

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM



1. NAME OF PROPERTY

HISTORIC NAME: Santa Fe Building  
OTHER NAME/SITE NUMBER: N/A

2. LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER: 900 South Polk Street  
CITY OR TOWN: Amarillo VICINITY: N/A NOT FOR PUBLICATION: N/A  
STATE: Texas CODE: TX COUNTY: Potter CODE: 375 ZIP CODE: 79101

3. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this x nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property x meets    does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant    nationally    statewide x locally. (    See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

*Justin J. Powell*  
Signature of certifying official

17 June 1996  
Date

State Historic Preservation Officer, Texas Historical Commission

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 commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and 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) :

*Edson H. Beall*  
Signature of the Keeper

8/22/96  
Date of Action

Entered in the  
National Register

**5. CLASSIFICATION**

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**OWNERSHIP OF PROPERTY:** public-local

**CATEGORY OF PROPERTY:** building

<b>NUMBER OF RESOURCES WITHIN PROPERTY:</b>	<b>CONTRIBUTING</b>	<b>NONCONTRIBUTING</b>
	1	0 BUILDINGS
	0	0 SITES
	0	0 STRUCTURES
	4	0 OBJECTS
	5	0 TOTAL

**NUMBER OF CONTRIBUTING RESOURCES PREVIOUSLY LISTED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER:** 0

**NAME OF RELATED MULTIPLE PROPERTY LISTING:** N/A

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**6. FUNCTION OR USE**

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**HISTORIC FUNCTIONS:** COMMERCE/business

**CURRENT FUNCTIONS:** WORK IN PROGRESS

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**7. DESCRIPTION**

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**ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION:** Other: 3-part vertical block; Late Gothic Revival

**MATERIALS:** FOUNDATION CONCRETE  
WALLS CONCRETE; TERRA COTTA  
ROOF ASPHALT  
OTHER GLASS; BRONZE

**NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION** (see continuation sheets 7-5 through 7-6)

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Santa Fe Building  
Amarillo, Potter County, Texas

Section 7 Page 5

Built between 1928 and 1930 at a cost of \$1.5 million, the Gothic Revival style Santa Fe Building rises 14 stories above downtown Amarillo. Company architect E.A. Harrison designed the terra cotta clad skyscraper to serve as the regional headquarters of the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway system. The rectangular building conforms to Longstreth's typology for 3-part vertical blocks, a predominant urban form in Texas during the period. The composition combines a 2-story base with a 10-story shaft surmounted by a 2-story stepped tower. Focused principally on this tower and the main entry, restrained Gothic detailing with Moderne influences distinguishes the composition. Giant red neon signs emblazoned with the Santa Fe name cap all four elevations. A prominent visual landmark in the community, the building retains a high degree of its historic integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association.

The Santa Fe Building occupies a 90' by 140' tract at the southwest corner of Ninth and Polk streets, maintaining a prominent visual presence at the heart of Amarillo's central business district (see Figure 21). Towering above the surrounding 1 and 2-story commercial buildings, it rises 188 feet above ground and extends 25 feet below ground. Its structural skeleton incorporates more than 8,500 cubic yards of concrete and over 1,080 tons of structural steel (*Amarillo Sunday News and Globe*, 12 January 1936). Granite and terra cotta panels sheath each of the four nearly identical elevations. Fenestration includes symmetrically placed banks of double hung metal sash above an arcaded ground floor. . Bronze entranceways of revolving doors with swinging doors on each side open from both Ninth and Polk Street facades. Metal fire escapes zigzag up each of the secondary elevations. The austere shaft of the building gives way to ornamental terra cotta detailing at the topmost floors, which step back from the main shaft. This detailing consists primarily of tracery panels, arcaded windows, quatrefoil motifs and buttress-like pylons drawn from the Gothic Revival style. The original neon signs still top each elevation (see Photo 6). Emblematic of the four directions from which the Santa Fe entered Amarillo, the 40' long signs consist of neon letters between 7.5' and 5.5' high.

Designed to accommodate three additional floors, the building encompassed 166,256 square feet of office and mechanical space (see Figures 23-24). News coverage of the dedication ceremonies described its interior arrangement (*Amarillo Sunday News and Globe*, 12 January 1936). Extending under the sidewalks, the sub-basement housed the heating plants, machinery and file room, with additional machinery, the mail room and file rooms occupying the basement. Public areas on the first floor held the city freight and passenger offices as well as lessees such as the Fox Drug Company, Peacock Beauty Parlor, and Bruce Daniel Barber Shop. The retail businesses grew to a total of five before their eviction in 1968 to make room for an automated Central Accounting Bureau office, one of only six in the Santa Fe system. Installation of these new offices resulted in the replacement of show

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Santa Fe Building  
Amarillo, Potter County, Texas

Section 7 Page 6

window glass with bronzed panels to convert the ground floor public spaces into offices. The second, third and fourth floors housed offices for the train master, mechanical superintendent, chief dispatcher, car accountant, claim agent, general agent, tax department, telegraph office, division engineer, road master, bridge and building department, and building superintendent. The building superintendent's office controlled all 134 clocks in the building via a master clock, which in turn was calibrated each day with the U.S. Naval Observatory. The fifth floor held the passenger department, freight department, baggage department, Santa Fe refrigerator dispatch office, agriculture department and livestock agent. Offices for the general manager, assistant general manager and district engineer occupied the sixth and seventh floors. The eighth floor officed the chief engineer, valuation engineer, heating engineer and company architect. The freight section accounting department occupied the ninth floor, with the treasurer and disbursement section of the accounting department housed on the tenth floor. The eleventh floor held the locating engineer's office and the land department, as well as the auditorium, smoking room for men and stage dressing rooms outfitted with showers (see Figure 24). Extending into the twelfth floor, the auditorium measured 69' by 54' including a 53' by 16' stage. Folding chairs seated 600 and allowed room for dancing. The signal engineer's office occupied the rest of the twelfth floor. The top two stories held the blue print and reproduction rooms.

To increase fire protection, little wood was included in the building. Interior office doors, office trim such as chair rails, a few window sills, and picture moldings were made of wood. Most of the wood trim is of quartered oak. Some private offices contained lockers and lavatory enclosures of the same quartered oak. The auditorium was trimmed with oak wainscot, with its floors, stage and ladies lounge composed of maple

The little altered building has been immaculately maintained. Mechanical upgrades included the 1957 replacement of the four original elevators with Westinghouse *Selectomatic* elevators and installation of the air conditioning system in 1959. The building retains its original appearance despite replacement of the first floor storefront windows in 1965. These windows will be restored to their original appearance during the current conversion of the building into offices for Potter County.

**8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

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**APPLICABLE NATIONAL REGISTER CRITERIA**

- 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 VALUE, 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:** N/A

**AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE:** Transportation; Architecture

**PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANCE:** 1928-1946

**SIGNIFICANT DATES:** 1928 1930

**SIGNIFICANT PERSON:** N/A

**CULTURAL AFFILIATION:** N/A

**ARCHITECT/BUILDER:** Harrison, E.A. (architect); Brennan Construction Company (builder)

**NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE** (see continuation sheets 8-7 through 8-14)

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**9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES**

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**BIBLIOGRAPHY** (see continuation sheets 9-15 through 9-16)

**PREVIOUS DOCUMENTATION ON FILE (NPS):** N/A

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

**PRIMARY LOCATION OF ADDITIONAL DATA:**

- State historic preservation office (*Texas Historical Commission*)
- Other state agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other -- Specify Repository: Preservation Amarillo

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Santa Fe Building  
Amarillo, Potter County, Texas

Section 8 Page 7

During the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railway network established Amarillo as the hub of a trading area that embraced the Texas Panhandle and neighboring parts of Oklahoma, Kansas, Colorado and New Mexico. The community evolved as the focus of regional markets for agricultural, livestock, commercial and petroleum interests. Regional discoveries of oil and natural gas augmented agriculturally based wealth in the 1920s and 1930s, prompting a period of unprecedented growth. In response to exponential increases in passenger and freight traffic during this period, the railroad company commissioned a new regional headquarters building in 1928. As Western Lines headquarters for the rail company from 1930 to 1989, the Gothic Revival style Santa Fe Building represented the tremendous economic power this transportation conglomerate exerted in the community, state and region. As a result, the property is nominated at the state level of significance under Criterion A in the area of Transportation and under Criterion C in the area of Architecture.

The establishment of rail service in 1887 coincide with the organization of Potter County and the creation of Amarillo. In August of that year, the community's initial town site arose along the newly laid Fort Worth and Denver City (FW&DC) rail line. Eager to capitalize on trade developing in the region, the Southern Kansas Railway Company (a Santa Fe subsidiary) simultaneously constructed a 100-mile line into Texas terminating at Panhandle City (Reed, 301). Santa Fe officials planned to continue their line to the South Plains through Washburn and Canyon (see Map 18). Amarillo's leading citizens successfully lobbied for an alternate route through their community. In response, the Panhandle Railway Company built a line linking Panhandle City with the FW&DC line at Washburn. The Santa Fe system initially leased track rights over the FW&DC line to reach Amarillo (Price, 1). It subsequently extended the main line directly to Amarillo in 1908, abandoning the earlier route and redirecting traffic along lines constructed between Amarillo and Belen, New Mexico (Reed, 301). This new connection enhanced Amarillo's position within the transcontinental network (see Map 17), establishing it as the focal point of a 100,000 square mile trade territory serving 850,000 people (see Map 19).

Consolidation of the Santa Fe system in the region prompted relocation of its offices from Panhandle City to Amarillo in 1899 (Reed, 301). In 1903 the company moved a frame building by rail from Roswell, New Mexico, to the corner of Second and Grant streets to serve as its local office. Extensions of lines to serve rapidly developing areas of northwest Texas, western Kansas, western Oklahoma, eastern Colorado and eastern New Mexico necessitated staff increases prompting three additions to this building. The system also built a handsome Mission Revival style passenger station and Harvey House Restaurant (1910; NR 1986) during this period. It subsequently established Amarillo as the Plains division headquarters and eventually Western Lines headquarters, from which activities in Colorado, New Mexico, western Oklahoma, Kansas, and west Texas were directed. The Plains division was one of three grand divisions in the Santa Fe system (Page, 54). The Amarillo office supervised nine

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection 8 Page 8Santa Fe Building  
Amarillo, Potter County, Texas

divisions with 5,668 miles of tracks (*Amarillo Sunday News and Globe*, 12 January 1930). Upon completion of the new headquarters building, Santa Fe's facilities in Amarillo also included an interlocking plant and modern store house, complete car repair shop, wheel shop, machine shops, and round house servicing 75 to 85 locomotives and 1200 to 2400 cars each 24 hours (Key, 162). These facilities occupied a large yard near 17th and Garfield Streets in eastern Amarillo. Linked with the passenger depot via underground telegraph train dispatch and message telegraph circuits, the Santa Fe Building served as the nerve center of the Western Lines grand division (*Amarillo Sunday News and Globe*, 12 January 1930). Dispatchers in the office building controlled traffic on 226 miles of track between Pampa, Texas, and Wynoka, Oklahoma, and from Canyon, Texas, to Frisco, New Mexico (*Along Your Way*).

The Santa Fe system was built upon the assumption that the Great American Desert of the West was capable of nurturing a flourishing economy (Waters, 474). The southwestern United States was sparsely settled during the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Isolated settlements depended on rail service to link them to markets elsewhere in the nation. The railroads in turn relied on expanding volumes of freight and passenger traffic to generate profits. As a result, railroad companies such as the Santa Fe system actively encouraged settlement efforts within their service areas to build profitable markets in the developing region. Amarillo served as the chief point of entry for new settlers in the region. Anticipating \$300 per year in gross revenues for the railroad from each new settler (Waters, 252), Santa Fe officials established a special department to encourage settlement in the region. This department continued its efforts until the Depression of the 1930s (Waters, 251). To improve agricultural productivity in the region, the company also sponsored educational programs such as the "Cow, Sow and Hen" train, a rolling exhibit encouraging diversification of crops and other scientific farming practices. Corporate offices in the eastern United States and Europe encouraged migration by immigrant groups such as the Russian Mennonites, who had proved invaluable in the earlier settlement of farm lands (Waters, 227). The dismantling of the 3,000,000 acre Texas Panhandle XIT Ranch into farms and smaller ranches by private land operators further facilitated this settlement process in the Panhandle (Robertson, 272). Santa Fe's salesmen, colonization agents and agricultural agents often became leading citizens in the communities they settled in the region. They lured people to view and purchase land in the region through a variety of inducements. Millions of booklets and maps distributed in the east and midwest advertised the area. Twice a month Santa Fe excursion trains ran from Chicago to the Texas Panhandle (Key, 164). Groups of automobiles and drivers met each trainload of potential settlers, transporting them over the long distances of the Panhandle in the company of Santa Fe agents (see Figure 20). Special out-of-the-way hotels owned by the land companies provided a comfortable place for prospective settlers to stay while keeping them isolated from competition or a discouraging word. During the first quarter of 1907 alone, Santa Fe's Department of Colonization and Immigration arranged transportation for 1,340 rail cars of emigrants' belongings, 2 families to a car, to the vicinity of Amarillo (Waters, 251).

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Santa Fe Building  
Amarillo, Potter County, Texas

Section 8 Page 9

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The relationship between farmer and rail company was symbiotic. Profitable operation of farms relied on accessibility to distant markets where products could be sold at good prices. The rail company generated profits both by charging farmers to ship produce and cattle and by collecting freight revenues on incoming machinery and household goods. To bolster productivity and therefore freight revenues, the railroads invested in loading facilities that improve speed and quality service. They also hired agricultural experts to assist the farmers through lectures and agricultural publications (Waters, 417). These experts promoted crop diversification and implementation of scientific farming methods, recommended strains of grain compatible with local environmental conditions and occasionally furnished seed grain to the farmer (Waters, 417).

Of the estimated 18 million acres of arable land in the Panhandle, one-fifth was in cultivation by 1928. Alfalfa, cotton, oats, potatoes, cotton, broom corn, milo, maize, grain sorghum and wheat were among the diverse crops shipped from the region during this period (*Texas Almanac*, 1929). Most Panhandle wheat was shipped to flour mills near the Great Lakes, while beef cattle, hogs, sheep, poultry, and dairy products ended up in markets such as Chicago and St. Louis. The Amarillo Chamber of Commerce estimated the annual value of the Panhandle's crops at more than \$71 million, with livestock products accounting for an additional \$6 million (*Amarillo City Directory*, 1931). Amarillo achieved recognition as the livestock center of the Panhandle as a result of such figures.

At the junction of three major rail lines, Amarillo also served as the distribution center for wholesale trade in an area embracing the Panhandle, Colorado, New Mexico and Oklahoma. Contemporary accounts labeled it "one of the largest machinery distribution points in the U.S.; a leading wholesale and jobbing center in the southwest" (*Texas Almanac*, 1929). The giant Amarillo Hardware Company, for example, shipped wholesale orders of everything from dishes to oil field supplies throughout the region. Other wholesale companies operating from Amarillo during this period included Foxworth-Galbraith Lumber, Waples-Platter Grocery Company, O.M. Franklin Blackleg Serum Company, Moore Poston Wholesale Dry Goods and Southwestern Wholesale Drug Corporation. At the time of the Santa Fe Building's construction, Amarillo's wholesale business amounted to \$22 million annually (Key, 258).

Discoveries of natural gas in 1918 prompted further exploration for oil in the region. Large oil strikes in 1925 fostered a frenzied period of economic expansion in the region. During 1926 alone, 28 new towns were established in the Panhandle oil fields. Dozens of oil companies formed overnight. The Panhandle population swelled from 115,000 in 1920 to more than 240,000 in 1930 (*Texas Almanac*, 1930). Drilling activity in oil fields in Hutchinson, Gray, Carson and Moore counties attracted hordes of people to the area. A 240-acre town site staked out in March 1926, Borger housed 10,000 residents in tents and shacks within a few months. The influx of newcomers seeking their fortunes spawned rampant lawlessness and violence that prompted Governor Dan Moody to declare martial law in the community

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 10

Santa Fe Building  
Amarillo, Potter County, Texas

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twice. He sent in both the National Guard and the Texas Rangers to restore order (White, n.p.). Boom towns featured few amenities, with no paved streets, hotels or restaurants. A room with a bath was rare.

As a consequence, the oil enterprises often established headquarters in Amarillo, about 60 miles from the fields. The resultant population influx fostered an economic boom that transformed Amarillo. New buildings arose to house the offices, residences and services required by the business travelers, oil workers, and others pouring into the community. The total capacity of Amarillo's hotel rooms, for example, expanded from 750 in 1926 to 2,700 in 1927 (*Amarillo Sunday News Globe*, 13 March 1927). New construction lagged so far behind the demand for office space that large companies doing business in the oil fields were forced to operate from the lobby of the Amarillo Hotel. Rents rose so high that the oil concerns threatened to move out of the city. In addition to new commercial buildings constructed during the period, 11 major residential additions were developed to house the newcomers. The boom prompted establishment of new services as well, including transportation companies such as the Union State Bus Line that linked Amarillo with Borger, Isom, Signal Hill, Plemons, the Gulf Camp and other boom towns not connected into the existing rail network. As a result of this activity the city's population nearly tripled to 43,132 by 1930, moving a *Denver Post* writer to observe that "people from all over the world with an interest in oil seemed to be in the Panhandle and making Amarillo their headquarters" (Stanley, 335).

Meanwhile, oil speculators drilled 1,500 wells in an area with no rail facilities (Stanley, 231). They employed thousands of people to drive trucks, wagons, and carts between the oil fields and the nearest rail connection at Panhandle City, 28 miles northeast of Amarillo. As a result, Panhandle City developed into the second largest freight point on the Santa Fe system, second only to Chicago. (Weaver, 51). Personnel, drilling rigs and machinery continually rumbled through Panhandle City and Amarillo. The Essex Construction Company of St. Louis, for example, imported 200 mechanics to build a storage tank farm in the area. Construction of a single 20-inch pipe line, laid by Empire Gas and Fuel to move petroleum to Kansas and Missouri, required delivery of 50,000 tons of pipe weighing an estimated one million pounds (Stanley, 292). Components of new hotels, stores and boarding houses for the oil field towns were shipped into the area by rail, including the startling arrival of a completely assembled 20-room hotel in Panhandle City (Stanley, 331). Men and vehicles unloading rail cars extended six miles along the tracks from Panhandle City (Stanley, 331).

To cope with the traffic congesting its main arteries, the Santa Fe system began construction of short lines to facilitate distribution of the region's industrial, agricultural and petroleum products provide a capillary system which gathered or distributed a and veins. This effort began in 1920 with construction of an 85-miles line linking Amarillo with Shattuck, Oklahoma, through the new towns of Follett, Booker, Perryton, Spearman and Morse. In October 1926, the Santa Fe system announced an expenditure of \$2.5 million to improve service in the region by double tracking 22 miles of main line

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 11

Santa Fe Building  
Amarillo, Potter County, Texas

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through Amarillo, laying 10.5 miles of switching tracks in the city and purchasing 15 giant Baldwin locomotives (*Southwest Plainsman*, 2 October 1926). A crowd of 2,000 people greeted the first train on the new line from Panhandle City to Isom that Santa Fe completed in the same month (Waters, 222). This line, which eventually extended the full 31 miles to Borger (see Map 18), was soon joined by an 11-mile line from White Deer to Skellytown (1927), a 57-mile line between Pampa and Clinton, Oklahoma (1929), and a 120-mile line constructed in 1931 to link Amarillo with Boise City, Oklahoma, via Dumas, Etter, Stratford and Kerrick (Marshall, 437). F.A. Lehman, vice president and general manager for Santa Fe's Western Lines division, noted that:

the unprecedented development of the Panhandle oil field upset all their calculations. Santa Fe facilities became inadequate overnight. Everybody wanted to drill a well, or build a house, or start a store and wanted to do it yesterday. Materials were ordered by the carload, or often by the train load. Thirty days after the rush started, there was so much traffic, that it was difficult to move the transcontinental trains through the local traffic. On top of that, the wheat, cotton and feed grain crops were bumper crops of 1926 and had to be shipped to market (*Amarillo Sunday News and Globe*, 16 January 1927).

Almost before people realized the extent of the oil boom, great trains of oil were moving over the Santa Fe lines. Trains moving into the region with needed supplies jostled with those transporting products from the oil field. In 1927 Phillips Petroleum Company erected the world's largest oil refinery northwest of Borger. The region's 12 carbon black plants produced 60% of all carbon black generated in the United States. During the 1930s three oil refineries and 51 plants operating in the Panhandle produced 43% of all Texas natural gas. Of 6,296 wells drilled in the region by 1938, 90% were producing viable quantities of oil and gas. The average daily production reached 20 billion cubic feet of gas and more than 80,000 barrels of oil during the period. Santa Fe lines could move only 1,000 cars of petroleum daily from the oil fields. The zinc smelting industry, helium plant, flour mills and refinery in Amarillo also depended on this rail network to transport both raw materials and finished products.

In 1928 the system handled 420,030 tons of freight loaded onto 290,937 carloads consigned to or originating at Amarillo, an average of 1,151 tons of freight per day (*Amarillo Sunday News and Globe*, 16 January 1929). These dramatic increases in traffic taxed the capacity of the entire Santa Fe system (see Figures 27-29). The railroad spent \$296,176,004 for improvements of road and equipment during the 1920s (Waters, 411). The system added 234 passenger cars and 15,068 freight cars, increasing its rolling stock to 1057 and 87,060 cars respectively (Waters, 412). These gains reflected the development of winter crops in Texas, Arizona, California and New Mexico, as well as the impact of oil fields in Kansas, Oklahoma, California and Texas. By 1933 "the Great Plains territory of Northwest Texas ha[d] witnessed more railroad building during the last seven years than any other area of like size in the world, except possibly the USSR where railroad building is a public enterprise" (*Texas Almanac*, 1933).

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 12

Santa Fe Building  
Amarillo, Potter County, Texas

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These heavy expenditures were supported by the level of revenues during the 1920s throughout the Santa Fe system, but especially in the Texas Panhandle. The investment in the maintenance and improvement of its infrastructure placed the Santa Fe was at its maximum point of efficiency and strength (Waters, 418).

The jurisdiction of Santa Fe's Amarillo office included 5,300 miles of mainline track covering territory in nine operating divisions. The rapid development of the Amarillo area and the extension of lines in Texas, western Kansas and Oklahoma, and eastern Colorado and New Mexico also necessitated the enlargement of its offices. Company employees in Amarillo numbered 1,460 by 1930, not including the Fred Harvey or Railway Express employees. Railroad employees and their families accounted for 6,000 of Amarillo's population of 45,878 (*Amarillo Sunday News and Globe*, 12 January 1930). Expansion of the system through the purchase of rail concerns brought additional population to the community. The 1929 purchase of the Orient lines linking Wichita, Kansas, with Alpine, Texas, for example, added 58 employees to the local work force (*Amarillo Daily News*, 22 June 1930). Santa Fe management concluded that more office space was needed throughout the system, especially in Topeka and Amarillo. Topeka received a new white brick 10-story office building in 1925 (see Figure-25). Work began on a replacement for Amarillo's antiquated office building in the middle of 1928. Plans were subsequently drawn to replace the Gulf Lines division headquarters as well, with the new 8-floor office building (1932; NHL 1976; see Figure-26) in Galveston intended to be on a par with those at Amarillo and Topeka.

Santa Fe architect E.A Harrison of the main office at Chicago designed Amarillo's handsome 14-story office building. Brennan Construction Company of Amarillo and Dallas constructed the building in 1928-30 at a cost of \$1.5 million. The Brennan Company also built the Capitol Hotel, Talmage Place Apartments, the Telephone building, Price Memorial College, and the Fisk building in Amarillo; and Mercy Hospital at Slayton. McKnight Transfer, Livery and Sales conducted the excavation work. Broome Electric wired the building and Johnson-Davis did the plumbing. Cowing Pressure Relieving Joint Company of Chicago, Texas Sand & Gravel, Clowe & Cowan, Patent Scaffolding of St. Louis, Hunter Hays agent to American Elevators, Sedwick Interlockers Company of Dallas, J.C. Woolridge Lumber Company of Amarillo and Roberts Tile & Marble provided other services. Rogers Asbestos Company installed the roof. A Lamson pneumatic tube system served the building with an instant message delivery system.

R.H. Allison, vice president and general manager, publicly announced that the building was "made to order"; with every floor and detail designed to meet the needs of the department it housed (*Amarillo Daily News*, 11 December 1927). He noted that it took more time to adapt a building to the specific requirements of the various departments than to design an office building where one floor is typical of all. A subsequent article spotlighted the building as the first steel structural construction in

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 13

Santa Fe Building  
Amarillo, Potter County, Texas

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Amarillo, calling it "A Modern Symphony in Steel" (*Amarillo Daily News*, 14 October 1928). When the building was completed, 585 employees moved into the offices. General Manager, Avery Turner and his staff were honored by being the first to move into the new facilities (Turner, 1933). Incorporating the most advanced features of rail management and providing ample margin for expansion enabled the building to meet the company's needs for many years.

The Santa Fe building is one of Amarillo's few surviving downtown skyscrapers built in the 1920s (Page, 198). The 4-story Potter County Courthouse (1903; now demolished) was the tallest building in the city until that time. Few cities of Amarillo's size in 1930 could boast a skyscraper. Most of Amarillo's skyscrapers arose between 1925 and 1930 as 2- or 3-part vertical blocks clad in brick. These office buildings included the 8-story Amarillo Building (1925-26), the 8-story Rule Building (1927), the 11-story Fisk Building (1927), the 10-story Oliver-Eagle Building (1927) and the 8-story Potter County Courthouse (1932). Large hotels built during these years included the 600 room 14-story Herring Hotel (1926), the 12-story Amarillo Hotel tower (1927; now demolished) and the 6-story Capitol Hotel (1932; now demolished). Of the surviving examples, the Rule Building, the Oliver-Eagle Building, and the Herring Hotel stand vacant and badly in need of repair. While the four others remain in use; the 14-story Santa Fe Building is one of the most well preserved. An important component of Amarillo's skyline, it remained the tallest building in Amarillo until the 1970s.

The Santa Fe system provided passenger service to Amarillo until 2 May 1971. In December 1987 Santa Fe officials announced the closing of the Plains Division headquarters as part of a 3-year, company-wide reorganization. Operations were merged with its other two grand headquarters in Los Angeles and Topeka, Kansas. Santa Fe merged operations with the Burlington Northern system in December 1995 to become the Burlington Northern Santa Fe. Presently Santa Fe operations in Amarillo include freight hauling, transporting grain, automobiles, UPS container shipments, coal to the local electric plant and petroleum products. The Santa Fe line no longer ships the Panhandle's cattle. The roundhouse turntable, machine shops and supply shops survive in the freight yard, although they no longer remain in service. Amarillo is a crew changing point on the Santa Fe line, with 30 to 50 crews working out of local facilities (Assistant Trainmaster, Amarillo, Texas, 8 February 1996). The last handful of employees moved out of the building in 1989. The building was occupied by a maintenance person and a couple of former employees who performed contract work for Santa Fe. Potter County purchased the building from the Santa Fe the summer of 1995 to adapt as county office space. The building is expected to be ready for occupancy in late 1998.

The railroad established Amarillo as a trade center and the leading city of the Panhandle. Amarillo was barely organized before it became a large cattle shipping center. The arrival of the Santa Fe system in Amarillo assured the city's future. Rail service changed the history of the Panhandle, permanently altering land use patterns in the region, swelling populations, adding to the pool of civic

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 14

Santa Fe Building  
Amarillo, Potter County, Texas

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leaders and creating jobs. The Santa Fe's promotion of colonization influenced political and social patterns as it introduced immigrants from a variety of cultural heritages, educational backgrounds, and religious beliefs. The Panhandle became part of the wider world as a result of the rail lines direct links to other communities. The Santa Fe Building is significant for its contribution as the regional nerve center of the railroad concern that was Amarillo's largest employer and most influential corporate citizen for most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It is significant in the area of Transportation as a part of the state's second largest rail system, serving Texas for over a century (Reed, 283). The rich history of the Santa Fe railroad, from its entrance into Texas in 1886 until its demise in 1995 justifies the building's eligibility under Criterion A at the state level. The Santa Fe Building is also an intact example of commercial office design typical of skyscrapers in Texas during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Constructed by the railroad at the peak of its success, the Santa Fe Building remains one of the most prominent such properties in the state. The building is therefore also eligible for the National Register under Criterion C at the state level of significance in the area of Architecture.

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National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 9 Page 15

Santa Fe Building  
Amarillo, Potter County, Texas

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**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section 9 Page 16

Santa Fe Building  
Amarillo, Potter County, Texas

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**10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

---

**ACREAGE OF PROPERTY:** less than one acre

**UTM REFERENCES**

ZONE EASTING NORTHING  
14 241680 3899200

**VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION**

Lot 1, north half of Lot 2, Block 121, Glidden & Sanborn Addition, Amarillo, Texas

**BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION**

Boundaries encompass all property historically associated with the nominated building.

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**11. FORM PREPARED BY (with assistance from Bruce Jensen, THC Architectural Historian)**

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**NAME/TITLE:** Lueise Tyson

**ORGANIZATION:** Preservation Amarillo

**DATE:** January 1996/June 1996

**STREET & NUMBER:** 2220 South Tyler

**TELEPHONE:** (806)371-0728

**CITY OR TOWN:** Amarillo

**STATE: TX ZIP CODE:** 79109

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**ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION**

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**CONTINUATION SHEETS**

**MAPS (see continuation sheet Map-17 through Map-19)**

**PHOTOGRAPHS (see continuation sheet Photo-30)**

**ADDITIONAL ITEMS (see continuation sheets Figure-20 through Figure 29)**

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**PROPERTY OWNER**

---

**NAME:** The Honorable Arthur Ware, County Judge, Potter County

**STREET & NUMBER:** 501 South Taylor, Room 102 **TELEPHONE:** (806)379-2250

**CITY OR TOWN:** Amarillo

**STATE: TX ZIP CODE:** 79101

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# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Santa Fe Building  
Amarillo, Potter County, Texas

Section MAP Page 17

Map of national Santa Fe Railway system connections, c.1936



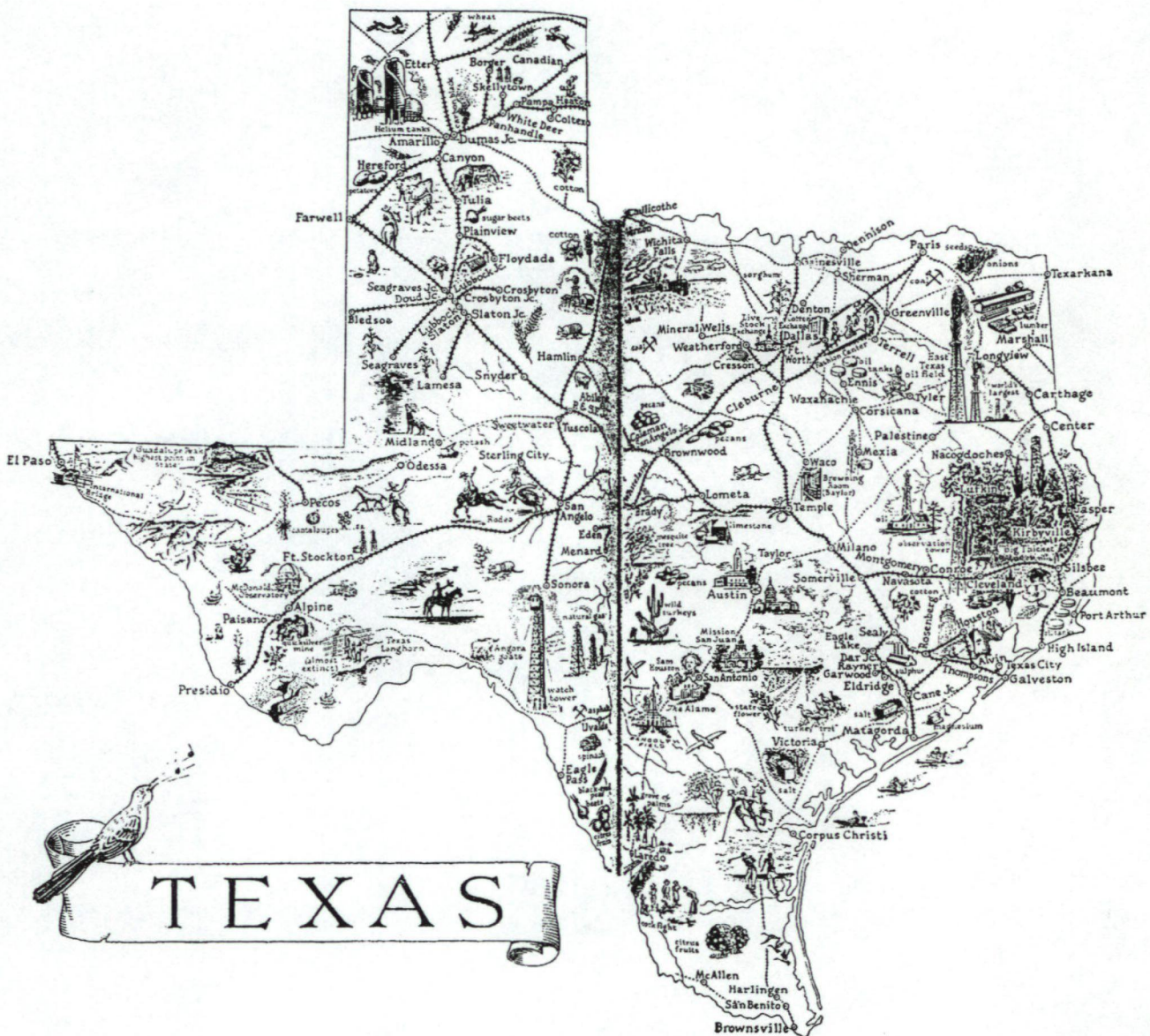
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# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Santa Fe Building  
Amarillo, Potter County, Texas

Section MAP Page 18

Map of Santa Fe Railway system in Texas, c.1945  
(source: Marshall, 1945)



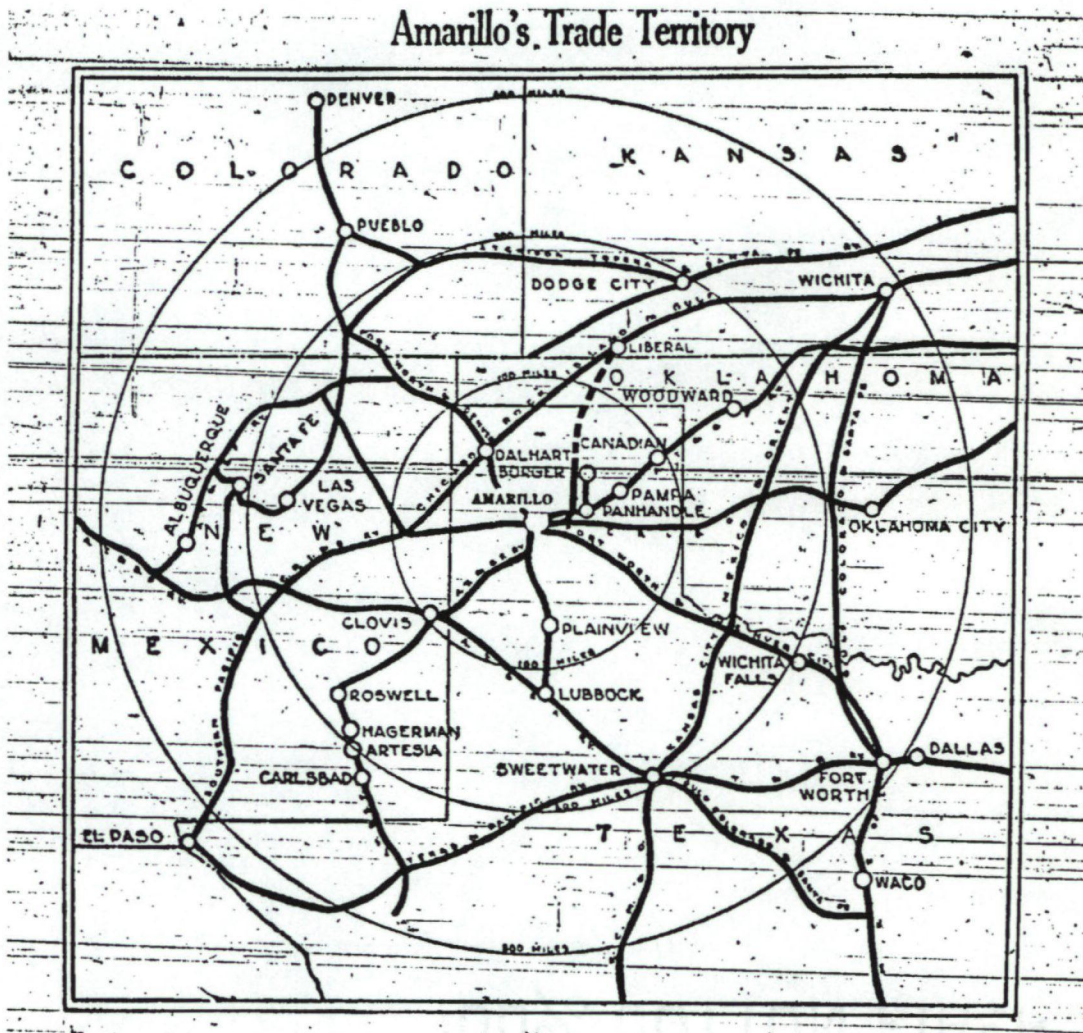
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# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section MAP Page 19

Santa Fe Building  
Amarillo, Potter County, Texas

Map of Amarillo's Trade Territory  
(source: *Amarillo Sunday News and Globe*, 16 January 1927)



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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section FIGURE Page 20

Santa Fe Building  
Amarillo, Potter County, Texas

Historic image of new settlers to region, c.1910



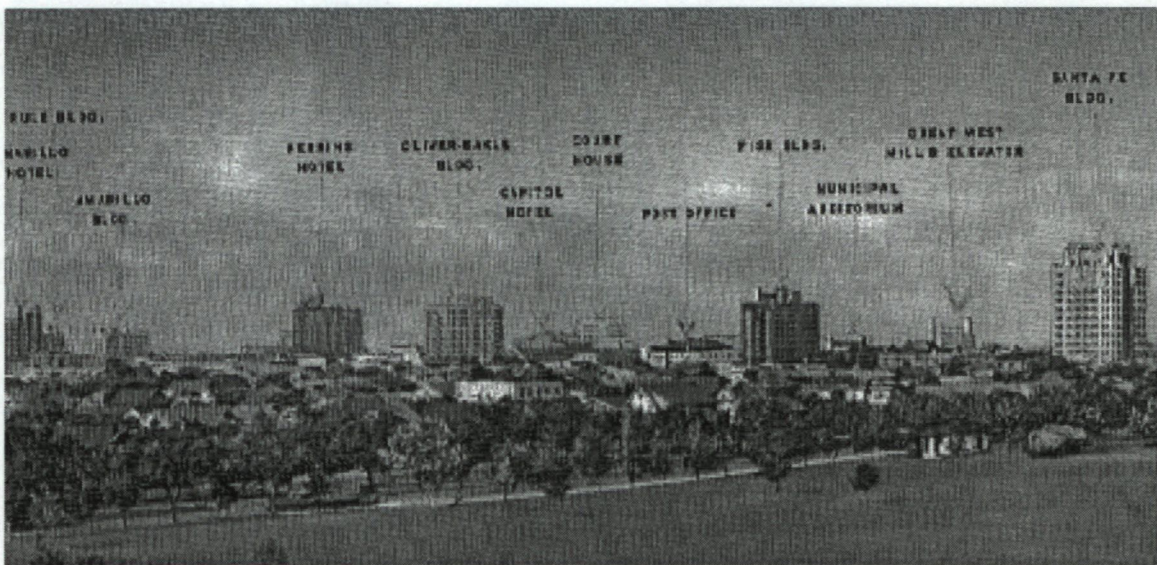
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# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section FIGURE Page 21

Santa Fe Building  
Amarillo, Potter County, Texas

Historic aerial view of Amarillo, c.1950



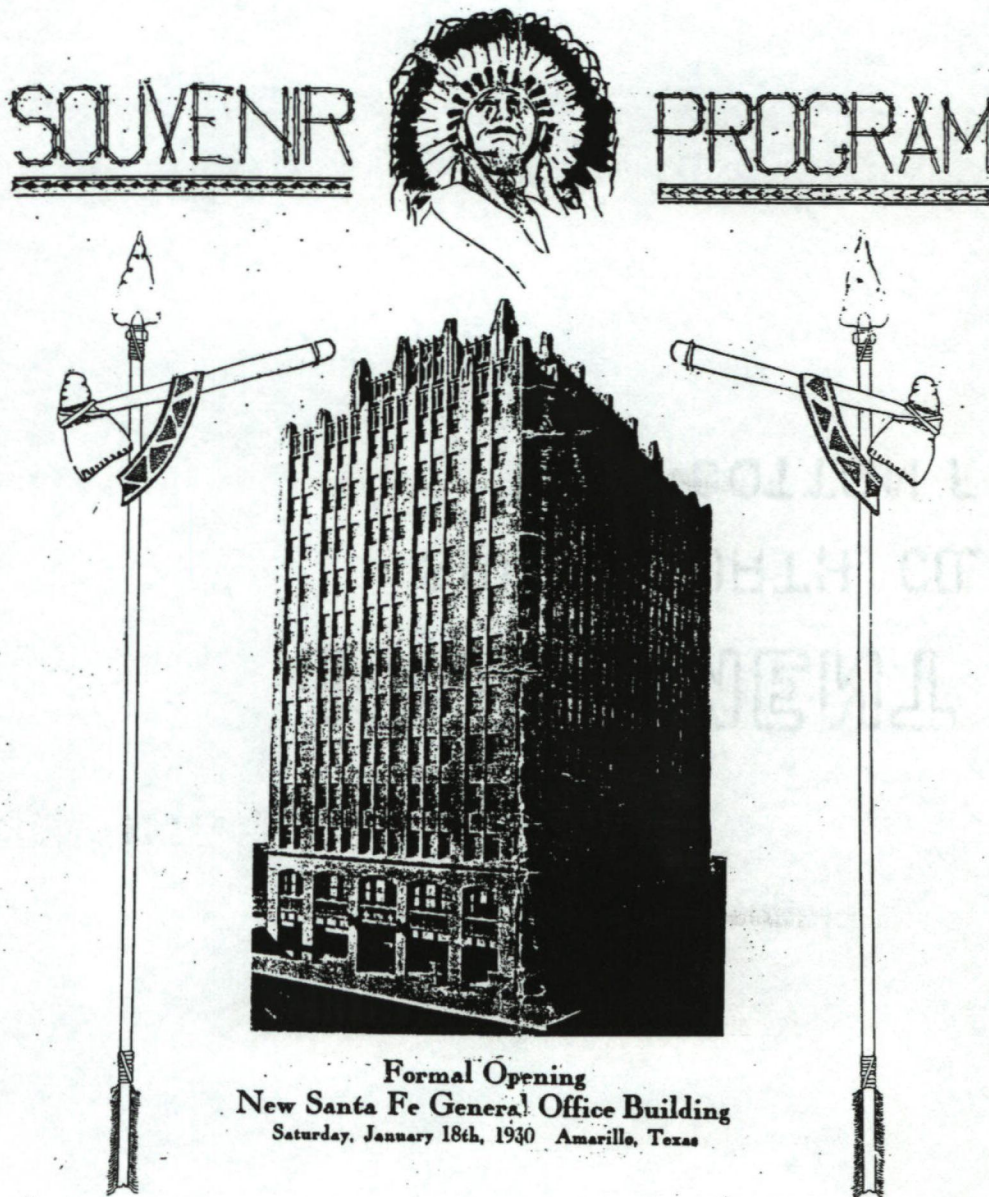
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# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section FIGURE Page 22

