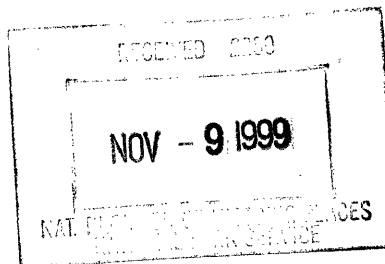


United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM



This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions 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 any 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 1090a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name: Little Rock U.S. Post Office and Courthouse  
other names/site number: Little Rock U.S. Post Office and Federal Building

2. Location

street & number 600 W. Capitol Avenue N/A not for publication  
city or town Little Rock N/A vicinity  
state Arkansas code AR county Pulaski code 119  
zip code 72201

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this  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.)

Constance Werner Ramirez  
Signature of certifying official

October 28, 1999  
Date

U.S. General Services Administration

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.)

Cathryn A. Slater  
Signature of commenting or other official

July 19, 1999  
Date

Arkansas Historic Preservation Program

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this 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:)

Signature of Keeper

Patrick W. Andrews

Date of Action

12/23/99

**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 include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
		sites
		structures
		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**

0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Cat:	Sub:
GOVERNMENT	Post Office
	Courthouse

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Cat:	Sub:
GOVERNMENT	Courthouse

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Classical Revival

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation STONE: Granite

walls STONE: Limestone

roof CERAMIC TILE

other

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

See Continuation Sheets pp. 5-9.

**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.
- 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 a 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.

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

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

See Continuation Sheets pp. 10-14.

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

**Bibliography**

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.) See Continuation Sheet p. 15.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR67) as 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:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

General Services Administration, Greater Southwest Region, Fort Worth, Texas

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

- Politics/Government
- Architecture
- Economics
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1931-1949

**Significant Dates**

1932, 1941

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)  
N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

Wetmore, James A., Supervising Architect, U.S. Treasury Dept.  
Simon, Louis, Supervising Architect, U.S. Treasury Dept.  
Weakly, F. M., Supervising Engineer, U.S. Treasury Dept.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 2.07 acres

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

1	1   5	5   6   7   1   4   0	3   8   4   4   8   4   0	3			
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
2				4			
					<input type="checkbox"/>	See continuation sheet	

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.) See Continuation Sheet p. 16.

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.) See Continuation Sheet p. 16.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Victoria Green Clow, Cultural Resources Project Manager

organization Geo-Marine, Inc. date February 19, 1999

street & number 550 East Fifteenth Street telephone (972) 423-5480

city or town Plano state TX zip code 75074

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 the SHPO or FPO.)

name General Services Administration, Greater Southwest Region

street & number Fritz G. Lanham Federal Bldg., 819 Taylor St. telephone (817) 978-4229

city or town Fort Worth state TX zip code 76102

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 the 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 Reductions Project (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 5

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**Little Rock U.S. Post Office and Courthouse  
Pulaski County, Arkansas**

**Narrative Description:**

Since its completion in late 1932, the Little Rock U.S. Post Office and Courthouse has been an important landmark in Little Rock, the capital of Arkansas. Located on West Capitol Avenue between Arch and Gaines streets, the building functions in both a practical and visual capacity, enhancing the monumental quality of the Central Business District and State Capitol area. Designed by the Office of the Supervising Architect of the Treasury Department, the building's Classical Revival architecture is reflective of the government's use of classically inspired styles in the 1920s and 1930s. The building continues to serve as a symbol of the federal presence in Little Rock.

The Classical Revival design of the Little Rock U.S. Post Office and Courthouse is revealed in its projecting, distyle, temple-like pavilions, the Doric columns, and the decorative friezes. Although additions were added to the building in 1941 and 1987, the character and presence of the 1932 building have been retained. Original features such as ceramic tile floors, marble walls (accented by a terra cotta cornice), paneled plaster ceilings, suspended light fixtures, and white metal postal stations continue to grace the large postal lobby. The main ceremonial courtroom, located on the fourth floor, still displays wood wainscot and plaster walls, trabeated plaster ceilings, urn-type chandeliers, and an ornamental cartouche behind the judge's bench.

**Exterior Description**

The Little Rock U.S. Post Office and Courthouse is an impressive five-story, limestone building. Rising above a gray granite foundation and basement, the first two stories form a rusticated base which is composed of a limestone veneer. Smooth-finished, flush joint, limestone walls clad the upper three floors. The pitched Ludowici mission-type tile roof which caps the building displays colors that range from light yellows to burnt oranges and reds. Copper-clad dormers project from the roof.

The structure's monumental character is communicated on the south (primary) façade by the temple-type, projecting pavilion set over each of the two entrances, one at the east end and one at the west end of this face of the building. Enhancing each pavilion are two fluted Doric columns that stretch three stories to support a pedimented entablature. Decoration is applied to the pediment cornice in the form of a mutule band. The tympanum design is also enriched with a cartouche depicting a spread eagle holding reeds in its talons. The two pavilions are identical, with the exception of the direction of the eagle heads, which are reversed to face each other. A Doric pilastrade, 10 bays in length, is centered between the two pavilions. Three-light casement windows are exhibited on the second through fifth floors. Gray marble spandrel panels are also present between the third- and fourth-floor windows, and fourth- and fifth-floor windows. Casement windows on the first floor are unadorned and have nine lights.

Terra cotta fretwork and friezes further complement the south elevation design. Located between the second and third floors is a band of terra cotta fretwork that extends around this and other façades (the east, west, and northeast building faces). At the midway point of each elevation, the fretwork design reverses upon itself. A terra cotta frieze, consisting of metopes with palmette and scroll leaf patterns, is also present below the cornice.

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section Number 7 Page 6

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**Little Rock U.S. Post Office and Courthouse  
Pulaski County, Arkansas**

**Narrative Description (continued):**

The two first floor entries on the south elevation are enriched with architectural details. Bracketed denticulated cornices and simple friezes set between terra cotta tiles ornament the entablature of the door surrounds. The friezes are inscribed as follows.

UNITED STATES  
POST OFFICE AND COURT HOUSE

The door surround itself displays a leaf and dart design as well as bead and reel molding. Original aluminum grilles with Fleur-de-lis scrollwork cap the contemporary aluminum storefront doors. Narrow terra cotta tiles flank these doors.

The east elevation and the southern end of the west elevation display design features similar to those described on the south façade. These include Doric pilasters, the rusticated two-story base, fretwork, and window configuration. Neither elevation, however, displays the massive pavilions. The northern extension of the east elevation was added in 1941. This wing replicates the design of the 1932 portion of the same elevation. At the northern end of this wing, the basement level is above grade, exposing its granite base.

The northern end of the west elevation was expanded in 1987. The new wing did not repeat the design of the 1932 building; however, its massing and materials are similar to the original. The addition sits on a rusticated limestone base that is two stories in height. Smooth limestone walls extend from the third to the fifth stories. White precast concrete bands are visible between the limestone base and smooth walls as well as at the cornice level. Monolithic in appearance, the addition lacks any of the vertical elements exhibited on the other building faces.

As a result of the extension of the east and west building faces, only a small portion of the north elevation is still visible. Fixed-place mechanical equipment and a metal canopy also obscure the first floor and part of the second floor. This elevation exhibits little architectural detail and does not significantly contribute to the historic character of the building.

Green spaces, plantings, sidewalks, and other landscape features characterize the site area immediately surrounding the building. Narrow lawn areas border the south, west, and east elevations. Plantings are present along the west and east building faces. The south elevation, however, displays evergreen trees at the east and west entrances, and a variety of shrubs. The north elevation serves as a parking and service area and is completely paved. Other site features include original Deco-style white metal lighting standards (south, east, and northeast entries), an original wrought iron fence (at the northwest basement area of the west elevation), and a contemporary flagpole (at the center of the south elevation lawn).

**Interior Description**

Like other federal buildings, the Little Rock U.S. Post Office and Courthouse originally had a rectangular footprint. From the second floor through the third floor, the building reduced to an E-shaped configuration. At the fourth and fifth

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section Number   7   Page   7  

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**Little Rock U.S. Post Office and Courthouse  
Pulaski County, Arkansas**

**Narrative Description (continued):**

floors, the building was further reduced to a U-shaped plan. The first floor area was designed to accommodate the building's postal function, while the fourth floor was allocated to the judicial function. As the government's spatial needs increased, two wings were added (in 1941 and in 1987). These extended off the east and west building faces and did not alter the E- or U-shaped designs of the upper floors. The postal lobby, the ceremonial courtroom, and, to a lesser degree, the auxiliary courtroom, the public corridors, and the elevator areas are the most architecturally enriched of the interior spaces. This enrichment was largely a reflection of their public usage. The remaining interior spaces were designed for use by federal tenant offices and to accommodate a light court and maintenance and service areas.

The postal lobby, originally the most heavily trafficked of the public spaces, is rich in architectural detail and ornamentation. Entrance into the building is through the storefront doors which open into entrance vestibules. From the vestibules—clad in white Batesville, polished marble—marble steps lead into the postal lobby area. The lobby runs from east to west along the south side of the first floor, while the north side of the first floor was designated as a postal work area. At the east and west ends of the lobby are monumental marble doorways leading to postal service offices. Each door surround is accented by bronze rosettes and topped by a marble cornice and entablature. Rosettes are repeated in the design of a terra cotta cornice band that extends around the perimeter of the lobby as well as decorating the crossbeams of the paneled plaster ceiling.

Engaged marble pilasters with terra cotta capitals divide each postal bay on the north and south walls. Stamp sales windows (no longer in use) and bulletin boards are located on the south wall. Art deco-style white metal postal boxes and sales windows are situated on the north wall, as are also a stairwell and three elevators. The elevator doors are stainless steel and are not original. The staircase has marble steps and a cast iron stringer and rail, and the stairwell has marble wainscot walls. Both the sales windows and the postal boxes are set under open aluminum grille work. The cornice of the grille work displays a leaf and dart design over dentil molding. The sales windows are framed by aluminum and display signage designating each as a sales window. A decorative band of fretwork also ornaments the frame of the window. The floor of each postal bay area is delineated by a bordered mosaic of heavily veined white and gray marble (one inch in width) enclosing 12-inch-square, black Batesville Terrytine marble tiles set in a diamond pattern. The remaining floors are laid in a basket weave pattern of red and beige ceramic tiles. The entire height of the walls is clad in marble.

Original light fixtures also grace the main postal lobby and the two entry vestibules. The light fixtures in the lobby are suspended from the ceiling on brass chains and are of acorn-shaped opaque glass with a brass rim at the top. The vestibule fixtures are similarly designed, although there are four external brass supports that culminate at the base of the hanging light fixture in a leaf and acorn finial.

The main ceremonial courtroom is located in the eastern end of the fourth floor. It is entered through double wooden doors on the north and west walls. Wooden entablature ornamented with a wooden cartouche sits over the doorways. The doors on the north wall are covered in imitation leather. The interior walls of the room are divided horizontally by

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section Number 7 Page 8

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**Little Rock U.S. Post Office and Courthouse  
Pulaski County, Arkansas**

**Narrative Description (continued):**

wooden wainscot and plaster. The wooden wainscot is 10 feet high, wrapping around the lower half of the courtroom walls. Tall, two-story windows interrupt the wainscoting on the east wall. The courtroom's white, painted, acoustical plaster ceilings are trabeated, the beams of which were originally stenciled with a geometric pattern enriched by burnt sienna, gray-green, and blue-gray colors. Replastering appears to have masked the stenciling. Suspended from the center of the ceiling are urn-type chandeliers.

Although covered by carpeting, the original cork tile flooring appears to be intact. The floor has 12-inch squares of alternating light and dark tiles with a brown cork border. The judge's bench, jury box, podium, and spectator benches are also original to the room.

The focal point of the courtroom is the judge's bench. Relocated to the south wall in 1941, the judge's bench sits in front of a decorative surround composed of denticulated wood entablature supported by fluted, Ionic-style pilasters. Forming an arch below the entablature is a full-height panel of gray marble. A bronze-work frame exhibiting a leaf and rosette motif surrounds the marble.

An auxiliary courtroom is situated in the northeast corner of the fourth floor of the original west wing. This courtroom is small and less adorned than the main courtroom. The room displays wooden wainscot and plaster walls. Room lighting consists of contemporary surface-mounted fluorescent boxes. Room furnishings, including the jury box, recorder's desk, and judge's rostrum, appear to be original. The carpeted floors are not original.

