

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an 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 entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

Historic name: The United States General Accounting Office Building

Other names/site number: _____

2. Location

Street & Number: 441 G Street, N.W. [N/A] Not for Publication

City or town: Washington [N/A] Vicinity

State: District of Columbia Code: DC County: District of Columbia Code: 001 Zip Code: 20548

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this 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 meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. ([] See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title: [Signature] Date: 8/8/95

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. ([] See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title: [Signature] Facilities Management Officer Date: June 6, 1995

General Accounting Office

State or Federal agency or bureau _____

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is: Signature of the Keeper Date of Action
 entered in the National Register. Patrick W. Andrews 9/21/95

determined eligible for the National Register () see continuation sheet

determined not eligible for the National Register () see continuation sheet

removed from the National Register

other, (explain): _____

The United States General Accounting Office Building
Name of Property

Washington, DC
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	No. Resources within Property	
		Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> Private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building(s)		
<input type="checkbox"/> Public-Local	<input type="checkbox"/> District	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> Buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> Public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> Site	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> Sites
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> Structure	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> Structure
	<input type="checkbox"/> Object	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> Objects
		<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> Total

Name of related 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/Government Office

Current Functions (enter
categories from instructions)
GOVERNMENT/Government Office

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(enter categories from instructions)
MODERN MOVEMENT/Moderne

Materials (enter categories
from instructions)
foundation: Stone and Concrete
walls: Stone

roof: Asphalt
other: _____

Narrative Description

Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets

See continuation sheet

United States General Accounting Office
Name of Property

Washington, DC
County and State

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 of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Art

Period of Significance

1941, 1949-1951

Significant Dates

1941, 1949-1951

Significant Person

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

Undefined

Architect/Builder

Gilbert S. Underwood, Architect

John McShain, Inc., Builders

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and period of significance noted above.

[X] See continuation sheet

The United States General Accounting Office Building
Name of Property

Washington, DC
County and State

9. Major Bibliographic References

[X] See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67)
- previously listed in the NR
- 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 add. data:

- State SHPO office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository: General Services Administration

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property Approximately one acre

UTM References

A 1/8/ 3/2/5/0/0/0/ 4/3/0/7/0/2/6/
Zone Easting Northing
B // //////// ////////
Zone Easting Northing
C // //////// ////////
Zone Easting Northing

Verbal Boundary Description

The United States General Accounting Office Building at 441 G Street occupies 80% of Square 518 in Northwest Washington, DC. The square is bounded by 4th, 5th, G, and H streets.

Boundary Justification

The United States General Accounting Office Building has been historically associated with Square 518 since the building's design and construction began in 1941.

11. Form Prepared By

Name/title Laura V. Trieschmann and Laura H. Hughes, Architectural Historians

Organization Traceries Date April 10, 1995

Street & Number 5420 Western Avenue Telephone (301)656-5283

City or Town Chevy Chase State Maryland Zip code 20815

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

The United States General Accounting Office, 441 G Street, N.W., Washington, DC

Section number 7 Page 1

The United States General Accounting Office (GAO) Building is located at 441 G Street, N.W., Washington, DC. The massive building occupies nearly all of Square 518, bounded by G, H, 4th, and 5th streets. The exterior of the seven-story building is characterized by simple geometric forms, overall symmetry, horizontal emphasis in building elements, and minimal applied decorative detailing. The design and massing of the GAO Building exhibits conservative modernism; this modern aesthetic, seen in federal buildings around World War II, presents pure geometric forms that express building function with limited ornamentation created by the manipulation of building materials. Similarly, the significant interior spaces derive their character much more from the handling of shapes and materials than from decorative elements.

The block-like solidity that dominates one's impression of this building is heightened with the treatment of the exterior walls. The walls rise sheer and unadorned with few exceptions: the main entrances on G and H streets, the angles created at the corners by projecting bays, and the setback of the penthouse. No ornament is used to delineate sections of the building, and the fenestration is uniform throughout. The rows of triple windows recessed into plain aluminum frames reinforce the horizontal lines of the design. The only artwork originally planned and executed for the exterior of the building, flanking the primary entry on G Street, are two *bas reliefs* carved in granite.

Displaying distinctive construction techniques and decorative motifs that were characteristic of the mid-20th century, the GAO Building is in exceptional structural condition and remains essentially intact despite a few modifications required to increase building security.

EXTERIOR

MATERIALS AND GENERAL CONFIGURATION

The GAO Building is set upon a granite and concrete base faced with polished red granite (Cold Spring Carnelian Number 1). The same polished granite is also used for the columns and surrounds of the principal entries on the G and H street elevations, as well as the surrounds of secondary entries on 4th and 5th streets. Above the base, the walls of the building are faced with buff-colored limestone with a shot-sawn finish. Smooth machine-dressed limestone in the same buff color was used for the cornice, parapets, quirks, and reveals.

The site slopes up from south to north with an angle so slight the building appears to be set squarely on the ground. The structural frame consists of steel-reinforced concrete in a flat slab system, chosen

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

The United States General Accounting Office, 441 G Street, N.W., Washington, DC

Section number 7 Page 2

in response to the storage requirements of the GAO. The flat slab rests directly on the columns at each story, allowing heavy loads to be carried on all floors. The building is comprised of seven full stories with a sub-basement, basement, and two-story mechanical penthouse. The first and seventh stories are 13'6" high; the second through sixth stories are each 12'8" high; and the penthouse is 28' high. The maximum dimension of the footprint is 638.67' running east to west and 388.67' running north to south. The overall footprint of the building is a blunt L-shape, planned to accommodate St. Mary's Catholic Church and its rectory, convent, and school that stood on the northwest corner of Square 518 since 1891.

The massing of the GAO Building is formed from the arrangement of geometric shapes. Each of the street elevations is faced with a projecting section, five stories in height and one bay deep. The projections create pairs of angles at the northeast, southeast, and southwest corners of the building, presenting a stepped profile at the outer corners. This is further emphasized at the roofline as the square penthouse is set back on all four elevations. The flat roof is edged with a painted metal railing, set several feet from the plane of the walls and not visible from street level.

With the exception of the entries, the walls of the GAO Building are sheer and unadorned. Plain boxed cornices cap the projecting sections along the street elevations, while plain stone coping is found on the main roofline. The walls are given a textured appearance that is created by turning alternate facing blocks to intersect at a 90 degree angle with the bedding plane. In contrast to the square facing blocks used for the main portions of each wall, narrow rectangles of limestone were used to create a surround for each of the window openings. The bedding planes of the surrounds are set vertically at the sides of the openings, and horizontally at the top and bottom. All of the mortar joints in the exterior walls are tinted to match the color of the limestone.

The fenestration is uniformly patterned from the first through seventh stories, adding to the horizontal emphasis of the design. Each of the major openings measure 7'3" wide and 5'6-1/4" high. Within each opening is a row of three casement windows composed of clear glass set within anodized aluminum frames. At the lower level of the penthouse are rows of ten doors on both the north and south elevations. Set within steel frames, the steel doors have a baked enamel finish. The upper level of the penthouse has a row of ten copper louvers along the east and west elevations.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

The United States General Accounting Office, 441 G Street, N.W., Washington, DC

Section number 7 Page 3

SOUTH ELEVATION (MAIN FACADE)

The main elevation of the GAO Building is oriented to the south, fronting on G Street. The elevation distinguishing features of the elevation include the entry forecourt, the main entry, and flanking ramps to the basement and sub-basement parking area. The entry is approached by a polygonal forecourt that is paved with scored concrete. The entry is set one bay to the east of the center of the elevation, which is divided into vertical rows by 46 bays. The main entry itself is framed on the east and west sides by the identical polished red granite found on the base of the building. The frame extends nine bays across the elevation, rising to the lower edge of the second story windows with a cap of aluminum coping of anodized gray finish. An aluminum marquee projects from the face of the surrounding frame. The marquee is ornamented with six stylized eagles with spread wings. Between the eagles are bands of zig-zag ornament in an anodized natural satin finish applied to a background of anodized gray satin finish. The row of 19 entry doors are arranged in five groups of three, separated by four single doors. The openings all measure 3' by 7' with glazed and metal panelled doors. Above the set of three doors are nine-light rectangular transoms, while the single entry doors have three-light transoms. The openings are veneered with a satin finished, gray anodized aluminum.

Relief sculptures are carved into a lighter colored granite to the east and west ends of the entry surrounds. Each relief is composed of six pieces of stone joined to form a single design; three on the upper tier, measuring 3'5-7/16" high, and three below, measuring 4'3-11/16" high. The eastern relief consists of a group of figures representing agriculture, fisheries, mining, smelting and assaying, shipping and transportation. The western relief depicts education, government, architecture, fine arts, and science. Each of the panels is approximately 17'6" wide.

To the east and west of the forecourt walls are decks paved with quarry tiles, forming a canopy over the basement parking entries. On the outer side of the paved concrete ramps are granite retaining walls topped with aluminum railings, while the polished granite base of the building extends down to the inside of the ramp curbs.

