



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

Historic name United States Post Office and Court House
Other names/site number Potter Stewart United States Courthouse; United States Courthouse and Federal Building

2. Location

Street & Number 100 East Fifth Street Not for Publication N/A
City or Town Cincinnati Vicinity N/A
State Ohio Code OH County Hamilton Code 061
Zip Code 44308

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 nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

[Signature] 3/10/2015
Signature of certifying official Date
Federal Preservation Officer, U.S. General Services Administration
State or Federal Agency or Tribal government

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

Barbara Power, DSHPO for Inventory & Registration Feb. 25, 2015
Signature of commenting official/Title Date
State Historic Preservation Office, Ohio History Connection
State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

[Signature] 4-28-15
Signature of Keeper Date of Action
Edson H. Beall

- 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): _____

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.
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
 C 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)

ARCHITECTURE

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Period of Significance

1939

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Dates

N/A

Architect/Builder

Louis A. Simon, Supervising Architect of the Treasury

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

Please see Section 8 Continuation Sheets.

9. Major Bibliographical References

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

Please see Section 9 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 1.5 acre

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

	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	16	715277	4330800	3	_____	_____
2	_____	_____	_____	4	_____	_____

____ See Continuation Sheet

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

The site consisting of NEC Fifth and Walnut Streets, Parcels 1,2,3,4 consecutive, is bounded on its half-city block by Walnut Street, East Fifth Street, Main Street and Government Place.

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

The boundary was selected because it is consistent with the historical limits of the federally owned parcel.

11. Form Prepared By

Name/Title Mark Bowen, Barbara Lamprecht, Architectural Historians

Organization ICF Jones & Stokes Date 8/2009; rev.1/2014

Street & Number 811 West 7th St., Suite 800 Telephone (213) 627-5376

City or Town Los Angeles State CA Zip Code 90017

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.
- Photographs
 - Representative 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 U.S. General Services Administration

Organization Great Lakes Region Telephone 312-353-5572

Street & Number 230 South Dearborn Street, Room 3500

City or Town Chicago State IL Zip Code 60604

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.). A federal agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number.

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to range from approximately 18 hours to 36 hours depending on several factors including, but not limited to, how much documentation may already exist on the type of property being nominated and whether the property is being nominated as part of a Multiple Property Documentation Form. In most cases, it is estimated to average 36 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form to meet minimum National Register documentation requirements. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, 1849 C St., NW, Washington, DC 20240.

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*United States Post Office and Court House
Hamilton County, Ohio*

Description

Summary

The United States Post Office and Court House in downtown Cincinnati, now known as the Potter Stewart U.S. Courthouse, is located in a dense urban setting of buildings one block east of Fountain Square and bounded on the half-city block by Walnut, East Fifth and Main streets and Government Place. The steel, concrete and limestone structure was built in response to the demand for suitable and adequate quarters for the growing services of the federal government. When dedicated on January 14, 1939, 51 agencies occupied the nine-story, U-shaped building whose symmetrical long facade faces south onto East Fifth Street. The John Weld Peck Federal Building was constructed on the block to the east of the historic courthouse in 1964 and the two buildings are connected by a tunnel under Main Street.

The courthouse blends Art Moderne details with Neo-Classical planning in its simple massing and regular symmetry. The blend shares some characteristics with early Modernism in its clean lines and plain, flat surfaces; an approach typical of federal buildings during the Great Depression years of the 1930s. In contrast, the fenestration and interior features are primarily in the styles of Art Moderne and Art Deco.

The building was rehabilitated in the 1980s and, more recently, in a series of projects from 2002 through 2010. While the cumulative work has been substantial, the building retains its significant character-defining spaces, features, and materials.

General Description

The block-long southern, primary facade has seventeen bays as defined by openings for recessed windows and spandrel panels. It measures 356 feet along its front. The short ends of the U, the half-block-long east and west elevations, are 160 feet long and identical, having eight bays and pairs of one-story-high entry doors located toward the center of each elevation. The basement and a sub-basement are below street level and only visible from the grates along the south elevation. There are nine stories above grade.

The structural system is steel frame; the floors and roof are reinforced concrete; the exterior walls are clad in limestone set atop a dark granite base. This base acts as a plinth, lifting the ground floor above street level. The entrances are approached by broad expanses of seven granite steps flanked by incised granite piers that rise slightly above the granite water table circumscribing the building. These stairs are accompanied by simple stainless steel handrails.

All three street-facing elevations share many identical elements. The overall parti is one of strong verticals in a compact horizontally oriented building. The strongest exterior feature is the symmetrical pattern of the deeply recessed windows on the three public elevations. These vertically aligned metal windows, in three different opening sizes, are identical in their glass pane dimensions and set into smooth, ashlar limestone. The vertical thrust of the fenestration is interrupted by a Greek key belt course above the fourth floor. This belt course creates the major horizontal division in these three street-facing facades.

A granite water table topped with an elliptical granite sill circumscribes the three public facades. Directly above the sill, three-story-tall openings are filled with recessed windows. Above these, recessed, square openings housing double-hung three-over-three-sash windows complete the building's base. A belt course separates the third from the

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fourth floors. A series of five-story-tall windows set in recesses, spanning the fourth through ninth floors, complete the building facades. The five-story-tall windows contain fifty-four multi-paned lights with black spandrels, all in the same proportions: three lights horizontally, eighteen lights vertically.

Horizontality is also introduced at the roof of the building, which features a simple, articulated cornice. Above the cornice, a later addition of an undecorated, one-story limestone-clad structure for rooftop mechanical equipment is recessed on all three street-facing elevations.

The belt course, frieze, and cornice wrap the south, east, and west elevations. Stylized pavilions at either end of the principal (south) elevation each contain three pair of aluminum-framed doors. Each pair is topped by a 10-light, vertically oriented transom window. These entry doors and transom windows are deeply recessed into the front elevation. On the east or Main Street façade, the two entrances near the center of the elevation are narrower than those on the front elevation and feature limestone incised to look like a deeply inset lintel above each entry. Directly above each lintel is a recessed, multi-light vertical window similar in design to those across the rest of the elevation.

In contrast to the street-facing facades, the rear or north elevation consists of a two-story section, filling up the central portion of the taller U-shaped building around it, permitting daylight to enter into the building's rear elevations above the second floor.

Typically, the plan of the building is composed of a long corridor running east-west for the length of the building. At the southeast and southwest corners of the building, the corridors intersect with the elevator lobbies; above the first floor, the corridors turn north to service the east and west wings of floors two through nine. The corridors of the upper floors are generally double-loaded, with tile flooring, marble and plaster walls, and suspended acoustical tile ceilings, which are a later addition. The elevator lobbies, elevator doors and cabs are original and extant in their finishes and features.

