

PH 0693561

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

FOR FEDERAL PROPERTIES

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

1 NAME

HISTORIC

~~United States~~ Immigrant Station and Assay Office

AND/OR COMMON

Federal Building, Department of Justice,
Immigration and Naturalization Service

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

815 Airport Way South

__NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Seattle

__ VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

7th Congressional District

STATE

Washington 98134

CODE

53

COUNTY

King

CODE

033

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input 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 AGENCY

REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS: *(If applicable)*

General Services Administration

STREET & NUMBER

GSA Center

CITY, TOWN

Auburn

__ VICINITY OF

STATE

Washington 98002

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE.

REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. King County Administration Building

STREET & NUMBER

Fourth Avenue and James Street

CITY, TOWN

Seattle

STATE

Washington 98104

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

DATE

__ FEDERAL __ STATE __ COUNTY __ LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input 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

A large four story structure, the Immigration and Naturalization Service Building was constructed between February, 1930 and late 1931. The actual designer of the building could not definitely be determined. However, plans were drawn and approved by the Office of the Supervising Architect of the Treasury Department in the latter half of 1929. At that time the Acting Supervising Architect was James A. Wetmore. He signed and approved all plans related to the building.

Eivind Anderson of Tacoma was the general contractor. His firm's bid for construction was \$517,588. Elevators were supplied and installed by the Otis Elevator Company of Seattle at a cost of \$20,663.

Site

The property was originally purchased by the Federal government to be used as the site of a post office. When it was determined not to build a post office there, the land was left surplus and made available to the Department of Labor for use as the Immigrant Station and Assay Office site. Congress authorized \$100,000 for its purchase.

The original 276' x 150' site, together with adjacent street and alley vacations (1.18 acres), is almost half covered by the 240' x 82' building. A narrow lawn and planting space in front (northeast) and a parking area to the rear (with ingress and egress on the northwest and southeast sides) are the only portions of the site not occupied by the building.

The building is the largest and most imposing structure in the immediate area, which is primarily light industrial. It faces Airport Way (Seattle Boulevard at the time of construction) which runs diagonally from northwest to southeast at that point. Few other structures in that area are oriented diagonally, making the building even more prominent. Railroad tracks leading to nearby Union Station border the site immediately to the west.

Seattle's International District is located several blocks to the north. The huge King County Stadium (Kingdome) rises several blocks to the west.

Building-General

The building exhibits strong, simple Neo-Classic design. Certain Mediterranean qualities are evident, especially in such features as the red mission tile roof of the central section, the veined marble Corinthian columns and pilasters above the main entrance, the wrought iron sunbursts above each doorway, and the bright blue and green coloring in the soffit decoration and running spiral beltcourse between the third and fourth floors.

Reinforced concrete is the principal structural material used throughout the building. Construction is post and beam. Exterior non-supporting walls are also concrete. Because the site is located on fill over former tideflats, the concrete foundation is laid over reinforced concrete pilings in order to prevent settlement. Buff brick of varying shades faces the entire building. The brick is laid in common bond throughout;

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on the first floor the header courses are recessed, giving the effect of rustication. Stone, terra cotta, and some cast and wrought iron are used as decorative elements. The steel window frames are divided into three, four, or five paned horizontal sashes, each of which is hinged at the top and opens out.

The full basement and first floor fill out the entire 240' x 82' dimensions of the building. The three story northwest and southeast sections measure 36' x 82' each. These sections have flat composition roofs. Recessed approximately one foot in front, the four story, central section measures 168' wide by 37' deep. It has a 36' x 44' wing which projects from its center to the southwest and becomes flush with the southwest facade of the first level. A hip roof covers the entire central section. On the rear slope of this roof, several chimneys which formerly serviced the fourth floor Assay Office have been removed. Only the large chimney leading up from the basement boiler room remains. The above described configuration leaves two 66' x 44' outdoor exercise terraces, one between the northwest section and the central wing, and the other between the central wing and the southeast section. These fenced terraces utilize the flat e roof of that portion of the first floor as their floor surface.

Exterior-General

The building's exterior displays a classic simplicity and monumentality. The rusticated first level serves as a visual base for the upper stories. Between the first and second floors, a wide, molded terra cotta beltcourse surrounds the building. It serves as a sill for the second story windows and a base for decorative elements such as columns and pilasters.

The exposed concrete surface of the full basement is visible on all sides of the building except for the northeast. Several garage and service entrances to the basement from the paved parking area are located along the southeast side.

Facades

Although the most highly decorated, the main facade is both simple and symmetrical. The northwest and southeast sections are identical. A metal, double leaf, multi-paned entrance door is centered on the front facade of each section. Entrance openings are round arches. A fanlight with a wrought iron sunburst in front is above each doorway. The brick pattern of the wall turns diagonally downward toward the arched openings, forming a voussoir pattern. Each doorway is flanked by two wrought iron wall lamps. On the second and third floors are three vertical window bays with spandrels separating the floors. The wider central bay contains a terra cotta diamond pattern in its spandrel. Two-story pilasters divide the window bays. Above the pilasters is a plain, wide freize, a simple dentiled cornice, and a parapet, all of ra cotta.

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By far the most decoration appears on the slightly recessed, four story central section of the main facade. Three entrances identical to those at either end are grouped in the center on the first floor. The central of these leads through a cast iron vestibule into the lobby of the building. Eight (four on each side) double window bays symmetrically flank the entrance grouping. On the second and third floors, eleven two-story, arched window bays extend along the facade. Each bay contains a decorated cast iron spandrel and is topped by a large terra cotta keystone. The three central window bays are grouped closer together directly above the first floor entrances. This group is divided by two ornamental, engaged Corinthian columns and flanked by two half pilasters. The columns, pilasters, and their bases are Gravina marble. A terra cotta band extends across the facade connecting the roof cornices of the end sections. This band is decorated with a running spiral design which is highlighted in blue and green. In its center, in slightly projecting block letters, appear the words: "UNITED STATES IMMIGRANT STATION AND ASSAY OFFICE." The band also serves as a sill for the plain windows of the fourth floor. A narrow frieze tops the windows and an egg and dart motif serves as a transition between the wall surface and the soffit of the overhanging f. The terra cotta soffit is alternately decorated with green rosettes and diamond shapes over a blue background. The red mission tile roof terminates in a terra cotta cornice molding.

The northwest and southeast elevations are similar to the front end sections except that each window bay is the same width and each spandrel panel contains a diamond pattern.

The rear elevation is very simple with little ornamentation.

Interior

Indicative of its function, the building's interior is strong, simple and unadorned. Floors are concrete covered with terrazzo, brown mastic tile, or ceramic tile. Partitions are hollow tile. Walls in the entry area and on most of the second and third floors are covered with glazed buff tiles in varying shades. Steel bars cover windows, and create cells and partitions in the detention areas on the second and third floors. With the exceptions of the lowering of some ceilings, the addition of carpeting in certain areas, and the conversion of some holding areas into offices, few changes have been made.

The basement contains shops, garages, and storage areas as it always has. Under the central section is a boiler and incinerator room which still contains the original equipment, although it is no longer in use because of pollution standards. The first floor is occupied by offices of the Immigration and Naturalization Service. It also contains two courtrooms. The infirmary and some detention dormitories on the second floor are still in use for day internment. The remainder of the second floor is used as office space. The kitchen and remaining detention dormitories on the third floor are no longer in use. However, offices and an employee lunchroom are still

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occupied by other federal agencies. All equipment has been removed, including furnaces used in the assaying process. Only the large safe remains.

The simple massing, classic symmetry and monumentality, and the substantial construction of this building reflect its era in federal construction. Yet its Mediterranean features; its location near Seattle's International District, where many of its occupants eventually made their way; and its present, nearly unique function as one of the few remaining government operated detention centers for undocumented aliens, make it a structure of profound interest and significance.

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 checked="" 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 checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" 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 1929 - 1931

BUILDER/ARCHITECT James A. Wetmore,
Supervising Architect

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Immigrant Station and Assay Office retains much of its original imposing character. Constructed to house the agency charged with the enforcement of federal laws regulating immigration affairs in Western Washington, the building symbolizes the era when immigration to America, the land of golden opportunity, was a world wide mania.

The United States Assay Office, housed on the building's top floor, had its own position in America's history. A place where millions of dollars in gold was processed, the building is a reminder of the gold rush days and the pioneer spirit of the Northwest.

Immigrant Station

The Immigration and Naturalization Service had its beginnings when the Office of the Superintendent of Immigration was established as a permanent agency dealing with immigration affairs on March 3, 1891. All immigration procedures then in force were placed under the control and supervision of the Secretary of the Treasury. On March 2, 1895 the Bureau of Immigration was established and the title of Superintendent of Immigration was changed to Commissioner General of Immigration. On February 14, 1903 the Department of Commerce and Labor was formed and the Commissioner General and Bureau of Immigration were transferred to that agency. On June 29, 1906, a Congressional Act provided for the federal supervision of naturalization and the immigration bureau was redesignated the Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization.

On March 4, 1913, the Bureau of Immigration and Naturalization was again transferred to another agency. On that date, the Department of Labor was created and immigration and naturalization was divided into two bureaus. These were again consolidated on June 10, 1933, under the jurisdiction of Commissioner of Immigration and Naturalization and remained in the Department of Labor. On June 14, 1940, a final transfer was made, placing the Immigration and Naturalization Service under the Department of Justice.

With the implementation of America's first immigration laws, aliens who arrived in the United States without proper documentation were required to be detained until their immigrant status could be determined. Transportation companies owning the steamship lines which carried the aliens were charged with the custody, care and feeding of these people until their disposition could be resolved.

At the turn of the century, the United States Government became concerned about the substandard conditions under which aliens were being held. The Immigration officials began to document the ill treatment of the aliens and the filthy conditions of the

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

See attached sheets

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 1.18

UTM REFERENCES

A 10 | 5510161910 | 52713210
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

B [] | [] | []
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Legal Description: LOT - 11 THRU 16 BLOCK 283 SEATTLE TIDE LDS REPLAT
 BLK 283 TGW VAC ALLEY AND STREET ADJ

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Gwendolyn A. Lee, Stephen A. Mathison

ORGANIZATION

The Conservation Company

DATE

April 29, 1978

STREET & NUMBER

1955 Sixth Avenue West

TELEPHONE

206 - 284-8556

CITY OR TOWN

Seattle,

STATE

Washington 98119

12 CERTIFICATION OF NOMINATION

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER RECOMMENDATION

YES

NO

NONE

Jeanne M. Welch
 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

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

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

Michael F. Hutto

TITLE

HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER - GSA

DATE

10.2.78

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

Michael F. Hutto

DATE

1.25.79

~~DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION~~

~~KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER~~

ATTEST:

W. Ray Luce

DATE

1.25.79

~~KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER~~

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detention "pens." In the interest of "humanitarianism and good administration" the alien detention functions were assumed by the Federal government. This allowed governmental control of sanitary conditions and nutrition and restricted the alien's association with outsiders who might coach or assist the alien in the immigration process.

The government's passage of stringent immigration laws, especially the Chinese Exclusion Acts, further complicated immigration administration. Thus, housing the aliens and the immigration officials in the same facility would expedite the enforcement of the immigration laws.

To accomplish this, suitable buildings had to be obtained. Major immigration stations were constructed by the Federal government, while other buildings were leased and altered to accommodate immigration use. Early immigration stations include those constructed at Ellis Island, New York, 1892; Honolulu, Hawaii, 1905; and Angel Island, California, 1906-09.

The original immigration station and headquarters of the Puget Sound District was located at Port Townsend, Washington. By 1905, however, the volume of immigration activity had increased so that this facility was no longer adequate. Plans were begun to remove the station from Port Townsend and to arrange its relocation in Seattle. The move to Seattle was made in the fall of 1907 to a rented building owned by the Great Northern Railroad at the head of Smith Cove. Port Townsend was to continue as the port of entry, but the headquarters of the consolidated district was placed in Seattle. It was felt that the administration and enforcement of Chinese Exclusion Laws from the well-equipped office in Seattle would be more convenient.

By 1916, Seattle gained popularity as a port of entry. The existing quarters had proved unsatisfactory and a new four-story, wood frame facility was leased. Located between Western Avenue and First Avenue at the foot of Union Street, it was completed, equipped and occupied by January 31, 1916.

In that year, a total of 900,000 aliens passed through the Seattle District as either visitors or those seeking permanent residency. The chief functions of the immigration officers who were stationed on the new building's fourth floor included the examination of aliens applying for admission; investigations for deportation purposes; and prosecutions for immigration law violations, including the smuggling of aliens. Between 3,000 and 4,000 investigations took place. There were 543 deportations.

As many as 750 aliens were detained in the building at one time. Detained aliens included individuals involved in arrest cases as well as persons applying for admission awaiting decision on their application. Aliens awaiting deportation and those yet judged were housed in separate quarters on the building's first three floors.

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As a matter of course, all aliens of Chinese ancestry were detained in compliance with the Chinese Exclusion Act. As the aliens debarked, they were immediately taken into custody and escorted to the Immigration Station. The transportation was provided by the steamship companies.

