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DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Yakima Federal Building is built on the stable remains of an old river bed. It faces west, fronting on S. 3rd Street at its intersection with Chestnut Street.

The 1908 site plan shows a small house with a cellar, a barn, a shed, assorted maples and locusts, two corrals and a warehouse. The boundaries of the rectangular site run for 140' along Chestnut Street on the south, and for 150' along 3rd on the west. Chestnut was unpaved. 3rd Street was paved with bricks and bordered by an 8' wood sidewalk. A church stood next door on the site's north side where the brick and terra cotta Capitol Theater was later built by Frederick Mercy. A public alley formed the border to the east.

When it was completed in 1912 the Federal Building was a freestanding, 118' X 72' building with three storeys and a basement. In 1926 a 1 storey annex, 58' X 26'6", was added to the east facade. This annex was demolished during a major expansion completed in 1940. During that expansion the building was extended 51'6" toward the east with two 3 storey office wings and a central 1 storey workroom.

The original portion of the building has concrete footings, brick foundation walls and columns, and a wallbearing structural steel framework. The foundation is faced with a light grey granite with $\frac{1}{4}$ " concave joints of light grey mortar. The granite was furnished by Thomas Fox of Concord, New Hampshire. Exterior walls are of brick with smooth-finished, buff-colored Indiana limestone facing, cornice, parapet and trim. The second and third storey joints are concave, $\frac{1}{4}$ " wide, with light cream-colored mortar. The first storey has horizontal joints $1\frac{1}{2}$ " deep. The Furst-Kerber Cut Stone Company of Chicago furnished the limestone. The structural floors and roof slab are reinforced concrete. The roof is flat with a built-up surface and copper flashing. Interior partitions are of terra cotta.

The building is of a predominately Second Renaissance Revival style with a pronounced division into a ground storey with banded rustication, a "piano nobile", an entablature. The engaged columns on the facade add a touch of the neo-classical revival.

The main facade is divided vertically into nine window bays. The two end bays are identical. A tall, $4\frac{1}{2}$ ' X $7\frac{1}{2}$ ', recessed, double hung (3 over 3) window is in the first storey. It has a stone sill

8 SIGNIFICANCE



SPECIFIC DATES Built 1911-1912

	Architect,	James	Knox	Taylor	
BUILDER/ARCHITECT	Ireasury D				

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The first white settlers began arriving in the fertile Yakima Valley of Eastern Washington in the 1860's. The only word they received from the outside world was brought by trappers, traders or riders for cattlemen. Later, stage coaches brought mail from The Dalles and Umatilla in Oregon. In May of 1870, United States Post Offices were established in the neighboring communities of Moksee, Attanam and Yakima City. In the 1880's the Northern Pacific Railway passed through North Yakima which was then a suburb of Yakima City. This event triggered a mass migration of people, and even entire buildings, from Yakima City (now Union Gap) to North Yakima (now Yakima). Even the postmaster, George W. Carey, moved to North Yakima where he became the first postmaster. On April 4, 1885, he opened the first post office in North Yakima. The post office was established in a frame building at North 1st and A Streets. Postal operations were moved four times in the next twenty-five years to accommodate the expanding business of the rapidly growing city.

In 1902 under Postmaster W. L. Lemon route 4 to Wide Hollow and Upper Ahtanum was mechanized. The steam driven automobile not only carried the mail, but also displayed a complex system of colored and patterned flags that signaled the days weather forecast.

In 1910 a new post office and courthouse was designed for Yakima in the office of Treasury Department Supervising Architect James Knox Taylor. Mr. Taylor served as Supervising Architect from 1897 until 1912. Originally from Illinois, he studied at Massachusetts Institute of Technology and was employed by Cass Gilbert in New York before opening his own practice in 1882. He was in charge of the design and erection of many government buildings including the old San Francisco Federal Building.

W. L. Lemon was still postmaster in February, 1911, when bids for the construction of the new post office were opened. W. H. Maxwell of Great Falls, Montana, submitted the low bid of \$170,774.40. The

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supported by molded brackets. Directly above, in the second storey, is a similar window with four lights and a transom. This window has a smaller sill and brackets. The window in the third storey is similar to that of the second storey, but with no transom. The two end bays are recessed 2' behind the plane of the seven central bays.

The seven central bays are identical to one another. An arched opening with radiating voussoirs occupies the first storey of each. A window identical to that of the second storey of the end bay, but with a larger stone sill and a stone pediment above, is in the second storey. The third storey window is identical to that of the third storey end bay, but with a molded stone surround and keystone and no brackets.

The first and seventh of the central bays contain a doorway in their first storey openings. These now hold aluminum double doors. There were originally four section revolving doors. A fanlight is above the doors. The other first storey arched openings contain windows like those of the end bays, but with fanlights above.

Six engaged columns with an Ionic motif separate the central bays on the second and third storeys. An unusual combination of 1/3 of an engaged column sharing a base with a wide pilaster separates the central bays from the end bays of the two upper storeys. The words United States Post Office and Courthouse were added to the freize of the entablature in 1939. An Ionic cornice with pronounced dentils and a parapet with balustrades finishes the facade.

Granite stairways 8' wide lead directly from the sidewalk to the entrances. Cast bronze lamps with white glass globes stand on the granite cheekblocks. A narrow band of shrubs and grass separates the rest of the facade from the sidewalk.

The north and south facades are similar to the main facade. The first five bays from the west are part of the 1912 building. The two end bays of this portion are identical to the end bays of the main facade. The three central bays are identical to the central bays of the main facade. The four easternmost bays of the north and south facades are part of the 1939-1940 extension. On the south

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facade these are identical to the end bays of the main facade. On the north facade they are similar, but without brackets. The newer section of the north facade is faced in buff-colored brick. It has no dentils on its cornice. Its parapet is solid. A deeply recessed loading dock opens into the north facade at ground level.

The east facade of the building's south wing has two window bays similar to those of the end bays of the main facade, but without brackets. It has a solid parapet. The two portions of the 1912 east facade covered by the newer office wings had two window bays identical to the end bays of the main facade. The rear facade of the north wing has two similar window bays. It is faced in brick and is identical in detail to the 1939-1940 section of the north facade.

The south facade of the light court is identical to the upper two storeys of the north facade, but has no cornice. The north facade of the light court is part of the 1912 building and is faced in limestone. It has five window bays. Each bay has a tall rectangular window in the second storey with an incised square panel above. The cornice is very small and the parapet is solid. Small ventilating grilles in the freize lead into the attick. Skylights in the roof admit light into the workroom.

The basement originally contained the boiler room, fuel room, storage room, and postal workers swing room. The floor was of cement painted dark grey. The walls were white painted brick and the ceiling was white painted concrete.

A stairway and passenger elevator are located near the building's southwest corner. The original elevator shaft had an ornamental cast iron framework. It was glazed with clear wire glass on all four sides. The original elevator was an Otis Elevator Company #30778Y.

Most of the first storey was occupied by a postal workroom with an inspection lookout gallery above. The workroom adjoined the public lobby on the west and south sides. The public lobby was

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L-shaped, 96' long and 14' wide, with a 34' X 10' angle at its south end and a 17'2" ceiling. At the northwest corner of the building was the money order and registry office with its own small lobby. The postal inspector's office was in the southwest corner and the postmaster's office was behind the elevator and stairway in the southwest corner.

The main lobby postal screen was simple in design with six arched bays containing service windows and "Greek" patterned bronze lock boxes. The screen, entrance vestibule, desks and trim were white oak with a dark oak finish. The lobby walls, ceiling and plain cornice were of plaster. The 2'44" wainscot was of grey "Light Cloud Rutland" marble. Borders and dividing strips were "Brocadilla" marble (nearly white with a few grey veins) from the Vermont Marble Company. The floors were terrazzo made of white marble chips in grey cement. It was laid in sections of approximately 16 square feet. In 1930 the walls were painted light grey adn the ceiling and cornice a cream-color. These may approximate the original colors.

The money order and registry office had a wood floor covered with brown linoleum, wood T & G wainscot with a dark oak finish, wood trim and cream-colored walls and ceiling. The other first storey offices were similar but without wainscots. The postmaster's office had a natural oak floor.

