NPS Form 10-900
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

OMB No. 1024-0018

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form.* If any 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.

1. Name of Property

Historic name: U.S. Department of Agriculture Cotton Annex

Other names/site number: _____

Name of related multiple property listing:

N/A

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing

2. Location

Street & number: 300 12th Street, SW

City or town: Washington, D.C. State: DC County: _____

Not For Publication: ☐ Vicinity: ☐

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this X 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 X meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

X **national** ___ **statewide** X **local**

Applicable National Register Criteria:

X **A** ___ **B** X **C** ___ **D**

[signature]	8/17/2015
Signature of certifying official/Title:	**Date**
Federal Preservation Officer, U.S. Natural Services Administration	
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government	

In my opinion, the property X meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official:	**Date**
[signature] DAVID MALONEY	8/7/2015
Title: DC STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER	**State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government**

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1. Name of Property

Historic name: U.S. Department of Agriculture Cotton Annex

Other names/site number: Bureau of Agricultural Economics Building, Standardization Building

Name of related multiple property listing:

N/A

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing

2. Location

Street & number: 300 12th Street SW

City or town: Washington, D.C. State: D.C. County: _____

Not For Publication: ☐ Vicinity: ☐

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As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

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In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

___national **___statewide** **___local**

Applicable National Register Criteria:

___A **___B** **___C** **___D**

Signature of certifying official/Title: **Date**

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official: **Date**

Title : **State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government**

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

___ entered in the National Register

___ determined eligible for the National Register

___ determined not eligible for the National Register

___ removed from the National Register

___ other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper — Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

Private: [ ]

Public – Local [ ]

Public – State [ ]

Public – Federal [X]

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

Building(s) [X]

District [ ]

Site [ ]

Structure ☐

Object ☐

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1	0	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

6. Function or Use
Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)
Government

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)
Vacant

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions.)
OTHER: Simplified Classical

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)
Principal exterior materials of the property: Brick, Limestone, Steel, Copper

Narrative Description
(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with **a summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

The Bureau of Agricultural Economics (BAE) Building, now known as the Cotton Annex, was built in 1936–1937 for the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) under the auspices of Supervising Architect of the Treasury Louis A. Simon (1933–1939). The building occupies a 60,175-square-foot (1.38-acre) parcel on Square 326, bounded by C Street SW on the north, the 12th Street Expressway on the east, D Street SW on the south, and 12th Street SW on the west. A one-way, paved-asphalt driveway leads from the southwest corner of the building to the east (rear) side and exits onto C Street at the building's northwest corner. On the east (rear) side of the building is a parking lot. A poured-concrete sidewalk frames a narrow, manicured lawn that extends along the north, west, and south sides of the building. Mature trees are located within the grassy areas. Directly west of the Cotton Annex, across 12th Street is the Central Heating Plant (1933–1934), and to the northwest is the Department of Agriculture South Building (1930–1936). With its balanced proportions, restrained ornamentation, and variegated buff-colored brick, the Cotton Annex exhibits characteristics of "Stripped Classicism," an architectural style it shares with the adjacent Central Heating Plant and Department of Agriculture South Building.

The Cotton Annex stands six stories above a raised basement and has a roughly rectangular footprint formed by a primary L-shaped administrative wing that is composed of the north and west sections of the building and a rectilinear warehouse wing integrated into to its southeast corner. The masonry building has exterior walls constructed of variegated, buff-colored, stretcher-bond brick and is capped with a flat composition roof with limestone coping. The public north and west elevations of the building consist of a three-part façade with a base, formed by the basement through second stories, a colonnade of colossal order pilasters on the third through sixth stories, and a tall parapet with a limestone cornice. Original site plans for the building indicate that the Cotton Annex was designed for later expansion to the south and east. Plans show a C-shaped addition to the administrative wing that created a rectangular, open courtyard around the warehouse. This expansion never occurred. Thus, the east and south elevations of the administrative wing, as well as all elevations of the warehouse wing, lack architectural ornamentation.

The exterior of the building has undergone few alterations since its construction, excluding a six-story stairwell addition located on the south elevation built ca. 1986. The interior of the building has been renovated and upgraded over the years as the building's use changed. Despite these interior alterations, the building retains sufficient integrity to convey its significance.

Narrative Description

Exterior Description

The Cotton Annex is six stories above a raised basement and has a roughly rectangular footprint formed by an L-shaped administrative wing that is composed of the north and west sections of the building and a rectilinear warehouse wing integrated into to the southeast corner. While the exterior of the building in its entirety is clad in variegated buff-colored brick, only the north and west elevations of the administration wing serve as the public facades of the building. The remaining elevations, including the warehouse wing, lack architectural detail and for the most part, have minimal fenestration. The Cotton Annex's distinct, multi-colored brick ranges from light beige to brown and includes iron spot brick, and the brick also varies in texture, having smooth-faced brick as well as rough, sand-struck brick.

