(Oct. 1990)

United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES **REGISTRATION FORM**

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

HISTORIC NAME: Las Vegas Municipal Building OTHER NAME/SITE NUMBER: City of Las Vegas Museum and Rough Rider Memorial

2. LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER: 727 Grand Avenue **CITY OR TOWN:** Las Vegas **STATE:** New Mexico **CODE: 47**

COUNTY: San Miguel

NOT FOR PUBLICATION: N/A VICINITY: N/A **ZIP CODE: 87701**

3. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this x 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 does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally x meets statewide x locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official

State Historic Preservation Officer

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION I hereby certify that this property is: signature of the Keep Date of Action entered in the National Register 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):

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Date

5. CLASSIFICATION

OWNERSHIP OF PROPERTY: Public-local

CATEGORY OF PROPERTY: Building

NUMBER OF RESOURCES WITHIN PROPERTY:	CONTRIBUTING	Noncontributing
	1	0 buildings
	0	0 sites
	0	0 structures
	0	0 objects
	1	0 Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: $\boldsymbol{0}$

NAME OF RELATED MULTIPLE PROPERTY LISTING: The Historic and Architectural Resources of the New Deal in New Mexico

6. FUNCTION OR USE

HISTORIC FUNCTIONS: GOVERNMENT: government office

CURRENT FUNCTIONS: RECREATON AND CULTURE: museum GOVERNMENT: courthouse

7. DESCRIPTION

ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION: LATE 19th AND 20th CENTURY REVIVALS: Pueblo

MATERIALS: FOUNDATION CONCRETE WALLS SANDSTONE ROOF SYNTHETICS OTHER WOOD

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION (see continuation sheets 7-5 through 7-9).

8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

APPLICABLE NATIONAL REGISTER CRITERIA

- <u>x</u> <u>A</u> PROPERTY IS ASSOCIATED WITH EVENTS THAT HAVE MADE A SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTION TO THE BROAD PATTERNS OF OUR HISTORY.
 - **B** PROPERTY IS ASSOCIATED WITH THE LIVES OF PERSONS SIGNIFICANT IN OUR PAST.
- _X_C PROPERTY EMBODIES THE DISTINCTIVE CHARACTERISTICS OF A TYPE, PERIOD, OR METHOD OF CONSTRUCTION OR REPRESENTS THE WORK OF A MASTER, OR POSSESSES HIGH ARTISTIC VALUE, OR REPRESENTS A SIGNIFICANT AND DISTINGUISHABLE ENTITY WHOSE COMPONENTS LACK INDIVIDUAL DISTINCTION.
- **D** PROPERTY HAS YIELDED, OR IS LIKELY TO YIELD, INFORMATION IMPORTANT IN PREHISTORY OR HISTORY.

CRITERIA CONSIDERATIONS: N/A

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE: Social History; Architecture

Period of Significance: 1940-1957

SIGNIFICANT DATES: 1940

SIGNIFICANT PERSON: N/A

CULTURAL AFFILIATION: N/A

ARCHITECT/BUILDER: Kruger, Willard C., Clark, Kenneth S. (Kruger and Clark), architects

NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE (see continuation sheets 8-10 through 8-13).

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES

BIBLIOGRAPHY (see continuation sheet 9-14).

PREVIOUS DOCUMENTATION ON FILE (NPS): N/A

_ 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:

<u>x</u> State historic preservation office (Historic Preservation Division, Office of Cultural Affairs)

- _ Other state agency
- _ Federal agency
- _Local government
- _ University
- _ Other -- Specify Repository:

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF PROPERTY: less than one acre

UTM REFERENCES Zone Easting Northing 1 13 480700 3939160

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION A triangle located in the northeast corner of Block 20 of the San Miguel Town Company Addition, Las Vegas, San Miguel County, measuring 130 feet on the northerly side, 150 feet on the westerly side and 200 feet on the easterly side, fronting on Grand Avenue as depicted in Figure 7-1.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION The nominated property includes the entire parcel historically associated with the municipal building.

