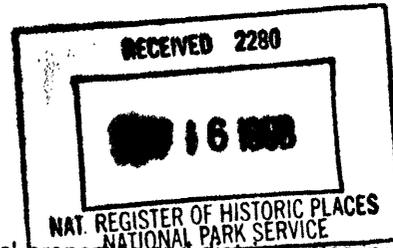


1536

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 determination for individual properties and districts. See instruction 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 Casper Federal Building  
other names/site number Ewing T. Kerr Federal Building and United States Court House/48NA2691

2. Location

street & number 111 S. Wolcott Street [N/A] not for publication  
city or town Casper [N/A] vicinity  
state Wyoming code WY county Natrona code 025 zip code 82601

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this [ x ] 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 [ ].)

John J. Keck 5/29/98  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date  
WYOMING STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER  
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 [ ].)

Constance Warner Kanies Oct. 15, 1998  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date  
U.S. General Services Administration Federal Preservation Officer  
State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- entered in the National Register  
See continuation sheet [ ].
- determined eligible for the  
National Register  
See continuation sheet [ ].
- determined not eligible for the  
National Register.
- removed from the  
National Register
- other, explain  
See continuation sheet [ ].

Signature of the Keeper Date  
Linda McClelland 12/21/98

5. Classification

Ownership of Property  
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property  
(Check only one box)

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

Number of Resources within Property  
(Do not count previously listed resources.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing.  
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources  
previously listed in the National  
Register.

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Function  
(Enter categories from instructions)

GOVERNMENT/post office

GOVERNMENT/courthouse

GOVERNMENT/government building

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Current Functions  
(Enter categories from instructions)

GOVERNMENT/courthouse

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

7. Description

Architectural Classification  
(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY  
REVIVALS/Classical Revival

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Materials  
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation STONE/sandstone

walls BRICK

\_\_\_\_\_

roof STONE/slate

other STONE/sandstone

\_\_\_\_\_

Narrative Description

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

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.

[X] 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)

POLITICS/GOVERNMENT

ARCHITECTURE

Periods of Significance

1932-48

Significant Dates

1932

Significant Person(s)

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above).

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Office of the Supervising Architect of the Treasury Department (James A. Wetmore, Acting Supervising Architect)

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographic References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

[ ] preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested

[ ] previously listed in the National Register

[ ] previously determined eligible by the National Register

[ ] designated a National Historic Landmark

[ ] recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey

#

[ ] recorded by Historic American Engineering Record

#

Primary location of additional data:

[X] State Historic Preservation Office

[ ] Other State Agency

[X] Federal Agency

[ ] Local Government

[ ] University

[ ] Other:

Name of repository:

U.S. General Services Administration

Name of Property

County/State

**10. Geographical Data**Acreage of Property 0.7 acres**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

A. Zone 13 Easting 391910 Northing 4744760 B. Zone Easting Northing

C. Zone Easting Northing D. Zone Easting Northing

[ ] See continuation sheet

**Verbal Boundary Description**

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

**Boundary Justification**

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

**11. Form Prepared By**name/title R. Laurie Simmons and Thomas H. Simmons, historiansorganization Front Range Research Associates, Inc. date 6 January 1998street & number 3635 West 46th Avenue telephone (303) 477-7597city or town Denver state CO zip code 80211**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

**Continuation Sheets****Maps**A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.**Photographs**Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.**Additional Items**

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

**Property Owner**

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name Regional Administrator, U.S. General Services Administrationstreet & number Building 41, Denver Federal Center, telephone (303) 236-7329city or town Denver state CO zip code 80225-0006**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*).**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1

Casper Federal Building,  
Natrona County, Wyoming

### DESCRIPTION

The Casper Federal Building is a massive three-story, rectangular (158' X 87'), Classical Revival style office building (Photograph 1). The building has a hip roof clad with slate tiles. The walls of the building are composed of reinforced concrete and brick tiles faced with red pressed brick trimmed with Wyoming sandstone. Dominating the front of the building is a stone frontispiece with first story entrance arcade. Other sandstone features include the cornice and frieze, a belt course between the first and second stories, and quoins enframing the slightly projecting end bays of the facade. The building has a concrete foundation and raised basement clad with sandstone veneer which extends to the spandrels of the first story windows. Windows of the symmetrical building are multipaned, evenly spaced, and aligned vertically. The visually prominent building stands at the southeast corner of East First and South Wolcott streets in downtown Casper, Wyoming (Photograph 2). The building is in excellent condition and the exterior has undergone few alterations since its completion in 1932.

The facade (west side) of the building is divided into five bays (Photograph 3). The central bay features a projecting, central, sandstone frontispiece with an arcade of three tall semicircular arched entrances facing a raised concrete platform clad with stone veneer (Photograph 4). Each entrance arch is highlighted by a sandstone keystone in relief and has recessed double doors glazed with eight lights in each leaf and a granite sill. The doors are crowned by decorative patterned panels and surmounted by stilted arch multipaned transoms. Between the arches are decorative metal medallions. Terminating the first story is a cornice with metal lettering reading "FEDERAL BUILDING UNITED STATES COURT HOUSE." The entrance arcade forms the base for four two-story engaged sandstone pilasters (twenty-three feet high) supporting the entablature with dentil molding topped by a sandstone pediment. Between the pilasters are flat arched eight-over-eight-light double-hung sash windows. The windows of the second story have sandstone architrave surrounds and spandrel panels. The third story windows have thin stone sills.

Bays flanking the frontispiece have four windows on each story, while the slightly projecting, quoined end bays have one window per story. The windows of the first story are ten-over-ten-light double-hung sash topped by semicircular arched transoms with stone keystones and imposts. First story windows have stone sills and spandrel panels. Windows of the second and third stories are eight-over-eight-light double-hung sash, flat arched, with brick lintels (gauged brick on the second story) and stone sills. Second story windows have stone keystones. Horizontal eight-light basement windows are vertically aligned with the upper windows of each bay and have rectangular window wells. A stone cornerstone at the northwest corner is inscribed with the names of the Secretary of the Treasury and the Acting Supervising Architect and the date 1930 (apparently reflecting the year the building was designed). Adjacent to the northwest corner is a flagpole rising from a round concrete base.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 2

Casper Federal Building,  
Natrona County, Wyoming

The north and south sides of the building have design elements similar to the facade, replicating the sandstone belt course, cornice, frieze, and window treatments. The north and south walls have slightly projecting, quoined outer bays which have one window on each story flanking a broad central bay with five windows on each of the upper stories and four windows and an entrance on the first story. The south wall has an arched entrance accessed by a concrete handicap ramp with metal railings at the west end of the center bay which has inset double doors (Photograph 5). The inset entrance area is clad with stucco. One window on the first floor and one window on the second story of the south wall have been filled in with brick. The north wall has a similar entrance accessed by stairs (Photograph 6). On the north, a flat roofed brick dormer with sandstone coping includes a small fanlight window. On the north are rectangular window wells.

The north and south ends of the rear (east side) of the building have hip roof, slightly projecting, quoined, three-story bays. The end bays flank flat roof, two-story, inside bays which enclose second story light wells in the center of the building. The inside bays, in turn, flank a taller, central, slightly projecting, two-story, flat roof bay (Photograph 7). The east wall has a continuous sandstone belt course between the first and second stories and a similar course above the second story windows of the central bay. The lower, flanking bays have sandstone coping and the end bays have sandstone friezes and cornices.

The three-story end bays continue the window treatments of the facade, with the addition of narrow, four-over-four-light double-hung sash windows with stone sills on the second stories of the southern and northern bays. The first story of the southern inside bay has two rows of short, paired windows with stone sills (Photograph 8). The lower row has paired four-light windows, topped by decorative panels. The upper row of windows illuminating the mezzanine are two-over-two-light double-hung sash; one window is covered with a louvered vent and one has a security grille. The center bay has similar mezzanine windows with grilles. The northern inside bay has three ten-over-ten-light double-hung sash windows with arched transoms and with stone impost, keystones, and sills. The central bay has second story windows with multipaned arched transoms with stone impost, keystones, and sills flanking a blind arch with similar stone trim; above the windows are two stone medallions. The inside flanking bays have eight-over-eight-light double-hung sash windows with gauged brick lintels, keystones, and stone sills on the second story.

Projecting from the center of the first story of the rear wall is a one-story, flat roof, partially enclosed loading dock (Photographs 8 and 9). The loading dock has a raised, concrete foundation and brick walls on the north and south. The roof has stone coping on the side walls and metal flashing along the front and is supported by metal pole supports. The southern end of the dock is enclosed with brick and the enclosure has double slab doors on the north wall. The central part of the dock has metal stairs and the north end has concrete stairs with tube railings. Facing the central stairs on the east wall are double slab doors. To the south of the stairs is an opening

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 3

Casper Federal Building,  
Natrona County, Wyoming

which has been filled in with brick. North of the central stairs is a freight elevator door. South of the dock is a stairwell with stairs leading to the basement of the building.

