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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 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 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 (NPA Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name United States Post Office, Court House and Custom House  
other names/site number Gene Snyder U.S. Courthouse and Custom House/JF-CD-177

2. Location

street & number 601 West Broadway N/A not for publication  
city or town Louisville N/A vicinity  
state Kentucky code KY county Jefferson code 111 zip code 40202

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 X meets      does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant      nationally      statewide X locally. (     See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Constance Werner Ramsey, Federal Preservation Officer 2/12/99  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

USA  
~~State of~~ Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property X meets      does not meet the National Register criteria. (     See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

David L. Morgan David L. Morgan, SHPO and Executive Director 4-23-98  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

Kentucky Heritage Council/State Historic Preservation Office  
~~State~~ ~~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:)

Edson H. Beall 3/18/99  
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

**5. Classification**

| Ownership of Property<br>(Check as many boxes as apply.) | Category of Property<br>(Check only one box.)   | Number of Resources within Property<br>(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.) |                 |
|--|---|---|-----------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> private                         | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s) | Contributing  | Noncontributing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> public-local                    | <input type="checkbox"/> district               | 1   | 0 buildings     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> public-State                    | <input type="checkbox"/> site                   | 0   | 0 sites         |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public-Federal       | <input type="checkbox"/> structure              | 0   | 0 structures    |
|  | <input type="checkbox"/> object                 | 2   | 0 objects       |
|  |   | 3   | 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.)

GOVERNMENT:post office  
GOVERNMENT:courthouse  
GOVERNMENT:government office  
GOVERNMENT:custom house

Current Functions  
 (Enter categories from instructions.)

GOVERNMENT:courthouse  
GOVERNMENT:government office  
GOVERNMENT:custom house

**7. Description**

Architectural Classification  
 (Enter categories from instructions.)  
LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS: Neo-Classical Revival

Materials  
 (Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation CONCRETE  
 walls STONE:limestone  
BRICK  
 roof CONCRETE  
COPPER  
 other METAL:bronze  
 other STONE: marble

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  
qualify the property for National Register Listing.)

Areas of Significance  
(Enter categories from  
instructions.)

A Property is associated with events  
that have made a significant contribution  
to the broad patterns of our history.

Architecture

B Property is associated with the lives  
of persons significant in out 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.

Period of Significance  
1932-1938

D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield,  
information important in prehistory or history.

Significant Dates  
1932/1938

Criteria Considerations  
(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

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

A owned by a religious institution or  
used for religious purposes.

Cultural Affiliation  
N/A

B removed from its original locations.

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.

Architect/Builder  
U.S. Govt. - Architect  
Pike and Cook Co.-Builder

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

9. Major Bibliographical 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:  
 State Historic Preservation Office  
 Other State agency  
 Federal agency  
 Local government  
 University  
 Other  
Name of repository:  
General Services Administration

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of Property Approximately 3.5 acres

**UTM Reference - Louisville West, Kentucky**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

| 1 | <u>16</u>   | <u>608285</u> | <u>4233795</u> | 3 | <u>    </u> | <u>    </u> | <u>    </u> |
|---|-------------|---------------|----------------|---|-------------|-------------|-------------|
|   | Zone        | Easting       | Northing       |   | Zone        | Easting     | Northing    |
| 2 | <u>    </u> | <u>    </u>   | <u>    </u>    | 4 | <u>    </u> | <u>    </u> | <u>    </u> |
|   | Zone        | Easting       | Northing       |   | Zone        | Easting     | Northing    |

**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 Philip Thomason  
organization Thomason & Associates date Jan. 13, 1997  
street & number P.O. Box 121225 telephone 615-385-4960  
city or town Nashville state TN zip code 37212

**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       
street & number      telephone       
city or town      state      zip code     

**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 instruction, 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 Service Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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**United States Post Office,  
Court House and Custom House  
Louisville, Jefferson County,  
Kentucky**

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The United States Post Office, Court House and Custom House is located at 601 W. Broadway in downtown Louisville, Kentucky (JF-CD-177). The building and its rear parking lot occupy an entire city block containing approximately 3.5 acres. The property is bounded on the south by W. Broadway, on the west by Seventh Street, on the east by Sixth Street, and on the north by a parking lot. In front of the building on the south facade are small landscaped areas delineated by granite curbing. Two original steel flagpoles are located at the southwest and southeast corners of the property and are included as contributing objects.

The United States Post Office, Court House and Custom House is a six-story, rectangular plan building completed in 1932. The building was designed in the Neo-Classical style by government architects under the supervision of James A. Wetmore. The building is of steel and concrete construction with an exterior of Bedford limestone. The basement and first floor level have a rusticated stone exterior while the upper floors display an ashlar stone finish. The roof is of copper which was added in 1990 to replace the original copper roof.

The building was originally designed with five stories with the fifth story hidden behind the building's stone entablature. The space within the building was soon deemed to be inadequate and in 1938 an attic story, or sixth floor was added to the building. This addition was also sheathed in limestone to reflect the original design. The six-story section of the building is in a "U" shape with projecting four-story rear wings. These wings house the building's courtrooms and adjacent to these wings are light wells which provide illumination into the building's office areas. Adjacent to the basement are also a series of below-grade light wells which provide illumination into the offices on this level.

The exterior of the building has not been significantly altered since the completion of the sixth floor in 1938. The building retains its exterior stone surface and detailing. These include engaged and freestanding Corinthian columns, cast iron spandrels, and entablatures with dentils and modillion blocks. Windows throughout the upper floors of the building are original paired, four-over-four steel sash design. Those on the first floor are four-over-four design with elliptical transoms. The windows retain their original glass but have had a transparent film added to the inside of the glass to reduce glare. Entrances on the primary facades retain their original glass and bronze doors, decorative surrounds, and elliptical transoms with bronze grilles.

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The interior of the building has been remodeled over the past decade with the exception of the major public spaces. The public lobby on the first floor and the second floor courtrooms have been largely preserved and maintained and display most of their original floor plan and detailing. The public lobby is an impressive space with marble and terrazzo floors, marble walls, Doric marble columns, and original bronze and glass postal boxes and windows. The second floor courtrooms retain their original coffered wood and plaster ceiling, Corinthian wall pilasters, and arched windows.

The remaining spaces of the interior have been remodeled with new floor and wall finishes, dropped acoustical tile ceilings, added partition walls, and light fixtures. All heating and cooling units, plumbing, and electrical systems have also been upgraded over the past decade. In some areas, original corridors are extant and retain their terrazzo floors and marble baseboards and wainscoting.

**Exterior**

The main (south) facade of the building faces W. Broadway and serves as the primary access to the building. This facade has 25 bays and on the first story these bays have rounded arched windows. On the second, third and fourth floors, the bays are divided by Corinthian engaged columns. The fifth floor is concealed on the three primary facades by the building's entablature and original roofline. In 1938, the existing sixth floor attic story was added which also has a stone exterior and flat roof. The basement of the building is illuminated by light wells with granite surrounds and iron grates. The basement windows are original paired four-over-four steel sash design.

At the southwest and southeast corners of the building, this facade has five-story projecting pavilions with pedimented porticos, Corinthian pilasters, and Corinthian columns. The pediments on the projecting pavilions have dentils and modillion blocks. On the first floor these pavilions contain the main entrances into the building. Each pavilion has three entrances on the first floor set within arches with radiating voussoirs. Steps leading to these entrances are of granite with an added surface of concrete on the treads. Flanking the entrances are original bronze and glass light standards with claw feet and a central fluted column. Each entrance has original double doors of single-light glass and bronze design. The bronze doors have lower panels with acanthus

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leaf molding. Above the doors are dentil molding, acanthus leaf molding, acroterions, and elliptical bronze grilles.

Dividing the first and second floors is a stone water table. Between the column plinths on the second floor are open stone balustrades. Below the third floor windows are cast iron spandrels with alternating designs. One design depicts a winged eagle while the other has a bound wreath and medallion design. Below the fourth floor windows are plain stone spandrels. The fifth floor of the building is concealed behind the building's entablature which has a plain frieze, dentils, and modillion blocks. At the original roofline is an open balustrade with stone balusters. At the roofline of the building is an attic story which was added in 1938. Above the fourth story in the frieze are attached bronze letters which spell "UNITED STATES POST OFFICE COURT HOUSE AND CUSTOM HOUSE."

The west facade of the building has eleven bays and also displays a first story of rusticated limestone and upper stories of ashlar finish limestone. This facade has similar detailing to the main facade and features window bays divided by Corinthian engaged columns. Windows on this facade are paired, four-over-four steel sash design. The original roofline has an entablature with modillion blocks, dentils, and an open balustrade. A sixth floor attic story was added to this facade as well in 1938.

The entrance on this facade has a concrete handicapped ramp added in recent years. This ramp has a steel handrail and a similar handrail has also been added to the granite steps leading to the entrance. This entrance has original paired, single-light double doors of glass and bronze. This entrance also has a bronze surround and grille identical to the entrances on the main facade. Flanking this entrance are original wall light standards of glass and bronze.

Extending an additional five bays on the west facade is a one-story wing. This wing has paired four-over-four sash windows and elliptical transoms and a rusticated stone exterior. Above the windows is a stone water table and belt course and below the roofline are rectangular limestone panels.

The east facade of the building has eleven bays and also displays a first story of rusticated limestone and upper stories of ashlar finish limestone. This facade has similar detailing to the

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main facade and features window bays divided by Corinthian engaged columns. Windows on this facade are paired, four-over-four steel sash design. The original roofline has an entablature with modillion blocks, dentils, and an open balustrade. A sixth floor attic story was added to this facade as well in 1938.

The entrance on this facade has a concrete handicapped ramp added in recent years. This ramp has a steel handrail and a steel handrail has also been added to the granite steps leading to the entrance. This entrance has original paired, single-light double doors of glass and bronze. This entrance also has a bronze surround and grille identical to the entrances on the main facade. Flanking this entrance are original wall light standards of glass and bronze.

Extending an additional five bays on the west facade is a one-story wing. This wing has paired four-over-four sash windows and elliptical transoms and a rusticated stone exterior. Above the windows is a stone water table and belt course and below the roofline are rectangular limestone panels. At the north bay of this wing is a staircase which connects from grade to the basement light well level. This staircase has granite steps and a steel handrail. Opening onto this staircase from the basement level is an entrance with ca. 1990 double doors.

The rear (north) facade of the building has a limestone exterior which wraps around the six-story wings. The exterior wall surfaces of the central courtroom wings and two-story rear wing is of five-course common bond brick. Windows on this facade are also original four-over-four steel sash design and above the windows are soldier course lintels. All of the original doors on this facade have been removed and replaced with ca. 1990 solid steel doors or single-light steel and glass doors. Extending much of the length of this facade is a concrete loading dock which has a steel and poured concrete roof supported by steel posts. Concrete steps lead from the loading dock to the adjacent parking area. Rising above the roofline on this facade is the square brick smokestack for the building's original steam boiler system. At the roofline of the six-story section are elliptical attic dormers with louvered vents.

At this facade are two, one-story brick additions constructed in the 1980s. These additions are rectangular in design and have four-over-four anodized aluminum windows and solid steel doors.



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**Interior**

The interior of the building is composed primarily of individual offices connected by central hallways. The major exceptions to this arrangement are on the first and second floors which contain the primary public spaces. On the first floor is the public lobby which extends the length of the building. This lobby was originally designed to serve post office patrons and displays original postal boxes and windows. On the second floor are two federal courtrooms which were designed with coffered wood ceilings, decorative pilasters, and arched windows. As part of the building's remodelings of the late 1980s and early 1990s all of the building's heating and cooling systems, plumbing, and electrical systems were upgraded.

