

# United States Federal Office Building

**1915**

The United States Federal Office Building was built in 1915, with its intended use as a post office. The location was controversial. With the Milwaukee Railroad Depot across the street, it was thought that this block was better suited to retail and businesses associated with the railroad.

The Federal Office Building was designed by James Knox Taylor, at the time the supervising architect to the U.S. Treasury Department. Plans originally positioned the main entrance on Washington Avenue, a logical choice, as the Twin Cities Rapid Transit streetcar line ran down Washington Avenue. A revised set of drawings moved the entrance to Third Avenue South, directly across the street from the Milwaukee Road Depot.

Even before the building was completed, there was concern that the new Post Office was too small to accommodate the volume and type of mail being processed. The building had been designed before the reality of parcel post came into being.



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The building opened, and postal Services continued to expand, putting greater pressure on the building that was already too small. In February 1926, only eleven years after occupancy, plans were unveiled for a four-story addition. Within fifteen years, plans for a new Minneapolis Post Office on First Street South were already underway.

The building functioned as the United States Post Office until late 1935, when it was announced that the Post Office building would be renovated for federal offices, but not federal court-related spaces. The postal service vacated the space and moved to its new building on First Street South. The building was officially renamed the Federal Office Building on January 13, 1937.



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The building is an example of Neoclassical architecture, which was the prevailing style of architecture in Europe during the Nineteenth and Twentieth centuries. Two-story Corinthian columns line the building exterior. Three faces of the building are clad in granite, while the rear of the building facing a small parking lot and loading dock, is clad in brick. Above the entrance to the building and etched in granite are the words, United States Federal Office Building.



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The building occupies the entire block surrounded by Washington Avenue, Second Street, Third and Second Avenues South.

Many materials in the building are original, including the mosaic floors in the main lobby, the marble wall panels and a barrel-vaulted plaster ceiling.

The Federal Office building was the site of a bombing on Monday, August 17, 1970 at about 3 a.m. The explosion blew out the exterior steps on the northeast side of the Federal Office building, causing extensive damage to the granite and stone building. A night security guard was knocked



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unconscious from the explosion. The explosion, believed to be caused by twenty sticks of dynamite, blew off the stairs, tore an eight foot by ten-foot hole in the exterior wall, ruptured water pipes, blew out windows, and resulted in cracks in the building's three-foot thick exterior walls. Windows were blown out in buildings up to three blocks away, including The Towers apartments and the Minneapolis Post Office. Guests at the Park Nicollet Hotel were knocked to the ground by the force of the explosion. Damage was estimated to be \$500,000. At the time, the Federal Office Building housed the Armed Forces Examining and Entrance Station and a Navy recruiting office, believed to be the target of the explosion. The building had been the site of many anti-war rallies during the late 1960s and early 1970s.

During the past several decades, the building has been updated and renovated, to enhance security, update the building's mechanical and fire protection systems, and comply with ADA requirements. The main lobby of the building was updated with low,



glazed partitions that guide visitors through the space but do not detract from the grandeur of the lobby. Local architecture firms were hired to complete the design work.

The Federal Office Building was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2010 and in 2014, won a Minneapolis Heritage Preservation Award. Today the building houses the Department of State Passport office, Housing and Urban Development, and the National Labor Relations Board.