The remaining interior space of the building is consumed by corridors, offices, maintenance and restroom facilities, and the light court. Of these, the corridors are the more architecturally elaborate and publicly accessible. From the second to the fifth floors, the corridor areas have a U-shaped configuration; the base of the U forms the south corridor. The design of the floor in these areas mimics the basket weave pattern visible in the postal lobby. The floor tiles vary in color with red, buff, and shades of gray predominating. On the fourth floor, the walls are clad with marble wainscoting. The walls on the second, third, and fifth floors have a marble base with vinyl covering above. This also occurs at the elevator lobbies. The floors of the second-, third-, and fourth-floor lobbies display a medallion of 12-inch square, Batesville Terrytine tile set in a diamond pattern. Surrounding the diamond pattern are white ceramic tiles that are further enclosed by a rectangle design of one-inch, gray and white mosaic tile. The elevator doors are framed in marble. Mounted, original, opaque glass and brass light fixtures have been retained in each elevator lobby and south corridor areas. Also original to these corridors are the wood-paneled doors with opaque glass; some of the doors also display operable transoms and wood-framed sidelights.

The 1941 and 1987 additions have corridors that flow directly into the 1932 building. A border of black-veined, white marble separates the 1932 interior from the newer spaces.



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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section Number 7 Page 9

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**Little Rock U.S. Post Office and Courthouse  
Pulaski County, Arkansas**

**Narrative Description (continued):**

The postal offices (located on the first and second floors), the judicial offices, and the other federal tenant offices retain some original finishes. However, these spaces have been modified over the years to accommodate different uses and are not architecturally significant.

**Alterations**

The Little Rock U.S. Post Office and Courthouse has been altered over the years to accommodate a need for increased space, changes in the usage of space, modernization, and other building improvements and upgrades. Although these alterations have occurred, the impressiveness and historic character of the 1932 building and its 1941 addition are still visible today. As such, the building continues to be an important feature in the Capitol area of downtown Little Rock. The building's exterior and important interior spaces largely retain the historic appearance including materials, workmanship, and design. Even though the building has lost one of its historic functions, that of a post office, the association and feeling of its original intent is extant.

Alterations to the exterior of the building began just nine years after its completion. The need for increased space precipitated the addition of an east wing in 1941. This wing followed the original design of the 1932 building, including the use of the same materials, scale, and ornamentation. The construction of this addition resulted in the relocation of the east elevation entrance from the first floor to the basement. Forty-six years later the building was expanded yet again through the construction of a west wing. This wing was carefully designed to be sympathetic to the historic building without replicating its design. The result was a modern addition with simplified details that were in harmony with the architectural details on the 1932 and 1941 façades.

From the interior perspective, the majority of alteration has occurred in the offices. The second and third floors have particularly suffered from postal and judicial office expansions. Dropped acoustical tile ceilings and partitioning have resulted in the loss of volume and spatial character in these areas. The more architecturally significant areas, such as the ceremonial courtroom and postal lobby, largely retain their historic appearance. When the 1941 addition was built, the judge's bench in the ceremonial courtroom was moved intact from the north to the south wall. At some point, the ceiling beams were replastered, covering original decorative stencil work (which could possibly be restored). Carpeting also currently obscures the original flooring in this room.

Changes to the postal lobby have included the closing of the postal sales windows on the south wall. Marble in-fill has also replaced the once open bays. Some of the original signage above these windows has been removed and put in storage. In the entry lobby area, a glass screen has been added near the elevators for security purposes.

The post office has recently vacated the Little Rock U.S. Post Office and Courthouse for other facilities. Currently, the postal lobby area is not in use.

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section Number   8   Page  10 

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**Little Rock U.S. Post Office and Courthouse  
Pulaski County, Arkansas**

**Narrative Statement of Significance:**

**Summary**

The Little Rock U.S. Post Office and Courthouse is eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places at the local level of significance under Criterion A for its association with the federal construction programs designed to relieve the economic emergency of the Depression years and under Criterion C as a significant example of federal architecture during the early 1930s. Constructed in 1931-1932, the building is symbolic of the continued presence of the federal government in the Arkansas state capital. It is also representative of the growth of both Little Rock and the federal government in the 1930s. It was designed and constructed, as were other public buildings built in the 1930s, as part of the federal construction programs that were enacted to reduce unemployment during the Depression. Architecturally, the Classical Revival design of the Little Rock U.S. Post Office and Courthouse is reflective of the government's use of restrained classical architectural styles to evoke an appropriate image of the federal government. The period of significance for this property begins at the date of its design in 1931 and extends to 1949. The building retained its original historic functions for more than 50 years, and, as such, its significance extends to the 50-year mark.

