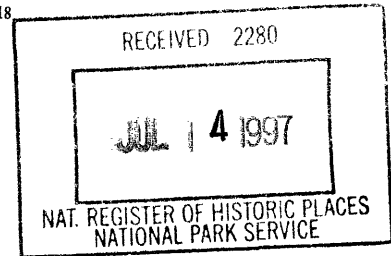


United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM



This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties or districts. See instructions 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: The Fidelity National Bank and Trust Company Building

Other names/site number: Federal Office Building

2. Location

Street & Number: 911 Walnut Street [N/A] Not for Publication

City or town: Kansas City [N/A] Vicinity

State: Missouri Code: MO County: Jackson Code: 095 Zip Code: 64106

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.)

Signature of certifying official/Title \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Constance Hanna Ramsey 6/9/97

State or Federal agency and bureau

Federal Preservation Officer, U.S. General Services Administration, Public Buildings

In my opinion, the property ☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. (☐ See continuation sheet for additional Service comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title Claire F. Blackwell/Deputy SHPO 20 June 1997 Date

State or Federal agency or bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this 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:)

Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

Beth Boland 8/14/97

Federal Office Building  
Name of Property

Kansas City, MO  
County and State

### 5. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	No. Resources within Property	
<input type="checkbox"/> Private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> Public-Local	<input type="checkbox"/> District	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> Buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> Public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> Site	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> Sites
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> Structure	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> Structure
	<input type="checkbox"/> Object	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> Objects
		<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing  
N/A

Number of contributing  
Resources previously  
listed in the National  
Register 0

### 6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories  
from instructions)  
COMMERCE/Financial Institution

Current Functions (enter  
categories from instructions)  
GOVERNMENT/Government Office

### 7. Description

Architectural Classification  
(enter categories from instructions)

MODERN MOVEMENT/Art Deco

Materials (enter categories  
from instructions)

foundation: Concrete

walls: Limestone

Brick

roof: Synthetics

other: Copper

### Narrative Description

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

[X] See continuation sheet

Federal Office Building  
Name of Property

Kansas City, MO  
County and 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.

### **Areas of Significance**

(enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Commerce

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### **Period of Significance**

1930-1932

1932-1933

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### **Significant Dates**

1930-1932

1932-1933

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### **Significant Person**

N/A

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### **Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### **Architect/Builder**

Hoit, Price & Barnes, Architects

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

☒ See continuation sheet

Federal Office Building  
Name of Property

Kansas City, MO  
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## 9. Major Bibliographic References

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67)
- ☐ previously listed in the NR
- ☐ 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 add. data:

- ☐ State SHPO office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☒ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other

Specify repository: General Services Administration  
Region 6 - Kansas City, MO

☒ See continuation sheet

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property Approximately .41 acres

UTM References

A 1/5/ 3/6/3/2/5/5/ 4/3/2/9/1/0/0/  
Zone Easting Northing  
B // /////// ///////  
Zone Easting Northing  
C // /////// ///////  
Zone Easting Northing

☒ See continuation sheet

## 11. Form Prepared By

Name/title Andrea Bakewell Lowery and Laura Hughes, Architectural Historians

Organization Traceries Date June 30, 1997

Street & Number 5420 Western Avenue Telephone (301)656-5283

City or Town Chevy Chase State Maryland Zip code 20815

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
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### SUMMARY

The Fidelity National Bank and Trust Company Building, 911 Walnut Street, Kansas City, Missouri, is located at the southeast corner of 9th and Walnut streets. The massive building occupies approximately one quarter of the block bounded by 9th and 10th, Walnut and Grand streets. The thirty-five-story building is Art Deco in style, characterized by geometric forms, overall symmetry, vertical emphasis in building elements, and stylized ornament. The building's height is emphasized by a series of step backs, and stylized decorative detailing. The design and massing of the Fidelity National Bank and Trust Company Building exhibits a transition between the conservative Neo-Classical style and the more modern aesthetic as expressed by Art Deco; the traditional design of the base is sympathetic with its function as the bank's quarters, while the tower, a vertical shaft with stylized ornament, is articulated as a modern skyscraper office building. Similarly, the significant interior spaces are, like the base of the building, traditional in design and proportion but ornamented with stylized decorative elements reflecting the Art Deco influences.

The four-story base of the building, traditional in design, provides a heavy pedestal. The giant, fluted pilasters and end pavilions ground the composition. The tower soars gracefully above this base; its verticality is emphasized through a series of step backs and the regular fenestration. Pairs of sash windows create tall, brick piers, which are capped with bursts of ornament. The expression of the building's perpendicularity culminates in the twin towers that crown the composition.

Displaying distinctive construction techniques and decorative motifs that were characteristic of the 1920s and 1930s, the Fidelity National Bank and Trust Company Building is in good structural condition and remains essentially intact, with some alterations to the interior.

### EXTERIOR

#### MATERIALS AND GENERAL CONFIGURATION

The site slopes up from west to east along 9th Street. The steel frame rests on solid rock 26' below the street. The structural frame consists of steel-reinforced concrete in a flat slab system. The flat slabs rest directly on the columns at each story. The building comprises thirty-four full stories with a sub-basement, a basement, and two towers and rises 465' 4" from the sidewalk. The maximum dimension of the footprint is 169.5' running north to south along Walnut Street and 110.5' running east to west along 9th Street. Rectangular in plan, the building stands on the same site that the earlier Fidelity Bank Building (previously a U.S. Post Office) had stood since 1885.

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The massing of the Fidelity National Bank and Trust Company Building is formed by a series of set backs, required by the City Planning Commission's 1923 zoning ordinance. Each street elevation is composed of a four-story, smooth, limestone base, above which is a series of three buff-colored brick and terra cotta set backs. These set backs are clearly marked with bursts of ornament that thrust toward the towers.

The base of the building is expressed in the Neo-Classical style, consistent with its function as a public banking facility and private bank offices. A concrete foundation clad in polished grey-pink granite veneer rises approximately 6' above the sidewalk, leading to four stories clad in Indiana limestone. The four story base is marked with regular fenestration of the upper three stories. The interior bays, articulated with metal windows, are separated by fluted pilasters that rise three stories. The outer bays are surrounded by smooth, ashlar limestone, creating heavier end pavilions. Stylized, classically derived motifs have been carved, ornamenting the window spandrels and entryways. The frieze below the entablature is marked with medallions.

The upper stories of the office shaft are covered with buff-colored brick. The exterior of the building is expressed through a series of set backs, one above the base of the building and two within the office tower, at the 26th and 31st stories. The upper stories are articulated with paired 1/1, double-hung, sash metal windows. This arrangement of fenestration produces a vertical effect, creating piers that appear to rise from set back to set back. Terra cotta ornament is used to further enhance this effect. Stylized orders, floral antefix, and free standing details decorate the bases and tops of the tall, brick piers, adding to the linear nature of these strips of wall.

Two towers crown the composition. Square in plan, with chamfered corners, the north tower housed three clocks designed for the building. The south tower housed the original town clock saved from the previous building, allowing Fidelity National Bank and Trust Company to keep its slogan, "Under the Old Town Clock." These brick and terra cotta towers are articulated in a manner similar to the stories below. Sheets of copper cladding cover the tower roofs.

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**WEST (MAIN FACADE), NORTH, AND EAST ELEVATIONS**

The main elevation of the Fidelity National Bank and Trust Company Building is oriented to the west, fronting on Walnut Street. This elevation is nine bays wide at the four-story base, eight bays wide from the fifth through the twenty-fifth story, and seven bays wide to the towers. The distinguishing features include three central entrances with ornate carved door surrounds, fluted pilasters that separate the central bays, stylized classical ornamentation at the base of the building, and Deco-style linear ornament at the office tower.

The lower four stories are nine bays wide and Neo-Classical in style with Art Deco overtones. This portion of the building has been constructed following a classically derived formula: the first story is articulated as a raised basement, appropriate to its sloping site; the second and third (mezzanine) stories have been united with ornamental metal spandrels and window frames joining the metal windows at these levels and creating a piano nobile; the fourth story is marked with smaller paired sash windows, resulting in an attic level that is capped with a wide frieze and entablature. Stylized, classically derived ornamentation decorates this portion of the building.

The building is anchored by a tall polished granite base that rises approximately 6' above the sidewalk. Two courses of rusticated ashlar Indiana limestone rise above the granite, leading to a molded water table. At the base of the building, three ornately carved surrounds mark the openings in the center three bays. Granite base blocks support the banded architrave and panel of each door surround, which is carved with medallions, aegricanes, festoons of fruit, bell flowers, and foliage. Floral metal cresting with anthemia crowns each doorway. At the center of the cresting over the central door is an octagonal stone clock. All three doorways originally housed glass and metal revolving doors. Now, the outer two doorways are infilled with granite panels, and the center opening has been altered to hold a pair of modern bronzed anodized aluminum and glass doors beneath granite panels. On either side of these openings are two bays of store front windows. A keystone marks the center of each bay. The storefront windows have been altered over time. Currently each opening contains a single fixed sash window. A fourth entrance is located in the southernmost bay of the first story. This entrance leads through a recessed vestibule to three pairs of metal and glass commercial doors to the elevator lobby of the building. Three openings are surrounded with painted metal fluted pilasters and floral motifs that decorate this tripartite entranceway. Above this metal work, modern metal letters reading, "Federal Office Building," have been mounted. At either side of the doorway are surface-mounted metal letters reading, "911" and a medallion ornamented with an eagle. The northernmost bay is marked at the first story with two modern fixed sash windows and a painted metal security door opening.

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The second and third stories are divided into nine bays, which are marked by metal windows. These windows have a tripartite configuration that accentuates the verticality of the building's composition. Ornamental metal spandrels and window frames are used to join the windows of the central seven bays. Above these seven windows are carved limestone spandrels decorated with satyrs and cornucopia. The fourth story is marked with seven pairs of 1/1, double-hung, sash windows with carved mullions. The second, third, and fourth stories are united through the use of seven giant, fluted pilasters with foliate capitals. The outer bays of the facade are differentiated through the use of smooth, ashlar limestone, creating solid end pavilions. These outer bays are marked with metal windows with transoms and carved stone surrounds at the second and third stories and with single sash windows with simple carved stone surrounds at the fourth story. The entire composition is crowned with an ashlar limestone frieze with a laurel wreath at the center and a carved title reading, "FIDELITY NATIONAL BANK AND TRUST COMPANY." In smaller letters beneath this title the words, "FOUNDED A.D. 1899" and "ERECTED A.D. 1931," have been carved. Flanking the inscription are pairs of bas-relief medallions displaying the bank's corporate seal.

The materials and details on the lower stories of the north elevation match those on the west elevation with only a few exceptions. The north elevation is only five bays wide, and due to the slope of the street, the lower portion of the first story, or raised basement, is obscured by the rising grade. Likewise, the granite base disappears from view near the center of the elevation. A single entrance is located on the north elevation. A simplified version of the ornate door surround on the facade ornaments this secondary entrance. The opening is filled with a bronze and glass door with sidelights. The remainder of this elevation of the base is detailed like the facade with the exception of the frieze, which is marked only with three medallions.

The east elevation addresses a shared service alley. Like the facade, the base of this elevation is nine bays wide. However, unlike the facade, because of the change in grade, this elevation appears only three stories tall. Due to its lack of exposure to the public, the base at this elevation is clad almost completely with buff-colored brick laid in stretcher bond. The one portion that can be seen from the street, the northernmost bay, is clad in limestone. The molded watertable and window frames match those on the north elevation, but the original windows have been removed. In their place, a metal exterior mounted HVAC duct has been introduced.

The openings at the "second" story in this elevation are filled with stacked sash, metal windows. At the third and fourth stories, the openings are filled with sash, metal windows in paired openings. All openings are simply detailed with flat stone sills and steel sills capped with rowlock. At the



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south end of the elevation is a door opening with a painted metal security door. The base of this elevation is capped by simple limestone coping.

The tall brick- and terra cotta-clad shaft of offices is set back from the base beneath on the east, west, and north elevations. Above the fourth story, eighty feet above the sidewalk, the tower steps back approximately 20 feet at each of these elevations. All three elevations are similar in appearance, excepting the metal fire escape that is mounted on the east elevation. Due to the set backs, the elevations are reduced to eight bays on the east and west elevations, and three bays on the north elevation at the first set back. The bays are demarcated by wide brick piers that extend from the fifth story through the twenty-fifth story. Within these bays are paired 1/1, sash, metal windows, which are separated in turn by brick mullions. The fifth, sixth, and seventh stories are clad in buff-colored brick. Above the seventh story, a frieze of molded terra cotta extends across each elevation. Above the windows, the terra cotta tiles are fluted, but at the brick piers, a floral motif is introduced. Fluted terra cotta ornaments the brick piers as they rise from this band to the eleventh story, terminating in floral bursts of ornament. Beneath the windows at the eleventh story are fluted terra cotta spandrels decorated with terra cotta medallions. The brick-clad elevations extend unadorned to the twenty-fifth story, interrupted only by a series of terra cotta floral spandrels beneath the windows of the twenty-second story. It is at this point that the corners of the building are chamfered. The use of plain brick is resumed until the twenty-fifth story, where fluted terra cotta spandrels are located beneath the windows and floral spandrels above them. Terra cotta coping marks the edge of the set back. The top of each wide brick pier is crowned with a vigilant eagle, poised for flight. Terminating each elevation of this set back, large acroteria face out from the corners at a 45 degree angle.

The west, north, and east elevations each step back again at the twenty-sixth story by approximately four feet. The west and east elevations remain eight bays wide, and the north elevation remains four bays wide. However, to account for the set back, the outer bays are reduced to a single sash window instead of a pair. The four corners of the building are fully chamfered. The five-story block is ornamented with fluted terra cotta pilasters like those that rise from the seventh story. Floral ornament caps the windows of this set back, and terra cotta coping crowns the block, as at the twenty-fifth story.

At the twenty-sixth story, the west, north, and east elevations step back once again, creating a "dumbbell" shaped plan that is carried through the thirty-fourth story. All three elevations at this height are ornately decorated with terra cotta spandrels, urns, and acroterium. From the ends of the dumbbell rise two square towers with chamfered corners. These towers are crowned with hipped copper roofs. The four elevations of the south tower contain paired windows. The north

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tower is marked with openings in the east, west, and north sides. Three openings in the north tower and one in the south tower originally contained clock faces, but these have since been infilled with metal siding.

### SOUTH ELEVATION

The first three stories of the south elevation of the limestone base of the building are obscured by a building that abuts the Fidelity National Bank and Trust Company Building. The limestone veneer of the facade wraps around the westernmost twenty feet of the exposed fourth story. The rest of the elevation is clad in the same buff colored brick employed in the office tower. Original window openings in the exposed fourth story have been infilled with brick. Limestone coping marks the top of the four-story base of the building.

The fifth through the thirtieth story of the south elevation are clad entirely in brick. The office tower at this elevation is four bays wide. The outer bays of each story are marked with single 2/2, sash, metal windows. At each story, metal louver vents mark the inner bays. Owing to the set back above the twenty-fifth story, the uppermost window opening marks the twenty-fifth story. The vents, however, continue to the thirtieth story.

The placement of the openings on the south elevation further underscores the vertical nature of the tower. This verticality is further reinforced by four vertical bands of tan-colored brick that extend from the fifth to the thirtieth story. These vertical stripes are broken at levels that correspond to the set backs on the other elevations. Decorative spandrels and fluted piers, like those on the other elevations, are introduced at the twenty-fifth story and extend to the base of the south tower.

### INTERIOR

The interior of the Fidelity National Bank and Trust Company Building is supported by steel square columns, or piers, which follow the bay system established on the exterior of the building. In some of the more public spaces, these columns are free-standing and sheathed in marble, but in the more private office space, the columns are incorporated into the partitions and are covered in plaster. The public spaces and executive offices are richly detailed with ornament that is modern in interpretation -- revealing the building's link to Art Deco. The private areas, such as the tower of offices, are more simply detailed, with plastered hollow tile partitions separating tenant spaces.

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Originally, the four-story base of the building was devoted to banking services and retail. The safe deposit was located in the basement of the building. The first floor was to serve as retail space and to provide a grand entrance to the main banking hall on the second floor. The third floor, or mezzanine, was occupied by offices for the bank executives and an ornate Director's Room. The fourth floor was devoted to more mundane banking services like bookkeeping and transit departments. The significant spaces of the building are located in this four-story base and include the main lobby, the banking spaces, the vault, and the Director's Room. All spaces are highly designed using the classical orders and rich materials like marble, American black walnut, and ornamental plaster.

Vertical circulation is provided by two banks of elevators, three in each, located on the south side of the building. Additionally, one stair is housed in the southeast corner of the building and one at the center of the northern edge of the base. The elevators are decorated with molded cast metal doors at the lobby level.

The tower of offices above is utilitarian in presentation, and therefore simpler in design. The upper floors were conceived as open space that could be adapted for a variety of functions through the installation of hollow tile partitions. The sub-basement, which occupies the southernmost 48 feet of the building and runs from the east to the west wall, contains various service areas and machinery. The towers that crown the composition, which originally housed the town clock and three additional clocks, provide space for elevator machinery.