Once inside the building, men and women were taken to separate quarters. Families were separated and the children were housed with their mothers. In the barred dormitories, they were assigned bunks and lockers in which all their possessions had to be kept. They were given disinfectant baths, physical examinations and issued uniforms.

All aliens were confined behind metal bars surrounding and separating the dormitories. Windows were screened as well as barred. Aliens were not allowed close to windows to prevent them from seeing others outside who might provide signals or cues to assist them in gaining admission.

After two decades of use, it became apparent that the wooden Immigrant Station was no longer adequate. It had deteriorated and become a fire hazard. It was too small and more space was required for both detention and administrative functions. The Office of the Supervising Architect of the Treasury Department was commissioned to design a new facility. Plans for the new building were completed in 1929.

The new Immigrant Station at 815 Airport Way South in Seattle was occupied in late 1931. Modern and spacious, this facility was a vast improvement over the former station. It contained larger detention dormitories, larger and better equipped dining and kitchen areas, spaces for recreation and exercise, and an infirmary staffed by a Public Health physician. Courtrooms were located on the first floor to efficiently hear immigration and naturalization proceedings. Between 250 and 300 aliens were simultaneously housed in the new building's facilities. Approximately 95% of these were Asians, and the majority were Chinese males. Several national and international factors account for the disproportionate representation of this ethnic group.

In China, poor record-keeping methods and internal turmoil which destroyed records resulted in inadequate identification of the people. Unstable social and economic conditions in China provided strong motivation for emigration. The number of males who sought to come to America far outnumbered the females. Men came alone so they could either make enough money to bring their wives and families, or so they could "make a fortune" and return to China to live a wealthy life. The conditions which lured the Chinese to America were so powerful that great numbers left their homeland.

As these people reached American ports, it became the burden of the immigration officials to enforce the Chinese Exclusion Acts. The original Act was amended several times since the first passage. Among other things, the complex laws required that in order to gain United States entry, individuals of Chinese descent had to be verified offspring of certified American citizens.

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The urge to immigrate to the United States and the stringent restrictions imposed upon Chinese people caused many to attempt the use of illegal means. The immigration service then instituted a method of complete investigation of each Chinese individual who sought to enter the United States. This included in-depth interrogation and testimony of a personal nature about the individual's residence, family, friends, the topography and geography of his village, etc. This had to be collaborated by another witness under separate questioning. This continued until the immigration officials were convinced that the individual indeed was the person he represented himself to be. For this reason, Chinese aliens were detained for periods ranging from 30 days to 12 months.

The Seattle Immigrant Station was designed and constructed specifically as a holding facility for Chinese people. The original plans indicated dormitories for Chinese men, a separate dormitory for Chinese women, and another for Chinese boys. An attempt was made to accommodate the Chinese in meal preparations. Chinese cooks were contracted usually to provide authentic meals.

The function of the Seattle Immigrant Station as a Chinese detention facility diminished rapidly after World War II, when people were no longer allowed to leave the interior of China. During the war, however, the number of Europeans detained had increased. In January, 1941, a local newspaper noted that every European country was represented in the 130 persons held in detention. Because of the war, it was difficult to deport Europeans to their native countries, and many had to be detained longer than usual. If they could not be shipped back to Europe safely, they were generally paroled.

The Immigration and Naturalization Service continues to use the Seattle facility for administration of its affairs in Washington State. At one time, its responsibilities included the management of the states of Washington, Oregon, Montana, Idaho, and Alaska. The holding facilities, however, have not had heavy use since the 1950's. During this time, many Mexicans were housed there awaiting deportation.

Today, the Seattle Immigration and Naturalization Service building is one of the few structures of its kind which has intact detention facilities still in use. Undocumented aliens are held for short periods of time, not to exceed one working day. Three rooms are currently in use for these purposes, including a dormitory for men, single cell units, and the former infirmary which holds women. Overnight facilities are not in operation and aliens requiring longer detention are transferred to King County Jail. Other Immigration and Naturalization Service jurisdictions contract directly with local county jails for detention services.

Seattle's Immigrant Station, massive and sturdy, stands as a symbol of an era of America's past. At a time when the attributes of our country were glorified, in-

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ducing millions of people throughout the world to leave their native lands, the Immigration and Naturalization Service was charged with the unpleasant task of dispelling romantic notions in the enforcement of laws created by the American people.

Assay Office

The 1897 Klondike Gold Rush in the Canadian Yukon created a flow of gold through the City of Seattle. Miners carrying fortunes in gold passed through Seattle's port. The United States government saw the opportunity to strengthen its gold balance by purchasing quantities of this precious metal.

