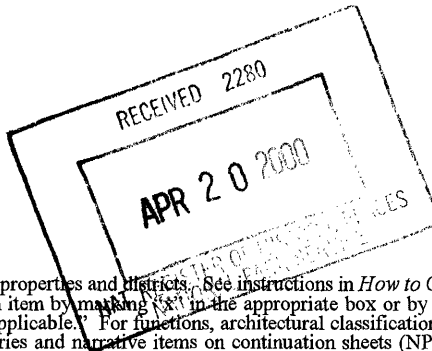


**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**



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**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 Alexandria U.S. Post Office and Courthouse  
other names/site number Alexandria Federal Building

**2. Location**

street & number 515 Murray Street  
city or town Alexandria  
state Louisiana code LA county Rapides Parish code 079 zip code 71301

**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, 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.)

Constance Werner Ramirez  
Signature of certifying official

March 21, 2000  
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.)

Jon Fricker  
Signature of commenting or other official  
Jonathan Fricker  
Deputy SHPO, State of Louisiana

March 1, 2000  
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:)

Edson H. Beall  
Signature of Keeper

Date of Action

5-18-00

5. Classification

Ownership of Property  
(Check as many boxes as apply)

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

Category of Property  
(Check only one box)

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

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
		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 Functions  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Cat:	Sub:
GOVERNMENT	Post Office
GOVERNMENT	Courthouse
GOVERNMENT	Government offices

Current Functions  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Cat:	Sub:
GOVERNMENT	Courthouse
GOVERNMENT	Government offices

7. Description

Architectural Classification  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Modern Movement: Art Deco/Moderne

Materials  
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation STONE: Granite

walls STONE: Limestone

roof ASPHALT

other

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

See Continuation Sheets pp. 5-10

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.
- 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 a 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.)

See Continuation Sheets pp. 11-16.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.) See Continuation Sheet p. 15.

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 # \_\_\_\_\_

Primary location of additional data:

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

Name of repository:

General Services Administration, Greater Southwest Region, Fort Worth, TX  
LSU Archives, Hill Memorial Library, Baton Rouge, LA

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Politics/Government  
Architecture

Period of Significance

1932-1949

Significant Dates

1932, 1933

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Neild, Edward F.—Architect  
Wetmore, James A.—Acting Supervising Architect, Treasury Dept.  
Algernon Blair—Contractor (Montgomery, AL)  
Hadden, W. L.—Superintendent of Construction  
Mizell, Frank—Government Construction Engineer

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of Property 1 acre

UTM REFERENCES

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

1	1   4	5   5   2   7   2   0	3   4   6   3   8   8   0	3		
	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
2				4		

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.) See Continuation Sheet p. 18.

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.) See Continuation Sheet p. 18.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Victoria Green Clow, Cultural Resources Project Manager

organization Geo-Marine, Inc. date December 7, 1999

street & number 550 East Fifteenth Street telephone (972) 423-5480

city or town Plano state TX zip code 75074

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 the SHPO or FPO.)

name General Services Administration, Greater Southwest Region

street & number Fritz G. Lanham Federal Bldg., 819 Taylor St. (7PT) telephone (817) 978-4229

city or town Fort Worth state TX zip code 76102

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 the 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 Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 5

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**Alexandria U.S. Post Office and Courthouse  
Rapides Parish, Louisiana**

## Description

### *Introduction*

Since completion in 1933, the U.S. Post Office and Courthouse has been an important landmark in Alexandria, the county seat of Rapides Parish, Louisiana. Located on Murray Street between Fifth and Sixth streets, the building functions in both a practical and visual capacity, enhancing the Central Business District of Alexandria. Designed by Shreveport architect Edward F. Neild, under the supervision of the Office of the Supervising Architect of the Treasury Department, the building is an excellent example of Depression-era Art Deco architecture. Despite modifications to the interior, the Alexandria U.S. Post Office and Courthouse retains a high degree of integrity in its setting, location, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. As an active postal substation and U.S. District Courthouse, the building retains functional integrity as well.

The historical presence of the Alexandria U.S. Post Office and Courthouse is primarily manifested through the Art Deco architecture, which is revealed in the temple-like central pavilion, the vertical flow of the window bays, the chamfered roof corners at the wings, the incised octagonal plaques, and the bronze spandrels. The exterior is also defined by reed-like pilasters, which enhance the vertical flow of the building while reflecting an element of restrained Neo-Classical influence. While the interior has been modified over the years to better serve the needs of court, post office, and other federal tenants, the U.S. Post Office and Courthouse retains the original postal lobby and monumental carved marble staircase.

### *Exterior*

The Alexandria U.S. Post Office and Courthouse is an impressive, three-story (plus basement and penthouse), Art Deco building. A pearl white granite base supports the smooth-finished, flush joint, light buff limestone-clad walls. Two-story projecting wings flank both sides of the larger, nine-bay central (three-story) portion of the building. The wings, which are a single-bay in length, have square corners that gradually chamfer as they approach the roof line. The structure measures approximately 150-by-77 feet.

Perhaps one of the most interesting features of this building is its entrance. Two single doorways flank a larger, double doorway at the center of the primary (northwest) façade. The double doorway is taller than its two counterparts, extending into the mezzanine level. Written in incised lettering above the central doorway are the words,

□ UNITED □ STATES □ POST □ OFFICE □ & □ COURTHOUSE □

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**Alexandria U.S. Post Office and Courthouse  
Rapides Parish, Louisiana**

**Description (continued)**

The smaller doorways are set under attractive carved American eagle plaques. Set in the transoms of the three entry doorways are cast bronze grilles depicting the various modes of transporting the mail. The central grille depicts the stagecoach (labeled the "The Mail Stage"), the steamship (labeled "The Mail Boat"), and the mail train (labeled "The Mail Train"). The single doorway grilles display delivery by "The Mail Plane" and delivery by packet boat (labeled "The Courier"). The transoms and brass-framed, storefront-type doors are separated by wave-patterned lintels that further enhance the building's main entrance. Granite steps lead to the main entry.

With the exception of the entrance, the first floor and the mezzanine are relatively stark in appearance. First-floor windows are slightly recessed and have a two-over-two, double-hung configuration with Verde Green marble spandrels. The mezzanine windows are one-over-one in configuration. These elements characterize the appearance of the first-floor and mezzanine levels on the primary as well as the secondary elevations.

The second and third floors of the primary (northwest) façade are defined by a series of six reed-like pilasters framed by two unadorned pilasters. These elements are restricted to the central portion of the structure. Set in between the reed-like pilasters are paired two-over-two windows, which are separated by cast bronze spandrels. The spandrels are ornamented with incised octagonal plaques. The octagonal design is also depicted in incised limestone plaques located above the reed-like pilasters and the third-floor corner window bays. The corner plaques are further differentiated by three incised rods, which appear on both sides of the octagonal motif.

A fluted cornice wraps around the third floor of the central pavilion and the second floor of the wings. The building's flat roof is constructed of built-up tar and gravel. A service penthouse is set back several feet from the northwest building face and is visible from primary and side elevations. Its design mimics some of the principal attributes of the northwest elevation, including the fluted pilasters.

The design of the two wings also compliments the ornamentation and symmetry of the central portion of the structure. Lintels, with an incised sunburst motif, embellish each of the second-floor windows on all façades of the wings. An incised reed design also appears at the window surrounds. The windows of the second floor are two-over-two and double-hung; the first-floor and mezzanine windows have the same configuration as the center portion of the northwest elevation. This includes the presence of spandrels.

