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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 Courthouse

Other names/site number _____

2. Location

Street & Number 118 South Mill Street Not for Publication N/A

City or Town Fergus Falls Vicinity N/A

State Minnesota Code MN County Otter Tail Code 111

Zip Code 56537

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] Date 9/5/12

General Services Administration, Federal Preservation Officer
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 Howard / DSHPO Date June 14, 2012

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register [Signature] Signature of Keeper Date of Action 10-24-12

determined eligible for the National Register See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register See continuation sheet.

removed from the National Register _____

other (explain): _____

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)	Category of Property (Check only one box)	Number of Resources within Property	
		Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<u>1</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-state	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> structures
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public-federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> objects
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

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

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

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

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

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

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

LATE VICTORIAN
Renaissance: Second Renaissance Revival

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETE

roof METAL: Copper (lead-coated)

walls STONE: Granite

walls STONE: Limestone

walls BRICK

walls TERRA COTTA

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

Please see Section 7 Continuation Sheets.

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*United States Post Office and Courthouse
Otter Tail County, Minnesota*

Section 7 Page 1

Description

The United States Post Office and Courthouse is located in the downtown area of Fergus Falls, Minnesota, on the west side of Mill Street about one-half block south of Lincoln Avenue. The boundaries of the property are the Otter Tail River (south), an alley (north), and a parking lot (west). The street address is 118 South Mill Street and the building is oriented towards Mill Street. The building's setback from the street is the width of the sidewalk plus its seven front steps. The property slopes gently to the west and drops sharply to the south towards the river, exposing the south elevation of the basement. There are no additional buildings, structures, or objects within the property lines.

The Post Office and Courthouse was completed in 1904. A small addition in 1927 and a major addition in 1933 create the building as seen today. The original building illustrates a Second Renaissance Revival design, and the major addition, which nearly doubled the building through a southward expansion, was designed as a mirror image of the original building. The materials and ornamental treatments of the addition are nearly identical to the original. The primary façade is symmetrically composed, and all façades consist of granite, limestone, brick, and terra cotta. The symmetrical arrangement and monumental proportions of the building suggest a Beaux Arts style influence, while the use of round and segmental arched openings, varied wall materials, quoins at the corners, and classic cornice treatment represent the Renaissance Revival style. In addition to the exterior, there are a number of significant interior elements, particularly the public lobby and courtrooms (described in detail below).

Containing approximately 28,000 square feet, the building is three stories in height with a raised basement level. It has an irregular floor plan. The building's structural system consists of reinforced concrete columns with cast-in-place concrete joists. The hipped roof is supported by 2x10 inch wood rafters with riveted steel substructure supports. Although originally designed in a rectangular plan, the 1927 addition on the west elevation and the 1933 addition towards the south extend the rectangular floor plan. A wing was placed on the west elevation. A recent addition has been constructed between the structure's two west wings.

A number of construction drawings are extant and located in the basement level of the building. Original drawings dating to 1902 were produced by the Office of the Supervising Architect and approved by James Knox Taylor. Drawings for the major addition date to 1932 and were approved by Louis A. Simon, Superintendent of the Architectural Division of the U.S. Treasury Department, and his superior, James A. Wetmore, Acting Supervising Architect.

Since the 1933 addition's completion, there have been additional modifications over the years. The heating, ventilation, and air conditioning systems were updated in the 1960s and 1970s. The most notable alteration was the replacement of all exterior windows in 1981-1982. However, the window openings remain intact and the glazing patterns of the replacement windows match their original design. In addition, the original roof was replaced in 1991 with a similarly detailed standing-seam roof. Staff of the Minnesota State Historic Preservation Office, as the reviewing agency for implementation of Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, approved both the window and roof replacement projects and concurred with the federal property owner's finding of "no adverse effect."

Exterior

The basement of the U.S. Post Office and Courthouse is made of striated granite blocks capped by limestone. The first floor is clad with limestone blocks with horizontal reveals every 18 inches on center. There are limestone keystone lintels over the windows. An intermediate limestone belt course divides the first and second floors. The second and third floors are clad with English-bonded red brick. Sandy beige brick is used for both the corner quoining detailing and the window surrounds. The building's cornice

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consists of fine dentils, block modillions with alternating coffers, and a coped cymatium made of limestone. Standing-seam, lead-coated copper covers the roof.

The windows are predominantly anodized aluminum, one-over-one double hung sash, placed within rectangular openings adorned by keystone lintels. On the third floor, segmental arches form the window heads. Above the first floor, glazed terra cotta is used for window sills, raised keystones, and quoins, while slightly projecting beige brick surrounds window openings. Large, round-arched multi-light windows on the east elevation define the two courtrooms of the building.

The main (east) façade consists of the original building and an addition that mirrors the original design seamlessly. Each section has a large, slightly projecting bay that corresponds with a courtroom and a centered main entry with surrounds accented with floral motifs, an entablature, and scrolled brackets supporting a slight overhang. The original doors have been replaced with modern glass-and-steel doors. Because the first floor is raised four feet above the sidewalk level, these entries are accessed via granite stairways that are bordered on each side by decorative cast-iron lampposts resting on heavy granite blocks, topped with multi-globed lenses. Each first floor entry is flanked by windows, one directly below the second floor courtroom and one located within the outermost building bay.

Spanning between the second and third floors, three large round-arched multi-light windows dominate each courtroom bay. These windows are adorned by terra cotta keystones and beige brick surrounds as well as terra cotta alleges, two of which support terra cotta American eagle sculptures. On the roof, above the three courtroom windows, are three small round copper dormers with glass lights.

A central section bridges the two side-by-side identical sections comprised of the original building and the 1932 addition. The first floor of the central section is marked by a recessed arch with a large bas relief floral pattern and a scrolled keystone. Both the second and third floors contain a grouping of three windows with slightly recessed beige brick spandrel panels separating the groups.

