

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

FOR FEDERAL PROPERTIES

FOR NPS USE ONLY  
RECEIVED SEP 26 1986  
DATE ENTERED NOV 10 1986

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC The New Interior Building

AND/OR COMMON U. S. Department of the Interior Building (Preferred)

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER 18th and C Streets, N.W.

\_\_ NOT FOR PUBLICATION  
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

CITY, TOWN Washington, D.C.

\_\_ VICINITY OF

STATE CODE COUNTY CODE  
11 District of Columbia 001

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> n/a	<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

**4 AGENCY**

REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS: (If applicable) General Services Administration, National Capital  
Region

STREET & NUMBER 7th and D Sts., N.W.

CITY, TOWN Washington, D.C. STATE

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Recorder of Deeds

STREET & NUMBER 6th and D Sts., N.W.

CITY, TOWN Washington, D.C. STATE

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE HABS Collection

DATE 1976  FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS Library of Congress

CITY, TOWN Washington, D.C. STATE

## 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED      DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

---

### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The United States Department of the Interior Building, 575 1/2 feet long and 382 feet wide, occupies two city blocks, from C to E Streets, and from 18th to 19th Streets, NW. It is located southwest of the White House, with DAR Constitution Hall and the Red Cross Building on its east, Simon Bolivar Park and the Pan American Annex on its south, the Office of Personnel Management on its west and Rawlins Park and the old Interior Building (now the General Services Administration) on its north.

Commissioned by the Roosevelt administration in 1934, designed by architect Waddy Butler Wood, and supervised throughout by Secretary of the Interior Harold L. Ickes, the Interior Building was dedicated on April 16, 1936. Of smooth Indiana limestone laid in a regular ashlar pattern, the exterior reflects the Art Moderne style popular in the 1930s, an intentional departure from the traditional classicist style of the majority of federal government office buildings in the District of Columbia. Austere and simply decorated on the exterior, the building itself is seven stories high with a basement, an additional floor between the fifth and sixth stories devoted entirely to mechanical equipment, and an eighth story that is set back from the first and sixth wings over the center wing.

The plan or shape--perhaps the most distinctive aspect of the exterior--consists of six wings running east and west between 18th and 19th Streets, with a connecting wing through the center running north and south between C and E Streets. The connecting wing includes the main entrances, which also serve as employee entrances and the north and south lobbies. The entrances to the garages and loading platforms are located on the east and west sides of the building. The superstructure of the building is 27 bays long. There are 4,432 windows, one-over-one, double hung, made of clear wood stock, Southern pine.

The south facade is symmetrical, and is comprised of a two-story base with a one-story projecting stylobate, a three-story superstructure with cornice, a two-story attic with monumental frieze, and a penthouse, which is not seen from the ground. The center five bays serve as a formal entrance. Contrasting with the Indiana limestone, the stylobate and door surrounds are Milford pink granite of medium-course grain, mottled with black mica spottings. The stylobate is highlighted by flanking truncated corner posts which serve to frame the entrance; each of these posts is decorated with an incised Greek fret design on its upper borders and crowned by a simple marble urn on a bronze pedestal. Between the stylobate and extending across the seven middle bays are eight granite steps with rounded nosing leading to a platform and five grand doors. The center five bays of the third through fifth stories

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are recessed, thus forming a loggia. The windows of the loggia are double-hung, one-over-one. Between the entrance doors and the loggia, the facade is embellished with the incised lettering: DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR. Flanking the loggia are ten identical bays and an end bay; the typical bays are separated by three-story pilasters with simple capitals. A plain architrave rests above the pilasters. Each typical bay has paired windows recessed from the plane of the pilasters; the windows of the third, fourth and fifth stories were designed as a visual unit in a tall, vertical rectangle. Between stories are double-recessed, horizontal panels--of the same size and materials as the windows of the loggia. The end bays do not have pilasters; the wall surface of the corner bays is flush with the pilasters. There is only one double-hung window per bay and it is not recessed. Above the fifth story is an entablature running the entire length of the building. The sixth and seventh stories are set back from the main facade, forming a monumental attic; the sixth story has one window per bay, but no pilasters. The seventh story, without windows on the south facade, serves as a monumental frieze. The frieze consists of a row of seals of the thirteen original colonies above every other window. Above the seals is a continuous classical cornice and simple parapet wall. The eighth story penthouse is two stories high and three bays wide, generally not visible as part of the south elevation design because it is recessed from the main facade the entire width of the first cross wing.

The north elevation is not as monumental in design as the south or main elevation, although the general features are similar. The entrance to this elevation is on the second floor; the first floor is below grade. The entire north elevation is limestone and there is no projecting stylobate, although two granite pylons flank the five bay entrance of the formal entrance.

The east and west facades--almost identical--consist of the end elevation of the projecting wings and the connecting hyphens. The east facade has a special exit from the auditorium and is punctuated by four entrances to the underground garages. The west elevation has a special exit from the gymnasium, two parking entrances, and a loading platform to serve the cafeteria's kitchen.

The typical courtyard is ten bays long and four bays wide. The ramps to the courts are 26 feet wide, a segmental arch forming the court entrance; the ramps are laid in an intersecting fan pattern. Most courts have cast-iron gates.

Since the Interior Building covers almost the entire site, landscaping is reduced to street trees and a variety of shrubs and ground cover along the stylobate (originally, the plans had specified plane trees and Japanese yews, but these trees have been

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supplanted by maples, oaks, hawthornes, magnolias, and flowering crabapples). The 6-foot-wide planted area of shrubs surrounding the stylobate is bordered by a granite curb. The trees lining the street are set in radiating, dark aggregate, concrete grilles. Simon Bolivar Park--south of the Interior Building and across from the main entrance--was added in 1959; the building's exterior floodlights were added in 1972.

The main or south entrance to the Interior Building faces south on "C" Street and consists of a succession of three spaces (vestibule, lobby, and foyer) that vary significantly in their size and proportions. Entering the building's vestibule, motifs are visually established which are then repeated throughout the corridors of the building--that is, in particular, the series of dark Creole Georgian marble rectangular panels, separated and bordered by white Georgian marble bands. Of special interest is the vestibule ceiling, consisting of rectangular stone panels with a relief; its bronze light fixtures are rimmed with leaves and berries below a Doric molding. The walls of both the vestibule and lobby are comprised of smooth buff Indiana limestone laid in a regular ashlar pattern; at the top is a running Greek fret design below and egg-and-dart molding and a plain projecting cornice. At the bottom is a black, polished marble base. The plan of the spacious south lobby consists of a two-story rectangle, five bays long. The major axis of the south lobby (which is east and west) is perpendicular to the main north and south axis of the building. Flanking the lobby are the 1948 library and auditorium (formerly a conference hall). A receptionist's desk was installed in 1972. A bronze, U. S. Departmental seal 54 inches in diameter (depicting a grazing buffalo with the sun rising behind mountains in the background) dominates the lobby floor. The buffalo is used throughout the Interior Building to symbolize the department's conservation mission.

The Interior Building has over three miles of corridors, with the main corridor on each floor a full two blocks long. Positioned in the center of the main corridor, the grand stairs may be viewed from both the south and north lobbies; circulation continues around the grand stairs through flanking side aisles. The floor treatment of the main corridor consists of a diagonal checkerboard pattern of white and dark marble; the main corridor walls are a combination of gray marble and hard plaster, originally painted a subdued gray with a slightly deeper gray trim. The interior decorative detailing--such as bronze grilles and hardware, lighting fixtures, plaster moldings, and marble flooring--are also in an Art Deco style.

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The interior includes several distinctive public and employee spaces, perhaps the most noteworthy of which is the first floor auditorium, originally the conference hall. Two stories in height and accessible from the main, south lobby, the auditorium has a basilican plan, and is eight bays long and three bays wide. A stage occupies the central bay. Above the rear aisle is a balcony and over the foyer is a projection room. Total seating capacity is 755. The flooring and walls, again, reflect decorative themes and patterns established in the main entrance lobby to the building: marble and Indiana limestone. The auditorium floor in the seating area is fumed oak, herringbone pattern, with a marble border, while the side, rear, main, and cross aisle and orchestra are carpeted in crimson, cut pile. A hard plaster, bronze gilded eagle with a 7 foot, 7 inch wing span, surmounts the proscenium arch. The gallery has clerestory windows with concealed up-lights, highlighting the bronze grilles and pilaster capitals in the six central bays of the auditorium. Cherry double doors lead to the stage area.

The other significant public space off the main south lobby is a library, original to Waddy Wood's plan for the building (and finally consolidated as the "Interior Library" in 1948). A reading room occupies one-third of the floor area and the stacks occupy the other two-thirds. Other unusual and original, spaces include a museum depicting the history, organization and work of the various bureaus; a gymnasium to promote health and athletics; an Indian Arts and Crafts shop with a sales and display room; a basement cafeteria with a courtyard, an Art Gallery; and north and south penthouses on the 8th floor. The south penthouse was designed to serve as the employees' lounge; the north penthouse served as a broadcasting studio for educational broadcasts by bureaus of the Interior and other government departments.

There are 2200 rooms in the Interior Building. The typical office is a 12 x 18 ft. rectangular space. It has a door leading directly to the corridor and doors leading to adjacent offices. Every office has two operable wood double-hung windows--side by side--that open onto the exterior or a courtyard. Originally, most of the offices had linoleum floors; today, they are carpeted. A small closet provides storage in each office and most offices were designed to include a personal lavatory.

Architecturally, the executive suites reflect the special position of the President's cabinet in both size and degree of ornamentation; predictably, the Secretary's office is the most elaborately embellished. The public entrance to the Secretary of the Interior's Suite is through raised, oak-paneled, double doors. Surmounting the double doors is a decorative panel with the incised gold-leaf letters OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR, flanked on each side by a carved bas-relief eagle.

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This entry way is framed on the main corridor by two fluted pilasters and features a scroll and floral design. In front of each pilaster stands a polychromed totem pole, carved from cedar. Other components of the Secretary's suite include a reception area, a parlor, and the Secretary's private office, 42 feet 3 inches long by 28 feet 9 inches wide. Both the public space and private office have floor to ceiling oak paneling, the Secretary's office itself featuring a doric frieze of triglyphs and metopes with a projecting soffit. The north wall has two windows that overlook a courtyard; the windows have crosssetted surrounds. At the top of the large oak panel between these windows is a bronze-faced electric clock, the works of which are concealed behind that paneling so that only the numerals and arrowshaped hands can be seen. The south windows face Constitution Avenue and the Mall. On the west wall is a marble fireplace above which is a portrait of Thomas Ewing, the First Secretary of the Interior (1849-1850). The ceiling is a shallow, segmental vault constructed of layers of thin tile, covered with acoustic plaster and embellished with two hard plaster ceiling medallions. The two chandeliers with antique bronze finish weigh 300 pounds each. They were modified in 1964 when down lights were installed. The Secretary's conference room is on the 5th floor; the executive dining rooms are located on the north side of the corridor of Wing 5100 near the Secretary's conference room.

Four escalators connect the basement with the first floor, and the first floor with the second. There are also twenty-two passenger elevators. Central air conditioning was installed throughout the structure; a central vacuum system and a floor between the fifth and sixth floors house mechanical equipment. In addition to fire and security systems, there are also eleven stairways to allow rapid evacuation of employees in the event of emergency. The opening between the first set of piers on the first floor (at the Grand Stairs) was enclosed and fire doors installed in 1974.

Sharing distinction with the architectural design of Waddy Wood's Interior Building is the artwork that decorates its walls. Installed in strategic positions at the ends of corridors, near elevator banks, at the side aisles of the grand stairs, and in such key public places as the cafeteria, the arts and crafts shop, and the auditorium, the murals and sculpture were planned as an integral part of the architectural scheme of the Interior Building. The mural paintings vary in technique from oil on canvas to fresco and secco. Many of the murals depict the various bureaus of the Department of the Interior during the 1930s. For example, the theme of the mural by William Gropper, "Construction of a Dam," represented the work of the Bureau of Reclamation; and the murals "Indian and Soldier, Indian and Teacher," incorporated the philosophy of the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Other murals (by artists Heinz Warneke, Millard Sheets, Nicholai Cikovsky, Ernest Fiene, and John Steuart Curry) portray historical themes, including early explorations and the settling and development of the various sections of the country and territories such as the "Oklahoma Land Rush" and "Lewis and Clark in the Northwest."

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Following is a complete listing of the Interior Department artwork and artists, by floor, together with the year of commission:

**LISTING OF MURALS AND SCULPTURE**

<u>Title</u>	<u>Artist</u>	
<u>Basement: Cafeteria</u>		
An Incident in Contemporary American Life	Mitchell Jamieson	1942 (mural)
Dance Festival	James Auchiah	1939 (mural)
Indian Theme	Stephen Mopope	1939 (mural)
Negro Mother and Child	Maurice Glickman	1940 (sculpture)
Abe Lincoln	Louis Slobodkin	1940 (sculpture)
<u>First Floor</u>		
Conservation - Western Lands (in storage)	Louis Bouche	1938 (mural)
Lewis and Clark Expedition	Heinz Warneke	1939 (sculpture)
Powell Exploring the Grand Canyon	Ralph Stackpole	1940 (sculpture)
American Moose and American Bison	Boris Gilbertson	1940 (sculpture)
Indian Murals	Allan Houser/Gerald Nailor	n.d. (mural)
The Negro's Contribution in the Social and Cultural Development of America	Millard Sheets	1943 (mural)
<u>Second Floor</u>		
Construction of the Dam	William Gropper	1940 (mural)
Desert, Irrigation, Gathering Dates, and Apples	Nicholai Cikovsky	1938 (mural)
Fighting Forest Fire, Placer Mining, Winter Roundup	Ernest Fiene	1938 (mural)
<u>Third Floor</u>		
Themes of National Parks	David McCosh	1940 (mural)
Western Gates or Indian Gates	Mary Ogden Abbott	1961 (sculpture)
Conservation of Wild Life	Henry Varnum Poor	1939 (mural)

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Fourth Floor

Themes of the Bureau of Indian Affairs Production and Refining, and Distribution and Use	Maynard Dixon	1939 (mural)
	Edgar Britton	1939 (mural)

Fifth Floor

Conservation of the National Parks Rush for the Oklahoma Land - 1889, and The Homesteading	Gifford Beal	1941 (mural)
	John Steuart Curry	1939 (mural)

Sixth Floor

Alaska and Insular Possessions	James Michael Newell	1939 (mural)
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Seventh Floor

Salt River Irrigation Project, Arizona	Frank J. Mackenzie	1928 (mural)
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Eighth Floor

Potawatomi Life - Deer, Peyote Bird and Symbols, Stealing Horses, Flute Player, Courting, and Buffalo Hunt	Woodrow Crumbo	1940 (mural)
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Navajo Scenes - Hunting Ground and Initiation Ceremony	Gerald Nailor	1940 (mural)
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Apache Scenes - Singing Love Songs and Apache Round Dance	Allan C. Houser	n. d. (mural)
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Pueblo Life -Indian Themes	Vilino Herrera	1939 (mural)
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# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD		AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1933-1940		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION			

SPECIFIC DATES Dedicated April 16, 1936 BUILDER/ARCHITECT Waddy Butler Wood

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Interior Building is an excellent example of Federal government architecture that, in both conception and design, reflects the humanistic concern and "progressivism" which characterized Franklin Delano Roosevelt's Administration. The latest innovations in building technology were utilized by Waddy B. Wood in the construction of the structure to ensure the comfort, safety, and well-being of some 4,000 employees. At the time of construction, the Interior Building provided the most modern and comfortable work environment for Federal employees in Washington. The building is significant as well as the last major work of Wood, one of Washington's most prolific architects in the first decades of the 20th century. Also, of significance is the extensive artwork--large-scale murals and sculpture in the public corridor--that is an integral part of the building's interior design. By many American artists who had gained national reputation by the 1930s, the murals and sculpture in the Interior Building constitutes the largest collection of New Deal art (commissioned by the Treasury Department's Section of Painting and Sculpture) in a Federal government office building. Finally, construction of the building itself in 1934 reflected growing Federal concern and involvement in conservation and the planned use of America's natural and manmade resources--an impetus that culminated in key conservation legislation of the later 1930s and well beyond to the 60s, 70s, and 80s.

Constructed during 1935 and 1936, and dedicated on April 16, 1936, the Interior Building is important historically as the first building in Washington, D.C. authorized, designed, and built by the Roosevelt administration. Prior to selection by Secretary of the Interior Harold L. Ickes as architect of the Interior Building, Waddy Butler Wood (1869-1944), had gained prominence in the District--as well as the Tidewater-Chesapeake Bay area, Georgia, and Iowa. His designs included residences in Kalorama, Cleveland Park, Northeast, and the Downtown area; a car barn at M Street and Key Bridge in Georgetown; and the Jacobean-style chancery for the Chinese Legation (1901 Vernon Street NW); the Union Trust Bank Building (15th and G Sts. NW) and the Masonic Temple (13th St. NW). On June 28, 1934, representing the Department, Secretary Ickes entered into a contract with architect Waddy Wood to prepare preliminary plans.

