

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

## 1. Name of Property

Historic name: Sears, Roebuck & Company Mail Order Building (AMENDMENT)

Other names/site number: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of related multiple property listing: \_\_\_\_\_



(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

## 2. Location

Street & number: 2650 East Olympic Boulevard

City or town: Los Angeles State: CA County: Los Angeles

Not For Publication:  Vicinity:

## 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 at the following level(s) of significance:

\_\_\_ national      \_\_\_ statewide      \_\_\_ local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

\_\_\_ A      \_\_\_ B      \_\_\_ C      \_\_\_ D

<p>_____  <b>Signature of certifying official/Title:</b></p> <p>_____  <b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b></p>	<p>_____  <b>Date</b></p>
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<p>In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.</p>	
<p>_____  <b>Signature of commenting official:</b></p> <p>_____  <b>Title :</b></p>	<p>_____  <b>Date</b></p> <p>_____  <b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b></p>

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#### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_

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Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

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#### 5. Classification

##### Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

##### Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

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**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	_____	buildings
_____	_____	sites
_____	_____	structures
_____	_____	objects
<u>1</u>	_____	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 1

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**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE/TRADE – Department Store, Warehouse

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE/TRADE – Department Store, Warehouse

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

MODERN MOVEMENT – Art Deco

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**Materials:** (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: concrete

Foundation Concrete

Roof Concrete & Synthetics

Walls Concrete

### Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

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### Summary Paragraph

See continuation sheets



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**Narrative Description**

**See continuation sheets**

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## 8. Statement of Significance

### Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

### Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1927-1966  
1927-1955 (original from nomination)  
1955-1966 (proposed in this amendment)

**Significant Dates**

1927 – building constructed  
1929 – addition  
1936 – addition  
1940 – addition  
1945 – addition  
1959 – addition  
1964 – addition

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

1927: Nimmons, George C., original architect  
1936: Young, G. B.  
1940: Redden, John Stokes

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**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

**See continuation sheets**

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**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

**See continuation sheets**

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## 9. Major Bibliographical References

**Bibliography** (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

**See bibliography included in the 2005 National Register Nomination and the Part I application.**

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### Previous documentation on file (NPS):

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

### Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office  
 Other State agency  
 Federal agency  
 Local government  
 University  
 Other  
Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

**Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):** \_\_\_\_\_

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## 10. Geographical Data

**Acres of Property** 12.3 acres

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Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

**Latitude/Longitude Coordinates (decimal degrees)**

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- |                               |                               |
|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1. Latitude: <b>34.024387</b> | Longitude: <b>-118.221179</b> |
| 2. Latitude:                  | Longitude:                    |
| 3. Latitude:                  | Longitude:                    |
| 4. Latitude:                  | Longitude:                    |

**Or**

**UTM References**

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or  NAD 1983

- |                    |                        |                            |
|--------------------|------------------------|----------------------------|
| 1. Zone: <b>11</b> | Easting: <b>387300</b> | Northing: <b>3765300 3</b> |
| 2. Zone:           | Easting:               | Northing: <b>4</b>         |
| 3. Zone:           | Easting:               | Northing:                  |
| 4. Zone:           | Easting :              | Northing:                  |

**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

Assessor's Parcel Number 5169-010-006 corresponding to Tract #9410 por of Lot 1 and Tract #6738 por of Lots 2, 3 ,4 and 5 of Block 8; also as that land bounded by 12<sup>th</sup> Street, Soto Street, Olympic Boulevard, and Rio Vista Ave. in Los Angeles and comprising 12.3

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acres; as shown on the accompanying parcel map.<sup>1</sup> The boundary of the property is unchanged from the original nomination and listing.

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundaries correspond to the parcel and lots the building historically has occupied.

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**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title: Robert Chattel with Justin Greving, Laura G. Carias, and Kristen Hayashi  
organization: Chattel, Inc.  
street & number: 13417 Ventura Boulevard  
city or town: Sherman Oaks state: CA zip code: 91423  
e-mail robert@chattel.us  
telephone: 818-788-7954  
date: 08/13/15

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**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.  
Attachment A:  
-USGS Topographic Map, Los Angeles, 2015  
  
Attachment B:  
-Los Angeles County Assessor's Office parcel map
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.  
  
Attachment C:  
-Schematic diagram and floor-by-floor construction history, which illustrate when additions were made to the building. Photographs are keyed to the schematic diagram.

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<sup>1</sup> This boundary description was taken from the 2005 National Register nomination; however, the assessor's parcel number has been corrected. Refer to the "Purpose of Amendment" section of this document for further information on the correction to the assessor's parcel number for the subject property.

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**Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.) \

Attachment D:

-National Register Nomination (June 30, 2005)

Attachment E:

-Historic Preservation Certification Application Part 1 – Evaluation of Significance (July 15, 2014)

(On a separate disk:)

-(5) Contemporary photographs that show the 1959-1964 addition to the building. (Keyed to schematic diagram)

### **Photographs**

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

### **Photo Log**

Name of Property: Sears, Roebuck & Company Mail Order Building

City or Vicinity: Los Angeles (Boyle Heights)

County: Los Angeles

State: CA

Photographer: Robert Chattel

Date Photographed: July 16, 2015

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

0001 / 1 of 5: East elevation, view west

0002 / 2 of 5: South elevation (left) and east elevation (right), view northwest

0003 / 3 of 5: South elevation, view north

0004 / 4 of 5: West elevation (left) and south elevation (right), view northeast

0005 / 5 of 5: West elevation, view east



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**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

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PURPOSE OF AMENDMENT

In 2006, the Sears, Roebuck & Company Mail Order Building, located at 2650 E. Olympic Boulevard in the Los Angeles neighborhood of Boyle Heights, was listed in the National Register of Historic Places. In the National Register nomination, an arbitrary period of significance from 1927-1955 was established, reflecting the 50-year cutoff date when the nomination was submitted. The portions of the building that were less than 50 years old at the time were determined not to have exceptional significance. As a result, the 1959-1964 additions that expanded the building’s footprint, as well as a 1970 alteration, were identified as non-contributing features.

The purpose of this amendment is to extend the period of significance for the Sears, Roebuck & Company Mail Order Building to encompass the 1959-1964 additions, to provide supplementary information clarifying how the building developed and was used over time, and to correct the Los Angeles County Assessor’s parcel number that was listed in the 2005 National Register nomination. This amendment recommends that the period of significance should be increased to span from 1927 to 1966 in order to recognize the southernmost rear addition as a contributing feature due to its centrality to Sears’s operations and because it has surpassed fifty years of age since the nomination was first submitted. The southernmost rear addition, which was added to the building in 1959 with further additions in 1964, was significant to the continued growth of the Sears, Roebuck & Company in the post-war period; it increased the amount of office and warehouse space necessary to process and store merchandise awaiting shipment to customers across the country. The proposed 1966 end date for the revised period of significance marks the year when the final significant addition to the property was completed. This date also coincides with the 1966 announcement that the western headquarters of Sears would move to a new building in Alhambra, California. Additionally, while reviewing the National Register nomination, the Los Angeles County Assessor’s Parcel Number (APN) that was listed was found to be incorrect. The correct APN for 2650 E. Olympic Boulevard is 5169-010-006 and should replace 5183-012-004 in all official records.

7, DESCRIPTION

SUMMARY

The Sears building is situated on a 12.3-acre parcel that encompasses an entire city block. It is bounded by Soto Street and Rio Vista Avenue to the east and west, and E. Olympic Boulevard and E. 12<sup>th</sup> Street to the north and south. Architect George C. Nimmons designed the original Sears building in the Art Deco style. Even at the time of completion in 1927, future additions to the building were anticipated as the company continued to grow at a rapid pace. Subsequent additions in 1929, 1936, 1940, 1945, 1959, and 1964 expanded the footprint of the building towards the south (rear). Reflecting their warehouse function and later date of construction, the additions, while not distracting from the original 1927 design, are more utilitarian in architectural character than the original 1927 building, the additions thus carry out the original vision for the property, and do not detract from the original design intent.

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NEW CONTRIBUTING FEATURE

Expanding the period of significance will specifically encompass the 1959-1964 addition to the building. The characteristics of the newly proposed contributing feature are described in the following narrative:<sup>1</sup>

Between 1959 and 1964, the Sears, Roebuck & Company completed a ten-story addition to the south of the 1940-1945 addition. In 1959 seven stories were added expanding the building to the south by seven bays, and in 1964, the top three stories were added. This further extension of the rectangular mass of the building accommodated additional flexible warehouse and office space. The 1959-1964 expansion was necessary to increase capacity as mail-order and retail operations grew in the post World War II years. All of the additions to the 1927 Art Deco building, including the 1959-1964 additions, are more utilitarian in appearance than the original design. While less architecturally detailed, the additions are consistent with and do not detract from the original design intent. In order to accommodate the 1959 expansion, the LA Paper Box Factory, a one-story commercial warehouse facing 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue, was demolished. By the end of all construction phases, the Sears building extended almost to the southern boundary of the property.<sup>2</sup> The last addition (1964) was built adjacent to the one-story Ingram building (now demolished) located at the corner of 12<sup>th</sup> Street and Rio Vista Avenue.

Like the earlier additions to the buildings, the 1959-1964 ten-story addition is of unornamented reinforced concrete construction. It is topped by a flat roof which is hidden by a plain parapet. Towers mark the locations of staircases and elevators. The addition measured seven bays on the side elevations (east and west) and seventeen bays on the rear (south elevation). Above the ground level, the rectangular alternation of piers and spandrels define bays of either industrial sash windows or blind panels.

As part of this addition, the loading dock area constructed as part of the 1940-1945 addition was expanded to the south and a one-story loading facility, comprised of exterior space covered and defined by a canopies, was erected at the southwest corner. Canopied loading docks also were built along the entirety of the south elevation, and along the west elevation, north of the Ingram building.

The interior of the 1959-1964 addition included staircases located at the southeast and southwest corners, restrooms along the west elevation, freight elevators along the south and east elevations, and a package chute towards the north end of the addition. Envisioned in this expansion was flexibility in the use of the floors depending on the company's needs. While the elevations of the addition were to be

<sup>1</sup> Information was excerpted from the "Historic Preservation Certification Application Part 1 – Evaluation of Significance," completed by Chattel, Inc. in July 2014. Only information regarding the additions made after 1959 is included in this document. For a complete history of the alterations to the building, see either the document entitled: "Historic Preservation Certification Application Part 1" or the original National Register nomination, see Attachment E.

<sup>2</sup> See the 1959-1964 addition noted in Attachment C schematic diagram. The 1959-1964 expansion was also completed in two phases. The first phase, which was completed in 1961, included the construction of seven of the ten stories. For the first phase of this addition, see: "1959 Mail Order Expansion, Sears Roebuck and Co.," drawings prepared by Bowen & Brown Inc., dated February 14, 1959 and Certificate of Occupancy Los Angeles Department of Building and Safety, permit LA 34883-59, issued March 3, 1961. Drawings for this addition indicate the remaining three stories were anticipated and are sketched in as "future addition." Although a certificate of occupancy for the remaining three stories was not located, drawings from a later period date this addition to 1964, indicating the remaining three stories were completed at this time.

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finished with industrial steel windows located in the center of most structural bays, some bays were left unfenestrated with temporary filler walls finished in plaster.<sup>3</sup> Infill of this nature would have allowed for easy installation of windows in the future if, at some point in time, Sears determined these areas needed to be reconfigured to accommodate a different use and to allow more natural light in these spaces.

#### NON-CONTRIBUTING FEATURES

In 1968, the firm Robert Clements & Associates was hired to update the image of the retail store located in the Sears building.<sup>4</sup> This work, which was completed in 1970, included construction of a new two-story addition, remodel of the existing one-story garden center located along the west elevation, and construction of a new one-story free-standing concession stand on the east elevation. Entrances to the north and east elevators were remodeled and new façade was installed that wrapped the lower bays of the north elevation and portions of the east and west elevations. The interior of the Sears retail store was remodeled and an escalator was added. Sometime in the recent past, the loading area along the west elevation was dismantled and the two, one-story loading facilities were removed.

Recently, filler walls of select bays on the eighth and ninth stories of the west, south, and east elevations have been removed and left open to the elements.

None of these additions or alterations are being proposed for inclusion in the National Register listing.

<sup>3</sup> "1959 Mail Order Expansion, Sears, Roebuck and Co.," drawings prepared by Bowen & Bowen, Inc. dated February 14, 1959. Details of the west elevation identify some infill areas and state as follows: "plaster interior only."

<sup>4</sup> "Additions and Alterations to Los Angeles Catalog Order Plant and Retail Store," drawings prepared by Robert Clements and Associates, dated July 29, 1970. It should be noted that Robert Clements is the son of the master architect Stiles Clements. Robert Clements' firm still exists and is now known as Clements and Clements. A newspaper article describing this addition by Clements stated the project was to be completed in the late summer of 1969; however, a certificate of occupancy for a "snack bar" was not issued until March 1970 ("Sears Store Being Given a New Look," *Los Angeles Times*, May 25, 1969, J18, and Certificate of Occupancy Los Angeles Department of Building and Safety, for permit LA 77212/68, issued March 10, 1970).

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8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Sears & Roebuck Mail Order Building in Los Angeles was previously found eligible for and listed in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A. The building was deemed historically significant in the context of commerce because of the central role played by Sears, Roebuck & Company in ushering in the era of mass consumption in the United States. This era corresponded with the post-World War II population boom and an explosion in the construction of single-family homes in California and the West. This building played a critical role in Sears' pioneering of the retail mail order business in the western United States.

SEARS, ROEBUCK & COMPANY

The following early history of Sears, Roebuck & Company (Sears) is quoted and summarized from the 2006 National Register nomination for the subject property (Teresa Grimes, May 15, 2009) as follows:

Sears, Roebuck & Company was synonymous with the surge in the mass consumer market in America during the early and mid-twentieth century. Richard Sears established the company in 1886 and within a short period of time, the company became one of the largest mail-order businesses in the country and the seventh largest corporation in the world. By 1927, Sears provided goods to eleven million customers, which equaled one out of every three American families, and it distributed over seventy-five million catalogs per year.

Julius Rosenwald, who assumed operation of the business in 1895, is largely attributed with the success of this mail-order empire. Under Rosenwald, Sears came to encompass all the processes of a capitalist enterprise, including the processes of extraction, fabrication, distribution, and consumption. He sought to offer rural customers a broad range of products and developed a new business ethic that promoted customer satisfaction. The company slogan, "Satisfaction Guaranteed or Your Money Back," for example, reflected this new philosophy. A new emphasis was also placed on economies of scale and the streamlining of product distribution, as business expanded and a new operating infrastructure was created.

During the late 1920s, as more people began to live and work in American cities, a shift emerged in the consumer market as retail stores eclipsed the success of the older mail-order businesses. To capitalize on these changes, Sears, Roebuck & Company hired Robert Wood, a former employee of Montgomery Ward, the company's major competitor. Wood worked to build upon the success of Sears's established mail-order business by developing a network of retail stores around the existing mail-order centers and distribution infrastructure. Additionally, Wood was quite savvy to launch a campaign to pursue new retail markets found among the rising working class.

The Sears, Roebuck & Company Mail Order Building in Los Angeles has been listed in the National Register as the only large mail-order plant constructed by Sears, Roebuck & Company in the southwestern United States. It was the seventh mail-order center built by the company and was only the second constructed on the west coast, the other being located in Seattle. The facility provided mail-

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order service to markets in California, Arizona, Utah, Nevada, western New Mexico, and Hawaii, as well as parts of Asia. It also contained the company's twelfth retail store, which was one of the few built in conjunction with a mail-order center.

SEARS BUILDING

As early as 1926 Sears announced plans to construct two buildings in Los Angeles, a joint mail-order plant and retail store, located on an eight-and-a-half acre site along what is now known as Olympic Boulevard, and a "mammoth" retail store at Vermont and Slauson Avenues.<sup>5</sup> The Sears building on Olympic Boulevard, with an estimated construction cost of over \$5,000,000, was erected at a record pace. It was completed in just 171 days, with construction occurring from late December 1926 into June of the next year.<sup>6</sup>

At the grand opening of the building on July 23, 1927, tours highlighted the "efficient" operation of the distribution center that allowed for products to be shipped within 24 hours of receiving the order by mail. This effort to generate interest in the Sears building reflected the large market soon to be even better served by the company. Although this was the seventh mail-order plant of its kind constructed in the United States for Sears, it was built to serve not only California, but almost the entire western United States, including Nevada, Utah, Arizona, parts of New Mexico, Hawaii, and portions of Asia.<sup>7</sup>

Design of the Sears building reflected a change in the way the company wished to be viewed by the American public. For the development of Sears's brand, offering high quality goods at low costs was just as important as constructing and occupying buildings that possessed a significant architectural presence. Sears wanted to present itself as a corporation that produced inexpensive and quality goods while it also buttressed its image through the creation of architecturally impressive buildings across the United States. The combination of these characteristics became integral with the Sears brand. Moreover, as the Chicago-based architecture firm of Nimmons, Carr and Wright continued to design buildings for Sears, the nexus between the utilization of efficient construction methods and materials and the creation of iconic and expressive works of icons of architecture was perfected. Architectural historian Richard Longstreth explains that, in contrast to the more "pedestrian" attempts at mail-order plans constructed earlier in Kansas City and Atlanta, the Los Angeles, Memphis, Boston, and Minneapolis locations for Sears found a happy medium between their utilitarian nature and a more "ambitious symbolic role."<sup>8</sup> Aside from the minimal sculptural detailing and massing said to reflect the designs of famous architects such as Eliel Saarinen and Bertram Goodhue, the buildings had a certain "non-western" approach to scale and proportion that created "beacons of modernity in their respective

<sup>5</sup> "Sears Roebuck & Company Coming to Los Angeles," *Los Angeles Times*, 5 Dec 1926: 2. The retail store opened in 1927 and closed in 1976; building is no longer extant.

<sup>6</sup> "New Building Mark Set," *Los Angeles Times*, 26 June 1927: E4.

<sup>7</sup> "Mail-order Plant Opening Prepared," *Los Angeles Times*, 22 July 1927: A3.

<sup>8</sup> Richard Longstreth, "Sears, Roebuck and the Remaking of the Department Store, 1924-1942," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 65, No. 2 (June, 2006): 242. Richard Longstreth is a noted architectural historian and in addition to writing about Sears retail stores, he has published extensively on the design of retail stores, particularly in Los Angeles.

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locations.”<sup>9</sup>

PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANCE

The original nomination states that 1927-1955 was arbitrarily determined to be the period of significance for the Sears & Roebuck Building since this nearly 30-year span reflected the peak in economic activity at the Los Angeles location.<sup>10</sup> When the Sears & Roebuck Mail Order Business Building was listed in 2006, only the portions of the building that were constructed prior to 1956 identified as historic. Because of Criteria Consideration G, the 1959 and 1964 additions were considered to lie outside of the period of significance and were therefore determined to be non-contributing features of the building. Presently, these additions have now reached 50 year threshold necessary for their consideration as contributing features of the building. Moreover, they retain sufficient integrity to convey their significance in the development of the Sears building and the company's role as a pioneer in the retail mail order business in the Western United States. Since the additions completed between 1959 and 1964 facilitated growth for Sears, Roebuck & Company according to a previously envisioned expansion scheme, and their timing coincided with an era of phenomenal growth in population and housing in the western United States in general and California in particular, they should now be recognized as contributing features.

The oldest portion of the Sears building in Los Angeles was constructed in 1927 during a pivotal era in its corporate history when the company transitioned its focus from mail-order to retail sales. Additions in 1929, 1936, 1939-1947, and 1959-1964 reflected and contributed to the company’s transition and rise as a retail powerhouse, especially in the western United States. The additions are significant for their association with the most important period of retail growth in the Western United States. These additions allowed the Sears building to efficiently store and manage distribution of an increased inventory to ship to customers and retail stores.

The period of national growth following World War II was an important era of expansion for Sears, in general, and particularly in regard to its Pacific Coast territory. Before the war, the territory was comprised of 65 retail stores in California, Oregon, Washington, Nevada, Arizona, and Utah.<sup>11</sup> By 1949, the company’s sales volume exceeded \$2 billion, and it operated 635 stores. This included 79 in the Pacific Coast territory. Los Angeles was identified as a “hot spot,” as it was home to the largest retail store in the company’s portfolio.<sup>12</sup> In 1952, Sears identified California as “one of the nation’s best retail markets” and Southern California, specifically, as an important area for future expansion.<sup>13</sup> By 1955, California accounted for the largest percentage of company sales, which was \$3.2 billion.<sup>14</sup>

The warehouse, distribution, and merchandising facilities at the Los Angeles location were essential to

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, 244.