### Interior Features

The interior was remodeled in 1970-71, when the post office moved to a new building. At that time, an interior vestibule at the main entrance on the west was removed and replaced by a corridor; post office boxes and service windows were removed; and interior offices were reconfigured. In 1987-90, the interior was again remodeled and some elements were restored. The District Courtroom on the second floor is the most intact and architecturally distinguished space within the building, retaining most of its original features and character, including wood trim, millwork, judge's bench, witness stand, entrance doors, and wall paneling (Photograph 10). Other notable original features of the interior include a mezzanine above the first floor on the east side (now filled with mechanical equipment). Much of the wood trim remains, as well as corridors with terrazzo and white marble flooring, an elevator entrance with marble surround and brass elevator doors (Photograph 11), and a north staircase with marble treads and risers. The bathrooms have marble wainscot and partition walls, terrazzo flooring, and paneled wood stall doors. The third floor has metal stairs leading to the attic.

### Alterations

The front (west side) of the building originally had three curved, projecting balconets on the central bay of the second story. The balconets were removed prior to 1955. In the 1970-71 remodeling, new entrances on the north and south were created from window openings. The handicap ramp on the south was also added. Carving with the name of the building was removed from the entablature and metal lettering and medallions identifying the building was added when the building was renamed.

In the 1987-90 remodeling, all exterior windows and doors were replaced with reproduction aluminum clad wood units replicating the originals. The transom lights of the first story have opaque glass. Two windows on the south have been filled in with brick and some windows on the rear (east) have been filled with brick or covered with metal louvers. Decorative panels above the rear first story windows of the southern inside bay have been added. Window wells on the south are gone. An opening facing the loading dock has been filled in with brick. The loading dock was originally covered with a flat roof, suspended hood. In 1979, the dock underwent alterations, including extension of the dock which obscures northern windows; brick enclosures on the north and south; metal pole supports; and alterations to the roof. A flag pole suspended from the front of the building has been removed and replaced with a tall, freestanding flagpole at the northwest corner. The 1987-90 improvements also included new landscaping.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 4

Casper Federal Building,  
Natrona County, Wyoming

### SIGNIFICANCE

The building is significant under Criterion C for its architecture, which is an excellent example of the Classical Revival style federal office buildings erected in the United States during the early twentieth century. Representative features of the design include the rectangular plan, symmetrical facade, prominent location, pedimented frontispiece with arched entrances and two-story pilasters, and low hipped roof. Other distinguished elements of the exterior include the Wyoming sandstone comprising the base, belt courses, frieze, cornice, and quoins, and the evenly spaced multipaned double-hung sash windows with stone trim. The interior is significant for its District Courtroom with original wood paneling, millwork, and trim, and its judge's bench, witness box, and elaborated entrances. The building is also significant for its representation of the work of the Office of the Supervising Architect of the Treasury Department during the tenure of James A. Wetmore. The building's prominent location, monumental size, and solid, finely crafted construction make it a significant component of Casper's architectural heritage and proclaim the city's role as a major regional center. The period of significance for the building extends from its completion in 1932 through the period of its historic use ending in 1948.

### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

#### Introduction

Early development of the vicinity of present-day Casper consisted of large-scale cattle and sheep raising operations in the 1870s and 1880s. In 1888, the construction of the Wyoming Central Railroad through the area led to the settlement of Casper at the railhead. The economic collapse of the cattle industry in that year stopped a further extension of the railroad until 1905, when it was pushed westward to Lander. Casper incorporated in 1889 and became the county seat of Natrona County in 1890. Early efforts to develop the oil fields in the Casper region were made in the 1890s, but large-scale, commercial production did not take place until World War I, when a full-scale oil boom began. The population of the city soared, reaching an estimated peak of 35,000 persons. The commercial, residential, and public sectors expanded to meet the increased population. As a result of this growth, a joint Post Office-Treasury Department study in the 1920s identified Casper as a logical location for a new federal building.<sup>1</sup>

The boom began to lose momentum by the mid-1920s, becoming a full-scale bust by the end of the decade, as oil fields in Texas and Oklahoma were developed with lower production costs than those of Casper. Many oil wells in the Casper area were capped and a good proportion of residents departed for more promising economic locations. Some newly constructed homes in

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<sup>1</sup>"Casper, Boom to Bust: Boom to Stability," *Wyoming* (11 October 1957):22-23; *Casper Diamond Jubilee*, 1964.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 5

Casper Federal Building,  
Natrona County, Wyoming

recently platted subdivisions were even removed from their foundations and hauled to other cities. Planning for the new federal building was well underway as the local economy continued to decline, and its completion was one of the major construction projects of the early 1930s, providing jobs for a number of local men. It was also one of the last buildings erected as a result of the oil boom. As one historian judged, the boom "made Casper, Wyoming, what it was and largely what it remains."<sup>2</sup>

### Federal Building Planning and Design

Oil boom economic growth rendered Casper's first federal building, which had been erected in 1916, overcrowded, unsafe, and inefficient.<sup>3</sup> In February 1924, the **Casper Daily Tribune** argued that "with all the business which must be handled Casper feels that it needs a new postoffice."<sup>4</sup> Gross postal receipts, a good barometer of a community's population and level of economic activity, increased from \$15,819 in 1915 to \$154,107 in 1924. While the town did not immediately receive a new building, in late 1924 a one-story addition was built onto the rear of the existing structure. The **Daily Tribune** reported that the \$20,000 addition gave some relief to the overcrowding. According to Edwin M. Bean, the local postmaster,

the expansion of quarters represents only a temporary amelioration of the congested condition that has existed for years. Clerks are still compelled to work in the basement, where virtually no provision is made for ventilation. As a result their efficiency and even their physical health must suffer. Missionary work to convince congress of the urgent need for a new and commodious federal building will continue.<sup>5</sup>

Wyoming's lone Congressman, Charles E. Winter, a Republican who served in Congress from 1923 through 1929, led the effort in the U.S. House of Representatives to authorize and appropriate funds for construction of a new building. He later praised Postmaster Bean, the Chamber of Commerce, service clubs, and private citizens for supporting the goal of a new federal building. A replacement federal building for Casper was recommended in a 1926-27 study of

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<sup>2</sup>Ibid. and Michael Cassity, Casper, Wyoming: Historic and Architectural Properties Multiple Property Documentation Form, "Historic Context 1: Urbanization in Casper, Wyoming, 1889-1939," E-4.

<sup>3</sup>Research materials for a downtown Casper walking tour, in the files of the Fort Caspar Museum, Casper, Wyoming. The 1916 federal building has been demolished; it is pictured in Edna Kukura and Susan True, **Casper: A Pictorial History** (Norfolk, Virginia: Downing Company, 1986).

<sup>4</sup>**Casper Daily Tribune**, 3 February 1924, 11.

<sup>5</sup>**Casper Daily Tribune**, 15 February 1925, 10.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 6

Casper Federal Building,  
Natrona County, Wyoming

federal government space needs and was finally authorized and approved in 1930.<sup>6</sup>

The site of the new building was selected in 1929. The rectangular (210' X 140') parcel was located at the southeast corner of South Wolcott and East First streets and included Lots 1 through 3, Block 6, of the Original Townsite. The federal government in 1929 purchased the property, slightly northeast of the Casper business district and just one block from the old federal building, for \$44,000. The existing buildings on the site included at least two residences and possibly a small corner grocery store. One of the houses was that of early Casper resident Wilson F. Kimball, a newspaper publisher, who moved to the town in 1890. W.V. Johnson, a contractor, and Forest Jackson, a house-moving specialist performed the removal or demolition of the buildings.<sup>7</sup>

The Office of the Supervising Architect of the Treasury Department designed the Casper Federal Building. During the period of its design and erection, James A. Wetmore served as the Acting Supervising Architect of the U.S. Treasury Department, and his name appears on the building's cornerstone. Wetmore was born in Bath, New York, in 1863, and educated in the public schools of that state. He began a career as a court stenographer and joined the U.S. Treasury Department in Washington in 1885. In 1896, Wetmore received a law degree from Georgetown University. Wetmore served as Acting Supervising Architect of the Treasury from 1915 to 1933. The *New York Times* reported that "though untrained as an architect, he rose to the office of architectural supervisor through his ability as an administrator and organizer." After his retirement Wetmore moved to Florida where he died in 1940. According to one source, during Wetmore's tenure "the Superintendent of the Architectural Division, Louis A. Simon, exercised considerable influence on the design of federal buildings."<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>6</sup>*Casper Tribune-Herald*, 15 July 1931, 1; Congressional Quarterly, Inc., *Members of Congress Since 1789* (Washington: Congressional Quarterly, Inc., 1977), 150; Institute for Urban and Local Studies, "Historic U.S. Post Offices in Wyoming, 1900-1941," National Register of Historic Places Thematic Nomination, Spokane, Washington: Institute for Urban and Local Studies, Eastern Washington University, 1986, citing U.S. House Document 710 (17 February 1927) and U.S. House Document 788 (27 February 1931).