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**National Register of Historic Places  
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**Alexandria U.S. Post Office and Courthouse  
Rapides Parish, Louisiana**

**Description (continued)**

The building's keystone is located on the north corner of the southwest façade and reads:

**OGDEN L. MILLS  
SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY**

**FERRY K. HEATH  
ASSISTANT SECRETARY**

**JAMES A. WETMORE  
ACTING SUPERVISING ARCHITECT**

**EDWARD F. NEILD  
ARCHITECT**

1932

The southeast (rear) elevation of the U.S. Post Office and Courthouse is very similar in appearance to the northwest building face, with the exception of the entrance area, which is more utilitarian in nature. Designed to serve as a postal loading area, this elevation features a metal canopy and dock area that spans five bays at the center of the structure. Situated above the canopy are five fluted pilasters, which are framed by two unadorned pilasters. The incised bronze and limestone plaques described on the northwest elevation are also present on this building face. A contemporary three-story fire escape is also attached to the exterior southern corner of the southeast façade.

Green spaces, plantings, sidewalks, and other landscape features characterize the site area immediately surrounding the building. Narrow lawn areas border the northwest, northeast, and southwest elevations. Plantings, including a variety of shrubs, are present along these building faces. The southeast elevation serves as a parking and service area and is completely paved. Other site features include original bronze Art Deco lighting standards (northwest entry), a flagpole (located at the northwest lawn area), and flat aluminum handrails (northwest entry).

*Interior*

Like other federal buildings, the Alexandria Post Office and U.S. Courthouse has a rectangular footprint. The first floor area was designed to accommodate the building's postal function, while the second and third floors were allocated to judicial and other government tenant functions. As the spatial needs of the post office increased through the years, the 1933 building ceased to be used as the main post office, although a section of the original postal lobby was retained for use as a downtown

**United States Department of the Interior  
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**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

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**Alexandria U.S. Post Office and Courthouse  
Rapides Parish, Louisiana**

**Description (continued)**

postal substation, and portions of the first floor were reconfigured to accommodate other functions. While the building still serves in a judicial function, the needs of the federal district courts have changed such that the main courtroom and court-related offices have been remodeled. These efforts have resulted in significant alterations to these spaces.

The lobby, the main staircase, and, to a lesser degree, the former postmaster's office and the second- and third-floor public corridors are the most architecturally enriched and historically intact of all the interior spaces. The lobby, which leads to the postal sales area, is entered through three bronze doors. Immediately inside these doors is an entry vestibule that is divided from the main lobby by an aluminum-framed, glass, security wall. Located on the northeast wall of the entry vestibule is an aluminum-paneled door with bronze detailing. The door features four simple octagonal plaques with circular centers. The plaques are vertically aligned and connected through a series of bronze spokes, which also project horizontally. The design is similar in appearance to the limestone octagonal plaques on the third floor of the northwest exterior elevation.

A large and ornamental main staircase, located at the north corner of the entry vestibule, has 1.5-inch-thick Vermont Verde marble treads and stringers, and Vermont Olive marble risers and wall wainscoting. A Vermont Olive marble central newel column and a circular newel post support the open end of the handrail. Horizontal aluminum rails and aluminum fretwork embellish the open end of the handrail, while the wall side of the stairwell is relatively simple. These details add to the Art Deco character of the vestibule and lobby area. A sensitively designed aluminum grille prevents unsecured access to the staircase and upper floors.

The vestibule walls are clad in marble. Two cast-aluminum grilles featuring a corn stalk motif are displayed on the northwest wall between the entry doorways. The ceilings are plastered and the floors are terrazzo. Suspended from the ceiling are three modernistic lighting fixtures characterized by elongated, aluminum-framed cylinders encasing opaque glass panes. Each cylinder displays three concentric rings at the top and bottom of the fixture.

