

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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RECEIVED JUL 12 1977

DATE ENTERED JAN 30 1978

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**NAME**

HISTORIC Occidental Life Building

AND/OR COMMON

**LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER 119 Third Avenue, S.W.

CITY, TOWN

Albuquerque

— NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

— VICINITY OF

01

STATE

New Mexico

CODE

035

COUNTY

Bernalillo

CODE

**CLASSIFICATION**

**CATEGORY**

\_\_DISTRICT

BUILDING(S)

\_\_STRUCTURE

\_\_SITE

\_\_OBJECT

**OWNERSHIP**

\_\_PUBLIC

PRIVATE

\_\_BOTH

**PUBLIC ACQUISITION**

\_\_IN PROCESS

\_\_BEING CONSIDERED

**STATUS**

OCCUPIED

\_\_UNOCCUPIED

\_\_WORK IN PROGRESS

**ACCESSIBLE**

YES: RESTRICTED

\_\_YES: UNRESTRICTED

\_\_NO

**PRESENT USE**

\_\_AGRICULTURE

COMMERCIAL

\_\_EDUCATIONAL

\_\_ENTERTAINMENT

\_\_GOVERNMENT

\_\_INDUSTRIAL

\_\_MILITARY

\_\_MUSEUM

\_\_PARK

\_\_PRIVATE RESIDENCE

\_\_RELIGIOUS

\_\_SCIENTIFIC

\_\_TRANSPORTATION

\_\_OTHER:

**OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME Albuquerque Production Credit Association

STREET & NUMBER 119 Third Avenue, S.W.

CITY, TOWN

Albuquerque

— VICINITY OF

STATE

New Mexico

**LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, Bernalillo County Courthouse  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Albuquerque

STATE

New Mexico

**REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE New Mexico State Register of Cultural Properties

DATE

March 2, 1973

\_\_FEDERAL  STATE \_\_COUNTY \_\_LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS State Planning Office

505 Don Gaspar

CITY, TOWN

Santa Fe

STATE

New Mexico

# 7 DESCRIPTION

| CONDITION                                     |                                       | CHECK ONE                                   | CHECK ONE   |
|---|---------------------------------------|---|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT | <input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED | <input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED          | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE |
| <input 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 Occidental Life Building, "the most artistic building ever erected in Albuquerque," was opened to the public at a reception given by the Occidental Life Insurance Company on August 1, 1917. The one-story 100' x 142' building was constructed to house the offices of the insurance company founded in Albuquerque in 1906, the company's second headquarters building in the city. It is located at the northwest corner of the intersection of Third Street and Gold Avenue, one block south of the main business street in downtown Albuquerque.

The building was designed by architect Henry Charles Trost (1860-1933) of Trost and Trost of El Paso, an adaption of the Doge's Palace in Venice, the design motif suggested by A.B. McMillan, one of the founders of Occidental Life and its president when the new headquarters was built, following an European tour. The building was of masonry construction with the south and east facades fronting the two streets faced with glazed white terra cotta supplied by the Denver Terra Cotta Tile Company which also did the marble work in the building. An arcade, said to have been nine feet deep, extended along the two streets with plate glass windows and double doors set back from the columns. The counter-thrusting arches rose from Corinthian columns with the triangular spaces between the pointed arches ornamented with bas-relief terra cotta. Above the arches was a belt of quatrefoils pierced with windows. A simple cornice projected approximately four feet beyond the unadorned terra-cotta faced wall above the band of foils. Each of the three corners of the building visible from the street was adorned with a plaque inscribed with the name of the building.

In the early morning hours of April 24, 1933, a fire completely destroyed the interior of the building. The fire was believed to have started between the ceiling and the roof at the northeast corner of the building, since a patrolman on his beat first noticed flames shooting from the roof at that corner. At the time of the fire, the building was valued at \$125,000 with the damage to it and its contents estimated at over \$100,000. The projecting cornice was destroyed and the tops of the walls were damaged by the collapsing roof. The terra-cotta arches and band of foils remained intact. On the day after the fire, "twenty men were given work...clearing debris from the fire-gutted... building." The Occidental Life Insurance Company considered replacing the building, but it was rebuilt shortly after the fire from plans drawn by W. Miles Brittelle, Sr. (1894-1970), a prominent Albuquerque architect.

In the remodeling of the building the arches of the original facade were retained, but the arcade was partially enclosed with windows set under some of the arches and recessed entrances located on both sides of the building and at the corner. The band of quatrefoils remains, although the clerestory windows were closed. The only obvious change in the facade was made in the treatment of the parapet. The projecting cornice was replaced by a more ornate one supported by small brackets, the materials supplied by the Denver Terra Cotta Tile Company. The embrasures of the crenelated parapet are ornamental with small finials and the three corners of the building are topped with conical acroterions. The remodeled building resembles the Doge's Palace more closely than the original. The corners retain the original plaques although the name of the building, no longer owned by the Occidental Life Insurance Company, is not now inscribed on them.

The roof of the building is supported by steel columns which has permitted the interior to be changed frequently. This flexibility and the generally sound condition of the building have allowed its continued use while many other buildings of architectural significance and individuality in Albuquerque's central business district have been razed or severely altered. The building now houses Offices of the Albuquerque Production Credit Association and the Albuquerque Title Company.



# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Albuquerque Journal, April 26-27, 1933.

Albuquerque Morning Journal, August 1, 1917.

Engelbrecht, Lloyd C. "Henry Trost: the Prairie School in the Southwest." Prairie School Review VI, 4 (1969) pp. 5-31.

"Portrait of an architect: W. Miles Brittelle, Sr." New Mexico Architect I,1 (March 1959) p. 6.

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than one acre

UTM REFERENCES

A 1,3 3,4,9,5,5,0 3,8,8,3,3,5,0  
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

B                 
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C               

D               

## VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The property nominated consists of a 100' x 142' building located on lots 13-16 of block 17 of the original townsite of the City of Albuquerque, bounded on the north by the alley between Central and Gold Avenues, on the east by Third Street and on the south by Gold Avenue.

## 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

Sylvia L. Cook, Architectural Historian

ORGANIZATION

State Planning Office

DATE

STREET & NUMBER

505 Don Gaspar

TELEPHONE

505-827-5191

CITY OR TOWN

Santa Fe,

STATE

New Mexico

# 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL     

STATE X

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

*Russ W. Mark*

TITLE

State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE

1-10-78

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

ATTEST:

*Charles W. Smith*

DATE

1-30-78

DATE

1-30-78

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

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ITEM NUMBER

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Also like the Owls Club, the Occidental Life Building had a row of clerestory openings above the arches, a row of quatrefoils, while those in the Owls Club are oval. The arches of the Owls Club are embellished with Sullivanesque ornament; those of the Occidental Life Building are more organic. While the arcade was stylistically correct, the arches also reflect a vernacular tradition in Southwestern architecture.

The remodeling of the building following the 1933 fire was the work of W. Miles Britell Sr., a prominent Albuquerque architect whose work includes the Grant County Courthouse in Silver City, several buildings at the New Mexico Institute of Mining and Technology in Socorro, and the Coliseum at the New Mexico State Fairgrounds. His remodeling of the Occidental Life Building more closely resembles the Doge's Palace than the original building.

The building is significant partly because of the successful, locally organized insurance company which built it. Begun as an operation of unlikely success, because of the high personal and financial characters of the persons involved, it was a successful operation which continues today. It is also significant because it was designed by the highly regarded architect Henry Trost, and is one of several of Trost's designs extant in the state. It is important to the central business district of Albuquerque as a building of beauty and architectural individuality which continues as an important landmark in the city.