<sup>7</sup>Research material for downtown Casper walking tour, in the files of the Fort Caspar Museum, Casper, Wyoming; Frances S. Webb, *Casper's First Homes* (Casper: Mountain States Lithographing, 1978), 14; and *Casper Daily Tribune*, 27 January 1931, 8.

<sup>8</sup>*New York Times*, 15 March 1940, 23; Henry F. Withey and Elsie R. Withey, *Biographical Dictionary of American Architects (Deceased)* (Los Angeles, California: New Age Publishing Co., 1956), 647; Lois A. Craig, *The Federal Presence: Architecture, Politics, and National Design* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1978), 195; and Institute for Urban and Local Studies, "Historic U.S. Post Offices in Wyoming, 1900-1941."

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 7

Casper Federal Building,  
Natrona County, Wyoming

### Construction

The general contractor for the Casper Federal Building was Murch Brothers Construction Company of St. Louis, Missouri. H. Goldsworthy, the vice president of the company, was in Casper at the beginning of the project to oversee the awarding of subcontracts. Walter Murch was project construction superintendent for the general contractor at the initiation of the job, while E.J. Jarvis held that position at the time the building was completed. The on-site construction engineer for the federal government was F.E. Hayes, Jr.<sup>9</sup> Excavation for the foundation and basement of the federal building began 26 January 1931. Construction progress photographs reveal that the project relied largely on manpower, rather than heavy equipment. Excavation was carried out using mule teams and scrapers. Wheeled pushcarts were used to transport and pour concrete within the building. Manual hoists moved materials to upper floors.

The internal framework of the building consisted of reinforced concrete columns (See Figure 1). Rognstad and Olson of Casper secured the subcontract for performing the concrete work. The exterior walls were composed of brick tiles clad with face bricks and stone. Face brick was supplied by the Lovell Clay Products Company, Lovell, Wyoming, while the Western Brick and Supply Company, Lincoln, Nebraska, provided the brick tile. Stone for the project was obtained by the Casper Monument Works operated by Robert Simpson. His contract called for supplying 9,000 cubic feet of Wyoming sandstone from a quarry in Rawlins, Wyoming, and some Vermont granite for about \$25,000. The stone was shipped to the Casper firm where it was cut and polished.<sup>10</sup>

The cornerstone at the northwest corner of the new building was laid 14 July 1931 in a Masonic ceremony. Items placed in the cornerstone included Masonic publications and paraphernalia, and copies of current newspapers, which included lists of Casper area federal employees and names of firms working on the construction project. Grand Master Elwood Anderson of Gillette presided at the ceremony and former Congressman C.E. Winter delivered the main oration. Winter traced his efforts to secure funding for the building and stated that

this day and event marks a milestone in the progress of the west, of the state of Wyoming, and more particularly, of the city of Casper. Notwithstanding the present conditions [i.e., the Great Depression], which are not peculiar to Casper, we have pride in the past achievements of our city and its people. What is more important, we have faith in its future. Casper has been and will continue to be a city of commercial destiny. This is inevitable because of its location and surrounding

<sup>9</sup>Casper Daily Tribune, 2 January 1931, 1.

<sup>10</sup>Casper Daily Tribune, 7 January 1931, 1 and Casper Tribune-Herald, 14 June 1931, 4.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 8

Casper Federal Building,  
Natrona County, Wyoming

resources. We shall in due time go on to greater growth and prosperity.<sup>11</sup>

By September 1931, brick and stone were being laid on the first story walls of the building. By November 1931, brickwork had been completed on the north elevation, while it was still underway on the upper floors of the facade. Casper brick contractor John A. Ridle received the subcontract for the masonry work on the building, including the installation of brick, stone, and tile. Ridle had previously undertaken brickwork for the Texas oil refinery east of Casper and for an electric plant at Midwest, Wyoming.<sup>12</sup>

By May 1932, most of the windows had been installed. The building's roof was in place by August 1932; Bacon and Schramm of Denver, Colorado, applied the slate roof tiles. The United Terrazzo and Mosaic Company of Omaha, Nebraska laid the terrazzo floors in the corridors. Alfred Davis of Pensacola, Florida was responsible for the building's marble.<sup>13</sup>

### Dedication

The Casper Federal Building was officially completed on 9 October 1932 and accepted by the government (See Figures 2 and 3). The formal dedication of the \$360,000 building was held 11 October 1932. U.S. Senator Robert D. Carey had been scheduled to deliver the dedication address, but circumstances prevented him from attending. The ceremony was marked by the singing of "America," a speech of acceptance by Postmaster Verne W. Mokler, and an address by Casper Mayor E.M. Rowell. The **Casper Tribune-Herald** hailed the facility as "one of the finest governmental structures in the Rocky Mountain region" and one to "which Casper citizens can justly point with pride. It represents the very latest developments in government postoffices and court houses." Four to five thousand persons reportedly toured the building following the dedication ceremony.<sup>14</sup>

While commending the building's "red brick and white trim" exterior, an article in the local newspaper had even greater praise for the interior:

The interior of the building is a beautiful harmony of brown and white....The

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<sup>11</sup>**Casper Tribune-Herald**, 15 July 1931, 1.

<sup>12</sup>**Casper Daily Tribune**, 30 January 1931, 6.

<sup>13</sup>U.S. Public Buildings Service, Records of the Public Buildings Service, Progress Photographs and Final Photographs, 1915-1970, Box 38, in the files of the National Archives, Rocky Mountain Branch, Denver, Colorado and **Casper Tribune-Herald**, 14 July 1931, 4. The latter newspaper article has a very complete listing of all subcontractors who worked on the building.

<sup>14</sup>**Casper Tribune-Herald**, 9 October 1932, 2 and 11 October 1932, 1 and **Casper Morning Times**, 11 October 1932, 1.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Casper Federal Building,  
Natrona County, Wyoming

Section number 8 Page 9

spaciousness of the corridors, rooms and, in fact, the entire interior, is one of the most distinctive features of the building....Every conceivable government department appears to have been lavishly cared for, from postmaster to janitor. Every room, every department, is most modernly and thoroughly equipped.<sup>15</sup>

The building's corridors featured indirect lighting using opaque panels near the ceiling. The structure was heated by steam from a furnace plant in the basement, which was originally fueled by coal. An Otis elevator manned by a "pilot" provided service to the building's three floors. The second floor federal courtroom was described as one of the "outstanding units" of the new building: "Concealed lights behind the ceiling heading flood the domed ceiling, which has the hue of gold. Rich tones make the courtroom one of beauty. The floor is of cork tile. The room is especially notable for its fine acoustics."<sup>16</sup>

### Building Uses

The new building was designed as a combination federal building, post office, and U.S. Courthouse, and permitted the consolidation of all federal agencies in the Casper area in one location. Employees of some agencies worked in leased space in downtown Casper prior to the opening of the 1932 building. A total of seventy-eight federal workers initially occupied the new structure. Much of the first floor was occupied by the post office, with a 1,800-box lobby, service windows, the Postmaster's office, and a large sorting area. A swing or lounge room for postal workers was located on the second floor, including an adjoining lavatory with shower.

The U.S. Geological Survey of the Department of the Interior was housed in thirteen offices on the third floor, as well as operating drafting and blueprinting facilities in the basement. The federal courts occupied the second floor, with a courtroom and offices for the Clerk, Deputy U.S. Marshal, and U.S. Attorney. A grand jury room was located on the third floor. Other agencies in the building included Army and Navy Recruiting, the Internal Revenue Service, the County Agent of the Department of Agriculture, the U.S. Employment Service of the Department of Labor, and the Veterans Bureau.<sup>17</sup>

As time passed, the once commodious 1932 building became too small to accommodate the space requirements of federal agencies in Casper (See Figure 4). In 1970 a new federal building and post office was completed two blocks northwest of the 1932 building. The removal of post office functions from the older building necessitated alterations to its interior space. In 1986 Alan B. Johnson was appointed as the first U.S. District Court judge permanently assigned to Casper.

<sup>15</sup>Casper Tribune-Herald, 9 October 1932, 2.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., 2. The cork flooring is gone and the ceiling has been altered.

