

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service  
National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

FEB 11

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determination for individual properties and districts. See instruction in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an 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. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name United States Post Office and Court House

other names/site number Federal Building and U.S. Court House

2. Location

street & number 131 East 4<sup>th</sup> Street [N/A] not for publication

city or town Davenport [N/A] vicinity

state code IA county Scott code 163 zip code 52801

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  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. (  See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Mark Rodolph FOR ROLANDO RIVAS - CAMP FPO FEB 10 2005  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

US GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  
(  See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Donell Q. Salko Deputy SHPO November 30, 2004  
Signature of certifying official/Title State Historic Preservation Officer Date

State Historical Society of Iowa, Iowa Department of Cultural Affairs  
State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- Entered in the National Register  
 See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register  
 See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register
- other, explain  
 See continuation sheet.

Edson H. Beall 3/25/05  
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- [ ] private
[ ] public-local
[ ] public-State
[ X ] public-Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- [ X ] building(s)
[ ] district
[ ] site
[ ] structure
[ ] object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not count previously listed resources.)

Contributing Noncontributing

1 0 buildings
sites
structures
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 Function

(Enter categories from instructions)

GOVERNMENT/courthouse
GOVERNMENT/post office

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

GOVERNMENT/courthouse
GOVERNMENT/government office

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

MODERN MOVEMENT/Moderne

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation STONE Granite
walls STONE Limestone
roof SYNTHETICS Vinyl
other METAL Bronze

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 patterns of our history.
[ ] B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
[X] 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 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
#

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

Periods of Significance

1933

Significant Dates

1933

Significant Person(s)

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above).

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Temple, Seth J.

Primary location of additional data:

- [X] State Historic Preservation Office
[ ] Other State Agency
[X] Federal Agency
[ ] Local Government
[ ] University
[x] Other

Name of repository:

General Services Administration

Name of Property

County/State

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** less than one acre

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1. 15/ 702577/ 4599674  
Zone Easting Northing

2. Zone Easting Northing

3. 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 Jan Olive Nash, Managing Member

organization Tallgrass Historians L.C. date August 23, 2004

street & number 2460 S. Riverside Dr. telephone 319.354.6722

city or town Iowa City state IA zip code 52246

**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 General Services Administration c/o Sylvia Rose Augustus, Regional Historic Preservation Officer

street & number 1500 East Bannister telephone 816.823.4905

city or town Kansas City state MO zip code 64131

**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. 470 et seq. **Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 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 Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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## 7. Narrative Description

The United States Post Office and Court House (Fig. 1), now known as the Federal Building and U.S. Court House, is in the central business district of Davenport, an area of intensively built blocks of nineteenth- and twentieth-century commercial buildings.<sup>1</sup> Many corners in the central business district feature prominent commercial towers eight or more stories tall that loom over the lower, mid-block nineteenth-century buildings. Most of these tall buildings are hotels and banks constructed just after the turn of the twentieth century. "Designed in various combinations of Neoclassical Revival, Chicago commercial, and Moderne styles, Davenport's 'tall buildings' present an interesting contrast to the smaller Victorian structures that surround them."<sup>2</sup> Two notable examples are located across the alley to the south of the Federal Building. One, the Hotel Blackhawk (200 E. 3<sup>rd</sup>) was finished in 1915 and represents a "major work by the local firm of Temple and Burrows," the same Seth J. Temple who later designed the Federal Building.<sup>3</sup> One block west of the Blackhawk, at the corner of E. 3<sup>rd</sup> and Brady, sits the Mississippi Hotel and RKO Orpheum Theater. Designed in the Moderne style by Chicago architect A.S. Graven, and finished in 1931, the Mississippi Hotel stands 10 stories tall and contains a stylishly Art Deco movie theater that was restored in 1984 and renamed the Adler Theater.<sup>4</sup>

The Federal Building occupies essentially all of three lots at the southwest intersection of East 4th Street and Perry Avenue. Two lots were purchased in 1891 for the original U.S. Post Office on this site and two adjacent parcels were purchased from landowners in the early 1930s for the present building.<sup>5</sup> There is minimal landscaping around the building, with concrete sidewalks on the north and west sides, a parking lot on the east side (where Perry Avenue has been abandoned), and a public alley on the south side.<sup>6</sup> There are no other buildings on the property. The Federal Building is a three-story, slightly U-shaped building with a flat roof. Its walls are clad in a smooth, beige Minnesota Kasota Travertine limestone over a base of polished, dark gray granite flecked with pink and light gray.<sup>7</sup> Simplified classical details interpreted through a Moderne lens combine with the building's rectangular massing to produce what architectural historian David Gebhard

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<sup>1</sup> The building's signage was changed to "Federal Building" when the post office moved out in the 1960s.

<sup>2</sup> Martha H. Bowers, *Historical and Architectural Resources of Davenport, Iowa* (National Register of Historic Places [Multiple Resources] Nomination Form, 1983), 7A-3 (hereafter *Resources of Davenport*).

<sup>3</sup> The 11-story Blackhawk is "a Davenport landmark" and already listed in the National Register. The hotel's historic main entrance was on the now closed Perry Street side of the hotel, therefore the address at the time of the survey was 309 Perry St. "Architectural/Historical Survey, Davenport, Iowa," Hotel Blackhawk survey form, 1981. (Located in the offices of the City of Davenport, Planning and Zoning)

<sup>4</sup> "Architectural/Historical Survey, Davenport, Iowa," Mississippi Hotel/RKO Theater survey form, 1981. (Located in the offices of the City of Davenport, Planning and Zoning)

<sup>5</sup> The Scott County Assessor indicates the property on which the building sits occupies Lots 6, 7, and 8 of Block 57 in LeClair's 2<sup>nd</sup> Addition (accessed at [http://www.scott.ia.promap.com/pmc/summary\\_report.asp?pid=L008-16](http://www.scott.ia.promap.com/pmc/summary_report.asp?pid=L008-16) on 2 Sept. 2004). Lot 8 and a slice of Lot 7, however, had to be acquired from two different property owners late in 1930 to complete the parcel needed for the new building. Warranty Deeds from W.L. and Mable K. Mason and Ernest and Lillian Arzberger to the United States of America. (Collection of the General Services Administration, Kansas City, Missouri)

<sup>6</sup> Shalom Baranes Associates, PC and Tracerics, "Building Preservation Plan, Federal Building and U.S. Courthouse" (unpubl. report prepared for the General Services Administration, 1997), 4 (hereafter "Building Preservation Plan").

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

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called a "PWA Moderne" style.<sup>8</sup> Transferred to the General Services Administration in the mid-1960s and abandoned for postal duty, the property was undergoing renovation at the time of this nomination. The renovation sought to upgrade the facility for its continued use as a U.S. Court House. As part of the renovation, some historic exterior details were in storage for their protection but were to be reinstalled on the building at the conclusion of the project.



**Figure 1** The United States Post Office and Court House nearly completed, circa 1933. The photographer is looking southwest and standing at the northeast corner of Perry Street (on the left) and East 4th St. (foreground and to the right). Especially noticeable in this view is the building's dark gray band of granite at ground level and around the two north entrances. The non-extant Windsor Hotel is visible at the left edge of this view. (General Services Administration)

The ground-floor shape of the building would be a 126' by 171' rectangle but for a notch out of the rear wall that accommodates a loading bay accessed from the alley (Fig. 2). The rear of the building above the ground floor is more U-shaped—the loading platform and postal receiving/shipping bay in the center remain a single story while the wings on either side rise to three stories. The east wing extends to the alley but the west wing

<sup>8</sup> David Gebhard and Tom Martinson, *A Guide to the Architecture of Minnesota* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 1977), 420. Since the Public Works Administration, one of the Depression-era alphabet agencies, was not formed until 1933, use of this term is actually a misnomer when applied to a building designed in 1931. Still, the shared attributes of the Federal Building and post-1933 public buildings constructed under the PWA are obvious and suggest that the inspiration for the Modernist style predated the Depression. Gebhard later partially clarified his use of the term when he defined PWA Moderne as a synthesis of the Moderne and classicism "often associated with federal government buildings of the 1930s and 40s during the Public Works Administration (emphasis added). Gebhard and Gerald Mansheim, *Buildings of Iowa* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 539.

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stops short of it. Originally, the Post Office occupied essentially all the ground floor and much of the basement, while the upper floors in the building were dominated by offices in the wings and across the north



**Figure 2** The United States Post Office and Court House, circa 1933. This view is taken from the public alley behind the building, looking towards the northeast at the short west side to the left and the longer, more complicated footprint of the south walls to the right. The U shape of the building is apparent from this perspective, with the post office's loading bay located behind the third car from the left. Note also the single story portion of the building's west wing in the foreground. (General Services Administration)

façade. The large main courtroom in the center still occupies the second and third stories. In addition to large and small corridors, the public elevator, and stairwells, the architect's 1931 plans indicate the following major spatial functions:

- **Basement:** mail carriers, physical plant, switchboard room, tool storage, and storage rooms for all tenants
- **First/ground floor:** Post Office lobby, workspace, offices, loading bay
- **Second floor:** offices for U.S. Marshal (including a detention cell) U.S. Attorneys, public toilets, P.O. inspector, Internal Revenue agents, Internal Revenue collectors, a "Prohibition Room," the main courtroom, witness room, court anteroom, judge's room, judge's private office, stenographer room, file room, and the Clerk's public office and private office
- **Third floor:** War Department offices, U.S. Commissioner offices, a Civil Service office, Navy offices, a "Household Demonstration Room," public and private offices for the County Agent, a printing room,

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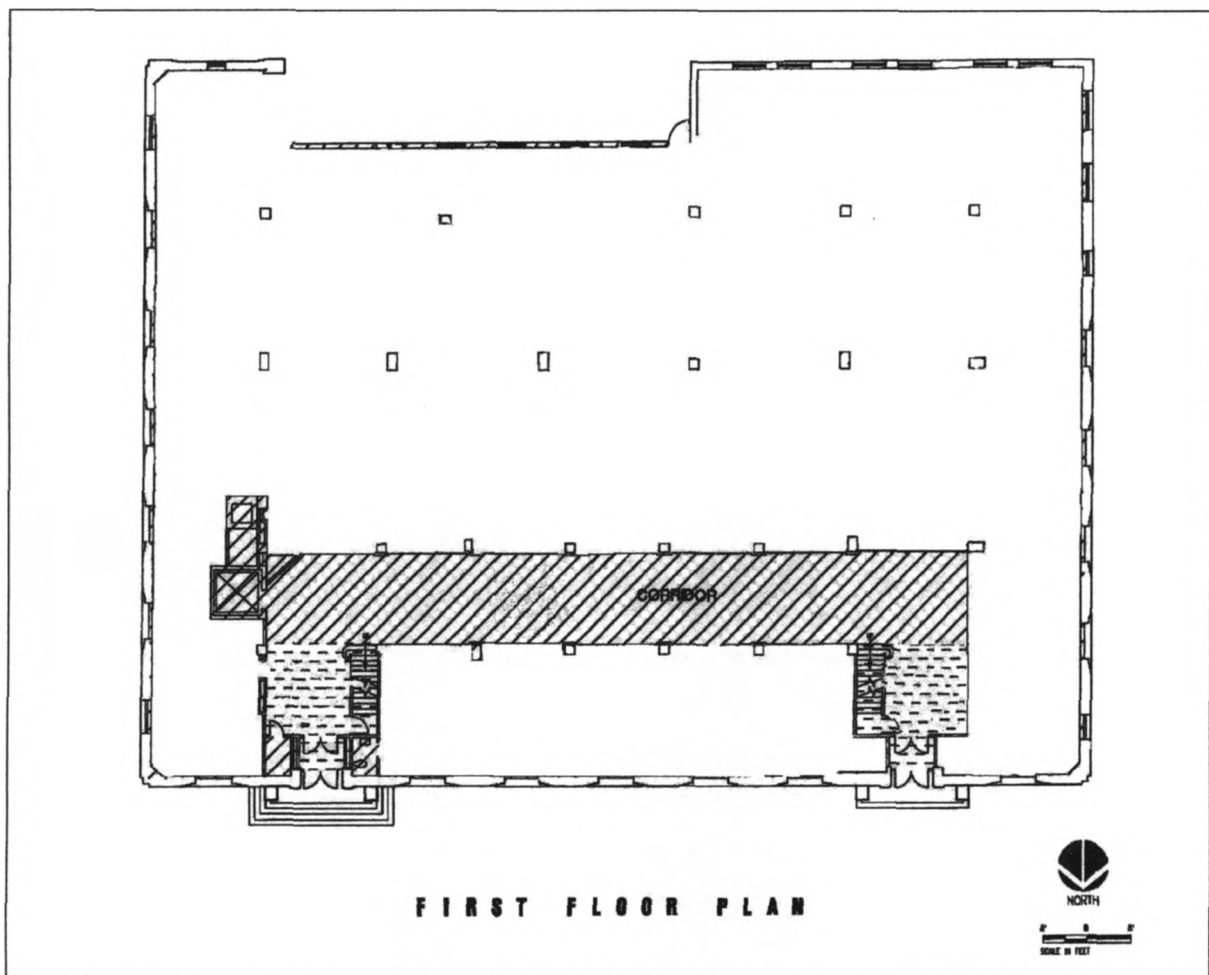
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storage room, and three offices in the rear east corner occupied by the Weather Bureau including two observer rooms. Also on this level were court-related offices for Probation, a witness room, a court lobby, a grand jury room and a petit jury room.<sup>9</sup>

Figures 3, 4, and 5 show the *current* plans for the building's first, second, and third levels.



