

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
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

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

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: Commerce/Trade Sub: Offices
Government Offices

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: Government Sub: Offices

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

20th CENTURY REVIVAL: Classical Revival

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Limestone
 roof Asphalt
 walls Brick, Limestone
 other _____

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets)

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 pattern of our history.
- B** Property 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)

Property is:

- 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 of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets)

Previous documentation on files (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

Area of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Government: New Deal, Home Owners' Loan Corporation
Architecture: Louis A. Simon
Office of the Supervising Architect of the Treasury

Period of Significance

1927-1937

Significant Dates

1927-28, 1936-37

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Louis A. Simon, Supervising Architect of the Treasury

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

U.S. General Services Administration

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property 1 acre

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

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

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Erin E. Brasell, Architectural Historian
 organization Earth Tech, Inc. date May 12, 2006
 street & number 7 St. Paul Street, Suite 900 telephone 410.637.1600
 city or town Baltimore state MD zip code 21202

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

- A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional Items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

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

name U.S. General Services Administration, National Capital Region
 street & number 7th & D Streets, SW telephone 202.708.5891
 city or town Washington state DC zip code 20407

Paperwork Reduction 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. 470 et. seq.). A federal agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number.

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to range from approximately 18 hours to 36 hours depending on several factors including, but not limited to, how much documentation may already exist on the type of property being nominated and whether the property is being nominated as part of a Multiple Property Documentation Form. In most cases, it is estimated to average 36 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form to meet minimum National Register documentation requirements. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, 1849 C St., NW, Washington, DC 20240.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Federal Home Loan Bank Board Building

Name of Property

District of Columbia

County and State

Section 7 Page 1

Summary:

The Federal Home Loan Bank Board Building is located at 320 First Street, NW between Indiana Avenue and D Street, with elevations fronting all three streets. Unlike most other properties administered by the U.S. General Services Administration in the National Capital Region, the building was originally designed and built for a private corporation and later sold to the government and enlarged.¹ The building was constructed in two phases, with the first (southern) v-shaped section along First Street, for the Acacia Mutual Life Company as its headquarters in 1927-1928. An extension of the building was constructed in 1936-1937 for the Federal Home Loan Bank Board, which consists of two wings – one running north from the original building and the other extending west from First Street along D Street.

The exterior design and materials of the two sections are essentially identical, featuring a Classical Revival style with a granite base, Indiana limestone walls on the street elevations, and rear walls of buff colored brick. The interior arrangement of the Federal Home Loan Bank Board Building is based on a double-loaded corridor plan and the current appearance of the spaces was determined mostly by the 1936-1937 remodeling and extension. However, some significant and relatively unaltered spaces remain from the original 1928 construction, including the south lobby with Adamesque detailing.

Narrative Description:

The exterior of the building is a Classical Revival design that was widely used in American commercial buildings in the early 20th century. The building consists of two components; the southern portion of the building that was completed in 1928, and the 1936-37 L-shaped addition to the north. The ten story building is composed of limestone ashlar on the lower floors, Indiana limestone on the upper floor street elevations, and buff colored brick on the end and rear elevations. The first three floors compose the base of the building and are separated from the upper floors by a limestone beltcourse. The fourth through eighth floors compose the building's body and are articulated with Corinthian pilasters and are denoted from the top floor by a beltcourse. The attic, tenth floor, is capped by a modillion cornice.

The original 1928 section of the building is v-shaped and faces the intersection of First Street and Indiana Avenue, NW. The southeast elevation of the building is only three bays wide and originally served as the main entrance. A centrally located entrance door is set within an arched limestone surround that rises two stories. The doorway is framed by pilasters that support an entablature above. Within the frame is a pair of glazed bronze doors and transom composed of four vertical lights. A rounded transom with four vertical lights is situated above the doorway. Flanking the doorway on either side is a large window with a transom, and at the second floor a small sash window flanks either side of the arch. The third floor consists of a pair of windows in the central bay that are flanked by smaller windows similar to those on the second floor. The same pattern of two windows in the central bay with a smaller window at either side is repeated on this façade through the upper floors.

