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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *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 any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. 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 U.S. Post Office and Courthouse
other names E. Ross Adair Federal Building and U.S. Courthouse

2. Location

street & number 1300 West Harrison Street N/A not for publication
city or town Fort Wayne N/A vicinity
state Indiana code IN county Allen code 003 zip code 46802

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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 Redford FOR ROLANDO RIVAS-CAMP, FPO, 2-2-2006
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

U.S. 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).

[Signature] 1-18-06
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this 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): _____

[Signature] Signature of the Keeper
Edson M. Beall 3.15.06 Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)

- private, public-local, public-State, public-Federal

Category of Property (Check only one box)

- building(s), district, site, structure, object

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

Table with columns: Contributing, Noncontributing, buildings, sites, structures, objects, Total. Values: Contributing 1, Noncontributing 0, Total 1.

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

number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

GOVERNMENT/post office = Post Office
GOVERNMENT/government offices= Federal offices
GOVERNMENT/courthouse= Federal Courthouse

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

GOVERNMENT/government offices= Federal offices
GOVERNMENT/courthouse= Federal Courthouse

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

MODERN MOVEMENT
Art Deco
Other: Starved Classicism

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation STONE: granite
walls STONE: limestone
roof ASPHALT
other STONE: granite- Plaza (exterior)

Narrative Description

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

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Description Summary:

The E. Ross Adair Federal Building and U.S. Courthouse is architecturally significant as an excellent example of Starved Classical style, exhibited by architectural features such as a smooth façade, vertically-oriented window bays, and shallow, squared columns. Significant interior finishes include marble and terrazzo floors, coffered plaster ceilings, and decorative bronze grilles. Notable furnishings include original light fixtures, wooden courtroom furniture, and cast bronze lobby desks.

General Description:

The Federal Building and U.S. Courthouse is three stories tall, resting on a slightly raised basement. The height of the building from the entry plaza level to the top of the parapet is approximately 57 feet. The building is clad in a gray-buff limestone with a granite base and entry steps, plaza, and platforms. The simple detailing is carved limestone. Windows are replacement aluminum sash and frames.

The front (east) façade faces Harrison Street and features an elaborate, granite plaza, which extends approximately 50 feet from the face of the building. There are five granite steps across the entire width of the front façade with granite cheek walls at either end. The steps are divided at the midpoint by a granite platform for the large, bronze flagpole base. At either end of the plaza, the granite base forms curved walls and the backs of built-in benches. A similar treatment is used at the back of the plaza where a 40-foot-long granite bench is centered on the façade. The bench back is carved with signs of the zodiac, and the armrests with a motif of stylized leaves. Behind the bench and granite walls is a planting area with small trees and shrubs. The granite walls at the ends of the plaza continue, forming cheek walls for the three granite steps that lead to the entry platforms at both the north and south entries. There are bronze urn light fixtures on each of the cheek walls of these entry steps. All granite walls have copings with rounded edges. The plaza is paved with granite. The pattern of the paving divides the length of the plaza into five plain squares, two squares with diamond motif at the entries, and a curved pattern at each end. A concrete access ramp for the disabled has been added at the north end of the plaza in a manner that respects the plaza's historic design. The site immediately adjacent to the north and south elevations consist of wide, grassy lawn areas with some mature trees.

The three-story, front façade of the building is 211 feet long and is divided into eleven bays of fenestration by stylized columns of the Starved Classical style, set between slightly projecting end bay pavilions. The main entries are located in these pavilions. There are three-story, vertical openings in the limestone cladding, which contain the entry doors and transoms and windows with spandrels. The original, cast aluminum entry doors have been replaced, but the original transom and cast aluminum transom grilles and transom bars remain. The transom bars are decorated in a stylized palm leaf ornamentation. This motif is repeated in various locations around the building. The door openings have a stone architrave with carved and ornamented cornices. The ornamental motifs are floral and leaf patterns. The soffit of the cornice above the entry is a stylized mutule pattern. There are matching windows above the entry doors at the second and third floor levels. The window sash and frames are replacement aluminum units and feature muntins, which are the same pattern as the cast aluminum grilles below. Black glass spandrel panels separate the second and third

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floors. A carved bank of shallow relief extends across the front and side facades at the heads of the third floor windows. Above this bank is a flat frieze band with heavy carved stone cornice. This cornice contains the gutter system for the building and has carved lion heads at intervals along its length. A broad bank above the cornice forms the parapet and has shallow molded bands near the top. There is a stone coping along the entire parapet. There are carved stone medallions in this band above each entry with an eagle as the ornamental motif.

The smaller bays between the end pavilions are marked by stone columns with carved capitals of a stylized leaf motif having the appearance of a flatted Corinthian capital, which are typical throughout the building. A running band of stylized palm leaves forms the bases of the columns and continues around the front façade and three-story portion of the side facades. Each bay has windows at the first, second, and third floor levels between stone columns. All of the windows are replacement aluminum sash and frames. The floor levels are indicated by metal spandrel panels with eagle ornamentation at the second floor level and limestone panels with a simple, carved medallion of the third floor level. Above the columns of the front façade is a plain frieze band incised with the words "UNITED STATES POST OFFICE AND COURT HOUSE." The cornice and parapet treatment are the same as those above the entry pavilions, without medallions.

The south façade, facing Brackenridge Street, is divided into three visual segments. The first is the slightly recessed bay, which forms the entry pavilion. The second is the main body of the three-story pavilion of the building, and the third is the one-story portion of the former postal work room. The whole face is tied together by the raised granite base, which becomes more exposed as the site slopes down to the west. There are openings in the granite for windows at the basement level in all bays, except the two eastern bays. Each basement window has a metal grille. The recessed bay of the entry pavilion has a vertical opening in the limestone into which the first, second, and third floor windows are placed, with spandrel panels between the floor levels. The detailing of these windows nearly matches those of the front façade; however, there is no grillework and the openings are narrower. The carved surrounds and cornices are the same, the window and spandrel of the second and third floors are the same as the front façade, and the carved stone ornamentation, cornice, frieze and parapet are identical.

The main portion of the three-story façade is divided into seven bays. These bays appear as five two-story vertical bands, each topped by a square opening and flanked by bays with small, rectangular windows at each floor level. The five vertical bands are defined by flattened and stylized columns, matching those of the front façade. The end bays with the rectangular window openings are unornamented except for the band forming column bases, the frieze, cornice, and parapet. The one-story portion of the former postal work room has four vertical bands for windows. The heads of these openings are even with the first floor window openings of the end bay, but the sills are lower. The ornamentation is generally simplified. Columns are only indicated by joints in the limestone cladding, a cornice is indicated only by slight relief, and the running band of carved ornamentation forming column bases elsewhere, is only indicated by slight relief.

The north façade, facing Douglas Street, is identical to the south façade except that there are areaways to the basement windows, and an areaway with stair to provide access to the basement along the one-story portion of the façade.

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The west elevation faces the plaza and parking lot that were added in the 1986-1987 renovation, which were designed to be compatible with the historic character of the building yet are visually apparent as contemporary construction. The infill of the west elevation is clad with smooth limestone surfaces. The rear entrance and service doors are set in wide limestone architrave frames. Decorative wall sconces highlight the door openings. Above the door openings is a continuous banding of alternating limestone panels with recessed circles and louvered metal vents.

Immediately adjacent to the west elevation is a limestone-paved plaza and asphalt-paved parking lot. The plaza is enclosed by a smooth limestone wall with aluminum railing. Light stands matching the wall sconces sit atop the stone wall. The parking lot has two distinct terrace levels in response to the sloping site. The light standards and aluminum railings continue through the parking lot, conveying a cohesive design scheme.

The location of the courtroom on the second and third floors is indicated by the design of the west elevation. In the rear light court, the center five bays have tall openings reflecting the two-story height of the courtroom. In the bays on either side of the courtroom window are three window openings at each floor level. The north and south elevations of the light court have two window openings on each floor level.

The interior of the courthouse contains several significant spaces, the most remarkable of which are the former postal lobby on the first floor and the District Courtroom on the second floor. The main postal lobby, including the entry vestibules and elevator lobby, features terrazzo floors, marble walls, decorative plaster ceilings, and ornamental cast aluminum door and window surrounds. The two-story courtroom features mahogany wall panels with walnut burl inlay, original furniture, and a diamond-patterned cork floor. Both of these spaces retain much of their original appearance and grandeur and represent the highest degree of detail and finish level found in the building.

