

DATA SHEET

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

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: California
COUNTY: San Francisco
FOR NPS USE ONLY
ENTRY DATE JAN 29 1975

1. NAME

COMMON: U. S. Custom House
AND/OR HISTORIC:

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER: 555 Battery Street			
CITY OR TOWN: San Francisco		CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT: No. 5	
STATE: California	CODE 06	COUNTY: San Francisco	CODE 075

3. CLASSIFICATION

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

4. AGENCY

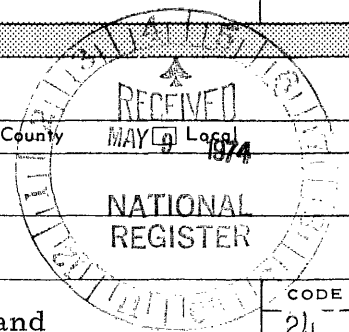
General Services Administration			
REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS: (If applicable) San Francisco		STREET AND NUMBER: 49 4th Street	
CITY OR TOWN: San Francisco		STATE: California	CODE 06

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC: Deputy Regional Management Service, County Recorders Office			
STREET AND NUMBER: 49 4th Street			
CITY OR TOWN: San Francisco		STATE: California	CODE 06

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY: Custom House Block (Block 197, Lots 1 and 2)			
DATE OF SURVEY: June 13, 1904 <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Federal <input type="checkbox"/> State <input type="checkbox"/> County			
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS: U. S. National Record Center No. 221			
STREET AND NUMBER:			
CITY OR TOWN: Suitland		STATE: Maryland	CODE 24



SEE INSTRUCTIONS

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DATE:

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7. DESCRIPTION

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

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The late Renaissance style Custom House is a symmetrical 5-story, rectangular building 265 ft. by 117 ft. The steel frame rests on concrete foundations supported on wood piling. The exterior materials are cut granite base and a facing of gray Madera granite slabs on upper stories. The two L-shaped light courts which bring light to central halls and interior offices are faced with white glazed brick. The hipped roof, covered with slate laid on sheet metal, is hidden behind a balustrade above the cornice. The entrances on Battery and Washington Sts. have double bronze doors with detail in relief; above the rectangular openings are balustrades and carved stone ornament. Other carved stone is on the faces of the building, none projecting beyond the cornice.

Interior floors and walls of the central halls and corridors are white Italian marble, with black Belgian marble edging and strips on the floors. The case work throughout is white oak, varnished; the reveals of doors to offices are paneled in white oak.

The prostrated base floor was originally used for post office and others offices where accessibility to street was desirable, with customs offices on the main floor at second level. A large central lobby (approx. 48 ft. by 28 ft.) occurring on all floors has double staircases in open wells at north and south ends. There were three elevators at the west side of the central lobby, one eliminated in 1950, the two remaining ones replaced in 1958 by ones with stainless steel doors. Flanking the stairs are the L-shaped light courts. The north light court was roofed over at ground level before 1948 for use as a storage room, a door having been cut from a window for entrance, and the marble framing extended to the floor; in 1955 the storage room was turned into a snack bar, with tables and vending machines. Tucked away in a residual space, the L-shaped addition is not offensive except for the poor taste and quality of materials.

The Deputy Collector's office, entered from either side of the bank of elevators on the main floor, is approx. 100 ft. by 42 ft. with curved end walls. At the center of the ceiling was originally a skylight but after considerable leakage it was roofed over (before 1948) and fluorescent lights installed between roof and glazing. A free-form high counter separating public from staff space was before 1948 changed to a rectangular form to enlarge staff space; this change partially conceals the round arched doors and pilasters. Murals were painted on the end walls before 1915 by A. L. Cooper. At the same time he added abstract floral decorations between the groins and around the skylights and on the same floor, a frieze in the office of administrator of customs. Early published plans show two small administrative offices at the southeast corner, most likely changed to one large room before construction since the frieze shows no patching. Before 1948 the large sub-treasury clerks' office next to administrative office was partitioned.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

8. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

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

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) **completed 1911**

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

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

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The handsome 1911 granite-faced Custom House was the first large building on which construction started in San Francisco after the 1906 earthquake and fire, and one of the few surviving good examples of late Renaissance federal architecture in the west. The sober taste, fine materials and workmanship of exteriors and interiors, and the state of preservation are unusual; relatively few changes have been made to degrade it aesthetically.

A neo-classical custom house was demolished to clear the site, and grading was under way when the fire broke out. Ground was broken July 29, 1906, but the unprecedented amount of building caused a labor shortage and it was 1911 before completed and occupied. The concrete foundations of the steel-framed building rest on timbers taken from the hull of the steamship Georgian, a vessel that in Gold Rush days had been deserted and was drawn up to the Washington St. wharf.

The commission for the design was won in a competition by the St. Louis architects William S. Eames and Thomas C. Young; Eames was then president of the American Institute of Architects, and his firm had designed other federal buildings.

A splendid architectural feature is the ample central lobby with marble stairs at the north and south ends, especially fine at the main level where the symmetrical double stairs with open well, high ceilings with plaster work, and a baroque pattern outlined in the white marble floor distinguish the elegant space. Another architectural accomplishment is the Deputy Collector's office on the main floor; curved end walls with round-arched doors flanked by pilasters; the groined ceiling, painted in abstract floral patterns; two skylights. For the 1915 Pan Pacific International Exposition, A. L. Cooper painted murals on the end walls: "The Panama Canal and its Construction," and "San Francisco Harbor." Other notable details: ornamental plaster work, bronze wall lamps in lobbies, furniture designed by the architect in the customs administrative office, and a frieze and marble fire place in the same room.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

The Architect and Engineer, Aug. 1905, p. 87; Nov. 1905, pp. 36-38; July 1906, p. 75; Aug. 1907, pp. 38-41; July 1918, p. 68.
American Architect, Sept. 24, 1913, p. 124; Apr. 21, 1915, p. 248.
Architectural Review, July 1905, p. 38.
 "Here Today," Chronicle Books, 1968, pp. 55, 57, 58.
 "Preservation of Landmarks," San Francisco Planning Dept. 1966.
 "San Francisco Skyline," E. G. Potter, Dodd Mead, 1939, p. 101.
 "San Francisco Call," Jan. 19, 1904, p. 4; May 2, 1911, p. 7; col. 4.

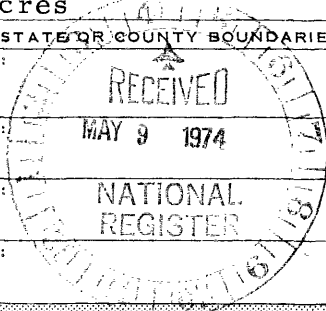
10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			OR	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees	Minutes	Seconds
NW	0 0 0	0 0 0		37°	47'	40"
NE	0 0 0	0 0 0		122°	23'	52"
SE	0 0 0	0 0 0				
SW	0 0 0	0 0 0				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: **1.77 acres**

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

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE



SEE INSTRUCTIONS

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE: Esther McCoy, architectural historian		DATE: Mar. 30, 1973
BUSINESS ADDRESS:		
STREET AND NUMBER: 2434 Beverly Avenue		PHONE: (213) 396-2033
CITY OR TOWN: Santa Monica	STATE: California	CODE: 06

12. CERTIFICATION OF NOMINATION

State Liaison Officer recommendation:

Yes
 No
 None

[Signature]
 State Liaison Officer Signature

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

[Signature] **2/6/74**
 Federal Representative Signature Date

Historic Preservation Liaison Officer

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

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

[Signature]
 Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date **1/29/75**

ATTEST:

[Signature]
 Keeper of The National Register

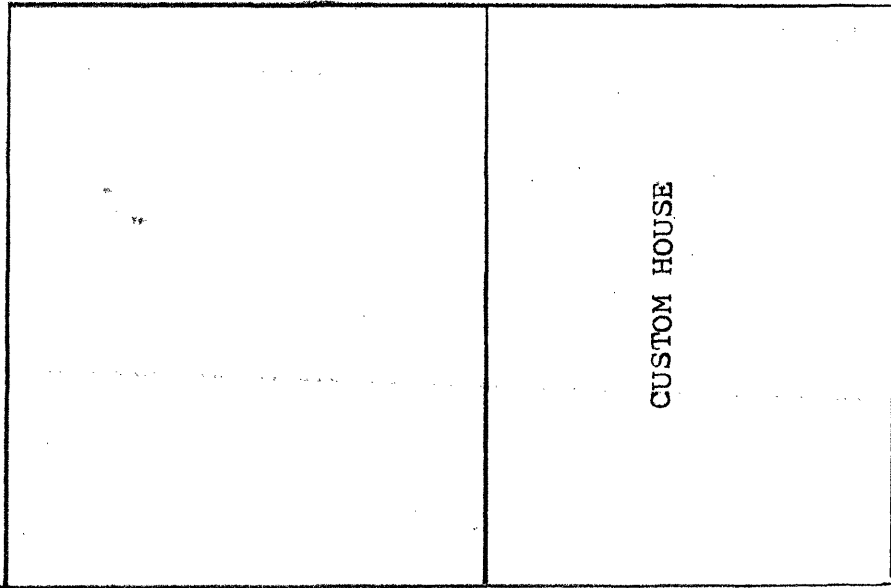
Date **10-4-74**

U.S. CUSTOM HOUSE, 1911
555 Battery Street, San Francisco, Cal. 04
Lat. 37° 47' 39" 46"
Long. 122° 23' 58"
Map source: Survey of Custom House Block, 1904



JACKSON ST.

SANSOME ST.



BATTERY ST.

WASHINGTON ST.