The north and south elevations are nearly identical: three bays wide, with three evenly spaced windows on the first, second, and third floors. Window detailing matches the east elevation's detailing. There is one small, round dormer on the roof directly above each middle window. The only difference between the north and south elevations is their visible height. The basement level is exposed on the south elevation because of the drop in ground level towards the river, thus appearing larger than the north elevation.

The west elevation contains an irregular series of wings and extensions. The wall surface consists of cladding, window openings and detailing, and cornice similar to the other elevations. The roof is pierced by a beige brick chimney, six round dormers, and several vents, both round and square. The 1927 addition is attached to the northern section of this elevation. This two story flat-roofed annex has a rectangular plan and granite, limestone, and brick walls on the basement, first, and second floors. The west-facing windows on the first floor of the annex have segmental arches with raised keystones and rectangular openings with keystone lintels on the second floor. On the north elevation of the annex, there is a loading door, and a single-story, flat-roofed loading bay with an attached loading dock.

On the southern section of the west elevation, there is a three-story wing with a flat roof, a broad, plain cornice and a low parapet. Wall materials and windows are similar to the 1927 annex. Between the wing and the annex, there is a recently built concrete block addition with a flat roof and no openings.

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Interior

The first floor interior space is divided between the public lobby area, which runs along the eastern one-third of the building nearly its full length, and the mail processing area, which encompasses the western two-thirds of the first floor as well as the wing and the addition on the west side. Office space is located at the south end of the first floor. The lobby flooring is composed of terrazzo finished with a 12-inch marble border and highlight strips.

There is a vestibule at each of the main entries, consisting of faux-oak-painted metal framing and muntins that divide multiple glass panes, and access doors on each side. The west wall of the lobby consists of postal counters and post office boxes, and is divided in half by an archway that marks the building's original south exterior wall. The post office boxes have cast eagles in the decorative brass doors and are trimmed with intricately carved woodwork, including engaged Corinthian columns. The northern half of the west wall above eight feet has a series of multiple-light fixed wood-sash windows, and above eight feet on the southern half has open wrought-iron grillage to allow ventilation. The lobby ceiling is coffered with scrolled brackets and a finely dentilled cornice. Each coffer contains a modern fluorescent light fixture.

At the southern end of the lobby, there is a stairway and a transverse-oriented hallway. The rectilinear stairway has a landing at the midway point, marble steps, and a wrought-iron railing with wood handrail. The hallway provides access to offices for post office management and the Postmaster. The offices are plainer than the public lobby, though there are wood baseboards, door and window surrounds, and wood doors with glass panels.

The mail processing area is mainly unfinished, with asphalt floor tile, exposed ductwork, and fluorescent light fixtures suspended from the ceiling. Running longitudinally over the center of the space, there is an enclosed suspended walkway used by postal inspectors to observe operations. The mail processing area is divided east/west by a segmental-arched arcade that was the west exterior wall prior to the 1927 addition.

On the second floor, there are two courtrooms on the east side of the building with a hallway running alongside to the west. Offices occur to the North, and South, as well as in the west wing/addition. At the north end of the building, there is a jury assembly room; between the two courtrooms, there is a jury deliberation room; and at the south end there is a judge's chambers. These spaces have minimal decorative detail, primarily consisting of wood baseboards and door surrounds. The hallway has a terrazzo floor, wood baseboards, door, and window surrounds, and a coffered ceiling with a wide, plain crown molding.

Two sets of paneled wood doors provide access to each courtroom. The south courtroom is currently in use. It encompasses a large space – approximately 1,500 square feet of floor space while two-story in height. The room is arranged with the bench on the southern wall, jury seating along the west wall, and visitor seating to the north. The walls have a high wood-paneled wainscoting, above which they have a modern rough plaster finish. There are three tall, round-arched windows with wood surrounds on the east wall. The ceiling has a wide crown molding with fine dentils and is divided into three coffers by two transverse beams with fine dentil details. Within each coffer, there are two plaster-molded, suspended light fixtures. The north courtroom is the original of the two, and although it is currently un-restored, the historic materials are intact. The north courtroom is a mirror image of the south, and the details are essentially the same. One notable difference is that the north ceiling is more elaborate than in the south, with each coffered bay bordered by coffered panels and a larger dentil pattern along the crown molding.

The third floor is arranged much like the second floor, with a large portion occupied by the courtrooms. There is a small amount of office space at the north and south ends, in the area between courtrooms, and in the south wing. The offices have similar decorative detail as elsewhere in the building. The hallway has a flat ceiling with crown molding.

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The basement is partially finished, with one office, a maintenance/custodian's area, and the boiler room.

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 components lack individual distinction.
 C
 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)

Community planning and development

Architecture

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Period of Significance

1904 - 1933

Cultural Affiliation

Significant Dates

1904, 1927, 1933

Architect/Builder

James Knox Taylor/John Lauritzen

Louis A. Simon/Anders Lauritzen

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 (DOE #65003024, 10/30/1980)
 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: Otter Tail County Historical Society; Minnesota Historical Society Library

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Statement of Significance

The United States Post Office and Courthouse in Fergus Falls is eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places at the local level of significance under Criterion A for Community Development and under Criterion C for Architecture. This substantial three-story brick building is associated with the development and maturation of downtown Fergus Falls, which by the turn of the twentieth century, was a regional center in northwestern Minnesota. Construction of the federal building was important locally as a symbol of progress. In addition, the courthouse function was an economic boon to the downtown, bringing visitors from around the region and directly leading to the construction of a four-story hotel across the street.

