

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE:	Oregon
COUNTY:	Multnomah
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
15116117	MAR 20 1973

1. NAME			
COMMON: Pioneer Courthouse			
AND/OR HISTORIC: U. S. Courthouse and Custom House			
2. LOCATION			
STREET AND NUMBER: 520 S. W. Morrison Street Oregon Third Congressional District Representative Keith Green			
CITY OR TOWN: Portland			
STATE	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
Oregon	97204	Multnomah	051

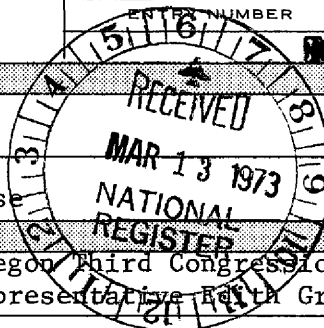
3. CLASSIFICATION			
CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
☐ District ☒ Building ☐ Site ☐ Structure ☐ Object	☒ Public ☐ Private ☐ Both	☒ Occupied ☐ Unoccupied ☐ Preservation work in progress	Yes: ☐ Restricted ☒ Unrestricted ☐ No
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
☐ Agricultural ☐ Commercial ☐ Educational ☐ Entertainment	☒ Government ☐ Industrial ☐ Military ☐ Museum	☐ Park ☐ Private Residence ☐ Religious ☐ Scientific	☐ Transportation ☐ Other (Specify) _____ _____

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY			
OWNER'S NAME: U. S. Government			
STREET AND NUMBER:			
CITY OR TOWN:	STATE:	CODE	

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION			
COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC:			
Multnomah County Courthouse			
STREET AND NUMBER:			
CITY OR TOWN:	STATE	CODE	
Portland	Oregon	97204 41	

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS			
TITLE OF SURVEY: Historic American Buildings Survey			
DATE OF SURVEY: 1954, 1964 ☒ Federal ☐ State ☐ County ☐ Local			
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:			
National Park Service			
STREET AND NUMBER:			
CITY OR TOWN:	STATE:	CODE	
Washington	District of Columbia	11	

SEE INSTRUCTIONS



STATE:	Oregon
COUNTY:	Multnomah
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
15116117	MAR 20 1973
FOR NPS USE ONLY	

7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	☒ Excellent	☐ Good	☐ Fair	☐ Deteriorated	☐ Ruins	☐ Unexposed
?	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	☒ Altered	☐ Unaltered	☐ Moved	☒ Original Site		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Occupying a full city block in downtown Portland at S. W, Fifth Avenue and Morrison Street, the U. S. Courthouse and Custom House is presently being renovated under supervision of the General Services Administration for use by the Ninth U. S. Circuit Court of Appeals and the bankruptcy division of Oregon's U. S. District Court. The building, popularly called "Pioneer Post Office" for many years, was officially redesignated "Pioneer Courthouse" by GSA in 1969. In 1963 it had been expected that the building would be surplused owing to proposed construction of a new federal building in Portland. However, in 1967 the U. S. Court of Appeals asked that the building be retained and restored for continued use by federal court offices. GSA prepared a feasibility study, and, having the support of the Oregon Historical Society, Portland Art Association and the local chapter of the AIA and other groups, the request was acted upon favorably. Exterior restoration work was carried out between 1971 and 1972. Interior renovation contract work was let in 1972 and is expected to be completed in time for re-dedication ceremonies scheduled for May 1, 1973.

During expansion and remodeling carried out between 1903 and 1905, wings consistent with the original design were added to the west face, and certain modifications were made to the interior. Current restoration work has been aimed at the appearance of 1905. Supervision of initial construction work has been attributed to local architect John H. Holman and to an E. B. St. John. Contractor was William Luther Higgins. Remodeling shortly after the turn of the century was directed by Portland architect Edgar Lazarus.

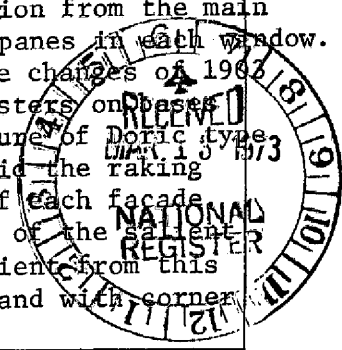
The following passages are quoted from Dr. Joseph A. Baird, Jr., Historic American Buildings Survey Photograph-Data Book Report, 1964.

