



THE NEW FOLEY'S, HOUSTON, TEXAS



EMPIRE ROOM, RICE HOTEL, HOUSTON, TEXAS

Above: Vintage postcards of architect Kenneth Franzheim's work. Below: Bank of the Southwest Building (1955).



Endangered City

Franzheim Alert!

THE GREATER HOUSTON PRESERVATION ALLIANCE has nominated Kenneth Franzheim's 1952 Prudential Building at 1100 Holcombe to the National Trust for Historic Preservation's list of America's 11 most endangered historic places for 2002. The Trust will announce the list in June.

The very real possibility that M.D. Anderson Hospital will raze this great building (See "Modern Landmark Endangered" in *Cite 52*) starkly dramatizes how little of Franzheim's work we have left, and worse, how little it is appreciated.

Kenneth Franzheim moved to Houston in the 1930s, bringing a high New York style to the Bayou City. The Empire Room, the great art deco night club on the Rice Hotel's ground floor, demonstrated to Houstonians just how good he was.

Foley's at 1100 Main, completed in 1947, is arguably Franzheim's best work; it received a national AIA design award in 1950. The building's original Raymond Loewy interiors are long gone, but the exterior is original.

The Capital National Bank and garage (1955) is still at 1300 Main, though it has undergone recent large-scale upgrades to attract more tenants. Franzheim would probably be sympathetic: He took on many remodeling jobs himself, including the Hermann Professional Building at 6410 Fannin, and the Phase Two addition to the old Texas Company/Texaco Building at 720 San Jacinto.

Franzheim's largest downtown commission, the Bank of the Southwest Building at 910 Travis, is still mostly original above street level, although the great Rufino Tamayo mural *America*, commissioned for the second floor banking lobby, now graces the Dallas Museum of Art. The streamlined, continuous canopy that made the entire surrounding sidewalk a shelter from sun and rain did not survive the gentrification efforts of new owner Bank One in the mid-'90s.

At this point it seems as if the corporate landlords are better stewards of the Franzheim legacy than the institutional owners. Maybe it is only logical: Kenneth Franzheim was Houston's ultimate corporate architect. — Barry Moore

The Metropolis



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