

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

FOR FEDERAL PROPERTIES

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	MAY 4 1984
DATE ENTERED	

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

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Knoxville Post Office

AND/OR COMMON

N/A

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

501 Main Street

N/A NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Knoxville

N/A VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

2nd

STATE

Tennessee

CODE
047

COUNTY
Knox

CODE
093

3 CLASSIFICATION

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

4 AGENCY

REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS: (If applicable)

Southern Regional Headquarters U.S. Postal Service

STREET & NUMBER

P. O. Drawer 3744

CITY, TOWN

Memphis

N/A VICINITY OF

STATE

Tennessee 38173-0744

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Knox County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

Main Street

CITY, TOWN

Knoxville

STATE

Tennessee

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

N/A

DATE

N/A

N/A FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

N/A

CITY, TOWN

N/A

STATE

N/A

7 DESCRIPTION

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

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Knoxville Post Office is a large three-story stone and steel frame building located on Main Street in Knoxville, Tennessee. Built in 1934, the Knoxville Post Office is a notable example of the Moderne and Art Deco styles of the early 20th century. It was built to serve as the city's main postal facility and federal office building and continues to be used for these purposes. The interior of the building exhibits a noteworthy display of Art Deco decoration in the lobby and is one of the most notable interior spaces in the city. The building has not been significantly altered and retains its original architectural character.

The Knoxville Post Office occupies an entire city block and is bounded by Main Street and Walnut, Locust and Cumberland Avenues. The building itself measures 250' in length and 138' in width with the three floors and basement containing over 123,000 square feet of gross floor area. Adjacent to the structure are areas devoted to open space and landscaping. At the rear of the building facing Cumberland Avenue is a large concrete paved court which serves to accomodate postal vehicles. There are no outbuildings on the lot.

Constructed as the city's main postal facility, the post office was designed with characteristics of the Moderne and Art Deco styles. The building is rectangular in shape with the main facade and entrances facing Main Street. The most striking features of the exterior are the large fluted engaged columns and pilasters which are evident on the three main facades. These columns and pilasters have simple banding at the capitals instead of the Greek orders. This emphasis on simplicity and sleekness are hallmarks of the 1930s Moderne style. Other characteristics of the Moderne style are also evident in the horizontality of the building and curvilinear stonework at the roofline.

The interior lobby reflects another important style of the period, the Art Deco style. The lobby displays a variety of detailing executed in multi-colored marble, bronze, and aluminum panels. Verticality is expressed throughout the lobby in aluminum grills with stylized floral motifs, and in decorative aluminum screens above the postal service windows. In both entry lobby areas paired marble columns with capitals display inset stylized floral panels. On the plaster ceiling are aluminum leaf moldings of floral and zigzag banding also characteristic of the Art Deco style. This lobby area has not been altered and is one of the few Art Deco interiors remaining intact in the city.

The south elevation facing Main Street is the main facade of the structure and is eleven bays in length. The end or corner bays extend out from the main block of the building and contain the major entrances for the building. These entrances contain three aluminum and glass doors with transom bars and transoms. The transoms have aluminum grillwork over the glass lights and feature floral Art Deco patterns similar to the grillwork in the interior lobby.

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Surrounding the entrance is red marble which displays elliptical molding. Windows on the upper floors of the extended bays are of tri-part aluminum and glass casement design. The windows are separated by aluminum spandrels with zigzag molding and floral motifs. Running the height of the extended bays are Doric pilasters topped by sculptured stone eagles. In the frieze above the eagles is inscribed "E Pluribus Unum".

The central nine bays are separated by large marble fluted columns with simple banding at the capitals. The ground story of the building displays four foot high red marble banding which runs along all four elevations of the structure. Each bay on the first floor displays a twenty-light aluminum casement window. The spandrels separating the first and second floors are of marble and feature elliptical molding. The second story windows are also of aluminum and glass and are four-light casement design with transoms and apron windows. The third floor windows are similar in design to those on the second floor except that they lack transoms. Between the second and third story windows are aluminum spandrels. Above the window openings on the facade is a frieze with a Moderne pattern of floriated and elliptical design. In the marble panels above the frieze is inscribed "United States Post Office and Courthouse". Running the length of the roofline of the building is cylindrical marble molding which is characteristic of the Moderne style.

Extending the width of the central nine bays on the ground story is a four foot high red marble retaining wall. The wall masks the sunken courtyard behind it which provides illumination into the basement windows. On top of the retaining wall are four ten-sided Art Deco light fixtures which are in good condition.

The west elevation facing Locust Street is eight bays in width with the two end or corner bays extending from the main block of the building. Windows in the extended bays are of casement design with aluminum floral motif mullions and muntins. The six central bays are separated by large fluted pilasters which have plain banding at the capitals. Window arrangements are similar to those on the main facade and are of casement design with aluminum spandrels. At the ground story is a low red marble retaining wall which conceals the light well for the basement level.

The east elevation facing Walnut Street is similar to the west elevation with casement windows separated by fluted pilasters. This elevation does differ however with the presence of two entrances into the ground floor of the building. These entrances also display glass and aluminum windows with aluminum grills covering the glass transoms. On the north or Cumberland Street

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facade the ground story exhibits nine bays of wood and metal double doors which open onto a large loading platform. Protecting the loading platform on the ground story is a large fixed metal canopy. On the upper facade are fluted pilasters which separate the windows on each floor. These casement windows are similar in design to those on the main facade.

The most important space on the interior is the ground story lobby which serves patrons of the post office. The lobby is 200 feet in length and has a floor to ceiling height of 18 feet. The lobby features marble floors, marble columns and great expanses of Art Deco aluminum and bronze grillwork. Ceiling decoration is also extensive with aluminum leaf designs painted in a zigzag and floral pattern on the crown molding. The original brass post office boxes are also intact and are still in use. Adjacent to the lobby is the postal work room which contains a work area of over 18,000 square feet.

On the upper floors the most notable interior space is the Federal Courtroom which occupies space on both floors. The courtroom features a cork floor, walls of painted maple and panels of burl walnut. Adjacent to the courtroom are two light wells which illuminate the second and third floor inner offices. Around the central courtroom and light wells are numerous small offices which vary from 100 to 400 square feet in size. These rooms are rectangular, have walnut frame and glass doors, plaster walls, marble and wood floors and added acoustical tile ceilings.

Interior spaces and details have not been significantly altered since the building's construction in 1934. A 1964 renovation involved the installation of a new heating and air conditioning system in the building, roof repairs and replacement of some of the wood flooring. This renovation resulted in the addition of a new acoustical tile ceiling below the original plaster ceiling in office spaces throughout the building and in the hallways of the second and third floors. Fortunately, this work did not impact the lobby or courtroom spaces of the interior. Today the interior of the Knoxville Post Office retains its original Art Deco character, and the majority of its spaces and detailing are in excellent condition.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

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

SPECIFIC DATES 1932-1934

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

Baumann and Baumann

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The United States Post Office and Federal Building of Knoxville, Tennessee is an architecturally and historically significant structure of the early 20th century. The building has been nominated under criteria A and C because of its role in Knoxville history and architectural characteristics. Constructed between 1932 and 1934 in the Art Deco and Moderne styles, the building encompasses an entire city block in Knoxville's central business district. It continues to serve as the main post office for Knoxville and retains its original architectural integrity. The Post Office is one of the few structures built in Knoxville with Art Deco and Moderne characteristics and is one of the most significant structures constructed in the city during the early 20th century.

Knoxville was founded during the late 18th century as a trading center for east Tennessee and it quickly grew in size and importance in the region. By 1794 a post office was established at Knoxville in a log cabin on Gay Street between Church Street and Cumberland Avenue. It was located in the store of George Roulston who is listed as the first postmaster for the city. During the next several decades the location of the post office moved frequently and at one time was established in the Central House Hotel on Gay Street. Often the location of the post office was in the home or shop of the person appointed as postmaster. Knoxville's growth during these years increased considerably and by the mid-19th century a separate building to house the post office was required. In 1856 an appropriation was made in Congress to fund the construction of a permanent postal facility and federal building for the city.

The Civil War prevented the construction of Knoxville's Post Office until 1870 when a site was selected at the corner of Market and Clinch Streets. Over \$500,000 was appropriated for the construction of the building which was designed in the Second Renaissance Revival style. When the building was completed in 1874 it was regarded as one of the most handsome and functional government buildings in the South. Within thirty years, however, the city outgrew the capacity of the post office and an addition was constructed and occupied in 1910. This addition met the needs of the community for only a few more years and by 1925 it was clear that a new postal facility was needed in Knoxville.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

See continuation sheet

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 1.9

UTM REFERENCES

A	<u>17</u>	<u>231671510</u>	<u>39831610</u>	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The boundary of the Knoxville Post Office is shown as the dotted line on accompanying Knox County Tax Map A-95-P. This boundary encompasses the block bounded by the post office property.

