

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service
National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. Name of Property

Historic Name: Bryan Federal Building and Post Office
Other name/site number: NA
Name of related multiple property listing: NA

2. Location

Street & number: 216 W. 26th Street
City or town: Bryan State: Texas County: Brazos
Not for publication: Vicinity: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 levels of significance:
national statewide local

Applicable National Register Criteria: A B C D

Signature of certifying official / title: Mark Wolfe, State Historic Preservation Officer
Date: 10/11/23
Texas Historical Commission
State or Federal agency / bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria.
Signature of commenting or other official
Date
State or Federal agency / bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the 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

Bryan Federal Building and Post Office, Bryan, Brazos County, Texas

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Private
<input type="checkbox"/>	Public - Local
<input type="checkbox"/>	Public - State
<input type="checkbox"/>	Public - Federal

**Category of Property**

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	building(s)
<input type="checkbox"/>	district
<input type="checkbox"/>	site
<input type="checkbox"/>	structure
<input type="checkbox"/>	object

**Number of Resources within Property**

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: NA

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions:** Government/Post Office

**Current Functions:** Vacant

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification:** Late 19th and Early 20th Century Revivals: Classical Revival

**Principal Exterior Materials:** Concrete, Brick, Glass, and Stone/cast stone

**Narrative Description** (see continuation sheets 7-6 through 7-9)

Bryan Federal Building and Post Office, Bryan, Brazos County, Texas

**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>A</b>	Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>B</b>	Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<b>C</b>	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.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>D</b>	Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations:** NA

**Areas of Significance:** Politics/Government; Architecture (*local level of significance*)

**Period of Significance:** 1915-1973

**Significant Dates:** 1915, 1939, 1967

**Significant Person** (only if criterion b is marked): NA

**Cultural Affiliation** (only if criterion d is marked): NA

**Architect/Builder:** Wenderoth, Oscar; Simon, Louis (U.S. Treasury Department architects); Blair, Algernon (contractor)

**Narrative Statement of Significance** (see continuation sheets 8-10 through 8-19)

**9. Major Bibliographic References**

**Bibliography** (see continuation sheets 9-20 through 9-23)

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

X preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested. (*Part 1 approved 11-20-18, Part 2 approved 11/18/2021*)

- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State historic preservation office (*Texas Historical Commission, Austin*)
- Other state agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other -- Specify Repository: NA

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## 10. Geographical Data

**Acreeage of Property:** less than 1 acre

### Coordinates

#### Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: NA

1. Latitude: 30.674190°N Longitude: -96.374759°W

**Verbal Boundary Description:** The legal boundary description as defined by the Brazos County Appraisal District is: (Property ID: 22535) CITY OF BRYAN TOWNSITE, BLOCK 119, LOT 8-9 & PT OF ALLEY and shown on Map 3. (UCAD accessed May 3, 2021.)

**Boundary Justification:** The boundary includes all property historically associated with the Bryan Federal Building.

## 11. Form Prepared By

Name/title: Kate Singleton, MPA  
Organization: Post Oak Preservation Solutions  
Street & number: 112 E. Pecan St., Suite 2810  
City or Town: San Antonio State: TX Zip Code: 78205  
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Date: March 31, 2021

## Additional Documentation

**Maps** (see continuation sheets MAP-24 through MAP-25)

**Additional items** (see continuation sheets FIGURE-26 through FIGURE-32)

**Photographs** (see continuation sheets PHOTO-33 through PHOTO-53)

**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.

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**Photograph Log**

Name of Property: Bryan Federal Building and Post Office  
City or Vicinity: Bryan  
County: Brazos  
State: Texas  
Photographer: Ross Falcone  
Date: October 2022 - January 2023  
Location of Original Files: 2506 Little John Lane, Austin, Texas 78704

Photo 1  
Primary (South) Elevation, View North.

Photo 2  
Oblique Showing Primary (South) and West Elevations, View Northeast.

Photo 3  
West Elevation, View Northeast.

Photo 4  
West Elevation Showing Lightwell, View North.

Photo 5  
North Elevation, View Southwest.

Photo 6  
Northeast Corner Showing Mailing Platform, View Southwest.

Photo 7  
East Elevation, View Northwest.

Photo 8  
Oblique Showing Primary (South) and East Elevations, View Northwest.

Photo 9  
Primary (South) Entrance, View North.

Photo 10  
Primary (South) Elevation, View Northwest.

Photo 11  
Primary (South) Elevation Masonry and Cornice Detail, View North.

Photo 12  
Cornerstone Located at Southwest Corner, View North.

Photo 13  
Main Level, Lobby, View West.

Photo 14  
Main Level, Postmaster Office Entrance, View West.

Photo 15  
Main Level, Postmaster Office, View North.

Photo 16  
Main Level, Postmaster Office Historic Safe Door Detail, View North.

Photo 17  
Main Level, Work Room, View Northwest.

Photo 18  
Main Level, Work Room, View Northwest.

Photo 19  
Main Level, East Corridor, View South.

Photo 20  
Lower Level, Central Corridor, View West.

Photo 21  
Lower Level, Meeting Room, View Northwest.

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### **Narrative Description**

The Bryan Federal Building and Post Office in downtown Bryan, Brazos County is an early 20<sup>th</sup> century government building constructed in 1915 with a 1939 rear addition. The one-story building has a raised basement, red brick load-bearing masonry walls on a concrete foundation with a modified rectangular plan and standing seam metal hipped roof. Built by the United States Treasury Department, the building's Classical Revival style is expressed through its red brick exterior with cast stone elements, like detailed fret or key pattern course and keystones, symmetrical fenestration, arched windows, and arched center door. The interior's characteristic L-shaped lobby is intact and represents the Treasury Department's standardized plans for post office construction. As the federal government's longtime center in Bryan, the nominated building underwent renovations in 1939 and 1967 to accommodate different public services. The current property owners rehabilitated the former federal building under the oversight of the National Park Service Technical Preservation Services. It retains good integrity for the period of significance 1915-1973.

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### **Setting**

The Bryan Federal Building and Post Office is at 216 W. 26th street on the northeast corner of W. 26th Street and N. Parker Avenue in downtown Bryan, five blocks west of the 1955 Brazos County Courthouse. It is one block south of Farm-to-Market Road 158 (Bryan Parkway), a major east-west traffic corridor. Main Street is two blocks to the east and State Highway 6B is five blocks east of the building. Most buildings that surround the Bryan Federal Building and Post Office are 20th-century one and two-part commercial blocks. Nearby buildings are listed in the National Register of Historic Places include the 1914 St. Andrew's Episcopal Church and the 1911 James O. Chance House.

### **Site**

The nominated building is on the northeast corner of W. 26th street and N. Parker Avenue is flanked on the east by an alley that runs from N. Parker Avenue to Bryan Parkway which is to the north of the building. Concrete and brick parking areas and sidewalks flank the west, south and east elevations of the building; parking is also located at the north or rear elevation of the building. There is a raised concrete wall with a simple wrought iron railing that extends down into the basement light well that rings the building on the west, south, and east elevations. The building is landscaped with trees; streetlights are also located around the building. A wood fence encloses the north end of the building.

### **Building Evolution**

Bryan Federal Building was initially constructed in 1915-1916 and received a major addition in 1939 and interior alterations in 1967 and 1984. The largest changes fall during the period of significance (1915 to 1971). In 1915-1916, the initial building was constructed at the south end of the parcel. Rectangular in shape, it rises one story tall with a truncated hipped roof behind parapet walls and has a partially above-ground basement level. In 1939, an L-shaped addition was constructed to the north (rear) of the initial building. It rises one story tall and has a partially above-ground basement level, matching the initial portion of the building, and has a flat roof. This addition included a mail loading dock (located at the northeast corner, with the platform facing east) and extra interior workroom space. The lobby was also expanded at this time.

In 1967, the original exterior wood windows and doors were replaced with aluminum-frame windows and doors; inside, partitioning was added to the east side of the first story to create restrooms and individual offices. In 1984, the first story layout was again reconfigured to create larger restrooms and add office space to the west side of the building. As of 2023, the building largely retains its 1984 configuration .

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## Exterior

The Post Office is constructed of red brick with cast stone accents, including coping, a cornice with fret pattern detailing, keystones at first-story fenestration openings, windowsills, and a belt course between the first story and basement level. The original 1915-1916 portion of the building features a truncated hipped roof behind parapet walls; bitumen and standing seam metal covers the roof. The 1939 addition has a flat bitumen roof. An exhaust shaft chimney, dating to the 1939 addition, rises above the roof at the north elevation.

### South (Primary) Elevation

The south (primary) elevation faces West 26<sup>th</sup> Street (*Photos 1 & 2*). Five bays organize the south elevation. From east to west, bays 2, 3, and 4 project slightly from the main plane of the elevation (*Photos 9 & 10*). Bay 3 contains the main entrance to the building. The entrance retains its original arched opening; non-original aluminum-frame glazed doors and two stacked aluminum-frame transom windows dating to 1967 fill the opening. Concrete steps with concrete cheek walls and non-original wrought iron railings extend from bay 3, leading to the entrance. Original cast iron lampposts flank the steps atop each cheek wall. Bays 2 and 4 each feature an original arched first story window opening and an original rectangular basement level window opening. Bays 1 and 5 each feature an original rectangular first story window opening and an original rectangular basement level window opening. Non-original aluminum-frame windows dating to 1967 fill the openings; the basement level opening in bay 1 is blind. A small rectangular first story window opening dating to the building's initial construction with a non-original aluminum-frame window dating to 1967 is situated between bays 4 and 5. Bays 1 and 5 feature red brick panels; these date to 1967 and infilled original clerestory window openings.

### West Elevation

The west elevation faces North Parker Avenue (*Photos 2 & 3*). Six bays organize the west elevation. From south to north, bays 1, 2, and 3 correspond with the original 1915-1916 portion, while bays 4, 5, and 6 correspond with the 1939 addition. The 1939 portion is slightly recessed from the main plane of the original portion. All bays but bay 2 feature an original rectangular first story window opening and an original rectangular basement level window opening. Bay 2 features a smaller first-story window opening within a larger rectangular recession and two smaller basement-level window openings; this configuration is original. Non-original aluminum-frame windows, dating to 1967, fill the window openings. The upper sashes in the basement-level bay 2 windows have been altered with vents. Each bay features red brick panels; these date to 1967 and infilled original clerestory window openings.

### North Elevation

Five bays organize the north (rear) elevation, which wholly corresponds with the 1939 addition (*Photos 5*). From west to east, bays 1, 2, and 3 feature original rectangular first story window openings with aluminum-frame windows dating to 1967. Each of these bays features red brick panels; these date to 1967 and infilled original clerestory window openings. Bay 1 at the basement level is blank. Bay 2 has an original rectangular entrance opening at the basement level; a non-original aluminum-frame glazed door dating to 1967 fills the opening. A concrete ramp with simple wrought iron railings leads to this entrance from the North Parker Avenue sidewalk. An exhaust shaft chimney projects from the elevation between bays 3 and 4. Bay 4 contains a rectangular entrance opening at the basement level; non-original steel doors fill the opening. Concrete stairs with metal tube railings lead to this entrance. Bay 5 contains a basement level rectangular window opening with a non-original aluminum-frame window dating to 1967. Bays 4 and 5 at the first-story level correspond with the mail loading dock. Bay 4 originally contained a rectangular entrance opening with concrete steps extending from the elevation; the entrance was infilled with brick and the steps were removed at an unknown date. Bay 5 is blank.

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### East Elevation

The east elevation faces a small parking lot and an unnamed alley (*Photos 6, 7, & 8*). Seven bays organize the east elevation. From south to north, bays 1, 2, and 3 correspond with the original 1915-1916 portion, while bays 4, 5, 6, and 7 correspond with the 1939 addition. Bay 4 is slightly recessed from the main plane of the original portion. Bays 5, 6, and 7 correspond with the mail loading dock and are substantially recessed from bay 4. Bays 1, 2, 3, and 4 each feature an original rectangular first story window opening and an original rectangular basement level window opening with non-original aluminum-frame windows dating to 1967. A rectangular entrance opening dating to 1939 is situated between bays 1 and 2 at the basement level; a non-original aluminum-frame door dating to 1967 fills the opening. Bays 5, 6, and 7 correspond with the mail loading dock (*Photo 6*). A raised concrete dock with a flat roof cover extends across these bays. Bay 5 contains an original rectangular first story entrance opening with a non-original aluminum-frame door dating to 1967. Bay 6 contains an original rectangular first story entrance opening with paired non-original aluminum-frame doors dating to 1967. Bay 7 contains an original rectangular first story window opening a non-original aluminum-frame window. A concrete ramp and wood stairs, both non-original, lead to the platform.

### **Interior**

#### First Story

The first story contains a front lobby, historic postmaster's office suite, open work rooms, and offices. The front lobby is centered on the south (primary) elevation (*Photo 13*). It was enlarged and reconfigured in 1939 and again in 1967, but a remodel in 1984 largely returned it to its original configuration. Plaster walls and ceilings and terrazzo floors date to 1915-1916, while marble wainscoting dates to 1939. The historic postmaster's office suite occupies the southwest corner of the building (*Photos 14-16*). It retains its original 1915-1916 configuration and most original finishes. The suite contains a large office space, a vault room, and several storage rooms, one of which was repurposed into a restroom in 2023. The suite features original 1915-1916 plaster walls; wood door and window casing, dado rail, and baseboards; hardwood floors; wood doors; and a metal vault door. A dropped ceiling dating to 1984 covers the original plaster ceiling (still extant), and ceramic tile dating to 2023 covers the floors in the restroom.

Open workrooms occupy a large portion of the first story, stretching along the west elevation from the front lobby to the rear of the building (*Photos 17-18*). The south half of the work room is original, dating to 1915-1916; the north half was added in 1939. Non-historic drywall partitioning dating to 1984 and the early 2000s creates a few office spaces along the east and west elevations of the work rooms, but the open feel of the workrooms is still clearly perceptible. The work rooms feature historic plaster walls and hardwood floors; a dropped ceiling dating to 1984 covers the original plaster ceiling (still extant). Offices and restrooms occupy the east side of the building, separated from the work rooms by a north-south corridor (*Photo 19*). The current office configuration dates to a 1984 remodel; the corridor evolved from a 1939 expansion of the lobby and subsequent remodels in 1967 and 1984. Finishes in the offices and north half of the corridor include non-original dropped ceilings, drywall partitions, and carpet tile. The south half of the corridor features terrazzo floors and marble wainscoting dating to 1939.

#### Lower Level

The lower level contains offices and restrooms organized around an irregular U-shaped double-loaded corridor (*Photos 20-21*). The historic layout is unknown due to a lack of historic plans, but the current layout has remained unchanged since 1967. Finishes in the lower level include historic plaster walls, dropped ceilings likely dating to circa 1967 and 1984, vinyl tile flooring dating to 2023 in the corridors and offices, and ceramic tile flooring dating to 2023 in the restrooms.

#### Circulation

A stairwell with concrete steps connecting the first story and lower level is located at the southeast corner of the building; it dates to the 1967 remodel. A metal spiral stair is located within an enclosed area in the postmaster's office



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suite. It dates to the building's original 1915-1916 construction of the building and once led to a catwalk (no longer extant, removed in 1967) overlooking the work room.

**Integrity**

Although alterations to the building have been made over the years, the building still retains a high degree of integrity. The exterior materials of the building have been matched when minor alterations have been made. The windows were replaced in 1967; however, the size, openings and location were not changed. A few windows have been infilled or covered over in such a manner as to be compatible with earlier construction. The interior spaces have changed over the years, but the configuration of the lobby and main post office work room are still recognizable. Several of the office spaces, including the postmaster's office, remain in their original configuration. The building retains integrity of location as it is in its original location; the setting reflects the original downtown area; the original design of the building is still evident in its shape, form, materials, and ornamentation; the original brick and cast stone materials as well as much of the interior materials are still evident in the building; the building still retains the aspect of feeling due to the retention of original design and materials; the association of the building to the U.S. Postal Service is still evident, and workmanship in construction of the structure is retained by the original materials and ornamentation that were used in construction.

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### Statement of Significance

The Bryan Federal Building and Post Office in Bryan, Brazos County is nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A in the Area of Politics/Government at the local level of significance for its service as an important center for federal government administration and services. Designed by architects with the federal government, it is also a good example of early 20th century Classical Revival post office design and is nominated under Criterion C in the area of Architecture. In the early 20th century, Bryan developed into a center for county government, education, and cotton-shipping with a growing population stimulated by its healthy economy. Due to its regional importance, the U.S. Government chose to construct a modern post office there in 1915. Completed in 1916 and enlarged in 1939, the Bryan Federal Building and Post Office provided citizens with critical governmental and civil services through the 1970s. Under the Public Facilities Act of 1913, the U.S. Postal Service built new, modern branches in rural cities and towns nationwide. Between 1915-1929, architects and administrators for the federal government prioritized the efficient administration of building construction using standardized post office designs with Classical Revival-style form and ornament. The Bryan Federal Building and Post Office reflects these early strategies in its exterior design of symmetrical primary façade, Palladian windows, and cast stone details against the red brick veneer. Interior alterations—a 1939 rear addition and layout changes in the 1960s— demonstrate the building's continued use for federal government services through the late 20th century. Before the nominated building was sold to the City of Bryan in 1999, it served as the local office for the General Services Administration. The period of significance is 1915-1973, which represents the year of its construction through the current 50-year threshold for listing.

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#### *Bryan, Brazos County*<sup>1</sup>

The city of Bryan was established in 1859 on land donated to the Houston and Texas Central Railroad by William Bryan. Its construction spurred immediate growth and a small town of 300 developed around the railway. In 1866, citizens established a post office and voted Bryan as the new seat of Brazos County government.<sup>2</sup> Five years later, the town celebrated the completion of its first courthouse. The arrival of rail service facilitated an easy and inexpensive method of transporting regionally grown cotton to market, which spurred increased production of that cash crop and demographic expansion.

A second source of the city's prosperity was its close proximity to the Agricultural and Mechanical (A&M) College of Texas in nearby College Station. In the last quarter of the 19th century, H&TC and citizens of the Brazos County donated land for the establishment of the A&M College of Texas, the state's first Land Grant College, which opened in 1876. Its founding drew other small academic institutions to the community in subsequent years that strengthened and diversified Bryan's economy.<sup>3</sup>

During the late 19th and early 20th century, Bryan evolved into a major cotton-shipping point for the agricultural rich Brazos Valley. By 1900, the city had grown to a population of 3,589 and installed electrical lighting and a municipal water system. Downtown Bryan became the center of commerce, culture, and government. The downtown area grew on a north/south grid aligned with the railroad, but later development was at a 45-degree angle to the original town layout.<sup>4</sup> Interurban railways built in the early 1900s connected Bryan to new suburban districts and, what became, College Station.

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<sup>1</sup> This section is adapted from Odintz, Mark, "Bryan, TX." Texas Historical Association, 1976, Accessed June 01, 2020, <http://www.tshaonline.org/handbook/online/articles/hdb05>.

<sup>2</sup> Heck, "Historic Resources of Bryan, Texas."

<sup>3</sup> Woodcock, David, "Bryan Municipal Building (Bryan, Texas)," National Register of Historic Places Inventory Form (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, February 20, 2002).

<sup>4</sup> Heck, "Historic Resources of Bryan, Texas."

