

DIME STORE DECO: THE ARCHITECTURE AND ADAPTIVE REUSE
OF DEPRESSION ERA S.H. KRESS 5 & 10 CENT STORES.

by

ROBERT KEVIN CHASTINE

(Under the Direction of John C. Waters)

ABSTRACT

In 1880, Frank Winfield Woolworth opened the world's first 5 & 10 Cent Store. With the success of the F. W. Woolworth Company numerous other five and ten cent stores developed at the end of the 19th century. One of these was the S. H. Kress Company that was started in 1896 by Samuel Henry Kress. Even though Samuel Kress utilized the identical business principles as all other five and ten cent stores, his company differed in the fact they employed an in house architectural firm to design new stores. The Kress architectural division reached its zenith during the Great Depression of the 1930's, under the supervision of Edward F. Sibbert. These depression era stores became instant landmarks in cities across America, because of their modern art deco designs with regionally and locally influenced ornamentation. These buildings represent an important part of America's commercial architectural history and the development of Main Streets. Many cities have realized the significance of these buildings and have rehabilitated them so that they may continue to contribute to the economic viability of the community.

INDEX WORDS: Historic Preservation, S.H. Kress Company, Adaptive Reuse, Dime Stores, Depression Era Architecture, Art Deco

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B.S., Lander University, 1997

A Thesis Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of The University of Georgia in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree

MASTERS OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATHENS, GEORGIA

2002

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to God, from who all things flow and my personal savior Jesus Christ. From both I have been given a life full of love, forgiveness, and opportunity.

Trust in the Lord with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.

Proverbs Chapter 3, Verses 5 & 6

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

John C. Waters – Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to come to UGA and discover what I am to do in life. Thank you for the unlimited use of your experiences in preservation and making this thesis the best it could possible be.

Robert C. Benedict – Thank you for the opportunities you have given me with Palmetto Preservation Works as an intern and consultant. These experiences have been priceless. Also, thank you for all of your help with this thesis, especially your knowledge of development, adaptive reuse, economics and all of those phone calls and voice mails.

Hank Methvin – Thank you for providing me with a design oriented viewpoint for my thesis. It was wonderful to have a non-preservation point if view as part of my committee,

Jennifer Martin-Lewis – Thank for teaching me what a one-point perspective is (Darien) and the basics of rendering. Also, your knowledge of Main Street/ Downtown revitalization was invaluable in terms of completing my thesis.

Mom, Dad, Denny, Nannie and Aunt Becky – Thank you for all of your moral and financial support throughout my life and especially the last two years.

Rob, Ryan, Steve, Chris and Rob – To my “true” friends I can only say that I am blessed to call all of you friends and thank you for all of your support.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Working as an intern, I was asked to research the history of the Kress Building in Greenville, South Carolina. My research was intended to assist in establishing the significance of the building because it was being threatened with demolition. Prior to this assignment, the name Kress meant nothing to me, which is not completely surprising, considering my age. Therefore, my research began with asking my parents and grandparents if they knew anything about Kress. I was pleasantly surprised by the numerous stories my family members possessed about visiting and shopping at the S.H. Kress & Company 5 & 10-cent store. My most important find during my research was *America's 5 & 10 Cent Stores: The Kress Legacy*, a book written by Bernice L. Thomas, an architectural historian. The book focused on the development of the S.H. Kress Company's architectural division and the evolution of Kress architecture. After reading this book, my attention and interest was focused on the Kress stores that were designed during the Great Depression of the 1930's.

Before beginning my research on the S.H. Kress Company, I began researching the history of the 5 & 10-cent store. I quickly discovered that the history of the F.W. Woolworth Company was essentially the history of the 5 & 10-cent store. Next, I utilized Bernice L. Thomas's book as my basis for researching the history of the S.H. Kress Company. To support the information in Thomas's book, I also obtained archival materials from the New York Stock Exchange, National Building Museum, numerous

newspapers and university libraries. Following the history of the Kress Company, I focused my research on Kress architecture. Similarly, I utilized Thomas's book as a basis for my research. For additional support, I obtained information from several historic preservation organizations, downtown development organizations, personal interviews, and visitations to view Kress stores. I traveled to and photographed Kress stores in Columbia and Charleston, South Carolina, Greensboro, North Carolina and Memphis and Nashville, Tennessee. During my architecture-based research, one of my most unexpected sources of information came from antique postcards that featured S.H. Kress stores. Upon concluding my research, I decided to focus my thesis on the architecture of depression era Kress stores, their role in the evolution of commercial architecture, the adaptive use of depression era Kress stores and the link between Kress stores and the development of Main Streets throughout the United States.

The Kress architecture division was established in 1905 with the hiring of Julius H. Zietner. The development of an architecture division was a reflection of Samuel Henry Kress's love of art and architecture, as well as his desire to establish a corporate image through stores that consisted of uniform parts. Although uniform in appearance, every Kress store was unique in its design. The Kress architecture division first began designing stores in 1909. At this time, Kress stores were designed in a simplified neoclassical style. However, as the S.H. Kress Company developed and expanded, along with each new supervising architect, Kress stores became more and more elaborate. The pinnacle of Kress store architecture occurred during the 1930's under supervising architect Edward F. Sibbert. The concept of unique, one-of-a-kind Kress stores reached its height during this period. Edward F. Sibbert designed modern art deco stores,

incorporating regionally and locally influenced ornamentation in nearly all of the thirty-one stores he designed. This use of regionally and locally influenced ornamentation was unique for its time, especially for a dime store chain; it is even more rare and nearly nonexistent in present day commercial chain store architecture. This unusual architectural approach thereby secured Kress store architecture's place in the evolution of American commercial architecture.

Just as Kress architecture mirrored the success of the company, so did the development of Main Streets. The S.H. Kress Company began in 1896 and by 1944 had established over two hundred Main Street stores. After 1944, the Kress Company began to focus its efforts on establishing stores in strip malls and eventually suburban malls. After this change of direction, the Kress Company began to decline in the early 1960's. By this time, nearly every other company changed its focus to suburban stores, eventually bringing about the decline of Main Streets throughout the United States. Therefore, the history and development of the S.H. Kress Company closely mirrors that of Main Streets throughout the United States.

As Main Streets and entire downtowns throughout the United States are being revitalized, numerous cities have realized the significance of their depression era Kress store and have had the store individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places or designated as a local landmark. In many cases, the Kress store was such a large part of people's lives that its rehabilitation has provide the needed spark to jumpstart the revitalization of a Main Street or downtown. The adaptive uses of the Kress stores range from retail and office space to restaurants and movie theaters. Regardless of the use, the significance of the store has been recognized and protected, thus allowing future

generations to experience a Kress store that was designed specifically for their city or town.

As important as Samuel Kress and the S.H. Kress Company were to the development of Main Streets, commercial architecture and, now, the revitalization of Main Streets, it must be remembered that without Frank Winfield Woolworth and his development of the 5& 10-cent store in 1880 the S.H. Kress Company may have never existed.

CHAPTER 2

THE BEGINNINGS OF THE DIME STORE

You are profiting today from the dreams of a man who was considered a little bit 'wild' only a few years ago – a man who persisted in carrying out his ideas to the letter – who profited by following up on his convictions with hard work – and who was happy in being backed up by those in whom he had confidence, and whom he had chosen to assist him.

Carson Peck (Partner of F.W. Woolworth)

F.W. Woolworth: The Person:

The man described in the above quote is Frank Winfield Woolworth. At the time of Carson Peck's speech (ca. 1905) Frank W. Woolworth had altered the face of Main Street retail forever, with 76 five and ten cent stores in ten northeastern states along with several more located in the District of Columbia.¹

Frank Winfield Woolworth was born on April 13, 1852 in the town of Rodman, New York to John and Fanny Woolworth. With the birth of Charles Sumner Woolworth four years later, in August 1856, the future creators of the Woolworth empire had been born. The two brothers were

raised to be penny-wise, hard-working, God fearing Methodists. Although both boys abided to these three tenets taught to them by their parents neither boy wished to follow their father's agricultural lifestyle.



Figure 1.1. Frank Winfield Woolworth. *Plunkett-Powell, Remembering Woolworth's.*

¹ Plunkett-Powell, Remembering Woolworth's (New York: St. Martin's Press) 60.

Frank Woolworth's future as a businessman became apparent at an early age. When he was only four years old a fast-talking traveling salesman visited Frank's parents. After this encounter Frank bragged to his parents about the day he would be a fast talking peddler. Frank also began playing "store" in the dining room by gathering items from the kitchen and arranging the "merchandise" while his brother Charles would be the customer.² Even at an early age Frank Woolworth displayed his dreams of becoming a businessman. However, his parents never encouraged nor nurtured the dream; they felt Frank should become a farmer like his father. With each passing year Frank's dream of leaving the farm grew stronger and more focused on his destiny.

One of the greatest influences on Frank Woolworth was his trips to the town square of Watertown, NY. Although Frank enjoyed the trips to Watertown's square, he rarely had more than a few pennies to spend. As a result, he was shunned and directed to visit a more fitting store when he and his brother Charles entered one of the finer dry goods stores. Although not all of Frank Woolworth's experiences at Watertown's square were pleasant they fostered Frank's desire to own his own business. Frank Woolworth admitted later that he envied the shop owners and clerks because he thought they were "the most fortunate of all mortals".³ At the same time Frank also remembered the negative treatment that he was given by the clerks at the finer stores.

As Frank Woolworth neared his sixteenth birthday, these varied experiences converged into what would become the philosophical basis for his five and ten-cent empire. Frank vowed that he would own a store that provided quality merchandise that was affordable to people from all stations in life. Also, his employees would respect all

² Plunkett-Powell 25.

³ Plunkett-Powell 26.

customers who came through the doors.⁴ However, Frank was in a major predicament, he was turning sixteen which meant his family expected him to begin a life of farming after completing his last year of schooling. Frank knew he would make his mark in the world of business and not farming. However, his first attempts to secure a job in a mercantile store were all met with an unequivocal response of “NO”. As a result, Frank was forced to return home and farm the land for several more years until an opportunity presented itself.

At the age of nineteen Frank heard about a small commerce college in Watertown, where he had first experienced the world of mercantilism. The college offered a two-month commercial course that would teach a person the rudimentaries of business. Upon discovering this opportunity, Frank told his mother that if he had a certificate an employer might take him more seriously. Fanny McBrier Woolworth agreed with her son and felt that Frank had worked in the fields since he was a child and deserved a chance at something better. Knowing that the tuition of twelve dollars would be an issue, Frank’s mother convinced his father to allow Frank this opportunity and gave Frank her nest egg that she had been saving since her wedding day. John Woolworth eventually gave in, with the provision that Frank still perform his chores at the farm. To accommodate his chores, Frank made arrangements with a professor to tutor him at night. Frank Woolworth enrolled in 1872. By his twentieth birthday, he had earned a certificate in double bookkeeping and felt he was on the road to success.

With his newly found enthusiasm and certificate in hand, Frank Woolworth traveled to near by Cathage, NY, in hopes of securing a job. Frank visited every merchant in the town and all gave the same answer, NO. None of the merchants were

⁴ Plunkett-Powell 26.

impressed with Frank or his certificate. Feeling desperate, he returned to Great Bend where he spoke with the stationmaster, who operated a tiny grocery at the rear of the depot. Although willing to teach Frank the trade, the stationmaster had no money to spare for wages. Nonetheless, Frank began working part-time and his duties included odd jobs, bagging groceries, and selling train tickets. His enthusiasm soon wore off. Frank realized the impracticality of working without pay, and he was forced into a full-time farming life.

Frank maintained his determination and in early 1873 Daniel McNeil, a local general store owner, told Frank of an opening at Augsbury & Moore's Drygoods in Watertown. After interviewing with both Alexander Augsbury and William Moore, Frank was given three months, with no pay, to prove himself as an employee. After his first day, Frank was crowned the worst salesman ever hired by Augsbury & Moore. However, Frank's eagerness and politeness warranted him another chance. Frank made the most of this opportunity and completed the three-month trial with a salary of \$3.50 per week. Frank's duties included displaying merchandise and other odd jobs.

Several years later, in 1878, William Moore realized his sales were beginning to slow down, so he took the advice of his friend, Mr. Golding. Mr. Golding told William Moore how stores in the Midwest had added a 5-cent table in their stores to lure people in, with the hopes the customers would buy more expensive items once inside the store. The sales strategy had been working well for others, therefore William Moore decided to try the 5-cent table in his store. The 5-cent table made its debut in September 1878 and it coincided with the first day of the Watertown County Fair. By the end of the day all 5-cent items had been sold. The 5-cent table was cleared of its items every day of the week

long fair. Although William Moore continued the 5-cent table as part of his store, it was not the primary business. However, Frank Woolworth had seen the success of the 5-cent table and realized where he would try and make his entrepreneurial mark on the business world.

F.W. Woolworth: The Store:

Frank Woolworth decided he would establish his own five-cent store, maybe even a chain of them and would make steady profits off of bulk sales.⁵ Frank's dream would come true beginning in 1879, when William Moore agreed to provide Frank with a note that would finance his store if Frank could find a good location. Upon hearing this Frank boarded a train to scout out the surrounding cities and towns. Frank Woolworth ended up in Utica, NY, where he found a thirteen by twenty storefront. On February 22, 1879 Frank Woolworth opened, "Frank's Great Five Shinplaster Store".⁶ Shinplaster was a type of Civil War paper money that was available in denominations of 2, 3, 5, 10 and 25 cents. By April 1879, business was booming but unexpectedly the bottom dropped out of the market, causing Frank to close down his first store in mid-May. The main cause of his failure was the limited amount of items he could sell for 5-cents. However, Frank Woolworth did not believe that the cut-rate business was a passing fad, instead Frank saw an empire to be made.

Before leaving Utica, Frank received a tip from a traveling man, who told Frank that he should consider Lancaster, PA, for his next business venture. The man explained to Frank that the German immigrants and Pennsylvania Dutch in Lancaster would appreciate his quality goods at inexpensive prices. Taking the advice, Frank Woolworth

⁵ Plunkett-Powell 38.

⁶ Plunkett-Powell 42.

traveled from Utica, NY, to Lancaster, PA, and within a month of closing down the store in Utica, Frank opened his second 5-cent store. After the first day open Frank's store had sold thirty percent of its stock at \$127.65.⁷ The Lancaster store prospered quickly and by early July 1879, just one month after opening, Frank decided it was time to expand. Frank knew how his brother longed for something other than a farm life, just as he had, so Frank hired his brother to manage his second store in Harrisburg, PA. The Harrisburg store fared well throughout the remainder of 1879. However, after the Christmas season sales plummeted combined with a rental increase the brothers were forced to close the Harrisburg store in March of 1880. Determined as ever, the two brothers opened another store in York, PA, which lasted only three months. After these misfortunes Frank Woolworth could have easily sat back and been content with the success of his Lancaster store and forgotten the idea of owning a chain of 5-cent store, but this was not how Frank envisioned his future.

⁷ Plunkett-Powell 46.

During the summer of 1880 Frank Woolworth decided he had to do two things to achieve his goals. The first was to find larger retail space, the second was to add ten-cent



Figure 1.2. World's First 5 & 10. *Plunkett-Powell, Remembering Woolworth's.*

items to his inventory. To test his theory, Frank introduced a dime section to his Lancaster, PA store in the summer of 1880, thereby establishing the world's first five and dime.⁸ Frank and Charles' stores continued to profit and by 1881 their gross sales were approximately \$18,000 and within a year annual sales increased to \$24,000.

Also during 1882 the Scranton, PA store had begun to exceed the sales of the Lancaster store,

which began to foster Charles Woolworth's notion of forming his own chain of five and dimes. This dream became a reality in January 1883 when Charles bought out Frank's interest in the Scranton store. Frank supported this move and he and his brother continued to share resources and business tips. The down side of this decision was that it placed Frank back into being a one man show, something that Frank did not like, because it limited his ability to expand and develop his chain of stores. Frank Woolworth tried two more independent ventures after Charles' leaving, both of which failed miserably. After these two failures, Frank decided to commence with a plan of action that would allow him to expand faster than ever before.

In 1884, Frank Woolworth initiated a plan that called for a series of partnerships that would allow for faster expansion and the ability to purchase merchandise in discounted bulk. The partner of a new store would invest half of the money in each new

⁸ Plunkett-Powell 51.

store and would act as manager. Frank Woolworth estimated that each partner would need to invest between \$600 to \$1000. To test his new partnership plan, Frank wanted someone he knew he could trust, therefore he brought in his cousin Seymour Knox, who had been running a general store in Michigan. Frank and Seymour opened their partnered five and dime in Reading, PA on September 30, 1884. The store was an instant success for both men, however another Woolworth, Charles, had already formed a partnership with Fred Kirby and had opened a partnered five and dime ten days earlier in Wilkes-Barre, PA.

This store in Wilkes-Barre not only advanced Charles Woolworth's goal of owning his own chain of five and dimes, but it also provided an exposure to the concept of a five and dime to a young businessman by the name of Samuel Henry Kress. In 1890, Samuel Kress had bought a stationary and toy store in Wilkes-Barre and reopened it under the name Kress Stationary Company.⁹ Six years later Samuel Kress opened his first five and dime in Memphis, TN, and formed a company that would become one of Frank Woolworth's greatest rivals.

Frank Woolworth continued partnering with other businessmen and in two years had opened, as half partner, twelve new stores of which six failed miserably. These misfortunes left Frank owning or holding interest in only three profitable stores. Frank's cousin Seymour Knox had become interested in forming his own chain of five and dimes as had Fred Kirby, Charles Woolworth's partner. Frank Woolworth supported all three of these men's ambitions, under the condition that the men would remain friendly competitors and would not establish stores in cities where one of them already operated a

⁹ Bernice L. Thomas, America's 5 & 10 Cent Store: The Kress Legacy, (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1997) 4.

five and ten. Despite the less than successful launch of Frank's partnership plan and the competition that he was beginning to receive from his "friendly" rivals, Frank Woolworth's chain continued to prosper.

By 1886 Frank's handful of five and dimes were producing annual revenues equal to \$100,000, while Frank Woolworth's personal profits had risen to \$10,000 a year. Within seven years Frank Woolworth had ventured from a small 5-cent store in Utica, NY, which ultimately failed, to generating six figure revenues. Frank decided in July 1886 to move himself and his family to New York City. Upon arrival Frank promptly acquired office space at 104 Chambers Street in Manhattan. From his Manhattan office Frank continued his partnerships with other businessmen he had recruited, this time with more success. In 1888, just two years after moving to New York, Frank Woolworth held ownership or interest in several stores outside of New York City and made his first venture into the markets of Wilmington, Delaware. Also, in 1888 a major turning point of Frank's career occurred when he contracted a near-fatal case of typhoid fever.

Before his sickness, Frank Woolworth had run or overseen nearly every part of his company. However, because of the nine weeks Frank spent in bed he realized he must rethink and reconfigure the structure of his company, if it was to be as successful as he envisioned. The first task Frank undertook while still bedridden was an expansion plan. This plan consisted of a map, on which Frank had marked thirty-five cities east of the Rockies all with populations exceeding 50,000 people and a handful of cities with populations of 30,000 people. Frank Woolworth's vision was to open a store on Main Street in each of these towns, preferably located near a train depot, for easier shipping and receiving of goods. Frank Woolworth's other restructuring plans dealt with the staff

of his company and how new positions would be formed to allow for easier expansions, therefore he would not have to oversee all new store openings. The first new position was that of a scout, whose duties were to travel to new cities and locate prime rental sites and then prepare the store for its grand opening. Next, Frank developed the position of specialist who was responsible for laying out the merchandise, preparing displays, and hiring the needed staff. Only after the scout and specialist had completed their jobs would a manager be hired for the store. Frank Woolworth also decided that a manager would complete written reports for the executive office every single day. The final aspect of Frank Woolworth's plan was to acquire a centralized warehouse for storing bulk and seasonal items. With the F. W. Woolworth Company restructured and rapidly expanding, Frank Woolworth made another change in business strategy. Late in 1888, Frank and Carson Peck would become partners in a five and dime located in Wilmington, Delaware. After this partnership Frank decided this was his last partnership. From now on he would own his stores outright and hire managers on salary. Despite this change of strategy, Frank Woolworth's company continued to expand and grow between the late 1880's and the early 1900's.

In 1904 Frank Woolworth owned seventy-six stores in ten states with sales exceeding \$10 million dollars.¹⁰ By the end of 1904, F. W. Woolworth & Co. had expanded to 120 stores with millions more at stake. Rumors began to flow during 1904 concerning the many rivals Frank Woolworth had in the five and dime business. A majority of Frank's rivals were considered "friendly" because they were his brother, Charles Woolworth, his cousins, Seymour Knox and Hubert Woolworth, and his long time friend Fred Kirby. All of these men had in some way assisted Frank Woolworth in

¹⁰ Plunkett-Powell 60.

the formation of the F.W. Woolworth Co. and had taken Frank's business strategies and formed their own chains of five and dime stores. While, Frank Woolworth had little concern regarding his "friendly" rivals, things were a bit different in regards to the many other five and dime chains that had begun using Frank Woolworth's business strategies.

These threatening rivals included McCrory, Titus Supply Co., H. Germain, Rothchild & Co., S.S. Kresge and S.H. Kress. The rumors that began near the end of 1904 and the beginning of 1905 spoke of how Frank Woolworth's threatening rivals were contemplating a merger that would give them a larger stake in the five and dime business and establish the first national five and ten chain. These rumors escalated as the months passed in 1905. The rumors never materialized and Frank Woolworth was blessed by the depression of 1907 in that three of his threatening rivals went bankrupt. However, all of the other five and dime chains survived the depression of 1907 and Frank Woolworth knew that to assure himself long term success he needed to take drastic action.

On April 11, 1911, Frank Woolworth gathered his "friendly" rivals for a meeting at the old Waldorf Astoria in New York. The topic was of them merging their respective chains to form a giant corporation.¹¹ The attendants of the meeting were Seymour Knox, Fred Kirby, Charles Woolworth, Earle Charlton, and Frank Woolworth himself. Seymour Knox owned 112 stores in the northeast and Canada and Fred Kirby owned ninety-six stores and owned the only five and dime operating in the Deep South. Charles Woolworth owned fifteen stores in Pennsylvania and Maine, and Earle Charlton owned fifty-three dime stores west of the Rocky Mountains and in Montreal, Canada, while Frank Woolworth owned 319 stores.¹² All men involved in this meeting knew how

¹¹ Plunkett-Powell 73.

¹² F.W. Woolworth Company, Woolworth's First 75 years. The Story of Everybody's Store 1879-1954 (New

essential this merger was to their long-term success. They all knew this merger would develop the first ever coast to coast five and dime chain, which in turn would provide this new corporation with unsurpassed buying power that would allow for larger bulk purchases, which would equate into larger profits. However, the most important aspect of the merger was that both individually and jointly the men could assure the success of the business by not allowing it to fall into the wrong hands. The only item of discussion among the men was that Frank Woolworth insisted that his name and his alone be the new company's name, the F.W. Woolworth Company. Although every man had worked hard to build their respective companies, they all realized Frank Woolworth had been the visionary who developed the five and dime business, along with having more stores than anyone else. Also, all of the men, in someway or another, owed his success in the five and dime business to Frank Woolworth. After all details were worked out, the new corporation agreement was signed on November 2, 1911.

Beginning January 1, 1912, all 611 five and dimes, with its \$65 million capital stock, began operation under the name F.W. Woolworth Company, thereby establishing the nations largest and first coast-to-coast five and dime chain. The F.W. Woolworth Company dominated the five and ten field in 1912 and never relinquished its position as the largest dime store chain. However it was never above or free from competition with other dime store chains that had formed

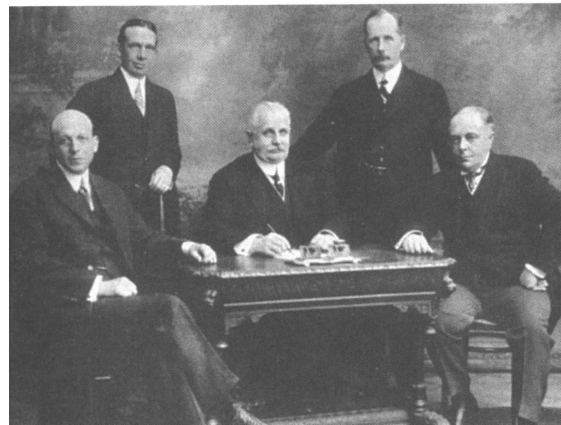


Figure 1.3. F.W. Woolworth Co. Founders. *Plunkett-Powell*, Remembering Woolworth's.

in the late 19th and early 20th century. These new chains of five and dimes included S.S. Kresge, J.J. Newberry, W.T. Grants, McCrory, and S.H. Kress.

