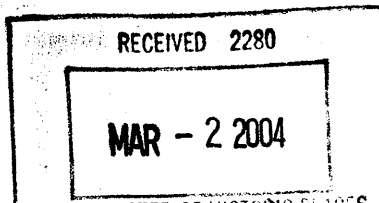


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service



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 Government Square

Other names/site number Old City Hall/First US Post Office & Courthouse (LC13:C09-1); Old Federal Building/2nd US Post Office & Courthouse (LC13:C09-110); Municipal Comfort Station (LC13:C09-125)

2. Location

Street & number North 9th to North 10th Street, O to P Street Not for publication

City or town Lincoln Vicinity

State Nebraska Code NE County Lancaster Code 109 Zip code 68508

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, 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.)

Lawrence Sommer
Signature of certifying official

2/26/04
Date

Director, Nebraska State Historical Society
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying 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.
 - see continuation sheet.
 - determined eligible for the National Register.
 - see continuation sheet.
 - determined not eligible for the National Register.
 - removed from the National Register.
 - other, (explain): _____

Edson F. Beall 4/15/04

for
Signature of Keeper

Date of Action

Government Square

Name of Property

Lancaster County, Nebraska

County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- Private
- Public-local
- Public-state
- Public-federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
3		Buildings
		Sites
		Structures
	2	Objects
3	2	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

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

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

1

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

- GOVERNMENT/post office
- GOVERNMENT/courthouse
- GOVERNMENT/city hall
- GOVERNMENT/public comfort station

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

- GOVERNMENT/government office
- DOMESTIC/multiple dwelling (work in progress)
- COMMERCE/TRADE/specialty store, restaurant (work in progress)
- VACANT/NOT IN USE

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

- LATE VICTORIAN/Second Empire, High Victorian Gothic
- LATE 19TH & 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS/Beaux Arts
- LATE 19th & 20th CENTURY REVIVALS/Classic Revival

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions.)

- Foundation Limestone, granite
- Walls Limestone, granite
- Roof Slate, built up tar & gravel
- Other

Narrative Description

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

Government Square
Name of Property

Lancaster County, Nebraska
County and State

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.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- 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.)

Property is:

- 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.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Government

Architecture

Period of Significance

1874-1941

Significant Dates

1874-79, 1905 (Old City Hall)

1904-06, 1915-16, 1939-41 (Old Federal Building)

1924 (Comfort Station)

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

A.B. Mullett, Wm. A. Potter; James Knox Taylor, Oscar Wenderoth, J.A. Wetmore; Fritz Craig

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more 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 for additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local Government
- University
- Other
- Name of repository: _____

Government Square

Name of Property

Lancaster County, Nebraska

County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property 2 acres, more or less

UTM References (place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet).

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
1.	14	4520400	693100	3.			
2.				4.			
				[]	See continuation sheet		

Verbal Boundary Description

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

Boundary Justification

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

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Edward Zimmer, Planner and Carrie Schneider, Historic Preservation Intern
organization Lincoln-Lancaster County Planning Department date Dec. 15, 2003
street & number 555 South 10th Street telephone 402.441.6360
city or town Lincoln state NE zip code 68508

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/title City of Lincoln, Nebraska c/o Urban Development Department / NuStyle Development Corp.
street & number 129 N 10th / 1025 Leavenworth telephone 402.441.7857 / 402.345.8000
city or town Lincoln / Omaha state NE / NE zip code 68508 / 68102

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determined 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, (15 USC 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 205

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 1

Government Square

Name of Property
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DESCRIPTION

Government Square is a city block, 300'x300', near the west edge of downtown Lincoln, Lancaster County, Nebraska. From the 1870s to 1960s it was the seat of the federal government in Nebraska's capital city; from 1905-1969 it also provided Lincoln's City Hall. Three historic buildings occupy the block. Oldest is the hybrid Second Empire/High Victorian Gothic style U. S. Post Office and Courthouse, built 1874-9 on the south half of the block. The three-story limestone structure was adapted in 1907 and used until 1969 as Lincoln's City Hall (also known as Old City Hall). That building was supplanted by the second U. S. Post Office and Courthouse on the north half of the block, built in three campaigns (1904-6; 1915-16; 1939-41). Known as the Old Federal Building, it is a four-story, C-shaped limestone building, designed in the Beaux Arts Neoclassical style by the Supervising Architect of the U.S. Treasury. The third and smallest building on the block is a small, limestone, Neo-Classical Revival style Municipal Comfort Station, built on the west side of the south half in 1924 from designs by Lincoln architect Fritz Craig. The block also has a vest-pocket park on the southeast corner, containing a granite sculpture by Jene Highstein installed in 1985; it is considered a minor intrusion due to its date of installation.

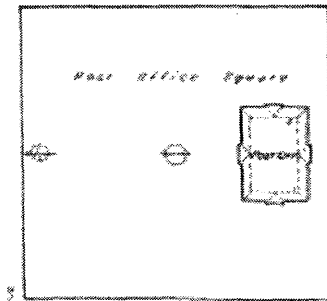
Evolution of the Site

The Original Plat of Lincoln, Nebraska, adopted in 1867 as the plan for Nebraska's new capital city, was developed on a grid system on a module of 300'x300' blocks. Several areas were designated for specific uses including the Capitol, university campus, and public park (on 720'x720' "superblocks"), and blocks for schools, a county courthouse, library/historical society, and "Market Square." The last block, bounded by O and P Streets from 9th to and Streets, was described as "an open air market for produce and livestock, as well as a camping ground for immigrants and a general gathering place."¹ In 1873 the City of Lincoln deeded the block to the U. S. Government as a location for a post office and courthouse and construction began in 1874 under Supervising Architect of the (U. S.) Treasury A. B. Mullett. He was replaced in 1875 by William Appleton Potter and the building was completed by 1879.

The original Post Office and Courthouse was located at the center of the O Street frontage on the south half of the block north half of the block was originally developed as a public open space, with diagonal walks from corner to corner, an artesian fountain at the center, and by the 1880s, a two-story bandstand

near the center of the P Street frontage. The artesian well pumped mineral water that was reputed to cure anything from indigestion to cancer.²

In 1904 construction began on a new U. S. Post Office and Courthouse on the east end of the north half of the block. This portion was a C-shaped structure facing east to 10th Street, with a loading dock on the west side. The remainder of the north half of the block remained park space until 1914 when a second portion of the new



*Detail from 1891 Sanborn Map
Co. map of Lincoln, north to left.
showing bandstand, fountain, "Post Office" (left to right).*



*Postcard view of new Post
Office (left) and converted City Hall (right), ca. 1910.*

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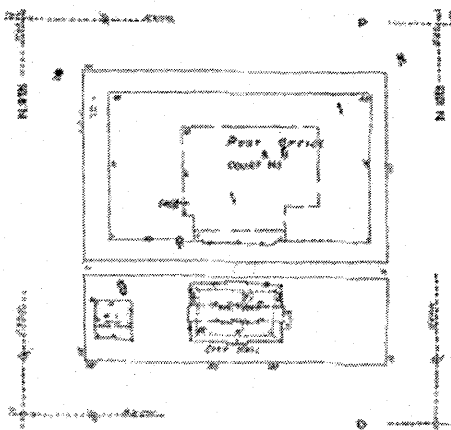
Government Square

Name of Property

Lancaster County, Nebraska

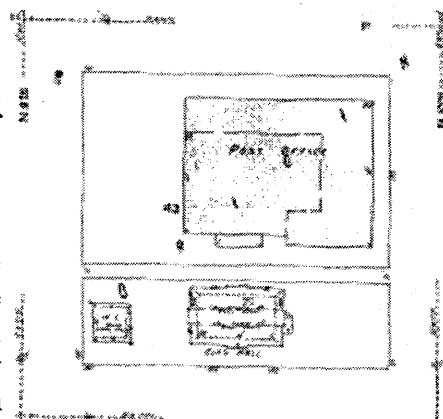
County and State

building was constructed in 1915-16 west of the first wing, reducing the park space to the west end of the north half of the block and causing the fountain to be relocated to the 9th Street frontage. On the south half of the block, the City of Lincoln adapted the old Post Office as City Hall, then in 1924 erected a Municipal Comfort Station on the west side of the block. Lincoln architect Fritz Craig signed a handsome perspective drawing for the little limestone building in the NeoClassical Revival style.



Detail, 1928 Sanborn, /updated 1949 latter.

The buildings on Government Square were completed in 1939-41 with the construction of the west portion of the Post Office and Courthouse, finishing a large C-shaped plan with a one-story mailroom embraced within the taller "C." Open space on the block was reduced to lawns on the east and north sides of the Post Office and Courthouse (with vehicle parking on the west side), and on the south part of the block, the southeast corner and the area between the Comfort Station and City Hall. The old artesian well was capped in the basement of the Post Office/Courthouse, where its location is still visible in a sealed "manhole." An alley was created east-west between the City Hall and Post Office buildings, accessing loading docks on the rear of the



Detail, 1928 Sanborn Map Co.

In 1985 the southeast corner of the block was developed as a small grassy park with two large, black granite sculptures titled "Tem" and "Ptah" by sculpture Jene Highstein. The small park is a welcome oasis in downtown but the sculptures must be considered non-contributing objects on Government Square due to their date of installation.

Construction and Description of the Buildings
"Old City Hall"

The former U. S. Post Office and Courthouse at 920 O Street in Lincoln, commonly known as Old City Hall, was initiated under the design supervision of Alfred B. Mullett as the Supervising Architect of the Treasury. He visited Lincoln in May 1874 to finalize arrangements for construction, but by the next year had been replaced by William Appleton Potter in the office of Supervising Architect. The building which resulted from this mixed design parentage is a three-and-a-half story limestone structure with the massing and mansard roof of a Second Empire style structure and the ornament of a High Victorian Gothic structure. It is well-finished on all four sides as befitted its original role as the sole building on the prominent block. The limestone was principally obtained from the Gwyer Quarries on the Platte River in Sarpy County, Nebraska. The pale, warm-toned limestone is quarry-faced except where it is tooled smooth for stringcourses at the watertable, sill, and lintel levels, and at the surrounds of the fenestration.

The south facade of the structure is now the principal facade, accessed by wide steps from the public sidewalk up to a terrace level. The terrace is contained by an old wall of eroded Dakota sandstone blocks. The 90 foot south facade (and very similar north facade) is seven bays long, with a projecting central entrance pavilion which rises through the cornice creating a tower-like element at the fourth (attic) story level. The east and west, 60 foot facades are three bays wide, with a similar central pavilion/tower feature.

The structure has three entrances, at the center of the south, west, and north sides, with a former center entrance on the east side converted to a window. Limestone steps provide access to the south door, while the north door is at grade level but has steps

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Government Square

Name of Property

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just inside the entrance. A discrete ramp was added to the west entrance in renovation work in the early 1980s. Formerly the south facade had two additional entrances at the center of each side (placing entrances at the second, fourth [central], and sixth bays) but the side entrances were converted to windows in the 1907 conversion to City Hall. All of the entrances, including those converted to windows, have trefoil arches and flanking columns. All of the other windows below the attic level feature shallow pointed arches and double windows, but on the central tower each pair of windows are further elaborated by a central stone column serving as a mullion. The central attic windows have trefoil tops and a quatrafoil ornament piercing the stonework above the windows. The attic story is formed by a slate covered, mansard roof with a gable-roofed dormer surmounting each bay. Five stone chimneys pierce the roof, two each on the north and south pitches and one on the west side.

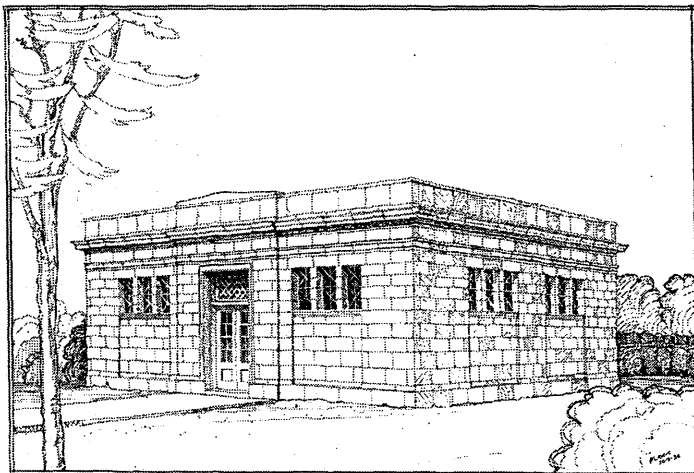
The interior of the former Post Office and Courthouse was remodeled when the building was adapted into Lincoln's City Hall in 1907. Inside the main, south entrance the vestibule floor is mosaic, inscribed "CITY OF LINCOLN." The center of the main floor is an octagonal rotunda, supported by cast iron, clustered columns. The main floors are terrazzo and the walls of the central space have heavy classical entablatures and Roman Ionic pilasters. There are offices along the east and west walls of the main floor, with pointed arch wooden door frames; at the center of the east and west walls are vault doors with the same trim. A wide, cast iron staircase rises on the north wall and tucked against it is an open elevator shaft of metal grillwork and glass.

