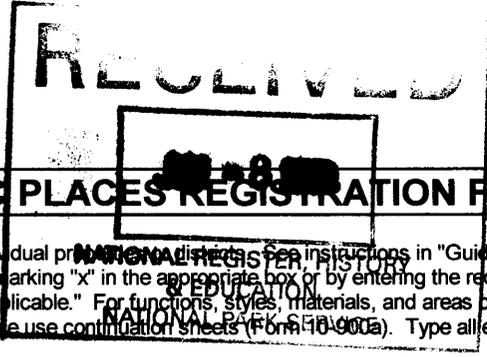


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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES REGISTRATION FORM

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in "Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms" (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name United States Post Office--Decatur, Georgia
other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number 141 Trinity Place
city, town Decatur () vicinity of
county DeKalb code 089
state Georgia code GA zip code 30030

() not for publication

3. Classification

Ownership of Property:

- private
- public-local
- public-state
- public-federal

Category of Property:

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

Number of Resources within Property:	<u>Contributing</u>	<u>Noncontributing</u>
buildings	1	0
sites	0	0
structures	0	0
objects	0	0
total	1	0

Contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: N/A

Name of previous listing: N/A

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets the National Register criteria. () See continuation sheet.

Richard C. Cloves 6-6-00
Signature of certifying official Date

W. Ray Luce
Director, Historic Preservation Division,
Georgia Department of Natural Resources

In my opinion, the property () meets () does not meet the National Register criteria. () See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency or bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register

Edson H. Beall 7-5-00

() determined eligible for the National Register _____

() determined not eligible for the National Register _____

() removed from the National Register _____

() other, explain: _____

() see continuation sheet

[Signature] _____
Keeper of the National Register Date

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions:

Government: post office

Current Functions:

Commercial/Trade: professional

7. Description

Architectural Classification:

Other: Starved Classicism

Materials:

foundation	Concrete
walls	Stone: marble
roof	Asphalt
other	Metal

Description of present and historic physical appearance:

The United States Post Office in Decatur, built in 1935, is an austere, white marble building designed in what has been called by Historian Lois Craig the “starved” classical phase of modern architecture. Its square shape, flat roof without a cornice, and planar walls create the appearance of a massive block relieved only by the regularly spaced windows. The one-story post office is steel-framed with reinforced concrete beams and structural terra-cotta tiles. The building occupies a small lot at the corner of Church Street and Trinity Place one block east of the DeKalb County Courthouse in downtown Decatur, the county seat of DeKalb County.

The main facade features four fixed-light windows with marble aprons that replace the original multi-plane windows. The loss of the historic windows is the only significant change to the exterior of the building. Door and window surrounds throughout are recessed. The main entrance features the original transom above the double doors. Five granite steps with flanking marble abutments rise to the main entrance. Ornament on the main facade and throughout the exterior is limited to the recessed surrounds and the stylized Greek fret that wraps around all sides of the building.

The side elevations feature six bays with large windows similar to those on the main facade. An exterior basement entrance and a small coal window are also located along the southeast side of the building. A two-story mailing platform is located in the center of the rear facade. The platform includes two mailing bays covered by an awning. A tall, exterior brick chimney is located on the rear of the building southeast of the platform.

The interior of the Decatur post office has been significantly altered during several previous renovations prior to the 1996 certified rehabilitation. Little of the historic main floor plan or character-

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National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section 7--Description

defining features associated with the building's function as a post office survive. The building now serves a photographic studio. The floor plan is largely open and the materials and design are modern. A tier of lofts diagonally spans the front of the building. Stainless-steel partition walls divide the space that historically served as the lobby. The pink marble wainscoting had been removed during a previous rehabilitation and is now used as floor tile. The structural terra-cotta tile is exposed where the wainscoting had been located. The ceiling in the lobby and work room has been removed exposing the brick above the plaster walls. A sink wall for studio photography was built in the workroom and includes a stair to the loft that narrows from top to bottom. The front loft can also be reached by a spiral stair on the southeast side of the lobby space. A stair at the rear of the workroom, which remains intact, provides access to the swing room above mailing platform. The swing served as the break room for the letter carriers. The basement has sustained few alterations.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria:

A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): N/A

A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions):

Architecture.
Politics and Government.

Period of Significance:

1935

Significant Dates:

1935 - Office of the Supervising Architect of the Treasury built the United States Post Office in Decatur.

Significant Person(s):

N/A

Cultural Affiliation:

N/A

Architect(s)/Builder(s):

Simon, Louis A. (Supervising Architect)
Melick, Neal A. (Supervising Engineer)

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Section 8--Statement of Significance

Narrative statement of significance (areas of significance)

In Georgia, the Treasury Department built approximately 65 post offices in small towns between 1932 and 1942. Like the United States Post Office in Decatur, most were one-story, five-bay buildings with standardized floor plans. However, the vast majority were brick buildings designed in the Colonial Revival style of modern architecture. The Decatur post office is one of only several in Georgia designed in the “starved” classical style. Although it has lost significant portions of the historic interior, the Decatur post office remains eligible for listing in the National Register in the area of architecture because its intact marble exterior represents an especially deft treatment of the starved classical style. The importance of the Decatur post office has been heightened in recent years with the loss of other modern buildings in the Atlanta area, including the nearby Art Deco-style Decatur Chevrolet, which was built in 1936. The Decatur post office is also significant in the area of politics and government because it represents the efforts of the federal government to improve the infrastructure of small towns throughout the nation during the New Deal era.

During the 1930s, the number of post offices built in the United States increased dramatically as numerous public works programs were initiated to spur economic recovery and provide work for the unemployed, many of whom worked in the building trades. In 1933, the Public Works Administration (PWA) was formed to administer the planning and construction of Federal and non-Federal public works projects. The Public Buildings Act (1926), and the Federal Employment Stabilization Act (1931), enabled the PWA to begin its program without delay by starting with Federal projects such as post offices. By 1939, the PWA completed 406 post offices, nearly one-eighth of the total 3,174 construction projects funded by the Public Works Administration.¹

The role of the PWA in construction projects was similar to that of a bank or a large building and loan association. The PWA determined which projects received funding and ensured that its projects were completed according to the appropriate specifications. The Office of the Supervising Architect of the Treasury retained primary responsibility for design, construction, and allocation of post offices until the Office of the Supervising Architect was reorganized. By 1935, Treasury Department building projects were funded under the auspices of five separate programs: the original Public Building Program (1926); the PWA; the Emergency Relief and Construction Act (1932); the Emergency Construction Program (1934); and the Building Program for the District of Columbia (1926).²

¹Emily Harris, *History of Post Office Construction, 1900-1940* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Postal Service, 1982), 16.

²Emily Harris, *History of Post Office Construction*, 17.

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Section 8--Statement of Significance

In 1934, Louis A. Simon replaced Supervising Architect James W. Wetmore. The Supervising Architect's office, which lost its independence as a separate office in the Office of the Treasury Secretary, was replaced by the Public Buildings Branch of the Procurement Division of the Treasury Department. In February 1934, the Supervising Architect's office was moved from the Treasury Building to the Federal Warehouse Building, renamed the Procurement Building. In addition, the Office was reorganized into four divisions consisting of a Supervising Architect, a Supervising Engineer, a Chairman of the Board of Award, and a Chief of the Legal Section.

Through the 1920s, the staff of the Office of the Supervising Architect developed standardized designs and floor plans for its buildings. The Supervising Architect's office rarely hired local architects to design its buildings as it had during the nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries. The practice of hiring local architects resumed from 1930 to 1934, when many of the Federal recovery programs were getting underway. In June 1934, the Treasury Department determined that it was not practical for private architects to handle small architectural projects. The staff of the Office of the Supervising Architect designed all of the remaining Federal buildings.³

Designs for post offices built between 1932 and 1942 followed standardized plans. Some stylistic variation was permitted on the facades, but the floor plans were well established by the early 1930s. Post offices built in small towns were usually one-story, rectangular-plan buildings. Much of the building was devoted to the large, full-width work room, where much of the mail handling and sorting operations were conducted. The work room included a vault and sometimes an area enclosed with wire-mesh screen to secure money orders and registered mail. The rear of the building contained the mailing vestibule and mailing platform for receiving deliveries of mail. The public lobby was located across the front of the post office. It contained an entrance vestibule, post office boxes, and customer service windows. Lobbies were usually L-shaped to provide space for additional post office boxes. As the only public space in the building, the lobby was often adorned with decorative architectural elements, including marble wainscoting, terrazzo floors, and coffered ceilings and furnishings, such as lobby desks. The postmaster's office was generally located in a front corner of the building, with lobby and work room entrances.

The acceptance of standardized floor plans for post offices left little room for ingenuity on the part of the architect, except for the facades. Designs generated in the Office of the Supervising Architect under Louis A. Simon demonstrated greater stylistic variety than in the previous twenty-five years. During this period, more consideration was given to local architectural traditions. In California, for example, the Spanish or Mission style became popular. The small, Mission-style post office in La Jolla, built in 1935, is an example. The Colonial Revival style, built throughout the East, remained

³Beth M. Boland, *National Register Bulletin 13: How to Apply the National Register Criteria to Post Offices* (Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, 1991), 4.

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Section 8--Statement of Significance

the most popular historical revival style for post offices as well as other PWA building types. Middle-Atlantic examples include the two U.S. Post Offices in New Castle, Delaware, and in Easton, Maryland, both completed in 1936.

Most popular were modern designs (such as streamline moderne or Art Deco) or designs that mixed one or more historical styles with the "starved classicism" that dominated Federal building during the 1930s.⁴ Starved classicism, sometimes called PWA Modern, was described by Historian Lois Craig as a simplified classical style characterized by symmetrical massing, smooth expanses of unadorned planar surfaces, and reduced ornamentation. The style derived from the Beaux-Arts tradition and featured inspirational names or phrases incised on the facade as an economical decorative motif.⁵

The PWA was organized in seven administrative regions that comprised the continental United States. Region No. 3, the Southeast, included the states of Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Tennessee, and Kentucky. C. W. Short and R. Stanley Brown observed in their survey *Architecture under the Public Works Administration, 1933-1939*, that "traditional architecture of the Colonial period still dominates design [in Region No. 3], except in Florida and Gulf coasts of Alabama and Mississippi where 'modern' has crept in."⁶

The vast majority of post offices built in Georgia during this period were designed in the Colonial Revival style. Small post offices featured hip or side-gable roofs with cupolas, elaborate pedimented door surrounds, sometimes with fanlights, and window treatments that included plain stone lintels or gauged arches with keystones. Decorative details varied at each building, some included stone beltcourses, dentil cornices, brick panels and quoins, or incised lettering. Examples of this type include post offices built in the following towns in Georgia: Adel (1940), Ashburn (1940), Calhoun (1936), Commerce (1937), Corneila (1937), Cuthbert (1937), East Point (1935), Hawkinsville (1938), Millen (1938), Summerville (1938), and Sylvester (1937).

⁴Beland/Associates, Inc., "U.S. Post Offices in California, 1900-1941," National Register of Historic Places multiple property nomination (Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, National Register of Historic Places, 1984), 8.14-.15

⁵Lois A. Craig, *The Federal Presence: Architecture, Politics, and National Design* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1984), 286.

⁶C. W. Short and R. Stanley Brown, *Public Buildings: A Survey of Architecture of Projects Constructed by Federal and Other Governmental Bodies between the Years of 1933 and 1939 with the Assistance of the Public Works Administration* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1939), xii.

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Section 8--Statement of Significance

Less than a dozen post offices in Georgia were built in historical idioms other than the Colonial Revival or Neoclassical styles. Post offices in Buford (1941) and Vidalia (1936) were built in the Greek Revival style. Based on the same building type as the small Colonial Revival post offices, the two buildings feature modified Doric porticos with stout, unfluted columns, and incised lettering across the entablature. The post office in Eatonton (1932), is one of the few Mission-style post offices in Georgia.

Several post offices in Georgia were built in the Art Deco style. Primarily built after 1935, these buildings are based on the same standardized plans that the Treasury Department used for its Colonial Revival-style post offices. These buildings feature few, if any, historical references. Ornament is minimal, often composed of corbelled brick window surrounds, stone beltcourses and coping, and relief sculptures above the windows and entrance on the main facade. Free-standing Art Deco lamps flank the entrance. Examples of this type include: Cairo (1935), Hartwell (1937), Manchester (1940), and Sylvania (1940).

The United States Post Office in Decatur was probably modeled after the influential Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, D.C., designed by Paul Cret in 1928-1932. The Folger is considered the first building designed in a "modernized classical" style, also called stripped classicism, which came to characterize federal architecture through the 1930s. Like the Folger library, the Decatur post office is a low, rectangular mass clad in white marble; the only post office in the state with a white marble exterior. Both buildings feature expanses of unornamented wall surfaces and recessed door and window openings. The post office's plain but recessed cornice and main entrance that incorporates the stylized Greek fret in the hood are very close to Cret's library design. The Decatur post office is a community landmark building that survives as an outstanding example of stripped classicism in Georgia and a symbol of the federal government's role in developing the infrastructure of the nation during the New Deal era.

National Register Criteria

The United States Post Office in Decatur is eligible for listing in the National Register under Criterion A in the area of politics and government because of its association with the efforts of the federal government to improve the infrastructure of small towns throughout the nation during the New Deal era. The post office is also eligible under Criterion C in the area of architecture as an outstanding example of stripped classicism in Georgia.

Criteria Considerations (if applicable)

N/A

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Section 8--Statement of Significance

Period of significance (justification)

The 1935 period of significance represents the period in which the post office was built and acquired the characteristics that make it eligible for listing in the National Register.

Contributing/Noncontributing Resources (explanation, if necessary)

The post office is the only contributing resource. There are no noncontributing resources associated with this nomination.

Developmental history/historic context (if appropriate)

The United States Post Office in Decatur was built in 1935 by the Office of the Supervising Architect of the Treasury under the auspices of the Public Works Administration. The Decatur post office, like most post offices built between 1932 and 1942, followed standardized plans. Some stylistic variation was permitted on the exterior, but the floor plans were well established. Much of the building was devoted to a full-width work room. The rear of the building contained a mailing platform with a carrier's swing room and bathroom above. The L-shaped public lobby included an entrance vestibule, post office boxes, customer service windows, and pink marble wainscoting and standardized furnishings. The building served as a post office until 1967.

In 1967, the postal service sold the post office to the General Services Administration (GSA). That year, GSA converted the post office to a federal building. A double-loaded corridor replaced the original plan and most interior architectural details were removed, including the lobby mural entitled "Dogwood and Azalea" (1938), which was reinstalled in the Richard B. Russell Federal Building in downtown Atlanta. In 1987, the General Services Administration sold the building at auction with covenants to preserve the intact exterior and surviving interior architectural elements.

In 1988, a subsequent owner received preliminary certification for the tax incentives program. His rehabilitation resulted in the wholesale removal of historic and nonhistoric interior fabric, including the marble wainscoting which was reused as floor tiles. His application for certification was withdrawn. In 1995, the current owner received preliminary certification to rehabilitate the post office for use as a photographic studio. The dramatic layout of the interior is modern but the rehabilitation met the Standards for Rehabilitation because the building was determined eligible at the outset of the project when there was very little left of the historic interior. The Decatur post office received final certification on June 13, 1996 from the Tax Incentives Program, Technical Preservation Services Branch, National Park Service.

9. Major Bibliographic References

Beland/Associates, Inc. "U.S. Post Offices in California, 1900-1941," National Register of Historic Places multiple property nomination. Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, National Register of Historic Places, 1984.

Boland, Beth M. *National Register Bulletin 13: How to Apply the National Register Criteria to Post Offices*. Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, 1991.

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Goldfarb, Stephen. "The Artists Who Painted Georgia." *Brown's Guide to Georgia* (May-June 1977): 70-73.

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Phagan, Patricia. "New Deal Art in Georgia: A Guide to Post Office Murals and Sculpture." Pamphlet. Athens, Ga.: Georgia Museum of Art, University of Georgia, n.d.

Short, C. W. and R. Stanley Brown. *Public Buildings: A Survey of Architecture of Projects Constructed by Federal and Other Governmental Bodies between the Years of 1933 and 1939 with the Assistance of the Public Works Administration*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1939.

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Section 9--Major Bibliographic References

Previous documentation on file (NPS): () N/A

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested**
- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been issued
date issued: June 27, 1995**
- 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, Specify Repository:**

Georgia Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): N/A

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property 0.63 acres

UTM References

A) Zone 17 Easting 250470 Northing 3740250

Verbal Boundary Description

The property boundary is indicated by a heavy black line on the attached map, drawn to scale.

Boundary Justification

The National Register boundary follows the legal bounds of the 0.63-acre parcel. This parcel is the same tract that was historically associated with the post office.

