

# Georgia Tech

## Historic Structure Report

830 West Peachtree Street Building

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# Historic Structure Report

## 830 West Peachtree Street Building

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## **Chapter One: First Owner and Developer: Richardson Realty Company**

The 830 Building (also known as the Capstone Building) is located at 830 West Peachtree Street on Land Lot 80 of the 14<sup>th</sup> District in the City of Atlanta, Georgia. It was constructed in 1929, and appears in the 1930-31 *Atlanta City Directory* for the first time. The Richardson Realty Company owned the building at that time. The area was mostly residential until the mid 1920's, when commercial zoning began. The building was erected on the same location as the former Richardson homestead, which was demolished when the family moved to Buckhead in 1925.

### **Hugh Richardson, founder of Richardson Realty Company**

The founder of the Richardson Realty Company was Hugh Richardson, a member of one of the "Pioneer Families" of Atlanta.

Hugh T. Inman owned the property before Richardson. Inman purchased four acres, bounded by West Peachtree, Spring, Fifth and Sixth Streets from Richard Peters in 1881. The price paid for the city block was \$4000. The current building was constructed on the southern half of this property, which he gave to his daughter Josephine after she was married to Hugh Richardson. The first Richardson home was built on the property in 1898.

Hugh Richardson was born in Vicksburg, Mississippi and attended Southwestern Presbyterian College and later Princeton University, where he graduated in 1894. He came to Atlanta in 1896 and started his own business as a realty developer. He owned a large number of industrial land and buildings in Atlanta and also managed several of the properties given to his wife by her father. The Richardson's had four children – Hugh Inman, Lee, Louise and Josephine. All four children, and eventually some of their offspring, were involved in the family-owned and run business. Louise married the future mayor Ivan Allen Jr. and became a well-known civic figure herself. Josephine married into the Adair clan, another prominent pioneer family in Atlanta.

Around 1910 Richardson started to assemble properties around Tenth and State Streets, and developed the subdivision Home Park. During World War I, Richardson was appointed Chairman for War Savings for Georgia.

Richardson's son Hugh Inman Richardson, also Princeton educated, joined the company in 1923. Hugh Inman was born in December 1900 in the Richardson home; the same location as the 830 West Peachtree Building. In 1925 the Richardsons built a new home, "Broadlands," at the corner of West Paces Ferry and Northside Drive, an area they were the first ones to develop. The home was a grand estate, architect designed, located on 250 acres with extensive formal and informal gardens.

According to the *Atlanta Journal Constitution* both father and son saw the future in land, and especially recognized the potential of the West Peachtree Street corridor as a viable business district for Atlanta. Richardson Realty was the one of the first to build and lease

“tailor made” buildings to fit individual needs. This was certainly true for the 830 West Peachtree Building, which was designed and operated as an automobile showroom and service garage for the first twenty years of its existence.

In 1938 Richardson's son Lee also joined the company. Following World War II the Richardson Realty Company again became active in the development of West Peachtree and Spring Streets. They remodeled the 830 West Peachtree Street building into a more modern office building. They added a third floor and provided office space as well as covered parking in the basement and the rear of the first floor. Part of the first floor housed their own offices. Eventually they would take over the entire first floor. Until the Richardson Realty Company moved to their offices on West Peachtree in 1950, they ran the business mostly out of their own homes. For a short time in the early 1940's the business address was at 160 Peachtree on the third floor.

Hugh Richardson, the company's founder died at Emory Hospital in December 1951 at the age of 82 after a long illness. However, the Richardson Realty Company continued. In 1955 Hugh Inman Richardson, Jr. joined his father in the company, now bringing the third generation into the Richardson Realty Company. The 1965 City Directory showed the following listing for the Richardson Realty Company: Hugh I. Richardson-President, Mrs. Louise R. Allen- Vice President, Mrs. Josephine R. Adair – secretary, Lee Richardson- Treasurer.

Lee Richardson retired from the company in 1972. He died in 1979, while riding a train through the countryside of Denmark. According to the *Atlanta Journal* he had been a train buff all of his life and had made it his goal to travel as many of the famous lines all over the world as he could.

The Richardson Realty Company sold the 830 West Peachtree Building to the Woodrow Wilson College of Law in 1977. Although the company continued to maintain their offices on the first floor of the building until the late eighties, by 1980 they had downsized their office to one suite and shared the first floor with several other businesses. They probably moved to their new offices on 1819 Peachtree Road when the building was sold to Atlanta Eye Consultants in 1994. As of 2010, a Hugh Inman, also a Princeton graduate, still heads the Richardson Realty Company. Unfortunately, he was unwilling to fill in some of the family history or provide historic photos of their offices.

**Attachment 1.1:** 1911 Sanborn Fire Insurance map, Page 88. The two homes in the upper right block are the Inman home on the north and the Richardson home to the south. Inman purchased the entire block in 1881 and later gave the southern half to his daughter and son-in-law Hugh Richardson. The 830 West Peachtree Street Building replaced the Richardson home in 1929 after the Richardson family had moved to their new residence in 1925.

QuickTime™ and a  
decompressor  
are needed to see this picture.

**Attachment 1.2:** This photo shows the original Richardson Residence on West Peachtree Street. The home was designed by the well-known Atlanta period architect Walter T. Downing. The picture is on file at the Atlanta History Center, Visual Art Collection #3507.



**Attachment 1.3:** The photos show Hugh Richardson, the founder of the company and his son and grandson Hugh Inman Richardson Sr. and Jr.



**FATHER-SON TEAM GO OVER DEVELOPMENT PLANS**  
(L-R) Hugh Richardson Jr. and Hugh Richardson Sr. at Their Offices

**ATLANTA . . . AND SON**

# Pioneer Family Richardsons Put Faith in Home Land

By **GEORGE ERWIN**, Atlanta Journal Real Estate Editor  
The Richardson Realty Co., one of the oldest family-owned realty firms in the South, is expanding its operations to meet the needs of the business firms which leased them. Hugh Richardson Sr. was one of the first presidents of the Central Artillery division before joining his father in business in 1955. His father had served as a major in the U.S. Army during World War I.

## **Chapter Two: Occupants of the 830 West Peachtree Street Building**

The rapid increase in the use of automobiles and consequently the construction of better roads and viaducts influenced the development of the West Peachtree corridor as well as the 830 West Peachtree Street Building. Of course the fact that the building was originally designed and opened as an automobile sales office as well as a service garage needs no further explanation. But also in its reincarnation as an office building in 1950, the fact that the building had indoor two-level parking suggests that the clients visiting “modern offices” would also come in their own automobiles, expecting covered parking, a trend evident in most of the mid-twenties and later office buildings in this area.

### **A. Automobile Sales and Service Center from 1929 – 1949**

Atlanta’s first glimpse of an automobile within the city was in 1901 when William Alexander drove a Locomobile Steamer from Atlanta to Fort McPherson and back. The witnessing crowd was skeptical and amused at such an event. It was doubted at that time that the horseless carriage would ever become a common sight. However, by 1908 the Ford Company had opened a small sales and service office in Atlanta, and by 1915 Ford had expanded its operation and opened an assembly plant in Atlanta employing 600 people. As quoted in the *Atlanta Magazine*, “The horseless carriage was here to stay.” Venues like the Hapeville Speedway and events like the National Automobile Show, held in Atlanta in 1909, further helped to promote the car industry.

By 1920 Atlanta had begun to see widespread use of the automobile. Registered vehicles grew from 6,301 to 47,333 between 1916 and 1925. The city changed from its reliance on railroads to dependence on the automobile. The automobile's growing use in downtown Atlanta contributed to the creation of a series of viaducts to raise the city's streets above the railroads and railroad lines and their grade-level crossings. In 1923 the Spring Street viaduct was completed. It spanned the Western and Atlantic railroad tracks, enabling development to proceed rapidly northward.

The automobile also helped disperse the city's residential population farther into the suburbs, sparking a suburban real-estate boom and the creation of a ring of middle-class, bungalow-style houses and communities two to five miles from downtown. Included in this ring were Home Park and Virginia Highlands on the north, Candler Park/Edgewood on the east, Sylvan Hills and West End on the south, and Washington Park—a black suburban development—on the west side. The automobile also encouraged Atlanta's white elite to move away from the center of the city—particularly to the north. By 1930 almost half of all Atlantans listed in the Social Register lived north of Ansley Park, many of them in Buckhead, which grew from a population of 2,603 in 1920 to 10,356 ten years later.

The 830 West Peachtree Building was designed for and occupied by auto related businesses for the first twenty years of its existence. Richardson Realty owned the building and leased it to the various businesses until 1977. The 1932 Sanborn Fire

Insurance Map shows a 2-story L-shaped building with a parking lot and corner gas station. The service department entrance was located on Fifth Street. The 1930/31 City Directory listed Grant Motor Company, a Ford and Lincoln car dealership and service center as the first occupant. William J. Grant was listed as President and Fenn O. Stone as Vice-president.

By 1932 Grant had moved to Spring Street, and Capital Automobile Company, a Cadillac and Oldsmobile dealership, also offering service, had moved to this address. The owner Elwyn C. Tomlinson had bought a Cadillac Dealership in 1931 and renamed it from Atlanta Cadillac to Capital Automobile. They stayed at 830 West Peachtree until 1938, when they moved to 796 West Peachtree Street into their own building. This was just at the opposite corner from their previous space, a location they must have liked very well. Today Capital Cadillac Hummer still conducts business as one of the largest Cadillac dealers in Georgia. A family run company with the third generation in power, sold cars to many Atlantans, including Robert Woodruff, Bobby Jones, Ivan Allen and Maynard Jackson.

In 1939, after the Capital Automobile Company had left, the third and last automotive business, United Service Motor Parts, opened their doors there. They stayed until 1949, which marked the end of automobile-related businesses for this building

## **B. Office Building from 1950 through 1977**

After extensive remodeling, the building was reincarnated as a three-story modern office building with indoor parking in the rear. The former service area was probably leased separately, and is listed as a warehouse in the 1950 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map.

Although the building was outfitted with business suites on all three floors, the first floor consistently housed the Richardson Realty Company. Originally they shared this floor with other businesses, but by 1955 they had taken over the entire floor.

The remaining businesses were diversified and constantly changing. In 1955 the three floors were occupied as follows: First floor, Richardson Realty; second floor, Hardware Insurance Company, Joseph D. and Company Insurance, Napier Cambell and Company Assets, Napier Cambell Lawyer. On the third floor were General Foods, Sis Division, American Casualty Insurance and American Aviation Insurance.

With the exception of the Richardson business all others seemed to change quite frequently and were not limited to any one particular type of business. Over the years businesses like Magic Chef Appliances, Encyclopedia Britannica, the Anti-Moonshine League and the Kappa Alpha Order appeared as tenants.

In 1970 Richardson Realty still occupied the first floor. However, as it was in the early fifties, they shared it - now with Road Atlanta, Inc. and several insurance companies. The third floor housed the Woodrow Wilson College of Law; and, among others, the Fulton County Republican Headquarters.

### **C. New Owner and Occupant Woodrow Wilson College of Law, 1970 -1987**

The Woodrow Wilson College of Law was chartered in 1933 as a non-profit organization. Clifford Walker, former Governor of Georgia, founded it as a result of his dream of a school for qualified persons to obtain a law degree while fully employed. Walker had graduated from the University of Georgia School of Law. He taught at the Woodrow Wilson College of Law and served as its President until his death in 1954. Co-founder of the college was Joseph B. Kilbride, who served as Dean of the college from 1933 until his death in 1972. Kilbride was a partner in the law firm Walker & Kilbride, located in the Healy Building. The college was housed at this location from its beginning until 1973, when it began its move to the 830 West Peachtree Building. The college was accredited in the State of Georgia, but not on a national level.

Upon the death of Governor Walker, Virlyn B. Moore, a graduate of Emory University and the University of Georgia School of Law, was named President of the school. At Kilbride's death he also became Dean of the Woodrow Wilson College of Law and taught there from 1949 until the school closed in 1987.

By 1973 the school had leased part of the third floor of the 830 West Peachtree Building and housed their library there. In 1977 the school purchased the building from the Richardson Realty Company, who remained on the first floor. The school then utilized the entire second and third floors. In 1982 the school sold the building to Reid Provident Laboratories, but kept their operations in this location.

In 1987 The Woodrow Wilson College of Law closed after having been in operation for 54 years. The reason for the closing is not known, but might be related to the fact that the school had accreditation issues in the early 1980's. The final graduation class numbered 160 students and in its 54-year existence 4000 students graduated from there.