The L-shaped administrative wing is eleven bays long, three bays wide, and contains the primary building facades, which face west and north on 12th and C Streets, respectively. The three northern bays of the west elevation project slightly from the building and hold the main entrance. A splayed limestone stair leads up to the entrance; flanking the stairs is a rounded limestone wall decorated with stylized Art Deco coquillage (decoration imitating shells). Bronze light posts sit on pedestals on either side of the stairs. The doorway is ornamented by a limestone surround with decorative cornerblocks and reeding. In the center of the entablature is a bronze eagle. Within the surround is a one-light, double-leaf steel door with a transom covered by a bronze grille.

On the west and north elevations of the administrative block, the building's raised basement is clad in limestone panels capped with a limestone watertable. The basement is symmetrically fenestrated by six-light, steel-sash casement windows that are bordered by a light well with a metal railing. North of the entrance, carved into one of the limestone panels, is this cornerstone inscription:

HENRY MORGENTHAU JR
SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY

HENRY A WALLACE
SECRETARY OF AGRICULTURE

LOUIS A SIMON
SUPERVISING ARCHITECT

NEAL A MELICK
SUPERVISING ENGINEER

1936

The basement and first and second stories form the horizontal base of the building, emphasized by the limestone cladding of the basement and eight rows of stretcher brick separated by recessed header courses on the first and second stories. A limestone stringcourse caps the second story, separating the base from the four stories above. Symmetrically fenestrated, the first story of the administrative block has elongated window openings that hold paired six-light, steel-sash casement windows capped with a four-light transom. Below the windows are lead-coated copper spandrels decorated with a Greek key motif. The windows sit on a continuous limestone sill formed by the basement's limestone watertable. On the second story, the evenly spaced windows are six-light, steel-sash casements with limestone stills.

In contrast with the horizontality of the first and second stories, the third through sixth stories of the administrative wing are pierced by large, vertical window bays, separated by colossal brick pilasters and capped with a limestone entablature. The grid pattern of the windows of the third through fifth stories is continuous. Between each floor, 12-light windows are backed with copper spandrels that continue the window grid and shield the building's floor joists. A greenstone spandrel separates the windows between the fifth and sixth stories. All of the windows are 24-light, steel-sash windows with operable four-light casements in the center. The entablature above each window of the sixth story is decorated with V-cut chamfers that form the lintels for the windows. Above the windows and entablature is a tall brick parapet with a decorative frieze. Evenly spaced limestone blocks with a sunflower motif decorate the frieze and are separated by recessed brickwork in a diamond-shaped pattern. An ogee limestone cornice caps the frieze. The lettering on the southern end of the parapet reads: "UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE."

The north elevation of the warehouse wing has a loading dock with metal roll-up overhead doors and a metal awning on the basement story. Notably, the fifth story features two large 70-light, steel-sash windows where the original wool laboratory was located due to the optimal, natural northern light that was used for wool classification purposes.

The east elevation of the administrative wing has unevenly spaced, paired eight- and ten-light, steel-sash casement windows with four-light transoms. A vertical row of windows near the southern end of the elevation indicates the location of the internal stairwell.

The east elevation of the warehouse has unevenly spaced, paired eight-light, steel-sash casement windows with four-light transoms. Two 24-light, steel-sash windows are located at the northern end of the fifth story, the original location of the wool laboratory.

The stairwell addition, constructed on the south side of the administration wing in 1986, is one bay wide and six stories high; it visually and physically separates the administration wing from the rear warehouse wing. The stairwell is constructed of similar variegated brick as the original building, is capped with a flat roof, and has no exterior windows or doors. West of the stairwell, the second and third stories each have a paired, eight-light, steel-sash casement window capped with a four-light transom.

The south elevation of the warehouse wing has three paired, eight-light, steel-sash casement windows on the fifth story and one similar window on the sixth story. Several louvered metal vents also pierce the south elevation of the warehouse wing.

The roof of the building contains the original ductwork for the Cotton Annex. The two original skylights on the southeast side of the building, which previously provided natural light into the cotton laboratories on the sixth floor, have been removed. On the north end of the building the skylight over for the former wool standards laboratory remains intact. A wall of glass, composed of multi-light, steel-sash windows, angled approximately 20 degrees is located on the north side of this skylight. The south side of the skylight consists of a curved wall with a 14-foot radius. Copper flashing covers the south, west, and east sides of the skylight.

Interior Description

Similar to the exterior, the interior of the building is divided into two sections formed by the administrative and warehouse wings. On the exterior, the two sections are roughly the same height; however, on the interior, the warehouse wing has five floors, while the administrative wing has six (excluding the basement) because of the large storage areas in the lower floors of the warehouse block that required high ceilings. The ceiling heights of the warehouse floors, including the basement, are 13.5 feet high, while the floors of the administrative block are 12 feet high on the first two floors and 11 feet on the four floors above. Historically, the first three floors of the warehouse were storage areas and the upper two floors housed laboratory space.

The interior of the Cotton Annex is primarily accessed from the main entry on the north end of the building's west elevation, which houses a small vestibule and the public lobby. Small offices dominate the L-shaped administrative wing of the building. The warehouse wing formerly served as storage and laboratory space; however, these spaces have been converted to additional office space. The basement contains additional office and storage space.

The entry vestibule has a coffered, plaster ceiling and a single, rounded, Art Deco-style light fixture hanging from the center of the ceiling. The interior walls and floor contains green and black marble panels. A small, square steel grille covers the heating vent located on the lower north wall. The vestibule leads into the rectangular lobby. A single public elevator is located at the southeastern end of the lobby. Doors to small offices are located on the north side of the lobby. A long corridor, which is accessible from the lobby, stretches south along the length of the building. The lobby and corridor have the original white terrazzo floors flanked by strips of black terrazzo, a replacement ceiling of drop acoustical tiles, and painted plaster walls. Doors leading into individual offices are located on the west side of the corridor.

Each floor of the Cotton Annex contains the same basic configuration, except the basement and first floor, which vary slightly from the standard floor plan. The administrative wing of the building is characterized by small offices located along an L-shaped central corridor that runs the full length of the floor. The floors in the corridor of the administrative block are white and black terrazzo with bronze striping. Each floor also has a replacement drop ceiling, consisting of acoustical tiles and inset-fluorescent lighting. The walls are painted plaster. Replacement industrial carpeting covers the majority of the floors in the offices. None of the original restroom finishes or fixtures are extant. Original floor plans indicate that offices in the administrative block were separated by metal and glass partitions. These partitions have since been removed, and the offices currently are divided by drywall partition walls. The administrative wing lacks decorative interior finishes, except the terrazzo floors.

The interior of the warehouse wing has been partitioned so that the former large, open space now contains smaller offices. The warehouse floors also have replacement drop ceilings, consisting of acoustical tiles and inset-fluorescent lighting, and the walls are painted plaster. Replacement industrial carpeting covers the floors in the offices.

The south end of the sixth floor originally housed the cotton standards rooms. The interior has changed from the 1937 layout to accommodate additional office space. While the floor does not retain any evidence of its former function as wool laboratory, color laboratory, cotton-sewing rooms, machine rooms, and cotton standards laboratories, iron stairs do remain in the office located on the floor's northeast corner to provide access to the former wool standards room, located in the attic. The attic has been altered with industrial carpeting and a drop ceiling that covers the skylight above.

Integrity

The Cotton Annex retains a high degree of integrity on its exterior. Only minor alterations have been made to the exterior, the majority of which are located on the west (rear) elevation to accommodate a loading dock area and a parking lot. The stairwell, added to the south elevation in 1986, is the only modern addition to the building's exterior. Interior alterations to office, laboratory, and storage space have been ongoing since the building's erection to accommodate continuous use.

The building does not have any substantial additions and has undergone minimal change on its exterior. Interior changes have been made to the building; however, these alterations to not diminish the overall integrity of the building. Therefore, the Cotton Annex retains integrity of design, materials, and workmanship. In addition, the building retains its original location, and the immediate area around the building largely contains mid-twentieth-century, multistory buildings comparable in style and form to the Cotton Annex; therefore, the building retains integrity of location and setting. The building also retains its original signage and overall monumentality as a governmental entity, all of which contribute to integrity of association. The integrity of all of these elements results in the building's retention of feeling as a 1937 Federal building erected in the Stripped Classical architectural style.

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.)

[x] 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.

[x] 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.)

- [ ] A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- [ ] B. Removed from its original location
- [ ] C. A birthplace or grave
- [ ] D. A cemetery
- [ ] E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- [ ] F. A commemorative property
- [ ] G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

Areas of Significance
(Enter categories from instructions.)
ARCHITECTURE
COMMERCE
AGRICULTURE

Period of Significance
1937–1964

Significant Dates
1937

Significant Person
(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder
Simon, Louis A., Supervising Architect
Melick, Neal A., Supervising Engineer
McShain, John, Contractor

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The Cotton Annex possesses national significance under Criterion A in the areas of agriculture and commerce as the building within which the BAE developed the processes for cotton classification and standardization. The building was erected specifically to aid in the classification and standardization of cotton, a system that continues to serve as the basis for the valuation and utilization of cotton bales within the United States.

