

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Erie Federal Courthouse and Post Office
other names/site number Erie Federal Courthouse

2. Location

street & number 6th (South Park Row) and State Streets N/A not for publication
city, town Erie N/A vicinity
state Pennsylvania code PA county Erie code 049 zip code 16501-1196

3. Classification

Ownership of Property

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

Category of Property

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

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u>1</u>	<u> </u> buildings
<u> </u>	<u> </u> sites
<u> </u>	<u> </u> structures
<u> </u>	<u> </u> objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing:
N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. 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. See continuation sheet.

[Signature]
Signature of certifying official
General Services Administration
State or Federal agency and bureau

12/31/91
Date

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Brent D. Glass
Signature of commenting official
Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission
State or Federal agency and bureau

3/27/92
Date

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register.
 See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register. See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain): _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

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The rear elevations, facing the parking areas and loading dock, preserve the fenestration and cornice lines of the main facade, but signal their lesser importance through the complete absence of ornament and the substitution of yellow brick for limestone and granite. As with the other elevations both the windows and coping have been replaced within the last two decades.

To a large extent, the exterior elevations reflect the plan of the building. The double-loaded corridors align with the north and west entrances to form a "cross" plan (albeit modified at the eastern arm). The multi-story window bays on the North and West Elevations express the grand courtroom spaces, while the loggia fronts the courtroom lobby (see Photograph 6).

On the first floor, the vestibules are fitted with blue, matte glazed terra cotta wainscoting to a point approximately 4' high (see Photographs 7, and 8). This wainscoting continues into the corridors and lobbies and is complemented in these areas by ceramic tile floors that are bordered with a Greek fret pattern similar to the motif used on the exterior soapstone panels. These spaces are largely intact with the exception of modern lighting and "lay-in" ceilings that mask retrofitted HVAC equipment. The main stairwell of the building is relatively simple, and is placed in close proximity to the elevator core. The stair balusters are of iron with slate treads and risers, and oak handrails. A secondary stairwell, of similar detailing, is located adjacent to the State Street entrance.

The main postal lobby is the most interesting space on the first floor (see Photographs 9, and 10). It is rectangular in plan, and follows the vocabulary established in the vestibule and corridors with ceramic tile floors and walls. Additional features worth noting are the plaster ceiling with shallow cornice, decorative grilles which feature the familiar pattern of the floors, and original bronze post office boxes and lanterns. Behind this principal public space are the functional spaces such as the sorting room and the loading bays. The remainder of the first floor contains various federal offices.

The courtrooms located on the second floor are the most elaborately finished spaces of the building (see Photographs 11 - 14). These rooms are handsome period designs, trimmed in paneled wood wainscoting and capped by molded friezes at the height of the door heads. The paneling continues around the room, interrupted by the windows and by the elaborate backdrops of the judges' dais. The judges' benches

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and backdrops are executed in holly, ash, and beech veneer. The rooms are crowned by decorative plaster ceilings. Each courtroom is part of a complex of service rooms that include the judge's chambers, the clerk's offices, and a library. These rooms generally are finished more ornately than other office space in the building.

Built-in courtroom furnishings conform to the generally classical detail of the building. Wood benches were designed with console arms that follow the modified classical lines of the building. Ornamental metal balustrades, that carry familiar motifs found throughout the building, partitions the judges' bench and lawyers' desks from the gallery. Each courtroom also has an elaborate metalwork clock executed in copper and copper alloy.

The remainder of the first, second, and third floors is dedicated to corridor and office space for federal agencies. Typical treatments include stained and clear-finished doors, molded base, chair rail, and picture rail with flat plaster walls and ceilings. The corridors in these areas also received the ceramic tile finish, while the offices have concrete floors that are either tiled with resilient flooring or carpeted. The basement originally was largely given over to mechanical spaces, with one double-loaded corridor of offices off of the elevator lobby. In recent years, a significant portion of the mechanical area has been converted to court and office-related uses.