In 1898, the United States Congress passed an Act to establish an Assay Office in Seattle. This location was selected because of its status as a port city and its proximity to the Canadian border. Later, when the American gold fields in Alaska were opened, this office was instrumental in the handling of that gold.

The United States Assay Office opened in Seattle on July 1, 1898 and received its first shipment of gold two weeks later. The office, located at 617 Ninth Avenue near James Street, occupied a red brick building owned by Thomas Prosch, pioneer newspaper publisher. The original rent was \$100.00 per month, but later a vault was added and other improvements were made and the rent was raised.

Peak years in assay activity for the Seattle office occurred soon after the turn of the century. During these peak years, deposits between \$20-22 million were received by the office. Alaska gold bullion, amounting to \$174,019,302 was purchased by the United States Government during the first ten years of the Assay Office.

In 1906, the building which housed the Assay Office was enlarged for safety and ease of handling gold. An additional wing was constructed for the office of the Superintendent. On April 5, 1906, a consignment from Eagle, Alaska, contained a gold nugget about the size of a teacup. It was the largest single piece of gold received to that date, and was valued at \$600.00.

Through the years the employees of the Assay Office continued to receive gold, weigh it, melt it into bars, assay samples and calculate values. Depositors were paid by U.S. Treasury checks. The bars were sent to the Denver Mint. The office assayed the entire production of gold mines in Alaska, Washington, Oregon, Idaho and Montana. However, employees estimated that 85% - 90% of the gold came from mines in Alaska. Silver from those states was also assayed at the Seattle office, but the quantities and values were not as great.

For 34 years, the red brick building on Ninth Avenue housed the Assay Office. In the latter years, it began to show the wear from its heavy use. More space was needed and the building became inadequate for assay volume and use.

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In 1929, plans were being drawn for a new Immigrant Station in Seattle. It was decided to construct a new Assay Office on the building's top (fourth) floor. Special chimneys, outlets and fittings were added to the building's plans to accommodate the huge furnaces required by the Assay Office.

Just as construction of the new building was about to begin, in February, 1930, Congress explored the feasibility of closing the Assay Offices in the West. It was decided that those located in Salt Lake City, Helena, Carson City and Boise should be closed. The only western offices which showed profits were those in Denver and San Francisco. Offices in Seattle and New Orleans showed losses.

Despite this there was no disposition to close the Seattle office. Its large volume of business ranked only behind Denver and San Francisco. In the fiscal year ending June 30, 1929, Seattle's office received 1,262 deposits of gold and silver valued at \$6,966,588.07. Gross operating expenses were \$28,078,25; gross income was \$1,770.11; gross loss was \$26,308.14.

Thus, construction of the Assay Office in the new building continued as planned. The office was moved in February of 1932 to its new quarters in the Immigrant Station and Assay Office at Fifth Avenue South and Airport Way South.

Although the functions of the two agencies housed in the same building were completely unrelated, they were not incompatible. For example, the presence of a 24 hour guard in the Immigrant Station below also served to provide some degree of protection to the Assay Office. Perhaps it is for this reason that the Assay Office never experienced a burglary or robbery attempt.

The same routine for handling gold was continued in this more efficient and better equipped facility. Scrap and newly mined gold were received and weighed. It was mixed with compounds of borax, glass, soda and potassium nitrate which acted to bring impurities to the top when the gold was melted. The mixture was melted in graphite crucibles in the furnace at 4000 degrees Fahrenheit for 10-40 minutes. The flaming mixture was poured into graphite molds coated with oil or stove blacking which kept the bars from sticking. Charcoal dust was sprinkled on the bars to prevent the oxidizing of the metals. A number was then stamped on each bar before it was cooled and weighed. The average weight of the bricks was 70 pounds and the heaviest ever weighed was 170 pounds, valued at \$22,000.00.

Two types of samples were extracted and used for assayers tests. The dip sample was taken from the core of the melted gold. "Plugs", or drillings were taken from the hardened bars. The cuttings were wrapped in sheet lead and melted in such a way that the base metal separated from the gold and silver in the sample.

The assayer was described as a chemist-metalurgist. His job was to analyze the gold and silver content of bullion to determine the amount to be paid.

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The Assay Office in Seattle was one of the last of its kind in the history of the Treasury Department. By the time of its closure on February 28, 1955, \$658,619,298.46 worth of gold, nearly 1,000 tons, had been processed here. Its position in Seattle provided a unique status for the City and played a significant role in the economy of the nation.

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