

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Criminal Courts Building

and/or common Same

2. Location

street & number 2700 Tulane Avenue N/A not for publication

city, town New Orleans N/A vicinity of First congressional district

state Louisiana code 22 county Orleans Parish code 071

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>N/A</u> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<u>N/A</u> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name City of New Orleans

street & number 1300 Perdido Street

city, town New Orleans N/A vicinity of Louisiana state 70112

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Civil District Court Building

street & number 421 Loyola Avenue

city, town New Orleans, Louisiana state Louisiana 70112

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title A Survey of Community Development
Neighborhoods by Koch and Wilson/Urban has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date August 1978 - December 1979 federal state county local

depository for survey records Historic District Landmarks Commission, 830 Julia Street

city, town New Orleans state Louisiana

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one	
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site	N/A
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved	date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed			

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

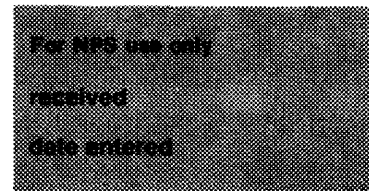
A monumental, limestone faced, three story structure with raised basement and an attic. An interesting transitional building described as an example of "stripped neoclassicism", with the center portion in a Beaux Arts classical style and the end pavilions in the new Art Deco style. It fronts 418 feet on Tulane Avenue by 70 feet in depth. Along the front is a colonnade of twelve fluted Corinthian columns supporting an entablature, in the frieze of which is inscribed in Roman letters "The Impartial Administration of Justice is the Foundation of Liberty". Above the dentil cornice is a parapet, broken over the four end columns and the end antae, the slightly projecting breaks being capped by large anthemions. Over the four center columns the parapet is higher, containing a recessed panel, inscribed with the words "The Courts of Criminal Justice". Between these four center columns are three monumental bronze entrance doors with classical architraves and a slight cornice supported by flattened consoles. Above each of these doors is a large second floor window and between each alternate bay of the colonnade is a large window on both first and second stories. A broad stone stairway with buttresses supporting bronze tripod urns leads from the ground level to the entrance doors. A polished granite base course surrounds the building including these buttresses. All the classical details of this central colonnaded element are carefully executed and academically correct.

The end pavilions are designed in strong contrast to the central colonnade in an Art Deco style, apparently inspired here by the work of Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue, architect of the Nebraska State Capitol and the Kansas City Liberty Memorial design of the 1920's. Each pavilion consists of two pylon-like elements flanking a repetition of the central colonnade containing two Corinthian columns with an entablature and parapet similar to those of the central element. The cast-iron bronzed spandrels between the windows of the pylons are sculptured bas-reliefs representing scenes from local history by Angela Gregory, noted New Orleans sculptor who also executed the modern sculptured decorations that are incorporated into the Art Deco design of the Broad Street facade of the building.

The interior of the Courts Building is distinguished by a great barrel-vaulted lobby running nearly the full width of the building at the second floor level. Seven large courtrooms, two stories in height with light courts between them open off the Gravier Street side of this classically detailed lobby. The lobby is lighted by several large Art Deco glass chandeliers. The courtrooms were originally designed in a classic style with pilasters, plaster cornices and elaborate coffered ceilings. Several of these have been remodelled in a stripped-down contemporary manner and in some, the great side windows have been closed up as some of the adjacent light courts have been roofed over to provide more space in the building. A program is now being prepared for the restoration of these courtrooms to their original appearance and the eventual restoration of the entire building which in its over half century of use has suffered no significant major alterations.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
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Continuation sheet Criminal Courts Building

Item number 7

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ADDENDUM BY STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE

Item 7. (Description)

Summary Paragraph:

The New Orleans Criminal Courts Building (1929) is a three story limestone faced building which mainly reflects the neo-classical style. It is located in a mixed commercial-residential neighborhood which dates from the late-nineteenth century to the present. The building has undergone a few changes since construction, but these have not affected its significant features (mentioned in Item 8 addendum).

