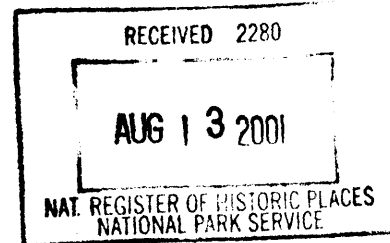


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service



1054

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determination for individual properties and districts. See instruction 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 Leeman Auto Company Building
other names/site number Apple Plumbing & Heating; Broadway Central; 5DV6140

2. Location

street & number 550 Broadway [N/A] not for publication
city or town Denver [N/A] vicinity
state Colorado code CO county Denver code 031 zip code 80203

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 [].)

Guerrero Contreras State Historic Preservation Officer July 19, 2001
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State Historic Preservation Office, Colorado Historical Society
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
See continuation sheet [].

Signature of the Keeper _____ Date 9/27/01

Leeman Auto Company Building
Name of Property

Denver CO
County/State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

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

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not count previously listed resources.)

Contributing

Noncontributing

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

Name of related multiple property listing.

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

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register.

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Function

(Enter categories from instructions)

Specialty Store

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Specialty Store
Restaurant

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Modern Movement/Art Deco

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation concrete
walls brick
concrete
roof synthetic
other terra cotta

Narrative Description

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

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National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

**Leeman Auto Company Building
Denver, CO**

Section number 7 Page 1

DESCRIPTION

The 1932-1934 Leeman Auto Company Building is a one-story, brick and terra cotta, Art Deco-style building. Constructed as an automobile showroom, maintenance facility and office, it is located on the southeast corner of E. 6th Avenue and Broadway. It has an L-shaped plan. The original 1932 building covers four city lots, from sidewalk to alley. The 1934 addition fills the east half of the site's three corner lots, with an entry ramp to the basement of the 1932 building running along the east elevation. The verticality of its Art Deco style is expressed mainly in the high corner parapets, the evenly spaced terra cotta panels on the facade and north elevations, and in the decorative use of a contrasting russet-colored brick against a background of a lighter-hued brick. The bricks are not uniform in color, but display variations in the depth of their hues.

The building sits at the intersection of two high-traffic, main arterial city streets. The building is one block west of Cherry Creek and Speer Boulevard, part of the Denver Park and Parkway System listed on the National Register of Historic Places and a locally designated landmark district. Two blocks southwest is the northeast corner of the Baker/South Side Historic District, also listed on the National Register of Historic Places and recently designated a Denver landmark district.

The Setting of the Leeman Auto Company Building

The site is on the southeast corner of E. 6th Avenue and Broadway. The site is on a block set in a north-south grid one block west of Cherry Creek. Cherry Creek travels in a northwest direction to meet the South Platte River in downtown Denver, two miles to the northwest. Broadway was one of the earliest roads into Denver and has remained a main transportation route throughout Denver's history. North of Cherry Creek, it was laid out in the 1860s. In 1871 it was extended south of Cherry Creek in front of the Leeman Auto Company site. The Leeman site is located in the East Broadway Terrace Addition, which was platted in 1875. The Leeman Auto Company Building is the second building on the site. The first was a multi-family building that was demolished in 1915.

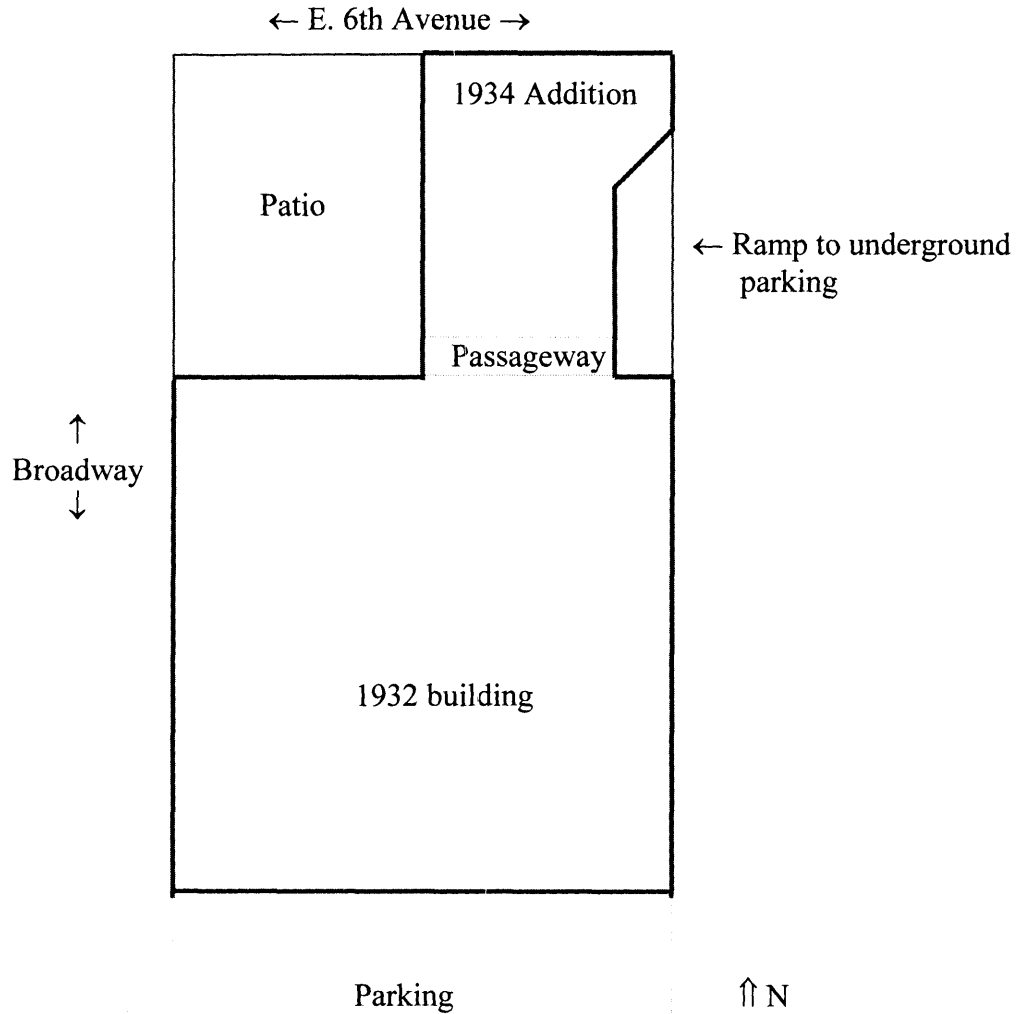
The Leeman Auto Company Building is in scale with neighboring buildings on Broadway. The remaining intersection corners contain a fast food chain outlet, a parking lot, and the third is currently under redevelopment. Adjacent on the south is an automobile repair shop with parking in front and to the south. Across the street are buildings that were originally part of the automobile sales and service industry.

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Continuation Sheet**

**Leeman Auto Company Building
Denver, CO**

Section number 7 Page 2



Sketch of Leeman Auto Company Building and Site
Source: Nancy L. Widmann

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Leeman Auto Company Building
Denver, CO

Section number 7 Page 3

Description of the Exterior of the Leeman Auto Company Building

The 1932 facade (west or Broadway elevation) has three bays - a long central bay composed of storefront windows flanked by short bays containing retail entries. (See Photo #2.) A narrow band of smooth-faced terra cotta is at the base. The background brick of the facade and north elevations of the building is a hard brick, baked in forms where bent wire was laid flat before the clay pour. The bricks exhibit a textured, precision finish. (See Photo #7.) The background brick is variegated in color, from blond to medium brown. The accent brick is russet-colored. The brick covers common bond concrete block walls.

The northern- and southern-most facade bays of the 1932 building each have one centered entry door. (See Photo #5.) The doors have smooth-faced terra cotta surrounds, which in turn have surrounds of russet-colored brick. A new handicap access ramp with iron railings extends along the central bay from the north door. Above each entry is a rectangular, terra cotta panel set into the running bond background brick. Russet brick courses step up to a point from both sides of the bays starting at the height of the terra cotta panels. (See Photo #6.) The stepped lines formed by the courses of contrasting russet brick meet at a point several feet above the panels. Rising out of the stepped lines is a pilaster centered in each side bay. Each pilaster is outlined in contrasting brick and is in relief. The adjacent brick courses step back to form three receding sections, each capped with a course of contrasting brick. The central pilasters of the bays are capped by a repeat of the stepped-up russet brick. The two side bays form tall parapets that are braced to the roof. Three blue, diamond-shaped plates decorate the pilasters where the braces are connected to the parapets.

The central facade bay of the 1932 building has wood-framed, plate glass across its entire width. (See Photo #3.) Wood-framed glass transoms are above each glass panel. Above the transoms, contrasting brick forms a double brick band that meets the side bays at the point where the contrasting brick begins its jagged-ascent (obscured by awnings in Photo #2). A later narrow green canvas awning spans the width of the central bay above the transoms. The curving roofline follows the barrel roof shape while rising above it. It is capped with a band of contrasting brick. A finial rises from its highest point. T-shaped, foliated, terra cotta panels are located approximately five feet from the ends of the central bay and approximately five feet above the transoms. (See Photos #2 and #8.) Between the t-shaped panels is a rectangle outlined by contrasting brick. Signage is within the rectangle.

The north elevation of the original section of the building has three bays, separated by three-quarter height buttresses of contrasting brick with sloped rowlock coping. (See Photo #9) Near the top of the pilasters are t-shaped panels similar to those on the facade's central bay. (See Photo #11.) The central bay has a double-door entry with surrounds of terra cotta and contrasting brick. The west bay wall rises

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Leeman Auto Company Building
Denver, CO

Section number 7 Page 4

into another stepped parapet, half as tall, but wider than the facade's side bay parapets. The west bay's window has a later green canvas awning above it. (See Photos #12 and 13.) The east bay holds a service door and multi-light window. (See Photo #18.)

The facade [the west elevation] of the 1934 addition repeats the pilaster design of the north elevation described in the previous paragraph. (See Photo #15.) There are five buttresses separating six bays. Two bays have restaurant entrances. (See Photo #16.) Three bays, the north and central two, have large, metal-framed, multi-light windows. The south bay accommodates an entry to a passageway from the west elevation to the east elevation. (See Photos #17 and 18.) The brick wall of the 1934 facade concludes in a parapet capped by contrasting brick rowlock. The parapet is straight except for crenels over each of the five pilasters. (See Photo #15.)

A passageway close to the junction of the original building and the addition offers pedestrians access to the vacated alley and parking area on the east and to the patio on the west. It also offers access to entry doors for shops on either side. (See Photos #19 and #21.) The passageway ceiling is the original, high, barrel-shaped wood ceiling. (See Photo #22.)

The north elevation of the 1934 addition faces E. 6th Avenue. (See Photo #23.) The terra cotta band continues around the base of the building where it forms a water table with contrasting brick below and a band of five courses of contrasting brick above. The brick courses below the terra cotta band increase in number from west to east to accommodate the downward slope of the land. (See Photo #24.) A large, four-light, metal-framed window is centered on the north elevation. Terra cotta outlines this window above and on two sides. The window sill is at the height of and interrupts the north elevation's terra cotta band. Flanking the central window on each side are two multi-light windows separated by contrasting brick buttresses with t-shaped, terra cotta panels as described above. Two evenly spaced, t-shaped terra cotta panels are also on the brick wall between the buttresses. The wall rises into a parapet, rounded to follow the lines of the barrel-shaped roof. The parapet is capped by contrasting brick. A finial rises from its highest point.

The east elevation runs along the vacated alley. (See Photos #25 and #26.) The northern portion is made of the decorative bricks and terra cotta of the facade; the remaining expanse is common brick. The northern half of the east elevation has five multi-light, metal-framed windows. The east elevation is along the vacated alley line from E. 6th Avenue to about one-fifth its distance where it angles toward the southwest to accommodate a ramp for basement access by vehicles. (See Photos #27, #28, and #29.) The east elevation then continues parallel to the vacated alley line until meeting the north elevation of the original 1932 building. This is just beyond the east entry to the passageway. A later green canvas

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**Leeman Auto Company Building
Denver, CO**

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awning is above the passageway entry. A stairway flanked by iron railings rises from the parking lot to the passageway entry. (See Photo #30.)

The southern half of the east elevation has a stepped-up brick parapet that rises above the barrel-shaped roof. (See Photo #31.) It is the rear elevation of the 1932 building. Fenestration on the southern half of the east elevation includes one service door, one loading door, and 18 metal-framed, multi-light windows. (See Photos #33 and #34.) A handicap access ramp is located on this half of the east elevation. (See Photos #34 and #35.)

The south elevation has six bays separated by five stucco buttresses painted with textured paint and capped with brick. (See Photo #37.) Only the western bay is of the decorative facade brick with the remaining bays in common brick. The western bay repeats the western bay of the north elevation of the original 1932 building. (See Photo #38.) The bay adjacent to the western bay has metal-framed glass entry doors. The next two bays have metal-framed, multi-light windows. (See Photo #39.) The next bay has a garage door. The sixth and easternmost bay has no doors or windows. A half-wall extends from the sixth bay creating a small enclosure. (See Photos #40 and #41.) The roofline is level above the second through sixth bays. Green canvas awnings are over the windows and doors in the first four bays.

The roof of the 1932 building is barrel-shaped. The roof of the 1934 addition is also barrel-shaped. The "barrels" are set at right angles to each other. The roof is of single membrane material. Combination heating/cooling units are on the roof.

The Interior

The interior of the Leeman Auto Company Building now provides retail and restaurant space for four businesses. The 1932 building houses a fish market and restaurant combination and a car-related retail outlet. They are accessed from the patio, the passageway, and south elevation entries. Two restaurants are located in the 1934 addition with access from the patio. One also has access from the passageway. The original barrel-shaped ceilings of wood are exposed. Its purlins and other supporting metal trusses and original skylights are also in view from three of the interior spaces. The fourth interior, the southernmost retail space, has a dropped ceiling of acoustical tile.

A stairwell in the southeast corner leads down to the 1932 building's full basement. This was the original stairwell. A second stairwell was added during the 1999-2000 rehabilitation. The second stairwell is accessed by the service door in the east bay of the 1932 building's north elevation. The basement has concrete floors, support columns, and concrete block foundation walls. The ramp from the

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**Leeman Auto Company Building
Denver, CO**

Section number 7 Page 6

vacated alley drive allows the entry of vehicles to this large space through a door set into the east end of the north basement wall. There is no basement beneath the 1934 addition.

1999-2000 Rehabilitation

The 1999-2000 rehabilitation was approved by the United States Park Service for Federal Tax Credit eligibility. Following are the changes approved for the rehabilitation:

- Replaced glass in central bay of the 1932 building, where necessary, with historically accurate, wood-framed glass. (See Photo #3.)
- Replaced windows, where necessary due to damage, on remaining elevations with historically accurate metal-framed windows.
- Replicated service doors in side bays of 1932 facade. (See Photos #2 and #5.)
- Created a pedestrian passageway from west elevation through to east elevation. Opening replaced and is the same width as original window in southernmost bay of west elevation of the 1934 addition. Fabricated and installed passageway doors and hardware to match existing doors. (See Photos #17 and #18.)
- Replaced each garage door in two bays of west elevation of 1934 addition with metal-framed glass doors for access to new restaurants. (See Photos #16 and #17.)
- Replaced one window with a loading door on east elevation of 1932 building. (See Photos #33 and #34.)
- Applied textured paint to pilasters on south elevation. These pilasters were previously coated with stucco. (See Photo #37.)
- Demolished small concrete block addition to south elevation (constructed after the Period of Significance, 1932-1951) and restored wall where addition was joined to historic structure. (See Photo #37.)
- Removed dropped ceilings not original to building, exposing the barrel-shaped wood ceiling of original building. Original purlins and other supporting metal trusses and skylights were exposed. Refinished ceiling wood. (One retail space, the southernmost space, required a new acoustical tile dropped ceiling.)
- Removed evaporative cooler from roof and installed combination heating/cooling units.
- Installed green canvas awnings above west and south elevation windows and entries (except not over side bay entries on west elevation of 1932 building), above one north elevation window (1932 building) and above passageway entry on east elevation.

Leeman Auto Company Building
Name of Property

Denver CO
County/State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

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.

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

9. Major Bibliographic 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
- # _____

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE
COMMERCE

Periods of Significance

1932-1958

Significant Dates

N/A

Significant Person(s)

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Ervin, Raymond Harry
Smythe, W.R.
Anderson, Frank B.

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State Agency
- Federal Agency
- Local Government
- University
- Other:

Name of repository:

Colorado History Museum

Leeman Auto Company Building
Name of Property

Denver CO
County/State

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of Property less than 1 acre

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1. 13 501160 4397060
Zone Easting Northing

3. Zone Easting Northing

2. Zone Easting Northing

4. Zone Easting Northing

[] See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Nancy L. Widmann / Consultant

organization N/A

date 23 February 2001

street & number 703 Ash Street

telephone 303-322-6942

city or town Denver

state CO

zip code 80220

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

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

name Richard R. Landon

street & number 215 St. Paul Street, Suite 201

telephone 303-394-3300

city or town Denver

state CO

zip code 80206

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127, and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503

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**Leeman Auto Company Building
Denver, CO**

Section number 8 Page 7

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Leeman Auto Company Building is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A in the area of Commerce. The Period of Significance is 1932 through 1958. The building was constructed in 1932; a large addition was constructed in 1934. The building is associated with the development of the automobile sales and service industry on Broadway, a main Denver thoroughfare since the 1800s. During the Period of Significance, over eighty percent of the businesses in this block and nearby Broadway blocks were associated with the automobile industry. By the 1940s, Leeman Auto Company was one of the largest automobile dealers in the Rocky Mountain region. Harry B. Leeman (1899- ?) was the owner of the Leeman Auto Company Building. He began as an automobile repairman and developed his own used car business having this building created as a showroom for new DeSotos and Plymouths. Leeman was one of two automobile dealers who financed half of Denver's automobile loans before post-World War II. He organized the Leeman Industrial Bank, and located it near the Leeman Auto Company Building. Leeman served as president of the Denver Automobile Dealers' Association during the World War II years when the association was credited with supporting the war effort.

The 1958 ending date for the Period of Significance extends slightly into a less-than-fifty-year-old period. The ending date is important to the history of the property as this is the date when Harry Leeman sold the automobile dealership to concentrate on his associated banking business. The property meets the requirements of Criteria Consideration G.

The Leeman Auto Company Building is also eligible under Criterion C for its architectural significance. It is an expression of the Modern Movement, designed in Art Deco style. The style was selected to impress prospective buyers with state-of-the-art showroom design for new automobiles. The building is also associated with architect Raymond Harry Ervin (1900-1969). Ervin probably designed the 1932 building, and is documented as the architect for the large 1934 addition. The body of work documented to Ervin in Denver includes the 23-story Denver Club Building (1950s), 518 17th St.; the 28-story First National Bank Building (Murchison Towers) (1958), 621 17th St.; "Shangri-La" (1937), a residence for theater mogul Harry E. Huffman at 150 Bellaire St.; George Washington High School; Roscoe C. Hill Middle School (1955); and other school, commercial, and residential buildings.

Broadway's Automobile Trade and Harry B. Leeman's Automobile Enterprises

The Leeman Auto Company Building is associated with the development of the automobile sales and service industry on Broadway. It was one of several buildings on Broadway used by new and used car dealers in the early 1930s. Although there were a couple automobile-related businesses located near E.

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National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Leeman Auto Company Building Denver, CO

Section number 8 Page 8

Colfax Avenue, Broadway was the first Denver home for a concentrated number of new automobile sales rooms and service centers. A scan of city directories during the 1932-1951 period confirms that over eighty-five percent of the businesses in the block of 500 Broadway and nearby Broadway blocks were associated with the automobile industry.

A few buildings remain on Broadway and on Lincoln Street, one block east, that recall the new car showrooms of this automobile era. They include, but are not limited to, the Cullen-Thompson Motor Company Building, 1000 Broadway, now known as Gart's Sports Castle; Franklin Studebaker Building, 1144 Broadway, now the Howard Lorton Furniture Store; James Dodge Motor Company, 1270-1278 Lincoln St., now home of the Colorado Ballet; Kumpf Motors, north west corner of W. 8th Ave. and Broadway, now a sporting goods store; and Willys-Overland, 969 Broadway, now the home of *Westword Newspaper*; and the Leeman Auto Company Building.

A sampling of Broadway auto businesses in 1933: Jim Furlong (used cars), 539 Broadway; Mclean Auto Company, 745 Broadway; Larson-Nash Motors Company, 950 Broadway; Hoskins Motor Company, 1061 Broadway; and Marcus Motor Company, 1156-1170 Broadway. A sampling in 1950: Denver Buick Auto Company, 700 Broadway; Rickenbaugh Cadillac, 729-781 Broadway; Colorado REO Motors Inc., 869 Broadway; North Denver Hudson, 915 Broadway; Metropolitan Pontiac, 945 Broadway; Kurland Motors, 1134-1138 Broadway; Graham Curly Motor Company, 1144 Broadway; Weaver-Beatty Motor Company, 1200 Broadway; and O'Meara Ford, southwest corner of W. 14th Ave. and Broadway.