The entry vestibules are nearly square in plan with both exterior and interior doors. There are windows in the exterior (north or south) walls of each vestibule. The floor is marble with a pattern of contrasting marbles, including a center star and diamond motif border. The walls are clad in marble with molded door and window surrounds and fluted pilasters. The marble is specified as St. Genevieve Golden vein, and is used for built-in benches below the window openings. The base marble is dark Verde Antique. The interior entry doors and transoms are the original cast aluminum doors and transoms with decorative grilles and transom bars. The ceilings are elaborately coffered, suspended plaster ceilings. The plaster has been glazed a rich, golden ivory.

The elevator lobbies and former postal lobby run into each other spatially, and are defined by fluted marble pilasters. The floors are marble and have a diamond pattern motif that also relates to the structural bays. The same materials are used on the lobby walls as in the vestibules: the walls have the same Verde Antique base and the wall surfaces are clad in the same marble wainscot and pilasters. Originally, both sides of the lobby had postal windows filling each bay between the pilasters. Although the Postal Service has moved from the building, the original postal windows, with cast aluminum surrounds and marble sills, have been retained. Above the postal windows are large transom windows with leaded glazing in metal sashes and frames. The elevator door openings have Verde Antique surrounds and polished aluminum doors. The suspended plaster

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ceiling has the same glazed treatment as the ceilings in the vestibules. The detail is the same, although individual coffers correspond to the structural bays of the front façade. Period-style pendant and wall sconce fixtures light the lobby. GSA has recently reacquired the original decorative, cast bronze lobby desks, which were removed by the Postal Service when they vacated the building in 1986.

The original district courtroom is centrally located on the second floor of the building. The courtroom is accessed via two sets of doors, the first set a pair of pocket doors and the second set a pair of pantasote covered wood pocket doors with a pattern of square brass nails. The gallery portion of the courtroom has an original cork floor of alternating squares of light and dark colored cork, which was covered by carpet until recently. The wall surfaces feature dark green marble base and wood wainscot paneling consisting of mahogany with walnut burl inlay in diamond motifs. Above the wainscot, the wall surfaces consist of alternating wood panels and fabric-covered panels on the north, south, and east elevations or draped window openings on the west elevation. The wood panels on the west elevation feature ornate bronze grilles and wall sconces. Ornamental plaster and wood bands form a cornice transition to the ceiling surface. The plaster ceiling is elaborately coffered with alternating octagonal and square molded coffers. The ceiling has a polychromatic paint scheme of brown-gray, blue, white, and gold. HVAC diffusers and recessed can lights have been installed throughout the coffers.

At the north end of the courtroom is the raised judge's bench. The rest of the courtroom furnishings, including the railing, spectator pews, jury box, counsel tables, witness stand, and recorder's deck, appear to be original, as well. The Courtroom retains its original configuration and appearance with only a few, minor cosmetic changes.

The original public circulation corridors and lobbies on the second and third floors and the stairwells at the north and south ends of the building have remained fairly intact, retaining many original materials and window/door configurations over the years. The floors of the corridors and elevator lobbies are terrazzo laid in a grid pattern. The pattern is large squares of a brown background with salmon chips and Verde Antique and white highlights. These squares are bounded by a light gray background highlighted with light and dark green chips. There is marble wainscot matching that of the first floor walls and a matching marble base. The walls above the wainscot are painted plaster. The marble continues as trim systems with the exception of simple plaster coffers adjacent to the courtroom entry doors on the second floor. Original doors are varnished wood with varnished moldings and brass hardware. Most doors have glue chip glass, and in some locations, windows with obscure glass flank the doors.

The stairwells, located across the lobbies from the elevator doors, feature terrazzo steps and landings, the same marble wainscot and cast aluminum balusters with floral motif with polished brass handrails.

Alterations have included the renovation of the former postal workroom on the first floor into a new courtroom. Additional alterations to tenant spaces included the installation or replacement windows, suspended acoustical tile ceilings with fluorescent light fixtures, substantial mechanical systems upgrades, and the reconfiguration of the former postal loading dock at the rear of the building into a new employee entrance from a rear parking lot.

