

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

562775

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.



1. Name of Property

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

Other names/site number: U.S. Post Office and Courthouse, New Bern Federal Building

Name of related multiple property listing:

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

2. Location

Street & number: 413 Middle Street

City or town: New Bern State: NC County: Craven

Not For Publication: Vicinity: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

	6/27/2018
Signature of certifying official/Title:	Date
<u>U.S. General Services Administration</u>	<u>Federal Preservation</u>
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government	<u>officer</u>

In my opinion, the property <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> meets _____ does not meet the National Register criteria.	
	6/26/18
Signature of commenting official:	Date
N.C. Department of Natural and Cultural Resources	
Title :	State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

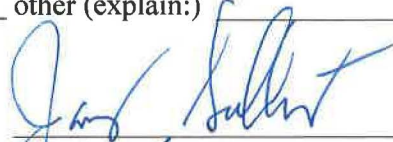
U.S. Post Office, Court House, and Custom House
Name of Property

Craven County, North Carolina
County and State

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

8-7-2018
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

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

Craven County, North Carolina
County and State

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

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

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 1
Contributing to New Bern Historic District

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

GOVERNMENT: Post Office
GOVERNMENT: Courthouse
GOVERNMENT: Customhouse

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

GOVERNMENT: Courthouse

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

Craven County, North Carolina
County and State

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE 19th and EARLY 20th CENTURY REVIVALS: Georgian Revival

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: BRICK; STONE: Limestone, Granite, Slate

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.)

Summary Paragraph

The U.S. Post Office, Court House, and Custom House occupies an approximately 1.2-acre lot at the southwest corner of the intersection of Middle and New streets in New Bern, Craven County, North Carolina, and is a contributing resource in the National Register-listed New Bern Historic District.¹ The approximately 35,000 square-foot, three-story building was constructed between 1933 and 1934. Dedicated in December 1934 and first occupied in early 1935, the building originally functioned as a post office, courthouse, and custom house. The form, proportions, symmetry, and decorative elements of the U.S. Post Office, Court House, and Custom House conform to the Georgian Revival style, which incorporates Colonial-era architectural influences and employs Classical design elements and ornamentation. The building features a rectangular plan, with a large front lobby flanked by secondary spaces on the first floor, staircases at the north and south ends of the building, and central corridors flanked by the courtroom and secondary spaces on the second and third floor. The exterior of the building is executed in red brick and limestone. Notable exterior features include a second story colonnade, a large central cupola, arched openings, elaborate pediments, and decorative limestone swags and quoins. Significant interior features include the marble-clad postal lobby; the grand, wood-paneled courtroom; terrazzo and marble floors in most common areas; original wood panel doors; and

1. The district (#73001325) was listed in the National Register of Historic Places on 6/19/1973, with boundary increases (#03000965 and #15000956) in 2003 and 2016.

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

Craven County, North Carolina
County and State

decorative metalwork throughout the interior. The courtroom includes a frieze of New Bern-themed murals executed and installed in 1938. Post office and custom house operations within the building have ceased; however, the building continues to house the United States District Court's Eastern District of North Carolina, with support offices occupying secondary spaces.

Narrative Description

The U.S. Post Office, Court House, and Custom House is sited approximately twenty-five feet from the concrete sidewalk along Middle Street and fifteen feet from the concrete sidewalk along New Street, with its main entrance facing Middle Street. A wide central terrace with granite steps connects the building to the sidewalk along Middle Street. Small landscaped areas planted with grass and shrubs flank the terrace and steps along the east (front) elevation and border the north (New Street) elevation of the building. An asphalt-paved parking lot borders the building to the west. This lot accommodates public and court-related parking and provides access to the vehicular sally port attached to the west (rear) elevation of the building. A black metal picket fence, installed in 2010, extends from the rear of the main block of the building to secure the vehicular sally port and surface parking areas. Nineteenth-century residential and institutional buildings comprise the area immediately surrounding the building to the north, west, east, and south.

The U.S. Post Office, Court House, and Custom House is a contributing resource in the New Bern Historic District, which is roughly bounded by the Neuse and Trent rivers and Queen, Metcalf, Broad, Fleet, Pollock, and Eden streets, and was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1973. The federal building is situated near the center of the historic district. The district is significant under National Register Criteria A and C for architecture, commerce, and politics and contains a number of eighteenth- through twentieth-century buildings exhibiting characteristics of the Georgian, Federal, Greek Revival, Italianate, late Gothic Revival, Renaissance Revival, Second Empire, Queen Anne, Stick, Eastlake, Shingle, Neo-Classical Revival, and Colonial Revival styles.

The U.S. Post Office, Court House, and Custom House is an excellent example of a Georgian Revival style public building that retains its integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association from its period of significance (1935;1938). The building retains integrity of design, materials, and workmanship despite various rehabilitation projects undertaken through the years, including the recent phased rehabilitation project undertaken from 2004 to 2010, following acquisition of the building by the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA). The building's character-defining features remain largely unaltered on the exterior, with the exception of the rear elevation where several small additions completed between 2007 and 2010 obscure much of the original elevation. The public interior spaces also remain largely unaltered. Partition walls in the second and third floor corridors were completed in 2006 as a component of the security improvements within the building; however, the walls are reversible and leave the original architectural fabric within the corridors intact. The former postal workroom on the first floor was subdivided to create spaces for court and associated uses in 2010. However, these areas were not intended as public spaces; the most significant public

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

Craven County, North Carolina

Name of Property

County and State

spaces, including the former post office lobby, the courtroom, and the stairways, remain intact and were restored in 2007.

Exterior Description²

The U.S. Post Office, Court House, and Custom House in New Bern is a three-story Georgian Revival-style building. The steel frame and masonry building is clad with red brick veneer laid in a common bond with limestone trim and a granite base. The original building is 144' wide by 69' deep and the primary elevation (east) consists of two projecting pavilions, one at each end, connected by a central colonnade consisting of four pairs of two-story limestone columns.³

East Elevation (Facade)

Two entry vestibules are recessed behind a brick arcade on the ground level. A simple entablature above the limestone columns contains the words "UNITED STATES OF AMERICA" incised in stone. A limestone belt course between the first and second floors is incised with the words "POST OFFICE, COURT HOUSE, CUSTOM HOUSE." The elevations are surmounted by a brick parapet with limestone coping and short limestone balustrades directly above the window openings. Corners are enriched by limestone quoins. The 1933 plans indicate that "cast stone" trim was to be used on the exterior; inspection reveals, however, that all stone trim is limestone.⁴

Windows are typically wood, double-hung, multi-light sash painted white. Wood pediments and spandrel panels enrich the first and second floor windows at the end pavilions at the east (main) elevation. Entry is via two projecting pedimented wood vestibules, one at either end of the lobby. These vestibules project into the lobby approximately 3 feet. Three large round-arched, double-hung wood windows light the lobby from the recessed loggia.⁵

End walls at the north and south side elevations culminate in a parapet. The roof consists of a steeply pitched slate roof with copper-clad arched dormers at each end and a copper-clad, three-tiered, wood cupola, painted white. Exterior ornamentation consists of limestone quoins at the corners of the end pavilions; iron grilles between paired columns at the second floor portico; a brick terrace with granite steps and cheek walls; iron lamp standards at the cheek walls; and flagpoles set in massive bronze bases on the lawn flanking the terrace.⁶ The lamp standards were restored and a flagpole, which had been missing from the north flagpole base, was reinstalled in 2010. A low handicapped access ramp installed in 2010 extends from a walk at the south side of the building to the south side of the terrace on the east elevation.

2. The majority of the descriptive text in this section was extracted from the *Historic Building Preservation Plan, United States Post Office and Courthouse (New Bern)* (Washington, D.C.: United States General Services Administration, Public Buildings Service, 1994). The text has been updated where necessary to reflect changes that have occurred since 1994.

3. United States General Services Administration, Public Buildings Service, *Historic Building Preservation Plan, United States Post Office and Courthouse, New Bern* (Washington, D.C.: United States General Services Administration, Public Buildings Service, 1994) 2.

4. *Ibid.*, 8.

5. *Ibid.*

6. *Ibid.*

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

Craven County, North Carolina
County and State

West Elevation

The west (rear) elevation has always been functional in nature. Originally this elevation was characterized by relatively simple, unadorned red brick veneer wall punctuated by regularly spaced, white painted, double-hung windows, framed by limestone quoins at the corners and topped by a short parapet with limestone coping. A projecting central block housed the postal loading dock on the first story, while five, double-height, arched windows lighting the second floor courtroom punctuated the wall above. In a project completed in 2007, an exterior fire stair consisting of a three story, brick-clad tower with rectangular window-like openings at each of the three stories was added at the north end of the west elevation. In a project completed in 2010, the loading dock was removed and replaced by a series of small, single story, brick-clad blocks housing a vehicular sally port and secure parking garage. A three-story, brick-clad elevator tower, also completed in 2010, occupies a position on the south end of the west elevation, mirroring the fire stair on the north end. Each of the recent additions to the rear elevation is held away from the original construction and features brickwork and cast concrete sills and coping similar to the brickwork and limestone elements found on the original building. An areaway at the north end of the west elevation provides access to the basement.⁷ In addition, a handicapped access ramp with simple metal railing installed in 2010 leads to an entry on the north end of the west elevation. A large HVAC cooling tower is located within a fenced enclosure between the secure parking garage and elevator tower on the south end of the west elevation.

North and South Elevations

The north and south (side) elevations of the building are nearly identical in design and consist of unadorned red brick veneer walls four bays wide, each bay punctuated by white painted, double-hung, multi-light windows. Limestone belt courses delineate the second and third stories and limestone quoins define the corners of the elevation. Parapets with limestone coping define the roofline. Wood pediments and spandrel panels enrich the first story windows. In addition to the four regular-sized windows located on each story, a small, narrow double-hung window can be found wherever a bathroom is located within on the first through third stories. A single blind window, filled with brick, is present on the third story and a circular window is centered in the gable at the attic level.

Interior Description

Basement

The full basement originally contained postal swing (break) rooms and a restroom at the south end, a double loaded corridor running north-south, and along the corridor assorted storage rooms, shops, custodial and mechanical spaces, terminating at the north end elevator lobby and stairwell. These spaces were not accessible to the public and were characterized by utilitarian finishes: flat plaster on hollow structural terra-cotta tile, exposed hollow terra-cotta tile, or gypsum board walls and concrete, vinyl or quarry tile floors. Doorways consisted of wood five panel doors and frames. Until 2010, the spatial configuration and finishes of the basement remained largely original; however, two large storage rooms on the east side of the corridor had been added at an

7. Ibid., 10.

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

Craven County, North Carolina
County and State

unknown date in what was originally unexcavated space.⁸ The 2010 rehabilitation project converted much of the basement for use by the United States Marshals Service (USMS), inserting a conference room, exercise facilities, a command and control room, and secure storage. These spaces are characterized by modern finishes consisting of carpeting, drywall, and suspended ceilings with lay-in lighting.

Originally, iron ladders in the basement corridor led to the lookout space above the first floor, which provided inspectors a vantage point from which to view postal floor activities. The ladders were removed at an unknown date and the catwalk above the postal workroom was removed in 2010.

First Floor

Main Lobby and Stairwells

The postal lobby runs the width of the building at the east side of the first floor. The east wall of the lobby has Royal black and white marble pilasters terminating in Ionic column capitals of plaster. The wall is punctuated with large, round arched, double hung, multi-pane, wood windows and two double door vestibules. Original post office tables have black glass tops on white marble bases, and are wall-mounted on scrolled metal brackets at each of the windows. The lobby is bordered with Royal black and white marble wainscot. The lobby floor consists of 2 feet square Alabama Crème marble tiles set on the diagonal with 6 inch black marble squares set on a diagonal at the intersection of the tiles. The floor has a 10 inch Alabama Crème white marble border. The ceiling is a shallow vaulted, painted, plaster ceiling with seven massive bronze, hexagonal, Gothic Revival style fixtures. The west wall of the post office lobby houses bays of post office boxes and service windows. The upper portion of each bay is filled with bronze grilles with painted iron floral bosses capping each joint. The lobby is terminated at each end by steel-framed stairs with curved returns. Stair rails consist of ornamental iron balusters capped by an aluminum handrail. Stair rails are accented by large cast bronze decorative elements at the ground floor. Marble walls in the stair vestibules are curved to follow the curved stair return and contain 4 foot long, curved, cast-iron vent grilles. Door frames at the lobby level are Alabama Crème white marble.⁹ Restoration of the interior marble and bronze light fixtures was completed in 2007.

A room located at the northeast corner of the lobby, originally housing the customs office, was converted in 2010 to accommodate a security screening check point consisting of a metal detector and a security desk. The passenger elevator is located at the east side, north end of the lobby. The governor and the control panel (in the attic) are original, with some electrical upgrades, though the cab, doors, and motor probably date to the 1964 rehabilitation. The original elevator doors were bronze-plated panel doors.¹⁰

Post Office Work Room and Offices

8. Ibid., 14.

9. Ibid., 9.

10. Ibid.

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

Craven County, North Carolina
County and State

The former post office work room occupies the area west of the former post office lobby. The work room consisted of two large, open primary spaces divided by a narrow corridor running east-west through the center and featured black asphalt floor tiles, 5 foot-high wainscoting of tan, glazed brick, and an exposed ceiling structure with suspended lights. Originally, iron ladders in the corridor led to the lookout space above the first floor, which provided inspectors a vantage point from which to view postal floor activities. The ladders as well as the catwalk above the postal workroom have been removed.

In 2006, accessible public restrooms were constructed within the southern section of the former post office work room. In 2010, a new bankruptcy court hearing room and associated conference rooms were constructed in the northern half and new USMS administrative spaces and interview rooms were constructed in the remainder of the southern half of the former postal workroom. These spaces are characterized by modern finishes consisting of carpeting, drywall, and suspended ceilings with lay-in lighting.

Second Floor and Third Floor

Second and Third Floor Corridors and Stairs

The second and third floor public corridors are largely original and very similar in design and finish. The corridor floors are black and white terrazzo with white marble borders. These floors were restored in 2010. Each corridor consists of large square stair vestibules (approximately 15 feet by 15 feet) at the north and south ends of the building. The vestibule in the second floor is connected by a double-loaded corridor approximately 10 feet wide, while the third floor corridor is not double-loaded due to the height of the courtroom. Ceilings in the corridors are painted plaster paneled ceilings approximately 10 feet high. Ceilings in the vestibules are raised to approximately 14 feet. Vestibule ceilings are paneled and include a decorative plaster crown mold and frieze of glyphs. Walls in the vestibules and corridors are painted flat plaster with black marble bases. The doors and frames appear to be largely original throughout the second and third floor corridors. The frames are stained wood and doors are typically six panel wood doors with oval brass knobs. Many lower door panels were replaced with vent grilles in 1964; however, wood panels were reinstalled as part of the 2007-2010 restoration work. The original corridor doors have marble plinths and thresholds. The main courtroom is entered at either end via two sets of double doors off the second floor corridor.¹¹

Partition walls with door openings were inserted at the north and south ends of the second and third floor corridors. These walls were installed in 2006 for security purposes.

