**United States department of the Interior**

**National Register of Historic Places**

**Inventory – Nomination Form**

(Type all entries – complete applicable sections)

1. **Name**
   - **Common**: Old Post Office
   - **And/or Historic**: United States Court House, Custom House and Post Office

2. **Location**
   - **Street and Number**: Eighth and Olive Streets
   - **City or Town**: St. Louis
   - **State**: Missouri
   - **Code**: 63101

3. **Classification**
   - **Category**: Building
   - **Ownership**: Public
   - **Public Acquisition**: In Process
   - **Status**: Occupied
   - **Accessible to the Public**: Yes

4. **Owner of Property**
   - **Owner's Name**: United States Government, General Services Administration
   - **Street and Number**: 19th and F streets, N.W.
   - **City or Town**: Washington
   - **State**: District of Columbia
   - **Code**: 20405

5. **Location of Legal Description**
   - **Courthouse, Registry of Deeds, etc.:** Office of Recorder of Deeds, St. Louis City Hall
   - **Street and Number**: 12th and Market streets
   - **City or Town**: St. Louis
   - **State**: Missouri
   - **Code**: 63103

6. **Representation in Existing Surveys**
   - **Title of Survey**: Historic American Buildings Survey
   - **Date of Survey**: 1965
   - **Federal**: Yes
   - **State**: No
   - **County**: No
   - **Local**: No
   - **Depository for Survey Records**: Historic American Buildings Survey, Prints and Photographs Division
     - **Street and Number**: Library of Congress
     - **City or Town**: Washington
     - **State**: District of Columbia
     - **Code**: 20405
The Old Post Office of St. Louis was designed by Alfred Bult Mullett, Supervising Architect to the Federal Treasury Department from 1865-1874, and was under construction from 1873-1884.

This building is a notable example of the "Second Empire" style in monumental public architecture. (Historic American Buildings Survey data sheet prepared by Buford L. Pickens, 1964.) The building follows the plan of an Italian Renaissance palazzo, built foursquare around an open court with three floors and an attic above street level and two basements below. Air and light are made available to the basements by means of a moat (areaway), 8 feet 6 inches wide by 25 feet deep.

Of the four almost identical facades, the Olive Street side (south) is given prominence by the crowning Mansard dome, originally topped by an ornamental belvedere, and a monumental sculpture, "America at War and America at Peace," executed by Daniel Chester French as his first major commission. The south and north walls have 17 bays; the east and west walls have 13. The long (east-west) axis of the building is 265 feet; the short (north-south) axis is 196 feet.

Granite is the predominant wall material. The foundations are of Missouri red granite, quarry faced and 10 feet thick. Walls above foundation level are gray granite quarried on Hurricane Island, Maine, 3 to 4 feet thick. Projecting porticos of four groups of paired columns are centered on each of the four facades. Granite cornices and entablatures surround the building at the level of each of the four stories. The wall surfaces are richly articulated with recessed window and door openings. These openings are flanked by pilasters and full columns, and are capped by keystone arches at the first floor level, segment arch pediments at second floor level, and triangular pediments at the third floor level.

The windows have wooden double-hung, 2 over 2 light sash in cast iron frames. For fire protection, ¼ inch sheet iron sliding shutters pull out from the wall and cover all exterior windows.

A low mansard roof, having slate shingles on the sloping surface, rims the street facade of the building. The roof has an iron supporting structure. A four-sided domical Mansard tower on the Olive Street (south) side also has iron framing and a slate shingle exterior. The central open court was originally covered by a skylight at the level of the main roof. The present skylight is at the second floor level.

The building's 7 chimneys, having 3 to 6 flues each, serve groups of fireplaces. In addition to the chimneys, 2 large air vent shafts project on the roof.
The Old Post Office of St. Louis is primarily significant as an outstanding example of a structure which embodies the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural type specimen. This building is exceptionally valuable as an example of the post Civil War "Second Empire" style incorporating innovative fire-proof construction techniques. Relatively few monumental examples of this style have survived in the United States. The building is also a rare survivor of the work of Alfred Bult Mullett, an important governmental architect of the mid-nineteenth century. George R. Brooks, current Director of the Missouri Historical Society in St. Louis, Missouri has noted further significance of the building in the following: "As the seat of the Federal Courts between 1884-1935, the building has played an important role in the judicial history of the area under the jurisdiction of the courts, and as such, a host of trials, cases, etc. have been heard in its rooms." (Historic American Buildings Survey data sheet, Old Post Office, St. Louis, 1963.)

The Old Post Office of St. Louis is an example of federal (i.e. governmental) architecture belonging to the period of reconstruction following the U.S. Civil War. In this period the country was attempting to regain strength and solidarity and at the same time to protect its government centers from new dangers. The fortress-like, yet noble, appearance of this "Second Empire" style building (Historic American Buildings Survey data sheet prepared by Buford L. Pickens, 1964.) is a superb architectural statement of the desired federal image.

Innovative applications of technology incorporated into the building's design include the use of predominately fire-proof construction methods and structural members. The building has a circulating hot air heating system, elevators and direct access, through the east moat, to an underground railway tunnel for mail service. All of these features were relatively new in the 1870's.

The Old Post Office is one of two survivors of the six major designs produced by Alfred Bult Mullett (1834-1890) during the
9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES


10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

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APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 1.66

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

STATE: CODE COUNTY

STATE: CODE COUNTY:

STATE: CODE COUNTY:

STATE: CODE COUNTY:

11. FORM PREPARED BY

M. Patricia (McCue) Holmes, Research Architectural Historian

Missouri State Park Board
State Historical Survey and Planning Office

P.O. Box 176, 1204 Jefferson Building

Jefferson City Missouri 65101

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

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 [x] State [x] Local [x]

Name: Joseph Jaeger, Jr.

Title: Director, Missouri State Park Board, and Missouri State Liaison Officer

DATE

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

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

Chief, Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation

DATE

ATTEST:

Keeper of The National Register

DATE
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**OLD POST OFFICE**

McCue, G. *Building Art in St. Louis, Two Centuries*  
(local)  
1964 and 1967  
321 South Woodlawn Avenue  
Kirkwood, Missouri 63122  
Code: 24

Missouri State Historical Survey  
(state)  
1968  
Missouri State Park Board  
P.O. Box 176  
1204 Jefferson Building  
Jefferson City, Missouri 65101  
Code: 24
7.

OLD POST OFFICE

The building's structural framing is of fire-resistant materials. Iron beams and cast iron columns were used on the basement and first floors. Above the second floor, brick arches carried on iron joists are supported by brick bearing walls.

On the interior wood was used minimally. An unusual sense of openness and lightness was achieved by creating window openings wider than the intervening sections of wall. The interior was, and remains, elegantly finished with cast iron mouldings framing windows and doors, ornamental plaster cornices, ceramic tile floors and stair risers, art glass windows, bronze door knobs displaying the U.S. seal, and cast iron ventilation grills pierced in ornamental patterns.

Two iron stairways, each in a 25 foot x 37 foot stair well, and three elevators provide vertical circulation.

Both basement levels have 16 foot ceilings; the first floor's is 26'; the second through fourth floor ceilings are 22'.

Red Italian Bologna marble fireplace mantles are major ornamental features of the offices on the second through fourth floors. An average of ten of these fireplaces are located on each floor.

Presently, the building is almost original in form and material. The belvedere has been removed and the office space on the second and third floors has been redecorated and partitioned. The interior is in need of plaster repairs and general refurbishment. In 1963 the exterior masonry was steam-cleaned and pointed, and the trim and metal work painted. The structure and exterior are in excellent condition.
8.

OLD POST OFFICE

presidency of General U. S. Grant. Mullett was Supervising Architect to the Treasury Department from 1865-1874. His only other major design which has survived is the former State, War and Navy Building, now the Executive Office Building, in Washington, D. C. Although the Old Post Office of St. Louis is considerably smaller than the Executive Office Building, similarities in general format, articulation and detail relate these buildings stylistically.

The building originally served the three-fold purpose of United States Court House, Custom House and Post Office. It later housed offices of federal agencies, and presently continues as a post office and St. Louis Visitors Center.
OLD POST OFFICE


6. Pickens, Buford L. Research files. Washington University, St. Louis, Missouri.

OLD POST OFFICE

* Form originally submitted November 21, 1968 on Draft (July 1968) version of the National Register of Historic Places Inventory Nomination Form, and given acceptance to the National Register of Historic Places with the provision that the data be transferred to an updated version of the form. Date of transfer was October, 1969.
### Form 10-301

**United States Department of the Interior**  
National Park Service  
National Register of Historic Places  
Property Map Form

**II. NAME**

**COMMON:** Old Post Office  
**AND/or HISTORIC:** United States Court House, Custom House and Post Office

**II. LOCATION**

**STREET AND NUMBER:**  
Eighth and Olive streets  

**CITY OR TOWN:**  
St. Louis  

**STATE:**  
Missouri  
**ZIP CODE:** 63101

**III. MAP REFERENCE**

**SOURCE:** U.S.G.S. 7½' Quadrangles "Granite City Ill.-No." and "Cahokia, Ill.-No."

**SCALE:** 1:24,000  
**DATE:** 1954

**IV. REQUIREMENTS**

**TO BE INCLUDED ON ALL MAPS:**  
1. Property boundaries where required.  
2. North arrow.  
3. Latitude and longitude reference.

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**State:** Missouri  
**County:** St. Louis City  
**Entry Number:**  
**Date:**
OLD POST OFFICE
St. Louis, Mo.

Property nominated to the National Register

R.R. MORSE 7-26-69