<sup>17</sup>Casper Tribune-Herald, 14 July 1931, 4 and 9 October 1932, 1.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 10

Casper Federal Building,  
Natrona County, Wyoming

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During the 1987-1990 period the building underwent an extensive interior rehabilitation to accommodate expanded court functions. Tim Belton of Sheridan, Wyoming, was architect for the remodeling. The building was formally renamed the "Ewing T. Kerr Federal Building" on 30 March 1992. Kerr was a former Wyoming Attorney General and U.S. District Court judge. The U.S. District Court, the U.S. Bankruptcy Court, the U.S. Attorney, and the U.S. Marshal now occupy the building.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>Casper Star-Tribune, 22 June 1987 and 5 December 1987 and Casper Journal, 9 December 1989.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number   8   Page  11 

Casper Federal Building,  
Natrona County, Wyoming



Figure 1 This July 1931 view northwest of the south and east sides of the Casper Federal Building shows its reinforced concrete skeleton under construction. Note the pile of brick tile blocks in the lower right, which were used in the exterior walls, and the hoist (right center), which carried materials to upper floors. SOURCE: U.S. Public Buildings Service, Records of the Public Buildings Service, Progress Photographs and Final Photographs, 1915-1970, Box 38, in the files of the National Archives, Rocky Mountain Branch, Denver, Colorado.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number   8   Page  12 

