**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR**
**NATIONAL PARK SERVICE**

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

**NAME**

HISTORIC
Charles R. Jonas Federal Building

AND/OR COMMON
United States Post Office and Courthouse

**LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER
1401 West Trade Street

CITY, TOWN
Charlotte

STATE
North Carolina

**CLASSIFICATION**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CATEGORY</th>
<th>OWNERSHIP</th>
<th>STATUS</th>
<th>PRESENT USE</th>
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| | | | OTHER:

**OWNER OF PROPERTY** *(GSA is in process of acquiring building from U. S. Postal Service.)*

* NAME
General Services Administration (GSA)

**LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.
County Office Building

STREET & NUMBER
720 E. 4th Street

CITY, TOWN
Charlotte

**REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS** -- None.
The present structure of the Charles R. Jonas Federal Building is a large rectangle of two levels and a basement. The front contains 23 bays, the rear 27 bays, and the two sides contain 11 bays each. The construction is a skeleton frame of steel on a spread footing foundation with a flat, built-up roof.

The building was built in 1915 in the Renaissance style. In 1934, an addition was built in the Neo-Classical Revival style which increased the size threefold and changed the main axis of the building from being parallel to Mint Street to being parallel to West Trade Street.

The West Trade Street facade is broken into three main sections. Each section is defined by a plain bay, the two end bays containing deeply recessed niches. The two end sections are finished with a colonnade. The central section projects with a portico and a simple pediment. The overall image is an expansive colonnade extending the length of the facade. The sides, including the original entry, and rear facades are much simpler. These are detailed with pilasters extending from the base of the first level to the entablature which surrounds the building.

The interior contains two major spaces of significance: the lobby and the courtroom. The lobby is L-shaped as a result of the 1934 addition. Both ends contain details which complement each other and give a unified appearance. The ceiling and light fixtures vary only in that the addition expresses the beams and the original section does not. The remainder of the finishes are much richer in the addition and are exhibited in the marble moldings, the marble columns and pilasters (absent in the original wing), and the letter tables.

The courtroom is paneled in oak. Ornate carvings accent the entries with fluted pilasters and entablatures and a surrounding entablature detailed with triglyphs. The furnishings of oak also express rich carvings in the moldings and paterae. The ceiling has been repaired, though it exhibits much of the fine detail of the original. In 1933, the original ceiling was installed as a normal suspended plaster ceiling. In 1965, the center section fell and, subsequently, was repaired with sensitivity to the original design. The new ceiling is of acoustical tiles and yet was designed to blend well with the existing ornate plaster details of the beams. The entry lobby to the courtroom is equally elegant in its details. Fine craftsmanship is exhibited in carved marble door surrounds, marble coupled pilasters, and the molding and trim work of the encased beams.

Throughout the building are examples of the extravagances which were a part of life at this time. Some of these extravagances are reflected in: (1) the high ceilings found in corridors, offices, and important spaces such as the lobby and the courtroom, (2) marble wainscot and baseboards, (3) solid oak doors, (4) terrazzo floors of fine design, (5) delicate brass balustrades, and, (6) plaster wall moldings at the ceiling.

The site of the building contains two features of note. The West Trade Street section is finished with a large garden walkway. It is accented with mature
trees and shrubbery. At the corner of Mint Street and West Fourth Street is a monument dedicated to First Lieutenant William Ewen Shipp. The inscription reads:

"Amongst a grove the very straightest plant
William Ewen Shipp First Lieutenant
Tenth Cavalry U. S. Army
Born: August 23, 1861
Killed at San Juan, battle of Santiago: July 1, 1898."

The monument, an obelisk, was originally located at the front of the U. S. Branch Mint off of West Trade Street. It was relocated when the Post Office facilities were expanded in 1934.
The Charles R. Jonas Federal Building gains its significance in two ways: (1) the site on which it is located has played an important part in the history of Charlotte; (2) the structure itself is of significance due to its architectural detailing and its imposing size.

The Charles R. Jonas Federal Building, built in 1915, is significant due to its location on the site of the first branch of the U. S. Mint built in 1836. The original post office was built in 1891, on the southeast section of the site. The space between the post office and the mint was converted into a park-plaza for the citizens of Charlotte. The mint functions were discontinued in 1913. At this time, the original section of the present Charles R. Jonas Federal Building was built on the site occupied by the 1891 post office. In 1932, the mint was threatened with the possibility of being demolished. There was great citizen concern. The dilemma was: should the mint be preserved as a monument to the City as evidence of the progress of Charlotte or should it be demolished to allow the Federal Government the opportunity to expand its facilities thus creating job opportunities for a much depressed area? It was decided to reconstruct the mint on a new location, in the Eastover section of Charlotte, where it was converted into North Carolina's first museum of art.

The present building was thus built in two stages. The original section built in 1915 is approximately one-third of the size of the present structure. The 1915 section built parallel to Mint Street was done in the Renaissance style. When the 1934 addition was completed, the main axis of the structure was turned 90 degrees so that the new facade, the main facade, faced West Trade Street. The addition was executed in the neo-Classical Revival style. The structure exhibits many fine details in both the exterior and the interior. Some of the more important details of the exterior include: the colonnade of Corinthian columns on the West Trade Street facade, the pilasters with Corinthian capitals on all facades, an entablature which includes rosettes on the West Trade Street facade, and friezes containing anthemion and urn bas-relief carvings in door and window surround heads.

The interior contains two spaces of particular significance in their detailing: the lobby and the courtroom. The lobby is an excellent example of the lavish use of materials and care in the execution of details which were common in the more elaborate buildings of this period. Such details as the marble columns, the

GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 2.9

UTM REFERENCES

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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Rectangular shape approximately 330 feet x 386 feet bounded by West Trade Street on NE, Mint Street on SE, W. 4th Street on SW, and Simon's Formal Wear on NW.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

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

For NPS use only

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

Director, Office of Archaeology and Historic Preservation

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

Keeper of the National Register
SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD
PREHISTORIC
1400 1499
1500 1599
1600 1699
1700 1799
1800 1899
X 1900

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW

ARCHAEOLOGY
ARCHITECTURE
ART
COMMERCIAL
COMMUNICATIONS
COMMUNITY PLANNING
CONSERVATION
ECONOMICS
EDUCATION
ENGINEERING
EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT
INDUSTRY
INVENTION
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE
LAW
LITERATURE
MILITARY
MUSIC
PHILOSOPHY
POLITICS/GOVERNMENT
RELIGION
SCIENCE
SCULPTURE
SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
THEATER
TRANSPORTATION
X OTHER (SPECIFY)

SPECIFIC DATES 1915/Extended: 1934

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

wainscoting, the door surrounds, the ornate plaster moldings, and design work of the ceilings and walls are in excellent condition. The courtroom is again a fine example of rich carvings and detailing with its oak paneling and furnishings.

In both, the exterior and the interior, these details have been maintained in excellent condition. They are a good representation of the fine craftsmanship and attention paid to the finishings of buildings in this period.

James A. Wetmore, Acting Supervising Architect for U. S. Government Buildings
Name: Charles R. Jonas Federal Building (United States Post Office and Courthouse)

Location: 401 West Trade Street
Charlotte, North Carolina (Mecklenburg County)

Location of Deed: County Office Building
720 East Fourth Street
Charlotte, North Carolina

Acreage: 2.9 acres

Longitude and Latitude: See Geological Survey Map

Original Owner: United States Government

Present Use: United States District Court and other related agencies plus a downtown postal station

Original Architect: James A. Wetmore, Acting Supervisory Architect

Age of Structure: Built in 1915
Extended in 1934

Representation in Existing Architectural or Historical Surveys: None

Condition: Exterior - The materials and details of the building appear to be in good condition. Some minor maintenance and cleaning could restore the building to excellent condition.

Interior - The major portions of the interior appear to be in good condition. During the inspection of the building, it was noted that the major spaces—such as the first floor lobby, the Post Office workrooms, the courtroom foyer, and the courtroom itself—remain, by and large, as originally constructed. However, a good portion of the other interior spaces have been renovated using dropped ceilings, lighting, and paneling not sympathetic to the original fabric.

Description of the Surrounding Environment: The site is located in the Central Business District (CBD) of Charlotte. To place the CBD in perspective, a brief discussion of the city of Charlotte as a whole follows.

Charlotte - is the largest city in the Carolinas. Located near the center of the two Carolinas, at the midpoint of the Carolina Piedmont, a region characterized by clusters of small and medium-sized cities, it is within a few miles of I-85, about 260 miles northeast of Atlanta, Georgia, and about 390 miles southwest of Washington, DC.
Although Charlotte's beginning was in colonial times and its traditions are associated with the earliest aspirations for American independence, its aspect is of a busy city of the "New South." Its status as the largest city in the Carolinas and the region's most important commercial center is reflected, to some extent, by its position as the seat of Mecklenburg County and as the busiest statutory location for holding federal court in the Western District of North Carolina. Charlotte's development typifies the industrialization of the Carolina Piedmont from which it draws much of its life and trade. Its economic region, the 12-county Metrolina area, is one of the South's leading industrial areas and is the leading center of textile production in the United States. The city serves, in the main, as the financial, distribution, and transportation center of Metrolina and, to some degree, of the entire Carolina area. It is one of the nation's most important marketing centers for synthetic fibers, dyes, and other textile chemicals. And, because synthetic fibers are technically classified as chemicals, Charlotte ranks fourth in the nation in wholesale sales of industrial chemicals, behind only New York, Chicago, and Philadelphia.

Recently, over about the last five years, Charlotte has joined the ranks of regional headquarters cities in the Southeast. Large numbers of national corporations have chosen it as the site for their regional sales offices, their regional or, in some cases, national research and development facilities, and other type administrative units. The city now ranks 17th in the nation as a regional sales center for national firms.

While the CBD is Charlotte's historical center, a concomitant of the above developments has been the destruction of most of the physical reminders of this history. Instead of so much of a mixture of the human and the monumental scales in its architecture predominant until about 30-40 years ago, instead of the mixture of commercial and residential land uses predominant until about this same time, the area is now largely given over to commercial enterprises housed in new buildings of various descriptions. The site in question, for the present, on the northern fringe of this development, in an area of the CBD that is, to a large extent, deteriorated.

Physical Description:

Exterior - -The present structure of the Charles R. Jonas Federal Building (Jonas FB) is a large rectangle of two levels and a basement. The front contains 23 bays, the rear 27 bays, and the two sides contain 11 bays each. The construction is a skeleton frame of steel on a spread footing foundation with a flat, built-up roof.

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Interior - The interior contains two major spaces of significance: the lobby and the courtroom. The lobby is L-shaped as a result of the 1934 addition. Both ends contain details which complement each other and give a unified appearance. The ceiling and light fixtures vary only in that the addition expresses the beams and the original section does not. The remainder of the finishes are much richer in the addition and are exhibited in the marble moldings, the marble columns and pilasters (absent in the original wing), and the letter tables.

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Throughout the building are examples of the extravagances which were a part of life at this time. Some of these extravagances are reflected in: (1) the high ceilings found in corridors, offices, and important spaces such as the lobby and courtroom, (2) marble wainscot and baseboards, (3) solid oak doors, (4) terrazzo floors of fine design, (5) delicate brass balustrades, and (6) plaster wall moldings at the ceiling level.

