

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

PH0669199

FOR NPS USE ONLY	<b>DATA SHEET</b>
RECEIVED	MAY 22 1978
DATE ENTERED	JUN 23 1978

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

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC **\*\***  
Federal Building - U.S. Courthouse (AHRS # ANC-128)

AND/OR COMMON  
Old Post Office; Federal Bldg; U.S. Post Office and Courthouse

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER  
601 W. 4th Avenue

CITY, TOWN  
Anchorage

STATE  
Alaska

VICINITY OF  
Alaska at Large

COUNTY  
Anchorage Division

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT  
020

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME  
General Services Administration

STREET & NUMBER  
GSA Center, Public Buildings Section (10P)

CITY, TOWN  
Auburn

STATE  
Washington 98002

VICINITY OF

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.  
District Recording Office

STREET & NUMBER  
911 W. 4th Avenue

CITY, TOWN  
Anchorage

STATE  
Alaska

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE  
Alaska Heritage Resources Survey (AHRS)

DATE  
March 1977

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS  
Division of Parks, Office of History & Archaeology

CITY, TOWN  
Anchorage

STATE  
Alaska

FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

# 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED      DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

## DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Anchorage Federal Building is of an architectural style which might best be characterized as "New Deal Concrete." The building, constructed in 1939, stands as the foremost example of that era's federally funded, public buildings in Anchorage, if not all Alaska. The building represents the purest form of modern architecture which had developed in Anchorage at the time of its construction; its poured concrete, rectilinear form highlighted the townsite as an advancement in both construction and design techniques. It continues to hold its place in the Municipality as a symbol of the Federal government's relationship to the people of the region.

The building faces Fourth Avenue, between F and G Streets. It was developed on Block 27 which historically was always the federal reserve and had contained federally operated offices since 1915.

The Federal building has changed very little in appearance since it was first completed. The original plans called for U-shaped complex which would contain three main floors (ground level, first and second) plus penthouses which are extensions of the tower-like entrances at the southeast and southwest corners. Only the base of the U was to be constructed initially; but one wing was added immediately. The building extends 255 feet along Fourth Avenue; the major wing extends a similar distance along G Street. Both wings and the facade are 60 feet wide. The building was intended to be perfectly symmetrical. The original wings, extending back along F and G Street were alike and duplicated the form of the central portion of the building. The most distinctive features of these concrete forms are the relatively long, vertical windows which tend to visually ease the mass of the structure. The roof level penthouse offices and chimneys add to symmetry of the structure. The original set back and landscaping accentuate the building as an important feature of the townscape of Anchorage's Central Business District.

Near the end of the first phase of construction (1939-40), it was realized that more space was required to accommodate the needs of the locally operating federal agencies. Thus, the first of a few of expansions took place: the west wing was extended along the G Street side of the block in 1941. A plan, which was cited at this time, called for the eventual enclosure of the block through a series of expansions which would form a quadrangular complex with an interior court yard. Whatever the reasons, this did not occur. Additional jail facility space and court related space were placed in the interior of the block; however, the facade of the building and the wings retain their original appearance.

Of the original agencies which occupied the building, some (e.g. the Civilian Conservation Corps) no longer exist, others (e.g. the Extension Service) have relocated; still, the Postal Service & the Federal District Court are major tenants. In that sense the original name, which was molded into the face of the building "United States Post Office and Court House," is still appropriate today.

The continued use of the Federal Building became jeopardized a few years ago when the General Services Administration (GSA) set forth its plans to accommodate all federal agencies in a single office complex. At the local level there was talk of the building being surplusd or torn down. Because of the expressed interest of the Anchorage community in the historical and architectural significance of the building, and because of GSA's recognition that more office space would be needed for federal agencies beyond that which was being constructed at the new Federal Office Building complex, plans have been set forth to retain this facility for Federal agency use.

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

## PERIOD AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW

<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES

1939

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

McCarthy Brothers Construction Co.,  
Architects are discussed below

### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The history and architecture which are associated with the Anchorage Federal Building draw their significance from the following: (1) the original town plan as platted by the Alaska Engineering Commission; (2) the architectural contribution of the building to the Anchorage Community; and (3) those politicians and public servants who are profoundly linked to Alaskan and national history through this landmark.

In the summer of 1915 a temporary settlement along Ship Creek, known simply as the "Tent City," gave way in orderly fashion as a townsite was platted and lots were sold to create Anchorage, the shipping and operational headquarters for the construction of the Alaska Railroad (ARR). The plan was the most simplistic possible - a series of square blocks, separated in T-square precision by a network of grid streets. The plan acknowledged only a few special uses of land: a school reserve, a municipal reserve, a cemetery reserve, park reserves, and, important to the matter at hand, a federal reserve. The blocks of reserved land have all had a permanent role in the townsite's development. The intended functions are apparent to this day. In the case of the federal reserve (Block 22), the site was quickly developed. A Post Office sprung into operation that summer of 1915 as Anchorage's first government building. Soon to follow were the Federal Marshall's Office and a Territorial Jail. Those three structures (see accompanying photos) remained the extent of development on the federal reserve until 1939 when the present structure was built.

Given the space needs for postal service, continuing federal agency expansion and the condition of the original Post Office, Anchorage citizens, especially the Chamber of Commerce, started clamoring for a new Federal Building as early as the late 1920's. Delegate Anthony J. Dimond, the Territorial Representative to Congress, pressed hard for the funding; it was finally appropriated through the Treasury Department's Procurement Division in 1938. That summer Post Master General Farley, who had come to Alaska to study air mail feasibility, broke ground for the building (unofficially, as the actual plans had not been finished at that point in time).

The design of the Federal Building was coordinated through the Public Buildings Branch of the Treasury Department's Procurement Division. The Architects associated with the Federal Building are Louis A. Simon, Supervising Architect, and Gilbert Stanley Underwood, Consulting Architect. These architects are notable in the sense of the prodigious program to which they were attached and the prolific number of government buildings which they helped to create. Simon, a graduate of Massachusetts Institute of Technology, had a long career (1896-1941) with the U.S. Treasury Department. In 1933 he was appointed as Supervising Architect, Public Buildings Administration; consequently, his name has come to be engrained on many corner stones of U.S. Federal Buildings. During the early 1930's he was sent to Europe to study the applicability of the emerging techniques of modern architecture to the design and construction of needed U.S. government buildings. Underwood had a distinguished career as a consulting architect and rose to national prominence. Educated at Yale and Harvard, he worked

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- (1) Anchorage Daily Times (Various dates in 1938 including: January 8, p.1; June 9, p.1; July 16, p.1; July 22, p.1; and April 20, 1939, p.1).
- (2) Atwood, Evangeline, and Robert N. DeArmond, 1977. Who's Who in Alaskan Politics. Portland, Oregon: Binford and Mort.
- (3) Interview with Robert B. Atwood, Editor, Anchorage Daily Times, by M.E. Carberry, March 28, 1977.

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 2.066

QUADRANGLE NAME \_\_\_\_\_

QUADRANGLE SCALE \_\_\_\_\_

UTM REFERENCES

A 06 5145240 6790970 450

B

C ZONE EASTING NORTHING

D ZONE EASTING NORTHING

E

F

G

H

G

H

G

H

G

H

## VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The Federal Building is bounded on the north by 3rd Avenue, on the south by 4th Avenue, on the east by F Street, and the west by G Street. It sits on Block 27 (federal reserve) of the original townsite.

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

# 11 FORM PREPARED BY:

NAME / TITLE  
 Michael E. Carberry, Historic Preservation Specialist, Landmarks Commission

ORGANIZATION  
 Planning Department, Municipality of Anchorage

DATE  
 6 July 1977

STREET & NUMBER  
 Pouch 6-650

TELEPHONE  
 (907) 264-4267

CITY OR TOWN  
 Anchorage

STATE  
 Alaska 99502

# 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL  STATE  LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation 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.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE *William Shanahan*

TITLE *State Historic Preservation Officer* DATE *3/25/78*

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER *W. J. ...* DATE *6-23-78*

ATTEST: *William Shanahan* DATE *June 26, 1978*

CHIEF OF REGISTRATION

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 1

for many years on the West Coast in consultation with the Union Pacific Railroad and the U.S. Treasury Department. The last ten years of his career were spent in the nations's capital.

The New Deal Era, those twelve F.D.R. years, presented a rare and exciting opportunity to the likes of Simon and Underwood. Partly as a recovery measure, partly out of need for better facilities, governmentally financed projects blossomed throughout the states and territories. A major highlight of the period is that engineering technology, especially that of concrete and steel, were melded to the field of architecture. Given the emerging theory as to form, function and materials, the period marked the birth of modern architecture in this country.

Turning from the broad scope of that movement to the Federal Building at Anchorage, a related process unfolded to affect urban design in the original townsite. The civic architecture of the major structures to be built in the late 1930's, the City Hall (1936), the Anchorage Elementary School (1938) and Providence Hospital (1938), was pronounced in the use of concrete and size of the buildings; yet, the designs, especially that of the City Hall, were enamored with quasi-classical or other frivolous detail. It was the Federal Building, which was so devoid of detail, so cubic and so simplistic in its expression of line, that was the most definitive expression of modern architecture in Anchorage at that time. The Federal Building culminated a brief span of years through which Anchorage moved from the frame construction era to the concrete era, and in doing so, marked the transition to modern architecture.

In that era of economic depression, Federal involvement in the Affairs and development of Alaska could mean economic stability. The Federal Building, as a symbol of Federal Agencies, Judiciary, and Postal Services, was a major psychological boost to the citizens of Anchorage; in short, as a local editor said, "It meant Uncle Sam was here to stay!"

The most noteworthy aspect of the interior is the original Federal District Court Room. The woodwork, although not exceptional, is dignified. The decorative gem of that room is the WPA mural behind the judge's dais. Research has not produced the identity of the artist; however, he did capture to a large measure the essence of the Alaskan Landscape. His soaring mountains give way to aquamarine glaciers; in turn the ice is resolved by the sea; and at the water's edge the fisheries and forest hint of the era's economy. The mural is one of two or three which were produced in the territory at that time.

Beyond architectural history, the Federal Building has a story to tell about the agencies who have been tenants there, and more importantly, about those Alaskans who have played a prominent role in territorial and state history. The original tenancy of the building included: the Post Office; the Third District Court; the U.S. Marshall's Office; the Division of Investigation, U.S. Department of Interior; the Division of Fire Control; the Civilian Conservation Corps; the Extension Service; the U.S. Signal Corps; and the Alaska Railroad. Each had their own separate impact on this Alaskan region, whether in developing communication and transportation or in establishing law and order. The list of individuals whose court offices or congressional offices have been in the building reads as a substantial portion of Who's Who in Alaskan Politics. As to the judiciary, it was Judge Simon Hellenthal who played a prominent role in having the

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 2

Federal District Court to be relocated in Anchorage from Valdez; this Alaskan Pioneer presided over the court until 1945. Anthony J. Dimond followed Hellenthal to the court-room's dais. Dimond made extraordinary contributions to Alaska: first, as Mayor of Valdez, then, as a Territorial Senator, and finally, as the Alaskan delegate to the U.S. Congress (1932-1945). Dimond completed his public service career within the court-room of the Federal Building.

As the symbol of Federal government in Anchorage, the Federal Building was a major focal point in the spirited ceremonies which followed the Congressional passage of the Statehood legislation. The facade of the building was literally engulfed in the 49th Flag during those celebrated moments in 1958. After Statehood the Congressional contingents moved into the Federal Building to man field offices for the Alaskan people. The first Senators, Bob Bartlett and Ernest Gruening, initiated this practice on a seasonal basis during periods of Congressional Recess. Senators Ted Stevens and Mike Gravel man full time offices there at this time. Representatives who have had offices in the Federal Building include Congressman Nick Begick and Congressman Don Young who currently maintains an office there.

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8

PAGE 3

The following items are supplemental to item 8.

Among the more notable architectural achievements of the consulting architect, Gilbert Stanley Underwood, are the San Francisco Mint, the Federal Building in Los Angeles and the first building of the U.S. State Department's complex in Washington, D.C.

The National Archives has found the names of the artists who painted the mural in the courtroom. Richard Haines and Arthur Kerrick collaborated on the project, having won the commission through a Works Progress Administration (W.P.A.) contest. Both artists have been listed in Who's Who in American Art.