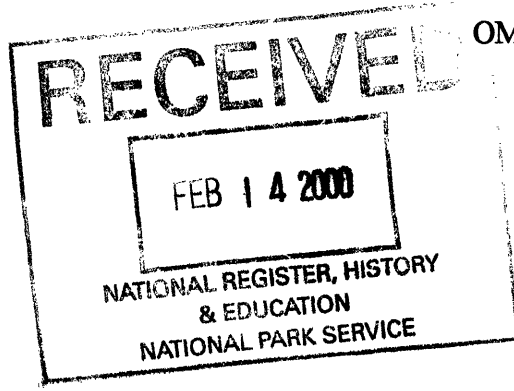


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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

1. Name of Property

historic name Federal Building and U.S. Courthouse

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number Northeast Corner of the intersection of S. W. 5th Street & S. W. "E" Avenue not for publication N/A

city or town Lawton vicinity N/A

state Oklahoma code OK county Comanche code 031 zip code 73507

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally.
(See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Constance Werner Ramirez
Signature of certifying official

February 2, 2000
Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Bob Blackburn
Signature of commenting or other official

11-15-99
Date

Oklahoma Historical Society/SHPO
State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
 See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register
 See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other, (explain:) _____

for
Signature of Keeper

Date of Action

Edson H. Beall 3/24/00

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)

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

Category of Property (Check only one box)

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

Number of Resources within Property

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

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

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

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

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

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

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

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Classical Revival

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Stone:Limestone
roof Metal
walls Brick
Stone:Limestone
other _____

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

8. Statement of Significance

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

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

Criteria Considerations (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

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

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

Politics/Government
Architecture

Period of Significance 1915-1949

8. Statement of Significance (Continued)

Significant Dates 1917

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Wenderoth, Oscar, Supervising Architect
Moore, R.S., Contractor

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

9. Major Bibliographical References

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

Previous documentation on file (NPS)

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

Primary Location of Additional Data

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

Name of repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Less than One (1) Acre

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

	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	<u>14</u>	<u>555520</u>	<u>3829000</u>	3	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
2	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	4	<u> </u>	<u> </u>

N/A See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Cynthia Savage, Architectural Historian

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

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

city or town Pocasset state Oklahoma zip code 73079

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name General Services Administration, Greater Southwest Region

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

city or town Fort Worth state TX zip code 76102

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Federal Building and U.S. Courthouse
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Narrative Description:

SUMMARY

The Federal Building and U.S. Courthouse in Lawton, Oklahoma, is a buff brick and limestone, three-story building with a full basement. Constructed between 1915 and 1917, the building is an excellent example of a Classical Revival style, public building in Lawton. The rectangular building is topped by a hipped, metal roof, which is barely visible from the street. The building has a rusticated stone base comprising the first floor with upper walls of brick capped with a brick parapet and a denticulated limestone cornice. The majority of windows in the building are wood, double-hung of various sizes. The windows on the first floor of the north, west and south elevations are arched. The larger second floor courtroom windows located on the rear elevation are also arched. Historically, the main entry, consisting of three sets of wood panel double doors with fanlights, was located on the west side of the building, accessed by a flight of stairs. The two flanking sets of doors on the façade have been replaced with arched balustraded windows similar to the other windows on this level. The central door on the west elevation remains, although it is now glazed slab with an aluminum frame. Centered above the historic triple entry are nonoriginal aluminum letters spelling "Federal Building – United States Court House." Currently, the main entry is located on the south side of the building, and consists of double glazed slab doors with aluminum frame topped by a fanlight. Above this entry are also aluminum letters indicating the function of the building. In addition to the alterations to the entries, an enclosed loading dock was added to the rear elevation in about 1957. On the south side of the loading dock, a concrete handicap ramp has been added and to the north two first floor windows have been infilled. Additionally, an open steel fire stair has been located on the northeast corner of the building with steel fire doors on the second and third floor levels. All of these changes, except for the addition of the loading dock, occurred in approximately 1965. To the north of the building is a noncontributing decorative block structure which shelters cooling equipment and off the northwest corner of the building is a flag pole. North of the decorative block structure is another mechanical box.

The Federal Building and U.S. Courthouse is located in the heart of downtown Lawton. However, the building's setting has been dramatically altered due to the razing of the majority of historic commercial buildings in the early 1970s to allow for the construction of a modern, enclosed mall. Also in the 1970s, the historic Comanche County Courthouse, located north of the Federal Building, was razed to make way for construction of a modern courthouse. Additionally, a modern Post Office was built south of the historic Federal Building and to the southeast a high rise apartment, named the Lawtonian Camlu, was constructed in the mid 1950s. Despite these changes, the Federal Building and U.S. Courthouse in Lawton retains a high degree of integrity of location, design, workmanship, materials, feeling, and association.

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EXTERIOR DESCRIPTION

The Federal Building and U.S. Courthouse in Lawton is an excellent example of a Classical Revival style, public building. Constructed of limestone on the first level and buff brick laid in a running bond on the upper two levels, the building has a metal, hipped roof that is not readily visible from the street. Piercing the metal seam roof is a brick chimney on the north side and the elevator mechanical equipment on the south side, along with various vents. Below the roof is a brick parapet featuring a limestone cornice with dentils. Below the cornice and above the third floor windows is a limestone belt course. Limestone spandrels, embellished with foliate swags and rosettes, ornament the brick walls between the second and third floor windows. The fenestration of the building is symmetrical, in keeping with the Classical Revival style. The wood, double-hung windows are of various sizes, including two-over-two, six-over-six, eight-over-eight, and twelve-over-twelve. For the majority, the first floor windows are six-over-six with four-light side lights, heavy mullions, and fanlights. The second floor windows are twelve-over-twelve, the third level windows are eight-over-eight and the basement windows are horizontal 3-pane wood awning windows. The treatment of the windows varies slightly between the floors and on the different elevations. The doors are currently glazed slab with aluminum frames. The entries are accessed by granite stairs as the first floor is slightly above grade. The building is set upon a nicely landscaped lot with an above grade yard held in place by a low brick retaining wall. A concrete sidewalk encircles the building on the north, west, and south elevations. This is encircled by the pavement of the Central Mall parking lot on the north and east elevation, 5th Street on the west elevation and a small parking lot on the south side of the building.

The west side of the Federal Building and U.S. Courthouse in Lawton serves as the primary elevation. Matching the other elevations, the first story of the building is rusticated limestone, providing a base for the upper brick walls. The façade is divided into three bays with two narrow side bays flanking a larger, protruding center bay. The windows in the first floor are wood, six-over-six, double-hung windows with four-light sidelights, heavy mullions and a fanlight. The arched first floor windows also feature large limestone voussoirs and limestone balustrades. Historically, the west elevation also contained the main entry, consisting of three sets of double, wood, panel doors with fanlights and large limestone voussoirs. Flanking each of the historic entries are original wall-mounted cast iron lanterns. Centered above the doors are nonoriginal metal letters spelling "Federal Building – United States Court House." A large expanse of granite stairs with cheek walls and iron railings lead to the main entry. In about 1965, the center historic entry was replaced by aluminum storefront doors and the two side doors were altered to windows. The new windows are very similar to the historic windows but not identical. The new windows are wood, six-over-six, double-hung windows with four-light sidelights with fanlights and limestone balustrades. Although the windows have the similar heavy mullions, the new windows' historic fanlights match the original fanlights over the existing doors with thinner mullions. This slight difference sets the new windows apart from the historic windows. On the upper two floors, the protruding center bay

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features six scored Doric pilasters that support an unembellished limestone entablature. In the two side bays, the entablature becomes a simpler belt course. The second and third floor single windows are aligned one on top of the other and separated by limestone spandrels, embellished with foliate swags and rosettes. Within the center projecting bay, the windows are evenly spaced between the pilasters. In the two flanking bays, the windows are centrally located within the bay, which is slightly wider than the space between the pilasters. The windows on the second floor are more elaborate than those of the third floor. The second floor windows are twelve-over-twelve, wood, double-hung with bracketed limestone hoods and surrounds in the center bay and twelve-over-twelve, wood, double-hung with brick, flat hoods and limestone keystones in the flanking bays. The third floor windows are eight-over-eight, wood, double-hung with limestone sills. The molded limestone belt course, featuring the bead and reel motif, directly above the third floor windows acts as a window head.