**Historical Significance**

William Russell, a land speculator, established Little Rock in 1820. During that same year, the Arkansas Territory legislature chose Little Rock as its territorial capital. In 1836, the city became the capital of the state of Arkansas. By 1860, the population of Little Rock was 3,727 (Herdon 1938). The city's development and growth during this early period was a reflection of its status as a capital and its proximity to the Arkansas River. Following the Civil War, Little Rock prospered as a cotton and lumber market and as the chief center of trade in Arkansas. With over two-thirds of the state still forested, the lumber industry spurred economic growth and the development of the state's infrastructure. As a result, the city of Little Rock began to be transformed into a modern metropolis. With the expansion of the railroads in the 1880s, more sawmills were built and more people arrived who were ready to work in them (Tucker 1985). An *Arkansas Gazette* article from 1883 appropriately summarized the state's economic and population growth.

With the advent of the railroads and telegraph, old Arkansas disappears, the dirt road and slow coaches have vanished. The easy, somewhat indolent life of the first settlers is superseded by the activity which rapid travel promotes. New industries are called into existence by the development of natural resources. A stream of immigration has poured into our borders, a new population who with quick and eager hands turn the treasures of the forest, the soil and mines into money [*Little Rock Arkansas Gazette* 7 July 1883].

As the Arkansas capital grew, so did its legal and postal needs. In 1881, Little Rock's first courthouse and post office was constructed. The Renaissance Revival-style building was designed by the Treasury Department's Office of the Supervising Architect. James B. Hill served as the Supervising Architect during its planning. The building's stone and brick exterior, rectangular configuration, high-pitched roofs, and romantic design were typical of the buildings produced

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section Number 8 Page 11

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**Little Rock U.S. Post Office and Courthouse  
Pulaski County, Arkansas**

**Narrative Statement of Significance: (continued):**

during Hill's tenure. In 1897, less than 20 years after its construction, the first Little Rock courthouse and post office was expanded to meet the needs of the city's growing population. Thirteen years later, in 1910, the building was expanded for a second and final time. It remained in service until 1932, when the new U.S. Post Office and Courthouse was completed on Capitol Avenue.

As the nineteenth century came to a close, Little Rock's population continued to grow by leaps and bounds. In 1890, the population was estimated at 25,874. By 1900, it had increased to 38,039 (Herdon 1938). Both the lumber and cotton industries prospered, and Little Rock's population continued to increase into the early years of the twentieth century. When the stock market crashed in 1929, however, the nation entered into a bitter economic depression. Neither Arkansas nor Little Rock escaped these hard times. The Arkansas drought of 1930 and the state's growing debt weighed heavily on Arkansas and its capital city. The Arkansas agricultural industry suffered particularly hard during the early years of the Depression, causing farmers and rural families to leave their homes for the cities. While many left the state, others migrated to Little Rock looking for economic relief, and, by 1930, the population of Little Rock had reached just over 80,000.

It was in this atmosphere of economic turmoil and population growth that preparations began for the construction of the new Little Rock U.S. Post Office and Courthouse. The Office of the Supervising Architect, under the direction of Acting Supervising Architect, James A. Wetmore, completed designs for the building in May 1930. In advance of its construction, a number of properties were razed, including a two-story garage and gas station (at the southeast corner of the property), two two-story duplexes, and six one- and two-story homes. Actual construction began at the site sometime in 1931. F. M. Weakly, a Treasury Department engineer, supervised the building process.

The new Little Rock U.S. Post Office and Courthouse, completed at a cost of \$1,000,000, was officially opened on December 28, 1932. The first mail was distributed into the lobby's postal boxes the following day. At its opening, Albert E. Townsend was serving as postmaster, a position that he had held since January 1930. Judge John E. Martineau, appointed in 1928, served as judge for the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Arkansas (Ross 1996). Local newspapers, the *Arkansas Democrat* and the *Arkansas Gazette*, reported on the opening of the building. According to an article in the *Arkansas Democrat* on 28 December 1932,

Mrs. E. S. Green of 2504 Ringo Street, holds the distinction of contributing the first money to "Uncle Sam" in the new quarters. She bought a postal money order as soon as the money order window was raised.

The 28 December article also described the building and its offices, stating that,

Convenience and efficiency was the watchword in the construction and arrangement of the various offices of the new building, from the lobby plan on the first floor to the miniature jail in the offices of the United States Marshall.

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section Number   8   Page  12 

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**Little Rock U.S. Post Office and Courthouse  
Pulaski County, Arkansas**

**Narrative Statement of Significance: (continued):**

The article further noted that a number of federal government offices would be moving into the building, including those associated with the U.S. district courts which would occupy the majority of the fourth floor. It also explained that three-fourths of the first floor was designated for post office purposes.

