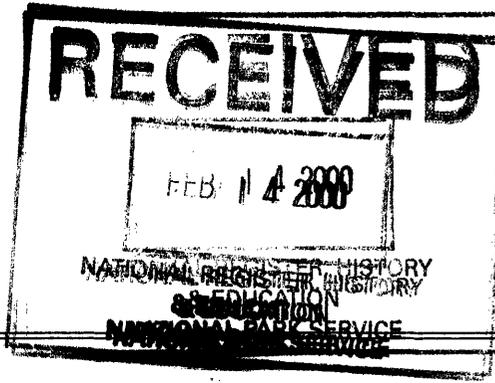


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM



246

1. Name of Property

historic name United States Post Office and Courthouse

other names/site number Federal Building and United States Courthouse

2. Location

street & number 111 North Fifth not for publication N/A
city or town Muskogee vicinity N/A
state Oklahoma code OK county Muskogee code 101 zip code 74401

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this X 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.
(N/A See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Constance Werner Ramirez
Signature of certifying official

February 2, 2000
Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Bob Blackman
Signature of commenting or other official

11-15-99
Date

Oklahoma Historical Society/SHPO
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 Keeper

Date of Action

Edson H. Beall 3/24/00

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

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u> 1 </u>	<u> 0 </u> buildings
<u> 0 </u>	<u> 0 </u> sites
<u> 0 </u>	<u> 0 </u> structures
<u> 0 </u>	<u> 0 </u> objects
<u> 1 </u>	<u> 0 </u> Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

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

 N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: <u>GOVERNMENT</u>	Sub: <u>post office</u>
<u>GOVERNMENT</u>	<u>courthouse</u>
<u>GOVERNMENT</u>	<u>government office</u>
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions.)

Cat: <u>GOVERNMENT</u>	Sub: <u>courthouse</u>
<u>GOVERNMENT</u>	<u>government office</u>
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions.)

Classical Revival

Materials (Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation Stone:Limestone

roof Synthetics

walls Stone:Limestone

other _____

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.
- 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.)

- 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.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

Politics/Government

Architecture

Period of Significance 1911-1949

8. Statement of Significance (Continued)

Significant Dates 1915
1938

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above.)
N/A

Cultural Affiliation N/A

Architect/Builder Taylor, John Knox, Supervising Architect, U.S. Treasury Department (1915)
J.E. & A.L. Pennock Construction, Contractor (1915)
Simon, Louis A., Supervising Architect, U.S Treasury Departement (1938)
Manhattan Construction Company, Contractor (1938)

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

(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 # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data

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

Name of repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Less than One (1) Acre

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	<u>15</u>	<u>285220</u>	<u>3958560</u>	3	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
2	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	4	<u> </u>	<u> </u>

N/A 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 Cynthia Savage, Architectural Historian

organization Savage Consulting for Geo-Marine, Inc. (Plano, TX) date June 1999

street & number Route 1, Box 116 telephone (405) 459-6200

city or town Pocasset state Oklahoma zip code 73079

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

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Narrative Description:

SUMMARY

The U.S. Post Office and Courthouse in downtown Muskogee, Oklahoma, is a five-story, limestone, Classical Revival style, public building with a full basement. Built between 1911 and 1915, the building appears to be only four stories in height. The fifth floor, not readily visible from the exterior, was originally storage space. In 1937-1938, an addition was constructed on the rear elevation that spanned the length of the back side and widened the sides of the building by 32 feet. Additionally, the storage space on the fifth floor was converted to office space. Above the first floor, the floors are organized around a central, open lightwell with corridors lining the lightwell on the north, east, and south sides. Originally, the west corridor was also adjacent to the lightwell; however during the 1938 expansion of the building, the west corridor was moved to allow for office space immediately adjacent to the lightwell. Office space circles the building on the outside of the corridors. The building originally had a low, hipped, standing seam, copper roof. The low, hipped roof is now covered by a white, single ply, membrane covering. The roof of the 1938 addition is flat with asphalt composition covering. The walls are clad with rectangular, buff colored Indiana limestone with similar colored terra cotta accents. The building is topped by a highly decorative terra cotta cornice. The cornice is supported by Doric pilasters on the fourth floor. The third and fourth levels are separated by a full limestone entablature. The entablature is supported by three-story high, Composite Corinthian columns and pilasters on the north, east, and south elevations. Level with the bottom of the Composite capitals, a stringcourse wraps around the north, east, and south elevations. While the cornice, entablature, and stringcourse extend along the north and south sides and only wrap around the corners of the west elevation, the 1937-1938 addition is delineated from the original building by the lack of columns and pilasters. The first floor is elevated on a base and approached by ceremonial steps in a classical manner on the three entry elevations. The fenestration pattern is symmetrical, in keeping with the Classical Revival style. The doors are nonhistoric, double, glazed slab with aluminum frames with large, replacement, rectangular transoms. The doors have been covered with reflective film. All the windows are nonoriginal, single-hung windows with mill finish aluminum frames. The rectangular windows are covered with a reflective film and have classical ornamentation consisting of Doric pilasters and an entablature. Generally, the first floor windows are divided into four large panes. The transom space above the first floor windows has been filled with divided, opaque panels. The second floor windows have four large panes topped by large rectangular transoms. On the north and east elevations, the second floor transom windows are divided. While the third-story windows on the south and west sides match the second floor windows, the majority of the third-story windows on the north and east elevations

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are smaller, four-pane windows. The fourth-story windows appear to be smaller but match the second- and third-story windows. Surrounding the second- and third-story windows on the north and east elevations is cast iron grillwork. The dominating decorative elements of the building are the Corinthian columns and pilasters on the north, east, and south elevations. The exterior of the Federal Building has been modified by the creation of a handicap ramp on the northeast corner and the replacement of the windows and doors. The building is situated in downtown Muskogee. Many of the buildings in downtown Muskogee, while retaining some historic fabric, have been modernized and, thus, do not maintain their historic integrity. Despite the changes to downtown Muskogee and the minor exterior modifications, the U.S. Post Office and Courthouse in Muskogee retains a high degree of integrity of setting, location, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

EXTERIOR DESCRIPTION

The U.S. Post Office and Courthouse is an excellent example of the Classical Revival style. Containing five floors plus a basement, the building gives the appearance of only four stories. In 1937-1938, an addition was constructed on the back of the building, and the former storage space on the fifth floor was converted to office space. The upper four floors are organized around a lightwell with corridors ringing the lightwell on the north, east, and south sides. Office space is off the corridor away from the lightwell except on the west side of the building. During the 1938 expansion, the west corridor was moved west, away from the lightwell, to allow for the construction of additional office space immediately adjacent to the lightwell. The limestone-clad walls support a low-pitched, hipped roof covered by a single ply, white membrane over the original building and a flat, asphalt composition roof over the 1938 addition. A terra cotta cornice tops the building. The cornice is ornamented with anthemion finials, ogees, and round medallions engraved with an "S" imposed on a "U." Below this are the fourth floor windows, which are separated from each other by Doric pilasters and from the lower level windows by the limestone entablature. The entablature features dentils and a plain frieze. Extending around the north, east, and south elevations is a stringcourse which is level with the bottom of the capital at the third floor. The fenestration pattern is symmetrical. All first, second, third, fourth, and fifth floor windows and doors have been replaced and are covered with reflective film. The doors on the north, east, and south elevations are now double, glazed slab with aluminum frames and large rectangular transoms. The windows are now aluminum, single-hung windows. Most of the original wood basement windows remain intact. In addition to decorative cast iron grillwork surrounding the second- and third-story windows on the south and east elevations, the building is ornamented by decorative stonework. Dominating the decorative features of the building are the Composite Corinthian columns and pilasters on the north, south, and east elevations of the original building.

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The west elevation and the 1938 portions of the north and south elevations are not as highly ornamented but are similar with matching materials and some decorative details. Located around the entries on the north and south elevations and wrapping around the southeast corner of the building are small, landscaped areas containing trees and shrubs. The lawns have a low, concrete retaining wall. Except for these small expanses of lawn, a concrete sidewalk encircles the building on the north, east, and south sides. The east elevation fronts onto North Fifth Street, the north side to West Broadway, and the south elevation to West Okmulgee. To the rear, the west elevation, is a north-south paved drive and short alley separating the Federal Building from the other commercial buildings on the block. The Federal Building is the only building on the block to face onto Fifth Street. The remaining buildings front onto either West Broadway or West Okmulgee with an east-west alley dividing these buildings.

The façade of the building is the east elevation and is divided into five bays. Two narrow, relatively unadorned bays flank two narrow, ornamented bays which flank a large, central bay. The three innermost bays slightly project from the two outer bays. The first story of the entire east side is elevated on a base, allowing the basement windows to be fully visible on this elevation. The basement windows are obscured by cast iron security bars. An expanse of granite steps extends the length of the central bay and provides access to a long landing. This landing gives way to another flight of centrally located steps which provides access to the primary entry. Located on the long landing are four cast iron light standards highly ornamented with acanthus leaves. Metal hand-rails are located on either side of the door and extend to the sidewalk below. Dominating the east elevation are 10, three-story Composite Corinthian columns and four Composite Corinthian pilasters in the three innermost bays. The fenestration within the central bay is recessed between the columns. The primary entry to the building is centrally located. The double, glazed slab doors have black aluminum frames and two large rectangular transoms. The first floor windows are replacement aluminum windows with four large panes topped by two obscured panels. Both the windows and door have been covered with reflective film. Above the door and the two windows flanking the entry are elaborate carved panels. The two flanking panels have garlands with an eagle looking towards the entry. The central panel has two eagles, draped with garland, looking to a central cartouche engraved with "United States Post Office and Courthouse." Also on the first floor, behind the columns, are secondary, one-story, Doric pilasters which support an entablature which also serves as the window head for the first floor windows. Surrounding the nonoriginal, four-pane, aluminum, second floor windows and transoms and four-pane, aluminum, third floor windows is ornamental cast iron grillwork. Within the center of the ornamental cast iron grillwork are three sets of four cloudy panes. Centrally located on the frieze of the entablature between the third and fourth floors is aluminum lettering spelling "Federal Building – U. S. Courthouse." Above the entablature, the fourth floor windows are separated by Doric pilasters which support the highly ornamented, terra cotta cornice. The fourth floor windows have a

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rectangular, limestone surround. Flanking the large, central bay are two narrow bays delineated by Composite Corinthian pilasters. Within these bays are narrow windows at the first and second floors. The first floor windows are a two-pane window topped with an obscure pane. The second floor windows are four-pane windows. Above the first floor windows is an ornamental stone panel with bas-relief swag. Between the Composite capitals of the pilasters in these bays are triple, false grill panels. Above the entablature, which continues around the building, are Doric pilasters which match the pilasters in the central bay. Instead of a fourth level window, the two inner flanking bays have stone shields. On the north bay, the shield has a flying eagle, ready to catch prey and on the south side is a sitting eagle with its wings spread. The outside bays are less ornamented than the inner bays. The cornice, entablature, and stringcourse continue along these bays, and the windows match the other windows in the elevation. The first floor windows have Doric pilasters along the sides and a full entablature as a window head. The second, third, and fourth floor windows are unadorned. A flagpole and concrete pad are located in the landscape area off the southeast corner of the building.

The original south elevation was symmetrical, with seven openings on the first, second, and fourth floors. The second floor courtroom windows extend through the third floor. The 1938 addition added an additional 32 feet on the western side of the south elevation. This added two additional window openings on the second, third, and fourth floors. On the first floor, an overhead door was added. Visible on the westernmost section of the south elevation is the watertable, which acts as a base for the Corinthian capitals on the façade. Similar to the front elevation, the south elevation was originally divided into three bays with two, even, narrow bays flanking a larger, slightly protruding central bay. The 1938 addition disrupted the even proportion of the flanking bays, making the western bay larger than the east. The windows on the south elevation match the windows on the east elevation, except for the second floor windows which extend through both the second and third floors as windows for the 1915 courtroom. Unlike the north and east elevations, the second and third floor windows in the central bay on the south side are not surrounded by cast iron grillwork. Both the first and second floor windows have Doric pilasters on the sides and entablatures serving as the window heads. Above the second floor windows are triple, false grill panels. The central bay's fourth floor fenestration is ornamented identical to the east elevation with Doric pilasters separating the windows and rectangular limestone surrounds. Highlighting the south elevation are six, three-story Composite Corinthian pilasters in the central bay and the ornamented terra cotta cornice, full limestone entablature, and stringcourse which continue across the south elevation. The easternmost flanking bay on the south elevation is identical to the outer bays on the east elevation. The western bay has been expanded to include an overhead door on the first floor and matching windows on the second, third, and fourth floors. The terra cotta cornice and limestone entablature have

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been continued along the western bay so there is no disruption in these decorative elements. The entry is centrally located within the central bay. The entry is accessed by a wide expanse of stairs. A low, concrete, landscape wall extends from the steps. On both corners of the steps and concrete wall are cast iron lamp standards matching the lamps on the front.

The west elevation is the rear elevation. Extending the length of the elevation, the entire rear side was constructed in the 1938 expansion of the building. Elements of the original rear elevation, including the terra cotta cornice, are visible from the roof of the 1938 addition. The current west elevation is symmetrical with very little ornamentation. The terra cotta cornice, entablature, and stringcourse continue only around the corners of the west elevation. The first floor has 15 large openings covered with louvers. The fourth floor has 15 windows which match the windows on the other elevations. On the second floor, the central five windows, which open onto the 1930s courtroom, are larger than the five flanking windows. Although the second floor central windows are larger than the other windows, they do not extend through the third floor. The third floor has five windows on each side, with the central section being unadorned.

The north elevation is similar to the east and south elevations. Originally, it also was divided into three bays with symmetrical placement of windows. Matching the south elevation, the 1938 addition added windows and an overhead door to the west bay. The majority of decorative the elements and features on the north elevation match the south elevation: the six, three-story Composite Corinthian pilasters supporting the limestone entablature; the terra cotta cornice capping the building; the stringcourse mid-level with the third-story windows; the Doric pilasters between the fourth floor windows; the classical treatment to the windows in the central bay and the first floor windows in the flanking bays; the visible watertable at the westernmost section; the wide expanse of steps leading to the central entry; and the two cast iron light standards on the corners of the steps. One of the defining differences between the south and north elevations is the cast iron grillwork surrounding the second-and third-story windows on the north elevation. Due to the courtroom windows on the south elevation, it does not have the grillwork. The windows in the north elevation's central bay are similar but not identical to the windows on the east elevation. The replacement first floor windows on the north side match the east elevation. The nonoriginal aluminum windows on the second floor have two sets of three vertical panes separated by a narrow, undivided middle pane. The third-story windows have two sets of two panes separated by a narrow, vertical, single pane. Matching the east elevation entry, the double, glazed slab door is also topped by an elaborate, carved panel with eagles draped with garland and a cartouche inscribed with "United States Post Office and Courthouse." The remaining windows on the north elevation match those on the south elevation. Another differentiating feature between the north and south sides is the new, concrete, handicap ramp on the northeast corner. The ramp slopes down in front of

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the east elevation and curves back around to a former basement window on the north elevation. The former basement window now contains a glazed slab door with aluminum frame. The ramp has a black, metal railing which extends down the course of the ramp and a black, metal barrier around the upper edges of the sloped, below-grade ramp.

Above the first floor, the interior of the building is organized around an open lightwell. The lightwell, part of the original construction, is constructed more modestly and with less ornamentation than the street exteriors. Buff colored brick is used instead of limestone, and the entablature and cornice are simplified. Originally, the upper corridors were single loaded (except at the north end toilets) so that the lightwell was visible and provided daylight to the surrounding offices which made extensive use of transoms and relights. In 1972, the original windows in the lightwell were replaced with mill finish aluminum, four-pane windows and mechanical grills. Additionally, the post office workroom skylights were removed and a new, light colored, single ply roofing was installed. In 1961, the elevator shaft was extended to the fifth floor and the shaft windows were infilled with brick. When the elevator shaft was extended, the use of terra cotta on the cornice and parapet cap was not continued.

INTERIOR DESCRIPTION

In the mid-1960s, the post office moved out of the building. At that time, the first floor was turned largely into office space with offices in the north and south corners of the originally lobby. Recently, the first floor lobby was rehabilitated to much of its former glory. Extending the full north-south length of the building, the lobby is organized by the structural bays with the structural columns articulated as marble clad pilasters with ornamental plaster capitals. Beams are also clad with ornamental plaster. The ceiling bays are divided into classically inspired ornamental plaster coffers with a central rosette. Each ceiling bay is lit by a large, metal and white glass faceted pendent. The marble floor, also organized by the structural bays, is enriched by the use of five different marbles. The flooring pattern follows the structural bay using Tennessee Meadow Gray for the field and Tennessee Meadow Pink and Tennessee Dark Gray for borders and strips. In the center of the bays are disc and diamond designs patterned with the above stones and featuring Greek Tinos and Italian Levanto marbles. The border, strip, and disc/diamond marbles continue as flooring for the main stairways and borders and features on the upper level corridors. The center entry is flanked by two marble stairways with heavy carved wood balustrades that extend to the fourth floor. The stairs are marked with two, square, Composite Corinthian, engaged columns. Also within the center entry are four, freestanding, marble, Composite Corinthian columns. A modern, glass enclosed entry has been constructed just inside the entry for security reasons. The remainder of the first floor remains as modern office space.

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The 1915 second floor courtroom is located on the south side of the building. The two-story room has cream colored plaster walls that are organized by window/entry bays and pilasters that are headed with groin arches at the ceiling. Each wall arch has a central, lunette grill flanked by two, quarter arc grilles. The lunette at the center arch on the east above the judge's platform contains an eagle, and the one on the west has a clock. The flanking lunettes contain a federally inspired shield and ribbon motif. The south wall is ornamented by five windows, and the north wall has five, double vinyl covered, inner doors and five Red Gum, wood doors on the outside. The door transoms have been infilled. Above four of the doors are plaster inscription panels. The raised inscription panels read from west (left) to east (right): "Justice Is the Great Interest of Men of Earth," "With Malice Toward None, with Charity for All," "Conscience Is the Chamber of Justice," and "It Is Impossible to Be Just If One Is Not Generous." The center door is ornamented with an eagle. Behind the judge's bench is a wood panel door with a wood pediment. On the opposite wall is another wood panel door; this one does not have a pedimented surround. The ornamental ceiling is a design composed of large connected circles, octagons, and diamonds. Modifications to the room include new stem-mounted, fluorescent lighting; new carpet; new court furniture; and replacement benches. The historic wood benches are from the Federal Building and U.S. Courthouse in McAlester.