NORTH ELEVATION

The L-shape of the building reduces the length of the north elevation, fronting on H Street, to 35 bays. The north elevation is arranged similarly to the south elevation; however, the north elevation has a polygonal forecourt framed by low granite curbs rather than walls. The polished red granite frame again extends nine bays across the elevation. The relief panels that were to flank the frame were not

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

The United States General Accounting Office, 441 G Street, N.W., Washington, DC

Section number 7 Page 4

executed. The north marquee and entry are identical to the south elevation; however, the transoms consist of only single-lights.

A single concrete ramp extends from the west corner of the north elevation to a basement parking entry. Although similar to the ramps on the south elevation, the northern ramp has no granite retaining wall or aluminum railings, indicating it was intended to be a secondary parking entry.

EAST AND WEST ELEVATIONS

The narrower east and west elevations of the GAO Building follow the same pattern of unadorned walls and uniform fenestration as the primary south and north elevations.

Fronting on 4th Street, the east elevation is 26 bays wide and features a secondary entry in the second bay from the south. The entry contains a pair of anodized aluminum doors, each with a vertical row of three aluminum panels. The transom is composed of three rectangular panes of glass in an anodized aluminum frame. The door and transom are recessed within a surround that is an extension of the polished red granite base.

A concrete driveway leads to the two truck entries located in the four central bays of the east elevation. The openings contain double anodized aluminum doors, made up of wire-glass windows and panels. The paved drive was extended 42'6" to the south of the double aluminum doors, providing a turning and parking area for the delivery trucks. To the north, the drive slopes down to a second ramp with concrete paving and curbs. As on the south elevation, the polished base of the building extends down to the inner ramp curb with a granite wall topped with aluminum railing on the outer edge.

The west elevation, fronting on 5th Street, is 11 bays wide, terminating at St. Mary's Catholic Church to the north. An entry, located in the second bay from the south, is identical to the entry on the east elevation. A driveway, bounded on the northern side by a chain-link fence, runs from the north corner of the elevation to a loading dock at the inner angle of the building. The two walls that form the inner angle of the GAO Building at the northwest corner of the site face St. Mary's Catholic Church. Fenestrated the same as the exposed street elevations, the walls consist of limestone facing without the granite base. The loading dock and garage entry, set one above the other, are the only entry openings on the elevation. Both entries are fitted with steel doors set within steel frames.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

The United States General Accounting Office, 441 G Street, N.W., Washington, DC

Section number 7 Page 5

INTERIOR

The interior of the GAO Building is supported by square columns, or piers, set at a distance of 25' on center. Typically, the columns have applied cove bases. The characteristic flared caps of the columns, as well as the air-handling ducts, are concealed in most areas by a suspended ceiling. The floor-through design of the building allows for maximum usable space.

A major portion of the building is devoted to offices and records storage, with the number of highly designed spaces deliberately limited. The significant spaces include the main lobbies adjacent to the G and H street entries, the north-south connecting corridor, and the Comptroller General's suite on the seventh floor. All public lobbies and connecting the north-south corridors on each of the floors, as well as the cafeteria on the third floor, are considered important secondary spaces. All lobbies and connecting corridors, which are I-shaped, feature marble wainscoting and terrazzo floors.

Vertical circulation is provided by two banks of elevators, eight in each, set at the western side of the north and south lobbies. Additionally, two banks of escalators, located on the east side of the lobbies, link the first through fifth floors. Twelve enclosed stairs are found throughout the building. The elevators are decorated with cast aluminum plaques.

The greater part of each floor in the GAO Building was originally conceived as open space that could be adapted for a variety of agency functions through the installation of movable steel partitions. The partitions have been used, in particular, to create cross corridors and rows of offices around the perimeter of the building. Fixed interior walls are generally constructed of structural tile in combination with a variety of facing materials. The sub-basement and basement contain various service areas, as well as parking garages.

SOUTH PUBLIC LOBBY

In an effort to accommodate the change in the grade of the site, the south public lobby was divided into lower and upper portions, connected by stairs which originally spanned the width of the lobby. The steps, constructed of pink-red terrazzo, are divided into five sections by piers faced with Ellis Tavernelle marble between the third and fifth risers. Each stair section has a satin finished aluminum railing mounted at the upper and lower end of anodized aluminum posts with convex fluting.

The lower lobby has a pink-red terrazzo floor with a grid of zinc dividing strips. The east and west walls are faced from floor to ceiling with high polished Ellis Tavernelle marble. At the center of each

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

The United States General Accounting Office, 441 G Street, N.W., Washington, DC

Section number 7 Page 6

wall is a plaster panel that is recessed one inch. Murals were originally intended for this panel, however, they were never installed. The original plaster ceiling with anodized aluminum moldings has been covered with acoustical tile. The piers at the stairs are linked at the top by large beam-like elements, also faced with Ellis Tavernelle marble, which span the lobby area emphasizing the division between lower and upper lobbies.

The upper lobby has pink-red terrazzo floors with two-inch zinc strips creating a double grid pattern. The field of the floor is edged with a nine-inch terrazzo border. All the walls have six-inch bases of Henderson Dark Cedar marble and are faced with Ellis Tavernelle marble. The upper portion of the walls are trimmed with aluminum moldings and projecting steel coves that conceal fluorescent tubes. Currently, because of the installation of the acoustic tile ceiling, only the underside of the light cove is visible. The upper lobby contains an information/security counter, bookrest, directory case and telephone booths.

SOUTH ELEVATOR LOBBY

The elevator lobby is rectangular in plan, set parallel to and immediately west of the public lobby. At the south end, the elevator lobby opens directly onto the public lobby; on the north, it connects with a cross corridor. Rows of four elevator shafts line the east and west side of the lobby. At the time of construction, functioning elevators were originally installed in three of the shafts, with the fourth left empty. The flooring has the same combination of terrazzo-zinc grid pattern as the south lobby with the addition of an inlaid stylized lotus blossom running on axis with the elevator doors. The elevators have nickel silver thresholds and double doors made of anodized aluminum with narrow vertical ribbing.

The unique feature of the first floor elevator lobby, and one of the most significant interior features of the GAO Building, is a series of decorative aluminum plaques. The cast plaques are mounted on and at either sides of the elevator doors. The eight low-relief designs for the smaller plaques, repeating around the elevator openings, depict aspects of nature, such as sunlight, rain, hydrography, geology, snow, wind, energy matter, and astronomy. The larger plaques, vertical in orientation, are mounted directly on each of the elevator doors. Entitled with raised lettering, the plaques depict democratic principles, including "Spirit of Laws," "Freedom of Religion," "Liberty," "Justice," "Internal Development," "National Ideology," and "National Security."

NORTH PUBLIC LOBBY AND ELEVATOR LOBBY

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

The United States General Accounting Office, 441 G Street, N.W., Washington, DC

Section number 7 Page 7

The north vestibule, public lobby, and elevator lobby are mirror images of those on the south side of the building, with one exception. The north side of the site has a flat grade, thus not requiring a division of the lobby.

MAIN CORRIDORS

The central corridor connects the lobbies on the south and north sides of the GAO Building. The corridor is treated as an extension of the lobbies and has identical finishes. The floor is red terrazzo with the same zinc grid, the walls have a Henderson Dark Cedar marble bases and are faced with Ellis Tavernelle marble. The upper edge of the walls have anodized aluminum moldings and steel light coves, visible from the underside only. The steel doors and frames are painted steel. The corridors have water fountains, letter boxes, mail chutes, fire hose closets, and alarm boxes.

COMPTROLLER GENERAL'S SUITE

The rooms comprising the Comptroller General's Suite are located at the southeast corner of the seventh floor. The entry to the suite, at the eastern end of corridor 7000, leads to a rectangular foyer with an east-west axis. The series of rooms along the south side of the foyer consists of the Comptroller General's public office, a passage and two restrooms, a reception and secretarial office, and the Comptroller General's private office. The remaining rooms of the suite are arranged along either side of a private corridor that runs north from the east end of the foyer. To the east of the private corridor are the office of the Secretary to the Assistant Comptroller General, the Assistant Comptroller General's office, and the office of the Assistant Executive Officer.

The walls of the suite are panelled with full height, bleached walnut veneer over plywood and crowned by a walnut cornice. The special feature found within the Comptroller General's public office are an Alberene soapstone fireplace, centered on the west wall, and built-in bookshelves on the east wall, concealed by a pair of flush doors. Originally, the most significant feature of the private office was a mural by John Lewis Chapman. Entitled "Tulip Culture," the painting depicted a tulip field in Beaufort County, North Carolina. The mural, originally mounted on the east wall of the private office, was executed in oils on canvas and measured 7'5" high and 10'6" wide.¹ The conference room contains a mural by Mitchell Jamieson, presently mounted on the north wall.

¹ The mural was removed in 1972, and subsequently loaned to the National Collection of Fine Arts in 1974.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

The United States General Accounting Office, 441 G Street, N.W., Washington, DC

Section number 7 Page 8

Entitled "Historic Dare County," the mural is composed as a montage representing the heritage of that area of North Carolina. The mural is executed in oils on canvas, and measures 7'5" high and 15' wide.

LIBRARY AND ASSEMBLY ROOM

The General Counsel Library is entered from the north side of corridor 7000. The main reading room is a rectangular space with its long axis running east-west. To the west of the reading room is a rectangular Conference Room with north-south axis. The finish of the reading room, conference room and librarian's room includes 12" square cork tile floors and walls panelled in bleached walnut veneered with a 6" base and cornice, both in walnut. The bookcases are walnut with adjustable steel shelves.

The Assembly Room is rectangle in plan with its long axis running east-west. At the west end is a bow-fronted stage with short flights of steps at either end. The floor is slightly angled to the east, providing greater visibility of the stage. There are two aisles, dividing the 247 seats into center and side sections. Cheek walls, triangular in section, project from the side walls. A solid railing, slightly curved in plan, is located at the rear of the center group of seats. The floor is carpeted and the walls are covered with acoustical plaster. A projection screen and recessed spotlights are mounted above the stage with curtains at either side to conceal the wings. The ceiling has a square coffer at the center with rectangular coffers on each of its four sides.

ALTERATIONS

The major interior alteration in the building is the addition of dropped acoustic tile ceilings in the following first floor public spaces: the North and South Lobbies, Elevator Lobbies and connecting corridor. The new ceilings cover the original plaster ceilings and partially obscure the original cove lighting.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

The United States General Accounting Office, 441 G Street, N.W., Washington, DC

Section number 8 Page 1

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The United States General Accounting Office Building holds historical significance within the District of Columbia as the first structure to be erected exclusively for occupancy by the General Accounting Office (GAO); one of the first federal buildings to be completely air conditioned and artificially lit; and the first modern, block-type building to be constructed for the federal government.

Commencing in 1941, and completed in 1949-1951, the GAO Building is presented in conservative modernism, a modern aesthetic exhibited in federal buildings around World War II which presents pure geometric forms with limited ornamentation. Influenced by the architectural theory of form-follows-function, the overall configuration and massing of the GAO Building is dictated by the use of a flat slab construction system. The treatment of exterior materials is subtly manipulated, thus impelling them to serve as decorative detailing. This structure-based decoration assists in announcing the function of the GAO Building as a modern government office building. Additionally, the minimal applied ornamentation of the building, accenting the main entries, functions as an emblem of the philosophy of the GAO and the nation at the mid-20th century.

Efforts to secure a suitable headquarters for GAO covered a span of 30 years, from 1921 to 1951. The scheme for the building had to be expanded several times over that period to keep pace with the growth of the agency. As completed, the new headquarters satisfied GAO's two major requirements for its new headquarters: it allowed the agency to perform more efficiently by consolidating its personnel and equipment in a single location; and it provided sufficient storage to secure records to meet both contemporary and future needs.

The GAO Building has achieved significance as the embodiment of a distinctive ornamentation and form, as well through its method of construction and plan which served as a model that would be followed for both federal and private office buildings throughout Washington, DC. Therefore, the United States General Accounting Office Building meets Criteria C of the National Register of Historic Places.

Criteria C: That embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction.

FEDERAL BUILDING DESIGN AT MID-CENTURY

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

The United States General Accounting Office, 441 G Street, N.W., Washington, DC

Section number 8 Page 2

The beginning of the twentieth century found American public architecture firmly ensconced in the philosophy of the Beaux Arts. Rejection of the picturesque and period revivals that dominated the last quarter of the nineteenth century was vividly obvious with the completion of the Library of Congress, whose design had undergone numerous revisions until the final Beaux Arts scheme was accepted. The Supervising Architect's Office was firmly committed to this classical style, designing hundreds of Federal buildings during the first quarter of the twentieth century. The Public Buildings Act of 1926 formalized this commitment to the style. Established to provide new accommodations for executive departments and independent agencies and imbued with the goal of high standards of architectural beauty and practical utility, this Act was the primary vehicle behind the idea of the Federal Triangle. However, despite its impressive aesthetic and pragmatic success, the enormous Federal Triangle would turn out to be the government's final expression of the Beaux Arts.

In the 1930s, private sector architecture moved from the Art Deco into a reduced Moderne style, only to be replaced by a stream-lined presentation that would soon be replaced by the full-blown International Style. However, for Federal design, the classical motifs were not rejected, only modified--creating first a stripped classicism, then a "starved" version. The Depression had a dramatic affect on Federal design, moving it into a period of "economy and utility." The design and construction of the Department of the Interior in 1936 heralded the official acceptance of a stripped classicism, but this would soon surrender to an even more ascetic philosophy, influenced by the compelling forces of European Modernism. The Federal design program did not fully accept the tenets of the International Style, so popular among the private sector of American designers; however, a greater interest in the nature of materials and a reduction in applied ornament prevailed, clearly influenced by the work of Frank Lloyd Wright.

Gilbert Underwood, the architect of the GAO Building, first made his mark in Federal design as a private architect working for the Curry Company and the National Park Service. Underwood's 1925-27 Ahwahnee Lodge for Yosemite was but one of a series of hotels he designed for national parks that presented the aesthetic ideals associated with Wright. At Ahwahnee, Underwood combined natural stone from the park with poured concrete, integrated native Indian designs into leaded, stained glass, and sited the building to appear as if it had sprung from Yosemite's natural topography. Underwood's interest in materials developed into an understanding of European Modernism, and the seemingly simple forms of his Federal office building designs for the War Department and GAO.

In an obvious understanding of the need for a response to a variety of contexts--historic as well as locational--the designs for Federal office buildings after World War II shifted away from classicism. The country's renewed alliance with the European world seemed to pave the way for the endorsement of the International Style, but American supremacy would not allow that style to dominate Federal

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

The United States General Accounting Office, 441 G Street, N.W., Washington, DC

Section number 8 Page 3

design. Instead, a fusion of ideas resulted and what can be called "Conservative Modernism" took hold.

Underwood became Supervising Architect of the Public Works Administration in 1945. Although the position was reduced in power from former years, it was not without influence and during his tenure Underwood placed his stylistic preferences at the forefront. The building's initial "fishbone" design of 1941 was changed when, as new Supervising Architect, Underwood reviewed and re-designed the building in 1946, after the War. During the intervening years, two major discourses on modern architecture were published: Sigfried Gideon, Jose Luis Sert, and Fernand Leger's 1943 "Nine Points of Monumentality" and Frank Lloyd Wright's "In the Nature of Materials: A Philosophy." Joan Ockman points out the impact of this treatise in *Architecture Culture 1943-1968*:

The approach...was to place monumentality--"the expression of man's highest cultural needs"--within the historical evolution of modernism itself. While modern architecture had earlier been obligated to concentrate on the more immediate and mundane problems of housing and urbanism, the authors argued, its new task in the postwar period would be the reorganization of community life through planning and design of civic centers, monumental ensembles, and public spectacles. This "third step" would involve the collaboration of architects, planners, and artists. The chief difficulty, in their view, was to invent forms of large-scale expression free of association with oppressive ideologies of the past and historicist bombast ("pseudomonumentality").

Underwood was well-known for his modernist design work and surely this important discourse would have affected his thinking. His particular architectural grounding, however, can be directly associated with Wrightian aesthetics. When Wright published *An Autobiography* in 1943, he presented the basis for his architecture as "five new resources." Simply explained, these include: "spatial" (the concept of interior space); "material" (specifically glass as a "supermaterial" that was let light in while permitting the traditional wall to "disappear"); "structural" (Wright called it "tenuity" or the continuity of structure possible when using plastics and steel); "constructional" (or the "nature of materials"); and "expressive" (integral ornament). Although Wright was the architect most publicly and successfully associated with these ideas, they were not uniquely his. Underwood (and others in the early part of the century) demonstrated an interest in these ideas in both his early work and later in Washington, D.C. The War Department (now the State Department) Building as well as at GAO illustrates their application in a Modernist interpretation in a monumental, urban setting. Although different in presentation, analysis of the designs shows the similarities. Critical elements of the aesthetic included spaces that respond to the programmatic needs of the intended use (flexible space dominant over structure, not encumbered by it), an interest in material as ornament, incorporation of technological advancements that would

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

The United States General Accounting Office, 441 G Street, N.W., Washington, DC

Section number 8 Page 4

allow flexible space or otherwise support the necessary use, and a rejection of traditional forms and historical symbolism.

THE GAO HEADQUARTERS

Underwood's oversight of the plans for the GAO headquarters brought that building to a new level of design. Today, it can be seen as the embodiment of American Federal design at mid-century.

Its exterior is characterized by the repetition of simple rectangular forms in both the massing and fenestration, by overall symmetry of arrangement, by the minimal detailing, and by a uniformly horizontal emphasis. Because of the nature of GAO's functions, interior public spaces calling for decorative detailing were deliberately limited. Only the lobbies and central corridors on each floor and the executive suite, library, and auditorium on the seventh floor received distinctive architectural detailing. The remainder of the spaces throughout the building can only be described as typical, functional office interiors of their period.

In addition to introducing a modern style of architecture for the Federal government, the GAO Building is an important example of a new type of Federal office building. Its construction marked a distinct break from the "fishbone" type of office building erected earlier in Washington, DC, which used either interior courts or a series of wings branching from a central spine in order to provide both air and light. The elimination of courts and wings at the GAO Building allowed a substantial increase in the floor area that could be contained within the overall envelope. The building provided an almost unbroken expanse of space on each floor that could be adapted for a variety of activities by the insertion of movable metal partitions. The plan of the GAO Building established a model that would be followed for both federal and private office buildings throughout Washington, DC.

The building's plan was made possible by two technological innovations dating from the years before World War II: air conditioning and fluorescent lighting. The modern concept of air conditioning had originated with Willis Carrier in 1902. The Milam Building, constructed in San Antonio, Texas in 1928, was the first air conditioned office building. The use of air conditioning did not become widespread until after World War II, when the level of technology made it possible to localize input and extraction, thus allowing for a system that could serve subdivided interior spaces.² It was,

² The GAO Building was not the first federal office to be air conditioned. The War Department, the National Archives, the Interstate Commerce Commission, and Department of Interior were the first buildings in Washington, D.C. to have air conditioning; however, at the time of its completion, the GAO Building was the largest air conditioned building in the

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

The United States General Accounting Office, 441 G Street, N.W., Washington, DC

Section number 8 Page 5

however, the introduction of fluorescent lighting at the GAO Building that marks it most significantly. Westinghouse and General Electric introduced fluorescent light tubes commercially in 1938. This technology provided a reliable and economical source of artificial light that when used in continuous strips allowed for a substantial increase in the depth of buildings. This was a crucial factor for the block-type plan chosen for the GAO Building. In addition, fluorescent tubes generated less heat than conventional electric lighting, allowing the air conditioning system to function more effectively. The GAO Building was the first government building in Washington, DC lit exclusively with fluorescent fixtures.

The flat slab construction used for the GAO Building, although not innovative, was an important technological factor in the design. This structural system was invented in 1900 by Swiss Engineer Robert Maillart. It was also developed independently in the United States and patented in 1908 by Claude A. P. Turner. The flat slab system consists of a concrete slab that is reinforced in two or more directions, usually without beams or girders to transfer the loads to supporting members, thus allowing heavy loads to be carried in all areas of the building and on all floors. This was an essential element of the GAO design due to the vast quantities of records expected to be stored at the building.

The fusion of new aesthetic ideas, new structural ideas, and new technological ideas into a single Federal office building marks a significant step in Federal design. The GAO Building represents the beginning of a new age.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND OF THE U.S. GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE

The United States General Accounting Office (GAO) was created in 1921 by the Budget and Accounting Act (96 Stat. 887; 31 U.S.C. 702) to provide independent auditing of government agencies and departments. The new office was to operate under the direction of a Comptroller General, appointed by the President, with the advice and consent of Congress, for a 15-year term. Over succeeding years, Congress has gradually expanded GAO's audit authority and added other responsibilities. Its duties now fall into three primary categories: legal, accounting, auditing and claims settlement functions for government programs and operations as assigned by Congress; assistance to Congress in carrying out oversight responsibilities; and making recommendations designed to provide for more efficient and effective government operations.

District of Columbia and the second largest in the country, surpassed only by the Pentagon in Virginia.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

The United States General Accounting Office, 441 G Street, N.W., Washington, DC

Section number 8 Page 6

The first efforts to construct a headquarters for GAO followed almost immediately upon the creation of the agency. On December 5, 1921, H.R. 9288 was introduced to approve the construction of a building on the government-owned block bounded by Delaware Avenue, Constitution Avenue, North Capital Street, and C Street, N.E. The bill, which specified fireproof construction and appropriated \$10,000, was not enacted.³

On January 16, 1931, H.R. 16245 was introduced, providing for acquisition of a site for a GAO building. This new bill would provide \$950,000 for purchase of the block bounded by 1st, 2nd, Constitution, and C streets, N.E., and provide \$10,000 for the preliminary architectural drawings. Again, the legislation failed to win approval.⁴

The GAO, by nature of its operations, required both office space and large facilities for records storage. During its early years, the agency housed records in rented space throughout the city. By 1934, GAO occupied a total of 420,800 square feet of office and storage space in seven buildings. Files were stored in several other buildings, among them the Old Patent Office at 9th and G streets, N.W.⁵ The largest component of office space was located in the former Pension Building at the southwest corner of 4th and G streets, N.W. which functioned as the GAO headquarters until 1951.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND GAO BUILDING SITES

A major construction campaign to erect buildings for the expanding federal government occurred during the 1920s and 1930s. The Public Buildings Act of 1926 represented a radical departure from the discretionary appropriations enacted at the intervals between 1902 and 1913. Initiated by the Public Buildings Commissions, the act provided the direction for the design and construction of a massive complex within the city to provide new accommodations for executive departments and

³ H. R. 9288, December 5, 1921 in Commission of Fine Arts, National Archives, Records Group 66, Project Files 1910-1952, Box 66.

⁴ Ibid, Box 67.

⁵ Letter and memorandum, J. H. DeSibour to Procurement Division, Department of Treasury, January 3 and 4, 1934. Public Buildings Service, Record Group 121, Box 2947.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

The United States General Accounting Office, 441 G Street, N.W., Washington, DC

Section number 8 Page 7

independent agencies, setting "high standards of architectural beauty and practical utility."⁶ Each department was to have its functions consolidated under a single roof. Significantly, the complex was to be located close to the center of power, joining the Capital grounds with those of the White House. Two years later, Congress authorized the acquisition of 73 acres of land to the west of the White House, and the design/construction of the Federal Triangle commenced.

During the early years of the Roosevelt administration, there was comparatively little government building activity in Washington, DC, except for the completion of the Federal Triangle by 1938 and the Interior Department Building between 18th and 19th street, N.W. in 1935-1936. In 1937, however, President Franklin D. Roosevelt began to push five- and ten-year plans for new government buildings to house the growing number of workers hired to service newly created New Deal agencies and the expanding activities of existing agencies.⁷

In an effort to provide for consolidation of GAO functions and to anticipate future storage needs by 1934, the Public Works Branch in the Procurement Division, Department of the Treasury, had commissioned prominent Washington architect Jules Henri DeSibour to prepare preliminary plans and estimates for enlarging the Pension Building. Designed by Montgomery C. Meigs in 1882-1885, the massive brick Pension Building had originally housed the agency that distributed pensions to Civil War veterans. The proposed work included replacement of the existing superstructure with two new setback stories, subdivision of the interior court, construction of winds, refacing with stone ashlar, and the addition of pedimented porticoes. The scheme would have provided a total of 497,868 square feet of space for GAO.⁸ On July 16, 1935, the *Washington Evening Star* reported that although the House of Representatives had included funding for the Pension Building remodeling in a proposed deficiency appropriation act, the Senate was considering an amendment that would authorize construction of a completely new GAO headquarters.

On August 12, 1935, the appropriation bill for the GAO was approved with a provision for \$4.7 million for remodeling and extension of the Pension Building. Despite the legislation authorizing remodeling of the Pension Building, the work did not begin, presumably because of the controversy surrounding the plan. Within a short time, both the National Park Service and the National Capital

⁶ United States Department of the Treasury. *Annual Report of the Secretary of the Treasury on the states of finances for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1926*. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1927), 631.

⁷ *The Washington Star*, October 22, 1937.

⁸ *Ibid*, DeSibour to Procurement Division, May 24, 1934.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

The United States General Accounting Office, 441 G Street, N.W., Washington, DC

Section number 8 Page 8

Park and Planning Commission entered strong protests against the project.⁹ Further, by November 1935, the GAO maintained that the enlarged Pension Office would not provide adequate space for their anticipated growth in the future.¹⁰

Between 1936 and 1939, there was extensive discussion about the GAO's need for a building and possible sites with little progress. Technically, the decision to remodel the Pension Building stood, but the law was not implemented. Architect Jules Henri DeSibour proposed in February 1936 to acquire Square 518 directly across G Street to the north of the Pension Building as a site for a warehouse for storage of GAO records, connecting with the Pension Building by a tunnel under the street. He suggested first building the wings of the Pension Building, opening them to GAO use, and then remodeling the original portion of the building. This idea does not appear to have been given much official consideration, but it is the first known suggestion that Square 518 be used as a site for a GAO building.¹¹

As a result of the controversy surrounding the remodeling of the Pension Building, the Procurement Division requested amendatory legislation to provide for acquisition of a site and construction of a new GAO building. A memorandum written by Supervising Architect Louis A. Simon in January 1936 referred to a location at Independence Avenue and 4th Street.¹² Further discussions and studies of the GAO's future requirements were conducted throughout the late 1930s. In January 1937, the Acting Comptroller General reported that the GAO occupied 665,064 square feet in 14 buildings and anticipated the leasing of another 25,000 square feet within a month. The site on Independence Avenue was considered acceptable by the GAO, which urged action for a suitable building. Despite this, the proposal for a site and headquarters was again put on hold.

In 1939, the Public Works Branch was removed from the Treasury Department and subsumed by the Public Buildings Administration (PBA) in the newly created Federal Works Agency. On November 2, 1939, the Comptroller General urged that GAO operations be consolidated to one location. The

⁹ Ibid, Admiral C. J. Peoples, Director of the Procurement Division, to Arno B. Cammerer, Director of the National Park Service, December 9, 1936.

¹⁰ Ibid, J. L. Baity to C. J. Peoples, November 8, 1935.

¹¹ Jules Henri DeSibour to Procurement Division, Public Works Branch, Treasury Department, February 28, 1936. *Public Building Service Records*, Box 2947.

