

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form



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This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. 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 certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).

### 1. Name of Property

historic name United States Post Office  
other names/site number Federal Building, United States Post Office and Courthouse

### 2. Location

street & number 600 Church Street  not for publication  
city or town Flint  vicinity  
state Michigan code MI county Genesee code 049 zip code \_\_\_\_\_

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,  
I hereby certify that this X 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 X meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

\_\_\_ national X statewide \_\_\_ local

[Signature]  
Signature of certifying official  
Federal Preservation Officer, GSA  
Title

4/10/13  
Date  
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property X meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register criteria.

[Signature]  
Signature of commenting official  
State Historic Preservation Officer  
Title

4/4/13  
Date  
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

### 4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_
- determined eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register

[Signature]  
Signature of the Keeper

5.22.13  
Date of Action

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public - Local
- public - State
- public - Federal

**Category of Property**  
(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		district
		site
		structure
		object
1	0	<b>Total</b>

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

N/A

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

GOVERNMENT/ Post Office

GOVERNMENT/ Offices

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

GOVERNMENT/ Offices

GOVERNMENT/Courthouse

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions)

MODERNE/ Classical Moderne

**Materials**

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation: Concrete

walls: Kasota Limestone

Brick

Brick

roof:

other:

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**Narrative Description**

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(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

**Summary Paragraph**

The United States Post Office is located at 600 Church Street in downtown Flint, Michigan. The building expresses the classical moderne style. The symmetrical two-story façade has a broad pavilion with colonnade flanked by four bays. A terrace edged with a balustrade extends from the central portion of the façade where three pedimented doorways provide access to the public lobby. The building is faced with Kasota limestone, and polychromatic terra-cotta panels with iconography suitable for a federal building enrich the spandrels and parapet wall. A large one-story postal workroom above a raised basement extends from the taller portion of the building along Church Street; a mailing vestibule and loading platform, as well as a modern secure garage, project from the rear of the workroom wing.

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**Narrative Description**

See Continuation Sheets 7.1 through 7.3

**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)

Property is:

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

**Period of Significance (justification)**

The period of significance is 1931, representing the completion of the building.

**Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)**

**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria)

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1931  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

1931  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above)

\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

James A. Wetmore, Acting Supervising Architect  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

The United States Post Office is a well-designed example of the transition to the classical moderne style, executed in yellow Kasota limestone and ornamented with a polychromatic iconographic program. This building represents the standardized design period of the Treasury Department during the late 1920s and early 1930s and has the style and materials that would become strongly identified with public buildings during the 1930s. The building retains all aspects of integrity that convey the characteristics of this style and type of public building, and therefore, represents the federal building program of the 1930s in Flint. The United States Post Office represents the attempt to implement the Nolen plan for a civic center in downtown Flint, and its size is a testament to the steady and rapid growth of the city during the early hey-day of automobile manufacturing during the 1920s. For these reasons, it meets National Register Criterion C.

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**Narrative Statement of Significance** (provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance)

The design of the United States Post Office represents the transition to the classical moderne style in design elements and materials. Its appearance expresses the persistence of Beaux-Arts design principles and traditional classical elements, as well as the influence in materials, forms, and overall impression of the modernistic style of architecture now known as the art deco. The formal, three-part façade incorporates a central section with a colonnade, where the classical language of architecture prevails, flanked by ranges of bays where bold piers separate stacked window openings that have a vertical emphasis and modern feeling. The yellow Kasota limestone walls and polychrome terra cotta have links both to the art deco interest in color and the stone material that would become firmly identified with federal buildings during the 1930s. The designer of the Post Office in Flint merged several stylistic design elements to produce a building that has the grandeur and formality associated with a large post office building, and yet is firmly situated in the modernistic architecture of the late 1920s. The Post Office in Flint represents the standardized design period of U.S. Treasury Department buildings, and a transition to modernized classicism that would dominate during the 1930s. It has an iconographic program in polychrome terra cotta that uses symbols of the nation and power. The building is one of the major civic buildings in Flint and is representative of the city's buildings erected during the late 1920s and early 1930s that reflect the influence of the modernistic architecture style. One of only a few large post office/federal buildings built in Michigan during the early 1930s, it is an architecturally outstanding example of the type in state for the period.

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**Developmental history/additional historic context information** (if appropriate)

See Continuation Sheets 8.1 through 8.11

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

**Bibliography** (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form)  
See Continuation Sheets 9.1

**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: **General Services Administration**

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** Approximately 1 acre  
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage)

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

1	<u>17</u>	<u>280605</u>	<u>4765787</u>	3	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
2	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	4	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing

**Verbal Boundary Description** (describe the boundaries of the property)

The United States Post Office and Courthouse is located on lots 1, 2, 3, and 4 and part of lots 5 and 6, Block L, Stockton's West Addition and part of the Gore of the Village of Flint.

**Boundary Justification** (explain why the boundaries were selected)

The nomination consists of the property historically associated with the building known by the address 600 Church Street, Flint, Michigan.

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Betsy H. Bradley and Andrew J. Schmidt/ Architectural Historians

organization Summit Envirosolutions, Inc., prepared for the U.S. date September 2010, rev. December 2012  
General Services Administration

street & number 1217 Bandana Boulevard North telephone 651-842-4202

city or town St. Paul state MN zip code 55108

e-mail aschmidt@summite.com

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**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.  
A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

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**Photographs:**

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

**Name of Property:** United States Post Office

**City or Vicinity:** Flint

**County:** Genesee

**State:** Michigan

**Photographer:** Betsy H. Bradley and Andrea Kampinen

**Date Photographed:** September 2007 and October 2009

**Description of Photograph(s) and number:**

- 1 of 12. STREET VIEW OF EAST FAÇADE, FACING NORTHEAST.
- 2 of 12. EAST FAÇADE, CHURCH STREET, FACING SOUTH
- 3 of 12. EAST FAÇADE, MAIN ENTRANCE, FACING SOUTHWEST.
- 4 of 12. SOUTH FAÇADE, WEST 3<sup>RD</sup> STREET, FACING NORTH.
- 5 of 12. NORTH FAÇADE, WEST 2<sup>ND</sup> STREET, FACING SOUTH.
- 6 of 12. WEST FAÇADE, FACING NORTH.
- 7 of 12. INTERIOR, FIRST FLOOR, VESTIBULE AND ENTRANCE DOORS.
- 8 of 12. INTERIOR, FIRST FLOOR, HALLWAY CORRIDOR.
- 9 of 12. INTERIOR, FIRST FLOOR COURTROOM ENTRANCE.
- 10 of 12. INTERIOR, FIRST FLOOR, MAIN COURTROOM.
- 11 of 12. INTERIOR, FIRST FLOOR, CLERKS OFFICE.
- 12 of 12. INTERIOR, SECOND FLOOR CORRIDOR.

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**Property Owner:**

(complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO)

name U. S. General Services Administration, Great Lakes Region  
street & number 230 South Dearborn Street, Suite 3600 telephone 312.886.5573  
city or town Chicago state IL zip code 60604

**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.460 et seq.).  
**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

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### Description

The United States Post Office is located at 600 Church Street in downtown Flint, Michigan. The building expresses the classical moderne style. The symmetrical two-story façade has a broad pavilion with colonnade flanked by four bays. A terrace edged with a balustrade extends from the central portion of the façade where three pedimented doorways provide access to the public lobby. The building is faced with Kasota limestone, and polychromatic terra-cotta panels with iconography suitable for a federal building enrich the spandrels and parapet wall. A large one-story postal workroom above a raised basement extends from the taller portion of the building along Church Street; a mailing vestibule and loading platform, as well as a modern secure garage, project from the rear of the workroom wing.

The United States Post Office, completed in 1931, is located at the western edge of the central business district of Flint. Church Street extends in a northwest to southeast direction; for purposes of this description, northwest is considered to be west. The building occupies the entire Church Street blockfront between Second and Third streets. The building is set back from the sidewalk by a narrow lawn along Church Street and has wider side lawns. A flagpole stands near the southeast corner of the building in the front lawn. A modern monument sign identifies the property as the Federal Building United States Courthouse. Paved parking areas on the west side of the building accessed from both Second and Third Streets are separated by the loading platform and the adjacent garage. A retaining wall topped with a pipe rail fence edges the western boundary of the property. A parking lot and garage are located across Church Street north of the United States Post Office, and other buildings of various ages and styles are located to the east, west, and south.

The design of the United States Post Office represents the transition to the classical moderne style in design elements and materials. The overall formality and three-part composition with central pavilion demonstrate the continuing influence of Beaux-Arts design principles. The central range of engaged columns and pedimented entrance surrounds are traditional classical forms. A more modernistic tone is established with the smooth yellow Kasota limestone walls, the vertical emphasis of two-story piers and columns, the stacked window openings with ornamented spandrels between them, and the polychrome terra-cotta panels and molding.

The United States Post Office has a 230-foot-long two-story wing along Church Street and a one-story work room projecting to the west; both portions of the building are positioned above a raised basement. The workroom wing is recessed slightly from the Church Street wing, a bay of which forms a shallow light court above the workroom. The building has brick exterior bearing walls faced with limestone, structural steel framing, and reinforced concrete floor slabs. The exterior walls, including a raised basement, are clad with a dressed Kasota limestone laid in a coursed ashlar pattern, except for the west (rear) walls, which are yellow brick. The mailing vestibule is a narrow two-story wing with yellow brick walls that extends from near the center of the west wall of the work room. A modern secure garage that holds four vehicles has been built on the south side of the mailing vestibule. A limestone chimney rises from the southeast corner of the light court. The two-story section of the building has a low-pitched hip roof clad with slate. A hip-roofed dormer extending to the rear of the two-story section is a modern addition. The flat roof of the workroom wing is covered with built-up roofing.

Architectural drawings for the United States Post Office are located in the building. Original drawings dated 1930 were produced by the Office of Supervising Architect and approved by James A. Wetmore, Acting Supervisory Architect.

The exterior of the United States Post Office has good integrity of design, materials, and workmanship. Replacement window sashes, an entrance added at the basement level in the north end wall, and the addition of the parking garage are the major changes to the exterior of the building. The building conveys the formality of a federal building and the scale of the post office operation at the time it was built. The interior of the

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building, including the main post office lobby, was altered circa 1960, resulting in the removal of nearly all historically significant interior fabric.

**Exterior**

The exterior walls of the Post Office, except for the west wall, are faced with dressed yellow Kasota limestone laid in an ashlar pattern; the stone returns as quoins on the west walls of yellow brick. The lot slopes down to the north leaving more of the basement exposed on the north end of the building. The rectangular basement windows have continuous window wells on the east side. The window sash in all openings is replacement fixed dark-colored aluminum sash divided by mullions into four lights. A continuous band course marks the level of the main floor. The upper wall terminates with a parapet wall that limits the visibility of the low-pitched hip roof of the two-story section and the flat roof above the work room. A fire escape has been placed on the south end of the west wall of the workroom.

The main (east) façade has a tri-partite arrangement with a slightly projecting central pavilion. Six two-story engaged Tuscan columns and engaged piers on the ends frame the seven central bays. The columns support a frieze with inset tablet flower panels and heart and dart molding of blue and buff terra cotta set below a projecting cornice molding. The center of the parapet wall rises slightly and features a buff colored terra-cotta panel with a spread-winged eagle in low relief with the eagle's head set off with a red background. The molding that accents the top of the parapet wall extends from both sides of the terra-cotta panel. The punched window openings in the first and second stories are separated by spandrel panels of terra cotta. Each spandrel panel features a buff colored eagle with its head set off with a red background in a central rondel. The field of the panel is blue and buff colored with fasces (bundle of reeds with an ax head), the Roman symbol of power, flanking the rondels. Rosettes enrich the panel frames. Entrances in the three central bays have molded surrounds with console brackets supporting a pedimented cap. Modern dark-colored aluminum doors are set with a wide sidelight and transom. A wide run of granite steps flanked by Kasota-limestone cheek walls leads to a terrace that extends the width of the central pavilion; it is edged with a Kasota-limestone balustrade. The terrace was recently repaired and rebuilt; modern handrails have been added to the steps. Bronze lamps are positioned on pedestals at the top of the cheek walls.

The side portions of the façade are four bays wide. Broad two-story piers define the bays, and terra-cotta transom panels separate the window openings in the first and second stories. The frieze below the projecting cornice is plain; buff-colored terra-cotta panels set in the parapet wall above each bay have a central diamond with a tablet foliage motif set off by a blue background linked by a ribbon to flanking bundles of reeds. Rosettes enrich the panel borders. The bays of the north and south walls of the two-story portion of the building are identical to the side façade bays. A door has been inserted into the middle bay of the south end wall. An entrance created in the central bay of the north end basement wall is flanked by curved yellow-brick cheek walls that maintain the grade of the flanking lawn. The frieze and parapet wall return on the end bays of the two-story wing. The west wall of the two-story section of the building is faced with yellow brick. Openings in the upper wall are filled with louvers or are blocked.

The one-story workroom wing has five bays exposed on the north and south sides of the building. This portion of the facility has a more utilitarian design. Window openings are punched in the Kasota limestone walls. A simple cornice molding edges the top of the parapet wall. The basement windows in the north wall and the northern portion of the west wall are entirely above grade due to the slope of the lot. Wide window openings in the north portion of the west wall are punched openings and have the same type of replacement sash as used elsewhere; the window openings in the south portion of the wall have been blocked.

The mailing vestibule is a narrow two-story wing with yellow-brick walls; the windows in the second story of the north wall have been blocked with brick. It has internal loading bays in the north wall that are sheltered by a modern sheet-metal canopy. A door is located in the north wall adjacent to the workroom wing. The roof of

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the mailing vestibule has been altered to be a low-pitched hip roof. A secure parking facility with a flat roof and four garage doors in its south wall has been constructed adjacent to the south wall of the mailing vestibule. The color of its brick walls is similar to that of the mailing vestibule.

**Interior**

The interior spaces were completely renovated circa 1960 after the main post office moved to a new building. The public lobby was altered to provide a post office sub-station and to serve as a courthouse lobby. The main floor work room was converted into a courtroom, offices for court personnel, and a workroom for the postal sub-station. The second story of the Church Street wing has a row of offices facing the street that are served by a corridor overlooking the light court. The workroom area of the basement has been divided into several spaces.

Prior to the circa 1960 alterations, the post office lobby ran nearly the length of the Church Street side of the building, but it encompassed only about one-quarter of the floor plan. The three doorways at the main entrance were encompassed within an interior vestibule. Postal windows for various services, including money orders, C.O.D, parcel post, and stamps, occupied much of the lobby wall space, and post office boxes occupied the remainder. It is not known what material finishes adorned the lobby. Offices and restrooms were located along the west (Second Street) side of the building, accessed via a hallway off of the main lobby. The main workroom, an open-plan space punctuated by a series of posts, encompassed most of the floor plan. The second floor, which is limited to the northern one-third of the building footprint, included offices for various federal agencies and a single-loaded corridor along the south side.

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**Statement of Significance**

The United States Post Office is eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places. The building meets Criterion C as a distinctive example of the classical moderne style of architecture. The period of significance is 1931, representing the completion of the building. Despite alterations over time, the building retains sufficient integrity to convey its significance, and is significant at the state level.

The design of the United States Post Office represents the transition to the classical moderne style in design elements and materials. Its appearance expresses the persistence of Beaux-Arts design principles and traditional classical elements as the influence in materials, forms, and overall impression of the modernistic style of architecture now known as the art deco. The formal, three-part façade incorporates a central section with a colonnade, where the classical language of architecture prevails, flanked by ranges of bays where bold piers separate stacked window openings that have a vertical emphasis and modern feeling. The yellow Kasota limestone walls and polychrome terra cotta have links both to the art deco interest in color and the stone material that would become firmly identified with federal buildings during the 1930s. The designer of the United States Post Office in Flint merged several stylistic design elements to produce a building that has the grandeur and formality associated with a large post office building, and yet is firmly situated in the modernistic architecture of the late 1920s. The United States Post Office in Flint represents the standardized design period of Treasury Department building, and a transition to modernized classicism that would dominate during the 1930s. It has an iconographic program in polychrome terra cotta that uses symbols of the nation and power. The building is one of the major civic buildings in Flint and is representative of the city's buildings erected during the late 1920s and early 1930s that reflect the influence of the modernistic architecture style.

**Historic Context: Construction of Federal Buildings, 1915 – 1930**

The U.S. Treasury Department was the agency responsible for the construction of federal buildings – mainly post offices and courthouses – from the mid-nineteenth century until the Federal Works Agency was created in 1939. The Treasury Department established the Office of Supervising Architect in 1864 to oversee design and construction of the federal civilian facilities. The work of this office represents several eras defined by congressional authorizations, the Supervising Architect's stylistic preferences, and the involvement of private architects. During the first fifteen years of the twentieth century, private architects provided designs for larger projects while the staff in the Office of the Supervising Architect produced plans for many smaller buildings, including most post offices.<sup>1</sup>

The period between 1915 and 1930 was characterized by a more standardized approach to the design of federal buildings, but little new construction took place. An omnibus Public Buildings Act passed in 1913 created the Public Buildings Commission and limited new building construction to communities with postal receipts more than \$10,000. These actions were intended to reduce the costs of the federal building program and to promote the use of standardized plans, specifications, and materials for different classes of federal buildings. William McAdoo, Secretary of the Treasury and Chairman of the Public Buildings Commission, established a classification system for federal buildings in 1915. Four classes were defined, based on the value of annual post office receipts and the value of adjoining real estate in large cities. The class definitions mandated the type of exterior materials, windows and doors, and interior finishes to be used, as well as the treatment of public spaces. Class A buildings would have marble or granite exterior facings and interior public spaces with a monumental treatment. Class B buildings included first class post offices that would have

<sup>1</sup> Lois Craig, ed., and the staff of the Federal Architecture Project, *The Federal Presence: Architecture, Politics, and Symbols in the United States Government Building* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1979); pp. 99-105, 195.

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limestone or sandstone exterior facings and restricted ornament in interior public spaces. The Supervising Architect's office rarely used private architects for projects during this period.<sup>2</sup>

Acting Supervising Architect James A. Wetmore oversaw the development of a set of standardized plans for federal buildings in 1916. Louis A. Simon, who became Supervising Architect in 1933, no doubt directed the architectural development during this period as well, since Wetmore had no formal training in architecture. The architectural treatment of the buildings retained the Beaux Arts massing, plan, and style, though smaller buildings were plainer than in previous years and had less classical ornamentation. The impact of these changes was limited because Congress authorized no new appropriations for federal buildings between 1913 and 1926.<sup>3</sup> In addition, with time, Wetmore came to recognize that standardization could only be taken so far, noting in 1923 that "each individual building required a separate set of drawings and specifications because of variations in functions, location, topography, availability of materials, and the cost limit fixed by Congress."<sup>4</sup>

The Public Buildings Act of 1926, also known as the Keyes-Elliott Act, allotted \$100 million for the construction of federal buildings outside the District of Columbia. As a general enabling act, it did not authorize appropriations for specific buildings. A survey report prepared in 1927 identified towns and cities with no federal buildings and \$170,420,000 was estimated to be the cost of a construction program to erect buildings in these cities. The Hoover Administration and Congress increased funding for the federal building program in 1928 and again in 1930 and 1931. The construction of new post offices and other federal buildings was delayed by economic conditions, including the stock market crash of 1929. The federal building program, greatly expanded, became part of the federal relief program during the 1930s.<sup>5</sup>

The Post Office in Flint is clearly representative of this era of post office construction. It was funded in 1927 after the passage of the Keyes-Elliott Act and designed in 1930 and represents the final stages of the federal building program before it became part of the federal relief effort of the 1930s. The facility is a Class B building with a Kasota limestone exterior and represents the trend towards standardization and efficiency in the federal construction program. The use of terra cotta on the building is representative of this era as well. The American Terra Cotta Company received thirty orders from the Supervising Architect's office between 1930 and 1935.<sup>6</sup> Beyond the use of materials proscribed for a Class B building, the impact of the standardization program on the design of this building is unclear. While the building program and exterior design are similar to other post offices constructed in this period, it is not thought to be identical to any other building.

#### **Development of the United States Post Office in Flint**

Fur trading brought Jacob Smith to the Flint River in 1811 where he established a trading post at the point where the Detroit to Saginaw trail crossed the river. Smith family members and others claimed land in the area after the treaty of 1819 with the Chippewa and Pottawatamee tribes made it possible to do so. A tavern, blacksmith shop, and a bridge across the river were added to the settlement during the 1830s. Postal service was established in Flint in 1834; the office was known as Flint River until it was changed two years later to Flint. In 1838, when Flint was named the county seat of the newly established Genesee County, it had a population

<sup>2</sup> Emily Harris, "History of Federal Policy Concerning Post Office Construction, 1900-1940." Draft report for the National Park Service, printed by the U.S. Postal Service as *History of Post Office Construction, 1900-1940*, July 1982, p. 9-12; Beth M. Boland, *National Register Bulletin 13: How to Apply the National Register Criteria to Post Offices*, originally published 1984, revised 1994, document available on the internet: <http://www.cr.nps.gov/nr/publications/bulletings/nrb13/>.

<sup>3</sup> Harris, pp. 11-12; Craig, pp. 181, 328.

<sup>4</sup> Antoinette J. Lee, *Architects to the Nation: The Rise and Decline of the Supervising Architect's Office* (New York:Oxford University Press, 2000).

<sup>5</sup> Harris, pp. 12-14.

<sup>6</sup> Statler Gilfillen, *The American Terra Cotta Index* (Chicago: The Prairie School Press, 1973).

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of 300 families. During the late 1850s the first wagon and first carriage manufacturing shops were established in Flint.<sup>7</sup>

By the beginning of the twentieth century, Flint had a population of 15,000 and its manufacturers produced over 100,000 horse-drawn vehicles a year. Progressive businessmen introduced automobile production to the city during the first years of that century. The Buick Motor Co. was founded in Flint and its first automobile was completed in 1904. Flint declared itself the "Vehicle City" during its 1905 Golden Jubilee Celebration, based on the horse-drawn vehicle industry. Soon automobiles became the vehicles identified with Flint and the rapid expansion of this new industry is considered to be the birth of modern Flint. When General Motors was established in 1908, the local Weston-Mott Co. became part of the Flint-based company. The W. F. Stewart Co., a pioneer in horse-drawn vehicle manufacturing, converted to the production of auto bodies and other foundries and tool-and-die companies were established in connection with the auto industry. General Motors established its Research Corporation, Proving Ground, and Institute of Technology in Flint.<sup>8</sup>

Flint's post office occupied several spaces before moving into a new Post Office, a neo-classical building located on Kearsley Street, built in 1909 by the Treasury Department. By that time the automobile industry was flourishing, the city was growing rapidly, and the Post Office was soon pressed to meet the city's needs. The Kearsley Street Post Office was expanded with an addition to the second story in 1921 and an addition on the south side for the handling of parcel post. A branch post office, known as the Oak Park Station, opened in 1925 to decentralize service.<sup>9</sup>

Flint grew with the automobile industry. Its population more than doubled between 1910 and 1920 and continued to expand rapidly during the 1920s to reach 156,500 in 1930. Billy Durant, who had founded General Motors, as well as the Chevrolet Co., regained control of General Motors and became president of the company in 1916. Most of the General Motors stock was held by residents of Flint and as the automobile company prospered, so did the city. By 1926, the General Motors Corporation employed 40,000 men in Flint at its Buick, Chevrolet, and other plants. During the 1920s, the automobile industry in Flint supported related commercial and industrial enterprises. Flint was home to the Chevrolet Motor Co., Flint Motor Co., and the Mason Motor Truck Co., in addition to the Buick Motor Co. Automobile related businesses in the city included the Marvel Carburetor Co., the A. C. Spark Plug Co., the DuPont de Nemours Co. paint and color division, the Flint Motor Axle Co., and the Flint Malleable Castings Co.<sup>10</sup>

A building boom took place during the 1920s that included tall buildings in the central business district, schools, residential areas, and industrial plants. The General Motors facilities were expanded significantly by 1927 and plans were underway at that time for an addition to the Flint Motor Co. plant to house the Fisher Body Co. The Buick Motor Co. was planning a large grey iron foundry and the Chevrolet Motor Co. had plans for a new factory and office building.<sup>11</sup>

### **A Modern Post Office for Flint**

The need for a new, larger post office to support the commerce of Flint reached the state of "chaos" in 1926. Lines to the service windows could be a half a block long and the overtaxed facility took several days to deliver

<sup>7</sup> Flint History website; Flint Chamber of Commerce, *Progressive Flint*, (Flint: Flint Chamber of Commerce, ca. 1929). p. 3.

<sup>8</sup> Flint History website; Flint Chamber of Commerce, pp. 5-9.

<sup>9</sup> Flint Chamber of Commerce, p. 18; Genesee County Historical Society, *Flint, 1890-1960* (Charleston, S.C.: Arcadia, 2004), p. 98.

<sup>10</sup> Gustin, p. 159.

<sup>11</sup> National Association of Letter Carriers, *Flint in the World's Progress*, James A. Welch Co. insert (Flint: National Association of Letter Carriers, Flint Branch, ca. 1928).

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second class mail. During the summer of that year, Congressman Grant M. Hudson reported to local businessmen that he was working to secure a new post office for Flint, presumably after the passage of the Public Buildings Act. A delegation of local leaders traveled to Washington, D.C. in December 1926 to lobby James A. Wetmore, Acting Supervisory Architect of the Treasury Department for a new post office, armed with population and postal receipts statistics. Wetmore acknowledged the need, and promised to send a department official to Flint to determine whether the existing building could be enlarged, or if a new building was needed. The delegation returned to Flint with the sense that officials recognized the city's need for better postal service. The citizens of Flint were bitterly disappointed when the Supervisory Architect's office recommended only \$315,000 for an addition to the existing post office. Business leaders in Flint considered sending another delegation to Washington, D.C. to demonstrate again the need for a new building and to recommend a site, "the proposed civic center facing the south junior high school grounds." A plan for Flint prepared by city planner John Nolen, proposed that the block occupied by the school be cleared and converted into the park of a civic center. The Nolen plan, partially carried out, suggested that the park be surrounded by public and semi-public buildings, including a new post office, a new city hall, a library, churches, and fraternal buildings.<sup>12</sup>

The Treasury Department and Postal Service reassessed Flint's postal needs in August 1927. It was noted that the city was being served by a post office designed for a city with a population between 35,000 and 50,000, and that the population of Flint was then over 150,000. The visiting officials announced that a new Flint Post Office would be placed in the first program for funding.<sup>13</sup>

A site for the new post office was selected in 1928 after the consideration of eleven properties (Figure 1). The site chosen on the west side of Church Street, which had been occupied by the Carpenter Apartments, was the one identified earlier by Flint civic leaders that faced the proposed civic center. In 1928 the block on the east side of Church Street was the site of the high school built in 1873, then serving as the South Junior High school. The St. Matthew's Roman Catholic Church and School were on Third Street south of the school block.<sup>14</sup>

Plans were prepared for the new Post Office in Flint by the Supervising Architect's office and signed by James A. Wetmore in 1930. The building was occupied in September 1931. The building was hailed as a "great addition to the already metropolitan downtown district."<sup>15</sup> It was dedicated at a banquet attended by over five hundred civic leaders and several other observances. The Church Street Post Office opened on Monday, September 28, 1931, after a weekend of moving. The U.S. Department of Internal Revenue opened an office in the new building, as did the Army, Navy, and Department of Agriculture.<sup>16</sup>

Most of the basement and main floor of the Post Office were occupied by the postal operation. On the main floor, the three main entrance doors led to a narrow vestibule, which opened into a public lobby that extended along most of the Church Street façade (Figure 2). Service windows for money orders and postal savings, registered mail and cash on delivery, and general delivery were located at the south end of the lobby. The parcel post windows and other service windows were located near the north end of the lobby. A row of offices along the north end of the building were occupied by the Postmaster and other supervisors. The Post Office

<sup>12</sup> "Hudson Talks of Post Office Plans," *Flint Journal*, 22 July, 1926; "Flint is Given Hope for Relief of Postal Chaos," *Flint Journal*, 23 December, 1926; "Civic Leaders Seek New Deal on Post Office," *Flint Journal*, 22 January, 1927 "Civic Center is Logical Post Office Site," *Flint Journal*, July 15, 1928.

<sup>13</sup> "The Postal Survey," *Flint Journal*, 10 August, 1927; "Flint Post Office will be on First U.S. Building List," *Flint Journal*, 10 August 1927.

<sup>14</sup> "Post Office Site Picked in Flint's New Civic Center," *Flint Journal*, 14 July, 1928; Sanborn Map Company, Flint, Michigan, 1928; Genesee County Historical Society.

<sup>15</sup> "Congratulations – Flint," *Flint Journal*, 27 September 1931.

<sup>16</sup> "First Patrons are Served at New Post Office Today," *Flint Journal* 28 September, 1931.

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had a two level work room connected by a set of stairs and a freight elevator on the west wall. A look-out gallery for postal inspectors overlooked the lower work room. A public stairs near the north end of the building led to the second story, where a row of offices facing Church Street were served by a long corridor.<sup>17</sup>

The Church Street Post Office served as the main Flint facility until postal operations outgrew it. The Federal Bureau of Investigation, Civil Service Commission, Navy Recruiting Service, and Federal Probation Office occupied upstairs space in the building during the 1950s. A new post office building was erected circa 1960. The Church Street building was then remodeled for new uses, including a post office substation and a courtroom.<sup>18</sup>

### Architectural Significance

The United States Post Office is a fine example of a public building in Flint that represents the distinctive characteristics of the classical moderne style and the use of architectural terra cotta (Figures 3-5). It was completed at the end of a 1920s building boom in downtown Flint that included public and commercial buildings. At the time it was built, it was the only public building in Flint that represented the classical moderne style and one of a limited number of buildings that had extensive architectural terra cotta.

During the 1920s, Saginaw Street in downtown Flint was transformed by the construction of multiple-story commercial buildings, many inspired by the classical architectural vocabulary. The Genesee Bank Building, completed in 1920, was a ten-story, classically inspired building. Other similar examples on Saginaw Street include the ten-story Metropolitan, or Industrial Savings, Bank Building, completed in 1923, and the seven-story First National Bank and Trust Company building, built in 1924. The 1926 Genesee County Courthouse, which is listed in the National Register of Historic Places, is located several blocks to the south and is a fine example of late neo-classical revival design.<sup>19</sup>

In addition to classical architecture, the modernistic movement, including the style now known as art deco, influenced the design of Flint's downtown buildings erected during the second half of the 1920s. The Flint Journal building, designed by Albert Kahn in 1924, was influenced by the new aesthetic, as was the Ameritech Building, built by the Bell Telephone Company in 1928. Flint's most prominent art deco tall building is now known as the Mott Foundation Building. Designed by the Detroit firm of Smith, Hinchman & Grylls, it was completed in 1930 with a sleek exterior employing vertical lines and terminating with set-back forms. The 1928 Capitol Theater in Flint, which is listed in the National Register of Historic Places, features architectural terra cotta on its exterior. Terra-cotta piers, colonnade, and roofline cresting set off the buff-colored brick walls.<sup>20</sup>

The design of the Post Office in Flint incorporates Beaux Arts design principles, the classical language of architecture, the modernistic emphasis on verticality, and polychromatic architectural terra cotta as it expresses a transition to the classical moderne style of architecture. The isolated blockfront setting for the building, overall formality, and three-part composition with central pavilion, as well as the scale of the two-story columns, demonstrate the continuing influence of Beaux-Arts design principles. The range of engaged columns, pedimented entrance surrounds, and balustraded terrace enclosure are traditional classical forms. A more modernistic tone is established with the yellow Kasota limestone walls and bold two-story piers between bays

<sup>17</sup> Space assignment plans dated 19 October 1931, in General Services Administration Flint Federal Building files, Grand Rapids, Michigan office.

<sup>18</sup> "Analysis and Recommendation," typescript dated 28 April, 1961, in General Services Administration Flint Federal Building files in Grand Rapids, Michigan office.

<sup>19</sup> American Institute of Architects, Flint Chapter, "A Guide to Flint Architecture," circa 2006, n.p.; State of Michigan Historic Sites Online and Center of Geographic Information website, <http://www.mcgi.state.mi.us/>, accessed June 15, 2007; Kathryn Bishop Eckert, *Buildings of Michigan* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 335-336.

<sup>20</sup> American Institute of Architects; Eckert, p. 335.

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that echo the two-story engaged columns that provide a vertical emphasis. The stacked window openings with ornamented spandrels between them, and the polychrome terra-cotta panels and molding are also part of the modernistic aesthetic.

When it was constructed, the Post Office was one of the few buildings in Flint that had an iconographic program in polychrome terra cotta. Although architectural terra cotta was introduced earlier, the use of strongly colored terra cotta was aligned with the modernistic style of the 1920s that we now know as art deco.<sup>21</sup> The First National Bank and Trust Company and the Capitol Theater both employed extensive terra cotta, but the material was used in different ways: the monochromatic-white, classically inspired terra cotta of the First National Bank and Trust Company building; and the twisted columns and fanciful roof cresting on the Capitol Theater façade. In contrast, the terra-cotta elements on the Post Office provided an iconographic program that featured eagles, a common national symbol, and the Roman fasces, which were classical symbols of power. The use of floral forms and heart and dart molding was a carry-over from the neo-classical ornamental program. The use of blue and red grounds with the buff colored terra cotta set off the other forms and evoked the red, white, and blue scheme of the American flag. The terra cotta along with the yellow Kasota limestone walls, established a polychrome program for a moderne federal building.<sup>22</sup>

The Flint Post Office Building is one of only a few large post office/federal buildings built in Michigan during the early 1930s. The others are the 1931-32 Bay City Post Office/Federal Building, 1932 Jackson Post Office/Federal Building, and 1932-34 Lansing Post Office/Federal Building. The Jackson and Lansing buildings were designed by leading architects of those two cities, Claire Allen & Son for the Jackson building and the Bowd-Munson Co., Architects (with Albert Kahn, Inc., of Detroit as associates) for the Lansing building. Many more post office buildings and at least two post office/federal buildings were constructed in Michigan during the later 1930s, but nearly all were small and simple buildings by comparison with these four large and elaborately detailed buildings. Each of these four buildings – including Flint – possesses a state level of significance because in architectural terms, in their overall size, in the use of stone exterior cladding, and in overall quality of exterior design and finish among Michigan post office/federal buildings each is one of the outstanding examples of post office/federal building design in Michigan from the 1930s.

### Summary of Significance

The United States Post Office is a well-designed example of the transition to the classical moderne style, executed in yellow Kasota limestone and ornamented with a polychromatic iconographic program. This building represents the building program of the Treasury Department during the late 1920s and early 1930s and has the style and materials that would become strongly identified with public buildings during the 1930s. The building retains all aspects of integrity necessary to convey the characteristics of this style and type of public building, and therefore, represents the federal building program of the 1930s in Flint. The United States Post Office represents the attempt to implement the Nolen plan for a civic center in downtown Flint, and its size is a testament to the steady and rapid growth of the city during the early hey-day of automobile manufacturing during the 1920s. For these reasons, it meets National Register Criterion C.

<sup>21</sup> Susan Tunick, Introduction, in Gary F. Kurutsh, *Architectural Terra Cotta of Gladding, McBean* (Sausalito, CA: Windgate Press, 1989), pp. 9-10.

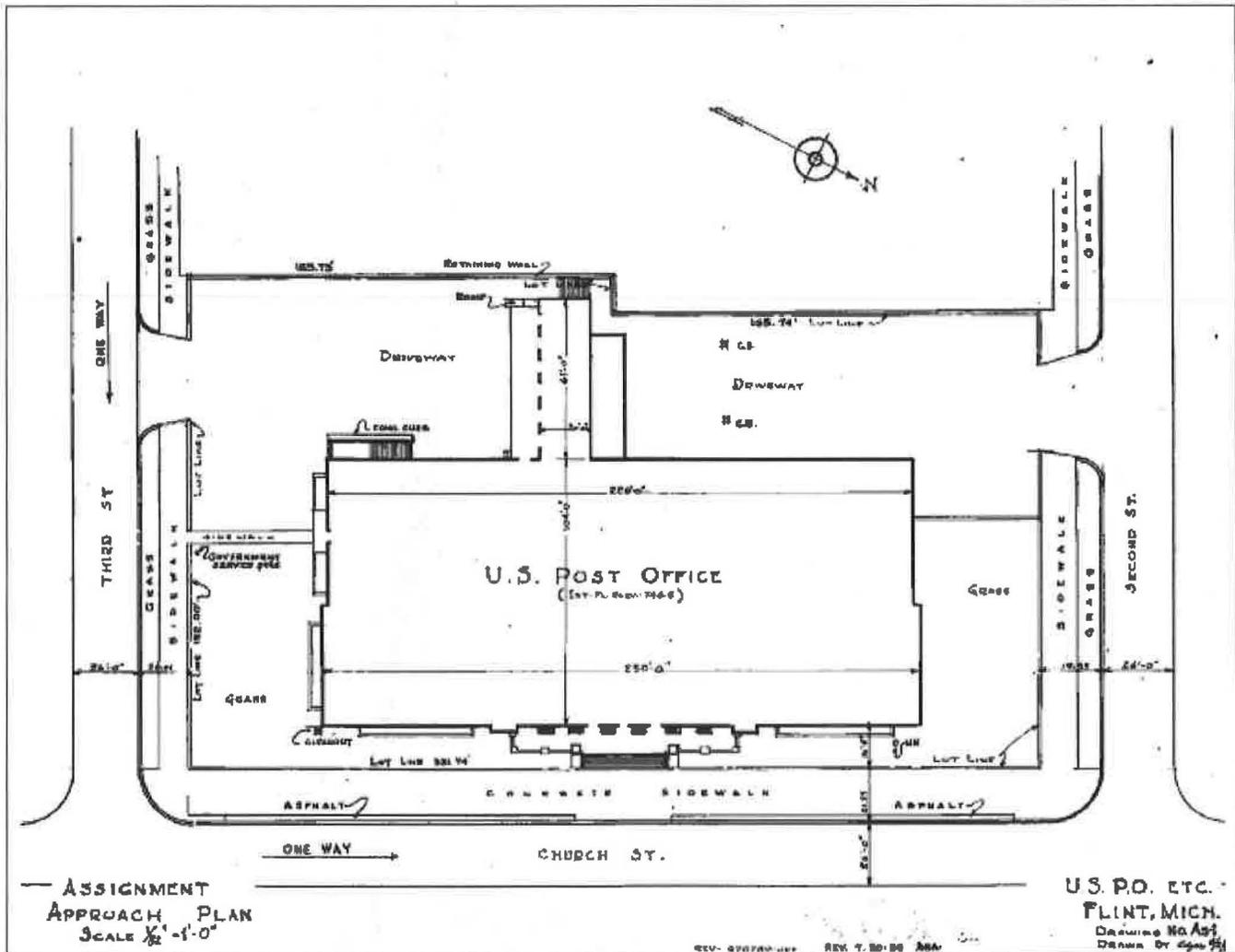
<sup>22</sup> Gilfillen.

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Plan from GSA files, United States Post Office

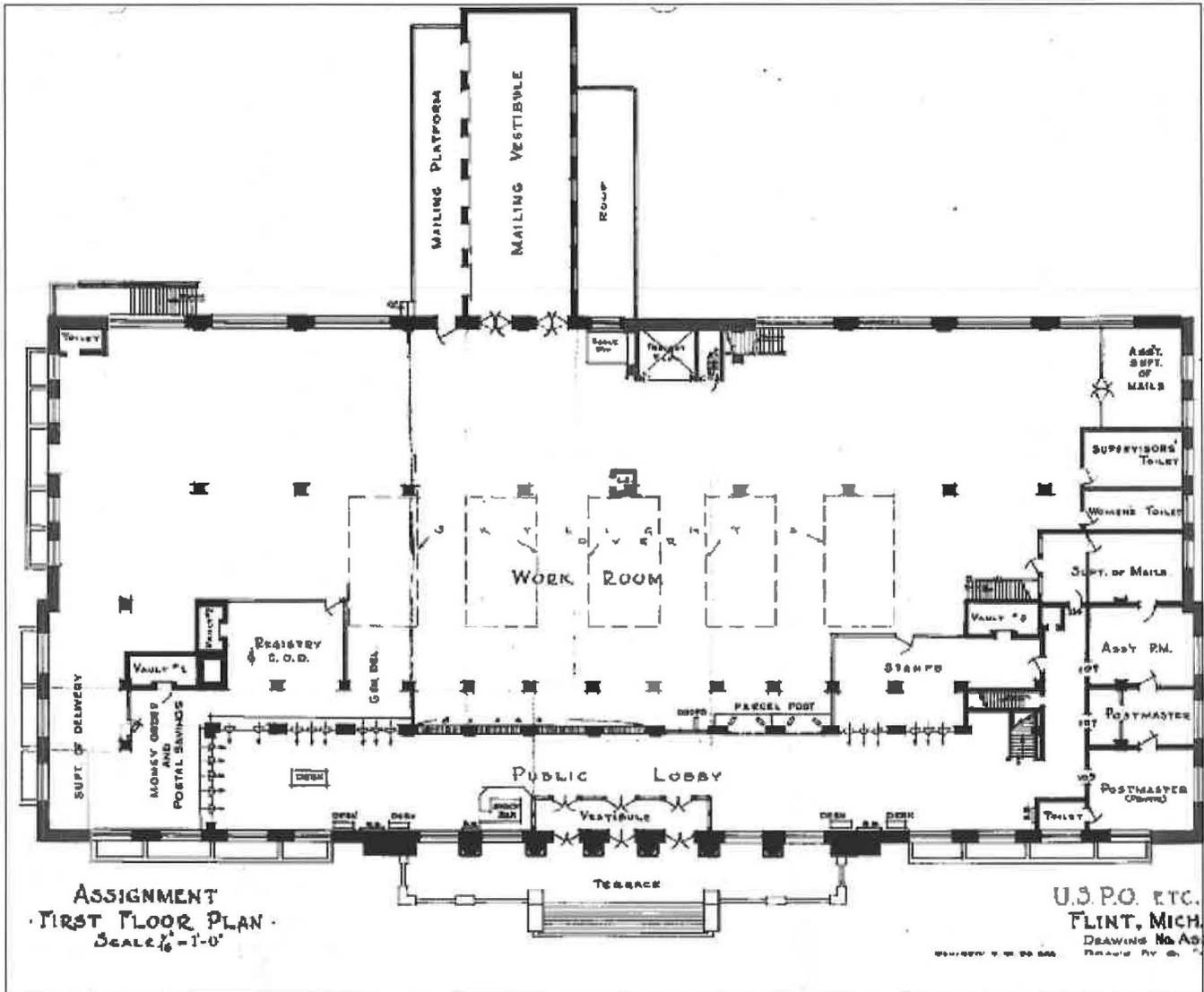
Figure 1. Site Plan, United States Post Office

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Plan from GSA files, United States Post Office

Figure 2. Original First Floor Plan, United States Post Office

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Photograph from GSA files, United States Post Office

**Figure 3. Church Street façade, United States Post Office, 1958**

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Photograph from GSA files, United States Post Office

**Figure 4. Third Street side of the United States Post Office, 1958**

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Photograph from GSA files, United States Post Office

**Figure 5. Second Street side of the United States Post Office, 1958**

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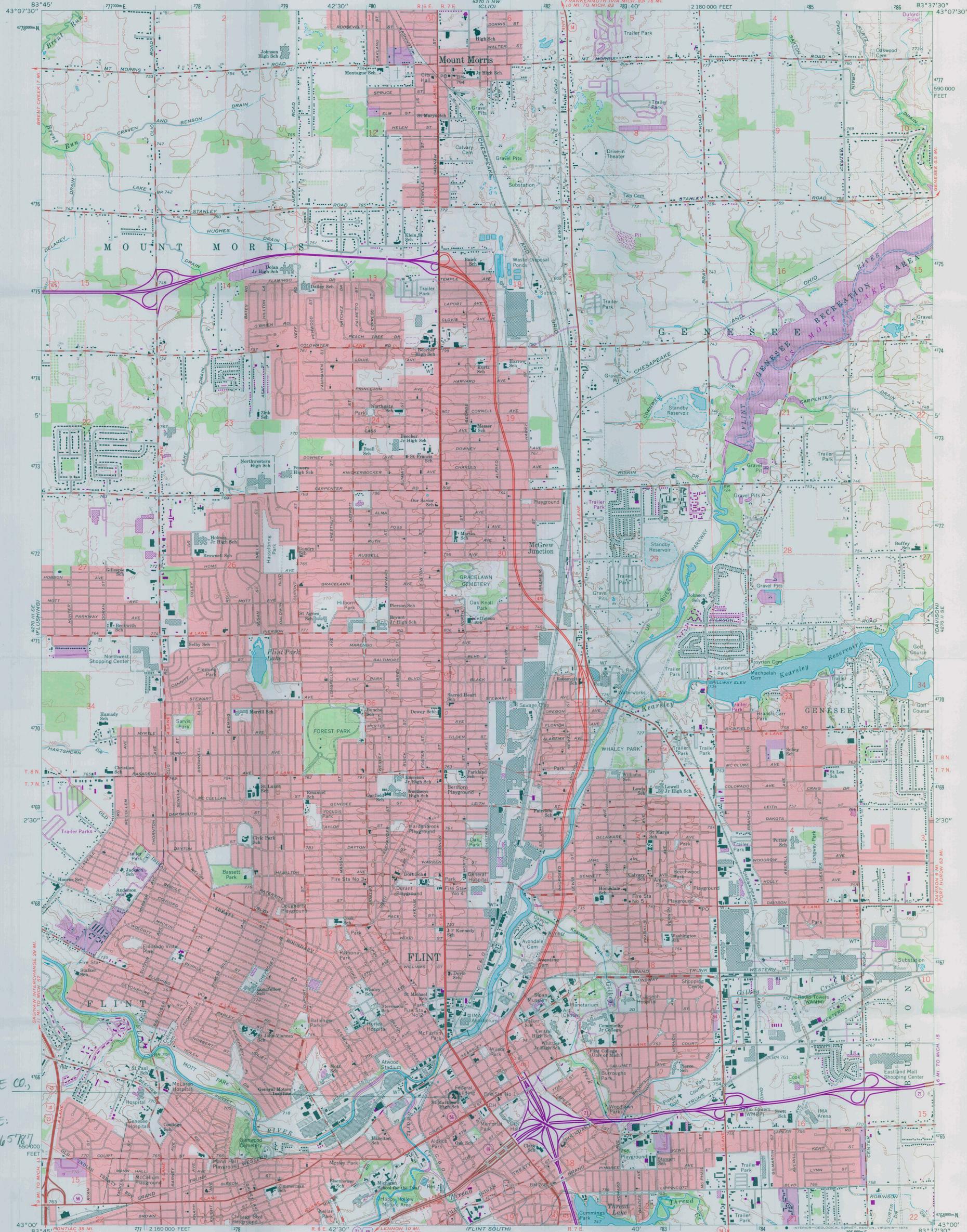
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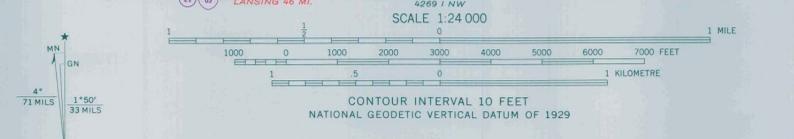
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UNITED STATES  
POST OFFICE  
FLINT, GENESEE CO.,  
MICHIGAN  
UTM REFERENCE:  
17/280605/4765787

Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey in cooperation with State of Michigan agencies  
Control by USGS and USC&GS  
Topography by photogrammetric methods from aerial photographs taken 1966, and in part by the Genesee County Metropolitan Planning Commission field checked 1969  
Polyconic projection, 1927 North American datum 10,000-foot grid based on Michigan coordinate system, south zone 1000-metre Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks, zone 17, shown in blue  
Red tint indicates areas in which only landmark buildings are shown  
Fine red dashed lines indicate selected fence and field lines where generally visible on aerial photographs. This information is unchecked



ROAD CLASSIFICATION  
Primary highway, all weather, hard surface  
Secondary highway, all weather, hard surface  
Light-duty road, all weather, improved surface  
Unimproved road, fair or dry weather  
Interstate Route  
U. S. Route  
State Route

QUADRANGLE LOCATION  
FLINT NORTH, MICH.  
N4300-W8337.5/7.5  
1969  
PHOTOREVISED 1975  
AMS 4270 II SW—SERIES V862

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS  
FOR SALE BY U. S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092  
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST  
Revisions shown in purple compiled from aerial photographs taken 1975. This information not field checked  
Purple tint indicates extension of urban areas















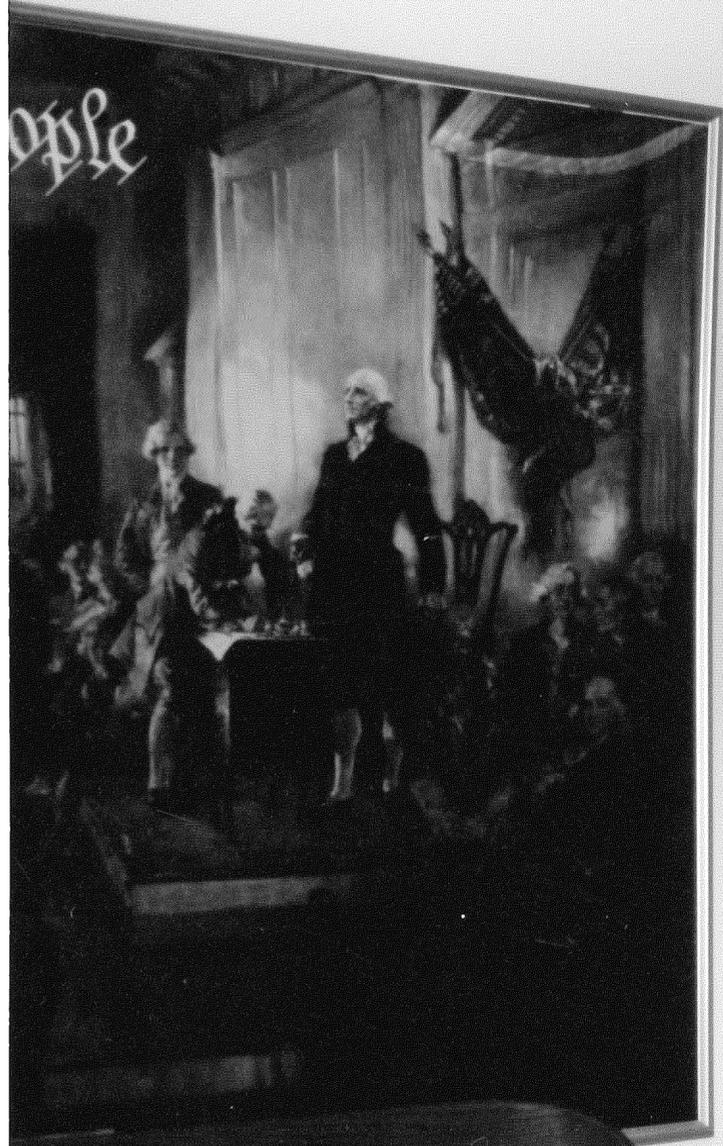




UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

127  
U.S. DISTRICT COURT  
COURT ROOM

QUIET PLEASE  
COURT  
IS IN  
SESSION









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  
NAME:

MULTIPLE  
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: MICHIGAN, Genesee

DATE RECEIVED: 4/12/13 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 5/06/13  
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 5/21/13 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 5/29/13  
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 13000321

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 5.22.13 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.



April 10, 2013

Ms. Carol Shull  
Interim Keeper, National Register of Historic Places  
National Park Service 2280  
1201 Eye Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20005

Dear Ms. Shull:

The U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) is pleased to nominate the United States Post Office (current name Federal Building) located at 600 Church Street, Flint, Michigan, for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places.

The following documents are enclosed:

- Signed original National Register of Historic Places Registration form;
- U.S.G.S. Map; and
- Original labeled black and white photographs along with a disk of tiff images.

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. No comments were received within the 45-day response period.

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 these nomination packages, please contact Elizabeth Hannold at (202) 501-2863.

Sincerely,

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

Enclosures