Through his determination and perseverance Frank Winfield Woolworth established the world's first 5 & 10-cent store in 1880. Even though the F.W. Woolworth Company would alter Main Street retail forever, Frank Woolworth's importance in the history of the 5 & 10-cent business was more wide spread than just his company. He directly assisted in the development of five 5 & 10-cent chains, other than his own, while every other dime store chain utilized Frank Woolworth's business principles as the basis for their company. Of his competitors, Frank Woolworth's greatest competition came from the S. H. Kress Company, which was started in 1896 by Samuel Henry Kress.

CHAPTER 3

THE S.H. KRESS COMPANY

Across America, in any middle-aged downtown, a Kress Store is part of what makes it look like a downtown.

*Betty Marvin
The Independent Gazette
Berkley, CA., 1979*

Samuel Henry Kress: The Person

Samuel Henry Kress (1863 – 1955) had a much easier start in the business world than Frank Woolworth. This came in great part because of Samuel Kress' father, John Franklin Kress, owning and operating a drugstore and later two commissary stores at the Slatington, Pennsylvania mines. However, Samuel Kress' connection to the business world extends back through history to the fourteenth century when his German ancestors were wholesale traders and merchants. Despite his father's connections in the business world and his lineage to centuries of merchants and traders, Samuel Kress choose to teach school in his hometown of Cherryville, Pennsylvania. Samuel Kress taught himself to pass the teachers examination and began teaching at the age of seventeen. However, over the next seven years Samuel Kress began to save money so that he could purchase or establish his own business.



Figure 2.1. Samuel Henry Kress. *Samuel Henry Kress Collection, National Gallery of Art, Washington, D.C.*

By 1887 Samuel Kress had saved enough money to purchase a stationary and novelty store in Nanticoke, Pennsylvania.¹³ Three years later, in 1890, Samuel Kress added a second stationary store to his holdings; this store was located in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania. During his time in Wilkes-Barre, Samuel Kress would have known of the new five and ten cent store that had been opened there in 1887 by Charles Woolworth and Fred Kirby. This encounter establishes where Samuel Kress would have learned of the five and ten-cent business strategies that he would utilize in 1896 when he opened his first five and ten in Memphis, TN.¹⁴

Samuel Kress' personality and state of mind differed greatly when compared to many of his counterparts in the five and ten cent business. Coming from aristocratic lineage and being raised in a prosperous family, Samuel Kress was exposed to the finer things of life along with being taught the importance of public service and obligation. From his exposure to the finer things in life, Samuel Kress developed a great love and admiration for art, architecture, and archeology, with great interest in pre-19th century Europe. During the 1920's Samuel Kress focused on collecting art and sculpture of the Italian Renaissance. With the success of his company, Samuel Kress utilized his wealth to assemble one of the largest and finest private collections of Italian Renaissance art and sculpture.

As his company and personal wealth grew, Samuel Kress established the Samuel Henry Kress Foundation in 1929. The Foundation was established for the advancement of conservation and enjoyment of the vast heritage of European art, architecture and

¹³ Bernice L. Thomas, , America's 5 & 10 Cent Store: The Kress Legacy, (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1997) 4.

¹⁴ Thomas 4.

archeology from antiquity to the 19th century.¹⁵ The guiding purpose behind the foundation was a direct reflection of Samuel Kress himself. He felt a great sense of public responsibility due to his great wealth, and he believed great works of art could cultivate morality.

Two of the earliest projects undertaken by the Foundation were the significant donation of money in 1929 to the Italian Government for the preservation of historic monuments and, in 1939, the donation of 386 Italian paintings and 24 sculptures to the newly formed National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C.¹⁶ As a result of the donation to the Italian Government, Samuel Kress was made a cavaliere, or knight, by the King of Italy. Similarly, Samuel Kress was named a Founding Benefactor of the National Gallery of Art.

Samuel Kress' feeling of public responsibility was not restricted to large national and international arenas. Samuel Kress was a member of numerous organizations that included, but were not limited to, a commission on public parks and beaches in Los Angeles, the Sons of the American Revolution, both the Army and Navy Club, and was considered a devote Freemason. Samuel Kress also provided a statue of his namesake, Samuel Henry Kress, who died in the battle of Gettysburg, to the Samuel Kress Post, No. 284.

Samuel Kress' civic service and collection of Italian art and sculpture influenced the lives of many people, however his greatest achievement in public service came in the architecture of his company's buildings. Through his admiration of art and architecture

¹⁵ Samuel H. Kress Foundation, Kress Collection History, January 2002, July 15, 2002 <www.kressfoundation.com>.

¹⁶ National Gallery of Art, Paintings and Sculpture from the Kress Collection (Washington, D.C., National Gallery of Art, 1954) 6.

Samuel Kress developed a concern for the appearance of his company's stores. This concern was the basis for the development of the S.H. Kress Company's architecture division in 1905 when Julius Zietner was hired as supervising architect. The degree of Samuel Kress' concern for the design and appearance of his stores is demonstrated by the fact that no plans left home office without his approval, which was signified by his initials, SHK, on the outside of the plans.¹⁷ In addition to his appreciation of art and architecture, and his desire to distinguish his stores from other five and ten cent stores, Samuel Kress saw the expenditures of designing and building stores as a gift to the community. He saw his buildings as public art that could be appreciated aesthetically while simultaneously attracting the consumer. It has been said that S.H. Kress stores were commitments to a better everyday world, to civic pride, and to the bounties of democratic society.¹⁸

Although the S.H. Kress Company began to design and build its own stores in 1909, there were a few instances when the company would lease space within older buildings. In three of these instances Samuel Kress' association with the Freemasons was a deciding factor in the location of S.H. Kress stores. In 1907, S.H. Kress Company leased two storefronts in a Masonic Temple Building in Wilmington, N.C. Four years later, in 1911, S.H. Kress Company leased the first floor and basement of a building in Trinidad, Colorado, which had been designed for the Freemasons. Two years after that, S.H. Kress Company leased space in an 1880's building in Pueblo, Colorado, which had been purchased by the Masonic Association and housed the Masonic Temple for that area. The fact that these Kress stores were located in three separate Masonic Temple

¹⁷ Thomas 3.

¹⁸ Thomas ix.

buildings could be called coincidental, although Samuel Kress' dedication to the Freemasons undoubtedly influenced the location of these three Kress stores.

The S.H. Kress Company never ranked higher than the fifth largest five and ten-cent company yet provided the F.W. Woolworth Company, the largest five and ten, with some of its greatest competition. Samuel Kress's feeling of civic responsibility and the stores his company designed and built are key to understanding the S.H. Kress company's success.

S.H. Kress & Co. 5 & 10-Cent Store: 1896 to 1929

Although it would have been logistically easier to open a five and ten in his home state of Pennsylvania, Samuel Kress had his reasons not to do so. Being an intelligent businessman Samuel Kress chose Memphis because it was a thriving cotton port and it appeared, after careful appraisal, to offer the maximum potential and minimum risk for the introduction of the Kress idea.¹⁹ Kress also realized Memphis' market was "understored" and although not specified as one of the major reasons that influenced Samuel Kress' decision,



Figure 2.2. First S.H. Kress & Co. 5 & 10.
National Building Museum, Kress Collection.

there were no five and ten cent stores already located in Memphis, TN, unlike his home state of Pennsylvania where Frank Woolworth had been operating for seventeen years. Even though Samuel Kress utilized Frank Woolworth's five and ten cent business strategies, Kress' desire was to establish a merchandising entity that would influence and bring about the production of goods at value prices that were not presently available.

¹⁹ Thomas 5.

Samuel Kress felt this vision for the future was the difference that would set his five and tens apart from all others. He also knew for his company to obtain such influence that it must grow and expand into a chain, which soon became a reality.

Samuel Kress' Memphis store prospered quickly and by 1900, just four years after opening, Samuel Kress owned twelve five and ten stores in four southern states and Texas.²⁰ Samuel Kress' annual sales also increased greatly during his first four years. In 1896 Kress' annual sales were \$30,000, but in 1900 his annual sales had increased to \$490,000.²¹ Just five years later, in 1905, S. H. Kress & Company had increased its annual sales to an astonishing \$2.2 million. During the same period S.H. Kress & Company had expanded from eleven stores in four states to thirty-eight stores in fifteen states, which included all southeastern states plus Illinois, Oklahoma, and Arkansas.²²

Beginning in 1905 Samuel Kress undertook an initiative that would quickly differentiate his five and dime stores from all others. In 1905 Samuel Kress hired Julius H. Zietner as the S.H. Kress & Company supervising architect, thereby establishing the S.H. Kress & Company's architecture division.²³ Four years after establishing the architecture division, Samuel Kress began his career as a builder when the S.H. Kress Company began to construct its own buildings in lieu of renting space in older buildings. In 1909 Julius Zietner designed Kress stores for Lawrence, Kansas, and Bartlesville, Oklahoma, making these the first company-designed buildings.

²⁰ Thomas 5.

²¹ Godfrey M. Lebharr, Chain Stores in America: 1859 – 1959 (Clinto, Mass.: The Colonial Press, Inc., 1959) 370.

²² Thomas 172.

²³ Thomas 20.

By 1909, the S.H. Kress Company consisted of seventy-five stores with annual sales of \$6.6 million.²⁴ As the Kress Company continued to grow Samuel Kress commissioned a secondary headquarters building to be designed and constructed on Main Street Houston, Texas. Seymour Burrell, the company architect who had replaced Julius Zeitner, designed the eight-story Beaux-Arts masterpiece in 1913. The Kress Building, as it was called, contained a five and ten-cent store on the ground floor with storage and company offices located on the upper stories. Although not as breathtaking as Frank Woolworth's sixty-story Woolworth Building in New York, which was completed the same year, Samuel Kress' eight-story skyscraper in Houston symbolized the rapid progress of the S.H. Kress Company within its first eighteen years of existence.

The S.H. Kress Company continued its progress and expansion and on May 14, 1917, applied to the New York Stock Exchange for listing of \$3.7 million dollars in stock that consisted of varying monetary amounts.²⁵ At the time of application the S.H. Kress Company was operating 130 stores in eighteen states and employed 4,000 people.²⁶ The Company's sales for 1916, from which the application was being evaluated, exceeded \$15 million; astonishingly, just fourteen years later, in 1931, the S.H. Kress Company's annual sales would be four and half times that of 1916.²⁷

The rapid growth of the S.H. Kress Company from the 1910's throughout the 1920's illustrates the societal and economic changes occurring in the United States. A major factor in the success of S.H. Kress stores, as with any retail business is the number of customers that enter the stores. Beginning as early as 1910, the United States

²⁴ Lebhar 370.

²⁵ William W.Heaton, Committee on Stock List, New York Stock Exchange, (New York Stock Exchange, 1917) 1.

²⁶ Heaton 1.

²⁷ David Bloomfield, Chain Stores, (New York: The H.W. Wilson Company, 1931) 39.

population began a mass migration from the farm to the city. In 1910, 60% of the American population lived on farms while 40% lived in the city, however by 1930 the percentages were reversed.²⁸ This mass migration coupled with the rising standard of living, during the 1920's provided Kress stores with a greater number of customers who had newly found desires to buy so they could maintain their higher standard of living. However, a citizen's disposable income had not increased at the same rate as their desires. Therefore, S.H. Kress stores were able to generate greater profits while allowing the average person to maintain his or her higher standard of living by providing both necessity and "luxury" items for prices no higher than 25-cents.

The fact that S.H. Kress stores were able to sell items for between 5 and 25 cents illustrates the improvement in manufacturing and more specifically mass production. Unfortunately, after World War I the capacity of production had outpaced the capacity of distribution systems. A five and ten-cent chain like S.H. Kress was able to establish a distribution system that could equal production. S.H. Kress' bulk buying power, its system of warehouses that provided space for overstock, and the improvements to transportation, both rail and motor truck, were all keys for allowing the S.H. Kress Company to prosper during the 1920's and into the Great Depression of the 1930's.

S.H. Kress & Company and The Great Depression

After October 29th, 1929, Black Tuesday, uncertainty came to the economy of the United States. This uncertainty produced a lack of investment confidence by large investment firms. Lack of investment when coupled with the Federal Reserve Boards policy of severe restrictions on the money supply when an influx of money was needed caused a dramatic decrease in public confidence in financial institutions. This lack of

²⁸ E.C.Buehler, Chain Store Debate Manual, (New York: National Chain Store Association, 1931) 23.

confidence brought about the numerous bank closings in 1933 and the worst years of the economic depression. The Great Depression has been described as a readjustment of the stock market because of the excess of supply over demand compounded by the above reasons it then transformed into a full-fledged economic depression.²⁹

Two months after Black Tuesday, the S.H. Kress Company was celebrating the opening of ten new stores and another year of record-breaking sales. The idea of expansion and increased sales was something few businesses thought of during the depression. However, Samuel Kress knew that the depression would not last forever and took advantage of the cheap labor and materials to embark on his most ambitious building program ever. To accommodate this increased workload during the 1930's the architectural division of the S.H. Kress Company expanded to its largest size ever, with as many as 100 architects and draftsmen.³⁰ The architectural division, under the direction of Edward F. Sibbert, designed thirty-nine unique one of a kind S.H. Kress stores between 1930 and 1940.

Providing salaries for the number of people it took to design, build, and operate a Kress store would have been astronomical if it had not occurred during the Great Depression and if the S.H. Kress Company had not continued to prosper. Fortunately the S.H. Kress Company ended 1930, the first full year of the depression, by opening nine new stores and producing annual sales of \$69.3 million, which was a new annual sales record for the company. Even though the Great Depression worsened year by year, causing 110,000 businesses to file bankruptcy between 1930 and 1932, the S.H. Kress Company continued expanding, opening eighteen new stores between 1930 to 1932. The

²⁹ Michael Kurtz, The Challenging of America: 1920 – 1945, (Arlington Heights, Ill.: The Forum Press, 1986) 63.

³⁰ H. McKeldon Smith, questionnaire to Edward F. Sibbert, 28 February 1977.

S.H. Kress Company's prosperity continued throughout the Great Depression with the company opening at least one new store every year from 1930 until 1941. During that same time frame the S.H. Kress Company had only two years, 1932 and 1938, in which annual sales decreased from the previous year. By the end of 1941, the S.H. Kress Company had expanded to include 242 stores, including two in the territory of Hawaii, with annual sales exceeding \$101 million.³¹

The reason for such economic success during the Great Depression was simple. The amount of disposable income a person had was minimal at best if they had any at all. Therefore, it was essential for people to spend their money sparingly. The answer to this problem was the five and ten-cent stores because they provided quality necessity goods for five and ten cents and "luxury" items for 25-cents. By remaining true to the business strategies on which the five and ten-cent business was founded, the S.H. Kress Company, along with all other five and ten-cent chains, thrived and grew during the Great Depression.

However, the S.H. Kress Company grew in another way. As a result of its massive building program during the Great Depression, the S.H. Kress Company cultivated the loyalty of cities, towns, and their citizens. The building program of the 1930's could be seen as a means by which to distance the S.H. Kress Company from its competitors; however, Samuel Kress' feelings of civic responsibility to cities and towns seem to have influenced the building program. During a time when the economy was described as, "A temporary dislocation of the free market"³² the expenditures associated with the construction of a Kress store was a gift to a city or town. Whether it was the

³¹ Lebhar 371.

³² Kurtz 59.

two-story \$100,000 building built in Amarillo, Texas, in 1932 or the four-story \$750,000 building in Birmingham, Alabama, in 1937, Kress stores were beacons of faith in free enterprise as a beneficent as well as economically rewarding endeavor.³³

S.H. Kress & Company: The Closing Years

The end of the Great Depression was not the end of the S.H. Kress Company's growth. The company continued building new stores until 1954 when the company consisted of 264 stores with profits of \$169.4 million.³⁴ In 1944 the architectural division was dissolved when Edward Sibbert was promoted to Vice President of the Company and Head of the Building Division. This change of corporate structure signaled the end of S.H. Kress dime stores and the beginning of S.H. Kress department stores and the end of Main Street Kress stores. As early as 1941, in Miami, Florida, the S.H. Kress Company located within a large complex that included a movie theater and other retail stores. This change to larger strip development demonstrated the increased development and importance of the car and highway system in American society. Samuel Kress had placed his faith in the growth of cities and towns as well as the automobile. After the death of Samuel Henry Kress in 1955, the S.H. Kress Company began a mode of maintenance instead of its usual mode of expansion. Beginning in the late 1940's all five and ten-cent stores were forced into becoming low-end department stores in order to compete with a broader range of competitors, most notable were the discount stores. By 1963, the S.H. Kress Company had begun a downward spiral until Genesco, Inc., a Nashville based corporation purchased the S.H. Kress Company.³⁵ Genesco, Inc. operated Kress stores as discount stores until the early 1980's, when all remaining Kress

³³ Thomas ix.

³⁴ Lebhar 370.

³⁵ Thomas xi.

stores were liquidated. A few stores, such as the Columbia, South Carolina, and the Memphis, Tennessee, stores remained open under the name of Kress as independent discount stores until as recent as the early 1990's.

The influence Samuel Kress and the S.H. Kress Company had on Main Streets and commercial architecture is undeniable. Each Kress building that remains on a Main Street in America is a unique, one of kind, architectural landmark for that city or town. Many cities, such as Greensboro, North Carolina, El Paso, Texas, and St. Petersburg, Florida, have realized the unique aspects of their Kress stores and have used these stores as cornerstones in the revitalization of their respective downtowns. However, many of these stores, such as those in Miami, Florida, and Phoenix, Arizona have been consumed by progress and development thus resulting in the demolition of unique, one of a kind architectural treasures and being replaced by non-descript, disposable architecture.

Samuel Henry Kress began the S.H. Kress Company in 1896, utilizing Frank Woolworth's business principles. However, Samuel Kress's personal background and beliefs directly affected the success of the S. H. Kress Company. His sense of public service and civic responsibility coupled with his love of art and architecture assisted in the development of the S.H. Kress Company's architecture division, the most pronounced difference between the S.H. Kress Company and any other 5 & 10-cent chain. Although his company provided more than 4000 items for fewer than 25 cents his greatest act of public service came in the form of his company's buildings, which were designed by the architectural division of the S.H. Kress Company.

CHAPTER 4

S.H. KRESS COMPANY ARCHITECTURE: 1905 to 1929

*S.H. Kress stores were conceived . . . as works of art, civic art
that would contribute to the urban landscape.*

Richard Longstreth

The architectural division of the S.H. Kress Company began in 1905 when Samuel Kress hired Julius H. Zietner as supervising architect. Between 1905 and 1909 Zietner's work was confined to renovating older buildings, in which S.H. Kress had leased space or purchased outright. The necessity for a supervising architect was due in part to the rapid growth of the company. From its inception in 1896, the S.H. Kress Company had opened thirty-eight stores by the end of 1905. The other reason behind a company architect was Samuel Kress' revolutionary idea of a company identity through a "signature storefront".³⁶

Samuel Kress envisioned each store within the company as a form of advertisement. However, during the earliest years of the S.H. Kress Company the architectural design of each store differed, because the buildings were being leased. Therefore to establish a company identity, Samuel Kress realized that each store should have an identical storefront so that no matter where a person traveled they would know a Kress store by its storefront. Transom windows made of prismatic glass assisted in characterizing the signature storefront and were located below the long red and gold store sign, which itself was located below the second story windows. Transom windows

³⁶ Thomas 2.

spanned the entire façade and related to the mezzanine level within the store. The sales floor of Kress stores were extraordinarily high, allowing for the distinctive transom windows, coupled with glass doors, to allow greater amounts of natural light and ventilation for the main sales floor. The storefront windows were made of polished plate glass and were distinguishable by their curved glass end sections that led to the recessed entrance doors. The earliest Kress stores utilized cast iron bulkheads to secure the storefront windows. As the company prospered, the bulkheads would become covered with Verde Antique marble, polished granite, and occasionally even ceramic tiles, for the smaller stores within the chain. Regardless of the material, the bulkhead would curve with the rounded plate glass.

These rounded plate glass corners provided a smooth transition from display window to entrance doors. A potential customer could begin window-shopping and could be led around the corner by the arrangement of the merchandise. At this point a potential customer is standing in the recessed entryway that has either a marble mosaic or travertine with bronze lettering Kress logo. When standing in front of the entrance doors, which was also glass, the potential customer would be given a view of the interior. It was as if the entrance doors were display windows for the interior of the store.



Figure 3.1. Birmingham, Alabama Entrance. *National Building Museum, Kress Collection.*

Once the customer had entered the store he or she would notice standardized elements within the interior of the Kress store. The first noticeable standard interior

element would have been the color of the walls. All Kress stores would have had tan and cream colored walls with ivory trim. Samuel Kress assured uniformity of color by forcing contractors to buy the paint from him or an approved company. A second consistent interior element was the saleswomen's uniforms. The uniforms contained colors, light tan with brown trim, which was similar to the wall colors. Samuel Kress chose these neutral colors to allow the colorful merchandise to stand out against the walls and the saleswomen as they showed the merchandise. Samuel Kress also chose to standardize all lighting fixtures for the interiors of his stores, even in the warehousing areas where only Kress employees were allowed. The architecture division of the S.H. Kress Company designed the lighting fixtures and if there was a change in design all stores would receive the newest lighting fixtures, whether it was through new construction or renovation.

The reasons for Samuel Kress' uniformity of his storefronts and interiors are both proactive and reactionary. Samuel Kress saw uniformity as a reaction to the rapid growth of his company. In 1946, the company's golden anniversary, a company history described, "The Kresses were no less zealous than Henry Ford in the desire to reduce each motion of their retail transmission belt to its highest point of efficiency . . . thereby eliminating expense-mounting waste".³⁷ The "signature storefront", with minor changes, continued throughout the history of the S.H. Kress Company and each of its seven supervising architects. The uniform storefronts and interiors also provided Samuel Kress with his envisioned company identity that allowed each store to become a form of advertisement while at the same time distinguish his stores, architecturally, from those of his many competitors.

³⁷ Ben Gordon, "The Kress Story," Chain Store Age November 1946: 6.

Julius Zietner: S.H. Kress Company's First Architect

Julius Zietner was hired as S.H. Kress' first supervising architect. The earliest notation of his work is in 1905 when he made renovations to an older building in Cairo, Illinois, which was S.H. Kress' first venture into the markets of Illinois.³⁸ During the first four years of his tenure, Julius Zietner's work was confined to retrofitting Samuel Kress' signature storefront onto older buildings in which space had been leased for S.H.

Kress stores. An example of Zietner's renovation work is shown in this 1907 postcard of the Kress store in Coffeyville, Kansas. Retrofitting older buildings would have consumed a great deal of time because of the rapid expansion of



Figure 3.2. Postcard of Kress Store, Coffeyville, Kansas, 1907. *Collection of the Author.*

the S.H. Kress Company between 1905 and 1908. When Zietner was hired as company architect the S.H. Kress Company consisted of thirty-eight stores; within four years the company had expanded to sixty-two stores. By the end of 1908 the S.H. Kress Company was producing \$4.6 million in annual sales from its sixty-two stores. At that time, Samuel Kress made the decision to begin designing and constructing his own stores.

Julius Zietner turned his focus to designing Kress stores in 1909 when he signed plans for stores in Bartlesville, Oklahoma, and Lawrence, Kansas. Just as Samuel Kress had developed the “signature storefront” for his stores he also wanted to develop a uniform architectural style for the buildings that he would be constructing. Unlike the storefronts, Samuel Kress did not wish to standardize the architectural design of every

³⁸ Thomas 20.

building. He wanted to provide each city or town with a unique, one-of-a-kind Kress building. However, he did wish to use similar architectural details that when coupled with the signature storefront would clearly define the building as a S.H. Kress store. For his earliest stores Samuel Kress chose a simplified neoclassical style.

The first Kress building designed and constructed was in Bartlesville, Oklahoma. Julius Zietner signed the plans for this building in 1909.³⁹ The façade was designed so that the building appeared as two distinct facades. The Kress store occupied the left-hand side of the building while the right-side storefront was constructed as rental space.



