Form 10-300

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(TYPE all entries - complete applicable sections)

1. NAME
COMMON:

United States Custom House

AND/OR HISTORIC:

2. LOCATION
STREET AND NUMBER:

Bowling Green

CITY OR TOWN:

New York

3. CLASSIFICATION
CATEGORY (Check One)

□ District  □ Building  □ Site  □ Structure  □ Object

OWNERSHIP

□ Public  □ Private  □ Both

PUBLIC ACQUISITION:

□ In Process  □ Being Considered

STATUS

□ Occupied  □ Unoccupied

□ Preservation work in progress

ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC

□ Yes:  □ Restricted  □ Unrestricted  □ No

PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

□ Agricultural  □ Government  □ Park  □ Transportation  □ Comments

□ Commercial  □ Industrial  □ Private Residence  □ Other (Specify) U.S. Post Office

□ Educational  □ Military  □ Religious  □ Scientific

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY
OWNER'S NAME:

United States Government Treasury Department

STREET AND NUMBER:

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION
COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC:

New York County Hall of Records

STREET AND NUMBER:

31 Chambers Street

CITY OR TOWN:

New York

5. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS
TITLE OF SURVEY:

New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission

DATE OF SURVEY:

□ Federal  □ State  □ County  □ Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:

New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission

STREET AND NUMBER:

305 Broadway

CITY OR TOWN:

New York

Rep. Bella Abzug
Number of stories: Seven stories including a rusticated base with five stories above it and an additional floor under the mansard roof.

Number of bays: The north facade is seven bays wide. The east, west and south facades are each thirteen bays wide.

Layout and/or shape of plan: The building is trapezoidal in plan.

Wall construction: There are ashlar masonry walls with semi-engaged columns separating the windows between end bays.

Structural system: This is a steel-framed building.

Roof, cornice: A slate-covered mansard roof is crowned by copper crestings. A stone parapet, which alternates solid sections with a balustrade, encircles the building above the fourth floor. An elaborate entablature, which extends the full height of the fifth floor, extends around three sides of the building.

Dormers: Dormer windows in the mansard roof are segmental-arched, and are surmounted by baroque-type frames.

Important interior features: A great oval central chamber occupies most of the courtyard at the center of the building. A rotunda inside the central chamber is decorated with murals painted by Reginald Marsh. Paintings by Elmer Garnsey ornament the walls of the Reception Room of the Collector of Customs.

Other notable features: There is a great variety of sculpture on the exterior of the building. On pedestals advanced from the base of the building are four sculpture groups, heroic in size, representing the four continents. The keystones of the main windows are carved with heads signifying the eight races of mankind. Over each of the columns of the main facade are heroic statues representing the twelve commercial centers of the ancient and modern worlds. A cartouche, bearing the arms of the United States crowns the main facade. Each of the forty-four columns which encircle the building has a capital crowned by a head of Mercury, the mythological character who governed commerce.
The U.S. Custom House on the Bowling Green, one of the financial district's most impressive buildings, was designed by the noted architect Cass Gilbert (1858-1934) whose design won the competition. Gilbert, best known as the architect of the Woolworth Building, had been associated with the firm of McKim, Mead & White. He designed the Custom House in the richly ornamented style of the French Baroque Revival.

The Custom House, which covers an enormous area, is seven stories high above an excavated cellar. A rusticated ground level floor is treated as a base above which a giant order of Corinthian engaged columns, three stories high, encircles the building. Their full entablature with an elaborately ornamented frieze extends the height of the fifth floor, and it continues around three sides of the building. At the Bowling Green facade the entablature carries twelve heroic-size sculpted figures. A tall mansard roof which encloses a full story is partially screened by a stone parapet alternating solid with balustraded sections. The main entrance on the Bowling Green is a monumental arch, through which a wide flight of steps leads into the building.

The building is heavily encrusted with stonecarving and adorned with statuary, the iconography of which deals with international relations, neoclassically personified. The sculptor Daniel Chester French, whose work had received much favorable attention at the World's Columbian Exposition in 1893, carved the four groups which are raised on pedestals flanking the Bowling Green entrance. Representing each of the four major continents, idealized women are the central feature of each composition. Breaking the skyline above the Bowling Green entrance is a large carving by the German sculptor Karl Bitter representing the shield of the United States crowned by an American eagle and supported by two female figures. The work of several other sculptors is represented elsewhere on the exterior of the building.