The second floor has a wide east-west corridor. The length of the south side of this floor is a single space, the former courtroom and subsequent City Council chamber. Its coffered, pressed metal ceiling has been restored. The third and fourth floors contain offices, many retaining pointed-arch doorways with wooden surrounds.

The interior of the former Post Office and Courthouse/Old City Hall reflects careful renovation in the 1980s, after strenuous use of the building as City Hall for over half a century. The exterior is remarkably faithful to its original form, with modifications such as the adaptation of doors to windows carried out with care in design and materials. Old City Hall was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1969; its inclusion in this nomination reflects its role within a distinguished complex of governmental buildings.

Municipal Comfort Station

While all three buildings on Government Square eventually come into municipal ownership and use, the Comfort Station was the only one built by the City of Lincoln, at a cost of \$22,000 in 1924-5. It was described at the time of its opening as "one of the most modern stations of the sort on the D. L. D." ³ A perspective sketch for the building is inscribed "F. Craig 10-2-24." Fritz Craig (1887-1960) was a Lincoln architect who practiced from 1924 until his death. The single-story, flat roofed limestone building is located at the corner of 9th and O Streets, with its 39-foot-long, three bay principal facade facing west. The single entrance is centered on that facade, with a slightly projecting surround which continues up through the entablature and is topped by a peaked capstone above the parapet, as a modest pediment. There is a criss-cross grill at the transom above the doors and Roman-cross muntins in all the windows.



Given the original function of the building as public restrooms, all the windows are located high in the walls, in groups of three on each bay. To strengthen the effect of the small windows, they are clustered within a recess in each bay and united by a common stone molding at the sill level.

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The 32-foot side facades to the north and south have two bays of windows on each side, while the rear, east side has two tripartite groups and a single central window. The stonework of the Comfort Station is smooth limestone, with a full classical entablature on all sides.

The interior of the building originally included (along the west side) a bootblack stand, a small sales counter for cigars, and a parcel checkroom. A double rank of toilets, with six to each side, filled the center of the building, with urinals and lavatories on the north and south walls. The plan did not include separate accommodations for men and women, and was described upon opening as "PUBLIC COMFORT STATION FOR MEN."

The building was used in recent years as the city carpentry shop and most of the original interior features are not extant, but the exterior has a high degree of integrity.

"Old Federal Building" Summary

The Old Federal Building, located at 129 North 10th Street in downtown Lincoln, Nebraska, formerly served as a U.S. Post Office and Courthouse. The C-shaped building is a fine example of Beaux Arts Neoclassicism, constructed by the U. S. Government from designs by the Supervising Architect of the Treasury. The block-long limestone structure is four-stories tall, with a primary façade to the east (1904 - 06) and a lesser primary façade to the north (1915 - 1916). The west side (1939 - 1941) does not have the major entrances of the two primary sides but is nonetheless very prominent from the heavily traveled 9th Street corridor. The south side is secondary but has a similar degree of finish to the main façades.

While the building appears unified from the exterior, its complex construction history provides a framework for viewing the design. Its three building campaigns span nearly four decades. In 1903, Congress authorized the construction of a new U.S. Post Office and Courthouse to replace Old City Hall, appropriating \$350,000 for the task. This campaign erected the original (east façade) building. The office of the Supervising Architect of the Treasury completed the plans in March 1904, and construction began May 21, 1904. The building opened to the public seventeen months later on October 26, 1906. Ten years later in 1914, new plans were drawn up for the expansion of the building (north façade). The addition, under construction from 1915 to 1916, nearly doubled the size of the building. A final addition (west façade), under construction between 1939 and 1941, completed the building in its present form.

Supervising Architect James Knox Taylor designed the 1904 wing. In addition to Old Fed, Taylor designed federal buildings in nearly every other state in the union. Subsequent Supervising Architects, Oscar Wenderoth (1871-1938), James A. Wetmore (1863-1940), and Louis A. Simon expanded Taylor's original building, while remaining true to its initial design. Old Fed's life cycle typifies that of a Taylor building. Built in the early part of the 20th century, it was designed to serve a small population. The 1910s brought expansion, and then again in the late 1930s this grand building underwent renovation and expansion to accommodate the rapidly growing city of Lincoln. Finally in the 1960s the former Post Office and Courthouse was converted to local government uses as the federal government's needs outgrew the building's capacity.

"Old Federal Building" Architectural Description

The limestone walls of the flat-roofed structure sit on a granite waterable. The first story is treated as a "basement" with banded rustication and segmental arched windows with keystones. A prominent molding separates the base story from the three upper floors, which have smooth limestone cladding. The east end was constructed first between

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Government Square

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1904 and 1906, with colossal engaged Ionic columns establishing a central entrance pavilion on the east façade. A wide rank of steps serve three arched entrances, with cheek blocks topped by bronze lamps flanking the stairs. Above a modillion cornice, a balustrade tops the east façade, with a large stone cartouche with swags crowning the center. The north and south façades of the original portion were five bays long and had narrower steps serving a single door at the center of each front. In the 1915 addition of the central portion, the north entrance was enlarged to include three doorways (two converted from windows) and the steps were widened.

In the original (eastern) portion of the building the windows of each of the three upper stories were treated distinctly, with entablatures supported by modillions above the second story windows, unornamented openings on the third story, and keystones about the smaller fourth story windows. This treatment remains on the east façade but on the north side the windows were reworked during the 1915 addition. The entablatures were removed from the second story windows on the first and fifth bays, but left in place on three central bays. On the upper floors, the three central windows were modified with copper spandrels between the third and fourth stories.

