

PROTECTED LANDMARK DESIGNATION REPORT

LANDMARK NAME: Swift & Company Packing Plant

AGENDA ITEM: A

OWNERS: Waverly Owner, LLC

HPO FILE NO.: HP2024_0163

APPLICANTS: Steve Radom, owner and Amanda Coleman, Ryan, LLC, agent

DATE ACCEPTED: 06-24-2024

LOCATION: 612 Waverly Street

HAHC Hearing: 07-18-2024

SITE INFORMATION: Lot Res A, Block 1, Houston Heights Swift, City of Houston, Harris County Texas. 612 Waverly Street consists of two commercial buildings. The building closest to the street was the meat-packing plant, constructed 1953/54 and the rear building was the boiler and engine house, constructed 1917. The site is an approximately 2.97 acres within the historic Houston Heights neighborhood.

TYPE OF APPROVAL REQUESTED: Protected Landmark Designation

Most of this report was extracted from the draft National Register of Historic Places nomination for Swift & Company Packing Plant by Ryan, LLC Senior Consultants Jessica Richardson and Steph McDougal and Intern Meri Beth Slaughter. The Swift & Company buildings are proposed to be nominated to the National Register under Criterion A in the area of Industry at the local level of significance. The proposed period of significance is 1917-1974.

The project is currently under consideration for the Texas and Federal Historic Tax Credit Program (Part B/2). Initial eligibility for the National Register of Historic Places has been confirmed with an approved Part 1 application to the Texas Historical Commission.

HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE SUMMARY:

The Swift & Company Packing Plant site at 612 Waverly Street was purchased by Swift & Company in 1904.¹ Today, it contains two extant historic buildings – a 1917 Boiler and Engine House (aka Rear Building) and the 1953/54 Swift & Co. Packing Plant (aka Main Building, facing Waverly Street). Both buildings are constructed of fireproof brick and concrete; they were functionally related and represent the evolution of the site. Swift & Co.’s first development on the property was a cottonseed oil refinery complex of four buildings, of which only the Boiler and Engine House is still extant. In 1953/54, the original cottonseed oil buildings were razed and replaced with the current multi-story meatpacking plant, warehouse, and wholesale market buildings. The original Boiler and Engine House was retained and continued in use, with the addition of a laundry facility within the existing space. Both nominated buildings are more than 50 years of age.

Swift & Company was one of the “Big Five” meatpacking companies in the United States during the 19th and 20th centuries and, by the 1970s, one of the largest industrial corporations nationwide. Swift led its industry in innovations; for example, the development of refrigerated railcars enabled the shipping of sides of beef, pork, and mutton across the United States, disrupting the small-scale local slaughterhouse industry as well as the wholesale distribution and retail sales of fresh and processed meat. The buildings constructed on this site represent several different lines of business within the greater Swift & Co. operation, including cottonseed oil, fertilizer, other plant oils, and meatpacking.

Swift & Company’s site at 612 Waverly Street developed within an industrial section of the Houston Heights community, along what was then the Missouri, Kansas, and Texas Railroad.² A 1944 aerial photograph shows that Swift & Co. was then flanked by wooded areas to its south and west and by a separate industrial site to the east.

¹ “Swift to Open Largest Unit in South Here,” *The Houston Post* (Houston, TX) November 11, 1954.

² “Large New Factories Built,” *The Houston Post* (Houston, TX), December 30, 1917.

Immediately across the rail line, small residences were likely worker housing, and three blocks to the east is another industrial site. Later aerial photographs show that, by the 1950s, the land immediately south of the rail line had been developed into the industrial and commercial area it is today. Swift & Co. closed the plant entirely in 1972.

HISTORY AND SIGNIFICANCE:

Swift & Company

Gustavus Franklin Swift first ventured into the meat business on Cape Cod, Massachusetts, in 1855, at the age of 16, when he bought, slaughtered, and dressed a cow, selling the meat to neighbors from a wagon. He opened his first retail butcher shop in Sagamore, Massachusetts, in 1862.³ Swift continued to expand his business, eventually moving beyond New England, and established the Swift & Company meat-packing business in Chicago in 1868. It was officially incorporated almost 20 years later, in 1885.⁴ In 1878, G.F. Swift was responsible for the invention of the refrigerated railcar, which allowed the company to ship butchered and packaged meat long distances. This allowed Swift to realize a considerable savings on weight-based shipping costs, versus livestock on the hoof or meat packed in barrels of salt, and greatly expanded the company's distribution capabilities. Swift & Company purchased railcars from the Peninsular Car Company, converted them to refrigerated cars, and established the Swift Railway Line in the 1880s.⁵ G. F. Swift's personal involvement in the railcar development and testing was representative of his desire to keep as much of the company's operations as possible in-house. By 1900, Swift & Company had expanded their operations throughout the Midwestern U.S., with plants from Kansas City, Missouri, to St. Paul, Minnesota. That year, the company expanded into international trade, opening shops in London, England, which were supplied with fresh and processed meat shipped via refrigerated cargo vessels.⁶ The company also established an international subsidiary for its South American and Australian operations.⁷ In the early 1900s, Swift & Company operated in many lines of business, including meatpacking, cottonseed oil refining, and produce (including chicken eggs). It was "one of the largest wholesale packing and produce concerns in the (United States)."⁸

Swift & Company expanded into Texas in 1902-1902. Greenlief Simpson, owner of the Fort Worth Union Stockyards, sought to corner the market on Texas beef by offering a higher price per head than ranchers could get in Kansas City. When Fort Worth subsequently became swamped with cattle sellers, Simpson contacted Swift & Company and its competitor, Armour & Company, which together agreed to establish meatpacking operations at the Stockyards. The two companies subsequently became part owners of the Fort Worth Belt Railway Company, the Stockyards National Bank of Fort Worth, the Fort Worth Cattle Loan Company, and a publishing company. Swift and other meatpacking companies made a habit of acquiring related businesses in each city where they had a facility, in order to lower prices and facilitate the production and transportation of their multiple product lines. In Fort Worth, by 1908, Swift also operated a canning plant and fertilizer plants.⁹

At the end of 1919, the U.S. Attorney General announced that, following years of litigation, the "Big Five" meatpacking companies (of which Swift was the largest) were to abandon "all packing interests except those directly involved in the production of meat, poultry, butter, eggs, and cheese." This included fruit and vegetable canning, dealing in fish, manufacturing fertilizers, operating tanneries, and manufacturing sporting goods, among other ancillary businesses. The Big Five had been accused of threatening competition and influencing prices within the meatpacking industry, related processes, and the outlying industries into which they had ventured.

³ "Making the Cut since 1855 - Check out Our Heritage," Swift, April 8, 2021, <https://swiftmeats.com/heritage/>.

⁴ "Swift & Company 1929 Yearbook: Covering the Activities of the Year 1928," (Chicago, IL: Swift & Company General Offices), January 10, 1929, 56.

⁵ "Making the Cut since 1855 - Check out Our Heritage," Swift, April 8, 2021, <https://swiftmeats.com/heritage/>.

⁶ "Making the Cut since 1855 - Check out Our Heritage," Swift, April 8, 2021, <https://swiftmeats.com/heritage/>.

⁷ "Foreign Swift Company," *New York Times*, August 16, 1918, 3.

⁸ "Ask Heavy Penalty for Swift Company," *New York Times*, April 4, 1918, 10.

⁹ Jon Kutner, "Swift and Company," *Handbook of Texas - Texas State Historical Association*, November 1, 1995, <https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/swift-and-company>.

Moving forward, the corporations were to be bound by a decree that “enjoins, restrains, and prohibits them from dealing in any food commodity other than the product of the animal itself.” In addition, they were required to release control of their stockyard holdings and their relationships with banks, railroad companies, and cold and dry storage plants. This was intended to restore healthy competition and reduce prices.¹⁰ Swift & Company and similar firms were slow to comply with the ruling, however, and did not relinquish all of their assets for 10 more years. In Fort Worth, Swift formed the United Stockyards corporation in 1936 to continue acquiring stockyards through legal means; over time, the company purchased a majority interest in 11 stockyards in the Fort Worth area.¹¹

Swift faced similar state-level restrictions in Texas. In 1916, the State of Texas filed an anti-trust lawsuit against Swift & Company and other packing companies, intended to force them to divest themselves of their cottonseed operations “when a fair price could be obtained.” Swift placed its cottonseed business in a trust but continued to operate its facilities. Twenty-two years later, in 1938, Swift sought to create a Texas corporation that could be permitted to operate cottonseed oil refining facilities, at which point the State of Texas filed a lawsuit arguing that Swift was in violation of a state law prohibiting foreign (headquartered outside Texas) corporations from engaging in any business other than the one for which they held a business permit. Swift responded by spinning off its cottonseed oil business, including 29 refining plants nationwide, into a wholly owned subsidiary called Consumers Cotton Oil Company. The U.S. Court of Appeals upheld Swift’s ability to operate a subsidiary cottonseed oil business in Texas in 1945.¹² The Consumers Cotton Oil Company was reorganized as part of Swift in 1946 and ceased to exist as a separate entity. At that time, Consumers had oil mills in 12 Texas cities: Brownwood, Coleman, Dallas, Fort Worth, Gainesville, Harlingen, Houston, Kaufman, Mexia, Palestine, San Antonio, Terrell, and Waco. The Houston facility was one of the larger oil mills.¹³

Despite the limitations imposed upon it by the courts, Swift & Company built a diverse business with meatpacking plants; facilities for processing poultry, butter, and eggs; oil mills and refineries; fertilizer plants; cottonseed oil plants; and separate shortening manufacturing plants. In addition, Swift owned and operated its own refrigerated railcars and 400 refrigerator branch selling houses along 600 refrigerated-car routes. The company sold its products directly to retailers as well as other industries.¹⁴ In 1943, at the height of World War II, the company exceeded \$1.4 billion in sales.¹⁵ Swift & Co. ventured into the insurance and petroleum businesses in the 1960s and founded Esmark Inc., a holding company, in 1973. Esmark spun off the Swift Independent Packing Company (SIPCO) in 1980. SIPCO was purchased by Conagra in 1987-1989 and operated out of Greeley, Colorado.¹⁶ Conagra sold Swift to private equity firms in 2002-2004; the company became part of JBS in 2007 and now operates as Swift Meats.

Swift & Company Packing Plant in Houston Heights

The company’s first venture into Texas was a plant in Fort Worth, built in 1902. In early 1917, Swift & Company’s Assistant Superintendent, G.L. Noble, visited Houston to inspect a recently constructed sewage disposal plant; this facility was of interest to Swift, as the disposal of industrial sewage in Lake Michigan had recently been outlawed, requiring the Chicago enterprise to employ better methods. While in the city, Noble made the remark that “Houston would make an ideal spot for a packing plant,” due to existing shipping facilities and

¹⁰ “Packer Big Five to Withdraw from All Side Lines,” *The Houston Post* (Houston, TX), December 19, 1919.

¹¹ Jon Kutner, “Swift and Company,” *Handbook of Texas - Texas State Historical Association*, November 1, 1995, <https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/swift-and-company>.

¹² “Seed Oil Case Settled,” *New York Times*, August 5, 1938, 229; also *State v. Swift & Co.*, 187S.W. 127 (Tex. App. 1945), Court of Appeals of Texas. Courtlistener.com.

¹³ “Houston Oil Mill’s Name Changed by Swift & Company,” *Houston Chronicle*, December 31, 1946, 3.

¹⁴ “Swift & Company 1929 Yearbook: Covering the Activities of the Year 1928,” (Chicago, IL: Swift & Company General Offices), January 10, 1929, 6-8, 23-24, 51. “Swift & Company 1930 Yearbook: Covering Activities of the Year 1929,” (Chicago, IL: Swift & Company General Offices) January 9, 1930, 18-19.

¹⁵ “Making the Cut since 1855 - Check out Our Heritage,” Swift, April 8, 2021, <https://swiftmeats.com/heritage/>.

¹⁶ “Swift & Co.,” *Encyclopedia of Chicago*, <http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/2869.html>.

large numbers of cattle in the vicinity. Noble concluded that “the possibilities of a new plant here in the near future are altogether promising.”¹⁷

In a mere handful of months, Swift & Company had started work on a cottonseed oil refinery in Houston Heights. Construction of the first plant at 612 Waverly Street began in July 1917. Horton & Horton of Houston had been awarded the \$250,000 construction contract and employed 100 men on the project.¹⁸ Local newspapers reported that the entire facility would be constructed of fire-proof brick and concrete construction. Initially, six Swift structures were constructed on the site: a packing plant, an oil refinery, an office building, a black grease plant, an employee locker room, and the still-extant 1917 Boiler and Engine House. At that time, the plant was primarily responsible for refining cottonseed oil into “a lard substitute and other cooking materials,” with black grease produced as a by-product of the process.¹⁹ The Swift & Company facilities were among three large manufacturers established in Houston in 1917, the others being a chemical company and another cottonseed oil refinery.

Less than two years after the opening of the Houston Swift & Company plant, Houston was named district headquarters for the company. A new office was opened in the historic Scanlan Building in downtown Houston, approximately five miles from the Houston Heights plant. Swift informed the local newspapers that a general increase in business had led to establishing a secondary headquarters in Houston, in addition to the current one in Fort Worth. W.B. Sander was named the General Manager of the South Texas District of the Houston headquarters branch.²⁰

The cottonseed oil refinery ceased operations ca. 1949. Just three years later, Swift decided to convert the old oil refinery site into a branch house for meat distribution. The expansion program was an estimated \$1 million venture on the part of the company. Local construction company W.S. Bellows Construction Corporation was awarded a \$250,000 contract to alter and construct considerable additions to the oil refinery and packing plant buildings to convert them for the new use. The company was also contracted to build a one-story wholesale market building with a two-story section, totaling roughly 18,500 square feet.²¹ Local newspapers recount that the plans for this expansion were released by Swift & Company headquarters in Chicago, but they do not credit the architect. It is likely that a company architect was responsible for the design.²²

In late 1954, Swift & Company announced in the local Houston papers that they would be opening a new packing plant at their Houston Heights site. The new plant was reportedly the largest in the South, with a processing capacity of 1,000,000 pounds of meat per week. The 10-acre site would contain three buildings representing 65,000 square feet of floor space, more than doubling the 1917 facilities. W.S. Conner was named the manager of the site and its 150 employees. The 1953 Packing Plant included a new department with temperature and humidity control for meat aging, and six stainless steel ovens to be used for smoking approximately 75,000 pounds of ham and bacon per week. This plant expansion allowed Swift to expand its trade area in Texas to include Port Lavaca, Edna, Eagle Lake, Navasota, Crockett, Madisonville, Livingston, Dayton, and Galveston, Beaumont, and Post Arthur. The new meat packing plant was Swift & Company’s fourth major installation in Houston within a relatively short time, with an ice cream plant, an oil mill, and a plant food (fertilizer) unit predating the expansion. Conner is quoted in announcements describing the plant expansion as “the biggest local investment made by a meat packer in a unit of this kind.”²³

The exact closing date of the Swift & Company packing plant in Houston Heights is unclear. The meat packing industry was in a sharp decline by the 1970s. Swift & Company had fallen from the top five to twenty-second in the rankings of largest US manufacturers.²⁴ Local newspaper articles about the nationwide closure of packing plants pointed to competition from smaller-scale auction houses and markets, the growing trend of direct selling

¹⁷ “Swift & Co. Has Eye on Houston; Ideal for plant,” *The Houston Chronicle* (Houston, TX), February 6, 1917.

¹⁸ “Work Commenced on Swift Oil Refinery,” *The Houston Post* (Houston, TX), July 3, 1917.

¹⁹ “Begin Building Refinery Today,” *The Houston Post* (Houston, TX) July 8, 1917.

²⁰ “District Headquarters of Swift Opened Here,” *The Houston Post* (Houston, TX), August 6, 1919.

²¹ “Swift Plans \$1,000,000 Expansion,” *The Houston Chronicle* (Houston, TX), August 31, 1952.

²² “Swift Conversion Job to Cost Millions,” *The Houston Chronicle* (Houston, TX) July 20, 1952.

²³ “Swift to Open Largest Unit in South Here,” *The Houston Chronicle* (Houston, TX), November 11, 1954.

²⁴ “In Meat, its Packaging that Pays,” *The Houston Chronicle* (Houston, TX), December 13, 1970.

and buying, and the relocation of slaughterhouses and packing plants to the proximity of feedlot areas versus stockyards.²⁵ Between 1968 and 1970, Swift & Company had closed more than 200 of its plants, replacing them with larger and more efficient complexes. By the end of 1970, the company had fewer than 40,000 employees on its payroll.²⁶ The end of the period of significance is 1974, as evidence suggests that, by the mid-1970s, the Swift & Company packing plant complex was among the plants closed and consolidated by the company during this period.

Site History

Local newspaper articles and Sanborn Fire Insurance maps confirm that Swift & Company's first development on this site was a cotton seed oil refinery complex built in 1917. This initial venture consisted of a four-story refinery building, a two-story packing house, the Boiler and Engine House, an office building, an employee locker room, and a structure for the black grease produced as a byproduct of the industrial process. Every structure was reported as being of fireproof brick and concrete construction.²⁷ The 1917 construction of the cottonseed oil refinery was part of Swift & Co.'s no-waste strategy for utilizing as much of each meat animal as possible; cottonseed oil was initially mixed with beef suet to create a more affordable cooking oil product called "Cotosuet." A later "bland lard" (shortening) product, made of equal parts cottonseed oil and lard, was marketed under the "Swift'ning" trademark between 1948–1992. Swift & Co. at one point owned 29 cottonseed oil refining facilities, including 12 in Texas.²⁸ The cottonseed oil refinery building at 612 Waverly later also ground peanuts, soybeans, and flax seed into oil. It was one of Swift's larger oil processing facilities in 1946 but closed in 1949. In 1952, Swift planned to convert those buildings into a "branch house for processing all edible products that Swift manufactures" and to construct a new fertilizer plant.²⁹ By the following year, the company also planned "the construction of a one-story and partial two-story wholesale market building."³⁰

The 1925 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map shows that the packing house and Boiler and Engine House were built along a railroad spur, with the four-story refinery and two-story office set back and to the east of the property. Locker rooms and a grease structure were located to the rear of the packing house. A 1944 aerial photograph (Figure 4) shows that the property was still surrounded by woods to its rear and west, with the lot to the east having been partially cleared but not yet built upon. To the north of the facility is the railroad line, with a working-class residential neighborhood established on the opposite side. The site appeared largely unchanged on the 1950 Sanborn map, with all major structures still intact and no new additions to the site.

By 1953, when an updated aerial photograph of the site was captured, most of the original structures had been razed and replaced with the current multi-story packing house. The 1953/54 Packing Plant is in the same location as the previous plant, along the railroad spur, but occupies a larger footprint. The 1917 Boiler and Engine House remains west of the packing plant, also along the spur. The two-story office building was still present, to the east of the packing plant, in 1953. The area surrounding the Swift & Co. property had also changed, as shown in the 1953 aerial photo, with the wooded area to the west having been cleared and developed by that time. The railroad line was still active in 1953.

A 1966 aerial photograph shows that the Swift & Company site had continued to develop, and by then included the current configuration of paved drives and thoroughfares, including a paved parking lot to the rear of the packing plant. The 1917 office building was still present at that time. The 1969 Sanborn map notes the construction dates of 1917 and 1953 for buildings on the site. That Sanborn map clearly shows the larger footprint of the 1953/54 packing plant and attempts to label the various departments inside that building. The Boiler and Engine House was present to the west at that time, although the southern portion had evidently been divided to

²⁵ "Cowtown," *The Houston Chronicle* (Houston, TX) December 13, 1970.

²⁶ "In Meat, its Packaging that Pays," *The Houston Chronicle* (Houston, TX) December 13, 1970.

²⁷ "Begin Building Refinery Today," Advertisement, *The Houston Post* (Houston, TX), July 8, 1917.

²⁸ "Houston Oil Mill's Name Changed by Swift and Company," *Houston Chronicle*, December 31, 1946, 3; "Foreign Swift Company," *New York Times*, August 16, 1918, 3.

²⁹ "Oil Mill's Name Changed"; "Swift Conversion Job to Cost Million," *Houston Chronicle*, July 20, 1952, 66.

³⁰ "Swift Plans \$1,000,000 Expansion," *Houston Chronicle*, August 31, 1952, 24.

accommodate an auto repair and laundry. The 1917 two-story office building was still present on the 1969 Sanborn map.

Ten years later, the two-story office building was missing from a 1979 aerial photograph. A 1989 aerial photograph included an addition to the rear of the 1953/54 Packing Plant; it appears to be a loading and receiving area, based on its footprint and the presence of 18-wheel semi-trucks abutting the structure. This non-historic rear addition appears to have been removed ca. 2020, based on available aerial photography. The railroad line was no longer active after 2000, and in 2012, the inactive rail lines were removed and replaced with a public concrete bike and walking trail.

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION AND RESTORATION HISTORY:

Current Conditions

Swift & Company Packing Plant Building (Main Building), 1953/54

The Swift & Company Packing Plant Building (Main Building) is irregularly shaped and consists of four generally rectangular components plus a covered loading dock. The 1953/54 structure is constructed primarily of exposed brick and concrete on an individual lot. A multi-story tower on the east elevation rises from a central one-story facility to its south and west (five stories at its tallest point). A two-story warehouse comprises the westernmost portion of the building.

The “front section” (tower) is the tallest component of this building and occupies the smallest footprint. It is three bays wide on the north and south elevations, and four bays wide on the east (front) elevation. Most of the tower is three stories in height, but the northernmost section becomes progressively taller as it proceeds from east to west. Within that section, the easternmost bay is four stories in height; the westernmost bay is five stories, and the central bay is four-and-a-half stories with clerestory windows in the upper half-story admitting light to the upper floor.

The tower is clad primarily in brown brick, laid in a common bond pattern with varying numbers of courses of running bond between header courses. Wide horizontal bands and narrow vertical columns of plain concrete divide each elevation into a grid. On the north and south elevations, the vertical columns feature heavy concrete brackets, often (but not always) immediately below the horizontal bands of concrete, suggesting a structural function. Banks of three large single-pane windows, framed in dark metal, are shallowly inset within each field of brick, immediately below the concrete band. Brick sills are present below each bank of windows. Window openings in the first (ground) floor have been infilled with red brick; some of the window glass on upper floors has been broken. The roof is flat with flat capped parapets. A single scupper empties into a drain head and pipe at the midpoint of the east elevation.

The central portion of the Packing Plant building is one story in height and comprises the majority of the building’s footprint. It wraps around the front tower’s entire south elevation, a loading dock on the one-story east elevation projects shallowly across the north elevation of the tower. This part of the building then extends westward to the two rectangular two-story components at the westernmost end of the building. The smaller of these intersects with the west side of the one-story section and creates a continuous wall plane along the southern elevation. The larger two-story component is oriented east-west along its long axis; the north wall is set back from the north elevation of the central portion of the building so that an awning (no longer extant) over the loading dock area would be in line with the north one-story wall. A small second story addition over the one-story portion of the building abuts the east elevation and spans the intersection of the two-story components. Over the larger two-story warehouse, a small penthouse rests near the midpoint of the north parapet. Both of these projections contain windows and at least one door providing roof access.

The exterior walls of the one-story and two-story portions of this building are clad in brick with horizontal and vertical concrete bands, echoing the appearance of the front tower. Some window openings are infilled with brick or glass block or covered with painted plywood or metal.

Office space appears to have been concentrated at the east (front) of the building in the tower and the one-story section that wraps around its southern elevation. Large loading dock openings, flanked by single-entry doorways, line the rest of the south elevation. The north elevation is heavily fenestrated with small window openings of various sizes on the first and second floors, and large openings (now infilled with brick or plywood) on the upper floor. The smaller window openings in this location are infilled with glass block surrounding a single center pane.

Graffiti is present across much of the exterior of this entire and, in some places, has been painted over with white paint on window glass, window coverings, infill materials, and masonry walls. Various metal pipes, electrical service panels and conduit, and drainpipes are present on the north, south, and west elevations.

Alterations

The major alterations to the building include modern window replacement and infill. The original industrial, multi-lite steel windows of the three-story front portion of the plant were replaced with black aluminum and glass windows ca. 1980s. The windows on the lowest story of the building were infilled with concrete block or brick, presumably also ca. 1980s. The original fenestration pattern was retained throughout the building, allowing an accurate read of the building's function and character despite these losses. The building is in a general state of disrepair due to deterioration and neglect.

Current Conditions

Boiler and Engine House (Rear Building), 1917

The Boiler and Engine House building sits at the rear (west) side of the lot, facing east and **is minimally visible from the street**. It is a two-story brick building with a wide metal awning sheltering the east and south elevations. The brick walls are laid in running bond with a single header row, several courses above the windows, on each story. Windows and doors, topped by heavy concrete lintels, are distributed symmetrically across the first and second floor elevations on the east, west, and north elevations. Most window and door openings on the first floor have been infilled with brick, but the original openings are still visible. A large vehicle bay has been cut into the wall on the south elevation. Where windows are visible, they appear to be operable single-hung steel-framed units containing multiple lites in each sash; wide sashes are bisected by a single vertical muntin. Some glass panes have been broken; some door and window openings are covered with plywood, although the building itself is not secured. A small penthouse on the east side of the roof, slightly north of center, is topped by a flat roof. Floodlights are positioned in several locations on the north and east sides of a modest parapet to light the surrounding pavement.

Alterations

The alterations to the building consist of window infill and the addition of a non-historic awning. The lower story windows of the building were infilled with either concrete blocks or were boarded over with plywood at an unknown date.; however, the lintels and sills are still visible, allowing for an accurate read of the historic fenestration pattern. The south and east elevations of the building feature a steel-bracketed overhang with a corrugated sheet metal roof which interrupts the second-story windows. The building is in a general state of disrepair due to deterioration as a result of neglect.

