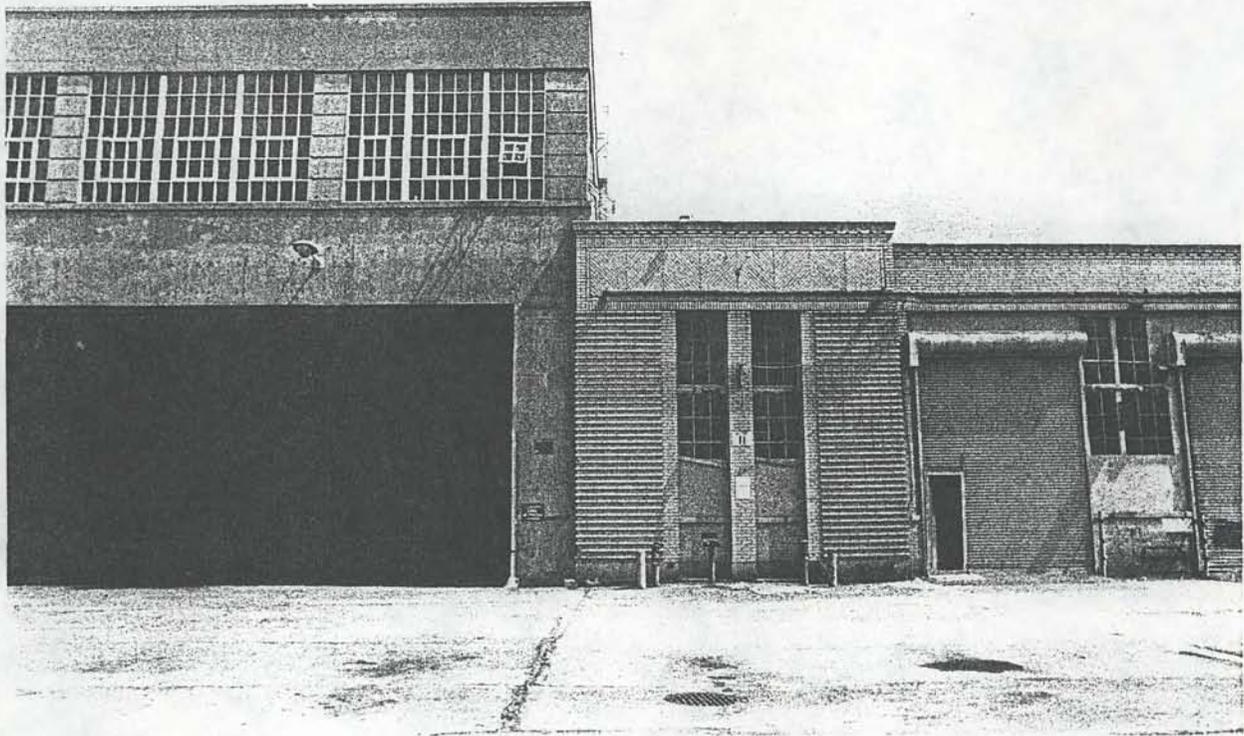
Photograph of a portion of the south elevation of the 1932 Old Ford Plant building (#11).



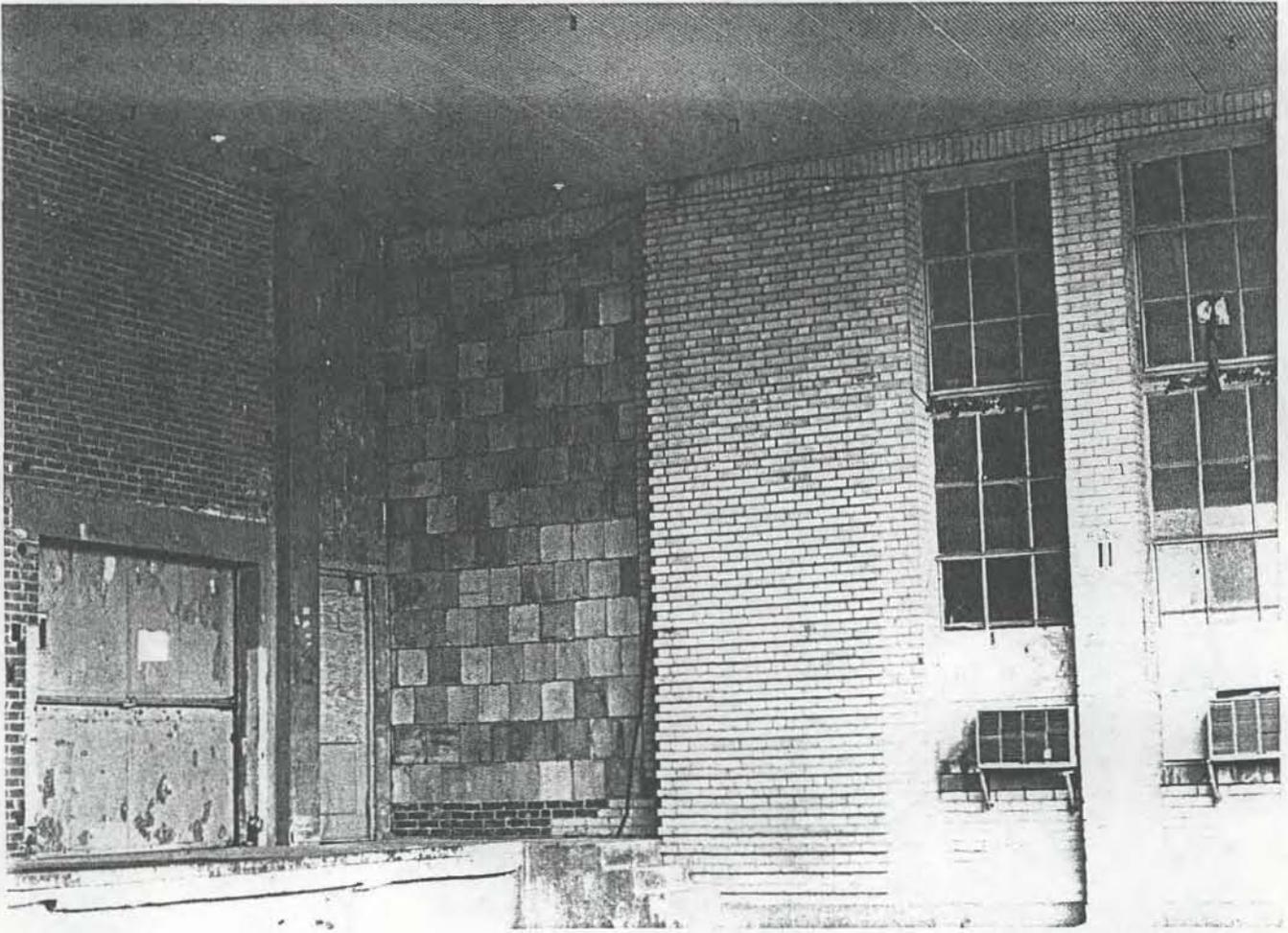
Photograph of the interior of Building #11 showing original structural system and Department of the Navy interior office additions.



Detail photograph of original Old Ford Plant lobby stair.



Photograph of the southwest connection between Building #11 and Building #12.



Detail photograph of southwest connection between original Old Ford Plant building and Building #12. Note structural clay tile infill where original steel curtain wall was removed.

Department of the Navy Storage Building  
(Building #12)

Upon assuming control of the Old Ford Plant site in 1942, the Department of the Navy initiated the conversion of the facility as an annex to their Pieny Point, Maryland gun factory. From the records we have been able to obtain, it appears that the Navy utilized the original Plant for their "operations" and undertook expansion of the site through the construction of a storage building adjacent to the west facade of the Old Ford Plant in 1943. This structure is a two-story tall, approximately 200 foot x 200 foot, monolithic concrete, flat roofed building. Although the design of the storage building reflects, to some degree, the "international" character of design style used in the 1920s and 30s, the overriding impression the public receives from the building is its massive concrete form. The use of heavy concrete construction was common in most buildings erected by the military in this period. This structure, which was developed primarily as a receiving and storage facility, has a continuous loading dock along its South Union Street facade, and large truck bays dominating its south elevation. The building is one story taller than the original Albert Kahn structure and is connected to the Plant through a single truck ramp close to the northern edge of the building. Since its construction, it appears that the only major change to the storage building was the replacement of its original windows to aluminum sash sometime in the early 1960s.

The design of this building is not consistent with the scale of the Albert Kahn building, nor is its use of material or detailing. In addition, the structure is not sympathetic or compatible with the character of the Old and Historic Alexandria District and thus, cannot be considered a contributing element to the National Historic Landmark District.

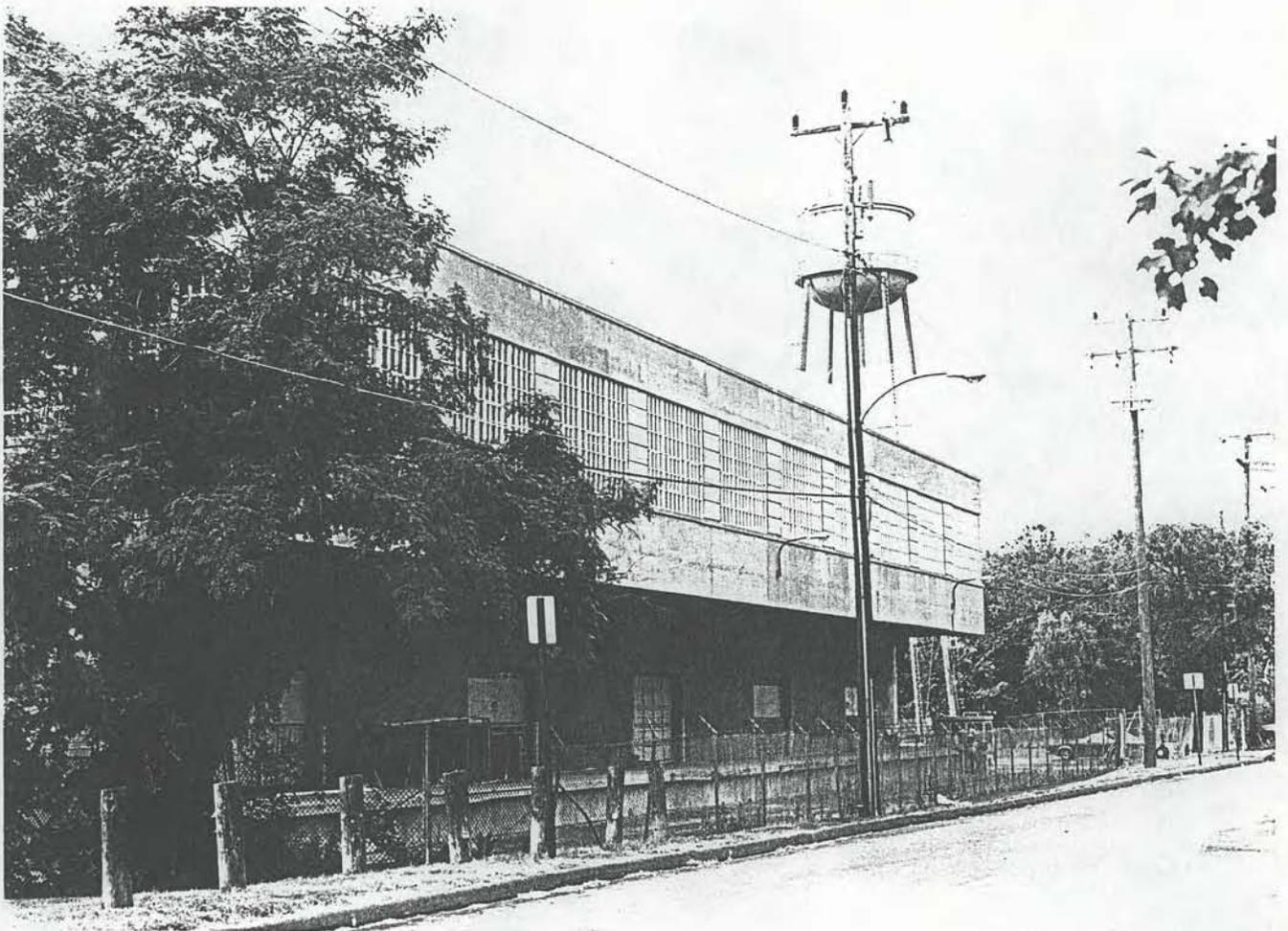
As it was designed, the storage building was developed purely as a functional structure. Whether due to the expediency caused by the war effort, or the lack of designers, there appears to have been very little attempt to integrate the building into its immediate (Old Ford Plant) site, or its larger (Old Town Alexandria) environment. Its location, directly adjacent to the historic building, completely covers one of the Plant's primary facades. But, in spite of this physical relationship, the height of the storage building substantially exceeds that of the one-story Kahn building and its pattern of window and door openings is not compatible with that of the earlier structure. Where the texture of the Kahn building is of unit masonry (brick), set in many different patterns, that of the storage building is basically of a uniform flat concrete surface.

As it faces the residential areas of Old Town, the storage building offers a 200 foot long loading dock and a cantilevered second floor fronting South Union Street. In the design of the building, there was no attempt to soften this edge or to relate the scale of the structure to the residential units on adjacent streets.

In addition to not being a contributing element of the Old and Historic Alexandria District, the storage building does not qualify for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places based on age. The general age guideline used by the National Register in determining whether a building is old enough to be listed is 50 years. Although there are exceptions to this rule, on May 23, 1988, as part of the National Park Service's proposed revisions to Federal regulations governing historic preservation certification tax benefits (36 CFR Part 67), a clarification to the 50 year guideline was provided. Under Section 67.5 of that regulation, "Standards for Evaluating Significance within Registered Historic Districts", part (a)(3) states:

Ordinarily buildings that have been built within the past 50 years shall not be considered to contribute to the significance of a district unless a strong justification concerning their historical or architectural merit is given or the historical attributes of the district are considered to be less than 50 years old.

After undertaking an evaluation of the storage building, we have been unable to find justification based on its historic significance for considering the structure a contributing element of the district. Although the building was constructed by the Department of the Navy as part of its war buildup, the facility was a minor annex to Maryland gun factory and, the presence of the Navy in Alexandria is better represented by the Torpedo Factory complex at the foot of King Street. In terms of its architectural significance, the building, in addition to not being sympathetic to the Old Ford Plant or the historic district, is neither a unique nor representative example of World War II construction. Also, the "historical attributes" of the Old and Historic Alexandria District is much older than 50 years. As noted in the original 1969 National Register nomination form for the district, its primary period of significance is "18th Century", 200 plus years old. Accordingly, based on the most current guidelines provided by the National Park Service, the Department of the Navy's 1943 storage building is not eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places.