The south elevation is currently used as the main entry. Historically, this side entry matched the front entries but it also has been modified to a modern glass and aluminum storefront door. The historic fanlight remains in place, as do the original wall-mounted cast iron lanterns. This entry also matches the original front entry in having granite steps, cheek walls and iron railings. Centered above the door are two rows of nonhistoric metal letters indicating the building's use as a "Federal Building/United States Court House." The majority of windows on the south side match the windows on the west and north elevations. An exception is the first floor window on the southeast corner of the elevation. This window is wood, double-hung, six-over-six but the remaining space within the arch has been filled with stepped down limestone panels. Similar to the other first floor windows, this window has large limestone voussoirs and a limestone balustrade. The balustrade on this window, however, is smaller than on the other windows, spanning only the space of the actual six-over-six window. This is an original treatment according to historic construction photographs but the reason for this different treatment is unknown. Identical to the windows in the flanking bays of the west elevation, the second floor windows have flat, brick hoods with limestone keystones. The third floor windows have limestone sills and the limestone belt course serves as the header. Again, the second and third floor windows are separated by limestone spandrels, identical to those on the other elevations. On the southwest corner of the south wall is a carved limestone cornerstone which reads "William G. McAdoo/Secretary of the Treasury/Oscar Wenderoth/Supervising Architect/ 1915." Barely visible from the street is the metal shaft on the roof containing the elevator equipment and another large vent.

While featuring many of the same elements and decorative features as the other elevations, the east side of the building is easily distinguished. Also divided into three bays, matching the façade, the east wall has the same rusticated limestone base at the first floor level and brick-clad second and third floors. Also identical to the other elevations, the east elevation is surmounted by a brick parapet and an overhanging denticulated cornice. Beneath this, the limestone belt

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course wraps around the building. The fenestration within the flanking bays matches that of the other elevations with the exception of the window on the northeast corner which was completely blocked-in. Identical to the other walls, the second floor windows at the extreme north and south ends of the east elevation are wood, double-hung, twelve-over-twelve with limestone surrounds, flat brick hoods and limestone keystones. The third floor windows are wood, double-hung, eight-over-eight with limestone sills. The belt course continues to serve as the lintel for the flanking bay's third story windows on the rear elevation. The fenestration within the central bay distinguishes the rear elevation. The two-level courtroom windows highlight the center bay. These consist of three, large, Palladian style windows with wood, double-hung, nine-over-nine windows with four-light sidelights and a fanlight within the arch. The semi-circular arch is defined by brick voussoirs with limestone keystones. A fluted sheet metal hood lies within the arch. On either side of the courtroom windows are wood, double-hung, four-over-six windows with limestone keystones on the second floor. Above these on the third story are small, wood, double-hung, two-over-two windows with limestone keystones. The first floor windows in the center bay are large, rectangular, wood, double-hung, four-over-four with four-light sidelights. The windows towards the southern end of the central bay are topped with double louvers. The central first floor windows have been obscured by the 1957 loading dock. The northernmost window of the central bay has been completely infilled. Two drain pipes are located on the outside edges of the central bay.

Also differentiating the east side from the others is the one-story, wood paneled, enclosed loading dock which extends from the central bay. The dock was added to the building in about 1957. The dock has plaster finish on the walls. A handicap access ramp leads to a glass and aluminum storefront entry door on the south side of the loading dock. The handicap ramp was added in about 1965, when the first floor windows to the north of it were also infilled. The south side entry on the loading also has sidelights and a transom. On the east side of the dock are two metal, paneled, overhead doors. There are no openings on the north side of the dock.

The north side of the building is also functional in nature, although it has the same decorative elements and features as the south elevation. On the first floor, the second window from the east matches the southeast first floor window on the south side and is infilled with stepped-down limestone and a wood, six-over-six, double-hung window with the smaller balustrade. It is believed that a restroom was located here originally. An open, steel, exterior fire stair is located at the northeast corner of the north wall. Steel fire doors open onto the fire stairs on both the second and third floors. The fire stairs and steel doors were added to the building in about 1965. A brick chimney with limestone string courses is visible from the street.

Located north of the north elevation is a noncontributing, decorative block structure that contains cooling equipment. According to building personnel, the structure was constructed in about 1967. A flagpole is located off the northwest corner of the building.

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INTERIOR DESCRIPTION

Originally, the main entry on the west elevation opened into an L-shaped lobby, with a secondary entry at the southwest corner. This space has been altered with the size of the lobby being reduced and the main entry re-oriented to the southwest corner. The remaining space has been turned into office space with a central corridor running east to west.

The corridor floor is clad with vinyl tiles. The walls are a combination of partition walls and original plaster walls. All ceilings are dropped acoustical with fluorescent lighting. Original materials remaining on the first floor include the vestibule at the southwest corner and the main stairs to the east of the entry. The original staircase also remains. It has veined, white marble risers and treads with a marble stringer. The original rail, visible only at the first floor, consists of a square baluster with foliate motif. The staircase wraps around the contemporary elevator.

The corridors of the second and third floor of the Federal Building remain nearly original in appearance. Both corridors run north to south in the center of the building with a narrower corridor extending to the east at the south end. The staircase and elevator are located on the southern end of the building. The original corridor flooring consisted of $\frac{3}{4}$ " white ceramic tile with a red fretwork border, all outlined in black. The original floors have been covered by vinyl tile except at the elevator lobby and short east-west corridors on each floor. Walls are painted plaster with a 6" wood chair rail and a 10" white marble base. The ceilings, originally flat plaster, are covered with acoustical ceiling panels. Fire doors have been added at the south end of the corridors where they connect to the stair/elevator lobby. Doors off the corridor are wood panel with the upper panel of obscure glass featuring a float glass transom. A significant number of original doors remain. The courtroom doors (located on the second floor) are double, five panel, wood doors with float glass transoms and are located on the east wall of the second floor corridor.

The second and third floor tenant space, which are located off the corridors to the west, north, and south of both floors, largely retains its original configuration. The original wood floors have been covered with carpet in some areas and vinyl tile in others. Walls are painted or covered with vinyl wallcovering. Ceilings are dropped acoustical panels. Some original wood chair rails and bases remain. Typical interior passage doors are flush wood, though a few original, five panel, wood doors remain.

One original private restroom remains within the judge's suite on the second floor. The floor is $\frac{3}{4}$ " white ceramic tile. Walls are clad to 5' with gray Tennessee marble wainscot with a covered base. Fixtures appear to be original, as does the hardware. An original oak-framed mirror remains on the wall.

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The ceremonial courtroom is located on the second floor in the center of the east (rear) portion of the building. It retains many original features and finishes. The floors have carpet over the older cork flooring. Walls feature painted wood panel wainscot to 4' with molded wood dado. Recessed plaster arches rise above the wainscot to a molded chair rail at the 20' level. Above the chair rail, the walls are covered with an acoustical finish. The ceiling consists of glued-on acoustical tiles with a denticulated cornice and a decorative crown mold. The plaster crown mold features an urn and anthemion motif. On the north wall is the judge's bench set within an arched, recessed area. Double Corinthian pilasters ornament the walls of the recessed area. On the northeast wall of the recessed area is an original, five panel, wood door which opens into the judge's robing chamber. On the south wall is an original, five panel, wood door which provides access to a storage area. The Palladian style windows on the east wall of the courtroom are ornamental. A scored arch above the windows springs from a cornice ornamented by fretwork and supported by scored Corinthian columns. A fluted sheet metal hood lies within the arch at the window head. The courtroom's main entry doors are located on the west wall. These consist of two sets of vinyl covered, double, fly doors. The doors have wood surrounds surmounted by denticulated wood cornices with ornamental entablatures. The entablature is embellished by a series of glyphed panels. The panels feature glyphs alternating with diamonds and disks with rosette centers. The transom is an open panel with straight wood spindles. Original chandeliers are suspended from the courtroom ceiling. They consist of six panels of translucent glass within a brass frame. The frame features foliate motifs. An original brass judge's lamp sits on the judge's desk. Two original brass torchiere sconces remain on the west wall and one on the east wall. The sconces, originally gas, were retro-fitted for electricity. All built-in courtroom furnishings are paneled wood. It is not known which, if any, are original. It is believed that the jury and witness boxes are replacements.

The full basement of the Federal Building is primarily utilitarian and continues its original function. A boiler room lies in the center of the basement with shop and storage rooms on the north, south and west sides. The original postal carrier's toilet, located in the northeast corner, has been abandoned but maintains its gray Tennessee marble wainscot and ceramic tile floor. Former offices and the carrier's swing rooms have plaster walls with wood chair rail and painted plaster ceiling. Typical finishes in the service/mechanical areas include concrete floors and ceilings and painted brick walls. Basement doors are a mixture of original diagonal wood panel doors and contemporary flush wood ones.

