

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Central Heating Plant

other names / site number \_\_\_\_\_

2. Location

street & number 325 13<sup>th</sup> Street, SW  not for publication

city or town Washington  vicinity

state District of Columbia code DC county District of Columbia code 001 zip code 20405

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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  nationally  statewide  locally. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments).

Signature of certifying official \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

State or Federal Agency or Tribal Government \_\_\_\_\_

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments).

Signature of commenting official/Title \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

State or Federal agency and bureau \_\_\_\_\_

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register  
 See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register  
 See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register

removed from the National Register

other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the Keeper \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Action \_\_\_\_\_

Central Heating Plant

District of Columbia

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

**Category of Property**  
(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

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

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

N/A

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: Government Sub: Public Works

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: Government Sub: Public Works

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Modern Movement: Industrial Art Deco

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Limestone

roof Asphalt

walls Brick

\_\_\_\_\_

other \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets)

**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

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

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

**Criteria Considerations**

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

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets)

**Area of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Community Planning and Development  
 Government  
 Architecture

**Period of Significance**

1933-1948

**Significant Dates**

1933-34, 1948

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

**Cultural Affiliation**

**Architect/Builder**

Paul Philippe Cret

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

**Bibliography**

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets)

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

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey  
# \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record  
# \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

U.S. General Services Administration

Central Heating Plant

District of Columbia

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** 2 acres

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

1	1 8 Zone	3 2 3 3 5 5 Easting	4 3 0 5 3 4 0 Northing	3			
2				4			

See continuation sheet

**Verbal Boundary Description**

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet)

**Boundary Justification**

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet)

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Erin E. Brasell, Architectural Historian  
 organization Earth Tech, Inc. date May 12, 2006  
 street & number 7 St. Paul Street, Suite 900 telephone 410.637.1600  
 city or town Baltimore state MD zip code 21202

**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

**Continuation Sheets**

**Maps**

- A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

**Photographs**

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

**Additional Items**

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

**Property Owner**

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO)

name U.S. General Services Administration, National Capital Region  
 street & number 7<sup>th</sup> & D Streets, SW telephone 202.708.5891  
 city or town Washington state DC zip code 20407

**Paperwork Reduction 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. 470 et. seq.). A federal agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number.

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to range from approximately 18 hours to 36 hours depending on several factors including, but not limited to, how much documentation may already exist on the type of property being nominated and whether the property is being nominated as part of a Multiple Property Documentation Form. In most cases, it is estimated to average 36 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form to meet minimum National Register documentation requirements. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, 1849 C St., NW, Washington, DC 20240.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Central Heating Plant

Name of Property

District of Columbia

County and State

Section 7 Page 1

### Summary:

The Central Heating Plant is located at 325 13<sup>th</sup> Street, SW on a site bounded by C Street to the north, D Street to the South, 13<sup>th</sup> Street to the west and 12<sup>th</sup> Street to the east. The building is surrounded on three sides by federal buildings that include the U.S. Department of Agriculture and Annex buildings, and the U.S. Printing and Engraving Annex. Constructed in 1933-34, the monolithic six-story steel and masonry building is clad primarily in yellow and brown buff variegated brick.

Nationally renowned architect, Paul Philippe Cret, designed the building in the Art Deco Style under the direction of the James A. Wetmore and Louis A. Simon of the Office of the Supervising Architect of the Treasury. Due to Cret's exterior patterning and surface detailing, the rigid function of the building is somewhat softened and reduces the industrial impact of the building among its monumental neighbors. The Central Heating Plant has been subject to numerous equipment upgrades over the past 70 years; however it retains much of its original interior and exterior configuration, materials, and uses.

### Narrative Description:

The Central Heating Plant site consists of a main building, coal and fuel storage areas, refrigeration plant addition, and a coal/ash house. The main building is a six-story monolithic steel and masonry structure that consists of two rectangular masses – the 1933-34 building and a 1957 refrigeration plant addition.<sup>1</sup> The main heating plant is located on the northwest corner of the block, with the coal and fuel storage area to the south. A one-story brick screen wall connects to the main building on the southwest and southeast corners, and shields the yard from pedestrian view.

The original variegated buff, brown and yellow brick main building is symmetrically designed with a limestone base, and areaway that runs along the west and north sides, providing light and air to the basement level. A continuous limestone stringcourse separates the first floor from the upper floors, which contain vertically arranged industrial awning windows that are set within recessed panels. The windows rhythmically break up the expansive facades on the west, north and south.

