

NPS Form 10-900
(Rev. 10-90)
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

OMB No. 1024-0018

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

1. Name of Property

historic name Occidental Life Insurance Company Building
other names/site number WA 4298

2. Location

street & number 1001 Wade Avenue
N/A not for publication
city or town Raleigh vicinity N/A
state North Carolina code NC county Wake code 183 zip code 27607

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this X 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 X meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide X locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Jeffrey J. Crow SHPO 7/11/03
Signature of certifying official Date

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 Keeper Date
of Action

=====
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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A

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

=====
6. Function or Use
=====

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: Commerce/Trade: business

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: Commerce/Trade: business

=====
7. Description
=====

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Modern Movement: International Style

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation brick
roof asphalt
walls limestone
other aluminum

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.)

- 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.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Period of Significance 1956

Significant Dates 1956

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above) N/A

Cultural Affiliation N/A

Architect/Builder Kemp, Bunch & Jackson (supervising architect); Valand, Leif (associate architect)

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

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9. Major Bibliographical References

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(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: _____

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10. Geographical Data

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Acreage of Property 4.4 acres

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	17	711740	3963950	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 M. Ruth Little
organization Longleaf Historic Resources date March 2003
street & number 2709 Bedford Avenue telephone 919-836-9731
city or town Raleigh state NC zip code 27607
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12. Additional Documentation
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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 Neal Coker, Oberlin Capital Acquisition, LLC
street & number 221 Glenwood Avenue telephone 919-834-9400
city or town Raleigh state N. C. zip code 27603
=====

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.

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section 7 Page 1

**Occidental Life Insurance Company Building
Wake County, North Carolina**

Section 7: Description

The Occidental Life Insurance Company Building, completed in 1956, is sited atop a knoll on a 4.4 acre tract at 1001 Wade Avenue, at the northwest corner of Daniels Street in Raleigh (see Fig. 1 sketch map). It originally faced east to Wade Avenue. A lawn, shaded by large oak trees, extends from the front of the building east to Wade Avenue and to Daniels Street on the south side. The four-story building is a 68,000 square-foot steel frame structure encapsulated in concrete. The austere International Style design is finished with elegant materials: a brick base, limestone walls, aluminum windows with green-tinted glass, and entrance canopies with rounded aluminum eaves. An original brick and concrete terrace runs around the perimeter of the building, extending on the south side beyond the porch, with three steps to the lawn. Original concrete benches border this terrace. The original parking lot, located on the north side of the building, is largely outside the boundary of this nomination. Figure 2, a view ca. 1956 from the south, shows the original appearance of the Occidental Building.

Exterior:

The massing of the building and finish materials exemplify the aesthetic of the International Style. The four-story rectangular main block, two bays wide and ten bays deep, is oriented east-west, with a four-story north wing and a one-story south wing. A louvered mechanical cooling tower projects from the flat roof of the main block and north wing. The ground floor is sheathed with red brick veneer, upper stories with smooth Alabama limestone panels. The main (east) façade is a windowless expanse of limestone. Each bay of the side elevations contains a band of six aluminum casement windows with green-tinted glass. The original main entrance was located at the back of a covered plaza within the first story created by two rows of square piers faced with stacked Roman brick that support the upper stories. The outer bay of the plaza functioned as a porte-cochere for cars; the inner bay was a brick and concrete pedestrian area. A circular driveway from Wade Avenue passed through the porte-cochere. About 1970 the plaza was enclosed as office space and the north entrance became the main entrance. One pair of the original double front doors is still in place. The natural-finish wood doors have a row of four small glass windows.

The north wing is four stories tall (the cooling tower functions as a fifth story). It is one bay wide on the east elevation and two bays deep on the north elevation. An entrance canopy with stacked Roman brick piers projects north from the lobby. This entrance faced the original employee parking lot on the north side. The canopy has Art Deco-style aluminum eaves with streamlined, rounded corners. Since 1970 this has been the main entrance. The cornerstone originally located beside the front door was installed beside the north door about 1970. It is inscribed:

HOME OFFICE
OCCIDENTAL LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY
LAURENCE F. LEE, PRESIDENT
ERECTED 1955

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Section 7 Page 2

**Occidental Life Insurance Company Building
Wake County, North Carolina**

KEMP, BUNCH & JACKSON, ARCHITECTS
LEIF VALAND, ASSOCIATED ARCHITECT
GEORGE W. KANE, CONTRACTOR

The south wing is a red brick, one-story rectangular block that originally contained the company theatre. A tall band of windows is set in the center of the south elevation. There were no other original openings in the wing. A one-story porch, supported by Roman brick piers, with a cantilevered roof with rounded aluminum eaves, wraps around the southwest corner of the auditorium. This porch provided public access to the cafeteria located at the rear of the ground floor. At the rear of the north elevation is the loading dock for the cafeteria kitchen. It has a flat-roofed canopy with a cantilevered roof with rounded aluminum eaves and stuccoed support columns. A glazed stair tower projects from the rear (west) elevation. Small rectangular panels of fluted and reeded etched glass illuminate the entire height of the tower.

The flat asphalt rooftop is accessed by the stair tower. The cooling tower, which functions as the top floor of the north wing, contains the top of the elevator and mechanical equipment, and forms a partial fifth story. The original signage consisted of large stainless steel letters spelling out the name "OCCIDENTAL LIFE" on the front and sides of the cooling tower, and across the main façade just above the recessed plaza. These signs have all been removed. The front elevation of the theatre wing bears ornamental bosses and the company's creed in stainless steel letters: FOUNDED WITH VISION....STRENGTHENED BY VIGILANCE.

The Occidental Life Insurance Company Building (referred to as the Occidental Building) retains a high degree of exterior integrity. About 1970 the entrance plaza was enclosed as office space by the installation of plate glass set into dark metal muntins. At the same time, clear plate glass enclosed the wraparound porch to convert it into additional dining room space for the cafeteria. In each instance, sensitive design and materials minimized the adverse impact of the remodeling. The only other significant exterior alteration was the addition of two narrow windows to the south elevation of the auditorium wing in the late 1980s.

Interior:

The interior floor plan of the Occidental Building is basically intact (see Figs. 4-7 for a plan of each floor). The first floor contains a front and side lobby linked by an elevator lobby, a theatre, a cafeteria and dining room, and a small amount of office space. The second, third and fourth floors have central elevator lobbies, with executive office space in the north wing and general clerical office space in the south main block. The fourth floor, where executive, accounting and financial offices were located, contained an executive dining room in the north wing, the president's office suite in the rear of the main block, and general office space in the remainder of the main block. The below-grade basement contains storage areas. The subbasement contains the oil-fired furnace. A set of three elevators rises through the

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**Occidental Life Insurance Company Building
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center of the building. Opposite the elevators are original bathrooms. Above the fourth floor roof rises a small fifth floor mechanical level, with metal louvered windows on all four sides, that contains the cooling tower, mechanical equipment, and the elevator machine room.