ALTERATIONS/ADDITIONS

The Federal Building and U.S. Courthouse in Lawton has been slightly modified. According to the building plans, the majority of changes occurred in about 1965 when the first floor of the building was being converted to office space. At this time, the historic main entry was altered from three sets of doors to one. The flanking doors on the west elevation

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were changed to windows very similar to the other windows of the first floor but retaining their historic fanlights which sets them apart. Additionally, the south side entry was modified to serve as the main entry to the building. All first floor exterior doors went from wood panel doors to glazed slab with aluminum frames. Aluminum lettering indicating the function of the building was also added on the façade and above the south entry. On the rear of the building, a handicap ramp was added to the loading dock and two first floor windows on the northern side of the east elevation were completely infilled. On the north elevation, an open steel fire stairs was added to the exterior west corner. Steel fire doors on the second and third floors were added at the same time. Other changes to the exterior of the building include the construction of a loading dock on the rear of the building. This was added in about 1957.

Although the interior of the second and third floor retain much of their historic appearance, the first floor has been modified. In the mid-1960s, when the U.S. Post Office moved out of the building, the first floor lobby was reduced. Currently, the southwest corner of the original lobby serves as the main entry. The remainder of the former Post Office space was turned into modern office space with dropped acoustical ceilings, fluorescent lights, vinyl tile floors, and partition walls amidst the original plaster walls.

Despite these changes, the Federal Building and U.S. Courthouse in Lawton retains a high degree of integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship, feeling and association. The exterior modifications do not significantly impact the building's ability to convey its historic significance as a federal building, nor its architectural significance as an excellent example of a federally-designed, Classical Revival style public building. While the loss of historic fabric on the first floor is more significant, the high degree of integrity of the second and third floor, particularly the courtroom on the second floor, aptly allows the building to convey the historic uses of the building.

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Narrative Statement of Significance:

SUMMARY

The Federal Building and U.S. Courthouse in Lawton, Oklahoma, is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its association with the federal government at the local level and Criterion C as a significant example of federal architecture from the early twentieth century. From the start of construction in 1915 to 1949, the building provided a federal presence in the town, as well as many federal services, including postal and legal. The building is an outstanding example of a federally-designed Classical Revival style government building. Additionally, because much of historic downtown Lawton was destroyed during the urban renewal movement of the late 1960s and early 1970s, the Federal Building is one of a handful of historic buildings remaining in the town's commercial core and one of a very few public buildings still extant.

BACKGROUND

Located in Southwest Oklahoma, Lawton is located in the portion of Oklahoma that was reserved for the Apache, Kiowa, and Comanche tribes in the late nineteenth century. In 1901, when the two million acres of surplus land was opened to non-Native American settlement, the federal government tried a new approach. The previous land runs held in Oklahoma Territory were successful but all incurred the problems of conflicting claims and the presence of Sooners – people who entered the area illegally, staking their claim before the run officially began. To avoid these problems in the opening of the former Apache, Kiowa, and Comanche lands, the federal government instead auctioned the town lots of the three county seats established by the government and awarded the remaining farm land through a lottery. Allotted 320 acres, Lawton was chosen to be the seat of Comanche County before the official opening of the area, 6 August 1901.¹

Almost 25,000 people arrived to bid on the 1200 lots available in Lawton on 6 August 1901. All lots were sold and paid for the day of the sale with proceeds totaling over half a million dollars. As prescribed by law, the money was to be used to build a courthouse, high school, sewer system and water works for the new town. Any remaining money was to go for county roads and bridges. Work on permanent buildings began quickly in the tent city. Within four months of the opening, tents occupied only about half the lots in town and the population had stabilized at approximately eight thousand people.²

¹ Oklahoma Historic Preservation Survey, "Final Survey Report: Reconnaissance Level Survey of a Portion of Lawton," (on file at State Historic Preservation Office, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma: 1991), 13.

² Ibid., 14.

