

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**REGISTERED NATIONAL
HISTORIC LANDMARKS**

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DATE ENTERED	

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

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

1 NAME

HISTORIC United States Courthouse, Custom House and Post Office

AND/OR COMMON
The Pioneer Courthouse

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER 555 S. W. Yamhill

CITY, TOWN Portland
VICINITY OF 3rd

STATE Oregon 97204 COUNTY Multnomah CODE 41

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME United States Government (GSA)

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN Washington VICINITY OF STATE D.C.

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, Multnomah County Courthouse
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN Portland STATE Oregon 97204

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE Historic American Buildings Survey

DATE 1954, 1964 FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS Library of Congress

CITY, TOWN Washington STATE D.C.

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The following description was prepared by Elizabeth Potter:

"Occupying a full city block in downtown Portland at S. W. Fifth Avenue and Morrison Street, the U.S. Courthouse and Custom House is presently being renovated under supervision of the General Services Administration for use by the Ninth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals and the bankruptcy division of Oregon's U.S. District Court. The building, popularly called "Pioneer Post Office" for many years, was officially redesignated "Pioneer Courthouse" by GSA in 1969. In 1963 it had been expected that the building would be surplused owing to proposed construction of a new federal building in Portland. However, in 1967 the U.S. Court of Appeals asked that the building be retained and restored for continued use by federal court offices. GSA prepared a feasibility study, and, having the support of the Oregon Historical Society, Portland Art Association and the local chapter of the AIA and other groups, the request was acted upon favorably. Exterior restoration work was carried out between 1971 and 1972. Interior renovation contract work was let in 1972 and is expected to be completed in time for re-dedication ceremonies scheduled for May 1, 1973.

During expansion and remodeling carried out between 1903 and 1905, wings consistent with the original design were added to the west face, and certain modifications were made to the interior. Current restoration work has been aimed at the appearance of 1905. Supervision of initial construction work has been attributed to local architect John H. Holman and to an E. B. St. John. Contractor was William Luther Higgins. Remodeling shortly after the turn of the century was directed by Portland architect Edgar Lazarus.

The following passages are quoted from Dr. Joseph A. Baird, Jr., Historic American Buildings Survey Photograph-Data Book Report, 1964.

"The original Post Office was a rectangular structure of stone which stood unaltered until 1903. At that time additions at the west (on 6th Street) increased the floor space of the first floor to almost double what it had been and continued on the second and third floors as two wings at the west of the older structure - with an open space between. It would be unwise to say that the building was 'spoiled' by these additions as they are a meticulously exact imitation of the style of the original structure - in the same kind of stone (apparently from a different quarry). Furthermore, they are essentially the kind of wings that might be expected on this kind of restrained building...

The basement level is made up of a thick wall of stones, with an externally roughened surface laid in regular horizontal courses. The first story was divided (east and west) into nine 'bays,' with a projecting group of three

(CONTINUED)

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1869-1875

BUILDER/ARCHITECT Alfred B. Mullett

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

One of the first monumental buildings to be constructed in the Pacific Northwest, the Pioneer Court House is the oldest standing Federal building in that area. Officially renamed in 1969, the structure had been a Post Office and a United States District Court (1875-1933) where the infamous land fraud trails began in 1904. The building was designed by Alfred Bult Mullett, who designed the United States Mint in San Francisco at about the same time. Mullett was the Supervisor, Architect of the Treasury from 1866 until 1874 when a large building program was taking place after the Civil War. He was responsible for the north wing of the U. S. Treasury in Washington, D.C. and the State, War and Navy Building as well as regional Federal structures in both the classic and the French Empire style.

Elizabeth Potter, in her report for the National Register, writes: "The following passages are quoted from Dr. Joseph A. Baird, Jr., Historic American Buildings Survey Photograph-Data Book Report, 1964.

"The Pioneer Post Office (so named in 1937, when it was again activated as a post office after three years of disuse) is undoubtedly the singly most important building of the American Northwest to survive into the 20th century. Finished in 1875, it was a dignified exemplar of Italianate (albeit more classicist) design, following the precedent of much civic and government building in both San Francisco and Portland. The additions of 'wings' (from the second story up), at the west in 1903, give it a more Baroque shape and made it more visually comparable to the San Francisco Mint - built also in the early 1870s. Long threatened by both government and city officials, the building has fortunately survived in a relatively intact condition, exteriorly and interiorly.

On February 24, 1869, the city council authorized Mayor Hamilton Boyd to sell the block to the United States Government for a customs house and post office at a cost of \$15,000. The sale was consummated two days later for the two hundred foot square block. At the time of its purchase, the Federal Government was criticized for locating the Court House and Post Office so far from the center of town, then down near the river. It was humorously suggested that a pony express service be established between the new Post Office and the center of business. Although the building's cost is variously given as

(CONTINUED)

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

(See Continuation Sheet)

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY _____

UTM REFERENCES

A

1	0
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5	2	5	2	3	0
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5	0	4	0
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4	3	0
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ZONE EASTING NORTHING

B

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ZONE EASTING NORTHING

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ZONE EASTING NORTHING

D

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ZONE EASTING NORTHING

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Block 172 of the original plat of Portland.

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Carolyn Pitts, Architectural Historian

ORGANIZATION

Historic Sites Survey Division, National Park Service

DATE

2/17/77

STREET & NUMBER

1100 L Street NW.

TELEPHONE

202-523-5464

CITY OR TOWN

Washington

STATE

D.C. 20240

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL X

STATE _____

LOCAL _____

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

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

TITLE

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
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Pioneer Courthouse

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 6 PAGE 2

TITLE: Statewide Inventory of Historic Sites and Buildings

DATE: 1970 FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS: Parks and Recreation Section, Oregon State Highway Bldg.

CITY, TOWN Salem STATE Oregon 97310

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bays at the center of each face. Corner and internal articulation, vertically, is achieved with smoothy rusticated pilasters of sandstone. The eight windows and single door (of the original facades - the west facade is now different) were crowned with flattened arches with a stubby keystone in the center. Window and door reveals were set back in two levels of recession from the main facade plane. The windows have muntins of wood, making four panes in each window. The second and third stories were grouped (again there are the changes of 1903 on the west) as a single story with colossal Roman Doric pilasters on bases above a salient string course; above, is a classical entablature of Doric type without triglyphs and metopes. The cornice has mutules, as did the raking cornice of the pediment over the projecting central section of each facade.

The north and south facades are alike. Each is a repeat of the salient central section of the east and west facades - again made salient from this north and south face of the building, with a section of wall and with corner pilasters to complete the composition.

The windows of the second story on all facades are relatively tall; and their narrowness is emphasized by the continuation of vertical moldings at either side, to the main string course below - the space between the bottom of the window and the horizontal molding above the string course being treated as a rectangular recessed panel. Each window is capped with a strongly projecting cornice strip, supported on consoles - in the Italianate manner. The windows of the third story are simple square shapes with framing moldings to give them plastic definition. The roof is a modified gable-hip type, with angles of intersection where the salient sections come together. There are four sandstone chimneys on each side of the building, east and west, serving old fireplaces inside (now generally unused). An octagonal cupola of wood crowns the entire building, in the center of the roof. It has a pseudo-balustrade (obviously not to be used as a balustrade) beneath each arched window (of each of the eight sides) - the arch above being strengthened visually with repeated moldings and a continuous molding horizontally at the springing point of the arches. The domed cap of the cupola rises above a cornice with mutules and a dentil course.

Of the original interior (finished in 1875) the main hall on the first floor, the stairway at the north, and the great Court Room on the second floor are the best preserved. All are of exceptional architectural interest

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and of fine design quality. The hall on the first (main) floor is made up of six 'bays' which start at the south and end at the staircase on the north side of the building. The side elevations of these 'bays' is ennobled with a colossal order of wooden pilasters, grouped as pairs at the point of abutment of each 'bay.' Their capitals are of a Roman Doric type, with egg and dart molding in the echinus; the fluting is of the Ionic type. A ten inch grey and white marble baseboard rises to the base of these pilasters; above each of them is a plaster (mastic?) console. The squared ceiling compartment of each 'bay' is enriched with additional moldings to emphasize its shape. The entire effect of heavily varnished (apparently oak) - pilasters and white ceiling is handsome and dignified. The floor is a combination of marble and terrazzo. Various doors and wicket-like windows punctuate the side elevations, and provide access to the rooms at the east and west which are generally of less architectural interest than the hall. Many have had interior revisions, and new lighting, in more recent times.

The stair is an interesting structural type - rising in two side flights to a mezzanine landing, and then continuing (reversing itself) to the second floor with one central flight; it is the so-called 'imperial' stair, and is appropriate to this building's stylistic character. The woods of the stair are reported to be of Oregon ash and walnut - probably ash for the steps and balusters, and walnut for the handrails. All have been heavily varnished. An elevator (probably dating from the additions of 1903) rises to the west of the stair.

On the second floor, at the head of the stair, is the entrance to the great Court Room - magnificent chamber of rectangular shape, with the judge's chambers to the south. This Court Room is also articulated vertically with colossal pilasters, grouped as pairs on the east and west sides (center) and singly on the north and south sides (center). At the corners there are single pilasters on each face, making two for each corner. There are great doors, at north and south, and a simple, but attractive fireplace in the center of the north wall. On the west, there is one main central door to the hall; on the east there are three large windows between the pilasters. All of the trim is of wood (oak apparently), yellow with varnish; the pilasters are again (as in the first floor hall) of the Doric type with Ionic fluting. Above, a massive entablature with dentil course over the triglyph blocks above each pilaster leads to the ceiling. This is enriched in the center with an oval molding with high relief areas of ornament (cartouches around central bosses) - east, west, north and south.

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A great gas chandelier was once the principal artificial light source of the room; it has disappeared, as has all of the superb walnut furniture." The restoration was done by George McMath, AIA.¹

¹ National Register form, Elizabeth Potter.

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\$250,000, \$365,000 or \$450,000, it was actually \$396,500 - as proven by the Congressional Acts necessary to finance construction. The official completion date is October 1, 1875.

Since it was built under the direction of the supervising architect of the United States Treasury, A. B. Mullett, one might assume he had something to do with the design. Like the contemporary Old Mint in San Francisco, it is in a generally classicizing Baroque manner, although there are Italianate aspects of the Portland Post Office - in the tall narrow windows - not seen in San Francisco. The local supervising architects E. B. St. John and/or John H. Holman, may have had something to do with the details. The builder was William L. Higgins. Trees were planted in the last stages of construction in 1874-1875 and are still standing.

An Act of Congress, approved June 6, 1902, called for extension to the building at a cost of \$200,000. On December 17, 1902, the Secretary of the Treasury, the Post Master General and the Secretary of the Interior personally signed authorization for construction of two new wings at the west side of the structure (on Sixth Street). They were wings only from the second story up; below that, the interior was complete between the wings.

...Sharing the main (first) floor with the Post Office was the Internal Revenue Department and the Office of the Surveyor General. Office of the United States Marshall and Clerk of the United States Court, as well as the District Court itself, occupied the second floor. In 1875, the third floor did not have permanent tenants. Between September, 1933 and December, 1936, the Post Office service was closed in this building, when both Post Office and Court moved to new quarters at S. W. Broadway and Main Streets. After the removal of 1933-1936, the inconvenience of not having a central, downtown Post Office had caused the Postal Department to open a branch in the old Post Office building again, early in 1937."¹

The exterior restoration was finished in 1971, before the interior restoration began. Architects for the restoration were Allen-McMath-Hawkins with George McMath the principal in charge of the job. This million dollar restoration was undertaken by the General Services Administration, encouraged by Ninth Circuit Court Judge John F. Kilkeny who has also overseen the acquisition and preservation of some of the magnificent furniture.

"The oak woodwork on the walls of the courtroom is more than 100 years old, as is a substantial part of the ash paneling and other woodwork in the chambers, hallways, main floor lobbies and in the chambers, courtrooms and

¹Elizabeth Potter, National Register Form

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hallways of the third floor. The priceless old furniture comes from a number of Federal Courthouses from as far east as Chicago. The bench lamps are from Chicago, the public benches from St. Paul, Minnesota, the hat and umbrella rack from Butte, Montana, counsel tables with matching lectern and chairs from Spokane, two Seth Thomas clocks, stand-up desk and cabinets from Bellingham, other items of furniture from Judge Deady's original chambers and courtroom, and other antique tables and chairs from Los Angeles and San Francisco, the antique McGinn chair from Multnomah County Circuit Court, Mahoney rolltop desk from Heppner, and other charming articles from interested Oregonians.

"One hundred years ago it was a marvel - for its place. In a reverse sense it is today a marvel - for its place. It is a marvel and is a tribute to the community that has preserved it, and is a very moving and enduring link between two so very different centuries." (Carl Gohs)²

²Brochure Pioneer Court House.

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ITEM NUMBER 9 PAGE 1

- Historic American Buildings Survey Inventory Sheet prepared by Oregon Chapter, American Institute of Architects, July 10, 1954.
- Historic American Buildings Survey Photograph-Data Book Report (ORE-52) prepared by Joseph A. Baird, Jr., June 1964.
- Ross, Marion D., A Century of Architecture in Oregon, 1859-1959 (Women's Architectural League of the Oregon Chapter, AIA, 1959), 4.
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- Southwell, James, "Renovation Dated Soon for Portland Landmark," Oregonian (January 19, 1972), 23.

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PHOTOGRAPHS AND THEIR DESCRIPTIONS

Pioneer Courthouse, Portland, Oregon

Photo credit: George McMath, Portland, Oregon

- Photo descriptions:
1. Facade.
 2. Courtroom.
 3. Lobby.