

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED JAN 4 1980
DATE ENTERED FEB 27 1980

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 Fayette National Bank Building; (First National Bank Building)
AND/OR COMMON First National Bank Building

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER 159-67 W. Main Street
CITY, TOWN Lexington VICINITY OF 6th District
STATE Kentucky COUNTY Fayette CODE 067
CODE 021

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input 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
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME H. Foster Pettit, Dunster Foster Pettit, William Pettit III
STREET & NUMBER 167 W. Main Street
CITY, TOWN Lexington VICINITY OF Kentucky

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Fayette County Courthouse
STREET & NUMBER West Main Street
CITY, TOWN Lexington STATE Kentucky

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE Survey of Historic Sites in Kentucky
DATE June, 1979 FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS Kentucky Heritage Commission
CITY, TOWN Frankfort STATE Kentucky

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input 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 First National Bank Building is located on the corner of West Main and North Upper Streets in Lexington, Kentucky. The location is the "center" of the city being across from the Fayette County Courthouse. Next to the building and facing on Main Street is the Higgins Block which was placed on the National Register on August 12, 1977. This sixteen-story high-rise office building was erected in 1913-14 from the design of the great American architectural firm McKim, Mead and White of New York (photo 1).

The principal materials used were stone and buff brick with glazed tile trim. There are eight bays on the Main Street side and ten on North Upper Street. The lower four stories are of Bedford limestone and are treated as the base while the top four stories are the cap, with the remainder as the shaft. The fourth and sixteenth stories are treated on horizontals, reinforcing the course above. The lower three stories are treated as rusticated colossal order with columns or pillars between rusticated end-piers (that establish the pattern of quoins extending upward to define the edges of all but the top story): the Main St. front has two pairs of rusticated Ionic columns (photos 2 & 3); the outer columns are set under the wider spaces between paired windows above; the inner columns unorthodoxly under the adjacent narrower spaces, in order to allow for the original central main entrance (photo 4). The west (Upper St.) facade has square piers located under the spaces between the pairs of windows, in a structurally more logical placement. These supports have handsome molded bases and rest on pinkish granite blocks at the sidewalk level (photo 5). The 13-15 story windows are grouped in recesses within large three-story round arches with keystones clasping the course under the top floor. These arches correspond to the pairs of windows below, although they have triple rather than double openings, with bronze spandrels between the floors. The fenestration of the bottom three floors is also set back behind the piers and columns, with narrower sidelights flanking wide central panes; the mezzanine level is not visible from outside, with large transoms taking its place, and there are bronze spandrels with a meander-pattern relief below the third floor. The top story again has pairs of rectangular windows treated as an attic to underscore the horizontal of the large projecting cornice; tile lozenges accentuate the panels between these windows. The huge and elaborately detailed cornice is modillioned in the Florentine manner, with lion's-head blocks terminating alternate modillions at the outer edge. The tile courses above the third, fourth and twelfth stories are particularly finely shaped, and the details throughout are elegant but quite severe, consisting almost exclusively of meander and egg-and-dart moldings.

Originally the main entrance was through the center bay on the Main St. side, through a two-story round arch, and there was an areaway providing access to the basemen along the Upper St. side, with handsome bronze railings, recently replaced (except for a "thermal" gate) by concrete planters. The interior has also been somewhat remodelled, although some of the marble wainscotting of the fire stairs and other features remain, and basically the building both inside and out is remarkably intact (photo 6). The first story has been completely remodelled, in rather high-style contemporary vein, by the occupants, Bennett & Tane Architects, Inc., who received a Ky. Society of Architects

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 1913-14

BUILDER/ARCHITECT McKim, Mead & White

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

This sixteen-story high-rise office tower, erected just before World War I of steel construction with limestone, buff brick, and terracotta cladding, remained the tallest structure in the city until a decade ago. It was designed by the most famous and respected architectural firm in the country--and one of the most successful in the nation's history--McKim, Mead & White of New York City. Built for the prosperous Fayette National Bank (founded in 1870 and consolidated as the First National Bank of Lexington in 1931), the building clearly fulfilled the bank's intention of symbolizing in concrete form their financial and civic status as well as providing convenient, up-to-date quarters. Within the work of this prominent firm, Beaux-Arts Classical design of this building makes it one of their more handsome "skyscrapers," suggesting a Renaissance merchant prince's palazzo at vast scale, with its colossal three-story orders at top and bottom; the handsome but restrained classical details accentuating horizontal divisions that make the elevations as a whole conform to the base, shaft, and capital of a column; and the climactic projecting cornice. The structure is the last and finest of the group of high-rise towers--most designed by non-Lexington architects for banks, no doubt in competition with each other--that punctuate the corners of the courthouse square. It continues to provide attractive and functional office space and contributes considerable distinction to the city's architectural heritage and its urban skyline.

The last, and probably most important, high-rise office tower to be built in Lexington for almost 60 years from before World War I until after World War II, the Fayette National Bank Building was also located on what had been one of the most prominent locations in downtown Lexington since the late eighteenth century, when the entire block facing Upper St. from Main to Short Sts. was known as "Jordan's Row," after an early owner and developer of the site. All but the long, narrow lot at the Upper St. corner were replaced in 1872 by the extremely important castiron front "Higgins Block," of which the six easternmost of fifteen original bays remain and are listed on the National Register. On the Upper St. corner was erected about the same time the old Fayette National Bank Building. The Bank had been founded in 1870, and was first located temporarily at the opposite end of the same block. The old bank building and the six bays of the Higgins Block were replaced by the present structure in 1912-13. (The facade of the former three center bays of the Higgins Block was remodelled when the bank acquired the property about 1927, with limestone, pale buff brickwork, and a few details to relate it to the main building.) The article in the Herald (4/27/1912, 1-5) announcing the board's decision to erect a new "skyscraper" suggests the symbolic role of the building for the bank, which had had enormous success over the past forty years. They were particularly proud of being one of the few banks in the state whose surplus exceeded--in this case considerably--their capital. "The board felt that Lexington is growing so fast, and its own business is keeping pace with the city's growth...The new building, when finished, will be the highest and most pretentious of the office buildings of the city. It will occupy a commanding position opposite the courthouse, and will be a decided acquisition to Main Street."

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

See attached continuation sheet.

UTM NOT VERIFIED

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY approx. .10 acre

UTM REFERENCES

A | 16 | 719550 | 4213800 |
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING
 C | | | | | | | | | |

B | | | | | | | | | |
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING
 D | | | | | | | | | |

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The nominated property consists of a rectangular area (59 ft. Main St. by 77 ft. 10 in. Upper St.) comprising only that land on which this McKim, Mead and White building stands.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Walter Langsam, Architectural Historian, and Richard S. DeCamp, Executive Director
 ORGANIZATION

DATE

Lexington-Fayette Co. Historic Commission
 STREET & NUMBER

August, 1979

253 Market Street
 CITY OR TOWN

TELEPHONE

255-8312

Lexington

STATE

Kentucky

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

Cedric W. Yector

TITLE State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE 12-19-79

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

W. Ray Luce
 DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION
 ATTEST Kristin O'Connell
 KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

2/27/80

DATE

2/19/80

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Fayette, County, Kentucky

CONTINUATION SHEET

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Design Award in 1976 for "a simple solution allowing for new use of space while giving utmost respect to the integrity of the fine architectural quality of the existing building." The main entrance was shifted to the east bay; there is much use of travertine in the polygonal vestibule and elevator hall. The firm's office is in the former banking hall, which has shallow handkerchief vaults with restrained classical details between the two-story structural piers (photo 7); the new interiors include boldly curved partitions but retain much of the original sense of spaciousness.

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The directors of the bank had chosen the most important architectural firm in the United States at that time, and one of the most important firms in American architectural history: McKim, Mead & White, of New York City. Two of the founders of the firm--brilliant decorative designer Stanford White (1853-1906) and Charles Follen McKim (1847-1909)--had died before the Lexington commission was undertaken, but William Rutherford Mead, the administrative leader, was still active. According to Roth in his recent building list of the firm's works (p. 58, #289), the designing partner of the bank building has tentatively been identified as William Mitchell Kendall (1856-1941), Mead's later successor as head of the firm.

Kendall, a Bostonian, began his career as a draftsman, after training at Harvard, M.I.T., and Europe, with McKim, Mead & White in 1882, the period of some of their early major commissions. According to Withey (p. 340), he was "responsible for the design or architectural details of many of their outstanding works in this country and Europe," including the old Madison Square Gardens, the Morgan Library, Washington Square Arch, and the Municipal Building, all in New York City; and numerous important hotels, commercial and university buildings, and particularly war memorials. He was also a distinguished member of the profession in his own right, and active in many cultural societies.

The design for the Fayette National Bank Building in Lexington bears a striking resemblance--to the extent that it may be considered a version of--the Knickerbocker Trust Company's "Downtown Building" in New York, of which the first eight stories were erected in 1907-1909 (Roth, #266) and the upper fourteen in 1909-11. Its long narrow corner site seems to have been quite similar to that in Lexington, but proportionately larger, so that the center portion of the long side was slightly recessed to break its length. Aside from the use of the more elaborate Corinthian, rather than Ionic order, and other details, the buildings are very similar, and both were constructed by one of the firm's favorite contractors, the George A. Fuller Co. of New York and Knoxville, Tenn. If anything, the Lexington tower looks more "modern" with its single block emphasized by the massive cornice (without the balustrade on top of the Knickerbocker), its stronger and simpler colossal orders at top and bottom, and its almost continuous quoins emphasizing the sweep of the corners from top to bottom. White himself is believed to have been the designing partner of the Knickerbocker, although it was completed after his death. The basic composition, however, goes back at least to the unbuilt project for the Home Life Insurance Co., New York, of 1892 (Roth, #405), and was even used for the far more complex and lavish New York Municipal Building of 1907-1916 (#544), of which Kendall was one of the major designers; as well as the Munsey Building in Baltimore, 1908-1913, also built by Fuller (#544). Thus, the Lexington bank building belongs to an extremely important sequence of pre-World War II high-rise office towers in the Beaux-Arts Classical vein, applying Roman Imperial and some French Renaissance or Baroque elements (such as the coupled columns flanking the main entrance) to the basic steel modular skeleton.

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Chinn, Asa. Photographs (ca. 1920), A-29 and B-20.

Lancaster, Clay. Vestiges of the Venerable City. Lexington, Kentucky. 1978.

Lexington City Directories.

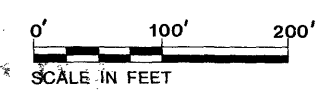
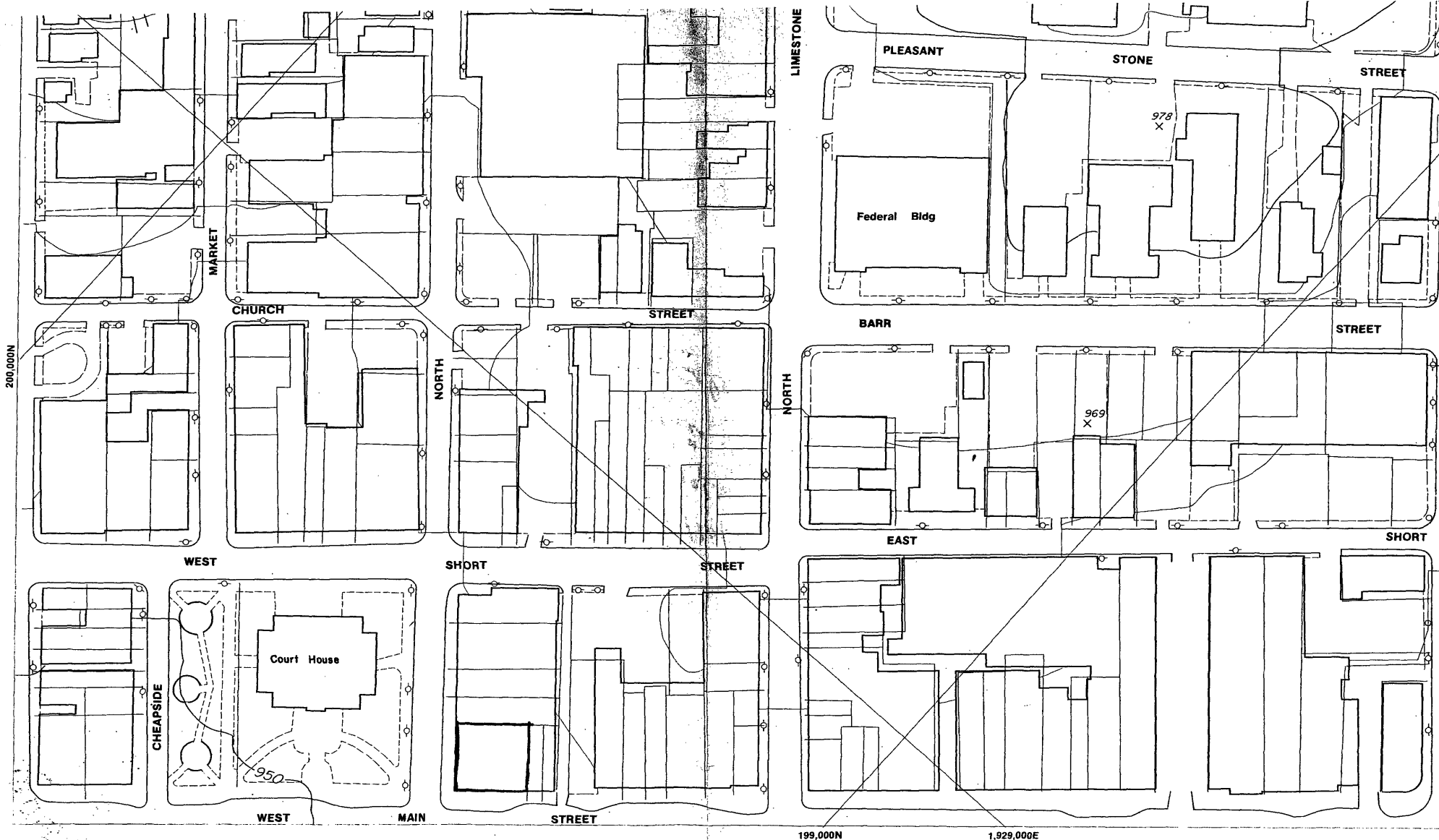
Lexington-Fayette County Deed and Will Books.

Lexington Public Library newspaper index and specific references mentioned in the text.

Roth, Leland M. The Architecture of McKim, Mead and White, 1870-1920: A Building List. New York and London: Garland Publishing, Inc., 1978.

Sanborn Insurance Maps.

Withey, Henry F. and Elsie Rathburn. Biographical Dictionary of American Architects (Deceased). Los Angeles, 1956.



- PROPERTY LINE
- PAVEMENT EDGE
- PRIVATE OR SECONDARY ROAD

- 950- CONTOUR
- X 947 SPOT ELEVATION
- ▭ BUILDING