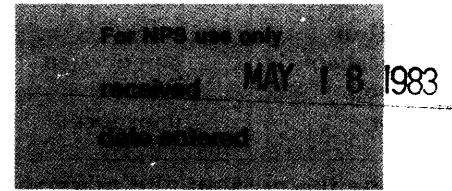


OMB NO. 1024-0018
EXP. 12/31/84

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections



1. Name

historic Test Building; Circle Motor Inn

and/or common Test Building

2. Location

street & number 54 Monument Circle

N/A not for publication

city, town Indianapolis

N/A vicinity of

~~congressional district~~

state Indiana

code 018

county Marion

code 097

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Monument Circle Associates

street & number One Indiana Square, Suite 2500

city, town Indianapolis

N/A vicinity of

state Indiana

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Marion County Recorder's Office

street & number City-County Building

city, town Indianapolis

state Indiana

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Regional Center Survey

has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date Summer 1980

federal state county local

1821 City/County Building,
depository for survey records Indianapolis Historic Preservation Commission,

city, town Indianapolis

state Indiana

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one	
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site	N/A
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved	date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed			

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Test Building is prominently sited on the southwest segment of the Circle, which defines the center of Indianapolis and the heart of the downtown area. Adjoining the building on the south is the four-story Journal Building (1897), the oldest surviving commercial building on the Circle. Across the alley (Bird Street) to the west of the Test Building is the Illinois Building (1925-26), a 10-story office building. Directly across the brick-paved Circle from the subject building is the 1890's Soldiers' and Sailors' Monument, the centerpiece of the city and a civic amenity exhibiting some of the finest public sculpture in the state.

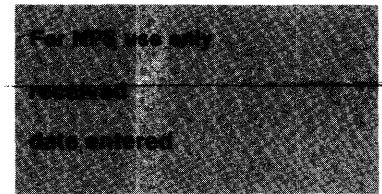
The Test Building is nine stories high (108 feet), with a basement and sub-basement plus a three-story brick penthouse. Of fireproof construction, the structure has a reinforced concrete frame, floors, and roof with 12-inch thick brick and tile curtain walls. Interior partition walls are, for the most part, of hollow, vitrified clay tiles (maker identification: CFBCOLB). Its two main elevations on the Circle and on West Market Street are faced in Indiana Oolitic limestone in dressed-face ashlar above a granite foundation. The reinforced concrete frame is exposed on the visible four-story portion of the brick wall on the south side, while the alley elevation is faced with buff-colored brick. The building's footprint is roughly trapezoidal in outline, with the line of the Circle elevation conforming to the arc.

The parking garage function of this building is not readily apparent from an exterior view. It appears to be a conventional office building of its period with shops at street level. Exterior ornamentation is concentrated at the lower three levels and top floor, leaving the mid-section of five stories very plain. This design approach to the facade of a multi-story building (the analogy of base, shaft, and capital of a column) had been used commonly for three decades.

The building is five bays wide on the Circle and six bays wide on Market Street. The main entrance to the building and its lobby is located in the central bay of the Circle side, with two shops on either side. On Market Street, the garage entrance and exit are located in the farthest west two bays with the other four bays being shops. With the exception of the Roman-arched entrance, the ground floor and mezzanine were united in an entresol composition by metal (possibly copper) storefront enframements terminating in an anthemion cresting. Several of these original storefronts survive on Market Street, but others have been lost through subsequent remodelling or are now obscured by signage. The original shops had a recessed entry between plate glass display windows. Spindled intake grilles

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Continuation sheet Description

Item number 7

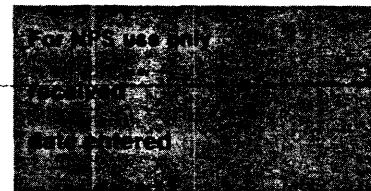
Page 1

occurred in the storefront bases. At mezzanine level, tilting transom lights flanked a central sign board for each shop. The original main entrance to the building was recessed behind the richly carved stone reveals of the archway, featuring rosettes in coffers. A foliar molding forms the archivolt; a "key stone" volute ties the molding to the name tablet above carved ".TEST.", and rosette medallions ornament the arch's spandrels. The original two matching light fixtures of copper at the sides of the arch are still extant.