## LOBBIES AND BANKING HALL

### *Original Description*

The main lobby of the building was originally accessed through three doors located at the center of the Walnut Street elevation. The floor of the lobby was covered in marble laid in geometric patterns. The walls were designed using classical motifs, with a system of light colored marble pilasters rising above a wide marble base. The cornice of the lobby was decorated with ornamental plaster with wavescroll and chevron detailing. Off the lobby were five store rooms for tenants. At the rear of the lobby a marble stair, 14'-6" wide with a central rail supported by ornamental brass legs, led to the main banking floor. Cast metal grills ornamented with chevrons and foliage flanked the stair at the landing. Pendant lights with ornate metal cresting hung from the lobby ceiling.

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The main banking space, 34'-8" by 87'-6", was located on the second floor of the building. The marble stair, marked by a marble balustrade, rose to the center of this floor. The design of this room was based on Beaux-Arts principles. Free standing piers, three by three and one-half feet, followed the rhythm established on the exterior of the building. These piers rose to support a double height ceiling, 38 feet above the floor, and were articulated as pilasters. Behind the eastern row of columns was an arcade 7'-9" wide and ornamented with classically inspired detailing. Behind the arcade was a bank of tellers' desks richly detailed with marble. A loggia, the corridor of the third or mezzanine floor, looked out over the banking hall.

The floor of the banking hall was laid in geometric patterns of triangular slabs of Tennessee marble in three shades. A Greek key border of Tennessee marble surrounded this field, and a marble edge of Belgium Black lined the floor. The pilaster bases were of black and gold and Florido creme marbles. The faces of the pilasters that address the lobby rose the full two stories in height and were clad with fluted Botticino marble that rose to Corinthian capitals. The sides of these piers extend only one story, as they support the mezzanine level loggia. These interior pilasters of Florido creme are capped with Ionic capitals. An entablature above these one-story columns encircled the lobby, weaving behind the two-story columns. This entablature was ornamented with cast plaster medallions and a cornice of dentils. Foliate carved panels lined the third floor loggia, and intermediate pilasters of ornamental plaster and stone defined the openings. An entablature of dentils capped the entire composition and led to an ornate plaster frieze based on floral motifs. Above was a cornice of dentils and plaster ceiling with ornate designs of foliage, scrolls, and classical motifs. Both the frieze and the ceiling were decorated with colors derived from the marbles below: greys and corals with accents of blue, green, and gold. Three large chandeliers of bronze and molded glass illuminated the grand space. Six large, bronze check desks ornamented with chased and etched bronze lined the room.

*Current Description*

This area has been adapted as office space for the federal government. A floor has been inserted across the original double height banking space, and the original stair between the first and second floor has been removed. The walls have been covered with drywall. The ceilings have been dropped with acoustical tile, likely obscuring much of the original ornament. Fluorescent lighting has been installed.

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### **SOUTH ELEVATOR LOBBY**

The elevator lobby, rectangular in plan, is located at the southern end of the building. The lobby is entered from Walnut Street through a modern, bronze anodized aluminum and glass airlock vestibule. The corridor is irregular in plan, extending along the south exterior wall, with a leg to the north to accommodate two banks of three elevators. The corridor is ornamented with marble floors, marble walls, and a decorative plaster ceiling.

The floor of the elevator lobby is covered with pink-with-grey-veined marble laid in a diaper pattern with banding. Black marble borders surround the composition, and the walls are lined with a 16" base of the same black marble. The fields of the walls are clad with cream-colored travertine. The wall surface is interrupted with large decorative brass radiator grills ornamented with floral Deco-style designs, modern bronze directories, and the elevator banks. The elevator doors are of brushed aluminum and are set within molded jambs and beveled lintels. Above each elevator is an aluminum and glass indicator light. A plaster frieze ornamented with anthemion and capped with a dentil molding encircles the lobby. The plaster ceiling is relieved with a series of slightly recessed vaults with cross beams that continue the dentil moldings. These vaults are detailed with multi-colored borders and recessed central panels with Deco-style floral and geometric shape designs, but the only bay to retain the original color system is the westernmost bay. Troughs allowing modern indirect lighting have been suspended from the ceiling.

A flight of stairs is located at the east end of the lobby. The marble treads are placed on metal risers, and a decorative cast-iron and wood railing lines the stair.

At the second floor, the elevator lobby originally led to the banking space. The stairwell and corridor are finished like the floor below. The elevator banks are as below, but carved bas-relief marble panels ornamented with floral scrolls and bands are located above the elevator door openings. The original marble wall surface of the elevator lobby is capped by a gilded plaster band of Deco-style, Egyptian-derived ornament. Above the band are alternating panels of fluting and gilded floral scrolls like those above the elevator doors. The original ornate coffered ceiling of the double-height elevator lobby features gilded borders and flat, recessed panels. Two modern pendant fluorescent lights hang from the ceiling. The original entrance to the banking space, formerly filled with an ornate metal gate, has been much altered. The decorative metal lintel bearing the firm's insignia remains intact, but the other metalwork has been removed and replaced with glazing and double-leaf doors.

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The cast-iron and marble stairway in the east corner of the building continues to the third and fourth floors of the building. The motifs established on the first and second floor corridors are continued on the third and fourth floors, but the design of these spaces is simpler than those below. The pink marble introduced below is again used as wainscoting. This pink marble is also used as flat jambs and lintels at the elevator and north end wall. The fields of the wall are flat painted plaster capped with a plain cornice. The ceilings are flat painted plaster.

The third floor circulation is differentiated from the other banking floors by the introduction of a corridor that runs north-south along the eastern side of the plan. This corridor, which leads to the Director's Room, originally looked out over the highly-ornamented banking hall, but has since been enclosed. Pairs of pilasters and molded plaster cross beams form a rhythmic march along the corridor walls. The floor is covered in beige terrazzo squares lined with gray borders and cross bands. A black granite base and marble wainscoting line the hall. Along the east wall are three recessed doorways that lead to the Director's Room. These stepped recesses feature ornamental plaster and molded marble door surrounds. Recessed panels trimmed with dentils crown the doorways. The crown molding is decorated with bands of foliate scrolls. The ceiling consists of a series of recessed panels defined by the decorative cross beams. The stepped ceiling panels contain ornate plaster air grilles with floral medallions and rosette designs. Pendant fluorescent lights have been mounted over the plaster grilles.

## DIRECTOR'S ROOM AND EXECUTIVE OFFICES

The Director's Room, 22' by 54', is located at the east side of the building. The room is currently carpeted. The walls are clad with floor-to-ceiling wood panelling, and highly ornamented painted plaster covers the ceiling.

A pair of panelled wood doors is centered on the western wall of the room. To either side of the entrance are built in closets. Grouped in evenly spaced pairs on the east wall are six large, 2/2 sash windows with single light transoms. The north wall contains a single wood door at the west end of the wall and three openings to allow for movie projection. The south end of the room features a small raised platform and a central single door that leads to an adjacent room.

The floor was originally covered in carpeting of black background with figured patterns in greys, grey-greens, and rose. A black marble base skirts the room. The walls are divided into bays by fluted wood pilasters. The door surrounds are intricately carved with floral designs, and the main

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entrance to the room is crowned with a shield. The fields of the walls are covered figured panelling of American black walnut enriched by carved molding and panels of inlaid wood. At the cornice a band of reeding encircles the room. Window valances with inserts of tooled leather of brown, red, and gold cap the windows.

The ceiling of the room is covered with intricate plaster work, featuring scrolls and foliate designs. Floral details were incorporated into a medallion motif, allowing speakers and brass air grilles to be incorporated into the design at the centers of the medallions. This plaster ceiling was painted in black, red and gold. Pendant bronze and glass lights were suspended from the ceiling.

The executive offices, also located on the third floor, were, like the Director's Room, highly ornamented. These rooms had walnut wainscots, textured walls, and decorated plastered ceilings.

Although the original carpeting has been replaced and fluorescent lighting has been installed, the Director's Room remains very much intact today. The other executive offices, however, have been refinished as typical office space with linoleum, drywall, and dropped ceilings.

## VAULT ANTEROOM

The vault is located at the basement level of the building. Rectangular in plan, this room features terrazzo floors, plaster walls with a simple cornice, a vaulted ceiling with decorative plasterwork, and decorative metal grillwork. The original security vault door remains in place on the north wall of the anteroom.

The floor is covered with beige and grey terrazzo laid in a stylized sunburst, reflecting the ceiling plan of the basement. The walls are flat painted plaster capped with a simple cornice. The painted plaster ceiling is vaulted with two octagonal recessed panels divided by a molded plaster cross beam. Reeding and floral details typical of the Art Deco style ornament the vaulted ceiling. Fluorescent lights and sprinkler equipment have been suspended from this ceiling.