¹² Ibid, Supervising Architect to Assistant Director of Procurement, January 16, 1936.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

The United States General Accounting Office, 441 G Street, N.W., Washington, DC

Section number 8 Page 9

agency was now scattered throughout the District of Columbia in 15 different buildings. The PBA proceeded quickly and by February 1940, planned to erect a building for the GAO on Square 518, bounded by 4th, 5th, G, and H streets, N.W. The First Supplemental Civil Functions Appropriation Act of 1941 authorized the acquisition of Square 518 and the construction of a building with a total cost of \$9,850,000.¹³

Supervising Architect Louis A. Simon, together with consulting architects, William D. Foster and R. Stanley Brown, presented sketches for preliminary review by the Commission of Fine Arts in January 1941. The Commission did not take any formal action on the design, but did, however, state that too many government buildings were being crowded into the Square 518 area and recommended that the building should be erected on East Capitol Street. Revised perspective sketches and a model were presented to the Commission again in February 1941. While the overall size and design remained much the same, Simon proposed to change the exterior material to brick with limestone trim. Despite minor design concerns, the commission gave preliminary approval to the design of the GAO Building on Square 518.

SITE ACQUISITION AND FINAL BUILDING DESIGNS

The site selected for the General Accounting Office Building has significance as part of the coordinated efforts of the 1930s for planning the location of government buildings within the District of Columbia. Incorporating some of the oldest commercial buildings in the city, such as the Pension Building (1882-1887) and the Old City Hall (1820-1881), the area exhibits a remarkably long architectural evolution of over a century and a half, including several cycles of redevelopment.¹⁴

During 1941, the work proceeded rapidly to prepare Square 518 for construction of the building. Most of the structures fronting on G, H, 4th, 5th, and G Place, N.W. were three-story brick or frame row houses, some of them containing small stores. Stables, garages, and yards were along the rear lot lines. Two brick warehouses stood on the north side of G Place and an electric substation was on the south side of G Place. A large parking lot was located on the northeast corner of the block, at 4th and H streets. A PBA topographic survey of Square 518, prepared in April 1941, excluded the large lot at the corner of 5th and H streets, occupied by St. Mary's Catholic Church and its associated buildings.

¹³ H. R. 3030, April 14, 1947. Commission of Fine Arts, Records Group 66, Box 66.

¹⁴ Pamela Scott and Antoinette J. Lee. *Buildings of the District of Columbia*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), p 178.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

The United States General Accounting Office, 441 G Street, N.W., Washington, DC

Section number 8 Page 10

This stone edifice, designed in the Gothic Revival style, was constructed in 1891. For reasons unknown today, the PBA avoided acquisition of this lot. The government began to acquire title to the property from individual property owners and in September 1941, the District Court ordered all occupants of the block except for St. Mary's Church to vacate their properties by October 15, 1941.

The original sketches, submitted by Supervising Architect Louis Simon, showed a "fishbone" type building of six stories with a central section and a series of flanking wings. The building heights were to be 80' at the cornice, 89' to the first setback, and 104' to 120' for the penthouse. The principal features of the main facade on G Street were pavilions resting on a 600'-long colonnade.

Jeffress-Dyer, Inc. was awarded to the contract to construct the building. The PBA moved quickly to clear the remaining portion of the site and excavate for the foundation of the new GAO Building. By December 1941, World War II intervened, making it impossible to obtain the necessary materials, such as reinforced steel. Consequently, construction work ceased with only the foundation of the building construction. Eventually, the government cancelled the contract with Jeffress-Dyer, Inc.

Although construction was suspended for the duration of the war, the PBA was revising the designs of the building to reflect the GAO's growth in the intervening years. Discussion of the design, cost, and storage capacity of the building continued throughout the war years. On September 23, 1946, the Chief of Design, following the instructions of Supervising Architect Gilbert S. Underwood, submitted an "analysis and preliminary diagrammatic sketches" for the GAO Building. This revised scheme was based on an eight-story, block-like structure with a basement, parking space, and penthouse. The building would have a gross area of 1,922,300 square feet, with a net area of 1,200,000 square feet for agency personnel and files.¹⁵

In October 1946, the Commission of Fine Arts approved the preliminary sketches of a solid block-type building, in lieu of a "fishbone" type building with its central spine and wings. In addition, the Commission recommended the acquisition of the St. Mary's Catholic Church property. Meanwhile, the National Capital Park and Planning Commission reviewed the sketches and requested that the height of the building be reduced from eight- to seven-stories plus penthouse.

During this period, the PBA continued to work on the design for the GAO Building. Revised drawings for the G and H street elevations were presented to the Commission of Fine Arts and approved on August 8, 1947. Most of the construction drawings for the project were prepared in

¹⁵ Ibid, Chief, Design Division, to Supervising Architect, September 23, 1946.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

The United States General Accounting Office, 441 G Street, N.W., Washington, DC

Section number 8 Page 11

April 1948; however, it was not until January 10, 1949 that the Commission inspected and approved the final model for the building.

On April 14, 1947, a bill providing revised authorization for construction of the GAO Building was introduced in the House of Representatives. A little over one year later, Congress authorized the revision, sending the bill to the White House for President Harry S Truman to sign. The act imposed a cost limit of \$22,850,000 for the work. President Truman signed the bill into law on May 18, 1948.¹⁶

CONSTRUCTION OF THE GAO BUILDING COMMENCES AGAIN

In December 1948, the *Washington Evening Star* reported that construction bids for the GAO Building were to be received on January 16, 1949. The article described the new structure as the "world's largest auditing building" and the "largest single block-type building in the city."

The cost limit of \$22,850,000 in the 1948 authorization for the new GAO Building had been based on the assumption that construction costs would have receded once building began. This did not occur and all of the construction bids exceeded the cost limit. Although funds were available to initiate construction, the contract could not be awarded until the level of funding was increased to cover the full cost of the project, estimated at \$25,400,000. Congress approved the higher appropriation on February 25, 1949, and the contract was awarded that same day to John McShain, Inc., Builders, of Philadelphia.¹⁷

Responsibility for supervising most of the construction of the GAO Building lay with the General Services Administration (GSA), created during the second half of 1949. The Public Buildings Service within this new agency took over the functions of the former PBA. That same year, Allan S. Thorn replaced Gilbert S. Underwood as Supervising Architect. Underwood had played the principal role in the PBA's development of the GAO Building plans, and he was credited with the design of the building, as noted on the cornerstone.

¹⁶ Ibid, Senate Committee on Public Works, Report to accompany S. 713, February 7, 1949.

¹⁷ P. L. 10, 81st Congress, February 25, 1949.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

The United States General Accounting Office, 441 G Street, N.W., Washington, DC

Section number 8 Page 12

A photograph taken in June 1950 shows the structural frame of the GAO Building from the first through fifth stories. A caption on the rear of the photo points out the flat slab construction and the ducts for the air conditioning system. The construction work proceeded rapidly. On January 3, 1951, the *Washington Evening Star* reported that the first occupants, a group of 300 including Comptroller General Lindsay C. Warren, would move into the new GAO Building on January 15. In an article headlined "The Largest Office Building in Washington," the *New York Times* announced on July 15, 1951 that the GAO Building would be completed on September 1. The article described the building as the first block-type building constructed for the federal government and added that 6,000 of the 10,000 employees to be housed there had already moved into their new offices.

The cornerstone ceremony for the GAO Building took place on September 11, 1951. Assistant Comptroller General Frank L. Yates presided, Commissioner of Public Building W. E. Reynolds made brief remarks, and Comptroller General Lindsay C. Warren delivered the address. President Harry S. Truman unveiled the cornerstone.

Gilbert S. Underwood (1890-1961)

Born in Oneida, New York in 1890, Gilbert S. Underwood studied architecture at the University of Illinois and the University of Michigan before obtaining a bachelors' degree from Yale University and a master's degree from Harvard University. After graduation, Underwood settled in Los Angeles, where he established an architectural firm specializing in office buildings and civic structures. Serving as consulting architect to the Union Pacific Railroad, he designed several railroad stations, including the terminal in Omaha, Nebraska.

After the Depression had affected his private practice, Underwood relocated in Washington, DC, working as a consulting architect for the Public Buildings Service. In 1945, he became Supervising Architect, serving in that capacity until 1949 under both the Public Buildings Administration and the General Services Administration. Underwood is particularly noted for those buildings he designed for the National Park Service, such as Ahwahnee Hotel, Yosemite National Park, California; Timberline Lodge, Mount Hood National Forest, Oregon; Grand Teton Lodge, Jackson Hole, Wyoming; and North Rim Lodge, Grand Canyon National Park, Nevada. As Supervising Architect, Underwood is credited with the design of the War (now State) Department Building, Washington, DC; the Federal Court House, Los Angeles; the United States Mint, San Francisco; and the GAO Building, Washington, DC.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

The United States General Accounting Office, 441 G Street, N.W., Washington, DC

Section number 8 Page 13

FINE ARTS: SCULPTURE AND MURALS

The PBA was responsible for the early planning of sculptural works for the GAO Building and for selection of the sculptors. The selection of the painters and the installation of the artwork was carried out by the GSA. In all cases the artists were chosen on the basis of recommendations received from the Commission of Fine Arts and were selected directly rather than through competitions.

SCULPTURE

Joseph Kiselewski of New York City was given the commission for the reliefs at the G Street entry. Lee Lawrie of Easton, Maryland designed reliefs for the H Street entry. Although Lawrie created designs and a model, his work was never executed. Sculptor Heinze Warneke of Washington, DC designed the panels for the elevators.

Joseph Kiselewski

Joseph Kiselewski was born in Browerville, Minnesota in 1901. He studied with Lee Lawrie, Paul Landowski, and H. Bouchard, and also at the American Academy in Rome. During the early years of his career, he won several prestigious awards: Beaux Arts Paris Prize (1925); Prix de Rome (1926-1929); and the Watrous Gold Medal, National Academy of Design (1937). His metallic art won him the J. Sanford Saltus Award of the American Numismatic Society.

The work of Kiselewski known to most Americans is the Good Conduct Medal issued by the armed forces during World War II. The list of his major designs also includes a pediment for the Commerce Building, Vincennes, Indiana; an honorary medal for Occidental College, California; two heroic groups for the Bronx County Courthouse, New York City; the seahorse fountain for the Brookgreen Gardens, South Carolina; a memorial sundial for Bryn Mawr College, Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania; three medallions for the Lyman Allyn Museum, New London, Connecticut; and sculpture for the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company, New York City.

Kiselewski also produced large-scale works for the Federal Courthouse, Brooklyn, New York and the House Chamber of the United States Capitol, Washington, DC. He was known as well for his portrait busts, whose subjects included Sinclair Lewis, Oliver Wendell Holmes, and Lee Lawrie.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

The United States General Accounting Office, 441 G Street, N.W., Washington, DC

Section number 8 Page 14

Lee Lawrie (1877-1963)

Lee Lawrie was born in 1877 in Rixdorf, Germany, and brought to America as an infant. He began to work for sculptor Richard Henry Park of Chicago in 1891 and made some pieces for the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893. The next year, he went to New York City to study with Augustus Saint-Gaudens.

During his career, Lawrie specialized in architectural sculpture; because these works were often to be seen from a distance, he tended to design in a broad style of simple, cubic volumes with uncluttered lines and minimal detail. Many of his pieces have an Art Deco character, particularly those of the 1920s and 1930s, and this manner carried over into some of his later work as well.

Lawrie is best known for the "Atlas" at Rockefeller Center, New York City. His other commissions included sculpture for the Pawtucket Library, Rhode Islands; the Nebraska State Capitol, Lincoln, Nebraska; the Century of Progress Exhibition (1932) at Chicago; and the New York World's Fair (1939). He also provided decorations for the United States Military Academy at West Point; the Harkness Memorial Tower at Yale University; and for the Church of St. Vincent Ferrer, St. Thomas Church, and the Chapel of the Intercession, all in New York City.

Heinze Warneke

Heinze Warneke was born at Bremen, Germany. He studied at the Bremen and Berlin Academies. By 1925, he was living in the United States, and by 1949, when he was selected as one of the sculptors for the GAO Building, was a resident of Washington, DC.

Although Warneke is noted for his reliefs, he also produced freestanding figures and sculpture groups. His work ranges from the "Elephant Group" for the Philadelphia Zoo to the design of the pulpit, columns, and pews for Trinity Church, Upperville, Virginia. Other examples include commissions for Brookgreen Gardens, South Carolina; the Universities of Nebraska and Virginia; the Masonic Temple, Fort Scott, Kansas; Medical Society and the YMCA, St. Louis, Missouri; Fairmount Park, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; and the Office of the Postmaster General and the Department of Interior, Washington, DC.

Warneke exhibited widely and was given one-man shows in Berlin; New York City; Philadelphia; New London, Connecticut; and Washington, DC.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

The United States General Accounting Office, 441 G Street, N.W., Washington, DC

Section number 8 Page 15

MURALS

The original plans for paintings at the GAO Building called for six mural panels, four in the two public lobbies on the first floor and two in the Comptroller General's suite. Cost factors prevented full implementation of the program; therefore, only the two murals for the Comptroller General's suite were executed. In 1953, Mitchell Jamieson and John Chapman Lewis were selected and contracts awarded. Both of the murals depict subjects associated with North Carolina, presumably because the current Comptroller General Lindsay C. Warren was a native of that State.

The mural by John Lewis Chapman was entitled "Tulip Culture." The mural, originally mounted on the east wall of the private office, was executed in oils on canvas and measured 7'5" high and 10'6" wide. Removed in 1972, the mural was loaned to the National Collection of Fine Arts in 1974. The conference room contains the mural by Mitchell Jamieson, presently mounted on the north wall. Entitled "Historic Dare County," the mural is composed as a montage representing the heritage of that area of North Carolina. The mural is executed in oils on canvas, and measures 7'5" high and 15' wide.

Mitchell Jamieson (1915-1976)

Mitchell Jamieson was born in 1915 at Kensington, Maryland. He trained at the Abbott School of Art and the Corcoran School of Art in Washington, DC. For a brief period, he studied graphic art and lithography in Mexico City. In the 1930s, Jamieson was sent to Key West Florida, and the Virgin Islands to paint under the Treasury Art Project. From 1937 to 1940, he painted murals for post offices in Upper Marlboro and Laurel, Maryland, and in Willard, Ohio. In 1941, he won a Department of the Interior commission for a mural commemorating Marian Anderson's historic 1939 concert on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial.

During World War II, Jamieson served as a Navy combat artist in the European and Pacific theaters, and won a Bronze Star. In 1947-1948, he studied in Italy under a Guggenheim Fellowship. From 1949 to 1951, Jamieson headed the painting department at Cornish School in Seattle. He taught at the Madeira School in Greenway, Virginia from 1952 to 1955, and was a visiting instructor at the Norton Gallery and Art School, Shreveport, Louisiana, 1952-53 and 1956-57.

In 1963, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration appointed Jamieson the first official artist for the Mercury Project. Four years later, the Army Office of Military History sent him to Vietnam, where he produced scores of drawings illustrating the horrors of war. On his return to the United States, he completed the four groups of paintings and drawings that comprised his "Plague Series." He

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

The United States General Accounting Office, 441 G Street, N.W., Washington, DC

Section number 8 Page 16

also supported anti-war protests at the University of Maryland, where he taught from 1959 until his death in 1976.

John Chapman Lewis

John Chapman Lewis was born in Washington, DC and studied at the Corcoran School of Art. He received early national attention when he was included in the group of "Young American Artists" selected by the Metropolitan Museum of Art and *Life Magazine*. After service in the Navy and several years of independent study in New York City, he returned to the Corcoran as an instructor for the school year 1949-1950.

In 1950, Lewis was granted a Louis Comfort Tiffany Fellowship. He received awards in regional exhibitions at a number of museums in the eastern United States. His work was included in national exhibitions mounted by the Metropolitan Museum of Art, the Smithsonian Institution, and other major galleries. Lewis was also given one-man shows, in New York, Washington, DC, and other major cities. The list of Lewis' major works includes the following titles: "Towers of Georgetown," "East Side Bridge," "Bay Nets," "Eastern Shore," "Red Nets," "Shorescape, Chincoteau," and "Kneeling Fisherman."

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

The United States General Accounting Office, 441 G Street, N.W., Washington, DC

Section number 9 Page 1

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Articles, Books, Published and Unpublished Resources

Armstrong, Ellis L., Michael C. Robinson, and Suellen M. Hoy, eds. *History of Public Works in the United States, 1776-1976*. Chicago, IL: American Public Works Association, 1976.

Brolin, Brent C. *Flight of Fancy: The Banishment and Return of Ornament*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1985.

Commission of Fine Arts: A Brief History, 1910-1984. Washington, DC: The Commission of Fine Arts, 1985.

Commission of Fine Arts, Records Group 66, Project Files 1910-1952, Box 66 and 67. National Archives, Washington, DC

Craig, Lois A. *The Federal Presence: Architecture, Politics, and Symbols in United States Government Building*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1979.

Gutheim, Frederick, with Antoinette Lee. "The Architecture of Public Buildings." General Services Administration, August 16, 1974.

New York Times, July 15, 1951.

Ockman, Joan, ed. with Edward Eigen. *Architecture Culture 1943-1968, A Documentary Anthology*. New York: Columbia Books of Architecture/Rizzoli, 1993.

Public Buildings Service, Records Group 121, Box 2947. General Archives Division, National Archives, Suitland, Maryland.

Scott, Pamela and Antoinette J. Lee. *Buildings of the District of Columbia*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1993.

Short and Ford Architects. "Historic Structure Report and Preservation Manual for the General Accounting Office, Washington, DC: Final Report." Prepared for the General Services Administration, National Capital Region, September 1990.

Tracerics. "The Origins of the Public Buildings Service." General Services Administration, August 1994.

United States Department of the Treasury. *Annual Report of the Secretary of the Treasury on the State of the Finances for the Fiscal Year Ending June 30, 1926*. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1927.

Washington Evening Star, 1934 through 1951.

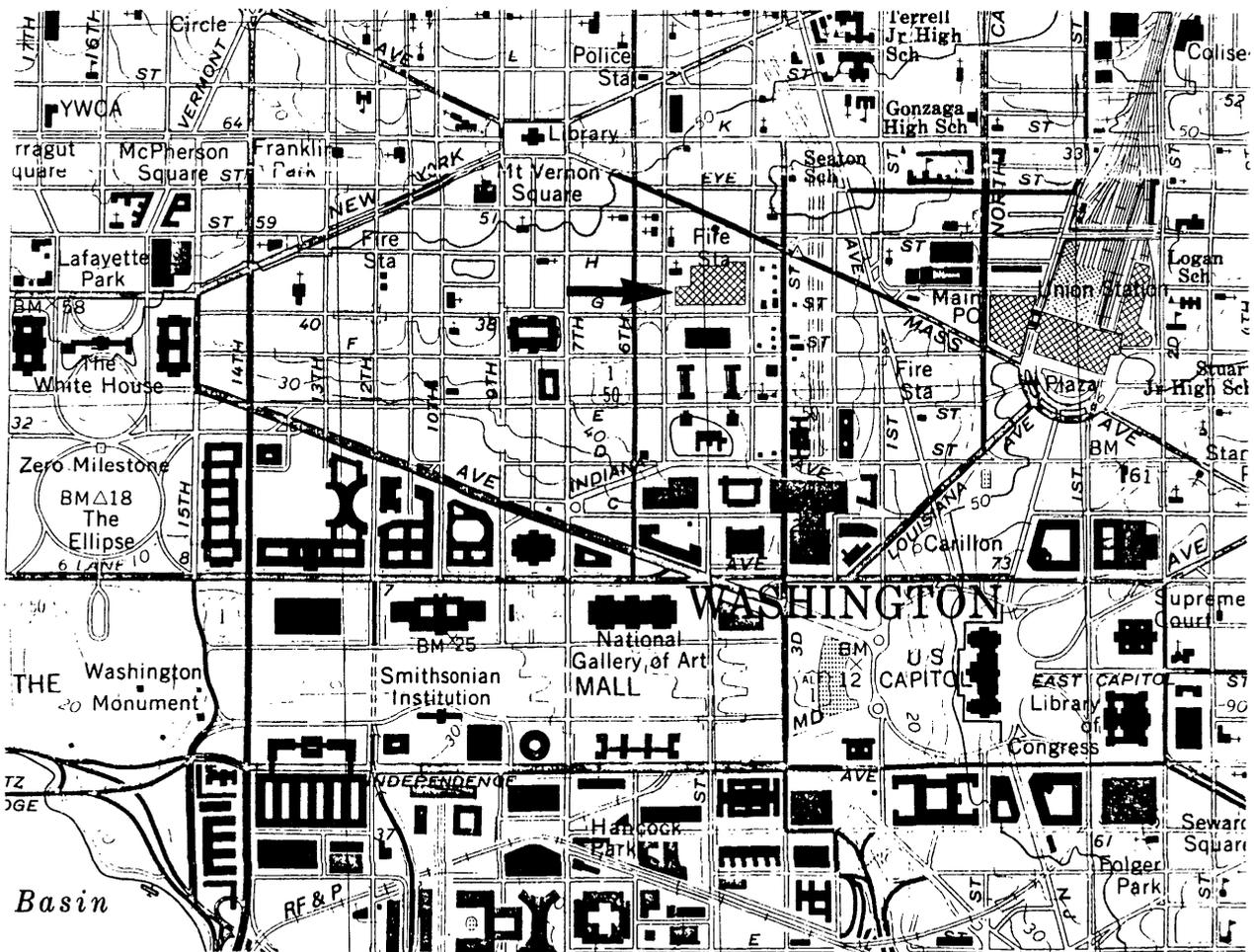
Wilson, Richard Guy. "Modernized Classicism and Washington, DC" *American Public Architecture, European Roots and Native Expressions*, Volume V. Edited by Craig Zabel and Susan Scott Munshower. University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University, 1989, pp 272-304.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

The United States General Accounting Office, 441 G Street, N.W., Washington, D.C.

Section number Map Page 1



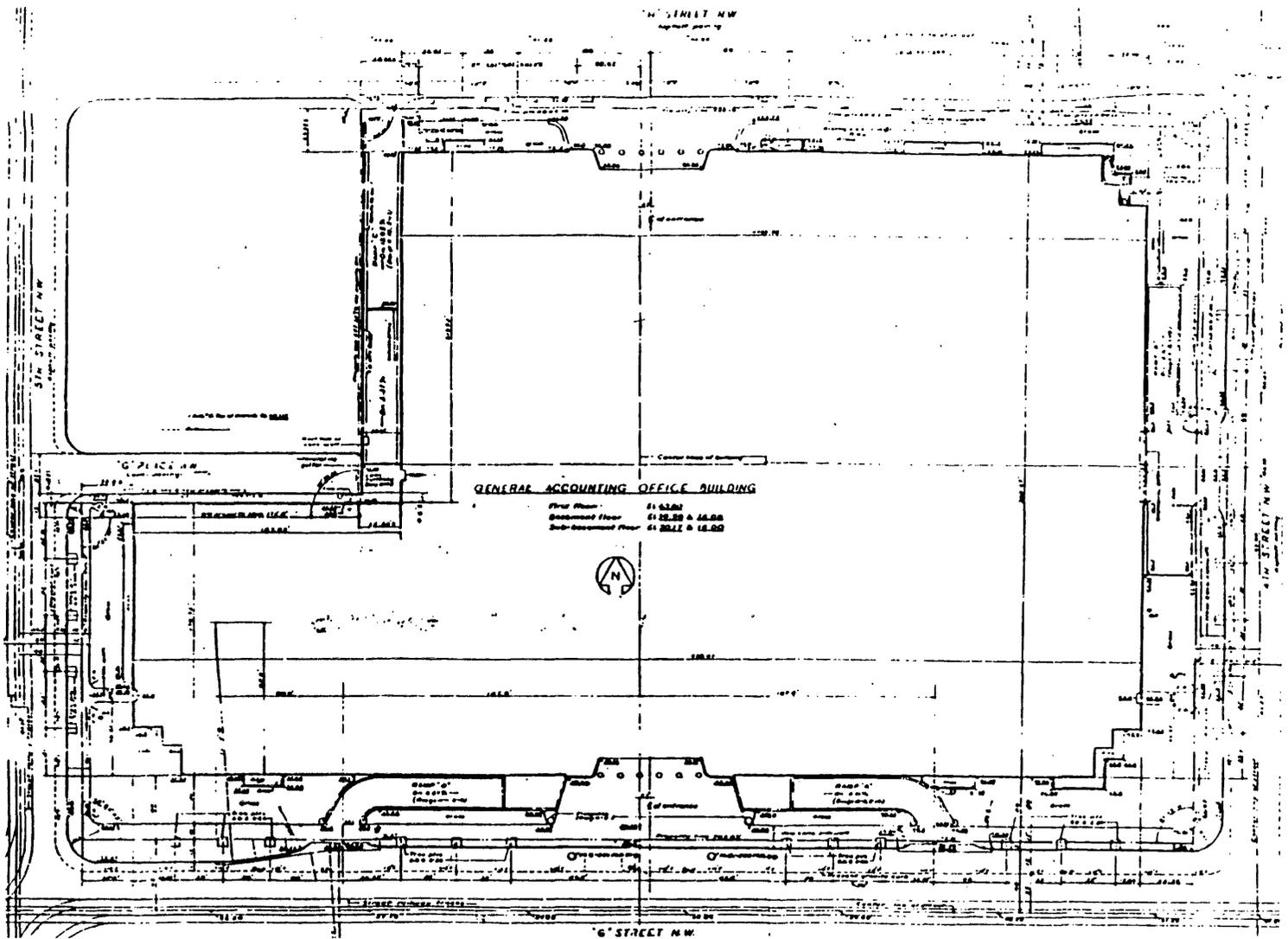
The United States General Accounting Office Building
Site Plan, 1995

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

The United States General Accounting Office, 441 G Street, N.W., Washington, D.C.