To unite the first and second stories as a base, the architect chose to simulate rusticated stonework with pronounced mortar joints for these floors only. Above the main entrance sits a window enframed by an elaborate entablature with top and side scroll ornaments. With the exception of this window and the two end bays of the Market Street elevation, all windows of the second floor are three-part windows with a wide casing accentuating the rectangular form. The cast iron spindle colonettes of all the second-story windows are curious in design for a 1920 building, harkening back to late-19th-century types. Below the denticulated stringcourse dividing the second and third floors, there is a frieze with foliar ornaments.

Between the paired windows of the third floor and at each corner, 13 scrolled inset panels of carved stone depict symbols of the technology of the time and monuments of local history. These high relief sculptures attracted much favorable comment when the building was first completed, being recognized even then as possibly being quaint vignettes in future years. Starting from the southeast corner of the building, the Circle panels are as follows: a propeller airplane common to World War I, a flying dirigible, and the Soldiers' and Sailors' Monument, these same three then being repeated in reverse order. On Market Street, starting with its intersection with the Circle, there is a truck (also of World War I vintage), a flying dirigible, the 1860's Marion County Courthouse, a boat at sea (difficult to interpret), a State Capitol building, another propeller airplane, and another truck. A stringcourse differentiates the third floor from the fourth, directly above a reeded band with small floral medallions.

The fourth through eighth floors are unornamented with the exception of a bas-relief decoration consisting of cartouche and flanking swags, located in the center of the Market Street elevation between the seventh and eighth floors. The mortar joints of the dressed limestone veneer of these stories are very fine, contributing to the smooth,

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planar effect intended. The metal, double-hung windows with concrete sills are paired in each bay with the exception of the end bays of the Market Street elevation, which consist of single windows. Below the stringcourse between the eighth and ninth floors, there is a terra-cotta frieze composed of alternating shields, festoons, and medallions.

The ninth floor is distinguished by identical, narrow, rectangular panels of terra-cotta ornament inset between the windows. The stylized design depicts a floriated double urn. Rising from the top of the ninth floor is a stone cornice at the level of the building's 30-inch, copper-flashed parapet. This cornice survives in its entirety and is one of the most richly ornamented features of the exterior. Starting with a line of dentils with a bead-and-reel molding above, brackets support a reeded overhang with a stone cresting of acanthus leaves alternating with fleurs-de-lis.

The only interior space of note today is the first floor's main entrance lobby. Applied to the side walls is a 10-foot-high veneer of Tennessee marble, which meets the ornamental plaster cornice consisting of a variety of moldings. The flat plaster ceiling above is simply bordered, and the floor is of marble squares.

The parking garage portion of the Test Building originally occupied the two full basements and portions of floors one through six. It is assumed the upper floors originally were split (50-50) between parking and office space. That balance varied through the life of the building. As noted, the parking garage was unique, (1) in its ramp system and (2) that it was fronted at Market Street with windows and ornamentation similar to the office building facade.

The garage structure is of reinforced concrete post and beam with integral concrete deck. The interior walls are infill of clay-tile. Exterior walls are clay-tile with limestone or brick veneer.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates Constructed 1925 **Builder/Architect** Bass, Knowlton & Company

Statement of Significance (~~is one paragraph~~)

Architecture

The Test Building is significant architecturally as one of Indianapolis' earliest large parking structures, if not indeed the city's first parking garage and one of the earliest in Indiana.¹ Incorporated within the design of a conventional urban building, the parking function combined with groundfloor commercial spaces and offices above was an example of mixed use that was progressive for the early 1920's. The prominent local architectural firm of Bass, Knollton and Company devised a design for the building that both quieted a controversy surrounding the circumstances of its construction, as well as responded to numerous architectural and engineering problems.

In 1923 the heirs of Charles Edward Test, former president of the National Motor Vehicle Company of Indianapolis,² proposed to build a six-story garage with groundfloor stores on a site they leased on the southwest corner of the Circle at its intersection with Market Street.³ Controversy arose immediately, and on November 23, 1923, the City's Board of Public Works rescinded the building permit it had granted on the project 13 days earlier.⁴ Grounds for this action were ostensibly based on the fact that the City could not allow motor access to the garage to cross a sidewalk due to danger to pedestrians. Two ex post facto ordinances were then passed to this effect. Nearby property owners had actively circulated petitions in opposition to the garage, claiming that it would "be detrimental to the general welfare of the vicinity because of the probable congestion of traffic."⁵

This outcry came in the midst of much concern about new construction around the Soldiers' and Sailors' Monument. In the early 1920's city planners had been studying the effects of height limitations on buildings fronting the Circle. Well-known landscape architect George E. Kessler had proposed an official limit based on a diagonal line of vision across the Circle, with consideration for the silhouette effect on the Monument.⁶ Architect William Earl Russ had advocated a set of architectural guidelines for buildings fronting the Circle.⁷ Wishing to create of the Circle a civic composition comparable to the great squares of Europe, Russ stressed the importance of a commonality in materials and architectural style in addition to a uniformity in height. As for the general public, opponents of the parking garage did not deem its construction to be consistent with preserving the dignity of a memorial to the community's war dead. Led by Colonel Oran Perry, long-time Superintendent of the Monument, public opinion held sway in the revocation of the permit.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Please see notes to Item 8. One additional source of information was used in writing Item 7, the Description. A set of 21 blueprints of the original drawings by Bass, Knowlton and Company was found in the Test Building at the onset of the recent rehabilitation. (These drawings are currently in the possession of Browning, Day, Pollak, Mullins, and Dierdorf Architects, Indianapolis, Indiana) They include elevations, sections, floor plans and mechanical drawings.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property less than an acre

Quadrangle name Indianapolis west

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UMT References

A

1	6	5	7	2	0	4	0	4	4	0	2	1	7	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B

Zone		Easting				Northing								

C

Zone		Easting				Northing								

D

Zone		Easting				Northing								

E

Zone		Easting				Northing								

F

Zone		Easting				Northing								

G

Zone		Easting				Northing								

H

Zone		Easting				Northing								

Verbal boundary description and justification

41 10/12' on Circle; 72 1/2' on rear Lot 14 Square 55; 32 1/2' on Circle south side, Lot 14 Square 55

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state N/A code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Mary Ellen Gadski, Architectural Historian
James S. Reed, Historian

organization Indianapolis Historic Preservation/Commission date February 1983

street & number Room 1821 City/County Building telephone (317) 236-4406

city or town Indianapolis state Indiana 46204

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title Indiana State Historic Preservation Officer

date April 21, 1983

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Entered in the
National Register

date 6/16/83

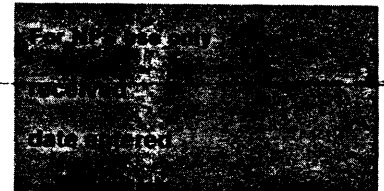
Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

12/31/84

**United States Department of the Interior
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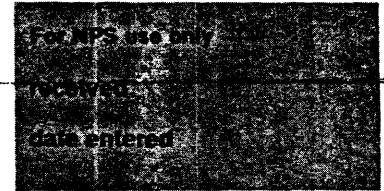
A few days after municipal action, the Test heirs -- Skiles E. Test, Donald N. Test, Dorothy Test Hiatt, and Mary E. Test -- filed suit in Superior Court to seek an injunction allowing construction of the garage.⁸ City officials then cited General Ordinance No. 79, enacted in 1921, which set forth regulations on the construction or alteration of any building used for storage of more than three automobiles (or for storage of gasoline in excess of 50 gallons) within 500 feet of a residence. According to the ordinance, the City Plan Commission would have to recommend approval of construction of the garage since the Hotel English across the street came under the category of "any building used for residential purposes." By court order, the injunction against interfering with the erection of the building was granted the owners. Controversy nonetheless continued. As late as February 1924, efforts were made by a City Councilman to oppose the garage in response to public opinion.⁹

By mid-May 1924, a decision had been made to change the scope of the architectural project from that initially proposed.¹⁰ An additional three stories were added to the building to accommodate offices in addition to the building's main function as a "storage garage for automobiles." By June a new building permit had been issued by the City, and demolition of the existing building on the site (the Bates Hotel, formerly the Hendricks Building) had begun.¹¹ The architectural firm of Bass, Knowlton and Company was called upon for a design that would gain public acceptance for an unconventional building in function sited at one of the City's most prominent locations. In addition, the firm had to meet the engineering challenges posed by incorporating a garage within an office building.