On the west side of the second floor, another two-story courtroom, not as elaborate as the original, was constructed as part of the 1938 expansion. This courtroom is of a similar size and proportion to the 1915 courtroom. The Red Gum wood wainscot extends to five feet, above which painted plaster walls rise to a cornice with a barrel vault ceiling. The 1938 courtroom has restrained use of ornamental plaster compared to the 1915 courtroom. The 1938 courtroom utilizes a taller wainscot and, historically, indirectly lit ceiling to ornament the room. Two pairs of outer wood and inner upholstered entry doors are located at the original building's western window openings, now adorning the east wall of the courtroom. The west wall has five large windows with drapes. Along the south wall are three wood panel doors. The center door, behind the judge's desk, is set off by two Doric pilasters supporting the cornice. Directly above the door is a bronze Federal seal. Sitting on the cornice is an elaborate plaster eagle with spread wings. The north wall has no openings. Original furnishings include the judge's desk, clerk's table, and cast metal lamps; benches are dated 1938 but are darker than the built-in woodwork. Alterations to the courtroom include new carpet flooring, indirect fluorescent light, speakers above the wainscot on the east wall, furniture, and revisions to the jury and spectator railings.

In 1982, a new courtroom was constructed on the south portion of fourth floor. This courtroom is similar to the 1938 courtroom with wood wainscoting, but it has modern finishes with a dropped acoustical ceiling. This courtroom has two double doors on the north wall and four rectangular windows with drapes on the south wall. Behind the judge's desk, a bronze federal seal ornaments the wall.

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The upper floors of the building were organized around a lightwell. The original 1915 corridors lie adjacent to the lightwell on the east, north, and south sides. These corridors have terrazzo flooring, marble borders and inlays, marble base and plaster walls. The 1938 addition relocated the west leg of the corridor loop at each floor to be adjacent to the original exterior wall. The revised corridor matched the finishes and materials of the 1915 work. The entry stairways are original to 1915 and are in good condition with the exception of being separated from the upper level corridors. In 1967, enclosure walls were built at the stair shaft for safety purposes. The stairs are finished with marble treads, risers, skirting, and landings. The stairs have a heavy, stained wood, ornamental balustrade. The original, cast metal, gas/electric wall light fixtures remain in the stairwell. Lowered acoustical ceilings with recessed fluorescent lighting have been added at both the corridors and the restrooms. The ceilings conceal ducting and pipes at the corridor but result in a loss of the view of original plaster molding at the ceiling and plaster capitals. The majority of the doors are wood panel with wood surrounds. Some of the doors also have large wood sidelights and transoms. The second, third, and fourth floor corridors retain much of their historic feel. The fifth floor, originally attic space, is utilitarian with linoleum floors and painted plaster walls. The doors are wood panel but are painted white, matching the walls.

The second and third floor women's restrooms were expanded, and two new restrooms on the fifth floor were added during the 1938 expansion. The materials closely matched those of the original 1915 work. Finishes consist of terrazzo flooring with marble borders, base, wainscot, and stall partitions. Marble, which matches the lobby accents, is rose color in some of the restrooms and gray color in others. Stalls have original chrome pipe bracing and stained wood panel doors. The upper walls are painted plaster. Porcelain fixtures vary, but many are original and include pedestal and wall-hung lavatories and wall-mounted tank toilets. Most of the rooms have original wood-framed small mirrors. The fourth floor men's and women's restrooms have switched locations. There are two historic showers, one in the men's restroom in the basement and one in a private restroom on the north end of the second floor.

The basement presently contains storage, building equipment, and ancillary space which has been developed from the original storage areas. The new handicap ramp on the northeast corner of the building enters the building at the basement level. The floors are concrete. The former swing room has been replaced with a conference room. Some original partitions and heavy storage doors remain. Overall, the basement does not contain a significant amount of historic material.

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ALTERATIONS

The United States Post Office and Courthouse in Muskogee has been modified on the exterior by the recent construction of a handicap ramp on the northeast corner and the replacement of windows and doors. The handicap ramp, constructed in about 1995, is very sympathetic to the historic building and does not significantly impact the integrity of the building. The first floor replacement aluminum windows were installed in 1967 and the other aluminum windows in 1972. The paired, mill finish aluminum and glass entry doors with fixed sidelights were also installed in 1967.

Overall, the interior of the building retains a high degree of integrity. The major public spaces, the lobby, corridors, and courtrooms, retain many original features and finishes. The recent rehabilitation of the lobby has returned that space to its historic grandeur. The minor changes to the corridors and courtrooms discussed above do not significantly impact their ability to convey the historic uses of these spaces.

Overall, the United States Post Office and Courthouse in Muskogee retains a high degree of integrity of setting, location, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. The exterior modifications do not significantly impact the building's ability to convey its historic significance as a federal building, nor its architectural significance as an excellent example of a federally designed, Classical Revival style, public building.

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Narrative Statement of Significance:

SUMMARY

The United States Post Office and Courthouse in Muskogee, Oklahoma, is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its association with the federal government at the local level and Criterion C as an excellent example of federal architecture from the early twentieth century. From the start of construction in 1911 to 1949, the building provided a federal presence in the town as well as many federal services, including postal and legal. Although many historic buildings remain in downtown Muskogee, the building is an outstanding example of federally designed, Classical Revival style, government building.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In 1872 when the Missouri-Kansas-Texas Railway constructed the first rail line across Indian Territory, the town of Muskogee was founded as the site of a new railroad station. Previously, the Creek agency had been established in the vicinity of Fern Mountain, approximately three miles northwest of presentday Muskogee. Muskogee was also located on the old Texas Road, upon which settlers headed south to Texas and cattle came north. The majority of pre-1872 settlers in the area were Creek freedmen. The new town was first situated on the railroad's narrow right-of-way as the Creek Nation did not allow the sale of land for townsites. Nonetheless, merchants obtained licenses from the Creek Nation to operate stores and settlers began taking up residence. As Creek law also prohibited the surveying of streets and private land ownership, Muskogee was built adjacent to the tracks in rows that faced each other across unofficial streets. Following a devastating fire in downtown Muskogee in 1899, the town was surveyed and laid out in a grid pattern. This pattern, however, did not follow the usual compass points. Instead, it was laid out in relation to the railroad which ran slightly east of north to west of south.¹

¹ The WPA Guide to 1930s Oklahoma (Lawrence, Kansas: University Press of Kansas, 1986), 149-150. See also Arrell Morgan Gibson, Oklahoma: A History of Five Centuries, 2nd Edition (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1981), 132; Grant Foreman, Muskogee: The Biography of an Oklahoma Town (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1943), 118; and Department of Geography, "Reconnaissance Level Survey of a Portion of Muskogee (1998, on file at the State Historic Preservation Office, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma), 193.

