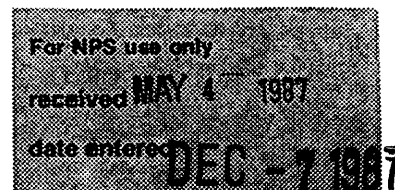


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Lea County, Lovington  
County Courthouses of New Mexico

1. Name: Lea County Courthouse  
(County Courthouses of New Mexico)
2. Location: 100 Block Main Street  
Lovington, New Mexico
3. Owner: Lea County Commission  
Lea County Courthouse  
Box 1539  
Lovington, New Mexico 88260
7. Description: The 1936 Art Deco Style Lea County Courthouse is a three story, rectangular building with bas relief embellishment. Situated on a Shelbyville style court square, the structure was designed by O.R. Walker.

This three story, flat roofed, blond brick building is composed of two sections; a central, three story section and a two story wing surrounding the building on three sides. This configuration gives the courthouse a stepped, symmetrical front (west) facade. Windows on the building are metal and located in vertical bands, with metal spandrels embellished with abstract Indian motif designs. Third story fenestration is horizontally connected with concrete bas relief panels designed in an abstract Indian motif. The building is surrounded on three sides by terraced landscaping, and on the fourth side by a parking lot.

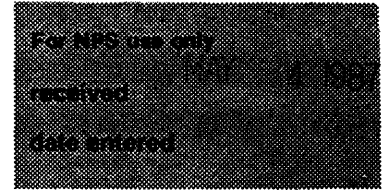
Entry to the courthouse is up two short flights of stairs, flanked by Art Deco light standards and metal handrails. The concrete frontispiece is heavily massed with a deeply embossed lintel embellished by a thunderbird design. Stylized piers are heavily embossed, and set diagonally into the entry. Doors are double leaf, wood, fully glazed, and have a single light transom.

The interior is detailed with terrazzo flooring, marble wainscoting, plaster walls, and acoustic tile ceilings. The foyer is decorated with a thunderbird motif in multi-colored ceramic tile. The stairs are terrazzo, with marble wainscot and cast aluminum Deco motif balustrade.

The second floor courtroom is relatively plain with elevated judge's bench and Deco Style wooden backdrop adorned with a carved Zia symbol. The original jail was located on the third floor. This area has been remodeled for administrative use. A new jail was constructed one block to

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Continuation sheet Lea County Courthouse

Item number 7

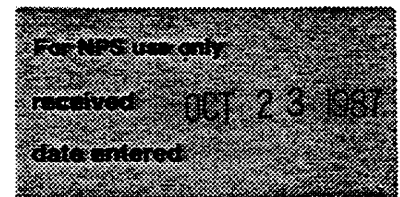
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the east.

The handicap entrance is on the southside. An escalator has been added and elevators access each floor. The building is in excellent condition with minor remodeling.

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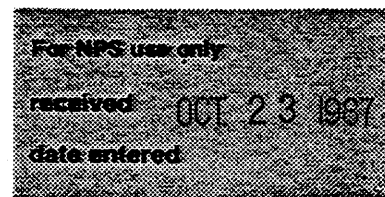
8. Significance: The Lea County Courthouse in Lovington meets National Register Criterion C as one of the best Art Deco buildings in New Mexico.

Because of the emergence of the Pueblo Revival as a virtual state style during the 1930s, New Mexico has fewer Art Deco style buildings than are found in most other states. A number of major Art Deco buildings do exist, however. The Albuquerque Indian Hospital and the Hotel Clovis, which are often cited as leading local examples of the style, have less modeled massing and less developed decorative programs than the other leading examples--a number of courthouses in Colfax, Grant, Roosevelt, Quay, Curry and Lea Counties. They are roughly comparable in the quality of their designs. All are symmetrically composed with vertically-grouped windows; the massing of each progresses up and back from two or three-story side wings to three to five-story central masses. The Colfax County Courthouse in Raton, which steps back and up in gradual increments, producing five wall planes and an equal number of roof levels, is perhaps the most interestingly massed.

The architect of the Lea County Courthouse, O.R. Walker, employed the formal, stripped Classicism seen in so much American public architecture of the decade. Not only are the building's facades symmetrical, but the vertical piers flanking the windows recall classical pilasters with relief detailing where the capitals would be. While the building's massing is less subtle and varied than the courthouse at Raton, its decorative program is more integrated and interesting since it brings together two genres of Art Deco ornamentation: Southwest Indian and Mayan. Geometricized Indian motifs predominate: sun, corn and rain symbols in the window spandrels, and stylized thunderbirds over the main entrance and above the second floor windows. Under these second floor lintels are Indian-face brackets. The band of cast ornament, interspersed with the third floor windows, resembles ornamental belt courses of Mayan architecture. This ornament is even reminiscent of some of Frank Lloyd Wright's Mayan inflected detailing: the Hollyhock House, for instance, or the Storer House, both in Los Angeles.

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Continuation sheet Lea County Courthouse Item number 9,10

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9. Major Bibliographic References:

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Pare, Richard, ed. Courthouse: A Photographic Document. New York: Horizon Press, 1978.

Robinson, Willard. The People's Architecture: Texas Courthouses, Jails and Municipal Halls. Austin: Texas State Historical Association, 1983.

Whiffin, Marcus and Carla Breeze. Pueblo Deco: the Art Deco Architecture of the Southwest. Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1984.

Whisenhunt, Donald. New Mexico Courthouses. El Paso: Texas Western Press, 1979.

10. Geographical Data: The nominated property consists of Block 10,  
Original Lovington Townsite.

Quad Name: Quad Scale: 1:24,000

UTM Reference:

Acreage: approximately acres.