The firm of Bass, Knowlton and Company was formed in 1921 when consulting engineer Lynn O. Knowlton joined the long-established firm of Herbert L. Bass and Company, founded in 1903.¹² In Bass' 27-year career from the point he became a head draftsman in a local firm at age 22, he was responsible for designing numerous notable public schools, commercial and industrial buildings, post offices, and residences. To his design credit were the prestigious homes of Stoughton A. Fletcher ("Windridge"), Charles B. Sommers, James A. Allison, and James I. Holcomb (the latter three estates on Cold Springs Road), and several others in the city of Indianapolis. The Sommers home was awarded the Gold Medal of the Indiana Chapter of the American Institute of Architects (AIA) in 1925 as the most meritorious building of the year. He was noted for several high schools across the state of Indiana, including those at Lebanon (1908), Logansport (1912), and Greencastle (1914). His commercial buildings included the Ben-Hur Building in Crawfordsville, the Citizens National Bank in Greensburg, and the Police and Fireman's Insurance Building in

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Indianapolis. The entire plant of the Cole Motor Car Company was among his industrial designs. It was Bass' experience in the construction of postal garage buildings across the country that was perhaps his most important credential in gaining the commission of the Test Building. He designed and supervised U.S. postal substations and garage buildings in Indianapolis, St. Louis, Chicago, Detroit, Cleveland, Dayton, Atlantic City, and Boston -- an impressive record indeed at a period when the architectural solutions of the problem of parking garages were in their initial stages.

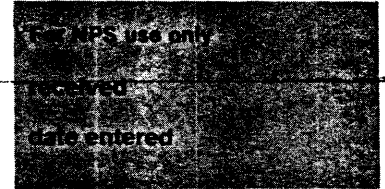
Bass, Knowlton and Company had an interesting challenge in designing a multi-story facility for storing automobiles in between "layers" of groundfloor shops and upper-story offices. They also had to work within the constraints of a confined urban site and an irregular parcel of land. The Test Building made use of an innovative type of ramp system that had been used for the first time in the construction of a garage in Poughkeepsie, New York, only a few years beforehand. The "d'Humy Motoramp" system was based upon the construction of a building in which the floors in one half of the building were halfway between the floors in the other half.¹³ This enabled the ramps to be half the usual length necessary to connect floors. The short ramps allowed for continuous travel up or down through the building, and because they occupied less space in the building, more square footage could economically be devoted to parking space. Another claimed advantage for the d'Humy system was that the sides of the ramps did not have to be enclosed as was the usual practice, thereby allowing greater driving maneuverability.¹⁴

In 1928, three years after construction of the Test Building was completed, a fire began in the sixth floor oilroom of the Circle Motor Inn.¹⁵ Despite dense clouds of black smoke that poured forth from the building, adding to the drama of the temporary entrapment of many office workers on the upper three floors, the fire was confined soon after it had begun. Only four automobiles out of the approximately 200 cars in the building were damaged. The general engineering and fireproof construction of the building were acclaimed for preventing a disaster. Among those touting the credits of the Test Building's construction were Edward D. Pierre, then president of the local AIA chapter.

The exterior design of the Test Building owed much to a building immediately preceding its construction on the Circle -- The Guaranty Building (1922) designed by Rubush and Hunter -- and perhaps the earlier ideas of Russ. Since this building had received considerable public acclaim, a similar design for the Test Building ensured some measure of acceptance for the parking garage. Perhaps the most artistically significant aspect of the exterior design is the sculptural

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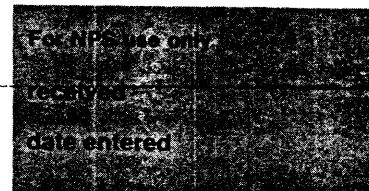
was filed through commercial radio channels rather than cables. In this regard, INS was a communication front runner.

Another important early tenant of the building was the Chevrolet Motor Company, located in the prime second floor office space.¹⁹ From the opening of the building, the company leased space until 1929. Another initial tenant was the General Motors Acceptance Corporation, located on the ninth floor during this same period. (Building co-owner Donald Test's officership in the Central Motor Parts Company could have a relationship to these two automobile interests leasing space in the building.) One final early commercial venture of interest in the Test Building was a rooftop miniature golf course, by local tradition the first "Tom Thumb" course in the state of Indiana.

Monument Circle is the central node of the downtown and of the City, with the Soldiers and Sailors Monument as its centerpiece (National Register, 1973). Some structures on the Circle have undergone renovations that destroyed their original character, and others have been demolished. The Test Building is one of the few, essentially unaltered, historic structures remaining on the Circle, and continues to serve as an appropriate companion to the beautiful Monument.

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¹Research into the Test Building's status as one of the city's first parking garages has not proven conclusively that it was indeed the first. However, no earlier such structures have been documented. A 1944 article on post-war planning for adequate parking downtown stated that there were currently only 300 off-street parking spaces in the area bounded by Ohio, Pennsylvania, Washington and Illinois. ("Lack of Parking is Serious Handicap to City," Indianapolis News, May 8, 1944, pg. 1.) Since the Test Building held 200 automobiles in the late 1920's, it still retained two-thirds of all parking spaces in the heart of the downtown area 20 years after its construction. This data would tend to suggest that the Test Building was also one of the largest of early parking garages.

²Biographical information on Charles Edward Test from: Jacob Piatt Dunn, Memorial Record of Distinguished Men of Indianapolis and Indiana (Chicago: Lewis Publishing Co., 1912), pp. 417-418.

³The first proposed building is documented in the Indiana Construction Recorder (November 24, 1923) vol. 4, no. 34, p. 15.

⁴"City Bans Proposed Garage on Circle," Indianapolis Star, November 14, 1923.

⁵Ibid.

⁶"Proposed Building Limit Effect," Indianapolis Star, April 21, 1922.

⁷"Unfolds Scheme To Make Circle Famed Beauty Spot," Indianapolis Star, December 10, 1921.

⁸"Injunction Asked To Permit Garage Building on Circle," Indianapolis Star, November 28, 1923. Also Skyles E. Test et. al. vs. City of Indianapolis, Superior Court #A23810, recorded November 27, 1923.

⁹"Tries to Prevent Garage on Circle," Indianapolis Star, February 8, 1924.

¹⁰Indiana Construction Recorder (May 10, 1924) vol. 6, no. 6, pg. 5.

¹¹Ibid. (June 7, 1924), vol. 6, no. 10, p. 15.

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¹²This fact and all subsequent information relating to Bass, Knollton and Company were derived from the following sources: Indianapolis Men of Affairs (Indianapolis: American Biographical Society, 1923), pp. 48-49; "H. L. Bass, Local Architect, Dies at Washington," Indianapolis Star, April 9, 1926; American Art Annual (1926) 23:333; Henry F. and Elise R. Withey, Biographical Dictionary of American Architects (Los Angeles, CA: Hennessey and Ingalls, Inc., 1970), p. 41.

¹³"New Ramp System for Garages," Engineering News-Record (January 26, 1922) 88:147.

¹⁴Three years following the design of the Test Building, a traffic engineer and authority on parking garages noted the following: "Probably the most satisfactory, economical, and generally used type of inter-floor travel makes use of a patented system of staggered floors with short ramps of easy grades and provides for rapid vehicle movements with safety." Hawley S. Simpson, "Downtown Storage Garages." The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science (September 1927), 133:87.

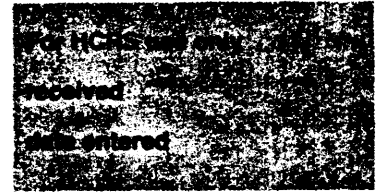
¹⁵"Huge Crowd Sees Downtown Fire," Indianapolis Star, January 24, 1928. Note: the Circle Motor Inn should not be confused with an in-city motel or some such similar public accommodation. It was the name given to the storage garage portion of the building by Skiles E. Test, president of Indianapolis Motor Inns, Inc. and manager of the garage.

¹⁶Biographical information on Sangernebo was compiled from the following articles: "Sculptor's Work Graces Towering Edifices; Home is Art and Love," Indianapolis Sun, October 8, 1911, p. 10; Margaret M. Scott, "New Building Reflects City's Growth in Appreciation of Commercial Art," Indianapolis Star, September 11, 1927, p. 40; "Alexander Sangernebo, Noted Architectural Sculptor, Dies," Indianapolis News, January 23, 1930. Because Bass worked closely with Sangernebo on several other projects -- notably the homes of Fletcher, Holcomb and Sommers -- his collaboration with the sculptor is very likely. The above-cited articles do not specifically mention the Test Building, but it is very possible the 1927 article confused the Guaranty Building with the Test Building.

¹⁷Information on the Veteran's Bureau was taken from: "Veterans' Bureau to Have Home on Circle," Indianapolis News, November 20, 1924. Note that the quoted figure for rental included an option on the sixth floor. The completed value of the Test building was cited in: "19 Large Building in 3 Years," Indianapolis News, March 16, 1925, p. 3, c. 1.

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¹⁸Background information on the International News Service was derived from: Francis Williams, Transmitting World News (Paris: UNESCO, 1953), pp. 39-47.

¹⁹A regional sales office of the Chevrolet Motor Company, rather than an automobile showroom, apparently was located here. Comprehensive research in city directories was done on the Test Building from the time of the building's completion until the mid-1930's. For further information on early tenants, consult building file in offices of the Indianapolis Historic Preservation Commission.