The interior retains much of the original hierarchy of finishes, with the most expensive finishes in the public spaces and fourth floor executive offices, and utilitarian finishes in the large office pools of the second and third floors. The east lobby, the elevator lobby, and the north lobby of the first floor retain their complex patterned-terrazzo flooring. The east lobby is finished with wood veneer paneling and travertine walls. The first floor elevator lobby has travertine walls and stainless steel elevator doors and frames. The north lobby walls retain original wood veneer paneling. The theatre retains its parquet floor. The cafeteria retains original deep orange ceramic-tiled floors and walls. A dumbwaiter service extends from the basement to the fourth floor executive dining room. The second through fourth floors have elevator lobbies with simply patterned-terrazzo floors, travertine walls, and stainless steel elevator doors and frames. The third floor lobby retains the only remaining dropped soffit, in a dramatic "boat" shape, created out of lath and plaster. This elongated oval soffit provides reflected lighting onto the ceiling, and also contains ventilation ducts. The perimeters of the walls throughout the second through fourth floors have boxed cabinets beneath the windows that conceal the heating system. Materials covering the window sills range from metal sheathing in the general office space of the main block, to ceramic tile in reception areas and executive offices of the second and third floor, to paneled sides and marble sills on the fourth floor. Several executive offices on the second and third floors have one or two paneled walls.

The interior has undergone some rearrangement of the original floor plan in order to create additional office space. The main entrance was shifted to the north lobby when the east entrance plaza was enclosed about 1970. The original entrance lobby was then partially enclosed as office space, leaving a narrower hallway. About 1970 the rear porch was glassed in to expand the dining room area. A computer center was installed in the rear north side of the third floor in 1966.¹ Some offices were reconfigured on the fourth floor in the late 1980s by the installation of new partition walls.

¹ "Timesharing Computer Center Dedicated in Raleigh," *News and Observer*, Nov. 29, 1966.

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**Occidental Life Insurance Company Building
Wake County, North Carolina**

Statement of Significance

In 1956 one of Raleigh's first modern office buildings, the Occidental Life Insurance Company Building, was completed in Cameron Village, North Carolina's first suburban shopping center. Cameron Village is a mixed-use residential, retail and office center built between 1949 and 1960 on a large tract in western Raleigh among early twentieth century residential suburbs. Occidental Life Insurance Company, founded in 1906 in New Mexico, moved its headquarters to Raleigh, North Carolina in 1926 to take advantage of the South's growing population. After almost thirty years of operation in the Professional Building in downtown Raleigh, Occidental Life Insurance Company built a new headquarters on a six-acre tract at 1001 Wade Avenue, at the north edge of Cameron Village. Designed by the Jacksonville, Florida, firm of Kemp, Bunch & Jackson, and constructed under the supervision of Cameron Village architect Leif Valand, the four-story International Style building is one of the first International Style office buildings in Raleigh. The 68,000 square foot building is a steel-frame structure sheathed with elegant limestone panels and green-tinted windows. The main entrance plaza is recessed within the east façade, and canopies of curved aluminum supported on Roman brick piers shelter the north and south side entrances. The luxurious building, with central air-conditioning, a theatre, executive facilities, and a large cafeteria for employees and the public, set a new standard of architectural design and employee amenities in Raleigh. The well-preserved Occidental Life Insurance Company Building, a local landmark of corporate International Style design, has exceptional significance under Criterion C and Criteria Consideration G as the earliest major International Style office building in Raleigh. Its period of significance is its year of completion, 1956.

Historical Background

Occidental Life Insurance Company had its beginnings in Albuquerque, New Mexico, where attorney A. B. MacMillan founded it in 1906. A flurry of new insurance companies started in the American West in the early years of the twentieth century as a result of a New York City insurance company scandal, as well as such disasters as the San Francisco Earthquake of 1906 and the Great Flu Epidemic of 1918. Attorney Laurence Lee married MacMillan's daughter and entered the MacMillan law firm and the Occidental Life Insurance Company in the 1910s. Company actuary George Roslington persuaded the company to move to Raleigh in 1926 to take advantage of the upper South's population, which was larger than that of the New Mexico region.² For nearly thirty years, the Occidental Life Insurance Company operated their headquarters in Raleigh out of the first floor of the Professional Building, a high-rise office building in downtown Raleigh. Laurence Lee was the president during the entire period.³

² R. Peyton Woodson III (former president and chairman of the board of Occidental Life Insurance Company) interview, Aug. 23, 2002. See also "Occidental Life Company Had Romantic Beginning," *News and Observer*, Raleigh, May 18, 1940; "Occidental Life of North Carolina: The First 75 Years," company history printed 1981, copy in file.

³ Raleigh City Directories: 1927-1955.

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**Occidental Life Insurance Company Building
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In the late 1940s, as Willie York was developing Cameron Village, a mixed-use retail, residential and office development one and one-half miles northwest of downtown Raleigh, Occidental decided to construct a spacious, architecturally distinctive suburban headquarters. A master plan of the village published in a commercial brochure about 1950 (Figure 3) showed the Occidental office building at the 1001 Wade Avenue site, although the firm did not formally purchase the 5.63-acre site from Cameron Village Inc. until 1951. The site was part of the "Northern Section of Cameron Village," which had been platted earlier in 1951.⁴ Willie York and Occidental executive Hal Trentman had negotiated for some time about the cost of the property, so it is likely that York assumed that the insurance company would occupy the site even before they actually purchased it.⁵ Its wooded hilltop site, along with the rest of the 160-acre Cameron Village tract, had been clearcut by the owners during World War II.⁶

The Jacksonville, FL. architectural firm of Kemp, Bunch & Jackson, with Leif Valand of Raleigh as associate architect, designed the home office building in 1954. Contractor George W. Kane constructed the building from 1954 to 1956 at an approximate cost of \$1,500,000. A newspaper article about the ground-breaking ceremony, held on September 21, 1954, noted that "The office building will be a four-story expandable structure completely air-conditioned and of modern design."⁷ Occidental moved into the new building on March 9, 1956.⁸