The main (west) elevation of the original building, fronting 13<sup>th</sup> Street, is a five-part stepped façade that is denoted by a main projecting tower and central main entrance. The main entrance portal is one story, and is approached by a set of limestone stairs that are flanked by rounded limestone cheek walls. Two glass entry doors are framed by an aluminum sidelight and transom surround, and are encased within a rounded limestone frame. A rounded metal overhang shelters the main entrance. Set into each bay of the buff colored brick walls on the first floor are four sculpted terra cotta panels. Each panel details machinery from the building within, which is indicative of the stylized artwork displayed on many New Deal-era federal buildings throughout the country. Above the panels, the continuous limestone stringcourse separates the first floor from the upper levels of the building. A centrally located double-width

<sup>1</sup> The later 1957 addition does not meet the National Register's 50-year age requirement, and thus will not be included.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Central Heating Plant

Name of Property

District of Columbia

County and State

Section 7 Page 2

stack of vertical windows surmounts the central entrance and extends to the fifth floor. The central vertical windows are framed by projecting brick bays and flanked by two single-width rows of vertical windows. A larger terra cotta recessed panel caps the central stack of vertical windows, and illustrates the workings of the heating plant boilers. A bold denticulated cornice caps the entrance block.

The north elevation of the original building fronts C Street and has seven long vertical bays of industrial awning windows that alternate with brick buttressing. A stylized classical cornice is executed in patterned brickwork and runs the entire length of the north elevation. The east four-bay section of the north elevation consists of the 1957 refrigeration plant addition, which is differentiated from the original building by its wider bands of vertical windows and dissimilar brick color.

The south elevation is composed similarly to the north, but the view is partially obstructed from the street by the one-story screen wall. Running the full length of the south side of the block, the wall wraps around the east side to meet with the refrigeration plant addition. The wall is composed of similar variegated brick as the main building, and is accentuated by rectangular recessed segments and a continuous limestone coping.

Fronting 12<sup>th</sup> Street, the east elevation is composed entirely of the 1957 refrigeration plant addition, which obscures the original east façade. The six-story addition echoes the west elevation in design, projections and details. A vehicular entrance is located within the first bay of the east section of the screen wall that connects to the addition.

### *Interior*

The Central Heating Plant's interior was primarily utilitarian, and contains the large mechanical spaces necessary to hold boiler equipment. The first floor lobby and stair hall are accessed from the main (west) entrance and remain largely intact as they were originally built in 1934. The lobby is a one-story, small space that is finished in a brown, small veined marble and brown-toned terrazzo floors that are framed by a black granite border. Original decorative vent covers adorn the east wall of the lobby. Two wooden glass panel doors lead to the mechanical rooms behind the lobby. A small stair hall is located at the north end of the lobby, which originally led to offices for workers. The stairway is u-shaped and contains the original terrazzo treads and metal balustrade featuring Art Deco motifs. The lobby remains largely intact and represents not only the primary interior space with special finishes, but also the original design intentions of the architect.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Shalom Barnes & Associates, PC, *Historic Building Preservation Plan: Central Heating Plant*, prepared for the General Services Administration, Washington, D.C., January 5, 1995, 14.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Central Heating Plant

Name of Property

District of Columbia

County and State

Section 8 Page 1

### Summary Statement of Significance:

The Central Heating Plant is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its association with the growth of the federal government in Washington, D.C., as well as broader patterns of city development in the city. It is also eligible under Criterion C as an excellent example of industrial Art Deco architecture by prominent architect Paul Philippe Cret.

### Historic Context:

At the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Pierre Charles L'Enfant's 1791 plan for Washington, D.C. was largely unrealized. Because of the growing prominence of Washington, D.C., Congress decided it was necessary to revitalize L'Enfant's initial ideas for the future growth of the city. In response to growing discontent with the way the National Mall had developed throughout the 1800s, the McMillan commission formed in 1901. Until that point, the central city was laced with railroad tracks with a depot directly on the Mall, which was not a desirable space to represent the nation's capital.<sup>3</sup> While relying on the scope of L'Enfant's original designs, the McMillan Plan focused on a more comprehensive plan for Washington, D.C., and was the basis for more specialized government planning in the coming decades.<sup>4</sup>

As a result of World War I, a severe delay in federal building and construction led to a crisis in the Office of the Supervising Architect of the Treasury. Because of this delay, the federal government enacted the Public Buildings Act of 1926 – a multimillion dollar building program that would take over 10 years to complete.<sup>5</sup> The Act enabled the Public Buildings Service (PBS) to hire private architects for the design of federal buildings, and was the precursor to one of the country's largest construction programs.<sup>6</sup> Between World War I and World War II, Washington, D.C. was transformed by the rapid growth of the federal government, which established a critical need for space to house federal workers. It also spurred the large scaled building program conducted by the Office of the Supervising Architect.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Frederick Gutheim, *Worthy of the Nation: History of Planning for the National Capital* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 1977) 117-118.

