

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

SG 2938

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 National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. 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.

1. Name of Property

Historic name: United States Post Office and Court House

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

Name of related multiple property listing:

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



2. Location

Street & number: 815 South Garden Street

City or town: Columbia State: Tennessee County: Maury

Not For Publication: Vicinity:

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

___ national ___ statewide local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

A ___ B C ___ D

	0/2/2018
Signature of certifying official/Title:	Date
<u>Federal Preservation Officer, U.S. General Services Administration</u>	
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government	

In my opinion, the property <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.	
	7/25/18
Signature of commenting official:	Date
<u>D-SHPO</u>	
Title :	State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

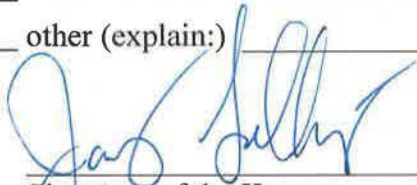
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4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain: _____)



Signature of the Keeper

9.11.2018

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

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Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>0</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>0</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 1
Contributes to the Columbia Commercial Historic District (NRISIS 84003625)

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

GOVERNMENT/Post Office

GOVERNMENT/Courthouse

GOVERNMENT/Government Office

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

GOVERNMENT/Courthouse

GOVERNMENT/Government Office

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

MODERN MOVEMENT: Simplified Classical

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: Granite; Marble; Sandstone

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

The United States Post Office and Court House is a three and four story, generally square-shaped building with a prominent pavilion at its main facade at South Garden Street. The building occupies an approximate 0.6 acre rectangular lot, at the northeast intersection of South Garden and 8th streets in Columbia, Maury County, Tennessee. The Simplified Classical-style building was completed in 1941 to house the Columbia U.S. Post Office (USPO), U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Tennessee, and additional federal government offices. Current tenants include the U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Tennessee, and supporting offices, the U.S. Marshals Service, and U.S. Probation and Pretrial Services. The United States Post Office and Court House is a contributing resource to the Columbia Commercial Historic District listed in 1984 (NRISID 84003625) as "U.S. Post Office."

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Narrative Description

Exterior Description

The United States Post Office and Court House is a generally square-shaped, steel-framed, multi-story building with a prominent pavilion at its main facade at South Garden Street. Four stories form a U-shape around a three-story core. Despite the varied massing, the first through third stories are each a single, generally square floorplate; the fourth story is U-shaped. The central section of the fourth story is topped by a utility penthouse. The ground (basement) level has a square floorplate and is partially elevated.

The visible portion of the basement is clad in granite. All facades, from the first through fourth stories, are clad in gray Tennessee marble panels, with the exception of the east wall of the penthouse which is clad in beige brick laid in running bond pattern. There is a gray marble belt course between the first and second stories on each facade. The building's roofs are flat and clad in tar-and-gravel. The roofline at the U-shaped mass is accentuated with a projecting eave, and a parapet with limestone coping obscures the penthouse. A chimney, clad in Tennessee marble panels, is located near the northeast corner of the building.

In the first story, the building is lit by nine, fixed, metal sash windows, with the wider square-shaped center lights flanked by narrower rectangular-shaped lights. The basement level and upper stories of the building feature two-over-two, double-hung, metal-sash windows, except where noted otherwise. The east (rear) facade is lit by one-over-one, double-hung, metal-sash windows, some of which have been inset with aluminum louvers. The exterior windows are original to the 1941 construction.¹

West (Primary) Facade

The west (primary) facade, which faces South Garden Street, is symmetrical and measures five bays wide. A cornerstone is situated in the upper southwest corner of the basement and reads:

ROBERT H JACKSON
ATTORNEY GENERAL

JAMES A FARLEY
POSTMASTER GENERAL

JOHN M CARMODY
FEDERAL WORKS ADMINISTRATOR

W ENGLEBERT REYNOLDS
COMMISSIONER OF PUBLIC BUILDINGS

¹ Original building plans, "Exterior Wall Section & Metal D.H. Window Details," drawn 07/15/1939, approved 07/15/1939. Metal windows confirmed by Jennifer Russell (Building Management Specialist of United States Post Office and Court House), in conversation, 17 July 2018. Specific window metal could not be confirmed, either steel or an alloy.

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LOUIS A SIMON
SUPERVISING ARCHITECT

NEAL A MELICK
SUPERVISING ENGINEER

WM DEWEY FOSTER
CONSULTING ARCHITECT

1940

The three centermost bays of the second through fourth stories form a projecting pavilion, with continuous windows separated between each story by marble spandrel panels. The windows consist of central one-over-one-light, double-hung, metal-sash flanked by smaller one-over-one, fixed-sash rectangular lights. The marble spandrel panels are separated into three parts by the continuous mullions that divide the window lights. A carved marble federal eagle entitled *American Eagle*, sculpted by Sidney Waugh in 1941, is centrally located on parapet.

Three wide granite steps featuring a single centrally located, rounded, bronze railing lead to a landing that extends the full width of the facade's central three-bay section. The landing is comprised of granite inlaid with pink Tennessee sandstone panels. A short granite wall flanks the landing to the north and south. A poured concrete and aggregate ramp with a rounded bronze railing divides the northern granite wall, providing access to the landing. The ramp is an alteration, likely dating to the latter part of the twentieth century.

The steps, ramp, and landing provide access to the building's main entrance. The entrance is set back into a smooth mahogany granite surround, approximately one foot from the face of the facade. The entrance consists of a set of full-light, double-leaf, bronze doors surrounded by twelve large, single-light, bronze windows. Two steel seals featuring the obverse and reverse sides of the Great Seal of the United States of America hang on the exterior wall, to the north and south of the entry. Original bronze light fixtures are located to the outside of each seal. The words "UNITED STATES POST OFFICE AND COURT HOUSE" are carved into the exterior wall above the entry, immediately below the beltcourse.

North Facade

The north facade is eight bays wide, with six central bays. The central bays are flanked on either side by one recessed bay. The bays are recessed by a width of ten feet. The four centermost bays are narrower than the outer bays. The third bay from the west, on the first story, is a blind window. The two centermost first story window openings contain a vent and louver in the uppermost light. A poured concrete curb topped by an iron railing denotes an exterior stairwell that provides access to the basement level. The stairwell leads to a set of four-light, steel, double-leaf doors situated in the basement level of the east side of the north facade. The north facade of the rear section measures one bay wide and contains a single opening in the first and second stories. The first story window has been inset with a panel and vent; the second story window retains the bottom light with a vent fitted into the top sash. The north facade of the penthouse contains a single-leaf steel door in the easternmost bay. A long rectangular louvered vent is located to the west.

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East (Rear) Facade

The east (rear) facade is nine bays wide. The five-bay wide centermost section is lower, projects ten feet from the main block of the building, and has a loading dock extending across the full width of its first story. The main block, visible to either side of the projecting central section, is four stories high and two bays wide. A chimney is located in the juncture between the central projecting section and the north end of the main block. The five center bays are only three stories tall. The loading dock is comprised of a poured concrete landing supported by a concrete block and brick pier foundation and sheltered by a metal-clad canopy supported by four evenly spaced steel poles. A set of poured concrete steps with a metal pipe railing is situated on the north side of the landing. Two single-leaf steel doors, accessed via the loading dock, are centrally located in the first story of the rear section. The second story contains five evenly spaced one-over-one light, double-hung, metal windows; the two northernmost of which have been inset with metal louvers. These windows light the mezzanine level above the former postal workroom on the first floor. The wall rises above these windows to the top of the third story without any openings. This blind wall corresponds to the rear wall of courtroom on the interior. The east (rear) facade of the penthouse consists of two centered two-over-two light, double-hung, metal windows.

South Facade

The south facade is eight bays wide, with six central bays. The central bays are flanked on either side by one recessed bay. The four centermost bays are narrower than the outer bays. The top sash of the second window from the west in the first story has a vent. The easternmost bay is one bay wide and contains a single door in the first story and a single window in the second story. The first story has a single-leaf steel door accessed by a set of poured concrete steps with metal pipe railing. The second story window is aligned above this secondary entrance. The south facade of the penthouse level is devoid of openings.

Exterior Landscape Features

The building lot is bordered by a poured concrete sidewalk to the west and south. The original aluminum flagpole, with bronze base, is located at the northwest corner of the building. A small deciduous tree is located to the southwest of the flagpole and is set into the sidewalk. Low evergreen foundation plantings are located at the northwest and southwest corners as well as along the south facade of the building. A grass lawn, which slopes downward, extends between the south facade of the building and the sidewalk. A paved-asphalt ramp also provides access from 8th Street to the rear parking lot, which provides parking for approximately seventeen vehicles. A poured concrete retaining wall separates the rear parking lot from the parking lot associated with the commercial and government buildings to the east. Mid-to late-twentieth-century low-rise commercial and county government buildings are located to the north, west, and south of the building.

Interior Description

The interior of the United States Post Office and Court House underwent extensive renovations in the 1960s after the U.S. Postal Service vacated the property.² Consequently, the first floor

² Maury County Archives, "Post Office" Vertical File, Columbia, Tennessee; Bob Duncan (Maury County Archives Director), in conversation with author, 10 March 2009.

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postal workroom and associated spaces were adapted for office use. Renovations were also carried out on the second through fourth floors as well as the basement level.

The building features one primary entrance at the west (primary) facade, which facilitates public movement through a vestibule and directly into the building's first floor lobby. The first floor is currently occupied by a U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) field office and supporting court offices. The basement contains mechanical and storage space. The second floor is dominated by the large courtroom and its supporting offices, including the judge's chambers and offices for the clerk of court. The third floor contains offices for the U.S. Probation and Pretrial Services and U.S. Marshals Service, and the fourth floor is used as other offices. The penthouse still serves its original function to house the air handler units for the building.

The vestibule, first floor lobby, the courtroom, and third and fourth floor corridors retain the most original material in the building. The majority of interior alterations have occurred within the office spaces throughout each floor in order to accommodate tenants' needs. These spaces largely contain replacement industrial carpeting, dropped, acoustical-tile ceilings with inset fluorescent lighting, and full-height gypsum and plaster wall partitions, all of which are reversible alterations.

First Floor

The first floor of the United States Post Office and Court House contains the vestibule, first-floor lobby, restrooms, and former postal workroom.

Vestibule

The main entry into the building, centrally located in the west facade, leads to a narrow vestibule that extends one-and-one-half-stories in height. The interior (east) wall of the vestibule features original bronze framing and glass walls that mirror the main entry surround in the west wall. The interior floor of the vestibule contains beige terrazzo floor panels, inlaid with an orange marble border. The walls are clad in pink marble panels that extend to ceiling height. The vestibule's stepped plaster ceiling features a cornice inlaid with a Greek key motif. An original Art Deco-style bronze rectangular light fixture hangs from the ceiling.

The west wall of the vestibule features three inset, original, bronze, bulletin and display boards. A bronze plaque hangs in the northwest corner of the vestibule and reads:

THIS BUILDING WAS ERECTED
DURING THE ADMINISTRATION OF
FRANKLIN D ROOSEVELT
PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES
OF AMERICA

ROBERT H JACKSON
ATTORNEY GENERAL

JAMES A FARLEY
POSTMASTER GENERAL

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W ENGELBERT REYNOLDS
COMMISSIONER OF PUBLIC BUILDINGS

LOUIS A SIMON
SUPERVISING ARCHITECT

NEAL A MELICK
SUPERVISING ENGINEER

WM DEWEY FOSTER
CONSULTING ARCHITECT

1940

The east wall of the vestibule contains a bronze tablet installed and commissioned by the Daughters of the Revolution (DAR) that bears the name of eighty-eight Revolutionary War soldiers buried in Maury County, Tennessee. The elevator for the building, which provides access to each of the four floors and basement, is located in the north wall of the vestibule. The elevator retains the original bronze-plated doors. A set of two-light, double-leaf, bronze doors is located in the south wall of the vestibule and provides access into the main stairway of the building. The stairway provides access to each floor, including the basement and penthouse levels.

First Floor Lobby

A set of double-leaf, two-light, bronze doors situated in the east wall of the vestibule provide access directly into the first-floor lobby (former postal lobby) of the building. The cavernous space extends one-and-one-half-stories in height and features two centrally located massive, full-height columns clad in marble panels with integral desks. The floor of the lobby is comprised of white terrazzo panels inlaid with orange terrazzo panels that form a square-shaped geometric pattern. The east wall and the eastern ends of the north and south walls are clad in full-height pink marble paneling. Pink marble wainscoting is located on the north, south, and west walls, the rest of which are finished with smooth plaster. The lobby has a stepped plaster ceiling featuring the original suspended Art Deco-style bronze rectangular light fixtures in the western half and replacement suspended, square, fluorescent lights in the eastern half.