The life of the 830 West Peachtree Building then slowed down. In 1989 Richardson Realty, Rice Bookkeeping Service and Star Property Management were listed on the first floor; the second and third floors were vacant.

In 1994 Atlanta Eye Consultants bought the property from the Resolution Trust Company and immediately turned it over to CSA Marand, who still owns it, by a quick claim. Atlanta Eye Consultants currently occupies the building.



**Attachment 2.2:** Ca. 1936 Photo shows the automotive sales and service center as well as the gas station in the lower left corner. This image reflects the 1932 Sanborn Fire Insurance map exactly. The car dealership in the right lower corner of the picture was the new location of Capital Automotive Corporation. On file at the Atlanta History Center, Visual Collection 3574.



**Attachment 2.3:** Advertisements from the Atlanta City Directories for the first two occupants of the building, Grant Motor Company and Capital Automobile Company.

W. J. GRANT                      H. B. HARRIS                      F. O. STONE

**LINCOLN and FORD Motor Cars**

**GRANT-HARRIS-RIPPEY CO.**

Lincoln and Ford Sales and Service

W. PEACHTREE ST. near 5th N. W., opp. BILTMORE HOTEL  
TELS. HEMLOCK 2955-2956

(1930) ATLANTA CITY DIRECTORY CO.'S



**CAPITAL AUTOMOBILE CO.**

ELWYN W. TOMLINSON, President

**CADILLAC -- OLDSMOBILE**

**MOTOR CARS**

Sales and Service

Wheel Alignment --- Wreck Repairers --- Brake Service  
Painters --- Carburetor and Ignition --- Lubrication

W. Peachtree, N. W.  
Opposite Biltmore Hotel

SERVICE DEPT.  
20 5th St. N. W.

Phone Hemlock 1200

ATLANTA CITY DIRECTORY

**Attachment 2.4:** This ca. 1926 photo of the Buick Motor Company showroom located at 512-516 Spring Street was probably very close in design to the 830 W. Peachtree Building. Unfortunately a historic photo of the 830 West Peachtree Street Elevation could not be located.



## **Chapter Three: Physical Description and Changes to the Building**

### **A. Automotive shop, sales and service 1929 -1949**

The 830 West Peachtree Street Building was designed as an automotive sales and service facility, using a standard design. The L-shaped, two-story red brick building had clear differentiation between its different functions. The showroom was located in the front third of the main building with large showroom windows fronting on West Peachtree. The offices were probably located above the showroom. These areas would have been highly finished to impress potential customers. The rear of the building was the garage area where cars were parked or received final touches before sales. This area most likely had unfinished walls and ceilings and the floors were concrete. Skylights on the second floor of this area gave natural light to the garage. The Service Department was housed in a smaller rectangular building with a separate entrance facing Fifth Street. The remaining corner held a gas station and additional parking spaces.

### **B. Office Building 1950 to 1994**

In 1950 the building reopened as an office building with leased space. A third floor had been added. It was probably at this time also that the West Peachtree Street façade and the eastern third of the Biltmore Place façade were cladded with concrete panels to give the building a more "modern" appearance and hide the changes in brick on the third floor addition.

On the interior, a lobby allowed access to the stairs and elevator. The rear of the first floor offered indoor parking with access from Biltmore Place. The remaining interior spaces on each floor were subdivided into several office suites. Interior walls were probably terracotta tiles finished with sheetrock, and ceilings were suspended ceiling tiles. Floors were linoleum.

The former Service Department building was no longer connected to the main building, and was leased as a warehouse space to separate businesses. It was later torn down.

### **C. Current State of the building.**

#### **Site and Exterior**

The three-story office building and parking garage is located at 830 West Peachtree Street. The entire acreage is developed and vehicular entrance is currently from Biltmore Place. An additional small surface parking lot is located behind the building. The building is bordered by West Peachtree Street on the east, Biltmore Place on the north, and a Georgia Tech building and parking lot on the south and west sides.