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Within a month of the opening, the Rock Island and Frisco Railroads both completed lines to Lawton, greatly facilitating the development of the town. A central business district was quickly established adjacent to the railroad in what became downtown Lawton. By 1920, the downtown commercial area covered approximately twelve city blocks. The central business district continued to expand over the years so that by 1965 it covered thirty city blocks. In the mid 1960s, downtown Lawton roughly included the area bounded by Sixth Street on the west, First Street on the east, A Avenue on the north and F Avenue on the south. However, in 1970 a 21.5 million dollar urban renewal project was undertaken to modernize the central business district by constructing a large, enclosed mall. The result of this project was the demolition of much of the downtown commercial core and extensive renovations to the buildings that survived. In addition, urban renewal concerns also contributed to the demolition of the historic city hall and county courthouse buildings. One of the very few early government buildings that survived the urban renewal onslaught in Lawton is the Federal Building and U.S. Courthouse.³

The federal government has always been one of the major economic supports in Lawton. In addition to the federal presence evident by the Federal Building and U.S. Courthouse, located a mere four miles north of the town is the Army's Fort Sill Military Reservation. Established in 1869, the fort has continued to provide a strong federal military presence in the area to the current times. Additionally, the economic boost provided by the fort has resulted in several booms in nearby Lawton. Although the town maintained a fairly steady population throughout its first fifty years, significant population increases occurred during the two World Wars. Also, during the hard times of the Great Depression, the city's economy was bolstered by the 4.4 million dollar building program started at Fort Sill in 1933 for which several thousand men had to be hired. This economic boost was continued through the 1940s as the building program continued its expenditures to a total of fourteen million dollars.⁴

HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE

When Lawton opened to non-Native American settlement in 1901, it was located in Oklahoma Territory. Six years later, the combined territories of Oklahoma and Indian officially entered the United States as the state of Oklahoma. In early 1908, while Congress was debating the passage of an omnibus public building bill that would appropriate at least twenty million dollars for U.S. Courthouses and Post Offices, the Oklahoma delegation was seeking to get an appropriation for every large town in Oklahoma. Towns for which appropriations were sought included Oklahoma City, Muskogee, Enid, Ardmore, McAlester, Tulsa, Bartlesville, Lawton, Chickasha, Vinita, El Reno, Anadarko,

³ Ibid., 17-19.

⁴ Ibid., 13 and 22.

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Woodward, and Alva. The amounts sought varied from half a million dollars for Oklahoma City and Muskogee to 50,000 dollars for Anadarko, Woodward and Alva. The Oklahoma delegation made such bold demands because they contended that both Oklahoma and Indian territories had been neglected to that point in the allocation of federal buildings.⁵

Prior to 1902, federal buildings were authorized on a building-by-building basis. Beginning in 1902, Congress began authorizing the construction of multiple federal buildings through omnibus acts. The omnibus public building acts saved considerable time in Congress because it allowed for authorization of a large body of projects in one vote. However, the omnibus bills also allowed for considerable political abuse. Political influence often dictated the size, ornamentation and location of the buildings, rather than actual operational needs. Often viewed as federal “presents,” the buildings confirmed to the town’s residents the importance of their community and the power of their Congressional delegation.⁶

Although the federal buildings were often viewed as “pork” projects, they did serve the communities in which they were placed. In March 1910, Congressman Scott Ferris introduced a bill into Congress asking that the appropriation for the Lawton Federal Building be raised to \$250,000. Although this amount was apparently not approved, the construction of a federal building seemed imminent. Late in March, it was announced that bids for an acceptable location were to be received by 15 April 1910. Locals anticipated that the contract for construction would be let by the first of May. The local newspaper proclaimed “The erection of this monster building in addition to other activities already under way will make this year a record breaker in the history of Lawton.”⁷

However, construction of the federal building did not proceed as anticipated. In May 1914, Congressman Ferris notified a Lawton resident that work on the federal building would began sometime in the coming summer. The newspaper indicated that work had not begun sooner because other sites, being on the building list first, came before Lawton. Much of this delay in construction activity is attributable to the overburdened Supervising Architect’s Office of the Treasury Department, which had charge of all federal building construction projects. The increase in the number of authorized buildings during the early part of the twentieth century resulted in a backlog of projects. In 1899, the Supervising Architect’s Office managed or was in the process of constructing a total of 399 buildings. By 1912, the number of building rose to 1,126. Within four years, it was estimated that the number of federal buildings was increasing “at a rate of a new building every fourth day in the year.”⁸

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

⁶ H.J. Kolva and Steve Franks, National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form, “Historic U.S. Post Offices in New Mexico 1900-1940” (September 1988), E-5.

⁷ Daily News-Republican, (Lawton, Oklahoma), 4 March 1910 and 23 March 1910.

⁸ Daily News and Star, (Lawton, Oklahoma), 9 May 1914. See also Lois A. Craig and the Staff of the Federal Architecture Project, The Federal Presence: Architecture, Politics and National Design, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1984), 213.

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Late in 1914, the local newspaper announced that plans for the new Federal Building were now completed. Excitement about the federal project in Lawton continued as residents of the town were encouraged to “picture in their minds what a magnificent structure is to be erected by Uncle Sam.” Additionally, it was announced that “The plans call for the most modern constructed building, representing not only beauty and stability, but convenience along the lines intended.” The economic benefits of the building were also anticipated. It was expected that local workmen would be employed “at good wages” for several months and that much local material would be used.⁹

Construction of the building was probably started in June 1915 and was well underway by early September 1915. On the 3rd of September, the building’s cornerstone was laid. Although there had been some slow downs caused by delays in shipping of materials, it was believed that the building would be complete within the time defined by the government, eighteen months after start of construction.¹⁰ Work on the building continued through 1916 and into early 1917. In late February 1917, the building was announced as complete. The Post Office was scheduled to move into its spacious new accommodations on 1 March 1917.¹¹

Constructed at a cost of approximately \$130,000, the building was viewed as “one of the best, most complete and most up-to-date government building that is to be found in this part of the country outside of Oklahoma City.” Using “the best materials,” the building was further proclaimed to be “by far the finest and best looking structure of which the city can boast.”¹²

One of the major occupants of the building was the U.S. Post Office, which was allocated the entire first floor of the new Federal Building. A post office was established in the federally designated townsite of Lawton on the day the town lots were auctioned, 6 August 1901. Lawton’s first postmaster was Joe White, a relative of Governor Jenkins. The post office was immediately ranked as second class. Within a month of the opening, the post office was located in a frame building at 305 C Avenue. Continued expansion of the city during the early decades increased demand within the post office. In February 1910, the Post Office receipts continued to increase from the previous year, up almost 17%.

⁹ The Lawton (Oklahoma) News, 17 November 1914.

¹⁰ The Lawton (Oklahoma) Constitution, 3 September 1915.

¹¹ Ibid., 20 February 1917.

¹² Ibid., 20 February 1917.

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Additionally, it was announced that the Post Office would probably be adding another carrier as the present force was unable to keep up with current demand. In 1912, the post office moved to the first floor of the Masonic Building where it remained until the Federal Building was opened. Four years later, in the midst of construction of the Federal Building, a substation post office was established in the Kerans Store at the corner of Fourth Street and C Avenue. The substation was contracted to handle all the duties of the main post office except for the distribution of mail. The hours of the new substation were to be the same as the store so it stayed open until almost twelve o'clock. It was believed that these extended hours would be appreciated by traveling men who arrived on the night train. Additionally, it was held that the substation would be of "unusual value" when the new Federal Building was completed as the new building was deemed "somewhat remote from the main business district." In addition to handling the town's mail, the Lawton post office was also in charge of the Fort Sill branch. As such, it was necessary to hire an additional twenty-five workers during World War I.¹³ The boom experienced by Lawton as a result of World War II probably also resulted in the hiring of additional postal workers.

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

¹³ The Daily News-Republic, 4 March 1910. See also Monta Rae Collins, The History of the City of Lawton, Oklahoma (M.A. thesis, Oklahoma University, 1941), 96-97.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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Many of the cases that came before the federal courts in Oklahoma dealt with the same issues that district courts in other states were dealing with. Due to its unique history as Indian Country, however, Oklahoma federal courts also dealt with issues that were fairly peculiar to the state. Much of the work of the federal courts in Oklahoma during the first decades of the century had to do with two dominant forces in Oklahoma history: Native Americans and oil. In addition to abolishing the Indian Tribal Courts, the 1898 Curtis Act had harsh provisions for the disbursement of tribal land in Indian Territory and the dissolution of tribal governments. In order to ease the transition, the tribes entered into agreements with the federal government in which some land was retained under tribal ownership while the majority of land in Indian Territory was allotted to individual tribal members with the remaining land, including townsites, to be sold at auction. Due to the numerous legalities involved in this process, often not understood by the citizens of Indian Territory who were made wards of the federal government to protect them, there was much illegal and immoral activity related to the allotment process. A number of the early court cases dealt with Indian allotment issues, particularly in the Eastern District Court. Combined with the discovery of oil in the late nineteenth century, often on land held in trust for the thousands of Native American wards of the federal government, the allotment related cases mushroomed.¹⁸

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

In addition to the District Court and the Post Office, other 1917 occupants of the Federal Building and U.S. Courthouse in Lawton included the Indian Agent and reclamation service on the third floor. The remaining space on the third level

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

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

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was used for jury and witness rooms for the federal court.²⁰ In 1968, the Post Office moved to a new location but the building continues in use as a federal court, as well as office space for various other federal agencies.

Business at the Federal Building and U.S. Courthouse in Lawton was fairly routine, for Oklahoma at least. Nonetheless, the building is significant within Lawton for its association with these events because it and they represent the federal government in Lawton during the period. Often seemingly a remote entity, the federal government was made a tangible reality in Lawton through the construction and use of the Federal Building and U.S. Courthouse.

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

As with all federal buildings constructed during the period, the Department of the Treasury in Washington, D. C., was responsible for the design of the Federal Building and U.S. Courthouse in Lawton. As Supervising Architect of the U.S. Treasury Department, Oscar Wenderoth headed a group of architects in charge of building design for federally funded buildings nationwide. During the 1910s, the Supervising Architect's Office housed one of the largest architectural design offices in America. The team of professionals under Wenderoth's supervision included: L. Trviar, Architect, Supervisor of Drafting Division; Ernest C. Ruebsam, Structural Engineer, Supervisor of Structural Division; and, N.S. Thompson, Mechanical Engineer, Supervisor of Mechanical Division.²¹

During the early part of the twentieth century, Beaux-Arts Classicism returned federal architecture to the classical traditions that the eclectic styles of the Victorian period had disrupted.²² The Classical Revival style was derivative of the Beaux-Arts style. One of the defining differences between the two styles is that the Classical Revival style employed much less opulent decorative detail while maintaining the classical order. The Federal Building and U.S. Courthouse in Lawton is an excellent example of federally-designed Classical Revival style architecture. In addition to the Doric pilasters on the façade, the classical order is also visible in the overall building. The first level of the building, constructed of rusticated limestone, serves as the base. The buff brick second and third floor levels are the column. The capitol is formed by the limestone beltcourse and cornice. Also representative of the Classical Revival style are the symmetrical façade, dentils, fanlights, and Palladian style windows.

²⁰ The Lawton Constitution, 20 February 1917.

²¹ Larry Ummel and Cynthia Smelker, National Register of Historic Places Nomination for the U.S. Post Office and Courthouse in Chickasha, Oklahoma, (on file at the State Historic Preservation Office, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma: 1994), 20.

²² Craig, The Federal Presence, 214.

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Additionally, the Federal Building is one of the few historic buildings that remain in Lawton's central business district. The demolition of much of downtown Lawton in the early 1970s created a void in the historic fabric of the community. Over five hundred buildings in the commercial core of the town were torn down to make way for a modern enclosed mall. This included all of the buildings on the block that surrounded the Federal Building. Currently, the Federal Building sits on the southwest edge of the expansive parking lot of Lawton's Central Mall. In 1965, there were six other buildings located on the block with the Federal Building. The blocks surrounding the Federal Building also contained numerous historic buildings, which came down to make way for the mall.²³

The Federal Building and U.S. Courthouse is one of the very few extant historic public buildings in Lawton. The original Lawton City Hall, constructed in 1904, was also demolished by urban renewal in the late 1960s/early 1970s. During the same period, the Comanche Courthouse fell to the wrecking ball, replaced by a modern high-rise office building. The historic Carnegie Library (NR 1976) remains standing, although no longer in use as a library. The historic library is now used as an annex for the new City Hall.

The Federal Building and U.S. Courthouse served the Lawton community well from its construction in 1915 to 1949, the fifty-year mark of the National Register. The building is a physical representation of federal government policies and practices at the community level. It is also an excellent example of federally-designed Classical Revival style architecture. Importantly within the context of Lawton's built environment, the Federal Building and U.S. Courthouse is one of the few historic buildings remaining from the early twentieth century and one of a select number of historic public buildings in town.

²³ "The Downtown that Disappeared," The Lawton Constitution, date unknown, available in the Lawton Vertical File at the Lawton Public Library. See also The Lawton (Oklahoma) Morning Press-Constitution, 6 August 1986.

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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Lots 17-20, Block 49, Original Townsite of Lawton, Oklahoma.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The boundary includes the property historically associated with the Federal Building and U.S. Courthouse in Lawton, Oklahoma.