11. Form Prepared By

State Historic Preservation Office

name/title Steven H. Moffson, Architectural Historian
organization Historic Preservation Division, Georgia Department of Natural Resources
street & number 500 The Healey Building, 57 Forsyth Street
city or town Atlanta **state** Georgia **zip code** 30303
telephone (404) 656-2840 **date** June 1, 2000

Consulting Services/Technical Assistance (if applicable) (x) not applicable

(HPD form version 02-24-97)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Photographs

Name of Property: United States Post Office--Decatur, Georgia
City or Vicinity: Decatur
County: DeKalb
State: Georgia
Photographer: James R. Lockhart
Negative Filed: Georgia Department of Natural Resources
Date Photographed: September 1999

Description of Photograph(s):

1. Post office, photographer facing west.
2. Main facade, photographer facing southwest.
3. Detail, main entrance, photographer facing southwest.
4. Detail, window on main facade, northwest corner, photographer facing southwest.
5. Photographer facing northeast.
6. Rear facade with mailing platform, photographer facing northeast.
7. Rear facade, photographer facing north.
8. South corner, photographer facing west.
9. Detail, mailing platform, photographer facing west.
10. Photographer facing west.
11. Photographer facing west.
12. Interior, lobby, photographer facing southeast.
13. Interior, lobby, photographer facing south.
14. Interior, lobby, view from loft, photographer facing north.
15. Interior, workroom with sink wall, photographer facing north.

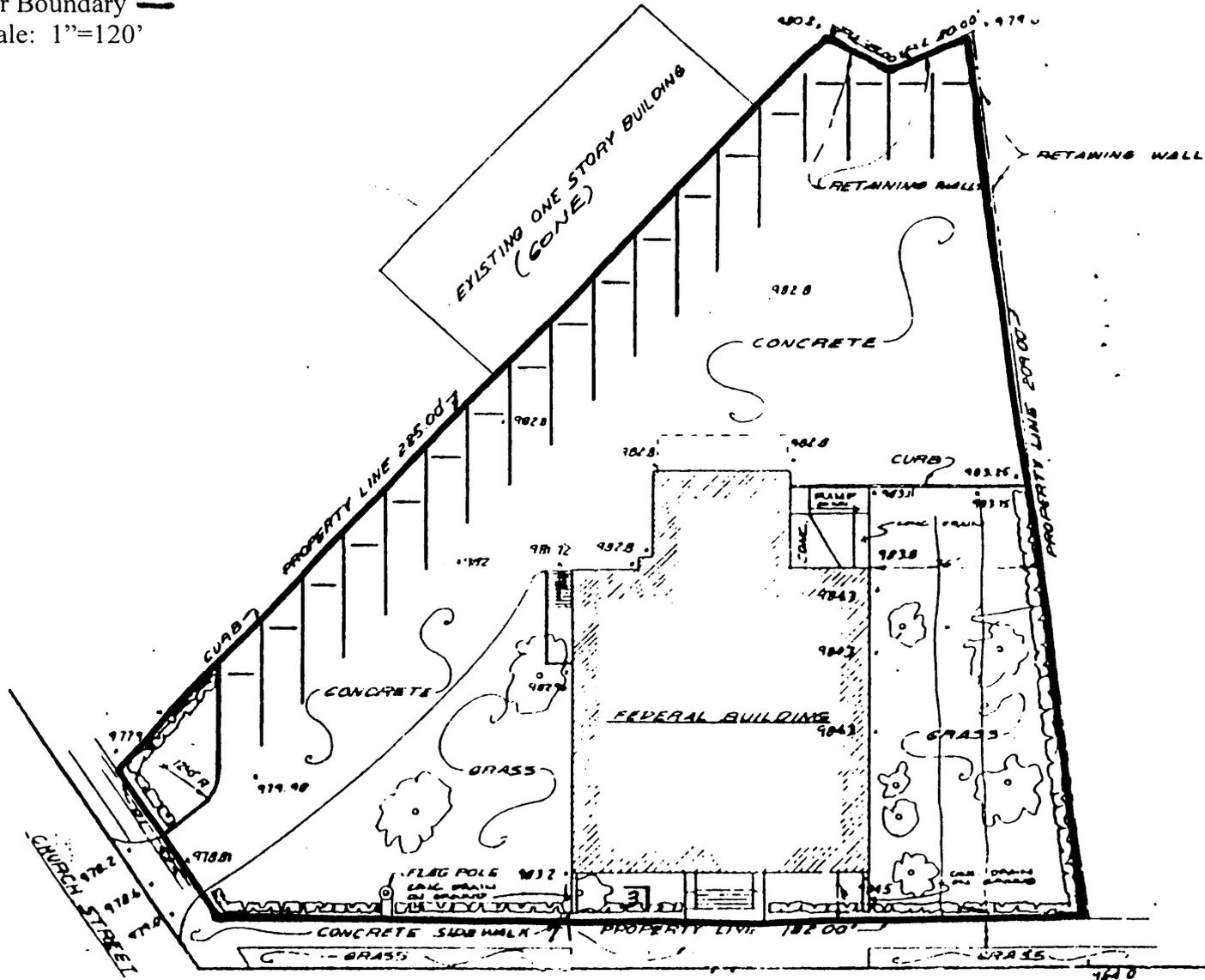
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

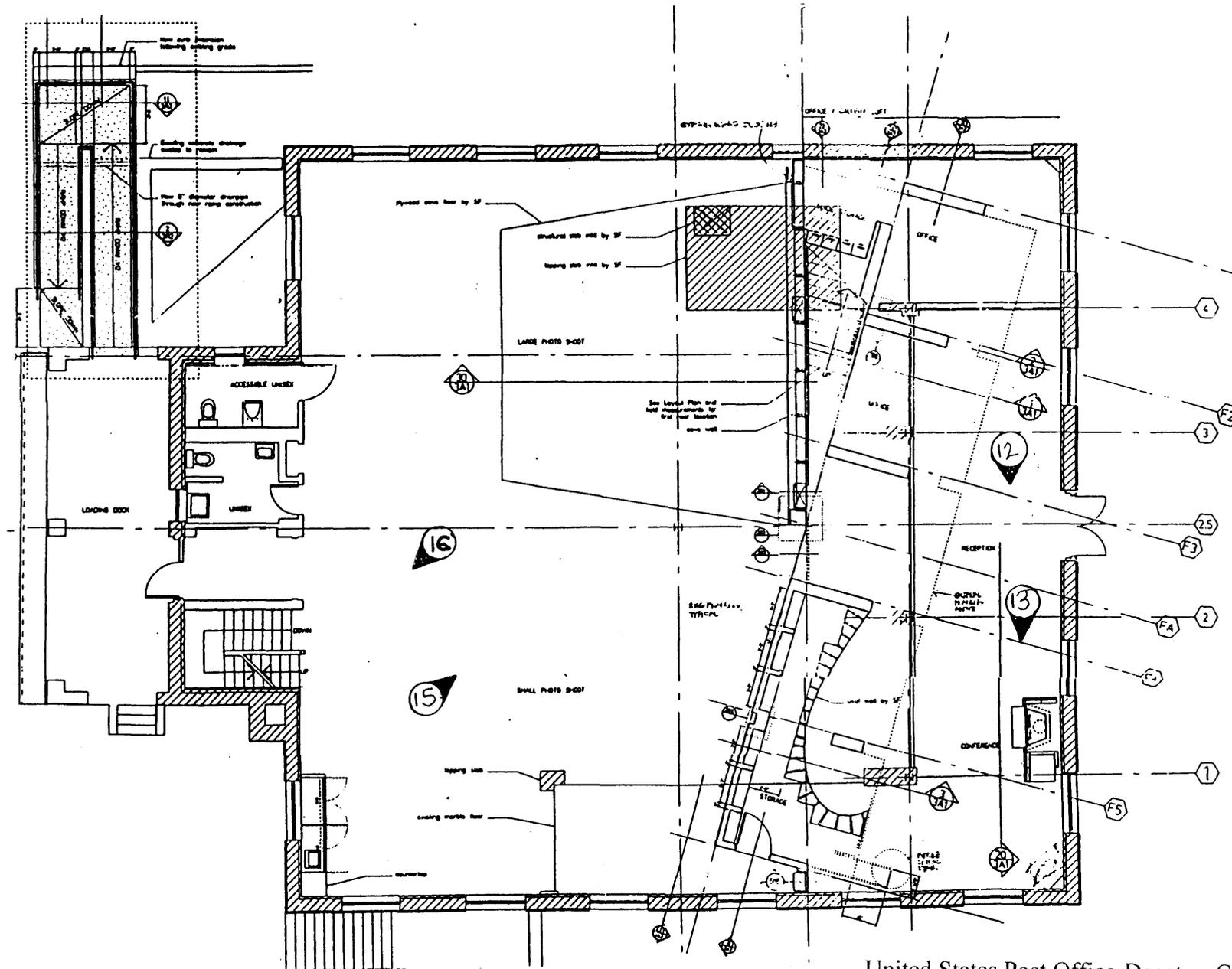
**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Photographs