Leif Valand (1911-1985), the architect of Cameron Village, had only a supervisory role in the design of the Occidental Building. Valand, trained at Pratt Institute, worked in the 1940s as the staff architect for a firm called American Houses in New York City that produced prefabricated houses. Willie York, a building contractor in Raleigh, purchased fifty Cape Cod-style houses designed by Valand and erected them as government housing in Morehead City during World War II. York was so impressed with Valand's design skills that he hired him to come to Raleigh in 1946 to design the apartments, houses, retail, and office buildings in the Cameron Village project. All of the Cameron Village buildings were of prefabricated construction, although the brick and stone veneers that enclose the commercial buildings were added on site. Valand's Cameron Village commercial and office buildings were economical International Style one and two-story flat-roofed brick veneer buildings with flagstone accents on the main facades, bands of metal casement windows shaded by wide roof eaves, and flat metal awnings with pipe supports sheltering the entrances and shopfronts. Valand spent the rest of his career in Raleigh. Among his many later projects were the Ridgewood Shopping Center and subdivision in 1953, the YMCA on Hillsborough Street in 1960, the North Hills Shopping Center and subdivision in

⁴ Wake County Deed Book 1084, page 486 (1951); plat of "Northern Section of Cameron Village Adjacent to Rex Hospital," Wake County Map Book 1, page 62 (1951).

⁵ J. W. (Willie) York interview, Aug. 21, 2002; Cameron Village Master Plan, in Hutchins, *Cameron Village: A History 1949-1999*, 5.

⁶ Woodson interview; *Cameron Village: A History*, 4; Edmisten, *J. W. Willie York: His First Seventy-Five Years in Raleigh*, 97; "Occidental Life of North Carolina, The first 75 Years."

⁷ "Occidental Holds Ground-Breaking Ceremonies," *The News and Observer*, Raleigh, Sept. 22, 1954; Edmisten, *J. W. Willie York: His First Seventy-Five Years*, 97.

⁸ Woodson interview.

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**Occidental Life Insurance Company Building
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the early 1960s, and Northgate Shopping Center in Durham in the early 1960s.⁹

Valand had no input into the design of the Occidental Building—it was wholly the work of William K. Jackson of Kemp, Bunch & Jackson. The firm formed in 1946 out of the Jacksonville firm of Roy Benjamin (1888-1963). Benjamin designed many of Jacksonville's major landmarks in the first half of the twentieth century.¹⁰ Occidental Company executives selected Kemp, Bunch and Jackson to design their home office because the firm had designed a successful headquarters for Peninsular Life Insurance Company, a subsidiary of Occidental, in the early 1950s in Jacksonville. Laurence F. Lee, Occidental Company president, was also president of Peninsular, and split his time between Jacksonville and Raleigh. Bill Jackson, chief architect of the Occidental Building, designed the Prudential Life Insurance Building in Jacksonville about the same time that he was designing the Occidental Building. Both the Peninsular and the Prudential Buildings were sited on the riverfront in downtown Jacksonville, and were mid-rise International Style buildings of similar appearance to the Occidental Building.¹¹

Laurence Lee, Hal Trentman, and other Occidental Company executives planned the new headquarters as a more relaxed environment than their downtown offices. They particularly admired International Style design for its functional office plans which allowed more offices in less space than did traditional office architecture.¹² The new building was sited in a nearly six-acre park-like setting with a theatre used for agent training and gatherings as well as for community meetings. Executive vice-president Hal Trentman was chairman of the board of county commissioners for some years. He and the Occidental Company's other executives were active in the civic and political life of Raleigh, and encouraged public activities in the building. The elegant cafeteria not only was convenient for employees, but also was enjoyed by the public. On the fourth floor where the executive, accounting and investment departments were located was the executive dining room. Food from the cafeteria was sent up via a dumbwaiter.¹³

The 1001 Wade Avenue building served as the home office of Occidental Life Insurance Company from 1956 until the late 1980s. Over the years, the Occidental Company made only a few changes. Although the building was designed to be expandable, the company never enlarged. They gained extra office space by enclosing the front plaza and the side porch. The first floor plaza had never been very functional, since most visitors parked to the north of the building and entered by the north side entrance. By the late 1960s, the growth of the firm necessitated the enclosure of the plaza as office space. The popularity of the cafeteria resulted in the expansion of the dining room out into the porch.¹⁴ In both

⁹J. W. Willie York: *His First Seventy-Five Years*, 83, 115, 125.

¹⁰ Benjamin is prominently presented in a publication, *Jacksonville's Architectural Heritage*, available at www.jaxhistory.com. Kemp, Bunch & Jackson (KB&J) have a large practice throughout the Southeast to the present day. (www.kbj.com)

¹¹ Woodson interview.

¹² Woodson interview.

¹³ Woodson and York interviews.

¹⁴ Woodson interview.

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cases, the former open spaces were enclosed with sensitive glass curtain walls that preserved the original open feel of the space.

Occidental Life Insurance Company was sold to Pennsylvania Life Insurance Company in the late 1980s. Pennsylvania Life made a number of interior alterations, including the conversion of the theatre into offices and the reconfiguration of most of the fourth floor. In the late 1990s, Pennsylvania Life found itself in financial difficulty and sold the building. The new owner in turn sold it to developer Neal Coker, current owner of this tract and a larger tract to the north. Mr. Coker is in the process of selling the Occidental tract to Billie Redmond of TradeMark Properties. Ms. Redmond intends to restore the building to its original class A office space appearance.¹⁵

Architectural Significance

Although not quite fifty years old, the 1956 Occidental Building is eligible for the National Register for its exceptional architectural significance as the finest of a group of early International Style office buildings built in Raleigh from 1954 to 1962. The Occidental Building is one of a group of mid-rise office buildings constructed in the 1950s in Cameron Village, the first suburban mixed-use development in Raleigh. The Occidental Building retains a high degree of architectural integrity on its distinguished hilltop site on Wade Avenue at the north edge of Cameron Village. The building's architecture was not directly associated with the modern architects then teaching at the nearby North Carolina State College School of Design in Raleigh, although the modernist tradition created by the school presented a fertile climate for the new style.

The International Style developed out of the European modernist movement that began at the Bauhaus, a school of design founded in Weimar, Germany in 1919 by architect Walter Gropius. During the 1920s Gropius and Mies van der Rohe, another architect associated with the Bauhaus, evolved a style based on the steel frame, curtain glass walls, and the juxtaposition of slab and cube forms that came to be known as the International Style. French architect Le Corbusier's reinforced concrete buildings of the period, raised on concrete piers one level above the ground, also helped to create the new style.¹⁶ The International Style achieved its greatest popularity in the realm of mid-rise and high-rise corporate office buildings in the 1950s to 1960s. The earliest appearance of the International Style skyscraper in the United States was the Philadelphia Savings Fund Society building designed by Howe and Lescaze and completed in Philadelphia in 1932. But the style did not become popular in American corporate architecture until after World War II. Among the earliest landmarks are the Equitable Life Assurance Building in Portland, Oregon by Pietro Belluschi, 1944-1947; the United Nations Secretariat, New York City, by an international team, 1947-1950; and Lever House, New York City, by Gordon Bunshaft of

¹⁵ Woodson interview; interview with Billie Redmond, president of TradeMark Properties, May 8, 2002.