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The federal government was a key component in the evolution of Muskogee. In 1874, the federal government consolidated the four agencies of the Five Civilized Tribes. Muskogee was named the headquarters of the new Union Agency. Fifteen years later, the first federal court in Indian Territory was established in Muskogee. The growth of Muskogee, however, was slowed by the land restrictions imposed by the Creek Nation. The federal government eased this restriction with the forming of the Dawes Commission in the mid-1890s. The Dawes Commission was organized to allot the land of the Five Civilized Tribes to individual Indians. In 1894, the Dawes Commission made Muskogee its headquarters which tremendously boosted the development of the town. According to Grant Foreman, noted Oklahoma and Muskogee scholar, the presence of the Dawes Commission, which employed "...hundreds of employees...during many succeeding years" and brought "...countless thousands of Indians and other thousands from the half-million white men in the Territory who brought their multiplicity of racial and interracial problems to the Dawes Commission for solution," helped make Muskogee "...the most important center of Indian administration outside of Washington." Between 1889 and 1900, the population of Muskogee went from 2,500 to 4,254, an increase of 58 percent. In 1898, the Curtis Act provided for the survey and incorporation of towns. Acting quickly, Muskogee incorporated the same year.²

The allotment of Indian land also created the opportunity for oil speculation. Although oil wells had been drilled in Muskogee as early as 1894, widespread exploration had largely been halted by tribal ownership of the land, as well as a lack of a transportation system and a market for crude oil. Finally able to gain title to the land, oil speculators swarmed into Indian Territory and Muskogee. Due largely to oil, the Muskogee population more than tripled between 1900 and 1907. Although during the first years of the century, it was said "that there were more Federal employees in Muskogee than in any other city outside Washington." By 1910, over 25,000 people resided in Muskogee. At that time, Muskogee was second only to Oklahoma City in terms of population in the state.³

Although Muskogee continued to boom in the 1910's, by 1920 the rate of development had slowed. During the decade of 1910 to 1920, Muskogee's population increased by just under 5,000 people to 30,277. Oil production leveled off during the 1920's. Only 1,749 new residents moved to Muskogee during the 1920s, bringing Muskogee's population to 32,026.

² WPA Guide, 151. See also Gibson, Oklahoma, 193; Foreman, Muskogee, 104; and Department of Geography, "Survey of Muskogee," 204.

³ Ibid., 151. See also Foreman, Muskogee, 105.

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Additionally, agricultural prices began their downward slide which would continue through the depression years of the 1930s. The national economic crisis of the 1930s further stagnated development in Muskogee. By 1940, Muskogee's population stood at 32,314, an increase of just 288 in 10 years.⁴

HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE

Seventeen years after Muskogee was founded, portions of western Indian Country opened to non-Native American settlement. This resulted in the creation of Indian Territory in the east and Oklahoma Territory in the west. In 1907, the combined territories officially entered the United States as the state of Oklahoma. In early 1908, while Congress was debating the passage of an omnibus public building bill that would appropriate at least \$20 million for U.S. Courthouses and Post Offices, the Oklahoma delegation was seeking to get an appropriation for every large town in Oklahoma. Towns for which appropriations were sought included Oklahoma City, Muskogee, Enid, Ardmore, McAlester, Tulsa, Bartlesville, Lawton, Chickasha, Vinita, El Reno, Anadarko, Woodward, and Alva. The amounts sought varied from \$500,000 for Oklahoma City and Muskogee to \$50,000 for Anadarko, Woodward, and Alva. The Oklahoma delegation made such bold demands because they contended that both the Oklahoma and Indian territories had been neglected up to that point in the allocation of federal buildings.⁵

Prior to 1902, federal buildings were authorized on a building-by-building basis. Beginning in 1902, Congress began authorizing the construction of multiple federal buildings through omnibus acts. The omnibus public building acts saved considerable time in Congress because it allowed for authorization of a large body of projects in one vote. However, the increase in the number of authorized buildings during the early part of the twentieth century flooded the Supervising Architect's Office of the Treasury Department with new projects. The Supervising Architect's Office had charge of all federal building construction projects during the period. In 1899, the Supervising Architect's Office managed or was in the process of constructing a total of 399 buildings. By 1912, the number of buildings rose to 1,126. Within four years, it was estimated that the number of federal buildings was increasing "at a rate of a new building every fourth day in the year." Additionally, the omnibus bills allowed for considerable political abuse. Political influence often dictated the

⁴ Department of Geography, "Survey of Muskogee," 223-224. See also Foreman, *Muskogee*, 141-142.

⁵ *The Muskogee (Oklahoma) Times Democrat*, 6 March 1908.

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size, ornamentation, and location of the buildings, rather than actual operational needs. Often viewed as federal “presents,” the buildings confirmed to the town’s residents the importance of their community and the power of their Congressional delegation.⁶

Although the federal buildings were often viewed as “pork” projects, they did serve the communities in which they were placed. In some communities, the buildings were also genuinely needed and deserved. Muskogee had been an important center of federal authority since the locating of the Union Agency there in 1874. The federal presence was further enhanced in 1889 by the creation of the first federal court in Indian Territory at Muskogee. The first courtroom was located in a two-story, frame building located on the southwest corner of Main Street and Okmulgee Avenue. A two-story brick building was soon built to accommodate the court and related offices. Located at the corner of Court and Second streets, the cornerstone for the first federal court building was laid on 24 June 1889. In 1899, a fire destroyed much of downtown Muskogee, but the “US Court building was saved by the most heroic work of the officials and help secured for several times the front rooms were a roaring furnace.” The Railway Exchange Building (National Register 1983) was later built on the location of the first federal court building. The original court building was not a “federal building” as other federal agencies were located elsewhere. For example, the offices of the Indian Agency burned in the 1899 fire with the result of “irreplaceable loss of all government records.” The significance of Muskogee as a court town was increased in 1907 when it became the headquarters of the Eastern District Court for the new state of Oklahoma.⁷

In 1905, Congressman Murphy of Missouri was working to get a new federal building at Muskogee. Senator Robert L. Owen of Oklahoma continued this quest in 1906 by inserting a provision for a federal building in Muskogee in the public building bill. Owen sought \$222,000 for this new building. However, Owen was unable to get the appropriation passed

⁶ H.J. Kolva and Steve Franks, National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form, “Historic U.S. Post Offices in New Mexico, 1900-1940” (September 1988), E-5. See also Lois A. Craig and the Staff of the Federal Architecture Project, The Federal Presence: Architecture, Politics and National Design (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1984), 213.

⁷ Letter to Honorable R.L. Williams (dated 25 February 1932, on file at the Oklahoma Historical Society Research Library, Muskogee Vertical File). See also Foreman, Muskogee, 99-100 and The Muskogee Times-Democrat, 23 February 1915.

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in 1906. Two years later, Oklahoma Senator Gore and Representative Davenport again introduced bills to erect a federal building at Muskogee. As part of the 1908 omnibus public building bill, Muskogee received an appropriation of \$200,000 to purchase the site and construct a new federal building. This was \$300,000 less than the amount sought.⁸

Throughout 1908 and into 1909, the site for the new federal building was under debate. In September, Special Agent Richard Fourchy inspected all the sites offered. None of these sites were deemed suitable. By May 1909, the site of the new federal building was selected at Fifth Street and Okmulgee Avenue. However, no further action was taken. In 1910, the public buildings bill increased the appropriation for the Muskogee federal building to \$565,000. A year later, the first appropriation of \$140,000 was approved to begin work on the Muskogee building during the next fiscal year.⁹

In February 1911, the bids for construction of the new Muskogee federal building were being called for by the Treasury Department. The Treasury Department was pushing the project because the present offices were not fireproof, and the records of the Indian Agent, Commissioner of the Five Tribes, and Federal Courts "were in danger." Additionally, the new building would stop the large rent payments currently being paid. Seven months later, the plans for the new building were approved with the local newspaper noting that "It will be by far the most imposing and dignified federal building in the state."¹⁰

By November 1914, government employee Mr. Putnam was engaged in buying furniture for the new building which was still under construction. The elevators, installed by the Kaestner-Kecht Elevator Company of Chicago, Illinois, were being tested by February 1915. The elevator was run up to the second floor, loaded with 1,556 pounds of sand and iron, lowered to within 6 feet, 2 inches of the bottom of the shaft and the ropes were then cut to allow the elevator to drop. According to the newspaper, "This is the usual test made when an elevator is installed in a government building." Work stalled shortly thereafter because the J.E. and A.L. Pennock Construction Company, responsible for constructing the building, filed a bill of equity asking that a receiver be appointed for the building. Ira Jewell Williams was appointed ancillary receiver over the Muskogee building in early March 1915. Work on the building was expected to resume after "a let-up of several weeks."¹¹

⁸ The Muskogee Times-Democrat, 12 December 1905, 28 June 1906, 6 July 1906, 13 January 1908, 17 January 1908, 19 February 1908, and 20 May 1908.

⁹ Ibid., 23 July 1908, 11 September 1908, 26 March 1909, 20 May 1909, 15 June 1910, and 17 January 1911.

¹⁰ Ibid., 7 February 1911 and 18 September 1911.

¹¹ Ibid., 14 November 1914, 23 February 1915 and 5 March 1915.

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In April 1915, the Muskogee post office department began making plans to move into the new building the following month. However, Supervising Superintendent Collier of the Treasury Department inspected the building and determined that the building would not be ready for occupancy for several months, possibly not until late summer 1915. In September, the first of eleven carloads of furniture for the new building arrived. By then, it was anticipated the building would be occupied by 1 October. The building was put into temporary service by late September 1915 when Dr. Charles Hendricks, Secretary of the Civil Service Commission of Saint Louis, held a departmental examination for stenographers.

Additionally, Postmaster Brewer was giving out keys to those who paid their quarterly rent of twenty cents for the new post office boxes. The building opened for public inspection on 26 November 1915, the day before the post office, United States court, the clerk, the marshal and the district attorney moved into the building. It was anticipated that the Indian offices would not get moved "before the last of next week." One of the interesting sites the newspaper encouraged the public not to miss was the basement where the power plant was located. The power plant included "an air sucker, washer, heater and blower dingus which gets pure, cold air from the outside in winter, takes the dust out of it, warms it over and shoots it to the various departments - and does the same thing backward in summer." At a cost of three-quarters of a million dollars, the United States Post Office and Courthouse in Muskogee was touted as "...one of the finest buildings in the southwest and with the possible exception of the state capitol building will be the finest piece of architecture in the state of Oklahoma."¹²

One of the major occupants of the building was the U.S. Post Office which was allocated the entire first floor of the new federal building. Most recently, the Muskogee Post Office had been in the Thompson Building on 3rd Street. The post office moved into the Thompson Building in April 1908 after two additions had been built onto the Thompson Building for the post office. This was the third move for the Muskogee post office in the "last few years." By 1913, the Muskogee post office was ranked second in the state among first class post offices with gross receipts of \$114,120. In 1915, the post office quarters were deemed "safe and dry.....but ...crowded and the quarters are in many ways less convenient than the new building will be." When the Muskogee post office moved into the new United States Post Office and Courthouse, they enjoyed "new furniture and every modern equipment and device to facilitate handling" of

¹² Ibid., 6 April 1915, 27 April 1915, 15 September 1915, 25 September 1915, 26 November 1915, and 27 November 1915.

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the mail. Additionally, it was judged that with the new building "Muskogee will have one of the finest post office buildings and departments of any city of its size."¹³

The other principal occupant of the new Federal Building was the federal court. Indian Territory first came under federal court jurisdiction in 1844 when the United States District Court, Western District of Arkansas at Fort Smith was given nominal jurisdiction over non-Native Americans in Indian Territory. Native American criminals were tried by Indian Tribal Courts which had no jurisdiction over non-Native Americans. Lawlessness within Indian Territory, however, continued mostly unabated until the mid-1870s when Judge Isaac C. Parker came to Fort Smith. Judge Parker appointed 200 deputy marshals to roam the territory and bring non-Native American lawbreakers to Fort Smith to face judgment. The deputy marshals faced a daunting task as they patrolled over 74,000 square miles of Indian Territory. In 1883, Congress authorized the United States District Court of Kansas to extend its authority over the northern half of the western part of Indian Territory, while the United State District Court, Northern District of Texas was to assume jurisdiction for the southern half of the western part of Indian Territory. Two years later, the Major Crimes Act of 1885 further restricted the jurisdiction of the Indian Tribal Courts. This act required that Native Americans accused of certain crimes would be tried in federal courts rather than by Indian authorities. To facilitate implementation of the Major Crimes Act, Oklahoma's first federal court was established in Muskogee in 1889. The federal court at Muskogee had jurisdiction over all civil cases if at least \$100 and one U.S. citizen was involved and all criminal cases except those which carried a sentence of hard labor or death.¹⁴

Another momentous event in Oklahoma history occurred in 1889 with the opening of the Unassigned Lands. When opened on 22 April 1889, the Unassigned Lands did not have any provisions for government. The Organic Act of 1890 provided the legal framework for government in the newly created Oklahoma Territory, which essentially covered the western half of the future state. The land of the Five Civilized Tribes in the eastern half of Oklahoma remained as Indian Territory. Muskogee continued as a federal court but now had jurisdiction only over the eastern portion of Oklahoma. A new court encompassing western Oklahoma was established at the territorial capital of Oklahoma Territory, Guthrie. Additionally, South McAlester and Ardmore were named as court towns in Indian Territory.¹⁵

¹³ Ibid., 18 February 1908, 5 March 1915, and 27 April 1915. See also The McAlester (Oklahoma) News-Capital, 21, July 1913.

¹⁴ Jeanette W. Ford, "Federal Law Comes to Indian Territory," The Chronicles of Oklahoma (58:4, Winter 1980-1981), 432-434.

¹⁵ Ibid., 434. See also Colonel Clarence B. Douglas, The History of Tulsa, Oklahoma: A City with a Personality (Chicago, Illinois: The S.J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1921), 64.

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Following the procedures used by the courts of Arkansas, the Indian Territorial Court system gave both civil and criminal jurisdiction to the federal government under the *Mansfield Digest*. In 1895, the Northern, Central, and Southern divisions of the Indian Territorial Court were organized, with court being held in each of the Indian nations. Court was held at the following locations: Northern District – Vinita, Miami, Tahlequah, and Muskogee; Central District – South McAlester, Atoka, Antlers, and Cameron; and Southern District – Ardmore, Purcell, Pauls Valley, Ryan, and Chickasha. Additionally, a Court of Appeals was established at McAlester with terms to be held in January and July. Three years later, the Curtis Act of 1898 abolished tribal courts and declared Indian law unenforceable in federal court. In 1904, the federal court system in Indian Territory was divided into four districts. The newly created Western District held court at Muskogee, Wagoner, Okmulgee, Sapulpa, and Wewoka. Court in Oklahoma Territory was largely the same throughout the period except that the Oklahoma Territorial Court used Nebraska State law as a guideline and the court was never divided.¹⁶

In 1907 with the advent of statehood, the two territorial courts were replaced by United States District Courts. Interestingly, Oklahoma was the only state in the union that had two district courts since the time of statehood. Headquarters for the Eastern District Court was located at Muskogee and the Western District Court was situated in Guthrie until 1910. In 1910, Governor Haskell moved the state seal and papers to Oklahoma City, thereby designating it as the state capitol. Although court continued to be held in Guthrie, the headquarters of the Western District Court also moved to Oklahoma City. Court towns for the Eastern District included Muskogee, Vinita, Tulsa, McAlester, Ardmore, and Chickasha. In the Western District, federal court was held at Guthrie, Oklahoma City, Enid, Lawton and Woodward. In 1924, the Northern District was created with headquarters at Tulsa. Court towns for the Northern District included Vinita, Pawhuska, Miami, and Bartlesville.¹⁷

Many of the cases that came before the federal courts in Oklahoma dealt with the same issues that district courts in other states were dealing with. Due to its unique history as Indian Country, however, Oklahoma federal courts also dealt with issues that were fairly peculiar to the state. Much of the work of the federal courts in Oklahoma during the first decades of the century had to do with two dominant forces in Oklahoma history: Native Americans and oil. In addition to abolishing the Indian Tribal Courts, the 1898 Curtis Act had harsh provisions for the disbursement of tribal land in Indian

¹⁶ Ibid., 434-435. See also Douglas, *The History of Tulsa, Oklahoma*, 64.

¹⁷ Ibid., 435. See also W.B. Richards, *The Oklahoma Red Book* (Oklahoma City, Oklahoma: Secretary of State, 1912), 428-429 and William C. Kellough, "Power and Politics of the Oklahoma Federal Court," *The Chronicles of Oklahoma* (65:2, Summer 1987), 183-184 and 191-192.