11. FORM PREPARED BY NAME/TITLE: David Kammer, Ph.D. **ORGANIZATION:** Consulting historian **DATE:** June. 2007 STREET & NUMBER: 521 Aliso Dr. NE **TELEPHONE: (505) 266-0586** STATE: NM CITY OR TOWN: Albuquerque **ZIP CODE: 87108** ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION **CONTINUATION SHEETS** MAPS (see attached Las Vegas N. Mex. USGS quadrangle map) **PHOTOGRAPHS** (see continuation sheet Photo-15) ADDITIONAL ITEMS N/A **PROPERTY OWNER** NAME: City of Las Vegas STREET & NUMBER: P.O. Box 160 **TELEPHONE: 505-454-1401 CITY OR TOWN:** Las Vegas STATE: NM **ZIP CODE: 87701**

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Las Vegas Municipal Building Las Vegas, San Miguel County, New Mexico

Description

The Las Vegas Municipal Building is located on an acute triangular parcel with its principal façade facing eastward to Grand Avenue. The building consists of two distinct masses. A rectangular two-story north wing with an east-west axis is located in the base of the triangle, and an irregular four-sided one-story wing extends to the south. Constructed during 1939-40 as a Works Progress Administration (WPA) project, the building is the only example of a New Deal-era structure in Las Vegas employing elements of the Spanish-Pueblo Revival style. With a sandstone foundation and an excavated fenestrated basement providing the lower story of the twostory mass, the building has a flat roof with parapets and walls faced with random-coursed ashlar sandstone. Two of the three public entries are similar and located at the top of concrete stairways situated at the east and west ends of the two-story mass. The third entry faces on the east facade of the building's south wing and is marked by a porch, or *portal*, generously imbued with Spanish-Pueblo Revival details. With the sandstone and wood posts used in its construction obtained locally, the building typifies the efforts of many WPA projects to use materials supplied by the local sponsoring authority. In 1965, when the building's south wing was remodeled to house the City of Las Vegas Museum and Rough Riders Memorial Collection, interior walls of former offices were removed to create exhibition galleries. Minor alterations to transoms and sidelights were made at the two public entries of the north wing as well. None of these alterations, however, substantially diminished the integrity of the building's exterior, and the building retains its feeling as a WPA public works project, especially with regard to its location, design, materials, workmanship, and association.

Site

Following voter approval in April 1938 of a bond issue to fund construction of a new municipal building as a WPA project, in November of that year city leaders selected Taupert Park as its site. A triangular parcel, created by the platting of the San Miguel Town Company Addition at oblique angles to the grid plat between Railroad and Grand Avenues to the east, the park lined Grand Avenue, designated in 1926 as U.S. 85. The plans for the building prepared by the firm of Kruger and Clark acknowledged the constraints imposed by the triangular parcel with the east-west section of the building extending along its northern base and the south wing narrowing at the acute south angle of the parcel. They also incorporate the gradual incline of the parcel as it rises from the acute south angle at 4th Street and Grand Avenue to higher ground along National Avenue. The roofline of the one-story wing, on the same plane with the excavated lower story of the northern section, steps up at the two-story wing, suggestive of the higher ground to the north.

Building

The building has a sandstone foundation, most apparent along the north wall where single nine-light metal casement windows with concrete sills and lintels are situated along the upper wall of the partially excavated basement. Since the building's construction, some of those windows have been truncated with a brick facing

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placed over the lower lights to ameliorate ground drainage. All of the building's walls are faced with randomcoursed ashlar sandstone that was locally quarried. A continuous sandstone parapet periodically broken with wood drains, or *canales*, extends around both sections of the flat roof as well as the stepped *portal* extending along the entry façade of the one-story section.

All of the windows other than sidelights added during the alteration of the two public entries in the twostory section are single metal casement windows with the number of lights varying from nine in basement windows to 40 in large windows along the north façade. Originally with a dark bronze finish, the window casings are now painted white, and, in some instances, glazing has been painted to compensate for reorganization of interior spaces including exhibition cases in the museum now located in the one-story section of the building. Concrete lintels and sills denote each window.

Each of the three deeply recessed public entries has been altered with the original multi-light doors replaced by wood panel doors. The replacement doors in the two-story section are single, and the door in the one-story section is double. The doors of the former section have sidelights and transoms although they are also replacements. A former coal chute is located along the west wall of the two-story section, and a panel door along the south basement wall of the two-story section offers access to the former electrical room. A large portal extends along the east façade of the one story-section. Nearly eight ft. wide and 45 ft. long the *portal* is punctuated with four wood columns topped by double corbels, or *zapatas*, and a wood beam. Slightly tapered openings headed with a corbel and beam are located at each end of the *portal*. Roof beams, or *vigas*, formerly extending beyond the parapet wall have been cut back to the plane of the parapet.

Asymmetrical in its plan, the building's two sections contain approximately 9,600 square feet, with the two-story section having 3,128 square feet on each floor and the one-story section 3,240 square feet. A wide interior corridor with oak floors connects the two main entries accessible from exterior concrete stairways flanked by low sandstone walls. Access to former basement office spaces, now a single space created by the removal of interior walls, is from a corridor along the same axis as the above corridor. Both the floor of the lower story and the floor of the one-story section are concrete. A corridor extending through the one-story section is perpendicular to the axial corridor of the northern section and is connected by a wide finished-concrete with tile interior stairway.

No details are included in the WPA project records or city council minutes regarding specific landscape details. The concrete walkways leading to the exterior stairways of the north section of the building and the maturity of the few Siberian elms and evergreens located on the triangular parcel, however, suggest landscape practices associated with other WPA urban park projects carried out in New Mexico (Kammer 1994: 45, 60-62). Since the completion of the building, the subsequent widening of U.S.85 resulted in the elimination of landscape details, including a planting strip, along Grand Avenue. More recently, other areas of the original landscape have been allowed to decline or removed in favor of low maintenance hard surfaces.

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Integrity

In 1965, the building was remodeled to house the city's museum as well as several municipal offices including those of the city clerk and manager, military recruiters, the Chamber of Commerce, and, more recently, the municipal court. To accommodate museum galleries, the interior walls of offices in the one-story section were removed as were those in the basement of the north section, now a storage area for the museum's holdings not currently exhibited. It was during this remodeling that entry doors and sidelights were replaced. In subsequent years, other reversible finishes were added to interior walls. None of these alterations have substantially altered the historic appearance of the building's exterior or its plan.

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Las Vegas Municipal Building Las Vegas, San Miguel County, New Mexico

Figure 7-1:Site and Ground Floor Plan (2007) (outside line depicts the boundary of the
property)



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Figure 7-2: Site and Basement Floor Plan (2007)



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Las Vegas Municipal Building Las Vegas, San Miguel County, New Mexico

Statement of Significance

The Las Vegas Municipal Building was constructed as a WPA project during 1939 and 1940. Although numerous WPA projects had been undertaken in Las Vegas from the inception of the WPA in 1935, the growing New Deal bureaucracy and the city's need for office space prompted leaders to seek voter approval for bonds to finance the construction of a municipal building in April, 1938. Selecting a city-owned site to reduce project costs, a city council-appointed building committee enlisted the Santa Fe architectural firm of Kruger and Clark to prepare plans for the project. Despite cost overruns and the need for a subsequent bond issue and additional WPA funding, over the next two years workers on relief using local materials and regional building details completed the building completed as a New Deal project in the city. For the building's association as a WPA project, and its subsequent use as office space for city agencies as well as those created under the New Deal, the building meets the requirements outlined in *The Historic and Architectural Resources of the New Deal in New Mexico* Multiple Property Documentation Form and is eligible under Criterion A. For its regional style unique to New Deal projects completed in Las Vegas, the building is also eligible under Criterion C.

Context

The coming of the railroad to Las Vegas in 1879 stimulated Las Vegas' development as a trading and shipping center, and over the next few decades it emerged as one of the leading communities in the Territory of New Mexico (Kammer 1986: 303). Despite these successes, fostered, in part, by active civic boosters, Las Vegans remained divided, largely along ethnic lines. Reflecting these divisions, in 1895 the eastern portion of the community located near the railroad depot incorporated as the City of Las Vegas. The western largely Hispanic section remained oriented around the plaza and incorporated as a town in 1903 (Perrigo: 88). Although consolidation of the two communities would not occur until 1970, numerous WPA projects were undertaken in the two communities with both municipalities and other government entities serving as local sponsoring agencies.

Surveying Las Vegas' needs for New Deal initiatives, Las Vegas historian, Lynn Perrigo, notes that San Miguel County was particularly affected by the Great Depression. During the depression's early years "devastating local droughts" challenged local charities such as the Sisters of Loretto, the Sisters of Charity, the Salvation Army, the Charles Ilfeld Fund and other eleemosynary organizations to provide food and supplies to destitute families. Further impacting the Las Vegas area were the many destitute families who abandoned their homes in small rural villages and moved to the urban area in order to be closer to the modest relief provided by these private charities. When the New Deal began in mid-1933, the first governmental relief administrators recorded over 700 applicants for direct relief during the single month of October (Perrigo: 63).

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It was within this dire social and economic context that Las Vegas emerged as a sub-district headquarters of District One of New Mexico's statewide WPA program. WPA records indicate that while the area's major institutions, Highlands Normal School (now Highlands University) and the New Mexico State Asylum (now New Mexico Behavioral Health Institute) were the recipients of several WPA projects, the City of Las Vegas was the sponsoring authority for many projects as well. These included park, road and sewage improvements, construction of a fire station, and, in 1939, construction of a new airport (Kammer 1994: B-59).

As these projects developed between 1935 and 1938, the growing state bureaucracies created as a result of New Deal program requirements as well as the city's needs for office space made it apparent to city leaders that Las Vegas also required a new public office building. As a result, in the spring of 1938 when the city council presented voters with five bond issues, one was for \$7,500 "for the construction of a public building to be occupied by the offices and departments of the City of Las Vegas" (City Council Minutes 4/18/38: 249). Following voter approval, the council appointed a seven-person building committee that approached the Santa Fe-based architectural firm of Kruger and Clark to prepare plans for the new municipal building.

The selection of Willard C. Kruger and Kenneth Clark was determined, in part, because both men had previously worked on numerous WPA projects with Kruger serving as the State Architect for the WPA in 1936 and 1937 and Clark serving as the Assistant State Architect from 1935 to 1938. Both had extensive experience designing public buildings, and both were familiar with the vocabulary of regional design that typified public building projects under various New Deal programs in New Mexico (Kammer 1994: 53-55). Now engaged in private practice, Kruger and Clark continued to design buildings for municipalities and public institutions as a succession of New Deal projects were funded.

By November 1938, they had completed preliminary plans for the municipal building. Reflecting the widespread use of a regional architectural style that characterized the majority of New Deal-sponsored public construction in New Mexico, the plans incorporated elements of the Spanish Pueblo Revival style, substituting locally quarried stone for the more commonly used adobe bricks and brown stucco facing. This choice may have reflected the designers' appreciation of the widespread use of stone in San Miguel County where the availability of sandstone often resulted in high masonry foundations even when adobe was used in upper walls.

The minutes of the city council reveal that during the summer and fall of 1938 there was public debate as to the selection of the site for the building (City Council Minutes 10/3/38: 341). The desire to lower the city's share of the cost of the project by using land it already owned was compelling, however, and the plans, tailored to a triangular parcel, suggest that city leaders had already made a strong commitment to the site at Taupert Park. Deeded in 1892 by Lewis Forte and his wife to what was then the Town of East Las Vegas, by 1921 the parcel became a municipal park named after a prominent local businessman and former mayor, Robert Taupert, and appears in a 1923 aerial photograph as a wooded plot. With Grand Avenue, designated as U.S. 85 in 1926, lining the parcel to the east, the site was located along the city's emerging automobile commercial strip. The

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location was, no doubt, attractive to city boosters, particularly the Chamber of Commerce, seeking to promote the city to motorists traveling along the adjacent federal highway.

Typical of other communities in New Mexico where chambers of commerce were viewed as quasipublic entities, the Las Vegas Chamber of Commerce is listed along with the City Council as an "interested public agency" in the WPA application for the municipal building project (National Archives WPA Records, Roll 342: 3386). Later, in early 1940, when the City Council put a second bond issue for \$4000 to the voters to obtain funds to complete the building, the Chamber of Commerce served as the most active proponent of the measure. Describing the new building as "one of the outstanding improvements of recent years" it predicted that it would "be of use to the community for future generations." Echoing the thinking of former New Mexico governor, Clyde Tingley, it urged Las Vegans to "take advantage of the federal government's generosity through public works projects...that may not last through the decade" (Las Vegas Optic 2/15/40: 4).

By the spring of 1939, construction of the building was underway. The project's budget totaling approximately \$64,000 included expenditures of \$48,000 by the federal government and \$16,000 by the City of Las Vegas. Characteristic of labor-intensive WPA projects intended to provide work for the unemployed, most of the federal monies were designated for work relief with provisions for 40 unskilled and semi-skilled workers, 19 skilled workers, and three supervisory personnel working 130 hours each month. With masons, stonedressers and powder experts included among the skilled workers, the largest costs in the project were the nearly \$25,000 budgeted for quarrying and cutting the stone to be used for the building. To facilitate this process the federal budget also included the rental costs for a 11/2 -ton pickup truck to transport the 430 cubic yards of stone from a nearby quarry to the project site where it was used for the facing of the building.

Despite the seemingly careful planning entailed in the project proposal, City Council records indicate that budgetary problems affected the project. At first, the building committee sought to delay paying Kruger and Clark their architectural fee of \$1,343, maintaining that the "plans were not drawn up according to the requests of the committee" (City Council Minutes 2/13/39: 363). A review of the approved plans reveals that some changes were made during construction including the omission of an additional office door at the south end of the one-story wing, likely as cost-cutting measures. As other costs became apparent, city officials transferred monies to the project from within the city budget, including funds originally designated for the city's new airport. By December 1939, City Clerk Nathan Jaffa, noting the "dearth of funds" for the project, urged the council to find other means "for the completion of the building" (City Council Minutes 12/11/39: 400). Jaffa's admonition prompted the council to seek voter approval for a second bond issue the following spring.

Early in 1940, construction on the building had progressed to the degree that city leaders and the heads of various state agencies created as a result of New Deal initiatives gathered to discuss the allocation of office spaces. Representatives of the WPA Certification Program and New Mexico's Department of Public Welfare, Employment Service and Unemployment Compensation Committee met with Mayor Frank Condon, members of the building committee, the Chamber of Commerce and the Las Vegas Women's Club to make plans for

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transferring their offices to the new building. Since each of the state agencies had previously received spaces rented and paid for by the City of Las Vegas, city leaders appreciated that with the new building, the city would actually receive rental income from those same agencies.

By late March most of the painting and plastering had been completed. Although it would not be until May after voter approval of a second bond issue that the city would contract with landscape architect Gordon Byrne to "landscape and beautify the grounds," in late March the Chamber of Commerce invited the public to visit the new building.

As an inducement to attract visitors, the invitation noted that visitors would also be able to view furniture "not to be found in any other Chamber of Commerce office in the country" (*Las Vegas Optic* 3/29/40:.4). The specific attraction was the tables and chairs made by young men enrolled in a National Youth Administration (NYA) furniture program located in the Veeder Building on the plaza in the Town of Las Vegas. Using traditional furniture-making techniques, they fashioned chairs and tables using wood pegs instead of nails. Some of these chairs replete with decorative carvings remain in the municipal building today, recalling the cooperation between various New Deal programs and the sense of community that it fostered in Las Vegas and other New Mexico communities, including Clayton and Albuquerque.

From its completion in 1940 until 1965 the building functioned as the public office building described in the WPA application. Following the donation in 1961 to the city of mementos from 20 members of the 1st Volunteer Cavalry Regiment, known as the Rough Riders, the city sought a public space in which to exhibit the materials. In 1965 it remodeled the building to create the City of Las Vegas Museum and Rough Rider Memorial Collection in the one-story wing, a space also shared initially with the Chamber of Commerce. The second story of the north wing serves as a municipal courthouse while the basement section houses museum holding not on display. Future plans anticipate the entire building serving as a museum, and this nomination reflects the community's interest in preserving and celebrating this highly visible legacy of the New Deal in Las Vegas.

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Bibliography

- Kammer, David. *The Historic and Architectural Resources of the New Deal in New Mexico*. Multiple Property Nomination prepared for the New Mexico Historic Preservation Division, 1994.
- Kruger, Willard C. Collection. File #119, City Office Building, Las Vegas. Located in the John Gaw Meem Archives at the Southwest Research and Archives Center, University of New Mexico.
- Las Vegas City Council Minutes, April 5, 1938--August 12, 1940.

Las Vegas Optic. Various issues, 1938-1940.

National Archives. Works Progress Administration Project Records. Reel 342, pp. 3364-3417.

Perrigo, Lynn. Gateway to Glorieta: A History of Las Vegas, New Mexico. Boulder, Colorado, 1982.

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Photographic Log

The following information pertains to all photographs unless otherwise noted:

Las Vegas Municipal Museum Las Vegas, San Miguel County, New Mexico Photographer: David Kammer November 26, 2007 Location of Negatives: New Mexico Historic Preservation Division

Photo 1 of 5 East elevation Facing west

Photo 2 of 5 West elevation Facing southeast

Photo 3 of 5 East elevation Facing north

Photo 4 of 5 East elevation Facing southwest

Photo 5 of 5 Interior, chairs Facing west