¹ Short & Ford Architects. *Historic Structure Report and Preservation Manual: 320 First Street, NW*. (Washington, DC: U.S. General Services Administration, 1991) 11.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Federal Home Loan Bank Board Building

Name of Property

District of Columbia

County and State

Section 7 Page 2

The Indiana Avenue (southwest) elevation is part of the original 1928 building and is nine bays wide. The entrance on the southwest elevation is located in the third bay from corner of First Street, and the one-story surround consists of pilasters carrying an entablature. Above the entablature is a classical motif of a central cartouche flanked by swags and rosettes with volutes at the corners. Flanking the entrance door are arched windows that rise to the second story. The arched windows continue along the Indiana Avenue elevation in every other bay and contain limestone surrounds with a scroll-form Corinthian keystone at the crown. The second floor level is marked on the windows by a molded cast iron spandrel that is capped by a spindle railing. Above the spindle railing, the arched head of each window is glazed with four vertical lights that are framed in steel. In the alternating bays, square casement windows with a transom are located on the first floor and a pair of framed sash windows on the second floor. Windows at the third through eighth floors are arranged in pairs with recessed limestone spandrels below the fifth through eighth floors. The ninth story windows are arranged in a closely spaced continuous row.

The First Street (east) elevation is twenty-one bays wide, of which the first nine are from the original 1928 building. The remaining twelve bays were added as part of the Federal Home Loan Bank Board extension in 1936-37. The original bays of the First Street elevation are arranged identically to the Indiana Avenue façade, and the 1936-37 extension varies only slightly from the original design. The first variation is the treatment of the north entrance, located on the third bay from the corner of D Street, which is set two steps below sidewalk level. The entrance frame is a rectangular opening with a molded surround of Indiana limestone. Recessed in the rectangular opening, triple glazed bronze doors are surrounded by an acanthus bronze molding. The extension also varies from the original façade in the use of alternate fenestration on the bay at the corner of D Street in which a single sash window without spandrels is located on each of the ten floors.

The north elevation extends ten bays along D Street with a stepped base due to the slope of the site. The materials and a majority of composition are similar to the First Street and Indiana Avenue elevations. However, the north elevation does not have an entrance and the fenestration differs from the other elevations. Because of the change in grade, the first floor windows vary in height along the façade. The eastern most bay of the D Street elevation contains a single row of windows on each floor, while in the remaining bays the windows are paired from the first floor through tenth floor.

Because of the irregular shape of the completed building, its two ends face northwest and west. For this reason, both ends are treated as secondary elevations in terms of their design and materials. The four bay northwest corner is composed of a granite base with walls clad in buff colored brick. Along the lower three stories, the brick is laid in common bond with slightly recessed header courses to suggest an ashlar limestone effect. Above the third floor is a limestone beltcourse, a buff colored brick fascia, and limestone box cornice. The brick above the third floor is also laid in common bond without recessed courses, and is a slightly lighter color. Unornamented pilasters of the same brick define the bays at the fourth through eighth floors and are capped by a limestone beltcourse. A cornice caps the ninth floor. Fenestration along the northwest elevation consists entirely of single sash windows. The west end elevation was part of the Federal Home Loan Bank Board addition and is identical to the northwest elevation in materials and arrangement – except that it is five bays wide rather than four. Together the original section and later

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Federal Home Loan Bank Board Building

Name of Property

District of Columbia

County and State

Section 7 Page 3

addition have five rear elevations that all face onto two open courts at the center of the west side of the site. The materials and design for the five rear elevations are all consistent with the end elevations at the northwest and west. Interior

The interior of the building is based on a double-loaded corridor plan with a main central corridor running through the entire first floor. Monumental public spaces on the first floor are located at each of the building's entrances, and are surrounded by typical office spaces along the central corridor. The significant spaces in the building are primarily public areas – two main lobbies on the first floor and elevator lobbies on each upper floor. Typical materials throughout the significant public spaces consist of polished marble floors and walls with decorative plaster ceilings and bronze detailing. There is a noticeable difference in the style of the 1928 building and the 1936-37 addition, which displays more Art Moderne detailing that is reflective of the pervading tastes during the era.

