Form No. 10-306 (Rev. 10-74)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

TIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

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FOR FEDERAL PROPERTIES

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC

United States Post Office, Portland, Oregon

AND/OR COMMON

Federal Building, 511 N.W. Broadway

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

511 N.W. Broadway	NOT FOR PUBLICATION				
CITY, TOWN		CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT			
Portland	VICINITY OF				
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE		
Oregon	41	Multnomah	051		

3 CLASSIFICATION

	CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESI	ENTUSE
	DISTRICT	XXPUBLIC	XX_OCCUPIED		MUSEUM
	XXBUILDING(S)	PRIVATE	UNOCCUPIED	COMMERCIAL	PARK
	STRUCTURE	вотн	WORK IN PROGRESS	EDUCATIONAL	PRIVATE RESIDENCE
	SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	ENTERTAINMENT	RELIGIOUS
	OBJECT	IN PROCESS	XX YES: RESTRICTED	XXGOVERNMENT	SCIENTIFIC
		BEING CONSIDERED	YES: UNRESTRICTED	INDUSTRIAL	TRANSPORTATION
			NO	MILITARY	OTHER:
_					

4 AGENCY General Services Administration

REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS: (If applicable)

Regional Headquarters Building

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

GSA Center, 10PG

Auburn,	VICINITY OF	Washington
5 LOCATION OF LEGAL	DESCRIPTION	
COURTHOUSE		

REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Multnomah County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Portland,

state Oregon

STATE

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

	Survey of Federal Properti	les in Oregon
DATE		VV
	1968	FEDERAL XXSTATECOUNTYLOCAL
DEPOSITORY FOR		
SURVEY RECORDS	Department of Transportati	on, State Historic Preservation Office
CITY, TOWN		STATE
	525 Trade Street, S.E., Sa	alem Oregon 97310

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE		
EXCELLENTDETERIORATED X_GOODRUINS FAIRUNEXPOSED	UNALTERED	X_ORIGINAL SITE MOVED DATE		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Federal Building at 511 Broadway occupies an entire block in downtown Portland. It is bordered by N.W. Broadway on the east, 8th Avenue on the west, N.W. Glisan Street on the south, and Hoyt Street on the north.

The building is basically rectangular. The two lower storeys extend 195' along Broadway and 8th Avenue and 192' along Glisan Street and Hoyt Street. Four upper storeys share the 192' south facade, but extend only 86' along the east and west facades. These upper storeys form a "U" around a light court opening toward the north. The architect's 1916 plan to extend the upper storeys the full length of the lower storeys was not realized. The building has a partial basement and an attic. The roof is flat except for saw-tooth skylights over part of the lower storeys. Structural framing is of concrete and masonry.

The Building has a combination of Neo-Classical Revival and Second Renaissance Revival characteristics. In the upper storeys it seems to incorporate also some of the influence of the Chicago Commercial style in the size, quantity and organization of fenestration.

The two lower storeys rest on a granite base and are of smooth, rusticated stone masonry. The third storey is of smooth masonry with banded rustication. The three upper storeys are of smooth masonry with flush joints.

The east and west facades are mirror images. Each has twelve bays in the first two storeys. Eleven of these are window bays separated by smooth masonry pilasters with Doric capitals. The architect has employed an ingenious solution to the perennial problem of "turning the corner" of the building. What appears to be an extra half-pilaster at each end of the building is actually a whole pilaster that "wraps" around the corner. The fifth bay from the south does have an extra half-pilaster marking the line of the taller part of the building above and suggesting a non-existent corner that is never turned. Perhaps the architect was not comfortable with the conformation of the building and hoped to provide the visual impression of two separate buildings, a tall one beside a lower one, at street level.

The eleven window bays of the first two storeys are identical. Each has a tall, 7' X 14' window with a semi-circular arch in the first storey. Directly above, in the second storey, is a rectangular, 5' X 7' window. Both have steel sash with several lights hinged at the sides to swing in and a central fixed light. The steel sash is faced in ornamental cast iron in a pattern incorporating a floral motif and human figures. The lower windows have pointed, radiating voussoirs with scrolled keystones. The upper windows have shaped stone lintels. Both types have shaped stone trim. A wide stone band and narrower stone string course run between the two windows in each bay.



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From the string course springs the semicircular arch of the entrance in the third bay from the south. The opening is framed by two monolithic stone engaged columns with ionic capitals and extends almost the full two storeys. The glazing and doorway are recessed 16'. The original bronze doors were replaced by aluminum around 1962. A decorated cast iron panel is above the doorway and ornamental cast iron covers the mullions of the glazed arch. The barrel vault over the landing is of plaster coffers painted to match the light color of the surrounding stone. Each coffer frames a large rosette. A cast bronze lamp embellished with 2'6" human figures is suspended from the center of the vault. Stone bas-relief panels of two eagles flanking a garland of fruit and flowers are mounted just above head height at either side of the landing.

Seven granite steps lead up from the sidewalk. At either side of the steps extend broad masonry platforms. These platforms on the east and west sides are used as benches by the public, much as is the same element of the Farnese palace in Rome. Several amall basement windows formerly visible in the base were sealed in 1963 to cure a leakage problem.

An entablature with a denticulated and moulded stone cornice caps the first two storeys, projecting slightly over the entrance to form a small portico. On each of the two corners of this portico stands a carved stone eagle. A cast iron flagpole bracket is between the eagles.

The third through the sixth storeys of the building continue the lines of the lower bays on the east, west and south facades. The two end bays have rectangular double-hung windows with wood sash and frame. Those of the third storey are $3\frac{1}{2}$ ' X $5\frac{1}{2}$ ' and continue in three sets of two across the other three bays of that storey. A band course runs between the third and fourth storeys. Porcelain enameled steel letters 10" tall reading "Federal Building" are mounted on a panel on the band course. These are a relatively recent addition.

On the fourth through sixth storeys the windows in the end bays are vertical rectangles 3' X 6¹/₂' with incised stone trim. The three central bays are divided by two colossal pilasters with Corinthian capitals. Very narrow pilasters with Doric capitals separate the end bays from the central bays. A carved stone fret runs across the lintel of each of the central bays. The fourth storey windows in the three central bays are 10' wide and 7' tall. Spandrel panels of ornamented cast iron separate these from the fifth storey windows which are similar, but 9' tall with wrought iron protective grilles at the bottom. The sixth storey windows are identical to those of the fifth storey.

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Above the pilaster capitals is an entablature with a moulded stone architrave, a smooth frieze and a denticulated, moulded stone cornice with animalheaded modillions. A smooth parapet with moulded stone coping runs above the cornice.

The south facade is identical in arrangement to the east and west facades except that it has no entrance, columns or portico.

The north facade has two storeys vertically divided into thirds. The two end thirds are of three bays identical to the two lower storeys of the other three facades. The central third has four rectangular window bays alternating with five masonry panels on the second storey. Below is a recessed mailing platform with eight steel and wood doors.

The rear facade of the U-shaped third through sixth storeys is similar to the front and side facades.

A "transportation shed" extended from the building's 8th Avenue facade in 1952 was removed in 1964.

The original interior of the 511 Broadway building remained basically unchanged until 1966 when the Postal Service moved to a new location across Hoyt Street. That year the firm of Skidmore, Owings and Merrill was hired for conversion of space and air conditioning of the building. David Arthur Pugh, a Portland architect, was in charge of the project. Carl Schiewe was the contractor. The job was completed in 1968. An effort was made to retain much of the original public Post Office lobby, and the effort was partially successful.

The lobby extends about 150' between the east and west entrances. It is about 20' wide with an oval foyer with a long axis of 27' 6" running north and south at each end. The foyers provide waiting space for the elevators and access to the two north-south corridors. In the original plan the parcel post and registry windows blocked what are now the corridor entrances. In each foyer is a wood and glass entrance vestibule. The wood and glass portions of the postal screen with its service windows and lock boxes was removed in the modernization and conversion. It was replaced by plastered and painted gypboard partitions which noticeably alter the spatial impression of the lobby, making it feel tightly enclosed. Some of the woodwork was retained, however, and used as doors into the offices and storage rooms that have replaced the postal service's offices and workroom. Travertine wall sections, carved travertine and plaster cornices imitating travertine were retained. Also carefully preserved was the dramatic coffered ceiling of gold and blue painted plaster with ventilation ducts hidden behind its rosettes. A row of hanging white glass light globes is suspended from each side of the lobby ceiling.

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The original plan for the floor had an elaborate pattern of circles within octagons intersecting along one side of each to form squares. Notes on the SOM plan indicate that the existing floor was repaired after the removal of built-in postal convenience desks from the center of the lobby. The original plan was probably never executed. The present floor has a pattern of rows of black, tan and white marble parallelograms running diagonally across the lobby. On the plans these are specified as Belgian Black, Grey Tennessee and Alabama White marble.

Rooms 121 and 122 on either side of the east entrance have floor to ceiling oak paneling and a carved wood cornice. The oak floor has been carpeted. These were originally the offices of the postmaster and the superintendent of the mails. The space south of the lobby was divided originally into separate rooms, but the space north of the lobby was an open postal service work room. The entire space is now divided into offices with the exception of a large warehouse room.

The main stairs up from the lobby have marble treads, risers and landings, and wrought iron railings with cast iron ornament and oak hand rails. Along the stairwell the Alaska marble wainscot is 9' tall with plaster walls above and a moulded plaster cornice. There is marble trim around windows and doors and wood caps over them. Above the stairway is a furred arch.

The second floor has been considerably altered. Six offices along the Glisan Street side were opened to provide one large space. The upper part of the first storey work room which once occupied nearly 6,000 square feet in the core of the building became second storey photographic laboratories. The postal service lookout (an enclosed elevated catwalk with louvred peepholes from which workers could be observed without their knowledge) was removed. The glass in a 64' X 18' skylight running east-west over the south end of the old first storey workroom service counters was removed and replaced with a concrete slab, rigid insulation and built-up roofing. Seven smaller skylights over the second floor were also roofed over. In the new office spaces white paint, white vinyl asbestos tile, white suspended acoustical ceiling tile and fluorescent lighting panels were employed in the modernization.

Fewer changes have been made on the third through the sixth storeys. The corridors have retained their wood and wood and glass doors with brass fixtures. Light colored Alaska marble rises to door height. The original terrazzo floors in the corridors have been covered by carpet and acoustical tile installed in the ceiling.

The basement beneath the six storey portion of the building was originally used only for storage and mechanical rooms. Rooms along its south side have been converted into training rooms and workspace in addition to its earlier uses.

8 SIGNIFICANCE



AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW

SPECIFIC DATES	Designed	1915		Architect:	Lewis P. H	obart
	Completed	1918	BUILDER/ARCHITECT Supervising	Architect:	James A. W	etmore

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

In 1911 Portland had outgrown its old Post Office in what is now called the "Pioneer Post Office." Congress had approved funds for a new building, but delays in site selection necessitated the remodeling of the old facilities. By January of 1911, Block "S" of Couch's Addition had been selected, but acquisition proved to be difficult. In February of 1911 the government began condemnation proceedings. On April 21 a pact among the owners, designed to inflate the price of the land, was revealed and a minor scandal ensued. Finally, on June 24, 1911, the <u>Portland Oregonian</u> was able to announce that the government had arranged for the purchase of Block "S." On July 14, 1911, the United States Government paid \$140,000 to the Espy Estate Company after the condemnation of lots 2, 3, 6, and 7 in the western half of Block "S." At the same time, the eastern half of the block was purchased by the government for \$200,000.

By January 7, 1914, the <u>Oregonian</u> reported that Oregon's Senator Lane was was "surprised at the delay in preparing plans" for the new Post Office. The Senator discovered Treasury Department plans to demolish the existing Post Office and Courthouse and move the Federal courts as well as the Post Office and Federal offices to the proposed new building. Senator Lane protested strongly, insisting upon holding the new building to its original \$1,000,000 budget and retaining the old building as the Federal Courthouse.

An <u>Oregonian</u> headline on January 9, 1914 read "'Portland's New Post Office and Federal Building will be Completed Within a Year,' Declares Senator Lane." According to the newspaper, the Supervising Architect insisted upon his plan to move the courts and dispose of the existing building.

"Thereupon Senator Lane said he would introduce a resolution in the Senate Monday calling on the Secretary of the Treasury for information why the Supervising Architect refused to carry out an Act of Congress. This threat brought the architect to terms, and he asked Senator Lane to take no such radical step. . ."

Senator Lane called on the Acting Secretary of the Treasury and asked about the building delay.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

See continuation sheet number 8.

10 GEOGRAPH	HICAL DATA		<u></u>		<u> </u>
	NATED PROPERTY 70,000	<u>square f</u>	eet		
	1 <th>3,4,0)</th> <th>B ZONE D</th> <th></th> <th></th>	3,4,0)	B ZONE D		
	" Couch's Addition containing Lots 1,				mah County,
LIST ALL S	TATES AND COUNTIES FOR	PROPERTIE	S OVERLAPPIN	IG STATE OR COUN	TY BOUNDARIES
state None	C	DDE	COUNTY		CODE
STATE	C	DDE	COUNTY		CODE
ORGANIZATION STREET & NUMBER	Kristine Bak, Ope Public Buildings General Services Regional Headquar GSA Center, 10PG	Service		DATE	NNE 833-6500, Ext. 317
CITY OR TOWN	GSA Center, 10PG Auburn	-		(206) STATE Washi	
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"The Secretary sent for the Supervising Architect and the subject was thoroughly discussed."