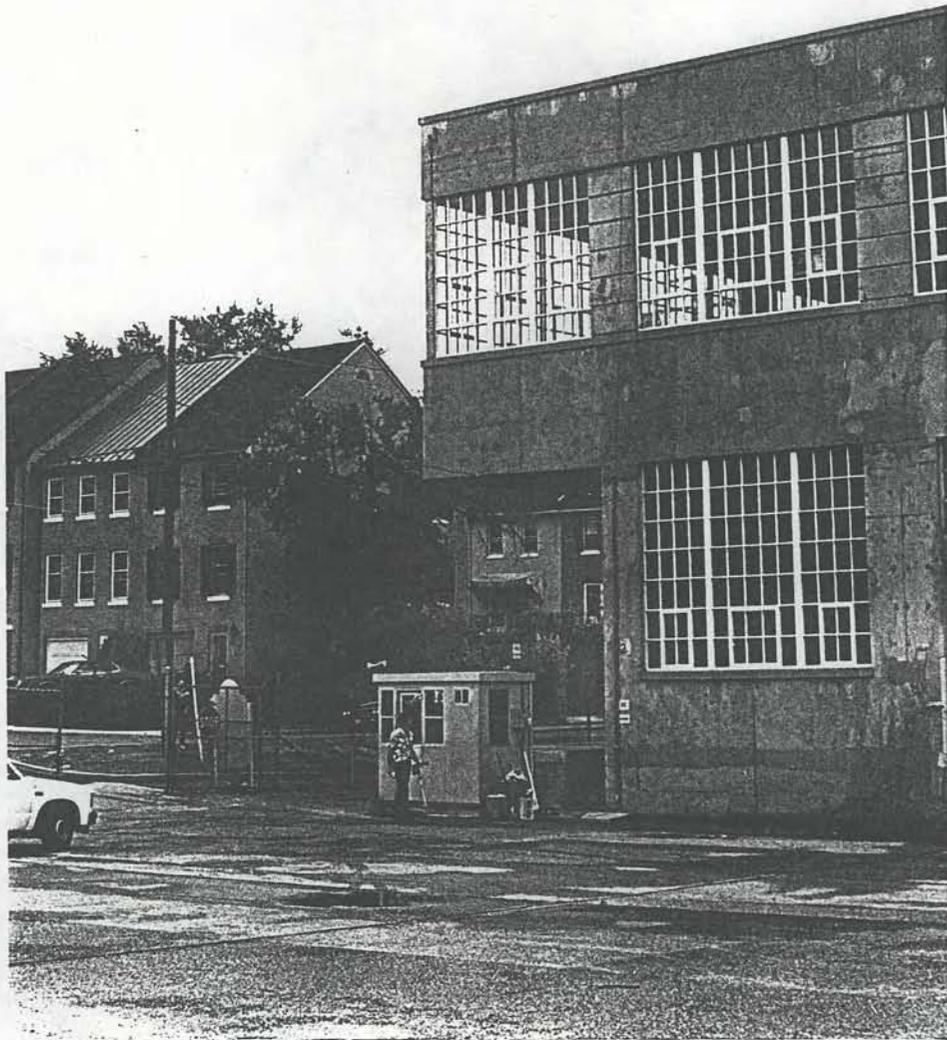
South Union Street view of the Old Ford Plant site with Building #12 in foreground and original water tower in background. View looking southeast.



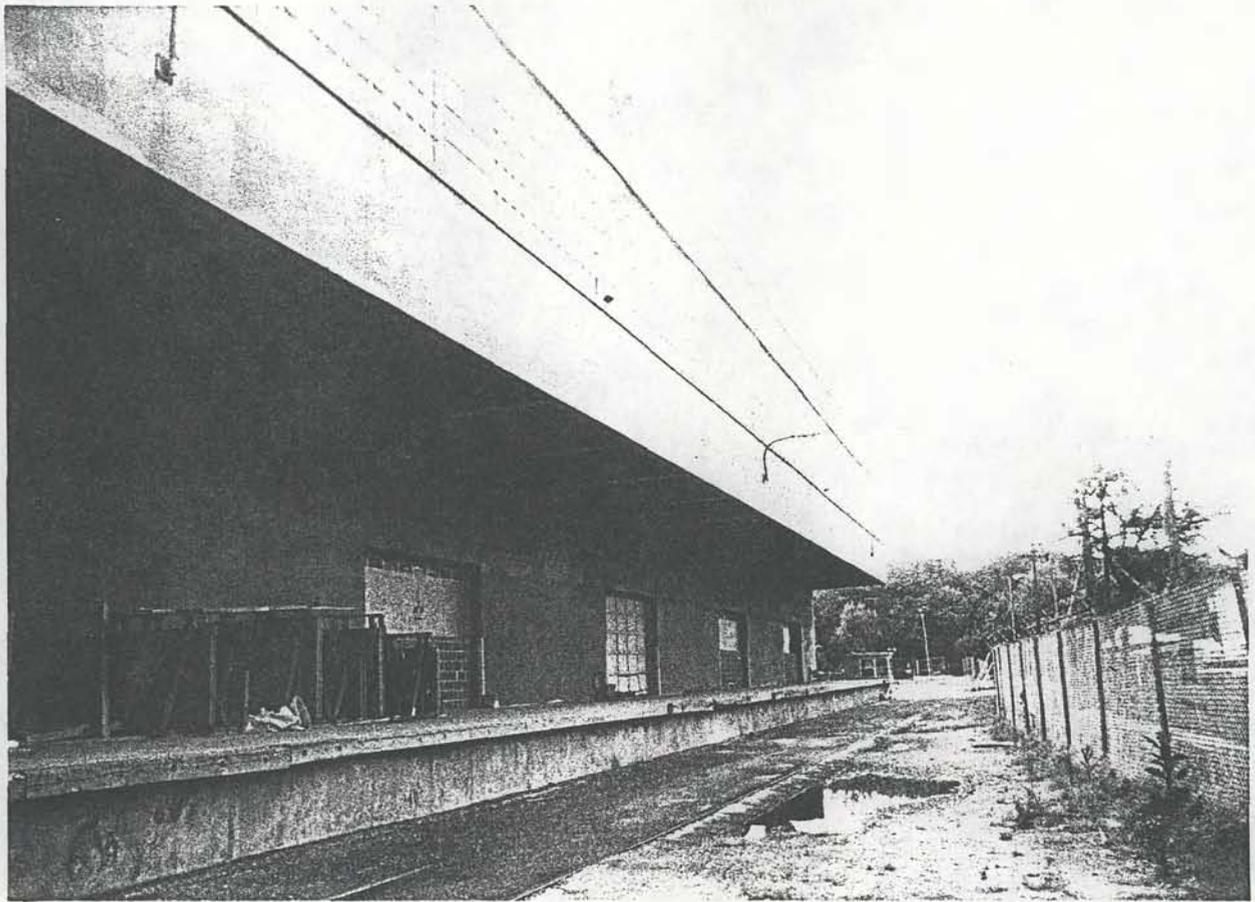
Photograph of a portion of the west elevation (South Union Street view) of Building #12, showing loading dock.



Photograph of the southwest corner of Building #12, with a portion of the water tower supports in the foreground.



Photograph of the southwest corner of Building #12 showing the loading dock and concrete cantilever adjacent to South Union Street.



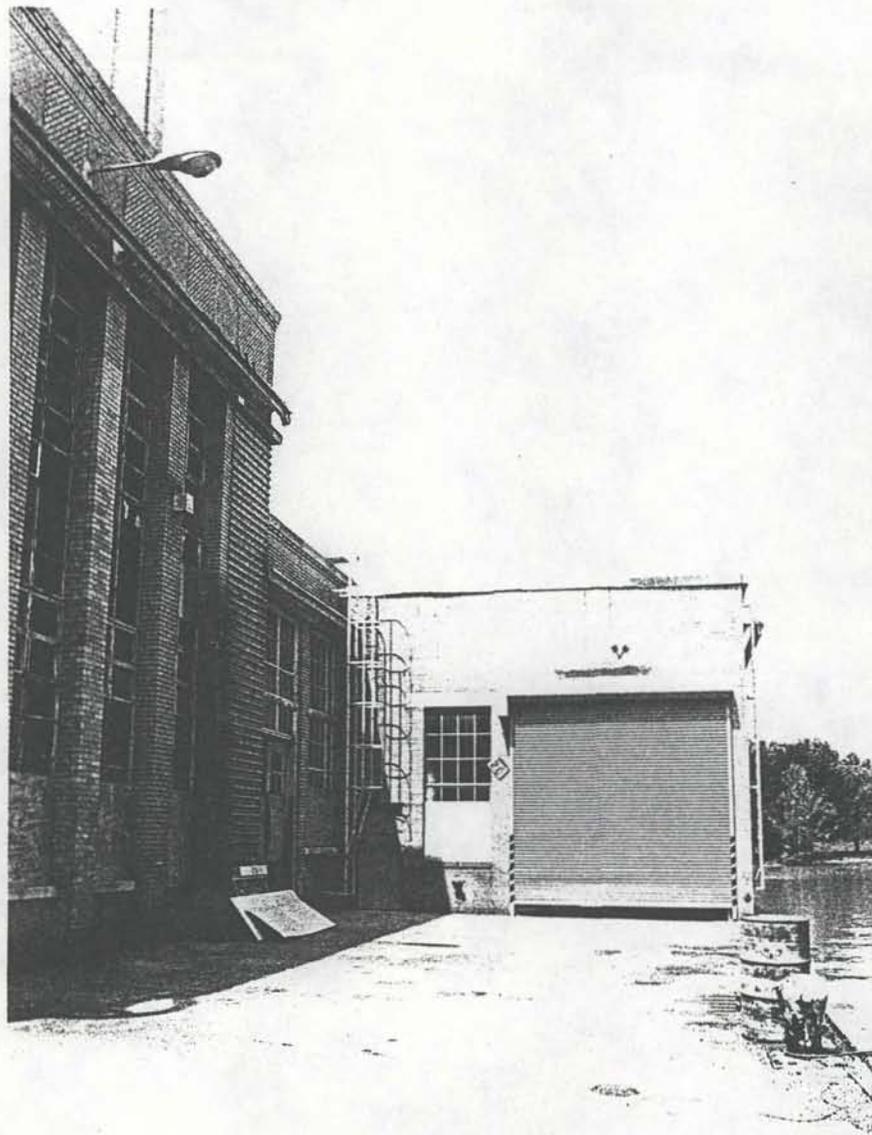
Detail photograph of the South Union Street loading docks on  
Building #12

Department of the Navy Machine Shop (Building #20)

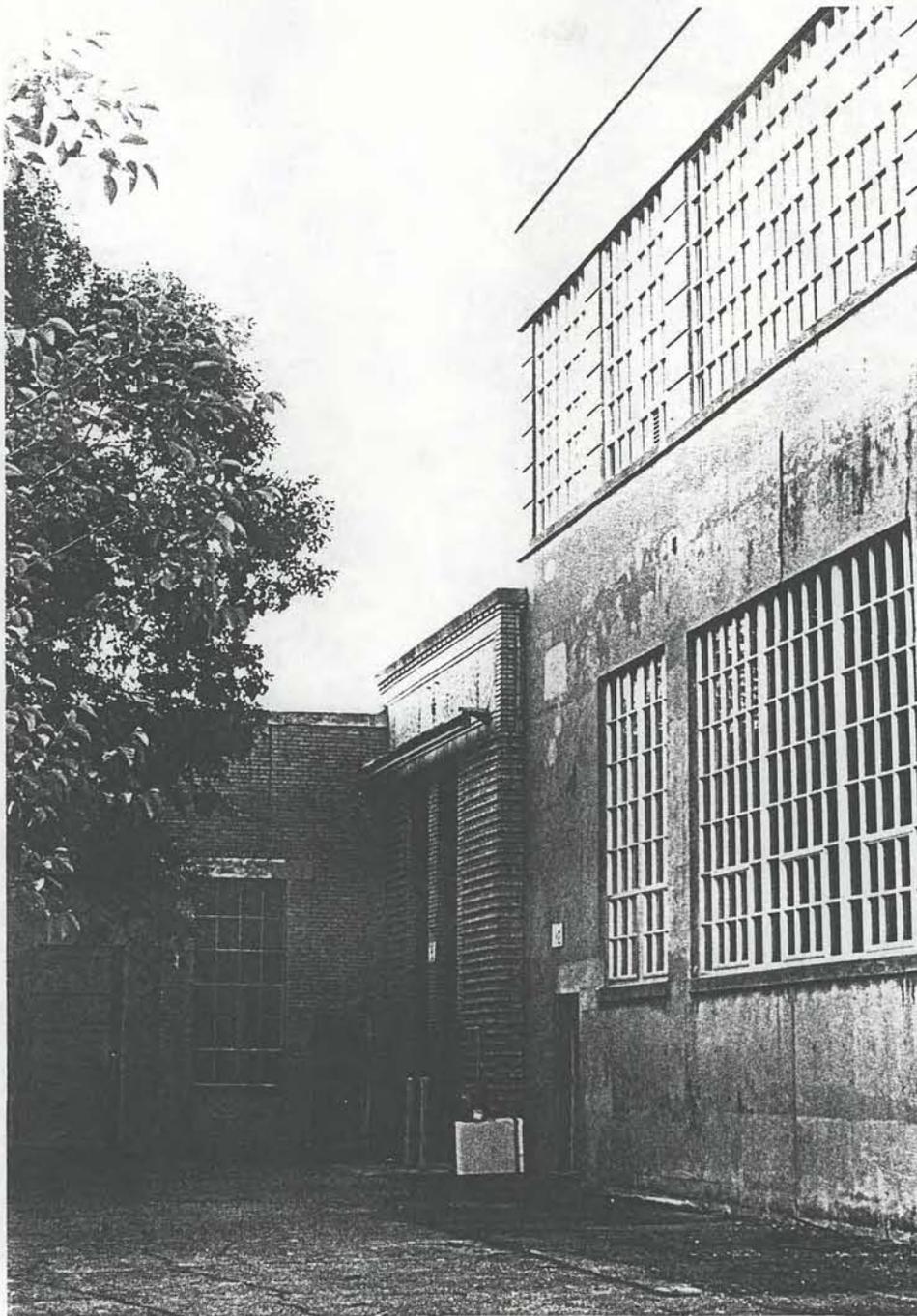
After World War II the Department of the Navy continued to expand their operations at the Old Ford Plant site and added a machine shop, ca. 1954, along the north facade of the original Plant. This one-story, steel-frame structure is 30 feet wide x 360 feet long and was constructed on the original concrete pier. It was connected to the original building through a single opening at the west end of the shop. In constructing this building the Navy removed a majority of the steel curtain wall along the north facade of the Plant and closed up most of the original openings. The machine shop is slightly shorter than the Albert Kahn building, has a shed roof and brick apron wall, divided by steel sash.

The siting of this building obscured the north facade of the Old Ford Plant and changed its character substantially. The roofform of the machine shop is inconsistent with that of the original building, as is its window wall.

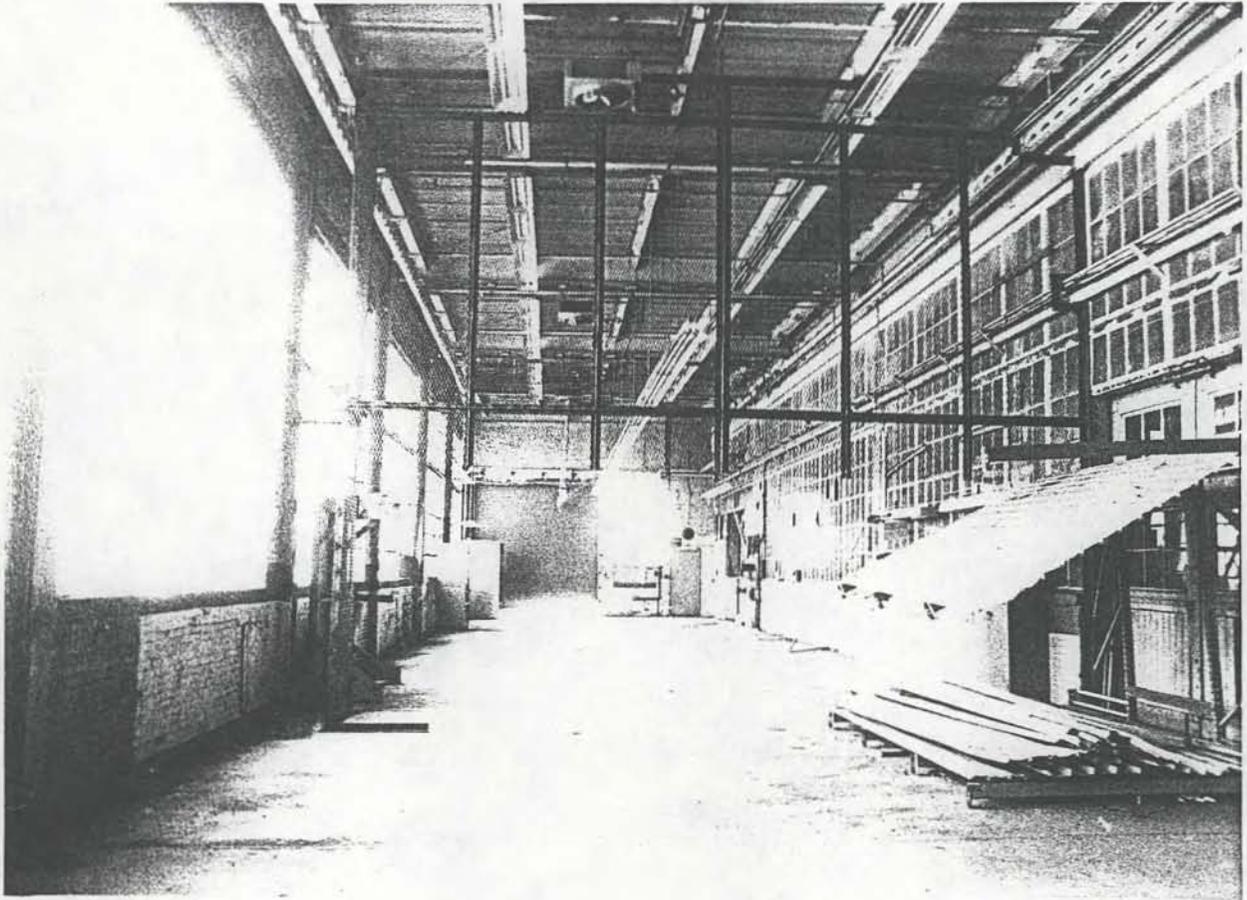
In our evaluation of this structure we were unable to find any historic or architectural significance to justify its inclusion in the National Register, either as an individual building or as a contributing element to the Old and Historic Alexandria District. In addition, the machine shop, built ca. 1954, falls far short of the 50 year guideline established by the National Park Service (see insert under Building #12 above).



Photograph of the east elevation of Building #20, with a partial view of Building #11 to the left.



Detail photograph of the northwest intersection of Buildings #11 (middle), #12 (right), and #20.



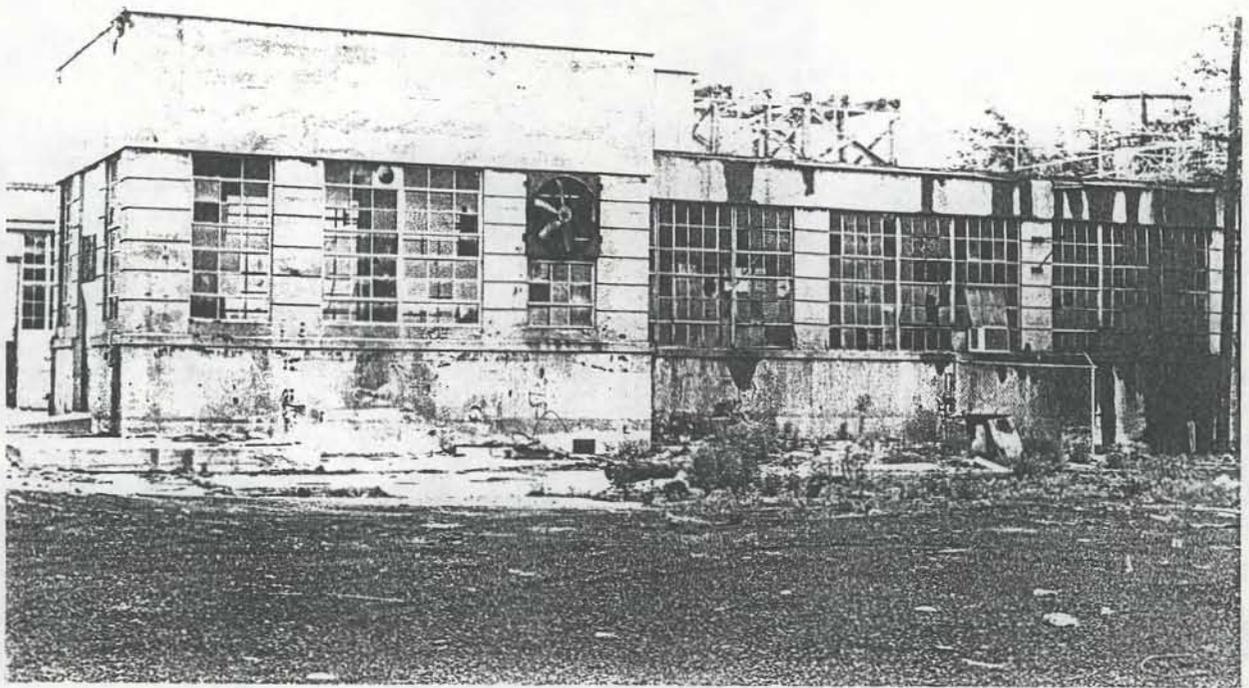
Photograph of the interior of Building #20.

### Other Buildings and Structures

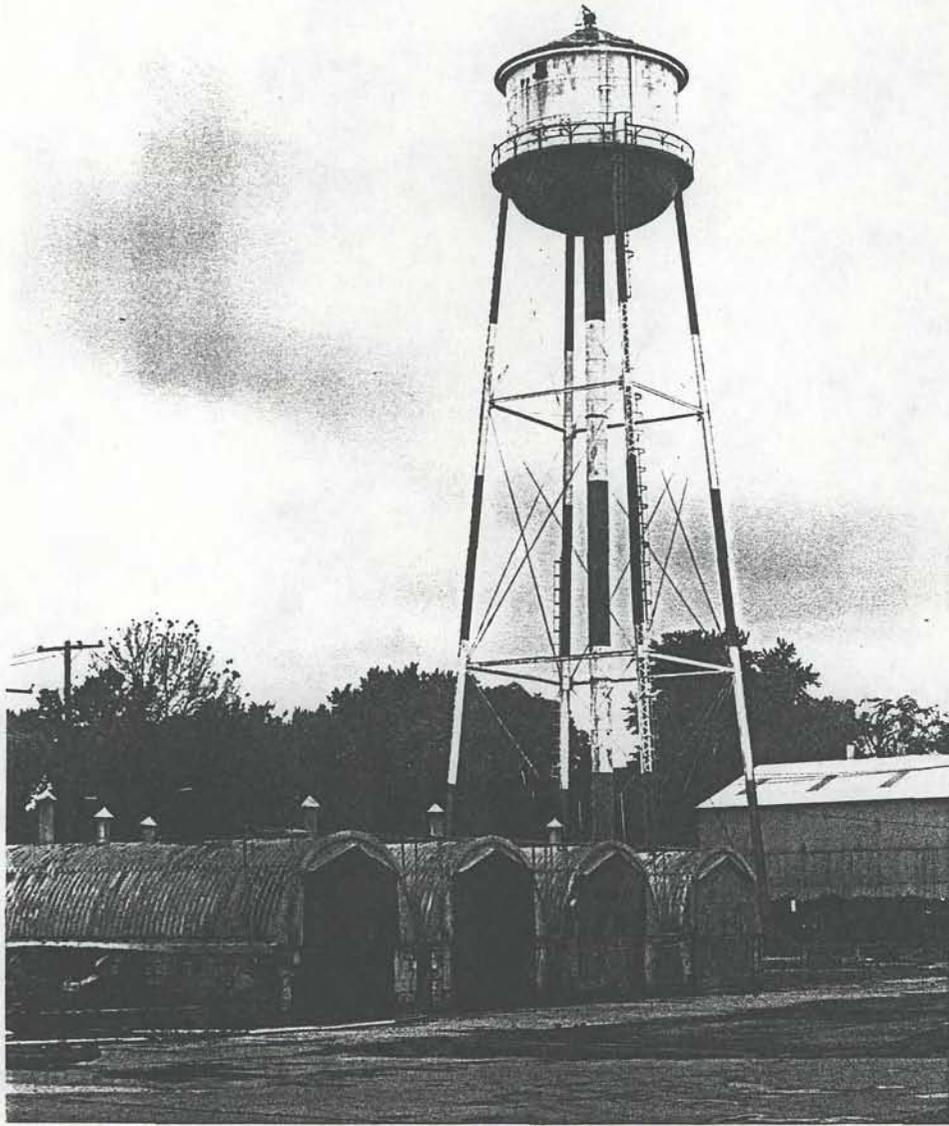
In addition to the above mentioned buildings, there are a number of additional structures on the site, some of which date from the original Ford Motor Company development, and others from the Department of the Navy's use of the property.

Original with Albert Kahn's development is a 70,000 gallon water tower and a series of underground fuel tanks. Both of these elements were erected as functional components of the Plant and do not represent any unique historic or architectural significance. Based on our evaluation, we have determined that neither of these components, although original with the Ford Motor Company development, are individually eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places, nor contributing elements of the Old and Historic Alexandria District.

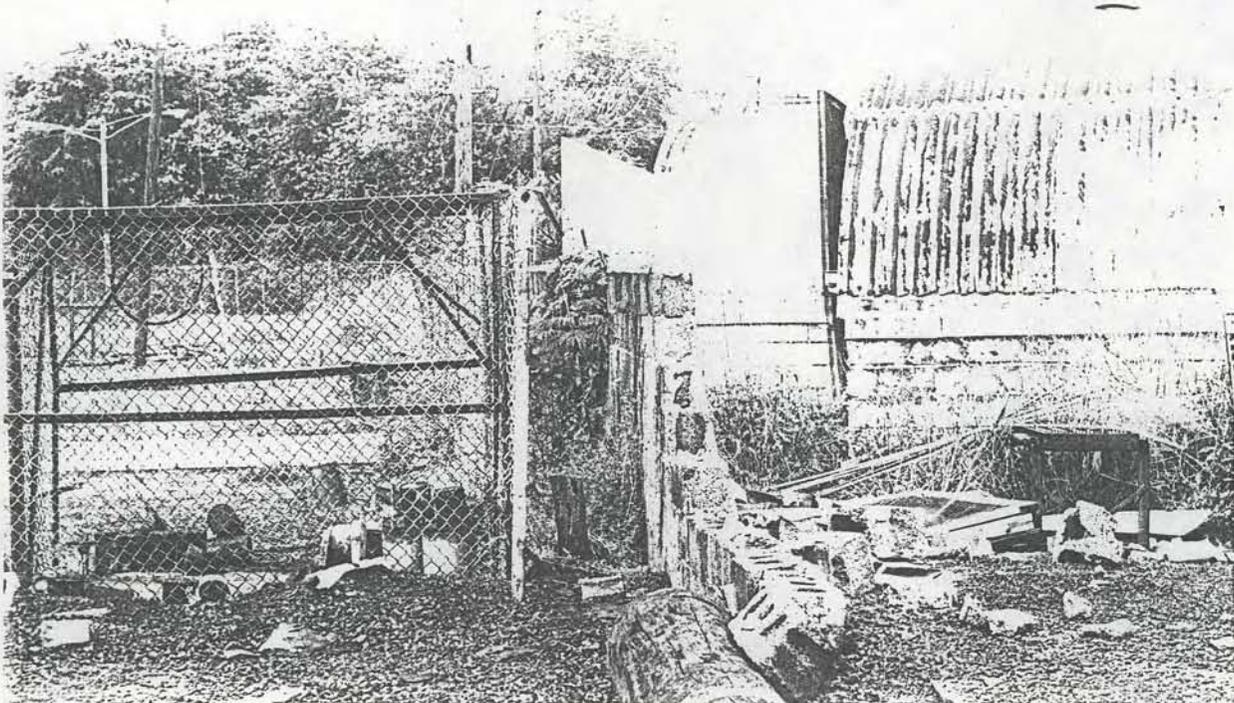
Contemporary with the Department of the Navy's use of the site are a series of metal huts (buildings #21, #26, #28 and #29) and a concrete block fire wall, ca. 1955, located south of the original Plant. In addition, the Navy constructed two monolithic concrete "battery" buildings (#13 and #18) in the same time period, which are still standing, and a 100,000 gallon water tank (fire tower), which was demolished sometime between 1954 and 1969. None of these structures meet the criteria for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places as individual resources or as contributing elements of the Old and Historic Alexandria District.



Photograph of Buildings #13 (right) and #18. View looking northeast.



Photograph of Metal Huts #21, #26, #28 and #29, with the original 75,000 gallon water tower in the background.



Photograph of concrete firewall adjacent to Metal Huts.

### Recommendations

After completing our assessment and evaluation of the Old Ford Plant and individual buildings and structures located on that property, we have come to the conclusion that the only historically and architecturally significant resource on the site is the original Albert Kahn building. Accordingly, we have developed a series of recommendations aimed at preservation of that resource and the significant qualities associated with the Old and Historic Alexandria District.

1. The 1932 Albert Kahn designed Old Ford Plant building (#11) should be preserved and rehabilitated. The components of that building which should be retained are:
  - o the south and east facades of the building, including the brick apron walls, steel curtain walls and brick and stone detailing on those facades;
  - o the steel structural system of the building, i.e. the original butterfly trusses;
  - o the aluminum and marble stair currently located in the original building lobby; and,
  - o the original brick chimney.
2. The 1943 Department of the Navy storage building (#12) should be removed from the site and the newly exposed original west facade of the Albert Kahn building should, to the extent possible, be restored.
3. The remaining buildings and structures on the site, including the ca. 1954 Department of the Navy machine shop (#20) should be removed from the site.

# National Register of Historic Places 1969 Nomination Form, as amended

Form 10-300  
(Dec. 1968)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

## NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: Virginia	
COUNTY: Alexandria (in cit.)	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

**1. NAME**

COMMON:

Alexandria

AND/OR HISTORIC:

Alexandria

**2. LOCATION**

STREET AND NUMBER:

As described in attached Ordinance No. 1338

CITY OR TOWN:

Alexandria

STATE:

Virginia

CODE

510\*

COUNTY:

(in cit.)

CODE

117

**3. CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
District <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/>	Public <input type="checkbox"/>	Occupied <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Yes: <input type="checkbox"/>
Site <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/>	Private <input type="checkbox"/>	Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/>	Restricted <input type="checkbox"/>
Object <input type="checkbox"/>	Both <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Preservation work in progress <input type="checkbox"/>	Unrestricted <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	Public Acquisitions: In Process <input type="checkbox"/>		No: <input type="checkbox"/>
	Being Considered <input type="checkbox"/>		

PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/>	Government <input type="checkbox"/>	Park <input type="checkbox"/>	Transportation <input type="checkbox"/>	Comments <input type="checkbox"/>
Commercial <input type="checkbox"/>	Industrial <input type="checkbox"/>	Private Residence <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Other (Specify) <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Public buildings <input type="checkbox"/>
Educational <input type="checkbox"/>	Military <input type="checkbox"/>	Religious <input type="checkbox"/>		
Entertainment <input type="checkbox"/>	Museum <input type="checkbox"/>	Scientific <input type="checkbox"/>		

**4. OWNER OF PROPERTY**

OWNERS NAME:

Multiple public and private

STREET AND NUMBER:

City of Alexandria

CITY OR TOWN:

Alexandria

STATE:

Virginia

CODE

510

**5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:

Alexandria Clerk of Courts

STREET AND NUMBER:

130 N. Fairfax

CITY OR TOWN:

Alexandria

STATE:

Virginia

CODE

510

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: see Ordinance No. 1338

**6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE OF SURVEY:

Historic American Buildings Survey

DATE OF SURVEY: 1941

Federal

State

County

Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:

Library of Congress

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:

Washington

STATE:

District of Columbia

CODE

08

Virginia

Alexandria (in cit.)

ENTRY NUMBER DATE

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet)

Virginia	
COUNTY	
Alexandria (in cit.)	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

(Number all entries)

6. Historic American Buildings Survey Inventory  
1958  
Library of Congress  
Washington, D. C. Code: 08

Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission Report #100  
1968  
Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission  
Room 1116, Ninth Street State Office Building  
Richmond, Virginia 23219 Code: ~~760~~ 45

7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)				
	Excellent <input type="checkbox"/>	Good <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Fair <input type="checkbox"/>	Deteriorated <input type="checkbox"/>	Ruins <input type="checkbox"/>
INTEGRITY	(Check One)			(Check One)	
	Altered <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		Unaltered <input type="checkbox"/>	Moved <input type="checkbox"/>	Original Site <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The general layout of the historic district of Alexandria consists of uniform rectangular blocks in a grid pattern. The streets are lined with townhouses, the more important of which are generally free-standing while the majority are either semi-detached or non-detached. Most of the structures are brick or frame. The architecture found in the district includes the full-range of the late-eighteenth and nineteenth century styles, but the district is more noted for its outstanding buildings of the Federal period.

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPH L REFERENCES

Davis, Deering, Stephen P. Dorsey, and Ralph Cole Hall, Alexandria Houses, New York: Bonanza Books, 1946.

Moore, Gay Montague, Seaport in Virginia, Richmond, Virginia: Garret and Massie, Inc., 1949.

Templeman, Eleanor Lee and Nan Netherton, Northern Virginia Heritage, published by authors, 1966.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN ONE ACRE		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	LATITUDE		LONGITUDE
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees	Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds
NW	38° 49' 03"	77° 03' 15"	°	' "	° ' "
NE	38° 49' 03"	77° 02' 20"			
SE	38° 47' 26"	77° 02' 20"			
SW	38° 47' 26"	77° 03' 15"			

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

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE:  
State SP VHL C, James W. Moody, Jr., Director

ORGANIZATION: Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission DATE: March 28, 1969

STREET AND NUMBER:  
Room 1116, Ninth Street State Office Building

CITY OR TOWN: Richmond STATE: Virginia CODE: 760-

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison 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. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National  State  Local

Name Dr. Edward P. Alexander

Title Chairman, Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission

Date March 28, 1969

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date 1969

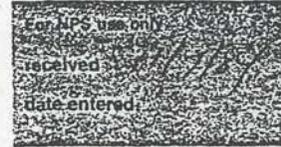
ATTEST:

Keeper of The National Register

Date \_\_\_\_\_

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form



ALEXANDRIA HISTORIC DISTRICT, ALEXANDRIA, VA  
Continuation sheet 1

Item number 7

Page 1

DESCRIPTION: Inventory (appendix)

In addition to Victorian residences, the Alexandria district contains an ample stock of small scale early 20th-century town houses. These were designed in a variety of modes including American Four Square, Bungalow, Neo-Colonial and Second Empire during an era of aggressive eclecticism. The residential units appear as infill development throughout the district. Typical areas include the 500 block of N. Washington Street and the 700 block of Oronoco Street.

The commercial area of the district centers around the corner of S. Washington Street and King Street. Consequently both King and Washington are bordered with commercial buildings and storefronts of varying ages, most of which date from the first third of the 20th century. Of particular note are the Art Deco Virginia Public Service building at 117 S. Washington Street, the Neo-Colonial Post Office and Court House at 200 S. Washington Street and the Burke and Herbert Bank at 625 King Street.

The district also encompasses several factory buildings along Alexandria's formerly active waterfront. The most notable of these structures is the former Ford Plant, designed by Albert Kahn. The major part of this structure is a yellow glazed brick, saw-tooth roofed shed designed in an Art Deco style. Appended to this structure are three concrete additions designed in a rigid, yet sympathetic style.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

ALEXANDRIA HISTORIC DISTRICT, ALEXANDRIA, VA

Continuation sheet #2

Item number 7

Page 2

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date entered

7. DESCRIPTION: Inventory (appendix)

FRANKLIN STREET & UNION STREET

(Old Ford Plant): concrete; 2 stories; flat roof; 8 bays on main building, 20 bays on annex. Modern. 1920s. Architect: Albert Kahn. The Old Ford Plant is a unique structure in Virginia for it is the only structure in the state designed by the famous factory architect Albert Kahn. The main 8-bay, concrete structure has a 3-story tower at its center. It is adjoined by a 20-plus-bay, concrete structure. All windows are of industrial sash.

KING STREET

625 (Burke and Herbert Bank): brick (stretcher bond); 2 stories; flat roof; 3 bays. Bank. Vernacular Classical. 1906. This small bank, with bracketed cornice and curved pediment with inscribed date, is a fine example of an early twentieth-century commercial structure.

627: brick (stretcher bond); 2 stories; flat roof; 2 bays. Commercial (store). Classical Eclectic. 1910. This is an excellent example of an early twentieth-century brick commercial building designed in rather eclectic classical vocabulary.

ORONOCO STREET

711-709: brick (Flemish bond); 2 stories; gable roof; 3 bays each; 1-story, 1-side-bay, arch entrance. Row house. 20th-century Vernacular. 1915-20. This structure contributes to the small scale streetscape of this part of the district.

NORTH WASHINGTON STREET

520: brick (stretcher bond); 2 stories; hipped roof (composition); 1 hipped dormer; 2 bays; 1-story, 1-bay porch. Detached house. American Four Square. 1920. This residence maintains the low scale of its nineteenth- and twentieth-century neighbors.

524: brick (stretcher bond); 2 stories; mansard roof (slate); 3 bays; 1-story, 3-bay porch. Detached town house. Second Empire. 1910. This building clearly contributes to the fabric of the neighborhood in scale, style, and materials.

528: brick (stretcher bond); 2 stories; mansard roof (slate); 1 shed dormer; 3 bays. Detached town house. Twentieth-century Vernacular. 1910. This modified American Four Square building maintains the low density of this area of the district.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

ALEXANDRIA HISTORIC DISTRICT, ALEXANDRIA, VA

Continuation sheet # 3

Item number 7

Page 3

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received 11/7/84

date entered

7. DESCRIPTION -- Inventory (appendix)

SOUTH WASHINGTON STREET

117: stone (limestone); 3 stories; flat roof; 5 bays. Commercial (office). Art Deco. Ca. 1930s. Now a Marine recruiting office. this 3-story, limestone-faced structure is a fine example of the reserved form of Art Deco-style that was frequently used in commercial buildings.

200 (U.S. Post Office and Courthouse): brick (5-course American bond); 3 stories; gable roof (composition); 2 gable dormers; 5 bays. Post Office. Colonial Revival. 1930. This 3-story, brick-and-limestone building with its large cupola is an excellent example of the late Colonial Revival architecture so popular for public buildings in the south.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

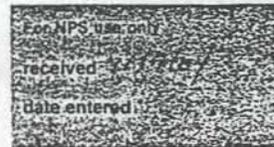
## National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