The site of the building contains two features of note. The West Trade Street facade is finished with a large garden walkway. It is accented with mature trees and shrubbery. At the corner of Mint Street and West Fourth Street is a monument dedicated to First Lieutenant William Ewen Shipp. The inscription reads:

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Significance:

History: The Jonas FB, built in 1915, is significant due to its location on the site of the first branch of the U. S. Mint built in 1836. The original Post Office was built in 1891, on the southeast section of the site. The space between the Post Office and the Mint was converted into a park/plaza for the citizens of Charlotte. The Mint functions were discontinued in 1913. At this time, the original section of the present Jonas FB was built on the site occupied by the 1891 Post Office. In 1932, the Mint was threatened with demolition. There was great citizen concern. The dilemma was: Should the Mint be preserved as a monument to the city, as evidence of the progress of Charlotte, or should it be demolished to allow the Federal Government the opportunity to expand its facilities, thus creating job opportunities for a much-depressed area? It was decided to reconstruct the Mint on a new location, in the Eastover section of Charlotte, where it was converted into North Carolina's first museum of art.

The present Jonas FB was thus built in two stages. The original section, built in 1915, is approximately one-third of the present structure. The 1915 section, built parallel to Mint Street is designed in the Renaissance Style. When the 1934 addition was completed, the main axis of the structure was turned 90 degrees so that the main facade faced West Trade Street. The addition was executed in the Neo Classical Revival style.

Architecture: The structure exhibits many fine details. Some of the more important details of the exterior include: The colonnades of Corinthian columns on the West Trade Street facade; the pilasters with Corinthian capitals on all facades; an entablature which includes rosettes on the West Trade Street facade; and friezes containing anthemion and urn bas-relief carriages in door and window surround heads.

The interior contains two spaces of particular significance in their detailing: the lobby and the courtroom. The lobby is an excellent example of the lavish use of materials and of the care taken in the execution of details which were common in the more elaborate buildings of this period. Such details as the marble columns, the wainscoting, the door surrounds, and the ornate plaster moldings and design work of the ceilings and walls are in excellent condition. The courtroom is again a fine example of rich carvings and detailing with its paneling and furnishings.

In both the exterior and the interior, these details have been maintained in excellent condition as a good representation of the fine craftsmanship and attention paid to the detail of finishings in buildings of this period.

In addition to the above details, the structure's sheer mass, together with its styling, lend a certain monumentality to the surrounding environment.
Features to be Retained:

1. Exterior: The exterior is in excellent condition, and every effort should be made to retain it as it is. Of special note are: (a) the details of the entablature, the colonnade, and the coffered ceiling of the portico; (b) the monument dedicated to First Lieutenant William Ewen Shipp; and (c) the landscaping (this could be improved with new seeding and additional shrubbery).

2. Interior: Many areas of the interior including the lobby, the courtroom, the corridors, the offices, and the bathrooms contain elements which would be difficult to replace such as marble finishes, plaster moldings, and brass work. Features falling into this category include: (a) the ornate plaster ceilings of the lobby and the courtroom; (b) the ceiling moldings of the corridors; (c) the marble wainscoting; (d) the solid oak doors; (e) the terrazzo floors; (f) the marble staircases with their brass balustrades; (g) the lobby with the grand entry to the Postmaster's office, the letter tables, the double-entry doors, the letter boxes, the light fixtures, and the teller's windows; (h) the courtroom with its oak paneling, oak furnishings, plaster ceiling, and light fixtures, and; (i) the wood flooring in the Postal Service workroom.

In summary, the main portion of the building has been maintained in good condition. There are a few exceptions: namely, those areas which have been renovated carelessly through the indiscriminate use of plywood paneling. This occurs in several of the offices, but is most obvious in the lobby. Portions of the lobby's integrity have been destroyed by sealing bays with this plywood paneling rather than making an attempt to use more sympathetic materials. Also, there are visual intrusions in the lobby, such as the concession stand, the automatic stamp machines, the newspaper vending boxes, the bulletin boards, and the additional letter tables. In each case, the materials, design, and placement of these items exhibit little regard for the generally-elegant atmosphere of the space. These items should be corrected.