Form No. 10-306 (Rev. 10-74)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR FEDERAL PROPERTIES

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

1 NAME

HISTORIC
~~United~~ ~~States~~ Post Office and Courthouse

AND/OR COMMON
United States Courthouse

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER
55 ~~East~~ Broadway — NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN — VICINITY OF — CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT
Tucson — na

STATE — CODE — COUNTY — CODE
Arizona 85701 — Pima

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE	
__DISTRICT	X PUBLIC	X OCCUPIED	__AGRICULTURE	__MUSEUM
X BUILDING(S)	__PRIVATE	__UNOCCUPIED	__COMMERCIAL	__PARK
__STRUCTURE	__BOTH	__WORK IN PROGRESS	__EDUCATIONAL	__PRIVATE RESIDENCE
__SITE	**PUBLIC ACQUISITION**	**ACCESSIBLE**	__ENTERTAINMENT	__RELIGIOUS
__OBJECT	__IN PROCESS	X YES: RESTRICTED	X GOVERNMENT	__SCIENTIFIC
	__BEING CONSIDERED	__YES: UNRESTRICTED	__INDUSTRIAL	__TRANSPORTATION
	N/A	__NO	__MILITARY	__OTHER:

4 AGENCY

REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS: *(If applicable)*
General Services Administration Region IX

STREET & NUMBER
525 Market Street

CITY, TOWN — VICINITY OF — STATE
San Francisco — California 94105

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.
Pima County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER
131 West Congress Street

CITY, TOWN — STATE
Tucson — Arizona 85701

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE
none

DATE
__FEDERAL __STATE __COUNTY __LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN — STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
X EXCELLENT	__DETERIORATED	__UNALTERED	X ORIGINAL SITE
__GOOD	__RUINS	X ALTERED	__MOVED DATE_____
__FAIR	__UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The United States Courthouse (originally called the U.S. Post Office and Courthouse) is situated within the mildly urban setting of the desert city of Tucson. The building is located on a corner site - the northwest corner of Scott and Broadway - within the downtown area, one block south of the busiest street in the central business district. "Downtown" Tucson consists largely of low- to medium-rise commercial and institutional buildings of varying ages representing most of the architectural styles developed since the 1880s. One block north is the 1920 Consolidated Bank Building, one of the city's early landmark structures; just north of that is the Home Federal Savings Building, a new medium-rise office tower - Tucson's tallest. Directly across Scott Street from the Post Office is the Hotel Roskruge, a three story brick building built early in the 20th century, and directly behind is a cluster of one- to two-story attached Late Victorian commercial structures. Across the intersection is the Santa Rita Hotel, a medium-rise building. Directly across Broadway from the 1930 Post Office and Courthouse is a newer Federal Courthouse Building; the two buildings have been joined by a second-story enclosed walkway bridge which freespans over Broadway.

The Courthouse is oriented with the front facade facing south toward Broadway, the busier of the two adjacent thoroughfares. An extremely small site has placed some unusual design constraints on the building, virtually eliminating any room for surrounding landscaping. Most federal buildings of the period were set back from the sidewalk and placed within small grassy lawns with trees and/or foundation shrubbery to distinguish them from their commercial neighbors. The Tucson site allowed no room for a lawn, and the building is built immediately beside the sidewalks. A public alley extends east-west behind the Courthouse; a small parking area occupies the remainder of the site on the west.

The exterior of the building appears today virtually unaltered from its original state. Measuring 141'2" wide by 115'4" deep, the Courthouse is massed as a great four-story block. The simple rectangular form is broken only by shallow setbacks on the front, side and rear facades. Classified as a fireproof structure, it is supported by a reinforced concrete frame which holds pan type concrete floor and roof slabs. The roof is basically flat, covered with composition roofing, with a partial, sloping outer edge on all sides which gives the impression of a hipped roof. Basically a brick box, it is the classical detailing which gives the building its refinement and stylistic distinction - and typifies it as one of many similar buildings designed by the Supervising Architect's office (see Addendum, Item 8). With typical neoclassical symmetry and proportion, a pair of stacked two-story colonnades is centered in the front facade, composing the central bay; this is enframed on both sides by matched brick end bays within which classical windows are also stacked, one per floor. This configuration - central prominent colonnade anchored on both sides by

massive corner elements - is an arrangement developed in 18th century France and adapted by American government and private architects in the late 19th and early 20th centuries for a wide variety of public and institutional buildings. The neoclassical arrangement took on several appearances as the architects varied the scale, proportion and detailing, but at its core it represented the type of classicism favored by the Treasury Department as appropriate for federal architecture. The building also displays the classical vertical hierarchy of base, body and cap, the base formed by the slightly raised granite-faced foundation, the body by the brick and terra cotta walls and the cap by the terra cotta entablature and deceptive tiled roof.

The Courthouse is strongly oriented toward the front facade, with the remaining three sides relatively unembellished. The front features a striking central bay made up of glazed terra cotta components. Basically a flat wall relieved by a series of six engaged columns, this bay displays features such as: two levels of stacked columns, each with stylized Composite capitals, flat shafts, simply enframed windows between the lower columns and terra cotta spandrels separating the windows between the upper columns; stylized eagle inset ornamentation above the window bays at the top with other inset terra cotta ornaments set in column shafts and frieze panels; and classical entablatures above both colonnades, the upper entablature capped by the slightly projecting roof eaves. Two main entries are situated at either end of this central bay; each features neoclassical surrounds with flat pediments, stylized triglyphs and guttae and fluted flat pilasters with rosette caps. On either side of the terra cotta wall is a brick-faced end bay, framed at the corners by stepped terra cotta quoins. The sides and rear are relatively plain in comparison, composed of four-story brick walls framed by terra cotta quoins, granite base and terra cotta entablature. Frames similar to those on the front are located in the two end bays of both east and west facades.

The building title centered on the lower frieze panel of the front facade is a striking feature, with red painted letters incised in the terra cotta blocks. Originally "United States Post Office and Court House," the title has been changed in recent years to "United States Court House." The building's cornerstone, laid in a 1929 ceremony, is located in the foundation at the southeast corner and is inscribed:

A.W. Mellon	Secretary of the Treasury
James A. Wetmore	Acting Supervising Architect
	1929

The interior of the building has undergone several changes, most of them made when the post office moved out and it became strictly a federal courthouse. The first floor was originally occupied entirely by the post office, with a public lobby extending almost the width of the front wall and a large postal workroom behind that. Smaller lobbies/hallways which joined the main lobby at its east and west corners gave access to the Postmaster's and Superintendent's offices on the east wall and the Assistant Postmaster's office and money order registry on the west wall. A loading platform was situated behind the main workroom, centered on the rear wall. Today the main lobby has been changed into a large jury assembly room, the workroom has been subdivided into several office spaces and the Assistant Postmaster's office has been incorporated into the U.S. Marshal's office. The Postmaster's and Superintendent's offices, with their small public lobby, and the stair and elevator at both ends of the main lobby all remain as original. Many of the orignal components are still in place in the public spaces, including the quarry tiles laid in basketweave pattern for the floors, marble wainscots and floor borders, plaster walls and ceilings with moulded plaster crowns and decorative wrought iron balusters for the stairways.

The upper three levels are organized as series of office and court spaces aligned along double-loaded hallways. The ecnter of the upper levels is open, forming a light court which allows natural light into the postal workroom through large skylights (which, unfortunately, have been blocked off). The most impressive space in the building is the main District Courtroom, located on the south wall of the third and fourth floors. This space today features many of its original elements, including the wood-beamed ceiling with stencilled patterns, original wainscoting, plaster walls, wood windows and doors and surrounds and furniture. The other interior spaces on the upper levels have undergone varying amounts of change, ranging from no change at all to extensive alterations involving the addition of carpeting, wall paneling and suspended ceilings.

Summary

The United States Courthouse is sited facing south on a corner lot within the central business district of Tucson. It is massed as a great four-story block, the simple rectangular form broken only by shallow setbacks on all facades. Basically a brick box with a mission-tiled hipped roof, the building depends upon classical detailing for its refinement and stylistic distinction. It is strongly oriented toward the front facade, with the remaining three sides relatively unembellished; the front features a striking central two-tier

colonnade made up of glazed terra cotta components. The building has been maintained well, and the exterior today appears in virtually original condition. The interior has undergone changes to accomodate the changing needs since its construction, but the changes have been made with some sensitivity and the original character of the public spaces is retained. As one of the city's major public buildings, it is a prominent landmark - the most refined and best preserved of Tucson's Depression-era architecture.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW				
__PREHISTORIC	__ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	__COMMUNITY PLANNING	__LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	__RELIGION
__1400-1499	__ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	__CONSERVATION	__LAW	__SCIENCE
__1500-1599	__AGRICULTURE	__ECONOMICS	__LITERATURE	__SCULPTURE
__1600-1699	X ARCHITECTURE	__EDUCATION	__MILITARY	__SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
__1700-1799	__ART	__ENGINEERING	__MUSIC	__THEATER
__1800-1899	__COMMERCE	__EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	__PHILOSOPHY	__TRANSPORTATION
X 1900-	__COMMUNICATIONS	__INDUSTRY	X POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	__OTHER (SPECIFY)
		__INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES	Designed: 1928-29 Built: 1929-30	BUILDER/ARCHITECT	James A. Wetmore Acting Supervising Architect

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The significance of the United States Courthouse in Tucson rests upon the building's intrinsic and representational values on a local level to the city. These values lie in two areas: architecture and politics/government. Architecturally the Courthouse is representative of the eclectic revivalism which distinguished most public buildings designed by the Treasury Department's Supervising Architect's office in the 1920s and 1930s. Although it may not have succeeded in its intended role as an exemplar of good taste to be imitated by subsequent private structures, the building is the most refined of Tucson's Depression-era architecture. It is a well preserved and locally prominent example of its genre - a medium-scaled public building of the late twenties. The Courthouse also represents Tucson's part of an extensive federal building program initiated in the late 1920s by the Hoover administration - the forerunner to Roosevelt's Public Works Administration. As the first federal building erected in the city, it was a source of pride for Tucson and a locally prominent symbol of the federal government.

Addendum

Although the Courthouse in Tucson was completed in 1930, the history of the building had begun two decades earlier - in 1910. On 25 June of that year, the House of Representatives, urged by Arizona Congressman Ralph H. Cameron, approved a bill authorizing the acquisition of a site for the Post Office and Courthouse at a cost not to exceed $15,000. Site Agent James Plant was dispatched to Tucson later that year by the Treasury Department to assess several tracts of land offered by local owners; Plant reported in January 1911 to the Treasury Secretary:

> The city is generally level. While some streets have fair grades it cannot be said that the surface is broken or hilly. On the west is the Santa Cruz river but there are few dwellings within 1/8th of a mile of it. Main and Myers Streets of the original adobe town are on a low ridge which rises from the river bottom lands. The bulk of the business was originally on Myers Street south of Congress Street. Modern business has abandoned this

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

See Addendum, Item 9

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY .60

UTM REFERENCES

	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
A	12	502890	3516480
B			
C			
D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Legal description: Lots 5 & 6, Block 208, City of Tucson

Property is on northwest corner of East Broadway and Scott Street, with 180.0' frontage on Broadway and 149.1' frontage on Scott Street.

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE
Clayton B. Fraser, Principal

ORGANIZATION
Fraserdesign

DATE
7 March 1982

STREET & NUMBER
1269 Cleveland Avenue Suite Two

TELEPHONE
303-669-7969

CITY OR TOWN
Loveland

STATE
Colorado 80537

12 CERTIFICATION OF NOMINATION

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER RECOMMENDATION

YES X NO ___ NONE ___

Ann D. Pritchett
STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

In compliance with Executive Order 11593, I hereby nominate this property to the National Register, certifying that the State Historic Preservation Officer has been allowed 90 days in which to present the nomination to the State Review Board and to evaluate its significance. The evaluated level of significance is ___National ___State ✓Local.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE J. WALTER ROTH

TITLE DIRECTOR, HISTORIC PRESERVATION GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION W Roth DATE 12 JAN 83

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST: Delores Byers DATE 2/10/83

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER Entered in the National Register

GPO 899-214

street but it is still filled with very quaint interesting and reliable stores patronized by the old time American and Mexican element and curiosity hunters. The adjacent streets are narrow and the adobes in many cases are in extremely poor repair and given over to Chinamen and the lower element south from Alameda Street and west from Church Street.

Tucson is preeminently a residence city with most complete retail houses supplying all lines. It is a very important Division point on the Southern Pacific which handles all matters connected with the road from Los Angeles and El Paso; and it has a moderate wholesale trade with the adjoining country which must with the development of the community materially increase.

He recommended a parcel of land on the northwest corner of Scott and Broadway streets.

After waiting in vain over four years for the Treasury to act, the city bought the land Plant had recommended and gave the site to the government; they then awaited a Congressional authorization for construction of a building. The Tucson Courthouse was to have been one of hundreds of structures built across the country in a fifteen-year government construction binge. Congress during the first decade of this century was responding to pressure from emerging towns and cities for more federal buildings by awarding numerous construction projects as part of the political spoils system. The first omnibus buildings legislation was enacted in 1902; this and those which followed in subsequent sessions authorized the wholesale construction of the new post offices and courthouses in small towns throughout America. However, increasingly vociferous criticism of porkbarrel politics dampened the enthusiasm in Congress for new building projects, and by the mid-1910s the program was halted. Between 1913 and 1926 no new spending for public buildings was approved in Washington; the site selection process in Tucson had taken so long that the building was caught by this moratorium, and it would not be until almost twenty-five years later that Congress would appropriate the funds for a new federal building for the city. With the building stalled indefinitely the site was leased to a series of operators of a gas station and parking lot. It must have been with some relief (the leased facility had become an eyesore) that the announcement was made that an appropriation for the building was approved in 1928.

The Courthouse that was finally built was in reality part of an enormous federal building program undertaken by Congress and the Hoover administration in the late 1920s and early 1930s. During this period some 1300 new civil federal buildings were erected, nearly doubling the number under the aegis of the Treasury Department. The program was initiated in 1926 with a Congressional authorization of

$165 million over an 11 year period. The authorization was increased by $125 million in 1928 and, with the Depression worsening, by $330 million in 1930 and 1931. The total appropriation, including revenues from the sale of so-called obsolete structures which added $69 million, hovered at $700 million. According to Lois Craig in The Federal Presence: "In terms of establishing the image of the United States government, this program was the most important undertaken since the first few decades under the Constitution."

The massive construction effort was designed to serve three functions. First, it represented fiscal pragmatism and was calculated to reduce the rising rental costs incurred by a growing number of federal agencies in leased space. The program also afforded Congress the opportunity to distribute political presents in the form of post offices and courthouses, a type of logrolling it historically has found hard to resist. Finally, under the deepening shadow of the Depression, the building project was in the later years also a make-work project, intended to provide jobs for the local unemployed. A predecessor to the myriad New Deal programs, Hoover's building program was later absorbed within the Public Works Administration.

The Courthouse was designed by the Supervising Architect's (SA) office of the Treasury Department in late 1928. During that time the SA had been receiving increasing pressure from private architects as the renewed federal activity in this latest building program had rekindled long dormant animosities between the SA's office and the architects, represented by the American Institute of Architects. The AIA, protective of a membership beleaguered by the Depression, objected vehemently to in-house design of federal buildings by the SA's office, which had increased its staff from 432 in 1929 to 750 in 1932. A 1931 resolution of the AIA Board of Directors proclaimed:

> We believe that the country is entitled to the services of the best architectural talent available, and that the construction of so large a volume of work as the present appropriations provide, into the hands of a single Government bureau, must inevitably tend to produce stereotyped, mediocre and uninspiring results.

Architects railed against the SA repeatedly in the trade periodicals: American Architect was particularly fervent in its criticism, regularly publishing articles like "Government Architects Cannot Create Beauty" and "The Time Has Come for Government to Get Out of the Architecture Business." A counterattack was printed in the April 1931 Federal Architect, a magazine sympathetic with the SA:

> The ethics of the profession has certainly taken a jolt when the architects of the country on letterheads of their A.I.A. Chapters blacken without investigation the work of other architects' offices with the naive and frank admission that it is for the purpose of getting architectural commissions for themselves.
>
> The Federal Architectural offices are weaned and reared on criticism. If they use material A, delegations appear to lambaste them for not using material B. Or Vice Versa. If they face the building north, a newspaper crusade develops because it was not faced south. The bitter attacks of private architects are, therefore, merely the regular order. . . .But - one could have wished that architects would have stood by architects.

Although the Public Buildings Acts of 1926 and 1930 granted the Treasury Department the option to commission private architects for federal projects for the first time since the repeal of the Tarnsey Act in 1911, the Hoover administration used their services sparingly and the fusillades continued throughout the late 1920s and early 1930s.

There were stylistic differces as well. At one extreme was the SA's office, which continued to advocate classicism as the appropriate symbolic expression for public buildings. The SA executed hundreds of buildings of varying scales with classical facades and detailing during the twenties and thirties. James A. Wetmore was the Acting Supervising Architect from 1915 to 1933. A graduate of the Georgetown University Law School, Wetmore was not himself an architect, the reason for the "Acting" before his title; stylistic direction for the office was given by the Superintendent of the Architectural Division Louis A. Simon, a stylistic traditionalist who later succeeded Wetmore as Supervising Architect - the Treasury's last. At the other end of the spectrum were a number of architects in the avant garde of the private sector. Embracing the tenets of the emerging Art Deco and Moderne styles (and a decade later the International style), these architects designed public buildings relatively unembellished by ornamentation and austere when compared with their classical predecessors. Between the two extremes, architects designed with a wide range of stylistic expression, combining new forms with borrowed revivalist or vernacular forms or motifs or somehow compromising between the classical and modern trends to create what is today termed "starved classicism."

The Tucson Courthouse, one of many in the country designed by the SA's staff, exhibits the synthesis of classical and vernacular elements which distinguishes many of the buildings designed by the staff architects in the 1920s and 1930s. The building was featured in an article by the Assistant Secretary of the

Treasury in the September 1931 Architectural Forum. The construction drawings were completed in March 1929, and bids for construction were solicited in May. The following month the construction contract was awarded to a Texas firm, the Robert E. McKee Company of El Paso. McKee was a large national contractor who had regularly bid on - and won - federal construction projects across the country. On 12 August ground was broken for the building in a formal ceremony; stated the Arizona Daily Star:

> Wielding a long-handled shovel while hundreds of citizens and the representatives of various civic organizations looked on, Mrs. Allie Dickerman, Tucson postmaster, formally started the work on Tucson's half million dollar federal building yesterday noon. . . . John L. Gung'l, U.S. district attorney, spoke in behalf of the federal employees and also paid tribute to the city and the chamber of commerce for their untiring efforts to secure the building. "The federal employees are indebted to the city and to the chamber of commerce for their efforts," Gung'l said, "but there is one man whom I think is entitled to special mention at this time and that is Frank Hitchcock, who by his influence and efforts worked diligently with the high authorities of the government to impress upon them the need of this building. I might say that I am pleased with one thing and that is that this building was not authorized a few years ago, because then we would have only gotten a small two story building. . . ."
>
> While federal, state, county and city officers gathered around, Mrs. Dickerman sunk her shovel into the earth while cameras clicked and the first shovelfull of earth was formally turned and the work which will take five hundred days was underway. The building will be four stories and will house every branch of government services functioning in the city.

Construction commenced soon after the ceremony and continued through the remainder of the year and into 1930. Slated for completion at the end of December, construction of the Courthouse ran far ahead of schedule, and the building was ready for occupancy in September 1930. It was formally introduced to the city in an open house held 19 September, the same day it was opened for business. Again, the Arizona Daily Star:

> With an elaborate floral display, softly glowing lights and all the eclat customary on such occasion, Tucson's new federal building was "officially" introduced to the public last night.
>
> The "spot light" for the evening was centered above the postoffice quarters on the first floor. Here, near the entrance of the rotunda, Postmaster Henry W. Zipf headed the receiving line, flanked by the various employees of the local postal service.

The hundreds attending were escorted through the entire postoffice quarters, in addition to viewing the three upper floors. In addition to the window service, the new quarters provides 1,913 boxes, it was revealed.

The new federal building represented a fulfillment of two decades of requests by federal officials and townspeople in Tucson as it consolidated several government agencies which had before been housed in leased spaces around the city. The building's occupants were described by the Daily Star:

> The general post office is housed on the first floor with space provided for a work room, public lobby, and special room for money orders and registry. Offices are also provided for the post master, superintendent of mails and assistant postmaster.
>
> Back of these rooms is a mailing vestibule and mailing platform where post office trucks can be loaded and unloaded.
>
> The second floor has offices for a number of departments including the horticulture board, agriculture extension, civil service, post office inspector, department of immigration, internal revenue, department of interior, and war department. Two storage rooms and an unassigned office are also included.
>
> These offices are grouped about a large light court which corresponds to the general work room of the post office.
>
> The third floor contains a court room with its grouping of offices, chambers and anterooms. In addition there is space for a library and a grand jury room. The district attorney and the clerk of the court as well as the U.S. marshall have offices here. There is also a file room, a witness room and a special master consultation room.
>
> The fourth floor is not so large as the others because it contains the upper part of the two story court room. It contains, however, the petit jury rooms, two unassigned offices, a commissioner's office, offices of the district attorney's deputies, regional forest and range experiment station and forest supervisor.
>
> The basement is used largely for storage and the boiler room. Storage spaces are partitioned off for the various departments.

The operational history of the building consists essentially of the daily activities of the occupant agencies. The post office and other agency offices have been taken over by courtroom and ancillary spaces; the building today functions strictly as a federal courthouse for the District Court and as the office of the U.S. Marshall. It has undergone little exterior alteration and some less than disasterous interior modification (described more fully in Item 7).

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

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Addendum: Major Bibliographical References

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"Tucson Postoffice in Budget Plans," (Tucson) Arizona Daily Star, 5 December 1929.

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"U.S. Building is Under Way," (Tucson) Arizona Daily Star, 13 August 1929.

"U.S. Building Seen by Tucson," (Tucson) Arizona Daily Star, 20 September 1930.

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Vertical Files. Pima County Assessor, Pima County Courthouse, Tucson Arizona.