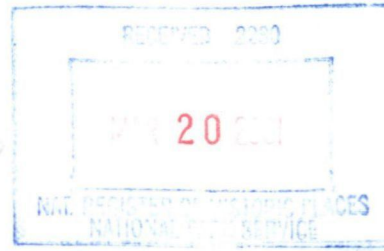


**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM**



433  
01

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 an 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 Tyler U.S. Post Office and Courthouse  
other names/site number Tyler Federal Building

**2. Location**

street & number 211 West Ferguson Street  not for publication  
city or town Tyler  vicinity  
state Texas code TX county Smith code 423 zip code 75702

**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.)

Holanda Dumas Camp 3.9.1  
Signature of certifying official Date  
GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION  
State or Federal agency and bureau

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

[Signature] 3-1-01  
Signature of commenting or other official Date  
TEXAS SHPO  
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:)

Edson H. Beall 4/25/01  
Signature of Keeper Date of Action

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
		sites
		structures
		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:	Sub:
<u>GOVERNMENT</u>	<u>Courthouse</u>
<u>GOVERNMENT</u>	<u>Post Office</u>
<u>GOVERNMENT</u>	<u>Offices</u>

Current Functions  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Cat:	Sub:
<u>GOVERNMENT</u>	<u>Courthouse</u>
<u>GOVERNMENT</u>	<u>Offices</u>

7. Description

Architectural Classification  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Classical Revival

Materials  
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation STONE: Granite

walls STONE: Limestone; Brick

roof CERAMIC TILE

other \_\_\_\_\_

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

See Continuation Sheets pp. 5-9

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 5

Tyler U.S. Post Office and Courthouse  
Smith County, Texas

## Narrative Description

The Tyler U.S. Post Office and Courthouse, begun in 1933 and completed in 1934, is an attractive, 3-story (plus basement), limestone and brick building. Designed by local architect Shirley Simons under the supervision of Treasury Department Acting Supervising Architect James A. Wetmore, its Classical Revival design is an example of the government's use of restrained classical architecture during the 1920s and 1930s. This style is revealed in its slightly projected entry pavilion, pilasters, pediments, and decorative friezes. Despite an addition attached to the center section of the east elevation of the building, the character and presence of the 1934 building have been retained. Original features such as marble floors and walls, ornamental paneled ceilings, a marble staircase, and suspended light fixtures continue to grace the former postal lobby. The main ceremonial courtroom still displays wood wainscot walls; paneled, corbeled ceilings; urn-type chandeliers; and a decorative surround behind the judge's bench.

Located on West Ferguson Street, the Tyler U.S. Post Office and Courthouse holds a prominent position in the city's central business district. It is the second federal building in Tyler and was built to house the post office, the federal district court, and other government tenants. It served as Tyler's main post office for more than 40 years, until the post office moved into new facilities in 1976. While it no longer functions as a post office, the Tyler U.S. Post Office and Courthouse building remains very much as it was when first built and continues to function as a federal district court.

### *Exterior*

The Tyler U.S. Post Office and Courthouse is an excellent example of a Classical Revival-style public building. Its base is of a dark gray mottled granite. The first floor is clad in light buff limestone; the second and third floors are salmon-colored brick. Above the third floor is a limestone frieze, which features a carved relief band of steer heads and swags. Shields depicting a pony express rider (representing the post office), an eagle (for the Justice Department), scales (for the Treasury Department), and a pine tree (possibly representing East Texas) are visible at the architrave. An acroterion appears at each corner of the parapet. A pitched, clay tile roof extends above the parapet.

Entries are located on the south (primary) and west elevations. Windows on the first floor are 2/2 steel casement with decorative grilles set over fixed transoms. A cornice and an embellished frieze embossed with rosettes are present above the windows. Scrolled pediments extend over the cornice. Second- and third-floor windows are vertically divided by fluted limestone spandrels. The upper-floor window units are generally 2/2 steel casement.

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 6

**Tyler U.S. Post Office and Courthouse  
Smith County, Texas**

**Narrative Description (continued)**

Concrete steps with terraced, granite, cheek walls introduce the building's original entrance on the primary (south) façade. Pedestaled on the top of these cheek walls are two massive urn-style light fixtures. Each bronze fixture sits on granite drums ornamented with fretwork. The entry is set within a slightly projected pavilion with limestone pilasters supporting a frieze and crested cornice. The cresting consists of a series of eagles flanked by scrollwork and a palmette motif. The frieze is unadorned with the exception of the words:

**United States Post Office  
And Courthouse**

The entryway is set within an embellished surround composed of various motifs, including a border of circular bosses, a architrave of rosette bosses, and cresting with a palmette at the center and acroteria at each corner. The actual entry door, originally paneled bronze, has been replaced with contemporary storefront-type doors. An original bronze grille still sits in the transom over the storefront doors. The second- and third-floor windows in the entry pavilion are recessed, forming a balcony. Cast bronze grilles obscure the steel-framed casement windows. Similar to the entry doors, the window banks are enhanced by a decorative surround created by an inner border of bundled leaves and an outer border of fretwork. A flagpole projects from the base of the second-floor window.

The west elevation repeats many of the design details found on the south façade, with the exception of those at the entry pavilion. A 2-story recessed area separates the north and south sections of this building face. Adjacent to the recessed area and at the center of the elevation is a contemporary fire stair that was added in 1986. The exterior of the stairs was constructed of like materials, including matching brick and cast stone.

The east façade is very similar to the west elevation. The north and south ends of this building face are divided by an addition, which connects an annex built in 1976 to the historic building. The addition extends to the base of the 1934 building's third-floor window.

The north (rear) elevation is largely functional in nature. Originally designed as a loading zone for the post office, this building face continues to serve as a delivery area with adjacent parking. A large concrete loading dock with brick walls and metal canopy is still present along the building face. The second- and third-floor windows have been filled, but the limestone spandrels remain.

Green spaces, plantings, sidewalks, and other landscape features characterize the site area immediately surrounding the building. Shrubs and narrow lawn areas border the south, west, and southeast elevations. The areas adjacent to the north elevation and to part of the northeast elevation are paved.

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 7

**Tyler U.S. Post Office and Courthouse  
Smith County, Texas**

**Narrative Description (continued)**

*Interior*

Similar to other federal buildings, the Tyler U.S. Post Office and Courthouse has a rectangular footprint. The first-floor area was designed to accommodate the building's postal function, while the second floor was allocated to the judicial function.<sup>1</sup> As the government's spatial needs increased, a new annex was constructed in 1976 adjacent to the historic building—with a connection built between the two—and the post office was moved to another facility. The postal lobby, the ceremonial courtroom, and, to a lesser degree, the public corridors are the most architecturally enriched of the interior spaces. This enrichment was applied largely as a reflection of their public usage. The remaining interior spaces were designed for use as federal tenant offices, maintenance and service areas, and restroom facilities.

Entrance into the former postal lobby is through an entry vestibule at the center of the south façade. The walls of the entry vestibule are clad in Pink Kasota marble, and the floors are of marble. The ceiling, from which a schoolhouse-type light globe is suspended, is of painted plaster and has an acanthus motif cornice. The vestibule's interior entry doors opening into the lobby area are of red gum. A float glass transom with an attractive bronze grille hangs above the doors. The grille features a series of American flags in the center, flanked by plaques with an eagle motif.

The former postal lobby is located just beyond the entry vestibule. The Pink Kasota marble walls, Ozark Grey Veinless/St. Genevieve Rose marble floors, and trabeated plaster ceiling continue, gracing this space. With the postal service departure from the building in the 1970s, much of the post office-related fabric, including the original postal boxes and sales windows, has been removed. A round, cast-iron postal table, however, remains.

Located to the east and west of the entry vestibule are two elevators and the main staircase. Like the lobby and entry vestibule, the elevator surround and staircase are of Pink Kasota marble. The original elevator doors have been replaced with flush-steel doors surmounted by a broken-scroll pediment with palmette-crested bosses on the cornice.<sup>2</sup> The stairwell is accessed through a pink marble-bracketed entryway. Its risers are of pink marble and the treads are of Ozark Grey Veinless marble. An attractive iron stair rail with an urn-shaped newel and an urn-motif balustrade further enhances the space.

The lobby proper is embellished by a rosette-embossed cornice with palmette-motif cresting. The cornice divides the pink marble wainscoting from the plaster portion of the walls. Pink marble, engaged pilasters, and freestanding columns with ornate marble caps are present throughout the lobby area. On the north wall, original massive plaster grilles are visible above the marble. The grilles once provided natural light into the postal workroom and are ornamented with rosettes.

<sup>1</sup> The original second floor of the building was redesignated as the third floor subsequent to the 1970s addition to the east side of the building.

<sup>2</sup> The original elevator doors were of cast bronze, with fluted and diamond-shaped panels.

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 8

**Tyler U.S. Post Office and Courthouse  
Smith County, Texas**

**Narrative Description (continued)**

Contemporary chandeliers reflecting the period are suspended from the trabeated plaster ceiling. Oak doors, designed to match the original, are present on several of the lobby walls. Each door is flush and has fluted panels with diamond-shaped plaques applied to the surface.

Almost equal attention to design was paid to the ceremonial courtroom at the northern end of the second floor (now designated as the third floor). The courtroom is entered through double, red gum, paneled doors on the south wall. A wood surround with pilasters frames the doorway; a broken-scroll pediment with an urn relief surmounts it. The walls are clad in red gum paneling and plaster. Although windows originally interrupted the paneling on the north wall and at the northeast and northwest corners of the room, these windows have been filled with oak paneling designed to match the original red gum paneling. Faux apertures, featuring a cornice with a broken-scroll pediment with an urn in the center, add symmetry to the corners of the room. The frieze is embellished by a series of relief panels with eagles, swags, and shields. Additional apertures are visible on the south wall.

Paneled, corbeled ceilings enhance the room. The ceiling's bracketed crossing beams feature fretwork, anthemion, and palmette and guilloche motifs. The field between these beams is clad in acoustical panels. Crown moldings enhance the appearance of the ceiling area, as do six suspended, ornamental chandeliers. The floors are carpeted; wood tiles, however, are likely intact underneath.

The focal point of the courtroom is the judge's bench, which is situated on the west wall. Four pilasters that support three pedimented panels form the projected wall behind the bench. Each panel has an eagle relief on a simple shield surrounded by swags. It is not known whether or not the judge's bench is original. Its design, however, is complementary. The jury box and the spectator benches appear to be contemporary.

Office space occupies the remainder of the second floor and most of the third. This space is primarily defined by a series of perimeter office spaces opening into U-shaped corridors. These corridors surround a core area that includes the main courtroom, restrooms, service spaces, and the former light corridor. The light corridor originally extended from the second floor to the third floor, providing natural light into the hallways. This area has been converted into office space.

Renovation of the offices and, to some extent, the corridors has resulted in the loss of original fabric. With the exception of some wooden furnishings—doors, chair rails, and paneling—the offices are more contemporary in appearance. The corridors, however, retain their original gray marble and plaster walls and buff-colored tile floors with gray marble borders.

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 9

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**Tyler U.S. Post Office and Courthouse  
Smith County, Texas**

**Narrative Description (continued)**

*Alterations*

Overall, the Tyler U.S. Post Office and Courthouse retains a high degree of integrity in its setting, location, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. While modifications have occurred, they have not impacted the building's ability to convey its historic significance as a federal building, nor its architectural significance as an excellent example of a Classical Revival-style public building. Alterations to the building have been primarily restricted to the interior, with the exception of the addition to the east side of the building. The post office's departure and the changing needs of the district court and other federal tenants have resulted in the removal of some original fabric, primarily in the former postal lobby and office areas.

The main historic spaces—the lobby, the main stairwell, the corridors, and the ceremonial courtroom—retain original finishes and details. In the entry lobby, security equipment that includes a metal detector has been added, unavoidably detracting from the volume and character of this space. The original elevator doors have been replaced with contemporary metal doors. Pink Kasota marble has been installed where postal sales windows and boxes once stood on the west and north walls, and two of the three original postal tables have been removed. In the 1980s, a wall was added in the eastern portion of the lobby to create a reception space for an adjacent judge's office. In the second floor ceremonial courtroom, original windows have been filled on the north wall and at the northeast and northwest corners of the room. Carpeting has been added, obscuring the original floors.

In the corridors, acoustical tile ceilings (original second floor only) and contemporary fixtures have been added. Sections of the corridors have been incorporated into office spaces. In 1964, the light court, which once provided light to the corridors, was replaced with offices.

The exterior of the building has undergone limited alterations, the most significant of which occurred in 1976. At that time, a new annex was constructed adjacent to the historic federal building and a connection was made between the two. At the main entry, contemporary storefront doors replace the paneled, bronze originals. In 1988, a contemporary fire stair of like materials was installed at the center of the west elevation. Finally, the courtroom windows on the north building face have been infilled.

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 patterns of our history.
- B Property is 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 a 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.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Politics/Government  
 Architecture  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Period of Significance

1933-1950  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Significant Dates

1933, 1934  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

\_\_\_\_\_

Cultural Affiliation

N/A  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Architect/Builder

Simons, Shirley—Architect  
 Ralph Sollitt and Sons, Chicago, Illinois—Contractor  
 Wetmore, James A.—Acting Supervising Architect, U.S. Treasury Dept.  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.) See Continuation Sheets pp. 10-17.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.) See Continuation Sheet p. 18.

Previous documentation on file (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:

General Services Administration, Greater Southwest Region, Fort Worth, TX  
 Smith County Historical Society, Tyler, TX

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 10

Tyler U.S. Post Office and Courthouse  
Smith County, Texas

Narrative Statement of Significance

*Summary*

The Tyler U.S. Post Office and Courthouse is eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its association with federal construction projects designed to relieve the economic Depression of the 1930s. The building is also eligible under Criterion C as an example of restrained Classical Revival architecture, which was employed in the design of a number of federal buildings during that period.

Completed in 1934, the building is symbolic of both the continued federal government presence in Tyler and the overall growth of the federal government in the 1930s. Like other public buildings from the 1930s, the design and construction of the Tyler U.S. Post Office and Courthouse were part of the federal construction programs enacted to reduce unemployment during the Depression. Architecturally, the Classical Revival design of the building reflects the restrained classical architecture used so prolifically for public buildings during the Depression era.

*Historical Significance*

The city of Tyler was designated the county seat of Smith County in 1846 when the county was created by the new Texas state legislature. Tyler received its name from this same legislative action, which required the town to be named in honor of President John Tyler in recognition of his support for admitting Texas to the United States. A year after this event, Tyler's first post office was established in a small log building on Block 7, fronting north on the public square.<sup>3</sup> The first postmaster to serve was Elisha Everett Lott, one of the original town commissioners. Dr. William S. Caldwell became postmaster three years later in 1851. For a year, he operated the post office in the log building, alongside Tyler's first drugstore.

Between 1852 and 1855, Richard Cowsar (1852) and then Daniel Cowsar (1853-1855) served as postmasters. Napoleon B. Ellis became postmaster after Daniel Cowsar and moved the post office from the log building to a small frame building midway along Block 6, fronting south on the public square. Ellis only held the position for six months, but the post office remained in this building after Hugh A. Masters succeeded him as postmaster. In October 1855, Augustus Erwin was

<sup>3</sup> Woldert, Will A. "History of the Tyler Post Office, Federal Building from 1847-1934." In *Chronicles of Smith County, Texas*. Vol. 12:1:1973, pp. 1-11.

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 11

**Tyler U.S. Post Office and Courthouse  
Smith County, Texas**

**Narrative Statement of Significance (continued)**

appointed postmaster and moved the post office back to the log building on Block 7, which was owned by his father, Col. Thomas B. Erwin. Erwin was succeeded by Johnson V. Wright, who operated the post office at that same location until it was destroyed by fire in September 1859.

Following the 1859 fire, the post office moved to the "Tondreau" building, a single-story, wood-framed building on Block 1, fronting on the north side of the public square. Byron C. Sigler (1858-1865) served as postmaster for a number of years in the Tondreau building. He was succeeded by James W. Arnold (1865) and R. P. Derrington (1865-1866). The three subsequent postmasters moved the building from location to location. Postmaster Edward N. Bass (1866-1867) relocated the post office from the Tondreau building to a small, frame residence on Block 1. Postmaster Columbus F. Lucky continued to use that residence during his short, three-month tenure. Archibald H. Thomson, appointed postmaster in 1867, moved the post office to a long, frame building on the southeast corner of Block 10. Finally, in 1868, newly appointed postmaster Henry T. Curtis returned to the site owned by Colonel Erwin (the former site of the log building), where a new, 2-story, frame building had been constructed.

The post office remained in the new building on Block 7 through the postmaster tenure of Warren I. Hunt (1870-1871). Then beginning in 1871, the post office was again moved from location to location. Sites included residences and small frame buildings on South Broadway, West Erwin Street (two locations), and one site on Block 4. The postmasters who served during this period were John J. Flynn (1871-1872); Henry T. Curtis (temporarily reappointed 1872); Jesse F. Rasbury (1872-1873); Albert F. Hunt (1873-1882); and Sidney McClendon (1882-1886).

During William S. Caldwell's short term as postmaster in 1851, the city of Tyler gained another important federal service, that of the federal district court. The court for the district of Texas had been created in 1845, the year that Texas was admitted to the Union. On March 3, 1851, the district of Texas was divided into four divisions, and court sessions were held in Tyler, Galveston, Austin, and Brownsville. The first Tyler court session was on April 17, 1851, in a 2-story frame building on Cherry Street (now East Ferguson). The first judge to serve in the building was Judge John C. Watrous.

Like the post office, the federal district court moved to a different location in Tyler during the late 1850s. The new location was in the Ferguson Building on the southwest corner of Block No. 6, fronting south on the public square. A year prior to this move, Congress authorized the creation of two district courts in Texas: the District Court for the Eastern District of Texas (composed of 29 coastal counties) and the District Court for the Western District of Texas (composed of 91 sparsely settled counties representing the remainder of the state). Judge Thomas H. Duval was assigned to the court in Tyler. Court sessions for the district were also held in Austin. Both the eastern and western district courts possessed the powers of both the district court and circuit courts. Appeals and writs of error went directly to the United States Supreme Court. This situation continued until 1862, when Congress attached Texas to the Sixth

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 12

Tyler U.S. Post Office and Courthouse  
Smith County, Texas

Narrative Statement of Significance (continued)

Judicial District, withdrawing the special jurisdiction of the district courts and establishing regular circuit courts. The outbreak of the Civil War, however, disrupted the court system in the south, and the Confederacy operated its own district courts.<sup>4</sup>

As the 1870s came to a close, the city of Tyler welcomed the long-awaited coming of the railroads. The Houston and Great Northern arrived in 1874, and the St. Louis railway (which purchased the Tyler Tap railroad) as well as the Kansas and Gulf Short Line railroad arrived shortly thereafter in 1879. The latter two railroads set up machine shops, resulting in an influx of laborers into the town. As a consequence, between 1880 and 1890, the population of Tyler nearly tripled.<sup>5</sup>

During this period Tyler's federal court was transferred from the western district to the eastern district following the realignment of Texas into three judicial districts—the eastern, the western, and the northern—by act of Congress in 1879. The same legislation also stipulated that the Texas district courts become a part of the Fifth Circuit Court, where they remain today. The judge sitting at the time of the changeover was Judge Amos Morrell, who had the dubious distinction of being a “carpetbagger.”<sup>6</sup> He served until 1883.

Tyler's growth, spurred largely by the railroads, necessitated the 1886 construction of a combined facility to house the post office and the federal court. This measure spared the government the cost of renting separate buildings and allowed federal activities to be located in one building. On September 1, 1885, the government purchased the land at the corner of West Ferguson and North Bois d'Arc for the new building.<sup>7</sup> On this site was built a 2-story, red brick building that was likely designed by the Office of the Supervising Architect of the Treasury Department.

At the time of the first federal building's opening in 1886, Richard B. Long (1886–1889) was Tyler's postmaster, and Judge Chauncey B. Sabin was the sitting Judge for the eastern district. For 22 years, the building served the needs of a growing community. In 1908, however, that growth necessitated the construction of an addition to the 1886 building. The 2-story addition extended northward from the northwest corner of the original building. The 1886/1908 building remained in service for an additional 25 years, until growth again required the construction of an entirely new facility. During its 47 years of use, five judges and nine postmasters served in the building.

<sup>4</sup> Fisher, Joe J. “The Federal Judiciary of the Eastern District of Texas, n.d.” Unpublished manuscript on file at the federal district court, Tyler, Texas.

<sup>5</sup> Long, Christopher. “Tyler, Texas.” In *The Handbook of Texas Online*. Operated by the libraries of the University of Texas at Austin and the Texas State Historical Association. Last updated February 1999.

<sup>6</sup> Fisher, Joe J. “The Federal Judiciary of the Eastern District of Texas.” Unpublished manuscript on file at the federal district court, Tyler, Texas, n.d.

<sup>7</sup> Woldert, Will A. “History of the Tyler Post Office, Federal Building from 1847–1934.” In *Chronicles of Smith County, Texas*. Vol. 12:1:1973, pp. 1–11.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 13

Tyler U.S. Post Office and Courthouse  
Smith County, Texas

## Narrative Statement of Significance (continued)

Tyler's population increased from 10,400 in 1910 to 25,000 in 1933, marking its evolution into one of the principle cities in East Texas.<sup>8</sup> This importance was due partially to the burgeoning oil industry—which became an important part of the local economy in 1930—and partially to the continued success of an agriculture industry in which roses were becoming an increasingly popular cash crop. Public support for a new federal building began in 1929 when the original federal building could no longer support the needs of a community of Tyler's size. Political maneuvering by the chamber of commerce, as well as by Congressman Morgan G. Sanders, and Senators Tom Connally and Morris Shepherd led to the appropriation of \$360,000 for construction.<sup>9</sup>

### Construction

By August 1932 the federal government had determined that the building site would encompass the location of the 1886/1908 building and several nearby buildings to be purchased by the government. The old federal building was razed in April 1933, and construction of the new federal facility was underway by the following month. Drawings for the new Tyler U.S. Post Office and Courthouse were prepared by local architect Shirley Simons. He worked under the supervision of James A. Wetmore, Acting Supervising Architect for the Office of the Supervising Architect, U.S. Treasury Department. The firm of Ralph Sollitt and Sons of Chicago, Illinois, was awarded the construction contract.

The cornerstone for the new building was laid on October 12, 1933. The occasion was marked by a ceremony that coincided with the city's Rose Festival. Senator Tom Connally, Congressman Morgan Sanders, and other notables gave addresses. Congressman Sanders remarked,

I rejoice with you today. You deserved your splendid new building. Tyler is one of the best towns in East Texas. It is a growing city of churches, schools, and commerce, and it is in the heart of the great East Texas oil field. I rejoice with you.<sup>10</sup>

Senator Connally told attendees,

I bring you the good wishes of the government today. This fine building gives jobs to the unemployed. It helps to carry out one item listed on the Democratic program of President Roosevelt.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Long, Christopher. "Tyler, Texas." In *The Handbook of Texas Online*. Operated by the libraries of the University of Texas at Austin and the Texas State Historical Association. Last updated February 1999.

<sup>9</sup> *Tyler Daily Courier Times*, 12 October 1933.

<sup>10</sup> *Tyler Daily Courier Times*, 12 October 1933.

<sup>11</sup> *Tyler Daily Courier Times*, 12 October 1933.

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# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Tyler U.S. Post Office and Courthouse  
Smith County, Texas

## Narrative Statement of Significance (continued)

Construction of the new building proceeded in a timely manner and was completed on schedule by the summer of 1934. A dedication ceremony was held on August 4, 1934. Government, post office, and city officials as well as a number of civic leaders attended the afternoon ceremony. W. M. Roberts, chairman of the chamber of commerce federal building committee, presided over the event.<sup>12</sup> Postmaster J. B. Miller spoke, as did D. H. Rankin, chairman of the city commission, and Congressman Morgan Sanders. A concert by the Tyler Municipal Band concluded the formalities of the dedication, and the public was then permitted to tour the building.

From a national perspective, the construction of the Tyler U.S. Post Office and Courthouse was one of a number of public building projects undertaken during the early part of the Depression. The Public Buildings Act of 1926 and subsequent appropriations (in 1928, 1930, and 1931) associated with that act provided the impetus for this and other building projects initiated before the creation of the Public Works Administration (PWA) and other New Deal programs. The 1931 Federal Employment Stabilization Act also contributed to the growth in the construction of public buildings during that period. The 1931 act permitted the president and Congress to authorize additional appropriations for construction projects in order to facilitate employment. Projects such as the Tyler U.S. Post Office and Courthouse were important contributors to the country's economic recovery, as one-third of the nation's unemployed were from the building trade.

### Post-Construction

During its history, seven postmasters have served in the building: John B. Miller (1930-1935); Roy C. Owens (1935-1942); C. H. Carr (Acting, 1942); Frank M. Bell (1942-1966); L. B. Whisenant (Acting, 1966); Tom Ramsour (Acting, 1967); and T. J. Leatherwood (appointed in 1967). Leatherwood was the last postmaster to serve in the federal building prior to the post office removal in the late 1970s.

The District Court for the Eastern District of Texas is composed of six divisions that are located in Tyler, Texarkana, Marshall, Beaumont, Sherman, and Lufkin. The first judge to serve in the new building under the eastern judicial district of Texas was Randolph Bryant. Judge Randolph Bryant was the son of Judge David E. Bryant, who had served from 1890 to 1910 as the fourth judge of the eastern district. As the seventh judge for the district, Judge Randolph Bryant handled more cases during his tenure than any other federal judge.<sup>13</sup> As an expert in oil and gas matters, he presided over

<sup>12</sup> *Tyler Daily Courier Times*, 5 August 1934.

<sup>13</sup> Fisher, Joe J. "The Federal Judiciary of the Eastern District of Texas." Unpublished manuscript on file at the federal district court, Tyler, Texas, n.d.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 15

Tyler U.S. Post Office and Courthouse  
Smith County, Texas

## Narrative Statement of Significance (continued)

a number of cases arising out of East Texas oil field discoveries and served as district judge until the 1950s. The combined years of judicial service for Judge Randolph Bryant and his father Judge David Bryant spanned 40 of the 61 years between 1890 and 1951.

By the 1970s, an increasing need for space became critical. To alleviate, again, overcrowding, an addition was constructed in 1976 on the east side of the 1934 building. This addition connects a modern annex to the historic 1934 Tyler U.S. Post Office and Courthouse.

### *Architectural Significance*

The Tyler U.S. Post Office and Courthouse was one of the many public buildings designed under the supervision of the Office of the Supervising Architect for the Treasury Department. For over 75 years (1850s–1939), this office was responsible for the design and construction of public buildings, including customhouses, post offices, and courthouses. The buildings created were not only designed to serve a federal function but to express the permanence and presence of the federal government in the cities and communities in which the buildings were located. Early in its history, the Office of the Supervising Architect employed a variety of architectural styles to convey this presence. At the turn of the century, however, classically inspired styles began to predominate. These styles were thought to express democratic values and to reflect the government's assertion that "government buildings should be monumental and beautiful, and should represent the ideals of democracy and high standards of architectural sophistication in their communities."<sup>14</sup>

While these ideals continued to be applied for many years, the expense of constructing "monumental and beautiful" buildings became a concern. In 1913, federal construction policy measured the cost of constructing post offices against the city or community's postal receipts and the value of the real estate on which the building was to be built. The evaluation of the cost of constructing the public buildings coincided with a new architectural movement that promoted modernism. Both had similar effects on federal architecture—a "starved" classicism. Starved classical designs still employed many classical elements, but the expression and amount of ornamentation were restrained. Façades became more simplified. Classical elements were angular and faded into the building faces. In the 1920s, particularly after the Public Buildings Act of 1926, starved versions of Classical Revival and other classical styles of architecture were employed rather than their more elaborate predecessors. While architects in the Office of the Supervising Architect resisted moving in the direction of totally modern designs, the

<sup>14</sup> Boland, Beth. *How to Apply the National Register Criteria to Post Offices*. National Register Bulletin 13. Washington D.C.: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Interagency Resources Division, 1994.

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 16

Tyler U.S. Post Office and Courthouse  
Smith County, Texas

**Narrative Statement of Significance (continued)**

starved classical approach was adopted because it still incorporated the classical elements that were thought to express the federal presence.

The movement toward incorporating more restrained classical and modern styles of architecture in the design of public buildings is reflected in the Tyler U.S. Post Office and Courthouse. The building's Classical Revival design is very streamlined. It displays architectural elements, such as pilasters, stylized friezes, acroteria at the parapet, and pediments, central to conveying the type of presence for which Classical Revival architecture is recognized; however, these features are not lavish or imposing. While not as elaborate as other classically styled government buildings, the design of the Tyler U.S. Post Office and Courthouse is a good example of a public building constructed in the Classical Revival style. Its design reflects architectural movements adopted by the Treasury Department to convey the permanence and presence of the federal government at a local level.

The American Institute of Architects campaigned for the government to contract out the design of public buildings throughout the 1920s and 1930s, and the Tyler U.S. Post Office and Courthouse is an example of one of the cases in which a private architect was hired to complete the designs. Local architect Shirley Simons designed the building. Simons was later responsible for the original campus building plan for Tyler Junior College.<sup>15</sup>

As Acting Supervising Architect, James A. Wetmore oversaw the design of the Tyler U.S. Post Office and Courthouse. He served as Acting Supervising Architect for the U.S. Treasury Department from 1912 to 1913 and then from 1915 to 1933. The Tyler U.S. Post Office and Courthouse was one of more than a thousand buildings constructed during his tenure.<sup>16</sup> Wetmore began his career at the Treasury Department as a court stenographer. Although he later held the position of Supervising Architect, he was a lawyer and not an architect. Historical documents indicate that he approached his position as an administrator rather than as a designer.

Louis A. Simon, Superintendent of the Architectural Division, assumed many of the architectural duties of the office, including the architectural direction of building designs. His adherence to traditional (classical) styles of architecture, albeit restrained, was reflected in the 1920s- and 1930s-era buildings constructed by the Treasury Department. Simon, who was a Massachusetts Institute of Technology (M.I.T.) graduate, served as the Superintendent of the Architectural Division from 1905 to 1933, when he succeeded James Wetmore as Supervising Architect.

<sup>15</sup>Cross, Linda J. "Tyler Junior College." In *The Handbook of Texas Online*. Operated by the Libraries of the University of Texas at Austin and the Texas State Historical Association. Last updated February 1999.

<sup>16</sup>Withy, Henry F., and Elsie R. Withy. *Biographical Dictionary of American Architects (Deceased)*. Los Angeles, California: Hennessey and Ingalls, Inc., 1970.

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National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 17

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Tyler U.S. Post Office and Courthouse  
Smith County, Texas

**Narrative Statement of Significance (continued)**

The Tyler U.S. Post Office and Courthouse has served the citizens of Tyler for over 65 years. While it no longer functions as a post office, the Tyler U.S. Post Office and Courthouse building remains very much as it was when first built and continues to function as a federal district court. In 1976, as the need for space was critical, an addition was constructed on the east side of the building connecting a modern annex to the historic 1934 Tyler U.S. Post Office and Courthouse. The federal building also retains much of its original fabric, particularly in public interior spaces and on the exterior. As such, the building continues to exemplify the federal government at the local level and is reminiscent of Depression-era public building projects. Additionally, it remains an excellent example of a Classical Revival public building and is worthy of listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

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National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

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Tyler U.S. Post Office and Courthouse  
Smith County, Texas

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- Withey, Henry F., and Elsie R. Withey. *Biographical Dictionary of American Architects (Deceased)*. Los Angeles, California: Hennessey and Ingalls, Inc., 1970.
- Woldert, Will A. "History of the Tyler Post Office, Federal Building from 1847-1934." In *Chronicles of Smith County, Texas*. Vol. 12:1:1973, pp. 1-11.

*Newspaper Articles*

- "Cornerstone for New U.S. Building Laid Thursday." *Tyler Daily Courier Times*, 12 October 1933.
- "Open House at Post Office on Saturday Afternoon Arranged." *Tyler Daily Courier Times*, 3 August 1934.
- "Federal Building Dedication Held." *Tyler Daily Courier Times*, 5 August 1934.

Tyler U.S. Post Office and Courthouse  
Name of Property

Smith County, Texas  
County and State

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of Property 1 acre

**UTM REFERENCES**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

1 / 1 - 5 / / 2 / 8 - 3 / 3 - 3 - 0 / / 3 - 5 / 8 3 / - - / / - - / - - - - / / - - / - - / - - - - /			
- 1 / 5 - 0 - 0 /	Zone	Easting	Northing
2 / - - / / - - / - - - - / / - - / - - / - - - - /	4 / - - / / - - / - - - - / / - - / - - / - - - - /	<input type="checkbox"/> See Continuation Sheet	

**VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION**

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.) See Continuation Sheet p. 19.

**BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION**

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.) See Continuation Sheet p. 19.

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Victoria Green Clow, Cultural Resources Project Manager  
organization Geo-Marine, Inc. date June 9, 2000  
street & number 550 East Fifteenth St. telephone (972) 423-5480  
city or town Plano state TX zip code 75074

**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 the SHPO or FPO.)

name General Services Administration, Greater Southwest Region  
street & number Fritz G. Lanham Federal Building, 819 Taylor Street telephone (817) 978-4229  
city or town Fort Worth state TX zip code 76102

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 10 Page 19

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Tyler U.S. Post Office and Courthouse  
Smith County, Texas

**Verbal Boundary Description**

The legal property description of the Tyler U.S. Post Office and Courthouse is: City of Tyler Lot #38B, 9-12 and 14, Block 10.

**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**

Section number 11 Page 20

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**Tyler U.S. Post Office and Courthouse  
Smith County, Texas**

**Photographs**

1. Tyler U.S. Post Office and Courthouse
2. Tyler, Texas
3. Victoria Clow; Dan Pannell
4. November 1999
5. Geo-Marine, Inc.; General Services Administration
6. South (front) and west (side) elevations
7. Photo 1

Item numbers 1-5 are the same for all photographs. Item numbers 6 and 7 are listed below for each photograph.

6. Roof detail
7. Photo 2
  
6. Entry detail, south elevation
7. Photo 3
  
6. Light standard, south elevation
7. Photo 4
  
6. South (front) and west (side) elevations
7. Photo 5
  
6. Southeast elevation (note extension to new federal building)
7. Photo 6
  
6. Frieze detail, east elevation
7. Photo 7
  
6. North (rear) elevation
7. Photo 8
  
6. North (rear) and west (side) elevations
- Photo 9

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 11 Page 21

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**Tyler U.S. Post Office and Courthouse  
Smith County, Texas**

**Photographs continued**

- 6. Former postal lobby, looking west
- 7. Photo 10
  
- 6. Former postal lobby, main stairwell
- 7. Photo 11
  
- 6. Former postal lobby
- 7. Photo 12
  
- 6. Courtroom, judge's bench, west wall
- 7. Photo 13
  
- 6. Courtroom, paneling detail, north wall
- 7. Photo 14

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY NAME: Tyler US Post Office and Courthouse

MULTIPLE NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: TEXAS, Smith

DATE RECEIVED: 3/20/01      DATE OF PENDING LIST: 4/09/01  
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 4/25/01      DATE OF 45TH DAY: 5/05/01  
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 01000433

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N    DATA PROBLEM: N    LANDSCAPE: N    LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N  
OTHER: N    PDIL: N    PERIOD: N    PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N  
REQUEST: N    SAMPLE: N    SLR DRAFT: N    NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT     RETURN     REJECT    4/25/01 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

Entered in the  
National Register

RECOM./CRITERIA \_\_\_\_\_

REVIEWER \_\_\_\_\_ DISCIPLINE \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N