"The original Post Office was a rectangular structure of stone which stood unaltered until 1903. At that time additions at the west (on 6th Street) increased the floor space of the first floor to almost double what it had been, and continued on the second and third floors as two wings at the west of the older structure - with an open space between. It would be unwise to say that the building was 'spoiled' by these additions as they are a meticulously exact imitation of the style of the original structure - in the same kind of stone (apparently from a different quarry). Furthermore, they are essentially the kind of wings that might be expected on this kind of restrained building...

The basement level is made up of a thick wall of stones, with an externally roughened surface laid in regular horizontal courses. The first story was divided (east and west) into nine 'bays,' with a projecting group of three bays at the center of each face. Corner and internal articulation, vertically, is achieved with smoothly rusticated pilasters of sandstone. The eight windows and single door (of the original facades - the west facade is now different) were crowned with flattened arches with a stubby keystone in the center. Window and door reveals were set back in two levels of recession from the main facade plane. The windows have muntins of wood, making four panes in each window. The second and third stories were grouped (again there are the changes of 1903 on the west) as a single story with colossal Roman Doric pilasters on bases above a salient string course; above, is a classical entablature of Doric type without triglyphs and metopes. The cornice has mutules, as did the raking cornice of the pediment over the projecting central section of each facade.

The north and south facades are alike. Each is a repeat of the salient central section of the east and west facades - again made salient from this north and south face of the building, with a section of wall and with corner pilasters to complete the composition. (Continued).

SEE INSTRUCTIONS



8. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- ☐ Pre-Columbian | ☐ 16th Century | ☐ 18th Century | ☐ 20th Century
☐ 15th Century | ☐ 17th Century | ☒ 19th Century

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) 1869-1873

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- | | | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|---|--|
| ☐ Aboriginal | ☐ Education | ☒ Political | ☐ Urban Planning |
| ☐ Prehistoric | ☐ Engineering | ☐ Religion/Philosophy | ☐ Other (Specify) |
| ☐ Historic | ☐ Industry | ☐ Science | |
| ☐ Agriculture | ☐ Invention | ☐ Sculpture | |
| ☒ Architecture | ☐ Landscape | ☐ Social/Humanitarian | |
| ☐ Art | ☐ Architecture | ☐ Theater | |
| ☐ Commerce | ☐ Literature | ☐ Transportation | |
| ☐ Communications | ☐ Military | | |
| ☐ Conservation | ☐ Music | | |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Portland's "Pioneer Courthouse," as the building was officially retitled in 1969, is the oldest standing federal building in the Pacific Northwest. It was begun in 1869 during the term of Supervising Architect of the Treasury Alfred B. Mullett, an appointee of President Grant, and completed in 1873. Elsewhere on the West Coast, the U. S. Mint in San Francisco, California, was constructed under Mullett's direction along similar classical lines at about the same time. The Portland landmark housed federal courts from 1875 to 1933, and has also housed the U. S. Post Office and other federal offices.

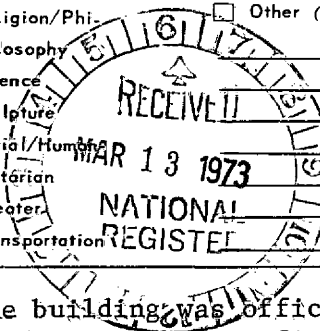
The following passages are quoted from Dr. Joseph A. Baird, Jr., Historic American Buildings Survey Photograph-Data Book Report, 1964.

"The Pioneer Post Office (so named in 1937, when it was again activated as a post office after three years of disuse) is undoubtedly the singly most important building of the American Northwest to survive into the 20th century. Finished in 1875, it was a dignified exemplar of Italianate (albeit more classicist) design, following the precedent of much civic and government building in both San Francisco and Portland. The additions of 'wings' (from the second story up), at the west in 1903, give it a more Baroque shape and made it more visually comparable to the San Francisco Mint - built also in the early 1870s. Long threatened by both government and city officials, the building has fortunately survived in a relatively intact condition, exteriorly and interiorly.

On February 24, 1869, the city council authorized Mayor Hamilton Boyd to sell the block to the United States Government for a customs house and post office at a cost of \$15,000. The sale was consummated two days later for the two hundred foot square block. At the time of its purchase, the Federal Government was criticized for locating the Court House and Post Office so far from the center of town, then down near the river. It was humorously suggested that a pony express service be established between the new Post Office and the center of business. Although the building's cost is variously given as \$250,000, \$365,000 or \$450,000, it was actually \$396,500 - as proven by the Congressional Acts necessary to finance construction. The official completion date is October 1, 1875.

Since it was built under the direction of the supervising architect of the United States Treasury, A. B. Mullett, one might assume he had something to do with the design. Like the contemporary Old Mint in San Francisco, it is in a generally classicizing Baroque manner, although there are Italianate aspects of the Portland Post Office - in the tall narrow windows - not seen in San Francisco. The local supervising architects E. B. St. John and/or John H. Holman, may have had something to do with the details. The builder was William L. Higgins. Trees were planted in the last stages of construction in 1874-1875 and are still standing (cont').

SEE INSTRUCTIONS



A History of Public Buildings Under the Control of the Treasury Department
(Washington, D. C.: U. S. Government Printing Office, 1901), 486-487.

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Historic American Buildings Survey Inventory Sheet prepared by Oregon Chapter, American Institute of Architects, July 10, 1954.
Historic American Buildings Survey Photograph-Data Book Report (ORE-52) prepared by Joseph A. Baird, Jr., June 1964.
Ross, Marion D., A Century of Architecture in Oregon, 1859-1959 (Women's Architectural League of the Oregon Chapter, AIA, 1959), 4.
Vaughan, Thomas, and McMath, George A., A Century of Portland Architecture (Portland: Oregon Historical Society, 1967), 19-21.
Jumper, Ken, "Portland's Old Post Office Preserved, Now 'The Pioneer Courthouse,'" Oregon Journal (November 18, 1969), 4.

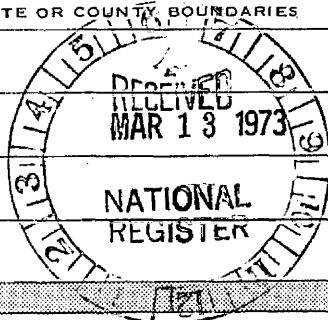
10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA *Renovation Dated Soon for Portland Landmark," Oregonian (January 19, 1972), 23.*

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY				OR	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES					
CORNER	LATITUDE				LATITUDE			LONGITUDE		
	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds		Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds
NW	0	'	"	0	'	"	0	'	"	
NE	0	'	"	0	'	"	45	31	08	
SE	0	'	"	0	'	"	122	40	37	
SW	0	'	"	0	'	"				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 0.92 acres

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

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE



11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE: (Description and Significance based upon Joseph A. Baird, Jr. see references above)
 ORGANIZATION: Elisabeth Walton
 Park Historian
 Oregon State Highway Division
 STREET AND NUMBER: State Highway Building
 CITY OR TOWN: Salem
 STATE: Oregon 97310
 CODE: 41
 DATE: February 1973

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National ☒ State ☐ Local ☐

Name: George M. Beldum
 Title: Administrator of Highways
 Date: March 6, 1973

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

Robert M. Utley
 Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date: 3/20/73

ATTEST:
W. Bradford
 Keeper of The National Register
 Date: 3/16/73

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

HR
10/525231
5040440

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

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE Oregon	
COUNTY Multnomah	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
	MAR 20 1973

(Number all entries)

PIONEER COURTHOUSE - 1

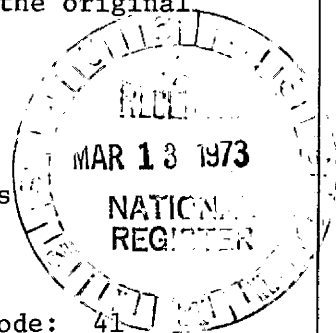
2. Location

The Pioneer Courthouse is located in Block 172 of the original plat of Portland.

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

Statewide Inventory of Historic Sites and Buildings
1970
Parks and Recreation Section
Oregon State Highway Building
Salem, Oregon 97310

Code: 41



7. Description

The windows of the second story on all facades are relatively tall; and their narrowness is emphasized by the continuation of vertical moldings at either side, to the main string course below - the space between the bottom of the window and the horizontal molding above the string course being treated as a rectangular recessed panel. Each window is capped with a strongly projecting cornice strip, supported on consoles - in the Italianate manner. The windows of the third story are simple square shapes with framing moldings to give them plastic definition. The roof is a modified gable-hip type, with angles of intersection where the salient sections come together. There are four sandstone chimneys on each side of the building, east and west, serving old fireplaces inside (now generally unused). An octagonal cupola of wood crowns the entire building, in the center of the roof. It has a pseudo-balustrade (obviously not to be used as a balustrade) beneath each arched window (of each of the eight sides) - the arch above being strengthened visually with repeated moldings and a continuous molding horizontally at the springing point of the arches. The domed cap of the cupola rises above a cornice with mutules and a dentil course.