The west wall of the public lobby features two inset bronze double bulletin boards located to each side of the entrance. An original wall-mounted bronze light fixture hangs above each bulletin board set. An original glass-and bronze-topped marble desk is located underneath each bulletin board. Two additional desks extend from the west side of each of the lobby's two massive columns. Each desk retains the original bronze inkwells and vents. A bronze plaque is located on the west side of the southern column and reads:

THIS BUILDING WAS MADE POSSIBLE
THROUGH THE ENTERPRISE AND ABILITY OF

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SENATOR
KENNETH D. McKELLAR

WHO SERVED IN THE
UNITED STATES SENATE
FROM 1917 TO 1953
AND IN THE
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
FROM 1911 TO 1917

The north wall of the lobby features an original wall-mounted Art Deco-style bronze clock. Two bronze vents are located to the east of the clock and one is located to the west of the clock, near the ceiling. On the eastern end of the wall, the section that had previously held the postal boxes was clad in marble paneling following their removal. The east wall of the lobby contains a single-leaf bronze-plated door in the northernmost opening. Four evenly spaced, original, bronze service windows are situated in the east wall, to the south of the door. The two northernmost windows, which feature a wood counter, are covered with an open bronze grille. The two southernmost windows are covered with a small rollaway bronze panel. Seven bronze vents are located near the ceiling in the east wall.

The south wall of the lobby features a single-leaf, bronze-plated door in the easternmost opening. A single-leaf, bronze, paneled door is located to the west and is set into a mahogany granite surround. Two inset bronze bulletin boards flank the doorway. A large mural measuring approximately seventeen feet wide by six feet high hangs approximately eight feet from the floor, above the westernmost doorway, and extends to the ceiling. The oil on canvas mural, entitled *Maury County Landscape*, was painted in 1942 by Henry Billings.

The mural illustrates the general role of agriculture and industry in the development of Maury County. A power structure associated with the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) is depicted to the left with buildings associated with the phosphate industry in the center, and tobacco plants, farmers, and a barn painted at the right.

Former Postal Workroom and Loading Dock

The former postal workroom is accessed from the lobby via the doors in the lobby's east wall and southeast corner. The postal workroom and loading dock area were altered following the departure of the U.S. Postal Service to provide office space for building tenants. The floors are clad in industrial carpeting. The walls are comprised of plaster or glass partitions, and the ceiling has been lowered through the installation of dropped acoustical tiles featuring inset fluorescent lighting. A wood counter was installed at the bronze-grille-clad service windows, and the area is enclosed by a wood banister. The former postal workroom retains the three original, massive, support columns, clad in drywall, that extend through the dropped ceiling near the east end of the room.

Stairways

The main stairway, located in the southwest corner of the central section of the building, provides access to each floor as well as the basement and penthouse levels. The stairway is

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comprised of marble treads, with the exception of the portion that extends from the fourth floor to the penthouse level. The simple wood balustrade is topped by a bronze railing, and the exterior of the stairway features a wall-mounted bronze railing.

A rear stairway is located in the northeast corner of the south facade and provides access from the basement level through to the fourth floor. The stairway is comprised of marble treads in the first through fourth floors and smooth concrete treads from the basement level to the first floor. A simple wood balustrade topped by a polished wood handrail lines the interior of the stairway, while the exterior walls feature a wall-mounted wood handrail.

Ground (Basement) Level

The basement level is accessed by the elevator, main stairway, and rear stairway. The basement houses storage space for GSA and the U.S. District Court, as well as the mechanical units for the building.

A series of corridors connect the basement-level rooms. The corridors feature vinyl-tile flooring and plaster walls, painted white. The corridor ceilings are comprised of replacement dropped acoustical-tile ceilings with hanging fluorescent light fixtures in some areas, while other areas retain the original smooth plaster ceiling partially concealed by exposed ductwork. Many of the original basement-level doors remain and consist of one-light, steel doors, featuring an inset wood or glass upper panel and a lower louvered area, set into plain wood surrounds. Replacement doors primarily consist of steel fire doors.

The two basement-level restrooms retain the original beige terrazzo floor and pink marble wainscoting and stall partitions; however, the stall doors have been replaced with steel doors. Many of the original porcelain plumbing fixtures remain. The windows that light each restroom consist of one-over-one light, double-hung, metal-sash doors.

The basement-level storage and former office areas feature beige vinyl-tile or industrial carpet floor cladding, plaster or clay tile walls, and plaster ceilings with exposed piping and ductwork or replacement dropped acoustical-tile ceilings with hanging or inset fluorescent light fixtures.

The former postal workers' and postal inspector's break and shower rooms are situated in the southeast corner of the building. These spaces contain replacement finishes. A small, narrow, single-leaf door is situated in the north wall of the former postal inspector's room; it originally provided access to the lookout gallery situated above postal service work space.

The boiler room is located in the northeastern corner of the basement level. The floor is clad in poured concrete, the walls are comprised of plaster, and the ceiling is plaster largely concealed by exposed piping and ductwork.

Mezzanine Level

The rear stairway from the first floor former postal workroom provides access to the mezzanine level located above the eastern end of the space. The narrow, rectangular space is comprised of a

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painted wood floor, plaster walls, and a smooth plaster ceiling with exposed piping. The space includes the air handler equipment for the basement level and first floor.

Second Floor

The second floor of the building contains the U.S. District Courtroom and its supporting offices. The elevator and main stairway lead to the second floor courtroom lobby situated to the west (front) of the courtroom. The lobby retains the original gray terrazzo flooring featuring a white and pink terrazzo border, marble wainscoting, plaster walls, and a stepped plaster ceiling.

Two restrooms are located to the south of the courtroom lobby. The restrooms retain the original gray terrazzo floor, marble wainscoting, marble stall partitions, and some of the original porcelain fixtures.

The second floor corridor continues to the north and south of the courtroom lobby. Vinyl tiles cover the corridor floor, and the walls and ceiling are comprised of smooth plaster with some wall areas clad in wallpaper. Stainless steel pendant-shaped original ashtrays are mounted on the walls throughout the corridor. The second floor retains many of the original doors, the majority of which consist of single-leaf, one-light, steel doors or single-leaf, paneled, wood doors, set into marble surrounds. Replacement doors consist of single-leaf, solid, wood or steel doors.

The former law library, holding cell, and jury room occupy the south side of the second floor. These areas consist of vinyl-tile or industrial carpet floor cladding, plaster or movable wall partitions, and dropped acoustical-tile ceilings with inset fluorescent lighting. The holding cell is comprised of stainless steel wire mesh. A kitchenette area is located on the east wall of the jury's room.

The offices for the clerk of court occupy the northwestern corner of the second floor. The offices contain replacement finishes, including industrial carpeting, plaster walls, and dropped acoustical-tile ceilings with inset fluorescent lighting.

U.S. District Courtroom

Two sets of double-leaf doors situated in the east wall of the courtroom lobby provide access into the U.S. District Courtroom. The outer doors consist of paneled wood doors, which feature original mounted pendant-shaped ashtrays. The inner doors are comprised of double-leaf, swinging doors that are clad in leather crisscrossed with brass studs. The swinging doors are topped by a faux transom clad in leather with brass studs. A small round window is located in each swinging door.

The courtroom, which extends two floors in height, retains some original features and finishes that date to the period of completion (1941). A portion of the original cork-tile flooring is visible at the entry doors; the remaining area is covered in plush carpeting. The original wood wainscoting remains as well as the original leather-clad doors crisscrossed with brass studs leading from the courtroom to the judge's chambers and supporting offices.

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The walls of the courtroom are covered in fabric wallpaper and feature simple plaster pilasters evenly spaced throughout the room. The ceiling is comprised of replacement dropped acoustical tiles inset with fluorescent lighting.

Rows of polished oak benches provide public seating. The wood jury box, witness stand, and judge's bench feature rounded edges and are accentuated by bronze capping. The judge's bench, which occupies the eastern end of the courtroom, retains the original thirteen evenly spaced bronze stars applied to the west side of the rostrum. A bronze seal for the United States District Court-Middle District of Tennessee hangs on the wall behind the judge's bench. The judge's bench is flanked to the north and south by doors that lead into the judge's chambers, located to the north, and the storage area located immediately to the east of the courtroom.

Judge's Chambers

The judge's chambers, which consists of the judge's and secretary's offices and restroom, occupy the northern and northwestern corners of the second floor. The offices retain the original polished black walnut wainscoting and built-in shelves and bookcases as well as Art Deco-style bronze door surround. The built-in features are located in the east wall of the secretary's office and the east and north walls of the judge's office. The remaining features and finishes include replacement doors, industrial carpeting, wood cornice, and dropped acoustical-tile ceilings with suspended fluorescent light fixtures. The restroom, located to the east of the judge's office, retains the original marble stall partition.

Third Floor

The third floor of the United States Post Office and Court House contains space for the U.S. Probation and Pretrial Services, U.S. Marshals Service, and storage space for GSA. The upper part of the courtroom, inaccessible from the third floor, dominates the central portion of the floor.

A rectangular room extends outward from the west wall of the elevator lobby and separates the elevator from the main stairway. This room contains single-light square windows in the north and south walls. The third floor corridor extends from each side of the central room, forms an L shape leading from the south to the north, and curves around to the east. The corridor consists of vinyl-tile floor cladding, smooth plaster walls, and dropped acoustical-tile ceilings with inset and hanging fluorescent light fixtures. Original stainless steel pendant-shaped ashtrays are mounted to the wall throughout the corridor. Original bronze, Art Deco-style signs denoting "ELEVATOR" and "STAIRS" hang from the corridor ceiling.

The U.S. Probation and Pretrial Services are located on the south side of the third floor, while the U.S. Marshals Service occupies space on the north side. With the exception of original doors that consist of single-leaf, one-light, steel doors, and wall partitions, these spaces largely contain replacement finishes, including the application of industrial carpeting and dropped acoustical-tile ceilings with inset or suspended fluorescent lighting. An original holding cell is located in the northeast corner of the third floor. This cell retains the original single-leaf steel door inset with a small steel-grille covered window. The interior of the holding cell contains a replacement vinyl-tile floor and the original plaster ceiling.

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Fourth Floor

The fourth floor offices have the same configuration as the offices on the third floor. The floor forms a U shape with the central section and flanking sections.

A rectangular room extends outward from the west wall of the elevator lobby and separates the elevator from the main stairway. This room contains single-light square windows in the north, south, and east walls. The fourth floor corridor extends from each side of the central room and forms a U shape to access each part of the floor. The corridor consists of vinyl-tile floor cladding, smooth plaster walls, and dropped acoustical-tile ceilings with suspended fluorescent light fixtures. Original stainless steel pendant-shaped ashtrays are mounted to the wall throughout the corridor. Original bronze, Art Deco-style signs denoting "ELEVATOR" and "STAIRS" hang from the corridor ceiling.

Offices occupy the south side of the fourth floor. These rooms were remodeled in the late-twentieth century to accommodate tenant needs. Alterations included the installation of a security checkpoint area in the receptionist area, application of industrial carpeting, and installation of dropped acoustical-tile ceilings.

Offices are located on the north side of the floor. These spaces were altered circa 2002 to include the application of industrial carpeting and vinyl-tile floor cladding, movable wall partitions, and installation of dropped acoustical-tile ceilings with inset fluorescent lighting.

Penthouse Level

The penthouse, which is accessed via the main stairway, sits atop the fourth floor at the westernmost section. The small rectangular room houses the air handlers and supporting structures for the second through fourth floors of the building. The room is comprised of a poured concrete floor, smooth plaster walls, and a smooth plaster ceiling obscured by exposed ductwork. A single-leaf steel door situated in the north wall of the penthouse provides access to the roof.

Alterations

The United States Post Office and Court House retains a high degree of exterior integrity as alterations to the primary and side facades of the building have been minimal and generally completed with in-kind materials, finishes, and details. The building retains the original *American Eagle* sculpture on the facade as commissioned in 1941 by the U.S. Treasury Department's Section of Fine Arts. A ramp was constructed along the facade on the northwest corner of the front portico to ensure compliance with the Architectural Barriers Act (ABA) and was designed to be sensitive to the historic building design and materials.

Overall, the significant public spaces of the interior retain integrity from the building's construction completion in 1941 particularly the first floor entry lobby, the second floor elevator lobby and corridor, and the U.S. District Court courtroom. The building retains the original 1942 *Maury County Landscape* mural also installed as commissioned by the U.S. Treasury Department's Section of Fine Arts. The remaining interior spaces have been altered to meet the

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needs of the tenants and changing uses. Many of these spaces have new interior finishes that include industrial carpeting or vinyl-tile flooring, new plaster and gypsum wall partitions, and dropped acoustical-tile ceilings with inset fluorescent lighting; however, the majority of these changes are reversible.

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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 grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

POLITICS/GOVERNMENT

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1941 - 1942

Significant Dates

1941; 1942

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Simon, Louis A.—Supervising Architect

Foster, William Dewey – Consulting Architect

Melick, Neal A. – Supervising Engineer

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The United States Post Office and Court House possesses local significance as a notable example of a federal government building in Columbia, Maury County, Tennessee. Erected under the New Deal-era federal programs, the building was designed in the 1930s to relieve the economic problems caused by the Great Depression. The erection of the building was perceived as a symbol of community pride and achievement and as a representation of the federal presence in Columbia. The building is also locally significant as a notable example of the Simplified Classical architectural style popularized through the federal building projects of the 1930s and 1940s.

The building is significant under National Register Criterion A for its association with politics/government and Criterion C as an example of Simplified Classical architecture. The period of significance is 1941 for the year of construction through 1942 with the installation of commissioned New Deal artwork. The United States Post Office and Court House is a contributing resource to the Columbia Commercial Historic District (NRISID 84003625).

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

Historical Narrative:

Brief History of Columbia, Maury County, Tennessee

The small city of Columbia is located on the south bank of Duck River, the second largest river in Middle Tennessee. The city is located approximately forty-five miles south of Nashville, the state's capitol. Columbia serves as the county seat of Maury County and encompasses over 30 square miles in the center of the county.³

An act passed on November 24, 1807 created Maury County from Williamson County. Consequently, several prominent area settlers were commissioned to select a centrally located county seat to be known as "Columbia," purportedly named after Christopher Columbus. Shortly thereafter, on May 30, 1808, John White deeded 150 acres of land to the Commissioners of Columbia for the laying out of the town, which has since served as the county seat.⁴

The first permanent courthouse in Columbia was a county courthouse in a two story brick building, built by 1810. The one-room log law office of future President James K. Polk and the

3 U.S. Census Bureau "Columbia city, Tennessee; Maury County Tennessee."
(<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/columbiacitytennessee,maurycountytennessee/PST045217>) accessed 9 July 2018.

4 Columbia Chamber of Commerce, *Columbia, Maury County, Tennessee* (Columbia, Tennessee: Columbia Chamber of Commerce, 1949), 3.

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home of Congressman Houston Thomas were built by this time. In addition, a large inn was opened and operating, as well as the town's first store within two years. By 1817, the expanding "village" of Columbia was incorporated. By 1837, Columbia boasted a population of 1,500 residents and was considered by many to be one of the most flourishing towns in all of Tennessee.⁵

From its founding, the rich soil of Maury County attracted settlers who planted cotton and tobacco and raised livestock. During the nineteenth century, continued growth allowed Columbia to become one of the largest and most influential cities in Tennessee. Much of the goods to and from Columbia were transported via steamboat and then flat-bottom boats and barges along the Duck River. By 1850, its population was surpassed only by Nashville and Memphis. At the outbreak of the Civil War, Columbia was the county seat of the wealthiest county in the state due to its railway junction and its role as the regional agricultural and shipping center of Southcentral Tennessee.⁶ After the Civil War, farmers shifted from cotton to tobacco and grain and continued raising livestock. Throughout the latter half of the nineteenth century, tobacco became the county's largest cash crop.

From its earliest settlement, Columbia gained wealth from exceptional livestock and diversified agricultural production. Beginning about 1840, the first Monday in April brought huge crowds to the animal livestock show and Mule Day Market, originally called "Breeder's Day." Mules became such a big business in Maury County that, at one time, Columbia's Mule Day had the distinction of being one of the largest livestock markets in the world. Over time, Mule Day continued to grow and evolved into a multi-day festival, attracting thousands of attendees.⁷

By the late 1880s, agricultural production throughout Maury County was dropping drastically as farmland was depleted of its natural fertility. However, in 1888, William Shirley discovered high-grade brown phosphate rock in Maury County, which spawned a mining industry that flourished for over 100 years. With the arrival of processing plants in the 1930s, Maury County shifted from an agricultural to an industrial economy. For almost a century, the phosphate industry, including companies such as Hooker, Monsanto, Occidental, and Stauffer, employed more workers and provided more income than any other sector of the county's economy.⁸

Throughout the twentieth century, Columbia continued to grow steadily due largely to its prosperity in phosphate production. This continued until scarcity of raw materials, changes in the laws governing the use of phosphates, and environmental concerns forced all but one of the companies to close their plants by the 1980s. Consequently, like many other American cities in the 1980s, Columbia experienced a decline, particularly in the downtown area, which left many buildings vacant. By the 1990s, however, Maury County soon attracted another major industry. After a nationwide search, General Motors purchased 1,000 acres outside of Columbia to build

5 William Bruce Turner, *History of Maury County, Tennessee* (Nashville: The Parthenon Press, 1955), m.p.

6 Richard Quinn and Shain Dennison, *Columbia Commercial Historic District National Register of Historic Places Nomination*, April 1984.

7 Mule Day "About Mule Day" (www.muleday.com) accessed 9 July 2018.

8 Maury County Historical Society, "Maury County History" (<http://historicmaury.com/mchs-history/maury-county/>) accessed 9 July 2018.

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its new production facility to be called the Saturn Corporation. The facility continues to employ over 6,000 persons with thousands of others brought to the area to work in collateral or service positions.⁹

In 2007 the Columbia downtown area underwent a revitalization program, including resurfacing of pavement, installation of new sidewalks, and installation of new traffic signals.¹⁰ The city continues to grow and has emerged as an important tourist center. Thousands of visitors descend upon Columbia each year for the tradition of “Mule Day,” which has grown into a four-day long festival event that includes a parade, mule-pulls, food, crafts, and horse show. Columbia welcomes visitors as the seat of the national headquarters for the Sons of Confederate Veterans and the site of the ancestral home of President James K. Polk. Columbia, which boasted a urban population of over 34,000 persons in 2010 continues to owe its longevity and prosperity to manufacturing—automotive parts and other diversified products—as well as its agricultural heritage. Maury County, with a population of over 80,000 residents in 2010, remains the largest producer of beef cattle in the state and a leader in corn, wheat, grain, sorghum, and cotton.¹¹

Early Federal Buildings in Columbia, Tennessee

In 1807, federal mail service began in Columbia, Tennessee, with Isaac Roberts serving as the first postmaster.¹² The post office was first located in an old frame house and then moved serially to various stores throughout the downtown area throughout its first 100 years. It was moved to the Masonic Building in the late-nineteenth century and remained there until 1907.¹³ The rapid growth of the city throughout the nineteenth century precipitated by the growing phosphate industry necessitated the need for a permanent post office and federal building. In 1907, the first federal building in the city, erected in the neoclassical style under the supervision of Supervising Architect James Knox Taylor, was opened on West 7th Street in downtown Columbia.¹⁴ This 1907 federal building, which accommodated the Columbia USPO, was erected five years after rural free postal delivery was made permanent throughout the United States.

Even during the construction phase, Columbia’s first permanent post office was deemed too small due in part to the unexpected popularity of the parcel post service instituted by the U.S. Postal Service in 1913 and the establishment of scheduled airmail service in 1918.¹⁵ However, due to funding limitations and the entry of the United States into World War I, the crowded 1907 building continued to operate as Columbia’s post office for the next three decades.¹⁶

9 Maury County Historical Society, “Maury County History” (<http://historicmaury.com/mchs-history/maury-county/>) accessed 9 July 2018.

10 Cammie Tutwiler, “Upcoming Projects Continue Progress in Downtown,” *Daily Herald* (Columbia, Tennessee), 7 October 2002.

11 U.S. Census Bureau “Columbia City, Tennessee; Maury County Tennessee.” (<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/columbiacitytennessee,maurycountytennessee/PST045217>) accessed 9 July 2018.

12 W.D. Hastings, “Post Office has 29 Heads in 134 Years,” *Daily Herald* (Columbia, Tennessee), 17 June 1941.

13 Ibid.

14 Ibid.

15 Ibid; The advent of parcel post meant the in-home delivery of small packages containing foodstuffs, tobacco, dry goods, and other commodities not easily available to farmers and other rural residents.

16 Ibid.; the 1907 Columbia USPO is still extant and is known as the Memorial Building, which houses various county offices and social and meeting events.

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Planning for the Federal Building and United States Court House, 1935 to 1939

Serious consideration of a new federal building for Columbia followed the passage of the Public Buildings Act of 1926, which provided funds for federal building construction for the first time since 1913. With the expansion of programs initiated by President Franklin D. Roosevelt in the early 1930s, government officials began campaigning vigorously for a new federal building in Columbia. Led by Tennessee Congressman Kenneth D. McKellar, government officials started searching for a new location that would include a lot large enough to construct a more spacious and modern federal building.¹⁷

Congressman McKellar began the process of searching for a suitable location for Columbia's new federal building at the outset of his fourth congressional term as senator in 1935. During this time, Senator McKellar was a member of the Committee on Post Office and Post Roads and was a staunch supporter of the New Deal-era programs, particularly the creation of the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA).¹⁸ Although the TVA was headquartered in Knoxville, Tennessee, its far-reaching network necessitated offices throughout the region. This, in combination with Columbia's rising status as a first-class USPO, provided the impetus for Senator McKellar's campaign for a new federal building in Columbia, which would include a new USPO to replace the overcrowded 1907 building. In addition, the building would house a federal courtroom and various federal offices including offices for the newly created TVA. The construction of Columbia's new United States Post Office and Court House was funded through a congressional appropriation of approximately \$340,000, approved in 1938; however, the total expenditure amounted to over \$400,000 once the building was complete.¹⁹

By 1938, a rectangular building lot at the northeast corner of South Garden and 8th streets had been bought and waited clearing to make way for Columbia's new federal building.²⁰ The building was designed by Louis A. Simon, supervising architect of the U.S. Treasury Department, as well as

17 Biographical Dictionary of the United States Congress, "Kenneth Douglas McKellar" (<http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=M000499>) accessed 9 July 2018; Kenneth D. McKellar (1869-1957) served longer in both houses of U.S. Congress than any other representative from Tennessee. Congressman McKellar served in the House of Representatives from 1911 until 1917 and in the U.S. Senate from 1917 until 1953.

18 Tennessee Valley Authority, "TVA: From the New Deal to a New Century," (<http://www.tva.com/abouttva/history.htm>) accessed 9 July 2018; The TVA is a federally owned corporation in the United States that was created by a congressional charter enacted in May 1933. The purpose of the TVA is to provide navigation, flood control, electricity generation, fertilizer manufacturing, and economic development in the Tennessee Valley, a region that includes most of Tennessee and portions of Alabama, Mississippi, Kentucky, Georgia, North Carolina, and Virginia, which were greatly impacted by the devastation of the Great Depression. The TVA was envisioned not only as an electricity provider, but also as a regional economic development agency that would use federal experts and electricity in order to modernize the region's economy and society. In 2010, the TVA is the largest public power company in the U.S. The TVA acts primarily as an electric power wholesaler, utilizing power created by dams providing hydroelectric power, fossil fuel plants, nuclear power plants, combustion turbines, and wind turbines.

19 W.D. Hastings, "U.S. Building, Erected in Year, Architectural Gem," *Daily Herald* (Columbia, Tennessee), 5th Progress Edition, March 1941.

20 A brick and frame dwelling belonging to "A. Barr" was located on this site but the dwelling was vacant at the time of purchase; Bob Duncan (Director, Maury County Archives), in conversation with author, 10 March 2009.