While the postal function of the U.S. Post Office and Courthouse has diminished, the main lobby and postal sales area still retain significant features of their original design. The lobby runs the length of the central portion of the first floor (northeast to southwest) and is slightly elevated from the entry vestibule. The postal sales area (as currently operated) is located in the northeast section of the lobby, occupying a space two bays in length and one bay in width. Two active sales windows are situated on the northwest wall of this area. The northeast and southeast walls serve as space for postal boxes. The postal boxes are metal, set in an area with an oak trim surround. A short corridor extends from the southeast wall of the postal sales area to the loading platform at the rear of the building (the southeast elevation). Additional postal boxes are located along this corridor. While this corridor has finishes similar to the other postal corridor, it was not a part of the building's original floor plan.



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Alexandria U.S. Post Office and Courthouse  
Rapides Parish, Louisiana

Description (continued)

Former postal bays are also situated along the southeast wall of the remaining portion of lobby. This includes, primarily, intact stamp sales windows, which are no longer in use. Reed-like marble pilasters define the individual bays on the northwest and southeast walls. The top of each pilaster exhibits a capital embellished with three satin-finished aluminum reeds set beneath a five-point star. Oak pilasters divide the opaque glass postal windows. Set above each of these windows is an oak-framed, hinged-glass panel that extends to the ceiling. Metal grilles appear to have originally separated the glass panels; however, these have been removed. Original pink marble tables with aluminum frames still grace the postal sales area. The tables' aluminum frames are enriched with rosettes and vertical reeds.

The lobby has simple plaster panel ceilings. Suspended from ceilings are eight original, square, aluminum-framed, opaque glass light fixtures. Three rectangular rings span the top and bottom of each fixture. Floors are green terrazzo with Vermont Verde marble base and borders. The walls are clad in full-height Vermont Olive marble, with the exception of the western portion of the lobby which has marble wainscot and painted plaster walls. Two doorways with marble surrounds penetrate the lobby's northwest wall. The oak doors are identical in their ornamentation to the aluminum door in the entry vestibule. These doors serve as the entry into the postmaster's office and anteroom (Rooms 103 and 104).

Unlike other tenant offices in the U.S. Post Office and Courthouse, the postmaster's office and anteroom retain features of their original design. The walls still display the original three-foot-high oak wainscoting and the corner, reed-like, plaster pilasters. The interior oak passage door (between the anteroom and office) is identical in design to the outer oak doors. Dropped acoustical ceilings, however, have been added, and the original wood flooring is covered by carpet.

The main ceremonial courtroom is located in the center of the second floor. Remodeling efforts have resulted in the loss of much of this space's original fabric. All that remains are original spectator benches and portions of the plaster panel ceiling. Office spaces occupy the remainder of the second and most of the third floors and, for the most part, are defined by a series of perimeter offices opening into straight or L-shaped corridors. These corridors surround a core area that includes the main courtroom, restrooms, and service spaces. Renovation of these areas, particularly the offices, has resulted in the loss of original fabric. With the exception of some wooden furnishings—doors and chair rails—the offices are more contemporary in appearance. The corridors, however, retain their original plaster walls and green terrazzo floors with Vermont marble borders. On the northwest corridor of the second floor the walls also display Vermont marble wainscoting.

*Alterations*

Overall, the Alexandria U.S. Post Office and Courthouse retains a high degree of integrity in its setting, location, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. While modifications have occurred, they have not impacted the building's

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National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
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**Alexandria U.S. Post Office and Courthouse  
Rapides Parish, Louisiana**

**Description (continued)**

ability to convey historic significance as a federal building nor architectural significance as an excellent example of a federally designed, Art Deco-style, public building.

Alterations to the building have primarily been restricted to the interior. In the postal lobby area, building security measures have resulted in the addition of glass curtain walls between the entry vestibule and postal area. A security grille has also been placed over the stairwell doorway in the entry vestibule. Dropped acoustical ceilings and carpeting currently obscure the original ceilings and floors in the postmaster's office and anteroom. A corridor has been added to the postal sales area.

