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

# National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

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See instructions in How to Complete National Register Forms
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

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### 7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one	
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Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

#### SUMMARY

The Municipal Building of the City of El Dorado was designed in 1927 by Eugene John Stern, an architect important for his contribution to the development of Arkansas architecture. Stern was associated with the firm of Mann & Stern, Architects. The design of this two-story stone and masonry structure successfully combines features typical of the Art Deco style, such as a vertical emphasis and flat wall surfaces with classically-derived ornament. A centrally situated square tower, rising from the building's flat roof, is a dramatic focal point that creates a monumental presence appropriate to its function as the administrative headquarters of El Dorado and is indicative of the city's period of growth and prosperity following the discovery of oil in 1921.

#### ELABORATION

Symmetrical front and end elevations are constructed of dressed limestone and are embellished with Classical details. This is in contrast to the rear elevation which is buff-colored brick with a noticeable absence of ornament. The rear entrance is clearly utilitarian and was not intended for general use. Therefore, it is the front and end elevations, those most visible to the public, that demonstrate the incorporation of Art Deco and Classical Revival elements that distinguish the building.

Consisting of two stories built over a full basement, the building is rectangular in plan with centrally located lobbies and corridors. An office wing projecting on axis from the rear facade has been altered by the addition of an attached sorvation of city jail to its south side and the bricking-in of the second floor windows.

The seven bay front elevation has a three bay central projecting frontispiece with fluted pilasters at each corner and slightly smaller fluted pilasters on either side of the centrally positioned entrance. Windows are eight-over-eight sash of uniform size, with the exception of a larger window directly above the entrance, which has twenty-four lights and a stylized iron railing. Originally, the entrance consisted of double wood and glass doors, above which was located a metal relief depicting two nude male figures bearing cornucopias. These features have since been replaced with modern glass doors and a glass panel upon which "City Hall" is lettered.

The judicious use of ornament on the exterior of the building is limited to the front elevation and tower. Pilasters lack capitals and bases and the architrave is a flat surface adorned only with the incised name of the building between two spheres. Above the fluted pilasters at the corners of the frontispiece are panels of carved limestone depicting two pegasi flanking an urn. The two bays on either side of the central projection have only swags of garland at the cornice as decoration, which continue for several feet from the corner on the north and south end elevations.

The end elevations are less detailed than the front, embellished with only several garland swags at each corner. The functional rear elevation has no ornamentation but does possess a rear entrance as well as a double-doored entrance to the Council Chambers.

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The Municipal Building's centrally situated tower is the most impressive feature of the building. Approximately equaling the height of the building's two-stories, it sits atop the flat roof, thereby counterbalancing the building's otherwise horizontality. At its midpoint, the tower steps in, creating a ledge upon which four urns are positioned at each of the four chamfered corners. Swags of garland relief resembling those found on the frontispiece are the only ornament on the lower portion of the tower. The upper portion has fluted pilasters and a Greek key meander at the cornice. The top of the tower terminates in three steps. Two grille-covered fenestrations on each side of the tower originally illuminated the second floor lobby.

The interior of this building is simply detailed with classical ornament and does not exhibit the same indulgence of the Art Deco as the exterior. Each of the two floors have a central lobby with marble floors, wainscot, piers and pilasters. Walls above the wainscot and ceilings are of smooth plaster. The south wings of both the lower and upper floors house the Council Chambers and Municipal Court Room respectively. Doors between the lobby areas and Court Room and Council Chamber are walnut, as is the wainscot in each.

Pilasters on the first floor have cast Ionic capitals with palmette and egg and dart detailing, while those on the second floor have simple Doric caps. The first floor lobby is dominated by a double stair with bronze railings and a landing directly above the front entrance. Plaster swags of garland at the cornice adorn the second floor lobby. Originally, a skylight beneath the tower provided daylight to the second floor, but the addition of a false dropped ceiling currently covers this feature.

### 8. Significance

Period prehistoric 1400–1499 1500–1599 1600–1699 1700–1799 1800–1899 X 1900–	<b>.</b>	community planning conservation economics education engineering	military music music	religion science sculpture social/ humanitarian theater transportation other (specify)
Specific dates	1927-28	Builder/Architect Man	n & Stern, Architect	s

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

#### SUMMARY

The El Dorado Municipal Building, commonly referred to as the City Hall, is significant for its successful combination of classical and Art Deco features and its representation of the pride and affluence that developed in the El Dorado area resulting from the oil boom of the early 1920's. Responding to the city's rapid growth and affluence, city leaders saw fit to erect a building of modern and elaborate proportions. Though the ornament is classical in derivation, the form of the building reflects the architect's familiarity with Art Deco, a modern and primarily urban style that, with its dramatic setbacks, rhythmic verticality and flat smooth wall surfaces, reflected the evolution of the American skyscraper. Also significant is the city's choice of Eugene John Stern, an accomplished architect responsible for many hotels, office, bank and civic buildings throughout the State of Arkansas. The Municipal Building contributes significantly to the City of El Dorado as a reminder of proud and forward thinking City officials and the citizens who supported the declaration of progress and affluence by allowing such a structure to come into existence.