In addition, the U.S. Post Office and Courthouse is a fine example of the Second Renaissance Revival style with Beaux Arts influence that stands out in downtown Fergus Falls. It is a formal, symmetrical composition of Second Renaissance Revival elements, including: a mix of round, segmental and flat arched window openings, all with keystones; varying wall materials between the first and second floors; quoins at the corners; elaborate entry surrounds; and an ornamental cornice. The 1933 addition maintains the overall symmetry, matches the original materials, and contributes to the overall architectural significance. In addition, the public interior spaces, including the first floor lobby and the courtrooms, were constructed with high-quality craftsmanship and materials, including terrazzo and marble floors, coffered ceilings with decorative elements, extensive woodwork, and bronze fittings on post office boxes.

While still owned by the U.S. Postal Service and serving as the main post office in Fergus Falls, the building was determined eligible by the National Register of Historic Places on October, 30, 1980.

Construction History

Growth in postal receipts in Fergus Falls, the need for a courthouse in northwestern Minnesota, and timely politicking resulted in approval of a federal building in Fergus Falls. Influential Congressman S. G. Comstock of Fergus Falls helped secure designation of a federal building for his city. During the 1889-1890 congressional session, the U.S. Congress authorized \$125,000 for construction of a post office and federal courts building in Fergus Falls.¹

Despite the approval, over a decade would pass before any action was taken towards construction of a federal building in Fergus Falls. In 1902, the Office of the Supervising Architect, U.S. Treasury, completed construction drawings, signed by Supervising Architect James Knox Taylor, for the U.S. Post Office and Courthouse in Fergus Falls. Work commenced the following year by contractor Lauritzen Brothers Construction, and the building was completed in May 1904. The post office officially opened on May 17, receiving decidedly positive reviews locally. Several editorials wrote glowing reviews, including the following in the *Fergus Falls Daily Journal* May 17, 1904:

There is very general surprise and satisfaction over the substantial character and elegance of the building. It could not have been better and it will have a decided influence on the character of buildings built in Fergus Falls in the future.

As was typical of federal buildings designed by Taylor, the Fergus Falls U.S. Post Office and Courthouse utilized high-quality exterior materials, including granite at the basement level, limestone on the first floor, offsetting grey and red brick on the upper floors, and terra cotta ornamentation.

¹ *Fergus Falls Daily Journal*. February 24, 1996.

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The interior was praised for its elegance, with "fittings and finish [that] are strikingly complete and beautiful."² The first floor was dedicated to the post office function, with a richly ornamented lobby running nearly the length of the building, a series of service windows, and a back area for mail sorting. Upstairs, the courtroom, with its raised ceiling, occupied two floors, and there were adjacent offices on the second and third floors.

In 1927, an addition to the U.S. Post Office and Courthouse was attached to the west elevation to provide additional mail handling space. This two-story annex utilized similar exterior materials as the original building.

In 1932-1933, the U. S. Post Office and Courthouse was nearly doubled in size through an addition so well designed that, on casual observation, it appears to be original. The addition was designed under Acting Supervising Architect James Wetmore and likely designed by Louis Simon, longtime chief of the Architecture Division and the Supervising Architect after 1934. Like the original, Lauritzen Construction was the building contractor.

Historical Background and Significance

Fergus Falls was platted in 1870 at a time when Euro-American settlers were streaming into western Minnesota and converting the prairie land into wheat farms. Roughly 1,000 settlers arrived in Otter Tail County during 1869-1870 alone. Because of its waterpower potential, the falls on the Otter Tail River provided a natural town site. In 1871, George Wright constructed a dam across the river, and flour and grist mills were established. The town became a commercial center for the surrounding countryside, and in 1872, Fergus Falls was named county seat. Nonetheless, growth in the village was slow during the 1870s, and the population stood at 680 in 1878.³

Arrival of the railroads increased the pace of development. The St. Paul, Minneapolis & Manitoba (later Great Northern) Railroad reached Fergus Falls in 1879, and three years later, in 1882, the Northern Pacific Railroad completed a line through town. In 1880, the population had increased to 1,213, and by 1883, the population exceeded 5,000. During this period, in 1881, Fergus Falls incorporated as a city. Growth continued at a slower pace in the second half of the 1880s and the 1890s, until by the turn of the century, the population was 6,000.⁴

During the 1870s, it was unclear whether the north or south side of the Otter Tail River would develop as the commercial center of Fergus Falls. However, during the building boom of the early 1880s, the business district coalesced around the intersection of Lincoln Avenue and Mill Street, and Lincoln effectively became "Main Street." A warehouse district developed two blocks to the east on Lincoln Avenue, along the Great Northern tracks. By the early twentieth century, a group of Italianate and Queen Anne style two-story brick commercial buildings clustered around Lincoln and Mill streets.

In addition to commerce, Fergus Falls developed into a government center, and public buildings have long been an important aspect of the city's landscape. Village (later city) and county government functions began in 1872. While earlier buildings are gone, the current City Hall (Colonial Revival) and County Courthouse (Beaux Arts) are fine examples of early twentieth-century public buildings. At the state level, beginning in 1888, the state of Minnesota established the Fergus Falls state hospital just north of downtown, developing a complex that included an impressive Richardsonian Romanesque style, eight-story clock tower.

² *Fergus Falls Wheelock's Weekly*, May 19, 1904.

³ Jane Thompson, *Fergus Falls, Minnesota: 1872-1972* (Fergus Falls, MN: Otter Tail Power Company, 1972).

⁴ *Ibid.*

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Like many pioneer settlements, the first government presence in Fergus Falls was the federal government, through establishment of the post office in 1871. First located at the house of Postmaster Henry Hanigson, the post office moved later that year to the store of new Postmaster George Nichols, where it remained until 1885. As the city grew, so did postal receipts, and by the turn of the century, yearly receipts regularly exceeded \$10,000.⁵

Federal courts in Minnesota also provided a local federal presence, though not as widespread as post offices. The U.S. District Court for Minnesota was established with statehood in 1858. Since 1890, the federal court in Minnesota has consisted of one district, with six divisions. The Sixth Division comprises 25 counties in the northwestern part of the state. Although population in the western portion of Minnesota grew rapidly in the late nineteenth century, the nearest courthouse was in Minneapolis, requiring lengthy travel times for those with court business.