Renovations have been more extensive in the second- and third-floor tenant spaces. The installation of dropped acoustical tile ceilings, contemporary light fixtures and finishes, and carpeting has resulted in the loss of both the volume and character of the original office spaces. Dropped ceilings have also been added to the corridor areas, creating a similar effect. Additionally, a small section of the second-floor southeast corridor has been enclosed. Finally, the second-floor main courtroom has been significantly altered.

Changes to the exterior of the building have been less extensive. Aluminum windows replaced the original wood windows in 1993. The design of the contemporary windows matches the original configuration of the wood units. Other changes have included the addition of a handicapped access ramp and fire escape to the southeast (rear) elevation.

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# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Alexandria U.S. Post Office and Courthouse  
Rapides Parish, Louisiana

## Statement of Significance

### *Summary*

The Alexandria U.S. Post Office and Courthouse is eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places at the local level of significance under Criterion A for its association with the federal construction programs designed to relieve the economic emergency of the Depression years and under Criterion C as an excellent example Art Deco architecture. From construction in 1932-1933 to 1949 (the period of significance), the building provided both a federal presence in Alexandria and federal services, including postal and legal. It was designed and constructed, as were other public buildings built in the 1930s, as part of the federal construction programs enacted to reduce unemployment during the Depression. Architecturally, the building is an excellent example of a form of Art Deco architecture known as “PWA or WPA Moderne” for its use in the design of public buildings during the 1930s.

### *Historical Background and Significance*

In the vicinity of present-day Alexandria, which was officially incorporated in 1819, and the neighboring town of Pineville were the previous sites of a modest, military post and several early Spanish, French, and Native American settlements. At the end of the eighteenth century, two men from Pennsylvania, Alexander Fulton and a Mr. Miller, started a trading company in the area. By 1805, Fulton had surveyed and plotted the town named after his infant daughter, Alexandria. Within two years, the small town of Alexandria became the parish seat of newly created Rapides Parish. Located at the center of the state and on the banks of the Red River, the town of Alexandria quickly became one of the Louisiana’s earliest trade routes. Steamboat navigation—after conquering the rapids of the Red River—allowed for the shipping of goods subsequent to the 1820s. One of the first railroads west of the Mississippi, the 40-mile-long line between Alexandria and Bayou Hauffer, further contributed to the early success of the town. The fertile soils of the Alexandria/Pineville area brought forth the agricultural products—particularly cotton and sugarcane—that were the community’s economic base prior to the Civil War.

During the Civil War, Alexandria was briefly occupied by Federal troops who dismantled some of the area’s railroads, cotton gins, sugar houses, and other structures for the construction of a dam on the Red River. Later, as Federal troops retreated in May 1864, much of Alexandria was set on fire, destroying nearly all of the town. As the war came to a close, Alexandria attempted to rebuild the destroyed town infrastructure and the neglected agricultural base, both of which had been severely impacted.

In 1880, Alexandria had a population of 1,500. By 1910, the population had grown to 11,213 and by 1920 to 17,500. Census figures further indicate that, while the state grew at a rate of 17.2 percent between 1890 and 1930, Alexandria’s

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**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

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**Alexandria U.S. Post Office and Courthouse  
Rapides Parish, Louisiana**

**Statement of Significance (continued)**

population advanced at a rate of 70.9 percent.<sup>1</sup> The growth of the community was likely due in part to pine lumbering, which became one of the chief economic pursuits at the turn of the century. The presence of several large saw mill companies, which sprang up during this period in central and northern Louisiana, precipitated this industry's growth. Cotton and sugarcane, however, continued to be important cultigens of the area agricultural industry. Another reason for the Alexandria's population increase was the community's progressive character. According to Louisiana historian, Alcee Frotier, Alexandria was a popular, modern city, easily accessible from multiple steamer and railway lines, and attracted a number of conventions.

Alexandria's central location and growth likely contributed to the decision to locate a U.S. district court there in 1881. The western district court, created on March 3, 1881 (21 Stat 507), included the parishes of Avoyelles, Bienville, Bossier, Caddo, Calcasieu, Caldwell, Cameron, Catahoula, Claiborne, Concordia, De Soto, East Carroll, Franklin, Grant, Jackson, La Fayette, Lincoln, Madison, Morehouse, Natchitoches, Ouachita, Rapides, Red River, Richland, Sabine, Saint Landry, Saint Martin, Tensas, Union, Vermilion, Vernon, Webster, West Carroll, and Winn. Court sessions were held in Alexandria, Monroe, Opelousas, and Shreveport. Shreveport served as the headquarters for the western district. The remainder of the state comprised the eastern district of Louisiana, with court sessions held in New Orleans.

The first judge to serve in the western district was Alexander Boarman. During his judgeship, Lake Charles became the fifth location for western district court sessions. Judge Boarman was succeeded by George Whitfield Jack in 1917. Seven years later, Judge Jack was succeeded by Benjamin C. Dawkins, Sr. During Dawkins's tenure, a second judgeship was created in the western district in 1938.

It was also during Judge Dawkins' tenure that the U.S. Post Office and Courthouse in Alexandria was constructed. The location where the previous court held sessions in the city is unclear; the previous post office, however, is known to have been located on Johnson Street (between Third and Fourth streets). Plans and specifications for the combined post office and courthouse arrived in Alexandria in August 1932. According to the local paper, *Alexandria Daily Town Talk*, the appropriation for the erection of the structure was secured through the efforts of the late Congressman Aswell and his successor, Congressman John H. Overton.<sup>2</sup> Building designs were prepared by Shreveport architect Edward F. Neild, under the supervision of James A. Wetmore, Office of the Supervising Architect, U.S. Treasury Department.

The building was to be constructed in the block between Fifth and Sixth and Johnson and Murray streets on property purchased by the government at cost of \$75,000. Although the original appropriation allowed for a construction budget of

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<sup>1</sup> Stowe, Albert. "Alexandria, The Heart of Louisiana." In *The Historical Encyclopedia of Louisiana*. Louisiana Historical Bureau, 1952.

<sup>2</sup> *Alexandria Daily Town Talk*, 19 August 1932: pp. 1, 14.

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National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Alexandria U.S. Post Office and Courthouse  
Rapides Parish, Louisiana

## Statement of Significance (continued)

\$275,000, budget cuts resulted in the reduction of funds by 10 percent. Bids received by the Treasury Department on September 9, 1932, were consider in excess of the amount available; the lowest bid submitted was \$248,274. Less than two weeks later, the *Alexandria Daily Town Talk* reported that architect Edward Neild had been called to Washington to revise his original plans.<sup>3</sup> According to the same article (dated September 21), the mayor had been informed by Mr. Neild "that he had in mind certain changes which would not materially alter the plans, which would be sufficient to reduce the price to the figure desired." New bids were submitted to the Treasury Department on October 27, in accordance with the revised plans. Algernon Blair Construction Company of Montgomery, Alabama, the lowest bidder at \$217,774, was selected as the contractor.

Completion of the building was scheduled for no later than January 24, 1934. Construction proceeded rapidly, and by December 30, 1933, the U.S. Post Office and Courthouse was open. Government construction engineer Frank Mizell ensured that the building met government specifications, and W. L. Hadden served as Algernon Blair's superintendent of construction. Final cost of the building (including land) was \$315,000. Locally, the building was touted as "one of the most ornate post offices and federal buildings in the south," with a design that was described as "modern and contemporary."<sup>4</sup>