The construction of the Little Rock U.S. Post Office and Courthouse in 1931-1932 was not simply a reflection of the growing needs of a city. As one of more than 1,300 public buildings built by the Office of the Supervising Architect of the Treasury Department during the early 1930s, the Little Rock building was an example of the government's use of federal construction projects to stimulate employment during the Depression. From 1926 to 1931, a series of legislation was enacted that culminated into this massive public building program. The Public Buildings Act of 1926 served as the catalyst, authorizing the construction of a number of buildings in communities previously without federal buildings. In 1928 appropriations allotted under the 1926 Public Buildings Act were increased in response to U.S. Post Office and Department of the Treasury reports indicating a need for more space. As the effects of the Depression began to be felt all over the country in 1930 and 1931, the government released additional funds for public building projects. During 1931 the Federal Employment Stabilization Act was passed to further stimulate the economy. This act permitted the president and congress to authorize additional appropriations for construction projects in order to facilitate employment. The 1930 and 1931 appropriations, coupled with the Federal Stabilization Act, were reflective of how the government used public works projects to combat the economic depression. The following statement is indicative of this trend.

. . . [W]ith a view of relieving countrywide unemployment the Secretary of the Treasury and Postmaster General, in the selection of towns or cities in which buildings are to be constructed, shall endeavor to distribute the project equitably throughout the country so far as may be consistent with the needs of the public service [48 Stat 1062].

The economic impact of the construction of the Little Rock U.S. Post Office and Courthouse on the city of Little Rock is not clear. However, on a national level, building projects such as this were responsible for pumping over \$700 million dollars into the national economy during the Depression (Craig 1979). These types of early efforts served as predecessors to the Public Works Administration (PWA) and Works Progress Administration (WPA).

The Little Rock federal building continues to serve the Little Rock community's legal needs; however, the building no longer retains its postal function. The first floor post office left the facility in the mid-1990s. The building has been expanded twice in its history. The first time was in 1941 shortly after its construction. Louis Simon, Supervising Architect for the Treasury Department (succeeding James Wetmore), supervised the construction of the east addition, which closely followed the design of the 1932 structure. In 1987 a second, west wing addition was added. This addition did not replicate the design of the original building, rather using some of its details in a contemporary design to clearly distinguish the historic from the new.

A number of postmasters and district court judges have served in the Little Rock U.S. Post Office and Courthouse. After Postmaster Albert E. Townsend's departure in 1933, he was succeeded by Acting Postmaster Mrs. N. C. Rimmel, who only occupied the position for a year. Charles C. Karanaugh, who was appointed postmaster in April 1934, served until

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section Number 8 Page 13

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**Little Rock U.S. Post Office and Courthouse  
Pulaski County, Arkansas**

**Narrative Statement of Significance: (continued):**

March 1938. After Karanaugh's departure, Mrs. E. M. Robinson became the acting postmaster. She retained the position until 1953 when Albert Townsend returned for a short time as acting postmaster. J. C. Bellville succeeded Townsend in June 1954 and served until his retirement in April 1961.

The building's first judge, John Martineau, was succeeded in 1937 by Judge Thomas C. Trimble (Ross 1996). He served for 20 years until Judge Smith Henley assumed the bench (recess appointment) in 1957. Judge Henley served until 1959.

**Architectural Significance**

The Little Rock U.S. Post Office and Courthouse was one of the many public buildings designed under the auspices of the Office of the Supervising Architect for the Treasury Department. For over 75 years (1850s-1939), this office was responsible for the design and construction of public buildings, including customhouses, post offices, and courthouses. These buildings they created were not only designed to serve a federal function but to express the permanence and presence of the federal government in the cities and communities in which the buildings were located. Early in its history, the Office of the Supervising Architect employed a variety of architectural styles to convey this presence. At the turn of the century, however, classically inspired styles such as Classical Revival and Beaux-Arts began to predominate. These styles were thought to express democratic values and to reflect the government's assertion that "government buildings should be monumental and beautiful, and should represent the ideals of democracy and high standards of architectural sophistication in their communities" (Boland 1994:3).

While these ideals continued to be applied for many years, the expense of constructing "monumental and beautiful" buildings became a concern. In 1913, federal construction policy measured the cost of constructing post offices against the city or community's postal receipts and the value of the real estate where the building was to be built. The evaluation of the cost of building public buildings coincided with a new architectural movement that promoted modernism. Both had similar effects on federal architecture—a "starved" classicism. Starved classical designs still employed many of the classical elements that defined styles of architecture such as Classical Revival, but the expression and amount of ornamentation were restrained. Façades became more simplified. Classical elements were angular and faded into the building faces. In the 1920s, particularly after the Public Buildings Act of 1926, starved versions of Classical Revival and other classical styles of architecture were employed rather than their more elaborate predecessors. While architects in the Office of the Supervising Architect resisted moving in the direction of totally modern designs, the starved classical approach was adopted because it still incorporated the classical elements that were thought to be expressive of the federal presence.

Movement by the Office of the Supervising Architect toward starved classical styles strongly influenced the design of the Little Rock U.S. Post Office and Courthouse. The building's Classical Revival design is very practical. It displays architectural elements, such as the projected pavilions, that are central to conveying the type of presence for which

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section Number   8   Page  14 

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**Little Rock U.S. Post Office and Courthouse  
Pulaski County, Arkansas**

**Narrative Statement of Significance: (continued):**

Classical Revival architecture is recognized; however, these features are not overly lavish or imposing. Additionally, the façade is not overwhelmed by a colonnade of classical columns. A pilastrade and two engaged Doric columns reflect these types of elements but in a much more simplified manner.

While not as elaborate as earlier Classical Revival-style government buildings, such as the U.S. Patent Office in Washington D.C. (one of the most impressive examples of classically styled public buildings), the design of the Little Rock U.S. Post Office and Courthouse is a good example of a public building constructed in this style. Its design reflects the architectural movements adopted by the Treasury Department to convey the permanence and presence of the federal government at a local level.

As Acting Supervising Architect, James A. Wetmore, oversaw the design of the Little Rock U.S. Post Office and Courthouse. He served as Acting Supervising Architect for the Treasury Department from 1912 to 1913 and then from 1915 to 1933. The Little Rock U.S. Post Office and Courthouse was one of more than a thousand buildings constructed during his tenure (Withey and Withey 1970). Mr. Wetmore began his career at the Treasury Department as a court stenographer. Although he later held the position of Supervising Architect, Mr. Wetmore was a lawyer and not an architect. Historical documents indicate that he approached his position as an administrator rather than as a designer. Louis A. Simon, Superintendent of the Architectural Division, assumed many of the architectural duties of the office, including the architectural direction of office building designs. Mr. Simon's adherence to traditional (classical) styles of architecture, albeit restrained, was reflected in the 1920s- and 1930s-era buildings constructed by the Treasury Department. Mr. Simon, an M.I.T. graduate, served as the Superintendent of the Architectural Division from 1905 to 1933, when he succeeded Mr. Wetmore as Supervising Architect (Craig 1979). Before he retired from the position in 1941, he oversaw the design of the east wing addition of the Little Rock U.S. Post Office and Courthouse.

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section Number   9   Page  15 

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**Little Rock U.S. Post Office and Courthouse  
Pulaski County, Arkansas**

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*Little Rock Arkansas Gazette*. Article concerning the growth of Arkansas, 7 July 1883.

———"Federal Building Furniture Arrives," 15 December 1932:18.

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section Number 10 Page 16

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**Little Rock U.S. Post Office and Courthouse  
Pulaski County, Arkansas**

**Verbal Boundary Description:**

The building is located in the Little Rock Addition in Block 126, Lot 1-12.

**Boundary Justification:**

All property lines are as they existed at the building's construction.



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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section Number Photographs

Page 17

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**Little Rock U.S. Post Office and Courthouse  
Pulaski County, Arkansas**

1. Little Rock Post Office/Courthouse
2. Little Rock Arkansas
3. Victoria Clow
4. 18 November 1998
5. Geo-Marine, Inc., Plano, Texas
6. South (main) elevation, view to east
7. Photo 1

Item numbers 1-5 are the same for all photographs. Item numbers 6 and 7 are listed below for each photograph.

6. Corner view of west elevation
7. Photo 2

6. West elevation showing 1987 addition
7. Photo 3

6. North (rear) elevation
7. Photo 4

6. East elevation
7. Photo 5

6. West entry, southern elevation
7. Photo 6

6. Main courtroom (view to south)
7. Photo 7

6. Main courtroom, judge's bench
7. Photo 8

6. Postal lobby, suspended acorn-shaped light
7. Photo 9

6. Postal lobby corridor
7. Photo 10