

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM  
FOR FEDERAL PROPERTIES**

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: <b>Maryland</b>
COUNTY: <b>Baltimore City</b>
FOR NPS USE ONLY
ENTRY DATE <b>FEB 15 1974</b>

**1. NAME**

COMMON:  
**United States Custom House**

AND/OR HISTORIC:  
**Same**

**2. LOCATION**

STREET AND NUMBER:  
**40 ~~South~~ Gay Street**

CITY OR TOWN:  
**Baltimore**

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT:  
**3rd Congressional District**

STATE: **Maryland** CODE: **24** COUNTY: **Baltimore City** CODE: **005**

**3. CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Object <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Structure 	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public <input type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress	Yes: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Park <input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ _____ _____

**4. AGENCY**

**General Services Administration - Public Buildings Service**

REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS: (If applicable) \_\_\_\_\_ STREET AND NUMBER:  
**18th & F Streets, N. W.**

CITY OR TOWN:  
**Washington**

STATE: **D. C.** CODE: **11**

**5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC:  
**Baltimore City Courthouse**

STREET AND NUMBER:  
**200 St. Paul Street**

CITY OR TOWN:  
**Baltimore**

STATE: **Maryland** CODE: **24**

**6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

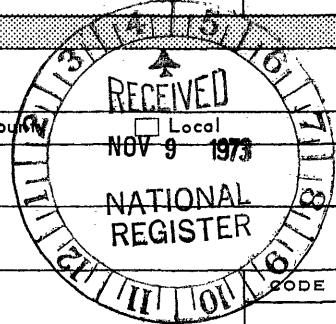
TITLE OF SURVEY:  
**None**

DATE OF SURVEY: \_\_\_\_\_  Federal  State  County  Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS: \_\_\_\_\_

STREET AND NUMBER: \_\_\_\_\_

CITY OR TOWN: \_\_\_\_\_ STATE: \_\_\_\_\_ CODE: \_\_\_\_\_



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## 7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered		<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site	

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The United States Custom House in Baltimore is free-standing on a site bounded by South Gay Street, East Lombard Street, Water Street and a parking lot running west to Commerce Street. It is a granite structure measuring 252'8" (13-bay east front) by 139'6" (7-bay north and south elevations). The very thick exterior walls are bearing members, but the structural system also utilizes steel frame construction. Above a low base course, the three principal elevations are composed of a rusticated basement or ground floor carrying a three-story high engaged colonnade of unfluted Roman Ionic order supporting a full entablature crowned by a balustrade. Visually, the ground floor acts as a podium for the order. The entablature and balustrade conceal an attic floor and low roof. The ground-floor windows are heavily barred. Those of the main floor are more elaborately composed than the others, suggesting a piano nobile, although there is little if any actual variation in the height of the floors above the ground floor. The main floor windows are fronted by balustrades having square balusters, as does the roof balustrade also. Console-supported alternating segmental and triangular pediments crown the main floor windows, which are headed by Mannerist panels. The corners of the building are rusticated. The stylistic treatment of the exterior is a restrained version of 16th century Italian Renaissance precedent with certain Mannerist details. Although the Custom House appears from three sides to be rectangular, it is in fact U-shaped, having a rear courtyard flanked by north and south wings whose three-bay west ends are identical in design with the other elevations. The remarkable feature of the west, or rear, elevation is the pavilion that occupies most of the court. Above a rusticated basement, or ground floor, the pavilion (which houses the Call Room) rises the height of two full stories to enclose the lofty chamber within. The hip roof is copper-sheathed and relatively high. The west wall has five bays, the end walls having three bays each. These walls are designed as archades without any columnar order. The measurements of the pavilion are 97'6" x 64'6", and it is attached to the west wall of the main block only by a ligature containing the passage from the main lobby to the Call Room, thus being, in effect, free-standing. The exterior is ornamented by sea monsters, shells and grotesque masks carved in the intractable granite of the window spandrels with great skill. As much care was taken with the design of the rear elevation as with those fronting the streets. The main (front) entrance on Gay Street is centered and projects slightly from the facade plane. The sill is eight steps above grade, the steps being flanked by plinths bearing iron lamp standards of Baroque design with lamps resembling 18th-century ship's stern lanterns. The doors are flanked by paneled pilasters headed by Roman Doric capitals ornamented by masques. The doors themselves have iron grille-work. There are minor entrances on Lombard and Water Streets. The exterior has not undergone any alterations or modifications of any significance.

The interior has suffered one major alteration: the originally open lobby has had its well floored over and its staircases enclosed. No other major structural changes have occurred. Except for the loss of fine spatial effect in the lobby (the well rose to the fourth floor), the building is much as it was. Broad marble steps lead from the entrance to the main floor lobby. The marble floor is inlaid with a brass compass design below the former well. The walls are paneled with variegated marble at the entrance. The staircases,

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(Continuation Sheet)

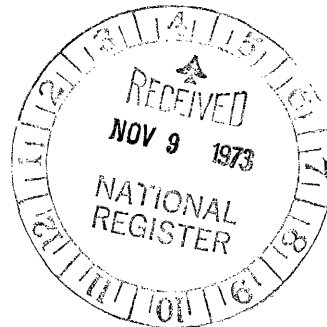
STATE	
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COUNTY	
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(Number all entries)

7. DESCRIPTION

now enclosed, are marble and have fine ornamental iron railings capped with brass. They rise around open wells in three runs to each floor. Lateral corridors run north and south from the lobby area and give access to offices. The upper floors are similar in plan. The attic (fifth) floor houses mechanical equipment and storage areas. The office floors have marble floors and dadoes with plaster walls and ceilings with plaster cornices.

Opposite the entrance and entered from the lobby is the great glory of the interior, the Call Room. This lofty chamber has lost its original grille-topped marble counters and is now lighted by a suspended grid of fluorescent fixtures that makes the ceiling hard to view, but it is otherwise unaltered. The walls are articulated by paired Roman Ionic pilasters supporting an entablature with paneled frieze. Above the entablature is a deep paneled cove effecting the transition from the outer perimeter to the central ceiling panel measuring 63' x 30'. The main ceiling bears a painting titled "Entering Harbour." The panels of the cove and frieze, and five lunettes on the east wall, together with the border of the central ceiling panel contain paintings depicting the evolution of navigation. The main ceiling panel shows a fleet of ten sailing vessels - ships (including a whaler), barks, a barkentine, a brig, and a schooner entering harbor on a hazy day. The series of panels and lunettes shows about 125 historic vessels ranging in size from a gondola to a North Atlantic Liner and in period from ancient Egypt to the then latest marvel of marine architecture and engineering, the turbine-driven R.M.S. Mauretania of 1907 (accompanied by Mr. J.P. Morgan's yacht, Corsair). These paintings are generally acknowledged to constitute the masterpiece of the noted American artist Francis D. Millet, one of the principal muralists of his day.



**8. SIGNIFICANCE**

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- Pre-Columbian       16th Century       18th Century       20th Century  
 15th Century       17th Century       19th Century

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) 1903-1907

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |  |   |  |  |
|--|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal              | <input type="checkbox"/> Education              | <input type="checkbox"/> Political           | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric             | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering            | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic                | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry               | <input type="checkbox"/> Science             | _____                                    |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agriculture  | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention              | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture           | _____                                    |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian | _____                                    |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Art          | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature             | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater             | _____                                    |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Commerce     | <input type="checkbox"/> Military               | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation      | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications          | <input type="checkbox"/> Music                  |  | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation            |   |  | _____                                    |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The United States Custom House in Baltimore is an exceptionally distinguished example of Beaux-Arts architecture, that is, a style which reflected the basic tenets of the École des Beaux Arts in Paris, the model for the development and direction of architectural schools throughout the United States in the 19th and early 20th century. The Beaux Arts manner emphasizes a highly ordered, formal plan, axial symmetry, monumentality and classicistic (Roman and Renaissance) spacial relationships and details. Noteworthy for its handsome design, suave proportions, superb workmanship, and famous ceiling painting, the Baltimore Custom House was built from 1903 through late 1907 from plans by Hornblower and Marshall, a Washington, D. C. firm composed of Joseph C. Hornblower (1848-1908) and John Rush Marshall (1851-1927). Hornblower matriculated from the École des Beaux-Arts in Paris in 1871. Both men were Fellows of the American Institute of Architects. The Custom House is not only a particularly refined and subtly restrained design, it is also a fine exemplar of the integral blending of art and architecture that flourished briefly in America around the turn of the century. The Call Room ceiling by Francis Davis Millet (1846-1912) is generally acknowledged to be the masterpiece of that important American artist. Millet's decorative program for the Call Room represents not only an aesthetic success of major significance in the history of American mural painting but also a carefully researched and accurately depicted visual history of the Evolution of Navigation. Ironically, Millet, who passionately loved ships, perished in the Titanic disaster in 1912. The Custom House is unaltered, except for the enclosure of the majestic staircases and lobby well, and magnificently illustrates the finest workmanship and building materials of its era. It stands on the site of Latrobe's earlier Custom House and withstood the ravages of the Great Baltimore Fire of 1904. It was designated Historic by Commissioner of Customs Myles J. Ambrose on January 18, 1972. From December 2, 1907 until 1953 it served as the Custom House. Since that time Selective Service personnel have occupied the building.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS



9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Clayton Colmar Hall, Baltimore, Its History and Its People, 1912

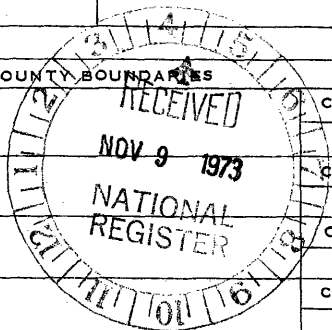
10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY				O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES				
CORNER	LATITUDE		LONGITUDE		N	LATITUDE		W	LONGITUDE
	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds
NW	°	'	"	°	'	"	°	'	"
NE	°	'	"	°	'	"	39	17	17
SE	°	'	"	°	'	"	76	36	33
SW	°	'	"	°	'	"			

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 1

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE



6171  
19/301200  
4447000

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE: <b>John D. Milner, AIA, Executive Director</b>	DATE: <b>22 June 1973</b>
BUSINESS ADDRESS: <b>National Heritage Corporation</b>	
STREET AND NUMBER: <b>P. O. Box 167</b>	PHONE: <b>215-459-8710</b>
CITY OR TOWN: <b>Chadds Ford</b>	STATE <b>Pennsylvania 19317</b>
	CODE <b>37</b>

12. CERTIFICATION OF NOMINATION

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

State Liaison Officer recommendation:

Yes  
 No  
 None

*Dorlando Ridout II*  
 State Liaison Officer Signature

In compliance with Executive Order 11593, I hereby nominate this property to the National Register, certifying that the State Liaison Officer has been allowed 90 days in which to present the nomination to the State Review Board and to evaluate its significance. The recommended level of significance is  National  State  Local

*Steven R. Rutterbaum* 10/24/73  
 Federal Representative Signature Date  
 Historic Preservation  
 Liaison Officer

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

*W. R. Mortensen*  
 Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date 3/15/74

ATTEST:

*Henry F. Emery*  
 Keeper of the National Register

Date Feb 14, 1974