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consulting architect William Dewey Foster, working under the supervision of Simon.²¹ By 1939, the Chicago, Illinois-based Henke Construction Company had been awarded the construction contract for the building. In addition, subcontracts were let to local companies including: Richardson Lumber Company for all scaffolding materials; Frank Nicholson for the supply of cement, gravel, and sand; Malcolm West and M.J. Pleasant for excavation; and A.D. Whitson for the plumbing and heating. Other subcontracts were awarded to companies from Nashville, Tennessee; Birmingham, Alabama; and, Georgia.²² Shortly thereafter, construction began on Columbia's new four-story Simplified Classical-style United States Post Office and Court House.

Supervising Architect Louis A. Simon

In 1934, Louis A. Simon, at the age of sixty-six, succeeded James A. Wetmore as supervising architect.²³ At the time of his appointment, Simon had worked for the Office of the Supervising Architect for almost four decades and was well-known to the architectural community. The 1933 reorganization of the federal architecture program placed the newly named Public Works Branch at a lower level within the U.S. Treasury Department. Louis Simon retained control over the architecture of the federal buildings designed within his office. Simon served as supervising architect from 1934 until 1941, during which time the United States Post Office and Court House in Columbia, Tennessee, was designed and constructed. In this capacity, Simon oversaw the design and construction of various post offices, courthouses, custom houses, mints, assay offices, hospitals, and federal office buildings throughout the country.

Louis A. Simon was born in Baltimore in 1867 and was educated at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. After an extended tour throughout Europe, he opened an architectural office in Baltimore in 1894. Two years later, Edward A. Crane, a draftsman with the supervising architect's office, brought Simon into the Office of the Supervising Architect, where Simon spent the rest of his working career.²⁴

Simon favored classical styles of architecture during his tenure, although some of his works were greatly influenced by a new interest in modernism. Simon utilized a simplified classical style (also referred to as "Stripped Classical" or "Modern Classic") that blended modern and classical elements, characterized by symmetrical massing and relatively plain surfaces.²⁵ Simon's designs, particularly those in the Simplified Classical style, were appreciated for their relative "simplicity and restraint" and for their proportionality and functionality, especially when compared to the more exuberant styles promoted by his predecessors. During his tenure as supervising architect, Simon also oversaw numerous projects designed by private "consulting architects" working for the federal government. These were larger projects that would not conform to standardization and where the use of private architects was presumed to be more beneficial and economical.²⁶

21 Hastings, 1941.

22 Ibid.

23 Antoinette Lee, *Architects to the Nation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 258.

24 Idem, 258.

25 Idem, 260.

26 Lee, 256.

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The influence of Louis A. Simon is initially noted during James Wetmore's tenure, as Simon was the principal architectural designer during Wetmore's term. In addition to the United States Post Office and Court House in Columbia, Tennessee, Simon influenced the design of numerous federal buildings throughout the United States, including: the Internal Revenue Service Building in Washington, D.C.; the U.S. Court House in Los Angeles, California; the U.S. Post Office Building in New Philadelphia, Ohio; and a series of U.S. Border Stations along the Vermont-Quebec border.²⁷

Upon Simon's retirement in 1941, the *Federal Architect* praised Simon for his leadership and insistence on quality designs:

Louis A. Simon will have a thousand or more buildings throughout the land, some bearing his name, some not, which are tokens of his architectural ability. Words concerning that ability are relatively ineffectual. It is the buildings themselves which are the best commentary of his judgment and his service to the country.²⁸

Louis A. Simon died in 1958 at the age of ninety-one.

*Architect William Dewey Foster*²⁹

William Dewey Foster, a Washington, D.C.-based architect, worked on various New Deal-era federal buildings, particularly under the supervision of Supervising Architect Louis A. Simon. His dignified designs, like Simon's, combined classical details with the elegant simplicity of the 1930s and 1940s modern styles. In 1940, Foster, under the supervision of Simon, completed his Simplified Classical-style design for the new United States Post Office and Court House in Columbia.

William Dewey Foster, born in 1890, graduated in 1911 with a degree in architecture from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. During Simon's tenure as supervising architect (1934-1941), Foster was employed in the design of numerous federal buildings, including the Cooper Station USPO in New York, New York (1936); USPO in Larchmont, New York (1937); and the War Department Building (now U.S. Department of State headquarters, 1941) and West Heating Plant (1946-1948) in Washington, D.C.

Segregation and the United States Federal Government

The United States Post Office and Court House in Columbia, Tennessee, was designed and built during the Jim Crow era, a time between the end of Reconstruction in 1877 and the Civil Rights Act of 1964 when both laws and customs reinforced white racial supremacy. Beginning in the 1890s, the state of Tennessee enacted a series of laws intended to disenfranchise and limit

27 Living Places. "Louis A. Simon." (<http://www.livingplaces.com/people/louis-a-simon.html>) accessed 9 July 2018.

28 As quoted in Lee, 280.

29 Withey, H.F. (1956). *Biographical dictionary of American architects (deceased)*. Los Angeles: New Age Pub. Co.

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African American access to public facilities.³⁰ While state law is subordinate to federal law, in the late 1930s, when the United States Post Office and Court House was being designed and built, there were no federal laws or judicial opinions expressly prohibiting racial segregation; indeed, the United States Supreme Court's 1896 decision in *Plessey vs. Ferguson* condoned "separate but equal" facilities.³¹

Discrimination within and segregation of the federal bureaucracy was not unknown during Reconstruction, when African Americans were first employed in the federal government in significant numbers; however, with the end of Reconstruction, by the turn of the nineteenth into the twentieth century, those numbers were at a minimum.³² Racial segregation in federal offices became common after 1913 with the arrival of the Wilson Administration.³³ The Treasury Department in Washington, D.C.—which housed the Supervising Architect's Office—earned the strongest reputation for segregation.³⁴ One of the few written documents addressing racially segregated facilities was issued at the direction of Treasury Secretary William McAdoo:

In July 1913 the Auditor of the Treasury Department issued an order, on the authority of the newly appointed Secretary William McAdoo (a Southerner), designating separate toilets for White and Black employees. The Assistant Secretary, Williams, wrote to his Chief Clerk on 12 July 1913: "I think it would be best for this Department if you should make arrangements by which white and colored employees of this Department shall use different toilet rooms. Please arrange accordingly."³⁵

As African American employees were routinely demoted and moved into manual labor jobs, segregation was typically touted as a way to promote efficiency and segregated spaces were readily created by various adaptive strategies, without formal written order or directive.³⁶ *De*

30 Tennessee Encyclopedia, "Civil Rights Movement," (<https://tennesseeencyclopedia.net/entries/civil-rights-movement/>) accessed 10 July 2018.

31 Article VI, Clause 2, of the U.S. Constitution, known as the "Supremacy Clause," establishes that federal laws made pursuant to the Constitution constitute the supreme law of the land. The Supreme Court in *Plessey vs Ferguson*, 163 U.S. 537 (1896), upheld the constitutionality of state racial segregation laws for public facilities as long as the segregated facilities were equal in quality.

32 August Meir and Elliott Rudwick, "The Rise of Segregation in the Federal Bureaucracy, 1900-1930," *Phylon*, Vol. 28, No. 2 (1967), 180, citing "The Crisis," XXXV (November 1928), 369.

33 Desmond King, *Separate and Unequal: African Americans and the U.S. Federal Government* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 10.

34 Eric S. Yellin, *Racism in the Nation's Service: Government Workers and the Color Line in Woodrow Wilson's America* (Chapel Hill, North Carolina: The University of North Carolina Press, 2013), 117.

35 King, 29, citing Papers of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), Group I, Box C402, File "Segregation-Federal Service," 12 July-24 August, 1915, Library of Congress.

36 Historian Eric Yellin writes, "Official orders are rarely extant in archives. Letters between administration officials refer to verbal conversations obliquely, and in one of the only letters between Treasury secretary William Gibbs McAdoo and President Wilson in which segregation was mentioned, McAdoo suggested that they meet privately. A diary kept by Assistant Secretary of the Treasury Charles S. Hamlin is a rare and brief record of key talks about race and segregation within the Treasury Department, which employed the most African Americans among the executive departments in Washington. It reveals a lack of administrative clarity, multiple changes in direction, varying degrees of commitment, and sensitivity to protests among some administrators." Yellin, 114-115, citing September 30, 1913, letter from William G. McAdoo to Woodrow Wilson, and the diary of Charles S. Hamlin.

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facto segregation was achieved by exclusion, *e.g.*, placing all African American employees in one room or designating restrooms on different floors for African American employees and visitors, or by partitioning, as described in a letter from 1913:

Lafayette Hershaw, a black government lawyer in the Interior Department and a founder of the NAACP, reported that most of the [Washington, D.C.] Post Office Department's black clerks had been placed in the Dead Letter Office and *separated from white clerks by a row of lockers running down the center of the room.*³⁷

Segregation in the government outlasted Wilson's administration.³⁸ Subsequent administrations in the 1920s accepted the Wilsonian standard that efficiency in government required segregation.³⁹ Spreading throughout the federal government with nationwide New Deal programs, the segregation seen in Washington offices extended to field offices and programs.⁴⁰

Racial Segregation at the Columbia Post Office and Court House

The Columbia Post Office and Court House was designed in the late 1930s, a time when public facilities in Tennessee were strictly segregated by state law. A review of the original construction correspondence and drawings for the Post Office and Court House suggests the building was designed to accommodate Tennessee's segregation practices.

For example, toilet facilities are a bellwether for segregated facilities and there are numerous, seemingly duplicative, toilet rooms in the building. Most are simply marked "toilet," and their use may be inferred by adjacency, *e.g.*, there is a toilet room located within the judge's chambers and another adjacent the postmaster's office. However, there are three "swing" (break) rooms, with associated toilets, in the building: there is a "Women's Swing Room and Toilet" (as labeled on the original plans) at the first floor, next to the postal workroom; and, in the basement, there is both a large swing room and toilet and a small swing room and toilet. Both of these basement level swing rooms and toilets can be viewed from the lookout gallery, suggesting both were intended for male employees (there is no lookout into the women's swing/toilet rooms at the first floor). Approximately 15 feet from the basement small swing room toilet is a small room marked on the original plans as "W. Toilet," indicating a women's toilet room. There is a large men's toilet and a large women's toilet in the basement, likely for convenient use of the occupants of the basement level offices; however, the large women's toilet is a mere 12 feet from the small "W. Toilet."⁴¹ While there is no independent documentation, *e.g.*, annotated plans or sign schedule indicating "Colored" (in the language of the era) or "White Only," it is likely that these

37 Yellin, 116-117, citing September 11, 1913, letter from Lafayette M. Hershaw to May Childs Nerney (emphasis added). The terms "exclusion" and "partitioning" as segregation strategies are derived from the work of Professor Richard Weyeneth of the University of South Carolina. See Robert R. Weyeneth, "The Architecture of Racial Segregation: The Challenges of Preserving the Problematical Past," *Scholar Commons*, University of South Carolina, Department of History, Faculty Publications, October 1, 2005.

38 King, 30-31.

39 Yellin, 185; Meir, 183.

40 King, 31.

⁴¹ Original building plans, "Drawing No. 2, Ground Floor Plan, First Floor Plan," drawn 07/15/1939, approved 09/28/1939.

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smaller swing/toilet rooms were intended for African Americans who visited and/or worked at the United States Post Office and Court House and that use was enforced by local custom.

Federal Building and United States Court House, 1940 – 2010

Construction of Columbia's new federal building began in early 1940 by Chicago, Illinois-based Henke Construction Company using architectural plans designed by William Dewey Foster under the supervision of Supervising Architect Louis A. Simon. Tennessee marble, accented by a granite foundation, covered the building's exterior. A centrally located door accessed via marble, granite, and sandstone staircase and landing provided the main entry into the building through the west (primary) facade. The original plans called for a terrazzo floor, marble wall panels, and marble wainscoting in the vestibule and first-floor lobby as well as the second-floor courtroom lobby. Finishes in the second-floor courtroom and judge's chambers included built-in shelves, desks, and benches of black walnut. Restrooms throughout the building also featured marble wainscoting and stall partitions.