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

(See attachment)

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 5.05 acres  
 UTM REFERENCES

Washington West Quadrangle; scale: 1:24000

A | 1 | 8 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 8 | 0 | 0 | 4 | 3 | 0 | 6 | 8 | 5 | 0 |  
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING  
 C | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

B | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |  
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING  
 D | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

(See attachment)

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
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## 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Kay D. Weeks, Technical Writer/Editor

July, 1986

ORGANIZATION

Preservation Assistance Division, National Park Service, DOI

DATE

STREET & NUMBER

P.O. Box 37127

TELEPHONE

(202) 343-9588

CITY OR TOWN

Washington, D.C. 20013-7217

STATE

## 12 CERTIFICATION OF NOMINATION

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER RECOMMENDATION

YES

NO

NONE

*Carol B. Thompson*  
 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

In compliance with Executive Order 11593, I hereby nominate this property to the National Register, certifying that the State Historic Preservation Officer has been allowed 90 days in which to present the nomination to the State Review Board and to evaluate its significance. The evaluated level of significance is  National  State  Local.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

*W. Roth*

TITLE HIST. PRSN. OFFICER, GEN. SERVICES ADMIN.

DATE

25 SEP 86

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

11-10-86

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

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The Interior Building stands in stark contrast to the majority of Federal government buildings in Washington, D.C. Purposely avoiding conventional classical styles and motifs used in other government offices within the Federal Triangle, the structure's distinctive form, massing, and use of materials reflect the Moderne or Art Deco style popular in the 1930s. Yet, while not conforming to typical classically-styled buildings in the Federal Triangle area, Wood's design was still well within local architectural precedent; the new Interior Building plan bears striking similarities to the old Interior Building in several ways. The old Interior Building (1914-1917), located at 19th and G Sts. NW, and now used as the General Services Administration's offices, included a main corridor and wings in the shape of an "E." This configuration was expanded and doubled to arrive at the plan of the new Interior Building. Other similarities between the old and new buildings include setback attics, hyphens, courtyard entrance gates and ramps, limestone facing, and adaptation to a sloping site. In addition, the new and old Interior Buildings are physically connected by a tunnel under Rawlins Park.

Beyond breaking with the exterior appearance of other government office buildings in the Washington, D.C. area, perhaps one of the most notable aspects of Wood's Federal office building was his incorporation of the latest technological advances in building construction both to enhance the working environment of the employee and to provide efficient maintenance and protection of the building itself. His special features included movable steel office partitions, acoustically treated ceilings, central air conditioning, an automatic sprinkler and fire detection system, a special floor to house mechanical equipment, a central vacuum system, and the use of escalators. As a result of centering the building's design and features around the employees' comfort and needs at every level, the new Interior Building became one of the most functional and innovative office structures in Washington, D.C. during the 1930s. To Wood's further credit, two of the technological advances represent the first of their kind in a Federal office structure, specifically, escalators and central airconditioning.

Secretary Ickes was very critical of buildings in the Federal Triangle with their closed light courts, wasted space, and columned facades which he felt were extravagant. He observed that the open courtyards (three-sided courts) in the old

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Interior Building provided more light and circulation of air; consequently, Wood's interior design featured double-loaded corridors so that each office would have daylight and direct access to a corridor. Yet, while an unprecedented emphasis was placed on a functional working environment, the two-block long interior building--featuring grand vistas, multiple staircases, and rich decorative detailing--seems far from utilitarian today.

The idea of enhancing productivity in the workplace went beyond the individual office spaces to pervade every level of architectural planning. Thus, in addition to Wood's well-lighted office space, distinctive public and group spaces were included. There was an auditorium for group assembly (originally intended to be a conference hall for all Federal agencies in Washington, D.C.); a basement gymnasium to promote health and athletics; a cafeteria with a courtyard; and an employees' lounge complete with a soda fountain. An Interior Museum was established to depict the history, organization, and work of the various bureaus. In addition, an art gallery was designed to house art and planning exhibits. At the request of Secretary Ickes, space was also provided for the promotion and sale of Indian arts and crafts in the new building. An Interior Department broadcasting studio became the first such unit designed for a Federal government building. A central library was added in 1948 off the main, or south lobby.