## OFFICE TOWER CORRIDOR

The elevator lobbies are located at the south end of each floor. These lobbies feature terrazzo floors, plaster walls, and marble wainscot panels. The plaster ceilings were originally ornamented with cross beams and simple cornices.

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The floors of the elevator lobbies are fields of pink and grey terrazzo squares edged in dark grey terrazzo. Marble wainscoting extend approximately 3 feet above the floor and skirts the lobbies. Elevator doors are flush. These elevator lobbies open to double-loaded corridors. The terrazzo floors and marble wainscoting continues into the corridors. The walls of the corridors are pierced with glazed wood stile and rail doors.

Some of the lobbies and corridors have been altered through the installation of carpeting, dropped acoustical tile ceilings, and fluorescent lights. In many instances, the double-loaded corridor has been removed to create open plan offices.

#### TENANT OFFICES

Hollow tile partitions divide the offices in the tower. Most of the floors in the offices have been covered with linoleum or carpeting. The interior walls have been plastered or covered with drywall and painted. The ceilings are generally dropped acoustical tile, obscuring the installation of electrical, HVAC, fire sprinkler, and communication systems. Some original metal and glass partition walls remain in place, and a few original wood doors, baseboards, chair rails, picture rails, and window casings remain.

#### ALTERATIONS

The major interior alteration of the building is the use of the double-height banking hall as two floors of offices. Some of the original marble and plasterwork, although damaged, may be intact beneath the drywall and dropped ceilings.



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## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

### SUMMARY

The construction of Fidelity National Bank and Trust Company flagship at 9th and Walnut streets not only anchored and celebrated Kansas City's business community, but the building and its institution led the way in the development of city's financial district around the Federal Reserve Bank, as occurred in the other Federal Reserve cities across the country.

The imposing structure and architecture of the Fidelity National Bank and Trust Company Building in Kansas City attest to the establishment's significance and symbolize the importance and success of Kansas City as a banking center in the first decades of the twentieth century and to the importance of the federal reserve system, thus meeting Criterion A of the National Register of Historic Places. Constructed between 1930 and 1932, during Kansas City's hey day as a prosperous banking and financial nucleus for the Mid-Western states, the building forms the centerpiece for the city's financial district. Kansas City's banking industry was not only locally important, but gained national attention when, in 1914, one of the twelve National Federal Reserve banks was located there serving Wyoming, Colorado, Missouri, Nebraska and portions of Missouri, Oklahoma, and New Mexico. The building affirms the importance of Fidelity National Bank and Trust Company, one of the largest 100 banks in the nation in the early 1930s. Thus, although liquidated the year after construction, the bank held a prominent role, not only in Kansas City but nationwide in 1932 and 1933.

The Fidelity National Bank and Trust Company Building has also achieved significance as the embodiment of a distinctive style, expressed by its ornamentation, form, and method of construction, supporting its nomination under Criterion C of the National Register of Historic Places. The Fidelity National Bank and Trust Company Building (1930-1932) is designed in the Art Deco style, a modern aesthetic ideally translated to the architecture of skyscrapers constructed in the 1920s and 1930s. This building style broke with the classical and revivalist traditions so popular in the early twentieth century, and created architecture of soaring forms and geometric motifs. Spurred by the 1925 *Exposition Internationale des Arts Decoratifs et Industriels Modernes*, Art Deco strove for modernity and a new expression for the machine age. Looking to the future, the style is characterized by linear edges, angular compositions with vertical emphasis, and stylized ornament. Buildings in this style frequently feature set backs that emphasize the geometric form of the building.

Although the base of the Fidelity National Bank and Trust Company Building employed a traditional design scheme, a modern interpretation, evident in the stylized low relief ornament, was

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applied even to this more conventional portion of the building. The office tower itself was thoroughly modern, expressing the zeitgeist with its verticality, set backs, geometric form, and stylized decorative details. Further, the Fidelity National Bank and Trust Company is an outstanding example of the work of prominent Kansas City architects, Hoit, Price, and Barnes. The excellence of the building's design was acclaimed by the Kansas City chapter of the American Institute of Architects, which voted it the best designed commercial building of 1931. Although the bank established its significance as the Fidelity National Bank and Trust Company Building, its term as the Federal Office Building has been more prolonged; the building is therefore being nominated as the Federal Office Building in Kansas City, MO.

#### **HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE FIDELITY NATIONAL BANK AND TRUST COMPANY BUILDING IN THE BANKING INDUSTRY**

The Fidelity Trust Company was chartered on June 24, 1899, and the first office was opened in Kansas City in the New York Life Building (NHRP 1887-1890) on July 10, 1899. The first president of the bank, Mr. Henry C. Flower, headed a distinguished list of subscribers. This "Who's Who" of banking included: James Stillman, president of the National City Bank of New York; Philip D. Armour, P.A. Valentine, and K.B. Armour of Armour & Co., packers, Chicago; William W. Crapo of New Bedford, Massachusetts, financier, president of the Pere Marquette Railway, former congressman and chairman of the banking committee; Charles S. Fairchild, president of the New York Trust Co. and former Secretary of the treasury under President Grover Cleveland; George J. Gould, son of J. Gould, a national force in the financial world; John A. McCall, president of the New York Life Insurance Co; and Marshall Field of Chicago. From this auspicious beginning, the bank grew and, in 1902, acquired the Kansas City Post Office Federal Courts Building (1879-1885) at the corner of 9th Street and Walnut Street as its new home. Its new building, a two-towered Romanesque Revival-style building housed the town clock, leading the bank to its slogan, "Under the Old Town Clock."

Fidelity moved into its new quarters in 1904, and continued to grow at an exponential rate. This rapid growth forced the bank to construct an addition at the south of the building in 1913. Just four years later, it became necessary for the bank to add on to its building at the north elevation. Even with these additions, the bank rapidly outgrew its new quarters.

Banking, already a thriving business, began to boom in Kansas City with the introduction of a regional Federal Reserve bank in 1914. In 1913, President Woodrow Wilson signed the Federal Reserve Act, creating a central banking system with regional Federal Reserve banks. These banks

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would in turn serve member commercial banks. Twelve Federal Reserve banks were established to provide banking services such as holding cash reserves, lending to banks, collecting and clearing checks, transferring funds, providing currency, and serving as the government's fiscal agency to member banks. The Federal Reserve in Kansas City, Missouri, was the banking center for District No. 10, which included Wyoming, Colorado, Kansas, Nebraska, and portions of Missouri, Oklahoma, and New Mexico. This district was second in area only to the twelfth district, which included all the western states. The number of member banks District 10 claimed was 835, second only to the seventh district (Chicago). When the Federal Reserve bank was created, it served a population of 6,306,850. It was acknowledged that the location of these banks "may have a considerable influence on commerce and industry in various localities."<sup>1</sup>

Prior to World War I, European banks dominated the global financial market; however, with the advent of World War I, Europe's attention was completely diverted. This boosted American trade with other countries, and the export of the dollar increased, leading to unprecedented growth among U.S. banks.

Fidelity, like many other commercial banks, continued to expand through a succession of mergers. In 1919 the National City Bank of Kansas City was merged with Fidelity Trust Company, producing the Fidelity National Bank and Trust Company. Other banks later absorbed by Fidelity included the New England National Bank and Trust Company (1929), the Western Exchange Bank (1930), and the Liberty National Bank (1930). Bank employees were scattered throughout the financial district with a large personnel office at 10th and Grand, 10th and Baltimore, and the Fidelity Savings Trust Company at 1000 Grand Street. In 1929, a total of 41 national and state banks and trust companies and 63 building and loan associations were located in Greater Kansas City<sup>2</sup>, and by 1930, a solid financial district bounded by Grand, 9th, Baltimore, and 10th Streets, had been established. Within these boundaries were the Atlantis Acceptance Corporation (1012 Baltimore), First National Bank (10th and Baltimore), Baltimore Bank (1022 Baltimore), Fidelity Savings Trust Company (1000 Grand), Pioneer Trust Company (1014-1016 Baltimore), and Fidelity National Bank (9th and Walnut). Within a block of this area were four additional banks: the Federal Reserve (on Grand near 10th), Sterling State Bank (1125 McGee), Traders Gate City National Bank (1111 Grand), and Home Trust Company (111-1119 Walnut).

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<sup>1</sup> "The New Banking System." *Bankers Magazine*, February 1914, p. 141.

<sup>2</sup> Roy Ellis. *A Civic History of Kansas City, Missouri*. Springfield, Missouri: Elkins-Swyers Co., 1930.