Section number Map Page 2



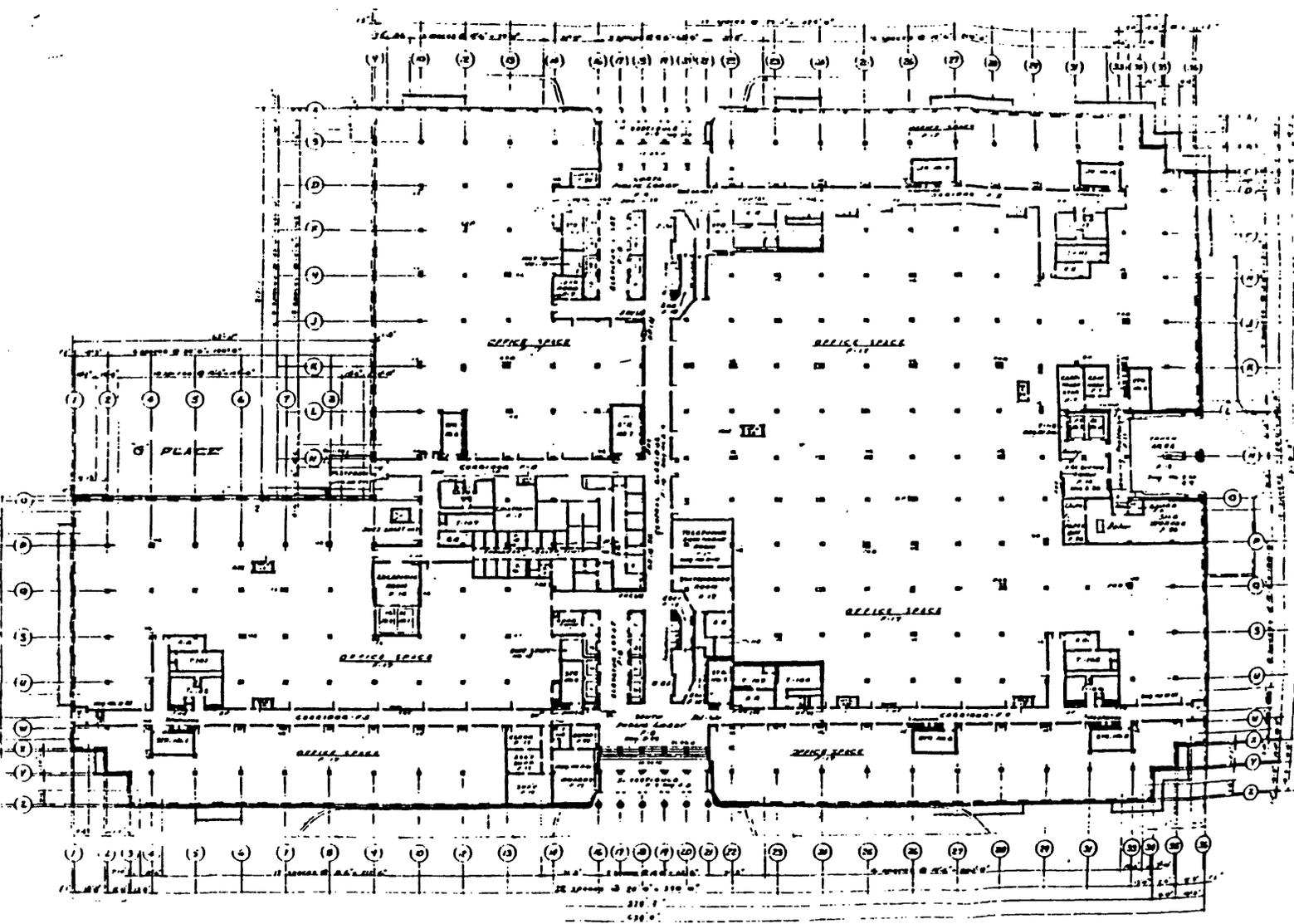
The United States General Accounting Office Building
Site Plan, 1948
(General Services Administration, Regional Office, Washington, D.C.)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

The United States General Accounting Office, 441 G Street, N.W., Washington, D.C.

Section number Floor Plans Page 3



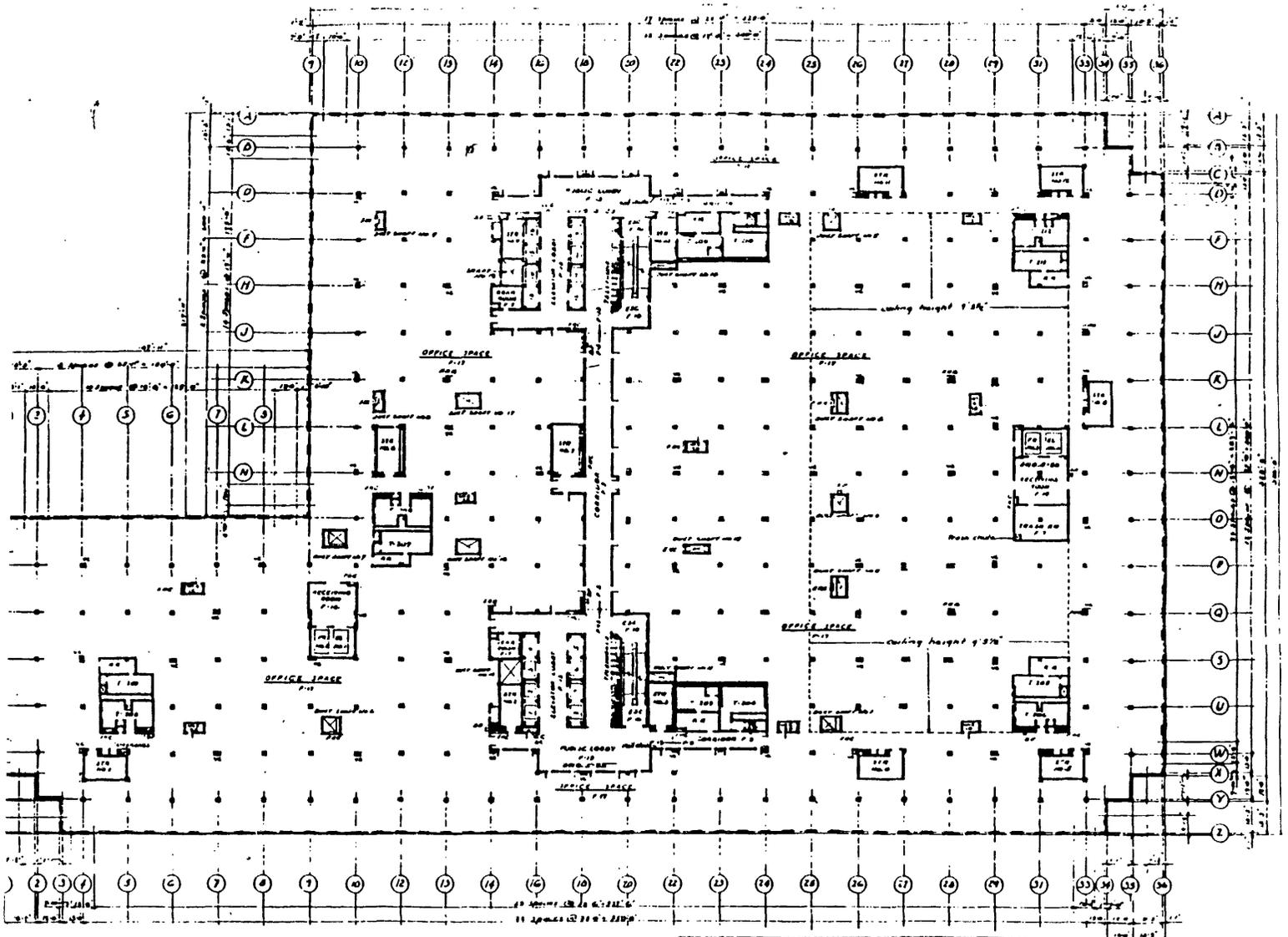
The United States General Accounting Office Building
First Floor Plan, 1948
(General Services Administration, Regional Office, Washington, D.C.)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

The United States General Accounting Office, 441 G Street, N.W., Washington, D.C.

Section number Floor Plans Page 4



The United States General Accounting Office Building
Second Floor Plan, 1948
(General Services Administration, Regional Office, Washington, D.C.)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

The United States General Accounting Office, 441 G Street, N.W., Washington, DC

Section number PHOTOS Page 1

All photographs are of:

**THE UNITED STATES GENERAL ACCOUNTING OFFICE BUILDING
441 G STREET, N.W.
WASHINGTON, DC**

All photographs were taken by Tracerics in April 1995. Negatives are on file at Tracerics, 5420 Western Avenue, Chevy Chase, Maryland 20815.

VIEW OF: South Elevation, View Looking
Northeast
PHOTO 1 OF 18

VIEW OF: Main Entry, South Elevation,
View Looking North
PHOTO 2 OF 18

VIEW OF: Detail of Main Entry, South
Elevation, View Looking Northwest
PHOTO 3 OF 18

VIEW OF: Sculpture Detail, Main Entry,
South Elevation, View Looking North
PHOTO 4 OF 18

VIEW OF: Sculpture Detail, Main Entry,
South elevation, View Looking Northwest
PHOTO 5 OF 18

VIEW OF: Basement Entry, South Elevation,
View Looking Northwest
PHOTO 6 OF 18

VIEW OF: Southeast Corner, South Elevation,
View Looking Northwest
PHOTO 7 OF 18

VIEW OF: Southeast Corner, East Elevation,
View Looking Northwest
PHOTO 8 OF 18

VIEW OF: East Elevation, View Looking
Northwest
PHOTO 9 OF 18

VIEW OF: North Elevation, View Looking
Southeast
PHOTO 10 OF 18

VIEW OF: Main Entry, North Elevation,
View Looking Southwest
PHOTO 11 OF 18

VIEW OF: West Elevation, St. Mary's
Church, View Looking Northeast
PHOTO 12 OF 18

VIEW OF: West Elevation, View Looking
Southeast
PHOTO 13 OF 18

VIEW OF: North Public Lobby, First Floor,
View Looking Southwest
PHOTO 14 OF 18

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

The United States General Accounting Office, 441 G Street, N.W., Washington, DC

Section number PHOTOS Page 2

VIEW OF: Main Corridor, First Floor, View
Looking South
PHOTO 15 OF 18

VIEW OF: South Public Lobby, First Floor,
View Looking Southeast
PHOTO 16 OF 18

VIEW OF: South Elevator Lobby, First Floor,
View Looking North
PHOTO 17 OF 18

VIEW OF: South Elevator Lobby Detail, First
Floor, View Looking Southeast
PHOTO 18 OF 18