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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 *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. 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 entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

Historic name United States Post Office and Court House
Richard C. Lee United States Courthouse; New Haven United States Courthouse; New Haven Post Office; GSA #CT0024ZZ
Other names/site number

2. Location

Street & Number 145 Church Street Not for Publication N/A
City or Town New Haven Vicinity N/A
State Connecticut Code CT County New Haven Code 009
Zip Code 06510

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 nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

[Signature] Date 7/24/2015
Signature of certifying official
Federal Preservation Officer, U.S. General Services Administration
State or Federal Agency or Tribal government

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)
[Signature] Date 6/12/15
Signature of commenting official/Title

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register [Signature] Date of Action 9.14.15
 See continuation sheet.
 determined eligible for the National Register
 See continuation sheet.
 determined not eligible for the National Register
 removed from the National Register
 other (explain):

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)	Category of Property (Check only one box)	Number of Resources within Property	
		Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> Private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<u>1</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-state	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> structures
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public-federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> objects
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

Name of related multiple property listing (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)
N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: <u>GOVERNMENT</u>	Sub: <u>Courthouse</u>
<u>GOVERNMENT</u>	<u>Post Office</u>
<u>GOVERNMENT</u>	<u>Government Office</u>

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: <u>GOVERNMENT</u>	Sub: <u>Courthouse</u>
<u>GOVERNMENT</u>	<u>Government Office</u>

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

LATE 19TH CENTURY AND 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS

Beaux Arts

Classical Revival

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation	<u>CONCRETE</u>
roof	<u>OTHER: flat roof covered with a membrane and ballast stone</u>
walls	<u>STONE: Granite</u>
walls	<u>STONE: Marble</u>
walls	<u>STONE: Limestone</u>
walls	<u>BRICK</u>
windows	<u>METAL: Bronze</u>
& doors	<u>WOOD</u>
	<u>GLASS</u>

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Please see Section 7 Continuation Sheets.

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.

Criteria Considerations (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or a grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Period of Significance

1919

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Dates

1919

Architect/Builder

Rogers, James Gamble
Taylor, James Knox (Supervising Architect of the Treasury)

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Please see Section 8 Continuation Sheets.

9. Major Bibliographical References

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Please see Section 9 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: GSA Region 1

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property 0.98 acre

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
1	18	673724	4574876	3			
2				4			

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

The site is bounded by: Church Street along the west, a pedestrian right-of-way (formerly Court Street) along the north, a pedestrian and restricted vehicular-use plaza along the east, and a vehicular access drive along the south. From New Haven City Real Estate Records: Block 0152, Lot 145.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

The boundary was selected because it is consistent with the historical limits of the parcel owned by the federal government. The site is located opposite the New Haven Green. The greater part of the site was occupied by the Tontine Hotel (built 1828), which housed an early Post Office in New Haven in 1831-1836.

11. Form Prepared By

Name/Title Richard Starzak, Senior Architectural Historian; Barbara Lamprecht, Senior Architectural Historian; later edits by George Siekkinen, Architect, GSA

Organization ICF International (formerly Jones & Stokes Associates) on behalf of GSA Date 08/25/2009; 07/20/2015

Street & Number 601 W. 5th Street, Suite 900 Telephone (213) 312-1800

City or Town Los Angeles State CA Zip Code 90071

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

Photographs

Representative photographs of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

Name Liz Mees, Regional Historic Preservation Officer

Organization U.S. General Services Administration, Region 1 Telephone (617) 565-7282

Street & Number 10 Causeway Street Suite 1100

City or Town Boston State MA Zip Code 02222

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. 470 et seq.). A federal agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number.

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to range from approximately 18 hours to 36 hours depending on several factors including, but not limited to, how much documentation may already exist on the type of property being nominated and whether the property is being nominated as part of a Multiple Property Documentation Form. In most cases, it is estimated to average 36 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form to meet minimum National Register documentation requirements. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, 1849 C St., NW, Washington, DC 20240.

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**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section 7 Page 1

*United States Post Office and Court House
New Haven County, CT*

Description

Summary

The United States Post Office and Court House (known today as the Richard C. Lee United States Courthouse) is sited on Church Street across from the New Haven Green, which since 1638, has been the historic civic center of New Haven. The subject building's site and civic grandeur was influenced by the City Beautiful Movement, and master architect James Gamble Rogers designed the building following the Beaux Arts tradition in the Classical Revival style. The building is three stories in height with its primary elevation consisting of a monumental decastyle portico of unfluted Corinthian columns supporting a blank pediment topped by anthemion anifixa at apex. The full entablature carries a continuous frieze around the building with the words of a sermon given on June 4, 1639, when the colonial founders met to form the New Haven colony government: "Wisdom hath builded her house; she hath hewn out her seven pillars." The frieze includes the names of the seven men who served as the first General Court, and across the portico is the title "UNITED STATES POST OFFICE AND COURT HOUSE." The exterior features several stone types including pink Tennessee marble for the walls and pink Milford granite for the steps and base. The 140 foot by 200 foot rectangular plan features a rectangular central light court in the second and third stories with a skylight, now roofed over, at the bottom of the light court that originally lit the first floor postal workroom. The walls of the light court are Indiana limestone with windows to provide daylight to surrounding spaces of the second and third floors including the elaborately appointed second floor courtroom. The first floor was mainly devoted to the postal service, second floor to the U.S. district court functions and the third floor to a variety of federal government offices. The basement and the mezzanine floor above the first floor provided additional space for the post office with customs also provided space in the basement. Elaborately ornamented public lobbies were provided along the west side of the building for the first floor main entrance with a public lobby providing public access to postal services and a public lobby outside the second floor courtroom. These lobbies offer sweeping views to the Green. Single-loaded corridors encircle the light court on the second floor on the north, east, and south sides of the light court. The courtroom overlooks the light court on the west side. The third floor has a similar arrangement of single-loaded corridors and the upper portion of the two-story courtroom on the west side of the light court. The interior spaces are elaborately appointed and all of the historic public spaces, the courtroom, and private offices are remarkably preserved.

The United States Post Office and Court House is among New Haven's most distinguished public buildings. It exhibits a particularly clear and strong mastery and command of the spectrum of classical detail and architectural vocabulary, rendered with a high standard of execution. The choice materials and the craftsmanship of the masonry, stone and generous bronze work on the interior and exterior of the building are especially significant. The building's exterior remains much as it was constructed. The building's interior retains the significant original volumes, spaces, features and finishes. Secondary areas which have been modified include the postal workroom, the postal service features along the first floor public lobby's long interior wall, and basement and mezzanine floors. Now known as the Richard C. Lee United States Courthouse, the building serves as the federal courthouse and it continues to house the United States Courts and related court offices, although it no longer functions as a post office. The 1981-1985 conversion of the former post office spaces to new courtrooms, offices and support spaces, and the upgrading of mechanical systems throughout the building, had little effect upon principal spaces such as public lobbies, stair halls and other architecturally significant spaces above the first floor. The building strongly retains its integrity and conveys its historic significance from the period of its completion and dedicated in 1919.

Site

Located in downtown New Haven, directly across the Green to the east of the Old Campus of Yale University, the United States Post Office and Court House is an important anchor of the historic urban streetscape of buildings that face the

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New Haven County, CT*

Green, one of the nation's early civic spaces. The Green, originally called the market place, is the center square of the original three by three "Nine Square" plan of New Haven laid out in 1638. The New Haven plan with its central market place that evolved into being the Green is a seminal example of urban design and the first example of regular and formal city planning in the area of the East Coast of the United States settled by immigrants from the British Isles. The New Haven Green was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1970.