<sup>10</sup> Sears, Roebuck & Company Mail Order Building National Register Nomination, 2006: Section 8, page 3.

<sup>11</sup> “Barrows Named to New Sears Post,” *Los Angeles Times*, 7 Jan 1941: 25.

<sup>12</sup> “Sears Roebuck Names Angeleno as Coast Chief,” *Los Angeles Times*, 11 Jan 1949: A2.

<sup>13</sup> “Sears Executives See Bright California Future,” *Los Angeles Times*, 18 Jul 1952: A2.

<sup>14</sup> “Sears Schedules \$50,000,000 a Year Expansion,” *Los Angeles Times*, 24 Nov 1955: 40.

**United States Department of the Interior**  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Sears, Roebuck & Company Mail Order Building
Name of Property
Los Angeles County, CA
County and State
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number 8 Page 4

the entire southwestern United States region in the postwar period as mail-order sales expanded. To keep up with the growth, Sears executives understood that expansion of the Los Angeles facility was necessary. The addition to the rear of the building, completed in 1964, was intended to provide additional warehouse space and office space to support the company's operations. As Sears continued to expand operations, additions to the Sears building were both integral to the company and necessary. Soon, it was clear that further expansion at 2650 East Olympic Blvd was no longer feasible. Sears officials determined that a new site was essential to facilitate growth of the company by separating the administrative headquarters function from the mail-order warehouse and local retail operation. In 1966, Sears officially announced the construction of a new western corporate headquarters in Alhambra, putting an end to 39 years of continual expansion of the Sears building that served as a mail-order plant, a retail store, and the company's western corporate headquarters.

Given that the original period of significance included several additions to the building that were necessary to facilitate the continuing expansion of operations at the Sears Los Angeles location, it is appropriate to extend the period of significance to 1966. This extension of the period of significance will then encompass the final expansion of the building, which more accurately reflects Sears's substantial postwar role in the retail and catalog business, especially in the western United States.



SEARS, ROEBUCK & CO. MAIL ORDER BUILDING  
**ATTACHMENT A:**  
**USGS LOS ANGELES TOPOGRAPHIC MAP, 2015**

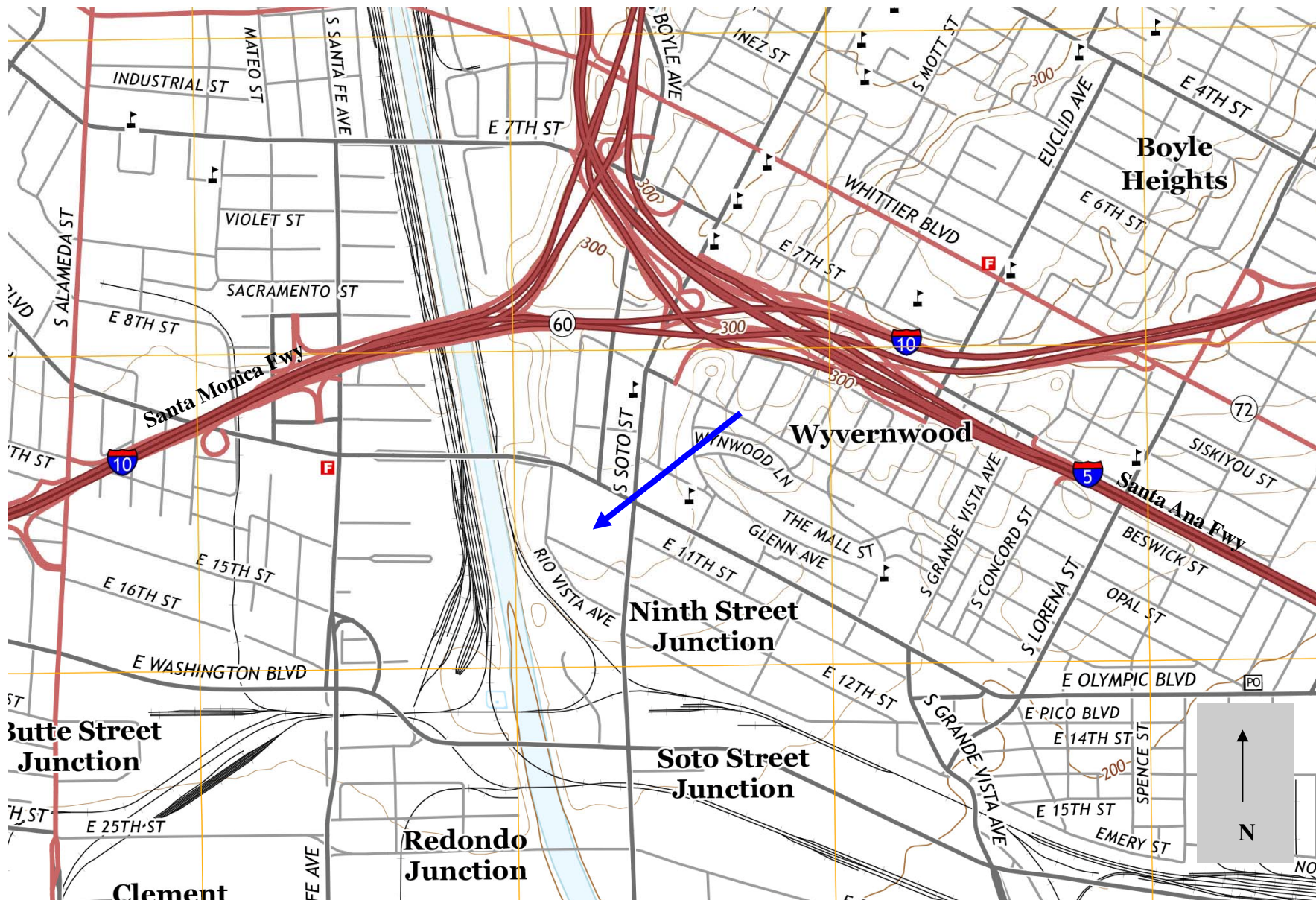


Figure 1: USGS Los Angeles Topographic Map, 2015. Project site highlighted by blue arrow.

SEARS, ROEBUCK & CO. MAIL ORDER BUILDING  
**ATTACHMENT B:**  
**PARCEL MAP**

NATIONAL REGISTER AMENDMENT  
 SEARS, ROEBUCK & Co. MAIL ORDER BUILDING  
 ATTACHMENT B: PARCEL MAP

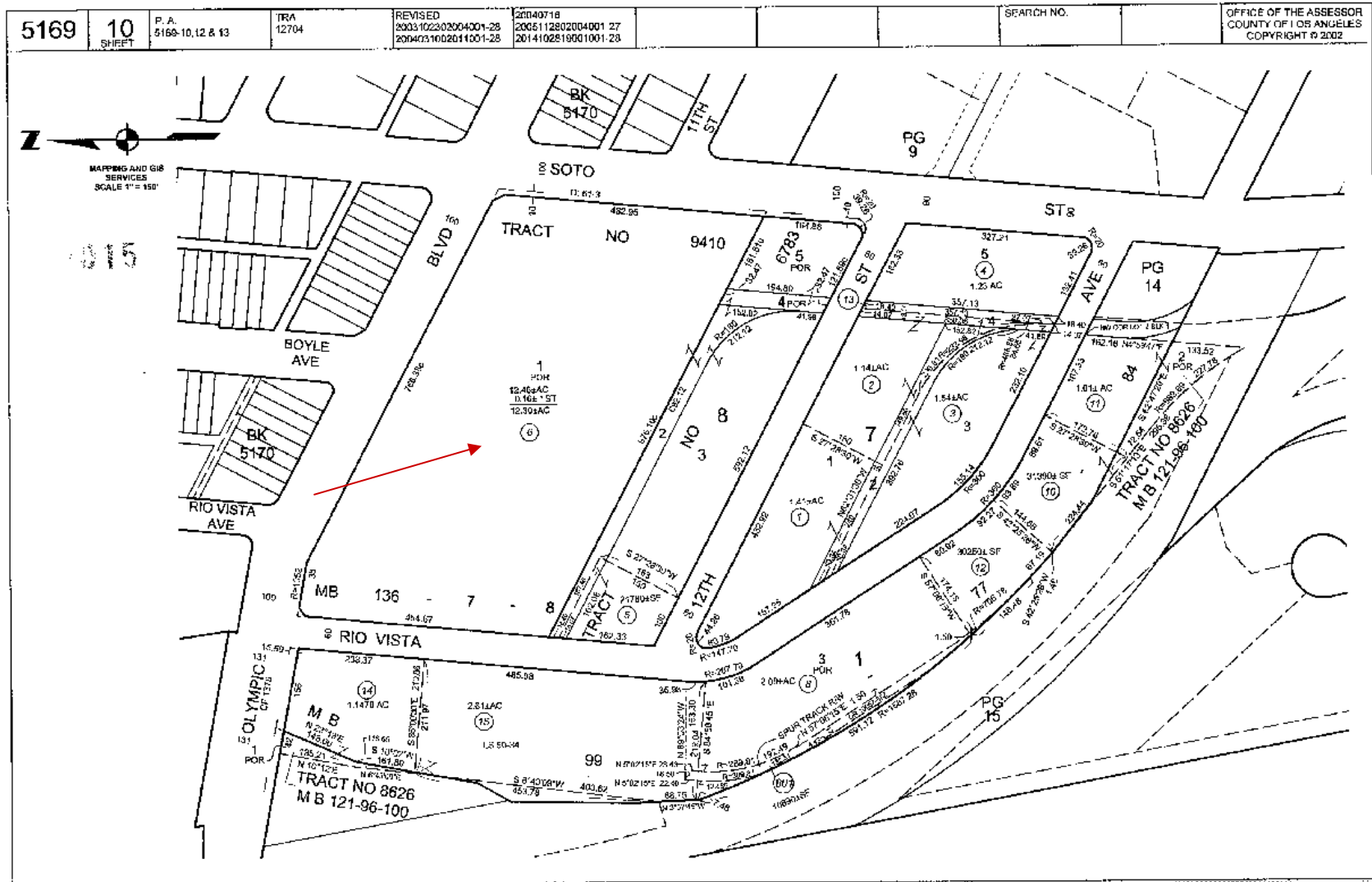
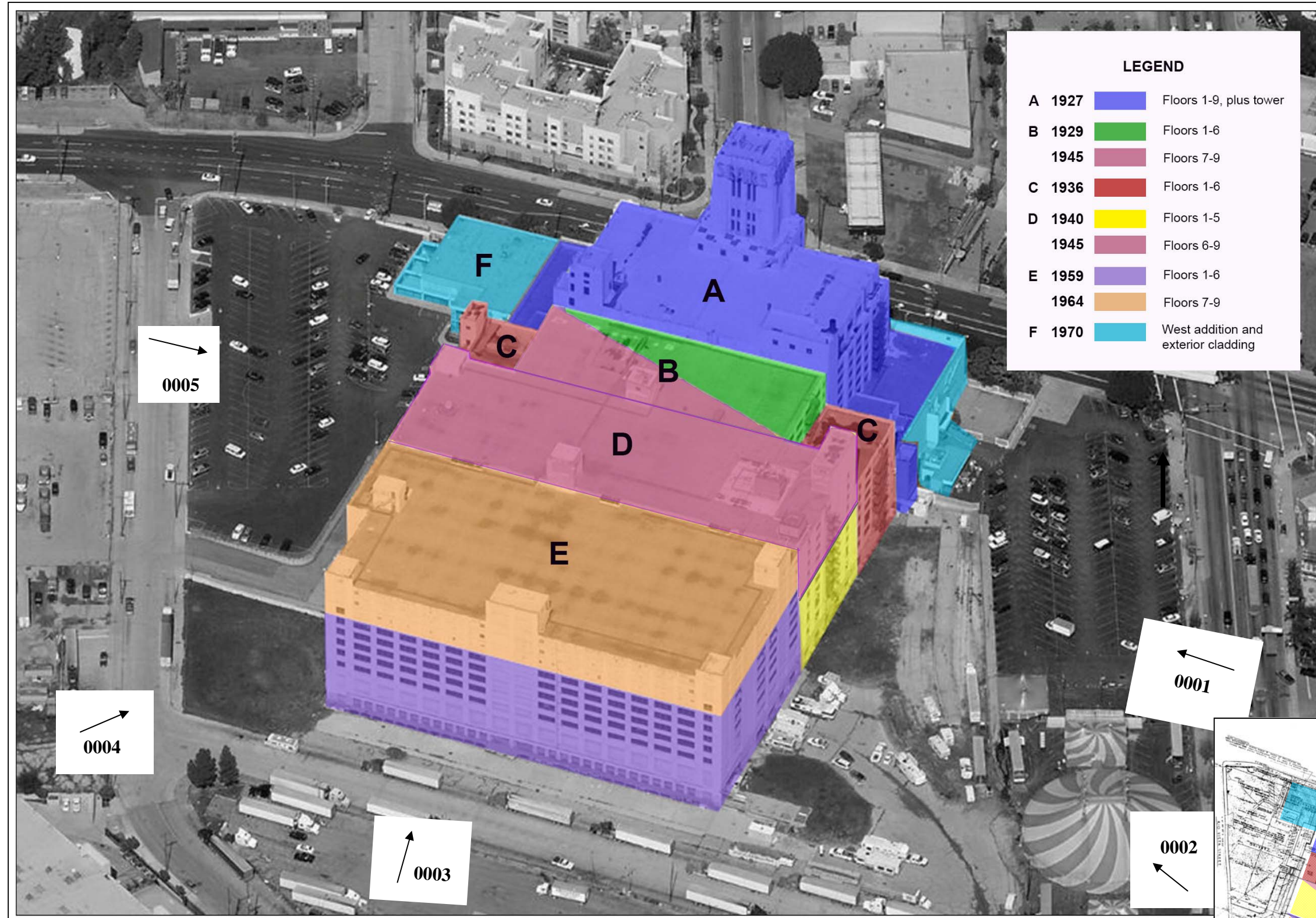


Figure: Los Angeles County Assessor's Parcel Map of the project site. Project site highlighted by red arrow.

SEARS, ROEBUCK & CO. MAIL ORDER BUILDING  
**ATTACHMENT C:**  
**SCHEMATIC DIAGRAM, INCLUDING PHOTO KEY**  
**AND**  
**FLOOR BY FLOOR CONSTRUCTION HISTORY**

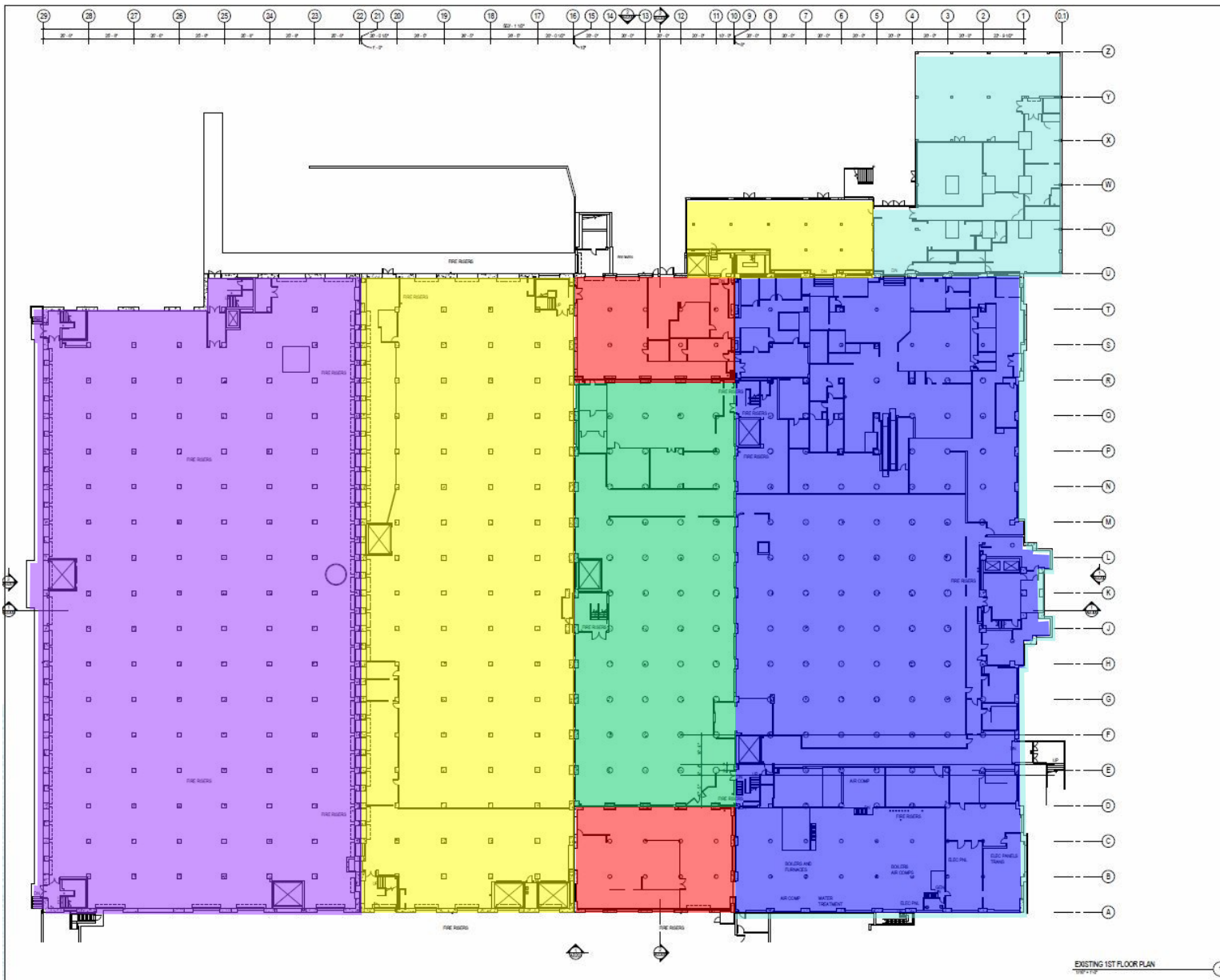




LEGEND		
A	1927	Floors 1-9, plus tower
B	1929	Floors 1-6
	1945	Floors 7-9
C	1936	Floors 1-6
D	1940	Floors 1-5
	1945	Floors 6-9
E	1959	Floors 1-6
	1964	Floors 7-9
F	1970	West addition and exterior cladding

BIRD'S EYE VIEW LOOKING NORTH

**NATIONAL REGISTER AMENDMENT  
SEARS, ROEBUCK, & COMPANY MAIL ORDER BUILDING  
2650 EAST OLYMPIC BOULEVARD  
ATTACHMENT C: FLOOR-BY-FLOOR CONSTRUCTION HISTORY**



Legend	
<span style="display: inline-block; width: 20px; height: 10px; background-color: blue; border: 1px solid black;"></span>	1927
<span style="display: inline-block; width: 20px; height: 10px; background-color: green; border: 1px solid black;"></span>	1929
<span style="display: inline-block; width: 20px; height: 10px; background-color: red; border: 1px solid black;"></span>	1936
<span style="display: inline-block; width: 20px; height: 10px; background-color: yellow; border: 1px solid black;"></span>	1940
<span style="display: inline-block; width: 20px; height: 10px; background-color: pink; border: 1px solid black;"></span>	1945
<span style="display: inline-block; width: 20px; height: 10px; background-color: purple; border: 1px solid black;"></span>	1959
<span style="display: inline-block; width: 20px; height: 10px; background-color: orange; border: 1px solid black;"></span>	1964
<span style="display: inline-block; width: 20px; height: 10px; background-color: cyan; border: 1px solid black;"></span>	1970

**First floor**



**NATIONAL REGISTER AMENDMENT  
SEARS, ROEBUCK, & COMPANY MAIL ORDER BUILDING  
2650 EAST OLYMPIC BOULEVARD  
ATTACHMENT C: FLOOR-BY-FLOOR CONSTRUCTION HISTORY**

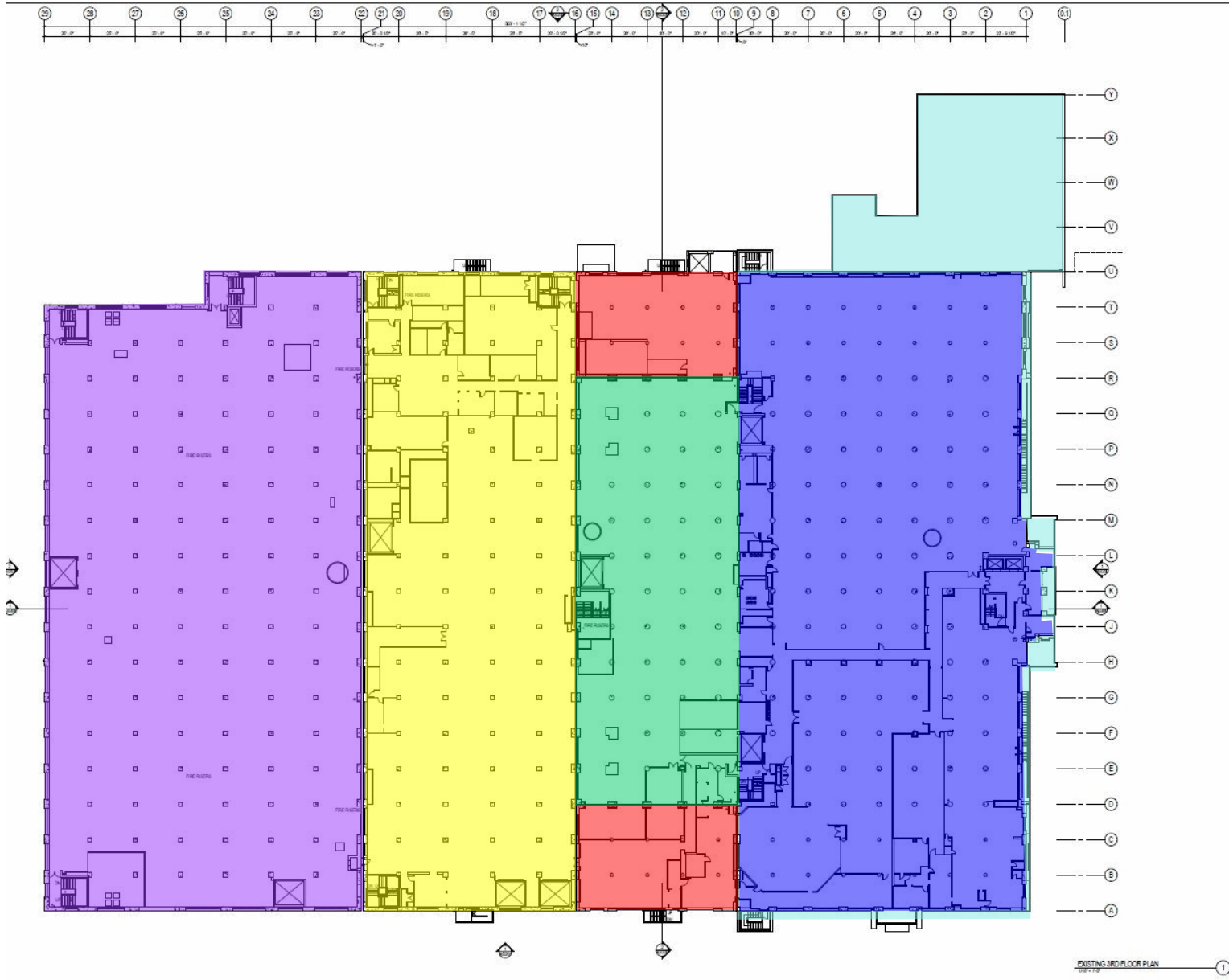


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**Second Floor**



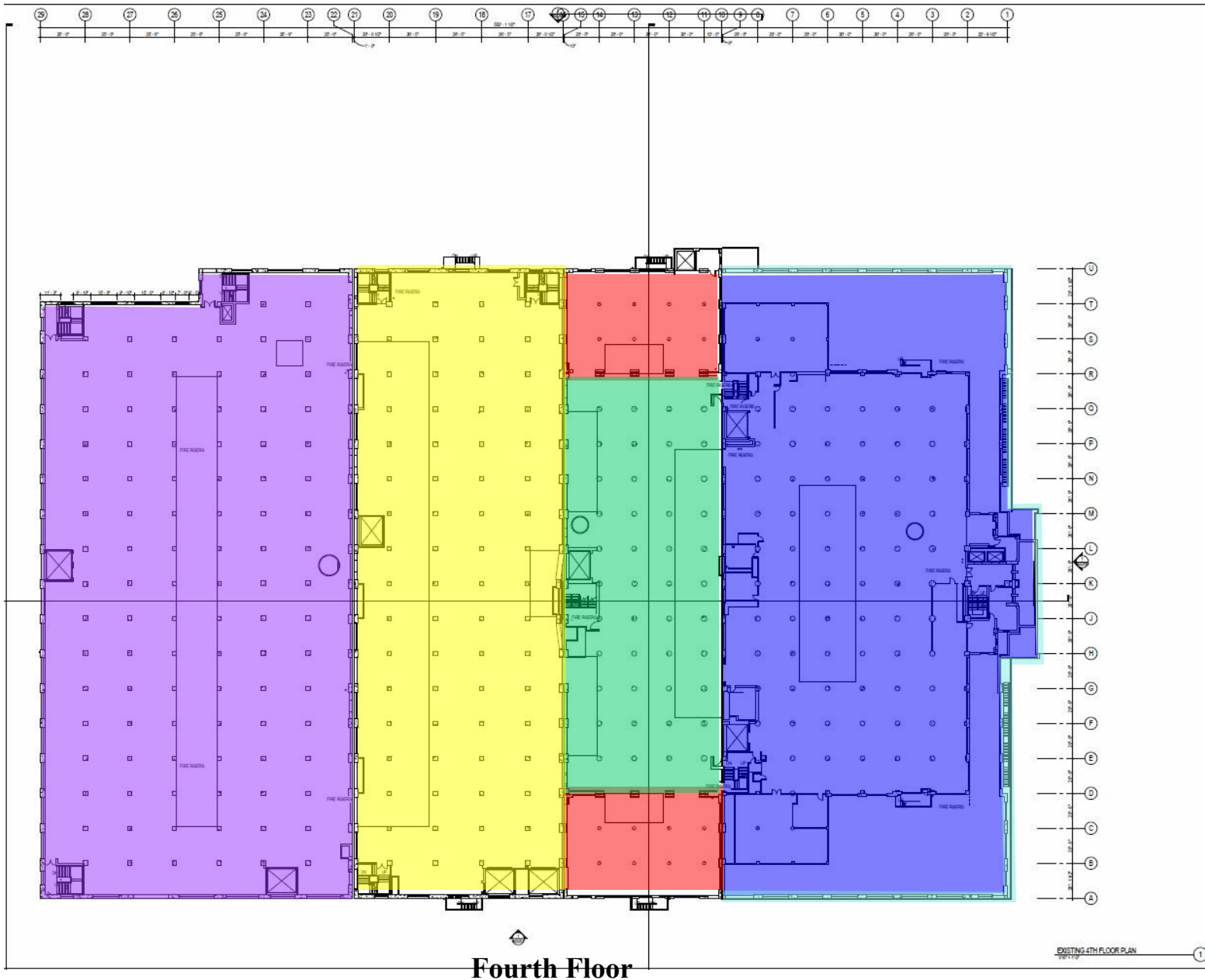
**NATIONAL REGISTER AMENDMENT  
SEARS, ROEBUCK, & COMPANY MAIL ORDER BUILDING  
2650 EAST OLYMPIC BOULEVARD  
ATTACHMENT C: FLOOR-BY-FLOOR CONSTRUCTION HISTORY**



Legend	
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<span style="display:inline-block; width:20px; height:10px; background-color:red; border:1px solid black;"></span>	1936
<span style="display:inline-block; width:20px; height:10px; background-color:yellow; border:1px solid black;"></span>	1940
<span style="display:inline-block; width:20px; height:10px; background-color:pink; border:1px solid black;"></span>	1945
<span style="display:inline-block; width:20px; height:10px; background-color:purple; border:1px solid black;"></span>	1959
<span style="display:inline-block; width:20px; height:10px; background-color:orange; border:1px solid black;"></span>	1964
<span style="display:inline-block; width:20px; height:10px; background-color:cyan; border:1px solid black;"></span>	1970

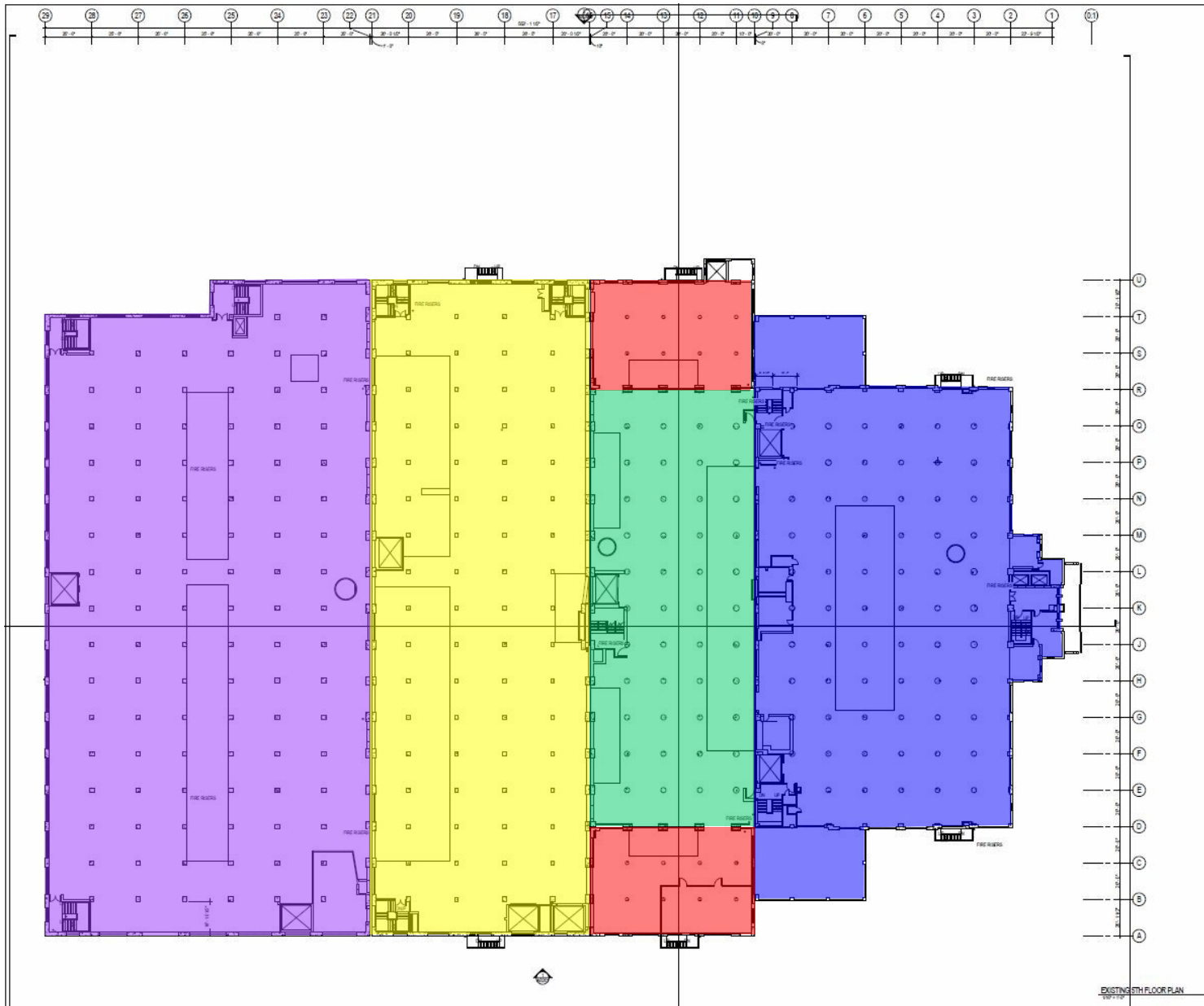
**Third Floor**









**NATIONAL REGISTER AMENDMENT  
SEARS, ROEBUCK, & COMPANY MAIL ORDER BUILDING  
2650 EAST OLYMPIC BOULEVARD  
ATTACHMENT C: FLOOR-BY-FLOOR CONSTRUCTION HISTORY**



Legend	
	1927
	1929
	1936
	1940
	1945
	1959
	1964
	1970

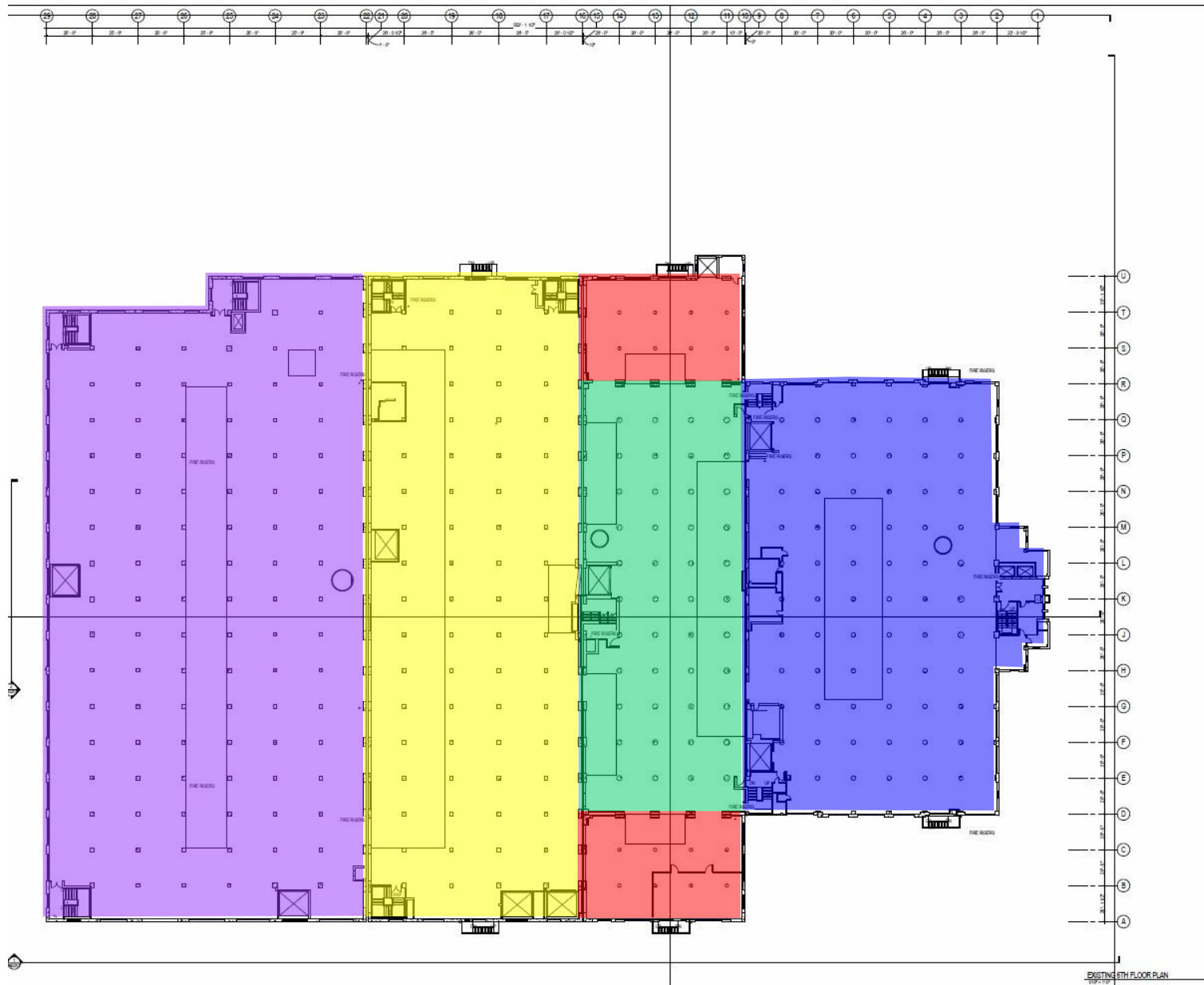
**NATIONAL REGISTER AMENDMENT  
SEARS, ROEBUCK, & COMPANY MAIL ORDER BUILDING  
2650 EAST OLYMPIC BOULEVARD  
ATTACHMENT C: FLOOR-BY-FLOOR CONSTRUCTION HISTORY**



Legend	
	1927
	1929
	1936
	1940
	1945
	1959
	1964
	1970

**Fifth Floor**

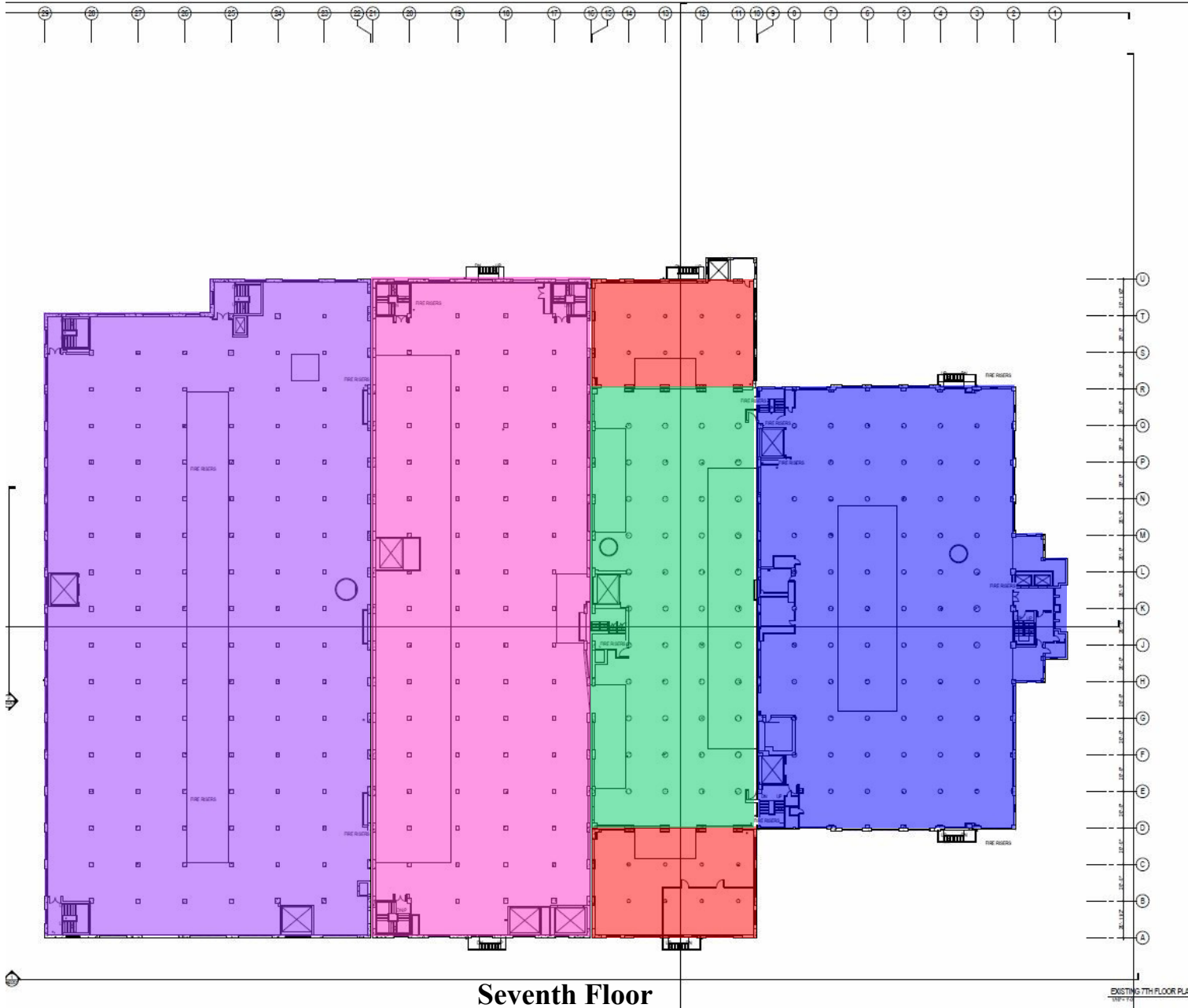
**NATIONAL REGISTER AMENDMENT  
SEARS, ROEBUCK, & COMPANY MAIL ORDER BUILDING  
2650 EAST OLYMPIC BOULEVARD  
ATTACHMENT C: FLOOR-BY-FLOOR CONSTRUCTION HISTORY**



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<span style="display: inline-block; width: 20px; height: 10px; background-color: #FF4500; border: 1px solid black;"></span>	1936
<span style="display: inline-block; width: 20px; height: 10px; background-color: #FFFF00; border: 1px solid black;"></span>	1940
<span style="display: inline-block; width: 20px; height: 10px; background-color: #FF69B4; border: 1px solid black;"></span>	1945
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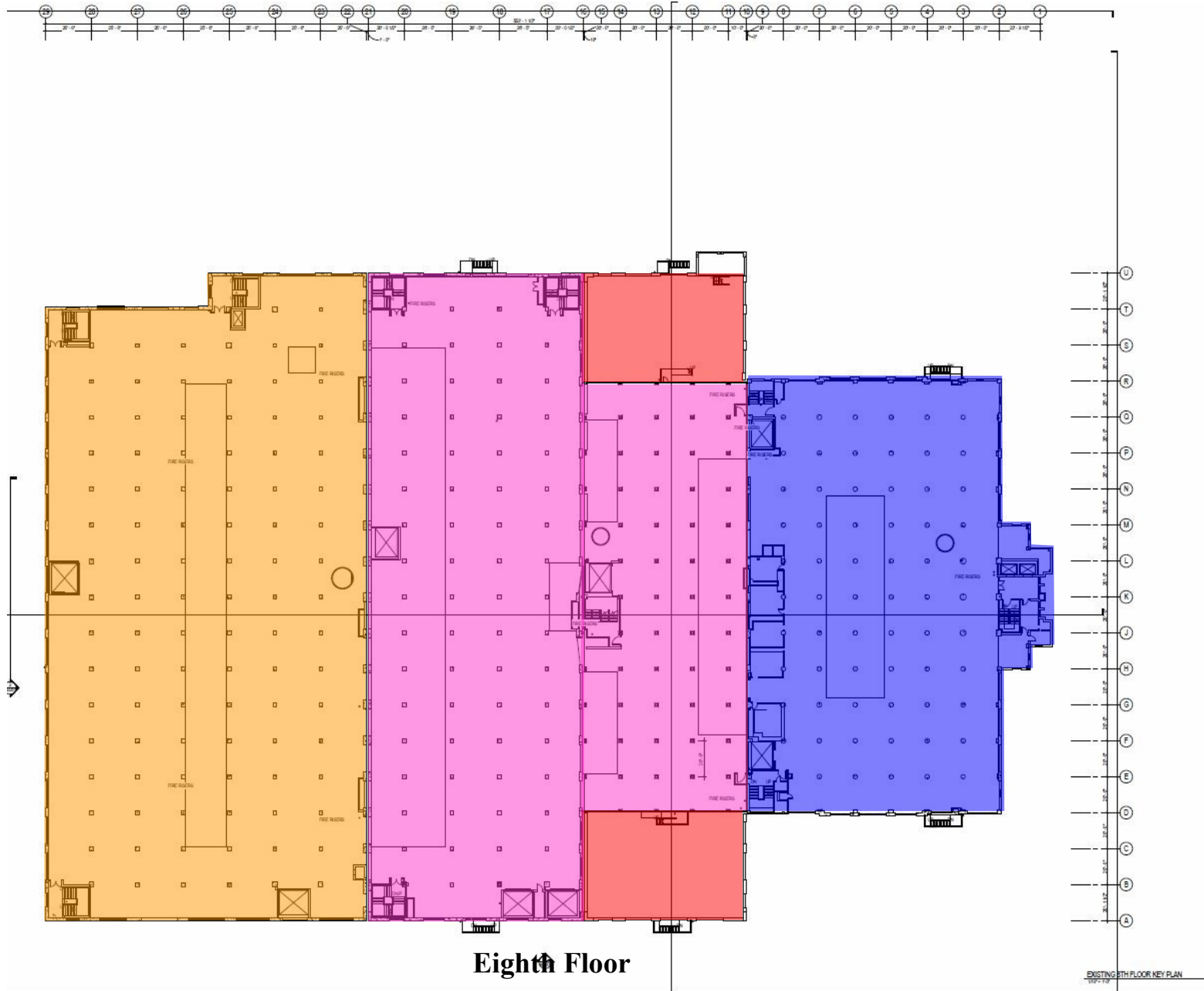
**Sixth Floor**

**NATIONAL REGISTER AMENDMENT  
SEARS, ROEBUCK, & COMPANY MAIL ORDER BUILDING  
2650 EAST OLYMPIC BOULEVARD  
ATTACHMENT C: FLOOR-BY-FLOOR CONSTRUCTION HISTORY**



Legend	
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<span style="display:inline-block; width:20px; height:10px; background-color:red; border:1px solid black;"></span>	1936
<span style="display:inline-block; width:20px; height:10px; background-color:yellow; border:1px solid black;"></span>	1940
<span style="display:inline-block; width:20px; height:10px; background-color:purple; border:1px solid black;"></span>	1945
<span style="display:inline-block; width:20px; height:10px; background-color:lightblue; border:1px solid black;"></span>	1959
<span style="display:inline-block; width:20px; height:10px; background-color:orange; border:1px solid black;"></span>	1964
<span style="display:inline-block; width:20px; height:10px; background-color:cyan; border:1px solid black;"></span>	1970









**NATIONAL REGISTER AMENDMENT  
SEARS, ROEBUCK, & COMPANY MAIL ORDER BUILDING  
2650 EAST OLYMPIC BOULEVARD  
ATTACHMENT C: FLOOR-BY-FLOOR CONSTRUCTION HISTORY**



Legend	
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<span style="display: inline-block; width: 20px; height: 10px; background-color: red; border: 1px solid black;"></span>	1936
<span style="display: inline-block; width: 20px; height: 10px; background-color: yellow; border: 1px solid black;"></span>	1940
<span style="display: inline-block; width: 20px; height: 10px; background-color: pink; border: 1px solid black;"></span>	1945
<span style="display: inline-block; width: 20px; height: 10px; background-color: purple; border: 1px solid black;"></span>	1959
<span style="display: inline-block; width: 20px; height: 10px; background-color: orange; border: 1px solid black;"></span>	1964
<span style="display: inline-block; width: 20px; height: 10px; background-color: cyan; border: 1px solid black;"></span>	1970



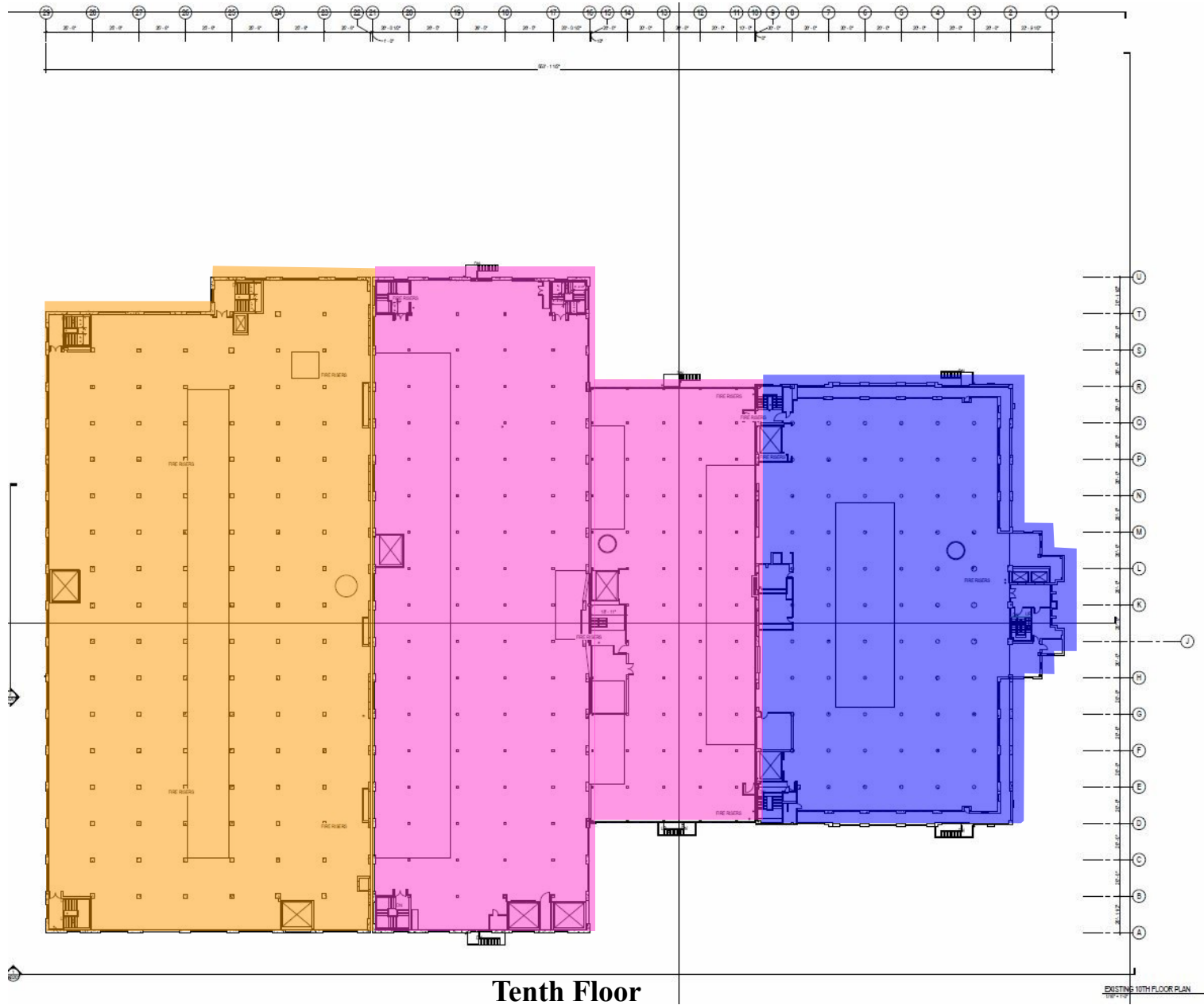
**NATIONAL REGISTER AMENDMENT  
SEARS, ROEBUCK, & COMPANY MAIL ORDER BUILDING  
2650 EAST OLYMPIC BOULEVARD  
ATTACHMENT C: FLOOR-BY-FLOOR CONSTRUCTION HISTORY**

Legend	
	1927
	1929
	1936
	1940
	1945
	1959
	1964
	1970



**Ninth Floor**

**NATIONAL REGISTER AMENDMENT  
SEARS, ROEBUCK, & COMPANY MAIL ORDER BUILDING  
2650 EAST OLYMPIC BOULEVARD  
ATTACHMENT C: FLOOR-BY-FLOOR CONSTRUCTION HISTORY**



Legend	
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<span style="display: inline-block; width: 20px; height: 10px; background-color: red; border: 1px solid black;"></span>	1936
<span style="display: inline-block; width: 20px; height: 10px; background-color: yellow; border: 1px solid black;"></span>	1940
<span style="display: inline-block; width: 20px; height: 10px; background-color: pink; border: 1px solid black;"></span>	1945
<span style="display: inline-block; width: 20px; height: 10px; background-color: purple; border: 1px solid black;"></span>	1959
<span style="display: inline-block; width: 20px; height: 10px; background-color: orange; border: 1px solid black;"></span>	1964
<span style="display: inline-block; width: 20px; height: 10px; background-color: cyan; border: 1px solid black;"></span>	1970



SEARS, ROEBUCK & CO. MAIL ORDER BUILDING  
**ATTACHMENT D:**  
**2005 NATIONAL REGISTER NOMINATION**

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section \_\_\_\_\_ Page \_\_\_\_\_

=====

**SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD**

NRIS Reference Number: 05001407

Date Listed: 4/21/2006

Sears, Roebuck & Company

Mail Order Building

Los Angeles

CA

Property Name

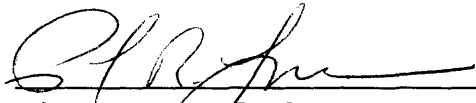
County

State

N/A

Multiple Name

-----  
This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.

  
-----  
Signature of the Keeper

4/21/06  
-----  
Date of Action

-----  
Amended Items in Nomination:

**U. T. M. Coordinates:**

The corrected U. T. M coordinates for the Sears property should read:

A.	11	387080	3765460
B.	11	387480	3765320
C.	11	387440	3765000
D.	11	387120	3765120

[The polygon created by the UTM points generally encompasses the nominated parcel, but does not define the exact boundaries. The boundaries are presented more precisely in the verbal boundary description and sketch map.]

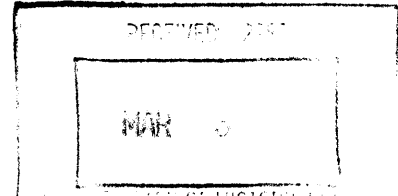
These clarifications were confirmed with the CA SHPO office.

-----  
**DISTRIBUTION:**

- National Register property file
- Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form



This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "X" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name **Sears, Roebuck & Company Mail Order Building**

other names/site number

2. Location

street & number **2650 East Olympic Boulevard** NA  not for publication

city or town **Los Angeles** NA  vicinity

state **California** code **CA** county **Los Angeles** code **039** zip code **90023**

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, 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.)

*Stephen D. Mikesell*  
Signature of certifying official

*3/10/06*  
Date

California Office of Historic Preservation  
State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
  - See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register
  - See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

*[Signature]*

*4/21/06*

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply)

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

**Category of Property**  
(Check only one box)

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

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		Buildings
		Sites
		Structures
		Objects
1		Total

**Name of related multiple property listing**  
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A \_\_\_\_\_

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

0 \_\_\_\_\_

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE – Department Store, Warehouse

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE – Department Store, Warehouse

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

MODERN MOVEMENT – Art Deco

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete

roof Concrete & Synthetics

walls Concrete

other \_\_\_\_\_

**Narrative Description**

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

**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations**

(Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or a grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

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

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE

**Period of Significance**

1927-1955

**Significant Dates**

1927 - building constructed

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

NA

**Cultural Affiliation**

NA

**Architect/Builder**

Nimmons, George C., architect

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

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

**Primary Location of Additional Data**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

\_\_\_\_\_

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of Property 12.3 acres

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
1	11	387300	3765300	3	—	—	—
2	—	—	—	4	—	—	—

 See continuation sheet.**Verbal Boundary Description**

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

**Boundary Justification**

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

**11. Form Prepared By**name/title **Teresa Grimes**organization \_\_\_\_\_ date **June 30, 2005**street & number **4211 Glenalbyn** telephone **323-221-0942**city or town **Los Angeles** state **CA** zip code **90065****Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

**Continuation Sheets****Maps**A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.**Photographs**Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.**Additional items**

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

**Property Owner**

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

Name **10309 Folsom Blvd. L.P., attn: Mark Weinstein**street & number **1640 5<sup>th</sup> Street, Suite 112** telephone **310-395-3430**city or town **Los Angeles** state **CA** zip code **90401****Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*).**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

**United States Department of the Interior**  
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**Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 1

Sears, Roebuck & Company Mail Order Building  
Los Angeles County, California

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The Sears, Roebuck & Company Mail Order Building is located on a 22-acre parcel of land at the southwest corner of Olympic Boulevard and Soto Street. Constructed of reinforced concrete, the building has an irregular plan and a flat roof. A wide two-story base surrounds the building's nine-story mass. The tall central tower divides the primary elevation. The tower, steeped profile, and cast stone ornamentation around the entrances are all evocative of the Art Deco style. The two-story sections on the front (north) facade, as well as portions on the east and west, were covered with a flat-panel cladding system in 1964. A series of additions were made to the rear of the building between 1929 and 1964. Nevertheless, the building continues to retain sufficient integrity to convey its feeling, association, location, setting, materials, and design.

The original portion of the building has a rectangular shape with an east-west orientation. The central tower provides a strong vertical emphasis to the mostly nine-story mass of the building. Its form and ornamentation are the focal point of the design. Windows are stacked vertically in two columns and run up the center of the tower on all four sides. As the tower rises to the top it steps back and is vertically articulated with narrow bas-relief panels. The two wings on either side of the tower are identical in design. Along the primary elevation these wings step down to eight stories. Cast stone elements and other formed concrete decorations mark the roof parapets.

The retail store is located in the lower two stories of the north end of the building, which fronts Olympic Boulevard. This portion of the building was remodeled in 1964. Originally it was designed in an A-B-C-B-A pattern with the main entrance located at the base of the tower. The design of the main entrance repeated the design of the tower in that it stood out from the rest of the base. Massive piers to each side stepped up as they rose vertically. Bas-relief panels accented the top of each pier and three more were positioned above the side-by-side doorways. This set of doorways was framed by bas-relief work. Above the doorways were multi-paned windows. The middle bays were more simply detailed the outer bays, which featured ornamentation similar to that used on the tower and main entrance. Secondary entrances were located on the east and west sides, and were probably more heavily used than the main entrance as they were related to the surface parking lots on each side of the building. The fenestration on all floors consisted of large metal-frame industrial windows set in large horizontal openings between the piers. Many of the windows contained paired sets of operating casement sashes. Metal fire escapes climbed the building on the east and west elevations, and a series of basement level loading docks characterized the south elevation. Elevators used by the mail order departments were located at the southeast and west corners.

Additions were planned for the south end of the building as the business grew and that turned out to be the case. The first addition was made in 1929. The existing Art Deco style entrance on the west elevation dates from this period. Other additions followed in 1940, 1959, and 1964. The 1929 and 1940 additions are illustrated on the 1950 Sanborn Map in section 10 page 15 of this application. Each

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**National Register of Historic Places**  
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Section number 7 Page 2

Sears, Roebuck & Company Mail Order Building  
Los Angeles County, California

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addition consisted of reinforced concrete construction, but the engineering was different in each phase. Steel-framed casement windows continued to be used but were slightly different in each addition. In some cases, window openings on the side and rear additions have been closed. The 1940 alterations also included the existing signage on top of the tower.

The upper floors of the north end and all of the south end of the building was used by the mail order department. Many of the upper floors retain the open floor plans. Most remain unaltered. The reinforced concrete construction that characterizes the building, including the structural columns and solid floor slabs, is visible throughout the interior. The original building features mushroom-shaped columns and solid floor slabs, while the additions employ the more traditional use of square columns and concrete beams and girders.

On the east and west sides of the building are surface parking lots. On the rear, the loading dock is set just off 12<sup>th</sup> Street. There are a few mature specimen trees, mostly *Chorisia speciosa* along the front (north) elevation. They do not appear to have been part of a designed historic landscape plan. The property is otherwise void of plant life.

While the 1959 and 1964 rear additions do not detract from the significance of the building, they are not character-defining features. In fact, it was anticipated that additions would be required as business grew. The changes to the front of the building are incompatible with the historic architecture, but reversible. Much of the original material remains underneath the existing cladding, as it was integral to the structural system of the building. The existing cladding consists of pre-cast concrete aggregate panels with steel frames. The use, layout, and circulation system in this part of the building were not changed. The main entrance on Olympic Boulevard and the side entrances off the adjacent parking lots continue to function as they did originally. However, the doorways have been replaced and they were reclad with travertine. Given the massive scale of the structure, the unaltered state of the upper floors, the reversibility of the 1964 changes, the building continues to retain sufficient integrity to reflect its historic significance.



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**Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8    Page                    3    Sears, Roebuck & Company Mail Order Building  
Los Angeles County, California

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The Sears, Roebuck & Company Mail Order Building is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A. The building is historically significant in the context of commerce for its strong association with Sears, Roebuck & Company. Perhaps no other business institution in the United States is as responsible for ushering in the era of mass consumption as Sears, Roebuck & Company. Originally constructed in 1927, the Los Angeles building housed Sears, Roebuck & Company's warehouse, distribution, and merchandising facilities for the entire southwestern United States, as well as one of the company's early retail stores. As such, the Los Angeles building played a critical role in the success of the company. Although the company continues to occupy the retail store, the period of significance has been arbitrarily set at 1955 because nothing of exceptional importance occurred after that time. Like most commercial structures, the Los Angeles building has seen alterations and additions over the years. Yet the original building is easily envisioned without its later appendages and continues to convey its role in the commercial history of the nation.

Sears, Roebuck & Company was synonymous with the surge in the mass consumer market in America during the early and mid-twentieth century. Established in 1886 by Richard Sears, the company became one of the largest mail-order businesses in the country and the seventh largest corporation in the world. By 1927, Sears provided goods to eleven million customers, equaling one out of every three American families, and distributed over seventy-five million catalogs per year.

Julius Rosenwald, who assumed operation of the business in 1895, leaving Richard Sears to market the company's products, is largely attributed with the success of this mail-order empire. Under Rosenwald, Sears came to encompass all the processes of a capitalistic enterprise, including the processes of extraction, fabrication, distribution, and consumption. He sought to offer rural customers a broad range of products, and developed a new business ethic that promoted customer satisfaction. The company slogan, "Satisfaction Guaranteed or Your Money Back," for example, reflected this new philosophy. A new emphasis was also placed on economies of scale and the streamlining of product distribution, as business expanded and a new operating infrastructure was created.

The infrastructure necessary to sustain the company's expansion rested upon ten (later twelve) mail-order centers strategically located across the country. Constructed between 1906 and 1928, these centers handled the processing and distribution of orders from customers, and were specifically located so that most customer orders could be filled in three to four days. In these buildings was captured the scale and ambition of the country's rapid expansion and improving standard of living. They remain architectural centerpieces in the neighborhoods they occupy and some are, to this day, among the largest structures in their respective regions.

During the late 1920s as more people began to live and work in American cities, a shift emerged in the consumer market as retail stores eclipsed the success of the older mail-order businesses. To capitalize on

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# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8    Page                    4    Sears, Roebuck & Company Mail Order Building  
Los Angeles County, California

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these changes, Sears, Roebuck & Company hired General Robert Wood in 1924. Formerly employed by Montgomery Ward, the company's major competitor, Wood launched a campaign to pursue new retail markets found in the rising American working class.

Wood built upon the success of Sears' established mail-order business by building a network of retail stores around the existing mail-order centers and distribution infrastructure. In fact, many of the mail-order centers constructed in the late 1920s, including the one in Los Angeles, incorporated retail stores in their original design as a result. Wood's strategy was a success. Between 1925 and 1927, twenty-two Sears' stores opened in major United States cities. In 1929, there were three hundred twenty-four stores, and by 1932 the company's retail sales surpassed those of the mail-order sales.

Sears, Roebuck & Company sold most of its mail-order centers in a wave of restructuring starting in the 1980s. Only the Los Angeles distribution center continued to function, while the centers in Philadelphia and Kansas City were demolished. In 1994 the company left the mail-order business discontinuing the publication of its catalog. While the warehouse space in the Los Angeles building became obsolete, the retail store continues to operate.

The Sears, Roebuck & Company Mail Order Building in Los Angeles merits listing in the National Register as the only large mail-order plant constructed by Sears, Roebuck & Company in the southwestern United States. It was the seventh mail-order center built by the company and was only the second constructed on the west coast, the other being located in Seattle. The facility provided mail-order service to markets in California, Arizona, Utah, Nevada, western New Mexico, and Hawaii, as well as parts of Asia. It also contained the company's twelfth retail store and one of the few built in conjunction with a mail-order center.

The only comparable building in California to the subject building was the Montgomery Ward Building in Oakland. It was an eight-story, 950,000 square-foot store and mail-order warehouse of reinforced concrete frame and slab floors which was originally constructed in 1923. It was thereafter expanded by the addition of connected warehouse buildings and a multi-story parking garage. It became the first branch of Montgomery Ward Company in California, and distributed merchandise throughout the western states, much of it manufactured by local enterprises.

The history of Montgomery Ward Company is similar to that of Sears, Roebuck & Company. In 1872 Aaron Montgomery Ward, a traveling salesman created a single sheet catalogue with one hundred sixty-three items that customers could order through the mail. By 1883, the catalogue had expanded to ten thousand items covering two hundred forty pages. Like Sears, the company entered the retail business in the 1920s, opening its first store in Plymouth, Indiana in 1926. By 1928 the company had two hundred forty-four stores. In 1930, Sears proposed a merger of the two companies, but Montgomery Ward

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Company declined the offer. The company's position began to shift in the 1960s as Sears, and J.C. Penney began to dominate the market. Later those companies would see their positions decline as the likes of K-mart, Target, and Wal-Mart expanded. The catalogue was discontinued in 1985 so that the company could focus on its retail stores.

The following year the company ceased operations in Oakland and vacated the building. Plagued with financial problems during the 1990s, the company filed for bankruptcy in 2000. The site in Oakland was eventually sold to the school district, and the building was demolished in 2001 after a lengthy legal battle to save it.

While the Los Angeles building does not appear to be eligible under Criterion C, its architectural history is worth noting. The Los Angeles building was one of the ten original mail-order distribution centers commissioned by Julius Rosenwald and designed by George C. Nimmons. A native of Wooster, Ohio, Nimmons began his career in the Chicago office of Burnham & Root, where he worked as a draftsman for ten years. At the age of twenty-eight, Nimmons served as Superintendent of Buildings for the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition under the direction of Daniel Burnham, his employer who was appointed Director of Works.

In 1897, Nimmons formed a partnership with William K. Fellows. They designed several large commercial buildings in Chicago, including the first Sears, Roebuck & Company mail-order center in 1906. Following completion of the Sears' Chicago center, Nimmons and Fellows received commissions to design additional mail-order centers.

Nimmon's partnership with Fellows lasted until 1910. From 1910 until 1933, the architect remained in private practice as principal of the George Nimmons & Company and subsequently the firm of Nimmons & Company. He then partnered with George W. Carr and Clark C. Wright until his retirement in 1945. Nimmons is responsible for a large number of buildings found across the county. Examples of his work include the Reid Murdoch Building (Chicago 1913-14), Lake Shore Place (Chicago 1924-25), the Sears, Roebuck & Company mail order plants in Chicago, Dallas, Seattle, Atlanta, Philadelphia, Kansas City, Minneapolis, Memphis, and Boston, and numerous other Sears, Roebuck & Company stores and facilities. The four-building complex in Chicago (1905-06) served as the company's headquarters until 1973. It also included the printing plant that for many years produced the Sears Catalog.

All of the mail order centers share a common design vocabulary, which isn't surprising as the same architect designed them for the same purpose. A central tower flanked by lower masses is found in all of the buildings. The older buildings, like the one in Chicago, were finished with red brick with stone trim. The later buildings, like the one in Los Angeles, adopted the Art Deco style and were either finished in

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concrete or stucco. Two of the ten – those in Philadelphia and Kansas City – have been demolished. Only the ones in Chicago and Boston have been listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

Similar to other structures designed by Nimmons, the function of the Los Angeles building determined its design. The lower two stories, which housed the 57,600 square foot retail store, provided a wide base out of which the mass of the structure was erected. The retail store required a much larger floor area than the mail order departments housed in the rest of the building. Similarly, the mail-order departments were best arranged over each other in a multi-storied configuration. This design provided light for offices in each level and interior space for the movement of merchandise throughout the building. The 226-foot tower was likewise designed to house a large water tank that supplied the building's gravity-fed sprinkler system.

One of the most significant aspects of the building is its reinforced concrete construction. A relatively new use for large commercial and industrial buildings in the 1920s, reinforced concrete construction reduced the overall cost of constructing large buildings and provided architects with more freedom to manipulate the form and ornamentation of their designs. Using reinforced concrete, the structural load-bearing capacity of a building could be carried in floor slabs rather than in more traditional beams and girders. This innovation saved on overhead room and reduced the floor-to-floor heights required in multi-stories buildings. The reinforced concrete construction also provided the means to ornament the building with elaborate Art Deco style details without employing other materials.

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Sears, Roebuck & Company Mail Order Building  
Los Angeles County, California

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Sears, Roebuck & Company Mail Order Building  
Los Angeles County, California

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# **National Register of Historic Places**

## **Continuation Sheet**

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**Sears, Roebuck & Co. Mail Order Building**  
**Los Angeles County, CA**

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### **Geographical Data**

#### **Verbal Boundary Description:**

Assessor's Parcel Number 5183-012-004 corresponding to Tract #9410 por of Lot 1 and Tract #6783 por of Lots 2, 3, 4 and 5 of Block 8; also as that land bounded by 12<sup>th</sup> Street, Soto Street, Olympic Boulevard, and Rio Vista Ave. in Los Angeles and comprising 12.3 acres; as shown on the accompanying Sketch Map.

#### **Boundary Justification**

The legal lots the building historically and currently occupies.

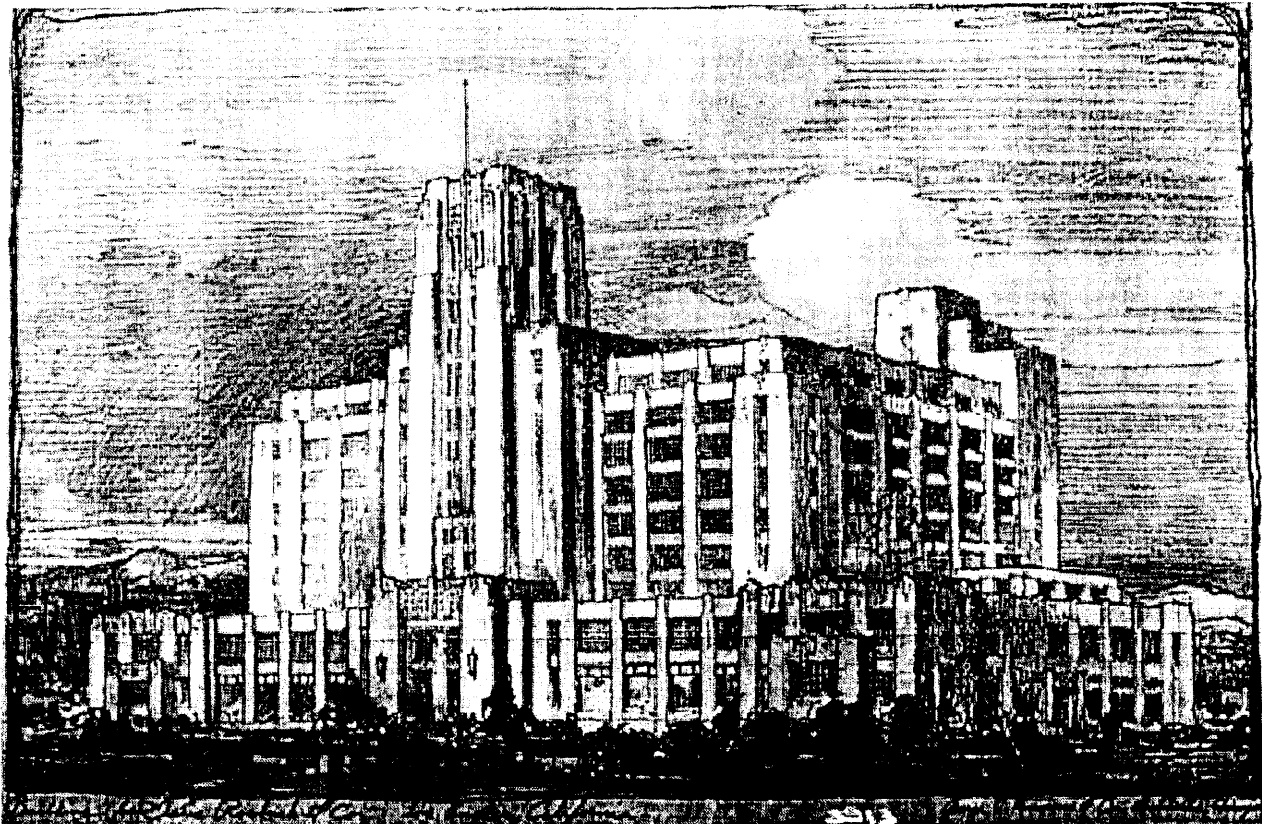
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Section number 10 Page 9

Sears, Roebuck & Company Mail Order Building  
Los Angeles County, California

HISTORIC RENDERING  
Los Angeles Central Library Photo Collection  
No Date





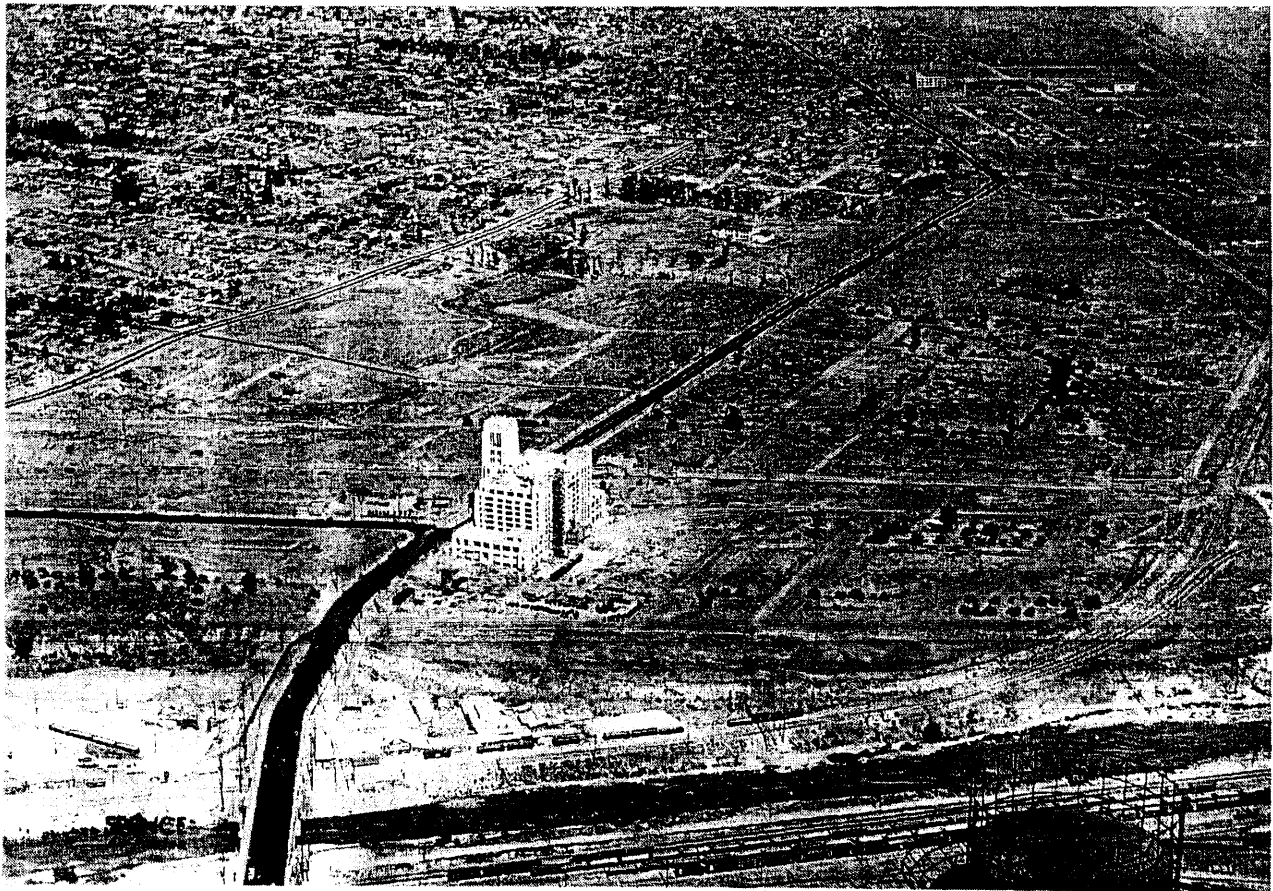
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Sears, Roebuck & Company Mail Order Building  
Los Angeles County, California

AERIAL  
Sears, Roebuck & Company Archives  
1927



LOS ANGELES MAIL ORDER -- 1927

Gross Area - 383,462 sq. ft.

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Sears, Roebuck & Company Mail Order Building  
Los Angeles County, California

ENTRANCE  
Sears, Roebuck & Company Archive  
1927



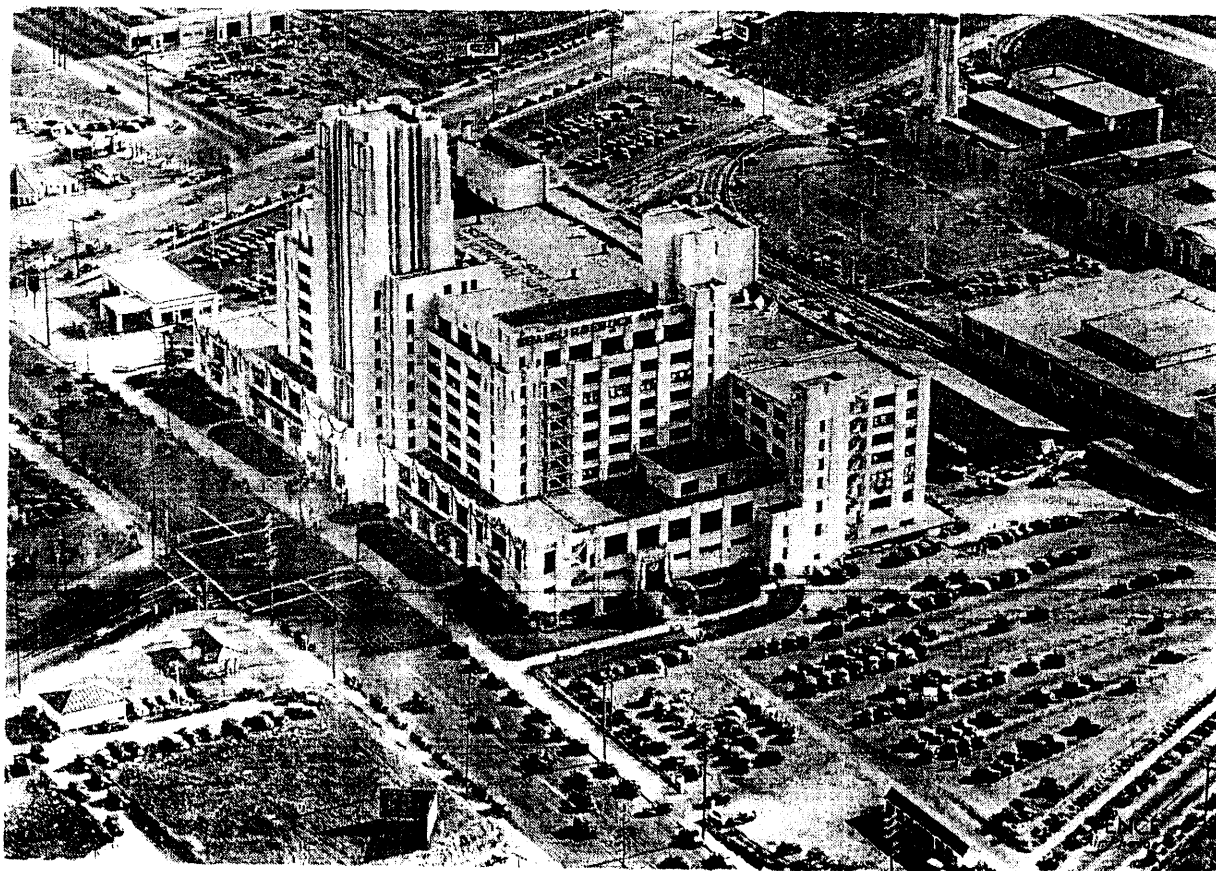
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National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Sears, Roebuck & Company Mail Order Building  
Los Angeles County, California

AERIAL  
Sears, Roebuck & Company Archive  
1936



1936

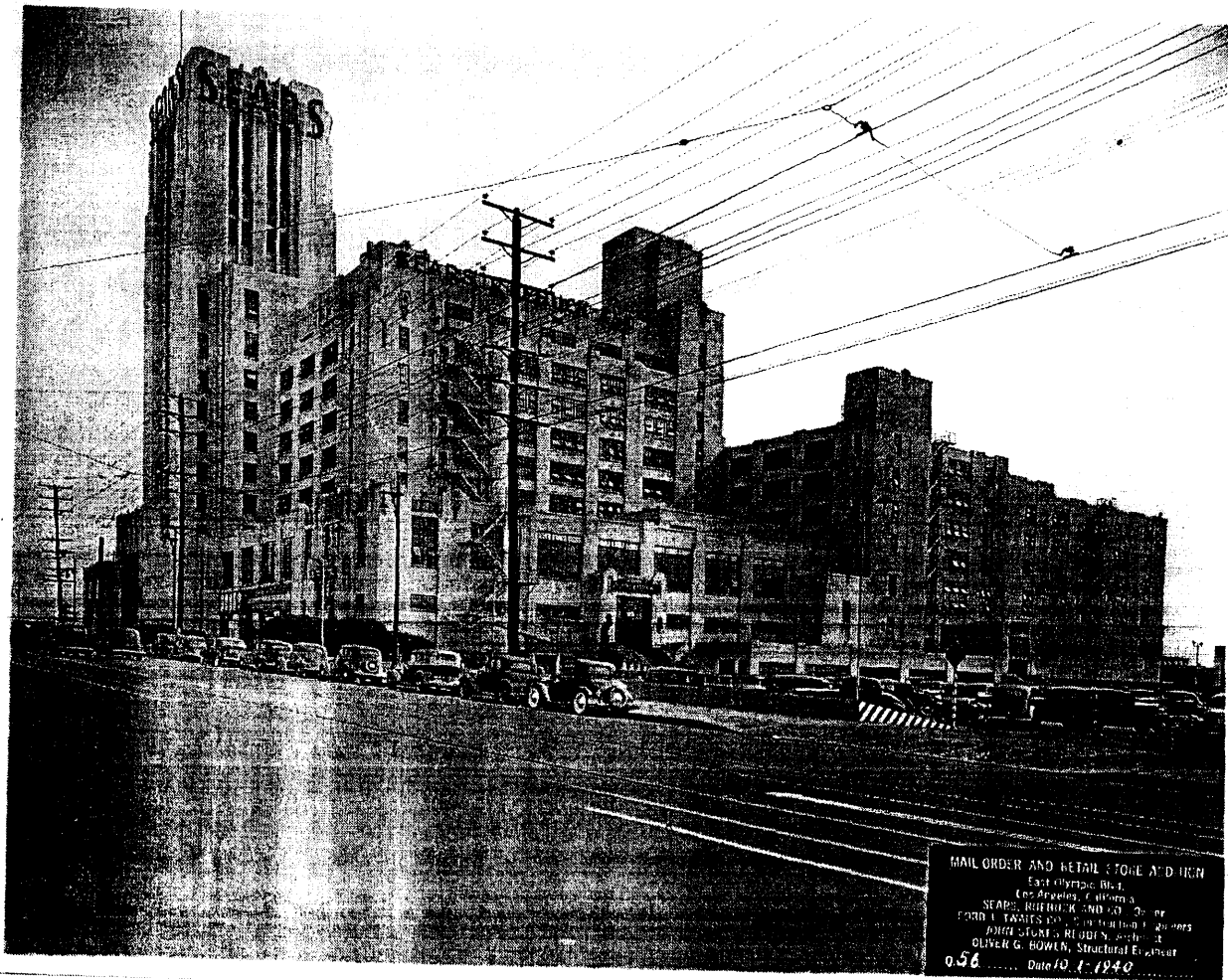
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Sears, Roebuck & Company Mail Order Building  
Los Angeles County, California

AERIAL  
Sears, Roebuck & Company Archive  
1940



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National Park Service

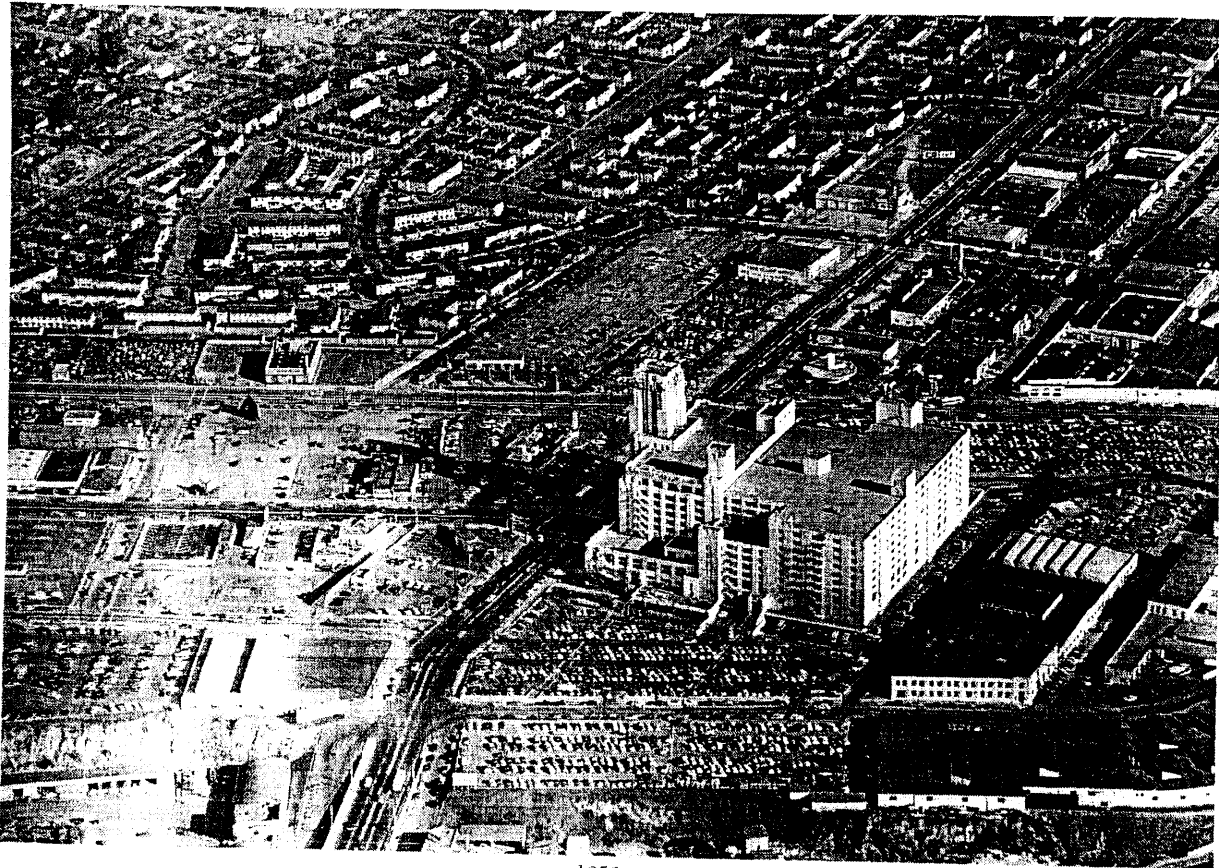
**National Register of Historic Places  
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Sears, Roebuck & Company Mail Order Building  
Los Angeles County, California

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AERIAL  
Sears, Roebuck & Company Archive  
1953



1953

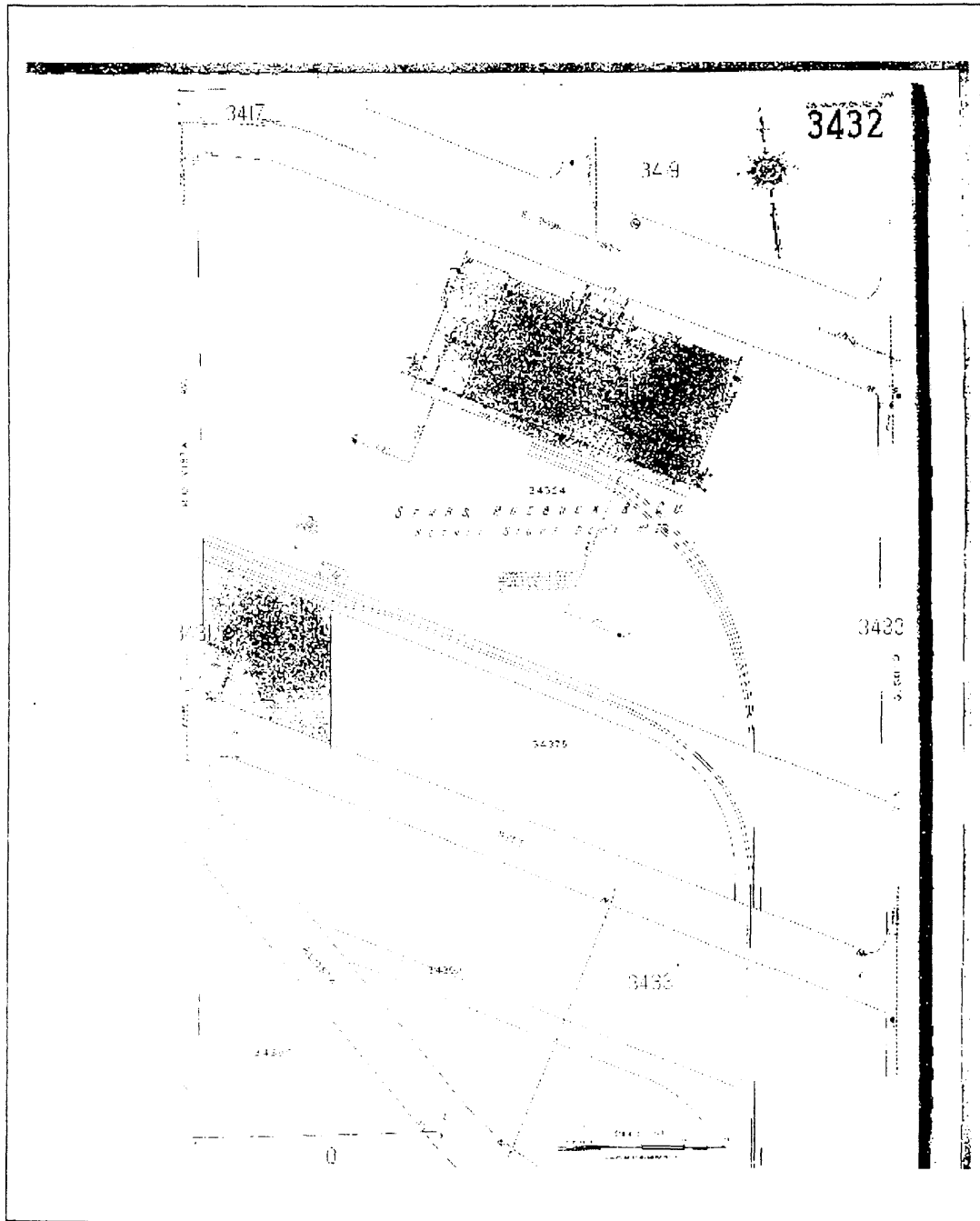
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National Register of Historic Places  
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Section number 10 Page 15

Sears, Roebuck & Company Mail Order Building  
Los Angeles County, California

SANBORN MAP  
1928



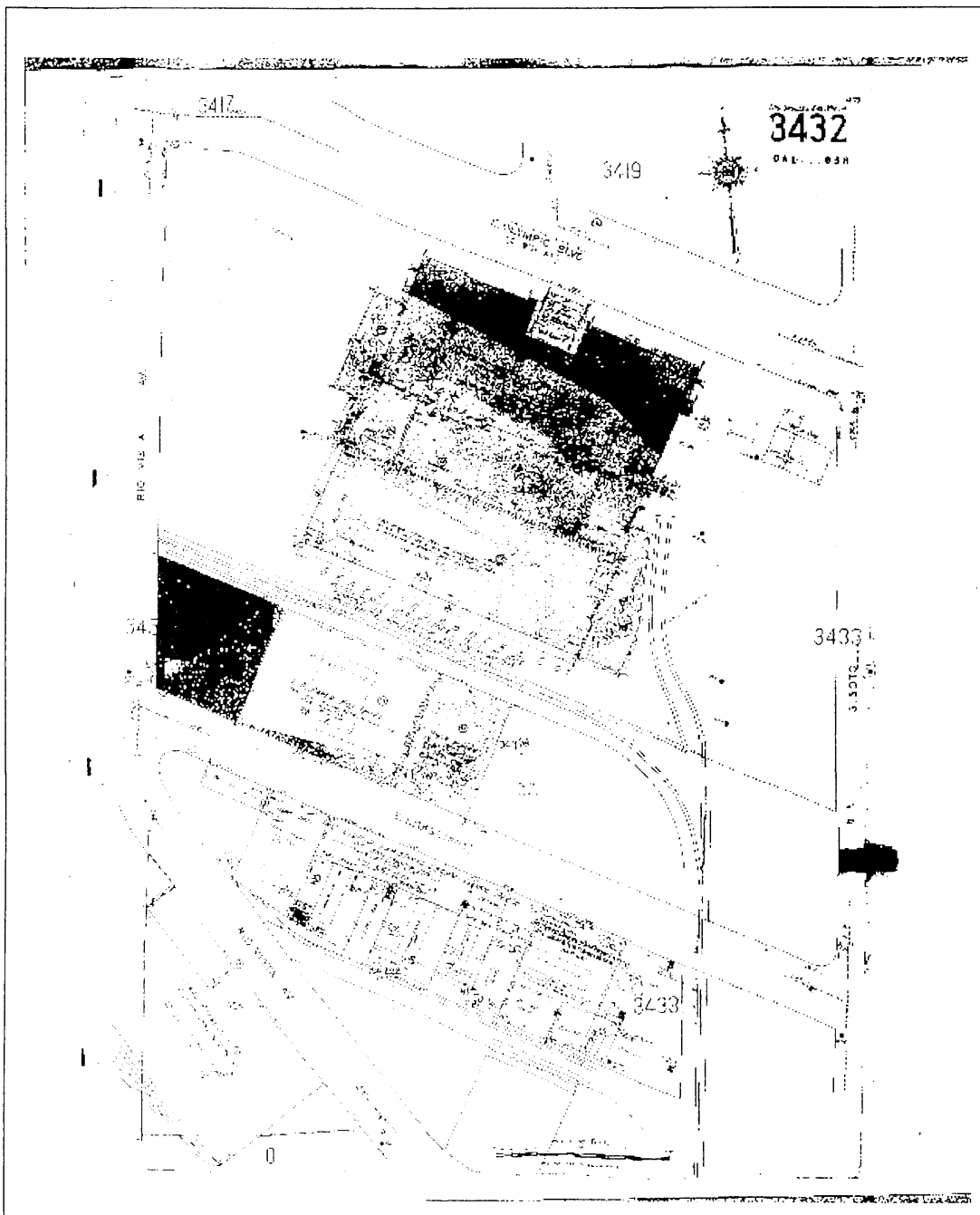
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Sears, Roebuck & Company Mail Order Building  
Los Angeles County, California

SANBORN MAP  
1950



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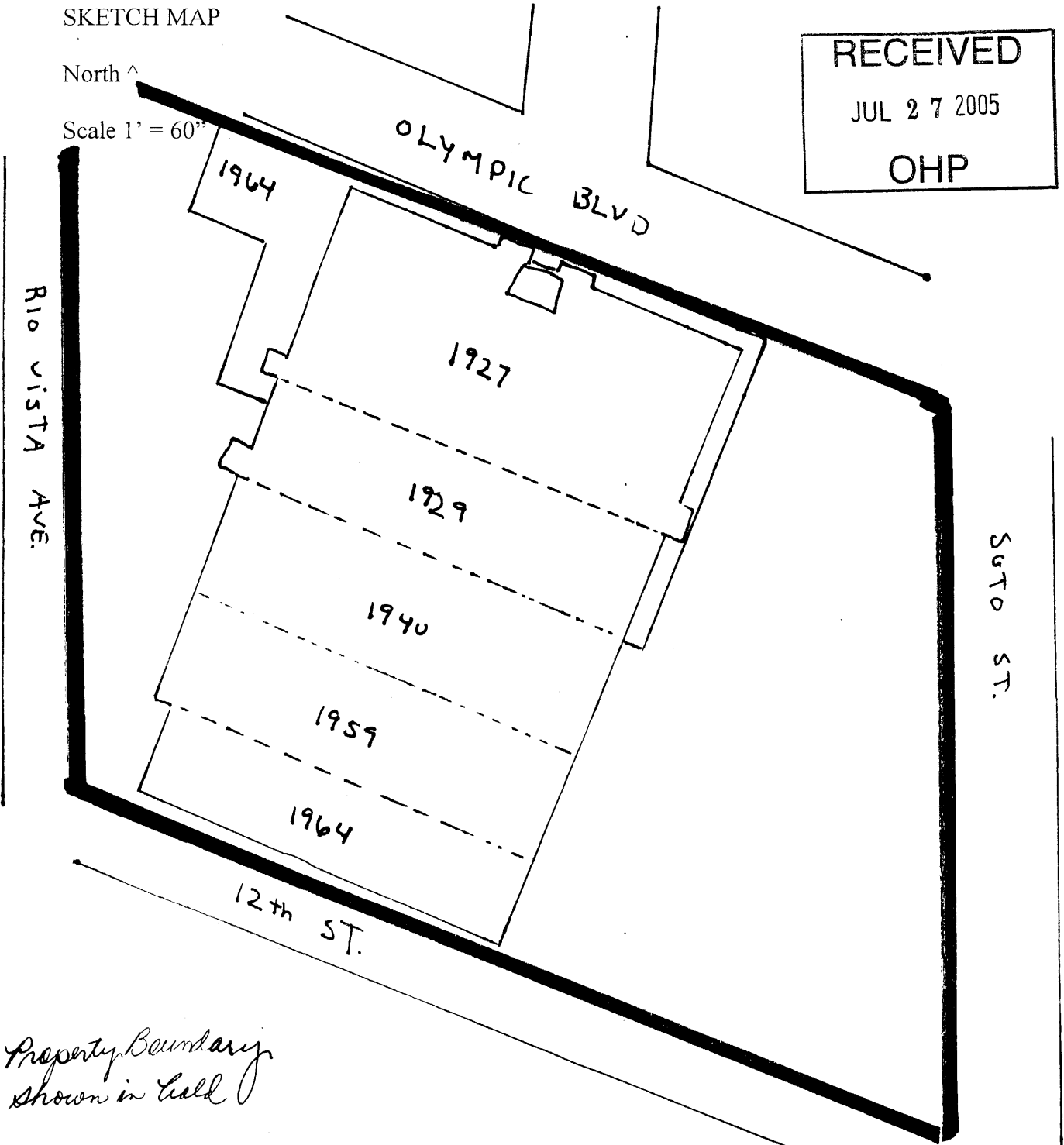
Sears, Roebuck & Company Mail Order Building  
Los Angeles County, California

SKETCH MAP

North ^

Scale 1" = 60'

RECEIVED  
JUL 27 2005  
OHP



Property Boundary  
shown in thick line





Sears

Sears, Roebuck & Company Mail Order Building

Los Angeles County, CA

Teresa Grimes, photographer

5-1-05

4211 Glenalbyn Drive, LA, CA 90065

East elevation looking west



Sears, Roebuck + Company Mail Order Building

Los Angeles County, CA

Teresa Grimes, photographer

5-1-05

4211 Glenalbyn Drive, L.A. CA 90065

South + east elevations looking northwest



CUSTOMER PICK UP

RETAIL STORE

FIRE LANE

NO PARKING

PERMITTED PARKING  
AUTOMOBILES  
CITY OF LOS ANGELES  
FIRE DEPARTMENT

SEARCH

Sears, Roebuck + Company Mail Order Building

Los Angeles County, CA

Teresa Grimes, photographer

5-1-05

4211 Glenalbyn Drive, LA, CA 90065

West elevation looking east at 1929

Side entrance



Sears, Roebuck Mail Order Building

Los Angeles County, CA

Teresa Grimes, photographer

5-1-05

4211 Glenalbyn Drive, LA, CA 90065

West elevation looking east





Sears, Roebuck + Company Mail Order Building

Los Angeles County, CA

Teresa Grimes, photographer

5-1-05

4211 Glenalbyn Drive, L.A. CA 90065

Primary (north) elevation looking south

SEARS, ROEBUCK & Co. MAIL ORDER BUILDING  
**ATTACHMENT E:**  
**HISTORIC PRESERVATION CERTIFICATION APPLICATION**  
**PART 1 – EVALUATION OF SIGNIFICANCE**



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

OMB Approved  
No. 1024-0009  
Form 10-168  
Rev. 2014

**HISTORIC PRESERVATION CERTIFICATION APPLICATION  
PART 1 – EVALUATION OF SIGNIFICANCE**

NPS Project Number

16681

**Instructions:** This page must bear the applicant's original signature and must be dated. The National Park Service certification decision is based on the descriptions in this application form. In the event of any discrepancy between the application form and other, supplementary material submitted with it (such as architectural plans, drawings and specifications), the application form takes precedence. A copy of this form will be provided to the Internal Revenue Service.

**1. Property Name** Sears, Roebuck & Company Mail Order Building (Sears building)

Street 2650 East Olympic Boulevard

City Los Angeles County Los Angeles State CA Zip 90023-2608

Name of Historic District \_\_\_\_\_

National Register district  certified state or local district  potential district

**2. Nature of request** (check only one box)

- certification that the building contributes to the significance of the above-named historic district or National Register property for rehabilitation purposes.
- certification that the building contributes to the significance of the above-named historic district for a charitable contribution for conservation purposes.
- certification that the building does not contribute to the significance of the above-named district.
- preliminary determination for individual listing in the National Register.
- preliminary determination that a building located within a potential historic district contributes to the significance of the district.
- preliminary determination that a building outside the period or area of significance contributes to the significance of the district.

**3. Project Contact** (if different from applicant)

Name Robert Chattel Company Chattel, Inc.

Street 13417 Ventura Blvd. City Sherman Oaks State CA

Zip 91423-3938 Telephone (818) 788-7954 Email Address robert@chattel.us

**4. Applicant**

I hereby attest that the information I have provided is, to the best of my knowledge, correct. I further attest that [check one or both boxes, as applicable] (1)  I am the owner of the above-described property within the meaning of "owner" set forth in 36 CFR § 67.2 (2011), and/or (2)  if I am not the fee simple owner of the above-described property, the fee simple owner is aware of the action I am taking relative to this application and has no objection, as noted in a written statement from the owner, a copy of which (i) either is attached to this application form and incorporated herein, or has been previously submitted, and (ii) meets the requirements of 36 CFR § 67.3(a)(1) (2011). For purposes of this attestation, the singular shall include the plural wherever appropriate. I understand that knowing and willful falsification of factual representations in this application may subject me to fines and imprisonment under 18 U.S.C. § 1001, which, under certain circumstances, provides for imprisonment of up to 8 years.

Name Izek Shomof Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date 07/15/2014

Applicant Entity East River Group LLC (see attached) SSN \_\_\_\_\_ or TIN 46-3723053

Street 206 West 6th Street City Los Angeles State CA

Zip 90014-1849 Telephone (213) 623-2409 Email Address izek@pacinvestmentla.com

**NPS Official Use Only**

The National Park Service has reviewed the Historic Preservation Certification Application – Part 1 for the above-named property and has determined that the property:

- contributes to the significance of the above-named district or National Register property and is a "certified historic structure" for rehabilitation purposes.
- contributes to the significance of the above-named district and is a "certified historic structure" for a charitable contribution for conservation purposes.
- does not contribute to the significance of the above-named district.

Preliminary Determinations:

- appears to meet the National Register Criteria for Evaluation and will likely be listed in the National Register of Historic Places if nominated by the State Historic Preservation Officer according to the procedures set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.
- does not appear to meet the National Register Criteria for Evaluation and will likely not be listed in the National Register.
- appears to contribute to the significance of a potential historic district, which will likely be listed in the National Register of Historic Places if nominated by the State Historic Preservation Officer.
- appears to contribute to the significance of a registered historic district if the period or area of significance as documented in the National Register nomination or district documentation on file with the NPS is expanded by the State Historic Preservation Officer.
- does not appear to qualify as a certified historic structure.

Date \_\_\_\_\_ National Park Service Authorized Signature \_\_\_\_\_

NPS comments attached

**Attachment to Historic Preservation Certification Application  
Part 1 - Evaluation of Significance**

**Additional Owners**

4. IZEK SHOMOF AND ALINE SHOMOF IRREVOCABLE CHILDREN'S TRUST, DATED  
FEBRUARY 11, 1999

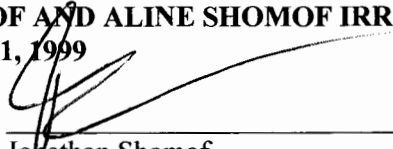
and

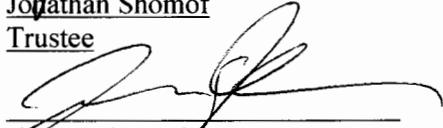
VEGAS GROUP, LLC,  
a Nevada limited liability company

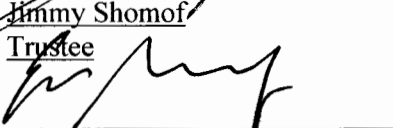
**Statement of Consent**

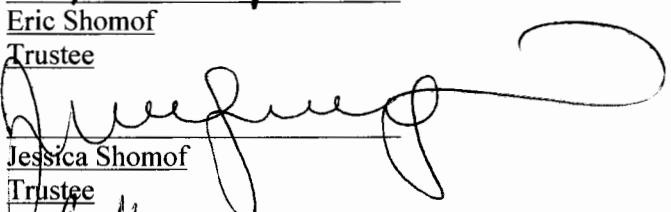
The above Additional Owner of the above described property are aware of the action Applicant is taking relative to this application and have no objection.

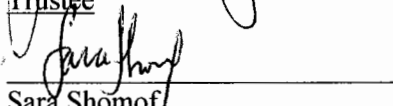
**IZEK SHOMOF AND ALINE SHOMOF IRREVOCABLE CHILDREN'S TRUST, DATED  
FEBRUARY 11, 1999**

By:   
Name: Jonathan Shomof  
Its: Trustee

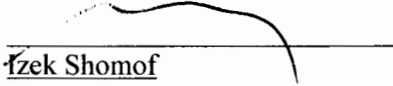
By:   
Name: Jimmy Shomof  
Its: Trustee

By:   
Name: Eric Shomof  
Its: Trustee

By:   
Name: Jessica Shomof  
Its: Trustee

By:   
Name: Sara Shomof  
Its: Trustee

**VEGAS GROUP, LLC, a Nevada limited liability company**

By:   
Name: Izek Shomof  
Its: Manager

**HISTORIC PRESERVATION CERTIFICATION APPLICATION**  
**PART 1 – EVALUATION OF SIGNIFICANCE**

Property name Sears, Roebuck & Company Mail Order Building (Sears buildi NPS Project Number 16681

Property address 2650 East Olympic Boulevard Los Angeles Los Angeles CA 90023-2608

**5. Description of physical appearance**

Following is description of the Sears, Roebuck & Company Mail Order Building (Sears building, subject property), which comprises a 1927 building with 1929, 1936, 1939-1947, and 1959-1964 additions, and a 1970 alteration.

**EXTERIOR**

The Sears building is located at 2650 E. Olympic Boulevard in the Boyle Heights neighborhood of Los Angeles. It is situated on two parcels that encompass an entire city block, bounded by Soto Street and Rio Vista Avenue to the east and west, and E. Olympic Boulevard and E. 12th Street to the north and south. Paved surface parking lots and a receiving dock area occupy most of the remainder of the block. The reinforced concrete building is ten-stories (plus a four-story tower), with a flat roof and irregular plan, and is substantially larger than the generally low rise industrial buildings with surface parking lots in the surrounding neighborhood (Attachment A, Photos 1-12 for exterior photos). The base of the building consists of two tall floors and is generally rectangular in plan. Because the site slopes downward from northeast to southwest, the first floor of the building is below grade along the north and east elevations but slightly above grade along the west and south elevations. At higher floors, setbacks at the north (primary) elevation culminate in a central tower that rises an additional four stories above the main building mass (Photo 1). The stepped profile of the building that ends in a tower and integration of architectural flourishes are typical of Art Deco style. Fenestration on all elevations consists of industrial sash, steel frame, divided light windows, most of which are set within wide horizontal bays and contain operable center panels with horizontal pivoting panes surrounded by inoperable panels. (continued)

Date(s) of building(s) 1927

Date(s) of alteration(s) 1929, 1936, 1939-1947, 1959-1964, 1970

Has building been moved?  no  yes, specify date \_\_\_\_\_

**6. Statement of significance**

The Sears building was designed by architect George C. Nimmons in the Art Deco style and constructed in 1927, with 1929, 1936, 1939-1947, 1959-1964 additions, and a 1970 alteration. The property was listed in the National Register of Historic Places (National Register) in 2006. In the National Register nomination, an arbitrary 1927-1955 period of significance was established, and the 1959-1964 addition and 1970 alteration were identified as non-contributing features. The purpose of this Part 1 Amendment is to provide additional information clarifying how the building developed and was used over time, expand the period of significance to 1927-1966, and identify the southernmost, rear addition constructed between 1959-1964, which is now 50 years of age, as a contributing feature. The 1970 alteration does not appear to meet exceptional significance requirements for buildings under 50 years of age and, thus, does not appear to be a contributing feature. (continued)

**7. Photographs and maps.** Send photographs and map with application.

## HISTORIC PRESERVATION CERTIFICATION APPLICATION PART 1 – EVALUATION OF SIGNIFICANCE

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### 5. Description of Physical Appearance (continued)

Future additions extending from the rear south elevation of the original 1927 building were anticipated as the company grew, and a series of rear additions were constructed in 1929, 1936, 1939-1947, and 1959-1964.<sup>1</sup> These rear additions extended the rectangular mass of the building to accommodate additional flexible warehouse and or office space and increase capacity as mail-order and retail operations grew. Although they do not detract from the original 1927 building, the additions are more utilitarian in character.

A 1970 alteration included construction of a new two-story addition with an open exterior stair, remodel of an existing one-story garden center along the west elevation, and construction of a new one-story free-standing concession stand on the east elevation (Photos 1-3). Entrances on the north and east elevations were also remodeled. An entirely new screen façade was installed that wrapped the north elevation, and portions of the east and west elevations. This screen façade consisted of a system of Marblecrete aggregate panels installed in front of the lower three stories of these three elevations. Although the original detailing of these lower elevations is concealed, it appears detailing may be intact behind the screen façade (Photo 4).

The north elevation is a composition of two contrasting forms. A horizontal mass punctuated at the ends by piers is contrasted by a vertical central tower set forward from the main mass of the building. Cast concrete detailing on this elevation features a series of fluted fan motifs along roof parapets as well as more decorative bas relief detailing between windows at spandrel panels of the tower. The 1970 alteration is visible along the lower three stories of this elevation.

Rear additions to the Sears building are visible along the secondary east and west elevations, extending the south elevation of the building almost to 12<sup>th</sup> Street. The rear additions feature irregular groupings of window bays separated by piers, as well as additional freight elevators, stair towers, and exterior fire escapes. Stair and elevator towers punctuate the building mass of these elevations. Some bays of these additions contain filler walls, some of which have smaller divided light windows indicating locations of stairs and restrooms. Original drawings indicate this is not an alteration and these infilled openings were finished in a somewhat temporary manner.<sup>2</sup>

The west elevation generally comprises repetitive bays of industrial steel sash windows separated by piers along with three exterior fire escapes (Photos 3, 5-8). Although the additions are largely indistinguishable from one another, a prominent stair tower located towards the north of this elevation indicates the south end of the original 1927 building. A secondary retail entrance no longer in service (1939 west elevation entrance, Photo 6), demarcates the end of the 1929 and 1936 additions. South of this secondary retail entrance is the 1939-1947 addition that extends five bays, and the 1959-1964 addition completes the remaining seven bays. Other notable features at this elevation include a loading ramp leading to the first floor just south of the original 1927 building, and a canopied loading dock at the first floor extending south of the 1939 west elevation entrance. At the southwest corner of this elevation, on the first and second floors, between the 4 southernmost bays, unfinished concrete walls demarcate where the now demolished Ingram building abutted the Sears

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<sup>1</sup> National Register nomination, "Sears, Roebuck & Company Mail Order Building," prepared by Teresa Grimes, June 30, 2005, 1.

<sup>2</sup> "1959 Mail Order Expansion, Sears Roebuck and Co," drawings prepared by Bowen & Bowen Inc. dated February 14, 1959. Details of the west, south, and east elevation identify some of these bays as filler walls indicating they may have been intended for flexible use allowing for windows to be installed at a later date if needed.

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building. Filler walls with partially or wholly infilled bays are located on various floors along this elevation (Photos 3, 5-8).

The 1970 alteration, including the two-story addition, remodeled one-story garden center, and screen façade is visible at the north end of this elevation (Photos 3 and 7).

The south elevation is roughly symmetrical and features a regular rhythm of bays punctuated at the corners by slightly taller piers that indicate locations of interior staircases, and at the center by two piers that indicate the location of a freight elevator (Photos 8-9). The first floor contains an industrial loading dock along the entire elevation, with bays containing deeply inset industrial metal roll up grills. Filler walls with partially or wholly infilled bays are located on the second, ninth, and tenth floors in all bays, and on various bays between second through twelfth floors (Photos 8-9).<sup>4</sup>

The east elevation is similar to the west elevation and consists largely of a repetition of bays containing industrial steel sash windows separated by piers along with three exterior fire escapes (Photos 2, 9-12). The first floor opens onto the site of an industrial loading area. First floor bays contain deeply inset industrial metal roll up grills. Filler walls with partially or wholly infilled bays are located at various floors along this elevation.

The 1970 alteration is visible along the lower three stories of this elevation at the north corner that now serves as the main entrance to the Sears retail store (Photos 2, 11). The one-story free-standing concession stand that was part of this alteration is located just south of the retail entrance. Parking lots surround the Sears building and aside from some palm trees located in planters along the north elevation, and shrubs located adjacent to the staircase leading to the retail store on the east elevation, landscaping is minimal. As mentioned previously, the southern corner of the east elevation opens onto the site of an industrial loading area (Photos 11-12). Although the two one-story canopied loading facilities that were constructed during the 1939-1947, and 1959-1964 additions are no longer extant, a portion of the rail platform remains, along with a truck loading dock and underground vault at the southeast corner of the building.

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<sup>4</sup> The eleventh and twelfth floors are the location of an elevator penthouse.



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### INTERIOR

Interiors of the Sears building are generally uniform at each floor, and most floors feature large open spaces with unfinished concrete floors, and exposed painted columns and ceilings. The Sears retail store currently operates in the northern portion of the first and second floors. The northwest portion of the first floor interior contains the Sears retail store that has contemporary fixtures and finishes, while to the west is retail storage for Sears (Photos 13-14). East of the Sears retail store, a portion of the first floor is accessed via a northeast L-shaped corridor connecting the existing elevator at the north elevation and contains a number of small rooms housing mechanical equipment (Photos 15-17). A large double height space is located in the northeast corner, south of a mechanical transformer room (photo 16). South of the Sears retail store consists of open plan, warehouse space with unfinished concrete floors, and exposed painted columns and ceilings (Photo 18). Industrial roll up doors are located within bays along the south end of this area (Photo 19). Mechanical equipment and light fixtures are surface mounted on the ceiling. At the southwest corner of this floor is an underground vault that was once part of the industrial loading area (Photo 20). The northern portion of the second floor interior is the primary floor of the Sears retail store and has contemporary fixtures and finishes (Photo 23). Although no longer in use, the northern elevator lobby contains fixtures and finishes dating to the 1970 alteration (Photo 25). South of the retail store consists of open plan, warehouse space with unfinished concrete floors, and exposed painted columns and ceilings (Photos 26-29).

The two-story addition constructed as part of the 1970 alteration that once housed a garden center and cafeteria has been vacated by Sears (Photos 21-22, 24). It maintains the features and finishes dating to the 1970s. The one-story addition remodeled as part of this alteration is part of the Sears retail store and contains contemporary features and finishes.

Third through tenth floors feature a regular rhythm of support columns interrupted only by walls that indicate the north and south boundaries of additions, thus dividing the floors into different areas (photos 30-139). For the most part these floors have unfinished concrete floors, and exposed painted columns and ceilings. Portions of these floors have been partitioned for use as office space to meet the demands of Sears as the company expanded its operations. These partitions were constructed in an inconsistent manner on different locations of each floor as interiors were converted into offices or back to warehouse space, depending on the needs of the company. Aside from end-cut wood grain floors in the original 1927 building, and mushroom fluted structural columns in the original 1927 building and 1929 and 1936 additions, warehouse floors are unfinished concrete, with painted concrete finishes on walls, columns, and ceilings (Photo 31 shows where end-cut wood grain floors have been removed, Photos 60-61, 70-71 show end-cut wood grain floors in poor condition). Bathrooms are located on most floors and appear to have been remodeled as late as the 1960s (Photos 84, 97). Elevators and stairwells are located throughout the building. Three package chutes are located in the original 1927 building, and the 1939-1947 and 1959-1964 additions (Photos 78, 86, 100, 125, 129). These tube-shaped package chutes connected all ten floors with a system of spiral slides that allowed packages to be delivered to the first floor. While these chutes are generally intact, only a portion of the chute in the 1959-1964 addition is extant.

While most of the floor areas exhibit an industrial character, a somewhat more formal treatment distinguishes the central elevator bay located within the tower at the primary north elevation. These elevator lobbies connected to office spaces located at the north elevation on upper floors (Photos 72-75). Office suites appear to have been used by executives, as most contained small private bathrooms (Photos 101-102). These office spaces have been remodeled over the years and are in particularly poor condition.

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The central tower itself extends four stories above the main building mass. The first floor above the main building mass (eleventh floor) is partially recessed in the tenth floor and contains water tanks and mechanical equipment (Photos 140-144). Twelfth and thirteenth floors of the central tower contain mechanical equipment (Photos 145-150), while the fourteenth floor is a double height space and is almost entirely occupied by a large water tank (Photos 151-153, for exterior photos of the central tower and rooftop see Photos 154-157).

### ALTERATIONS

The Sears building has undergone a number of alterations and expansions over time as the company increased its mail-order and retail business throughout the western United States. Additions to the rear of the original building were constructed in a manner that left in situ the rear exterior wall of the south elevation of each preceding portion of the building, thus creating double partition walls throughout the building (see Attachment C, Historic Drawings: Drawing 1 for an aerial view of these additions). The first rear addition to the original 1927 building was constructed in 1929 and was the width of the original building. This seven-story addition extended the west and east elevations by four bays (Figures 2-17 show early photos and maps of the Sears building, in particular figures 10-11 for the 1929 addition. See Attachment C, Drawings 2-8 for the original 1927 building, and Drawing 9 for the 1929 addition).<sup>6</sup> Signage was added to the roof during this time. Individual neon lit letters spelling "Sears, Roebuck and Co" were installed along the parapets of the east and west elevations of the original 1927 building. In 1936, two smaller additions were constructed to the west and east of the 1929 addition, each six stories in height and four bays wide, extending the addition to the same width as the base of the 1927 building (see Figures 18-20 for this addition, and Attachment C, Drawings 10-15).<sup>7</sup>

Between 1939 and 1947, a ten-story addition was constructed that extended the building to the south by five bays as well as adding three stories to the 1929 addition (figures 21-24, and Attachment C, Drawings 16-22).<sup>8</sup> At the same time, a secondary retail entrance was added to the west elevation, opening what used to be a window on the south corner of the 1936 addition. This new retail entrance was slightly grander than the earlier west entrance and featured a wide staircase leading up to the paired double doors set below raised letter panel that reads, "Retail Store." Along the west, south, and east elevations, a number of alterations were made to increase the capacity for loading and unloading merchandise from trucks and train cars. A loading area was constructed at the southeast corner of this addition that included a one-story canopied loading facility and rail platform to connect with a rail line, while the entire length of the south and west elevations of this addition were spanned by a canopied loading dock for trucks. During this time, additions were also made to the parking lot including a one-story garden center along the west elevation just north of the

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<sup>6</sup> "Addition to the Mail Order Store for Sears Roebuck & Co, E. 9<sup>th</sup> St. & Boyle Ave," drawings prepared by Nimmons, Carr & Wright. Architects, dated March 8, 1929.

<sup>7</sup> "Addition to Mail Order Store, Sears Roebuck & Co., Olympic Blvd & Boyle Ave," drawings prepared by C. B. Young, Architect, dated ca. 1936. Though the date of the drawings is illegible Sanborn map and later drawings indicate this addition was completed in 1936.

<sup>8</sup> It appears this addition was completed in two phases, the first phase included a 5-story south addition and construction of a one-story garden center to the west, likely completed in 1940. The second phase included an additional 4 stories on top of this south addition along with an additional 3 stories on top of the 1929 addition, completed in 1947. For the first phase, see, "Addition to Mail Order Plant, Sears Roebuck & Co., Olympic and Boyle Aves," drawings prepared by Sears Roebuck and Co. National Construction Department, John Stokes Redden, architect, dated December 22, 1939, and Building Permit Los Angeles Department of Building and Safety, "application to alter, repair, more of demolish, permit #6105" issued February 1, 1940. For the second phase, see, "1945 Mail Order Expansion," Drawings prepared by Sears Roebuck and Co. West Coast Property Department, undated, Certificate of Occupancy Los Angeles Department of Building and Safety, for permits 28410, 11673, 14573, issued June 18, 1947.

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new retail entrance and construction of a free-standing auto shop in the parking lot east of the building. Additional neon lit Sears signs were also added to all four elevations of the tower. At the interior, the 1939-1947 addition generally contained warehouse space along with three stairwells and one freight elevator. Restrooms were constructed on all floors towards the southwest corner of this addition.