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It eventually became evident that the bank would need to construct a new building to house its employees. It was decided that this new bank should feature an office tower, which would eventually profit the bank. During this period, headquarter offices of banks were constructed on prominent sites on corners and main streets. True to this idea, the new building was to be constructed on the site of the old building, at the crest of a hill at the southeast corner of 9th and Walnut streets. These new bank buildings often functioned as city landmarks, as the new Fidelity National Bank and Trust Building would do for Kansas City.

During the 1920s and even into the 1930s, commercial banks were constructed on a scale and level of grandeur not seen previously. No expense was spared for these new, monumental buildings constructed for major commercial banks. Fidelity National Bank was no different. The bank was ranked the 100th largest bank in the nation in 1931, while its new quarters were being constructed.<sup>3</sup> As the foremost bank in Kansas City, the bank wanted to erect a city landmark. Hoit, Price, and Barnes were selected as the architects for this project. The guidelines established for the project were limited to two criteria: (1) the banking quarters had to be classical in design, like a traditional bank; and (2) the bank, like the earlier incarnation, was to have two towers, one of which was to house the old town clock.<sup>4</sup>

Although construction in Kansas City peaked in 1925, building continued on a grand scale. Even the stock market crash did not devastate the construction industry. Between the building periods of 1923-1926 and 1927-1930, the number of buildings erected declined by 61 percent. In contrast, the cost of the buildings built only declined by 16 percent. Kansas City's growth was inspired and sustained by the developing farming, aircraft, and automobile industries, and by the tireless efforts of Tom Pendergast, a Jackson County political figure who propelled the construction industry through the Depression.

Although Pendergast was able to temporarily stem the tide of the Depression, hard times eventually fell on Kansas City. One year after the bank opened, Fidelity National Bank and Trust Company, like many banks across the country during the Depression, failed and was liquidated. Although Fidelity National Bank and Trust Company occupied this building for less than a year, the banking floors did continue to serve as bank facilities from 1935 until the federal government moved in the early 1950s.

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<sup>3</sup> "The Nation's 100 Largest Banks." *The Bankers Monthly*. August, 1931, p. 474.

<sup>4</sup> Telephone interview with Kansas City Architect and Local Historian Richard Farnan. September 11, 1996. Mr. Farnan had previously interviewed a staff member of Hoit, Price, and Barnes, who was involved in the project, Robert Blumgarten.

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Since that time, the federal government has continued to occupy the Fidelity National Bank and Trust Company Building, changing its name to the Kansas City Federal Office Building on July 1, 1951.

#### **SUMMARY OF HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE**

With the introduction of the Federal Reserve system, Kansas City gained national importance in 1914 as a regional headquarters for the Federal Reserve. Under the jurisdiction of Kansas City, District Ten was the second largest and second most populous district in the country. Thus, banking in Kansas City, already flourishing, began to boom. In the early 1930s, Kansas City, a national banking capital, claimed three of the nation's 100 largest banks, one of which was Fidelity National Bank and Trust Company. With its employees dispersed throughout a number of buildings in Kansas City, Fidelity National Bank and Trust Company decided to unite under one roof, building a monument to their prestigious organization.

In grandeur, scale, and iconography, the 1931 Fidelity National Bank and Trust Company Building proclaimed the bank's importance as a major commercial venture in a Federal Reserve city. Its form and iconography alluded to its operations as a financial establishment, from the classically-inspired base of the building to the eagles perched on the upper set backs who guard the building, and the money within. The rich materials - marbles, bronze, and walnut - convey the wealth of the bank. The building's soaring towers and height, (465'-4"), its imposing ornament and innovative design, and its housing of the town clock in its tower, create an impressive city landmark, anchoring one end of Kansas City's skyline.

#### **THE ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE FIDELITY NATIONAL BANK AND TRUST COMPANY BUILDING**

The Fidelity National Bank and Trust Company Building is eligible for listing in the National Register under criterion "C", as a significant example of Art Deco architecture in Kansas City and as an important work of the prominent Kansas City firm, Hoit, Price, and Barnes. The building displays the streamlined forms of Art Deco design, symbolizing modernity and a new era of progress. The building combined traditional classical motifs, iconographic elements, and more mystical elements derived from ancient cultures like the Mayans and Egyptians. Highly stylized variations of these motifs ornamented the building inside and out. Typical of the Art Deco style, the geometric form of the building, emphasized by the building's set backs, and the building's

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verticality were underscored at night by the use of hidden floodlights that illuminated the office tower. This building, which was for approximately six months the tallest building in the city, anchored one end of the skyline, becoming a symbol for the city itself. According to Architectural Historian George Ehrlich, the Fidelity National Bank and Trust Company Building is a representative statement in office building design of the period ... and mark[s] the importance of Hoit, Price & Barnes as architects of the period between the World Wars."<sup>5</sup>

The architecture of the first two decades of the twentieth century were largely characterized by revivalist traditions. The popularity of the Beaux-Arts, Neo-Classical, and Colonial Revival styles attest to this trend. Art Deco was spurred primarily by two events, the *1925 Paris Exposition Internationale des Arts Decoratifs and Industriels Modernes*, which featured works of "new inspiration and real originality"<sup>6</sup>, and by the 1922 Chicago Tribune Tower competition. The Paris exposition strictly prohibited historical styles, promoting a sentiment for modernity and the idea that ornament could be used to achieve this goal. Louis Sullivan's widely publicized praise for Eliel Saarinen's Chicago Tribune Tower entry established unrelieved verticality as the model for tall buildings. Henry Russell Hitchcock pronounced the entry's freedom from Gothic ornament and use of stylized ornament as nearly original. This praise resulted in the advocacy of design that was independent of historical precedent.

Art Deco-style architecture was characterized by the composition of geometric forms with a vertical emphasis. Buildings were often arranged as a series of step backs, emphasizing this linear, hard edge composition. Ornament was highly stylized and ranged from floral and foliate motifs to geometric forms, particularly chevrons and fluting, and included decoration derived from ancient sources, including the Egyptian and Mayan cultures. To this modern generation, the streamlined forms of the Art Deco style symbolized a new era and progress. In Kansas City, the Art Deco style was applied to a number of building types including office buildings, apartment buildings, banks, hotels, department stores, and other commercial buildings.

During the 1920s and early 1930s, Kansas City was experiencing a period of prosperity, and construction was booming. During the 1910s a few tall buildings had been built, but it was in the 1920s and 1930s that Kansas City developed status as a city with a highrise skyline. This

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<sup>5</sup> George Ehrlich. *Kansas City, Missouri: An Architectural History*. Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1992, pp. 96-97.

<sup>6</sup> John Poppeliers, S. Allen Chambers, and Nancy B. Schwartz. *What Style Is It?* Washington, DC: The Preservation Press, n.d., p. 39.

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development was spurred in part by the city's growing prominence in the national arena. The city served as a refueling stop for flights between Los Angeles and the East Coast. Air cabins during this period were not pressurized, and many passengers deplaned at the city. Thus, the city became a stopover for many of the more prominent figures from these cities. During these decades, most of the nation still travelled by train, but Kansas City's role as a layover between the coasts assured that many of the stars, the executives, and the adventurous saw this city in the midwest. "Everybody knew Kansas City was a great modern city because everybody could see those Art Deco downtown towers when flying into the main airport."<sup>7</sup>

Kansas City's use of the Art Deco style was also influenced by the zoning ordinance developed in the 1920s. The City Planning Commission was organized in 1920, and one year later the State Zoning Enabling Act was passed. A draft of a zoning plan was drawn up by the Commission in 1922, and in 1923 the final version was passed. This resulted in the city's control of land use, building height, and area of lot. The plan, modelled on New York's 1916 zoning legislation, required set backs on the city's tall buildings. The first project to be regulated by this new law was the 1929 addition to the 1919 Southwestern Bell Telephone building at 324 E. 11th Street. The fourteen story addition, designed by Hoit, Price, and Barnes, employed step backs as required by the law.

In 1930, the firm of Hoit, Price, and Barnes was chosen to design the Fidelity National Bank and Trust Company Building. This Kansas City firm was made up of three partners, Henry Ford Hoit, Edwin Morgan Price, and Alfred Edward Barnes. The firm was responsible for a number of projects throughout the city ranging from single family houses to large commercial structures. The firm was consistently ranked among the top three architectural firms in Kansas City from the 1910s until the firm was dissolved in the 1940s. Hoit, Price, and Barnes was responsible for the design of a number of notable buildings in Kansas City including the Kansas City Power & Light Company Building (NRHP Determined Eligible, Ref. #88001852), the Continental Hotel (NRHP Listed, Ref, #83000997), and the Southwestern Bell Telephone Company Building. Other buildings by the firm included the Temple B'nai Jehudah, Longview Farm, Independence Boulevard Christian Church, and the Robert Keith Furniture Building.