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Territory and the dissolution of tribal governments. In order to ease the transition, the tribes entered into agreements with the federal government in which some land was retained under tribal ownership while the majority of land in Indian Territory was allotted to members of individual tribes. The remaining land, including townsites, was to be sold at auction. Due to the numerous legalities involved in this process, often not understood by the citizens of Indian Territory who were made wards of the federal government to protect them, there was much illegal and immoral activity related to the allotment process. A number of the early court cases dealt with Indian allotment issues, particularly in the Eastern District Court. Combined with the discovery of oil in the late nineteenth century, often on land held in trust for the thousands of Native American wards of the federal government, the allotment-related cases mushroomed.¹⁸

Prohibition was another major issue the Oklahoma federal courts dealt with from an early date. In the mid-1890s, a federal law was created which barred the shipment of liquor into areas occupied by Native Americans. In 1913, the Supreme Court held that this law was not repealed by the 1906 Enabling Act, which allowed for the creation of the state of Oklahoma. The Enabling Act stipulated that liquor was prohibited in Indian Territory and the Osage Nation for 21 years. The delegates of the Oklahoma Constitutional Convention subsequently extended prohibition to the entire state. However, federal law continued to apply in situations where the liquor was transported from outside the state, and federal officials enforced the law more frequently than the state government. Indicted by federal court for introducing liquor into Muskogee County, Bob Wright raised the point that he did not introduce liquor on land owned or occupied by Native Americans but rather into the town of Muskogee, in which the Creek Nation had relinquished title. In 1913, the Supreme Court determined that the unrepealed 1896 law prohibited the introduction of liquor from outside Oklahoma into any Oklahoma counties occupied by Indians. Because this issue dealt with the shipment of liquor into the state, state laws did not have jurisdiction. The local newspapers contained numerous references to people being indicted in federal court for liquor related offenses.¹⁹

In addition to the District Court and the Post Office, other 1915 occupants of the United States Post Office and Courthouse in Muskogee included the U.S. Marshal who had offices on the second floor with the judge, clerk, commission, and "other offices." The third and fourth floors of the building were occupied by the Union Indian Agency. The fifth floor contained storage space and janitor's closets. Also housed in the building was the weather bureau.²⁰

¹⁸ Kellough, "Power and Politics," 187-191.

¹⁹ The McAlester (Oklahoma) News-Capital, 26 May 1913 and 6 July 1914.

²⁰ The Muskogee Times-Democrat, 27 April 1915 and 27 November 1915.

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In 1937, the Treasury Department, with Louis A. Simon as Supervising Architect, undertook construction of a \$360,000 annex for the United States Post Office and Courthouse in Muskogee. The project included adding a 32-foot-wide addition which extended the length of the rear (west) elevation of the original building. The addition provided covered loading and parking for the post office, a new courtroom on the second floor, and expanded office space on each floor, including the fifth floor which was previously a storage area. Bids opened for the project on 13 July 1937 with construction underway within a month. The Manhattan Construction Company of Muskogee won the bid. The annex was dedicated on 20 June 1938 with 2,500 attending the ceremony.²¹

The 1938 addition was a Department of Treasury project and not one of the New Deal's "alphabet soup" agencies. In 1933, the buildings program of the Treasury Department was suspended and the staff was "furloughed" four days a month. Following this, projects in the office fluctuated and in an internal reorganization, the office "...lost its independent status as well as its quarters in the Treasury building, and became part of the "Public Buildings Branch" in "Procurement Division." The year after the Muskogee addition was complete, in a major administrative shift affecting many New Deal agencies, the office merged with the buildings management division of the Park Service. The former Supervising Architect's Office then properly joined the New Deal as the Public Buildings Administration (PBA) within the Federal Works Agency.²²

The Post Office moved out of the Muskogee building in 1965. The United States Post Office and Courthouse in Muskogee remains very much in use as a courthouse. In 1982, a new courtroom was constructed on the fourth floor. Other offices in the building include the Federal Bureau of Investigation, U.S. Marshals, Bureau of Indian Affairs, and other federal agencies.²³

Business at the United States Post Office and Courthouse in Muskogee was fairly routine, for Oklahoma at least. Nonetheless, the building is significant within Muskogee for its association with these events because both represent the federal government in Muskogee during the period. Often seemingly a remote entity, the federal government was made a tangible reality in Muskogee through the construction and use of the United States Post Office and Courthouse.

²¹ Ibid., 19 August 1937 and 20 June 1938. See also McMath and Dortignacq, Architects, "Historic Building Preservation Program, U.S. Federal Building—Courthouse," (1994).

²² Craig, *The Federal Presence*, 327.

²³ McMath and Dortignacq, "U.S. Federal Building," 2.

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ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

As with all federal buildings constructed during the period, the Department of the Treasury in Washington, DC. was responsible for the design of the original building and the 1938 annex. In 1911, when the original design was complete, James Knox Taylor was Supervising Architect of the Department of the Treasury's Supervising Architect's Office. Sometime after this, Oscar Wenderoth became Supervising Architect. In 1937-1938, when the Muskogee annex was designed and constructed, Louis A. Simon was Supervising Architect. Interestingly, Simon, who joined the Supervising Architect's Office in 1896, was superintendent of the architectural section from 1905 to 1933. From 1915 to 1933, the Supervising Architect's Office was presided over by "Judge" James Wetmore. As Wetmore was a lawyer, he was designated only the Acting Supervising Architect. As such, Simon was actually responsible for determining the office's architectural directions during this period. Simon served as Supervising Architect from 1933 to 1939.²⁴

During the early part of the twentieth century, Beaux-Arts Classicism style returned to federal architecture the classical traditions that the eclectic styles of the Victorian period had disrupted.²⁵ The Classical Revival style is a derivative of the Beaux-Arts style. One of the defining differences between the two styles was that the Classical Revival style employed less opulent decorative detail while maintaining the classical order. The United States Post Office and Courthouse in Muskogee is an excellent example of federally designed, Classical Revival style architecture. In addition to the ten Composite Corinthian columns dominating the façade, other features of the Classical Revival style present on the building include: Composite and Doric pilasters, symmetrical fenestration pattern, and classical window treatment. Additionally, the overall building alludes to a classical order column. The first floor is set on the base; the remainder of the first floor, and all of the second and third floors serve as the column and the fourth floor serves as the entablature. The watertable separates the base from the column, and the limestone entablature above the third floor separates the column from the entablature.

The United States Post Office and Courthouse in Muskogee served the community well from its construction in 1911 to 1949, the 50 year mark of the National Register. The building is a physical representation of federal government policies and practices at the community level. It is also an excellent example of federally designed, Classical Revival style architecture in Muskogee.

²⁴ Craig, The Federal Presence, 238.

²⁵ Craig, The Federal Presence, 214.

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Muskogee County, Oklahoma
county and state

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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
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United States Post Office and Courthouse
name of property
Muskogee County, Oklahoma
county and state

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Lot 1, East 11 feet of Lot 2, Lot 9 and 10, Block 12, Muskogee Original Townsite, Muskogee, Oklahoma.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The boundaries include the property historically associated with the United States Post Office and Courthouse in Muskogee, Oklahoma.