8. Statement of Significance**Applicable National Register Criteria**

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

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

Criteria Considerations

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

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

Area of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Period of Significance

1931-1932- construction

Significant Dates

October 29, 1932- public opening ceremony

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architects

Mahurin, Guy
 Morris, Benjamin
 Simon, Louis—U.S. Treasury

9. Major Bibliographical References**Bibliography**

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

Previous documentation on files (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey

- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record

Primary location of additional data:

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

Name of repository:

GSA, Great Lakes Region, Chicago, IL

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Summary Statement of Significance:

The E. Ross Adair Federal Building and U.S. Courthouse in Fort Wayne, Indiana, is a local landmark that demonstrates Starved Classicism, the predominant federal architectural style of its time. Starved Classicism, which was the product of several divergent influences, is distinguished by its use of planar walls, vertical strip window openings, and simplified square columns. The application of Starved Classicism to federal architecture was guided for more than a quarter century by Louis A. Simon, of the Supervising Architects Office in the Treasury Department. The U.S. Post Office and Courthouse is an excellent example of the work that this influential architect achieved across the United States. In the context of 20th century architectural movements, Starved Classicism represents a powerful expression of the federal image, bridging traditional classical styles to the modern movement that is familiar today.

The U.S. Post Office and Courthouse meets National Register Criteria "C" because it embodies the distinctive characteristics of the Starved Classical style of architecture, and because it has been used exclusively for federal government operations since its completion in 1932.

Resource History and Historic Context:

Since its completion in 1932, the U.S Post Office and Courthouse in Fort Wayne, Indiana, has served as a community landmark and as a highly visible symbol of the federal government's presence in the physical and functional center of the city. The building is also emblematic of the Starved Classical style that characterizes federal architecture of that time, making it unique among the structures that compose Fort Wayne's downtown. At the time of its construction, Fort Wayne was one of the Midwest's most important cities, whose buildings and institutions served as examples for smaller cities throughout the area.

The building was designed in 1931 by local architect Guy Mahurin and consulting architect Benjamin Morris of New York. Funds for the acquisition of the site and the construction of the building were authorized under the Public Buildings Act of 1926, which allocated \$165,000,000 for public buildings over the next eleven years. This followed a period of inactivity from 1913 to 1926, when Congress mandated that no funds would be granted for new public buildings in reaction to charges of waste and fraud in government building construction. Rapid growth of governmental agencies after World War I created a need for new public buildings. This spurt of building activity beginning in 1926 remains relatively undocumented, having been overshadowed by Depression Era building programs.

The role of private architects in the design of public buildings varied in the early 20th century. The Tarsney Act allowed the Treasury Department to select private architects through competitions; prior to its passage in 1892, private architects were barred from designing public buildings. The Act was repealed in 1912 because Congress was convinced that private architects and juried competitions for their selection were too expensive.

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The Supervising Architect's Office designed the public buildings that were authorized between 1912 and 1916, when authorizations for public buildings ceased until 1926.

Hiring private architects became part of the federal pump-priming aimed at economic recovery during the Great Depression. While private architects were the designers of record on some public buildings, during the late 1920's and 1930's, consistency of style, plan, and detailing indicates that their role was subordinate to that of the Supervising Architect's Office. Whether these firms prepared working drawings from designs prepared by the Supervising Architect, or whether they completed design and working drawings using guidelines from the Supervising Architects probably depended upon the size and reputation of the private firm. Several influences combined at this time to produce a new federal building style, of which U.S. Post Office and Courthouse is a valuable example. James Knox Taylor's 1901 announcement of the federal government's return to classicism, guided the design of federal architecture to a simple, distinct neo-classical style. After World War I, controversy emerged between traditionalists and modernists over the merits of classical design versus Bauhaus. At the same time, charges of extravagance in public buildings were resulting in simpler, standardized buildings.

Paul Cret, a graduate of L'Ecole des Beaux-Arts who came to the United States in 1903, combined principles of both traditional and modern architecture to produce design that became much more than the sum of those two components. He felt that the modern emphasis on designing volumes instead of decorating surfaces and on using plain surfaces as a design element was appropriate. He also felt that the federal image required traditional elements. The resulting architecture is characterized by planar walls, vertical strip window openings, and simplified square columns. Facades became detailed by patterns of lights and dark, solid, and void. The interiors of his buildings were examples of beaux-arts principles of grand entries and public spaces and of axiality. His architecture exemplified Starved Classicism and as a style is so strongly identified with federal architecture that it has become the federal style. Cret's influence on public buildings was enhanced by the fact that he was a juror for many architectural competitions, and he served on numerous public commissions.

