

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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JAN 26 2018

# 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.

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MAR 23 2018  
NAT. REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

### 1. Name of Property

Historic name: U.S. Post Office, Court House, and Custom House

Other names/site number: Theodore Levin United States Courthouse

Name of related multiple property listing:

N/A

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

### 2. Location

Street & number: 231 West Lafayette Boulevard

City or town: Detroit State: MI County: Wayne

Not For Publication:

Vicinity:

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,


I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:


national  statewide  local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

A  B  C  D

	<u>3/20/2018</u>
<b>Signature of certifying official/Title:</b>	<b>Date</b>
<u>Federal Preservation Officer, U.S. General Services Administration</u>	
<b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b>	

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

	<u>3/15/18</u>
<b>Signature of commenting official:</b>	<b>Date</b>
<b>Title :</b> <u>SHPO</u>	<b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b>

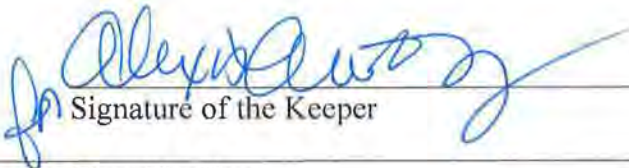
U.S. Post Office, Court House, and Custom House  
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**4. National Park Service Certification**

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 of the Keeper

4/27/18  
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

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**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

<u>Contributing</u>	<u>Noncontributing</u>	
<u>                    </u>	<u>                    </u>	buildings
<u>                    </u>	<u>                    </u>	sites
<u>                    </u>	<u>                    </u>	structures
<u>                    </u>	<u>                    </u>	objects
<u>          0          </u>	<u>          0          </u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register   1    
The subject property is a contributing resource in the Detroit Financial District

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**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

- GOVERNMENT/Post Office
- GOVERNMENT/Courthouse
- GOVERNMENT/Government Offices
- 
- 
- 

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

- GOVERNMENT/Courthouse
- GOVERNMENT/Government Offices
- 
- 
-

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## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

MODERN MOVEMENT/Moderne

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**Materials:** (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: STONE: Limestone, Granite; CONCRETE;  
ASPHALT

### Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

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### Summary Paragraph

The 1934 U.S. Post Office, Court House, and Custom House<sup>1</sup> is located in downtown Detroit, Michigan, at 231 West Lafayette Boulevard, within Detroit's central business district. The ten-story Classical Moderne style building is constructed of concrete and steel with granite and limestone exterior cladding. Significant stylistic elements include symmetrical façades and extensive use of pilasters and bas-relief panels, and also smooth, unadorned wall surfaces broken by vertically grouped window openings. The building has a single-volume cubic massing, and all four facades have similar arrangements and architectural detailing. The north (Lafayette Boulevard) and south (Fort Street) facades include the main entrances. The interior includes courtrooms and court-related spaces, such as chambers, jury rooms, and offices, as well as office space for other federal agencies. The public spaces, such as corridors, lobbies, and courtrooms, are constructed of high quality materials with Moderne-influenced architectural detailing, including marble and terrazzo floors, marble and granite wainscoting, decorative bronze and aluminum metalwork, and decorative painting. Known as the "million dollar courtroom for its elaborate Romanesque Revival detailing, Courtroom Number 732-734, was saved from the prior federal building on the site, and

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<sup>1</sup> The historic name for the building is based on that used in the title block of the original drawings. Copies of original design drawings, as well as subsequent alteration drawings, are located in the basement of the building; digital copies are maintained by the Great Lakes Region of the U.S. General Services Administration.

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reinstalled on the seventh floor of the current building. While public spaces retain a high level of integrity, non-public spaces have undergone successive alterations to accommodate changing tenant needs.

The U.S. Post Office, Court House, and Custom House is located in and contributes to the Detroit Financial District, which was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2009.

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## **Narrative Description<sup>2</sup>**

The U.S. Post Office, Court House, and Custom House is located in downtown Detroit, Michigan, at 231 West Lafayette Boulevard. It is ten stories above grade with a partially below grade basement level. In addition, it has three mezzanine levels and a penthouse level with two stories. The Classical Moderne style building is constructed of concrete and steel with granite and limestone exterior cladding. Significant stylistic elements include symmetrical façades and extensive use of pilasters and bas-relief panels, and also smooth, unadorned wall surfaces broken by vertically grouped window openings.

The U.S. Post Office, Court House, and Custom House is located within Detroit's central business district, and situated at the northwest corner of the approximately eight-block Detroit Financial District, a National Register-listed historic district characterized by large commercial buildings predominantly dating to the first two decades of the twentieth century.<sup>3</sup> It occupies the entire block bounded by Lafayette Boulevard (north), Fort Street (south), Shelby Street (east), and Washington Boulevard (west). The building's setback on all sides is the width of the sidewalk, and as a result, landscaping is limited to planters flanking the main entrances. There are no additional objects on site. The building has a single-volume cubic massing, and all four facades have similar arrangements and architectural detailing, although the north (Lafayette Boulevard) and south (Fort Street) facades include the main entrances. Each facade is divided into thirds, and within each section, the windows are grouped vertically with pilasters providing a distinct vertical emphasis. The main entries are set within recessed loggia at the centers of the north and south facades.

The U.S. Post Office, Court House, and Custom House includes courtrooms and court-related spaces, such as chambers, jury rooms, and offices, as well as office space for other federal agencies. The first floor and double-height second floor are both arranged around a central concourse, while the third through 10<sup>th</sup> floors are arranged as corridors encircling a central light court. Mezzanine levels are located above the first, sixth, and seventh floors. The eleventh and twelfth floors are penthouse spaces located only north and south of the light court. The historic courtrooms are located on the seventh and eighth floors, and modern courtrooms are located in remodeled former post office space on the second floor. The other floors predominantly house office space.

The U.S. Post Office, Court House, and Custom House was designed in 1931 by the Detroit architectural firm, Robert O. Derrick, Inc., under contract with the U.S. Treasury Department's Office of the Supervising Architect. The ornamental exterior bas-relief sculptural groupings present on all four facades were created by noted Detroit architectural sculptor Corrado Giuseppe Parducci.

### **Exterior**

The predominant material of the exterior walls is buff-colored limestone, although the water table is polished black granite. On the north and south, the façade arrangement is nearly identical from the first story through the penthouse level. A duplication of detailing is used for the opposing east and west

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<sup>2</sup> For purposes of this description, Washington Boulevard and Shelby Street run north-south and Lafayette Boulevard and Fort Street run east-west.

<sup>3</sup> The U.S. Post Office, Court House, and Custom House is a contributing resource in the Detroit Financial District (#09001067), listed December 14, 2009.

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facades. The otherwise cubic massing of the building is broken up by slight setbacks at the third, seventh, eighth, and attic stories. Above the 10<sup>th</sup> story, the penthouses are setback much farther than those used below. All facades are vertically divided into thirds.

The base, consisting of the basement, first, and second stories, consists of polished granite and limestone. The plane is punctuated by ornamental bronze window grilles at the basement level, a thick incised horizontal band in the limestone directly above and entrance openings flanked by pilasters. The first and second story window openings are unadorned and contain slightly recessed bronze sash and bronze sheet metal sills.

The north and south facades each include a centrally located main entrance set within a recessed loggia, which is reached on the north by seven granite steps and on the south by four granite steps. A pair of fluted columns divides this recessed entrance into thirds. The entrance area is flanked by a pair of pilasters that replicate the design of these columns. Above the entrance, carved in relief in the limestone face of the building, are three medallions depicting the Great Seal of the United States in the center and symbols representing the U.S. Post Office and U.S. Department of Justice on either side. Second story window openings are located above each of the medallions. The columns and pilasters flanking the medallions are surmounted by stylized eagles, instead of capitals, which extend the design to the windows' lintels. The words, "UNITED STATES OF AMERICA," are incised in capital letters in the building face above the eagles.

Within the loggia, the polished granite at the building base wraps all walls in the entrance area. Rectangular panels, each containing three square bronze grilles with stylized motifs, are located on the end walls and ceiling. The original white bronze doors have been replaced with aluminum and glass units.

On all facades, a middle section of the building plane at the third through sixth stories is slightly setback from the base plane and a slightly projecting stringcourse divides the base and middle sections, as well as the middle and upper sections. The middle section is arranged vertically with slightly projecting end bays and a slightly recessed central area. The windows at this level are grouped vertically, separated by bronze spandrel panels, and flanked by fluted pilasters. An ornamental limestone frieze with bas-relief panels, fluted panels, and medallions separates the sixth and seventh stories. Each end bay (encompassing three windows) includes a bas relief panel spanning the bay that depicts workers engaged in various activities under the aegis of federal agencies. Medallions depicting symbols of the federal government are located above every other sixth story window. Fluted limestone panels span between the medallions. Above this frieze, a slightly projecting denticulated string course runs the entire length of this middle section of the building. It is interrupted in four locations by four flat pilasters that define the two end bays of the facade.

The seventh story is separated from the sixth story by the string course described above. The flat pilasters defining the end bays terminate at the seventh story window lintels with an architrave rather than a capital. These windows match the design of those at the base level: unadorned, slightly recessed bronze sash with bronze sheet metal sills.

On all facades, an upper section above the seventh story is slightly set back from the middle level. This section is created by the eighth, ninth, and tenth stories. Flat pilasters flank the end bays, whereas, the windows, which are vertically grouped, are flanked by fluted pilasters. Otherwise the upper section is unadorned.

All windows are typically bronze-framed, double hung sash. On the first story, the windows are paired four-over-six sash with transoms. Stories two and seven have paired two-over-six sash windows, without transoms. On stories three through six and eight through ten, the windows are paired four-over-four sash.

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The east and west facades include granite-clad vehicular sally ports that lead to the basement level loading dock area. A large bronze grille is located above each sally port, and smaller grilles flank each side. A pedestrian entrance with a full surround of polished granite is located on the east facade. The original doors have been replaced by flush steel double doors surmounted by a hollow metal and glass transom.

## **Interior**

The interior of the federal building is divided between public and non-public spaces. The public spaces, such as corridors, lobbies, and courtrooms, retain much of their historic materials and architectural details. The non-public spaces, such as the former postal work areas and other federal offices, have been altered. The exterior design details and materials are carried into the interior, including fluted pilasters, prominent cornices and black granite trim.

The double-height first story has a central corridor in the north-south direction and four perpendicular east-west lobby wings that form an H-plan. The central corridor dominates the public space and connects at each end the entrance and elevator lobbies. Three of the four original east-west corridors are extant; the southwest corridor was demolished and incorporated into a jury assembly room.

The north-south corridor is richly appointed with high quality finishes of plaster, wood, bronze, limestone and granite. It originally was the post office lobby. The floors are a combination of tan and dark brown terrazzo arranged in geometric patterns. The corridor walls are divided into bays by fluted pilasters of polished black granite, and a wainscot of the same granite runs the length of the corridor. Between the pilasters and above the wainscot, the walls are clad with rectangular limestone panels. The walls terminate with a slightly stepped, polished black granite cornice, which is topped with a cast bronze molding.

The corridor has a vaulted, segmental-arched ceiling that is divided by dropped plaster ribs aligned with the pilasters. The ribs are adorned with overlapping polygons in-filled with abstract foliate motifs. Between the ribs, the ceiling bays are overlaid with diamond-patterned acoustical tiles that cover the original diamond-patterned plaster. Although much of the original plaster vaulted ceilings are covered, a molded and painted plaster border surrounds each bay. Much of the original ornamental aluminum metalwork in the corridor remains extant. The most elaborate of these features are the former postal windows and bulletin boards. Although the window openings have been in-filled, the metalwork remains and consists of decorative surrounds with fluted pilasters, rounded counters, and window grilles. The bulletin boards have fluted pilasters and stepped cornices. Both the windows and bulletin boards have relief profiles of United States presidents and other famous Americans. The corridor doorways also have decorative surrounds, including fluted pilasters and stepped cornices. Four original postal lobby tables, with black granite bases, limestone, and linoleum writing surfaces, remain in this corridor.

The side corridor lobbies have similar materials as the central corridor, including tan and dark brown terrazzo floors, black marble pilasters and wainscot, and limestone wall cladding. Above the cornice on each end wall, a segmental arched lunette depicts in plaster relief the profile of a famous American. The vaulted ceilings are divided into bays by painted cross bands. Some decorative metalwork remains intact, including postal windows, bulletin boards and doorway surrounds.

At each end, the central north-south corridor leads to the entrance lobbies, which are subdivided into three areas: stair lobbies, elevator lobbies, and vestibules that lead to the exterior loggia on the north and south facades. The entrance lobbies have been set off from the corridor with glass and aluminum partition walls, which are non-original. On the north end, at Lafayette Boulevard, segmental-arched openings lead to the elevator lobby on the west, a telephone vestibule on the east, and the stair lobby to the north.

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On the south end, at Fort Street, a half flight of interior stairs leads to a lobby with arched openings. The lobby opens to the elevator lobby to the east and the airlock to the south; a blind arch is located on the west wall. The stair and elevator lobbies at both entrances have the same materials and architectural details as the side corridors. In each elevator lobby, there are four elevators. The elevator entries are recessed and include fluted aluminum surrounds, transom panels, doors, and vertical annunciator lights.

In the stair lobbies, the ceilings continue the pattern from the central corridor, with plaster ribs dividing the ceilings into bays. Above the vestibules, a transom, three bays wide, spans the width of the stair lobby. The transom is glazed with a bronze grille of interlocking hexagons and diamonds. Three stepped aluminum bands, cast in a floral pattern, run up the walls and across the ceiling of the transom arch. The vestibules are three bays wide each, in-filled with a pair of modern aluminum and glass doors. The original jambs are fluted bronze and the heads are ribbed bronze; aluminum shield motifs are centered above each pair of doors. A metal detector and guard station have been added in each entrance lobby.

The east and west side postal workroom spaces have been remodeled and divided into office spaces. The overhead look-out galleries for postal inspectors have been covered or removed, and the double-height ceilings have been dropped by inserting an acoustical tile ceiling.

The third through sixth floors are arranged around a corridor flanked by offices or courtrooms that encircles the central light court. Although the office space has been remodeled, the corridors, elevator lobbies, and courtrooms generally remain intact. The floors are pink marble with black marble borders, bases, and cross banding in the elevator lobbies. A pink marble wainscot extends to the height of the door openings, above which the walls are painted plaster. The original ceilings are covered with suspended acoustical tile ceilings.

The seventh and eighth floors house courtrooms and their support spaces. The seventh floor is dominated by four courtrooms, two each in the east and west wings. Its north and south wings include offices, a law library, and other support spaces. The seventh floor corridors in the east and west wings, are wider than those on other floors and are double height. They provide access to the courtrooms on their exterior wall and have windows to the light court on their interior wall. The floors in the corridors are grey-pink marble laid in a chevron pattern with black marble borders and cross bands.

Three of the four courtrooms on the seventh floor (Numbers 711-712, 715-716, and 737-738) are similar in layout and architectural details. Each courtroom has two entries, a double door main entrance towards the rear, and single entrance towards the front. Opposite the entries, the exterior wall has three bays of four-over-six, double-hung bronze sash windows deeply set into the wall. The judge's bench and a doorway leading to the judge's chambers are located at the front of the courtroom. The chambers' door has a surround topped with a broken pediment and a carved, stylized federal eagle. The rear wall includes a doorway leading to the jury room. The walls have a grey marble wainscot with black marble base below and painted wood paneling above. A dentil molding serves as a cornice and a canted plaster cove transitions to the ceiling plane. Plaster bands divide the ceiling into three bays. The ceiling is covered with modern acoustical tile, alternating with original octagonal mechanical system vents and modern fluorescent light panels.

The fourth courtroom on the seventh floor, that of the chief justice (Number 732-734), was removed from the previous federal building (which stood on the present site from 1897 to 1931), stored during construction of the current building, and reassembled in its current location. Highly ornamented and Romanesque in style, this space is often referred to as "the million dollar courtroom". This courtroom is laid out like the others, although there are three entrances in the corridor side wall—two single door entries flanking a double door central entrance. The entries are articulated by round, Romanesque arches, which correspond with the three arched window bays on the exterior wall. Each arch frames a set of double hung four-over-six bronze sash windows.

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The front of the courtroom is dominated by the chief judge's elaborate mahogany bench, behind which a triple arched marble reredos surrounds the doorway to the judge's chambers. An arched doorway to the jury room is centered in the rear wall, creating symmetry while emphasizing the reredos. The walls are clad with marble of varying types and colors and include elaborately carved detailing. The base and plinths are black marble, and a reddish-purple marble molding transitions the plinths to a paneled reddish-brown marble wainscot, which has a peach colored marble border. Above the wainscot, a wide band of peach-yellow marble has elaborately carved foliate ornamentation interspersed with circular disks. The upper wall consists of peach colored marble panels and large voussoirs in the window and door arches. A marble molding carved in a checkerboard pattern divides the wall panels and articulates the extrados of the arches. Circular medallions with various colored carved marble disks are located in the spandrels between the arches. The window and door jambs are a reddish-purple marble, the voussoirs are onyx, and elaborately carved marble defines the intrados and extrados of the arches. The cornice and frieze band are peach-colored marble elaborately carved with various motifs. The ceiling is divided into three bays by dropped beams enclosed in decoratively painted plaster.

The chief judge's chambers are located north of the courtroom and accessed via a door behind the bench. The walls in the chambers are paneled in mahogany and built-in bookshelves line all four walls. The paneling exhibits the blend of classical and modern influences found elsewhere in the building, including fluted pilasters and a denticulated frieze band at the cornice.

The other significant spaces in the building are the eighth floor courtrooms and corridors. The eighth floor is laid out differently than the seventh floor, having only three courtrooms located in the east wing. The only difference between the seventh and eighth floor courtrooms' architectural details and finishes is the ceilings. On the eighth floor, painted bands divide the courtroom ceilings into bays, each of which contains an elongated octagonal vent. The architectural details and finishes in the corridors are the same.

### **Alterations and Integrity Assessment**

There have been few exterior alterations to the courthouse building over the years. The original entrance doors were replaced in 1953 with glass and aluminum doors. A concrete access ramp was added to the Fort Street entrance in 1972 and the steps and landing at the Lafayette Boulevard entrance were replaced in kind in 1985. Exterior stone surfaces were repointed and cleaned in 1986. A cooling tower was added to the roof 1987.

Interior alterations have been more extensive but generally have been confined to the non-public office spaces. For the most part, the original public corridors, lobbies and courtrooms remain intact. Furthermore, the most significant public areas of the building, including the central north-south corridor on the first floor and "million dollar courtroom" on the seventh floor, were restored in 1995. Metal detectors and security stands have been installed in the entrance lobbies in recent decades; however, these alterations have been designed to be reversible and to minimize damage to original materials. While the former post office work space on the first and second floors was remodeled for offices and courtrooms in 1964 and 1972, the lobby and corridor finishes on these floors remain largely intact. Non-public office areas on all floors have been subject to alterations over time to accommodate changing tenant needs. Today these areas generally feature non-historic interior walls, floor coverings, and dropped ceilings.

