

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**  
FOR FEDERAL PROPERTIES

FOR NPS USE ONLY  
RECEIVED NOV 27 1978  
DATE ENTERED JUN 14 1979

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

United States Post Office, Courthouse and Custom House

AND/OR COMMON

Main Post Office

**2 LOCATION**

Fronts the North side of Rodney Square

STREET & NUMBER

11th and Market Streets

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Wilmington

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

VICINITY OF

One

STATE

DE

CODE

10

COUNTY

New Castle

CODE

0023

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

**4 AGENCY**

REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS: (If applicable)

U. S. Postal Service - Eastern Region - Real Estate and Buildings Department

STREET & NUMBER

1845 Walnut Street - P. O. Box 8601

CITY, TOWN

Philadelphia

STATE

PA 19101

VICINITY OF

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,

REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

Rodney Square

CITY, TOWN

Wilmington

STATE

DE

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

No Nomination to Date

DATE

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

## 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The property is in the center of the Wilmington business district, which is a major business and financial center. It fronts the north side of Rodney Square which is bounded by the Public Library, Custom House, and other public buildings. The square is a beautifully landscaped park and environmentally and aesthetically enhances that area of downtown Wilmington. Our research indicates "that in planning the building, the architects, aside from producing a building practical and modern in all respects, kept in mind as of utmost importance the architectural beauty and unity of Rodney Square."

The first and second stories forming the main block of the building are approximately the same height as the Library. The third floor is contained in a clear story emerging from the primary mass of the building and set back in such a way as not to interfere with the general low appearance of the structure necessary to the balance of the square. The site is hampered by differences in site elevation which limits ingress and egress to vehicles in the maneuvering area in the rear of the building.

The building is a three-story cut stone structure with design features typical of government thinking in that era with reference to utility and graceful lines. The structure resembles the features of neo-classical design. The front is ornamental in design with six large stone pillars across the main entrance flanked by bronze lights on each side of the front entrance steps up from Eleventh Street.

There are 104,669 sq. ft. of gross building area (including basement) on a site of 56,120 sq. ft., approximately 27,300 per 1st floor level. Exterior walls are of cut stone around steel beams; interior walls and ceilings are plaster; the roof is constructed of composition and tile; spread footings for the foundations; the majority of flooring is poured concrete with hallways of marble block.

The present floor plan differs from the original construction only in that several 2nd and 3rd floor offices have been developed with partitions from an original large open area. Exterior walls of the court are in cream-colored brick. There are no unusual or unique subterrestrial features.

The public lobby is enhanced by marble columns, and marble floors and two murals located above each end of the lobby. New lockboxes were installed in the Postal lobby in 1960. Air conditioning was installed in the first floor in 1961. The second and third story offices are provided with individual air-conditioning units, ie., judges' chambers, courtrooms, etc. A medical unit was also later provided (1970) on the 3rd floor.

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD		AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW				
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)		
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION				

SPECIFIC DATES Designed 1933-5 Construction Complete Aug. 1937 BUILDER/ARCHITECT Designer-Assoc. Fed. Archs.-Wilmington Construction-Irwin & Leighton, Phila.

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The personality which lends historic significance to the property is the fact that it unifies Rodney Square. Rodney Square being named after Caesar Rodney who rode to Philadelphia in 1776 to vote for the Declaration of Independence and was also Delaware's first chief executive.

The following quotations are from a determination made by the State Architectural Historian supporting the SHPO opinion:

"Architecturally, the building reflects some fine neo-classical detailing on the exterior and very interesting Art Moderne detailing on the interior. The finest exterior spaces are the lobby, still in use for postal service, and the main courtroom, now abandoned".

"One of the finest spaces in the building is the main courtroom. This room retains a great deal of its original Art Moderne detailing, including the judge's bench, jury box, lawyer's tables, and chandeliers. Behind the judge's bench is a large WPA painting. Art Moderne detailing is also found in the lobby of the building. Of note here is the wall of stations for the postal clerks, and the two WPA paintings. This space is still retained for postal activity. The City of Wilmington feels strongly about its retaining this use".

"As one of the few major neo-classical buildings remaining within the City of Wilmington, I feel it possesses architectural integrity worthy of nomination to the National Register. It is my feeling that the clause stating that the building must be more than fifty years old to be placed on the National Register should be waived because there are so few buildings in Wilmington remaining which reflect its period of architecture".

"The position of this building on Rodney Square heightens its architectural significance. Rodney Square and the buildings fronting on it create an area with a strong sense of architectural identity. It is feasible to create a viable district nomination based on the above considerations".

"There are, as noted, three WPA paintings contained within the old Post Office. At a SHPO meeting just a few years ago, we heard the counselor to the Administrator for Fine Arts and Historic Preservation of the General Services Administration, ask all state staffs to work to preserve the WPA and other GSA fine art. I think that their presence in this building is noteworthy".

Continued on Attached Sheet

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Wilmington Public Library - Rodney Square  
 U. S. Postal Service - Reference File  
 Director/State Historic Preservation Office  
 Hall of Records - Dover, DE 19901

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 1.29

UTM REFERENCES

A	1 8	4 5 3 7 6 0	4 3 9 9 5 6 0	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

### VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The property is fronted on the North side of Eleventh Street - bounded by Twelfth Street to the North (rear) and Market Street (West) and King Street (East).

(Approach Plan attached)

### LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

# 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME/TITLE

Charles A. Preston, Jr. - Realty Mgmt. & Acquisition Program Manager

ORGANIZATION

U. S. Postal Service - Eastern Regional Office

DATE

8-23-78

STREET & NUMBER

1845 Walnut Street - P. O. Box 8601

TELEPHONE

215-597-9722

CITY OR TOWN

Philadelphia, PA 19101

STATE

# 12 CERTIFICATION OF NOMINATION

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER RECOMMENDATION

YES

NO

NONE

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

In compliance with Executive Order 11593, I hereby nominate this property to the National Register, certifying that the State Historic Preservation Officer has been allowed 90 days in which to present the nomination to the State Review Board and to evaluate its significance; The evaluated level of significance is  National  State  Local.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

TITLE D. L. Warner, Director, Office of Real Estate

DATE 11-1-78

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

ATTEST Emma Jane Saye  
 REGIONAL REVIEW COORDINATOR

DATE 6-14-79

DATE 6-11-79

8 - SIGNIFICANCE (Continued)

"Historically, perhaps, the building possesses less significance than architecturally. However, as a federal court house it was the scene of several famous Delaware cases including the Copeland bankruptcy case, the largest bankruptcy case in the State of Delaware".

"In light of the above considerations, I would deem the Wilmington Post Office to be eligible for consideration to the National Register".