According to the 1939 building plans, the new building was to measure four stories tall with a large basement and penthouse. The main entrance would lead through a vestibule into the post office lobby, with the postal workroom comprising most of the first floor and a loading dock at the rear and offices for the postmaster and finance division flanking the vestibule. The second floor of the building was devoted entirely to the federal court activities. Suites allocated for the Clerk of Court, private offices for the federal judge and U.S. Attorney, law library, and witness room were to be located to the north and south of the centrally located courtroom.⁴² The courtroom was noted as being thoroughly "air-conditioned...with no outside ventilation or light...absolutely soundproof."⁴³ The third floor was to hold additional offices for the U.S. District Courts, as well as a suite for the U.S. Marshals Service, offices for the Probation Officer and Postal Inspector. The fourth floor contained offices for the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). The basement was to provide additional storage space, as well as house the mechanical units and rest and recreational rooms for the postal employees; the penthouse would house additional air conditioning and mechanical equipment.⁴⁴

By March 1940, officials were preparing to lay the cornerstone for the building in an elaborate ceremony open to the public.⁴⁵ The building was less than one-tenth complete at the time of the cornerstone laying ceremony, which took place on the afternoon of April 1, 1940 as part of the annual Mule Day celebrations. Henke Construction Company had built a small portion of the foundation upon which to lay the cornerstone in order to keep from disappointing the thousands of spectators who were planning to attend the ceremony.⁴⁶ Postmaster General James A. Farley, who was the guest of honor of the Centennial Mule Day celebration, was also honored as the keynote speaker for the federal building's cornerstone laying ceremony. Other dignitaries present

42 Federal Works Agency, "United States Post Office and Court House, Columbia, Tennessee," Floor Plans, March 1940; on file at the U.S. General Services Administration, Southeast-Sunbelt Regional Office, Atlanta, Georgia.

43 Hastings, 1941.

44 Federal Works Agency, "United States Post Office and Court House, Columbia, Tennessee," Floor Plans, March 1940; on file at the U.S. General Services Administration, Southeast-Sunbelt Regional Office, Atlanta, Georgia.

45 "Many Articles of Historical Value Are Placed in Crypt," *Daily Herald* (Columbia, Tennessee), 1 April 1940.

46 "Federal Building Construction News," *Daily Herald* (Columbia, Tennessee), 5 March 1941.

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included Congressman Wirt Courtney, Governor Prentice Cooper, Fourth Assistant Postmaster General Smith W. Purdom, Second Assistant Postmaster General Ambrose O'Connell, and "many others of national reputation."⁴⁷

A long list of items was placed within the "hermetically sealed copper crypt" that was laid inside the cornerstone to commemorate the ceremony. These items included: a Hebrew copper penny and coins of gold and other metals as furnished by the Grand Lodge of the Masons; a copy of the April 1, 1940 edition of the *Daily Herald*; official invitations and program for Mule Day, cornerstone laying exercises, Horse Show, and the Beauty Pageant of the Lions Club; list of the federal court officials of the Middle Division of Tennessee; list of county officials; list of nineteen surviving Spanish War veterans from Maury County; list of all major U.S. Postal Officials; list of Columbia U.S. Postal employees; list of fifty famous Maury locals; a photo-static copy of the first postal law in America; list of Boy Scouts in Columbia; and a unique stamp collection, among other articles.⁴⁸

The construction costs amounted to over \$400,000 by the completion of the building just over one year later.⁴⁹ In April 1941, the sixty-foot-high flagpole was installed near the northwest corner of the building, the bronze fixtures were added to the facade, and a bronze dedication plaque, costing "several hundred dollars" was hung in the vestibule.⁵⁰ Just over one month later, the Columbia U.S. Post Office was distinguished with the honor of being the first department to establish offices in the new federal building on May 21, 1941, thereby vacating the overcrowded 1907 U.S. Post Office.⁵¹ Shortly thereafter, the other tenants, including county and state government offices, were settled in the new building by June 1, 1941.⁵² The second floor U.S. District Courtroom and its supporting offices were not scheduled to be used until the following fall.⁵³

A dedication ceremony for Columbia's new United States Post Office and Court House, which was open to the public, took place at 3:30 in the afternoon of June 17, 1941.⁵⁴ *The Daily Herald*, Columbia's local newspaper, issued a souvenir edition of the dedication, which was sold for ten cents. The newspaper noted, "Persons wishing to mail this souvenir edition to friends will need only to write the name and address of the person to whom it is being sent, and drop the paper in the mail bag that will be provided at the booth where the papers will be sold."⁵⁵ The souvenir edition included special congratulatory advertisements from local businesses, historical articles pertaining to the first post office and different postmasters throughout Columbia's postal history, and a short sketch of each post office throughout Maury County.⁵⁶

47 Ibid.

48 "Many Articles of Historical Value Are Placed in Crypt," *Daily Herald* (Columbia, Tennessee), 1 April 1940.

49 Hastings, March 1941.

50 "Flag to Fly Atop New P.O. Here Monday," *Daily Herald* (Columbia, Tennessee), 5 April 1941.

51 "Post Office in New Building on Wednesday," *Daily Herald* (Columbia, Tennessee), 19 May 1941.

52 "Post Office in New Place with No Disruption," *Daily Herald* (Columbia, Tennessee), 21 May 1941.

53 "Move May 23 to Post Office, Is Likely Now," *Daily Herald* (Columbia, Tennessee), 13 May 1941.

54 "Dedication of Post Office is Set for June 17," *Daily Herald* (Columbia, Tennessee), 4 June 1941.

55 Ibid.

56 Ibid.

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The souvenir edition provided a clear perception of the community's view towards the new building, as well as an account of the "impressive" ceremony. Persons who had previously inspected the building were "loud in praise of its interior. It is a work of architectural art throughout, and by all odds, the finest building in this section of the state, observers say."⁵⁷ The June 17, 1941, newspaper article noted that the formal dedication was a celebration of the "magnificent, fully equipped \$400,000 . . . Post Office and Federal Court House."⁵⁸

W.D. Hastings, head of the Chamber of Commerce, served as the Master of Ceremonies with Federal Judge Kelly as the keynote speaker. Congressman Wirt Courtney, who introduced Judge Kelly, praised the new building as among the "outstanding architectural achievements of modern times." Federal Judge Elmer D. Davies, who was to receive the courtroom and other court-related parts of the building at a smaller ceremony held later that afternoon, also spoke. Music was played by the Columbia High School Band.⁵⁹ Following the formal ceremony, the Tennessee Chapter of the DAR unveiled the bronze plaque in the vestibule of the building that bears the inscription of eighty-eight names of Revolutionary War soldiers buried within Maury County. After the unveiling, the small courtroom dedication ceremony took place, followed by an "informal" open house for the large number of attendees. This open house "culminated five years of work on the project, which proved to be the largest and finest federal building in Southern Middle Tennessee."⁶⁰

The monumentality of the federal building relates to the perceived federal importance of Columbia in 1941. The original interior finishes, including the terrazzo floors and marble wainscoting, wall paneling, and restroom stall partitions, are all characteristic of those used in federal buildings erected during the tenure of Louis A. Simon. The construction of the federal building was a source of considerable community pride, as it utilized local and regional materials and provided jobs to the locally unemployed. Local materials included sandstone, granite and Tennessee marble, as exhibited by the *American Eagle* sculpture on the building's facade.

In 1940, prior to the completion of the United States Post Office and Court House, U.S. Department of the Treasury's Section of Fine Arts commissioned Sculptor Sidney Waugh to create the "American Eagle" sculpture for placement on the facade of the building.⁶¹ The sculpture was then installed in 1941 on the west (primary) facade of the building. Previously, Sidney Waugh had been commissioned in 1937 to create several sculptures for other federal buildings, including, two limestone medallions with eagles in their centers which adorn the northwest corner of the Federal Trade Commission building in Washington, D.C. which were

57 "Move May 23 to Post Office, Is Likely Now," *Daily Herald* (Columbia, Tennessee), 13 May 1941.

58 "Federal Building Dedicated," *Daily Herald* (Columbia, Tennessee), 17 June 1941.

59 Ibid.

60 Ibid.

61 Marlene Park and Gerald E. Markowitz, *Democratic Vistas: Post Offices and Public Art in the New Deal* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1984), 228; Sidney Waugh (1904-1963) was born in Amherst, Massachusetts, and attended the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He later studied in Rome and Paris, where he won bronze and silver medals for his salon exhibitions in 1928 and 1929. From 1930 until 1933, he studied at the Rinehart School of Sculpture in Baltimore, after which he spent an additional three years at the American Academy in New York. In addition to the sculpture on the Columbia's Federal Building, Waugh also completed sculptures for the National Archives and Records Administration and Federal Reserve Board buildings.

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installed in 1937. After his *American Eagle* (1941) sculpture, he was commissioned in 1949 to create four statues of lawmakers for a courthouse in Washington, D.C. The statues included Moses, Hammurabi, Solon, and Justinian. These statues were installed in 1951 in the courtroom of the Elijah Barrett Prettyman U.S. Courthouse.

Upon completion of the building in 1941, the Section of Fine Arts commissioned New York-based artist Henry Billings to paint a mural that would hang in the first floor postal lobby of the federal building. Henry Billings also produced work for Lake Placid Post Office, Wappinger Falls Post Office, and Radio City Music Hall. Upon receipt of his commission in Columbia in 1941, Billings traveled to Maury County for inspiration. Billings subsequently painted *Maury County Landscape*, an oil-on-canvas mural that was hung on the south wall of the postal lobby. Billings' mural portrays the county's industries, with the TVA generators to the left, buildings associated with the phosphate industry in the center, and a tobacco barn and field mule pulling a wagon to the right. In 1942, when his completed mural was hung in the lobby, Billings was serving as a Captain in the U.S. Army, and it is unknown if he ever re-visited Columbia to see his mural in place.⁶²

The 1941 United States Post Office and Court House was the last major public edifice to be constructed in the city prior to World War II. However, due to the increasing size of Columbia, government officials recognized that eventually the new building would need to be expanded or services relocated to larger facilities. When designed, the new federal building was intended to serve Columbia residents for at least the next twenty-five years. By 1960s, officials announced the relocation of Columbia's USPO from the 1941 federal building to the vacated Kroger grocery store building at Columbia Shopping Plaza, which would assume the role as the main postal distribution office for Columbia. This location would accommodate much-needed parking spaces for postal patrons in comparison to the six parking spaces then provided at the 1941 federal building. Consequently, all postal functions were removed from the first floor of the 1941 United States Post Office and Court House by the early 1970s, and the first floor space was converted for office space which housed the Social Security Administration (SSA) in the 1990s and currently houses GSA and supporting court offices.⁶³

Throughout the late-twentieth century, various county, state, and federal offices have continued to use the United States Post Office and Court House. Presently, the second floor federal courtroom and various supporting offices are still in use. In addition, the U.S. Marshals Service, and U.S. Probation and Pretrial Services, maintain offices on the third and fourth floors.

62 Maury County Homecoming '86 Committee, *Hither & Yon: The Best of the Writings of Jill K. Garrett* (Columbia, Tennessee: Daily Herald, 1986), 280; Henry Billings (1901-1987) was born in Bronxville, New York in 1901. He studied and subsequently taught at the Art Students League in New York. From the mid-1930s through the mid-1950s, Billings was a visiting lecturer and assistant professor at Bard College. In addition to the mural for the U.S. Post Office and Court House in Columbia, Covey also received commissions to paint murals for the U.S. Post Offices in Lake Placid, Wappinger Falls, and Saranac, New York and Medford, Massachusetts. His works can also be found in a variety of collections, including the Whitney Museum of American Art and Radio City Music Hall in New York City.

63 Bob Duncan (Director, Maury County Archives), in conversation with author, 10 March 2009. Jennifer Russell (Building Management Specialist of United States Post Office and Courthouse), in conversation, 12 July 2018.

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Simplified Classical Architectural Style

The United States Post Office and Court House exhibits features characteristic of the Simplified Classical architectural style. Under the late tenure of Supervising Architect Louis A. Simon, during which the federal building was erected, the Simplified Classical style generally prevailed as the most common federal building style.

There has been no study of the distribution of major post office building styles in the United States, nor is it clear if there was a deliberate policy on the part of the supervising architect to choose designs to match regional tastes of construction types. Simplified Classical (also referred to as “Stripped Classical” or “Modern Classic”) was the style common to many public and quasi-public buildings of the 1930s and 1940s.⁶⁴ The strong effect of mass achieved a sense of monumentality, presence, and permanence, while simplified detailing satisfied the burgeoning taste for modern design and prudence, as witnessed by the subsequent growth of modern architecture. The Simplified Classical style contains a symmetrical composure, with a repetitive rhythm of columns or column-like elements and a reliance on carefully considered proportions. Very simplified cornices and pilasters or square piers are common elements found on Simplified Classical architecture.

The style was so named because the basic form and symmetry of Classicism was retained, but the ornamentation and motifs were reduced or removed. Particularly during the Great Depression era, the Office of the Supervising Architect embraced the concept of the Simplified Classical style because the form was still classical and dignified, which conveyed the stability of the federal government during an uncertain time. Simultaneously, the lack of ornamentation characteristic to the Simplified Classical style appeared judicious at a time when exuberant details would have been out of place.

Office of the Supervising Architect of the U.S. Treasury Department and the Public Works Administration (PWA)

The Office of the Supervising Architect of the U.S. Treasury Department was responsible for the construction of federal buildings throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The office was created within the U.S. Treasury Department in 1852 as a response to the enormous increase in federal construction. The office was given responsibility for all architectural design and construction supervision. One of the earliest innovations of the office was the development of standardized building types to house the customs house, post office, and court house functions. The architectural style selected for these buildings reflected prevailing national taste. The scope of the supervising architect’s office is reflected in the increase of federal buildings, from twenty-three in 1853, to 297 by 1892.⁶⁵

From 1895 to 1933, the office reported to the U.S. Treasury Department. In the 1920s, the Office of the Supervising Architect was divided into a Technical Branch and an Administrative Branch. The Technical Branch included a division responsible for project costs and accounting; a drafting division, including a superintendent who greatly influenced design practices; a structural division; a mechanical engineering division; and a repairs division. In 1933, the U.S. Treasury

64 Rifkind, 107-110

65 Lois A. Craig, et al., *The Federal Presence* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1978), 202.

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Department was reorganized and the Office of the Supervising Architect was shifted to the Procurement Branch of the Division of Public Works of the Treasury. In July 1939, the public buildings program was removed from the U.S. Treasury Department and merged into the Federal Works Agency, Public Buildings Administration. In 1949, Congress established the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA), and the new agency assumed responsibility for public buildings.⁶⁶

World War I and the Public Buildings Act of 1926

The financial, industrial, and transportation strains caused by World War I brought the work of the supervising architect's office to a halt. The only buildings constructed during this period were those required for wartime use and those already under construction. New building construction commenced by 1922; however, the postponement of many projects authorized by the Public Buildings Act of 1913, and a backlog of new building requests necessitated the development of a major public building program. This resulted in the passage of a new Public Buildings Act on May 25, 1926.⁶⁷

The Public Buildings Act of 1926 contained three principal provisions. First, the Secretary of the Treasury and the Postmaster General were directed to conduct a nationwide survey to determine the need for postal facilities with the intent that new facilities would be based upon need rather than political influence. Secondly, the supervising architect's office was permitted to consult private architects in "special cases." The staff of the supervising architect had previously handled all projects, since James Knox Taylor decided in 1904 to effectively bar private architects from federal construction projects. Finally, the act provided for the continuation of building-design standardization.⁶⁸ The building-needs survey of 1926 resulted in the following:

- Doubling the \$100 million previously allocated through the act of 1926;
- The construction of at least two new buildings per state; and
- No buildings constructed in towns where postal receipts were less than \$10,000.⁶⁹

President Herbert Hoover worked with Congress to increase allocations for the building program in both 1930 and 1931 as the nation suffered the impacts of the Great Depression. However, the Administration of President Franklin D. Roosevelt substantially expanded the program.⁷⁰

The Great Depression and the Reorganization of the U.S. Treasury Department

The building industry began to suffer from the stock market crash of 1929 and the onset of the Great Depression in the early 1930s. Using provisions of the Public Buildings Act of 1926, officials promoted employment within the building trades. Congress passed an amendment to the 1926 act, known as the Keyes-Elliott Bill, in 1930 to provide "increased authority to the

66 Idem, 327.

67 Lee, 231-232, 239.

68 Louis Melius, *The American Postal Service: History of the Postal Service from the Earliest Times*, (Washington, D.C.: Louis Melius, 1917), 40-41.

69 Beth Boland, National Register of Historic Places, Bulletin 13, "How to Apply National Register Criteria to Post Offices" (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1984), Section II, 3.

70 Ibid.

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secretary of the treasury to enter into contracts with private architects for full professional services.” Despite this directive, the Office of the Supervising Architect, still under Wetmore’s direction, only considered hiring private architects for large projects due to concerns related to efficiency.

The American Institute of Architects (AIA) objected to the Treasury Department’s implementation of the amendment to the 1926 act and petitioned for the reorganization of the supervising architect’s office. The AIA hoped that the office would serve only a supervisory function, allowing wider employment of private architects and resulting in greater diversity, vitality, and regional appropriateness in federal architecture. The President’s Emergency Committee for Employment and members of Congress echoed the AIA’s concerns, particularly regarding the need to employ local private architects. H.R. 6197, known as the Green Bill, was introduced in Congress in 1932 in an attempt to place all federal building design in the hands of private architects; however, the legislation did not pass. The AIA continued its campaign following the election of Franklin D. Roosevelt and the appointment of new officials to the U.S. Treasury Department, including Treasury Secretary William H. Woodin.⁷¹

Roosevelt’s Executive Order 6166, which reorganized the federal building program and promised unemployment relief, was announced in June 1933. The order resulted in the creation of the Procurement Division within the U.S. Treasury Department, the transfer of the supervising architect’s office to the Procurement Division, and the change in name of the Office of the Supervising Architect to the Public Works Branch. W.E. Reynolds, Assistant Director of the Procurement Division, was put in charge of five units headed by the supervising engineer, the supervising architect, the office manager, the chairman of the board of award, and the chief of the legal section.⁷²

New relief funding programs were initiated to allocate and supplement funding for public works simultaneously with the U.S. Treasury Department reorganization. Harold L. Ickes, the federal emergency administrator of public works, allocated funds to the U.S. Treasury Department for the construction of federal buildings under the provisions of the National Industrial Recovery Act of 1933, including two allotments in August 1933 in the amounts of \$6,971,648 and \$13,799,550, as well as additional funds for emergency construction projects throughout the country.⁷³

Public Works Administration, 1933-1939

Although public works spending as a means to aiding recovery from the Great Depression began under the Hoover Administration, President Roosevelt’s New Deal is credited with using the federal building program to achieve relief. These efforts were formalized in 1933, when the Public Works Administration (PWA) was organized to give structure to the recovery effort.

The PWA oversaw the planning and construction of federal and non-federal public works projects, including post office construction. To stimulate the economic recovery, the government

⁷¹ Lee, 248-252.

⁷² Idem, 253.

⁷³ Idem, 254.

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rapidly expanded its public works program. This provided work for the unemployed, many of whom were in the building trades. The Bureau of Labor Statistics maintained statistics on employment, wages, cost of materials, and other PWA project data. During the 1930s, the number of public buildings constructed increased dramatically.

Because of the planning already completed under the 1926 legislation, these projects were able to start up quickly. Post office construction increased nearly threefold during this period compared to the previous fifty years; the PWA built 406 post offices in the years from 1933 to 1939, which represents more than one-eighth of the total 3,174 PWA construction projects built. Congress authorized a number of New Deal programs that were used to fund the construction of post offices. In addition, funds for post office construction came from the relief program authorized by the Emergency Relief and Construction Act of July 21, 1932; the Emergency Construction Program under the Appropriation Act of June 1934; and the Building Program for the District of Columbia, authorized by the Act of 1926. The U.S. Treasury Department retained responsibility for post office construction funding until 1939, utilizing a number of different programs and authorizations to fund the program.⁷⁴

These post offices were among the most familiar government buildings to the public. Despite the desire to complete projects rapidly, the PWA also stressed the importance of high quality in order to ensure “public works of an enduring character and lasting benefits.”⁷⁵ The program’s goals were to construct buildings as quickly as possible and to employ as many people as possible at efficient costs. Standardized design practices were well suited to this high-speed, efficient process in the 1930s and 1940s. While facade variations were allowed, standardized interior plans were well established and utilized. A publication entitled “Instructions to Private Architects Engaged on Public Building Work under the Jurisdiction of the Treasury Department” listed these standards. The most commonly used styles were Colonial Revival, and Neoclassical, and Simplified Classical, a simplified classical style mixing modern and classical elements. All of the styles can be characterized by symmetrical massing and plain surfaces.⁷⁶ Simplified ornamentation, limited design changes, and a lack of incorrect plans meant less drawing time. Any drawing that did not have to be reproduced, but could instead be borrowed from other projects, allowed for a faster project timeline. The combination of simplification and standardization resulted in high quality buildings constructed as quickly as possible.

From PWA to GSA, 1939-1954

Federal building construction under PWA programs continued until 1942 when the American entry into World War II virtually halted all building activity. The few buildings finished in the years 1942-1943 were completions of old projects. The styles of architecture remained the same, as did the supervising architect’s commitment to standardized design.

After World War II, federal architectural activities were well diffused throughout military and civilian agencies. In 1949, GSA subsumed the Federal Works Agency, including its public

⁷⁴ Ellis Armstrong, *History of Public Works of the United States, 1776-1945* (Chicago: American Public Works Association, 1976), 327.

⁷⁵ Boland, Section II, 3.

⁷⁶ Idem, Section II, 4.

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building design function. With the Public Buildings Act of 1949, the Office of the Supervising Architect increasingly relied on private architectural firms to carry out public building designs.

In 1954, all exclusively post office projects were removed from the GSA and transferred to the United States Post Office Department. Currently, GSA retains holdings over non-military federal buildings, including those that house various federal agencies within one building, such as the United States Post Office and Court House in Columbia, Tennessee.⁷⁷

The Murals Program

From 1934 to 1943, the Administration of President Franklin D. Roosevelt supported public art with a series of programs designed both to support unemployed artists and artisans and to improve the character of public buildings within which their work was placed. These programs employed over 10,000 artists, producing a total of 100,000 paintings, 18,000 sculptures, 13,000 prints, and over 4,000 murals.⁷⁸

The New Deal arts program strived to bring art to the American people by placing the artwork in accessible locations. The New Deal sought to change the relationship between the artist and society by democratizing art and culture. The projects combined an elitist belief in the value of high culture with the democratic ideal that everyone in the society could and should be the beneficiary of such efforts. Art project officials wrote that the mass of people were “underprivileged in art,” and they endeavored to make art accessible to all citizens, regardless of class, race, age, or gender.⁷⁹ In addition to the democratic ideals of federal patronage, New Dealers expected that the art projects would help create a national culture.

George Biddle, an artist and former classmate of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, spearheaded the early movement to obtain funding for the program. A public mural experiment in Mexico inspired Biddle to attempt the same thing in the United States. Joining forces with Edward Bruce, a Treasury Department official, Biddle obtained funding for a public arts program from Public Works Administrator Harold Ickes. Subsequently, Edward Bruce emerged as the chief promoter of public funding for artists and named the Public Works of Art Project (PWAP).

After a shaky start and disagreements on the quality and style of the artists, Bruce insisted that the publicly funded art interpret the “American scene” by focusing on American history and historical personages. By the spring of 1934, the PWAP employed 3,749 artists who produced 15,663 pieces of art, of which approximately 400 were murals.⁸⁰

In September 1934, Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau, Jr., and Bruce agreed to spend a portion of new federal buildings’ construction costs on decoration administered by the art unit, not the architect. Approximately one-percent of the building cost was to be reserved for murals, sculpture, or both. In reality, not all buildings contained artwork. If actual costs for construction exceeded the estimate, the building did not receive art. Consequently, some architects were

⁷⁷ Lee, 285-290.

⁷⁸ Park and Markowitz, 5.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Richard D. McKinzie, *The New Deal for Artists* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), 23.

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reluctant to create spaces for murals or sculpture that may not be included.⁸¹ As a result of the interest in public art, a new Section of Painting and Sculpture became part of the Office of Supervising Architect. In 1938, the Section of Painting and Sculpture became the Section of Fine Arts. One year later, the entire building department including the art unit transferred from the Treasury Department to the new Federal Works Agency, Public Buildings Administration.

According to Edward Bruce, the Chief of the Section of Fine Arts in 1940, the aim of the Section of Fine Arts was to “secure the murals and sculpture of distinguished quality appropriate to the embellishment of federal buildings.”⁸² During this period, as many federal buildings were losing regional architectural character, an emphasis was placed on including public art that presented local scenes or historical events. *Maury County Landscape*, the mural that was hung in the Columbia United States Post Office and Court House, is reflective of this trend.

Statement of Significance⁸³

The United States Post Office and Court House is significant under Criterion A, in the area of politics/government, for its local significance as a notable example of a federal government building in Columbia, Tennessee, erected under the New Deal-era federal programs designed in the 1930s to relieve economic problems caused by the Great Depression. The building embodies the ideas of the federal building campaign initiated by the Hoover and Roosevelt administrations under the direction of Supervising Architect Louis A. Simon (1934-1943). The United States Post Office and Court House retains two New Deal artworks from 1941 and 1942. The building is significant under Criterion C, in the area of architecture, as a local exemplification of the Simplified Classical architectural style popular for federal buildings constructed during the late tenure of Supervising Architect Louis A. Simon. The period of significance for the building is 1941-1942, the date of the building’s completion through to the installation of the federally commissioned artwork.

Integrity Evaluation

The United States Post Office and Court House retains a high degree of exterior integrity. The building has only minor alterations to the exterior, the majority of which are located on the east (rear) facade in association with the loading dock area. On the interior, the building retains the original terrazzo floor panels, marble wainscoting, and plaster ceilings in the vestibule, first floor lobby, and courtroom lobby, all finishes that were typical of public buildings constructed in that period and style. The continued use of the building throughout the twentieth century necessitated the need for interior alterations. The application of new interior finishes such as industrial carpeting, acoustical-tile dropped ceilings, and inset and suspended fluorescent lighting do not detract from the integrity of the building as the original features typically remain beneath the more recent materials; consequently, the majority of these changes are reversible.

81 McKinzie, 38.

82 *Exhibition of Mural Designs for Federal Buildings* (Ottawa, Canada: The National Gallery of Canada, 1940), 4.

83 The United States. Post Office and Court House is a contributing resource within the Columbia Commercial Historic District (NRISID 84003625), which was listed in the National Register of Historic Places on August 16, 1984.

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Despite interior alterations to accommodate the changing and continuous use of the building, the United States Post Office and Court House retains its overall integrity of design, materials, and workmanship. In addition, the building retains its original location. As is typical of many downtown areas, however, the blocks surrounding the building have been developed to various degrees and now contain mid-to late-twentieth-century, multi-story commercial edifices as well as buildings that predate the construction of the United States Post Office and Court House. Therefore, the building retains its integrity of setting as it is located in the downtown Columbia area surrounding by commercial and government buildings.

The United States Post Office and Court House retains its overall monumentality as a governmental entity, which contributes to integrity of association. The building's retention of integrity of design, materials, workmanship, location, setting, and association results in the building's retention of integrity of feeling as an early twentieth-century federal building erected in the Simplified Classical architectural style.

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“U.S. Building Erected in Year, Architectural Gem,” *Daily Herald* (Columbia, Tennessee), 5th Progress Edition, March 1941.

“Post Office has 29 Heads in 134 Years,” *Daily Herald* (Columbia, Tennessee), 17 June 1941.

Tutwiler, Cammie

“Upcoming Projects Continue Progress in Downtown,” *Daily Herald* (Columbia, Tennessee), 7 October 2002.

Interviews

Bob Duncan (Maury County Archives Director), 10 March 2009, in conversation with author.

George Phillips (U.S. General Services Administration Building Manager), 9 March 2009, in conversation with author.

Jennifer Russell (U.S. General Services Administration Building Management Specialist), 17 July 2018, in conversation with author.

Miscellaneous

Exhibition of Mural Designs for Federal Buildings. Ottawa, Canada, The National Gallery of Canada, 1940.

Federal Works Agency, “U.S. Post Office and Court House, Columbia, Tennessee,” Floor Plans, March 1940; on file at the U.S. General Services Administration, Southeast-Sunbelt Regional Office, Atlanta, Georgia.

Maury County Archives, “Post Office” Vertical File, Columbia, Tennessee.

U.S. General Services Administration, Fine Arts Division, Central Office, Washington, D.C. , Box FA481; FA482; FA560; FA590; FA800A-D.

United States Post Office and Court House
Name of Property

Maury County, Tennessee
County and State

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
 previously listed in the National Register (Contributing resource to the Columbia Commercial Historical District NRISID 84003625)
 previously determined eligible by the National Register
 designated a National Historic Landmark
 recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
 recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
 recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

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

Name of repository: GSA Region 04 — 77 Forsyth St. SW, Atlanta, GA, 30303

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 0 (0.6-acre property contributes to Columbia Commercial Historic District NRISID 84003625)

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates (decimal degrees)

Datum if other than WGS84: _____

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. Latitude: 35.613892 Longitude: -87.035218
2. Latitude: Longitude:
3. Latitude: Longitude:
4. Latitude: Longitude:

United States Post Office and Court House
Name of Property

Maury County, Tennessee
County and State

Or

UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or NAD 1983

- | | | |
|-------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| 1. Zone: 16 | Easting: 496810 | Northing: 3941125 |
| 2. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 3. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 4. Zone: | Easting : | Northing: |

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The boundary includes the approximately 0.6-acre tax parcel (Maury County Tax Parcel # 060099 ADG 01900) upon which the United States Post Office and Court House is located. The western boundary is delineated by South Garden Street, and 8th Street forms the southern boundary. The northern and eastern boundaries are defined by the property's tax parcel lines.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The National Register boundary for the United States Post Office and Court House includes the entire portion of the 0.6-acre tax parcel that is historically associated with the building during its period of significance (1941-1942). This boundary follows the tax parcel lines and includes the federal building that has occupied the lot since its completion in 1941. The boundary encompasses all of the significant resources and features that comprise the property.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Ashley Raye Smith, Preservation Specialist
organization: U.S. General Services Administration
street & number: 1800 F Street NW
city or town: Washington, DC state: DC zip code: 20405
e-mail ashleyr.smith@gsa.gov
telephone: 202-969-7400
date: July 2018

United States Post Office and Court House
Name of Property

Maury County, Tennessee
County and State

name/title: Emma K. Young, Architectural Historian
organization: A.D. Marble & Company, prepared for U.S. General Services Administration
street & number: 3913 Hartzdale Drive, Suite 1302
city or town: Camp Hill state: PA zip code: 17011
e-mail: eyoung@admarble.com
telephone: 717-731-9588
date: September 2010

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property: United States Post Office and Court House
City or Vicinity: Columbia
County: Maury State: Tennessee
Photographer: E. Young
Date Photographed: March 2009 *

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

United States Post Office and Court House
Name of Property

Maury County, Tennessee
County and State

Photo # 1 (TN_Maury County_United States Post Office and Court House_0001)
West facade, view to southeast

Photo # 2 (TN_Maury County_United States Post Office and Court House_0002)
North and west facade, view to southeast

Photo # 3 (TN_Maury County_United States Post Office and Court House_0003)
East facade, view to west

Photo # 4 (TN_Maury County_United States Post Office and Court House_0004)
East and south facades, view to northwest

Photo # 5 (TN_Maury County_United States Post Office and Court House_0005)
Interior, first floor lobby, view to southwest

Photo # 6 (TN_Maury County_United States Post Office and Court House_0006)
Interior, first floor lobby, view to southeast

Photo # 7 (TN_Maury County_United States Post Office and Court House_0007)
Interior, former postal workroom, view to west

Photo # 8 (TN_Maury County_United States Post Office and Court House_0008)
Interior, second-floor courtroom lobby, view to northwest

Photo # 9 (TN_Maury County_United States Post Office and Court House_0009)
Interior, second floor courtroom lobby, view to northwest

Photo # 10 (TN_Maury County_United States Post Office and Court House_0010)
Interior, second floor courtroom lobby, view to east

Photo # 11 (TN_Maury County_United States Post Office and Court House_0011)
Interior, second floor courtroom, view to east

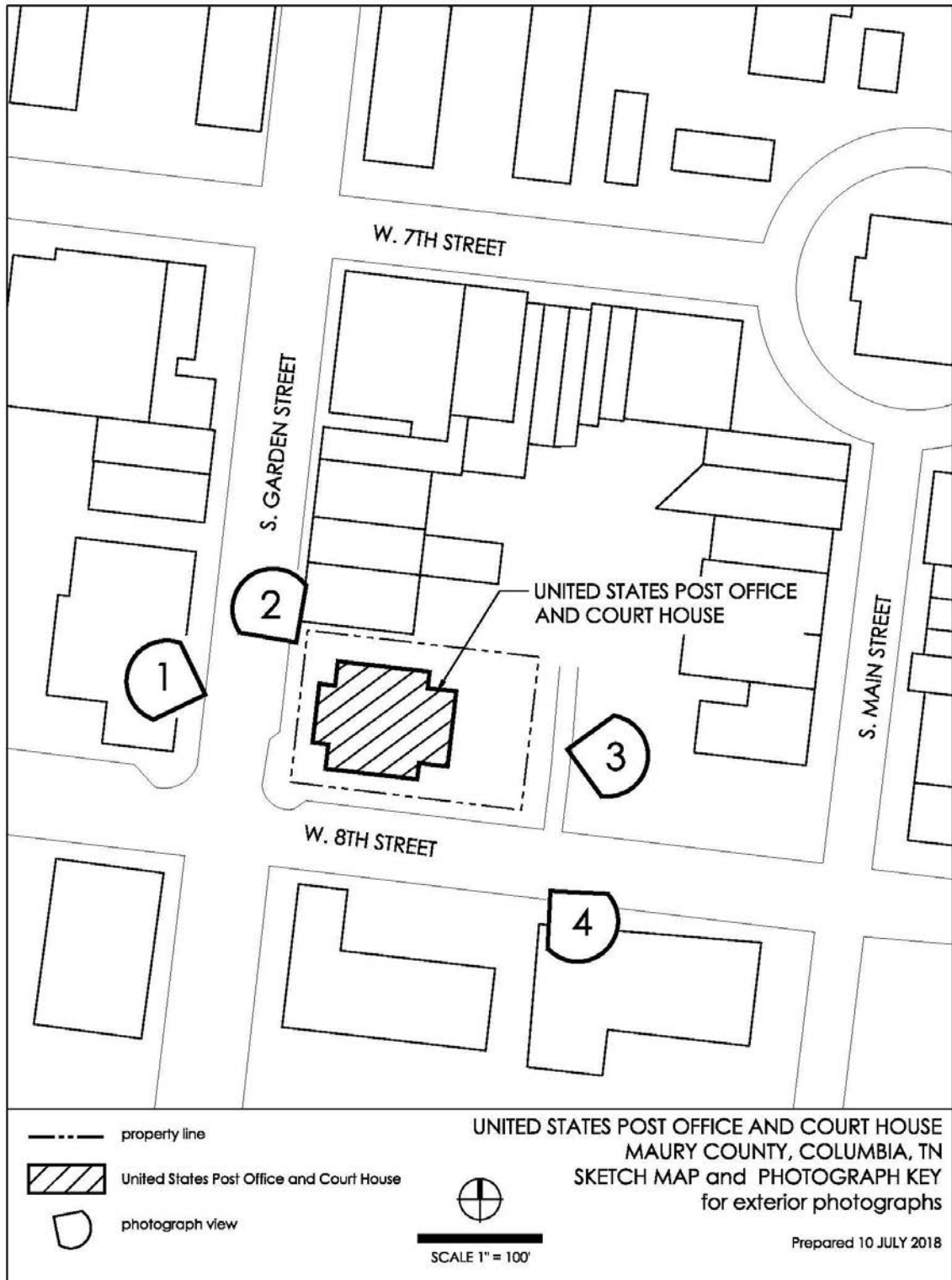
Photo # 12 (TN_Maury County_United States Post Office and Court House_0012)
Interior, third floor corridor, view to west

Photo # 13 (TN_Maury County_United States Post Office and Court House_0013)
Interior, fourth floor corridor, view to south

* Photographs accurately present existing conditions as of 2018.

