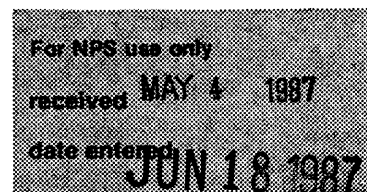


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Colfax County, Raton  
County Courthouses of New Mexico

1. Name: Colfax County Courthouse  
(County Courthouses of New Mexico)
2. Location: Third and Savage  
Raton, New Mexico
3. Owner: Colfax County Commission  
Box 159  
Raton, New Mexico 87740
7. Description: The 1936 Art Deco Style Colfax County Courthouse in Raton is a rectangular shaped, five story building, with T-shaped circulation and PWA era bas relief embellishments. Designed by Townes and Funk with R.W. Vorhees, the structure occupies a Shelbyville style court square on a unique sloping site which overlooks the commercial district.

This blond brick courthouse has a truncated, hipped tile roof on the top, and flat roofs at the lower levels. The cornice is decorated in geometric bas relief, with the corners articulated in rounded glazed tile. One chimney extends above the roofline at the southwest corner. The building steps symmetrically down to the north and south (the courthouse faces east); each level has a flat roof and glazed tile cornice. Windows are metal casement and pivot in the center. The entry is detailed with farmer, miner, and cattle bas reliefs representing the main industries of Raton. Access to the courthouse is through a two story archway, leading to four, large, aluminum and glass doors. Metal panels above the doors are embellished with cattle brands from the region; above these are multi-light transoms. Deco-style elongated lights with metal casings hang from above.

Inside, the building is decorated in green, mustard and black deco designs. Throughout the courthouse, the floors are terrazzo (with an inlaid Zia symbol on the main floor), with tile wainscot and plaster walls. The ceilings are plastered with classically styled plaster corner moldings and deco light fixtures.

The third floor courtroom is deco style with green stained furniture, aluminum gates, fluted engaged pilasters, and fluted corner moldings. The bar rail at the front of the room is a deco design of yellow squares in a black background. Behind the judge's bench is an inlaid wooden torch. The jail is on the fifth (top) floor.

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The building has handicap access and an elevator, and is in excellent condition with only minor remodeling.

8. Significance: The Colfax County Courthouse in Raton is architecturally significant as an excellent example of the Art Deco Style as interpreted by R.W. Vorhees and Townes and Funk architects, and historically significant for its association with the Public Works Administration era of courthouse building in New Mexico.

Colfax County was founded in 1869 and named for Schuyler Colfax, then Vice-President of the United States under President Grant. The first county seat was in Elizabethtown, but by 1870 it had been moved to Cimarron where a New Mexico Vernacular Style residential building was used as the courthouse. After ten years in Cimarron, in 1882 the county seat was moved to Springer. There a small Second Empire Style building was constructed as the third courthouse. When the Santa Fe Railroad established Raton as a central division point, the town began to grow and quickly became larger and more influential than Springer. Raton citizens began to lobby for moving the county seat to their town, and after a bitter battle with Springer, they won. In 1897, a Richardson Romanesque Style courthouse was built in Raton for \$28,000. By 1935, the fourth Colfax County Courthouse was too small, and the citizens of Raton decided to apply for Federal funding through the Public Works Administration while also promoting a local bond issue for \$160,000. The bond issue passed, the federal funding came through at approximately \$100,000, and Raton hired architects Townes and Funk to design the new structure and architect R.W. Vorhees to supervise construction. Raton was the second municipality in New Mexico to take advantage of the PWA funds (Grant County was the first).

Townes and Funk were architectural partners, located in Amarillo and Albuquerque respectively. They were responsible for the Quay County Courthouse as well as twenty-six other courthouses including Potter County, Texas (Amarillo). R.W. Vorhees, an architect based in Trinidad, Colorado, was responsible for the Eddy County Courthouse, and construction supervision of the Colfax County Courthouse in Raton.

The Colfax County Courthouse in Raton is generally considered the second best Art Deco Style courthouse in the Southwest, after Bisbee, Arizona. Colfax County's distinction is warranted by its five-part facade and entrance pavilion, described by one writer to give it "dynamic centripetal movement horizontally as well as vertically".

9. Major Bibliographical References: