

PH0364835

DATA SHEET

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED MAR 18 1977
DATE ENTERED NOV 23 1977

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

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

1 NAME

HISTORIC ^{U.S.}
Old ~~United States~~ Customs House and Post Office (Chamber of Commerce Building)
AND/OR COMMON
Same

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER
300 West Liberty Street
CITY, TOWN
Louisville
STATE
Kentucky
VICINITY OF
Jefferson
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT
3 & 4
COUNTY
Jefferson
CODE
111

3 CLASSIFICATION

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

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME
Old South Life Insurance Co.
STREET & NUMBER
310 West Liberty Street
CITY, TOWN
Louisville
STATE
Kentucky

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.
Jefferson County Courthouse
STREET & NUMBER
Jefferson Street
CITY, TOWN
Louisville
STATE
Kentucky

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE
Survey of Historic Sites in Kentucky
DATE
_FEDERAL STATE _COUNTY _LOCAL
DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS
Kentucky Heritage Commission
CITY, TOWN
Frankfort
STATE
Kentucky (continued)

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"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

On the southwest corner of Liberty and Third Streets stands the structure built between 1853 and 1858 as the United States Customs House and Post Office. In 1912 the Courier-Journal Company moved its newspaper operations into the building after gutting and rebuilding the interior and altering portions of the exterior. The Louisville Area Chamber of Commerce and other offices presently occupy the building.

The site is in the heart of downtown Louisville one block east of the River City Mall (formerly Fourth Street), the main retail axis of the central area. The surrounding buildings are predominantly commercial with a mixture of styles and periods. There are several structures of historic and architectural significance in the area. On the western corner of the same block is the unique High Victorian Gothic building designed by John Andrewartha and completed in 1876 for the Courier-Journal Company, which occupied the building until moving to the Customs house in 1912. Three blocks west on Liberty Street is the Jefferson County Jail (listed on the National Register of Historic Places in July 1973) and two blocks south on the Mall is the Seelbach Hotel (listed on the National Register in August 1975). Just across Liberty Street is the site of the proposed Hyatt House Hotel and one block north on Jefferson Street is the new Commonwealth Convention Center, located on the site of the Tyler Block (listed on the National Register in October 1973) which was demolished in 1974 (see maps #1 & #2).

The Customs House is a four-story structure built of Indiana limestone. The irregular facades are composed of forward thrusting end and central bays with recessed sections between forming five units. The rusticated stone of the first story is separated from the smooth stone of the upper stories by an extended stone course. A series of open arches in the original construction led into the street level post office. Some of these arches remain though they have been filled in with windows. The other arches on both street facades have been removed to accomodate large, rectangular windows, a display window, and a modern entrance on Liberty Street (see photo #1).

In the 1912 renovation, supervised by Louisville architect John Bacon Hutchings, the original second-story space was divided into two floors. The tall windows were divided to create rectangular windows on the new second story. The present third-story windows are the arched tops of the original window openings but without the original panes. Arched stone mouldings supported by small, carved pendants remain above the third-story windows. (see photo #2).

Fourth-story fenestration is varied and appears little changed from that in the original construction. Most windows are composed of coupled, vertical paned sections separated by stone stanchions which form arches within the window enframement. The windows in the projecting bays also have a small round window surmounting the arched panes forming a tracery effect. The original arched stone mouldings are above all the fourth-story windows and there are pairs of small dentils beneath the sills. Two bold, stone courses with a plain entablature between traverse the building above the fourth story. An extended roof cornice is underscored by large stone brackets in pairs and a parapet tops the building. A small, one-story addition to the building on the south side on Third Street was built in recent years and is quite compatible in style and material.

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1853-1858

BUILDER/ARCHITECT Ammi B. Young/E. E. Williams

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Customs House at Third and Liberty Streets, constructed under the supervision of local architect Elias E. Williams (1794-1880) and possibly designed by Ammi Burnham Young (1798-1874), was the first building erected by the federal government in Louisville for the specific purpose of housing customs offices, the post office, and the federal courts. It is one of the few structures from the 1850s which survive in Louisville, and it is an outstanding example of the excellent architectural design of the government buildings erected during the decade from 1850 to 1860 under the direction of Ammi B. Young, Supervising Architect of the Treasury Department during those years. Additionally it has been imaginatively adapted for re-use twice--first as a home for the Courier-Journal and The Louisville Times and second as office space for the Louisville Chamber of Commerce and other businesses.

Louisville was established as a customs collection district within the state of Virginia by an act of Congress in 1789. Colonel Richard Taylor was appointed collector of customs, a position which most likely involved collection of taxes levied so that Virginia might meet the expenses of her involvement in the Revolution.

At this time no federal customs house existed between Louisville and New Orleans, which was a foreign port. Most imported goods were thus transported up the Mississippi River with no collection of duties. Congress then passed an act in 1799 making Louisville a port of entry. The act remained in force until the acquisition of Louisiana in 1803. New Orleans was made a port of entry and the position of customs collector at Louisville was abolished. In its place the office of Surveyor was created. The functions of the Surveyor included the inspection of all boats constructed in the Mississippi District and the granting of temporary licenses which were to be surrendered at the New Orleans customs house. By 1831 the growth of trade was great enough that Congress reinstated a port of entry at Louisville. A collector of customs, or port director of customs, has been here ever since.

During those years the Federal government did not erect or even own a building to house either its customs collector or the post office. Both were located wherever the collector and postmaster could obtain office space. Early city directories prove the nomadic existence of these federal offices as their addresses changed from street to street through the years until 1858.

In 1851 the United States government acquired several lots on the southwest corner of Liberty (then Green Street) and Third Streets from the heirs of Henry Clay, Jr., for the site of a building to house all federal government offices in Louisville. As late as March 1853 contracts for construction had not been let due to Congressional wrangling

(continued)

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

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Falls of the Ohio Metropolitan Council of Governments. (Louisville) Metropolitan Preservation Plan. Text and selection by Walter E. Langsam. Washington, D.C.: United States Department of Housing and Urban Development, Falls of the Ohio. (continued)

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY .5 acres

UTM REFERENCES

A	1 6	6 0 8	8 6 0	4 2 3 4	3 6 0	B					
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING	ZONE	EASTING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		
C						D					

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The Chamber of Commerce Building is located in the Third City District, Block 14-K, Lot 66, on the southwest corner of Third and Liberty Streets. The rectangular plot is 117' x 150' x 117' x 150'.

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Mary Jean Kinsman

ORGANIZATION

DATE

26 November 1976

STREET & NUMBER

4012 Druid Hills Road

TELEPHONE

893-5731

CITY OR TOWN

Louisville

STATE

Kentucky

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

Eldred W. Miller

TITLE

State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE

3/15/77

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

Robert B. Rethig

DATE

11/23/77

ATTEST:

Charles A. [Signature]

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

11/29/77

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

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Metropolitan Preservation Plan, 1973.
Kentuckiana Regional Planning Development Agency
County
Louisville, Kentucky

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over the appropriation of additional funds for constructing customs houses in several western cities, including Louisville.

Two men undoubtedly played roles in the eventual approval of funds to construct the federal buildings in Louisville and other cities. One was Colonel William Preston, prominent Louisville lawyer and veteran of the Mexican War, who was elected to the House of Representatives in 1853. He introduced the proposals for increased appropriations and defended them forcefully. The other was James Guthrie, also a Louisville lawyer and financier, who in 1853 was appointed Secretary of the Treasury in the cabinet of President Franklin Pierce. Guthrie came to Louisville as a young man and for the rest of his life played a large part in shaping the growth of his adopted city. Representing the Louisville district numerous times in both houses of the State Legislature, he was instrumental in formulating the Kentucky Bank Act in the 1830s. He was a key figure in the development of the Louisville and Nashville Railroad and was its president from 1860-1868. Considering Guthrie's interest and involvement in the growth of Louisville, he would surely have exercised some influence in Congressional approval of funds for constructing a suitable federal building in the city.

In 1853 notices began appearing in local newspapers inviting proposals for construction of the new customs house. Work evidently began that year, though it was 1854 before Congress appropriated the additional funds.

The architect of the customs house is not definitely known. The design has been attributed to E. E. Williams (1794-1880) a Louisville architect who was referred to in contemporary sources as "Superintending Architect" for the customs house. However, because of the design of the structure and the period during which it was built, consideration must be given to Ammi B. Young (1798-1874), Supervising Architect of the Construction Branch of the Treasury Department from 1852-1860.

Little is known about E. E. Williams or his work in Louisville. He was first listed in the city directory in 1839 as an architect. In addition to the customs house, he is credited with the design of three other structures in Louisville, none of which survive. The Masonic Temple, which occupied the block on the west side of Fourth Street between Green (Liberty) and Jefferson, was under construction at the same time Williams was supervising the customs house and was completed in the late 1850s. The Shreve house, c.1840s, was a stone front building with a symmetrical facade featuring large, rounded bays on either side of the entrance. It was on Walnut Street and was razed for construction of the old Armory. It is thought that the Shreve house was originally two structures later joined and the stone facade added. The Ben Smith house was a fine Greek Revival building completed about 1842 for Benjamin Smith, a wealthy planter from Scott County, Kentucky, who owned extensive lands in Louisiana and Mississippi. The house was on Jefferson Street and was razed in 1965. A newspaper article in 1913 mentioned that Williams spent some time in New Orleans and that he was awarded government contracts for building Marine hospitals in Baton Rouge

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and Natchez. He evidently gave up his architectural work, as he was listed in the directories as a wholesale liquor dealer in the 1860s and 1870s. He died in 1880.

Ammi Burnham Young (1798-1874) was born in New Hampshire and is believed to have studied with Alexander Parris (1780-1852) a Boston architect. Young designed buildings for Dartmouth College, the Vermont state capitol (1837), and the magnificent Greek Revival customs house in Boston (1838-1849), his best-known work. In 1852 Young was appointed Supervising Architect of the Office of Construction of the Treasury Department, a post he held until 1860.

During Young's tenure in office the Treasury Department constructed an unprecedented number of federal buildings made necessary by the rapidly growing population and commerce of the country. Young was the architect of most of the customs houses and post offices built during those years. Talbot Hamlin, in his Greek Revival Architecture in America, said that Young's buildings were especially important because of his innovative use of metal in attempting to deal with the problem of fireproof building. His buildings used iron columns, stairs, window frames, and sometimes even iron doors and internal window shutters. Most of the federal buildings designed by Young were classic in style with some variations. Some had Greek Revival details, others were Georgian and some had Italian villa characteristics.

The Louisville Customs House has the angular, vertical appearance of the villa style, although it was described in contemporary sources as a "combination of Byzantium Romanesque" and "Anglo-Norman." Unfortunately none of the original interior remains for comparison with other examples of Young's work. Descriptions of the structure in local newspapers upon its completion in 1858 referred to the iron staircases, iron window frames and the fact that, with the exception of the pine floors, all materials were stone and iron.

Although records of most of the government buildings designed by Young exist in the National Archives, no plans or drawings of the Louisville Customs House have been found. It was the usual practice to attribute these buildings to the superintending architect on the site, and in some instances the local architect may have done the actual plan, based upon descriptions and specifications from Young. Thus until some evidence is found the design of the Louisville Customs House cannot be conclusively attributed to either Young or Williams.

After completion of the Customs House in 1858, the customs collector, the post office and federal courts occupied the building until 1896 when a new and larger federal building was erected at Fourth and Chestnut Streets under the supervision of Louisville architect D. X. Murphy and/or McDonald Bros.

During construction of this new building several plans were under discussion to utilize the old Customs House. Mayor Henry Tyler thought it could be converted into a new

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police headquarters, if it could be purchased for a nominal sum or if the government would donate it to the city. The Board of Trade and the Commercial Club supported a plan to establish a permanent exhibit of Kentucky products in the building and both the Polytechnic Society and Colonel Reuben T. Durrett indicated that their libraries could be acquired for such a venture and housed in this permanent exhibition hall. However none of these plans materialized and when offered for sale by the government, the Customs House was purchased by Walter N. Haldeman, president of the Courier-Journal Company. Mr. Haldeman intended making the building the home of The Courier-Journal, but delayed remodeling for some years and used the structure as a public warehouse.

After his death his sons, Bruce and W. B. Haldeman, carried out the plans for renovation. Under the direction of Louisville architect John Bacon Hutchings (1859-1916) the structure was gutted and an interior of steel and reinforced concrete was built to accomodate the heavy presses and machinery necessary for the newspaper operation. The newspapers remained in the building until 1948. In the 1950s the Louisville Chamber of Commerce moved into the building and still occupies it.

For over 100 years the old Customs House has been a functional building housing a variety of tenants. In addition to being a viable part of downtown Louisville it provides a visual link to the architecture of an era from which too few examples remain.

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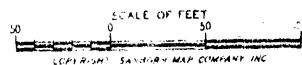
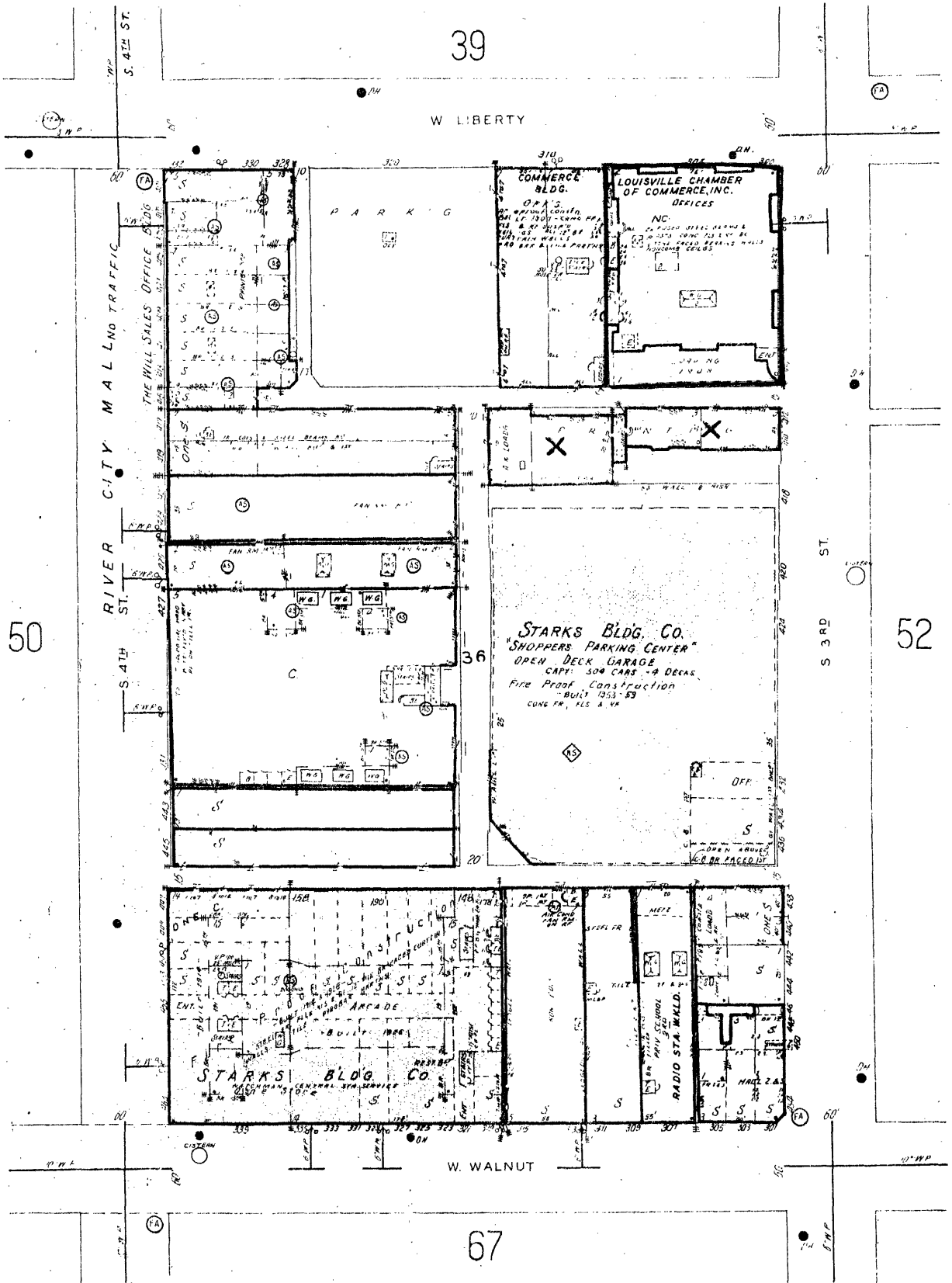
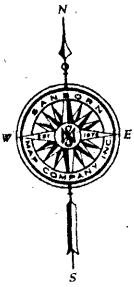
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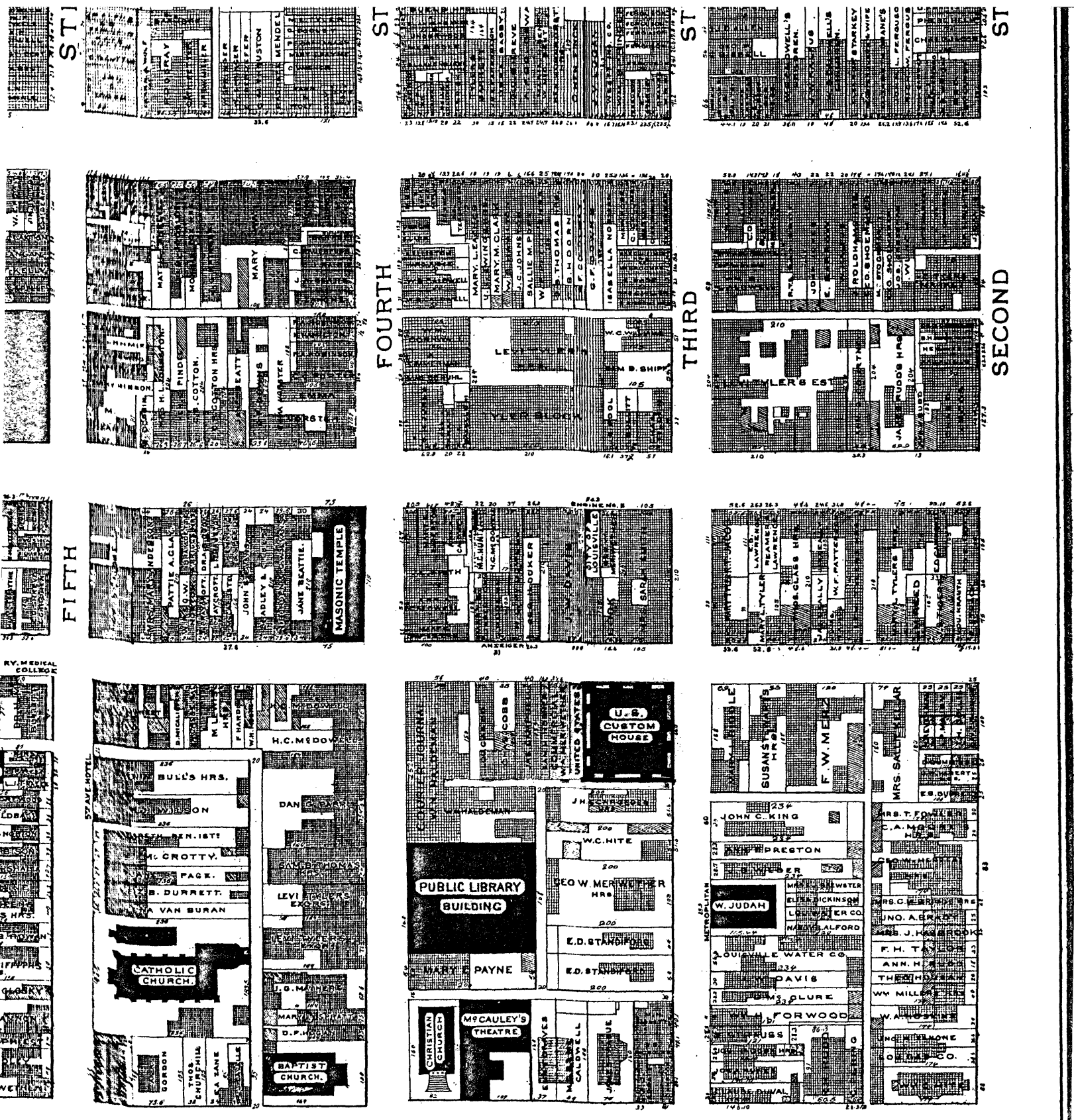
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NOV 23 1977

United States Customs House
Louisville, Kentucky MAR 18 1977
Jefferson County
Sanborn Map Company, Map #1
Sanborn Map of site plan. C. 1970



Map No. 1.

Abstract & Loan Association, Office S.E. Cor. Green & Center Sts. Louisville, Ky.

United States Customs House
Louisville, Kentucky
Jefferson County

NOV 23 1977

Atlas of the City of Louisville
1876
Map #2
Map of site plan. MAR 18 1977

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