Between 1959 and 1964, the company completed an additional ten-story expansion to the south by seven bays. The LA Paper Box factory, a one-story commercial warehouse facing 12<sup>th</sup> Avenue, was demolished prior to this phase of expansion that was completed in 1964, and extended the Sears building almost to the southern boundary of the property (Figures 27-29, Attachment C, Drawings 23-26).<sup>9</sup> This addition was built adjacent to the one-story Ingram building located at the corner of 12<sup>th</sup> Street and Rio Vista Avenue. The Ingram building was either constructed for Sears and was likely incorporated into the building with construction of this addition.

Along the exterior, the loading area constructed as part of the 1939-1947 addition was expanded and an additional one-story canopied loading facility was constructed at the southwest corner of this addition. Canopied loading docks were built along the entirety of the south elevation, and along the west elevation, north of the Ingram building.

The interior of the 1959-1964 addition included staircases at the southeast and southwest corners, restrooms along the west elevation, freight elevators along the south and east elevations, and a package chute towards the north of the addition. This expansion envisioned flexible use of the floors depending on the needs and capacities of the Sears building. While most bays along the elevations of this addition were to be finished as on the other extant elevations with industrial steel windows, some bays were finished with temporary filler walls.<sup>10</sup> Infill of this manner would have allowed for easy installation of windows in the future if Sears determined these areas needed to be reconfigured to allow more natural light in these spaces.

In 1968, the firm Robert Clements & Associates was hired to update the image of the retail store in the Sears building (Figures 30-31, Attachment C, Drawings 27-30).<sup>11</sup> This work was completed in 1970 and included construction of a new two-story addition, remodel of the existing one-story garden center along the west elevation, and construction of a new one-story free-standing concession stand on the east elevation. Entrances on the north and east elevations were remodeled and new façade

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<sup>9</sup> The 1959-1964 expansion was also completed in two phases. The first phase included the construction of 6 of the 9 stories and was completed in 1961. For the first phase of this addition see, "1959 Mail Order Expansion, Sears Roebuck and Co," drawings prepared by Bowen & Bowen Inc. dated February 14, 1959, and Certificate of Occupancy Los Angeles Department of Building and Safety, for permit LA 34883-59, issued March 3, 1961. Drawings for this addition indicate the remaining three stories were anticipated to be completed as part of this addition and are sketched in as "future addition." Although a certificate of occupancy for the remaining 3 stories was not located, drawings from a later period date this addition to 1964, indicating the remaining 3 stories were completed at this time.

<sup>10</sup> "1959 Mail Order Expansion, Sears Roebuck and Co," drawings prepared by Bowen & Bowen Inc. dated February 14, 1959. Details of the west elevation identify some infill areas and state, "plaster interior only."

<sup>11</sup> "Additions and Alterations to Los Angeles Catalog Order Plant and Retail Store," drawings prepared by Robert Clements and Associates, dated July 29, 1970. A newspaper article detailing this addition stated the project was to be completed in the late summer of 1969; however, a certificate of occupancy for a "snack bar" was not issued until March 1970. See, "Sears Store Being Given a New Look," *Los Angeles Times*, May 25, 1969, J18, and Certificate of Occupancy Los Angeles Department of Building and Safety, for permit LA 77212/68, issued March 10, 1970. Robert Clements is the son of the master architect Stiles Clements. His firm still exists and is now known as Clements and Clements.

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was installed, wrapping the lower bays of the north elevation and portions of the east and west elevations. At the interior, the Sears retail store was remodeled and an escalator was added. Sometime in the later twentieth century, the loading area along the west elevation was dismantled and the two one-story loading facilities were removed. Aerial photos indicate the Ingram building was demolished in 2003.

Recently, filler walls of select bays on the ninth and tenth stories of the west, south, and east elevations have been removed.

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**6. Statement of Significance (continued)**

The following statement of significance is extracted from the National Register nomination for the Sears building:

The Sears, Roebuck & Company Mail Order Building is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A. The building is historically significant in the context of commerce for its strong association with Sears, Roebuck & Company. Perhaps no other business institution in the United States is as responsible for ushering in the era of mass consumption as Sears, Roebuck & Company. Originally constructed in 1927, the Los Angeles building houses Sears, Roebuck & Company's warehouse distribution, and merchandising facilities for the entire southwestern United States, as well as one of the company's early retail stores. As such, the Los Angeles building played a critical role in the success of the company.<sup>12</sup>

**SEARS, ROEBUCK & COMPANY**

The following early history of Sears, Roebuck & Company (Sears) is extracted from the National Register nomination for the subject property:

Sears, Roebuck & Company was synonymous with the surge in the mass consumer market in America during the early and mid-twentieth century. Established in 1886 by Richard Sears, the company became one of the largest mail-order businesses in the country and the seventh largest corporation in the world. By 1927, Sears provided goods to eleven million customers equaling one out of every three American families, and distributed over seventy-five million catalogs per year.

Julius Rosenwald, who assumed operation of the business in 1895, leaving Richard Sears to market the company's products, is largely attributed with the success of this mail-order empire. Under Rosenwald, Sears came to encompass all the processes of a capitalistic enterprise, including the processes of extraction, fabrication, distribution and consumption. He sought to offer rural customers a broad range of products, and developed a new business ethic that promoted customer satisfaction. The company slogan, "Satisfaction Guaranteed or Your Money Back," for example, reflected this new philosophy. A new emphasis was also placed on economies of scale and the streamlining of product distribution, as business expanded and a new operating infrastructure was created.

The infrastructure necessary to sustain the company's expansion rested upon ten (later twelve) mail-order centers [or plants] strategically located across the country. Constructed between 1906 and 1928, these centers handled the processing and distribution of orders from customers, and were specifically located so that most customer orders could be filled in three to four days. In these buildings was captured the scale and ambition of the country's rapid expansion and improving standard of living. They remain architectural centerpieces in the neighborhoods they occupy and some are, to this day, among the largest structures in their respective regions.

During the late 1920s as more people began to live and work in American cities, a shift emerged in the consumer market as retail stores eclipsed the success of the older mail-order

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<sup>12</sup> National Register nomination, "Sears, Roebuck & Company Mail Order Building," prepared by Teresa Grimes, June 30, 2005, 3.

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businesses. To capitalize on these changes, Sears, Roebuck & Company hired General Robert Wood in 1924. Formerly employed by Montgomery Ward, the company's major competitor, Wood launched a campaign to pursue new retail markets found in the rising American working class.

Wood built upon the success of Sears' established mail-order business by building a network of retail stores around the existing mail-order centers and distribution infrastructure. In fact, many of the mail-order centers constructed in the late 1920s, including the one in Los Angeles, incorporated retail stores in their original design as a result. Wood's strategy was a success. Between 1925 and 1927, twenty-two Sears' stores opened in major United States cities. In 1929, there were three hundred twenty-four stores, and by 1932 the company's retail sales surpassed those of the mail-order sales.<sup>13</sup>

The oldest portion of the Sears building in Los Angeles was constructed in 1927 during a pivotal era in corporate history when the company transitioned its focus from mail-order to retail sales. Additions constructed in 1929, 1936, 1939-1947, and 1959-1964 reflected and contributed to the company's transition and rise as a retail powerhouse, especially in the western United States. These additions allowed the Sears building to efficiently be used to store and manage distribution of an increased inventory shipped to mail-order customers and retail stores. The additions were also linked to the property's use as one of four territorial offices<sup>14</sup> as the company implemented a decentralization strategy in the 1930s to allow for efficient expansion.

When Sears began transitioning its focus to retail in the 1920s, the company had a very centralized structure in which general managers at each mail-order plant would report directly to the President and three Vice Presidents based at the corporate headquarters in Chicago.<sup>15</sup> While this rigid form of organization worked well for the mail-order business, it proved to be inefficient for retail operations, which required addressing consumer demands, competition, and inventories that were unique to individual communities. Each store had a unique set of issues that could not efficiently be addressed by executives at the corporate headquarters, especially as the number of retail stores throughout the country increased exponentially.

Wood responded to these new challenges by engaging a committee of company executives and outside consultants in 1929 to develop a new corporate strategy with the following objectives:

- continue to develop the mail-order business and operate it efficiently;
- organize the jobbing end of the business, focused on distribution of goods from mail-order plants to retail stores; and
- develop a more efficient system for retail store operations responsive to unique community needs.<sup>16</sup>

As part of this new corporate strategy, which was implemented in 1930, territorial offices were established in Atlanta, Chicago, Los Angeles, and Philadelphia. These offices were led by Territorial Officers who had significant decision making authority as representatives of the President over all

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<sup>13</sup> National Register nomination, "Sears, Roebuck & Company Mail Order Building," prepared by Teresa Grimes, June 30, 2005, 3-4.

<sup>14</sup> A fifth territorial office was added in the late 1940s.

<sup>15</sup> Boris Emmet and John E. Jeuck, *Catalogues and Counters: A History of Sears, Roebuck and Company* (Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press, 1950), 358.

<sup>16</sup> Emmet and Jeuck, 359.

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mail-order plants and retail stores in their respective territories.<sup>17</sup> Their primary focus was on selection and training of retail store managers and coordination of merchandise distribution from mail-order plants to retail stores. H.W. Kingsley was the first Territorial Officer based at the Sears building with jurisdiction over the Pacific Coast territory, which also included a mail-order plant in Seattle and stores in California, Oregon, Washington, Nevada, Arizona, Utah, Idaho, Alaska, and Hawaii.

Throughout the 1930s and 1940s, Wood refined the organizational structure and amount of autonomy given to Territorial Officers. By 1946, he expressed, “that every function of the company except the buying function, could be entirely decentralized and that it was unnecessary except in the very rarest cases to refer anything to the Company’s headquarters in Chicago.”<sup>18</sup> Decentralization became a hallmark of Sears’ operating strategy over the next decades. Consequently, the Sears building played an essential role in growth of the company in the Pacific Coast territory, which became so large and autonomous, that it was frequently regarded within the company as the “separate kingdom.”<sup>19</sup>

The period of national growth following World War II was an important era of expansion for Sears generally and the Pacific Coast territory in particular. Before the war, the territory comprised 65 retail stores in California, Oregon, Washington, Nevada, Arizona, and Utah.<sup>20</sup> By 1949, the company’s sales volume exceeded \$2 billion, and it operated 635 stores, including 79 in the Pacific Coast territory. Los Angeles was identified as a “hot spot,” home to the largest retail store in the company’s portfolio.<sup>21</sup> In 1952, Sears identified California as “one of the nation’s best retail markets” and Southern California specifically as an important area for future expansion.<sup>22</sup> By 1955, California accounted for the largest percentage of company sales, which were \$3.2 billion.<sup>23</sup> In rapidly developing suburbs throughout the state, new malls typically included Sears as an anchor, and most of these new stores featured what were described as “ultramodern” designs by architects Stiles & Robert Clements.<sup>24</sup>

### SEARS BUILDING

As early as 1926 Sears announced plans to construct two buildings in Los Angeles, a joint mail-order plant and retail store located on an eight and a half acre site along what is now known as Olympic Boulevard, and a “mammoth” retail store at Vermont and Slauson avenues.<sup>25</sup> The Sears building on Olympic Boulevard, with an estimated construction cost of over \$5,000,000, was erected at a record pace and was completed in just 171 days, from late December 1926 into June of the next year.<sup>26</sup> As would be expected of such a monumental construction endeavor, the opening ceremony was a lavish affair. When the Sears building opened its doors on July 23, 1927, the Mayor of Los Angeles and President of the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce were in attendance, along with R.E. Wood, Vice President of Sears.<sup>27</sup> The building was open to the public for tours highlighting the

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<sup>17</sup> Emmet and Jeuck, 360.

<sup>18</sup> Emmet and Jeuck, 365.

<sup>19</sup> Donald R. Katz, “Sears Strikes Back,” *Los Angeles Times*, 27 Sept. 1987, N16.

<sup>20</sup> “Barrows Named to New Sears Post,” *Los Angeles Times*, 7 Jan. 1941, 25.

<sup>21</sup> “Sears Roebuck Names Angeleno as Coast Chief,” *Los Angeles Times*, 11 Jan. 1949, A2.

<sup>22</sup> “Sears Executives See Bright California Future,” *Los Angeles Times*, 18 Jul. 1952, A2.

<sup>23</sup> “Sears Schedules \$50,000,000 a Year Expansion,” *Los Angeles Times*, 24 Nov. 1955, 40.

<sup>24</sup> “Big Shopping Center Development Planned,” *Los Angeles Times*, 8 Apr. 1956, E22 and “Sears Will Open New East Pasadena Store,” *Los Angeles Times*, 10 Sept. 1958, B1.

<sup>25</sup> “Sears Roebuck Company Coming to Los Angeles,” *Los Angeles Times*, December 5, 1926, 2.

<sup>26</sup> “New Building Mark Set,” *Los Angeles Times*, June 26, 1927, E4.

<sup>27</sup> “Mail-order plant opening prepared,” *Los Angeles Times*, July 22, 1927, A3.

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“efficient” operation of the distribution center that allowed for products to be shipped within 24 hours of receiving the order by mail. This effort to generate buzz around the Sears building reflected the large market soon to be even better served by the company. Although this was the seventh mail-order plant of its kind constructed in the United States for Sears, it was built to serve not only California, but almost the entire western United States including Nevada, Utah, Arizona, parts of New Mexico, Hawaii, and portions of Asia.<sup>28</sup>

Design of the Sears building reflected a change in the way the company wished to be viewed by the American public. At the same time wanting to present themselves as a corporation that produced inexpensive and quality goods, they also wanted to create landmark buildings across the United States that would become synonymous with the Sears brand. As the Chicago-based architecture firm Nimmons, Carr and Wright continued to design buildings for Sears, they perfected the nexus between efficient construction methods and materials and creating beautiful icons of architecture. Although the original plant in Chicago featured an ornate design with Renaissance Revival detailing and pedimented entrances, this approach was not feasible on a larger scale (Figure 32). Therefore, the architecture firm explored a range of options when designing other mail-order plants. Noted architectural historian Richard Longstreth explains that, in stark contrast to the more “pedestrian” attempts at mail-order plants constructed earlier in Kansas City and Atlanta, the Los Angeles, Memphis, Boston, and Minneapolis locations, found a happy medium between their utilitarian nature and a more “ambitious symbolic role” (Figure 33).<sup>29</sup> Aside from the minimal sculptural detailing and massing said to reflect the designs of famous architects such as Eliel Saarinen and Bertram Goodhue, the buildings had a certain “non-western” approach to scale and proportion that created “beacons of modernity” in their respective locations.<sup>30</sup> As construction of the Los Angeles Sears building predated the nearby Los Angeles County-University of Southern California General Hospital (General Hospital) and City Hall, its tower became an icon not only for Sears but also for the region.

The Sears building was also designed in a way that allowed for easy expansion as Sears anticipated growth in Southern California and along the West Coast. While the main elevation facing Olympic Boulevard was the most decorative face of the building, the rear elevation was kept relatively simple, facilitating easy expansion to the rear without detracting from the more public north elevation. As Sears continued to expand regionally, the firm increased capacity by constructing rear additions, oftentimes beginning construction of a new addition almost immediately after completion of the preceding addition.

With completion of the final rear addition to the Sears building in 1964, options for expansion became more complicated as remaining portions of the lot were dedicated to much needed parking for employees and customers. In an undated letter to Arthur M. Wood, Chairman and CEO of Sears, A.E. Havill explained the need to expand the Sears building beyond its existing boundaries due to the astounding growth Sears was experiencing throughout the region (Figure 34).<sup>31</sup> The letter explained that based on existing expansion rates the Sears building would need to increase its

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<sup>28</sup> “Mail-order plant opening prepared,” *Los Angeles Times*, July 22, 1927, A3.

<sup>29</sup> Richard Longstreth, “Sears, Roebuck and the remaking of the Department Store, 1924-1942,” *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 65, no. 2 (June, 2006), 242. Richard Longstreth is a noted architectural historian and in addition to writing about Sears retail stores, he has published extensively on the design of retail stores, particularly in Los Angeles.

<sup>30</sup> Richard Longstreth, “Sears, Roebuck and the remaking of the Department Store, 1924-1942,” *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 65, no. 2 (June, 2006), 244. Use of the term “modernity” may have been hyperbole on the part of Longstreth and may have referred more to the function of Sears as a modern retailer rather than the buildings being considered “modern.”

<sup>31</sup> This letter was found on site of the Sears building.



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capacity by 275,000 square feet every year in the next ten years (likely through the 1970s) in order to remain efficient in distributing to their markets. Although he explained that the recent conversion of seventh and eighth floor office areas back to merchandise space was helpful, this would only open up sufficient space for the next year. Havill clarified that the surrounding surface parking lots were the only location to continue expansion of the existing Sears building, thus forcing them to explore the option of constructing multi-deck parking garages somewhere off site. This need for additional space was likely the impetus for Sears to explore expanding operations off site that led eventually to the construction of an entirely separate Sears corporate headquarters in Alhambra.

In 1966, Sears announced plans to move their corporate offices from the Sears building, described as the “regional headquarters,” to a new location in Alhambra.<sup>32</sup> Furthermore, this new headquarters would consolidate a number of different Sears corporate departments within one building. Explaining that the company had outgrown its territorial office operations at the Sears building and that most of its 600 employees that would be relocated lived in the suburban San Gabriel Valley in eastern Los Angeles County, the company began constructing a new Pacific Coast Headquarters building in Alhambra in 1969 to house its territorial office operations so that the Sears building could be used exclusively as a retail store, warehouse, and distribution center.<sup>33</sup> When the new Alhambra building was dedicated on April 20, 1971 it stood out as an imposing twelve-story glass cube in a suburban landscape of a city that had never seen a building taller than four-stories (Figure 35).<sup>34</sup>

In 1968, the firm Robert Clements & Associates was hired to update the image of the retail store in the Sears building.<sup>35</sup> This work was completed in 1970 and included construction of a new two-story addition, remodel of the existing one-story garden center along the west elevation, and construction of a new one-story concession stand on the east elevation. Entrances on the north and east elevations were remodeled and new screen façade was installed, wrapping the lower bays of the north elevation and portions of the east and west elevations. On the interior the Sears retail store was remodeled and an escalator was added.

### PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANCE

When the Sears building was listed in the National Register in 2006, the period of significance was arbitrarily set from 1927-1955, reflecting the 50-year cut off date from when the nomination was submitted. The 1959-1964 additions and 1970 alteration were identified as non-contributing features.

Based on findings in this Part 1 amendment, the period of significance should be expanded from 1927-1955 to 1927-1966. Since the time the property was listed in the National Register, the 1959-1964 addition has become 50 years of age and should be considered a contributing feature, as it reflects and contributed to Sears’ substantial postwar expansion in the retail and catalog business, especially in the western United States. As Sears continued to expand operations, additions to the Sears building were integral and necessary for this growth. When Sears officially announced the construction of a new western corporate headquarters in Alhambra in 1966 this ended 39 years of

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<sup>32</sup> “Sears building Headquarters in Alhambra,” *Los Angeles Times*, February 6, 1966, I4.

<sup>33</sup> “Sears to Build Headquarters in Alhambra,” *Los Angeles Times*, 6 Feb. 1966, I4 and “Sears Breaks Ground for Headquarters,” *Los Angeles Times*, 19 Oct. 1969, J4.

<sup>34</sup> Payton Canary, “Application Filed for 12-Story Sears building,” *Los Angeles Times*, April 22, 1969, SG8.

<sup>35</sup> “Additions and Alterations to Los Angeles Catalog Order Plant and Retail Store,” drawings prepared by Robert Clements and Associates, dated July 29, 1970. A newspaper article detailing this addition stated the project was to be completed in the late summer of 1969; however, a certificate of occupancy for a “snack bar” was not issued until March 1970. See, “Sears Store Being Given a New Look,” *Los Angeles Times*, May 25, 1969, J18, and Certificate of Occupancy Los Angeles Department of Building and Safety, for permit LA 77212/68, issued March 10, 1970.

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continual expansion and growth of the Sears building that served a triple function as a mail-order plant, western corporate headquarters, and retail store. The period of significance has been expanded to end in 1966, as the date when Sears officials determined the Sears building had reached its maximum physical capacity and could no longer be expanded to effectively serve these three functions.

The 1970 alteration does not appear to meet exceptional significance requirements for buildings under 50 years of age and, thus, does not appear to be a contributing feature.