

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM  
FOR FEDERAL PROPERTIES**

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: California  
 COUNTY: San Diego  
 FOR NPS USE ONLY  
 ENTRY DATE: JAN 2 1975

**1. NAME**

COMMON: U. S. Court House  
 AND/OR HISTORIC: U. S. Custom and Court House

**2. LOCATION**

STREET AND NUMBER: 325 W. F Street (Union and F Streets)  
 CITY OR TOWN: San Diego CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT: No. 37  
 STATE: California CODE: 06 COUNTY: San Diego CODE: 073

**3. CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Object <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Structure	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public <input type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress	Yes: <input type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Park <input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) <input type="checkbox"/> Comments

**4. AGENCY**

General Services Administration  
 REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS: (If applicable) San Francisco, California  
 CITY OR TOWN: San Francisco  
 STREET AND NUMBER: 49 4th Street  
 STATE: California CODE: 06

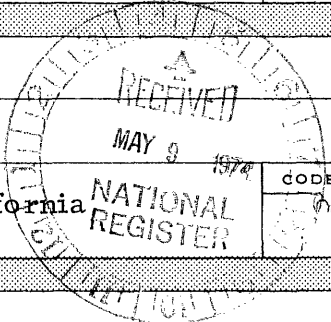
**5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.: San Diego County Recorders Office  
 STREET AND NUMBER: 1222 First Avenue  
 CITY OR TOWN: San Diego  
 STATE: California CODE: 06

**6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE OF SURVEY: New San Diego (Book 10, p. 456, Bl. 39)  
 DATE OF SURVEY: 1850  Federal  State  County  Local  
 DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS: County Recorders Office, City Operations Building  
 STREET AND NUMBER: 1222 First Avenue  
 CITY OR TOWN: San Diego STATE: California CODE: 06

SEE INSTRUCTIONS



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## 7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Good	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The 1913 4-story Custom and Court House blends elements of Spanish Colonial and classical revival styles in a reinforced concrete structure with stucco exterior walls. The space enclosed, including basement is 57,000 sq. ft. The building occupies one-half square block with a 160 ft. front facade on F St., the sides extending 76 ft. along Union and State Sts. Two 5-story square towers with chamfered corners project slightly beyond the main rectangular mass on the F St. side; between the towers are steps to a raised 2-story portico supported on columns with Ionic capitals. Two wings extend from the main mass to the south toward G St. The symmetrical plan is in the shape of a double T with the continuous horizontal bar the front facade on F St., the two wings the verticals. Front and side entrances led originally to a public lobby the length of the facade.

Roofs are hipped on the main block and on the wings are gabled; tile is laid on sheet metal. Floors are concrete slab. The first floor has round arched windows and doors, screened with iron grilles or double gates. Ornamental brackets of Spanish Colonial design projecting from walls at side entrances and portico support lamps.

Before 1936 the following changes were made: the U-shaped court between the wings was filled in with a 1-story flat-roofed structure; the L-shaped court on the east was filled in with a structure projecting 6 ft. beyond the existing side wall; is one story with flat roof. The second story court room windows on the south were closed over. Loading docks were added.

Subsequent changes were: three new courtrooms accommodated to existing spaces, offices repartitioned. The lobby was partitioned off into offices, leaving a narrow hall at the main entrance to an interior corridor.

Traces of the original interiors remain in the east tower where there is an open stair well to the fifth level. The floor covering here is verde granite laid between strips of red marble, plinths are dark verde marble, treads and risers of the stairs are gray granite. The only remaining pilasters typical of the interiors are here; they have Tuscan capitals and egg and dart detail. On the coffered plaster ceiling is a band of egg and dart molding.

Originally, the only courtroom was on the second floor; pilasters and coffered ceilings were intact until remodeled in 1968 following a fire. The previous year, 1967, two courtrooms were built on the first floor in existing spaces. All four courtrooms are now wood paneled. Most ceilings have been furred down and acoustical tile applied; floor coverings are green terrazzo, composition tile or carpeting.

In 1971 and 1972 two annexes on the south extended the facility to G St. These are one-story structures (except for a 2-story portion of Annex A) used for courtrooms; the area is 25,000 sq. ft. Construction is of steel-framed sandwich panels.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**8. SIGNIFICANCE**

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |  |                                       |                                       |  |
|--|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian | <input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 18th Century | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 20th Century |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century  | <input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century | <input type="checkbox"/> 19th Century |  |

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) 1913 (working drawings 1911, occupied 1913)

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |  |   |  |  |
|--|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal              | <input type="checkbox"/> Education              | <input type="checkbox"/> Political           | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric             | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering            | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic                | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry               | <input type="checkbox"/> Science             | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture             | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention              | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture           | _____                                    |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature             | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater             | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce                | <input type="checkbox"/> Military               | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation      | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications          | <input type="checkbox"/> Music                  |  | _____                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation            |   |  | _____                                    |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The only remaining classical revival facade in San Diego is that of the 1913 Custom and Court House. Of significance is the skillful blending of the classical and Spanish Colonial revival styles, the latter seen in the towers, arched openings, deep reveals, tile roofs and other Mediterranean style features.

The outstanding classical element in the design is the 70-ft. long raised portico between two projecting towers; concrete columns with Ionic capitals support roof of the 2-story portico. Well-scaled arched openings on the first floor, and rectangular ones without moldings on the second, are elements of the fine architectural space. Originally the portico gave onto a noble lobby, now lost through partitioning. Regional as well as Spanish Colonial in character is the stucco covering of the reinforced concrete-framed building.

The original plan, wholly symmetrical, combined the formal and informal; the shape resembled a 2-stemmed T, the horizontal bar the front facade, the stems the two wings to the south. The facade is monumental, the wings (originally enclosing a U-shaped court and flanked by courts) were accommodations to function, to sun and comfort.

The only architect listed on the plans is James Knox Taylor, Treasury Dept. Supervising Architect. The working drawings were approved by Structural Engineer E. C. Heald on Mar. 11, 1911. The building was completed in 1913 at a cost of \$763,000.

The Custom and Court House figures in the history of the establishment of a new town center in San Diego, a struggle culminating in 1871 in the removal "in the dead of night" of county records to "New Town." The site of the building was part of an addition commonly called "Davis' New Town," surveyed in 1850 and approved by the alcalde the same year. Listed as one of two surveyors was A. B. Gray, head of a surveying party for the U. S. Bounds Commission to fix the boundary between the U.S. and Mexico; another surveyor was Lieut. T. D. Johns who had come to San Diego to select a site for an army barracks and was persuaded to locate it in New Town. The square block chosen for the barracks was in 1908 turned over by the War Dept. to the Dept. of the Treasury for the sum of \$15,000. By

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

McGrew, Clarence Alan, City of San Diego and San Diego County,  
 American Historical Society, 1922, pp. 185, 197.  
San Diego Union, Dec. 12, 1970, Sec. B, p. 1, col. 5.  
 McPhail, Elizabeth, C., The Story of New San Diego, Pioneer, 1969.

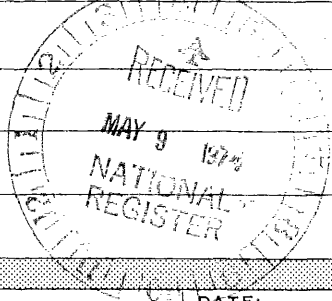
10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
NW	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees	Minutes	Seconds
NE	° ' "	° ' "		32°	42'	54"
SE	° ' "	° ' "		117°	09'	44"
SW	° ' "	° ' "				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: **1.30 acres**

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

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE



11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE: **Esther McCoy, architectural historian** DATE: **Mar. 30, 1973**

BUSINESS ADDRESS:

STREET AND NUMBER: **2434 Beverly Avenue** PHONE: **(213) 396-2033**

CITY OR TOWN: **Santa Monica** STATE: **California** CODE: **06**

12. CERTIFICATION OF NOMINATION

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

State Liaison Officer recommendation:  
 Yes  
 No  
 None

*[Signature]*  
 State Liaison Officer Signature

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

*[Signature]* **2/6/74**  
 Federal Representative Signature Date

Historic Preservation  
 Liaison Officer

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

*[Signature]*  
 Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date **1/29/75**

ATTEST:

*[Signature]*  
 Keeper of The National Register

Date **10-4-74**

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(Continuation Sheet)

STATE	California	
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		JAN 29 1975

(Number all entries)

U. S. Court House, San Diego, California

8. Significance con't

the time plans for the Custom House were drawn San Diego city and county offices occupied land adjoining the site, the former town center having been abandoned.

The lack of critical attention given the building is due to a taste developed in San Diego for purer Spanish Colonial styles, first through Irving Gill's now famous 1906-1913 buildings in a severe style closer to the Franciscan Missions; then the same year the Custom House was completed (1913) Bertram G. Goodheu was planning the California Building in Balboa Park in the more ornate Spanish Colonial Churrigueresque style. The mixed classical and Spanish Colonial revival style Custom House received appreciation late, and by that time it had suffered damage to plan and destruction of interiors. The fabric of the building is sound, and front and west facades in their original state, and the lobby is recoverable. To restore the lobby is to return to the public a fine public space of architectural significance.



U.S. COURT HOUSE (U.S. CUSTOM AND COURT HOUSE) 1913  
325 W. F St., SAN DIEGO, CAL. 04

LAT. 32° 42' ~~54~~ 49"

LONG. 117° 09' ~~44~~ 57"

MAP SOURCE: Survey of New San Diego, 1850