Exterior Elevations

Primary (South) Elevation

The building is bilaterally symmetrical about a north-south axis and the east and west elevations are mirror images of each other. The primary elevations (south, east and west) exhibit details based on the Art Deco and Art Moderne styles of architecture. The limestone facing set atop a dark granite base wraps around the south elevation, covering the bases of the east and west elevations up to their respective northern walls. The recessed window systems, complete with spandrel panels at the floor levels, emphasize verticality. The raised granite base, limestone water table, and belt coursing between the third and fourth floors, combined with a carved frieze and projecting cornice at the rooftop, all provide a horizontal emphasis.

The main facade, the south elevation, stretches a full city block from Main Street on the east to Walnut Street on the west. This elevation's two end-bay entrances are each comprised of three pairs of aluminum and clear glass entry doors set within a head frame that houses non-original raised letters reading "POTTER STEWART UNITED STATES COURTHOUSE". An original, cast aluminum eagle with spread wings is centered above the lettering at each entrance. A transom of translucent glass and aluminum members completes the design of each recessed entrance. The entry doors are reached by granite steps set between granite cheek walls and large, non-original planting urns.

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Original circular bas-relief carvings of a map of North America and original bas-relief lettering reading "UNITED STATES POST OFFICE AND COURT HOUSE" are centered in the limestone cladding above both entrances.¹

There are fifteen bays of recessed tripartite window set in ashlar limestone between the south elevation's corner entrances. The building's visual base consists of two-story-tall openings which are three lights wide and eight lights high. The middle column of lights has a vertical security bar that is thinner than the steel muntins and mullions comprising the window frames.

The third floor level creates the building's visual central section and consists of individual, three-over-three double-hung steel-sash windows set into simple punched rectangular openings. Above the third floor windows is a limestone belt course of a Greek key design. It wraps the building until the cladding changes from limestone to brick on the northern, rear facade. The building's shaft, comprised of floors four through eight, consists of vertically elongated, continuous windows. The metal window system is comprised of clear operable glass panes (at least two out of three jalousie-type operable windows per row) and sandblasted, black slate spandrel panels set behind clear glass. At the blind ninth floor level, the smooth limestone cladding includes a carved frieze of alternating stylized Doric triglyphs and metopes. A projecting cornice caps the facade. An undecorated limestone wall, set back from the plane of the façade as a parapet, screens the roof-top mechanical equipment and penthouses.

The original street level view of the primary south elevation from the public right-of-way has been compromised by the canopies of a city bus system pick-up/drop-off facility directly in front of the building. This block-long bus facility, which includes its own thruway between the building and East 5th Street, was constructed in the late 1970s and consists of a series of concrete, aluminum frame and tinted-glass canopies of a modern appearance. In contrast, the east and west building elevations overlook concrete and brick paver-set sidewalks.

Side Elevations

The architectural detailing of the front facade continues on the east and west (side) elevations of the building. However, these elevations are approximately half as long as the primary elevation and are divided into eight bays by the vertical, recessed window openings. Entry doors are located on each elevation at the first floor level in the third and fourth bays from the south. The paired aluminum and glass doors, topped with Greek cross details in their transoms, are accessed by flights of granite steps. The steps are flanked by granite cheek walls on the south side and recently constructed ramps with simple stainless steel railings on the north side. Low dark granite walls extend along the ramps facing the street. Unlike the southern entries, the side doors are only one story tall. Also differing from the south elevation, the southernmost window openings of the east and west elevations, from the fourth floor to the eighth floor, contain aluminum louvers instead of the glass and spandrel panel system.

Rear Elevation

The limestone cladding and detailing continues around the building onto the north (rear) elevation of the building. The cladding covers the ends of both the east and west wings where the elevations are divided into three bays by the vertical, recessed window openings. A low, two story section, which originally served as the postal workroom and loading area, fills the space between the east and west wings. It is clad in buff-colored brick as is the light court which rises above the roof of the two story section to the top of the U-shaped main block of the building. The first story of the postal workroom area contains a series of loading docks while the second story is punctuated by regularly spaced double hung, three-over-three windows. The rear elevation fronting on the light court also features

¹ Ratio Architects, Inc, *Historic Building Preservation Plan*, 14.

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a long series of rhythmically located double-hung, three-over-three windows; a few of the windows on the rear elevation have been replaced with metal grilles and some sixth and seventh floor windows have been blocked.

Interior

On the interior, significant spaces are found on the first floor in the entry and elevator lobbies at the southeast and southwest corners of the building and the connecting east-west corridor, formerly used as the U.S. Post Office service lobby. The double-height, two story lobbies and the connecting corridor have ceramic tile floors, marble walls, and molded plaster ceilings. Large openings on the upper walls of interior bays flanking this corridor have inset brass grilles. Their narrow, central brass section is a stacked series of chevrons pointed downward, a classic Art Deco motif.

Historic courtrooms exist on the sixth and eighth floors. These two story rooms retain their original wood paneling and details, their overall spatial volumes and relationships, and original, surface-applied acoustic treatments. The ornamental use of metals such as aluminum and bronze in stamped and molded forms, a characteristic of the Art Deco style, is a theme throughout the building. In the Post Office Lobby, raised plaster panels covered in gold leaf of an abstract wave, nautilus shell and squared scallop shells, are extant and were restored in the 2002–2005 restoration and rehabilitation project.

Ground Floor Corridor and Lobbies

The ground floor, or main level of the building, consists of the entry and elevator lobbies and the connecting east-west corridor, originally serving as the U.S. Post Office lobby. These spaces remain virtually intact as originally designed and constructed except for a few minor alterations.

Entry elevator lobbies: The ground floor elevator lobbies, located at the southeast and southwest corners of the building, are accessed from the south, the East Fifth Street entrance vestibules, through three sets of aluminum and glass doors topped by glazed transoms. The elevator lobbies have decorative red and black quarry tile floors set within a black and green marble tile border, a Cardiff green marble base, Anderson Sequoyah marble wall panels, and a plaster panel-and-beam ceiling. Of particular note in the elevator lobbies is the original decorative brushed aluminum elevator doors, travel indicator lights, and the building directories. Lighting consists of replicated, suspended brass and milk glass globes, and rectangular lozenge-shape wall washers. These are attached perpendicular to the walls, supported by a horizontal aluminum L-shaped brace. Highly stylized panels of eagles whose feathers run vertically and whose wing spans emphasize the characteristic diagonal of the Art Deco style adorn the elevator doors and as well as the entryways at either end of the corridor. All of these features are excellent examples of the Art Deco style.

East-west corridor: The north ends of the elevator lobbies intersect with the east-west corridor. Running the entire block length of the building, this corridor connects the two elevator lobbies. Marking the intersections are two original, Art Deco style ceiling-mounted glass and metal pendant custom clocks called “4-Face Electrical Clocks.” At the north end of the western lobby are original aluminum doors, of which a pair lead to the “SUPERINTENDENT OF MAILS” office, as proclaimed by raised aluminum letters atop the marble door frame. At the far ends of the east-west corridor are entrance vestibules providing access from Main and Walnut Street, respectively. These entry doors are similar to those at the East Fifth Street entrances. As stated previously, this corridor originally functioned as the U.S. Post Office service lobby. The former U.S. Post Office space behind this lobby and corridor was adaptively

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reused to house a federal courtroom, judges' chambers and the U.S. District Court clerk's office in the 1980s phase of rehabilitation and restoration. The quarry tile floors with marble tile borders and wall bases continue the length of the corridor.