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In the early years of the 20th century, Bryan was a major shipping point for cotton. In 1913, the Eagle began to publish as a daily newspaper. The city had paved the streets in the central business district and adjacent neighborhoods by 1915-1916. The city adopted a commission form of local government in 1917 as it continued to grow. The 1920 population was 6,307, growing steadily to 7,814 in 1930 and 11,842 in 1940. Neighborhoods on the boundary of Bryan were incorporated into the city limits. State Highway 6 was constructed through the city and on through College Station in 1936, helping to stimulate the local economy during the Great Depression.

An aviation training center, Bryan Army Airfield, was built during World War II, bringing growth to the city. It was deactivated in 1945 and then reactivated in 1951. The base served as a temporary campus for Texas A&M College freshmen in the 1940s. The population grew to 18,072 in 1950 and saw a dramatic increase by 1960 to 27,542 due in part to the growth of Texas A&M University.<sup>5</sup> The base was closed in 1959 but in 1962, the property became the Texas A&M Research Annex. The city continued to grow and spread out from the original downtown with suburban neighborhoods and shopping centers. The population continued to expand to 33,141 in 1970, 44,337 in 1980, 55,002 in 1990 and 65,6600 in 2000.<sup>6</sup>

The city, working with Texas A&M, began to diversify the local economy to include high-tech manufacturing, agribusiness, and defense industries. The city has grown from a one square mile townsite to more than 43 square miles and a population of over 85,000 in 2019.<sup>7</sup>

### **Bryan Post Office and Federal Building**

In the early 1900s, the City of Bryan, most notably the Business League (precursor to the Chamber of Commerce), began to lobby for a federal building. The Post Office was located in a building located at 206 W. Anderson, now W. 26th Street in a row of commercial buildings.<sup>8</sup> In 1906, Congressman Scott Field introduced a bill in Congress to authorize \$100,000 for the building. The Business League and local newspaper reasoned that Bryan was an important economic center for the region and had a state college located close by therefore a federal building was warranted.<sup>9</sup> However, it was not until 1910 that the Bryan building was authorized for construction through one of the federal and post office construction omnibus bills and then it was not on the first list of projects, but number 136 on list 2.<sup>10</sup> Additionally, the lot for the building was not purchased until June 1911.<sup>11</sup> The city was told by the Treasury Department that construction would begin in November of 1913.<sup>12</sup> The bid for the building was let yet all the bids that were submitted were too high and construction was further delayed.<sup>13</sup> The Commercial Club, anxious for construction to begin, wrote their Senator and Representative several times requesting information about the delays and were told that delays were tied to funds available for construction and the bids.<sup>14</sup> A total of \$50,000 was typically allocated for these types of projects, however, only about \$35,000 to \$40,000 was available as funds were needed to purchase the

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.bryantx.gov/history-of-bryan-texas/>.

<sup>8</sup> "Insurance Maps of Bryan", Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, 1912, p. 6. New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1912.

<sup>9</sup> "For A Federal Building". *The Brazos Pilot*, December 20, 1906, p.1.

<sup>10</sup> "Bryan Federal Building and Post Office". *The Bryan Daily Eagle*, March 13, 1912, p.4.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.; "Site Selected for Federal Building", *Bryan Daily Eagle*, February 6, 1911, p.1; "New Post Office Building News," *Bryan Eagle*, March 9, 1914, p.1.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> "Bids for Federal Building". *Bryan Eagle*, November 7, 1914, p.5; "Sheppard Urges Construction of 70 Federal Buildings;" *Austin American Statesman*, May 5, 1915, p.3.

<sup>14</sup> "More Red Tape, Another Delay". *Bryan Weekly Eagle*, July 9, 1914, p.8; "Status of Bryan's Federal Building". *Bryan Daily Eagle*, July 1, 1914, p.3; "Federal Building Drags". *Bryan Eagle*, October 28, 1914, p.3.

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vault, light fixtures, shelving and furniture. Adjustments to the drawings and materials were then made by the Supervising Architect's office to meet the budget constraints.<sup>15</sup>

The contract for the building was finally awarded to the lowest bidder, Algernon Blair from Alabama at a cost of \$37,173 (Blair also constructed the Beeville Post Office).<sup>16</sup> Blair indicated that he would be able to buy the materials and start construction in August of 1915.<sup>17</sup> The work continued through the fall and winter of 1915-1916 and into the early summer of 1916.<sup>18</sup> Articles in the local newspapers chronicled the construction progress. One article noted that the "interior plastering is nearly all in place" and "the brick work is completed except for a small portion around the windows."<sup>19</sup> The article further stated "L.R. Benning...to whom the contract was let for the plumbing and heating work...has arrived. Mr. Benning states that the smokeless boiler installed is a new innovation in Bryan, and is something seen only in the most modern buildings."<sup>20</sup> The building was used in advertising campaigns for the city. A "Modern Bryan" ad by the Commercial Club notes the many schools and colleges and the "handsome federal building and free mail delivery."<sup>21</sup> The federal building also provided office space for governmental entities including a civil service office and the recruitment offices for the various branches of the military.<sup>22</sup>

The building continued to be in use and in 1924, the local and county Chamber of Commerce called for expansion of the structure. In a letter to Bryan's members of Congress and a newspaper article, the Chamber requested \$100,000 be allocated to enlarge the building or construct a new one. The article detailed several reasons why this was necessary. The Chamber cited the population growth from about 4,300 in 1916 when the building was constructed to over 6,300 in the 1920 Census, a 52 percent increase. However, the Chamber believed that the population in 1924 was really around 8,000. They noted that money orders had risen from \$12,800 in 1916 to almost \$24,000 in 1923 and, that same year, the post office handled 40,000 incoming and outgoing packages. The article also noted the additional routes and staff that had been added and the need for more boxes at the post office.<sup>23</sup> However, the expansion of the Post Office did not occur until 1939. A 1937 article indicated that Bryan was on a list for funds to build a new Post Office and that \$105,000 had been allocated for construction.<sup>24</sup>

The 1939 expansion of the Bryan Federal Building and Post Office was part of a plan by the federal government to build new post offices and expand older ones under the various stimulus programs during the Great Depression (*Figures 3-11, 16*). The Federal Works Agency, where the Supervising Architects Office was now located, was tasked with the construction. Several cities in Texas were chosen for new or additional post offices that were authorized and in the planning stages including Austin, Laredo, Hearne, McCamey, Clifton, Fredericksburg, New Boston and several others.<sup>25</sup> Other cities had contracts ready to bid on expansions and new buildings including Bryan, Fort Worth, Odessa, Longview and Robstown. Completed post office projects in 1939 included Anson, Electra, Elgin, Lampasas, and Rockdale to name a few.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> "More Red Tape, Another Delay". *Bryan Weekly Eagle*, July 9, 1914, p.8; "Will Ask New Bids". *Bryan Daily Eagle*, April 3, 1915, p.10.

<sup>16</sup> "Contract Let for Federal Building". *Bryan Daily Eagle*, May 20, 1915-1916 p. 7.

<sup>17</sup> "To Begin Work on Federal Building". *Bryan Weekly Eagle*, June 24, 1915-1916, p.2.

<sup>18</sup> "Local and Otherwise". *Bryan Daily Eagle*, February 22, 1916, p.5; "Local and Otherwise". *Bryan Daily Eagle*, April 6, 1916, p.5; "Federal Building Progressing". *Bryan Weekly Eagle*, October 15, 1915, p. 8.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid. "Post Office Work Progressing". *Bryan Weekly Eagle*, December 9, 1915, p.2.

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> "Modern Bryan". *Bryan Daily Eagle*, November 20, 1917, p.2.

<sup>22</sup> Architectural Plans. Federal Works Agency, Public Works Administration, 1938.

<sup>23</sup> "Data Procured by Chamber of Commerce for Information of Congressmen and US Senators Regarding Bryan Post Office". *Bryan Weekly Eagle*, March 13, 1924 p.4.

<sup>24</sup> "New Federal Building is Now Certain". *Bryan Weekly Eagle*, September 15, 1937, p.1.

<sup>25</sup> "Many Texas Post Offices Planned to be Completed in Good Time; Many Steps Needed in Process". *Bryan Daily Eagle*, October 17, 1939, p.3.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid.

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A study was done by the Postal Inspector and Department of Treasury to determine remodeling plans for the building and \$104,000 of federal funds was allocated to the Bryan project. A one-story addition was proposed, including a reconfiguration and extension of the lobby with more post boxes added and more windows. The basement extension would add another 1,500 square feet for offices including civil service, the county and home demonstration agents and, when in town, internal revenue service agents.<sup>27</sup> The architect reviewing the building and proposed project was Joseph Sabacky, architect for the Supervising Architect's Office and a 1921 graduate from the architecture program at Texas A&M College.<sup>28</sup> At this time, a bas relief of a buffalo herd sculpted by William Gordon Huff was installed in the lobby as part of the Federal Works Agency art program.<sup>29</sup> (The artwork was removed when the building was sold to the city in 1999.)

