

1053

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 Court House  
Other names/site number L. Clure Morton United States Post Office and Courthouse

#### 2. Location

Street & Number 9 E. Broad Street Not for Publication N/A  
City or Town Cookeville Vicinity N/A  
State Tennessee Code TN County Putnam Code 141  
Zip Code 38501

#### 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] 10/30/2014  
Signature of certifying official Date  
Federal Preservation Officer, U.S. General Services Administration  
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.)  
[Signature] DSHPD 9/11/14  
Signature of commenting official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

#### 4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:  
 entered in the National Register [Signature] 12-16-14  
See continuation sheet. Signature of Keeper Date of Action  
 determined eligible for the National Register  
 See continuation sheet.  
 determined not eligible for the National Register  
 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)	1	building(s)
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/>	sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-state	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<input type="checkbox"/>	structures
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public-federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/>	objects
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	1	0 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> </u>	<u> </u>
<u> </u>	<u> </u>

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: <u>GOVERNMENT</u>	Sub: <u>Post Office</u>
<u>GOVERNMENT</u>	<u>Courthouse</u>
<u> </u>	<u> </u>
<u> </u>	<u> </u>

**7. Description**

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

LATE 19<sup>TH</sup> and 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY REVIVALS  
Italian Renaissance  
 

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation	<u>CONCRETE</u>
roof	<u>SLATE</u>
walls	<u>BRICK</u>
walls	<u> </u>
walls	<u> </u>
other	<u>TERRA COTTA, LIMESTONE</u>
	<u> </u>

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

Please see Section 7 Continuation Sheets.

**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
- C components lack individual distinction.
- 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)

POLITICS/GOVERNMENT

ARCHITECTURE

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Period of Significance

1916

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Dates

N/A

Architect/Builder

Wenderoth, Oscar, Supervising Architect of the U.S. Treasury

W.H. Fissell & Co., Construction Contractor

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
- 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: \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of Property .6 acre

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

Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	16	634375	3	16	634431
		4003110			4003042
2	16	634439	4	16	634361
		4003086			4003070

See continuation sheet.

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

The property is bounded by Walnut Street on the west, Broad Street on the north, Dow Place on the east, and Federal Place on the south.

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

The boundary reflects the original property lines for the United States Post Office and Court House.

**11. Form Prepared By**

Name/Title Jessica B. Feldman and Erica Kachmarsky, Architectural Historians  
 Organization ICF Jones & Stokes Date 12/09/2005, rev. 7/28/2009, rev. 9/2014  
 Street & Number 811 W. 7<sup>th</sup> Street, Suite 800 Telephone 213.627.5376  
 City or Town Los Angeles State CA Zip Code 90017

**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.

A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white 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 \_\_\_\_\_  
 Organization U.S. General Services Administration (Region 4) Telephone 404.562.0262  
 Street & Number 77 Forsyth Street, SW  
 City or Town Atlanta State GA Zip Code 30303

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.

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 7 Page 1

*United States Post Office and Court House  
Putnam County, Tennessee*

### Description

#### Summary

Completed in 1916, the United States Post Office and Court House in Cookeville, Tennessee is a rectangular plan, masonry building designed in the Italian Renaissance Revival style. Three stories with basement, the building sits on a slightly raised limestone clad foundation with walls of buff colored brick laid in common bond. It has a low, hipped slate roof. The windows are multi-light, double-hung wood windows. Although relatively modest in character, the building clearly conveys its civic nature and the Italian Renaissance Revival style as designed by the Office of the Supervising Architect of the U.S. Treasury. The large overhanging eaves supported by numerous brackets are a signature feature of the Italian Renaissance Revival style. Other character defining features include the prominent band course between the second and third stories, the five arched openings on the first story of the primary elevation and the four terra cotta roundels centered above them. The original rectangular plan building was extended to the east side and to the rear in two building campaigns in the mid-twentieth century and has been subject to multiple minor interior alterations over time. However, the United States Post Office and Court House retains sufficient integrity to convey its significance under Criteria A and C for the period of significance of 1916.

#### Setting

The United States Post Office and Court House was constructed in 1916 at the southeast corner of Walnut and Broad Streets in Cookeville, Tennessee, near the commercial center of the growing community. The front of the building faces north onto Broad Street, which is oriented on the city's east-west axis and was one of the first streets to be laid out when the city was founded in the mid-nineteenth century. Today, the immediate vicinity of the building is characterized by large twentieth century buildings, primarily civic in nature. Directly across the street from the building are the Cookeville Performing Arts Center and the Police Department, both late twentieth-century structures. East of the Post Office and Court House, on the same side of Broad Street is the City Hall, and directly behind it is the Cookeville First Baptist Church, both constructed in the mid- to late twentieth century. Across Walnut Street, immediately to the west, is a four-story office building, constructed in the mid-1980s. Further west is the Westside Shopping Center, a collection of late nineteenth and early twentieth century one- and two-story commercial structures. At the far end of the Westside Shopping Center is the former Tennessee Central Railroad Depot, constructed in 1909, now a railroad museum.

Although Broad Street descends as it travels east, the United States Post Office and Court House site is relatively level. The lot is almost entirely consumed by the building footprint and associated surface parking on the east and south (rear) sides of the building.

#### Exterior Description

The United States Post Office and Court House in Cookeville, Tennessee, is a rectangular plan, three-story building with basement and attic designed in the Italian Renaissance Revival style. The original 1916 building is rectangular in shape, measuring 89 feet by 58 feet, with seven bays across the front (north) elevation and five bays on the side (east and west) elevations. The building was extended to the rear (south) in 1956, to enlarge the workroom vestibule, and was extended again to the east in 1964 to enlarge the mailing lobby, workroom floor, and loading dock. The building has a total gross square footage of 24,874 square feet.

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Described as "fireproof" in the original inspection reports, the building is constructed of concrete and terra cotta block on a slightly raised concrete foundation. The exterior is clad in limestone at the foundation and buff colored pressed brick laid in common bond on the walls.<sup>1</sup> It has a low, hipped, slate roof terminating on all sides in a molded copper gutter. A majority of the windows are original, multi-light, double hung wood windows. The large overhanging eaves are supported by numerous closely spaced curved brackets. On the front and rear elevations, leaders extend down from the eaves to leader boxes, located one bay in from each end at the level of the third story windows. The leader boxes have the date "1915" stamped into the front surface.

The north (front) elevation contains the only public entrance to the building and has the highest level of architectural detailing. On the first story, the five center bays are arched one-and-one-half story openings, with multi-pane fanlights. The three center bays contain multi-pane French doors with six-light transoms and four-light sidelights. These doors are not original, dating to 1964 or later. To either side of the three entry bays are single bays, each with an eight-over-eight, double-hung wood sash window with fanlight above and inset wood panel below the sill. All five arched openings are framed with narrow brick pilasters with flat concrete Doric capitals, and a brick Roman arch with a prominent terra cotta keystone. The entrance is accessed by two granite steps with low granite cheek walls. The windows in each of the outer bays of the north elevation are eight-over-eight, double-hung wood sash with limestone bullnose sills and limestone architrave window heads with ears and keystones. A low concrete ramp with simple metal pipe railings extends along the eastern side of the front elevation leading to the entrances. The ramp is not original. Four large, octagonal-shaped sconces are mounted the north elevation between the five arched openings on the first floor. These lanterns are aligned just below the springline of the five large fan lights.<sup>2</sup>

The second story has seven bays each having a window aligned with the fenestration below in the first story. The second story windows are eight-over-eight, double-hung wood sash with limestone bullnose sills. The five center windows at the second story have flat, bracket-shaped, limestone aprons below the sills. Between five center bays are four terra cotta roundels containing seals, representing (from left to right) the U.S. Department of Justice, the U.S. Department of the Treasury, the United States of America, and the U.S. Postal Service.

A prominent limestone band course in the form of an entablature runs around the building between the second and third stories. It has a projecting cornice, triglyphs and guttae. A sign board composed of limestone panels bearing the name, L. Clure Morton United States Post Office & Court House, in bronze letters with a bronze medallion at either end is mounted over the band course, obscuring nearly the full length of this feature on the north elevation. This sign board appears to have been installed as part of a modernization completed in 1964. At that time it simply read, United States Post Office and Court House. Following the rededication of the building in 1996, the current sign was composed, also using bronze lettering. Early images of the building show no signage.

The third story has twelve windows. The two outermost windows are eight-over-eight, double-hung wood sash, matching the dimensions and configuration of the second floor windows directly below. The ten central windows have six-over-six, double-hung, wood sash and fill the same wall area as the five second floor window bays below. These third story windows rest on the band course between the second and third stories and have no visible sills. A simple, flat band course extends around all elevations of the building at the top of the third story windows and just below the eaves.

<sup>1</sup> Although the inspection reports and construction documents refer to the brick as "gray," buff is used here as the current descriptor.

<sup>2</sup> A supply list dating from the building's construction retained at the building refers to these fixtures as General Electric Form No. 12, or the Tudor/Cleveland style.

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*United States Post Office and Court House  
Putnam County, Tennessee*

The west (side) elevation is composed of five regular bays on each story, each containing a single window. The fenestration details on this elevation are a simplified version of those of the north (front) elevation. The windows on the first story are eight-over-eight, double-hung wood sash with limestone bullnose sills and limestone architrave window heads with ears and keystones. The second story windows are eight-over-eight, double-hung wood sash with limestone bullnose sills. The third story windows are eight-over-eight, double-hung wood sash, rest on the band course between the second and third stories, and have no visible sills. A cornerstone located near the north end of the low limestone foundation on this elevation is inscribed as follows:

William McAdoo  
Secretary of Treasury  
Oscar Wenderoth  
Supervising Architect  
1914

The south (rear), elevation is composed of five bays. At the center of the first story is a small, one story, flat roofed vestibule which provides access to the postal workroom. Original drawings show a vestibule having double doors on the south elevation, a single door accessed by steps on the west elevation and a window on the east elevation.<sup>3</sup> The existing vestibule appears to be either entirely new or a substantial reworking of the original feature. Today the workroom vestibule has two exterior doors, one on the east elevation with a metal canopy with scalloped eaves, accessed by a concrete ramp, and the other on the west side at ground level. Both entrances have hollow-core doors with nine lights. There are steps down to the basement level next to the ramp on the east side. On the first story, on either side of the vestibule, are two large windows which appear to be a circa 1964 alteration. These windows have metal rails and muntins which are thicker than those of the original wood windows and match the windows on the 1964 addition. Additionally, the brick surrounding these windows matches the brick of the 1964 addition. These large windows are composed of six-over-six sash with four-light sidelights. The windows in the outer bays of the south elevation on the first story match the other eight-over-eight, double-hung wood sash found throughout the building. As elsewhere on the first story, they have limestone bullnose sills and limestone architrave window heads with ears and keystones. The arched window composition used for the first story along the north (front) elevation is repeated on the south elevation. Located in the three center bays and extending through the second and third stories, the double height arched windows light the courtroom. The spring line of the courtroom windows is aligned with the band course between the second and third stories. These windows differ from those at the front in that they are six-over-six sash and do not have the wood panels below. The windows at the outer bays on the second and third floor on this elevation match those in the same locations on the second and third stories of the north elevation. A large brick chimney with a corbelled cap and louvered vents is located on the east side of the roof at the rear of the building.

### 1956 Addition

Appended to the south (rear) elevation of the 1916 building and connected to the main postal workroom through the one-story workroom vestibule, this loading dock has a flat roof cantilevered over the raised platforms located on the east and west sides. The loading dock has three bays on each side, each with a double door with a center pivot,

<sup>3</sup> The drawings, dated March 14, 1914, and bearing the stamp of O. Wenderoth, Supervising Architect, Treasury Department, dated April 29, 1914, are located in the building. Digital copies reside with Region 4, U.S. General Services Administration, Regional Historic Preservation Office. Additional records concerning site selection, appropriations and construction are located in Record Group 121 at the National Archives at College Park, MD.

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solid lower panels, and fixed six-light windows. The rear elevation contains a single door and is otherwise unadorned.

### 1964 Addition

Appended to the east (side) elevation, which originally matched the west elevation, is a one story, addition constructed on in 1964. It is roughly 1,000 square feet and projects several feet beyond the face of the 1916 building on the north (front) elevation. The base of the addition is clad in limestone while the walls are clad in a buff brick of a slightly lighter shade than the brick of original building. The north elevation is dominated by a single full-height window set within a slightly projecting central pavilion. The window, which has a metal frame and sash, rests on a panel. It is composed of an eight-over-eight, double hung sash with four-light sidelights and a rectangular fixed sash transom with eight lights, and two-light sidelights. There are four windows on the east elevation, and one on the south elevation, each having six-over-six, double-hung sash, with four-light sidelights, and limestone sills. The roof is flat, and the cornice is simple, without ornamentation. There is no exterior entry to this addition.

### Interior Description

Historically, the first floor of the building, as shown in the original plans, consisted of an L-shaped lobby along most of the north (front) elevation and two-thirds of the west (side) elevation, with the stairwell in the northwest corner of the building. In the northeast corner was the mail order and registered mail division, with a window/counter facing the lobby. The wall along the back of the lobby was punctuated with one window/counter, and several other window spaces. Entry to the workroom, which occupied most of the space behind the lobby, was accessed from a door at the end of the west part of the lobby, through the Postmaster's office. As with the mail order room, the Postmaster was to have a vault room attached to this office. A toilet was also included here, and a women's room was located at the southeast corner of the workroom. As was typical of federal buildings of the period, the main public areas, the postal lobby and courtroom, were more richly detailed than other areas. The lobby had marble baseboards, oak wainscoting, a plaster cornice and a wood paneled and glazed entrance vestibule with a patterned tile floor. In addition to postal windows with counters, it had two wooden lobby desks.

The first floor is the most altered of the interior spaces, having been impacted by the 1964 addition on the east end of the building and a series of subsequent alterations. Today, the main central space on the first floor is used for the mailing, or box, lobby. A lock box vestibule now extends into a small alcove cut into the original south wall of the lobby, where a series of postal windows had been located, and projecting into the original postal workroom space on the other side of the wall. On the west side of the lobby is the original staircase and an elevator added in 1963. This area is currently not accessible to the general public when court is not in session. A full-height aluminum framed glass partition with a centered entryway separates this section from the main lobby area and a security gate and related apparatus are in place at all times. Separated from the main lobby by a partition matching that on the west, are the east side service lobby and the postal counter, located within the 1964 addition. The lobby ceilings have been suspended with large box fluorescent lights and acoustic tile. Wood wainscoting has been removed in some places and replaced with marble wainscoting with a similar coloration but a different pattern than original marble seen throughout the building. Wall heaters have been attached to the mailing lobby's north walls. The floors, light fixtures, glass partitions and doors appear to date to 1964 or later alterations. However, the original Verde Antique marble baseboard does remain in the lobby area. The non-public spaces located in the south/southeast corner of the building include the postal workroom, directly behind the service counter, and the United States Clerk of Court office,



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and several storage rooms in the southwest corner. South of the postal workroom is the workroom vestibule, which connects the main building with the 1956 mailing platform or loading dock.

The current configuration of the upper stories is little changed from that shown in the original drawings. The plans for the second floor show the double height courtroom surrounded by a U-shaped corridor which is lined with smaller spaces dedicated to uses associated with the court. The judge's chambers consists of two rooms with access to a small bathroom and there is a door leading directly from the judge's office to the courtroom, as there is today. North of the judge's chambers is a library. The clerk of the court occupies the northeast corner and the room to the west. There are two vaults with a prisoner cell taking up the space between the vaults and the wall along the south elevation. Next to the vaults and the jail cell are two offices occupied by the U.S. Marshal and two additional rooms (including the northwest corner) occupied by the United States Attorney. Along the west corridor is the stairwell lobby, a public toilet and the witness room at the southwest corner. When court was not in session, the Post Office Inspector was permitted to use this last room.

The second floor still contains the main courtroom and related judge's chambers, as well as other small offices accessed from the U-shaped corridor along the north (front) and side elevations. Located on the south (rear) side of the floor, the courtroom is two-stories high and lit by the three double-height arched windows. The courtroom retains the original walnut paneled wainscoting. However, the judge's bench and the paneled wall behind it have been altered and a modern United States seal hangs over the bench. The pocket doors to the corridor have been replaced as have the benches for public seating. The floor, originally consisting of cork tiles, is now carpeted. The ceiling has been lowered with acoustic tiles and the original ornate light fixtures replaced with recessed panels. Public entry to the courtroom is through a set of replacement double-doors in the corridor on the north side of the courtroom. Records indicate that alterations were made to the courtroom in 1964 and 1986. There is a secondary entrance off the western corridor that leads to a jury room, and a third, private entrance behind the judge's bench at the east end of the courtroom. On the other side of this third entrance are a several steps, which lead into the space at the southeast corner of the federal building. This room, identified as the Judge's Library, has been reconfigured over time and is now used for a de facto law library, a small conference area, and other general administrative uses. A half-bathroom is located off this space. At the northeast corner of the second floor is the Judge's Office, separated by two back-to-back vaults<sup>4</sup>, one of which opens into a series of smaller offices that overlook Broad Street.

The second and third floor offices were simply finished with plaster walls and ceilings and wood floors, base, chair rail and trim. The hallways originally had ceramic tile floors and marble baseboards. Modifications to these spaces generally are confined to the installation of carpeting and lowered ceilings. Some original marble baseboards have been replaced.

The original plans for the third floor repeat the hallway configuration of the second floor, with a petit jury room in the southeast corner with a small toilet. Just north of the jury room is a women's toilet with a small entry area, then the Grand Jury room at the northeast corner, also with an associated toilet. West of the Grand Jury room is a room split into two spaces: along the corridor wall is a vault (which aligns with the two vaults on the second floor) and between the vault and the south elevation is an unmarked room, which was attached to the next series of rooms to be occupied by the U.S. Department of Internal Revenue (now the Internal Revenue Service or IRS). During court sessions, as noted on the blueprints, this space could be used for female witnesses. South of the IRS offices is the stairwell, the public toilet (in alignment with the public toilet on the second floor) and a witness room in the southwest corner. Today, as in 1916, offices are located on the east, west and north sides of the third floor. There is also a small meeting room in the southeast corner of the third floor. Along the north elevation are several spaces used by

<sup>4</sup> Information found at the site shows these vaults were manufactured by H.H. Schults of Eowanda, NY.

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the U.S. Marshals Service, including two modern holding cells. The majority of changes on the third floor have occurred to the bathrooms due to the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliance.