¹⁶ Curtis, *Modern Architecture Since 1900*, 163-199.

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Skidmore, Owings and Merrill, 1951-1952.¹⁷ All four buildings share the high-rise steel and concrete slab form with its stilted ground floor and gleaming, austere, gridded aluminum-framed and curtain-walled exterior surface characteristic of the International Style. These first International Style skyscrapers were built in the centers of large cities.

During the business boom of the later 1950s, companies no longer needed to be in expensive city centers and began moving to smaller towns and suburban communities. Architectural firms spread the aesthetic of the International Style skyscraper out on larger sites, creating a horizontal profile instead of a high-rise one. Some of the earliest landmarks of the style in Germany, such as the Bauhaus school in Dessau, designed by Gropius in 1926, and apartment houses and factory buildings of the 1920s, were mid-rise buildings composed of tall slabs counter-balanced with horizontal wings. These prototypes provided useful models for suburban office buildings. In the United States in the 1950s, a number of modernist style buildings were insurance offices. Insurance companies desired the same sizeable, stable, and conservative public image as did banks. Like banks, insurance companies hired the best architects to produce buildings symbolic of their community standing. One of the most successful followers of Mies, whose pre-World War II buildings launched the International Style in the United States, was the Chicago and New York firm of Skidmore, Owings and Merrill (SOM). Gordon Bunshaft, one of SOM's first designers, created the suburban campus of Connecticut General Life Insurance Company, Bloomfield, Connecticut, from 1955 to 1957. The modular International Style complex, set in a 113-acre park with lakes and sculpture, encloses four courtyards and is connected to a cafeteria. The classic phase of the corporate International Style—the glass tower archetype—lasted little more than a decade. By the early 1960s American designers moved the office building into a new phase in which the elegant glass towers of the International Style gave way to the expressionist use of rough-cast concrete, later called Brutalism.¹⁸

Raleigh's corporate architectural development is a microcosm of such development in the United States. Prior to the 1950s, Raleigh's office buildings were contained within the central business district. One of the downtown's most architecturally significant office buildings was the Durham Life Insurance Building (now the Wake County Office Building), 336 Fayetteville Street, built from 1940-1942 by Winston-Salem architects Northup & O'Brien. The limestone-clad Art Deco skyscraper featured air conditioning, a gleaming lobby, and setback massing reminiscent of the Empire State Building. This landmark building demonstrates the opulence often associated with office buildings constructed by insurance companies. Occidental Company's offices were in a downtown high-rise office building, the Professional Building, 123 W. Hargett Street, built in 1924, from 1926 until they moved to 1001 Wade Avenue in 1956.

Suburban development in Raleigh began with the construction of Cameron Village in the late

¹⁷ Jordy, *American Buildings and Their Architects: The Impact of European Modernism in the Mid-Twentieth Century*, 233.

¹⁸ Khan, *International Style: Modernist Architecture from 1925 to 1965*, 133.

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1940s. The west Raleigh commercial, office and residential development marked the first challenge to the central business district. Raleigh had several small neighborhood centers with a drugstore and a grocery store, such as Five Points, but Cameron Village, the first shopping center in North Carolina, literally constituted a second central business district.¹⁹ Along with the retail stores and housing, a group of four Modernist office buildings were designed by Leif Valand and constructed in the 400 and 500 blocks of Oberlin Road between 1954 and 1960. The Cameron Building, 400 Oberlin Road, was built in 1954-55. The Phillips Building, 401 Oberlin Road, was built 1957-1958. The Cameron Village Inc. Office Building at 410-412 Oberlin Road was built in 1959. Balantine's Cafeteria moved into the first floor in 1961. The Cameron Village Post Office, 505 Oberlin Road, was built ca. 1960. The buildings share Valand's personal version of the International Style which combined inexpensive prefabricated construction, low-rise massing, and long cantilevered roofs that shade first and second story bands of ribbon windows. Valand warmed the stark designs with rough brown flagstone veneer at entrances and other façade areas and set staircases into flagstone-veneered "towers."

At the north end of Cameron Village, another three modernist office buildings were constructed between 1955 and 1958 along Wade Avenue. Prior to 1955, Wade Avenue was a residential street of the Oberlin community, an African American settlement that continued south on Oberlin Road. By 1956 three office and institutional buildings stood along a new section of Wade Avenue at the north end of Cameron Village: the Occidental Building, 1001 Wade Avenue; Nationwide Insurance Company, 1000 Wade Avenue; and the office of the Boy Scouts of America, Oconeechee Council, 1005 Wade Avenue. East of this block, the Cameron Village street of Daniels Street intersected with St. Mary's Street, where Rex Hospital was located. About 1965 the city of Raleigh extended this road east of Rex Hospital to U. S. 1 (Capital Boulevard), straightened out its sharp angles, and created the Wade Avenue of today--a curving four-lane boulevard that winds approximately three miles from Capital Boulevard west to Meredith College.²⁰

The Occidental Building is the earliest major International Style office building in Raleigh. The mid-rise steel and concrete building is a sophisticated example of the style. The four-story main block creates a central axis, flanked by a four-story wing on one side and a one-story wing on the other. The elegant finishes--including limestone panels, green-tinted bands of windows, Roman brick piers that support the front of the main block, and aluminum canopies over the side entrances--enrich the austere volumes of the building.

The Oconeechee Council Office of the Boy Scouts of America, at 1005 Wade Avenue is a small modernist building constructed just north of the Occidental Building at the same time, in 1955. The small split-level International Style building has brick walls, tall bands of ribbon windows, and a porte-cochere entrance with Roman brick piers. As Occidental executive Hal Trentmen was president of the

¹⁹ J. W. Willie York, *His First Seventy-Five Years in Raleigh*, 71.

²⁰ Raleigh City Directories, 1950s and 1960s; plat of Northern Section of Cameron Village, 1951; 1968 Map of Raleigh.

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**Occidental Life Insurance Company Building
Wake County, North Carolina**

Oconneechee Council, it was likely not merely a coincidence that the office was located on this site and had a modernist architectural design.²¹

In 1955 the Nationwide Insurance Company was building its own regional headquarters across the street from the Occidental Building.²² Designed by Leif Valand, the large two-story brick building sprawls out on its hilly site, with a center glass stair tower of fieldstone, and cantilevered eaves at the first and second stories sheltering wide bands of ribbon windows. In the late 1980s or early 1990s the building was enlarged and remodeled. The stair tower was reconfigured and metal pent roofs and balconies were added in place of the original cantilevered roof eaves.²³ In 1958 Valand designed a very similar office building next door at 900 Wade Avenue for the Cameron Mortgage Company, later known as the Cameron Brown Company. The 1958 building is a smaller but quite similar building of brick, with ribbon windows, fieldstone accents, and cantilevered eaves. This building was remodeled at the same time and in a similar style as 1000 Wade Avenue.²⁴

The Occidental Building is the most architecturally significant and the best-preserved building of the eight early Modernist office buildings constructed in Cameron Village from 1954 to 1960. Six of them were designed by Leif Valand in an inexpensive prefabricated Modernist style that has never equalled the luxurious appearance of the Occidental Building. Nor were they intended to-- the Oberlin Road buildings were rental buildings that contained many different small businesses; the Nationwide Building was a branch office rather than a national headquarters; and the Boy Scouts building was a regional state office for a non-profit organization. The Occidental Building, built of elegant limestone, with a theatre and cafeteria, and sited on a prominent hilltop, symbolized the corporate pride of a large insurance company. Furthermore, most of the other buildings have lost their architectural integrity through remodeling. The brick veneer walls of all have been painted. The original cantilevered eaves have largely been replaced with pent roofs covered with standing seam tin. The Cameron Village Inc. Office Building at 410-412 Oberlin Road, the finest of Valand's office designs at Cameron Village, is generally intact, as is the Phillips Building at 401 Oberlin Road. The Cameron Building, 400 Oberlin Road, and 410-412 Oberlin Road are slated for demolition.

The best-documented mid-century modernist architecture in Raleigh are the buildings associated with architects that taught at the North Carolina State College School of Design in the late 1940s and early 1950s. From the 1948 founding of the School of Design at N. C. State College, its faculty produced a "body of adventurous new designs which for a decade rivaled the best modern work in America's major cities."²⁵ Most of these buildings were residences and institutional buildings in versions of mid-

²¹ Willie York interview.

²²In the Raleigh City Directory, 1955, it is listed as: Farm Bureau Insurance Building, 1000 Wade Ave., 1955. In the 1956 City Directory it is listed as Nationwide Insurance. The State Employees Credit Union has occupied the building since 1996.

²³ See photo of Valand's architectural model of the Nationwide Building, Willie York's personal archives, copy in nomination file.

²⁴ The State Employees Credit Union has owned this building since 1996.

²⁵Robert P. Burns, "Modern Architecture in North Carolina's Capital City," unpublished manuscript quoted in Black, "Early Modern

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**Occidental Life Insurance Company Building
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century modernism. A group of these buildings have been listed in the National Register as a result of David R. Black's documentation of their exceptional architectural significance. Black's Multiple Property Documentary Form, "Early Modern Architecture in Raleigh Associated with the Faculty of the North Carolina State University School of Design," written in 1994, justified the exceptional architectural significance of modernist Raleigh buildings built from 1948 to 1972 by such School of Design architects as Matthew Nowicki, Henry Kamphoefner, George Matsumoto, Edouardo Catalano, and G. Milton Small. Although the presence of this school of modernist architecture in Raleigh probably created a fertile climate for other modern buildings, there is no direct relationship between the Occidental Building's design and the School of Design. The Florida firm of Kemp, Bunch, and Jackson absorbed their modern architectural aesthetic from other sources. During the mid-1950s architectural taste in Raleigh was open to architectural modernism, which may have influenced Occidental executives in their design decisions.

One modernist office building was built in Raleigh before the Cameron Village office buildings. In 1950 G. Milton Small, who had studied under Mies van der Rohe, designed the Wake County Office Building (later the Social Services Building) in downtown Raleigh. The four-story steel frame building was planned under a meager budget for a constricted site and bore little resemblance to the Occidental Building except in its International Style design. It was demolished in 1999.

An examination of International Style office buildings in Raleigh clarifies the 1950s as the pioneer phase of the corporate International Style. International Style office buildings did not become common in Raleigh until the early 1960s. Not until 1962 did another example of similar architectural significance to the Occidental Building appear in Raleigh, when G. Milton Small designed the Northwestern Mutual Insurance Company Building at 3515 Glenwood Avenue. Like the Occidental Building, this is a beautifully-sited insurance building on a major thoroughfare in suburban Raleigh. The one-story building features horizontally-extended floor and roof slabs and free-standing steel columns reminiscent of the buildings of Mies van der Rohe. This building was doubled in size in the late 1960s and has lost much of its architectural integrity. The 1962 Wachovia Bank and Trust Company building, 234-240 Fayetteville Street, by A. G. Odell and Associates of Charlotte is a Mies-influenced International Style steel and glass skyscraper. Small collaborated with New York architects Emery Roth & Sons to design the only true Miesian skyscraper in Raleigh—the BB & T Bank Building at 333 Fayetteville Street, built 1963. The slender tower features an uninterrupted vertical sweep of black glass and black spandrel panels in the manner of Mies' Seagram Building in New York City of 1954-1958.²⁶

Architecture in Raleigh Associated with the Faculty of the North Carolina State University School of Design," E.2.

²⁶ "A Guide Map to Raleigh, North Carolina's 20th Century Architecture," 1998.

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Wake County, North Carolina**

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Raleigh City Directories, 1927-1955.

"Timesharing Computer Center Dedicated in Raleigh," *The News and Observer*, Raleigh, November 29, 1966.

Wake County Deeds.

Wake County Maps.

Interviews (all were conducted by M. Ruth Little)

Redmond, Billie, Occidental Building redeveloper, Raleigh, August 7, 2002.

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Wake County, North Carolina**

Woodson, R. Peyton III, former president, Occidental Life Insurance Company, Raleigh, August 23, 2002.

York, J. W. (Willie), developer of Cameron Village, Raleigh, August 21, 2002.

Section 10: Boundaries

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary of the nominated parcel is shown on the accompanying Wake County Tax Map, being the southern section of Parcel Number 1704152486.

Verbal Boundary Justification

The nominated area of 4.4 acres is the amount of remaining property associated with the Occidental Life Insurance Building. The northern portion of the original 5.63 acre tract has been subdivided, and is now a part of a separate parcel on the north side of the property.

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Section Photos Page 14

**Occidental Life Insurance Company Building
Wake County, North Carolina**

Photographs:

The following information pertains to all photographs:

Photographer: M. Ruth Little

Date: August 2002

Location of Negatives: North Carolina Historic Preservation Office, Raleigh

- A. Overall of Occidental Building, from southeast.
- B. North elevation with canopy, from northeast.
- C. North Elevation, rear section, from northwest.
- D. South elevation, view of auditorium, from southeast.
- E. South elevation, view of porch, from southeast.
- F. View of front lobby, looking toward former front door.
- G. North lobby, first floor.
- H. View of auditorium
- I. View of enclosed porch.
- J. Third floor elevator lobby.

Fig. 1.
OCCIDENTAL LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY BUILDING
1001 WADE AVENUE
RALEIGH, N. C.

4.4 acres

Plat Map by Longleaf Historic Resources
May 14, 2002
Not to Scale

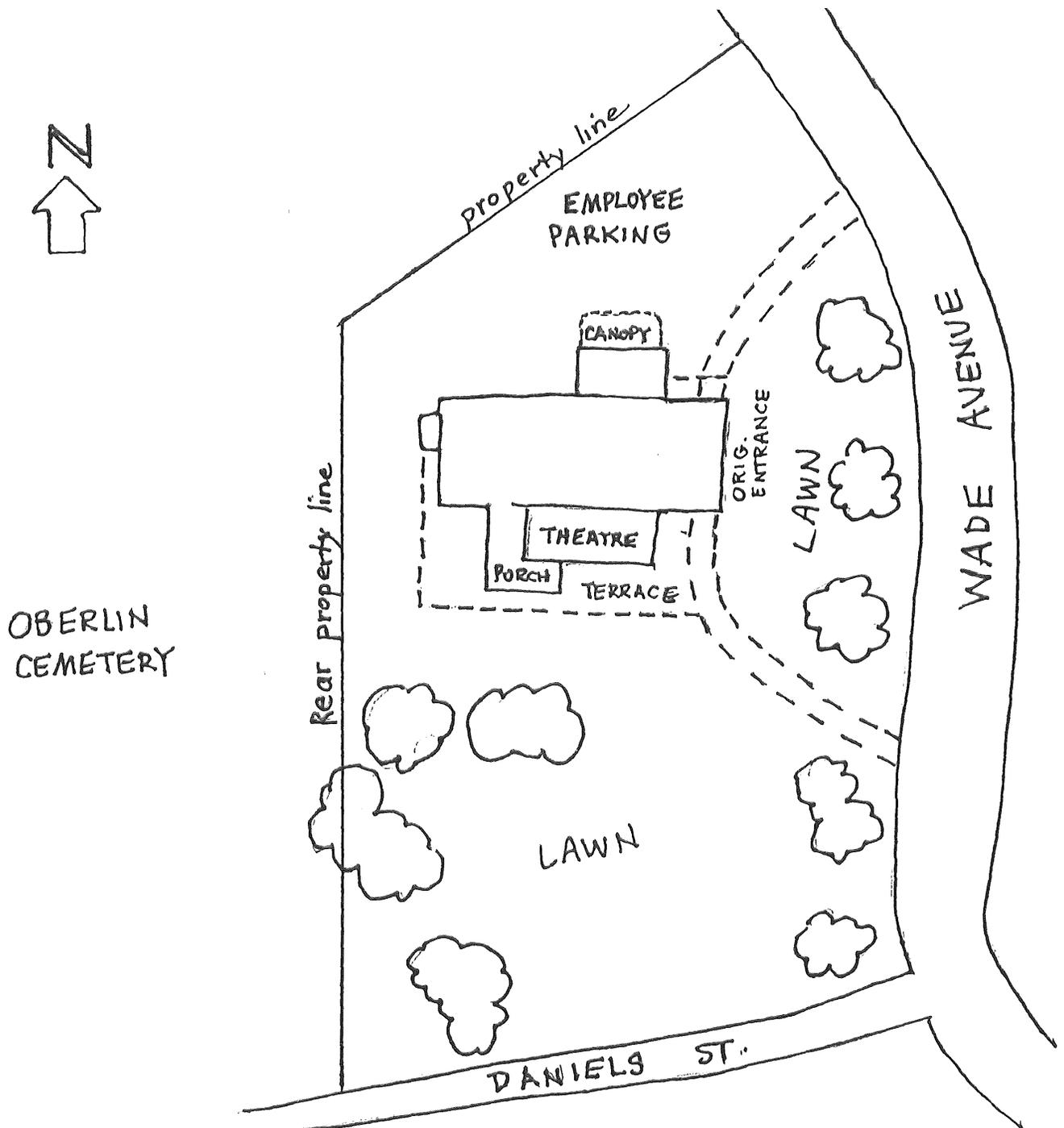
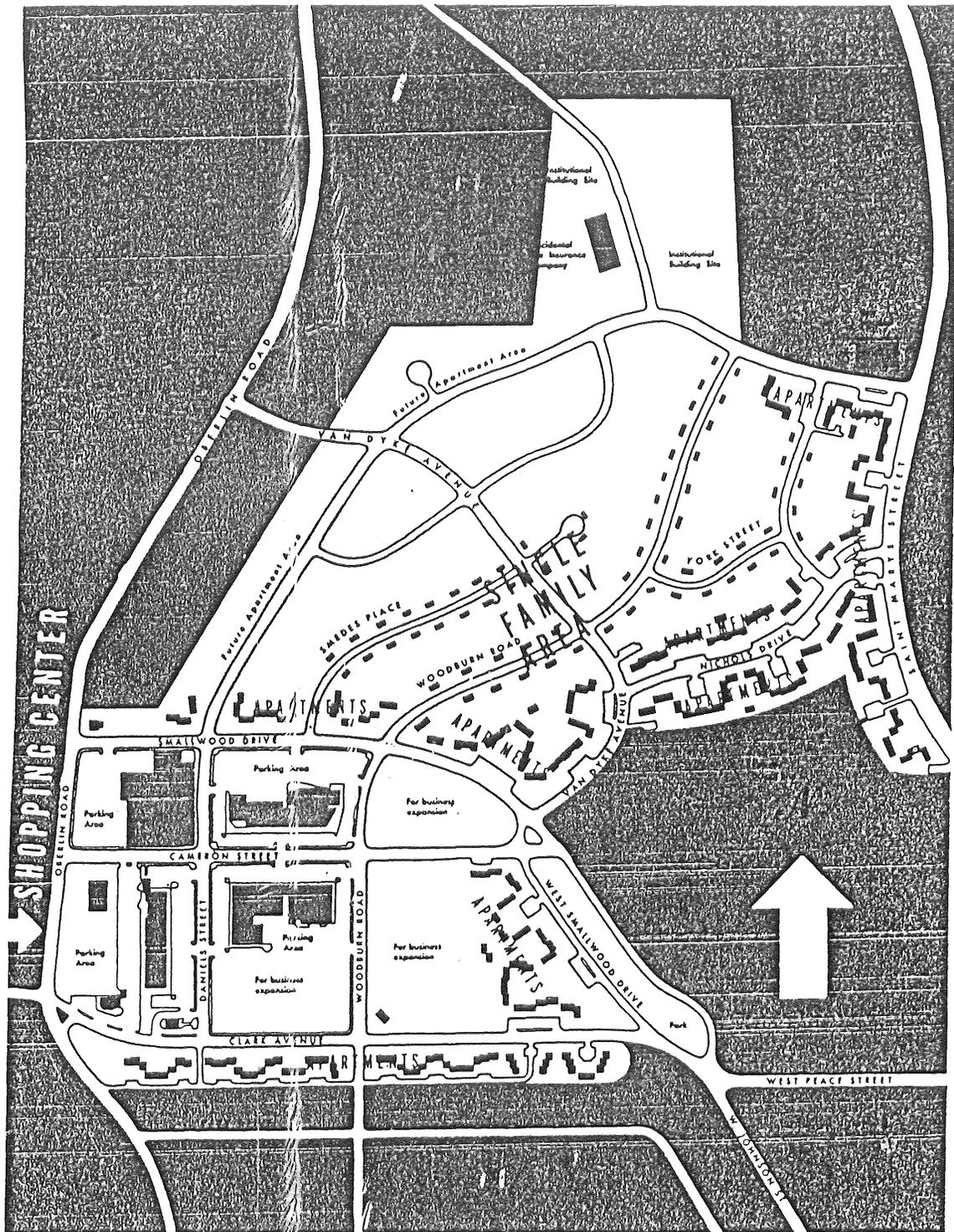


