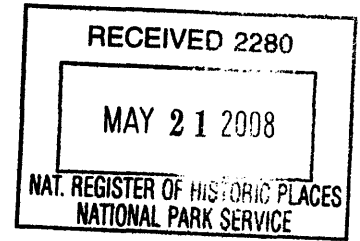


(Oct. 1990)

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM**

574



**1. NAME OF PROPERTY**

**HISTORIC NAME:** Lovington Fire Department Building  
**OTHER NAME/SITE NUMBER:** Lovington Fire Station

**2. LOCATION**

**STREET & NUMBER:** 209 S. Love Street **NOT FOR PUBLICATION:** N/A  
**CITY OR TOWN:** Lovington **VICINITY:** N/A  
**STATE:** New Mexico **CODE:** NM **COUNTY:** Lea **CODE:** 025 **ZIP CODE:** 88260

**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 \_\_\_ nationally  
\_\_\_ statewide  locally. (\_\_\_ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

*Kathleen Stinch*  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official

*15 May 2008*  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

State Historic Preservation Officer

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property \_\_\_ meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register criteria.  
(\_\_\_ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting or other official

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

**4. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION**

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register  
\_\_\_ See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register  
\_\_\_ See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

*for*  
Signature of the Keeper  
*Edouard H. Beall*  
\_\_\_\_\_

Date of Action

*7-2-08*  
\_\_\_\_\_

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**5. CLASSIFICATION**

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**OWNERSHIP OF PROPERTY:** Public-local

**CATEGORY OF PROPERTY:** Building

<b>NUMBER OF RESOURCES WITHIN PROPERTY:</b>	<b>CONTRIBUTING</b>	<b>NONCONTRIBUTING</b>
	1	0 BUILDINGS
	0	0 SITES
	0	0 STRUCTURES
	0	0 OBJECTS
	1	0 TOTAL

**NUMBER OF CONTRIBUTING RESOURCES PREVIOUSLY LISTED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER:** 0

**NAME OF RELATED MULTIPLE PROPERTY LISTING:** *Historic and Architectural Resources of the New Deal in New Mexico*

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**6. FUNCTION OR USE**

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**HISTORIC FUNCTIONS: GOVERNMENT:** fire station; city hall

**CURRENT FUNCTIONS: GOVERNMENT:** fire station

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**7. DESCRIPTION**

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**ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION:** Modern Movement: International Style

**MATERIALS: FOUNDATION:** CONCRETE  
**WALLS:** STUCCO  
**ROOF:** ASPHALT  
**OTHER:** ALUMINUM

**NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION** (see continuation sheets 7-5 through 7-6).

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**8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

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**APPLICABLE NATIONAL REGISTER CRITERIA**

- 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 VALUE, 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:** N/A

**AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE:** Social History; Architecture

**PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANCE:** 1941-1942

**SIGNIFICANT DATES:** 1941; 1942

**SIGNIFICANT PERSON:** N/A

**CULTURAL AFFILIATION:** N/A

**ARCHITECT/BUILDER:** N/A

**NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE** (see continuation sheets 8-7 through 8-9).

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**9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES**

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**BIBLIOGRAPHY** (see continuation sheet 9-10).

**PREVIOUS DOCUMENTATION ON FILE (NPS):** N/A

- 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 #

**PRIMARY LOCATION OF ADDITIONAL DATA:**

- State historic preservation office (*Historic Preservation Division, Office of Cultural Affairs*)
- Other state agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other -- Specify Repository:

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**10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

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**ACREAGE OF PROPERTY:** less than one acre

**UTM REFERENCES**    Zone Easting    Northing  
                          1 13    654520    3646420

**VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION** Block 16, Lots 1-6 of the Original Lovington Townsite, Lovington, Lea County, New Mexico.

**BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION** The nominated property includes the entire parcel historically associated with the nominated property.

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**11. FORM PREPARED BY**

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**NAME/TITLE:** David Kammer, Ph.D.