<sup>4</sup> Gutheim, 133-136.

<sup>5</sup> Lee, Antoinette J. *Architects to the Nation: The Rise and Decline of the Supervising Architect's Office* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 237.

<sup>6</sup> Lee, 238-241.

<sup>7</sup> Geier, Brown, Renfrow Architects and Oehrlein & Assoc. *Historic Structure Report and Preservation Manual: Agriculture South Building (HSR)* (Washington, DC: General Services Administration, 1988) 25.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Central Heating Plant

Name of Property

District of Columbia

County and State

Section 8 Page 2

Federal planning in the 1920s and 30s focused greatly on the monumental core of the District of Columbia, most notably areas flanking the National Mall. During this time period, more than any other, the ideals of the McMillan Plan of 1902 were realized and the monumental core of the city was formed. In the immediate vicinity of the Mall, the Central Heating Plant (1934) the U.S. Department of Agriculture Administration Building and South Building (1928-36), the U.S. Bureau of Engraving and Printing Annex (1938), and the U.S. Department of Treasury Procurement Division (1932), were constructed. North, across the Mall, the Federal Triangle complex (1928-1938) was also underway and the largest building project undertaken by the federal government. On Capitol Hill, the Supreme Court (1935) and the Library of Congress Annex were built, and west of the Ellipse buildings were executed for the U.S. Department of the Interior (1936), the U.S. Federal Reserve Board (1937), the U.S. Public Health Service (1931), as well as and the Arlington Memorial Bridge (1926-1932).<sup>8</sup>

The Central Heating Plant was constructed to serve as the main heating plant for all federal buildings in Washington, D.C. At the time of its construction, it was the largest heating facility in the United States, and served 22 federal buildings.<sup>9</sup> Ten miles of pipeline was laid in order to provide steam heat to government buildings at a total cost of \$5,00,000.<sup>10</sup> Excavation of the pipelines and the plant building site began in 1933, and construction on the building continued throughout 1934. The heating plant was officially "cut in" in February 1934.<sup>11</sup>

Throughout the 1930s and early 1940s, the building continued to function as the singular heating plant for federal buildings located within Washington, D.C. As early as 1940, the federal government was building at such a rate that an additional heating plant was needed to provide heat to buildings in the western part of the city. A new site for the additional heating plant was sought to service the new War Department Building and others planned for the Northwest Rectangle.<sup>12</sup> The Northwest Rectangle was an area bounded roughly by C Street, E Street, 18<sup>th</sup> Street and 23<sup>rd</sup> Street, NW, and was meant to compliment the Federal Triangle located to the east of the Ellipse. Due to the onset of World War II, the Northwest Rectangle plan was abandoned and only two of the planned buildings were completed, the War Department (1941) and the Department of the Interior (1936). Similarly, plans for the West-Central Heating Plant were shelved during WWII due to restricted funding. Instead, additional equipment was added to the Central Heating Plant to prevent overload in the winter of 1934.<sup>13</sup> In 1948, the West-Central Heating Plant was completed, and continues to share heat production with the Central Heating Plant.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Geier, Brown, Renfrow, 8.

<sup>9</sup> Shalom Baranes, 2.

<sup>10</sup> "Excavation Work Started for Federal Heating Plant," *Washington Post* 17 Oct 1932: 14.

<sup>11</sup> "Huge Central Heating Plant Met Test of Cold Successfully," *Washington Post* 2 Mar 1934: 6.

<sup>12</sup> "D.C. Planners seek Sites for Buildings," *Washington Post* 29 June 1940: 13.

<sup>13</sup> "We'll Make it Hot for you, PBA Tells Government Workers," *Washington Post* 19 Aug 1942: 17.

<sup>14</sup> Shalom Barnes & Associates, 2.



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Central Heating Plant

Name of Property

District of Columbia

County and State

Section 8 Page 3

### Architectural Significance:

Located in the heart of Washington, D.C.'s central business district, the Central Heating Plant is an excellent example of industrial architecture that has been skillfully translated to correspond to its monumental setting by Paul Philippe Cret. The federal government commissioned Cret to design Central Heating Plant with an exterior appropriate for its setting, but also functional in nature. As with all federal buildings designed during the time period, the Paul Cret's design was overseen by James A. Wetmore and Louis A. Simon in the Office of the Supervising Architect of the Treasury. Paul Cret was trained as a student of architecture at the Ecole des Beaux Arts and came to the United States in 1903 as a faculty member at the University of Pennsylvania's architecture department. Like many architects during the 1930s, Cret found most of his work in the design and construction of public buildings and structures. Cret was consulting architect on many federal projects in nationwide, and as a result, his designs were greatly influential in the development of federal architecture during the 1920s and 30s.<sup>15</sup> Among his prominent works in D.C. are the Folger Shakespeare Library (1928-32), and the U.S. Federal Reserve Building (1939). Cret's particular outlook on civic architectural design is particularly evident in the Central Heating Plant's architecture, as he saw public buildings not merely as a combination of mundane functions, but rather each as a problem to be dealt with in its own terms.<sup>16</sup>

Designs for the Central Heating Plant were required to meet the approval of the Commission of Fine Arts, as specified under the 1930 Shipstead-Luce Act of 1930. The Central Heating Plant was designed in an industrial variety of the Art Deco style. Art Deco buildings are generally defined by their emphasis on verticality, particularly in the form of skyscrapers, and geometric patterning and ornamentation.<sup>17</sup> A large factor in the Central Heating Plant's design revolved around its compatibility with its monumental surroundings. As a result, Cret was required to submit numerous plans regarding height and scale. In an original design for the building, Cret had planned for three large smoke stacks on the roof, which would have greatly altered the D.C. skyline. Those plans were rejected, and Cret instead incorporated the stacks within the building to satisfy the Commission's requirements.<sup>18</sup> Because the Central Heating Plant is utilitarian in nature, a functional approach was necessary when planning the building's details.

<sup>15</sup> Elizabeth Grossman, *The Civic Architecture of Paul Cret* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996) 1-13, 182.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid*, 1-13.

<sup>17</sup> Marcus Whiffen, *American Architecture Since 1780: A Guide to the Styles* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996), 235-240.

<sup>18</sup> Shalom Barnes & Associates, 2.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Central Heating Plant

Name of Property

District of Columbia

County and State

Section 8 Page 4

Instead of applied ornamentation, Cret used key building components such as vertical industrial windows, streamlined and patterned brick walls, angled buttresses, and detailing on the main (west) entrance to emphasize the Central Heating Plant's function and style, while maintaining a prominent position amongst its monumental neighbors. Although the Central Heating Plant has been subject to many changes in equipment over the last seventy years, it remains a prominent figure among Washington's federal architecture.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Central Heating Plant

Name of Property

District of Columbia

County and State

Section 9 Page 1

### Major Bibliographical References:

Cox, Warren, Hugh Newell Jacobsen, Francis D. Lethbridge, and David Rosenthal. *A Guide to The Architecture of Washington, D.C.* Washington, D.C.: McGraw-Hill, 1974.

Geier, Brown, Renfrow Architects and Oehrlein & Assoc. *Historic Structure Report and Preservation Manual: Agriculture South Building (HSR)*. Prepared for the U.S. General Services Administration, Washington, D.C., 1988.

Grossman, Elizabeth. *The Civic Architecture of Paul Cret*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996. .

Gutheim, Frederick. *Worthy of the Nation: History of Planning for the National Capital*. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 1977.

Lee, Antoinette J. *Architects to the Nation: The Rise and Decline of the Supervising Architect's Office*. Oxford University Press, 2000.

Shalom Barnes & Associates, PC, *Historic Building Preservation Plan: Central Heating Plant*. Prepared for the U.S. General Services Administration, Washington, D.C., January 5, 1995.

Whiffen, Marcus. *American Architecture Since 1780: A Guide to the Styles*. Cambridge: MIT Press, 1996.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Central Heating Plant

Name of Property

District of Columbia

County and State

Section 10 Page 1

## Verbal Boundary Description:

The Central Heating Plant and its grounds at 325 13<sup>th</sup> Street, SW occupy the block bounded by C Street, D Street, 13<sup>th</sup> Street and 12<sup>th</sup> Street, NW in Washington, D.C., on Square 297.

## Boundary Justification:

All property lines are as they existed at the time of the building's construction. The nomination includes all property historically associated with the building.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Central Heating Plant

Name of Property

District of Columbia

County and State

Section 10 Page 2

**Photographs:**