The construction of the Alexandria U.S. Post Office and Courthouse in 1932-1933 was not simply a reflection of the growing needs of a city or federal court. As one of more than 1,300 public buildings built under the auspices of the Office of the Supervising Architect of the Treasury Department during the early 1930s, the Alexandria building was an example of the government's use of federal construction projects to stimulate employment during the Depression. From 1926 to 1931, a series of legislation was enacted that culminated into this massive public building program. The Public Buildings Act of 1926 served as the catalyst, authorizing the construction of a number of buildings in communities previously without federal buildings. In 1928 appropriations allotted under the 1926 act were increased in response to U.S. Post Office and Department of the Treasury reports indicating a need for more space. As the effects of the Depression began to be felt all over the country, the government released additional funds in 1930 and 1931 for public building projects. During 1931 the Federal Employment Stabilization Act was passed to further stimulate the economy. This act permitted the president and congress to authorize additional appropriations for construction projects in order to facilitate employment. The 1930 and 1931 appropriations, coupled with the Federal Stabilization Act, were reflective of how the government used public works projects to combat the early years of the economic depression. The following statement is indicative of this trend:

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<sup>3</sup> *Alexandria Daily Town Talk*, 21 September 1932: p. 1.

<sup>4</sup> *Alexandria Daily Town Talk*, 18 October 1933: pp. 1, 9; 29 December 1933: pp. 1, 5.

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**Statement of Significance (continued)**

. . . [W]ith a view of relieving countrywide unemployment the Secretary of the Treasury and Postmaster General, in the selection of towns or cities in which buildings are to be constructed, shall endeavor to distribute the project equitably throughout the country so far as may be consistent with the needs of the public service [48 Stat 1062].<sup>5</sup>

The economic impact of the construction of the Alexandria U.S. Post Office and Courthouse on the city of Alexandria is not clear. However, when plans were received for the new building in August 1932, an *Alexandria Daily Town Talk* article suggested that,

[a] large labor force will be employed on this building, which will likely include many local people. Employment of Alexandria people and the expenditure of such a large sum of money will be of especial benefit to Alexandria at this time, when so many people are out of employment.<sup>6</sup>

On a national level, building projects such as the Alexandria U.S. Post Office and Courthouse were responsible for pumping over \$700 million into the national economy during the Depression. These types of early efforts served as predecessors to the Public Works Administration (PWA) and Works Progress Administration (WPA).

Since completion in 1933, the Alexandria U.S. Post Office and Courthouse has continuously served the postal and federal judicial needs of Alexandria. At the building's opening in December 1933, Les A. Furregano was postmaster. He was succeeded by Samuel Hass in 1934. In 1942, James L. Treadway became postmaster and served through World War II and until 1952. The first judge to serve in the building was Benjamin Dawkins, Sr. In 1938, a second judgeship was created, and a year later Gaston Louis Porterie was given this appointment. Both Judge Porterie and Judge Dawkins served until 1953. They were succeeded by Benjamin Dawkins, Jr., and Edwin F. Hunter, Jr.

*Architectural Significance*

The Alexandria U.S. Post Office and Courthouse was one of the many public buildings across the nation designed under the auspices of the Office of the Supervising Architect for the Treasury Department. For more than 75 years (from the 1850s to 1939), this office was responsible for the design and construction of such public buildings as custom houses, post offices, and courthouses. These buildings they created were not only designed to serve a federal function but to express the permanence and presence of the federal government in the cities and communities in which the buildings were located. Throughout its early history, the Office of the Supervising Architect had employed a variety of architectural styles to

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<sup>5</sup> Statute as cited in Kolva, J., and S. Franks. *Historic U.S. Post Offices in New Mexico, 1900-1941*. National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form, 1990.

<sup>6</sup> *Alexandria Daily Town Talk*, 19 August 1932: pp. 1, 14.