The stairway leading up from the lobby was of steel frame with marble treads and stringers and cast iron risers. The second storey corridor had a terrazzo floor, wood trim, and plaster walls and ceiling (painted grey and cream-colored in 1930). The ceilings in the second storey were 15' high. In the second storey were offices for the resident judge, clerks of the court, U.S. Marshall and U.S. Attorney. They were all similar in finish to the offices of the first storey and were arranged along the north, south and west walls. They were connected by a corridor surrounding the court room. The court room was 36' wide, 56' long and 22' high. Furnishings and trim were of white quarter sawed oak stained dark oak. The floor and wainscot to the window sill level were oak.

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The walls, domed ceiling and cornice were of plaster. Double inner doors were covered in imitation leather and each had an oval window.

In the third storey were the offices of the Reclamation Service along the west wall, the General Land Office in the southeast corner and the Weather Bureau in the northeast corner. The central portion of the third storey was occupied by the upper part of the court room. The finishes of the third storey were similar to those of the second. Third storey ceilings were 11'0" high.

There were men's, women's and carrier's toilets in the first storey; men's, judge's, and jury's toilets on the second; and men's, and women's on the third. All had terrazzo floors and most had marble partitions and wainscots. Porcelain plumbing fixtures were supplied by the L. Wolff Manufacturing Company.

Aside from the construction of a small annex to the postal workroom in 1926, few changes were made in the original building until 1939. Two three storey office wings and a one storey workroom extension added 51'6" to the rear of the building filling the eastern part of the site.

At that time the south wing of the lobby was extended. Remaining gas and electric fixtures were replaced. A small mezzanine was added over the northeast part of the workroom. It served as space for a women's swing room. A new terrazzo floor, new marble base, and "Alaska Nuage" marble wainscot were installed in the lobby. Efforts were made to match the existing materials. The observation lookouts into the basement swingroom were bricked up. Along the west and south facades Northern red oak, English hawthorne, Pfitzer juniper and European privet were planted. Bronze letters 10" high were installed on the frieze of the front facade.

The building has not been altered significantly since 1940 except for the installation of fluorescent lighting fixtures in most areas and of a suspended, acoustical tile ceiling below the domed court room ceiling in 1961.

Building alteration plans are currently being considered by the General Services Administration.

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Yakima Morning Herald of February 23, 1911, carried the following headline:

"CONTRACTOR IN A HURRY"

"Man Who is to Construct Federal Building Will Start Work at Once, He Says."

"Wants Plastering Done By Fall."

"Hopes to Have the Structure Ready for its Occupants 16 Months Before the Limit Set by the Government."

Mr. Maxwell projected a completion date of July, 1912. By March 21, 1911, the <u>Herald</u> reported the beginning of construction as G. T. Aumiller, a sub-contractor, broke the ground with a team of horses and a plow.

"EXCAVATORS AT FEDERAL SITE

Postmaster W. L. Lemon, custodian of the site, did not know that the work had been commenced until informed by a representative of the <u>Herald</u>. Incidentally, on account of not knowing what was going on, Mr. Lemon lost a dinner. It came about thus: Mrs. Bertha B. Johnson, prominent property owner on the same street on which the Federal Building is to be erected, had promised the postmaster that he would be the recipient of a choice dinner on the date of the commencement of the work. Mr. Lemon's chagrin at failing to get his dinner was much more than overcome by his joy and satisfaction at knowing that actual work had begun.

The site of the government building cost \$15,000.00 four years ago. As a sample of the increase in the value of local real estate...(its 1911 cost would have been \$30,000.00.)"

Construction, providing employment for about fifty local men, went smoothly. The building was completed by June 22, 1912, exceeding even the contractor's optimistic expectations. Upon completion of the building Postmaster Lemon held an evening open house for the people of North Yakima. "Crawford's Band" provided a three-hour concert in the federal court room. Off duty postal employees led

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visitors on guided tours. A reporter for the $\underline{\mathsf{Herald}}$ described the event:

"Beginning shortly after the regular dinner hour, the big revolving doors, which proved a decided novelty for more than a few, began turning merrily with the flow of visitors. By 8 o'clock every corridor and stairway was jammed, two single files passing slowly back and forth, and every room was comfortably filled.

About 9 o'clock Secretary Ware of the Commercial Club... mounted the platform in the court room and addressed the audience. He dwelt on the fact that the new building, although it had been secured directly by the influence and work of Senator Wesley F. Jones, was indirectly due to the remarkable condition of growth in the community...

Judge Milroy, who has lived in the city since it first sprouted...called attention to the efforts of Senator Jones for the city in getting the first appropriation, then twice getting an increase of appropriation for the same purpose...

City Commissioner William Redman said, 'I remember that when I came here twenty-three years ago, there were one or two brick blocks in the town. The most of it was sage brush. It was a dusty, dirty village...

Mr. Ware, in his closing remarks...referred to the architectural beauty of the government building and of the obligation of the people of the city to make their buildings harmonize with it..."

The post office moved into its quarters that same night. It was a month later when the court room saw its first use. The <u>Herald</u> reported the occasion on July 23, 1912:

"'This is one of the finest court rooms in the state,' said U.S. District Judge Frank H. Rudkin Monday, at the conclusion of the first case heard in the new government building. While all the appointments of the cosy little court room are not all in place, there was enough to show just what it would be like

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when finished complete. He was especially pleased with the jury box, which was low and against the inside wall with no windows above or nearby to throw light where it was not wanted. The acoustics were considered fine and will be better when all the furniture is in place..."

In 1939-1940 contractor Elvind Anderson added two three storey office wings and a central one storey workroom to the rear of the building. Supervising Architect for the addition was Louis A. Simon with Superintendent of Architecture W. G. Noll. The extension was designed to closely resemble the original building.

The interior of the Federal Building has escaped significant alteration. Operable windows and transoms, good natural illumination, high ceilings, marble, metal, wood and plaster detailing, and generously proportioned public spaces provide an environment very different from that of most contemporary office interiors.

Yakima is making an effort to revitalize its downtown area, which was nearly killed in the late 1960's and early 1970's by competition from several outlying shopping malls. In addition to free downtown parking the city has provided new transit shelters and landscaped street areas with benches. Enthusiastic urban renewal had wiped out many of Yakima's older buildings. Only recently has the city become aware of the importance of its historic landmarks. The old Capitol Theater, dating from the days of the great Pantages Vaudeville circuit, was gutted by fire in 1975. It is now being painstakingly restored for use as a performing arts center. It stands next door to the Federal Building only a block from Yakima Avenue, the main street of Yakima's central business district. The two buildings are of a similar size and massing, although vastly different in style and intent. They face a large, free parking lot where the downtown Sears store once stood. The parking lot is a center of downtown activity and various small restaurants, theaters and retail establishments open directly onto it. The parking lot, in this case, performs the function of a city square and will be an even livelier place after the re-opening of the Capitol Theater. As all public squares rely on their surroundings to give them form, the "square" of the parking lot is visually defined largely by the masses of the theater and the Federal Building. They are an impressive sight, unique in Yakima.

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ARTICLES AND ABSTRACTS:

Yakima Morning Herald:

"Post Office Bids Sought." January 19, 1911. page 1. "Contractor is in Hurry." February 23, 1911. page 1. "People Visit New Building." June 22, 1912. page 1.

Yakima Herald Republic:

"Yakima's First Post Office." April 5, 1960. "U.S. Mail Service Spurred Growth of Pioneer Area." June 19, 1960. "Since 1870. Many Hands Have Sorted Mail." June 2, 1965. "Century of Service." April 26, 1970. "Future of Federal Building Uncertain." December 13, 1976. "Yakima's Past, An Historic Portrayal of Yakima as it Was in its Youth." May 27, 1976.

BOOKS:

Withey, Henry F. and Elsie Rathburn Withey. <u>Biographical Dictionary</u> of American Architects, Deceased." New Age Publishing Company. Los Angeles: 1956.

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Construction Drawings, 1910, 1938.

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