The rectangular building has concrete foundations and a concrete structural frame. The West Peachtree Street façade and the eastern portion of the Biltmore Place façade are covered with decorative concrete panels. The first floor of the main façade has three

large glass and aluminum showroom windows set back under the building with columns dividing them. The most southern showroom window also has a recessed front portico with exposed columns and a full glass in aluminum frame entrance with double doors and surrounding fixed windows. The northern window has a granite-paneled infill with a band of glass in aluminum windows. The windows on the second and third floors are double hung metal windows, grouped in threes, mirroring the tri-division of the ground floor.

The remaining perimeter walls are red brick curtain walls with a decorative limestone stringer above the second floor windows along Biltmore Place. The red brick clearly changes in color between the second and third floors, where a floor was added during the 1950 renovation of the building. Windows on the Biltmore Place facades are the same type windows as the front façade, but are grouped in fours.

The first floor parking garage is accessed by a single drive-in metal overhead door entrance along Biltmore Place and by a concrete ramp from the western surface lot. Several bricked-in garage door sized openings exist along the north and south sides of the building.

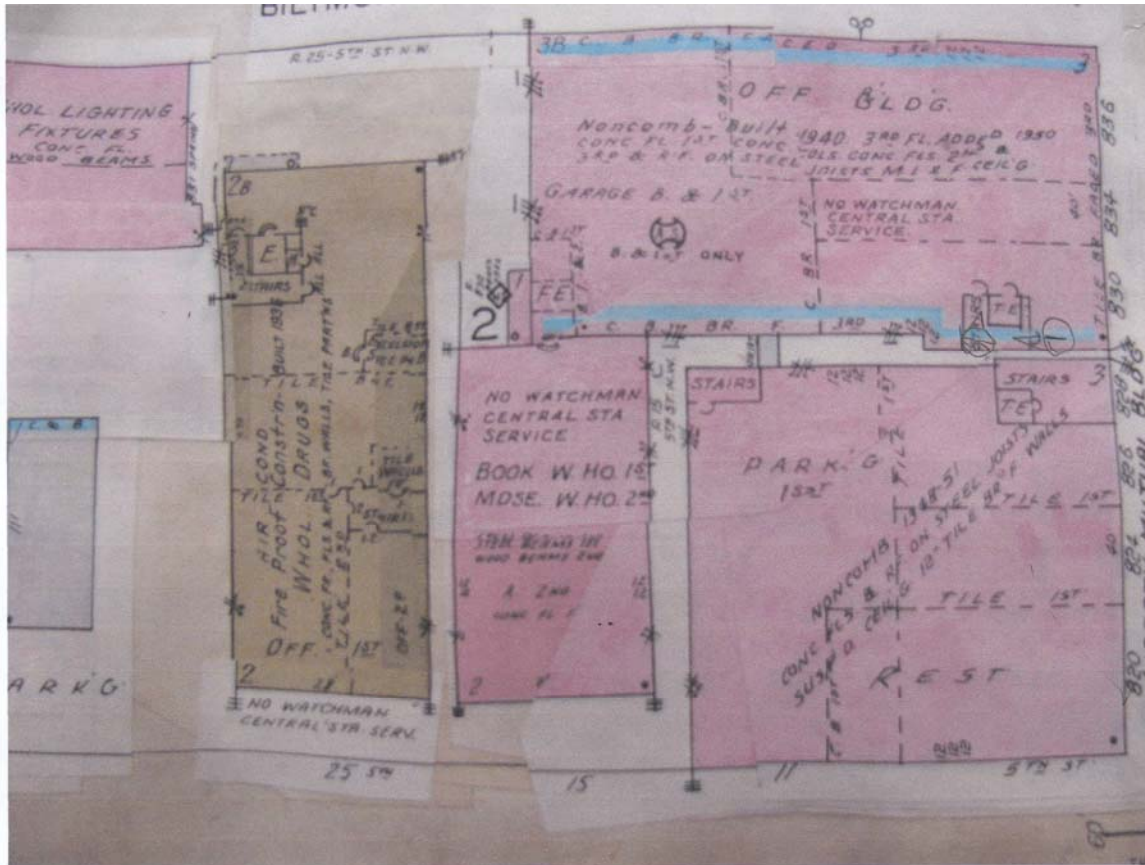
The windows on the eastern, northern and western facades are multi-pane glass in aluminum frames. Windows on the southern wall are smaller since the building shares this wall with the building to the south along West Peachtree Street. It is also evident that the size of window openings in the south wall has been changed several times. All windows are a replacement of unknown date.

The building has a flat built-up roof supported by the interior concrete structure.

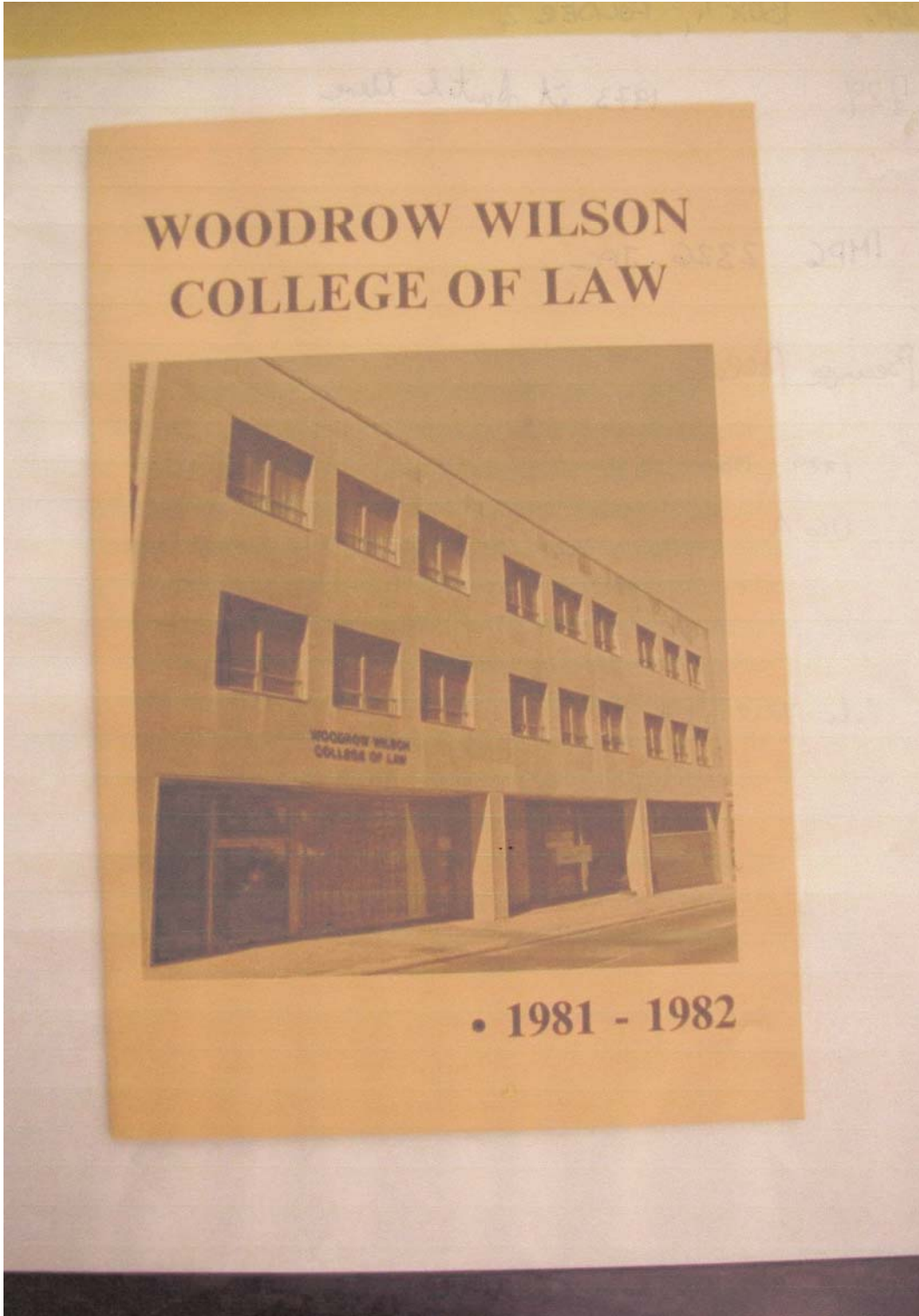
## **Interior**

On the interior the first floor lobby has terrazzo floors with marble tile walls. The clinic area was off-limits at the time of the photo shoot and site visit. It appears to be finished with carpeted floors and gypsum board walls and ceilings. An enclosed staircase as well as an elevator gives access to the second and third floors. The staircase is concrete, covered with Terrazzo up to the second floor. All interior partitions have been removed on the two upper floors, probably during the 1994 renovation to get ready for more modern office spaces. The floors and ceilings are poured concrete. Apparently a technique using wire reinforced fabric forms that were left in place, were used to pour these floors. Perimeter walls are unfinished and show mostly exposed brick on the two upper floors. The third floor has remnants of painted plaster. The rear parking area is unfinished with exposed concrete floors, concrete columns and masonry structural walls and exposed concrete ceiling structure.

