

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 National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. 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 certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).

1. Name of Property

historic name United States Immigration Station

other names/site number Rosa Parks Federal Building

2. Location

street & number 333 Mount Elliott Street

☐ not for publication

city or town Detroit

☐ vicinity

state Michigan code MI county Wayne code 163 zip code 48207

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 at the following level(s) of significance:

national statewide X local

[Signature]
Signature of certifying official

Date 4/10/13

Federal Preservation Officer, GSA
Title

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property X meets does not meet the National Register criteria.

[Signature]
Signature of commenting official

Date 4/4/13

State Historic Preservation Officer
Title

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

☒ entered in the National Register

☐ determined eligible for the National Register

☐ determined not eligible for the National Register

☐ removed from the National Register

☐ other (explain):

[Signature]
Signature of the Keeper

5.22.13
Date of Action

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	
2	2	buildings
		district
		site
		structure
		object
2	2	Total

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

0

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

GOVERNMENT/Government Office

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

GOVERNMENT/ Government Office

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY REVIVAL

Colonial Revival and OTHER

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation: Concrete

walls: Brick

Limestone

roof: Ceramic Tile

other:

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

Summary Paragraph

The United States Immigration Station is located just east of downtown Detroit, Michigan at 333 Mount Elliott Street at the corner of Mount Elliott and East Jefferson Avenue. It is a three story Colonial Revival style building constructed of brick with limestone decorative elements. Stylistic elements include a symmetrical primary façade, a prominent entablature with projecting cornice, quoins simulating columns, main entry with pediment and columns, and cupola.

Narrative Description

See Continuation Sheets 7.1 through 7.3

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 grave.
- ☐ D a cemetery.
- ☐ E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- ☐ F a commemorative property.
- ☐ G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Politics and Government

Period of Significance

1933

Significant Dates

1933

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Wetmore, James A., Acting Supervising Architect

Period of Significance (justification)

The United States Immigration Station is a fine example of a combination immigration and border station building type and is associated with national Prohibition, which prohibited the sale and consumption of alcoholic beverages between 1920 and 1933 and led to a dramatic increase in smuggling across the borders of the United States. Therefore, the period of significance for the United States Immigration Station is 1933, representing the completion of the building, as well as the end of national Prohibition.

Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria)

The United States Immigration Station, Detroit is historically significant and meets National Register Criteria A and C. A multiple property documentation form has been prepared for United States border stations on land points of entry, including border patrol, customs, and immigration functions, and although that document did not include the Detroit immigration station, this building meets the significance criteria and integrity requirements it set forth. The period of significance for the United States Immigration Station is 1933, representing the completion of the building, as well as the end of national Prohibition. The building retains most aspects of its architectural integrity.

Narrative Statement of Significance (provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance)

Politics/Government

Regarding Criterion A, the United States Immigration Station is associated with national Prohibition, which prohibited the sale and consumption of alcoholic beverages between 1920 and 1933 and led to a dramatic increase in smuggling across the borders of the United States. Smuggling alcohol from Canada was widespread, and Detroit in particular was the gateway for a high proportion of this traffic. Construction of the United States Immigration Station is a direct result of the increased emphasis beginning in the 1920s that the government put on securing the international borders.

Architecture

Regarding Criterion C, the United States Immigration Station is a fine example of a combined immigration and border station that incorporates a number of the qualities of the "special office building" border inspection station building type. At three stories in height and nine bays along its longitudinal axis, the United States Immigration Station ranks as a large border station building. The United States Immigration Station also exhibits Colonial Revival stylistic influence common in border stations, including a symmetrical primary façade, a prominent entablature with projecting cornice, quoins simulating columns, a main entry with pediment and columns, and cupola.

Developmental history/additional historic context information (if appropriate)

See Continuation Sheets 8.1 through 8.7

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form)
See Continuation Sheets 9.1

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**

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Less than one acre
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage)

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

1	17	334522	4689678	3	17	334309	4689805
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
2	17	334426	4689866	4	17	334396	4689622
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing

Verbal Boundary Description (describe the boundaries of the property)

The United States Immigration Station is bounded by Mount Elliott Street on the northeast, Wright Street on the southeast and parking on the southwest and northwest.

Boundary Justification (explain why the boundaries were selected)

The nomination consists of the property historically associated with 333 Mount Elliott Street, Detroit, Michigan.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Andrew J. Schmidt/ Senior Architectural Historian
organization Summit Envirosolutions, Inc., prepared for the U.S. Date September 2010, rev. December 2012
General Services Administration
street & number 1217 Bandana Blvd. N. telephone 651-842-4202
city or town St. Paul state MN zip code 55108
e-mail aschmidt@summite.com

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **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. Key all photographs to this map.

- **Continuation Sheets**

- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Photographs:

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

Name of Property: United States Immigration Station

City or Vicinity: Detroit

County: Wayne County

State: Michigan

Photographer: Andrew J. Schmidt

Date Photographed: May 2007

Description of Photograph(s) and number:

- 1 of 12. NORTH FAÇADE, MOUNT ELLIOT STREET, FACING SOUTH.
- 2 of 12. NORTH AND WEST FAÇADES, FACING SOUTHEAST.
- 3 of 12. DETAIL OF CUPOLA, FACING SOUTH.
- 4 of 12. DETAIL OF FORMER ENTRANCE, FACING SOUTH.
- 5 of 12. WEST FAÇADE, FACING EAST.
- 6 of 12. SOUTHWEST CORNER, FACING NORTHEAST.
- 7 of 12. ADDITION, FACING NORTHEAST.
- 8 of 12. BOILERHOUSE, FACING SOUTH.
- 9 of 12. BOILERHOUSE, FACING NORTHWEST.
- 10 of 12. GARAGE, SOUTH AND EAST FAÇADES, FACING NORTHWEST.
- 11 of 12. INTERIOR, TYPICAL CORRIDOR.
- 12 of 12. INTERIOR, DETAIL OF DOOR AND WINDOW.

Property Owner:

(complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO)

name U. S. General Services Administration, Great Lakes Region

street & number 230 South Dearborn Street, Suite 3600

telephone 312.886.5573

city or town Chicago

state IL

zip code 60604

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.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

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United States Immigration Station

Name of Property

Wayne County, Michigan

County and State

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

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Description

The United States Immigration Station is located just east of downtown Detroit, Michigan at 333 Mount Elliott Street at the corner of Mount Elliott and East Jefferson Avenue. It is a three story Colonial Revival style building constructed of brick with limestone decorative elements. Stylistic elements include a symmetrical primary façade, a prominent entablature with projecting cornice, quoins simulating columns, and a main entry with pediment and columns.

The United States Immigration Station is located near the Detroit River waterfront in the former warehouse and shipping district east of downtown Detroit. The building is sited in the northern quarter of a large parcel of land area, which also includes an annex to the main building, a former boiler house, a garage, and a large parking lot. The area immediately surrounding the main building is landscaped with a manicured lawn and various types of trees planted to the east. A driveway off Mount Elliott Street provides access to the complex on the east side and leads directly into the parking lot, which encompasses roughly the middle half of the complex. The former boiler house, which is currently used as a garage and storage, is located southeast of the main building and the garage is southwest of the main building, facing Mount Elliott Street.

The United States Immigration Station has a rectangular massing, and was originally oriented north toward Jefferson Avenue with its long central axis parallel to Mount Elliott Street. The entrance on the west elevation now serves as the main entrance. The building is three stories tall with a raised basement/foundation formed with massive limestone blocks. Arranged in an I-shaped plan, the building has a hipped roof, projecting bays, and a prominent cupola. The roof is covered with red clay tiles.

The United States Immigration Station was completed in 1933 as part of the reuse of the former U.S. Marine Hospital. Original drawings are not available. Although one source credits Robert O. Derrick with the design, information carved into one of the foundation blocks lists the Secretary of the U.S. Treasury Department, Assistant Secretary of the U.S. Treasury Department, and "James A. Wetmore, Acting Supervising Architect," with no other architect listed.¹ Given the modest scale of the Immigration Building, it is more likely to have been designed by a U.S. Treasury Department staff architect than by Derrick's private architectural firm.

In 1962, the firm of Giffels and Rossetti prepared the design for renovation and a new building to be connected to the United States Immigration Building via a breezeway. The 1962 work included re-orienting the main entrance from the north elevation (including removal of the original steps) to a new entrance on the west elevation with concrete steps. A two-story steel-framed building with glass-and-aluminum curtain walls was also built in 1962 and is attached to the south elevation of the United States Immigration Station via a two-story glass-and-aluminum breezeway. In addition, the site was redeveloped to its current layout. All buildings on site previously associated with the former Marine Hospital were demolished in 1962, including the investigation building (hospital), the Border Patrol office (nurses' residence), the Coast Guard district office (doctor's house), a storage building, and a garage. In the years since the early 1960s, a covered entry and accessibility ramp were added to the main entrance on the west elevation of the main building, the original window sashes were replaced aluminum window sashes, and the interior office spaces were renovated. Minor elements were added to the exterior, such as lights and antennas. The most recent work, completed in 2012, included replacement of the existing replacement sash and interior renovations which left all existing historic fabric intact.

¹ John Vinci, Inc. *Historic Structures Report for the Federal Building/United States Immigration Station, Detroit, Michigan*, Unpublished manuscript prepared for the U.S. General Services Administration, 1992.