#### ELABORATION

The first mention of construction of a new City Hall for the City of El Dorado, in the minutes of the City Council of the City, was on October 3, 1925, when the Council passed an ordinance calling for the election for sanction of the issuing bonds to construct a new City Hall. The amount of the issue was \$150,000. There was no further evidence of action on this particular issue until October 14, 1926, when an ordinance was passed that was identical to the previous document of October 3, 1925. Obviously, no action had been taken on the ordinance and, possibly, it had been forgotten. The council did pass an ordinance to repeal the second ordinance and then ordered that another be presented in the amount of \$150,000 and it was presented at the November 18, 1926 Council Meeting and defeated. Then on November 24, 1926, the Council again considered and passed an ordinance calling for an election for the sanction of the issuance of bonds in the amount of \$125,000.

The City Council, on June 30, 1927, officially hired the firm of Mann and Stern as architects to design and supervise the construction of the Municipal Building. Also, order for bids for construction was issued. The bids were opened on July 25, 1927, at 1:30 p.m. Bids were in amounts from \$129,300 to \$150,000. The City Council ordered the architect to submit revisions to the bidders which was done and William Peterson was selected with a bid of \$125,000. Construction began on the project shortly thereafter and the building was officially dedicated on February 17, 1928, at 8:00 p.m. The dedicatory plaque in the lobby lists Eugene John Stern as architect.

### 9. Major Bibliographical References

Minutes of the City Council: 1925, 1927, and 1928.

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

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Item number 8

Page 1

The Municipal Building exemplifies one of the outstanding creative design variations of public buildings developed by the Mann and Stern firm.

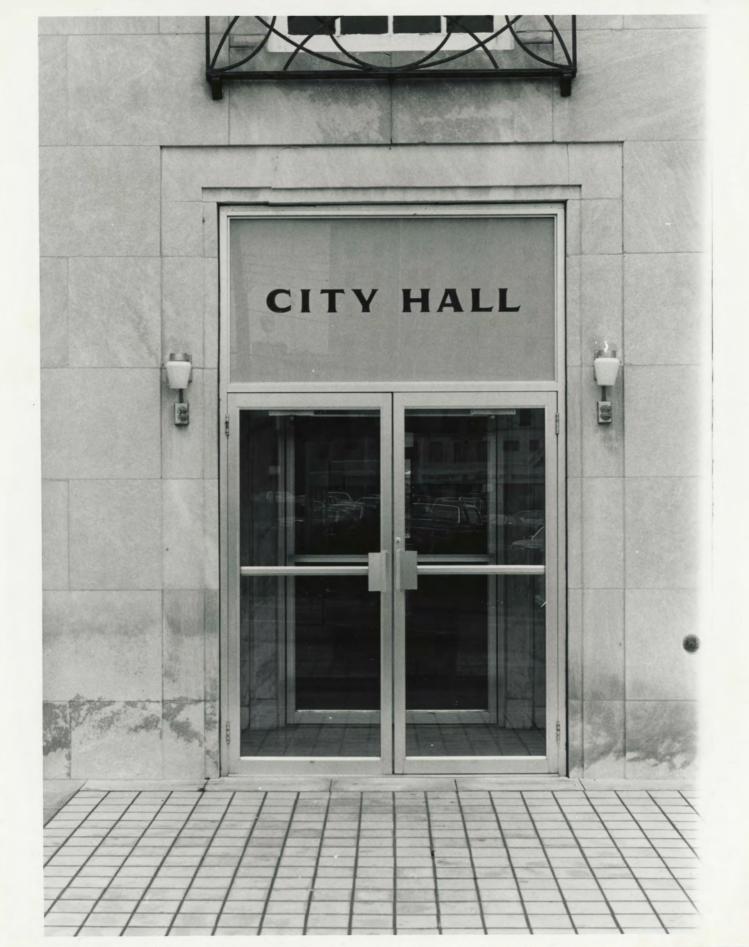
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Municipal Building - City of El Dorado El Dorado, Union County Photographed by Alice Jones February 1983 Negative on file at AHPP Viewed from the East



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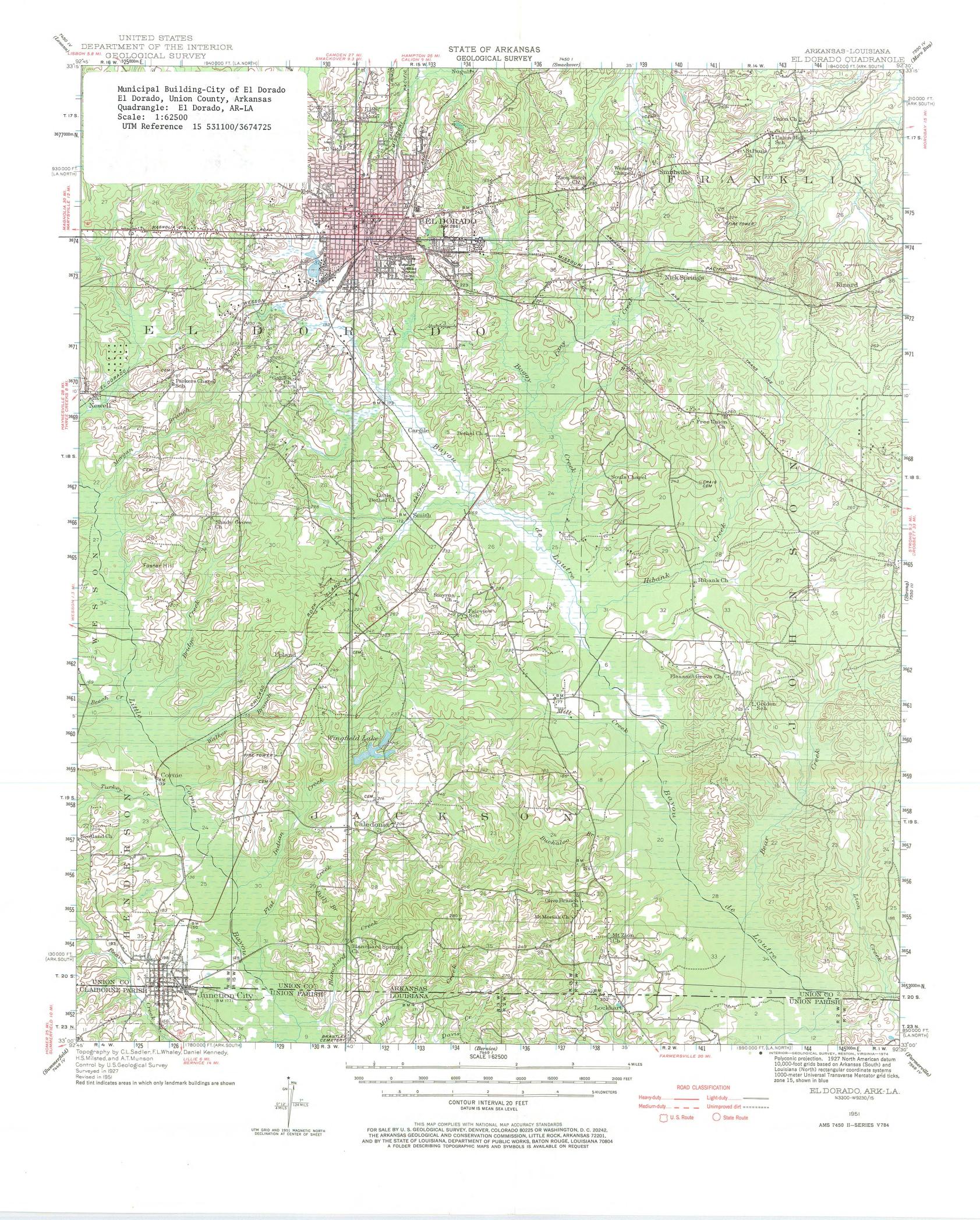
Municipal Building - City of El Dorado El Dorado, Union County Photographed by Alice Jones February 1983 Negative on file at AHPP Viewed from the Southwest



Municipal Building - City of El Dorado El Dorado, Union County Photographed by Alice Jones February 1983 Negative on file at AHPP Interior



Municipal Building - City of El Dorado El Dorado, Union County Photographed by Alice Jones February 1983 Negative on file at AHPP Interior





#### ARKANSAS HISTORIC PRESERVATION PROGRAM

May 13, 1983

Carol D. Shull
Chief of Registration
United States Department of the Interior
National Register of Historic Places
National Park Service
1100 "L" Street, N. W.
Washington, D. C. 20240

Re: Municipal Building - City of El Dorado El Dorado, AR, Union County

Dear Carol:

We are enclosing for your review the nomination for the Municipal Building - City of El Dorado. The Arkansas Historic Preservation Program has complied with all applicable nominating procedures and notification requirements in the nomination process.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter.

Sincerely,

Wilson Stiles

State Historic Preservation Officer

WS/AJ/ss

Enclosure/s

