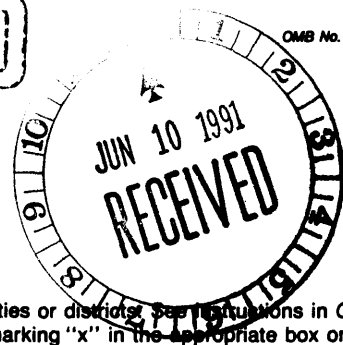


JUN 10 1991



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 of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms (National Register Bulletin 16).

1. Name of Property

historic name United States Post Office and Courthouse
other names/site number Federal Building and U.S. Courthouse

2. Location

street & number 500 South Barstow Commons
city, town Eau Claire
state Wisconsin code WI county Eau Claire code 035 zip code 54701

3. Classification

Ownership of Property: public-Federal (checked)
Category of Property: building(s) (checked)
Number of Resources within Property: Contributing 1, Noncontributing 0 buildings, 0 sites, 0 structures, 0 objects, Total 1

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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. See continuation sheet.
Signature of certifying official: [Signature]
Date: 5/14/91
GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.
Signature of commenting or other official: [Signature]
Date: 7/26/91
State Historic Preservation Officer-WI
State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:
[checked] entered in the National Register.
[ ] determined eligible for the National Register.
[ ] determined not eligible for the National Register.
[ ] removed from the National Register.
[ ] other, (explain:)
Signature of the Keeper: Beth Boland
Date of Action: 7/25/91

**6. Function or Use**

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Government/Post OfficeGovernment/CourthouseGovernment

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Government/CourthouseGovernment**7. Description**Architectural Classification  
(enter categories from instructions)Classical Revival

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation granitewalls limestonebrickroof other/asphalt shingleother woodconcrete

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Classical Revival style United States Post Office and Courthouse at Eau Claire, Wisconsin is three stories high, with a raised basement and a high attic located beneath a flat-topped mansard roof. It is sited near the center of a city block approximately 264 feet long by 165 feet deep, near the south end of downtown Eau Claire. The architect for the original building construction was James Knox Taylor of the U. S. Treasury Department. Construction drawings were completed in 1907, and the building was occupied in June, 1909. A one story addition with a raised basement and a flat roof is located at the rear (southwest side) of the building, and extends nearly to the lot line. The architect for that addition was Louis A. Simon, also of the U.S. Treasury Department. Construction documents for the addition were completed in April, 1933. Construction began in late 1934 and continued until August, 1935, when the addition was occupied.

The front of the building is on the northeast elevation, facing Barstow Commons (originally Barstow Street). A plaza of concrete extends from the public sidewalk along Barstow Commons to the base of the main entrance stair. The present plaza replaced the original, which was similar in shape and size, but had a raised curb at its edge. The original granite steps leading to the main entrance were replaced with concrete in 1961, but portions of the original oversized granite kneewalls flanking the stair remain, as do the original painted cast iron lamp standards with globe lights, located atop each of the two kneewalls. A concrete access ramp has been installed at this entrance, and, while clearly visible, is relatively unobtrusive.

Bushes planted near the building on the southeast, northeast, and northwest elevations date from 1970. Contemporaneous photographs and site plans show original landscaping very similar in feeling, if not botanically identical, to today's landscaping. The current absence of many of the large trees that had grown up on the property over time, shown providing the site with ample shade in photos taken in the 1950s, lends a somewhat stark appearance similar to that seen when the building was first constructed. New trees have been planted to replace those that were lost.

 See continuation sheet

**8. Statement of Significance**

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally  statewide  locally

Applicable National Register Criteria  A  B  C  D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions)  A  B  C  D  E  F  G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Architecture  
Law  
Politics/Government

Period of Significance

1907-1909  
1933-1935

Significant Dates

1907-1909<sup>1</sup>  
1933-1935<sup>2</sup>

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Taylor, James Knox<sup>3</sup>  
Simon, Louis A.<sup>4</sup>

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The United States Post Office and Courthouse is being nominated under Criterion A as the first permanent post office and the only Federal court facility ever to be constructed in Eau Claire, and under Criterion C as a fine example of the Classical Revival style.

History: The City of Eau Claire is located at the junction of the Eau Claire and Chippewa rivers in western Wisconsin. The city was first established as a French trading post in 1784, with permanent settlement by white people beginning in 1832. The lumber industry took hold in Wisconsin in the early 1800s, and in 1846 the first sawmills were constructed in Eau Claire. By 1850, a prospering settlement of approximately 600 people had developed in the vicinity.<sup>5</sup>

The history of the Post Office in Eau Claire dates from the instigation of postal service in this region. Congress established a mail route in 1851 over a newly constructed road from Prairie du Chien to Hudson, Wisconsin, with a post office at Eau Claire. This post office was known as the Clearwater or Clear Water Post Office, the literal translation of Eau Claire being "clear water". A long line of postmasters followed in rapid succession, with nearly every new postmaster relocating the post office operation in a different building, typically as part of a privately owned commercial concern. Most of these sites were located on Barstow Street, in the heart of the commercial district. The Post Office continued to be housed in rented quarters until June 29, 1909, when it occupied the first floor of the newly constructed United States Post Office and Courthouse (now known as the Federal Building and U.S. Courthouse) at 510 S. Barstow Street (now 500 S. Barstow Commons).<sup>6</sup>

At the time of its construction, and to a lesser degree today, the United States Post Office and Courthouse was the physical manifestation of the Federal presence in Eau Claire. In addition to the Post Office facilities, a complete Federal

See continuation sheet

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

Bailey, William F., editor. History of Eau Claire County Wisconsin Past and Present. Chicago: C. F. Cooper and Company, 1914.

Barland, Lois. Sawdust City. 2nd.ed. Stevens Point, Wisconsin: Worzalla Publishing Co., 1960.

Barland, Lois. The Rivers Flow On. Stevens Point, Wisconsin: Worzalla Publishing Company, 1965.

See continuation sheet

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

Specify repository: \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of property 1 acre

UTM References

A 

1	5	6	1	8	7	5	4	4	9	6	2	5	9	2
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

C 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

D 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

Block Number Five (5) of the original plat of the Village of Eau Claire now in the City of Eau Claire, County of Eau Claire, in the State of Wisconsin.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The nominated property consists of the entire lot that has been historically associated with the property.

See continuation sheet

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Sally A. Guregian  
organization Hasbrouck Peterson Zimoch & Sirirattumrong date January 28, 1991  
street & number 711 South Dearborn telephone (312) 922-7211  
city or town Chicago state Illinois zip code 60605

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National Park Service**

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General Services Administration  
The United States of America  
500 South Barstow Commons  
Eau Claire, Wisconsin 54701

**United States Department of the Interior  
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United States Post Office and Courthouse  
Eau Claire, Eau Claire County, WI

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Comments of State Historic Preservation Officer-Wisconsin

The United States Post Office and Courthouse meets National Register Criterion C in the area of architecture as a fine local example of the Classical Revival Style.

We do not believe significance is demonstrated in the areas of Law and Politics/Government. The nomination demonstrates the historic use of the building in those areas but does not show that use to be significant in the local context.

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The northwest elevation of the addition serves as the receiving area for the building. The paved parking area and retaining wall in this area were also built in 1935, and replaced a smaller paved driveway in this area. Portions of the retaining wall survive from the construction of the 1926 addition, when the mailing platform (now the loading dock) was shifted from facing southwest to facing northwest. The remaining portions of the original parking and service area (which were located on the southwest elevation and had been revised in 1915 and 1926) were demolished to permit construction of the addition. The parking lot at the south corner of the site, adjacent to the southeast elevation of the building addition, is of more recent construction. Existing mature trees were retained when this parking lot was built. This corner of the site could easily be restored to its original appearance.

The front of the building is the northeast elevation. It is five bays wide, with the three center bays projecting slightly. Above the raised granite base, the first floor is faced with limestone block. Above the first floor the walls are faced with light tan brick, capped by a parapet of limestone complete with dentilated cornice. Limestone Corinthian columns rising from the second to the third story delineate the three center bays of the elevation, and the center of the parapet over these three bays is capped with a limestone eagle with outspread wings. The limestone frieze of this center section is incised with the original name of the building, the United States Post Office and Courthouse. (Smooth-faced limestone panels have been installed over the incised area.) Limestone is also used for window and door surrounds on all three floors.

The main entrance is in the center bay. The original entrance, a revolving door beneath a glazed transom set in a bronze enclosure, was modified by the original architect in 1912 to include a projecting vestibule complete with classical pediment and tympanum. This vestibule has since been removed, and the revolving door replaced with conventional leaf doors in a modern anodized aluminum frame that is compatible in design. The original windows were of wood. The first and second floor windows had a single or divided fixed sash above single or paired double-hung windows, while basement windows were a single sash with a divided pane, and third floor windows consisted of multiple pane double-hung sash. These were replaced with anodized aluminum windows and frames in similar configurations in 1981. Decorative limestone spandrel panels, consisting of wreaths set below arches with keystones, cap the slightly taller second floor windows of the center three bays, concealing the attic space above the raised ceiling of the second floor courtroom.

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The two side elevations of the original building are essentially unchanged from their original appearance. Once again, the base is of granite, the first floor is faced in limestone, and the upper two floors are faced in light tan brick with limestone trim. These elevations, like the front elevation, are capped with a dentilated limestone cornice and limestone parapet. Each side elevation is divided into four bays, with identical window treatment at each bay, matching the window treatment (and window sash) of the two outer bays of the front elevation. In addition to the symmetrically placed window openings, narrow double-hung windows were installed in isolated locations to serve toilet rooms. Original wood window sash on these elevations was also replaced with similar anodized aluminum sash in 1981.

The southwest (rear) elevation was originally similar in design to the other three elevations. The basement and first floor levels were altered in 1915, and altered again in 1926, when a single room addition was constructed and the mailing platform was reconfigured. When the present one story addition was constructed in 1935, the entire original basement and first floor facade were removed, along with the 1926 addition. Originally, a pair of entrance doors were located at the west end of the first floor, directly beneath the window openings on the second and third floor. Above those doors was a small wood canopy with a glazed transom opening directly above it. This doorway lead to a raised mailing platform faced in granite, reached from the exterior by a granite stair at the west end of the platform. The platform faced southwest, and served a parking area with brick driveways leading from River (now Graham) Street and Gray Street. An exterior exit from the basement was also located on this elevation, and consisted of a pair of doors opening into a concrete areaway and stairs leading to grade.

The second and third floor levels of the rear elevation are virtually unaltered from their original appearance. Subsequently added fire escapes and exit doors have since been removed and the openings reclosed with brick. This elevation is divided into five symmetrical bays, with the center three bays slightly recessed. The window treatment at the end bays is identical to that of each bay of the side elevations, while the windows at the center bays have simple brick window surrounds. Wood windows similar to those used on the other elevations were installed on this elevation, but have been replaced with anodized aluminum sash in similar profiles.



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The original roof of the building was a flat-topped mansard style roof covered with slate. The ridge lines were accented by heavy bands of copper trim. In 1971, the original slate roofing and copper trim were replaced with asphalt shingles. The form of the roof remains unaltered.

The present rear one-story addition was constructed in 1935. The addition sits on a raised, granite-faced brick foundation. On the southwest and southeast elevations, limestone cladding is used above the base, while on the northwest elevation, where the loading platform is located, the cladding is of cream-colored brick, with a limestone cornice. All of these cladding materials are identical to corresponding materials used on the original building. The limestone cornice line of the addition is exactly aligned with the belt course between the first and second floors on the original building, and has an identical profile.

The northwest elevation of the addition has a reinforced concrete loading platform at the first floor, covered by a wood canopy supported by steel columns. The platform extends the full length of the elevation. Concrete stairs at the northeast end of the platform lead to the loading platform and to the basement. Two original door openings at the back of the loading platform have been closed with mis-matched brick, and all of the original wood windows, identical to those of the original structure, were replaced with anodized aluminum windows in 1981.

The southwest elevation of the addition is a single wall with a granite base, limestone facing, and a limestone cornice. The five symmetrically placed first floor window openings are identical to first floor window openings on the northwest and southeast elevations of the original building, and have anodized aluminum replacement window sash and frames. Below each first floor window is a simple basement window. The center window has been replaced with a metal louver. The southeast elevation of the addition is similarly designed, but has only three window openings at each floor.

Substantial portions of the interior of the structure remain in unaltered or only slightly modified condition. The basement, originally designed as a mechanical space, has been changed the most. The available space was nearly doubled as a result of the 1935 addition. It was then that the basement began to be used as

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occupiable space. When the most extensive revisions were made, in 1968, previously unexcavated areas were dug out and areas of the original boiler room were also subdivided to create additional office space.

Public areas of the first floor have also been altered, but many of the significant elements and finishes remain. The original first floor plan consisted of an L-shaped main lobby and a secondary lobby along the entire northeast side of the building. Post office work spaces occupied the remainder of the first floor. The large post office workroom, which had smaller offices and work rooms at its southeast and northwest ends, was separated from the public lobbies by a decorative wood "screen" partition wall above a low marble wainscot. This screen contained service windows, slotted openings, and post office boxes. It extended the full length of the public lobby. A doorway near the stair provided access from the lobby to the offices of the postmaster and assistant postmaster. A similar "screen" separated the main lobby from the secondary lobby.

The 1935 addition doubled the amount of work space available on the first floor. Fortunately, because the addition was located at the back of the original work space, the public areas were left virtually unaltered. The centrally located workroom was expanded and office and mailing platform areas were revised. However, both the original work spaces and those of the addition were completely remodeled in 1985 to create new facilities for the U. S. Bankruptcy Court. This remodeling virtually eliminated all original building elements that remained in work areas of the first floor, including many walls and most finished surfaces. Another result of this construction was that the floor of the former observation mezzanine above the post office workroom was removed and this area was abandoned. In conjunction with this renovation, the wood screens between the lobbies and the workrooms, and between the main lobby and the secondary lobby, were replaced with drywall and glass partitions. The access door opening near the stair was also plastered over at this time, and the secondary lobby was converted into a courtroom. Despite these alterations, significant portions of the lower areas of the original partition walls remain, including most of the original marble wainscotting.

The remaining portions of the main lobby are intact and near original condition. The interior surfaces of the exterior lobby walls are clad with original marble

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trim. The original stair, with cast iron balustrades, marble risers and treads, and wood handrails, remains in its original location at the short end of the "L", and continues to the third floor. The original terrazzo flooring and marble trim is intact in the public lobby, as is the original paneled plaster ceiling with dentilated cornice. The original light fixtures, however, have been replaced with modern fixtures.

The second and third floors each consist of a single double-loaded corridor running from southeast to northwest, with a two-story high courtroom space located on the second floor. Modifications have been made at the west corner of each floor, where a new fire stair, toilets, and an elevator were constructed in 1987. The ends of each corridor were enclosed with fire partitions at that time. Aside from these changes, the only changes on the second and third floors have been revisions to isolated partition walls, installation of suspended ceilings in some office areas, and installation of carpeting or vinyl asbestos tile flooring over the original wood floors. Original plaster walls and ceilings (including decorative cornices in the courtroom and corridors), wood doors and trim, terrazzo and marble corridor flooring remain on both floors. Nearly all of the furnishings in the litigation area of the courtroom are also original. Exceptions are the modesty panel in front of the original jury box, of modern construction, and the attorneys' tables, which may be of modern construction as well. Original chandeliers and wall sconces remain in the courtroom, but light fixtures originally installed at the judges bench have been removed.

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District Court facility was provided on the second floor and a small portion of the third floor, with a Land Office, the Weather Bureau, and the Internal Revenue Service located in the remaining space on the third floor. Although court has traditionally been held in Eau Claire only occasionally, the original facilities continue to be reserved for use by the District Court. The Post Office and the other original Federal agencies have been relocated, but other Federal agencies still occupy the remainder of the building, including the space gained when a well designed 1935 addition nearly doubled the area of the basement and first floors.

Architecture: The Federal Building and U.S. Courthouse is one of several important Classical Revival style buildings constructed in Eau Claire in the first two decades of this century. Others include the City Hall, the Public Library, and the Y. M. C. A. Building, all of which, along with the United States Post Office and Courthouse, continue to function as important components of Eau Claire's main commercial district. The other three of these buildings are included within a National Register Historic District encompassing much of the downtown area; the U.S. Post Office and Courthouse was not considered as a part of that earlier nomination because it is Federally owned.

Although relatively small in size, the United States Post Office and Courthouse was designed with every bit of the care typically devoted to building construction by the U.S. Treasury Department during this time period. This is reflected in the high quality of the materials used, the extensive detailing of the construction, and the well-developed concept of the overall design. Great care was also taken to design the major building addition to be compatible with the design and materials of the original building. Modifications to the building exterior subsequent to the building addition have been compatible with the original design, and could easily be reversed if so desired. The United States Post Office and Courthouse remains a solid example of a governmental building constructed in a grand style, though on a small scale, for a medium-sized community during the early Twentieth Century.

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<sup>1</sup>Date of construction of the original building. Treasury Department construction drawings dated July 23, 1907, are in the possession of the owner.

<sup>2</sup>Date of construction of the extant addition. Treasury Department construction drawings dated April 11, 1933, are in the possession of the owner.

<sup>3</sup>Treasury Department construction drawings dated July 23, 1907, and bearing Mr. Taylor's signature are in the possession of the owner.

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<sup>4</sup>Treasury Department construction drawings dated April 11, 1933, and bearing Mr. Simon's signature are in the possession of the owner.

<sup>5</sup>Lloyd V. Owens, A Mini-History of Eau Claire. (Eau Claire, Wisconsin: The West Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission, 1975), pp. 3-4.

<sup>6</sup>William F. Bailey, ed., History of Eau Claire County Wisconsin Past and Present. (Chicago: C.F. Cooper and Company, 1914), pp. 445-447.

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Forrester, George, editor. Historical and Biographical Album of the Chippewa Valley, Wisconsin. Chicago: George Forrester, 1892.

Owens, Lloyd V.. A Mini-History of Eau Claire. Eau Claire, Wisconsin: The West Central Wisconsin Regional Planning Commission, 1975.

Taylor, Mary. Final Report: Intensive Historic / Architectural Survey of the City of Eau Claire. Eau Claire, Wisconsin: n.p., 1983.

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Photo #1 of 12.  
UNITED STATES POST OFFICE AND COURTHOUSE.  
Eau Claire, Eau Claire County, WI.  
Photo by C. Gonzales, March 1990.  
Neg. at WI. Historical Society.  
View looking west.

Photo #2 of 12.  
UNITED STATES POST OFFICE AND COURTHOUSE.  
Eau Claire, Eau Claire County, WI.  
Photo by C. Gonzales, March 1990.  
Neg. at WI. Historical Society.  
View looking southwest.

Photo #3 of 12.  
UNITED STATES POST OFFICE AND COURTHOUSE.  
Eau Claire, Eau Claire County, WI.  
Photo by C. Gonzales, March 1990.  
Neg. at WI. Historical Society.  
View looking southeast.

Photo #4 of 12.  
UNITED STATES POST OFFICE AND COURTHOUSE.  
Eau Claire, Eau Claire County, WI.  
Photo by C. Gonzales, March 1990.  
Neg. at WI. Historical Society.  
View looking northeast.

Photo #5 of 12.  
UNITED STATES POST OFFICE AND COURTHOUSE.  
Eau Claire, Eau Claire County, WI.  
Photo by C. Gonzales, March 1990.  
Neg. at WI. Historical Society.  
View looking northwest.

Photo #6 of 12.  
UNITED STATES POST OFFICE AND COURTHOUSE.  
Eau Claire, Eau Claire County, WI.  
Photo by S. Guregian, March 1990.  
Neg. at WI. Historical Society.  
View of first floor lobby, looking northwest.

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Photo #7 of 12.

UNITED STATES POST OFFICE AND COURTHOUSE.

Eau Claire, Eau Claire County, WI.

Photo by S. Guregian, March 1990.

Neg. at WI. Historical Society.

View of first floor lobby, looking south/southeast.

Photo #8 of 12.

UNITED STATES POST OFFICE AND COURTHOUSE.

Eau Claire, Eau Claire County, WI.

Photo by S. Guregian, March 1990.

Neg. at WI. Historical Society.

View of stair at first floor lobby, looking south.

Photo #9 of 12.

UNITED STATES POST OFFICE AND COURTHOUSE.

Eau Claire, Eau Claire County, WI.

Photo by S. Guregian, March 1990.

Neg. at WI. Historical Society.

View of second floor courtroom litigation area, looking southeast.

Photo #10 of 12.

UNITED STATES POST OFFICE AND COURTHOUSE.

Eau Claire, Eau Claire County, WI.

Photo by S. Guregian, March 1990.

Neg. at WI. Historical Society.

View of second floor courtroom, looking south.

Photo #11 of 12.

UNITED STATES POST OFFICE AND COURTHOUSE.

Eau Claire, Eau Claire County, WI.

Photographer and date unknown (after 1912 and before 1935).

Original print from collections at Chippewa Valley Museum, Eau Claire, Wisconsin

Neg. at WI. Historical Society.

View looking west.

Photo #12 of 12.

UNITED STATES POST OFFICE AND COURTHOUSE.

Eau Claire, Eau Claire County, WI.

Photographer and date unknown (after 1915 and before 1935).

Original print from collections at Chippewa Valley Museum, Eau Claire, Wisconsin

Neg. at WI. Historical Society.

Aerial view looking northeast, with building and site at far right center.