The first floor public lobby has original marble floors, marble baseboards and walls. At each end of the lobby are paired Doric columns of marble. The postal windows retain their original marble and brass grilles and counters. Dividing these bays are paired bronze Doric pilasters. On the cornice above the postal boxes are bronze finials or stanchions in leaf designs. Above the postal boxes and windows are arched brass grilles. The ceiling has rectangular panels with acanthus leaf cove molding. Dividing each bay in the lobby are Doric marble wall pilasters. In the center of the lobby are a series of rectangular, free-standing brass tables. Within the lobby the original brass and glass postal boxes are intact but are no longer functional. The marble floors in the lobby have inset circular and diamond shaped marble borders. Some entrances leading to the lobby have original single-light bronze and glass doors. These doors have marble pedimented surrounds and acanthus leaf brackets.

In addition to these details, the east and west entrance lobbies also possess painted murals completed in 1937 by artist Frank Long. In the east lobby are the murals titled "Stock Farming" and "Agriculture." These are located just below the ceiling and measure approximately 23' in length and 3' in height. Similar sized and placed murals are located in the west entrance lobby and are titled "Ohio River Traffic" and "Coal Mining." Within the public lobby are two murals depicting horse racing scenes which measure approximately 12' in length and 3' in height. In the lunettes over the elevators are also murals depicting postal delivery and operations.

At the east and west ends of the lobby are stairwells and elevators. Each staircase has marble treads and risers, a wrought iron railing and newel post, and a wood handrail. Sections of the railings have inset floral designs. The elevators have original bronze doors with decorative

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medallions and Greek key fretwork. Above the elevator doors are bronze acanthus leaf molding and lunettes containing the Frank Long murals.

The original post office work space north of the lobby and behind the postal boxes was remodeled for office space in 1987. This office space has added linoleum floors, partition walls, acoustical tile ceilings, and sheet rock wall finishes. Much of the open space configuration of this work space has been subdivided for separate offices.

The second floor retains much of its original floor plan and configuration. Important public spaces include the two federal courtrooms which have been largely preserved and maintained. Both courtrooms have added floor carpeting and inset light fixtures in the ceiling. Original detailing include marble wainscoting, concrete and plaster walls, and brass radiator grilles along the walls. The original judge's bench and witness bench have been preserved and maintained. Leading to the courtrooms are three entrances which have original solid wood double doors.

Another significant space on the second floor which has been retained is the law library. This library has original fluted Doric wall pilasters of wood, original book cases, and an original plaster ceiling with a Greek fret band and wave molding. Along the walls are original radiators with brass grilles. A steel staircase with a brass handrail provides access to the books on the upper levels. The library has added light fixtures and new floor carpeting. The doors have pedimented surrounds with egg and dart molding and scrolled volutes.

The remainder of the second floor consists of individual offices which open onto connecting corridors. The offices were remodeled in 1990 and many of the original partition walls and doors were removed. This remodeling included the addition of new floor and wall finishes in offices and the addition of a dropped acoustical tile ceiling in the corridors and office areas. The corridors retain their original terrazzo floors and marble wainscoting.

The third floor contains a variety of offices which have been remodeled in recent years and additional remodeling is scheduled for this floor over the next year. This remodeling has resulted in the removal of original partition and corridor walls and the addition of new wall and floor finishes, dropped acoustical tile ceilings, and light fixtures.

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In 1990, the fourth floor was remodeled with the original floor and ceiling finishes removed and replaced with new dropped acoustical tile ceilings and carpeting. One section of the original corridor area was preserved and it retains its original terrazzo floor, marble baseboard and marble wainscoting. All of the original doors on this floor have been removed and replaced with solid wood and louvered wood doors.

In 1987, the fifth floor was remodeled with the addition of new partition walls, acoustical tile ceilings, and floor finishes. Original marble baseboards were retained in the hallways. In 1993, the sixth floor of the building was remodeled with new partition walls, doors, acoustical tile ceilings, and new terrazzo floors. The original marble baseboards have been retained in the corridor spaces. In 1990, the basement area was remodeled with new partition walls. The original terrazzo floors were refinished and a new reflective ceiling was added.

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**STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

The United States Post Office, Court House, and Custom House located at 601 West Broadway in Louisville, Jefferson County, Kentucky (JF-CD-177) is eligible for the National Register at the local level under Criterion C for its architectural design. The building is an excellent example of the Neo-Classical style of architecture of the early 20th century. It is one of the most notable buildings constructed in the city during the 1930s and it retains much of its original design and character. It is representative of federal buildings constructed by the United States government during the first decades of this century and it continues to serve as the federal courthouse for the city.

In 1926, the United States government passed the Public Buildings Act which initiated an unprecedented federal building program. As part of this Act, \$165,000,000 was appropriated for public buildings in 85 cities. The office of the Supervising Architect of the Department of the Treasury was given the responsibility of designing and constructing all federal public buildings. The Post Office, Court House and Custom House in Louisville was part of this construction program.

The construction of a new federal building for Louisville was being reported in the local newspapers as early as January 1926. Representative M. H. Thatcher of the Fifth District introduced a bill providing for the allocation of \$2,600,000 for the acquisition of a site and the construction of a new federal building for the city. As part of that plan, the old building, located at Fourth and Chestnut Streets, would be sold to the highest bidder to help finance the new structure (Louisville Times 1/4/26).

As part of the Public Buildings Act, Louisville received an allocation of \$3,400,000 for a new post office and federal building. In March of 1927, the bill that would provide the initial money to begin the structure died in Congress and the building was put on hold (Louisville Herald 4/6/26; Louisville Courier-Journal 3/5/27). Not until February 1928 did the City of Louisville receive congressional approval for its federal building and post office. On February 15, congress passed the Treasury and Postoffice [sic] Appropriation Bill which authorized \$2,800,000 for the construction of the building. As part of this act the old federal building, valued at \$2,500,000, was to be sold to the highest bidder (Louisville Courier-Journal 2/26/28; 2/19/28).

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In July of 1928 a site on the north side of Broadway between Sixth and Seventh Streets was chosen for the federal building. Composed of approximately 26 different lots, twelve of which faced Broadway, this site had 420 feet of frontage on Broadway, 377 feet on Seventh Street, and 339 feet on Sixth Street (Louisville Times 7/10/28). However, it was not until November of 1929 that the site was officially purchased for \$771,187 (Louisville Courier-Journal 11/30/29). By August of 1930, the demolition of the 68 brick buildings on the site was underway by Moll Company, Inc. of Louisville (Louisville Times 9/1/30).

Construction of the building came at the end of a prosperous decade for the city of Louisville. Louisville was the largest city in Kentucky and it was a major manufacturing and shipping center of the region. Between 1920 and 1930 the city's expansion resulted in an increase in population to 307,745 residents (Two Hundred Years, 145). From 1923 to 1927, the city gained 153 new manufacturing plants and extensive new construction took place in the downtown area. In 1923, the 700-room Brown Hotel opened on Broadway, and in 1928, the \$2.5 million Loew's Theater was built. These projects highlighted the growth and prosperity of the city and the planned construction of the new federal building was another indication of Louisville's rising prominence.

The design of the building was patterned after the Treasury Department building in Washington and was designed by government architects in the Treasury Department. Plans were supervised by James Wetmore of the Treasury Department. On October 5, 1930, Congressman Maurice H. Thatcher presided over a ground breaking ceremony along with George R. Bickel of the Henry Bickel Company, which was awarded the foundation construction contract. The company submitted the lowest bid of \$68,305 for the excavation and the concreting of foundation walls and floors (Louisville Herald 10/5/30; Louisville Courier-Journal 11/1/30). In April of 1931, a request for bids for the construction of the building was issued (Louisville Courier-Journal 5/25/31). This construction contract was awarded to Pike & Cook Company of Minneapolis. Peter & Burghard of Louisville was awarded the contract for the interior marble work. The cornerstone of the building was laid on December 28, 1931 (Louisville Courier-Journal 11/22/32; Louisville Herald 12/28/31; Louisville Herald 4/16/32).

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Construction on the building progressed throughout 1932 and in October the facility was inspected by government officials, and the new post office opened for business on November 19, 1932. The official dedication ceremony for the building was held the second week in January of 1933 (Louisville Times 10/1/32; Louisville Courier-Journal 11/19/32; Louisville Courier-Journal 1/15/33). The construction of the \$3 million building was one of the few positive actions which occurred in Louisville in the early 1930s. The coming of the Depression ended the city's rapid growth of the previous decade and the construction of the federal building and the Southern Bell Telephone Building at Sixth and Chestnut, were the only major building projects of the early 1930s (Two Hundred Years, 194).

The Neo-Classical design of the building was in keeping with established guidelines for federal buildings and post offices. In 1901, James Knox Taylor, Supervising Architect the Treasury Department, announced a return to the "classic style of architecture" for government buildings ("History of Post Office Construction," 4). Government buildings were designed to express classical and democratic ideals to symbolize the power of the federal government. During the 1910s and 1920s, architects for the Treasury Department devised standardized plans for post offices and courthouses for smaller communities. However, those for larger cities continued to be designed on an individual basis using Neo-Classical and Colonial Revival details.

The Neo-Classical and Colonial Revival styles were the predominant styles utilized in the 1920s and 1930s for the construction of federal buildings. These styles were thought to best illustrate America's past and future progress and both styles increasingly became the architectural symbol of the federal government ("History of Post Office Construction," 21). The Neo-Classical style was based primarily on the classical orders of Greek architecture. Renewed interest in this style occurred following the Columbian Exposition at Chicago in 1893 which revived the grand scale and monumentality of classical architecture (American Architecture, 217). The Neo-Classical, Colonial Revival, and related styles became widely popular for residences, commercial buildings, and public buildings during the early 20th century.

The Neo-Classical style for public buildings was distinguished by its grand scale, symmetry, and exterior finishes of stone. These buildings were often built with pedimented porticos or columned pavilions in the Greek orders of Doric, Ionic, or Corinthian. Most roof lines were kept simple in design and entablatures were generally left unadorned. The Neo-Classical style dominated public building designs into the early 1930s. By the mid-1930s the use of more restrained

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classicism with elements of the Art Deco style became widely used for public buildings until World War II (North American Architecture, 244).

The United States Post Office, Court House and Custom House in Louisville is a representative example of the Neo-Classical style federal buildings constructed during the 1920s and 1930s. The building was designed with an exterior of rusticated and ashlar finish limestone panels and is distinguished by its monumental pavilions on the primary facade. These pavilions feature three-story pediments with stone Corinthian columns. Three-story engaged Corinthian columns are located on the three main facades of the building and divide the window bays. Above the fifth story of the building is an entablature with large modillion blocks and dentils. The interior also features Neo-Classical style elements in the public lobby and courthouse spaces. The public lobby displays Doric columns of marble and Doric pilasters divide the postal box and window bays. Corinthian pilasters are employed in the second floor courtrooms to continue the overall design of the building. The exterior of the building has not been extensively altered and its monumental massing, proportion, and detailing remain intact.

Throughout the 1930s, improvements to the building continued. In 1935, the Treasury Relief Art Project was funded out of a New Deal organization, the Public Works Administration. The art project was designed to spend \$530,784 and give work to jobless painters and sculptors while adding art to post offices, marine hospitals, and other Federal agencies. As part of this, the Louisville building was chosen as one of the first to receive a series of ten murals (Louisville Times 12/14/35). The murals were drawn and painted by Frank Weathers Long of Berea College with assistance by Alois E. Ulrich, Bert Mullins, and Martha Lauscher. The murals depicted "local agricultural activities and pursuits," and were completed in June of 1937. Frank Weathers Long was a Berea artist who also painted murals during the 1930s at the post offices in Morehead and Berea. He concentrated his career on creating jewelry after the Depression and left Kentucky in 1962 (Kentucky Encyclopedia, 570).

In late 1936, \$240,000 was allocated by the U. S. government from the Public Works Administration to add a sixth floor along the Broadway elevation of the building. Plans for the alterations were approved in August 1937. The Algernon Blair contracting firm from Montgomery, Alabama was awarded the contract for \$168,218 to be completed within 300 days from the beginning of construction (Louisville Courier-Journal 10/22/37; Louisville Times 11/10/36).

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In 1950, a contract for \$112,515.53 was awarded to Grohne Company of Decatur, Illinois for a renovation project which included the installation of a new maple floor in the post office work area, replastering walls and ceilings, and rehangng the entrance doors (Louisville Times 1/7/42; 6/14/50). In February 1958, the building experienced a fire in the attic which caused \$250,000 in damage. Later that year, in September the building underwent renovation that included sandblasting the exterior, replacement of interior lights, and the installation of acoustical tile ceilings on the sixth floor. In February of 1959, the federal government spent \$1,444,221 to modernize the building and to complete the repair from the fire damage (Louisville Courier-Journal 9/11/58; 2/15/59).

Since the addition of the sixth floor in 1938, few changes or alterations have taken place to the exterior of the building. The building retains its original exterior form and plan and the majority of its original details including its windows and doors. The significant interior spaces of the building have also been largely retained including the public lobby on the first floor and federal courtrooms on the second floor. These spaces were the most highly visible public spaces in the building and they were designed with extensive decoration and expensive materials.

Over the past ten years, major remodeling projects have resulted in extensive alterations to most interior spaces. These projects have included the upgrading of the building's heating and cooling system, plumbing, and electrical systems. The addition of new partition walls and removal of existing walls has been widespread in the basement, first floor postal work area, and office areas of the upper floors. In most of these areas new dropped acoustical tile ceilings have been added along with new floor and wall finishes. Most original doors were removed and replaced with paneled wood doors.

Although many federal post offices and courthouses are listed on the National Register, there has yet to be a nationwide or statewide contextual study of these buildings. Due to this circumstance, the building at Louisville can only be evaluated in terms of its local significance. The building is regarded by the city's historic preservation office as the most monumental example of the Neo-Classical style built in the late 1920s and 1930s (Interview, Joanne Weeter). The Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite Temple at 200 E. Gray Street is the only other building constructed during this period which possesses many of the same design characteristics. This two-story limestone building has a large Doric colonnade on the main facade. The building was completed in 1931 and was listed on the National Register in 1982 for its architectural



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significance. Both the Scottish Rite Temple and the United States Post Office, Court House and Custom House are regarded as the city's most outstanding examples of the monumental Neo-Classical style of the period (Ibid).

The United States Post Office, Court House and Custom House is eligible for the National Register under Criterion C for its architectural design. Despite the numerous remodelings to the building, its essential exterior character and important public spaces remain intact. The building is one of Louisville's best examples of the Neo-Classical style and is representative of federal architecture of the period. The building continues to serve as the city's primary federal courthouse and center for federal government operations.

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**VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION**

The boundary for the United States Post Office, Court House and Custom House includes the entire city block bounded by Broadway on the south, Sixth Street on the east, Seventh Street on the west, and the closed section of Magazine Street on the north.

**VERBAL BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION**

The nominated property includes the entire parcel historically associated with the United States Post Office, Court House and Custom House in Louisville.

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United States Post Office, Court House and Custom House  
601 Broadway, Louisville, Jefferson County, Kentucky  
Photo by: Thomason and Associates, Nashville, Tennessee  
Date: December 11, 1996  
Location of Negatives: General Services Administration

Photo No. 1: South facade, view towards the northeast.

Photo No. 2: South facade, view towards the northwest.

Photo No. 3: South facade, view towards north of east bay portico.

Photo No. 4: East facade, view towards the northwest.

Photo No. 5: West facade, view towards the northeast.

Photo No. 6: North facade, view towards the southwest.

Photo No. 7: View of Public Lobby on the first floor.

Photo No. 8: View of elevator lobby showing Frank Long murals in the lunettes.

Photo No. 9: Detail of Frank Long mural titled "Fox Hunting" in the east elevator lobby.

Photo No. 10: View of Courtroom No. 1 on the second floor.

Photo No. 11: View of the Law Library on the second floor.

Photo No. 12: View of the remodeled third floor corridor and office space, typical of the upper floors.