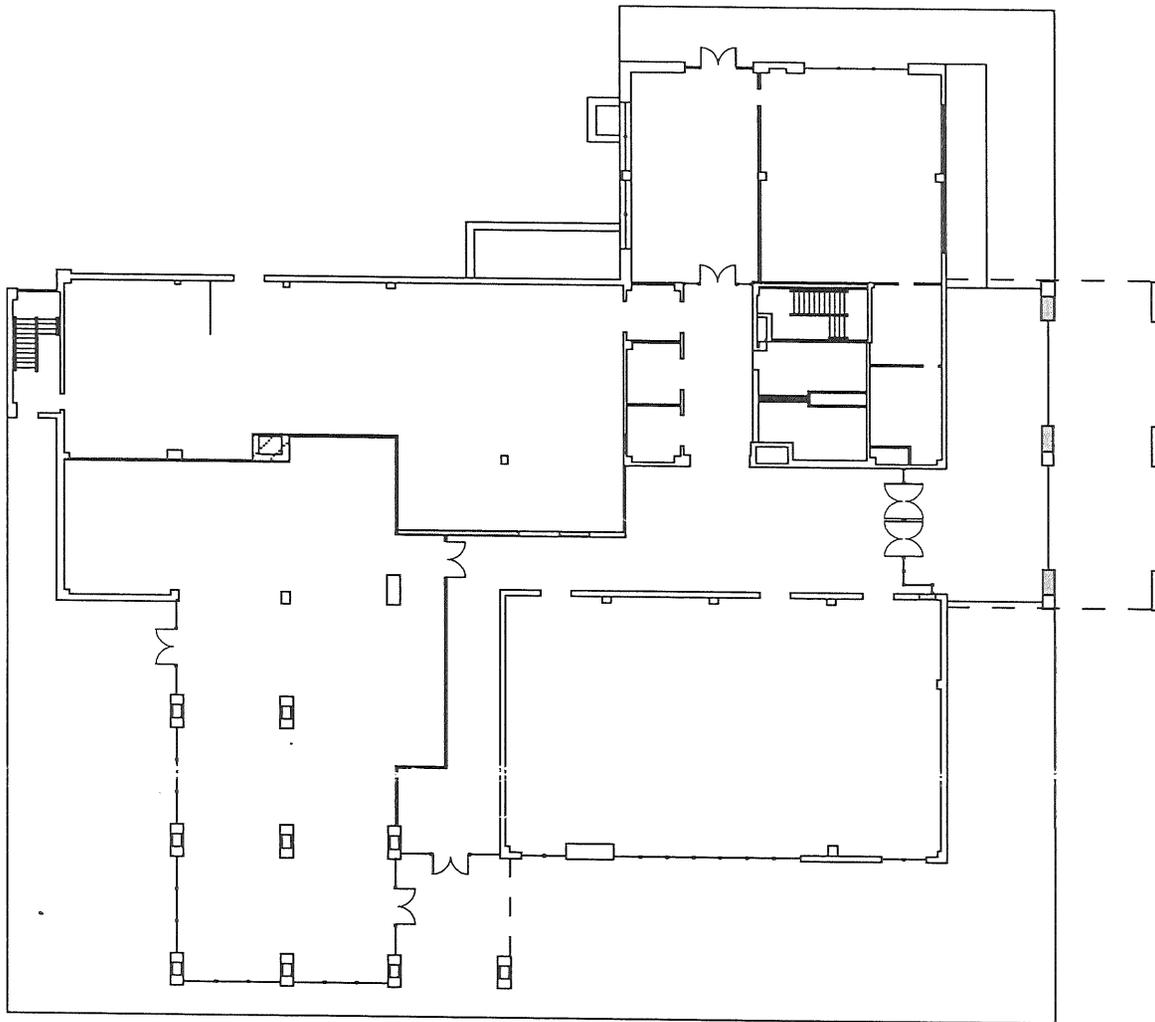


Figure 2. View of Occidental Life Insurance Company Building from the south, ca. 1956. (from *J. W. Willie York: His First Seventy-Five Years in Raleigh*, by Linda Harris Edmisten, 1987).



