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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Nat. Register of Historic Places
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 National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. 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 certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).

1. Name of Property

historic name United States Custom House

other names/site number Appraisers' Stores Building

2. Location

street & number 610 South Canal Street not for publication

city or town Chicago vicinity

state Illinois code IL county Cook code 031 zip code 60607

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,
I hereby certify that this nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:
 national statewide local

[Signature] _____ Date 6/22/2016
 Signature of certifying official Federal Preservation Officer U.S. General Services Administration
 Title _____ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

[Signature] _____ Date 05/06/16
 Signature of commenting official DSHPD, IHFA
 Title _____ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register determined eligible for the National Register
 determined not eligible for the National Register removed from the National Register
 other (explain:)

[Signature] _____ Date of Action 8.4.16
 Signature of the Keeper

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	
1		buildings
		district
		site
		structure
		object
1	0	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

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

GOVERNMENT/ Custom House

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

GOVERNMENT/ Government Office

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

MODERN MOVEMENT: Classical Moderne

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation: Concrete

walls: Limestone

Granite

roof:

other:

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

Summary Paragraph

The United States Custom House is located just south of the downtown Chicago Loop district at 610 South Canal Street. It is a 12-story Classical Moderne style building constructed of concrete and steel with limestone exterior cladding and a black granite base. Significant stylistic elements include symmetrical façades; extensive use of pilasters; vertical planes of window openings with cast aluminum spandrel panels; and stylized bas-reliefs of the bald eagle at the parapet.

Narrative Description

See Continuation Sheets 7.1 through 7.3

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.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Period of Significance

1933, 1940

Significant Dates

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Burnham Brothers, Inc.
Nimmons, Carr & Wright

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 grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

Period of Significance (justification)

The United States Custom House in Chicago is a distinctive example of the Classical Moderne architectural style in a federal building erected during the 1930s. The period of significance is 1933 and 1940, representing the period of initial construction and the addition of the uppermost four stories to the building, respectively.

Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria)

The United States Customs House is eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C at the local level as a distinctive example of the Classical Moderne architectural style in a federal building erected in Chicago during the 1930s. The period of significance is 1933 and 1940, representing the period of initial construction and the addition of the uppermost four stories to the building. The building retains integrity with respect to location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

The United States Custom House is an example of a semi-industrial, individually-designed federal building, with both offices and warehouse floors. It was designed by two prominent Chicago firms, Burnham Brothers, Inc. and Nimmons, Carr & Wright as associated architects. A strong vertical emphasis is created by wide end bays and a rhythm of pilasters, recessed windows, and spandrel panels. The black granite of the entrance elements contrasts with the light limestone walls to form a lively composition. The abstract ornamentation of the main entrance and bas-relief eagles high on the corners of the building add to the formality and iconography of this federal building.

Narrative Statement of Significance (provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance)

Architecture

The architecture of the United States Custom House reflects emerging national influences. The local architectural firms of Burnham Brothers and Nimmons, Carr & Wright interpreted the modernistic trend in architecture, Art Moderne, which during the early 1930s was well on its way in replacing the Beaux Arts style with "liberated," Moderne-influenced classicism in the design of federal buildings. This design minimizes the traditional Beaux Arts influences and strikes a note more subdued than that previously seen in courthouses and post offices. The building has handsome qualities and substantial mass similar to industrial buildings of the era, with pylon-like wide end bays similar to those that anchored the cubic masses of many industrial structures of the time; however, the use of granite and limestone, ornamental spandrel panels, and iconographic ornamentation at the top of the building differentiates it from more utilitarian counterparts. The design of the United States Custom House has similarities to its contemporaneous but much larger neighbor, the National Register-listed central U.S. Post Office (1921, 1932) designed by Graham, Anderson, Probst & White.

Developmental history/additional historic context information (if appropriate)

See Continuation Sheets 8.1 through 8.6

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form)
See Continuation Sheets

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been Requested)
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other
- Name of repository: **General Services Administration**

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 2 acres
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage)

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

1	<u>16</u>	<u>446907</u>	<u>4635992</u>	3	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
2	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	4	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing

Verbal Boundary Description (describe the boundaries of the property)

The United States Custom House is located in the parcel identified as the Cook County Assessor's Parcel Identification Number 17-16-307-001-0000. The parcel is bounded by South Canal Street, West Harrison Street, South Clinton Street, and a line extending east from West Vernon Park Place.

Boundary Justification (explain why the boundaries were selected)

The nomination consists of the property historically associated with 610 South Canal Street, Chicago, Illinois.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Andrew J. Schmidt/ Senior Architectural Historian

organization Summit Envirosolutions, Inc., prepared for the U.S. September 2010

General Services Administration date Revised March 2013

street & number 1217 Bandana Blvd. N. telephone 651-842-4202

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name/title Sherry Frear/ Historic Preservation Specialist

organization General Services Administration date April 2016

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Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **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. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Photographs:

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

Name of Property: United States Custom House

City or Vicinity: Chicago

County: Cook

State: Illinois

Photographer: Andrew J. Schmidt

Date Photographed: November 2007

Description of Photograph(s) and number:

EAST ELEVATION	IL_COOK_COUNTY_UNITED_STATES_CUSTOM_HOUSE_0001
MAIN ENTRANCE VIEW	IL_COOK_COUNTY_UNITED_STATES_CUSTOM_HOUSE_0002
SOUTH ELEVATION	IL_COOK_COUNTY_UNITED_STATES_CUSTOM_HOUSE_0003
WEST ELEVATION	IL_COOK_COUNTY_UNITED_STATES_CUSTOM_HOUSE_0004
NORTH ELEVATION	IL_COOK_COUNTY_UNITED_STATES_CUSTOM_HOUSE_0005
EAST ELEVATION PARAPET VIEW	IL_COOK_COUNTY_UNITED_STATES_CUSTOM_HOUSE_0006
PARAPET DETAIL	IL_COOK_COUNTY_UNITED_STATES_CUSTOM_HOUSE_0007
MAIN ENTRANCE DETAIL	IL_COOK_COUNTY_UNITED_STATES_CUSTOM_HOUSE_0008
INTERIOR VESTIBULE CEILING	IL_COOK_COUNTY_UNITED_STATES_CUSTOM_HOUSE_0009
INTERIOR LOBBY STAIRWELL	IL_COOK_COUNTY_UNITED_STATES_CUSTOM_HOUSE_0010
INTERIOR LOBBY	IL_COOK_COUNTY_UNITED_STATES_CUSTOM_HOUSE_0011
INTERIOR CORRIDOR TYPICAL	IL_COOK_COUNTY_UNITED_STATES_CUSTOM_HOUSE_0012

Property Owner:

(complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO)

name U. S. General Services Administration

street & number 230 South Dearborn Street, Suite 3570 telephone 312-886-4492

city or town Chicago state IL zip code 60604

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including 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 Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

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

United States Custom House
Name of Property
Cook County, Illinois
County and State
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 1

Description

The United States Custom House is located just south of the downtown Chicago Loop district at 610 South Canal Street. The 12-story building represents the transition to the Classical Moderne style for federal buildings during the 1930s. The building is constructed of concrete and steel with limestone exterior cladding and a black granite base. Significant stylistic elements include symmetrical façades; extensive use of pilasters; smooth, unadorned wall surfaces broken by vertical planes of windows; and stylized bas-reliefs of the bald eagle at the parapet.

The United States Custom House is located within the Near West Side neighborhood of Chicago. The immediate area of the United States Custom House includes mostly late 19th and early 20th century commercial buildings and warehouses clustered along the south branch of the Chicago River. The United States Custom House building and parking are bounded by Canal, Harrison, and Clinton streets, and a line extending east from West Vernon Park Place. The building fronts onto Canal Street, which is the location of its main entrance, but is substantially set back from the other three streets. Canal Street is raised, covering the basement level, which is exposed on the north, west, and south sides. There are parking lots west and south of the building. A former lawn north of the building has been converted into a playground for an on-site daycare center.

The building has a single volume cubic massing, and all four elevations have similar arrangements and architectural detailing, although the east elevation includes the main entrance. The windows are generally grouped vertically and separated by pilasters, providing a distinct vertical emphasis.

The United States Custom House primarily provides office space for United States Customs and Border Protection and other federal agencies. The interior spaces are typically organized around a central elevator lobby with four public access elevators located toward the east end of the building. A pair of freight elevators are located towards the west end of the building. All office spaces have been renovated over the years to serve the needs of different tenants, as have the elevator lobbies above the first floor. The first floor lobby, including the entrance vestibule, remains largely intact from the historic period, although there have been alterations, as detailed below.

The United States Custom House was designed in 1932 as the Appraisers' Stores Building by the associated architectural firms Burnham Brothers, Inc. and Nimmons, Carr & Wright. The building was constructed in 1933 as a seven story building with a penthouse. Following designs developed in 1939 by the United States Public Buildings Administration, the firm of Coagh & Goss, Inc. built an additional four floors of office space plus a penthouse containing a firing range, which brought the building to its current 12 story height. Exterior alterations include the replacement of all window sash during the 1990s and, in 2004, replacement of deteriorated limestone and granite panels with matching materials. The building interior was renovated most recently during the 1990s, with security measures added to the first floor main lobby, including a metal detector, a built-in security desk, and separate entrance and exit doors in the vestibule.

Exterior

The predominant exterior wall material is limestone, although the water table and exposed basement are clad with polished black granite. The façade arrangement of all elevations is nearly identical above the first floor; however, the north and south elevations are longer than those on the east and west, and therefore have a greater number of window bays. The otherwise cubic massing of the building is broken only by a slight setback between the first and second stories and by slightly projecting end bays that extend the full height of the building. Each elevation is vertically divided with a center section flanked by end bays.

On the east elevation, the first floor is dominated by the main entrance, which is in-filled with modern glass and aluminum doors and transoms. The entrance is adorned with black granite that projects from the limestone walls

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

United States Custom House
Name of Property
Cook County, Illinois
County and State
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 2

in tiers culminating in projecting fluted pilasters with geometrically patterned capitals, and a pair of panels over the transom that are inscribed with the words "United States Custom House." In addition, the entrance is flanked by a pair of square, fluted plinths, each capped with a light sconce. On each side of the entrance, there are three punched window openings just above the water table, as well as a pair of window openings in each end bay.

In the second through tenth floors, the windows in the center section are grouped vertically in nine bays, separated by geometrically patterned cast-aluminum spandrel panels and flanked by limestone pilasters. The vertical grouping ends at the tenth floor, and on the eleventh floor, there is a row of punched window openings. There are no openings on the twelfth floor and the wall terminates with a parapet adorned with a bas-relief band of three wavy horizontal stripes interrupted by rectangles with two vertically-stacked inscribed stars.

The end bays each have paired, vertically grouped window openings flanked by wide vertical bands of limestone and separated by a narrow vertical band of limestone for the entire height of the building. Beneath each window opening are geometrically patterned cast aluminum spandrel panels. This fenestration extends from the third floor through the eleventh floor. On the twelfth floor, each end bay is terminated by a stylized bald eagle carved in bas-relief on a limestone panel flanked by limestone panels inscribed with wavy horizontal stripes.

The west elevation is similar to the east, except the basement level is above grade, and a secondary entrance leads into the basement level. This entrance, located near the northwest corner, is adorned with black granite surrounds of projecting, square, fluted columns capped with light sconces. Above the entrance, a single panel set within a recessed space is inscribed with the words "United States Custom House." An accessible concrete pedestrian ramp constructed c. 1990 leads to this entrance; the ramp is faced with black granite panels, edged with a green-painted ornamental railing, and flush to the west and south elevations. The only other building access on the west elevation is via an unadorned entrance with a metal security door. The west elevation's first floor includes three groups of three punched window openings in the center section and a pair of punched window openings in each end bay. The second through twelfth floors are identical to the east elevation.

The first through twelfth floors of the north and south elevations are similar to the west elevation, differing only in the number of window bays (15) in their center sections. The basement level of the north elevation is clad in black granite and includes a series of punched window openings. At the south elevation's basement level, also clad in black granite, there are four large drive-in loading bays, each separated by a square, granite-clad column, and one smaller drive-up loading bay.

The building's landscape is typical of utilitarian office buildings, being very limited. The main entrance is flanked by c. 2012 rectangular black granite-edged beds, each with two black granite backless block-legged benches at each beds' shorter side. (Figure 1.) The parking lots at the west and south are flush to the building, with no foundation beds. Both parking lots are edged at the property boundaries by terraced beds planted with a limited palette of shrubs and small deciduous trees. At the western edge of the west parking lot, a green-painted ornamental low fence (approx. 42"), similar in style to the building's accessible ramp railing, runs between the terraced bed and the sidewalk, and extends along the drive into the south parking lot. The parking lots are below street level, the western one more so than the southern one, and a staircase near the intersection of S. Clinton and W. Harrison streets provides access from the sidewalk into the west parking lot. The daycare playground at the north side of the building is similarly below street level; this area has more extensive landscaping, with foundation shrubs and more mature deciduous shade trees

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

United States Custom House

Name of Property

Cook County, Illinois

County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number 7 Page 3



Figure 1. Typical planter and benches at main entrance.

Interior

The first-floor entrance/elevator lobby retains its general configuration from 1940. When the eighth through eleventh stories and penthouse were added, the main lobby was expanded from two to four elevators plus a stairwell to the second floor. The original terrazzo floor and marble veneer on the walls were removed during a major remodeling campaign in 1990-1991 and replaced with a new terrazzo floor and alternating light and dark gray horizontal marble wall panels. The original doors between the lobby and vestibule, and the elevator doors, were replaced. The elevator doors were replaced with flush metal doors that display an etched pattern of vertical lines with an eagle on top, reminiscent of the pattern found on the original elevator doors. The wall mounted sconces on the lobby columns are most likely the original lighting elements for this space.

South of the elevators, the stairwell has green marble risers and green terrazzo steps. A 1990s security desk, clad in gray marble that matches the walls, is located along the east wall of the lobby, and a metal detector is located along the north wall between the entrance vestibule and the security desk. The entrance vestibule has a gray terrazzo floor, green marble wainscot, and gray marble walls. The ceiling is original; it is plaster and is painted with a circular design that includes red, white, and blue shields, stars, eagles, and the words "United States Custom House." A half flight of stairs leads to a landing where the doorways between the vestibule and the main lobby are located. The original doorways on the west wall now serve as the exiting doors, and a new doorway on the east wall serves as the door for entering. The first floor includes office spaces to the west of the main lobby, laid out on double-loaded, U-shaped corridors.

Each upper floor interior is laid out with a central elevator lobby. Originally, double-loaded, U-shaped corridors connected at each end of the lobby provided access to office spaces, with additional single-loaded corridors running parallel to the lobbies. Originally, the first through sixth floors were dominated by warehouse space with offices grouped along the east wall. The seventh floor and, after 1940, the eighth through eleventh floors, were designed for office functions. The major remodeling effort in 1990-1991 gutted the second through eleventh floors, with the exception of the original courtroom, located on the seventh floor; the courtroom was retained, with most of its original materials, and repurposed as a library.

At the basement level, the public entrance lobby, located on the west elevation, retains a number of original materials, including a gray terrazzo floor, gray marble wainscot, and painted plaster walls. The ceiling is covered

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

United States Custom House

Name of Property

Cook County, Illinois

County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number 7 Page 4

by a modern bulkhead enclosing overhead lighting. A corridor connecting the entrance lobby with the other basement spaces has a gray terrazzo floor and plaster walls. Decorative stainless steel panels embossed with a stylized bald eagle atop a fluted column (the original doors for the main lobby elevators) are mounted on the walls.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

United States Custom House
Name of Property
Cook County, Illinois
County and State
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 1

Statement of Significance

The United States Custom House is eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places. The building meets Criterion C at the local level as a distinctive example of the Classical Moderne architectural style in a federal building erected in Chicago during the 1930s. The period of significance is 1933 and 1940, representing the period of initial construction and the addition of the uppermost four stories and penthouse to the building. The building retains all aspects of its integrity.

The United States Custom House was designed by two prominent Chicago firms, Burnham Brothers, Inc. and Nimmons, Carr & Wright as associated architects. It has a strong vertical emphasis created by wide end bays and a rhythm of pilasters, recessed windows, and spandrel panels. The black granite of the entrance elements contrasts with the light-colored limestone walls to form a lively composition. The abstracted ornamentation of the main entrance and bas-relief eagles high on the corners of the building add to the formality and iconography of this federal building.

Historic Context: Design and Construction of Federal Buildings, 1931-1939

The United States Treasury Department was the agency responsible for the construction of federal buildings—mainly post offices and courthouses—from the mid-nineteenth century until the Federal Works Agency (FWA) was created in 1939. The United States Treasury Department established the Office of Supervising Architect in 1864 to oversee design and construction of federal civilian facilities. The work of this office spans several eras defined by congressional authorizations, the supervising architect’s stylistic preferences, and the involvement of private architects. During James Knox Taylor’s years as the Supervising Architect (1897-1912), all new federal buildings were individually designed. Private architects provided designs for larger projects while the staff in the Office of the Supervising Architect produced plans for smaller buildings. The period between 1915 and 1930, however, was characterized by a more standardized approach to the design of federal buildings. A system of four classes of buildings was created, based on the value of annual post office receipts and the value of adjoining real estate in large cities. Relatively little new construction took place during this period.¹

The onset of the Great Depression after the stock market crash in 1929 ushered in a new era of federal building projects. The Hoover Administration and the U. S. Congress had increased funding for the federal building program in 1928 and did so again in 1930 and 1931. When the U. S. Congress amended the Public Buildings Act of 1926 in 1930, it increased funding and authorized the Secretary of the U.S. Treasury Department to contract with private firms and individuals. The Federal Employment Stabilization Act of 1931 directed federal agencies that oversaw construction projects to prepare six-year construction plans and appropriated an additional \$100 million for that year. As a result of this act, the staff of the Supervising Architect’s office was increased significantly and over 130 private architectural firms were commissioned to design federal buildings in 1931. By 1934, over 300 firms were involved in the program. As a result of this design and building activity, approximately 1,300 new federal buildings were constructed in 1,080 communities.²

As federal construction surged during the early 1930s, the architectural profession was in the midst of a broad debate between “traditional” and “modern” styles. Traditionalists, who adhered to the ideals of the École des Beaux Arts, felt that the classical design vocabulary was most fitting for federal buildings because it uniquely expressed democratic values. Modernists called for minimal ornamentation, asymmetrical design, and use of new materials. Although traditionalists would dominate the Supervising Architect’s Office until after World War II,

¹ Lois Craig, ed., and the staff of the Federal Architecture Project, *The Federal Presence: Architecture, Politics, and Symbols in the United States Government Building* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1979), 99-105, 195, 213; Emily Harris, “History of Federal Policy Concerning Post Office Construction, 1900-1940,” printed as *History of Post Office Construction, 1900-1940*, (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Postal Service, 1982), 1-11.

² Harris, *History of Post Office Construction*, 14-15; Craig, et. al, *The Federal Presence*, 281.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

United States Custom House
Name of Property
Cook County, Illinois
County and State
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number 8 Page 2

modernist influence was apparent by the early 1930s, resulting in the 20th century Classical Revival style commonly employed in federal buildings throughout the decade.

Louis A. Simon guided the stylistic development of federal buildings for over three decades, serving as superintendent of the architectural section of the Supervising Architect's Office from 1905 to 1933, then as the Supervising Architect from 1933 to 1939. Under Simon's leadership, the traditionally inspired Colonial Revival and the modern Classical Revival styles dominated federal building design during the 1930s. For example, Detroit was in the Public Works Administration's Region 2 where both traditional and modern designs were widely used. In addition, art work, often in the form of murals or sculpture, was introduced into many post offices. This program was funded by several federal relief programs to provide employment for artists and bring art to the American public. Colonial Revival designs were often used for smaller post offices in small cities and towns where the traditional designs could blend with other public buildings yet have the formal presence expected of federal buildings. Larger post offices, courthouses, and federal buildings in bigger cities tended toward the 20th century Classical Revival, where the modernist influence lent itself to large interchangeable work spaces, and where generally cosmopolitan populations were more accepting of non-traditional designs.³

The work of Paul Philippe Cret was particularly influential in the adoption of the Classical Revival style for federal and civic buildings.⁴ Cret's design for the Hartford County Building and Courthouse of 1926 was praised for its "style liberation" and became an important prototype for the modern classical architecture that both Cret and federal buildings would be known for during the 1930s. The bold rectangular pillars on the façade of the Hartford building, widely identified with the freedom from traditional classicism, were actually derived from the little used Attic order. Cret used the Attic order to reinterpret the forms and overall character of classicism as well as reduce the visual conflict between the components of the classical order and steel-framed construction. He moved from the use of minimal capitals and no bases on the Hartford County Building and Courthouse in Connecticut to designing fluted shafts with no capitals to support a reinterpreted frieze and cornice assembly in his Château-Thierry Monument in France (1926-1932). This form also appeared on his influential Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, D.C., completed in 1932. Cret's "liberation" of the classical forms was widely adopted by architects for civic and commercial buildings during the late 1920s, although no doubt the simplified, non-ornamented, and modern appearance was more influential than the academic origin of the rectangular pillars. By the time Cret was competing for the Federal Reserve Board commission in 1935, a "liberated," or "Moderne-influenced" classicism had been widely adopted in the design of federal buildings and characterized the submittals of most of his competitors. Cret's participation on many architectural juries and commissions extended his influence on the classicism of the era.⁵

The modernized classicism utilized symmetrical façades with rows of windows divided by pilasters to simulate columns, but ornamentation was generally angular and geometric and was kept to a minimum. Columns, pilasters, and entablatures were often abstracted. Classical ornament and forms could be reduced to geometric incisions in stone, changes in scale, or reinterpreted. Stone walls penetrated by vertically grouped windows with crisp surrounds and abstracted pilasters created a rhythmic pattern of piers and windows perceived as a series of solids and voids. The *Architectural Forum* noted in 1938 that "[a] distinct modern influence and the continuing tradition of 'government classic' are the two conflicting tendencies which have resulted in the first sign of vitality in American post office design."⁶

3 C. W. Short and R. Stanley-Brown, *Public Buildings: Architecture Under the Public Works Administration, 1933-1939* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1986), VI, XII, 16, 21-22; Harris, *History of Post Office Construction*, 14-15;

4 Craig, et. al, *The Federal Presence*, 294-297.

5 Elizabeth Greenwell Grossman, *The Civic Architecture of Paul Cret* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 140-159, 170, 193-195.; Craig, *The Federal Presence*, 294.

6 Quoted in Robert A. M. Stern, *New York 1930* (New York: Rizzoli, 1987), 107.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

United States Custom House
Name of Property
Cook County, Illinois
County and State
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number 8 Page 3

With the large number of federal buildings planned or in progress by 1933, the Public Works Administration (PWA) was established to fund the planning and construction of public works projects. The PWA functioned like a large building and loan association to fund federal construction projects but it did not become involved in the design of any buildings or projects. The PWA's role in building design was limited to a general requirement that materials be from the United States and manufactured by American firms. The Office of Supervising Architect continued to oversee building designs. Because the main goals of the program were to provide employment and erect buildings, standardization of design continued to be a priority. "Cabinet Sketches" produced by the U.S. Treasury Department included standard floor plans for post offices of various sizes. Individual treatment was limited mostly to exterior details.

Development of the United States Custom House in Chicago

The first American presence in Chicago was Fort Dearborn, which was established in 1803 at the mouth of the Chicago River. The Town of Chicago was platted in 1830, and by the time the City was incorporated in 1837, its population had reached 4,170. By 1848, Chicago had reliable transportation connections via the Illinois & Michigan Canal and the Galena & Chicago Union Railroad, the first stockyards were operating, and the Board of Trade was active. After the Civil War, Chicago developed into the largest commodities market in the country for grain, lumber, and meat as farmers, ranchers, and lumbermen fanned out into the lands to the west and northwest.