By January 18 Senator Lane was clashing with the Secretary of the Treasury McAdoo over the building materials. Stone was proposed but the Senator was adament that Oregon brick should be used. He also asked for the elimination of any costly ornamentation.

On January 22, 1914, the word from the <u>Oregonian</u> was that the Supervising Architect had increased the estimated building cost to \$1,414,000. One hundred fifty thousand dollars of it was to be for "architectural fees, special mechanical equipment, conveyors, chutes, airwashers, etc." At a total cost of "34¢ per cubic foot" Portland could expect "the plainest kind of both exterior and interior" not ranking "with even the usual type of office buildings which frequently cost 40¢ per cubic foot and over."

The October 12, 1914 <u>Oregonian</u> declared February 1, 1915 as the date for the beginning of construction. In April of 1915 construction was promised within the next two months, with completion scheduled within 14 months. San Francisco architect, Lewis P. Hobart, was announced as the winner of the competition for the design of the building.

"Portland's Post Office, according to Mr. Hobart, will be an entirely new departure in such buildings in the United States. It will be the first strictly office building for Post Office purposes to be erected, it being the plan of the government to abandon the monumental type of structure now so generally in use.

The Chicago Post Office is in part of the new type, being several storeys in height, but it remains for Portland, it is said, to inaugurate the new architecture as applied to Post Offices. The Chicago office cannot be classed properly as an office building whereas the Portland building will be strictly of this type. . ."

A July 14, 1915 headline in the <u>Oregonian</u> read, "Senator Lane's Suggestion for Post Office Prompts Erection of Similar Structure in East."

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"Even before work is started on the new Post Office building at Portland, a new building of a type never before erected by the government, the Treasury Department is contemplating the erection of similar modern office buildings in some of the larger cities of the east, in lieu of the old Greek temple type that has been followed by government architects for years. Yet, when Senator Lane, of Oregon, first suggested that the government erect a modern, light and airy office building to accommodate a Post Office and other Federal officials in Portland, the then supervising architect let out a protest. . . The old type of Federal Building was designed to be a monument as well as a government office building. The new type is designed primarily for use. . . The Treasury Department also hereafter will construct Post Offices and other Federal Buildings in accordance with the needs and importance of places where they are situated, instead of spending all that Congress appropriates. In some instances expensive Post Offices have been built in towns where postal receipts were not sufficient to maintain them. . ."

By September 8, 1915 the people of Portland were beginning to despair of the hope that they would ever get their new Federal Building. A glib reporter wrote an <u>Oregonian</u> article set in the year 1927 in which an aged and weary reporter tracks down an equally aged and weary Postmaster. The Postmaster, ever faithful to the Treasury Department, repeats, "The plans will be ready in thirty days. . .How often have I told you that!"

In response, the architect, Lewis P. Hobart, wrote an encouraging letter that was published on September 14 under the headline, "Plans are Assured ---Time for Post Office Drawings Uncertain, However -- Everyone is Confidant."

"The drawings are in good condition. We have the steel plans, with the exception of the foundation, ready to send to the government, and have our architectural plans coming along splendidly. Nearly everything has been worked out at a large scale and we are compiling these on the proper sized sheets, also to submit to Washington.

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We are also making the heating and ventilating engineers lives as miserable as possible and they are coming through very well. Must say that I think we are going to have a perfectly corking building for you."

(Mr. Hobart, who died in 1954 at the age of 81, was a prominent West Coast architect. He was probably best known as the designer of Grace Cathedral in San Francisco. Among his other works are the Mills College Lower Building, the Firemen's Fund Insurance Building, The University of California Hospital and the Del Monte Hotel.)

In the same <u>Oregonian</u> article was a comment upon Federal Government processes:

"Charles E. Dunbar, in the office of the First Assistant Postmaster General in Washington, D.C.,. . .said a clerk in the Treasury Department. . .said that the plans were not held up 'but going through in the ordinary way, which, as you realize, is slow.'"

By December 15, 1915, the plans were, at last, complete and in the hands of Supervising Architect, James A. Wetmore. In the December 17 <u>Oregonian</u> he described the building as being classic in design "on the lines of the Italian Renaissance," with stone facing, and the public lobby as the only elaborate portion. The foundations allowed for the possibility of increasing the building size at some future date. All of the offices and workspaces were described as having the "customary" office or utilitarian finishes.

The first official perspective drawing of the new Post Office was presented in the December 26, 1915, <u>Oregonian</u> and pronounced "decidedly attractive." The long wait was finally over, or so everyone thought. Although the cornerstone was laid in 1916, the building was not actually occupied by the Postal Service until 1919. The delay between cornerstone-laying and occupation may have been caused by the material, shipping and labor problems resulting from World War I.

As a work of Lewis P. Hobart the Federal Building at 511 Broadway is notable in the context of American architectural history. Elizabeth Walton Potter, Preservation Specialist with the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office, commented on the building on June 28, 1978, in a letter to the Regional Commissioner of the Public Buildings Service, General Services Administration, Region 10:

"Its size and decorative program are exceptional among Federal Buildings in Oregon of this vintage."

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It is also a significant element in the urban fabric of Portland. The Federal Building and the Union Pacific depot form a visually dramatic landmark area at the northern end of Broadway and Portland's Park blocks. The Federal Building stands in remarkable contrast to the nondescript new Post Office just across Hoyt Street and marks the entrance into the downtown area from the Broadway Bridge. The United States Custom House (on the National Register of Historic Places) a few blocks further south picks up the scale of the Federal Building. The Juxtaposition of the two buildings creates a rhythm in the streetscape.

The Oregon State Historic Preservation Office completed a survey of Federal Properties in Oregon in 1968. This survey describes the Federal Building at 511 Broadway and the United States Custom House as "important to their locality because they have noteworthy features and they typify period styles. Through their scale and quality of design, these buildings stabilize and enhance their environment.

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ARTICLES AND ABSTRACTS:

"Lewis P. Hobart, Architect, Dies," <u>Architect and Engineer</u>, v. 199, no. 2, p. 38, November 1954.

Portland Oregonian:

"Remodeling Necessitated by Delay in Site Selection," January 5, 1911, p. 12, column 4.

"Site Selected," January 13, 1911, p. 9, col. 1. "Condemnation Suit Begun," February 11, 1911, p. 16, col. 1. "Pact to Hold Up Price," April 21, 1911, p. 5, col. 5. "Price Settled," April 23, 1911, p. 12. "Government Will Buy Block S," June 24, 1911, p. 10, col. 1.

"New Post Office Due in Two Years," March 9, 1913, p. 14, col. 5. "Broadway Chosen as Front," April 13, 1913, Sec. 2, p. 7, col. 1. "Stone Tests Required," June 29, 1913, p. 4, col. 2.

"Senator Lane Surprised at Delay in Preparing Plans," January 7, 1914, p. 3.

"Lane to Investigate Delay," January 7, 1914, p.2.

"Portland's New Post Office and Federal Building Will be Completed Within a Year," January 9, 1914, p. 1.

"McAdoo Would Build Post Office of Stone," January 18, 1914, p.6. "Full Lot Use Proposed," January 22, 1914, p.4.

"Work to Begin Febraury 1st," October 12, 1914, p. 9.

"Post Office to be Started Soon and Finished in 14 Months--Lewis P. Hobart," April 5, 1915, p. 14.

"Treasury Department to Model After Portland Building," July 14, 1915, p. 5.

"Site Still Bare in 1927," September 8, 1915, p. 18.

"Plans Assured, Time for Drawings Uncertain," September 14, 1915,

p. 11.

"Plans Being Expedited: Drawings to be Ready by December," November 7, 1915, p. 1.

"Plans Received by Secretary of Treasury," December 15, 1915, p. 1.

"Supervising Architect Describes New Post Office Building," December 17, 1915, p. 1.

"Perspective of New Building is Ready," December 26, 1915, p. 10.

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MISCELLANEOUS INFORMATION SOURCES, GSA FILES, REGION 10

Construction Drawings by the office of Lewis P. Hobart, 1915.

Progress Reports and Inspection Photos, GSA Region 10.

Site Acquisition Documents

"Supplemental Report 31 to Community Plan for Portland, Oregon," prepared by W. C. Nelson, Public Buildings Service, GSA Region 10, February 16, 1971.

"Survey of Federal Government Property in Oregon," Department of Transportation, State Historic Preservation Office, Salem, 1968.