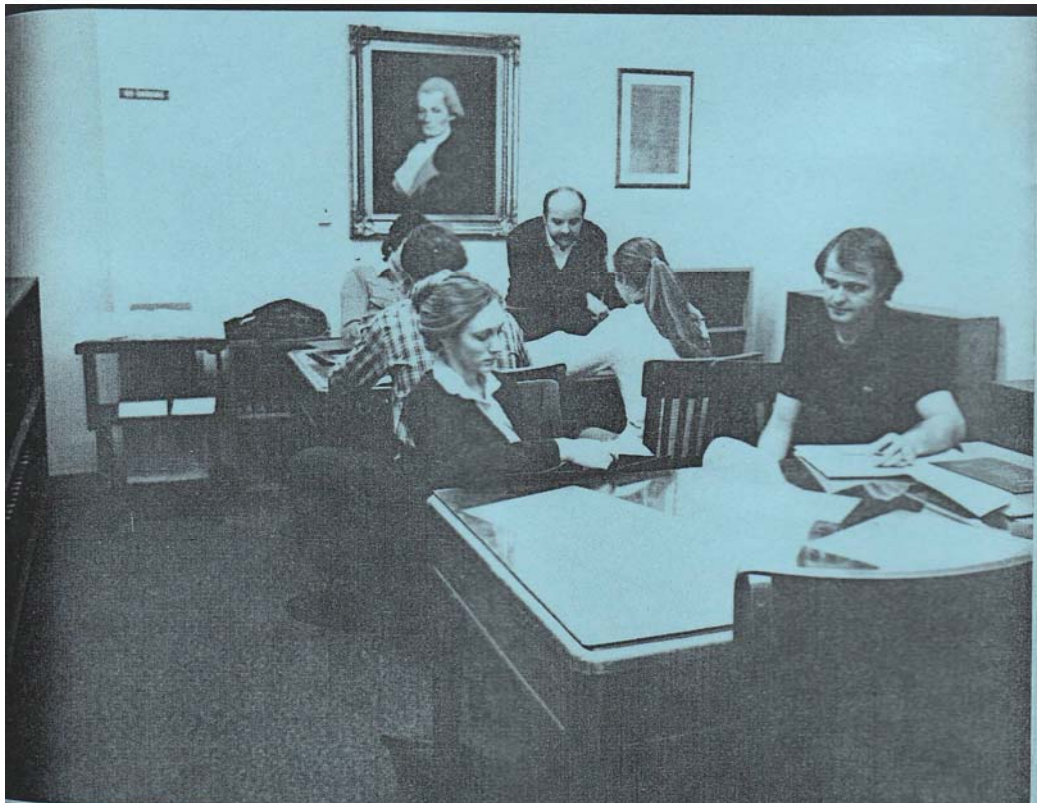
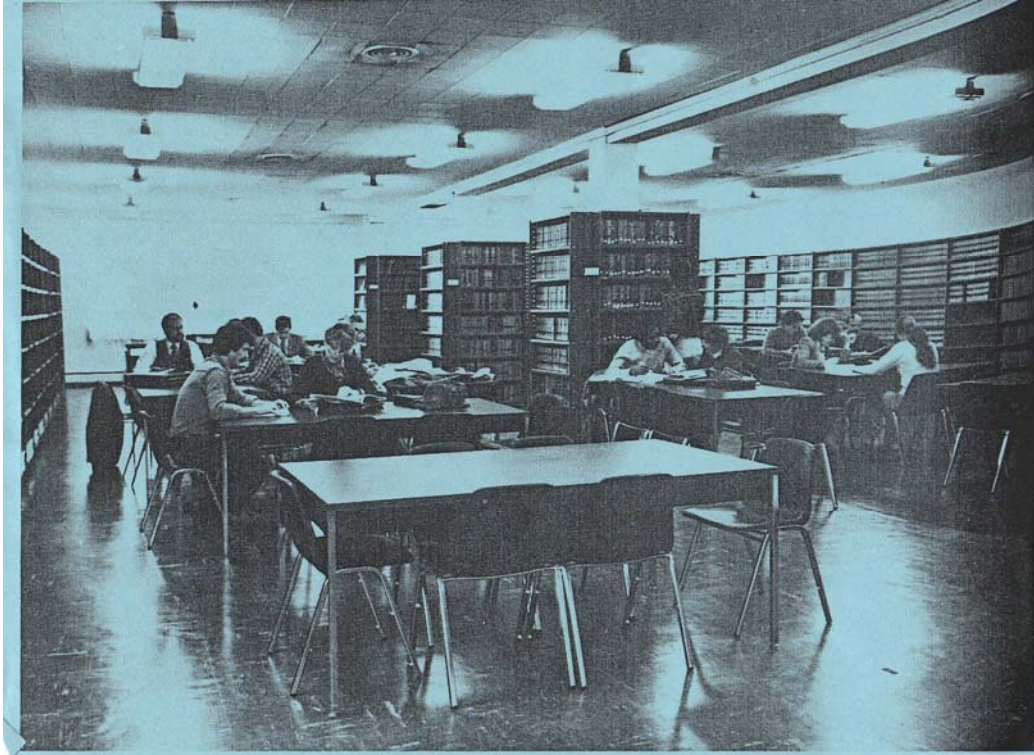
**Attachment 3.1:** The 1951 Sanborn Fire Insurance map shows the building after the conversion to a three-story office building. The gas station and parking lot have now also been replaced by a three-story building.