In summary, interior alterations for safety, upkeep and modernization have occurred over time. These alterations include reconfiguration of the first floor mailing lobby (1964); installation of an elevator (1963), air conditioning (1964), and sprinkler and fire alarm systems (2011); remodeling of restrooms for ADA compliance (2000-2002); and alterations to the courtroom (1964, 1986).

### **Landscape**

Early images show that when the building was constructed, the area just east of the structure was landscaped with grass and had several mature shade trees. Originally, a flagpole rose from the center of the roof. A later postcard, which appears to date from the 1930s or 1940s, shows the trees still present and the flagpole now on the ground, near the sidewalk. The trees and flagpole were all removed from the east side of the lot for the 1964 addition and the parking area that abuts it. Current landscaping includes small shrubs on either side of the entrance stairs, grassy strips at the front and sides of the building, an ornamental tree and relocated flagpole at the northeast corner of the 1964 addition and several flowering bushes planted in the back southwest corner near the loading dock. At the rear of the building is a parking area, which is accessible from Walnut Street and from a small parking area on the east side of the building, which is accessed from Broad Street. There are several angled parking spaces in front of the building.

### **Integrity**

Despite a number of alterations over the years, the Cookeville United States Post Office and Court House retains sufficient integrity to convey its significance. The exterior of the original 1916 building remains substantially unaltered. The 1956 and 1964 additions, themselves now more than 50 years old, are modest in size and utilize materials and design details compatible with the original construction. While the interior alterations have resulted in a loss of some original interior finishes and details, the original plan remains largely intact, particularly on the second and third floors.

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### Significance

#### Summary Statement

Constructed in 1916 at the southeast corner of Walnut and Broad Streets, the United States Post Office and Court House reflects the growth and stature of Cookeville in the first decade of the twentieth century. The attainment of a federal building was a significant achievement for the town and the building's importance is in turn reflected in its site, located between the two most important sectors of the community: the commercial sector represented by the railroad depot at one end of Broad Street and the civic sector, represented by the county courthouse at the other end of the thoroughfare. The United States Post Office and Court House brought needed services to the community, solidified Cookeville's position as a regional governmental, as well as commercial, center and demonstrated the political power of the community. Designed by the Office of the Supervising Architect of the U.S. Treasury Department, the United States Post Office and Court House is a well-executed example of the Italian Renaissance Revival style government building. This building remains a landmark in Cookeville. The United States Post Office and Court House is eligible for the National Register under Criterion A for Politics/Government and Criterion C for Architecture on the local level.

#### History of Cookeville

Cookeville is the seat of Putnam County, which was established by the state legislature in 1854.<sup>5</sup> It is 80 miles east of Nashville, and situated near the Cumberland River in the middle of the state. The town was named for and by Major Richard F. Cooke who was a state senator at the time and influential in the creation of the county. The first town lots were established along Jefferson, East, Spring, Monroe, Glade, Narrow and Broad streets; in July of 1854, the first auctions were held for the sale of those lots.<sup>6</sup> The town was incorporated in 1903.

The community had an official post office beginning in 1855. According to a 1976 article in *The Cookeville Dispatch*, the first post office was located on the south side of the Courthouse Square, three blocks east of the present post office site. The first postmaster from this era was Curtis Mills.<sup>7</sup> A later post office, also in use prior to the 1916 post office, was located in the Old Howell Jackson Shoe Shop Building (address unknown). Although the center of the county government, and located in the geographic center of the county, Cookeville grew slowly for the first few decades after its founding. The village was the center of the Upper Cumberland region of the state, but it was fairly isolated even though the Walton Road (an early nineteenth-century east-west thoroughfare) came through town. The Walton Road was also known as the Cumberland Road and the Cumberland Turnpike. The Cumberland Turnpike Company was established by the State of Tennessee to collect tolls for the road's upkeep as early as 1799. While the United States Post Office and Court House was under construction, mail was still conveyed to the town via rail and John B. Dow was listed as the postmaster.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Putnam County was actually carved from parts of White, Overton, Jackson, Smith and DeKalb Counties in 1842, and was named for Israel Putnam, a general during the Revolutionary War. The county functioned for several years, but was dissolved by the state in 1844 because Overton and Jefferson Counties alleged that the formation of the new county made them smaller than the state constitution allowed. It was decided by the Chancery Court that Putnam County had been formed illegally, and it was dissolved. See Austin P. Foster, *Counties of Tennessee: A Reference of Historical and Statistical Facts of Each of Tennessee's Counties* (Department of Education, Division of History, 1923), p. 78, and Putnam County History website, accessed August 17, 2005: <http://www.tngenweb.org/putnam/putnhist.htm>

<sup>6</sup> Walter S. McClain, *A History of Putnam County* (Quimby Dyer & Co.: Cookeville, TN), 70.

<sup>7</sup> Postmaster L. K. Mahler, "A History of Cookeville Post Office," *Cookeville (TN) Dispatch*, July 5, 1976.

<sup>8</sup> Mahler, "A history of Cookeville....," 2C.

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The local physical landscape and geography was a main reason for the region's slow growth. Nashville, the capital of the state, is west of the community, reached by traveling across the Eastern (Highland) Rim, and down steep slopes to the Nashville Basin. West Tennessee is known for its fertile lands, and was the site for the plentiful cotton fields that flourished in the nineteenth century. The Mississippi River, which runs through western Tennessee, provided convenient transportation of cotton and other goods; in turn, this provided for greater wealth in the western part of the state. East of Cookeville is the Cumberland Plateau. East Tennessee was sparsely settled in the nineteenth century, and was dominated by difficult terrain and impenetrable, but valuable, timberlands.

Two events helped spur growth in Cookeville. First, the town began to increase in size and population when the Nashville and Knoxville Railroad came through the town in 1890 and constructed a station at the west end of Broad Street. Until that time, most local histories of the town indicate that the growth occurred mainly around the public square. The population, which stood at less than 400 in 1890 more than quadrupled by 1910 to 1,848. 1920 population figures put the count at 2,395 people in Cookeville, with just over 23,000 in Putnam County.

The primary reason the Nashville and Knoxville railroad line was laid through the town was to open timberland and coalfields on the Cumberland Plateau. Alexander Crawford, the owner of the railroad, owned many of those timberlands. In addition to coal, sandstone and phosphate deposits were also located throughout the county. However, the land surrounding Cookeville was predominately used for agriculture. With the arrival of the railroad, the town became a center for agricultural trade. Textile manufacturers who were situating their factories adjacent to two springs that were near town also found the railroad an important resource for getting their goods to other communities. Trains were run daily, bringing passengers and freight to the community, and sending out local residents, local produce, timber, and other products from the immediate area to the rest of the state, and beyond.

The Nashville and Knoxville Railroad was a spur of the Lebanon Branch of the Nashville, Chattanooga & St. Louis Railroad. The location of the depot increased interest in commercial property in the immediate vicinity, resulting in a nineteenth-century commercial district east of the depot. The Nashville and Knoxville Railroad was acquired a few years later by Jere Baxter, and renamed the Tennessee Central Railroad. Jere Baxter, who hailed from Nashville, intended to extend the railroad alignment from the middle of the state towards the eastern edge of the state. A new passenger depot was constructed in 1909, in a late variation of the Victorian style, with exaggerated flared eaves, sometimes referred to locally as "Pagoda style."

The second event that encouraged growth in and around Cookeville occurred in the early twentieth century. In 1912, Dixie College opened in Cookeville. As originally conceived in 1909 by the Church of Christ and local business leaders, the campus buildings were designed principally in the Colonial Revival style (although Georgian Revival architecture was also used) were set around a grassy quadrangle that opened onto 7<sup>th</sup> Street at the south end. The school originally opened on the north side of the town and operated as a high school; two years later it merged with the county high school. In 1916, when the United States Post Office and Court House building was completed downtown, Tennessee Polytechnic Institute was formed on the campus of Dixie College, offering high school and junior college level courses in technical education. The school became a four-year college in 1924, and then in 1965 became a university.

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### Historic Context--U.S. Post Offices, Courthouses and Federal Buildings designed and constructed by the Treasury Department, 1864-1930

#### *Treasury Department Design, 1864-1896*

The history of design and construction of federal buildings falls into distinct eras typically defined by congressional authorizations for public buildings, the preferences of the Supervising Architect and the extent of involvement of private architects. In the nineteenth century, federal civilian facilities were designed and constructed by the U.S. Treasury Department and military facilities by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. In the first half of the nineteenth century, the U.S. Treasury Department primarily purchased existing buildings for its own use, typically custom houses and marine hospitals. Monumental buildings built for the U.S. Treasury Department at that time were designed in the Neoclassical style by Robert Mills, the Federal Architect, including the U.S. Treasury Building (begun 1836), U.S. General Post Office (1836), U.S. Patent Office (1839), and four U.S. Custom Houses at New Bedford, Massachusetts; Newburyport, Massachusetts; New London, Connecticut; and Middletown, Connecticut (1836).

In 1854, increasing demand for new federal buildings caused Secretary of the U.S. Treasury James Guthrie to create the Office of Construction. Captain Alexander H. Bowman from the U.S. Corps of Engineers was named Engineer-in-charge and Ammi B. Young was named Supervising Architect of the Office of Construction. Young had previously assisted Federal Architect Robert Mills until 1842 and served as Architectural Advisor for the U.S. Treasury Department in 1842-1852.<sup>9</sup> Young remained in the position of Supervising Architect when it was formally established in the U.S. Treasury Department in 1864. Young designed about 70 buildings from 1853-1862, mostly two- to three-story structures in remote locations, with standardized designs reviving the appearance of Renaissance villas.<sup>10</sup> Until the 1890s, the design of federal buildings tended to follow the favorite style of the Supervising Architect.<sup>11</sup> Alfred B. Mullet was the most notable among the early Supervising Architects, serving from 1865-1874. Mullet designed in a variety of classical styles, but his most well recognized works, such as the State, War, and Navy Building (1871-1888), were designed in the French Second Empire style and often were monumental in scale.<sup>12</sup> Unfortunately, the post of Supervising Architect was not particularly well paid, which meant that it did not attract prominent architects, and the heavy burden of work often meant that the federal buildings, especially outside Washington D.C., were designed by assistants and apprentices.<sup>13</sup> The responsibilities of the Supervising Architect had grown from its inventory of 23 buildings in 1853 to 297 buildings in 1892, with 95 in the process of completion, but the office was criticized for cost overruns and construction delays.<sup>14</sup>

In 1893, near the end of President Benjamin Harrison's administration, Congress passed the Tarnsey Act, which permitted the U.S. Treasury Department to contract out for private sector architectural services through competition or to continue design within the Treasury.<sup>15</sup> Passage of the Tarnsey Act coincided with the successful construction and exhibition of the World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago in 1892-93. The Exposition was largely planned by one of Chicago's most influential architects, Daniel Burnham, who served as Director of Works. Featuring designs by

<sup>9</sup> Lois Craig, ed., and the staff of the Federal Architecture Project, *The Federal Presence: Architecture, Politics, and Symbols in United States Government Building* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1978), 99, 195.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Beth M. Boland, *National Register of Historic Places Bulletin 13: How to Apply National Register Criteria to Post Offices* (Washington DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1994), 4-6.

<sup>12</sup> Craig, *The Federal Presence*, 155, 162.

<sup>13</sup> Thomas S. Hines, *Burnham of Chicago: Architect and Planner* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1974), 126.

<sup>14</sup> Craig, *The Federal Presence*, 202.

<sup>15</sup> Emily Harris, *History of Post Office Construction, 1900-1940* (Washington, DC: U.S. Postal Service, 1982, 3.

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Burnham & Root; Richard Morris Hunt; McKim, Mead & White; Adler & Sullivan; Peabody & Stearns; and George B. Post, it was so well received by the public that it would popularize the Beaux Arts and Neoclassical Revival styles for the design of monumental architecture for decades to follow. In 1893 and 1894, Burnham was elected President of the American Institute of Architects (AIA), which had long opposed the role of the Supervising Architect of the U.S. Treasury, and had lobbied for passage of the Tarnsey Act. In 1893, the AIA represented less than 20 percent of the nation's architects. In January 1894, Secretary of the U.S. Treasury, John G. Carlisle, of President Grover Cleveland's new administration, announced that a new federal building in Buffalo, NY was to be designed by the Supervising Architect and not by a private sector architect. This caused a confrontation between Secretary Carlisle and the Burnham-led AIA that effectively stalled implementation of the Tarnsey Act until the McKinley administration took office in 1897.<sup>16</sup>

### ***Individual Design, 1897-1914***

In 1897, President McKinley appointed Lyman Gage as Secretary of the U.S. Treasury. Gage was one of the financiers of and served as President at the World's Columbian Exposition. Gage was also a good friend of Daniel Burnham and was aware of the AIA's issues.<sup>17</sup> In 1897, Secretary Gage and the new Supervising Architect of the Treasury, James Knox Taylor, began implementing the Tarnsey Act, and the Beaux Arts and Neoclassical Revival style began to dominate the design of monumental federal buildings. The Colonial Revival style was also used for smaller scale buildings or where a more traditional American design was warranted. From 1897-1912, 35 buildings were designed under the provisions of the Tarnsey Act by some of the country's most prominent architects. Among the notable buildings designed and constructed during James Knox Taylor's tenure were: Ellis Island Main Building (1898-1900, by Boring and Tilton); West Point improvements (by Cram, Goodhue and Ferguson); National War College Building, Washington D.C. (1903, by Stanford White); the U.S. Mint in Philadelphia (1898, by Cass Gilbert); U.S. Post Office and Courthouse, Chicago (1905 by Henry Ives Cobb); and the Customhouse, New York (1901-1907, by Cass Gilbert).<sup>18</sup> Most of these buildings were designed in the Beaux Arts and Neoclassical Revival styles.

As referenced in National Register Bulletin 13, "[d]uring the tenure of James Knox Taylor (1897-1912) as Supervising Architect of the Treasury, the federal government promoted the concept that government buildings should be monumental and beautiful, and should represent the ideals of democracy and high standards of architectural sophistication in their communities. Taylor preferred styles derived from classical or early American traditions. Believing that federal buildings should be built to last, he also emphasized the use of high quality construction materials. Private architects worked on many of the larger projects, but the Office of the Supervising Architect produced most of the smaller buildings, including many of the post offices. In either case, the buildings were individually designed; Taylor firmly resisted suggestions that designs be standardized."<sup>19</sup>

In 1902, the first omnibus public buildings law was passed, which saved authorization time in Congress and allowed construction of vastly more federal buildings. It provided an increased limit of cost on over 60 buildings and authorized approximately 150 new projects.<sup>20</sup> Taylor learned, after an experiment when he tried to open up smaller projects under the Tarnsey Act, that skilled architects were not interested in the commissions. As a result, most post

<sup>16</sup> Hines, *Burnham of Chicago*, 127-133.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid.

<sup>18</sup> Craig, *The Federal Presence*, 230-243.

<sup>19</sup> Beth M. Boland, *National Register of Historic Places Bulletin 13: How to Apply National Register Criteria to Post Offices* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1994), 3.

<sup>20</sup> Craig, *The Federal Presence*, 239.

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offices and federal buildings outside of major cities were designed within the U.S. Treasury Department after 1904.<sup>21</sup> Five of Taylor's Treasury-designed smaller buildings were published in 1907, in the architectural journal *The Brickbuilder*, illustrating his Neoclassical Revival and Colonial Revival designs for buildings costing under \$100,000.<sup>22</sup>

In 1911, a Congressional committee recommended that the Tarnsey Act be repealed because of "pork barrel" criticism and because the fees of private architects were considered greater than the cost for the same services rendered by the Supervising Architect.<sup>23</sup> In 1912, both the Tarnsey Act was repealed and Taylor resigned, signaling the beginning of the end of the emphasis on individual plan and design and high quality materials and construction used for federal architecture. Taylor's successor, Oscar Wenderoth, continued to design federal buildings in the individual manner of his predecessor, typically in the Renaissance Revival style with arcaded loggias, but legislative action and policies were developing that would end this era.<sup>24</sup>

Oscar Wenderoth (1871- 1938) was born in Philadelphia, where he began his architectural career at the age of 15. In 1897 he came to Washington, D.C. to work for the Office of the Supervising Architect as a senior draftsman. In 1903 or 1904, he left the office to work for the Capitol Architect on the new House and Senate Office Buildings. In 1909 he left Washington for New York, where he joined the prominent firm of Carrere & Hastings, designer of the aforementioned buildings. Following Taylor's resignation in 1912, Wenderoth was appointed Supervising Architect by President Taft, serving until June 1915. Calling it "a mystery," an April 11, 1915 *New York Times* article noted that Wenderoth had tendered his resignation on March 8<sup>th</sup> and that it had not been made public for over a month. Wenderoth subsequently joined Weary & Alford Company of Chicago and later returned to New York to practice architecture.<sup>25</sup> Although Wenderoth was Supervising Architect when the Cookeville United States Post Office and Court House was designed and his stamp, with the date, April 29, 1914, is on the drawings for the building, the extent of his involvement in its design is unknown. However, it clearly conforms to his preference for the Renaissance Revival style.

### **Standardized Design, 1915-1930**

1913, an omnibus Public Buildings Act was enacted and the Public Buildings Commission was established, both of which sought to economize costs and led to the standardization of plans, specifications, and materials for different classes of federal buildings. For example, while it authorized construction of a large number of public buildings, the Act stipulated that communities with postal receipts totaling less than \$10,000 per annum would not receive authorization for a new post office building.<sup>26</sup> This policy culminated in 1915, when William McAdoo, Secretary of the U.S. Treasury and Chairman of the Public Buildings Commission, established a classification system for four classes of federal buildings. McAdoo's classes were differentiated by the value of post office annual receipts and the value of metropolitan real estate adjoining the proposed site. The higher the class, the higher the quality of design and materials allowed, including exterior facing, windows and doors, interior finishes, and ornament in public spaces.<sup>27</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Harris, *History of Post Office Construction*, 4.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, 203.

<sup>24</sup> Harris, *History of Post Office Construction*, 7.

<sup>25</sup> Antoinette Lee, *Architects to the Nation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 216-222, and "Oscar Wenderoth Quits: Resignation of Supervising Architect of Treasury Made a Mystery," *New York Times*, April 11, 1915.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, 9-10.

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Secretary of the Treasury McAdoo's Classification System for Federal buildings, 1915 <sup>28</sup>					
Class	Definition	Exterior	Windows and doors	Interior Finishes	Public spaces
<b>A</b>	Include a first class post office with annual receipts exceeding \$800,000 and would be sited as part of a city development plan or on an important thoroughfare of a great city with adjacent property reaching the higher valuation of metropolitan real estate.	marble or granite facing; fireproof throughout.	metal frames, sashes and doors	Interior finish to include the finer grades of marble, ornamental bronze work, mahogany, etc.	monumental treatment, mural decorations; special interior lighting fixtures.
<b>B</b>	Include a first class post office with receipts between \$60,000 to \$800,000 with adjacent property improvements somewhat below the higher valuation of metropolitan real estate.	Limestone or sandstone facing; fireproof throughout.	Exterior frames and sash metal; interior frames, sash and doors wood	Exclude the more expensive woods and marbles. ornamental metal to be used only where iron is suitable.	Restricted ornament in public spaces.
<b>C</b>	Include a second class post office with receipts over \$15,000 or of the first class to \$60,000, with surrounding property values that of a second-class city.	Brick facing with stone or terracotta trimmings; fireproof floors, nonfireproof roof.	Frames, sashes and doors wood	Exclude the more expensive wood and marbles; the latter used only where sanitary conditions demand	Public spaces restricted to very simple forms of ornament.
<b>D</b>	Include a post office having annual receipts of less than \$15,000 with real estate values meeting only a limited investment for improvements.	Brick facing, little stone or terracotta used; only first floor fireproof.	Stock sash, frames, doors, etc., where advisable	Ordinary class of building, such as any businessman would consider a reasonable investment in a small town.	

In 1916, standardized plans were developed under the direction of Acting, Architect James Wetmore, and they typically retained the basic Beaux Arts and Neoclassical Revival style, massing, and plan, but with less detail on smaller buildings.<sup>29</sup> In actuality, between 1913 and 1926, Congress authorized no new spending for public buildings.<sup>30</sup> The Public Buildings Act of 1926, also known as the Keyes-Elliott Act, was a general enabling act that allotted \$100 million for federal buildings outside the District of Columbia. This Act allowed the Secretary of the U.S. Treasury and the U.S. Postmaster General to select towns and cities and specific sites for new buildings. As a result, a survey report was prepared in 1927 that listed towns and cities with no federal buildings, including 799 with annual postal receipts over \$20,000 and 1,512 with postal receipts between \$10,000 and \$20,000. The estimated cost of implementing construction was \$170,420,000, but the actual construction was delayed by economic conditions, including the stock market crash of 1929.<sup>31</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 9-10.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>30</sup> Craig, *The Federal Presence*, 281.

<sup>31</sup> Harris, *History of Post Office Construction*, 13-14.



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### United States Post Office and Court House - Cookeville

#### Construction History

The United States Post Office and Court House in Cookeville, Tennessee, was authorized by the Public Building Act passed June 25, 1910. The legislation limited the cost of the site and building to \$100,000. An advertisement requested proposals for a corner lot of 130 feet by 135 feet. A site report dated October 11, 1910 describes the attributes of eight lots and recommends selection of the lot offered by J.C. Elrod at the corner of Broad and Walnut streets. The Treasury Department agent investigating the sites noted that the lot was well located in relation to the center of population and close to the county courthouse, depot and town square. In addition, it had the added attraction of having a number of "magnificent shade trees". He noted that there was some rivalry between those favoring the west side and east side of town, but estimated that 60% of the citizenry supported the recommended location.<sup>32</sup> Originally offered for \$7,000, the final price paid for the J.C. Elrod lot when acquired on September 12, 1911 is unknown. The house and outbuildings that had stood on the lot were cleared by early December 1911.

The October 11, 1910 site report provided a brief profile of the town:

Cookeville is the center of supplies for fourteen counties, in consequence of which it is quite prosperous. It has several wholesale houses and a number of small manufactories; over-alls, wooden columns, spokes, saw and planing mills, brick yards etc. The population of 2500 is increasing at a rate of five to six per cent. per year. The location plan, however, shows a town of much greater extent than it really is.

The Post Office serves about nine thousand people, of which about one half are reached by nine R.F.D. carriers. City delivery is likely to be established in three or four years. United States Court has been established two years. A Deputy Collector of Internal Revenue has headquarters at Cookeville.<sup>33</sup>

Other sources note that the federal courts met in a county building, the post office in rented space and various federal officials worked out of their homes. Despite the apparent need for a federal building and the efficiency of the site acquisition process, construction did not commence until the spring of 1915. A backlog of design and construction projects within the Office of the Supervising Architect was undoubtedly one reason for the delay. However, another major consideration was the effort to establish the need for the building in light of the growing resolve to control pork barrel projects that would culminate in McAdoo's 1915 classification system. While the 1910 site report and various other reports from earlier in the decade promote the town's prosperity and future prospects, giving a population figure of 2,500 (considerably higher than the 1910 census figure of 1,848), some in the Treasury Department were unconvinced.

A December 1, 1913 memorandum to the Secretary of the Treasury from Oscar Wenderoth, Supervising Architect, questioned the wisdom of constructing a combined post office and courthouse building in Cookeville, arguing that the postal receipts and volume of court business did not justify the action at that time:

<sup>32</sup> Site Report, October 11, 1910, NARA at College Park, Record Group 121.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid.

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The accompanying sketches for the building at Cookeville, Tenn., illustrate rather strikingly the questionable policy of taking up projects in our current program according to dates of acquisition of site, rather than according to the demands of service.

The post office at Cookeville will serve a population of about 2,500, and, in the last completed fiscal year, the post office receipts were less than \$7,000. I can find no record of a post office only being built for a town in which the receipts are so small; the smallest building is erected for a post Office to accommodate a business which brings in about \$10,000 receipts.

The size of the building at Cookeville is determined by the accommodations required by the courts, these having no relation to the size of the town. In order that the court may discharge its functions, it is necessary to provide a court room of a certain size, as well as rooms for the judge, clerk, marshal, etc., etc. These necessary accommodations determine the ground area of the building, and fix its dimensions in the second story, which of course control the dimensions in the story below, in which the post office is located. If it is conceivable that we should erect a post office building in so small a town, the trouble would be that the post office would rattle around, so to speak and would have, for years, accommodations far in excess of its requirements.

Wenderoth went on to note that the court only met twice a year for four or five days and that the large building its program required came with commensurate costs for upkeep and maintenance. He further argued that the \$100,000 limit for site and construction costs would result in an unsatisfactory building:

The smallness of the [postal] receipts doubtless influenced the committee in this case to fix a limit of cost of \$100,000. This ignores, of course, the fact that the courts must be given certain fixed accommodations, regardless of the size of the town or the post office receipts. As a result, this three-story building will have only the first floor of fireproof construction, the second and third floors and roof being of wood construction, while the exterior will be faced with stucco. The later, in my opinion, is not a proper material to use in this part of the country, but is contemplated in this case because of the limits of the appropriation.

Wenderoth's conclusion reflects the growing sentiment toward reigning in federal building program:

I would suggest that this and similar cases be brought to the attention of the Commission on Public Buildings, in order that the policy concerning the erection of large Federal court houses in very small towns may be given due consideration.

While Wenderoth may have considered Cookeville "a very small town," and the proposed building unjustified, it went forward, no doubt due in large part to the effectiveness of its Congressional representatives who had sponsored multiple bills for its construction in the years prior to its authorization and continued to press for its immediate construction. The Tennessee delegation introduced bills for the authorization of the building in 1908, 1909 and 1910. Senate bill S. 3001, passed in the Senate on June 16, 1910, imposed a cost ceiling \$50,000 higher than the \$100,000 finally authorized. Following authorization, Cordell Hull, Cookeville's representative in the House, visited the Treasury Department in late November 1912 to question the delay. A letter in response from the Assistant Secretary of Treasury, dated November 27, 1912, noted that other projects were ahead of Cookeville in the queue

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and promised that the production of working drawings would commence in December 1913.<sup>34</sup> A year later, in December 1913, having reluctantly begun the working drawings, Wenderoth wrote his plea to the Secretary of the Treasury questioning the wisdom of constructing the planned combined courthouse and post office in Cookeville.

Interestingly, the building that was constructed was of higher quality than that typical for the size and type and than that originally described. A January 6, 1914 letter to Hull from the Assistant Secretary of the Treasury assured Hull that working drawings were in production and described the building thusly:

The exterior facing for walls from grade to first floor line will be stone, stucco above, with terra cotta trimmings; steps will be granite. The roof covering will be tile and composition, and the first floor construction will be fireproof, the remainder of the building being of non-fireproof construction. The public lobby will have ceramic tile floor, marble base, wood wainscot and plaster cornice. The courtroom will be similar to the public lobby, except that it will have wood base.<sup>35</sup>

As constructed, the building was fully fireproof construction and the exterior was not clad in stucco, but in pressed brick with limestone and terra cotta trim.

