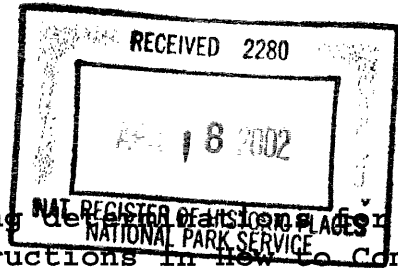


561

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM



This form is for use in nominating or requesting individual properties and districts. See instructions in how to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. 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 entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

=====

1. Name of Property

=====

historic name Old City Hall

other names/site number Town Hall  
AHRS Site No. FAI-00282

=====

2. Location

=====

street & number 410 Cushman Street

not for publication n/a

city or town Fairbanks vicinity n/a

state Alaska code AK county Fairbanks North Star code 090

zip code 99701

USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form

Old City Hall  
Fairbanks North Star, Alaska

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this  X  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  X  meets   does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant   nationally   statewide  X  locally. (   See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Jack M. E. Bettner  
Signature of certifying official

April 11, 2002  
Date

Alaska  
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

Edson H. Beall 5/30/02

other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

Beall  
Signature of Keeper

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Action

USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form

Old City Hall  
Fairbanks North Star, Alaska

=====  
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

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u>  1  </u>	<u>      </u> buildings
<u>      </u>	<u>      </u> sites
<u>      </u>	<u>      </u> structures
<u>      </u>	<u>      </u> objects
<u>  1  </u>	<u>  0  </u> Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register   0  

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

USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form

Old City Hall  
Fairbanks North Star, Alaska

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6. Function or Use

=====

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: Government Sub: city hall  
Government fire station

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: Recreation and culture Sub: museum

=====

7. Description

=====

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Modern Movement, Art Deco

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation concrete  
roof concrete  
walls concrete  
other

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

The City of Fairbanks built a new city hall, fire and police station in 1935 to replace an older wood frame building. The primary objective was a fireproof building. The new City Hall was a concrete, two-story building at the corner of Fifth Avenue and Cushman Street, not far from the center of the business district. The town had several other new concrete public buildings, the Empress movie theater built in 1927, the Federal Building built in 1933, and Main School built in 1934 (the latter two are listed in the National Register of Historic Places). The three public buildings are along Cushman Street, and all are Art Deco style concrete buildings. City Hall stands halfway between the other two.

Now known as Old City Hall, the building has a concrete basement and poured concrete walls. The apparatus bay doors were wood and now are infilled with wood. Double-hung windows are symmetrically placed. The building has typical Art Deco elements among them a rectilinear emphasis, repeated low relief geometrical decoration on smooth flat surfaces, lack of fussy detail, use of concrete, and stepped back design elements.

The city sought to provide space for the police and fire departments, an office for the city clerk, and chambers for the city council. The building plans provided for street level bays for fire equipment with their entrance doors on Cushman Street. Two more street level bays for shorter apparatus

**USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form**

Old City Hall  
Fairbanks North Star, Alaska

Page 5

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had entrance doors on the west side of the building. The clerk's office and vault were in the southeast corner of the first floor of the building.

Central stairs led to the second floor. There, the office of the Chief of Police was in the southeast corner, City Council chambers and a lavatory were on the south side, office of the Fire Chief, fire department kitchen, dormitory, lavatory, drying room, and hose tower were on the north side.

The original building is 48 by 50 feet, with the 50 foot east elevation on Cushman Street the principal elevation. The building has a symmetrical organization. Two steps lead to a formally detailed protruding central entry surrounding the front door. At the roofline, a parapet is detailed with rectangular raised concrete medallions. Below the medallions is a concrete belt course detailed with incised concrete suggesting dentils. A central flagpole at the roof, supported by a shield medallion, tops the formal facade. The corners of the building are detailed with quoins, imitating stonework. At the base are two concrete belt courses. The same motifs are carried to the entrance surround.

On the east facade, five large double hung windows symmetrically arranged are on the second floor. On the first floor, two identical windows light the southeast corner. Two apparatus bay doors were north of the main entrance. Using overly large and symmetrically arranged windows, the architect managed to create the impression of a balanced facade in spite of the apparatus bays. The doors have been filled and covered with wood siding except where two single pane windows have been added.

Detailing, including the quoins, parapet, and belt courses which characterize the east facade, continue on the south elevation. The west half of this elevation is set back ten feet from the street. The south elevation has windows on each floor (2-1-2), identical to those on the east facade and symmetrically arranged.

There are no drawings for the west or north elevations of the building. The west side had an apparatus bay with entrance doors for two vehicles, and two windows similar to the others on the second floor above the apparatus bay. There are several windows visible on the north side, but the adjacent building is only two feet away.

Before 1950, an addition for housing more fire equipment and offices was added to the rear of the building. This addition is approximately 24 feet long and 30 feet wide. It was set back from Fifth Avenue for access to the apparatus doors. The addition is concrete, with some effort made to match the original building. The second floor of the south side of the addition has four windows evenly spaced and similar to those on the original building.

Shortly after the Chena River flood in 1967 that damaged many properties in downtown Fairbanks, a building was constructed abutting the back of the addition. At the same time, the city built a new fire and police station. City officials had no trouble expanding into the freed space in the old

**USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form**

Old City Hall  
Fairbanks North Star, Alaska

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building. The only changes made to Old City Hall were removal of the wood apparatus bay doors and their replacement with wood siding in-fill and windows.

In 1994, the City Council voted to move city offices to Main School. Since, Old City Hall has been leased to a non-profit group for a city museum. The building maintains its historic fabric and integrity. It represents community support for a substantial, permanent city building. It is a good example of Art Deco architecture, the same style used for several other public buildings constructed in the community during the 1930s.

=====  
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.) n/a

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

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

Community planning and development  
Architecture

Period of Significance 1935-1950

Significant Dates 1935

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

n/a

Cultural Affiliation n/a

Architect/Builder Bittman, Henry, Seattle

=====  
**Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)**

The people of Fairbanks were excited when Old City Hall was constructed in 1935. The handsome, concrete, Art Deco style building replaced a wood frame building determined inadequate for city functions and vulnerable to fire. For the residents of Fairbanks, a new concrete City Hall signified a readiness to look forward to the future of the town and a step away from its pioneer past. The new Art Deco style concrete Federal Building built in 1933, Main School built in 1934, and new City Hall--all along Cushman Street--gave Fairbanks a different look and feel. They represented the conscious effort on the part of Fairbanks citizens to change the temporary, waterfront town character of the community to that of a more progressive, permanent city landscape. Old City Hall functioned as a city hall and fire and police station through World War II and the Cold War, eras when Fairbanks experienced booms in population and construction. Old City Hall served its several functions until the 1967 Chena River flood, a watershed year so to speak, when the community made a transition to 1960s planning and urban renewal and modern architectural styles. A new police and fire station was built, but city offices remained in the 1935 building until 1994. The period of significance starts in 1935 when the building opened and ends in 1950 by which time the only addition to the building was in place.

Historic background

E. T. Barnette established the town of Fairbanks in 1901 as a trading center. The next year Felix Pedro discovered gold in the hills and creeks in what is now the Fairbanks North Star Borough. The City of Fairbanks officially incorporated in 1903, named for U.S. Senator Charles Fairbanks at the behest of Judge James Wickersham with whom Barnette had a chance encounter. Wickersham also suggested a major street in town be named after Representative Francis Wellington Cushman, a Republican from Washington state. Wickersham's decision to establish the courthouse and federal presence in Fairbanks, rather than the rival town of Chena in 1903 played a major role in ensuring the continued viability of Fairbanks. Mining declined during the 1910s and the town lost population. Completion of the Alaska Railroad in 1923 ushered in a renewed era of prosperity. With the availability of rail transportation, the Fairbanks Exploration Company bought many of the claims on Goldstream, Ester, Cleary and other creeks. They shipped in dredges and began large-scale gold mining. Gold mining and related economic activity revitalized Fairbanks.

Like most frontier mining towns, Fairbanks was always threatened by fire. the first major fire occurred in 1906, destroying many of the town's log and frame buildings. A second disastrous fire in 1919 destroyed more of the earliest buildings and many of the replacements. In the wake of the 1919 fire, buildings of fireproof construction were built downtown. These newer buildings defined a new look and feel to downtown Fairbanks. Among the first was Cap Lathrop's Empress Theater, built in 1927 of reinforced concrete.



**USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form**

Old City Hall  
Fairbanks North Star, Alaska

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With steady mining activity during the 1930s, Fairbanks to some extent escaped the Great Depression. Depression era federal programs such as the Public Works Administration (PWA) made available funds that were used for a new federal building, courthouse and post office in 1932. Later that winter, the catastrophe everyone dreaded took place when the wood frame Main School burned. City residents voted to replace it with a concrete building similar to the Federal Building.

After the fire destroyed the school, the vulnerability of the wood city hall at Fourth and Cushman streets was apparent. In the winter of 1934 an item on the City Council agenda was to ask the fire chief to add more sawdust insulation to the walls of the old building. The mayor and council determined that city hall was "inadequate, inconvenient, and unsuitable."

The city requested PWA funds to replace the building with a fireproof building which would house city offices and the fire and police departments. At the end of December 1934, the city purchased a portion of Lot 1 and all of Lot 2, Block 66 at the corner of Fifth and Cushman streets. Following a request for proposals, architect Henry Bittman of Seattle was selected in February 1935 to design the building. On May 23 Warwick Construction received the construction contract. Work started in June and the building was completed and occupied by the end of the year.

The new building anchored the city government downtown. Little did the city fathers know that Fairbanks would play important roles during World War II and the Cold War. In the late 1930s, construction started on Ladd Field and it became the major stop in Alaska for the Northwest Air Transport Route (Lend-Lease program). At Fairbanks, U.S. pilots transferred airplanes to Russian pilots to help defeat Hitler. Fairbanks was a center for construction of Army facilities, airports and roads in northern Alaska. The population boomed and consequently there was much construction around the city. The city expanded City Hall to house more fire equipment and additional offices during the 1940s.

A new fire and police station was constructed after the Chena River flooded downtown Fairbanks in 1967. Old City Hall continued to serve as City Hall until 1994 when the offices moved to Main School. Still owned by the City of Fairbanks, Old City Hall is now a museum operated by a non-profit organization.

USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form

Old City Hall  
Fairbanks North Star, Alaska

=====  
9. Major Bibliographical References  
=====

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

City of Fairbanks. Engineering Department files. 800 Cushman Street, Fairbanks, Alaska.

Cole, Dermot. *Fairbanks: A Gold Rush Town That Beat the Odds*. Seattle: Epicenter Press, 1999.

Fairbanks City Council Minutes. 1919-1935. Archives and Polar Regions Department, Elmer E. Rasmuson Library, University of Alaska Fairbanks.

Fairbanks North Star Borough. *The Historic Preservation Plan*. January 1999.

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

\_\_\_ Other State agency

\_\_\_ Federal agency

X Local government

\_\_\_ University

\_\_\_ Other

Name of repository:

USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form

Old City Hall  
Fairbanks North Star, Alaska

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10. Geographical Data  
=====

Acreage of Property less than one acre

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	<u>06</u>	<u>465907</u>	<u>7190888</u>	3		
2	<u>   </u>	<u>   </u>	<u>   </u>	4		
	<u>   </u>	<u>See continuation sheet.</u>				

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

Old City Hall occupies most of Lot 4, Block 66A, as shown on the plat of resubdivision of Fairbanks Townsite blocks 48, 66, 75 and 86, Urban Renewal Project TAR-7, on file at the Fairbanks District Recorder's Office as instrument #195.411 dated November 30, 1959.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary includes the building that has stood on the site since 1935 and the addition to it.

=====  
11. Form Prepared By  
=====

name/title Jane G. Haigh, Contractor

organization Fairbanks Downtown Association

date November 1, 2001

street & number 551 Second Avenue, Suite 225

telephone 907-452-8671, 907-457-8859

city or town Fairbanks state AK zip code 99701

USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form

Old City Hall  
Fairbanks North Star, Alaska

=====  
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.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

=====  
Property Owner  
=====

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

name City of Fairbanks

street & number 800 Cushman Street

telephone 907-459-6748

city or town Fairbanks state AK zip code 99701

USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form

Old City Hall  
Fairbanks North Star, Alaska

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NPS Form 10-900-a  
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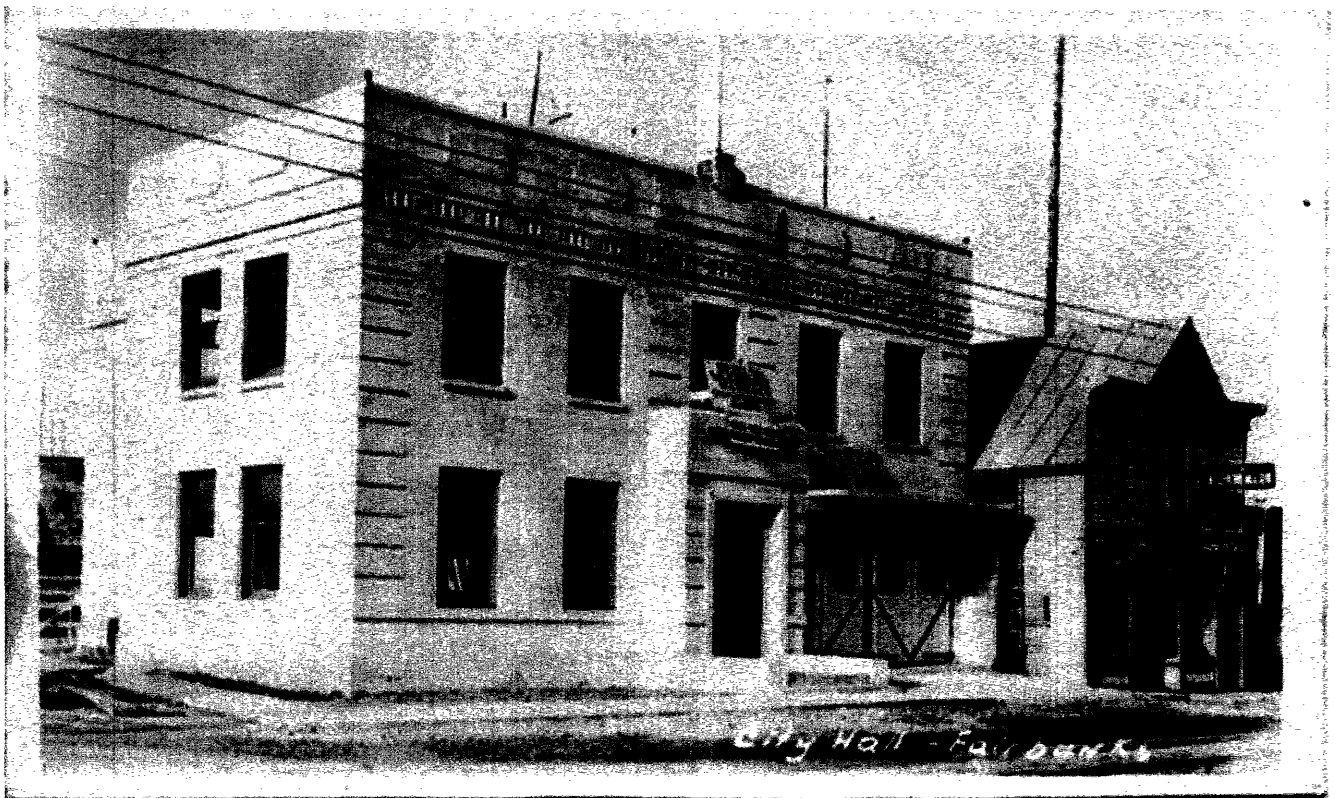
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OMB No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET

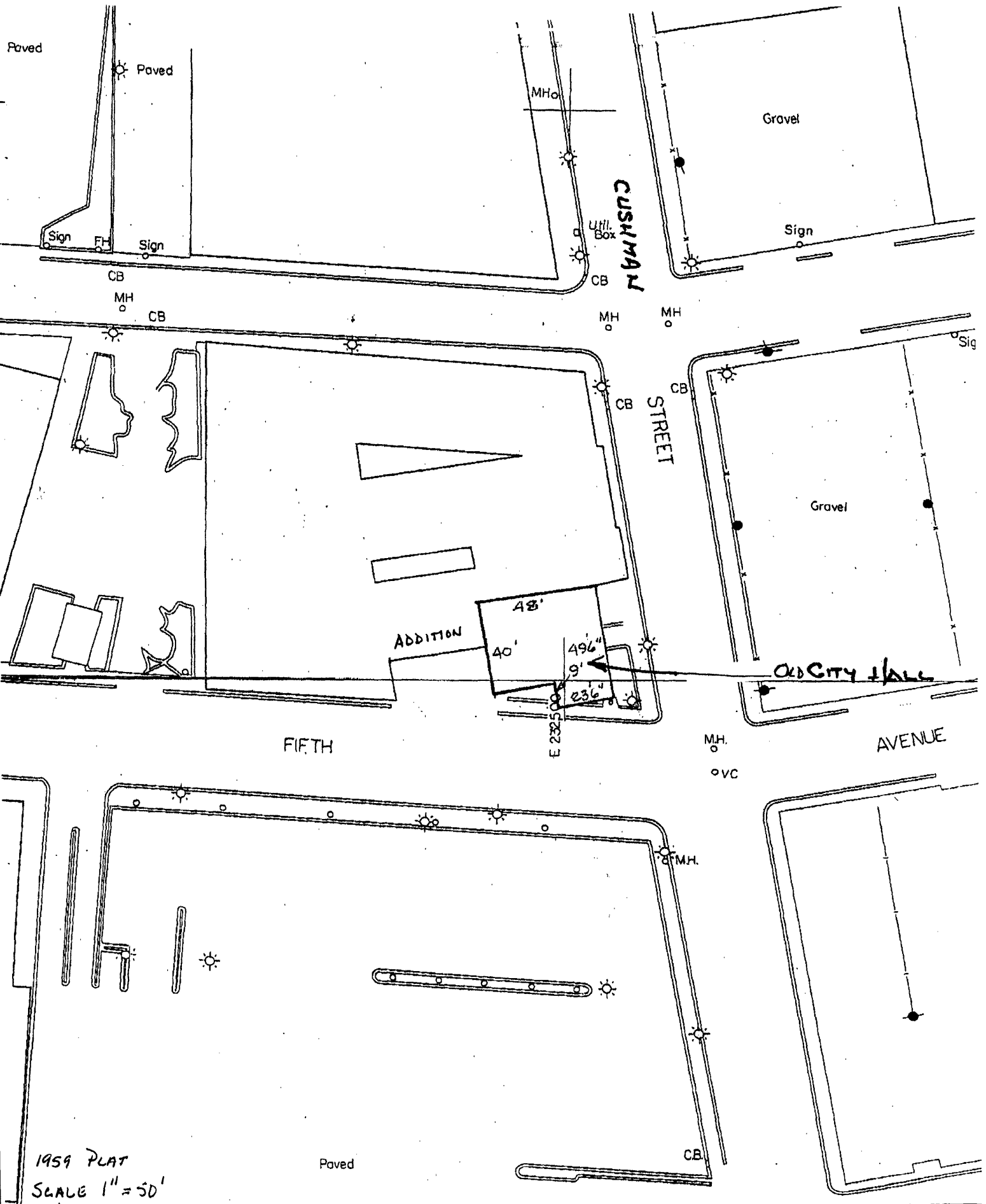
Section Photograph identification  
=====

1. Old City Hall  
Fairbanks North Star, Alaska  
Brian Allen  
October 2001  
4301 Second Ave. NE, Seattle, Washington 98105  
Looking west at front or east facade.
2. Old City Hall  
Fairbanks North Star, Alaska  
Brian Allen  
October 2001  
4301 Second Ave. NE, Seattle, Washington 98105  
Looking northwest at south and east elevations.
3. Old City Hall  
Fairbanks North Star, Alaska  
Brian Allen  
October 2001  
4301 Second Ave. NE, Seattle, Washington 98105  
Looking northeast; addition is at right of photograph
4. Old City Hall  
Fairbanks North Star, Alaska  
Unknown  
c.1935  
Candy Waugaman, P.O. Box 80589, Fairbanks, Alaska 99708-0589  
Looking northwest at City Hall



Old City Hall  
Fairbanks North Star, Alaska  
Unknown  
c. 1935  
Candy Waugaman, P.O. Box 80589, Fairbanks, Alaska 99708-0589  
Looking northwest at City Hall  
Photo No. 4

OLD CITY HALL  
FAIRBANKS NORTH STAR, ALASKA



Paved

Paved

MHo

Gravel

CUSHMAN

Sign

Sign

Util. Box

Sign

CB

CB

MH

MH

CB

CUSHMAN STREET

Sign

Gravel

ADDITION

48'

40'

E 232500

496"

9'

236"

OLD CITY HALL

FIFTH

MH

AVENUE

oVC

MH

CB

1959 PLAT  
SCALE 1" = 50'

Paved

Old City Hall  
Fairbanks North Star, Alaska

Block 48-A  
Block 48-B

B

53,543.121  
1.229 AC.