It is known that James A. Wetmore, Acting Supervising Architect from 1915 to 1933, encouraged the use of classically-designed styles; however, as a lawyer and a judge, Wetmore never actually controlled architectural design. That role was assigned to Louis A. Simon, who was Superintendent of the Architectural Section of the Supervising Architect's Office from 1905 to 1933, and Supervising Architect from 1933 through 1939. He was a well-respected and conservative designer who came from a background in traditional architectural design. Simon was undoubtedly influenced by the traditionalist/modernist conflict, by charges of extravagance in public buildings, and by Paul Cret's superior public architecture. During the 1920's and especially the 1930's, Simon encouraged a style that has been described by Lois Craig in her book, The Federal Presence, as Starved Classicism.

The site of the U.S. Post Office and Courthouse is bounded on Harrison Street on the east, Brackenridge Street on the south, Webster Street on the west, and Douglas Avenue on the north. The site was acquired through condemnation of 21 parcels of land with single-family residences after negotiations failed to arrive at a mutually-agreeable price. Excavation for the building was completed by September 21, 1931. Unlike many

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public buildings of this era, the structural system is reinforced concrete instead of steel frame, saving an estimated \$30,000. All interior wood finish and millwork, including walnut and birch doors, judges benches, courtroom paneling, and cabinets, was subcontracted to the Fort Wayne Builders' Supply Company. The stone, brick and granite work was subcontracted to Mike Sheer and Sons of Huntington, Indiana. The Post Office occupied the building in early October of 1932, and the building was officially opened to the public in an elaborate ceremony on October 29, 1932.

On May 10, 1987, the Indiana State Historic Preservation Office determined that the U.S. Post Office and Courthouse was eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places for its significance in the areas of architecture and politics/government. In the same year, the United States Postal Service vacated its space in the building and was replaced by other Federal tenants.

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Sections 8, 9 Page 11

Major Bibliographical References:

Building Preservation Plan for Federal Building/ U.S. Courthouse, Fort Wayne, Indiana. Prepared by Ratio Architects, Inc., Indianapolis, Indiana.

Craig, Lois, The Federal Presence, Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1974.

Historic Structures Report for Federal Building, U.S. Courthouse, Fort Wayne, Indiana. Prepared by Community Services Collaborative, Boulder, Colorado. Final report, June 30, 1987. Project Principal: John D. Feinberg; Writing and Editing: Allyn Feinberg, John Feinberg, and George Schusler.

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Verbal Boundary Description:

The site of the U.S. Post Office and Courthouse is bounded on Harrison Street on the east, Brackenridge Street on the south, Webster Street on the west, and Douglas Avenue on the north. The dimensions of its facades are the following:

- 211'-4" along Harrison Street (front, east façade)
- 159'-1/4" along Brackenridge Street (south façade)
- 211'-4" along Webster Street (west façade, set back to accommodate a parking lot)
- 159'-1/4" along Douglas Avenue (north façade)

The long axis of the building is perpendicular to the long axis of the block, with the entry façade placed close to Harrison Street. This leaves a large, open area to the rear of the building along Webster Street, which was converted from a grassed area to an asphalt parking lot in the 1986-1987 renovation. A granite plaza along the Harrison Street (front, east) façade extends approximately 50 feet from the face of the building.

The site slopes to the west and southwest, dropping nine feet from the northeast to the southwest corners of the property.

Boundary Justification:

The nominated property includes the entire parcel historically associated with the U.S. Post Office and Courthouse in Fort Wayne, Indiana. Approximately 40% of the site is covered by the building. Most of the open site is to the west of the rear elevation, and is dominated by a parking lot used by the tenants of the building.

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Name of Property: U.S. Post Office and Courthouse
City: Fort Wayne
County: Allen
State: Indiana
Photographer: Conant, Alan
Negative Filed: GSA, Great Lakes Region, Chicago, IL
Date Photographed: November, 1998

Description of Photographs:

U.S. Post Office and Courthouse
1300 West Harrison Street
Fort Wayne, Allen County, Indiana

- Photo No. 1: East façade facing Harrison Street, view looking southwest
- Photo No. 2: East façade facing Harrison Street, view looking northwest
- Photo No. 3: North façade facing Douglas Avenue, view looking south
- Photo No. 4: Exterior, Northeast entrance
- Photo No. 5: Interior, South entrance
- Photo No. 6: Interior, First Floor Hallway, view looking south
- Photo No. 7: Interior, U.S. District Courtroom, Second and Third floors