ALEXANDRIA HISTORIC DISTRICT, ALEXANDRIA, VA

Continuation sheet 4

Item number 8

Page 1



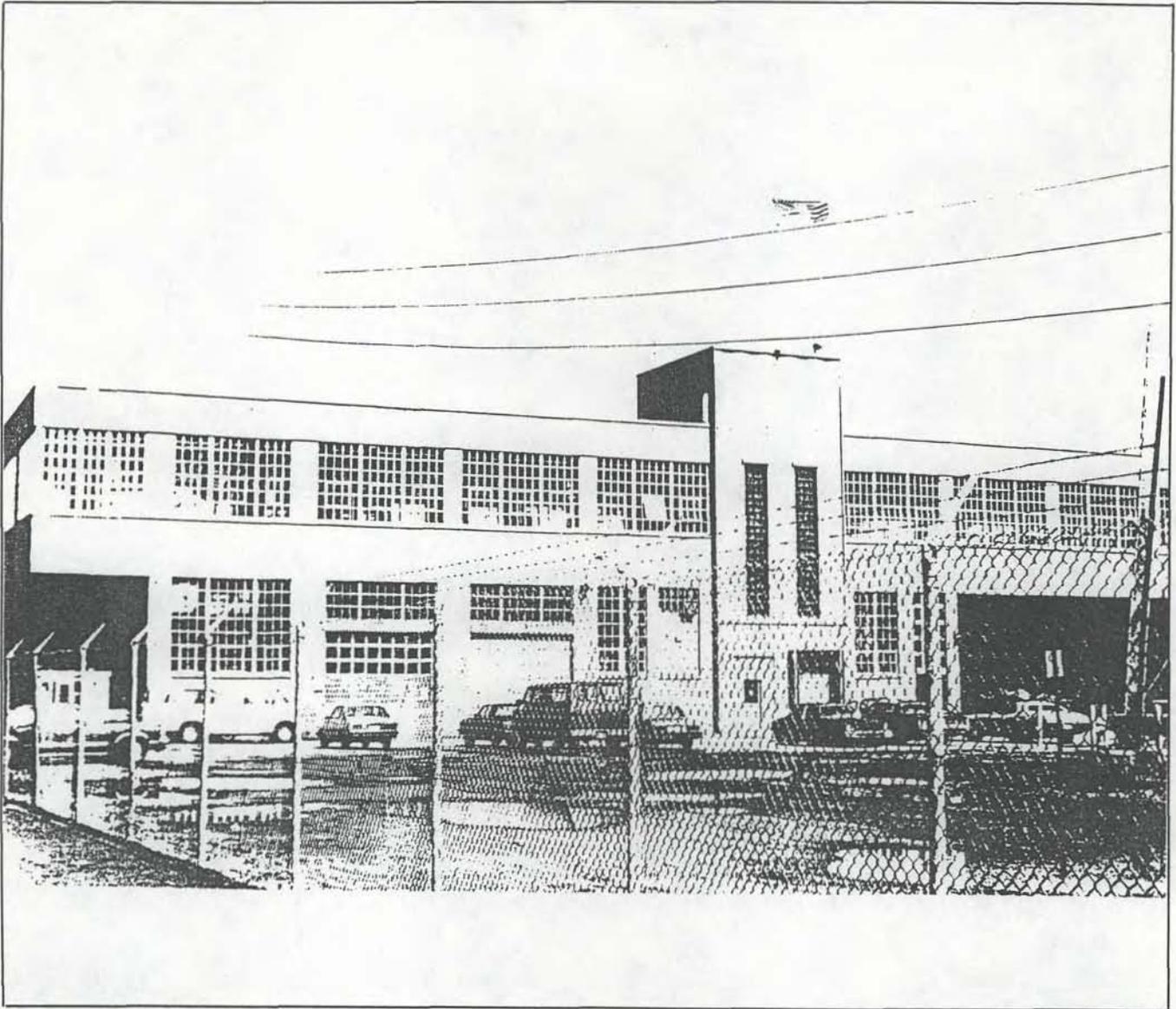
### 8. SIGNIFICANCE -- Historical Background

In addition to the previously discussed 19th-century structures, significant 20-century buildings still stand in the historic district. These residential, commercial, and industrial buildings contribute to the area's historic fabric and survive as a three-dimensional palimpsest of Alexandria's development.

In part due to its excellent rail connections to both north and south, Alexandria became an important industrial and commercial center in Northern Virginia. In fact, the Potomac yards were the largest classification railway yards in the country at the turn of the century. As a result of this transportation system, Alexandria developed a large industrial center along its waterfront adjacent to the railway. The list of industrial enterprises in Alexandria during the early 20th century is rather lengthy, including large lumber yards, leather and shoe factories, coal wharves, ice factories, a brewery, glass works, a tile manufactory, and a gas works. This combination of industrial vitality and excellent transportation facilities led Henry Ford to build a plant along the Alexandria waterfront. Designed by Albert Kahn and completed in 1932, the structure incorporates a saw-tooth roof, and Art Deco facade with a remarkable degree of structural clarity, making it stand today as the most important example of early modern architecture in Alexandria.

As the industrial area developed, so too did the commercial base rise to support the needs of the residents who were drawn to Alexandria by the availability of jobs and adequate housing. During the first two decades of this century, a central business district developed along King and Washington streets. The Post Office and Courthouse designed by the Office of the Supervising Architect is an excellent example of a late Colonial Revival structure; the Marine recruiting center, with its stripped Classical details and Art Deco-style ironwork, is the finest example of that style in the district.

The aforementioned combination of industrial development along with Alexandria's proximity to Washington D. C. caused an explosion of residential development in the first third of the 20th century. With its reasonable rents, relatively pure drinking water, fine educational system, and availability of loans through various cash-rich building associations, small scale residential developments, designed in several styles, sprang up throughout the city. While the units are architecturally significant and cohesive by themselves, these residences are also stylistically sympathetic to the fabric of the 19th-century city. The early 20th-century Empire and Four Square structures at 520-528 North Washington Street, for example, share a commonality of scale and material with the cotton mill across the street. 709-711 Oronoco Street performs the same function in relation to the neighboring 19th-century buildings.



ALEXANDRIA HISTORIC DISTRICT  
Alexandria, VA

Credit: VA Historic Landmarks Commission  
Date: 1984  
Negative Filed: VA State Library, Richmond, VA  
View of Old Ford Plant, Franklin St. and  
Union; view from SE  
Neg. No. 7528(6A-7)  
File No. 100-121  
View #1

07/80

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NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

PROPOSED REGULATIONS - 36 CFR PART 67; May 23, 1988

Historic Preservation Certifications

**§ 67.5 Standards for Evaluating  
Significance within Registered Historic  
Districts.**

(a) Buildings located within registered historic districts are reviewed by the Secretary to determine if they contribute to the historic significance of the district by applying the following Standards for Evaluating Significance within Registered Historic Districts.

(1) A building contributing to the historic significance of a district is one which by location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association adds to the district's sense of time and place and historical development.

(2) A building not contributing to the historic significance of a district is one which does not add to the district's sense of time and place and historical development; or one where the location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association have been so altered or have so deteriorated that the overall integrity of the building has been irretrievably lost.

(3) Ordinarily buildings that have been built within the past 50 years shall not be considered to contribute to the significance of a district unless a strong justification concerning their historical or architectural merit is given or the historical attributes of the district are considered to be less than 50 years old.

Divisions  
Historic Landmarks  
Litter Control  
Parks and Recreation  
Soil and Water Conservation

B. C. LEYNES, JR.  
Director



## COMMONWEALTH of VIRGINIA

*Department of Conservation and Historic Resources*

*Division of Historic Landmarks*

H. Bryan Mitchell, Director

221 Governor Street  
Richmond, Virginia 23219  
Telephone (804) 786-3143

June 24, 1988

Mr. John Cullinane  
John Cullinane Associates  
1214 28th Street, NW  
Washington, D. C. 20007

RE: Old Ford Plant, Alexandria (2521-AX)

Dear John:

Pursuant to your request, we have reevaluated the resources on the the Old Ford Plant which is listed in the National Register of Historic Places as a contributing building in the Alexandria Historic District. In an August 13, 1984 letter Bryan Mitchell identified buildings 11, 12, 13, 18, and 20 as integral parts of the Old Ford Plant complex. Having reviewed the documentation you provided, it is currently our position that only Building 11, designed by Albert Kahn, contributes to the Alexandria Historic District. Buildings 12, 13, 18, and 20 are sympathetic to Building 11, but do not contribute to the character of the historic district.

If we can be of further assistance, please do not hesitate to call.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Debbie Randall".

Debbie Randall  
Review and Compliance Officer