The primary entrances on Indiana Avenue and First Street (original 1928 building) open into two identical vestibules that were not substantially altered by the 1936-37 addition.² Both vestibules are square in plan with a convex wall at the inner side, reflecting the oval main lobby space beyond the vestibule doors. The floors are polished travertine mosaics and the walls are clad in Maryland Green marble and White Roman Classic travertine. The convex inner wall consists of an elaborate bronze doorway with double leaved doors set between sidelights. Bronze detailing adorns the spaces between the sidelights and doors, and is capped by a seven-light transom framed in bronze that runs the width of the doors above the cornice. The pediment consists of rosettes, foliate scrolls and an urn finial supported by back-to-back horse heads. The vestibule ceilings are plaster with crown moldings and decorative bands in a floral pattern along the edges. The highly ornamental details in the spaces are typical of Classical Revival architecture prevalent during the early 20th century.

The south lobby, like the adjacent vestibules, was not changed substantially by the 1936-37 addition. It is an oval space with its long axis parallel to the main southeast entrance. The lobby's finishing and details are similar to the vestibules, with polished mosaic floors, marble walls, and bronze doors with Neo-Classical detailing. The Adamesque plaster ceiling is more elaborate than the vestibules with a broad molded band of griffins flank urns and foliate decoration that alternate with rosette panels. Doorway details include colonnettes, lions head swags, and acanthus leaf pedestals.³

Opening from the northwest side of the main south lobby is the south elevator lobby. The elevator lobby is treated as an extension of the lobby, and all materials and detailing is carried through the space. Opening to the north is a formal stairway that is separated from the main lobby by dropped beams. Two elevators are located at either side of the lobby and have bronze jambs, thresholds, and doors. The formal stairway to the north leads to the second floor and rises to a half landing in a single flight of steps. The stairway is then divided and continues on the second floor in two

² The Indiana Avenue vestibule has been closed to direct traffic through the First Street vestibule, which is now used as the main entrance to the building.

³ A security gate and desk have been added to the south lobby, but are easily removed and do not damage the historic fabric of the building.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Federal Home Loan Bank Board Building

Name of Property

District of Columbia

County and State

Section 7 Page 4

flights. At the half landing, a nine-light arched window overlooks the south court at the rear of the building. Materials and detailing on the formal stairway are carried over from the elevator lobby.

The north vestibule and lobby are located in the 1936-37 L-shaped Federal Home Loan Bank Board addition. While the spaces differ in detailing from the original 1928 interior spaces – reflecting a more streamlined contemporary style of the era – similar materials such as marble and bronze are continued throughout the addition. The north lobby only has one vestibule that originally was entered from First Street, NW.⁴ The entry area is a small rectangular space divided into two sections by steps. Tennessee Light Campania Rose marble with Dark Campania Rose strips covers the floor, and the walls are clad in Montana Crème Buff travertine cut into blocks with recessed borders. The Art Moderne detailing of the vestibule is apparent in bronze detailing such as the radiator grilles and directory case. The vestibule ceiling is plaster and has two perimeter bands separated by a leaf molding with a decorative plaster cornice. On the west wall of the vestibule, a triple-leaf bronze doorway leads to the north lobby. Each leaf is glazed with a single panel of glass with flat strips of bronze applied to give the impression of divided lights. Above the doorway is a plain panel of travertine with applied octagonal plaques with eagle and palmate designs.

Beyond the vestibule doors is the north lobby, which is also a rectangular space. Many of the details and materials from the vestibule are continued in this space. The marble lobby floor is Tennessee Light Campania Rose with a D'or Fossile border. Like the vestibule, the walls are covered in Montana Crème buff travertine and are articulated by doubled pilasters. A decorated plaster cornice runs around the entire lobby with decorative bands around the perimeter of the ceiling. The west wall of the lobby is divided into four bays and contains three bronze elevator doors with bronze frames. Each door has a reeded motif with a circular bronze plaque that contains a central relief of a house and the words "Federal Home Loan Bank Board." An information booth is centered on the north wall of the lobby with a wide marble counter across the bottom of the booth. A directory case and bulletin board are located on either side of the information booth and are detailed with Art Moderne ornament across the top – alternating circles, squares, and reeded rectangles.

The north lobby is the location of the only original artwork commissioned for the 1936-37 addition. The artwork consists of a series of eight carved reliefs that are all executed in Tennessee Dark Campania Rose marble and finished with a bevel and polished border. The largest panel is placed over the triple-leaf doorway on the east wall of the north lobby. The relief is entitled "Activities of the Federal Home Loan Bank Board," and was intended to represent a small home acquired through family savings and a federal loan. The remaining reliefs are smaller in size and consist of various figures representing the building trades. Two of the reliefs are placed above door surrounds on the south wall, "Architecture," and "Surveyor." The west wall contains reliefs above the elevator doors entitled, "Masonry," "Plumber," and "Electrician." The last relief is on the north wall above the information booth window and represents the "Painter."⁵

⁴ Because all pedestrian traffic enters the building through the south lobby, the north lobby no longer functions as a major entry point.

⁵Short and Ford, 64.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Federal Home Loan Bank Board Building

Name of Property

District of Columbia

County and State

Section 7 Page 5

The second through fifth floors were used primarily for office space. Significant spaces on the second through fifth floors consist primarily of the elevator lobbies. Materials and detailing in the 1928 section of the building are all similar to the first floor finishes – polished marble floors and walls, plaster ceilings without ornamentation and bronze doors, and detailing. Elevator lobbies in the 1936-37 addition are located at the junction of First and D Streets, NW are typically finished with terrazzo floors, marble walls, and plaster ceilings.

Significant spaces on the sixth floor include the elevator lobbies, as on other floors, and the Executive Office and Reception room that is located in the 1928 section of the building at the intersection of First Street and Indiana Avenue. The Reception room is adjacent to the General Counsel's Office and is a rectangular space with half-oval alcoves at the narrow northeast and southwest ends. A rectangular alcove is centered on the northwest wall. Cherry stained wood wainscot covers the lower walls of the Reception room and the upper walls are laid out in plaster panels with French molding. The ceiling is Adameseque in design, like the main lobby on the first floor. The Executive Office is southeast of the Reception room and is an elongated octagon in plan. The room has oak strip flooring with walls treated similarly to the reception area. A plaster cornice runs around the room with a fret and leaf molding design. The ceiling is laid as a rectangle with semi-circular ends with foliate wave molding defining the central panel.

The seventh floor also contains a significant office space, the General Manager's suite, in addition to the north and south elevator lobbies. The suite is located on the east side of the corridor opposite the north elevator lobby and consists of two square offices flanking a service area with a private toilet. The offices are connected by a corridor between the toilet/closet areas. To the north of these two offices is a corner office, which also forms a part of the suite. The original wood parquet floor is now covered with carpet, but the plaster walls with metal picture molds are still in place. A dropped acoustic tile ceiling has also been added.⁶

The eighth floor contains one of the premier spaces in the 1936-37 extension, the Chairman's Suite. The suite consists of three rooms and is located in the northeast corner of the building. The rooms are L-shape in plan, with the short arm of the "L" forming the Reception office, which is situated on a north-south axis. The two other rooms of the suite open from the east side of the Reception office and consist of the smaller Secretary's office, and the larger Chairman's Office. The function of these spaces has changed very little. The Reception room and Secretary's offices contain identical finishes with oak parquet flooring (now covered in carpet in the reception room), with bases, window sills and two-panel doors in a varnished, stained birch. The Chairman's Office is more elaborate with similar parquet floors (now covered in carpet) and American walnut paneled wainscot and picture molding surrounding the room. At the top edge of the wainscot is a band of inlaid ornament consisting of alternating triglyphs and metopes, both in abstract form with a fret design. A door to the Secretary's office is set in the north wall with a recessed panel for a map that is bordered on all sides by walnut molding. Bronze radiator vents are set into the sill and base below each window. The west wall contains built-in cabinets with open bookshelves above.

⁶ Short & Ford, 322-23.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Federal Home Loan Bank Board Building

Name of Property

District of Columbia

County and State

Section 7 Page 6

The ninth and tenth floor significant spaces consist of the elevator lobbies in the 1928 building and 1936-37 extension. On the ninth floor, typical offices are situated around the main, central corridor, and on the tenth floor is a cafeteria space that has been completely refinished.⁷

Alterations

Overall the 320 First Street, NW building retains a high degree of integrity in its setting, location, design and materials. Alterations to the building have been restricted primarily to the interior, which consist of office space reconfiguration and circulation spaces. These changes do not affect the significant public spaces detailed in the nomination. Other additions include security features in the south lobby, as it now serves as the main entrance for the entire building. These features are removable and do not disturb the historic fabric of the building.

⁷ Short and Ford, 387-88.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Federal Home Loan Bank Board Building

Name of Property

District of Columbia

County and State

Section 8 Page 1

Summary Statement of Significance:

The Federal Home Loan Bank Board Building is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its association with the Federal Home Loan Bank Board and the impact the agency had on broader patterns of American history. The building is also eligible under Criterion C as an excellent example of early 20th century office building construction in Washington, D.C., as well as an advance in building technology that was state-of-the-art for its time. From its construction in 1927-1928 through 1937, when the addition was completed, the building served as a prominent presence in both commercial and governmental history in Washington, D.C. The Federal Home Loan Bank Board Building is associated with the commercial history of the District of Columbia through its connection with the Acacia Mutual Insurance Company, but meets the National Register Criterion A primarily for its association with the Federal Home Loan Bank Board and related government agencies. For this reason, the preferred name for the building in National Register of Historic Places is "Federal Home Loan Bank Board."

Resource History and Historic Context:

Originally constructed for the Acacia Mutual Life Company in the Classical Revival Style, the building spans a period of time in which commercial architecture was transitioning from more traditional building styles to a more modernistic Art Deco and Moderne style. The Federal Home Loan Bank Board Building represents the last phase of an older form of office building design. Although the 1936-37 addition's exterior is representative of the earlier style, the building's interior spaces emphasize the newer, streamlined and geometric forms of Art Moderne.

Acacia Mutual Life Association was incorporated in 1869 as the Masonic Mutual Relief Association of the District of Columbia, and was the only life insurance company to operate under a federal charter.⁸ By the late 1890s the company was failing, and in 1919 acquired a new acting president. Three years later, Masonic Mutual Relief was renamed Acacia Mutual Life Association. Until 1928, when the building at 320 First Street was completed, Acacia Mutual occupied rented quarters spread throughout the city. The new building's construction in 1928 provided the company with expanded office space, but also served as a symbol of the company's new success after financial difficulties in the preceding years.⁹ In 1925, the Acacia Mutual Life Association acquired a block of land at the corner of First Street and Indiana Avenue and a contract for the design and construction of the new office building in 1927. Construction began that year and the building was completed in 1928. The building was announced as the first of three structures to hold Acacia Mutual offices on the site. Very little information on the building's initial construction exists, leaving most records documenting the building after its opening ceremonies.¹⁰

⁸ Short & Ford, 11.

⁹ Ibid, 11-12.