The Roosevelt Administration had committed itself to the largest art program ever undertaken by the Federal government, the most famous of which was the Works Progress Administration's Federal Art Project (WPA/FAP). The WPA program sought to aid artists that were already on relief, and tended to be experimental in nature, giving initial opportunities to Stuart Davis, Arshile Gorky and other abstractionists. It focused on cities, where most of the artists lived, and the work produced went to state and municipal, rather than Federal institutions. On the other hand, to provide decorations for Federal government buildings, the Treasury Department directed special art programs, the most important of which was the Section of Painting and Sculpture organized by Henry Morgenthau, Jr. in 1934, and referred to simply as the "Section." Unlike the WPA artists who were given work on the basis of financial

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need and were employed directly by the Federal government, the Section artists competed for individual commissions and signed contracts. Not all American artists participated in the WPA program or the Section program. Thomas Hart Benton, Diego Rivera and Jose Clemente Orozco (two Mexican artists working in the U. S. from the 1920s) are possibly the best known muralists of the 1930s; interestingly, none of them worked in either the WPA/FAP or the Treasury's Section art program.

That New Deal art projects produced a substantial body of distinguished murals is well documented. The Section, with a small staff in Washington, D.C. administered a national program that commissioned 1,400 works in less than a decade. Of particular significance in this regard, the Interior Building contains more New Deal "Section" artwork than any other Federal government building and is second only to the the Post Office Department Building (now the Federal Building) in the number of artists who executed the work under the Section art program. Installed in strategic positions at the ends of corridors, near elevator banks, at the side aisles of the Grand Stairs, and in such key public places as the cafeteria, the arts and crafts shop, and the auditorium, the murals and sculpture were planned as an integral part of the architectural scheme of the Interior Building. The majority of the artwork was painted or installed between 1938-1943; an exception is a two-part sculpted wooden door on the third floor (Mary Ogden Abbott's "Indian Gates"), which was installed in 1961.

Although many artists who were commissioned to produce Section art for Federal government buildings were relatively unknown, it is especially important that the Interior Department was able to sign contrasts with a substantial number of individual muralists who had already gained national reputation. Among the artists who accepted commissions to decorate the halls of the Interior Building were some of the most prominent artists practicing in this country during the 1930s. For example, John Steuart Curry was a famous Regionalist who accepted (although Thomas Hart Benton and Grant Wood did not). Social Realists William Gropper and Edgar Britton's murals were already known and respected throughout the country when commissioned. Gerald Nailor was recognized as an important Native American muralist. Other artists of national reputation included Maynard Dixon, Henry Varnum Poor, James Michael Newell, Nicolai Cikovsky, and Ernest Fiene.

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Commissioned sculptors of prominence included Maurice Glickman, Boris Gilbertson, and Heinz Warneke. Only three Black artists were included in the New Deal "Section" program; one, Millard Sheets, contributed to the Interior Building. In a separate program, six artists from five tribes (Navajo, Apache, Potawatomie, Pueblo, and Kiowa) were selected with the assistance of the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Over 2200 square feet of walls in the cafeteria, the arts and crafts shop, and the employees' lounge have been devoted exclusively to Indian artists.

In Democratic Vistas: Post Offices and Public Art in the New Deal (Temple University Press, Philadelphia, 1984) authors Park and Markowitz conclude: "Section art did not provide an accurate image of American society, but a corrective or antidote to the reality. It was never intended to be a mirror of the economic, social, and political ills of the country." In was in this spirit that Secretary Ickes was involved in every step of the development of all the artwork--he inspected all full-size mural cartoons taped on walls and frequently requested changes, particularly in the content of the message in the mural. He saw each work of art as a medium to expound upon the administration's philosophy of conservation or to portray one of the programs of the Interior Department. No mural was complete until Ickes approved it.

The third area of the Interior Building's importance is as a built symbol of the country's concern for the natural and manmade environment in the 1930s, particularly during the Roosevelt administration. Although an earlier period in American history (from 1849 through the 1920s) is more commonly accepted as the "Conservation Era," Roosevelt recognized the problem of a growing Department of Interior literally spread throughout the city. Prior to construction of the new Interior Building, employees had been housed in the old Interior Building as well as in 15 additional offices around Washington, D.C. Employment conditions were overcrowded and morale was low. Recognizing the problems, plans for the new building were realized during the first term of Secretary Harold L. Ickes. Thus, in 1934, the Administrator of Public Works, with the approval of the President, allotted \$12,740,000 for a new Interior Building that would house all the principal agencies and offices of the Department of the Interior.

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Conservation awareness--as noted--had had its roots in the late 1800s and early 1900s. The Department itself was created in 1849 at which time the General Land Office and the Bureau of Indian Affairs were made a part of the new Department. The Bureau of Reclamation was established in 1901; the Bureau of Mines in 1910; and the National Park Service in 1916. The 1930s, in effect, saw more expansion, reorganization, and consolidation of conservationist activities within the Departmental than actual "creation" activities.

For example, 1933 President Roosevelt signed two landmark executive orders that enormously expanded the Park System--effectively transferring all national monuments under the control of the Forest Service to the Park System. This brought twelve major new areas under Park Service management. Fifty historical areas, including the great Civil War battlefields, gave the Parks' role in historic preservation an undisputed legitimacy.

Other Departmental activities in the 1930s to 1940 include establishment of the Grazing Service; establishment of the Bonneville Power Administration; transfer of the Bureau of Biological Survey (from the Department of Commerce) and the Bureau of Fisheries (from the Department of Agriculture) to the Department of Interior. In 1940, these transferred bureaus were consolidated into the the Fish and Wildlife Service.

Beyond consolidation and expansion, however, possibly the most widely remembered conservation activity of the Roosevelt administration was establishment of the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) within the National Park Service to deal with "post-depression economy and the depression's social consequences." This amounted to an employment or relief service to foster conservation goals; by 1935, the agency was running 118 camps in the National Park System. To pursue Roosevelt's goal of public recreation opportunities as a component of the "good life," this decade also saw the Park Service begin to take over management of recreation facilities of dam sites through cooperative agreements with the Bureau of Reclamation.

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In addition to Park System management, major historic preservation responsibilities were conferred to NPS as a result of the Historic Sites Act of 1935, one of which was to make a national survey of historic and archeological sites, buildings, and objects to determine which of them had "exceptional value as commemorating or illustrating the history of the United States." The act also directed the Park Service to make cooperative agreements with states, municipalities, corporations, private associations, and individuals to preserve historic properties which were not under federal ownership.

The increased emphasis on recreation outside the national parks and monuments culminated in the Parks, Parkway, and Recreation Act of 1936. This act established the Park Service as the preeminent Federal recreation agency, and strengthened the independence of the National Park System against the Department of Agriculture's Forest Service which also wanted to increase its administrative powers in land management. Although Roosevelt supposedly promised his close friend Harold Ickes control over the Forest Service, such a transfer never took place. In merging with the Forest Service, Ickes had proposed changing the name of the Interior Department to the Department of Conservation. He had stressed the necessity of protecting and preserving all of our national resources--both natural and manmade. Although the name was never changed, Ickes succeeded in consolidating the existing conservation programs under the Department of the Interior.



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Its Art. Washington, D.C.: Department of the Interior, National Park Service,  
Preservation Assistance Division, 1986.

Park, Marlene, and Markowitz, Gerald E. Democratic Vistas: Post Offices and  
Public Art in the New Deal. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1984.

Item #: 10

The nominated area includes the Main Interior Building. The structure's boundary starts at the S.E. corner of the 19th and C. Sts, NW, then heads north following the eastern curb line of 19th St for approx. 580 ft. to a point at the S.E. corner of the intersection of 19th and E. Sts. NW; then proceeds east along the s. curb line of E St. for approx. 390 ft., to the S.W. corner of the intersection of E. and 18th Sts. NW; then south, along the w. curb line of 18th st. for approx. 580 ft.; then, turning west on C. St. along the n. curb line for approx. 580 ft., and back to the point of beginning at the S.E. corner of C. and 19th Sts. NW.

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U.S. Department of the Interior Building

18th and C Streets, N.W.

Washington, D.C.

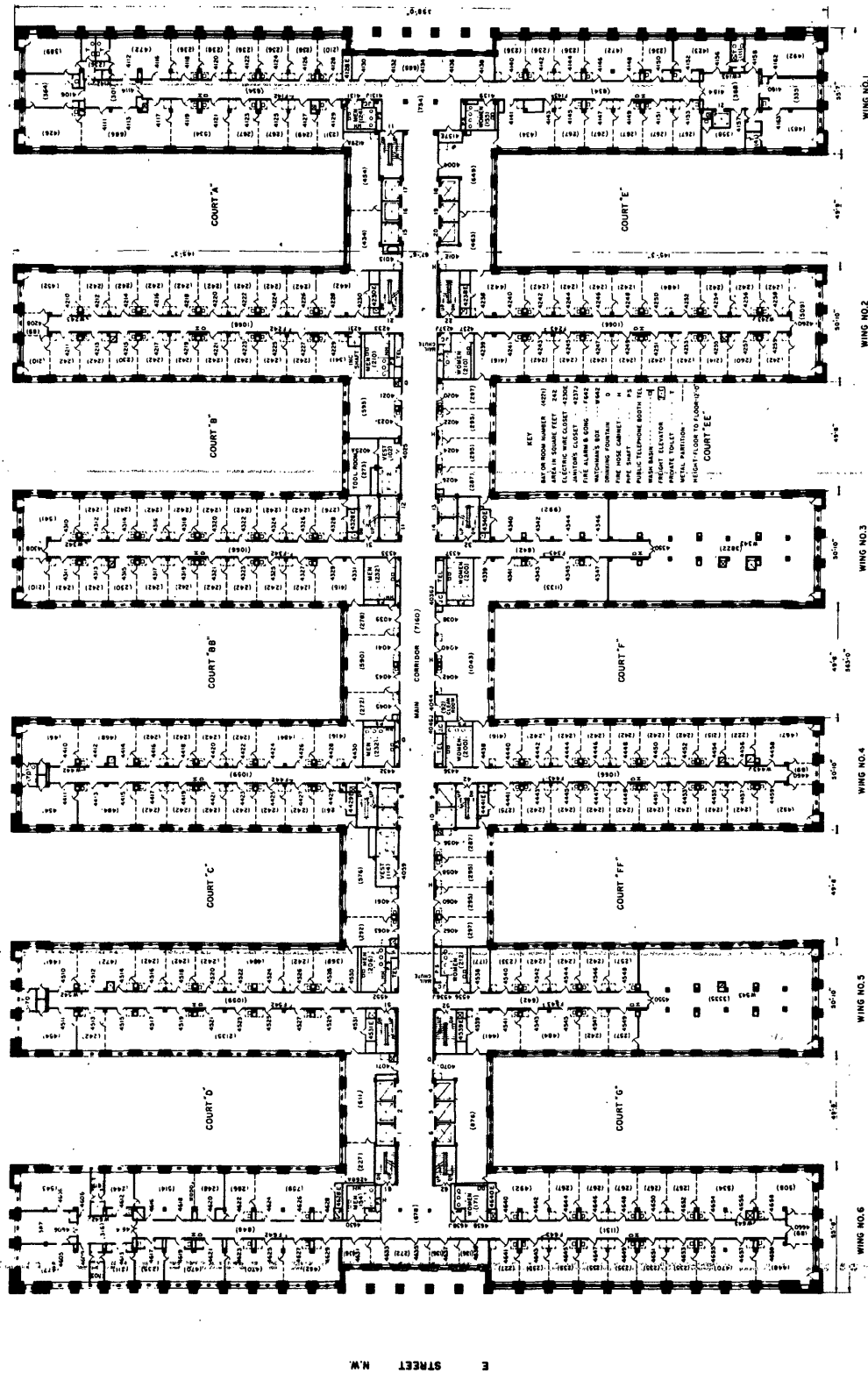
Commemoratively signed in ceremony, September 29, 1987



Secretary, Department of the Interior



Administrator, General Services Administration



FEDERAL WORKS AGENCY  
 PUBLIC BUILDINGS DIVISION  
 OFFICE OF BUILDINGS MANAGEMENT  
 1947

18<sup>TH</sup> STREET N.W.  
 19<sup>TH</sup> STREET N.W.  
 SCALE IN FEET

THE INTERIOR BUILDING

FOURTH FLOOR PLAN

FILE NO. 8917-76

302. FOURTH FLOOR PLAN. Revised by Federal Works Agency, 1947. Document stored at the National Record Center, Suitland, Maryland, Record Group 121-76-301, Box 83, No. DC 0020 ZZ 16.

The U. S. Department of Interior Building  
18th and C. Sts., NW  
Washington, D.C.

Plan: Revised by Federal Works Agency, 1947.

Document stored at the National Record Center, Suitland,  
Maryland, Record Group 121-76-301, Box 83, No. DC 0020 ZZ  
16.