Original public restrooms are located at the north and south ends of the second and third floor corridors. According to the 1931 plans, the large public restrooms were all men's restrooms. However, one restroom on each floor was converted to a women's restroom. The restrooms have terrazzo floors, painted flat plaster walls, and, typically, structural glass stall partitions with

11. Ibid., 11.

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

Craven County, North Carolina
County and State

wood panel stall doors. The original lavatories and urinals remain, as do some original fixtures (soap dishes, toilet tissue holders).¹²

Ceremonial Courtroom

The ceremonial courtroom is located in the center of the second floor on the west (rear) side. The courtroom is 60 feet long by 27 feet high, finished throughout with mahogany wainscoting. It is a symmetrical Georgian style room with fluted Ionic pilasters along the walls and returned at the corners. The east wall consists of 14 feet and 6 inches high wood paneling with plaster panels between the top of the wood paneling and the wood entablature. These plaster panel sections are separated into sections by mahogany pilasters. The west wall has 5 feet wide by 12 feet high double hung multi-pane, round-arched wood windows. The front wall behind the judge's bench consists of wood wainscoting with wood pilasters supporting a split pediment; the north wall, at the opposite end of the room, is a mirror image. The central doorway behind the judge's bench opens into the judge's chambers. A central doorway at the opposite end (or rear) of the courtroom opens into the marshals' office. The doorway to the east of the judge's bench opens to a stairway which leads to the jury room on the third floor. At each end of the east wall, a pair of double fly doors covered in red leather access wood-paneled, double-entry vestibules which open onto the second floor corridor.¹³

The courtroom ceiling is a shallow vaulted plaster ceiling. Remarkable features of the room are the eight massive copper and bronze urn-type pendants which up light the ceiling. These fixtures consist of six-foot-long copper-clad iron shafts that help stabilize the four foot bronze bowls suspended by four copper-clad iron rods. An ornamental copper shaft rises from the bowl to the converging rods. The fixtures reportedly weigh approximately 1,100 pounds each.¹⁴ These light fixtures were restored and the courtroom ceiling was abated of asbestos and returned to its original appearance in 2007. Flooring throughout the courtroom is red carpet. The parquet flooring remains in place beneath the carpet.¹⁵

The courtroom is divided by a wood balustrade. Built-in furniture includes a jury box, witness stand, clerk's desk, and judge's bench, all of which are wood paneled to match the interior woodwork. The judge's bench is surmounted by two bronze desk lamps with brass-framed, stained glass shades, commonly found in federal courtrooms.¹⁶

A frieze of murals, approximately 7 feet high, executed in oil on canvas and depicting historic New Bern scenes, caps the paneling on the south wall above the judge's bench. David J. Silvette of Richmond, Virginia, painted these murals in 1938. The easternmost panel symbolizes justice. It depicts the Bayard vs. Singleton case (1787) in which a three-judge-panel meeting in New Bern held that a legislature is limited in power and that the judiciary has the right to declare a law null and void if that law is unconstitutional. The center panel, representing liberty, has two scenes. The panel to the left shows Baron Christopher DeGraffenried (founder of New Bern)

12. Ibid.

13. Ibid., 7.

14. Ibid.

15. Ibid.

16. Ibid.

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

Craven County, North Carolina
County and State

telling Old World residents about the New World. The center panel to the right depicts the history of printing and publishing in North Carolina. James Davis, who established the first printing press in the colony, in 1749, is shown with the press. The westernmost (right) panel represents freedom. It shows the first provincial convention held in New Bern in 1774.¹⁷ These murals were cleaned and conserved in 2010.

In the same location on the east wall are three murals depicting Tryon Palace. These murals were painted in 1981 by Willie Taglieri, a local artist. The southernmost mural shows colonial Governor Tryon and architect John Hawks discussing plans for Tryon's palace. Taglieri has the custom of painting himself into his major works. His face, with white hair and beard, appears in the tree trunk in the southernmost mural. The large center panel shows the reconstruction of Tryon Palace as it appears at the present time. The northernmost panel depicts the Maude Latham memorial garden at Tryon Palace. Mrs. Latham spearheaded the rebuilding of the palace in the early 1950s. These murals are painted on vertical canvas strips about 4 feet high and 10 to 12 inches wide that are applied to the wall. The rear (north) wall has plain plaster panels above the wood paneling.¹⁸

Judge's Chambers and Associated Court Areas

The Judge's chambers features mahogany wainscoting, a plaster ceiling with decorative cornice and parquet flooring. In 2010, the chambers underwent restoration; this included repairing the wainscoting, removing a suspended ceiling to expose the original ceiling, and uncovering and refinishing the original parquet floors. In addition, the judge's chambers were improved with the conversion of an adjacent former restroom to a kitchen/service room and conversion of three offices on the third floor to a library and conference room. Further alterations were made to the spaces housing the clerk of the court, jury room, and administrative and law clerk offices surrounding the judge's chambers to improve functionality and to install new interior finishes, modern lighting, and information technology.

Second and Third Floor Tenant Spaces

Tenant office areas on the second and third floors have retained their original spatial configurations and are typically finished with standard features and finishes. Floors in these areas are originally parquet with either vinyl tile or carpeting concealing the original materials. Walls are typically painted plaster over 4 inch hollow structural terra-cotta tile. Door frames are a mix of painted and stained wood, and doors are typically six panel wood. Ceilings throughout are typically drop-in 2 foot by 4 foot acoustical tile with suspended fluorescent strips or drop-in fluorescent lights that conceal the original plaster finish. Remaining original trim typically includes the baseboard, door and window casings, wood chair rail, and picture molding.¹⁹

17. Ibid., 24. These murals belong to the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA)'s Fine Arts Collection.

18. Ibid., 7. These murals, which are not original to the building and were installed while the building was owned by the United States Postal Service, do not belong to GSA's Fine Arts Collection.

19. Ibid., 13.

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

Craven County, North Carolina

Name of Property

County and State

The third floor is similar to the second floor in layout; however, the offices and secondary spaces are arranged along the east side of the central corridor and end foyers.

Attic

The attic consists of a large, open rectangular area containing mechanical equipment (air handlers and elevator controls) and a network of catwalks allowing access to the equipment, the roof and the cupola.²⁰

Alterations and Integrity

Overall, the U.S. Post Office, Court House, and Custom House is in excellent condition. The building retains a high degree of its exterior integrity due to the limited nature of exterior alterations on the prominent Middle Street elevation (facade) as well as the side elevations (north and south).

Alterations

The New Bern U.S. Post Office, Court House, and Custom House first underwent minor alterations in 1964. These alterations included: lighting, heating, and ventilation improvements; replacement of the original work counters in the post office service area; modification of the original money order and registry room counter to accommodate post office boxes; installation of a new witness box in the courtroom; replacement of the weathervane on the cupola; installation of a new elevator car; and re-pointing of the exterior brickwork. Exterior lighting upgrades were also made during the mid-1960s. In the 1980s, alterations included subdivision of the former witness and grand jury rooms on the third floor; installation of a corridor entrance to the law clerk's office (former file room) on the second floor; and, the expansion of the United States Marshals Service office on the second floor by removal of a partition wall.²¹

Additional rehabilitation of the building began in 2004, with GSA's acquisition of the property from the United States Postal Service. The first stages of this undertaking consisted of stabilization measures that included painting the exterior woodwork and the cupola, cleaning the masonry, replacing the boiler, and minor roof repairs. Additional upgrades and modernization were completed from 2007 to 2010 to accommodate the United States District Court and the United States Marshals Service. This phase of the rehabilitation included the installation of new interior finishes, modern lighting, and information technology equipment, as well as improvements to the functional arrangement of spaces on all three floors and the basement level. However, the general division of spaces within the second and third floors remains intact. Much of the work on the first floor and basement level involved workspaces formerly occupied by the postal service. Additional work resolved HVAC, accessibility, fire safety and egress issues. Much of this work took place in areas not normally accessible to the public, as well as at the rear of the building, where fire stairs, separate elevators for judge and prisoners, holding cells and judge's parking were accommodated in block additions clad in brick to match the existing

20. Ibid., 14.

21. United States General Services Administration, Design and Construction Division, Region 4, various architectural drawings dated November 1963, January 1964, October 1965, and July 1966, on file at New Bern United States Post Office, Courthouse, and Custom House, New Bern, North Carolina.

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

Craven County, North Carolina

Name of Property

County and State

building. Significant public spaces, including the former post office lobby, the stairways, and the ceremonial courtroom, retain their original appearance. Concurrent with the alterations undertaken from 2004 to 2010, these significant public spaces underwent restoration, which included refinishing of interior marble and terrazzo; restoration of lobby and courtroom lighting, restoration of the courtroom ceiling, and cleaning and conservation of the courtroom murals, as well as restoration of parquet flooring and wood wainscoting in the judge's chambers,

Integrity

The U.S. Post Office, Court House, and Custom House retains sufficient architectural integrity from its period of significance (1935; 1938) to convey its historical significance and associations. Minor alterations were made to the building in the mid-1960s. From 2004 to 2010, more substantial interior and exterior alterations were undertaken; however, the building retains its most significant original features. These include its overall plan, form, and exterior appearance, as well as the general layout of its interior spaces and the configurations and surface materials of the primary public spaces.

Despite some recent changes to secondary interior spaces, as well as the rehabilitation of the former postal work area and the construction of partition walls in the second and third floor corridors, the U.S. Post Office, Court House, and Custom House continues to retain its integrity of design, materials, and workmanship. In addition, the building retains its original location, and its immediate setting has not changed significantly since its construction. The building is situated within a historic district comprised of eighteenth- through twentieth-century domestic, institutional, and commercial buildings. Modern infill construction is limited and generally consistent with the scale of the historic buildings. The building also continues to function as the home of the United States District Court, Eastern District of North Carolina, thereby retaining its integrity of association. The building's retention of its integrity of design, materials, workmanship, location, setting, and association culminates in the building's retention of feeling as a 1935 federal building erected in the Georgian Revival architectural style.

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

Craven County, North Carolina
County and State

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

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

Craven County, North Carolina
County and State

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

POLITICS/GOVERNMENT

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1935, 1938

Significant Dates

1935, 1938

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

Unknown

Architect/Builder

Smallwood, Robert F.

Murch Brothers Construction Company

Wetmore, James A.

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

Craven County, North Carolina

Name of Property

County and State

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 in New Bern, North Carolina is locally significant as a visual symbol of the federal presence in the city of New Bern and as a local representation of public buildings constructed under the Public Works Administration (PWA). In addition, it is an excellent local example of the Georgian Revival architectural style popular for federal buildings constructed during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The building's significance falls under both National Register Criterion A (properties that are associated with events or trends that have made significant contributions to the broad patterns of our history) for Politics/Government and Criterion C (properties that embody distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master) for Architecture. The period of significance for the U.S. Post Office, Court House, and Custom House includes 1935, the date of the building's completion, and 1938, the date of the installation of the federally commissioned artwork. The U.S. Post Office, Court House, and Custom House is a contributing resource in the National Register-listed New Bern Historic District.

Politics/Government

The U.S. Post Office, Court House, and Custom House represents the second official home of the United States District Court's Eastern District of North Carolina. Although the court met in New Bern as early as 1790, the first building constructed for the purpose of housing the court and the post office was not constructed until 1897. The court and post office relocated to the current federal building upon its opening in 1935. The U.S. Treasury Department transferred ownership of the U.S. Post Office, Court House, and Custom House to the United States Postal Service (USPS) upon the creation of that agency in 1961, and the USPS ceased operations in the building in 1992. The U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) acquired the building from the USPS in 2004, ensuring its continued use as the home of the court of the Eastern District of North Carolina. The court has functioned within the building for seventy-two years. The U.S. Post Office, Court House, and Custom House has represented the federal presence in New Bern for that entire period, and continues to be a source of pride within the community.

Federal Building Campaign

The U.S. Post Office, Court House, and Custom House is an excellent example of a PWA-authorized federal building, and the only known building associated with the PWA in New Bern. The building is consistent with the PWA tendency toward Classically-inspired designs. Its quality materials and traditional design represent the physical quality and longevity sought by the PWA. The U.S. Post Office, Court House, and Custom House was also among the first public building contracts let by the Procurement Division under the National Industrial Recovery Act of 1933.

The U.S. Post Office, Court House, and Custom House prominently displays federally funded murals characteristic of federal buildings constructed during the duration of the Section of Fine Arts (1934-1943). David J. Silvette painted the series of panels representing liberty, justice, and

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

Craven County, North Carolina
County and State

freedom in 1938 as part of the art program managed by the U.S. Treasury Department. The murals were installed on the south wall of the courtroom in 1938. The murals were commissioned by the federal government specifically for the U.S. Post Office, Court House, and Custom House, in which they were placed.

Georgian Revival Architecture

The U.S. Post Office, Court House, and Custom House is an excellent example of the Georgian Revival architectural style, embodying the characteristic architectural and decorative features of that style, and represents the best embodiment of the style within the City of New Bern. The building achieves a strong sense of order through its classically inspired form, proportions, and symmetry. The building's massive size and elaborate architectural detailing mark it as a place of significance within the community, and appropriately convey the authority of the federal court that it houses. The building also represents the ideals of history and tradition embraced by the federal government in architectural design during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as well as the government's concern with economical design during the 1930s.

The Colonial and Georgian Revival architectural styles were among the most popular styles found in federal building design from the late 1890s to the early 1940s. James Knox Taylor (supervising architect of the U.S. Treasury Department from 1897 to 1912) was a proponent of the use of these and other styles that reflected Classical influences in federal architecture, and they remained popular in federal architectural design through the early twentieth century due in part to the ideals of history and tradition that they conveyed and the ease that their symmetry lent to standardized design practices.

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

Historical Narrative

History of New Bern, Craven County, North Carolina

New Bern, North Carolina, is the state's second oldest city. Baron Christopher DeGraffenried, a Swiss nobleman, settled the city in 1710 and named the settlement after his place of origin, Berne, Switzerland. Settlers began trading products through the post at New Bern in 1713. The city was the seat of the Craven precinct, which later became Craven County, by 1722. The state's lord proprietors sold their land back to England in 1729 and the town became part of a governor-ruled royal colony.²²

New Bern was a leading port and mercantile center in North Carolina, as well as the state's largest town, from the 1760s until the 1820s. The first permanent capital of the colony and the state was established here in 1766 by Royal Governor William Tryon and the town served this distinguished role through 1778. New Bern's shipping and trade activity continued to spur

22. Elaine Durnin Boughner, "Will Rogers Spoofs Swiss-Found City," *Linn's Stamp News*, 7 December 1981, on file at New Bern-Craven County Public Library, vertical files, New Bern, North Carolina.

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

Craven County, North Carolina

Name of Property

County and State

tremendous growth and development through the early 1820s, as local commodities including lumber, naval stores, tobacco, hides and skins, corn, myrtle and bees wax, tallow, pork, indigo, rice, and other agricultural products from the Neuse and Trent river basins were traded for manufactured goods, hard currency, and the produce of the West Indies. A number of manufacturing enterprises associated with the processing of lumber and naval stores were also established during the early nineteenth century. The town's population grew from about 500 in 1765 to 2,467 in 1800 to 3,663 in 1820. It was during this period that Craven County's first two brick courthouses were constructed in New Bern, the first between 1750 and 1764 (demolished circa 1800), and the second in 1806. Governor William Tryon's monumental residence and capital building was also constructed during this period, completed in 1770.²³

Craven County and a large part of eastern North Carolina experienced a significant economic decline in the late 1820s and the 1830s. A general economic depression was made worse by a damaging out-migration of individuals seeking better conditions in states to the south and west. In New Bern, the problems were compounded by a lull in commercial growth that resulted from shallow waters in the Ocracoke Inlet, the only convenient shipping entrance to the Neuse River and New Bern's harbor at the time. Population growth slowed in New Bern during this period, placing it behind Wilmington and Fayetteville, North Carolina, in terms of size.²⁴

An end to the economic depression came in the 1840s with a resurgence and growth of local naval stores and turpentine industries. The town's population grew rapidly from 3,690 in 1840 to 4,681 in 1850. Completion of the Atlantic and North Carolina Railroad in 1858 further bolstered growth. In 1859, the original northern and western boundaries of the town, formed by Queen and End streets, were extended to include the area north of Broad and Queen streets. A community of free blacks quickly settled a portion of this area, and the remainder was occupied predominantly by industrial operations.²⁵

Union forces occupied the town from 1862 to 1865, following the Battle of New Bern; however, the peaceful occupation preserved the town's architectural character, which was defined at that time by Georgian, Federal, Adam, Greek Revival, Italianate, and Gothic Revival style buildings. Little development occurred within the city as it recovered from the war during the late 1860s and early 1870s.²⁶

The greatest period in the town's growth occurred between the 1870s and the 1920s, as a result of tremendous expansion in the area's lumber industry, as well as increased agricultural operations, brought on by the introduction of truck farming, and increased manufacturing operations. The population of New Bern climbed from 5,849 in 1870 to 12,198 in 1920. As a result of this growth, and a disastrous fire in 1922, hundreds of new buildings were constructed within New Bern during this period, including most of the downtown commercial buildings and a number of public and institutional buildings that remain extant today. Architect Herbert

23. Peter B. Sandbeck, *The Historic Architecture of New Bern and Craven County, North Carolina* (New Bern, North Carolina: The Tryon Palace Commission, 1988), xiv, 7, 21-22, 35.

24. *Ibid.*, xiv-xv, 40.

25. *Ibid.*, xv, 123, 130.

26. *Ibid.*, xv, 123.

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

Craven County, North Carolina

Name of Property

County and State

Woodley Simpson, a native of New Bern, designed many of the city's important residences and religious and commercial buildings between the 1890s and the early 1920s, when he relocated to Virginia. Examples of public buildings constructed during the late nineteenth century include the Craven County Courthouse (1883) and New Bern's first U.S. Post Office, Courthouse, and Custom House (1897). The city's first suburbs, Riverside, Ghent, and DeGraffenried Park, also developed during this period. An extensive program of civic improvements that was completed by 1910 aided in the town's development, and a number of infrastructure improvements including rail, electricity, and institutional developments were made during the early twentieth century.²⁷

The lumber industry slowed by the mid-1920s, and by 1940 only a handful of sawmills remained in operation in and around New Bern. The town's population declined slightly as a result of this and general economic conditions within the country during the late 1920s and early 1930s; however, a number of new buildings were constructed during this period. By far, the grandest of these was the U.S. Post Office, Court House, and Custom House at the intersection of Middle and New streets, constructed between 1933 and 1934 as a PWA project. Robert F. Smallwood, another native architect, designed this and several other Colonial and Georgian Revival style buildings within the town between the 1910s and the 1930s.²⁸

The city's population recovered during World War II as a result of the construction of the Marine Corps Air Station at Cherry Point and the subsequent influx of military personnel to the area. After 1950, however, the majority of development in and around New Bern occurred in new suburbs.²⁹

Modernization and transportation developments that occurred during the 1930s through the early 1970s, including the widening of Broad Street and the construction of new gas stations and auto dealerships, threatened the historic character of the town. A group of concerned citizens organized against this trend in the early 1970s, resulting in the listing of a large portion of the town in the National Register of Historic Places as a historic district, the formation of the New Bern Preservation Foundation, and the establishment of the New Bern Historic District Commission. Residential restoration projects began in the late 1970s, and preservation activity has continued within the town. Tourism is currently a significant component of the local economy.³⁰

History of the United States Postal Service in the United States and in New Bern

Postal Service in the United States

The postal service in the United States began as a means to provide communication to the colonies during the Revolutionary War. The Second Continental Congress developed the post office under its first Postmaster General, Benjamin Franklin, on July 26, 1775. The post office was the only agency to remain intact through the Revolutionary War, the Confederation period,

27. *Ibid.*, xv, 123, 149, 151-152.

28. *Ibid.*, 150-152.

29. *Ibid.*, 149.

30. *Ibid.*, xvi.

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

Craven County, North Carolina

Name of Property

County and State

and after the Constitution was adopted. Subsequently, the newly established federal government viewed the post office as the means for conveying knowledge of its laws and proceedings to all parts of the country.³¹

The number of post offices in the United States expanded from 75 in 1789 to 16,749 in 1849.³² The postal system served as the country's principal means of long distance communication throughout the nineteenth century. Postal service provided both a physical and intellectual link between great distances as the nation expanded across the continent.³³ By 1820, the number of post offices and miles of post roads approximately quadrupled from that of 1800.³⁴ Local taverns, grocery stores, coffeehouses, or inns, all focal points of community life, housed the first post offices.³⁵

The U.S. Congress established or improved postal services and facilities throughout the nation during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Efforts to increase the speed and efficiency of mail delivery encouraged the growth of roads, railroads, shipping lines, and eventually airlines. The postal presence, through its sheer number, distribution, and types of services, provided tangible reminders to otherwise isolated communities of the role and ideals of the central government. Consequently, the buildings constructed for use as post offices have reflected various government and architectural philosophies throughout the nation.³⁶

The postal service built structures for receiving, processing, and distributing mail to provide postal service for the expanding population during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. For smaller communities, a special counter in a local store served as the post office. In larger villages or towns, a separate post office building was constructed with a public service counter, workroom for mail processing, and a loading dock. Urban post offices handling large volumes of mail required larger buildings with extensive workrooms, offices, employee facilities, loading platforms, and windows or counters to serve the public. Urban post offices often shared space in federal buildings with courts and branch offices of federal agencies. The supervising architect of the U.S. Treasury oversaw the design and development of these early post offices.³⁷

Criteria used to determine the placement of post offices reflected the uses of the facilities and the manner in which they were designed to function. Post offices that included other federal offices or courts were often located near other government buildings in the community. Single-function post offices built prior to the 1930s were often located on or near "Main Street" near the railroad station to facilitate movement of mail to and from trains. Facilities constructed during the 1930s and later became more truck and auto-oriented and were located near the downtown, but perhaps

31. Rita L. Maroney, *History of the U.S. Postal Service: 1775-1982* (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1982), 3.

32. Ellis L. Armstrong, *History of Public Works of the United States, 1776-1945* (Chicago, Illinois: American Public Works Association, 1976), 327.

33. Beth Boland, *National Register Bulletin, How to Apply National Register Criteria to Post Offices* (Washington, D.C.: United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1984), Section II, 1.

34. Ibid.

35. Maroney, *History of the U.S. Postal Service*, 1.

36. Boland, *National Register Bulletin*, Section II, 2.

37. Maroney, *History of the U.S. Postal Service*, 5.

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

Craven County, North Carolina

Name of Property

County and State

a block or two from "Main Street." This made the post office easy to find, but also allowed better access for truck activity.

The modern-day USPS was officially established as an independent federal agency on July 1, 1971, when Congress implemented the Postal Reorganization Act.³⁸

Postal Service in New Bern

Postal service in New Bern may have started as early as 1713; however, the first official colonial postal service in North Carolina was authorized on October 14, 1755. James Davis, a state printer and newspaper publisher in New Bern, was authorized the following day to convey public letters every fortnight along a route that extended between Suffolk, Virginia, and Brunswick, North Carolina. Davis was to establish postal headquarters along the route in Suffolk, Chowan River, Edenton, New Bern, and Brunswick. A similar arrangement was made with Davis in 1758 for postal service along a route that extended between Suffolk, Virginia, and Wilmington, North Carolina. Benjamin Franklin named James Davis postmaster for New Bern after the Continental Congress established a postal system in 1775 and named Benjamin Franklin the first postmaster general.³⁹

The first U.S. post office established under the Republic in the state of North Carolina was opened in New Bern in 1790, with Francis Xavier Martin serving as the first postmaster. Martin began delivering mail to individual addresses by March 23, 1793, prior to the Federal Act of May 8, 1794, that authorized the appointment of letter carriers.⁴⁰ The first building constructed in New Bern specifically to house the post office was built at the corner of the intersection of Craven and Pollock streets, near the historic center of town. The building's construction date is unknown; however, it is depicted on C.A. Nelson's *Plan of New Bern in 1864*.⁴¹ The building was described in 1974 as:

...a wooden, 'one jump and a half,' building on the corner of Pollock and Craven streets. Wooden letter boxes were on the outside of the exterior wall on Craven Street, so that box owners could get their mail by unlocking their boxes from the street, without entering the building. This landmark was moved to the northwest corner of Middle and Broad streets, and a drug store was opened in it. The century-old structure was razed some years ago to make way for a more modern building.⁴²

Congressman Furnifold M. Simmons of New Bern secured appropriations for the city's first federal building, which was to contain a post office, courthouse, and custom house, in 1886. This new building was completed on April 1, 1897, and served as the home of the city's post

38. Bonnie Hobbs, "Birthday Festivities Slated," *The Sun Journal* (New Bern, North Carolina), 1 July 1991, on file at New Bern-Craven County Public Library, vertical files, New Bern, North Carolina.

39. "State Mail Service Started in NB," *The Sun Journal* (New Bern, North Carolina), 16 August 1974, on file at New Bern-Craven County Public Library, vertical files, New Bern, North Carolina.

40. Ibid.; Jerry Miller, *North Carolina Bicentennial Calendar, 1776-1976*, New Bern-Craven County Public Library, vertical files, New Bern, North Carolina; Boughner, "Will Rogers Spoofs Swiss-Found City."

41. Sandbeck, *The Historic Architecture of New Bern and Craven County, North Carolina*, 101.

42. "State Mail Service Started in NB," *The Sun Journal*.

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

Craven County, North Carolina

Name of Property

County and State

office until 1935. The 1897 building was constructed across the street from the site of the old 1864 post office. In 1936, the city purchased the 1897 building for use as its city hall, following the construction of a new federal building in 1935.⁴³

The federal government outgrew the 1897 post office, courthouse, and custom house building by the late 1920s. Congressman Charles L. Abernethy secured appropriations for a new, larger federal building in New Bern, and the new facility was constructed between 1933 and 1934 at the intersection of Middle and New streets. New Bern's main post office functioned in this building from 1935 to 1992, when it relocated once again to a larger facility.

The West New Bern Postal Service branch, a smaller downtown post office, was constructed in New Bern to supplement the services of the main post office. The main post office in the federal building on Middle Street had outgrown its space in the 1934 federal building by the late 1980s, prompting the construction of a new main post office facility of approximately 31,000 square feet on South Glenburnie Road in 1991.⁴⁴ The federal building on Middle Street retained some mail services until 1992.⁴⁵

The national trends in nineteenth- and early twentieth-century post office location strategies are reflected in New Bern. The first and second post office buildings in the city were located at the commercial center. The federal building constructed in the 1930s was located a few blocks outside of the commercial center in an area more accessible to truck traffic, but still accessible to pedestrians. The Glenburnie Road facility brought the U.S. post office close to the U.S. Route 70 Bypass, where truck access is optimal. This newest facility also provided ample off-street parking for customers, which was not as necessary in 1935.

History of the United States District Court and the District of North Carolina

The Federal Judiciary

The federal building in New Bern housed federal courts in addition to the postal facilities. The federal judiciary was organized in 1789 with the formation of thirteen judicial districts that served as the basic organizational unit of the federal courts. These thirteen districts coincided with the thirteen original states of the Union. The federal court system is made up of the district, appeals, and supreme courts. The United States district court initially served primarily as the federal trial court for admiralty and maritime cases, although they also tried civil and criminal cases from time to time. A district judge was appointed for each district and given the power to appoint a clerk to assist in the administration of the district and circuit courts.

43. "City Hall was Post Office," New Bern-Craven County Public Library, vertical files, New Bern, North Carolina; "Local City Hall was Post Office When First Built," *The Sun Journal* (New Bern, North Carolina), 4 June 1960, on file at New Bern-Craven County Public Library, vertical files, New Bern, North Carolina.

44. April Walton, "New Bern Post Office Headed to Glenburnie," *r*, 10 August 1989, on file at New Bern-Craven County Public Library, vertical files, New Bern, North Carolina; "New Bern Post Office Already Busy," *The Sun Journal* (New Bern, North Carolina), on file at New Bern-Craven County Public Library, vertical files, New Bern, North Carolina.

45. Mike Soraghan, "Change of Address," *The Sun Journal* (New Bern, North Carolina), 12 March 1992, on file at New Bern-Craven County Public Library, vertical files, New Bern, North Carolina. The remaining downtown operations moved to the O. Marks Building at 233 Middle Street in 1992.