Santa Fe Building  
Amarillo, Potter County, Texas

Souvenir program of formal opening of Santa Fe Building, 1930



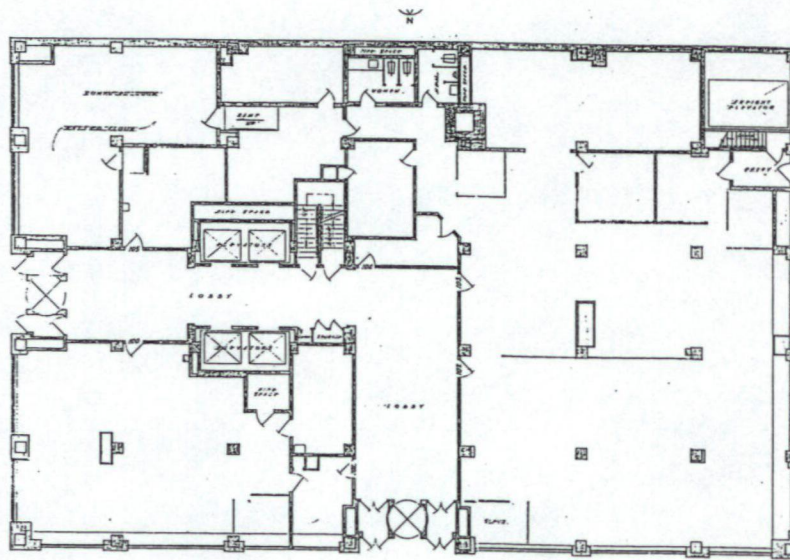
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# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Santa Fe Building  
Amarillo, Potter County, Texas

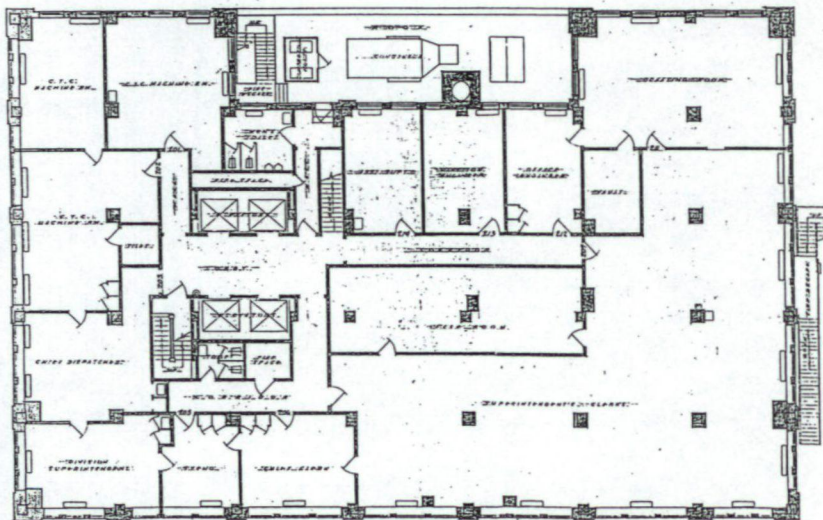
Section FIGURE Page 23

## Representative floor plans of Santa Fe Building



FIRST FLOOR PLAN  
SCALE 1/8" = 1'-0"

DESIGNED BY	A. T. & S. RY. CO.	DATE	1917
ARCHITECT	25-BUILD PLANS	NO. 12	
ENGINEER	GENERAL OFFICE BLDG.	NO. 12	
CONTRACTOR	AMARILLO, TEXAS	NO. 12	
DATE			
SCALE			
BY			
CHECKED BY			
DATE			



SECOND FLOOR PLAN  
SCALE 1/8" = 1'-0"

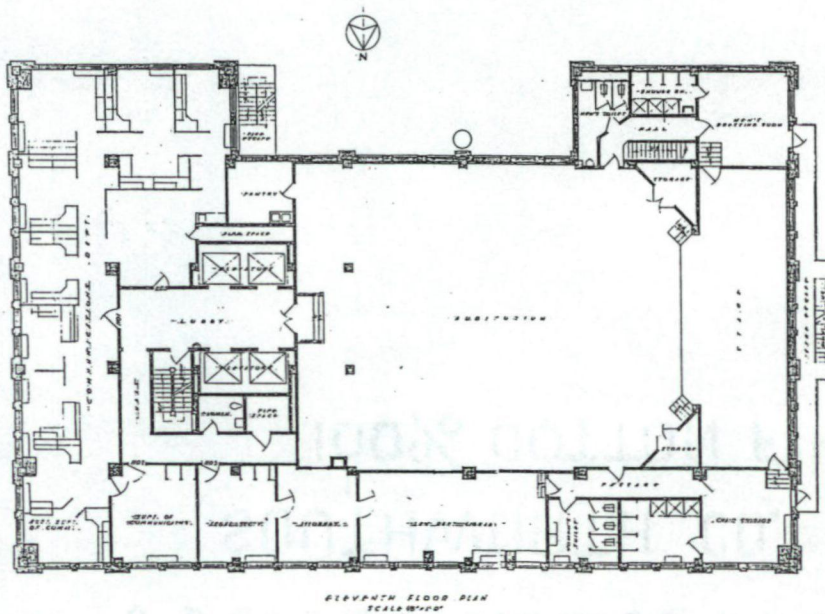
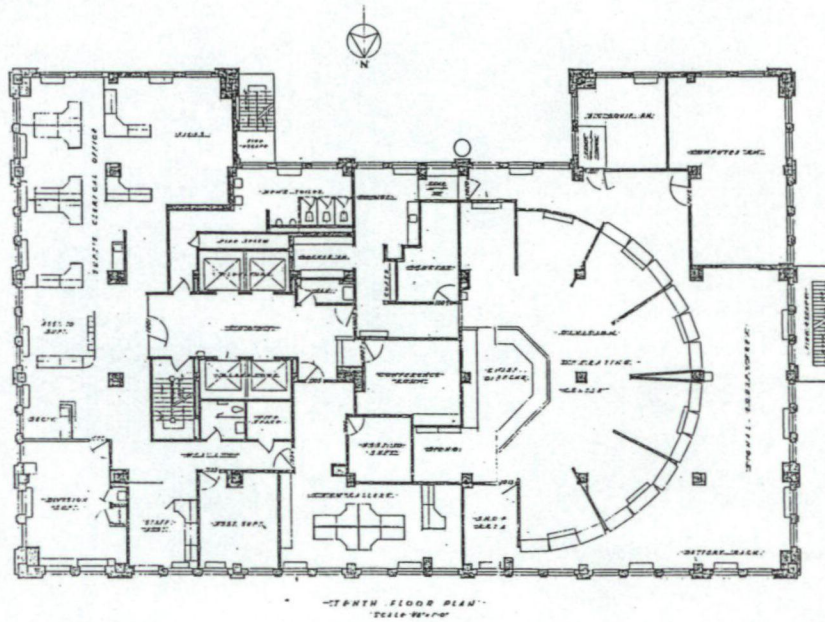
United States Department of the Interior  
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National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section FIGURE Page 24

Santa Fe Building  
Amarillo, Potter County, Texas

Representative floor plans of Santa Fe Building



DESIGNED BY	J. T. C. S. F. A. Y. CO.	DATE	11/10/24
DRAWN BY	J. T. C. S. F. A. Y. CO.	DATE	11/10/24
CHECKED BY	J. T. C. S. F. A. Y. CO.	DATE	11/10/24
APPROVED BY	J. T. C. S. F. A. Y. CO.	DATE	11/10/24
PROJECT	GENERAL OFFICE BLDG.	NO.	74
	AMARILLO, TEXAS		

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section FIGURE Page 25

Santa Fe Building  
Amarillo, Potter County, Texas

Historic image of regional headquarters building, Topeka, Kansas



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# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section FIGURE Page 26

Santa Fe Building  
Amarillo, Potter County, Texas

Historic image of regional headquarters building, Galveston, Texas

*Galveston's Newest Office Building*



*—Photo by Votham*

BEAUTIFUL SANTA FE BUILDING TO BE OPENED IN APRIL

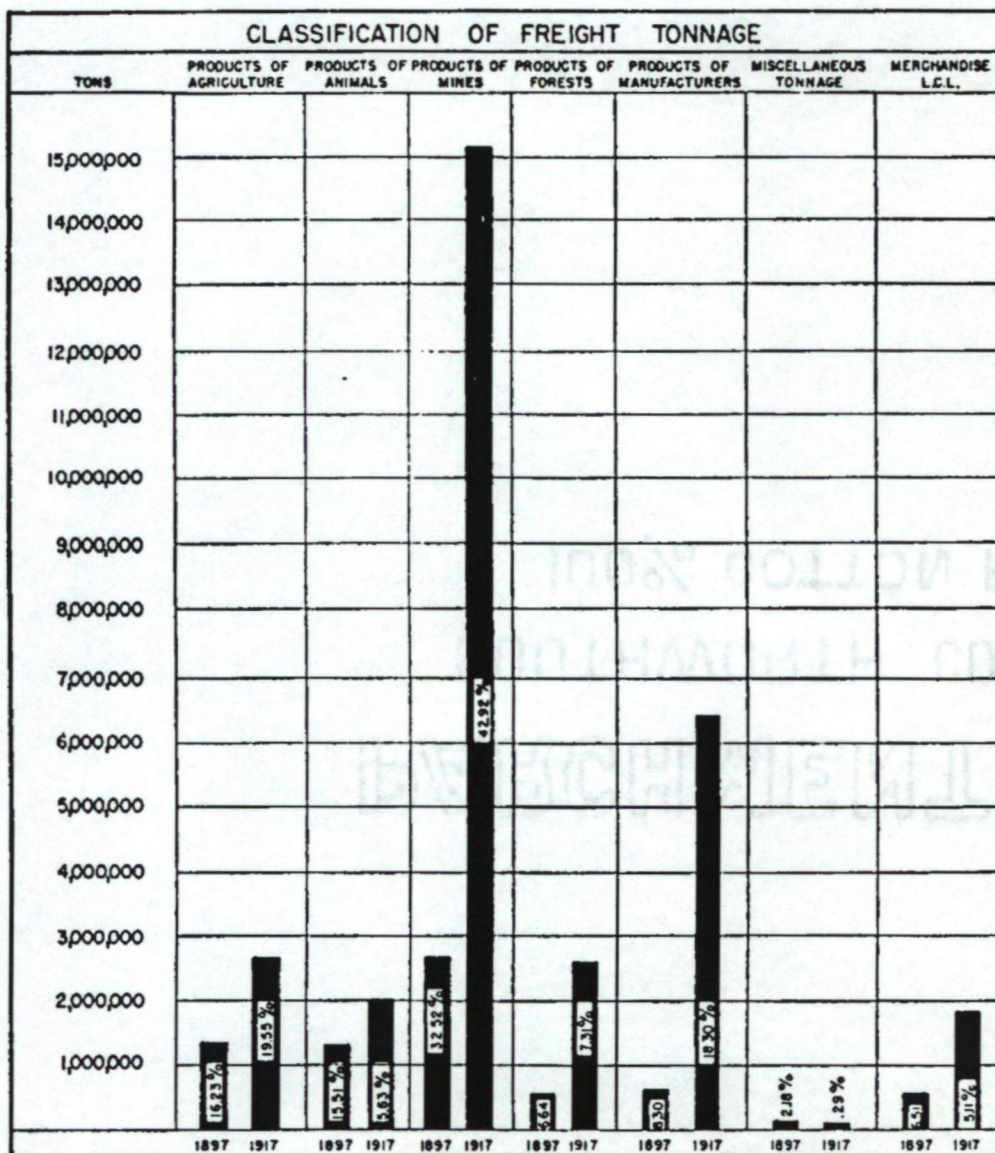
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National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Santa Fe Building  
Amarillo, Potter County, Texas

Section FIGURE Page 27

Classification of freight tonnage, 1897-1917  
(source: Waters, 1950)



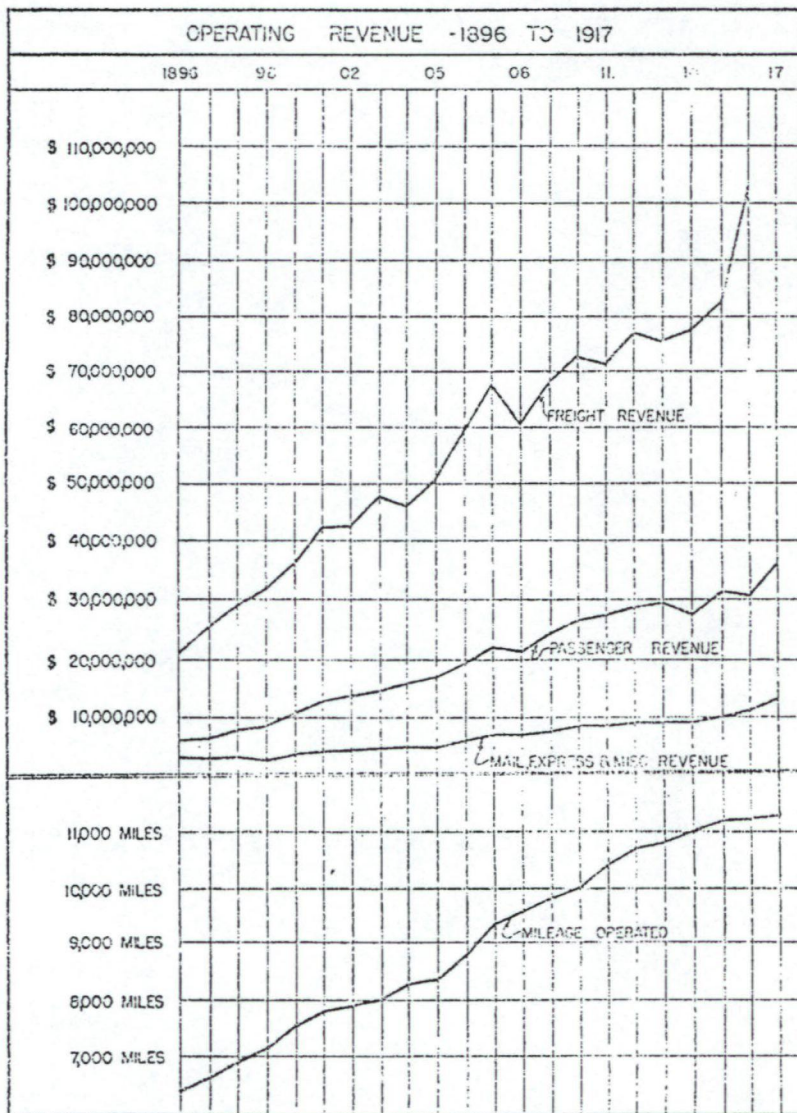
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# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Santa Fe Building  
Amarillo, Potter County, Texas

Section FIGURE Page 28

Operating revenue, 1896-1917  
(source: Waters, 1950)



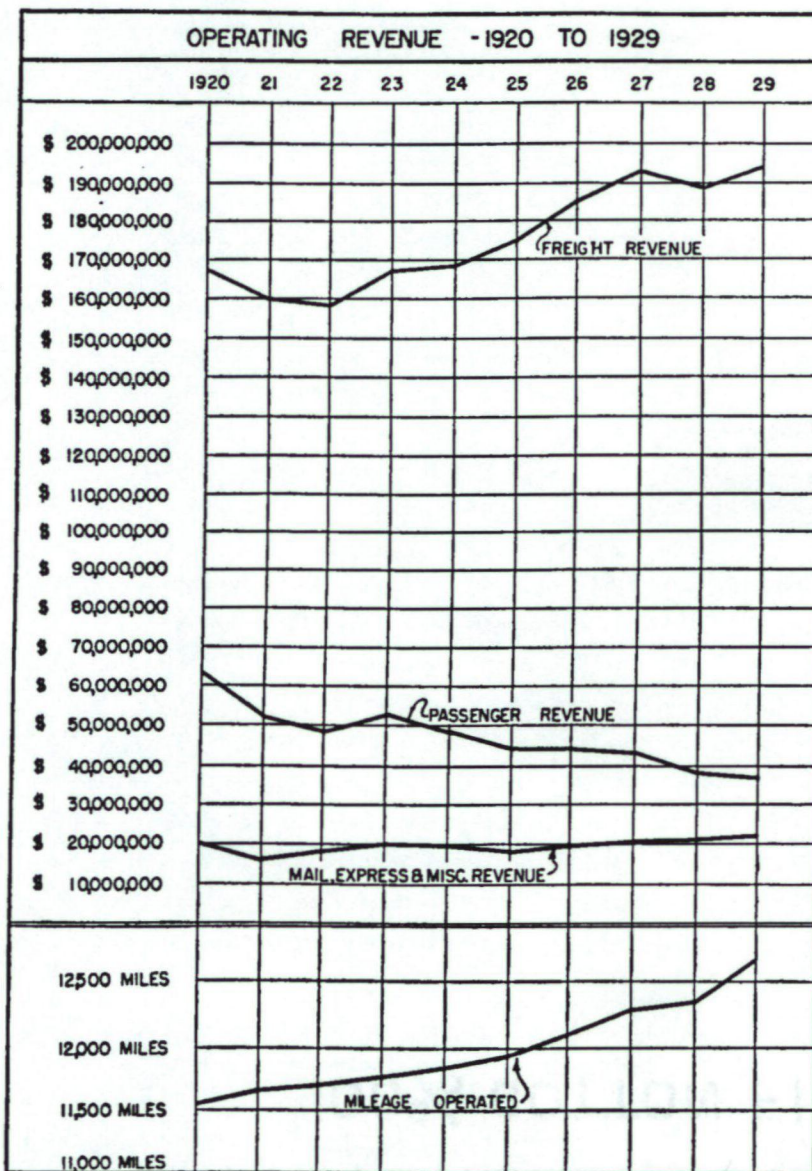
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Santa Fe Building  
Amarillo, Potter County, Texas

Section FIGURE Page 29

Operating revenue, 1920-29  
(source: Waters, 1950)



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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section PHOTO Page 30

Santa Fe Building  
Amarillo, Potter County, Texas

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### PHOTO INVENTORY

SANTA FE BUILDING  
900 SOUTH POLK STREET  
AMARILLO, POTTER COUNTY, TEXAS  
LUEISE TYSON - PHOTOGRAPHER (EXCEPT AS NOTED)  
MARCH 1996 (EXCEPT AS NOTED)  
ORIGINAL NEGATIVES ON FILE WITH THE TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

- PHOTO 1 - Historic photo, c.1930, photographer unknown, oblique view of south and west elevations, camera facing northeast, original negative on file with the Panhandle Plains Historical Museum, Canyon, credit line required for reproduction
- PHOTO 2 - View of principal (north) facade, camera facing south
- PHOTO 3 - Oblique view of north and east elevations, camera facing southwest
- PHOTO 4 - View of south elevation, camera facing north
- PHOTO 5 - View of west elevation, camera facing east
- PHOTO 6 - Detail of sign on north elevation, camera facing south
- PHOTO 7 - Interior detail of auditorium stage, camera facing west

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY Santa Fe Building  
NAME:

MULTIPLE  
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: TEXAS, Potter

DATE RECEIVED: 7/22/96 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 8/06/96  
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 8/22/96 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 9/05/96  
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 96000939

NOMINATOR: STATE

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N  
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N  
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT  RETURN  REJECT 8/22/96 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS: Entered in the  
National Register

RECOM./CRITERIA \_\_\_\_\_

REVIEWER \_\_\_\_\_ DISCIPLINE \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N



SANTA FE BUILDING

900 SOUTH POLK STREET

AMARILLO, POTTER CO., TEXAS

PHOTOGRAPH 1 of 7

Santa Fe



SANTA FE BUILDING  
900 SOUTH POLK STREET  
AMARILLO, POTTER CO., TEXAS  
PHOTOGRAPH 2 of 7



SANTA FE BUILDING  
900 SOUTH POLK STREET  
AMARILLO, POTTER CO., TEXAS

PHOTOGRAPH 3 of 7



CABLE CENTER

Star

ST

E

New-Us

SANTA FE BUILDING  
900 SOUTH POLK STREET  
AMARILLO, POTTER CO., TEXAS

PHOTOGRAPH 4 of 7

Santa Fe





**Santa Fe**

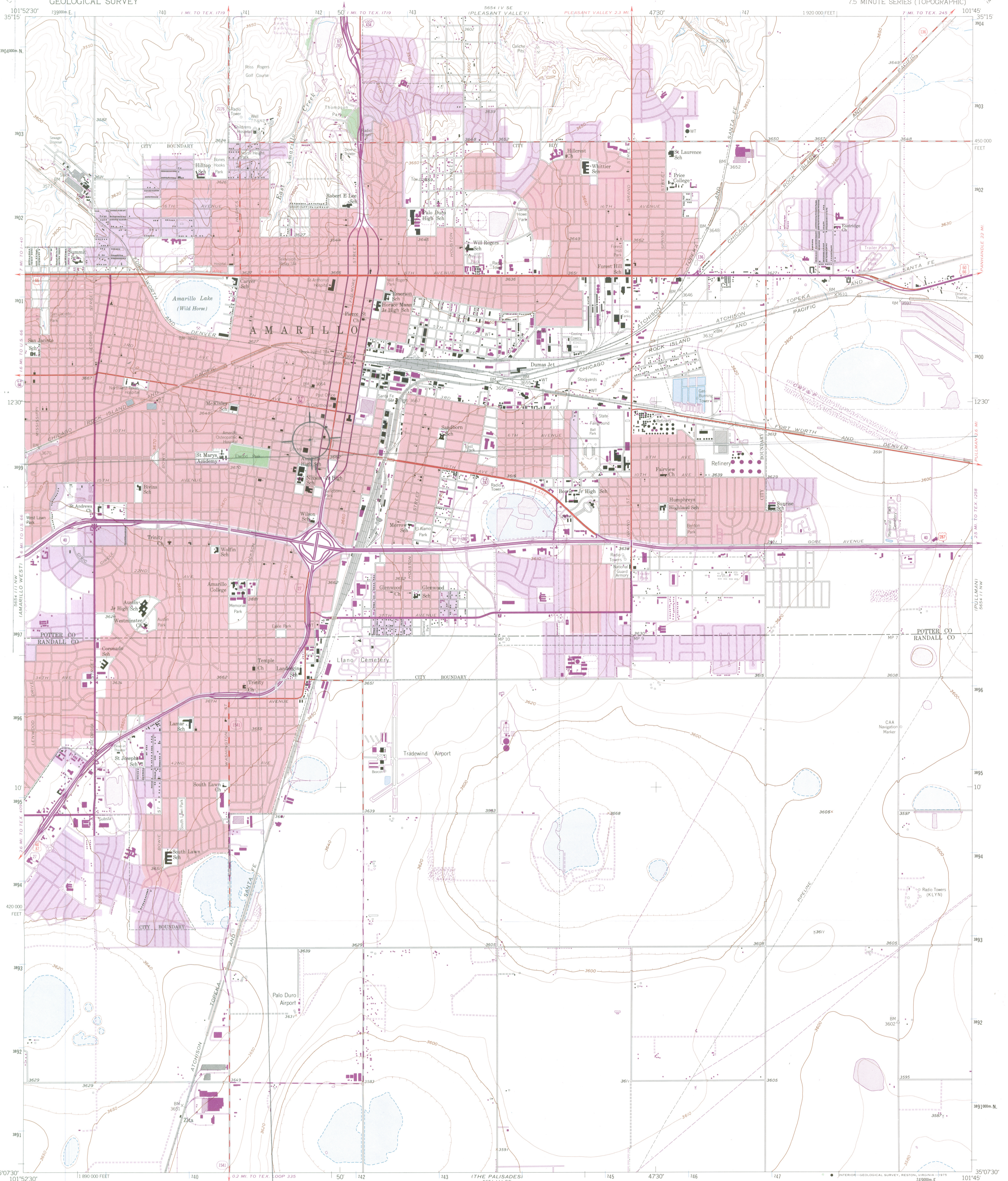


SANTA FE BUILDING  
900 SOUTH POLK STREET  
AMARILLO, POTTER CO, TEXAS  
PHOTOGRAPH 6 of 7

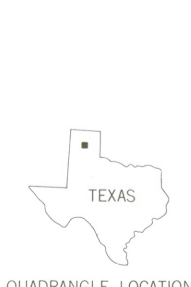
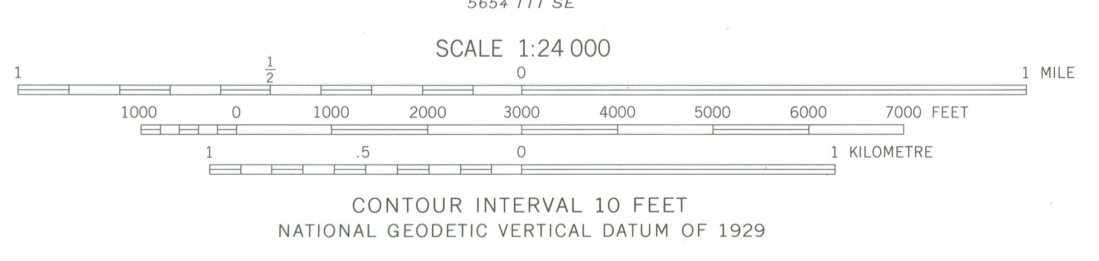
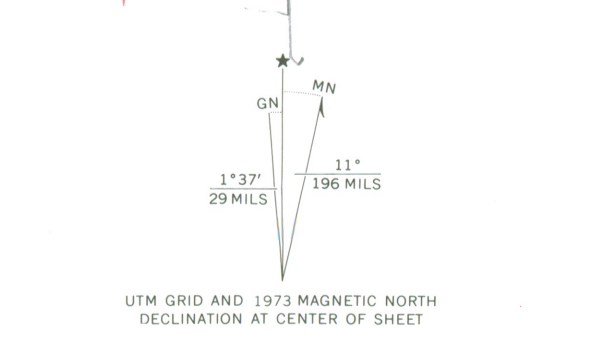


SANTA FE BUILDING  
900 SOUTH POLK STREET  
AMARILLO, POTTER CO., TEXAS  
PHOTOGRAPH 7 of 7

SANTA FE BUILDING  
900 POLK STREET  
AMARILLO POTTER CO, TEXAS  
UTM REFERENCE: 14/241000/3899200



Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey  
Control by USGS and NOS/NOAA  
Topography from aerial photographs by Kelsh plotter  
and by planimeter surveys 1956. Aerial photographs taken 1953  
Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum  
10,000-foot grid based on Texas coordinate system, north zone  
1000-metre Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks,  
zone 14, shown in blue  
Red tint indicates areas in which only landmark buildings are shown  
Revisions shown in purple compiled from aerial photographs  
taken 1967 and 1973. This information not field checked  
Purple tint indicates extension of urban areas



ROAD CLASSIFICATION

Primary highway, hard surface	Light-duty road, hard or improved surface
Secondary highway, hard surface	Unimproved road
Interstate Route	U. S. Route
	State Route

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS  
FOR SALE BY U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, DENVER, COLORADO 80225, OR RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092  
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

AMARILLO EAST, TEX.  
N3507.5—W10145/7.5  
1956  
PHOTOREVISED 1967 AND 1973  
AMS 5654 III NE—SERIES V882