Figure 3.3. Bartlesville, Oklahoma, 1909; Julius Zietner, architect. *National Building Museum, Kress Collection.*

However, in 1918 the Kress store was enlarged to encompass both sections of the building. The two-story façade of the left section of the building was divided into two symmetrical bays. The façade begins with a cast iron Kress “signature storefront”. The upper story consists of brick Doric pilasters with granite bases and capitals with each pilaster supporting a pair of large brackets on which set a simple entablature. The entablature consists of only four large dentil moldings per bay. Below the entablature are large metal vents that are of a floral motif. Below the vents is a pair of two-over-one double hung windows topped by large-scale flat arches with granite keystones. The windows themselves rest upon granite lintels. Above the entablature is a feature that would perpetuate throughout Kress architecture until the 1920’s. Julius Zietner had

³⁹ Thomas 21.

designed the roof parapet so that the center section would stand higher than the remainder of the parapet. Upon this raised center section Zietner placed the Kress logo, which was the word Kress with the bottom of the word arching, as if stretched over a circle.

The Lawrence, Kansas store contained many of the same neoclassical details that the Bartlesville store did. These details included large flat arches with granite keystones, granite window lintels, large-scale brackets, and a centralized Kress logo on the roof parapet. Although not identical in design, the architectural vocabulary of each building reads as neoclassical, thereby establishing a company identity through similar designs with a few standardized parts.

Julius Zietner had only one year of designing Kress stores as the supervising architect. In 1910 Seymour Burrell joined the Kress architecture division and began assisting Zietner. After 1910 Zietner's name disappears completely from architectural plans until 1913, when he is listed as co-architect with Burrell on the 1913 Houston, Texas Kress building. After the Houston store was complete, Julius Zietner's name never appears again as a S.H. Kress architect.

Seymour Burrell: 1910 to 1918

Seymour Burrell began his career with the S.H. Kress company as co-supervising architect in 1910. In that year the S.H. Kress Company opened nine new stores and set a company sales record with \$8.4 million in annual sales. During that year Burrell assisted Julius Zietner in the design of Kress stores in Goldsboro and Salisbury, North Carolina. Although Burrell and Zietner were working together in 1910, Burrell is credited with designing the Salisbury, North Carolina store.⁴⁰

⁴⁰ National Register of Historic Places Inventory, nomination form, Salisbury, N.C.

The Salisbury store continued the simple neoclassical design established by Zietner, but Burrell added several details that differentiated it from Zietner's earlier designs. The two most obvious differences between the Salisbury store and Zietner's Bartlesville store is the corner location and overall scale. The Bartlesville store was only two bays wide while the Salisbury store consists of five equal sized bays. The Salisbury store is fitted with a cast iron Kress "signature storefront" above which is a limestone belt course that runs the entirety of the South Main Street façade and the Bank Street façade. The second story consists of six brick Doric pilasters, with limestone bases and capitals, on which rests pairs of large scrolled brackets, reminiscent of Zietner's Bartlesville store. The paired brackets support an entablature that consists of an egg and dart pattern below large scaled dentil moldings. Below the entablature are five vents covered with decorative metal covers. Below the



Figure 3.4. Salisbury, North Carolina, Kress Building, 1910; Seymour Burrell, architect. *Susan Goodman Sides.*

vents are the two-over-two double hung windows that are topped by large rectangular limestone lintels. Above the entablature is the roof parapet. However, Burrell modified it from Zietner's earlier designs. On the Salisbury store the parapet has been transformed into a three sided parapet with the Kress logo placed in the center of the South Main Street façade and above the first bay of each side elevation. This technique of a three-sided parapet allowed for the Kress logo to be seen by people who were traveling from either end of Main Street. The use of a three-sided parapet was utilized when a store was

located on a corner lot. This technique continued throughout Burrell's career with other examples being found on the Key West, Florida, and Sumter, South Carolina stores.

Two other architectural features Burrell added to the Salisbury store, but were subsequently removed by S.H. Kress in a 1935 renovation, are the gabled portico that was placed around the middle bay window and the bay window that was located midway down the Bank Street façade. These architectural features provided a balcony and added space, respectively, for the second story two and three bedroom apartments. Second story residential was highly unusual for a Kress store. Normally the upper stories were built as leaseable office space until the Kress store itself needed the upper floors for warehousing.

Another detail of the Salisbury store that warrants attention is the use of a light brown, almost tan colored brick with limestone detailing. The use of these materials coincided with the uniform interior colors of a Kress store. Beginning in 1910 and until the end of the 1920's, buff or pale-yellow brick facades became a trademark of Kress stores. The "yellow brick" stores were a basic façade design that could be repeated, with variation, throughout the country. The basic façade would consist of buff or pale yellow brick trimmed in off white. The architectural design would be simplified neoclassical with a projecting cornice and a roof parapet with the Kress logo centrally located. These yellow brick stores were the next step in Samuel Kress' vision of a corporate identity through standardization. According to architectural historian Bernice L. Thomas, there are more than fifty yellow brick Kress stores that can be found at present.⁴¹

The Salisbury Kress store still stands today and is included within the Salisbury National Register Historic District. It retains its original cast iron "signature storefront"

⁴¹ Thomas 31.

including all of its transom windows. The second story entrance on the Main Street elevation has been closed off and glass has been added to provide more display window space. A non-structural partition wall that allows two businesses to share the first floor space has divided the interior sales floor, however the pressed tin ceiling of the sales floor has been retained. Because numerous Kress stores had two entrances, located on its main façade, the main sales floor can be easily divided to provide less square footage for smaller businesses. The Salisbury Kress store currently has three retail tenants that occupy the first floor and basement.

After 1910, Seymour Burrell became the supervising architect of the S.H. Kress Company. Over the next three years Burrell continued to design new stores while still completing numerous renovations to older buildings. By the end of 1912, the S.H. Kress Company had expanded to 100 stores with annual sales of an even \$10 million.⁴² Upon reaching this level of success Samuel Kress ordered the construction of a second headquarters building/ office building to be located on Main Street Houston, Texas. As supervising architect, Seymour Burrell was lead architect on the project with Julius Zietner returning as co-architect. The Houston, Texas building was the largest construction project undertaken by S.H. Kress Company. Prior to 1913, Kress buildings were two to three stories tall and constructed with brick. However, the Houston, Texas store was an eight-story, terra cotta clad, Beaux-Arts skyscraper. The Kress building, as it was called, is located at the corner of Main Street and Fannin Street.

⁴² Lebhar 370.

Both elevations of the building are divided similarly to tall buildings designed by Louis Sullivan. Each elevation has a distinctive base, shaft and capital. Vertically, both elevations are divided into three bays. This is achieved by four pilasters that begin above the second floor and extend to the seventh floor where each pilaster is topped by a decorative cartouche, which itself is part of a large frieze that runs the entire length of both elevations. Above the frieze is the eighth floor, which has decorative terra cotta panels that are located just above the cartouches.

The relationship of the panels and cartouches

accents the verticality of the building by providing a visual line from the start of the pilasters on the third floor up through the eighth floor and projecting cornice to a point of termination within the roof parapets design.

The ground floor was fitted with a cast iron Kress “signature storefront” that incorporates double sized transom windows, which allowed greater light and ventilation into the 21-foot coffered ceiling sales floor. The entire second floor is characterized by deep rustication that is accentuated by the recessed windows. The window fenestration of the second floor sets the pattern for the remaining six floors. The elevations are divided into three bays. The outer bays of the Main Street façade consist of three one-over-one double hung windows that are recessed to give visual emphasis to the pilasters.



Figure 3.5. Houston, Texas, Kress Building, 1913; Seymour Burrell, architect. *National Building Museum, Kress Collection.*

The center bay of the Main Street façade is characterized by six pairs of single fixed pane windows that are topped by rectangular transom windows. The windows within the center bay are also recessed to provide visual emphasis to the smaller one-third scale pilasters that run vertically, providing a solid unbroken line of division between each pair of windows. The window fenestration on the eighth floor is identical, however all windows on the eighth floor are one-over-one double hung windows, with no paired fixed single pane windows. Next are the large corbels that support the projecting cornice. Above the cornice is the parapet. It appears similar in design to the three-sided parapet Burrell utilized on the Salisbury store with the only difference being the size and scale.

The Kress Building remains standing at the corner of Main Street and Fannin in Houston, Texas. However, through its 1951 renovation and 1983 rehabilitation major design features have been lost or altered. The most obvious loss is the large-scale cornice with its corbels and the roof parapet that held the Kress logo. The next major loss is the replacement of the “signature storefront” with a postmodern storefront. The storefronts were changed out as part of 1983 rehabilitation conducted by Ray Bailey Architects. It was said that the new storefront brought the architecture of the upper floors down to the sidewalk. However, it should be noted that Kress architecture preferred to differentiate between the ground floors and upper floors, because the ground floor served one purpose while the upper floors served other purposes.⁴³ Therefore, the present day appearance of the Houston Kress Building does not illustrate the design intent of Seymour Burrell’s original design.

Although it does not retain all of its original architectural details or components, the 191,000 square foot Kress Building has provided downtown Houston, Texas, with

⁴³ Thomas 119.

114 loft apartments, known as St. Germaine Lofts. The apartments are located in the upper floors of the 1913 building and in the 1951 four story annex, along with retail space located on the ground floor. The apartments are currently renting from \$800 to \$3000 dollars a month. The \$3000 a month will provide you with one of the five penthouses located on the upper floor of the building. Each penthouse has around 1000 square feet, 28-foot ceilings and a roof garden. The remainders of the tenants' share a second rooftop garden that is located atop the 1951 four-story annex.

The 1913 Kress Building in Houston, Texas, was Seymour Burrell's masterpiece during his tenure as Kress supervising architect. Burrell continued refining the yellow brick storefront for the remainder of his career. Seymour Burrell's name no longer appeared on Kress architectural plans after 1918 and although his career with the S.H. Kress Company lasted only eight years, Burrell was involved in designing or renovating sixty new stores, with many of those stores located in the southeast. Burrell was responsible for buildings in Sumter, South Carolina, Athens and Albany, Georgia, Johnson City, Tennessee, Fayetteville, Durham, Charlotte and High Point, North Carolina, to name a few. The eight years of Seymour Burrell's career coincided with a time of growth and prosperity for the S.H. Kress Company, however the next twelve years would see the company grow even larger.

Emile Weil: The New Orleans Exception

Although Seymour Burrell was the supervising architect in 1912, Samuel Kress looked outside of the architectural division for someone to design the New Orleans store. Samuel Kress selected New Orleans architect Emile Weil to design the Kress Company's

first store in New Orleans. This was the first and only time an outside architect designed a downtown Kress store.

The store was located at 921 Canal Street next door to the Maison Blanche French Department Store. The Canal Street store was second only to the Houston, Texas, store in terms of height. The Canal Street façade was five stories of white terra cotta while the other two elevations, Iberville and Burgundy Street, were three stories and faced with the traditional buff colored brick. The ground floor is characterized by a cast iron Kress “signature storefront” with marble bulkheads. However, this storefront differed from others within the chain because of its tremendous recessed entrance doors. The entry arcade was the depth of three large plate glass display windows with a Western Union occupying the space of one of the display windows. The floor of the entry arcade was a

marble mosaic with another marble mosaic of the Kress logo located near the edge of the sidewalk. Six entrance doors welcomed customers into the building. Upon entering the sales floor a customer entered a center court. Large plaster Corinthian columns supporting a



Figure 3.6. New Orleans, sales floor, 1912; Emile Weil, architect. *National Building Museum, Kress Collection.*

ceiling of coffered skylights defined this center court. Weil was attempting to emulate the grand Parisian department stores by his use of a copper canopy, the deep entrance arcade, the six entrance doors, and the large center court. Weil’s design intent was surely influenced by New Orleans being America’s most French city and the Kress stores

location at the edge of the French Quarter. Weil's influence from French department stores continued to the Canal Street façade. The entirety of the Canal Street façade is faced with white enameled terra cotta. The material was chosen by Weil, because of its durability in the New Orleans climate, and it was approved by Samuel Kress.⁴⁴ The use of white terra cotta was an inexpensive method to give the appearance of marble, a design feature of high-end department stores such as the Maison Blanche department store located next to the Kress store.

The Canal Street's upper façade is characterized by a large wall of one-over-one sash windows. The wall of windows is five windows wide and centered within the Canal Street façade. The wall of windows begins above the mezzanine level transom windows and extends upward four windows. Cast iron mullions and spandrels, with terra cotta sheathing, divide the twenty windows. The terra cotta sheathing of the spandrels is defined by geometric spaces, similar to diamonds turn on one end. This pattern of ornament is repeated, as edging,

on raised rectangular panels located to the left, right and top of the wall of windows.

This pattern of ornamentation has been likened to that of Louis Sullivan but may have its origins within Emile Weil's own mind. Similar geometric ornamentation is located on the rear elevations of the Kress store and those have been noted as reminiscent of Weil's



Figure 3.7. New Orleans, Canal Street Elevation, 1912; Emile Weil, architect. *National Building Museum, Kress Collection.*

⁴⁴ Thomas 174.

1909 Touro Synagogue in New Orleans. The Canal Street façade finishes with a large projecting cornice that seems to begin with several courses of corbelling that is topped by large-scale dentil moldings and is finalized with a simple entablature.

Emile Weil's design for the Canal Street Kress store stood the test of time until 1962 when an interlocking porcelain slipcover masked the 1912 façade. At that time the projecting cornice was removed, as was most of the copper canopies ornamentation. However, all of these design elements have been reconstructed and replaced as part of The Ritz-Carlton Hotel Company's \$240 million dollar renovation of the Kress Building and Maison Blanche department store building.

Whitehouse Hotels, L.P. purchased both buildings in 1994 with the Ritz-Carlton, New Orleans opening on October 6, 2000. The Ritz-Carlton New Orleans was the first luxury five-star hotel to be built in New Orleans in the past sixteen years. It provides 452 rooms, which includes thirty-seven suites. The hotel also provides a 20,000 square foot day spa and fitness center as well as a complete business center that includes twelve meeting rooms and one executive boardroom. The hotel includes high-end retail shops along the street level and is a one minute walk to the French Quarter and Bourbon Street and a fifteen minute walk to the Convention Center, Superdome, and Aquarium of the Americas. Although the Kress Building encompasses a small percentage of the hotel its adaptive reuse as a five-star hotel speaks highly of the dedication to design that Samuel Kress wished for his stores as well as Emile Weil's design for the store.

E. J. T. Hoffman: Prosperity and Growth

At the time of Burrell's leaving, in 1918, the S.H. Kress Company had expanded to include 144 stores with annual sales of \$21.2 million.⁴⁵ As Seymour Burrell left the Kress Company, E. J. T. Hoffman acquired the position of Kress supervising architect. During Hoffman's ten-year career with S.H. Kress, he became the most prolific supervising architect to date. From 1918 to 1928 the S.H. Kress Company expanded from 144 stores to 193 stores, thereby attributing forty-nine new Kress buildings to Hoffman. The rapid expansion of the Kress Company, during Hoffman's tenure, came in part to the improvements in transportation, the mass migration of people to the city, and a quickly rising standard of living during the period between the two World Wars.

E.J.T. Hoffman began his career as supervising architect by carrying on the standardized yellow brick facades, however Hoffman introduced several changes. The first change was the illumination of storefronts at night. Prior to this all Kress store interiors and display windows were illuminated at night, to encourage window shopping at night, and a trip back to the store the next day. Hoffman also brought about several new interior changes such as the use of Napoleon Blanc Mélange marble veneers, mirrored piers, and ornate plaster capitals. All of these changes were undertaken to provide Kress sales floors with a new elegance. Even though he carried on the standardized yellow brick facades his variations in detailing insured that no Kress store could be mistaken for another. Hoffman used the 1926 Asheville, North Carolina, store to demonstrate his abilities to move beyond the basic yellow brick façade.

The Asheville, North Carolina store provided Hoffman with a unique architectural opportunity. The building is located at the corner of Patton Avenue and Lexington Street

⁴⁵ Lebahr 370.

and stands four stories high. The uniqueness of this situation is that the building abutted sidewalks on three of its four sides and had both front and rear entrances, therefore appearing as freestanding architecture, something Hoffman had not encountered as supervising architect. Hoffman also deviated from the basic yellow brick façade by incorporating an off-white terra cotta cornice and frieze. He also included orange and blue rosettes set against an off-white terra cotta trim around each window bay. Finally, Hoffman utilized blue terra cotta instead of white for the Kress logo that set upon the roof parapet. In terms of signage, Hoffman also introduced two-rooftop metal signs that spelled out KRESS in incandescent bulbs. These signs were placed cattycorner above the front and rear elevations and are still present on the roof of the Asheville Kress building today.

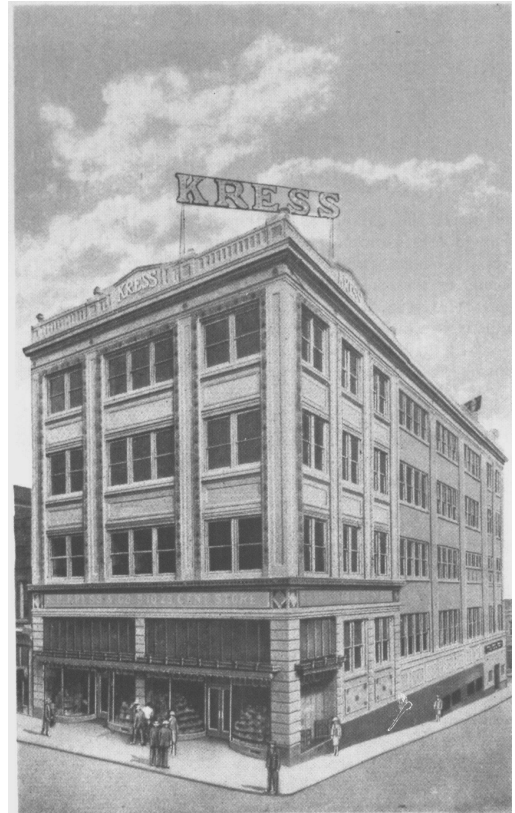


Figure 3.8. Asheville, North Carolina, Kress Building, 1926; E.J.T. Hoffman, architect. *Lake County, Illinois, Museum/ Curt Teich Postcard Archives.*

The Patton Avenue façade is characterized by a Kress “signature storefront” complete with marble bulkheads. Located above the transom windows and signboard is a small storefront cornice. Rising from the cornice are four pilasters that divide the façade into three bays. The outer bays consist of a pair of one-over-one sash windows while the center bay consists of three one-over-one sash windows. Vertically, the windows are divided by large rectangular spandrels with recessed rectangular panels as their only decoration. Surrounding each bay, from

storefront cornice to rooftop cornice, is off-white terra cotta trim with alternating orange and blue rosettes. Each pilaster terminates at the roof top frieze; at the termination of each pilaster there is a single rosette before the projecting cornice begins. Setting above the cornice is the roof parapet, which is designed to represent a roof balustrade with large square posts that correspond to the pilasters, thereby producing a vertical line from sidewalk to sky.

The Asheville, North Carolina Kress building remains standing today and now provides retail space on the first floor and residential on the top three floors. The retail space is occupied by the Kress Emporium, which is a retail establishment that showcases the work of over eighty regional artists. The upper floors provide downtown living in the form of condominiums, which range in price from \$135,000 to \$400,000.

Hoffman began to stretch the boundaries of the yellow brick façade, with the 1926 Asheville, North Carolina store, because of his enormous use of terra cotta on the main façade. However, Hoffman was even expanding Kress store design at the same time as the Asheville store, by designing a Gothic Revival store for Knoxville, Tennessee and Seattle, Washington. An explanation for the use of Gothic Revival architecture, in the 1920's, comes from Fredrick Lewis Allen who observed that, "Businessmen, previously considered crass and undignified, now ranked with clergymen or even higher".⁴⁶ Thereby, designing in the Gothic Revival style would confer a quasi-religious status on a business and would declare the nobility of both the businessman/ owner and the company.

⁴⁶ Richard Guy Wilson, Machine Age (New York: Brooklyn Museum in association with Abrams, 1986) 68f.

The underlying association between Gothic Revival architecture and businessmen would have been apparent to Samuel Kress, due to his position as owner of one of the largest dime store chains in America and because of his love of art and architecture, which included the Middle Ages. However, Samuel Kress' art collection consisted mainly of Italian Renaissance art and sculpture. Samuel Kress' love of the Italian Renaissance undoubtedly influenced Hoffman in his 1927 design for a new Kress store in Memphis, Tennessee.

Samuel Kress began his five-and-dime chain in Memphis in 1896 and for that reason Memphis always held a special place within the company. The Memphis store was referred to as Old No. 1, even though the store had been moved three times prior to Hoffman's 1927 store, which was located at 9 North Main Street. As construction began in 1926, three adjacent buildings were razed to make room for the much larger and finer store.

The four-story Kress store, topped with a cupola, strongly resembles an Italian villa or palazzo. The store begins with a Kress "signature storefront" with



Figure 3.9. Memphis, Tennessee, Old No. 1, E.J.T. Hoffman, architect. *National Building Museum, Kress Collection.*

large transom windows and signboard located just under a storefront cornice. Granitex, terracotta formed to resemble granite, was used as "granite blocks" for the quoining of the storefront piers. Lion heads with bright red tongues added a striking detail at the top

of each storefront pier. The use of “granite blocks” continues with the four pilasters that start at the storefront cornice and extend through the roofline. The pilasters are used to divide the façade into three equal bays. The width of the outer bays is defined by four three paned windows, while the center bay is the width of five three paned windows. Hoffman used rectangular spandrels to delineate each floor of the building. The spandrels that delineates the second and third floors are decorated with five garlands per spandrel, while the spandrels between the third and fourth floors are decorated with a centrally located cartouche flanked by a cornucopia to either side. Also, all three bays have a continuously running trim of fleurs-de-lis from the storefront cornice to the frieze just above the fourth floor. The frieze runs the length of the Main Street façade with interruptions from the pilasters and the Kress logo, which is centered above the middle bay of the façade. Above the outer bays, the friezes are heavily decorated with floral motifs and cartouches that are located in line with the cartouches on the spandrels between the third and fourth floors. Just above the frieze, a projecting cornice starts with an egg and dart motif, which is followed by a row of biologically correct bald eagle heads that run the length of the façade. Hoffman’s choice to use bald eagle heads has never been substantiated through documents; however, it is believed that the



Figure 3.10. Detail of eagle heads on Memphis store. *Photograph by Author.*

eagle heads were used for one of two reasons. The first is that Samuel Kress was using the eagle heads as a patriotic celebration of the United States. A second reason is the Reelfoot Sanctuary located just north of Memphis where bald eagles would come every

winter.⁴⁷ Hoffman completed the Italian Renaissance design by elevating the center section of the roof parapet to provide a cupola, complete with three rounded windows. The shorter portions of the roof parapet, to each side of the cupola, consist of three trefoils per side with large-scale finials located atop the corners of the parapet. Hoffman's design for Memphis, in 1927, illustrates the influence Samuel Kress had on the design of his stores and the beginning of locally inspired design elements within a Kress store façade. The Memphis store is also an amazing example of how variations of two colors, blue and yellow, can produce such dramatic ornamentation.

Presently the Memphis, Tennessee Kress building stands empty. The building is located on North Main Street, within the central business district and across the street from a city park and a trolley station. It is also within two blocks of Memphis' waterfront park along the Mississippi River and just a few blocks from the new downtown minor league baseball stadium. The Kress store in Memphis, Tennessee, is a prime location and its adaptive reuse potential is limitless.

E.J.T. Hoffman worked as Kress supervising architect for one more year after the opening of the Memphis store in 1927. With his many variations in Kress store architecture, Hoffman foreshadowed themes that would soon become part of S.H. Kress five-and-ten-cent store architecture: the influence of Samuel Kress, including his self-perception and regional or local influences with a stores design. Hoffman's tenure had paralleled the greatest expansion of the S.H. Kress Company to date. Hoffman was responsible for some forty-nine new stores and the company ended 1928 with annual sales of \$65.1 million.⁴⁸ With annual sales increasing every year and the company in a

⁴⁷ Thomas 43.

⁴⁸ Lebhar 370.

state of constant expansion the next supervising architect, George E. Mackay, provided S.H. Kress stores with an air of aristocracy.

George E. Mackay: Palaces and Temples

George Mackay began his tenure as Kress supervising architect in 1928. Prior to Mackay, Kress stores had evolved from renovated buildings to simplified neoclassical yellow brick stores and finally the beginning of revival styles with Hoffman's Gothic Revival stores in Knoxville and Seattle. Mackay picked up where Hoffman left off, in terms of revival style buildings. Even though Mackay holds the distinction of having the shortest tenure of any supervising architect, the buildings he designed from 1928 until 1929 were some of the most elaborately designed and ornamented stores every designed by the S.H. Kress Company.

