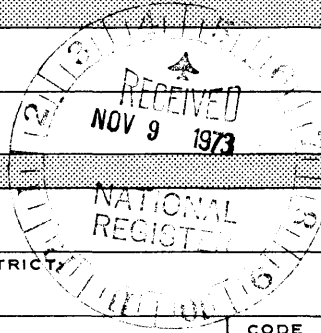


**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM
FOR FEDERAL PROPERTIES**

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: Georgia
COUNTY: Chatham
FOR NPS USE ONLY
ENTRY DATE MAY 29 1974



1. NAME

COMMON: United States Custom House
AND/OR HISTORIC: Custom House

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER: 1-3 East Bay Street	
CITY OR TOWN: Savannah	CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT: First
STATE: Georgia	COUNTY: Chatham
CODE 10	CODE 051

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Object <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public <input type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress	Yes: <input type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Park <input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ _____ _____

4. AGENCY

General Services Administration	
REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS: (If applicable)	STREET AND NUMBER: 1776 Peachtree
CITY OR TOWN: Atlanta	STATE: Georgia
	CODE 10

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC: Chatham County Courthouse, Registry of Deeds	
STREET AND NUMBER: Wright Square	
CITY OR TOWN: Savannah	STATE: Georgia
	CODE 10

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY: Historic Savannah Inventory	
DATE OF SURVEY:	<input type="checkbox"/> Federal <input type="checkbox"/> State <input type="checkbox"/> County <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Local
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS: Historic Savannah Foundation, Inc.	
STREET AND NUMBER: P.O. Box 1733	
CITY OR TOWN: Savannah	STATE: Georgia
	CODE 10

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE:	
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ENTRY NUMBER	
DATE	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	

MAY 29 1974

7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One) (slight)			(Check One)		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered		<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site	

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The United States Custom House in Savannah, Georgia, is located on the corner of East Bay and Bull Streets, just north of Johnson Square. It fronts Factor's Walk, the center of Savannah's early commercial and shipping district. Diagonally across Bay Street is City Hall.

The July 30, 1852, issue of the Savannah Morning News provides a contemporary description of the original appearance and use of the Custom House: "It is built of granite, fronts 110 feet on Bay Street, and extends back to Bay lane 90 feet. The entablature is supported by six fluted solid granite columns, thirty feet high and three feet in diameter. --The whole is enclosed with a heavy iron railing. The internal arrangements are adapted to the Post Office, Custom House Offices, and stores, and a splendid court room for the Circuit and District Courts of the United States--with convenient rooms for the Juries, and offices for the Judges, Clerk, Marshall, and District Attorney, &c. The whole is fire proof, and is finished in a style of art which reflects the greatest credit upon Mr. NORRIS, the Architect and superintendent." Actually, the building is not fire proof because it contains an open staircase, a fire hazard.

The building in exterior appearance has changed little since its construction. With additional federal buildings in Savannah, use of the Custom House is restricted now to custom and related services.

Built in the Greek Revival style, the Custom House is rectangular with a raised basement and two floors. Surfaces are smooth, dressed gray granite from Quincy, Massachusetts. Dominating the East Bay Street or front facade, is a pedimented portico with six monolithic columns which are fluted and have capitals carved with a tobacco leaf motif. The projected section on the south or back side of the building is also pedimented.

There are eleven openings on the front facade of the two upper stories: three centrally placed entrances flanked by four windows on each side on the first floor; and eleven windows across the second story. The side facades have five openings. All windows are six-over-six. Crowning the walls is a simple, unadorned entablature which is in keeping with the absence of external ornament on the building. The raised, gilded words, "UNITED STATES CUSTOM HOUSE" on the frieze of the front side have been added. An iron fence encloses the property.

The basic interior floor plan has changed little, although office areas have been renovated resulting in the usual lowering of ceilings, removal of original fixtures, and closing of fireplaces. Not altered is the most significant architectural feature of the interior, the central double circular stair. Three arches define the main entrance foyer from the stair and circular hall encasing the stairwell. The stair itself is marble (matching the marble floors) with an iron railing which is carried around the second floor gallery overlooking the stairwell. The three arches are repeated at the second story landing. Above the stairwell is

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE Georgia	
COUNTY Chatham	
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No. 7 Description (continued)

a semicircular skylight which gives the effect of a small dome. Behind the stairwell on the first floor is a back entrance as well as the interior stair to the basement.

The building dimensions are 109'-10" x 52'-1".



5. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- | | | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|--|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian | <input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 18th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 20th Century |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 19th Century | |

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) **Completed 1852**

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- | | | | |
|--|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal | <input type="checkbox"/> Education | <input type="checkbox"/> Political | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry | <input type="checkbox"/> Science | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture | _____ |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater | _____ |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Commerce | <input type="checkbox"/> Military | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications | <input type="checkbox"/> Music | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation | | | |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Architecturally, the United States Custom House in Savannah is one of the most significant public buildings in the city. Historically, it symbolizes the importance of Savannah as "Georgia's port city" during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

The site of the Custom House is important to the history of Savannah. Firmin Cerveau's 1837 panoramic view of the city shows a one-story frame house and shop at the corner of Bull and Bay Streets. The house, which was built about 1733, was rented by James Edward Oglethorpe, founder of the Georgia Colony, upon his return visits to Savannah. At the rear of the lot stood the building from which John Wesley preached his first sermon on American soil on March 7, 1736.

The first custom office in Savannah opened in 1789 in Commerce Row on Bay Street, and was replaced by a custom house in 1819 on East Bryan Street. When the latter burned in 1837, the Custom House was moved to the City Exchange.

In 1845, the federal government had purchased ground at the corner of Bull and Bay Streets for a new custom house. John S. Norris, New York architect, was employed as both designer and supervisor of construction. The July 20, 1848, issue of the Savannah Weekly Georgian, described the laying of the cornerstone with masonic honors for what was called the "most imposing edifice upon the most classic spot in Savannah." The same article noted various improvements to the city, including some along the waterfront, such as better lighting of the harbor.

On July 28, 1852, Architect Norris wrote Acting Secretary of the Treasury, W. L. Nodge, that "the construction of the Savannah Custom House, erected from my Designs & under my superintendance, was completed on the 24th." The letter also discloses that the building as constructed differed from first plans. He further noted that delays, during 1847, were due to a change of plans and the purchase of additional property. Finally, operations commenced "upon the large Plan" and were completed four years later in 1852. Norris added that "I do not think there has been a building of similar construction erected in any shorter period of time, it being completely fire proof inside and outside."

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

A History of Public Buildings under the Control of the Treasury Department.
 Washington: Government Printing Office, 1901, pp. 110-111.
 "Antiques at Savannah," reprinted from Antiques Magazine, March, 1967.
 Georgia Historical Society. File on the United States Custom House.
 Historic Savannah Foundation, Inc. File on the United States Custom House.
 "History of the U. S. Custom House, Savannah, Georgia," mimeographed
 history distributed by Building Manager.
Savannah Morning News, July 30, 1852; Savannah Weekly Georgian, July 20, 1848.
 Wells, Tom Henderson. The Slave Ship Wanderer. Athens: University of
 Georgia Press, 1967.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

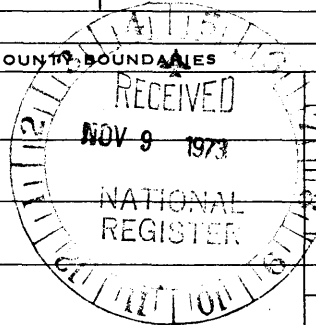
LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
NW	Degrees Minutes Seconds ° ' "	Degrees Minutes Seconds ° ' "		Degrees Minutes Seconds ° ' "	Degrees Minutes Seconds ° ' "	
NE	° ' "	° ' "		32° 04' 49"	81° 05' 29"	
SE	° ' "	° ' "				
SW	° ' "	° ' "				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: _____

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE

NO UTM
CX



SEE INSTRUCTIONS

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE: **Ellen Beasley** DATE: **March 26, 1973**

BUSINESS ADDRESS: _____

STREET AND NUMBER: **2516 Belmont Boulevard** PHONE: **617-297-6637**

CITY OR TOWN: **Nashville** STATE: **Tennessee** CODE: **41**

12. CERTIFICATION OF NOMINATION NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

State Liaison Officer recommendation:
 Yes
 No
 None

Mary Gregory Grant
 State Liaison Officer Signature

In compliance with Executive Order 11593, I hereby nominate this property to the National Register, certifying that the State Liaison Officer has been allowed 90 days in which to present the nomination to the State Review Board and to evaluate its significance. The recommended level of significance is National State Local

Steven R. Rutenbaur 10/24/73
 Federal Representative Signature Date

Historic Preservation Liaison Officer

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

Annit Allen Connolly
~~Director, Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation~~
 Associate Director Professional Services MAY 29 1974

ATTEST: *Charles Alden*
 Acting Keeper of The National Register

Date: **5-29-74**

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE Georgia	
COUNTY Chatham	
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(Number all entries)

No. 8 Significance (continued)

On July 29, 1852, Norris invited the public to view the new Custom House built in the Greek Revival style. Located a short distance from the waterfront, the structure housed numerous government agencies, including the Federal Court, but its primary functions were connected with operations of the port of Savannah. In 1860, the case of the yacht "Wanderer" was tried before the court as the last violation of the law against the importation of slaves. The following year, On March 8, 1861, the Confederate flag flew from the Custom House staff, one day after adoption of the Ordinance of Secession by the Georgia State Convention.

Presently, the Custom House is used solely for custom-related services, because other federal offices have moved to newer buildings. Although its function has been reduced to a single agency, its importance to Savannah has not diminished. Located in view of Factor's Walk and on a prime corner in the downtown section, it remains both a visual and an historical anchor to the city. Its national importance has been recognized by its designation as an Historic Custom House.

