



Memorandum

Planning Division
Community & Economic Development Department

To: Historic Landmark Commission

From: Lex Traugher, Senior Planner

Date: June 4, 2015

Re: National Register of Historic Places Nomination:
Western General Agency Building, 780 E. South Temple Street

Please find the National Register of Historic Places nomination for the Western General Agency Building, located at 780 E. South Temple Street in the South Temple Historic District.

The Utah State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) desires input from the Historic Landmark Commission, a Certified **Local Government (CLG)**, regarding **National Register nominations within the Salt Lake City's boundaries**.

Commission Members should focus their review and comments on whether a reasonable case has been made for the significance of this property and forward a recommendation to the Board of State History.

National Register

The National Register of Historic Places is the federal **government's official list of historic properties worthy of preservation**. Listing of a property provides recognition of its historic significance and assures protective review of federal projects that might adversely affect the character of the historic property.

If the property is listed on the National Register, tax credits for rehabilitation and other beneficial provisions may apply. Listing in the National Register does not place limitations on the property by the federal or state government.

Background

In 1957, the Tracy Insurance Company purchased a vacant lot at 780 East South Temple Street on the southwest corner of the intersection of 800 East and South Temple and proceeded to construct a simple Modernist one-story brick building of 3,800 square feet. Tracy Insurance was a subsidiary of the Tracy-Collins Trust Company, a Salt Lake City area bank and trust business started in 1884, with the insurance section formed as a separate corporation in 1942.

The Tracy Insurance building had a flat roof. It lacked windows but had two storefront entrances on the South Temple and 800 East elevations. At its southeast corner fronting 800 East was a simple, glassed-in doorway. On its north façade was a broader slightly projecting foyer of storefront glass framed in aluminum. The interior, based on an **"open floor plan" that was becoming increasingly popular at the time**, was essentially an open space with no interior walls or partitions. In 1964 the Western General Agency purchased the existing lot and 1-story building at 780 East South Temple Street. The .29 acre corner lot is visible from both streets. Running east-west between the

city's downtown and the University of Utah, South Temple Street is Salt Lake's most prominent street – historically and architecturally – and displays examples of architectural styles from Utah's settlement through today, including only one New Formalist building – the Western General Agency building.

Constructed for financier Edward Mabey in phases from 1965 through 1969, the New Formalist building seen today modified the existing 1957 modern building. When its initial phases were completed in 1969 it was perhaps the purest representation of New Formalism in the state. Its primary character-defining features – and those most closely associated with New Formalism – are its geometric forms; smooth, white walls; and various arched motifs. Subsequent modifications in 1975 infilled the open porches with boxy additions on the north side of the building as well as adding an arched entry vestibule on the southeast corner. In 1977, a rear garage and 2nd level swimming pool were added to the southwest corner of the building. The most recent renovation in 2014 re-established some of the integrity on the north façade by pushing the north porch infills back from the main face of the building in addition to providing functional changes to the building by installing windows on the main floor. The interior holds two very different spaces. The ground floor **has, since the building's completion,** served as office space, while the second floor, with its extravagant decorative flourishes, has served as entertaining and living space.

Since its completion in between the years 1965 and 1969, which defines the period of significance, the Western General Agency building has undergone some minor modifications that have altered some of its original New Formalist characteristics. However, the majority of essential forms and primary exterior features remain intact. The current owners have recently invested in an extensive remodel, particularly to the interior of the building. They recognize that the original building is slightly less than 50 years old, but are currently seeking federal rehabilitation tax credits. Given the timeframe for procuring the credits, the owners have submitted this **nomination, recognizing the building's period of significance** extends from the period 1965 to 1969.

The Western General Agency building is significant because of its primary character-defining features – its geometric forms, smooth, white walls, and arcades of grand arches – which are distinctive elements of New Formalism. It is also architecturally significant as a material representation of the changing character of South Temple in the 1950s and 1960s. While a number of buildings throughout Utah display some characteristics of New Formalism, the Western General Agency building is the best example of an integral New Formalist style building in Salt Lake City.

Finally, the Western General Agency building is significant for its association with Utah architect Arthur K. Olsen who was an important local and regional player in disseminating modernism in the 1950s and 1960s.

Criteria for Nomination

The Western General Agency building is significant under Criterion C in the area of Architecture for its unique and distinctive design and association with prominent Salt Lake City architect Arthur K. Olsen.

Following the purchase of the Tracy Insurance building, Mabey commissioned Utah architect Arthur K. Olsen to **design a new concept for the structure. Olsen's most prominent works include the Capitol Reef National Park Visitor Center in Torrey, Utah (1966) and the Dinosaur National Monument Headquarters in Artesia Colorado. The latter was constructed as part of the National Park Service's Mission 66 program. None of Olsen's other known designs display the same characteristics of New Formalism found in the Western General Agency building.**

Olsen's New Formalist design was constructed in two phases. The first phase was constructed in 1965, and effectively transformed the simple Modernist Tracy Insurance building into the foundation of the elaborate New Formalist structure that was to come. The exterior walls were sprayed with textured stucco and painted white, and tall, narrow arches were scribed into the finish. At the same time, thick, flat roofs were added over the north and east entrances, giving them a more substantial, monumental appearance. The north foyer was significantly enlarged, and the north entry door was moved to the east side of the foyer. Taller, more expansive windows were installed in the foyer. The effect was to set off the interior with the clear intent of displaying its most significant element: an arcade encircling a **conference room with an inverted circular "blind" arcade in the ceiling** immediately above. Matching arches lined the outside walls of the lobby. This series of interior arcades in the interior was clearly intended to carry through the **building's New Formalist motifs from the exterior.**

In 1969, Arthur K. Olsen was again commissioned to design a second phase which enhanced the existing New Formalist features by adding an even more elaborate, more visible set of New Formalist elements. The most significant change was structural: the addition of a second floor with open porches on the northeast and northwest corners. Projecting arcades of two-story arches framed by slender columns were constructed on the north, east, and south facades. On the north façade, the arcade wrapped around to the porches on either side. An octagonal tower topped by a prism (skylight) was constructed on the east side, and a balcony was added along the length of **the south façade's second story. In the interior, an** extravagant entertaining space was created on the second floor. On the northwest corner of the lot, a low wall of smooth, white concrete/stucco was constructed. Wall sections alternated between simple, blank panels and panels incorporating arches repeating the forms of those found in the exterior walls of the first story.

Staff Analysis

The Western General Agency building is the best example of an integral New Formalist style building in Salt Lake City. Additionally, it is associated with a locally-significant architect, Arthur K. Olsen. The building has retained nearly all of its significant interior and exterior design features and, along with its site, maintains significant historic integrity.

Staff recommends a positive recommendation to the State Historic Preservation office and the National Park Service owing to the integrity of the site and building and its direct association with a locally-significant architect.

Next Step

The Board of State History will review the National Register nomination prior to submittal to the National Park Service.

Attachments:

- A. Area Map
- B. National Register Nomination, Photos, and Renderings

Attachment A
Area Map



Attachment B
National Register Nomination, Photos, Renderings

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

1. Name of Property

Historic name: Western General Agency Building

Other names/site number: Tracy Insurance Building

Name of related multiple property listing:

NA

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

2. Location

Street & number: 780 East South Temple Street

City or town: Salt Lake City State: UT County: Salt Lake

Not For Publication: Vicinity:

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this ___ nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property X meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

___ national ___ statewide X local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

___A ___B XC ___D

<hr/>	
Signature of certifying official/Title:	Date
<u>Utah Division of State History/Office of Historic Preservation</u>	
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government	

Western General Agency Building
Name of Property

Salt Lake County, Utah
County and State

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.	
<hr/>	
Signature of commenting official:	Date
<hr/>	
Title :	State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- ___ entered in the National Register
- ___ determined eligible for the National Register
- ___ determined not eligible for the National Register
- ___ removed from the National Register
- ___ other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site

Western General Agency Building
Name of Property

Salt Lake County, Utah
County and State

Structure

Object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u> </u>	buildings
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	sites
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	structures
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	objects
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Commerce/Trade

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Commerce/Trade

Western General Agency Building
Name of Property

Salt Lake County, Utah
County and State

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

MODERN MOVEMENT:

New Formalism

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: STUCCO, CONCRETE, GLASS, METAL:
aluminum

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

In 1957, the Tracy Insurance Company purchased a vacant lot at 780 East South Temple on the southwest corner of the intersection of 800 East and South Temple and proceeded to construct a simple Modernist one-story brick building of 3,800 square feet. Tracy Insurance was a subsidiary of the Tracy-Collins Trust Company, a Salt Lake City area bank and trust business started in 1884, with the insurance section formed as a separate corporation in 1942.

The Tracy Insurance building had a flat roof. It lacked windows but had two storefront entrances on the South Temple and 800 East elevations. At its southeast corner fronting 800 East was a simple, glassed-in doorway. On its north façade was a broader slightly projecting foyer of storefront glass framed in aluminum. The interior, based on an “open floor plan” that was becoming increasingly popular at the time, was essentially an open space with no interior walls or partitions.

In 1964 the Western General Agency purchased the existing lot and 1-story building at 780 East South Temple Street. The .29 acre corner lot is visible from both streets. Running east-west between the city’s downtown and the University of Utah, South Temple Street is Salt Lake’s most prominent street – historically and architecturally – and displays examples of architectural styles from Utah’s settlement through today, including only one New Formalist building – the Western General Agency building.

Western General Agency Building
Name of Property

Salt Lake County, Utah
County and State

Constructed for financier Edward Mabey in phases from 1965 through 1969, the New Formalist building seen today modified the existing 1957 modern building. When its initial phases were completed in 1969 it was perhaps the purest representation of New Formalism in the state. Its primary character-defining features – and those most closely associated with New Formalism – are its geometric forms; smooth, white walls; and various arched motifs. Subsequent modifications in 1975 infilled the open porches with boxy additions on the north side of the building as well as adding an arched entry vestibule on the southeast corner. In 1977, a rear garage and 2nd level swimming pool were added to the southwest corner of the building. The most recent renovation in 2014 re-established some of the integrity on the north façade by pushing the north porch infills back from the main face of the building in addition to providing functional changes to the building by installing windows on the main floor.

The interior holds two very different spaces. The ground floor has, since the building's completion, served as office space, while the second floor, with its extravagant decorative flourishes, has served as entertaining and living space.

The current owners have recently invested in an extensive remodel, particularly to the interior of the building, and intend to seek federal preservation tax credits. Given the timeframe for procuring the credits, the owners have submitted this nomination, recognizing the building's period of significance extends from the period 1965 to 1969.

Narrative Description

Exterior

The Western General Agency building is a two-story commercial structure in the New Formalist style that was popular for a brief period in the 1950s and 1960s. The building is composed of series of geometric forms or cubes that are integrated by their shared material (concrete/stucco) and their color (white). The largest volume is a two-story rectangular mass that extends from north to south. Its geometric lines are reinforced by a broad fascia and flat roof. Side porches sit on the northeast and northwest corners of the second floor.

The building's primary elevation is on its north side. Its primacy results both from its orientation (facing South Temple Street) and in the fact that it prominently displays the building's essential New Formalist features. Most visible of these is a two-story arcade of six slender arches that project one bay from the façade itself. The four central arches are glazed, enclosing the lobby and bringing light into the first-floor while providing a clear view of the lobby from the outside. In 2014, the single-pane windows were replaced in the original openings with a modern, high-efficiency double-pane insulated glazing and divided by horizontal bronzed aluminum mullions which in effect become secondary to the primary white vertical forms of the arcade. The arcade continues to communicate monumentality to the structure – one of the fundamental attributes of New Formalism. A tall entry door with an arched glazed panel is located on the east side of the arcade, but it is too narrow to be truly functional. In 2014, a required accessible access entry was created in the north wall, just to the east of the existing entry. On the second floor, porches sit at the northeast and northwest corners of the building. Originally these porches were open and the north arcade turned the corner and continued through on their side walls. The continuation of the arcade was mostly obscured when the porches were enclosed in 1975, though there was still one full bay of the arcade visible from the outside with the rest visible above the porch infill as short arched windows. The arcade is better detected from the interior through the high, arched window openings that were preserved as part of the 1975 renovation. The exterior brick walls on the first story are covered with white

Western General Agency Building

Salt Lake County, Utah

Name of Property

County and State

concrete/stucco which has been scribed with arches that repeat the profile found in the arcades on the north, east, and south elevations.

The east elevation continues the New Formalist motifs found in the north elevation. Unlike the north (and somewhat uncharacteristic of New Formalism), the east façade is asymmetrical. Its most notable feature is a two-story arcade of five arches projecting from the southeast corner of the building mimicking the north facade. The arcade on the second floor was glazed while the lower rectangular openings on the main floor were open and the windows set back behind the columns in the plane of the main wall. The first floor openings were enclosed likely during the 1975 renovation. In 2014, the same modern, high-efficiency double-pane insulated glazing and horizontal bronzed aluminum mullion combination found in the north arcade replaced the original glazing. The rest of the elevation is comprised of smooth, white concrete/stucco walls, with the first floor displaying the same scribed arches found on the north façade. In 2014, three tall, narrow window openings were carefully integrated into the existing scribed arches towards the north end of the first story and a single window opening was created on the second story just to the north of the glazed arcade. An octagonal prism topped with a skylight is visible along the middle of the roofline. Extant by 1969, it was retained and upgraded in 2014 with a modern efficient skylight. At the building's southeast corner is an arched entry vestibule which was built in 1975.

The south elevation mirrors the north façade with an arcade of six two-story arches. The broad fascia defining the roofline of the building's primary volume continues around to this elevation. Inside the arcade is a stairwell that leads to the second floor. A balcony extends the length of the façade from east to west and was likely added in 1977 along with the addition of a one-story, two-car garage with a swimming pool on top, which partially obscures the south elevation, but the visibility of this elevation from the street is limited.

The west façade is a combination of painted brick and stucco with no character-defining elements. Because of its proximity to a building just to the west, it is substantially obscured and is visible only to a limited extent.

Interior

The interior of the Western General Agency building comprises two distinct spaces. The ground floor was originally designed for offices, with the New Formalist motifs found on the exterior carried through to the interior. The most prominent feature on the first floor was the north lobby located inside the north arcade and was on prominent display on South Temple. Present in this lobby was a low-walled circular-shaped arcade that enclosed a small conference room. The arches of the conference room arcade were repeated in a horseshoe shaped blind arcade of inverted arches in the ceiling above, wrapping the east, south and west walls of the lobby. Below this was a coved soffit following continuing the same horseshoe shape. The south wall of the lobby was curved to follow the horseshoe shape of the ceiling and was finished in a teak paneling and fitted with a curved teak base cabinet. In 2014, the conference room and its circular arcade were removed. However, the horseshoe shaped arcade of blind arches in the ceiling and the cove and soffit below was retained as was the teak base cabinet. As a functional requirement the south wall of the lobby was moved north to enclose required restrooms and offices were integrated on the outside walls of the first floor. As part of the 2014 remodel, an open, glazed circular stairway, following the architectural shape of the lobby, was installed at the north end of the lobby.

The second floor was a radical departure from the building's New Formalist (Modernist) motifs. Designed for the purpose of entertaining clients, it presented an eclectic mix of Classic and old world styles and tastes, as described in a 2006 survey:

Western General Agency Building
Name of Property

Salt Lake County, Utah
County and State

“The second floor penthouse is elaborately decorated with hand painted murals in the living and dining rooms and lavish use of marble. A sky and cloud pattern is painted on the arched living room ceiling. The living room mural covers two walls (north and west) with a landscape with classical ruins. Corinthian columns and elaborate chandeliers are found throughout. The dining room mural on the east wall shows a view of the Black Forest with mountains in the background. The ornate master bath has a carved alabaster pedestal sink with 24 karat gold leaf fixtures. The door to the elevator and other doors on the second floor have gold tracery patterns on a white background.”¹

In 2014, the north wall of the second floor was removed to accommodate the second stairwell required by municipal building code and to introduce light to the second floor from the full length arcaded windows on the north side of the building. A passageway was completed that allowed for direct access from the newly opened north atrium to the south side atrium and stairwell. This passageway also allowed light from the south side of the building to penetrate all the way through the building and provided a perspective from which the large New Formalist arches and windows on the north and south elevations could now be viewed simultaneously from the middle of the second floor. The passageway also increased compliance with fire code and safety requirements by facilitating access to the north and south side stairwells.