When the United States Post Office and Courthouse was constructed in 1904, it not only established a more public federal presence in Fergus Falls, it placed a large, well-designed building in the immediate downtown area on Mill Street just south of Lincoln Avenue. The U.S. Post Office and Courthouse had a positive economic impact on Fergus Falls. Because federal court in Fergus Falls was seasonal, judges were based in Minneapolis and St. Paul. When court was in session, judges and clerks traveled to Fergus Falls, and attorneys, jury members, and court visitors traveled from around the 25-county Sixth Division of the Minnesota federal judicial district. All of those visitors required food, lodging, and other services.

Although statistics have not been compiled regarding the economic importance of the federal court in Fergus Falls, an illustrative example is the River Inn Hotel. As a result of the loss of the Grand Hotel and two smaller hotels in Fergus Falls, by the late-1920s, demand for hotel rooms exceeded supply. A typical day during the court session could bring 100 jurors and numerous additional attorneys, witnesses, and litigants to town, in addition to the judge and staff. However, many visitors and occasionally officers of the court could not find local accommodations. Declaring local lodging "the poorest of any place we are required to hold court," Judge Sanborn moved the court's 1928 winter term to Detroit Lakes.⁶

In response, the Fergus Falls Commercial Club (later Chamber of Commerce) issued a resolution and open invitation to hotel builders and operators for a new first class hotel in the city. With assistance from the club, within one year Vernon Wright (son of founder George Wright) built the four-story River Inn Hotel across Mill Street from the Courthouse. Days after its opening in February 1929, the hotel was reported to be full to capacity.⁷

A downtown landmark since its construction in 1904, the United States Post Office and Courthouse served as postal headquarters, housed one and then, after 1933, two federal courtrooms and various federal agencies for more than a century. In October 2000, after moving its mail handling operations to a new facility on the west side of town, the U.S. Postal Service transferred ownership of the federal building to GSA, but continued to maintain a presence in the building, offering postage, post boxes and business services there until March 18, 2011. Today, the primary tenants are the judiciary, the U.S. Marshals Service and U.S. Attorneys. The courthouse has a full time bankruptcy court judge and a visiting district court judge.

Architectural Significance

The Fergus Falls U.S. Post Office and Courthouse is a fine example of a federal building in Minnesota that represents the Second Renaissance Revival style in an orderly Beaux Arts mode. Growing out of the revival styles of the late nineteenth century, classically inspired architecture was the preferred style for federal buildings and public buildings generally from the

⁵ *Fergus Falls Daily Journal*, May 14, 1904.

⁶ Noreen Roberts, "River Inn National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form," *National Register of Historic Places*, Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Interior, 1988.

⁷ *Ibid.*

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1900s through the early 1930s. Benefiting from a federal building boom, Renaissance Revival and Neo-Classical became the standard for post offices, courthouses, and federal office buildings.

Despite its laissez-faire image, the late nineteenth century was a time of growth for the federal government, as institutions were established or expanded to administer the free-wheeling, growing national economy. The number of federal civilian employees grew steadily from approximately 36,700 in 1861 to roughly 157,400 in 1891. While many federal employees were concentrated in Washington, D.C., they represented only 12 percent of the total workforce. During the second half of the nineteenth century, the U.S. Treasury Department was responsible for federal buildings, constructed mints, post offices, and courthouses in cities and towns around the country. The number of buildings constructed and operated by the Office of Supervising Architect increased 17-fold during this period.⁸

The architecture of federal buildings during the late nineteenth century, mirroring commercial architecture, represented a break from the formal classicism that dominated the early nineteenth century. Exuberant designs utilizing motifs from a variety of historic periods resulted in the "revival" styles – Romanesque, Italian Renaissance, English Renaissance (particularly Georgian), and French Second Empire. Federal buildings were the public façade of the federal government. Because the buildings embodied the federal presence at the local level, Supervising Architects consistently sought to convey dignity and refinement in their designs through the proportions, siting, materials, and overall solidity of the buildings.

The World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1893 both transformed public architecture and strengthened the popular perception that public buildings should convey institutional values. The unifying style of the major buildings was the Beaux Arts, a style that returned to classical motifs and emphasized symmetrical plans, monumentality, and highly ornamented façades. By the early twentieth century, Beaux Arts, Neoclassical and, to a lesser extent, revival styles applied to the monumental and symmetrical Beaux Arts form, dominated new public buildings' design.

The ascendancy of Beaux Arts classicism came at a time when the number of federal buildings was growing rapidly. During the period 1895 through World War I, Progressive Era reformers advocated government intervention to address the problems that emerged as American society transformed from primarily rural and agrarian to urban and industrial. As the role of the federal government increased, so too did the number of buildings under construction. In 1899, the Supervising Architect's Office was responsible for 399 buildings, and by 1912, the number had grown to 1,126.⁹

James Knox Taylor, who served as Supervising Architect from 1897 to 1912 and oversaw many buildings' designs and construction, was an advocate for Beaux Arts designs. Through classical architecture, Taylor sought to provide the symbolic appearance of federal authority at the local level, as well as architectural sophistication in local communities. In 1901, Taylor declared that classical style architecture would be the standard for federal buildings. Indeed, most post offices built in Minnesota during Taylor's tenure reflected the Beaux Arts Classical or Renaissance Revival style.¹⁰ While large projects were often designed by private architects, the Office of Supervising Architect produced most of the smaller buildings' designs. Taylor steadfastly insisted that federal buildings should be individually designed because government buildings, "are not similar; there is no similarity between them and other constructions. Each is individual to itself."¹¹

⁸ Lois Craig, ed., and the staff of the Federal Architecture Project, *The Federal Presence: Architecture, Politics, and Symbols in the United States Government Building* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1979).

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ David Gebhard and Tom Martinson, *A Guide to the Architecture of Minnesota* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1979).

¹¹ Norene Roberts and Joe Roberts, "United States Post Offices in North Dakota, 1900-1940, National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Nomination Form," *National Register of Historic Places* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Interior, 1989).

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The 1933 addition was designed and constructed during the transitional period in the history of the Supervising Architect's office, encompassing the final years of Judge James Wetmore's term as the Acting Supervising Architect of the U.S. Treasury Department (1915-1934). As at the turn of the twentieth century when the Fergus Falls United States Post Office and Courthouse was first constructed, federal architecture of the early 1930s for the most part continued to reflect the belief that classical revival styles were the most suitable for conveying the underlying role of the government. However, as the 1930s progressed, the modern, Art Deco style could be seen in the interior detailing of some federal buildings while the classicism of the exterior was increasingly simplified and devoid of details, partially a practical response to the economic depression, but also reflecting a growing acceptance of modernist ideals. By the late 1930s and 1940s, the spare "PWA Moderne" or Stripped Classicism had become the preferred style for public buildings, including those of the federal government. The 1933 addition to the Fergus Falls U.S. Post Office and Courthouse reflects nothing of the changes in architecture or the nation's economic situation that occurred in the quarter century between the original construction and addition. The addition is unusual in its strict adherence to the tenets and details of the original 1904 design scheme and in the extension to the side rather than to the rear. The decision to expand laterally may have been governed by the configuration of the available building site, which, in turn, may have driven the decision to construct a mirror addition.

The building contractor was Lauritzen Brothers Construction, led by John Lauritzen. The Fergus Falls contractor worked throughout Minnesota, Iowa, and the Dakotas. Lauritzen was born in Denmark in 1863, and he immigrated to the United States in 1883. Trained as a bricklayer, Lauritzen moved to Fergus Falls in 1888. Lauritzen's first contract was for construction at the state hospital in Fergus Falls, and his firm completed numerous public buildings, including: the Fergus Falls U. S Post Office and Courthouse, an asylum in Wilmar, and the state school for girls in Sauk Center, all in Minnesota. Post offices in Waterloo, Iowa, and Bismarck and Minot, North Dakota were also built by his firm. In addition, his firm built a dam for the Otter Tail Power Company and the Hoot Lake power works in Otter Tail County, and, in Fergus Falls, he completed the Kaddatz Hotel, the Lake Region Hospital, two colleges, and many commercial buildings and churches. One son, Anders, followed his father into the construction business and took over management of Lauritzen Construction in 1929, just months prior to the death of John Lauritzen. Anders Lauritzen successfully ran the company for another 20 years, and constructed some notable buildings, including the 1932-1933 addition to the Fergus Falls U.S. Post Office and Courthouse and the River Inn Hotel across the street.¹²

The Fergus Falls U.S. Post Office and Courthouse reflects the prevailing architectural style for public buildings in the context of a smaller federal building. The building was well designed and executed in high quality materials. The visual effect on downtown Fergus Falls, which primarily consisted of modest two-story commercial buildings, was immediate and added credibility to its claim as a regional center.

¹² Otter Tail County Historical Society, Biographical file for John Lauritzen and Anders Lauritzen.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

United States Post Office and Courthouse
Otter Tail County, Minnesota

Section 9 Page 10

Bibliographic References

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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

*United States Post Office and Courthouse
Otter Tail County, Minnesota*

Section 9 Page 11

United States Department of the Treasury, Office of the Supervising Architect. "U.S. Post Office & Courthouse, Fergus Falls, Minn." Architectural Plans and Specifications on file at the United States Post Office and Courthouse, Fergus Falls, Minnesota.

United States Postal Service. *History of Post Office Construction, 1900-1940*. Washington, D.C.: United States Postal Service, 1982

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Less than one acre

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

Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	14	725560	3		
2			4		

 See continuation sheet.

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

 See Continuation Sheet.

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

 See Continuation Sheet.

11. Form Prepared By

Name/Title	<u>Andrew J. Schmidt</u>	Date	<u>May 2005, rev. July 15, 2009, GSA rev. May 2012</u>
Organization	<u>ICF Jones & Stokes Associates</u>	Telephone	<u>213 627-5376</u>
Street & Number	<u>811 West 7th Street, Suite 800</u>	State	<u>CA</u> Zip Code <u>90017</u>
City or Town	<u>Los Angeles</u>		

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>Great Lakes Region</u>		
Organization	<u>U.S. General Services Administration</u>	Telephone	<u>(312) 886-5573</u>
Street & Number	<u>230 S. Dearborn Street, Room 3600</u>		
City or Town	<u>Chicago</u>	State	<u>IL</u> Zip Code <u>60604-1505</u>

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.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

*United States Post Office and Courthouse
Otter Tail County, Minnesota*

Section 10 Page 12

Geographical Data

Verbal Boundary Description:

The boundary for the United States Post Office and Courthouse is defined by Lots 18 and 19, Block 20, Original Village (now City) Plat of Fergus Falls.

Boundary Justification:

The boundary reflects the original property lines and subsequent acquisitions for the United States Post Office and Courthouse.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet—Additional Documentation

*United States Post Office and Courthouse
Otter Tail County, Minnesota*

Section Photos Page 13

Additional documentation: Photographs

Name: United States Post Office and Courthouse

Location: 118 South Mill Street
Fergus Falls, MN 96537

Photographer: Andrew Schmidt; ICF Jones & Stokes

Date of Photographs: March 1, 2005

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

1. Exterior, Historic Photo, south and east elevations, view northwest.
2. Exterior, Courthouse and streetscape, view northwest.
3. Exterior, Street perspective, west elevation, view east.
4. Exterior, West elevation, view east.
5. Exterior, South and west elevation, view northeast.
6. Exterior, South elevation, view north.
7. Exterior, South and east elevation, view northwest.
8. Exterior, North and east elevation, view southwest.
9. Exterior, north and east elevation, view southwest.
10. Exterior, North elevation, view south.
11. Exterior, Detail of arched windows on south elevation.
12. Interior, Stairs to second floor off of main lobby.
13. Interior, Main lobby.
14. Interior, Main lobby.
15. Interior, Main lobby.
16. Interior, Former post office workspace.
17. Interior, Former post office workspace.
18. Interior, Court room.
19. Interior, Court room.
20. Interior, Second floor hall.

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 Courthouse
NAME:

MULTIPLE
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: MINNESOTA, Otter Tail

DATE RECEIVED: 9/07/12 DATE OF PENDING LIST:
DATE OF 16TH DAY: DATE OF 45TH DAY: 10/24/12
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 12000879

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: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT RETURN REJECT 10.24.12 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

Entered in
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.



United States

~~██████████~~ Post office & Courthouse
Pergas Falls
Otter Tail, Minnesota

Andrew Schmidt, ICF Jones & Stokes

March 1, 2005

GSA Headquarters, office of chief Architect

Exterior, ~~courthouse and streetscape~~

Historic Photo, south & east elevation, view northwest
MN - Otter Tail county - courthouse1.tif

United States

~~██████████~~ Post office & Courthouse
Pergas Falls
Otter Tail, Minnesota

Andrew Schmidt, ICF Jones & Stokes

March 1, 2005

GSA Headquarters, office of chief Architect

Exterior Courthouse and streetscape, view northwest

MN - Otter ~~county~~ tail county - courthouse 2.tif



United States

~~██████████~~ post office & Courthouse

Fergus Falls

Otter Tail, ~~count~~ Minnesota

Andrew Schmidt, ICF Jones & Stokes

March 1, 2005

GSA Headquarters, office of chief Architect

Exterior, street perspective, west elevation, view east

MN_ Otter Tail county_ courthouse 3.tif

United States

~~██████████~~ post office & Courthouse

Fergus Falls

Otter Tail, Minnesota

Andrew Schmidt, ICF Jones & Stokes

March 1, 2005

GSA Headquarters, office of chief Architect

Exterior, west elevation, view east

MN_ Otter Tail county_ courthouse 4.tif



United States

[REDACTED] Post office & Courthouse

Fergus Falls

Otter Tail, Minnesota

Andrew Schmidt, ICF Jones & Stokes

March 1, 2005

GSA Headquarters, office of chief Architect

Exterior, south and west elevation, view northeast

MN_ottertailcounty_courthouse 5.tif

United States

[REDACTED] Post office & courthouse

Fergus Falls

Otter Tail, Minnesota

Andrew Schmidt, ICF Jones & Stokes

March 1, 2005

GSA Headquarters, office of chief Architect

Exterior, south elevation, view north

MN_ottertailcounty_courthouse 6.tif



United States

[REDACTED] post office & courthouse

Fergus Falls

Otter Tail, Minnesota

Andrew Schmidt, ICF Jones & Stokes

March 1, 2005

GSA Headquarters, office of chief Architect

Exterior, south and east elevation, view northeast

MN_ottertailcounty_courthouse 7.tif

United States

[REDACTED] post office & courthouse

Fergus Falls

Otter Tail, Minnesota

Andrew Schmidt, ICF Jones & Stokes

March 1, 2005

GSA Headquarters, office of chief Architect

Exterior, north and east elevation, view southwest

MN_ottertailcounty_courthouse 8.tif



United States

[REDACTED] post office & courthouse

Fergus Falls
Otter Tail, Minnesota

Andrew Schmidt, ICF Jones & Stokes

March 1, 2005

GSA Headquarters, office of chief Architect

Exterior, north and east elevation, view southwest

MN-otter tail county - courthouse 9.tif

United States

[REDACTED] post office & courthouse

Fergus Falls
Otter Tail, Minnesota

Andrew Schmidt, ICF Jones & Stokes

March 1, 2005

GSA Headquarters, office of chief Architect

MN-otter tail county - courthouse 10.tif

Exterior, North elevation, view south



United States

[REDACTED] Post Office & Courthouse

Fergus Falls

Otter Tail, Minnesota

Andrew Schmidt, ICF Jones & Stokes

March 1, 2005

GSA Headquarters, Office of Chief Architect

Exterior, Detail of arched windows on south elevation

MN_ottertailcounty_courthouse11.tif

United States

[REDACTED] Post office & courthouse

Fergus Falls

Otter Tail, Minnesota

Andrew Schmidt, ICF Jones & Stokes

March 1, 2005

GSA Headquarters, Office of Chief Architect

Interior, Stairs to second floor off main lobby

MN_ottertailcounty_courthouse12.tif



United States Post office & courthouse

Fergus Falls

Otter Tail, Minnesota

Andrew Schmidt, ICF Jones & Stokes

March 1, 2005

GSA Headquarters, office of chief Architect

Interior, Main lobby

MIN-Otter Tail County - courthouse 13.tif

United States Post office & courthouse

Fergus Falls

Otter Tail, Minnesota

Andrew Schmidt, ICF Jones & Stokes

March 1, 2005

GSA Headquarters, office of chief Architect

Interior, Main lobby

MIN-Otter Tail County - courthouse 14.tif



United States post office & courthouse
Fergus Falls
Otter Tail, Minnesota

Andrew Schmidt, ICF Jones & Stokes

March 1, 2005

ESA Headquarters, office of chief Architect
Interior, main lobby

MN - Otter Tail county - courthouse 15.tif

United States Post Office & courthouse
Fergus Falls
Otter Tail, Minnesota

Andrew Schmidt, ICF Jones & Stokes

March 1, 2005

ESA Headquarters, office of chief Architect
Interior, former post office workspace

MN - Otter Tail county - courthouse 16.tif



United States Post office & Courthouse
Fergus Falls
Otter Tail, Minnesota

Andrew Schmidt, ICF Jones & Stokes

March 1, 2005

BSA Headquarters, office of chief Architect
Interior, former post office workspace
MN_ottertailcounty_courthouse 17.tif

United States Post Office & Courthouse
Fergus Falls
Otter Tail, Minnesota

Andrew Schmidt, ICF Jones & Stokes

March 1, 2005

BSA Headquarters, office of chief Architect
Interior, courtroom
MN_ottertailcounty_courthouse 18.tif



United States Post Office & Courthouse
Fergus Falls
Otter Tail, Minnesota

Andrew Schmidt, ICF Jones & Stokes

GSA Headquarters, office of chief Architect
Interior, courtroom

MN-ottertailcounty - courthouse 19.tif

United States Post Office & Courthouse
Fergus Falls

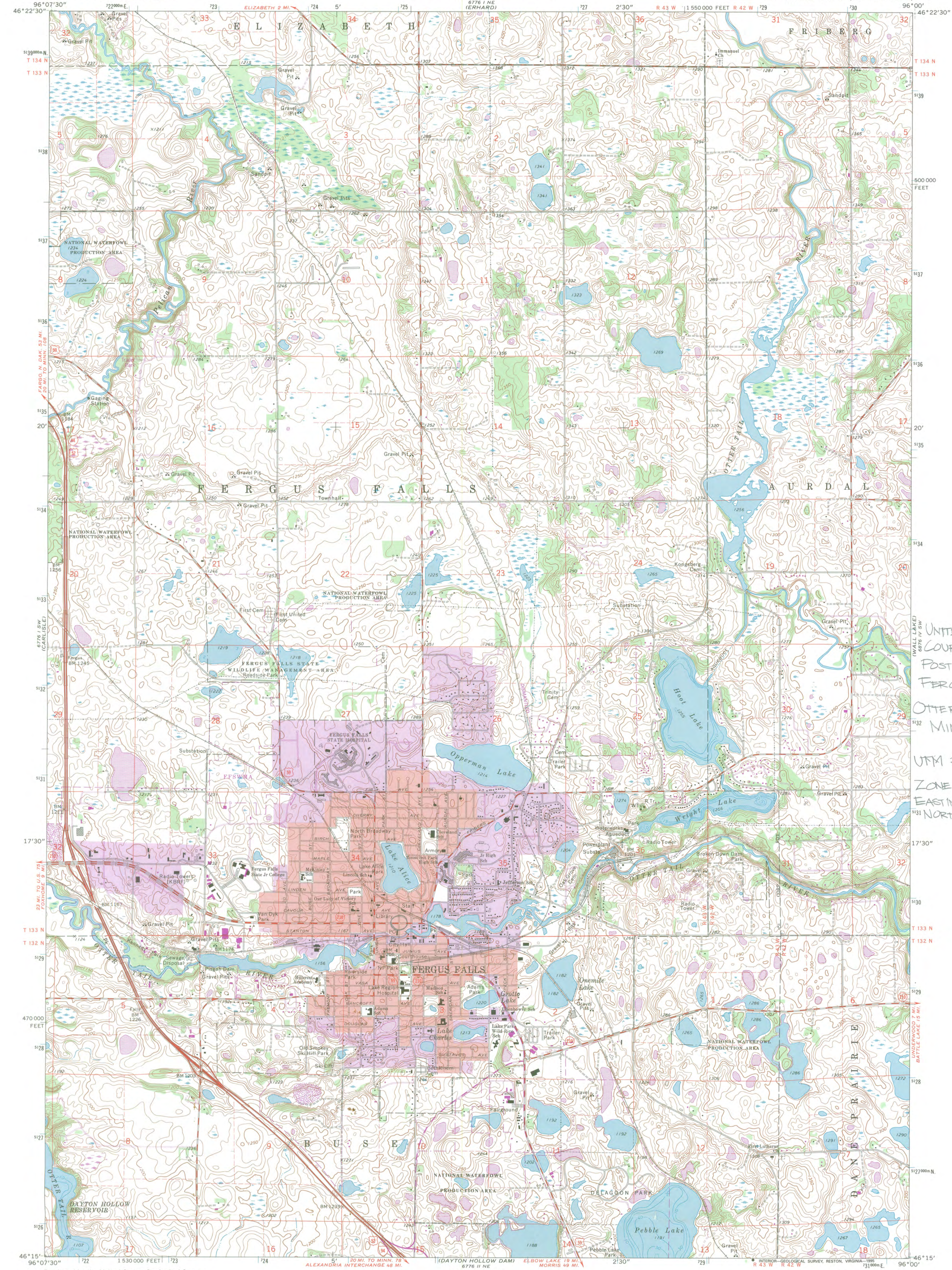
Otter tail, Minnesota

Andrew Schmidt, ICF Jones & Stokes

GSA Headquarters, office of chief Architect

Interior, Second Floor hall

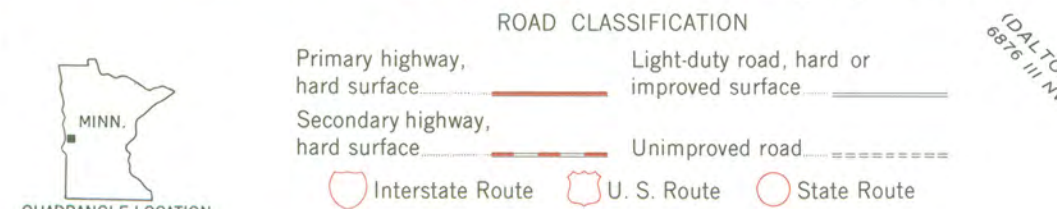
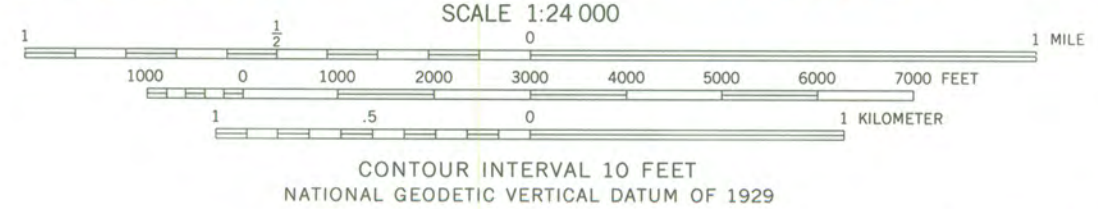
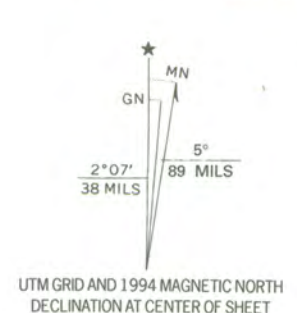
MN-ottertailcounty - courthouse 20.tif



UNITED STATES
COURTHOUSE AND
POST OFFICE -
FERGUS FALLS :
OTTER TAIL COUNTY -
MINNESOTA

UTM REFERENCES =
ZONE : 14
EASTING : 725560
NORTHING : 5129590

Produced by the United States Geological Survey
Control by USGS, NOS/NOAA and Minnesota Highway Department
Topography by photogrammetric methods from aerial photographs
taken 1972. Field checked 1973
Hydrography compiled from information furnished by
Minnesota Department of Natural Resources
North American Datum of 1927 (NAD 27). Projection and
10 000-foot ticks: Minnesota coordinate system, central zone
(Lambert conformal conic)
Blue 1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator ticks, zone 14
North American Datum of 1983 (NAD 83) is shown by dashed
corner ticks. The values of the shift between NAD 27 and NAD 83
for 7.5-minute intersections are obtainable from National Geodetic
Survey NADCON software
There may be private inholdings within the boundaries of the
National or State reservations shown on this map
Red tint indicates areas in which only landmark buildings are shown
Fine red dashed lines indicate selected fence and field lines where
generally visible on aerial photographs. This information is unchecked



Revisions shown in purple compiled in cooperation with
State of Minnesota agencies from aerial photographs
taken 1991-92 and other sources. This information not
field checked. Map edited 1994
Information shown in purple may not meet USGS content
standards and may conflict with previously mapped contours
Purple tint indicates extension of urban areas

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
FOR SALE BY U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY
DENVER, COLORADO 80225, OR RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

FERGUS FALLS, MINN.
46096C11F024
1973
REVISED 1994
DMA 6776 1 SE-SERIES V872

**Fergus Falls Heritage
Preservation Commission**
1110 W. Lincoln Ave.
Fergus Falls, MN 56537 (218) 736-6038



August 1, 2012

Beth Savage
Federal Preservation Officer
U.S. General Services Administration
1800 F Street, NW
Washington, DC 20405-0002

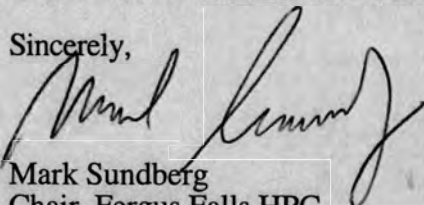
Dear Ms. Savage:

The Fergus Falls Heritage Preservation Commission is pleased to submit this letter of support for the nomination of the Fergus Falls United States Post Office and Courthouse, to the National Register of Historic Places.

The brick, stone and concrete building has been a cornerstone in downtown Fergus Falls since its construction in 1903-04. In addition, its integrity remained intact when in 1932-33, the building was doubled in size with an addition to the south. The architectural style of the original design was skillfully duplicated under the direction of GSA architect J.A. Whitmore.

If the Fergus Falls Heritage Preservation Commission can be of any assistance in the National Register process, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,


Mark Sundberg
Chair, Fergus Falls HPC



112 West Washington Ave.
Fergus Falls, MN 56537
Phone: 218-332-5400
Fax: 218-332-5449
Website: www.ci.fergus-falls.mn.us

August 6, 2012

Beth Hannold
U.S. General Services Administration
1800 F Street, NW
Washington, DC 20405-0002

Dear Ms. Hannold:

Thank you for this opportunity to review and comment on the National Register of Historic Places registration package for the United State Post Office and Courthouse located at 118 South Mill Street, Fergus Falls, Minnesota. The City Council of the City of Fergus Falls supports the nomination of this signature property to the National Register of Historic Places. In combination with the nearby River Inn Hotel and City Hall, both on the National Register, the United States Post Office and Courthouse helps to define a part of our community that is uniquely Fergus Falls.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Hal Leland". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Hal Leland
Mayor of the City of Fergus Falls



GSA Public Buildings Service

September 5, 2012

Ms. Carol Shull
Interim Keeper, National Register of Historic Places
National Park Service 2280
1201 Eye Street, NW
Washington, DC 20005

Dear Ms. Shull:

The U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) is pleased to nominate the U.S. Post Office and Courthouse 118 South Mill Street, Fergus Falls, MN, for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places. In accordance with 36 CFR Part 60.9 (c), the appropriate local elected officials were provided an opportunity to comment. Letters of support (copies enclosed) were received from the City of Fergus Falls and Fergus Falls Heritage Preservation Commission prior to the conclusion of the 45-day comment period.

The following documents are enclosed:

- Signed original National Register of Historic Places Registration form;
- U.S.G.S. Map; and
- Original labeled black and white photographs along with a disk of tiff images.

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 Beth Hannold at (202) 501-2863.

Sincerely,

Beth L. Savage
Federal Preservation Officer
Director, Center for Historic Buildings

Enclosures

U.S. General Services Administration
1800 F Street, NW
Washington, DC 20405-0002
www.gsa.gov