Postal lobby corridor: The walls of the U.S. Post Office lobby corridor are defined by a series of fluted marble pilasters. On the southern wall, set within the pilasters, are the original, decorative bronze postal windows with original decorative bronze transom grilles above. Along the northern wall of the corridor, original brass postal lock-boxes, decorated with a Greek key motif surrounding a hammered-finish field with a tiny rosette at the center, and brass postal windows still recall the historical use of the space. Below the postal windows and lock-boxes, wall surfaces are finished with California rose marble panels. Beige Anderson Sequoyah marble panels cover the remainder of the walls.

At the intersection of the walls and ceiling, the marble wall pilasters abut plaster ceiling beams. An interesting Art Deco motif, based on a similar Egyptian style design, is the form of a serpentine wave whose alternating curves contain a free-floating lotus flower blossom pointing up or down, according to the curl of the wave. Like the ceiling panels, these are enhanced with gold leaf. Meanwhile, another section of the wall has Classical detailing in the form of a sustained Greek key motif that acts as band on the lower portion of the wall. The ceiling is characterized by plaster geometric zigzag patterns and stamped rosette square inlays. The original plaster panel-and-beam ceiling has been modified by the addition of surface-mounted fluorescent lighting fixtures; however, these can easily be removed without damage to the ornamental ceiling areas. Three original bronze service tables, approximately three-foot-by-five-foot, with marble tops and stylized bronze floral and animal ornamentation with zigzag patterns on the sides, remain in the U.S. Post Office lobby.

The first floor corridor and entry/elevator lobbies still function as the primary public space of the building. Although the original function of the corridor as a U.S. Post Office lobby is changed, the character, configuration, and appearance of the space remains essentially unaltered.

Courtsrooms

Four original courtrooms continue to be used for their original purpose. The U.S. Court of Appeals is located on the sixth floor while the three U.S. District Courts are located on the eighth floor of the building. These four volumes maintain their original spatial layouts, wall and ceiling finishes, and courtroom furniture.

The three original U.S. District Court courtrooms are on the eighth floor of the building. Two of these courtrooms, Room Nos. 805 and 842, are located at the northern ends of the west and east wings, respectively. The third courtroom, Room No. 822, is situated along the south side of the main corridor in the central portion of the building. All three of these two story rooms retain their spatial volumes and appear nearly as they were when originally constructed. Although they have had carpeting installed over their original floors and acoustical tiles and recessed lighting fixtures installed in the flat portions of their plaster ceilings, the fluted wood pilasters and paneled wood wainscoting are intact. In the two northern courtrooms, the flush paneled wainscoting is capped by a profile molding while the pilasters continue up to engage the ceilings with stylized capitals of a Greek key design. Wood cornices with egg and dart molding encircle the rooms.

The judges' benches are framed by two pilasters connected with a wood transom panel in the spandrel area of the wall surface above a curtained backdrop. Each transom panel is decorated with a Greek key design and a paired set of banded reeds. Both of the north courtrooms have leather-covered wood entry doors with decorative bronze grilles and transom lights. The surrounds repeat the Greek key design, incorporating rosette details that are similar to the

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transom lights. The central courtroom, No. 822, differs somewhat in that the wainscoting is composed of raised panels and is capped with a Greek key molding. The surrounds of the entry doors feature circular indentations and egg and dart moldings.²

The fourth original courtroom, Room No. 606, for the U.S. Court of Appeals, is located at the northern end of the west wing on the sixth floor of the building. The walls of this two-story space are covered with wood panels of a recessed design and capped by a wood molding with rosette details. The plaster ceiling has paneled wood beams with similar details. The paneled wall directly behind the judge's bench is framed by paired fluted wood pilasters which support an entablature and semi-circular niche containing a carved eagle with outstretched wings and trimmed with egg and dart moldings.³ The courtroom entry doors are also leather-covered with decorative bronze light and transom grilles.⁴

The four courtrooms retain their original spatial volumes, materials, furnishings and finishes and have had only minor modifications which include the insertion of acoustic tiles on the ceilings and carpeting.

Upper Floor Corridors and Lobbies

The floors of the elevator lobbies are covered with the original quarry tiles. The walls are finished with the original marble bases, wall panels and wainscoting, and painted plaster surfaces. The brushed aluminum elevator doors, the travel indicator lights, and the aluminum and wood elevator cabs are also original features. Non-original suspended acoustical tile ceilings have been installed along the corridors and lobbies.

The corridors and elevator lobbies of the upper floors remain in their original configuration with only minor alterations. The elevator lobbies are located in the southeast and southwest corners of the building and are connected by narrow double-loaded corridors. Similar, shorter corridors lead north from the lobbies. This arrangement repeats on floors two through eight with the exception of the third and fifth floors. On the third floor, the central connecting corridor has been relocated to the southern wall by the installation of the new court library and on the fifth floor the corridor has been eliminated. On the ninth floor, the plan and finishes of the central corridor were introduced during a late 1980s renovation; no original features or materials are present in the area.

The original quarry tile floor continues in the corridors, with the exception of the central connecting corridors on the third and ninth floors. The quarry tile floors on the third and ninth floors are replications installed during the 1980s renovation. A marble base and wainscot continues on the corridor walls of the eighth floor and along both walls of the fourth floor's west corridor. All other corridor walls are painted or vinyl wall covered plaster with quarry tile bases. All upper floor corridors have had suspended acoustical tile ceilings added.

² Ratio Architects, *Historic Building Preservation Plan*, 18.

³ According to tradition, interior finishes were salvaged and placed in Room No. 606 when the earlier federal courthouse was demolished. It should be noted that in 1892, former President William Howard Taft, 1909-1913, was appointed a judge on the Sixth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals in Cincinnati and served in an earlier federal courthouse. Therefore, it is plausible that salvaged materials from the courtroom in which the future president served were salvaged and used in this 1939 U.S. Court of Appeals courtroom. An August 26, 1936 project description states that a marble mantel will be salvaged from the old Court of Appeals reinstalled in Room No. 606, however there is no marble mantel present. Alternatively, a close study of the courtroom reveals that the woodwork directly behind the Judge's bench is different from that elsewhere in the room in color and design, suggesting that perhaps this section of decorative woodwork, rather than the marble mantel was reused.

⁴ Ratio Architects, *Historic Building Preservation Plan*, 18.

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For the most part, the doorways located on the corridors and lobbies appear to be in their original locations and retain their original hollow metal frames. However, the doors themselves vary from the original all wood, paneled doors, as some have glass lights or metal vent grilles, while others are flush wood or hollow metal replacement doors.

In general, the upper floor corridors and elevator lobbies contain a significant amount of their original materials and remain in their original configurations.

Judges' Chambers

Located adjacent to each of the four historic courtrooms are the original judges' chambers. They are intact and contain their original wood wall paneling and bookcases. The chambers have had acoustical tile ceilings installed over the original plaster; however, this can be removed easily. All chambers are now carpeted. Of note, the two chambers adjacent to the U.S. District Courts on the east and west wings of the eighth floor have beveled wall corners.

Alterations: Exterior and Interior

A rehabilitation of the building, which included extensive restoration work, was started in 2002 and completed in 2010. Exterior work included cleaning and repointing; the installation of a ramp on the west elevation to match one previously installed on the east elevation; the replacement of the building's roof; and the replacement of the single-glazed metal windows with dual-glazed metal windows. The replacement windows replicate the mullions, muntins, frames and fenestration patterns of the original windows. Interior work included the installation of new boilers, emergency generator, and sprinklers in areas lacking them. Interior spaces on the ground floor were converted into a new courtroom and, on the second floor, into new judge's chambers.

A previous major renovation replaced original electrical and plumbing facilities and made improvements for life and fire safety, way-finding, and American with Disabilities Act compliance. Original radiators throughout the entire building were replaced with "thinfin" heaters. Restoration and replication work included the reproduction of thirty light fixtures as well as other historic features such as brass doors with engraved glass inlays showing the agencies' insignias for the U.S. Marshall's Office and U.S. Probation Office. The "4-Face Electrical Clocks" in the main public corridor on the first floor were restored with new faceplates with numerals. Where deteriorated, some bronze detailing was replicated.

Interior spaces that have been reconfigured include the former U.S. Post Office work space on the ground floor, north side of the main corridor, which was converted into a ceremonial courtroom and a 'Clerk of Court' room. Two new door openings were added to accommodate the courtroom; the doors are bronze and similar to the doors and door frames elsewhere in the building. On the second floor, a U.S. Attorney's office and pre-trial space was added, using existing office space. On the third floor, a judicial/arbitration space and a librarian's office were added, also using existing office space.

The fifth floor was reconfigured, eliminating the corridor and applying carpet over the floors. The ceiling was replaced with new ceiling tiles and contemporary lighting yet maintains the original 7'-10" height. The roof of the two story section on the building's rear was replaced with a built-up roof with stone ballast. The sixth floor was reconfigured but the corridor was preserved while accommodating four judges' chambers. The seventh floor was reconfigured while retaining the corridor while accommodating a new audio-visual room, computer room, and

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automation facility. Finally, the eighth floor alterations to original office space include a new holding cell and a judge's satellite office. During the latest renovation period, a permanent ground floor exhibit was prepared to highlight the architectural significance, public history, and community value of this historic building.

Integrity

The United States Post Office and Court House is particularly distinctive in its design, using both Neo-Classical and Moderne detailing, materials, and finishes. The structure's exterior and interior character-defining spaces, features, and materials are in good condition. Although some alterations, as noted, have occurred, the principal public areas have been restored and alterations have not diminished the character-defining spaces. Where the quarry tile, light fixtures and brass doors were replicated, the new work follows the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards*. Both the exterior of the building and the primary interior spaces, including the original elevators, public corridors and lobby areas, retain their architectural integrity with much of their original fabric intact. The replacement windows fit within the original limestone openings and replicate the material, proportions, and muntin and mullion patterns of the original windows that are so characteristic of the building's period of significance.

The United States Post Office and Court House retains its architectural integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship and feeling of the exterior and primary interior spaces. Some integrity of association was lost with the departure of the U.S. Post Office, yet the building continues in its original use as a courthouse for federal government functions.⁵

⁵ Articulation of many exterior and interior elements of the United States Post Office and Courthouse, as incorporated in this essay are culled from the thorough report: Ratio Architects, Inc, *HBPP: Historic Building Preservation Plan, U.S.P.O./Courthouse – Cincinnati, Ohio, OH0028CN* (Washington, DC: U.S. General Services Administration, 1994), 3.

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Significance

Summary

The United States Post Office and Court House is an excellent example of the change in federal building architecture that occurred in the New Deal era of the 1930s, when it shifted from the ornate Classicism of the nineteenth century to incorporate twentieth century styles. Whereas the building's exterior maintains overall Neo-Classical massing and symmetry, it also integrates the modernist ideal of clean, unembellished planes. Unlike the exterior, the interior reveals a range of high quality Art Moderne and Art Deco ornamentation. While some alterations to the building have occurred, particularly on the reconfigured ninth floor, the exterior and principal interior spaces retain their character-defining spaces and features. Both the exterior and interior appear much as they did during the building's period of significance, its year of completion, 1939, in part because of recent extensive restoration and rehabilitation efforts.

Within the context of U.S. Post Offices, U.S. Courthouses and Federal Buildings, the authorization and design of the building fall within the Public Works Administration Design era of 1931–1939. The building retains high levels of historical and architectural integrity of location, design, materials, workmanship, setting, feeling, and association. Thus, on an individual level, the United States Post Office and Court House meets Criterion C at the local level of significance.

History and Development of the United States Post Office and Court House⁶

The United States Post Office and Court House was at the time of its construction the third federal building to be built in Cincinnati. The first U.S. Courthouse and Federal Building in Cincinnati, built in 1857, was modeled on the first century B.C. Roman temple, the Maison Carrée in Nimes, France, which in turn became Thomas Jefferson's model for the Virginia State Capitol Building (1792). The 1857 building was constructed on a site purchased in 1851 at the southwest corner of Fourth and Vine streets, in response to a general demand in the city that scattered federal offices be assembled. Construction of the building took seven years and cost \$339,183. After twenty-seven years of use, the site and structure were sold in 1879 for \$100,000 to make way for the construction of the Merchants Exchange.

In the early 1870s the growing population of Cincinnati needed a larger federal building. An act authorizing construction of a new building was passed by Congress, March 18, 1872, and signed by President Grant immediately. A new site along Fifth Street on which to construct the building was soon after acquired by condemnation, costing the government \$708,026. The Fifth Street site and its proximity to Fountain Square and Government Square had assumed historic importance long before it was selected as the site of the federal building. Three Presidents—Monroe, Jackson and John Quincy Adams—had visited the site, which was also the location of one of President Lincoln's public addresses. A fountain and esplanade installed in the early 1870s at the location quickly became leading attractions of the city. Given this history, the site was deemed a good location for the next federal building, despite concerns from area businessmen that Fifth Street was too far from the business center of the city.

It was not until April 1874 that the last of the business houses on the Fifth Street site were torn down. Excavation for foundations, done entirely by hand labor, required another year. In all, it took eleven years to complete construction on the second courthouse and cost \$5,088,328. The federal building, which opened in 1885, housed twenty-seven

⁶ Ratio Architects, *Historic Building Preservation Plan*, 2.

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departments. The building was much larger than the first and was a fine example of the Second Empire architectural style, drawing heavily upon the French Renaissance style of the seventeenth century.

Nearly half a century went by, and then again, in the 1930s, the demand arose for suitable and adequate quarters for the federal government in ever-expanding Cincinnati. In response, demolition of the second courthouse began November 30, 1936 to make way for the construction of the city's third courthouse. The United States Post Office and Court House, completed in 1939, was built on a portion of the limestone foundations of the 1885 building. The footprint of the second courthouse endured because of its pivotal location, which became more desirable as downtown Cincinnati grew around it.

Designed by the U.S. Department of Treasury architects in Washington, DC, and led by Supervising Architect Louis A. Simon, veteran of many federal building projects, the building was constructed by Great Lakes Construction Company of Chicago. Calvin H. Cool, the Treasury Department Construction Engineer, led the construction for the two years of building, with Joseph Arekelan and O.V. Dukes as assistants. Work began November 30, 1936; a flood the following year, as well as the surprising sturdiness of the Victorian-era federal building, delayed demolition and progress until the following summer.

Louis A. Simon was Supervising Architect of the Treasury from 1933 to 1939, but had been with the office continually since 1896. Simon had effectively directed the office during Judge James Wetmore's tenure (1915-1933) as Acting Supervising Architect, because Wetmore had no formal training in architecture.⁷ Under Simon's direction, federal architecture in the 1930s was designed in the Colonial Revival style or a simplified or minimal Classical style, and often incorporated murals or sculptures produced under the Treasury Department's Section of Painting and Sculpture (later known as the Fine Arts Section).⁸

The nine-story United States Post Office and Court House was completed by August 1939. The cost of the new building was approximately \$3,244,924. Having been built to provide a larger facility for the growing community, new building managed to provide increased work area in a smaller building envelope. It was constructed with only 6,640,000 cubic feet, whereas the previous structure included 7,883,500 cubic feet. However, the new building had 485,000 square feet of working area, compared to 240,000 in the old, in part because the new building is nine stories tall whereas its predecessor was five stories. While both buildings were approximately the same height, the older building's elaborate mansard roof of iron, glass, slate and ornate cresting with dormer projections likely accounted for three stories.

In addition to the foundation, some materials from the earlier building's U.S. Court of Appeals may have been reused in the new building in Room No. 606 because the former President William Howard Taft and, subsequently, Chief Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court, once presided (1909-1913) in the earlier building as a judge on the Sixth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals.

The new U-shaped building, integrating a strong central axis, crisp, unornamented facades, and Art Deco flair in its detailing, materials, and interior ornament, was a sharp contrast to the old "French Renaissance Chateau." In its limestone masonry cladding, symmetrical planning and arrangement of floor plans, and rhythmic distribution of openings, the design is based on Neo-Classical ideas. The building also shows a traditionally classical façade division based on a column with base and capital. (In an article from the *Cincinnati Enquirer*, dated August 31, 1936, the design was described as "simple modified classic.") However, the absence of most of the standard repertoire of

⁷ Craig, et al., *The Federal Presence*, 328.

⁸ Harris, *History of Post Office Construction*, 20, 25.

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classical detail and the plain, unembellished surfaces speak of some attention to avant-garde modernist tenets, although the strong verticality of the building's openings undermine horizontality, which is a cornerstone of Modernism. In addition, much of the interior detailing and the choice of aluminum surrounds for the entry pavilions is a lively concoction of Art Moderne popular in the 1930s.

When dedicated on January 14, 1939, the new facility housed fifty-one branches of the federal service where the old one accommodated only twenty-seven. Originally the building counted as its major tenant the U.S. Post Office, which employed 128 persons and occupied most of the ground and second floor as well as the mezzanine and the basement. The remaining federal tenants of the building included federal agencies such as the U.S. Public Works Administration, the Internal Revenue Service, the Bureau of Narcotics, the Veterans Administration, the Federal Housing Administration, U.S. Social Security Board, U.S. Conciliation Service, Alcohol Tax Unit, Bureau of Valuation, Bureau of Motor Carriers, U.S. Customs Service, the Home Owners' Loan Corporation, National Labor Relations Board, U.S. Engineers, the Public Health Service, U.S. Food and Drug Administration, U.S. Agricultural Conservation Association, the Ordnance Office, U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Immigration and Naturalization Service, the Weather Bureau, U.S. District Attorney, United States Commissioner, U.S. Secret Service, National Bank examiners, United States District Court, United States Marshal and the U.S. Civil Service.

By the 1950s, the need for more federal office space resulted in plans for another federal building. Most of the government agencies moved across the street in 1964 to the John Weld Peck Federal Building; throughout the 1960s, the U.S. Court of Appeals expanded from six to 16 judges covering the states of Kentucky, Michigan, Ohio, and Tennessee. The U.S. Post Office vacated the premises in 1992 and the court system was expanded to include other major tenants such as the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit and the U.S. District Court for the Southern District of Ohio.

On May 4, 1994, Public Law 103-214 renamed the courthouse the Potter Stewart U.S. Courthouse, in honor of Justice Potter Stewart, who also served as a Circuit Judge in the Sixth Circuit until his appointment as an Associate Justice on the U.S. Supreme Court in 1958. Justice Stewart was originally from Cincinnati, and his father, then-Mayor James Garfield Stewart, spoke on behalf of the city of Cincinnati at the 1939 dedication ceremony for the new building.⁹

History of Federal Construction

Between 1852 and 1939, the Treasury Department's Office of the Supervising Architect oversaw the design and construction of federal buildings throughout the United States. As a distinct property type, these structures served to underscore the authority of the federal government throughout the nation and their designs typically incorporated revival styles to suggest timeless values and lend prestige to federal authority. The choice of location for a federal building was often contentious, with neighboring communities vying for the opportunity to become an administrative and commercial center.

Public Buildings Act, 1926

The Public Buildings Act of 1926, also known as the Keyes-Elliott Act, was a general enabling act that allotted \$100 million for federal buildings outside the District of Columbia. This act allowed the Secretary of the Treasury and the Postmaster General to select towns and cities and specific sites for new buildings. As a result, a survey report

⁹ U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit, "Federal Courthouses in Cincinnati," *Courthouses of the Sixth Circuit*.
http://www.ca6.uscourts.gov/lib_hist/Courthouses/ohio/cincinnati.html.

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was prepared in 1927 that listed towns and cities with no federal buildings, including 799 with postal receipts over \$20,000 and 1,512 with postal receipts between \$10,000 and \$20,000. The estimated cost of implementing construction was \$170,420,000, but the actual construction was delayed by economic conditions, including the stock market crash of 1929.¹⁰

Public Works Administration Design, 1931–1939

With the onset of the Great Depression, the architectural profession and construction trades were extremely hard hit by unemployment. On May 31, 1930, Congress amended the Public Buildings Act of 1926, which increased funding and further authorized the Secretary of the Treasury to contract with private firms and individuals.¹¹ To meet spatial needs of the U.S. government and help stimulate the economy, the Hoover Administration and Congress increased funding for the federal building program in 1928, 1930, and 1931, for a total of \$700 million.¹² The Federal Employment Stabilization Act of 1931 directed federal construction agencies to prepare six-year building plans and increased appropriations for that year by \$100 million. As a result, 133 architectural firms were commissioned to design federal buildings in 1931, and this number increased to 301 by 1934.¹³ This practice substantially ended, however, on June 29, 1934, with an order that the Office of the Supervising Architect design all remaining federal buildings.¹⁴

The Public Works Administration (PWA) was established in 1933 to oversee the planning and construction of public works projects. In 1933, many of the properties of the federal Government were modest. Due to the Great Depression, a large number of buildings were in need of attention, including post offices, courthouses, and federal prisons. In addition, there was a shortage of post offices, prisons, veteran's hospitals, and other federal facilities.¹⁵ As of February 28, 1939, PWA federal building construction projects totaled 3,167 buildings at \$303,581,146, including 406 post offices with an allotment of \$43,607,814.¹⁶

By the 1930s, Classical architecture had long been the dominant style conveying the federal presence across the nation. With the Great Depression, the need to provide government space while saving on the cost of unnecessary ornament fit well with the principles of Modern architecture then being introduced, stressing functionality, open plans with interchangeable work areas, and exterior surfaces in uninterrupted simple planes and volumes. Government architects kept abreast of the Modern Movement. For example, the Association of Federal Architects (AFA), organized late in 1927 with Louis A. Simon, Supervising Architect of the Treasury Department, as its first president, held dinners with prominent Modernist speakers such as Frank Lloyd Wright, Eliel Saarinen, and Richard Neutra.¹⁷ However, the Supervising Architect's Office did not adopt the Modernist vocabulary for the buildings' exteriors, but held steadfast to references to the Classical style while reducing detail to a minimum.

¹⁰ Emily Harris, *History of Post Office Construction, 1900-1940* (Washington, DC: U.S. Postal Service 1982), 13-14.

¹¹ Harris, *History of Post Office Construction*, 17.

¹² Craig, et al., *The Federal Presence*, 281.

¹³ Harris, *History of Post Office Construction*, 15, 17, 19.

¹⁴ Boland, *National Register Bulletin 13*, 3.

¹⁵ U.S. Federal Emergency Administration of Public Works (PWA). *America Builds: The Record of PWA. Public Works Administration*. Washington, DC: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1939.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 290.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 298.

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Buildings and structures constructed during the PWA era that convey this minimal classicism (also known as PWA Moderne style) include: the Hoover Dam (1933 by Gordon B. Kaufmann) and the U.S. Mint, San Francisco, California (1937 by Gilbert Stanley Underwood), as well as numerous more modest government buildings including the U.S. Post Offices in Minneapolis, Minnesota; Waterbury, Connecticut; Norfolk, Virginia; and Manchester, New Hampshire.¹⁸ Today it is this minimal classicism, rather than Thomas Jefferson's nod to Roman forms, the Greek temples studied by Robert Mills, or the ebullient Beaux Arts style of the early 1900s that most Americans think of when they think of federal architecture.¹⁹

Although Neo-Classical style civic buildings continued to be built through the 1930s, a general acceptance of building designs inspired by the Modern Movement's Art Deco, Moderne, and International styles occurred. These styles repudiated traditional design elements and embraced artistic expression that complemented the modern machine age and featured cubic forms with a marked horizontal or vertical emphasis, smooth surfaces, and a minimum of ornamentation.

State and federal relief programs played an important role in introducing the country to the simplified design and ornament that evolved from the Modernist aesthetic during this period. In the Midwest, the targeted funding for construction programs introduced Modern Movement design throughout the region. While civic buildings reflected changing tastes in design, the vocabulary of classical architecture persisted and the Modern Movement government buildings of the 1930s clearly reflect classical Greek and Roman massing and motifs.

It is in this period of transition in the architectural nature of federal architecture that the U.S. Post Office and Court House was designed and constructed. The building is an excellent example of the late 1930s transition from minimal classicism to a more stylized Modernist aesthetic.

Currently, there are no postal-related activities in the building. However, the court facilities are still in use and have expanded. The integrity of the building is largely intact on the exterior and most of the significant interior spaces also retain their integrity, if not their purpose.

Finding of Significance

Eligibility under Criterion C

The United States Post Office and Court House is significant under Criterion C as a good example of the Neo-Classical style with Modern Movement influences and an excellent example of the craftsmanship and detailing of the 1930s. Designed by the U.S. Department of Treasury architects in Washington, DC, and led by Supervising Architect Louis A. Simon, veteran of many federal building projects, the monumental building introduced the city to the minimal classicism that characterized 1930s federal works projects. In conclusion, the building was designed in an important architectural period of transition both within the federal realm and within American design as well as. The building is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places at the local level, with a period of significance of 1939, as an outstanding example of a transitional Neo-Classical federal building, with strong Modern Movement influences.

¹⁸ Craig, *The Federal Presence*, 280-287.

¹⁹ George Ehrlich, *Kansas City, Missouri: An Architectural History, 1826-1990* (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 1992), 63.

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Major Bibliographic References

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Additional documentation: Photographs

Name: U.S. Post Office and Court House

Location: 100 East 5th Street
City of Cincinnati
Ohio, 44308

Photographer: Carol M. Highsmith Photography, Inc.

Date of Photographs: December 2, 2013

Location of Negatives: General Service Administration Headquarters, Office of Chief Architect

1. Exterior, Facing north, exterior view of south elevation.
2. Exterior, Facing north, exterior view of south elevation.
3. Exterior, Facing north, exterior view of west end entrance, south elevation.
4. Exterior, Facing northeast, exterior view of south and west elevations.
5. Exterior, Facing east, exterior view of entrance with ramp, west elevation.
6. Exterior, Facing southeast, exterior view of north elevation.
7. Exterior, Facing northwest, exterior view of east and south elevations.
8. Interior, Postal Lobby with decorative bronze postal windows, decorative bronze service tables and pendant light fixtures.
9. Interior, Postal Lobby, postal windows framed by fluted marble pilasters with decorative bronze grilles above.
10. Interior, Postal Lobby, detail, metal door centered between postal windows.
11. Interior, Postal Lobby, detail, decorative bronze postal windows with decorative bronze grilles above.
12. Interior, First Floor Elevator Lobby, detail, elevator with decorative brushed aluminum doors and numerical floor indicator.
13. Interior, Postal Lobby, transition to elevator lobby, detail, original hanging ceiling mounted pendant clock (one of two).
14. Interior, Corridor, wood panel doors, marble base and wainscoting, and tile quarry tile floor.
15. Interior, Eighth Floor, detail, elevator with brushed aluminum doors and travel indicator light above.
16. Interior, contextual view, U.S. Court of Appeals, room 606, with public seating and Judges Bench.
17. Interior, contextual view of U.S. District Court, Eighth Floor, with public seating and Judge's Bench.
18. Interior, detail, U.S. District Court, Eighth Floor, leather covered wood entry door with surround decorated with Greek key.
19. Interior, detail, decorative heating grill.

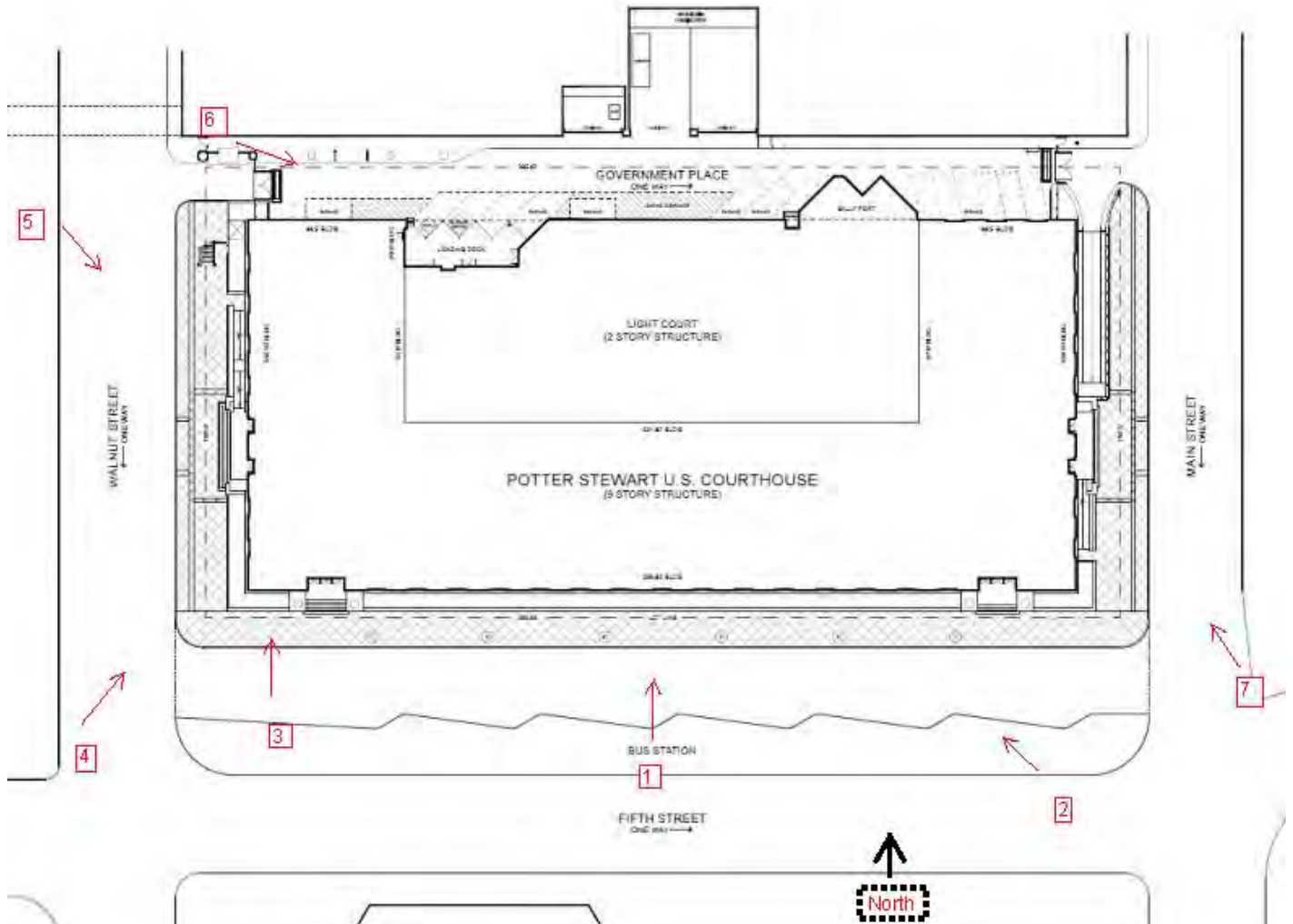
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Sketch Map of Exterior Photographic Views

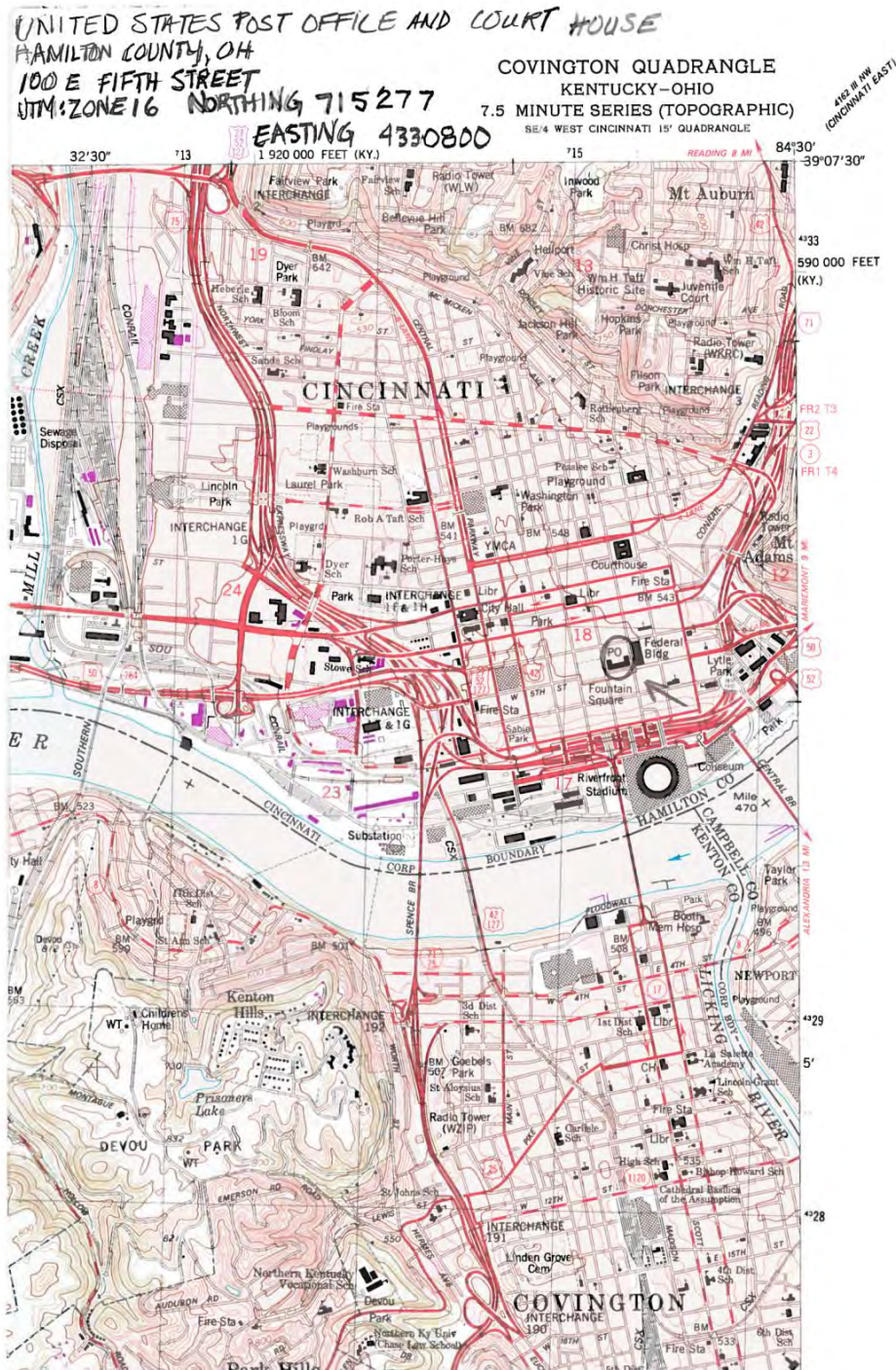


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UNITED STATES POST OFFICE
AND COURTHOUSE