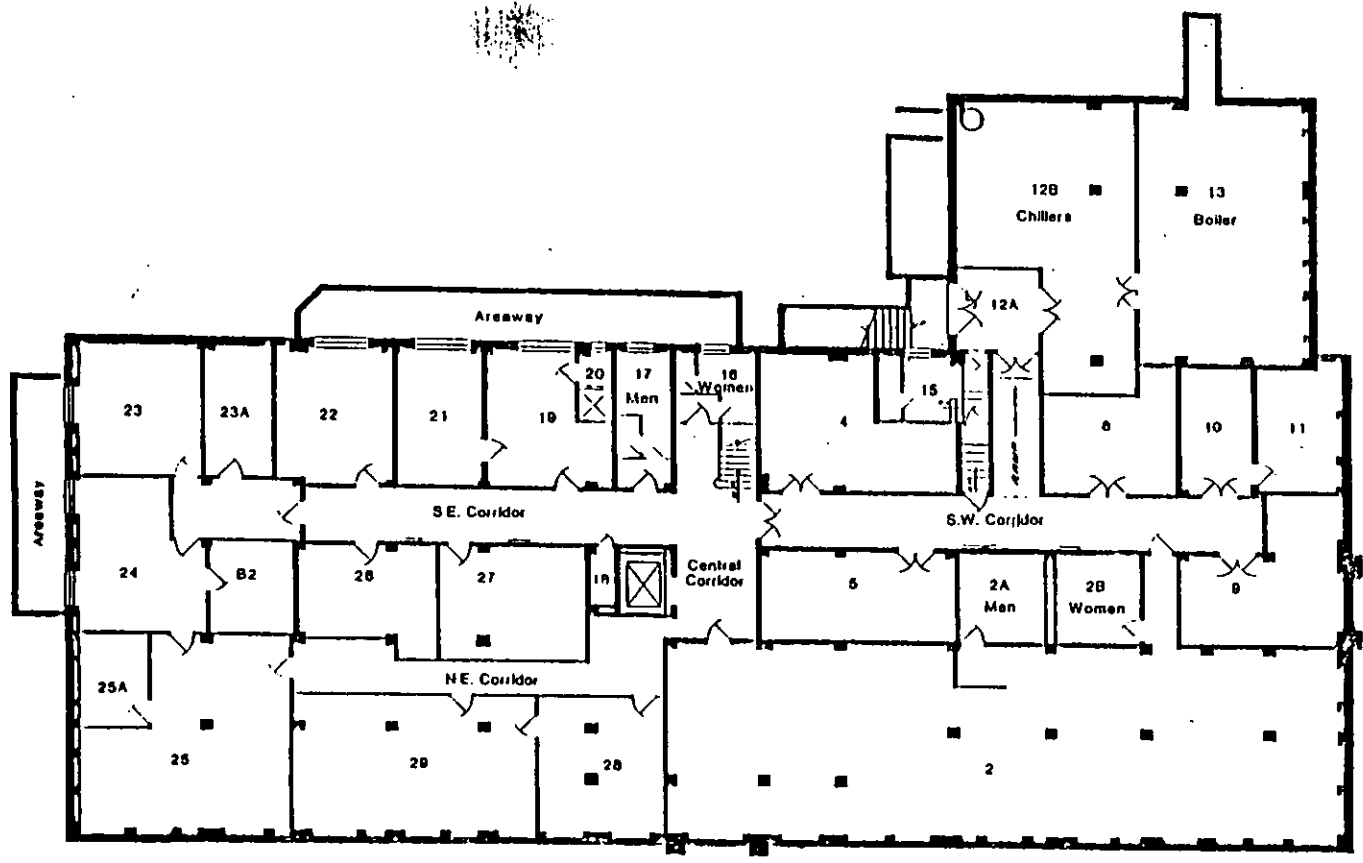
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BASEMENT FLOOR PLAN



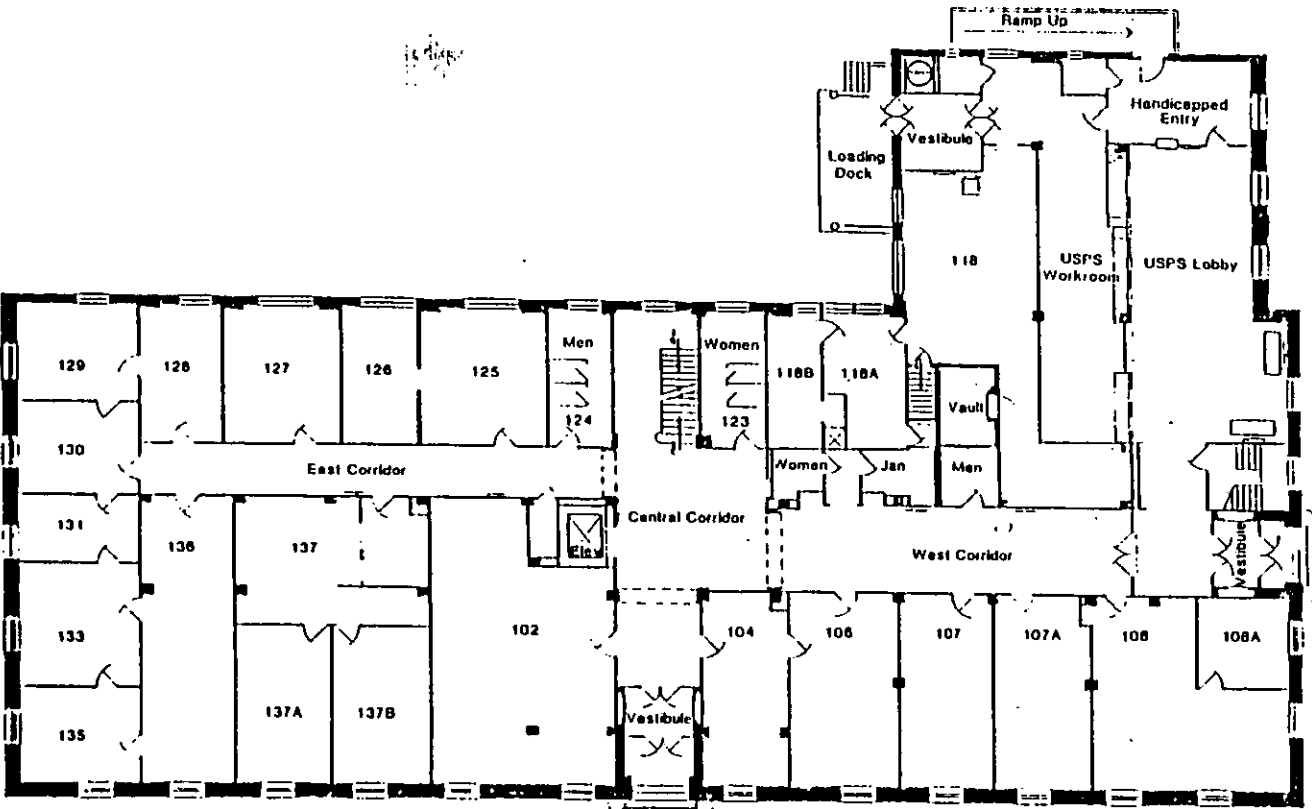
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FIRST FLOOR PLAN



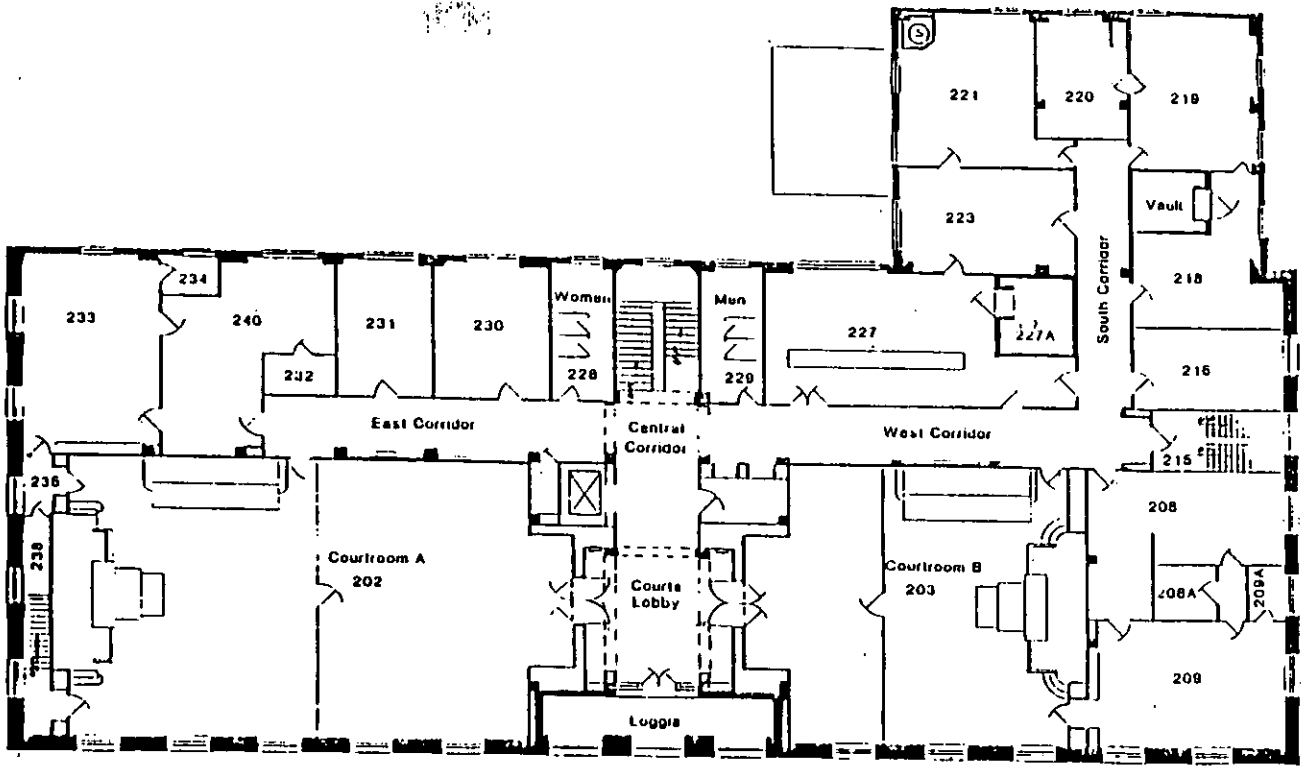
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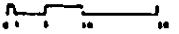
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SECOND FLOOR PLAN



Second Floor



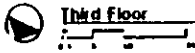
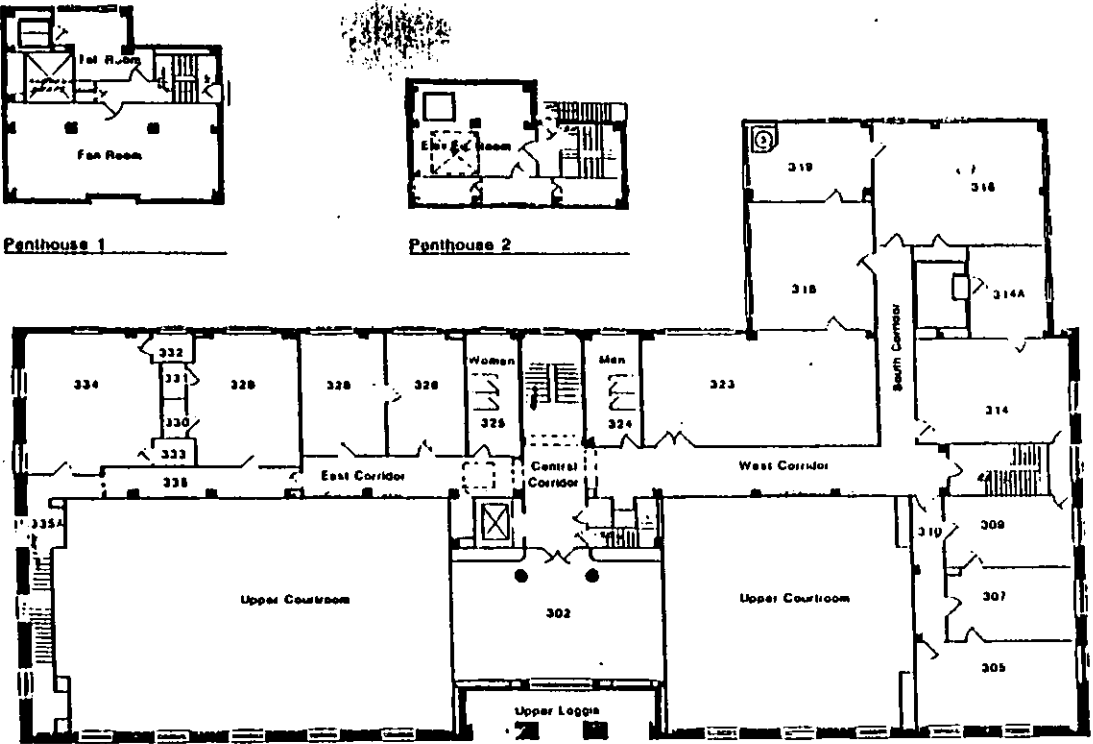
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THIRD FLOOR PLAN



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land architect, and later was made a partner. He practiced in Cleveland before moving to Washington D.C. several years before his death.³

Louis A. Simon, FAIA (1867-1958), served as supervising architect for the Erie Federal Building, and was a highly regarded designer who was made supervising architect for the Treasury Department. Simon attended the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and graduated in 1891. Shortly after, he joined the Supervising Architect's office in the Treasury Department, assuming the position of principal architectural designer.⁴ During the first thirty years of the twentieth century, Simon was the designer of many small post offices and courthouses for the federal government.

In his own right, Simon is of interest as a colorist and classicist whose designs incorporated modern motifs with success and skill. At the end of his career, he had been involved with a thousand or more buildings, though his name is on the cornerstone only of those erected during his tenure as Supervising Architect, a position which he held from 1934 until 1937 when he reached the federal mandatory retirement age of seventy. President Roosevelt extended his tenure for an additional eighteen months, and then asked him to stay on as consultant to the Treasury Department.⁵

The Erie Federal Courthouse and Post Office is a principal element in Erie's business district, and therefore of great local importance. It is recommended that the Erie Federal Building, in view of its architectural and historical importance as a representative example of federally commissioned buildings of its period, be nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under criterion C.

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Notes:

- 1 American Guide Series, Erie: A Guide to the City and County (Philadelphia: William Penn Association, 1938).
- 2 "R. Stanley-Brown, 54, Garfield's Grandson," New York Times, February 9, 1944, Obituaries.
- 3 Henry F. Withey AIA and Elsie Rathburn Withey, Biographical Dictionary of American Architects (Deceased) (Los Angeles: Hennessey and Ingalls, Inc., 1970), 566.
- 4 Date stone located on the Erie Federal Courthouse and Post Office, Erie, Pennsylvania.
- 5 Clio Group, Inc., Scranton Post Office and Courthouse Historic Structures Report (Philadelphia, 1986), 17.

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Bibliography: (continued)

"R. Stanley-Brown, 54, Garfield's Grandson." New York Times, Obituaries, February 9, 1944.

Withey, Henry F., AIA and Elsie Rathburn Withey. Biographical Dictionary of American Architects (Deceased). Los Angeles: Hennessey and Ingalls, Inc., 1970.

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Verbal Boundary Description: (continued)

point; thence west (S63° 39'W) for a distance of 20' to a point; thence north (N26° 23'W) for a distance of 82.5' to a point; thence west (S63° 39'W) for a distance of 20' to a point; thence south (S26° 23'E) for a distance of 40' to a point; thence west (S63° 39'W) for a distance of 165' to a point; thence north (N26° 23'W) for a distance of 125' to the point of origin.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (if applicable) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Period of Significance

Significant Dates

Architecture

1937-1944

1937

Politics/Government

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Stanley-Brown, Rudolph

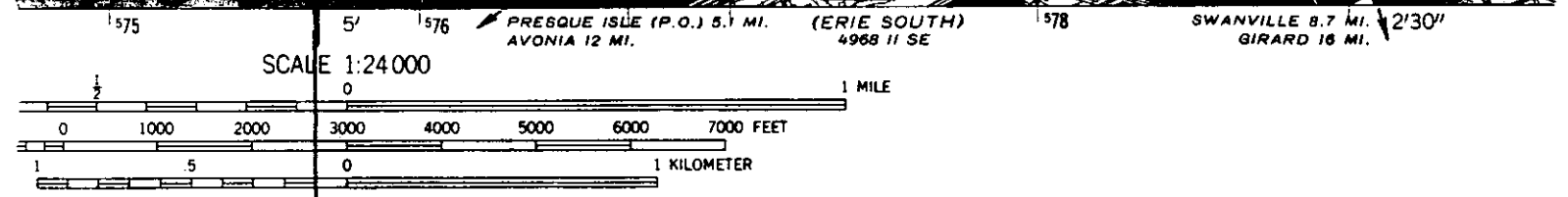
State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The Erie Federal Courthouse and Post Office is a product of the federal government's effort to stimulate the building industry during the 1929 Depression. The Moderne influence, which is evident in the building's modified classical design, reflects the stylistic features and typical design elements characteristic of federally commissioned buildings of this period throughout the United States. Built in 1937 to function as a U.S. Federal Building and Courthouse, the building continues to house the federal offices of the district, including the Federal Court and the Perry Square station of the U.S. Post Office.

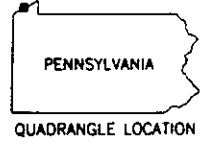
The U.S. Courthouse marks a high point of Erie's growth and regional significance before changing transportation systems, and then the deflation of America's heavy industry, reduced the city's importance as a manufacturing and transportation center. Erie is situated in the far northwest corner of Pennsylvania on a tiny strip of lakeshore land that developed from a trading post fort to a ranking industrial center largely because of its physical attributes, namely its location on the transportation corridor of Lake Erie. With the transportation monopoly in the northeast corner of Pennsylvania, many industries located in Erie at the end of the nineteenth century and the city underwent a period of rapid expansion.¹ Many of Erie's late nineteenth and early twentieth century buildings, including the U.S. Federal Building and Courthouse, reflect the city's success during that period.

Erie's Federal Building and Courthouse was designed by Rudolph Stanley-Brown (1890-1944), grandson of President James A. Garfield, and a consulting architect of the U.S. Treasury Department.² Stanley-Brown received his formal training at Yale and studied architecture at Columbia University and the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris. Two years later he enlisted in the Army and served in the first World War. Upon his discharge he joined the firm of his uncle, Abram Garfield, Cleve-

See continuation sheet



CONTOUR INTERVAL 10 FEET
 NATIONAL GEODETIC VERTICAL DATUM OF 1929
 DEPTH CURVES AND SOUNDINGS IN FEET—DATUM IS LOW WATER 570.5 FEET



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

ERIE FEDERAL COURTHOUSE AND POST OFFICE
 ERIE COUNTY, PA
 ERIE NORTH, PA QUADRANGLE
 ZONE 17
 UTM Z: 17 575600 4604340
 Datum: Northing