Of the original interior (finished in 1875) the main hall on the first floor, the stairway at the north, and the great Court Room on the second floor are the best preserved. All are of exceptional architectural interest and of fine design quality. The hall on the first (main) floor is made up of six 'bays' which start at the south and end at the staircase on the north side of the building. The side elevations of these 'bays' is ennobled with a colossal order of wooden pilasters, grouped as pairs at the point of abutment of each 'bay.' Their capitals are of a Roman Doric type, with egg and dart molding in the echinus; the fluting is of the Ionic type. A ten inch grey and white marble baseboard rises to the base of these pilasters; above each of them is a plaster (mastic?) console. The squared ceiling compartment of each 'bay' is enriched with additional moldings to emphasize its shape. The entire effect of heavily varnished (apparently oak) - Cont'

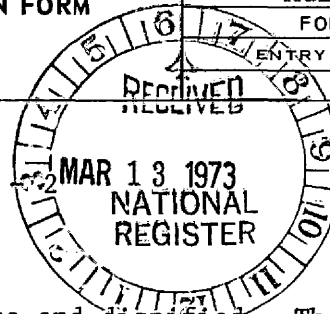
**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM**

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE Oregon	
COUNTY Multnomah	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

(Number all entries)

PIONEER COURTHOUSE



7. Description (Cont')

pilasters and white ceiling is handsome and dignified. The floor is a combination of marble and terrazzo. Various doors and wicket-like windows punctuate the side elevations, and provide access to the rooms at the east and west which are generally of less architectural interest than the hall. Many have had interior revisions, and new lighting, in more recent times.

The stair is an interesting structural type - rising in two side flights to a mezzanine landing, and then continuing (reversing itself) to the second floor with one central flight; it is the so-called 'imperial' stair, and is appropriate to this building's stylistic character. The woods of the stair are reported to be of Oregon ash and walnut - probably ash for the steps and balusters, and walnut for the handrails. All have been heavily varnished. An elevator (probably dating from the additions of 1903) rises to the west of the stair.

On the second floor, at the head of the stair, is the entrance to the great Court Room - magnificent chamber of rectangular shape, with the judge's chambers to the south. This Court Room is also articulated vertically with colossal pilasters, grouped as pairs on the east and west sides (center) and singly on the north and south sides (center). At the corners there are single pilasters on each face, making two for each corner. There are great doors, at north and south, and a simple, but attractive fireplace in the center of the north wall. On the west, there is one main central door to the hall; on the east there are three large windows between the pilasters. All of the trim is of wood (oak apparently), yellow with varnish; the pilasters are again (as in the first floor hall) of the Doric type with Ionic fluting. Above, a massive entablature with dentil course over the triglyph blocks above each pilaster leads to the ceiling. This is enriched in the center with an oval molding with high relief areas of ornament (cartouches around central bosses) - east, west, north and south. A great gas chandelier was once the principal artificial light source of the room; it has disappeared, as has all of the superb walnut furniture."

8. Significance

An Act of Congress, approved June 6, 1902, called for extension to the building at a cost of \$200,000. On December 17, 1902, the Secretary of the Treasury, the Post Master General and the Secretary of the Interior personally signed authorization for construction of two new wings at the west side of the structure (on Sixth Street). They were wings only from the second story up; below that, the interior was complete between the wings.

...Sharing the main (first) floor with the Post Office was the Internal Revenue Department and the Office of the Surveyor General. Office of the United States Marshall and Clerk of the United States Court, as well as the District Court itself, occupied the second floor. In 1875, the third floor did not have permanent tenants. Between September, 1933 and December, 1936, the Post Office service was closed in this building, when both Post Office and Court moved to new quarters at S. W. Broadway and Main Streets. After the removal of 1933-1936, the inconvenience of not having a central, downtown Post Office had caused the Postal Department to open a branch in the old Post Office building again, in 1937."



NPS Number 3/20/73

Title: PIONEER COURTHOUSE

Loc. MULTNOMAH, OREGON

EAST FACE

Pioneer Courthouse



NPS Number 3/20/73

Title: PIONEER Courthouse

Loc. Multnomah, Oregon

Northeast view