Just as his predecessors had done, Mackay brought about new innovations in the design of Kress stores. The most successful was his placement of swiveling floodlights on top of the store marquee that were used to illuminate the upper stories. He also added floodlights on the upper side of the roof cornice in order to light the parapet and Kress logo. However, the most important change in store design was the use of revival styles that were in some way linked to the city or region. This is not to say the locale or region influenced every store Mackay designed, but he set the stage for future supervising architects to follow his lead and expand upon regionally inspired design.

One of Mackay's first stores was to be located in Lakeland, Florida. Mackay chose to design the store in a strict neoclassical style reminiscent of an English country home. The entire façade was completed in pale yellow terra cotta with details in red, blue and dark green. The Lakeland store starts with a Kress "signature storefront" with the

only change being how Mackay dealt with the signboard. Mackay placed the signboard above the transom windows within the center bay of the façade as well as producing it using red and gold terra cotta, instead of the traditional wooden sign with a red background and gold lettering.

Mackay also included a storefront marquee, reminiscent of Emile Weil and the New Orleans store.

Four fluted pilasters begin just above the marquee and continue until their elaborate Corinthian capitals, which supports an



Figure 3.11. Lakeland, Florida, Kress Building, 1928; George Mackay, architect. *Photograph by Bob Braun.*

entablature. The entablature consists of a blank frieze topped by a row of dentil moldings, which are then topped by a continuous strand of acanthus leaves. A pediment, ornamented with the same dentil moldings and acanthus leaves, is centered above the center bay of the façade. Above the cornice and to each side of the pediment is a roof balustrade, which has four aquamarine urns, set upon bases that continue the vertical lines of the pilasters through the façade and into the sky. The façade is divided into three equal sized bays with each bay containing three six-over-six sash windows. Each window is framed by a window surround and is topped by a suggested flat arch with keystone. Below each window is a separate recessed panel that contains a garland of dark green leaves tied by blue and golden ribbon. Similar in design to these garlands are the ones that are located to each side of the Kress logo, which has been placed inside the pediment.

George Mackay wasted no time in establishing the style of buildings that he wished to design as Kress supervising architect. His attention to detail and the resulting academically correct revival style of the Lakeland, Florida store provided it with a unique adaptive reuse as a courthouse for Lakeland.

Mackay designed a new Kress superstore for Tampa, Florida in 1929. The Tampa store, when completed, represented Mackay's masterpiece as company architect. The superstore was designed in the Spanish Colonial style, which was quite befitting its location in Tampa. The most unique aspect of Mackay's design was that the building fronted on parallel streets, Florida and North Franklin, with nearly identical facades. The facades begin with the Kress "signature storefront" and transition into a large marquee that has a repeating pattern of large and small palmettes that converge in the center at a tall cartouche with the letter K on a shield. Above the marquee are the large-scale mezzanine windows and signboard that are both surrounded by off white terra cotta meant to resemble rusticated stone. The upper façade, which consists of three floors, is articulated into three equal bays of windows. Each bay is trimmed with a rope molding with massive pilasters positioned at each edge of the façade. The pilasters support a projecting cornice that begins with a row of dentil



Figure 3.12. Tampa, Florida, Kress Building, 1929; George Mackay, architect. *National Building Museum, Kress Collection.*

moldings and is topped by an interlacing arcade, with each arch providing shade for a heraldic symbol. The façade is completed by a high parapet that Mackay finished by placing a large cartouche at the center of the roofline. The use of a large decorative element to interrupt the roofline became a design trait of Mackay's during his tenure.

The imposing façade of the Tampa superstore was just that for two of Samuel Kress' biggest competitors, J.J. Newberry, and F.W. Woolworth, who constructed

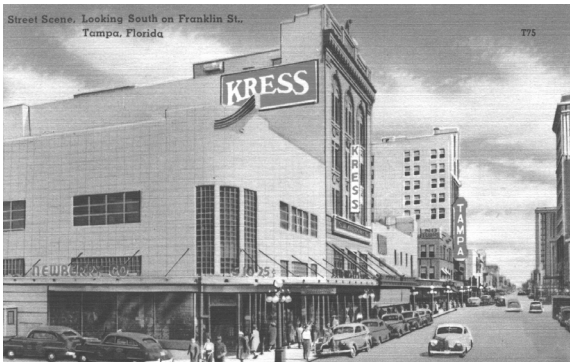


Figure 3.13. Postcard Looking South on Franklin Street, Tampa, Florida, 1955. *Collection of Author.*



Figure 3.14. Postcard Looking North on Franklin Street, Tampa, Florida. *Collection of Author.*

two-story five-and-ten-cent stores to the left and right of the Kress superstore. Today the three former five-and-ten-cent stores are now part of a \$20 million project that is expected to provide the spark necessary to revitalize downtown Tampa, Florida.

The Doran Jason Group has purchased the block that contains the J.J. Newberry, F.W. Woolworth, and Kress building in order to renovate the historic buildings into a mixed used complex named "Kress Square".⁴⁹ The project will total just under 148,000 square feet of retail, office, and residential. The Kress building will provide retail space at street level and 48 lofts within the upper floors. The J.J. Newberry store, located to the left of the Kress store, will contain 10 lofts on the second floor and retail space at street level. The city of Tampa has taken an active role in this \$20 million project by applying

⁴⁹ Tampa Bay Online, [Kress Square](http://www.tampadowntown.com/redevel.htm), Jan. 2002, 28 Aug. 2002. <www.tampadowntown.com/redevel.htm>

for a \$4.5 million HUD 108 loan that will allow 25% of the lofts to be affordable housing. The remaining retail and office space is forecasted to employ 385 people, when completed.

George Mackay's choice of Spanish Colonial style architecture provided the city of Tampa with an instant architectural landmark by reflecting the Spanish influences of the region. Although regionally influenced store design first began with E.J.T. Hoffman's Spanish Mission style store in Pomona, California, in 1927, George Mackay expanded upon the concept of regional architecture first with the Tampa store and then with the Montgomery, Alabama store in 1929.

S.H. Kress Company had operated in Montgomery, Alabama since 1897, just one year after opening in Memphis, Tennessee.⁵⁰ The Montgomery, Alabama store provided



Figure 3.15. Montgomery, Alabama, 1929; Dexter Avenue elevation. *National Building Museum, Kress Collection.*

Mackay with a uniquely southern issue, segregation. In an effort to balance racial division in the south while drawing both black and white customers, Mackay designed the Montgomery store to have parallel storefronts located on Dexter Avenue and Monroe Street. The 1929 Montgomery, Alabama store's main façade was constructed on Dexter Avenue, the

main thoroughfare leading up to the state capital and the principal shopping district for whites. While a second, parallel façade was constructed on Monroe Street, the major shopping street for blacks. In order to accommodate the two facades the building had to measure an amazing 325 feet between Dexter Avenue and Monroe Street. To balance

⁵⁰ Thomas 50.

such a long expanse, Mackay raised the sales floor ceiling to an astonishing thirty-one feet. Although segregation influenced the design of the Montgomery Kress store, Mackay chose an architectural style that reminisced of old southern architecture.

Mackay's choice of a Greek Temple was unique to Kress architecture as well as to five-and-ten architecture in general. A pair of freestanding fluted Doric Columns, set in antis, defines the Dexter Avenue façade. The deeply recessed windows and spandrels, which are completely detached from the columns, accentuate the columns even more. The Dexter Avenue façade is rendered in pale yellow terra



Figure 3.16. Montgomery, Alabama, 1929: Monroe Street elevation. *National Building Museum, Kress Collection.*

cotta, which has been formed to resemble large blocks of stone for the walls and layered drums for the columns. The fluted columns support a Doric order entablature that consists of alternating blue and white triglyphs with blank metopes. Above the frieze is a projecting cornice that is topped with a continuous row of anthemions. The roof parapet is simple in design with vertically oriented recessed panels, to either side of the Kress logo that is positioned in the center of the parapet. The recessed panels are located in line with the two columns of the façade, there by producing a vertical line that begins above the storefront marquee and ends at the parapet. Directly above the Kress logo, atop the parapet, is a larger scale blue and orange anthemion that is set atop a rectangular base that is supported to each side by scrolled brackets. In contrast, the Monroe Street façade is an extremely simplified version of the Dexter Avenue façade that is rendered in pale yellow

brick in lieu of terra cotta. Also, brick pilasters with terra cotta bases and capitals have replaced the freestanding columns that dominate the Dexter Avenue façade.

No matter which façade is examined, the uniqueness of each would have set the Kress building apart from all adjacent buildings. Another factor that would have increased the building's prominence was that it was constructed during the stock market crash of 1929 and opened in December 1929, just in time for Christmas. However, the Greek Temple form of the building played the largest role in the prominence of the building. The reason for Mackay's choice of style comes from Samuel Kress knowing that by aligning himself with the Old South, through his architecture, would be good business and also an antebellum inspired storefront would disperse any fears of Yankee outsiders.⁵¹ Another reason Samuel Kress could have brought such an archeological correct Greek Temple storefront to Montgomery was that in 1929, the year the building was designed and built, Samuel Kress made a donation to the Italian government for the preservation of historic monuments. One of the monuments was a sixth-century BC Doric Column from the Greek Temple of Hera at Cotrone in Southern Italy. Surely, the Greek storefront, with its monumental Doric columns was a statement by Samuel Kress himself.

Continuing his use of revival style stores, as well as reviving Hoffman's use of Gothic Revival, Mackay designed two corner lot stores in Emporia and Wichita, Kansas. The Emporia store was the smaller of the two, standing just two stories high. The Emporia store has strong overtones of Tudor Revival Style rather than the more pure Gothic Revival of the Wichita store.

⁵¹ Thomas 50.

Mackay's five-story corner store in Wichita, Kansas, was a Gothic monument within the central business district. Also, it was one of only a handful of Gothic designed commercial buildings in all of Kansas. The five-story building was rendered in a warm cream colored terra cotta. The main façade is divided into three bays by the four large piers that extend from the sidewalk through the roof parapet. Each bay consists of twelve multi-paned windows with three windows per floor. Each bay is topped with a segmental arch that spans the entire width between the piers. The upper stories are divided by spandrels, which themselves are divided into threes by vertical piers, with each section ornamented with either a quatrefoil or four part circular moldings. The upper façade transitions smoothly into the crenellated parapet, which is decorated with red-orange shields located at regular intervals. The Kress logo remains in the center of the parapet except it is placed within a recessed panel that is topped by a Gothic inspired window hood. The Gothic theme is continued with ten medieval inspired lanterns that are located at the top of the storefront piers just below the signboard. The side elevation of the Wichita store is identical to the main façade with the addition of two more bays and an additional multi-paned window per floor. Mackay's use of a rectangular castellated

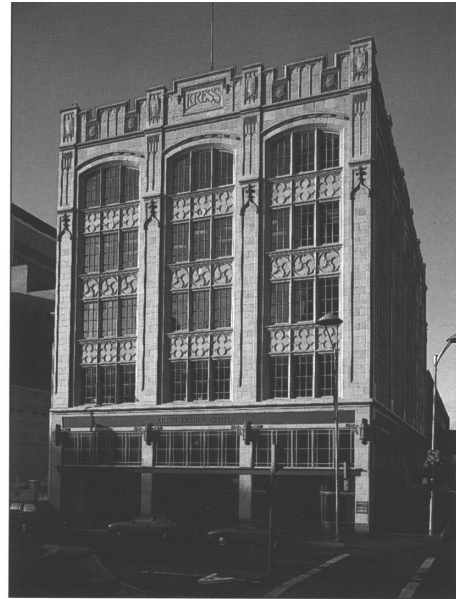


Figure 3.17. Wichita, Kansas, Kress Building, George Mackay, architect. *Photograph by Warren Denning.*

building with elevations comprised of repetitious design motifs speaks to an English architectural tradition and provides downtown Wichita with a castle of commerce.⁵²

The prominence and uniqueness of the Wichita Kress store was realized in 1985 when the building underwent a \$5 million rehabilitation to convert it into an office building named the Kress Energy Center. Today the Kress building provides 57,693 square feet of office space.⁵³ The largest tenant is Coulter Enterprises, which occupies 42,600 square feet. Coulter Enterprises operates four national steak house chains that include Lone Star Steakhouse and Sullivan's Steakhouse. The other major tenant is Ikon Document Services. These two major tenants occupy 89% of the Kress Energy Center with the remaining 11% unoccupied at this time.

George Mackay's revival style palaces, temples, and castles represented an end of an era in Kress five-and-ten architecture. Mackay was released of his duties as supervising architect in 1929, apparently because of the company's change of direction in terms of store design. Before the end of Mackay's tenure he had been sharing architect duties with two others, Edward F. Sibbert and John G. Fleming.

John G. Fleming: California and Hawaii:

John G. Fleming was hired as a Kress Company architect in 1929 and remained so until 1932 when he was released of his duties. The unique aspect of Fleming's work was that it was confined to California and Hawaii. Due to his short tenure and the Kress Company's rapid expansion into California during E.J.T. Hoffman's tenure, Fleming's work was limited to only six buildings of which the 1931, \$500,000, Class A Superstore in Honolulu, Hawaii, is easily his masterpiece.

⁵² Thomas 54.

⁵³ TripleNet Properties, Lease List, Aug. 2002, 17 August 2002 <www.1031nnn.com/leaselist.asp>.

For the design of his Honolulu store, Fleming with the assistance of Samuel Kress, took his architectural design from Honolulu's regional uniqueness. The store that Fleming designed began as two-story sand colored terra cotta façade with the Kress "signature storefront." Fleming also employed a cast iron marquee as part of the storefront, a design element revived by George Mackay. Fleming also used wrought iron to form ornamental balconies for the second story windows. Above the second story windows is a large scale bracketed cornice that supports a green tiled roof. Fleming used all of these architectural details to reflect the Mediterranean style of architecture that was prevalent in Hawaii. Besides architectural details, the layout of Fleming's building also took into account the climate of Hawaii. Fleming designed the store so that it would have alleyways to both sides of the store in order to have windows located on all four elevations. This design allowed the store to take advantage of the trade winds. Fleming also used glare resistant window glass and Venetian blinds to combat the Hawaiian climate. The correlation of the Kress store to its Hawaiian surroundings did not stop with architectural design.

Samuel Kress placed great emphasis on hiring employees that represented the multicultural community of Honolulu. Samuel Kress issued a press release prior to the stores opening that stated the S.H. Kress Company would not hire any individual that was already employed by a Honolulu business and that the employees would represent the many nationalities that were present in Honolulu. As a direct result of these initiatives, the Kress Company was able to decrease the unemployment rate in Honolulu and employed saleswomen that represented the exact same nationalities that would be shopping the store. The exact number of saleswomen is not known, however a similar

sized Kress store opened in Hilo, Hawaii, a year later and it employed 155 saleswomen at its opening.⁵⁴ The fact that the Kress store was Hawaii's first mainland five-and-ten store and later its first department store, coupled with Kress' regionally influenced initiatives caused the Honolulu store to produce higher annual sales than all of Kress' 221 mainland stores. The results of such sales are evident by



Figure 3.18. Honolulu, Hawaii, Kress Building, 1931; John G. Fleming, architect. *National Building Museum, Kress Collection.*

Fleming's renovation in 1932 that added a third floor and then Edward F. Sibbert's 1935 two-story addition that nearly doubled the square footage of the building. The Honolulu Kress store maintained its title of first and only five-and-ten store in Hawaii until 1954 when F.W. Woolworth built its first store in Hawaii.⁵⁵ Unfortunately, the Honolulu Kress store was demolished in 1988 in the name of progress and development. At the time of its demolition the Kress store was described as the "grand dame of Hawaii retailing".⁵⁶

John G. Fleming assisted Edward Sibbert in the duties of company architect until 1932 when Fleming was released from his duties. Fleming was responsible for only six Kress stores from 1929 to 1932. With the loss of the Honolulu and San Francisco stores

⁵⁴ Thomas 64.

⁵⁵ F.W. Woolworth Company, *Woolworth's First 75 Years* (New York: William E. Rudgens & Sons, 1954).

⁵⁶ Phil Mayer. "The Dowager of Hawaii's Retail History is Doomed." *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, 31 Oct. 1988: 1f.

nearly half of Fleming's work has been lost. Although his number of stores was the least by any Kress architect, Fleming provided a transition from Mackay's revival style stores to Edward Sibbert's art deco masterpieces of the 1930's.

The development of the Kress architecture division, in 1905, was a reflection of Samuel Kress's concern for his company's buildings. Beyond appearance Samuel Kress envisioned each building as a form of advertisement for the company. To accomplish this he first developed the signature storefront, followed by uniform interior colors and eventually a uniform architectural style. Even though Kress architecture began with a simplified neoclassical style, each building was unique and one of a kind. As the Kress Company prospered the architectural design of each store became more elaborate, with each supervising architect redirecting and advancing Kress architecture. Although the Kress architecture division was a success from its inception, it reached its pinnacle during the 1930's under the supervision of Edward F. Sibbert.

CHAPTER 5

DIME STORE DECO

In truth, Kress Modern is Sibbert's architecture, and vice versa.

Bernice L. Thomas

Edward F. Sibbert: Architect

Edward F. Sibbert began working in the S.H. Kress architecture division in 1929, as a result of answering a newspaper classified. At the time, George Mackay was supervising architect and John G. Fleming was designing Kress stores in California and Hawaii. However, by November 1929 Samuel Kress had fired George Mackay, due to a change in direction within the company, and promoted Edward Sibbert to supervising architect.

Edward F. Sibbert was born on July 1, 1899 in Brooklyn, New York. Sibbert was a well-educated man, first earning a degree in structural engineering from the Pratt Institute in 1919 and secondly earning his degree in architecture from Cornell University in 1922. Sibbert was also a member of both the American Society of Civil Engineers and the American Institute of Architects.

Upon graduating from Cornell, Sibbert assisted in establishing the architecture firm of Heesch and Sibbert,

Inc. Their scope of work was limited to large-scale renovation projects in New York. A year later, in 1923, Sibbert took a job as a draftsman for W.T. Grant and Company, an up

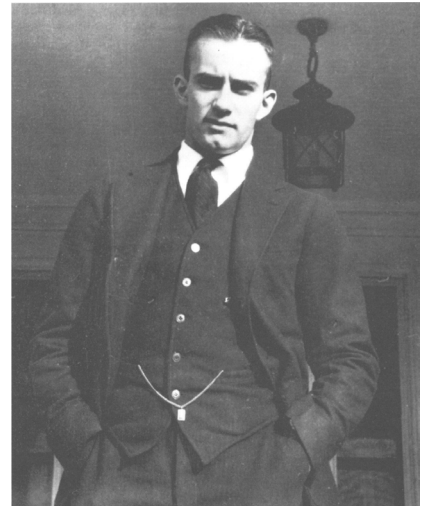


Figure 4.1. Edward F. Sibbert, at Cornell School of Architecture, 1921 or 1922. *Frederic C. Wood.*

and coming five-and-ten-cent chain. Sibbert's major accomplishment during his one year at W.T. Grant was the design of a store in Hartford, Connecticut.⁵⁷ In 1924, Sibbert left the W.T. Grant Company and moved to Miami Beach to work with Russell T. Pancoast, a former Cornell classmate. Pancoast was a grandson to John S. Collins, the original developer of Miami Beach. As Sibbert and Pancoast arrived, Miami Beach was still undergoing a resort-building boom. Prior to establishing their own partnership, the two classmates worked for the firm of Kiehnel and Elliott. The focus of their work was designing expensive winter residences for northerners. The largest of their commissions was for a Mediterranean style estate for Irving Collins, son of John S. Collins, which ironically enough sat next door to the estate of Sebastian S. Kresge, founder and owner of S.S. Kresge five-and-ten chain. Sibbert's work in Miami ended in 1926 when a hurricane hit Miami and Sibbert's wife, Bertha, said she did not want to live through another hurricane. Upon hearing this Edward and Bertha packed up and moved back to Brooklyn where Edward found work in the firm of E.H. Faile and Company Engineers. Sibbert retained his job with E.H. Faile and Company Engineers until he answered a newspaper ad for the S.H. Kress Company in 1929.

At the time Edward Sibbert answered the newspaper ad, the S.H. Kress Company was operating 193 stores with annual sales of \$65.1 million, a \$7 million increase from 1927.⁵⁸ S.H. Kress had prospered during the first two-thirds of the 1920's, as had most businesses. Between 1920 and 1928, the S.H. Kress Company opened forty-eight new stores and increased its annual sales from \$28.9 million to \$65.1 million.⁵⁹

⁵⁷ Catherine Bishir, questionnaire to Edward F. Sibbert, 27 Mar. 1979, North Carolina Archives & History.

⁵⁸ Lebhar 370.

⁵⁹ Lebhar 370.

Black Tuesday and The Great Depression:

As Edward Sibbert replaced George Mackay as supervising architect, the United States economy began its worst decline ever. It first began on October 29, 1929, more commonly known as Black Tuesday. After nearly a week of daily loses on the stock exchange, Black Tuesday began worse than any other. By the end of the trading day, over sixteen million shares had been traded and the ticker tape was over two hours behind. The sixteen million shares traded that day set the record for the most shares traded in a single day and that record would not be broken until April 1, 1968.⁶⁰ Nearly all historians and economists agree that Black Tuesday was not the beginning of the Great Depression. However, the reaction of investment firms and of the Federal Reserve Board exacerbated the situation, which in turn brought about the Great Depression. Large financial investment firms lost confidence after Black Tuesday and began to withhold their capital from the market. This situation was aggravated by the Federal Reserve Board's decision to decrease the amount of currency in circulation. From 1930 until 1932, the money supply of the United States decreased by one-third at a time when the economy demanded an increase.⁶¹ This lack of capital and the public's lowered confidence in financial institutions caused a rapid increase in bank failures in 1933. The stock market crash has been equated to a readjustment of the market because of the excess of supply over demand, but because of other factors developed into a full-fledged economic depression.⁶²

Between 1930 and 1932, six thousand banks, with assets of over \$4 billion, failed. During the same period 110,000 businesses were forced into bankruptcy, while thousands

⁶⁰ Maury Klein, Rainbow's End: The Crash of 1929 (New York: The Oxford University P, 2001) 229.

⁶¹ Kurtz 63.

⁶² Kurtz 63.

more laid off employees and/or reduced production in order to prevent bankruptcy. Many other unbelievable stories became truth because of the Great Depression. For example, on a single day in April 1932, one-fourth of the entire state of Mississippi was sold at auction because families could not pay the mortgages. One of the most astonishing facts of the Great Depression was that in 1932, 12 million people or about 24% of the United States work force were unemployed. Even as late as 1939, about 8 million people, 17% of the work force, were still unemployed.⁶³ With such unbelievable stories becoming truth most people had little money to spend, even for necessities much less luxuries. The solution to this problem was the five-and-ten cent stores, who provided quality necessity goods for between five and ten cents, a price that was affordable to a majority of citizens during the depression. Of all five-and-ten cent chains S.H. Kress Company took the greatest advantage of the Great Depression in order to expand its number of stores. Because of cheap labor and cheap materials the S.H. Kress Company undertook its largest building program ever, and Edward Sibbert was to be responsible for the 176 Kress stores that were constructed or renovated during the Great Depression.⁶⁴

Dime Store Deco: Kress Architecture of the Depression:

When asked why the art deco style was chosen for the Kress Stores of the 1930's, Sibbert responded by saying, "If that was a style then we knew it not. We tried to use good composition, simple ornamentation and coloring which we thought was significant of a Kress store, in average American towns".⁶⁵ However, Sibbert did mention the Bauhaus, Mayan and Egyptian temples as design sources. He also stressed that design

⁶³ Harvey Green, The Uncertainty of Everyday Life: 1915 – 1945 (New York: HarperPerennial, 1993) 75.

⁶⁴ H. McKelden Smith 6.

⁶⁵ H. McKelden Smith 2.

sources were anything other than classical styles. The use of Mayan and Egyptian styles and ornamentation was not wholly Sibbert's doing. Samuel Kress always had an interest in archeology, which had translated into a love of travel with Egypt as one of his destinations. Samuel Kress was also known as a faithful attendant to Burton Holmes's Travelogues, lectures that were given in Carnegie Hall. A final influence for the use of Mayan Revival architecture and ornamentation could have been Frank Lloyd Wright's 1923 Hollyhock House in Los Angeles, which by 1929, when Sibbert began designing for Kress, would have been well known to architects.

No matter the sources of his designs, Edward Sibbert wasted no time in distancing himself from the neoclassical and revival styles of past Kress architects. His first store was designed for Greensboro, North Carolina. The style of the Greensboro store is unmistakably art deco. The specifics of the Greensboro store will be provided in the next chapter when the store is presented as a case study. After Greensboro, Sibbert continued designing new stores within the south, with his 1931 Charleston, South Carolina store bringing Mayan Revival architecture to the forefront.

Charleston, South Carolina (1931)

S.H. Kress Company had been operating a store on King Street since 1913. In 1930, the decision was made to design and construct a Class A Superstore at the same location. When completed, the Superstore would contain approximately 45,000 square feet and have street frontage on both King Street and Wentworth Street. To accomplish this the building was designed in the shape of an L so that it would wrap around the building on the corner of King and Wentworth. The two elevations were four stories in height, with the Wentworth elevation receiving a two-story addition to its west elevation

in 1941. This addition provided space for the Kress lunch counter and soda fountain.

The two elevations are nearly identical in composition, although the King Street elevation was given more prominence by its use of butterscotch terra cotta instead of pale yellow brick as used on the Wentworth elevation and by the degree of ornamentation on the King Street elevation.

The King Street elevation had a double entrance “signature storefront” with bulkheads covered in Verde Green Marble. However, the original storefront was replaced sometime after Kress closed the store. Fortunately, as part of the recent rehabilitation a new storefront that closely resembles the original Kress storefront, has been installed. Instead of topping the storefront with a signboard, Sibbert rendered the store signage in art deco lettering and placed it above the center display windows. Sibbert also incorporated additional Kress logos in the chevron motif clad marquee that divided the facade between ground floor and upper floors. The upper façade is composed with projecting sections at each end of the façade, which resemble pylons, while the center of the façade is composed as a single broad section that is recessed in comparison to the corner pylons.

The corner pylons are covered in terra cotta that simulates large blocks of stone. The size of the corner pylons is accentuated by the large return of terra cotta applied to the side



Figure 4.2. Charleston, South Carolina, Kress Building at night. *National Building Museum, Kress Collection.*

elevations and the single-bay of windows that are deeply recessed in the center of the pylons.

The terra cotta cladding continues across the top of the center section, however the terra cotta is cut into triangular blocks instead of square blocks. Once arranged the triangular blocks form crisscrossing diagonals lines. Extending down are four pilasters, which separate the bays of windows and spandrels, with half versions located at the corners of the pylons. These pilasters resemble bundled shaft columns, reminiscent of Egyptian style wheat columns without the capitals. At the base of each pilaster, not visible from the street, is a stylized version of a Corinthian capital, which is rendered in butterscotch, blue, and orange terra cotta. Each of the five bays, located in the center section of the elevation, are composed of two two-over-two sash windows aligned vertically and divided by a spandrel that carries a chevron motif. Each window bay is topped by a flat terra cotta panel that spans between each pilaster and is ornamented with butterscotch chevrons against a dark green background. Below each of these panels is a valance that tops the uppermost window of each bay. These valances are ornamented with Deco-styled floral patterns and resemble corbelled arches.

The architectural style of the 1931 Charleston, South Carolina Kress Superstore is unmistakably Mayan Revival. The similarities include the terra cotta blocks of stone and triangular blocks used to form diagonal lines above the center section. Both of these architectural details can be found in Mayan structures from the eighth and ninth centuries located on the Yucatán Peninsula.⁶⁶ A more specific example would be the Nunnery Quadrangle at Uxmal, which ironically would be reconstructed at the 1933 Century of Progress Exposition in Chicago. The Mayan references continue with the window

⁶⁶ Henri Stierlin, The Maya: Palaces and Pyramids of the Rainforest (Koln: Taschen, 2001) 127.

valances that resemble corbelled arches and the abundance of chevron motifs within the façade. The final link to Mayan design is the ornamentation that is located above each window bay in the corner pylons and the base of the flagpole, which is located in the center of the roofline. The ornamentation itself is not taken from Mayan design but the look of it resembles the use of stone that has been worked to provide three-dimensional stylized floral patterns.

The Charleston Superstore illustrated Sibbert's desire to avoid classical style ornament and his preference for modern design. The use of Mayan Revival architecture would have stood out in any business district; however, the use of it in Charleston added to its uniqueness. The potential of the Charleston Superstores unique design and location at the corner of King Street and Wentworth Street was realized several years ago when Frank Haygood, of Frank Haygood and Associates, purchased the Kress building for \$2.25 million.⁶⁷ After marketing the street level retail space on King Street, Mr. Haygood was able to secure Williams Sonoma, a national gourmet cooking supply chain, as a tenant. Inside, Williams Sonoma has painted everything white and covered any detail or ornamentation on the lower ten feet of the walls, however Williams Sonoma has maintained the original 20-plus foot sales floor ceiling with its Art Deco/ Mayan inspired ornamentation. ZINN Rug Gallery and Duncan & Parnell Printing Services occupy the street level retail space on Wentworth Street. This retail area would have originally connected with the Williams Sonoma space to form one large open sales floor. The ceiling has also been retained within the Wentworth Street areas and so has the original storefront, interior door surround and entry vestibule. The second floor was planned to accommodate an Internet company, but before moving in the company went under. Mr.

⁶⁷ Haygood, Frank, telephone interview, 27 August 2002.

Haygood is now looking at placing a fitness center/ gym on the second floor, but has not taken any steps forward on such a plan. The final two floors of the Kress building are occupied by office space and are fully rented at this time. The rehabilitation that Frank Haygood has undertaken on the Kress building has cost approximately \$5.5 million to date, with more work remaining.⁶⁸ To lessen such large rehabilitation costs, Mr. Haygood has utilized the 20% Federal Tax Credits.⁶⁹

Hilo, Hawaii (1932)

Shortly after designing the Charleston, South Carolina store, Edward Sibbert designed what was to be S.H. Kress's second store to be opened in the territory of Hawaii. The first was designed in 1931 by John G. Fleming and was located in Honolulu. Sibbert's store was to be located in Hilo, Hawaii, which is located on the island of Hawaii. Sibbert's design for Hilo differed greatly from Fleming's Mediterranean store in Honolulu. Above the "signature storefront", Sibbert incorporated a bronze marquee ornamented with three groupings of three striations each, which runs the entirety of the marquee. The only interruptions of the striations are the Kress logos that are applied to the front of the marquee above the two entrances located on Kamehameha Avenue. The entire façade is covered with shell-pink terra cotta with pale aquamarine terra cotta trim, clearly a reflection of the stores location facing the Pacific Ocean from Hilo Harbor. Across the top of the façade, the terra cotta resembles ashlar blocks laid in a running bond pattern, while the terra cotta resembles ashlar between the four bays of windows. The four bays of windows also are divided in half by large mullions that open, above the third floor windows, into fans or palmettes. In the setting

⁶⁸ Haygood, Telephone Interview, August 21, 2002.

⁶⁹ Haygood, Telephone Interview, August 21, 2002.

of Hilo the palmettes are suggestive of palm trees and also the tall branched leaves used in ceremonies by the Hawaiian monarch whose first king was Kamehameha I, for whom the avenue the Kress store sets on is named. To divide the window bays vertically, Sibbert used vertically oriented spandrels that are ornamented with a more stylized version of the mullions and palmettes. Sibbert chose to complete the Hilo façade with a cornice of alternating stylized garlands and flowers. More specifically, the garlands are confined within the triangular shapes of a chevron pattern while the flowers alternate with the downward pointing chevrons.



Figure 4.3. Hilo, Hawaii, Kress Building. *National Building Museum, Kress Collection.*

The uniqueness and locally influenced design of the 1932 Hilo store was not overlooked as in 1988 when the Honolulu store was demolished in the name of development. Instead the Hilo, Hawaii store has received one of the most distinctive adaptive reuses of any Kress store. After a 1995 rehabilitation, the upper floors of the Hilo Kress store houses a four-screen movie theater while the street level retail space is occupied by Tropical Dreams ice cream parlor.⁷⁰

Spanish Themes: Daytona, Sarasota and Lubbock

In 1932, the same year the Hilo, Hawaii store was built, Sibbert also designed three distinctively different Spanish influenced stores in Daytona Beach, Sarasota, and Lubbock. The S.H. Kress Company had operated stores in both Florida and Texas as early as 1900, just four years after starting in Memphis.

⁷⁰ DIA, *Downtown Tour*, Dec. 2001, 17 Sept. 2002 <www.downtownhilo.com/tour/tour.htm>.

Daytona Beach, Florida (1932)

The Daytona Beach, Florida store was located on Beach Street across from a public park and the Halifax River. The Daytona Beach store was classified as a Superstore and its appearance reflected that fact. The building was designed as a large block with large corner piers projecting, just slightly, beyond the surface of the façade. The theme of the Superstore was that of a castle, like Mackay's "castles of commerce" in Wichita and Emporia, Kansas; however, Sibbert chose sixteenth and seventeenth century Spanish castles as his design source.⁷¹ Sibbert chose to utilize pale yellow brick as the primary material with terra cotta used as trim and detailing.

The corner piers of the Daytona Beach store are similar to the corner pylons of the 1931 Charleston, South Carolina store, except that the corner piers of the Daytona Beach store are narrower and the top one-fourth appears to step back to resemble a corner tower of a fortress. The corner piers begin above the bronze marquee and terminate just above the roofline. The lower three-quarters of the piers are pale yellow brick with pale yellow terra cotta used to resemble large stone quoins. Nearing the top of the quoining is a very narrow slit



Figure 4.4. Daytona Beach, Florida, Kress Building. *Halifax Historical Society.*

window. Above this window the quoining steps in and is flanked by two-dimensional scrollwork that appears to support large-scale Spanish Baroque ornamentation. By

⁷¹ Thomas 87.

stepping back and terminating the quoining, coupled with the narrowing Spanish Baroque inspired ornament, the corner piers appear to step back and narrow near the roofline. The rectangular panel that spans the upper façade between the corner piers appear similar to the Charleston, South Carolina store with its diagonal line pattern. The difference between the two stores is that the Charleston store utilized terra cotta to form the diagonal line pattern while the Daytona Beach store uses pale yellow brick interlaced with slightly darker brick to form the diagonal lines. The roofline above the center section of the façade is lined with crenellations made up in part by seashells, an iconic reference to Daytona Beach and the coast of Florida. Three pilasters, made of terra cotta and projecting from the façade, provide the division between each of the four window bays. Each window bay is divided vertically by a spandrel ornamented with Deco-styled floral motifs. The mezzanine windows, which coincide with the sales floor ceiling, have been moved above the marquee and surrounded by Spanish Baroque ornamentation similar to that atop each corner pier.

Although Sibbert drew from sixteenth and seventeenth century Spanish castles and fortress the Daytona Beach Kress Superstore is unmistakable modern or Art Deco in design. Upon completion of the Daytona Beach store, Sibbert turned his attention to another Kress Superstore in Sarasota, Florida. Sibbert again chose Spanish architectural design as a basis for his Sarasota store, although it would look nothing like the Daytona Beach Superstore.

Sarasota, Florida (1932)

Unlike the Daytona Beach store, the Sarasota store is built within a block of buildings, instead of at the corner. Due to its location, the Sarasota store provided Sibbert

with only one façade to design. The Sarasota façade, being three stories high and eight bays wide, is shorter and much wider than the Daytona Beach façade. The streamlined marquee that spans the entire width of the façade, just above the “signature storefront”, accentuates the width of the store. The marquee is ornamented with only five cartouches that are located inline with each hanger rod of the marquee. Sibbert chose to use a reddish-brown brick laid in a Flemish bond pattern with buff colored terra cotta used as trim and ornamentation. Unlike the facades of Charleston and Daytona Beach, the Sarasota façade is flat with no projecting or recessed areas. Sibbert may have used a flat façade to allow the Kress Superstore to be less intrusive within the continuous row of façades along Main Street. In



Figure 4.5. Postcard, Looking East on Main Street, Sarasota, Florida, Kress Building on Right. *Collection of the Author.*

doing this, Sibbert allowed the overall scale and height of the Kress Superstore to stand out from the other stores along Main Street in Sarasota. A recessed two-over-two sash window trimmed with buff colored terra cotta characterizes the far left and right-hand sides of the facade. Above this window is a buff colored terra cotta rainspout suggestive of Spanish adobe style homes. The center section of the façade is organized into six individual window bays, with each bay consisting of two three-over-three sash windows aligned vertically and surrounded by buff colored colonnettes that meet a buff colored Florentine style arch above the top window. Within the lunette area of each arch there is a centrally located Escutcheons or shield that is flanked, on both sides, by an

orange S scroll. Located behind the shield and mimicking the shape of the arch is a field of orange flowers with green leaves. All of the ornamentation within the lunette area of each arch is multicolored while the shield itself is rendered in light buff terra cotta. This technique allows the shield to appear in the shape of an arrowhead that is pointing downward. The arrowhead motif is emphasized by the bulging along the middle, the jagged edges, and the point at the bottom of each shape. A final detail is how the surface of the terra cotta is molded to suggest flint that has been shaped with a stone tool.

Sibbert's use of an arrowhead is a representative artifact of the Seminole Indians who once occupied the area of

Sarasota.⁷² To complete the regionally influenced design of the Sarasota store Sibbert turned his focus to the Spanish Missions. The buff terra cotta coping along the roofline



Figure 4.6. Sarasota, Florida, Kress Building. *Florida State Archives.*

begins at each end of the façade and rises twice as it moves to the center of the roof. The coping first rises up just in from the edge of the façade while the second rise in the coping coincides with the beginning of the arched window bays. Once the buff colored coping reaches the center of the façade it enlarges into a arched parapet, suggestive of Spanish Missions except that the coping terminates at two dimensional scrolls that support a larger scale shield/ arrowhead similar to the ones located in the window arches.

Sibbert's use of locally and regionally influenced design elements allowed the Sarasota Kress Superstore to not only stand out from other stores on Sarasota's Main

⁷² Thomas 90.

Street but it also allowed the store to stand out among other Spanish influenced Kress stores. Sibbert achieved this by maintaining certain standardized parts of the building around which he designed a modern/ Art Deco building that contained only Spanish influenced design elements instead of repeating an entire Spanish influenced façade in Daytona Beach and Sarasota. This methodology reflected Sibbert's desire to use, "... good composition, simple ornamentation, and coloring, ...".⁷³ Sibbert's Spanish influenced designs continued in 1932 with the design of the Lubbock, Texas store, which would be distinctive among other Lubbock, Texas stores as well as all other Kress stores.

Lubbock, Texas (1932)

The Lubbock, Texas Kress store is located at 1109 Broadway Street. Prior to this two-story building, Kress had not been operating in Lubbock even though Kress had operated in Texas since 1900. Prior to 1932, Kress had been operating in the larger markets of Texas such as Dallas, Houston, San Antonio, El Paso, and Fort Worth. However, during the first few years of the Great Depression, S.H. Kress Company expanded into the smaller markets of Amarillo and Lubbock.

The Lubbock, Texas store continues Sibbert's 1932 Spanish influenced designs, however Sibbert turns his attention to more local influences. Sibbert utilized a double entrance "signature store" front with Verde Green Marble bulkheads, which provides the façade its only touch of color besides the dark copper marquee. For the façade Sibbert decided to utilize both brick and terra cotta, like both Daytona Beach and Sarasota, however Lubbock would be monochromatic in appearance. The façade was covered with a cream colored brick laid in a Flemish bond pattern, like that of the Sarasota store, with an identically colored terra cotta for trim and ornamentation. Much like the Sarasota

⁷³ Smith 2.

façade the Lubbock façade was flat with the only projecting or recessed areas being the window bays and their trim. Also, due to the Lubbock store not being a Superstore its size and scale is much less than that of Sarasota. Therefore, its facade is more vertically oriented and is divided into four equal bays. The window bays start above the copper marquee and encompass both the mezzanine level windows and the second floor windows. Each bay is subsequently divided into two halves, with each half containing two four-over-four windows aligned vertically with vertically oriented spandrels used to divide the mezzanine level and second floor. Each window bay is



Figure 4.7. Lubbock, Texas, Kress Building.
Photograph by Bernice L. Thomas.

surrounded by terra cotta trim that form colonettes, extremely similar to the ones found on the Sarasota store. These colonettes trim the windows on both levels and form Spanish influenced window hoods/ frames above each bay of windows. Within the window hoods there is a terra cotta panel, which conforms to the shape of the window hood, and is ornamented with four sunken rays. The rays originate at the top of the center colonette, which gives the impression of a stylized sunrise or sunset. Just above the window hoods is the roofline, similar in design to that of the Sarasota store, but more Spanish in its execution. The roofline is covered by a terra cotta coping that begins at both edges of the roof in the form of two-dimensional scrolls. From these scrolls the coping rises upwards to a rounded point, at which time the coping levels out until the center of the roofline where the coping rises into the shape of a Spanish Mission parapet.

Within the Spanish style parapet are large “blocks” of terra cotta on which the Kress logo is applied. This Spanish parapet is truer to its origins than that of the Sarasota store, possibly because of the Lubbock store’s geographical closeness to the Alamo. Although Sibbert employed regional influences within his design for the Lubbock store, the most intriguing is his use of a local symbol. Within Lubbock, as well as many parts of Texas, cattle raising was the primary economic activity that ultimately determined the prosperity of the town. Knowing that the success of the Kress store depended on the success of Lubbock, Sibbert incorporated five deco stylized cattle heads within the façade of the Lubbock store.



Figure 4.8. Lubbock, Texas, detail of deco stylized “heads of cattle”. *Photograph by Carla Breeze.*

These heads of cattle were used to mask the connection of the marquee’s hanger rods to the façade. The location of these heads of cattle is easily visible from the sidewalk and would have been noticed by anyone approaching the Kress store.

The use of Spanish influenced design was not exclusive to Sibbert’s designs during 1932. In fact, his most elaborate Spanish designs came in the final years of the 1930’s. Sibbert designed a Spanish influenced masterpiece in El Paso, Texas in 1938 and San Antonio in 1939. Although Sibbert conceived the San Antonio store design, the local Chamber of Commerce influenced the El Paso store design.

Chamber of Commerce Influenced Designs

The desires of a local Chamber of Commerce influenced and guided Sibbert in the design of Kress stores in Amarillo, Texas (1931), Fort Worth, Texas (1936) and El Paso,

Texas (1938). In each of these cases, the local Chamber of Commerce desired to see a building designed in one of two ways. The first was to assist in developing a more modern look to the central business district while the second was to remain within an already established local or regional style. The Amarillo and Fort Worth store fall under the desire to develop a more modern look while the El Paso store falls under the regionally established Spanish influenced style. Although these Chamber of Commerces wished to have new buildings constructed within the set parameters, they did not provide any more restrictions for the design to follow, thereby allowing the architect to explore the different design possibilities.

Amarillo, Texas (1931)

Edward Sibbert's first encounter with a Chamber of Commerce came in 1931 when he designed a new store for Amarillo, Texas. The 1931 store would be Kress' first store in Amarillo. At this time the Amarillo Chamber of Commerce was encouraging new commercial buildings to reflect a modern design that incorporated the locally produced yellow-buff colored brick.⁷⁴ Neither Edward Sibbert nor Samuel Kress questioned the design request of the local Chamber of Commerce. Both men knew that by conforming to the desires of Amarillo, the S.H. Kress Company would develop a repore with the citizens, which in turn would lead to prosperity for the store. Also, the use of yellow-buff colored brick had long been an emblem of Kress stores; therefore it was an easy meshing of local desire and Kress tradition.

In lieu of using the yellow-buff colored bricks within the design of the building, Sibbert used the bricks as the primary construction material, with very little terra cotta used for trim or facing on the ground level walls. Sibbert's design for the two-story

⁷⁴ Thomas 87.

corner store gives every resemblance of being solid brick construction. The two elevations are viewed as continuous brick construction because of Sibbert's use of stepped brickwork at the corner, which also softens the turn around the corner. The appearance of solid brick construction continues



Figure 4.9. Amarillo, Texas, Kress Building. *National Building Museum, Kress Collection.*

along the side elevation with its windows that are recessed into the wall and accentuated by two or three rows of bricks that step inward toward the window. This technique provides the illusion of thick solid brick walls. For the main façade, on Polk Street, Sibbert chose a strikingly modern design, resembling a stripped down Art Deco building built by the Works Program Administration. Above the “signature storefront” Sibbert placed a copper marquee that was made up of large squares of opaline glass within the copper framing. Above the marquee are two-over-two mezzanine level windows, which relate to the height of the sales floor ceiling. The façade is divided into three bays of which the two side bays are organized into a pair of four-over-four sash windows per bay, while the center bay is organized as a grouping of four four-over-four sash windows. Much like the Seventh Avenue elevation recessed lintels assist the main façade in resembling solid brick construction. The only ornamentation, other than the decorative masonry work found between each of the three window bays, is located on these lintels in

the form of chevrons. Above each of the decorative brick panels that divide the bays of window are relief panels with orange, brown, and green floral patterns. The chevron patterns and these relief panels are the only ornamentation found on the Amarillo, Texas store.

Sibbert's design for the Amarillo store was so successful that five years later, in 1936, Levine's Department store constructed a near-copy of the Kress store one block north. Presently, the Kress building houses Center City Furniture and Center City Finance. Adaptive reuse as a furniture store is a common reuse for former Kress stores, because of their large storage areas, open sales floor and most of the time usable basement sales floor. Another example of a former Kress store reused as a furniture store is the 1914 Kress store located in Anderson, South Carolina.

Fort Worth, Texas (1936)

Several years after completing the Amarillo store Edward Sibbert encountered another Chamber of Commerce who wished to develop a more modern appearance for its central business district. Unlike Amarillo, Fort Worth, Texas made no preference to materials, as had Amarillo. Fort Worth had grown and prospered quickly after the discovery of oil. By the late 1920's Fort Worth's image as a town had changed and it began comparing itself with large cities of the east coast. To greater enhance this image the Chamber of Commerce, in 1928, implemented a five-year plan to create a new image for Fort Worth.⁷⁵ To complete such a transformation, Fort Worth called for new buildings to be designed in the latest modern style. To visualize this, the Chamber of Commerce had an artist render the Fort Worth skyline dominated by skyscrapers. To assist Fort Worth in developing its new image, Sibbert utilized a simplified version of the

⁷⁵ Thomas 136.

S.H. Kress Company's flagship store on Fifth Avenue, which he had designed the year before.

The S.H. Kress Company had been operating in Fort Worth for thirty-one years, during which time Kress had occupied three increasingly larger buildings.

Sibbert's four-story Fort Worth store is an L-shaped building with slim four-story elevations on both Houston Street and Main Street. The building receives its style from its restrained design, materials, and its simple ornamentation. Sibbert covered the "signature storefront" bulkheads with charcoal gray-brown granite, which lessens its tone as it encompasses the display windows and entrances. The upper portions of the facades are covered in glazed mottled terra cotta blocks that become nearly white near the roofline. The spandrels that provide division between the three upper floors are covered in a terra cotta whose color is between the storefront and upper façade colors. Sibbert used a range of hues to provide distinction between the ground floor, the upper floors, and the window bays.



Figure 4.10. Postcard of Fort Worth, Texas, Kress Building. *Collection of the Author.*

In lieu of the more standard copper marquee, Sibbert chose to use a bronzed iron balcony to divide the “signature storefront” from the upper stories. Sibbert chose to concentrate all of the upper story windows within the center section of the façade, which projects ever so slightly beyond the plane of the façade and above the roofline. The center section is divided into three individual window bays by two convex strips that extend from the balcony to the roofline. Each of the three window bays consists of three windows stacked vertically and are divided by unadorned terracotta clad spandrels. Centered above each window bay is a form of ornamentation that reflects Sibbert’s use of Mayan architecture as a design source. Although not copied from Mayan architecture, the forms appear as if they are Mayan headdresses. Sibbert had utilized a more complex representation of this form for Kress’ Fifth Avenue Store the year before. The only other ornamentation Sibbert placed on the Fort Worth store was small carvings that were located on the storefront piers near the top of the display windows. This ornamentation also drew from Sibbert’s knowledge of Mayan architecture, although the ornamentation also had a more locally inspired meaning. The ornament consisted of a large square center section that consisted of chevron patterns topped by a shield with pointed wings, while the two sides consisted of rectangular scroll shapes extending from the center section. This ornamentation is reminiscent of the Fifth Avenue store, which employed Mayan



Figure 4.11. Detail of storefront pier. *Photograph by Bernice L. Thomas.*

hieroglyphs above its storefront. The difference in the Fort Worth ornament is that the shield with its pointed wings is recognizable as the Chevrolet Motor Company's logo, while the ornament as a whole represented the parent company General Motors Car Corporation. This had great local significance because the Chevrolet Motor Company was one of Fort Worth's most successful businesses in 1936, along with Fort Worth being the home of several automobile-parts manufacturing companies. Another way in which this ornament can be seen is in the form of a contemporary Chevrolet automobile, as seen from the front. The use of automobile-oriented ornamentation would have also been in keeping with Samuel Kress' praise and support of the car and modernization in general.

The 1936 Fort Worth Kress store remains standing as a reminder of Fort Worth's progressive and prospering years. Unfortunately, the Kress store is the only Art Deco/modern designed store left on its block. Presently a dance/ comedy club occupies the basement, while the street level sales floor is occupied by a restaurant. Although not occupied at this time, the upper stories are beginning to be rehabilitated into office space. Another unique use of the Fort Worth Kress store is its use as a cellular phone tower by Prime Company.

El Paso, Texas (1938)

Edward Sibbert encountered another Chamber of Commerce in 1938 when the S.H. Kress Company decided to construct a Kress Superstore at the corner of Mills and Oregon Streets in El Paso, Texas. In El Paso, the Chamber did not wish to establish a new image, but instead they wished to retain their already established Spanish influenced designs. Prior to 1938 S.H. Kress had been operating a store at 211 North Mesa Avenue.

Sibbert chose to design the El Paso store in an L-shape, like many of his other stores, but the El Paso store would have three elevations that fronted sidewalks, which is very reminiscent of E.J.T. Hoffman's 1926 design in Asheville, North Carolina. Sibbert would retain Kress' location on Mesa Avenue, however he placed the main entrance at the corner of Oregon and Mills Street, which was located across the street from San Jacinto Park, where many of El Paso's finest downtown buildings were located.

At the corner of Oregon and Mills Street, Sibbert designed an eighty-foot tower from which the two-wings/ elevations extend down Oregon and Mills Street. The main body of the Kress store is two-stories with a basement while the tower adds a finished penthouse story that is topped by smaller hipped



Figure 4.12. Postcard of El Paso, Texas, Kress Building. *Kevin Chastine.*

roof tower. The Mesa Avenue elevation is more indicative of Sibbert's prior work because of its location within the block and having only one façade to design. All three facades are clad with both mottled and cream colored terra cotta, while ornamentation is rendered in eight different colors. These colors are red, blue, yellow, turquoise, black, white, tan, and metallic gold.

For the Mesa Avenue elevation Sibbert utilized a double entrance "signature storefront" above which he placed a cast iron balcony, much like the one employed in the Fort Worth store. However, this balcony incorporates a Native American motif that

resembles cumulus clouds. These “cumulus clouds” flank the Kress logo that is centered within the balcony. An identically designed and ornamented balcony is employed as part of the Mills Street façade to provide a sense of unity between the two distance facades. Beginning above the balcony Sibbert chose to divide the upper facade into three sections. The two outer sections are flat with three vertically aligned windows per section. As the windows progress upwards each receives more decoration. The second floor windows are set flush within the façade and have no decoration. The third floor windows are given a cream-colored window surround and the fourth floor windows have the window surround except that it has been arched at the top while a turquoise colored balcony has been placed in front of the window. The side sections are completed with a tall-arcaded cornice. The cornice is cream-colored with five arches per section and within each arch are brightly colored geometric shapes and patterns. To terminate the roofline, Sibbert incorporated several rows of red clay tiles to symbolize a roof structure.

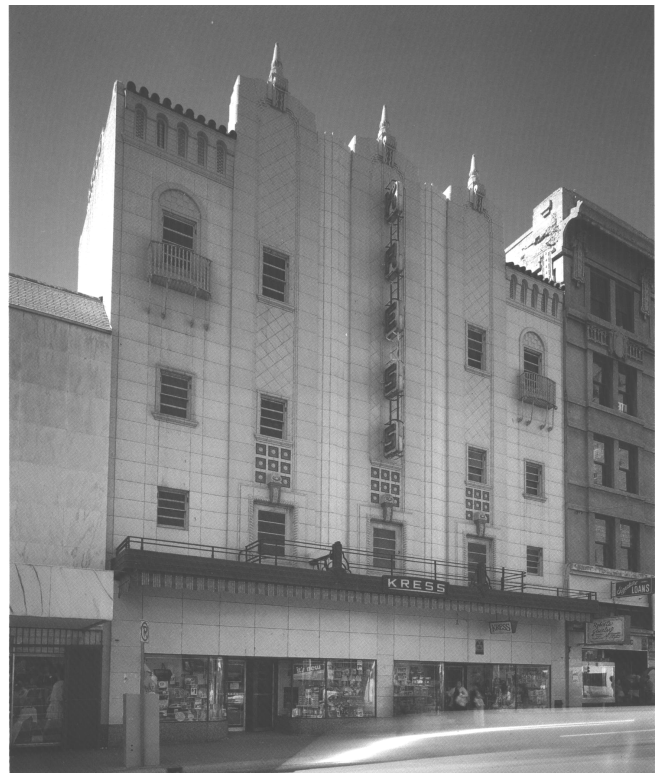


Figure 4.13. Mesa Avenue Elevation, El Paso, Texas, Kress Building. *Photograph by Carla Breeze.*

The center section of the El Paso store is similar in composition to the center section of the Fort Worth store, except in El Paso Sibbert uses color, geometric patterns

and architectural details to differentiate the center section from the side sections. Sibbert utilized cream-colored terra cotta to differentiate the three window bays of the center sections from the mottled colored terra cotta walls. Each window bay begins with a large mezzanine window that is surrounded by a large-scale rope window surround that is accented by a keystone. The keystone is characterized by overlapping floral patterns and topped by a Mayan inspired sculptural motif, similar to the one located at the base of the flagpole atop the Charleston, South Carolina store. Between these second floor windows and the third floor windows is a pattern of nine squares arranged into three rows within the pattern of a vertically oriented rectangle. The Mayan sculpture atop the keystone occupies the middle space of the bottom row of these nine squares. Above the second floor window, the center of each window bay begins a diagonal line pattern similar to that of the Mayan influenced Charleston, South Carolina store. At the top of each individual window bay, which extend beyond the roofline, is a turquoise and orange keystone that is topped by Moorish inspired gold and turquoise rounded finials. Although Sibbert was asked by the local Chamber of Commerce to design within the already established Spanish styles, he took liberty within his work and eventually produced a building that has been described as a modernized Spanish style.

Sibbert's eclectic mix of Spanish, Mayan, and Moorish ornamentation continued to the Oregon Street elevation, with the addition of some locally influenced details. The Oregon Street elevation is the longest of all three, due to it running the entire depth of the block. Sibbert continued the use of the red clay tiles along the roofline in order to provide connectivity to the three facades. Just in from Mesa Avenue Sibbert chose to place a similar, but flatter and less active entrance, than the Mills Street main entrance.

Again Sibbert utilized the Kress “signature storefront”, however he chose to use an awning above the entrance instead of a copper or iron balcony. At the end of the awning cover Sibbert placed a terra cotta panel that showcases a stylized stalk of cotton that has opened up to reveal its white cotton fiber inside. This detail can be



Figure 4.13. Oregon Street elevation, El Paso, Texas, Kress Building. *Photograph by Carla Breeze.*

interpreted in several ways. The first is the fact that the state of Texas was the leading cotton growing state in the U.S.⁷⁶ The stylized cotton also relates to one of Kress’s best selling items, cotton lace. A final interpretation of the cotton plant is that from the beginning Samuel Kress felt as though his company’s success depended on the production of cotton, since the majority of his stores were located in the cotton producing states of the South.⁷⁷ A second possible reference to Kress’s cotton lace sales is the frieze that is located above the storefront awning. The frieze consists of a new modern Kress logo that is flanked to each side by four ornamental panels that resemble lace design. It has also been suggested that each panel represents the design of a Moorish enclosed garden.⁷⁸ Sibbert completes the Oregon Street entrance with four windows placed within rectangular surrounds that extend from the frieze to just below the cornice. Each window is faced with a wrought iron balcony, while above each window is a panel

⁷⁶ Thomas 154.

⁷⁷ Thomas 154.

⁷⁸ Marcus Whiffen, Pueblo Deco (Albuquerque: U of New Mexico P, 1984) 66.

of blue, orange, green, yellow, and brown floral motifs. After the Oregon Street entrance Sibbert chose to continue second floor windows only. These windows are in line with the windows of the entrance, however these are topped with round arches that have latticework patterns within the lunette area of each arch. After the seven windows the Oregon Street elevation reaches the corner tower at Mills Street.

Integrating the corner tower into two different elevations was difficult, especially since the Mills Street side was to be the main entrance of the store. To solve this problem Sibbert allowed the pilasters of the corner tower to be flush with the Oregon Street façade so that the terra cotta “blocks” would be continuous from ground to tower roof. Sibbert topped each of the four corners of the tower, just above each pilaster, with a Moorish inspired finial like the ones found atop the Mesa Avenue façade. Each of the two full sides of the tower are divided by contrasting color sections like those of the Mesa Avenue façade. Also the tower is divided into two levels with the first being the first, second, and penthouse stories while the second section is stepped back and located on top of the penthouse level of the tower. Although the lower level of the tower is completed with the same arcaded cornice and red clay tile roof as the Mesa Avenue elevation the most elaborate ornamentation of the building occurs on the second level of the tower. The top section of the tower is divided into three decorative panels per elevation with a wave like design cornice and topped by a circular colonnade with a gold crown and buff terra cotta cap. Each panel begins with alternating cream and mottled colored terra cotta squares that have been turned on end to form a diagonal pattern of lines, again like that of the Charleston, South Carolina store. In the center of each of these squares is either a yellow or orange four-leaf flower with a circle of black located in the center of the flower. To

the left and right of these flowers are green eight pointed star motifs that represent the star of Islam, while above and below the flowers are small black squares turned on corner, like the terra cotta squares of the background.

With the use of the Mayan influenced diagonal line pattern and the Moorish influenced design motifs Sibbert was able to produce a distinctive modernized Spanish building that not only reflected El Paso but Texas and the diverse public that shopped the El Paso Kress store. After his retirement from the S.H. Kress company Sibbert was asked if he had any favorite buildings and he replied by saying his 1935 Fifth Avenue Flagship store and his 1938 El Paso, Texas store.⁷⁹

The World's Grandest Five-and-Ten Cent Store

New York City, Fifth Avenue (1935)

As the Great Depression continued, Samuel Kress seized the opportunity to commission a new company headquarters on Fifth Avenue in New York City. The low cost of labor and materials and his in house architectural firm allowed Samuel Kress to design and build the "Showplace of the Nationwide Chain".⁸⁰ The flagship store was located at 444 Fifth Avenue, at the corner of 39th Street. Appropriately enough, the seven story white marble clad building was the S.H. Kress Company's premier store and it was located on America's premier Main Street.

Beginning at street level, Sibbert retained the Kress "signature storefront", but he modified it in several ways. The first change was the use of a revolving door set to each side of a double set of swinging doors. In 1935, revolving doors were still new for Sibbert, who had only used revolving doors once before in East Orange, New Jersey.

⁷⁹ Bishir 1.

⁸⁰ Thomas 117.

Another change in the storefront was Sibbert's extreme use of bronze. All of the display windows, doors, and even two flag poles that project from above the first floor were made of natural bronze. Sibbert also changed the design and location of the Kress logo. Normally placed just above the storefront, Sibbert rendered the Kress logo in modern lettering and placed it above the mezzanine level windows. The first and mezzanine levels also received much improved cladding material.

The bulkheads were covered in darker Quincy granite while the remainder of the ground level was clad with a lighter, almost white Mount Airy granite. Sibbert chose these darker granites to contrast with the white South Dover marble that sheathed the upper floors of the building.

In using these darker granites, along with giving the



Figure 4.14. Kress Company's flagship store, corner of Fifth Avenue and Thirty-Ninth Street. *Fay S. Lincoln Collection, Pennsylvania State University.*

ground floor a strong horizontality, Sibbert was able to express the difference between the ground and upper floors, which was considered desirable in Kress architecture. The reason for such desirability was that the ground floors always served the purpose of sales floor while the upper floors served as office or warehousing space. To produce such a horizontally accentuated ground floor, Sibbert divided the mezzanine level into three

bays with the two outer bays containing one window apiece while the center section contained three windows. This rhythm of one-three-one can be traced to other Sibbert stores from the mid 1930's, namely the Fort Worth, Texas store that has been described as a "paraphrase" of the Fifth Avenue store.⁸¹ To accentuate the horizontal design of the windows, Sibbert placed Mayan inspired hieroglyphs to the left and right of each window. Although Mayan in design, these hieroglyphs represented products that a customer could purchase within the Kress store. The best example of this is an outstretched hand with a ring located above it that represents the jewelry and gloves found within the Kress store, but it also is the Mayan hieroglyph for the completion of something of the word zero. In total there were thirty-two hieroglyphs that represented Kress products ranging from an axe to a bolt of cloth.



Figure 4.15. Hieroglyphs of Kress store merchandise, Fifth Avenue, New York. *New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission.*

As the darker granites of the ground levels give way to the South Dover white marble it is quite apparent that this building is the design source for the Fort Worth store. The 99-foot wide Fifth Avenue façade is divided into three sections with the two outer sections containing only a concave line which runs from just above the mezzanine level to just below the roofline. Except for this concave line, the two side sections lack any ornamentation or even windows. Sibbert chose to place all windows and ornamentation within the larger center section of the façade, identical to the Fort Worth store. The center section of the Fifth Avenue façade projects just slightly from the

⁸¹ Thomas 136.

plane of the façade and above the roofline. The center section was divided into three double bays of windows and spandrels, which were separated by large convex mullions that end above the roofline in a Mayan headdress motif. Sibbert chose to clad the spandrels with highly polished deep-gray granite known as Clark's Oriental granite. He also tinted the windowpanes in order to have the windows and spandrels form six dark vertical strips that would run from the mezzanine level to just below the roofline.

Sibbert's Fifth Avenue flagship store was unmistakably modern in its design. His restrained use of ornamentation, kept to the areas around the mezzanine windows and the roofline, make the loudest statement about its modern design. When asked, Sibbert said that his Fifth Avenue store was one of his two favorite stores.⁸² However, Sibbert was not alone in making this statement because in 1940 Sibbert received a gold medal from the Pan American Congress of Architecture for his Fifth Avenue store. Before this gold medal Sibbert had received praise from the Architectural League of New York and the American Institute of Decorators as part of a joint exhibition. At that show a critic from the *New York Sun* called Sibbert's Fifth Avenue store, "one of the good modern buildings in the show", in contrast to the ultra conservative designs.⁸³ Even though the praise came quickly it faded with time and in 1980, The Republic National Bank demolished the Fifth Avenue Kress flagship store in order to replace it with a new building. There was a fight to save the Kress flagship store, but only one person on the New York Landmarks Commission saw the significance of the building. Therefore, the building was demolished on the grounds that the building could not be designated a New York landmark because the S.H. Kress Company was not a New York Company. Even though the Kress

⁸² Bishir 1.

⁸³ Thomas 118.

Company had been operating from New York City since 1900, just four years after its opening in Memphis, not to mention that the company had been incorporated within the state of New York in 1916.

Few commercial buildings in New York utilized Mayan inspired designs and no other five-and-ten cent store was predisposed to Mayan design. For these reasons, why did Sibbert chose Mayan influenced design for the Fifth Avenue as well as other Kress stores within the chain, is a relevant question. The first reason for Mayan inspired design is Samuel Kress himself. As Samuel Kress' love of archeology expanded so did that of the general public through such publications as *Maya Architecture (1926)*. This book, written by George Oakley Totten, assisted in explaining Mayan buildings and their designs, which in turn stimulated interest in ancient civilizations. Two much larger factors in exposing the public to Mayan design was the 1893 Columbian Exposition that had reconstructions of Mayan ruins and artifacts and the 1933 Century of Progress International Exposition at which was a full-scale reproduction of the Nunnery at Uxmal. A final reason behind Sibbert's use of Mayan design comes back to Samuel Kress. During the 1920's and 1930's, Mayan civilization was connected to Freemasonry, of which Samuel Kress was considered a devoted member. Also, Samuel Kress's Masonic Temple in New York was associated with other lodges in Mexico, which may have given Samuel Kress a greater exposure to the theories that linked Freemasonry to the Mayans.

Building to the End (Nashville, Birmingham and Alexandria)

In 1936, one year after the opening of the Fifth Avenue flagship store, the S.H. Kress Company was operating 235 stores with annual sales nearing \$87 million.⁸⁴ The S.H. Kress Company had steadily increased its number of stores and annual sales since

⁸⁴ Lebhar 370.

Black Tuesday and through the worst years of the Great Depression. As the company continued to prosper Samuel Kress continued to expand while Edward Sibbert designed new stores. One year after the Fifth Avenue flagship store opened Sibbert designed a new Kress store for Nashville, Tennessee.

Samuel Kress chose Nashville as the site for his second store that opened in 1897, just one year after his first store in Memphis, Tennessee. By 1936, the Kress store had moved its operations to two larger buildings on Fifth Avenue North. Samuel Kress either purchased these two larger stores or he was leasing space within them, because Nashville had never received a Kress designed store, even though a Kress store had operated in Nashville since 1897. Speaking to this, Samuel Kress wrote in a newspaper advertisement that the new store was his way of showing gratitude to the citizens of the Tennessee Valley who had accepted Kress's merchandising principals.⁸⁵

Nashville's new Kress store was constructed on Fifth Avenue North, where the previous Kress store was located. The new building is comprised of five floors, four stories, and a basement sales floor/cafeteria. The façade of the Nashville store is located in the middle of the block and at the time of its construction was taller than any other building on the block. The façade is primarily flat and clad with off-white terra cotta blocks,



Figure 4.17. Nashville, Tennessee, Kress Building. *Photograph by Author.*

⁸⁵ Thomas 137.

while the “signature storefront” bulkheads are covered with slightly darker Minnesota granite. A similarly colored terra cotta is used for the lintels located above the mezzanine windows and the spandrels that are used to delineate the upper floor windows. Sibbert chose to use a copper marquee in lieu of an awning or iron balcony. Above the marquee the façade is divided into three bays by four large fluted pilasters that have no capitals but terminate just above the roofline. The mezzanine windows follow this same fenestration pattern with a pair of windows located in each of the two outer bays while four windows constitute the center bay. Each of the mezzanine windows are provided a small amount of ornamentation in the form of lintels that are ornamented with a Mayan hieroglyph motif similar to the one carved into the storefront piers of the Fort Worth store. A signboard encompassed by blocks of off-white terracotta provides a horizontal line of division between the ground floor and the upper floors, which have a strong vertical orientation. The side bays of the upper façade consist of three pairs of four-over-four sash windows that are divided by dark-gray terra cotta clad spandrels, while a small mullion or colonette subdivides the bays into two individual window bays. This same composition is repeated within the larger center bay where a total of twelve windows are divided into four individual window bays that are three windows high. The center bays incorporate the same spandrel designs and colonette design. The only colored ornamentation on the Nashville façade is found above each section. The two side sections feature, centered just above the colonettes capitals, relief panels that depict Greek inspired figures. The left section’s panel shows a female figure while the right section’s panel shows a male figure. The female figure is shown holding a pole that is topped by a winged hat. This winged hat can be interpreted two different ways. First, the

winged hat is recognizable as an attribute of Hermes, the God of Commerce. This is quite appropriate ornamentation for a five-and-ten cent store. Secondly, the winged hat also resembles a style of women's hat that was quite popular during the 1930's and could have easily been sold within Kress's hat department. Another detail of the female panel



Figure 4.18. Detail of female figure. *Photograph by Author.*

is the background, which is filled with modern skyscrapers. This image is possibly Samuel Kress's prediction for Nashville's future growth. The male figure panel is centered above the colonette's capital within the right side bay. The male figure is shown wearing a bibbed apron and holding a stylized hammer in his hand. The hammer itself begins with a traditional handle;

however as the hammer progresses upwards it culminates into large layered disks that represent gears. In contrast to the female panel, the background of the male panel shows a series of smokestacks, which could be a representation of where Nashville had been and how it had prospered and expanded. Centered within the center section of the façade and aligned with the two figure panels is the gold Kress logo. Above the panels and Kress logo but just below the roofline is a cornice line consisting of a repeating pattern of stylized gold and green Greek Key motifs. Sibbert's classically

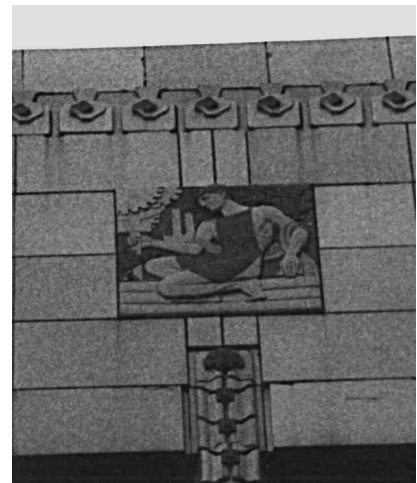


Figure 4.19. Detail of male figure. *Photograph by Author.*

inspired design, produced within a façade of modernity, provided Nashville with a distinctively Art Deco Kress store.

Although the use of classical Greek architecture was not unheard of during the 1930's, Sibbert stated that he did not use classical patterns of ornamentation. However in the 1936 Nashville store, Sibbert decided to utilize classical ornament because of its association with the history of Nashville. During the mid to late nineteenth-century Nashville was nicknamed the "Athens of the South". In order to continue this image, the city of Nashville constructed an exact replica of the Greek Parthenon as part of its centennial celebration in 1897, at which time Samuel Kress was living and operating a Kress store in Nashville. Samuel Kress also has a more personal connection to the Nashville Parthenon because in 1934 he lent the Nashville Board of Park Commissioners a collection of Italian paintings that were displayed within the gallery space within the Parthenon. Sibbert's inspiration obviously came from Nashville's full-scale Parthenon because of the large fluted pilasters that resemble the rows of Doric columns located on the Parthenon. Secondly, the male and female panels are reminiscent of the painted metopes of the Parthenon's entablature, while the row of terra cotta ornament below the roofline recalls the repetition of the many anthemions located along the roofline of the Parthenon.

Upon completion, the 1936 Nashville Kress store was described as, " the finest type of mercantile building known to modern engineering".⁸⁶ Unfortunately, the Nashville Kress store has lost its "signature storefront" along with the facing off of the marquee, and it is presently vacant. However, several local developers have realized the potential of the Kress building, in providing downtown residential with street level/

⁸⁶ Thomas 137.

basement retail. Although none of these particularl developers have been able to purchase and begin rehabilitation of the building, it is obvious that Sibbert's 1936 store will soon serve the City of Nashville again.

Birmingham, Alabama (1937)

As Sibbert completed the Nashville store he turned his attention to a new Kress Superstore for Birmingham, Alabama. The four-story, \$750,000 Superstore was located at the corner of Third Avenue and 19th Street and measured 100 feet by 150 feet.⁸⁷ The building also contains two basements and a penthouse. After utilizing a classically inspired Greek design for the Nashville store, Sibbert utilized his most modern design yet for the Birmingham store.



Figure 4.20. Birmingham, Alabama, main sales floor. *National Building Museum, Kress Collection.*

The Birmingham store revealed Sibbert's increasing appreciation and respect for the German Bauhaus School.⁸⁸ The store's "signature storefront" has been given a bronze treatment, much like that of the New York Fifth Avenue store. The entire façade is covered in creamy mottled terra cotta that contrasts greatly with the darker variegated marble bulkheads of the storefront. These darker marble bulkheads matched the copper awning boxes that Sibbert placed above each display window along the 19th Street elevation and above Third Avenue's center display window. To cover Third Avenue's two entrances Sibbert employed cantilevered overhangs topped by balconies made with

⁸⁷ Thomas 143.

⁸⁸ Bishir 1.

cast iron piping that is rounded at the ends, reminiscent of deck rails on a ship. Sibbert may have been utilizing the idea of a ship as a design source for the Birmingham store, due to Birmingham's location on a waterway that leads to the Gulf of Mexico and that Birmingham is a port of entry for the Mobile customs district. To simulate a ship Sibbert took the unprecedented step of removing all sculptural ornamentation from the upper façade. Instead Sibbert placed oversized metallic gold Kress logos above the roofline on each elevation. He continued the use of signage as ornament by placing the company's full name, S.H. Kress & Co., just



Figure 4.21. Birmingham, Alabama, Kress Building, 1937. *National Building Museum, Kress Collection.*

above the mezzanine level windows. The only true ornament is located above the entrances in the form of parallel lines and four vertically oriented concave lines located in each of the storefront piers.