POTTER STEWART UNITED STATES COURTHOUSE





THE UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN
H. R. HOOVER LIBRARY





PETER BERNARD
UNITED STATES
COURTHOUSE

51





FIFTH THIRD BANK

AMERICAN CIVIL LIBERTIES UNION
FUNDRAISING BANNER

STEVIE
LEPPA
FUNDRAISING BANNER

NO RIGHT TURN

STREET SIGNAGE







United States
District Court
U.S. Probation
110

110
U.S. PROBATION











EXIT



5



EXIT



6

EXIT

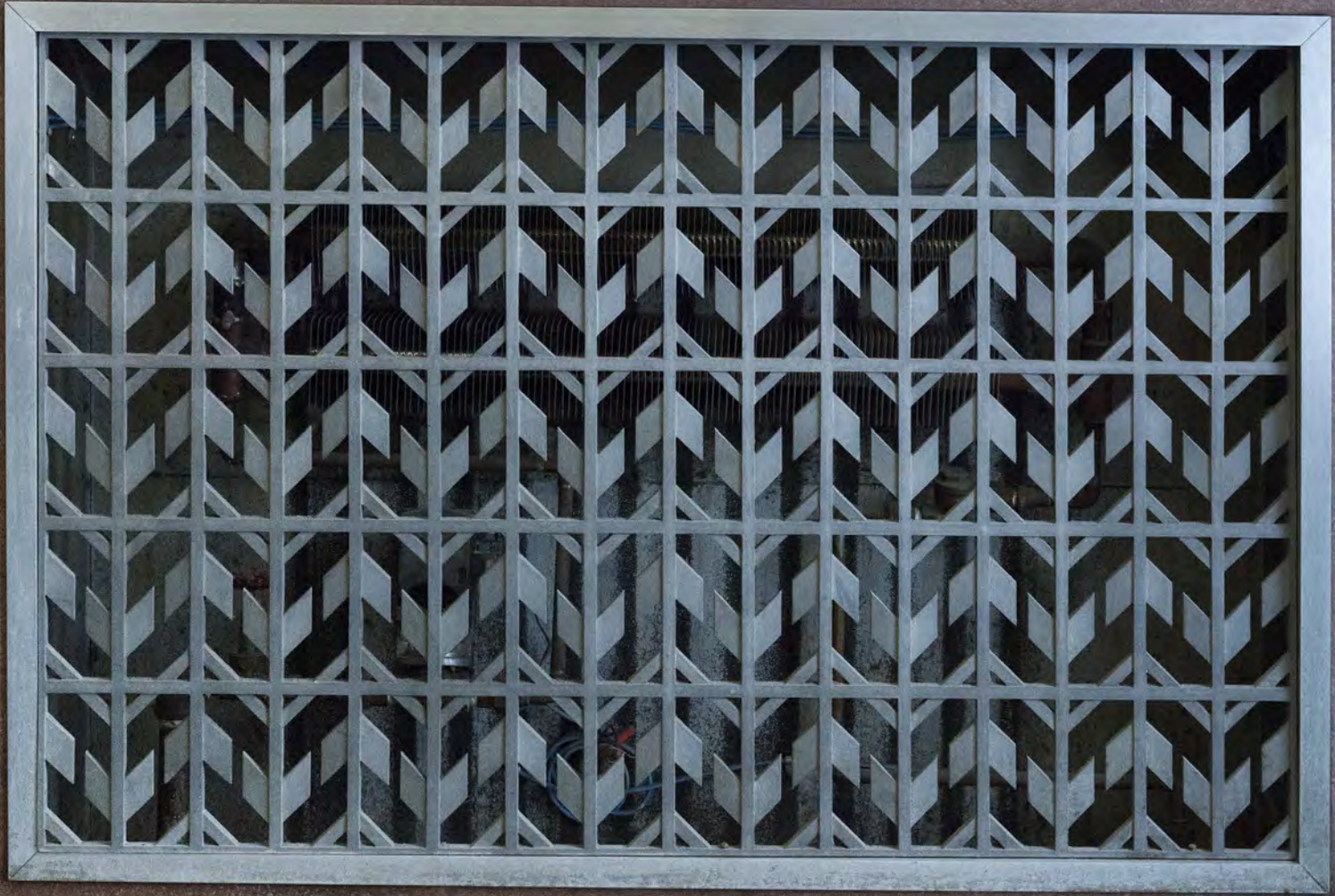
7











UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY United States Post Office and Court House
NAME:

MULTIPLE
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: OHIO, Hamilton

DATE RECEIVED: 3/13/15 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 4/08/15
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 4/23/15 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 4/28/15
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 15000184

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N
REQUEST: Y SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT RETURN REJECT 4-28-15 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

The National Register
of
Historic Places

RECOM./CRITERIA _____

REVIEWER _____ DISCIPLINE _____

TELEPHONE _____ DATE _____

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.



February 25, 2015

Ms. Beth Savage
Federal Preservation Officer
Director, Center for Historic Buildings
U.S. General Services Administration
1800 F Street, NW
Washington, DC 20405-0002

Dear Beth:

Enclosed is the National Register of Historic Places nomination form 1st page for the United States Post Office and Courthouse located in Cincinnati, Hamilton County, Ohio. As National Register signatory for the Ohio Historic Preservation Office I have signed the nomination and am now forwarding the sheet back to you for listing.

We appreciate your agency's effort to nominate this significant property to the National Register of Historic Places.

Please contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Barbara Powers".

Barbara Powers
Department Head
Inventory and Registration



GSA Public Buildings Service



March 10, 2015

Mr. Paul Loether
Chief, NRHP & NHL Program
National Park Service
1201 Eye Street, NW (2280), 8th Floor
Washington, DC 20005

Dear Mr. Loether: *Paul*

The U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) is pleased to nominate the United States Post Office and Court House located at 100 East Fifth Street, Cincinnati, Ohio, for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places. 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 Cincinnati, OH, to the National Register of Historic Place and correspondence from the SHPO; and,
- 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 January 14, 2015.

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

Enclosures
cc: Audrey Entorf, Regional Historic Preservation Officer