Over the last decade, the building has been subject to a series of projects to upgrade and modernize major building systems. In a 2010 project focused on energy sustainability, the building automation system, HVAC zone occupancy controls, and lobby lighting and HVAC system were upgraded. A current capital project, scheduled to be completed in 2019, will renovate the mechanical, electrical, plumbing, and fire and life safety systems throughout the building. For the most part, this work is behind the scenes and does not impact character defining features of the building.

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Another major alteration currently underway is the addition of a new elevator tower to address separation of travel in the building for court security purposes. The elevator tower and a pedestrian connection between the tower and the existing interior corridor system will be inserted in the light court and will utilize existing (expanded) window openings. However, the light court is not visible from the street and the alterations are designed to minimize impacts to the historic fabric. All recent work has been undertaken in accordance with the Secretary of Interior's Standards.

Therefore, the U.S. Post Office, Court House, and Custom House as a whole retains integrity of design, materials, workmanship, association, and feeling. The building also retains its integrity of location and setting, as it remains in its place of construction in the heart of the Detroit's central business district and within the Detroit Financial District, which was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2009. Although there has been some new construction in the vicinity of the U.S. Post Office, Court House, and Custom House in recent years, the area still conveys its character as an early to mid-20<sup>th</sup> century commercial district. In conclusion, the building retains a high level integrity of design, materials, and workmanship, as analyzed above, that combine to create integrity of feeling and association to the date of completion in 1934. The building strongly conveys its original identity as a large, urban federal building designed in the Classical Moderne style in the 1930s.

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## 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.)

- 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

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**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Architecture  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1934  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

1934  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

Robert O. Derrick, Inc.  
James A. Wetmore, Supervising Architect of the Treasury  
Great Lakes Construction Company

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**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The U.S. Post Office, Court House, and Custom House is eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C as an example of the Classical Moderne architectural style in a federal building erected during the 1930s as part of a major government construction program. The period of significance is 1934, representing the date of completion of the building, and the level of significance is local.

The Classical Moderne style is expressed here in classical elements, such as the symmetrical façade divided by pilasters and the intermediate cornice with a wide frieze and projecting dentil course, as well as modern elements, including the façade setbacks, the stylized bas-relief sculpture, the large expanses of smooth wall plane, and the relative lack of exterior ornamentation. Abstracted classical forms, primarily the fluted pilasters of the long facades, establish a reference to earlier federal buildings and classical revival styles, but situate the building firmly in the 1930s era of modern design. The public interior spaces, including the lobbies, corridors and courtrooms exhibit a similar blending of -classical and modern stylistic motifs including pilasters, fluting, denticulated cornices, highly polished surfaces, setbacks, and abstracted decorative patterns.

The U.S. Post Office, Court House, and Custom House is a well-executed example of an individually designed combination federal post office, courthouse and customhouse. By the 1930s many federal buildings were built according to standardized designs developed by the U.S. Treasury Department's Office of the Supervising Architect. Larger buildings in major cities, however, were designed individually by private architects, selected by and working under the supervision of the supervising architect. The U.S. Post Office, Court House, and Custom House represents the collaboration of a prominent Detroit architectural firm, Robert O. Derrick, Inc. and the renowned Detroit architectural sculptor, Corrado Giuseppe Parducci. The 1931 design of the U.S. Post Office, Court House, and Custom House is a notable transition for the architect, Robert O. Derrick, who previously worked primarily in the Colonial Revival style. The bas-relief sculpture of Corrado Parducci, a master craftsman who contributed to many Detroit buildings, provides abstract federal icons well suited to the abstracted classicism of Derrick's design.

The building retains all aspects of its integrity that convey the characteristics of this style and type of public building.

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

#### **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 was created in 1939. The U.S. Treasury Department established the Office of the Supervising Architect in 1852 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

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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 buildings was defined, based on the value of annual post office receipts and the value of adjoining real estate in large cities. However, relatively little new construction took place during this period.<sup>4</sup>

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 Office of the Supervising Architect was increased significantly and more than 130 private architectural firms were commissioned to design federal buildings in 1931. By 1934, more than 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.<sup>5</sup>

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 Classical Moderne style (also known as Simplified Classical or “Stripped Classical”) commonly employed in federal buildings throughout the decade.

The U.S. Post Office, Court House, and Custom House was designed at the end of the tenure of Acting Supervising Architect James A. Wetmore, who served from 1915 to 1933. A lawyer by training, Wetmore relied on Louis A. Simon for matters of architectural design. Simon guided the stylistic development of federal buildings for over three decades, serving as superintendent of the architectural section of the Office of the Supervising Architect from 1905 to 1933, then as the supervising architect from 1933 to 1939. Under Simon’s leadership, the traditionally inspired Colonial Revival and the more forward looking Classical Moderne styles dominated federal building design during the 1930s. Colonial Revival designs were often used for smaller post offices in small cities and towns where the traditional designs could blend with other public buildings yet have the formal presence expected of federal buildings. Larger post offices, courthouses, and federal buildings in bigger cities, where the modernist influence lent itself to large interchangeable work spaces, and where generally cosmopolitan populations were more accepting of non-traditional designs, tended toward the Classical Moderne style.<sup>6</sup>

### **Classical Moderne Style**

The work of Paul Phillipe Cret was particularly influential in the adoption of the Classical Moderne style for federal and civic buildings.<sup>7</sup> Cret’s 1926 design for the Hartford County Courthouse (completed in 1929) in Hartford, Connecticut, was praised for its “style liberation” and became an important prototype for the modern classical architecture that both Cret and federal buildings would be known for during the 1930s.

<sup>4</sup> 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.

<sup>5</sup> Harris, *History of Post Office Construction* 14-15; Craig, et. al, *The Federal Presence*, 281.

<sup>6</sup> C. W. Short and R. Stanley-Brown, *Public Buildings: Architecture Under the Public Works Administration, 1933-1939* (New York: Da Capo Press, 1986), VI, XII, 16, 21-22 ; Harris, *History of Post Office Construction*, 14-15;

<sup>7</sup> Craig, et. al, *The Federal Presence*, 294-297.

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The bold rectangular pillars on the façade of the Hartford building, widely identified with the freedom from traditional classicism, were actually derived from the little used Attic order. Cret used the Attic order to reinterpret the forms and overall character of classicism as well as reduce the visual conflict between the components of the classical order and steel-framed construction. He moved from the use of minimal capitals and no bases on the Hartford County Courthouse to designing fluted shafts with no capitals to support a reinterpreted frieze and cornice assembly in his Château-Thierry Monument in France (1926-1932). This form also appeared on his influential Folger Shakespeare Library in Washington, D.C., completed in 1932. Cret's "liberation" of the classical forms was widely adopted by architects for civic and commercial buildings during the late 1920s, although no doubt the simplified, non-ornamented, and modern appearance was more influential than the academic origin of the rectangular pillars. By the time Cret was competing for the Federal Reserve Board (Washington, D.C.) commission in 1935, a "liberated," or "moderne" classicism had been widely adopted in the design of federal buildings and characterized the submittals of most of his competitors. Cret's participation on many architectural juries and commissions extended his influence on the classicism of the era.<sup>8</sup>

This modernized classicism utilized symmetrical façades with rows of windows divided by pilasters to simulate columns, but ornamentation was generally angular and geometric and was kept to a minimum. Columns, pilasters, and entablatures were often abstracted. Classical ornament and forms could be reduced to geometric incisions in stone, changes in scale, or reinterpreted. Stone walls penetrated by vertically grouped windows with crisp surrounds and abstracted pilasters created a rhythmic pattern of piers and windows perceived as a series of solids and voids. The *Architectural Forum* noted in 1938 that "A distinct modern influence and the continuing tradition of 'government classic' are the two conflicting tendencies which have resulted in the first sign of vitality in American post office design."<sup>9</sup>

### **Development of the U.S. Post Office, Court House, and Custom House in Detroit**

Detroit began as a fort occupied first by the French and subsequently by the British during the 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>10</sup> Following a devastating fire in 1805, Detroit was rebuilt according to a design by Judge Augustus Woodward. 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 ship building center during the first half of the nineteenth century. Its population grew slowly, reaching 21,019 by 1850, as Detroit was eclipsed by other cities, such as Cincinnati, Buffalo, and Chicago.<sup>11</sup>

After 1850, Detroit grew more rapidly. As an established shipping point 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 shipbuilding. Although no single industry dominated the local economy, Detroit was the leading producer of stoves worldwide 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, taking advantage of the riverfront and railroad connections. During the 1890s, as the city grew, downtown Detroit expanded

<sup>8</sup> Elizabeth Greenwell Grossman, *The Civic Architecture of Paul Cret* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 140-159, 170, 193-195.

Craig, *The Federal Presence*, 294.

<sup>9</sup> Quoted in Robert A. M. Stern, *New York 1930* (New York: Rizzoli, 1987), 107.

<sup>10</sup> The original fortification was replaced in 1789 by Fort Lernoult, subsequently called Fort Detroit and then Fort Shelby, which was centered on the present intersection of Fort and Shelby streets or the southeast corner of the present U.S. Post Office, Court House, and Custom House.

<sup>11</sup> Kathryn Bishop Eckert, *Buildings of Michigan* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 28-29.

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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.<sup>12</sup>

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: Henry Ford, William Durant, and Walter Chrysler. Henry Ford revolutionized the industry. After building a plant in 1903, he set out 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 twenty three 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.<sup>13</sup>

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).<sup>14</sup>

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—one-quarter the output from 1929. Workers were laid off by the thousands and the unemployed in the city reached 223,568 by 1931.<sup>15</sup> 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 U.S. Post Office, Court House, and Custom House was part of that building campaign.

The United States government established the first post office in Detroit in 1803. The post office was housed at a number of locations over the next fifty years and lacked a permanent site until the federal government constructed a three story building at the corner of Griswold and Larned streets during 1858 through 1860 to house the custom house, post office, and federal courts. By that time, Detroit was a city of nearly 45,000 people and was the location of the district U.S. post office. As Detroit continued to grow, planning for a new post office and federal courthouse began during the 1880s. In 1887, the United States government acquired the present site of the U.S. Post Office, Court House, and Custom House and a new building encompassing the entire city block was constructed from 1890 to 1897 in the Richardson Romanesque style. This building included a courtroom for the chief justice that was elaborately adorned with marble and mahogany finishes.<sup>16</sup>

Although the 1897 U.S. Post Office and Court House was larger than the 1860 federal building, which continued in service as a custom house, within a few decades it proved inadequate to meet the demands placed on it by Detroit's rapid growth during the early twentieth century. As Detroit's population surged

<sup>12</sup> Eckert, *Buildings of Michigan*, 32.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 32-33. Arthur M Woodford, *This is Detroit, 1701-2001* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 2001), 90-97.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 113.

<sup>15</sup> "How the Great Depression Changed Detroit," *Detroit News*, accessed online on January 23, 2018 at: <http://blogs.detroitnews.com/history/1999/03/03/how-the-great-depression-changed-detroit/>.

<sup>16</sup> John Vinci, Inc., "Historic Structures Report: Federal Building/United States Courthouse, Detroit, Michigan," unpublished manuscript prepared for the United States General Services Administration, 1992, p. 5.

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during the 1920s, so did postal receipts, straining the existing post office. In addition, Detroit and its upstream neighbors became popular destinations for alcohol smugglers during Prohibition because of their proximity to Canada.<sup>17</sup> The U.S. Customs Service and courts faced swelling caseloads due to the illicit activities related to alcohol smuggling, further straining the capacity of the existing federal buildings. Consequently, the Office of the Supervising Architect began preliminary planning for a new building in 1929.

Federal authorization, planning, and design of the new federal building occurred during the Presidency of Herbert Hoover. The Office of the Supervising Architect began preliminary planning for a replacement building in 1929. Congress had appropriated \$5.5 million for a new federal post office, custom house and courthouse, to be built on the same site as the 1897 U.S. Post Office and Court House. In August 1930, the Detroit architectural firm, Robert O. Derrick, Inc., headed by Robert O. Derrick, was selected to design the building, and local artist Corrado Joseph Parducci to sculpt decorative elements in bas-relief. The design was approved in March 1931 and a description and rendering were released to local papers; the resulting articles touted the imminent construction project as a boost to the local building trades. The Great Lakes Construction Company, a Chicago firm, won the bid to construct the building. In October 1931, demolition began to clear the site for the new building. However, at the insistence of Chief Judge Arthur Tuttle, the elaborate finishes of the chief judge's courtroom in the old building were preserved. The marble and wood features were disassembled and later reconstructed in the new building as Courtroom 732-734.

The building was designed and engineered to carry two more full stories. The original drawings include a sheet with elevations for the optional eleventh and twelfth stories. Set back slightly from the tenth story below and echoing the design motifs of the lower stories, the unbuilt two story block was to have had cresting along its roofline and two two-story penthouses. The elimination of the eleventh and twelfth stories may reflect budget shortfalls during the period of construction between 1932 and 1934, which coincided with the height of the Great Depression.<sup>18</sup> Construction of the new building began in the spring of 1932, and the cornerstone was laid in October of that year during a ceremony marked by speeches by government dignitaries and a parade. By June 1933, most of the building's stonework was in place. The interior and finishes were completed during the following fall and winter, and the first tenants moved into the building in the spring of 1934. In addition to the post office and federal courts, the new building provided office space for the customs service and numerous other federal agencies and bureaus.<sup>19</sup>

Beginning in the 1960s, the postal presence within the building began to shrink as postal operations were moved to locations offering better vehicular access and parking. Vacated non-public postal work spaces and, eventually, the public-facing service areas were converted to courtrooms, support areas, and offices for expanded court operations. In 1994, as the second floor was undergoing a major court expansion and renovation project, the U.S. Congress approved an act to designate the building as the "Theodore Levin United States Courthouse."<sup>20</sup> Judge Theodore Levin served on the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Michigan from 1946 until his death in 1970. The building was rededicated in Levin's honor in a 1995 ceremony. Today, the building houses twenty-four courtrooms, six of which are historic. The primary tenant is the U.S. District Court for the Eastern District of Michigan. Other tenants include: the U.S. Marshals, Probation, U.S. Attorneys, U.S. Court of Appeals, Pretrial Services, U.S. Tax Court and offices for members of the U.S. House of Representatives.

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<sup>17</sup> A new United States Immigration Station, located at 333 Mt. Elliot Street, was under construction at the same time as the U.S. Post Office, Court House, and Custom House. Completed in 1933, the Colonial Revival style building served as a combined immigration and border inspection station and was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 2013 (#NR 13000322).

<sup>18</sup> Ratio Architects, Inc., "Historic Building Preservation Plan/Theodore Levin United States Courthouse, Detroit, Michigan," prepared for the United States General Services Administration, 1995.

<sup>19</sup> "Corner Stone Laid for New U.S. Building," *Detroit Free Press*, 13 October, 1932; "Gleaming Beauty Marks New Federal Building," *The Detroit News*, 5 March, 1934.

<sup>20</sup> Public Law 103-405.

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### **Architectural Significance**

The U.S. Post Office, Court House, and Custom House is a significant example of a public building in Detroit that represents the distinctive characteristics of the Classical Moderne style as well as the work of prominent local architectural firm, Robert O. Derrick, Inc., headed by Robert O. Derrick, and Corrado "Joe" Parducci, a renowned local architectural sculptor. Both men made notable contributions to the built environment of the Detroit area, particularly during the 1920s and 1930s. Completed in 1934, the building continues to retain all aspects of its integrity that convey the characteristics of the Classical Moderne style and type of public building. For these reasons, the U.S. Post Office, Court House, and Custom House meets National Register Criterion C for Architecture on the local level for the period of significance of 1934.

The U.S. Post Office, Court House, and Custom House, designed in 1931 and built during 1932 through 1934, is representative of the Classical Moderne style strongly associated with federal buildings as they appeared in a transitional stage during the early 1930s. The design represents a balance between the Beaux Arts classicism of earlier federal building design and the new use of modern materials, simplified ornament, and a vertical emphasis of design. Modern elements include the use of setbacks, vertically grouped windows in both the third through sixth stories and the eighth through tenth stories, and the simplified ornamentation and expanses of flat, planar wall surfaces, particularly on the first and second stories. Classical elements were given equal emphasis, including the symmetrical arrangement of façades and inclusion of fluted Doric pilasters in the third through sixth stories that terminate at a wide denticulated frieze. The U.S. Post Office, Court House, and Custom House is the only example of the Classical Moderne style applied to a federal building in Detroit. Two other federal buildings dating from the same general period as the U.S. Post Office, Court House, and Custom House remain in Detroit. The 1927 Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago, Detroit Branch building, located at 160 West Fort Street, adjacent to the U.S. Post Office, Court House, and Custom House, reflects the earlier federal adherence to the Neoclassical Revival style, while its 1951 annex is fully modern, executed in the International Style. The Detroit Naval Armory, constructed in 1930 with additions dating to 1936-1939, reflects both the Art Deco and Moderne styles, eschewing any references to classicism.

The 1931 design of the U.S. Post Office, Court House, and Custom House by Robert O. Derrick, Inc. was not only an early example of the Classical Moderne style, but also a significant stylistic departure for the principal architect. The firm's founder Robert O. Derrick was born in Buffalo, New York, in 1890, received his bachelor's degree at Yale in 1913, and his architectural training at Columbia in 1917. After working in a New York architectural firm, Derrick came to Detroit in 1921, where he partnered with other architects in the firm, Brown, Preston & Derrick, for several years before founding Robert O. Derrick, Inc., in 1927. Derrick primarily worked in period revival styles, particularly Colonial Revival, during the 1920s, and many of his designs were for houses of wealthy Gross Pointe residents.<sup>21</sup> In 1928-1929, Derrick designed his most notable work—the Henry Ford Museum, which included replicas of Philadelphia's Independence Hall and the Congress Hall and City Hall buildings that flanked it. The design was a successful blend of historical forms with the needs of a modern museum.<sup>22</sup> With the publicity he received from the Ford commission, Derrick undertook more institutional commissions during the 1930s, including Charles Goodwin Jennings Memorial Hospital (1929) and the U.S. Post Office, Court House, and Custom House. The U.S. Post Office, Court House, and Custom House was a notable departure for this prominent Detroit architect because he utilized the Classical Moderne style, rather than the Colonial Revival, which had been his most common motif during the 1920s. Robert O. Derrick died in 1961.

<sup>21</sup> John Vinci Inc., *Historic Structures Report*, 1992, 11.

<sup>22</sup> Jim McCabe, "Designing a Landmark: Robert O. Derrick and the Henry Ford Museum," accessed online on January 9, 2018 at: <https://wayback.archive-it.org/5995/20150627032514/http://www.thehenryford.org/exhibits/pic/2004/may.asp>.

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Assisting Derrick in the firm of Robert O. Derrick, Inc. as the U.S. Post Office, Court House, and Custom House was designed and constructed, was Branson Van Leer Gamber. Gamber was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in 1893, graduating from Drexel Institute of Art and Science in 1913. After working in the Philadelphia firm of Day & Klauder, he came to Detroit in 1919, working as a draftsman in the office of Albert Kahn before moving on to another Detroit firm. In 1922 he joined Brown, Preston & Derrick as a draftsman and continued working alongside Derrick in positions of increasing responsibility. In 1945, he was recognized as a partner in Derrick & Gamber, the successor firm, to Robert O. Derrick, Inc. Gamber served as president of the Detroit chapter of the American Institute of Architects (AIA), was a Fellow of the AIA, and sat on the Detroit City Plan and Detroit Housing commissions.<sup>23</sup> Branson Gamber died in 1949.

Corrado Giuseppe Parducci was born in Buti, near Pisa, Italy in 1900 and came to New York City with his father at age four. He received artistic training, specializing in sculpture, with the assistance of scholarships. By his early twenties, Parducci was working for Anthony DiLorenzo Studios and met architect Albert Kahn, who persuaded him to move to Detroit. In the midst of Detroit's automobile-fueled building boom of the 1920s, Parducci worked with many of the Detroit's prominent architects, including George D. Mason; Donaldson and Meier; and Smith, Hinchman & Grylls. Parducci's work appears on the exteriors of the Guardian, the Buhl, the Penobscot, and the Fisher buildings as well as at Most Blessed Sacrament Cathedral, all in Detroit. Parducci completed works for public buildings, including the U.S. Post Office, Court House, and Custom House, the Grand Rapids Civic Auditorium (1932), and the Kalamazoo County Building (1937). In addition, Parducci completed many pieces for the Catholic Church. He continued working into the 1970s, and over the course of his career, his architectural sculpture adorned some 600 buildings.<sup>24</sup> Corrado "Joe" Parducci died in 1981.

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<sup>23</sup> Claire W. Ditchy, "Branson Van Leer Gamber, F.A.I.A. (1893-1949)," *The Journal of the American Institute of Architects*, December 1949, 260-262, accessed online on January 23, 2018 at <http://www.ncmodernist.org/AJ/AJ-1949-12.pdf> and "Derrick and Gamber," *AIA Historical Directory of American Architects*, accessed online on January 23, 2018 at: <http://public.aia.org/sites/hdoaa/wiki/Wiki%20Pages/ahd4001394.aspx>.

<sup>24</sup> John Vinci, Inc. Historic Structures Report, 12.

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National Register of Historic Places, Detroit Financial District, Detroit, Wayne County, Michigan, National Register #09001067.

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**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested  
 previously listed in the National Register (Detroit Financial District, contributing resource)  
 previously determined eligible by the National Register  
 designated a National Historic Landmark  
 recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_  
 recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_  
 recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office  
 Other State agency  
 Federal agency  
 Local government  
 University  
 Other  
Name of repository: Great Lakes Region, U.S. General Services Administration

**Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):** \_\_\_\_\_

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**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** 1.7 acres

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Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

**Latitude/Longitude Coordinates (decimal degrees)**

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- |              |            |
|--------------|------------|
| 1. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 2. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 3. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 4. Latitude: | Longitude: |

**Or**

**UTM References**

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or  NAD 1983

- |             |                 |                   |
|-------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| 1. Zone: 17 | Easting: 331109 | Northing: 4688445 |
| 2. Zone: 17 | Easting: 331195 | Northing: 4688486 |
| 3. Zone: 17 | Easting: 331144 | Northing: 4688566 |
| 4. Zone: 17 | Easting: 331063 | Northing: 4688530 |

**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The U.S. Post Office, Court House, and Custom House is located in the block bounded by Lafayette Boulevard, Fort Street, Washington Boulevard, and Shelby Street.

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The nomination consists of the property historically associated with the U.S. Post Office, Court House, and Custom House at 231 West Lafayette Boulevard, Detroit, Michigan.

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### 11. Form Prepared By

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date: January 2018

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### Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

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### **Photographs**

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

### **Photo Log**

Name of Property: U.S. Post Office, Court House, and Custom House

City or Vicinity: Detroit

County: Wayne

State: Michigan

Photographer: Andrew J. Schmidt

Date Photographed: May 2007\*

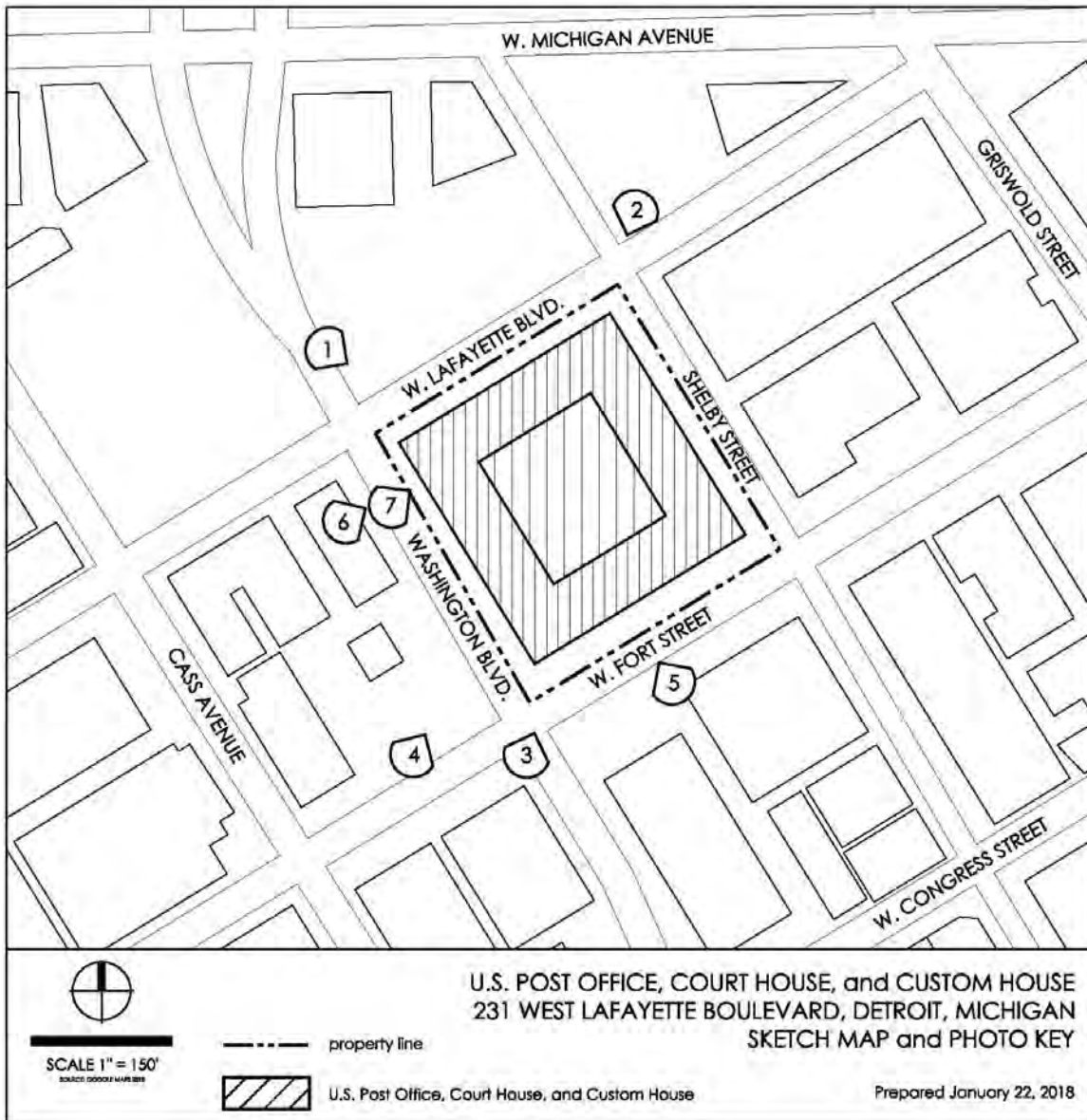
Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

- 1 of 22. NORTH FACADE, LAFAYETTE BOULEVARD, FACING SOUTHEAST.
- 2 of 22. EAST FACADE, SHELBY STREET, FACING SOUTHWEST.
- 3 of 22. SOUTH FACADE, FORT STREET, FACING NORTHEAST.
- 4 of 22. WEST FACADE, WASHINGTON BOULEVARD, FACING NORTHEAST.
- 5 of 22. DETAIL OF SOUTH ENTRANCE, FACING NORTHEAST.
- 6 of 22. DETAIL OF NORTHWEST CORNER, FACING NORTHEAST.
- 7 of 22. DETAIL OF SALLYPORT, NORTHWEST CORNER, FACING NORTHEAST.
- 8 of 22. INTERIOR, FIRST FLOOR CENTRAL CORRIDOR.
- 9 of 22. INTERIOR, DETAIL OF CEILING, CENTRAL CORRIDOR.
- 10 of 22. INTERIOR, FIRST FLOOR, TYPICAL SIDE CORRIDOR.
- 11 of 22. INTERIOR, NORTH ENTRANCE, TRANSOM DETAIL.
- 12 of 22. INTERIOR, POSTAL SAVINGS WINDOW.
- 13 of 22. INTERIOR, SEVENTH FLOOR CORRIDOR.
- 14 of 22. INTERIOR, TYPICAL SEVENTH FLOOR COURTROOM.
- 15 of 22. INTERIOR, TYPICAL EIGHTH FLOOR COURTROOM.
- 16 of 22. INTERIOR, TYPICAL CORRIDOR.
- 17 of 22. INTERIOR, CHIEF JUDGE'S COURTROOM.
- 18 of 22. INTERIOR, CHIEF JUDGE'S COURTROOM.
- 19 of 22. INTERIOR, SIDE ENTRANCE, CHIEF JUDGE'S COURTROOM.
- 20 of 22. INTERIOR, REAR ENTRANCE, CHIEF JUDGE'S COURTROOM.
- 21 of 22. INTERIOR, CHIEF JUDGE'S CHAMBERS
- 22 of 22. INTERIOR, DETAIL OF TYPICAL RADIATOR GRATES

\*Photographs accurately depict the current appearance of the building.

U.S. Post Office, Court House, and Custom House  
Name of Property

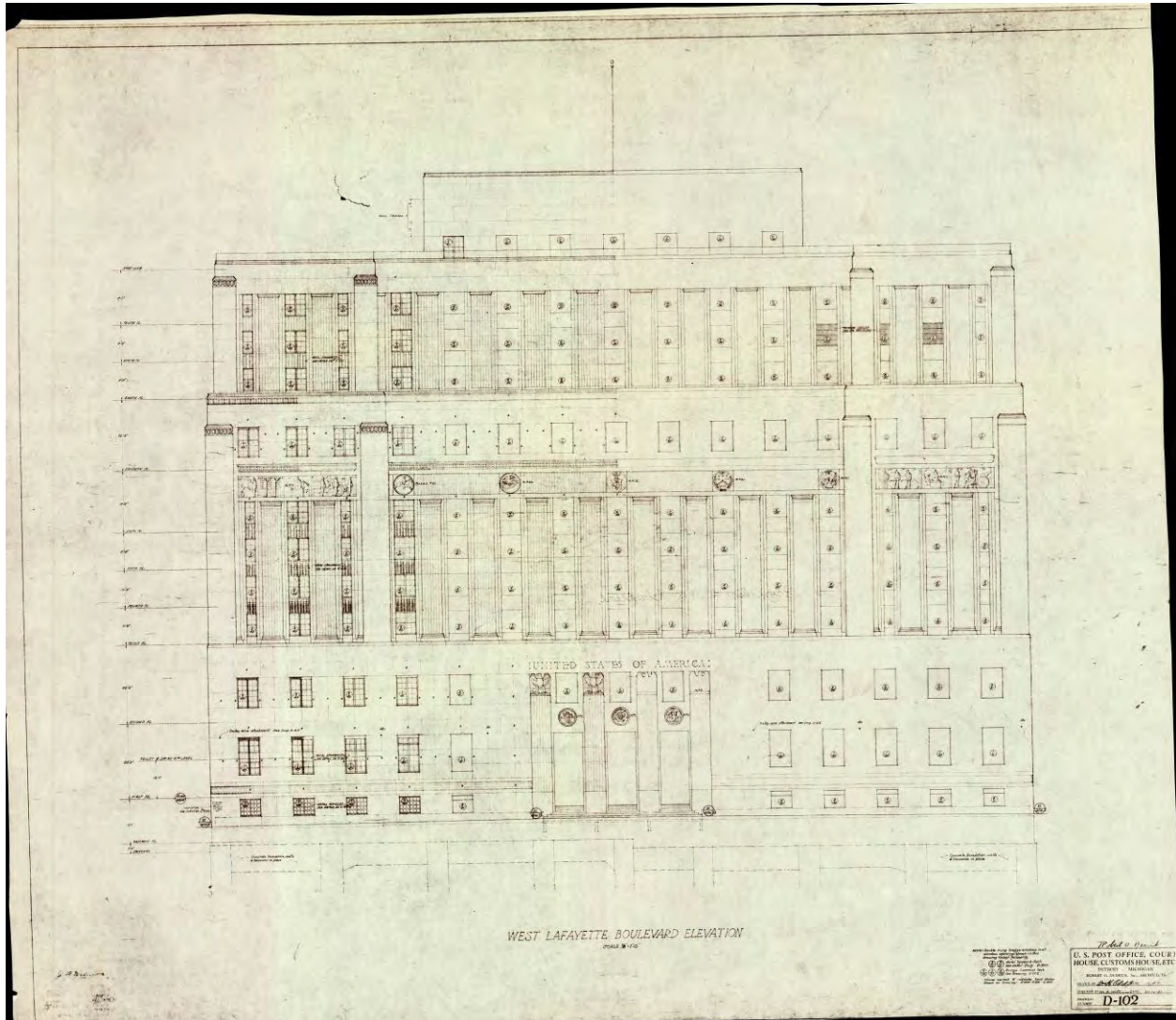
Wayne County, Michigan  
County and State



U.S. Post Office, Court House, and Custom House  
Name of Property

Wayne County, Michigan  
County and State

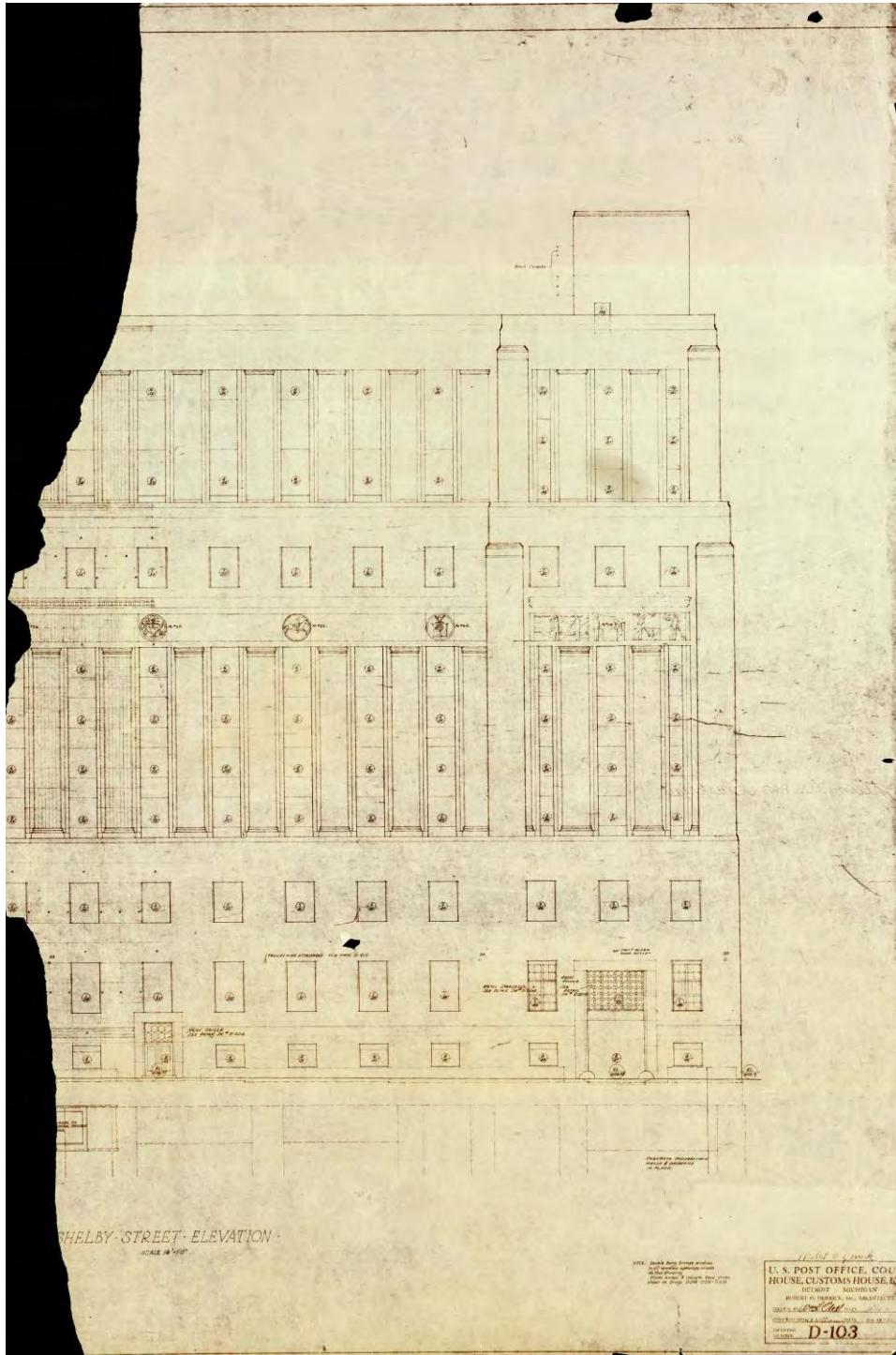
Figure 1 – 1931 Drawing of Lafayette Boulevard elevation, U.S. Post Office, Court House, and Custom House



U.S. Post Office, Court House, and Custom House  
Name of Property

Wayne County, Michigan  
County and State

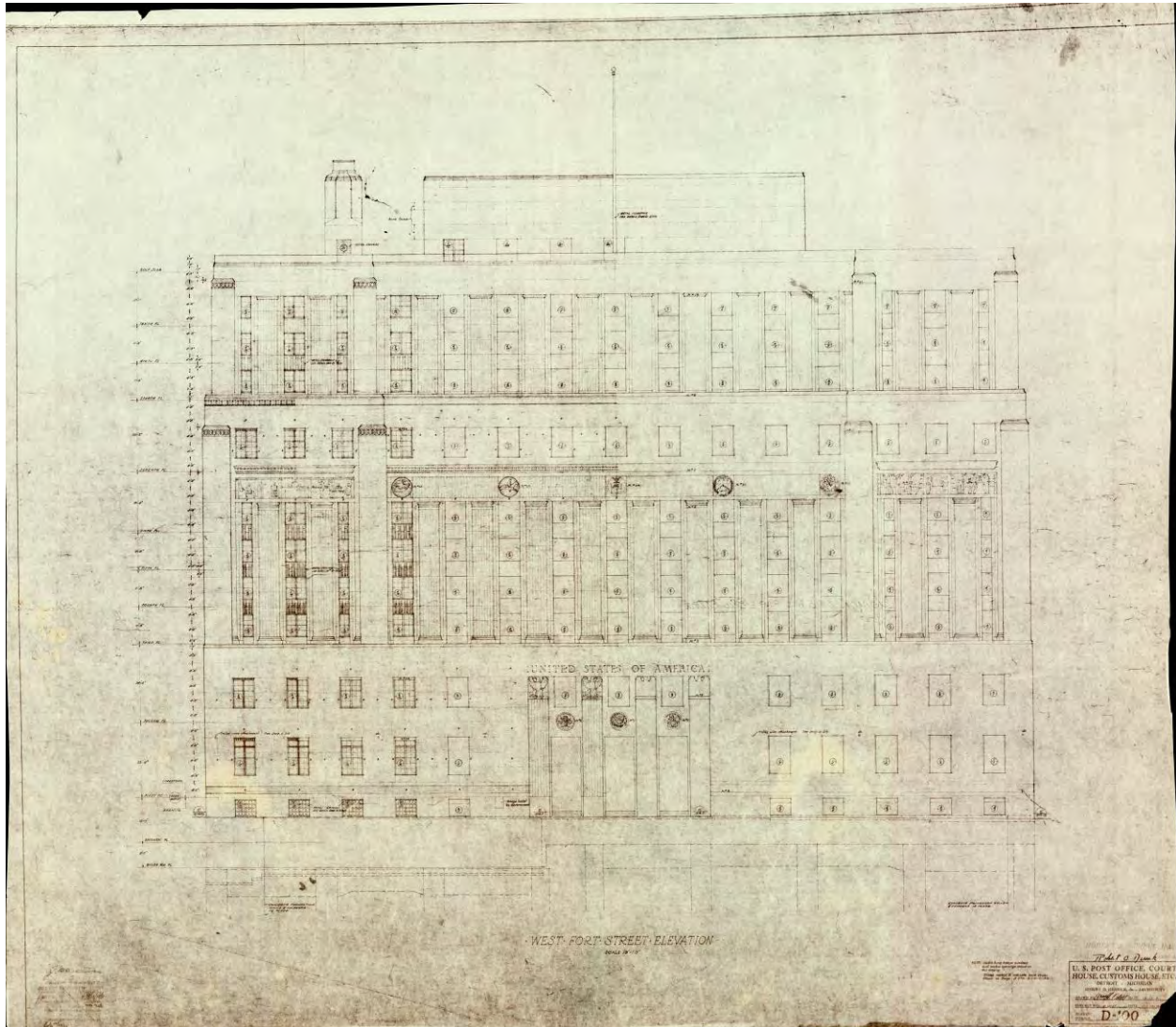
Figure 2 – 1931 Drawing of Shelby Street elevation (fragment), U.S. Post Office, Court House, and Custom House



U.S. Post Office, Court House, and Custom House  
Name of Property

Wayne County, Michigan  
County and State

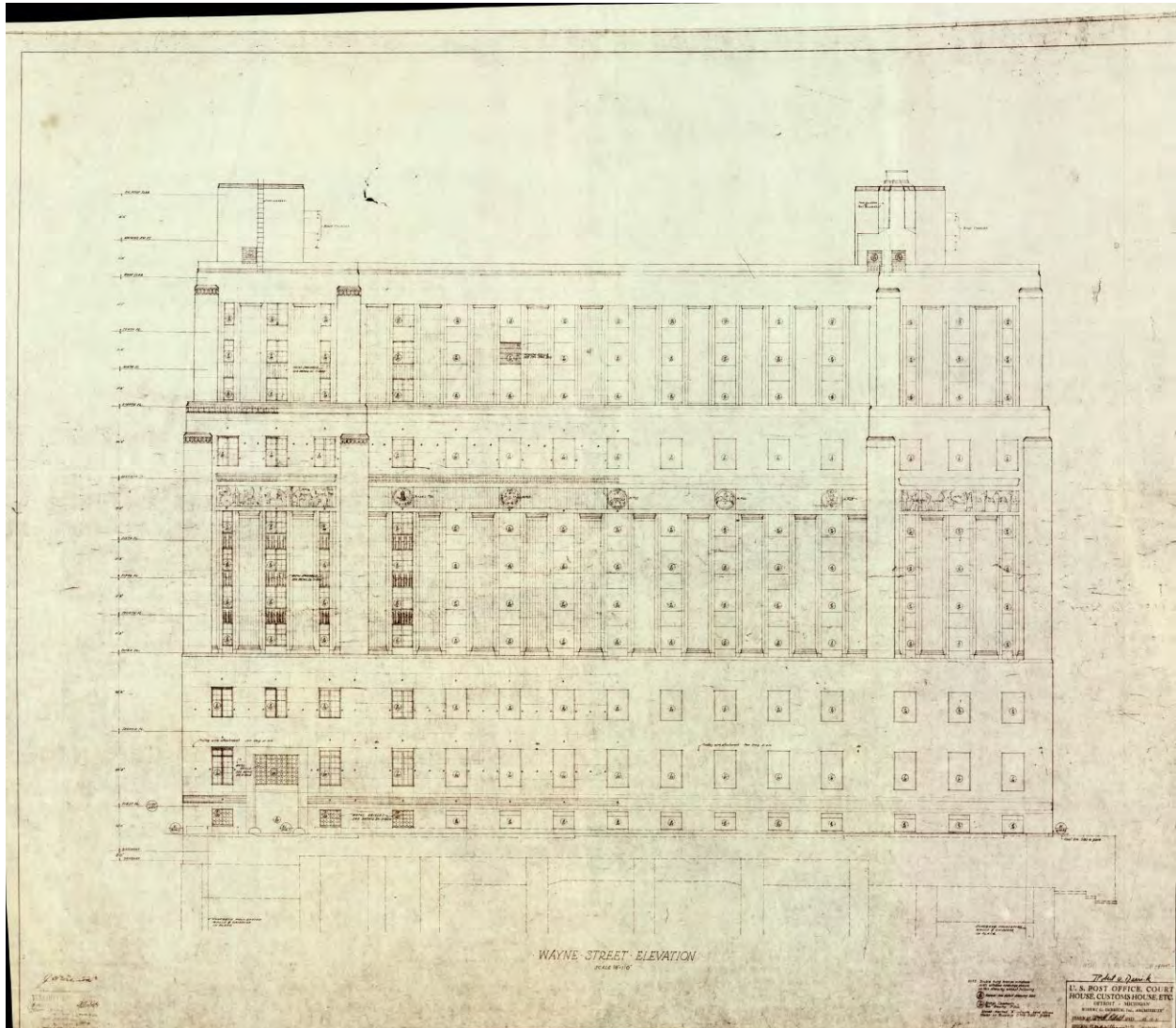
Figure 3 – 1931 Drawing of Fort Street elevation, U.S. Post Office, Court House, and Custom House



U.S. Post Office, Court House, and Custom House  
Name of Property

Wayne County, Michigan  
County and State

Figure 4 – 1931 Drawing of Washington Boulevard elevation, U.S. Post Office, Court House, and Custom House





U.S. Post Office, Court House, and Custom House  
Name of Property

Wayne County, Michigan  
County and State

Figure 6 – Photograph of completed U.S. Post Office, Court House, and Custom House (Fort and Shelby streets) dated May 1, 1934 (National Archives, RG 121-BS, Box 46, Folder SS, Print 1)



**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 100 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.



U.S. Post Office,  
Court House,  
and  
Custom House

Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey in cooperation with State of Michigan agencies  
Control by USGS, USC&GS, U. S. Lake Survey, and City of Detroit  
Planimetry by photogrammetric methods from aerial photographs  
Topography by planimetric surveys 1928. Revised from aerial photographs taken 1966-67. Field checked 1968  
Canadian portion copied in part from Windsor quadrangle (1:25 000) 1960, Army Survey Establishment, R. C. E.  
Selected hydrographic data compiled from U. S. Lake Survey Charts 41 and 412 (1966). This information is not intended for navigational purposes  
Polyconic projection 1927 North American datum  
10,000-foot grid based on Michigan coordinate system, south zone 17, shown in blue  
Red tint indicates areas in which only landmark buildings are shown

UTM GRID AND 1980 MAGNETIC NORTH DECLINATION AT CENTER OF SHEET  
To place on the predicted North American Datum 1983 move the projection lines 7 meters west as shown by dashed corner ticks  
There may be private inholdings within the boundaries of the National or State reservations shown on this map

SCALE 1:24 000  
CONTOUR INTERVAL 5 FEET IN THE UNITED STATES AND 10 FEET IN CANADA  
NATIONAL GEODETIC VERTICAL DATUM OF 1929  
DEPTH CURVES AND SOUNDINGS IN FEET—DATUM IS RIVER SURFACE AT FOLLOWING STAGES: LAKE ST. CLAIR-571.7 AND LAKE ERIE-568.6  
THE U.S. PORTION OF THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS FOR SALE BY U. S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092 AND BY THE GEOLOGICAL SURVEY DIVISION MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES, LANSING, MICHIGAN 48909 A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

Revisions shown in purple compiled from aerial photographs taken 1973 and 1978. Map edited 1980. This information not field checked. Canadian portion not revised

ROAD CLASSIFICATION  
Primary highway, all weather, hard surface  
Secondary highway, all weather, hard surface  
Light-duty road, all weather, improved surface  
Unimproved road, fair or dry hard surface  
weather  
Interstate Route U. S. Route State Route  
DETROIT, MICH.—ONT.  
N4215—W8300/7.5  
1968  
PHOTOREVISED 1973 AND 1980  
DMA 4368 I SE—SERIES V862

USGS  
Historical File  
National Mapping Div.  
MAR 25 1981  
2150





Lafayette W

ONE WAY

HAX





Washington Blvd.

CLEAN  
DOWNTOWN

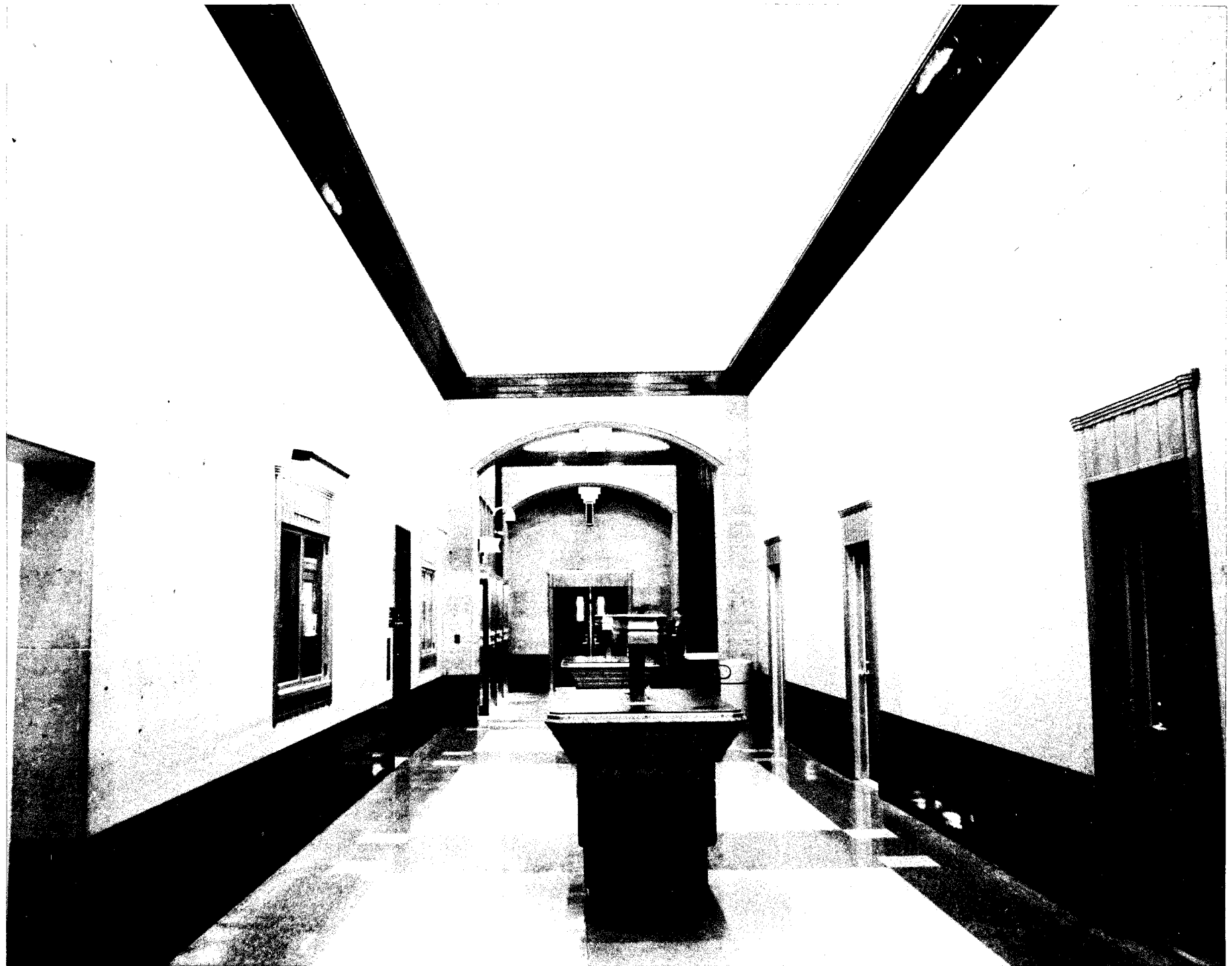














OFFICE  
CHIEF JUDGE  
EDWARD A. FRIEDMAN







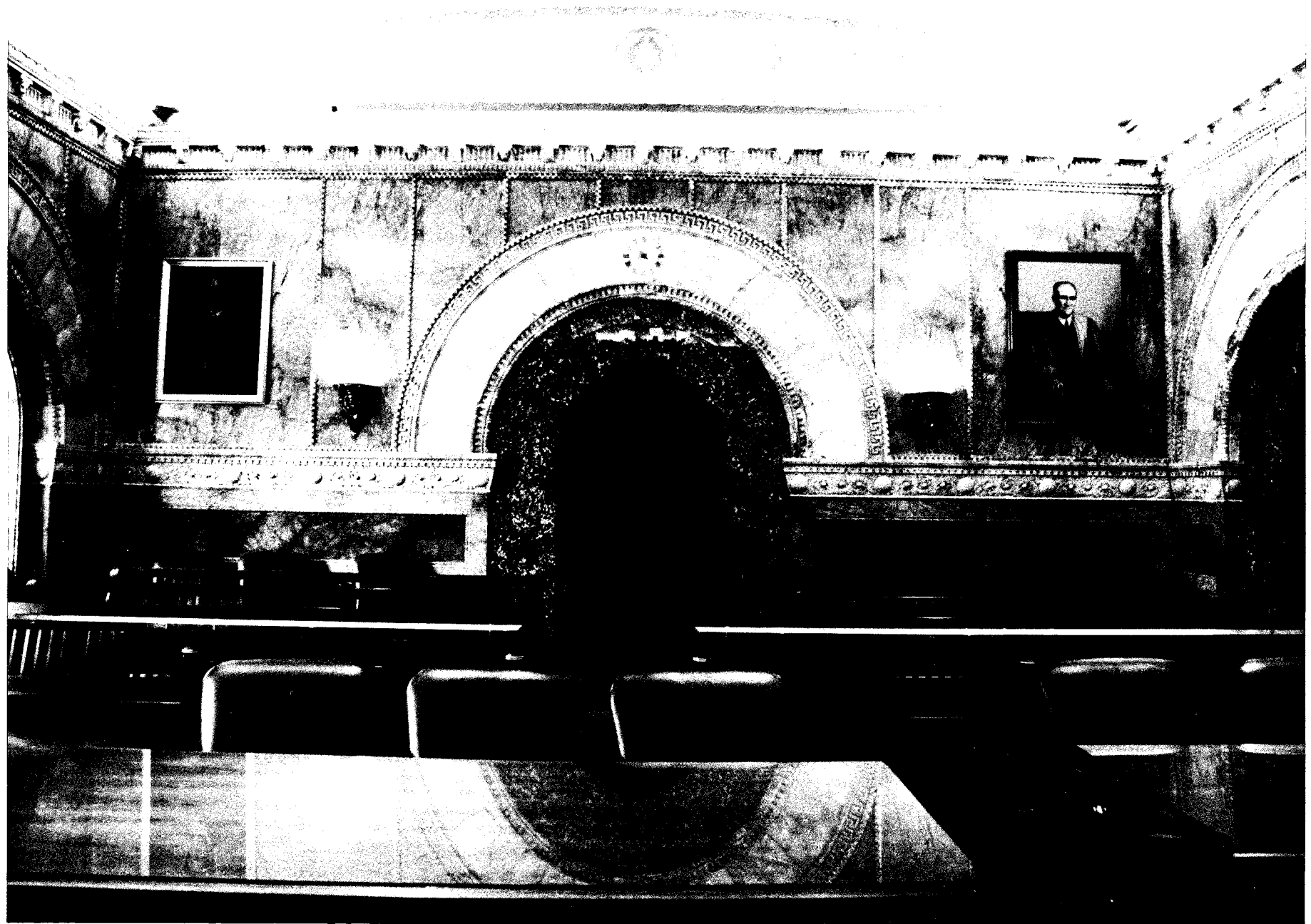




















March 22, 2018

Mr. Paul Loether  
Chief, NRHP & NHL Program  
National Park Service  
1849 C Street, NW, Mail Stop 7228  
Washington, DC 20005

Dear Mr. Loether:

The U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) is pleased to nominate the U.S. Post Office, Court House, and Custom House (current name: Theodore Levin United States Courthouse) located at 231 West Lafayette Boulevard, Detroit, Michigan, for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places. The building is located within and contributes to the previously listed Detroit Financial District (#09001067). The nomination is hereby submitted on disk in accordance with the May 6, 2013 guidance and includes the following:

- Signed original first page of the National Register of Historic Places nomination form;
- Disk 1 - The enclosed disk contains the true and correct copy of the nomination for the U.S. Post Office, Court House, and Custom House, located in Detroit, MI, to the National Register of Historic Places; and,
- Disk 2 - The enclosed disk contains the .tif image files for the above referenced nomination.

In accordance with 36 CFR Part 60.9(c), the appropriate local elected officials were notified of GSA's intent to nominate the above referenced property to the National Register of Historic Places by letters dated January 25, 2018. No response comments were received.

If for any reason any nomination package that GSA submits needs to be returned, please do so by a delivery service as items returned to our offices via regular mail are irradiated and the materials severely damaged. Should you have any questions or concerns regarding this nomination package, please contact Elizabeth Hannold at (202) 501-2863 or [elizabeth.hannold@gsa.gov](mailto:elizabeth.hannold@gsa.gov).

Sincerely,

Beth L. Savage  
Federal Preservation Officer  
Director, Center for Historic Buildings

Enclosures

cc: Brian Conway, State Historic Preservation Officer  
Regina Nally, Regional Historic Preservation Officer