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United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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NATIONAL REGISTER

National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name U.S. Inspection Station  
other names/site number U.S. Border Station; Old Customs Building

2. Location

street & number 12 Heffernan Avenue  not for publication  
city, town Calexico  vicinity  
state California code CA county Imperial code CA 025 zip code 92231

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>2</u>	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	_____	_____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	_____	_____
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	_____	_____
		<u>2</u>	_____
			Total

Name of related multiple property listing: \_\_\_\_\_  
Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: \_\_\_\_\_

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  See continuation sheet.  
Gladys Torres - Camp for Doll Langme 10/23/91  
Signature of certifying official Date  
GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  See continuation sheet.  
Stacie A. Craiga August 23, 1991  
Signature of commenting or other official Date  
California Office of Historic Preservation  
State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:  
 entered in the National Register. Autawilla Place 2/14/92  
 See continuation sheet.  
 determined eligible for the National Register.  See continuation sheet.  
 determined not eligible for the National Register.  
 removed from the National Register.  
 other, (explain:)

for Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

**6. Function or Use**

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

GOVERNMENT/Custom House

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

GOVERNMENT/Custom House

**7. Description**

Architectural Classification  
(enter categories from instructions)

Spanish Colonial Revival

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete

walls Stucco

roof Tile

other Wood

Terra Cotta

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

Summary

The U.S. Inspection Station complex at Calexico, California is a customs and immigration station on the U.S.-Mexico border. The complex is located on the corner of First Street and Heffernan Avenue in downtown Calexico. It is surrounded by commercial development on the north and west and a small park on the east. To the south is the Republic of Mexico and the commercial area of Mexicali, Baja California. The complex, constructed in 1933, consists of a main Customs building; an adjacent attached Public Health Annex; and a separate independent structure designated as the Garage and Inspection shed.

The buildings are examples of the Spanish Colonial Revival style, and possess many of the typical characteristics of the style (according to Whiffen, American Architecture Since 1780): red-tiled roofs, wrought iron balconies, arched openings and exterior walls finished in stucco. The buildings are an exceptional example of the use of regional styles and materials in the federal buildings of the 1930s. In this context it is similar to the Spanish Colonial Revival style border station at Tecate, California (1933) and the Pueblo Revival border station at Naco, Arizona (1936). The Calexico border station, even with alterations, retains a high degree of its original integrity of design.

Overall Appearance

The main Customs building is a two-story rectangular structure with a full basement, 95 feet long by 40 feet wide. The Public Health Annex, located at the southeast of the main Customs building, is a one-story structure whose overall length is 68 feet and width is 37 feet. The annex shares a common wall with the main building which results in an "ell-shaped" plan configuration. The Garage and Inspection shed, a single story structure, measures 43 feet square and is separated from the northeast corner of the main building by a 9-foot-wide concrete walkway.

Construction materials for all of the buildings are similar. The exterior perimeter walls are built of unreinforced brick masonry covered with light cream color stucco. Roof materials are either clay roof tile or composition roofing.

Exterior Features - Main Building

The two-story main Customs building has a simple gable roof covered in clay roof tile. The tile is mission type, red with a wide range of color, and is laid at random lengths. A stucco chimney (with the terra cotta flue lining extended) is at the north end. Another stucco chimney (later addition) is located slightly north of this. Copper hanging gutters and downspouts are found on the west and east elevations. The 3" x 4" downspouts have a larger five-sided copper head.

An interesting visual feature is the cupola centered on the roof of the building. The cupola is constructed of reinforced concrete and steel pipes, with terra cotta facing, and extends ten (10) feet above the roof ridge. Octagonal shaped in plan, the cupola has eight hexagonal shaped terra cotta columns with a rectangular cobalt blue terra cotta panel at the top of each column face. A clay tile tent roof supports a narrow hexagonal terra cotta ornament topped by a wrought iron rod. Copper flashing lines the base of the cupola.

**8. Statement of Significance**

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally     statewide     locally

Applicable National Register Criteria     A     B     C     D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions)     A     B     C     D     E     F     G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Politics/Government

Ethnic Heritage - Hispanic

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Period of Significance

1932-1941

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Dates

1933

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Cultural Affiliation

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

U.S. Treasury Department

\_\_\_\_\_

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

Summary

The U.S. Inspection Station in Calexico is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under criterion "A" for its role in Politics and Government as a custom house, where U.S. policies for international political and economic relations have been directly implemented on a continuing basis since 1933. Also to be considered under this criterion is the significant impact the building and its function have had on the Hispanic ethnic heritage of the region. The building has been the site of the immigration of thousands of new citizens of Hispanic heritage. It is appropriate that along with the recent restoration of Ellis Island, other U.S. Ports of Entry be recognized for their historic significance. In addition, the U.S. Inspection Station has been instrumental in the economic trade of the region, which depends on the free flow of goods and services across the border; and exemplary of the exchange of cultural ideas and traditions which also flow freely across the border.

The station is also eligible under criterion "C" as a significant example of Spanish Colonial Revival architecture as interpreted by the Depression-era federal building program under which it was constructed. The U.S. Inspection Stations at Calexico and at Tecate, (built shortly after the Calexico Station), are fine examples of the adaptation of regional architectural style and details to suit an important government function. The Period of Significance dates from 1932, the beginning of construction, through 1941, which reflects the end of the historic period as defined by the National Register.

Background History

The history of the town of Calexico, California begins and continues today to be ruled by its location on the U.S.-Mexico border. The town's history began in 1900 when the construction of a canal was being studied and planned to bring the Colorado River to the Imperial Valley. It was decided that the canal take a route through Mexico and back to California. The California Development Company was organized to oversee construction of the canal. On February 12, 1900 Charles N. Perry, an engineer on the canal project, selected the site for the surveyor's camp which grew to become the new town of Calexico. George Chaffey, the financier of the irrigation project, donated 160 acres of land for a settlement. The offices of the company attracted other development. The founding of Calexico was reported in the San Diego Union of October 7, 1901. The article, titled "A New Town Started on International Boundary", stated that the first work to be done was to cultivate land quickly for ranch and farming operations. The paper reported that the town was "started just at the point where the big ditch of the Imperial Company crosses the border." The settlement, which grew into Calexico, was located just north of the boundary line between California and the Mexican state of Baja California.

The names Calexico and Mexicali (Calexico's twin city across the border) have been credited to L.M. Holt, the publicity director for the Imperial Land Company and a friend of George Chaffey. The Imperial Land Company was instrumental in the development of several towns in the vicinity in the early 1900s including Imperial, Brawley, El Centro and Holtville.

See continuation sheet

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

BIBLIOGRAPHY

BOOKS

Chase, J. Smeaton. California Desert Trails. Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1919.

Farr, F.C. Ed. History of Imperial County. Berkeley: Elms and Franks, 1918.

Henderson, Tracey. Imperial Valley. San Diego: Neyenesch Printers Inc., 1968.

Livernois, Joe. Hetzel the Photographer: Impressions of Imperial Valley. Fresno: Pioneer Publishing, 1982.

Short, C.W. and Stanley-Brown, R. Public Buildings: Architecture Under the Public Works Administration 1933-39, Volume I. New York: Da Capo Press, 1986.

Whiffen, Marcus. American Architecture Since 1780. Cambridge: M.I.T. Press, 1988.

See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository:  
See continuation sheet  
(Bibliography)

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreeage of property 0.57 Acres

UTM References

A 1, 1 6, 4, 15, 8, 2 3, 6, 1, 49, 8, 0  
Zone Easting Northing

B \_\_\_\_\_  
Zone Easting Northing

C \_\_\_\_\_

D \_\_\_\_\_

See continuation sheet

**Verbal Boundary Description**

Lots 5, 6 and 7 and the westerly 27.45 feet of lot 4 of block 73. This is the portion between the east line of Heffernan Avenue and a line 147.45 feet easterly from and parallel with the east line of Heffernan Avenue. The northern boundary is the south line of First Street. The southern boundary is 36 feet north of the U.S./Mexico international boundary line.

See continuation sheet

**Boundary Justification**

The boundaries of the site are those indicated on the original plans for the U.S. Inspection station at Calexico (Drawing 1 or 16, dated November 9, 1931) which have not changed.

See continuation sheet

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Leonard M. Kliwinski, Project Manager and James C. Wilson AIA, Principal  
organization Thirtieth Street Architects, Inc. date 1/10/91; rev. 3/20/91  
street & number 2821 Newport Boulevard telephone 714-673-2643  
city or town Newport Beach, Ca. 92663 state California zip code 92663

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Typical windows throughout the building are 6/6 wood sash double hung windows with painted wood trim. The fenestration pattern is generally symmetrical on all elevations. The windows on the second floor measure 4'-0" wide by 6'-2 3/4" high. A continuous 5-inch-wide terra cotta belt course runs at the sill level. The first floor windows measure 4'-0" wide by 7'-7 1/4" high and have terra cotta lug sills. A concrete cement finish base runs between exterior grade and floor level at the first floor.

The west (front) elevation contains a 2'-4" deep bay at both north and south ends on the first floor. Each bay contains a pair of typical windows and has a clay tile roof. A narrow window divided into four lights is on each side of the bay. A wrought iron ventilation grille is under the sill of the south bay.

The main building entrance is slightly set back at the center of the building. The entrance setback has a 6"x 6" matte face tile jamb and head. A row of tiles surrounds the entrance, flush with the building (at the front of the setback). The wood double entrance doors contain twelve lights each, with a fixed 36 - light leaded glass transom above. A multicolored leaded glass shield is centered in the transom.

A cornerstone is laid flush with the stucco, at the northwest corner of the building, directly above the concrete base. The cornerstone, laid on April 13, 1933 (see Construction History), reads in incised letters:

OGDEN MILLS  
SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY  
FERRY K. HEATH  
ASSISTANT SECRETARY  
JAMES A. WETMORE  
ACTING SUPERVISING ARCHITECT  
1932

The original porte cochere (removed in 1962) is documented in the 1932 drawings. A series of four 4'-4" wide concrete islands, with 7'-6" wide drives between, ran parallel to the west elevation extending from the front entrance. Each island contained four concrete columns faced with 6"x 6" matte tile in tan with a wide range of color. The columns had decorative terra cotta caps. Two pilasters of similar design were attached to the building. The columns were topped with a concrete beam and wood joist platform faced with concrete with tile inserts and a terra cotta cornice. The construction was topped with composition roofing. Concrete balusters were placed around the perimeter of the top with wrought iron railing between. The top of the balusters was at the second floor window sill height.

The existing portico was built in 1975. It is an abbreviated replica of the original porte cochere, consisting of the pilasters, one row of columns and the concrete platform, balusters and wrought iron rail above. The wrought iron rail with decorative center pieces is identical to the original and may be reused historic fabric. The remainder of the portico is similar in proportion and spirit to the original, although the column caps are simplified and tile is laid on a diagonal. This portico, although not an original part of the building, is a vast improvement on the steel column-and-truss canopy which existed from 1962 to 1975. This visual intrusion extended far into the front lot and detracted from the historic character of the building.

The east (rear) elevation of the main building contains a symmetrical fenestration pattern on both floors. On the second floor, the second window from the north side had been removed in 1965. A metal fire door was installed in the opening, and a metal fire escape stair and rail to the ground level was installed. The rear entrance door is at the

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center of the first floor. The original 9-light, 2-panel door has been replaced by a flush wood door. The door is covered with a wood frame hood roofed with clay tile and supported by wood brackets. There is a 1' - 6" wide by 4' - 0" high window on each side of the door.

There is a 4-foot-wide light well (to below grade) in front of the east elevation running to within 19 feet of the north end. The basement wall of the east elevation is exposed at this opening. The basement windows are symmetrically located below those of the first floor, and are of the same type. The wall below grade level is exposed, unpainted concrete. A metal pipe rail, which has since been removed, originally stood on the concrete curb at the edge of the opening.

The north (side) elevation of the main building contains three typical windows at each floor. Three small arched tile louvers are located in the center above the second floor windows. Narrow wrought iron balconies are located at the center second floor window and the two end first floor windows. A decorative tile insert composed of four tiles in a diamond shape is located between the first and second floor center windows. At both side elevations the pitch of the gable roof is clearly visible. The south side elevation of the main building contains tile louvers identical in style and location to the north elevation. The second floor contains one typical window, at the west end. The main feature on the first floor is a slightly set back entrance located at the west end. The original opening was enlarged in 1954 and aluminium double doors and a transom with clear plate glass were installed, in place of the original wood 6 - light door and 8 - light transom. A new tile hood was constructed to match the original. The original wrought iron hanging lantern is to the west of the entrance. The lantern, hexagonal in plan with amber crackle glass, hangs from a wrought iron bracket. The remainder of the first floor is primarily the Public Health Annex which is described below.

#### Exterior Features - Public Health Annex

The one story Public Health Annex has a simple gable roof over the west portion, covered in clay roof tile, with the same pitch as the main building. The east portion of the annex has a flat composition roof with a clay tile border. The south elevation is the primary elevation of the annex. Two arched tile louvers are located below the roof ridge on this elevation. An entrance is centered on the west gable-roofed portion. An aluminum door and transom replaces the original wood and glass door and transom. A wood and tile hood with wood brackets is above the door. A wrought iron lantern, described previously, hangs to the west of the door. A typical first floor window is at either side of the entrance.

The east portion of the south elevation is set back 4-1/2 inches. The height of this portion is considerably lower due to the flat roof. The only features of this elevation are a series of 3' - 2" wide by 3' - 8" high wood frame windows with four lights. There are one single and three pairs of these windows. The side wall of a 1970 wood shed addition is visible to the west. A redwood canopy was installed over the entrance to the addition on the south elevation.

The north elevation of the annex contains two pairs and one single window as described on the south elevation. At the east end is a wood door with 8 lights and transom above. At the very east end is the blank stucco side wall of the small room projecting on the east side of the annex.

The 1970 addition is clearly visible at the east elevation. It is a wood shed type structure with a flat roof and one door. The tile roof hoods of the original entrances are visible above the low roof of the addition.

The west elevation contains three of the typical 6/6 first floor windows. A decorative tile insert is found on either side of the center windows approximately one foot above the window head.

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Exterior Features - Garage and Inspection Shed

The north and south elevations of the garage building are similar. Both contain four arched openings, with steel angle guards on either side of each opening painted cream to match the stucco. The openings on the south elevation contain the original paneled wood overhead doors. One of the doors has been fixed in the upright position, the opening partially filled in and a door added. The openings on the north elevation have been filled in on the exterior. The overhead doors are retained in a fixed upright or closed position on the interior. A door has been added in each end arch.

The north elevation facing First Street contains a terra cotta cartouche (a shield and ribbon) in the center at roof level. A copper downspout is located at each end.

The east and west elevations are similar. The only features on these elevations are two wood frame double hung 6/6 windows.

Interior Features

The original layout and functions of the building are described in a Calexico Chronicle article of June 10, 1932:

At the southwest corner of the new building on the first, or ground floor pedestrians from Mexico will pass first the Immigration department's quarantine and public health department which will extend eastward in a one-story wing containing personal inspection, physical examination, disinfecting departments and rest rooms for men and those for women. There will also be a laboratory room. This department will be the headquarters of Dr. A.L. Rice who is in charge of the quarantine department. There will also be a space at the rear of the ward for the disinfecting and fumigation of baggage.

Next to this division to the north will be the Immigration inspection front where pedestrians will show their passports to inspectors. In the rear of this will be Immigration work rooms.

Occupying the north half of the Heffernan Avenue front will be the Customs inspectors, inspection room and work rooms.

The basement plans call for a detention room for the Customs, one or more for the Immigration, a room for guards, a matron's room and women's detention room, a Customs bonded and general merchandise room and a fuel room.

In the second story will be Immigration offices and inspection rooms, office for the agricultural department where O.A. Pratt and his inspectors will have headquarters, headquarters for the Customs Border Patrol, general work rooms and office rooms for stenographers and clerks.

All of the interior partitions are of wood stud construction. Interior doors are generally of three types. The most prevalent door is wood with two wood panels and a large obscure glass panel. These doors have a clear glass transom above which is hinged at the bottom to swing in the same direction as the door. Another common door type is the five-panel wood door. The third type, found in the basement, is a four-panel wood door with a small metal grille located below the top panel. The majority of these wood doors, located in the basement, are clad in metal for security reasons, since the basement housed the detention rooms.

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The first floor of the main building has been altered with the addition of new partition walls, drop ceiling, fluorescent lighting and carpet and the removal of original walls (see the sketch plans). A central corridor running east to west and a wood stair exist in the original condition. The original public spaces to the north and south of the corridor have been divided into private offices. These spaces have a 6" x 6" red fire-flashed tile floor in a wide range of color with a cement border. There is a wood base, trim and picture mold. Walls and ceiling are plastered. There was originally a wood counter between the public area and the private work spaces on either side of the corridor. The remaining spaces on the first floor (the original private work spaces) have a wood floor. A vault with a metal door, cement floor and unplastered walls and ceiling exists in the northwest corner office.

The second floor has a central corridor running north to south with offices on either side. Mens' and womens' restrooms are located across from the central stair. The finishes are similar to the first floor private spaces: wood floor, base, trim and picture mold and plastered walls and ceilings. A new partition wall has been added to the offices at the north and south ends of the floor. The restrooms have new fixtures and tile floor and new carpet and lighting has been installed throughout the floor.

An attic above the second floor ceiling contains a four foot high ventilated crawl space. Insulation covers the underside of the roof as well as the top side of the ceiling. A catwalk extends the length of the structure from north to south.

The basement contains a central corridor running north to south. The corridor originally ended at a closet on both ends. The north closet has been removed and the corridor runs directly to the fuel room, which contains a gas furnace and air compressor. The boiler room and storage rooms are located on the west side of the corridor. On the north side are detention rooms, toilet rooms and concrete stairs. The fixtures in the womens' room have been removed. Cement floors and base and plastered walls and ceilings are found in the basement.

Many of the interior partition walls in the Public Health Annex have been removed. The original shower rooms and dressing rooms at the east end are no longer extant. New showers, toilets, lavatories and ceramic tile floor have been installed. The walls in the west end have been removed with the exception of the two toilet rooms (one remodeled into a closet) and the wall running north to south contiguous with the east wall of the main building. The original wood floor has been covered with vinyl floor tile. Several original wood doors exist along with the wood base and trim.

The interior of the Garage and Inspection shed remains virtually intact. The building is divided into two equal spaces by a masonry wall running east to west. One partition wall has been added in the north (Inspection shed) side. New lighting has been added. The interior finish remains painted exposed brick as originally specified.

Continuously occupied since its construction, the U.S. Inspection Station has performed different functions since the new Border Station opened in 1974. At this time the Public Health Division and Customs Patrol moved out; the annex and second floor were used for storage. The annex currently houses the Investigation Unit of the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS). The Examination Branch of the INS moved into the main building north side in 1988. The Amnesty Division located in the south side shortly after. The second floor is currently being remodeled for offices of the U.S. Customs Service and the INS. The basement rooms other than the mechanical rooms are currently used for storage.



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The public entrance lobby and stair is the only interior space on the first floor which can be identified as contributing to the historic significance of the building. The lobby possesses historic integrity through its retention of original walls, ceiling, wood stair and rail, floor tile, doors and trim, and ceiling light fixtures. The remainder of the first floor interior can not be considered as contributing since, due to alterations, it no longer reflects the original character of the building.

The entire second floor can be identified as contributing. With the exception of two walls which are a later addition, the walls and ceiling are original. The historic doors, door and window trim and base are, for the most part, intact. The recent installation of new carpet and lighting fixtures does not detract from the integrity of the second floor space.

Alterations

Modifications have been made to the exterior and interior of the building, but have not significantly altered the historic character of the building. The dates of the alterations are noted unless unknown. The alterations are graphically shown in sketch plans which accompany this report. The exterior alterations are as follows:

1. The original porte cochere at the west elevation of the main building was removed in 1965. It was replaced with a steel canopy which was subsequently removed and replaced in 1975 with the current portico.
2. One window at the second floor of the east elevation was removed; a metal fire door and fire escape were installed in 1965.
3. The original wood and glass panel door on the east elevation of the main building has been replaced with a flush wood door.
4. The original wood and glass panel door and transom on the south elevation of the main building has been replaced with aluminum double doors and transom (ca. 1954).
5. A metal pipe rail at the east elevation of the main building has been removed.
6. The flagpole in front was relocated and the original free standing sign was removed in 1958.
7. A wood shed addition with redwood trellis was built at the east end of the public health annex in 1970. The original exterior double doors of the building were removed.
8. The original wood and glass panel door and transom were replaced with an aluminum door and transom on the south elevation of the Public Health Annex (Ca. 1954).
9. On the north elevation of the Garage and Inspection shed the openings have been filled in on the exterior, but set back so the original arches are still visible. The original overhead doors are in a closed or open fixed position. New doors have been installed in two openings. One new door was installed on the south elevation.
10. Vertical wrought iron decorative elements were placed on each side of the windows throughout the building.

Interior alterations include the following:

1. A majority of the original lighting fixtures have been replaced.
2. The original tile or wood floor has been covered with carpet in many areas.
3. On the first floor of the main building, new partition walls and doors have been added to divide the public space on each side of the corridor into offices. Existing partitions were removed to create open work space. A drop ceiling was added. The original corridor, stair, toilet rooms, floors, base and trim remain. This work was done in 1975. (See sketch plan for extent of work).
4. Double doors from the main entrance vestibule have been removed.
5. On the second floor of the main building, new partition walls have been added in the northwest and southwest corner rooms.
6. New stalls and fixtures have been installed in the toilet rooms on the second floor.

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7. In the basement, fixtures have been removed from the womens' toilet.
8. The closet at the north end of the basement corridor has been removed and a door added to the fuel room beyond.
9. A new partition wall has been added in the Customs room at the southwest of the basement.
10. The original door at the northeast end of the basement corridor has been removed and a new door installed nearby.
11. Showers and counters in the east end of the Public Health Annex were removed and new asphalt tile floors installed in 1958.
12. All partition walls in the east end of the annex have been removed to create an open space (ca. 1958-63).
13. Partition walls in the west end of the annex were removed in 1970, except for the toilet rooms and the wall contiguous with the east shell wall of the main building.
14. The annex toilets have been remodeled, one with new fixtures and the other altered into a closet (1975).
15. A new partition wall has been added in the annex (1975) dividing the annex into three spaces. New showers, toilets and ceramic tile floor were added in the center space at this time.
16. A new partition wall has been added in the north end of the garage.

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The rich productive soil of the settlement was the first in the Imperial Valley to be irrigated and improved. The town site was plotted and laid out in lots in 1903. Two of the founding businessmen subsequently had streets named after them in the vicinity of the subject building (U.S. Inspection Station). Dr. W.T. Heffernan, a merchant (Heffernan Avenue) and E.H. Rockwood, a realtor (Rockwood Avenue) were both on the Board of City Trustees. In 1908 the town was incorporated and grew rapidly, due to its success in farming and in border traffic and trade. Mexicali was created soon after Calexico and grew immensely and quickly to become the capital of Baja California.

### The Border and its Importance

The importance of the border to the development of the region is exemplified by the government's establishment of a customs office in October 1902. This was before the actual town was laid out in 1903 and before the arrival of the Southern Pacific Railroad in 1904. The Mexican customs house opened in 1904.

The first U.S. customs house was located on the border on Imperial Avenue. It was moved to Heber Avenue, then to Rockwood and First Street, before being located at the site of the 1933 U.S. Inspection Station at First Street and Heffernan Avenue.

Border trade increased rapidly to the point where, according to the History of Imperial County (1918), "for two years the imports through the port of Calexico have exceeded those of Los Angeles, San Diego and Tijuana combined." It was reported in the same publication that "in time (Calexico) will contain the federal offices that will be required to take care of the growing business incidental to an important port of entry and border station." This prediction was realized in 1933 with the construction of the U.S. Inspection Station.

Calexico's population grew rapidly during the early years, from 500 in 1908 to 6,290 in 1930. During the Prohibition era of the early 1930s the border closed at 9 p.m. due to the lobbying efforts of temperance supporters. This did not slow down the arrival of tourists to Calexico eager to visit and party in Mexicali, a town with a wild reputation. In fact the grandest hotel in town, the Hotel de Anza, was built in 1931 at the height of the Depression. The impressive Spanish Colonial Revival building, located just three blocks from the 1933 Inspection Station, was the site of many social activities, Chamber of Commerce meetings and official government meetings regarding the construction of the new federal station. The Hotel de Anza is still open, with most of its original Spanish style furnishings intact.

The border traffic continued to grow, spurring on the growth of Calexico. In a single five year period (1942-47) there was a 300% increase in pedestrians and export shipments. It was this growth, which was also typical of the preceding years, that required the construction of the new border station in 1933. The construction history is discussed in a separate section.

The 1933 facility was in use as a border crossing station until 1974 when the new border gate at Rockwood Avenue was constructed. As reported in Calexico's Economic Development (1970) the new station may prove to be inadequate for future traffic needs. The report states an additional border crossing station would relieve the congestion of the downtown area and stimulate new commercial and economic development in all portions of Calexico.

### Federal Building Program

The federal agency responsible for the construction of the U.S. Inspection Station at Calexico in 1932 was the Public Buildings Branch of the Procurement Division of the U.S. Treasury Department. This agency was responsible for an enormous construction program undertaken by Congress and the Hoover administration in the late 1920s and early 1930s. During this period some 1300 new civil federal buildings were erected across the country, nearly doubling the number under the aegis of the Treasury Department. The Procurement Division was responsible for the design and construction of post offices, courthouses, federal office buildings, quarantine and immigration stations and border

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inspection stations including those in Calexico and Tecate, California. The total appropriation for the federal building program amounted to \$700 million. With the announcement of the awarding of the contract for the Calexico station on June 16, 1933 the Calexico Chronicle quoted W. Arthur Newman (Supervising Architect for the Pacific Coast) as saying "A new federal building is being completed every other day in the U.S. on the average. According to Lois Craig in The Federal Presence: "In terms of establishing the image of the United States government, this program was the most important undertaken since the first few decades under the Constitution."

The massive construction effort was designed to serve three functions. First, it represented fiscal pragmatism and was calculated to reduce the rising rental costs incurred by the growing number of federal agencies in leased space. The program also afforded Congress an opportunity to distribute local political favors in the form of new federal government buildings. Finally, under the deepening shadow of the Depression, the building program in the later years was intended to provide jobs for the local unemployed. In addition to the Inspection Station, the 36-mile long All American Canal through the Imperial Valley was another of the building program's accomplishments in the Calexico area. A predecessor to numerous New Deal programs (President Franklin D. Roosevelt took office during construction of the Calexico Border Station), Hoover's building program was later absorbed within the Public Works Administration.

In the Procurement Division the Acting Supervising Architect from 1915 to 1933 was James A. Wetmore. A graduate of the Columbia Law School, Wetmore was not himself an architect, the reason for the "Acting" before his title; design direction for the office was given by the Superintendent of the Architectural Division Louis A. Simon, a stylistic traditionalist who later succeeded Wetmore as Supervising Architect - the Treasury's last. The architects responsible for the design of specific federal buildings of this period were not individually credited. The belief was that since the buildings were created for the public and as expressions of the public will, the success of each project was not due to an individual talent or genius but was the product of many individuals including architects, draftsmen, laborers and craftsmen.

According to Short and Stanley-Brown in Public Buildings, the federal buildings of this program are designed with great simplicity and a very sparing use of ornament, emphasis being placed on line, good composition, scale and proportion. The rather rigid requirements in space and arrangement of federal projects have made innovations in plan rare. In general, however, the buildings are well and economically planned. Short and Stanley-Brown, in discussing the high quality of the structures built through this program, mention several other characteristics applicable to the U.S. Inspection Station at Calexico: local tradition in design has been observed as far as possible, most of the materials used were obtained from the state in which the project was located, very few new materials have been used, and the "modern" influence is less pronounced in Federal than in non-federal work.

#### Construction History

The construction history of the U.S. Inspection Station at Calexico is very well documented, especially through the local newspaper, the Calexico Chronicle. Any story regarding the building was given front page status.

The earliest reference found to the building is in the January 28, 1932 edition of the Chronicle. It was announced at this time that plans would be completed and bids invited for the new federal inspection building in May 1932. At this time the government had not yet received a deed to a portion of the building site on the west side of Heffernan Avenue. This land contained the concrete floor and foundations of the former Gateway Hotel which was razed the previous year. It was reported that the Chinese owner of the property was expected to confirm the transaction within a few days. The remainder of the building site contained the one-story City Jail, which was to be moved.

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Construction of the Calexico station was threatened when it was announced on April 11, 1932 that Treasury appropriations may be cut 10% in a Senate Bill. Public building projects would be the major recipient of this budget cut. E.M. Beidleman, Director of the Calexico Chamber of Commerce, protested the cut and declared the government obligated to complete the building. The building was determined to be so important to the community that a group of local businessmen raised a \$40,000 fund for purchase of the land to make construction possible. This combination of civic pride and financial assistance apparently caused the government to guarantee the construction of the station. On April 15, 1932 Frank Dow, Acting Commissioner of Customs, reported that the appropriation was available, plans were being rushed, and bids should be requested in one month. Further guarantee for the building came in an amendment to the previously mentioned Senate Bill. This amendment stipulated that when the Treasury appropriation was cut, 250 federal building projects would not be affected, Calexico included.

It was reported on June 1, 1932 that the completed plans had been formally approved. On June 24 demolition began on the site. The concrete floor of the former Gateway Hotel building was torn out. The moving of the women's ward of the City Jail was underway and the site was expected to be cleared by July 15.

On August 15 the Chronicle reported that "Calexicans are anxious to see the beginning of construction of the government building." It was pointed out that the property was cleared and ready for actual work. The contract, in the amount of \$61,882, (exclusive of furnishings and cost of land) was awarded to Associated Constructors of Los Angeles. The announcement on November 3 stated that the firm had 360 days to complete construction.

Work started on the building on December 12, 1932. At a ground breaking ceremony Mayor Ike Schlatter turned the first shovelful of earth. Soon after, it was reported that local carpenters insisted that Calexico workers and artisans be given work on the building. In fact, several local firms were ultimately involved in the construction (See Appendix A).

A cornerstone ceremony was held on April 13, 1933. The Chronicle reported "when completed, the federal line building.... will afford United States officers and citizens spacious, convenient and well lighted offices in which to conduct customs and immigration business on the boundary." The Chronicle also printed a complete list of the sub-contractors involved in the building (Appendix A).

Inspection of the building was completed on November 2 and 3, 1933 by W. Arthur Newman, U.S. Building Inspector and Supervising Architect for the Pacific Coast. At this time delayed delivery of office furniture and fixtures were holding up occupancy. Landscaping was also yet to be completed. Total cost, including furnishings, small items and architectural fees, was announced as approximately \$100,000, and is listed as \$108,000 in the GSA records.

Public Open House was held at the border station on the evening of November 27, 1933. Federal officers were to move in the following day. In an announcement of the Open House, the Chronicle wrote "this should be a large evening for .... all who went out and got the money to buy the site which made this beautiful building possible." The Open House proved to be bigger and better than expected. With expectations of 200 -300 people, the actual turnout was close to 1,000 people. The Chronicle reported "our neighbors from over the line seemed to be very happy about the building. Certainly the completion of this building is another milestone in the march of progress."

The formal dedication of the building took place on December 19, 1933. "This is the beginning of a big city", W.B. George, collector of Customs, congratulated and forecasted a great future for Calexico. "This momentous occasion really is the beginning of a permanent city and a greater future for Calexico." Mayor Ike Schlatter declared the building's permanency was guaranteed to establish Calexico as the foremost city in the Imperial Valley. Attending

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the ceremony were officials from both Mexicali and Calexico, visiting federal officials from the coast, and interested citizens. Members of the Chamber of Commerce filmed motion pictures of the ceremony to be shown at the Fox Capital Theater two weeks later.

The importance of the new building to the community is apparent throughout this history. Public interest was so strong in the well-respected building that four public celebrations were held during the construction: ground breaking ceremony, cornerstone laying, Open House night, and dedication ceremony. The official praise for the building and the front-page newspaper descriptions illustrate the high esteem in which the new community landmark was held.

Appendix A

Calexico Chronicle, April 13, 1933

A complete list of the firms which are furnishing materials for the building include:

Marble - Vermont Marble Company, Los Angeles  
Tile - Berger Eldridge, Los Angeles  
Roofing materials - Godbe Roofing Company, Los Angeles  
Terra cotta - Pacific Clay Products, Los Angeles  
Hardware - Yale and Towne, Hartford, Conn.  
Rough hardware - Imperial Valley Hardware, Calexico  
Lumber - Calexico Lumber Company, Calexico  
Joist anchors - Bill's Blacksmith Shop, Calexico  
Cornerstone - McGilvray Raymond, Los Angeles  
Overhead doors - Wilson Door Company, Los Angeles  
Engineering - Phil Knight, El Centro  
Photos - R. Castillo, Calexico  
Excavation - Lehman, Holtville  
Steel - Blue Diamond Steel Company, Los Angeles  
Cement - Riverside Cement Company, Riverside  
Gravel sand - Lehman, Holtville  
Structural steel - Bethlehem Steel Company, Los Angeles  
Steel erectors - Wright and McNeil, Pomona  
Brick work - Ray Tingley, Los Angeles  
Brick - Davidson Brick Company, Los Angeles  
Brick cement - Colton Cement Company, Colton  
Plaster - Newfield Brothers, Los Angeles  
Plumbing - J. Cummins, Los Angeles  
Electric wiring - W. Ferguson, El Centro  
Sheet metal - Sid Blackman, Calexico  
Paint - McKinley Paint Company, Beverly Hills  
Glass - Tyre Bros., Los Angeles  
Ornamental Iron - Dietzgen, Los Angeles  
Fencing - Southern California Fence Company, Los Angeles  
Hardwood flooring - McCall Company - Los Angeles  
Insulation - Insulite Company, Los Angeles

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NEWSPAPERS

Calexico Chronicle. All relevant articles on Page 1.

1932: January 28, April 11, April 13, April 15, April 20, June 1, June 24, July 12, August 15, August 19, November 3, December 1, December 12, December 15.

1933: January 5, January 9, January 11, February 24, March 28, April 11, April 13, June 16, September 28, October 11, November 2, November 15, November 23, November 27, November 28, December 14, December 18, December 19, December 20.

Imperial Valley Press. December 19, 1933, p. 3.

San Diego Union. October 7, 1901, p. 4; March 29, 1936, Expo supplement, p.7.

PAMPHLETS

Annual International Desert Cavalcade of Imperial Valley, 1948 and 1951.

California's Imperial Valley. San Diego: MARCOA Publishing Incorporated, 1990.

PUBLIC DOCUMENTS

Calexico. A Model City on the United States-Mexico Border. Application for Model Cities Planning Grant by City of Calexico, 1967.

Calexico's Economic Development. Prepared by Rural Development Corporation, Los Angeles, 1970.

OTHER

National Register of Historic Places. Inventory-Nomination Form. Federal Building, Las Vegas, NV. (n.d.)

URS/John A. Blume & Associates, Engineering. Seismic Hazard Study-Border Station. Prepared for General Services Administration, Region 9, San Francisco.

U.S. Treasury Department, Procurement Division. Floor Plans, Elevations and Alterations for the U.S. Inspection Station, Calexico, California, dated 1932 to 1975, provided by the General Services Administration, Region 9, San Francisco.

REPOSITORIES OF ADDITIONAL DATA

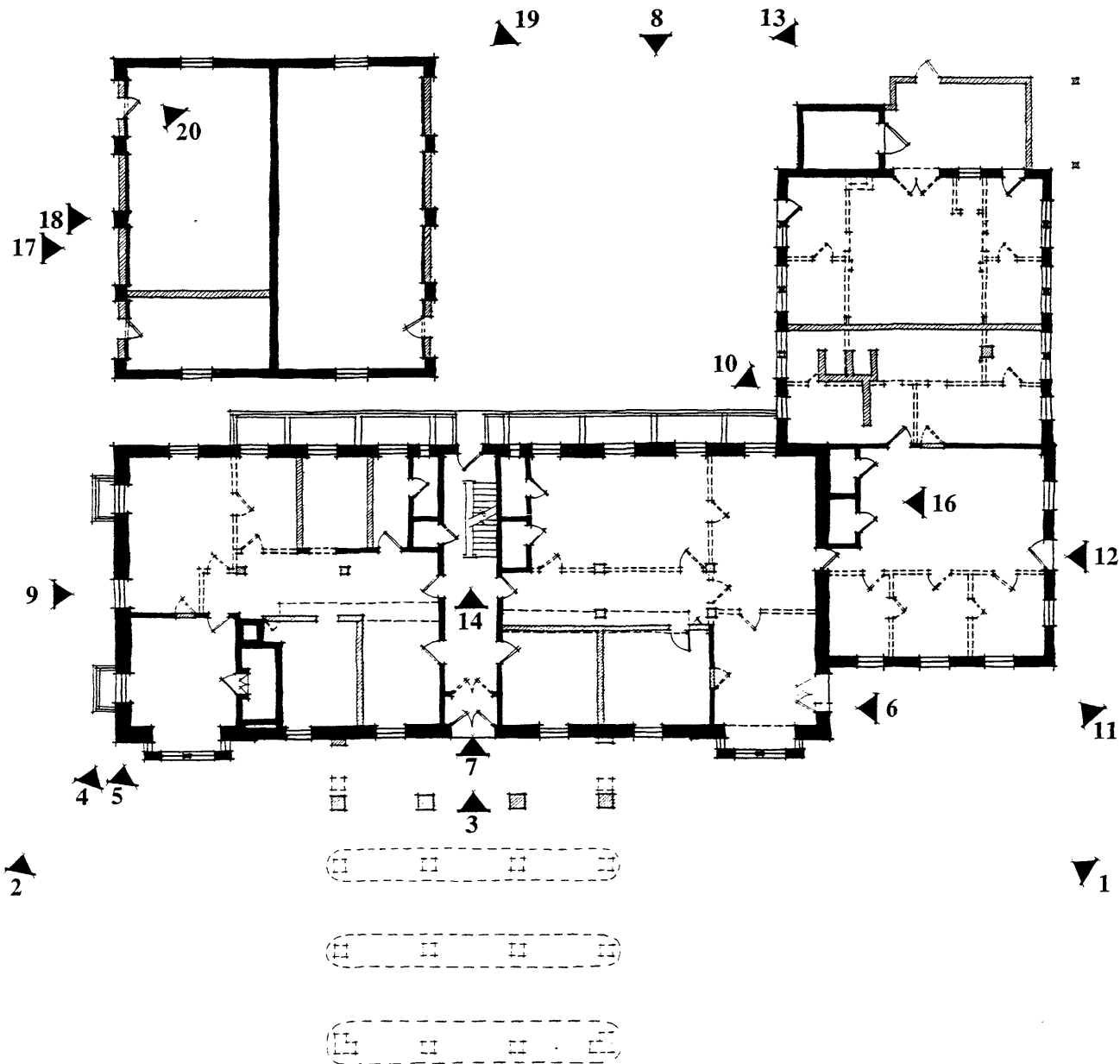
Enrique S. "Kiki" Camarena Memorial Library, Calexico, California.

General Services Administration, Region 9, San Francisco, California.

Museum of San Diego History and Research Archives, San Diego, California.

San Diego Public Library, California Room, San Diego, California.

San Diego State University, Imperial Valley Campus, Main Library, Calexico, California.

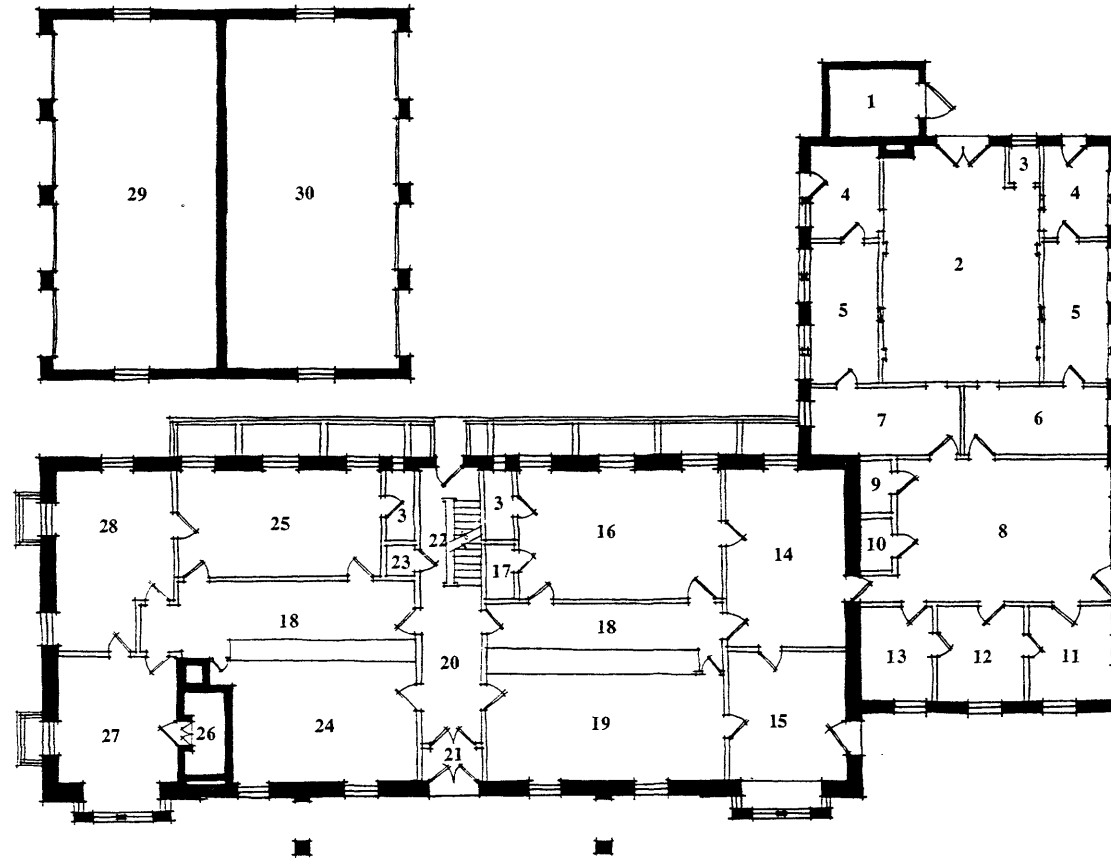


PHOTOGRAPH LOCATION KEY  
(FIRST FLOOR PLAN)

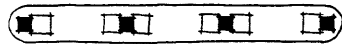




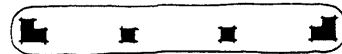
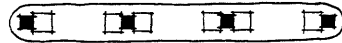
U.S. INSPECTION STATION  
CALEXICO, CA.



1. BAGGAGE FUMIGATION
2. DISINFECTING ROOM
3. TOILET
4. DRESSING ROOM
5. SHOWER ROOM
6. MEN'S UNDRESSING ROOM
7. WOMEN'S UNDRESSING ROOM
8. PUBLIC HEALTH WAITING ROOM
9. MEN'S TOILET
10. WOMEN'S TOILET
11. GENERAL QUARANTINE OFFICE
12. PHYSICAL EXAM ROOM
13. LABORATORY
14. IMMIGRATION EXAMINING ROOM
15. IMMIGRATION INSPECTOR
16. IMMIGRATION WORK SPACE
17. CLOSET
18. WORKING SPACE
19. IMMIGRATION PUBLIC SPACE
20. CORRIDOR
21. ENTRY VESTIBULE
22. STAIRS
23. JANITOR'S ROOM
24. CUSTOMS PUBLIC SPACE
25. CUSTOMS WORK ROOM
26. VAULT
27. DEPUTY COLLECTOR
28. CUSTOMS OFFICE
29. INSPECTION SHED
30. GARAGE
31. PORTE-COCHERE



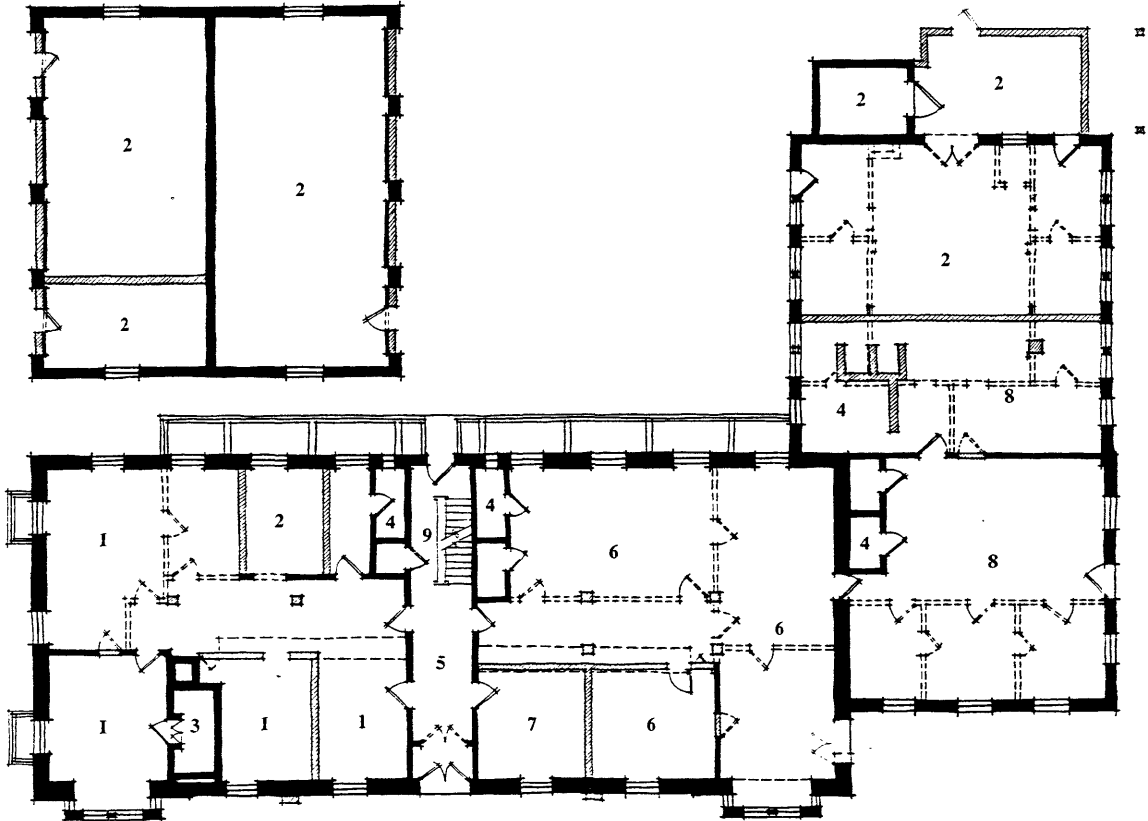
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ORIGINAL FIRST FLOOR PLAN (1932)

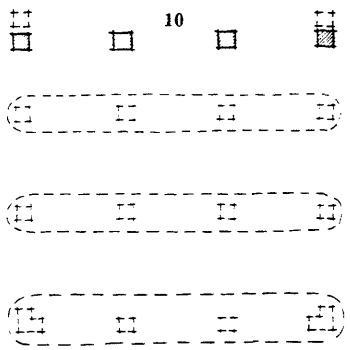


U.S. INSPECTION STATION  
CALEXICO, CA.



- 1. EXAMINATION BRANCH
- 2. STORAGE
- 3. VAULT
- 4. TOILET
- 5. CORRIDOR
- 6. AMNESTY DIVISION OFFICES
- 7. LUNCH ROOM
- 8. INVESTIGATION UNIT OFFICES
- 9. STAIRS
- 10. PORTICO

- - - - ORIGINAL WALLS THAT HAVE BEEN REMOVED
- █ ORIGINAL WALLS THAT ARE REMAINING
- ▨ NEW WALL CONSTRUCTION



EXISTING FIRST FLOOR PLAN (1990)