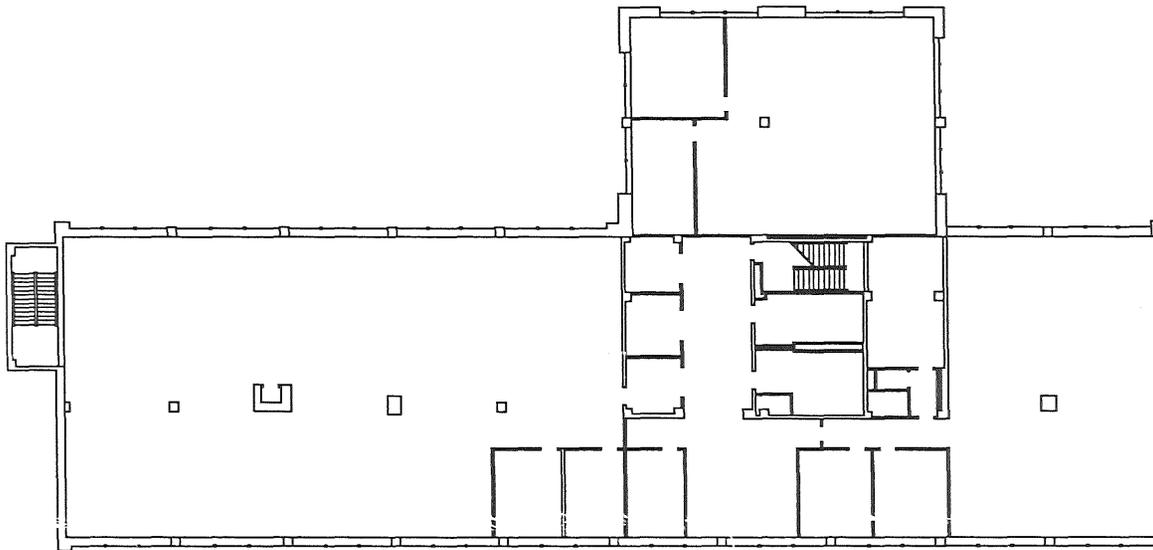
This plan of Cameron Village, published in 1950, shows the relationships of the apartment developments, the single family development and the commercial development. The three types of development were planned to complement each other.

Figure 3. Master Plan of Cameron Village, 1950. (from *J. W. Willie York: His First Seventy-Five Years in Raleigh*, by Linda Harris Edmisten, 1987).



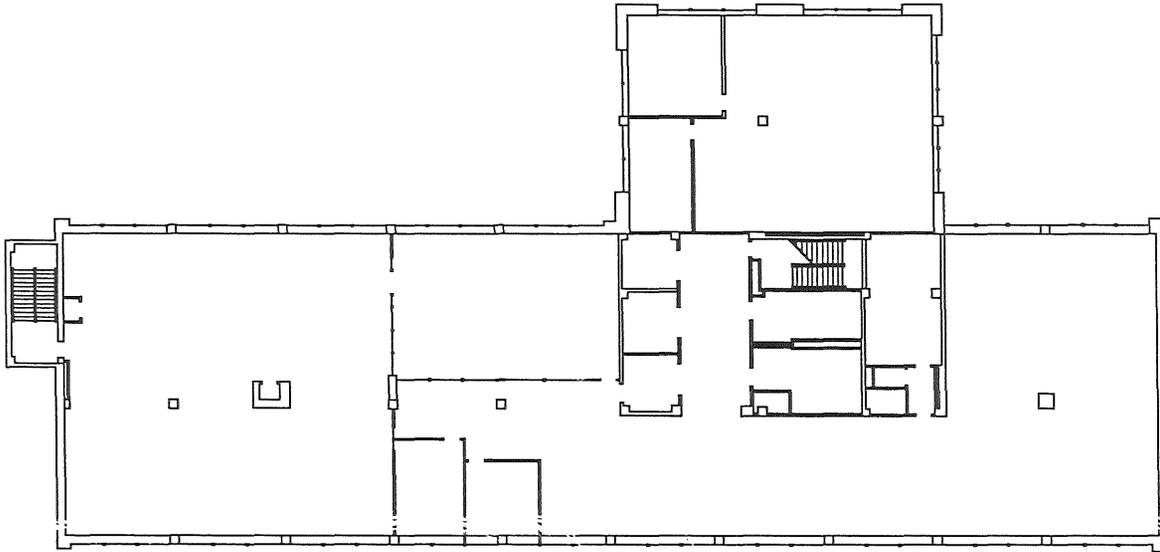
 **FIRST FLOOR**
SCALE: NTS

Fig. 4. Floor Plan
OCCIDENTAL LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY BUILDING



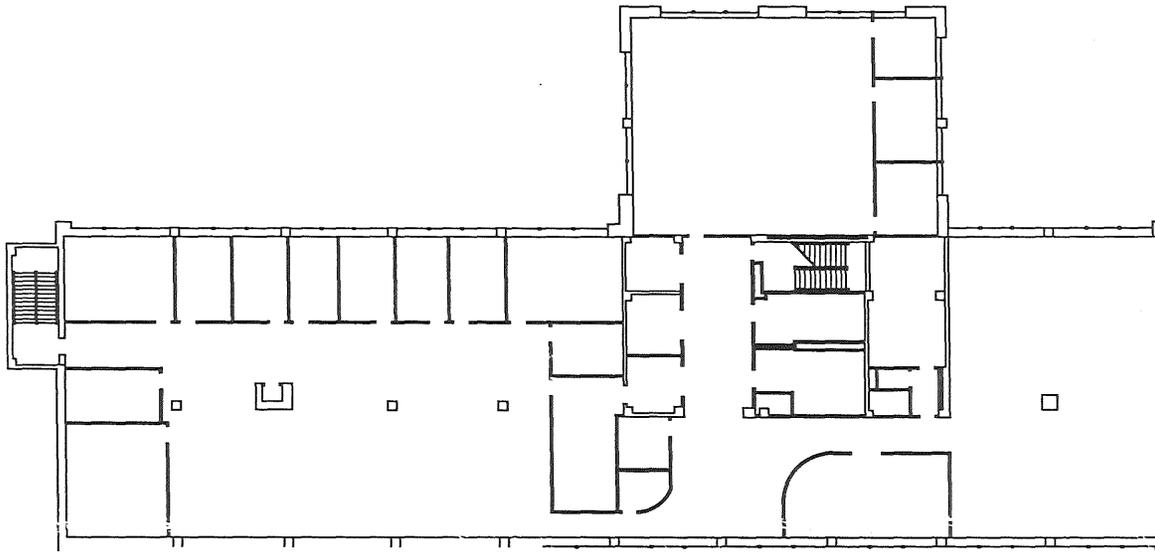
 **SECOND FLOOR**
SCALE: NTS

Fig. 5. Floor Plan
OCCIDENTAL LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY BUILDING



 **THIRD FLOOR**
SCALE: NTS

Fig. 6. Floor Plan
OCCIDENTAL LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY BUILDING



 **FOURTH FLOOR**
SCALE: NTS

Fig. 7. Floor Plan
OCCIDENTAL LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY BUILDING



365
364
47 30'
363
362
361
360
359 00'N
35° 45'

Occidental Life Insurance Building
1001 Wade Ave., Raleigh N.C.
Wake county 17/711740/3963950

