

Survey and Research Report
CRANE COMPANY BUILDING



1307 West Morehead Street
Charlotte, North Carolina
28208

1. Name and location of the property. The property known as the Crane Company Building is located at 1307 West Morehead Street, Charlotte, North Carolina. The property encompasses Tax Parcel Number **07325C99**.

2. Name, address, and telephone number of the present owner of the properties.
The owners of the property are:

1307 LLC—Units 101, 104-107, 204

LLC CNM Investments—Unit 102

Walden Enterprises—Unit 108

Insight Realty—Unit 109

Holdings LLC Fosbinder and Van Kampen—Units 201, 203

Seth Bernanke and Ellen R. Goldberg—Unit 202

3. Representative photographs of the property. This report contains representative photographs of the property.

4. Maps depicting the location of the property. This report contains maps which depict the location of the property.
5. Current deed book references to the properties. The most recent reference to Tax Parcel Number **07325C99** (1307 West Morehead Street) is recorded in Mecklenburg County Deed Books 22918, page 727, and 19763, page 595.
6. A brief architectural description of the property. This report contains brief architectural description of the property prepared by Richard L. Mattson and Frances P. Alexander.
7. A brief historical sketch of the property. This report contains a brief historical sketch of the property prepared by Richard L. Mattson and Frances P. Alexander.
8. Documentation of why and in what ways the properties meet criteria for designation set forth in N.C.G.S. 160A-400.5.
 - a. Special significance in terms of history, architecture, and cultural importance. The Commission judges that the property known as the Crane Company Building does possess special significance in terms of Charlotte and Mecklenburg County. The Commission bases its judgment on the following considerations: Constructed in 1928 for the Crane Company, a national manufacturer and supplier of plumbing supplies, the property clearly illustrates Charlotte's historical role as an important regional warehousing and distribution hub. In its use of reinforced concrete construction, the building clearly illustrates the innovations in structural engineering and factory and warehouse design that transformed industrial construction during the first decades of the twentieth century. It remains well-preserved, featuring decorative herringbone brickwork on the main elevation, and banks of steel-sash windows. Recently renovated according to the Secretary of the Interior's "Standards for Rehabilitation" for certified historic properties, the building is currently used for professional offices.
 - b. integrity of design, setting, workmanship, materials, feeling, and association. The Commission contends that the architectural description by Richard L. Mattson and Frances P. Alexander included in this report demonstrates that the Crane Company Building meets this criterion.
9. Ad Valorem Tax Appraisal. The Commission is aware that designation would allow the owner to apply for an automatic deferral of 50% of the Ad Valorem taxes on all or any portion of the properties which become designated historic landmarks. The current appraised value of the improvements to Tax Parcel Number **07325C99** (1307 West Morehead Street) is _____. The total appraised value is _____.

Date of Preparation of this Report.
20 May 2008

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**Crane Company Building
1307 West Morehead Street
Charlotte, North Carolina**

Statement of Significance

Constructed in 1928, the Crane Company Building exemplifies the storage and wholesale warehouses built in Charlotte during the early twentieth century, when the city emerged as a regional industrial, distribution, and commercial center. The growing commercial and manufacturing base of the city required a number of warehousing and wholesaling facilities, sited with both rail and highway access and proximity to the center city. The Crane Company was a national manufacturer and distributor of plumbing supplies. The building was one of the earliest warehouses constructed along the emerging West Morehead Street industrial corridor, which linked the center city to the newly built Wilkinson Boulevard. Completed in 1927 as the state's first four-lane highway, Wilkinson Boulevard followed the Piedmont and Northern Railway westward from Charlotte into the heart of region's textile belt. The adjacent railway allowed for railroad service to the booming mill towns, including the textile manufacturing center of Gastonia, west of Charlotte. Today, the Crane Company Building survives as one of the best preserved commercial or industrial properties within the West Morehead Street industrial corridor.

In its use of reinforced concrete construction, the building clearly illustrates the innovations in structural engineering and factory and warehouse design that transformed industrial construction during the first decades of the twentieth century. Technological advances, especially in the reinforcing systems used in concrete construction, made factories and warehouses largely fireproof, as well as offering numerous structural advantages over either heavy timber mill construction or steel framing.

The great strength of reinforced concrete framing, combined with the innovative extensive girder system for even greater structural support, was of particular importance in the design of multiple-story buildings housing heavy materials, such as the Crane Building. Listed in the National Register of Historic Places (2001), the building was recently renovated under the Secretary of the Interior's "Standards for Rehabilitation." The building features decorative herringbone brickwork on the façade and banks of steel-sash windows on the side elevations. The principal exterior modifications are the modern metal-frame windows and doors on the first floor of the front elevation. The first-floor windows had been brick-infilled in the mid-twentieth century. Now serving as the main entrance, the rear elevation also has modern, metal-frame storefront windows and doorways. The interior has been primarily subdivided for professional offices, but retains the original, exposed brick walls and concrete floors, ceilings, posts, and beams.