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

Craven County, North Carolina
County and State

The president was also authorized at that time to appoint a marshal and federal prosecutor (district attorney) for each district. While the court's jurisdiction was limited to cases arising within their district, the judges also served on the United States circuit court that met in each judicial district. In the nineteenth century, during the early days of the court system, district judges were likely to devote more of their time to their circuit court duties than to the district courts; however, over the nineteenth century, the jurisdiction of the district courts expanded, especially in the area of non-capital criminal cases.⁴⁶

In 1911, the United States circuit courts were abolished by the U.S. Congress, making the United States district courts the sole trial courts of the federal judiciary. New district courts were created as new states entered the Union. Also, as areas became more populated, and districts became busier, individual states were divided into multiple districts.⁴⁷

Today there are 91 United States district courts in the states, District of Columbia and Puerto Rico, with a total of 663 district judgeships.⁴⁸ The United States district courts are responsible for civil and criminal cases regarding a complaint based on federal law, in which the United States is either a plaintiff or a defendant, the jurisdiction is maritime, or the plaintiff and the defendant live in different states or countries and the amount in controversy is more than \$75,000.⁴⁹ The federal judiciary has recently become one of the most rapidly expanding institutions within the United States government. Their role is becoming increasingly complex and visible, and caseloads have multiplied in the last forty years. This is largely because of changes in American culture and the laws of the country, which have broadened the role of the courts and placed increased demands on the system.⁵⁰

The District of North Carolina

The United States District Court for the Eastern District of North Carolina was established in 1872, when North Carolina was divided into two judicial districts, the Eastern and Western. One judgeship was authorized for each district, and the sitting judge was assigned to the Eastern District. Between 1801 and 1871, the state was divided into the Albemarle, Cape Fear, and Pamlico judicial districts, with one judgeship authorized to serve all three districts. Prior to 1801, the state consisted of one judicial district, except for the period between 1794 and 1797, when it was organized into the Edenton, New Bern, and Wilmington Districts, with one judgeship serving all three districts. The Middle District of North Carolina and an additional judgeship were authorized in 1927. Additional judgeships were added to each the districts starting in 1961, and by 2002 the total number of authorized judgeships in North Carolina had reached thirteen (four in the Eastern District, five in the western District, and four in the Middle District).⁵¹

46. Federal Judicial Center website, accessed on February 15, 2007 <http://www.fjc.gov/history/home.nsf>.

47. Ibid.

48. Ibid.

49. Ibid.

50. Ibid.

51. Ibid.

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

Craven County, North Carolina

Name of Property

County and State

The United States District Court in New Bern

New Bern has served as the seat of a United States district court since an Act of Congress on June 4, 1790, established the District of North Carolina. The Honorable John Stokes, the District's first sitting district judge, was appointed on August 3 of the same year. New Bern has continued to house a United States district court since that time, and cases have been heard continuously, with the exception of the Civil War period during which the city was under military control (1862-1865).⁵²

The United States District Court met only four times per year at the Craven County Courthouse at the intersection of Broad and Middle streets from 1790 until 1861. Two county courthouses stood consecutively at this location, one constructed between 1750 and 1764 and demolished circa 1800, and the other constructed between 1800 and 1806 and destroyed by fire in 1861. After the 1861 fire, court did not resume until 1865 in rented space within the McLean Building. The court relocated to Stanly Hall at the intersection of Pollock and Craven streets in 1874. The newly constructed U.S. Post Office, Courthouse, and Custom House, located across the street from Stanly Hall, became the first official home of the court upon its completion in 1897.⁵³ This first federal building in New Bern featured elements of the Romanesque Revival style, as well as late Victorian-era features. The exterior of the building was executed in yellow and red pressed brick and brownstone with granite trim. The interior featured lavish oak trim and a grand four story oak staircase. A prominent tower and lighted, four-faced clock were added to the building in 1910. Purchased by the city of New Bern for use as its city hall in 1935, after the federal government moved its offices to the current federal building at the intersection of Middle and New streets, the former federal building remains the New Bern City Hall.⁵⁴

The Office of the Supervising Architect of the U.S. Treasury

The Office of the Supervising Architect of the U.S. Treasury was responsible for the construction of federal buildings throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. From 1895 to 1933, the office reported to the U.S. Treasury Department. In the 1920s, the Office of the Supervising Architect was divided into the Technical Branch and the Administrative Branch. The Technical Branch included a division responsible for project costs and accounting; a drafting division, including a superintendent who greatly influenced design practices; a structural division; a mechanical engineering division; and a repairs division. With the reorganization in the early 1930s, the office no longer reported to the Secretary of the U.S. Treasury. In 1933, it became part of the Public Building Branch of the Procurement Division of the U.S. Treasury Department. In 1939, the office became part of the Federal Works Agency, Public Buildings Administration. Subsequently, beginning in 1949, it came under the U.S. General Services Administration, Public Buildings Service.⁵⁵

James A. Wetmore 1912-1913 and 1915-1934

52. Stephens, AIA, "Renewal of a New Bern Landmark," 15-16.

53. Ibid., 16; Sandbeck, *The Historic Architecture of New Bern and Craven County, North Carolina*, 21, 43, 134-135.

54. Sandbeck, *The Historic Architecture of New Bern and Craven County, North Carolina*, 134-135.

55. Lois A. Craig, et al., *The Federal Presence* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1978), 238.

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

Craven County, North Carolina

Name of Property

County and State

James A. Wetmore served as acting supervising architect of the U.S. Treasury from 1912 to 1913 and again from 1915 to 1934, the period during which the U.S. Post Office, Court House, and Custom House was designed and constructed. In his first appointment, Wetmore succeeded James Knox Taylor, who served as the supervising architect for the U.S. Treasury from 1897 to 1912. Taylor, who was inspired by the Columbian Exposition and the City Beautiful movement, directed a return to classicism by the federal government during his tenure. This federal preference continued well into the 1920s and 1930s. Wetmore temporarily served as acting supervising architect immediately following Taylor's departure, until Oscar Wenderoth, supervising architect from 1913 to 1915, could conclude his private work in New York City and relocate to Washington, D.C. Wetmore then resumed his role in 1915 following Wenderoth's resignation.⁵⁶

James A. Wetmore was educated as a lawyer and served as head of the U.S. Treasury's Law and Records Division under both James Knox Taylor and Oscar Wenderoth. Wetmore's administrative background greatly affected his approach to the role of acting supervising architect. Wetmore was predominantly concerned with directing architectural policy within the U.S. Treasury due to his extensive experience in administration and his lack of architectural training. Wetmore reportedly left the architectural design tasks of the position to his staff, but had "an uncanny facility for knowing the intent and purpose of the architectural and engineering actions of his organization." Although Wetmore retained the word "acting" in his title for his entire tenure out of respect for the practicing architects in the office, he served in the supervising architect's role for longer than any of his predecessors.⁵⁷

World War I and the Public Buildings Act of 1926

World War I brought the work of the Office of the Supervising Architect to a halt due to the strain of financial, industrial, and transportation resources that it placed on the country. The only buildings constructed during this period were those required for wartime use and those already under construction. New building construction commenced by 1922; however, the postponement of many projects authorized by the Public Buildings Act of 1913 and a back-log of new building requests necessitated the development of a major public building program. This resulted in the passage of a new Public Buildings Act on May 25, 1926.⁵⁸

The Public Buildings Act of 1926 contained three principal provisions. First, the Secretary of the U.S. Treasury and the Postmaster General were directed to conduct a nationwide survey of the need for postal facilities with the intent that new facilities would be based upon need rather than political influence. Second, the supervising architect was now allowed to consult private architects in "special cases." The staff of the supervising architect had previously handled all projects, since James Knox Taylor decided in 1904 to effectively bar private architects from

56. Louis Melius, *The American Postal Service: History of the Postal Service from the Earliest Times* (Washington, D.C: Louis Melius, 1917), 32-33; Antoinette Lee, *Architects to the Nation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 215-222.

57. Lee, *Architects to the Nation*, 222-223, 237.

58. *Ibid.*, 231-232, 239.

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

Craven County, North Carolina

Name of Property

County and State

federal construction projects. Finally, the act provided for the continuation of building design standardization.⁵⁹

The building needs survey resulted in the following:

- Doubling the \$100 million allocation in the Act of 1926.
- The construction of at least two new buildings per state.
- No buildings constructed where postal receipts were less than \$10,000.⁶⁰

President Hoover worked with the U.S. Congress to increase allocations for the building program in both 1930 and 1931 as the Great Depression took hold; however, the President Franklin Roosevelt's Administration substantially expanded the program.⁶¹

The Great Depression and the Reorganization of the U.S. Treasury Department

The building industry began to suffer from the stock market crash of 1929 and the onset of the Great Depression by the early 1930s. The Public Buildings Act of 1926 was seen as a way to promote employment within the building trades. An amendment to the 1926 Act, known as the Keyes-Elliott Bill, was made in 1930 to provide "increased authority to the Secretary of the U.S. Treasury to enter into contracts with private architects for full professional services." The Office of the Supervising Architect, still under James Wetmore's direction, only considered hiring private architects for large projects due to concerns related to efficiency. The American Institute of Architects (AIA) objected to the U.S. Treasury Department's implementation of the amendment to the 1926 act and petitioned for the reorganization of the Office of the Supervising Architect. The AIA hoped that the office would serve only a supervisory function, allowing wider employment of private architects and resulting in greater diversity, vitality, and regional appropriateness in federal architecture. The President's Emergency Committee for Employment and members of the U.S. Congress echoed the AIA's concerns, particularly regarding the need to employ local private architects. H.R. 6197, known as the "Green Bill," was introduced in Congress in 1932 in an attempt to place all federal building design in the hands of private architects; however, the legislation did not pass. The AIA continued its campaign following the election of Franklin Delano Roosevelt and the appointment of new officials to the U.S. Treasury Department, including U.S. Treasury Secretary William H. Woodin.⁶²

President Roosevelt's Executive Order 6166, which reorganized the federal building program and promised unemployment relief, was announced in June 1933. The order resulted in the creation of the Procurement Division within the U.S. Treasury Department, the transfer of the Office of the Supervising Architect to the Procurement Division, and the change in name of the Office of the Supervising Architect to the Public Works Branch. W.E. Reynolds, assistant director of the Procurement Division, was put in charge of five units headed by the supervising

59. Melius, *The American Postal Service: History of the Postal Service from the Earliest Times*, 40-41.

60. Ibid.

61. Boland, *National Register Bulletin*, Section II, 3.

62. Lee, *Architects to the Nation*, 248-252.

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

Craven County, North Carolina

Name of Property

County and State

engineer, the supervising architect, the office manager, the chairman of the board of award, and the chief of the legal section.⁶³

New relief funding programs were initiated to allocate and supplement funding for public works simultaneously with the U.S. Treasury Department reorganization. Harold L. Ickes, the federal emergency administrator of public works, allocated funds to the U.S. Treasury Department for the construction of federal buildings under the provisions of the National Industrial Recovery Act of 1933, including two allotments in August 1933 in the amounts of \$6,971,648 and \$13,799,550, as well as additional funds for emergency construction projects throughout the country.⁶⁴ The U.S. Post Office, Court House, and Custom House was among the first public building contracts awarded by the Procurement Division under the National Industrial Recovery Act.⁶⁵

PWA 1933-1939

Although public works spending as a means to aiding recovery from the Depression began under the Hoover Administration, President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal is credited with using the federal building program to that end. These efforts were formalized in 1933, when the PWA was organized to give structure to the recovery effort.

The purpose of the PWA was to oversee the planning and construction of federal and non-federal public works projects. The PWA started by focusing on federal projects such as post offices. To stimulate the economic recovery, the federal government rapidly expanded its public works program. This provided work for the unemployed, many of whom were in the building trades. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics maintained statistics on employment, wages, cost of materials, and other PWA project data. During the 1930s, the number of public buildings constructed increased dramatically.

Because of the planning already completed under the 1926 legislation, these projects were able to start up quickly. Post office construction increased nearly three times during this period compared to the previous fifty years; the PWA built 406 post offices in the years from 1933 to 1939. This number represents more than one-eighth of the total 3,174 PWA construction projects built. The U.S. Congress authorized a number of New Deal programs that were used to fund the construction of post offices. In addition, funds for post office construction came from the relief program authorized by the Emergency Relief and Construction Act of July 21, 1932; the Emergency Construction Program under the Appropriation Act of June 1934; and the Building Program for the District of Columbia, authorized by the Act of 1926. The U.S. Treasury Department retained responsibility for post office construction funding until 1939, utilizing a number of different programs and authorizations to fund the projects.⁶⁶

63. Ibid., 253.

64. Ibid., 254.

65. "New Federal Structure is Dedicated at New Bern," *The News and Observer* (Raleigh, North Carolina), 16 December 1934, on file at New Bern-Craven County Public Library, vertical files, New Bern, North Carolina.

66. Ellis L. Armstrong, *History of Public Works of the United States*, 327.

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

Craven County, North Carolina

Name of Property

County and State

These post offices were among the most familiar government buildings to the general public. Despite the desire to complete projects rapidly, the PWA also stressed the importance of high quality in order to ensure “public works of an enduring character and lasting benefits.”⁶⁷ The program’s goals were to construct buildings as quickly as possible and to employ as many people as possible at efficient costs. Standardized design, which was first promoted by the Office of the Supervising Architect in 1915, was well-suited to this high-speed, efficient process. Standardized design reduced the number of drawings that would have to be produced, accelerating the project schedule. Avoiding construction glitches caused by design changes or incorrect plans also helped to increase efficiency. Simplified ornamentation meant less drawing time. While facade variations were allowed, standardized interior plans were well established and utilized. A publication entitled “Instructions to Private Architects Engaged on Public Building Work under the Jurisdiction of the U.S. Treasury Department” listed these standards. The most commonly used styles were the Colonial Revival, Neoclassical, and Simplified Classical. The Simplified Classical, also known as the Stripped Classical, was a simplified classical style mixing modern and classical elements. All of these styles can be characterized by symmetrical massing and plain surfaces.⁶⁸

From PWA to GSA 1939-1954

Post office construction under PWA programs continued until 1942, when the American entry into World War II virtually halted all building activity. The few facilities finished in the years 1942-1943 were completions of old projects. The styles of architecture remained the same, as did the supervising architect’s commitment to standardized design.

After World War II, federal architectural activities were well diffused throughout military and civilian agencies. In 1949, the GSA subsumed the Federal Works Agency, including its public building design function. With the Public Buildings Act of 1949, the federal government increasingly relied on private architectural firms to carry out public building designs. GSA continued to provide standard designs and guidelines for post office buildings; however, the nature of the buildings adhered to the new philosophy of modern architecture that “form follows function.” Consequently, the federal government sought utilitarian post office designs with no extraneous frills, such as exterior entrance steps; new post offices utilized clean lines and standardized designs for lobby windows, counters, postal lock-boxes, and letter drops.⁶⁹

In 1954, all exclusively post office buildings were removed from GSA’s responsibilities and transferred to the United States Post Office Department. GSA retained responsibility for non-military federal buildings, including those that combined post offices with other federal functions.⁷⁰

67. Boland, *National Register Bulletin*, Section II, 3.

68. *Ibid.*, Section II, 4.

69. *Ibid.*, Section II.

70. *Ibid.*

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

Craven County, North Carolina

Name of Property

County and State

The New Deal Arts Program

Many federal buildings constructed during the New Deal era contain public art, often in the form of murals. From 1934 to 1943, the Franklin D. Roosevelt Administration supported public art with a series of programs designed both to support unemployed artists and artisans, and to improve the character of public buildings within which the works were placed. These programs employed over 10,000 artists, producing a total of 100,000 paintings, 18,000 sculptures, 13,000 prints, and over 4,000 murals.⁷¹

The goal of the New Deal Arts Program was to bring art to the American people by placing the artwork in accessible locations. The New Deal sought to change the relationship between the artist and society by democratizing art and culture. In other words, the projects combined an elitist belief in the value of high culture with the democratic ideal that everyone in society could and should be a beneficiary of such efforts. Art project officials wrote that the mass of people were “underprivileged in art,” and they endeavored to make art accessible to all citizens, no matter of class, race, age, or gender.⁷² In addition to the democratic ideals of federal patronage, New Deal officials expected that the art projects would help create a national culture.

George Biddle, an artist and former classmate of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, spearheaded the early movement to obtain funding for the program. A public mural experiment in Mexico inspired Biddle to attempt the same thing in the United States. Joining forces with Edward Bruce, a U.S. Treasury Department Official, Biddle obtained funding for a public arts program from U.S. Public Works Administrator Harold Ickes. Subsequently, Edward Bruce emerged as the chief promoter of public funding for artists and named the Public Works of Art Project (PWAP).

After a shaky start and disagreements on the quality and style of the artists, Bruce insisted that the publicly funded art interpret the “American scene.” By the spring of 1934, the PWAP employed 3,749 artists who produced 15,663 pieces of art, of which approximately 400 were murals.⁷³

In September of 1934, Secretary of the U.S. Treasury Henry Morgenthau, Jr., and Edward Bruce agreed to spend a portion of new federal buildings’ construction costs on decoration administered by the art unit, not by the architect. Approximately one percent of the building cost was to be reserved for murals, sculpture, or both. In reality, not all buildings contained artwork. If actual costs for construction exceeded the estimate, the building did not receive art. Consequently, some architects were reluctant to create spaces for murals or sculpture that might not be included.⁷⁴

71. Marlene Park and Gerald E. Markowitz, *Democratic Vistas: Post Offices and Public Art in the New Deal* (Philadelphia, Pennsylvania: Temple University Press, 1984), 5.

72. Ibid.

73. Richard D. McKinzie, *The New Deal for Artists* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1973), 23.

74. Ibid., 38.

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

Craven County, North Carolina

Name of Property

County and State

As a result of the interest in public art, a new Section of Painting and Sculpture became part of the Office of Supervising Architect in the U.S. Treasury Department. In 1938, the Section of Painting and Sculpture became the Section of Fine Arts. One year later, the entire building department with the art unit transferred from the U.S. Treasury Department to the new Federal Works Agency, Public Buildings Administration.

According to Edward Bruce, the Chief of the Section of Fine Arts in 1940, the aim of the Section of Fine Arts was to “secure the murals and sculpture of distinguished quality appropriate to the embellishment of federal buildings.”⁷⁵ Art for public buildings was determined through competitions, often judged at the local level. The largest competition, dubbed the 1939 Forty-Eight State Mural Competition, commissioned forty-eight mural panels to be executed for designated post offices, one in each state. Almost 1,000 artists submitted 1,477 designs. Overall, the Section of Fine Arts held 190 competitions and awarded 1,371 commissions. Most of the commissions that did not result from competitions went to artists who had submitted designs in previous competitions.⁷⁶

Georgian Revival Architectural Style

The Colonial and Georgian Revival architectural styles were among the most popular styles found in federal building design from the late 1890s to the early 1940s.⁷⁷ James Knox Taylor (supervising architect from 1897 to 1912) was a proponent of the use of these and other styles that reflected classical influences in federal architecture, and they remained popular in federal architectural design through the early twentieth century due in part to the ideals of history and tradition that they conveyed and the ease that their symmetry lent to standardized design practices.

Georgian Revival style architecture is primarily influenced by Georgian style colonial building elements, and is therefore sometimes referred to as Neo-Colonial.⁷⁸ The style is also sometimes grouped with the Colonial Revival style, though that general category includes influences of the Georgian, Federal, and Queen Anne styles. The characteristics of the Georgian Revival style include a rectangular plan with a minimum of minor projections; a symmetrical facade; a hipped, double-pitched, or gambrel roof form; eaves detailed as classical cornices; symmetrical chimney placement; doorways with fanlights, and often set in tabernacle frames; and rectangular, double-hung sash windows, often with a Palladian window as a focal point. Examples with hipped roofs are often topped by flat decks with surrounding railings or balustrades. Central cupolas are also common roof elements. Facades are designed in two primary types: with the central portion of the facade projecting slightly and sometimes crowned with a pediment, with or without supporting pilasters; and with a portico with freestanding columns in the central portion of the facade.⁷⁹

75. Exhibition of Mural Designs for Federal Buildings (Ottawa: The National Gallery of Canada, 1940), 4.

76. Park and Markowitz, *Democratic Vistas*, 5.

77. Boland, *National Register Bulletin*, Section III, 3-5.

78. Marcus Whiffen, *American Architecture Since 1780: A Guide to the Styles* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1993), 159.

79. *Ibid.*, 159-160.

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

Craven County, North Carolina
County and State

Architects began designing in the Georgian Revival style as early as the 1850s; however, the renowned architecture firm of McKim, Mead and White is credited with popularizing the style beginning in the 1880s. Additional notable architects who designed in the Georgian Revival style included Charles A. Platt, William A. Delano, and Chester H. Aldrich.⁸⁰ Examples of the Georgian Revival and Colonial Revival styles in New Bern, North Carolina, are predominantly residential, with the primary exception of the U.S. Post Office, Court House, and Custom House. While several institutional and commercial examples of Colonial Revival style and numerous residential examples of that style exist in New Bern, the U.S. Post Office, Court House and Custom House appears to be the best specifically Georgian Revival example within the town.

There has been no study of the distribution of major post office architectural styles in the United States. Nor was it clear if there was a deliberate policy on the part of supervising architect to choose designs to match regional tastes of types of construction; however, the selection of architect Robert F. Smallwood, a New Bern native, for the design of the U.S. Post Office, Court House, and Custom House may have been partially based on his knowledge of and respect for the existing local building styles. A local newspaper reported on December 16, 1934, that “choice of the local man met with widespread approval, as it was known that he would do all in his power to keep the colonial design in keeping with the city’s colonial architecture.”⁸¹

U.S. Post Office, Court House, and Custom House 1935 to Present

By the late 1920s, the existing 1897 federal building at Pollock and Craven streets in New Bern, North Carolina, was inadequate to meet the daily needs of the post office, the federal court, and the customs house.⁸² At first, the United States Treasury Department expected only to expand the extant federal building, and purchased a lot at the rear of the existing building for that purpose. A sum of \$60,000 was originally allocated for the project, which Congressman and New Bern resident Charles Laban Abernethy (1872-1955) successfully petitioned to increase to \$110,000 and then \$220,000. Inspectors from the U.S. Treasury Department decided that the increased allocation was too large a sum to spend on an old building, and it proposed demolition and construction of a new building on the site. Congressman Abernethy proposed that an alternate site be considered as an alternative to demolition, and subsequently secured an even greater appropriation in the amount of \$325,000.

According to the congressman’s own account, several difficulties were encountered as the project progressed, including delays in the selection of a new site; difficulties in obtaining the title to the property that was eventually selected; the discovery of quicksand at the new site, which necessitated the use of pilings; and the federal government’s initial objection to such a large expenditure for a small town. The congressman “nagged, begged, threatened and pleaded” until the project was finally approved after the formation of the Public Works Administration

80. Marcus Whiffen, *American Architecture Since 1780*. 160-163.

81. “New Building Represents Efforts of Congressman,” 16 December 1934, on file at New Bern-Craven County Public Library, vertical files, New Bern, North Carolina.

82. *Ibid.*

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

Craven County, North Carolina

Name of Property

County and State

(PWA) in June 1933.⁸³ According to Mr. Abernethy, as stated in his public address at the December 15, 1934, dedication of the new building,

Mr. Fullaway of the U.S. Bureau of the Budget decided that this building was not a necessity and disapproved the starting of the building although bids had been opened. The New Bern Post Office was on a shelf indefinitely.

Honorable Lewis Douglass, a former member of the U.S. Congress, who had served on the Appropriations Committee with me in the House, was Director of the Budget. I went to see him and he said to me, 'Charlie, pray tell me why New Bern needs a new post office when its postal receipts are falling off?' I answered, 'Yes, receipts may be low, but not as low as my stock right now and the building must start or I have to leave town.' He must have believed in my predicament because he immediately approved it as one of the fourteen original public works projects approved for the whole country.⁸⁴

A local newspaper article printed immediately following the building's dedication in 1934 reported that the newly formed PWA allotted funds for the construction of twenty-nine public buildings on August 29, 1933, including the funds appropriated by Congressman Abernethy for the construction of the New Bern federal building.⁸⁵ The substantial authorization caught the attention of humorist Will Rogers, who chastised the appropriation in his weekly column.⁸⁶ At that time, the average post office erected in the United States cost a mere \$50,000.⁸⁷

According to a memorandum prepared by the Office of the Supervising Architect, an Act of the U.S. Congress approved July 3, 1930, related to the selection of a new site for the federal building read as follows:

New Bern (North Carolina) post office, courthouse, customhouse, and so forth:
The authorization contained in the Act of May 29, 1928 (45 Stat., p. 922) for the acquisition of additional land and extension and remodeling of the building, under an estimated total cost of \$210,000, is hereby amended so as to authorize the Secretary of the U.S. Treasury, in his discretion, to acquire a new site and construct thereon a new building at a total estimated cost of \$325,000:
PROVIDED, That no new site shall be acquired unless the city of New Bern shall agree to purchase the old site and building for a sum not less than the cost of the new site and in the event such an agreement is entered into the Secretary of the

83. Ibid.; "Congressman Abernethy Relates Story of New Bern Federal Building," *New Bern Tribune*, 16 December 1934, on file at New Bern-Craven County Public Library, vertical files, New Bern, North Carolina.

84. "Congressman Abernethy Relates Story of New Bern Federal Building."

85. Ibid.

86. Will Rogers, "Please Pass the Pork!," ed. Steven K. Gragert, vol. 6 of *Will Rogers' Weekly Articles* (Stillwater, OK: Oklahoma State University Press, 1982), 47-49.

87. Sandbeck, *The Historic Architecture of New Bern and Craven County, North Carolina*, 369.

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

Craven County, North Carolina
County and State

U.S. Treasury may sell such old site and building to the city on such terms as he may deem proper.⁸⁸

The same memorandum mentioned two sites that were considered for the new building's location, the Stewart- Hyman site (at the intersection of Pollock and Craven streets, across the street from the 1897 federal building) and the Bryan site (at the intersection of Middle and New streets). The memo outlined the following steps leading up to the selection and acquisition of the Bryan site, upon which the U.S. Post Office, Court House, and Custom House was constructed between 1933 and 1934:

September 15, 1930: A Treasury Site Agent and a Post Office Inspector directed to visit New Bern.

October 23, 1930: Report submitted by said site agents on the inspection of the Stuart [*sic*] - Hyman site, the only site offered under the advertisement, in the amount of \$67,500. No definite recommendation made by site agents as price was considered excessive in the opinion of city authorities.

January 7, 1931: The so-called "Bryan" site offered at \$50,000.

May 20, 1931: "Bryan" site reduced to \$35,000.

May 27, 1931: The site agents recommended the acquisition of the "Bryan" site for various reasons, including price and central location.

July 8, 1931: Committee approved selection of the "Bryan" site at \$35,000 provided city would purchase old site and building for a sum not less than the cost of this new site. This approval was not made public awaiting advice from the city as to what action it would take regarding the purchase of the old site.

September 11, 1931: Indications were that some of the citizens of New Bern desired to present their views regarding the site situation, the site agents again visited New Bern and afforded interested parties an opportunity to present their views. After this investigation the site agents again recommended the acquisition of the "Bryan" lot, and, if not acquired recommended that the Federal building be extended on the present site.

In view of the attitude of the citizens of New Bern, it was decided that a member of the Committee visit the city, and Assistant Secretary Heath visited New Bern to look the site situation over.

88. United States Department of the Treasury, Office of the Supervising Architect, "Memorandum Regarding Acquisition of Post Office Site at New Bern, NC," 26 May 1932, on file at National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 121, College Park, Maryland.

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

Craven County, North Carolina

Name of Property

County and State

March 22, 1932: After considerable correspondence between the Department and the city officials it was not until this date that a satisfactory agreement was reached, and the Joint Interdepartmental Committee was able to finally recommend the selection of the "Bryan" site, which also under the law was contingent upon the city purchasing the present property.

March 22, 1932: The above recommendation was made public, copies thereof having been furnished to the press, and the delegation in Congress from North Carolina advised accordingly.

Negotiations are now pending with the city for the conclusion of the transaction.⁸⁹

The selection of the "Bryan" site as the government's preferred location for the new federal building was the subject of controversy among some New Bern leaders and citizens. According to a local newspaper article dated December 16, 1934, "Delay in transactions was caused by differences over sites" and "After announcement by the federal officials that the "Bryan" lot had been chosen for the post office, an injunction was obtained by various downtown property owners."⁹⁰

A letter addressed to the supervising architect of the U.S. Treasury by site agents E.C. Graham, Jr., architectural engineer, and R.E. Dauch, U.S. Post Office Department inspector, detailed the opinions expressed by community members at the September 17, 1931, site visit and town meeting. The letter indicated that the site controversy may have partially resulted from friction between some town leaders and Congressman Abernethy, who was reportedly in favor of the "Bryan" site. In addition, city officials were concerned that property values immediately surrounding the 1897 building would decrease as a result of the removal of the federal functions from this location. Residents and business owners may have had similar concerns, as it was reported that the majority of the 750 to 800 individuals attending the meeting lived on or owned property near the 1897 building and the Stewart-Hyman site.⁹¹ In addition, the Richard Dobbs Spaight Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution opposed the selection of the "Bryan" site because it contained the John Wright Stanly House, an architecturally and historically significant Colonial-era dwelling that would require relocation or demolition to accommodate the new building.⁹²

The "Bryan" site was acquired by September 19, 1932, despite the controversy. This is indicated in a memorandum from James A. Wetmore, acting supervising architect for the U.S. Treasury, to

89. United States Department of the Treasury, Office of the Supervising Architect, "Memorandum Regarding Acquisition of Post Office Site at New Bern, NC," 26 May 1932.

