

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

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: District of Columbia
COUNTY: N.A.
FOR NPS USE ONLY
ENTRY DATE <b>JAN 24 1974</b>

**1. NAME**

COMMON:  
U.S. Department of Agriculture Administration Building

AND/OR HISTORIC:  
Same

**2. LOCATION**

STREET AND NUMBER:  
12th Street and Jefferson Drive, S. W.

CITY OR TOWN:  
Washington

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT:  
Federal District

STATE:  
District of Columbia

CODE:  
11

COUNTY:  
N.A.

CODE:  
001

**3. CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ <input type="checkbox"/> Comments _____ _____ _____

**4. AGENCY**

General Services Administration - Public Buildings Service

REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS: (If applicable)

STREET AND NUMBER:  
18th & F. Streets, N. W.

CITY OR TOWN:  
Washington

STATE:  
District of Columbia

CODE:  
11

**5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC:  
District of Columbia-Register of Deeds

STREET AND NUMBER:  
D. Street at 6th Street, N. W.

CITY OR TOWN:  
Washington

STATE:  
District of Columbia

CODE:  
11

**6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE OF SURVEY:  
None

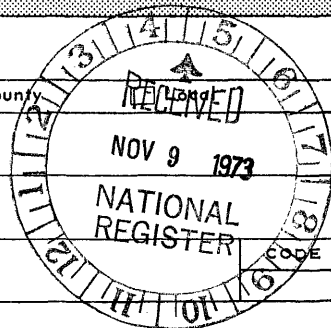
DATE OF SURVEY:  
 Federal  State  County

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:  
Washington

STATE:



STATE:

COUNTY:

ENTRY NUMBER:

DATE:

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SEE INSTRUCTIONS

## 7. DESCRIPTION

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

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Department of Agriculture Administration Building is free-standing on a site bounded by Jefferson Drive (on the Mall), Independence Avenue, 12th Street, and 14th Street, S.W. It is an extremely long building of white marble, having a total extent of 850' composed of two 19-bay L-shaped wings (approximately 160 feet in depth), linked to an 11-bay central block (approximately 175 feet in depth), by two corridor-wide 3-bay ligatures. The shape of the whole is roughly an elongated E. The wings are four stories high composed of a rusticated basement or ground floor, a piano nobile, a third floor, and an attic floor set behind the balustrades capping the entablature. Three-bay pavilions project slightly at each end of the two wings. The pavilions have engaged Roman Ionic tetrastyle colossal orders above the rusticated basement. These elements have pediments set against solid parapets at the attic level. Each pediment contains allegorical sculptures composed of two figures and a central trophy by A. A. Weinman. From east to west the subjects symbolized are fruits, flowers, cereals and forests. Swags are suspended from the volutes of the Roman Ionic capitals of the engaged columns. All ground floor windows are round-arched. The main floor windows have flat caps. Those above have simple architraves. The wing cornices are denticulated. The hip roofs of the wings are red tile. The central block projects beyond the plane of the wings and the ligatures are deeply recessed. The central block is five stories in height, the top story being an attic above the entablature. The principal element of the center block elevation is a shallow duo-decastyle Roman Corinthian portico which rises atop the ground floor through the second, third and fourth floors. The entablature of the central block has a modillioned cornice and supports a paneled parapet above the portico. The three attic panels carry quotations from Saint Paul, Abraham Lincoln, and George Washington referring to agriculture. The east and west elevations of the wings appear curiously truncated in design, as though it was originally planned to extend them into the present site of Independence Avenue. The courtyard elevations of the wings are trimmed with marble but faced with light buff brick instead of marble ashlar. The second and third floor windows of the central block are separated by metal spandrels ornamented by roundels carrying bison heads flanked by strigil motifs. The rear elevation of the central block has pilasters. The central block roof is flat. The rear elevations of the wing spurs are unusual in that they about single-span bridges spanning Independence Avenue to connect the Administration Building with the South Building. These two bridges spring at second floor level and carry third-floor enclosed blind passages. They date from 1936 and have bands of Art Deco ornament at their tops. The soffits are made of Guastavino tile, and the walls are limestone. The easterly bridge is dedicated to Dr. Seaman A. Knapp, founder of agricultural extension work, and the westerly bridge commemorates Secretary James Wilson, whose tenure of 16 years (under McKinley, Theodore Roosevelt, and Taft) remains unbroken. The western courtyard originally housed a heating plant and tall brick stack. Both are now removed.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

The interior plan is simple. A U-shaped corridor gives access to the two files of offices on each floor. The entrance is at grade. Three doors with iron gates lend to an outer vestibule with a shallow-coffered ceiling and a semi-enclosed stairway at the left. Beyond is a groin-vaulted corridor surrounding a two-story high skylit brick courtyard with a central fountain.

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(Continuation Sheet)

STATE District of Columbia	
COUNTY N.A.	
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ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
	JAN 24 1974

(Number all entries)

7. DESCRIPTION

The floors are travertine. The stairway is semicircular and has a fine brass rail. At the second floor level the curved wall of the stairwell has a mural painting by Gilbert White painted in 1934. The subject is drawn from Vergil's Georgics II, the inscription reading "O fortunatas nimis sua si bona norint, Agricolas". The courtyard has on its west wall a marble World War I memorial carved by John Flanagan that has been termed the finest of its kind in Washington. The tablet bearing the names of the fallen employees of the Department of Agriculture is flanked by a sailor and a soldier in half relief. They are depicted presenting arms. The memorial was installed in 1931. The courtyard, glass-enclosed and measuring 88' by 56' with its fountain and War Memorial is the most striking feature of the interior.

The Agriculture Administration was one of the first Government buildings to use reinforced concrete. - the wings were framed in reinforced concrete.

8. SIGNIFICANCE

neo-classical departmental headquarters that characterize much of modern Washington. Although the central section does not relate to the wings as well as it might have, the front elevations of the wings themselves are as felicitous examples of their kind as can be found anywhere in the United States.



**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) 1904-1908; 1928-1930; 1936 (bridges)

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |  |   |   |  |
|--|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal              | <input type="checkbox"/> Education              | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Political | <input checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> Science   | _____  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Agriculture  | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention              | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sculpture | _____  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian  | _____  |
| <input checked="" 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

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

The Department of Agriculture Administration Building is the first of the immense 20th-century neo-classical Government buildings to have been erected in Washington. It is a fine example of the Beaux-Arts manner executed in white marble - the Beaux Arts being a style which reflected the basic tenets of the École des Beaux Arts in Paris, the model for the development and direction of architectural schools throughout the United States in the 19th and early 20th century. The Beaux Arts manner emphasizes a highly ordered, formal plan, axial symmetry, monumentality and classicistic (Roman and Renaissance) spacial relationships and details. Designed by the Philadelphia firm of Rankin, Kellogg and Crane (they were the second choice in a ten firm competition) composed of John Hall Rankin, Thomas M. Kellogg (1862-1935), and Edward A. Crane (1867-1935) - the building established the limits of encroachment on the Mall and set the standard for the later structures of the Federal Triangle. Daniel Burnham and Charles McKim of the Park Commission (known today as the McMillan Commission) and the Department of Agriculture Building Committee were at odds over the proposed location of the structure. The Commission wanted to create an open Mall without buildings, as it is today, but the Agriculture Committee disregarded the proposed McMillan plan (which had not been accepted yet) and placed the building at random in the proposed Mall. Burnham and McKim sought the aid of President Theodore Roosevelt to stop construction of the structure and place it on their proposed East-West axis. The President called a meeting to stress the relationship of the building to the McMillan plan East-West axis assuming that the Agriculture Committee would follow the plan. As a result of the meeting, the Agriculture Committee moved the proposed building towards Independence Avenue but disregarded the McMillan plan North-South axis. Burnham and McKim caught the Agriculture Department Committee when the foundations were in place and again asked the President to intercede on their behalf. Roosevelt called another meeting and succeeded in having the Committee move the building 106 feet west to conform with both the East-West and the North-South axis. Thus, the open Mall concept was saved.

The wings remained unconnected from their completion in 1908 until the central block by Rankin and Kellogg (Crane left the firm in 1925) was built in 1928-30. The pediment sculptures of the wings by A.A. Weinman, the staircase mural by Gilbert White, and the World War I Memorial sculpture by John Flanagan in the interior courtyard are noteworthy in their own right and exemplify the unity of the arts which was a goal of official architecture during the first third of this century. The Agriculture Building also expresses the importance of agriculture at the time it was built, as it was the first of the new huge

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

(Donald Lehman) General Services Administration Historical Study No. 2  
 Agriculture -- Administration Building, Washington, 1964

Federal Writers' Project, Washington City and Capital, Washington, 1937

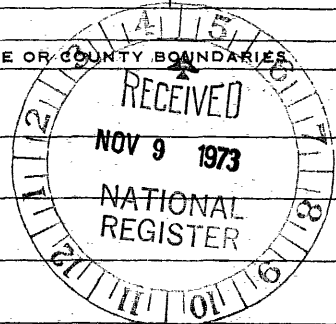
10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

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		N LATITUDE	W. LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees	Minutes	Seconds
NW	° ' "	° ' "		38°	53'	17"
NE	° ' "	° ' "		77°	01'	49"
SE	° ' "	° ' "				
SW	° ' "	° ' "				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 4

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

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE



SEE INSTRUCTIONS

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE: John D. Milner, AIA, Executive Director		DATE: 22 June 1973
BUSINESS ADDRESS: National Heritage Corporation		
STREET AND NUMBER: P. O. Box 167		PHONE: 215-459-8710
CITY OR TOWN: Chadds Ford	STATE Pennsylvania 19317	CODE 37

12. CERTIFICATION OF NOMINATION

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

State Liaison Officer recommendation:

- Yes
- No
- None

*James B. Conner*  
 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  
*Steven R. Kuttelbaum* 10/24/73  
 Federal Representative Signature Date

Historic Preservation  
 Liaison Officer

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

*W. R. Matousek*  
 Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date 1/24/74

ATTEST:  
*George J. Emery*  
 Keeper of The National Register

Date Jan 21, 1974