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Philip Thomason

11/15/83

ORGANIZATION

Thomason and Associates

DATE

(615) 320-5732

STREET & NUMBER

1700 Hayes Street, Suite 202

TELEPHONE

CITY OR TOWN

Nashville

STATE

Tennessee

12 CERTIFICATION OF NOMINATION

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER RECOMMENDATION

YES

NO

NONE

Deputy Herbert L. Hayden

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

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

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

[Signature]

DATE

4/30/84

TITLE

Dave W. Dogan, Director

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

[Signature]

DATE

5/31/84

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

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In the late 1920s the Federal government appropriated millions of dollars for the construction of public buildings throughout the country. Tennessee Senator Kenneth McKellar and Representative J. Will Taylor wielded influence over the selection of sites for these buildings and more than 1.5 million dollars was secured for the construction of Knoxville's new post office and federal building. An entire city block was purchased for the site which was bounded by Main, Locust, and Walnut Streets and Cumberland Avenue. Buildings on the site were razed, the land was leveled and the streets widened prior to construction.

Planning began on the building in 1930 when architects Baumann and Baumann of Knoxville were selected to design the structure. Baumann and Baumann was a well known architectural firm and designed many buildings in the late 19th and early 20th century. Among their works was the Knoxville City Hall and Market and courthouses for surrounding counties in east Tennessee. Their design for the post office was characteristic of the period and it incorporated elements of the Moderne and Art Deco styles. The exterior featured massive fluted columns and pilasters of white marble with restrained ornamentation characteristic of the Moderne style. The interior was designed with lavish decorative banding of multi-colored marble, Art Deco grills and figures of aluminum and bronze. Over six different types of marble were incorporated into the building's design and all of the marble came from quarries in east Tennessee. The building was also to be one of Knoxville's largest structures with over 123,000 square feet of space.

This new building was designed to meet several needs of the federal government. The main function was that of a central postal facility. The entire basement and first floor levels were set aside for that purpose. On the basement level were various rooms for administrative offices and employees. On the first floor level was the main lobby of the post office complete with service windows and 1,500 bronze mail boxes. Behind the service windows was the large work area for the receipt, classification and distribution of daily mail. This work area opened onto a large mailing platform and parking area to accommodate delivery vehicles. An interesting feature of the work area was an observation gallery which ran along the ceiling and was used by supervisors to monitor the efficiency of employees while remaining unseen. Also on the first floor were offices of the postmaster and other administrators.

The upper two floors were designed to contain federal offices and the federal courtroom for the city. Two large light wells provided illumination and fresh air for interior offices on both upper floors. In addition to the courtroom the third

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floor contained offices for congressmen, tax officials and civil service employees. The overall design of the building was considered adequate to meet the needs of the city for many years to come.

Construction began on the building in July of 1932. The contractor for the building was the A.W. Kusche Company of Detroit which had extensive experience in the construction of government buildings. The cornerstone was laid for the building on December 27, 1932 and work proceeded steadily for twenty months. The formal opening of the building was held on February 15, 1934 in the postal workroom. Opening day ceremonies began with a breakfast at the Andrew Johnson Hotel. More than 1,500 people attended the dedication ceremony including Knoxville Mayor John O'Conner, Congressman J. Will Taylor and Assistant Treasury Secretary L.W. Robert. On March 10, 1934 most of the post office department was moved from the old building and mail delivery began from the new building the next day.

Since 1934 the Knoxville Post Office has continued to provide mail service for the community. The growth of Knoxville has necessitated the construction of branch offices throughout the city but the main post office has continued to be the center of Knoxville's postal operations. A major renovation of the post office occurred in 1964 when one million dollars was spent to install a new heating and air conditioning system. This renovation resulted in dropped ceilings in parts of the building but otherwise did not disturb the original character of the building. The exterior and major interior spaces have not been altered, and the building continues to display its original architectural character.

The size and efficiency of the Knoxville postal service has been noted during past years. In 1969 the post office was named the most outstanding in the nation by the Magazine Publisher's Association. Postmaster C. Edwin Graves accepted the award which cited the post office for "high quality of service, outstanding management performance and positive community relations." Knoxville's continued expansion in recent decades has once again resulted in a desire to update postal facilities in the community. A new central post office building is planned for construction and opening in 1986. The present post office shall continue to be used for retail and delivery operations with excess space available for government or commercial tenants.

The Knoxville Post Office has been a landmark of the city since its completion in 1934. It is one of the few buildings in the city which contains Art Deco detailing and it has retained its original architectural integrity. Part of a long heritage of postal service in Knoxville, the building has occupied a major role in the community since its construction. Its distinctive architectural and historical character make the Knoxville Post Office a structure significant to the development of the city.

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Herndon, Joseph. "Architects in Tennessee until 1930, A Biographical Dictionary." Columbia University School of Architecture, New York, 1975.

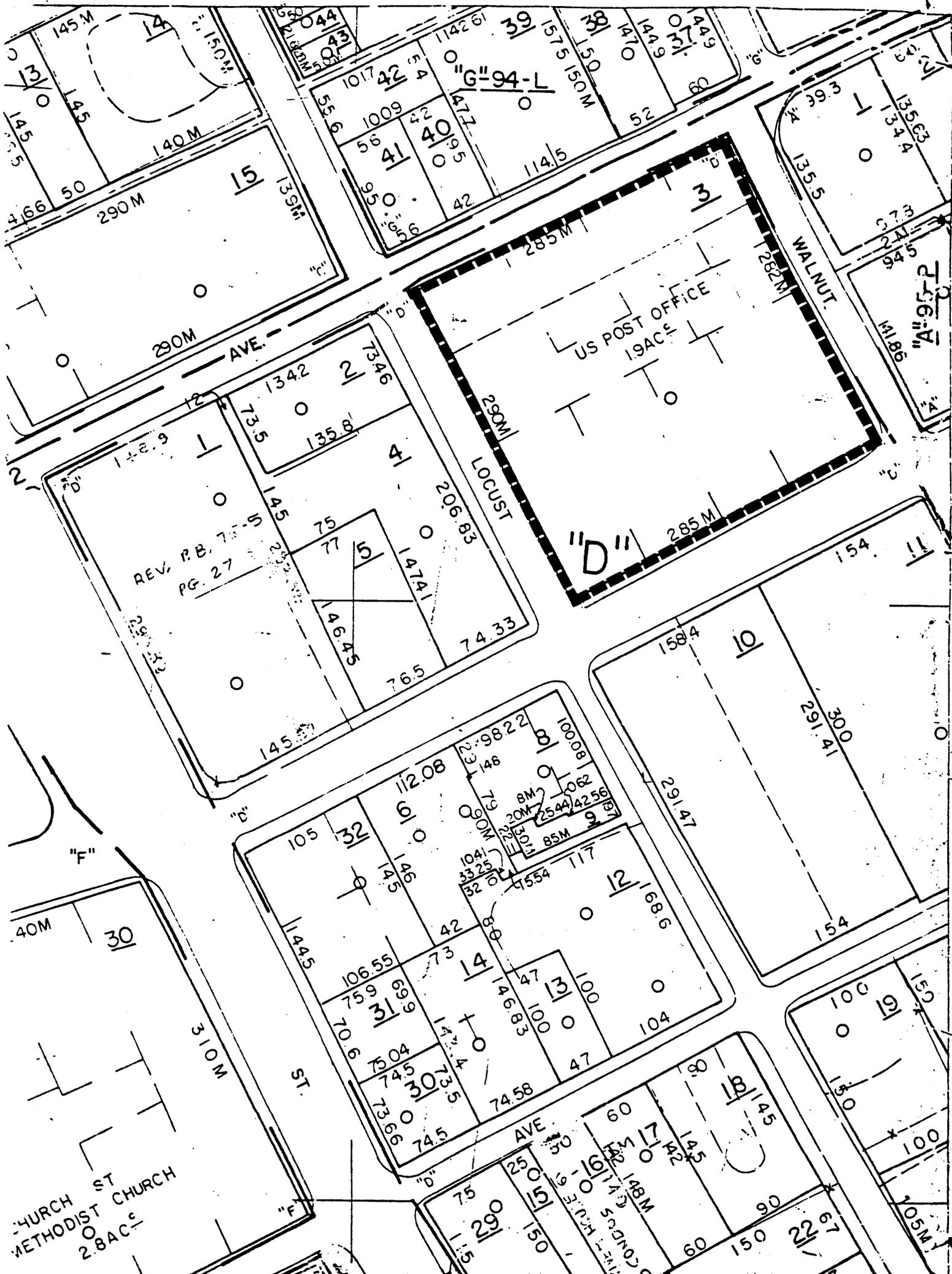
"Knoxville Post Office", Blueprints drawn by Baumann and Baumann Architects, 1933. On file at the Knoxville Post Office, Knoxville, Tennessee.

Knoxville Journal, 13 July, 1930; 14, February 1964; 30 September, 1969.

Knoxville News Sentinel, 24 December, 1932; 5 November, 1933.

Knoxville Sentinel, 11 March, 1954; 14 February 1964.

Mayfield, William. Assistant Postmaster, Knoxville Post Office, Knoxville, Tennessee. Interview, 4 November 1983.



290M AVE

LOCUST

WALNUT

CHURCH ST
METHODIST CHURCH
2.8AC

US POST OFFICE
1.9AC

"A" 95.2

"D"

"F"

3.00

57.200