Chicago was at the center of the country's transportation network. It was the main connecting point between railroads based in the eastern United States and those in the West, as well as between ships on the Great Lakes and Mississippi River watersheds. Chicago quickly became a major metropolis as numerous wholesale and manufacturing firms established operations in the city. The city's population surpassed 100,000 prior to the Civil War, and by 1870 had nearly tripled. The population growth continued, surpassing 500,000 by 1880, and when the population reached 1,099,850 in 1890, Chicago ranked as the second largest city in the United States, a position it would hold until the 1980s.⁷

By 1900, Chicago was a manufacturing, industrial, and commercial center second only to New York. Chicago led the country in producing agricultural implements, bicycles, and railcars. Its important industrial sectors included meatpacking, steel mills, foundries, and machine shops. Chicago dominated the country's midsection in wholesale commerce, and through mail order giants Sears, Roebuck & Company and Montgomery, Ward & Company, the city extended its retail commerce nationally. In addition, Chicago had developed as a major financial center, with banks, commodities exchanges, stock traders, and insurance companies headquartered in the city. With this rapid growth, design and construction had also become important industries in Chicago.

During the late nineteenth century, the Loop portion of downtown Chicago, the area set off by the elevated transit lines (the El) that were completed in 1897, was virtually equivalent to the central business district. The Loop had excellent local transportation due to the El and was surrounded with the stations of regional railroads. The Near West Side, the area west of the south branch of the Chicago River and the Loop, was annexed to the city in 1851 as far west as Western Avenue. Sewer and gas lines were installed, and the area developed as a manufacturing center during the mid-nineteenth century with many lumber yards, foundries, and flour mills. The Polk Street Bridge linked the Near West Side with the Loop area. A number of immigrant groups settled in the Near West Side and new waves of immigrants continually replaced old ones.

⁷ William Cronon, *Nature's Metropolis: Chicago and the Great West* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1991); "Available City Population Data: Population History of Selected U.S. Cities," accessed online at: <http://physics.bu.edu/~redner/projects/population/cities/chicago.html>.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

United States Custom House
Name of Property
Cook County, Illinois
County and State
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number 8 Page 4

The 1909 *Plan of Chicago* proposed a grand Civic Center at the intersection of Congress Parkway and Halsted Street. This Near West Side location was selected due to its central location within the city and as a means to expand the central business district beyond the confines of the Loop. Though the plan for the Civic Center was never realized, the route of the south branch of the Chicago River was straightened between Polk and 18th streets and crossed by several bridges during the 1920s, as suggested in the plan.

A new Union Station was built on the west side of the south branch at Jackson Boulevard and Canal Street in 1925. The need for a new central United States Post Office was acute by the late 1910s when the volume of mail entering and leaving Chicago was larger than the combined 1919 volume in five mid-size cities. The federal government had acquired a large parcel in the Near West Side on Canal Street between Polk and Harrison streets by 1927 and erected a building that was the largest post office in the world at the time it was completed in 1933.⁸

By January of 1932, the U.S. Congress had appropriated \$1.15 million for a new custom house, or appraisers stores building, and Ferry K. Heath, Assistant Secretary of the U.S. Treasury, had selected the architects for the building. The firms Burnham Brothers and Nimmons, Carr & Wright, both of Chicago, were the associated architects. The site selected for the United States Custom House was located diagonally across the street from the post office under construction and was part of the large tract of land purchased from Marshall Field & Co. for the post office project. The new United States Custom House would handle all foreign packages that arrived at the post office and the port of Chicago.⁹

The new United States Custom House replaced a facility built at 158 West Harrison Street circa 1890 that had long been inadequate. The seven story brownstone building was too small to handle the volume of material entering the port of Chicago. The Retail Merchants Association and large department stores joined with local legislators to lobby for funding for a modern custom house with the space to handle the volume and examination of shipments, as in order to assess customs duties, officials unpacked and examined the contents of all shipments sent from abroad, from large crates to small boxes. A train loading platform on the South Canal Street end of the building and a truck court with seven loading bays adjacent to the shipping and receiving rooms in the basement were designed to efficiently transfer merchandise in and out of the building. Floors one through six were designed as open warehouse floors with freight elevators in the center bay. A chemistry laboratory, offices, a courtroom, judges' chambers, and associated space for the hearing of appeals cases related to customs duties were planned for the seventh floor.¹⁰

The United States Custom House was designed structurally to support eleven floors, but only seven floors and a penthouse were built in 1933. By the late 1930s, the property had become the headquarters for the Chicago offices of several federal agencies. In 1940, four additional floors and a penthouse were added to the top of the building. The addition provided office space for agencies that were housed in rented offices throughout the city. The U.S. Coast Guard, U.S. Social Security Board, U.S. Department of Agriculture's Bureau of Entomology and Plant Quarantine, U.S. Bureau of Lighthouses, U.S. Agricultural Adjustment Administration, and Federal Power

8 Janice L. Reiff, Ann Durkin Keating and James R. Grossman, eds., "The Plan of Chicago: Implementation," in *Encyclopedia of Chicago*, accessed online at: <http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/300008.html>; "Near West Side," *Chicago Historic Resources Survey: An Inventory of Architecturally and Historically Significant Structures* (Chicago: Commission on Chicago Landmarks and Chicago Department of Planning and Development, 1996), 103.

9 "Chicago's New Custom House O.K.'d by U.S.," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, January 31, 1932.

10 "Chicago's New U.S. Custom House O.K.'d by U.S.," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 31 January 1932; Frank A. Randall, *History of the Development of Building Construction in Chicago* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1949), 144; Burnham Brothers and Nimmons, Carr, & Wright, "Appraisers Stores Building: Floor Plans, 1932" unpublished documents on file at U.S. General Services Administration Regional Office, Chicago.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

United States Custom House
Name of Property
Cook County, Illinois
County and State
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number 8 Page 5

Commission were among the agencies that occupied the new office space. The penthouse level was designed for a shooting range, radio room, and assembly room.¹¹

Architectural Significance

Daniel H. Burnham, Jr. (1886-1961) and Hubert Burnham (1882-1969), sons of Chicago architect Daniel H. Burnham, first worked as architects in their father's Chicago architecture and planning firm. After their father died in 1912, they continued as partners in the successive firms of Graham, Burnham & Company, D.H. Burnham & Co., Burnham Brothers, Inc., and Burnham & Hammond. The brothers worked together on the Century of Progress Exposition in Chicago in 1933. The Burnham Brothers firm designed many buildings in Chicago in addition to the United States Custom House, including: Michael A. Bilandic Building (hotel, 1920), Central Life Building (1924, razed), Seneca Hotel (1926), MDA City Apartments (Medical and Dental Building, 1927), Bankers Building (1927), Engineering Building (1928), Carbide and Carbon Building (1929), and Loop Center Building (1929). In addition, Burnham Brothers designed the U.S. Bank Building in Eau Claire, Wisconsin, a 1930 example of the Moderne style. Both brothers were elected Fellows of the American Institute of Architects.¹²

George C. Nimmons (1865-1947) was a prominent architect in Chicago for nearly fifty years. He began his architectural career as a draftsman in the Chicago office of Burnham & Root after study in Europe. During his partnership with William K. Fellows, Nimmons & Fellows designed many commercial buildings in Chicago and had a long-term client in Sears, Roebuck & Company, for whom it designed the main Chicago facility and many branch buildings. After 1917, he practiced alone and as George C. Nimmons & Company. Later, Nimmons was the senior partner in Nimmons, Carr & Wright from 1933 until 1947. Nimmons' work in the 1920s included the role of associate architect for the first portion of the Chicago American Furniture Mart Building (1923) and as architect of its larger western addition (1926).¹³

The United States Custom House, as built in 1933 and enlarged in 1940, is representative of the Moderne style strongly associated with federal buildings in the transitional stylistic stage of the early 1930s. The design represents the increasing replacement of the Beaux Arts formalism of earlier federal building designs with the use of modern materials, simplified ornamentation, and vertical emphasis. The Classical Moderne style's clean lines were suitable for a building that functioned as a warehouse yet provided the formality required of a federal building. The verticality of the building is emphasized by the use of slightly projecting corner bays and the series of plain pilasters adjacent to windows that are slightly recessed and underscored by dark-colored metal spandrel panels. Together, the light limestone and dark metal and glass create a composition in contrasts. The building maintains the tripartite organization typical of tall buildings based on the classical column, with a base, mid-section, and capping section. All four sides of the building have the same elements rather than a hierarchy of a primary façade, secondary façades, and rear façade.

The treatment of the top story as an attic story with plain punched windows between the corner bays, and parapet ornamentation and sculpture at the projecting end bays presents a Moderne aesthetic. When the building was enlarged by four stories in 1939-1940, the seventh story and the parapet ornamentation were removed and reinstalled, with the new parapet and the new stories replicating the original design.

¹¹ "4 More Floors to Be Added to Customs House," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 28 February 1940; "Custom House Will Be Center for Bureaus," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, 3 March 1940.

¹² Daniel H. Burnham, Jr. and Hubert Burnham Papers (biographical summary), accessed online at: <http://www.artic.edu/aic/libraries/>; and Building Summaries, accessed online at: <http://www.emporis.com/en/>.

¹³ Henry F. Withey and Elsie Rathburn Withey, *Biographical Dictionary of American Architects (deceased)* (Los Angeles: New Age Publishing Co., 1956), 442.

¹³ Randall, *History of the Development of Building Construction in Chicago*, 306-307.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

United States Custom House
Name of Property
Cook County, Illinois
County and State
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number 8 Page 6

A more iconographical program was chosen for the United States Custom House rather than the more extensively ornamental programs of post offices and courthouses of the era. This was no doubt due to the utilitarian function of the facility and its limited availability to the general public. Federal iconography is present in the bas-relief eagles and stars and stripes at the parapet. Iconography is painted as well on the ceiling of the entrance vestibule. In a basement corridor, the original elevator doors, adorned with an eagle atop a column, were relocated and hung on the walls when the original main lobby cabs were replaced c. 1990.

The main entrance has a severe, formal design with abstracted pilasters and plinths with ornamental lamps flanking the doors. The influence of Art Deco style is seen in the metal spandrel panels, the decorative wavy lines along the parapet and end bays, and the clear geometric forms of the capitals of the main entrance's pilasters.

The architecture of the United States Custom House represents emerging national influences. The local architectural firms, Burnham Brothers and Nimmons, Carr & Wright, interpreted the modernistic trend in architecture, which during the early 1930s was well on its way in replacing the Beaux Arts style with "liberated," Moderne-influenced classicism. Abstracted classical forms, primarily the rhythmic pilasters on symmetrical façades, establish a reference to earlier federal buildings and classical revival styles, but situate the building firmly in the 1930s era of modern design. This design minimizes the traditional Beaux Arts influences and strikes a note more subdued than that of the more extensively ornamental programs used for courthouses and post offices of the preceding decade. The building has handsome and substantial qualities similar to industrial buildings of the era, and uses the wide end bays that typically anchored the cubic masses of many industrial structures of the time; however, the use of granite and limestone, ornamental spandrel panels, and iconographic ornamentation differentiate the Custom House from its more utilitarian counterparts. The design of the United States Custom House has similarities to its contemporaneous but much larger neighbor, the central U.S. Post Office (1921, 1932) designed by Graham, Anderson, Probst & White.¹⁴

¹⁴ Alice Sinkevitch, ed., *AIA Guide to Chicago* (New York: Harcourt-Brace, 1993), 158.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

United States Custom House
Name of Property
Cook County, Illinois
County and State
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number 9 Page 1

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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

United States Custom House

Name of Property

Cook County, Illinois

County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number 9 Page 2

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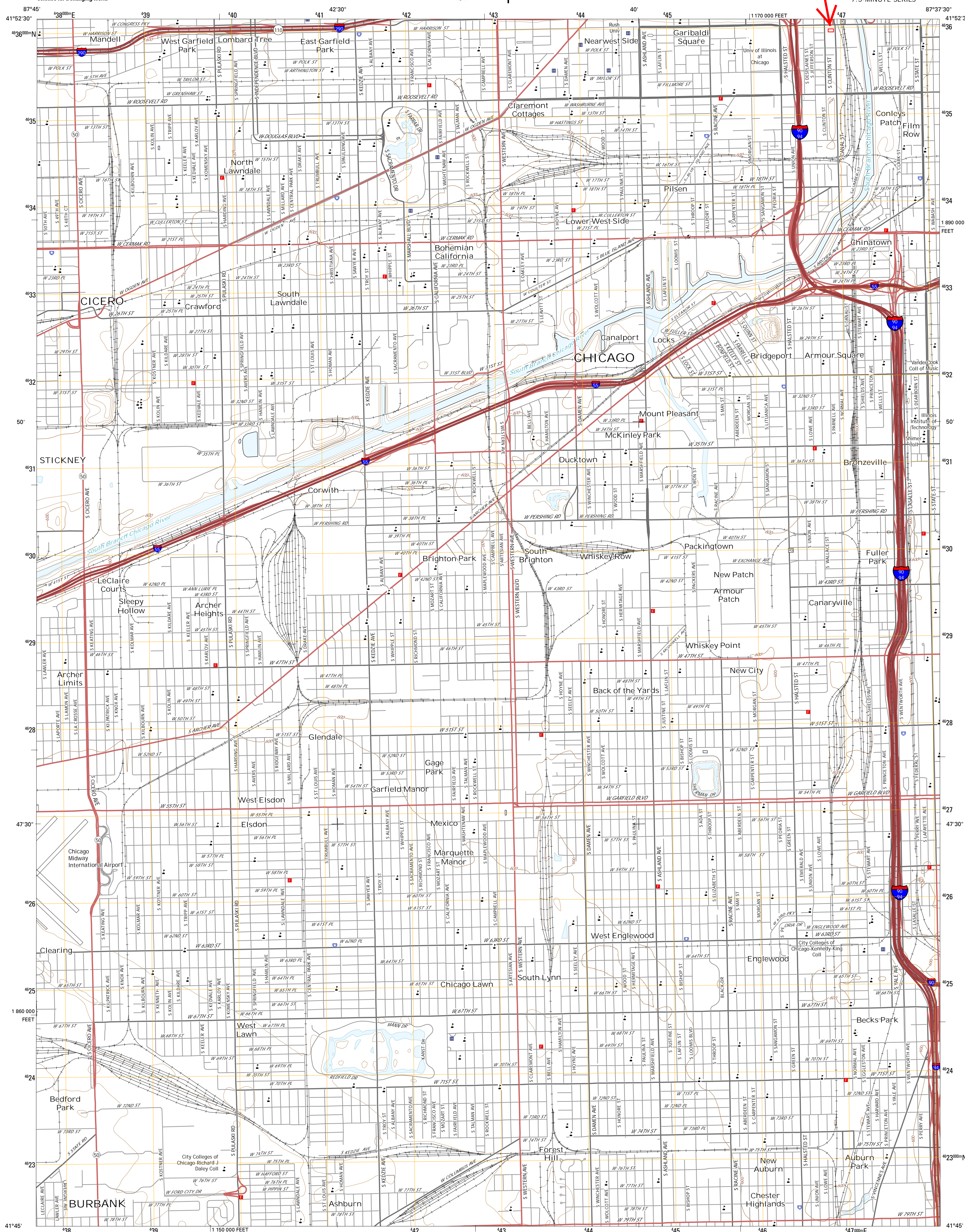
United States Custom House



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

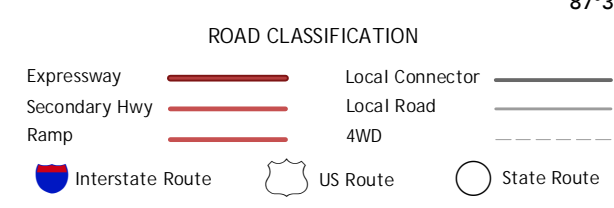
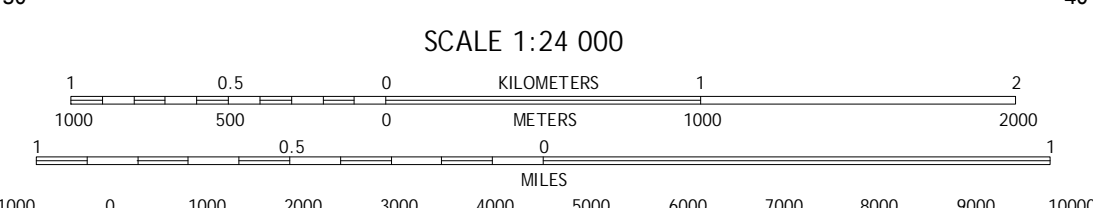
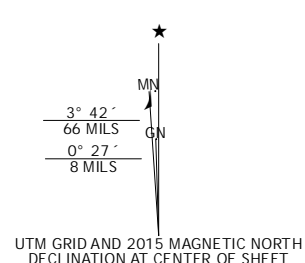


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ILLINOIS-COOK CO.
7.5-MINUTE SERIES

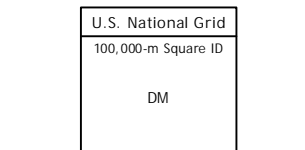


Produced by the United States Geological Survey
North American Datum of 1983 (NAD83)
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Imagery: NAIP, June 2014
Roads: HERE, ©2013 - 2014
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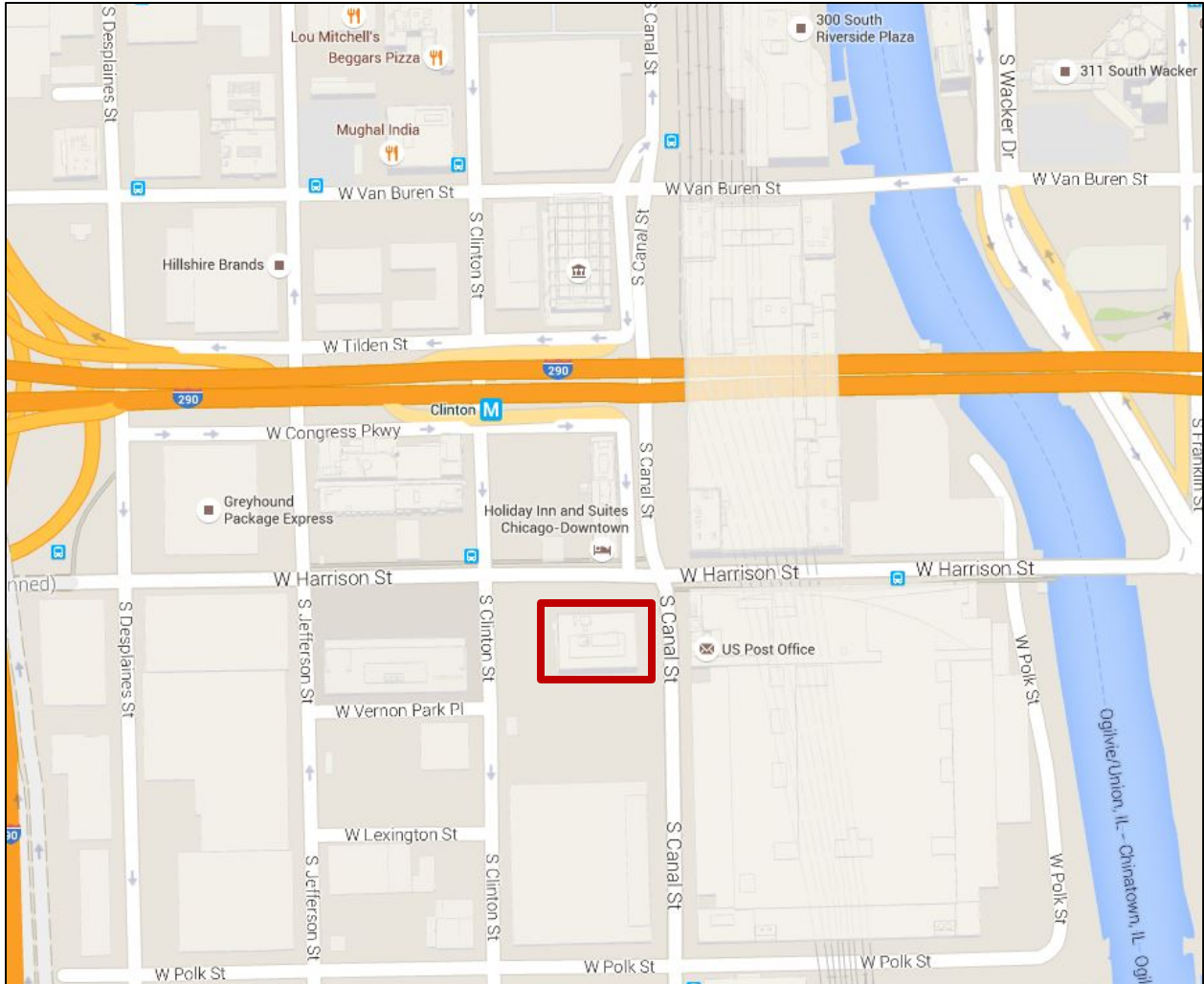
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NORTH AMERICAN VERTICAL DATUM OF 1988

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7	8	9

1 River Forest
2 Chicago Loop
3 Chicago Loop OE E
4 Berwyn
5 Jackson Park
6 Palos Park
7 Blue Island
8 Lake Calumet

ENGLEWOOD, IL
2015





Map data ©2016 Google

United States Custom House

Cook County, Illinois

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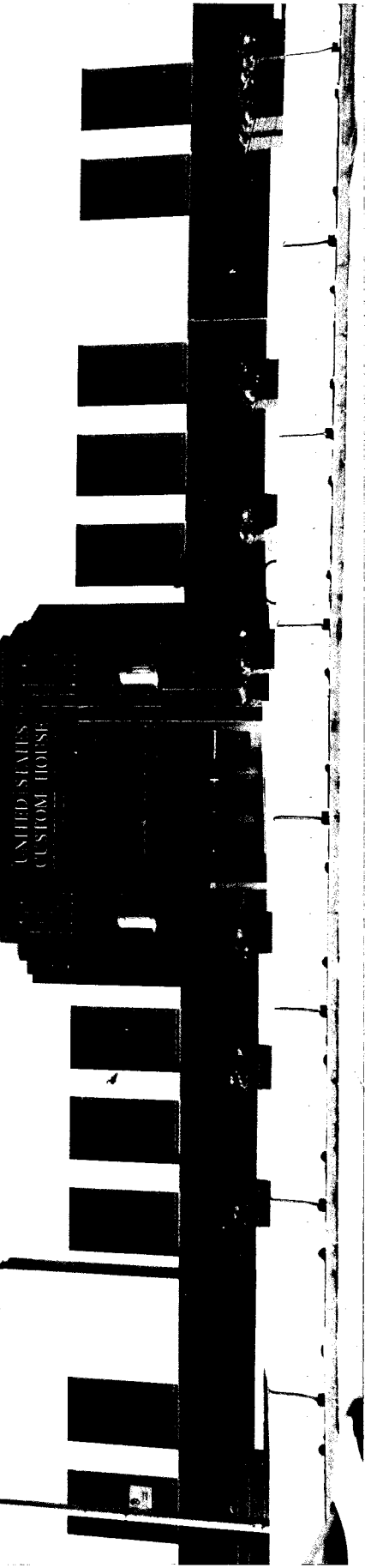