**ORGANIZATION:** Consulting historian

**DATE:** April, 2008

**STREET & NUMBER:** 521 Aliso Drive NE

**TELEPHONE:** (505) 266-0586

**CITY OR TOWN:** Albuquerque

**STATE:** NM

**ZIP CODE:** 87108

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**ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION**

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**CONTINUATION SHEETS**

**MAPS** (see attached USGS *Lovington* 7.5-minute series topographic map)

**PHOTOGRAPHS** (see continuation sheet Photo-11)

**ADDITIONAL ITEMS** N/A

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**PROPERTY OWNER**

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**NAME:** City of Lovington

**STREET & NUMBER:** 214 S. Love Street

**TELEPHONE:** 505-396-2884.

**CITY OR TOWN:** Lovington

**STATE:** NM

**ZIP CODE:** 88260

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 7 Page 5

Lovington Fire Department Building  
Lovington, Lea County, New Mexico

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### Description

Located a block southeast of the courthouse square, the Lovington Fire Department Building was constructed as a Works Progress Administration (WPA) project during 1941-42 and, during its first decades served multiple functions not only as a fire station but also as the town's city hall. The building is one story with a flat roof and a parapet. A slight decorative molding, windows slightly recessed in a smooth stucco wall, and a panel relief on the upper façade announcing the building's primary function suggest the minimal use of decorative details associated with the International style. Although a new building housing the city's fire and police departments was constructed just to the south in 1984, the Fire Department Building continues its role as a fire department facility, providing space for training rooms, repair shops and bays for vehicles. The only change to the building's original rectangular footprint is a small garage addition at the rear of the building. Other than the replacement of overhead panel doors in each of the vehicle bays, the only alterations to the building are a protective metal flashing along the parapet and metal hoods at some windows. A good example of several multi-function municipal buildings that were constructed in New Mexico as WPA projects, the building retains a high degree of integrity as to setting and location, design, materials and association.

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Similar to other county seats located along the eastern side of New Mexico, Lovington's historic settlement plan included a courthouse square around which the commercial district and public buildings were constructed. The Fire Department Building is located in the original Lovington townsite plat on the block lying diagonally southeast of the Lea County Courthouse. On the same block to the north is the former Commercial (later Plaza) Hotel, now the Lea County Museum. Historic photographs of the block indicate that the six lots on which the building was constructed were vacant prior to construction.

The one-story building has a concrete foundation and the stucco-faced walls consist of solid concrete bricks fabricated on the site (Photo 1). The dimensions of the original rectangular building are approximately 75' x 51'. The rear rectangular addition, approximately 27'x5', steps several feet lower than the original building. Slightly set back on the south side and significantly set back on the north side, it does not alter the original appearance of the façade as viewed along Love Street. A parapet with a slight molded stepping rises above a flat roof and is punctuated with covered drains. To solve leakage problems a small protective metal band painted skyblue has been wrapped over the upper parapet.

Fenestration includes 17 steel casement windows with concrete sills (Photo 3). The number of lights vary with 24-light windows topped by an 8-light fixed transom along the west façade and the south side and smaller windows with frosted light offering privacy for spaces formerly used as firemen's living quarters along the north side. The building has four pedestrian entries each with panel doors, three of which are replacements. The original door on the north side offering entry to the former living quarters contains four small vertical lights. Recently installed metal hoods shade three of the doors and all of the windows on the south and west

**United States Department of the Interior**  
National Park Service

## **National Register of Historic Places**

### **Continuation Sheet**

Section 7 Page 6

Lovington Fire Department Building  
Lovington, Lea County, New Mexico

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sides (Photo 3). Two vehicular bays with overhead aluminum panel doors are located on the west façade; another appears on the south side (Photo 4); there are two vehicular entries on the east side of the addition.

The interior consists of several bays, a former dormitory and offices. The largest space is the engine room facing Love Street. Flanking the bays of the engine room are two small rooms once housing municipal offices. Much of the interior shows its original finishes, including the five-panel wood doors providing entry to the offices. While the dormitory and offices no longer serve their original function, the bays continue house fire trucks and equipment.

The composition of the front of the building with two public office spaces flanking the fire truck bays recalls the earlier multiple functions of the building when they served as city government offices. Although the building is modest in its use of decorative details, the middle section of the façade containing the vehicular bays projects forward slightly and contains a recessed panel above the doors in which "FIRE DEP'T." is inscribed in relief.

With the completion of the city's new fire and police department facility just to the south, the Fire Department Building shifted from housing fire trucks to providing a training and equipment center. As a result, the former living quarters were converted to training rooms; a former truck bay was converted to a repair shop, and the former city hall spaces to storage areas. Vandalism has also prompted the boarding of two transoms. The building, however, retains a high degree of integrity and, nearly seven decades after its construction, continues to fulfill much of its original function.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 7

Lovington Fire Department Building  
Lovington, Lea County, New Mexico

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### Statement of Significance

Although Lovington grew slowly during much of the 1920s, late in the decade and during the 1930s the town began a campaign to improve the services it offered its citizens. With unemployment lower than in other parts of New Mexico because of the jobs that accompanied the discovery of oil in southern Lea County in 1927, during the New Deal town leaders sponsored several WPA projects to continue civic improvements as well as to provide work relief. To reduce the cost of high fire insurance rates the town proposed the construction of a new fire hall that would also function as a city hall. Funded in 1941, the project succeeded in lowering insurance rates for its citizens as well as creating jobs. For its association as a New Deal project, the building is eligible under Criterion A, meeting the registration requirements defined in the *Historic and Architectural Resources of the New Deal in New Mexico* Multiple Property Documentation Form. With its modest use of International style details, it is also eligible under Criterion C as a good example of a building type frequently undertaken by the WPA in which multiple municipal functions were housed in a single building.

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Founded in 1908 in what was then northeastern Eddy County, Lovington became the seat of Lea County following its creation by the state legislature in 1917. Despite longstanding efforts of boosters to bring a railroad into the area, it was only after the drilling of the Hobbs Discovery Pool in 1927 that the Texas-New Mexico Railway finally extended a line to Lea County in 1930 (Myrick: 151). With its northern terminus in Lovington, town leaders undertook a series of civic improvements even as the Great Depression and a prolonged drought affecting the town's ranching economy curtailed its growth. In 1929 gas, water and sewer systems were installed, and a year later, as the town incorporated, it also installed streetlights, giving "a lift to how Lovington residents regarded their town" (Hinshaw: 86).

By the mid-1930s, the town also began to sponsor WPA projects resulting in improved roads and sidewalks and landscaping at the school. Further evidence of the town's progress appeared with the county's completion of a new Modernistic courthouse in the town's main square in 1937. Accompanied by the improvement of state and federal roads into the county in late 1930s that integrated the town into the broader commerce of the region, Lovington seemed to be surviving the difficult decade.

One problem that continued to confront residents, however, was the lack of a modern fire station. In the absence of such a facility, Lovington was graded as 9<sup>th</sup> class with regard to fire insurance rates. As a result, rates for both residents and businesses were about 25 percent higher than towns with an 8th class rating that had modern fire stations with at least one firefighter always on duty (*Lovington Leader* May 2, 1941:1). Moreover, by June 1941, concerns about town's ability to fight fires as part of a heightened interest in national defense had prompted federal authorities to insist "that more citizens be trained in fire fighting so as to cut down loss by fire" (*Lovington Leader* June 6, 1941:1).

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 8

Lovington Fire Department Building  
Lovington, Lea County, New Mexico

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With the goal of reducing the town's insurance rates and raising fire fighting preparedness, the town sponsored a proposal for WPA funding to construct a modern fire hall that would also house the town government's offices. In late April, 1941, Senator Dennis Chavez notified the town that it had been allocated funding of \$9,171 "for construction of a city hall and fire station" (*Lovington Leader* May 2, 1941:1).

With the federal government providing funds to pay laborers selected from the county's work relief rolls, the local sponsor of a WPA project was obligated to support the project by providing a site for the project as well as building materials. Faced with costs of about \$3,500, the local newspaper speculated that the project will "probably be started in the near future as soon as the city dads can pick the \$3,500 off the mesquite bushes" (*Lovington Leader* May 2, 1941:1).

Within a month, the town began to move forward on the project when J. S. Eaves, the former mayor of Lovington, donated six lots in the block immediately southeast of the courthouse square. Located just south of the then Plaza Hotel and a block west of the Texas-New Mexico Railway depot, the centrally-located site was well suited for improving the town's ability to protect its commercial center and surrounding residential area from the threat of fire.

As the project proposal developed, it included a reminder of Lovington's remote location on the High Southern Plains. With no nearby producer of concrete blocks, the proposal included a "Justification for the Production of Materials," which permitted the city to purchase sufficient cement to manufacture the 34,000 4"x4"x12" concrete blocks that the building would require (WPA Project 165-1-85-210:40864). To fabricate the blocks at the job site, the WPA also authorized the rental of a cement mixer and a 1-ton truck.

By June the town had purchased the cement intended for the new building's walls. At the same time, Lovington had applied for funding from the State of New Mexico, which annually dispersed fire funds gathered from the fees insurance companies paid the state. In August, the state agreed to supply the town with \$2,000, the highest amount under the program's regulations (*Lovington Leader* August 8, 1941:1). With a site, building materials and funding in line, the project seemed ready to start, but as the newspaper noted, new hirings at a carbon black plant opening in the county threatened to remove potential workers from Lea County's relief rolls.

By late August 1941 work had begun on the project with workers laying the concrete foundation and manufacturing the concrete bricks. Supervising the project was foreman Davison T. Schrayner who had headed earlier WPA projects in the town. Working under Schrayner was a crew of 13 laborers drawn from the county's relief rolls and ten other semi-skilled and skilled workers to provide the plumbing, electrical work, cement mixing, masonry and roofing necessary to complete the project. Altogether, the proposal provided for approximately 14,600 hours of work, with just over half set aside for those on work relief (WPA Project 165-1-85-210:40860).



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Section 8 Page 9

Lovington Fire Department Building  
Lovington, Lea County, New Mexico

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The plan of the building was a rectangle measuring approximately 75' x 51'. The largest part of the building was the engine room fronting on Love Street. An additional bay for a city truck faced south. The interior of the building included a dormitory and living quarters for a resident fireman as well as a recreational room. Flanking the bay entries to the engine room were two small office spaces. Upon completion of the building the spaces served as Lovington's city hall for nearly two decades.

With only a slight molding around the parapet and the recessed panel above the main engine bays, the building's slight Moderne details were consistent with the current trends in fire station design. No longer relying on ornate designs evocative of the past, cities sought to portray fire fighting as "efficient and effective," with firefighters housed in buildings "designed without frills to get the job done" (Zurier: 191-192). Moreover, Lovington's decision to construct a multifunctional municipal building also reflected a move popular in neighboring Texas in which city governments sought efficiency by combining services such as city government, fire fighting and policing under a single roof.

Typical of other WPA projects undertaken in the years just before the country's entry into World War II, the rising costs of construction materials resulted in Lovington incurring greater costs for the project than it had initially budgeted. As the project came to an end in May 1942, the \$3,500 cost that the town had estimated had grown to more than \$6,000 (*Lovington Leader* May 29, 1942:1).

As the city clerk and city council prepared to receive the new building from the WPA and occupy their new offices, the volunteer firefighters undertook a series of dances to raise the additional funds for the project. Sponsored by both the firemen and the city council, the Firemen's Balls, as the events were called, featured the Walter Knowles Orchestra from Artesia, a popular dance band in southeastern New Mexico. The events proved successful not only in providing entertainment and reducing Lovington's debt for the building but also for introducing citizens to the new facility that would help to reduce their fire insurance premiums. Commenting on the events, the *Lovington Leader* noted that the dances were "the first time many had visited the new fire station and all were loud in their praise for the new building and for the substantial addition it made to the buildings of Lovington" (*Lovington Leader* June 19, 1942:1). As Lovington grew in the post-war decades, the city opened a new city hall in 1961 and a new fire/police building in 1984.

The Fire Department Building retains a high degree of integrity and continues to serve a primary function, housing the fire department's training and repair facilities. Located on the same block and adjacent to the Lea County Museum, the town's citizens hope that designation will offer recognition of the New Deal's impact on Lovington and Lea County.

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National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 9 Page 10

Lovington Fire Department Building  
Lovington, Lea County, New Mexico

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### Bibliography

Hanners, Jerry. Interview with David Kammer, January 23, 2008. Mr. Hanners grew up in Lovington in the 1930s and returned to Lovington in 1954 where he taught sciences in the public school system.

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Myrick, David F. *New Mexico's Railroads: A Historical Survey*, Revised Edition. Albuquerque, New Mexico, 1990.

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Zurier, Rebecca. *The American Firehouse: An Architectural and Social History*. New York: Abbeville Press, 1982.

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Photo Page 11

Lovington Fire Department Building  
Lovington, Lea County, New Mexico

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### Photo Log

*The following information pertains to all photographs unless otherwise noted.*

#### **Lovington Fire Department Building**

Lovington, Lea County, New Mexico

Photographer: David Kammer

Photographs taken: January 23, 2008

Negatives on file with the Historic Preservation Division

Photo 1 of 4

Front elevation

Camera facing south

Photo 2 of 4

Rear addition

Camera facing northwest

Photo 3 of 4

South elevation

Camera facing northeast

Photo 4 of 4

Engine bays

Camera facing east