To augment the penetration of light into the second floor, the prism/skylight located over the center of the building and which had been covered over due to leaks was re-established with a new modern skylight during the 2014 remodel. Other character-defining features of the second floor – including mirror-lined hallways, marble floors, murals, and an elevator – were retained and repaired during the 2014 remodel.

Modifications were made to provide for an internal sprinkling system, new lights, and upgraded heating and air conditioning. Some of the rooms that were used as part of the upstairs living quarters were repurposed into offices. A bedroom and dining room were converted to offices, but the original murals and doors were retained. The original ornate bathrooms along with their fixtures were maintained while being upgraded to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act. Finally, architectural elements from the first floor were carried through to the second floor through the consistent use of wood trim to produce a more cohesive feel to the interior.

¹ Historic Site Form, Utah Office of Preservation. 780 East South Temple, Salt Lake City, UT, 2013.

Western General Agency Building
Name of Property

Salt Lake County, Utah
County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

Western General Agency Building
Name of Property

Salt Lake County, Utah
County and State

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Architecture

Period of Significance

1965-1969

Significant Dates

1965
1969

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Arthur K. Olsen

Western General Agency Building
Name of Property

Salt Lake County, Utah
County and State

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The Western General Agency building located at 780 East South Temple² in Salt Lake City, Utah, is locally significant based on Criterion C (Architecture) as one of only a handful of examples in Utah of New Formalism, a derivative of Modernist architecture that was mildly popular for a brief period in the 1950s and 1960s. The building's primary character-defining features – its geometric forms, smooth, white walls, and arcades of grand arches – are distinctive elements of New Formalism. While a number of buildings throughout Utah display some characteristics of New Formalism, the Western General Agency building is the best example of an integral New Formalist style building in Salt Lake City. The construction of the original 1957 modernist building at 780 East South Temple and its subsequent “New Formalist renovation” signaled a major change on South Temple as the character of the street shifted from residential to commercial, with several other insurance companies relocating. In many cases, the companies demolished the existing residences which were falling into disrepair by the 1950s and 1960s and built new modern offices in their place. The Western General Agency building is architecturally significant as a material representation of the changing character of South Temple in the 1950s and 1960s. Finally, the Western General Agency building is significant for its association with Utah architect Arthur K. Olsen who was an important local and regional player in disseminating modernism in the 1950s and 1960s.

Since its completion in between the years 1965 and 1969, which defines the period of significance, the Western General Agency building has undergone some minor modifications that have altered some of its original New Formalist characteristics. However, the majority of essential forms and primary exterior features remain intact. The current property owners recognize that the original building is slightly less than 50 years old but are old but are currently seeking federal rehabilitation tax credits.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

Architectural Significance

The Significance of New Formalism and the Western General Agency Building

The Western General Agency building is significant because of its primary character-defining features – its geometric forms, smooth, white walls, and arcades of grand arches – which are distinctive elements of New Formalism. While a number of buildings throughout Utah display some characteristics of New Formalism, the Western General Agency building is the best example of an integral New Formalist style building in Salt Lake City.

What distinguishes the Western General Agency building from these and other buildings that incorporate New Formalist elements is that it was designed with the fundamental “palate” of New Formalism – inside and out. Its New Formalist motifs are integral to its design and are not simply decorative details or architectural afterthoughts. Another element of the significance is that the fully realized New Formalist design was implemented on an extant building. The fact that the original building was a modernist box basically made it a blank canvas and easily adaptable.

² The building is within the boundary, but falls outside of the period of significance for the recently amended South Temple Historic District (NRIS #82004147), which is 1876-1964.

Western General Agency Building
Name of Property

Salt Lake County, Utah
County and State

Even with some character-defining features modified, the Western General Agency building remains architecturally significant as a rare example of New Formalism in Utah. The most prominent façade – the north – has retained much of its original integrity particularly the character-defining elements: the geometric forms; the tall arcades framed by slender columns; and the arches scribed in the white concrete/stucco walls.

New Formalism emerged in America in the 1950s as a reaction to the perceived austerity of Modernism. Proponents of this new style – most notably Edward Durrell Stone, Minoru Yamasaki, and Phillip Johnson – sought to integrate Classical motifs into the Modernist palate while reinterpreting them in more contemporary ways. New Formalism adopted Modernism’s emphasis on geometric forms, smooth exterior walls, and extensive use of glass. At the same time, it incorporated “modernized” Classical elements, including symmetrical facades, columns and arches, and entablatures. As New Formalism evolved, more ornamental elements – most notably, decorative concrete block – were incorporated into many buildings of the style.

As something of a hybrid of Modernism and Classicism, New Formalism found itself with limited acceptance from either Modernists or traditionalists. Modernists dismissed it as, at best, a distortion of the true principles of Modernism and, at worst, a perversion. Traditionalists found New Formalism to be gaudy with the underlying coldness of Modernism’s austerity. As architectural historian Mark Gelernter has pointed out, “From the strictly Modernist point of view, the forms returned explicitly to the discredited traditional styles, and too often disguised or obscured their constructional realities. From the traditionalist point of view, the lack of detail failed to moderate the scale and bulk of what were still in reality large Modernist boxes.” (Gelernter, 270)

In spite of this lack of acceptance, New Formalism played a significant role in the evolution of Modernism, particularly in the U.S., for it broadened the set of motifs associated with Modernism, expanding the aesthetic choices for later styles such as Post-Modernism, Expressionism, and even Deconstructivism. Because of New Formalism’s lack of acceptance, however, examples of the style are relatively rare and are most often found in public, institutional, or large corporate buildings – structures that apply New Formalist elements to communicate a certain monumentality. The rarity of this style nationally has, in some communities, evoked a sense of urgency to focus on the preservation of existing example. Already, a number of New Formalist buildings have been listed on the National Register of Historic Places, including at least two, the Westgate Tower and the Pine Bluff Civic Center (both designed by Edward Durrell Stone), that were completed less than 50 years ago.

New Formalism is particularly rare in Utah. The Utah State Historic Preservation Office’s preservation database lists only eleven buildings in this style. Of these, three have been demolished, one has been substantially remodeled with any traces of New Formalism removed, and at least one has been misidentified as a New Formalist structure. There are a number of buildings throughout the state that incorporate elements of New Formalism in what might be characterized as a “Modernist Eclectic” style.

On South Temple Street itself, several other buildings display New Formalist motifs. The University Club building at 136 East South Temple incorporates a series of arches over its ground-level openings and decorative concrete screening on its second through fifth-floor parking structure. But the rest of its 24 stories display a strictly Modernist style. The IBM building at 348 East South Temple also incorporates a series of arches on its front façade, but it, too, follows strictly Modernist design ideas. Across South Temple Street from the Western General Agency building stands Bonneville Tower, which exhibits New Formalist elements in a grand arch over its entry and an integrated parking structure screened with

Western General Agency Building
Name of Property

Salt Lake County, Utah
County and State

decorative concrete block. But the tower's upper twelve stories lack the integral stylistic cues of New Formalism.

The Significance of the Evolving Character of South Temple

The Western General Agency building is architecturally significant as a material representation of the changing character of South Temple in the 1950s and 1960s.

South Temple developed originally from the late 1840s to the mid-1920s as an elegant residential boulevard, with many large mansions ranging in styles from Period Revival, Neo-Classical, Victorian, and early 20th century styles including the Prairie Style, and was home to many important businesses, political and religious leaders. As the city grew and expanded - particularly during the depression and World War II, South Temple became a prime location for commercial uses as a result of its close proximity to downtown and the elegant character of the buildings and street. The last single family dwelling to be constructed on South Temple was in 1927. Since that time, new construction on South Temple has consisted of a mix of apartment buildings and commercial structures which have modified the original character of the street.

While large commercial businesses typically remained downtown, South Temple began to see an influx of small office uses - Insurance companies in particular - in the 1950's and 60's. The Tracy Insurance Company Building was the first to locate here and ushered in a wave of development on South Temple. The Tracy Insurance Company built its new modernist building in 1957 at 780 East South Temple (the forerunner to the Western General Agency building). In addition, several other insurance companies located on east South Temple, including the Fred A. Moreton Insurance Company near 700 East. In many cases, the companies tore down existing residences which were falling into disrepair by the 1950s and 1960s and built new modern offices in their place. In the case of the subject property at 780 East South Temple, the lot was vacant; the new Tracy Insurance Company Building was a contrasting addition to the historic streetscape.

The changing character of South Temple continued until it reached a climax with the development of the Governor's Plaza development on the south side of the street between 500 and 600 East in 1981. The plaza was representative of the need for new high quality commercial and residential space in Salt Lake City. This trend had been particularly evident along South Temple (considering its desirability as an address) as many mansions and residences were being demolished and replaced with new modern commercial buildings. While the Governor's Plaza did come about after the designation of the South Temple Historic District and included the demolition of three historic mansions, it was the last major incursion of large scale commercial development on the east extent of the street (from State Street to the East). The Governor's Plaza was the largest and most disproportionately scaled project to that time. Ironically, that very lack of proportion was one of the principle reasons the effort to preserve the remaining character of South Temple was successful.

Since the designation of the South Temple Historic District in 1978, all subsequent commercial development efforts on the east extent South Temple faced two trends. The first trend was a considered movement by the City Council and the neighborhoods to preserve existing structures by either altering their use to offices as a means of establishing the continued viability of the South Temple Historic District or to scale any new construction to the now established residential character of the street. The second trend was an effort by a holding company called Terracor (which occupied the Keith-Brown Mansion immediately across the street from the Governor's Plaza development) to preserve the character of east

Western General Agency Building

Salt Lake County, Utah
County and State

Name of Property

South Temple by establishing an attractive location for large scale commercial development on the west extent of South Temple (from State Street to the West) where all the Victorian structures except one had been removed, the Devereaux House (formerly the Staines-Jennings Mansion). The Devereaux House, which is both historically and architecturally significant had been turned into a taxi barn and was located on the west end South Temple in an area that was economically and socially depressed. Beginning with the Devereaux House restoration and known as the Devereaux project a new environment and direction was established which ultimately resulted in the redevelopment of two full city blocks adjacent to the Union Pacific Depot and became the anchor for the redevelopment of the entire west side of the Salt Lake central business district that continues to this day.

Over the intervening years, east South Temple has continued to change, but has never faced the same level of development pressure it had beginning in the 1950s and continuing to the 1980s. This pattern continues to this day, with the only change being recent modification in zoning by Salt Lake City that restricts commercial development on east South Temple beyond 800 East.

The Significance of the Arthur K. Olsen, architect

Finally, the Western General Agency building is significant for its association with Utah architect Arthur K. Olsen who was an important local and regional player in disseminating modernism in the 1950s and 1960s.

Following the purchase of the Tracy Insurance building, Mabey commissioned Utah architect Arthur K. Olsen to design a new concept for the structure. Olsen's most prominent works include the Capitol Reef National Park Visitor Center in Torrey, Utah (1966) and the Dinosaur National Monument Headquarters in Artesia Colorado. The latter was constructed as part of the National Park Service's Mission 66 program. None of Olsen's other known designs display the same characteristics of New Formalism found in the Western General Agency building.

Olsen's New Formalist design was constructed in two phases. The first phase was constructed in 1965, and effectively transformed the simple Modernist Tracy Insurance building into the foundation of the elaborate New Formalist structure that was to come. The exterior walls were sprayed with textured stucco and painted white, and tall, narrow arches were scribed into the finish. At the same time, thick, flat roofs were added over the north and east entrances, giving them a more substantial, monumental appearance. The north foyer was significantly enlarged, and the north entry door was moved to the east side of the foyer. Taller, more expansive windows were installed in the foyer. The effect was to set off the interior with the clear intent of displaying its most significant element: an arcade encircling a conference room with an inverted circular "blind" arcade in the ceiling immediately above. Matching arches lined the outside walls of the lobby. This series of interior arcades in the interior was clearly intended to carry through the building's New Formalist motifs from the exterior.

In 1969, Arthur K. Olsen was again commissioned to design a second phase which enhanced the existing New Formalist features by adding an even more elaborate, more visible set of New Formalist elements. The most significant change was structural: the addition of a second floor with open porches on the northeast and northwest corners. Projecting arcades of two-story arches framed by slender columns were constructed on the north, east, and south facades. On the north façade, the arcade wrapped around to the porches on either side. An octagonal tower topped by a prism (skylight) was constructed on the east side, and a balcony was added along the length of the south façade's second story. In the interior, an extravagant entertaining space was created on the second floor. On the northwest corner of the lot, a low

Western General Agency Building

Name of Property

Salt Lake County, Utah

County and State

wall of smooth, white concrete/stucco was constructed. Wall sections alternated between simple, blank panels and panels incorporating arches repeating the forms of those found in the exterior walls of the first story.

Historical Context

780 East South Temple: Early History

The first building to occupy the lot at 780 East South Temple Street was an elaborate Victorian home built in 1889 for Edward and Elizabeth Bonnemort, who had amassed a fortune in cattle and sheep ranching. (Elizabeth came to be known as the "Utah Sheep Queen.") A 1909 sketch remarked that "[h]er beautiful home at Brigham and Eighth East Streets is the center of a social life and hospitality as remarkable for its breadth as for its tasteful and elegant simplicity."³ The Bonnemorts' was only one of a number of extravagant mansions built along South Temple Street in the late 1800s and early 1900s by Utah's super wealthy – mining magnates, ranching barons, and financial giants. The presence of these mansions and of the wealth and power that they communicated bestowed an almost mythical character on the street, and it became Salt Lake's most prestigious address. As South Temple has evolved, it has also become Salt Lake's most architecturally diverse street with buildings reflecting the progression of architectural styles in Utah's history.

Edward Bonnemort died in 1902 and Elizabeth in 1914. Following her death, Elizabeth's daughters quarreled over the estate for a number of years. The property was finally sold in 1927 to Salt Lake real estate developers William and Frank Adams. It's unclear how or when, but sometime in the next 20 years the mansion was demolished, because the 1950 Sanborn fire insurance map shows 780 East as a vacant lot. The most likely scenario is that the Adams themselves had it razed almost immediately after they bought it, for between 1929 and 1938 they and other developers filed a series of applications for variance with the Salt Lake City Board of Adjustment to construct various forms of commercial developments on the site, all of which were denied.

Tracy Insurance Building

In 1957, the Tracy Insurance Company purchased the vacant lot from the Adams brothers and proceeded to construct a simple Modernist one-story brick building of 3,800 square feet. Tracy Insurance was a subsidiary of the Tracy-Collins Trust Company, a Salt Lake City area bank and trust business started in 1884, with the insurance section formed as a separate corporation in 1942.

The Tracy Insurance building had a flat roof. It lacked windows but had two storefront entrances on the South Temple and 800 East elevations. At its southeast corner fronting 800 East was a simple, glassed-in doorway. On its north façade was a broader slightly projecting foyer of storefront glass framed in aluminum. The interior, based on an "open floor plan" that was becoming increasingly popular at the time, was essentially an open space with no interior walls or partitions.

Western General Agency Building

In 1964, Edward Mabey purchased the property from Tracy Insurance through a \$100,000 loan from the latter. Mabey had founded the Western General Agency insurance company in 1947 and was president of Western Industrial Shares, in addition to ownership or leadership of a number of other companies. He

³ Sketches of the Inter-Mountain States 1847-1909. Utah Idaho Nevada; SL Tribune, 1909.

Western General Agency Building

Salt Lake County, Utah
County and State

Name of Property

was also chairman of the board of directors of the Bountiful State Bank founded by his father, Charles R. Mabey, former governor of Utah. Edward Mabey died in 1991, but ownership of the property at 780 East South Temple stayed with the Mabey Investment Company until 2003.”⁴

Following the purchase of the Tracy Insurance building, Mabey commissioned Utah architect Arthur K. Olsen to design a new concept for the structure. Olsen’s design was constructed in two phases. The first phase was constructed in 1965, and effectively transformed the simple Modernist Tracy Insurance building into the foundation of the elaborate New Formalist structure that was to come. In 1969, Olsen enhanced the existing New Formalist features by adding an even more elaborate, more visible set of New Formalist elements.

These two projects – “phase 1” in 1965 and “phase 2” in 1969 – created a striking structure, with clear New Formalist elements carried through from the interior to the exterior to the landscape. Subsequent modifications in 1975, 1977, and 2014, however, gradually modified some of those elements. In 1975, the porches on the northeast and northwest corners of the second story were enclosed, obscuring the arcades that had been continued from the north side. A one-story garage with a swimming pool on top was added to the south façade in 1977. A 2014 remodel added window openings on the east façade and a handicapped ramp and entry door (required by code) on the north façade. This remodel removed the circular arcade from the lobby (as well as the arches lining the exterior walls) and inserted new energy-efficient glass with horizontal dividers (mullions) in the windows of the two-story arcades on the north, east, and south facades. Yet even with these impacts, the Western General Agency retains many of the original features that made it a distinctive example of New Formalism. Again, those features are the building’s fundamental geometric forms; its smooth, white surfaces; and variations on the arch motif.

⁴ South Temple Historic District amendment from 2012.

Western General Agency Building
Name of Property

Salt Lake County, Utah
County and State

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

Deseret News, various issues.

Gelder, Royal W., Jr.. "Building for Efficiency". *Northwest Insurance News*, Vol. 45 No. 9, September 1957.

Historic Site Form, 780 East South Temple, 2013.

Lester, Margaret. *Brigham Street*. Salt Lake City, Utah: Utah State Historical Society, 1979.

Salt Lake City Board of Adjustment case files, various.

Salt Lake County tax appraisal cards and photographs, various.

Salt Lake Tribune, various issues.

Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps. Salt Lake City, 1911, 1950.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

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 # _____

recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

State Historic Preservation Office

Other State agency

Federal agency

Local government

University

Other

Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

Western General Agency Building
Name of Property

Salt Lake County, Utah
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property .29

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- | | |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. Latitude: 40°46'10.3"N | Longitude: 111°52'07.8"W |
| 2. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 3. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 4. Latitude: | Longitude: |

Or

UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or NAD 1983

- | | | |
|----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 2. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 3. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 4. Zone: | Easting : | Northing: |

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

Beginning at the northeast corner of Lot 8, Block 59, Plat B: West 5 rods, south 154.5 feet, east 5 rods, north 154.5 feet to the beginning.

Western General Agency Building
Name of Property

Salt Lake County, Utah
County and State

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundaries are defined by the legal description for the property. In addition, they constitute the historical boundaries for the property.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Bim Oliver
organization: Bim Oliver Consulting
street & number: 1804 East Hollywood Avenue
city or town: Salt Lake City state: Utah zip code: 84108
e-mail bimconsulting@comcast.net
telephone: 801-419-4712
date: 05-15-2015

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Western General Agency Building
Name of Property

Salt Lake County, Utah
County and State

Photo Log

Name of Property: Western General Agency Building

City or Vicinity: Salt Lake City

County: Salt Lake State: Utah

Photographer:

Date Photographed:

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

1 of 6 . ca. 1957 photograph of Tracy Insurance Agency from the north.

2 of 6 . ca. 1971 photograph of the Western General Agency from north east.

3 of 6 . 2015 photograph of the north façade. Taken by applicant.

4 of 6 . 2015 photograph of the east façade. Taken by applicant.

5 of 6 . 2015 photograph of the south façade. Taken by applicant.

6 of 6 . 2015 photograph of the west façade. Taken by applicant.

Property Owner information:

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

Name _____

Address _____

City or Town _____ State _____ Zip code _____

Telephone/email _____

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

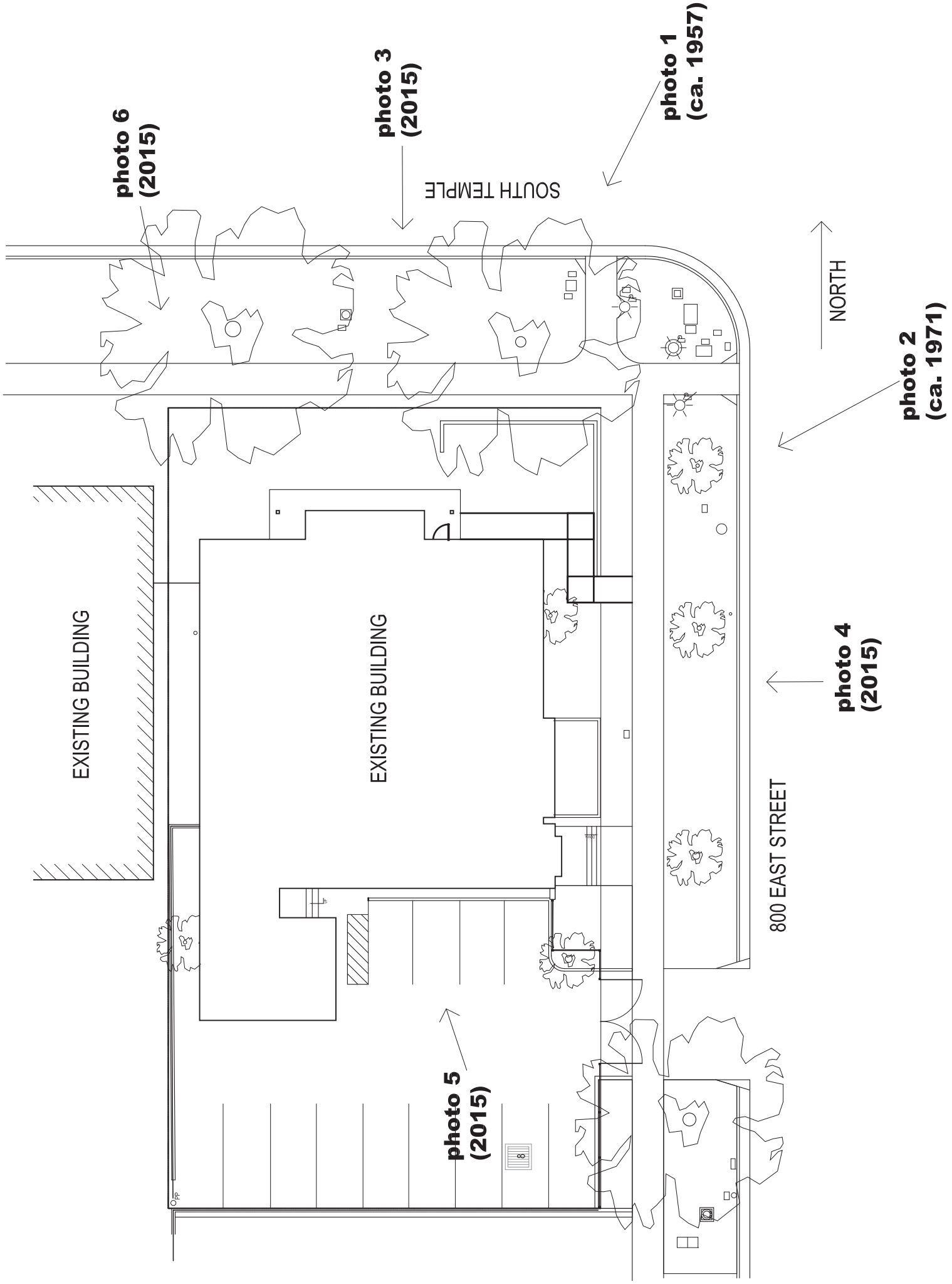


PHOTO #1

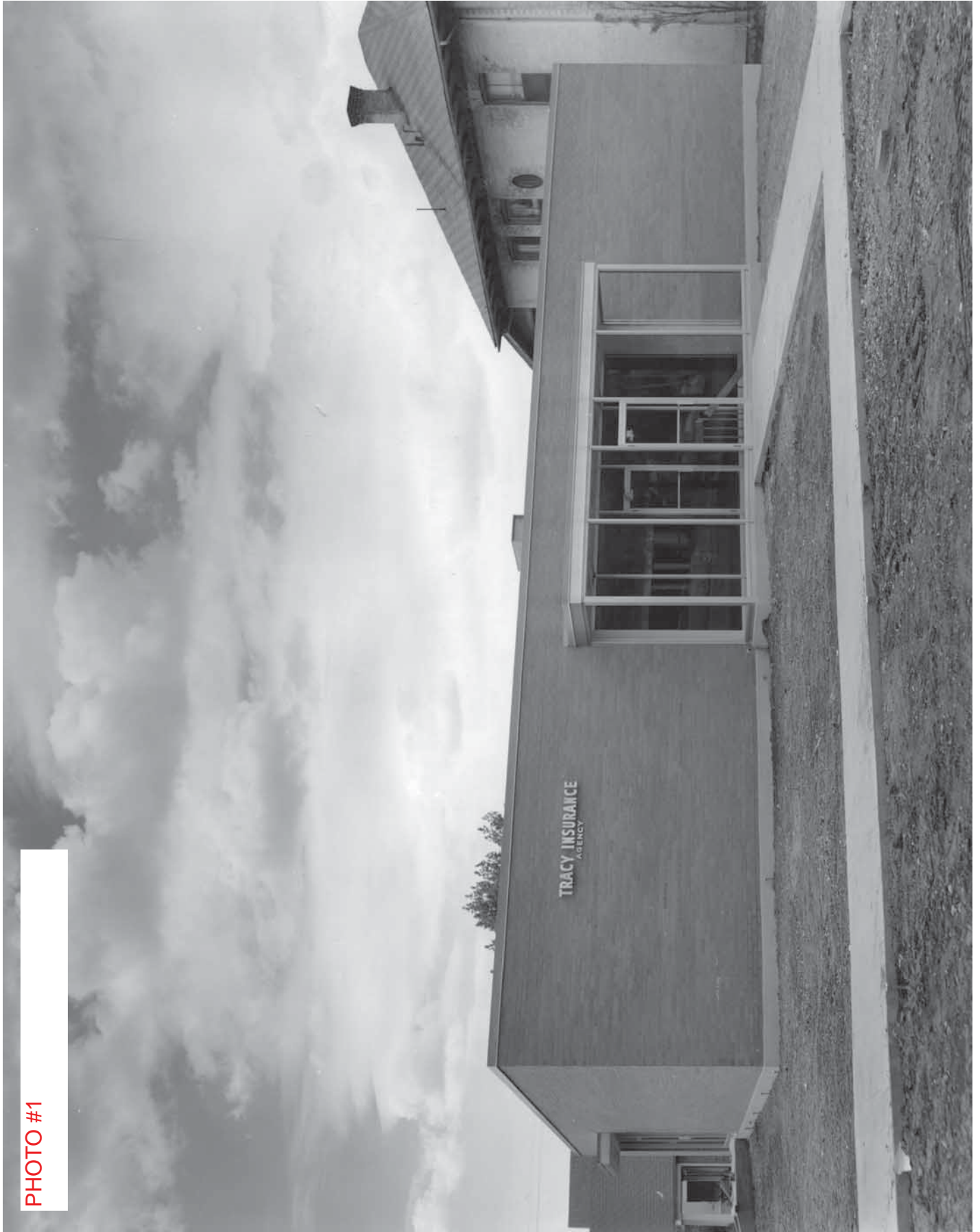


PHOTO #2





PHOTO #3

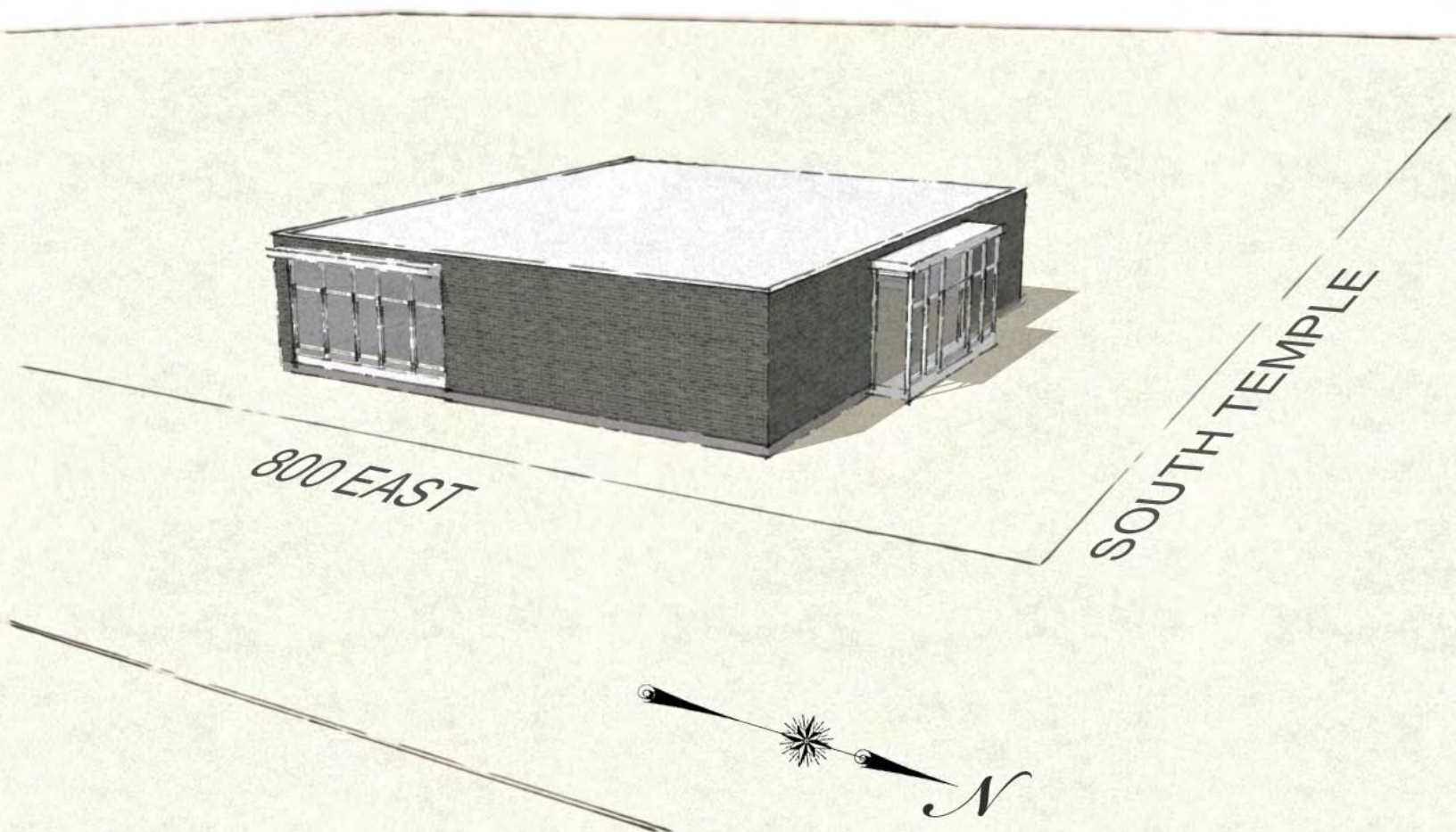




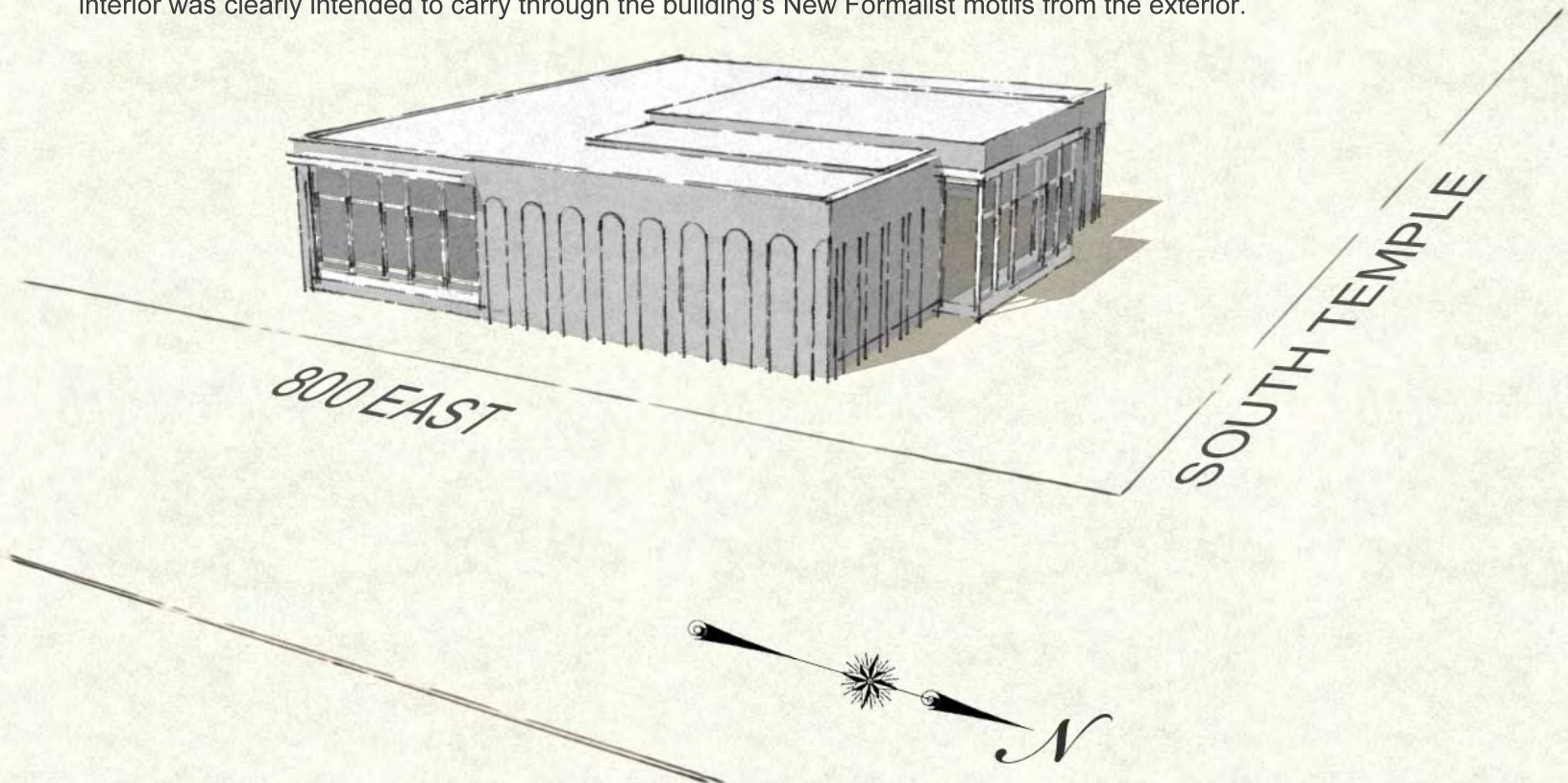
PHOTO #5



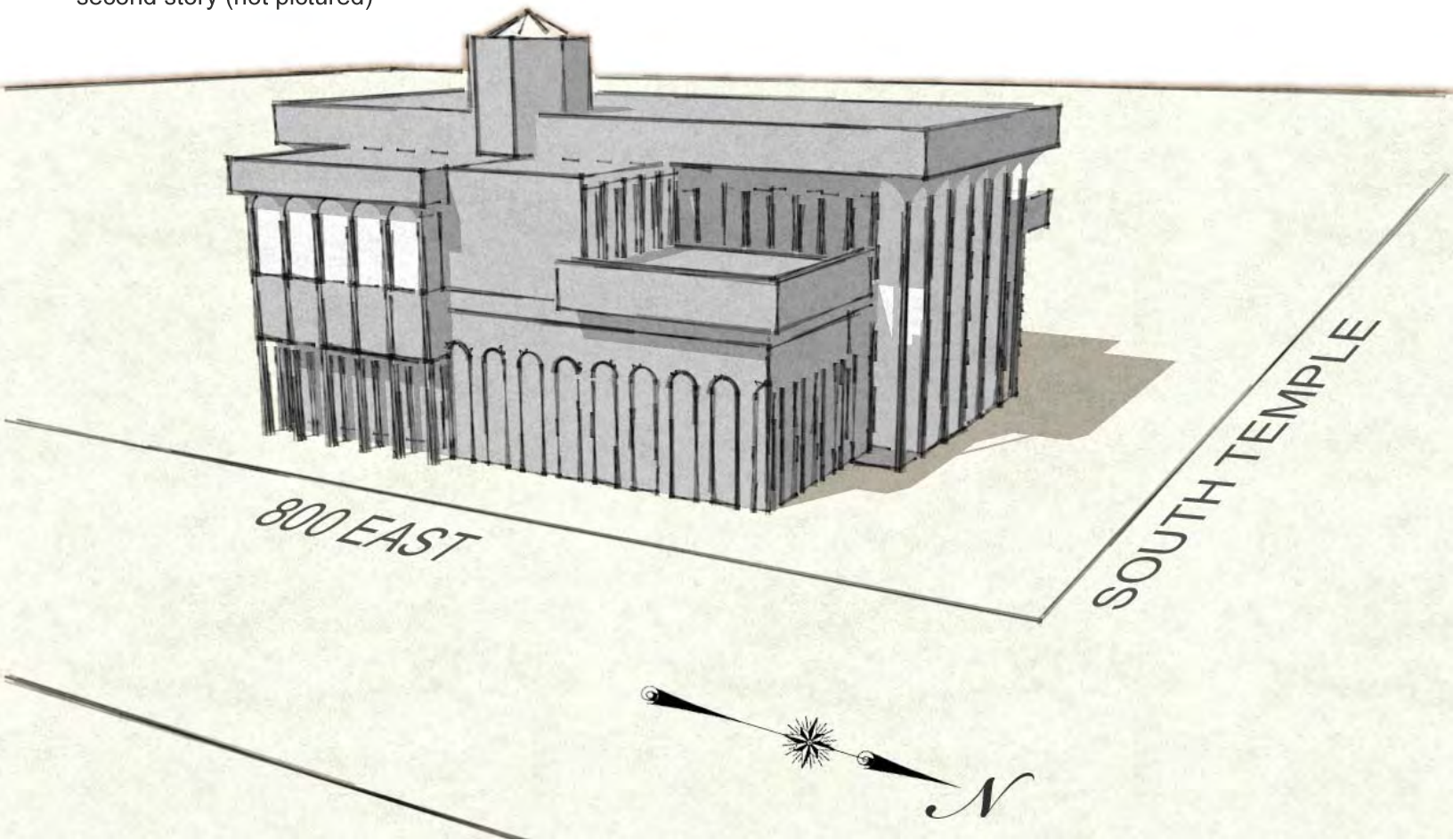
1957: The Tracy Insurance Company purchased the vacant lot from the Adams brothers and proceeded to construct a simple Modernist one-story brick building of 3,800 square feet.



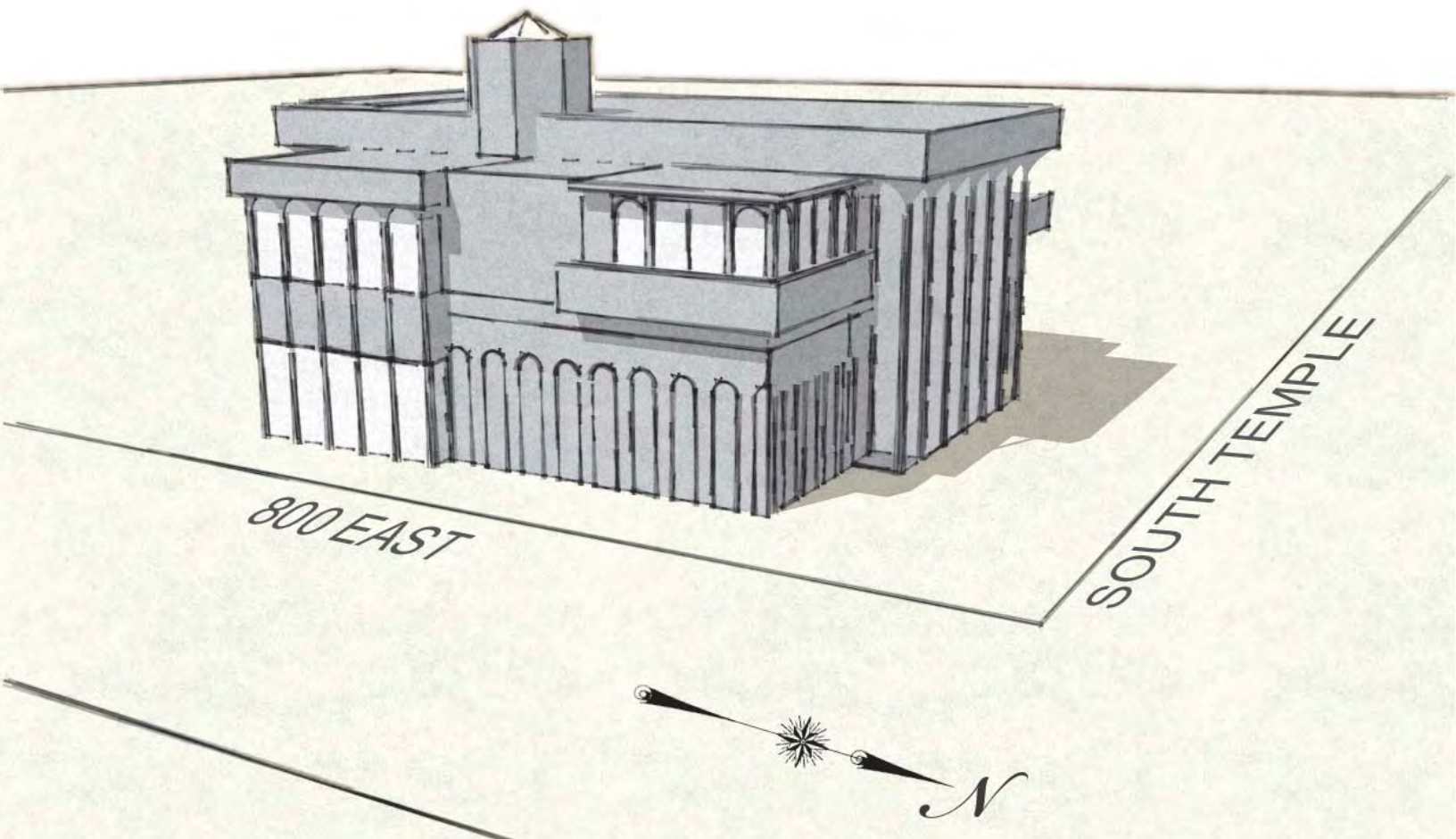
1965: Edward Mabey commissioned Utah architect Arthur K. Olsen to design a new concept for the structure. The exterior walls were sprayed with textured stucco and painted white, and tall, narrow arches were scribed into the finish. At the same time, thick, flat roofs were added over the north and east entrances, giving them a more substantial, monumental appearance. The north foyer was significantly enlarged, and the north entry door was moved to the east side of the foyer. Taller, more expansive windows were installed in the foyer. The effect was to set off the interior with the clear intent of displaying its most significant element: an arcade encircling a conference room with an inverted circular "blind" arcade in the ceiling immediately above. Matching arches lined the outside walls of the lobby. This series of interior arcades in the interior was clearly intended to carry through the building's New Formalist motifs from the exterior.



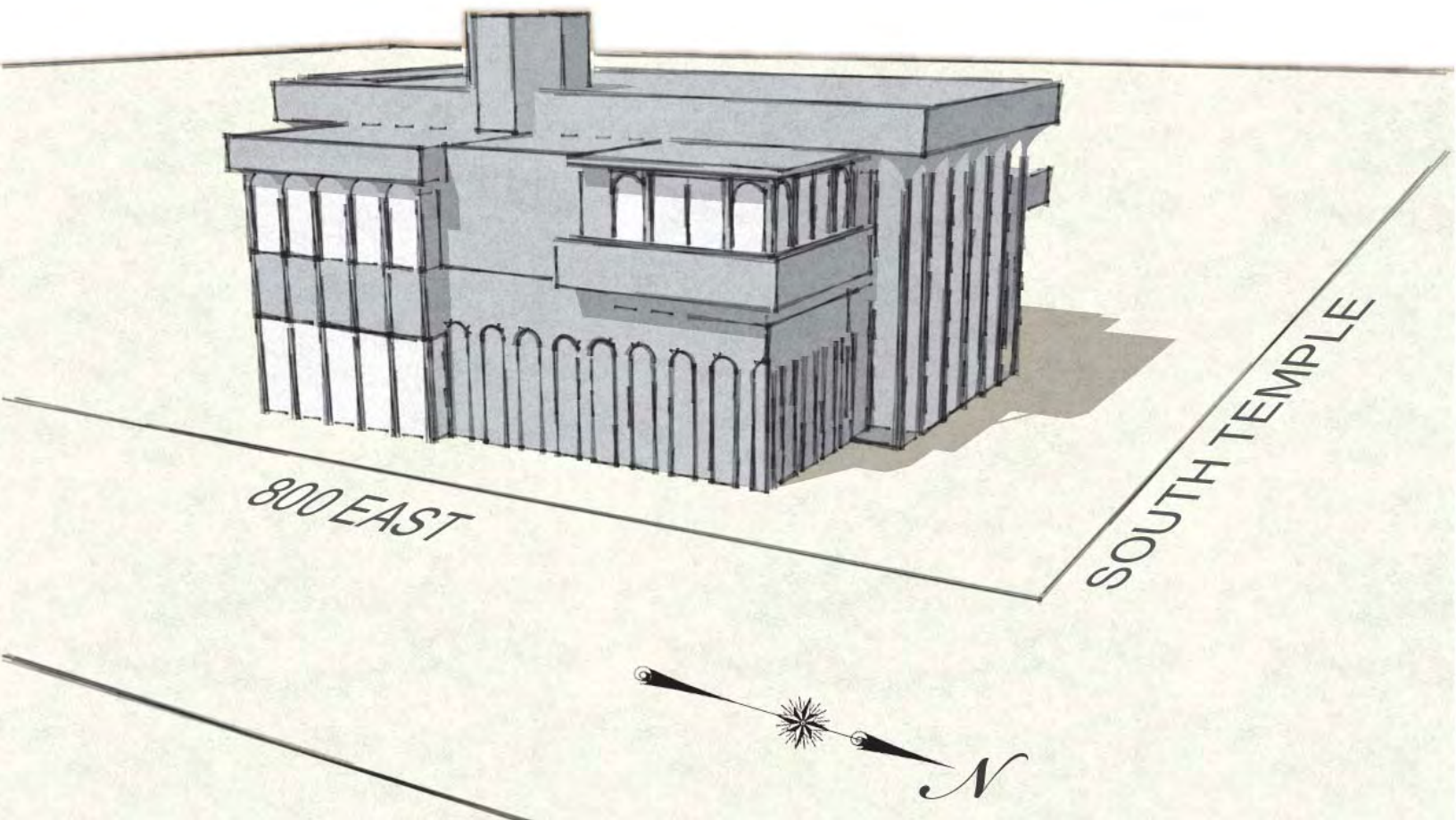
1969: The addition of a second floor with open porches on the northeast and northwest corners. Projecting arcades of two-story arches framed by slender columns were constructed on the north, east, and south façades. An octagonal tower topped by a skylight was constructed on the east side, and a balcony was added along the length of the south façade's second story (not pictured)



1975: The porches on the northeast and northwest corners of the second story were enclosed, obscuring the arcades that had been continued from the north side. An compatible entry addition was added on the southeast corner of the building (not pictured).



1977: A one-story garage with a swimming pool on top was added to the south façade in 1977. (not pictured). It is probable that the prismatic skylight was removed at this time and covered over.



2014: Lear & Lear, LLC purchased the property and engaged in a interior restoration of the building including a seismic upgrade, mechanical and electrical upgrades and reconfigured office spaces as well as minor exterior worksuch as installing new windows on the east side and a new entrance door on the north side as well as pushing the window wall of the north porch infills back.