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Exterior

The primary (north) façade is symmetrically arranged, with three window bays and a centered (former main) entrance. The limestone block of the foundation/basement forms a water table, above which the walls are variegated common-bond brick. Slightly raised brickwork at the corners to simulate quoining and flanking the original entrance simulates columns. The original entrance opening has been in-filled with aluminum-framed glass, although the original five light transom remains. The entrance surrounds are carved limestone and include a pair of Ionic columns, a wide frieze with the words "United States Immigration Station," and a denticulated broken pediment. A raised limestone block landing projects from the original entrance, but the steps have been removed.

The primary (north) façade has a pair of window openings with limestone sills and lintels that flank the original entrance. Each is set within an arch formed by raised brickwork with a limestone keystone and springer blocks. The windows are modern vinyl replacement sash with simulated divided lights. There are three window openings on both the second and third stories. The outermost window openings on the second story are unadorned except for limestone sills; whereas, the middle window, positioned above the original entrance, has limestone surrounds and keystone. A limestone entablature with a wide frieze and projecting cornice with block modillions separates the second and third stories. The third story's facade has three unadorned window openings and a pair of octagonal limestone medallions with motifs in bas-relief. A limestone denticulated cornice and coping terminate the north wall. The cupola, which rises from the north slope of the roof, has three parts: an octagonal brick base, a wood-framed middle section, and a bell-shaped copper roof. There is a round, porthole-like window in the north face of the cupola base and four vents on the north, south, west and east facades of the middle section. Decorative urns mark each corner at the top of the octagonal base.

The east and west elevations of the United States Immigration Station are similar. They are organized with two projecting bays flanking a recessed middle section. The brickwork, the entablature between the second and third stories, and the cornice at the roof are all similar to those of the north elevation. The window openings have heavy limestone sills and, on the first floor, limestone lintels. At the basement level, full-sized windows are located within window wells. As on the north elevation, the windows are modern vinyl replacement sash with simulated divided lights. On the west elevation, the current main entrance was created from a former window opening and is in-filled with a modern steel door and transom level window. A gable roofed portico with a pair of Ionic columns supporting a wide, plain entablature with an enclosed pediment covers the entrance. A concrete landing is accessed by concrete steps, and a concrete ramp approaches from the south. Because the ramp is in poor condition, a new wood ramp has been added extending towards the west.

A shed roofed brick penthouse projection with a single window and a vent is located on the roof on the west elevation. The south elevation of the United States Immigration Station is largely covered by the 1962 addition. The portions visible demonstrate materials and architectural details similar to those used on the east and west elevations.

Interior

The interior at the United States Immigration Building has a simple layout. Each floor has a central corridor flanked by offices on the east and west, offices to the north, and a stairwell to the south. The building is organized with three floors of office space, a basement, and an attic for mechanical equipment. Interior decorative elements are modest and are located in the corridors. The floors in the corridors are the original glazed ceramic tile with marble trim and baseboards. Office doorways line both sides of the corridors. They have wide wood surrounds and original wood and glass doors. Single light, hopper style windows were originally located between some of the doorways, but some have been replaced with metal vents.

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The corridor wainscot is a single wood band that runs the length of the corridors. Because the original main entrance on the north façade was abandoned and a new entrance created on the west side of the building, a doorway was created in the west facade as well as an entry corridor within the first floor west office space. In general, the office spaces have been renovated, and the original entrance lobby has been converted into office space.

Boiler House (Contributing)

Located southwest of the United States Immigration Station, the former boiler house once provided steam heat for the buildings in the complex. This rectangular plan building has variegated, common bond brick walls and a side gabled roof covered with asphalt shingles. This building has modest architectural details, including eave returns in the gables and corbelled brickwork in the eaves. The east elevation has four window openings. Two retain original multiple light, hopper style, steel sash windows, and two window openings are in-filled with steel doors. The west elevation has three window openings with the same original sash as the east elevation and an arched coal chute with a metal door. Openings on the north and south elevations are limited to vents with brick lintels in the gables on the south, and in-fill using plywood on the north elevation. A brick smokestack rises from the western slope of the roof.

Non-Contributing Buildings

As described above, the glass-and-aluminum office building is a non-contributing building within the boundaries of the United States Immigration Station property. The building was constructed nearly 30 years after the main building and is connected to the main building via a breezeway.

Located southeast of the United States Immigration Station building, the garage is a rectangular plan building that was built in two stages. The northern half was constructed circa 1933 and the southern half in 1962. The building has variegated common bond brick walls and a flat roof. The building has a functional design with minimal architectural details. Due to the 1962 addition, the garage lacks historic integrity and does not contribute to the historic property.