**Figure 3 First Floor Plan.** The diagonal and dashed lines show the historic features being preserved during the present renovation, including the original Post Office public lobby corridor floor, the entrance vestibules, and the public stairways to the second floor. (Base plan taken from "Building Preservation Plan," modified to show approximate conditions that existed at the time of Tallgrass Historians L.C.'s inspection, August, 2004.)

<sup>9</sup> Seth J. Temple, designing architect's plans, sheets T-1 through T-5, all dated 7 November 1931. (Collection of the General Services Administration, Kansas City, Missouri)



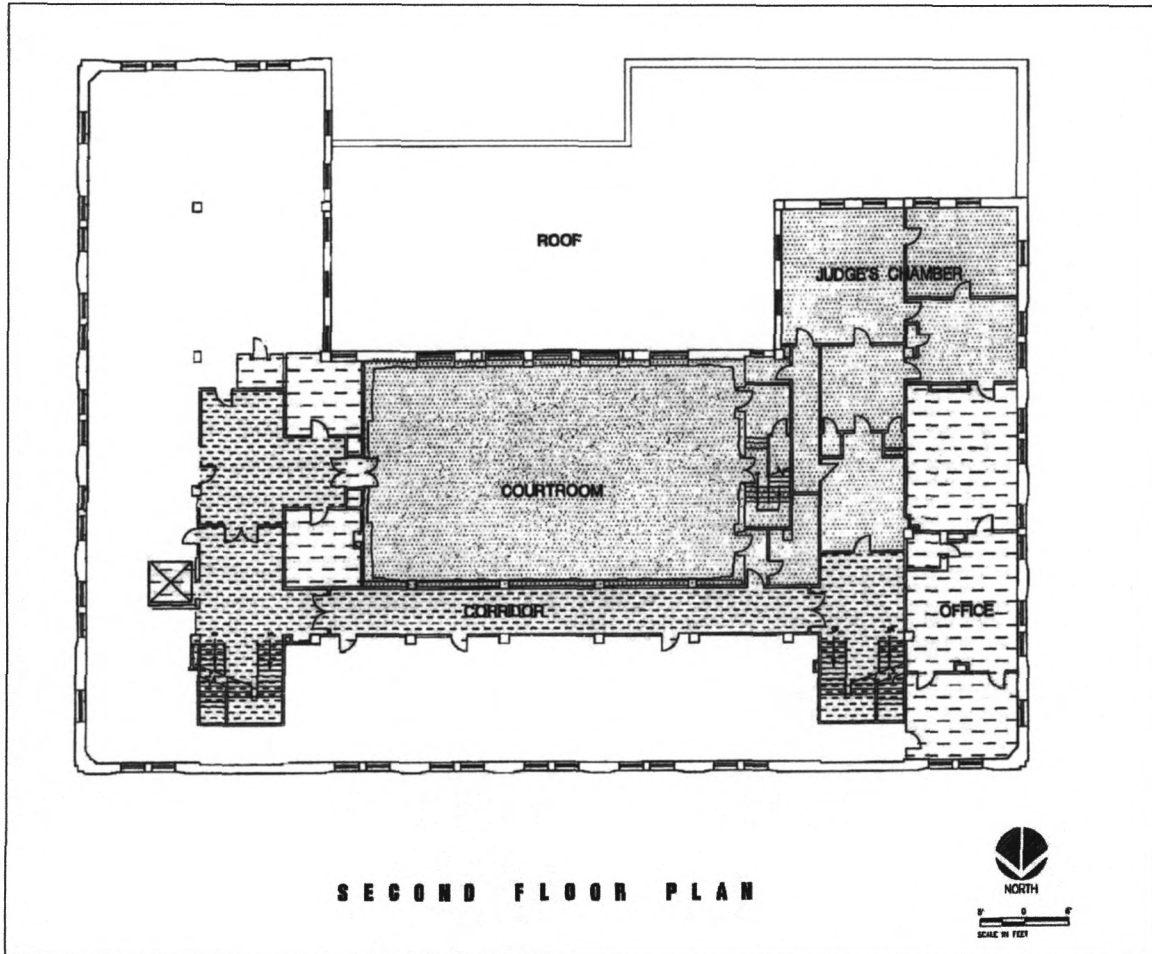
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**Figure 4 Second Floor Plan.** The dashed lines and gray shading show the historic features being preserved during the present renovation, or observed intact in August 2004. The stairwell to the left of the courtroom will be removed and a ramp installed. Offices walls at the far right will be relocated and the vault removed, and an elevator added. Earmarked for preservation are the main courtroom, public corridors, judge's suite, elevator, and public stairways. (Base plan taken from "Building Preservation Plan," modified to show approximate conditions that existed at the time of Tallgrass Historians L.C.'s inspection, August, 2004.)

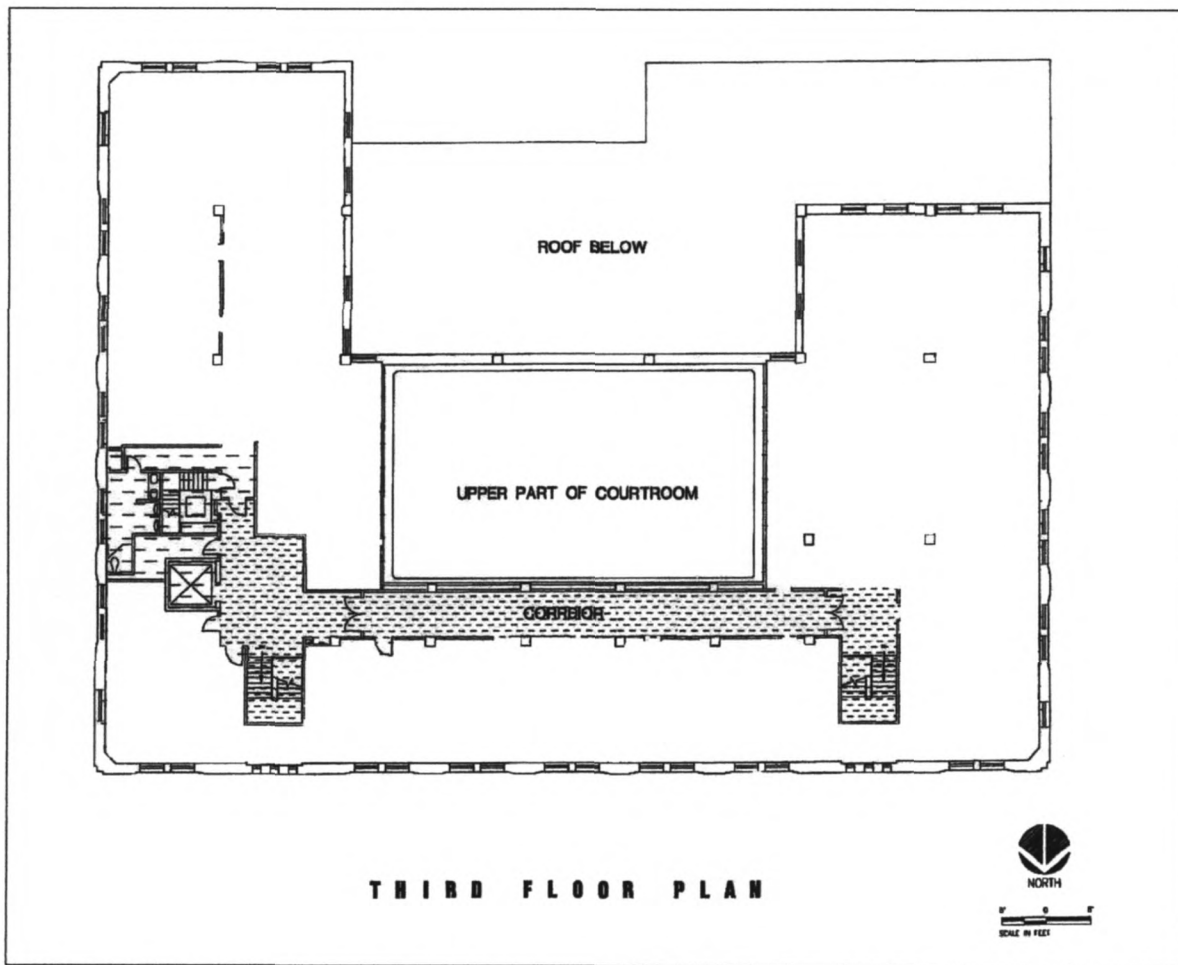
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**Figure 5 Third Floor Plan.** The gray shading shows the historic features being preserved under the present renovation. The dashed lines indicate the historic elevator shaft, and a large restroom area that was not original to the building. Earmarked for preservation are the upper part of the main courtroom (airspace), public corridors, and public stairways. (Base plan taken from "Building Preservation Plan," modified to show approximate conditions that existed at the time of Tallgrass Historians L.C.'s inspection, August, 2004.)

Many of the interior features and finishes were remodeled after the General Services Administration assumed control of the Federal Building in the mid-1960s and the postal service moved out. During the current project, most of the basement has been gutted and is being renovated. On the first floor, the wide public corridor floor that once served the Post Office lobby is being preserved, as are the two main public stairwells, vestibules, and the public elevator. On the second floor, the court room and public corridors are being preserved, as are judge's chambers and anterooms. On the third floor, the public corridors are being preserved. Interior finishes

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being retained include Tennessee pink and gray marble in various locations, walnut doors throughout, and the largely intact main courtroom paneling and moldings, white-metal grillwork, and extant lamp fixtures in

public spaces. Missing lamps in the court room are being replicated based on the original plans.<sup>10</sup> The original offices had been modernized over the years and most of them were not generally open to the public in any event. With the significant exception of the Post Office lobby walls (gone by the 1960s) much of the historically-public space is being preserved under the present project and the exterior of the building is essentially unaltered other than the temporary removal of certain details for safekeeping and the present renovation of the rear alley loading bay.<sup>11</sup>

As described by the authors of the "Building Preservation Plan,"

The exterior is composed of three stages of ashlar masonry, consisting of a simple base of coursed granite, a two-story body of limestone, and a modest, slightly raised entablature of limestone. A projecting stringcourse of limestone defines the entablature. The exterior walls terminate with a decorative parapet featuring a carved limestone frieze in a stylized Ionic capital and shield design, a pattern typical of the Classical style. The parapet wall is capped by limestone coping. The metal sash casement windows on the first story, and casement windows on the second and third stories, are slightly recessed and grouped in pairs or singles. Embossed bronze spandrels appear between the second and third story windows throughout. The diamond-shaped, low-relief pattern of the spandrels is typical of Art Deco ornamentation.<sup>12</sup>

Under this exterior finish, the structure of the building is a steel grid with integral concrete beam floors (Fig. 6). Exterior walls are common red brick with clay tile filler beneath the stone veneer. Along the alley, the south side walls are clad in a more utilitarian yellow, face brick laid in a common bond pattern.

<sup>10</sup> The interior integrity was studied extensively by Salom Baranes Associates, PC and Tracerics in 1997. This study informed the present renovation project by identifying building surfaces and regions that were original or altered, in good condition or in need of work. See "Building Preservation Plan," in the possession of the General Services Administration, Kansas City, Missouri.

<sup>11</sup> The National Register recognizes that most properties change over time. In light of this, Post Offices must "retain the essential physical features that enable it to convey its past identity and character and therefore its significance." *NRHP Bulletin 13: How to Apply the National Register Criteria to Post Offices* (1984, rev. 1994). Historically, the Davenport Federal Building was always of mixed use and included courthouse functions and federal offices representing a variety of agencies. Because the building is significant for its exterior architecture and the impact of its presence on the urban streetscape, the building retains its essential features. Additionally, preservation of some of the interior spaces that are most familiar to the public strengthens the ability of the building to convey its significance to those who venture inside. Evidence of the building's lingering ability to convey its past use as a Post Office is seen in a recent Request for Proposals (RFP) issued by the City of Davenport in which this building was still identified as the "U.S. Post Office" (RFP in the possession of the author).

<sup>12</sup> "Building Preservation Plan," 3.

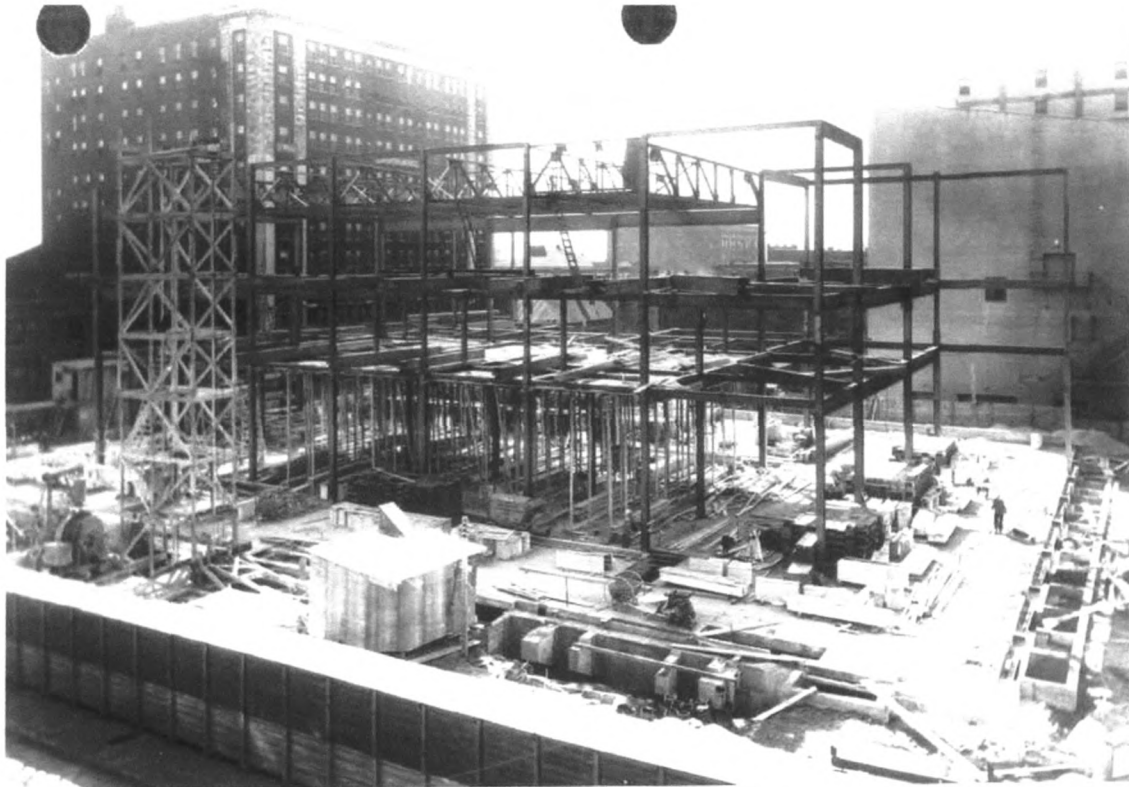
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**Figure 6** The steel grid work of the Federal Building's superstructure rises in front of the rear walls of the Blackhawk Hotel (tall, dark building on the left) and the RKO Orpheum Theater (light wall at right), both extant today. The forest of lumber filling the ground floor of the new building is bracing for the second floor concrete forms. This view is from 1932. (General Services Administration)

The principal north façade of the Federal Building fronts East 4<sup>th</sup> Street (Fig. 7) and is divided into nine vertical bays with the second and eighth bays occupied by the two public entrances. Side walls are divided into seven bays on the east side (Fig. 8) and six and eight bays on the west, depending on the story level (refer back to Fig. 2). Cast bronze spandrels designed by the architect separate the second and third story windows, accentuating the vertical line of the fenestration and obscuring the fact that two floor levels are found behind them. Windows on the north, east, and west sides are unified by stepped limestone surrounds. The simplified wall surfaces separated by these tall, dark window voids create a strong pattern that both pulls the eye up to the design of the parapet and reinforces the building's overall mass and monumental presence on the streetscape. Side elevations are treated the same way except there are no entrances. The south rear contains utilitarian metal sash windows.

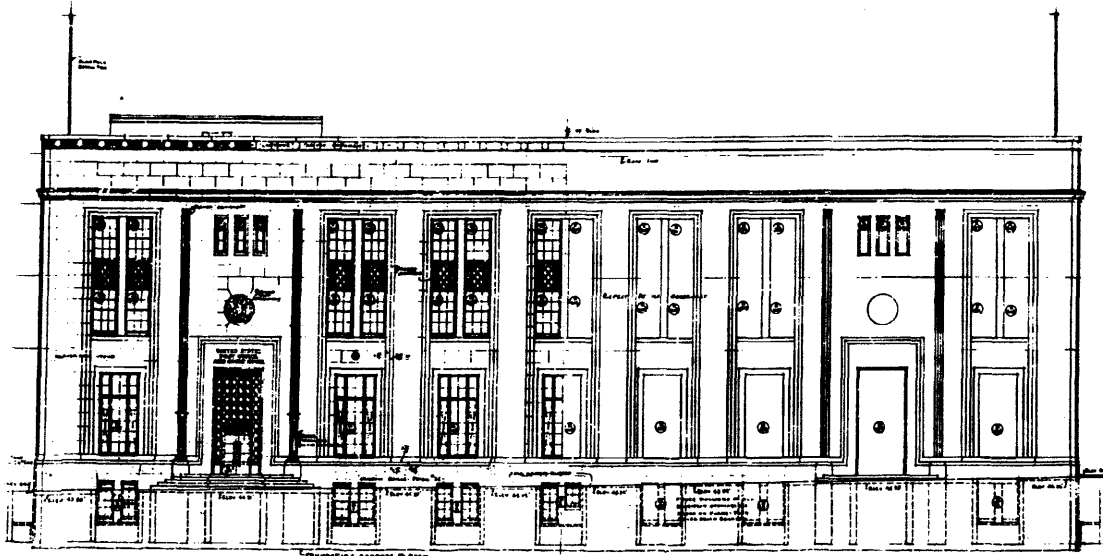
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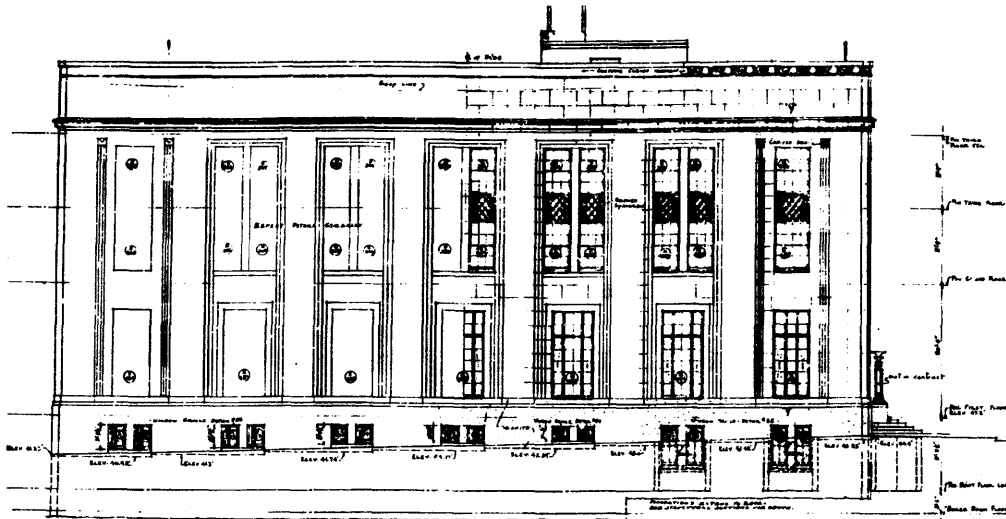
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**NORTH ELEVATION**

**Figure 7 Architect Seth J. Temple's north elevation for the United States Post Office and Court House. (Taken from sheet T-100, dated 7 November 1931)**



**EAST ELEVATION**

**Figure 8 Architect Seth J. Temple's east elevation for the United States Post Office and Court House. (Taken from sheet T-100, dated 7 November 1931)**

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The two public entrances on the north side (Figs.9-10) are decorated with three-story "stylized fluted carvings that reference the Classical pilasters of the Beaux Arts style."<sup>13</sup>

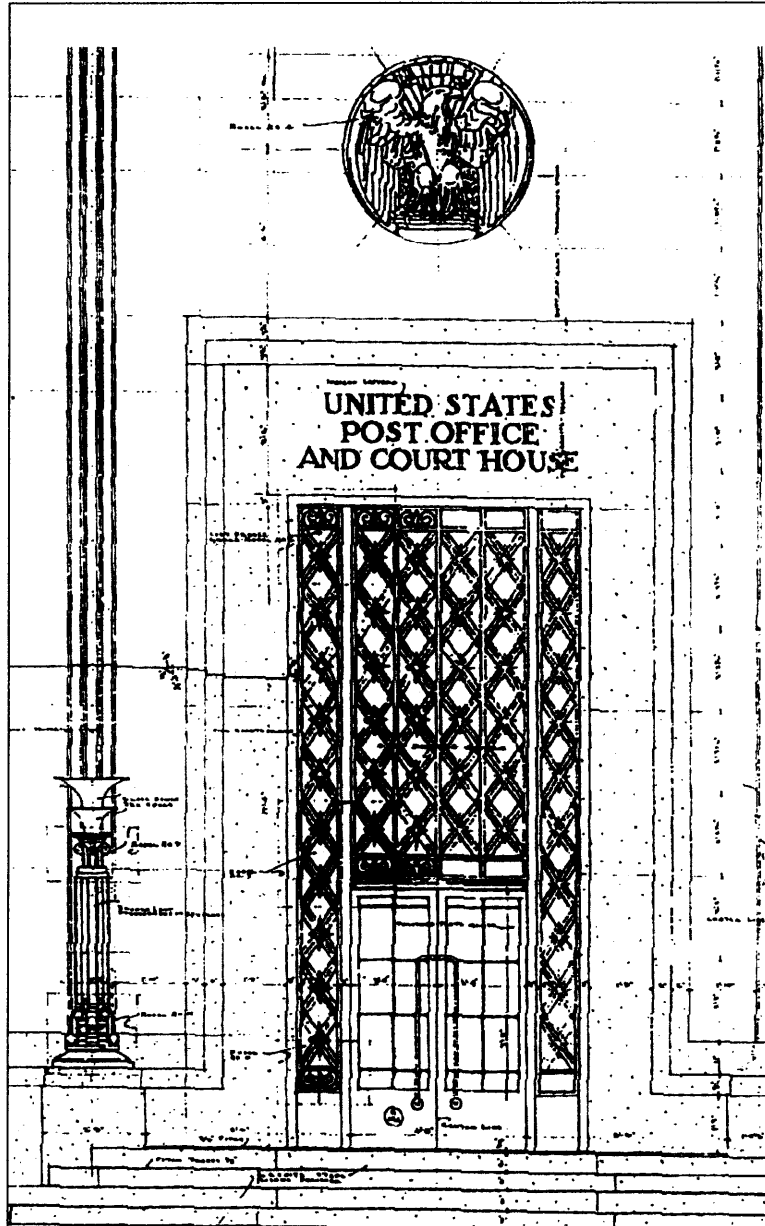


Figure 9 "Elevation of North East Entrance- North West Entrance Similar Except for Steps." (Taken from architect Seth J. Temple's plan sheet T-201)

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 4.

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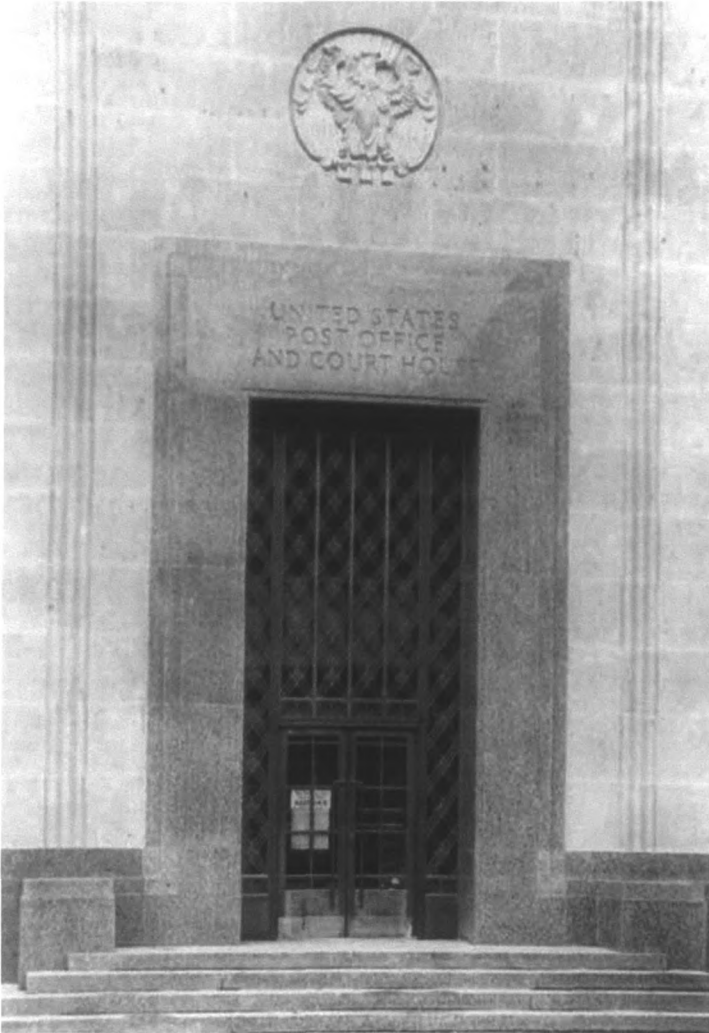
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A band of dark gray granite matching the foundation band surrounds each entrance. Above both entrances is a low-relief eagle sculpture designed by the architect and above that is a grouping of three small, narrow windows. The architect's plans call for a bronze grillwork over the front doors. These were removed in the 1960s but are being recreated as a part of the present project (Fig. 10). Additional decorative elements of the front entrances that are in temporary storage include "pairs of bronze light stanchions with granite bases" that "flank both entrances. The stanchions feature embossed chevron and geometric designs."<sup>14</sup> (Refer to Fig. 14 for the architect's representation of these entrance stanchions.)