Except for a few apartment buildings and retail stores, this section of Broadway, from Colfax Avenue south approximately a mile-and-a-half, was almost fully developed by auto-related businesses. A few new car sales buildings were constructed on Lincoln Street. Three were Fred Ward Hudson, 1300 Lincoln St.; James Dodge Motor Company, 1270-1278 Lincoln St.; and Downtown Buick, on the 1500 block of Lincoln Street. For his new building, Harry B. Leeman bought a vacant site just south of Cherry Creek, in the southern section of Broadway's auto sales and service buildings.

Harry B. Leeman was originally an automobile repairman. In 1923 he established his own used car business at 501-507-511 Broadway. Leeman's success at this location echoed the success of other new and used car dealers starting businesses on Broadway in the 1910s and 1920s. In 1932, Leeman built his new car showroom and became a new car dealer for DeSoto and Plymouth. He needed a building that would continue the Broadway tradition of constructing unique showrooms buildings. In selecting the Art Deco style of the relatively new Modern Movement, Leeman was also adding to his company's prestige.

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Leeman Auto Company Building Denver, CO

Section number 8 Page 9

It was reported in 1942 that Leeman Auto Company was one of the largest dealers in the Rocky Mountain region with a turnover of 1,800 autos a year. Leeman's company was under his direct control from the early days of the used car business to the final days of the Leeman Auto Company in 1958. The only time during the Period of Significance that Leeman Auto Company was not listed as a business was 1944-1945, when the location was home for the United States Employment Service. In 1946 business resumed and sales increased during Denver's postwar population boom.

Banks did not make automobile loans until after World War II. In the 1920s and 1930s, Leeman was one of two car merchants to fill most of the void by helping customers buy cars on credit. The other lender, not associated with Leeman, was Jim Furlong, who also had a car business on Broadway. Both Leeman and Furlong made loans for their own customers and for other car dealers' customers. For Leeman, the car financing activity, originally done in the Leeman Auto Company Building, led to the establishment of the Leeman Finance Company, and, later, to creation of the Leeman Industrial Bank, at 25 E. 5th Ave., on the same block as his car showroom. When Leeman sold his automobile sales and service buildings in 1958, he continued to run the Leeman Industrial Bank.

Architecture

The Leeman Auto Company Building is an expression of the Modern Movement in Art Deco style. Two national trends come together in this building: First, the new car sales industry established a prestigious presence in American cities by building large showrooms in impressive architectural styles. Second, the relatively new Modern Movement styles of Art Deco and Art Moderne were becoming styles of choice for public and commercial buildings where technology and efficiency were desirable associations.

Most of the auto showrooms along Broadway were representative of the national trend using the most popular architectural styles for their designs. Art Deco style was used to impress prospective buyers with state-of-the-art showroom design for new automobiles. One remaining new car showroom of the era also displayed applied, Art Deco-style elements. The Cullen-Thompson Motor Company Building, 1000 Broadway, built for selling new Chryslers in 1926, was designed in what historian Thomas J. Noel called "Deco Gothic." The elaborate, J. Jacques Benedict design is three stories and clad in very intricately-fashioned terra cotta. It spoke for the overindulgence of the mid-1920s. The Leeman Auto Company building is more subdued and speaks for a more sober early 1930s.

Continuing the Denver tradition of building masonry walls, the Leeman Auto Company Building wall material was brick. Terra cotta was used, but sparingly. Zigzag designs forming oversized chevrons and verticality were achieved with the use of contrasting brick. The simpler expression achieved a desired presence with the artful use of these materials.

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**Leeman Auto Company Building
Denver, CO**

Section number 8 Page 10

A large addition was constructed in 1934. The addition is carefully integrated into the original building. It is difficult to determine, without close inspection, that the building was not constructed as one project. The building retains its 1934 appearance.

Architect Raymond Harry Ervin (1900-1969)

The Leeman Auto Company Building represents the work of architect Raymond Harry Ervin. Ervin probably designed the 1932 building, and is documented as the architect for the large and prominent 1934 addition. The body of work documented to Ervin includes "Shangri-La" (1937), a residence for theater mogul Harry E. Huffman at 150 Bellaire St.; George Washington High School; Roscoe C. Hill Middle School (1955); and other school, commercial, and residential buildings. A complete study of the work of Raymond Harry Ervin has not been made to date.

Raymond Harry Ervin was born in Fort Thomas, Kentucky. He attended Denver Public Schools. He did not attend college. Ervin married Virginia Breckenridge in 1920 and joined the architectural firm of Fisher and Fisher as an apprentice draftsman in 1927. By 1932, with his new architecture license, Ervin opened his own firm. His early work included designing modest homes. It is likely that Harry Leeman gave Ervin his first commercial design challenge with the Leeman Auto Company Building. Though an architect is not named on the 1932 building permit, it is documented in the Building Permit Collection at the Denver Public Library that Ervin was the architect of record for the large 1934 addition.

In the latter half of the 1930s, Ervin designed homes for affluent residents in Hilltop and Montclair neighborhoods. In 1935, he designed the 300 Clermont St. residence. This house is most associated with Frank Kemp, Sr., president of Great Western Sugar Company, who lived there twenty-six years. The house won a Design House of the Year in 1935, awarded by an architectural magazine.

In 1936, Ervin designed "Crown House," 5201 E. 6th Ave. The regal name relates to the English Tudor-style house that served as the British Consul from 1951 to 1968. The residence was built for Aksel Neilson, friend of Dwight and Mamie Eisenhower and president of Title Guarantee Company. Another 1936 Tudor design by Ervin was at 100 Cherry St. for lawyer Jacob V. Schaetzel. This house was made from bricks left over from building the Phipps Mansion in the Belcaro neighborhood of Denver.

His next known work was "'Shangri-La,' a 1937 design . . . for theater mogul Harry Huffman. This showcase at 150 South Bellaire was modeled after the monastery that Columbia Pictures built for the 1937 motion picture, 'Lost Horizon.' Both Art Deco and Art Moderne elements are used in Shangri-La's design." In 1939, *Architectural Record*, America's oldest architectural journal, publicized the finest buildings in six American cities. Shangri-La was second on Denver's list.

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In 1940, Ervin designed a Tudor-style residence at 4600 E. 3rd Ave. for Frank Tetterer. Tetterer was founder and president of Electron Corporation and also a grandson of early Denverite, John Kernan Mullen, philanthropist and president of Hungarian Flour. This residence overlooks Cranmer Park. During World War II, Ervin worked for the Gates Rubber Company. His first post-war work was the design of the downtown J. C. Penney Building. In 1946 and 1947, Ervin was the president of the Colorado Chapter of the American Institute of Architects. It was reported that Ervin had "drawn the plans for over \$50 million worth of large buildings and homes for the wealthy" by the early 1950s and that he planned to retire to tend his rose garden at his modest home at 630 Krameria St.