In plan, the 1904 construction was a U-shaped building above the first story, with the open end to the west. The 1915 construction of the central wing extended the building seven bays to the west and began the process of modifying the floor plan to a large C-shape with the opening to the south. The process, completed when the 1939 building campaign finished the west end, matching on the north side the window pattern of the modified 1904 portion. The south façade of the 1939 construction mimicked the south end of the original 1904 design, and offered a plainer end, without entrances, to the west.

The south side has large overhead doors across the center, with a shallow truck dock. Above the first story, the upper portion of the south side is recessed in a deep C-shape, framed by five bay end portions. The inner walls of the "C" are finished in the same limestone and detailing as the more visible portions.

The interior of Old Federal Building reflects the same sequence of construction as the exterior. The east entrance retains considerable early finishes including terrazzo floors, marble wainscoting, and oak Corinthian pillars. Examination of the original plans for the 1904 and 1915 building campaigns indicate that the major public interiors of the 1904 construction were extensively altered in 1915 to their present configuration, but that original finishes were removed and reused. At the northeast corner of the first floor the north entrances open on a vestibule/stair lobby, which also contains a passenger elevator. The elevator has been updated in its doors and cage, but the original cast-iron enclosure for the shaft remains, surrounded by the main staircase. Across the north face of the first floor is a large lobby, formerly serving the Post Office, with standing-height oak tables and Art Deco grills on the south wall. On the second floor the significant spaces preserving early elements are the northeast stairwell, a double-loaded north-south corridor in the 1904 east portion, and the east portion of the main east-west corridor.

The most significant interior space is the third-floor courtroom within the 1904 construction. Although the coffered ceiling was for many years concealed by a drop-ceiling, it has been revealed as damaged but reparable and its restoration is underway. The east windows have been blocked with well-finished plaster panels, which were subsequent to the 1939 building campaign. These will also be removed and the windows revealed. The judge's bench, jury box, oak-paneled west wall, and three entry doors are all extant. The latter include double pocket oak doors and swinging double doors covered in leather and studded with brass.⁴

The interior of Old Federal Building retains some very significant features, such as the east lobby and third floor courtroom, but much has been altered in its transformation from a federal courthouse to municipal office building and its succession of local

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Government Square

Name of Property

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government uses in the late 20th century. The exterior of the building retains a very high degree of integrity, making it an essential landmark in Lincoln and a focal point of the Government Square complex.

Old Federal Building Construction Campaigns:
1904 - 1906 East Portion

The Post Office quickly outgrew its 1874 quarters. Lincoln's population boomed after its designation as the state capital, ballooning from 4,000 in 1874 to 55,000 in 1890. In 1903, Congress appropriated \$ 350,000 for the construction of a new U. S. Post Office and Courthouse. It also authorized the Secretary of the Treasury to sell the old Post Office (Old City Hall) to the City of Lincoln for \$50,000, a price substantially lower than its original cost of \$129,000.

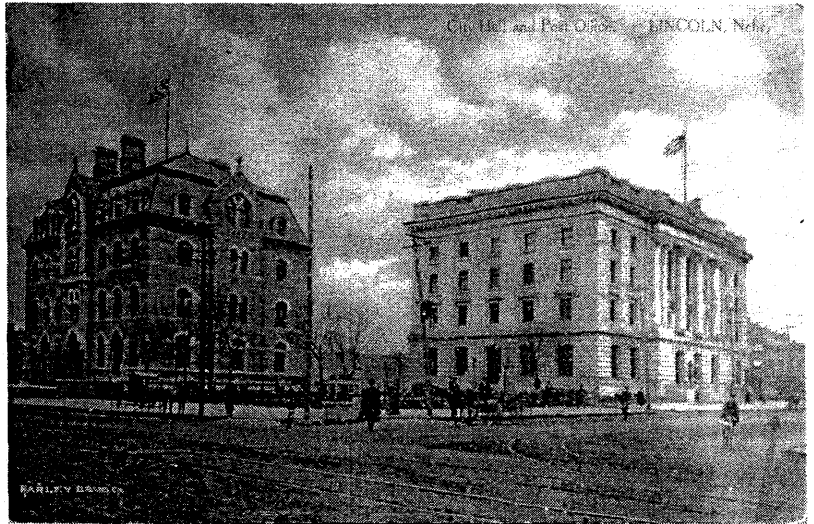
The first contract, awarded to the Charles W. Gindele Company of Chicago for \$276,423.90, was signed on April 11, 1904.⁵ This included the construction, interior finishes, grading and approach work. Materials for the grand building came from across the United States - Indiana limestone, New Hampshire granite and Vermont marble. A number of subcontracts were also awarded to firms nationwide. Otis Elevator of New York and Chicago would supply the passenger elevator for \$10,840. The electrical wiring and conduit contract was awarded to A.J. Adchambo of Minneapolis for \$14,500. The box equipment for the post office screens would come from Yale and Towne Manufacturing Co. of New York for an annual sum of \$2,671.10.⁶

Lincoln businesses and laborers also played a significant role in construction. Local red brick was used for wall construction. Lincoln Sash and Door Company provided the millwork and oak finish; Reimers and Fried laid the concrete curbs; and Westovers supplied the steel furring. The *Lincoln Sunday State Journal* reported that most of the laborers and mechanics were Lincoln residents.⁷

Excavation commenced on May 21st. Within two months the first footings were laid and the brickwork began shortly thereafter on July 15th. Charles Burnham of Norfolk, Grand Master of the Nebraska Masonic lodge, presided over the cornerstone ceremony on September 2, 1904.⁸ The brick wall construction took a year to complete. By the beginning of 1906, the building was 75 percent complete and dry. With the roof intact, interior plastering began at the end of January. Though the original contract terminated on May 31, 1906, the building would take another five months to complete. It opened to the public on October 26, 1906 at a final cost of \$350,000. The completed building contained 10,412 feet of floor space and measured 137'x76'.

Old Fed's design, in both scale and material choice, was intended to impress and endure. The 1904 building extended half a block and the base course of horizontal rustication further emphasized the building's immense nature. The interior was similarly grand, utilizing substantial finishes to ensure long-term usage. Public spaces such as lobbies and corridors were paneled in quartered oak with a base of verd-antique marble (green mottled marble). The floors were terrazzo with red marble borders. Even the toilets were outfitted in marble, though it is interesting to note that none were provided on the first floor. The elevator received striking treatment with an ornate ornamental cast iron enclosure that extended to the stair railings.⁹ The elevator, open to the public, ran to all four floors and the basement.

With two and a half times the floor space of Old City Hall, postal employees were now had elbow room in smart new quarters. Offices and the workroom were floored in maple. The workroom received pine wainscoting with hard plaster above, while offices were finished in hard plaster with quartered oak base board, chair rail and standing trim. To the rear of the central workroom, on the west end of the structure, was the mailing vestibule and platform where the wagons arrived for loading and



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unloading.¹⁰ The platform was covered with a marquise roof.¹¹ The walls of the vestibule were enameled brick to absorb as little light as possible.¹²

Theft prevention, both internal and external, was of critical importance to the post office. "To guard against internal robbery a system of lookout and galleries will be erected. With this system the postmaster or the post office inspector can examine any part of the work room without himself being seen. Thus any employee engaged in illicit opening of mail runs a fine chance of himself being discovered and punished."¹³ The vault system also served as a safeguard. Each division was provided with its own vault in the basement, and each vault was equipped with the latest devices for electrical protection and alarm.

Three public entrances served the building. Each required patrons to pass through two sets of doors, an exterior sliding door and an interior revolving one. The main three bay entrance was on 10th Street, with single bay entrances at the north and south ends of the building. Of the two lesser entrances, the southern was the more ornate. The exterior doors each had a central panel of cast iron grille work which complemented the grille work in the transom above the entrance.¹⁴ Due to the stairwell, the northern entrance had an interior swing door and a stone transom, though the grille work on the exterior doors matched that on the south end.

Positioned on either side of the main entrance were two large bronze lamp standards bearing groups of combination globes for lighting. At either side of the north and south entrances were specially designed bracket lamps, with a pendent base and single globe. These light fixtures were provided by the Chief Clerk of the Treasury Department and not charged to the building fund.¹⁵ The site lamps, positioned at the corners of the building, stood nine feet above grade, not including the top ornament - the federal eagle with its wings spread, atop a small globe.¹⁶

Parking needs were also taken into account. Areas at all four corners of the building were seeded to grass to accommodate horses and wagons. A new driveway built along the west side of the extended building connected P St. to the drive between Old City Hall and the new building.¹⁷

The new driveway paved over the existing artesian well. The old fountain had previously been torn down to assess the condition of the well casing. It was decided that the water would be piped from the existing well to a new fountain west of Old Fed. This fountain stood in the center of the west section of the block. Radiating from it were four diagonal sidewalks that connected to each of the four corners of the site.¹⁸ The *Sunday State Journal* noted that the well no longer enjoyed much use.¹⁹

Upon entering at 10th Street, patrons stood directly opposite the letter boxes. The building design deliberately separated sending and receiving operations, with the south end dedicated to sending mail and the north to carrier windows and letter boxes.²⁰ The Postmaster and his assistant were located in the northwest corner, away from the majority of foot traffic.

Each story employed a north-south corridor. On the first floor, the corridor ran along the east side and turned at each end, creating a U-shape. On all other floors the corridor ran along the west side. These corridors, though less utilized by the public, were also bedecked with red marble borders, verd-antique marble base, green marble wainscoting, and terrazzo floors. The beam and console details on these upper floors further accentuated the monumental character of the building.²¹ Only the fourth floor received scaled down accouterments; its only decorative flourish being a quartered oak chair rail.

While the post office occupied the entire first floor and the basement, the upper three floors housed other federal agencies and offices. The Railway Mail Service shared the second floor with the Land Office. The third floor housed the federal courtroom, judge's chambers, grand jury room and district attorney's offices. In the 1904 plans, much of the fourth floor remained unassigned. The only designated offices were for the Marshall, prisoners and trial witnesses.

The most magnificent space in the building was the third floor courtroom. Gleaming dark brown oak covered nearly every surface. Where oak was not employed, one could find dark green marble. Even the ceiling was ornate with a molded plaster cornice and cartouches on the north and south ends. A chandelier hung from a large circular molding in the center of the ceiling and flanked by two smaller circular moldings that matched the woodwork details above the doors.²² Three large east windows supplied natural light, with the chandelier providing additional illumination. Two sets of double doors served as the courtroom entrance - outer sliding doors and inner leather-covered double action doors. Upon entering the courtroom, the judge's desk sat to the right at the southern end atop a raised platform. The door behind the desk provided private access to the judge's chambers. Directly below

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the judge was the clerk's desk, also atop a platform. To the west of the clerk's desk was a door to the private stairway leading to the district attorney's offices on the fourth floor. A gated railing bisected the courtroom, differentiating the public viewing space from the legal arena.²³

The public opening of the post office on October 26, 1906 was a grand event. To commemorate the occasion, the Post Office issued a souvenir book containing history, financial statements and pictures, including "many mustachios and intricate pompadours."²⁴

Old Federal Building Construction Campaigns:
1915 - 1916 Central Wing/North Façade

1915 looked to be a banner year for construction. The existing federal building was again bursting at the seams, though the timeframe for new construction was anything but certain. "The post office addition is as certain as anything can be that the government manages."²⁵ With the appropriation in place, the start of construction was delayed by lack of plans. The government asked for bids in late winter, and construction began in early summer. The cost of the extension, projected at \$275,000, would add nearly 46,000 feet of floor space. The addition to the Post Office would be a part of the largest building season the city had seen to date. Miller & Paine was scheduled to begin construction on its new 8-story department store at a cost of \$300,000. The University also embarked on an extended building campaign with funds of \$400,000.²⁶

Proof of the city's continued growth evidenced itself in postal receipts. Since new Post Office's construction, postal receipts had doubled from \$250,000 to \$507,000.²⁷ Receipts for 1914 were up 7%, a sum of over \$469,000.²⁸ The Postmaster and Assistant Postmaster's salaries were contingent on these receipt totals. In April 1915, Postmaster Brown received a \$100 salary increase, bumping his paycheck to \$1000 per annum.

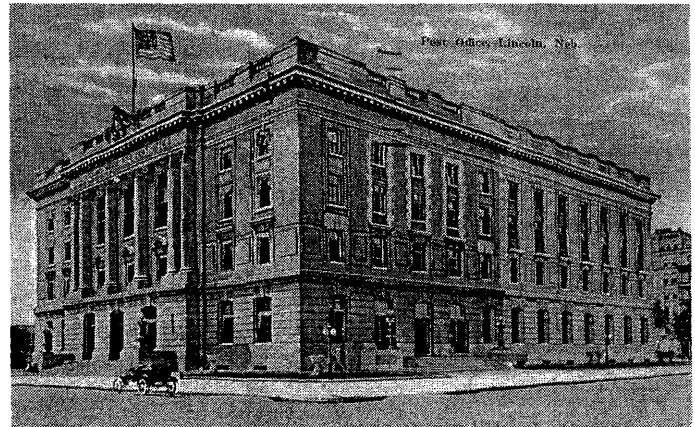
In May 1915 postal employees moved into the Matthews Building on N Street between 10th and 11th Streets to wait out the expansion. In comparison to the luxurious marble and grand stone of Old Fed, the Matthews Building was a decidedly plain affair. There was "no marble anywhere in sight."²⁹ The actual move was accomplished in a day and a half, with the postal clerks and five moving vans bearing the brunt of the duties.

Construction of the north façade began in July 1915 and by the end of the month the outer foundation walls were nearly complete. Work progressed rapidly. By the end of July, the west wall was waterproofed with a layer of tar between two tiers of bricks and the other sides of the building were moving along. The job of tearing out the west wall of the old building was nearly finished and work had begun on interior passageways.³⁰ By the end of October the first story neared completion.³¹

Workers returned to the improved federal building on June 29, 1916, an absence of nearly 13 months. True to their motto of preparedness, the Post Office opened for business the next day. The newly enlarged clerk's workroom was three times the size of the previous space. Other tenants like the Railway Mail Service were slated to move into their newly remodeled quarters in August. A newcomer to the building would be the Income Tax division of the IRS who received a special room on the second floor.³² The total cost of the building ran to \$625,000.³³

The 1915 addition by Supervising Architect of the Treasury James Wenderoth mirrored Taylor's original construction. All the exterior classical details, such as the balustrade and dentil molding, used in the 1904 construction were repeated in the expansion giving the building a sense of symmetry and grace. In the public lobbies and corridors, notes on the plans indicated that "wherever possible, the present marble wainscott, wood pilasters and wood paneling is to be removed from its present location and reused."³⁴

The new post office work space accounted for three-quarters of the first floor, with skylights added to better illuminate the space. The first floor was reconfigured along the east and north to accommodate additional office space. A layer



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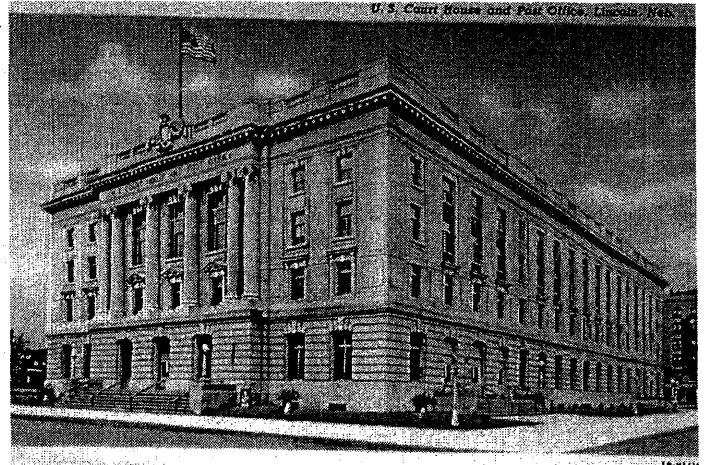
of offices now occupied the original corridor space, which was shifted west. Brass grilles were added at all sliding windows in the public spaces.

The upper floors received the same treatment as the lower, reusing 1904 material and adding new materials sympathetic to the original. The second floor plan notes that "consoles, beams, cornice and windows in corridor new work where shown as similar to align with same."³⁵ The corridor on the second floor was also shifted, creating a central walkway flanked by offices on the east and west.

The new entrance configuration changed the building dramatically. The north entrance transcended the east for main entry status. Two doors were added on either side of the existing north doorway. The door panels matched the existing with a central panel of cast iron grille work. Above each entrance was a stone transom. The old entrance steps were removed and replaced with a larger expanse to accommodate the new three bay entrance. At the east entrance the two outer doors were replaced with windows, reducing the entry to one bay. The south entrance was removed, replaced by a window with a lower bronze spandrel to match those added along the north elevation.³⁶ The mailing vestibule, formerly on the west side was moved to the south end of the building. A row of five wooden double doors serviced this entry.

In addition to the expanded entrance, the north elevation also received copper spandrels below the third and fourth story windows. This pattern was retrofitted to the existing five bays of the 1904 construction. Not all windows received this treatment. The first and fourth bays on the north elevation were left with limestone spandrels. The new north wing added seven bays to the existing five making the building appear slightly unbalanced; a problem remedied in the 1939 building campaign.

The west elevation also changed. The first two bays matched the building's four story character, but to the south a five bay, 1 story segment was constructed using the horizontal rustication. This piece was to serve as a building block for the western expansion of Old Fed, which the *Sunday State Journal* noted. "Eventually it is planned to erect another wing to the west corresponding with and matching the wing on the east, so that the one-story workroom will not appear out of place, as it does at present."³⁷



Old Federal Building Construction Campaigns:

1939 - 1941 West Completion

In 1939 Congress appropriated \$850,000 to finish the post office. This addition would create 101,000 more feet of floor space. On October 28, 1939, building permit number 31312 was issued to the United States Government for the work.³⁸ The original contract with Olson Brothers Construction for \$494,894 was issued the next day, but this did not include furnishings or "a number of miscellaneous items, necessitated by conditions when rehabilitation really got under way."³⁹ The contract stipulated the building would be completed within 360 days. Excavation began on October 31 and the first cement poured in mid-November. On Valentine's Day 1940, the first 360 tons of steel were placed. The stonemasons arrived in April. The expansion added two notable spaces, a new entrance in the northwest corner and a new north corridor and a secondary passenger elevator, which opened to the public just before the holidays.

Matching the new limestone and granite to the old required the stone in the older sections to be pointed and sandblasted "to harmonize with the Bedford limestone of the Ninth Street wing." New sod and sidewalks were laid. The main entrance supports at the east façade were crumbling, creating a dangerous sag. To remedy this the supports were replaced and the steps rebuilt.⁴⁰

The west wing expansion of the post office sounded the death knell for the artesian well. It was removed from Government

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Square in 1939, though by this time the well had stopped producing its famed mineral water and the fountain depended on rain to fill its wells.