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**Alexandria U.S. Post Office and Courthouse  
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**Statement of Significance (continued)**

convey this presence. In the 1870s and 1880s, Gothic and Romanesque styles were popular. At the turn of the century, however, classically inspired styles such as Greek Revival, Classical Revival, and Beaux-Arts began to predominate. These styles were thought to express democratic values and to reflect the government's assertion that "government buildings should be monumental and beautiful, and should represent the ideals of democracy and high standards of architectural sophistication in their communities."<sup>7</sup>

While these ideals continued to be applied for many years, the expense of constructing "monumental and beautiful" buildings became a concern. In 1913, federal construction policy measured the cost of constructing post offices against both the postal receipts taken in by a city or community and the value of the real estate where the building was to be built. Following the passage of the Public Buildings Act in 1926, the evaluation of the cost of constructing public buildings coincided with a new architectural movement that promoted modernism. As the nation entered into the Depression, the Treasury Department used restrained—or "starved"—versions of classically inspired styles of architecture in its designs. At the same time, private architects hired to design public buildings for the Treasury Department and other government agencies combined stately neoclassical Beaux Arts designs with a form of ornamentation referred to as Zigzag Moderne.<sup>8</sup> The result of these two combined influences was a classically balanced version of Art Deco architecture known as "PWA or WPA Moderne." The term "PWA or WPA" comes from the heavy use of the style in government-sponsored public building programs during the 1930s. PWA or WPA Moderne has been described as,

. . . pristine, formally balanced compositions employing piers rather than columns, with windows arranged as vertical recessed panels, and smooth surfaces for interiors and exteriors. Smooth stone, polished marble, and granite often face these buildings which are sprinkled with stylized embellishments. Additional decorative features may include ornamental metal-work, restrained sculptural decorations, murals, and pictorial friezes.<sup>9</sup>

The Alexandria U.S. Post Office and Courthouse is a wonderful example of this Depression-era form of Art Deco architecture. The building's vertical emphasis, ornamental motifs and plaques, fluted pilasters and cornice, entry metal grilles, and smooth stone walls are all hallmarks of this style.

Although the American Institute of Architects campaigned for the government to contract out the design of public buildings throughout the 1920s and 1930s, it was largely unsuccessful except in a limited number of cases. Designed by Shreveport

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<sup>7</sup> Boland, Beth. *How to Apply the National Register Criteria to Post Offices*. National Register Bulletin 13. Washington D.C.: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Interagency Resources Division, 1994.

<sup>8</sup> Cohen, Judith Singer. *Cowtown Moderne: Art Deco Architecture of Fort Worth*. College Station, Texas: Texas A&M University Press, 1986: p. 14.

<sup>9</sup> Cohen, Judith Singer. *Cowtown Moderne: Art Deco Architecture of Fort Worth*. College Station, Texas: Texas A&M University Press, 1986: p. 15.

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**Statement of Significance (continued)**

Architect Edward F. Neild, the Alexandria U.S. Post Office and Courthouse was one of those unusual cases. Mr. Neild, a graduate of Tulane University School of Engineering (1906), designed a number of courthouses (both federal and parish) during his 47-year career.

As Acting Supervising Architect, James A. Wetmore oversaw the design of the Alexandria building. He served as Acting Supervising Architect for the Treasury Department from 1912 to 1913 and then from 1915 to 1933. The Alexandria U.S. Post Office and Courthouse was one of more than a thousand buildings constructed during his tenure.

Mr. Wetmore began his career at the Treasury Department as a court stenographer. Although he later held the position of Supervising Architect, Mr. Wetmore was a lawyer and not an architect. Historical documents indicate that he approached his position as an administrator rather than as a designer. Louis A. Simon, Superintendent of the Architectural Division, assumed many of the architectural duties of the office, including the architectural direction of office building designs. Mr. Simon's adherence to traditional (classical) styles of architecture, albeit restrained, was reflected in the 1920s- and 1930s-era buildings constructed by the Treasury Department. Mr. Simon, an M.I.T. graduate, served as the Superintendent of the Architectural Division from 1905 to 1933, when he succeed Mr. Wetmore as Supervising Architect.



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**Verbal Boundary Description**

Lots 1-4, Block 38, Old Town, Alexandria.

**Boundary Justification**

All property lines are as they existed at the time of the building’s construction.