Figs. 12 and 13 reflect additional interior details conceived of by Seth J. Temple and preserved *in situ* or in temporary storage. Missing first-floor lobby chandeliers and court room chandeliers are being replicated for the current project using the architect's original plans.



**Figure 10 North East Entrance, circa 1933. Note the grillwork above the door. Windows behind the grills are casements with bronze sashes and bulkheads. (General Services Administration)**

<sup>14</sup> "Building Preservation Plan," 14.

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Fig. 15 is a current view of the stylized federal eagle over the northeast door. Three dimensional models of this sculpture (Fig. 16) and other decorative elements were created out of plaster and sent to the Treasury Department's Office of the Supervising Architect for approval prior to being forwarded to

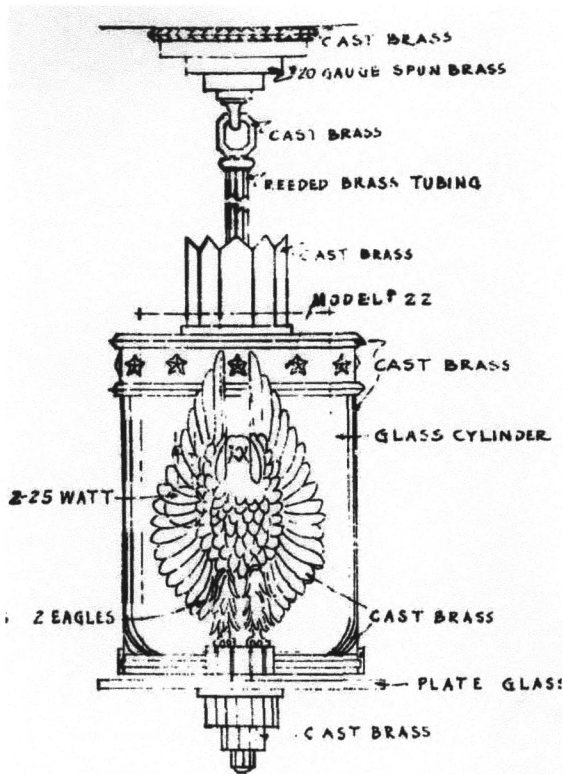


Figure 12 (Above) Architect's drawing of front entrance vestibule chandelier. (Taken from plan sheet T-213)

Figure 13 (Below) Vestibule chandelier as executed, c. 1997. (Taken from "Building Preservation Plan")





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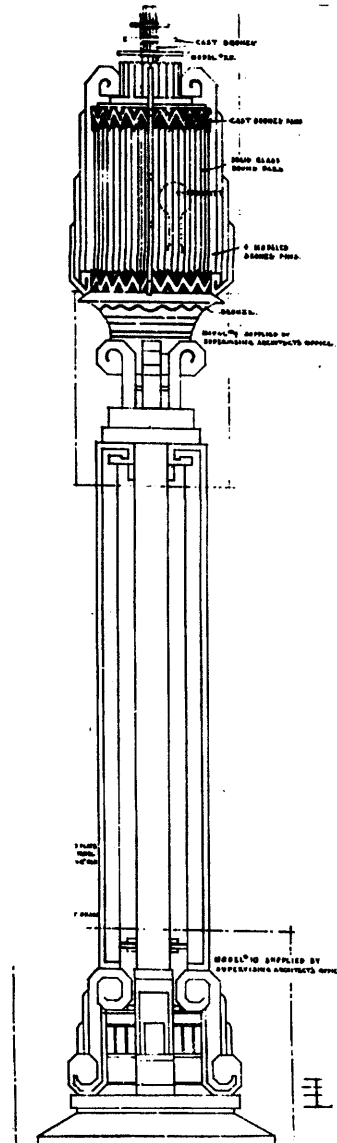


Figure 14 Architect's drawing of entrance lamp. The lamp neck and the plinth (base) are both marked "model ... supplied by Supervising Architect's Office." (Taken from architect's plan sheet T-213)

individual subcontractors for fabrication. In some cases, the plans suggest the Supervising Architect's Office may have supplied certain design details, like the plinth for the entrance lamps. Indeed, the project's

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construction correspondence files reveal that nearly every material and finish—from mortar to marble, paint to window glass—was submitted through the architect or general contractor to Washington, D.C. for approval.<sup>15</sup>

**Figure15 Architect's eagle sculpture over entrances, 2004. (Tallgrass Historians L.C.)**



**Figure 16 Plaster model of low-relief eagle sculpture. (General Services Administration)**



<sup>15</sup> "Davenport Original Construction Admin." files in the possession of the General Services Administration, Kansas City, Missouri.

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**8. Narrative Statement of Significance**

The U.S. Post Office and Court House (*aka* Federal Building), constructed in 1932-33 in Davenport, Iowa, is locally significant under Criterion C as an excellent example of multiple-purpose federal architecture designed for a small city on the eve of the Great Depression. Its Moderne architectural styling blends a traditional and persistent federal preference for classically-influenced government buildings with the progressive notions of streamlined, efficient, and modern government form and function. This marriage of historicism and modernity adopted by the U.S. Treasury's Supervising Architect around 1930, and influenced by the work of architect Paul Philippe Cret, became standard fare over the next decade when hundreds of Post Offices were built under the Public Works Administration. So many Midwest small-town and city Post Offices were executed in this style that the phrase "PWA Moderne" became commonly used—even when the particular building predated the PWA as does the Davenport Federal Building—because the term instantly reflected the strong association of Moderne design with Depression-era government building. The Davenport Federal Building, like the Dubuque and Sioux City U.S. Post Office and Court Houses, two other federal buildings in Iowa of similar importance, is a local precursor to this broader program of federal building. At the time of its construction, the Davenport federal building represented a significant source of work for the construction trades and materials suppliers during sagging economic times. This was work that resulted in a low-rise but monumental and authoritative federal presence in the heart of Davenport's business district.

The idea of a new federal building for Davenport was conceived as early as 1924 when Postmaster Charles S. Lewis, together with other local leaders, petitioned the federal government for a replacement of the existing 1890s Post Office and court house (Fig. 17).<sup>16</sup> After years of waiting, Congressional action on July 3, 1930 earmarked \$655,000 in federal funding for the acquisition of additional land adjacent to the existing site, the demolition of the old building, and construction of a new one. A prominent local architect, Seth J. Temple, was hired to design the new building in 1931 and by April, 1932 contracts were let for its construction. Demolition of the old federal building began on April 12, 1932. With a tight construction schedule and a stiff penalty clause in the general contractor's contract, the push was on and the building was completed in just over 500 days, despite a cumbersome approval process that was followed and delays caused by bankruptcies and subcontractor disputes.<sup>17</sup> Placed into service in September 1933, the building served as Davenport's main Post Office until the mid-1960s.<sup>18</sup> Over time other federal tenants left the building as new quarters were needed, but the federal judiciary, led by Judge Charles A. Dewey in 1933, have continuously occupied the building's court rooms and chambers. The current rehabilitation program reflects the continued reliance of the federal court system on the sleek Moderne building Seth J. Temple designed.

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<sup>16</sup> John Willard, "Federal building boasts proud past," *Quad City Times*, 2003 (undated copy supplied by General Services Administration, Kansas City, Missouri). Lewis made several trips to Washington, D.C. with other Davenport locals to pursue his petition. "Building Preservation Plan," 2.

<sup>17</sup> "Building Preservation Plan," 2; see also *Historic Federal Buildings, Federal Office Building & U. S. Court House*, at [http://w3.gsa.gov/web/p/interaia\\_save.nsf/1fd3e688294c3a74852563d3004975f4/407b2feeeac708ac852565d90053a194?OpenDocument](http://w3.gsa.gov/web/p/interaia_save.nsf/1fd3e688294c3a74852563d3004975f4/407b2feeeac708ac852565d90053a194?OpenDocument) accessed on 26 August 2004.

<sup>18</sup> "Federal Building Finished in 1933 at \$500,000 Cost," *The Daily Times*, 30 December 1933.

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Figure 17 The original U.S. Post Office and Court House, constructed in 1891-92 on the same site as the existing building, was enlarged with an addition in 1909. The Romanesque style and heavy, fortress-like appearance of the building was popular for Iowa county court houses of the 1890s as well.<sup>19</sup> County court houses were likewise of mixed use, providing both space for county offices and courtroom facilities for the state's judicial system. (Davenport Public Library)

### **Federal Architecture**

Perhaps the single most important source of federal architecture in this country has been the Supervising Architect's Office of the United States Treasury Department, a bureau established in 1852 and greatly expanded during the 1930s. Though it was eliminated during the World War II era, "for nearly a century [its architects] designed custom houses, courthouses, Post Offices, and other buildings that housed federal government functions."<sup>20</sup> Federal buildings were the tangible symbol of the country's democratic ideals and for the towns in which they were constructed the buildings represented the linkage between the federal government and the local community. Federal court houses were usually "located in expanding urban centers, [and] their construction signaled the arrival of that particular city into the community of major U.S.

<sup>19</sup> M[artha]. H. Bowers, *County Court houses in Iowa* [Thematic Resources] (National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, 1980 [prepared by the Iowa Division of Historic Preservation, Iowa City, IA]); see also Marlys A. Svendsen, *PWA-Era County Courthouses of Iowa* (NRHP Multiple Property Documentation Form, 2003).

<sup>20</sup> Antoinette J. Lee, *Architects to the Nation: The Rise and Decline of the Supervising Architect's Office* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 3.

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cities” as well as the effectiveness of that particular jurisdiction’s politician.<sup>21</sup> According to historian Antoinette J. Lee:

Federal buildings served as major architectural icons in the urban landscape. During the nineteenth century, these buildings were often the largest buildings in the commercial centers of towns and cities. Monumental bell and clock towers accentuated their height and importance. After 1900, federal buildings often became elements of large scale “City Beautiful” plans that joined together public buildings, civic spaces, and formal landscape settings. In the next phase, following World War I, federal buildings were increasingly dwarfed by rising skyscrapers whose tall profiles proclaimed the dominance of commercialism on the city.<sup>22</sup>

Lee’s description aptly depicts the situation in Iowa. The original U.S. Post Office and Federal Building in Sioux City, erected in 1893-97 of limestone with a corner tower “supposedly modeled after the Palazzo Vecchio in Florence” exemplifies the nineteenth-century federal building constructed in a growing metropolis.<sup>23</sup> In Des Moines, Iowa, the old Post Office (1908) and the federal court house (1928) were both executed in the Beaux-Arts classical style, the former as an initial contribution to a planned City Beautiful civic center in the heart of the state capital, the latter as a late but sensitive addition to the civic district.<sup>24</sup> A few years later, in 1931, construction commenced on the “somewhat bland” Beaux Arts Cedar Rapids Post Office/federal court house.<sup>25</sup> This “blandness,” however, might simply be viewed as a last vestige of the Beaux Arts in federal architecture in Iowa, and a sign of the coming adoption of the Moderne by the Acting Supervising Architect, James Wetmore. Even just one year later, when ground was broken in 1932 for new Post Office/federal court houses in Davenport, Dubuque, and Sioux City, the Moderne was comfortably ensconced in designs approved by the Office of the Supervising Architect. These three federal buildings constructed between 1932 and 1934 may have been dwarfed by skyscrapers—Davenport’s certainly was—but all three federal court houses were designed to stand out in another way. Their simplified lines reflected a modern, streamlined approach to the public’s architecture and, therefore, a more progressive and efficient relationship between the federal government and local populace. Their sleek appearance also eliminated the generous detail typical of Beaux Arts architecture, thereby reducing the potential for public criticism in an era of deepening economic crisis.

James Wetmore was not an architect, but a lawyer who had weathered several administrative changes in Washington to rise from court stenographer in 1885 to Acting Supervising Architect in 1915. His skills at administration, respect for the work of architects, and intimate understanding of the workings of the Office ensured he would remain in the last position for nearly twenty years, until 1934.<sup>26</sup> He recognized that the Supervising Architect’s burden of administration “precluded him from doing more than directing policy in

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>23</sup> David Gebhard and Gerald Mansheim, *Buildings of Iowa* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 500. The old Sioux City post office and federal building was replaced in 1932-33 and has served as City Hall since 1948, undergoing an extensive remodeling in the 1990s.

<sup>24</sup> The Des Moines “Civic Center Historic District” was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1988 (nomination authored by Barbara Beving Long).

<sup>25</sup> *Buildings of Iowa*, 183.

<sup>26</sup> *Architects to the Nation*, 222.

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architectural design.” Indeed, Wetmore readily credited the Office’s draftsmen as the real designers.<sup>27</sup> Initially, Wetmore supported the concept of standardization in federal buildings, an idea promoted by Secretary of the Treasury William McAdoo that theoretically would produce more work from the Office’s draftsmen. By 1923, however, Wetmore had eased this policy, and recognized that each site presented a set of unique variables. The flip side of standardization was the often-controversial issue of the use of private architects to design federal buildings. During the tenure of James Knox Taylor (1897-1912), when classical and early American traditions were favored by the Supervising Architect, private architects worked on many of the larger projects, while the smaller designs were produced by Office staff. By contrast, from 1913 throughout the 1920s, “the Supervising Architect’s Office used the same design and floor plan whenever possible [for U.S. Post Offices] and rarely employed private architects.”<sup>28</sup> The advent of the Great Depression reinforced the need for an efficient building program at the federal level, but also brought the competing public policy that recognized that federal projects stimulated local economies and provided employment for local workers, including local architects and draftspersons.

By the end of the 1920s, Wetmore and his staff were contending with a backlog of federal building projects delayed by World War I and the very large Federal Triangle project in Washington, D.C., authorized in 1926. The Office sought to increase its staff of architects by more than 100, even advertising on the radio with a 15-minute program. Still short of draftsmen, in 1929 more radio spots were used to respond to the widespread criticism that the government’s salary was too low.<sup>29</sup> A year later, with the Depression’s impact on the building industry already clear, President Hoover expressed his desire to move federal projects more quickly into the construction phase in order to benefit local workforces. Use of standardized plans helped, but in 1930 the Office also was given increased authority to use private architects. Balancing the pressures of the Administration’s desire to quickly move projects to construction with the pressures of private sector architects who found fewer and fewer commissions, meant the Office began to limit the use of private architects to the bigger projects. “Only large projects were considered for private architects because ‘as the work [of the Supervising Architect’s Office] is only slightly more for a large building than for a small building, it is evident that it is advantageous to make a contract for say a \$5,000,000 building than ten contracts for buildings costing \$500,000 each.”<sup>30</sup> By November of 1930, “the Treasury Department reported that private architects were enjoying a hefty share of the design work on federal buildings.”<sup>31</sup> The \$655,000 appropriation for the Davenport Federal Building, designed by Seth J. Temple, suggests the bar was steadily lowered for what constituted a project big enough to employ a private architect.

**Federal Architecture in Iowa**

Among the commissions awarded to private architects early in the 1930s were the three Iowa combination Post Office/court houses in Sioux City, Dubuque, and Davenport. Each was designed in the Moderne style, which, according to architectural historian, David Gebhard, reflected the influence of architect Paul Philippe

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> *How to Apply the National Register Criteria to Post Offices*, National Register Bulletin #13 (1984, rev. 1994), 3 (hereafter Bulletin #13).

<sup>29</sup> *Architects to the Nation*, 248.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 249, citing Ferry K. Heath to William Adams Delano, 22 Oct. 1930, General Correspondence, 1910-1939, Record Group 121, National Archives, Washington, D.C.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 249.

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Cret (1876-1945).<sup>32</sup> Cret was a native of France who attended the Ecole des Beaux Arts and was professor of design at the University of Pennsylvania from 1903 at 1937. Cret combined teaching with an active practice, designing memorials, civic and commercial buildings, and participating in campus planning for Brown University, the University of Pennsylvania, and the University of Texas at Austin. His sleek Moderne design for the Folger Shakespeare Library (1928-1932) (Fig. 18) in Washington, D.C. could easily have influenced Midwest architects such as Seth J. Temple. Stripped of elaborate detail, the low, broad library building is clad in white stone punctuated by tall dark window voids. Across the top is a "frieze of chiseled inscriptions honoring the great playwright" while bas-relief panels depict scenes from Shakespeare's plays.<sup>33</sup> Nine years older than Cret and much advanced academically, Temple also attended the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris in the late 1890s. It is unlikely, however, that he ever crossed paths with a youthful Cret by 1896, the year he returned to the United States.<sup>34</sup> Temple's relationship, if any, with the architects of the two



Figure 18 Paul Philippe Cret designed the Folger Shakespeare Library (1928-32) in Washington, D.C. Stripped of most detail, the building's symmetry reveals its classical roots. (*20<sup>th</sup> Century American Architecture*, 62)

<sup>32</sup> David Gebhard and Tom Martinson, *A Guide to the Architecture of Minnesota* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1977), 29. See also *Buildings of Iowa*, 71, 83.

<sup>33</sup> Sydney LeBlanc, *20<sup>th</sup> Century American Architecture: 200 Key Buildings* (New York: Whitney Library of Design, 1993), 62.

<sup>34</sup> Details of Paul P. Cret's life are available online at the Northwest Architectural Archives, University of Minnesota (<http://special.lib.umn.edu/findaid/html/mss/nwaa0023.html> accessed on 26 August 2004); and at the Philadelphia Architects and Buildings Project ([http://www.philadelphiabuildngs.org/pab/app/ar\\_display.cfm/22472?&Printable=1](http://www.philadelphiabuildngs.org/pab/app/ar_display.cfm/22472?&Printable=1) accessed on 26 August 2004). See also "Paul Philippe Cret: Modern Classicism and Civic Art," in *Modern* 1(Winter 1998)3.

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other important federal buildings commenced in Iowa in 1932 is unknown.

The new federal Post Office and Court House in Sioux City was designed by the local firm of Beuttler & Arnold. William Beuttler and Ralph Arnold formed their partnership in 1912, eventually designing many schools, churches, and commercial buildings mostly in the cities of northwestern Iowa, eastern South Dakota, and Nebraska.<sup>35</sup> Their Sioux City federal building (Fig. 19) replaced an earlier, imposing limestone Post Office completed in 1897. The new building was three stories with a central four-story pavilion and "rows of pilasters with recessed windows and spandrels between. The interior harks back to the Art Deco of the twenties with many surfaces of polished bronze and marble."<sup>36</sup>



Figure 19 The 1932-34 U.S. Post Office and Court House at 316 6<sup>th</sup> Street, Sioux City, Iowa, was designed by local architects, Beuttler & Arnold under the supervision of James Wetmore, Acting Supervising Architect. Consulting architects were Proudfoot, Rawson, Souers & Thomas of Des Moines, Iowa. (Collection of the General Services Administration, Kansas City, Missouri)

Authorized by the same Appropriations Act of July 3, 1930<sup>37</sup> that initiated construction of the Davenport

<sup>35</sup> Wesley I. Shank, *Iowa's Historic Architects* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1999), 12-13; 24-25.

<sup>36</sup> *Buildings of Iowa*, 500.

<sup>37</sup> The 1930 appropriation was an outgrowth of the 1926 Public Buildings Act. "...James Wetmore was responsible for the passage of the 1926 Public Buildings Act which prompted the construction of the \$300,000,000 Federal Triangle project and other important buildings in the District of Columbia. As Supervising Architect, Wetmore is credited with overseeing the construction of more than 2,000 post offices and other public buildings across the country." See *Historic Federal Buildings, Federal Office Building & U. S. Court house* <http://w3.gsa.gov/web/p/interaia>



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Federal Building, the Sioux City building is a:

concrete-encased, steel frame building...clad with smooth-cut light gray limestone ashlar from Bedford, Indiana, and granite ashlar from Pine Mountain, Iowa [sic]. The building illustrates the strong rectilinear qualities associated with the Art Deco...Art Moderne and Modern styles...[as well as] stripped down Classical elements...employed...as a tribute to the Beaux Arts federal buildings of the early twentieth century.

The style of the building reflects a new approach in the design of federal buildings that represents the form, materials, and details in a restrained, clean-lined, and modest fashion.<sup>38</sup>

Local Sioux City newspapers described a construction process that appears similar in many respects to that followed for the Davenport building. The space requirements were solicited of various federal agencies and departments that would be using the building. Then six preliminary designs were produced, one of which was approved by James Wetmore. This design was reviewed and approved by the eventual tenants. Detailed working plans, as well as full-size drawings and 43 clay models were produced to assist the construction process.<sup>39</sup> Like the Davenport building, Sioux City's new federal building came in under budget (about \$900,000).<sup>40</sup>

The consulting architects on the Sioux City building, Proudfoot, Rawson, Souers & Thomas—hired to “provide inspection, oversight, criticisms, and suggestions pertaining to the architecture” on that western Iowa project—were engaged in 1931-32 at the opposite end of the state as primary architects for the new Dubuque Post Office and Court House in association with local architect, Herbert A. Kennison (Fig. 20).<sup>41</sup> Kennison, who was relatively inexperienced at the time, was associated with the project to provide the local oversight and drafting services, but the Proudfoot firm assured Ferry K. Heath, Assistant Secretary of the Treasury Department, that the design work would be done in his Des Moines office.<sup>42</sup> Architect Harry Rawson, a member of the Proudfoot firm since 1911, “is known to have been personally involved with the design.”<sup>43</sup> Dubuque's federal building was the only building constructed out of three civic buildings proposed in 1931 by the well-known city planner John Nolan in his concept for an “Administrative Center at Washington Park.” The Post Office plus a new city hall and a separate court house were to be connected by an arcade. Ground was broken for the new federal building in September 1932, with a Gary, Indiana construction company at the helm. The building was ready for use by January 1934.<sup>44</sup>

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[save.nsf/0/b799ce301b2edaf8852565d90053a191?OpenDocument](http://www.nps.gov/learning/visit/visiting/visiting.htm) on 27 August 2004, page 2.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., 1-2. It is unlikely the Pine Mountain quarry location is actually in Iowa; Georgia may be more likely.

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>41</sup> See *Historic Federal Buildings, Federal Office Building & U. S. Court house*

[http://w3.gsa.gov/web/pl/interaia\\_save.nsf/1fd3e688294c3a74852563d3004975f4/fd7562174c3a8c61852565d90053a1a0?OpenDocument](http://w3.gsa.gov/web/pl/interaia_save.nsf/1fd3e688294c3a74852563d3004975f4/fd7562174c3a8c61852565d90053a1a0?OpenDocument)

<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 2, citing National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 121, Box 1228, Folder “Jan 1926-May 1932, P.O. New,” Telegram dated 19 June 1931.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 1.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 2.

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Figure 20 Dubuque's U.S. Post Office and Court House, 1932-34, is located at 350 W. 6<sup>th</sup> Street. In 1936-37, murals by Bertram Adams and William E.L. Bunn were added to the interior main lobby vestibule. (Collection of the General Services Administration, Kansas City, Missouri)

Architectural historian David Gebhard described the Dubuque federal building as a "four-story PWA Moderne...reminiscent of the work of Paul P. Cret in the late 1920s (e.g. the Folger Shakespeare Library, Washington, D.C., 1928-1932). The central four-story pavilion, dominated by smooth masonry surfaces and sculptured eagles...looks back to the mid-twenties designs of Bertram G. Goodhue."<sup>45</sup>

**Davenport's U.S. Post Office and Court House**

The third new Moderne Post Office and court house funded by the 1930 Congressional appropriation was for Davenport, a growing city of about 60,000 at the time. Davenport had prospered during the 1910s with powerful growth especially in the banking industry. Seat of county government, transportation hub at the juncture of the Mississippi River and Rock Island rail line, and regional entrepôt for commerce and markets, Davenport's growth and development also included hotel accommodations that had greatly expanded between the turn of the twentieth century and the 1930s.<sup>46</sup> The 1915 Blackhawk Hotel (NRHP, 1983), designed by Seth J. Temple and then-partner, Park T. Burrows, epitomized the arrival of modern city life to Davenport. "Its opulence and size paralleled a boom of commercial expansion in the city."<sup>47</sup> The hotel's successful design ensured Temple's professional reputation and local prominence.

<sup>45</sup> *Buildings of Iowa*, 83. See for example Goodhue's Los Angeles Public Library (1926). Goodhue's office was in New York but he had numerous significant commissions in California. His designs reflect his "attempts to move away from conventional styles and uses of ornament." Richard Oliver, "Cram and Goodhue," in *Master Builders*, ed. Diane Maddox (Washington, D.C.: The Preservation Press, 1985), 114-117.

<sup>46</sup> Marlys A. Svendsen, John Piffner, and Martha A. Bowers, *Davenport, Where the Mississippi Runs West* (Davenport, n.d. but ca. 1987), 5-4, 5-5. (Available at the Davenport Public Library.)

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, 5-6. Burrows retired in 1925, leaving Temple a sole practitioner. *Iowa's Historic Architects*, 37.

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Seth Temple (1867-1949) was born in Winona, Minnesota. After receiving his Ph.D. in 1892 from Columbia University in New York City, Temple traveled to Europe in 1894-95 to attend the American Academy in Rome and the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris. In 1896, Temple returned to the United States and accepted a teaching position at the University of Illinois School of Architecture, where he was one of five faculty members. After serving as Professor of Architecture for eight years, Temple relocated to Davenport, Iowa in 1904 and joined with Burrows and Cyrus D. McLane to form the firm of Temple, Burrows, and McLane. When McLane left in 1910, the firm was renamed Temple & Burrows. Fifteen years later, in 1925, Burrows retired. Fifty-eight-year-old Temple continued the practice alone and in 1940 was joined by his son, Arthur Temple. Seth Temple was 73 in 1940 and, according to author Wesley Shank, he remained active in the profession until his death in 1949.<sup>48</sup> Table 1 reflects some of Temple's firm's commissions.

**Table 1. Architectural Commissions of Seth J. Temple's firm**

Building Name	Location	Firm Name	Year
Davenport High School (aka Central H.S.)	Davenport	Temple, Burrows & McLane [TB&M]	1904
Hotel Davenport**	Davenport	TB&M	1907
McManus auditorium/gymnasium, St. Ambrose College	Davenport, IA	TB&M	plans being prepared 1908
Burlington High School	Burlington, IA	TB&M	1909
Washington County Hospital**	Washington, IA	Temple & Burrows [T&B]	1911
Park T. Burrows House	Davenport, IA	T&B	sometime between 1911 and 1925
R.H. Harned House	Davenport, IA	T&B	sometime between 1911 and 1925
Blackhawk Hotel**	Davenport, IA	T&B	1915
E.C. Mueller House*	Davenport, IA	T&B	ca. 1915
Government War Housing Project	Davenport, IA	T&B	ca. 1918
Government War Housing Project	Bettendorf, IA	T&B	ca. 1918
Hotel Burlington**	Burlington, IA	T&B	1923
Union Davenport Trust & Savings Bank**	Davenport, IA	T&B	1924
Mabel Eastman House	Burlington, IA	T&B	1925
<b>U.S. Post Office &amp; Court House</b>	<b>Davenport, IA</b>	<b>Seth Temple</b>	<b>1932-33</b>
*May be A.C. Mueller (Alfred C.), descendent of the founder of the Mueller Lumber Co.; attorney and mayor of Davenport, 1910-16 & 1922-24; and a keynote speaker at the opening ceremonies of the Federal Building in 1933.			
**Listed on the National Register of Historic Places			
Source: Iowa's Historic Architects, 161-62.			

Temple's design for the Davenport Federal Building represents the "monumental" approach to federal architecture, as opposed to an "architectural traditions" approach that utilized regional building traditions. It

<sup>48</sup> *Historic Federal Buildings, Federal Office Building & U. S. Court house* [http://w3.gsa.gov/web/p/interaia\\_save.nsf/0/407b2feeeac708ac852565d90053a194?OpenDocument](http://w3.gsa.gov/web/p/interaia_save.nsf/0/407b2feeeac708ac852565d90053a194?OpenDocument) on August 26, 2004, citing Henry R. Withey and Elsie Rathburn, *Biographical Dictionary of American Architects (Deceased)* (Los Angeles: New Age Publishing Company, 1956), 592-593.

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was among the last combination Post Office/court houses to be constructed under the Office of the Supervising Architect before June 1933, when the Office was reorganized under President Roosevelt's new administration and renamed the Public Works Branch of the Procurement Division within the Treasury Department.<sup>49</sup> The distinction between monumental and architectural traditions approaches was later articulated in 1936 by the new Branch as it sought to establish policy for the federal Depression-era building program:

Architectural traditions, as well as the utilization of natural or manufactured products of the vicinity, are given every practicable consideration. Thus, in New England will be found examples of Colonial architecture with exterior facing of brick or stone; in the Southwest, many of the buildings designed for that locality will reflect the Spanish influence in elevation and materials; and in sections of more recent traditions, buildings of contemporary character have been designed. In larger centers of population, design tends toward monumental structures, expressing the strength and dignity of the Federal Government rather than local color.<sup>50</sup>

While it is not entirely clear which sections of the country in 1936 had more "recent traditions" or what "buildings of contemporary character" would have looked like, it seems clear the Hoover-era federal building executed in the Moderne style was viewed not so much as a new contemporary style, but as an extension, albeit modernized and stripped-down, of the earlier classical tradition of federal architecture. It was intended to perpetuate the image of the federal authority that monumentality created, not reference local or regional building traditions. Historian Antoinette J. Lee concurs, offering the Moderne U.S. Post Office (1932-35) in Minneapolis, Minnesota, and the Moderne Post Office and Court House (1931-1933) in Baton Rouge, Louisiana as examples of this "monumental" approach.<sup>51</sup> David Gebhard described the Minneapolis building as "monumental Moderne on a grand scale," and it is certainly very large, yet the Baton Rouge building appears closer in scale to the Davenport Federal Building.<sup>52</sup> Size, then, of a Moderne federal building appears to be secondary to *style* as the indicator of "monumentality." This Moderne style, rooted in the late 1920s and early 30s and associated with the authority of the federal government, provided the inspiration for many of the later, smaller Depression-era federal buildings, mostly Post Offices, that were constructed under the aegis of the Public Works Administration—buildings now referred to as "PWA Moderne." Though not all four hundred and six PWA Post Offices were executed in PWA Moderne, many in Iowa were (see Table 2). PWA Post Offices of all styles across the country remain "among the most familiar [Depression-era projects] to the general public."<sup>53</sup>

<sup>49</sup> The *Federal Architect* cast this reorganization in ironic terms, saying "We saw the good old Supervising Architect's Office, the oldest architectural office in the country, with its fine record for achievement and ability, buried without flag or volley in the Procurement Division" (quoted in *Architects to the Nation*, 253.). James Wetmore, long-time Acting Supervising Architect, resigned a year later, succeeded by Louis A. Simon, an architect with four decades of tenure in the Office, and Wetmore's chief architect. *Architects to the Nation*, 258.

<sup>50</sup> *Architects to the Nation*, citing a letter by Procurement Division Assistant Director W.E. Reynolds.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid.*, 266-267.

<sup>52</sup> *Architecture of Minnesota*, 29.

<sup>53</sup> *Bulletin #13*, 3.

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**Table 2. Selected Federal Buildings in Iowa, 1931-1940**

Building Type	Location	Year Built	Supervising Architect; Local Architects	Style	Comments (quotes indicate direct statements from source publication)
Fed. Court house & US Post Office	Cedar Rapids	1931-1933	James A. Wetmore	Beaux-Arts	"somewhat bland;" mid-1930s WPA murals inside
Fed. Courthouse & US Post Office	Dubuque	1932-1934	James A. Wetmore; Proudfoot, Rawson, Souers & Thomas, Herbert A. Kennison	PWA Moderne	"reminiscent of the work of Paul P. Cret.;" "looks back..[to] Bertram G. Goodhue"
Fed Court house & US Post Office	Davenport	1932-1933	James A. Wetmore; Seth J. Temple	PWA Moderne	"follows...Cret"
Fed. Court house & US Post Office	Sioux City	1932-1933	James A. Wetmore; Beuttler & Arnold	PWA Moderne	"usual fenestration—rows of pilasters w/ recessed windows and spandrels in between"
US Post Office	Hampton	1931	Louis A. Simon, George Van Nerta	Colonial Revival	In historic district
US Post Office	Oelwein	1931	James A. Wetmore	No info	
US Post Office	Independence	1934	Louis A. Simon	Colonial Revival	Georgian, "not a very inspired design", 1930s mural inside
US Post Office	Winterset	1934	Louis A. Simon	PWA Moderne	
US Post Office	Ames	1935	Louis A. Simon	Beaux-Arts	Small FAP mural inside
US Post Office	Cresco	1935	Louis A. Simon	PWA Moderne	"lightly" the style
US Post Office	Mount Pleasant	1935	Louis A. Simon; Wyatt C. Hedrich	PWA Moderne	
US Post Office	Osceola	1935	Louis A. Simon, Neal Melick	Colonial Revival	Georgian inspired, WPA mural inside
US Post Office	Sheldon	1935	Louis A. Simon	Beaux-Arts	"highly abstracted" version of the style
US Post Office	Storm Lake	1935	Louis A. Simon	Colonial Revival	"Regency", part of the 1930s "rage for the Colonial Revival"
US Post Office	DeWitt	1936	Louis A. Simon, Neal Melick	Colonial Revival	1938 WPA mural inside
US Post Office	Waverly	1936	Louis A. Simon, Neal Melick	Colonial Revival	1938 WPA mural inside (Mildred Pelzer, artist)
US Post Office	Waterloo	1937	Louis A. Simon, Neal Melick	PWA Moderne	1940 WPA murals inside, now the public library
US Post Office	Corning	1938	Louis A. Simon	Colonial Revival	WPA mural inside
US Post Office	Manchester	1938	Louis A. Simon, Neal Melick	Colonial Revival	WPA mural inside

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Building Type	Location	Year Built	Supervising Architect; Local Architects	Style	Comments (quotes indicate direct statements from source publication)
US Post Office	Clarion	1939	Louis A. Simon, Neal Melick	Colonial Revival	Style has been "modernized"
US Post Office	Knoxville	1939	Louis A. Simon, Neal Melick	Colonial Revival	"eagle detail" and "single-stem metal lights" relieve the "somber" design
US Post Office	Anamosa	1940	Louis A. Simon, Neal A. Melick	Colonial Revival	
US Post Office	Fort Atkinson	1940	Louis A. Simon, Neal Melick	Colonial Revival	"Modern Regency," 1942 WPA mural inside
US Post Office	West Union	1940	Louis A. Simon, Neal Melick	Colonial Revival	Federal-inspired
US Post Office	Hawarden	1940-1941	Louis A. Simon	Colonial Revival	Federal style "simplified to convey...modernity"
Source: Buildings of Iowa, multiple pages. This publication does not purport to be an exhaustive survey of Post Office or any other property type in Iowa.					

**Moderne Architecture**

The Davenport Federal Building exhibits the distinctive characteristics of Moderne architecture of the 1920s, 30s, and 40s. Sometimes called Modernist or Modernistic, the general term encompasses the more specific strands known as Art Deco, Streamline Moderne, and PWA Moderne. According to one historian, the Modernist jargon came into being in 1932, to name an aesthetic movement already underway, when the Museum of Modern Art in New York City opened an exhibit called "Modern Architecture: International Exhibition," organized by architect Philip Johnson and architectural historian Henry Russell-Hitchcock.<sup>54</sup> Modernism was fueled by innovative European trends transplanted to America between the World Wars by architects such as Richard Neutra and Walter Gropius, but blended with an increasing American romance with speed and aerodynamics, machined products and parts, and technological advances in all aspects of life. Modernism involved a balance (or, perhaps, a tension) between abandonment of all references to tradition or historical models, as with the International Style, with the adoption of stylized and re-created traditional motifs, as found in Art Deco forms. The American Art Deco was an outgrowth of a 1925 design fair in Paris called the *Exposition Internationale des Arts Décoratifs et Industriels Modernes*, which featured numerous, decorated rooms. In Europe, Art Deco motifs had emerged before World War I and were "a curious blend of Modernism, history, and fantasy, influenced by the speed-infused aesthetic of the Italian Futurists and the mystical images of Mayan, Assyrian, and Moorish cultures."<sup>55</sup> In addition to these stylized designs, Art Deco developed in America to include sharp angular forms, or zig-zag features.<sup>56</sup> Often used for interior decorations and exterior details, the buildings, as a whole, executed in this style were rarely domestic and most often commercial. Skyscrapers of the late 1920s and apartment buildings of the 1930s, especially

<sup>54</sup> Rachael Carley, *The Visual Dictionary of American Domestic Architecture* (New York: Henry Holt & Co., 1994; reprinted Owl Books, 1997), 222.

<sup>55</sup> *American Domestic Architecture*, 228.

<sup>56</sup> *Buildings of Iowa*, 525.