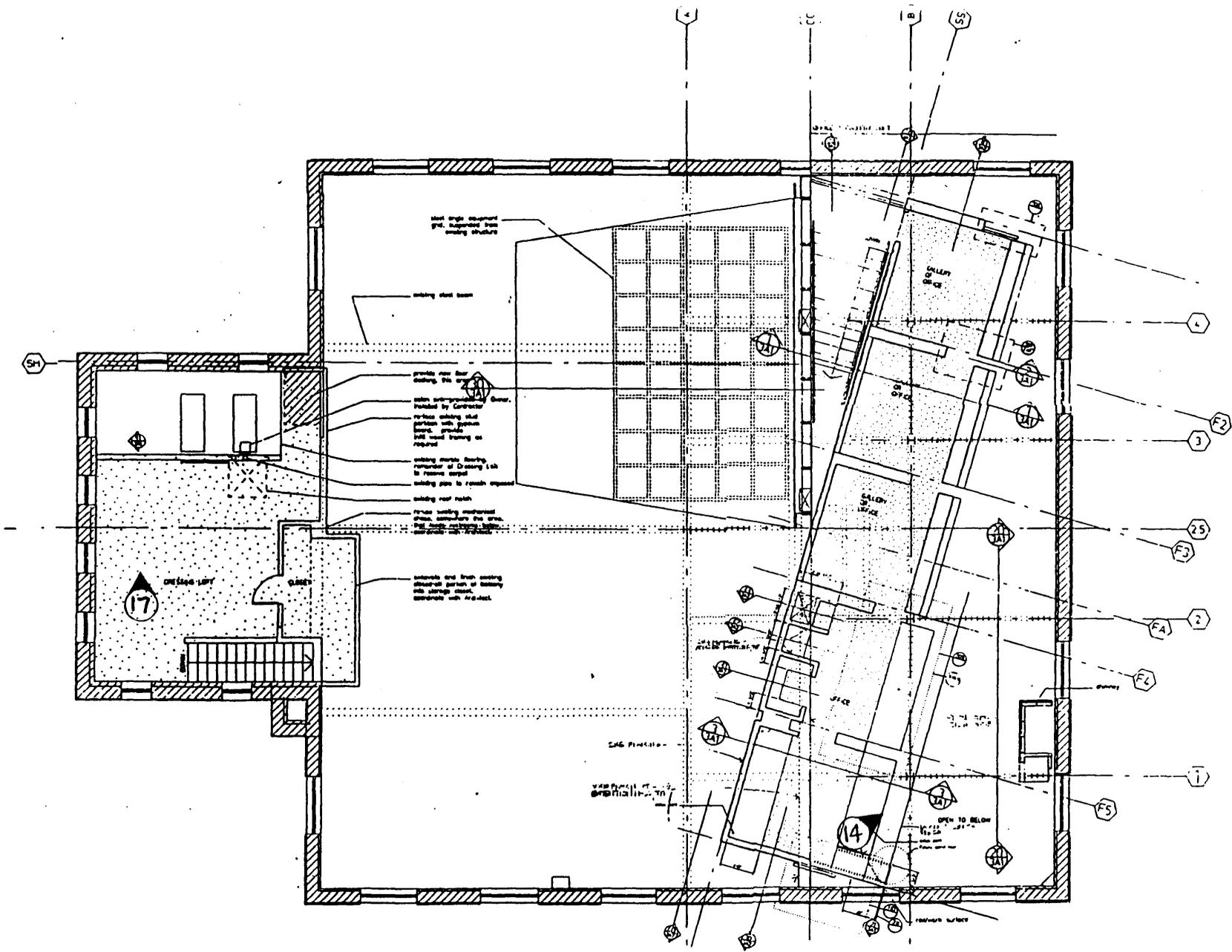
16. Interior, workroom with rear stair to swing room, photographer facing south.
17. Interior, swing room, photographer facing northwest.
18. Interior, basement, photographer facing southeast.

United States Post Office-Decatur, Georgia
Decatur, DeKalb County, Georgia
Sketch Map
National Register Boundary —
Approximate Scale: 1"=120'
North: ↙





United States Post Office-Decatur, Georgia
 Decatur, DeKalb County, Georgia
 Main Floor Plan
 No scale
 North:



United States Post Office-Decatur, Georgia
 Decatur, DeKalb County, Georgia
 Second Floor/Loft Plan
 No scale
 North: 