The oldest partner of the firm was Henry Ford Hoit (1872-1951). Henry Ford Hoit was born in Chicago on August 4, 1872. In 1892, Hoit graduated from Chicago's Manual Training School, where he showed an early talent for drawing and design. Inspired by the Beaux-Arts architecture at

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<sup>7</sup> Barbara Baer Capitman. *Rediscovering Art Deco, USA*. New York, NY: Viking Studio Books, 1994.

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the 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago, he turned to study architecture, apprenticing himself to Dwight Perkins, a Chicago Prairie School Architect. At Perkins' suggestion, Hoit went on to attend the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, graduating in 1897. A member of Delta Kappa Epsilon, Hoit made the acquaintance of another fraternity member, William H. Cutler, a draftsman in the Kansas City office of the Boston firm, Van Brunt & Howe. Cutler wrote to Hoit:

We are covered up with work here and now have the chance at another job that is too big to turn down; I speak of one of the main buildings to be put up for the World's Fair in St. Louis. We need a man who can take full charge of the men and design on this job. Would you consider the job?<sup>8</sup>

Henry Hoit accepted this offer, going to Kansas City in 1901 to design the Varied Industry Building for the St. Louis World's Fair. Soon after Hoit's arrival, Van Brunt retired, and the office became known as Howe, Hoit and Cutler in 1904. Cutler retired three years later, leaving the firm as Howe and Hoit, where Hoit practiced until establishing his own firm in 1910, and joined his partners, Edwin Morgan Price, and Alfred Edward Barnes in 1919. Price was president of the Kansas City Chapter of the A.I.A. and served as a member of a number of chapter committees. In 1938 Hoit was elected a Fellow of the A.I.A., an honor only previously bestowed on four Kansas City architects. Hoit later served as Director for the Central States Region of the A.I.A.

Edwin Morgan Price (1884-1957), another partner in the firm was born in 1884 in Webb City, Arkansas. Shortly thereafter, Price's family moved to Fort Smith, Arkansas, where Price attended public school. Price's talent for drawing led him to an apprenticeship in the architecture office of H.I. Gottard in Fort Smith. In 1903, Price moved to St. Louis and worked for Legg & Holoway, Eames & Young, Weber & Groves, and the Louisiana Purchase Exposition. In 1905, Price went to Kansas City to work for the firm, Howe, Hoit and Cutler, where he first met Henry Ford Hoit. In 1907 Price attended a year-long architecture course at Hoit's alma mater, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Price remained in this architectural firm, becoming Hoit's partner in 1913. In 1919, the firm became known as Hoit, Price, and Barnes.

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<sup>8</sup> Henry F. Hoit. "Turning Point in My Career." *Kansas City Star*, March 9, 1930.



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The third partner of Hoit, Price, and Barnes, Alfred Edward Barnes, was the only Kansas City native of the partnership. Alfred Edward Barnes was born in Kansas City on March 5, 1892. Although Barnes originally hoped to become a civil engineer, he instead found work at the architecture firm of Henry Hoit in 1909. Based on his talent for drafting, Barnes was shortly made chief draftsman and within ten years was made partner of the firm, Hoit, Price, and Barnes.

In 1930, Hoit, Price, and Barnes, already a prominent architecture firm within Kansas City, sealed their reputation by being awarded the two most prestigious commissions of the year: the new Fidelity National Bank and Trust Company Building and the Kansas City Power and Light Building. When Hoit, Price, and Barnes received the commission for the new Fidelity National Bank and Trust Company Building, two restrictions were placed on the architects. The new building was to pay homage to the old building in that it must have two towers, one of which was to house the town clock. The new building was also to be classical in design, in other words to look like a bank. Two additional staff members of Hoit, Price, and Barnes, Robert Blumgarten and Kent Frower, were charged with the ornamentation of the building. Significantly, Blumgarten, during a grand tour of Europe had heard tell of the Paris Exposition. Abandoning his travels in Switzerland and Austria, Blumgarten went to see the exposition. Although at the time Blumgarten claimed to have been unimpressed by the exposition, in retrospect he acknowledged the great impact it had on his work.<sup>9</sup> Blumgarten had just returned from being loaned out to the architectural firm of Keene and Bradley for work on one of Tulsa's Art Deco buildings, the Philcade Tower and was promptly assigned to the new Fidelity building.

The Fidelity National Bank and Trust Company Building, while conforming to the bankers' traditional requirements, was a conscious and distinct expression of the modern style. The form, a tower based on geometric shapes and feature set backs is typical of the Art Deco style. The use of linear elements like brick piers and ornament to emphasize the verticality of the building is also characteristic of the style. The verticality of the brick piers is reinforced with the use of terra cotta spandrels, fluted pilasters, and bursts of foliage that shoot up from these piers. At night the building's reach skyward was illuminated by floodlights set at each step back that shone upward along the tower. The vertical nature of the building culminates in the twin towers that crown the composition. The hard-edged low relief terra cotta ornament, like the ornate, foliate spandrels and fluted piers are typical of the style. Although the base, as required by the bankers, is classical in design, even this detailing, though rooted in tradition, is Art Deco in spirit: stylized, hard-edged, and more abstract. Stylized interpretations of traditional ornament, the fluted terra cotta pilasters

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<sup>9</sup> Telephone interview with Kansas City Architect and Local Historian Richard Farnan, September 11, 1996.

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that spring from the step backs, the vigilant eagles who sit atop the second step back, and the Fidelity shields that punctuate the entablature of the base, sign the function of the building.

The interior of the building, like the exterior, featured Deco-style stylized ornament. Geometric forms decorate the floors. Notably in the vault, a highly stylized sunburst, a motif commonly associated with Art Deco, decorates the floor. Lavish plaster ceilings were painted in polychromy, another feature typical of the style.

### SUMMARY OF ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

Several other Art Deco commercial buildings are contemporary with the Fidelity National Bank and Trust Company Building including Hoit, Price, and Barnes' Power and Light Building, the restrained Bryant Building (1102 Grand Avenue), and the Professional Building (1103 Grand Avenue). The Fidelity National Bank Building, like the already listed Power and Light Building, is distinguished in its expression of the Art Deco movement through its composition, height, and use of ornamentation. The building expresses the zeitgeist of the age with its verticality, set backs, geometric form, and stylized decorative details. Not only an excellent illustration of the Art Deco style, the Fidelity National Bank and Trust Company Building is an outstanding example of the work of prominent Kansas City architects, Hoit, Price, and Barnes.

### CONCLUSION

The Fidelity Trust Company was chartered in 1899. Just thirty years later, the Fidelity National Bank and Trust Company had become not only one of the largest banks in a Federal Reserve city, but one of the nation's largest banks. The bank's rapid growth led the ever-increasing number of employees to quickly outgrow its original quarters. With its employees scattered across the city, the directors of Fidelity National Bank realized the need to again unite its staff under one roof. This would not only be more efficient, but would allow the bank to proclaim its importance through a commanding monument. In fact, when constructed, the Fidelity National Bank and Trust Company was the second tallest building in the state of Missouri.

The building's grandeur and iconography illustrates the bank's importance and function. Its form and iconography alluded to its operations as a financial establishment, from the classically-inspired base of the building to the eagles perched on the upper set backs who guard the building, and the money within. The rich materials - marbles, bronze, and walnut - convey the wealth of the bank.

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The building's soaring towers and height, (465'-4"), its imposing ornament and innovative design, and its housing of the town clock in its tower, create an impressive city landmark, anchoring one end of Kansas City's skyline.

The Fidelity National Bank and Trust Company Building exemplifies Art Deco architecture in Kansas City and represents an important work of the prominent Kansas City firm, Hoit, Price, and Barnes. The building displays the streamlined forms and exuberant ornament of Art Deco design, symbolizing modernity and a new era of progress, characteristics that the Fidelity National Bank and Trust Company, as one of Kansas City's most important financial institutions, was eager to adopt.

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Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Collection

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Verbal Boundary Description

The north 24 feet except that part in Walnut Street of Lot 59 and all of lot 60-62 inclusive in Swope's Addition. Otherwise known as Plat 0166, Parcel 065.