¹⁰ Short & Ford, 12.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Federal Home Loan Bank Board Building

Name of Property

District of Columbia

County and State

Section 8 Page 2

The original building was highly publicized during its construction, and was praised as "...a ten-story structure, fire-proof throughout, containing all up-to-date improvements and conveniences known to modern office building designers and engineers."¹¹ At the time of its dedication in May 1928, over five thousand people witnessed and participated in a parade, complete with a marching band and drum corps.¹² Along with its popularity amongst onlookers, the building included many features designed specifically for the comfort of Acacia employees including special lighting fixtures and windows to provide optimal levels of light throughout and recreational facilities.¹³

The Federal Home Loan Bank Board (FHLBB) was created during the wake of the Great Depression by the Home Owner's Refinancing Act in 1933. Established as an emergency agency, the Federal Home Loan Bank Board offered refinancing to non-farm homeowners in danger of foreclosure through direct loans.¹⁴ Under the FHLBB was the Home Owner's Loan Corporation (HOLC), which was the direct lending program for these loans. The *Washington Post* reported in April 1933 that if the program was successful, billions of dollars in mortgages could be submitted to the Home Owners' Loan Corporation. At the time it was deemed "an ambitious plan, almost a parallel to the farm mortgage refinancing program."¹⁵ Although the HOLC lending program was set to expire by law in June 1936, the great number of loans being serviced at the time required a large staff. Vast amounts of office space were required to house the many workers, and were spread out across the city. As the case with many newly created federal agencies in the 1930s, such as the Social Security Administration, the federal government decided that it was not advantageous to have multiple leased spaces, separating workers and the functions of one agency. HOLC, as a result, had very little difficulty making the case for its own headquarters. In 1934 the FHLBB decided that there was too little time for the design and construction of a new building, and argued for the purchase of an existing building. The Acacia Mutual Building was purchased in July 1934 for \$1,060,000 and plans for an extension began the following year.¹⁶ The lots adjacent to the building were still owned by Acacia Mutual, and in October 1935 negotiations began for their purchase. By October 19th, land had been purchased and HOLC engineers were already working on the preliminary proposals for the 90,000 square foot extension.¹⁷

¹¹ "Care of Employees," R6.

¹² "Acacia Ceremonies Dedicating Building Witnessed by 5,500." *Washington Post* 17 May 1928: 1.

¹³ "Care of Employees," R6.

¹⁴ Short & Ford, 13.

¹⁵ "Aid for Home Owners." *Washington Post* 14 Apr 1933: 6.

¹⁶ Short & Ford, 13-15.

¹⁷ *Ibid*, 15-17.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Federal Home Loan Bank Board Building

Name of Property

District of Columbia

County and State

Section 8 Page 3

Planning and Construction of HOLC Extension (1935-1937)

Louis A. Simon, then Supervising Architect of the Treasury, prepared the preliminary drawings for the extension. As with all buildings in the city, the design for the Federal Home Loan Bank Board extension required approval from the National Capital Park and Planning Commission (NCPPC) as well as the Commission of Fine Arts (CFA). After much deliberation over the building's height and penthouse setback, the design was accepted by the NCPPC on December 30, 1935. James Stewart & Company of New York was awarded the contract for the extension, and construction began in May 1936.¹⁸ In July 1936 an art commission was awarded to Albert Stewart of New York for the completion of eight marble statues in the main elevator lobby of the FHLBB extension. The sculptures were installed in January 1937, just a month before the building extension was completed.

Construction progressed throughout the year several sections, as FHLBB's strategy was to complete the extension work in stages in order to distribute workers throughout different parts of the existing building for remodeling. The existing Acacia Building required the addition of air conditioning systems and remodeling of old partitions and ceilings to accommodate FHLBB's new functions. The 1936-37 addition was completed less than a year later in February 1937, and workers moved into the new offices. Renovations to the existing building were complete by July of the same year. In September 1937, the building was officially renamed the Federal Home Loan Bank Board Building.¹⁹

The purchase of the Acacia Mutual Life Company building and subsequent construction of the building's extension was not simply a reflection of the growing needs for office space for federal agencies in Washington, D.C., but also indicative of the growing number of federal programs intended to relieve hardships felt during the Great Depression. The addition to the original Acacia Mutual Life building included space not only for the Federal Home Loan Bank Board, but also for the Home Owners' Loan Corporation, the Federal Savings and Loan Association, and the Federal Savings and Loan Insurance Corporation.²⁰ The early history of these agencies represents an important shift in federal policy regarding home ownership, and illustrates the responses of the Hoover and Roosevelt Administrations to the Depression, particularly in Washington, D.C. The agencies were intended to provide the reduction of foreclosures on mortgages, and to stimulate residential construction, which in turn, reinforced the concept of home ownership – an ideal that today is often associated with the rights of every American family.

Architectural Significance:

The construction dates of the two sections of the Federal Home Loan Bank Board building spanned a period of transition in the United States. From the turn of the twentieth century through the mid-1920s, the prevalent styles for

¹⁸ Short and Ford, 17-20.

¹⁹ Ibid, 21-25.

²⁰ Ibid, 31-32.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Federal Home Loan Bank Board Building

Name of Property

District of Columbia

County and State

Section 8 Page 4

commercial buildings were all classically inspired. But in the late 1920s through the 1930s, more streamlined Art Deco and Art Moderne styles rapidly superseded the older building forms. This shift is clearly illustrated in the treatment of the building's first floor lobbies and the executive suites in the building.

The Public Works Branch of the Procurement Division of the Treasury was responsible for the design of the Federal Home Loan Bank Board addition. The Public Works Branch was created in 1933 as part of a reorganization that relocated the once independent Office of the Supervising Architect into the Treasury Department. Originally established under the U.S. Treasury Department in the early 1850s to oversee the design and construction of Custom Houses, the Office of the Supervising Architect designed a great number of buildings located within Washington, D.C. as well as across the country. Between 1929 and 1932 the office almost doubled in size because of the large federal building programs begun under the Hoover administration. As a provision of the 1926 and 1930 Public Buildings Acts, the office was able to hire private architects for the design and construction of public buildings.²¹ Although during the 1930s and 1940s the Public Works Branch sometimes retained consulting architects for public projects, Louis A. Simon, Supervising Architect 1933-1941, oversaw the design of the 1936-37 extension.

Louis A. Simon was born in Baltimore in 1867 and received his architectural degree from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1891. Simon was working in his own architectural firm in when he was asked to join the Office of the Supervising Architect of the Treasury in 1896. Simon began initially as a draftsman in the office, but soon worked his way to becoming chief of the Engineering and Drafting Division, under the supervision of then Supervising Architect James A. Wetmore, in 1915. He succeeded Wetmore to become Supervising Architect in 1933. Simon remained with the Office of the Supervising Architect throughout the duration of his career and was responsible for a great deal of architectural work associated with the office between 1915 and 1941.²²

²¹ Lee, xii-xiii.

²² Lee, 258-280.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Federal Home Loan Bank Board Building

Name of Property

District of Columbia

County and State

Section 9 Page 1

Major Bibliographical References:

“Acacia Ceremonies Dedicating Building Witnessed by 5,500.” *Washington Post* 17 May 1928, 1.

“Acacia Mutual Co. Starts on Building in Expansion Plan.” *Washington Post* 28 May 1927, 7.

“Aid for Home Owners.” *Washington Post* 14 Apr 1933, 6.

“Care of Employees will be featured in Acacia Building.” *Washington Post* 6 March 1927, R6.

Gutheim, Frederick, *Worthy of the Nation: History of Planning for the National Capital*. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 1977.

Kostof, Spiro. *History of Architecture*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995.

Lee, Antoinette J. *Architects to the Nation: The Rise and Decline of the Supervising Architect's Office*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000.

Short & Ford Architects. *Historic Structure Report and Preservation Manual: 320 First Street, NW*. (Washington, DC: General Services Administration) 1991.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Federal Home Loan Bank Board Building

Name of Property

District of Columbia

County and State

Section 10 Page 1

Verbal Boundary Description:

The Federal Home Loan Bank Board building and its grounds at 320 First Street, NW occupy the block bounded by First Street, Indiana Avenue, and D Street, NW in Washington, D.C., on Square 573 lot 9.

Boundary Justification:

All property lines are as they existed at the time of the building's construction and include property acquired for the later addition. The nomination includes all property historically associated with the building.