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UNITED STATES
CUSTOM HOUSE



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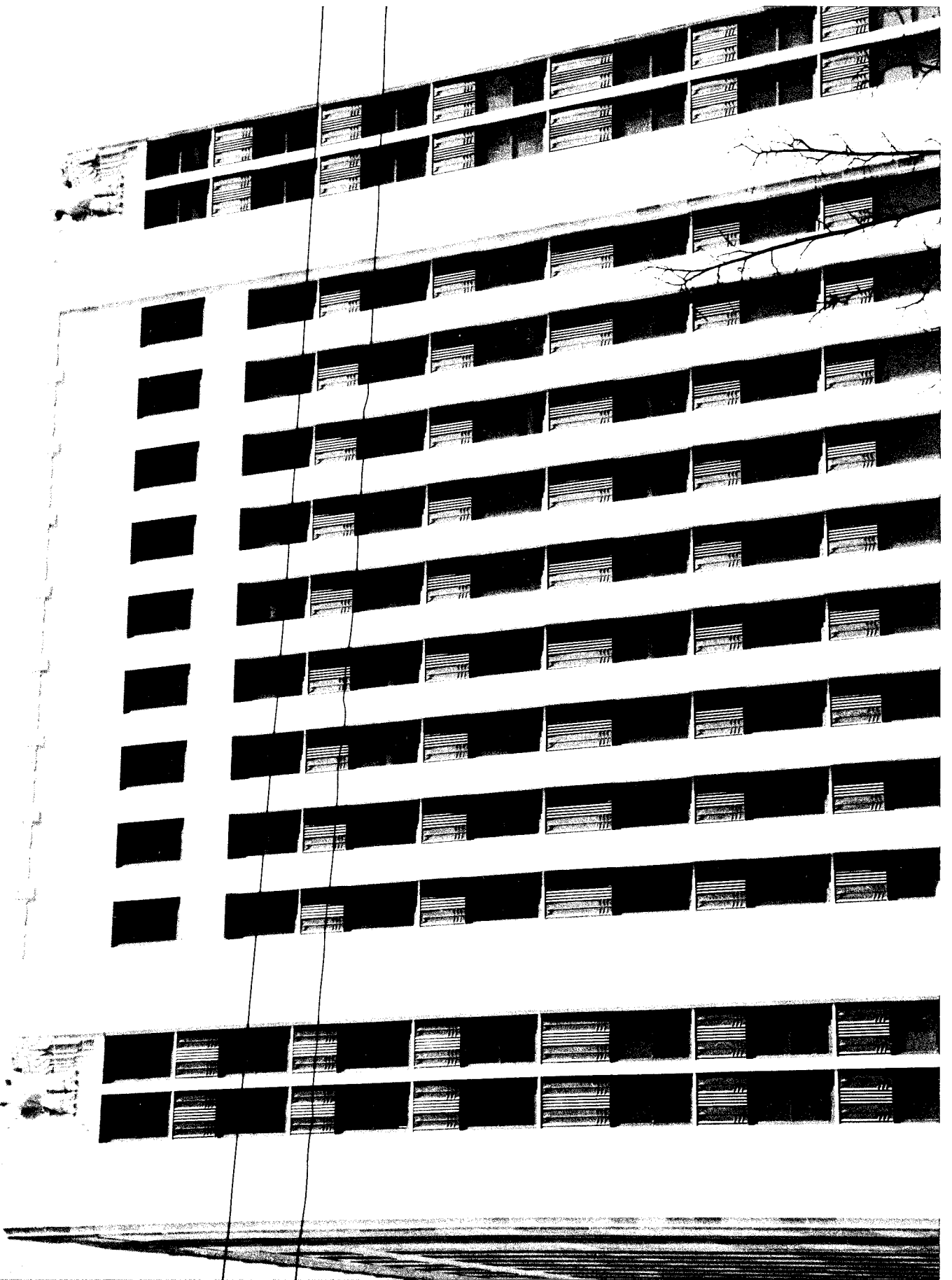
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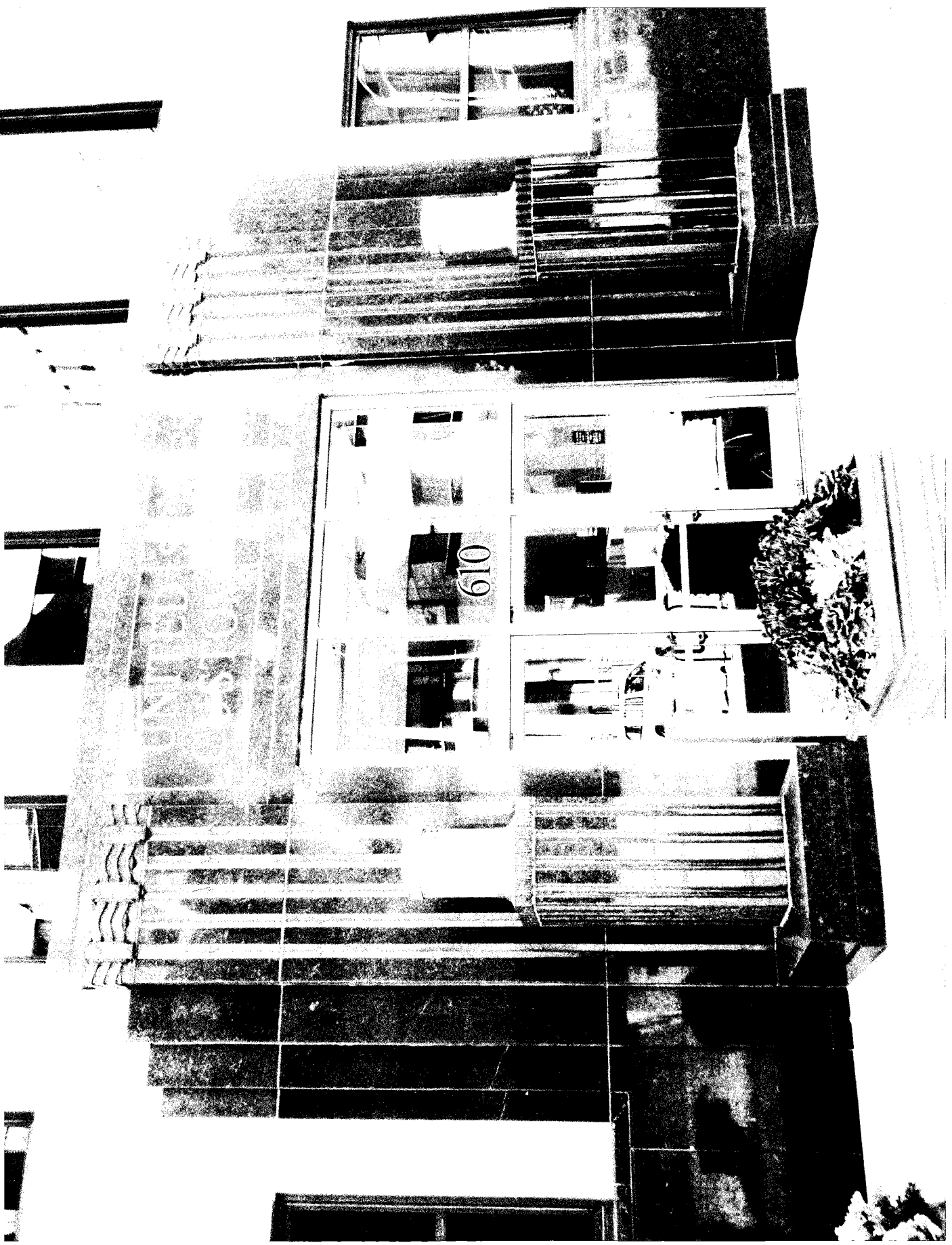
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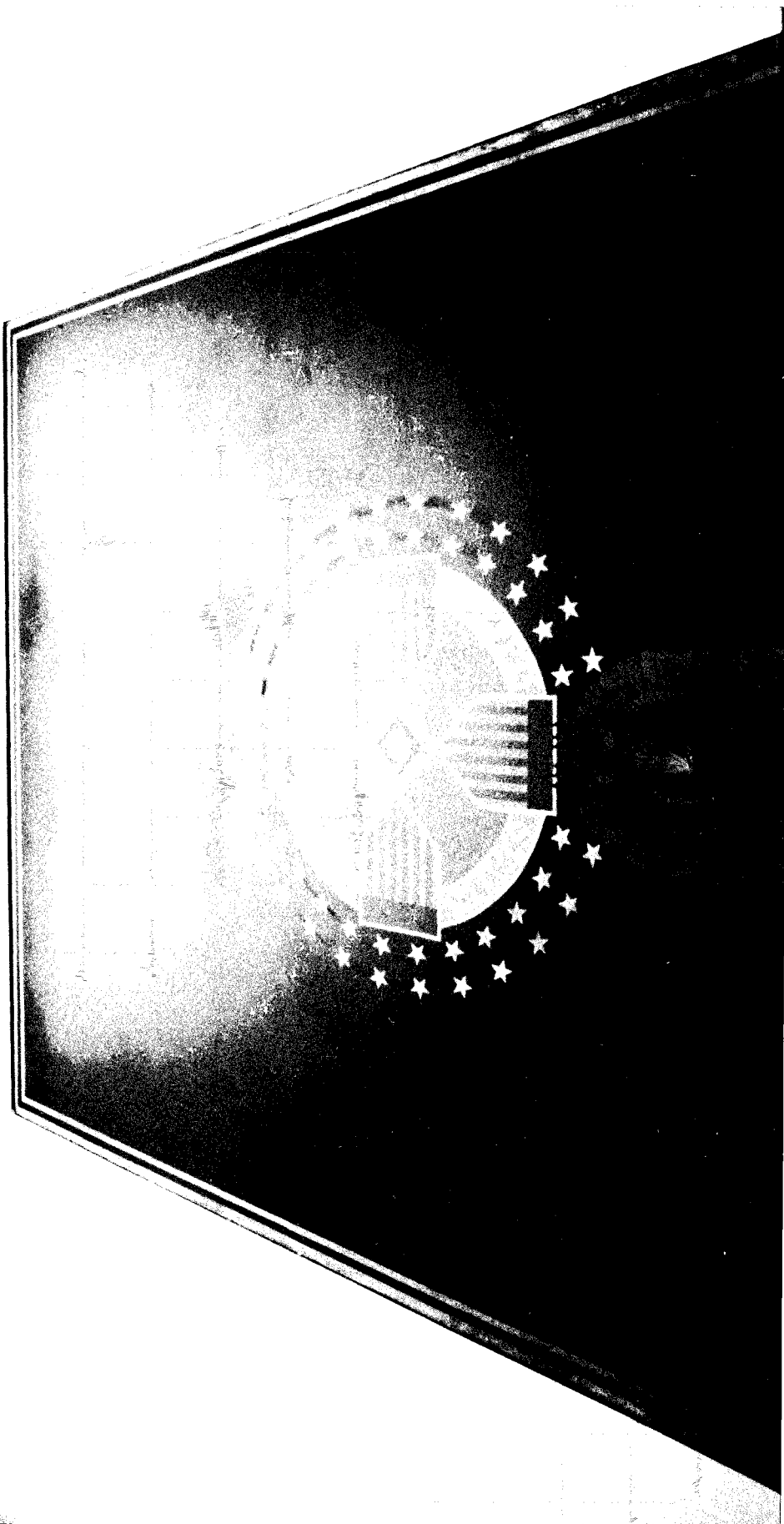