90. "New Building Represents Efforts of Congressman."

91. E.C. Graham, Jr. and R.E. Dauch, letter to Supervising Architect of the United States Department of the Treasury, 21 September 1931, on file at National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 121, College Park, Maryland.

92. Richard Dobbs Spaight Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution, resolution objecting the selection of the "Bryan" site for the New Bern federal building, n.d., on file at National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 121, College Park, Maryland.

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

Craven County, North Carolina

Name of Property

County and State

Major Ferry K. Heath, assistant secretary of the U.S. Treasury, requesting guidance related to the potential use of a twenty foot strip of land along New Street within the acquired property boundaries.⁹³ The “Bryan” site was selected due to its size (160 feet by 200 feet, with a 20 foot strip reserved for use by the city for street widening along New Street), its location close to but just outside of the city’s commercial center, and the potential for expansion into an adjacent lot to the north.⁹⁴

Prior to the final site acquisition, on July 23, 1932, the U.S. Treasury selected New Bern native architect Robert F. Smallwood to prepare the plans for the new federal building.⁹⁵ The U.S. Treasury accepted Smallwood’s completed plans by December of that year, and negotiations regarding the use of specific materials in the building continued through the fall of 1933.⁹⁶ Congressman Abernethy apparently had significant influence in the decision to hire Smallwood. Abernethy stated in 1934,

There was one piece of good luck during all this time when I found I had a home boy, Robert Smallwood, who could be the architect for this building. I was flooded with letters from all over the state from applicants. I didn’t know whether Bob could do a wonderful job with the plans or not, but I knew he was a fine boy, and I went to bat for him, and he was named architect. The results speak for themselves.⁹⁷

Congressman Abernethy stated during his December 15, 1934, address, “Whittled down by economy orders, the bid of the present contractors is somewhat below that figure [referring to the \$325,000 appropriation], \$260,249.”⁹⁸ Correspondence between Robert Smallwood, James A. Wetmore of the U.S. Treasury Department, and Ferry K. Heath of the U.S. Treasury Department reveals that the allocation was reduced by \$20,000 in the summer or fall of 1932 “to cover a prior expenditure of land,” presumably the plot originally purchased for the expansion of the 1897 federal building. This reduction resulted in the redesign of the roof of the new federal building from a hipped roof, typical of Georgian Revival style buildings, to a side gabled roof.⁹⁹

93. J. Wetmore, Acting Supervising Architect, United States Department of the Treasury, “Memorandum for Major Heath,”

19 September 1932, on file at National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 121, College Park, Maryland.

94. E.C. Graham, Jr. and R.E. Dauch, letter to Supervising Architect of the United States Department of the Treasury; Ward and Ward, attorneys for Alice H. Byers, memorandum to the U.S. Treasury Department, 14 September 1931, on file at New Bern-Craven County Public Library, vertical files, New Bern, North Carolina.

95. “New Building Represents Efforts of Congressman,” 16 December 1934.

96. Ibid; various correspondence to and from Robert F. Smallwood, James A. Wetmore, and Murch Brothers Construction Company, dated 20 June 1933 to 15 November 1933, on file at National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 121, College Park, Maryland.

97. “Congressman Abernethy Relates Story of New Bern Federal Building,” *New Bern Tribune*, 16 December 1934.

98. Ibid.

99. Various correspondence to and from Robert F. Smallwood, James A. Wetmore, and Ferry K. Heath, dated 7 October 1932 to 17 March 1933, on file at National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 121, College Park, Maryland.

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

Craven County, North Carolina

Name of Property

County and State

Although the exact final cost of the project is unknown, it was reported by newspapers to be “around \$300,000.”¹⁰⁰

J.J. Scott received the contract to move the John Wright Stanly House from the “Bryan” site in February 1933, and preparation of the lot for the new building commenced shortly thereafter.¹⁰¹ Murch Brothers Construction Company of St. Louis, Missouri, submitted the winning bid for construction of the new federal building, in the amount of \$212,800, and was awarded the contract on July 15, 1933.¹⁰²

The building’s construction superintendent and contractor arrived in late September 1933, and survey and excavation work began in early October. Workers laid the first brick on November 28, 1933.¹⁰³ Correspondence between Congressman Abernethy and H. Goldsworthy, President of Murch Brothers Construction Company, indicated that the government encouraged the use of “as much local labor and materials as possible.”¹⁰⁴ Additional correspondence to and from the congressman indicated that lists of local contractors were supplied to the Murch Brothers Construction Company by the local employment office and that some local workmen appealed directly to Congressman Abernethy for consideration on the project. Several minor disputes arose regarding the fair selection of local labor and veterans.

Additional correspondence between the congressman, his son Charles L. Abernethy, Jr., and various individuals documents suggestions that were made regarding the use of building materials for the project. Appeals were made in July and August 1933 urging the use of terra cotta and marble in the exterior of the building, although the U.S. Treasury Department approved only granite, limestone, and brick for the building’s exterior walls. The handmade Virginia brick that was proposed for use in the exterior by architect Robert F. Smallwood did not meet the approval of the government engineer or the general contractor upon inspection at the site, and construction was temporarily delayed in December 1933, as the issue was resolved. Construction commenced over the next year, encountering a few delays along the way as the result of the aforementioned labor disputes and construction issues.¹⁰⁵

James A. Wetmore served as acting supervising architect on the project. Thomas W. Marshall served as civil engineer. Additional contractors involved in the building’s construction included Bethlehem Fabricators, Inc., of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania; Koerner Engineering Company of St.

100., “New Building Declared Finest in City of New Bern’s Size in United States,” 16 December 1934, on file at New Bern-Craven County Public Library, vertical files, New Bern, North Carolina.

101. Ibid.

102. “Costs of Proposals for Construction (Except Elevator) of the Post Office, Co. H., Cu. H. etc., at New Bern, N.C.,” submitted to the Office of the Supervising Architect of the U.S. Treasury Department, on file at National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 121, College Park, Maryland; memorandum from P. Cooley to Mr. Ginder summarizing correspondence regarding use of limestone for exterior stone work, on file at National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 121, College Park, Maryland.

103. “New Building Represents Efforts of Congressman,” 16 December 1934.

104. Letter from Charles L. Abernethy to H. Goldsworthy, 19, September 1933, on file at New Bern-Craven County Public Library, vertical files, New Bern, North Carolina.

105. Various correspondence to and from Congressman Charles L. Abernethy and Charles L. Abernethy, Jr., on file at New Bern-Craven County Public Library, vertical files, New Bern, North Carolina.

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

Craven County, North Carolina

Name of Property

County and State

Louis, Missouri; Detroit Cornice and Slate Company of Detroit, Michigan; USONA Manufacturing Company of St. Louis, Missouri; and Alabama Marble Company.¹⁰⁶ Dedication of the new building occurred on December 15, 1934.¹⁰⁷ The post office and the court of Eastern District of North Carolina relocated from the 1897 federal building to the new location in 1935.¹⁰⁸

The U.S. Post Office, Court House, and Custom House was one of 406 post offices constructed under the PWA between 1933 and 1939.¹⁰⁹ Despite the desire to complete projects rapidly, the PWA stressed the importance of high quality design, construction, and materials.¹¹⁰ The U.S. Post Office, Court House, and Custom House's adherence to these high construction standards, as well as its design merit, was appreciated by the U.S. Treasury Department and citizens of New Bern alike. Local newspapers announcing the building's December 15, 1934, dedication reported:

Nelson M. Dunning, representing the Treasury Department and a licensed architect, declared that the building design is a 'remarkably fine piece of work. The architecture is not complacent and utilitarian but utilitarian and economical. It will be recognized among the fine traditional architecture of America.'¹¹¹

The handsome new postoffice [*sic*] here, costing around \$300,000, is regarded as perhaps the most spacious and attractive for any town of this size in the United States. Compliments have been paid it already by numerous visitors, and contractors declare that they have never worked on a more magnificent building for a small city.¹¹²

The author of the latter article went on to describe the building in the following manner:

Designed along colonial lines by its architect, Robert F. Smallwood of New Bern, to match the colonial homes here, the structure has twelve large columns, extending 25 feet upward from the second floor. On the column capitals and also on the pediments of the pilasters at the side of the building is an effective design of tobacco leaves, giving a unique local touch instead of the customary acanthus leaves usually found on Corinthian columns. Old Virginia face brick are used for the outside, with trim of Cordova limestone and a base of granite. Many states of

106. Robert F. Smallwood, various architectural drawings dated January 1933 through February 1934, on file at New Bern United States Post Office, Courthouse, and Custom House, New Bern, North Carolina and GSA, Raleigh, North Carolina.

107. Sandbeck, *The Historic Architecture of New Bern and Craven County, North Carolina*, 368.

108. *Ibid.*, 135.

109. Armstrong, *History of Public Works of the United States*, 327.

110. C.W. Short and R. Stanley Brown, *Public Buildings: Architecture Under the Public Works Administration 1933 to 1939* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1939): ix.

111. "Smallwood is Given Praise by Speakers," *New Bern Tribune*, 16 December 1934, on file at New Bern-Craven County Public Library, vertical files, New Bern, North Carolina.

112. "New Building Declared Finest in City of New Bern's Size in United States, 16 December 1934. On file at New Bern-Craven County Public Library, vertical files, New Bern, North Carolina."

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

Craven County, North Carolina
County and State

the union have been drawn upon for various building materials. The edifice is of structural steel, with fire proof concrete floors. A wall-bearing job, it has no columns in the walls, the structural beams being laid directly on the walls. All partitions are of hollow tile. The plaster lath is metal, making the structure entirely fire proof. It is also water proof, the foundations having been carefully arranged for this purpose.

From the new sidewalk on Middle Street, flanked by the new city white way, brilliantly lighted at night, the front entrance into the building is reached by seven granite steps, 42 feet long. At each side is a circular terrace of granite, of 20 feet. Two iron standards in colonial design, on granite bases, provide attractive lights, and farther over at both sides is a 65-foot flagpole placed in a base of antique bronze that also bears the tobacco leaf design.

Every modern convenience and the latest equipment will be found in the postal workroom and other offices of the building. Although the actual workspace for the postal department is not much larger than the present post office, the new building furnishes five times more space in all than the present location. A number of other county, state, and national departments will be housed there.¹¹³

David J. Silvette of Richmond, Virginia, was commissioned by the U.S. Treasury Department's Section of Fine Arts to produce a series of panels for the U.S. Post Office, Court House, and Custom House. The panels were installed in 1938 and cost \$3,031.29. The murals symbolize liberty, justice, and freedom and depict scenes of historical events of importance to New Bern.¹¹⁴

Although one of the original stated functions of the new federal building was to serve as a custom house, it is not clear how long custom house functions occurred in the building. During World War II, a United States Marine Corps Command Contingent occupied the building's second and third floors while construction occurred at Cunningham Field, later known as the United States Marine Air Station in Cherry Point, North Carolina.¹¹⁵ In 1971, following the creation of the United States Postal Service (USPS), the U.S. Treasury Department transferred ownership of the U.S. Post Office, Court House, and Custom House to the USPS. The USPS undertook minor rehabilitation projects several years later. The federal government also purchased the lot immediately adjacent to the building (to the west) in 1967 for construction of an approximately 195,000-square-foot parking lot and a maneuvering area behind the building.¹¹⁶ In 1981, New Bern resident and artist Willie Taglieri received a commission to paint three murals on the courtroom's east wall.¹¹⁷

113. "New Building Declared Finest in City of New Bern's Size in United States."

114. Gertrude S. Carraway, memorandum entitled "Historical Murals in the Federal Building at New Bern, N.C.," on file at GSA, Raleigh, North Carolina.

115. Ralph Stanley, former New Bern postmaster, October 13, 2004 email to Thomas Walker, on file at GSA, Raleigh, North Carolina.

116. "Progress on Post Office Lot Reported," *The Sun Journal* (New Bern, North Carolina), on file at New Bern-Craven County Library, vertical files, New Bern, North Carolina.

117. Mike Soraghan, *Sun Journal* (New Bern, N.C.), Sunday, 10 May 1992, C5.

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

Craven County, North Carolina
County and State

The USPS ceased operations in the federal building in 1992, moving their main post office to a new building located on Glenburnie Road and their downtown branch to the O. Marks Building.¹¹⁸ The USPS retained ownership of the federal building until 2004, when GSA acquired the property. GSA immediately made plans to rehabilitate the building, which stood vacant for nearly a decade and experienced some deterioration from neglect. Rehabilitation activities designed to adapt the building to accommodate additional court-related functions continued in several phases from 2004 to 2010. The United States District Court and the U.S. Marshals Service remain the building's main tenants.

Architect Robert F. Smallwood

Robert Feagles Smallwood was born to parents Samuel W. and Lida Feagles Smallwood on February 17, 1886.¹¹⁹ The Smallwood family had a long history in the city of New Bern, with family members residing in the town since at least 1810. Samuel Smallwood, Robert's father, was employed as a commission merchant starting in 1878, and later managed the New Berne Gas Company and served as the local United States Referee in Bankruptcy.¹²⁰ Robert Smallwood resided with his family in New Bern throughout his childhood. The 1904-1905 New Bern city directory lists Robert F. Smallwood as a student residing at 91 East Front Street, which was also the address of his father in that and subsequent editions of the directory.¹²¹ Smallwood attended Davidson College, the University of North Carolina, and the Columbia University School of Architecture.¹²² Sometime during or shortly after his attendance at Davidson College, from which he graduated in 1906, Smallwood assisted in the design of a dormitory on the campus, under the direction of the college's president, Dr. William J. Martin.¹²³

It is unclear exactly when Smallwood began his formal career as an architect; however, the first known commission awarded to him, in 1914, was the design of a two story brick mansion for Dr. Earl Sloan in his hometown of New Bern.¹²⁴ By this date, Smallwood made his residence in New York. He was employed at an architectural firm, according to a journal entry of Smallwood's future wife, Annie Cameron Graham, dated September 14, 1916.¹²⁵

I have decided to be married in November, the ninth I think it will be, to Mr. Robert Smallwood of New Bern, N.C. For some years, though, he has made his home in New York, as one of the junior partners in an architectural firm there.

118. Stephens, "Renewal of a New Bern Landmark," 17.

119. Theodore Rice, "Miscellaneous Genealogies" webpage at Rootsweb.com, accessed on April 26, 2018 (<http://worldconnect.rootsweb.com/cgi-bin/igm.cgi?op=GET&db=cricker2&id=I9>).

120. Stephens, "Renewal of a New Bern Landmark," 31-33.

121. *New Bern, N.C. Directory, 1904-1905* (Richmond, Virginia: Hill Directory Company, 1904), 141.

122. Obituary for "Robert F. Smallwood," *The New York Times*, 11 August, 1965, accessed online at *The New York Times*, April 26, 2018.

123. Various letters between Robert F. Smallwood and Dr. William J. Martin, dated 26 June 1918 to 5 March 1923, on file at Davidson College archives, President Martin Collection, Davidson, North Carolina.

124. Sandbeck, *The Historic Architecture of New Bern and Craven County, North Carolina*, 543.

125. Letters from Annie Cameron Graham to Professor Richard Austin Rice and Maxwell W. Rice, Williams College Archives, Williamstown, MA, recited in Theodore Rice's "Miscellaneous Genealogies" webpage at Rootsweb.com, April 26, 2018 (<http://worldconnect.rootsweb.com/cgi-bin/igm.cgi?op=GET&db=cricker2&id=I9>).

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

Craven County, North Carolina
County and State

Personal correspondence reveals that Smallwood had an office at 569 5th Avenue in New York City by June 1918, and began serving in World War I as an officer in the Engineer Corps of the Army beginning late that year.¹²⁶ Smallwood left his business in the hands of his associate, Mr. Samuel B. Coley, also of 569 5th Avenue, upon entering military service. Smallwood returned to his practice in New York City by May 1920, and relocated to 101 Park Avenue in the same city by April 1922.

A review of local histories of New Bern, North Carolina, and an obituary in *The New York Times* suggest that Robert Smallwood practiced in various locations throughout his career, including North Carolina, Florida, and New York. Many of his residential designs, in addition to his few public buildings, reflected elements of Colonial Revival and/or Georgian Revival architecture. A full list of commissions received by Robert F. Smallwood is not available. Known commissions include:

Dr. Earl Sloan House (ca. 1914-1915), New Bern, North Carolina

Craven County Courthouse, north addition (ca. 1915-1916), New Bern, North Carolina

Captain Elijah Willis House, expansion (1915-1920), New Bern, North Carolina

William F. Ward, Sr., House (1932), New Bern, North Carolina

New Bern U.S. Post Office, Courthouse, and Custom House (1933-1934), New Bern, North Carolina¹²⁷

Receiving the commission to design the new federal building in his hometown was likely Smallwood's most important and most recognized project. Smallwood received the commission on July 23, 1932, and received approval for the design by December of that year.¹²⁸ Although many bids were submitted by local architects for the federal building commission, Smallwood was awarded the job partially because of his ties to the city of New Bern.

Little is known about Smallwood's commissions following his design of the U.S. Post Office, Court House, and Custom House. In his later years, Smallwood resided in New York City. At his death in August 1965, Smallwood resided at 36 Sutton Place South in New York City. His death was attributed to a heart condition.¹²⁹ He was buried alongside his wife, Annie, in the St. Matthews Episcopal Church Cemetery in Hillsboro, North Carolina.¹³⁰

Mural Artist David J. Silvette

126 Ibid.; various letters between Robert F. Smallwood and Dr. William J. Martin, dated 26 June 1918 to 5 March 1923, on file at Davidson College archives, President Martin Collection, Davidson, North Carolina.

127. Sandbeck, *The Historic Architecture of New Bern and Craven County, North Carolina*, 228, 276, 311, and 575.

128. "New Building Represents Efforts of Congressman," 16 December 1934.

129. Obituary for "Robert F. Smallwood," *The New York Times*, 11 August, 1965.

130. Letters from Annie Cameron Graham to Professor Richard Austin Rice and Maxwell W. Rice.

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

Craven County, North Carolina
County and State

David J. Silvette of Richmond, Virginia (1909-1992), executed the murals in the courtroom of the U.S. Post Office, Court House, and Custom House in 1938. The three murals, depicting the Bayard vs. Singleton case (1787), the first printing press in North Carolina (1749), and the first Provincial Convention in North Carolina (1774), were the only public art projects awarded to Silvette by the U.S. Treasury Department's Section of Painting and Sculpture or Section of Fine Arts.¹³¹ Silvette was born in Richmond, Virginia, and received his first artistic training from his father, Ellis M. Silvette, a portrait artist.¹³² Silvette later trained under Cecelia Beaux (1855-1942) and Charles Hawthorne (1872-1930). Beaux was a Philadelphia-born portrait artist who achieved international fame during her lifetime. Hawthorne was an Impressionist painter who developed the Cape Cod School of Art in Provincetown, Massachusetts, and became a respected teacher and influential member of the Provincetown art colony near the turn of the century.¹³³ The dates of Silvette's training under Beaux and Hawthorne are unknown.

Mr. Silvette was known as a portrait, interiors, and mural painter, and common subjects in his work included genre (human activity), figures, portraits, and interior views.¹³⁴ The murals painted by Mr. Silvette on the courtroom wall of the U.S. Post Office, Court House, and Custom House followed the New Deal trend of depicting historical events of local significance and interest as a way to "affirm the importance of 'the people,' a sense of renewal, and the continuity of prosperity."¹³⁵ Additional work by Mr. Silvette included a portrait of F. Scott Fitzgerald, executed in 1935, which represents the artist's most famous work and was acquired by the National Portrait Gallery in 1972, as well as portraits of Chief Justice John Marshall (reproduced from an 1831 original) and Henry Morgenthau, Jr. Mr. Morgenthau was appointed Secretary of the U.S. Treasury by President Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1934 and was instrumental in developing the Works Progress Administration (WPA) and the Public Works of Art project. Mr. Silvette is known to have executed at least eighteen additional portraits between the 1930s and the 1960s. Mr. Silvette died on October 29, 1992.¹³⁶

Statement of Significance and Integrity

The U.S. Post Office, Court House, and Custom House is significant under Criterion A in the area of politics/government for its local significance as the seat of the United States District Court of the Eastern District of North Carolina, and as the home of the post office in New Bern.

131. Park and Markowitz, *Democratic Vistas*, 222.

132. United States Treasury Department website, accessed April 26, 2018
<https://www.treasury.gov/about/history/pages/hmorgenthaujr.aspx>.

133. Ibid.; The Plastic Club website, accessed April 26, 2018 <http://www.plasticclub.org/beaux.html>; Smithsonian American Art website, accessed April 26, 2018 <https://americanart.si.edu/artist/charles-w-hawthorne-2128>.

134. Ask Art website, accessed April 26, 2018 <http://www.askart.com/askart/artist.aspx?artist=103863>.

135. Park and Markowitz, *Democratic Vistas*, 29.

136. United States Treasury Department website; National Portrait Gallery database, accessed April 26, 2018 http://npg.si.edu/portraits/search?edan_q=silvette&edan_local=1&edan_fq%5B0%5D=p.edanmdm.descriptivenonrepeating.unit_code%3A%22NPG%22&incCAP=false&op=Search; Radford University website, April 26, 2018 http://www.radford.edu/rumag/backissues/2003_s/pages/wall.html; "Announcements," in *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd Ser., Vol. 26, No. 3, July 1969, 468-469; William and Mary College website, accessed April 26, 2018 http://oieahc.wm.edu/wmq/browse_toc.cfm?issue_num=26_3.

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

Craven County, North Carolina

Name of Property

County and State

The building is also significant under this criterion as a visual symbol of the federal presence in the city of New Bern and as a local representation of public buildings constructed under the PWA and possessing artwork commissioned under the Section of Fine Arts. The building is significant under Criterion C as a local example of the Georgian Revival architectural style popular for federal buildings constructed during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The period of significance includes 1935, the date of completion of the building and 1938, the date of the installation of the federally commissioned artwork.

The U.S. Post Office, Court House, and Custom House retains sufficient architectural integrity from its period of significance (1935; 1938) to convey its historical significance and associations. Minor alterations were made to the building in the mid-1960s and in 2004 to 2010 more substantial alterations were undertaken; however, the building retains its most significant original features. The building's retention of its integrity of design, materials, workmanship, location, setting, and association culminates in the building's retention of feeling as a 1935 federal building erected in the Georgian Revival architectural style.

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

Craven County, North Carolina
County and State

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

Books, Maps, and Monographs

Armstrong, Ellis L. *History of Public Works of the United States, 1776-1945*. Chicago: American Public Works Association, 1976.

Craig, Lois A. et al. *The Federal Presence*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1978.

Hill Directory Company. *New Bern, N.C. Directory, 1904-1905*. Richmond, Virginia: Hill Directory Company, 1904.

Lee, Antoinette. *Architects to the Nation*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000.

Maroney, Rita L *History of the U.S. Postal Service: 1775-1982*. Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, 1982.

McKinzie, Richard D. *The New Deal for Artists*. Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1973.

Melius, Louis. *The American Postal Service: History of the Postal Service from the Earliest Times*. Washington, D.C: Louis Melius, 1917.

The National Gallery of Canada. *Exhibition of Mural Designs for Federal Buildings*. Ottawa: The National Gallery of Canada, 1940.

National Park Service's National Register Bulletin, *Defining Boundaries for National Register Properties*. Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, 1997.

Park, Marlene and Gerald E. Markowitz. *Democratic Vistas: Post Offices and Public Art in the New Deal*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1984.

Sandbeck, Peter B. *The Historic Architecture of New Bern and Craven County, North Carolina*. New Bern, North Carolina: The Tryon Palace Commission, 1988.

Short, C.W. and R. Stanley Brown. *Public Buildings: Architecture under the Public Works Administration 1933 to 1939*. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1939.

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

Craven County, North Carolina

Name of Property

County and State

Whiffen, Marcus. *American Architecture Since 1780: A Guide to the Styles*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1993.

Periodicals

“City Hall was Post Office.”, n.d. On file at New Bern-Craven County Public Library, vertical files, New Bern, North Carolina.

“Congressman Abernethy Relates Story of New Bern Federal Building.” *New Bern Tribune*, 16 December 1934. On file at New Bern-Craven County Public Library, vertical files, New Bern, North Carolina.

“Local City Hall was Post Office When First Built.” *The Sun Journal* (New Bern, North Carolina), 4 June 1960. On file at New Bern-Craven County Public Library, vertical files, New Bern, North Carolina.

“New Bern Post Office Already Busy.” *The Sun Journal* (New Bern, North Carolina). On file at New Bern-Craven County Public Library, vertical files, New Bern, North Carolina.

“New Building Declared Finest in City of New Bern’s Size in United States.”, 16 December 1934. On file at New Bern-Craven County Public Library, vertical files, New Bern, North Carolina.

“New Building Represents Efforts of Congressman.”, 16 December 1934. On file at New Bern-Craven County Public Library, vertical files, New Bern, North Carolina.

“New Federal Structure is Dedicated at New Bern.” In *The News and Observer* (Raleigh, North Carolina), 16 December 1934. On file at New Bern-Craven County Public Library, vertical files, New Bern, North Carolina.

“Progress on Post Office Lot Reported.” in *The Sun Journal* (New Bern, North Carolina), n.d. On file at New Bern-Craven County Library, vertical files, New Bern, North Carolina.

“Smallwood is Given Praise by Speakers.” In *New Bern Tribune*, 16 December 1934. On file at New Bern-Craven County Public Library, vertical files, New Bern, North Carolina.

“State Mail Service Started in NB.” In *The Sun Journal* (New Bern, North Carolina), 16 August 1974. On file at New Bern-Craven County Public Library, vertical files, New Bern, North Carolina.

Durnin Boughner, Elaine. “Will Rogers Spoofs Swiss-Found City.” In *Linn’s Stamp News*, 7 December 1981. On file at New Bern-Craven County Public Library, vertical files, New Bern, North Carolina.

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

Craven County, North Carolina
County and State

Hobbs, Bonnie. "Birthday Festivities Slated." In *The Sun Journal* (New Bern, North Carolina), 1 July 1991. On file at New Bern-Craven County Public Library, vertical files, New Bern, North Carolina.

Rogers, Will. "Please Pass the Pork!" Ed. Steven K. Gragert. *Will Rogers' Weekly Articles*, Vol. 6. Stillwater, Oklahoma: Oklahoma State University Press, 1982.

Soraghan, Mike. *The Sun Journal* (New Bern, North Carolina), 10 May 1992. On file at New Bern-Craven County Public Library, vertical files, New Bern, North Carolina.

_____. "Change of Address." In *The Sun Journal* (New Bern, North Carolina), 12 March 1992. On file at New Bern-Craven County Public Library, vertical files, New Bern, North Carolina.

Stephens, Paul F. "Renewal of a New Bern Landmark: Bringing the United States Courthouse into the Twenty-First Century." In *Journal of the New Bern Historical Society* (New Bern, North Carolina: New Bern Historical Society, 2006), Vol. XIX, No. 1, May 2006.

Walton, April. "New Bern Post Office Headed to Glenburnie." 10 August 1989. On file at New Bern-Craven County Public Library, vertical files, New Bern, North Carolina.

Miscellaneous

Abernethy, Charles L. Letter from Charles L. Abernethy to H. Goldsworthy, 19 September 1933. On file at New Bern-Craven County Public Library, vertical files, New Bern, North Carolina.

"Costs of Proposals for Construction (Except Elevator) of the Post Office, Court House and Custom House. etc., at New Bern, N.C." Submitted to the Office of the Supervising Architect of the U.S. Treasury Department. On file at National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 121, College Park, Maryland.

Boland, Beth. National Register Bulletin, *How to Apply National Register Criteria to Post Offices*. Washington, D.C.: United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1984.

Cameron Graham, Annie. Letters from Annie Cameron Graham to Professor Richard Austin Rice and Maxwell W. Rice. On file at Williams College Archives, Williamstown, MA. Also recited in Theodore Rice's "Miscellaneous Genealogies" webpage at Rootsweb.com, <http://worldconnect.rootsweb.com/cgi-bin/igm.cgi?op=GET&db=cricke2&id=I9> (accessed December 7, 2006).

Carraway, Gertrude S. Memorandum entitled "Historical Murals in the Federal Building at New Bern, N.C." On file at GSA, Raleigh, North Carolina.

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

Craven County, North Carolina

Name of Property

County and State

Cooley, P. Memorandum from P. Cooley to Mr. Ginder summarizing correspondence regarding the use of limestone for exterior stone work. On file at National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 121, College Park, Maryland.

