NPS Form 10-900
(Oct. 1990)

1555
OMB No. 10024-0018

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 determinations for 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 an 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 Telephone Building

other name/site number 5DV522

2. Location

street & number 931 14th Street N/A not for publication

city or town Denver ☐ vicinity

state Colorado code CO county Denver code 031 zip code 80202

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.)

Georgianna Contiguglia 12/17/04
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

Colorado Historical Society, Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation
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 certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the 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 Edson H. Beall 1/26/05
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(check as many boxes as apply)

- ☐ public-local
- ☒ private
- ☐ public-State
- ☐ public-Federal

Category of Property
(check only one box)

- ☐ district
- ☒ building(s)
- ☐ site
- ☐ structure
- ☐ object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	Total

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

Historic Resources of Downtown Denver

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Function
(Enter categories from instructions)

INDUSTRY/communications facility
COMMERCE/business
COMMERCE/specialty store

Current Function
(Enter categories from instructions)

INDUSTRY/communications facility
COMMERCE/business

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS/
Late Gothic Revival
LATE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURY AMERICAN
MOVEMENTS/ Other: American Perpendicular

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation	CONCRETE
walls	TERRA COTTA
	BRICK
roof	ASPHALT
other	STONE/granite
	STONE/marble

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

8. Description

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.)

Property is:

☐ **A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.

☐ **B** removed from its original location.

☐ **C** a birthplace or 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)

COMMUNICATIONS

ARCHITECTURE

ART

ENGINEERING

Period of Significance

1929-1954

Significant Date

1929

1948

Significant Persons

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Bowman, William N.

C.E. Walker Construction Co.

True, Allen

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

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

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

☐ 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
☐ Local government
☐ University
☐ Other Name of repository:

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Less than one acre

UTM References
(Place additional boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

	Zone	Easting	Northing
A	1/3	5/0/0/4/2/9	4/3/9/9/2/2/9
B	/	/////	//////
C	/	/////	//////
D	/	/////	//////

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

Boundary Justification
(Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title R. Laurie Simmons and Thomas H. Simmons, historians

organization Front Range Research Associates, Inc. date October 2004

street & number 3635 West 46th Avenue telephone 303-477-7597

city or town Denver state CO zip code 80211

Additional Documentation
Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets
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
name/title Qwest, Attn.: Ms. LaRae Dodson, Director of Real Estate for Colorado

street & number 1801 California Street, Room 4600 telephone 303-965-0213

city or town Denver state CO zip code 80202

Narrative Description

Exterior

The fifteen-story[1] Telephone Building is a massive buff-colored terra cotta[2] skyscraper resting on a pink granite base and occupying half of a city block at the intersection of Fourteenth and Curtis streets in Downtown Denver (Photographs 1 and 2). On the same block to the south across an alley is the AT&T Building, originally connected to the Telephone Building via an abutting section above the alley. An International style 1960s addition to the building is on the east, and the 1910 white terra cotta Denver Gas & Electric Building lies across an alley south of the addition. The city's 1908 Municipal Auditorium is located across Fourteenth Street opposite the building, a part of the large Denver Performing Arts Complex. Across Curtis Street to the north rise the Executive Tower Inn and Brooks Tower skyscrapers.

Mountain States Telephone and Telegraph Company, the building's original owner, called its architectural style "Modern American Perpendicular Gothic," referring to its setbacks, massing, verticality, and Gothic Revival style ornamentation. The building rises ten stories from the street to a twenty-foot setback, then rises another five stories, reaching a height of 236 feet and nine inches (See Figure 1). The roof is flat, and a crenellated parapet is created by wall piers with stepped tops that project above the cornice and alternate with panels with quatrefoil ornaments. Stylized tower pavilions at the corners of the building are defined by stepped height and/or setback, arched windows, and traceried ornamentation above and below the windows. Alternating wide and narrow projecting wall piers extending continuously from the second story to the roof, setbacks, and projecting towers create a dominating vertical emphasis, while hundreds of recessed windows,[3] bands of wide display windows, ornamented parapets, and panels with tracery provide contrasting horizontal elements. Each bay of the building has two windows on each of the upper stories, while the first story features large display windows. Two-story arched entrances are surmounted by polychromatic terra cotta ornaments. The walls of the building are grounded by a base of pink granite which rises to the bottom of the display windows.

The seven bay west wall facing Fourteenth Street is enframed by immense corner piers rising slightly above the top of the bays at the north and south ends. The eight-story end bays have segmental arch windows on the upper story, are topped by parapets with blue quatrefoil panels, and are terminated by a setback at the ninth story. Adjacent bays step up three stories to form towers and have segmental arch windows on the top story, parapets ornamented with panels with blue medallions with S-shaped ornaments, and spandrel tracery. The central three ten-story bays of the west wall are topped by a parapet ornamented with blue medallions with S-shaped decorations above traceried panels. The remaining upper stories of the building are set back, with the outer bays of the setback designed as tower pavilions rising one story taller than the central three bays. The corner

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[1] The penthouse and highest towers are at the sixteenth story level; the building's height is equivalent to a twenty-two-story building.
[2] The terra cotta is textured and the color is mottled.
[3] The building reportedly includes a total of one thousand windows. *Mountain States Monitor*, June 1928.

piers of the towers feature vertically aligned engaged pilasters with flat, triangular, and arched capitals. The topmost story of each tower has inset round arch windows with bar tracery, accolades, and spandrel tracery, and is crowned by a paneled parapet. There is a flat roof, terra cotta clad penthouse on the roof. The fifteenth story of each tower has segmental arch windows and spandrel tracery, and the lower stories have flat arch windows with paneled spandrels. The central setback bay has flat arch windows with paneled spandrels. The lowest story has multi-light windows, and the top story has blind arches above the windows, projecting stepped piers, and paneling with tracery on the parapet.

The remainder of the vertically and horizontally aligned three-over-three-light double-hung sash windows of the west wall above the third story are flat arch, slightly recessed between the projecting wall piers, and have molded terra cotta sills and recessed paneled spandrels. The windows of the third story have spandrels with blue quatrefoil panels, central torches in relief, slanted sills, and tracery panels. There is a polychromatic terra cotta medallion with finial on the third story aligned above the central entrance arch. The spandrels of the second story feature white terra cotta panels with heraldic imagery in relief. On the first floor flanking the central entrances are large display windows on the north and south. The clerestory area above the windows is filled with louvers. The metal frames and divisions of the display windows have decorative metal molding, and the windows are flanked by thick terra cotta piers. The display windows south of the entrance area are filled with louvers.

The arcaded main entrance (Photograph 3) has three two-story round arch entrances leading to an outer lobby. Each entrance has an arch rising from thick terra cotta piers with pink granite bases, and the reveal of each entrance has arabesque and fleuron ornamentation in relief (Photograph 4). Above the arches are accolades with center trefoil ornaments, inset polychromatic (orange and green) terra cotta floral ornaments, paneling, and sculptural torches with orange tops. Above the center entrance is a blue and cream medallion ornamented with a sculptural blue bell inscribed "Bell System" topped with a green finial (Photograph 5). Each entrance has an inset arched glazed lunette with tracery. The two outer entrances have a paneled band below the lunette, while the center entrance has a blue plaque with metal letters reading "The Mountain States Telephone and Telegraph Company."

The outer lobby has a paneled ceiling with molding featuring foliate and floral ornaments and small bells, and there are travertine beams with ornamented brackets (Photograph 6). The lobby has hanging wrought iron light fixtures. The walls of the outer lobby are clad with light buff travertine, the baseboard is black marble, and the floor has black and pink marble tiles with a black tile border. There are large murals on the north, west, and south walls of the outer lobby depicting historic telephone company activities (Photographs 7 and 8). There are three Tudor arch entrances on the east wall of the lobby which have lunettes with foiled tracery. The center two entrances feature circular revolving doors of black wrought iron with decorative cresting (Photograph 6). A third entrance to the south has a black wrought iron door with tracery.

The north wall of the building facing Curtis Street has fourteen bays, including the original building and the additions of the same style and materials at the east end (Photograph 9). The north wall has the same setbacks, corner towers, and ornamentation as the west wall and additions located east of the original eleventh-story tower at the east end. The original component of the building has seven bays flanked by the tower pavilions. The sixth bay from the northwest corner has a single two-story arched entrance of the same design as the central entrance on the west wall. The entrance has a lunette with tracery above a blue metal panel with metal letters reading "The Mountain States Telephone and Telegraph Company." The entrance arch, ornamented like those on the west wall, leads to an outer lobby with light buff travertine walls, a paneled ceiling with plaster molding, a hanging wrought iron light fixture, and murals on the east and west walls. There are two Tudor arch entrances with lunettes with tracery and black wrought iron doors facing the outer lobby. The lobby floor is composed of black and pink marble tiles with a black tile border. Wrought iron gates that originally enclosed the lobby have been removed from the entrance.

The addition at the east end of the building is terminated with a projecting tower matching the original one further west, and there are three bays between the towers. There is a thick terra cotta pier at the east end of the wall. The addition is of the same design and materials as the original building. At the east end of the addition is an inset entrance area with travertine walls with black marble baseboard. The entrance has a lunette with tracery and paired black wrought iron doors with tracery and paneling. A slightly inset area east of the entrance is clad with travertine. There are several windows filled with louvers on the second story of the added component.

An early 1960s International style addition is located adjacent the east wall of the terra cotta building (Photograph 10). The building was initially composed of five stories but had received an additional seven stories by 1966. The twelve-story rectilinear building has a flat roof, and there is a flagpole at the northeast corner. The walls between the first story and top story on the north and east are composed of large panels of smooth light buff aggregate flanking glass curtain walls. The glass curtain walls have alternating rows of single-light windows and black metal panels divided by projecting slender metal mullions and flush horizontal members. The twelfth story flanking the center glazed bay has a band of deeply recessed windows separated by projecting rectangular mullions which wraps around the corner. The first story of the addition is slightly inset. The east wall has a flat roof stucco canopy centered under the curtain wall and supported by metal columns sheltering an entrance (Photograph 11). The entrance area has three sets of glazed metal frame double doors with sidelights and an arched glazed transom. The first story of the east wall has bands of metal frame windows and bands of black panels north of the entrance and a panel of windows and a granite panel topped by a band of black panels south of the entrance. The north wall has panels of polished gray granite with bands of black metal panels at the top and bottom flanking inset granite panels, as well as textured gray metal piers. On the west end of the north wall is an inset entrance with large louvered vent, slab metal door, and granite panels.

On the south wall (alley side) of the original building, the first two bays at the west end of the first story are clad with terra cotta, while buff brick matching the terra cotta in color is utilized on the

remainder of the wall. A walkway across the alley originally connecting to the building to the south is attached at the second story.

Interior

One of the most lavishly decorated interior spaces in a Downtown Denver commercial building, the main lobby has walls of light bluff travertine with baseboard of black and gold Alaskan marble (Photograph 12). The vaulted ceiling has an oak leaf frieze, and all of the woodwork is walnut. Thick, square, travertine columns with arabesque friezes support the arches of the ceiling. The floor is composed of black and pink marble tiles with a black border. There are large murals at the north and south ends of the entrance area of the lobby (Photograph 13). A large information desk is faced with travertine. The lobby extends through the building to the elevator waiting hall (Photograph 14), which has entrances on both sides,[4] and is terminated by a wall at the east end with a mural and a travertine drinking fountain structure with mosaic backsplash. Hanging wrought iron chandeliers illuminate the lobby and elevator hall. The Gothic Revival influence of the exterior is continued on the interior with a profusion of traceried trimming. Hand hammered, heavy, Tudor arch, black iron doors with tracery access the lobby and there are large arched openings with carved travertine and terra cotta ornament. The small lobby on the north end of the building has travertine walls, a marble tile floor, black wrought iron doors, a hanging wrought iron light fixture, and murals at each end and above the doors.

The fourteenth floor historically encompassed the Executive Department offices and now includes the Telephone Pioneer Museum. The hallways have gray marble wainscot. The President's Office (Photograph 15) has black walnut paneling and doors, ornamental plaster on the beamed ceiling, a travertine sheathed fireplace, intricate metal light fixtures, and large windows with transoms with wrought iron tracery providing panoramic views of the city. The Board Room is of similar design. The Pioneer Museum displays a variety of relics of telephone history, including a miniature Allen True mural prototype for one of the large murals of the first floor.

The fifteenth floor retains marble baseboards and polychromatic stenciling at the top of the hallway walls. An area with a paneled ceiling with beams stenciled with polychromatic electronic signals resembling Native American designs and with wrought iron chandeliers was formerly part of a large auditorium. The auditorium has been redesigned as a dining area which features architectural artifacts from the original business office on the first story, including parts of wrought iron tellers' cages.

Allen True Murals

The Telephone Building features thirteen murals by artist Allen S. True. The murals depict events and themes in the history of communications and the telephone. The outer lobby of the main (14th Street) entrance contains four murals: one large mural at each end of the lobby and two smaller ones on the west wall adjacent to the street. At the southern end of the lobby is "Mountain Telephone

[4] Replacement elevators were designed to replicate the originals.

Construction," while the northern end displays "City Telephone Construction." The two smaller murals are: "The Lineman—A Character Study" and "The Underground Cable Crew."
The main lobby of the building exhibits two large murals. To the north is "The Crucible of Science," an allegory on scientific invention showing a robed figure holding Alexander Graham Bell's first telephone as he wields a wand to summon forth a modern dial telephone. True indicated that this was his favorite mural of those in the building. On the south wall of the lobby is "The Wings of Thought," symbolizing modern communications. At the end of the elevator waiting area, surrounding a travertine drinking fountain, is a mural showing Canada geese "settling into a lake at evening; a lone telephone pole supplies the contact with civilization."

The remaining murals are located at the center Curtis Street entrance to the building. The outer lobby features a mural on each side wall. To the west is "Pioneer Communication," showing a Pony Express rider. The east wall holds "Primitive Communication" and depicts two Native Americans sending a smoke signal. The small inner lobby contains a mural on each side wall and two lunettes above the doors. The two wall murals are both titled "The Spirit of Service." The west mural shows a lineman sitting atop a telephone pole in snow, while the east painting shows an operator at a switchboard. The lunettes depict figures illustrating the geographic scope of MST&T's territory speaking on telephones. The west lunette shows an Eskimo and a cowboy, while the east one features a Native American and a Mexican in a sombrero. Each pair flanks the bell symbol of the telephone company.[5]

[5] Mountain States Telephone and Telegraph Company, *The Murals in the Telephone Building, Denver, Colo.* (Denver: Mountain States Telephone and Telegraph Company, 1929); *Mountain States Monitor*, September 1929.

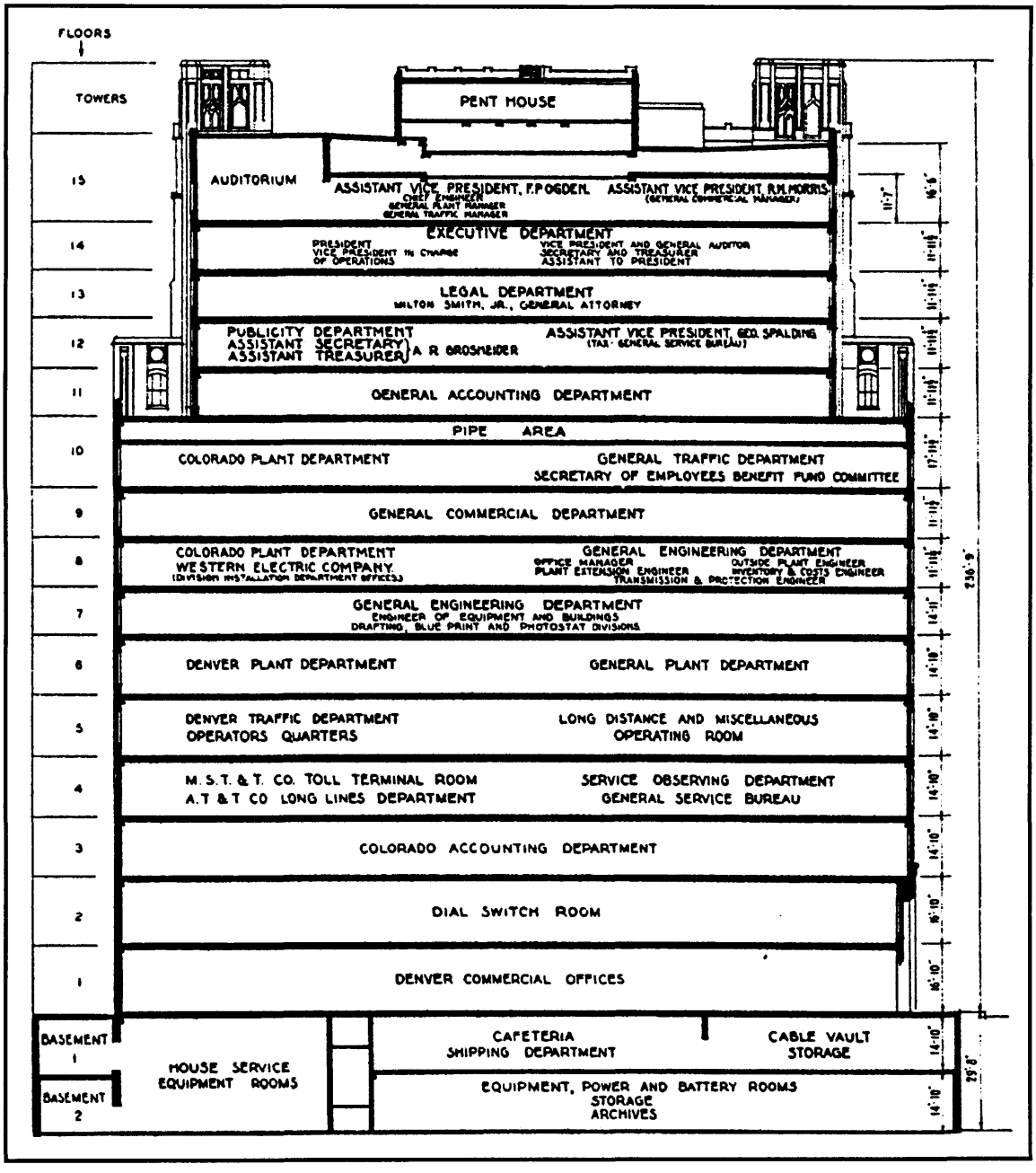

Figure 1. This cut-away view of the Telephone Building showed uses by floor and the heights of each story. SOURCE: *The Monitor*, September 1929, 20.

Statement of Significance

Significance

The Telephone Building is being nominated under the Multiple Property Documentation Form "Historic Resources of Downtown Denver." The Telephone Building is associated with the historic context "Development of the Denver Central Business District, 1880-1973." Under this context, the building represents "Commercial Buildings Associated with the Development of the Denver Central Business District, 1880-1973." The fifteen-story building was completed in 1929. The period of significance for the building extends from its completion in 1929 to 1954, fifty years ago.

The building is significant under Criterion A for its association with the growth and development of telephone communications in Denver and the Rocky Mountain region. The building served as the headquarters of Mountain States Telephone and Telegraph (later Mountain Bell) from 1929 until 1984, containing the offices of corporate officers and administrative departments for the company's seven-state territory. The building also housed the switching equipment needed for the introduction of dial telephone service to downtown Denver in 1929, as well as the local business office for MST&T. Long distance switchboards and equipment were also located in the Telephone Building, which remains an integral communications facility in the national telecommunications network. The Telephone Building was the tallest building in Denver until 1954. The building's design took advantage of the setback provision of the city's zoning ordinance, permitting buildings to rise higher than the nominal height limit of twelve stories if higher stories were setback from the wall-plane.

The Telephone Building is significant under Criterion C, in the field of architecture, as the only building in Colorado and one of the finest in the country, representing the American Perpendicular style, designated by the Bell system as "Modern American Perpendicular Gothic." The prototype for the style was the 1913 Woolworth Building in New York City. Among the distinctive characteristics of the style reflected in the building are the expressed verticality, steel framework, terra cotta sheathing, varied setbacks, continuous piers, stylized towers, recessed spandrels, and Gothic Revival style ornament. The style was identified with telephone company buildings of the 1920s, and Bell system examples are found in some other large cities, but none is exactly like the Denver building. The style was abandoned during the economic downturn of the following decade; thus the building is representative of a particular period of construction. The monumental scale and lavish ornamentation of the building were not repeated in Denver architecture until the 1950s. The *Denver Post* judged the building "a beautiful structure—an architectural achievement which does credit to the corporation and to the city," "one of the most beautiful buildings in [the] West," and a "cathedral of commerce."[6]

The building was truly a product of Colorado, having been designed by Denver architect William N. Bowman in conjunction with local Bell system engineers and erected by local builders and craftsman utilizing a variety of products from around the state, such as steel from Pueblo, Golden and Denver pressed brick, Colorado Portland cement, and travertine quarried near Salida. The building

[6] *Denver Post*, 12 October 1928, 31 December 1928, and 4 June 1929. The term "cathedral of commerce" had first been applied to the Woolworth Building.

represents what was probably the largest single use of Denver terra cotta in the city. The building is the most important example of the commercial work of the architect and represents one of the largest and most significant commissions of his career. The building also exhibits the work of a variety of the city's finest local craftsmen and manufacturing companies, including Sechrist Manufacturing, which designed and produced the lighting fixtures; Frank Kirchhof's American Fixture Co., which created the display windows; and the August Friedrichs Co., which crafted the wrought iron.

The building is significant for its artistic values, reflected in the intricate planning, lavish detail, and high quality craftsmanship displayed in its interior and exterior design. As telephone historian Herbert Hackenburg notes, the Denver building, completed on the eve of the Crash of 1929, was the last of the Bell system "palaces," and the best of everything went into its construction.[7] The terra cotta integral to the design of the building is among the finest crafted in Denver, incorporates Gothic Revival design motifs, and includes mottled and polychromatic components, ornament in varied relief, extensive decorated panels, ornate arches, and massive piers. The Gothic Revival influence is echoed on the interior, which also includes aesthetic elements incorporating the history of telephone service in the state and representing emblems of the telephone company. Noted Denver artist Allen True influenced the interior appearance of the building, selecting color palettes, designing fixtures, and advising the architect regarding the choice of materials. The artist believed that beautiful surroundings had a positive psychological effect on workers, and he was a leader in the city in advocating carefully planned color schemes and artistic decoration for large office buildings. As part of this effort, True executed thirteen murals with communications and telephonic themes which grace the public spaces of the building. These murals are considered among True's most outstanding work. In addition, polychromatic stenciling found in the building is unique and reflective of the overall aesthetic of the interior design. Other notable aspects of the composition include the extensive use of black hand-hammered wrought iron features, including specially crafted doors and light fixtures; ornamental plasterwork; carefully patterned marble tile floors; black walnut woodwork; a mosaic fountain backsplash; and vaulted and paneled ceilings.

The Telephone Building is also significant in the field of engineering, for the technological advances embodied in its composition and construction. The architect and engineers worked in conjunction to design a building which would structurally meet the challenging practical needs of the telephone company while also serving aesthetic considerations. The building was erected to make possible the introduction of telephone dial service to Denver, and therefore incorporated features which housed special equipment for the system. The floor loading of the building to accommodate the necessary equipment was unique. The building's size and character were primarily determined by requirements of the conversion to the city's first dial service: without the completion of the specially designed building, such service could not have been initiated. The building was also designed with an innovative independently fireproof core rising from the subbasement to the roof, which included the elevator shafts, stairways, smoke tower, restrooms, and elevator corridors. From the exterior, the building was designed to be virtually impenetrable, as befitting the center of telephonic operations for the Rocky Mountain region.

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[7] Herbert Hackenburg, Executive Director, Telecommunications History Group, Inc., Denver, Interview by R. Laurie Simmons, 12 August 2004.

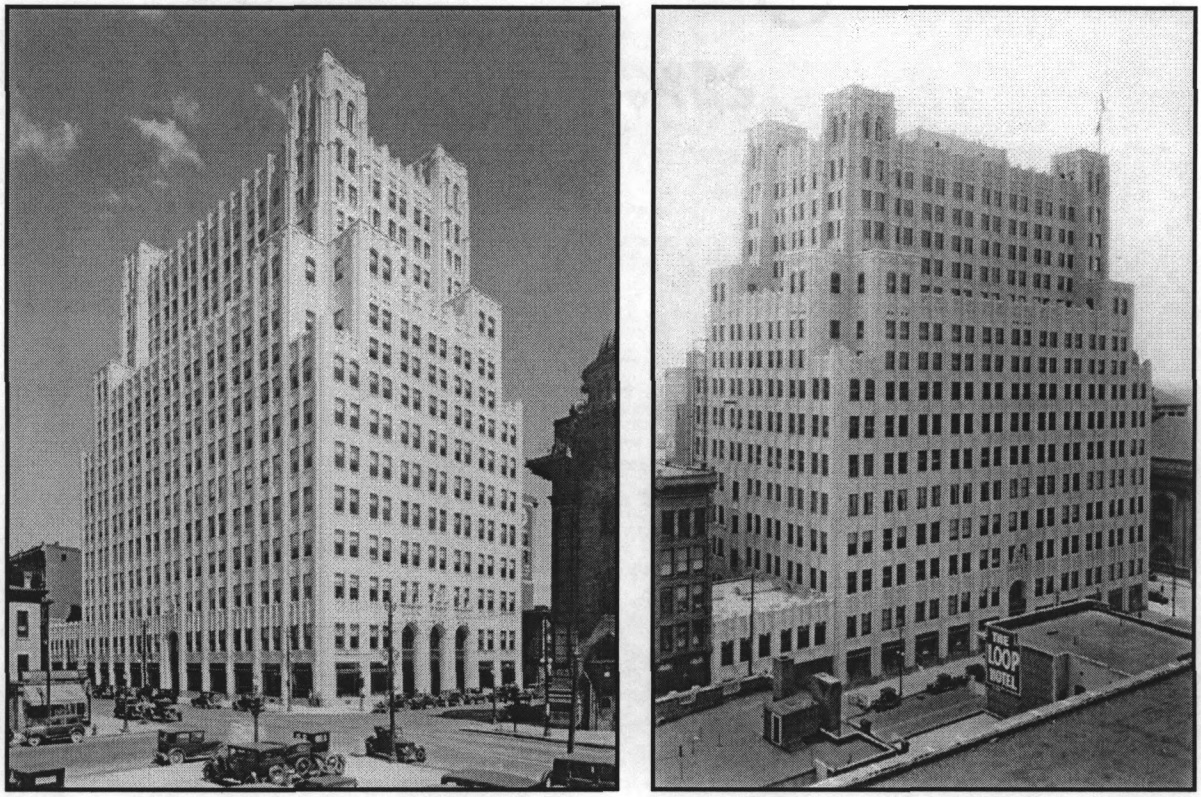

Figure 2. The Telephone Building was completed in 1929. The image on the left (view east), circa 1929, shows the façade on 14th Street (right) and the north side on Curtis Street (left). The right photograph, early 1930s, shows the Curtis Street side in a view to the south. SOURCE: Left, authors' collection; right, Denver Public Library, photographic collection, image X-25146.

Development of Telephone Service in Denver

Denver's first telephone exchange went into operation on 24 February 1879; it was the seventeenth such system in the country. The Denver Telephone Dispatch Company, a licensee of American Bell Telephone, was organized by Frederick O. Vaille and his partners, Henry and Edward Wolcott. The initial offices were located in three rooms on an upper floor of the Tritch Building on Larimer Street. The Western Union Telegraph Company established an Edison telephone system later in 1879. This rival business was absorbed by the original company in 1880.[8]

In January 1881, the Colorado Telephone Company was created, with Henry R. Wolcott as president and Frederick O. Vaille as general manager. The firm acquired a number of smaller telephone ventures throughout Colorado. The company moved to the Tabor Building at 16th and Lawrence streets, where it remained until 1890 when its own building was erected in the 1400 block of Lawrence Street. Buildings housing subordinate exchanges were erected in the late 1890s to serve outlying residential districts of Denver, and the company's lines were extended to various locations in

[8] Herbert J. Hackenburg, Jr., *Muttering Machines to Laser Beams: A History of Mountain Bell* (Denver: Mountain Bell, 1986), 10 and 13.

Colorado. By 1900, the company served 150 points within the state, had 4,500 subscribers, and handled approximately 45,000 calls per day. Denver historian Jerome Smiley, writing in 1901, observed:

> The telephone service has entered so far and so intimately into the daily business and social life of the community that it is difficult to understand how the preceding generation got along without it. It has made its advances so quietly, so unostentatiously, that we do not realize the vast development it has attained unless we make it the subject of special inquiry.[9]

In 1903, the company erected a new headquarters at 1421 Champa Street. Initially four stories in height, company growth later required its expansion to eight stories, as well as the acquisition of leased space in the adjacent Wyoming Building.[10]

In 1907, Theodore N. Vail became president of American Bell, which was renamed American Telephone and Telegraph (AT&T). Vail reorganized myriad small systems into the Bell System of large, regional telephone companies. Over the years, American Bell had acquired stock and gradually gained control of Colorado Telephone. In 1911, as part of AT&T's reorganization and consolidation, Mountain States Telephone and Telegraph (MST&T) was created by combining Colorado Telephone, Tri-State-Telephone (New Mexico, Arizona, and El Paso, Texas), and Rocky Mountain Bell Telephone (Utah, Montana, Idaho, and Wyoming). The consolidation of the regional telephone companies was in keeping with Vail's desire for "universality" of telephone service, which could not be provided by "dissociated companies." MST&T began a vigorous effort to acquire independent telephone companies within its service territory, which included the states of Colorado, Arizona, New Mexico, Montana, Idaho, Wyoming, and the El Paso region of Texas. Covering 22 percent of the nation's land area, MST&T had 220,000 subscribers by 1915 and a total invested capital of $35 million.[11]

Need and Planning for a New Building

By the middle 1920s, the need for construction of a new, large building for the Denver headquarters of MST&T operations had become apparent. The era saw the introduction of automatic dialing to replace operator-placed calls, a move which necessitated specialized buildings with new equipment. *The Monitor*, the MST&T company magazine, stated that "the decision as to the size and the character of the new telephone building in Denver was primarily based upon the requirements of this conversion program." In addition, Denver telephone demand was growing at such a pace that the existing Denver central office equipment was nearing capacity and needed to be expanded. The

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[9] Jerome C. Smiley, ed., *History of Denver* (Denver: Old Americana Publishing Company, 1978; orig. pub. Denver Times Publishing Co., 1901), 851-55.

[10] This older building continued in service after the construction of the Telephone Building in 1929; it was razed when the AT&T Building was constructed in the 1965-70 period.

[11] Hackenburg, *Muttering Machines*, 37-45 and 51; Thomas J. Noel, *Mile High City* (Denver: Heritage Media, Corp., 1997), 423; Wilbur F. Stone, *History of Colorado*, v. I (Chicago: S.J. Clarke Publishing Co., 1918), 391.

company also required additional office space to accommodate the larger numbers of administrative staff needed to serve the growing Rocky Mountain region. Between 1890 and 1920, the population of the Rocky Mountain states covered by the company had grown from 1.1 million to 2.4 million, an increase of 110 percent.[12]

Many aspects of the new building were dictated by technical needs of the communications equipment it would house. George E. McCarn, chief engineer of MST&T, and the Engineering Department developed the building's "general plan, in accordance with the Bell system idea." For example, the floors housing the automatic dial equipment had to be sufficiently strong to bear the weight of the heavy switching devices. The overall style of the building and the use of terra cotta cladding followed Bell System practices in other major cities. *The Monitor* in June 1928 noted that the building's "American perpendicular" design "has become very popular in recent years, and is employed successfully in the design of large office buildings. It is distinctively American in style and has contributed dignity to a number of the recently erected Bell System buildings throughout the United States." The same style of building was constructed by the company in cities such as New York City (1926), St. Louis (1926), Cleveland (1926), and Newark (1929). A brochure on the Telephone Building noted that the Bell system had "pioneered" the American Perpendicular style. The American Perpendicular had roots in the Perpendicular style, the third and longest-lived phase of Gothic architectural styles in England (ca. 1332-1550). *The Monitor* asserted that utility and beauty were the driving factors underlying the new Denver building's design.[13]

The Telephone Building was the first building to take advantage of the setback provision in the Denver Zoning Code. In 1908, a nine-story height ordinance had been enacted in an effort to preserve the city's mountain views. Later that year a controversy arose over plans for a fourteen-story bank building. In December 1908, the zoning ordinance was amended to permit buildings of twelve stories, with an additional three feet of height permitted for each one foot of setback. The setbacks incorporated into plans for the Telephone Building allowed it to rise above twelve stories.[14]

MST&T selected prominent Denver architect William N. Bowman to design the Telephone Building. Bowman (1868-1944) was born in Carthage, New York, and raised there and in Jackson, Michigan. After his father was injured in an industrial accident, Bowman left school at age eleven to work in a woolen mill. He studied mathematics and drawing in the evenings and eventually secured a job with an architectural firm in Jackson. Bowman also worked as a carpenter's apprentice to learn the basics of building. He worked for architectural firms in Detroit and Indianapolis before settling in Denver in 1910 and opening his own practice. His numerous Colorado works include such prominent buildings as the Continental Oil Building (demolished), the Norman Apartments (National Register listed), the Denver Public Schools Administration Building, Cole and Byers junior high schools, the Colburn

[12] *Mountain States Monitor*, March 1928 and April 1928; "Denver's Tallest Building Has Historical Associations," *Municipal Facts*, January-February 1929, 9.

[13] A single switch weighed 20 to 22 pounds. For examples of Bell System buildings in other major cities see, American Telephone and Telegraph Company, *Telephone Buildings, Bell System* (New York: American Telephone and Telegraph Company, 1930). *Mountain States Monitor*, June 1928 and September 1929, 35.

[14] Thomas J. Noel and Barbara S. Norgren, *Denver: The City Beautiful and Its Architects, 1893-1941* (Denver: Historic Denver, Inc., 1987), 133.

Hotel, courthouses for Jackson, Montrose, and Weld counties (all three National Register listed), the State Office Building, and the Greeley Masonic Temple. Bowman was the president of the Colorado chapter of the American Institute of Architects (1917-19), served as a member of the State Board of Architectural Examiners, participated in the Mountain Division of the Architects' Small House Bureau, and became part of the Allied Architects Association, which designed the Denver City and County Building (1929-32).[15]

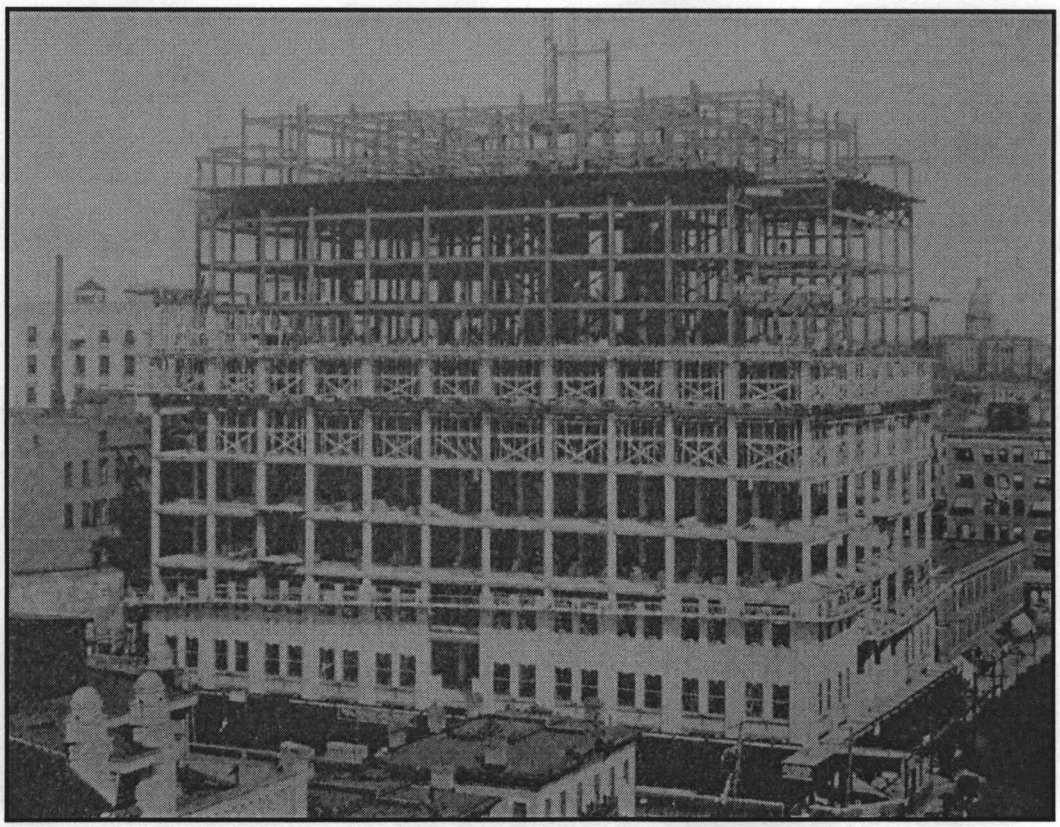

Figure 3. The steel frame of the Telephone Building had reached the upper stories in June 1928 and terra cotta was being applied to the lower stories. SOURCE: *The New Telephone Building and Fifty Years of Progress.*

While the telephone company engineers had specified a "skeleton" for the building necessary to meet the company's technical requirements, it was up to Bowman to fashion a "skin." The architect produced a number of alternative designs for the building during the 1926-27 period. An April 1926 rendering showed a more ornate building, with taller towers at the corners and round arch windows on the second story. Another undated design depicted a stepped building of more than twenty stories. A May 1927 drawing proposed a clock tower at the 14th and Curtis corner.[16]

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[15] Bowman also prepared plans for MST&T buildings in Phoenix, Arizona, and Cheyenne, Wyoming. Noel and Norgren, 191-92; *Denver Post*, 29 August 1944, 1; Colorado Historical Society, Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation, William N. Bowman, Colorado Architects Biographical Sketch, 20 May 2004; "William N. Bowman," Portrait and Biographical Memoirs, Indianapolis and Marion County, Indiana, www.countyhistory.com.

[16] In the files of the Telecommunications History Group, Denver, Colorado.

Colorado artist Allen T. True played a major role in the interior design of the building. True (1881-1955) was born in Colorado Springs, and attended Manual Training High School in Denver, Denver University, and the Corcoran Art School in Washington, D.C. Returning to Denver in the 1920s, True completed murals in many public and commercial buildings, including: the Colorado National Bank, the Denver City and County Building, the Brown Palace Hotel, the Greek Theater and the Voorhies Memorial in Denver's Civic Center, and the state capitols of Colorado, Missouri, and Wyoming. True was responsible for the interior color and decorative scheme of the Telephone Building and "for practically the entire set-up of furnishing and fixtures..." It was True's suggestion that the wrought iron fixtures be executed in black rather than bronze, as originally planned, as he perceived the "black as having more character and to more substantially support the travertine." True also executed the building's thirteen large murals (see Description), which took him about a year and a half to complete. He first produced small versions of the murals which were presented to company officials for approval. True noted that the project required close work with the architect, as the "size of the wall space, type of wall, light, company policy, and numerous other considerations enter into the composition and development of these paintings...."[17]

True paid homage to MST&T in the brochure describing the building's murals:

> These mural decorations represent to me the courteous gesture of a great Company to the people of Denver and the Rocky Mountain region. Some of them are placed practically in our streets, in sheltered lobbies just off the stream of traffic. They are all intended to beautify the place where the Company meets its patrons and are but another expression of its actuating principle which is service to the public.[18]

Construction of the Telephone Building

Clearing existing buildings from the site began in March 1927 and excavation started in May. The $300,000 building permit for the excavation alone made it one of the largest projects of its kind ever undertaken in Denver. The excavation was completed by January 1928 and the steel framework was largely in place by June. The C.E. Walker Company of Denver served as the general contractor for the project.[19]

Telephone historian Herbert J. Hackenburg, Jr., asserted that "the very best of everything" went into the building. Local construction materials dominated the project. Nearly all (85 percent) of the 4,000 tons of structural steel for the building was produced by Colorado Fuel & Iron Company in Pueblo, while Midwest Iron Company of Denver performed the steel fabrication. The 1,800 tons of terra cotta cladding was produced in Denver (probably by the Denver North West Terra Cotta Company) and amounted to "probably the largest single order of this material ever placed locally." The travertine used in the exterior entrance areas and in the main lobby was quarried in Colorado in the vicinity of

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[17] *City Edition*, 18-25 April 1984, 18; Noel and Norgren, 155; *Mountain States Monitor*, September 1929, 37.
[18] *The Murals in the Telephone Building, Denver, Colorado.*
[19] *Denver Evening News*, 18 July 1927 and 3 January 1928; *Denver Evening Post*, 26 October 1927; *Denver Post*, 5 August 1929.

Salida. The pink granite base on the street sides of the building came from the Platte Canyon. The 232,000 face bricks were manufactured near Golden, while 67,000 glazed or enamel bricks and two million common bricks were made in Denver. Colorado Portland cement was used in the building.[20]

Some of the marble used in the building's interior came from other states. In the inner lobbies, Alaskan Black and Gold marble was used as trim for the Colorado travertine, while the floors were composed of squares of Swanton Black Vermont marble laid diagonally with Friendsville Dark Pink Tennessee marble. Upper stories featured a wainscot of Colonial Gray Veined marble from Carthage, Missouri, atop a base of French Gray Vermont marble.[21]

The J.B. Martina Mosaic Company installed pre-cast terrazzo stair treads and ornamental terrazzo floors. The ornamental lighting fixtures were designed, manufactured, and installed by Sechrist Manufacturing Company of Denver. Ornamental wrought iron work was performed by the August Freidrichs Company. American Fixture Company of Denver fabricated and installed the wrought iron display windows under the direction of Frank Kirchhof.[22]

The completed building measured 125' by 200', was 236'9" tall, and reportedly contained a thousand windows. The interior of the building contained 5.2 million cubic feet, and *The Monitor* claimed that it was "the largest and tallest building in Colorado." Special areas within the building included a 350-seat auditorium on the fifteenth floor and an employee cafeteria with a capacity of 600 in the basement. While the entire building was fireproof, there was also a center fireproof core extending from the subbasement to the roof which contained the elevator shafts and corridors, stairways, a smoke tower, and restrooms. A cable vault in the basement brought underground communications cables into the building. The total cost of the building was $5 million, with construction totaling $3 million and equipment accounting for $2 million. The building was completely occupied on 29 July 1929.[23]

Opening and Impact of the Building

The formal, public opening of the building took place on 6-8 August 1929. MST&T invested considerable effort into welcoming the public to the building, producing a highly-organized system of tours. Seventy-five tour guides were provided with scripted "patter" written by the publicity department which enabled them to point out features of the building to the groups they guided. Each visitor received a brochure about "The Murals in the Telephone Building, Denver, Colo." Twenty thousand persons visited the Telephone Building during its opening.[24]

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[20] Herbert J. Hackenburg, Jr., Denver, Colorado, interview by R. Laurie Simmons, 10 August 2004; Noel, *Mile High City*, 423; *Mountain States Monitor*, June 1928.
[21] *Through the Ages*, 39 and 41.
[22] *Mountain States Monitor*, June 1928; *Rocky Mountain News*, 4 August 1929.
[23] *Mountain States Monitor*, June 1928 and September 1929, 14.
[24] *Mountain States Monitor*, September 1929, 8-11.

From its completion, the building played an important role in local, regional, and national telecommunications systems. The second through sixth floors were designed to hold switching equipment; space not needed initially for this purpose was used for offices. The central office automated dial equipment for forty-thousand downtown Denver area customers was located here. The long distance switchboard was on the fifth floor, where operators handled approximately ten thousand calls each day. The "Information" service for the Denver area also was in the building.

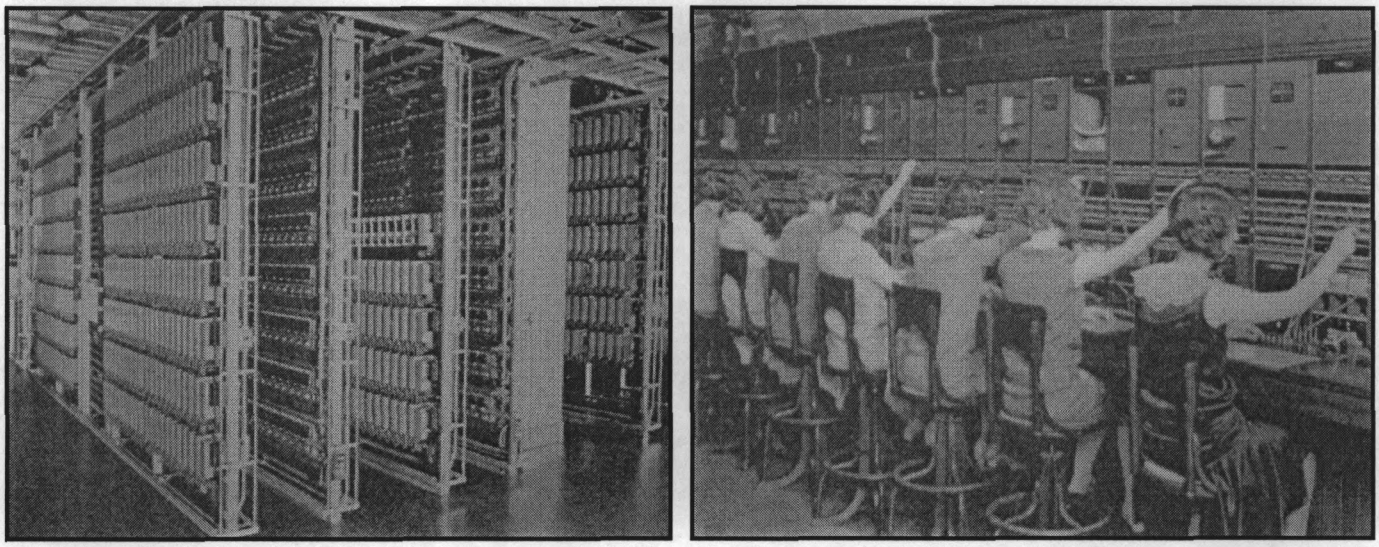

Figure 4. The new building brought dial telephone service to Downtown Denver through the use of thousands of automatic switches (left). The long distance switchboard for Denver was also located in the building (right). SOURCE: *The New Telephone Building and Fifty Years of Progress.*

The building also housed administrative functions. The corporate headquarters offices for the entire MST&T empire were located on the fourteenth floor. The business office, accessed through the Curtis street entrance, accommodated 45,000 customers a month, who paid bills and arranged service matters there. Private facilities were provided for making long distance telephone calls, and a library of out-of-state telephone directories was available.

The stature and importance of the building was immediately recognized. The *Denver Post* commented on the building's significance to the city:

> The Telephone building is one of the most beautiful business structures in Denver and is the city's tallest skyscraper. In architectural conception it varies markedly from other Denver structures. Businessmen concede that the building and the hundreds of workers it eventually will house will give new importance to Fourteenth street, Curtis street, and adjoining thoroughfares.[25]

The Telephone Building's height, mass, and light terra cotta walls distinguished it from its surroundings and made it an immediate visual landmark. It was the tallest building in Colorado until

[25] *Denver Post*, 31 December 1928.

the early 1950s. At night, the upper stories of the building were lighted with forty-eight floodlights placed on the terraces. The *Denver Herald* described the building as "one of the night features of Denver. It appears as a giant tower of light for both the Rocky Mountains and the plains region." The *Denver Statesman* opined that the new building enabled MST&T "to boast of an elegance seldom attained by any business institution in the west." Denver historians Thomas J. Noel and Barbara S. Norgren concluded that the Telephone Building and other skyscrapers of the 1920s "helped bring modern architecture to Denver." [26]

Figure 5. The upper stories of the building were illuminated with floodlights. The building was marked on aeronautical charts of the region. SOURCE: Telecommunications History Group, Denver, Colorado, photographic collection, image B0769, undated.

[26] The nighttime illumination was discontinued at the advent of World War II. *Denver Statesman*, 3 August 1929; *Denver Herald*, 10 August 1929; Noel and Norgren, 133.

Later Developments and Additions

The Telephone Building opened less than three months prior to the October 1929 crash of the stock market and the onset of the Great Depression. In the Denver area alone, MST&T lost approximately 70,000 subscribers between 1931 and 1933. Extension of new telephone service to consumers remained depressed during World War II, due to limits on the use of vital materials and the loss of part of the company's workforce to military service.[27]

Demand for telephone service surged after the war, and plans were made to expand space in the Telephone Building. A building permit was issued in December 1946 for adding two-stories to a five-story light well on the alley (south) side of the building. In November 1947, a permit was issued for three additional stories, bringing that section to ten stories and adding a total of 18,000 square feet to the building. James R. Howell and Company was the general contractor. The additional space housed offices and long distance switchboards.[28]

Between the end of the war and January 1949, MST&T added 340,149 new telephone subscribers. The company connected its one millionth telephone in September 1948. Although the MST&T workforce had increased from 11,600 at the end of the war to 18,100 in 1949, a backlog of more than 58,000 telephone orders existed in December 1948.[29]

Continuing postwar growth necessitated another addition to the Telephone Building in the late 1950s and construction of a new building in the early 1960s. The Telephone Building was expanded in 1958-59 through the construction of eight stories on top of a two-story section on Curtis Street. The addition was executed in the same style and materials as the original construction. Between 1960 and 1964, MST&T erected an International style five-story building that attached to the east wall of the Telephone Building and extended to 15th Street. Addressed as 930 15th Street, the building originally contained corporate and state administrative offices. During 1964-66, seven stories were added to the building. Connected to the original building with pass-throughs in the basement and on the eighth floor, the later construction is considered an addition to the original 1929 building.[30]

The headquarters of MST&T (later Mountain Bell) remained in the Telephone Building until 1984. The building is now owned and operated by Qwest Communications, successor to U.S. West. About five hundred people work in the building, which houses local and long distance telephone equipment. The Telephone Building still plays a nationally important role in the nation's telecommunications network.

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[27] Thomas J. Noel, *Rocky Mountain Gold* (Tulsa, Oklahoma: Continental Heritage Press, 1980), 222.
[28] City and County of Denver, building permits, number 14839, 19 December 1946 and number 13301, 1 November 1947; *Denver Post*, 11 March 1948.
[29] *Rocky Mountain News*, 2 January 1949.
[30] Sanborn Map Company, "Denver, Colorado," fire insurance map, Pelham, New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1974; *Denver Post*, 1 August 1965, 1E.

Figure 6. The height, mass, light buff color, and stepped design of the Telephone Building (lower center) made it a landmark on the Downtown Denver skyline. SOURCE: *The Monitor*, September 1929, 28.

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Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated area consists of Lots 1 through 16 (inclusive), Block 106, East Denver, in the City and County of Denver, Colorado.

Boundary Justification

The nominated area includes the original building, its 1946-47, 1958-59, and 1960 additions, and the parcel on which it is located. It was necessary to include the 1960 addition, as there are connecting pass-throughs in the basement and on the eighth floor.

Common Photographic Label Information:

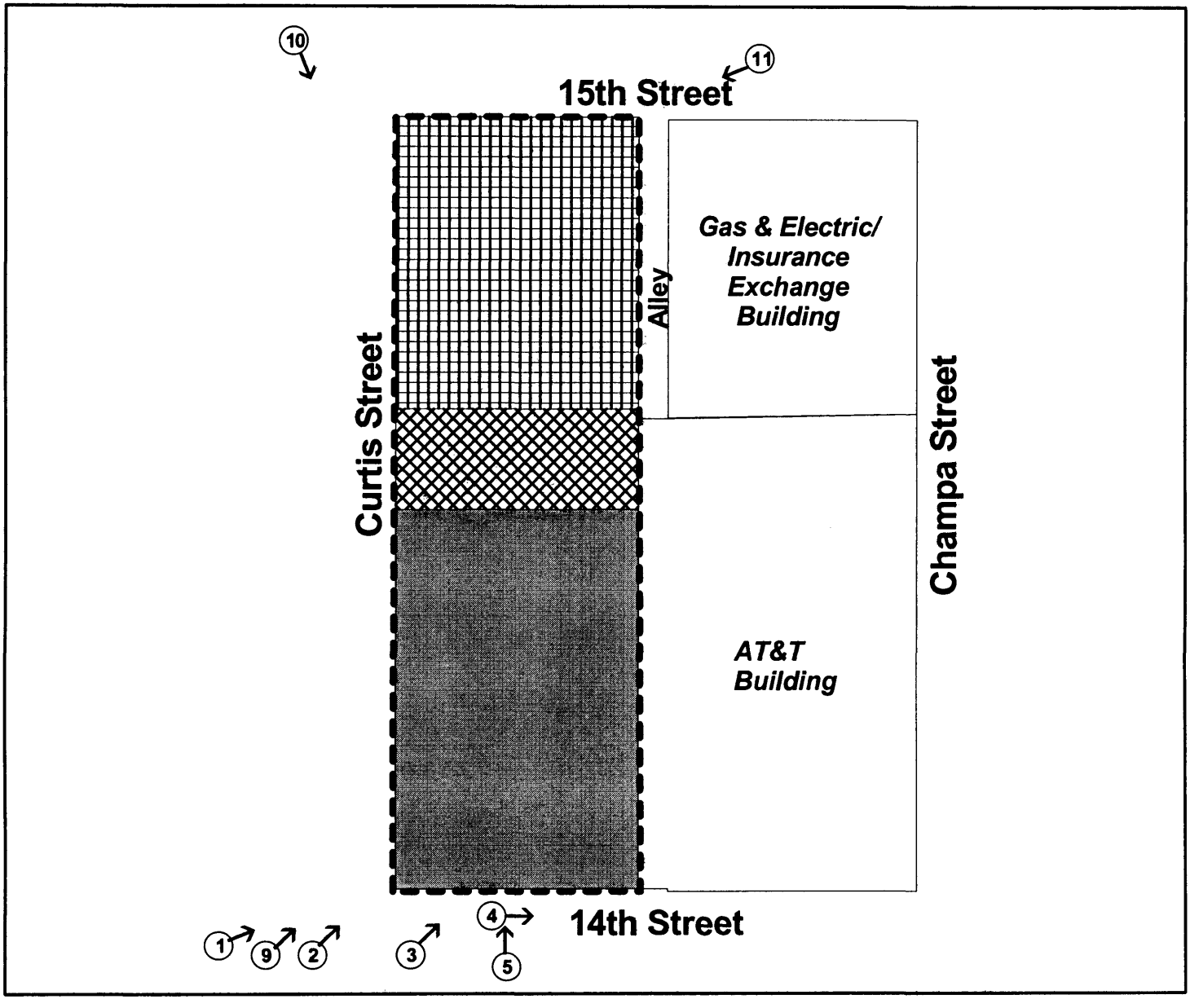
1. Name: Telephone Building
2. Location: City and County of Denver, Colorado
3. Negative on file at: Historic Denver, Inc.
   1534 Wynkoop St., Suite 400A
   Denver, CO 80202

Information Different for Each View:

4. Photograph Number, Description of View, Photographer, Photograph Date and Camera Direction

Photograph Number	Description of View, Photographer, and Photograph Date	Camera Direction
1	Front (14th Street), to right, and northern side (Curtis Street), to left. Roger Whitacre, May 2004.	E
2	Front (14th Street), to right, and northern side (Curtis Street), to left. Roger Whitacre, May 2004.	ESE
3	Main entrance on 14th Street. Roger Whitacre, May 2004.	E
4	Decorative terra cotta detail of main entrance on 14th Street. Roger Whitacre, May 2004.	SE
5	Decorative terra cotta, including Bell System logo, above main entrance on 14th Street. Roger Whitacre, May 2004.	NE
6	Outer lobby of main entrance on 14th Street, showing wrought iron revolving doors and part of "Mountain Construction" mural. Thomas H. Simmons, August 2004.	ESE
7	"Mountain Telephone Construction" mural in the outer lobby of main entrance on 14th Street. Roger Whitacre, May 2004.	SE
8	"The Underground Cable Crew" mural in the outer lobby of main entrance on 14th Street. Roger Whitacre, May 2004.	SW

Photograph Number	Description of View, Photographer, and Photograph Date	Camera Direction
9	Northern side (Curtis Street). Roger Whitacre, May 2004.	E
10	1960s addition (930 15th Street) to left and original building to right. Roger Whitacre, May 2004.	SSW
11	1960s addition (930 15th Street) to right; building to left is not part of this nomination. Roger Whitacre, May 2004.	WNW
12	Portion of inner lobby of the main entrance on 14th Street, with the elevator lobby to the right and part of the "The Crucible of Science" mural to the left. Thomas H. Simmons, August 2004.	N
13	"Wings of Thought" mural in the inner lobby of the main entrance on 14th Street. Thomas H. Simmons, August 2004.	SE
14	Elevator lobby on first floor with mural of geese landing at a lake at the far end. Thomas H. Simmons, August 2004.	NE
15	President's office on the fourteenth floor. Thomas H. Simmons, August 2004.	WNW



Nominated Area

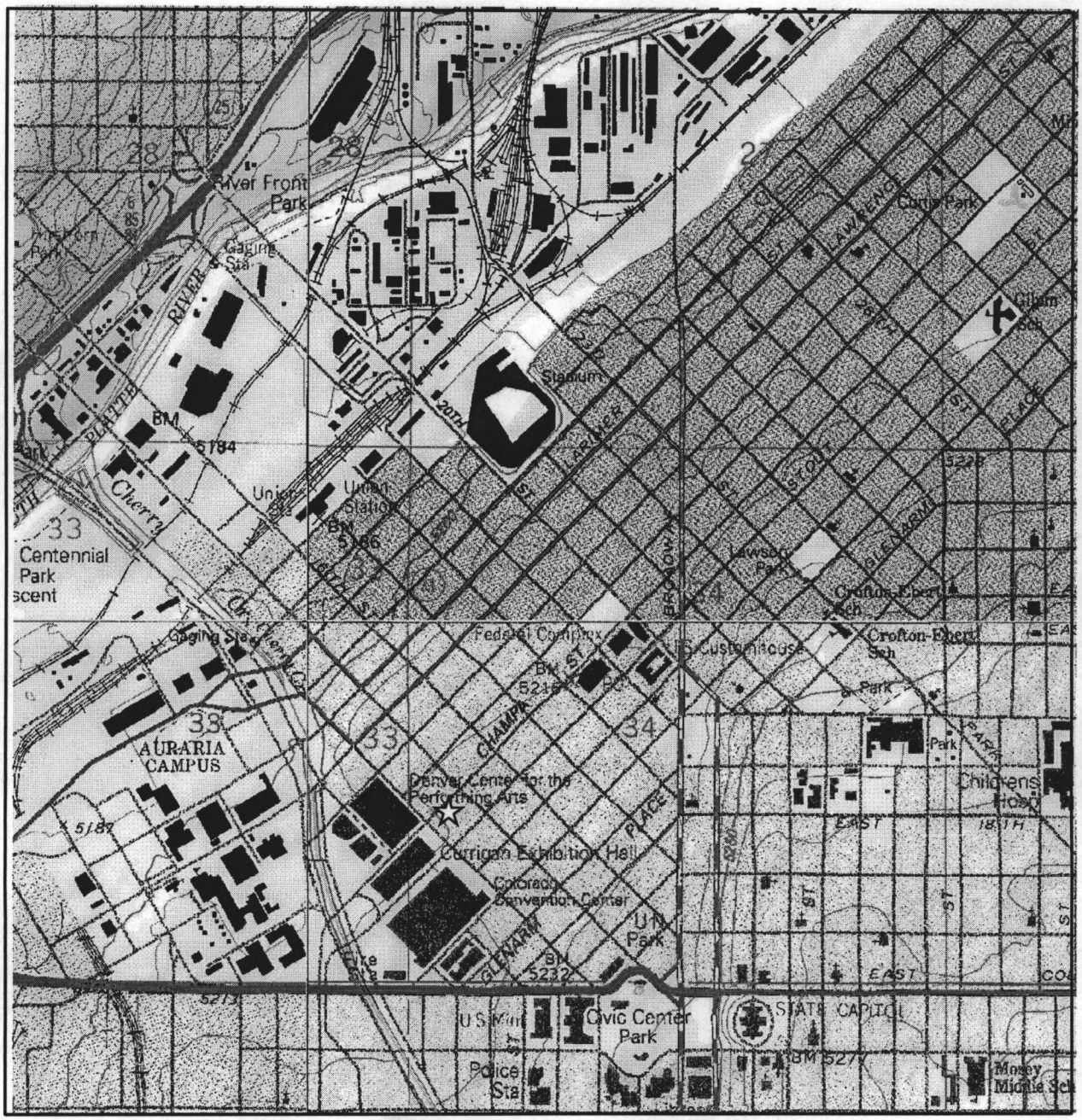
LEGEND

- 1929 Original Building
- 1958-59 Addition
- 1960-64 Addition
- Other Buildings

SKETCH MAP AND PHOTOGRAPH LOCATIONS

Scale: 1 inch equals approx. 78 feet

NOTE: Photograph locations are indicated by numbers in circles with arrows. Photographs 6 through 8 and 12 through 14 are interiors.



U.S.G.S. Location Map Extract. SOURCE: Extract of U.S. Geological Survey, "Englewood, Colo.," 7.5 minute topographic map (Reston, Virginia: U.S. Geological Survey, 1997). A white star bordered in black indicates the location of the nominated resource.