

1110077574

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM**

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: Iowa
COUNTY: Polk
FOR NPS USE ONLY
ENTRY DATE NOV 19 1974

**1. NAME**

COMMON: U.S.  
United States Post Office

AND/OR HISTORIC:

**2. LOCATION**

STREET AND NUMBER:  
2nd and Walnut Streets

CITY OR TOWN: Des Moines CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT: Fourth

STATE: Iowa CODE: 14 COUNTY: Polk CODE: 153

**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)

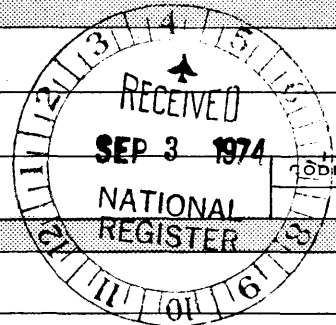
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural	<input type="checkbox"/> Government	<input type="checkbox"/> Park	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation	<input type="checkbox"/> Comments
<input type="checkbox"/> Commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> Industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Educational	<input type="checkbox"/> Military	<input type="checkbox"/> Religious	<u>Post Office</u>	
<input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Scientific		

**4. OWNER OF PROPERTY**

OWNER'S NAME:  
United States Government

STREET AND NUMBER:  
Second and Walnut Streets

CITY OR TOWN: Des Moines STATE: Iowa



**5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:  
Polk County Court House

STREET AND NUMBER:  
Fifth and Court Streets

CITY OR TOWN: Des Moines STATE: Iowa

**6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE OF SURVEY:

DATE OF SURVEY:  Federal  State  County  Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN: STATE: CODE:

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE: \_\_\_\_\_

COUNTY: \_\_\_\_\_

ENTRY NUMBER: NOV 19 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	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(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 Des Moines Post Office building was designed in 1908 by the Treasury Department architectural staff under the supervision of James Knox Taylor. The original plans showed a classical style building on the North end of a block containing existing commercial structures.

The broad face of the white tooled limestone building is seen from Walnut Street, then the commercial thoroughfare of the Des Moines business district. The block is contained between West First Street and Second Avenue and Walnut and Court Streets.

While a short block away, the Des Moines River seems to be an essential part of the vista in which the building is located. No construction blocks the area between the Post Office and the River.

A series of attached round Corinthian columns line the principal front (North) of the building. The first story windows are arch topped, more Roman in feeling. Main entrances on the Northeast and Northwest corners are pedimented and flanked by round columns also. Second story windows are divided by smaller round columns. East and West faces are similar to the North but with flat pilasters and capitals between windows.

Limestone facing is curiously tooled in vertical striations. Pilaster and Column cushions, ogee curves, all are marked by the same striations.

Not yet completed in 1910, the building underwent some minor changes in the South side, the service end and facing the rear of the commercial buildings on that end of the block. One such building still stands though four floors have been removed and is still in use by the Postal service as dock space.

Plans were completed in 1935 for a major enlargement to the South. This added two upper floors of building space and provided a lowered basement garage for the growing postal department use of motor vehicles.

This addition is in the same classical style though simplified and using the same stone, though not striated. The South wall of the addition is buff brick masonry. Subsequent work has added a new boiler and equipment room on the Southwest corner.

Structural frames for both the original building and addition are steel. Concrete flat-slab floors are found in the original building and concrete pan joist floors in the addition. Skylights over the original postal work space were closed during construction of the mechanical equipment room in order that exterior ductwork and fancoil units could be located over them when the airconditioning was installed.

Interior lobby space in the original building is noteworthy for its light and classical proportion. Subsequent mechanical and electrical additions disregarded this handsome setting. Some wall bracket gas lamps were electrified and do still remain.

A marble wainscot with graceful plaster groined vault arches are lighted by arched windows on the first story. Plaster rosettes once were the upper terminals of suspended iron light fixtures. Floors in the public spaces are terrazzo with marble borders.

Access to the second floor area is gained by marble steps with iron balusters, floral leaved newel posts and polished brass handrails.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**6. SIGNIFICANCE**

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

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

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) **1908 Original building, 1935 Addition.**

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

<input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal	<input type="checkbox"/> Education	<input type="checkbox"/> Political	<input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning
<input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> Engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)
<input type="checkbox"/> Historic	<input type="checkbox"/> Industry	<input type="checkbox"/> Science	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> Invention	<input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture	_____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture	<input 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

As a part of a concerted community plan to erect a governmental complex on the banks of the Des Moines River, the Post Office was the focal point of the Federal Government participation in local government planning.

Only one other existing governmental structure predates the Post Office. It is the Public Library built in 1901. Subsequently, the City Hall, Municipal Court and Federal Court Buildings were constructed.

The Post Office manifested much of the image of vital and growing federal power and only through the Post Office and Federal Court buildings did the average citizen make contact with his government.

In this building the government put its best foot forward. The building was well detailed of enduring materials, and while an eclectic composition of classical details and Romanesque fenestrations, it is a superbly composed and orderly structure. Great lanterns of acanthus leaves support white opal light globes and flank each principal entrance stairs. Interior detailing of the Post Office desks and lamps and stair newel posts is a frank expression of Art Nouveau.

The Post Office remains the best example of classicism in design in the central Iowa area and is the best preserved. The stone work remains in excellent condition with the detail still crisp in line and form. The detail in Corinthian column capitals and doorway pedimentation is notable, an outstanding example of building ornamentation and style that will never be constructed again.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS



**9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Des Moines Register, November 16, 1934, "Des Moines Post Office and Plans for Future Expansion."  
Des Moines Register, December 9, 1945, "Des Moines Post Office 100 years old, It Traces Growth of Des Moines."  
 Bringham, Johnson, "Des Moines, the Pioneer of Municipal Progress and Reform of the Middle West." State Librarian of Iowa Chapter IV Fourth Decade of Progress.

**10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

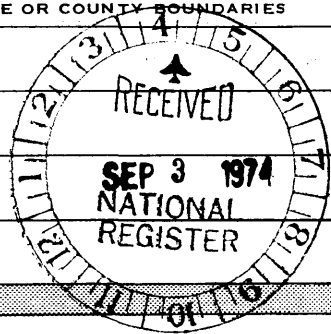
LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY				OR	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES				
CORNER	LATITUDE		LONGITUDE		LATITUDE		LONGITUDE		
	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds
NW	°	'	"	41°	35'	11"	93°	37'	10"
NE	°	'	"						
SE	°	'	"						
SW	°	'	"						

UTM  
15/442400  
4603850

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: Less than one acre

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:  
William J. Wagner FAIA State Preservation Coordinator

ORGANIZATION: Wagner • Marquart • Wetherell Architects DATE: Feb. 15th 1974

STREET AND NUMBER:  
1106 High Street

CITY OR TOWN: Des Moines STATE: Iowa CODE: 200103

**12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION**

As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National  State  Local

Name Adrian D. Anderson

Title Historic Preservation Officer

Date Aug. 22, 1974

**NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION**

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

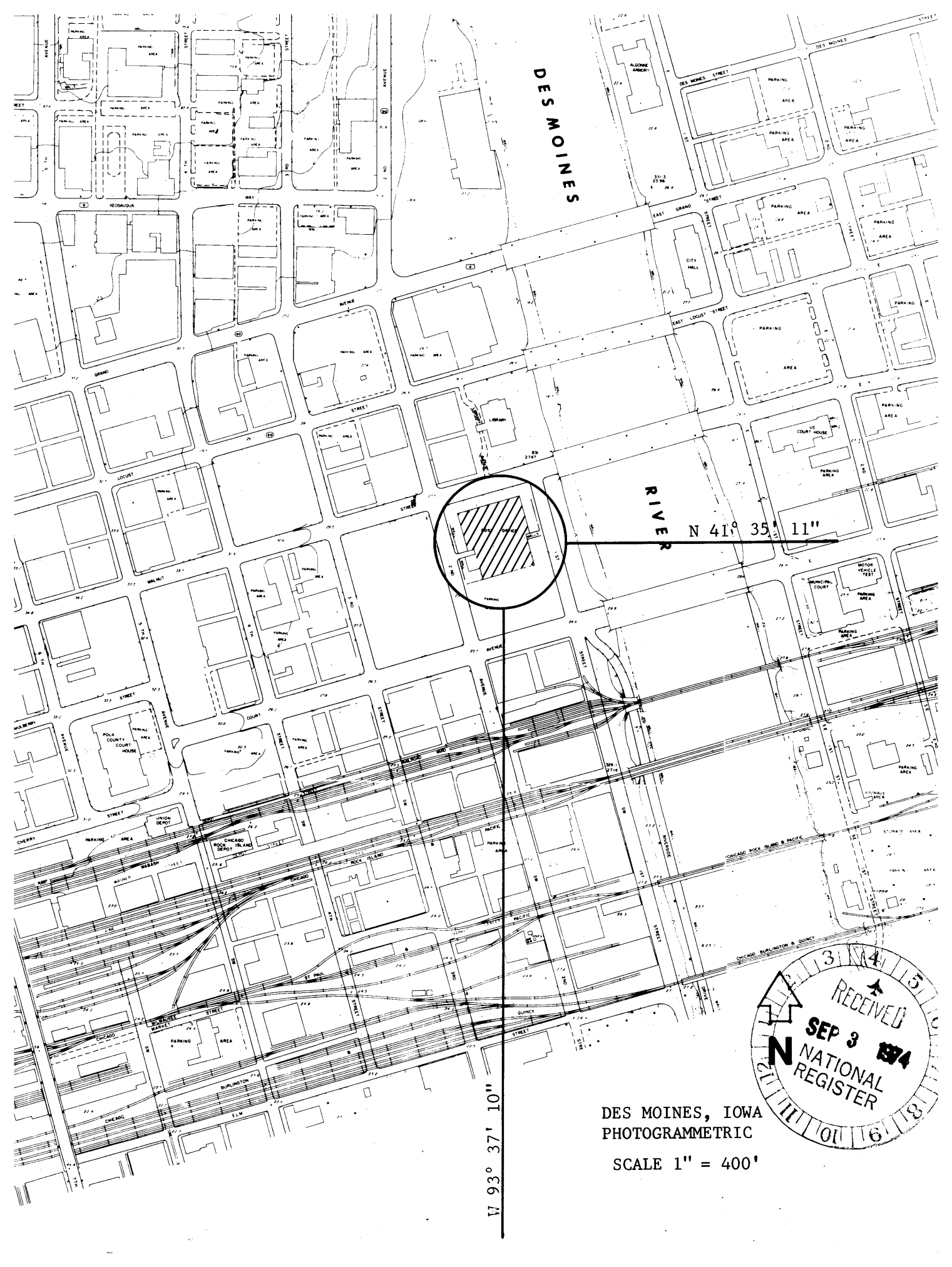
A. R. Wetherell  
 Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date 11/19/74

ATTEST:

Wm J. Marquart  
 Keeper of The National Register

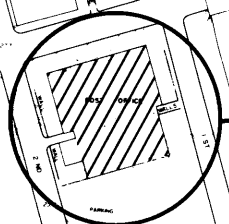
Date 11.18.74



DES MOINES

RIVER

N 41° 35' 11"



W 93° 37' 10"

DES MOINES, IOWA  
PHOTOGRAMMETRIC

SCALE 1" = 400'

