

## Feature Story



# Historic Building Makes Comeback as Condominium

Concrete Cutting Allows Dramatic Changes While Preserving Structural Integrity

San Antonio, Texas is ripe with history, especially in the city's busy downtown area. History buffs, casual tourists and locals alike flock to famous attractions like the River Walk and the Alamo. Another popular area of interest is the King William district, a section of downtown that holds some of the largest and oldest homes in the city. The neighborhood is comprised of hundreds of homes dating back to 1840. Within this district lies the former corporate headquarters of Tobin Surveys, a mapping company started in 1928 by famed mapping and aerial photography pioneer Edgar G. Tobin.

Tobin won acclaim for being the first person to successfully map most of southern United States. His maps were so trusted for their accuracy that geologists and landmen commonly use the word "Tobin" as a generic term in place of map. During World War II, Tobin served as a

civilian aide to General Arnold of the Army Air Corp while the company dedicated its resources to the U.S. Army Map Service as it created maps for the invasion of North Africa and

Normandy. The company is still in business today under the name Tobin International, Ltd. but has relocated and opened several locations around the world. When the corporate office relocated, the company left behind a 6-story building that was a prized piece of San Antonio history and a prime piece of real estate in downtown San Antonio.

The Tobin building was purchased in 2001 by another well-known businessperson, Linda Pace — the former owner of Pace Picante Sauce. Pace's plans for the building were to renovate

it into condominium loft space with gardens, art-oriented community rooms and a restaurant called the Blanco Café. The



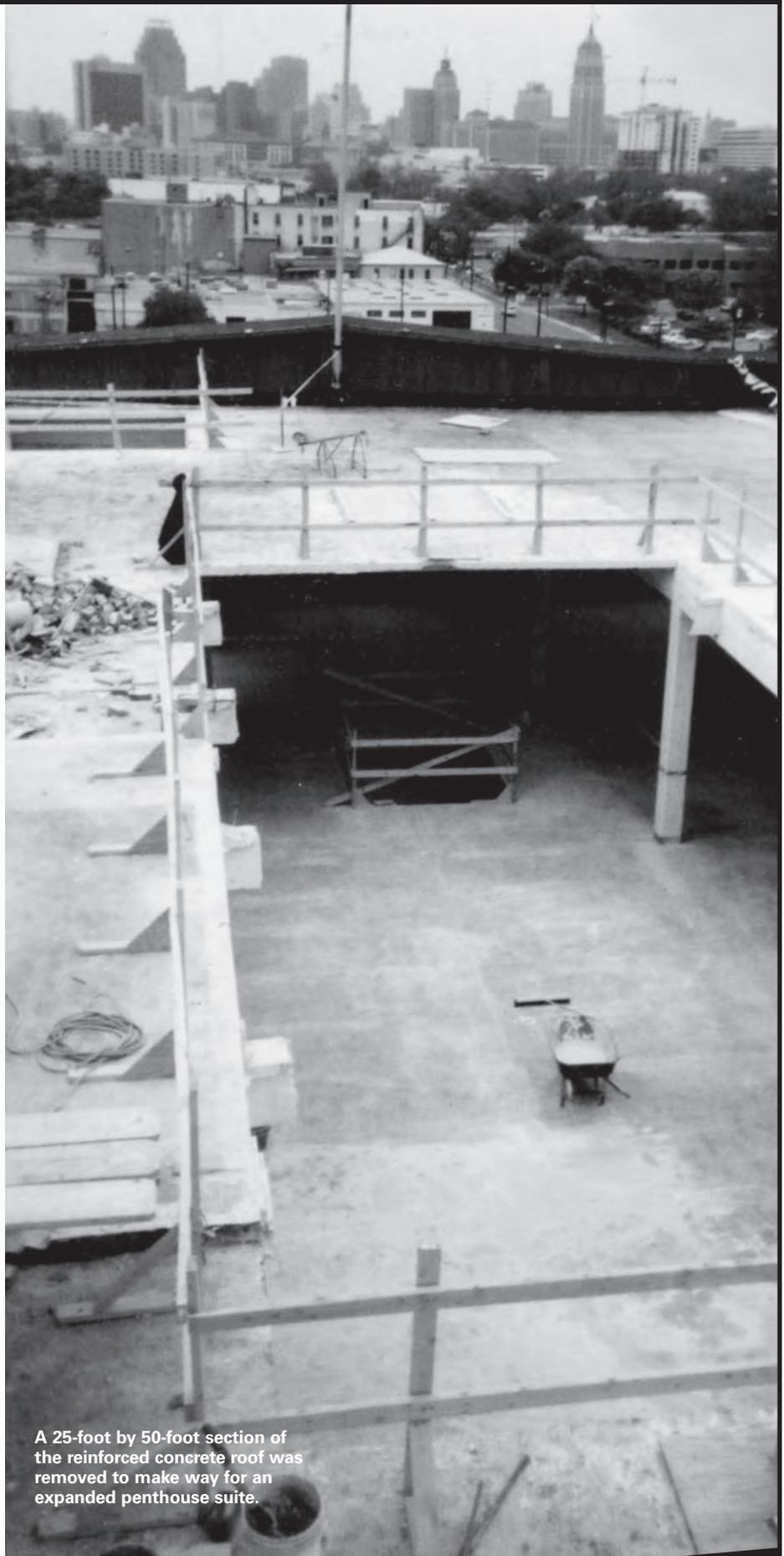
development, named the Camp Street Lofts, included 20 lofts ranging from 1,000 to 4,800 square feet and were priced at \$95.00 to \$125.00 per square foot.

Linda Pace retained general contractor Metropolitan Contracting Company of San Antonio, Texas for the renovation of the building. A vital part of the project would involve cutting numerous openings throughout the building's floors and walls for the installation of new elevators as well as the installation of new mechanical and electrical systems. Metropolitan Contracting called on CSDA member Holes of San Antonio in 2001 to assist them with the preliminary planning and budget for this project and in the Spring of 2005, the plans were finalized and construction started.

The general contractor specified concrete cutting with diamond tools because this method would best preserve the structural integrity of the building dating to 1940 as well as be able to accommodate the tight tolerances and construction schedule. The original structure proved to be quite fragile, so concrete cutting was a noninvasive way to meticulously remove the concrete without disturbing the surrounding structure. Concrete breaking tools could have created the openings, but the risk of damage to the remaining structure would have been too high.

The first phase for Holes Inc. operators involved creating an opening in the roof so the building could be expanded to include a penthouse suite for the owner of the property. To accomplish this, operators began by cutting and removing a 50-foot by 25-foot section of the concrete roof and beams. The concrete was 6 inches thick and reinforced with No. 4 rebar on 12-inch centers. The section to be removed was shored, cut into pieces using a Meco 35-HP, 3-speed flat saw and then craned off the roof and removed from the job site. All rigging and removal was done by Holes of San Antonio including the contracting of the crane and crane operator.

After the roof opening was completed, Holes operators had to cut and remove a



A 25-foot by 50-foot section of the reinforced concrete roof was removed to make way for an expanded penthouse suite.

**Top Left: Concrete cutting was non-invasive and did not compromise the structural integrity of the 60-year-old building.**

**Bottom Left: The roof opening was shored from below prior to being cut with a 35-HP flat saw.**

**Right: Holes of San Antonio also performed the rigging and removal on this job.**



small mechanical room atop the roof. This mechanical room housed equipment for the elevator and measured approximately 15 feet by 12 feet by 10 feet, including a 6-foot-thick concrete roof with an 8-inch by 12-inch concrete joist, 12-inch by 12-inch concrete columns and brick walls. The structure was cut into pieces using a wall saw and hand saws and then craned off the roof with a 75-ton crane.

Once this work was completed, an opening was cut into the basement wall so the site work contractor could access the area with his heavy equipment. After the exterior of the building basement was excavated, operators were able to use a wall saw to cut out a 20-foot by 15-foot section of 12-inch-thick concrete for access into the basement. The opening was cut into sections then lowered to the ground, broken up and removed.

The biggest factor complicating the job was the number of other contractors working on the building simultaneously. Holes operators were cutting openings on every floor of the building, so they had to maintain strict control over their safety for their own protection and the safety of all other workers on the job. Daily meetings were held with all workers on the job site to keep them informed of what Holes operators were doing. Each opening was given a 25-foot no-entry perimeter with a spotter/guard and was also taped off. Upon completion of each opening, the hole was immediately covered and made safe. This method proved successful as no one was injured and there were no near misses.

Holes had an average of four operators working on this job per day. They cut a total of 25 openings in the floor of the building and 12 openings in the walls. The

job was completed in three weeks without any complications. The new condo is expected to open later in 2005. ●

#### COMPANY PROFILE

Holes of San Antonio, Inc. is a full-service concrete sawing and drilling company founded in 1977. The company serves south and central Texas and with 25 employees and 15 trucks. Services include core drilling, flat sawing, wall sawing, hand sawing, grinding, decorative sawing, demolition, grooving and specialized concrete placement. The newest service offered is Structure Scanning. Holes of San Antonio has been a CSDA member since 1993.

#### RESOURCES

**General Contractor:**  
**Metropolitan Contracting Company**  
**San Antonio, TX**  
**Sawing & Drilling Contractor:**  
**Holes of San Antonio**  
**San Antonio, TX**  
**Methods Used: Flat Sawing**  
**Tel: 210-349-5256**  
**Fax: 210-349-0727**  
**Web: [www.holesofsa.com](http://www.holesofsa.com)**  
**e-mail: [georgejr@holesofsa.com](mailto:georgejr@holesofsa.com)**