Casper Federal Building,  
Natrona County, Wyoming

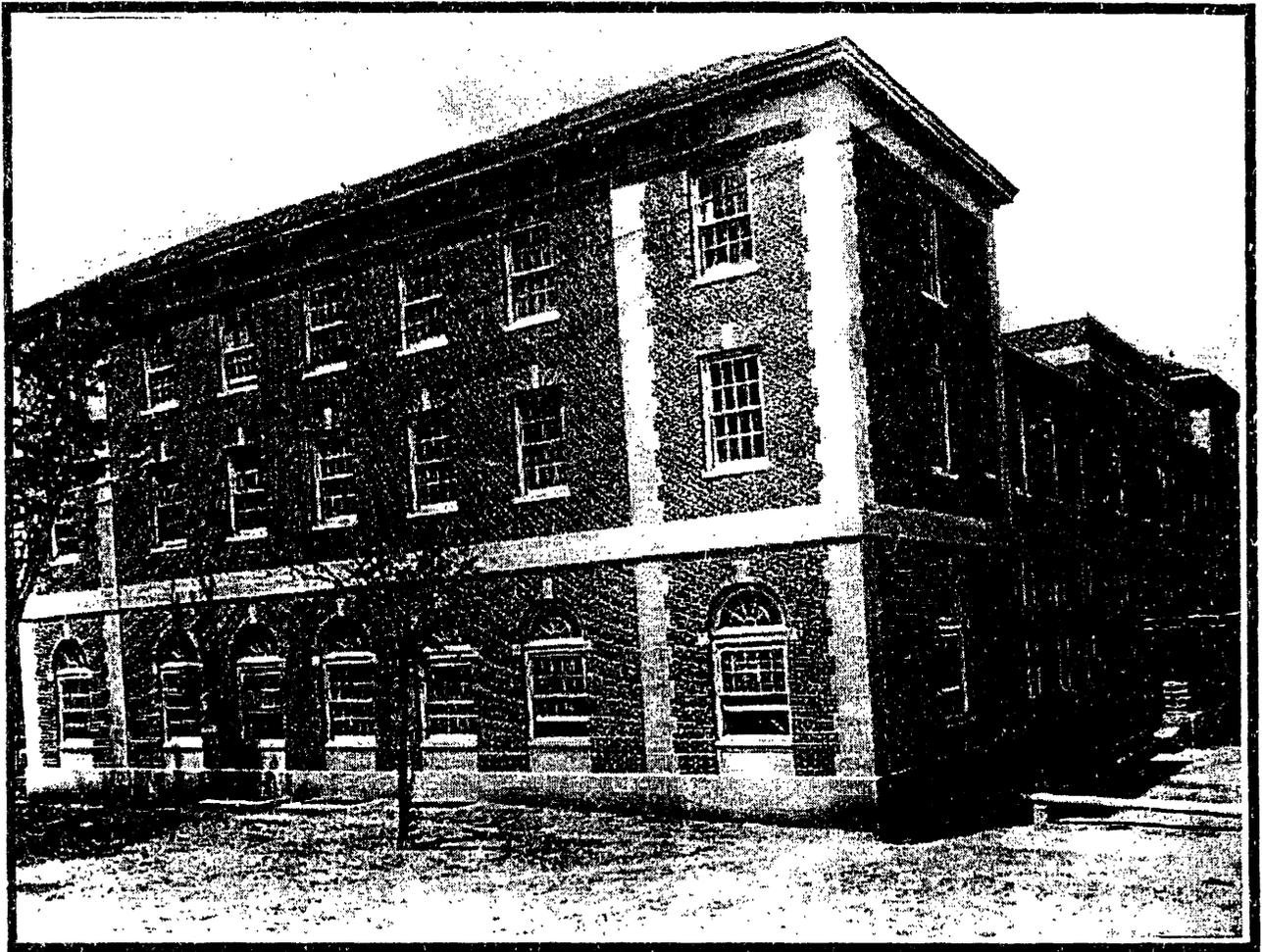


Figure 2. The Casper Federal Building is shown nearing completion in this July 1932 photograph northwest of the south and east sides. This is the same view as in Figure 1. Note the original wall supports for the loading dock roof. SOURCE: U.S. Public Buildings Service, Records of the Public Buildings Service, Progress Photographs and Final Photographs, 1915-1970, Box 38, in the files of the National Archives, Rocky Mountain Branch, Denver, Colorado.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number   8   Page  13 

Casper Federal Building,  
Natrona County, Wyoming



Figure 3. The north and west (front) sides of the Casper Federal Building are pictured in this view southeast, which was probably taken in the late summer of 1932. SOURCE: U.S. Public Buildings Service, Records of the Public Buildings Service, Progress Photographs and Final Photographs, 1915-1970, Box 38, in the files of the National Archives, Rocky Mountain Branch, Denver, Colorado.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 14

Casper Federal Building,  
Natrona County, Wyoming



Figure 4. The excavation for a Casper bank building was probably the principal subject of this circa 1957 photograph which provides a good view of the Casper Federal Building. SOURCE: Casper College Library, photographic collection (number P-15:632), Casper, Wyoming.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 15

Casper Federal Building,  
Natrona County, Wyoming

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United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 9 Page 16

Casper Federal Building,  
Natrona County, Wyoming

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United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 10 Page 17

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Casper Federal Building,  
Natrona County, Wyoming

**Boundary Description**

The area of the nominated property consists of lots 1 through 3 (inclusive), block 6, Casper Original Town, Natrona County, Wyoming, which is part of the Northeast quarter of section 9, Township 33 North, Range 79 West.

**Boundary Justification**

The nominated area includes the building and all of the parcel on which it is located.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Casper Federal Building,  
Natrona County, Wyoming

Section number Photographs Page 18

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**Photographic Index**

Information that is different for each photograph is listed below and is keyed to the photograph number referenced in the narrative and on the sketch map. Information that is the same for all photographs:

Location of Property: 111 S. Wolcott Street, City of Casper, Natrona County, Wyoming  
Photographer: Thomas H. Simmons  
Date of Photograph: November 1997  
Location of Negatives:

U.S. General Services Administration  
Denver Federal Center, Building 41  
Denver, Colorado 80225

<b>Photograph Number</b>	<b>Camera Direction</b>	<b>Description</b>
1	East-Southeast	Front (west or South Wolcott Street side) side.
2	Southeast	Front (west or South Wolcott Street) and north (East First Street) sides.
3	Northeast	Front (west or South Wolcott Street side) side.
4	East-Northeast	Front entrance detail.
5	Northeast	South side.
6	South North	North (East First Street) side.
7	Southwest	North (East First Street) side and rear (alley side).
8	Northwest	Rear (alley side).
9	Northwest	South side and rear (alley side).

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Casper Federal Building,  
Natrona County, Wyoming

Section number    Photographs    Page    19

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<b>Photograph Number</b>	<b>Camera Direction</b>	<b>Description</b>
10	Northeast	U.S. District Court second floor courtroom.
11	Northwest	Elevator with marble surround on the second floor, north end of building.



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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number \_\_\_\_\_ Page \_\_\_\_\_

**SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD**

NRIS Reference Number: 98001536

Property Name: Casper Federal Building

County: Natrona State: Wyoming

\_\_\_\_\_  
Multiple Name

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This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.

  
Signature of the Keeper

December 21, 1998  
Date of Action

=====  
Amended Items in Nomination:

**Section 3. Certification:** The level of significance is, hereby, indicated as "local".

**Section 8. Significance:** Criterion A is, hereby, added as a qualifying criterion corresponding to the property's significance in Politics and Government from 1932 to 1948.

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The General Services Administration was notified of this amendment.

**DISTRIBUTION:**

- National Register property file
- Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)