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Statement of Significance

The United States Immigration Station is historically significant and meets National Register Criteria A and C. A Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF) and individual nominations have been prepared for United States border inspection stations built between 1930 and 1943 at land crossings along the international borders with Canada and Mexico.² These stations were built in accordance with a 1928 report which conveyed the inadequacy of the existing facilities and recommended that the government construct purpose-built inspection stations combining border patrol, customs and immigration functions at 48 locations on highways at border crossings. Detroit was not one of the locations mentioned in the report. The United States Immigration Station in Detroit was constructed adjacent to the Detroit River and its maritime boundary with Canada, rather than on a highway at a land crossing. However, it shares a common historical context and many physical attributes with the buildings included in the multiple property submission. The MPDF sets forth context, significance criteria and integrity requirements useful to the consideration of the subject building. The period of significance for the Detroit United States Immigration Station is 1933, representing the completion of the building, as well as the end of national Prohibition. The building retains most aspects of its historic integrity.

Regarding Criterion A, the United States Immigration Station is associated with national Prohibition, which prohibited the sale and consumption of alcoholic beverages between 1920 and 1933 and led to a dramatic increase in smuggling across the borders of the United States. Smuggling alcohol from Canada was widespread, and Detroit in particular was the gateway for a high proportion of this traffic. As the Border Patrol and Bureau of Immigration increased their presence in Detroit during the 1920s, they needed a new facility to house their staff. Construction of the United States Immigration Station is a direct result of the increased emphasis beginning in the 1920s that the federal government put on securing the international borders.

Regarding Criterion C, at three stories in height and nine bays along its longitudinal axis, the United States Immigration Station is similar to but larger than the border station buildings included in the multiple property submission, which are 7 bays and two and a half stories high at the most. The building exhibits the Colonial Revival stylistic influence that was utilized in border stations along the Canadian Border. Colonial Revival stylistic elements present in the United States Immigration Station include a symmetrical primary façade, a prominent entablature with projecting cornice, quoins simulating columns, a main entry with pediment and columns, and a cupola.

Historic Context: Design and Construction of Federal Buildings, 1931-1939

The U.S. Treasury Department was the agency responsible for the construction of federal buildings—mainly post offices and courthouses—from the mid-nineteenth century until the Federal Works Agency (FWA) was created in 1939. The U.S. Treasury Department established the Office of Supervising Architect in 1864 to oversee design and construction of federal civilian facilities. The work of this office represents several eras defined by congressional authorizations, the supervising architect's stylistic preferences, and the involvement of private architects. During James Knox Taylor's years as the Supervising Architect (1897-1912), all new federal buildings were individually designed. Private architects provided designs for larger projects while the staff in the Office of the Supervising Architect produced plans for smaller buildings. The period between 1915 and 1930, however, was characterized by a more standardized approach to the design of federal buildings. A system of four classes of

² GSA is currently in the process of submitting to the National Register of Historic Places the Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF) titled, *U.S. Border Inspection Stations, States Bordering Canada and Mexico, 1930-1943*, as well as individual nomination forms for 34 border stations. The MPDF also includes eight previously listed border stations. Located in eleven states along the north and south borders, none of the border stations included in the multiple property submission are located in Michigan.

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buildings was defined, based on the value of annual post office receipts and the value of adjoining real estate in large cities. Relatively little new construction took place during this period.³

The onset of the Great Depression after the stock market crash in 1929 ushered in a new era of federal building projects. The Hoover Administration and the U.S. Congress had increased funding for the federal building program in 1928 and did so again in 1930 and 1931. When the U.S. Congress amended the Public Buildings Act of 1926 in 1930, it increased funding and authorized the Secretary of the U.S. Treasury Department to contract with private firms and individuals. The Federal Employment Stabilization Act of 1931 directed federal agencies that oversaw construction projects to prepare six-year construction plans and appropriated an additional \$100 million for that year. As a result of this act, the staff of the Supervising Architect's office was increased significantly and over 130 private architectural firms were commissioned to design federal buildings in 1931. By 1934, over 300 firms were involved in the program. As a result of this design and building activity, approximately 1,300 new federal buildings were constructed in 1,080 communities.⁴

As federal construction surged during the early 1930s, the architectural profession was in the midst of a broad debate between "traditional" and "modern" architects. Traditionalists, who adhered to the ideals of the Ecole des Beaux Arts, felt that the classical design vocabulary was most fitting for federal buildings because it uniquely expressed democratic values. Modernists called for minimal ornamentation, asymmetrical design, and use of new materials. Although traditionalists would dominate the Supervising Architect's Office until after World War II, modernist influence was apparent by the early 1930s, resulting in the 20th century Classical Revival style commonly employed in federal buildings throughout the decade.

Louis A. Simon guided the stylistic development of federal buildings for over three decades, serving as superintendent of the architectural section of the Supervising Architect's Office from 1905 to 1933, then as the Supervising Architect from 1933 to 1939. Under Simon's leadership, the traditionally inspired Colonial Revival and the modern Classical Revival styles dominated federal building design during the 1930s. For example, Detroit was in the Public Works Administration's Region 2 where both traditional and modern designs were widely used.

With the large number of federal buildings planned or in progress by 1933, the Public Works Administration (PWA) was established to fund the planning and construction of public works projects. The PWA functioned like a large building and loan association to fund federal construction projects but it did not become involved in the design of any buildings or projects. The PWA's role in building design was limited to a general requirement that materials be from the United States and manufactured by American firms. The Office of Supervising Architect continued to oversee building designs. Because the main goals of the program were to provide employment and erect buildings, standardization of design continued to be a priority.

Historic Context: Development of the Immigration Building in Detroit

Detroit began as a fort occupied first by the French then by the British during the 18th century and was rebuilt according to a design of Augustus Woodward as an American city following a devastating fire in 1805. Although never fully implemented, the city's broad radial avenues, centered on Woodward Avenue, and the Campus Martius, the main city square, convey the lasting effects of this early city planning. Strategically located on the Detroit River between lakes Huron and Erie, Detroit developed as a Great Lakes shipping and shipbuilding center

³ Lois Craig, ed., and the staff of the Federal Architecture Project, *The Federal Presence: Architecture, Politics, and Symbols in the United States Government Building* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press, 1979), 99-105, 195, 213; Emily Harris, "History of Federal Policy Concerning Post Office Construction, 1900-1940," printed as *History of Post Office Construction, 1900-1940*, (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Postal Service, 1982), 1-11.

⁴ Harris, *History of Post Office Construction* 14-15; Craig, et. al, *The Federal Presence*, 281.

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during the first half of the nineteenth century. Population grew slowly during that period, however, reaching 21,019 by 1850, and Detroit was eclipsed by others cities, such as Cincinnati, Buffalo, and Chicago.⁵

After 1850, Detroit grew more rapidly. As an established shipping port on the Great Lakes, Detroit became an important transshipment point for railroad companies, including the Grand Trunk, Michigan Central, Wabash, and Pennsylvania railroads. With those transportation connections, Detroit developed as a manufacturing center, including stoves, pharmaceuticals, paint and varnish, tobacco products, and ship building. Although no single industry dominated the local economy, Detroit was the leading stove producing city in the world by the end of the nineteenth century. Detroit's population reached 116,340 by 1880, then 285,704 in 1900. The main retail district extended north on Woodward Avenue, while the wholesale warehouse and manufacturing districts developed along Jefferson Avenue to take advantage of the riverfront and railroad connections. During the 1890s, as the city grew, downtown Detroit expanded upward into tall buildings, and the skyline began to change from the cupolas, domes, and spires of civic and religious buildings to large commercial buildings and skyscrapers.⁶

More than any other industry, automobiles transformed Detroit during the first three decades of the twentieth century. With good transportation connections and an established manufacturing sector, Detroit was also home to three notable entrepreneurs who became leaders in the automotive industry: Ransom Olds, Henry Ford, and William Durant. Olds built the first auto plant in Detroit in 1901 for his Oldsmobile. Henry Ford revolutionized the industry when, after building a plant in 1903, he planned to build mass-produced and affordable autos for farmers and small town residents that were easy to maintain and repair. In 1906, Ford Motor Company moved to a larger plant on Picquette Avenue, and two years later began producing the Model T. Also in 1908, William Durant formed General Motors Company. Numerous other auto makers, as well as body and parts manufacturers, set up shop in Detroit. Supplying a seemingly insatiable demand, auto production rose from 20,000 cars in 1904 to one million in 1917. By that time, Detroit had 23 auto manufacturing companies and 132 parts firms. In 1925, Walter Chrysler re-organized the failing Maxwell Motor Car Company into the Chrysler Corporation, and the last of the Big Three automakers was formed. Auto production continued to expand during the 1920s and reached 5,337,000 vehicles in 1929.⁷

The industrial boom and resulting economic opportunities drew new residents to Detroit by the hundreds of thousands. The city's population surged from 285,704 in 1900 to 993,678 in 1920, then to 1,568,662 in 1930. This rapid growth in turn led to a building boom in downtown Detroit during the 1920s, including a number of skyscrapers: the Penobscot Building (1928), the Buhl Building (1925), the Barlum Tower (1927, now Cadillac Tower), the David Scott Building (1929), and the Guardian Building (1929).⁸

After the rapid expansion of the previous two decades, Detroit's growth nearly came to a halt during the 1930s. As a result of the economic depression that began in late 1929, demand for and production of automobiles fell to 1,332,000 vehicles in 1931. This was one-quarter of the output from 1929. Workers were laid off by the thousands, and the unemployed in the city reached 223,568 by 1931.⁹ As Detroit struggled through the early years of the Depression, the federal government, as noted above, was in the midst of a building program that provided some relief to the construction trades. The Detroit United States Immigration Station was part of that building campaign, as well as a growing effort to secure the United States' borders.

⁵ Kathryn Bishop Eckert, *Buildings of Michigan* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 28-29.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 32.

⁷ Eckert *Buildings of Michigan*, 32-33

Arthur M Woodford, *This is Detroit, 1701-2001* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2001), 90-97.

⁸ Philip P. Mason, *Rum Running and the Roaring Twenties: Prohibition on the Michigan Ontario Waterway* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1995); Woodford, *This is Detroit*, 113.

⁹ "How the Great Depression Changed Detroit," *Detroit News*, accessed online on 5 December, 2007 at: <http://info.detnews.com/history/story/index.cfm?id=49&category=life>.

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During the nineteenth century, the involvement of the federal government with immigration related mainly to the preparation of reports by the U.S. Secretary of State concerning immigrants. In 1891, as immigration into the United States reached its peak and more immigrants came from southern and eastern Europe, the U.S. Congress authorized the creation of the Office of Superintendent of Immigration to head a Bureau of Immigration within the U.S. Treasury Department. The U.S. Congress also authorized the establishment of inspection stations at points of entry, and 24 inspection stations soon were established. Most stations were along the Canadian border, although a small number of inspectors operated out of El Paso, Texas. Those inspectors largely pursued Chinese immigrants trying to avoid the Chinese exclusion laws. By 1909, there were 23 immigration districts, and the Bureau of Immigration had been transferred to the U.S. Department of Commerce and Labor. District Number 1 extended from Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan, east to Maine. During the early twentieth century, most customs and immigration activities were centered on seaports and Great Lakes ports.¹⁰

During the late 1910s and 1920s, two factors led to greater numbers of illegal border crossings, which in turn led to increased enforcement efforts. The first factor was changes in immigration policy. In 1917, the United States extended the head tax and literacy tests on immigrants from Canada and Mexico that had long been in place for immigrants from overseas. In addition, four years later, the United States enacted quotas that established numerical limits on immigrants allowed from each country. Those changes led to large numbers of immigrants crossing illegally and led to a new criminal enterprise of smuggling people.¹¹

The second factor affecting border crossings was national Prohibition. The Eighteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution, prohibiting the importation, transport, manufacture, or sale of alcoholic beverages went into effect on January 16, 1920. Although Michigan had amended its state constitution to ban the manufacture or sale of alcohol in 1916, which became law in 1918, the national Prohibition created a new industry in Detroit beginning in 1920. Canada became a major supplier of alcohol, and Detroit was a main point of entry used by those illegally importing and distributing alcohol, also known as bootlegging. One source states that 85 percent of all liquor smuggled into the United States during the 1920s crossed from Windsor, Canada into Detroit—as much as 500,000 cases per month.¹² The illegal importation of alcohol was closely associated with a mounting volume of illegal immigration:

Rum runners were crossing the international border ... with large loads of contraband liquor and crews of illegal entrants. In testimony before the Senate Appropriations Committee immediately prior to formation of the Border Patrol, the Commissioner of Immigration testified that at least a hundred aliens a day were being smuggled into the United States across the Detroit and St. Clair Rivers.¹³

As a result of the restrictions on alcohol and immigration, border enforcement received renewed attention from the federal government. When the U.S. Congress passed the Labor Appropriation Act of 1924, it officially established the U.S. Border Patrol for the purpose of securing the borders between inspection stations. The following year, its duties were expanded to patrol the seacoast. In June of 1924, Major Ruel Davenport became the first Chief Patrol Inspector in Detroit for the Border Patrol Sector that extended from Port Sanilac, Michigan on the north to Port Clinton, Ohio on the south. The Sector was divided into 3 sub-sectors with their headquarters at Marine City, Detroit, and Sibley (Trenton), Michigan. The Detroit District's staff increased from 18 to 40 officers and procured

¹⁰ Richard Starzak, *U.S. Border Inspection Stations, States Bordering Canada and Mexico, 1930-1943*, National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form prepared by Jones & Stokes Associates for the U.S. General Services Administration, 2011, 4.

¹¹ Starzak, *U.S. Border Inspection Stations*, 5.

¹² Woodford, *This is Detroit*, 115.

¹³ U.S. Customs and Border Protection, "Detroit Sector Overview," accessed online on 31 December, 2012 at:

http://cbp.gov/xp/cgov/border_security/border_patrol/border_patrol_sectors/detroit_sector_mi/stations/detroit_station.xml.

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patrol automobiles, boats, and motorcycles. Shortly after creation of the Detroit Border Patrol Sector, a second Sector was created at Sault Ste. Marie. The Border Patrol base in Detroit was located at Atwater and Orleans streets, where there was a slip for boat storage, a garage, and office space. As border violations increased throughout the 1920s, the Detroit Sector's strength was correspondingly increased. By March of 1926, the Sector force increased to 70 patrol inspectors, and by July 1928, the total had reached 113 officers. This represented nearly 15 percent of the total U.S. Border Patrol strength of 850 men.¹⁴

With the increase in manpower, the Detroit district office needed additional work space. In the early 1930s, the U.S. Bureau of Immigration and Customs and Border Patrol took over the site of the old U.S. Marine Hospital at Mount Elliott and Jefferson avenues. A substantial, new three story office building, or immigration station, a steam plant building, and a garage were built on the site in 1933 in the Colonial Revival style. In addition, the former U.S. Marine Hospital building (razed) was converted into detention quarters, the nurses' residence (razed) converted into additional offices for the Border Patrol, and a substantial two story house (likely the doctor's residence, razed) converted into the U.S. Coast Guard and Customs Patrol district offices.

Despite the increase in U.S. Immigration and Customs patrol officers, it was only after the repeal of prohibition in 1933 that border violations began to decline. By that time, Sector staff had reached a record strength of 141 patrol inspectors. This included the Sault Ste. Marie office, which had been added to the Detroit Sector. Detroit then had the largest complement of any sector in the nation. In addition, in 1933, the U.S. Bureau of Immigration and the U.S. Bureau of Naturalization were combined to form the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS). In 1940, the INS was moved from the U.S. Department of Labor to the U.S., Department of Justice, where it remained until the formation of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security in 2003.¹⁵

Following World War II, the INS Border Patrol turned its attention to the import of illicit drugs, as well as illegal immigration. In the early 1960s, the facility at Jefferson and Mount Elliott avenues was altered to make room for the Detroit Sector Headquarters. The United States Immigration Station building was altered at that time, moving the main entrance from the north elevation to the west elevation and adding an enclosed walkway on the south elevation to connect with a new office building. Also, an addition was added on the south side of the garage, roughly doubling the size of the building, and the former U.S. Marine Hospital buildings were demolished (hospital, nurses' residence, and house). Finally, the driveway connecting with Jefferson Avenue was relocated to the Mount Elliott Street side and the southern half of the site was converted to surface parking. The Sector Headquarters and the Detroit District Office would share the site from 1964 to 1996.¹⁶

Historic Context: Architecture of United States Border Stations, 1930-1943

The United States Immigration Station is a fine example of a U.S. border inspection station that represents the function, location, era, and design characteristics of border stations constructed during the 1930s.

As stated in a Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF) prepared for U.S. border inspection stations:

Legislation approved under the Act of June 25, 1910, provided for the construction of border stations, inspection stations, and customs and immigration inspection stations, and funding was approved under the Public Buildings Act of 1926. The popularity of the automobile resulted in improved road construction and the emergence of land borders as the primary gateways into the United States. During the contextual period of "Public Works Administration Design, 1931-1939," the U.S. Treasury Department Procurement Division, Public Buildings Branch, authorized designs for 59 border and inspection stations. Typically, the

¹⁴ U.S. Customs and Border Protection, "Detroit Sector Overview," accessed online on 13 December, 2007 at: http://www.cbp.gov/xp/cgov/border_security/border_patrol/border_patrol_sectors/detroit_sector_mi/detroit_history.xml.

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Giffels & Rossetti, "Demolition Plan, U.S. Immigration Station," drawings on file with the U.S. General Services Administration, Rosa Parks Federal Building, Detroit.

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stations were designed to share the functions of two different agencies, the U.S. Customs Service and the U.S. Immigration Service. The designs were prepared at the direction of the Supervising Architect of the U.S. at the time, either James A. Wetmore (1915-1933) or Louis A. Simon (1933-1939). Simon had effectively directed the office during Judge James Wetmore's tenure, because Wetmore had no formal training in architecture.

"Simon, trained in architecture at MIT, was instrumental in the image of government projected by its public buildings, an image derived from classical western architecture, filtered perhaps through the English Georgian style or given a regional gloss, but one which continues to operate in the collective public vision of government. Simon was unwavering in his defense of what he considered a 'conservative-progressive' approach to design in which he saw 'art, beauty, symmetry, harmony and rhythm.'" This "regional gloss" often incorporated Colonial Revival design elements. The Colonial Revival was consciously associated with American heritage as early as the 1876 Centennial celebration which triggered a desire for understanding of American architectural lineage. Photographs and drawings of Georgian period colonial styles were printed and widely distributed to the country's architects in 1898 in a series by *The American Architect and Building News*. In 1915, the *White Pine Series of Architectural Monographs* included many photographs of colonial buildings that led to a wide understanding of Colonial Revival prototypes. Following America's involvement in World War I, the nation's architecture was strongly influenced by its European roots and a sense of nostalgic historicism, as well as a wave of patriotism for all things American. As a result, many buildings designed between the two World Wars (1919-1941) featured Colonial Revival design elements, often originating with America's colonial powers England, France, Spain, and Holland. The intention to create an American presence in the government's buildings at the international borders, along with the popularity of Colonial Revival architecture at the time, led to Simon's adaptation of Georgian Revival, Dutch Colonial Revival, Spanish Colonial Revival and even Pueblo Revival for the first purpose-built combined customs and immigration border inspection stations.¹⁷

As noted above, the federal government undertook a massive building program beginning in the late 1920s and extending through the 1930s. Included in this building program were border inspection stations, with most built along the Canadian border. A handful of stations were placed along the Mexican border in California and Arizona. The locations and programmatic requirements for these stations were based upon recommendations presented in a report written in 1928 by H.A. Benner of the U.S. Bureau of Customs and J.L. Hughes of the U.S. Bureau of Immigration. In essence, the goals of the recommended construction program were proper location (at the boundary), proper facilities (for efficient inspection and protection from the weather), and "dignified and attractive surroundings" through which to "produce enthusiasm and self respect in the officers," "convey to the public an impression of federal authority," and "instill in those inclined to evade the laws a fear of the power of the Government."¹⁸

The Supervising Architect worked closely with the U.S. Customs and Immigration officials on the location, siting, and design of the new stations. The border stations, inspection stations, and customs and immigration inspection stations often shared the functions of two different agencies, the U.S. Customs Service and the U.S. Immigration Service. Because of the shared function, facilities may have been referenced by one or more of the following names: U.S. Border Station; U.S. Inspection Station; and U.S. Customs and Immigration Station.

Selection of the type of facility to be constructed at a given location was based on factors such as the amount and type of anticipated traffic, the need for administrative space, and the proximity to towns or villages providing opportunities for housing the inspectors. The Benner and Hughes report of 1928 proposed three types of inspection stations. The "standard office building" and "standard office building with living quarters" were either

¹⁷ Starzak, *U.S. Border Inspection Stations*, 15-16.

¹⁸ Ibid, 7-8.

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single story or one-and-a-half stories in height. The third station type was the "special office building," which was built at the busier ports. The third type was the largest, consisting of two or more stories in height and seven or more bays in massing. The architectural detail applied to the buildings varied according to region and climate and included the Colonial Revival, Georgian Revival with classical details, Log Cabin Rustic, Spanish Colonial Revival and Pueblo Revival styles.¹⁹ Although the United States Immigration Station in Detroit was not specifically mentioned in the Benner and Hughes report, it is clearly related to the "special office building" type.

The United States Immigration Station is an example of a combined immigration and border station that incorporates a number of the qualities of the "special office building" border inspection station building type. At three stories in height and nine bays along its longitudinal axis, the Detroit building ranks as a large border station building, even within the "special office building" type. This is not surprising, because the building is located in a large city that, by the late 1920s, was a major gateway for illegal alcohol flowing into the United States. The United States Immigration Station is a Colonial Revival style building with classical details that is constructed of brick with limestone decorative elements. Colonial Revival stylistic elements present in the building include a symmetrical primary façade, a prominent entablature with projecting cornice, quoins simulating columns, a main entry with pediment and columns, and a cupola.

Summary of Significance

The United States Immigration Station is eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places because it meets Criteria A and C. A multiple property documentation form (MPDF) has been prepared for United States border stations, including border patrol, customs, and immigration functions. Although not located at an international highway crossing, the United States Immigration Station in Detroit is related to these border stations with respect to historical context and period of construction.

Regarding Criterion A, the United States Immigration Station is associated with national Prohibition, which prohibited the sale and consumption of alcoholic beverages between 1920 and 1933 and led to a dramatic increase in smuggling across the borders of the United States. Smuggling alcohol from Canada was widespread, and Detroit in particular was the gateway for a high proportion of this traffic. Construction of the United States Immigration Station is a direct result of the increased emphasis beginning in the 1920s that the government put on securing the international borders.

Regarding Criterion C, the United States Immigration Station is a fine example of a combined immigration and border station that incorporates a number of the qualities of the "special office building" border inspection station building type. At three stories in height and nine bays along its longitudinal axis, the United States Immigration Station ranks as a large border station building. The United States Immigration Station also exhibits Colonial Revival stylistic influence common in border stations, including a symmetrical primary façade, a prominent entablature with projecting cornice, quoins simulating columns, a main entry with pediment and columns, and a cupola.

¹⁹ Ibid, 27-28.

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¹⁹ Ibid, 27-28.

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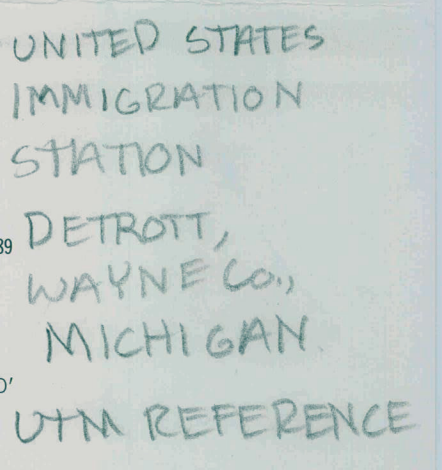
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