United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

APR 03 1989

NATIONAL
REGISTER

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name	Old Albuquerque Municipal Airport Building
other names/site number	William Cutter Memorial Building

2. Location

street & number	2920 Yale Blvd. SE	N/A	not for publication
city, town	Albuquerque	N/A	vicinity
state	New Mexico code NM	county Bernalillo code 001	zip code 87106

3. Classification

Ownership of Property
- [ ] private
- [x] public-local
- [ ] public-State
- [ ] public-Federal

Category of Property
- [x] building(s)
- [ ] district
- [ ] site
- [ ] structure
- [ ] object

Number of Resources within Property

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

Name of related multiple property listing;
N/A

Number of contributing resources previously
listed in the National Register ___0___

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this [x] nomination [ ] request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property [x] meets [ ] does not meet the National Register criteria. [ ] See continuation sheet.

Signature of certifying official	Date 3-30-89

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property [ ] meets [ ] does not meet the National Register criteria. [ ] See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official	Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:
- [x] 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:) _____

Entered in the
National Register 5/5/89

_____ Signature of the Keeper

_____ Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Transportation/airport

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Social/civic

Government/customs office

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(enter categories from instructions)

LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS

Pueblo

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation ___Concrete___

walls ___Stucco over adobe___

roof ___Asphalt___

other ___Wooden porch___

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The 1939 Old Albuquerque Municipal Airport Building, now occupied in part by the Albuquerque Junior League and the United States Customs Department, is a flat-roofed, two-story building with terraced massing in the Pueblo Revival Style. Located two hundred yards west of the current Albuquerque International Airport Building on city property, it adapts a regional style popular in many local public buildings to an emerging building type, a modern airport serving the needs of the growing transcontinental commercial airlines industry. Designed by City Architect, Ernst H. Blumenthal, and built as a labor-intensive project by the Works Progress Administration (WPA), using adobe bricks and other local materials, the building projected an image of the Southwest. Its two frontal facades, the observation and air control tower integrated into its terraced massing, and the lobby and other interior spaces conveyed a romantic regional flavor and ambience yet were praised as serving the needs of the modern air traveller.

Culminating a ten year campaign to fund and build a municipal airport that would enable Albuquerque to fulfill its boosters' vision of it as the "Crossroad of the Southwest," the building was funded by the WPA in 1938. The federal government provided $705,000, mainly for labor to construct runways, a hangar, and the airport building, while the city furnished about $175,000 in materials. Since WPA projects characteristically were labor intensive and sought to stretch workers' hours, the airport building was designed to put and to keep craftsmen at work. Stabilized adobe bricks were made on the construction site and covered the reinforced concrete frame. Vigas and other wood elements were cut in the Jemez Mountains and then milled or hand-carved on site. The flagstone used on most of the building's interior floors and for porch floors was cut and brought from the nearby mountains.

[x] See continuation sheet

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With its earthen-colored stucco and its irregularly-massed facade and stepped planes broken by a battered observation tower and a chimney, the building embodies many of the characteristics associated with the Pueblo Revival Style. Projecting vigas, a stepped parapet, and picturesquely-placed heavy wooden ladders reinforce this image as do the milled wood ornaments which cover the muntins of the slightly recessed metal casement windows. The porches employ heavy wood posts with corbel bracket "capitals." The porch facing the parking area is recessed and is reached by six wide flagstone steps. Paralleling the building and facing the airfield and runways to the south is a porch-like portal corridor used by air passengers. Its roof is supported by heavy wood posts with corbel bracket "capitals," and its rails consist of rough-hewn posts.

Consisting of 12,000 square feet, the original building was described as including "a dining room, kitchen, Weather Bureau quarters, post office, Civil Aviation Authority office, TWA division superintendent's office, two radio rooms, division manager's office, rest room, ticket office, pilots' room, hostess' room, curio shop, writing rooms, cold storage facilities and eight basement rooms." (Albuquerque Tribune, August 26, 1939) In addition, a promenade deck on the roof and a portal corridor to the east permitted spectators to watch planes taking off and landing. Access to the two-story observation tower was gained by walking across the roof. The furnace, boiler and electrical apparatus are housed in an eight room basement.

Although Pueblo style elements such as wood screens are found on the office doors in the building's private and administrative wings, the building's focal point is the large lobby. With its high ceilings and sturdy support posts and much southwestern ornamentation, it is an impressive space. The ceilings consist of herringbone latias over rounded vigas which rest on concrete beams boxed with wood for an historic appearance. Six large pillars of wood over concrete and each with corbel brackets support the square vigas. All of the wood, as well as the vigas in the adjoining restaurant, is hand-hewn or carved in southwestern designs. Pilasters and slightly recessed bays mark lobby walls which consist of roughened stucco above a dark-varnished tongue-and-groove wainscoating. The floor consists of large pieces of roughly cut flagstone.

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Ornamentation in the lobby reinforces the space's regional theme. A large southwestern fireplace with a nicho above is located in one corner. Wood screens and hand-woven rugs fill several of the upper bays as well as punctuate exits from the lobby. Three ornately-rendered tin-work chandeliers hang from the vigas, and heavy wood beams mark the baggage handling alcoves. Although some ornaments have been removed over the years, many of the pieces of heavy, handcrafted wood and leather furniture remain, conveying a clear feeling of how the space appeared during its tenure as an airport lobby.

Expansions and modifications have occurred since 1939. A portion of the second story included in the original plans was not completed until 1941-42. A food service wing, now occupied by the United States Customs Department, was added to the west side in 1945-46 and slightly modified some fifteen years later, and the lobby and baggage handling areas were enlarged in 1952-53. The middle portion of the passenger/spectator portal corridor of the runway side was enclosed in the early 1960s. Using Pueblo Revival detailing consistent with the original building, these alterations do not substantially alter the appearance of the original building, especially as it is viewed by the public from its north facade. Nor do they intrude into the historic and regional feeling that the lobby conveys.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

☐ nationally   ☐ statewide   ☒ locally

Applicable National Register Criteria   ☒ A   ☐ B   ☒ C   ☐ D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions)   ☐ A   ☐ B   ☐ C   ☐ D   ☐ E   ☐ F   ☐ G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)	Period of Significance	Significant Dates
Transportation	1939	1939
Commerce	1937-1939	1937-1939
Architecture	1939	1939
Politics/Government		

Cultural Affiliation
N/A

Significant Person
N/A

Architect/Builder
Blumenthal, Ernst H.
City of Albuquerque

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The Old Albuquerque Airport Building is significant under Criterion A, for Transportation and Commerce and Criterion C, for Architecture. Completion of the building in 1939 marked a major step in the development of modern airports serving day and night transcontinental air passenger transportation. At the same time, the building recalls the cooperation between the federal government and the City of Albuquerque and its boosters so vital to Albuquerque's commercial growth during the New Deal. Architecturally, the building is distinctive as the only major airport building in the nation constructed in the Pueblo Revival Style. Since the opening of the new municipal airport building in 1965, the Old Airport has served as the location of the Albuquerque Museum (1968-1979) and is now the home of the Albuquerque Junior League whose members are seeking to preserve it.

☒ See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

[x] See continuation sheet

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
- [x] Local government
- [ ] University
- [ ] Other

Specify repository:
  City of Albuquerque Planning Dept.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property ____ Less than one acre ____

UTM References

A [1,5] [3,5,2,1,0,0] [3,8,7,9,3,6,0]
  Zone Easting Northing

B [__] [__,__,__] [__,__,__]
  Zone Easting Northing

C [__] [__,__,__] [__,__,__]

D [__] [__,__,__] [__,__,__]

[ ] See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The property is described as Parcel 3 of the Southwest Quarter (SW1/4) of Section Thirty-Four (34) in Township Ten (10) North, Range Three (3) East of the New Mexico Principal Meridian in New Mexico.

[ ] See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes twenty feet from the perimeter on all extentions of the building including the steps.

[ ] See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title ____ David J. Kammer, Ph.D., Historian ____
organization ____ Private consultant ____   date ____ Feb. 8, 1989 ____
street & number ____ 521 Aliso Dr. NE ____   telephone ____ (505) 266-0586 ____
city or town ____ Albuquerque ____   state ____ NM ____ zip code ____ 87108 ____

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In 1937 the city agreed with TWA to seek federal funds to construct a municipal airport. Under the terms of the agreement TWA sold land to the city, and the city, in turn, granted TWA a fifteen year franchise to operate the airport and sought WPA funding to construct the complex. This agreement marked a victory for the city's leaders and boosters. Over the previous ten years the City Commission, the Chamber of Commerce, and other civic organizations had formed a series of "airport committees" which had conducted "aggressive lobbying efforts" (Biebel) to secure a federally-funded airport. At the heart of their thinking was a belief that the city was destined to become the "air crossroads of the Southwest." They believed that not only would a federally-funded project create jobs but that the myriad of services connected with the emergence of the modern airline industry would spur the city's economy and growth.

Underlying such thinking was an awareness that the modern airport would entail a much broader economic scope than the earlier generation of airplane depots. The newly created federal regulatory agency, the Bureau of Air Commerce (now the FAA) would require office space, as would the Weather Bureau, the post office, and the radio-equipped Route Traffic Control Center, which would be responsible for all commercial flights from Needles, California to Gage, Oklahoma, and from Trinidad, Colorado to Engle, New Mexico. In addition, TWA and the other airlines with whom it would share the airport needed space for administration, sales and ground services, as well as the plane crews. Passengers and spectators--the latter a significant factor in an era in which the novelty of flight had not yet vanished-- would also require services ranging from baggage handling to dining and shopping. In effect, the modern airport building of the late 1930s anticipated the small self-contained city that would emerge in post-World War airports.

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The building also stands as a significant reminder both of the active role that New Deal reform measures played locally in getting people back to work and of the visionary scope that civic leaders gave to the public projects they proposed. Although Albuquerque had suffered through many of the economic hardships that the rest of the country had faced in the early years of the Depression, by the late 1930s the city was well on the way to recovery. Clyde Tingley, the former chairman of the City Commission and then Governor of New Mexico, enjoyed a cordial relationship with President Franklin Roosevelt and succeeded in bringing much federal assistance into the state. Many of these federal monies were designated for projects in Albuquerque, including new buildings at the University of New Mexico, the development of a state fairgrounds, the construction of schools, libraries and other civic buildings, and road and sewage improvements. The project receiving the single greatest funding, however, was the airport, which between its initial funding in 1936 and its completion in 1939 received $864,000.(Biebel) With over a half million dollars of the budget paying workers for over "7,500 man months" and employing an "average of 350 men a month," the project provided a major stimulus to the local economy. As such, the building recalls the important role the federal government has played in the growth of the city.

Closely connected to the significance of the Old Airport Building as a WPA project stimulating the local economy and anticipating the city's service-oriented commerce is its architectural significance. The building stands not only as one of the finest examples of the adaptation of the Pueblo Revival Style to large public buildings, but also as the only WPA-funded airport using that style.

With its use of materials such as handmade adobes and hand-crafted wood vigas, the Pueblo Revival Style was necessarily a labor-intensive building style. Although the style had appeared shortly after the turn of the century in a heavily stylized and highly picturesque manner, it was not until the 1930s that architects began to restrain its more ornamental features and to adapt it to large public buildings, emphasizing the sculptural qualities of massive adobe, as in the case of John Gaw Meem's administration and library buildings at the University of New Mexico. The intensive labor that the style demanded as well as its evocation of regionalism, also important in New Deal thinking, enabled it to flourish in the New Deal era.

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Within this context, Ernst H. Blumenthal, Albuquerque's City
Architect, was able to design a building that at once reflected a
popular local building style yet met the needs of the modernizing
transportation industry. Having travelled extensively, examining
many of the new commercial airports in the eastern part of the
country, he was aware of the range of features necessary for
airports serving day and night transcontinental passenger
flights.(Blumenthal Jr.) Not only did airports need to provide
weather and air control services; they also needed to provide
administrative spaces for airlines and federal agencies as well
as passenger amenities such as waiting rooms, restaurants, and
restrooms. In addition, much like railroad depots in small
cities that did not have track-side, covered train sheds, they
needed to present two frontal facades, one for those arriving by
air and another for passengers and spectators arriving by car.
Blumenthal sought to meet the requirements of this new building
type while at the same time to embrace the Pueblo Revival Style
which he so valued for its distinctive local flavor.

Having designed the Monte Vista Fire Station, a PWA project,
in 1935 using the Pueblo Revival Style, he was already familiar
with ways in which a traditional building style might be adapted
to larger, more complex modern building types. For the airport
he used a reinforced concrete skeleton--standard in large
buildings of that day--but then added an adobe block infill and
buttresses, slightly battered towers, projecting viga ends, and a
generously ornamented lobby to convey the central elements of the
style. With the stepped terracing, the irregular massing of the
facade and the towers, the building represents a more picturesque
interpretation of the style than the more massive contemporary
work of John Meem. Even with the additions that have altered the
building's configuration, it continues to convey its picturesque
Pueblo Revival Style qualities.

While there were many WPA-funded airports, few have survived
intact.(Greif) The Old Albuquerque Airport building is unique in
that it is the only WPA airport built of adobe and using the
Pueblo Revival Style. In the years following the opening of the
new city airport, the City of Albuquerque designated the building
as an official City Landmark and the building served as the home
of the city museum, a move praised by Martin Greif, a leading
authority on airport architecture, as one of two such efforts in
the nation to preserve an "original airport."(Greif) The City
of Albuquerque and one of its current tenants, the Albuquerque
Junior League, are both committed to preserving this landmark.

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Old Albuquerque Municipal Airport Building--BIBLIOGRAPHY

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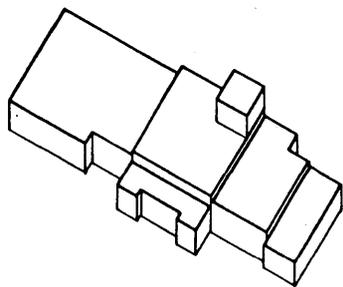
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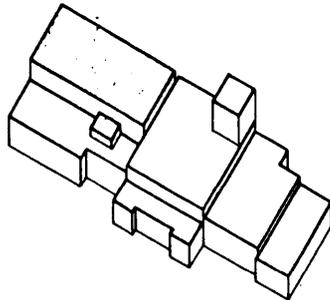
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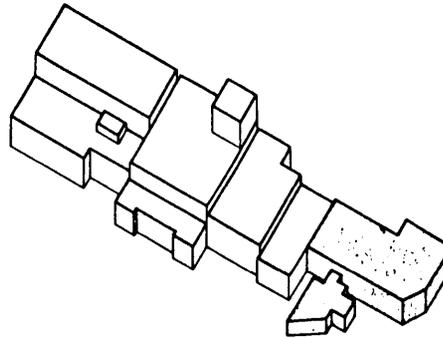
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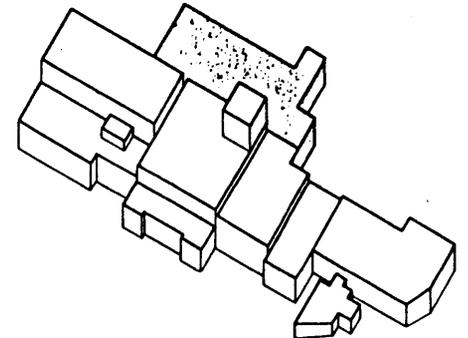
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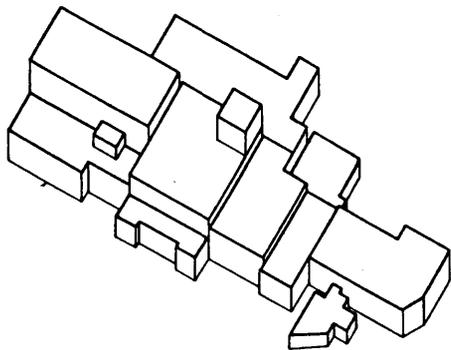
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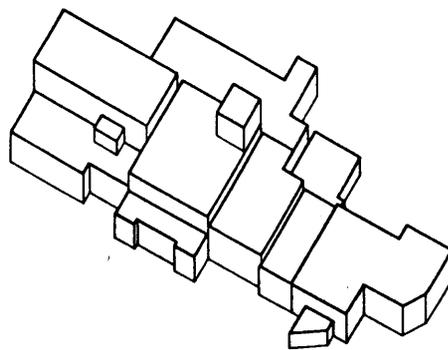
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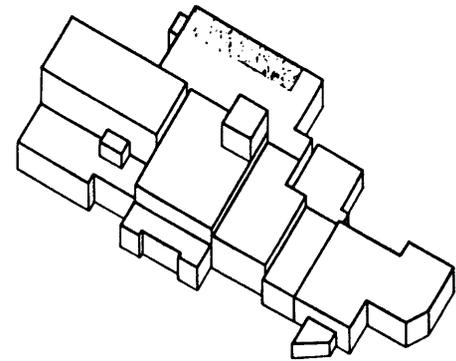
1970

A RENOVATION PROJECT
THE OLD ALBUQUERQUE MUNICIPAL
AIRPORT BUILDING

BUILDING HISTORY

RICHARD BRAUN
MASTERS OF ARCHITECTURE
UNIVERSITY OF NEW MEXICO
OCTOBER 1978

SHEET
NO 2

BAGGAGE HANDLING

JR. LEAGUE
OF
ALBUQUERQUE

AREA 'A'
4,800 sq. ft

AREA
'B'
349 s.f.

FOOD SERVICE

UP

WOMEN

MEN

(Use & Maint. only)

UP

BAGGAGE HANDLING
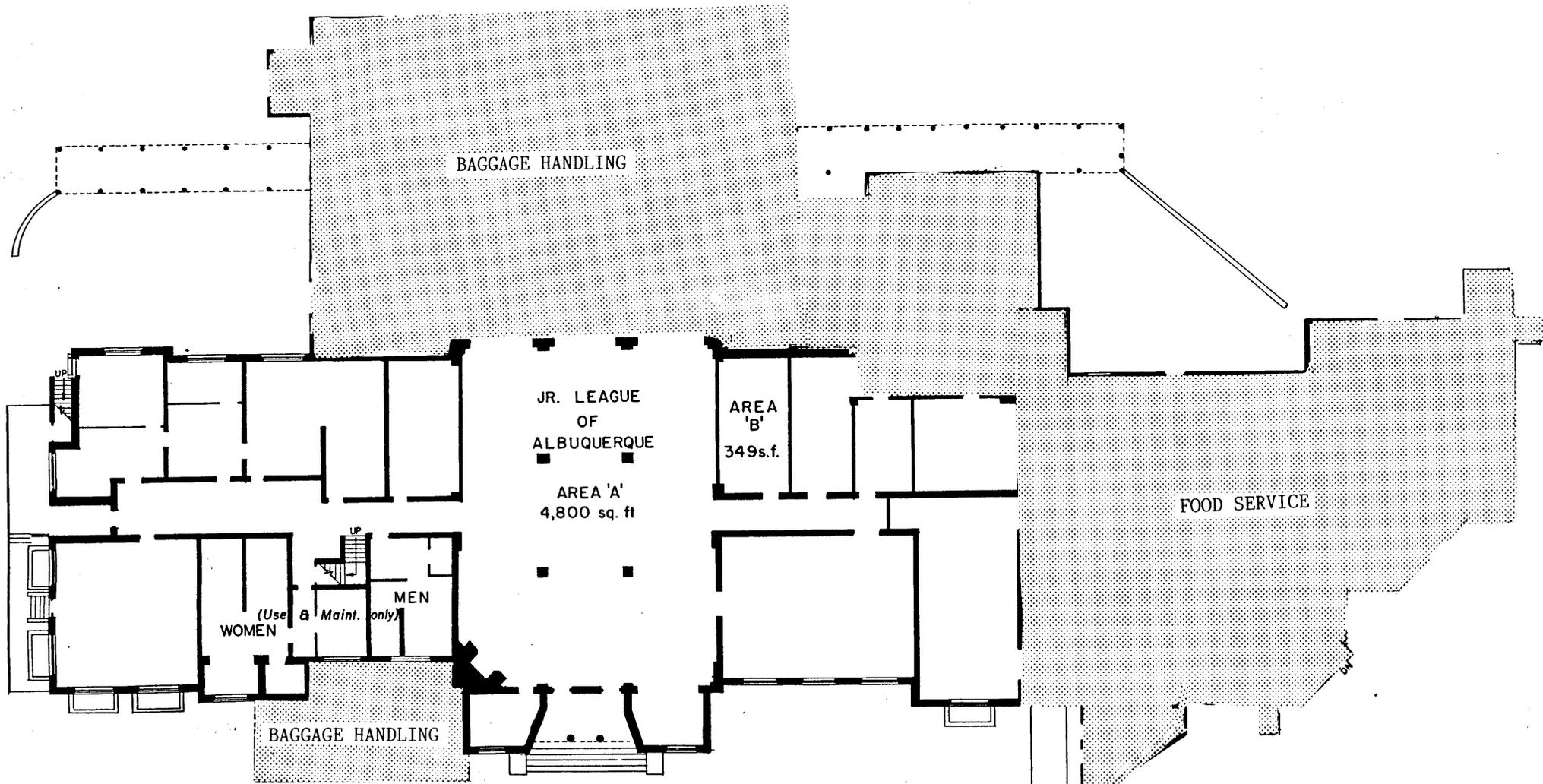
FIRST LEVEL

DENOTES ADDITIONS
TO BUILDING

REVISIONS: JULY, 1984

N

OLD TERMINAL BLDG.

Scale: 1/16" = 1'- 0"   AUGUST, 1983   T.L.SMITH