Rather than retire, Ervin worked on plans for Roscoe C. Hill Middle School, designed with architect Robert Bournes, and George Washington High School. Ervin designed the 23-story Denver Club Building in the 1950s, and the 28-story First National Bank Building (Murchison Towers) in 1958. He was the architect for two shopping centers, University Hills and Westland. Ervin designed the Engineering Research Building for Martin Company in Littleton, one of the secret government projects entrusted to Ervin during his career. Ervin also did the architectural design for the U. S. National Bank in San Diego. Besides the Leeman Auto Company Building, Ervin did at least one other automobile-related design for Kumpf Motor Company of Denver. In addition to membership in the A. I. A., Raymond Harry Ervin was a member of the Denver Country Club and St. Barnabas Episcopal Church. Ervin died after an extended illness in 1969.

The Site of the Leeman Auto Company Building

The Leeman site is located in the East Broadway Terrace Addition, which was platted in 1875. Two blocks northwest of the Leeman site is the location of Denver Health Medical Center, which began as the County Hospital in the 1800s. Northwest across the intersection from the Leeman site are the two blocks that once held the "Base Ball Grounds," home for Denver's professional A League teams, Western League, until 1922, when the team, the Bears, moved to newly built Merchants Park further south on Broadway. West of the Leeman site is Broadway Terrace Addition, platted in 1873 on land first homesteaded by early pioneers. A large part of Broadway Terrace Addition is listed on the National Register of Historic Places as Baker/South Side Historic District.

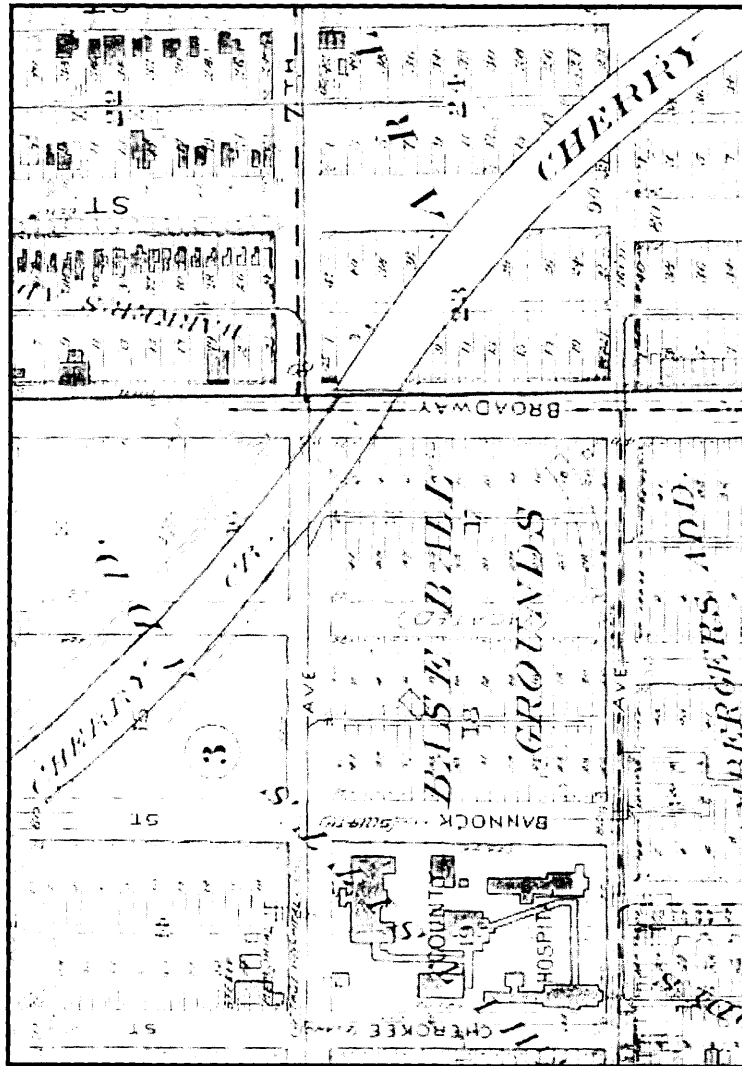
As noted in Section 7, Broadway was one of the earliest roads into Denver and has remained a main transportation route throughout Denver's history. North of Cherry Creek, it was laid out in the 1860s. In 1871 it was extended south of Cherry Creek in front of the Leeman Auto Company site. In the 1800s Broadway was a residential street with only a few retail and business buildings. With the installation of cablecar transportation and then streetcar lines, the street was redeveloped into commercial use with a few multi-residential buildings by the early 1900s. Broadway was a major business street by 1932.

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**Future site of
Leeman Auto Company
Building**



← Broadway



6th Avenue ↑

1904 Baist Map

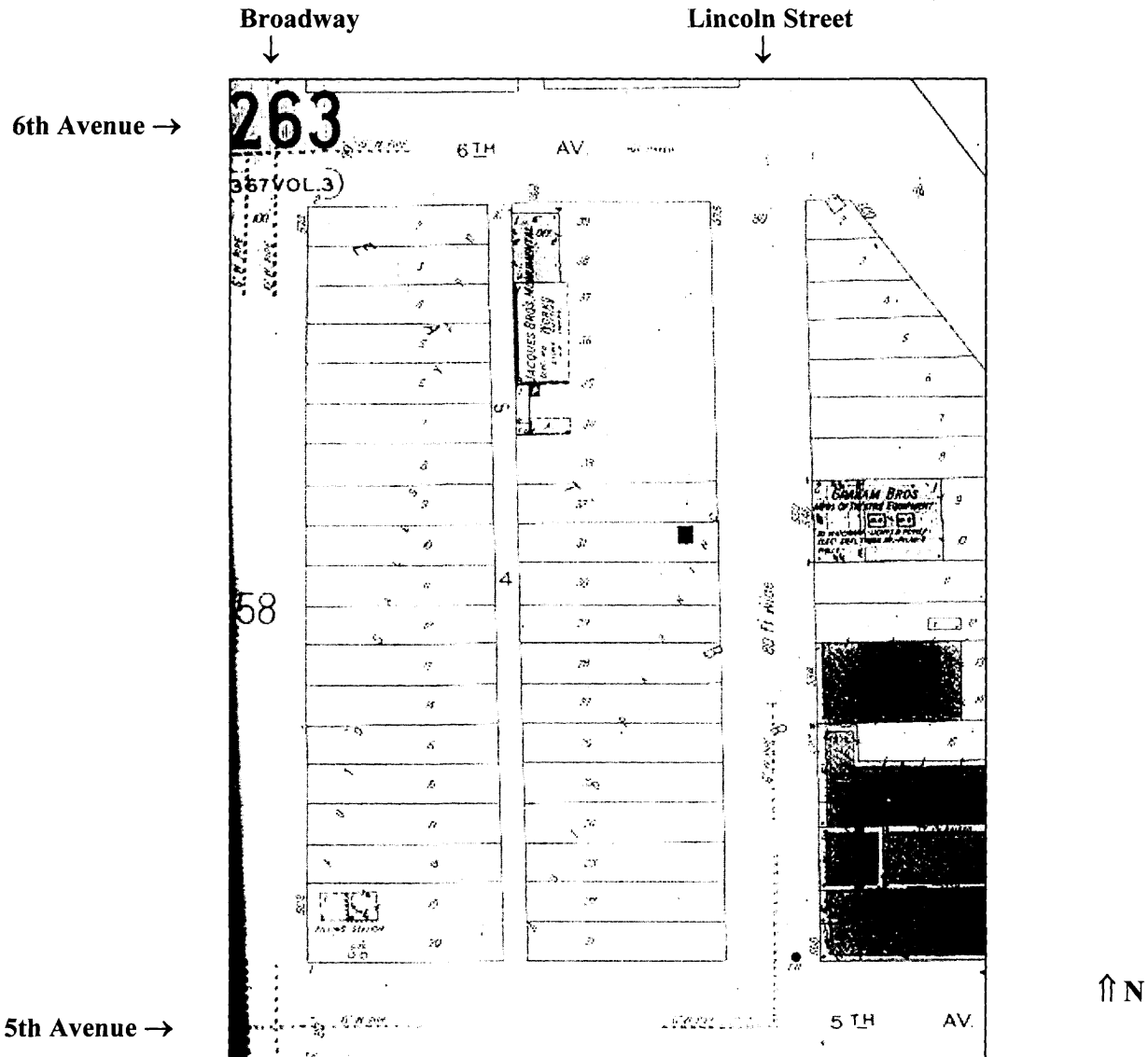
Note County Hospital and the Base Ball Grounds. The Leeman Auto Company Building was built on Block 4 where terraces are outlined on this map.

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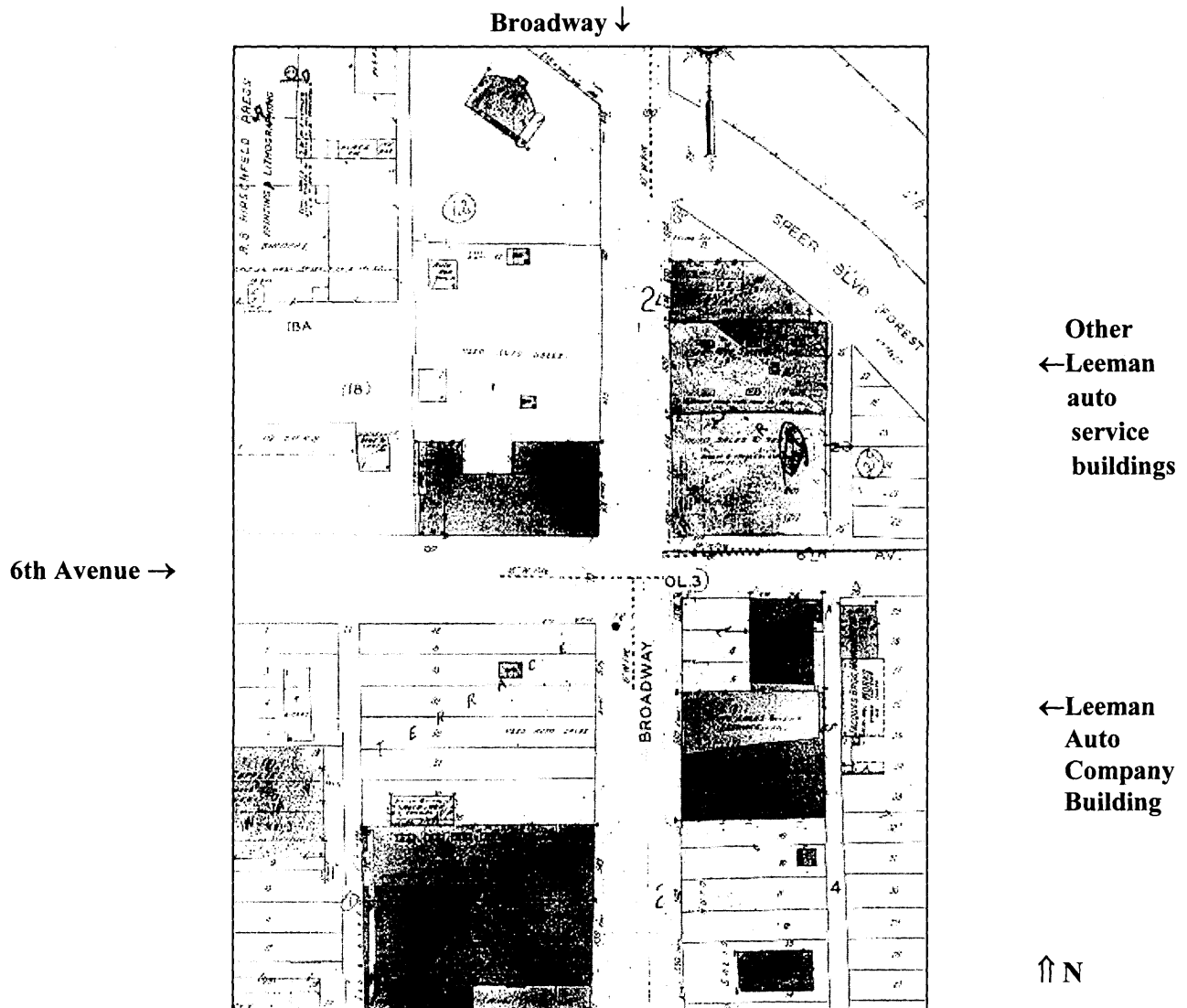
1929 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map
Block 4 was relatively undeveloped in 1929. Note that E. 6th Avenue was not paved.

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1951 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map

The footprint of the Leeman Auto Company Building is on Block 4 on the southeast corner of E. 6th Avenue and Broadway. [This map reproduction was made from three microfilm map segments. Therefore, although the streets do not appear to line up properly, each block is an accurate representation.]

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East 6th Avenue was still a dirt street between Broadway and Cherry Creek as late as 1929, and there was no bridge over Cherry Creek for E. 6th Avenue until after 1929. By 1929, the lots across the alley from the Leeman site held the Jacques Bros. Monumental Works which was built along the alley line and remained a thriving business throughout the Period of Significance. The monument business building was demolished many years ago. That site is now a part of Broadway Central, whose main building is the Leeman Auto Company Building.

The 1932 Leeman Auto Company Building was the second building on the site at 550 Broadway. The site held an eleven-unit terrace by 1905. The terrace was on Lots 1-9, Block 4, East Broadway Terrace Addition. The terrace was demolished in 1915 and the land lay vacant until 1932 when the Leeman Auto Company Building was constructed.

Harry B. Leeman (1899- ?-) and Construction of the Leeman Auto Company Building

Harry B. Leeman was raised in Indianapolis, Indiana. Leeman's father, Bert Leeman, was a foreman at Perry Manufacturing Company, a buggy maker. Harry Leeman was greatly impressed by the running of the first Indianapolis 500 automobile race. Leeman viewed the race from the grassy infield. He met auto racer, Barney Oldfield, during his early years and they became lifelong friends.

Following high school, Leeman began an apprenticeship as a machinist at Nordyke and Marmon in Indianapolis. That firm originally made flour mill equipment, but had ventured into automobile manufacturing. This was at a time when Indianapolis had over a dozen automobile manufacturers and was ahead of Detroit in establishing itself as the auto center of America. Leeman later reflected on those days when each auto was a custom job, when he and other mechanics would take the autos on long road tests into the countryside, carefully and leisurely adjusting carburetors and listening to the motors. During all his years in the automobile and banking business, Leeman enjoyed working on automobiles at his home in a well-equipped home shop.

After completing his four year apprenticeship in three years, Leeman left his parents and two sisters in Indianapolis for Chicago, where he worked for the Shaw Cab Company. Soon, he headed for the West, hoping to eventually reach Alaska. On 19 May 1919, at the age of 20, he arrived in Denver with \$1.85 to his name. He found employment with the Miller-Ray Company. Leeman also bought old cars and repaired them in his back yard.

Leeman's next business move was to rent space and machine tools in the Place Garage, on Clarkson Street near E. Colfax Avenue, and open Leeman's Repair Shop. Leeman hired two employees, but soon realized that more money could be made in selling autos. With a loan in 1923, Leeman bought five cars

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and started his business at 501-507-511 Broadway. Throughout his career, Leeman kept photos of the five cars in his office: three 1916 autos---a Hudson, a Buick, and a Columbia---and two 1917 autos---a Ford and a Velie.



Harry B. Leeman

Source: Fleming, Roscoe. "The Story of Harry Leeman." *Rocky Mountain News*, 21 February 1942, 8.

For a brief period he moved his business north. In 1926 and 1927 Leeman Auto Company was listed selling used cars at 1830 Broadway, next door to Trinity Methodist Church. In 1928, Leeman returned to the 500 block of Broadway.

It was during the 1920s that Leeman began financing his used car sales. As previously noted, banks did not make automobile loans until after World War II. Leeman, with fellow car dealer Jim Furlong, made loans for their own customers and for other car dealers' customers. Leeman established the Leeman Finance Company. When banks began to compete for the lucrative car loans, he founded the Leeman Industrial Bank, at 25 E. 5th Ave. on the same block as his car showroom.

In 1932, when Leeman became a new car dealer for DeSoto and Plymouth, the Leeman Auto Company Building was constructed. This is verified on Denver Building Permit #3485, taken out on 31 October 1932. The cost of the 1932 building was \$35,000, and the contractor was W. R. Smythe. By 1933, Leeman was no longer listed at his original Broadway location. In 1934, Leeman built a large addition to the 1932 building, using the same materials and architectural style as the original building. This is verified on Denver Building Permit #2563, taken out on 8 October 1934. The cost of the addition was \$10,000. The contractor was Frank B. Anderson.

In 1933, an 8'6" x 100' balcony was added to the interior space over the office. In 1935, another 18' x 18' balcony was added to the interior. A 5' x 80' [sic] sign was constructed along the Broadway property line in 1936 at a cost of \$1,000. The sign was to be supported on 8" I-beams and set 7 feet into the ground in concrete. In 1941, the Colorado Sign Company remodeled the signs. These large signs were demolished, and no photographs of them were located. A new 100' x

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100' ceiling was installed by building contractors Brown-Schrepferman in 1947. The building was insulated in 1947.

Leeman Auto Company endured the Depression. In 1937, Leeman expanded his company again, to a building north across E. 6th Avenue at 620 Broadway. Leeman remodeled this building for additional used car sales and a repair shop. In 1948, Leeman expanded again by building a new large service center at 600 Broadway for \$100,000. It opened to great fanfare as a state-of-the-art service center. This building was later the location of General Hardware. All Leeman buildings on the 600 block of Broadway have been demolished.

During WWII Leeman was elected president of the Automobile Dealers' Association. Leeman and the association were credited for support of the war effort.

[Leeman] has come to the presidency of the Denver Automobile Dealers' Association at a moment when, by its aggressiveness in seeking to turn its facilities to war work, it has matched any similar organization in the U. S. He [Leeman] does not take any credit for this. At 43, he's trim and energetic as ever; he bounces around his huge salesroom like a line-backer. (Lowe, 61.)

Leeman was quoted at the time:

This automobile business has weathered many storms. This is the most serious, for the moment, it has ever faced. But it will come out of it with its mighty energies intact, just as the nation will. You wait and see. (Lowe, 61.)

In 1945, and probably for the previous year, Leeman's showroom was used for the U. S. Employment Service, and his only business listing was at 620 Broadway.

Leeman sold the automobile-related buildings in 1958. The company name vanished from the records in 1958 and the buildings were no longer associated with the automobile industry. Leeman devoted his full attention to the Leeman Industrial Bank after 1958. He remained president of the bank through 1981. Leeman was married to Sadie Condon Leeman. They had one son, Edward J. Leeman, who joined the bank as Vice President in 1980. Sadie Leeman was Secretary-Treasurer of the bank until 1970 when Rose Ann Honeyman Leeman became Secretary-Treasurer. Until 1950 the Leemans resided at 3680 S. Downing St. In 1950 they moved to 3001 E. Mississippi Ave. No obituaries were located for the Leemans.

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Later Site Owners

In 1958, the Leeman Auto Company Building was used as a retail location for Bill Benton Clothing. In 1960, the Orbit Discount World Women's Clothing followed. Later, Karl's Shoe Giant occupied the space. By 1971 the C & C Tire Company was using the space. Then for many years the building was owned and occupied by Apple Plumbing & Heating Company. The company established a reputation as a reliable plumbing service from this location for central Denver. Company owner Brad Apple maintained other business locations throughout the Denver area, but this might have been its most visible location because of the high volume of traffic that passed through the 6th Avenue and Broadway intersection each day.

In 1998 the fate of the building was unknown. With the probability of demolition looming, individuals and neighborhood associations sought to find new owners who would rehabilitate the building for a new use. Richard Landon of Landon Enterprises and Bud Starker of Starker Construction Company purchased the site. Their partnership rehabilitated the site into Broadway Central, a location for a collection of retail businesses and restaurants.

The rehabilitation was approved by the United States Park Service for Federal Tax Credit eligibility. The Mulhern Group, Ltd., did the architectural work for the careful 1999-2000 rehabilitation of the building. Starker Construction Company was the contractor. The 1932 Art Deco-style Leeman Auto Company Building stands as a reminder of the Leeman Auto Company and Broadway's automobile sales showrooms during the Period of Significance. Located at the intersection of two main public transportation corridors, this historically and architecturally important Denver building serves as an orienting landmark. The rehabilitation has insured that the building will continue to contribute positively to Denver's urban landscape.

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Special Collections

Denver, Colorado. Western History/Genealogy Department, Denver Public Library. Assessor Lot Index, Clipping File Collection, Colorado Business Directories, Denver City Building Permit Collection, Denver City Directories, and Map Collection.

Verbal Boundary Description

Block 4, Lots 1-9, East Broadway Terrace Addition, City and County of Denver, Colorado.

Boundary Justification

The nomination includes all the land historically associated with the new car showroom and offices during the 1932-1958 period of significance.

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PHOTOGRAPH LOG

The following information pertains to photograph numbers 1-43 except as noted:

Name of Property: Leeman Auto Company Building
Location: Denver, Colorado
Photographer: Nancy L. Widmann
Date of Photographs: 14 February 2001
Negatives: Nancy L. Widmann files, 703 Ash St., Denver CO 80220

Camera Direction Description of View

1 Southeast	Intersection of 6th Ave. and Broadway and Leeman Auto Company Building.
2 East	Facade, 1932 building.
3 Northeast	Facade, 1932 building.
4 Northeast	North half of facade, 1932 building.
5 East	South bay of facade, 1932 building.
6 East	South bay of facade, 1932 building.
7 East	Terra cotta detail, north bay of facade, 1932 building.
8 East	Terra cotta detail, north bay of facade, 1932 building.
9 Southeast	North elevation, 1932 building.
10 Southeast	North and east elevations, 1934 addition, and north elevation, 1932 building.
11 South	Central bay, north elevation, 1932 building.
12 Southeast	North elevation, 1932 building.
13 Southeast	West bay, north elevation, 1932 building.
14 East	Facade, 1934 addition.
15 East	Pilaster, terra cotta detail, and roofline detail of facade, 1934 addition.
16 East	Facade, 1934 addition.
17 East	Passageway and two bays of facade, 1934 addition.
18 Southeast	Passageway entry and east bay of north elevation of 1932 building.
19 Southeast	South wall of passageway.
20 Southwest	South wall of passageway.
21 Northeast	North wall of passageway.
22 East	Ceiling of passageway.
23 Southeast	North elevation and part of facade, 1934 addition.
24 Southwest	North elevation, 1934 addition.
25 West	East elevation, 1934 addition.
26 Southwest	East elevation.

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27 Southwest	Underground parking entry and passageway entry, east elevation.
28 South	Underground parking entry, east elevation.
29 North	Underground parking entry, east elevation.
30 Northwest	North half of east elevation.
31 West	East elevation, 1932 building.
32 North	East elevation, 1932 building.
33 Southwest	East elevation, 1932 building.
34 Southwest	East elevation, 1932 building.
35 Northwest	Central section of east elevation.
36 Northwest	South elevation and south half of east elevation.
37 Northwest	South elevation.
38 North	Western bays, south elevation.
39 Northeast	South elevation.
40 North	Eastern bays, south elevation.
41 Northwest	South elevation.
42 Northeast	Facade, 1932 building, and south elevation.
43 Northeast	Facade and south elevation.

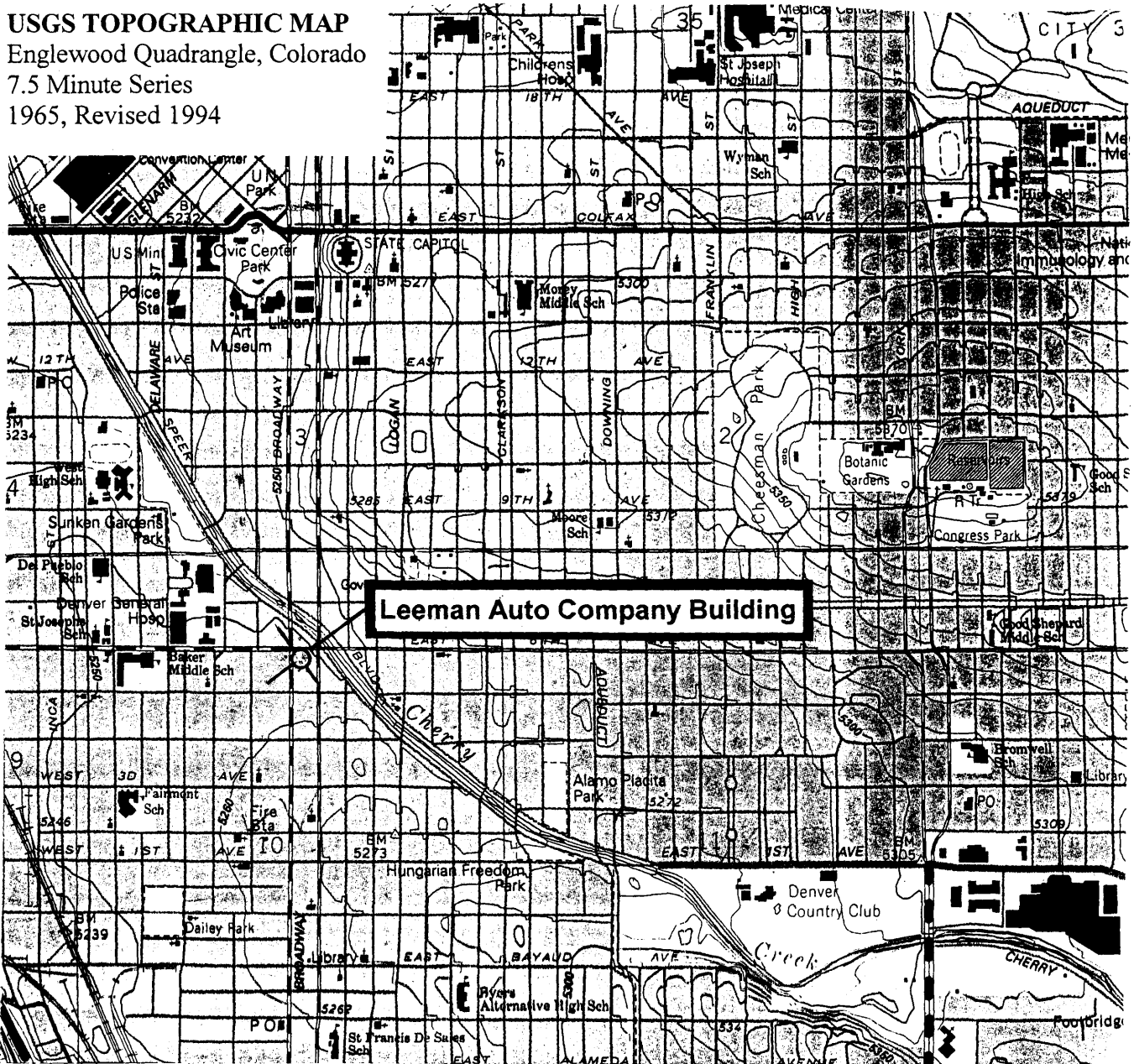
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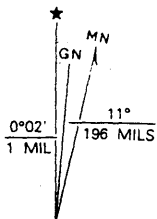
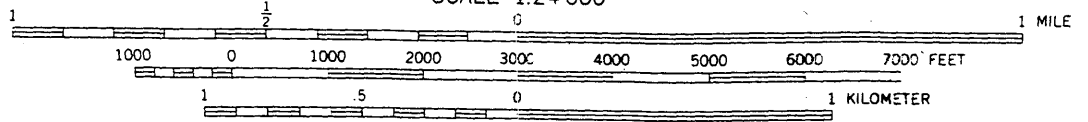
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USGS TOPOGRAPHIC MAP
Englewood Quadrangle, Colorado
7.5 Minute Series
1965, Revised 1994



Leeman Auto Company Building

SCALE 1:24 000



CONTOUR INTERVAL 10 FEET
NATIONAL GEODETIC VERTICAL DATUM OF 1929