United States Post Office and Court House
Name of Property

Maury County, Tennessee
County and State



United States Post Office and Court House
Name of Property

Maury County, Tennessee
County and State

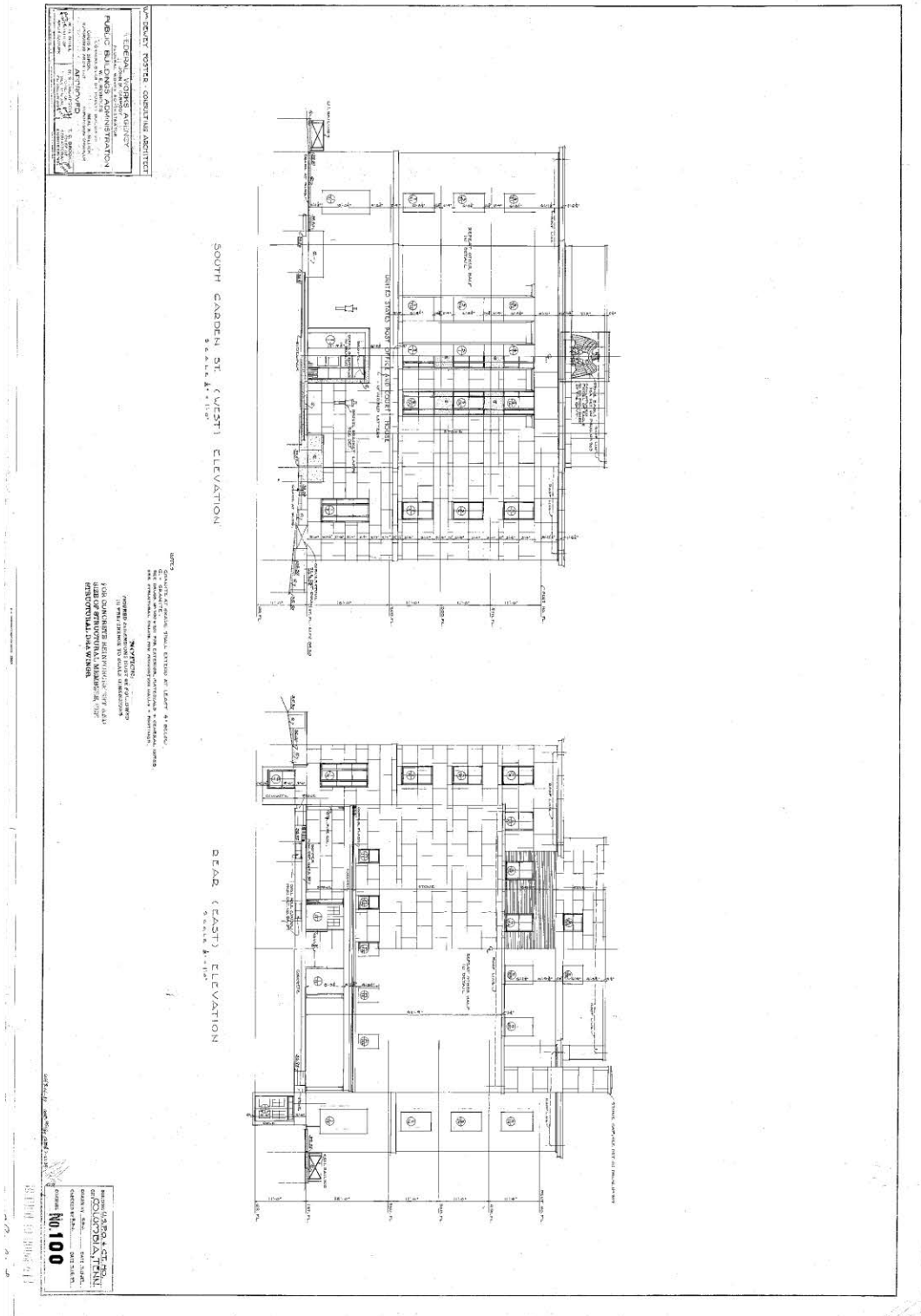
Figure 1 – United States Post Office and Court House, Columbia, Tennessee, west (façade) and south (side) elevations, completion photograph 1941 (National Archives and Records Administration, RG121-BS_81_X_3713)



United States Post Office and Court House
Name of Property

Maury County, Tennessee
County and State

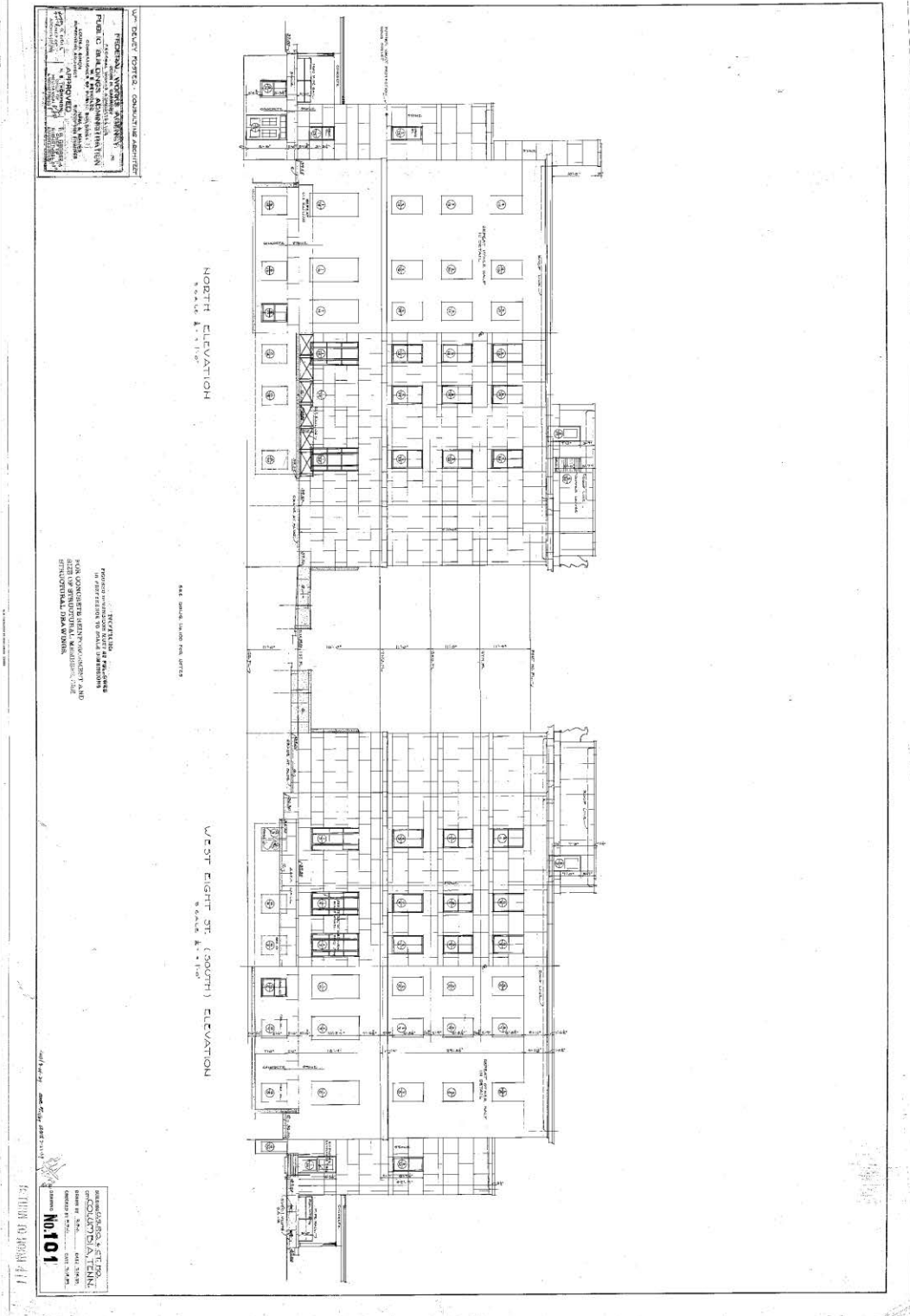
Figure 2 – 1939 Drawings, United States Post Office and Court House, Columbia, Tennessee, west (façade) and east (rear) elevations



United States Post Office and Court House
Name of Property

Maury County, Tennessee
County and State

Figure 2 – 1939 Drawings, United States Post Office and Court House, Columbia, Tennessee, north (side) and south (side) elevations



United States Post Office and Court House
Name of Property

Maury County, Tennessee
County and State

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.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, D.C .



UNITED STATES POST OFFICE AND COURT HOUSE



UNITED STATES POST OFFICE AND COURT HOUSE

Big Mattress Sale
Save Hundreds - Now
Open 'Til 6 PM
Monday - Saturday

ALEXANDER'S
MATTRESS WORLD

ALEXANDER'S MATTRESS WORLD



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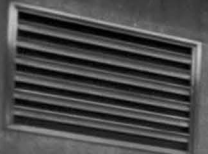
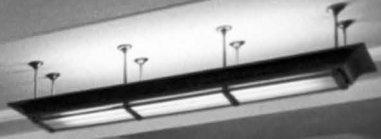




No Smoking
Except in Designated Area

NOTICE

60





EXIT







ELEVATOR





UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Requested Action:

Property Name:

Multiple Name:

State & County:

Date Received: 8/2/2018 Date of Pending List: 8/27/2018 Date of 16th Day: 9/11/2018 Date of 45th Day: 9/17/2018 Date of Weekly List:

Reference number:

Nominator:

Reason For Review:

Accept Return Reject 9/11/2018 Date

Abstract/Summary Comments:

Recommendation/ Criteria:

Reviewer Jim Gabbert Discipline Historian

Telephone (202)354-2275 Date _____

DOCUMENTATION: see attached comments : No see attached SLR : No

If a nomination is returned to the nomination authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the National Park Service.



Beth Savage - PCAB <beth.savage@gsa.gov>

Re: 815 South Garden Street, Columbia TN

1 message

Beth Savage - PCAB <beth.savage@gsa.gov>
To: Paul Keltner <paul@columbiatn.com>
Cc: Ashley Smith - PCAB-C <ashleyr.smith@gsa.gov>

Wed, Aug 1, 2018 at 3:18 PM

Mr. Keltner:

Thank you so very much for taking the time to convey the City's support for GSA's nomination of the U.S. Federal Building and Courthouse in Columbia, Tennessee.

We look forward to the building's listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

Best regards,

Beth L. Savage
Director, Center for Historic Buildings &
Federal Historic Preservation Officer
Office of the Chief Architect
GSA, Public Buildings Service
1800 F Street, NW, Rm. #5400
Washington, DC 20405
202.208.1936; www.gsa.gov/historicbuildings

On Thu, Jul 26, 2018 at 2:49 PM, Paul Keltner <paul@columbiatn.com> wrote:

Ms. Savage,

The City of Columbia fully supports the recognition of this historic structure as a candidate for the National Register. It continues today as a classic example of timeless architecture both within the internal and exterior of the building.

9/11/2018

GSA.gov Mail - Re: 815 South Garden Street, Columbia TN



Paul Keltner, AICP
Development Services Director
931-560-1560

"This institution is an equal opportunity provider"



August 2, 2018

Ms. Joy Beasley
Associate Director (acting), Cultural Resources, Partnerships, and Science
Keeper of the National Register of Historic Places
National Park Service
1849 C Street, NW
Room 3316
Washington, DC 20240



Dear Ms. Beasley:

The U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) is pleased to nominate the United States Post Office and Court House (current name: Federal Building and U.S. Courthouse) located at 815 South Garden Street, Columbia, Tennessee, for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places. The building is located within and contributes to the previously listed Columbia Commercial Historic District (#84003625). The nomination is hereby submitted on disk in accordance with the May 6, 2013 guidance and includes the following:

- Signed original first page of the National Register of Historic Places nomination form;
- Disk 1 – The enclosed disk contains the true and correct copy of the nomination for the United States Post Office and Court House, located in Columbia, TN, to the National Register of Historic Places;
- Disk 2 – The enclosed disk contains the .tif image files for the above referenced nomination.

In accordance with 36 CFR Part 60.9(c), the appropriate local elected officials were notified of GSA's intent to nominate the above referenced property to the National Register of Historic Places by letters dated July 19, 2018. Comments in support of the nomination were received shortly thereafter via email.

If for any reason any nomination package that GSA submits needs to be returned, please do so by a delivery service as items returned to our offices via regular mail are irradiated and the materials severely damaged. Should you have any questions or concerns regarding this nomination package, please contact Elizabeth Hannold at (202) 501-2863 or elizabeth.hannold@gsa.gov.

Sincerely,

Beth L. Savage
Federal Preservation Officer
Director, Center for Historic Buildings

Enclosure

cc: Claudette Stager, Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer
Audrey Entorf, GSA, Regional Historic Preservation Officer