

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR FEDERAL PROPERTIES

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC

U.S. Post Office

AND/OR COMMON

U.S. Federal Building

**USE THIS COPY
FOR DUPLICATING**

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

270 Seneca Street

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Oil City

VICINITY OF

23rd

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

STATE

Pennsylvania

CODE

42

COUNTY

Venango

CODE

121

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

- DISTRICT
- BUILDING(S)
- STRUCTURE
- SITE
- OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

- PUBLIC
- PRIVATE
- BOTH
- PUBLIC ACQUISITION**
- IN PROCESS
- BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

- OCCUPIED
- UNOCCUPIED
- WORK IN PROGRESS
- ACCESSIBLE**
- YES: RESTRICTED
- YES: UNRESTRICTED
- NO

PRESENT USE

- AGRICULTURE
- COMMERICAL
- EDUCATIONAL
- GOVERNMENT
- INDUSTRIAL
- MILITARY
- MUSEUM
- PARK
- PRIVATE RESIDENCE
- RELIGIOUS
- SCIENTIFIC
- TRANSPORTATION
- OTHER:

4 AGENCY

General Services Administration

REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS: (If applicable)

STREET & NUMBER

18th & F Streets, N.W.

CITY, TOWN

Washington, D.C.

VICINITY OF

STATE

District of Columbia

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,

REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Venango County Courthouse - Register & Recorder

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Franklin

STATE

Pennsylvania

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

None

DATE

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The U.S. Federal Building, formerly the U.S. Post Office, was completed in 1906 under the direction of James Knox Taylor, Supervising Architect of the U.S. Treasury Department. The principal (east) facade is on Seneca Street. Oil Creek is to the west of the building, a paved loading area to the south, and a drive and parking lot to the north. Set slightly back from the street, the building originally measured 81 feet 8 inches by 50 feet 4 inches. Its depth has been increased by two additions: one in 1912, a 49 foot by 25 foot addition to the west to increase work space, and one in 1928, a 30 foot 6 inches by 40 foot addition further to the west.

The original structure, five bays long by three bays wide, has two storeys above grade and a full basement. It is of reinforced skeleton construction with solid concrete floors bearing on steel beams. All four facades are faced with limestone ashlar, and the roof of the original building is tin. The central three bays of the principal facade form a pavilion corresponding to a projection on the west facade. The fenestration on all facades but that of the west implies a one storey structure. Although there is a second storey, only an 835 square foot area fronting on the west facade is finished. The flat roof is invisible behind the parapet. Set back slightly from the north facade above the middle bay is a penthouse providing roof access. Faced with limestone, it is visible from the street. The buildings basement is defined by a simple offset. Its windows are beneath those of the first storey.

In the outer bays of the principal facade, the illusion of piers is created by recessed wall areas surrounding the pairs of double-hung sash windows which have a common single light transom. The window unit is set within a molded and shouldered architrave surmounting a sill. The sill is supported by an apron member upon which is imposed a raised element in the form of a shaped apron panel. The architrave is surmounted by a frieze interrupted near its ends by two square blocks with raised panels. Above the frieze is a hooded cornice.

Rather than conforming to any one classical order, the building's entablature derives from several. The architrave is Ionic and the frieze blank. The cornice with mutules is Roman Doric. The building's parapet is of alternating piers and balustrades and continues vertically the pattern of projecting and recessed elements.

The principal facade has a central three bay pavilion, with a limestone stairway leading to the center bay entrance. The stairway is divided by a railing and enclosed by plinths and curved and sloping stairwalls. On the

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plinths rest square based post lamps whose globes are no longer in place. The central pavilion is terminated by two piers, its three bays being defined by four engaged, unfluted Tuscan columns. The outer two columns are doubly engaged, being attached to the returns of the piers and the back wall. The capitals freely interpret Tuscan prototypes, incorporating blocks and tassels dropping from each abacus at the visible quarter points. Within each bay is a round arched aperture. In the outside two are compound windows; the sill of each is supported by two block-like brackets with blank patera. The arches of the three apertures spring from the impost of pier forms behind the engaged columns. The keystone of each arch is molded, and the spandrels are each embellished with a festoon and blank patera.

Within the central arch is the main entrance, framed by a shouldered architrave which, in place of a frieze, rises at the center to accommodate a raised panel which reverberates the under window apron panels. Embellishing the upper member of the architrave above the shoulders are two small tassels. Surmounting the architrave is a broken triangular pediment enclosing a cartouche. Above the entrance and within the arch is a thermal window. The frieze in the entablature above the pavilion is inscribed "United States Post Office." The words "Post Office" are now covered by an applied sign reading "Federal Building." Directly above the outermost columns, the inscription is embellished with a blank patera. The parapet of the pavilion follows the general alternating pattern. Originally a flagpole stood centered on the parapet.

The north facade of the original building is composed of three bays identical to the end bays of the principal facade. The original three bay south elevation is identical, although the central enframingent is partially filled and has a single small double-hung sash window. The original west facade is largely hidden by the additions to the building. Only the second storey windows and northernmost door with its original decoration and marquee are visible. The additions to the rear of the building are of limestone ashlar similar to that of the original section. The roof of the 1912 addition is tin and that of the 1928 addition is five-ply composite roofing. The additions are considerably less embellished than the original. The basement offset continues, and the windows are set in unembellished flat-arched openings. The entablature of the additions is simply a continuation of the original building's architrave. The 1928 addition included a three bay loading dock on the north facade. On the southern facade there is also a three bay covered loading dock extending the length of the two additions. The interior spaces of each addition stress utility over architectural design, as do recent alterations.

Oil City, Pennsylvania

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Exterior alterations removed the original revolving main entrance door, decorated with wrought iron grille work, and replaced it by simple plate glass swinging doors. In general, the exterior features of the 1906 building remain as they were designed. On the other hand, interior renovations have completely altered both the plan and architectural character of the original space. Originally, the public interior spaces reflected the exterior's plan and character. The front central space was a formal L-shaped lobby with terrazzo floors, a striated red marble base and a grey marble wainscot. The original ceiling was 20 feet high in the long leg of the L and 15 feet 4 inches in the short leg. Further embellishment included wood trim and a plaster Ionic cornice.

Oil City, Pennsylvania

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW

- | | | | | |
|---|--|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC | <input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC | <input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING | <input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE | <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499 | <input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC | <input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION | <input type="checkbox"/> LAW | <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599 | <input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE | <input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS | <input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE | <input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699 | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE | <input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION | <input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY | <input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799 | <input type="checkbox"/> ART | <input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING | <input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC | <input type="checkbox"/> THEATER |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899 | <input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE | <input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT | <input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY | <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900- | <input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS | <input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY | <input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT | <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY) |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION | | |

SPECIFIC DATES 1906

BUILDER/ARCHITECT James Knox Taylor

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Federal Building is a formal example of Beaux-Arts Classicism. Although its massing is conservative and conventional, the inventive and mannered use of the classical vocabulary, the richness of its ornamentation, and the sculptural quality of its texture mark the building as exceptional because of its modest scale and original use.

The Federal Building became a local landmark by serving as the main post office for Oil City for almost sixty years. It was built in response to the rapid commercial growth following the nineteenth century oil boom from which the city derives its name. In this part of Pennsylvania, the Federal Building is the unique example of its style in Oil City. While there are two properties in Venango County on the National Register, they are both sites; no building has been entered on the Register. In a region with few structures of identified architectural or historical distinction, the building demonstrates a self-conscious attempt to present a dignified and imposing architectural statement of the Federal Government's presence in the city.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Martens, Charles D., The Oil City, 1971.

"Centennial Issue of the Oil City Derrick," 1971.

Construction Drawings and photographs of the original building and its subsequent alterations located at the Federal Building, Oil City, Pennsylvania.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY _____

UTM REFERENCES

A	1,7	60,784,0	4,518,774,5	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

General Services Administration

ORGANIZATION

Historic Preservation

DATE

STREET & NUMBER

19th & F Street, NW

TELEPHONE

CITY OR TOWN

Washington, DC 20405

STATE

12 CERTIFICATION OF NOMINATION

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER RECOMMENDATION

YES

NO

NONE

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

In compliance with Executive Order 11593, I hereby nominate this property to the National Register, certifying that the State Historic Preservation Officer has been allowed 90 days in which to present the nomination to the State Review Board and to evaluate its significance. The evaluated level of significance is ___ National ___ State ___ Local.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

TITLE

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER