

(Oct. 1990)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM



1. NAME OF PROPERTY


HISTORIC NAME: Alamo National Bank Building (1929)
OTHER NAME/SITE NUMBER: N/A

2. LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER: 105 South St. Mary's Street
CITY OR TOWN: San Antonio
STATE: Texas CODE: TX COUNTY: Bexar CODE: 029 ZIP CODE: 78205
NOT FOR PUBLICATION: N/A
VICINITY: N/A

1. 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 Date: 3-22-06
State Historic Preservation Officer, Texas Historical Commission
State or Federal agency and bureau

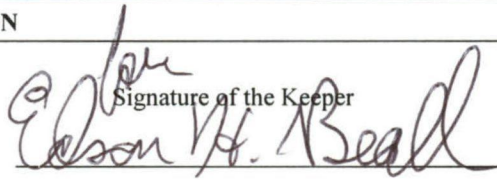
In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

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):


Signature of the Keeper Date of Action: 5.10.06

5. CLASSIFICATION

OWNERSHIP OF PROPERTY: Private

CATEGORY OF PROPERTY: Building

NUMBER OF RESOURCES WITHIN PROPERTY:	CONTRIBUTING	NONCONTRIBUTING
	1	0 BUILDINGS
	0	0 SITES
	0	0 STRUCTURES
	0	0 OBJECTS
	1	0 TOTAL

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

NAME OF RELATED MULTIPLE PROPERTY LISTING:

6. FUNCTION OR USE

HISTORIC FUNCTIONS: Commerce/Trade: business (office building); financial institution (bank)

CURRENT FUNCTIONS: WORK IN PROGRESS

7. DESCRIPTION

ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION: Modern Movement: Skyscraper

MATERIALS: FOUNDATION CONCRETE
WALLS STONE/granite, BRICK, TERRA COTTA
ROOF METAL/Copper, ASPHALT
OTHER

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION (see continuation sheets 7-5 through 7-13).

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The Alamo National Bank building is a 24-story building with a basement and attached parking garage. The bank building was constructed in 1929-30, the parking garage was attached to the west elevation in 1961, and the building was remodeled in the early 1970s. A rooftop sign and weather spire was added in 1956. The Alamo National Bank was designed in the boom days prior to the stock market crash of 1929, and completed in the early days of the Depression. It is an excellent example of eclectic design by one of the country's finest architects of tall buildings: Graham, Anderson, Probst and White. Built of structural steel and reinforced concrete, the building rises from a 3-story granite base. The office tower is 17 stories tall, with an extension of four stories on its east (primary) face. Entrances to the building lobby and banking lobby dominate the east and north facades respectively. The building is richly trimmed in granite, marble, terra cotta and decorative bronze. The centerpiece of the building is a 2½-story tall banking lobby with fluted columns and pilasters and an elaborate entablature of bronze grille work and molded plaster. The bank originally occupied the first three floors which are also trimmed in various colors of marble with bronze trim. The upper floors, which housed a variety of commercial tenants, are typical of the period with marble wainscoting and paneled walnut and glass doors with operable transoms. Seventy-five years after its completion, the building retains a remarkable degree of integrity. In addition to the parking garage, most changes date to remodeling and modernization projects between 1972 and 1974. Wooden double-hung sash windows were replaced with aluminum double-hung windows in 1972. Alterations in 1974 included conversion of some ground floor entrances to windows, extension of the mezzanine across the south end of the banking lobby, and removal of original tellers' cages. Apart from these changes, both the exterior and interior of the building are remarkably intact. The building lobby and entry vestibule to the banking lobby are virtually unchanged. While the tenant floors have experienced many changes, several retain their original plans and finishes. Construction is underway to convert the building to a 306-room hotel.

The Alamo National Bank building in downtown San Antonio sits on a rectangular site bounded by three major thoroughfares and the San Antonio River. The site is defined by East Commerce Street on the north, Market Street on the south, South St. Mary's Street on the east and the San Antonio River by-pass channel on the west (figure 1). At the time of the building's construction, the site was irregular in shape and bounded on the west by Yturri Street. This short north/south connector was later closed and incorporated into the bank's property (figure 2).

The building today is comprised of the original 1929-30 structure and an attached 8-story parking garage constructed adjoining the west elevation in 1961 (photo 1). The parking garage obscures the building to just above the sixth floor level. The original building site and therefore, the original building, was irregular in shape. It measured approximately 133-feet on the Commerce (north), 140' on St. Mary's (east) and the Yturri (west) Streets, and only 114 feet on Market Street (east). The parking garage addition measures approximately 123' on Commerce Street, 137' on Market Street and 140' on the river. A narrow pedestrian walkway separates the parking structure from the river by-pass channel (see figures 1 & 2).

The Alamo National Bank building was conceived in the period immediately before the stock market crash of 1929, and was completed in the early months of the Great Depression. The eclectic design, with its fine terra cotta and bronze ornamentation, reflects the stature of Alamo Bank which, at the time of the building's construction, was the third largest banking institution in the city.

The building was constructed on belled concrete caissons that reach 35 feet below street level. The structure through the fourth floor level is structural steel. Above this, the structure consists of reinforced concrete columns and girders supporting concrete slabs and beams. The building features a 3-story tall base which serves as the platform for a 17-story,

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L-shaped office tower (photo 2; historic photo 1). The tower rises an additional four stories at its east elevation, giving the building its total height of 24-stories. This 4-story extension culminates in a copper mansard roof with projecting dormers. Because the tower is L-shaped and therefore does not cover the entire base, the building at its southwest corner was originally only 3-stories tall. With a 1-story addition made in 1961, the southwest corner of the building is now 4-stories tall. The building is 280' in height from grade to the top of the roof tower. A roof-top weather sign added in 1956 rises more than six stories above the tower extension. When completed, the basement, first and second floors of the building were air-cooled.¹

EXTERIOR

The primary elevation of the building faces east onto St. Mary's Street and provides access to both the office building and banking lobbies (photo 3). The north elevation on Commerce Street, with its main entrance into the banking lobby, is equal in importance. The south elevation on Market Street is secondary, and the west elevation has always been considered the "back" of the building (photos 1 & 2). With construction of the parking garage in 1961, entrance on the west side was also provided from the ground and sixth floor levels.

The 3-story base of the building is faced at the ground floor with gray Minnesota granite, and on the second and third floors with buff-colored terra cotta. The office tower is constructed of buff-colored brick with darker brown brick spandrel panels. Ornamental panels are of terra cotta. It should be noted that original specifications contained the following wording. "Cast stone shall be an artificial stone finished to match buff Bedford Indiana Oolitic limestone in color and texture, being equal to the product of this character made by the Benedict Stone Corporation and acceptable to the architects." A revised drawing by Graham, Anderson, Probst and White dated April 12, 1929, is titled "revised spandrel section showing terra cotta in place of terra cotta." Architects knowledgeable about terra cotta who have examined the building believe that the material used was, indeed, terra cotta.

East (St. Mary's Street) Elevation

The east elevation is the primary façade of the building. It is comprised of the 3-story base, the 17-story tower, and the 4-story tower extension for a total height of 24-stories. The 4-story extension comprises ten bays in the center of the tower (photo 2). Unlike the north and south elevations, the east elevation is symmetrical. Using the base as the organizing element, the tower's east elevation is separated into three parts—north, central and south— all containing six bays. The ground floor of the base is faced in polished gray Minnesota granite, while the second and third floor levels are faced in buff-colored Benedict terra cotta. The surface is somewhat irregular, giving the impression of cut limestone. On the ground floor, the granite-faced entrance is flanked on each side by one narrow and three large fixed pane windows (photo 4). Ground floor openings on St. Mary's street originally provided access to leased retail spaces. During the 1974 remodeling, these recessed entrances were brought flush with the exterior of the building and converted to single, fixed-pane windows with tinted glass. Sloping sills matching the exterior granite were installed. Over each window, original awnings were replaced with fixed, metal-clad boxes containing down lighting.

¹ While current plans refer to the building as 25-stories in height, including the mechanical room under the roof, announcements at the time of construction referred to 23-stories and later descriptions state the building is 24-stories tall. This discrepancy lies in the number of stories assigned to the uppermost tower. Also, like many buildings of its day, the Alamo National Bank building does not contain a 13th floor.

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Directly above the narrower ground floor windows on each side of the entry is a tall rectangular window at the second floor level and a shorter window at the third floor level. Four small windows surmount the granite-framed entryway just below the frieze and stringcourse that separates the base from the tower. Above the three large ground floor windows on each side of the entry are two double height windows that extend to the third floor level. The upper and lower parts of these windows are separated by an embossed bronze spandrel panel featuring a star motif. Bronze dentil molding frames the spandrel. Vertical mullions in a rope pattern rise the full height of the windows. The lower part of the assemblage contains three tall, rectangular windows in a 1/1 pattern. The three windows in the upper portion are also rectangular and 1/1, but smaller in size.

The entrance to the office building lobby dominates the east elevation, projecting slightly from the face of the building. The architrave surrounding the door is of polished gray granite with fluted pilasters and a plain cornice. The words "Alamo National Building" are mounted in bronze letters on the plain frieze just below the cornice. A door and window assembly is inset into the architrave. Entry to the office building lobby is through bronze and glass doors. The ceiling and side walls of the vestibule are of bronze grille work to hide the ventilation equipment. The modern doors are mounted in a bronze framework with fluted pilasters, embossed "capitals," and a frieze decorated with brass medallions, both egg and dart and dentil molding and embossed classical motifs. The doorway is topped with open work cresting. Above the entry doors is a 48-lite clear glass, fixed panel window with bronze mullions. The entire window opening is set in a bronze frame decorated in a chevron pattern with corner medallions.

A terra cotta frieze and stringcourse spans the east elevation base, separating it from the tower. The frieze is decorated above each window in a stylized chevron pattern. The flat pilasters separating the windows are topped with terra cotta star medallions. The stringcourse is decorated with egg and dart molding. Flagpoles are supported in cast iron sockets mounted on terra cotta medallions, and set in the spandrel panel between the second and third floors. The poles are anchored with fixed rods to bronze medallions on the face of the building.

Above the base, the east elevation of the building is faced in buff-colored brick in a running bond pattern using a decorative soldier course. Windows from floor to floor are separated by spandrel panels of darker brown brick. Sloping sills are also of the darker brick. The tower's original double hung, wood sash windows were removed in 1972 and replaced by modern aluminum windows in the same 1/1 pattern. The only original windows remaining in the building are found on the first three floors and in scattered locations on upper floors, primarily in openings used for fire exits and utility purposes. The original fire escape windows were triple hung, steel sash.

The window pattern varies on the east elevation at the fourth and 20th floor levels. The six center windows on the fourth floor feature terra cotta pilasters and lintels. Decorative spandrel panels separate the fourth and fifth floors. The spandrels are decorated with the star pattern that is repeated throughout the building. The sills of the six windows on the fifth floor are also of terra cotta. The regular brick pattern resumes above this level until it reaches the 20th floor. Here, the center four bays feature shallow terra cotta balconies.

The building's verticality is accentuated by piers that rise the full height of the tower. In the north and south sections of the primary elevation, the piers are of alternating width—wide at the building corners, then narrow, then wide, etc. The center section of the east elevation displays deviations from both the pattern of pier width and use of brick that further accentuate the building's verticality. Wide piers (rather than alternating wide and narrow) rise from the base on either

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side of the entry way. In addition, the spandrel panels separating windows in this bay do not utilize darker brick. This creates an unbroken vertical line that draws the eye to the top of the building.

A decorative terra cotta spandrel panel separates the building's 16th and 17th floor windows on all elevations. This decoration extends across the center ten bays of the east elevation below the four story tower extension. Piers in the four bays to either side of the tower extension are capped with terra cotta finials that vary in size and height. The wide piers are topped with taller, more massive finials, while the alternating narrow piers are capped with smaller, shorter finials. This detailing is used on all elevations of the building. Decorative motifs used throughout the building are repeated on all elevations of the 4-story tower. This includes dark brick spandrels between the 21st and 22nd floors and terra cotta star details on the spandrel panels between the 22nd and 23rd floors. At the 23rd floor level, piers are topped with terra cotta caps in a chevron pattern and windows are surmounted by elaborate terra cotta shields. A richly embellished terra cotta cornice tops the tower extension at the 23rd story level. The tower extension culminates in a copper, standing seam mansard roof with projecting dormers. The ridge is capped with copper cresting.

North (Commerce Street) Elevation

The north elevation is comprised of the 3-story base and 17-story tower. The base contains six bays dominated by the 2 ½-story tall entrance to the banking lobby. Like the base of the east and south elevations, the ground floor is faced in polished gray granite, and the second and third floor levels are faced in buff-colored terra cotta (photo 3).

At the ground level, large fixed pane windows flank the entrance—three windows to the left (east) and two to the right (west). The window openings to the left originally provided access to a ground floor retail space. As on the east elevation, doorways were replaced with fixed pane, tinted glass and sloping sills were added during the 1974 remodeling. Lighted metal-clad box awnings were also added. Double height windows above each ground level window are identical in design to those on the east elevation.

The entrance to the banking lobby dominates the north elevation. The granite-faced entrance projects slightly from the face of the base and is off center (set further to the west). This offset created a deeper retail space at the building's northeast corner (Commerce and St. Mary's Streets). The architrave surrounding the door is of polished gray granite. The sides feature fluted pilasters trimmed with a rounded edge. The trim across the top of the architrave is also fluted, but in a stepped pattern receding from the face. An elaborate door and window assembly is inset into the architrave. A pair of richly decorated bronze doors are set in a surrounding frame comprised of fluted pilasters, embossed "capitals," and a frieze decorated with brass medallions, both egg and dart and dentil molding and embossed classical motifs. The doorway is topped with open work cresting. The decorative exterior doors open to reveal a vestibule with automatic aluminum and glass doors topped by a fixed, single pane transom. The side walls of the vestibule feature embossed brass paneling.

