

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

1. Name of Property

Historic name: United States Post Office and Custom House

Other names/site number: St. Albans Post Office; Federal Building

Name of related multiple property listing:

N/A

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

2. Location

Street & number: 50 South Main Street

City or town: St. Albans State: VT County: Franklin

Not For Publication: Vicinity: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

<p>_____</p> <p>Signature of certifying official/Title: Federal Preservation Officer Date</p> <p><u>U.S. General Services Administration</u></p> <p>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</p>
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<p>In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.</p> <p>_____</p>	
Signature of commenting official:	Date
<p>_____</p> <p>Title : State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</p>	

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4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
 determined eligible for the National Register
 determined not eligible for the National Register
 removed from the National Register
 other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
Public – Local
Public – State
Public – Federal

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s)
District
Site
Structure
Object

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS/Colonial Revival; Georgian Revival

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: CONCRETE; ASPHALT; BRICK; STONE; Marble; WOOD; GLASS

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 United States Post Office and Custom House is located at 50 South Main Street near the center of downtown St. Albans (city), Franklin County, Vermont. The original building, constructed in 1938, is comprised of two main components. The two-story core is L-shaped in plan, massed beneath a transverse gable roof, running parallel to Main Street. To the northwest of this core is a one-story, flat roofed wing, which contained the post office workroom, loading dock and mezzanine. Most of the windows in building are original double hung, wood sash and frames in one of several configurations: twelve-over-twelve, eight-over-eight, six-over-six. The main entrance is set within a loggia composed of three arches. An ironwork balcony aligned above the loggia is accessed by a series of three French doors. Two symmetrical vestibules just inside the building lead to the original postal lobby, which retains many of its original features including marble wainscoting and two New Deal era murals, facing each other in the north and south walls of the lobby. The original building, faced with red brick laid in Flemish bond and trimmed with Vermont marble, was extended to the west with a two-story, flat-roofed Federal Office Building addition faced with red brick in American bond above a poured concrete basement, constructed in 1966-1967.

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Features associating the United States Post Office and Custom House with the Colonial Revival style include: Flemish bond brickwork; a symmetrical front façade with a centered and detailed entry; symmetrically placed multi-glazed double hung sash; gable returns framing rondelle windows; a classically detailed cornice; and double chimneys symmetrically placed on the primary ridgeline. The building is in good condition and retains sufficient integrity for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. The 1967 addition does not detract from the original building.

Narrative Description

Introduction

The United States Post Office and Custom House is square in plan, two stories in height and clad in red brick and white Vermont marble. The roof over the main block of the original building is a transverse gable with the gable running parallel to Main Street (north/south). An ell also under a transverse gable connects to the main block at its south end and runs east/ west. Hidden from street view, located within the "L" formed by the main block and ell, in the northwest quadrant of the plan, is a single story, flat-roofed wing which contained the post office workroom, mailing platform and mezzanine. Most of the windows in the structure are original twelve-over-twelve, eight-over-eight, and six-over-six double hung wood sash and frames, with the exception of the gable-end rondelles and French doors above the entrance. These elements also have wood sash and frames.

Completed in 1938, the United States Post Office and Custom House is designed in the Colonial Revival style. Among the features that associate it with the Colonial Revival style are: Flemish bond brickwork; a flat and symmetrical front façade with a centered and detailed entry; symmetrically placed multi-glazed, double hung sash; door and window frames of an ogee profile molding with a beaded outer stop; gable returns framing rondelle windows; cornices of continuous, ogee molding atop a wide frieze band; and, two Flemish bond brick chimneys, symmetrically placed across the primary ridgeline.

The main entrance to the building is within a loggia. Two symmetrical vestibules provide access to the postal lobby, which retains original features including: continuous marble wainscoting; original bronze information cabinets; and, two New Deal era murals, facing one another and located at the north and south walls of the lobby. The murals, titled *Sugaring Off* and *Haying*, were painted in oil by the artist, Philip von Saltza. The federal architect of the United States Post Office and Custom House was Louis Simon, Supervising Architect of the Treasury Department. Simon was supported by Lorimer Rich, a private architect who designed twenty-three post offices and the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier.

Completed in 1967, the Federal Office Building (FOB) addition is attached to the southeast corner of the original building. Rectangular in plan, it is clad with red bricks in an American bond with a flat roof and one-over-one double hung aluminum windows. Its south-facing, primary elevation is recessed slightly from the original building. As a result, although the FOB addition is three stories tall, it stylistically defers to the United States Post Office and Custom House.

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Prior to the 1967 FOB addition, the most significant alteration to the building was the 1962 adaptation of the basement as a fallout shelter, which involved infilling basement windows with concrete blocks. The primary alterations to the building occurred in 1966-1967, concurrent with the construction of the new FOB wing. To accommodate the new wing, original masonry openings on the west elevation of the existing building were filled in or modified as interior doorways. A new HVAC system, integrated with that of the new wing, was installed in the original building, necessitating alteration of some north windows and attic openings as supply and return vents, and the lowering of second floor corridor ceilings to accommodate ductwork. Other work at this time included: replacement of the original east entrance doors with glazed aluminum units; replacement of the original lock boxes and counters in the post office lobby; elimination of the sky light above the postal workroom; addition of a loading dock extension and work facility to the first level rear of the post office; enclosure of the primary stairwell in the lobby; conversion of an off-lobby service area into a lock-box room; addition of spherical light fixtures in the exterior loggia; and replacement of original light fixtures in the lobby. Subsequent alterations include the replacement of the original slate roof with asphalt shingles in 1979. In 1980, rest rooms and interior level changes were improved to make them barrier-free. More recently, bollards and security gates were added along the site perimeter; the balcony over the main entrance was repaired; and, the 1967 aluminum front doors were replaced with more appropriate wooden doors. Most recently, in 2011, following the 2008 departure of the post office from the building, postal spaces on the first floor of the original building were reconfigured for the U.S. Department of State's passport office. Several modifications were made to the lobby at this time. Circa 2012, the asphalt roof was replaced with architectural asphalt shingles more closely simulating the original slate. These alterations, undertaken over time to maintain the viability and meet the changing needs of its tenants, have not adversely affected the overall architectural integrity of the federal building.

Location and Setting

The United States Post Office and Custom House is located on US Route 7, which was an early transnational route. In St. Albans (city), the highway is called Main Street and is the primary north-south route. The United States Post Office and Custom House is located directly below the St. Albans town center, and the National Register listed district of late nineteenth and early twentieth century commercial and civic buildings centered on Taylor Park, the earliest intact common in Vermont.¹

The United States Post Office and Custom House is located at the northwest corner of Main and Stebbins streets, with its front elevation facing east onto Main Street. The parcel's grade drops as it moves from east to west along Stebbins Street. The lower portion of the site houses the rear ell of the original building and the FOB addition. However, the main block of the original building is located at a street corner on the higher section of the site, lending the United States Post Office and Custom House an added sense of monumentality. Compared to the earlier development in the town center, the development surrounding the United States Post Office and Custom House is less dense with larger buildings. Many of the adjacent buildings, including a diner, car dealership, and a rectangular, three-story brick office building, all directly across Main Street, were built in the last fifty years. The Bellows Free Academy, a commanding Georgian Revival style academic building constructed in 1942, is located southeast of the United States Post Office and Custom House, across Main Street and downhill. On Main Street, immediately

¹ St. Albans Historic District, listed in the National Register of Historic Places on May 1, 1980 (NR #80000335),

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to the north of the United States Post Office and Custom House, is a large freestanding three story commercial block dating from the early twentieth century. A two story commercial building, formerly a house, dating from the turn of the twentieth century is located directly behind the United States Post Office and Custom House on Stebbins Street. Across Stebbins Street from the United States Post Office and Custom House is a pair of free-standing Victorian style residences.

The building parcel is bordered by concrete sidewalks on the east and south sides, along Main and Stebbins streets. Black metal bollards, embedded in the sidewalks and linked by chains, line the edge of the property on the east and south sides. A driveway enters the site from Main Street at the northeast corner of the parcel, continuing along the north side to an elevated parking deck with 21 spaces, while another driveway enters from Stebbins Street, just beyond the end of the FOB wing, continuing across the western end of the parcel, providing access to a row of 16 additional parking spaces. Security gates are located at the entrances to both driveways. A wide brick walkway leads to the loggia at the front of the building and is flanked by a panel of lawn on either side. A panel of lawn also runs along the south side of the building.

Original Building Exterior: General Features

The original building of the United States Post Office and Custom House, constructed in 1938, is comprised of two main components. The two-story core is L-shaped in plan, massed beneath a transverse gable roof, running parallel to Main Street. To the northwest of this core is a one-story, flat roofed wing, which contained the post office workroom, loading dock and mezzanine. Together, the two components give the original building a square footprint. The exterior cladding is Flemish bond brickwork with a protruding brick stringcourse running across the south, east, and north elevations between the first and second stories. White Vermont marble with grey veining laid in an ashlar pattern clads the foundation level of the south, east and north elevations. As the site slopes westward, the marble clad foundation has greater presence.

The most visible roofs of the United States Post Office and Custom House are the medium pitch transverse gable roofs on the main block and the ell, which intersect at the southeast corner of the building. Originally of gray Vermont slate, the gable roofs are now clad in architectural asphalt shingle simulating slate. Two symmetrically placed Flemish bond chimneys straddle the north-south ridgeline: the primary ridgeline over the front elevation. Each chimney features patinated copper flashing and the north chimney appears to have been repointed since 2000. Iron snow guards are present at the south and east slopes of the roof. Just beneath the roofline is a continuous ogee-molded Vermont marble cornice that traverses the entire length of both the transverse and gable ends of the original building. A wide, white Vermont marble frieze on the north, east, and south facing non-gabled rooflines underscores this cornice. At the gable ends, the ogee molding forms gable returns with a frieze underscore that frames the rondelle windows. A single story, flat roofed wing, which is not visible from street view, is present at the building's northwest quadrant. This section originally contained the post office workroom, mailing platform and mezzanine and was extended in 1967 with single story block to provide additional loading dock and work area.

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East Elevation: Front

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The east elevation of the United States Post Office and Custom House is the primary or entry elevation, and faces onto Main Street. This elevation is flat and symmetrical. The medium pitched, transverse gable roof is present above this elevation. The front elevation features nine bays divided into three even sections in an A-A-A-B-B-B-A-A-A pattern; two identical side sections flanking the three centered entrance bays. The two side sections feature twelve-over-twelve double-hung wood sash and frames at the first floor, and eight-over-eight double-hung wood sash and frames at the second floor. These rectilinear window openings are original and feature ogee molding at their perimeters with a beaded outer stop, and rectangular sills of white Vermont marble with light gray veining. The entrance features a series of three segmentally arched entries. Each arch is topped by gauged jack-arch brickwork in a splayed lintel pattern.

This entrance encloses a tripartite loggia at the first floor. Within the loggia, the flooring is white Vermont marble with light gray veining in rectilinear slabs placed in a vortex pattern. Two sets of double doors flanking a central window, corresponding to the three loggia openings, are surrounded by segmental arched brick openings. The half-glazed, paneled wood double doors based on the design of the original doors replace the aluminum doors installed in 1966-1967. A wood frame, segmental arched, twelve-light window is located above each doorway. The brick molding around each door and sash is a painted wood ogee with a beaded outer stop. Directly above the two pairs of double doors are transoms with dentiled moldings.

Within the loggia, the center bay between the two pairs of double doors features a twenty-four light, fixed segmental arched window with wood sash and frame. Centered below this window is a white Vermont marble plaque inscribed with the following:

HENRY MORGENTHAU JR
SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY
JAMES A FARLEY
POSTMASTER GENERAL
LOUIS A SIMON SUPERVISING ARCHITECT
NEAL A MELICK SUPERVISING ENGINEER
LORIMER RICH ARCHITECT
1936

Centered below the plaque is a white marble bench. The roof of the loggia features a white-painted plaster ceiling with tripartite rib-vaulting corresponding to each of the loggia's three bays. From the centered cross-axis within each of the three rib vaults hangs a pendant, spherical globe fixture added in 1966-1967. Engaged brick pilasters are present at the loggia corners.

Centered directly above the first floor central entry arch is gold-colored metal lettering stating "St. Albans, Vermont," and directly below this the post office zip code is provided in a smaller size numbers. The signage with the location is original, as shown on the 1936 construction drawings. However, the zip code signage was added at some point after the adoption of zip codes in 1963. Directly above the three entry arches is a three-bay wide, wrought iron balcony, which is painted black. Four pairs of scrolled iron brackets support the balcony at regular intervals, located at the ends and on either side of the center bay. The balcony is surrounded by a railing divided into three bays, each composed of straight pickets framed by panels with

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double s-curve ironwork. Each of these panels is topped by a pair of small, vase-shaped finials. The balcony floor is a pressure-treated wood deck. Above the balcony and opening onto it are three sets of wood French doors. Each door is composed of paired leaves, each leaf having ten lights set within a wood frame over a square panel in the lower quarter. Each door is encompassed by a frame set into a thick brick mold. Both doorframe and brick mold are of white Vermont marble and feature a running ogee design at the perimeter and a beaded outer stop.

Directly beneath the roof, an ogee style white Vermont marble cornice molding runs across the entire front elevation. Centered over the entry in the white marble frieze that underscores this molding are incised the words "United States Post Office and Custom House". Each letter is of a thin, Roman style font with gold painted inlay.

The United States Post Office and Custom House is set back from the sidewalk at its front elevation. In front of the centered entry is a wide Flemish bond brick walkway leading to the three-part loggia and the entrance. On either side of this walk is lawn. Where the lawn meets the building, a series of concrete edged window wells covered with black metal bars protect the mostly subterranean windows of the basement. These windows are nine-over-nine wood double hung sash in rectangular frames. The upper courses of these basement windows would be visible to the street if the concrete capping were not present.

In front of the lawn on either side of the walkway are two trimmed flowering bush specimens. In the southern panel of lawn, upon entry to the walkway from the sidewalk, is a tapered flagpole with a concrete base and a brass balloon finial, one of two flagpoles that originally framed the front entry. A small freestanding sign reading, "U.S. Passport Office," is located within the lawn panel to the north. At the southeast corner of the front lawn is a maple tree and a ground-mounted bronze commemorative plaque indicating the tree as a 1972 planting. After September 11, 2001, three large, square plant pots with flowering plant specimens were placed on the main walkway, as were the nineteenth century-style, black metal bollards that run continuously along the east and south sides of the parcel.

South Elevation: Side

The south elevation is a side elevation of the United States Post Office and Custom House and faces Stebbins Street. Like the east elevation, the south elevation, consisting of the gable end of the original building's main block and the rear ell, along with the 1967 FOB addition, is highly visible, particularly when driving north on Main Street. This visibility is heightened by the fact that the tall gable end portion of the south elevation is placed atop the highest grade on the parcel. The primary cladding of the south elevation, like the rest of the original building, is Flemish bond brickwork with a protruding stringcourse between the upper and lower level windows. The roof of the south elevation is comprised of the gable end abutting the slightly recessed transverse gable of the ell. The ogee molded white Vermont marble cornice present at the front of the building also continues along the south elevation roofline, across the gable to the ell, where it is underscored by a white Vermont marble frieze. At the gable end, the cornice features modest returns.

The foundation of the south elevation of the original building is clad in smooth ashlar Vermont white marble with light gray veining. At the base of the gable end section, series of concrete edged window wells covered with black metal bars protect the mostly subterranean windows

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of the basement. Further to the west, along the base of the ell, is a poured concrete areaway topped with a black painted tubular metal rail. This areaway contains a concrete stairway accessed from the west end and leading downward to two separate doors for basement entry. Each wood entry door is of two panels with the upper panel glazed in nine lights within a wood sash. The entry door is set into a wood frame with an ogee mold at its perimeter and a beaded outer stop. Six-over-six light, wood sash basement windows, largely subterranean, are also present within this areaway.

The south elevation of the United States Post Office and Custom House has eight bays: three of which are within the gable end section at the east end of this elevation, and the other five bays traverse the length of the slightly recessed ell. The first level windows are twelve-over-twelve wood double hung sash. The second level windows both are eight-over-eight wood double hung sash. The first and second level windows all feature rectangular sills of white Vermont marble with light gray veining and each sash is topped by gauged jack brickwork. The gable end section of the south elevation features ogee molded marble gable returns and frieze underscore, framing a circular attic rondelle window. This window has been converted into a milled, aluminum attic louver.

Behind and fully connected to the ell of the United States Post Office and Custom House is the 1967 FOB addition. The addition is recessed slightly from the wall plane of the south elevation of the ell. Rectangular in plan and three stories high, it features a flat roof, American bond brick clad walls, and eight bays of one-over-one aluminum double hung windows. Its entrance is at the far west end of the south elevation. The entry bay is double width and devoid of fenestration, except for the entrance, which is offset to the east. The entrance is a storefront unit composed of a fully glazed door surrounded by sidelights and transom set within aluminum framing. The entrance is approached by a concrete sidewalk and a set of concrete steps flanked by black painted pipe railings. On the wall above and to the west of the entrance is silver colored metal lettering stating "Federal Building." Below this are two silver colored metal plaques depicting the obverse and reverse of the Great Seal of the United States.

The landscape features at the south elevation of the United States Post Office and Custom House include a strip of lawn, sidewalks at the outer edge of the property, and a continuous row of post September 11, 2001 bollards matching those at the front elevation.

West Elevation: Rear

Although the rear elevation of the United States Post Office and Custom House is dominated visually by the 1967 additions, the major portion of the rear is comprised of the flat roofed inset construction of the original building's post office workroom and mailing platform. Although it remains embedded behind the newer construction, none of the first level of the original building is visible at this elevation. The lower level of the west elevation features a six bay steel beam column and masonry dock expansion added in 1967. What was originally a mailing platform was enclosed at that time and has become part of the dock vestibule.

At the north side of the rear elevation is a small brick addition, square in plan, also added in 1967. In front of this addition, a metal stairway leads to a metal balcony at the second level placed over the 1967 dock addition. The second story of the rear elevation at its southern end features the gable end of the original building's ell with gable returns underscored by a marble frieze. What was originally a rondelle window between the returns has been converted into a large square-

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shaped milled aluminum HVAC louver. The abutting FOB addition obscures the remainder of the gable end on this elevation. Above the single story of the original postal workroom and 1967 additions, the eight bays of the second level of the main block are visible on the rear elevation. Each bay has an eight-over-eight, wood double hung sash. On the rear elevation of the main block, the ogee molded cornice is present but the marble frieze is missing below. Behind the post office section and enclosed by the north elevation of the FOB addition is an elevated, concrete-paved vehicle deck that was expanded in 1966. The pre-expansion boundary line of the original deck is still present. The elevated deck is accessed by the driveway from Main Street at the north end of the building.

The west end of the FOB addition has a single one-over-one aluminum double hung window in the center of the elevation on each of the three levels. A secondary entrance is located at the north end of the elevation. This entrance is similar to that on the west elevation of the FOB addition, an aluminum and glass storefront unit. A metal-clad gable roofed canopy shelters the entry. A concrete walkway with pipe metal railings extends along the rear of the elevation, leading to the elevated vehicle deck.

North Elevation: Side

The north elevation of the United States Post office and Custom House features the gable end of the main block and the abutting single story flat-roofed section of the original postal workroom. At the lower level, eight window bays are present upon this elevation: three within the gable, and five within the inset. Similar to other elevations, these lower level windows are twelve-over-twelve wood double hung sash with gauged jack brick work and Vermont marble sills. Similar to the other elevations, window frames are of a running ogee design at the perimeter with a beaded outer stop. At the north elevation, the rearmost two window bays have been infilled. The marble sill at the rearmost of these blind windows is missing. In the upper section of the rear blind window, a milled rectangular aluminum attic louver is present. This louver and the filling in of these windows both occurred in 1967 with the installation of the HVAC system. In each of the three bays of the upper level of the gable end is an eight-over-eight, wood double hung sash window. The gabled section of the north elevation features a running ogee cornice with frieze underscored gable returns that frame an original twelve light rondelle, horizontal pivot window with a circular, ogee molded window frame.

The flat, inset roof construction of the north elevation features a white Vermont Marble cymatium running across the roof edge. At the base of the north elevation construction is a concrete-enclosed subterranean areaway with painted metal pipe railing. Concrete stairs, entered from the west, descend down to a molded steel doorframe and one two-panel door with nine lights in the upper panel. Appended to the end of north elevation is a single bay 1967 addition with a metal door.

Parallel and adjacent to the north elevation of the United States Post Office and Custom House is a concrete driveway used for entering and exiting the elevated vehicle deck at the rear of the building. At the face of the building, a metal security gate blocks access to the driveway.

Beyond this north elevation and separated from it by the single story mass of the original postal workroom and 1967 additions to it are the north elevations of the ell and 1967 addition. Only the second level of the ell is visible above the single story inset section. It has five bays each with an eight-over-eight wood double hung sash window. As elsewhere on the original building,

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an ogee molded white Vermont marble cornice underscored by a white Vermont marble frieze continues along the north elevation roofline. As the elevated vehicle deck abuts the 1967 FOB addition on its north side, only the second and third levels of the addition are visible here. On both levels there are seven bays, each with a one-over-one aluminum double hung window. The long west end bay of the addition, corresponding to that on the south side containing the entrance, is blind on this side.

Interior – Public Spaces

The primary, publicly accessible interior areas of the United States Post Office and Custom House include two side vestibules, each adjacent to a central foyer, which enters into a larger rectangular space that is the lobby. All of these spaces share a variety of design elements, including: polished black terrazzo floors with diamond patterned brass dividers; Rochester marble Dark Verde antique fascia bases; and, a consistent height continuous gray polished Vermont Olivo Marble Wainscot with marble frieze, that runs up to the lower edge of clerestory windows in the foyer, directly over doorways and under the two murals of the lobby.

The primary entrance to the United States Post Office and Custom House is through the east elevation. Two sets of symmetrically placed entrance doors are located at either end of the loggia. Upon entry into the building, each set of doors opens into its own square plan vestibule. The dual vestibules are split by a foyer between them, accessible from either vestibule by two symmetrical sets of painted, wood two panel doors with original matched brass butt hinges, door pulls, and kick plate. The upper panel of each door is float glass. The wood doorframes feature an ogee mold running the outer perimeter. Directly above each door is a plain lintel transom. Above these transoms, which separate the vestibule spaces from the foyer, are fifteen light, wood, fixed-clerestory windows with a segmental arched frame. The east wall of the foyer consists of the twenty-four light sash seen from the center, lower level of the front outer elevation between the two pairs of double entry doors. Inside, the window frame of this sash features an ogee molding and wood stops instead of marble sills.

At the far end of each vestibule and centered against the east wall of the foyer below the central, twenty-four light window are three iron, floor radiators. The ceiling over the vestibule and foyer is three square bays, each recessed and corbelled. The opening from the foyer to the lobby is crowned with a wide segmental arch. In the east wall of the lobby at either side of the large foyer opening are a set of twenty-four light, wood, fixed sash windows with a segmental arched upper course, and running molded frames. Above the wainscot and windows, the walls and ceiling are gypsum plaster.

The lobby space retains its original height and volume, although its lighting fixtures were replaced in 1966. The east lobby wall is the wall closest to the entry. From the lobby, the twin vestibules are visible through a dual set of twenty-four light, wood, fixed sash with a segmental arched upper course. The window frames of these two sashes feature running molded wood frames and wood stops and are similarly segmental arch-headed. Between these in the east wall is a wide segmental arched opening connecting the lobby to the foyer.

The east wall also features original information cases with a glass front and cast guilloche frame. Above each information case in gold and black transfer decal cursive font with serif are the words "Directory" and "Bulletin board." One information case is located at either end of the twenty-four light windows at the northern and southern ends of the east wall. These framed

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bulletin cases are also present on the north and west lobby walls. At the southern corner of the east wall is a metal door with a small float glass window and float glass sidelights. This door opens up to a stairway that was originally exposed to the lobby, but enclosed in 1966-1967. The words "Federal Offices" are attached in gold metal 1960s era lettering above the door in the marble frieze.

The north and south walls of the lobby are recessed behind their east and west corners. The north wall features an original door opening which led to the Postmaster's office. Following the removal of the post office, the original wood door was replaced with a modern fire-rated door. On either side of the door, which is centered in the wall, are two paired guilloched information cases similar in kind to those on the west and east walls. The word "Bulletin" is written above each case in black outlined gold transfer lettering in cursive with a serif. Both the cases and the door are within the marble wainscot that runs continuously across all walls of the lobby.

Covering the entire upper section of the north wall is a mural titled, *Sugaring Off*, painted in oil on canvas by the artist, Philip von Saltza. The 5.88 foot high by 16.25 foot long mural portrays the regionalist subject matter commonly portrayed in New Deal era federal murals, and does so in the loose, expressive brushwork of the Social Realist style. *Sugaring Off* features a snow-covered landscape with children at play, the gathering and piling of lumber, a courting couple, and the making of maple syrup.

The south wall of the lobby features two symmetrical and open doorways. The doorframes of both are original molded wood. The running marble wainscot present on the other three walls of the lobby is also present upon the south wall. Above these two doorways and the marble wainscot is the second von Saltza mural, titled, *Haying*, also done in oil on canvas and measuring 6 foot high by 16 foot long. This mural squarely faces the *Sugaring Off* mural on the opposite wall. Similar to *Sugaring Off*, *Haying* features regional activities that would take place during that season in rural Vermont. These activities include the gathering of hay, couples dancing to a fiddle, tilling the soil, and the wiping of a brow. *Haying* is painted in colors brighter than that of *Sugaring Off*. Each mural is lit by a row of recent light-emitting diode (LED) lights attached to the ceiling.

Except for the recessed sections of the north and south walls, all the walls in the lobby are topped with a plaster cornice fascia. The ceiling features a running architrave and ogee style molded cornice in plaster. The backlit fluorescent lighting fixtures over the lobby space were added in 1966.

Originally, the postal service counters in the lobby were located at the west wall, marked by two large, rectangular openings at the north end. In the 2011 rehabilitation converting postal spaces to passport offices, these openings were converted to doors. Also in 2011, a room, constructed in 1967 to open off the lobby to house a stamp dispenser and three bays of lock-boxes, was removed, restoring the lobby to its original 1938 configuration. Where necessary, the lobby's marble wainscoting was restored with marble from the original quarry. In 2011, a janitor's closet off the lobby, just north of the northern entrance vestibule, was converted to a public restroom and a security desk, magnetometer and X-ray machine were added inside the lobby.

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Non-Public Interior Spaces

Nearly all non-public areas on the first floor of the United States Post Office and Custom House beyond the lobby were reconfigured in 2011, following the removal of the post office. Previously, much of the area on the west side of the west wall of the lobby was open, utilized as the postal workroom. Additional large volumes were devoted to the custom mail examination room and mailing platform. All these areas, as well as the smaller, enclosed areas toward the east front of the building which were used for various postal service administrative purposes, such as the postmaster's suite, were reconfigured for the new tenant. Currently, a single common hallway at the north end of the original building gives access to numerous small, enclosed offices connected by short interior hallways. These recently rehabilitated areas feature finishes typical of early twenty-first century offices, including wallboard partitions, carpeted floors and dropped ceilings with lay-in lighting.

An original stairway remains behind a steel door labeled "Federal Offices," at the southern portion of the east wall of the lobby, is a quarter-turn stairway that leads to the second floor, attic, and basement. The stairway features polished black granite treads and landings with scored concrete edges. The rail is of stained hardwood, the balusters are metal, and the string features molded paneling. Metal, diamond headed newel drops and newel posts are part of the design.

The second level of the United States Post Office and Custom House retains its original floor plan of two halls in a transverse "L" meeting at the southeast corner of the building. The second floor consists largely of office space devoted to Customs and Border Protection-related activities. The flooring at the second level is wall-to-wall carpeting over original wood floors with a low, vinyl baseboard. A dropped acoustic ceiling and modern light fixtures were added in 1966 when the air conditioning system was added through the structure. All of the door frames on the second level are wood and have an architrave with beaded edge and ogee molding.

The east-west hall continues unimpeded into the 1967 FOB addition. Two types of doors are present at the second level. All of the doors are wood, with two panels framed by bead molding, and a brass mail slot between the two panels. In the south hall, the upper panels feature translucent glazing, and in the east hall the upper panel, like the lower, is solid wood. The office interiors of the second level feature fascia baseboards with ogee above the fascia, a double ogee chair rail above a wainscot and ogee picture molding. The walls are painted gypsum plaster. Most of the office spaces possess a window.

Above the second floor and accessible by the stairwell is the attic. The attic door is a wood, two-panel door with ogee molding around each panel and original brass hardware. The unfinished attic is entered through a thick, diagonal topped stairwell enclosure of ridged terra cotta clay tile block. The attic space echoes the shape of the transverse gabled roofline, and is largely an open space used for storage. Exposed steel I-beam diagonal common rafters affixed to the ridge beam are present. Steel vertical and diagonal posts that also run from the floor to the ridge beam support these steel beams. At the northern section of the attic is one oblong chimney flue of American course brickwork that connects to the basement level boiler room.

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Beneath the first floor of the United States Post Office and Custom House is the basement, which is also accessible by the southeast stairwell. The basement level is indicated on the exterior of the structure by the marble ashlar cladding. The basement originally had a U-shaped corridor leading to various workrooms, mechanical rooms and storerooms. In 1962, the central section of the basement was converted to a fallout shelter. Today, only vestiges of the original U-shaped corridor remain and the large open fallout shelter area has been subdivided into multiple offices and workspaces.

The rear section of the property behind the basement is excavated and is an enclosed parking structure. Large square concrete columns support this parking structure. The parking structure continues under the north-side driveway. Much of the basement features concrete floors and or terra cotta block or concrete wall surfaces.

Windows run across the basement perimeter at the north, south, and east elevations of the building. The basement windows are eight-over-eight wood double hung sash, except at the north elevation where they are six-over-six wood double hung sash. The window frames feature a running ogee at their perimeter and wood stools. Just outside each window is a square, exposed concrete light well indicated by the concrete capping seen where the ground meets the building at the exterior.

The primary organizing feature of the 1967 FOB wing is the east-west hallway, present on all three levels, running the length of the wing. The first level is the entry point for the wing, with a common area at the west end giving access to the stairway and elevator located in the southwest corner of the wing. On the first level, the hallway runs along the northern wall of the wing with offices to the south and connects with the east-west hallway of the original building on its basement floor. On the second and third levels of the wing, the hallway is located in the center of the wing with offices to either side. On the second level, the wing abuts the original building, but does not connect to it. On the third level, the wing hallway connects with the east-west hallway of the original building on its second floor.

Integrity

Overall, the United States Post Office and Custom House is in excellent condition. The most significant alteration to the building was the 1967 addition of the FOB wing. In all respects, the addition defers to the original 1938 building. Although the FOB wing is three stories tall, its siting, at the back and lowest portion of the parcel, and flat roof ensure that it does not overwhelm the two story original building. Clad in matching red brick and devoid of details or architectural flourishes it is a background building. A number of other alterations occurred in 1967-1967, concurrent with the construction of the new FOB wing. The most substantial of these alterations, the addition of a loading dock extension and work facility to the first level rear of the post office, is not visible from either Main or Stebbins Street. Several alterations from 1966-1967 were ameliorated subsequently, such as the most recent architectural shingle roof simulating slate and the replacement of the 1967 aluminum front doors with wood doors matching the original doors. Alterations undertaken in 2011, after the post office left the building, eliminated the original postal area floor plan on the first floor beyond the lobby. However, this area was never accessible to the public. On the exterior, the street facing elevations of the building are largely unaltered. The main public spaces, the vestibules, foyer and lobby on the first floor of the original building, remain largely intact. Thus, despite the alterations undertaken over time to meet the changing needs of the building's tenants, the

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building retains sufficient architectural integrity to convey its significance through its location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association.

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

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

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Architecture

Politics/Government

Period of Significance

1939

Significant Dates

1938, 1939

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Simon, Louis A., Supervising Architect of the Treasury

Rich, Lorimer

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

Completed in 1938 by the Treasury Department, the United States Post Office and Custom House in St. Albans, Vermont, is a visual symbol of the federal presence in the city of St. Albans and a local representation of thousands of public buildings constructed under the Public Works Administration (1933-1939). Additionally, it is associated with transportation-related developments of the 1930s and the federal program to improve facilities at the nation's international borders. The United States Post Office and Custom House is a good, intact example of a New Deal era post office and courthouse building executed in the Colonial Revival style. The vast majority of the building's original Colonial Revival design features retain their architectural integrity. The two murals, *Sugaring Off* and *Haying*, commissioned by the Treasury Department's Section of Fine Arts and painted by the artist, Philip von Saltza in 1939, are representative examples of New Deal era art projects in federal buildings, which sought to provide citizens access to high quality artwork and to promote civic values through the influence of art. Louis Simon, Supervising Architect of the Treasury Department, and supporting architect, Lorimer Rich, designed the United States Post Office and Custom House in a style compatible with a series of contemporary border inspection stations in Vermont. It is significant under Criterion A for Politics/Government and Criterion C for Architecture at the local level of significance, with a period of significance of 1939, representing the date of the completion of the building and its lobby murals.

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

Historical Narrative

Early Postal and St. Albans History

The U.S. Post was the primary means of long distance communication extant in the early history of the United States. The establishment of a post office by the U.S. Congress in a given community, particularly smaller communities, was a crucial act for connecting such communities, through communication, to other parts of the United States and beyond. At the turn of the nineteenth century, the establishment of post offices also played a vital role in uniting newly admitted states, like Vermont, with the rest of the Union.

St. Albans town was originally surveyed and laid out by New Hampshire Governor Benning Wentworth in 1763. A largely uncharted territory between New Hampshire and New York at that time, the original 64 land grantees sold or transferred their properties to Ira and Levi Allen (brothers to Green Mountain boy and Vermont founder Ethan Allen), who promptly resold the properties after the Revolutionary War.

Immediately after the Revolutionary War, in 1781 the Republic of Vermont hired its first post rider to ride between Bennington and Albany. Two years later, in Bennington, the state's first

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post office was established. On March 4, 1784, a wider postal system was established for the Republic of Vermont that did not include the Lake Champlain areas such as St. Albans.

St. Albans town was founded in 1788, when Jesse Welden, the first local settler of European descent, held the first town meeting at his residence.² Vermont was admitted into the Union three years later, in 1791. On February 20, 1792, an Act of the U.S. Congress approved postal routes for Vermont.³ This same year St. Albans was declared the shire city of Franklin County and Ira Allen laid out what is now part of US Route 7 as a coach route from Burlington to Montreal, Quebec. US Route 7, which is Main Street through St. Albans, was the primary trunk line between New York and Montreal.⁴ It would later become the primary automobile road through East Vermont until the advent of Interstate 89 in the 1960s.

In 1793, Silas Hathaway erected a house and tavern on Route 7 that is believed to be the site of the first post office in Franklin County.⁵ Hathaway, a large area landowner known as "Baron Hathaway," also held county court in the building from 1797 to 1802. In the first years of St. Albans, the Hathaway Tavern was headquarters for newcomers. The federal government would establish a post office there in 1800. Seth B. Pomeroy was St. Albans first congressionally appointed postmaster. The postmaster position was one that until the 1930s was a highly political position that legally and openly could organize political activities for the party in power. Located at 255 N. Main St., Hathaway Tavern still stands today as the oldest wood frame house in Franklin County, and is commonly known as the Hoyt House for a family that lived there a number of years.⁶

The period of 1800-1820 was a boom period for post offices as the number of post offices and miles of post roads quadrupled during that time.⁷ The early establishment of these routes and new post office sites was done by an act of the U.S. Congress. Congressmen often took advantage of franking privileges to seek favor from constituents in communities that featured newly established post offices and postal routes.⁸ St. Albans grew rapidly, aided by postal routes, but in large part due to the establishment in 1850 of the Central Vermont Railroad (CVRR) headquarters in the city. St. Albans soon became the industrial center of Vermont, and the rail freight center for upper New England. The central part of St. Albans town was incorporated as a village in 1859 and as a city in 1902.

Located at the corner of Federal and Kingman streets, the second post office in St. Albans also included a custom house. It was constructed in the Richardson Romanesque style in 1895, the same year a great fire that destroyed over 130 buildings in St. Albans, including most of the buildings on Main Street west of the Taylor Park common.⁹ This fire also destroyed the interior of what was then the new post office, which was subsequently refinished.

² Richard J. Ewald, *History Walk* (St. Albans, VT: Museum of St. Albans, 1995), 3.

³ Allen Lovey and Terence Fitzgerald, *Vermont Postal History: The Lake Champlain Mails 1809-1875* (Essex Junction, VT:

Paul Abajian, 2005), 1.

⁴ "Oldest Frame Dwelling in County Built 143 Yrs. Ago," *St. Albans (VT) Messenger*, October 24, 1936.

⁵ Ewald, *History Walk*, 16.

⁶ Mabel W. Mayforth, "Hoyt Mansion Oldest House in Franklin County; Built By Silas Hathaway In 1793," *St. Albans (VT) Messenger*, n.d.

⁷ Beth M. Boland, National Register Bulletin 13:How to Apply the National Register Criteria to Post Offices, (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1994), 3.

⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹ Richard Morsbach, Vermont Division of Historic Preservation, "St. Albans District," National Register of Historic Places Nomination (Washington, DC: National Park Service, 1980), section 8, page 3.

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The following year, in 1896, the rural free mail delivery system was established. By the 1930s, the 1895 post office had become too small to service necessary postal and customs operations and in 1937 construction was begun on the United States Post Office and Custom House on South Main Street. From 1938 until recently, the 1895 post office served as an immigration processing facility, as immigrants heading for U.S. would sometimes land in Halifax, Nova Scotia, or Montreal and take train through the border with Canada to St. Albans. The building is still extant and currently serves as a state office and district court building.

Located several blocks to the southeast of the 1895 building, the new United States Post Office and Custom House at 50 South Main Street opened on August 24, 1938, on the sesquicentennial celebration day for St. Albans town.¹⁰ The entire day was devoted to commemoration with decorated streets, a parade, an Elks Club luncheon, and a boys' choir in the park, followed by the opening ceremony for the new post office and custom house. Herbert B. Butler was the local postmaster of the new facility. Speakers at the opening ceremony included Postmaster General James A. Farley, his secretary, Ambrose O'Connell, and Vermont Senators Warren Austin and Ernest Gibson.

***The Public Buildings Act and PWA Era Post Office Architecture*¹¹**

The construction funds for hundreds of federal buildings across the country including the United States Post Office and Custom House, St. Albans, were initially approved in the U.S. Public Buildings Act, passed by President Calvin Coolidge in 1926. The Public Buildings Act, also called the Keyes-Elliott Act, allotted \$100 million for the construction of federal buildings outside the District of Columbia. This act allowed the secretary of the Treasury Department and the Postmaster General to select towns and cities and specific sites for new buildings. The estimated cost of implementing construction of the Keyes-Elliott Act was \$170,420,000, but the actual construction was delayed by economic conditions, including the stock market crash of 1929.¹²

With the onset of the Great Depression, the architectural profession and construction trades were extremely hard hit by unemployment. On May 31, 1930, the U.S. Congress amended the U.S. Public Buildings Act of 1926, with increased funding and further authorized the Secretary of the Treasury to contract with private firms and individuals.¹³ To meet spatial requirements of the Treasury Department and the Post Office Department, the Hoover administration and the U.S. Congress increased funding for the federal building program in 1928, 1930, and 1931, for a total of \$700 million.¹⁴ The Federal Employment Stabilization Act of 1931 directed federal construction agencies to prepare six-year building plans and increased appropriations for that year by \$100 million. As a result, 133 architectural firms were commissioned to design federal

¹⁰ Margaret B. Armstrong, ed., et al., *St. Albans Vermont Through the Years 1763-1963: A Bicentennial History* (St. Albans, VT: Regal Art Press, 1977), 51.

¹¹ Federal Government and Act information in this section provided by: U.S. General Services Administration, "Historic Context—U.S. Post Offices, Courthouses and Federal Buildings designed and constructed by the Treasury Department, 1864-1939" Rev. ed. (Washington, DC: U.S. General Services Administration, 2006).

¹² Emily Harris, *History of Post Office Construction: 1900-1940* (Washington, DC: U.S. Postal Service, 1982) 13-14.

¹³ Harris, *History of Post Office Construction*, 17.

¹⁴ Lois Craig, and the Staff of the Federal Architecture Project. *The Federal Presence: Architecture, Politics and Symbols in United States Government Buildings* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1978), 281.

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buildings in 1931, and this number increased to 301 by 1934.¹⁵ This practice ended, however, on June 29, 1934, with an order that the Office of the Supervising Architect, the Treasury Department, design all remaining federal buildings.¹⁶

The Public Works Administration (PWA) was established in 1933 to oversee the planning and construction of public works projects. The program would stimulate the economy through the massive scale of projects under construction and would provide communities throughout the country with badly needed modern facilities.

In 1933, many of the properties of the federal government were in poor shape. In a number of cities, post offices were in disrepair, federal justice was being dispensed in buildings with sagging floors and leaky roofs, and in scattered courthouses along our far-flung borders, U.S. Customs Service men in some instances had to work in poorly heated and equipped buildings. Federal prisons failed to live up to the standards set by the federal government's own penologists. There was a shortage of post offices, prisons, veteran's hospitals, and other federal facilities.¹⁷

As of February 28, 1939, PWA federal building construction projects totaled 3,167 buildings at \$105,984,762, including 30 courthouses and city halls with an allotment of \$1,312,012 and 406 post offices with an allotment of \$43,607,814.¹⁸

The United States Post Office and Custom House was designed in 1936 by Louis Simon, Supervising Architect of the Treasury Department, and Lorimer Rich. Louis A. Simon (1867-1958) was Supervising Architect of the Treasury Department from 1933-1939, a period when the Office of the Supervising Architect was one of the largest architectural offices in the world. Simon oversaw the design of thousands of new federal projects across the country. Approximately three times the number of post offices were built during the 1930s as had been built over the previous fifty years. After receiving architectural training at MIT and briefly working in private practice, Simon worked for the Office of the Supervising Architect continuously from 1896 until his retirement in 1939. During Judge James Wetmore's tenure (1915-1933) as Acting Supervising Architect, Simon directed the office's design activities because Mr. Wetmore had no formal training in architecture.¹⁹

Under the PWA and Simon's direction, federal government architecture in the 1930s was designed in a simplified Classical Revival style, sometimes called "PWA Moderne," or, like the 1938 United States Post Office and Custom House in St. Albans, the Colonial Revival style. The designs often included murals or sculptures.²⁰ The need to provide federal government space but save the cost of unnecessary ornament during the 1930s fit well with the principles of modern architecture being then introduced, stressing functionality, open plans with interchangeable work areas, and exterior surfaces in uninterrupted simple planes and volumes.

¹⁵ Harris, *History of Post Office Construction*, 15, 17, and 19.

¹⁶ Boland, *National Register Bulletin* 13, 3.

¹⁷ U.S. Federal Emergency Administration of Public Works (PWA), *America Builds. The Record of PWA. Public Works Administration* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1939), 106.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 290.

¹⁹ Craig, *The Federal Presence*, 328.

²⁰ Harris, *History of Post Office Construction*, 20,25.

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The Office of the Supervising Architect did not adopt the modernist vocabulary on the exterior, but held steadfast to references to the Classical or Colonial Revival styles to convey the democratic ideals and traditions of the federal government. Although the office continued to use revival styles, the federal government's architects were not entirely blind to the modern movement. Louis Simon served as the first president of the Association of Federal Architects (AFA), which was organized late in 1927. The AFA held dinners with prominent modernist speakers such as Frank Lloyd Wright, Eliel Saarinen, and Richard Neutra, and published a quarterly magazine from 1930 to 1946, which largely defended the federal government's designs.²¹

Stylistically, Modernism in the United States Post Office and Custom House, St. Albans expresses itself most clearly in the building lobby, where moldings and wainscot are minimal rather than elaborated, flat unadorned wall and ceiling surfaces are present, and the recession of the dual niches that house the two murals are abstracted rectangles.

The second architect credited with the United States Post Office and Custom House, St. Albans is Lorimer Rich (1891-1978). One of a few of the Treasury Department's consulting private architects during the 1934-1939 construction period, Rich designed a variety of public buildings including amphitheatres, dormitories, and federal buildings. Notable among the many post offices credited to Rich is the PWA Moderne style Madison Square Station Post Office, in New York City (1935). However, perhaps his best-known work is the 1921 Tomb of the Unknowns at Arlington National Cemetery, a commission that Rich won through a national competition early in his career and undertook in conjunction with sculptor Thomas Hudson Jones.²²

The Colonial Revival Style

The Colonial Revival style draws upon the architecture of the American colonies in the seventeenth century and, particularly, the eighteenth century, and is symbolically associated with the founding of the United States of America. A renewed interest in Colonial architecture began during the 1876 Centennial Exhibition in Philadelphia, in conjunction with the 100th anniversary celebration of the founding of the United States. The highly publicized travels and early projects of the architects, McKim, Mead, and White in the 1880s further advocated revisiting Jacobean, Georgian, Federal and other early Colonial styles. The *White Pine Series of Architectural Monographs*, first published in 1914, widely disseminated drawings and photographs of early American building details, encouraging accurate reproduction of Federal and Georgian styles. However, more commonly, features of these specific historical styles were combined and loosely applied in the Colonial Revival style. The style enjoyed great popularity in the United States in the period between 1915 and 1935 was applied to all building types, from residential to public buildings.²³

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.²⁴ 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

²¹ Craig, *The Federal Presence*, 298.

²² The Living New Deal, "Designer: Lorimer Rich – Architect," <https://livingnewdeal.org/designers/lorimer-rich-architect/>

²³ Virginia McAlester and Lee McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses* (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 2003), 325-326.

²⁴ Boland, *National Register Bulletin*, Section III, 3-5.

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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.

The United Post Office and Custom House employs a variety of Georgian design elements which include a flat, transverse gabled facade flanked by a symmetrically placed chimney at the ridgeline and an even number of large, multi-light, double hung window bays set in ogee molding across the façade at either side of a centered entrance. In Colonial Revival architecture, Classical details adorned walls, ceilings, fireplaces, windows, cornices, and especially entranceways, which often featured Classical columns and a pediment.²⁵ Classical exterior features such as the arched loggia, white marble ogee cornice moldings, jack arch brickwork above windows, gables with returns, and rondelle windows are evident on the exterior of the United States Post Office. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, building in brick, which was a fireproof material, was costlier than building in wood. Thus, in the Colonial Revival, institutional buildings, such as banks, universities and churches, as well as civic and governmental buildings are often clad in brick, connoting permanence and prosperity. The United States Post Office and Custom House references this tradition. Within the transverse facades of Georgian Colonial Revival buildings was often a continuous hallway; the lateral lobby space of the St. Albans Post Office references this spatial arrangement.

Colonial Revival in St. Albans

The United States Post Office and Custom House is an unusually well-developed example of the Colonial Revival style and is among the oldest surviving examples of the style in St. Albans. The brick-clad, gabled building with restrained, white-colored, ornament at the roofline as well as at door and window frames appears repeatedly on institutional architecture in St. Albans. However, these late twentieth century bank buildings were built well after the United States Post Office and Custom House: 152 South Main Street, 133 North Main Street and 109 North Main Street. The popularity of the Colonial Revival style for residential architecture is evidenced by the late nineteenth century residence at 196 North Main Street, which displays a prominent end gable roof, red brick walls, white trim, multi-light windows, cornice with returns and gabled entry portico.

The St. Albans building most comparable to the United States Post Office and Custom House in period, scale and architectural sophistication is the Bellows Free Academy. Although stylistically related to the Colonial Revival style in that it is a symmetrical, two story, red brick clad building with light colored masonry accents, multi-light windows and classical detailing, the academy, constructed in 1942, features design details more closely related to Georgian England than Colonial America.

Lobby Murals

During the New Deal period, the federal buildings were often paired with public art of various types, sometimes sculpture, but usually wall murals. The U.S. government administered four separate art projects that operated from 1933 to 1943. Of the four, the Treasury Department's Section of Painting and Sculpture (later the Section of Fine Arts) was the primary sponsor of art

²⁵ David Larkin, June Sprigg and James Johnson, *Colonial: Design in the New World* (New York: Stewart, Tabori & Chang: distributed by Workman Publishing Co., 1988), 19.

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placed in post office buildings. One percent of the total cost of a building's construction budget was allocated to complete its respective artwork.²⁶ The intention of the program was not only to employ visual artists struggling through the Depression, but also to make high quality art accessible to individuals that may not otherwise see it.²⁷

Artists were selected through blind competitions and, as evidenced through their selection process, the administration preferred representational subject matter, often incorporating regional themes. Such is the case of the *Sugaring Off* and *Haying* murals at the north and south walls of the U.S. post office lobby. Both murals depict a specific perception of culture and values associated with rural Vermont. The lumber chopping and making of maple syrup in the *Sugaring Off* mural, baling hay and tilling soil in the *Haying* mural, represent hard work. Courtship is represented in the *Sugaring Off* mural as a couple deeply engaged in conversation and dancing to a fiddler in the *Haying* mural. Both murals depict children at play and landscapes associated with Northeast Vermont: an open, snow-covered landscape dotted with trees for *Sugaring Off* and green rolling hills with a red barn for *Haying*. The *Sugaring Off* and *Haying* murals were painted by the artist Philip von Saltza and are representational, executed in oil on canvas with gestural, expressive brushstrokes and slight form elongations. The combination of this subject matter and stylistic traits is commonly associated with the Social Realism school of Thomas Hart Benton.

Philip von Saltza (1885-1980) was born in Sweden and immigrated to the United States with his parents as a youth. In 1940, von Saltza painted several post office murals, including: Milford, New Hampshire (*Lumberman Log-Rolling*); Schuyler, Nebraska (*Wild Horses by Moonlight*); and Williamston, North Carolina (*First Flight of the Wright Brothers at Kitty Hawk*).²⁸

Improved Transnational Roads and Associated Border Stations

The United States Post Office and Custom House, St. Albans is also significant for its connection to transportation-related developments of the 1930s. Specifically, the United States Post Office and Custom House was built in relation to the larger programmatic context of new U.S./Canada border stations built in Vermont during the 1930s. U.S. Border Inspection Stations built between 1931 and 1943 were new building types planned, designed and constructed by the U.S. government in response to greatly increased volume of motor vehicles across land borders, and the need to adequately enforce the nation's new customs and immigration laws. Prior to the 1920s, goods and people primarily entered the United States at sea, lake or river ports. As motor vehicle ownership, popularity, and total miles traveled increased, the U.S. Bureau of Public Roads improved roads and highways at international borders with Canada and Mexico. In 1917 and 1921, immigration laws were tightened, and the imposition of head taxes and quotas resulted in increasing numbers of illegal border crossings. From 1919 through the 1920s, prohibition laws increased the smuggling of alcohol and other illegal goods across land borders.

²⁶ Boland, *National Register Bulletin* 13, 4.

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ New Deal Art Registry, "Philip Von Saltza," <http://www.newdealartregistry.org/artist/SaltzaphilipVon/>.

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Similar to the United States Post Office and Custom House, the border inspection stations were initially funded by the 1926 Federal Buildings Act, but jumpstarted after the 1931 Federal Employment Stabilization Act that allowed the PWA to begin its building campaign. Designed by the Office of the Supervising Architect in a variety of revival styles, the border inspections stations constructed in Vermont display Colonial Revival and Georgian Revival features, with red brick cladding, gable roofs, multi-light windows and symmetrical facades.²⁹

These border inspection stations also developed in the context of the massive road rebuilding that occurred as a result of the great flood of November 3, 1927, the wettest day on record in the history of Vermont, and one of the state's worst disasters. The 1927 great flood effectively ended the economic dominance of railroad transportation in Vermont, which had been centered in St. Albans. Many tracks were washed out, never to return. Many roads that were originally dirt became paved with asphalt, changing the landscape and increasing the ability to travel by automobile through the state.³⁰ With the advent of improved automobile roads, the facilities within the United States Post Office and Custom House, St. Albans, could easily service the various border stations along the Canadian border, and do so from the last sizable city on Interstate 89 before reaching the border.

Integrity

The United States Post Office and Custom House—St. Albans is in its original location. The location is significant as Main Street through St. Albans is US Route 7, an early stage route between New York and Quebec that was the primary thoroughfare through western Vermont until the development of Interstate 89 in the 1960s.

The location of the United States Post Office and Custom House is directly below the Taylor Park common and the National Register District that is the center of St. Albans city. Pre-World War II post offices were deliberately built near town centers, and also near railroad tracks or depots. The United Post Office and Custom House was walking distance from the former headquarters and depot of the Central Vermont Railway, which was the central rail freight hub for upper New England from the 1850s through most of the twentieth century. The United Post Office and Custom House is also located within easy driving distance of a number of Vermont U.S. border inspection stations to which it is programmatically related. Of these, the Highgate Springs border checkpoint, like the United States Post Office and Custom House itself, was also located off US Route 7.

The monumental character of the United States Post Office and Custom House is enhanced by its setting at high grade on an open, generous lot at the northwest corner of Main and Stebbin streets. This location renders the building highly visible, especially for drivers northbound on Main Street, which the front elevation faces. It is a setting that is in contrast to the compact, zero lot line construction of the structures directly above it facing the Taylor Park Common off Main Street.

The design of the United States Post Office and Custom House is an intact and locally significant example of Colonial Revival architecture from the PWA period. As a Colonial Revival

²⁹ For more information on these properties, see U.S. Border Inspection Stations, listed in the National Register of Historic Places on 9/10/2014 (NR#14000602-14000610).

³⁰ Vermont Today, "The Flood of 1927," *20 in 20: Vermont's Great Moments of the 20th Century*, <http://www.vermonttoday.com/century/topstories/flood.html>.

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design, the building also possesses Georgian overtones as well as modern design elements. The vast majority of the character-defining features that give the United States Post Office and Custom House design significance are still intact. Inside the building, design significance is continued with the presence of two well-preserved wall murals commissioned by the Treasury Department's Section of Painting and Sculpture. The artist von Saltza painted these two murals, titled *Sugaring Off* and *Haying*, in oil on canvas in 1939. The public interior spaces, including the lobby, the vestibules, and a foyer, have all retained their design integrity.

The workmanship associated with the United States Post Office and Custom House is sound, but standard for the time. The materials used to construct the United States Post Office and Custom House were deliberately chosen to convey stability, strength, and permanence: all characteristics of the federal aesthetic commonly used by the federal government to express its image through architecture. At the United States Post Office and Custom House, these materials, all fireproof on the exterior, include exposed red brick and white Vermont marble used as an accent at the wainscot, the molding, and the window sills. The generous use of Vermont Olivo marble on the wainscots inside the building conveys the same impression in the public interior spaces. All of the marble used for the United States Post Office and Custom House is local from Vermont, as was the gypsum plaster used in walls throughout the building.

The United States Post Office and Custom House successfully conveys the feeling of a 1930s era, federal Public Works Administration building. The building's placement, materials, and classical details convey a feeling of monumentality, despite having been built toward the end of the Great Depression, which had crippled much of the country for the previous eight years.

The United States Post Office and Custom House is programmatically associated with the development of a cluster of 1930s-era border inspection stations in Vermont. The United States Post Office and Custom House is also associated with the Vermont border checkpoints through function, location, time-period, and style; all these buildings were designed and constructed under the supervision of Louis Simon, Supervising Architect of the Treasury Department. The opening day ceremonies for the United States Post Office and Custom House were part of commemorative sesquicentennial activities of the city of St. Albans, Vermont. In this regard, the completion and opening of the United States Post Office and Custom House was associated with community growth, identity, and civic pride.

Statement of Significance

Criterion A

Completed in 1938 by the Treasury Department, the United States Post Office and Custom House is a visual symbol of the federal presence in the city of St. Albans, Vermont, and a local representation of thousands of public buildings constructed under the Public Works Administration (1933-1939). Established during the Great Depression, this federal program sought to alleviate unemployment and stimulate the economy. Thousands of public buildings were constructed under its aegis, including hundreds of U.S. post offices. The building is also associated with transportation-related developments of the 1930s, which improved travel via highways, and the federal program to improve facilities at the nation's international borders, including those in Vermont at the border with Canada. The United States Post Office and Custom House is significant on the local level under Criterion A for Politics/Government for the period of significance of 1939, representing the date of the building's completion.

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Criterion C

The United States Post Office and Custom House is a good, intact example of a New Deal era post office and courthouse building executed in the Colonial Revival style. It is a well preserved, representative, and intact example of Colonial Revival architecture of the Public Works Administration period. Louis Simon, Supervising Architect of the Treasury Department, and architect Lorimer Rich designed the United States Post Office and Custom House in 1936. Though a major addition was affixed to the rear of the 1938 structure in 1967, this addition's design defers to the original building. Further reinforcing the design significance of the United States Post Office and Custom House are the murals completed by Philip von Saltza in 1939 and located in the lobby. The murals strongly express themes and history of local significance, and are themselves a touchstone component of 1930s post office design and the Great Depression. The United States Post Office and Custom House is significant on the local level under Criterion C for Architecture for the period of significance of 1939, representing the date of the building's completion.

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Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- 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, New England Region

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property 1 _____

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: |

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Or

UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or NAD 1983

- | | | |
|-------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| 1. Zone: 18 | Easting: 651509 | Northing: 4963556 |
| 2. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 3. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 4. Zone: | Easting : | Northing: |

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

The property is bounded by the property at 46 South Main Street on the north, South Main Street on the east, Stebbins Street on the south, and the property at 13A Stebbins Street on the west.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary reflects the original property lines and subsequent acquisitions and encompasses all that property currently owned by the U.S. Government for the United States Post Office and Custom House in St. Albans, VT.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Daniel D. Paul, Architectural Historian
organization: ICF Jones and Stokes/U.S. General Services Administration, Center for Historic Buildings
street & number: 811 W. 7th St., Suite 800
city or town: Los Angeles state: CA zip code: 90017
e-mail: _____
telephone: (202) 501-2863 (Elizabeth Hannold)
date: August 2009 (Revisions by Elizabeth Hannold, GSA, Center for Historic Buildings December 2016)

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Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

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

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.