Historical Background

Located within the industrial corridor of West Morehead Street along the Piedmont and Northern Railway, the well-preserved Crane Company Building stands as a tangible reminder of the diverse warehousing, commercial, and industrial operations that made Charlotte a flourishing New South city by the early

twentieth century. With the end of the Civil War, and the subsequent reconstruction and expansion of the Piedmont's rail network, leaders throughout the region envisioned a new order based on industrialization, specifically cotton production, and urban growth to replace the agrarian society of the past. These proponents of the New South campaigned vigorously for the construction of cotton mills, which by World War I numbered over 300 within a 100-mile radius of Charlotte. The city became the hub of the southern textile manufacturing industry, and by the 1920s the Piedmont of North and South Carolina had surpassed New England as the leading textile producer in the world. Textiles, in turn, attracted other industries to Charlotte. By the 1920s, the city could boast that its 141 factories manufactured eighty-one different products. With industrialization, the population of Charlotte soared from just 7,000 in 1880, to over 82,000 in 1929, becoming the largest city in the two Carolinas (Sixteenth Census 1940; Hanchett 1993: 202).

Although cotton and textile production formed the economic mainstay of Charlotte, other industries were also drawn to the city's good rail system, expanding work force, and plentiful and inexpensive electric power. Machine shops, pump and elevator manufacturers, foundries, engineering firms, mattress factories, and cotton oil processors were just some of the industries which followed in the wake of the textile boom. Tobacco magnate, James Buchanan Duke, and his Southern Power Company (later Duke Power Company) expanded aggressively in the region, supplying both industrial and residential clients with inexpensive electricity. With a robust industrial economy and urban prosperity came a strong commercial and financial base which served large areas of the industrialized Piedmont as well as local consumers. As the Charlotte Chamber of Commerce boasted in a 1928 advertisement, Charlotte had emerged as a regional commercial center with a 150-mile trading radius and more than 4,500,000 consumers (*Charlotte City Directory* 1928).

Because of its inland location, the economic success of Charlotte was dependent upon good rail transportation. Sustaining little damage during the Civil War, the city quickly recovered and even expanded its rail network. By 1875, six railroads were routed through the city, giving Charlotte more rail connections than any other city between Washington, D.C. and Atlanta. Charlotte benefited from continued rail expansion and consolidation throughout the late nineteenth century, which created both the powerful Southern Railway system, with its connections to New Orleans and Baltimore, and the smaller, but strategic, Piedmont and Northern (P & N) Railway. An interurban line linking Charlotte to scores of mill towns to the west, the P & N served both passengers and freight on its 150-mile route. At its height of operation in the 1920s, the line generated so much traffic that its motto, "A Mill to the Mile", was accurate for much of its length (Fetters and Swanson 1974: 12; Hanchett 1993: 72-74; Glass 1992: 57-58).

With the increase in manufacturing and trade, auxiliary operations quickly followed to serve these expanding sectors as well as a growing population and an increasingly specialized urban economy. Principal among these secondary operations were the large warehouse and storage companies that provided varying degrees of service to a diverse, urban clientele. As a sign of the growing urban status of Charlotte, by the late 1920s, the city supported eight storage warehouses and eleven transfer and moving companies (*Charlotte City Directory* 1928).

The Crane Company began in Charlotte in 1918, with Cyril G. Smith as the owner, president, and manager. The city directory in that year listed the firm's address as 205 West First Street, several blocks north of West Morehead Street. The 1921 directory listed West First Street as the company's office address and West Palmer Street (several blocks south of West Morehead) as the location of the warehouse (now gone) (*Charlotte City Directory* 1921, 1927).

The Crane Company Building was constructed at 1307 West Morehead Street in 1928, and first appears at that address in the 1928 *Charlotte City Directory*. The 1929 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map for Charlotte depicts the two-story, brick warehouse and denotes its 1928 date of construction. The West Morehead Street location was a strategic one for the newly built warehouse. In 1927, West Morehead Street, formerly

a minor roadway at the outskirts of the center city, was extended westward across Irwin Creek to connect downtown with Wilkinson Boulevard. Completed in 1927, Wilkinson was the state's first four-lane highway, and linked Charlotte to the booming textile center of Gastonia and surrounding mill towns west of the city. West Morehead Street also ran parallel to the P & N Railway, which Wilkinson Boulevard followed westward into Gaston County. Benefiting from both rail and highway connections and proximity to the Piedmont and Northern's Mint Street yards and freight station, the West Morehead Street corridor became prime industrial real estate. By the end of the 1920s, a number of warehousing, light industrial, and small commercial enterprises had been built along the new route (Sanborn Map Company 1929; Hanchett 1993: 16; Fetters and Swanson 1974: 69).

In 1920, there had been only one industrial operation, a foundry, located along West Morehead, but with its new connections, sales and construction both along the new thoroughfare were brisk between 1927 and 1930. In 1927, the four-story Carolina Transfer and Storage Company Building was constructed across the street from the Crane Company warehouse, while the two-story Union Storage and Warehouse was completed several blocks to the east. The following year, the Carolina School Supply Building opened across the street from the Union warehouse. By the end of the decade, West Morehead Street also included multiple-story buildings for the Charlotte Coca-Cola Bottling Plant and the Grinnell Company, manufacturers of fire extinguishers for the textile industry (Sanborn Map Company 1929; *Charlotte City Directory* 1920, 1929).

West Morehead continued to attract industrial and warehousing facilities until the 1950s and early 1960s, but the construction of Interstate Highway 85 to the north and east reoriented much of the industrial geography of the city after the early 1960s. Some of the original occupants along the corridor, like the Carolina Transfer and Storage and the Coca-Cola Bottling Plant, continued to operate in their West Morehead locations until the 1980s and early 1990s, but other properties became vacant or underused.

The Crane Company Building operated at 1307 West Morehead Street until 1942, when (for reasons unknown) it relocated to facilities (now gone) on the 200 and 300 blocks of West First Street. In that year, Ford Motor Company acquired the building for use as an automobile repair establishment. The recent rehabilitation of the building for office use reflects a renewed interest in this area because of the easy access provided by Interstate Highway 77 and increased commercial and residential development in downtown Charlotte. In particular, the 1996 construction of Bank of America Stadium along West Morehead Street for the city's professional football team has sparked the renovation and conversion of a host of industrial buildings along the street.

Physical Description

Constructed in 1928 for a major wholesale distributor of plumbing supplies, the Crane Company Building is located at 1307 West Morehead Street, southwest of downtown Charlotte. Facing the street, the building occupies a 0.39-acre lot that was laid out adjacent to both West Morehead and the Piedmont and Northern (P & N) Railway, which ran behind the property. Now used for professional offices, the building has recently undergone a renovation according to the Secretary of Interior's "Standards for Rehabilitation."

The two-story building is of reinforced-concrete construction, with exposed concrete framing that articulates the window bays and brick curtain walls. The building has a largely utilitarian appearance expressed in its steel-sash windows with concrete sills, flat roof, and simple, boxy form. The rear elevation has a stepped configuration that originally accommodated a series of four individual loading bays and docks. Exterior ornamentation is concentrated on the front elevation, which features a parapet facade topped by two decorative urns, and brick spandrels laid in a herringbone pattern. The four bays across the front facade are defined by projecting pilasters highlighted on the second story by alternating bands of brick and concrete. The second-story, steel-sash windows are original. However, the window bays on the front façade, which had been brick-infilled, now have modern metal sash. Original steel sash windows survive

on the side and rear elevations. The rear elevation now includes the main entrance, and has modern metal-frame, storefront windows and doorways on the first floor. The original rear loading dock has been replaced by a modern concrete deck with a metal railing that conforms to the configuration of the dock, and has a red-brick foundation that includes a portion of the original, brick dock foundation.

The interior has concrete floors and an extensive system of exposed, reinforced-concrete girders, beams, and piers, specifically designed to carry heavy loads, such as quantities of steel plumbing supplies. The overall use of reinforced concrete, combined with brick curtain walls and steel window frames and stairs, made the building largely fireproof. Originally large storage areas filled both floors, but with the conversion to offices, modern partition walls now subdivide much of the interior into offices and hallways.

Architecture Context

A two-story masonry building with reinforced concrete construction, the Crane Company Building exemplifies the innovations in structural engineering and factory design which transformed industrial construction during the first decades of the twentieth century. Technological advances, particularly in the reinforcing systems used in concrete construction, made factories and warehouses largely fireproof, as well as offering numerous structural advantages over either heavy timber mill construction or steel framing. Although unreinforced concrete had long been known for its great compressive strength, and had been used for simple vertical piers, in its reinforced state, the material could withstand tensile stresses as well, making reinforced concrete feasible for horizontal members such as foundations, floor slabs, and girders. Of particular importance in factory and warehouse design, its great strength reduced the number of vertical members needed for structural support, and even multiple story factories could be built with open interiors unbroken by numerous piers, and with flexible plans, which greatly increased the storage capacity of warehouses. The great strength of reinforced concrete framing, combined with the innovative extensive girder system for even greater structural support, was of particular importance in the design of multiple-story buildings housing heavy materials, such as the Crane Company Building.

By the 1920s, tall lofts had begun falling out of favor for manufacturing purposes as sprawling, one-story factory complexes better accommodated the new straight-line production methods with their emphasis on efficiency and rationalization of layout. However, multiple-story construction remained both highly efficient and economical for warehouse design. The strength of the reinforced concrete framing permitted even the upper stories to hold heavy loads, while making the interior plan versatile. In addition, the vertical loft design made economical and profitable use of expensive rail frontage property, which the contemporary sprawling one-story, multiple-building industrial properties did not.

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Figure 1

Crane Building Tax Parcel

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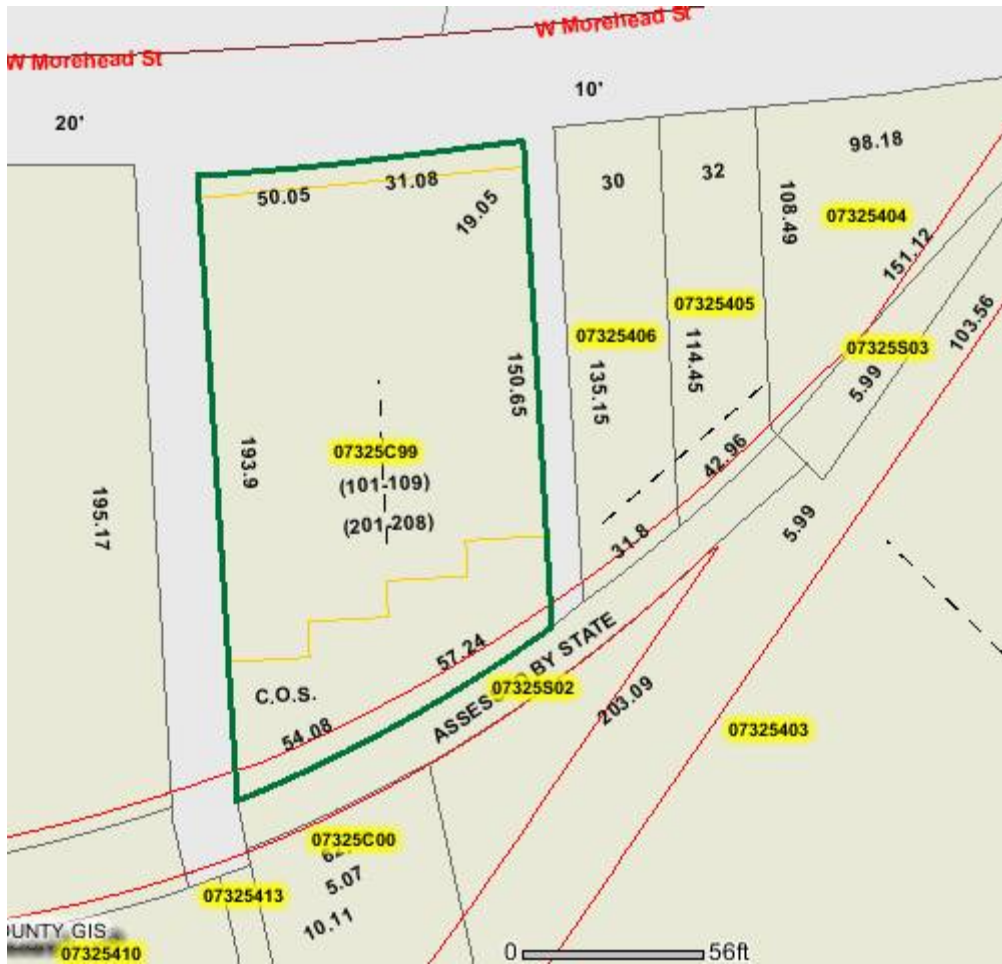
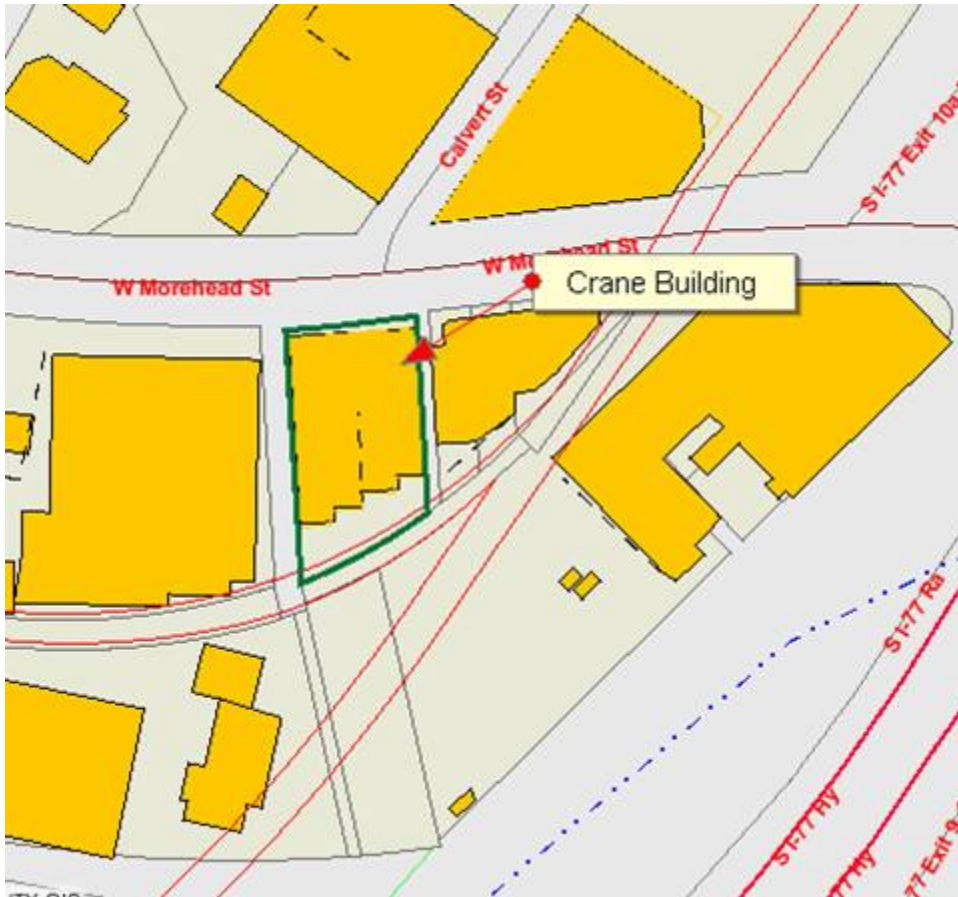


Figure 2

Crane Building Tax Parcel.

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Crane Company Building, Main (north) Elevation, Looking South.



Crane Company Building, Main Elevation, Looking West along West Morehead Street.



Crane Company Building, Main Elevation, Looking West along West Morehead Street.



Crane Company Building, Main Elevation, Herringbone Brickwork.



Crane Company Building, Main Elevation, Looking East along West Morehead Street.



Crane Company Building, Main Elevation, Looking East along West Morehead Street.



Crane Company Building, West Elevation, Looking South.



Crane Company Building, West Elevation, Looking South.



Crane Company Building, West Elevation, Looking South.



Crane Company Building, Rear (South) Elevation, Looking North.



Crane Company Building, Rear (South) Elevation, Looking Northwest.



Crane Company Building, Rear (South) Elevation, Looking North.



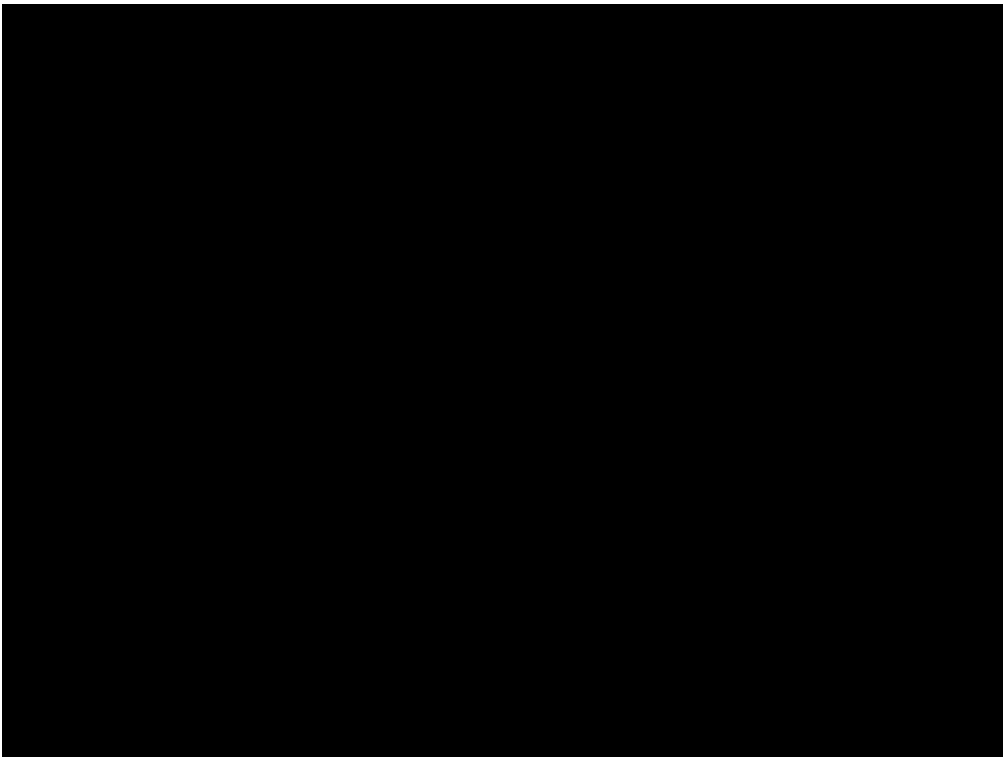
Crane Company Building, Rear (South) Elevation, Looking West.