Davidson College Archives

Various letters between Robert F. Smallwood and Dr. William J. Martin, dated 26 June 1918 to 5 March 1923. On file at Davidson College Archives, President Martin Collection, Davidson, North Carolina.

Graham, E.C. Jr., and R.E. Dauch. Letter to Supervising Architect of the United States Department of the Treasury, 21 September 1931. On file at National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 121, College Park, Maryland.

Miller, Jerry. *North Carolina Bicentennial Calendar, 1776-1976*. On file at New Bern-Craven County Public Library, vertical files, New Bern, North Carolina

National Archives and Records Administration

Various correspondence to and from Robert F. Smallwood, James A. Wetmore, and Ferry K. Heath, dated 7 October 1932 to 17 March 1933. On file at National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 121, College Park, Maryland.

____. Various correspondence to and from Robert F. Smallwood, James A. Wetmore, and Murch Brothers Construction Company, dated 20 June 1933 to 15 November 1933. On file at National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 121, College Park, Maryland.

New Bern-Craven County Public Library

Various correspondence to and from Congressman Charles L. Abernethy and Charles L. Abernethy, Jr. On file at New Bern-Craven County Public Library, vertical files, New Bern, North Carolina.

Richard Dobbs Spaight Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution

“Resolution objecting the selection of the Bryan site for the New Bern Federal building,” n.d. On file at National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 121, College Park, Maryland.

Smallwood, Robert F. Various architectural drawings dated January 1933 through February 1934. On file at New Bern United States Post Office, Courthouse, and Custom House, New Bern, North Carolina and GSA, Raleigh, North Carolina.

Stanley, Ralph. Former New Bern postmaster. E-mail to Thomas Walker, 13 October 2004. On file at GSA, Raleigh, North Carolina.

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

Craven County, North Carolina
County and State

United States Department of the Treasury, Office of the Supervising Architect. "Memorandum Regarding Acquisition of Post Office Site at New Bern, NC," 26 May 1932. On file at National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 121, College Park, Maryland.

United States General Services Administration (GSA), Design and Construction Division, Region 4.
Various architectural drawings dated November 1963, January 1964, October 1965, and July 1966. On file at New Bern United States Post Office, and Custom House, New Bern, North Carolina.

United States General Services Administration (GSA), Public Buildings Service. *Historic Building Preservation Plan, United States Post Office and Courthouse (New Bern)*. Washington, D.C.: GSA, 1994.

Ward and Ward. Attorneys for Alice H. Byers. "Memorandum to the U.S. Treasury Department," 14 September 1931. On file at New Bern-Craven County Public Library, vertical files, New Bern, North Carolina.

Wetmore, James A. "Memorandum for Major Heath," 19 September 1932. On file at National Archives and Records Administration, Record Group 121, College Park, Maryland.

Internet Resources

Ask Art website

<http://www.askart.com/askart/artist.aspx?artist=103863> (accessed April 26, 2018).

Federal Judicial Center website

<http://www.fjc.gov/history/home.nsf> (accessed April 26, 2018).

National Portrait Gallery database website

http://npg.si.edu/portraits/search?edan_q=silvette&edan_local=1&edan_fq%5B0%5D=p.edanmdm.descriptivenonrepeating.unit_code%3A%22NPG%22&incCAP=false&op=Search
(accessed April 26, 2018).

The New York Times website

Obituary for "Robert F. Smallwood." Published in *The New York Times*, 11 August, 1965.
<http://select.nytimes.com/gst/abstract.html?res=F20611FF3C5A157A93C3A81783D85F418685F9> (accessed April 26, 2018).

The Plastic Club website

<http://www.plasticclub.org/beaux.html> (accessed April 26, 2018).
<http://www.plasticclub.org/beaux.html>

Radford University website

http://www.radford.edu/rumag/backissues/2003_s/pages/wall.html (accessed April 26, 2018).

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

Craven County, North Carolina
County and State

Smithsonian American Art Museum website

<https://americanart.si.edu/artist/charles-w-hawthorne-2128> (accessed April 26, 2018)

United States Treasury Department website

<https://www.treasury.gov/about/history/pages/hmorgenthaujr.aspx> (accessed April 26, 2018).

William and Mary College website. "Announcements." In *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd Ser., Vol. 26, No. 3, July 1969. http://oieahc.wm.edu/wmq/browse_toc.cfm?issue_num=26_3 (accessed April 26, 2018).

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
 previously listed in the National Register (contributing to New Bern Historic District)
 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: U.S. General Services Administration and New Bern-Craven County Public Library; See Continuation Sheets 9.1 through 9.6.

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property 0 (1.2 acre property previously listed as contributing resource in New Bern Historic District)

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

Craven County, North Carolina
County and State

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: 18 | Easting: 313230 | Northing: 3887590 |
| 2. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 3. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 4. Zone: | Easting : | Northing: |

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

The subject property was acquired by the U.S. Government in two transactions. The first conveyance is recorded in Deed Book 303, Page 377; and the second in Deed Book 712, Page 637 of the Craven County Registry. The legal descriptions reveal two rectangular-shaped lots totaling 1.2 acres located in the southwest quadrant of Middle and New streets. Tax Identification for the parcels: PIN Nos. 8-002-D-072 and 8-002-D-073.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The National Register boundary for the U.S. Post Office, Court House, and Custom House includes the entire portion of the 0.7-acre tax parcel (Craven County Tax Parcel 8-002-D-073) that was associated with the building during its period of significance (1935; 1938) as well as the subsequent .5 acre tax parcel (Craven County Tax Parcel 8-002-D-072) that was purchased in

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

Craven County, North Carolina
County and State

1967. This boundary follows the tax parcel lines and encompasses all that property currently owned by the U.S. Government and associated with the federal building in New Bern, North Carolina

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Elizabeth Amisson/Senior Architectural Historian

organization: A.D. Marble & Company, prepared for U.S. General Services Administration

street & number: 375 East Elm Street, Suite 200

city or town: Conshohocken state: PA zip code: 19428

e-mail eamission@admarble.com

telephone: 484.533.2500

date: September 2010

name/title: Elizabeth Hannold/Preservation Specialist

organization: U.S. General Services Administration, Center for Historic Buildings

street & number: 1800 F. Street, NW, Suite 5400

city or town: Washington state: DC zip code: 20405

e-mail elizabeth.hannold@gsa.gov

telephone: (202) 501-2863

date: April 2018

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.)

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.

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

Craven County, North Carolina
County and State

Photo Log

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

City or Vicinity: New Bern

County: Craven County State: North Carolina

Photographer: Carol M. Highsmith

Date Photographed: June 9, 2006

Photographer: Patrick Coble, GSA

Date Photographed: November 27, 2017

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

Photo # 1 (NC_Craven County_U.S. Post Office, Courthouse, and Custom House_0001)
East elevation (facade) along Middle Street, view looking west (Carol M. Highsmith)

Photo # 2 (NC_Craven County_U.S. Post Office, Courthouse, and Custom House_0002)
East elevation (facade) along Middle Street, Entrance detail looking west (Carol M. Highsmith)

Photo # 3 (NC_Craven County_U.S. Post Office, Courthouse, and Custom House_0003)
Cupola detail, east elevation (facade) along Middle Street, looking northwest (Carol M. Highsmith)

Photo # 4 (NC_Craven County_U.S. Post Office, Courthouse, and Custom House_0004)
East elevation (façade) along Middle Street and south (side) elevation, view looking northwest (Carol M. Highsmith)

Photo # 5 (NC_Craven County_U.S. Post Office, Courthouse, and Custom House_0007)
South (side) elevation and west (rear) elevation, view looking northeast (Patrick Coble, GSA)

Photo # 6 (NC_Craven County_U.S. Post Office, Courthouse, and Custom House_0005)
West (rear) elevation, view looking northeast (Patrick Coble, GSA)

Photo # 7 (NC_Craven County_U.S. Post Office, Courthouse, and Custom House_0006)
North (side) elevation along New Street and west (rear) elevation, view looking southeast (Patrick Coble, GSA)

Photo # 8 (NC_Craven County_U.S. Post Office, Courthouse, and Custom House_0008)
Former postal lobby, first floor, view looking south (Carol M. Highsmith)

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

Craven County, North Carolina
County and State

Photo # 9 (NC_Craven County_U.S. Post Office, Courthouse, and Custom House_0009)

Detail of stair at south end of former postal lobby, first floor, view looking southeast (Carol M. Highsmith)

Photo # 10 (NC_Craven County_U.S. Post Office, Courthouse, and Custom House_0010)

Ceremonial courtroom, second floor, view looking south (Carol M. Highsmith)

Photo # 11 (NC_Craven County_U.S. Post Office, Courthouse, and Custom House_0011)

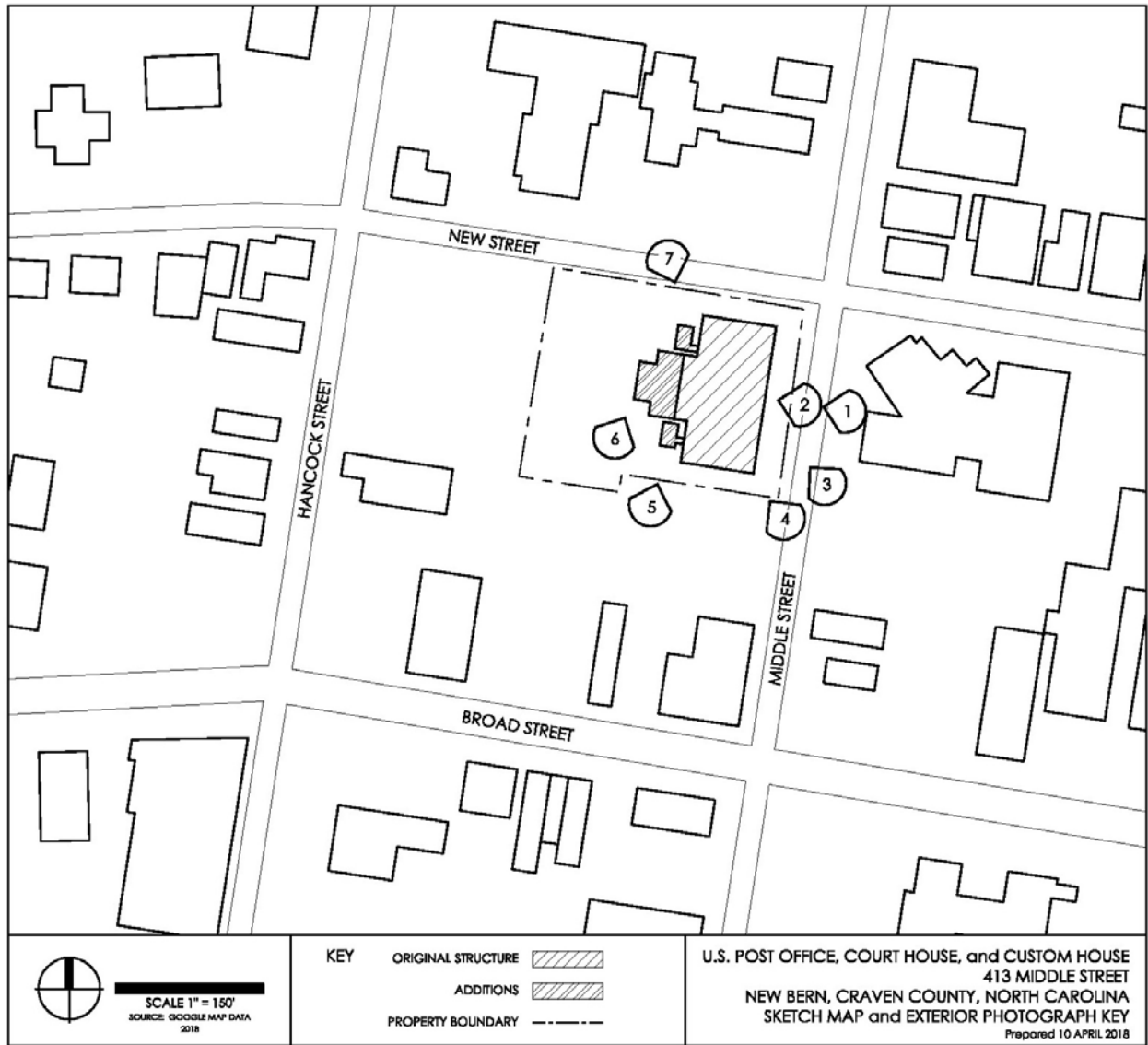
Detail of mural, ceremonial courtroom, second floor, view looking south (Carol M. Highsmith)

Photo # 12 (NC_Craven County_U.S. Post Office, Courthouse, and Custom House_0012)

Detail of light fixture, ceremonial courtroom, second floor, view looking southeast (Carol M. Highsmith)

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

Craven County, North Carolina
County and State



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

Craven County, North Carolina
County and State

Figure 1 – U.S. Post Office, Court House, and Custom House, east (façade) and north (side) elevations, completion photograph circa December 1934 (National Archives and Records Administration, RG121-BS_65_CC_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.

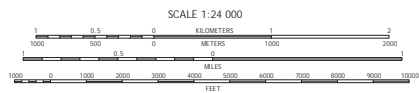
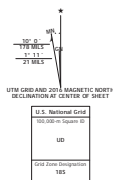


Produced by the United States Geological Survey

North American Datum of 1983 (NAD83)
World Geodetic System of 1984 (WGS84) Projection and
1000-meter grid. Universal Transverse Mercator, Zone 18S
10 000-foot scale. North Carolina Coordinate System of 1983

This map is not a legal document. Boundaries may be
generalized for this map scale. Private lands within government
reservations may not be shown. Obtain permission before
entering private lands.

Imagery: NMAP, October 2014
Roads: U.S. Census Bureau, 2015
Roads within US Forest Service Lands: ST09e Data
with limited Forest Service updates, 2015
Names: National Hydrography Dataset, 2016
Hydrography: National Hydrography Dataset, 2016
Contours: National Elevation Dataset, 2016
Boundaries: Multiple sources; see metadata file 1972 - 2016
Wetlands: FWS National Wetlands Inventory 1977 - 2014



CONTOUR INTERVAL: 5 FEET
NORTH AMERICAN VERTICAL DATUM OF 1988
This map was produced to conform with the
National Geospatial Program US Topo Product Standard, 2011.
A metadata file associated with this product is draft version 6.19



1	2	3
4	5	6
7	8	9

ADJACENT QUADRANGLES

ROAD CLASSIFICATION

Expressway	Local Connector
Secondary Hwy	Local Road
Bump	4WD
Interstate Route	US Route
FS Primary Route	FS Passenger Route
	FS High Clearance Route

Check with local Forest Service unit
for current travel conditions and restrictions.

NEW BERN, NC
2016