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Photo Log

Name of Property: United States Post Office and Custom House

City or Vicinity: St. Albans

County: Franklin County State: Vermont

Photographer: Daniel Paul, ICF Jones and Stokes

Date Photographed: July 2006*

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

- 1 of 15. Exterior, front (east) elevation, looking west
- 2 of 15. Exterior, front (east) elevation detail, main entrance and balcony, looking west
- 3 of 15. Exterior, front (east) elevation detail, entry door, looking west
- 4 of 15. Exterior, front (east) elevation detail, date stone
- 5 of 15. Exterior, front (east) and south elevation, looking northwest
- 6 of 15. Exterior, south elevation detail, gable end, looking northeast
- 7 of 15. Exterior, south elevation detail, cornice return at gable end, looking north
- 8 of 15. Exterior, south elevation detail, FOB wing, looking northeast
- 9 of 15. Exterior, rear (west) elevation, looking southeast
- 10 of 15. Exterior, front (east) and north elevation, looking southwest
- 11 of 15. Exterior, north elevation, looking southwest
- 12 of 15. Interior, entry vestibules and foyer, looking south
- 13 of 15. Interior, doorway and stairs to second floor off main lobby
- 14 of 15. Interior, lobby mural north wall, *Sugaring Off*, looking south
- 15 of 15. Interior, lobby mural south wall, *Haying*, looking north

*Note – GSA has verified that the building as shown in these views has not changed since the date of photography.

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Site Map

Google Maps



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Location Map



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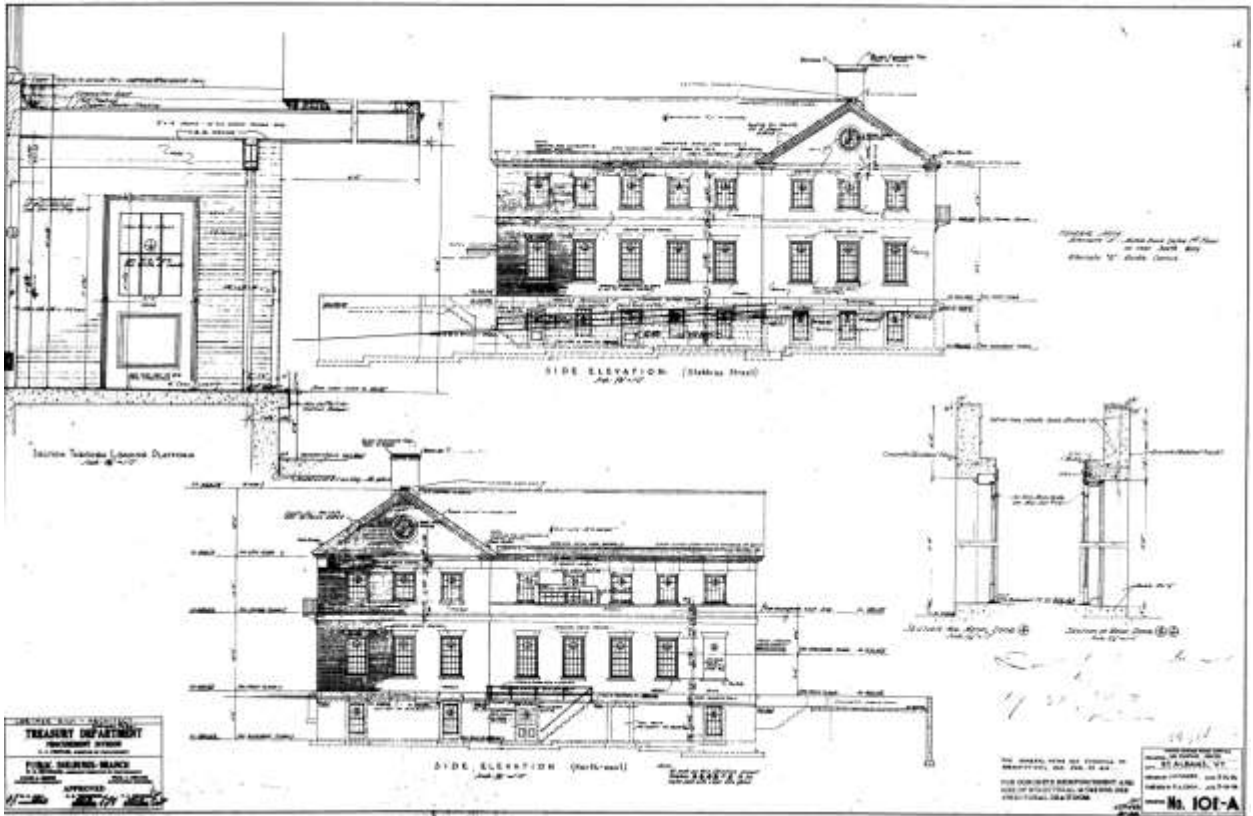
Figure 1 – 1936 drawings, front and rear elevations



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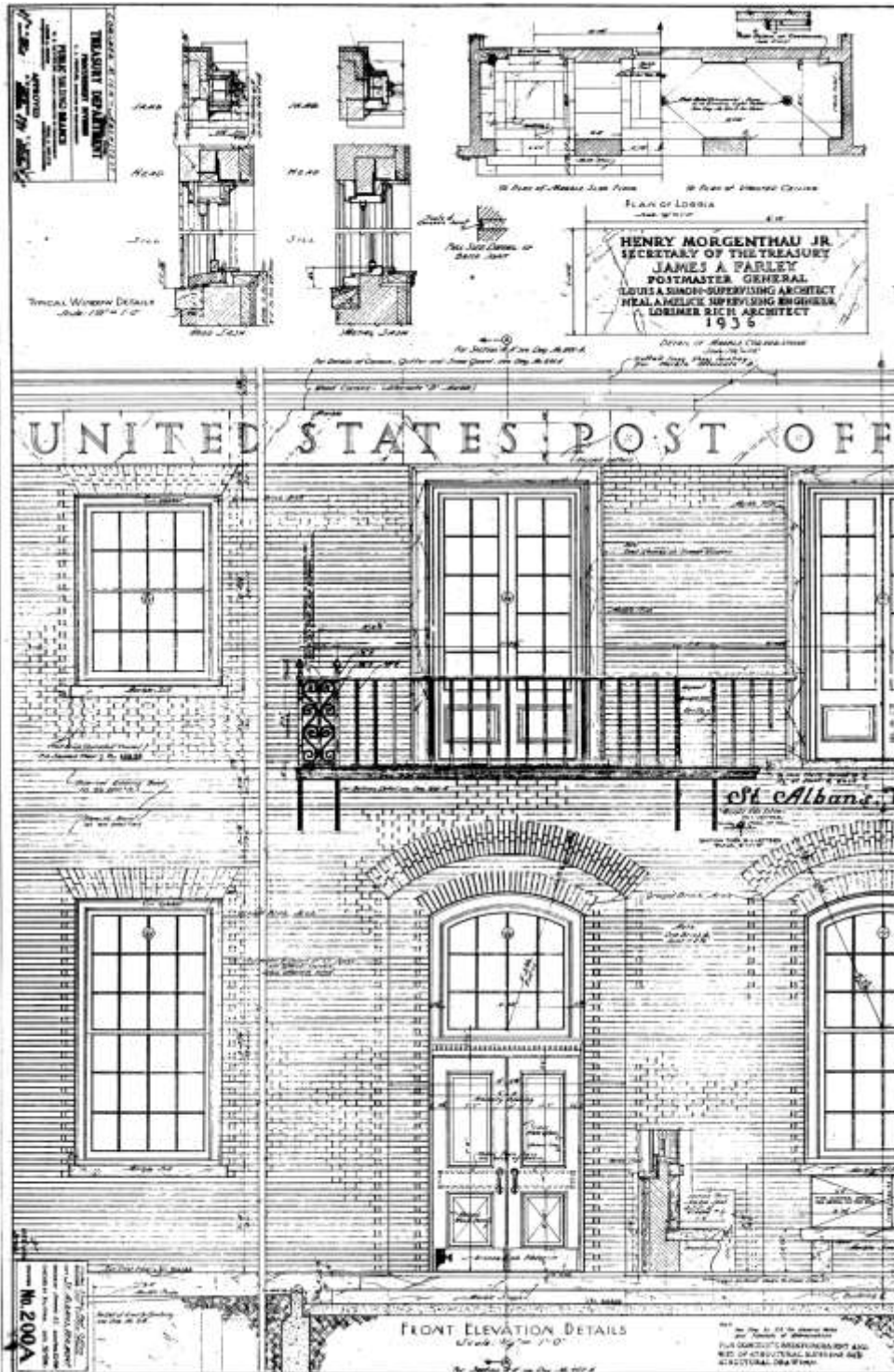
Figure 2 – 1936 drawings, side elevations



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Figure 3 – 1936 drawings, front elevation details



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Figure 5 – South wall lobby mural, *Haying*



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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.