

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

INDIVIDUAL DATA SHEET 17. O.T. Bassett Tower

Continuation sheet 26

Item number 7

Page 26

For HCRS use only

received APR 2 1980

date entered SEP 24 1980

Name: O.T. Bassett Tower
Address: 301 Texas Avenue
Owner: Bassett Company, Inc.
P.O. Box 179
El Paso, TX 79942

Architect/Builder:	Trost and Trost	Style:	Stepped skyscraper; Modern-
Date:	1930		istic, Art Deco detailing
Original Use:	Commercial/Office	Present Use:	Same

Physical Description:

At one time the tallest building in El Paso, the O.T. Bassett Tower rises fifteen stories with a strong vertical thrust in the setback skyscraper form which prevailed during the Modernistic development of the early 20th century. Ornamentation is selectively applied to the ground and upper levels with structural delineations establishing the prominent verticality. Unadorned brick piers rise the full height of the structure with fenestration piercing the recessed vertical planes between the piers. The spandrel bricks are manipulated to create a fluted effect in shallow relief. Terra cotta, art stone, marble, and granite ornamentation applied to the first and uppermost floors offset the unadorned austerity of the structure. An elaborate entrance detailed with Art Deco design elements is the focal point of the southeast facade of the ground floor. Included in this composition are facial representations, one of which is believed to be a likeness of Trost himself. The upper floors are detailed with predominantly rectilinear geometric elements. The piers of the uppermost floor are terminated with eagle busts and the tower is topped with a steep pitch pyramidal roof.

Statement of Significance:

O.T. Bassett Tower, a monumental example of early 20th century skyscraper construction and one of Trost's most noteworthy structures, was built by Charles N. Bassett in memory of his father, O.T. The pair represent a primary force in the early development of El Paso and also a lengthy term of professional prominence and community service. O.T. first came to El Paso in February, 1880 via Overland Stage with his friend Charles Morehead to purchase land for the Texas and Pacific Railroad. After purchasing 600 acres, Bassett returned home to his wife in Indiana who died later that same year following the birth of their son, Charles.

In February, 1881 Bassett and Morehead returned to El Paso and immediately organized the State National Bank with Morehead as president and Bassett a major stockholder. Bassett set up shop for a lumber business at the corner of Mills and Stanton Streets and when the first train arrived in May of that year bringing California redwood, he was in business. As the burgeoning city grew, Bassett supplied the materials necessary for building. Interested in establishing order to the lawless frontier town, Bassett was diligently active in civic affairs. He was involved in establishing the first school district in 1882 and afterwards named president of the school board. He also served the city as councilman.

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Statement of Significance, continued:

During this time, Charles remained with relatives in Indiana where he was educated, although he visited El Paso regularly. Charles moved to El Paso in 1898 following his father's death to continue the lumberyard operations. In 1908 he was appointed vice president of State National Bank and in 1921, president, a position he held until 1944 when he became chairman of the board. Throughout his long and distinguished career with the bank, he maintained other interests in real estate, ranching, and lumber, and continued to serve the needs of the community in the manner established by his father. Though Charles died in 1944, the Bassett name is still prominent to El Pasoans who have recently opened a modern shopping center known as Bassett center.

Geographical Data:

Verbal Boundary Description:

Mills Survey, Block 11, Lot 60
130' on Stanton x 160.73' on Texas

Acreage:

Less than one

UTM Reference:

13/3514532/359280

Property <i>Commercial Structures of El Paso</i> <i>by Henry C. Frost Thematic Resources</i>		80004111 80004108 80004115
State <i>TX - El Paso</i>	Working Number <i>#-2-801070</i>	
TECHNICAL		Cover CONTROL
Photos <u>36</u>		
Maps <u>5</u>		

Basically a well-done nomination. For the most part the buildings are nicely executed examples of various architectural styles, designed by the city's leading architect during the early decades of the 20th C. & have questions or reservations about Blalga 1, 3, 4, 12, 13, and 17, however - in attached sheet for specifics. Call about these 6 buildings - the rest can be accepted.

HISTORIAN
Grosvenor
6/2/80

ARCHITECTURAL HISTORIAN

See comments attached

ARCHEOLOGIST

OTHER

HAER

Inventory _____
Review _____

REVIEW UNIT CHIEF

See 8/5 phone sheet
Revised NBD for #1 rec'd.
All but 3 of the buildings are individually eligible. #4 & 12 do not appear to meet the criteria considering the other better Chicago School examples. I think #13 has lost too much integrity to be listed individually.
~~*now, the buildings are not eligible for listing as a group.*~~
~~*It is recommended that the buildings be listed individually.*~~
~~*It is recommended that the buildings be listed individually.*~~

Accept: #1-3, 5-11, 14-17
Reject: #4, 12, 13
Grosvenor
9/23/80

BRANCH CHIEF

KEEPER

National Register Write-up	Send-back	Entered SEP 24 1980
Federal Register Entry <u>2, 3, 81</u>	Re-submit	

80004106

80004105

80004100

80004101

80004109

80004116

80004102

80004112

80004113

80004109



SEP 24 1980

Commercial Structures of El Paso by Henry C. Trost

O.T. Bassett Tower

301 Texas Avenue

El Paso, El Paso County, Texas

Photo: Texas Historical Commission, 6/79

Negative on File

Southwest oblique, camera facing north

Photo # 17 of 36

APR 2 1980





SEP 24 1980

Commercial Structures of El Paso by Henry C. Trost
O.T. Bassett Tower
301 Texas Avenue
El Paso, El Paso County, Texas
Photo: Texas Historical Commission, 6/79
Negative on File
Facade detail, camera facing northwest
Photo # 18 of 36

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Commercial Structures of El Paso by Henry C. Trost

O. T. Bassett Tower

301 Texas Avenue

El Paso, El Paso County, Texas

Historic Photo: Courtesy Southwest Collection, 3/80

El Paso Public Library

Negative on File at Library

Southwest Oblique, Camera facing north

Photo # 36 of 36

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Please refer to the map in the
Multiple Property Cover Sheet
for this property

Multiple Property Cover Sheet Reference Number: 64000837