

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

FOR FEDERAL PROPERTIES

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	4 SEP 1979
DATE ENTERED	-8

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

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

*U.S. Courthouse*

United States Court House, Seattle, Washington

AND/OR COMMON

United States Court House, Seattle, Washington

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

1010 Fifth Avenue

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Seattle

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

STATE

Washington

VICINITY OF

CODE  
53

COUNTY  
King

CODE  
033

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

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

**4 AGENCY**

General Services Administration

REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS: *(If applicable)*

Regional Headquarters Building

STREET & NUMBER

GSA Center

CITY, TOWN

Auburn

VICINITY OF

STATE

Washington 98002

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

King County Administration Building

STREET & NUMBER

Fourth Avenue and James Street

CITY, TOWN

Seattle

STATE

Washington

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

Seattle Historical Society List of Historic Sites

DATE

1967

FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

Seattle Historical Society

CITY, TOWN

Seattle

STATE

Washington

## 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" 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

### SITE

Seattle's U.S. Court House (CH) was built between 1939 and 1940 to house Federal courts and supporting agencies. The block-square site is bounded by Fifth and Sixth Avenues on the west and east, and Spring and Madison Streets on the north and south.

The site lies midway between the downtown Fifth Avenue shopping district, two blocks north of the CH, and the City-County governmental complex two blocks to the south along Fifth Avenue. Directly across Fifth Avenue from the CH is the City Library. A block further west is the 40-storey Seattle First National Bank Tower and the heart of the financial district.

The site's eastern border is defined by ten lanes of Interstate Highway 5, which slices through downtown Seattle parallel to Sixth Avenue. The CH stands like a Modernistic-styled wall, separating the Central Business District (CBD) from the roar of traffic along I-5.

The 240 ft. X 255 ft. site slopes downward approximately 24 ft. from Sixth to Fifth Avenues. Only one third of the site is covered by the 104 ft. X 220 ft. CH building. The building's long principal facade, facing Fifth Avenue, is separated from the street by a large green lawn, which is one of the major green open spaces in the CBD. The Public Library across the street is the visual border to the open area.

A straight walkway with several flights of steps extends from Fifth Avenue through the middle of the lawn to the front doors. 30 ft. tall Northern Oaks line the lawn's Madison and Spring Street borders. The trees frame the CH's symmetrically ordered principal facade. Edges of the lawn are planted with Darwin Barberry and English Ivy.

The shorter north and south facades of the building are separated from sidewalks by 9 ft. wide planting areas with Darwin Barberry and English Ivy. A 14 ft. wide lawn with Japanese Yews in granite planters separates the rear facade from the Sixth Avenue sidewalk.

### EXTERIOR - GENERAL

The CH is an austere example of the Modernistic style. Typical to the style, the entire building rises in a series of setbacks. The first three storeys form a broad pedestal. The next seven storeys (which constitute the "main body" of the building) step-up from the pedestal. A two-storey penthouse caps the building.

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

...OD		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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)	
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION			

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SPECIFIC DATES		Designed: 1938	BUILDER/ARCHITECT	Louis A. Simon, Supervising Architect; Stanley Underwood, Consulting Architect.
		Built: 1939 - 1940		

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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

At the time of its completion in August, 1940, the United States Court House in Seattle was the first building in the West to be designed solely as a Federal Courthouse. It was only the second federal courthouse building to be constructed in the United States (the first was in New York City). The building embodies a Modernistic style of Federal architecture that was to disappear after World War II. Classical proportions, coupled with art deco period details and a formally arranged lawn, make the CH a unique and vital structure in Seattle's Central Business District.

The CH site was originally the location of Seattle's first hospital. On April 25, 1878, the Sisters of Charity of the House of Providence established Providence Hospital at the corner of Sixth Avenue and Madison Streets, overlooking the town of Seattle and Elliott Bay. The old Moss Family residence, the first structure on the site, was used for the original hospital. In 1882, the Sisters purchased the entire block (between Sixth and Fifth Avenues and Spring and Madison Streets) and built a new 25 bed structure. The hospital continued to serve the growing city until September 24, 1911, when the facility was moved to larger quarters on 17th Avenue. Seattle's first hospital site was added to the Seattle Historical Society's List of Historic sites in 1967. A bronze commemorative plaque has been installed at the foot of the stairway to the main entrances, at Fifth Avenue.

On June 22, 1936, Congress approved \$1,636,000 for site acquisition and construction of a new courthouse building in Seattle. By the time construction was completed, the total cost figure had increased to \$1,707,000.

In November, 1938, designs were approved by the Office of the Supervising Architect in the Federal Works branch of the Department of the Treasury. At that time the Supervising Architect was Louis A. Simon. Neal A. Melick was Supervising Engineer, W. G. Noll Superintendent of Architecture, N.S. Thompson Superintendent of Engineering, and T.C. Brooks Superintendent of Structural Engineering.

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

See attached sheets.

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

**UTM NOT VERIFIED**

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 1.4

UTM REFERENCES

A | 1, 0 | 5, 5, 0 | 3, 6, 0 | 5, 2 | 7, 2 | 6, 6, 0

ZONE EASTING NORTHING

B | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

D | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Lots 1,2,3,4,5,6,7,8, in Block 18 of C.D. Boren's Addition to the City of Seattle, and the 18-foot alley intersecting Block 18, extending in a southwardly direction from the southerly side of Spring to the northerly side of Madison Streets between the easterly sides of Lots 1,4,5, and 8, and the westerly sides of Lots 2,3,6, and 7.

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
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STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
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## 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

John Kvapil Operational Planning Staff

ORGANIZATION

General Services Administration

DATE

STREET & NUMBER

GSA Center (10PG)

TELEPHONE 396-5317

(206)833-6500, ext. 558

CITY OR TOWN

Auburn

STATE

Washington 98002

## 12 CERTIFICATION OF NOMINATION

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER RECOMMENDATION

YES X

NO     

NONE     

Jeanne M. Welch  
STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

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

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

Matthew J. Smith

TITLE

GSA - Federal Representative

DATE 8/24/77

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

Sally G. Obelt

DATE 1/8/80

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST: Kristin O'Connell

DATE 1/2/80

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

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Due to the building's height, most ornamentation occurs on the first three storeys, within eyesight of pedestrians at groundlevel. In accord with art deco-era design, terra cotta ornamentation is generally geometrical with accenting circles, waves, and scallops. Geometric designs on the concrete walkway leading to the front entry are in harmony with other Modernistic motifs on the building.

The smooth, symmetrical CH principal facade is a dignified backdrop to the angular eruptions of the International style Public Library across Fifth Avenue. The classical ornamentation of nearby turn of the century brick buildings is accented by the simple proportions of CH facades.

STRUCTURE - GENERAL

The CH has a reinforced concrete skeleton frame with poured-in-place reinforced concrete outer walls. "Fireproof" terra cotta hollowtile interior partitions are surfaced with smooth plaster.

All facades of the building are sheathed with terra cotta plates. The 1 ft. X 2 ft. plates on the first storey have the color and texture of red granite. All upper storeys have 1 ft. X 4 ft. plates, the color and texture of light gray granite. On the first three floors terra cotta plates are attached in English bond, with alternating courses of headers and stretchers. Plates on the upper seven storeys are all laid in stretcher bond. Terra cotta ornamentation around windows has the color and texture of adjoining walls.

Red granite cheek blocks at the front and rear entrances match terra cotta "granite" on the ground storey.

Concrete spread footings transmit the weight and mass of the building over the site's sandy soil. Floors are steel-reinforced concrete flat slab.

Horizontal roofs are surfaced with built-up asphalt and gravel.

PRINCIPAL FACADE

Although the period and style of the CH are Modernistic, the overall massing is Neo-Classical. The first three storeys are a podium or pedestal. The next seven floors create the illusion of a colonnade;

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a series of dark window bays have the vertical proportions of columns. A row of single windows above the "colonnade" bays creates the effect of dentils beneath a classical entablature.

The first storey, entirely sheathed with "red granite" terra cotta plates, has the appearance of a stone foundation. The three main entry doors are recessed four ft. into the middle of the ground storey. Each entryway has a pair of aluminum double swing doors. Fluted cast bronze trim surrounds each door. The cast bronze head above each door has an integral light receptical. Cast bronze letters above the doors read, "UNITED STATES COURT HOUSE." 5 ft. wide X 6 ft. tall first storey windows are divided into nine panes with a single, bottom-opening vent in the middle. This division and type of opening are typical to windows throughout the building.

Because the light-gray terra cotta cladding begins on the second storey, the second and third storeys appear to rise out of the "red granite" first storey. The first three storeys together make a solid pedestal for the smaller-dimensioned seven-storey "main body" of the building.

Ten bays of windows break-up the mass of the pedestal. Each bay is composed of steel-framed windows on the second and third storeys, with cast iron spandrel panels between storeys. Both the windows and the spandrel panels are recessed into the wall 4 in. (in order to create a shadow effect). Window frames and spandrels are painted the same dark brown thus creating dark vertical strips along the facade. Spandrel panels on the second storey have a raised, square-geometric design. Panels between second and third storeys have a modified art deco-inspired greek key fret with fluting below. Terra cotta trim around the windows has raised square geometric designs. A denticulated moulding acts as a cornice at the top of the third storey.

The seven storey "main body" of the building is set back 15 ft. from the first three storeys. Nine window bays, each six storeys tall, break-up the mass of the facade. The bays are more simple than second and third storey bays. Cast iron spandrels are divided by steel bars into the same divisions as the windows, giving the bay the appearance of a solid vertical band of windows. Unlike lower floors, window surrounds on the building's "main body" are not ornamented.

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Fifteen 5 ft. X 5 ft. square windows extend horizontally along the tenth storey, at the top of the main body, creating the visual effect of dentils below a classical entablature. The windows pull the vision away from the tight mass of window bays at the center of the facade.

The seven storey tall main body steps back another 15 ft. at the penthouse level. The rectangular penthouse has nine, two storey tall window bays.

SIDE FACADES

The north and south facades are identical (except for a first storey opening into the loading dock area on the north facade). The first three storeys on north and south facades have only five window bays. Ornamentation around windows within the bays is identical to principal facade ornamentation.

The main body on north and south facades has a single seven-storey tall window bay. The bay is four windows wide. The windows cast light into the two storey tall courtrooms inside. On north and south facades there are only five single windows at the top of the main body and only three windows opening into the penthouse.

REAR FACADE

The rear facade facing Sixth Avenue is the secondary entrance to the building. The facade is identical to the principal facade, with the exception of the first floor. Because the site slopes to the west, the red granite-colored first storey is below groundlevel. The three entrance doors on the rear facade open directly from streetlevel onto the second storey. Each door has a concrete marquee extending one foot from the wall surface. A wave motif accents the edge of the marquee. Since the rear facade is 15 ft. from the street, only a single pair of granite cheek blocks flanks the entrance doors.

INTERIOR - GENERAL

The CH has a gross area of 167,210 sq. ft. over 10 floors. A below groundlevel basement occupies only the southwest corner of the building. The basement is divided entirely into storage areas for various agencies housed in the building.

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First through third floors follow the 104 ft. X 220 ft. foundation dimensions. As is typical throughout the building, the area around elevators in the center of the building forms the service core. Men's and women's restrooms, stairways, and storage areas are situated to either side of the elevator lobby. The first three floors house offices of the Clerk of the Court, U.S. Marshal, Probate Officer, and Building Manager.

The building steps back 15 ft. at the fourth floor. Fourth through the tenth floors all have the same 74 ft. X 190 ft. dimensions. They comprise the "main body" of the building. Fourth through eighth floors have a single courtroom located at either the north or south end of the building. Offices and judge's chambers occupy the remaining spaces. The offices of U.S. Senator Henry Jackson are located along the west wall of the eighth floor. U.S. Senator Warren Magnuson's offices are along the west wall of the ninth floor.

INTERIOR - LOBBIES

The lobbies at the principal facade and the rear facade have retained most of their original details (the two lobbies are practically identical). The aluminum entry doors open into a vestibule which is illuminated by pyramid-shaped incandescent light fixtures, custom designed by the original architect. The rear facade vestibule has art deco-ornamented aluminum covers over steam radiators. The vestibule opens into a long public lobby that ends at the elevators. Two elevators are located on the lobby's north wall and two on the south wall. Baked black enamel elevator doors have fluted aluminum ornamentation running vertically along each door panel.

Lobby and vestibule walls are surfaced with terra cotta panels. The three colors of terra cotta used (pink, turquoise, and beige) were common to Modernistic-styled buildings. A modified terra cotta "dentil mould" accents the junction between walls and ceiling.

The lobby ceiling is divided into 9 ft. square coffers. The coffer in front of elevators has a custom designed coved light strip.

The terrazzo floor is divided into squares, generally following the divisions of the coffers on the ceiling above. The terrazzo in front of the elevators has a star-shaped design. Three colors of terrazzo (dark red, light red, and beige) highlight geometric floor designs.



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Elevator lobbies on other floors are simplified versions of the main public lobbies. Third through tenth floor lobbies lack terra cotta wall paneling and elevator doors have only a single band of aluminum trim. Fluted plaster trim surrounds upper floor elevator doors. Originally, two swinging doors were located at the junction of the hallway and the elevator lobbies on the upper floors. The ornamented, bronze-framed doors were removed in 1977.

COURTROOMS

The five major courtrooms are the CH's most noteworthy interior spaces. All courtrooms follow the same general plan, each having slight variations in detail. Each courtroom has 15 ft. tall windows that cast light into the room. Between every two windows is a fluted doric column of polished American black walnut. A 3 ft. wide pilaster with a denticulated capital flanks each four-window bay. An aluminum grille covers the windows. Aluminum stars are fastened to grille cross-members. The aluminum grille in District Courtroom No. 4 (at the south end of the fifth floor) has a cast aluminum wheat-staff motif fixed to grille cross-members.

The wall opposite the windows has four black walnut pilasters that correspond to the columns at the windows. The walls between the pilasters are paneled with American black walnut.

Black walnut pilasters highlight the four corners of the courtroom. A wainscot running the entire circumference of the room is also of the dark wood. The judge's bench, witness box, and jury box are all paneled with black walnut veneer plywood.

Behind the judge's bench a 15 ft. tall walnut paneled niche is flanked by walnut pilasters supporting a denticulated entablature. The frieze of the entablature has a honey suckle floral motif. Walnut doors leading to the judge's chambers flank the niche. Each door is divided into raised square panels that are similar to the concentric square ornaments around principal facade windows.

Two courtrooms have a custom designed clock behind the judge's bench. The clock has cast aluminum hands and aluminum five pointed stars in place of numerals.

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Judge's chambers have coved ceilings, walnut book cabinets and custom designed lights. Cast aluminum, bell-shaped lamps project light up to the ceiling. Most of these are no longer operable and have been replaced with fluorescent ceiling lights with opaque plastic cover panels.

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Louis A. Simon was a graduate of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. In 1933, he became Supervising Architect. During the 1930's Simon was sent to Europe to study the design and the applicability of emerging techniques of modern architecture to the construction of U.S. Government buildings. It is due to his influence that the Modernistic style became popular in Federal building designs. He retired in 1941.

Although Louis Simon was the Chief Administrator of the Office, the CH was probably designed by Gilbert Stanley Underwood, the Consulting Architect working under contract with the office of the Supervising Architect. Underwood was educated at Yale and Harvard. During the late 1920's he designed numerous West Coast railroad stations for the Union Pacific Railroad and was known as an authority on small town railroad depots.<sup>2</sup> Although many of Underwood's depots were in the Spanish Revival style, later buildings became distinctly Modernistic. In the late 1930's he became a Consulting Architect of the Office of the Supervising Architect. The Modernistic-Neo-Classical San Francisco Mint was designed under Underwood's supervision in 1936-37. After completion of the Seattle CH, he was consultant to large-scale defense housing projects during and after the Second World War.

N.P. Severin Company of Chicago, Illinois, was awarded a construction contract on May 3, 1939. Their low bid was \$1,214,000. Although the firm was from Chicago, Seattle workmen and materials were used in the project. Severin Company had been active in several Government projects, including the remodeling of the Whitehouse in Washington, D.C. When the cornerstone of the CH was laid on July 27, 1940, Judges John C. Bowen, Jeremiah Neterer, and Lloyd L. Black (the first judges to occupy the building) received gavels carved from the timbers that the Severin Company had removed from the Whitehouse.<sup>3</sup>

Otis Elevator Company submitted the only bid for a complete elevator plant. A contract of \$104,401 was awarded to the Washington, D.C., firm on May 3, 1939.

Construction work proceeded on schedule and the building was completed within the contract time limit in August, 1940. Visitors to the new building were impressed by the costly fittings and Modernistic details in the Northwest's first specially designed courthouse. American black walnut doric columns and art-deco styled aluminum grilles in courtrooms were particularly noteworthy details. The courtroom indirect lighting

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system was a novelty: "Overhead in the courtrooms are long chanel's of glistening chrome which reflect the rays of light and bathe the rooms in a gentle glow."<sup>4</sup> Although the original indirect lighting system was replaced with a suspended ceiling in 1977, the courtrooms retain most of their original Modernistic details. The black walnut judges benches, jury boxes, pilasters and wainscoting, and the aluminum window grilles are all well maintained courtroom details that enhance the style and period of the building. Equally significant are the geometric design terrazzo floors and the colored terra cotta walltiles in public lobby areas.

Seattle's new CH brought under one roof numerous Federal court agencies that had been scattered throughout the city. Crowded quarters in the Old Post Office building (at the corner of Fourth and Marion - torn down in 1965) were remedied by the new CH. When the building was occupied, the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Clerk's Office, Probation Office, Referee in Bankruptcy, Marshal's Office, Commissioner's Office, Secret Service, and Alcohol Tax Unit were brought closer together. Although the Secret Service and Alcohol Tax Unit were Treasury Department Agencies, much of their work involved prosecution of criminals in cooperation with Justice Department (the two agencies vacated the building in the 1950's).

The first judges to occupy the building were Judge John J. Bowen, Judge Lloyd L. Black, and Judge Jeremiah Neterer. Judge Bowen, for many years the Chief Judge, took a personal interest in the maintenance of the CH and its grounds. Trials during the early years ranged from admiralty cases concerning maritime affairs and lawsuits of differing nationalities (Washington State shares its northern border with Canada), to smuggling trials and international land disputes. Many foreign immigrants to the state underwent naturalization procedures in the Seattle CH.

The CH has become a landmark in Seattle's Central Business District. The front lawn is an integral part of the Fifth Avenue streetscape. The lawn is the only sizeable green open space between lower Fifth Avenue improvements, north of the CH, and the City-County governmental complex two blocks south of the CH. The CH lawn is, in effect, an urban square where the enclosed quality of Fifth Avenue and other sectors of the CBD open up into a wide, green planted area.

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As originally conceived, the lawn was part of the overall building design. The tall Northern oaks, symmetrically planted to either end of the site, create leafy walls that focus attention upon the building. They are, essentially, extensions of the classically proportioned Fifth Avenue facade. The walkway cutting through the middle of the lawn accents the formality of the building and its grounds. Massive polished granite planters and cheek blocks, granite copings, art deco-ornamented aluminum flagstaffs, and geometric pavements mark the route along the sidewalk from Fifth Avenue to the main entrance doors. These elements heighten the sensation of moving through the green open space; they mark the movement through space over time.

The CH building is an important element in other downtown open spaces. Freeway Park spans I-5 three blocks north of the CH, linking the CBD with Capitol Hill. The CH is a major component of the park's southern visual border. The stepped-up CH facades help to bring surrounding monolithic office towers "down to earth"; the skyline curves earthward from the mass of downtown 40-storey structures to the 10-storey CH at the CBD's eastern border.

Seattle's Court House stands as a soundly-built and well maintained statement of the Modernistic style. The facades portray the stability, permanence and authority that the building (the first Federal courthouse building in the western United States) was meant to evoke. The CH, with its formal lawns and facades, is a symbol of the Federal government and a prevailing 1930's style in downtown Seattle.

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4. GSA Public Buildings Service. Federal Space Situation Report, Seattle, Washington. GSA Center, Auburn, Washington. August 21, 1973.
5. "Judge Neterer Moves in as First Occupant of New Courthouse." Seattle Times. October 18, 1940. P. c 87.
6. "Linda Vista, America's Largest Defense Housing Project." Pencil Points. November, 1941. Vol. 22, pp. 696-708.
7. "New Court House Has Tiny Fort to Prevent Prisoners from Escaping." Seattle Times. July 27, 1940. P. 18.
8. Office of the Supervising Architect. United States Treasury Department. Specifications for the Construction of the United States Court House, Seattle, Washington. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, March 29, 1939.
9. "Sam Larsen and Whitehouse Timbers." Seattle Times. June 26, 1940. P. B9.
10. "San Francisco Mint." Illustrated Architect and Engineer. January, 1936. Vol. 124, pp. 32-33.
11. "Uncle Sam's Expensive Courthouse." Seattle Times. August 17, 1940. P. 14.
12. Whiffen, Marcus. American Architecture Since 1780 A Guide to the Styles. Cambridge, Mass.: The M.I.T. Press, 1969.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED 4 SEP 1979

DATE ENTERED 8

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 9 PAGE 11

13. Withey, Henry F. and Withey, Elsie Rathburn. Biographical Dictionary of American Architects (Deceased). Los Angeles, California: Hennessey and Ingotts, 1970.

INTERVIEWS

1. Schofield, Edgar. Former Clerk of the Court, U.S. District Court, Western District of Washington. Interviewed August 21, 1978.
2. Thomas, Millard. Former Clerk of the Court, U.S. District Court, Western District of Washington. Interviewed August 21, 1978.

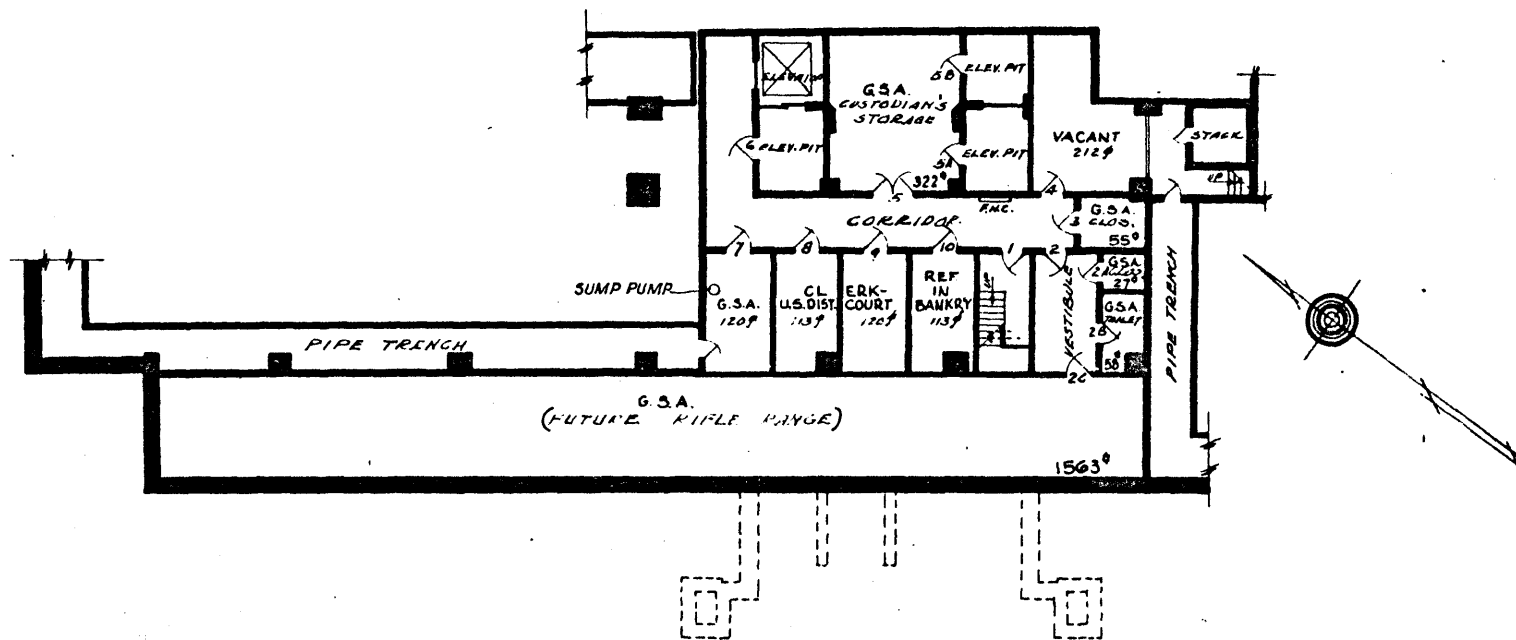
FOOTNOTES

1. "Uncle Sam's Expensive Courthouse." Seattle Times. August 17, 1940. P. 14.
2. "Design of Small Railway Stations." Architectural Forum. December, 1930. pp. 695-700.
3. "Cornerstone Laying Ceremonies Held." Seattle Times. July 28, 1940. P. C88.
4. "Uncle Sam's Expensive Courthouse." P. 14.





NET AGENCY AREA (NON PO) 2,703 SQ. FT.  
 NET ASSIGNABLE AREA 2,703  
 C.R.C. MECH. & CONST. AREAS 2,785  
 GROSS AREA 5,488

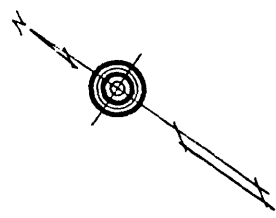
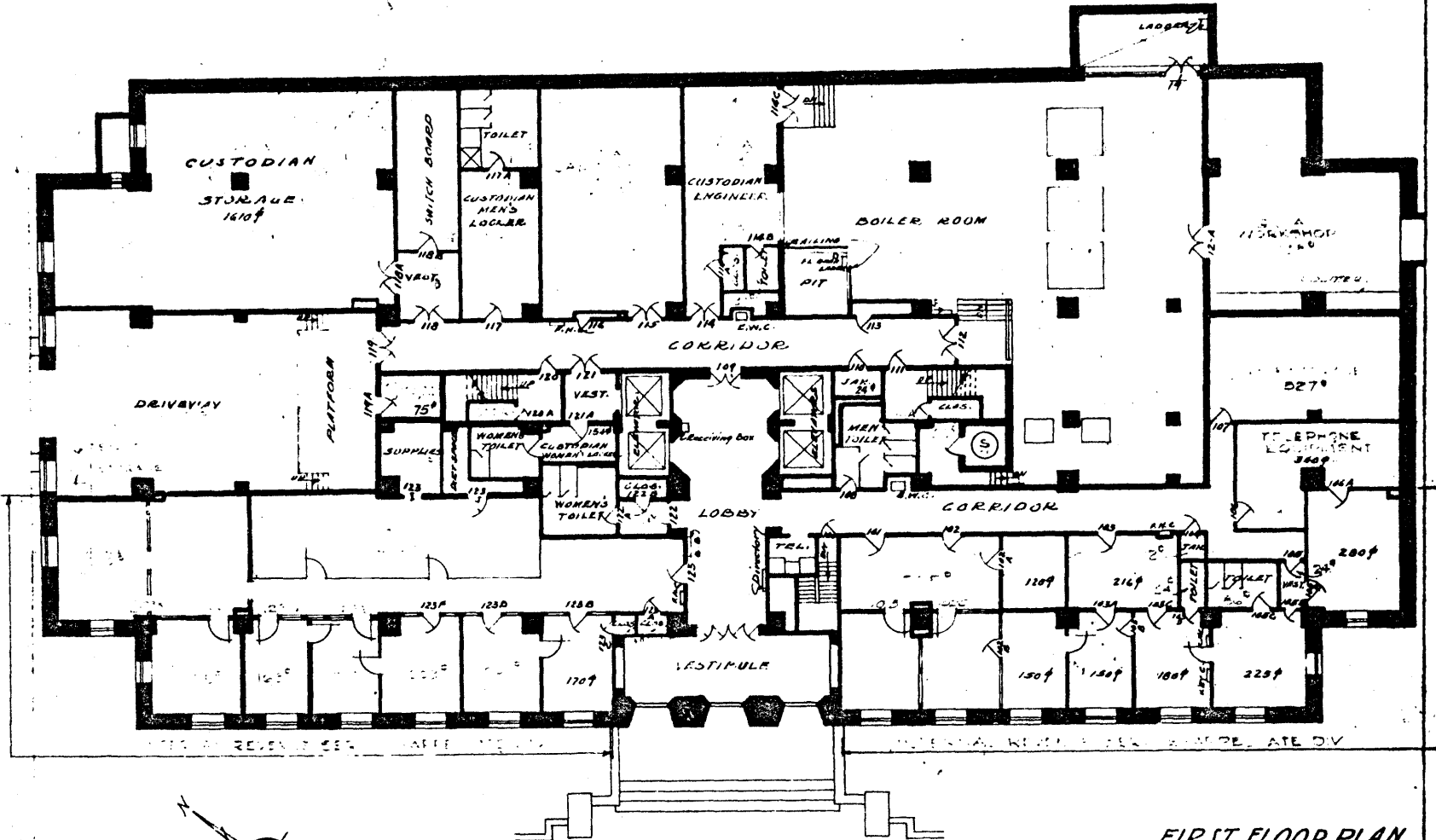


**BASEMENT PLAN**  
 SCALE 1/8" = 1'-0"

FEDERAL WORKS AGENCY PUBLIC BUILDINGS ADMIN.		
ASSIGNMENT U.S. COURT HOUSE SEATTLE, WASH.		
DRAWN BY A. M. JONES	REVISIONS R2051 TC.W.	DRAWING NUMBER AS-2
DATE - 7-1-59	CHECKED BY	

*Handwritten:* CAMP 9-9-59

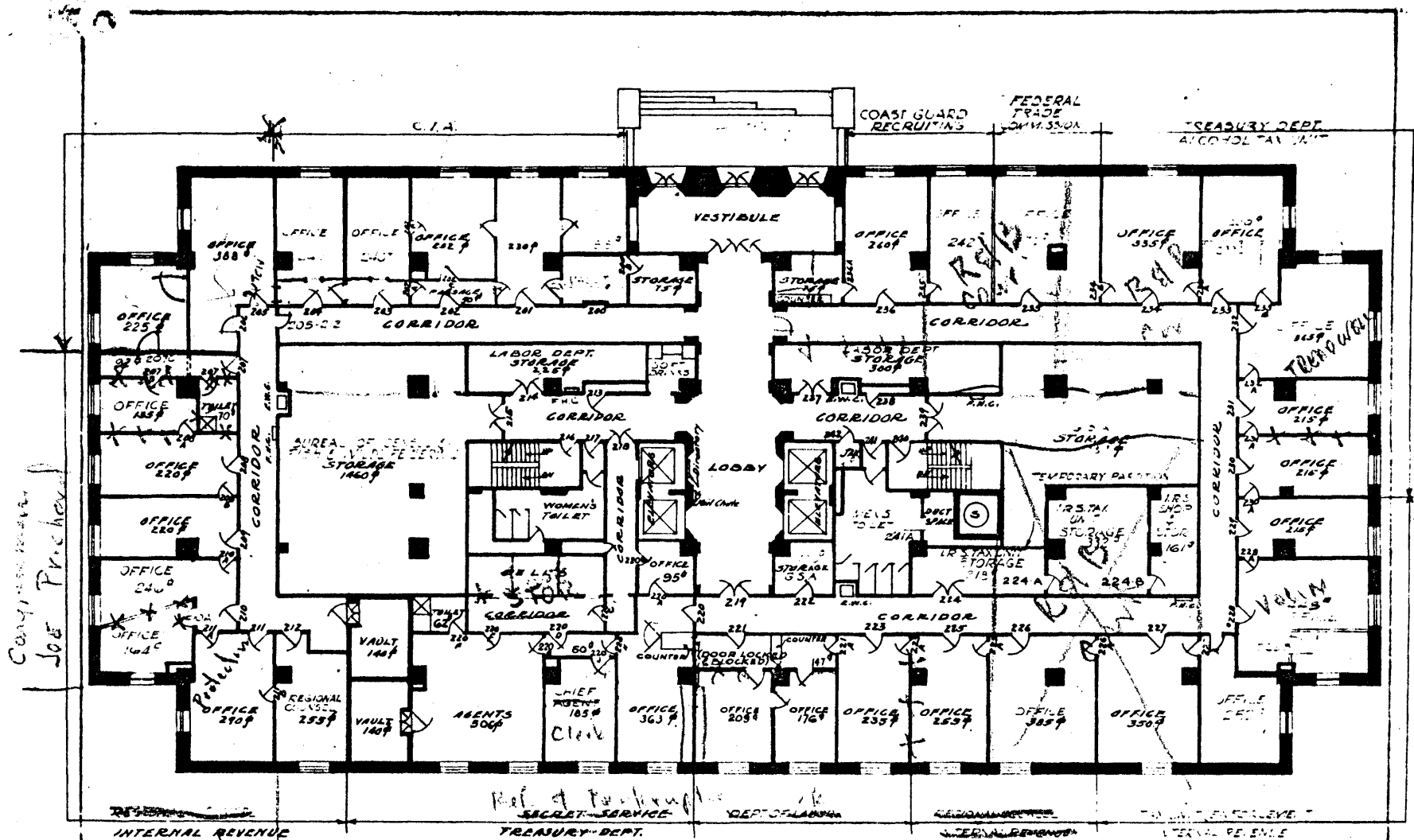
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 NET ASSIGNABLE AREA 12,583  
 CIRC. MECH. & CONST. AREA 9,841  
 GROSS AREA 22,424



FIRST FLOOR PLAN  
 SCALE 1/8" = 1'-0"

FEDERAL WORKS AGENCY  
 PUBLIC BUILDINGS ADMIN.  
 ASSIGNMENT  
 U.S. COURT HOUSE  
 SEATTLE, WASH.

DRAWN BY: A. M. JONES  
 CHECKED BY: J. B. GIBSON  
 DATE: 7-1-39  
 REVISIONS: 1-20-37  
 DRAWING NUMBER: AS-3

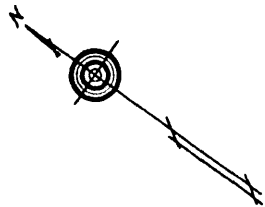
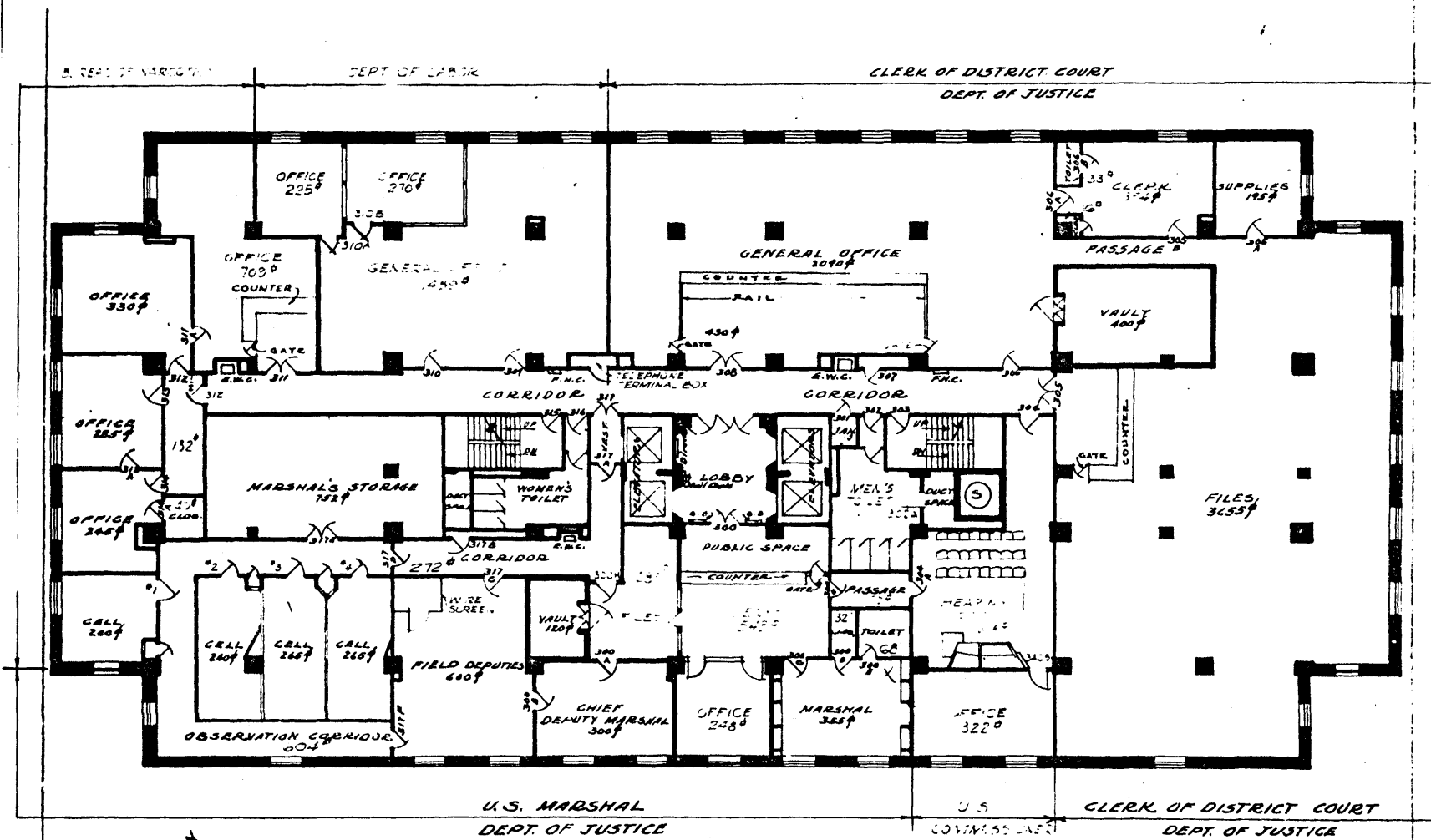


NET AGENCY AREAS (NON-PO) 14,351.50 FT.  
 NET ASSIGNABLE AREAS 14,351  
 CIRC. MECH. & CONST. AREAS 7,843  
 GROSS AREA 22,194

**SECOND FLOOR PLAN**  
 SCALE 1/16" = 1'-0"  
**FEDERAL WORKS AGENCY**  
**PUBLIC BUILDINGS ADMIN.**  
**ASSIGNMENT**  
**U.S. COURT HOUSE**  
**SEATTLE, WASH.**

DRAWN BY: REVISIONS DRAWING  
 A. M. JONES  
 DATE: 7-1-59  
 CHECKED BY: A. S. JONES  
 DATE: 7-1-59  
 T.C.W. 12-58  
 T.C.W. 12-58  
 T.C.W. 12-58  
 T.C.W. 12-58

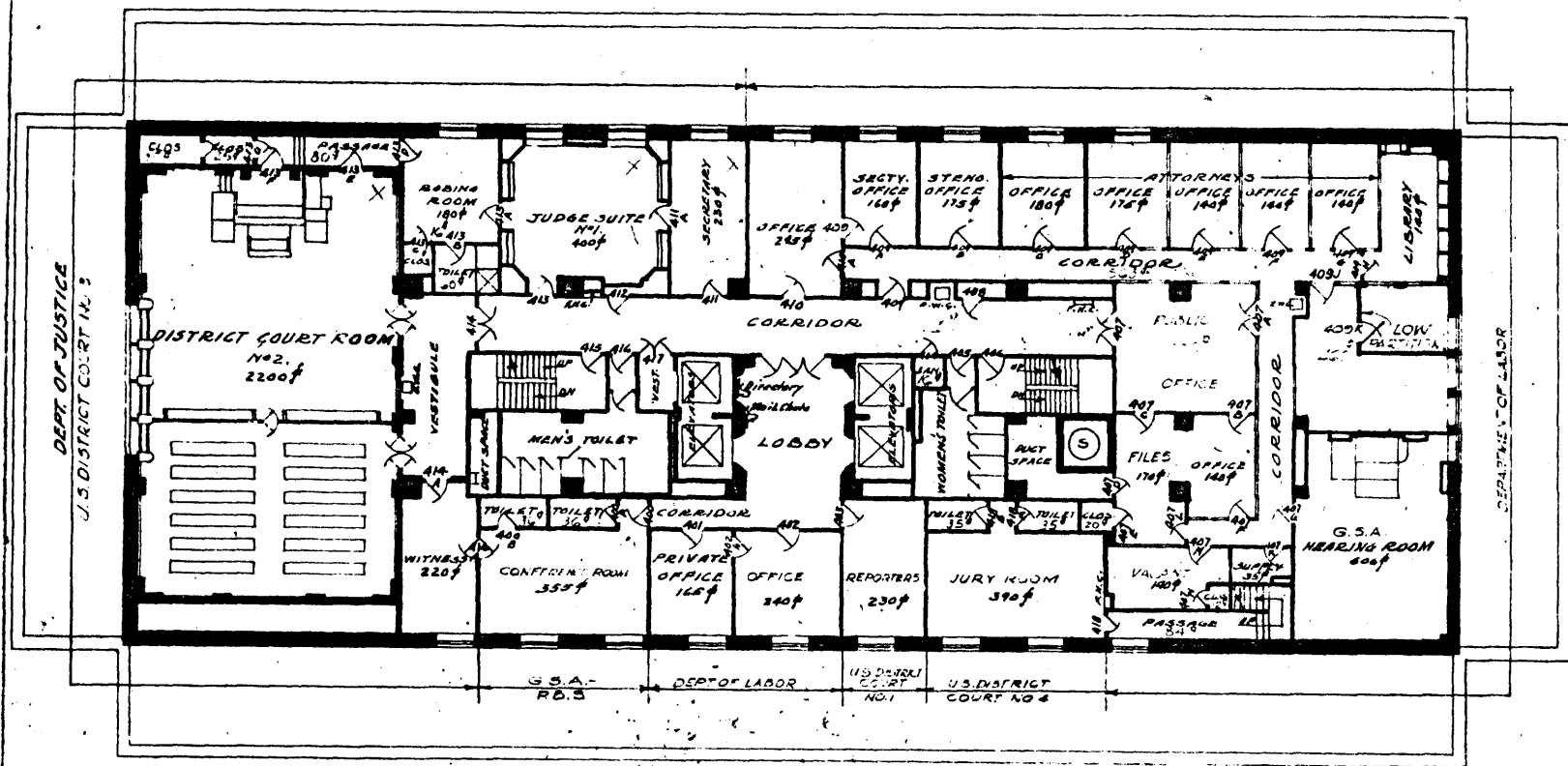
AS-4



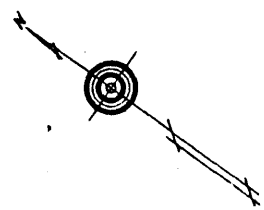
NET AGENCY AREA (NON DO) 16,543.50 FT  
 NET ASSIGNABLE AREA 16,243.00 FT  
 CIRC MECH. & CONST. AREAS 300.50 FT  
 GROSS AREA 22,194.00 FT

**THIRD FLOOR PLAN**  
 SCALE 1/8" = 1'-0"

FEDERAL WORKS AGENCY  
 PUBLIC BUILDINGS ADMIN.  
 ASSIGNMENT  
 U.S. COURT HOUSE  
 SEATTLE, WASH.  
 DRAWN BY REVISIONS DRAWING  
 J. M. JONES, P.A.W. 7-19-40 NUMBER  
 DATE 7-1-37, T.O.W. 1-3-36  
 CHECKED BY **AS-5**

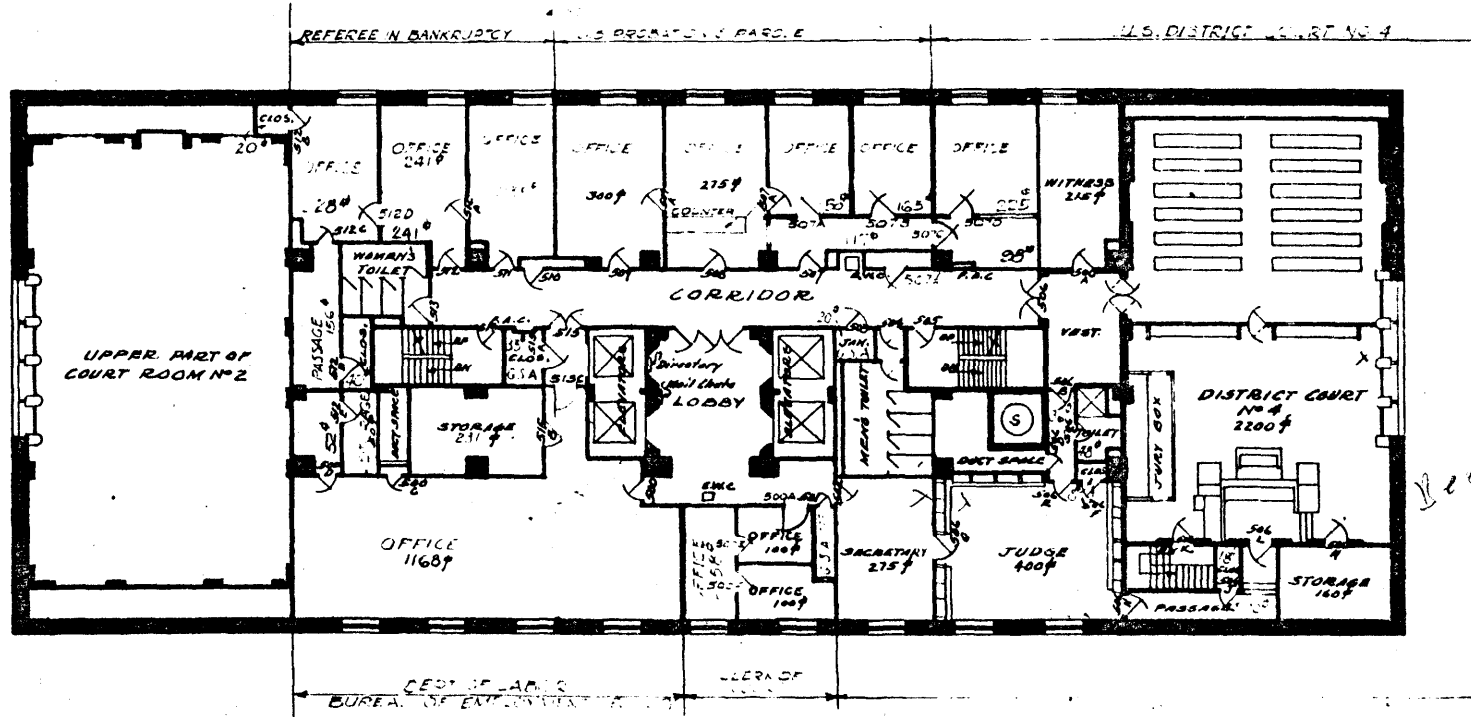


NET AGENCY AREA (NON PO) 9 141 50 FT.  
 NET ASSIGNABLE AREA 8 141 " "  
 CIRC. MECH. & CONST. AREAS 5 014 " "  
 GROSS AREA 14 155 " "



**FOURTH FLOOR PLAN**  
 SCALE 1/8" = 1'-0"  
**FEDERAL WORKS AGENCY**  
**PUBLIC BUILDINGS ADMIN.**  
**ASSIGNMENT**  
**U.S. COURT HOUSE**  
**SEATTLE, WASH.**

H. H. JONES ARCHITECTS  
 7-11-37  
 15-6

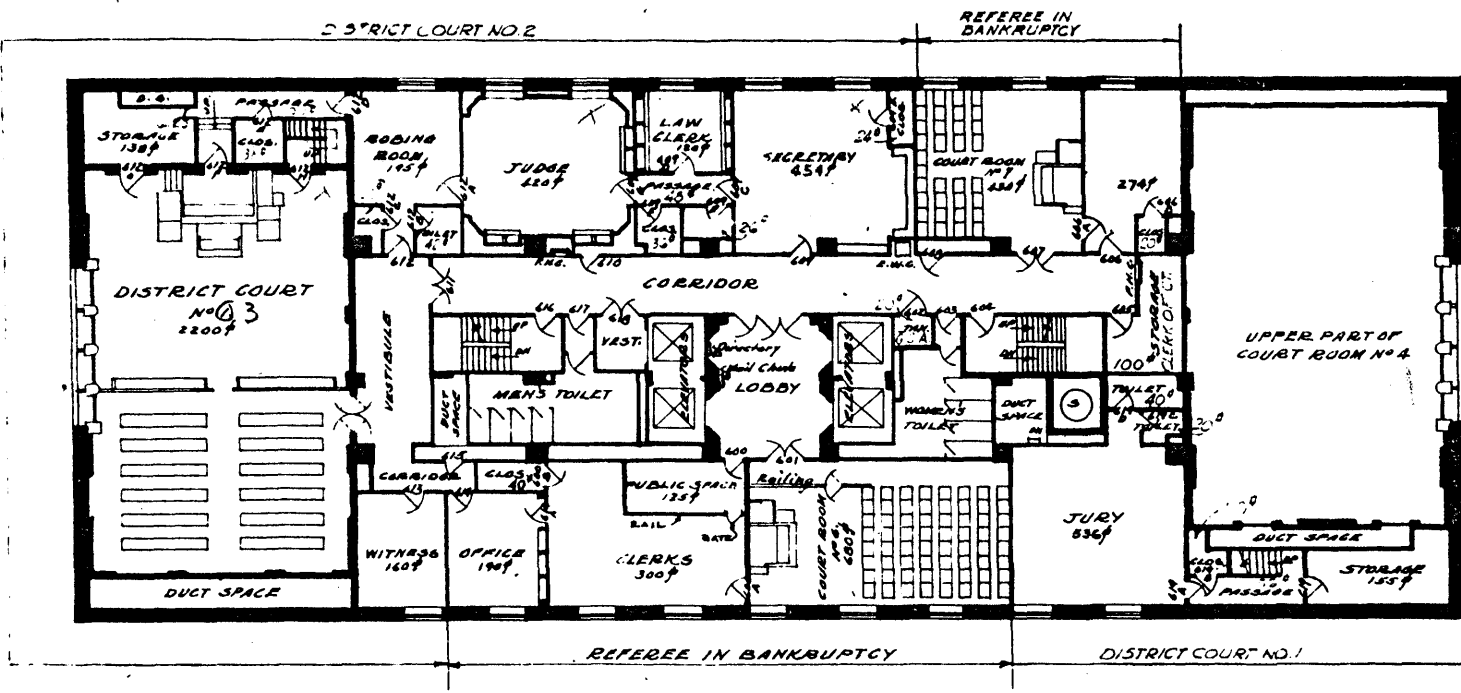


NET AGENCY AREA (NON PO) 7,512 SQ. FT.  
 NET ASSIGNABLE AREA 7,512 " " "  
 CIRC. MECH. & CONST. AREAS 4,058 " " "  
 GROSS AREA 11,617 " " "

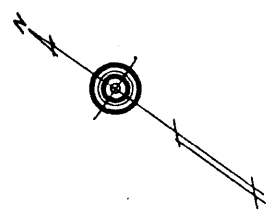
FIFTH FLOOR PLAN  
 SCALE 1/16" = 1'-0"

FEDERAL WORKS AGENCY  
 PUBLIC BUILDINGS ADMIN.  
 ASSIGNMENT  
 U.S. COURT HOUSE  
 SEATTLE, WASH

DRAWN BY: A. M. JONES  
 DATE: 7-1-59  
 CHECKED BY: J. M. JONES  
 REVISIONS: 1-6-59 J.C.W.  
 3-20-59 J.C.W.  
 6-13-61 J.C.W.  
 DRAWING NUMBER: AS-7



NET AGENCY AREA (NON P.O.) 1027 SQ. FT.  
 NET ASSIGNABLE AREA 7,027 " "  
 CIRC. MECH. & CONST. AREAS 5,038 " "  
 GROSS AREA 12,085 " "



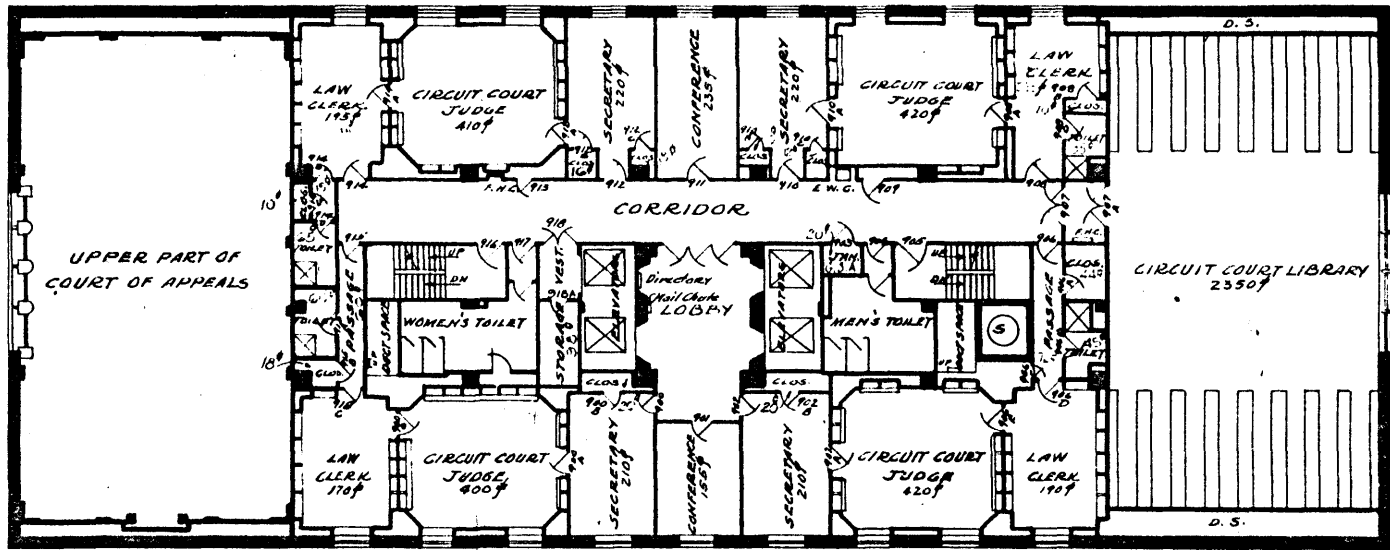
SIXTH FLOOR PLAN  
 SCALE 1/8" = 1'-0"  
 FEDERAL WORKS AGENCY  
 PUBLIC BUILDINGS ADMIN.  
 ASSIGNMENT  
 U.S. COURT HOUSE  
 SEATTLE, WASH.

DRAWN BY A.M. JONES	REVISIONS REV 7-19-40	DRAWING NUMBER
DATE - 7-1-39	REV 5-18-41	AS-8
CHECKED BY	REV 2-18-41	



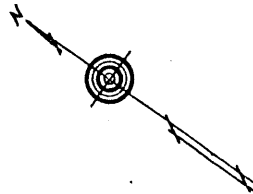






ENTIRE FLOOR

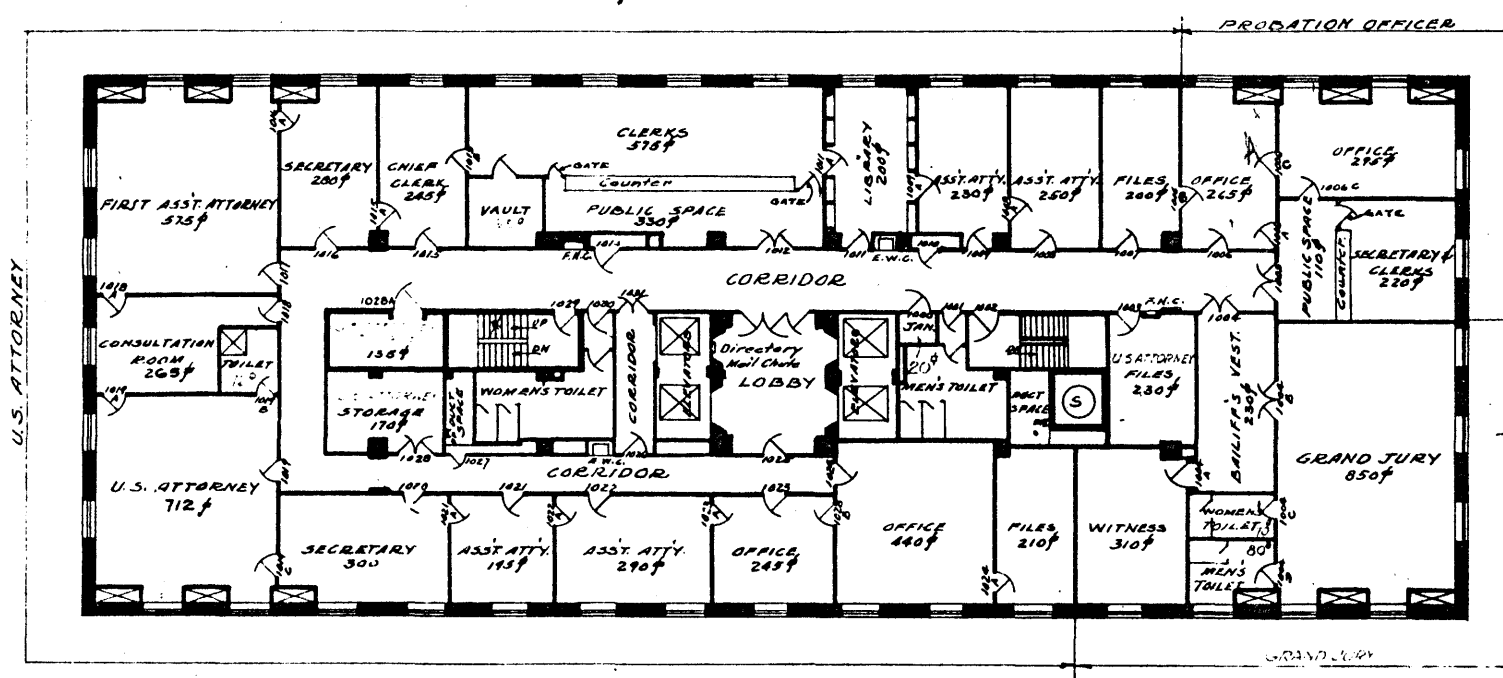
NET AGENCY AREA (NON PO)	6,000	50 FT.
NET ASSIGNABLE AREA	6,000	" "
CIRC. MECH. & CONST. AREAS	5,000	" "
GROSS AREA	11,000	" "



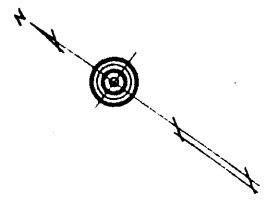
NINTH FLOOR PLAN  
 SCALE 1/4" = 1'-0"  
 FEDERAL WORKS AGENCY  
 PUBLIC BUILDINGS ADMIN.

U.S. COURT HOUSE  
 SEATTLE, WASH.

A. M. JONES T.C.M. 1-6-58  
 7-1-59 T.C.W. 4-13-61



NET AGENCY AREA (NON PO) 8634.50 FT.  
 NET ASSIGNABLE AREA 8604 " "  
 CIRC. MECH. CONST. AREAS 5461 " "  
 GROSS AREA 14,155 " "



TENTH FLOOR PLAN  
 SCALE 1/4" = 1'-0"

FEDERAL WORKS AGENCY  
 PUBLIC BUILDINGS ADMIN.  
 ASSIGNMENT  
 U.S. COURT HOUSE  
 SEATTLE, WASH.

DRAWN BY KENNETH TREWING  
 H.M. JONES  
 DATE 7-1-57  
 PROJECT NO. 100-100-100  
 SHEET NO. 19



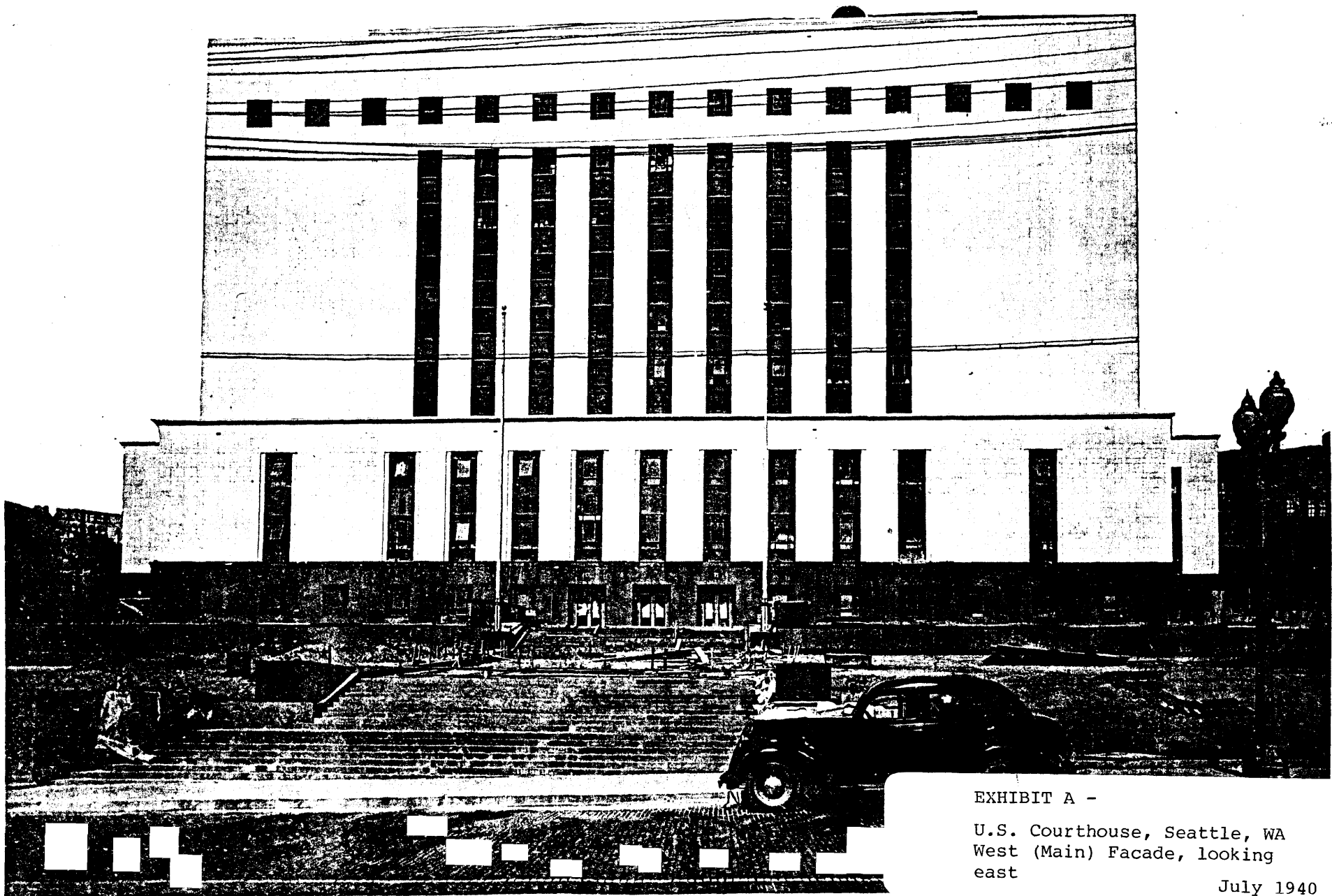


EXHIBIT A -

U.S. Courthouse, Seattle, WA  
West (Main) Facade, looking  
east

July 1940



EXHIBIT B -  
Seattle, Washington  
Yellow area - extent of CBD  
Red area - U.S. Courthouse site



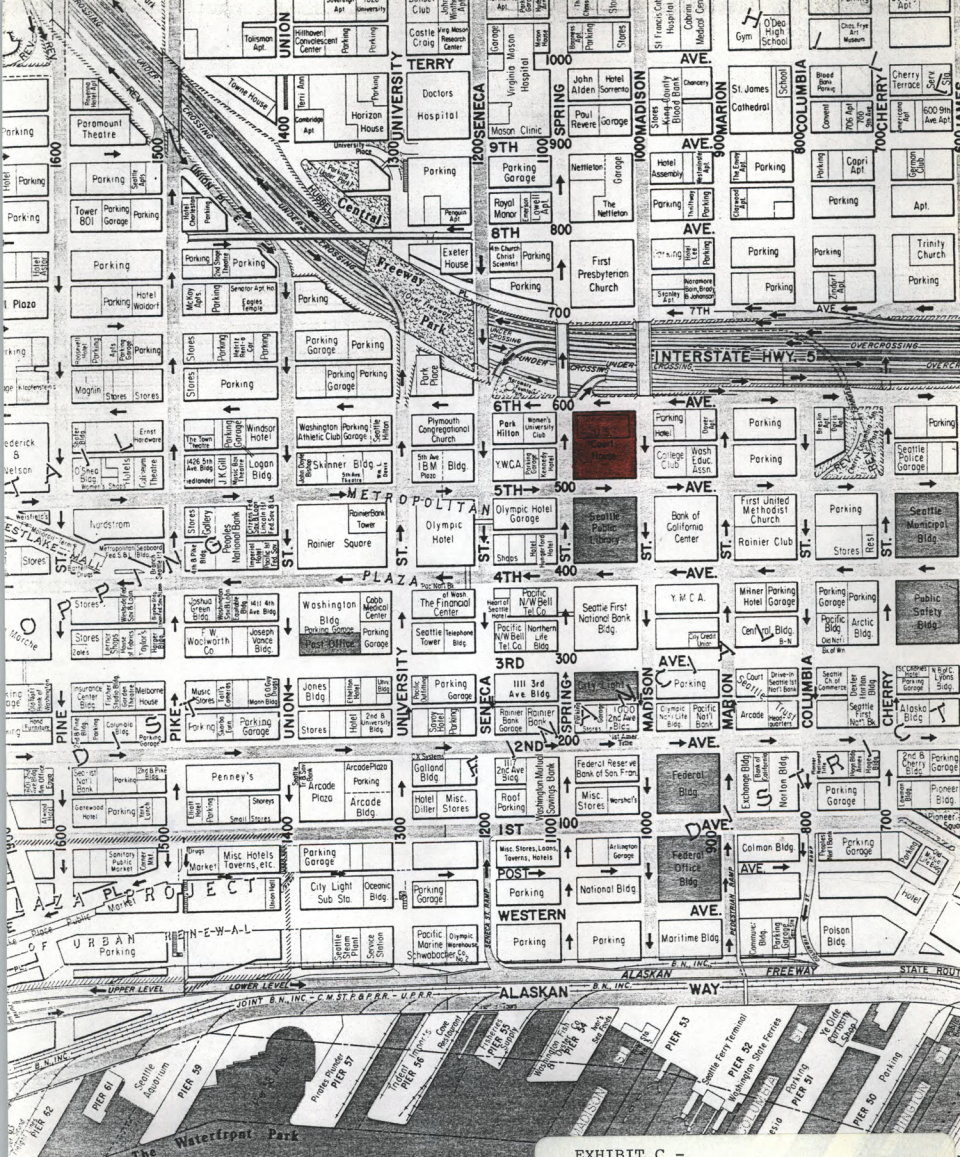


EXHIBIT C -  
 Urban Context of U.S. Courthouse

*King County*

Central Association of Seattle



EXHIBIT D -

Relationship of U.S. Courthouse  
to Seattle skyline, 1966.