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Boundary Justification

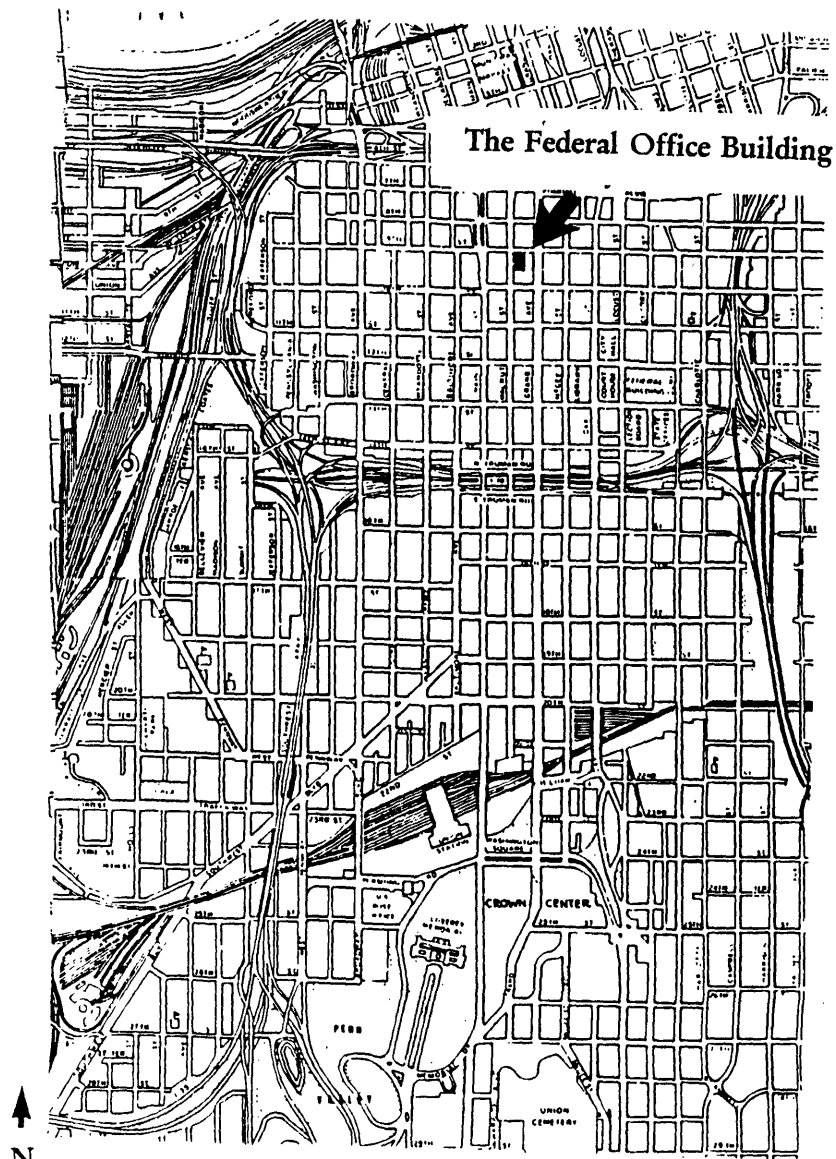
The nominated property includes the entire parcel historically associated with the Fidelity National Bank and Trust Company Building since its construction in 1930-32.

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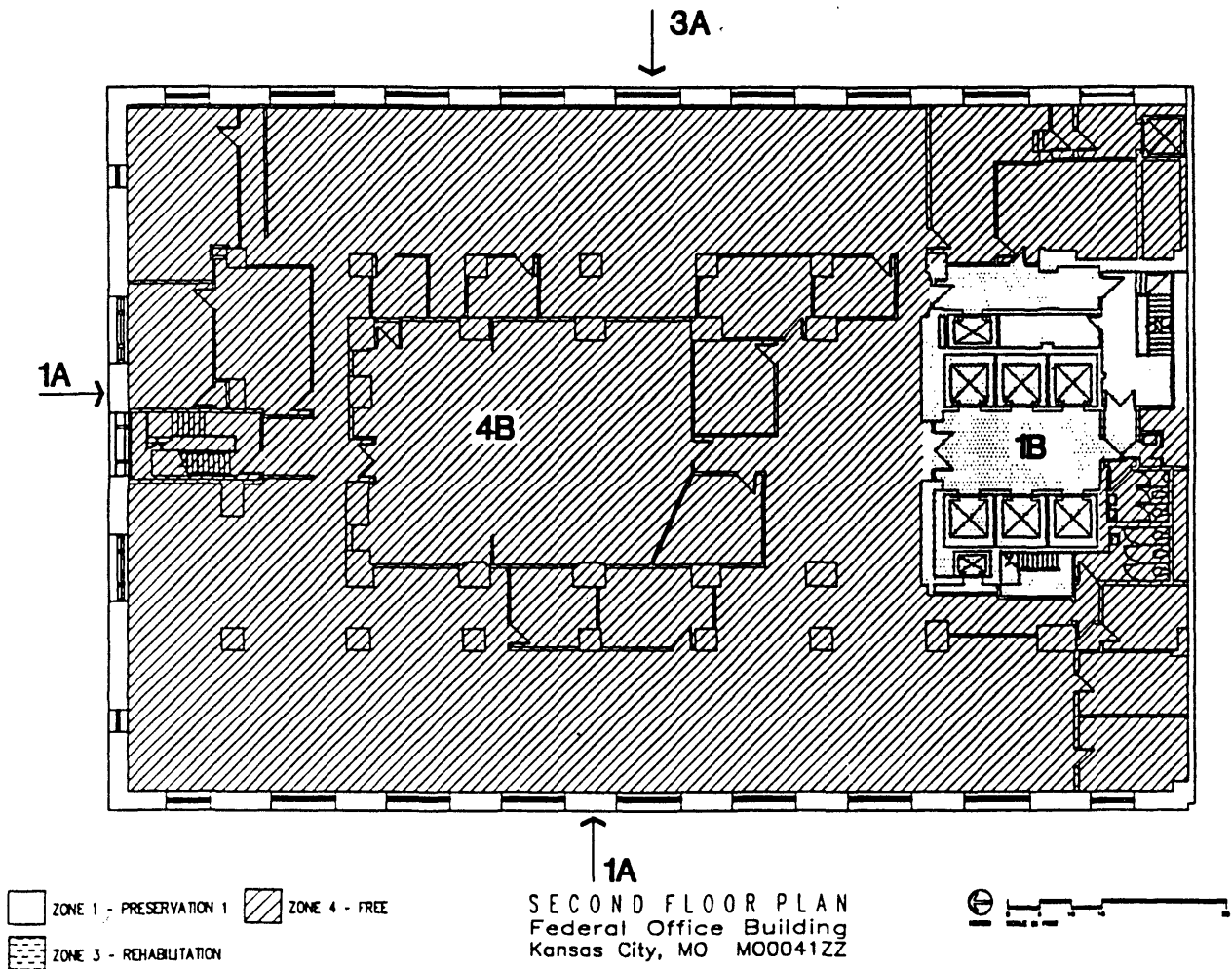
N Fig. 200. Detail of map of KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI, from near the riverfront on the north to Penn Valley Park on the south, including Union Station, Liberty Memorial and Crown Center.

The Federal Office Building

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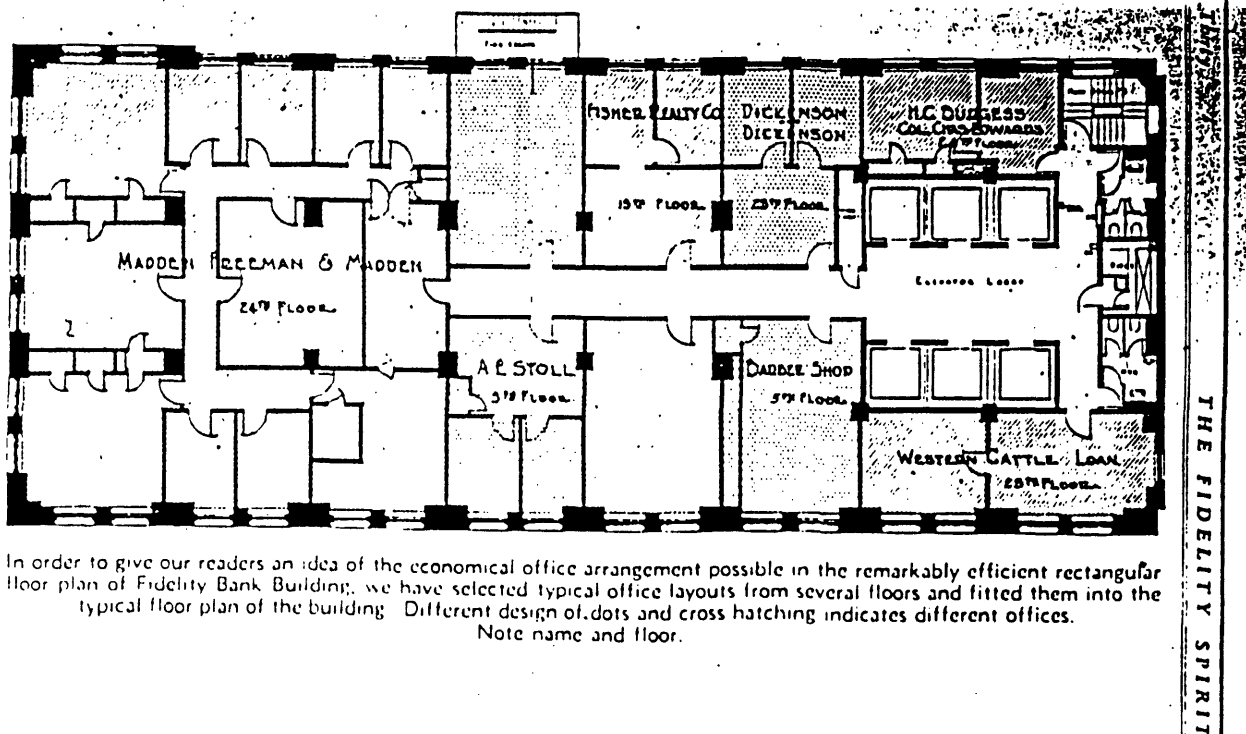