The east corridor was again renovated. The dividing wall between the public foyer and operating sections was set back some feet and subsequently widened. All woodwork, including the fluted columns with marble bases in the east promenade, were washed in a silver blue. Tall desks of deep blond were added in the first floor public corridors. The Post Office also continued the tradition of heirloom pens available for patrons to address their outgoing mail. Corridor walls were clad in a half facing of marble. The *Sunday State Journal* noted that the renovation had clearly given new life to Old Fed. "The extended corridors, the brighter interior, the copper colored lock boxes, and the really entertaining choices among letter drops have glamorized the faded beauty."⁴¹

This renovation included the offices on the first floor. While the Registry Department remained in the south corner of the 1904 wing, floor to ceiling cages and three public windows were added. The stamp department expanded to five public windows to manage the increased sales volume.

Postal employees now numbered 275, with 84 carriers and nine rural delivery men. A custodial force of 31 cared for the building, including nine African American cleaning women. Nine special delivery messengers, contracted to the Post Office, furnished their own cars.⁴² An average of 90,000 pieces of mail traveled through the post office daily.

The new wing was dedicated on July 19, 1941. Borrowed city bleachers accommodated the nearly 500 spectators and the who's who of Nebraska politics addressed the crowd. This included Mayor Johnson, Governor Griswold, and Joe W. Seacrest, president of the chamber of commerce. Postmaster Fenton presided over the ceremonies. The American Legion Post No. 8 raised the flag and the All City Boys band performed a host of patriotic songs, including *America* and *the Star Spangled Banner*.⁴³

ENDNOTES

1. Silverman and Zimmer, *Haymarket Landmark District Walking Tour*, p. 4.
2. *Sunday State Journal*. May 1, 1915.
3. *Lincoln State Journal*, May 30, 1925, "The City's Newest and Costliest Comfort Station."
4. *Lincoln City Directory*. 1955.
5. *Sunday State Journal*. May 1, 1915.
6. *Sunday State Journal*. January 7, 1905.
7. *Ibid*.
8. *Lincoln Sunday Journal Star*, August 12, 1945.
9. Taylor, James Knox. *Details of Stairway and Elevator*. U.S.P.O. & C.H. Drawing No. 22. March 3, 1904.
10. *Sunday State Journal*. January 7, 1905.
11. Taylor, James Knox. *Rear Elevation*. U.S.P.O. & C.H. Drawing No. 13. March 3, 1904.
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15. Taylor, James Knox. *Front Elevation*. U.S.P.O. & C.H. Drawing No. 10. March 3, 1904.

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17. Taylor, James Knox. *Approach Plan*. U.S.P.O. & C.H. Drawing No. 1. March 3, 1904.

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25. *The Sunday State Journal*, Lincoln, NE. January 3, 1915.

26. *Ibid.*

27. *Sunday Journal Star*. July 13, 1941.

28. *The Sunday State Journal*. Lincoln, Nebraska. April 4, 1915.

29. *The Nebraska State Journal*. Lincoln, Nebraska. May 1, 1915.

30. *The Sunday State Journal*. Lincoln, Nebraska. July 25, 1915.

31. *Sunday State Journal*, Lincoln, NE. October 24, 1915.

32. *Nebraska State Journal*. Lincoln, Nebraska. June 30, 1916.

33. *Sunday State Journal*. Lincoln, Nebraska. July 2, 1916.

34. Wenderoth, James. *Details in Public Lobby and Corridors First Floor*. U.S.P.O. & C.H. Drawing No. 200A. October 29, 1914.

35. Wenderoth, James. *Second Floor Plan*. U.S.P.O. & C.H. Drawing No. 4A. November 30, 1914.

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38. *Lincoln Building Permit*, Number 31312. October 28, 1939.

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40. *Ibid.*

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Statement Of Significance

Government Square in Lincoln, Lancaster County, Nebraska is significant on the local level under Criterion "A" in the area of government and under Criterion "C" in the area of architecture as a distinguished collection of governmental buildings from the 19th and early 20th centuries, representing the work of a succession of Supervising Architects of the U.S. Treasury, as well as a handsome locally designed municipal service building.

Government Square in Lincoln, Nebraska presents a distinguished group of governmental buildings of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries which have adapted to a succession of uses while retaining a high degree of integrity, especially of their exteriors and relations to one another and the city. They demonstrate durability of materials and evolution of design, as well as adaptability of these major buildings.

Lincoln's first permanent post office (now *Old City Hall*) was built between 1874 and 1879 on the southern half of Government Square, bounded by 9th, 10th, P, and O Streets. That building demonstrates the rapid transition in federal architecture and architects in the late 19th century, having begun under the supervision of Alfred B. Mullett and then evolving during the brief tenure of his successor William A. Potter. Mullett is best known as an architect of the Second Empire style, especially in such monumental public buildings as the Old State, War and Navy Building in Washington, D.C. (also known as the Old Executive Office Building). The Lincoln federal building is organized with the projecting central entrance pavilions and mansard roof characteristic of that style, but Mullett's separation from the Office in 1875 and the appointment of William Appleton Potter as Supervising Architect appears to be reflected in the richly textured stonework and abundant Gothic ornament of Old City Hall. Potter's best buildings are in the High Victorian Gothic style which relates closely to the Lincoln building's ornament.

Lincoln's need for space to house expanding federal services quickly outgrew the 1870s building and in 1903 Congress appropriated \$350,000 for new construction in Lincoln. Using plans designed by James Knox Taylor, Supervising Architect of the Treasury, construction began in May 1904 on the north half of Government Square to build a larger replacement structure, now known as the Old Federal Building.

Described as a "trendsetter" during the Victorian era, Taylor is responsible for many admired public buildings across the country.¹ He graduated from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology during the 1880s and went to work as a temporary draftsman in the Supervising Architect's Office in 1885. He ascended to Supervising Architect in 1897, a position he would hold for fifteen years. During his tenure as Supervising Architect, Taylor made several administrative changes calculated to strengthen the architectural quality of the office's work, including the selection of designers through competitions.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, Congress spent generously on public buildings. With the available funds, Taylor indulged in his favored Beaux-Arts and Georgian styles. Often associated with the City Beautiful Movement, urban architecture of the early 1900s embraced grand public buildings, often in cities coming into their own as political and social hubs. "The civic center's beauty would reflect the souls of the city's inhabitants, inducing order, calm, and propriety therein."² As a result, many noteworthy buildings were created under Taylor's direction that have been recognized and preserved over the years. According to the *American Architect*, "the average architectural worth of the designs for which Mr. Taylor is officially responsible has at least equaled the average worth of those prepared by private architects..."³

Currently, Taylor has 113 buildings or districts listed on the National Register of Historic Places, of which 96 are Post Offices. Taylor's oeuvre, primarily limestone construction, establishes kinship between his creations. The Federal Building/U.S. Courthouse in Grand Forks, North Dakota (NR - 6.3.76) is a smaller cousin to Lincoln's Old Fed. The two buildings were constructed almost simultaneously, with Lincoln finishing in 1905 and Grand Forks in 1906. Sharing similar features such as the five bay primary façade topped with balustrade and central stone cartouche, the *Lincoln Daily Star* could have just as easily been lavishing praise on the Grand Forks structure when it said, "The building will combine simplicity of outline with elegance and

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almost perfect proportion.”⁴ The *Nebraska State Journal* also testified to Old Fed’s impact on the growing downtown cityscape, “Therefore, when we build, let it be such as our descendant will be thankful for.”⁵

Although Taylor was not the Supervising Architect for the additions of 1915 and 1939, his initial design set the pattern subsequent additions completed. His 1904 design completed the primary three bay east entrance and the 5 eastern bays on the north end. The central portion of the building was constructed in 1915-16 under Supervising Architect Oscar Wenderoth. The block-long building was completed in 1941 under the supervision of J. A. Wetmore. The successive additions not only mirrored the 1904 exterior features, but liberally reused the interior finishes during the many rounds of renovation and rehabilitation. This trend of extension and renovation is also evident in other buildings begun by Taylor and enlarged by subsequent Supervising Architects. The federal buildings at Portland, Maine (NR - 5.9.86), Boise, Idaho (NR - 5.12.76) and Butte, Montana (NR - 11.15.79) all expanded in the late 1920s - 1930s and retained Taylor’s original vision of Neoclassical grandeur.

The third building on Government Square is the small Municipal Comfort Station of 1924, designed by Lincoln architect Fritz Craig. Craig was skilled in the period revival styles and was responsible for many of the Greek chapter house in University of Nebraska's Greek Row (NRHP 1997) as well as many large houses and several churches. For this humble municipal building, he adopted the smooth limestone materials and a restrained version of the Neo-classical style displayed in the neighboring Old Federal Building to produce a gem of a small public building. City Directories reflect that the attendants who operated the Comfort Station and its concessions (shoe shining and cigar stand) in the early years of the 1920s and '30s were consistently African American men, including Trago T. McWilliams, a community leader whose own house was NRHP-listed in 1999 (1723 N. 29th St., Lincoln, NE). This does not in itself constitute significance, but it does underscore the value of preserving a variety of buildings that reflect diverse aspects of a community's history. The building is also associated with the D-L-D (Detroit-Lincoln-Denver) Highway, as a public comfort station along its designated route, and reflects the expansion of government services as surely as the city’s use of Old City Hall and the steady, four-decade campaign that built Old Federal Building.

Together, the buildings of Government Square form a noteworthy ensemble of well-preserved public buildings that demonstrate the growth of government services at the local and federal levels, the evolution of public, especially federal, architecture and a community's adaptation of its major landmarks. Today Old Federal Building and the Comfort Station are in the process of renovation and adaptation to new uses, including residences, while Old City Hall will remain in municipal ownership and use.

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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

This property is described as Block 43, Original Plat, Lincoln, Lancaster County, Nebraska, bounded by North 9th Street on the west, O Street on the south, North 10th Street on the east, and P Street on the north.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

These boundaries include all the property historically associated with Government Square.

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The following information applies to all photographs:

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All negatives at Lincoln/Lancaster County Planning Department

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Photo by E. Zimmer, February 2004

View looking north-northeast at 9th and O Streets towards Government Square with Comfort Station in the foreground, Old City Hall at right, and Old Federal Building in background.

Photo 2 of 15

Photo by E. Zimmer, February 2004

View of Comfort Station showing west facade (left) and south facade (right).

Photo 3 of 15

Photo by E. Zimmer, February 2004

View of Comfort Station from southeast showing south facade (center) and rear (south facade) at right.

Photo 4 of 15

Photo by E. Zimmer, February 2004

View of Old City Hall from the south.

Photo 5 of 15

Photo by E. Zimmer, February 2004

Detail of first floor window, west of south central entrance to Old City Hall, converted from entrance in 1906 remodeling.

Photo 6 of 15

Photo by E. Zimmer, February 2004

Interior view on first floor of Old City Hall, showing central space, looking north.

Photo 7 of 15

Photo by E. Zimmer, January 2004

Elevated view of Government Square from southeast, showing Old City Hall in center, Comfort Station on left, Old Federal building at right.

Photo 8 of 15

Photo by E. Zimmer, December 2002.

View of Old Federal Building from the east, showing the east main facade (center) and south rear facade (left).

Photo 9 of 15

Photo by E. Zimmer, December 2002.

View of Old Federal Building from the northeast, showing the east facade (left) and north facade (right).

Photo 10 of 15

Photo by E. Zimmer, December 2002.

Interior view in Old Federal Building, showing stair & elevator lobby at northeast corner of first floor.

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Photo by E. Zimmer, December 2002.

Interior view in Old Federal Building, showing main lobby on north side of first floor, looking west.

Photo 12 of 15

Photo by E. Zimmer, December 2002.

Interior detail in Old Federal Building, showing clerks and judges benches in 3rd floor courtroom, looking southeast.

Photo 13 of 15

Photo by E. Zimmer, December 2002.

Interior view in Old Federal Building courtroom (3rd floor), showing paneled walls and three public doorways, looking northwest. Note laid in ceiling.

Photo 14 of 15

Photo by E. Zimmer, February 2004.

Interior view in Old Federal Building courtroom (3rd floor) showing work in progress on original plaster ceiling, looking northwest.

Photo 15 of 15

Photo by E. Zimmer, February 2004.

Interior view in Old Federal Building courtroom (3rd floor), showing original ceiling under restoration, looking north.