

Form 10-300
(Dec. 1968)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: District of Columbia	
COUNTY:	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

1. NAME

COMMON:
Tariff Commission Building

AND/OR HISTORIC:
General Post Office

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:
E and F Streets between 7th and 8th Streets, N. W.

CITY OR TOWN:
Washington

STATE District of Columbia	CODE 08	COUNTY: District of Columbia	CODE 001
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3. CLASSIFICATION

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

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNERS NAME:
United States of America

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN: STATE: CODE:

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC:
Recorder of Deeds

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

CITY OR TOWN: STATE: CODE:
Washington District of Columbia

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 64,299 square feet

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:
Historic America Buildings Survey

DATE OF SURVEY: 1969 Federal State County Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:
Library of Congress

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN: STATE: CODE:
Washington District of Columbia

STATE: COUNTY: ENTRY NUMBER: DATE: FOR NPS USE ONLY

(62)

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

(Check One)

Excellent Good Fair Deteriorated Ruins Unexposed

INTEGRITY

(Check One)

(Check One)

Altered , Unaltered Moved Original Site

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (If known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Tariff Commission Building, which almost fills the small square bounded by E, F, 7th, and 8th Streets, N. W., measures 204' from east to west, 280' from north to south, and encloses an interior court 95' x 194'. The building was constructed in two U-shaped sections. The 1839-44 Mills section of New York marble consisted of the 19-bay E Street block and two 7-bay wings up 7th and 8th Streets. When the Walter section of Maryland marble was constructed from 1855-66, the 7th and 8th Street wings were extended to 19 bays and the 13-bay F Street wing was added, completing the rectangle with only minor differences in detail, both sections are neo-classical in style and present an harmonious exterior. Above a basement and rusticated ground floor, engaged Corinthian columns and pilasters rise through two stories and support a simple entablature and parapet. With the exception of modern windows and steps added when the grade of the street was lowered in 1872, the exterior remains largely in its original condition.

The E Street entrance is marked by a flight of steps and a slightly projecting 3-bay central pavilion with engaged columns rather than pilasters. Second floor windows are 2/2 light double-hung, wooden sash, with stone sills and lintels. With the exception of the large triple central window which has a segmental pediment, second floor windows carry triangular pediments. Small third floor windows are square, 2/2 light, and double-hung.

The 7th and 8th Street facades are similar in design with three slightly projecting pavilions, again with engaged columns rather than pilasters. Second floor window pediments alternate from two triangular to three segmental, etc. The carriage-way entrance arch originally used for the reception of mail in the center of the 8th Street facade has a carved keystone representing Fidelity, and bas-reliefs in the spandrels of winged figures bearing a thunderbird and a locomotive symbolizing Electricity and Steam, respectively.

The central pavilion of the 13-bay F Street facade has five entrance arches approached by a flight of steps on the rusticated ground floor and a prostyle formed by four pairs of free-standing Corinthian columns flanked by pairs of engaged pilasters rising through the second and third stories.

Outstanding interior features are groined and barrel vaulted corridors with friezes, and the two graceful circular granite stairways in domed alcoves in the Mills section. Although indiscernible from the exterior, the joining of the north and south sections is obvious in the interior in the design of the ceilings and doors. In a second floor room on the 8th Street side of the building, 4' thick blocks of stone which once formed the north outside wall of the Mills section are still visible. All interior walls constructed of solid stone or brick and plaster are at least 20" thick, and exterior walls are even thicker. The Mills section was heated by fireplaces which, although boarded up, are still visible, while the Walter section was apparently centrally heated from the beginning.

On the 7th Street facade there is a bronze tablet marking the site of the building, where Samuel F. B. Morse opened the first public telegraph

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

B. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

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

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known)

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

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 type="checkbox"/>	_____
Art <input type="checkbox"/>	Landscape <input type="checkbox"/>	Social/Humanitarian <input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Commerce <input type="checkbox"/>	Architecture <input type="checkbox"/>	Theater <input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Communications <input type="checkbox"/>	Literature <input type="checkbox"/>	Transportation <input type="checkbox"/>	_____
Conservation <input type="checkbox"/>	Military <input type="checkbox"/>		_____
Architecture <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Music <input type="checkbox"/>		_____

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE (Include Personages, Dates, Events, Etc.)

The General Post Office, Washington, D.C., built in two stages from 1839 to 1866, is the work of Robert Mills and Thomas U. Walter, two of the most noted 19th-century American architects. Although relatively unnoticed because of the monumental presence of the Old Patent Office directly across F Street from it, and also because its exceptionally fine interior is little visited by a discerning public, this beautifully scaled and finely detailed building is a tour de force of restrained neo-classical design and an outstanding example of civil architecture in this country.

History

The General Post Office was erected in two sections over a 27-year period. The southern section stands on the site of the earlier Blodgett's Hotel built in 1795 and purchased by the Government in 1810 to house the Post Office Department, the City Post Office, and the Patent Office. In 1814, Blodgett's Hotel was the only Government building in Washington left unburned by the British and it became the Hall of Congress for a short period thereafter. Blodgett's burned to the ground in 1836. By 1839 construction was started on the south section of the present building designed by Robert Mills for use as the Post Office Department and City Post Office. These offices, which moved into the building around 1844, quickly outgrew their space limitations; and in 1855 construction was begun on the extension designed by Mills' successor, Thomas Ustick Walter, self-styled Architect of Public Buildings who also succeeded Mills on the Treasury and Patent Office Buildings. Apparently, the consulting engineer, Captain Montgomery C. Meigs of the Corps of Engineers, suspended construction of the north wing in 1861 to prevent interference with the Civil War. The building was not completed until 1866. During the war, the basement was used as a Union Supply Depot.

The Post Office Department and City Post Office occupied the building during this entire period, and it was from here that Postmaster General Montgomery Blair initiated home mail delivery in 1863. Other notable Postmasters General who greatly modernized the postal system were Joseph Holt, Horatio King, and John Wanamaker.

An act of June 7, 1897, transferred the building from the Post Office Department to the Secretary of the Interior. After this transfer it housed the General Land Office, the Bureau of Education, and one of the Govern-

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

History, Tariff Commission Building, Washington, D.C.: United States Tariff Commission, 1940. "Public Buildings: Washington, D.C. Area, Historical Architectural and Cultural Survey, Tariff Commission, F Street, N.W. at 7th Street," Public Buildings Service, General Services Administration, Washington, D.C. typewritten manuscript. Weigley, Russell, Quartermaster General of the Union Army, N.Y.: Columbia University Press, 1959. Duryea, Sacket L., A Historical Summary of the Work of the Corps of Engineers in Washington, D.C. and Vicinity, 1852-1952. Downtown Urban Renewal Area Landmarks, Washington, D.C., National Capital Planning Commission, Washington, D.C., 1970. McKee, Harley J., "General Post Office," HABS, (DC-219), Library of Congress, 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 ONE ACRE		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees	Minutes	Seconds
NW	° ' "	° ' "		38°	53'	48"
NE	° ' "	° ' "		77°	01'	22"
SE	° ' "	° ' "				
SW	° ' "	° ' "				

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

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE: **W. Brown Morton III, Historic Sites Survey and Nancy C. Taylor, Landmarks Historian, National Capital Planning Commission**

ORGANIZATION: **National Park Service (W. Brown Morton III)** DATE: **March 8, 1970**
National Capital Planning Commission (Nancy C. Taylor)

STREET AND NUMBER: **801 19th Street, N. W. (Morton)**
726 Jackson Place, N. W. (Taylor)

CITY OR TOWN: **Washington** STATE: **District of Columbia** CODE: **08**

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National State Local

Name _____

Title _____

Date _____

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

 Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date _____

ATTEST:

 Keeper of The National Register

Date _____

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Tariff Commission
Building

(Continuation Sheet)

(Number all entries)

7. Description

Continued

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office in the U. S. in 1845. The famous message, "What Hath God Wrought," was not, however, sent from this site, as the tablet implies, but from the Capitol.

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Tariff Commission
Building (Continuation Sheet)

(Number all entries)

8. Significance

Continued

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ment's first central power, heating, and lighting plants which served the Pension Office, Patent Office, Court House, Court of Appeals, and the Bureau of Mines. Such occupancy continued until the spring of 1917 when the General Land Office moved into the Interior Department Building and the Bureau of Education moved into the Pension Building.

After the U.S. entered World War I in April 1917, General Enoch Crowder, Provost Marshall General of the Army, operated the National Selective Service Board from the Building. In the fall of 1919, General John J. Pershing occupied the building while preparing his final reports as Commander-in-Chief of the American Expeditionary Forces. After Pershing's departure in 1921 when he became Chief of Staff, the Tariff Commission and the Patent Office shared the building which was transferred from the Department of the Interior to the Office of Public Buildings and Public Parks in 1922. Following passage of the Tariff Commission Act of 1930, the Tariff Commission expanded greatly; and, by 1940 it occupied the second and third floors and much of the basement, while the Employees Compensation Commission, the Superintendent of the Building, the Post Office substation, and Postal Telegraph Office occupied the first floor. With the exception of the F Street Post Office substation, the Tariff Commission now occupies the entire building.

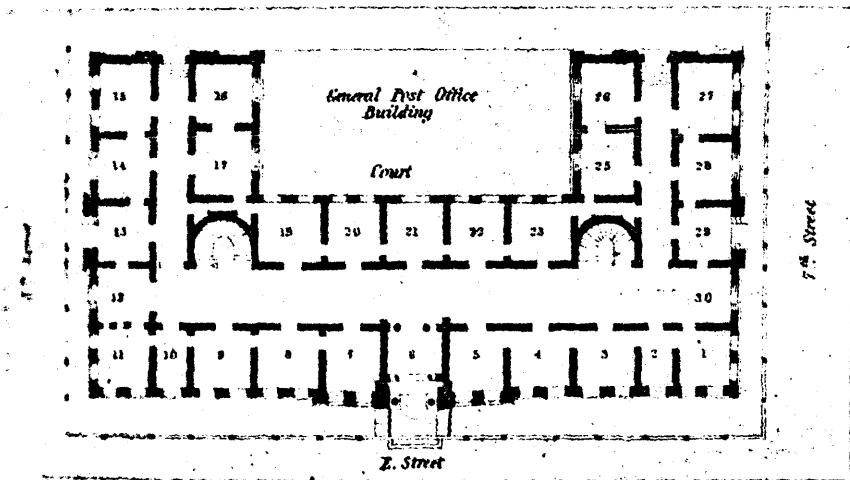
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General Post Office: Plan of original Robert Mills section.



THE POST OFFICE DEPARTMENT, WASHINGTON, D. C.
Above: The Post Office Department, Washington, D. C. (now the General Land Office and the Bureau of Education), from a photograph. *Below:* Original plan of the Post Office Department, from Robert Mills, *Guide to the National Executive Offices and Capitol of the United States.*

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