

PH00 1747

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

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE:	Iowa
COUNTY:	Lee
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY DATE	JAN 24 1974

1. NAME

COMMON:	U.S. Post Office and Courthouse
AND/OR HISTORIC:	

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER: 25 North ^{7th} Seventh Street, corner of Blondeau			
CITY OR TOWN: Keokuk		CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT: 1st (Edward Mezvinsky, H.R.)	
STATE: Iowa	CODE 19	COUNTY: Lee	CODE 111

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 Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress	Yes: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input 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

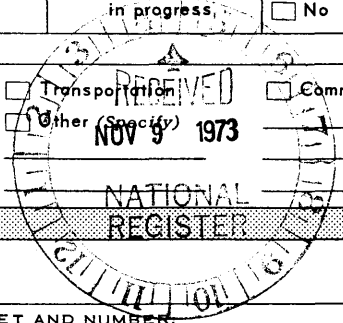
U.S. Postal Service			
REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS: (If applicable) Central Region		STREET AND NUMBER: 433 W. Van Buren Street	
CITY OR TOWN: Chicago		STATE: Illinois	CODE 17

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC: Lee County (South) Courthouse			
STREET AND NUMBER: 126 North 5th Street			
CITY OR TOWN: Keokuk		STATE: Iowa	CODE 19

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY: A History of Public Buildings under the Control of the Treasury Dept., Washington, D.C. GPO, 1901, pp. 172-3.			
DATE OF SURVEY: ca. 1900 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Federal <input type="checkbox"/> State <input type="checkbox"/> County <input type="checkbox"/> Local			
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS: Deposited in all designated libraries for U.S. Documents.			
STREET AND NUMBER:			
CITY OR TOWN:		STATE:	CODE



SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE: Iowa
 COUNTY: Lee
 ENTRY NUMBER: JAN 24 1974
 DATE:

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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
	(Check One)		(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 Site selected for the U.S. C.H. & P.O. in Keokuk in 1885 has proven to be more than adequate during eighty-three years of change. It is conveniently near the city center, and yet the location permitted expansion to satisfy the increased need for work space, driveway and parking. (See Property Map and photos #2 & #3.) The total lot size is 146'-6" by 200'-6"; the 13' grass-and-planting strip along the street sides is generous even by today's standards. The building serves literally as a landmark: its seven-story clock tower can still be identified from the city limits as it rises well above the two and three-story commercial neighbors that line Main Street just a block away.

The Original 1887-90 Building is still in good condition, partly because of the high quality of materials and structure, but partly also, because of the excellent maintenance it has received. (See photos and attachment 7-A, floor plan.) Mr. William T. Talbot, the current Postmaster happens to be president of the local historical society. He has retained copies of the construction photographs, from laying the foundation in April of 1887, to the completion on September 30, 1888 (see photo #1). In 1962, two of the original three large entrance arches (on both streets) were discreetly converted to windows (see photo #2). At the same time, the original screen line in the lobby was replaced by a modern lockbox partition. Otherwise the 1890 building is still there, exterior and interior, down to the 16 fireplace mantelpieces and the door knobs.

The rectangular building block, 2½ stories plus basement, has the overall dimensions 62 by 108 feet; floor to floor heights: bsmt. to 1st = ca. 12'; 1st to 2nd = 17'-6"; 2nd to 3rd = 15'+ (17'-6" over courtroom); 3rd to 4th = 13'+. The clock tower rising 7 stories = 103'+ to the roof peak. Apparently, either citizens or the architects realized that the original five-story tower of 1888, as shown in photo #1, was not tall enough to serve its time-keeping civic function or to be in proper proportion to the whole. In any case in 1890, at the cost of about \$7,000, the two upper stories of the tower were taken down and rebuilt exactly as designed after inserting an additional 25' high, two-story element at the fourth-floor level. (After this early "correction", i.e. extension of the tower, was called to their attention, local historians are now attempting to document the interesting details.)

The basement and foundation wall was constructed of Bedford limestone on the exterior, hard brick on the interior. This lower floor housed the boiler room, fuel storage, toilet rooms, and general storage area. Here the solid fireproof construction of the building is plainly visible. Above the basement level, exterior walls are of red brick, limestone trim with elaborate detail in molded brick around the arches, combined with rich terra-cotta decoration in panels and in running horizontal bands

(continued)

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

8. 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) **1887-90 (addition to rear, 1956)**

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) Jurisprudence |
| <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 type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce | <input type="checkbox"/> Military | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation | _____ |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Communications | <input type="checkbox"/> Music | | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation | | | |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The building at the S.W. corner of N. Seventh and Blondeau is significant as a well-designed, (thus continuously useful) sturdily built, example of the round-arch, brick and terracotta Victorian architecture that fortunately still exists in nearly mint condition. The evidence is implicit in the description and documents outlined under Section 7. Whereas Victorian buildings were once evaluated on their faithfulness to academic historical styles such as Romanesque, Gothic and Renaissance, today there is a growing awareness of other qualities that stem from creative variations. This one at Keokuk deserves recognition.

A scanning of material concerning the U.S. P.O. & C.H. on file at the Keokuk public library suggests that a careful researcher could easily assemble a dossier to show that, during eighty-three years, many notable events and people (judges, criminals, lawyers and postmasters) were associated with the building. Before the era of electric timepieces, the chiming, illuminated clock in the Post Office tower was stopped for repairs; as a result, the whole community was disrupted and off schedule, so dependent were they on the faithful timepiece and its quarter-hour sounds. The point is that this kind of significance in local history has not yet been formally written. But as historic architecture, the evidence is clear, not only in intimate details of exterior and interior, but also visible from miles around.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS



9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- (a) Gate City Trade Supplement, Keokuk, Iowa, Jan. 1889, p.42.
- (b) Constitution Democrat Annual Suplnt. Keokuk Ia. Aug. 1891, p.13.
- (c) Annual Reports of the Supervising Architect of the Treasury, Washington, D.C., GPO, (passim from 1885 p.30 to 1892 p.209).
- (d) A History of Public Buildings under the Control of the Treasury Department, Washington, D.C., Government Printing Office, 1901, pp. 172-3.
- (e) Roberts, Nelson C. and Moorhead, S. W. (eds.), A History of Lee County, Iowa, Vol. I, Chicago, Illinois, S. J. Clarke Publishing Co., pp. 147-149.

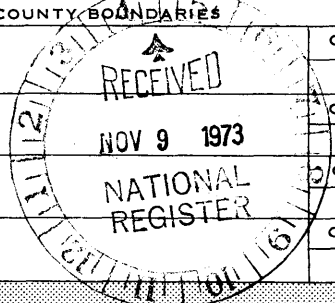
10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			OR	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	° ' "	° ' "		40° 23' 51"	91° 23' 02"	
NE	° ' "	° ' "				
SE	° ' "	° ' "				
SW	° ' "	° ' "				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: **0.66 a. (200.5' x 140.5')**

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

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE



SEE INSTRUCTIONS

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE: Buford L. Pickens, Prof., History of Architecture		DATE: March 28, 1973
BUSINESS ADDRESS: Washington University		
STREET AND NUMBER: Office: 1122 Warson Woods Drive		PHONE: 314-966-3590
CITY OR TOWN: St. Louis	STATE Missouri 63122	CODE 29

12. CERTIFICATION OF NOMINATION

State Liaison Officer recommendation:

Yes
 No
 None

Adrian D. Anderson
 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

[Signature] **9-7-73**
 Federal Representative Signature Date

[Signature]
 Title

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

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

AR Mortensen
 Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date 1/24/74

ATTEST:

[Signature]
 Keeper of The National Register

Date Jan. 21, 1974

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

STATE		Iowa
COUNTY		Lee
FOR NPS USE ONLY		
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE	
	JAN 24 1974	

Section 7, Sheet 1 (Continuation Sheet) Keokuk, USPO

(Number all entries)

at the spring line of the brick arches and elsewhere (see photo #4). For the most part this decoration, which gives character to the building, cannot be properly called Romanesque; rather it is "creative Victorian vernacular," a term that is no longer pejorative, but the opposite.

The first floor has the typical L-shaped lobby common to post office buildings located on a corner with entrances from both streets. (See attachment 7-A, 1st-floor plan.) In addition to the large workroom behind the screen line there is stair hall 15' x 28' and two spacious offices with marble mantels for postmaster and his assistant. In the public areas (photo #6), the original interior finish is elegant: flooring of dark and light marble tiles laid in diagonal pattern; the reddish marble base and wainscot is 5' high; richly decorative cast-iron stair newels, stringer and wrought-iron balustrade; finish woodwork is white oak. Even in the workroom (photo #7), which retains its high ceiling, the cast-iron columns are carefully designed to rest on octagonal pedestals perforated by grills for the cold-air returns; octagonal cast-iron caps above carry the deep beams and molded cornice.

The second floor is equally impressive with the same type of finish and materials continued from the floor below. The Courtroom (photo #5), about 33 by 56 feet, is a masterpiece in its preservation of the original woodwork, trim and furniture -- some of which are museum pieces -- all in white oak, carved or in solid panels. Even the marble mantels and the coved plaster cornice under the sixteen-foot high ceiling have survived intact.

The third floor originally housed two smaller courtrooms, the law library, retiring rooms for judges, juries and lawyers as well as toilets and storage space. The roofing was slate with copper gutters and downspouts carried within the thick masonry walls.

The character of the whole building seems far less Romanesque than simply round-arch-Victorian, as revealed in the seven photos. There are similar examples of brick-with-tower U.S. C.H. & P.O. in the History of Public Buildings (see Bibliography, item c, viz., p. 186, Topeka, Kansas; p. 442, Charlotte, North Carolina and P. 630, La Crosse, Wisconsin). Each has certain distinct features but in comparison, the Keokuk building seems architecturally superior in scale, proportion and unity of the various parts; also the extra height of the clock tower provides a much needed dominance where complex elements tend otherwise to compete.

The 1956 utilitarian, one-story extension was fortunately kept at the rear, near the alley, and away from the Blondeau Street end pavilion (see photo #3). The color of brick matches the old and, except for the mechanical equipment on the roof, the new unit pays appropriate respect for its distinguished and venerable relative.

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

STATE	Iowa	
COUNTY	Lee	
FOR NPS USE ONLY		
ENTRY NUMBER		DATE
		JAN 24 1974

Section 7 Sheet #2 (Continuation Sheet)

(Number all entries)

U.S. C.H. & P.O., Keokuk, Iowa

According to the Annual Report of the Supervising Architect for 1886 (opposite p. 30) this building was designed in 1885 under the administration of M. E. Bell. The extension of the tower came under the administration of Jas. H. Windrim, 1889-90.





KEOKUK QUADRANGLE
IOWA-MISSOURI-ILLINOIS
7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)
NW/4 KEOKUK 15' QUADRANGLE

N4022.5-W9122.5/7.5



1964

AMS 2764 IV NW-SERIES V863

40° 23' 51"
91° 23' 02"

25'
4475

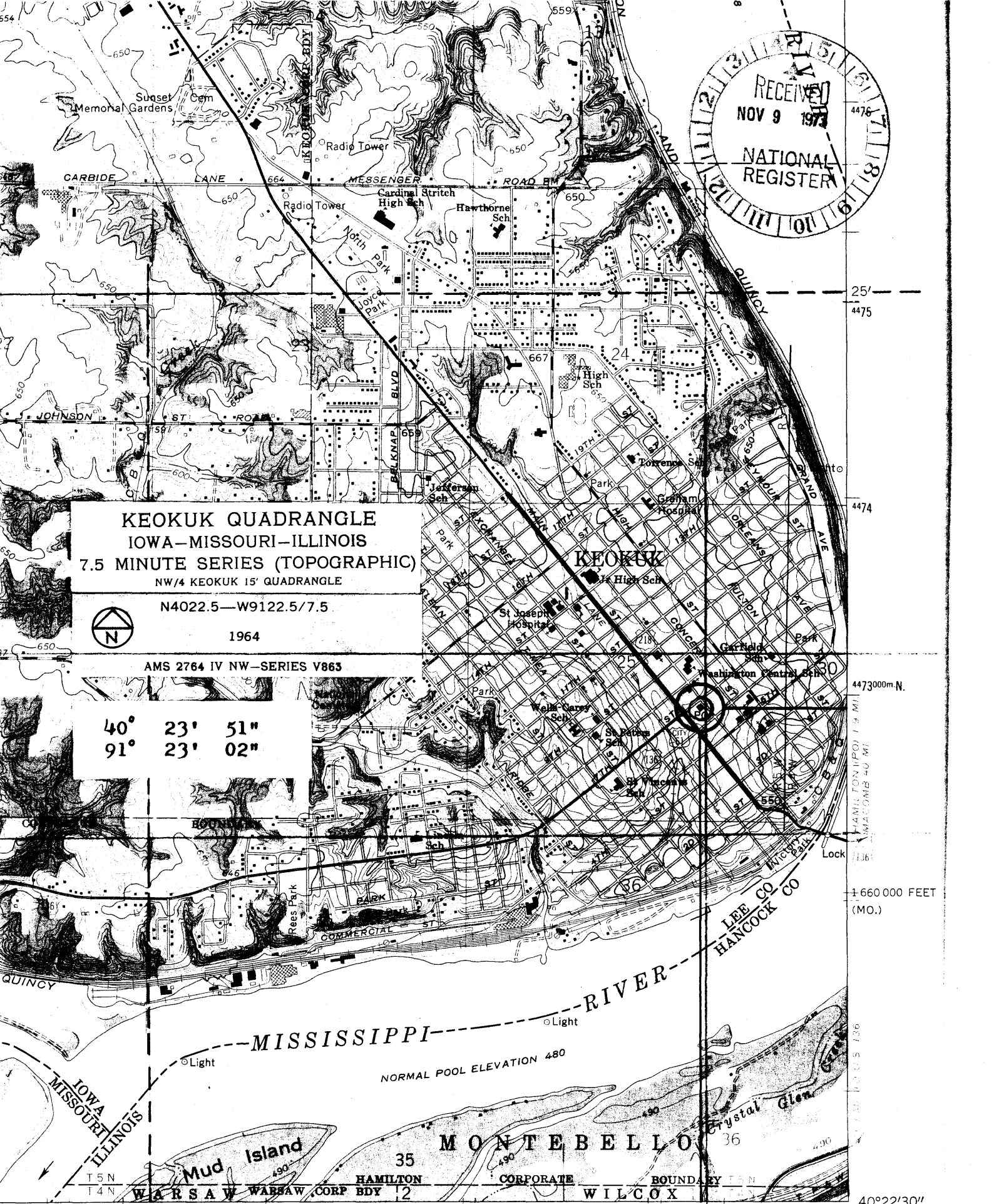
4474

4473000m N.

HAMILTON 1.9 MI
WABSAW 4.0 MI
WASCOMB 4.0 MI

1:660 000 FEET (MO.)

40°22'30"
91°22'30"



U.S. POST OFFICE AND COURTHOUSE, KEOKUK, IOWA

INTERIOR-GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, WASHINGTON, D.C., 1965

305

section 7
Keokuk P.O. Attachment #1, Floor Plan



Overall lot size
140'-6" x 200'-6"

Original 1887-90 Bldg.

1956 WORK ROOM EXTENSION, 59'-0"

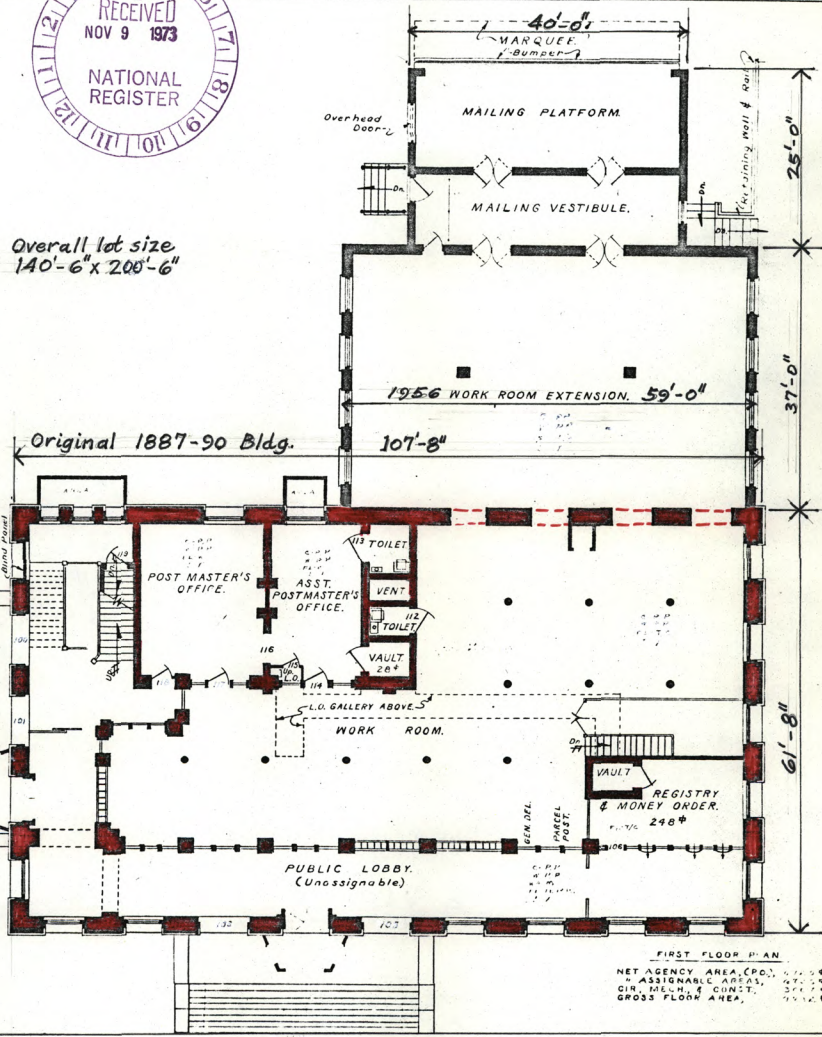
107'-8"

25'-0"

37'-0"

61'-8"

Blondeau Ave.



FIRST FLOOR PLAN
 NET AGENCY AREA (C.P.O.) 1,100 sq. ft.
 ASSIGNABLE AREA 272 sq. ft.
 CIR. MECH. & CINET. 32 sq. ft.
 GROSS FLOOR AREA 1,404 sq. ft.

FIRST FLOOR ASSIGNMENT PLAN.

N. Seventh St.



U.S.P.O. & C.H.,
 KEOKUK, IOWA.
 DRAWING NO. AS-3.
 REVISED: