

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

### 1. Name of Property

historic name Lincoln Liberty Life Insurance Building  
other names/site number Little Building, USLife Building / LC13:C9-48

### 2. Location

street & number 113 North 11th Street  not for publication n/a  
city, town Lincoln  vicinity n/a  
state Nebraska code NE county Lancaster code 109 zip code 68508

### 3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
		Contributing	Noncontributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> structures
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> objects
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing: n/a  
Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

### 4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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.  See continuation sheet.  
James A. Johnson DEC. 1, 1987  
Signature of certifying official Date  
NEBRASKA STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  See continuation sheet.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting or other official Date  
\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

### 5. 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

## 6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE: business

COMMERCE/TRADE: specialty store

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE: business

## 7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

MODERN MOVEMENT: Art Deco

LATE 19TH & EARLY 20TH CENTURY

AMERICAN MOVEMENTS: Commercial Style

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation not visible

walls brick

limestone

roof not visible

other copper-clad marquee

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Lincoln Liberty Life Insurance Building (LLL Building) in downtown Lincoln, Lancaster County, Nebraska is a six-story, flat-roofed, steel and reinforced concrete building with buff brick veneer and limestone trim on the principal (south and east) facades and painted red brick on the secondary (north and west) sides. The building has fifty feet of frontage on "O" Street and 142 feet on North 11th Street. The principal facades are organized vertically into three parts: the storefront level at the base, the body of the building (floors two to five), and a wide crowning frieze which contains the added sixth floor. Major alterations to the exterior (since the 1936 redesign of the 1907-8 building) consisted of the replacement of double hung windows with metal awning windows in the 1950s, and bricking in of the storefronts in the 1970s. Both changes were reversed in the recent rehabilitation, substantially restoring the integrity of the 1936 design and materials. The interior is much more altered, but the principal vestibule and elevator lobby have a high degree of integrity.

The Lincoln Liberty Life Building is a six-story, steel and reinforced concrete office building faced with buff brick and limestone on the south and east facades and red brick on the north and west. The principal south and east facades consist of three vertical parts--storefront, middle floors, and crowning, sixth floor frieze. In analyzing the current building, it is useful to understand that the structure originated in 1907 as a five-story office building (see historic photo), then was substantially remodeled in 1936. The exterior changes were concentrated on the bottom and top of the building, altering the storefronts and adding the marquee at the base and removing the cornice and replacing it with a new top floor.

The storefronts were infilled with buff brick in 1975, but were reopened in the rehabilitation of 1987. Buff brick piers matching the upper stories have been built and wide storefront windows have been installed. The copper-clad marquee survived the '70s remodeling, along with transom openings above the marquee and a decorated stone band above the transoms--all features of the 1936 remodeling of the building.

The middle floors reflect simple, Commercial Style detailing, with pier and spandrel treatment of floors two through four. The fifth floor is set apart by shallow, banded rustication in the brickwork and a projecting sill course.

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Originally that sill course continued around the corners as a secondary cornice, but the horizontal division was deemphasized in 1936 by removing the corner portions. Metal-frame, awning-type windows were installed in the 1950s. Those were removed in the 1987 rehabilitation and replaced with double hung, one-over-one sliding sash windows modeled on those which were installed in 1907 and which remained in place through the remodeling of the 1930s.

The top floor is the most noteworthy feature of the building. It is treated on the south and east sides as a tall, windowless, limestone frieze, subtly stepped back and enriched with two bands of shallow, angular relief carving of the Art Deco style. The lower band consists of stylized, repetitive organic forms, while the top band incorporates chevrons and dogtooth motifs, and a sawtooth profile against the sky. The top floor has windows on the west and north secondary facades.

The main entrance to the building is on the east side, one bay from the north end. The outer vestibule and inner lobby are largely intact and are the most significant interior features. Both areas have highly figured marble walls and richly molded plaster cornices. The vestibule also features punched metal ventilator covers, leaded glass skylights (illuminated by the transoms above the marquee), and a metal and glass hanging light fixture. The lobby's Art Deco elements also include the bronze mail box and elevator doors, painted in imitation of wood inlay. Little else in the interior reflects either the 1907 original construction or 1936 remodeling, except for the elevator doors painted with an "LLL" logo on most floors and the moldings decorating the stairs west of the elevator.

The LLL Building is located on the northwest corner of 11th and "O" Streets in downtown Lincoln, Nebraska, two blocks south of the commercial "center" of the city at 13th and "O" Streets. The area is characterized by commercial structures of widely varied date, size and materials. At the north end of the same block as LLL Building is the eleven-story, red brick and limestone Hotel Capital (LC13:C9-109, listed on the NRHP in 1983). South across "O" Street is the six-story, grey terra cotta Gold's and Company Store Building (C8-301, listed on NR in 1982). Both have undergone certified historic rehabilitations. One block east of the LLL Building is the Security Mutual Building (C9-2, NRHP listed in 1979), on the northeast corner of 12th and "O" Streets. These two historic, corner office buildings are expected to gain importance in the next few years in maintaining the traditional urban design of "O" Street, bracketing a planned redevelopment project which will replace all the structures on north side of the 1100 block of "O" Street.

**8. Statement of Significance**

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally     statewide     locally

Applicable National Register Criteria     A     B     C     D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions)     A     B     C     D     E     F     G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)  
architecture  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Period of Significance  
1936  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Dates  
1936  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Cultural Affiliation  
n/a  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Person  
n/a

Architect/Builder  
Meginnis, Harry (Meginnis & Schaumberg)  
Schaumberg, Edward G. (Meginnis & Schaumberg)

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

The Lincoln Liberty Life Building is locally significant in the area of architecture as one of Lincoln's best Art Deco style buildings, especially rare in this locale and style for its substantial scale and relatively rich ornament.

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The LLL Building originated in 1907-8 as the Little Building, a five-story, Commercial-Style retail and office building with storefronts on the ground floor, no marquee, and a simple projecting cornice. The architects of the Little Building were Fiske (Ferdinand C.) and Dieman (Chas A.). Fiske was an early and prolific Lincoln architect, who practiced here from 1887 until his death in 1930. During their partnership from 1902-1910, Fiske maintained a Lincoln office while Dieman worked from Cedar Rapids, Iowa. Fiske was architect for more than a dozen houses in the Mt. Emerald Historic Residential District (listed on the NRHP in 1980), as well as for the individually listed Barr Terrace (C8-27, NRHP 1979) and Municipal Water and Power Station (E6-2, NRHP 1986), designed in partnership with Harry Meginnis.

Fiske and Dieman's Little Building was a competent Commercial Style design, but is eclipsed locally by such examples as the Terminal Building (C8-298, NRHP 1986), Old First National Bank Building (C8-350), Miller and Paine Department Store (C8-362), and Security Mutual Building (C9-2, NRHP 1979).

LLL Insurance Company acquired the Little Building in 1936 and thoroughly remodeled it for approximately \$180,000, after designs by Meginnis and Schaumberg. Harry Meginnis had been Ferd Fiske's partner from 1917 through 1925; in the final year of their association Schaumberg was also a partner. The 1936 redesign can therefore be considered the product of a successor firm to the original architect.

Lincoln has a mere handful of Art Deco style buildings, which are generally of small scale and modest decoration. The two-story Union Bus Depot (300 S. 13th, ca. 1930, Davis and Wilson), with chevron decorated spandrels; and the one-story Skelley Gas Station and Safeway Grocery Store (2600 and 2620 "O" Street, 1936 and 1937, Jesse B. Miller), with narrow, carved limestone friezes and decorated marquees, are characteristic of the scale and ornamentation found locally. The three-story Phi Delta Theta Fraternity House (1545 "R", 1937,

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M. I. Aitken) was listed on NRHP in 1986 for its local architectural significance. That limestone-clad building is most noteworthy for its cubic massing and curved, glass-block corner. The two-story Christian Record Building (3705 S. 48th, F3-113, 1936, Felix A. Lorenz) was listed in 1986 primarily for social/humanitarian significance, although it also has local architectural significance as the Art Deco work of a building/designer. The only other tall office building in Lincoln with Art Deco elements is the Stuart Building (13th and "P", C9-3, 1927, Davis and Wilson), which combines stepped massing and fluted spandrels with considerable Gothic style trim, including gargoyles.

The 1936 remodeling of the Little Building into the LLL Building included a thorough reworking of the interior. The vestibule and elevator lobby retain strong elements of the Art Deco style, including highly figured and contrasting marble walls and angular, repetitive plasterwork cornices. Even rarer is the survival of more ephemeral Art Deco fixtures such as the vestibule's ventilator grills, art glass skylights, and ceiling lamp, and the lobby's mailbox and elevator doors.

On the exterior, the redesign concentrated on the bottom and top floors. While the 1936 storefronts have been lost, the fluted and banded marquee is intact, along of a wide limestone beltcourse of low relief decoration between the marquee and the second story windows. The remodeling left the simple mid-section of the 1907 building nearly untouched, saving the greatest effort for the building's cap. A simple, wide cornice above the fifth floor was removed and a windowless sixth floor was added, with limestone facing treated as a wide frieze. Most of the exterior changes in 1936 deemphasized the horizontal divisions that characterized the original Commercial Style design, with its clearly demarcated base, shaft, and cap. The removal of the cornice above the storefronts, reduction of the cornice below the fifth floor windows, and replacement of the crowning cornice with a low-relief frieze emphasize verticality and especially lead the eye to the carved stone cap.

It is characteristic of Lincoln's paucity of Art Deco style buildings that our largest and most prominent example is a remodeling. Fortunately, the middle floors of the original 1907 building are simple enough so as not to conflict with the 1936 base and cap, giving the reworked building a unity and clarity of style. The later storefront and upper window alterations that detracted from the 1936 design were sympathetically reworked in the 1987 rehabilitation.

LLL Building was evaluated for NRHP eligibility in 1986, in connection with a federally assisted downtown redevelopment. The City of Lincoln evaluated the building as potentially eligible and the Nebraska SHPO concurred. A resulting Memorandum of Agreement between the City, NeSHPO, and Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (signed April 7, 1986) encourages certified rehabilitations of eligible buildings, including the Lincoln Liberty Life Insurance Co. Building. In support of the 1987 certified historic rehabilitation, a "Part 1--Evaluation of Significance" was submitted to the National Park Service, which made a preliminary determination that the property appeared to meet the criteria for listing on the National Register.

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

"New Little Block at NW corner of 11th and O Streets," Sunday State Journal (Lincoln, NE), Jan. 5, 1908, 2:15 (illus.)

City of Lincoln Building Permits (County-City Building), #1997 (1907), #24510 (1936), #112610.

Beautiful Lincoln, Lincoln: Woodruff Printing, ca. 1912.

"Benefits of Air Conditioning Demonstrated in Lincoln," Real Estate Record, Feb. 5, 1938.

Ertl, Ted, ed., Historic and Architectural Site Survey of Lincoln, Nebraska, Lincoln: Univ. of Nebr. College of Architecture, ca. 1978.

Whiffen, Marcus, American Architecture since 1780: A Guide to Styles, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1969.

See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested (issued July 30, 1987)
- 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
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository:

Nebr. State Historical Society

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreeage of property .16 acre (less than one acre)

UTM References

A 

1	4
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6	9	3	6	7	0
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4	5	2	0	4	8	0
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Zone      Easting      Northing

B 

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Zone      Easting      Northing

C 

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D 

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See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

This property is described as Lots 20 and 21, Block 42, Original Plat, Lincoln, Lancaster County, Nebraska.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

These boundaries include all the property historically associated with the Lincoln Liberty Life Insurance Building.

See continuation sheet

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Edward F. Zimmer, Ph. D./Historic Preservation Planner

organization Lincoln/Lancaster County Planning Dept. date Nov. 18, 1987

street & number 555 South 10th Street telephone (402)471-7491

city or town Lincoln state Nebraska zip code 68508

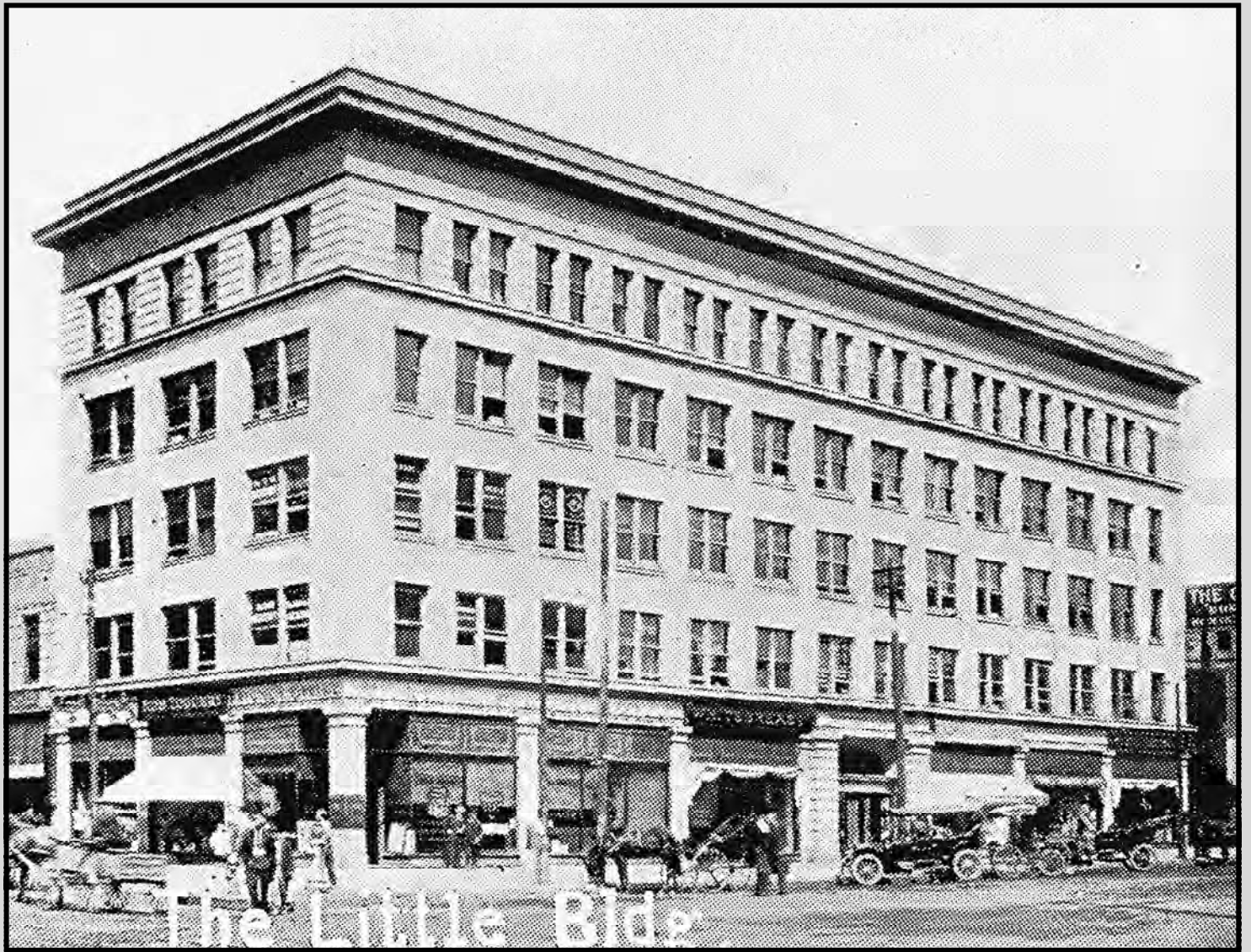


Photo 1 of 6. View (c1912) from southeast of Little Bldg. Photo by *Beautiful Lincoln*, Lincoln: Woodruff Printing,





Photo 2 of 6. View from southeast of south & east facades.  
Photo by Ed Zimmer, 1987, Lincoln Planning Department (8711/1:4a)



Photo 3 of 6. View from northeast of east & north facades.  
Photo by Ed Zimmer, 1987, Lincoln Planning Department (8711/1:8a)



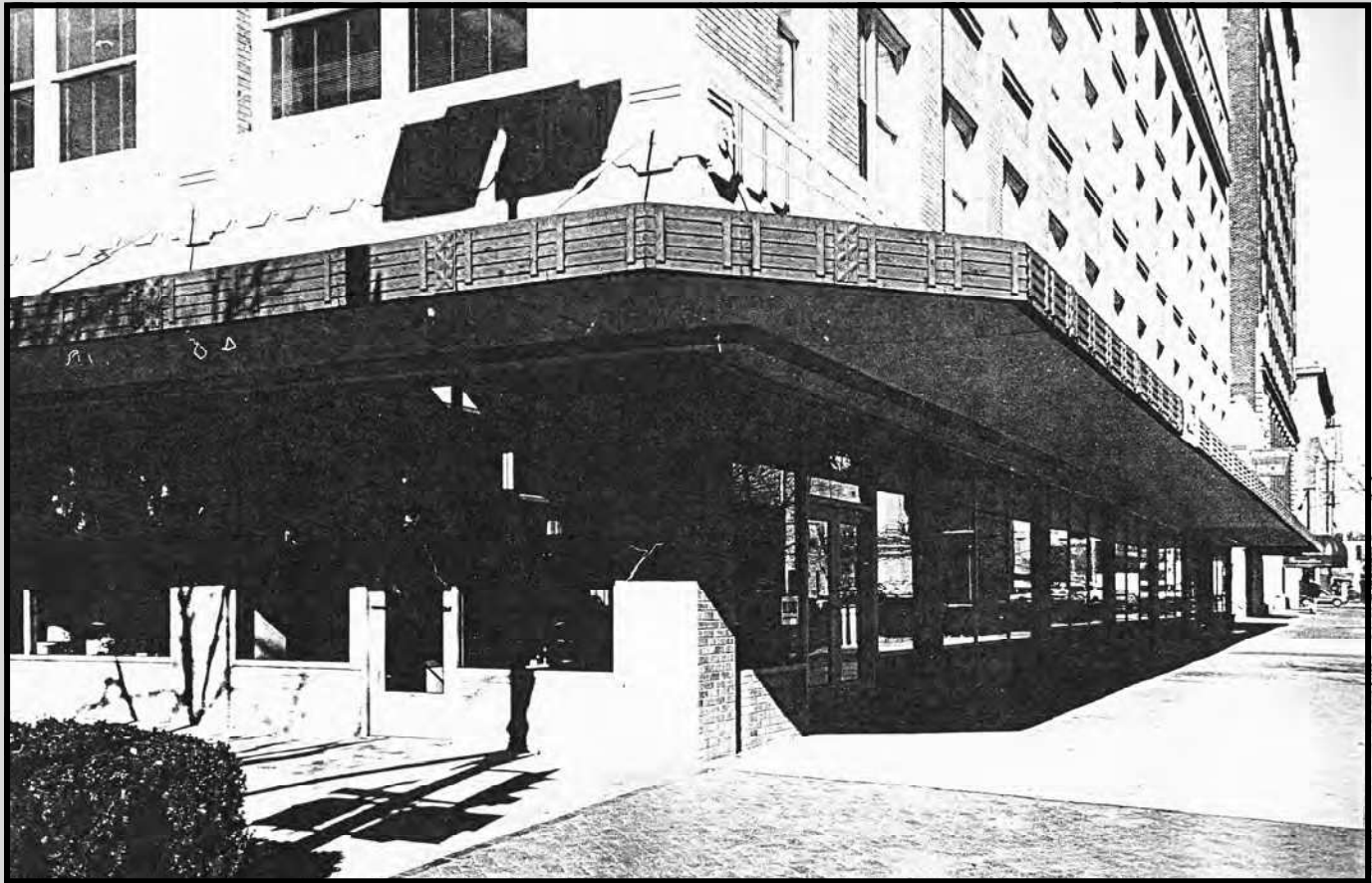


Photo 4 of 6. View from southeast showing detail of marquee & storefronts.  
Photo by Ed Zimmer, 1987, Lincoln Planning Department (8711/1:11a)



Photo 5 of 6. View from south showing detail of top floors, south façade.  
Photo by Ed Zimmer, 1987, Lincoln Planning Department (8711/1:15a)

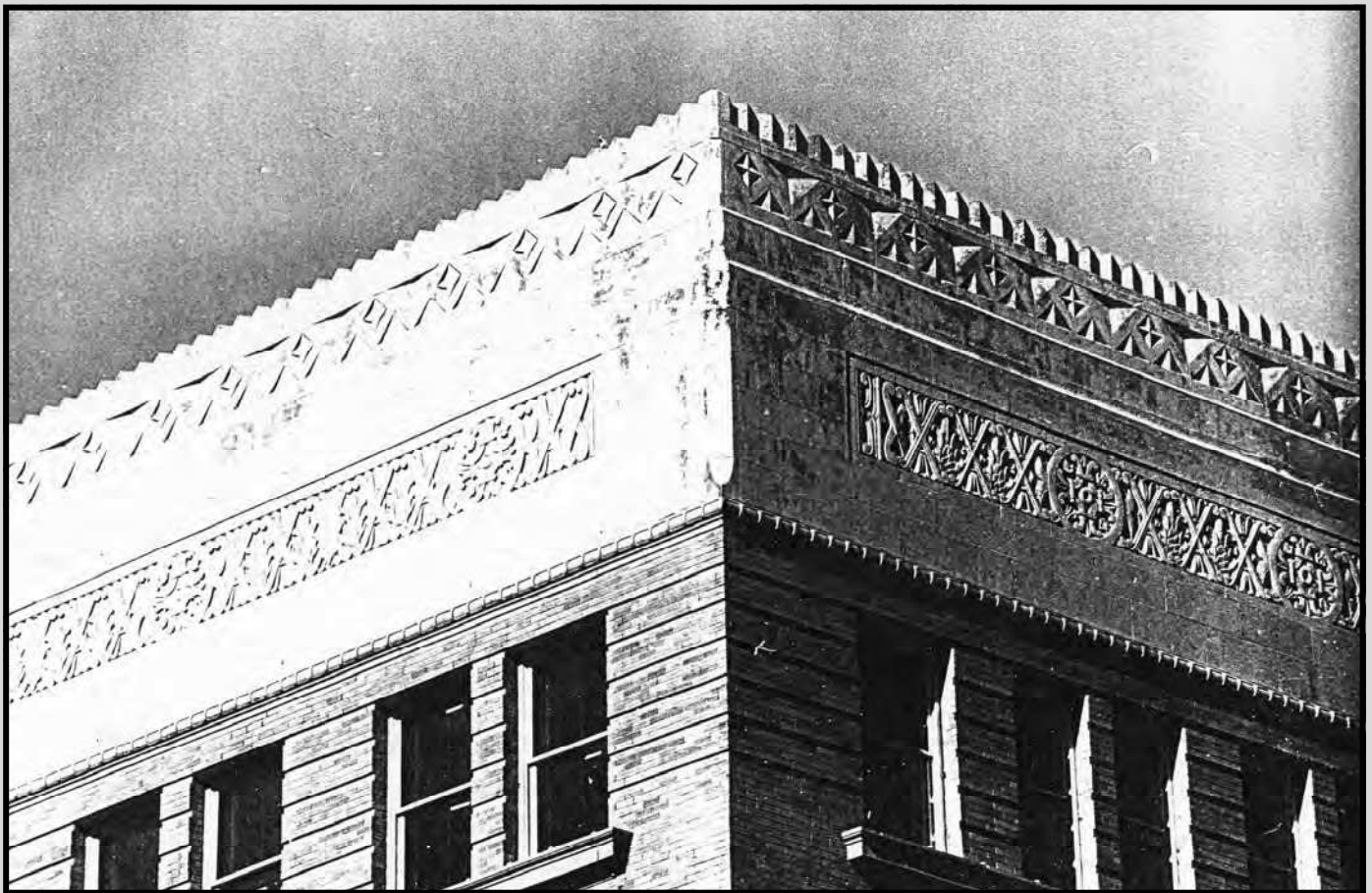


Photo 6 of 6. View from southeast showing southeast corner of 6th floor frieze.  
Photo by Ed Zimmer, 1987, Lincoln Planning Department (8711/1:18a)