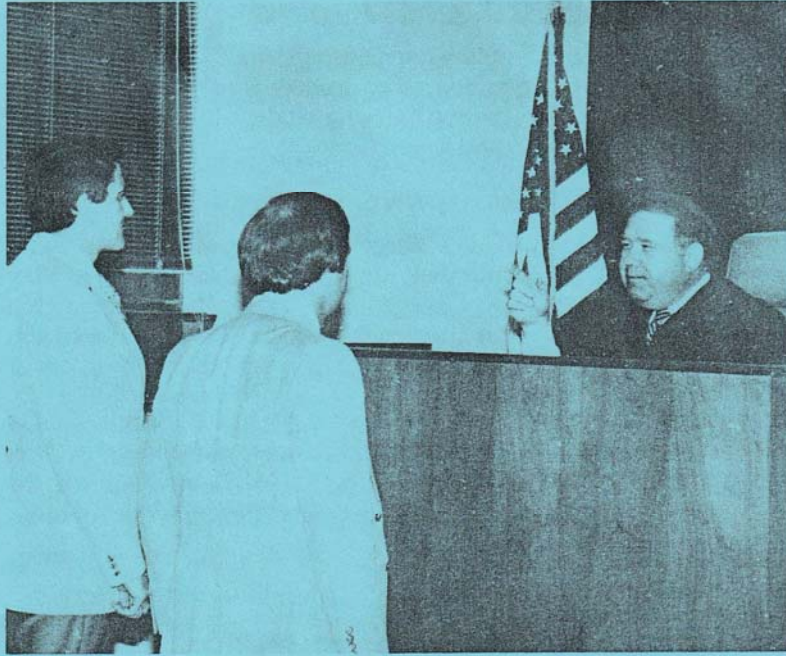
**Attachment 3.2:** Photo shows the building after its conversion from a two-story automotive shop to a three-story office building.



**Attachment 3.3:** Photos show the interior of the building while the Woodrow Wilson College of Law occupied the second and third floors. Photos appeared in their 1981-1982 annual catalog. The catalog is part of a manuscript collection MSS 729, Box 4 on file at the Atlanta History Center.



Attachment 3.3 continued....



Trial Advocacy Class



## **Chapter Four: Current Photographs**

Unfortunately, the current occupant did not allow access for photos on the first floor.

Photos # 1 – 14 Exterior

Photos # 15- 35 Interior

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