All of Sibbert's stores, prior to the Birmingham, possessed a vertical orientation. However, Sibbert decided that the Birmingham store would be his first horizontally oriented store. His reasons for this could be the Bauhaus School or maybe even Louis Sullivan's switch to horizontal design, such as the Carson Pirie Scott department store. To produce this horizontal design Sibbert utilized two-over-two sash windows with horizontal panes of glass. Sibbert then grouped three of these windows together on the

19th Street elevation and four windows on the Third Avenue elevation. The Third Avenue elevation is divided into three bays with each bay containing four of these window groupings. Similarly the 19th Street elevation is divided into five bays with four window groupings per bay. To accentuate the horizontal nature of the windows and building Sibbert employed horizontal banding that continued through both facades. This banding divided each floor of windows from the next, thereby producing alternating bands of windows and blank walls. To connect both facades, Sibbert first rounded the corner where the two elevations meet, then he placed a thin terra cotta coping along the roofline that runs unbroken through both elevations. The only vertically oriented piece on the Birmingham store is the massive cylindrical sign that projects from the rounded corner of the store. This sign stretches from the bottom of the second floor windows to the top of the fourth floor windows, with a flagpole atop that extends much higher than the roofline.

It does seem as though Sibbert was utilizing a ship as his design source, however it was probably not an ocean liner as Le Corbusier would advocate. Rather, it was most likely a cargo ship. As a port of entry for the Mobile customs district, Birmingham would have seen numerous cargo ships pass through daily. These cargo ships would be long vessels with flat hulls that were reinforced around the top with a narrow strip of steel, a detail that is picked up by Sibbert's roofline coping. Next, these cargo ships would have had pilot's cabins that incorporated continuous rows of windows, again picked up by Sibbert's horizontal bands of windows. Finally, these cargo ships would have employed iron pipe railings along their decks, a detail picked up by Sibbert's cast

iron balcony railings above the two entrances, which was Sibbert's only use of cast iron pipe railings ever.⁸⁹

Alexandria, Louisiana (1939)

Two years after the Birmingham store, Sibbert designed one of his last Main Street Kress stores. The store was located in Alexandria, Louisiana and was meant to replace a more modest yellow brick Kress store. Sibbert reverted to the traditional Kress yellow brick façade for the Alexandria store. The building is two stories in height with the first floor being the main sales floor and the second being used for warehousing and office space.



Figure 4.22. Alexandria, Louisiana, Kress Building, 1939. *National Building Museum, Kress Collection.*

The Alexandria store has a double entrance “signature storefront” that is topped by a thin marquee that ran the entire width of the façade. Above the first floor Sibbert used yellow buff colored bricks, laid in a common bond pattern, as the major wall cladding material. Sibbert's only use of terra cotta was for a roofline coping that was comprised of four lines that ran the width of the façade. The two window bays of the façade that are located directly above each of the entrances interrupt the roofline coping. Each window bay is comprised of two pairs of three-over-three sash windows aligned vertically. Terra cotta was utilized to form colonettes on either side of the bay and a mullion down the middle that divides each pair of windows. To differentiate each floor

⁸⁹ Thomas 146.

Sibbert used terra cotta to form spandrels that resemble a corrugated metal pattern. A similar corrugated pattern is placed above the second floor windows and extends through the roofline coping and terminates just above the roofline. Sibbert's design for Alexandria, Louisiana was one of his most modern, however its uniqueness was eliminated in 1940 and 1941 when he designed extremely similar stores for Charlotte, North Carolina (1941) and Augusta, Georgia (1940). Fortunately a local non-profit, The Rapides Foundation, has begun to rehabilitate the unique modern design of the Alexandria store for use as a non-profit center.⁹⁰

At the time of these stores, the S.H. Kress Company had evolved into a low-end department store, therefore the company began to focus on its future in strip malls and the suburbs. Edward Sibbert discontinued designing new stores after 1941 and turned his focus to remodeling older Kress stores. Remodeling older stores is something Sibbert had done throughout his career, but not to the degree he did between 1941 and 1954.



Figure 4.23. Metcalfe Plaza, Santa Ana, California, 1959. *National Building Museum, Kress Collection.*

In total Sibbert designed or renovated 176 Kress stores during his tenure from 1929 to 1954. In 1944, Sibbert was promoted to vice president of the S.H. Kress Company, in order for him to head up the newly formed buildings division, which replaced the

⁹⁰ Dr. Randall L. Bernhard, "The Town Talk, July 2002, 17 Sept. 2002
<www.thetowntalk.com/html/06E9CAEC-4922-4E48-B095-51B7A8BA1118.shtml>.

architectural division.⁹¹ This promotion signaled the end of Kress designed Main Street stores and the beginning of suburban strip mall stores. After ten years as Vice President, Sibbert became dissatisfied with the direction of the company and left on short notice.⁹² After resigning, Sibbert ceased practicing as an architect and he and his wife, Bertha, moved to Delray Beach, Florida where he lived until his death on May 13, 1982.

The Kress architecture division reached its pinnacle during the 1930's under the supervision of Edward F. Sibbert. His knowledge of structural engineering and architecture produced the most modern Kress stores ever. Astonishingly, these buildings were constructed during the Great Depression of the 1930's. Sibbert's modern art deco designs coupled with the use of regionally and locally influenced ornamentation helped to cultivate the loyalty of cities, towns and their citizens. Also, during a time when there was little to be happy about, depression era Kress stores offered an escape from the outside world along with nurturing civic pride. The significance of depression era Kress stores have been realized by numerous cities, with many cities encouraging the adaptive use of these buildings. Two successful adaptive use projects of depression era Kress stores, have been completed in Greensboro, North Carolina and Columbia, South Carolina.

⁹¹ Thomas 164.

⁹² Thomas, Endnote 42, 187.

CHAPTER 6

ADAPTIVE REUSE CASE STUDIES

Numerous Depression Era Kress stores have been adaptively reused so that they may provide for their respective communities again. The two following Kress stores were chosen as case studies because of their different adaptive reuses and dates of construction. The Greensboro, North Carolina (1930) store represents Edward Sibbert's earliest designs as supervising architect while the Columbia, South Carolina (1936) store represents Sibbert's designs during the final years of the Great Depression. Also, each of these stores has played a unique role within the communities in which they are located.

Greensboro, North Carolina (1930)

The S.H. Kress Company established its first store in the state of North Carolina in Wilmington in 1901. Just two years later S.H. Kress Company ventured into the markets of Greensboro with the establishment of a store at 208 South Elm Street. In 1929, Edward Sibbert was sharing supervising architect duties until George Mackay was released from his duties, apparently due to a change in store image/ design. Edward Sibbert assumed Mackay's position and wasted no time in developing a new store/ company image. His first store was the three-story Kress Superstore in Greensboro, North Carolina.⁹³ Construction of the Superstore began exactly one month after Black Tuesday. The work began with the razing of the old Kress store and by January 1, 1930 the steel framing for the new store was going up. Just three months later the Kress

⁹³ Thomas 70.

superstore opened its doors for business. Construction of Sibbert's three-story Superstore was completed in just six months.⁹⁴ Upon completion, the Kress store towered over most of the neighboring buildings, especially the nearby, two-story F.W. Woolworth building. The Kress store was an instant landmark for downtown Greensboro, and thirty years later it would become part of civil rights history.

On February 1, 1960 four African-American students from North Carolina A&T State University walked into the F.W. Woolworth store and took a seat at the lunch counter,⁹⁵ thus beginning the nation's first ever sit-in movement. African-Americans would have been served at Woolworth's and Kress's lunch counters, but there was a separate counter at which they had to stand and eat their food. Three days later students filled the Woolworth lunch counter and continued their sit-in at the nearby Kress's lunch counter. Within two months of the first sit-in, 45 people were arrested for sitting at the Kress lunch counter. Within another month Kress had integrated its lunch counter, with Woolworth's and other establishments following suit. Unfortunately, the Kress lunch counter has been lost, but the Woolworth's lunch counter is on display in the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of American History.

Kress stores began to lose their appeal during the 1960's when retail establishments left downtowns in favor of suburban malls. The Greensboro Kress store suffered greatly from this occurrence and closed its doors in 1973. The Kress building sat vacant until 1979 when Dick Rhyne, a local antique dealer, purchased the building for

⁹⁴ Bruce Cantrell, personal Interview, 7 August 2002.

⁹⁵ www.greensborolibrary.org/nc/pics13.htm, 6/27/2002.

storage. Mr. Rhyne stored his antiques and other “items” in the building until Bruce Cantrell and John Lomax purchased the building in January 2000.⁹⁶

Architectural Description

The Greensboro store measured 60 feet wide and 140 feet deep and consisted of three full floors, one half floor, a full basement, and a penthouse. The first floor ran the entire depth of the building and was highlighted by 26-foot ceilings with no columns, marble terrazzo floors, and six-foot marble wainscoting. The basement housed a second sales floor and the lunch counter. The second, third, and fourth floors were utilized as warehousing and office space, while the penthouse housed all of the elevator and air conditioning units.

As had every other Kress supervising architect, Sibbert utilized the Kress “signature storefront”. However, Sibbert modified the storefront. Because of the engineering of the building, only corner piers were necessary for the storefront, thereby allowing the entire storefront to be display windows with two pairs of entrance doors center within the storefront. Above the display windows Sibbert



Figure 5.1. Greensboro, North Carolina, Kress Building, 1930. *National Building Museum, Kress Collection.*

⁹⁶ John Lomax, Personal Interview, 7 August 2002.

utilized a rollup canvas awning instead of the more common marquee. Sibbert also disregarded the common signboard in favor of having S.H. Kress & Co. carved into the light gray granite that covered the ground floor. Sibbert limited storefront ornamentation to five concave lines that extend up the corner piers and above the display windows. Sibbert also placed stylized, biologically correct narcissus plants atop each of the storefront piers. These narcissus plants referenced Claude Kress's discovery that former rice fields could be reclaimed and used to produce narcissus bulbs. This agricultural discovery provided Claude Kress with a testimonial from Clemson Agricultural College in 1926 because of his assistance in the development of agriculture in South Carolina.⁹⁷ Also, these same narcissus bulbs would have been for sale at the Greensboro store's opening.

Sibbert divided the upper facade into three bays with two large unbroken pilasters that terminate just above the roofline. The capitals of these pilasters consist of a ram's head setting atop orange, yellow, and green stylized floral motifs. The pilasters are flat with four concave lines that extend from above the storefront to the base of the capitals. The two outer bays consist of three tiers of paired windows while the center bay consists of three tiers of three windows. To contrast with the off-white granitized terra cotta of the façade, Sibbert used a greenish brown color for all window surrounds, spandrels, and mullions. The spandrels that divide the mezzanine level windows and second floor



Figure 5.2. Detail of stylized tobacco leaves and Kress Coat of Arms. *National Building Museum, Kress Collection.*

⁹⁷ Thomas 72.

windows are decorated with stylized tobacco leaves. On days when tobacco auctions were held in Greensboro the Kress store would have special sales to attract customers who had just sold their crops.⁹⁸ In Greensboro the successes of the tobacco markets was essential for the prosperity of the community and likewise the Kress store. Therefore, the use of tobacco leaves within the design of the Greensboro store could have been a statement of interdependence and dedication to the community. Within the center spandrel, Sibbert chose to use the tobacco leaves as framing around the Kress family coat of arms. As the oldest son, Samuel Kress would have had the right to display the family coat of arms and by using it as decoration it illustrated Samuel Kress's pride of family and company.

The spandrels between the second and third floor lack ornamentation of any kind. Above the center bay is the KRESS logo. Sibbert chose to bring the logo down from the roof parapet, where it had traditionally been located. He also utilized bronze letters to render the logo against a background of Montel metal, along with using backlighting to highlight the logo. Prior to this the Kress logo had never been rendered in metal, only terra cotta or stone. Sibbert completed the Greensboro façade with a row of patterned terra cotta "blocks" that are then topped by a row of plain terra cotta "blocks" that are rounded along the top.

The Adaptive Reuse

Sibbert's Greensboro store stood out immediately on South Elm Street with its art deco influenced façade and localized ornamentation. It was an instant landmark in Greensboro's downtown and remains a favorite among many people, most notably, Bernice L. Thomas architectural historian and author of *America's 5 & 10 Cent Stores*:

⁹⁸ Thomas 58.

The Kress Legacy.⁹⁹ However, the most important realization of the Kress building's significance has come from the citizens of Greensboro. Many citizens' felt as though the Kress building was a major piece in the revitalization puzzle for downtown Greensboro, but feared its ultimate fate would be demolition. Fortunately, two local citizens realized the significance and prominence of the Kress building's design and location.

Acknowledging the Kress building's architectural significance, prominence within the community, and its location on South Elm Street, Bruce Cantrell, an architect with J. Hyatt Hammond & Associates and John Lomax, president of Lomax Construction formed Kress Building, LLC and purchased the Kress building for \$495,000.¹⁰⁰

After purchasing the building the first priority was clean up, since the building had been used for storage for twenty years. Dick Rhyne, the previous owner, estimated that it took seventy tractor trailer loads to remove all of his "antiques" from the building. As clean up was continuing, Cantrell and Lomax began formulating how the 45,000 square foot building would be reused. The adaptive reuse plan incorporated retail space in the basement and first floor, office space on the second and third floor, an assembly/event space on the fourth, and a penthouse apartment on the fifth floor.¹⁰¹ Upon completion of the reuse plan Cantrell and Lomax had their first tenant, Bouvier Kelly Public Relations. A lease was signed in January 2000, contingent on Bouvier Kelly occupying the entire second floor, for office space, by December 1, 2000. The entire third floor was leased to J. Hyatt Hammond & Associates contingent on moving in by January 1, 2001 while Downtown Greensboro, Inc.'s fundraiser was scheduled on the first and fourth floor for January 27, 2001. All of these deadlines pointed to one thing

⁹⁹ Jim Schlosser, "The Challenge." Greensboro News & Record 6 Sept. 2000, B2.

¹⁰⁰ Lomax & Cantrell, personal Interview, 7 August 2002.

¹⁰¹ Debra Liuzza, The 2001 Pinnacle Award Entry Packet 30 August 2001: 6.

and that was a speedy rehabilitation. These quick deadlines coupled with obtaining the appropriate permits and working out a budget caused Cantrell and Lomax to only have six months to complete all rehabilitation. The rehabilitation budget was finalized in August 2000 at a cost of \$2.9 million dollars.¹⁰² To offset some of the rehabilitation costs, Cantrell and Lomax contacted Preservation North Carolina, a statewide historic preservation non-profit organization, to determine the building's eligibility for federal and state tax credits. Since the building is listed on the National Register of Historic Places, it was eligible for the 20% federal tax credit as well as the 20% state tax credit. The ability to receive a 40% tax credit was enticing to Cantrell and Lomax, however the amount of pre-rehabilitation work that is required to receive the tax credits, both state and federal, would have caused the project to extend past the deadlines of the lease commencement dates. Therefore, Cantrell and Lomax decided against using the state and federal tax credits.

Cantrell and Lomax turned to local banks and Lomax Construction for the necessary funds to complete the rehabilitation.

Funding Sources for Greensboro Kress Building

Kress Building, LLC (Purchase Price)	\$495,000 (Equity)
*Local Banks (Rehabilitation Costs)	\$2,400,000 (Loan Amount)
Lomax Construction (Rehabilitation Costs)	\$400,000 (Equity)
Total Project Costs	\$3,295,000

* Names of Institutions Withheld

With funding in place the rehabilitation began with much fanfare. The rehabilitation of the Kress building made headlines numerous times in a variety of publications including

¹⁰² Lomax & Cantrell, personal Interview, 7 August 2002.

the Greensboro News & Record, Raleigh News & Observer, Triad Business News, and The Rhinoceros Times, a local news publication. The Kress building was rehabilitated and open for Bouvier Kelly Public Relations to move in to the second floor on December 1, 2000. J. Hyatt Hammond & Associates Architecture firm occupied the third floor on December 15, 2000, two weeks ahead of schedule. Finally, the fourth floor was rehabilitated into the Kress Terrace, an outdoor terrace and indoor event space. Kress Terrace opened on January 22 and hosted its first event on January 27, 2001. The January 27th Downtown Greensboro, Inc. fundraiser raised \$30,000 and was considered the grand reopening of the Kress building. Several months later, in July, John Lomax completed transforming the penthouse into a 2000 square apartment for himself. The first floor and basement has had all major rehabilitation and restoration work completed; however they are unoccupied. Cantrell and Lomax envision a fine dining restaurant locating in half of the first floor while the other half will contain a casual dining restaurant. They envision having a sports bar located in the basement. Cantrell and Lomax's vision may not be that far away. They have had several serious inquiries from local restaurants about relocating to the first floor or basement of the Kress building.

The rental rates for the second and third floors are \$15.00 per square foot (all-inclusive), while the first floor and basement are estimated to bring \$7.00 per square foot (space only).¹⁰³ Rental rates for Kress Terrace range from \$300 to \$1000 with a \$500/hour charge for additional hours of set up or tearing down. Once the first floor and basement levels are occupied, Cantrell and Lomax say they will meet or even exceed their projected economic return and with several serious inquiries about the first floor and basement levels, full occupancy should occur soon.

¹⁰³ Cantrell, personal interview, 7 August 2002.

Primarily, Cantrell and Lomax wanted to complete a profitable rehabilitation, which upon full occupancy will occur. However, Cantrell and Lomax had secondary reasons for undertaking the Kress building rehabilitation. Being Greensboro natives, Cantrell and Lomax have fond memories of downtown Greensboro and the Kress building itself. Their childhood memories coupled with their support of the revitalization of downtown Greensboro was a consideration in their rehabilitation of the Kress building.

The rehabilitation of the Kress building has had more of an impact on downtown Greensboro than any other project to date. Since the announcement of the Kress buildings rehabilitation, four new restaurants, three nightclubs, two theatrical facilities, fifty new apartments and ninety-eight condominiums have been announced as downtown projects.¹⁰⁴ Also, nearly all of the buildings on the same block as the Kress building have changed hands and are now undergoing rehabilitation as mixed use projects.

Columbia, South Carolina (1936)

The S.H. Kress Company established its first store in the state of South Carolina in Spartanburg in 1905.

By 1917, S.H. Kress was operating stores in all major markets of South Carolina except Columbia, the state capital.¹⁰⁵ Columbia would not receive a



Figure 5.3. Columbia, South Carolina, Kress Building, Main Street elevation. *Photograph by Tom Prioreschi.*

¹⁰⁴ Liuzza 5.

¹⁰⁵ Heaton 1.

S.H. Kress store until 1936, when the S.H. Kress Company commissioned a two-story building to be constructed at 1508 Main Street, near the intersection of Main and Hampton. At that time the S.H. Kress Company was operating 234 stores, of which Edward Sibbert had designed thirty-one since 1929.¹⁰⁶

The low and wide two-story façade did not tower above any of its surrounding neighbors like the Greensboro store. However, Sibbert did incorporate a two-tiered copper marquee, which was the only one on the block, and used a modern/ art deco style design to contrast with the neighboring late 19th and early 20th century architectural styles. The store prospered and in 1952 Edward Sibbert designed an addition to the building that would form an L shape and give the store an entrance on Hampton Street. This addition was an extension of the main sales floor and the location of the soda fountain/lunch counter. The Kress lunch counter in Columbia also would be tied to the civil rights movement of the 1960's, just as the Greensboro lunch counter. In the early 1960's the first lunch counter sit-in in Columbia and the state of South Carolina occurred at the Kress store. The Kress lunch counter also became the first to be integrated in Columbia. Fortunately, when the present owner, Tom Prioreschi, purchased the building the section of lunch counter where the first sit-in occurred had been left in the 1952 addition. Realizing the historic significance of the counter, Mr. Prioreschi donated the lunch counter to the South Carolina State Museum in Columbia.¹⁰⁷

Just as the Greensboro store declined in the 1960's and 1970's, so did the Columbia store. However, the Columbia store remained in business until the early 1980's, when Genesco, Inc., who had purchased the S.H. Kress Company in 1964, closed

¹⁰⁶ Lebhar 370.

¹⁰⁷ Tom Prioreschi, personal interview, 19 July 2002.

all of the remaining Kress stores. Although the store was closed it was quickly reopened under the name Kress, as an independent discount store. This independent discount store held on until 1991 when the store finally closed. The building sat vacant until Tom Prioreschi and his partners purchased the building in August 1998 for \$650,000.¹⁰⁸

Architectural Description

The sixty-six foot wide two-story façade is faced with off white terra cotta “blocks” that resemble granite or limestone. All ornamentation is rendered in orange, green or blue terra cotta. The width of the

building is accentuated by the two tier copper marquee that runs the entire length of the façade.

The first tier of the marquee is smooth with rounded corners. The only interruption of the marquee is two interior lit KRESS logo panels and two butterfly shaped motifs. These butterfly motifs can be read as EFS. If this is true then Edward Sibbert has discreetly signed his work.

The second tier of the marquee is characterized by a running chevron pattern. Below the marquee Sibbert utilized a Kress “signature storefront” with two recessed entrances. The storefront

bulkheads are covered with blackish-green granite. The storefront consists of three piers, one at each corner and one in the middle. These storefront piers resemble a two-



Figure 5.4. Detail of “butterfly” motif and Main Street elevation. *National Building Museum, Kress Collection.*

¹⁰⁸ Prioreschi, personal interview, 19 July 2002.

dimensional Egyptian wheat column, except the capitals are ornamented with floral motifs.

The upper facade begins with eight two-over-two sash windows located at the mezzanine level. These windows coordinate with the 18-½ foot high sales floor ceiling. Located directly above the mezzanine windows are the eight windows that correspond with the second floor of the building. To the left and right of this bank of windows are convex pilasters that extend from the marquee to just below the cornice. These pilasters continue the Egyptian wheat column motif with their reeded shafts.

However, these capitals consist of overlapping leaf and floral motifs rendered in orange, yellow, and green terra cotta.



Figure 5.5. Columbia, South Carolina, main sales floor with octagonal columns. *Photograph by Tom Prioreschi.*

Similarly, lintels ornamented with orange and green terra cotta floral motifs top each of the eight windows. From the center of each lintel rises a stylized plant stalk that blends with the off white terra cotta “blocks” of the façade. Sibbert centered the Kress logo just below the roofline and flagpole base. Ironically, Sibbert chose the more traditional Kress logo rather than using his more modern logo that he had incorporated on several other Kress stores by this point in the 1930’s. To the left and right of the Kress logo Sibbert extended a line of cavetto moldings to the edge of the façade. Adorning the center of the

roofline is a flagpole base that begins with a golden Mayan headdress motif that is flanked by green stylized leaves.

Nine freestanding octagonal columns that are topped by octagonal capitals characterize the 155-foot deep sales floor.¹⁰⁹ The octagonal capitals are covered with stylized branches that are banded with stemmed buds. The outer edge of the column capitals is covered by a continuous chevron pattern. The design of the columns and their capitals has been referred to as stylized Egyptian, which would coincide with the Egyptian motifs on the Main Street façade. As beautiful as the column capitals are they also provide air vents for the heating and cooling systems. Several sections of the capital ornamentation is perforated to allow air to flow out. Identically designed engaged columns run along both walls of the sales floor. The use of an octagonal shape continues with the octagonal coffers in the sales floor ceiling. Each edge of these coffers is recessed and has a continuous chevron pattern that runs along the edge of each coffer.

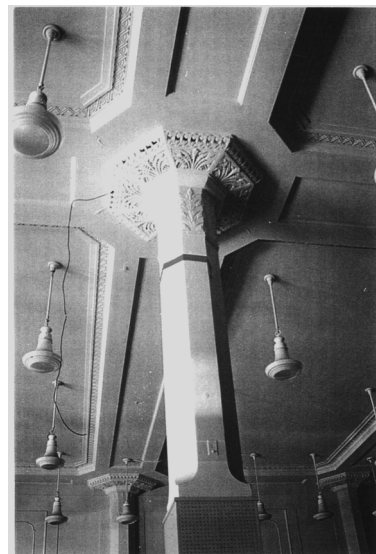


Figure 5.6. Detail of octagonal column capitals and coffered ceiling. *Photograph by Tom Prioreschi.*

Sibbert's Egyptian influenced art deco design in Columbia stood out immediately and became a landmark building on Main Street Columbia. The design of the Columbia store was so significant that it is described as the best example of Art Deco in

¹⁰⁹ National Register of Historic Places Inventory-nomination form, 1979.

Columbia.¹¹⁰ It's significance allowed the building to be listed on the National Register in 1979, at the age of forty-three.

Adaptive Reuse

The architectural design of a building can play a significant role in the success of an adaptive reuse and the Columbia Kress building is a perfect example. Being considered the best example of art deco architecture in Columbia gives the building prestige and significance, which translates into a desirable building to live in or operate a business. The architectural significance of the Kress building and the lack of downtown residential caught the eye of Tom Prioreschi. Prioreschi had been a developer in New Jersey, but had recently moved to Columbia. Along with the help of his partners, they purchased the Kress building in August 1998 at a cost of \$650,000. They also purchased a small building to the right of the Kress building that had been destroyed by fire. This building/lot was purchased for \$81,000. Prioreschi's purpose for purchasing the Kress building was to develop downtown residential on the upper floors with street level retail.

Prioreschi began with an environmental study and clean up in January 1999. The signing of the first retail tenant, Rising High Bread Company, followed the environmental clean up. Rising High Bread Company began demolition work in March of 1999. Rising High Bread Company chose to lease the original sales floor on Main Street. Originally the company wished to only lease about 2,000 square feet, however in order to claim the federal tax credits the South Carolina SHPO said the company would have to occupy twice that much square footage.¹¹¹ The SHPO's reasoning behind this was that the feeling of an open sales floor could only be achieved if Rising High Bread

¹¹⁰ National Register of Historic Places Inventory-nomination form, 1979.

¹¹¹ Prioreschi, personal interview, 19 July 2002.

Company occupied nearly half of the original sales floor, which equaled 4,410 square feet. Rising High Bread Company hired Kohn Architecture Firm to complete necessary design work and the restaurant opened in September 1999.

Two months after Rising High Bread Company opened, Prioreschi and his partners closed on a \$1.9 million HUD loan. Originally the HUD loan was for \$2.35 million, which was the estimated budget. However, HUD felt as though the downtown residential market would not support Prioreschi's project, therefore HUD lessened its loan amount to \$1.9 million. In order to make up for a smaller loan, one of Prioreschi's partners paid \$400,000 out of pocket. The rehabilitation budget was less than Greensboro's because Prioreschi utilized several other methods of obtaining funds. First, Prioreschi utilized Columbia's matching façade grant program. Prioreschi worked with the city so that they would allow him three, \$20,000 façade grants. His reasoning was that he would have a storefront on both Main and Hampton, along with the entry courtyard for the apartments, thereby totaling three facades. After receiving the three façade grants Prioreschi worked with the city so that they would purchase the entry courtyard from him. He paid \$81,000 for the lot and the city purchased it from him for \$98,000.¹¹² According to building codes, Prioreschi would not have to upgrade the sprinkler system, but for added safety he wished to install a better sprinkler system, the cost of which was \$98,000. Therefore the city of Columbia paid for the new sprinkler system and allows Prioreschi to lease the lot for \$1.00 a year for fifty years. Also, Prioreschi has the right to buy the lot back from the city at any time within the next

¹¹² Prioreschi, personal interview, 19 July 2002.

fifty years for \$98,000.¹¹³ Finally, Pioreschi contacted South Carolina Electric and Gas (SCE&G) and explained that he would be providing thirty-one new customers where there had previously only been one. By presenting this information to South Carolina Electric and Gas, Pioreschi received a \$25,000 grant. Pioreschi utilized several creative methods of obtaining funding for the rehabilitation of the Columbia Kress building. To further the economic feasibility of the rehabilitation Pioreschi also utilized the federal rehabilitation tax credits.

Funding Sources for Columbia Kress Building

Capital Places, LLC (Purchase Price)	\$650,000 (Equity)
HUD Loan (Rehabilitation Budget)	\$1,900,000 (Loan Amount)
City of Columbia (3 Façade Grants)	\$60,000 (Equity)
Sale of Lot to City of Columbia	\$98,000 (Equity)
South Carolina Electric & Gas (Grant)	\$25,000 (Equity)
*Partner (Out of Pocket Rehabilitation Costs)	\$400,000 (Equity)
Total Project Cost	\$3,133,000

***Partner's Name Withheld**

After funding was secured, work began on converting the remainder of the first floor and the entire second floor into thirty-one apartments. In order to receive the federal tax credits all major architectural elements had to remain. This task was easy while constructing the twenty-one apartments on the second floor. The second floor had always been warehouse or office space and had no architectural details; therefore Pioreschi could do nearly anything to fit the apartments in. However, it was much more difficult with the remaining ten apartments located on the first floor. To receive the tax

¹¹³ Pioreschi, personal interview, 19 July 2002..

credits, Prioreschi preserved and restored all of the octagonal columns and engaged columns as well as the coffered ceilings. He also maintained the original marble terrazzo floors with their strips of brass inlay. In order to preserve these architectural details, all of the first floor apartments have two levels that are connected by a circular staircase. Therefore, each of the first floor apartments have 18-½ foot coffered ceiling, marble terrazzo floors, octagonal columns/ engaged columns and original 1936 bell shaped lighting fixtures. Rightly so, these first floor apartments command the highest rents of all. They range in price from \$825.00 to \$990.00 a month, while square footage ranges from 892 to 1339.¹¹⁴ The second floor apartments range in size from 368 square feet up to 944 square feet, while rents range from \$540.00 to \$922.00 a month.¹¹⁵

Eleven second-floor apartments were open in May 2000. The last ten remaining second-floor apartments were opened in July 2000. Finally, all ten first-floor apartments were completed in September 2000. Therefore by September 2000, two years after purchasing the building, Prioreschi had all rehabilitation complete. Prior to renting the apartments Prioreschi had a rent appraisal completed to estimate the monthly rental income. The estimate was for \$18,556; this was excluding both retail spaces. Prioreschi felt as though the downtown residential market was strong enough to support higher rents. He pushed the pre-construction rents to \$20,900 and had every available apartment rented within a month. As demand has increased, Prioreschi has slowly raised rental rates. Presently the monthly rental income is \$23,355. Since completion Prioreschi has enjoyed full occupancy of his apartments, but the only retail tenant is Rising High Bread Company, who occupies the Main Street retail space. Of the building's 51,000 square

¹¹⁴ Prioreschi, personal interview, 19 July 2002.

¹¹⁵ Prioreschi, personal interview, 19 July 2002.

feet only the 2800 square foot Hampton Street retail space is currently unoccupied. Therefore, the building is presently at 95% occupancy. With a high occupancy rate and higher than projected monthly rental income the Columbia Kress building rehabilitation is exceeding projected returns.

Due to the success of the Kress building rehabilitation, Capital Places, LLC has purchased and rehabilitated a second commercial building on Main Street Columbia that includes four street level retail spaces and second and third floor apartments. As of July 2000, Capital Places, LLC was awaiting confirmation on a loan that will be used to convert another building on Main Street into condominiums. All of Capital Places projects are within one and a half blocks of one another and for good reason. All three projects including the Kress building are within one block of the newly constructed Columbia Art Museum, one block from the new county library, three blocks from the state capital, not to mention its close proximity to the University of South Carolina.

As with any development company Mr. Prioreschi and his partners at Capital Places, LLC wish to take on economically viable projects. They also wish to provide people with an alternative to suburban living, because Capital Places, LLC understands the environmental and quality of life benefits of downtown living. Because of the economic feasibility of the Kress building rehabilitation and the alternative it gave to suburban living, Capital Places, LLC was persuaded to take on the project even though it was the first downtown residential project in Columbia since 1975.¹¹⁶

Due to the fact that each of these projects differs in its reuse and funding sources, these case studies are excellent examples to study when considering or encouraging the reuse of a Kress store. However, the specifics of these two projects will not necessarily

¹¹⁶ Prioreschi, personal interview, 19 July 2002.

translate to every Kress store adaptive use. However, there are several general planning and preservation recommendations that should be followed to insure a successful project.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

S.H. Kress stores became instant landmarks on Main Streets throughout America during the Great Depression. Architecturally, the stores were many times the first or most modern building in a city or town and during a time in American history when there was little to cheer about the interior of Kress stores offered an escape from society.

From his earliest years as a builder Samuel Kress had seen his stores as civic art, but this concept took on new meaning during the Great Depression. Edward Sibbert's art deco designs with their regional and locally influenced details established a new corporate image during the Great Depression. The use of locally and regionally influenced details illustrated the interdependence of a Kress store and the community where it was located. The modern designs of depression Kress stores were in no way a reflection of a decrease in building capital. In actuality, the S.H. Kress Company undertook its largest building program ever and spent large amounts of money on constructing its most modern and advanced stores, along with modernizing older stores. This is evident from Sibbert's stores, which ranged in cost from \$100,000, for the 1931 Amarillo store, up to \$750,000 for the 1937 Birmingham store. Samuel Kress had always viewed the expenditures of constructing a new store or renovating an older store as a gift to the community and these gifts were never more welcomed than during the depression.

Although significant for their architectural design, depression era Kress stores provided a great deal more to communities throughout the United States. Primarily,

Kress stores offered 4, 275 items, all priced under twenty-five cents.¹¹⁷ The types of merchandise Kress stores carried allowed a majority of people to afford necessities as well as modest luxury items. In addition to providing quality merchandise, Kress stores created employment opportunities. The construction of a new store would have involved the hiring of local labor. Once completed, the Kress store would have employed a large number of saleswomen, managers, and stock boys. An average number of employees per store cannot be established, however when the 1932 Hilo, Hawaii store opened 115 employees were hired. The number of employees hired for the Hilo store is a good, but extremely conservative reference to the number of employees per Kress store during the Depression. No matter the number of jobs created, a Kress store would have had a major impact on a community's unemployment rate.

Whether a Kress store was the most modern building in a city, produced job opportunities or provided much needed help to a suffering local economy, most importantly a depression era Kress store provided a renewed sense of civic pride and optimism. During a time when the economic system of the United States was in question more than ever, "Kress stores were beacons of faith in free enterprise as a beneficent as well as economically rewarding".¹¹⁸ The economic effects of a Kress store was greatly welcomed, however a sense that one's community, as well as the United States, was on the road to recovery was even more important.

Kress stores provided for communities in numerous ways during the Great Depression. For their architectural and societal significance, Depression Era S.H. Kress

¹¹⁷ Samuel Henry Kress Foundation, S.H. Kress History, January 2002, 15 July 2002
<www.kressfoundation.org>.

¹¹⁸ Thomas ix.

stores deserve protection and opportunities to provide for their respective communities again.

Recommendations

Throughout the United States the adaptive reuse of historic buildings has provided a new life of service for once neglected buildings. The reuse of these buildings has provided communities with a physical link to its history without sacrificing more of its natural resources and money for infrastructure costs. Cities and towns that have advocated and promoted the adaptive reuse of historic buildings have seen their downtowns become vibrant centers of economy, much like they once were. The growing trend of adaptive reuse provides numerous opportunities for the protection and reuse of depression era S.H. Kress stores as well as S.H. Kress stores in general. To be successful any Kress store adaptive reuse plan should follow these considerations:

Planning/ Market Considerations:

- Look to previous market studies when determining how to reuse a Kress store. Also determine any initiatives by the local Chamber of Commerce and/ or economic development department.
- Understand the role of partnerships in the success of a downtown project.
- Consider adapting buildings with a mixture of uses. Combining residential, retail, office and restaurants provides less risk than a single tenant or use.
- Maintain retail businesses at street level. Upper story retail is more difficult to make work, while street level retail provides vibrancy to the street.
- It is important to make the reuse viable and not a quick fix. Occupied buildings are less vulnerable to demolition than vacant ones.

- Although located in a downtown pedestrian environment, automobile traffic must be evaluated and accommodated.
- In many instances Kress stores had several entrances. Maintain as many original entrances as possible to accommodate pedestrian traffic.

Preservation Considerations:

- Historic buildings often lose their integrity through remodeling. S.H. Kress stores should be rehabilitated to represent the period of development they represent. Each of the seven supervising architects had his own specific design features that should be retained, restored or reconstructed if possible.
- The art deco/ modern design of the depression era S.H. Kress stores must be appreciated for their part in the evolution of American Architecture.
- S.H. Kress stores had many interior architectural details that are no longer present in commercial design. It is important to retain these details during rehabilitation.
- S.H. Kress stores had open sales floors with very high ceilings. Reuses that allow for the retention of this open sales floor feeling should be pursued.
- The Kress “signature storefront” if still present should be retained. If it has been removed a similar storefront should be installed, because the storefront was a unique detail for Kress stores.
- Many Kress stores are listed on the National Register of Historic Places. If a store is not listed, have the store placed on the National Register. Also, determine if there is a local designation that would provide the building greater protection.

- Explore preservation based economic incentives. Federal tax credits, state tax credits, state or local tax freeze, state grants and local façade grants. Also consider façade and interior easements.
- Any rehabilitation work should be based on archival research. The Kress Collection at the National Building Museum provides over 7000 photographs, 6000 plans and fifty linear feet of documents regarding Kress buildings from the entire history of the company.

The rise and fall of the S.H. Kress Company closely mirrors that of Main Streets across America. The pinnacle of Kress architecture is Edward Sibbert's buildings of the Great Depression. The use of high-end materials, locally and regionally influenced details and modern art deco design made depression era stores instant landmarks. The exceptional construction methods, high-end materials, architectural detailing and social history associated with depression era Kress buildings cause them to be desirable for adaptive reuse. Just as they provided for a community during the great depression, Kress stores can assist communities today, in revitalizing their downtown.

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APPENDIX 1

GREENSBORO, NORTH CAROLINA



Figure A1.1. Rendering of 1st floor restaurant. *Bruce Cantrell*

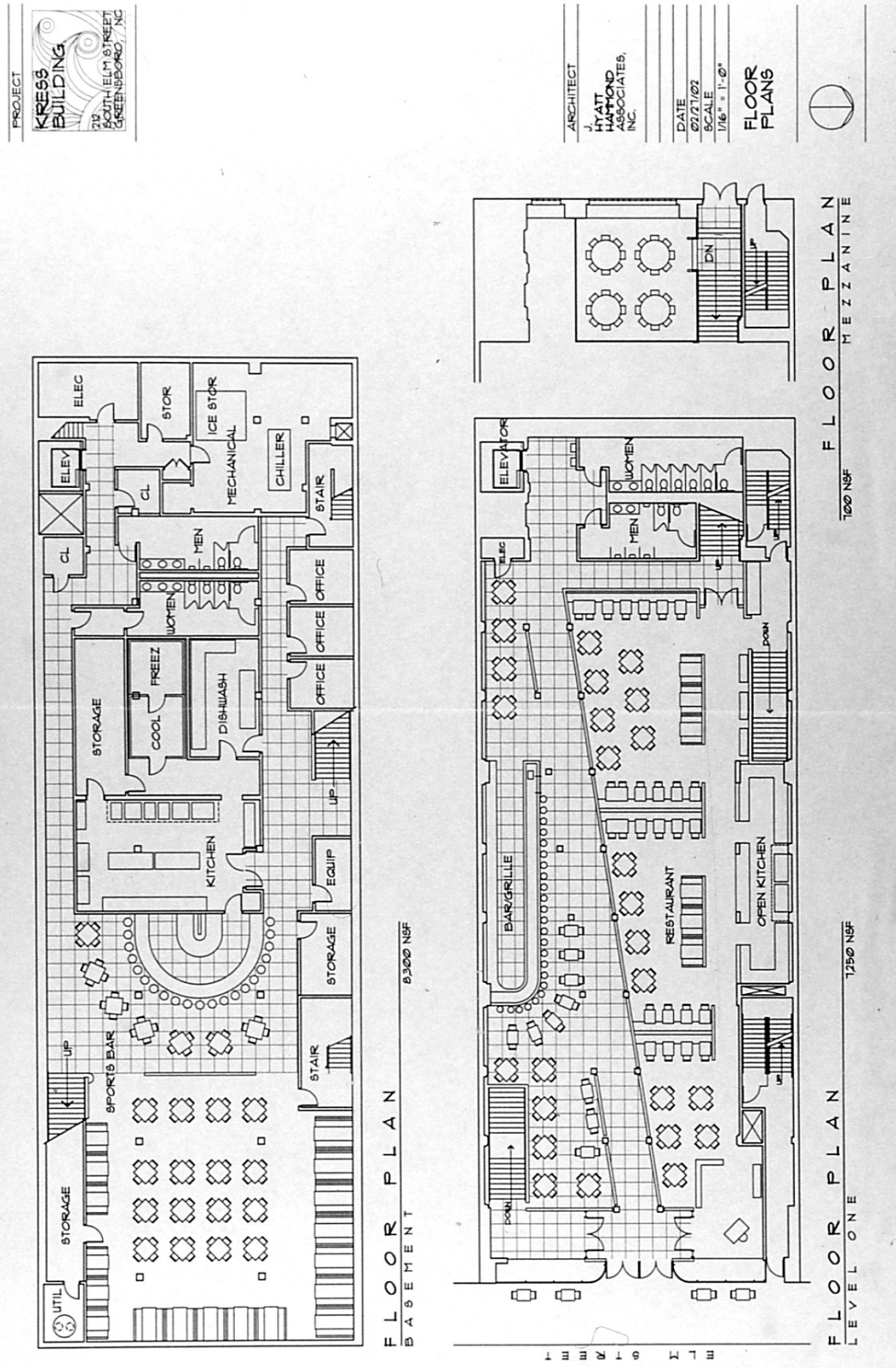


Figure A1.2. Floor plan of first floor and basement. *Bruce Cantrell*

COLUMBIA, SOUTH CAROLINA

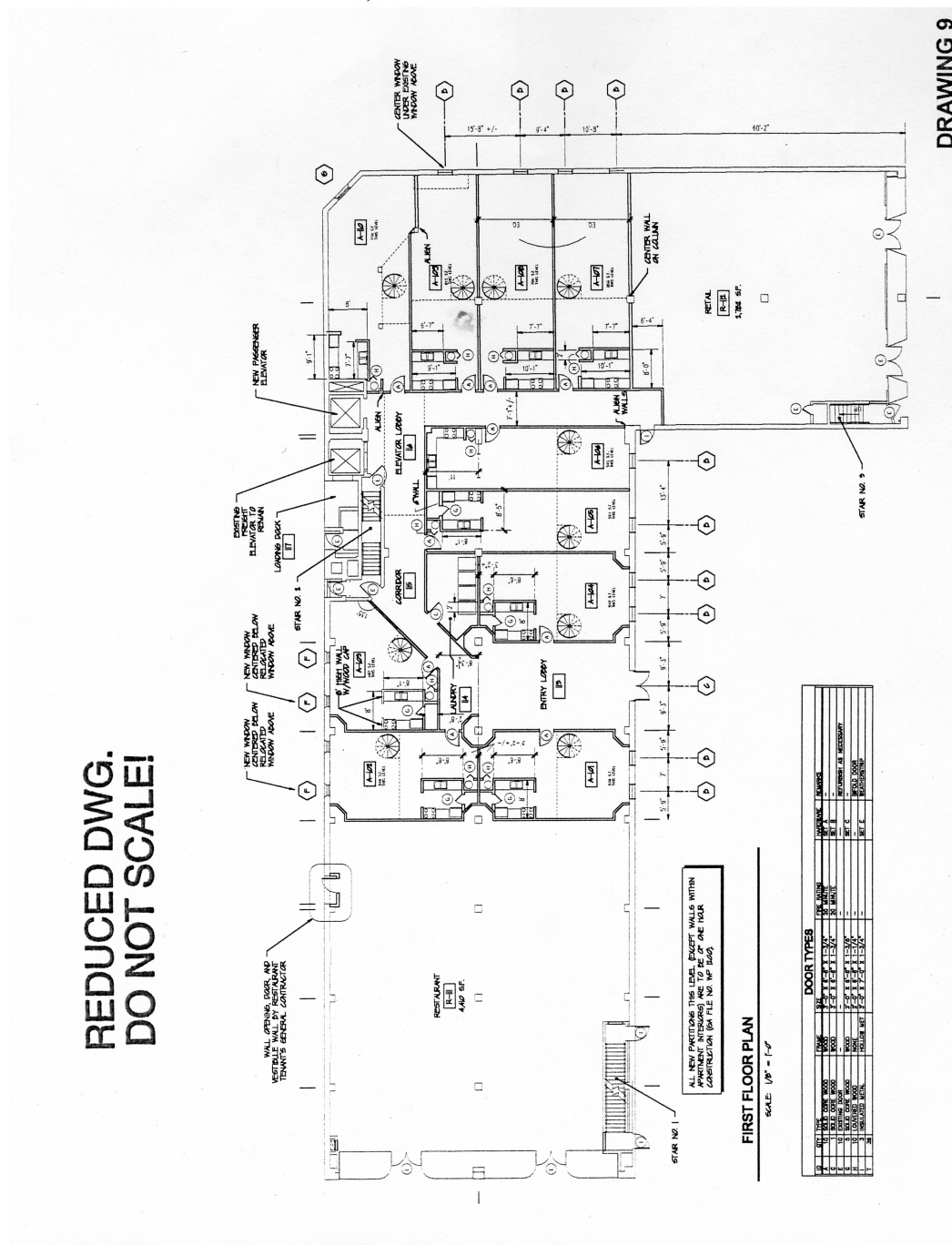
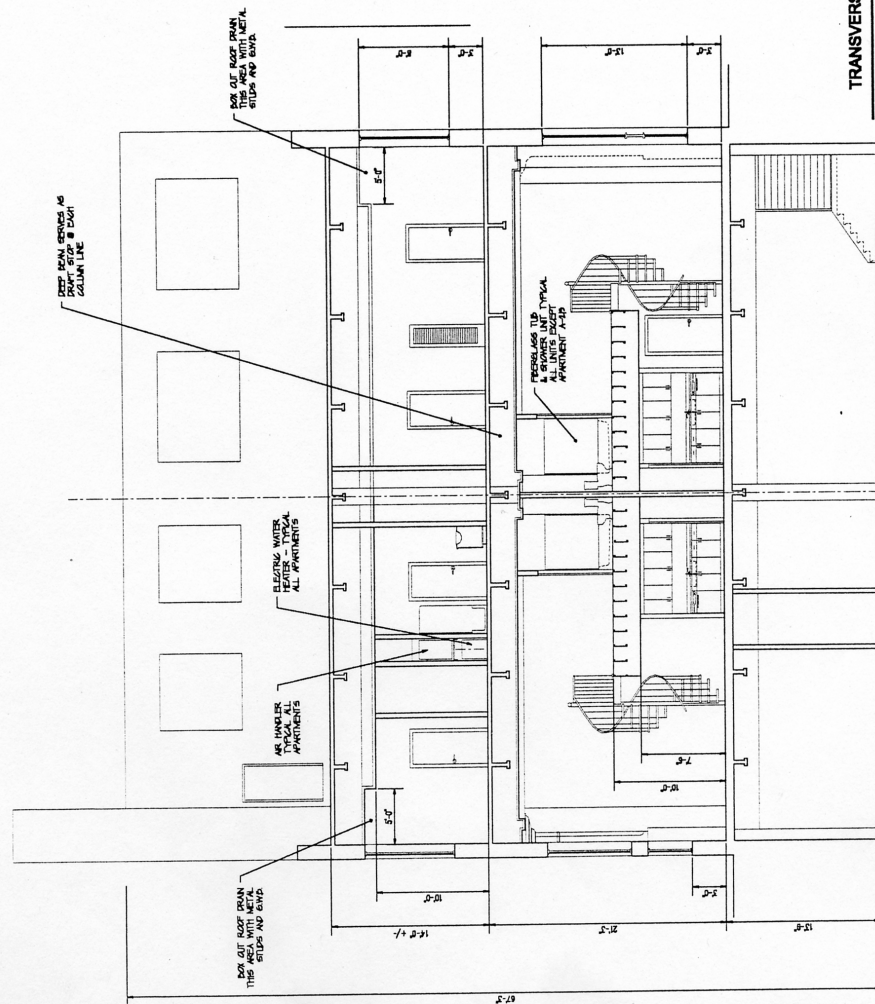


Figure A2.1. Floor plan of first floor, *Tom Prioreschi*.

DRAWING 12

REDUCED DWG.
DO NOT SCALE!



TRANSVERSE SECTION "AA"

SCALE 1/4" = 1'-0"

DRAWING 11

Figure A2.3. Cross section of First and Second floor. *Tom Prioreschi.*