The Custom House, now set amidst tall glass and steel buildings of modern design, occupies the entire block bounded by Bridge Street, State Street, Bowling Green and Whitehall Street. It is visible from all sides, and nearby parks to the north and west permit perspective views.

Inside the Rotunda on the second floor of the building a series of murals by Reginald Marsh depict the stages of the arrival of a vessel within the Port of New York to its ultimate docking at the pier. This
9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Files of the New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission
Alan Burnham, New York Landmarks (Middletown, Conn., 1963) p. 230

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

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LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES

Under one acre.

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY:

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

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11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE:
Stephen S. Lash, Associate

ORGANIZATION:
New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission

STREET AND NUMBER:
305 Broadway

CITY OR TOWN:
New York

STATE:
New York

CODE: 36

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison 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. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National [ ] State [x] Local [ ]

Name [Signature]

Title Chairman, New York State Historic Trust

Date 7/1/71

13. NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

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

[Signature]
Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date Jan 31, 1972

14. ATTEST:

[Signature]
Keeper of The National Register

Date Jan 26, 1972
series was completed in 1937. In the Reception Room of the Collector of
Customs, Elmer E. Garnsey's paintings represent ten major ports of the 17th
century. He selected the port cities which were closely related to the dis-
covery, settlement and commerce of the New World.

The present Custom House occupies a site which has always been of prime
importance to the City of New York. First Fort Amsterdam, then the old
Government House were located there, then a row of Federal town houses were
built which later housed offices of shipping companies, becoming known as
"Steamship Row".

Although Custom House business is gradually being moved to a new location,
the building will eventually be occupied by the U.S. Immigration and Naturali-
zation Service, the Post Office and a Maritime Library.
1. **NAME**

   COMMON: United States Custom House
   
   AND/OR HISTORIC:

2. **LOCATION**

   STREET AND NUMBER: Bowling Green
   
   CITY OR TOWN: New York
   
   STATE: New York
   
   CODE: 36
   
   COUNTY: New York
   
   CODE: 061

3. **MAP REFERENCE**

   SOURCE: USGS quadrangle, 7.5 minute series
   
   SCALE: 1:24000
   
   DATE: 1967

4. **REQUIREMENTS**

   TO BE INCLUDED ON ALL MAPS
   
   1. Property boundaries where required.
   2. North arrow.
   3. Latitude and longitude reference.

   **State:** New York
   
   **County:** New York
   
   **Entry Number:** JAN 31, 1972

   **City:** Jersey City
ENTRIES IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

STATE: NEW YORK

Date Entered: JAN 31 1972

Name | Location
--- | ---
United States Custom House | New York

Also Notified

Hon. Jacob K. Javits
Hon. James L. Buckley
Hon. Bella S. Abzug

Director, Northeast Region

State Liaison Officer
Dr. Louis C. Jones
Chairman
New York State Historic Trust
Parks and Recreation
Building 2 - State Campus
Albany, New York 12226

HR NRowland:mm 1/31/72
NPS Number 1/31/72
Title: U.S. Custom House
Loc. N.Y. Co, New York
Showing North Facade

PROPERTY OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER
**1. NAME**

**COMMON:** U.S. Custom House

**AND/OR HISTORIC:**

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**2. LOCATION**

**STREET AND NUMBER:** Bowling Green

**CITY OR TOWN:** New York

**STATE:** New York

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**3. PHOTO REFERENCE**

**PHOTO CREDIT:** New York City Landmarks Preservation Commission

**DATE OF PHOTO:** circa 1967

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**4. IDENTIFICATION**

**DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC.**

View looking southeast, showing north (Bowling Green) facade.
NPS Number Jan. 31-72
Title: U.S. Custom House
Loc.: N.Y. Co., New York

Shewing n. in facade

PROPERTY OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER
NPS Number: Jan. 31-72
Title: U.S. Custom House
Loc: N.Y. Co., New York

PROPERTY OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER
**United States Department of the Interior**  
**National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES**  
**PROPERTY PHOTOGRAPH FORM**

*(Type all entries - attach to or enclose with photograph)*

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<td>View looking southeast showing Bowling Green facade</td>
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Resource Name

U.S. Custom House

County

New York

State

New York

Date form completed

6/13/88

NPS Number

11/3/70

Title

U.S. Custom House

Location

N.Y. Co., N.Y.

Description

Showing west facade

3 pictures

PROPERTY OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER