

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. **Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).**

1. Name of Property

historic name Colorado National Bank Building

other names/site number 5DV.524

2. Location

street & number 918 17th Street

n/a not for publication

city or town Denver

vicinity

state Colorado code CO county Denver code 031 zip code 80202

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

national statewide local

[Signature]
Signature of certifying official/Title

3/10/10
Date

Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation,
Colorado Historical Society

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official

Date

Title State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register determined eligible for the National Register

determined not eligible for the National Register removed from the National Register

other (explain):

[Signature]
Signature of the Keeper

4.27.10
Date of Action

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5. Classification

Ownership of Property
 (Check as many boxes as apply.)

- private
- public - Local
- public - State
- public - Federal

Category of Property
 (Check only **one** box.)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property
 (Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	district
0	0	site
0	0	structure
0	0	object
1	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing
 (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
 (Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE / financial institution

Current Functions
 (Enter categories from instructions.)

VACANT / NOT IN USE

7. Description

Architectural Classification
 (Enter categories from instructions.)

1915 Building / 1925 Addition: Late 19th & 20th
 Century Revivals / Classical Revival / Neo-
 Classical Revival

 1964 Addition: Modern Movement / New
 Formalism

Materials
 (Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: stone: granite
 walls: stone: marble, granite
 brick
 roof: _____
 other: _____

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Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

Summary Paragraph

The six-story, flat-roofed Colorado National Bank Building faces east at the northwest corner of Seventeenth and Champa Streets in Denver. The building is composed of three major sections, all constructed of steel and concrete. The two primary elevations are clad in white Colorado Yule Marble with a base course of pink granite. The secondary elevations are largely exposed and painted brick masonry. The first section, the original 1915 Neo-Classical Revival style building, extends the full width of the building on Seventeenth Street and half the length of the current structure on Champa Street. The second section, constructed in 1925, doubled the length of building along Champa Street, and is indistinguishable from the original building in design and materials. These two portions of the building were four stories in height with a basement and sub-basement. A third section, constructed in 1964, remodeled the exterior of the fourth floor and added two stories atop the 1915 / 1925 structure. Designed in the New Formalist style, it is distinguished by its integration with the earlier floors of the building, its white marble-clad columns aligning with the original bays. Across the alley to the north is a 26-story office tower built by Colorado National Bank in 1975, an important New Formalist work of Minoru Yamasaki and Associates of Detroit, architects of the New York World Trade Center between 1966 and 1977. The tower, now under separate ownership, was previously connected to the upper floors of the Colorado National Bank Building by elevated walkways.

The Colorado National Bank Building is built to the outer limits of the property lines to the south and east, where a sidewalk of white concrete forms six narrow courses of paving between the building and a strip of standard gray concrete sidewalk that extends to the curb. A variety of street fixtures and furniture appear on the sidewalk to the east and south including city signage, metal-grated tree pits, bicycle rack, an enclosure with multiple newspaper vending boxes, fire hydrant, street lamps and traffic lights. Large oval exposed-aggregate concrete planters have been placed, unattached, between the column bases on top of the granite base course of the building.

To the west of the building is an asphalt-paved surface parking lot with an attendant kiosk. Adjacent to the entrance structure, a narrow courtyard forms a buffer between the parking lot and the west elevation of the building where a small entrance structure, dating to 1964, provides access between the parking lot and the main banking hall. To the south, the raised curb of a large ventilation shaft to the basement forms a seating bench. Other fixtures including freestanding benches, ashtrays and trash receptacles appear. Planting beds appear on portions of the west and north sides of the parking lot.

To the north of the building, an abandoned alley forms a paved walkway adjacent to the previously attached tower.

Narrative Description

The east-facing facade of the Colorado National Bank Building is largely clad and detailed with white Colorado Yule Marble. It is divided into nine symmetrical recessed bays defined by eight Ionic columns flanked by two corner pavilions. Each bay extends from a raised base course of pink granite to the top of the third story. The three center bays form a recessed entrance of white marble with a central pair of doors flanked by two windows. The doors and lower windows are framed in white marble. Shallow bas-relief panels with wreathed eagles appear above the windows and on the adjacent sidewalls of the entrance. The doors and windows are each surmounted by a single window at the third-story level. The decorative entrance doors are brass, and a metal screen covers each window. In the three bays to the south of the recessed entrance are vertical three-story windows of dark plate glass, their design dating to the 1964 addition that added the top stories to the building. To the north, the same window detail appears in the first two bays. The northernmost bay includes a formal pedestrian entrance with decorative light fixture, both dating to the original building. Above the door a dark-glazed window rises to the top of the third story. The corner pavilions display three low relief pilasters with smooth rectangular shafts and simple moldings defining the base and capital.

The south elevation is composed of thirteen bays formed by twelve Ionic columns with corner pavilions. The twelve easternmost bays feature the same three-story window detail as the east elevation. The west bay includes a secondary pedestrian door that serves as a service entrance, dating to the 1925 addition.

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On these two primary elevations, the historic entablature includes a tripartite architrave with bead and reel molding and a cymatium with acanthus detail above. A decorative molding and projecting cornice surmount the frieze. On the original 1915 building and the 1925 addition, the fourth story originally featured a pair of double-hung windows above each bay with a simple cornice and pitched tile roof above. In 1964, this fourth story was re-structured and re-clad as the first of the three floors of the modern roof addition.

The 1964 New Formalist style addition is distinguished by its sensitive visual relationship to the Neo-Classical style of the lower floors. Simple, slightly tapering columns of white marble rise over each of the Ionic columns of the lower building and extend to form shallow arches that define the top of the extended window bays. This same detail is repeated as pilasters on the upper corner pavilions. Above the arched window bays, a roof with smooth soffit and plain horizontal fascia projects beyond the wall, mirroring the projection of the Neo-Classical entablature below.

The west and north elevations are white painted brick masonry that originally formed party walls with adjacent buildings. They are detailed only by the portions of the corner pavilions that wrap around from the primary elevations.

The large, open, original three-story banking hall dominates the interior. It is adorned by an exceptionally important grouping of murals by Colorado artist Allen Tupper True representing the life of the American Indians before the arrival of the Europeans. A series of five triptychs appear at the upper level of the hall, one on the east wall and two on each of north and south walls. A large single panel, two stories in height, appears at the west end of the hall.

The main banking hall incorporates the original 1915 banking hall and 1925 addition. Marble Ionic columns two stories in height line the north and south walls. There are luxurious interior finishes of marble, bronze, and gilded decorative plaster. A small stair and elevator lobby dating to the 1925 addition survives in the southwest corner of the first floor. In 1964 the skylights over the main banking hall were removed for the addition of two new floors. A new coffered ceiling visually duplicated the original ceiling that appeared around the perimeter of the skylight. A large gilded dome was added over the east end of the banking hall, visible through a large circular opening between the banking hall and the fourth floor above. The mezzanine was extended around the perimeter of the banking hall and detailed to the east, north and south by a brass railing with transparent panels featuring a simple geometric motif drawn from a historic metal grille design that originally covered the exterior windows.

Outside of the banking hall and the small lobby, there are no character-defining interior features. The offices around the perimeter of the banking hall on the first, second and third floors were completely remodeled in 1964 into simple functional cubicles, workspaces and meeting rooms, along with the sub-basement, basement and fourth floor. The interiors of the 1964 fifth and sixth floors have small perimeter cubicles grouped around larger central work areas

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A 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.
- 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 values, 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

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

- Commerce
- Community Planning & Development
- Art

Period of Significance

1915-1964

Significant Dates

1921-1925 (Murals)

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

William E. Fisher and Arthur A. Fisher, Hoyt and Hoyt, and Rogers/Nagel/architects
Alan Tupper True, Muralist

Period of Significance (justification)

The period of significance encompasses the original construction of the building in three compatible phases 1915 through 1964, which in turn marked the bank's decision to take a leadership role in the revitalization of downtown Denver and remain in their historic location.

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Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria.)

The Colorado National Bank Building is eligible for listing on the National Register for its local significance under Criterion A in the area of Commerce for its association with the Colorado National Bank and in the area of Community Planning and Development for its embodiment of the Colorado National Bank's leadership role in the renaissance of downtown Denver during the post-World War II years. The Colorado National Bank Building is further eligible for listing on the National Register for its local significance under Criterion C in the area of Art for the significance of the 1921-1925 architectural murals in the main banking hall by Allen Tupper True.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least one paragraph for each area of significance.)

CRITERION A:

The Colorado National Bank Building is eligible for listing on the National Register under Criterion A in the area of Commerce for its association with the Colorado National Bank (CNB). Founded in 1862 by brothers Luther and Charles Kountze, the Colorado National Bank was a major force in the development of Colorado banking, railroads and mining. For well over a century, the Colorado National Bank was a leading financial institution in the state and from 1915 onward, this building served as its main branch and administrative headquarters. The Kountze and associated Berger family were also important commercial, political and philanthropic leaders in the history of Denver. Harold Kountze, Jr., the last member of the Kountze family with an active role in the Bank, retired in 1985.

The Colorado National Bank Building is further eligible for listing on the National Register under Criterion A in the area of Community Planning and Development for its embodiment of the Colorado National Bank's leadership role in the renaissance of downtown Denver during the post-World War II years. Despite national trends and strong pressure to relocate, Colorado National Bank remained in its historic downtown location, undertaking an innovative plan to preserve the essential features and character of its historic building while realizing a program of modernization essential to its continued commercial growth.

CRITERION C:

The Colorado National Bank Building is also eligible for listing on the National Register for its local significance under Criterion C in the area of Art for the significance of the 1921-1925 cycle of murals in the main banking hall by Allen Tupper True, an acknowledged master of architectural mural painting in the United States.

INTEGRITY

The Colorado National Bank Building retains all seven characteristics of integrity as defined by the National Park Service. The building remains in its original location. The design of the building is intact and displays the same form, plan, space, structure and style that it did in 1964, the end date established for the building's period of significance. The building's downtown urban setting remains intact. The materials and workmanship survive intact. The feeling evoked by the building, an early-twentieth-century bank building updated to meet the emerging needs of an urban, post-World War II financial institution, remain. The strength of all six of these characteristics combine to retain the historic association for which the property is significant – the history of the Colorado National Bank, its role in the post-World War II revitalization of downtown Denver, and the Allen Tupper True murals in the first floor banking hall.

Developmental history/additional historic context information (if appropriate)

CRITERION A:

Commercial History of the Colorado National Bank

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The Colorado National Bank (CNB) was founded as the Kountze Brothers Bank by four Ohio brothers who had learned bookkeeping and industrious work habits at the knee of their German-born father. Augustus, the oldest, along with Herman, Luther and Charles Kountze were each awarded partnerships in their father's prosperous general store at sixteen years of age and given \$100 at the age of twenty-one. Working together bound only by an informal and unwritten agreement that allowed each brother to invest for all four when a promising opportunity arose, the Kountze brothers became what local contemporary newspapers would call "The Rothschilds of America." The term probably originated with a *Munsey's Magazine* article entitled "The Millionaire Yield of Denver" that stated: "He [the Kountze's father] was a man of scholarship and vision. Like wise old Mayer Amschel Rothschild he determined that his sons should be trained at home and taught them that to succeed in life they must stand together."

Augustus and Herman opened the first Kountze Brothers Bank in Omaha, Nebraska, in 1857. In 1862, Luther, later joined by Charles, opened the Denver branch in a storefront at the corner of 15th and Blake. According to Tom Noel, author of an exhaustive history commissioned by the bank in 1987:

In a shaky frontier town riddled with bank failures, the Kountzes earned a reputation for caution and conservatism (...) Denver, an upstart town founded on a gamble for gold, desperately needed financial bedrock. Denverites found it in the Kountze Brothers.

With the growth of their business in Colorado, the social position of the Kountze Brothers grew as well. Luther's reputation as a conservative banker won him selection as Denver city treasurer in 1865, as well as the position of treasurer for the Masons and YMCA. In his capacity as a city official, Luther helped secure the financing necessary for a variety of major civic improvements including a new Larimer Street bridge over Cherry Creek and bridges over the South Platte at 15th and 11th Streets. Market, 15th and Blake Streets were graded after Luther joined with other Denver officials to establish property owner assessments for improvements. In 1866, the *Rocky Mountain News* identified Luther and Charles as the two richest men in Denver. The brothers became known for their many charitable contributions, most notably to St. John's in the Wilderness Episcopal Church. Church socials and philanthropic enterprises become one of the few diversions that the hard-working bachelors allowed themselves.

In 1866, with a fully subscribed capital stock of \$100,000 and deposits of \$170,000, the Kountze brothers' request to convert their small, private Denver bank to Colorado National Bank was approved by the Comptroller of the Currency in Washington D.C. Simultaneously, their Central City Bank was chartered as Colorado's third national bank under the name the Rocky Mountain National Bank. As with the conversion of their Omaha branch to the First National Bank in 1863, the Colorado National Bank was now entitled to "issue bank notes secured by the federal government, serve as a federal depository and enjoy the status and other privileges of a national bank" (Noel). As the banks were chartered, other illustrious businessmen from Nebraska and the west joined the Kountze brothers in their banking enterprises, increasing the prosperity and social and political prestige of the firm. Charles succeeded Luther as Denver city treasurer, serving from 1868 to 1871. Brother-in-law William Berger was selected by the Kountze brothers to expand the firm with the establishment of a Kountze Brothers Bank in Cheyenne, Wyoming. Two years later the branch was sold and Berger joined the Colorado National Bank in Denver, sharing its management with Charles Kountze.

In 1867, Luther Kountze returned from a European tour to become vice president and an incorporator of the Denver Pacific Railway, for which Colorado National Bank served as principal financier. Formed to link Denver with the transcontinental railroad at Cheyenne, Wyoming, it was widely credited with establishing Denver as the predominant metropolis of the Rocky Mountain region. Luther then relocated to New York where he opened a small private bank on Wall Street in 1870 called Kountze Brothers, New York.

Following the death of Charles Kountze in 1911, leadership of the Colorado National Bank was divided between his son Harold Kountze, William Berger's son George Berger Sr., and Dennis Sheedy, a long-time Colorado National Bank stockholder, director and officer originally brought into the business by Charles.

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Luther, the founding brother of Colorado National Bank, died in New York in 1918. He and his wife Annie were listed among New York City's "Four Hundred," the most socially elite members of that city's society scene. They were founding members of the Metropolitan Opera, with a prestigious box seat adjacent to Cornelius Vanderbilt and three boxes from J.P. Morgan.

In 1915, under the direction of George Berger, Sr., the Colorado National Bank began construction work on a new building commensurate with its position in the financial community. The building was located at 918 Seventeenth Street, the street known as "Bankers Row" and "The Wall Street of the West." The building was designed by the most prominent architects of early-twentieth-century Denver -- the firm of William E. Fisher and Arthur A. Fisher, a partnership of William Elsworth Fisher (1871-1937) and his younger brother, Arthur Addison Fisher (1878-1965). The Fisher firm had previously designed Denver houses for the Kountze and Berger families in Italian and Spanish historical revival styles.

William Elsworth Fisher was born in Canada in 1871 and came with his parents to Denver while still a teenager in 1885. In 1890, he was employed as a draftsman in the Denver architectural firm of Balcombe and Rice. In 1892, Fisher opened his own office and entered a solo practice, specializing in residential design, which lasted until 1901. At that time, Fisher entered a partnership with Daniel Riggs Huntington, who had been a fellow draftsman at Balcombe and Rice, forming the firm of Fisher and Huntington. The newly created firm found ready success with many commissions for luxury residences from the city's social elite.

Two years after Huntington left the firm and moved to Seattle, Fisher was joined by his younger brother, Arthur Addison Fisher, in 1907. Arthur A. Fisher was born in Canada in 1878, also coming to Denver with his family as a child in 1885. Before joining his brother in practice, the younger Fisher had studied in New York's Beaux-Arts Atelier Barber and, in 1905, had worked as an apprentice in the New York offices of Don Barber and Benjamin Morris. Three years after joining William's firm in 1910, the elder brother granted the younger full partnership, and only then was the firm's name changed to William E. Fisher and Arthur A. Fisher.

William E. Fisher and Arthur A. Fisher prospered during the next decade with more and larger commissions coming the firm's way. By 1920 the firm had established itself as one of the largest and most influential architectural firms in the Rocky Mountain region.

In 1914, George and Carrie Berger commissioned the firm to building an Italianate Revival home at 124 Lafayette Street in the Country Club neighborhood, later demolished in 1962. Directly behind the Berger mansion, William E. Fisher and Arthur A. Fisher also built a Spanish Colonial Revival house for the oldest daughter of Charles B. Kountze, Lina Bell Kountze Brown. When George Berger sought an architect for a new building for the Colorado National Bank, William E. Fisher and Arthur A. Fisher were a natural choice.

According to the historian Noel in his book, *Growing Through History With Colorado / The Colorado National Banks; The First 125 Years 1862-1987*:

The marble came from one of the bank's major customers, the Colorado Yule Marble Company. Their quarries lay near the town of Marble on the Crystal River in Gunnison County. In 1914, the year CNB construction began, the Colorado Yule Marble Company also signed the largest single marble contract ever made in the United States -- for the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C. The purity of the marble led Fisher and Fisher to select it for the bank, which was one of their purest designs.

Yule marble used for the exterior columns and walls, according to the Fishers' specifications, was "not less than 96 percent pure carbonate of lime: with ultimate crushing strength of 15,000 pounds per square inch." For the marble columns, decorative panels and trim, the Fishers required contractors to provide "full scale plaster models (...) done by skilled modelers selected by the architects."

Fisher and Fisher, hoping to make this Denver's finest example of Greek Revival architecture, prepared 44 pages of architectural drawings on waxed linen paper and over 135 pages of specifications. These records, now

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preserved and catalogued at the Denver Public Library, document the attention to detail, the expense and the art behind "The Bank That Looks Like a Bank."

These specifications called for a tile roof, cork tile flooring, steam heat and pneumatic tubes to expedite transactions. They covered details as minute as the white enamel finish on the steel cases in the barber shop, and even ordered the contractor to "provide marble caps over pipe space at back of urinals."

The huge, monogrammed bronze main door and many interior doors were of "cast and sheet bronze," for which the architects again required full size plaster models. Granite footings and scrolled marble capitals for the Ionic columns, carved marble entablatures and bronze window grilles were among the exquisite details of this neoclassical monument.

Though it had become common for banks of the period to construct multi-use office buildings in which the bank was one of many tenants, Colorado National Bank wanted to project a strong image of a banking institution. The Neo-Classical Revival style, commonly used in the design of banks and other institutions since the nineteenth century, communicated conservative and traditional values and implied fiscal responsibility. This choice was reflected in the bank's new slogan, "The Bank that Looks Like a Bank." The builders on the project were Seerie Brothers, the contractors for many of Denver's important stone structures, including the State Capitol Building. Looking to the future, "Fisher and Fisher designed a four-story building with a foundation strong enough to carry an additional eight stories. (...) A seven-foot slab of reinforced concrete was installed 35 feet below street level" (Noel).

Colorado National Bank survived the anti-German sentiment of the World War I years with the Kountzes and the Bergers, two of Colorado's most prosperous and prominent families of German extraction, assuming prominent roles in supporting the American war effort. The bank continued to prosper in the financially treacherous 1920s.

In 1921, the bank began discussions with Colorado artist and mural painter Allen Tupper True, who wrote the following letter to George B. Berger, chairman of the board regarding some proposed murals:

I urge that my theme, when developed, will probably give you as notable a bit of mural decorating as can be found in the western country. You gentlemen are continually backing your judgment of futures. There is a reasonable possibility that I am ripe to produce an epic in murals of the American Indian. Such a decorative scheme in the Colorado National Bank would give it a personality not readily duplicated by other banks, needing of no renewal and adaptable to various uses in the way of high class advertising.

If your original purpose of giving your bank the most distinctive housing in this district was good policy, it is now good policy to maintain that preeminence. If my scheme will obtain this, then an expenditure of \$18,000 is a comparatively small cost from a business standpoint.

My plan is adaptable, and valuable, whether the building is enlarged or not. It looks toward the future and anticipates a very definite tendency of the modern times for the more generous use of color and distinction in public and commercial buildings.

True won the contract that year and, in 1923, began work on the murals in Santa Fe, his home at the time.

In 1925, the bank hired Hoyt and Hoyt, an architectural firm with offices in the CNB building, to build an addition. Like the Fishers, brothers Merrill and Burnham Hoyt had also previously designed for the family, in their case a country home north of Bear Creek for Harold and Louise Kountze.

Merrill H. Hoyt (1881-1933) and his younger brother Burnham Hoyt (1887-1960) were the sons of Denver carriage designer Wallace Hoyt. Merrill Hoyt served as an apprentice with Fisher and Fisher. Burnham Hoyt began his architectural apprenticeship with the Denver firm of Kidder and Wieger. In 1908, he left for New York to complete his architectural studies at the Beaux-Arts Institute of Design. While a student, he won six architectural design competitions.

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Burnham Hoyt continued his professional training with the New York firm of George B. Post and Bertram Goodhue. During that period, he is credited with the interior of the landmark New York Church of St. Bartholomew of 1919. Goodhue was one of the foremost architects of the early twentieth century, responsible for one of the great masterpieces of the Art Deco style in America, the Nebraska State House of 1922-1932 in Lincoln, Nebraska. Hoyt's developed sense of detailing may have had its origins in Goodhue's office.

Burnham Hoyt returned to Denver to form the partnership of Hoyt and Hoyt with his brother Merrill. Their firm was responsible for a number of buildings in various historical revival styles. These include the English Gothic style Lake Junior High, the Spanish Baroque Revival Park Hill Branch Library, and the Eclectic Cactus Club and Steele Elementary School.

The 1925 Hoyt and Hoyt addition to the Colorado National Bank was conservative, indistinguishable from the original structure in both design and materials. During its construction, Allen True completed the group of murals depicting American Indian life in the main banking hall originally commissioned in 1921. The *Rocky Mountain News* of November 15, 1925, pictures True "(...) at work on the big south mural panel which he is painting for the Colorado National Bank, soon to be completed." It relates: "Three years ago this Denver painter started work on four murals for the upper wall panels of the original structure. Three of these have been removed from the wall which was destroyed and placed on one of the new wall surfaces. Two more new groups have been added in the past year, and the last one of these is being completed now."

The same article goes on to say:

Denver is soon to have one of the most beautiful bank lobbies in the United States. The Colorado National bank at Seventeenth and Champa streets has enlarged its quarters to accommodate 8,000 customers per day and has had regard for aesthetic [sic] standards beyond the popular utilitarian [sic] notion. ...

The theme of all the paintings is Indian – Indian idealism – Indian spirit. True has been interested all his life in recreating the pastoral side of the American Indian's nature. ... Having studied the relics of genuine Indian art, True has come to the conclusion that the American Indian has a spiritual side, is given to dreams and imaginings. And to recreate this...spirit world he has striven to eliminate all the alien background and to picture the Indian dreaming in his virgin wilderness...

— this spirit that impregnates the Indian pictures of Allen True... They are of the enduring quality of the marble of the beautiful supporting columns and the cool seep of the spacious interiors, which beauties they were designed to enhance and perpetuate.

The murals became a particular point of pride to the Colorado National Bank and were featured in promotional materials distributed to customers from their completion through the 1970s. A small paperbound pamphlet entitled "Indian Memories," picturing the murals and presenting the text above, was issued in multiple editions beginning in 1923, the sixty-first anniversary of the bank. In it, the bank stated:

The Colorado National Bank offers these murals as a contribution to the artistic progress of Denver. The series symbolizes the cycle of life as the primitive plains Indian lived it from youth to death, and is probably the most notable set of purely Indian decorations in America.

The pictures represent nearly two years' work by one of the country's foremost mural painters, Mr. Allen True of Denver, who has made an extensive study of early Indian life and has had entire freedom in the selection and treatment of his subjects.

Clockwise from the east wall of the main banking hall, the mural subjects were by True in the pamphlet, *Indian Memories*:

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Youth Triptych (east wall)

Several young boys are gathered around a crane which one of them has brought in as his trophy from a hunt. From a canoe another boy is unloading other birds of rich plumage, and two other boys are emerging from deep, cool waters into the sunlight to join the chorus that is acclaiming the success of the hunt.

Buffalo Hunt Triptych (east end of south wall)

An old buck sits in front of his "chip" fire and dreams. In the curling smoke and dust of the prairies there runs and rumbles the thundering Buffalo herd. Amid the billowing backs the horses lunge and race and stumble, the exultant cries of the hunters rise above the din of hoofs, and a choking dust obscures the sky. This is the stirring spirit of the Hunt rendered in terms of the Indian and the great American prairies.

Women Triptych (west end of south wall)

In the fourth group an old leather-dry squaw sits by the edge of a waterfall, leaning eagerly and intently forward, for there in the iridescent spray she fancies that she sees her own girlhood beckoning to her. She imagines herself young again and splashing through the water with other laughing, dancing maidens. In the morning air a mist hangs over the water and from the mist, and the shadows of the quaking aspens, appear the figures of still other girls and young mothers smiling contentedly at the happy dancers in the water.

Happy Hunting Ground Single Arched Panel (west wall)

At the end of the main banking lobby is the arched panel of the Happy Hunting Ground. This is in no sense a representation of Death, but rather an attempt to suggest some of the wonderment, awe and tremendous expectation with which the Indian looked forward to the great adventure at the end of life's trail, and linked it with the dramatic moods of Nature. Dressed in his finest, and equipped with shield, saddle and other gorgeous trappings, the departed chief is placed on the burial platform out of reach of further earthly harm. The rain cloud has just lifted and the storm passes. The rain mists, which have cooled the thirsty earth, drift by and envelope the figures of other Spirits pressing toward the light. As a last flash of lightning cleaves the storm and the mountain tops turn red with the setting sun, the great blue heron wing their homeward way and the Spirit of the chief rises from its shroud to gaze eagerly toward the Happy Hunting Ground. The Happy Hunting Ground is suggested by the use of Indian pictographs and can be little more than an intimation of the many beauties in which the realm of the Great Spirit is veiled by the faith and beliefs of the Indian.

Art Work Triptych (west end of the north wall)

Another old squaw rests from the labor of her beadwork. A papoose croons from its swinging cradle above her, and as she stretches her aged back the smoke from her cook fire drifts lazily through the shadows of the quakin' asp to mingle with her memories -- memories of a day when beautiful handicraft and skill in workmanship delighted her people. A young buck decorates a buffalo robe which is stretched on a quakin'asp frame. And farther on a group is admiring a fine piece of ornamental quill work.

War Triptych (east end of the north wall)

The once mighty chief of a warlike tribe beats the rhythm of his war chant while the winter snows whirl past him. On the wings of the gale, Memory rides with rushing, vengeful figures on horseback, the war whoop sounds through the raided village and goes wailing down the wind to mingle with exultant yells of fierce, undying courage. Stoic endurance and barbaric chivalry were ever part of the Indian nature and they swell in the heart of the war chief as the powdered snow swirls past the tepees.

The expanded bank with completed murals opened to great fanfare in 1926. It included special areas to serve women customers, a market segment that the bank vigorously pursued after the passage of the Women's Suffrage Amendment in 1920.

The stock market crash of October 24, 1929, and the subsequent Great Depression shook Colorado banking to its core.

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Colorado National Bank suffered a short-term loss of business due to their family association with Kountze Brothers New York. Kountze Brothers New York had established itself as one of Wall Street's most important banking and investment firms. However, since Harold Kountze had sold his shares in the firm after the death of the founder, his Uncle Luther, and since the Colorado National Bank had no financial dealings with the firm, CNB remained largely unscathed. The Omaha bank, which had attempted to save Kountze Brothers New York with a large infusion of capital, was staggered and Kountze family members were forced to resign. Kountze Brothers New York ultimately declared bankruptcy, but both CNB and the First National Bank of Omaha survived.

In the 1930s, to help stabilize the economy, President Franklin Roosevelt's Emergency Banking Act made the private ownership of gold punishable by fines and imprisonment. Over \$5 million in gold coin was moved from the vaults of the Colorado National Bank to the Federal Reserve Bank at 17th and Arapahoe. The practices of the bank were also affected by the establishment of the FDIC (Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation) and negotiations with the Reconstruction Finance Corporation (RFC), which ordered that the Colorado National Bank no longer operate as a private business of the Berger and Kountze families. To facilitate the restructuring, \$1.5 million in CNB preferred stock was sold to the RFC with \$1 million in common stock remaining under Kountze and Berger family control. A long-running battle ensued between Harold Kountze, whom the RFC had appointed to administer the bank, and the RFC through 1941, when the relationship was formally ended. The 1930s were also notable for the creation of a retirement policy that rewarded long-time employees with a pension, but also forced the retirement of a number of loyal, longtime employees.

The bank prospered from 1941 through 1961. Harold Kountze, Jr., was groomed for and in 1945 assumed his role as a leader of Colorado National Bank. Following his grandfather and father, he was also an active philanthropist and tireless volunteer for a wide variety of community causes and organizations.

In 1961, Colorado National Bank again found their existing building too small for their growing operations. Despite the deteriorating urban environment of the post-World War II years, the decision was made to invest in downtown Denver and expand the bank's historic 17th Street location. Disappointed by the work of California architects and planners Victor Gruen & Associates, who it initially retained, the bank solicited proposals from local architects to add a two-story addition to the Colorado National Bank, originally designed by Fisher and Fisher to carry an additional eight stories. Architects John Rogers and Jerome Nagel presented themselves as a partnership, winning the contract based on Rogers experience in bank design and the fact that Nagel and all the CNB officers were fellow Yale alumni. The firm of Rogers/Nagel/architects was formed the next day based on the commission. "Denver Architects Form New Company" in the *Denver Post* of August 16, 1961, lists their other current projects as the Primero Junior-Senior High School in Trinidad, Grace Presbyterian Church in Littleton, South Park Junior-Senior High School at Fairplay, and several residential projects. The article also listed the clients of their individual firms.

John Rogers (1922-) was born in Nebraska and moved as an infant to Kansas. He studied architectural engineering at Kansas State University and graduated in 1947 after an interruption of his studies by Army service during World War II. That same year, Rogers moved to Denver. After a short stint at the Bureau of Reclamation, he began work with the firm of G. Meredith Musick. With Musick, in association with Smith, Hegner and Moore, Rogers was involved in the design of the National Register listed University of Denver Civic Center Classroom Building. With Tom Moore, Rogers then moved to Grand Junction to open a branch office of Smith, Hegner and Moore. He then attended the University of Texas, earning a bachelor of architecture degree in 1951. After graduation and further studies in Mexico, Rogers returned to Denver and joined the firm of James Sudler, working on projects including the Greyhound Bus Station on Glenarm, the Shell Oil (later Columbine) Building on Sherman, and the U.S. National (now Wells Fargo) Bank immediately adjacent to William Zeckendorf's Mile High Center, where he had the opportunity to work with I.M Pei and Eason Leanord, Pei's Denver field associate. In 1954 Rogers re-joined Musick's office, working in association with Temple Buell on the State Services Building at Colfax Avenue and Sherman Street. In 1955 Rogers joined the firm of Raymond Harry Erwin where he was involved in the design of the new First National Bank Building at 17th and Welton. Rogers started his own architectural firm in 1956.

Jerome Nagel (1923 - 2006) was born in Denver. He attended the Middlesex Preparatory School in Concord, Massachusetts, and then began his undergraduate studies at Yale. A year later he volunteered and served as an Air

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Force pilot, flying P-51 bomber escorts in World War II. Upon his return to Yale, he discovered that there were no positions available in the undergraduate program, but was permitted to advance directly into the School of Architecture. After returning to Denver he worked for architects Smith, Hegner and Moore, and Eugene Sternberg before setting up as a solo practitioner. His first building was a modern dental office on South University Boulevard.

Ultimately the partnership of the two men grew to become RNL, an architecture, interior design, engineering and planning firm with offices in Los Angeles, Phoenix, and Denver. RNL now works internationally with an emphasis on education, transportation, civic, corporate, religious, criminal justice, urban housing, transit-oriented mixed-use development, and community planning projects.

The Colorado National Bank contract, originally estimated at \$400,000, rose to \$4.5 million by completion in 1964. The altered original fourth floor and the two new floors above were detailed in the New Formalist style, a modern architectural style rooted in and judged aesthetically compatible with the historic Neo-Classical Revival style of the building. The interior rehabilitation of the main banking hall was also planned and detailed to be historically and architecturally sensitive to the original 1915/1925 building. Colorado Yule marble matching the historic original material was brought from Carthage, Missouri, where it was stored in the event that repairs might be necessary to the Lincoln Memorial or the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier in Washington, D.C. A drive-through banking facility was added on a portion of the newly acquired property to the north, and a parking lot added to the west.

At the time of its construction, the Colorado National Bank Building addition was lauded as a sensitive architectural solution to the expansion of a historic building, a rare consideration for the time. According to Noel's *Growing Through History With Colorado / The Colorado National Banks; The First 125 Years 1862-1987*:

(...) The \$4.5 million project retained the old landmark but added two stories on top of it, capitalizing on the farsighted 1915 plan for a foundation strong enough to support a 12-story structure.

Some thought was given to matching the neoclassical style of the original building. Roberts and the board ultimately chose a sleek modern design by the Denver architectural firm of John Rogers and Jerry Nagel. Rogers-Nagel complemented the original building by using the same marble and aligning the new two-story solar bronze windows and contemporary style columns with the original window grills and Ionic columns. In a February 18, 1963, editorial, the *Rocky Mountain News* praised CNB for a "tremendous stride in the fast-moving program for revitalizing Downtown Denver" with an "enlarged bank" that "will carefully retain its classic lines."

In 1967, Colorado National Bank, prohibited by Colorado law from operating any branch banks, created Colorado National Bankshares, Inc., a bank holding company to acquire and establish subsidiaries. Branches of the bank began to spread throughout the Denver Metro area and the state. In 1971, the bank acquired a mortgage company to provide financing for new home and neighborhood construction. These changes fueled a new phase of growth, creating overcrowding in the downtown office.

In 1971, Colorado National Bank announced construction of a new office tower located on the site of their drive-through banking facility to the north of their building at 918 17th Street. The firm of Minoru Yamasaki and Associates of Detroit were hired to design the building. Like the 1964 addition to the Colorado National Bank Building, the new tower was designed in the New Formalist style. Like the Colorado National Bank Building, the tower was clad in white marble, in this case Imperial Danby marble provided by the Vermont Marble Company, which had acquired the Colorado Yule Marble Company. A cover article on the project by *Bank News* of July 15, 1975 is titled "New Office Tower Complements Classic Structure in Colorado National Complex." The bank commissioned sculptor Harry Bertoia to design a large "sound sculpture" for the tower's front courtyard on 17th Street. A covered walkway was later added to join the two Colorado National Bank buildings.

In 1985, Harold Kountze, Jr., retired from the Colorado National Bank, leaving the bank without a Kountze or Berger family member for the first time since its founding. Between 1911 and 1985, family members Luther Kountze, Augustus Kountze, Augustus F. Kountze, Herman Kountze, Charles B. Kountze, Harold Kountze, Sr., George B. Berger, Sr., George B.

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Berger, Jr., Charles B. Berger, William B. Berger, William L.B. Berger, Merriam B. Berger, and Harold Kountze, Jr. had all served the Colorado National Bank of Denver as Board Chairmen, Presidents, and/or Directors. All of these individuals were important community leaders in Denver congregations, philanthropy, education and a wide range of other community organizations.

The Colorado National Bank survived as a separate banking institution until the 1990s when a series of mergers with Bank Western and Central Banks and acquisition by First Bank System of Minneapolis took place. The original name survived until a 1998 acquisition by U.S. Bank.

In 2009, the Colorado National Bank Building was sold to the current property owner and applicant. The 1971 Minoru Yamasaki and Associates Tower remained under the ownership of U.S. Bank. Due to the separate ownership, an elevated walkway joining the two buildings at secondary elevations was demolished, not significantly affecting the physical integrity of the nominated resource.

Colorado National Bank as a Leader in the Post-World War II Revitalization of Downtown Denver

By 1959, drained by the loss of real estate investment in the post-Depression years and by the transfer of post-World War II commercial and residential construction from the urban core to the outlying suburbs, the deterioration of central Denver reached critical proportions. In response, Colorado National Bank made a strong commitment to remain in their historic building, purchasing additional property to expand, and working to establish the Bank as a major force in the stabilization and redevelopment of downtown Denver.

The Depression that followed the stock market crash of 1929 resulted in a series of financial reverses affecting the value and ownership of land and buildings across the United States. The construction boom that characterized the 1920s collapsed. The deflation of real estate values by as much as 35% resulted in massive foreclosures, with banks taking possession of worthless properties that no one could afford to buy. As a result, the value of national building stock deteriorated not only in monetary value, but in physical condition as well.

Even as World War II began to restore economic prosperity, the war effort monopolized industrial output, creating a massive shortage of building materials that drove the nation's building stock into a further state of deterioration and disrepair. It was not until after the end of the war and the removal of domestic building restrictions that the repair and maintenance of existing buildings resumed.

But it was not the inner city that benefited from post-World War II building investment. Instead, new construction exploded nationally outside the urban core in the suburbs, heavily subsidized by massive amounts of federal spending through the GI Bill, which utilized New Deal programs and agencies originally created to ease Depression housing shortages and revive the construction industry.

As residential growth spread to the suburbs, facilitated by an ever-expanding system of federally funded highways, commercial growth followed. Consumer-oriented businesses traditionally located downtown created suburban outposts to serve customers that flocked to the new residential areas. Retailers built new shopping malls, a new, rapidly burgeoning type of retail facility. Banks built branches with drive-through facilities. Both included continually expanding surface parking lots to create easy auto access. Many downtown businesses began to fail and close. As consumer spending and financial investment fled the center city, urban building deterioration increased and real estate values weakened still further:

(...) downtown Denver began to experience the malaise of many downtowns across the nation. Blight crept from Larimer Street, up 16th and 17th streets, toward Curtis and Champa. Instead of the skyscrapers that one would expect in a big city, Denver's downtown in the 1950s comprised only two or three tall buildings and block after block of dilapidated two-, three- and four-story commercial structures, many of them dating back to the 1880s and even earlier.

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The Colorado National's board of directors was deeply worried about the real-estate problems represented by the bank's headquarters at 17th and Champa streets, in a building and on land that it had occupied since 1915. (*Denver Business*, March 1985).

In 1959, the Colorado National Bank reported: "During the past year, management undertook a comprehensive study of present and future physical plan requirements (...) [and] has concluded that the Bank's location is sound, provided improved new uses can be found for property in the block now occupied by obsolete buildings." It then announced the CNB purchase of the Ernest & Cranmer Building at 17th and Curtis, saying that while the present bank provided sufficient room for operations: "(...) it will be necessary to expand into space on the upper floors of the building now occupied by tenants."

That same year, Colorado National Bank also acquired purchase options on all the property in the 1600 and 1700 blocks of Champa and Curtis Streets owned by the May Department Stores Company. May Company had joined another downtown Denver department store, Daniels & Fisher, to form May D&F, and to move into the I.M. Pei-designed Zeckendorf Plaza at Court Place and 16th Street.

On November 8, 1959, a *Rocky Mountain News* headline declared "Do-or-Die Decisions Face Downtown Area." In it, Colorado National Bank stepped to the forefront of the fight for the survival of downtown Denver. In part, the dramatic article read:

The struggle for and survival of downtown Denver is at the crossroads.

With quick action, some say, the area can equal and even surpass its former brilliance.

Without action, downtown will wither, die or fall prey to creeping slums.

"The time for talking is over. The time for action is here. And it has to be within months, not years."

So says one 17th Street banker whose firm has made a dramatic, yet guarded, step forward to save the downtown area.

Two weeks ago, the Colorado National Bank took purchase options on all of the property formerly occupied by the May Co. in the 1600 and 1700 blocks of Champa and Curtis Sts.

Feelers have been put out to possible users for the once-busy buildings. Plans for redevelopment of the area are being studied but as yet are being kept under wraps.

"We are hoping our action will stimulate others to invest in properties downtown and work for its revitalization," Bruce M. Rockwell, bank vice president, said. "There are already evidences of businesses wishing to shift back to the downtown area. What is needed is a long-range program to build up the economic worth of the area."

Such a program would take between ten and fifteen years, but could get off the ground with a booming start if "three or four major chunks of property were developed right now."

And how would all this be done? With public funds?

No, say [bank President] Roberts and Rockwell. The job should and could be done with private funds. Only the master planning of all of downtown need be the function of the city.

"Private capital working together in a co-operative effort could more than solve the needs of the area," Roberts said. "But it would have to be a unified effort."

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"We (the Bank) can't take the responsibility of doing this entire job by ourselves, but we are certainly going to do our share."

The hope at the Colorado National Bank is that others will do their part to preserve the area where Denver had its start a century ago.

In taking this position, Colorado National Bank defied local and national commercial relocation trends.

The Bank's project coincided with an impending Denver program of federally funded "urban renewal," initiated in 1957 by Mayor Newton's appointment of seven men to a newly formed Denver Urban Renewal Commission (later Denver Urban Renewal Authority or DURA). The appointees included CNB Vice President Bruce Rockwell. Urban renewal had begun in pre-war years as part of New Deal efforts to provide improved and expanded urban housing and jump-start the construction industry. It took new form in the post-World War II years with Title One of the Housing Act of 1949 and the 1954 Housing Act, as urban centers became home to a disproportionate number of citizens who did not have access to the new, suburban way of life -- the elderly, the poor, racial minorities, and the homeless. The focus of this new phase of federal urban renewal was the removal of large areas of run-down and deteriorated urban building stock in order to facilitate new and revitalizing urban development.

To realize their redevelopment efforts, the Bank hired the architectural and planning firm of Victor Gruen & Associates of Los Angeles and Washington, D.C. Gruen had immigrated from Austria and, during the 1950s and 60s, became known as the "father of the shopping mall." Gruen's firm was also responsible for the 1959 Kalamazoo Mall plan, the first prototype for the downtown mall that was implemented throughout the 1970s and 80s in an attempt to revitalize failing historic downtown and Main Street shopping areas.

According to the *Denver Post* of July 1962, the estimated \$2 million Colorado National Bank project was said to be "only the initial phase of the Colorado National Bank's master plan for revitalizing the block between 16th and 17th Sts. and Curtis and Champa Sts." The CNB plan "(...) to stay at 17th and Champa Sts. and engage in major rehabilitation and expansion in that block was hailed by the Downtown Denver Improvement Assn. as a major step in the growing campaign to modernize the entire lower downtown section."

By 1961, Victor Gruen & Associates had disappeared from the project. According to an interview with John Rogers conducted in May of 2007, CNB had tired of the months of travel between Denver and the Gruen offices in Los Angeles, and the open-ended discussion of seventeen different proposals. Instead, CNB hired the local firm of Rogers/Nagel/architects with an initial budget of \$400,000.

In February of 1963, the design of the new rooftop addition appeared for the first time in the *Denver Post* and *Cervi's Journal*, which showed a sketch including the addition and a new adjacent drive-in banking facility.

Again, the *Denver Post* stressed the role of the project in the wider context of downtown redevelopment. The article entitled "Colorado National to Spread Out; Desire for Greater Downtown Behind Bank's Building Plans" quoted bank President Melvin J. Roberts: "Exciting development such as the Larimer-Lawrence trafficway, the Park City twin apartment towers development and planning activities of the Downtown Master Plan Committee promise to add even greater stability and vitality to the area."

Gene Cervi, in his lead editorial in *Cervi's Rocky Mountain Journal* of February 20, 1963, said:

(...) it's been an open secret for several years that the Colorado National ultimately would have to fish or cut bait on the question of whether it intended to bet on its present location or move elsewhere. The decision has been made, the action has been taken and the solid news is in that important set of circumstances. What it means, stated another way, is that the rebirth of lower downtown Denver has been confirmed (...) With formalization of the Colorado National's ambitious project, lower downtown planners see a bright future for the area.

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The modern style of the new CNB addition reflected national trends in the architectural design of banks. In *Banking on the Future: Modernism and the Local Bank*, presented as part of the National Park Service's "Recent Past 2 Conference" of 2000, Carol J. Dyson and Anthony Rubano state: "Within the twenty short years between 1935 and 1955, banking as an industry moved from a staid conservative business into a highly competitive mass-marketed industry, enthusiastically selling new services with convenience and efficiency." They go on to discuss the social and economic changes that produced these changes:

The catastrophic banking failures of 1929 paralyzed the country. The public's trust in the banking industry was lost. From 1931 to 1933, almost 7,200 of the nation's 25,000 banks failed or were forced by the government to close. After the initial shock wore off, banks were left to reassemble the pieces of their industry. "The task before us as we get further and further away from the hectic days of 1931 and 1932," one banking journal article urged, "[is] to reestablish confidence in the minds of the people. (...) Let us (...) rebuild the structure of public esteem and faith in banks."

Extensive New Deal legislation, including the creation of the Federal Deposit and Federal Saving and Loan Insurance Corporations (FDIC and FSLIC), was enacted in 1933 and 1934 to regulate the industry and protect and insure investors' money. In 1934, banker Roy L. Stone recommended that his colleagues redefine their public policies and, thereby, the public's perception of the industry. The new approach "must include more courtesy in customer service, new efficiency on commercial accounts, new public mindedness of executives, new responsibility to loan accounts." The prestige-conscious, conservative, autocratic banker had to become part salesman, part civic leader. Banking began to transform itself into a retail mass-market industry and moved to divorce itself from its pre-Depression architectural iconography. Despite their unassailable appearance, the temples of the past had failed the public, who now understood that it was not the banks, but governmental intervention that had stabilized and secured the industry.

(...) In the post-World War II period, banking found itself in a period of unprecedented growth. A new and fast-moving credit economy fueled by mortgages and automobile and personal loans vastly increased banking profits. To capture the explosive growth, a bank had to be as appealing as possible to the largest number of people. Banks simply could not risk being perceived as stuffy and outdated. The most reliable way to attract people to your bank was to sell friendly convenience.

To provide welcoming accessibility, banks began to abandon the interior cages and high, imposing counters that served to separate bank staff and customers. Dyson and Rubano relate the comments of the 1951 editors of *Burroughs Clearing House*, a trade publication for the banking industry:

[R]ecently remodeled banks ... are playing an important part in breaking the grim stereotype of the banking industry that still lingers in the minds of many potential banking customers. The pretentious, dimly lit interiors that characterized the nation's banks at the turn of the century are fast being replaced with bright workshops that invite both the confidence and business of the man-in-the-street.... Low open counters have replaced the foreboding grillwork that formerly separated the teller from his customer. (...) Rich, smooth marble is still used, but ... with a wide variety of other decorative materials offering both textural contrast and harmony.... Eye pleasing and friendly, these revamped quarters testify to the keen public relations consciousness that today pervades all of banking.

The process of Colorado National Bank's modernization began in 1951, when the *Annual Report* reported the addition of a balcony over the offices and teller cages on one side of the banking lobby to provide 1,000 square feet of additional floor space, and the addition of new and modern machines to facilitate more efficient banking operations and improve employee working conditions.

By the *Annual Report* of 1955, modernization was a major focus:

To render better service to customers and to accommodate the increased volume of business, an exterior remodeling of the banking premises has been accomplished in the last year. This program has included the construction of balconies on three sides of the banking lobby to provide much needed additional working area, the

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installation of automatic elevators in the Bank building, the conversion of the old-fashioned tellers' cages to modern open counters and the construction of a facility in the lobby of the Bank building to provide after hours service. These changes have provided room for expansion and have at the same time permitted the adoption of procedures which will bring about greater efficiency and operating economies.

Banks perceived that modern architectural design was a valuable tool in shedding their historicist image and promoting a new modern, service-oriented image. According to Dyson and Rubano:

By moving to a more modern design, bankers reinforced a new, more accessible, and progressive image, while dissociating themselves from the institutions many blamed for the Depression (...) and suddenly in the mid-twentieth century, an industry steeped in tradition rapidly transformed its architectural iconography from classicist to Modernist. Indeed, banks embraced new nontraditional vocabularies more easily than did some less conservative building types. New materials, technology, and design were used to symbolize the seemingly divergent expressions of stability and progressivism. Banks were modernized on Main Street or built in new suburbs to make dramatic contemporary statements (...).

As banks begin to embrace modernization and modern architecture in order to transform customer attitudes toward the post-Depression banking industry: "(...) banks were modernized on Main Street or built in new suburbs to make dramatic and contemporary statements" (Dyson and Rubano). Many modernizations of existing Main Street banks were often perfunctory applications of modernist facades of pre-fabricated panels or cladding elements, often applied after the aggressive removal of defining historic architectural details.

Kenneth Kingsley Stowell, member of the American Institute of Architects and former editor of *The Architectural Forum*, published the profusely illustrated *Modernizing Buildings for Profit* in 1935. The book was directed at building owners facing the realities of the real estate market in the years immediately following the Great Depression, including banks and other financial institutions that had inherited buildings through foreclosure. The book clearly outlined the practical financial potential and pitfalls of building modernization, still perfectly relevant to owners working to improve their profitability today. Subsequently, however, the text turns to the issue of architectural style under a series of subheadings:

New character and atmosphere through style and design

The final type of modernizing [following a series of largely functional improvements] is in many ways the most important from the profit point of view, for it involves the appearance of the building in respect to its design and decoration. The importance of style and design in selling of all kinds has become increasingly apparent in recent years. Even Ford found that it was not sufficient to produce a car which would run at a low price. It must also have an eye-appeal for the customer. The same is true of buildings and parts of buildings. The engineering phases are not enough. The psychological reactions of those who use or see the building are equally important (...)

It is design that attracts the people that pay

Probably the majority of alterations that are successful are combinations of repair, replacement, and improvements in design and decoration. The design and decorative changes are the only ones that make the newness of the old building apparent to tenants or buyers. While "mechanical plant" changes improve efficiency, they have very little renting or selling powers unless the prospect has first been attracted by the change in style and appearance. Thus, this type of modernization is the invitation which serves as the introduction to the other types. For this reason, it is important that the architect be called upon to show what can be done to change design without changing structure.

Simplicity -- the keynote of modern design

Very surprising is the transformation that can be wrought by the use of the present structure, window arrangement, and so on; by the removal of moldings, cornices, belt courses, columns, pilasters, and superfluous ornament; and by the addition of just a few details in the simplified modern manner. The entire atmosphere and character of the building can be altered; and this change is what counts most when competition with new buildings must be considered. The old building can usually be made new and modern in design as any of its younger competitors.

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Like the wholesale demolition intended to revitalize deteriorated urban building stock, this type of facade modernization was institutionalized in the 1934 National Housing Act and vigorously promoted by the FHA through the "Modernization Credit Plan," as documented in the 2008 *Modernizing Main Street; Architecture and Consumer Culture in the New Deal* by Gabrielle Esperdy.

During the 1930s and through the post-World War II years, a whole new category of material suppliers, contractors and designers developed to promote and sell such facade modernizations to banks and merchants in small towns and big cities alike, contending that such updates would allow older buildings to compete for consumer attention with newly designed and constructed shops and services. This aggressive remodeling increased in urban city centers as retailers and other commercial enterprises scrambled to compete with brand new suburban shopping malls, office parks, professional offices, banking, and recreational facilities.

Such remodeling victimized historic architecture in the service of consumer marketing. Architectural modernism became a convenient tool to produce "eye-appeal" by completely stripping a building of its historic features and character. The old building, by implication, could then compete on a level playing field with a newly constructed modern building for consumer interest and patronage. This over-simplification did not take into account other overwhelming economic and

social changes that engendered the shift between suburban and urban commercial activity, including the use of the automobile as the primary form of access.

A typical approach was used at the Midland Federal Savings Building, a 1924 Fisher and Fisher bank building located just five blocks south of the Colorado National Bank at 444 17th Street. In 1964, Midland Savings completely stripped away the entire two-story street-level elevations including extensive original terra cotta ornament by Robert Garrison and replaced them with a modernist facade of exposed-aggregate concrete and glass. All that remained of the original architectural design was the minimally detailed upper stories and an elevator penthouse not visible from the street.

For their modernization, Colorado National Bank would make a very different architectural decision. That decision was both a response to the architectural and historical importance of their location and building, and a forward-looking statement about the new and evolving nature of the national banking industry. Despite its "old-fashioned" appearance, the historic quality of the Colorado National Bank's architecture was a source of continuing pride to the institution and had always been integral to its identity. Its preservation was considered necessary to the new addition and rehabilitation. For this reason, and the high cost of downtown land, the decision was made to expand vertically, with a modern addition atop the historic building. This approach retained the newly acquired adjacent lots for automobile parking and banking, critical to Colorado National's competitiveness with new suburban banks, and for a new tower that was projected for future construction.

The 1925 addition to the Colorado National Bank Building had taken a very conservative approach, matching the materials and design of the original building in every detail. The result, from the exterior, was what appeared to be a single building. Nothing distinguished the 1915 building from the 1925 addition.

In contrast, the design of the 1964 addition was the result of a careful exploration process that balanced the modern design, seen as essential to communicating the up-to-date services of the venerable banking institution, while retaining the historic and architectural character of the building. It was a radical approach for the time. A glass curtain wall structure was rejected as too visually disparate and inappropriate to the context of the historic building. The final design retained the street level elevations of the 1915/1925 building and added a sympathetic New Formalist style addition that paid homage to the historic Neo-Classical Revival style design and was clad in matching Colorado Yule marble to provide further visual continuity. The historic street level elevations were left virtually intact. The only major alteration was the removal of the metal window grates. These window grates, like the metal grillwork that defined the old teller cages in the main banking hall, were viewed as forbidding reminders of old-fashioned and obsolete ideas about banking.

The modern style of the new addition clearly demonstrated that CNB was keeping up with the times and providing up-to-date banking services. But as a modern interpretation of the Neo-Classical Revival style, the addition paid homage to the historic building.

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A *Denver Post* article of February 17, 1963 states: "The bank's development plan provides for retention without change of the familiar classic architecture of the present building, identified by its marble columns as a downtown landmark since 1915. Rising three stories above the building will be an addition featuring an exterior composed of a series of Roman arches built of the same marble as the original building." [The three stories included the redesign of the original fourth floor and the addition of two floors above.]

In the *Rocky Mountain Herald* of December 14, 1963, Denver poet laureate Thomas Hornsby Ferrell, under the nom de plume Childe Herald, wrote of the project:

Post-War Denver, like most American cities, has been so busy bulldozing old landmarks into oblivion and thrusting new structures into the sky so quickly that one loses perception of any bridge between the old and the new. I often feel like an alien in my own home town.

An exception, however, is the transformation of the Colorado National Bank. For months I've watched what's happening as this large new complex, soon to cover the entire block, Champa to Curtis and 17th to 16th, evolved from a single building. Here is continuity, tangible continuity, something growing out of the past and into tomorrow.

What made this possible was a sound and impressive structure to work from, "the bank that looks like a bank," as the late Walker Van Riper described its marble forms in the Greek manner. That saying has stuck over the years.

As one looks back over architectural ideas of the early 1900's, the plain classic style, implying dignity and strength, has held up better for financial institutions than most of the ornate innovations, many of which are now undergoing abominable face-lifting jobs. The same is true of buildings inspired by the cult of function.

This remodeling and expansion program involves a two-story addition to the bank itself, six drive-in auto bank installations, back space for 50 cars and all the diverse facilities, inside and out, with which a modern bank can serve its customers.

At any rate, good bank architecture that hangs together delights me personally in this somewhat bewildering period in which Hollywood hot-dog creations with neon bait try to seduce my nickels and dimes, assuring me handsome returns for my sundown years.

The traditions of the Colorado National, going back to its founding in 1862, parallel the growth of Colorado itself. Active in the bank today are members of the old families such as the Kountzes and Bergers, so closely identified with its historic development.

The Colorado Chapter of the American Institute of Architects gave its 1963 design award to the 100,000 square-foot addition. The quality of the design, materials and workmanship drew national attention to the project. In an article entitled "Addition Holds With Tradition (...) Denver Landmark Retained," *Architecture/West* magazine of November 1963 relates:

The timeless Flatiron building, focal point of New York's Times Square, may be emasculated with a gaudy new curtain wall, but not the Colorado National Bank, in Denver. Here, in an object lesson to architects, the colonnade and architrave of the existing sturdy status symbol will be retained and matched in the addition, rather than gift wrapping the old building in an innocuous envelope.

By dramatizing salient features of the original structure, built in 1914; maintaining the building column module, using the same white Colorado Yule marble, the additional three [two] stories to be added above actually enhance the old structure. The image of the 100-year-old, reliable, stable banking institution will be continued with this new work, which involves approximately 100,000 square feet at a cost of \$4,500,000.

Historic detailing including the windows and doors in the recessed historic main entrance were retained. The historic exterior window grates were carefully removed, cleaned and reinstalled as decorative details in a number of interior first

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floor locations. This re-use of significant historic details was unusual for its time. To a pedestrian walking along the adjacent sidewalks, the views of the historic bank building remained virtually the same. The only major change to the first three floors of the building were the new windows -- steel sash and bronze trim glazed with inch-thick insulating solar bronze glass.

In many historic bank buildings, interior modernization meant a complete gutting and redesign, like that which occurred at the Midland Federal Savings Bank Building. There, the historic main banking hall was completely stripped of all historic detail in 1964, and the only significant surviving interior detail in the building was a pair of lobby elevator doors.

Again, the modernization of the Colorado National Bank interiors were radically different in approach.

A *Denver Post* article of February 17, 1963, says, "[The] basic architectural character of the lobby will be retained. Executive and trust offices will be removed from the main banking level, and the space will be devoted to lobby and customer service activities. The famed Indian murals painted by Allen True and long a dominant feature of the lobby's decor will be retained." On March 31, 1965, a follow-up article stated: "The 16 Allen True Indian murals placed around

the lobby walls were renovated and re-lighted to enhance their beauty." According to an interview with John Rogers, the murals were cleaned with fresh bread dough, technique still used by mural restoration specialists today. *Architecture/West* included a photograph picturing rows of plaster pendants, newly cast to match the historic originals, that accommodated new lighting, HVAC and fire protection while retaining the historic appearance of the main banking hall's coffered ceiling. A gold-leafed dome with a huge modern crystal chandelier was created above the historic skylight, enclosed by the addition of the upper floors. The balcony railings had brass posts and rails with glass panels sandblasted with an abstract pattern of crosses based on the design of the historic exterior window grates.

By comparing the design, material and construction quality of the 1964 Colorado National Bank project to the very different modernization approach taken at the National Register-listed Midland Federal Savings Building (5DV.1733) just blocks away, the Colorado National Bank project can be seen to be exceptionally significant and forward-looking.

On many levels, the 1964 addition and rehabilitation of the Colorado National Bank Building can be understood as anticipating the concerns of the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and other historic preservation design guidelines that began to take form two years later as a result of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, the Tax Reform Act of 1976, and culminating in the 1978 Revenue Act which established investment tax credits for the appropriate rehabilitation of historic buildings. The rehabilitation guidelines followed the model established by the 1931 "Old and Historic Charleston District," which created an architectural review process to determine the appropriateness of changes to historic buildings.

The costs of the Colorado National Bank rehabilitation project were high – ultimately \$4.5 million. The 1964 *Annual Report* relates:

When the decision was made to remain in our present banking location and to acquire substantial contiguous real estate, the Bank became inextricably involved in the renewal of downtown Denver. Much has happened in the last five years which confirms the wisdom of the Bank's decision; and although the carrying charges of the real estate today diminish to some percentage the Bank's earnings it is the opinion of the Bank's Board of Directors that eventual developments will prove our decision to be of great service to Denver.

It is doubtful that any financial institution other than the Colorado National Bank itself would have been willing to provide financing for an investment of this scale, given the deterioration of property and real estate values in downtown Denver at the time.

Announcing "Colorado National; Bank Remodeling Completed" in March of 1965, the *Denver Post* stated: "The bank's decision to expand at its 17th and Champa Sts. location was one of the early pushes given to rebirth of lower downtown Denver. 'We are delighted we decided to keep our same location,' [Melvin J.] Roberts said. 'And each succeeding announcement of other firms expanding in this area reconfirms the wisdom of our decision.'" The 1965 *CNB Annual Report* said:

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Evidence of neighborhood development is now apparent. The new Federal Reserve Bank building to be located on the block west of our property has been started. The new Federal office buildings are complete. Urban renewal studies have been commissioned for the renovation of the area below our property and other adjacent property is being substantially improved. Denver's nearly new convention hall, and Auditorium theatre project is now underway. Much of the impetus for the redevelopment of downtown Denver is undoubtedly due to the leadership taken by the Colorado National Bank on its properties.

All of the leasing promotion for the 1971 Minoru Yamasaki and Associates Colorado National Bank Tower were illustrated by renderings that included the Colorado National Bank Building in the foreground. The copy addressed the importance of historic renovation in the successful revitalization of downtown Denver that the Colorado National Bank had worked so hard to promote:

Downtown Denver: A New Environment

The five-block circumference surrounding the Colorado National Bank Building is downtown Denver's most vigorous sector. Here is the new Denver. Open, growing and well-designed.

Your neighborhood mixes historic renovation with a \$43 million, 27 block redevelopment project. Your neighbors are Denver's newest hotels, apartment complexes and its newest office structures. 16th Street, Denver's retail core, and 17th Street, its financial center, pass by your doorstep (...).

Commuting is a good surprise, too. Six auto-viaducts connect the immediate Colorado National Bank vicinity with all of Denver's major freeways and interstate routes. Your neighborhood is the most directly accessible in downtown.

A progressive and efficient public transportation system links the Colorado National Bank Building with every part of the city and all suburbs. In a recent announcement, the Department of Transportation shows Denver as a pilot city for a multi-million dollar "People Mover" rapid transportation project which will operate only a few steps from your front door.

CRITERION C:

Allen Tupper True, Acknowledged Master of Architectural Mural Painting

According to the 2009 retrospective *Allen Tupper True: An American Artist*: "Experts in the field agree that these murals [the sixteen murals for the main banking hall of the Colorado National Bank] are Allen's finest."

Allen Tupper True (1881-1955) was born in Colorado Springs, Colorado. He studied at the University of Denver and the Corcoran School of Art, Washington, D.C. between 1901 and 1902. In 1902, he was accepted into Howard Pyle's prestigious illustration classes in Chadd's Ford, Pennsylvania, and studied there until 1908. His classmates included a number of distinguished illustrators including George Harding, Gordon McCouch, Thornton Oakley, and N.C. Wyeth. At Pyle's studio, True began his career as a magazine illustrator. He subsequently turned to easel painting.

In 1908, True met British muralist Frank Brangwyn during a visit to London and was hired to assist him in the execution of murals at the Panama-Pacific Exposition in San Francisco, California. After marrying Emma Goodman Eaton in 1915, True launched his own career as a mural painter. Peter H. Hassrick, Director of the Petrie Institute of Western American Art at the Denver Art Museum, wrote about True's development as a muralist:

...His paintings of Indians such as Santo Domingo Corn Dance are tightly composed figural works rendered in soft, pastel-like colors that abandon all hint of the saturated, rich palette he had learned from Brangwyn. He had, during his illustrator phase, been compared with Frederic Remington in spirit and vigor. Now True turned away from that association as well. As he told one Denver reporter in 1916,

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In the Indian, the history of the cliff dwellers, the pioneers who laid with hardship and suffering the foundation for the building of this great country, we have the greatest themes ever given to an artist for his work. But we have neglected them. We in our seeking after culture have based all our study of art on the standards of Europe. And what paintings we have had, interpreting American life, have been in the bold, rough subjects like Remington's picturesque cowboys, out in the blazing suns of the desert, and Indians as warriors, as cruel and cunning savages.

I, instead, am attempting to treat the West as a quiet pastoral. I want to bring to my work something of the spirit of those Indian villages in which I have lived and studied that has something to do with their worship – their corn dance, for instance, which is as solemn a ceremony, as devout [a] service, as any ceremony ever held in the greatest cathedral. I want to inspire...the real spirit of the cliff dwellers, something of their high civilization....

His association with the Taos painters was potentially invigorating as well. Certainly his preference for a 'pastoral' interpretation of Indian life allied him in sentiment with such New Mexico masters as E. Irving Couse and Joseph Henry Sharp.

Yet, just as he found common ground with the Taos painters, who had during the summer of 1915 formally banded together as the Taos Society of Artists, True saw his mission as fundamentally different. "The members of the Taos colony as easel painters," he noted in the *Denver Post* that fall, "not specialists in mural decoration." True began to claim the latter distinction and was now prepared to abandon painting small canvases for the more lucrative, public province of architectural embellishment.

As True embarked on the final and most enduring segment of his career, he carried forward the egalitarian core of his philosophy. His murals would always be painted for the people celebrating themes of popular history. He commented that

the school of decorative work to which I am attached believes in treating the familiar, the commonplace and the every day life types in a big decorative way, so that the decorative panel or frieze or whatever it may be, will have a vital message to those who behold it, as well as satisfy the eye with the decorative effect.

He was, by late 1915, already competing for large public commissions such as Denver's Union Station, in which his pioneer images might find broad exposure. Denver would be graced with multiple examples of his masterful mural works, as would the capitol buildings of several other states including Wyoming and Missouri.

True's attraction to the life and culture of the American Indian led to extensive research. His papers at the Smithsonian Institution contain sketches by him of Native American artifacts, photographs, and other documents reflecting his desire for historical accuracy and attention to detail. A 1925 article from the *Rocky Mountain News* related:

True has lived among the Indians and studied their arts since 1907. Before he undertook these great mural paintings, which are the biggest things he has done, he spent ten days in the Field museum [in Chicago] studying Indian bead work and war shields and buckskin robes. He came away afire with the sense of their beauty. This spirit he has endeavored to put into the detail in which the Colorado bank pictures are extravagantly opulent.

An excerpt of an interview with True from a pamphlet, "Indian Memories," which accompanied the unveiling of his Colorado National Bank murals in 1925, suggests his motivations:

The Indian in mural decoration usually has been depicted as surrendering to the Whites, making treaties with the Whites or fighting the Whites. Seldom, if ever, has he been accorded the dignity or honor of standing alone on his own intrinsic worth or beauty. These murals for the Colorado National Bank treat of the Indian only. They essay to recall the days before his contact with the White race -- days when he roamed the beautiful untouched reaches of

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our West in deep but unconscious sympathy with the loveliness of primeval Nature -- days when his dignity and cruelty, his joy in living, stoic endurance and primitive integrity, as well as beauty of superstition and religious belief, made the cycle of his life an epic which has never been properly sensed or understood by the White race. The method of presentation is through a series of memories of retrospective visions -- the Indian dreaming of his vanished glory. He is clothed in raiment which is perhaps colored by contact with the White trader or trapper, yet his background -- softened by memory -- is of the halcyon bygone days of clear-eyed youth, the wild tumult of the chase, or the courageous zest of battle -- or, through softer memories of the women, the peaceful joy of soothing flowered nature and the happiness of creative artistry -- long, happy days of Arcadian peace! And then the final glory of his life -- the passage to the Happy Hunting Ground, 'where 'tis always summer and buffalo are plenty.

The murals were nationally recognized at the time of their completion in the November 1924 issue of the *American Magazine of Art*. A description of the murals was followed by a discussion of the American Indian theme, reflecting a widespread contemporary interest in the topic:

The themes of these paintings in their reflection of primitive life speak of a larger insight and appreciation. The very unrest, the questioning spirit of our day, is leading us to a more wholesome respect for the simple reactions of primitive races. We are even discovering that there is some subtlety there. No longer so cocksure of ourselves and of the ultimate values of our civilization, we have become interested in many aspect of primitive life. A vital and picturesque record is that of the American Indian before white civilization touched him, and Mr. True has reflected something of the beauty, the joy and pathos of this life with its universal human significance."

The Colorado National Bank murals consist of five triptychs composed of three individual panels of approximately 10' x 8-1/2' each, and a single panel approximately 18' x 23-1/2' in size. They have been well maintained through the years by the Colorado National Bank and U.S. Bank and they remain in excellent condition.

Of True's 32 known murals, approximately 65% survive in their original locations. The Colorado National Bank murals were produced in the 1920s, the middle of True's peak years of mural production (1912 through 1939). The Colorado National Bank Building is one of only three Denver locations where murals from the 1920s survive in their original locations. But unlike the Telephone Building, where thirteen first-floor murals depict the evolution of the telephone industry in Denver, and Steele School, where ten panels covering three walls depict children marching to and playing at the seashore, the Colorado National Bank murals are central to True's body of work and draw upon his particular interest in the American Indian.

A series of three major exhibitions of Allen True's work are currently on display at the Denver Art Museum, the Colorado Historical Society and the Denver Public Library Central. A major monograph entitled *Allen Tupper True: An American Artist* has just been published. This current interest in True and his work demonstrate an increasing scholarly and critical appreciation of his contributions to early-twentieth-century American art in general and mural painting in particular.

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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 # _____
 recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

State Historic Preservation Office
 Other State agency
 Federal agency
 Local government
 University
 Other

Name of repository: Colorado Historical Society

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): 5DV.524

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10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property less than one
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	<u>13</u>	<u>500631E</u>	<u>4399518N</u>	3			
	Zone	Easting	Northing	(NAD27)	Zone	Easting	Northing
2				4			
	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing	

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The Colorado National Bank Building occupies Lots 26 to 32, inclusive, Block 108, East Denver, City and County of Denver, State of Colorado, containing 21,963 square feet or .504 acres more or less.

A portion of the Colorado National Bank Building and its adjacent parking lot occupy a portion of Lots 23 through 25, inclusive, and the northeasterly 4.00 feet of Lot 22, Block 108, East Denver, City and County of Denver, State of Colorado.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The nomination includes the property legally and historically associated with the Colorado National Bank Building and its adjacent parking lot to the west.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Diane Wray Tomasso, Historic Preservation Consultant (on behalf of owner)
organization _____ date 11/27/09
street & number 2907 South Elati Street telephone 303-552-8254
city or town Englewood state CO zip code 80110
e-mail dwtomasso@earthlink.net

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Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

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Photographs:

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

PHOTOGRAPH LOG

Name of Property: Colorado National Bank
City or Vicinity: Denver
County: Denver **State:** Colorado
Photographer: Diane Wray Tomasso
Date Photographed: July 2008 / November 2009

Description of Photograph(s) and number:

Photo No.	Photographic Information
1	East, Seventeenth Street elevation at right and south, Champa Street elevation at left (CO_DenverCityandCounty_ColoradoNationalBank-0001.tif)
2	Detail of facade, east elevation; Seventeenth Street main banking hall entrance (CO_DenverCityandCounty_ColoradoNationalBank-0002.tif)
3	Detail of facade, east elevation, Seventeenth Street elevator lobby entrance (CO_DenverCityandCounty_ColoradoNationalBank-0003.tif)
4	East, Seventeenth Street elevation at left and north, abandoned alley elevation at right. The elevated walkway at lower right has been removed. See Amendment Photo #7. (CO_DenverCityandCounty_ColoradoNationalBank-0004.tif)
5	South, Champa Street elevation at right and west, parking lot elevation at left. (CO_DenverCityandCounty_ColoradoNationalBank-0005.tif)
6	West, parking lot elevation at right and north, abandoned alley elevation at left. The elevated walkway at center has been removed. See Amendment Photo 7. (CO_DenverCityandCounty_ColoradoNationalBank-0006.tif)
7	North party wall after removal of connecting walkway (CO_DenverCityandCounty_ColoradoNationalBank-0007.tif)
8	Level one, main banking hall, view to east. Three of the Allen Tupper True triptychs are visible at upper center, left and right. (CO_DenverCityandCounty_ColoradoNationalBank-0008.tif)
9	Level one, main banking hall, view to northeast. Two of the Allen Tupper True triptychs are visible at upper center and right. (CO_DenverCityandCounty_ColoradoNationalBank-0009.tif)
10	Level one, main banking hall, view to southeast. Two of the Allen Tupper True triptychs are visible at upper center and left. (CO_DenverCityandCounty_ColoradoNationalBank-0010.tif)

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- 11 Level one, main banking hall. A portion of the Allen Tupper True triptych on the upper east wall of the banking hall.
(CO_DenverCityandCounty_ColoradoNationalBank-0011.tif)
- 12 Level one, main banking hall, view to north at east end of hall. A portion of the Allen Tupper True triptych on the east end of the upper south wall of the banking hall.
(CO_DenverCityandCounty_ColoradoNationalBank-0012.tif)
- 13 Level one, southwest elevator lobby
(CO_DenverCityandCounty_ColoradoNationalBank-0013.tif)
- 14 Level one, southwest elevator lobby
(CO_DenverCityandCounty_ColoradoNationalBank-0014.tif)
- 15 Level one, southwest stair hall
(CO_DenverCityandCounty_ColoradoNationalBank-0015.tif)
- 16 Three Alan Tupper True murals that form the triptych "Youth"
(CO_DenverCityandCounty_ColoradoNationalBank-0016.tif)
- 17 Three Alan Tupper True murals that form the triptych "Buffalo Hunt"
(CO_DenverCityandCounty_ColoradoNationalBank-0017.tif)
- 18 Three Alan Tupper True murals that form the triptych "Women"
(CO_DenverCityandCounty_ColoradoNationalBank-0018.tif)
- 19 The Alan Tupper True mural "The Happy Hunting Ground"
(CO_DenverCityandCounty_ColoradoNationalBank-0019.tif)
- 20 Three Alan Tupper True murals that form the triptych "Art Work"
(CO_DenverCityandCounty_ColoradoNationalBank-0020.tif)
- 21 Three Alan Tupper True murals that form the triptych "War"
(CO_DenverCityandCounty_ColoradoNationalBank-0021.tif)

PHOTOGRAPH LOG—HISTORIC

<u>Photo No.</u>	<u>Photographic Information</u>
H22	A circa-1915 photo showing the completed original Colorado National Bank Building designed by the Denver firm of William E. Fisher and Arthur A. Fisher. The elevation to the right is the east-facing façade. Source: Denver Public Library Digital Image Catalog). (CO_DenverCityandCounty_ColoradoNationalBank-0022.tif)
H23	Rogers/Nagel/architects with the model for the 1964 addition. Jerome Nagel is seated, John Rogers is at right and associate Jack Burrey stands at rear. Source: Rogers, <i>My Story</i> . (CO_DenverCityandCounty_ColoradoNationalBank-0023.tif)
H24	The 1964 addition included a New Formalist drive-through banking facility to the north, considered necessary to compete against suburban banking facilities designed for ease of automobile access. Source: <i>Cervi's Rocky Mountain Journal</i> (20 Feb 1963). (CO_DenverCityandCounty_ColoradoNationalBank-0024.tif)

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- H25 Muralist Allen Tupper True at work on *The Happy Hunting Ground*. Source: True and Kirby, *Allen Tupper True: An American Artist*.
(CO_DenverCityandCounty_ColoradoNationalBank-0025.tif)
- H26 *Indian Memories*, with text by Allen True describing the theme of each mural, was available to bank customers.
(CO_DenverCityandCounty_ColoradoNationalBank-0026.tif)
- H27 The main banking hall as it appeared in 1925 with *The Happy Hunting Ground* at center. Source: Denver Public Library Digital Image Catalog.
(CO_DenverCityandCounty_ColoradoNationalBank-0027.tif)

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Property Owner:

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name CDB Denver Suites, LLC, c/o Stonebridge Companies
street & number 9100 E. Panorama Dr., Suite 300 telephone 303-785-3124
city or town Englewood state CO zip code 80112-3404

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

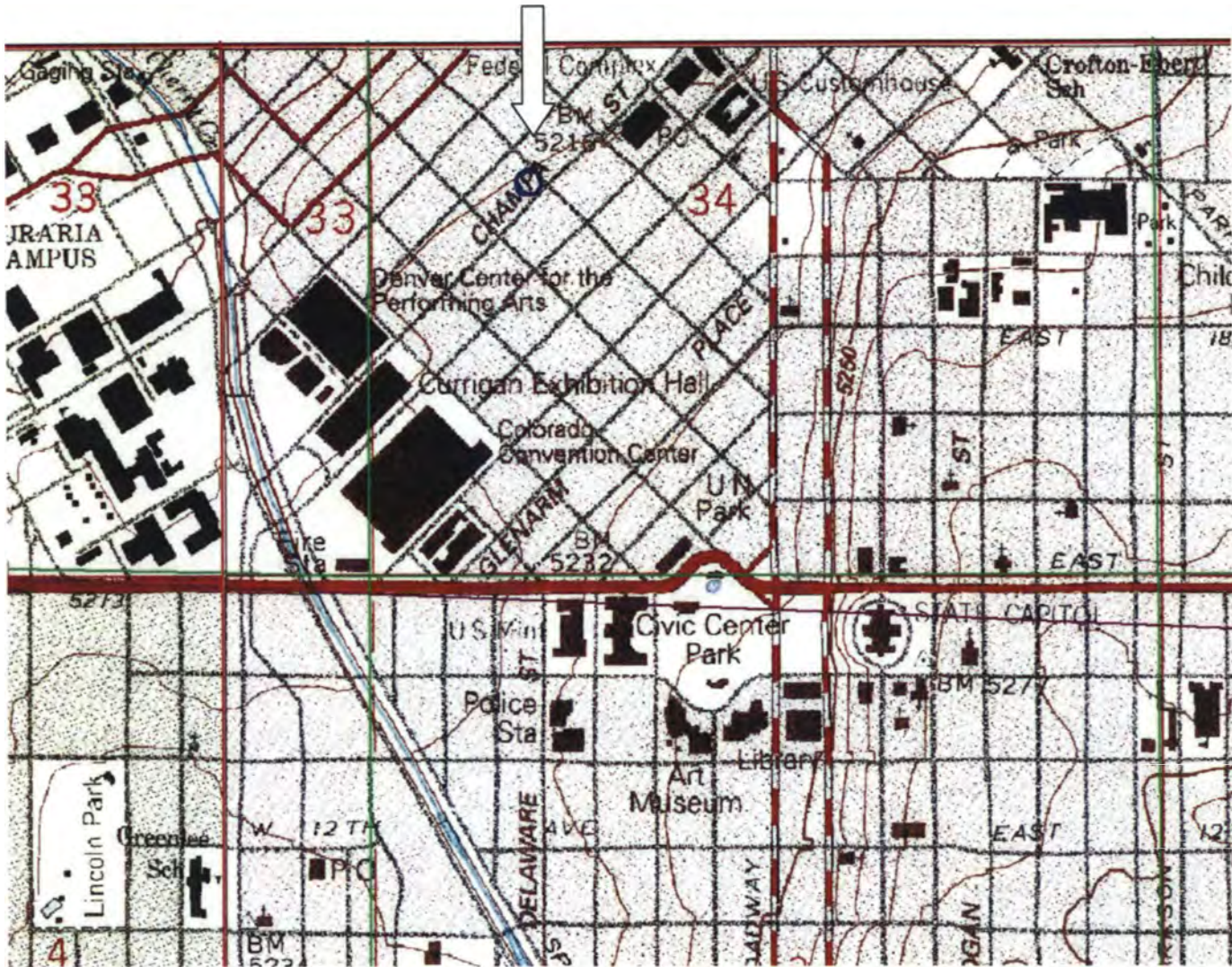
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USGS TOPOGRAPHIC MAP
Englewood Quadrangle, Colorado
7.5 Minute Series

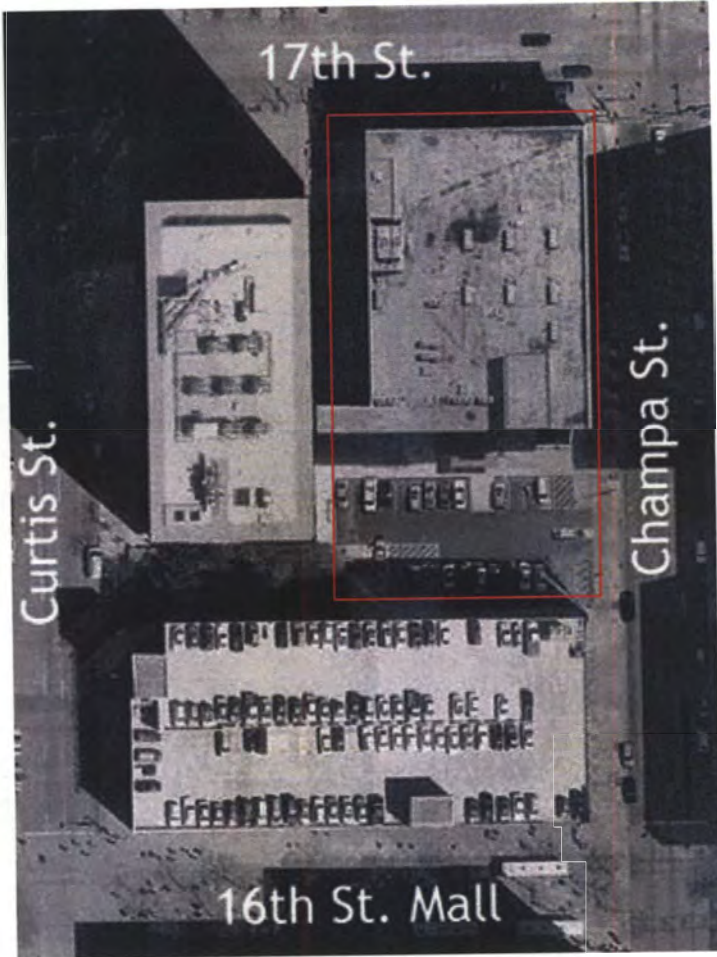
UTM: Zone 13/500631 E/ 4399518 N
PLSS: 6th PM, 3S TN, 68 W RW, 34 Sec.
¼ SE, ¼ SE, ¼ SW, ¼ NW
Elevation 5216 feet

Colorado National Bank Building
Name of Property

Denver County, Colorado
County and State

Section number 10 Page 25

N ←



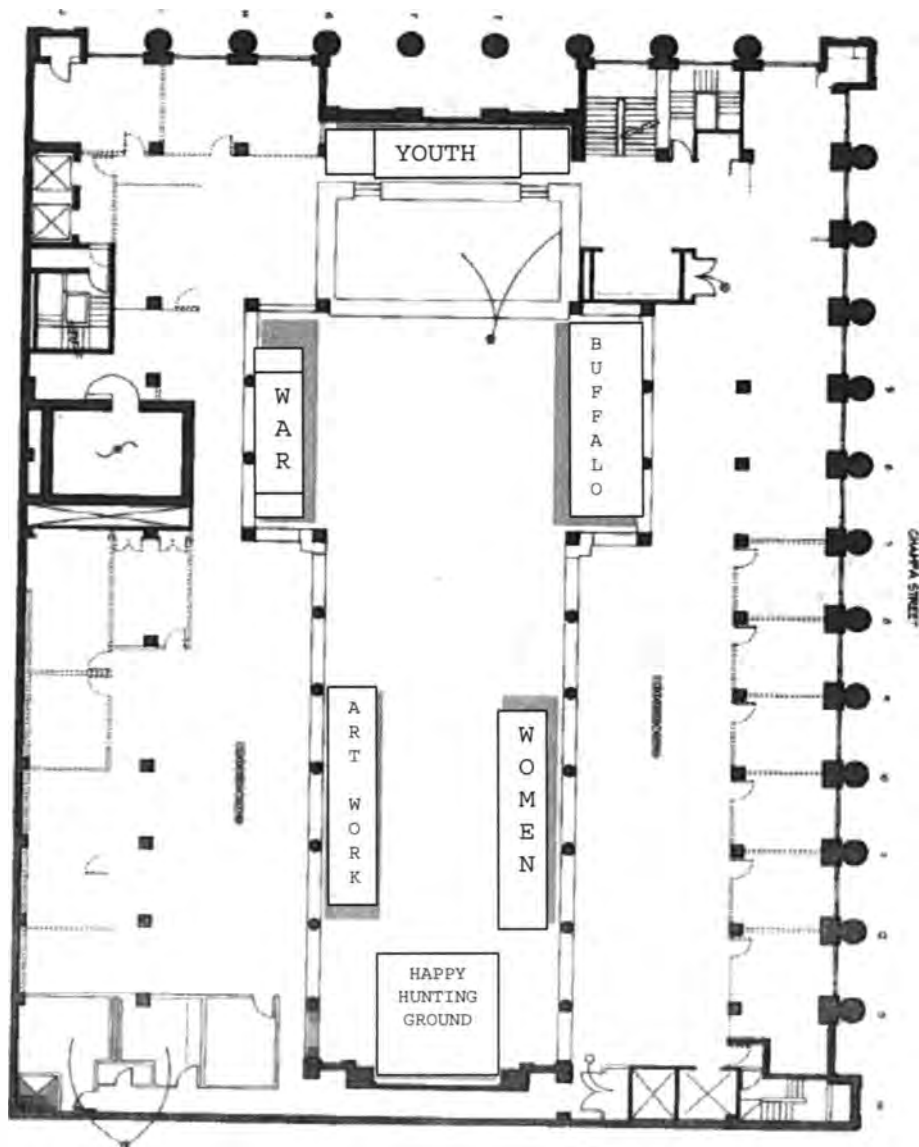
Sketch Map

Colorado National Bank Building
Name of Property

Denver County, Colorado
County and State

Section number 10 Page 26

N ←



First Floor Plan depicting location of Allen Tupper True murals

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY Colorado National Bank Building
NAME:

MULTIPLE
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: COLORADO, Denver

DATE RECEIVED: 3/19/10 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 4/07/10
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 4/22/10 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 5/03/10
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 10000215

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT RETURN REJECT 4.27.10 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

**Entered in
The National Register
of
Historic Places**

RECOM./CRITERIA _____

REVIEWER _____ DISCIPLINE _____

TELEPHONE _____ DATE _____

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.



0001

202645, CO-DenverCityandCounty-CO-BWADON

WADON A1364, 02/18/10

5DV.524
Colorado National Bank
colorado, city and county
of Denver



000 2

5DV.524

Colorado National Bank
Colorado, City and County
of Denver

A1364, 02/18/10

202645, CO-DenverCityandCounty-Colorado



5 DV. 524
Colorado National Bank
Colorado, City and County
of Denver

0003

202645, CO-DenverCityandCounty-Colo

Wolf, A1364, 02/18/10



5 DV. 524
Colorado National Bank
Colorado, City and County
of Denver

0004

202645. CO-DenverCityandCounty-CO

Wolf, A1364, 02/18/10



0005

202645, CO-DenverCityandCounty-Colorado

A1364, 02/18/10

5 DV. 524
Colorado National Bank
Colorado, City and County
of Denver



5DV.524

Colorado National Bank
Colorado, City and County
of Denver

0006

202645, CO-DenverCityandCounty-Colorado

Wolf, A1364, 02/18/10



5 DV. 524

Colorado National Bank
Colorado, City and County
of Denver

0007

202645, CO-DenverCityandCounty-Col

Wolf, A1364, 02/18/10



0008

202645, CO-DenverCityandCounty, Colorado

Wf
A1364, 02/18/10

5 DV. 524
Colorado National Bank
Colorado, City and County
of Denver



0009

202645, CO-DenverCityandCounty-Colorado

WA 11364, 02/18/10

5 DV. 524
Colorado National Bank
Colorado, City and County
of Denver



0010

5 DV.524

Colorado National Bank
Colorado, City and County
of Denver

0017, A1364, 02/18/10

202645, CO-DenverCityandCounty-Colorado



5 DV, 524
Colorado National Bank
Colorado, City and County
of Denver

W11
A1364, 02/18/10

202645, CO-DenverCityandCounty-ColoradoN

0011



5 DV. 524
Colorado National Bank
Colorado, City and County
of Denver

117, A1364, 02/18/10

202645, CO-DenverCityandCounty-COLORADO

EXIT



FDV. 524
Colorado National Bank
Colorado, City and County
of Denver

0013

202645, CO_DenverCityandCounty_Col

Wolf, A1364, 02/18/10

EXIT

EMERGENCY EXIT

IN THE EVENT OF AN EMERGENCY
PUSH BAR TO OPEN
ALARM WILL SOUND

9 DV. 524

Colorado National Bank
Colorado, City and County
of Denver

0014

202645, CO-DenverCityandCounty-CO

Wolf, A1364, 02/18/10




STAIRS

0015

5 DV. 524

Colorado National Bank
Colorado, City and County
of Denver

A1364, 02/18/10

202645, CO-DenverCityandCounty-Colorado



5 DV. 524

Colorado National Bank
Colorado, City and County
of Denver

A1364, 02/18/10

282645, CO-DenverCityandCounty-Colorado



5 DV. 524

Colorado National Bank
Colorado, City and County
of Denver

11364, 02/18/10

202645, CO-DenverCityandCounty-Colorado

0017



0018

5 DV. 524
Colorado National Bank
Colorado, City and County
of Denver

11364, 02/18/10

202645; CO-DenverCityandCounty-Col orado



5 DV. 524
Colorado National Bank
Colorado, City and County
of Denver

0019

202645, CO_DenverCityandCounty_Col

Wolf, A1364, 02/18/10



0020

202645, CO-DenverCityandCounty-COLORADO

1111
A1364, 02/18/10

5DV.524
Colorado National Bank
Colorado, City and County
of Denver



0021

202645, CO-DenverCityandCounty-COLORADO

A1364, 02/18/10

5 DV. 924
Colorado National Bank
Colorado, City and County
of Denver



9DV. 524

Colorado National Bank
Colorado, City and County
of Denver

A1364, 02/18/10

202645, CO-DenverCityandCounty-COLORADO

0022
(122)



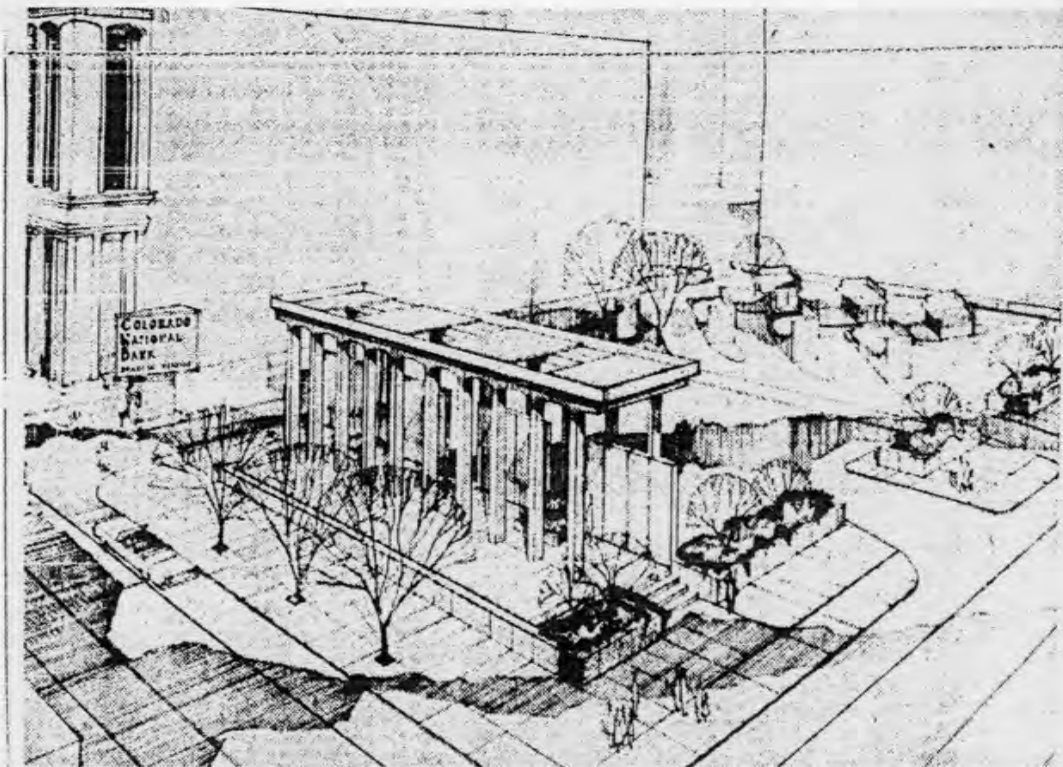
Jerry (Seated), Jack Burrey, John
Colorado National Bank Model

0023
(H23)

202645, CO-DenverCityandCounty-Colorado

W 91364, 02/18/10

5 DV. 524
Colorado National Bank
Colorado, City and County
of Denver



LANDSCAPING. MARBLE ARCHWAY FEATURE DRIVE-IN FACILITY.

5DV. 524

Colorado National Bank
Colorado, city and County
of Denver

A1364, 02/18/10

202645, CO-DenverCityandCounty-COLORADO

0024
(124)



Allen sitting beside his unfinished Colorado National Bank
Happy Hunting Ground mural.

0025
(H25)

202645, CO-DenverCityandCounty-COLORADO

1111
A1364, 02/18/10

SDV.524
Colorado National Bank
Colorado, City and County
of Denver

~~1111~~

INDIAN MEMORIES



A SERIES OF MURAL PAINTINGS IN THE
COLORADO NATIONAL BANK, *Denver*

5 DV. 524
Colorado National Bank
Colorado, City and County
of Denver

202645, CO_DenverCityandCounty_Col

Wolf, A1364, 02/18/10

~~10026~~
0026
(H26)



5 DV. 524

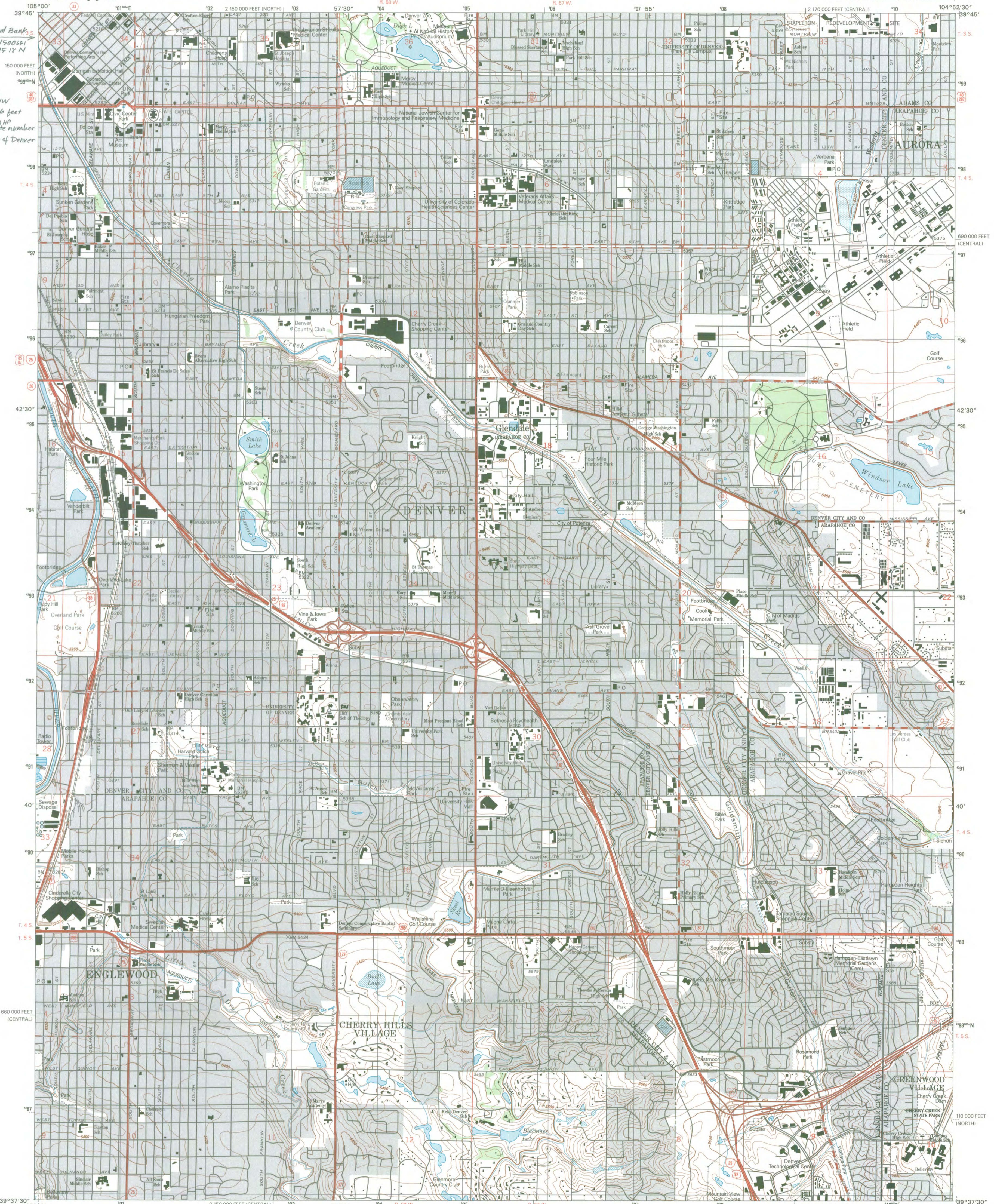
Colorado National Bank
Colorado, City and County
of Denver

A1364, 02/18/10

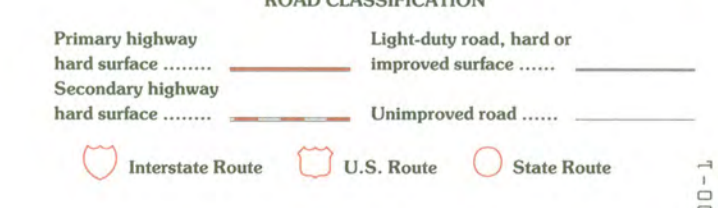
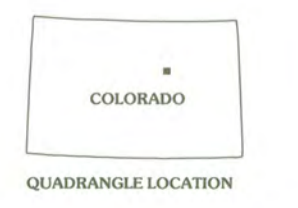
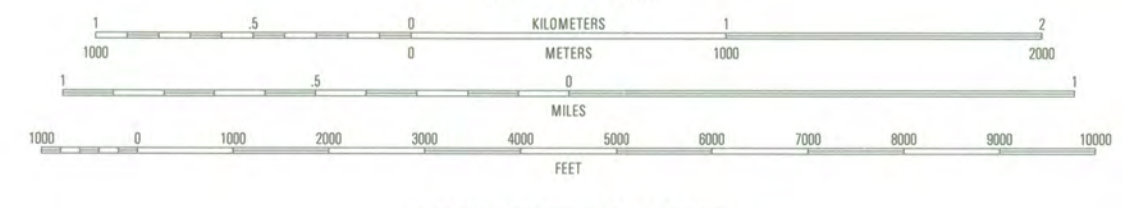
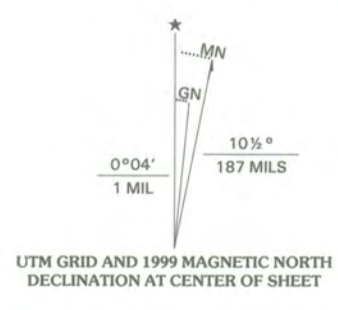
202645, CO-DenverCityandCounty-Colorado

~~0027~~
0027
(427)

Colorado National Bank
UTM Zone 13/500191
E/4399518 N
PLSS: 6th PM,
35 TN,
68 W RW,
34 Sec.
1/4 SE, 1/4 SW,
1/4 NW
Elevation 5216 feet
SDV. 524 OAH
Site number
City and county of Denver



Produced by the United States Geological Survey
Topography compiled 1964. Planimetry derived from imagery taken 1988 and other sources. Photoinspected using imagery taken 1997; no major culture or drainage changes observed. PLSS and survey control current as of 1965. Boundaries, other than corporate, revised 1999.
North American Datum of 1927 (NAD 27). Projection and 1000-meter grid: Universal Transverse Mercator, zone 13 10 000-foot ticks: Colorado Coordinate System of 1927 (central and north zones)
North American Datum of 1983 (NAD 83) is shown by dashed corner ticks. The values of the shift between NAD 27 and NAD 83 for 7.5-minute intersections are obtainable from National Geodetic Survey NADCON software.
There may be private inholdings within the boundaries of the National or State reservations shown on this map
Areas covered by dashed light-blue patterns are subject to controlled inundation



QUADRANGLE LOCATION

1	2	3
4	5	6
7	8	9

1 Arvada
2 Commerce City
3 Montebello
4 Fort Logan
5 Fitzsimons
6 Littleton
7 Highlands Ranch
8 Parker

CONTOUR INTERVAL 10 FEET
NATIONAL GEODETIC VERTICAL DATUM OF 1929
TO CONVERT FROM FEET TO METERS, MULTIPLY BY 0.3048
THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
FOR SALE BY U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, P.O. BOX 25286, DENVER, COLORADO 80225
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

ENGLEWOOD, CO
1997
NIMA 5063 III NW-SERIES V877





CITY AND COUNTY OF DENVER
LANDMARK PRESERVATION COMMISSION

JOHN W. HICKENLOOPER
Mayor

201 W. Colfax Ave.
2nd Floor, Dept. 209
Denver, Colorado 80202
Phone: 720-865-2915
Fax: 720-865-3056
TDD: 720-865-3055

January 19, 2009

Steve W. Turner, AIA
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer
Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation
Colorado Historical Society
1300 Broadway
Denver, CO 80203

Re: The Colorado National Bank Building, 918 17th Street, Denver, Colorado

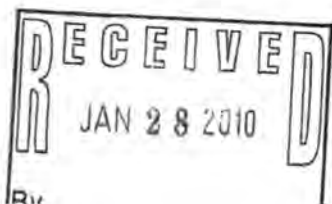
Dear Mr. Turner:

The Denver Landmark Preservation Commission considered the nomination of the Colorado National Bank Building to the National Register of Historic Places at its meeting on January 5, 2010. The Denver Landmark Preservation Commission expresses their full support of this nomination. The Colorado National Bank Building, the original 1915 construction as well as the 1926 and 1964 additions, are contributing to the city's local Downtown Denver Historic District. This building is significant not only for its strong expression of 17th Street's history as the financial center of the region and its distinctive architecture but for its gracious interiors displaying the work of the great muralist, Allen Tupper True. The Landmark Preservation Commission gives their full support to the nomination of the Colorado National Bank to the National Register of Historic Places.

Thank you for providing the Denver Landmark Preservation Commission with the opportunity to review and comment on this nomination.

Sincerely,

Dennis Humphries
Chair, Denver Landmark Preservation Commission





DOWNTOWN DENVER PARTNERSHIP, INC.
DOWNTOWN DENVER, INC.
DENVER CIVIC VENTURES, INC.
DOWNTOWN DENVER EVENTS, INC.

511 16th Street, Suite 200
Denver, CO 80202-4250
Tel: 303.534.6161
Fax: 303.534.2803
www.downtowndenver.com
info@downtowndenver.com

February 5, 2010

Steve W. Turner, AIA
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer
Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation
Colorado Historical Society
1300 Broadway
Denver, CO 80203

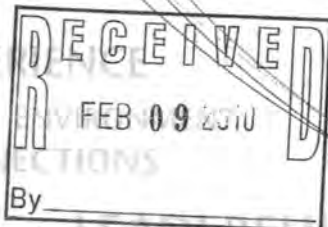
RE: Colorado National Bank Building (918 17th St.)

Dear Mr. Turner,

The Downtown Denver Partnership considers the Colorado National Bank Building to be an iconic Denver asset and we fully support its inclusion on both the State and National Register. It helped to establish 17th Street as Wall Street of the West and, until recently, was a hub of financial activity. We believe its redevelopment will prove to be a real benefit to the community and look forward to the day that the Allen True murals will once again be available to the public. The renovation of this property should extend its life and allow it to continue to contribute to the rich history of downtown Denver.

Sincerely,

Tami Door
Downtown Denver Partnership – President & CEO



JOBS
HOUSING
EXPERIENCE
CONNECTIONS
LEADERSHIP



February 8, 2010

Steve W. Turner, AIA
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer
Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation
Colorado Historical Society
1300 Broadway
Denver, CO 80203

Dear Mr. Turner,

I am writing to express Historic Denver's support for the National Register of Historic Places Nomination of the Colorado National Bank Building, located at 918 17th Street in downtown Denver. As the leading local preservation advocacy organization with a membership of more than 700 local residents, Historic Denver strongly supports this nomination due to the building's role of housing one of the West's leading financial institutions, one that was intrinsically tied to western development and commerce. We also support the nomination because of the artistic merit and significance of the Allen Tupper True murals located inside the original grand lobby, one of which is the largest he created.

Beginning in 1970, Historic Denver became the leading advocate for historic places in the city of Denver. For more than three subsequent decades downtown Denver was at the center of an intense struggle between urban renewal, development pressure and historic preservation. During these years many significant financial structures were lost forever, including the Women's Bank and the Central Bank Building, demolished as recently as 1990.

The Colorado National Bank building survived these tumultuous years due to the perspective of its managers, largely through their desire to remain in a downtown location, and because of the strong public sentiment about the structure and institution. Today the bank is one of forty-three contributing structures in the Downtown Denver Historic District, created in 1999.

The Colorado National Bank has a strong association with the development of Denver and the western region at both the turn-of-the-century and at mid-century. The bank, founded by the financially-minded Kountze family, anchored early Denver investments beginning in 1862 and continuing for more than a century. The Kountze's (and Berger's) savvy was a key contributor to the city's rise to prominence as a supply center and financial engine for the frontier. The bank's relocation in 1915 into the new marble structure at 17th & Champa signified the city's permanence and status, as well as the tremendous power of its Wall Street of the West (17th Street).

Historic Denver, Inc.

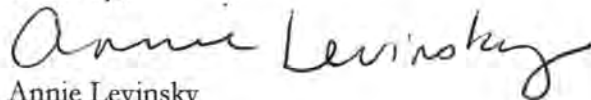
1628 16th Street	303.534.5288
Suite 200	303.534.5296 fax
Denver, CO 80202	www.historicdenver.org

In addition to the key historical role the bank played, the choices made by its managers over more than a century added to its significance. Among these choices was the decision to hire muralist Allen Tupper True to paint a series of murals in the bank's grand lobby. True was a western-born artist who broke with tradition by portraying everyday scenes of western life. His work at the Colorado National Bank is especially significant for its focus on Native American culture prior to the establishment of white settlements. In the 1920s this subject-matter was ground-breaking and the works are recognized as among the most significant of True's career. This significance only increases as True's works elsewhere in the West continue to disappear or become damaged.

Listing on the National Register of Historic Places will acknowledge the significant contribution of the Colorado National Bank building to the story of western development. Due to True's murals, the Kountze family association, and the bank's commitment to remain in downtown Denver until its ultimate closure, its story is one that mirrors 20th century American history on a broad scale.

Again, we encourage you to give the Colorado National Bank every consideration and to list the building on the National Register so it can join Denver's other iconic landmarks that have played and will continue to play a role in downtown's renaissance. Please feel free to contact me should you have any questions or if you desire additional information about Denver's history or preservation community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Annie Levinsky". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Annie Levinsky
Executive Director



Denver City Council District 8
Carla Madison

DISTRICT OFFICE:
2713 Welton Street • Denver, CO • 80205
303-298-7641
carla.madison@denvergov.org



February 10, 2010

Steve W. Turner, AIA
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer
Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation
Colorado Historical Society
1300 Broadway
Denver, CO 80203

Dear Mr. Turner,

I would like to offer my support for the National Register of Historic Places Nomination of the Colorado National Bank Building, located at 918 17th Street in downtown Denver.

The building is not simply a significant Denver landmark but important to the development of the entire western region and representative of national trends and activities in American History between 1862 and 1964.

I care about preservation and it has been an important aspect to the preservation redevelopment in downtown. This type of recognition provides an opportunity for the city's financial history to get national attention.

I hope you will give this application every consideration. Please feel free to contact me should you have any questions about the Denver community.

Sincerely,

Carla Madison, Councilwoman
District 8



HISTORY *Colorado*



March 8, 2009

Ms. Carol Shull
Interim Keeper of the National Register
National Register of Historic Places
1201 Eye Street, N.W. 8th Floor (MS 2280)
Washington, D.C. 20005-5905

Dear Ms. Shull:

We are pleased to submit for your review the enclosed National Register of Historic Places nomination for the Colorado National Bank Building (5DV.524), located at 918 17th Street in Denver.

The State Review Board considered the nomination at its meeting on February 19, 2010. The board voted unanimously to recommend to the State Historic Preservation Officer that the property met the criteria for listing in the National Register.

The nomination originated with a Historic Preservation Certification Application submitted in 2007, forwarded by our office to the National Park Service as approved based on comments by Dale Heckendorn, late National and State Register Coordinator. NPS responded with some concerns regarding the 1964 addition, elaborated upon in its April 2008 white paper, "Evaluating the Significance of Additions and Accretions." The property was foreclosed upon prior to completion of the process, the next step of which would have been submittal to the Colorado Historic Preservation Review Board for consideration.

We look forward to the formal listing of this property. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me by phone at 303-866-4681 or by e-mail at astrid.liverman@chs.state.co.us.

Sincerely,

Edward C. Nichols
State Historic Preservation Officer

Enclosures

- Registration forms
- USGS map
- Photographs

Thank you for reviewing this. It is a very important property to Colorado. Ed