Following the completion of the working drawings, the construction contract was advertised in June 1914. W.H. Fissell & Co., a New York City-based construction firm won the contract with a price of \$82,107. The contract period for the Cookeville post office and courthouse building ran from January 8, 1915 to May 8, 1916, but the building was completed months ahead of time with the Post Office, Internal Revenue Service and U.S. Marshal Service moving in on February 10, 1916. The final inspection report noted:

The contractors have shown at all times a knowledge of their responsibilities (with the usual exceptions expected) and have pursued actively the various branches involved. We have received an intelligent handling of the whole, and have as a result, a handsome structure of forty odd rooms, excellent both as to workmanship and materials; a bldg. which in its design, plan, and completeness, would do credit to any city in the United States.<sup>36</sup>

### Government Services

#### United States Post Office

The federal building in Cookeville was constructed during a period of intensive innovation and growth in postal service. Although free home delivery was available in many cities from 1863, at the turn of the twentieth century, the majority of the American population resided in rural areas and to travel to a post office to pick up their mail. Beginning in 1895, Congress authorized the Post Office Department to experiment with rural free delivery (R.F.D) on selected routes. The experiment was extended and expanding in the following years and in 1902 rural free delivery became a permanent service. A decade later, in 1913, parcel post was introduced to rural areas, allowing merchandise to be delivered directly to customers located far from the supplier and jump starting the mail order industry. Among the many consequences of these postal developments was a consolidation of many small rural post offices into larger facilities, adjacent to rail depots and equipped with mail sorting rooms and loading docks suited for

<sup>34</sup> Correspondence from Sherman Allen to Cordell Hull, November 27, 1912, NARA at College Park, Record Group 121.

<sup>35</sup> Correspondence from Byron R. Newton to Hull, January 6, 1914, NARA at College Park, Record Group 121.

<sup>36</sup> "Final Report – Court House & Post Office, Cookeville, Tenn.," March 6, 1916, NARA at College Park, Record Group 121.

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handling large volumes of mail and packages. Seven rural carriers would be headquartered at the United States Post Office and Court House in Cookeville when it opened. As it was nearing completion, the Construction Superintendent requested that the Supervising Architect amend the construction contract by \$125 to allow for additional hitching rails to accommodate the rural carriers' mule teams.<sup>37</sup> The 1916 building continues to serve as a post office for Cookeville, now a city of more than 30,000.

### District Court

The United States Post Office and Court House in Cookeville, Tennessee, was built to the specifications of the United States District Court, Middle District of Tennessee. The Middle District was formed in 1839 as the third judicial district in the state, headquartered in Nashville. Jackson was the headquarters for the Western District court and the Eastern District court was headquartered in Knoxville. The district courts were assigned to the Eighth Circuit Court until 1862 when the judiciaries were assigned to the Sixth Circuit Court.<sup>38</sup> Later, Cookeville and Columbia joined Nashville as locations for the Middle District Court. In Nashville, court met in the U.S. Custom House, Court House and Post Office, a large Romanesque Revival building constructed in 1882. In 1952, the district court in Nashville moved into the new Estes Keafauver Federal Building, which combined the Simplified Classical and Modern styles. The 1882 building now houses the Middle District's U.S. Bankruptcy Court. Columbia did not receive a federal courthouse until 1941; the Federal Building and U.S. Courthouse in Columbia was constructed in the Simplified Classical style, joining a Neoclassical style post office building constructed in 1907 under Supervising Architect James Knox Taylor. Currently, there are four authorized judgeships in the Middle District and courthouses in Nashville, Columbia and Cookeville. The Cookeville building continues to house the Middle District Court and Bankruptcy Court.

### Rededication

The United States Post Office and Court House in Cookeville, Tennessee was rededicated by Act of the 104<sup>th</sup> Congress of the United States in 1996<sup>39</sup>, although formal rededication did not occur until the next year. L. Clure Morton, in whose honor building was named, served as a Special Agent of the Federal Bureau of Investigation from 1941-1945, practiced law in Knoxville until he was appointed United States District Judge for the Middle District of Tennessee by President Richard Nixon in 1970, and served as Chief Judge of the District from 1977 until 1984, when he moved his chambers and courtroom to this building and presided over cases until his retirement in 1996. On March 31, 1997, the building was dedicated in honor of L. Clure Morton's contributions to the legal profession and distinguished career of public service.

### Architecture

The United States Post Office and Court House is a well-designed example of the Italian Renaissance Revival style. As previously noted, Oscar Wenderoth, Supervising Architect of the Treasury during the period in which the building was designed, favored the Renaissance Revival style. The Italian Renaissance Revival Style, a variant of the Renaissance Revival style, looked to Italy and the ancient world for inspiration, and in particular to the 16<sup>th</sup> century

<sup>37</sup> Proposal from Superintendent of Construction to Supervising Architect, November 8, 1915, NARA at College Park, Record Group 121.

<sup>38</sup> Federal Judicial Center, "Courts of the Federal Judiciary: U.S. District Courts of Tennessee, Legislative History," *Federal Judicial Center*, <http://www.fjc.gov/servlet/nGetInfo?jid=1701&cid=999&ctype=na&instate=na>, accessed August 15, 2014.

<sup>39</sup> *Designation of L. Clure Morton United States Post Office and Courthouse*. S.1931, 104<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> sess., Congressional Record, Vol. 142 (1996).

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*United States Post Office and Court House  
Putnam County, Tennessee*

buildings of the Italian Renaissance. The predominant feature of the style is its imposing scale and formal design incorporating classical details. Buildings in the style are usually of masonry construction, often stone. A common form was a rectangular building, often three or more stories in height, topped by a flat balustrade roof or a hipped roof. Other features common to the style are, arcades, roundels, and broadly overhanging, bracketed eaves. The Italian Renaissance Revival style was first popularized by architects such as McKim, Mead & White as early as 1880 and can be seen mostly in high-style, architect-designed buildings such as mansions and public buildings. The style remained popular through the 1920s.

The present building displays a number of characteristics of the style, most notably in its rectangular massing, hipped roof with overhanging eaves, series of arched openings, and classical detailing. Although constructed with a constrained budget, the building projects a sense of permanence and monumentality through its design and high quality materials. The use of brick rather than stone, limited exterior decorative features and omission of an elevator may reflect the cost constraints under which it was constructed.

Designed by the Office of the Supervising Architect of the U.S. Treasury, the United States Post Office and Court House is a well-executed example of the Italian Renaissance Revival style applied to a government building. Although representative of the most modest type of federal building constructed at the time, the design achieves authority through its strict symmetry, references to classical architecture and use of symbols, including the four seals on the Broad Street façade. The later additions, now all more than fifty years of age, are relatively sympathetic and do not impair the ability of the building to represent the characteristics of the style.

Within the context of Cookeville, the building is unique; there are no other buildings of substantiality in the city of Cookeville constructed in this style. The Arcade, the Harding Studio, and the Cookeville Railroad Depot, the only commercial buildings listed in the National Register within the City of Cookeville, do not possess the style or level of detailing of the United States Post Office and Court House. While there is a court square in the city, most of the older buildings have been altered and there does not appear to be a National Register eligible district. A review of Broad Street and its immediate surroundings revealed no other building designed in the Italian Renaissance Revival style. Most commercial buildings in the downtown area are Colonial or Greek Revival, although there is an Art Deco bank located near the public square. Across Walnut Street is a c. 1980, three-story, reinforced concrete bank building, and to the east is the one-story, mid-century City Hall. Across Broad Street is the late twentieth century Drama Center. To the west is the historic West Side commercial district, which is dominated by late nineteenth-century one-and-two-story buildings. Furthermore, there are few three-story buildings that date to the early twentieth century. In conclusion, the United States Post Office and Court House was distinguished from the surrounding buildings by its size and style at the time of construction and today the 1916 Italian Renaissance Revival style building remains an architectural landmark in the commercial and civic corridor of Cookeville.

### Significance

#### Criterion A: Politics/Government

The United States Post Office and Court House reflects the growth and prosperity of Cookeville in the first decade of the twentieth century. The attainment of a federal building was a significant milestone for a town and the building's importance in the community is in turn reflected in its site, located between the two most important sectors of the community: the commercial sector represented by the railroad depot at one end of Broad Street and the civic sector, represented by the county courthouse at the other end of the thoroughfare. Its construction in 1916 brought needed

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services to the community, solidified Cookeville's position as a regional governmental center, and demonstrated the political power of the community. The new building allowed more efficient delivery of postal services in period of rapidly expanding demand. While infrequently in session, the federal court in Cookeville meant those attending court were not required to travel long distances or spend extended time away from their homes. In addition, the presence of the court and its attendant business provided an additional boost to Cookeville's commercial growth.

The process leading up to the construction of the United States Post Office and Court House in Cookeville illustrates interplay between the federal government's desire to regularize and control spending on local projects and the local community's conviction that its position and potential warranted the expense. The record suggests that Cookeville's Congressional representatives were successful in pressing its claims, not only for a combined post office and courthouse, but also for the highest quality construction possible. The handsome, three-story, pressed brick, fireproof building still stands as a symbol of community pride and achievement and as a representation of the federal presence in Cookeville. For these reasons, it meets National Register Criterion A, at the local level of significance, with a period of significance of 1916.

### **Criterion C: Architecture**

The United States Post Office and Court House, is a well-designed example of the Italian Renaissance Revival style, executed in high quality materials, under the direction of Supervising Architect Oscar Wenderoth. The building retains all aspects of integrity that convey the characteristics of the Italian Renaissance Revival style, a style otherwise unrepresented in Cookeville. For these reasons, it meets National Register Criterion C, at the local level of significance, with a period of significance of 1916.

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*United States Post Office and Court House  
Putnam County, Tennessee*

### Photo Log

Name: U.S. Post Office and Court House

Location: 9 East Broad Street  
City of Cookeville  
Tennessee, 98501

Photographer: Jessica Feldman; ICF Jones & Stokes

Date of Photographs: April 2005

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

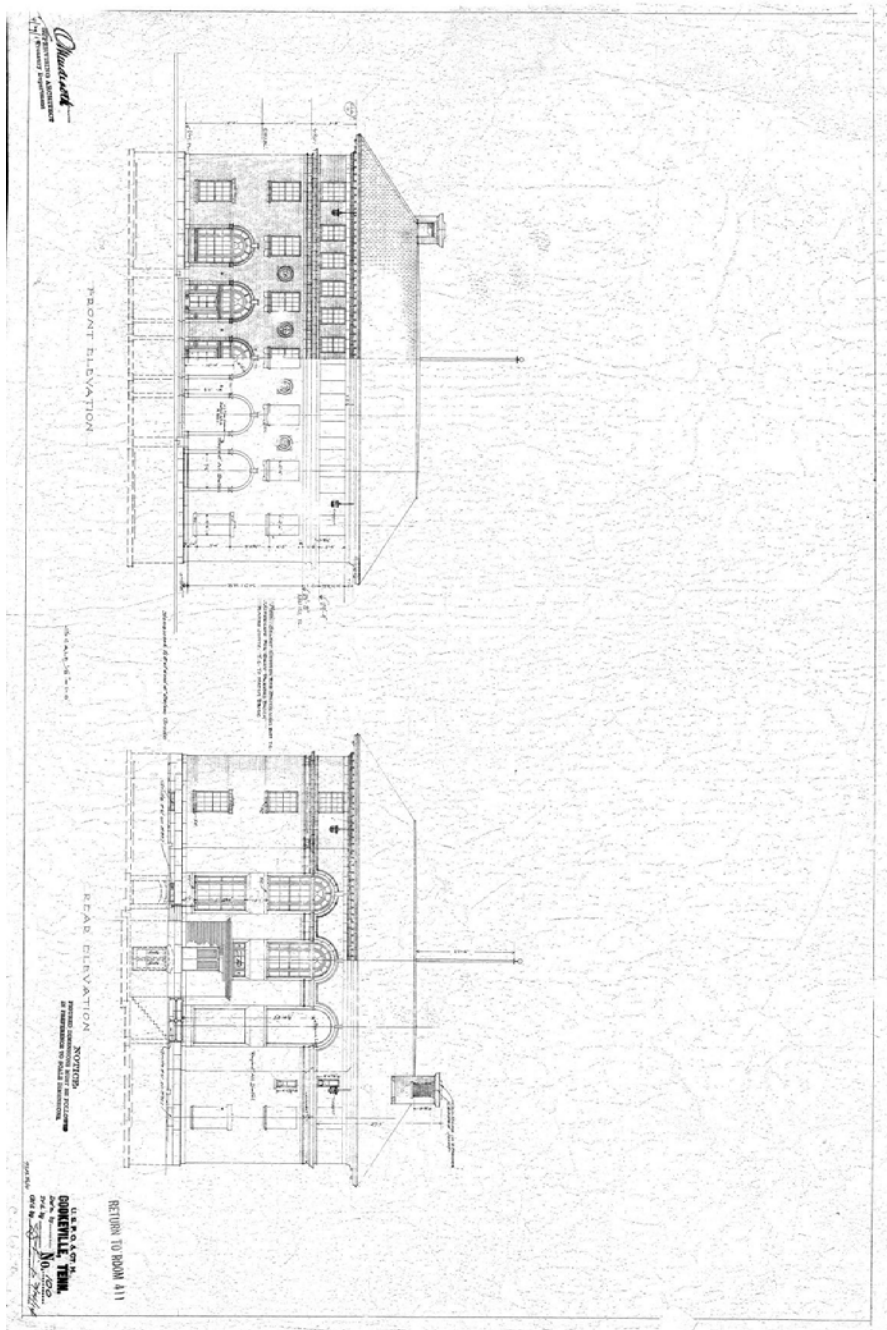
1. Exterior, Historic postcard, primary (north) elevation.
2. Exterior, Primary (north) elevation along Broad Street.
3. Exterior, Perspective of the north and east elevations, looking west/southwest along Broad Street towards Walnut Street with the 1916 building in the center of the image and the 1964 annex visible on the east end of the building.
4. Exterior, Rear (south) elevation, looking northwest with the loading platform and receiving dock at the center of the image.
5. Exterior, The west elevation, looking east/southeast from the opposite side of Walnut Street with the 1964 addition seen protruding from the 1916 elevation at the far left of the image.
6. Exterior, The east elevation of the 1964 annex, looking directly west from the parking lot associated with the building.
7. Interior, The western half of the lobby.
8. Interior, The eastern half of the lobby.
9. Interior, The third-story courtroom, looking southeast from the northwest corner of the room with the Judge's bench at the left-center of the image.

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National Park Service

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Plans

*United States Post Office and Court House  
Putnam County, Tennessee*

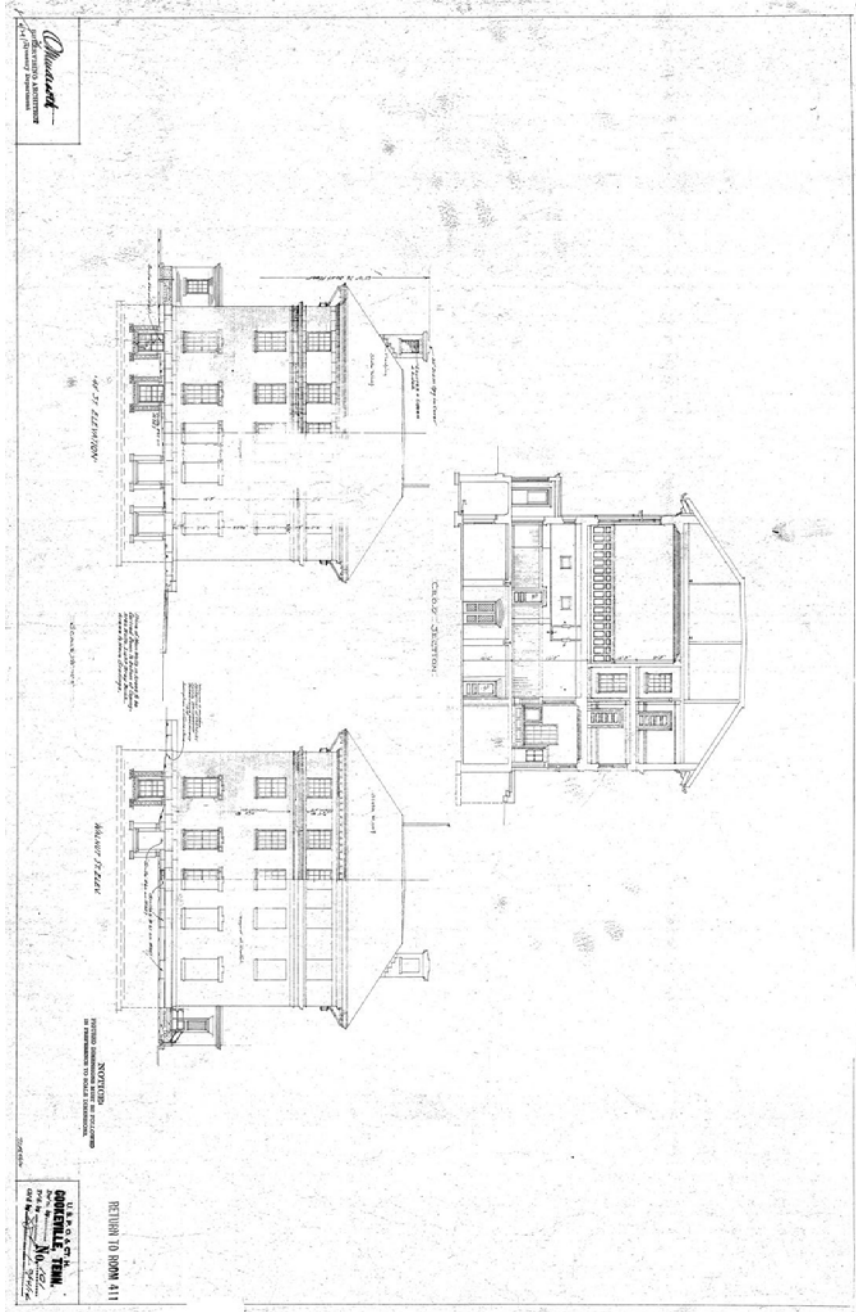


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Plans

*United States Post Office and Court House  
Putnam County, Tennessee*

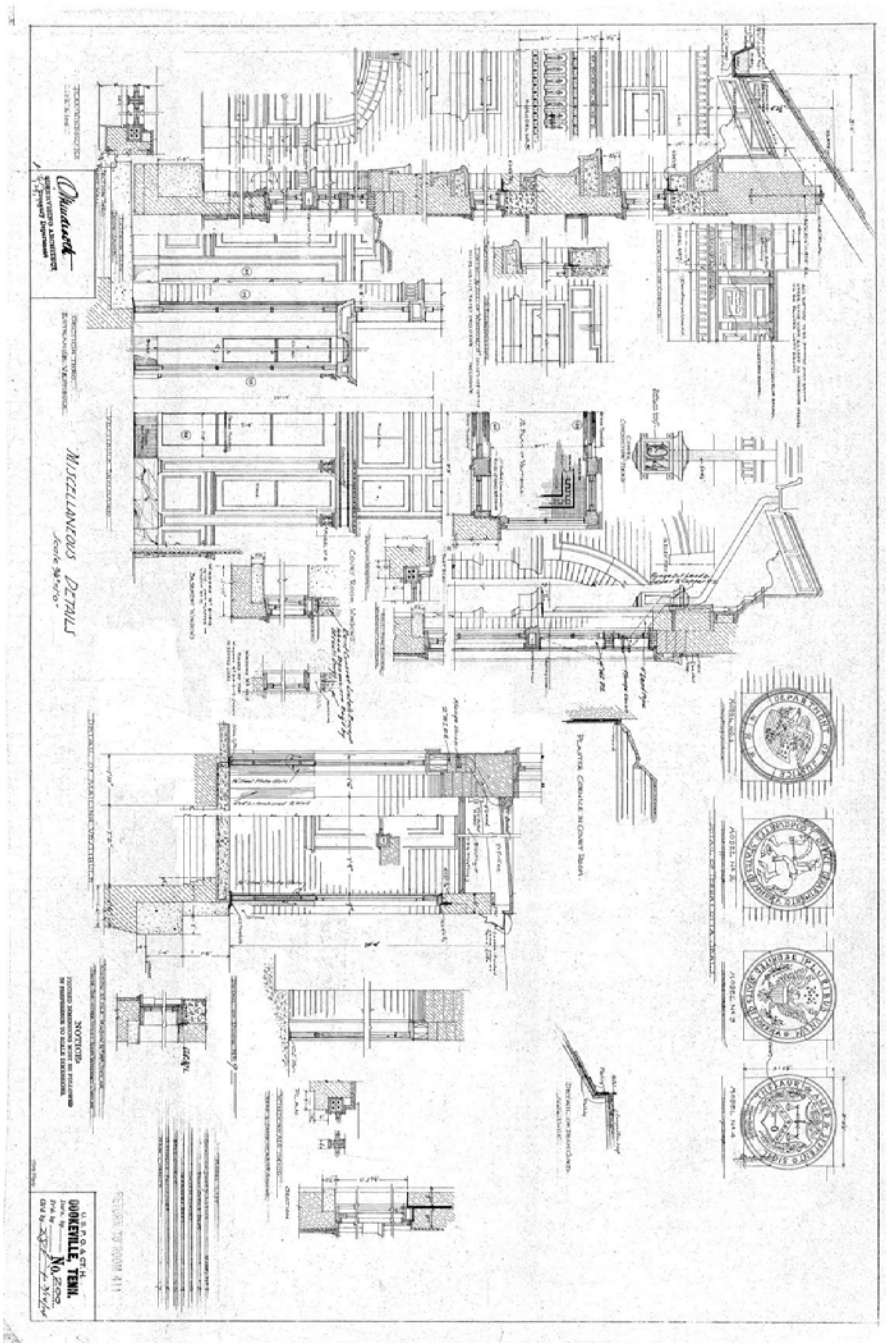


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Plans

*United States Post Office and Court House  
Putnam County, Tennessee*

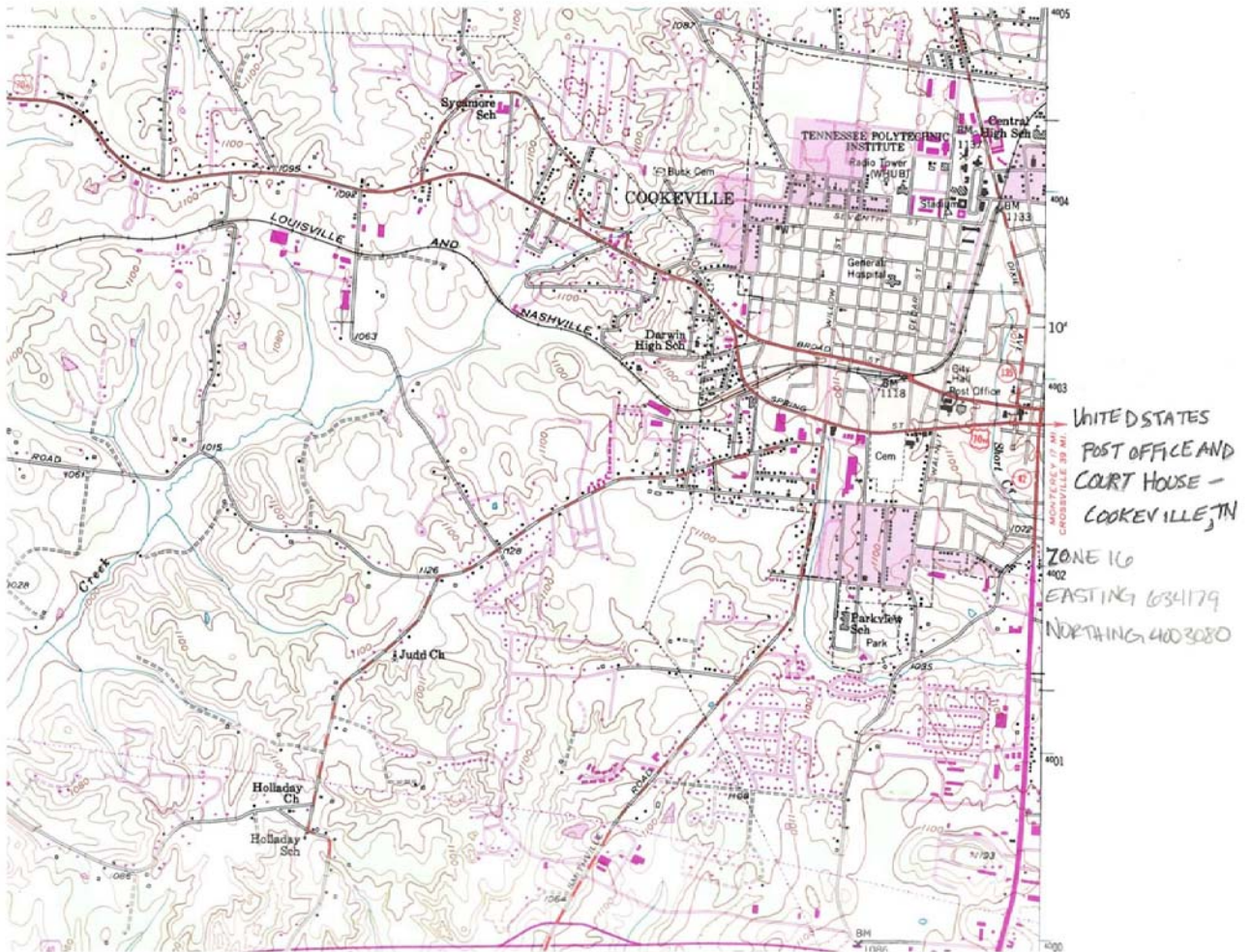


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*United States Post Office and Court House  
Putnam County, Tennessee*



U. S. Court House and Post Office,  
Cookeville, Tenn.





L. CLURE MORTON UNITED STATES POST OFFICE & COURT HOUSE







REGIO







SERVICE INFORMATION CENTER



POST OFFICE

POST OFFICE





UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY NAME: United States Post Office and Court House

MULTIPLE NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: TENNESSEE, Putnam

DATE RECEIVED: 10/31/14      DATE OF PENDING LIST: 11/25/14  
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 12/10/14      DATE OF 45TH DAY: 12/17/14  
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 14001053

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      12-16-14 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.



**TENNESSEE HISTORICAL COMMISSION**  
STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE  
2941 LEBANON ROAD  
NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE 37214  
OFFICE: (615) 532-1550  
E-mail: [Claudette.Stager@tn.gov](mailto:Claudette.Stager@tn.gov)  
DIRECT: (615) 770-1089  
[www.tnhistoricalcommission.org](http://www.tnhistoricalcommission.org)

September 11, 2014

Elizabeth Hannold  
US General Services Administration  
PBS/Center for Historic Buildings  
Suite 5400  
1800 F St. NW  
Washington DC 20405

Dear Ms. Hannold:

Enclosed please find a signed continuation sheet for the nomination of the United States Post Office and Court House in Cookeville, Putnam County, Tennessee. I appreciate GSA's efforts to complete this nomination and others.

The nomination is much improved from the 2006 version. I would suggest expanding the period of significance for criterion A in the area of politics/government would make this a stronger nomination, but I believe that the nomination can stand with the 1916 period of significance.

If you have any questions about this matter, please contact me.

Sincerely,

Claudette Stager  
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

CS/cs





October 30, 2014

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

Dear Ms. Shull:

The U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) is pleased to nominate the United States Post Office and Court House located at 9 E. Broad Street, Cookeville, Tennessee, for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places. The nomination is hereby submitted on disk in accordance with the May 6, 2013 guidance and includes the following:

- Signed original first page of the National Register of Historic Places nomination form;
- Disk 1 - The enclosed disk contains the true and correct copy of the nomination for the United States Post Office and Court House, located in Cookeville, TN, to the National Register of Historic Place and correspondence from the TNSHPO; and,
- Disk 2 - The enclosed disk contains the .tif image files for the above referenced nomination.

In accordance with 36 CFR Part 60.9(c), the appropriate local elected officials were notified of GSA's intent to nominate the above referenced property to the National Register of Historic Places by letters dated September 10, 2014.

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 Elizabeth Hannold at (202) 501-2863 or [elizabeth.hannold@gsa.gov](mailto:elizabeth.hannold@gsa.gov).

Sincerely,



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

Enclosures

cc: Audrey Entorf, Regional Historic Preservation Officer