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400–1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500–1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600–1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates 1929 **Builder/Architect** Diboll & Owen, Architects

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Criminal Courts Building is significant in many areas:

1. Its site was first occupied by a United States Marine Hospital designed by Ammi B. Young, architect, in 1856, completed about 1860 and never used for its intended purpose. It was demolished and a parish prison and House of Detention designed by W. J. Hardee, City Engineer, was erected in 1901 and demolished in 1929 for the construction of the present building.
2. It is a unique example of a mixture of Roman classicism and Art Deco modern, designed by Diboll and Owen, architects and built by R. P. Farnsworth & Co., Inc. in 1929. General Allison Owen, the designing architect, is said to have explained the design as representing the two characteristics of the law: elegance reflected in the classical colonnade and severity reflected in the modern buttresses; the great vaulted lobby recalling the Salle des Pas Perdus of the Palais de Justice in Paris.
3. The mural in the lunette over the entrance to the center courtroom is an important example of the work of Professor Ellsworth Woodward, then head of the Newcomb College School of Art and a well-known New Orleans artist. The painting is an allegorical design representing the administration of justice.
4. The courtrooms have been the scene of all the criminal trials in Orleans Parish since the completion of the building including the trial, prosecuted by District Attorney Jim Garrison, of Clay Shaw, accused and acquitted in connection with the assassination of President John F. Kennedy.
5. The sculptured decorations of the building, both in limestone and in bronzed cast-iron, are the work of Angela Gregory and are among the early examples of the art of this well-known New Orleans sculptor who studied in Paris under the famous Antoine Bourdelle.

SHPO COMMENTS:

This nomination was prepared by a consultant. The State Historic Preservation Office has appended its statement of significance on an Item 8 continuation sheet. As will be noted, we feel the building should be nominated on the basis of its statewide architectural significance. We think it would be difficult under the present National Register guidelines to make a plausible case for the other areas checked and discussed above.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Carl A. Brasseaux, Glenn R. Conrad, R. Warren Robinson; The Courthouses of Louisiana, Lafayette, Louisiana 1977
 Building Trade Publications; Builders of Louisiana, Mount Vernon, N.Y. n.d. (ca 1948)
 Kate Johns and Robert J. Cangelosi, Jr., "N.O. Architectural Styles-Stripped Classicism," Preservation Press, N.O., June, 1980

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property @ 1 acre
 Quadrangle name New Orleans East, LA

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UMT References

A

1	5	7	8	0	5	6	0	3	3	1	7	8	8	0
Zone			Easting				Northing							

B

Zone			Easting				Northing							

C

Zone			Easting				Northing							

D

Zone			Easting				Northing							

E

Zone			Easting				Northing							

F

Zone			Easting				Northing							

G

Zone			Easting				Northing							

H

Zone			Easting				Northing							

Verbal boundary description and justification

Please refer to enclosed sketch map.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state N/A code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Samuel Wilson, Jr., FAIA, Architect

organization Koch and Wilson Architects

date August 10, 1982

street & number 1100 Jackson Avenue

telephone 581-7023 (504)

city or town New Orleans,

state Louisiana 70130

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.


State Historic Preservation Officer signature



Robert B. DeBlieux

title State Historic Preservation Officer

date December 6, 1983

For HCRS use only	
I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register	
	date <u>1/12/84</u>
Keeper of the National Register	
Attest:	date
Chief of Registration	

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For NPS use only
received
date entered

Continuation sheet Criminal Courts Building Item number 8

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ITEM 8 -- ADDENDUM BY STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE

The Criminal Courts Building is of state significance in the area of architecture because it is a landmark in the early-twentieth century architectural heritage of Louisiana. It is one of the state's finest examples of a very important, albeit rarely employed, style.

Although there has never been a complete survey of early-twentieth century buildings in Louisiana, it is safe to assume that there are tens of thousands. The vast majority of these buildings are in one of the following styles: bungalow, Mission, Georgian Revival, Tudor, Arts and Crafts, or commercial-vernacular. There are relatively few severe neo-classical buildings of the then current "American Renaissance." In its day this style was the most earnest and academic of all American architectural tendencies. It was thought that the "American Renaissance" would at last enable American architecture to take its place along side the architectural traditions of older western nations. Hence, in many ways, the relatively few examples in Louisiana represent the state's most important cultural achievements in what was then regarded as the most serious vein of architecture. The Criminal Courts Building is one of the largest and most pretentious examples in Louisiana. This can be seen in its colossal Corinthian colonnade, its articulation with end pavilions, and in its grand vaulted lobby which runs nearly the length of the building. In fact, the Criminal Courts Building is believed to have the longest colonnade of any building in its style in the state.

CRIMINAL COURTS BUILDING
NEW ORLEANS, LA ORLEANS PARISH