*King County*

**Annual Report  
1965 \* 1966**



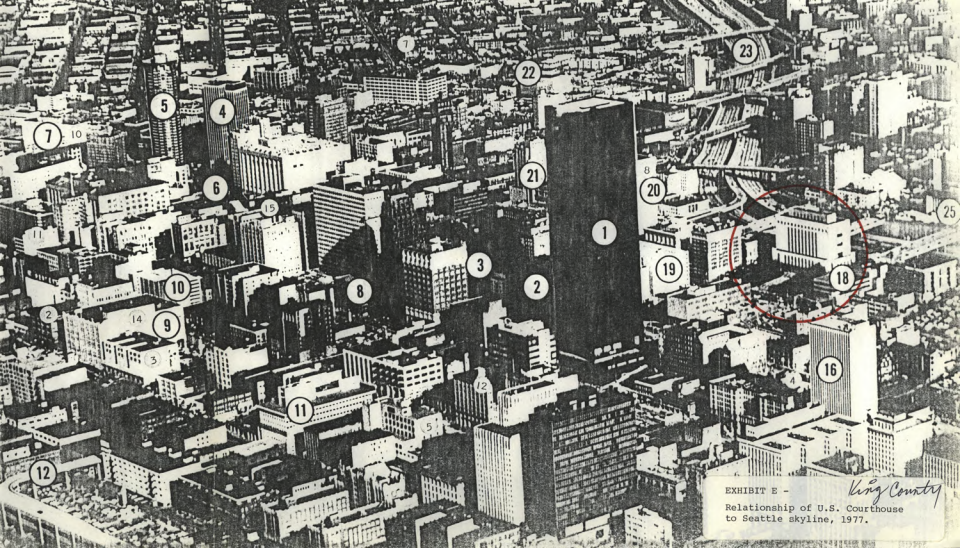


EXHIBIT E -

*King County*

Relationship of U.S. Courthouse  
to Seattle skyline, 1977.

## I. Significant Legal Activity

On August 21, 1978, an interview was held with Mr. Edgar Schofield, former Clerk of the Court, U.S. District Court, Western District of Washington. Mr. Schofield observed that Federal Courts activities in Seattle were limited to trials pertaining to crimes over which the U.S. Constitution gives the Federal Government specific jurisdiction. As noted in the Nomination, typical cases included crimes involving two states (such as fugitive criminal proceedings), admiralty cases (concerning ocean-going craft), income tax evasion, and minor disputes between the United States and Canada.

The most significant historic aspect of Court activity is related to the first justices to occupy the building: Judges John L. Black, John J. Bowen, and Jeremiah Neterer. Judge Neterer, a pioneer justice in the region, is a prominent figure in the history of jurisprudence in the Pacific Northwest. A native of Indiana, Judge Neterer came to Bellingham, Washington, in 1890, a year after Washington State's admission to the Union. He served as Bellingham's City Attorney and later became a Whatcom County Superior Court Judge. President Wilson appointed him a Federal Judge for the Western District of Washington in 1913. The most important and sensational cases during his long tenure on the Federal bench concerned conspiracy cases involving illegal production and sale of liquor in the 1920's and 30's. Judge Neterer served continuously until his death in 1943 at the age of 81 years (he had retired from full-time service in 1934).

Most important to the Courthouse building itself was Judge John Bowen, who consulted with Federal architects during the design of the Courthouse and later was to play an influential role in the building's preservation and upkeep. Mr. Schofield noted that Judge Bowen was "married to the Courthouse and to his job." During his 42-year tenure with the Federal Courts, beginning in 1934 and lasting until his death in 1978, Judge Bowen was personally committed to the Courthouse's public image. He regarded the extensive grounds in front of the building to be so important as to exclude the intrusion of casual picnickers. While protesters of the late 1960's disagreed with the then Chief Judge's restrictions, it should be noted that the excellent care of the red oaks, the lawns, and shrubbery may be attributed to Judge Bowen's attentions.

Judge Bowen was known to have worked according to a personal manifesto: "When I leave the court it will be a better place than when I came in." The excellent state of preservation of the Courthouse may be due, in large part, to such dedication.

## II. Context of the Building Within the Region

In early August 1940, the nearly complete Courthouse was given a final inspection by William A. Newman, District Engineer for the Public Buildings Administration. With him was Fred H. Williams, government Construction Engineer for the project. Mr. Newman stated that "This (the new Courthouse) is the only Federal courthouse building in the nation, with the exception of one in New York City...it represents the recognition by the Federal government of the enterprise and activity of Seattle citizens and should provide a definite tie between Seattle and the nation's capital."<sup>1</sup>

Most court facilities prior to the construction of Seattle's Courthouse were built under the jurisdiction of the Treasury Department and had "hybrid" functions. Early courthouses accommodated numerous Federal agencies under one roof, such as the Post Office, U.S. Customs, the Interior Department, etc.

Seattle's Courthouse was the first Federal building in the far West to be designed solely as a court facility. GSA Regional Historic Preservation Liaisons in Regions 7, 8, 9, and 10 (which encompass states west of the Mississippi River) have verified that other western courthouses in the West were dual-function facilities. One possible exception may be the U.S. Courthouse in Santa Fe, New Mexico, which was built in the late 1800's. However, the Santa Fe building was a Territorial court facility which later acquired various other non-court-related functions, in addition to its court activities. This would explain Mr. Newman's lack of reference to the building in his 1940 statement. The Santa Fe building has been nominated to the National Register.

The Seattle Courthouse was the first Federal (as opposed to Territorial) courthouse building to have been built west of the Mississippi. Further research would be needed to verify District Engineer Newman's assertion that the building was the only courthouse facility outside New York City.

Floor plans (please see enclosed exhibits AS1-13) show how the entire building was designed around its courtroom function. A long processional walkway extends from Fifth Avenue to the main entrance. The first and second floors are dominated by the detailed public lobbies which are, in effect, introductory spaces to the courtrooms above. Sensational crimes of the 1930's seem to have dictated the locating of courtrooms and jail facilities on upper floors. (The ground level delivery entrance at Spring Street originally had what emotional newspaper articles described variously as "a miniature Maginot Line," "a pillbox," or "a tiny fort." In reality this was a 20 ft. by 20 ft. concrete-walled guard room located at the top of the loading dock. One wall of the room had a bullet-proof glass window with a bronze machine gun porthole having the configuration of a Federal badge. The "fortification" was supposed to deter jailbreak attempts by organized crime. The room has subsequently been converted into a storeroom.)

The third floor was occupied by the U.S. Marshall and the Clerk of the Court. Fourth through eighth floors each had a large courtroom at either the north or the south end of the building. All other rooms on these floors were devoted to court-related activities: conference rooms, jury rooms, judges chambers, clerk's offices, etc. The uppermost floor, the ninth floor, houses an extensive court library and chambers for Circuit Court judges. The dominance in the plan of courtrooms and court facilities in the Seattle Courthouse differs markedly from earlier dual-purpose courthouse designs.

### III. Context Within the History of American Building Styles

The Nomination refers to the Courthouse's Art Deco or Modernistic style. Due to the lack of scientific descriptive criteria, buildings of the late 1930's are difficult to classify. It would be more accurate to label the Seattle Courthouse as "Modernized Neo-Classical;" the Nomination observes that while Courthouse facades have classical proportions and massing, they exhibit the "stripped-down" appearance notable in government buildings of the period (see Exhibit A). Courtroom interiors show a similar "streamlining" of classical proportion and detail.

WPA-PWA authority Karel Yasko (GSA, Washington, D.C., PBS, FTS 8-566-1499) attributes the simplification of 1930's Federal buildings to the Roosevelt Administration's desire to de-emphasize the relative opulence of Federally sponsored projects. An even more precise description, then, would classify the Courthouse as a Federal (or WPA-PWA) Building of the Art-Deco-Modernistic period. The building is a Federal species of the genus Deco.

The Courthouse is a major work of a preeminent style of the 1930's. It is the only major Federal building in the Pacific Northwest region (Alaska, Idaho, Oregon, Washington) which embodies the forceful and straightforward philosophy of the Roosevelt-WPA-PWA era. Several smaller Post Office buildings were built in the Pacific Northwest during this period, but all of these differ markedly from the scale, function, cost, or overall public stature of the Seattle Courthouse.

### IV. Context Within the City of Seattle

The Courthouse stands as a unique monument of the Federal-WPA presence in Seattle's Central Business District. The CBD is presently enjoying a building boom (which seems to be a fairly typical, periodic occurrence in the city's history). Numerous low-rise commercial and residential buildings have been replaced or are being replaced with high-rise office structures.

The enclosed Exhibits B-E show how the massing and proportions of the Courthouse are conspicuous within the context of recently built glass towers.

Seattle does not possess a great quantity of major 1930's buildings as do other West Coast cities (notably Los Angeles and San Francisco). But several Art-Deco-period buildings do survive (tenuously) in the CBD. The Courthouse is the only WPA-PWA building of this group, and as such, is a crucial part of Downtown Seattle's ensemble of 1930's buildings.

Grounds in front of the Courthouse, which are now open to citizen use, provide an essential green open space in the CBD. The grounds also reflect prevailing design motifs of the WPA era; the symmetrical placement of shrubs and trees, and the processional nature of the walkways emphasize the formality of WPA-era designs in general, and the Courthouse design in particular. The Courthouse lawn is the only instance of a symmetrical landscape design in the CBD.

As more definitive, scientific analyses of Federal buildings of the 1930's are developed, the Courthouse will gain increased significance. The building stands as a major work of the period and as a monument to the WPA-PWA legacy in the Pacific Northwest and in the City of Seattle.

Footnotes

- 1 "Uncle Sam's Expensive Courthouse," Seattle Times, August 17, 1940, p. 14.