The Green was an important component of the 1910 *Report of the Civic Improvement Commission*, which was authored by Cass Gilbert and Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. The 1910 report was New Haven's response to other civic improvement efforts that were occurring during this period in many cities across the country, often characterized as the City Beautiful Movement.¹ During this period, there were significant civic improvements in New Haven. In addition to new parks and other public infrastructure, the new public buildings of the time include several overlooking the historic setting of the New Haven Green: the New Haven Free Public Library, by Cass Gilbert, on the first block of Elm Street west of Church Street; the New Haven County Courthouse, next door at the corner of Church and Elm streets; and, the New Haven Post Office and Court House, on Church Street south of Elm Street.¹

The site, on the east side of the Green, is bounded by Church Street on the west and a pedestrian right-of-way (formerly Court Street) on the north. On the east side is a thirty-seven foot wide pedestrian, and restricted vehicular-use, plaza (originally designed to accommodate mail vehicle loading). On the south is an eighteen-foot vehicular access drive (originally designed to allow mail vehicle access to Church Street). Other significant historic buildings in the general vicinity include the New Haven City Hall (165 Church Street) and the Trinity Church (129 Church Street) from the nineteenth century and the Connecticut Savings Bank (47 Church Street), an early twentieth century commercial building.²

The light pink granite and marble exterior of the federal courthouse complies with the 1910 City of New Haven ordinance restricting buildings around the Green to white stone or white stone with red brick.³ Its three-story height reflects the objectives, in scale and mass, recommended for this area by the *Report of the Civic Improvement Commission*, authored by Cass Gilbert and Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. in 1910.⁴ The greater part of the site was previously occupied by the Tontine Hotel (built 1824-1914), which housed an early post office in New Haven in 1831-1836. The *New Haven Register* described the property acquisition for the site as follows:

Then in 1913 the property [of the Tontine Hotel] was sold for \$200,000 to the United States government for the new post office site. Three other parcels of real estate, all dwelling houses, adjoining the Tontine, were sold at the same time. They were the Ritter piece, for \$65,000; the Spalding piece, for \$65,000, and 40 feet sold by the Second National Bank for \$20,000.⁵

The federal courthouse is adjacent to several historic districts, being located north of the Ninth Square Historic District, (listed on the National Register in 1984), and across Church Street from the New Haven Green Historic District, designated a National Historic Landmark in 1970.

¹ Vincent Scully, Catherine Lynn, Eric Vogt and Paul Goldberger, Yale in New Haven: Architecture and Urbanism (New Haven: Yale University, 2004), p. 21-22.

² Helen Rosenberg and Susan Ryan, "New Haven Post Office and Courthouse," *New Haven Historic Resources Inventory* (New Haven, CT: The New Haven Preservation Trust, 1980)

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ New Haven Colony Historical Society, Vertical files #37C: "New Haven's proposed new Post Office"; # 46—1918 Photo of United States Post Office and Courthouse, New Haven; #48: "The Tontine Hotel" from the *New Haven Register*, 1931.

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*United States Post Office and Court House
New Haven County, CT*

Organization and General Plan

The rectangular plan building occupies nearly its entire city-block site. Its massing is a generally rectangular volume. It was built at a cost of \$1,212,000.⁶ The building has a frontage of 140 feet along Church Street, with a depth of 200 feet. The first story includes the main lobby, measuring 91 feet by 20 feet; which originally included the post office functions and a mezzanine level, with related postal departments. The building was organized around the former large, central, open plan post office workroom of 133 feet by 170 feet, which is one story tall and was roofed with a large internal glass skylight, 61 feet by 84 feet, with hipped gables, to provide daylight for the postal workers below. Above the skylight is a "light court" and this internal and unroofed void was common to many late to early twentieth century federal structures that combined the functions of post office and courthouse in one building. For the second and third floor levels, the light court still provides daylight for upper story windows looking into the light court. The former postal workroom skylight has been roofed over with standing seam lead-coated copper, but retains its original hipped profile. The former postal workroom, which occupied most of the rear portion of the first floor, has been subdivided with the space allocated for several new courtrooms, meeting and office spaces, circulation, and other functions. The mezzanine level has been subdivided into various offices plus some unfinished space. Offices, meeting rooms and toilets are located at the building's north, south and east perimeter on the second and third floors, accessed by single-loaded corridors. Above the light court, the upper stories receive daylight from both sides in every orientation. A continuous areaway at the north, and window wells at the south, allow daylight into the basement level. The portico has a broad set of steps between the end columns and the portico floor covers basement rooms. Original masonry openings to basement spaces below the former east loading dock have been infilled.

On the front of the first floor, the main lobby on the west side runs the length of the entrance steps and portico and is twenty-five feet tall. Corridors with public access ran perpendicular to the main lobby and along either side of the postal windows and postal workroom, providing access to the stamp division, the postal bank, and registry to the north side, and to the Postmaster and Superintendent's offices on the south side. At either end of the main lobby are mirror-image elevators and stairs leading up to the second floor lobby and the historic courtroom and related court functions, which function as originally designed and used. The plan of the second floor focused on the federal district courtroom, day-lit through side windows in the light court. The remainder of the second floor has peripheral offices originally allocated for the judges, clerks and district attorney on the north side, witnesses' waiting and lobby areas and the grand jury on the south side, and the Internal Revenue Service, Collector of the Port and the U.S. Customs House functions along the east side. The third story included a ring of offices around the light court, originally for: the Army and Navy recruiting service and engineers, Department of Justice, weather bureau, steamboat inspectors, farm bureau and bureau of animal industry. The basement level, the least architecturally detailed, originally housed: storage and stock rooms for the post office, lockers and rest rooms for postal workers, appraisers' warerooms and examination rooms, and the heating plant and mechanical equipment. The partial mezzanine floor above the first floor had additional space for post office functions.⁷

Exterior

The courthouse is a steel-framed building that measures eleven bays wide by fourteen bays deep, with three stories plus a mezzanine standing on a low basement. The imposing exterior elevations and roofline are principal character-defining features of the building. The three street-facing, public elevations are distinguished examples of architectural design and craftsmanship which are all accessible for viewing by the public, while the light court elevations are visually accessible from the second floor courtroom and corridors of the second and third floors surrounding it within the building. The west (primary) elevation features a shallow decastyle portico of unfluted Corinthian columns supporting a blank triangular

⁶ George Nichols, "The New Haven Post Office and Court House," *The Architectural Forum*, August 1919, 85-90.

⁷ George Nichols, "The New Haven Post Office," *The Architectural Forum*, August 1919, 85-90.

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*United States Post Office and Court House
New Haven County, CT*

pediment that faces the Green while the north elevation, another principal elevation, features a series of engaged Corinthian pilasters.

The roofline includes a full-height Classical attic that fronts the third story situated behind the triangular pediment. The third story has windows only on the side and rear elevations. Any rooftop structures mounted on top of the third story are hidden and visually unobtrusive from the street. The main flat roof surface, above the third story, is comprised of protection board, a roof felt membrane and beach stone ballast.⁸ The roof drains through interior downspouts at its outer perimeter and into copper gutters along the light court. The roof retains several original elements, including the hip shaped former skylights above the west stair halls, now roofed with lead coated copper, and large copper vents. A new bulkhead, clad in sprayed-on synthetic stucco, has been added at the east end to screen new mechanical equipment.

At the exterior grade level, an areaway providing ventilation, daylight and access to basement mechanical space, and an asphalt-paved access driveway are located along the south elevation. A new granite-paved walkway along the (former Court Street) right-of-way adjoins another areaway at the north elevation. The rear elevation has a modified former postal loading dock. A newer granite-paved plaza is located between the courthouse and the Robert N. Giaimo Federal Building, constructed in 1977.

The outer elevations are clad with sand-finished Tennessee ashlar marble above an axed-finished Milford (CT) granite ashlar base. The walls of the basement areaways and light wells on the south and east are clad in yellow brick laid in Flemish bond and coped with Milford granite. The light court walls are of Indiana limestone.

West Elevation (Primary/Church Street Elevation)

Although the building can be viewed from all four sides, the west elevation along Church Street is the primary elevation. The elevation includes the building's most prominent exterior architectural feature, the west-facing portico. The portico is a multi-story shallow decastyle entry portico with a blank triangular pediment supported by colossal Corinthian columns with attic bases. The portico is comprised of a granite base, reached by a short flight of steps, on which stand marble Corinthian columns rendered with entasis and carrying the pediment. The portico's finely carved capitals (the foliage of the acanthus leaves is meticulously rendered and includes baby eagles at the center front of each capital) contain eagle fleurons (decorative elements at the center of each side of the abacus of each column). The columns support a wide entablature with modillions below the triangular pediment which is the portico's roof; this pediment is characterized by a raking cornice also with the modillions and crowned with a substantial acroterion of a palmette. This ornament is flanked by a cymatium (the top molding of the cornice) of an interrupted series of unopened lotus buds and acanthus leaves. Both entablature and cornice wrap around the entire building, and are ornamented with acroteria rendered as a folded palmette where there are directional changes in the roofline, i.e., on the portico and at the corner pavilions. The interior ceiling of the porch features a deeply coffered ceiling of marble. The interior of each square coffer is successively bounded by two different scales of egg-and-dart molding and an abstracted lotus pattern. Enriched rosettes center each coffer, which are divided one from another with a broad horizontal band of marble; featuring a large border of a running Greek fret motif. Each band is aligned with the portico's columns in front, and broad plainer squared off engaged pilasters, in a restrained Corinthian style, at the building's recessed front wall.

Within the covered area of the portico, pilasters divide the recessed front wall plane into nine elaborate vertical bays framed in dull dark bronze which combine windows, clathri grillwork, spandrels plus the entrance doors at bays number 2, 5, and 8. Double doors have replaced the original revolving doors in these entrances. The entrance from Church Street is now routed through the center bay, bay number 5, for security reasons. Windows of the first story are large, undivided

⁸ Ann Beha Associates, *New Haven U. S. Courthouse: Historic Building Preservation Plan*, 1995, p. 15.

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panes flanked by vertical sidelights, within bronze frames with raised-relief cartouches, replicated on the north elevation of the building. Sidelights and mezzanine levels of the bays are covered with ornate bronze clathri grilles, which also frame the perimeter of the large second story windows.

The sides of the portico include an accouplement (oriented east-west) of an engaged squared pilaster and a round column, a Roman feature adopted by the Beaux Arts School. The engaged pilasters appear at the ends of each corner section, or pavilion, further distinguished by a slight setback of the pilasters at the four corners of the building, visually strengthening them and deepening the chiaroscuro and animation that is evident in the design. These pavilions, identifying the location of interior staircases, are more detailed and heavily articulated, especially seen in the denticulation at the base of the projecting roof cornice. Similar but more subtle changes in the wall, cheneau, and entablature establish an architectural hierarchy of elements among the facades. Another feature of each pavilion on this primary elevation is a blank niche recessed into the wall plane by the radius of a circle whose diameter dictates the arc and size of the recessed semi-circular half-dome conceived as a scallop shell at the top of each niche. The two niches terminate at the dado line of the base. All pavilions feature two lion's heads on the corona of the projecting cornice, further differentiating each pavilion. In contrast, the pilasters and cornice between the pavilions are flat and unenriched.

Of special importance are the names, words and phrases contained on the two friezes on the exterior elevations and the light court elevations, all of which relate to New Haven, New England, and American history of the seventeenth through the nineteenth centuries. The frieze of the portico contains the words of incised Roman letters, UNITED STATES POST OFFICE AND COURT HOUSE. The frieze continuing around the building contains words from a sermon preached by the Rev. John Davenport on June 4, 1638, when members of the fledgling New Haven colony met to decide on a form of government: 'Wisdom hath builded her house; she hath hewn out her seven pillars.'⁹ The "pillars" noted were named for the seven men chosen to serve as the first General Court: Theophilus Eaton, John Davenport, Robert Newman, Matthew Gilbert, Thomas Fugill, John Punderson, and Jeremy Dixon. While these were figures from the seventeenth century, the upper walls of the light court elevations are incised with names from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, including that of the great early-statesman Roger Sherman (1721-93), as well as the names of three New Haven military heroes.

All portico windows sashes and grilles, and the revolving door enclosures, are of low-luster bronze; all other exterior windows frames and sashes are of wood, covered in bronze.¹⁰

North and South Elevations

Between each corner pavilion, as on the west (primary), north and south elevations, engaged pilasters in slight relief separate bays with vertically aligned windows on each floor. The upper, smaller second floor window is separated by a marble spandrel from a taller segment below it; this upper window is a double-hung dark-stained wood-framed window. Below the marble spandrel is a tall window segment in the manner seen on the primary façade, this tall window segment encompasses the mezzanine and first floors. Here a three-over-three, double-hung sash window is separated by a bronze and dark wood spandrel, characterized by a projecting cornice and central chevron, from a taller six-over-six, double-hung sash window. The pilasters run from the base at the first floor to the top of the second floor windows and terminate above, at the articulated cornice at the base of the broad attic.

The north elevation includes an exceptional feature on its west end, a very handsome bronze half-domed and embellished revolving door; its half-circle footprint abuts the masonry wall plane. It is a reverse feature to the two blank domed niches, noted earlier, found around the corner on the north and south end bays of the west elevation. Its design is reminiscent of

⁹ Ann Beha Associates, *United States Courthouse, New Haven, Connecticut: Historic Structures Report, 1990*, p. 9.

¹⁰ Nichols, "The New Haven Post Office," 87.

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that of the Hellenistic-period Tower of the Winds, found at the Roman agora of Athens, here rendered as an extruded half-cylinder with a semispherical domed roof rather than a hexagon. Its roof is scalloped with imbrications: its edge features a Vitruvian scroll, the dome is crowned by a triad of Winged Victories supporting a prize, from the base of this ornament two arabesque diapers follow the arch of the dome to meet the marble wall. Below the Vitruvian scroll is a blank cornice atop a projecting cornice whose base has closely spaced modillions. Two engaged Corinthian pilasters flank the opening, framed above with a three-sided modified V-shaped indented bracket of bronze. On either side of this opening are low square bollards.

The north and south corner pavilions at the second floor on the east end of the building feature a modified tripartite "Chicago" window of three separate double-hung, one-over-one windows, with the larger center unit separated from the smaller flanking windows by marble mullions.

The south elevation faces an alley and retains the pilasters, but lacks the cheneau and entablature enrichments between the corner pavilions.

East Elevation

The east (rear) elevation has at its first story the modified and reconfigured former post office loading dock which protrudes from the face of the building. The dark painted cast iron frame contains glazed transoms and sidelights within the piers between bays. The frame is embellished with a denticulated cornice and running molds around the bay openings. The original glass-block roof surface has been replaced with a covered wood roof. The six original large bays defined by the extant pilasters, each of which had a set of wooden double doors connecting the loading dock to the postal workroom on the east elevation, have been infilled with stucco-finished masonry. Two bays have been equipped with unmatched doors and frames adjacent to the fire stairs behind. The original elevation difference between the vehicular approach and the loading dock surface, which allowed the mail trucks to be unloaded at the truck bed level, was eliminated when the new plaza was constructed between the courthouse and the new federal building to the east. The large openings in the cast iron structure have been infilled with railing-height black iron decorative grilles at eight of the nine bays. The modified loading dock now serves as access to the employee entrance, egress from an emergency stairway, and as the barrier-free entrance to the building via a newly-installed granite paved ramp at the northeast corner of the building. This ramp, which is of low slope, lacks railings.

All the windows on this east elevation are rectilinear and most are furnished with clear-finished wood, one-over-one sash windows, equipped with insulating glass, bronze weather-stripping and bronze chains. Another character-defining feature here includes the arrangement of the first story and mezzanine windows on the north and south sides of this elevation, located in each pavilion. The upper mezzanine window is configured as the other modified Chicago windows, but instead of the broad marble mullion between center and flanking windows, it features a thin cast-iron muntin. Below this unit, a broad cast iron spandrel separates the upper unit from the lower, comprised of a six-over-six double-hung sash window separated by thin cast iron muntins from two-over-two double-hung windows; above each of the upper double window is a transom divided to match the window below it.

Light Court Elevations

Exposed at the upper two stories above the now roofed-over former postal workroom skylight, the light court elevations are clad with sand-finished Indiana limestone. The ashlar block wall plane is continuous from its base, where it is flashed, to the adjacent roof below to a slightly projecting denticulated cornice. The cornice is surmounted by a limestone balustrade comprised of turned balusters between pedestals. All openings are rectilinear, with the exception of two arched openings with limestone voussoirs on the eastward-facing light court elevation. These smaller arched windows flank the three giant trabeated windows of the center three bays of the courtroom's side wall. The courtroom's elevation

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facing east is divided in five bays by Doric pilasters of slight projection, carried by the projecting sill under the side arched windows and the giant courtroom windows, and surmounted by impost blocks of the cornice. This elevation is further embellished with raised-relief cartouches above the courtroom windows, and carved pommels (rounded finials) resting on the balustrade pedestals.

While the bays of the other three light court elevations are undivided by pilasters, the spandrels of the third-story bays contain alternating recessed panels and raised-relief cartouches. The windows of the second story are framed by running molded limestone architraves with projecting lintels and elongated consoles, similar to those of the third story, where the architraves also contain crossettes; horizontal projections of the architrave moldings at the ends of the window heads.

The giant courtroom windows of the east elevation contain six, six-pane wood casement sash windows. The arched windows contain eight-paned wood casement sash windows divided by a center mullion beneath five-pane arched transoms. All other windows contain clear-finished wood, one-over-one double-hung sash equipped with insulating glass and bronze weather-stripping.

Interior

The interior of the building is well preserved and its spaces, features, and finishes well maintained. It retains a high level of integrity with the exception of the first floor, mezzanine, and basement areas that housed post office and other functions until 1979; and were subject of a major remodeling effort in 1985. Most of the building's dignified and decorated interiors including public entrances, lobbies, hallways and the historic courtroom, retain their spatial relationships, original and highly detailed finishes such as plaster, wood, stone and bronze work and fixtures. Alterations to primary spaces resulting from the closure of the post office work area caused the removal of the postal windows and accompanying bronze grillwork, as well as the construction of firewalls with doors to enclose the various stair halls for fire safety. However, these alterations have not significantly adversely compromised the building's ability to convey its historic significance. New elements added in the 1981-1985 project are predominately well executed and compatible with the building's character.

First Floor

The double-height main entrance lobby features travertine pilasters with Composite order capitals that carry an architrave twenty-five feet above the travertine marble floor laid in geometric pattern comprised of rectilinear and triangular pavers. The richly coffered ceiling is elaborately detailed with three large shallow roundels surrounded by deeper octagonal coffers with alternating rosette designs.¹¹ The original and extant ceiling was the focus of highly skilled craftsmanship. In order to blend the color of the ceiling with the travertine, repeated coats of buttermilk and rottenstone were applied and "wiped off the highlights of the ornament until an effect of softness and age in perfect harmony with the walls was secured."¹² Such attention to color and detail is characteristic of the entire building, as noted in the lengthy review of its architectural program in a 1919 publication of *The Architectural Forum*.¹³ As noted above, while the service windows have been removed; the original bronze interior vestibules, radiator and wall grilles, writing desks and light fixtures, custom designed by Rogers, have been retained.

The postal workroom consisted of simple, functional finishes such as cork and pine flooring and pine woodwork and steel cupboards and drawers, all of which were removed in the 1985 renovation.

¹¹ Beha, *Historic Structures Report*, pp. 19-20.

¹² Beha, *Historic Structures Report*, p. 11; Nichols, *The New Haven Post Office*, 88.

¹³ Nichols, "The New Haven Post Office," 88.

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Second Floor

One of the second story's principal spaces is the courtroom lobby located directly above the main entrance lobby. The courtroom lobby retains all of its original features. The floor is paved with Tennessee marble in a modified basket-weave design. Surrounding the long walls of the 90 foot by 20 foot lobby are twenty free-standing columns of pink Tennessee marble with bronze Ionic capitals, complemented by marble wainscoting, benches and paving.¹⁴

The courtroom off the lobby is very large space with a height of a full two stories. The walls features fluted Corinthian pilasters, panels, and ancillary woodwork all in quarter-sawn oak. The pilasters are supported on plinths of Tennessee marble. The ornate plaster capitals, cornice and ceiling beams are gilded and contrast with the oak walls. As with the ground floor entrance lobby, the immediate achievement of patina was important; here for example, the glazing of the intermediate panels was done to achieve the "effect of old stucco work."¹⁵ The east and west side walls have a three part arrangement with the center bays further divided by small Ionic pilasters. The outer bays have arch headed niches flanking the center bays. Along the north wall is the judge's bench and the opposite south wall has built-in clock. The west wall has paired doors to the lobby in the three center bays. The east wall draws daylight through three windows in each of the three center bays. Flanking on each side are smaller arched windows reflecting the niches on the opposite wall.¹⁶

Other Features

The grand jury room displays pilastered and paneled walls of plaster with painted wood trim. Private offices are paneled in butternut; the walls of the judges' private chambers were hung with pigskin panels framed in wood. East Indian mahogany was used for the woodwork in standard offices, with battleship linoleum covering standard floors. Public corridors elsewhere are finished with pink Tennessee marble floors and wainscoting of white Vermont marble with subtle green and black veining. On the second and third stories, the wainscoting consists of thin ashlar blocks; heavily rounded corners for door and window plaster surrounds precluded the need for marble detailing seen in the courtroom and first floor lobbies.

The remarkably subtle variation in paint colors in the original design has not been preserved; although the colors of the recent paint finishes themselves, by and large, are reasonable facsimiles. Rogers employed color not only for aesthetics, where he used colors according to their perception at various times during the day; but also in ways that indicate a knowledge of the nascent academic discipline, environmental psychology, seen in his concern for light reflection and reducing potential eye strain for postal workers. Those areas which received considerable daylight, for example, were painted in a "cold French gray," while on the north side, the gray was inflected with red. On the south side, where light varied, the gray was warmed with increasing amounts of yellow in the more westerly offices.¹⁷

Restrooms throughout the building are finished with white Vermont marble wainscoting and stall dividers and light gray vitrified tile floors.

¹⁴ Beha, Historic Structures Report, pp. 20-21.

¹⁵ Nichols, "The New Haven Post Office," 88-89.

¹⁶ Beha, Historic Structures Report, pp. 20-21.

¹⁷ Ibid., 90.

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Alterations

The United States Post Office and Court House has undergone few floor plan alterations, with the exception of the former postal areas, with the result that key historic character-defining spaces, features and finishes are extant and in good condition.¹⁸ The alterations in the postal work areas happened after the Post Office Department transferred title of the building to the United States General Services Administration (GSA) in 1970. A \$6.8 million restoration was completed in 1985 under the New Haven architectural firm William F. Pedersen & Associates. Interior alterations made in the 1981-1985 project included: replacing the vacated first floor postal workroom and mezzanine with two new courtrooms, replacing the glass roof skylight at the base of the light court with a standing seam metal roof, and removing the postal service windows. The basement also had some reconfiguring of the existing floor plan. Firewalls with exit doors, placed for life safety and to preserve the functionality of the building for court processes, were placed typically at the juncture of public corridors, lobbies, and open stair and elevator wells. Care was used to employ salvaged marble for the firewalls and to design in a compatible manner with the original and extant details. While the vertical circulation areas lost their arched ceilings and skylights in the project, their original elevator screens and grilles as well as elegantly tasseled brass handrails were retained.

The 1981-1985 conversion of the former post office spaces to new courtrooms, offices and support spaces, and the upgrading of mechanical systems throughout the building, had little effect upon principal spaces such as public lobbies, stair halls and other architecturally significant spaces above the first floor. More recent projects include the restoration of the front entrance steps with new and more compatible handrails for better accessibility and chiller and boiler replacements. An upcoming project will be the window restoration/rehabilitation that has been the subject of correspondence with the Connecticut State Historic Preservation Office. Overall, the building strongly retains its integrity and conveys its historic significance from the period it was constructed.

Integrity Assessment

The United States Post Office and Court House is among New Haven's most distinguished buildings and remains in its original, highly significant setting on the New Haven Green. It is an excellent example of the federal use of the Classical Revival style in public buildings set in important civic contexts, here rendered at a very high level of design and execution. The structure retains an exceptional level of integrity on the exterior, with the only major alteration being the removal of the postal loading dock at the rear. The significant interior spaces, including the entrance lobby, courtroom lobby and second floor courtroom retain most, if not all, of their original materials and features, exhibiting a high level of integrity. While the building's association with the United States Postal Service has ended, the association with judicial processes and the federal district court system has been retained.

¹⁸ Beha, Historic Structures Report, p. 13.

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Significance

Summary Statement

The New Haven courthouse is an excellent example of the Beaux Arts tradition of monumental civic buildings rendered in the Classical Revival style by a master architect, James Gamble Rogers. The building faces the New Haven Green near other important civic buildings of the period influenced by the City Beautiful Movement and designed in accordance with the 1910 *Report of the Civic Improvement Commission* authored by architect Cass Gilbert and Frederick Olmsted, Jr. The last of the thirty-five federal buildings to be designed by an architect selected as the winning competitor, under the terms of the Tarnsey Act before it was repealed in 1912, the building conveys the federal presence through its monumental architecture.¹⁹ Its design exemplifies the philosophy of James Knox Taylor, Supervising Architect of the Treasury (1897-1912), who advocated that federal buildings be constructed of the best materials and typically in classical or designs recalling early American traditions.²⁰ The building retains a remarkably high degree of integrity on the exterior and interior, with the exception of secondary spaces that served post office until 1979 and were subject of a major remodeling effort completed in 1985. The building is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places at the state level of significance under Criterion C as a significant example of the Classical Revival style designed by a master architect, James Gamble Rogers, with a period of significance related to the date of its completion and dedication in 1919.

Background History

The first New Haven Post Office was established in 1755 under the direction of Benjamin Franklin, Postmaster-General of the American colonies by authority of the King. The first post office was operated at the Haymarket at State Street and Grand Avenue by John Holt, postmaster, from 1755-1757. The New Haven post office occupied space in thirteen different buildings until construction of the first purpose-built federal building for New Haven was completed in 1860, on the west side of Church Street between Crown and Center streets.²¹ The United States District Court for the District of Connecticut is the oldest district court in the country, beginning on September 26, 1789, when Richard Law began his duties as the sole judge of the district. Until the first federal building in New Haven was completed in 1860, the district court did not have its own building but shared rooms in the former statehouse occupied by the New Haven Superior Court.²² New Haven's first building with federal offices was the custom house which was located in a pre-existing three-story brick structure at the corner of State and Water streets that was purchased by the U.S. government in 1818.

The first purpose-built federal building for New Haven was constructed from 1855-1860, and was designed by Ammi B. Young in the first Renaissance Revival style. The U.S. Postal Service occupied the first floor, the Custom Service and Internal Revenue Service shared the second floor, and the U.S. District Court occupied the third floor. Despite additions to the building in 1885 and 1895, the capacity of the building was not sufficient to match the volume of federal business needed by the citizenry in the early-twentieth century.²³

¹⁹ Nichols, "The New Haven Post Office," 85.

²⁰ Beha, *Historic Structures Report*, pp. 3-4.

²¹ Carroll Alton Means, "New Haven Post Office 200 Years Old: Franklin Set Up Press, Mail Service Here," *New Haven (CT) Register*, April 17, 1955.

²² Goetsch, "A History of the New Haven," 45.

²³ Beha, *Historic Structures Report*, p. 5.

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In 1908, the New Haven Chamber of Commerce petitioned the Congress for a new federal building with a more adequate postal department to accommodate the growth of the city. In the less than fifty years since the first federal building was completed, New Haven's population had grown from 39,267 to 108,027, the number of businesses had grown from 4,420 to 11,500, and property value had risen from \$26,948,000 to \$119,592,580. The petition noted that postal receipts increased from \$22,234 in 1857, to \$268,714 in 1900, and then to \$1,631,262 by 1907. The petition also quoted the remarks of Mr. R.A. Greenfield, Superintendent of Public Buildings for the Treasury Department after his week-long inspection of the existing building that: "the generally obsolete condition of this building would seem to warrant an entire new building in the near future."²⁴

Like many other cities influenced by the City Beautiful Movement of the early-twentieth century, New Haven appointed a Civic Improvement Commission to improve city planning and civic buildings. In 1907, the commission hired architect Cass Gilbert and landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. to produce a planning document for the City's improvement and future growth. Among the recommendations in their 1910 report was that future buildings were to respect the historic character of the New Haven Green, restricting the height of buildings facing the Green to one hundred feet.²⁵ While the City Council did not pass height limit legislation, it did pass an ordinance specifying that white stone or white stone with red brick be used as exterior building materials for buildings facing the Green, with the stone predominating in the lower stories.²⁶ George Nichols, in a contemporary *Architectural Forum* article, described the consideration of the site adjacent to the Green as follows:

Every consideration of past history, present-day necessities, concern for the city plan of the future, and the continued importance of its focal center demanded the location of the new federal building upon a site facing The Green, which was eventually secured on the southeast corner of Church and Court streets on the easterly side.

Congress has recognized the unique character of the site in large additions to the first appropriation, because of its surroundings and their historic associations...The site is a truly magnificent one in many respects. The open foreground of The Green permits unobstructed views of the principal front from all points within its boundaries...

...The exterior architectural treatment of the new post office has been nicely calculated to harmonize with the Colonial churches which face it, without sacrificing that monumental character to be desired in an important Government structure.²⁷

The selection of the architect, funding, and the design for the New Haven post office and courthouse fall under the period of the Tarnsey Act (1893-1912). During this period, the Supervising Architect of the Treasury, James Knox Taylor, implemented many commissions under the authority of the Tarnsey Act, which permitted the Treasury Department to contract out for private sector architectural services through competition. For funding, Taylor was able to utilize the first federal omnibus public buildings law; passed in 1902, which saved authorization time in Congress and allowed construction of vastly more federal buildings than under Taylor's predecessors. In 1912, both the Tarnsey Act was repealed and Taylor resigned, signaling the end of the emphasis on individual plans and designs by private sector architects. The major federal architecture projects of this period, such as this New Haven project and the New York City Custom House, were typified by the use of very high quality materials and construction. The United States Post Office

²⁴ Ibid., p. 5.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 6.

²⁶ Nichols, "The New Haven Post Office," 85.

²⁷ Nichols, "The New Haven Post Office," 85.

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and Courthouse is significant within this context because it was the last building commissioned during Taylor's tenure, ending the period of major buildings being designed by private architects selected through competition. After this period, federal architecture was characterized by much more standardized design.

In 1911, a national design competition was held for the New Haven post office and courthouse and submissions were received from six New York architectural firms: George B. Post & Sons, D. Everett Ward, Howells & Stokes, H. Van Buren Magonigle, Tracy, Swartwout & Litchfield, and the eventual winner, James Gamble Rogers. Attesting to the high level of competition and importance of the commission, first floor plans and elevation drawings of all six firms were published in *Architecture* magazine.²⁸

Architect James Gamble Rogers

James Gamble Rogers (1867-1947) was born in Bryant's Station, Kentucky, and moved as a child with his family to Chicago where he graduated from high school. He received a scholarship to study at Yale College in New Haven from 1885 to 1889. At Yale, he was tapped to be a member of the Scroll & Key, one of the college's most prestigious secret societies, where he established influential relationships with friends that often would become of benefit in his securing future architectural commissions.²⁹ In 1889, he moved back to Chicago where he took an apprenticeship position with William LeBaron Jenny. Jenny pioneered the skyscraper building form, and his 1885 Home Insurance Building was generally considered the world's first skyscraper. Jenny's firm also served as the starting place for a number of important architects, including Louis Sullivan, William Holabird, Martin Roche, and Daniel Burnham.³⁰ After working for Jenny, Rogers took a position at Burnham & Root for a relatively short period, where he was Superintendent of Building for the Ashland Block that was underway during 1891-92. James and his brother John Arthur formed a partnership by 1891 and in 1892 construction began on the Lees Building in Chicago Loop, designed by James. The building was very much in the Chicago School of architectural design: very businesslike in form and function with little ornamentation.³¹ In the summer of 1892, Rogers began study at the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris, culminating with Rogers receiving a "maximum note" for his thesis design "A House for the U.S. Embassy in Paris," a diploma "par excellence," and medals in both design and construction by 1898.³² Rogers' training at the Ecole clearly influenced his later architectural designs, including that of the United States Post Office and Court House in New Haven. Ecole des Beaux Arts design precepts of the time stressed the overall layout of the building as the primary organizational principle. The most important space would be placed at the focal point of the site; major axes would be developed to serve its function. The design would adhere to the correct use of the classical orders. Minor axes would be planned to serve secondary or less important spaces and functions. Rogers summed up his approach to design as follows:

It should be possible to ascertain simply at a glance at the building what are its uses. A home should look like a house, a city hall should differ from a post office, and engine house should not possibly be mistaken for a church, a seat of learning should be distinguished from a factory or restaurant. Moreover, in expressing its character, a building must express the spirit of its times and the place in which it was built.³³

²⁸ "Competitive Designs and Plans for the New Haven Post Office." *Architecture*, 1911: 116-120.

²⁹ Aaron Betsky, *James Gamble Rogers and the Architecture of Pragmatism* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1994), 10.

³⁰ Betsky, *James Gamble Rogers*, 11.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 14-15.

³² Betsky, *James Gamble Rogers*, 15-16.

³³ Betsky, *James Gamble Rogers*, 42.

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From 1898 to 1905, Rogers maintained an office in Chicago with his brother John. The Rogers brothers designed mansions and other structures for estates in the exclusive Chicago North Shore suburb of Lake Forest, town houses in the city, apartment buildings, developer housing, two important educational structures and some commercial buildings. During this time James Gamble Rogers and his professional career evolved into a long standing pattern of connections between social contacts and architectural commissions with a particular focus on the design of educational buildings that would serve as the foundation of his career.³⁴ Many of these early commissions were made through social connections of the family of his wife, Anne Day whom he married in 1901. Anne was the daughter of Albert Morgan Day, second president of the Chicago Stock Exchange and a relative through marriage to the family of the McCormick Reaper Works.

In 1905, Rogers moved to New York and entered into partnership with Herbert D. Hale of Boston. Hale retired from the firm in 1907, died an untimely death in 1909 at the age of forty-three, and Rogers then ran the firm without a partner.³⁵ Rogers' key client was Edward S. Harkness, Yale alumni and heir to one of the largest family fortunes to come out of investments made by his father, Stephen V. Harkness, in the newly formed firm of Rockefeller, Andrews & Flagler, the forerunner of the Standard Oil Company. Rogers designed for Edward Harkness his home at 5th Avenue and 75th Street in the Upper East Side of Manhattan, and designed other Harkness family homes in Madison, New Jersey, and Glen Cove, Long Island.³⁶ Other significant residential design commissions of this period include for example, in 1912, Rogers designed a home on the Hudson River for Richard C. Colt, son of the inventor of the Colt revolver and a fellow Yale graduate. Another important commission was the residence for Jonathan Bulkley at 600 Park Avenue in Manhattan, and this house design was important for Roger's career as caught the attention of architecture critic Montgomery Schuyler.³⁷

In 1917, Edward Harkness, in the name of his mother, Mrs. Stephen V. Harkness, provided the funds and designated that Rogers be retained to design a series of dormitories to form the Charles W. Harkness Memorial Quadrangle on the Yale campus as a memorial to her older late son Charles William. Following on this and for a number of years and for a number of future projects, Edward Harkness offered almost unlimited funds to Yale with Rogers as the designated architect to transform the Yale campus in the Collegiate Gothic style of the earlier commissions and later in Georgian Revival, or Collegiate Georgian, for the last two colleges. After becoming Consulting Architect to Yale in 1921, Rogers was retained under a separate contract to develop a comprehensive plan for construction, which resulted in designs and construction for the Sterling Memorial Library, law school, graduate school, and eight residential colleges of Yale. Rogers' recognition as a master architect was gained through his designs of educational buildings on many American campuses following his work at Yale, including Northwestern, Colgate, Columbia, and New York Universities among others.³⁸

Rogers design work in civic architecture started through a recommendation from Rogers' former employer Daniel Burnham with the result of Hale & Rogers being retained to design the Shelby County Courthouse, built in Memphis, Tennessee from 1906 to 1909, in the Classical Revival style.³⁹ In 1908, the firm, now solely run by Rogers, received a commission from the U.S. Department of the Treasury to design the United States Post Office and Courthouse in New Orleans at a cost of \$2 million; it was constructed from 1908-1915.⁴⁰ The New Orleans commission brought Rogers to the attention of Supervising Architect of the Treasury, James Knox Taylor, and it served as a forerunner to his selection as the architect for New Haven project, because it was commissioned under the authority of the Tarnsey Act, and was facilitated by the 1902 omnibus federal public buildings law.

³⁴ Ibid., 18-19.

³⁵ Ibid., 79.

³⁶ Ibid., 32.

³⁷ Ibid., 36-37.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid., 81-83.

⁴⁰ Betsky, *James Gamble Rogers*, 83-86.

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Rogers had a long and prolific career in architecture beginning in 1893 with the Lees Building in Chicago and including 163 commissions, with many of those for multiple buildings as part of the design program. The New Haven courthouse was the part of the small subset of three governmental buildings that began with the Shelby County Courthouse in Memphis and included the federal commission in New Orleans. These projects were completed in a relatively short and early period within his career, from 1909 to 1919.⁴¹

Construction History

Funds for the new federal building in New Haven were appropriated in 1912 during the lame duck session of Congress, and the enabling legislation was signed by President William Howard Taft early in 1913. Shortly thereafter with the completion of his presidential term, Taft moved to New Haven to assume the Kent Professorship at the Yale Law School.⁴²

Construction of the United States Post Office and Court House was undertaken from 1913 to 1919, with a total cost of \$1,212,000.⁴³ The cornerstone ceremony was held on June 4, 1914, with Taft as one of the speakers. Taft discussed the history of the New Haven Green and after noting the beauty of the structures on the Green and surrounding it, stated: "We are dedicating today a building which will evidence the majesty and usefulness of the United States Government and will add significance and importance to this wonderful municipal center."⁴⁴

The quality of Rogers' design and plan and use of color and materials was discussed at length in a contemporary article in *The Architectural Forum*, which stated:

*The building as a whole justifies the belief of its architect in the effectiveness of restrained design well executed in fine material. It is simple and practical in plan and has clear architectural expression of the function and importance of its parts. The studied simplicity of many of its features insures permanency of style and continued harmony with its surroundings.*⁴⁵

Following the organization precepts of the Ecole des Beaux Arts, the functions of the various government entities to serve the public were distributed among its principal three floors, which were described in *Architectural Forum* [with room numbers assigned from copies of Rogers's plans on file with GSA] as follows:

The lofty first story accommodates the post office, portions of this story containing an intermediate floor on which various related departments are located. The second story contains the federal district courtroom, surrounded by offices for judge, clerk, district attorney, marshal, witnesses and juries. Upon [the second] floor also are located offices of the collector-of-the-port and the customs house. The third story provides accommodations for the army and navy recruiting service [308] and engineers [337], department of justice ["Petit Jury" in 333], internal revenue officials "Investigation Bureau" in 310., weather bureau [343], steamboat inspectors [302-304], farm bureau, and bureau of animal industry [301]. In the basement are located storage and stock rooms for the post office, and toilet and rest rooms for its clerks and carriers; appraiser's warerooms and examination rooms, and the heating plant and other machinery.

⁴¹ Betsky, James Gamble Rogers, pp. 261-268.

⁴² Goetsch, "A History of the New Haven," 46.

⁴³ Nichols, "The New Haven Post Office," 90.

⁴⁴ Goetsch, "A History of the New Haven," 46.

⁴⁵ Nichols, "The New Haven Post Office," 86.

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Above the first story, the center of the building becomes an open court, which lights the post-office workroom beneath and is the sole source of light for the courtroom, which is thus effectively isolated from street noises.⁴⁶

A review of Roger's plans on file with GSA show the third floor plan with the center light court and the upper part of the second floor courtroom and also including offices along the perimeter for the "Pension Agent" in 309, the Civil Service Commission in 341, and unassigned offices in 334, 335, 342, and 348.

Preservation and Renovation

In 1965, the United States Post Office and Court House was threatened with replacement by a 29-story government office building in accordance with a master plan by I. M. Pei, developed for the New Haven Redevelopment Agency as part of a proposed City Government Center redevelopment project. The plan also called for the replacement of all of the structures on the east side of the Green Street along Church Street, including the historic City Hall. By the Spring of 1966 a preservation coalition formed, including New Haven Alderman William H. H. Rees, Margaret Flint of the New Haven Preservation Trust, Yale University Professors Vincent Scully and Christopher Tunnard, and later many others including the District Court Chief Judge William H. Timbers and fellow court judges. This coalition succeeded in galvanizing public opinion and gained the support of Senator Thomas Dodd, Senator Abraham A. Ribicoff, and Congressman Robert M. Giaimo to halt the demolition plans.⁴⁷ On October 19, 1966, Scully gave a lecture at Yale Law School auditorium which supported preservation of the building, comparing its historical importance of to the Acropolis.⁴⁸ On November 7, 1966, the New Haven Preservation Trust placed its landmark plaque on the building and Judge Timbers gave an address which concluded:

The New Haven landmark plaque which we place on our courthouse today is, I think, a fitting mark of recognition of the beauty and strength of this notable building; it is also, I venture to suggest, an appropriate recognition of one of the most basic, precious principles of our heritage as American citizens: a free and independent federal judiciary. On behalf of all the federal judges of this State, I give you our solemn pledge that a free and independent judiciary we will remain—in this United States Courthouse on this land of the United States!⁴⁹

In December 1966, architect I.M. Pei withdrew his master plan including the replacement building. Senator Thomas Dodd, Senator Abraham A. Ribicoff, and Congressman Robert M. Giaimo led an effort that resulted in a \$3.17 million proposed renovation of the subject building by GSA, which was approved by the House on November 9, 1967. However, the renovation work was delayed and was not actually completed until June 1985.

Statement of Significance

Designed following Beaux Arts tradition in the Classical Revival style, the United States Post Office and Court House is among New Haven's most distinguished public buildings. Located in downtown New Haven, east of the Old Campus of

⁴⁶ Ibid., 87.

⁴⁷ Goetsch, Charles C., "A History of the New Haven Federal Courthouse," *Journal of the New Haven Colony Historical Society* 33, no.1 (1986): 47-48.

⁴⁸ Goetsch, "A History of the New Haven," 47-48.

⁴⁹ Ibid.,48.

**United States Department of the Interior
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**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section 8 Page 16

*United States Post Office and Court House
New Haven County, CT*

Yale University, this federal courthouse is an important anchor of the historic urban streetscape of buildings that face the Green. The building was constructed from 1913-1919 after a nationwide design competition and it occupies an entire city block of this dynamic setting.

The United States Post Office and Court House was designed by James Gamble Rogers in 1913 during the tenure of James Knox Taylor as Supervising Architect of the U.S. Treasury. Influenced by the City Beautiful Movement and his training at the Ecole des Beaux Arts, Rogers followed the parameters for prestigious civic buildings around the Green outlined in the 1910 *Report of the Civic Improvement Commission*, by the architect Cass Gilbert and landscape architect Frederick Olmsted, Jr. The resulting United States Post Office and Court House exhibits a particularly clear and strong mastery and command of the spectrum of classical detail and architectural vocabulary, rendered with a high standard of execution. The high level of craftsmanship of the masonry, plaster and bronze work along with the use of fine materials and finishes on the interior and exterior of the building reinforce the civic importance of the building. The building's exterior remains much as it was constructed; within the building, character-defining original volumes, spaces, features and finishes are extant in the principal public spaces. Known today as Richard C. Lee United States Courthouse, the building continues to house the courts and support agencies, although it no longer functions as a post office. The 1981-1985 conversion of the former post office and other spaces to new courtrooms, offices and support spaces, and the upgrading of mechanical systems throughout the building, had little effect upon principal spaces such as public lobbies, stair halls and other architecturally significant spaces above the first floor. The building strongly retains its integrity and conveys its historic significance for the period in which it was constructed.

The United States Post Office and Court House is an excellent example of the Classical Revival style, designed by a master architect, James Gamble Rogers, and conveys the federal presence through monumental architecture. Rogers' training at the École des Beaux Arts is evident in the beautiful but restrained classical ornament executed on the exterior and interior of the United States Post Office and Court House in the finest materials including pink Tennessee marble and pink Milford granite. The commission was important in Rogers' career because it was his first commission in New Haven, and helped lead to his design of much of the Yale University campus in the 1920s and 1930s, including the Harkness Quadrangle, Sterling Library, law school, graduate school, and eight of the residential colleges.

The United States Post Office and Court House is important because it was the last of the thirty-five federal buildings to be designed by an architect selected as the winning competitor under the terms of the Tarnsey Act before it was repealed in 1912.⁵⁰ It exemplified the philosophy of the federal government during the tenure of James Knox Taylor as Supervising Architect of the Treasury (1897-1912), "that government buildings should be monumental and beautiful, and should represent the ideals of democracy and high standards of architectural sophistication in their communities. Taylor preferred styles derived from classical or early American traditions. Believing that federal buildings should be built to last, he also emphasized the use of high quality construction materials."⁵¹

The United States Post Office and Court House of New Haven is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places at the state level of significance under Criterion C as an excellent example of the Classical Revival style and civic architecture by a master architect, James Gamble Rogers, with a period of significance related to its completion and dedication in 1919.

⁵⁰ Nichols, "The New Haven Post Office," 85.

⁵¹ Boland, *National Register Bulletin* 13, 2.

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*United States Post Office and Court House
New Haven County, CT*

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New Haven County, CT*

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Continuation Sheet**

Section Photos Page 19

*United States Post Office and Court House
New Haven County, CT*

Photograph Identification Page

United States Post Office and Court House, New Haven County, Connecticut

Photographer: Rick Starzak, Jones & Stokes.

Date of photographs: April 18, 2005.

Location of Negative: General Services Administration, Office of Chief Architect

1. Streetscape view, facing northeast along Church Street from the New Haven Green. Featured historic buildings are City Hall (165 Church Street, to the left of frame), the United States Post Office and Court House (141 Church Street in the center of the frame), and the buildings that comprise the Ninth Square Historic District (to the right of frame).
2. Exterior view, facing west to primary elevation along Church Street
3. Exterior view, detail, facing west to decastyle portico colonnade and pediment along primary elevation
4. Exterior view, detail, facing west to bronze doors and grilles that comprise the main entrance off Church Street
5. Exterior view, facing up to ceiling between colonnade and main entrance off Church Street
6. Exterior view, detail, facing west to one of the decastyle portico column capitals, featuring an eagle
7. Exterior view, detail, facing west to acroterion atop the primary elevation
8. Exterior view, facing southeast to north and west (primary) elevations
9. Exterior view, facing southwest to north elevation
10. Exterior view, detail facing south to fenestration along the north elevation
11. Exterior view, detail, north entrance
12. Exterior view, facing northeast to south elevation
13. Exterior view, facing east to rear (east) elevation, former postal service loading area
14. Exterior view, detail, facing east to pilasters and windows at south end of rear (east) elevation
15. Exterior view, facing east to light court above former skylight
16. Interior view, facing south, 1st floor lobby (formerly post office).
17. Interior view, facing northeast, 1st floor lobby showing area of former postal service windows.
18. Interior view, facing northwest, 2nd floor courtroom lobby. New Haven Green is view from windows.
19. Interior view, facing north-northeast, 2nd floor courtroom lobby.
20. Interior view, detail, 2nd floor courtroom entrance
21. Interior view, 2nd floor courtroom and judge's bench.
22. Interior view, detail, 2nd floor courtroom ceiling and original lighting.
23. Interior view, detail, 2nd floor courtroom exit doors and pilasters with gilt capitals.

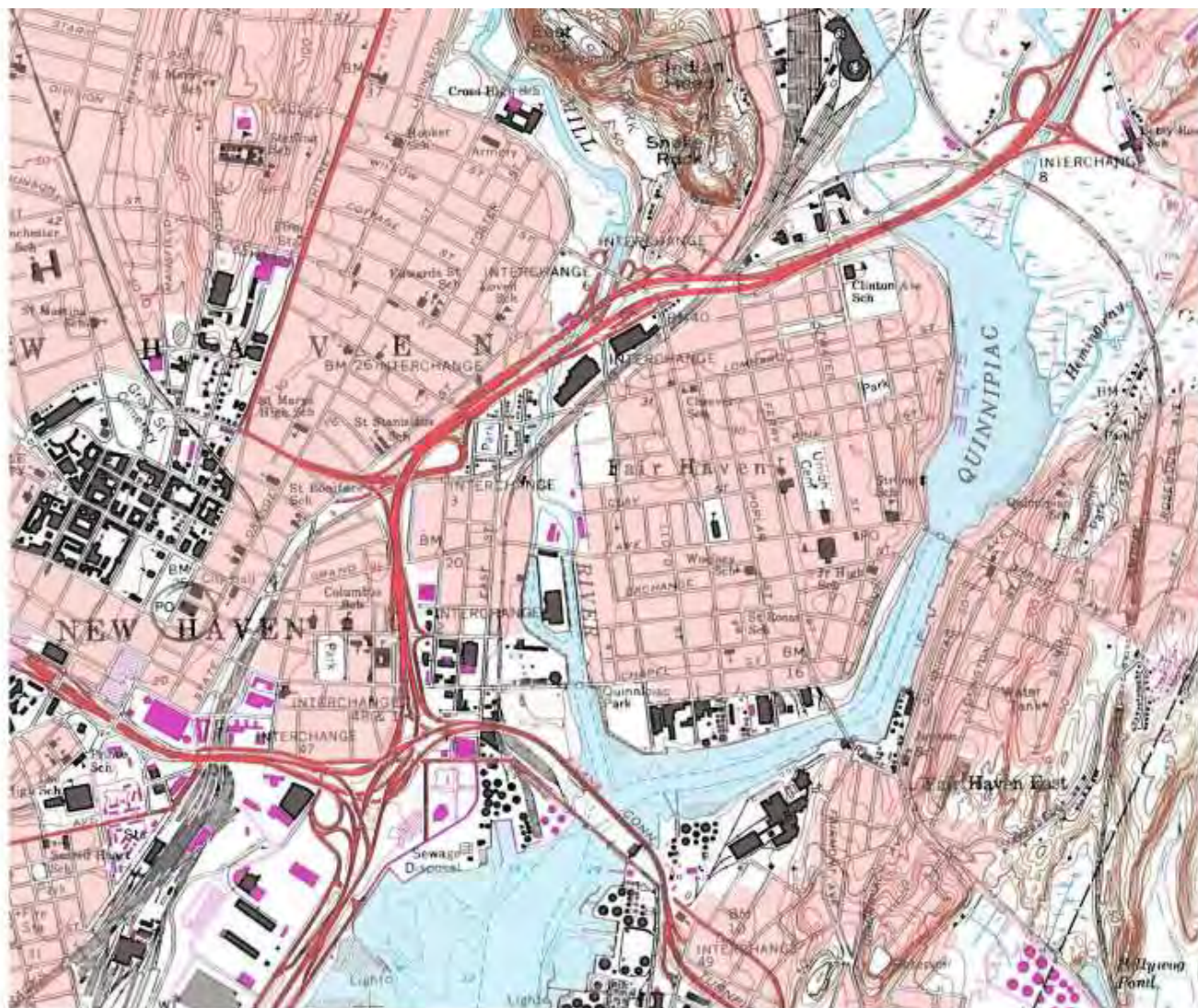
**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet—Additional Documentation**

Section Map Page 20

*United States Post Office and Courthouse
New Haven County, CT*

USGS Map – Scale 1:24000
UTM References: 18 673724 4574876



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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet—Additional Documentation**

Section Additional Page 21
Document
ation

United States Post Office and Courthouse

New Haven County, CT

HISTORIC PHOTOGRAPHS:

U.S. Post Office and Courthouse, New Haven County, Connecticut

Photographer: Unknown.

Date of photograph: c. 1916

Negative: Joseph Taylor (private collection)

Description of view: Historic view, facing east across Church Street from the New Haven Green.



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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet—Additional Documentation**

Section Additional Page 22
Documentation

United States Post Office and Courthouse

New Haven County, CT

U.S. Post Office and Courthouse, New Haven County, Connecticut

Photographer: Unknown.

Date of photograph: c. 1918

Negative: Joseph Taylor (private collection)

Description of view: Historic view, facing southeast across Church Street from the New Haven Green.









UNITED STATES POST OFFICE AND COURTHOUSE















HEWN OUT



























UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY United States Post Office and Court House
NAME:

MULTIPLE
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: CONNECTICUT, New Haven

DATE RECEIVED: 8/07/15 DATE OF PENDING LIST:
DATE OF 16TH DAY: DATE OF 45TH DAY: 9/22/15
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 15000586

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 9.14.15 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

July 24, 2015

RECEIVED 2280

AUG - 7 2015

Nat. Register of Historic Places
National Park Service

Mr. Paul Loether
Chief, NRHP & NHL Program
National Park Service
1201 Eye Street, NW (2280), 8th Floor
Washington, DC 20005

Dear Mr. Loether:

The U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) is pleased to nominate the United States Post Office and Court House located at 145 Church Street, New Haven, Connecticut, for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places. The nomination is hereby submitted on disk in accordance with the May 6, 2013 guidance and includes the following:

- Signed original first page of the National Register of Historic Places nomination form;
- Disk 1 - The enclosed disk contains the true and correct copy of the nomination for the United States Post Office and Court House, located in New Haven, CT, to the National Register of Historic Place; and,
- Disk 2 - The enclosed disk contains the .tif image files for the above referenced nomination.

In accordance with 36 CFR Part 60.9(c), the appropriate local elected officials were notified of GSA's intent to nominate the above referenced property to the National Register of Historic Places by letters dated April 27, 2015.

Along with the Connecticut State Historic Preservation Officer's concurrence on the property's eligibility, we received review comments. The enclosed nomination incorporates revisions in response to as many of those comments as possible.

If for any reason any nomination package that GSA submits needs to be returned, 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 have any questions or concerns regarding this nomination package, please contact Elizabeth Hannold at (202) 501-2863 or elizabeth.hannold@gsa.gov.

Sincerely,

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

Enclosures

Cc: Daniel Forest, Connecticut State Historic Preservation Officer
Elizabeth Mees, Regional Historic Preservation Officer

1800 F Street, NW
Washington, DC 20405-0002

www.gsa.gov