Above the entryway is a 40-lite fixed pane window with bronze mullions. Two decorative horizontal panels separated by embossed spandrels top the window. In 1964, a stained, leaded glass window featuring the Alamo image was mounted inside the originally clear window. The window was designed by Ruth Dunn and installed under the supervision of architect Bartlett Cocke (vertical file, San Antonio Public Library). The entire window opening is set in a bronze frame decorated in a chevron pattern with corner medallions. A terra cotta frieze and stringcourse spans the base, separating it from the tower. Unlike the east elevation, the frieze and stringcourse are broken on the north elevation. The frieze above the entryway is plain except for the word "Alamo" in surface mounted bronze letters. Here, the stringcourse projects

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slightly and is topped by decorative terra cotta cresting. The frieze, pilaster caps, and stringcourse extending across the remainder of the north elevation match those on the other building elevations. Bronze flagpoles with decorative holders set in terra cotta medallions project on either side of the entryway. The poles are anchored with fixed rods to bronze medallions on the face of the building. A bronze night depository box is mounted on either side of the entry. (As originally built, there were windows on either side of the entrance.)

Like the east elevation, the north elevation above the base, is faced in buff-colored brick in a running bond pattern, with spandrel panels and sloping sills of darker brown brick. Also like the east elevation, the building's verticality is accentuated by vertical piers of alternating width. Using the base as the organizing element, the north elevation of the tower is separated into three parts. The eastern portion contains six bays, the middle portion seven bays, and the western portion, four bays. The northwest corner of the building is angled to meet the west elevation (now obscured by the parking garage). This angle resulted from the irregular shape of the original building site.

The north elevation of the tower is regular in design. The only deviation from the window pattern is in the middle bay where the center three windows on the fourth floor feature terra cotta pilasters and decorative lintels. At these windows, the spandrel panels separating the fourth and fifth floors are decorated with the star pattern that is repeated throughout the building. The sills of the three windows on the fifth floor are also of terra cotta. The regular brick pattern resumes above this level. Decorative terra cotta spandrel panels separate the 16th and 17th floor windows of the north tower. The 17th floor parapet is faced with terra cotta panels on the east elevation. Piers project above the parapet and are capped with terra cotta finials that vary in size and height.

South (Market Street) Elevation

The building has its narrowest frontage on the south (Market Street) elevation. This is likely due to the fact that, at the time the building was completed, Commerce Street was considered the city's leading business center. Market Street, on the other hand, attracted fewer retail businesses. Immediate neighbors to the south included a city police building and the San Antonio Drug Company (NR 1994).

The south elevation of the base and tower are similar in detailing to the east and north elevations (photos 1,2 & 3). Facing Market Street, the southwest corner of the base contains three fixed pane windows and three double-height windows. Above the base, the tower contains six bays. The frieze, stringcourse and tower detailing are all identical to the rest of the building. Piers alternate in width and the use of buff and darker brick is consistent with the remainder of the building. As stated earlier, the L-shaped office tower rises from only a portion of the base. The southwest corner of the base facing on Market Street is therefore only three stories in height (historic photo 2). This portion of the building contains four bays. Three of these bays contain double height windows rising from the ground level to the second floor. The fenestration in the openings originally matched the double height windows on the east and north elevations but was replaced with fixed pane tinted glass during the 1974 remodeling. Embossed bronze panels matching the adjoining spandrel panels are set at the top of the windows to form a continuous band across the south elevation. The name "Alamo" is mounted in bronze letters on the plain frieze. A shallow cornice topped with decorative terra cotta projects from the building above the three windows.

The fourth bay (at the southwest corner of the building) contains a single window on the ground floor, and a double-height window on the second and third floor levels. This latter bay is identical in detail to the window arrangement in the

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remainder of the building's base (including the frieze and string course). Like the other ground floor windows, fixed pane tinted glass was installed during the 1974 remodeling. A plain parapet completes the 3-story portion of the south elevation. A flat-roofed, glass and brick enclosure was added above the 3-story base in 1956. The enclosed area is set back from the parapet wall creating a covered balcony. The parapet wall is topped with an iron railing (photo 2; historic photo 3). The back (or south) elevation of the tower facing on Commerce Street, is visible from Market Street. This elevation contains nine bays. Again, details of the brick, terra cotta, and piers are identical to the remainder of the building. A full height fire escape mounted on the south elevation will be removed for code compliance.

West Elevation

The west elevation of the original tower (with its four story extension) is visible from both Market Street and the river (photo 1; historic photo 3). This elevation has twelve bays. The two bays at the juncture of the "L" are infilled (with a few exceptions) to accommodate mechanical equipment. Terra cotta spandrel panels and parapet details extend across the west elevation at the 20th floor height, creating an unbroken decorative band that matches the remainder of the building. Brick, terra cotta and pier details are otherwise identical to the rest of the building. Like the south elevation, the full height fire escape will be removed for code reasons.

Parking Garage

The 8-story parking garage and drive-through banking facility designed by Bartlett Cocke was constructed in 1961 (photo 1). The strictly utilitarian structure is built of concrete and tile and faced in vertical, porcelain-enameled steel panels. The panels are finished in alternating beige and brown tones. An elevator lobby adjoins the bank building at the southeast corner of the garage. Two elevators provide access to the bank at the ground and six floor levels. The street level of the garage includes two ramps, six drive through tellers' lanes, stairways, and utility areas. The floor is red tile. The garage has cast-in place concrete ramps and decks. Mechanical equipment and the elevator penthouse are located on the top level.

Rooftop Weather Sign

The rooftop sign was erected in 1956 as an advertisement for Alamo National Bank (photo 1; historic photo 3; figure 3). The metal structure with its neon spire rises six stories above the building. The sign is approximately 60-feet in length and its steel framework has been estimated to weigh over 24 tons. The name on the sign has been changed over the years to coincide with the bank name. It is currently blank. The neon spire or "thermometer" once predicted the weather using changing light patterns. It is not functional at this time.

Other site features

The sidewalk surrounding the building on the north, east and south is comprised of dark red brick pavers. These are thought to have replaced the original concrete and granite-finished during the 1974 remodeling.

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INTERIOR

The Building/Elevator Lobby

The richly decorated banking and building lobbies are the most prominent interior features. The building lobby is entered from St. Mary's Street through two pairs of modern bronze and glass doors. Elaborate exterior detailing on the door frame is repeated on the interior. The walls and ceiling of the vestibule just inside the doors are covered with elaborate bronze grilles that hide the ventilation system (photo 5). The sides of the vestibule entrance are of red Levanto marble set in a bronze framework. The base is of matching marble. The vestibule is defined on the interior by a decorated bronze framework that reflects the same motifs used on the exterior of the building entry—rope moldings, egg and dart and dentil moldings, and cresting. Whereas the north entrance has a set of exterior and interior doors, the east entrance has only exterior doors.

The lobby is T-shaped, with the elevators located to the right. Walls are of cream colored Botticino marble and the floor is travertine. The elaborately molded coffered plaster ceiling, which was originally painted in a multi-colored pattern, it is now painted white. Entering the lobby to the right is the original, bronze-framed building directory which matches the design of the door frames. (It was originally mounted on the left wall.) To the left, a recess houses the modern ATM machine. The original mail drop is also set in left wall. Just past the mail drop, plain metal double doors provide access to the stairwell. Modern lights and monitors have been added at various locations.

The bank of six elevators is located to the right through a flat arched opening. The elevators are framed in red Levanto marble and have embossed bronze doors and side panels (photo 6). The glass and bronze ceiling fixtures are original, while wall sconces are modern. Modern lights and elevator controls have been added to the elevator lobby. As originally designed, the north wall of the elevator lobby contained a door into the adjoining retail space. This opening has been filled.

The bank lobby is entered through a set of full-height bronze and plate glass doors set in a classical architrave of red Levanto marble (photo 7). Bronze pocket gates slide to cover the entry, providing additional security for the bank. Inside a small vestibule to the left is an elevator with bronze doors that accesses the basement, second and third floors. The bank lobby elevation of the architrave is faced with cream marble. Above the doorway, a second floor balcony with bronze balustrade and railing overlooks the banking floor.

Bank Lobby

The main entrance to the bank lobby is from Commerce Street. The lobby is a soaring, 2 ½ - story space arranged on a north/south axis (photo 8). As originally configured, the lobby measured 133' X 82' and was 40' in height. A double line of rectangular columns with simple capitals divide the east and west sides of the lobby into nine bays. The columns have red Levanto marble bases and cream marble wainscoting trimmed in beveled walnut. The floor of the lobby is travertine and the dropped ceiling structure is comprised of modern coffered panels inset with a lighting grid.

The north elevation of the lobby is dominated by the entry vestibule and stained glass "Alamo" window screen. The vestibule projects into the lobby and reflects the same bronze details expressed on the exterior of the entrance (photo 9). Like the St. Mary's Street vestibule, the Commerce Street vestibule is inset with red Levanto marble panels framed in

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bronze. Side panels just inside the outer doorway have elaborate bronze grilles that mask radiators. The vestibule contains a second set of bronze and glass double doors that protect the banking lobby from inclement weather. Two operable transoms over the inner doors are covered with bronze grille work.

On the interior, the vestibule is also faced in marble with bronze framing. An octagonal shaped clock surmounts the vestibule assembly above the crested cornice. A hipped roof over the entry pavilion appears to be a modern addition. An Art Deco-inspired oil painting hangs on either side of the entrance between fluted pilasters. The paintings, commemorating the themes of trust and thrift, were installed in 1993 as props for filming of the movie titled *Blank Check* (photo 10).

The original layout of the bank lobby, altered during the 1974 remodeling, was as follows (beginning at the northwest corner and proceeding in a "U" to the northeast corner): senior officers platform (with conference rooms behind); tellers cages (with bookkeeping behind); payroll and savings department; trust department; junior officers; credit analysis, collection (with stenographers behind). As constructed, the building contained retail spaces along St. Mary's, Commerce and Market Streets. These stores closed over the years, and the retail spaces were incorporated into the ground floor banking space.

Today, modern banking counters occupy four bays on the west side of the lobby and the first two bays on the east side are glassed office spaces. The counters are of brass and marble. During the 1974 remodeling, a mezzanine was added on the south end of the lobby, and the existing mezzanines on the east and west sides were extended (photo 11; historic photo 4). (The exact date of the initial construction of the east and west mezzanines is not known, but it is thought to have been c.1940.) The mezzanine is accessed by a circular stairway constructed of concrete with glass and bronze railings. The face of the mezzanine is comprised of polished bronze finished metal and glass with a bronze railing. Behind the stairwell on the south side of the lobby are desks for bank employees. Original marble and bronze tellers' cages were removed during the 1974 remodeling. Today, only two original check desks remain in the bank lobby. These are placed along the east wall. The remainder of the lobby furniture is modern, and generally post dates the 1974 remodeling.

The window screen above the Commerce Street entrance was originally glazed in clear plate glass to emit light to the banking lobby. Double height windows on the south end of the lobby also helped light the lobby. In 1964, the stained glass depiction of the Alamo was installed in place of the clear glass above the main entrance (photo 11). As part of the mezzanine construction in 1974, the double height windows on the south were replaced with tinted, fixed pane glass. As a result of these modifications, the light level in the lobby is more subdued than originally designed.

The banking room ceiling is elaborately decorated in a manner described in early building accounts as "reserved Spanish Renaissance." The motifs reflect decoration on the exterior of the building (photo 12). The fluted columns are capped with elaborately carved plaster capitals. These support an entablature comprised a frieze of cast bronze ventilation grates and star medallions, and a molded plaster cornice that frames the ceiling. The entablature was once brightly painted but is now painted in darker tones. The ceiling was originally flat and unadorned except for suspended bronze and glass fixtures. These fixtures as well as sconces on the side walls, were removed in 1974. Also in 1974, a dropped ceiling with a grid lighting system was suspended below the flat plaster ceiling. The grid was installed within the original decorative frame which was carefully preserved (photo 8).

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Office Tower

When the building opened in 1930, banking operations occupied the second and third floors. The second floor contained conference and work rooms, as well as the stenographers pool and accounting, loan and sales departments. These areas were accessed from the bank using the single elevator within the east entry vestibule. Elevators are framed in Tennessee gray marble trimmed in walnut. Wainscoting is white marble. A glass-enclosed meeting room was constructed adjacent to the elevator lobby in 1974. The room extends to the St. Mary's Street window screen. The dropped ceiling hides original window details. Marble wainscoting has been retained. The directors room was located at the northeast corner of the third floor and a large work room at the northwest corner. The remainder of the third floor was devoted to lounges, restrooms and small offices. The San Antonio Petroleum Club, and later, the San Antonio Club, occupied the fourth floor which was divided into meeting and dining facilities. In 1956, the club was enlarged with an extension over the main banking lobby. An open-air balcony was added to overlook Market Street. The tower was left largely unfinished at the time the bank opened in March 1930. It is assumed that finish out was completed by individual tenants. Revised architects' drawings do reflect finish out for several offices as well as ground floor retail spaces.

In general, the finish out of the elevator lobbies and corridors on the upper floors is typical of the late 1920s. Elevators architraves are of dark gray Tennessee marble and wainscoting is of Alabama Cream marble trimmed with walnut molding. Floors are of two-tone terrazzo with a darker border. Doors are of walnut with two panels and operable transoms. Upper panels generally are glazed with opaque, textured glass and have black and gold painted signage identifying the office number and tenant. Remnants of walnut picture molding have been found above dropped ceilings. While certain floors retain some degree of integrity, others have been drastically altered to meet the changing tenant needs over the building's 75-year history. Marble wainscoting and trim and walnut doors and trim are missing from most of the floors. Some corridors have been modified and ceilings dropped. Terrazzo floors have been covered with linoleum or carpet and/or damaged. Floors 12, 19, 21, and 23 are the most intact, while floors 2, 10, 11, 17, 20, and 22 retain a lesser degree of integrity. In the building's conversion to hotel use, original elements on these floors will be preserved and incorporated into the hotel design.

Basement

The original bank vaults are located in the basement. The two main vaults remain in working condition, while the smaller vaults are no longer in use. The safety deposit vault gates are original, but other detailing, including the attendant's cage and counter, are modern. Heating and cooling equipment is also housed in the basement.

Stairwell

The stairwell is accessed from the east building lobby through modern metal doors added in 1974. Inside the stairwell, a bronze-framed fire hose box is mounted to the right of the entrance. One original bronze door exists on the south wall, while a modern door has replaced a bronze door leading to the banking space. The stairwell is highly finished to the third floor level, including a bronze railing and decorative bronze balustrades and corners. Travertine treads are set on red Levanto marble risers. White marble wainscoting is trimmed with walnut molding. Above the third floor, the stairwell is utilitarian, comprised of pipe rails and metal and concrete risers and treads.

8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

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 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: N/A

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE: Commerce, Economics, Architecture

PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANCE: 1929-1956

SIGNIFICANT DATES: 1929, 1956

SIGNIFICANT PERSON: N/A

CULTURAL AFFILIATION: N/A

ARCHITECT/BUILDER: Graham, Anderson, Probst and White; McKenzie Construction (1929)
Bartlett Cocke (1956); Ford, Powell and Carson (1974)

NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE (see continuation sheets 8-14 through 8-22).

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES

BIBLIOGRAPHY (see continuation sheet 9-23).

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: *San Antonio Public Library; San Antonio Conservation Society; Daughters of the Republic of Texas Library*

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Alamo National Bank
San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Alamo National Bank Building was constructed in 1929-30 as the new home for San Antonio's third-largest banking institution. The bank took its name from the historic Alamo which adjoined the mercantile business of Hugo, Schmeltzer and Company whose partners helped charter Alamo National Bank in 1891. Originally capitalized for \$250,000, the bank grew steadily, surviving the economic panics of the 1890s. The bank moved to a new building in 1900, and did business there until March 1930 when the imposing, 24-story building at the southwest corner of Commerce and St. Mary's Streets was completed. The building, designed by the renowned Chicago firm of Graham, Anderson, Probst and White, joined other tall buildings that changed San Antonio's skyline in the first two decades of the 20th century. At the time of its completion, the building, with its ornate lobbies and elaborate terra cotta embellishments, was the city's second-tallest structure. The office tower housed San Antonio's leading oil and insurance companies, as well as professionals including attorneys, architects and physicians. The bank maintained its position as the city's third largest financial institutions throughout the Depression and war years before falling victim to the banking crisis of the 1980s. Alamo National Bank, together with other banks in its holding company, was the subject of the third largest bank rescue in U.S. history to that point. Bank One, which acquired the failed institution, continued to operate in the historic banking lobby and the tower remained occupied by a variety of commercial tenants. Work began in 2005 to convert the building to a hotel which will open in Spring 2006. The building is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A (local level) in the area's of economics and commerce because of its 75-year association with local banking through periods of economic stability, growth and crisis. The building is also eligible for the Register under Criterion C (local level) as one of the city's finest tall buildings constructed during the boom period of the 1920s, and as an excellent example of the work of Graham, Anderson, Probst and White. The period of significance extends from 1929 to 1956

The Alamo National Bank was constructed in 1929-30 as the new home for the banking institution that was chartered on March 2, 1891. For the purpose of this narrative, the building will be referred to as the "Alamo National Bank." For the purposes of official National Register listing, it will be designated the "1929 Alamo National Bank." This distinguishes it from the bank's previous building that was listed on the National Register in 1984.

Banking in Texas and San Antonio

San Antonio had begun to grow and prosper following the entry of Texas into the Union in 1846. Between 1850 and 1860, the town's population grew from 3,488 to 8,235. After the Civil War put an end business expansion and construction, growth did not resume until the late 1860s. The Federal census of 1870 enumerated 12,256 San Antonio residents. San Antonio had historically been a regional economic center, and this position was enhanced during the decade of the 1870s. The establishment of Fort Sam Houston in 1876, the arrival of the railroad in February 1877, and the cattle drives of the 1880s, all contributed to local and regional prosperity. By 1890, there were 37,673 people living in San Antonio. As businesses expanded and diversified, and more people moved to the city, capital was needed to sustain and fuel this growth.

The establishment of banks in Texas was problematic in the mid to late 19th century. There were no banks chartered during the period of the Republic, and state bank charters were prohibited under the constitutions of 1861, 1866 and 1876. During the brief window between 1869 and 1876, a few state chartered institutions were established (Tyler 1:371-73). As a result of these restrictions, most of the banking business in Texas fell to private institutions. Private banks throughout Texas traced their roots to antebellum mercantile operations. In San Antonio, Friedrich, Gustav and Carl Groos, Daniel

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and Anton Oppenheimer and Thomas C. Frost transformed their stores and commission businesses into private banking institutions in the post-Civil War era. (It was not until 1899 and 1912 respectively that the Frost and Groos families changed their status from private to national banks. D & A Oppenheimer was the state's oldest private bank when it closed 1988). While private banks served a loyal and established clientele, national banks were able to provide larger loans through national bank notes based on the value of the banks' federal bonds (Head, 8). By 1890, the year before the Alamo National Bank was chartered, there were ten banks in San Antonio—three national banks and seven private banks.

Hugo, Schmeltzer and Company

Unlike local banking institutions which began as private banks, Alamo National Bank was established as a national bank. The National Currency Act (1863) and National Bank Act (1864) served to raise capital for the Union through the sale of federal bonds. More stringent regulations were also instituted and state bonds notes taxed more heavily, encouraging state banks to convert to national bank status. By 1890, when the founders of Alamo Bank sought their charter, national banking was well established.

The bank grew out of the partnership of Charles Hugo, Gustav Schmeltzer and William Heuermann who established a wholesale grocery business in San Antonio in the early 1870s. However, while Hugo, Schmeltzer and Company is often identified as the predecessor to Alamo National Bank, the grocery business and bank operated separately for a number of years. Charles Hugo (1838-1906) arrived in the United States with his family in 1854 at the age of 15. The Hugos settled in Dewitt County where his father became a farmer (1860 Federal Census). Hugo married c. 1896 and lived with his wife, Elise, near Clinton, then the county seat of Dewitt County. Shortly after his marriage, Hugo entered the mercantile business with Schwab and Company which operated in the vicinity of Clinton and Hochheim (1870 Federal Census; New Handbook of Texas).

Sometime after July 1870, Hugo moved to San Antonio where he was briefly a partner in Thomas Barry's retail grocery business. Shortly after this, Barry, who was in poor health, moved to Georgia. In 1872, Charles Hugo entered into partnership with Gustav Schmeltzer (1824-1911), who managed a local wholesale grocery company (1870 Federal Census). The men named their business Hugo, Schmeltzer and Company. William Heuermann (1828-1900), also a grocer, joined the partnership in 1873, and the firm became the city's leading wholesale and retail grocery establishment (San Antonio *Light*, September 15, 1906). An 1885 publication described the company:

“From the small beginning alluded to, this business has grown to be one of the largest in the South, the stock carried being very large and comprehensive....averages \$100,000 in value, and the yearly transactions will average \$1,000,000” (Land and Thompson, 59-60).

Hugo, Schmeltzer operated at 89-91 Commerce Street until 1883 when a fire destroyed the business and it moved to the building on Alamo Plaza commonly known as “Grenet's Castle.” Mercantile dealer, Honore Grenet, had leased the structure from the Catholic Church in 1878, built a crenellated storefront over the ruins of the *convento* of Mission San Antonio de Valero, and operated his business there from 1880 until his death in 1882 (San Antonio *Herald*, January 25, 1878).

Hugo, Schmeltzer Company was operating next to the Alamo when the partners apparently decided to enter the banking business. Unlike their local competitors who gave up mercantile operations in favor of banking, Hugo, Schmeltzer and

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Heuermann chose to establish a national bank while continuing their grocery business. They named the new bank for the famous Texas landmark adjoining their store. Hugo, Schmeltzer and Heuermann, all well-established local businessmen, joined with John Brown and Patrick Swearingen, both recent arrivals from Brenham, Texas, to charter the Alamo National Bank. John Brown (1850-1922), born in Virginia, came to Brenham in 1872, married Anna Giddings, and organized the First National Bank of Brenham (Ellis: 3:1802). Brown sold his bank and moved to San Antonio in 1890. Swearingen (1865-1919), a native of Brenham, attended the University of Texas and moved to San Antonio to practice law at about this same time.

Alamo National Bank: 1891-1906

The Alamo National Bank was established just after the Panic of 1890 (followed by similar events in 1893 and 1896) destabilized the country's economy. Over speculation and high money rates which resulted in business and bank failures did not deter the bank's organizers. In December 1890, 24 individuals including Hugo, Schmeltzer, Heuermann, Brown and Swearingen, pledged various amounts to underwrite the bank's original \$250,000 capital (Head, 22). However, when bank shares were issued and paid for on August 4, 1891, there were 49 shareholders, including only ten of the original subscribers. Together, Hugo, Schmeltzer and Heuermann controlled the largest block of stock—30% of the stock offering—and Patrick Swearingen and John Brown controlled 24% (Head, 79-80). Hugo and his partners retained their control of the bank stock until 1907 when John Brown allied with other shareholders to take and hold control until 1922 (Head, 81).

The institution received its charter as national bank number 4525 on March 2, 1891, and opened for business one week later (Head, 93). Charles Hugo was bank's first president and John Brown served as cashier. The Alamo National Bank operated first in the old Traders National Bank building at 264 West Commerce Street before moving to the Kampmann Bank building at the northeast corner of Main Plaza (Main/Military Plaza NR District, 1979). (The Traders National Bank was located on the site of the San Antonio River bypass channel which today forms the western boundary of the Alamo National Bank site). Alamo National Bank grew quickly, and within six months, had total assets of \$491,523. Just prior to the Panic of 1893, assets had grown to \$844,784, and before the subsequent Panic of 1896, rose to nearly \$1 million (Head, 95-96). While fluctuations in the cotton and livestock markets contributed to economic uncertainty in the region and several local banks closed during the 1890s, Alamo National Bank survived. With the discovery of oil at Spindletop in 1901, and establishment of a record number of new businesses statewide, Texas and San Antonio enjoyed renewed prosperity (Head, 116).

In 1902, Alamo National Bank moved to its own building, a new five-story structure at the southwest corner of Commerce and Presa Streets (NR 1984). At the time of the move, the bank had assets of \$1.5 million (Head, 108). The new building, designed by James Wahrenberger, became best known for being reset 16-feet to accommodate the widening of Commerce Street in 1913. After the move, an additional three floors were added to the structure and the bank remained at this site until 1930. Charles Hugo did not live to see the historic move of his bank building. In poor health, Hugo sought treatment at Johns Hopkins Institute in Baltimore and died there on September 15, 1906.

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Alamo National Bank: 1906-1929

Alamo Bank faced growing local competition in the early years of the 20th century. While it held a national charter, Alamo operated more as a private bank that catered to its shareholders and clientele of small businessmen. More ambitious institutions served wider markets. These included Frost Bank, which received a national charter in 1899, and the National Bank of Commerce, founded in 1903. At the time of Charles Hugo's death in 1906, Frost, National Bank of Commerce and San Antonio National Bank were all larger than Alamo National Bank.

When Charles Hugo died, his widow, Elise, gained control of 22% of the bank's stock. Hoping to promote her son, Victor, to president, she sought to purchase additional shares, acquiring a 47% interest with the acquisition of Gustav Schmeltzer and William Heuermann's shares. The board, which had voted to increase the bank's capitalization, favored John Brown as president and Ernest Steves, son of shareholder, Johanna Steves, as vice president. By 1907, the Steves/Brown interests were able to gain control and Elise Hugo sold her interest in the bank (Head, 131-32). Victor Hugo continued to run Hugo, Schmeltzer Company until his unexpected death in 1910. The company then ceased operation. (San Antonio *Light*, November 5, 1910).

John Brown assumed the presidency of Alamo Bank in 1907 and held the position until his death in 1922. Brown and his management team set out to implement new strategies to make their institution the largest in the city. The bank developed an underwriting subsidiary, the Alamo National Company, through the acquisition of one of the city's oldest investment firms, W.K. Ewing Company. The investment division moved to the nearby Travis Building where it stayed until the new bank building was ready for occupancy in March 1930 (San Antonio *Express*, March 26, 1930). The bank continued to grow, and in early 1921, issued new stock, increasing its capital to \$1 million (Head, 178). When John Brown died in 1922, Alamo National Bank, with assets of \$8,259,982, was second in size only to the Central Trust Company (Head, 167, 193). Brown's fifteen year term as president had been one of growth and management stability. During his tenure, the board composition had changed only due to the deaths of two directors.

Reshaping Downtown San Antonio

San Antonio was booming and still the largest city in Texas when Ernest Steves was selected to succeed John Brown as president of Alamo National Bank. In the first two decades of the 20th century, San Antonio experienced an explosion of construction in both its business and residential districts, and an exponential growth in the number of automobiles. To accommodate this growth and relieve congestion, the City government began a program of infrastructure modernization using bond funds to extend and widen streets, build bridges, and install new utilities. This modernization altered the city's 19th century character and facilitated 20th century growth. It also created the site where Alamo National Bank would begin construction of its new facility in 1929.

The 1912-15 widening of Commerce Street to accommodate additional vehicular traffic required demolition of structures along the south side of the street. This street widening delineated the north boundary of the future Alamo Bank site. The project was also the catalyst for moving the 1902 Alamo Bank building. (This was the only project of its type undertaken during the widening of Commerce Street. Other buildings were simply cut off and new facades constructed.)

New bridges and street extensions were built to improve the flow of traffic and connect parts of the city previously isolated by lack of river crossings. One such project was the extension of St. Mary's Street south from Commerce across

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a new bridge to connect with Garden Street (San Antonio *Express*, February 26, 1922). The new St. Mary's Street right-of-way defined the eastern boundary of the Alamo National Bank site.

Finally, after floods in 1913 and 1921 devastated downtown, (and destroyed many of Alamo Bank's business records), an extensive program of flood prevention was undertaken. Meanders were straightened and a by-pass channel was built to carry flood waters past the downtown area. In 1927, construction of the river bend by-pass channel necessitated demolition of the city's historic 1859 market house designed by John Fries (Fisher, 101). This by-pass channel defined the western boundary of the Alamo Bank site. These improvements, coupled with the completion of Olmos Dam north of the city in 1926, provided increased flood protection for downtown and gave investors greater confidence to build near the river.

The unprecedented period of downtown building in the 1920s was encouraged not only by flood protection and infrastructure improvements, but by the nationwide financial climate. Fueled by lower bank rates, building operations throughout the country reported a steady increase during the 1920s. Short term loans were as low as 5% and long term notes were about 3%. (San Antonio *Light*, April 2, 1922) The local papers optimistically reported:

" In no other city of Texas has the basis of real estate valuation maintained the high rate sustained in San Antonio. The dollar invested in San Antonio real estate is one of the dollars which has not depreciated since the armistice." (San Antonio *Express*, July 3, 1921)

For several years, the tallest building in downtown San Antonio was the 10-story Clower Building completed in 1910. By 1930, the skyline of San Antonio had changed entirely with the completion of numerous tall buildings including:

- Central Trust Company Building (12-story; 1918) (NR 1982)
- San Antonio Drug Company Building (7-story; 1919) (NR 1994)
- Frost National Bank Building (12-story; 1922) (Main/Military Plaza NR Historic District)
- Maverick Building (9-story; 1922) (NR 1995)
- Medical Arts Building (13-story; 1924)
- Milam Building (21-story; 1927)
- National Bank of Commerce (13-story; 1919/1927) (Main/Military Plaza NR Historic District)
- Majestic Theater & Building (15-story; 1929) (NL 1975)
- Smith-Young Tower (31-story; 1929) (NR 1991)
- Nix Hospital (23-story; 1929)

Alamo National Bank: Planning and Construction

Throughout the period of economic prosperity preceding the stock market crash of 1929, the Alamo National Bank continued to do business at its Commerce and Presa Street location. However, by the late 1920s, bank directors made the decision to construct a new building to accommodate their growing business and provide much-needed downtown office space. The directors chose a site at the intersection of two of downtown's major thoroughfares—Commerce and St. Mary's Streets. Other prominent buildings including the Aztec Theater (1926; NR 1992), City Public Service Building (1925; NR 1995), Smith-Young Tower (1929; NR 1991) and San Antonio Drug Company (1919; NR 1994), were all within one block of the new bank. Construction began in 1929 (one source indicates February 20, while another states

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September), and the bank moved into its new quarters on March 17, 1930 (*San Antonio Light*, March 9, 1930; *San Antonio Express*, March 30, 1930). At the time of its completion, the building was the city's second-tallest structure, surpassed only by the 31-story Smith-Young Tower one block to the south.

Bank directors chose one of the country's most prominent architectural firms of the era—Graham, Anderson, Probst and White of Chicago—to design a structure befitting the institution's role as San Antonio's third-largest bank. The building was designed during the firm's most prolific period. **Ernest Graham** (1868-1936), **Pierce Anderson** (1870-1924), **Edward Probst** (1870-1942) and **Howard White** (1870-1936) had all worked for the renowned firm of D.H. Burnham and Company led by nationally known architect and planner, Daniel Burnham (1846-1912). Burnham and Company originated with the founding of Burnham and Root in 1873. Following John Root's death in 1893, Burnham and Company was established. Burnham died in 1912, and five years after his death, Graham, Anderson, Probst and White was formed.

Ernest Graham had joined D.H. Burnham's practice as a draftsman in 1891, and rapidly rose to become a partner in the firm (Chappell, 260). At the age of 26, he was Burnham's assistant chief of construction for the World's Columbian Exposition. As Burnham's only partner until 1910, Graham worked on virtually all of the firm's projects, helping to earn D.H. Burnham and Company an international reputation for commercial design and construction. The firm that Graham organized after Burnham's death sustained this reputation. Graham divided his new practice into four sections: Business, which he headed; Design, headed by Anderson; Production, headed by Probst; and Construction, headed by White. This corporate structure, and the strength of the partners, contributed to the firm's success. Between 1912 and 1936, Graham, Anderson, Probst and White received over 2,000 commissions ranging from small jobs to buildings of great importance (ibid, 266).

While much of Graham, Anderson, Probst and White's work was in Chicago, the mid-West, and on the East Coast, Graham traveled widely to solicit and secure commissions throughout the country. During the prolific period of the 1920s, the firm employed as many as 250 workers. Among the many prominent buildings designed by D.H. Burnham and Company and Graham, Anderson, Probst and White were the Flatiron Building, the Shedd Aquarium, Wrigley Building, Chicago Merchandise Mart, Washington's Union Station, Pennsylvania Station, the Field Museum, and the United States Post Office in Chicago. The United States Government was an important client, commissioning seven buildings for the Federal Reserve System. Prior to receiving the Alamo National Bank building commission, Graham, Anderson, Probst and White, as well as Burnham before them, had already worked in Texas. Burnham's firm had designed the Scanlan Building (1909; NR 1980) and Scanlan warehouse (demolished) in Houston, and the Union Passenger Station in El Paso (1905; 1975).

Graham, Anderson, Probst and White's commission record lists other Texas projects including the Southern Texas Commercial National Bank and Federal Reserve Bank in Houston and the First National Bank in Amarillo (Chappell, Part 4). While the firm might have produced designs for Houston's Federal Reserve and Southern Texas Commercial National Bank buildings, it did not complete the final designs (Fox to Pfeiffer, e-mail correspondence, July 16, 2005). Likewise, the commission register lists the St. Anthony Hotel in San Antonio. However, the firms of record for the hotel are J. Flood Walker (1909) and John Marriott (1936 addition).

McKenzie Construction Company had already begun construction of the Alamo National Bank building when the stock market crashed in October 1929. Other tall buildings in downtown San Antonio—the Majestic Theater and Building,

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Smith-Young Tower and Nix Hospital— had all been recently completed. Like the Alamo Bank, construction continued on the Telephone Company building until its completion in the early days of the Depression. While research is ongoing, the laudatory dedication section typically published in the local press to celebrate a building's completion has not been located for the Alamo Bank Building. These sections were based on advertising, and funds were probably scarce for such purposes. In addition, while the bank occupied its section of the building on March 17, 1930, finish out of the remaining floors was ongoing. Opening of the remainder of the building was projected for May 1930, but the actual date has not been established.

The local press recounted the bank's opening as follows:

"A large crowd formed mostly of patrons of the institution visited the Alamo National bank Monday morning as the bank opened for business in its new home at St. Mary's and Commerce streets... The interior of the upper floors of the new building has not been completed, but plans already are underway for a formal opening of the building when the work is finished about May 1... the bank will have 120,000 square feet and approximately 550 offices. About 66 per cent of the building is already under lease. The new home of the bank is equipped with the modern of banking installations." (San Antonio *Light*, March 17, 1930)

The building lobby was the grandest in the city, and the office structure attracted many of San Antonio's leading oil companies, lawyers, realtors, accountants and insurance companies. The United States Weather Bureau, Reconstruction Finance Corporation, United States Bankruptcy Court, San Antonio Clearing House, and a variety of architects and doctors also established their offices in the new building. The San Antonio Petroleum Club opened on the fourth floor, and remained there until 1976.

Walter Napier had assumed presidency of the bank in March 1929. On October 29, 1929, he issued a statement that "A bank is not a formal institution for the few. It must serve the man who has a small account and perhaps wears overalls as diligently as it serves the millionaire" (Head, 231). As the Depression deepened, Alamo National Bank was able to acquire the city's largest bank, City-Central, which failed in 1931 and been reorganized as the South Texas Bank and Trust Company. Though the bank's assets continued to decline, it survived the bank holiday in 1933. A loan from the Reconstruction Finance Corporation in 1934 helped sustain the bank in the darkest days of the Depression (Head, 255-56).

Alamo National Bank emerged from the Depression as it had entered it, as the city's third largest financial institution. With assets of \$25 million, it was surpassed by only Frost National Bank and National Bank of Commerce (Head, 8-3). The bank sustained this position through World War II. Alamo Bank merged with South Texas National Bank in early 1946, and in September of 1946, reported assets of \$81 million (Head, 296, 8-4).

The Alamo National Bank: 1946 to the present

Alamo National Bank prospered in the post-war years. In 1956, the bank installed what became its signature, rooftop sign. The sign's large metal face containing the bank's name was visible for miles. The neon spire projecting above the sign advised San Antonians about the weather. Steady lighting meant no change, blinking lighting meant rain, ascending lighting meant a temperature rise, and descending lighting, a temperature decrease (San Antonio *Express*, December 28,

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1956). Bank officials hoped to make it a nightly habit for residents to look at the weather spire. They succeeded and the spire became a community fixture. (Tall buildings in at least two other cities were topped with weather predictors—Ontario's Canada Life Assurance Building and Boston's John Hancock Tower).

To better serve its customers and tenants, the bank constructed a 7-story, 250 car parking garage and drive-through banking facility in 1961. Designed by architect Bartlett Cocke, the structure was attached to the building's west elevation. Six drive-in windows provided convenient banking from both Commerce and Market Streets. The bank advertised that it now provided "total banking" (San Antonio *Light*, May 7, 1961; San Antonio *Express*, March 26, 1961). While the entire bank building had cost \$2.5 million in 1929-30, the parking garage was built at a cost of \$2 million.

In the post-war years, Texas banking remained relatively unchanged, but by the 1970s bank holding companies became common. (This was in response to the state ban on branch banking.) In 1971, Alamo National Bank was acquired by Alamo Bancshares, and in 1972, by Federated Texas and Federated Capital Corporation successively. The bank was committed to its downtown location, and in 1974 undertook a \$5 million remodeling of its building. Ford, Powell and Carson, Architects and Planners, Bartlett Cocke Construction Company, and Orville Carr and Associates interior designers carried out the project. The project involved remodeling and refurbishing of the banking lobby and the first eight floors of the building. While wood sash windows on the office tower had been replaced by metal windows in about 1972, the 1974 renovation involved replacement of ground floor windows and storefront openings. A glass and bronze faced mezzanine was added to the south end of the bank lobby and original tellers' cages and lighting fixtures were removed. The project began in January 1975 and was completed and dedicated on March 2, 1976. Bank president, John Meyer, stated,

"The completion of this project which began in January 1975 marks the beginning of a new era for Alamo National Bank, an era which combines the best of the old and the new to provide its customers with friendly, yet expedient banking services" (San Antonio *Light*, February 19, 1976).

In October 1976, within eight months of the dedication, Alamo Bank's holding company, Federated Capital, merged with Mercantile Texas Corporation and the bank became part of the state's fifth largest holding company (San Antonio *Express*, October 22, 1976; March 30, 1989). The entire face of banking locally and nationwide soon changed when the banking crisis of the 1980s led to further mergers, and then seizures and reorganizations.

In 1984, Mercantile Texas Corporation merged with Southwest Bancshares to form MCorp valued at \$19.7 billion (San Antonio *Express*, March 22, 1984). With the creation of MCorp, 93-year old Alamo National Bank was slated to be renamed MBank San Antonio (San Antonio *Express*, July 20, 1984). However, when customers and the public at large complained loudly about the loss of the "Alamo" name, the board of directors adopted a resolution to call the institution "MBank Alamo" (San Antonio *Express*, August 1, 1984; March 30, 1989). The signature rooftop sign was changed to reflect this new name, and dramatic nighttime lighting was added to the building. Bank chairman, Robert G. Davis, commented, "We wanted to contribute to the scenic beauty of our downtown area with this dramatic new lighting, to demonstrate our commitment to this important downtown landmark" (San Antonio *Express-News*, November 5, 1985).

The energy crisis of the 1980s and its negative impact on the real estate market, resulted in a regional recession. When MBank Alamo and other MCorp banks in Texas suffered heavy losses on real estate loans, the institutions were seized by the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation. The banks were packaged into a government-owned entity that operated under

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National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 22

Alamo National Bank
San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas

the temporary name, Deposit Insurance Bridge Bank (San Antonio *Express*, March 30, 1989). At the time of the seizure, regulators speculated that this was the third-costliest commercial bank rescue in history, surpassing the bailouts of Chicago's Continental Illinois bank (1984; \$4.5 billion) and Republic Bank of Dallas (1988; \$4 billion). Regulators estimated the price of the MBank transaction at \$1 to 2 billion.

Though temporary, the establishment of Bridge Bank ended the institution's association with the "Alamo" name. A local bank president reflected nostalgically on the loss of names that had shaped the city's mercantile history.

"We lost the Joske's name. We might lose the Frost Brothers name, and now it looks like we'll lose the Alamo bank name. It almost seems like San Antonio is losing some of its culture and charisma with the loss of these names" (San Antonio *Express-News*, March 30, 1989).

Three months after the MCorp banks were seized, they were taken over by Banc One Corporation of Columbus, Ohio. At the time, Banc One was the 25th largest bank holding company in the country. The corporation, which named its Texas holdings Bank One Texas, assumed control on July 5, 1989 (San Antonio *Express-News*, June 29, 1989). The main operation of Bank One San Antonio remained in the Alamo National Bank building. The rooftop sign, which had advertised MBank Alamo, was altered to read "Bank One." This lettering has now been removed in anticipation of the building's new use.

Bank One Texas, through its subsidiary, Bonnet Resources Corporation, retained ownership of the Alamo National Bank Building. The corporation then sold the building to Euro-Alamo Investments in 1992 (San Antonio *Express-News*, March 4, 1992). In 2005, Alamo National Building Development Partnership, L.P., a partnership of Euro-Alamo and Drury Southwest, Incorporated, began renovation of the Alamo National Bank building as a 390-room hotel. Completion is scheduled for Spring 2006. The rooftop sign will read, "Drury Plaza Hotel." Renovation of the Alamo National Bank building is a certified historic tax credit project. The banking operation, recently acquired by Chase, will downsize its presence and relocate to a storefront space on the south side of the building, thus continuing the 75-year tradition of banking at this site.

The Alamo National Bank building has been continually occupied by the original tenant bank and its successors for 75 years. With the exception of ground floor modifications, window replacement, the parking garage addition to the west and rooftop signage, the building remains almost identical to its 1930 appearance. The history of the Alamo Bank from its roots in the city early commercial life to its position as one of the city's largest banking institutions contribute to the building's National Register eligibility under Criterion A (local level) in the areas of commerce and economics. The building is a fine example of the work of Graham, Anderson, Probst and White, one of the country's leading designers of tall buildings in the 1920s. When completed, and today, it is one of the city's most prominent structures. For these reasons, it is eligible for the National Register under Criterion C (local level) in the area of architecture.

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National Park Service

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Continuation Sheet

Section 9 Page 23

Alamo National Bank
San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas

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- San Antonio *Express-News*, various issues.
- San Antonio *Light*, various issues.
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- United States Federal Census, various years.
- Vertical Files
Daughters of the Republic of Texas Library
San Antonio Public Library

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF PROPERTY: less than one acre

UTM REFERENCES	<u>Zone</u>	<u>Easting</u>	<u>Northing</u>
	14	549276	3255129

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION: The site is comprised of NCB 101, Lot 28 in San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas. It is bounded on the north by West Commerce Street, on the south by Market Street, on the east by South St. Mary's Street and on the west by the San Antonio River by-pass channel.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION: The site includes all property associated with the building and its attached parking garage since 1961.

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME/TITLE: Maria Watson Pfeiffer

ORGANIZATION:

DATE: October 19, 2005

STREET & NUMBER: 213 Washington St.

TELEPHONE: (210) 222-1586

CITY OR TOWN: San Antonio

STATE: Texas

ZIP CODE: 78204

ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION

CONTINUATION SHEETS

MAPS (see continuation sheets Figure 24 and Figure 25)

PHOTOGRAPHS (see continuation sheets Photo-35 through Photo 39)

ADDITIONAL ITEMS (see continuation sheets Figure-24 through Figure-34)

PROPERTY OWNER

NAME: Alamo National Building Development Partnership, L.P. by DSW Alamo Management, LCC, managing agent

STREET & NUMBER: 101 South Farrar Drive

TELEPHONE: (573) 335-3134

CITY OR TOWN: Cape Girardeau

STATE: MO

ZIP CODE: 63701

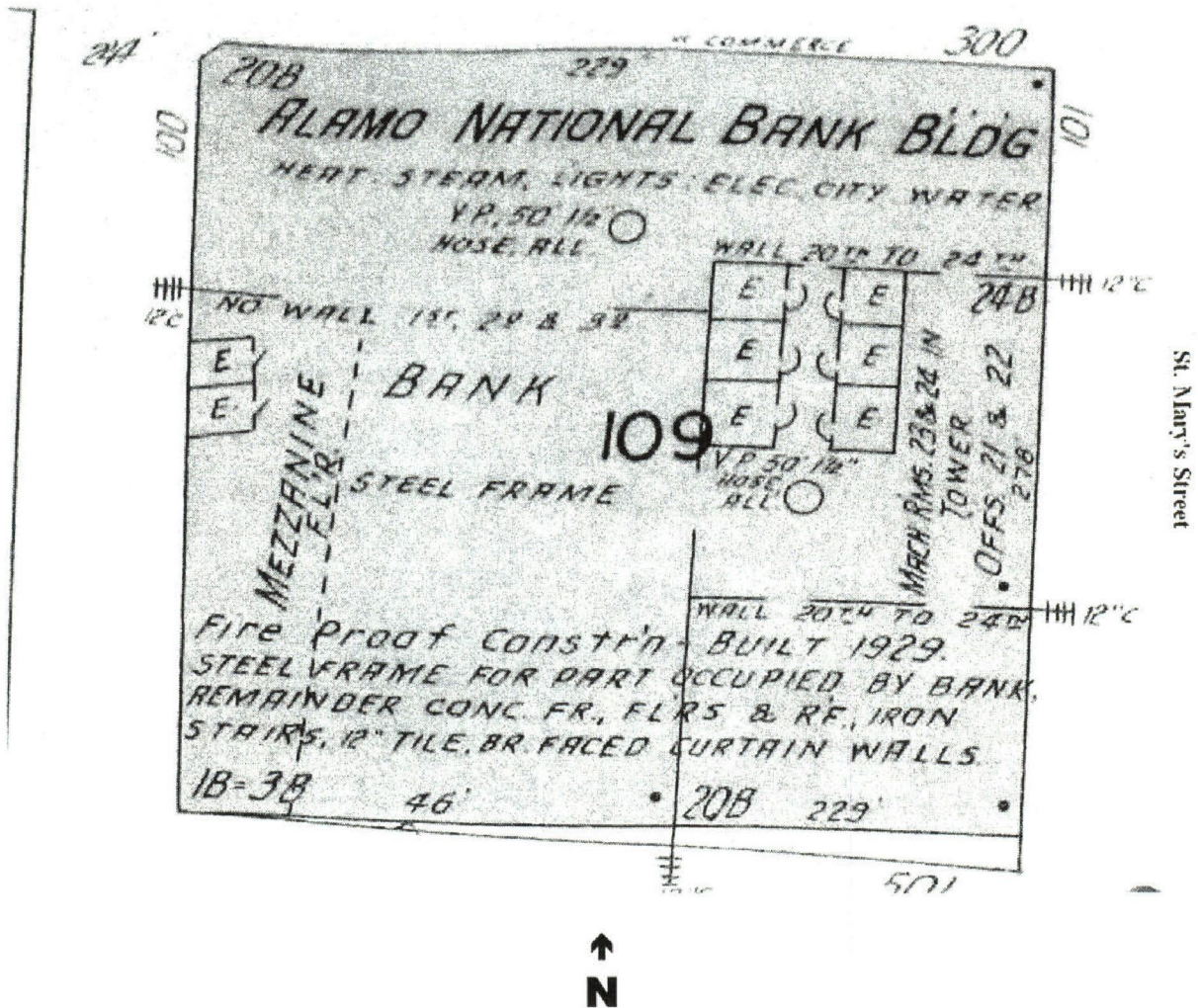
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National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section FIGURE Page 24

Alamo National Bank
San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas

Sanborn Fire Insurance map, 1938



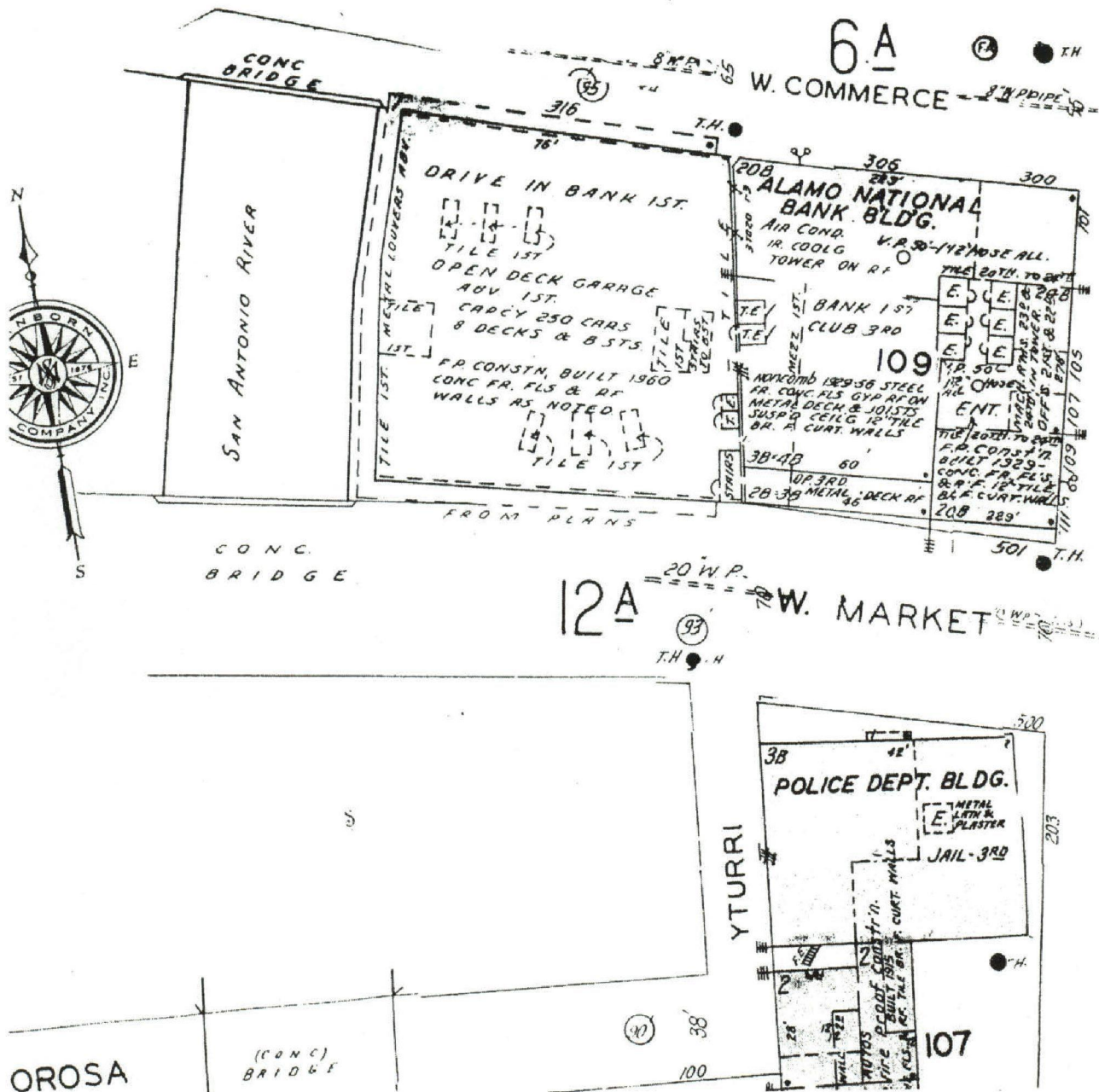
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National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section FIGURE Page 25

Alamo National Bank
San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas

Sanborn Fire Insurance map, 1961



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section FIGURE Page 26

Alamo National Bank
San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas

Alamo National Bank advertisement, 1956

**The Alamo National Bank
"Weather Spire" Brings
You the Latest U.S. Weather
Bureau Reports.**

Lights going up
WARMER

Lights going down
COLDER

Lights
Burning steady
NO CHANGE

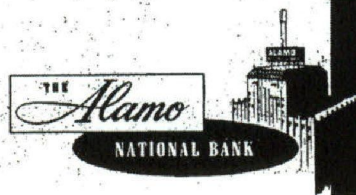
All Lights flashing
RAIN

ALAMO NATIONAL BANK

**Now
3%
interest
on savings**

OTHER SERVICES OF
THE *Alamo*

- ★ Complete Banking Service
- ★ Savings Accounts
- ★ Oil Production Loans
- ★ Personal and Automobile Loans
- ★ Safety Deposit Boxes
- ★ 24-Hour Depository
- ★ Bank-By-Mail
- ★ Checking Accounts
- ★ Complete Trust Services
- ★ Livestock Loans
- ★ Drive-In Windows
- ★ Save-By-Mail



**The Weather
at a Glance...**

THE *Alamo*
NATIONAL BANK

ST. MARY'S AT COMMERCE

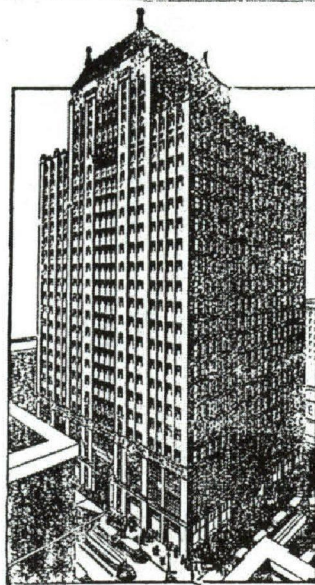
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section FIGURE Page 27

Alamo National Bank
San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas

Advertisement, San Antonio City Directory, 1929-30



Superlatively Fine

Space in the Alamo National Building is now leasing. It is available in flexible units ranging in size from a single office to an entire floor. It is superlatively fine in every detail, yet so well has it been designed that those who occupy it will enjoy economies in time and space that reduce rental

costs to a point where definite savings may be effected.

Strategically located and readily accessible from every business district, the new Alamo National Building is truly "An Address that's an Asset". A telephone call, Crockett 5522 will bring you full information --at once.

Under the management of
JOE J. NIX

THE NEW ALAMO NATIONAL BUILDING

"AN ADDRESS THAT'S AN ASSET"

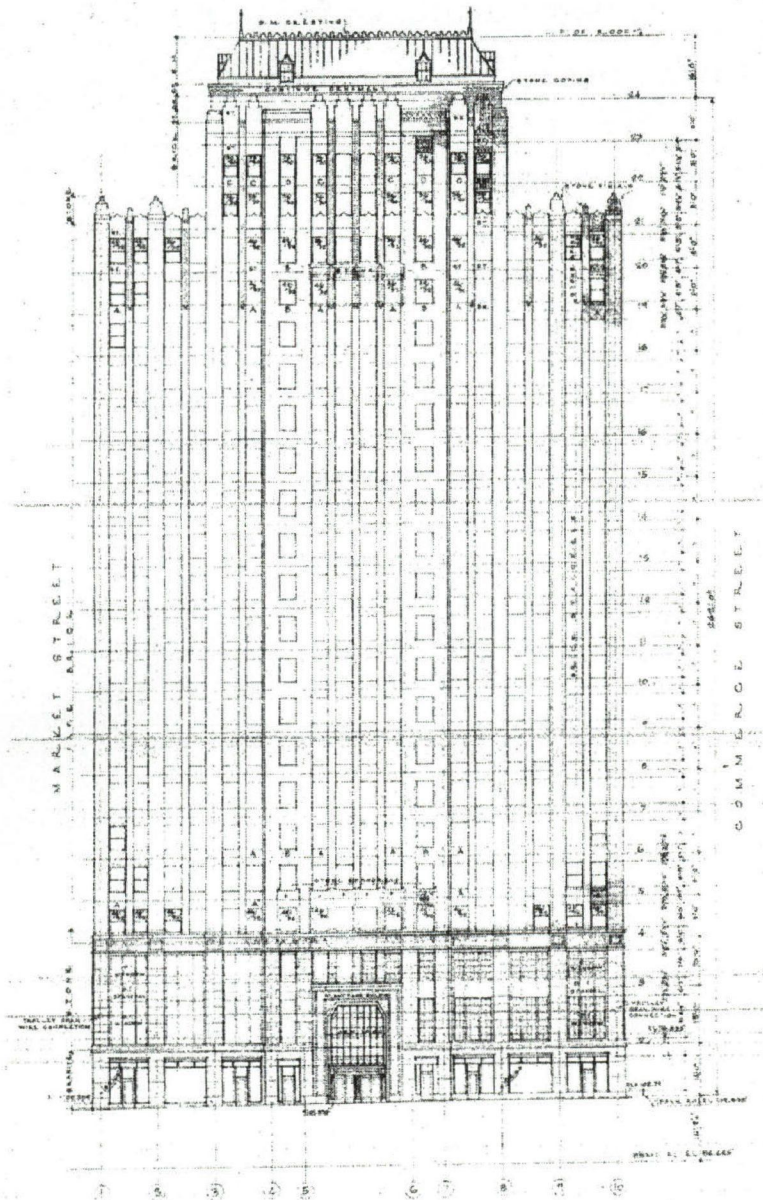
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section FIGURE Page 28

Alamo National Bank
San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas

East Elevation, 1929 plan



ST. MARY'S STREET ELEVATION
SCALE 1/8" = 1'-0"

NOTE:
ALL SPANDRILS DASHED
INDICATED DARK COLORED BRICK
WORK
AND ARE TO BE CONTINUED AND
REPEATED ON ALL ELEVATIONS
SEE SLY ELEV. OF SPANDRILS.

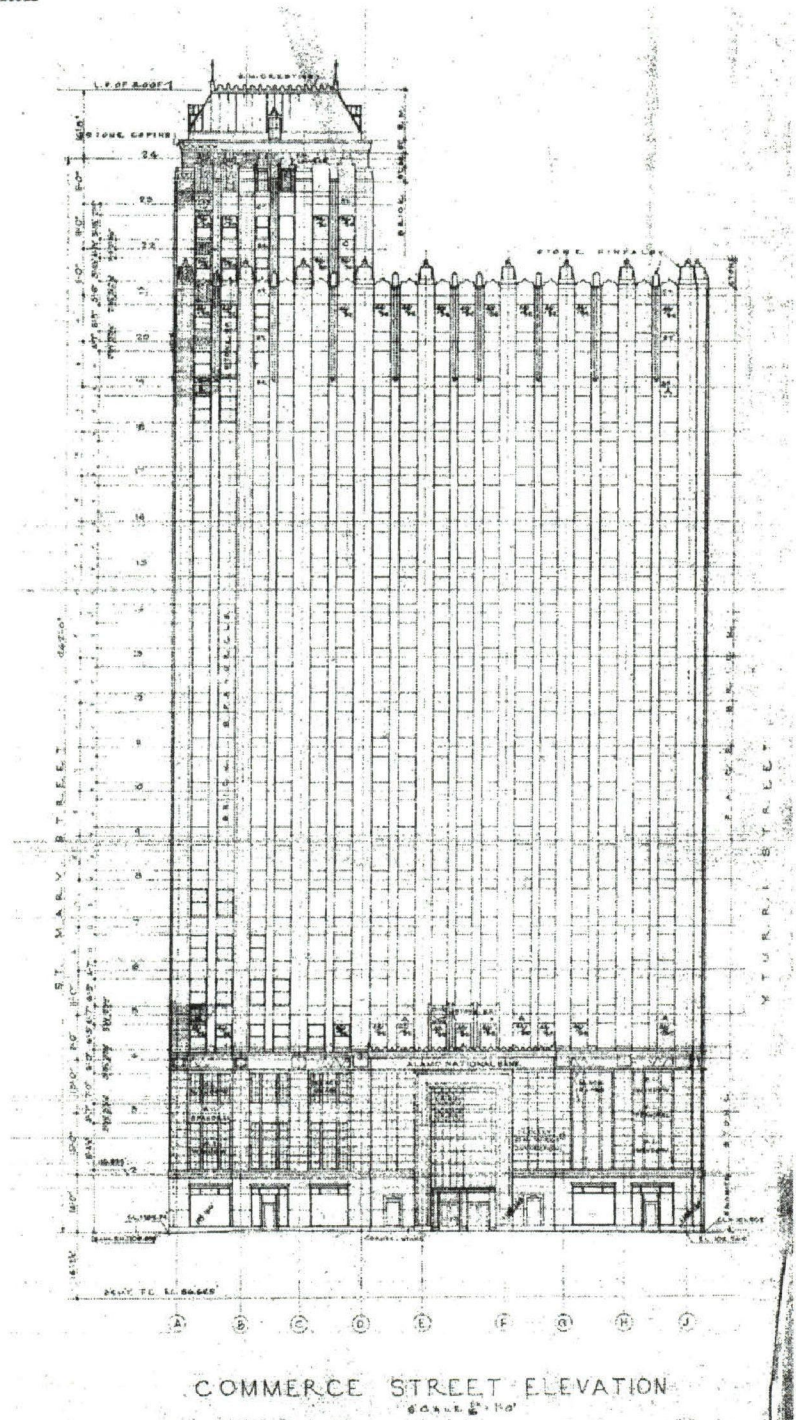
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section FIGURE Page 29

Alamo National Bank
San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas

North Elevation, 1929 plan



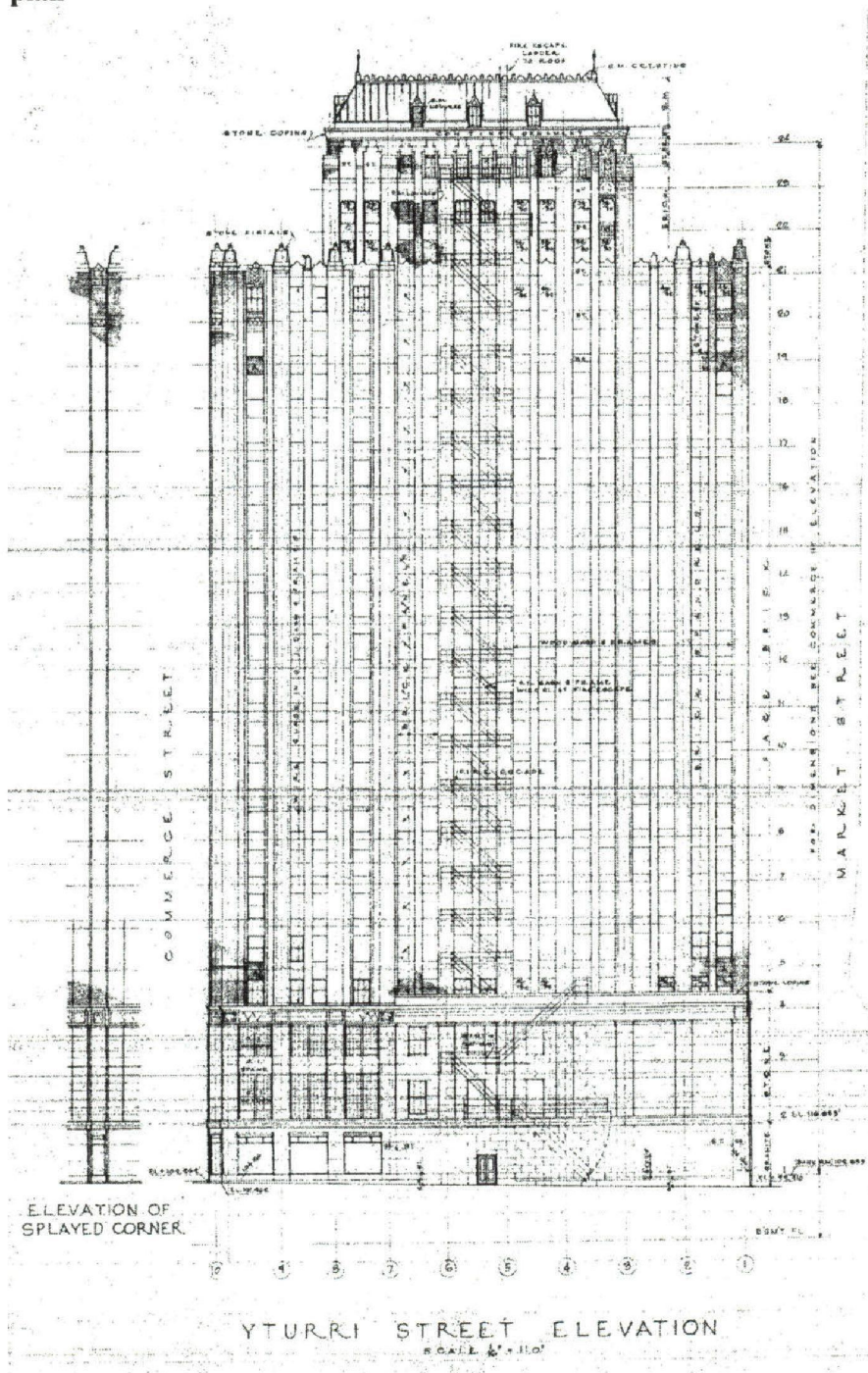
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section FIGURE Page 30

Alamo National Bank
San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas

West Elevation, 1929 plan



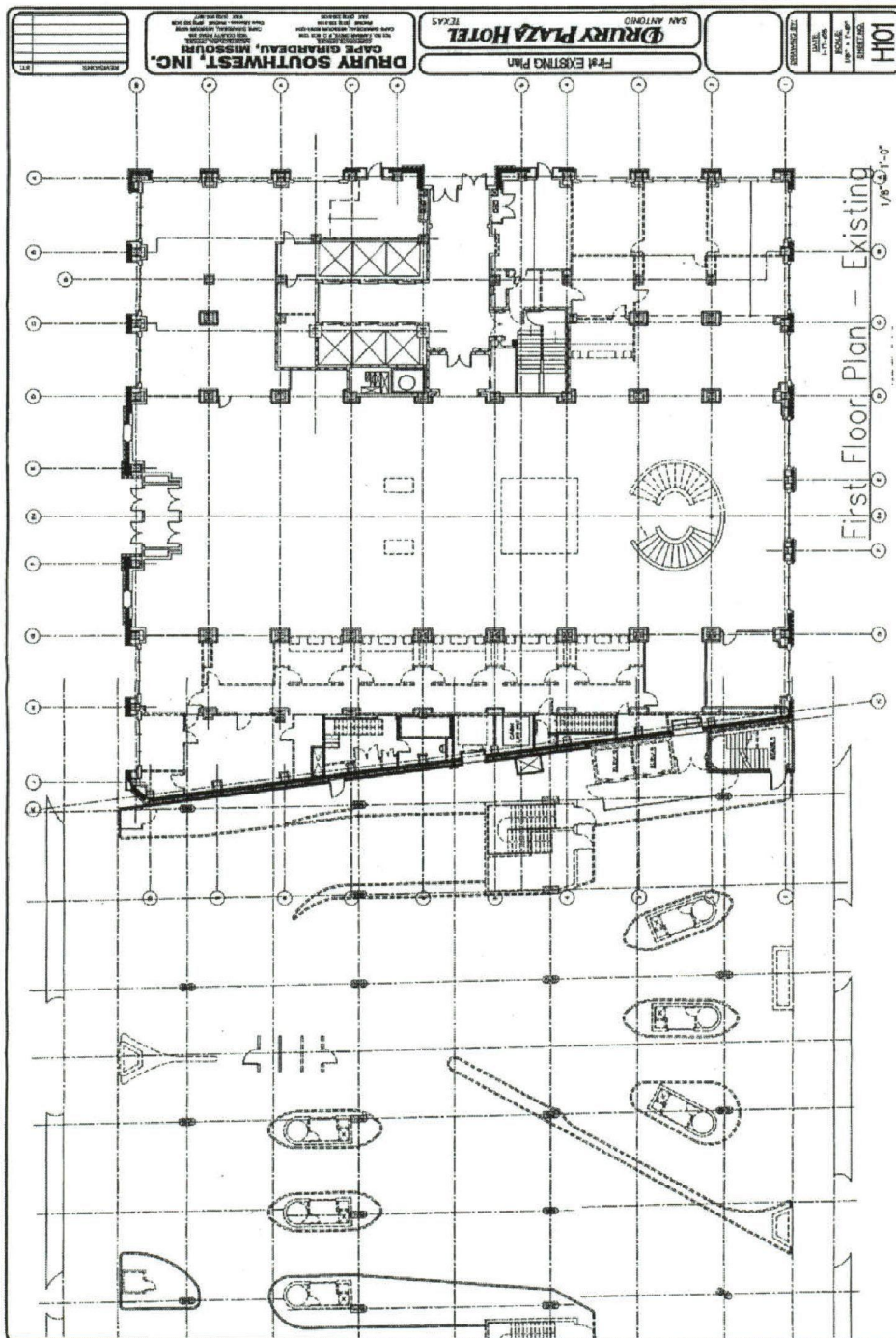
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National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section FIGURE Page 32

Alamo National Bank
San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas

First floor plan, 2005 (no scale)



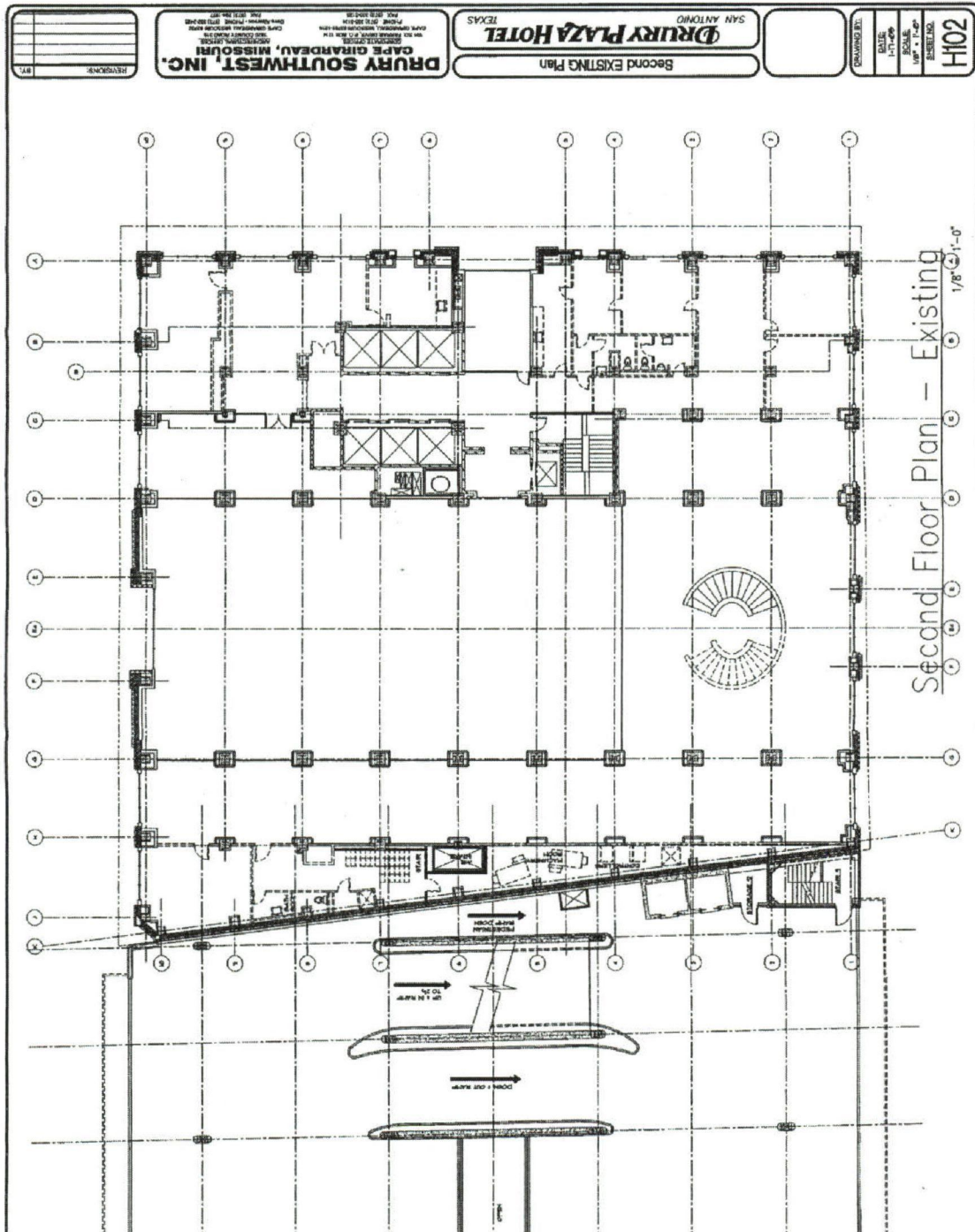
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National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section FIGURE Page 33

Alamo National Bank
San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas

Second floor plan, 2005 (no scale)



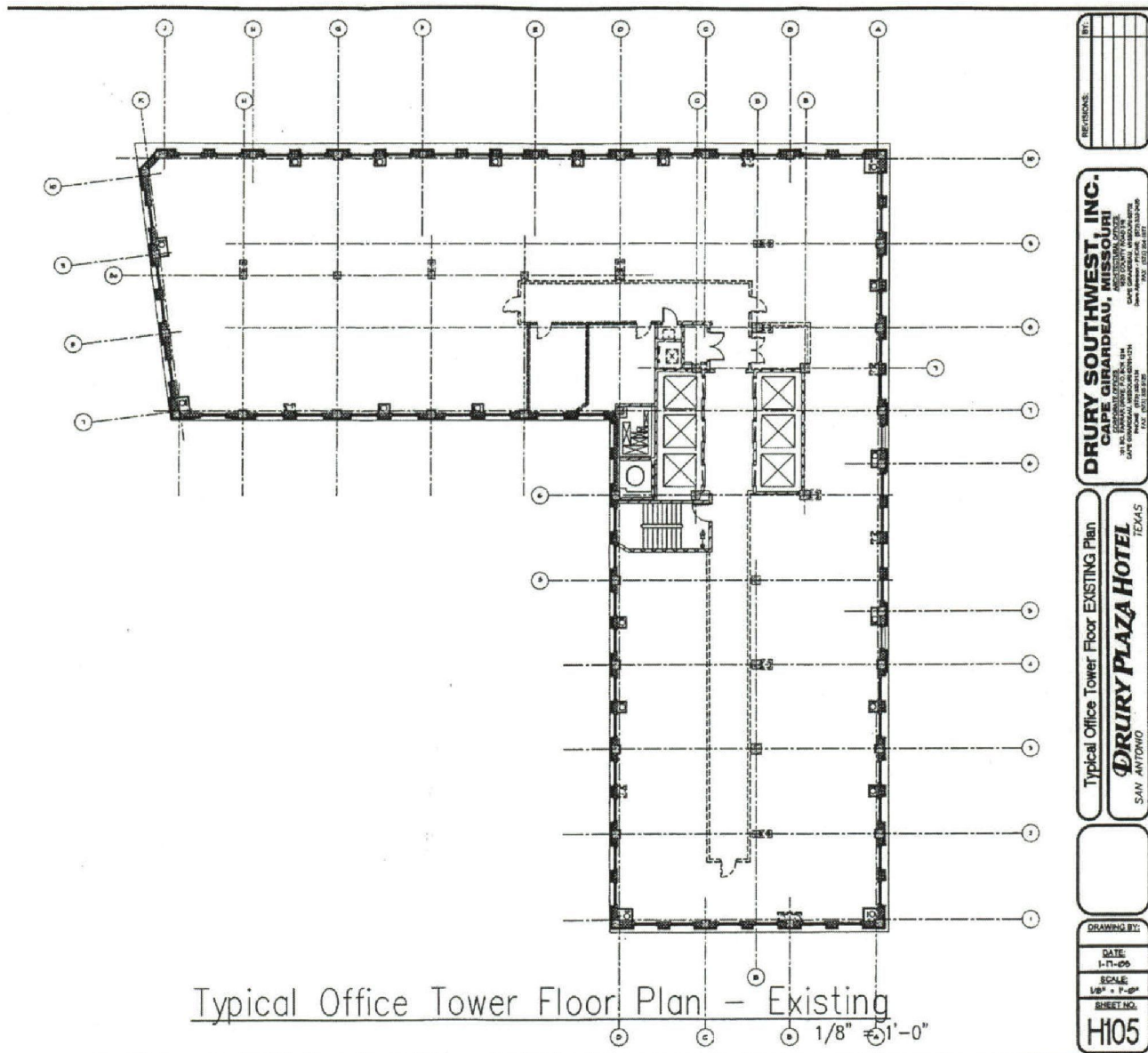
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National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section FIGURE Page 34

Alamo National Bank
San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas

Typical office tower floor plan, 2005 (no scale)



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National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section PHOTO Page 35

Alamo National Bank
San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas

Photo Log

Alamo National Bank Building
105 South St. Mary's Street
San Antonio, Bexar County Texas
Photographed by Al Rendon
September 2005

1. West elevation, camera facing east
2. South and east elevations, camera facing northwest
3. East elevation, camera facing west
4. Ground floor, east elevation, camera facing west
5. Building lobby, camera facing east
6. Elevator lobby, camera facing west
7. Building lobby, camera facing west into bank lobby
8. Bank lobby, camera facing north
9. Bank lobby vestibule, camera facing north
10. Bank lobby, camera facing north, window detail
11. Bank lobby, camera facing south
12. Bank lobby ceiling

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section PHOTO Page 36

Alamo National Bank
San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas

Alamo National Bank Building nearing completion

San Antonio Light, January 1, 1930, Institute of Texan Cultures, L-0082-B



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National Park Service

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Section PHOTO Page 37

Alamo National Bank
San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas

Alamo National Bank Building, west elevation
San Antonio Light, July 17, 1932, Institute of Texan Cultures, L-1366-B



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National Park Service

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Section PHOTO Page 38

Alamo National Bank
San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas

Alamo National Bank Building, west elevation, c. 1961
Zintgraf Collection, Institute of Texan Cultures, Z-64-A-22503



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National Park Service

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Section PHOTO Page 39

Alamo National Bank
San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas

Alamo National Bank Building, bank lobby looking south, 1975
Zintgraf Collection, Institute of Texan Cultures, Z-64-B-105927



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY Alamo National Bank Building
NAME:

MULTIPLE
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: TEXAS, Bexar

DATE RECEIVED: 3/28/06 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 4/17/06
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 5/02/06 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 5/11/06
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 06000364

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 5.10.06 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

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.



ALAMO NATIONAL BANK
SAN ANTONIO, BEXAR CO., TEXAS
PHOTO 1

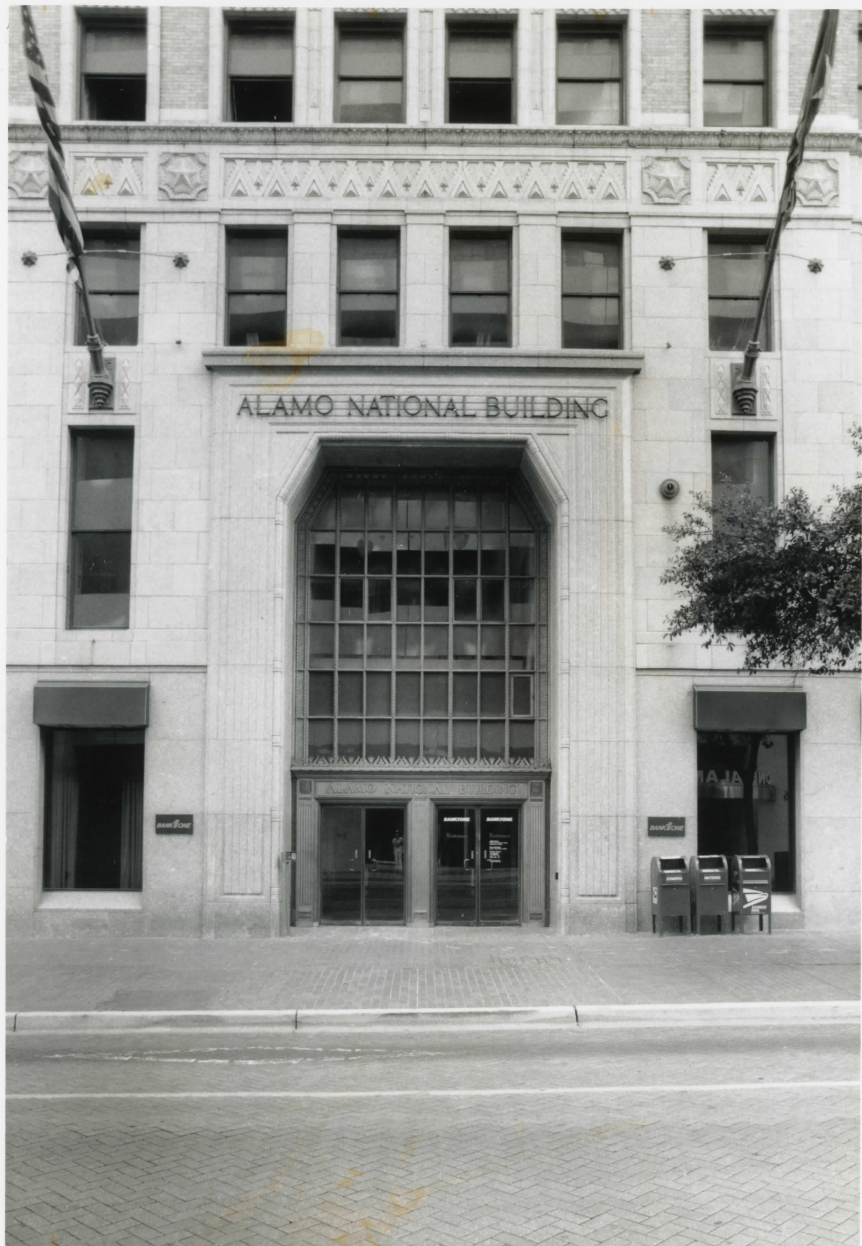


ALAMO NATIONAL BANK
SAN ANTONIO, BEXAR Co, TEXAS
PHOTO 2



63

ALAMO NATIONAL BANK
SAN ANTONIO, BEXAR CO, TEXAS
PHOTO 3



ALAMO NATIONAL BUILDING

ALAMO NATIONAL BUILDING

ALAMO NATIONAL BUILDING

ALAMO NATIONAL BUILDING

ALAMO NATIONAL BUILDING

4

ALAMO NATIONAL BANK
SAN ANTONIO, BEXAR CO., TEXAS
PHOTO 4



ALAMO NATIONAL BANK
SAN ANTONIO, BEXAR CO., TEXAS
PHOTO 5



ALAMO NATIONAL BANK
SAN ANTONIO, BEXAR CO., TEXAS
PHOTO 6



ALAMO NATIONAL BANK
SAN ANTONIO, BEXAR CO., TEXAS
PHOTO 7



TRUST
UNITED THE
NATION
TOGETHER

TRUST
UNITED THE
NATION
TOGETHER

TOANS

ALAMO NATIONAL BANK
SAN ANTONIO, BEXAR CO. TEXAS
PHOTO 8



ALAMO NATIONAL BANK
SAN ANTONIO, BEXAR CO., TEXAS
PHOTO 9



TRUST
BINDS THE
NATION
TOGETHER

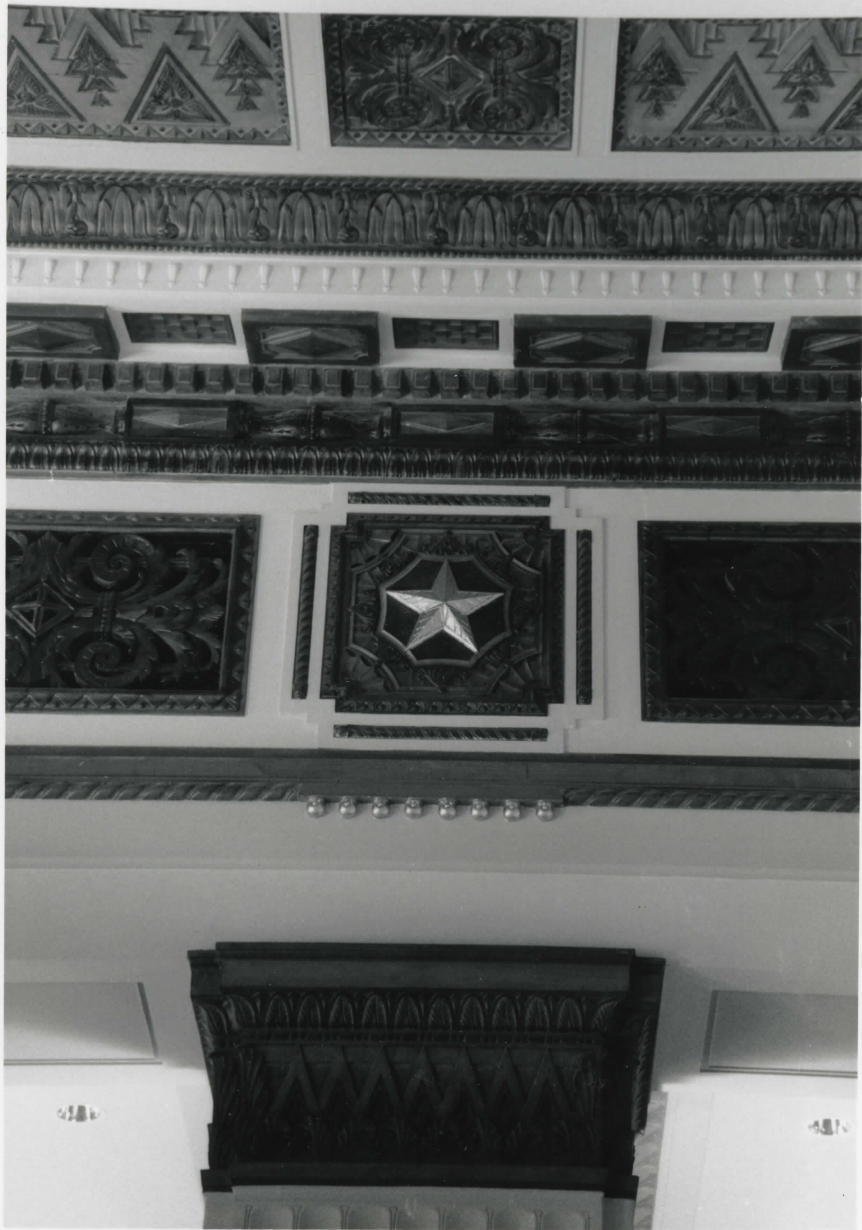
THRIFT
DRIVES THE
NATION
TOMORROW

LOAN

ALAMO NATIONAL BANK
SAN ANTONIO, BEXAR CO., TEXAS
PHOTO 10

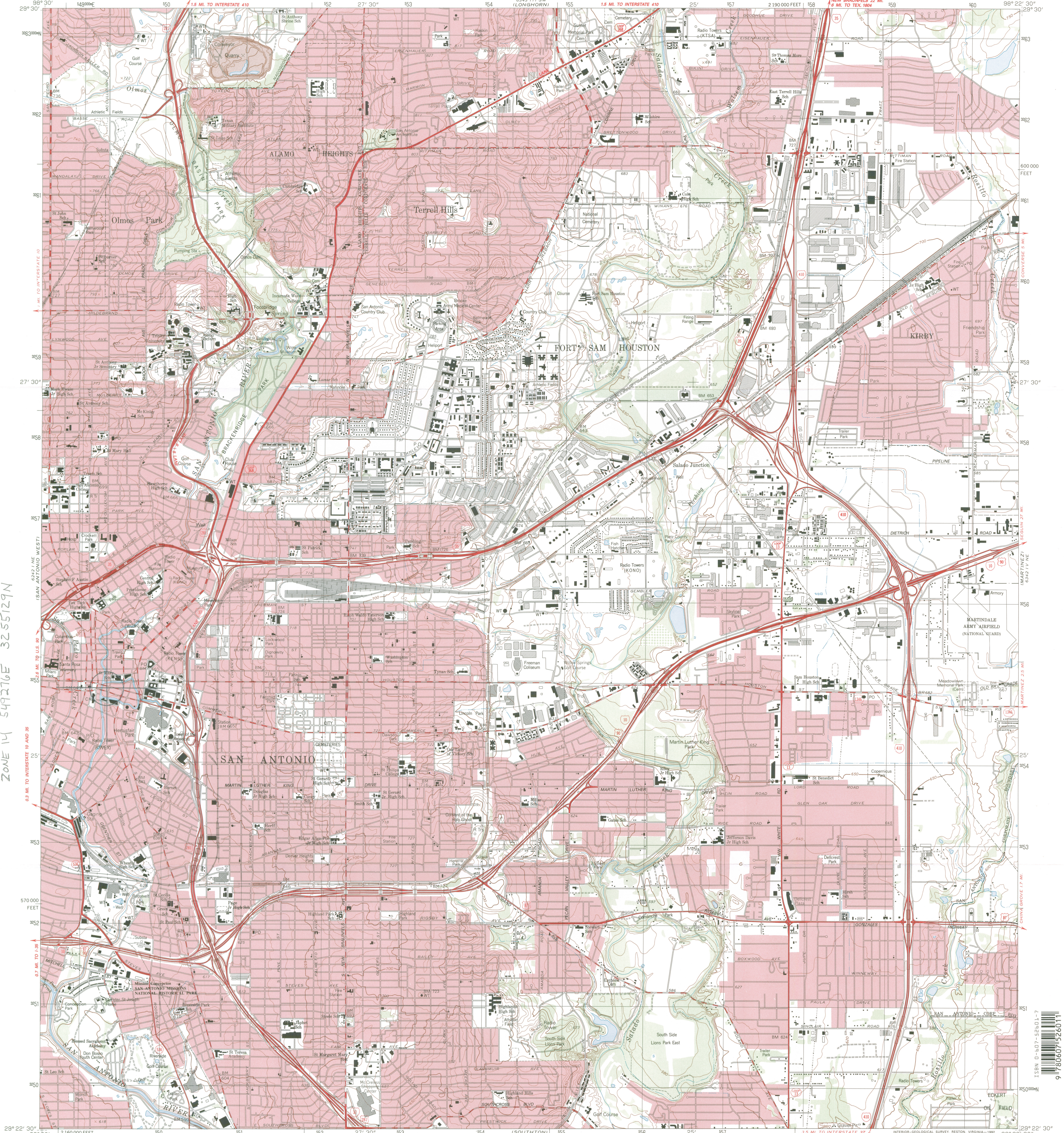


ALAMO NATIONAL BANK
SAN ANTONIO, BEXAR CO., TEXAS
PHOTO 11



ALAMO NATIONAL BANK
SAN ANTONIO, BEXAR CO, TEXAS
PHOTO 12

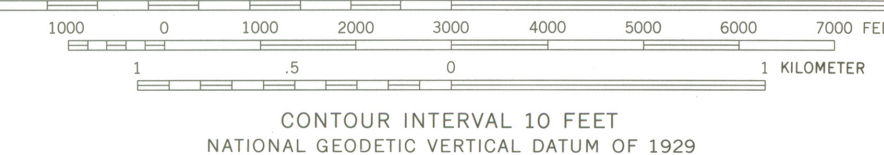
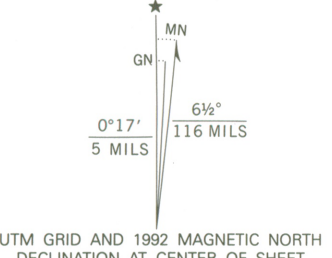
ALAMO NATIONAL BANK (1929)
SAN ANTONIO, BEXAR CO., TEXAS
ZONE 14 549276E 3255129N



Produced by the United States Geological Survey
Control by USGS, NOS/NOAA and USCE

Compiled by Defense Mapping Agency from aerial photographs
taken 1952. Revised from aerial photographs taken 1986
and other source data. Field checked 1987. Map edited 1992

North American Datum of 1927 (NAD 27). Projection and
10 000-foot grid ticks: Texas Coordinate System,
south central zone (Lambert Conformal Conic).
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid, zone 14
The difference between NAD 27 and North American Datum of
1983 (NAD 83) for 7.5 minute intersections is given in USGS
Bulletin 1876. The NAD 83 is shown by dashed corner ticks.
There may be private inholdings within the boundaries of the
National or State reservations shown on this map.
Red tint indicates areas in which only landmark buildings are shown



CONTOUR INTERVAL 10 FEET
NATIONAL GEODETIC VERTICAL DATUM OF 1929



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, P.O. BOX 25286, DENVER, COLORADO 80225
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

2998-133

SAN ANTONIO EAST, TEX.
29098-D4-TF-024

1992

DMA 6342 IV NW-SERIES V882



ISBN 0-607-52601-7
9 780607 526011



**TEXAS
HISTORICAL
COMMISSION**

Rick Perry • *Governor*
John L. Nau, III • *Chairman*
F. Lawrence Oaks • *Executive Director*

The State Agency for Historic Preservation

TO: Linda McClelland
National Register of Historic Places

FROM: Gregory W. Smith, National Register Coordinator
Texas Historical Commission

RE: Alamo National Bank, San Antonio, Bexar County, Texas

DATE: March 22, 2006



The following materials are submitted regarding:

- Alamo National Bank:

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Original National Register of Historic Places form
<input type="checkbox"/>	Resubmitted nomination
<input type="checkbox"/>	Multiple Property nomination form
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Photographs
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	USGS map
<input type="checkbox"/>	Correspondence
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other:

COMMENTS:

- SHPO requests substantive review
- The enclosed owner objections (do) (do not) constitute a majority of property owners
- Other