The Bryan Federal Building and Post Office served several important functions in the city and county. As stated above, the city and the local businessmen worked hard to procure a post office building over the course of several years, and they advocated for enlarging the building starting in the mid-1920s until the addition was completed in 1939. In a 1962 newspaper article about the post office, it was recalled that in a 1920s article, Bryan Eagle City Editor Ty Cobb stated that "no institution in Bryan reflects the growth of our city or the changing times more than our post office."<sup>30</sup> The building served as a hub for rural mail delivered as well as other activities related to the federal postal service. Civil Service exams were held for other postmasters and postal carriers in the county.<sup>31</sup> Another function of the local postmaster was to inspect the rural routes and mail boxes in the county. The conditions were reported to the Postmaster General in Washington, D.C.; this was extremely important because if a route or road was not passable, then the route would be eliminated, cutting off direct mail delivery to that area. Consequently, local communities in the county would often advocate for better roads simply so they could maintain direct mail delivery.<sup>32</sup> The Postal Savings program also functioned at this post office, essentially acting like a bank and providing an opportunity for rural families to participate in a savings program.<sup>33</sup> Additionally, the building housed armed forces recruitment offices, the Texas National Guard office for Brazos county, the postal inspector's office and other civil service offices in the basement. These uses remained located there until the 1970s. With the 1967 renovation, an office was created for the U.S. Congressman (first floor, east side of lobby area) so they could have a local presence in a well-known building. Again, after it was constructed, ads in the local newspaper touted the building as an asset and continued proof of the economic growth and stability of Bryan and Brazos County. The local post offices also worked with other federal agencies on projects. The Bryan Federal Building and Post Office rural carriers conducted agricultural surveys in Brazos county to assist the U.S. Department of Agriculture in assessing all crops harvested for a given year.<sup>34</sup>

The local postmaster, an appointed position, was usually a respected businessman in the community. It should be noted that the postmaster was the "face" of the U.S. Post Office at a local level so it was important to have someone who could represent the agency before the public. William D. Lawrence, who served as postmaster from 1922 to 1924, was a successful local businessman. Previously, Lawrence had worked for Gulf Refining in Port Arthur; his family also owned Lawrence Wholesale Grocery Company. He later purchased a Chevrolet dealership and was active in business and community affairs. When he passed away, the local paper described his death as a "distinct loss to the entire community" and noted he had been a community leader and booster.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> "Remodeling Plan for Post Office is Under Study". *Bryan Daily Eagle*, June 3, 1938. p.1.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> "Bas Relief of Bison Hunt is Put Up in PO". *Bryan Daily Eagle*, February 18, 1941, p.1.

<sup>30</sup> "Bryan Post Office Serves Entire Area". *Bryan Daily Eagle*, June 24, 1962, p.68.

<sup>31</sup> "For Hearne Postmaster". *Bryan Weekly Eagle*. August 17, 1922, p. 6.

<sup>32</sup> "To Inspect Routes of Rural Carriers". *Bryan Weekly Eagle*. September 4, 1919, p.2.

<sup>33</sup> The U.S. Postal Service. *The United States Postal Service: An American History*. Washington D.C., U.S. Postal Service Publication 100, 2020, p.31; Beth Boland. *How to Apply National Register Criteria to Post Offices*, National Register Bulletin 13. Washington, D.C: Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1994, pp. 2-4.

<sup>34</sup> "Acreage Survey Cards Scheduled for Distribution". *Bryan Daily Eagle*. September 9, 1963, p.10.

<sup>35</sup> "Illness is Fatal; W.D. Lawrence Funeral is Held". *Bryan Daily Eagle*. March 1, 1929, p.1.

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Lawrence's predecessor was John E. Astin who became postmaster in Bryan at the time of the building's construction. Astin's appointment became somewhat political when he was favored by Postmaster General Burleson and Congressman Hardy and another candidate was favored by Congressman Garret and Senator Sheppard.<sup>36</sup> Astin served on a committee of the Commercial Association to develop routes for mail delivery within the city limits (1917); these routes would then be recommended to the Postmaster General for approval. John Astin, W.D. Lawrence's predecessor, was a respected local businessman who was a vice president of City National Bank; president of Lawrence Wholesale Grocery Company (W.D. Lawrence's family) and part owner of Parkin-Astin Hardware. Astin resigned in 1917 and died about a month later. The paper stated that he "stood pre-eminent in the business affairs of the community and because of his varied business interests was an important factor in the development of the city and county"; his death at a young age (44) was seen as a great loss to the community and county.<sup>37</sup> Charles Myers was appointed postmaster in 1926 and was a local man, a Mason and former Marine. He had been in the cotton business before becoming postmaster.<sup>38</sup> Later postmasters included J Parker Carroll in the 1950s and E.C. Moehlman in the 1960s.

The Bryan Federal Building and Post Office employees were local residents and often worked for the post office for a number of years.<sup>39</sup> In the 1930s, they had a string orchestra that played around the county.<sup>40</sup> Postal employees sometimes came up with innovative ideas. L.J. McGee designed a new postal intake stamp that eliminated three such stamps. Mr. McGee was given a cash prize for his efforts.<sup>41</sup>

The building continued to be used as a post office building throughout World War II and the Post-War years. In 1958, Bryan was on a list of "promised" new post offices. It was noted that the post office, constructed in 1916 and expanded in 1939, could not accommodate new postal requirements for trucks and other equipment.<sup>42</sup> However, a new post office was not constructed in the downtown area. The building remained a post office until the mid-1970s and then was used by the General Services Administration for various offices and was sold to the city of Bryan in 1999.

## Architectural Significance

### Context

The presence of the federal government including the U.S. Postal Service saw significant expansion in the late 19th century and early 20th century. For the Postal Service, free city delivery began in 1863 in 65 cities that met the requirements of size, postal receipts, sidewalks, streetlights and street names and numbers. In 1890, 65 percent of the American population lived in rural areas and rural free delivery began on a limited basis in 1896 and by 1902 it spread to the whole country.<sup>43</sup> The Post Office served as a rural bank starting in 1910 when the Postal Savings System was established. The aim of the legislation was to ensure a safe place for money for those who had lost confidence in banks and to get money out of people's homes and into a "bank". The Savings System also served immigrants who were used to saving at their local post offices and provided convenient depositories for local workers. The maximum amount that

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<sup>36</sup> "John E. Astin is Bryan Postmaster". *Bryan Daily Eagle*. February 8, 1915, p.3.

<sup>37</sup> "Mr. John E. Astin Dead". *Bryan Weekly Eagle*, February 15, 1917, p. 6.

<sup>38</sup> "Myers Succeeds Carroll as Postmaster Here". *Bryan Daily Eagle*, March 9, 1926, p. 1.

<sup>39</sup> "Simpson gets "Diploma" After 41 Years". *Bryan Daily Eagle*, December 7, 1958, p.3.

<sup>40</sup> "Proper Officers Needed to Lead Fire Department". *Bryan Eagle*. July 17, 1935, p.6.

<sup>41</sup> "Local Postal Employee Wins Cash Award". *Bryan Daily Eagle*. August 7, 1962, p.2.

<sup>42</sup> "Bryan on "Promised" List for New Post Office". *Bryan Daily Eagle*, April 9, 1958, pp.1, 10.

<sup>43</sup> The U.S. Postal Service. *The United States Postal Service: An American History*. Washington D.C., U.S. Postal Service Publication 100, 2020, p.31; Beth Boland. *How to Apply National Register Criteria to Post Offices*, National Register Bulletin 13. Washington, D.C.: Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1994, pp. 2-4.

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could be saved in the account was \$500 and they offered a modest two percent interest rate. By 1929, \$153 million was invested, reaching a peak during World War II of \$3.4 billion; the program was suspended in 1967.<sup>44</sup>

New federal omnibus legislation in 1902 authorized the construction of 150 projects across the country, many of which were post offices and federal buildings in smaller cities. Previously, each federal project including the smallest project was individually reviewed and construction funding approved by Congress. This first omnibus law and subsequent similar laws saved Congress a great deal of time but also meant that members of Congress were doling out projects to their constituent cities and towns. In 1899, there were 399 building projects under the control of the Treasury Department and by 1912, that number had ballooned to 1,126 showing the scope and impact of these laws.<sup>45</sup>

In Texas alone, there were twenty-nine federal buildings by 1912.<sup>46</sup> The large federal projects were designed by architects through a competitive process held by the Office of the Supervising Architect under the Tarsney Act (1893, repealed 1913). John Knox Taylor, Supervising Architect from 1897 to 1912, realized that for smaller projects, this was not feasible, so those projects were designed by the Supervising Architects Office.<sup>47</sup> What Taylor began with the use of more standard proto-type plans for smaller projects was codified in the 1913 Public Buildings Act.

The 1913 Public Buildings Act was passed in response to the public's and Congress' concern with the cost of public buildings. The Act set up the Public Buildings Commission whose members included the Secretary of the Treasury, the Postmaster General, the Attorney General and four members of the House and Senate Public Buildings and Grounds Committee. The Commission was charged with preparing, "a connected scheme involving annual appropriations for the construction, in a reasonable time, of all public buildings theretofore authorized, as well as to frame a standard or standards by which the size and cost of public buildings shall, as far as practicable, be determined."<sup>48</sup> The role of outside architects was greatly reduced. At this point, plans for federal buildings and post offices became standardized including floor plans and exterior designs. There was some latitude for the addition of regional ornamentation to the exteriors but for the most part the buildings were to be visually recognizable as federal buildings; this helped to rein in costs and reduce construction time.

#### *McAdoo's 1915-1916 Classification for Federal Buildings*

A result of the Commission was Secretary of the Treasury McAdoo's classification system for federal buildings. It was this system that laid out the categories and guidelines for architectural standardization and graded the types of federal buildings. The categories were based on states' and cities' geographic and population conditions.<sup>49</sup> Instead of "grand" federal buildings for medium and smaller communities, the emphasis turned to providing functional buildings. The classification system stated:

There be a less costly, but durable, simple and architecturally desirable construction which shall permit economical operation and maintenance. While monumental structures have a place in Government construction, there should be discrimination in selection of cities in which they shall be erected, and recognition of the rule that the buildings to be constructed shall be suitable for the location for which they are

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid, p.39.

<sup>45</sup> U.S. Postal Service Real Estate Division. History of Post Office Construction 1900-1940, Washington, D.C. U.S. Postal Service, July 1982, pp. 3-4.

<sup>46</sup> "Twenty Nine Federal Buildings in Texas". *Bryan Eagle*, November 22, 1912, p. 2.

<sup>47</sup> Boland, p.3.

<sup>48</sup> Antoinette Lee. Architects to the Nation: the Rise and Fall of the Supervising Architect's Office. New York: Oxford Press, 2000, p. 219.

<sup>49</sup> U.S. Postal Service, pp. 7-9.

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to be erected, conforming to their surroundings and providing adequate quarters for all branches of the Government there found.<sup>50</sup>

Following this, McAdoo issued his annual report with the order including the classification system for the Supervising Architect to follow. The system included 4 categories of buildings from A to D. The Bryan Federal Building and Post Office is a Class "C" structure which includes "a post office of a second class with receipts of \$15,000 or over, and of the first class to \$60,000 in receipts; valuation of surrounding property that of a second class city."<sup>51</sup> The buildings of this class were to be brick-faced, with stone or terracotta trim, fireproof roofs, wood trim and doors (but not expensive wood) and marble (but not expensive) for the interior, and simple or no ornamentation in the public spaces.<sup>52</sup>

The program that McAdoo instituted began to yield results in 1917 according to James Wetmore, the Supervising Architect. Wetmore reported that in 1916 twenty-seven buildings were under contract; however, he did note that cost variances occurred due to locations and market fluctuations.<sup>53</sup> Construction of public buildings slowed then stopped during World War I, however, those buildings under contract at the time of World War I were completed. The practice established by McAdoo and overseen by Wetmore continued through the 1920s, especially in small towns.

#### *Public Building Act 1926*

In 1926, the Public Building Act was passed in response to the construction projects authorized under the 1913 Public Building Act that were shelved during World War I and the pent-up demand for additional federal buildings.<sup>54</sup> The bill gave the Treasury Department the ability to use its discretion to employ architects outside of the Supervising Architect's Office. Once again, somewhat like the Tarsney Act, outside architects were used on larger commissions.<sup>55</sup> For the other projects, Wetmore sought to build the number of architects and engineers working for the Supervising Architect's Office. However, the onset of the Great Depression in 1930 changed the course of the 1926 Public Building Act. In an effort to quickly get projects started and employ people, standardized plans helped to move projects forward. The use of private architects was covered under the Keyes-Elliot Bill; they would be working only on the largest projects that were planned.

The Federal Works Agency became the government department handling the construction of post offices and federal buildings across the country during much of the Great Depression when the Supervising Architect's Office was moved there in 1939. They oversaw the administration of the funds allocated for the expansion of the Bryan Federal Building and Post Office in 1939 and all the other post offices and federal buildings during this time.<sup>56</sup> The Supervising Architect's Office was subsequently reorganized and put under the General Services Administration.

#### *Bryan Federal Building and Post Office*

Designed in the Classical Revival style, the Bryan Federal Building and Post Office is an excellent example of the American expression of the Neo-Classical and Classical Revival style. This style was inspired by Greek and Roman architecture and was interpreted and used by noted architects of the late 19th- and early 20th centuries such as Daniel Burnham, Henry Bacon and Cass Gilbert. The expression of Neo-Classical and Classical revival styles was used not only for federal buildings but for non-federal public and private buildings in cities large and small. The Bryan Federal

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<sup>50</sup> U.S. Postal Service, pp. 8-9.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid, p.10.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid, pp. 10-11.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid, p.10-11.

<sup>54</sup> Lee, p.239.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid, pp.239-241; Boland, p. 3.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid, p. 238, pp.279-285.



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Building and Post Office was authorized during Oscar Wenderoth's tenure and constructed during James Wetmore's tenure as Supervising Architect. Louis Simon served a variety of roles, including Chief Architect and Supervising Architect for the Department of the Treasury from 1896 to 1941.

Locally, the Classical Revival style was used for only a few commercial and institutional examples such as the Carnegie Library (NR 1976) and the First National Bank and Trust (NR 1987). The First Baptist Church was a Classical Revival structure but demolished in 1994. A review of the Historic Resources of Bryan, Texas, Multiple Property Submission, shows that of the 47 buildings included, approximately four residential structures are Classical Revival style and three commercial/institutional buildings are considered Classical Revival style.<sup>57</sup> The rest of the buildings are a variety of styles including commercial, Craftsman, Mission Revival, Art Deco, Art Moderne, and vernacular. The nomination notes that many of the Classical Revival homes were constructed between 1890 and 1910.<sup>58</sup> It further notes that the Barron House (NR 1988), 100 S. Congress Street is one of the best examples of the Classical Revival style in Bryan.<sup>59</sup>

Again, it is important to understand that the federal government adopted the Classical Revival style for the standardized exterior design of their buildings and was not concerned with a community's stylistic requests or requirements. Only large cities were able to have a federally approved local architect design a federal building in their city. This practice began under John Knox Taylor as a response to the expense of architect-designed buildings for small and medium sized towns. This use of more standard proto-type plans and designs, in the Classical Revival style, for smaller projects was codified in the 1913 Public Buildings Act. It was further codified by McAdoo's 1915-1916 Classification for Federal Buildings which dictated classification of cities by size and therefore, classified federal buildings by design (Classical Revival), materials, and size. The Class "B" and "C" cities were relegated to a Classical Revival style building that might have one or two variations but were essentially the same across the country. Because Bryan, Texas was considered a Class "C" town, then the Federal Building and Post Office would be constructed to certain specifications as to size, materials and style. The buildings of this class were to be brick-faced, with stone or terracotta trim, fireproof roofs, wood trim and doors (but not expensive wood) and marble (but not expensive) for the interior, and simple or no ornamentation in the public spaces. This practice continued and was overseen by Wetmore through the 1920s. Consequently, these handsome yet modest federal buildings can be seen in small and medium sized communities across the country. Therefore, it should be understood that the style of the Bryan Federal Building and Post Office was a decision made in Washington, D.C. and not at the local level; the building's style did not relate to any other buildings in the community as the decision for the size, style and materials was not made in Bryan, Texas but in Washington, D.C.

#### *Classical Revival Style in Government Architecture*

Inspired by Greek and Roman architecture, Classical Revival was interpreted and used by noted architects of the late 19th- and early 20th centuries such as Daniel Burnham, Henry Bacon and Cass Gilbert. The Federal Building exhibits a standard design that was developed under the Supervising Architect's Office led by Oscar Wenderoth and implemented in 1915. Wenderoth served as Supervising Architect from June 1912 until March of 1915 and was followed by James Wetmore who served as Acting Supervising Architect from 1915 until 1933. Wenderoth was an architect who designed larger federal buildings and directed the designs of the standardized smaller government buildings such as the Bryan Federal Building and Post Office and numerous others across the country. The design was probably developed by and/or under the supervision of Louis A. Simon, who directed much of the Office's work

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<sup>57</sup> Marlene Heck, "The Historic Resources of Bryan, Texas,(Partial Inventory of Architectural and Historic Properties) National Register of Historic Places Registration Form," NRIS 8001609, 1987.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid.

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during this time. Authorization for the building occurred during the tenure of Wenderoth and the construction of the building was completed under James Wetmore's tenure.

In 1901, James Knox Taylor, the Supervising Architect, announced the return to Classical and Neo-Classical styles for federal buildings.<sup>60</sup> Taylor was adapting to American tastes as were defined by the American Renaissance Movement of the late 19th and early 20th Century and epitomized by the Columbian Exposition of 1893 as well as the City Beautiful Movement. Stylistic elements were drawn from Beaux Arts and Neo-Classical styles and from America's Colonial era. These styles were used in government buildings to express democratic and Classical ideals, power and stability.<sup>61</sup>

Taylor resigned from the position in 1912 and was succeeded by Oscar Wenderoth who held the position for three years. Under Wenderoth, the styles of the post office/federal buildings did not change substantially during his brief tenure. He did use Renaissance Revival features such as loggias but the stylistic influence remained Beaux Arts-Classical Revival, especially in massing and plan. This stylistic influence continued under James Wetmore's tenure as Supervising Architect.

Simon's architectural philosophy is evident in his larger buildings such as the Internal Revenue Service Building and the Federal Building in Worcester. It is also evident in the design of the numerous types of smaller buildings under the purview of the Supervising Architect's Office including post offices. The prototype that was used for the Bryan Federal Building and Post Office design and for the many other buildings like it are expressions of this restrained Classical Revival style. His obituary stated that, "Other architects have said no other American has exerted as much influence on design of courthouses, post offices and other government structures as he did".<sup>62</sup>

Although the American Institute of Architects felt that Classicism had been ingrained as the style for public buildings in the Tarsney Act of 1893, variations of the style had been used for public and commercial buildings several years before. Stylistically, Classicism, in the form of Neo-Classical and Classical Revival styles, was novel and new in the mid-1800s and by the 1893 Columbian Exposition it was entrenched as a popular style for commercial and public buildings. By the 1900s, Classicism was the predominant style for federal and state buildings. For many, there was no difference between those federal buildings designed by private architects and the standardized plans of the Supervising Architect's Office.

Additionally, the classicism of this period came from knowledge of the classical styles of the Italian Renaissance and of the European adaptation of these styles. The American classicism paid tribute to earlier Colonial architecture that was the inspiration for the Neo-Classical and Georgian revival styles. Often, exterior motifs and details were from other styles but the form, proportions, massing and dimensions were based on classical form. As a result, most of the federal buildings during this time period fall under the term of "Academic Classicism".<sup>63</sup>

The Beaux Arts movement influenced the American Classical Revival which was popular in the first half of the 20th Century. The style is also referred to as Neo-Classical style. It is characterized by brick or smooth stone or ashlar exterior, symmetrical elevations, repeating window patterns, and large or Palladian windows. It should be noted that many of the medium and larger Post Offices also exhibited these design elements, and the smaller buildings are very similar. The Post Office in Palestine, Anderson County exhibits the large Palladian windows that are seen on the Bryan Federal Building and Post Office along with the center door and window configuration. The Bryan Federal Building

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<sup>60</sup> U.S. Postal Service, pp. 3-4.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid, p. 5.

<sup>62</sup> "Louis A. Simon Dies, Retired U.S. Architect". *Sunday Star*, May 12, 1958, p.8.

<sup>63</sup> Lee, p. 190.

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and Post Office exhibit the characteristics of the Neo-Classical Revival styles through the form of the building and the use of materials. The symmetry of the elevations with the center entrance and the Palladian style flat arched front windows are indicative of Classical Revival style. The window pattern and ornamentation defined by cast stone elements such as the keystones and cornice are a modest interpretation of Classical Revival elements.

**Conclusion**

The Bryan Federal Building and Post Office (1915-1916) is eligible under Criterion A Politics/Government at a local level of significance representing the growth of the U.S. Postal Service into rural cities and towns during the early 20th Century and is a manifestation of the federal government and policy on the local level. For Bryan, the building represents the role of the community, not only as the county seat but as a commercial and regional center for rural Central Texas. Bryan was experiencing growth and expansion during this time and acquisition and construction of the Federal Building was seen as an important part of this growth. The building also was part of the federal government's expansion of facilities, especially to rural areas, under the Public Facilities Act of 1913. For the federal government, the years between 1915 and 1929 represented a shift to efficient administration of building construction and the Bryan Federal Building and Post Office epitomizes this trend.

The building is eligible under Criteria C Architecture on a local level of significance as an example of the expression of the federal government's use of Classical Revival style for local buildings and standardized plans. It exemplifies the federal government's policies and practices at a local level. The Bryan Federal Building and Post Office is an early expression of the change in the Supervising Architect's Office from private architect designed federal buildings to the standardized architectural designs meant to convey the importance and presence of the federal government in an efficient and cost-effective manner. The Bryan Federal Building and Post Office retains a significant level of integrity on the exterior and the interior. It was used as a Post Office until 1971 and as government offices until 1999 when it was sold to the city of Bryan. The building continues to retain a high degree of integrity of location, setting, design, materials, feeling, association and workmanship.

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- Site Selected for Federal Building. February 6, 1911, p. 1.
- New Post Office Building News. March 9, 1914, p.1.
- Bids for Federal Building. November 7, 1914, p.5.
- Status of Bryan's Federal Building. July 1, 1914, p.3.
- Federal Building Drags. October 28, 1914, p.3.
- Will Ask New Bids. April 3, 1915, p.10.
- Twenty Nine Federal Buildings in Texas. November 22, 1912, p. 2.
- Bryan Post Office Serves Entire Area. June 24, 1962, p.68.
- Proper Officers Needed to Lead Fire Department. July 17, 1935, p.6.
- Illness is Fatal; W.D. Lawrence Funeral is Held. March 1, 1929, p.1.
- John E. Astin is Bryan Postmaster. February 8, 1915, p.3.
- Mr. John E. Astin Dead. February 15, 1917, p. 6.
- Local Postal Employee Wins Cash Award. August 7, 1962, p.2.
- Myers Succeeds Carroll as Postmaster Here. March 9, 1926, p. 1.
- Simpson gets "Diploma" After 41 Years. December 7, 1958, p.3.
- Acerage Survey Cards Scheduled for Distribution. September 9, 1963, p.10.
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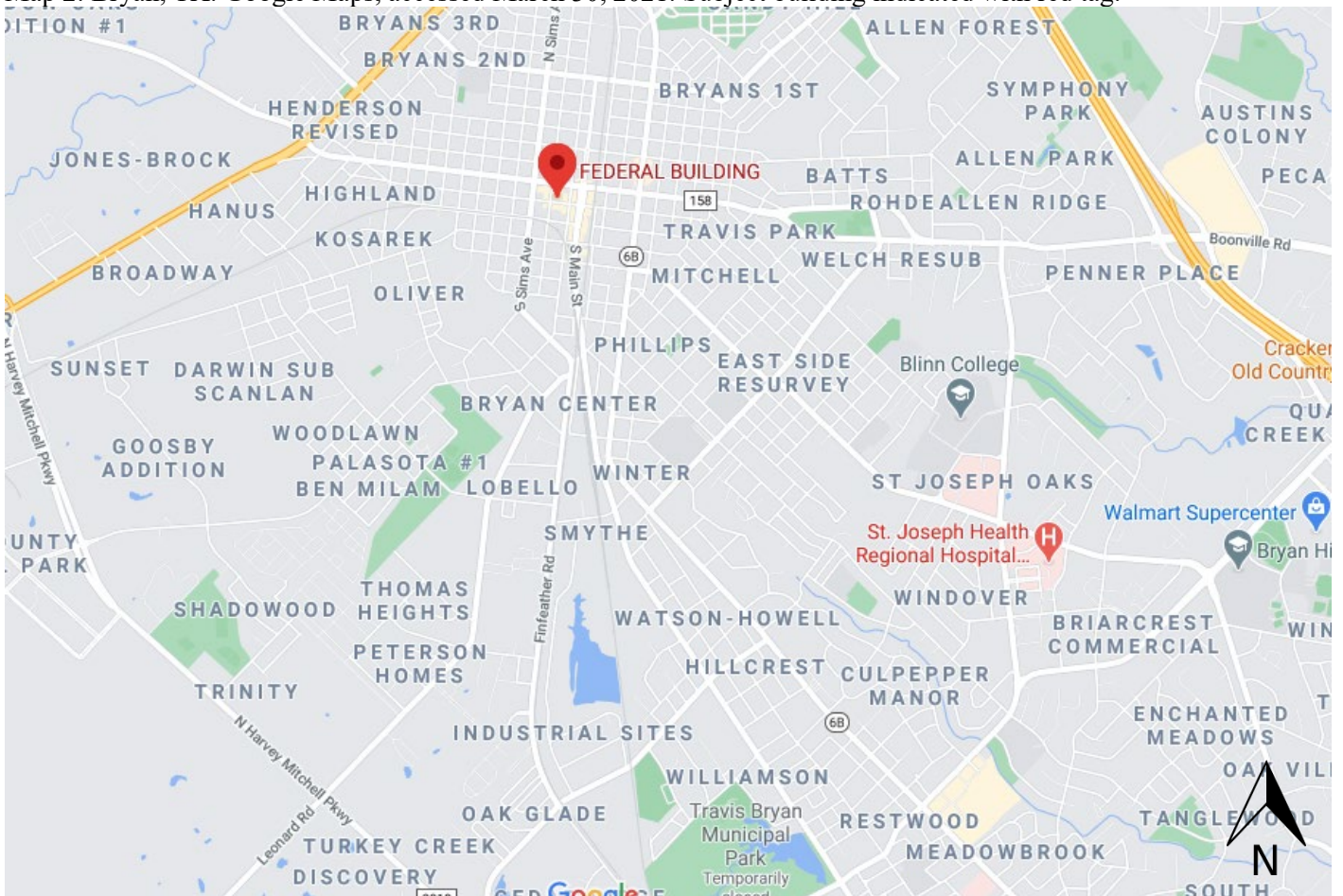
Bryan Federal Building and Post Office, Bryan, Brazos County, Texas

Maps

Map 1: Brazos County, Texas



Map 2: Bryan, TX. Google Maps, accessed March 30, 2021. Subject building indicated with red tag.



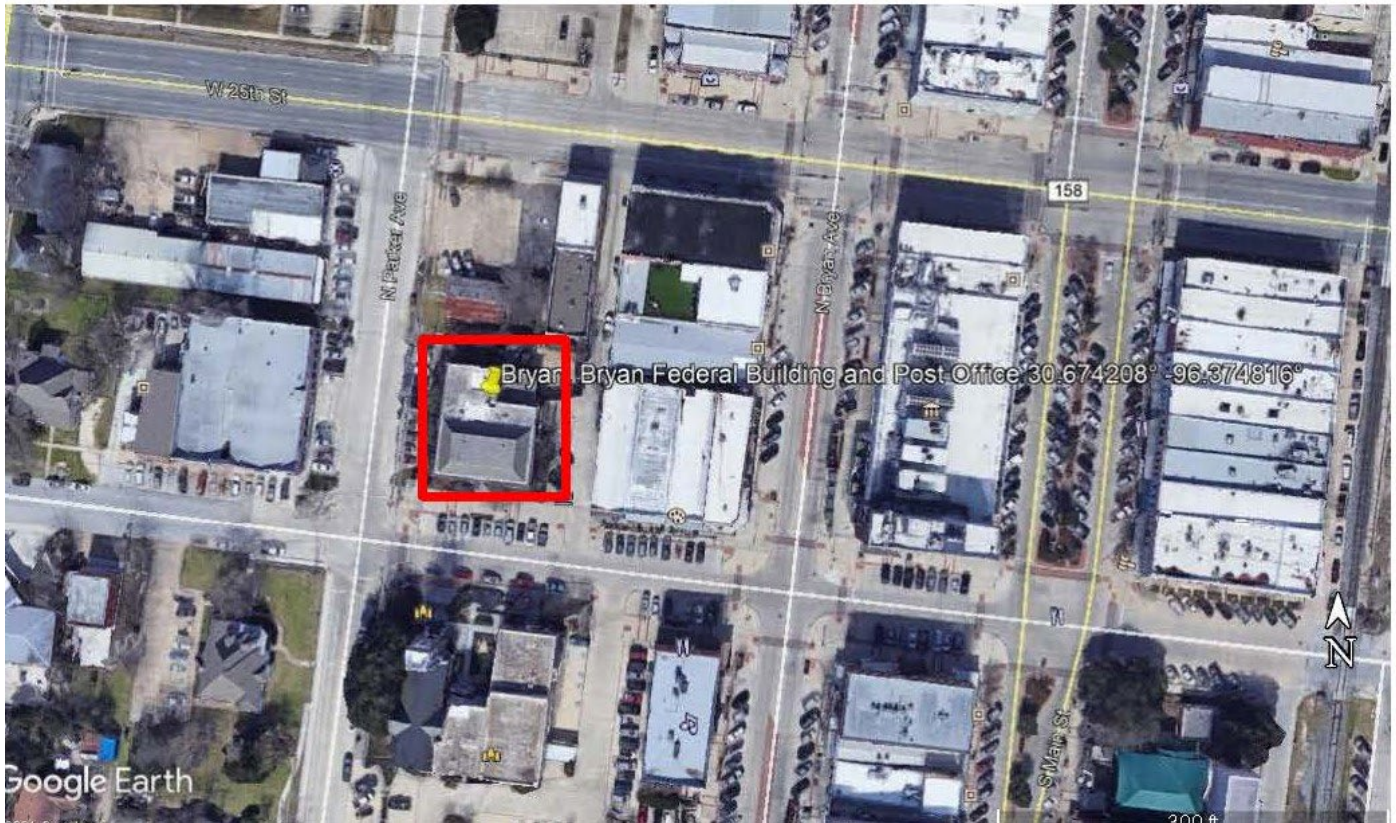


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Map 3: The nominated boundary is the legal parcel (in blue) defined by Brazos County Appraisal District as City of Bryan Townsite Block 119 Lot 8-9 & PT of Alley. Accessed May 3, 2021.



Map 4: Bryan Federal Building and Post Office. Google Earth, accessed March 30, 2021; outlined in red.



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**Figures**

Figure 1: Bryan Federal Building and Post Office and Post Office, ca. 1925. Source: Property Owner.



Figure 2: Bryan Federal Building and Post Office and Post Office, April 1939 front (south) elevation Beginning construction in addition. Source: Property Owner.



Bryan Federal Building and Post Office, Bryan, Brazos County, Texas

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Figure 3: Bryan Federal Building and Post Office and Post Office, September 1939 rear (north) elevation addition near completion. Source: Property Owner.



Figure 4: Bryan Federal Building and Post Office and Post Office, October 1939 rear (north) elevation addition construction near completion. Source: Property Owner.



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Figure 5: Bryan Federal Building and Post Office and Post Office, November 1939. Lobby interior looking east towards Postmaster office. Source: Property Owner.



Figure 6: Bryan Federal Building and Post Office and Post Office (November 1939) interior work area. Source: Property Owner.

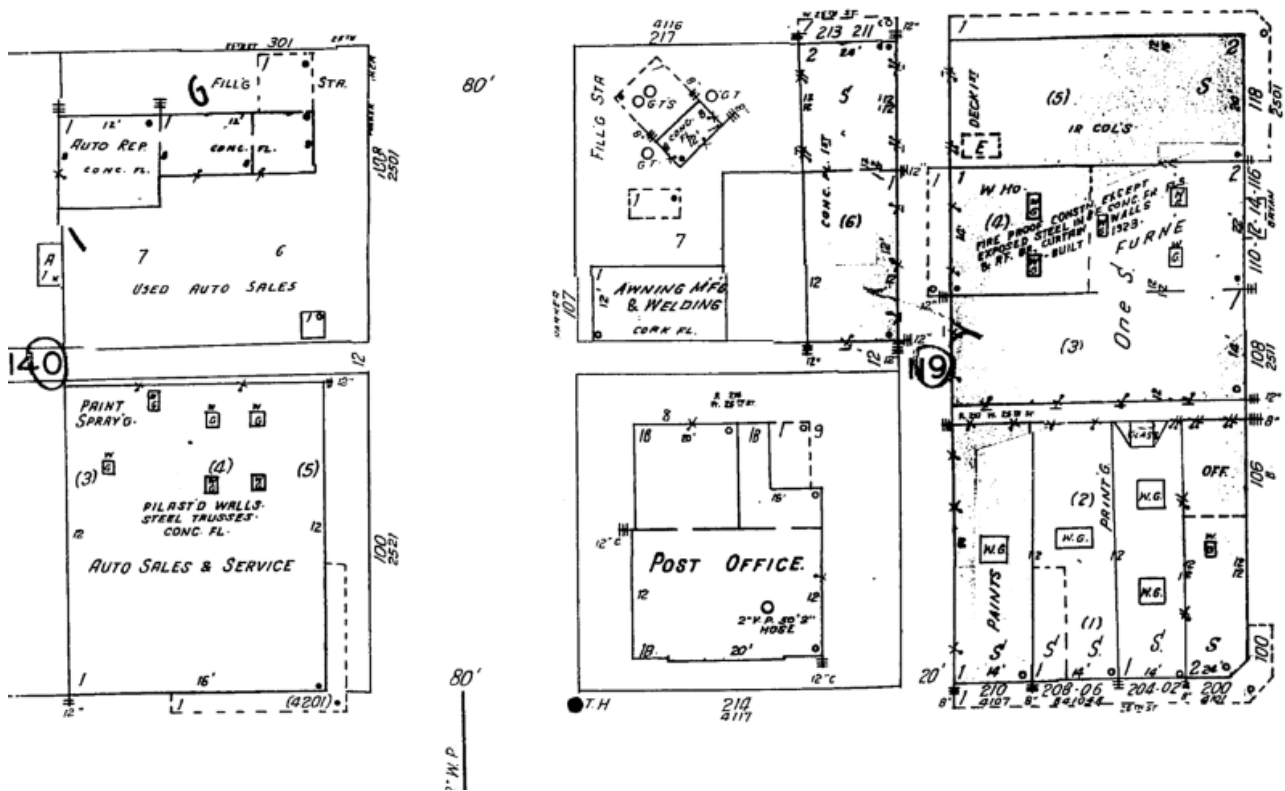


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Figure 7: Bryan Federal Building and Post Office and Post Office, ca. 1980s. Source: Property Owner.

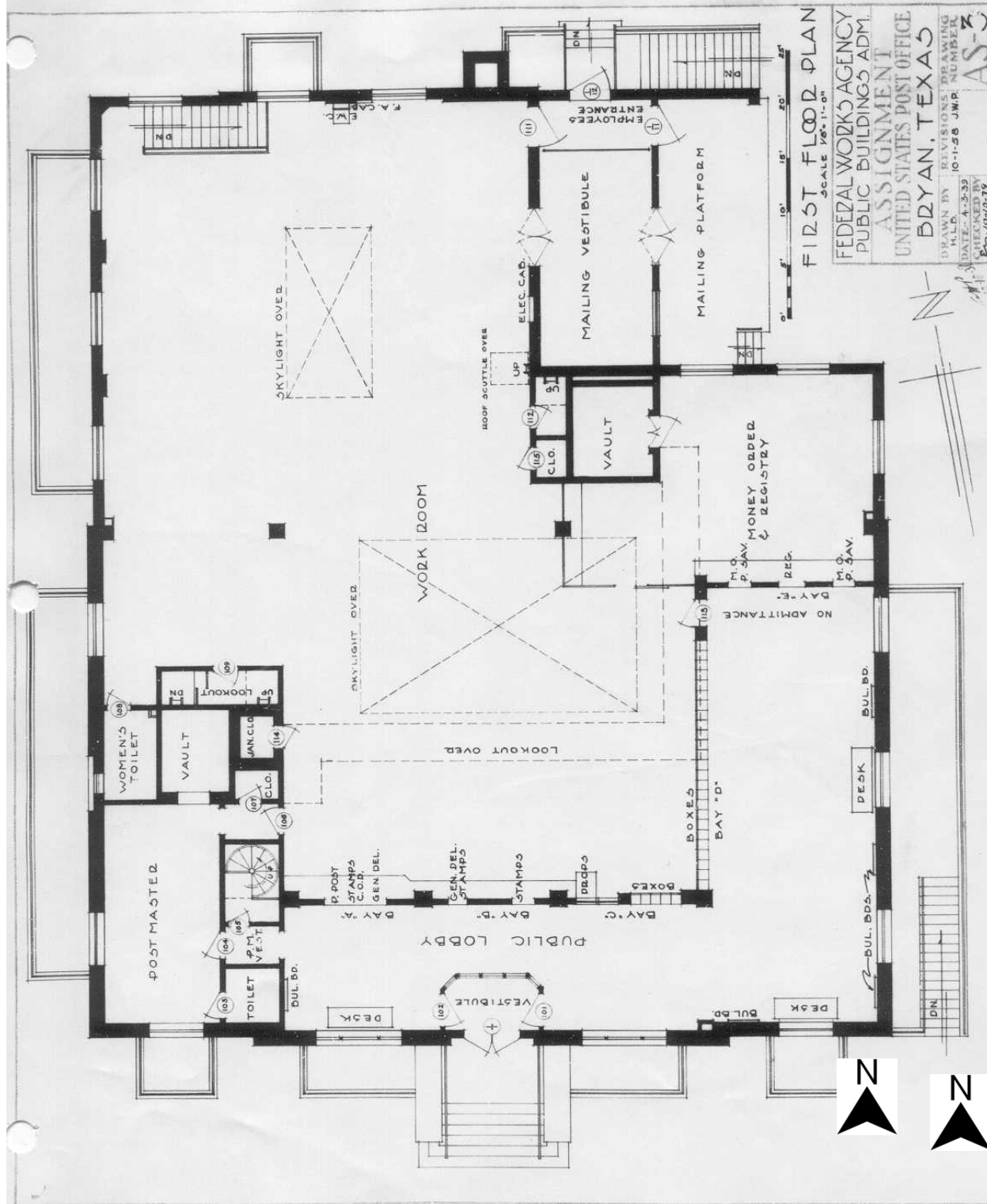


Figure 8: 1951 Sanborn Fire Insurance Map, Bryan, Brazos County, p. 2



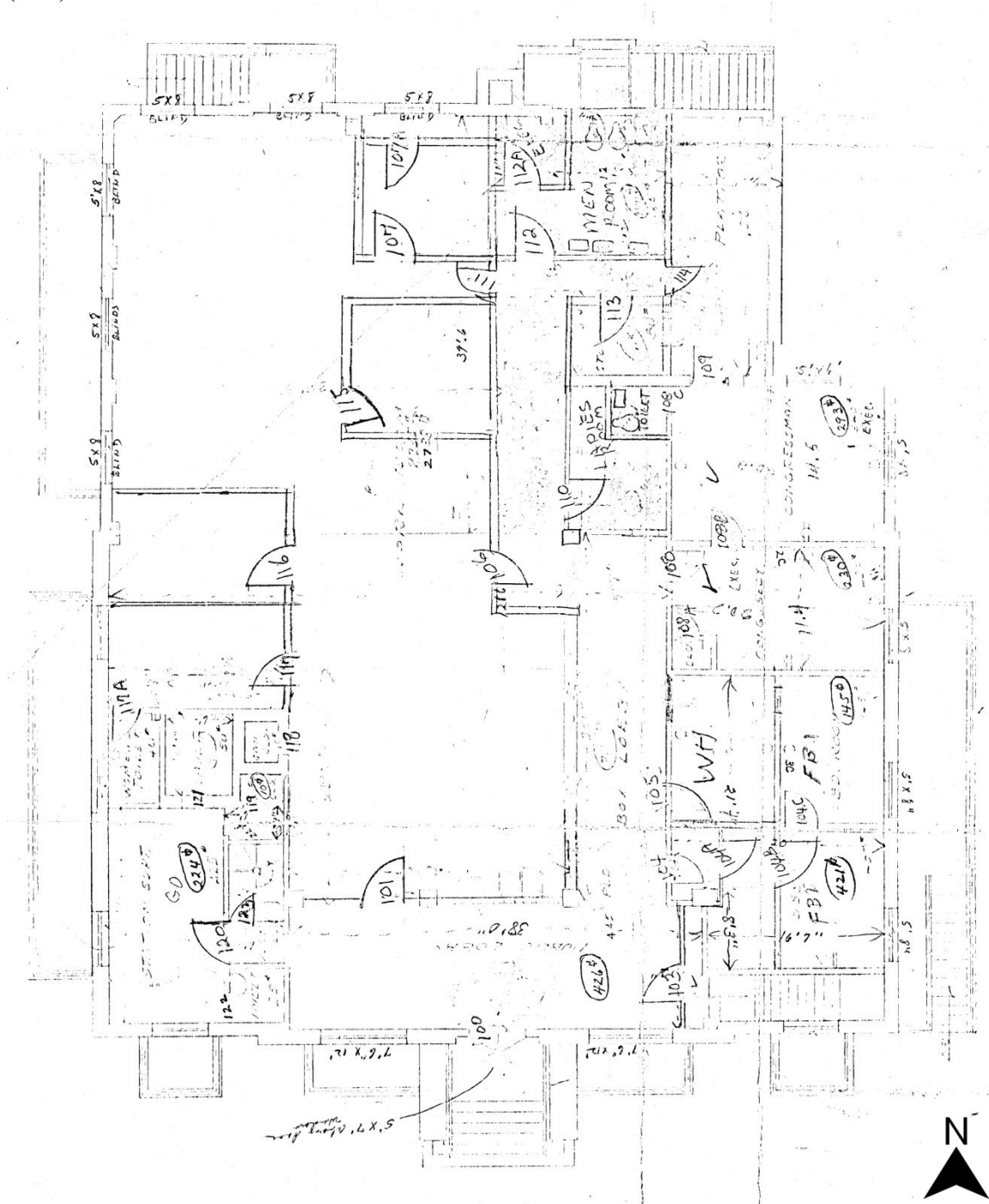
Bryan Federal Building and Post Office, Bryan, Brazos County, Texas

Figure 9. 1939 floor plan. Source: Historic Preservation and Fine Arts Officer Region 7, Public Buildings Service (7PC) General Services Administration.



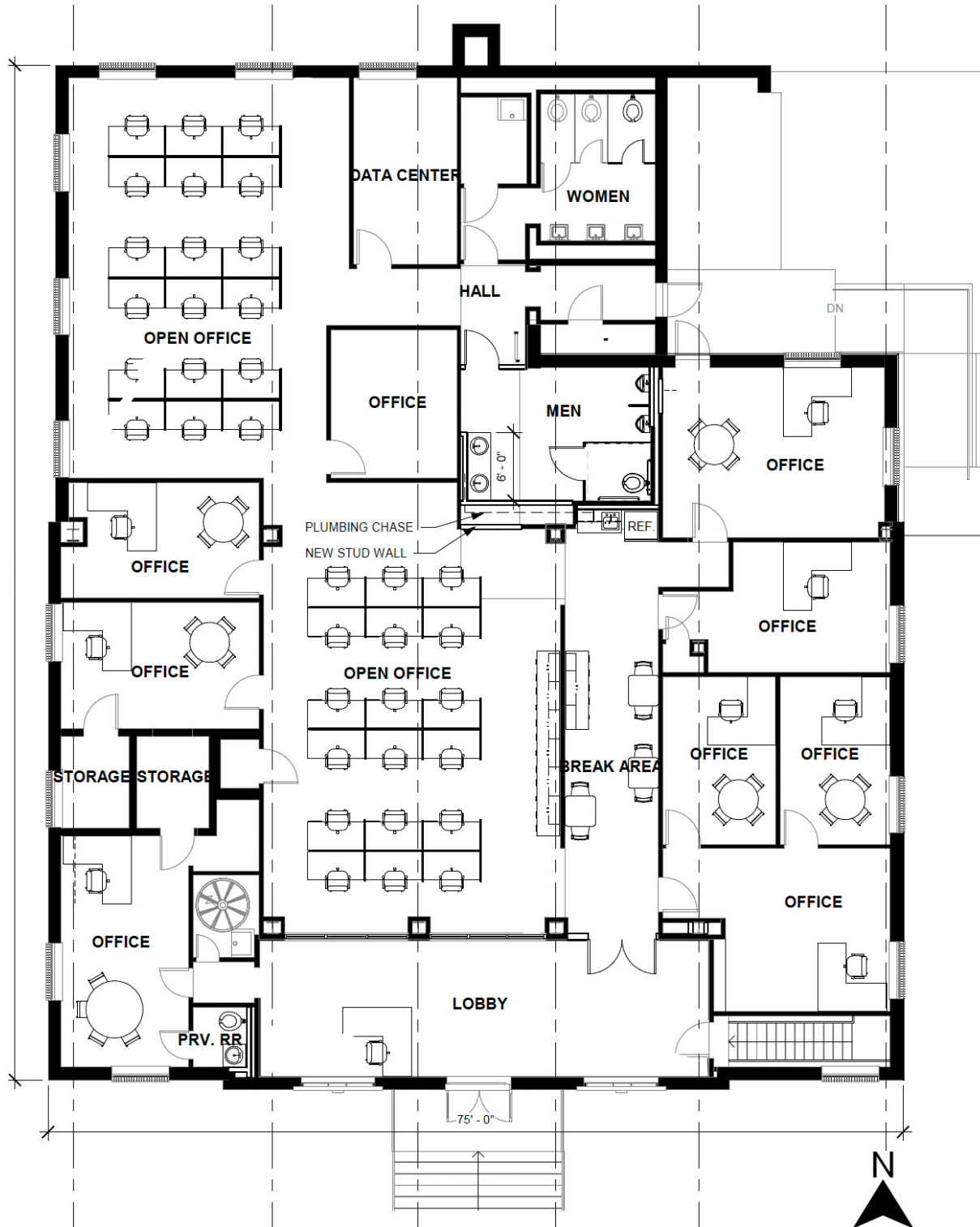
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Figure 10. 1984 floor plan Source: Historic Preservation and Fine Arts Officer Region 7, Public Buildings Service (7PC) General Services Administration.



Bryan Federal Building and Post Office, Bryan, Brazos County, Texas

Figure 11. Current (2023) floor plan. Source: Drawing by Praxis design/build, 2021.





**Bryan Federal Building and Post Office, Bryan, Brazos County, Texas**

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**Photographs**

Name of Property: Bryan Federal Building and Post Office  
City or Vicinity: Bryan  
County: Brazos  
State: Texas  
Photographer: Ross Falcone  
Date: October 2022 - January 2023  
Location of Original Files: 2506 Little John Lane, Austin, Texas 78704

Photo 1: Primary (South) Elevation, View North.



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Photo 2: Oblique Showing Primary (South) and West Elevations, View Northeast.



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Photo 3: West Elevation, View Northeast.



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Photo 4: West Elevation Showing Lightwell, View North.



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Photo 5: North Elevation, View Southwest.



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Photo 6: Northeast Corner Showing Mailing Platform, View Southwest.



**Bryan Federal Building and Post Office, Bryan, Brazos County, Texas**

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Photo 7: East Elevation, View Northwest.



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Photo 8: Oblique Showing Primary (South) and East Elevations, View Northwest.





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Photo 9: Primary (South) Entrance, View North.



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Photo 10: Primary (South) Elevation, View Northwest.



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Photo 11: Primary (South) Elevation Masonry and Cornice Detail, View North.



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Photo 12: Cornerstone Located at Southwest Corner, View North.



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Photo 13: Main Level, Lobby, View West.



Bryan Federal Building and Post Office, Bryan, Brazos County, Texas

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Photo 14: Main Level, Postmaster Office Entrance, View West.



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Photo 15: Main Level, Postmaster Office, View North.



Bryan Federal Building and Post Office, Bryan, Brazos County, Texas

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Photo 16: Main Level, Postmaster Office Historic Safe Door Detail, View North.





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Photo 17: Main Level, Work Room, View Northwest.



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Photo 18: Main Level, Work Room, View Northwest.



Bryan Federal Building and Post Office, Bryan, Brazos County, Texas

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Photo 19: Main Level, East Corridor, View South.



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Photo 20: Lower Level, Central Corridor, View West.



Bryan Federal Building and Post Office, Bryan, Brazos County, Texas

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Photo 21: Lower Level, Meeting Room, View Northwest.