1022006 0231 N-1

US Post Office and Courthouse  
Tyler, Texas  
Photo 1



1120821 0231-1-2

US Post Office and Courthouse  
Tyler, Texas  
Photo 2



1060999 0231-1 1

US Post Office and Courthouse  
Tyler, Texas  
Photo 3



1050821 0231 N N

US Post Office and Courthouse  
Tyler, Texas  
Photo 4



11/0821 0231 N-1

US Post Office and Courthouse  
Tyler, Texas  
Photo 5



1-1-1920 178101

US Post Office and Courthouse  
Tyler, Texas  
Photo 6



1143821 0231 N-2

US Post Office and Courthouse  
Tyler, Texas  
Photo 7



1160821 0231 N-2

US Post Office and Courthouse  
Tyler, Texas

Photo 8



NO  
PARKING  
ANY  
TIME  
←

1020999 0231 N-2

US Post Office and Courthouse  
Tyler, Texas  
Photo 9



1082821 0231 N N

US Post Office and Courthouse  
Tyler, Texas  
Photo 10



US Post Office and Courthouse  
Tyler, Texas  
Photo 11

1062821 0231 N 1



109J821 0231 N N

US Post Office and Courthouse  
Tyler, Texas  
Photo 12



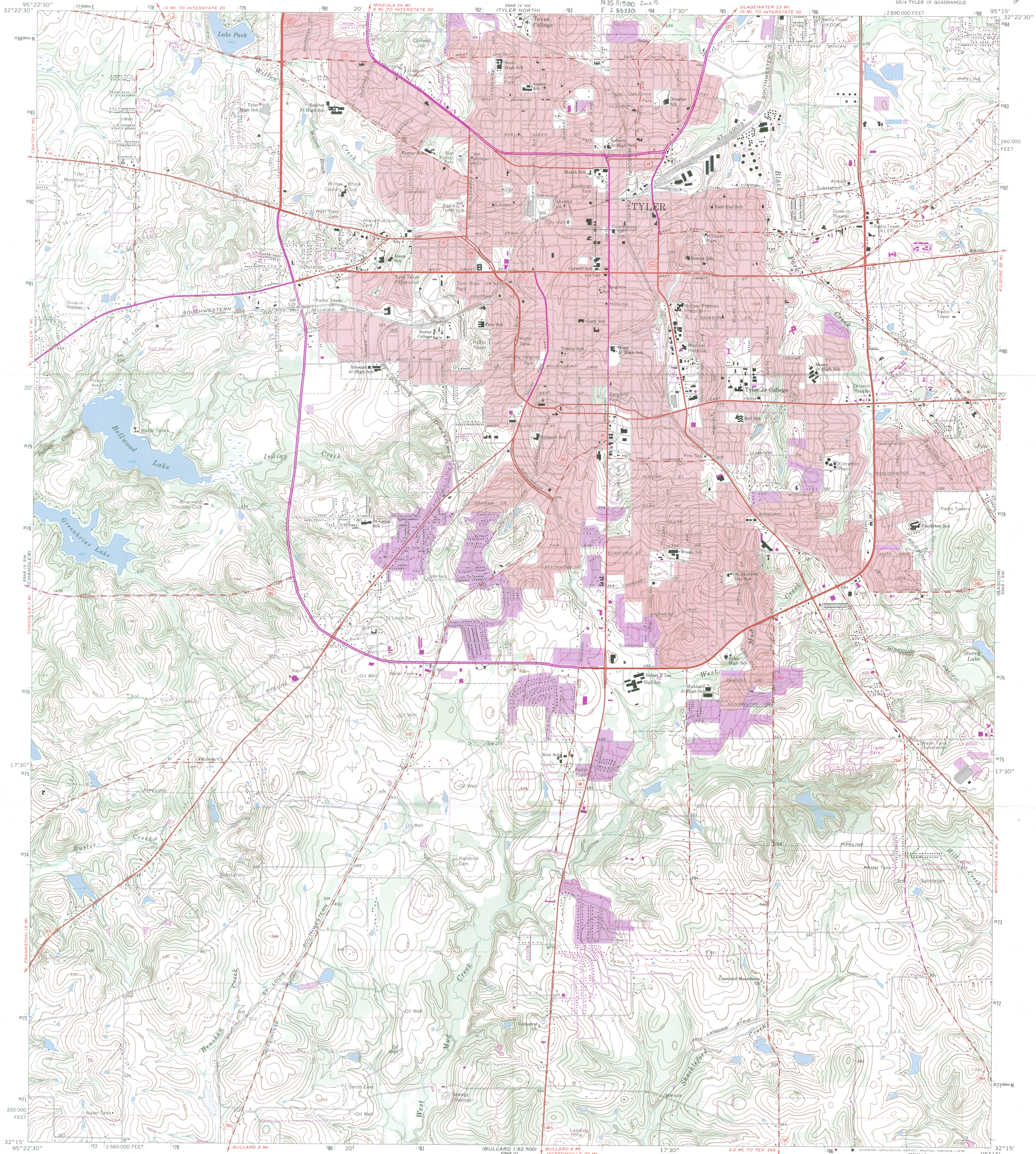
1210621 0231 N 1

US Post Office and Courthouse  
Tyler, Texas  
Photo 13



1201921 0231 N 1

US Post Office and Courtroom  
Tyler, Texas  
Photo 14



Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey

Control by USGS and USC&GS

Topography by photogrammetric methods from aerial photographs taken 1965. Field checked 1966

Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum

10,000-foot grid based on Texas coordinate system, north central zone

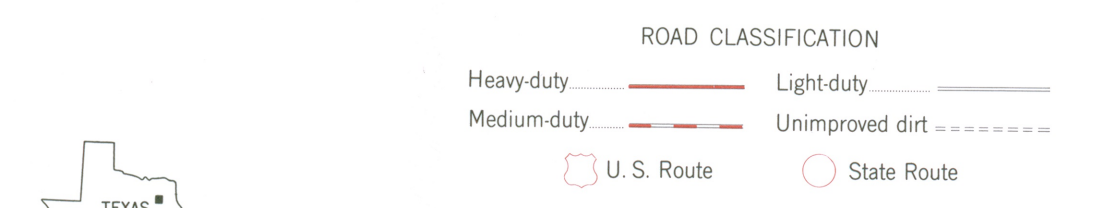
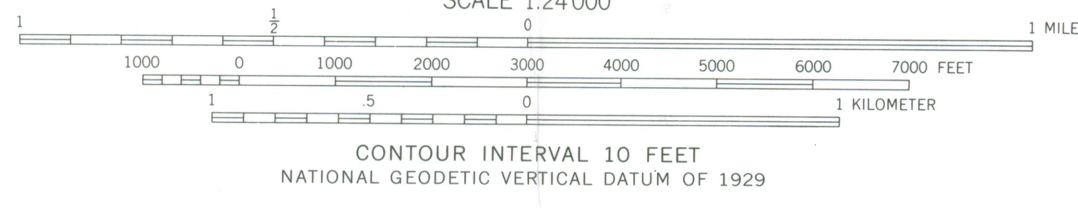
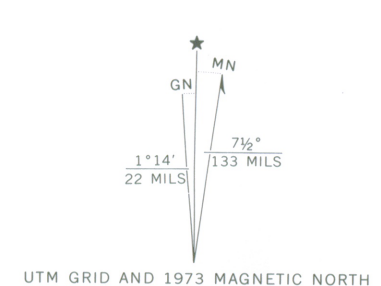
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks, zone 15, shown in blue

Red tint indicates areas in which only landmark buildings are shown

Fine red dashed lines indicate selected fence lines

Revisions shown in purple compiled from aerial photographs taken 1973. This information not field checked

Purple tint indicates extension of urban areas



THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS  
FOR SALE BY U. S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, DENVER, COLORADO 80225, OR RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092  
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

**MAPSCO, INC.**  
6118 CAMP BOWIE  
FORT WORTH, 76116 817/731-1666

**TYLER SOUTH, TEX.**  
SE/4 TYLER 15' QUADRANGLE  
N3215—W9515/7.5

1966  
PHOTOREVISED 1973  
AMS 6948 IV SE—SERIES V882