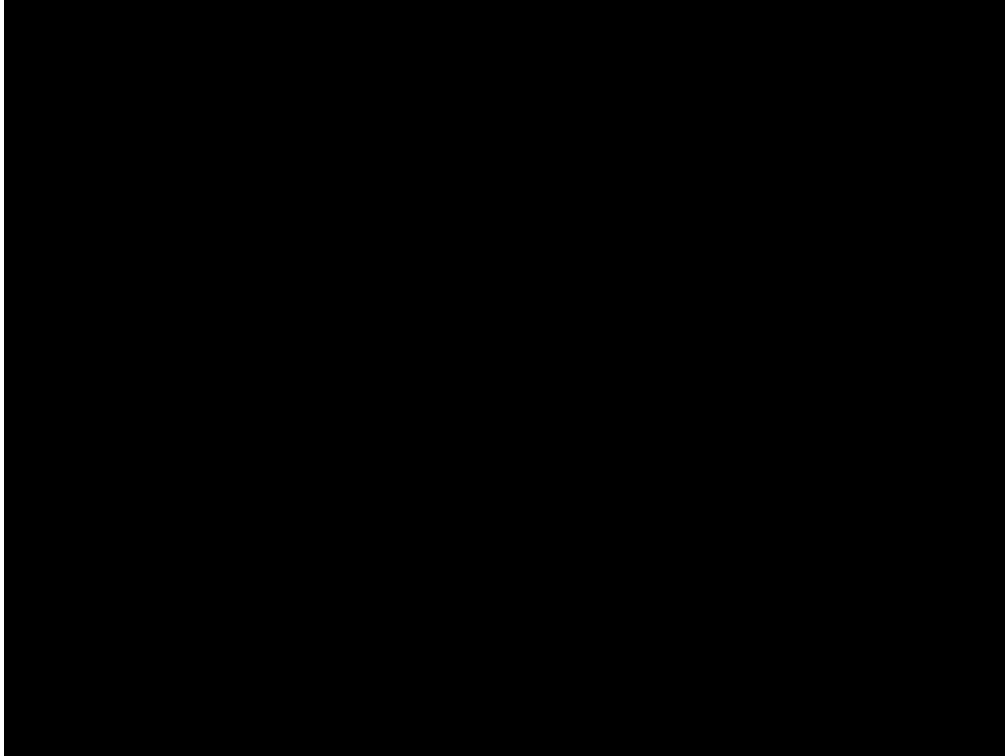
Crane Company Building, Rear (South) and East Elevations, Looking North.



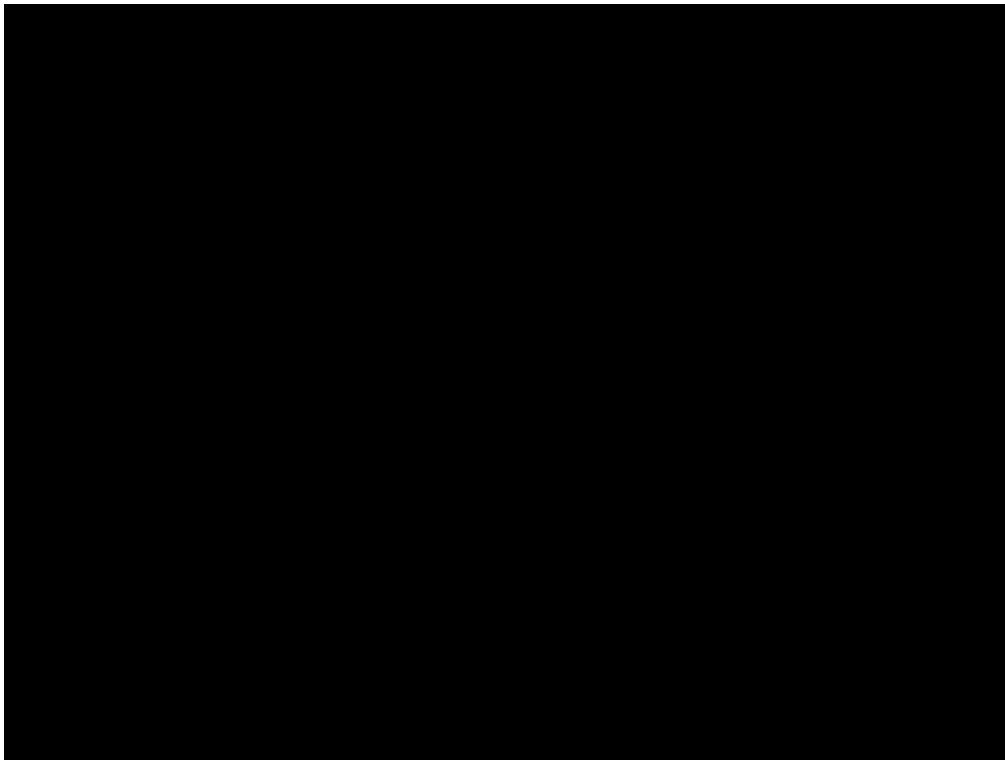
Crane Company Building, West Elevation, Windows, Looking East.



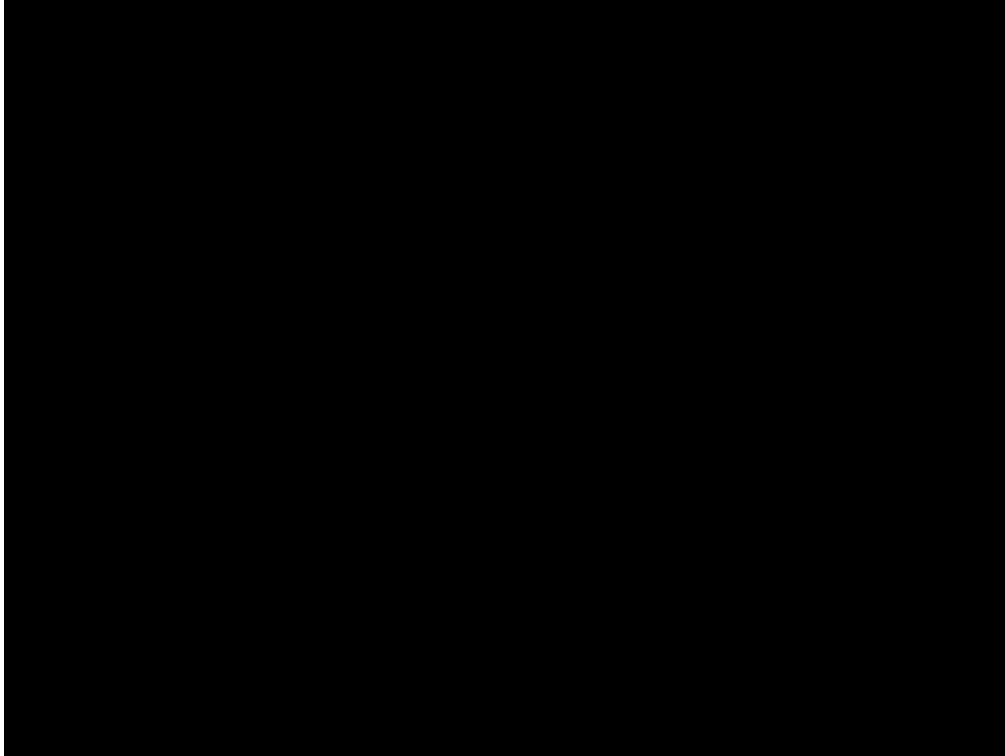
Crane Company Building, First Floor Hall, Looking North.



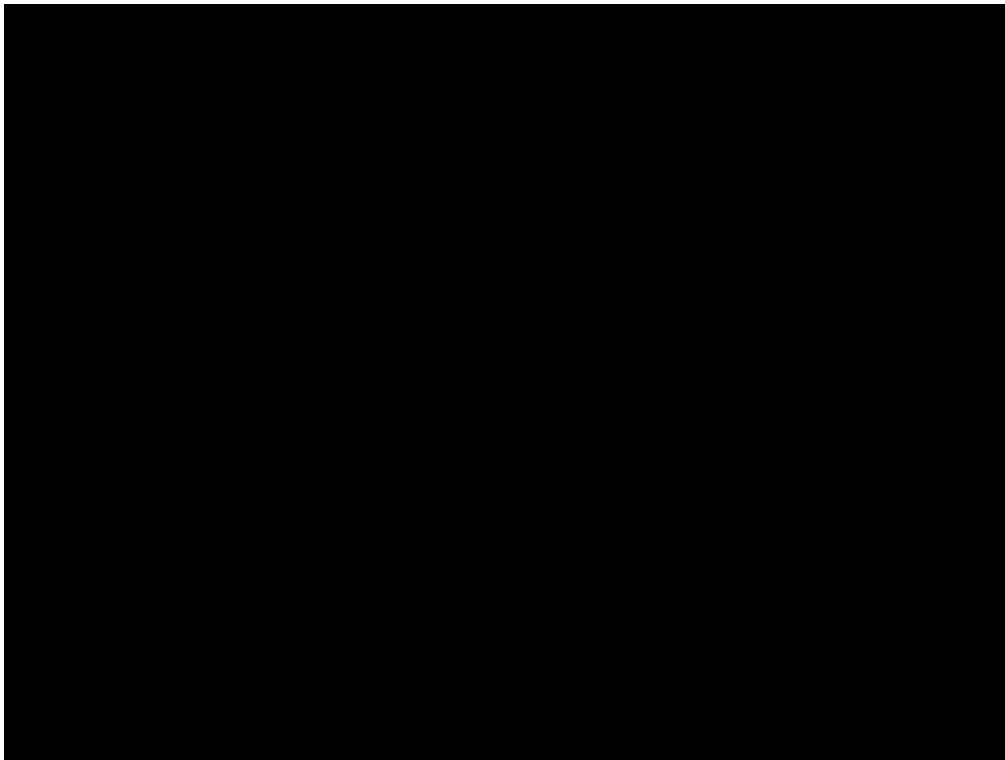
Crane Company Building, Renovated Office Space.



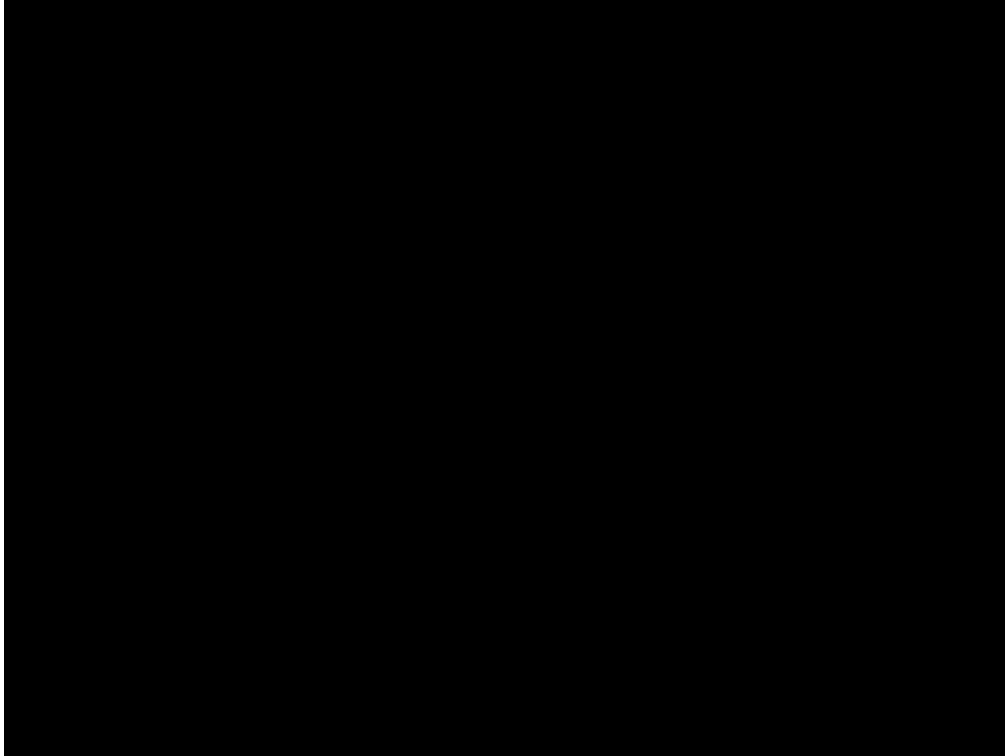
Crane Company Building, Renovated Office Space.



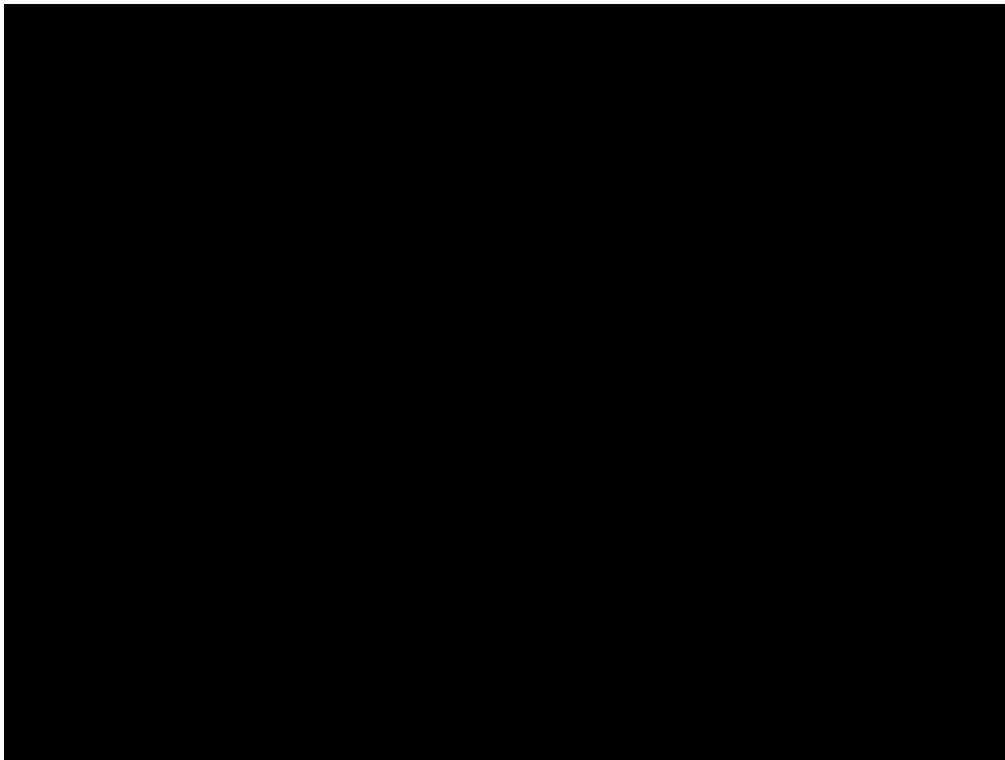
Crane Company Building, Original Freight Elevator at Rear Doorway.



Crane Company Building, First Floor Space.



Crane Company Building, Modern Stairway.



Crane Company Building, Rooftop View, Looking East Towards Downtown Charlotte.