General Renovations/Alterations

The 1917 Boiler and Engine House and 1953/54 Packing Plant are both contributing resources. Notable alterations to the buildings largely concern window replacement and infill. The industrial steel windows on the three-story front portion of the 1953/54 Packing Plant were replaced with modern windows, and the windows on

the lowest story were filled with brick or concrete block ca. 1980s. The ca. 1980s glass and black aluminum windows maintain the original fenestration, and therefore do not detract from the building's overall integrity. Both the modern windows and brick infill still allow an accurate reading of the original fenestration and building character. The lower story windows of the 1917 Boiler and Engine House have largely been infilled with concrete block or were boarded over with plywood or sheet metal at an unknown date. The concrete lintels and sills were retained, allowing for an accurate read of the historic fenestration. A steel-bracketed overhang with a corrugated sheet metal roof was installed on the south and east elevations of the 1917 building that bisects the second-story fenestration; however, the remaining historic steel windows are largely still visible.

INTEGRITY:

The Swift & Company 1917 Boiler and Engine House and 1953/54 Packing Plant building retain an overall high degree of historic integrity and are recognizable as early and mid-20th century industrial buildings. The property as a whole possesses all seven aspects of integrity, including location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

Location & Setting: Both structures have maintained their integrity of location and setting, as neither has been moved since the time of construction. While new development has occurred surrounding the Swift & Company buildings, none has encroached onto the property, and it still reads as a large warehouse lot with paving and circulation optimized for packing and shipping.

Design, Materials, & Workmanship: The design of both buildings has been maintained through the absence of major alterations. Both buildings are read as industrial structures of their respective periods despite use throughout the 20th century. Physical integrity of the resources has been maintained as the major materials have not been altered, nor have non-congruent materials been added. The high integrity of both design and materials lends to integrity of workmanship, as the plain finishes and overall utilitarian design still convey the original industrial function and use.

Feeling & Association: The absence of major alterations to the building or site has resulted in a high level of integrity in both feeling and association. The property's historic character as an early and mid-20th century industrial site has continued into the 21st century.

BIBLIOGRAPHY:

- “Begin Building Refinery Today.” Advertisement, *The Houston Post* (Houston, TX), July 8, 1917.
- ”Cowtown.” *The Houston Chronicle* (Houston, TX) December 13, 1970.
- ”District Headquarters of Swift Opened Here.” *The Houston Post* (Houston, TX), August 6, 1919.
- Johnson, Lee, and Peter Flagg Maxson. “Historic Resources of Houston Heights,” National Register of Historic Places Nomination. Washington, DC: National Park Service, February 1983.
- Jones, Benjamin. “White Oak Bayou: A History of a Houston Waterway” for White Oak Bayou Association. July 2016. <https://whiteoakbayou.org/uploads/3/4/9/1/34911613/historysection.pdf>.
- Kutner, Jon. “Swift & Company.” Handbook of Texas - Texas State Historical Association, November 1, 1995. <https://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/entries/swift-and-company>.
- “Large New Factories Built.” *The Houston Post* (Houston, TX), December 30, 1917.
- “Making the Cut since 1855 - Check out Our Heritage.” Swift, April 8, 2021. <https://swiftmeats.com/heritage/>.
- “Meat Packing.” Handbook of Texas, Texas State Historical Association, April 1, 1995. .
- ”In Meat, its Packaging that Pays.” *The Houston Chronicle* (Houston, TX), December 13, 1970.
- ”Packer Big Five to Withdraw from All Side Lines.” *The Houston Post* (Houston, TX), December 19, 1919.
- Selcer, Richard. “Where the West Begins.” Fort Worth History. Accessed March 14, 2024. <https://www.fortworthtexas.gov/about/history>.
- ”Swift & Company 1929 Yearbook: Covering the Activities of the Year 1928.” Chicago, IL: Swift & Company General Offices, January 10, 1929.
- ”Swift & Company 1930 Yearbook: Covering Activities of the Year 1929.” Chicago, IL: Swift & Company General Offices, January 9, 1930.
- ”Swift & Co Has Eye on Houston; Ideal for plant.” *The Houston Chronicle* (Houston, TX), February 6, 1917.
- “Swift & Co. Meatpacking Plant - Exchange.” Historic Fort Worth, July 31, 2017. .
- “Swift Conversion Job to Cost Millions.” *The Houston Chronicle* (Houston, TX) July 20, 1952.
- “Swift to Open Largest Unit in South Here.” *The Houston Post* (Houston, TX), November 11, 1954.
- ”Swift Plans \$1,000,000 Expansion.” *The Houston Chronicle* (Houston, TX), August 31, 1952.
- Waugh, J. “Industry in the Gilded Age.” The Gilded Age. Accessed March 14, 2024. https://www.sscnet.ucla.edu/history/waughj/classes/gildedage/private/industry_and_labor/history/industry.html#mining.
- ”Work Commenced on Swift Oil Refinery.” *The Houston Post* (Houston, TX), July 3, 1917.

The information and sources provided by the applicant for this application have been reviewed, verified, edited and supplemented with additional research and sources by Samantha de Leon and Jarius Jones, Planning and Development Department, City of Houston.

APPROVAL CRITERIA FOR LANDMARK DESIGNATION

Sec. 33-224. Criteria for designation

(a) The HAHC, in making recommendations with respect to designation, and the city council, in making a designation, shall consider one or more of the following criteria, as appropriate for the type of designation:

- | S | NA | S - satisfies | NA - not applicable |
|---|-------------------------------------|---------------|---------------------|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | | |
| <p>(1) Whether the building, structure, object, site or area possesses character, interest or value as a visible reminder of the development, heritage, and cultural and ethnic diversity of the city, state, or nation;</p> | | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | | |
| <p>(2) Whether the building, structure, object, site or area is the location of a significant local, state or national event;</p> | | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | | |
| <p>(3) Whether the building, structure, object, site or area is identified with a person who, or group or event that, contributed significantly to the cultural or historical development of the city, state, or nation;</p> | | | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | | |
| <p>(4) Whether the building or structure or the buildings or structures within the area exemplify a particular architectural style or building type important to the city;</p> | | | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | | |
| <p>(5) Whether the building or structure or the buildings or structures within the area are the best remaining examples of an architectural style or building type in a neighborhood;</p> | | | |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | | |
| <p>(6) Whether the building, structure, object or site or the buildings, structures, objects or sites within the area are identified as the work of a person or group whose work has influenced the heritage of the city, state, or nation;</p> | | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | | |
| <p>(7) Whether specific evidence exists that unique archaeological resources are present;</p> | | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | | |
| <p>(8) Whether the building, structure, object or site has value as a significant element of community sentiment or public pride.</p> | | | |

AND

- | | | | |
|---|-------------------------------------|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | | |
| <p>(9) If less than 50 years old, or proposed historic district containing a majority of buildings, structures, or objects that are less than 50 years old, whether the building, structure, object, site, or area is of extraordinary importance to the city, state or nation for reasons not based on age (Sec. 33-224(b)).</p> | | | |

Sec. 33-229. Criteria for protected landmark designation

- | S | NA | S - satisfies | NA - not applicable |
|--|-------------------------------------|---------------|---------------------|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | | |
| <p>(1) Meets at least three of the criteria for designation in section 33-224 of this Code;</p> | | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | | |
| <p>(2) Was constructed more than 100 years before application for designation was received by the director;</p> | | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | | |
| <p>(3) Is listed individually or as a contributing structure in an historic district on the National Register of Historic Places; or</p> | | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | | |
| <p>(4) Is recognized by the State of Texas as a Recorded State Historical Landmark.</p> | | | |

Staff Recommendation

Staff recommends that the Houston Archaeological and Historical Commission recommend to City Council the Landmark Designation of the Swift & Company Packing Plant at 612 Waverly Street.

HAHC RECOMMENDATION

EXHIBIT A
CURRENT PHOTOS
SWIFT & COMPANY PACKING PLANT
612 WAVERLY STREET



Photo 1
Swift & Co. Packing Plant; East and north elevations; view southwest



Photo 2
Swift & Co. Packing Plant; North elevation; view south



Photo 3
Swift & Co. Packing Plant; North elevation; view east



Photo 4
Swift & Co. Packing Plant; North elevation; view southwest



Photo 5
Swift & Co. Packing Plant; West elevation (rear); view northeast



Photo 6
Swift & Co. Packing Plant; Southwest corner; view northeast



Photo 7
Swift & Co. Packing Plant; Southeast corner; view northwest



Photo 8
Boiler and Engine House; East elevation; view from roof (rear) of main building, west



Photo 25
Boiler and Engine House; East elevation, northeast corner; view southwest



Photo 28
Boiler and Engine House; South elevation; view north

**EXHIBIT B1: SITE MAP
(COURTESY GOOGLE MAPS)
SWIFT & COMPANY PACKING PLANT
612 WAVERLY STREET**

Swift & Company Packing Warehouse, 612 Waverly Street, Houston, Harris County, Texas
Google Maps (accessed March 14, 2024)

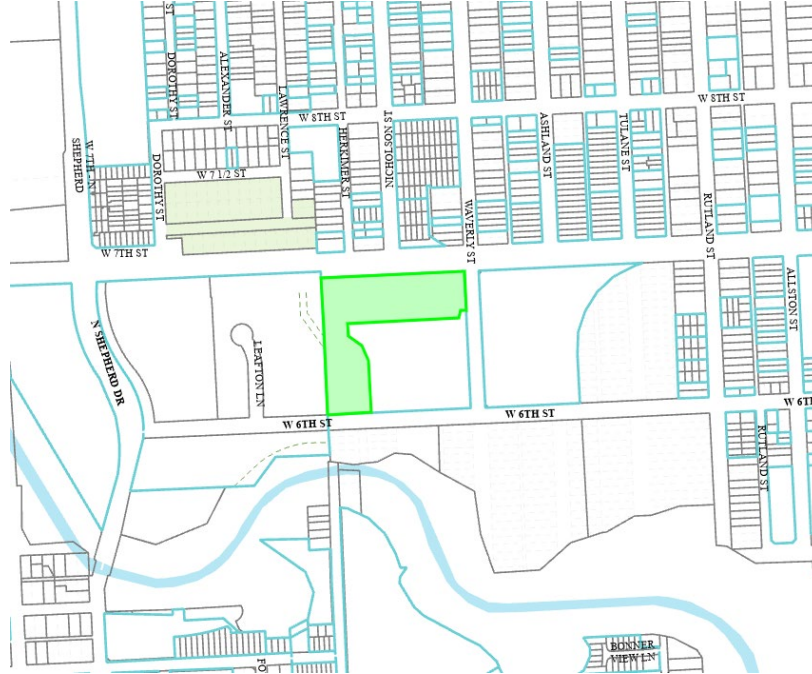


Point	Latitude	Longitude
1	29.783109	-95.406451
2	29.783125	-95.404458
3	29.782587	-95.404431
4	29.782552	-95.406443

EXHIBIT B 2: SITE MAP

(COURTESY HCAD)
SWIFT & COMPANY PACKING PLANT
612 WAVERLY STREET

ENTIRE LOT:



HISTORIC PORTION:

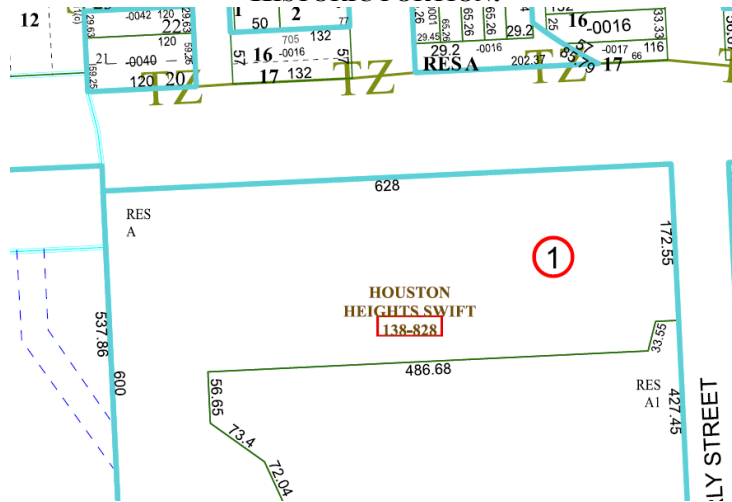


EXHIBIT C
SANBORN FIRE INSURANCE MAPS
SWIFT & COMPANY PACKING PLANT
612 WAVERLY STREET

Figure 1

Swift & Company Packing Warehouse, Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, Houston, Texas, 1925, Volumes 6, 7, & 8, Sheets 718 and 723 (Source: The Sanborn Library)

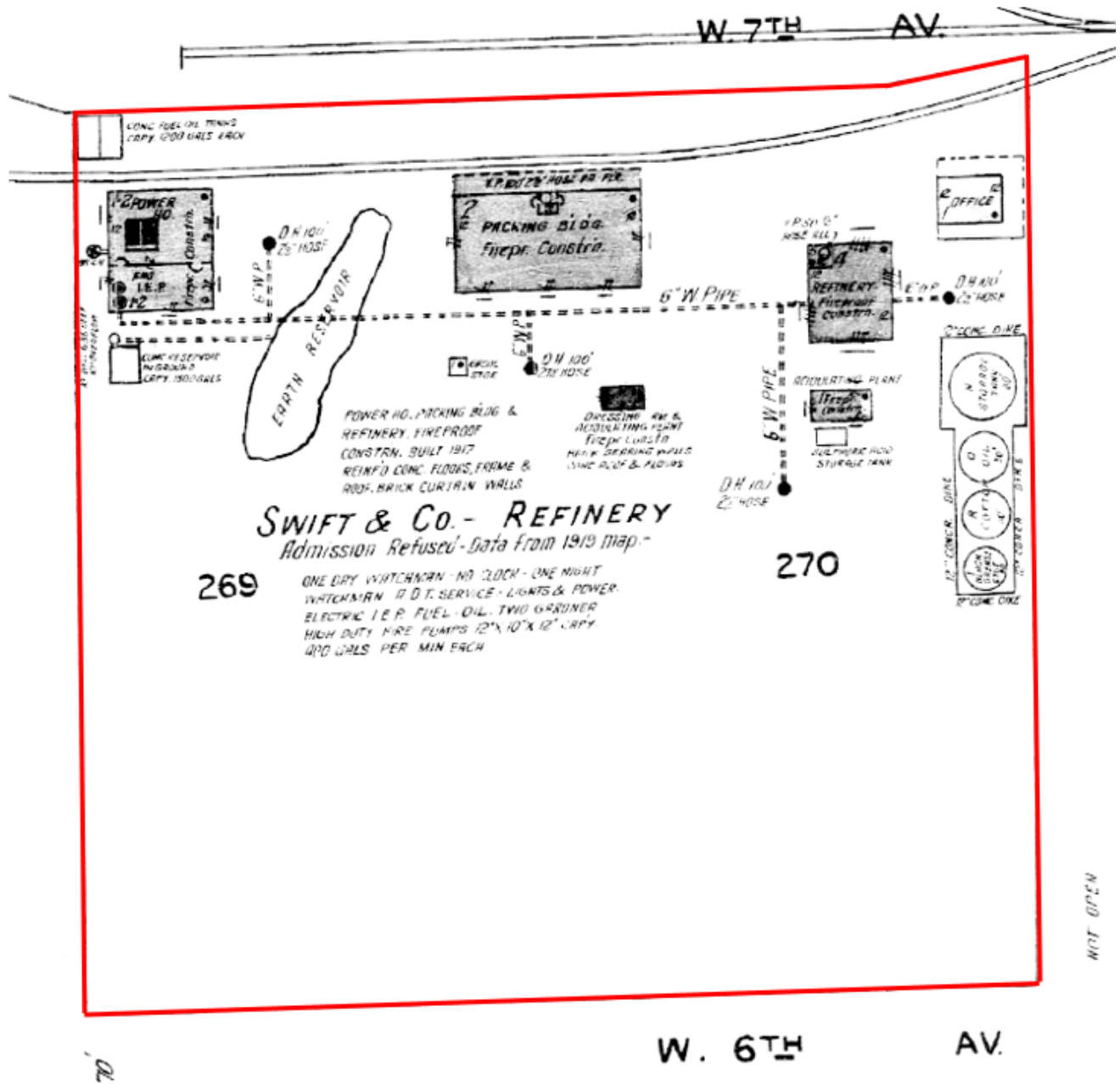


Figure 2

Swift & Company Packing Warehouse, Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, Houston, Texas, 1950, Volume 7, Sheets 718 at 723 (Source: The Sanborn Library)

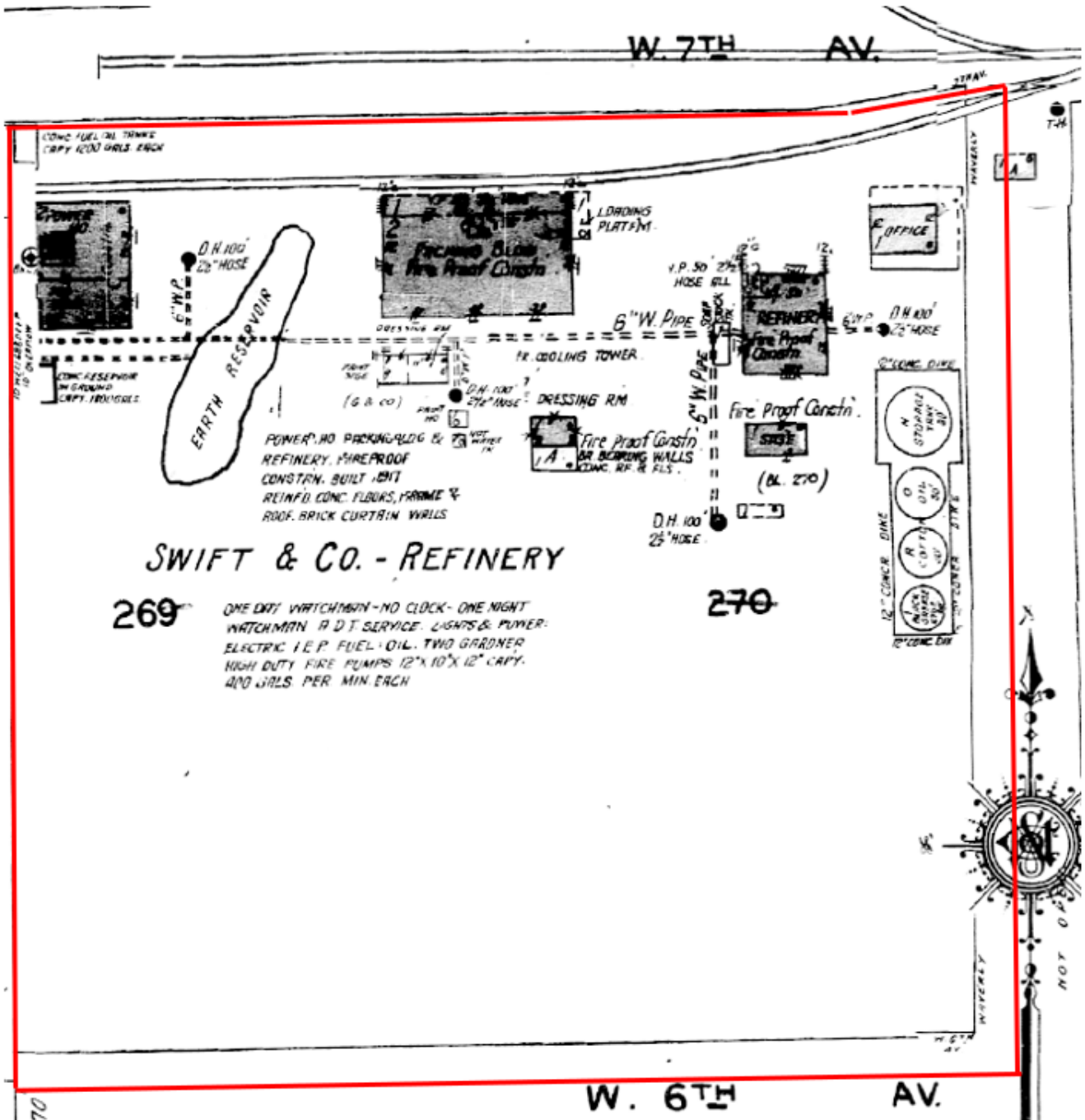


Figure 3

Swift & Company Packing Warehouse, Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, Houston, Texas, 1969, Volume 7, Sheets 718 and 723 (Source: The Sanborn Library)

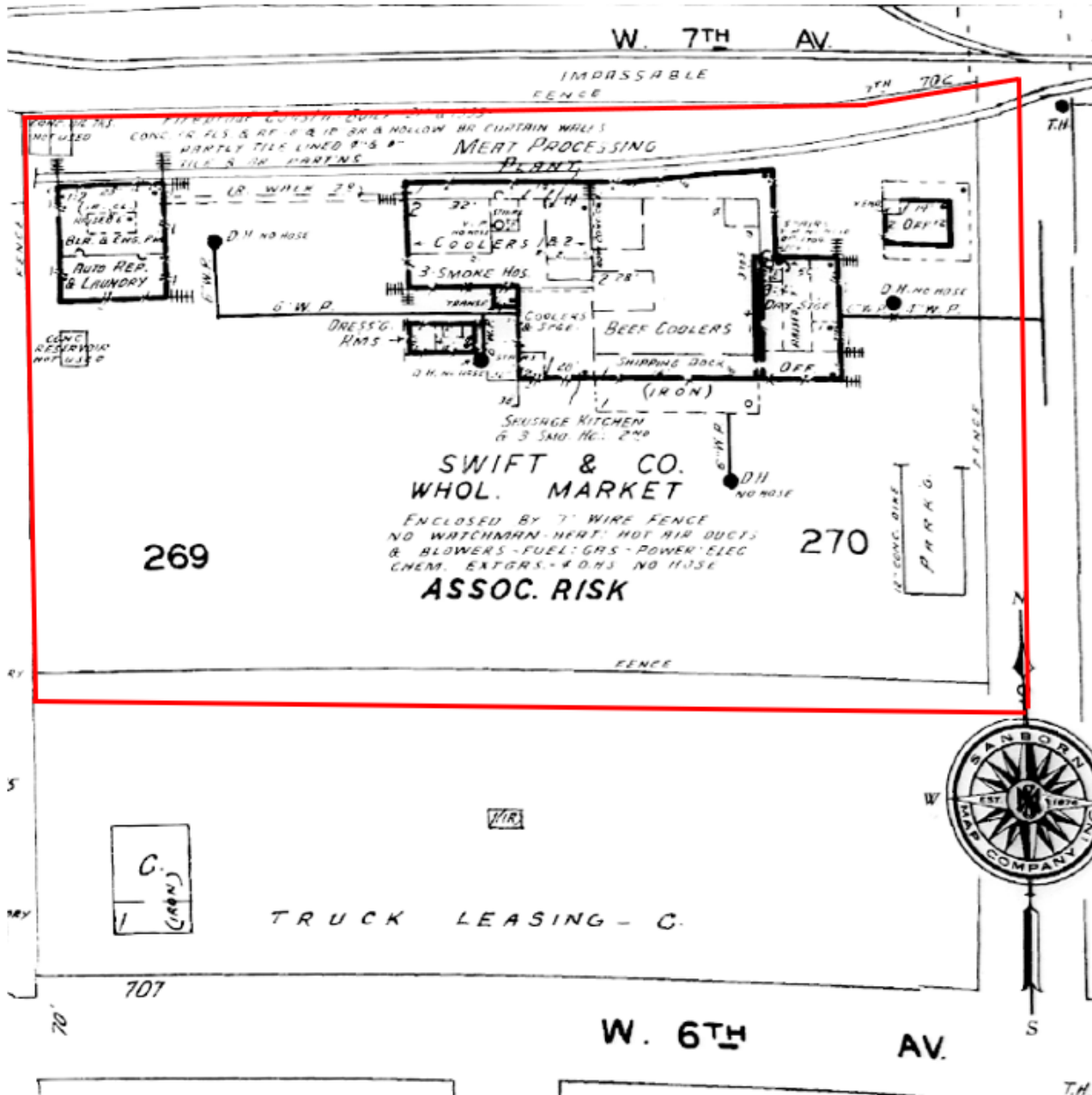


EXHIBIT D
HISTORIC AERIAL PHOTOS
SWIFT & COMPANY PACKING PLANT
612 WAVERLY STREET

1944 aerial photograph of Swift & Company Packing Warehouse (Source: EDR). The property is outlined in yellow. Extant buildings are outlined in green.



1953 aerial of Swift & Company Packing Warehouse (Source: EDR). The property is outlined in yellow. Extant buildings are outlined in green.



EXHIBIT E
BUILDING LAND ASSESSMENT (BLA)
SWIFT & COMPANY
612 WAVERLY STREET (621 WAVERLY BEFORE REPLATTING)

LAND VALUATION CARD, HARRIS COUNTY

NAME, ADDRESS, AND PROPERTY DESCRIPTION				SEQUENCE NO.	VOL.	PAGE	SUB	ITEM
SWIFT CO SALES UNIT 621 WAVERLY HOUSTON TEXAS				2696860000	21	1		1
REMARKS								
DATE POSTED TO INV.				DEPUTY				
LT1T036 BK269 HO HTS				6966				
ASSD. VALUE LAND	ASSD. VALUE IMP.	SCHOOL DIST.	TOTAL VALUE			YEAR DATE		
2310	680	01	2990					
NO.	SIZE	%	UNIT	FINAL UNIT	100% VALUE	ASS'D VALUE	CALCULATOR	
1-18	600 X 132	1/11 ⁰²	20	22 ²⁰	13320	10890		
1	B C I	1/2	51	10 ⁰⁰	500			
19-36	600 X 120	107 ⁵⁰	21	21 ⁵⁰	11700	1090		
1	B C I	1/2	10 ⁰⁰	10 ⁰⁰	500	11980		
TOTAL					27200	10890	E	

Handwritten notes: "10% INCREASE 1969" and "1969 TOTAL" are circled in blue. A large green scribble is present over the middle of the card.