The Federal Office Building  
Second Floor Plan, 1995  
(Ratio, Building Preservation Plan)

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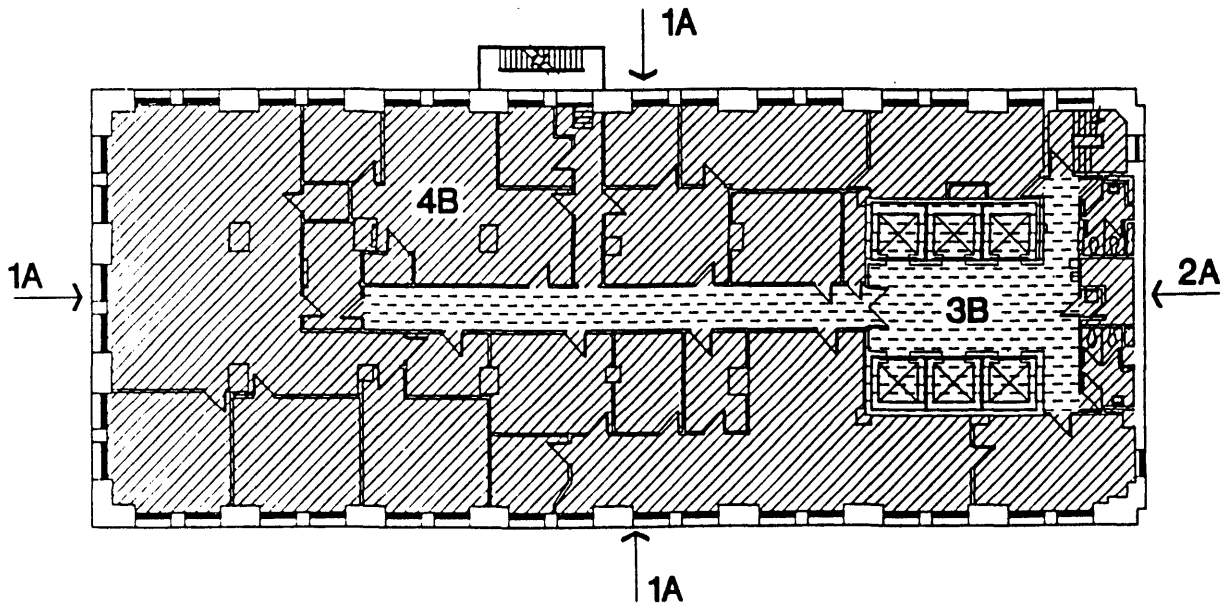


The Fidelity National Bank and Trust Company Building  
Typical Office Tower Floor Plan, 1932  
("Special Building Edition," *Fidelity Spirit*)

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ZONE 1 - PRESERVATION 1  
ZONE 2 - PRESERVATION 2  
ZONE 3 - REHABILITATION  
ZONE 4 - FREE

FOURTEENTH FLOOR PLAN  
Federal Office Building  
Kansas City, MO MO0041ZZ



Federal Office Building  
Fourteenth Floor Plan (Office Tower), 1995  
(Ratio, Building Preservation Plan)

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All photographs are of:

THE FEDERAL OFFICE BUILDING  
911 WALNUT STREET  
KANSAS CITY, MO

All 1996 photographs were taken by Tracerics in May 1996.  
Negatives are on file at Tracerics, 5420 Western Avenue, Chevy Chase, MD 20815.

VIEW OF: Northwest Corner, View Looking Southeast  
PHOTO 1 OF 8

VIEW OF: West Elevation (Facade), View Looking East  
PHOTO 2 OF 8

VIEW OF: Southeast Corner, View Looking Northwest  
PHOTO 3 OF 8

VIEW OF: Northwest Corner of Base of Building, View Looking Southeast  
PHOTO 4 OF 8

VIEW OF: West Elevation of Tower, View Looking East  
PHOTO 5 OF 8

VIEW OF: Main Entrance, West Elevation  
PHOTO 6 OF 8

VIEW OF: Entrance, West Elevation  
PHOTO 7 OF 8

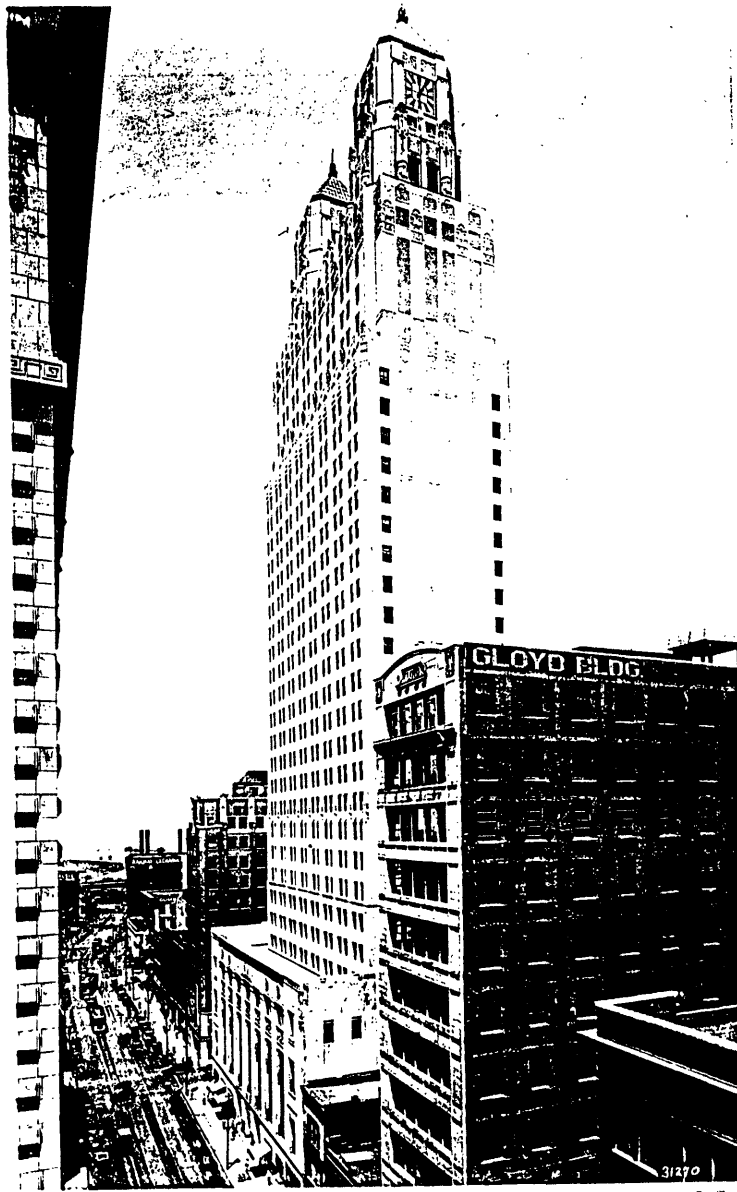
VIEW OF: Detail, Base of Building, West Elevation  
PHOTO 8 OF 8

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1932 View of Fidelity National Bank and Trust Company Building  
Looking North along Walnut Street







FOR SALE





FOR SALE

FOR SALE  
BUILDING  
100 West Street  
LONG BEACH, CA

EDS







FEDERAL OFFICE BUILDING



911



NO SMOKING IN  
THE READING ROOM



911



FIDELITY NATIONAL BANK  
AND TRUST COMPANY

FOUNDED 1852 INCORPORATED 1906