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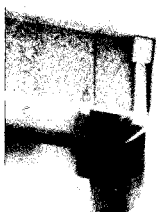


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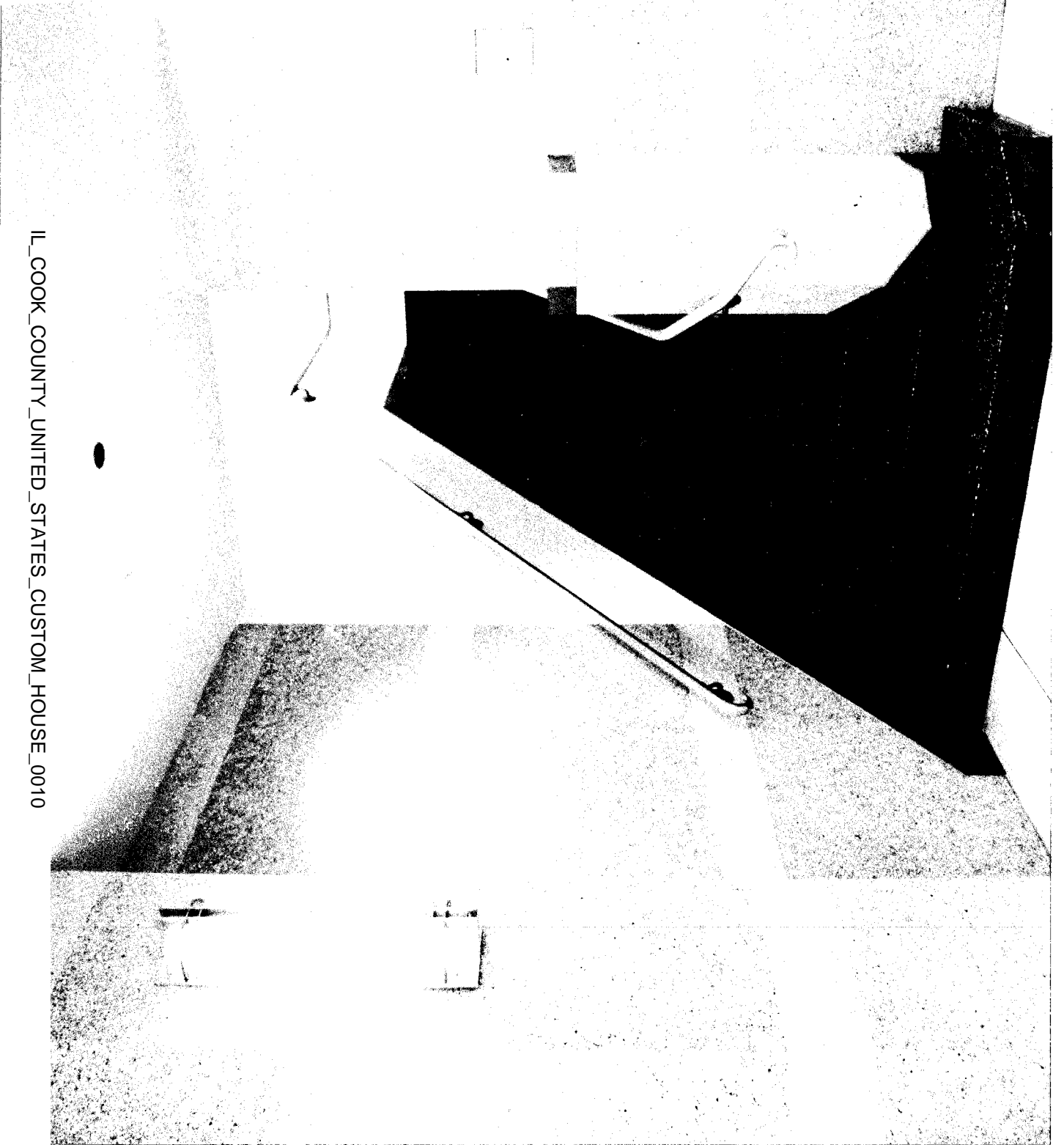




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UNITED STATES
CUSTOM HOUSE













UNITED STATES
CUSTOM HOUSE

610









UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY United States Customs House
NAME:

MULTIPLE
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: ILLINOIS, Cook

DATE RECEIVED: 6/24/16 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 7/15/16
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 8/01/16 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 8/09/16
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 16000492

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT RETURN REJECT 8.4.16 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

Entered in
The National Register
of
Historic Places

RECOM./CRITERIA _____

REVIEWER _____ DISCIPLINE _____

TELEPHONE _____ DATE _____

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.



GSA Public Buildings Service

RECEIVED 2280

JUN 24 2016

Nat. Register of Historic Places
National Park Service

June 22, 2016

Mr. Paul Loether
Chief, NRHP & NHL Program
1201 Eye Street, NW (2280), 8th Floor
Washington, D.C. 20005

Dear Mr. Loether:

The U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) is pleased to nominate the United States Custom House, located at 610 S. Canal Street, Chicago, Illinois 60607, for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places.

The following materials are enclosed for your review:

- A signed copy of the first page of the nomination
- "Disk 1" containing the true and correct copy of the nomination to the National Register of Historic Places for the United States Custom House in Chicago, Illinois, and
- "Disk 2" containing the .tif image files for the above referenced nomination.

We look forward to the nomination of this historic property to the National Register. If for any reason these materials need to be returned to GSA, please do so by a delivery service as items returned to our offices via regular mail are irradiated and the materials severely damaged.

Should you need further information regarding the nomination package, my contact for this matter is Ms. Sherry Frear at (202) 297-0812 or sherry.frear@gsa.gov.

Sincerely,

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

Enclosure

cc: Regina Nally, Regional Historic Preservation Officer, Region 5
Mariah McGunigle, Historic Architect, Region 5