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Los Angeles, New York, and Miami, epitomize the Art Deco form.<sup>57</sup> The richness of materials adopted for Art Deco architecture—marbles, bronze, white metals, and terrazzo—continued to be seen as the style evolved. Streamline Moderne architecture represents a later phase of Modernistic or Moderne architecture, typically constructed in the 1930s and into the 1940s,<sup>58</sup> and characterized by “stucco surfaces with rounded corners, horizontal banding, overhangs, and window groupings, and by other details suggestive of modern Machine Age aerodynamic forms.”<sup>59</sup> PWA Moderne has been described as a “synthesis of the Art Deco and Streamline Moderne with an austere late type of Beaux-Arts Classicism.”<sup>60</sup> “Fundamentally classical and formal,” this mode has enough Moderne details to “convey a contemporary feeling along with the traditional authority of the classical.”<sup>61</sup> Characteristics of the PWA Moderne include:

- symmetrical form and classical horizontal proportions;
- piers used instead of columns, occasionally fluted but lacking capitals or bases;
- windows arranged as recessed vertical panels;
- surfaces smooth and flat, with terra cotta ornamentation;
- smooth stone sheathing;
- polished marble, granite, and terrazzo within and without;
- low-relief sculpture and interior murals.<sup>62</sup>

Except for the terra cotta ornamentation and the interior murals (which were often added years later under the auspices of Depression-era arts programs), the Federal Building in Davenport displays all these features, especially in its exterior form and finishes. Indeed, architect Seth J. Temple voiced his unequivocal position about how some of these typically Moderne elements were to be created. On January 9, 1933, for example, he wrote to the model maker, C.G. Girolami & Co., of Chicago, “We acknowledge the receipt of a preliminary photograph of the elevator door model. The relief is too high... Keep the relief less rather than more.”<sup>63</sup> The building also exhibits the characteristic interior polished marble and granite, preserved in the most public spaces, and white-metal stairway railings and radiator grillwork containing abstracted botanical forms. The architect specified Monel metal finishes for many such interior details.<sup>64</sup> Monel metal is a platinum-colored alloy of nickel and copper and is one of the “nickel metals” favored for Art Deco details such as entrance doors, lobby details, and grille work.<sup>65</sup>

<sup>57</sup> The Charles Theatre (1935-36) in Charles City and the non-extant Varsity Theatre (ca. 1930) in Iowa City are excellent examples of the Art Deco style in Iowa.

<sup>58</sup> This period extends to the late 1940s in some places. For example, Anchorage, Alaska’s Streamline Moderne 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue Theatre was completed in 1947.

<sup>59</sup> *Buildings of Iowa*, 545. In Iowa, the Butler House (1937) at 2633 S. Fleur Dr. in Des Moines is an excellent example of the Streamline Moderne style.

<sup>60</sup> *Buildings of Iowa*, 539.

<sup>61</sup> *Architecture of Minnesota*, 420.

<sup>62</sup> Taken from *Architecture of Minnesota*, 420.

<sup>63</sup> Collection of the General Services Administration, Kansas City, Missouri. In the case of the elevator door, Temple also was concerned about the fit of the detail to the available space.

<sup>64</sup> Architect Seth J. Temple approved the “monel metal samples” submitted by the General Bronze Corp. and sent them on to the general contractor by letter dated March 6, 1933. (Collection of the General Services Administration, Kansas City, Missouri)

<sup>65</sup> Margot Gayle and David W. Look, *Metals in America’s Historic Buildings* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1980), 35-39.

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The fact that the Federal Building was designed, constructed, and occupied under the Hoover administration and before the creation of the Public Works Administration reveals the strength of association that the Moderne style later acquired with the PWA. The Davenport Federal Building superbly reflects the inspiration for the later PWA buildings.

**Construction of the Federal Building**

The impact of the Federal Building on the local economy also served as a precursor to the work programs of the Roosevelt administration a few years later. Analysis of the construction records and public declarations of local newspapers make it clear that a local public benefit was attempted and expected from the construction project. The general contractor was not contractually obliged to use local labor, but was advised that "the Department desires that preference be given to the employment of local labor so far as qualified labor is available..."<sup>66</sup> But even while this concern was expressed as to labor, many of the suppliers, fabricators, and even the general contractor, itself, were based in remote cities. Some of these subcontractors had worked on other federal construction projects in far flung project sites and may have been used because of this prior experience. Others were suppliers of raw resources, like granite, not locally available, or manufacturers with distant plants producing a finish material also not locally available. In this regard, the project fell short of a concerted effort to maximize the local economic benefit, in favor of tested labor and preferred products.

With architectural plans in place by November, 1931, the project started the next spring with the demolition of the old federal building. On April 12, 1932, the local newspaper reported that the razing had started that morning, undertaken by the R.A. Goldman Wrecking Co. of Chicago. Goldman's site superintendent, Irving Raben, thought it would take about a month and he expected to employ 20 local men for the work. "In the wrecking operations, Mr. Raben "will employ Davenport labor, with the exception of two foremen whom he brought with him from Chicago." Building materials were salvaged for resale, and Raben "expressed the expectation that the availability of these materials at low prices would stimulate repairing work on structures where they might be used, and that consequently employment would be aided to some extent."<sup>67</sup> Another local daily reported that Raben promised "some wrecking equipment and tools will be purchased here," suggesting an additional local economic benefit.<sup>68</sup> The excavation contract, however, had not been awarded when the demolition started and one newspaper reported that architect Seth Temple "expressed the hope that the excavation operation would be sublet to a contractor here [in Davenport]."<sup>69</sup>

This excavation (Fig. 21 ) was underway by May, but proved to be a troublesome part of the project. Work was interrupted on June 13<sup>th</sup> and a day was lost because of "misunderstandings over money matters"

<sup>66</sup> Jas. A. Wetmore, "Circular in Connection with Transfer and Detail of Construction Engineers," (n.d. but ca. 1932). (Collection of the General Services Administration, Kansas City, Missouri)

<sup>67</sup> "Wrecking starts at U.S. building, 20 will be hired," *The [Davenport] Daily Times*, 12 April 1932.

<sup>68</sup> "Post Office to be razed in a month, claim," *The Davenport Democrat*, 12 April 1932. The Democrat had a particularly good vantage point from which to watch the project, being located only a few buildings away to the north.

<sup>69</sup> "Wrecking starts at U.S. building..." An earlier 1931 inspection report on the site's suitability indicated that the "shortest haul from the site for excavated material to be wasted is four thousand feet to a dump on the river front at the foot of Scott Street where the municipality is reclaiming land as a park development." It is unknown if this waste dump site was used. N.H. Tunnicliff, Civil Engineer, "Soil Investigation of site for Federal Building, Report to Supervising Architect," (March, 1931), 2. (Collection of the General Services Administration, Kansas City, Missouri)



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according to the newspaper, but neither the general contractor nor the excavation contractor—reported to be B. H. Kelly, president of the Star Coal & Improvement Company, of Davenport—would elaborate.<sup>70</sup> Correspondence later in the fall, between the Supervising Architect's Office and the general contractor, B-W Construction Company, of Chicago, indicates the excavator (called the B.H. Kelly Coal and Material



**Figure 21** Excavation of the Federal Building's basement appears to have been well "supervised" in the spring of 1932. This view looks southwest from the corner of Perry and 4<sup>th</sup> Streets. The white building with the fire escape stairs in the center background is the alley side of the RKO Orpheum Theater (now Adler Theater). The hipped roof building in the far left is a part of the Windsor Hotel (nonextant). (Collection of the General Services Administration, Kansas City, Missouri)

Company) had not fulfilled the 30-day time limit stipulated in its contract for completion of the excavation. As a result, B-W withheld payment the final payment, explaining to the Supervising Architect:

The B.H. Kelly Coal and Material Company have not complied, nor have they tried to comply, with the progress schedule. It was very embarrassing to this company in view of the fact that the Construction Engineer [A.B. Rider, a federal employee] was repeatedly after us to speed up the excavation work. We have tried to do this in various ways and methods with whatever possible assistance our superintendent could give them to make satisfactory progress...we have received information they have not paid their bills and, therefore, [we] withheld payment from them order to be able to apply as many of the claimants as possible with the balance of the money due Kelly Company [\$1060.00]...

<sup>70</sup> "Halt progress of work on postal building one day," *The Daily Times*, 14 June 1932.

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We are still endeavoring to make a satisfactory settlement with the B.H. Kelly Coal and Material Company as we do not want to cause your office any embarrassment whatsoever."<sup>71</sup>

Pier excavation was underway by May, along with elevator pit and boiler room excavation. Form lumber for the concrete walls and piers was delivered to the site in early May also and concrete pours commenced on July 25<sup>th</sup>.<sup>72</sup> The concrete foundation walls were done in late July and early August. As the excavation and concrete work wrapped up, the steel for the interior structure became the next important stage.

A.B. Rider, the government's on-site construction engineer and the Inspector of Naval Material in Chicago were each directed in May, 1932 to inspect the various providers and fabricators of steel for the building. These included "an indefinite amount of structural steel to be rolled by the Inland Steel Company, Indiana Harbor, Indiana, and the Illinois Steel Company, South Chicago, Illinois, for the Davenport Machine & Foundry Company, Davenport, Iowa."<sup>73</sup> Also, Republic Steel Company, Moline, Illinois was to be visited to inspect "100 tons of reinforcing steel to be rolled and fabricated for the Post Office Building."<sup>74</sup> The correspondence file contains both the signed original and carbon of the second letter, however, suggesting the Moline steel company may not have been used after all. During August, the structural steel fabricated by the Davenport Machine & Foundry Company was erected and pouring of the cement for the first floor was expected to commence in early September (Fig. 22).<sup>75</sup>

Throughout the construction process, samples and models of materials to be used inside and outside of the building were ordered, submitted to the architect for approval, and passed along to the Office of the Supervising Architect for final approval. The process was aptly described in a March 24, 1933 letter by architect Seth J. Temple to one unfortunate vendor who had not correctly followed instructions: "We received your letter of Jan. 31<sup>st</sup> but no samples of your material. If we approve, we forward samples so marked to the Supervising Architect's Office for final approval. If that office approves the samples, the samples are returned to the Construction Engineer on the job. The fault here seems to be that you submitted samples directly to the Supervising Architect's Office. You had better start over."<sup>76</sup> Considering the time involved and the

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<sup>71</sup> File copy of letter sent from B-W Construction Company [no signature] to Supervising Architect, 14 September 1932. (Collection of the General Services Administration, Kansas City, Missouri)

<sup>72</sup> "Daily Record, Davenport, Ia. P.O.," entries by A.B. Rider, Construction Engineer. (Collection of the General Services Administration, Kansas City, Missouri. Entries in this record run from 20 June 1932 to 11 August 1932.)

<sup>73</sup> File copy of letter sent from unidentified staff member of the Supervising Architect to Inspector of Naval Material, 27 May 1932. (Collection of the General Services Administration, Kansas City, Missouri)

<sup>74</sup> Original and file copies of letter signed by James Wetmore, Acting Supervising Architect to A.B. Rider, Construction Engineer for the new Davenport Post Office, 16 May 1932. (Collection of the General Services Administration, Kansas City, Missouri)

<sup>75</sup> "Steel work near completion for Postoffice [sic] here," *The Daily Times*, 1 September 1932.

<sup>76</sup> Letter to Sprayo-Flake Co., Milwaukee, Wisconsin, in reference to acoustic tile. (Collection of the General Services Administration, Kansas City, Missouri)

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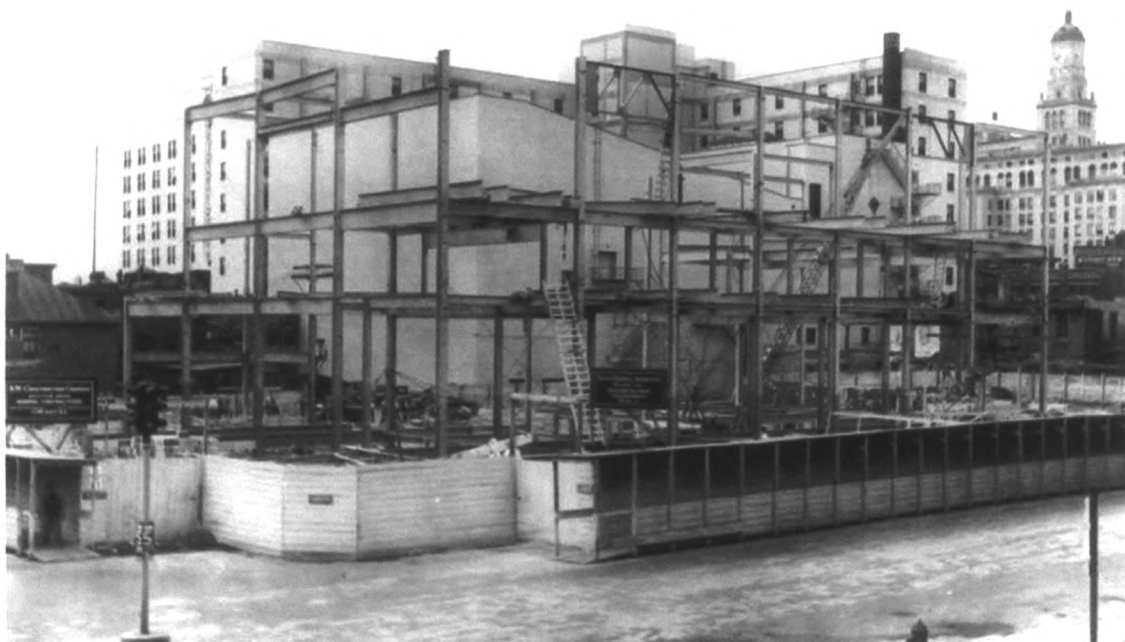
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**Figure 22** Late summer, 1932, view of steel going up on the Federal Building, looking southwest from the corner of Perry and 4<sup>th</sup> Streets. The 1927 American Commercial & Savings Bank building and tall clock tower is seen in the far right background (NRHP, 1983; now Davenport Bank & Trust). (Collection of the General Services Administration, Kansas City, Missouri)

complexity of the building, the 500-day completion schedule was remarkable. Table 3 below lists information about the various contractors and vendors who participated in the project.

**Table 3. Contractors and Suppliers for the Davenport Federal Building**

<b>Subcontractor Name</b>	<b>Location of Subcontractor</b>	<b>Material or Labor provided</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Acme Building Supply Co.	Meridian, MS	millwork, finished wood trim	supplied many Post Office projects
American Elevator & Machine Co.	Louisville, KY	elevator	
American Mosaic & Terrazzo Co.		terrazzo for base and border, for floor	10% white marble, 10% black marble, white cement
American Sheet & Tin Plate Co.		sheet metal for ducts and flues	
Anderson Mfg. Co.	Louisville, KY	wood ornamentation in court room	a subcontractor for Acme Bldg. Supply Co., Meridian Mississippi
Arthur Norris	Chicago, IL	sheet metal contractor	
B.H. Kelly Coal & Material Co.	Davenport, IA	excavation contractor	aka Star Coal & Improvement Co.

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Subcontractor Name	Location of Subcontractor	Material or Labor provided	Comments
Bailey-Reynolds Chandelier Co.	Kansas City, MO	special lighting fixtures	Chandeliers, lobby & court room lights, exterior standards
Benjamin Moore Co.		paint	
Breen Stone & Marble Co.	Kasota, MN	limestone exterior cladding and ornamentation	
Builders Lime & Cement Co.	Davenport, IA	lime for plaster, plaster sand	
B-W Construction Co.	Chicago, IL	general contractor	contract signed 16 March 1932
C.G. Girolami & Co.	Chicago, IL	contract to create construction models	models were made for, among other things, the exterior stone and bronze ornamentation; interior courtroom wood details
Chicago Fireproofing Co.		subcontractor for furring tile, partition tile	tile manufactured by H.D. Conkey & Co.
Cold Spring Granite Co.	Cold Spring, MN	granite for window sills; pink granite	
D. E. Kennedy Co.		cork tile	
Davenport Machine & Foundry Co.	Davenport, IA	structural steel fabricator	
Decatur Iron & Steel Co.	Decatur, AL	iron window anchor bars, manhole rings & covers, misc. ironwork	
Detroit Graphite Co.	Detroit, MI	paint, red lead	for structural steel
Esko Roofing Co.	Chicago, IL	roofing installer	installed "saturated felt" by H.F. Watson Mills (Chicago)
Flour City Ornamental Iron Co.	Minneapolis, MN	bronze radiator grilles	a subsidiary of General Bronze Corp.
General Bronze Corp.	Minneapolis, MN	ornamental bronze work; bronze for exterior doors	also supplied the Chicago and Kansas City Post Offices, and Washington D.C. Post Office extension
H. A. Framburg & Co.	Chicago, IL	light fixture manufacturer (interior)	
Herring-Hall Marving Safe Co.		U.S. Marshall's safe	may have reused some safes from old Fed. Bldg.
Illinois Steel Co.	South Chicago, IL	rolled steel	steel used by Davenport Machine & Foundry
Inland Steel Co.	Indiana Harbor, IN	rolled steel	steel used by Davenport Machine & Foundry
Iverson Decorating Co.	St. Paul, MN	painting contractor	
Marblehead Lime Co.	Chicago, IL	hydrated lime for foundation walls	supplier for Post Offices in Mason City and Albia, Iowa; Unionville, Missouri, and Sioux Falls, So. Dak.
Midwest Cast Products Co.	Downers Grove, IL	pilaster cap in lobby	
Moulding Brownell Corp.		face brick	
N.H. Tunncliff	Davenport, IA	civil engineer & land surveyor	performed soil investigation & final independent inspection
National Fire Proofing Co.	Hobart, IN	hollow, terra cotta "furring" tile, partition tile	filler tile for concrete floor construction and partition walls; same tile used in Cedar Rapids, IA, and LaFayette, IN postoffices

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Subcontractor Name	Location of Subcontractor	Material or Labor provided	Comments
Newman Mfg. Co.	Cincinnati, OH	bronze exterior doors, spandrels, grilles, stair newel rosette	contract cancelled due to bankruptcy; re-let to General Bronze Corp.
Northwestern Marble Corporation		marble subcontractor	
O.M. Gripp	Rockford, IL	lath, plastering contractor	
Paraffine Companies	Emeryville, CA	cork carpet	
Payson Mfg. Co.	Chicago, IL	hardware finishes, interior bronze	
Pittsburg Plate Glass Co.		paints and varnishes	
Purinton Brick Co.	Galesburg, IL	common brick	
Reardon Cement Co.	Washington, D.C.	cement for mortar	supplied Post Offices projects in Aurora, Harvey, and Peru, IL; Whiting, IN; Ann Arbor and Lapeer, MI; Wapun and Wis. Rapids, Wisc., Youngston & Finlay, OH; Miami, OK
Republic Steel Co.	Moline, IL	reinforcing steel fabricator	may not have gotten work
Republic Steel Corporation	Youngstown, OH	steel bars	
Roanoke Coal & Tile Co.	Roanoke, IL	clay filler tile for concrete floor construction	supplemented Natl. Fireproofing Co. order
Shapleigh Hardware Co.		lock sets, butts, and door closure hardware	
Structural Slate Co.	Pen Argyl, PA	structural slate	
T.M. Steel Clay Moulding		face brick, limestone-colored	
Thermax Corporation		acoustical tiles	
Trucson Steel Co.	Youngstown, OH	chromium plating of steel window sash and hardware	
U.S. Gypsum Co.		plaster supplier	
unknown		"Gray Ledge Mankato Stone"	
Variety Fire & Door Co.		metal frames for hollow metal doors, fabricator	
Watson Mfg. Co.		bronze and non bronze insect screens	
Yale & Towne Mfg. Co.	Stamford, CT	Post Office lock boxes, misc. letter drop equipment	

Source: "Daily Reports" and Correspondence File, General Services Administration, Kansas City, Missouri

Finally, September 21, 1933, just over 500 days from groundbreaking, the building was finished and placed into service. A grand opening ceremony was held on October 16, 1933, the very same day another, smaller Post Office was opened across the river in East Moline, Illinois. Construction Engineer A. B. Rider had supervised both projects and shuttled across the river, along with various Post Office dignitaries, to be present at both dedication ceremonies.<sup>77</sup> The East Moline event included a luncheon at a local country club.

<sup>77</sup> Rider had been a busy man for several years. He was pulled abruptly from supervision of Iowa City, Iowa's new post office in April, 1932, in order to move to Davenport to supervise the demolition of the old federal building and construction of the new one. At that time, he was also in the middle of construction projects in Marengo, Iowa, and Wisconsin Rapids, Wisconsin as well. When the Supervising Architect directed Rider to ship his personal and household goods by rail from Iowa City to Davenport, Rider requested permission to ship them by motor van from Fairfield, Iowa,

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The Davenport ceremony included both an open house in the afternoon—"held in the spacious mail room, opened for the only time to the public" —and an evening banquet hosted at the Blackhawk Hotel for about 300 people. At the banquet, in addition to the federal officials, former mayor Alfred C. Mueller gave an extended talk that recounted the history of the postal service in Davenport.<sup>78</sup> By December, 1933, the new tenants included the Post Office, the federal court with Judge Charles A. Dewey, U.S. Attorney Robert Colfish, U.S. Commissioner Albert F. Block, internal revenue department, postal inspectors, U.S. Marshal Fred S. Hird, weather bureau, farm bureau, army and navy recruiting services, federal probation officials, civil service, and the Referee in Bankruptcy Walter A. Newport. The Home Owners Loan Corp. was listed as a temporary tenant.<sup>79</sup> With the postal service vacating the building in the 1960s, the federal court remains the primary occupant.

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because they had never made it to Iowa City. As to office furniture, Rider had none. The Iowa City site custodian loaned him what he needed there, and in Davenport, the U.S. District Attorney was letting him use "a small table, flat top desk and two chairs." Letter by A.B. Rider to the Supervising Architect, 2 May 1932. (Collection of the General Services Administration, Kansas City, Missouri)

<sup>78</sup> "New \$500,000 Postoffice Dedicated Today; Aide to Farley one of Speakers," *The Davenport Democrat*, 16 October 1933; also "Dedicate Davenport, East Moline Postoffices," *The Daily Times*, 16 October 1933.

<sup>79</sup> "Federal Building Finished in 1933 at \$500,000 Cost," *The Daily Times*, 30 December 1933.

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**10. Geographical Data**

**Verbal Boundary Description**

Lots 6, 7, & 8, Block 57, of LeClaire's 2<sup>nd</sup> Addition to the City of Davenport, Iowa

**Boundary Justification**

Lots 6, 7, & 8 are the legal parcels of land that are historically associated with the property.

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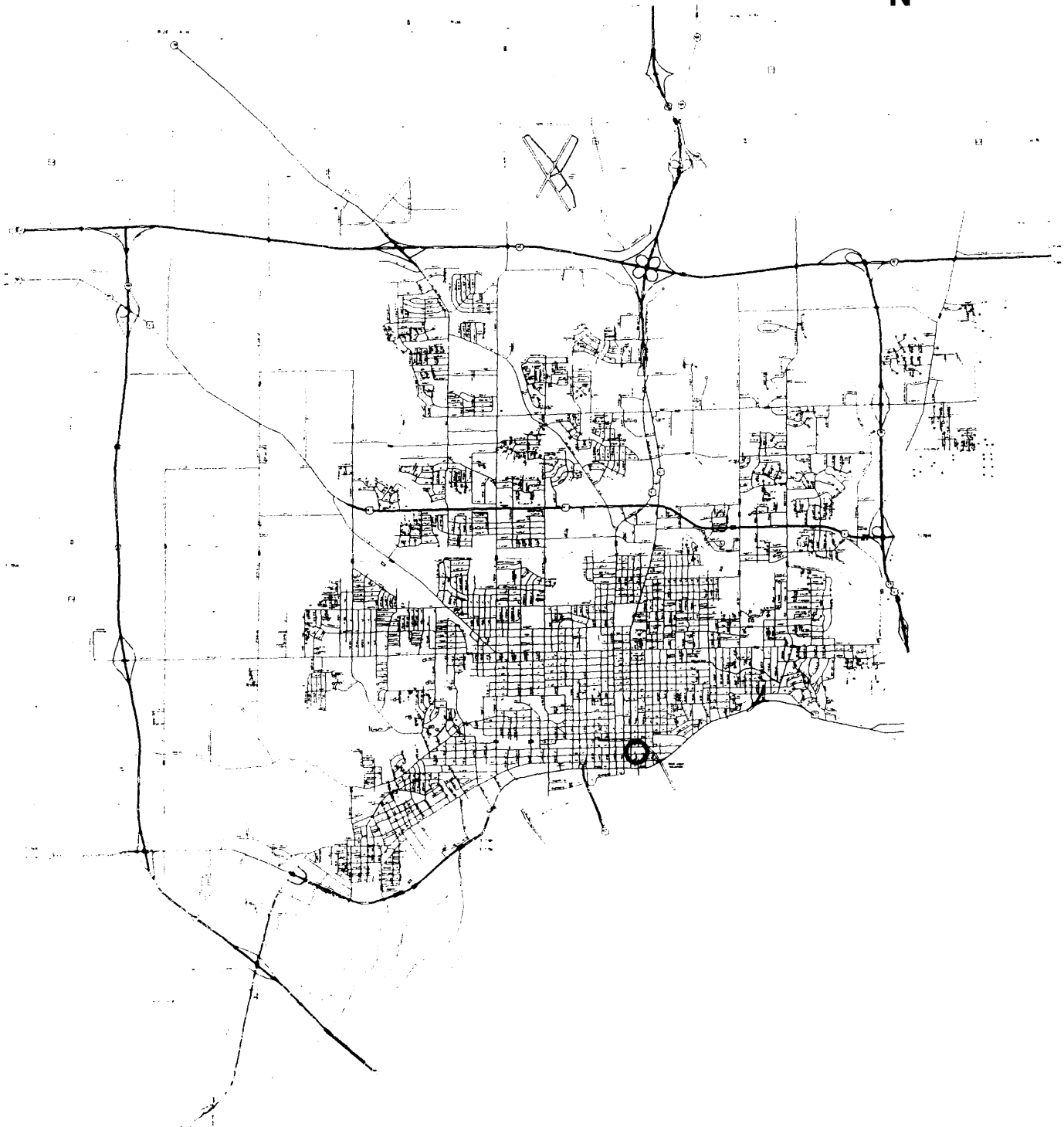
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**City of Davenport with the location of the property circled.**  
(Source: Iowa Department of Transportation, 2004)

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**Site Plan**

(Source: General Services Administration)