The Cotton Annex is locally significant under Criterion C in the area of architecture as a representative example of the "Stripped Classicism" style, preferred by Louis A. Simon, Supervising Architect of the Treasury, and the Commission of Fine Arts (CFA) during the 1930s. The building's classically influenced proportions and details were combined with buff-colored variegated brick as the primary exterior material, a characteristic it shares with the neighboring Department of Agriculture South Building and Central Heating Plant, illustrating its status an ancillary structure to the more prominent Department of Agriculture Building on the National Mall. The building successfully expresses the prominent components of Stripped Classicism, combined with elements essential to the BAE standardization efforts, such as large windows and skylights that provided ample northern light to the laboratories within the building.

The period of significance begins with the building's construction in 1937 and ends in 1964, when the Standards section of the Cotton Division moved its operations to Memphis, Tennessee.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE:

Agriculture

Variations in soil, weather, farming practices, and genetics in cotton grown throughout the Cotton Belt in the United States resulted in a variation of quality of cotton in the early twentieth century. BAE, and later the Agriculture Marketing Services (AMS), worked to create a more consistent method of classifying, selling, and marketing cotton. At the completion of its construction in 1937, the facilities of the Cotton Annex were considered to be among the best in the nation for cotton and other commodity research. Using technology developed from previous research, the Cotton Annex used state-of-the-art equipment, including some instruments designed by employees of the USDA, and architectural features, such as multi-light windows that provided crucial natural light to the laboratories, to further the programs of the Cotton Division. Work within the Cotton Annex also led to the development of new instruments, such as the Nickerson-Hunter colorimeter, an instrument that measured the color of cotton and provided its appropriate grade.

Commerce

The Cotton Annex housed BAE—and its later successor AMS—which, through the Cotton Division, established cotton standards authorized by the Cotton Futures Act of 1914. An agreement among the USDA and 23 international cotton associations in 1923 introduced these standards into international use, establishing the Universal Cotton Standards. The new standards created a quantifiable method for classing all cotton grown in the United States when presented at sale. A subsequent agreement in 1923 among the USDA and 23 cotton associations in 21 countries not only incorporated these standards for international market use but also resulted in the continual development and improvement of cotton standards. Since the USDA's development of the standards, it has been considered the international leader in cotton standards development.

Architecture

The design of the Cotton Annex building illustrates the preference of Stripped Classicism for Washington's Federal buildings under the direction of the Office of the Supervising Architect of the Treasury and CFA during the 1930s. Although the building is partly unfinished (original plans for the building indicate that it was designed for later expansion to the south and east), the building has two facades with simplified classical elements, such as recessed header course brick on the first and second stories suggesting a rusticated base; a simplified base, pilaster, and entablature; and an overall massing combined with simplified ornamentation. These elements were combined with practical features that were necessary for classification and standardization

activities. Because northern light provided the optimum conditions for these activities, the laboratories were primarily located on the northern end of the building and/or lit by large north-facing windows or skylights.

The Cotton Annex shares several design elements, such as its tripartite composition and use of variegated brick, with the nearby Department of Agriculture South Building, also designed under the direction of Supervising Architect Louis A. Simon. The Department of Agriculture South Building was designed as a serviceable building and does not exhibit the monumental character of the agency's headquarters, the Department of Agriculture Administration Building (1904–1908, 1928–1930), which is prominently located on the National Mall. Similar to the Department of Agriculture South Building, the Cotton Annex, with its location south of the Mall and its use of brick instead of stone, was clearly planned as a subordinate building, both within the Department of Agriculture complex and within the "larger realm of the city's monumental core, characterized by a predominance of monumentally scaled public buildings." [1]

Despite its secondary nature, the Cotton Annex is a successful example of Stripped Classicism, influenced by the Office of the Supervising Architect and CFA, both of which were responsible for reviewing and commenting on building plans for the District of Columbia. The style's reductionist approach to classical architecture signifies the departure of the preferred Beaux Arts and Neoclassical styles of the early decades of the twentieth century. Even with its abstraction of classical features, Stripped Classicism continued the strong association with the Classicism of Federal architecture while attempting to resolve the contradiction between a historically based form and a modern structural system. The style had a tremendous effect on the reshaping of Washington, D.C., in the 1930s until the start of World War II.[2]

HISTORICAL NARRATIVE:

Federal Government Construction in Southwest Washington

In 1901, the Senate Park Commission, known as the McMillan Commission, was formed to create a plan for the design of the city "as a work of civic art" that would be "a single, well-considered system."[3] The McMillan Plan included re-landscaping the monumental core of the city, consolidating railways and eliminating grade crossings, slum clearance, design of Federal and municipal office buildings, and creation of a comprehensive park system. Part of the McMillan Plan for the Mall system expanded its area to include space between Maryland Avenue and the Potomac River on the south and between Pennsylvania and New York Avenues to the north to

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1 General Services Administration, Agriculture South Building, Significance, (http://www.gsa.gov/portal/ext/html/site/hb/category/25431/actionParameter/exploreByBuilding/buildingId/676#) accessed August 29, 2014.

2 General Services Administration, Agriculture South Building, Significance, (http://www.gsa.gov/portal/ext/html/site/hb/category/25431/actionParameter/exploreByBuilding/buildingId/676#) accessed August 29, 2014.

3 C. Moore, editor, *The Improvement of the Park System of the District of Columbia. Report of the Senate Committee on the District of Columbia; Report of the Park Commission*, Fifty-Seventh Congress, First Session, Senate Report No. 166 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1902).

create a "symmetrical, polygonal, or kite-shaped, figure."[4] If realized, the plan would have required the taking of Square 326, on which the Cotton Annex is now located.

Funding was not appropriated by Congress for the full implementation of the McMillan Plan, but the plan influenced subsequent building development for a number of decades to follow. The year 1926 marked the passage of the Public Buildings Act and the establishment of the National Capital Park and Planning Commission (renamed the National Capital Planning Commission [NCPC] in 1952), both of which greatly influenced Federal building construction in the District of Columbia and the realization of the 1901 McMillan Plan. The Public Buildings Act authorized $100 million dollars for the construction of Federal buildings across the country, $50 million of which was specifically dedicated to construction in the District of Columbia. The Treasury Department spent half the funds for the construction of public buildings between Pennsylvania and Constitution avenues, NW, and Sixth and Fifteenth streets, NW, later known as the Federal Triangle. The remaining funds were spent on the site of the Supreme Court and the extension of the Government Printing Office.[5] Although the government planned to develop the area south of the National Mall and east of 14th Street with a Federal warehouse and other government buildings as early as 1926, construction was not considered during the first year of the Public Buildings Act. It was also unclear whether the project would be funded in the next four years of the program without special congressional authorization.[6]

Excluding the initial construction of the Department of Agriculture Building (1904–1908), development in the area of the Cotton Annex did not fully begin until the passage of an amendment to the Public Buildings Act in 1930, known as the Keyes-Elliott Bill. The amendment not only authorized another $230 million dollars for the Federal building program but also allowed the government to hire private architects to design buildings under the program. Of the funds authorized, $115 million were dedicated to new construction in Washington, D.C., alone with $15 million for land and $100 million for construction.[7] The bill also authorized the purchase of additional land in southwest Washington D.C. (Southwest) for new Federal buildings, bounded by B Street (Independence Avenue) on the north, Delaware Avenue on the east, 14th Street on the west, and Virginia Avenue, Maryland Avenue, and D Street on the south.[8] Included in this appropriation were a new BAE building for the USDA (the Cotton Annex), an annex for the Bureau of Engraving and Printing, and a new Federal warehouse (now known as the Regional Office Building).

Concurrent with the 1930 Public Buildings Act, Congress passed the Shipstead-Luce Act, which authorized CFA to review building permits for new and private construction projects adjacent to or abutting existing public buildings and parks. The goal of the act was to ensure that new construction in the District of Columbia would not negatively affect these public properties. Areas

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4 Moore, 1902.

5 F. Gutheim, *Worthy of the Nation: The History of Planning for the National Capital* (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution, 1977), 159, 172.

6 "Business Area South of Mall Not Planned." *Washington Post*, August 4, 1926.

7 "Building Measure Goes to Senate." *Washington Star*, January 25, 1930.

8 "Owners Ruined by Government Realty Deals." *Washington Post*, January 8, 1934.

covered by the act included Rock Creek Park, the National Mall, the White House, and the Capitol, and the review process encompassed the "height and appearance, color and texture of materials of exterior construction."[9]

The Federal government began purchasing land in Southwest under the Keyes-Elliott Bill in 1931, yet it failed to acquire all of the land immediately as planned. Three years after the passage of the bill, the government had only purchased two complete building sites in the area: one for the Central Heating Plant and one for the Department of Agriculture South Building.[10] A petition asking for the Federal government to purchase the remaining property under the Public Works Administration was presented to President Franklin D. Roosevelt and Frederick A. Delano, chairman of the Committee of 100 and NCPC, in September 1933. In January 1934, there was still no sign of progress. The last purchase of property by the government had taken place in February of the prior year.

Trouble surrounding land acquisition once again surfaced in 1936. The Treasury Department advertised bids for both the new Bureau of Engraving and Printing addition and the BAE building in March 1936. In June, the Treasury Department awarded the contact to John McShain Inc., a prominent Philadelphia contracting company that built numerous monumental buildings in Washington during the twentieth century. The $4,657,300 contract included the construction of both buildings and the demolition of any existing structures on the sites.[11] In August, McShain threatened to walk away from the contract because of the government's failure to purchase all of the needed land for the project. The government had been acquiring the land through direct purchase and condemnation proceedings, but difficulties arose in obtaining the titles of 16 remaining properties because of several owners' refusal to sell and/or move. The Procurement Division of the Treasury Department announced a week later that the issue surrounding the land acquisition had been resolved. McShain resumed work in fall 1936, and the new BAE building was completed by spring 1937 (see more on construction of the BAE/Cotton Annex building below).

Unlike the site for the new Bureau of Engraving and Printing annex, the site for the BAE building had been purchased and cleared by the time of construction. Because initial plans for the BAE building did not occupy Square 326 in its entirety, the row houses that occupied the eastern portion of the site along 11th Street remained. Tax and census records indicate that through 1940 these

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9 Gutheim, 1977:200.

10 A 1934 investigation by the Washington Board of Trade revealed that many of the families living in the area believed that the government was going to purchase their properties more than three years ago. These residents were unable to secure loans on their properties because investors refused to consider properties that may be taken over by the government. Other families, trusting that their houses would be purchased by the government, bought new houses elsewhere. When the government failed to buy their houses in Southwest, many of these families soon found that they could not afford to keep up the payments on both houses, resulting in the loss of both properties. Residents also asserted that properties purchased by the government were being rented at a much lower rate than residents could afford to accept for their own properties. "Owners Ruined by Government Realty Deals." Washington Post, January 8, 1934.

11 "Treasury Asks Bids for 2 New Edifices." *Washington Post*, March 29, 1936. "$4,657,300 Contract Awarded by Treasury." Washington Post, June 7, 1936.

houses stayed in private ownership, but the property owners appear to have moved elsewhere.[12] By 1944, the majority of the properties had been sold to the Federal government, although a few still remained in private hands.[13] Although the Federal government appropriated funds in 1940 to expand the BAE building, the expansion never materialized because the USDA no longer needed the additional space, and the United States' entry into World War II redirected funds for the addition.

Although the 1901 McMillan Plan called for Federal buildings to line Constitution (formerly B Street NW) and Independence (formerly B Street SW) avenues and the 1926 and 1930 Public Buildings Acts provided the mechanism to do so, by 1950 only a handful of buildings existed south of Independence Avenue. In addition to the Cotton Annex, these buildings included the Department of Agriculture South Building at 14th Street and Independence Avenue (1930–1937, Louis A. Simon, Stripped Classicism); the Bureau of Engraving and Printing Annex at 14th Street, between C and D streets (1938, Louis A. Simon, Stripped Classicism); the Central Heating Plant at 12th and C streets (1935, Paul Philippe Cret, Art Deco) the Mary E. Switzer Memorial Building, previously the Railroad Retirement Building at 330 C Street (1939–1941, Louis A. Simon and Charles Z. Klauder, Stripped Classicism); the Wilbur J. Cohen Building, previously the Social Security Administration Building located at 330 Independence Avenue (1939–1941, Louis A. Simon and Charles Z. Klauder, Stripped Classicism); and the Regional Office Building (1930–1935, William T. Partridge, Art Deco), located at 7th and D Streets.[14]

Planners and housing reformers "had long identified the Southwest as one of Washington's most troubled areas – one where substandard housing, poverty, disease, and crime were believed to be particularly intense."[15] By the 1950s, these problems had accelerated and started to spread as a result of the low-income housing built in recent decades and the population surge during World War II. With its proximity to the Capitol, Southwest created a juxtaposition of "overcrowded, poorly maintained housing with the symbol of American democracy," furthering the call for redevelopment.[16] From the early 1950s to the early 1970s, Southwest underwent a massive urban renewal effort, one of the earliest in the United States and the first in the District of Columbia. Over the course of two decades, urban renewal in Southwest displaced approximately 1,500 businesses and 23,000 residents from 560 acres of land considered to home to some of the worst slum conditions and alley dwellings in the entire city. By the time the project was complete, the former slum had been transformed with approximately 5,800 new housing units for middle and upper class residents. The area also included a town center with a shopping center, a revived

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[12] R.S. Lusk, *Lusk's 1940 General Assessment, Washington, D.C.* Compiled under the direction of M.C. Fitzgerald, Assistant Assessor, Washington, D.C; United States Bureau of the Census, Population Schedule. Sixteenth Census of the United States, 1940. National Archives Microfilm Publication T627, 4, 643 Rolls. Records of the Bureau of Census, Record Group 29, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

[13] R.S. Lusk. Supplement to Lusk's D.C. Assessment Directory Service. Changes from July 1, 1942 to June 30, 1945 (Washington, D.C.: Rufus S. Lusk, 1945).

[14] "Southwest Washington, D.C., Urban Renewal Area" (Washington, D.C. National Park Service, Historic American Building Survey, 2004), 103.

[15] R. Longstreth, "Brave New World: Southwest Washington and the Promise of Urban Renewal," in *Housing Washington*, ed. R. Longstreth (Chicago: Center for American Places, 2010), 258.

[16] Longstreth, 258.

waterfront, a public plaza and promenade, highways, and a Federal employment center. Land acquisition for the Southwest urban renewal project was one of the largest yet acquired by the Federal government, and although not fully realized, its plans "represented the most comprehensive and ambitious approach to urban redevelopment in the nation."[17] Ultimately, this massive project resulted in changes around the immediate vicinity of the Cotton Annex as the area became home to numerous government office buildings.

Included in the redevelopment plans for Southwest was a new expressway, which would separate the residential areas of Southwest from the Federal building center. The District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia highway departments proposed the construction of a 450-mile expressway system for the Washington Metropolitan Region in 1955 in anticipation of the Defense Highway Act of 1956. The proposed Southwest Expressway included a 17.6-mile inner loop within the District of Columbia that would be linked to two suburban beltways via five elevated highways radiating from the U.S. Capitol. Public opposition to the inner loop because of the proposed intensive demolition and resulting displacement of residents led to the abandonment of the inner loop plan and only two of its original elevated legs were built. These two legs form today's Southwest/Southeast Freeway and include the 9th Street/12th Street Expressway, a north-south spur that connects the freeway with Constitution Avenue via a tunnel passing under the National Mall. Construction of the freeway began in fiscal year 1958 and continued through the early 1960s. The row houses along 11th Street and adjacent to the Cotton Annex remained standing as late as 1951, but they were ultimately demolished by the early 1960s during the construction of the 12th Street Expressway.[18]

United States Department of Agriculture

Throughout its early history, the United States thrived on an agrarian economy. As early as 1796, officials in the Federal government sought new and improved varieties of seeds, plants, and animals for American importation. In 1836, Henry L. Ellsworth became the Commissioner of Patents, a position within the U.S. Department of State. Ellsworth's annual reports called for the following measures in the interest of improving the nation's agricultural practices and economy: the creation of a public depository to preserve and distribute various new seeds and plants; the selection of a clerk to collect agricultural statistics; the preparation of statewide reports about crops in different regions; and the application of chemistry to agriculture. Subsequently, Congress established the Agricultural Division within the Patent Office and allotted $1,000 for

[17] "Southwest Washington, D.C., Urban Renewal Area" (Washington, D.C. National Park Service, Historic American Building Survey, 2004), 2.

[18] S.M. Kozel, "Roads to the Future, Washington, D.C. Interstates and Freeways," (http://www.roadstothefuture.com/DC_Interstate_Fwy.html) accessed January 22, 2014; "Southwest Washington, D.C., Urban Renewal Area," 20; "The South Capitol Gateway and Corridor Improvement Study; Final Report," District of Columbia Department of Transportation, (http://www.jdland.com/dc/files/SouthCapitolStreetGateway-and-ImprovementStudy.pdf) accessed January 22, 2014; 1951 aerial photograph of Washington, D.C., Nationwide Environmental Title Research, LLC, (http://www.historicaerials.com) accessed January 2014.

"the collection of agricultural statistics and other agricultural purposes" in 1839.[19] Ten years later, in 1849, the Patent Office was transferred to the newly created U.S. Department of the Interior. In the ensuing years, agitation recurred for a separate bureau of agriculture within the department or a separate department devoted to agriculture.[20]

On June 30, 1862, a resolution passed by Congress and approved by President Abraham Lincoln created the USDA, a Federal agriculture office without cabinet status headed by a Commissioner of Agriculture. The purpose of the nascent USDA was to:

> acquire and to diffuse among the people of the United States useful information on subjects connected with agriculture in the most general and comprehensive sense of that word, and to procure, propagate, and distribute among the people, new and valuable seeds and plants.[21]

In the forthcoming years, numerous bills and petitions promoted the establishment of a cabinet-level position within the USDA. Economic depression in the late 1870s prompted a widespread belief that "the farmer's representative should have a greater place in governmental councils."[22] These long campaigns, often led by the Grange and other rural organizations, came to fruition on February 9, 1889, when the USDA was raised to executive rank and included in the cabinet of the president of the United States. President Grover Cleveland appointed Norman J. Colman to serve as the department's first secretary of agriculture.[23]

In its early years, the USDA focused on agricultural education and increasing agricultural production. The establishment of bureaus within the department, such as the Bureau of Animal Industry (1884) and the Bureau of Plant Industry (1901), "forwarded the beneficial partnership between regional experiment stations and national research efforts."[24] In the early years of the twentieth century, the USDA also established and facilitated programs that benefited the nation during times of economic depression and military conflicts.[25] The USDA provided valuable assistance to those less fortunate through programs, such as school lunch and milk assistance, as well as farm credit assistance.[26] More recognized programs included the Agricultural Adjustment Act, which authorized monetary payment to farmers who voluntarily reduced the production of basic staples such as wheat, cotton, corn, hogs, rice, tobacco, and milk.[27] Other organizations

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19 T. Swann Harding, "Henry L. Ellsworth, Commissioner of Patents" *Journal of Farm Economics*, Vol. 22, No. 3 (Aug., 1940), 621-627.
20 Harding, 1940: 621-627.
21 G. Baker, Century of Service: The First 100 Years of the United States Department of Agriculture (Washington, D.C.: Centennial Committee, United States Department of Agriculture, 1963), 13.
22 Baker, 1963: 27.
23 Baker, 1963: 29-30.
24 Robinson & Associates, Inc., *Beltsville Agricultural Research Center, Beltsville, Maryland, Historic Context and Recommendations*, Volume I, 19.
25 Baker, 1963: 57.
26 Baker, 1963: 185-188; 218.
27 Baker, 1963: 146.

within the USDA included the Rural Electrification Administration, which provided loans for the electrification of rural properties.[28]

Throughout the twentieth century and into the present, the USDA continues to provide a variety of services through seven identified mission areas: Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services (to help farmers face the uncertainties of weather and markets); Food, Nutrition and Consumer Services (to help end hunger and improve health in the United States); Food Safety (to ensure a safe supply of meat, poultry, and egg products and packaging); Marketing and Regulatory Programs (to facilitate the marketing of agricultural products); Natural Resources and Environment (to ensure the health of the land through sustainable management practices); Research, Education, and Economics (to create a safe and sustainable food and fiber system); and Rural Development (to improve the quality of life and promote economic development in rural America).[29]

The Bureau of Agricultural Economics

Many bureaus and departments comprise the USDA to plan, fund, and facilitate the department's various roles in terms of the promotion of agriculture. In 1922, the USDA combined its economic research and service activities into the BAE. The newly created bureau consisted of three different areas:

> **Production**—Divisions included: Farm Management, Cost of Production, and Crop and Livestock Estimates.
>
> **Marketing**—Divisions included: Cotton; Fruits and Vegetables; Warehousing; Livestock, Meats and Wool; Hay, Feed, and Seed; City Markets; Grain; Dairy and Poultry Products, and Cost of Marketing.
>
> **General**—Divisions included: Agricultural Finance, Agricultural Cooperation, Farm Population and Rural Life, Land Economics, Statistical Research, and Information.[30]

In the 1930s, BAE served as the central planning agency for USDA policy.[31]

In 1938, the USDA contemplated the reorganization of BAE to ensure that marketing would receive the same detailed attention as the production and conservation programs. Consequently, the Agricultural Appropriation Act of 1940 created a new bureau—AMS—and consolidated service and regulatory activities previously carried out by four different bureaus into one. Programs relating to marketing research, service, and regulatory work regarding cotton, dairy

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[28] Baker, 1963: 221.

[29] United States Department of Agriculture Website, "USDA Mission Areas," (http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/!ut/p/_s.7_0_A/7_0_1OB?navid=USDA_MISSION_AREAS&parentnav=AGENCIES_OFFICES&navtype=RT), accessed 23 January 23, 2007.

[30] Baker, 1963: 107-108.

[31] United States Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service Website, "History of ERS," (http://www.ers.usda.gov/AboutERS/ERSHistory), accessed January 31, 2007.

and poultry, fruits and vegetables, grain, hay, feed, and seed, and livestock and tobacco were placed in AMS.[32]

Since its inception in the 1940, AMS continues to support six commodity programs—Cotton, Dairy, Fruit and Vegetable, Livestock and Seed, Poultry, and Tobacco.[33] Employees of AMS provide "standardization, grading, and market news"; enforce applicable laws; and "oversee marketing agreements and orders, administer research and promotion programs, and purchase commodities for Federal food programs." Other divisions within AMS include the Science and Technology Program and the Transportation and Marketing Program.[34]

Division of Cotton Marketing and Universal Cotton Standards

Cotton was one of the first major agricultural commodities grown in the United States; it was grown in 11 southern states, known collectively as the Cotton Belt.[35] Variations in climate, soil, farming practices, and genetics resulted in varying quality attributes of the cotton.[36] Further, the criteria used to describe American-grown cotton at sale were "vague and disordered," resulting in variations in both quality and price from market to market.[37] In the late nineteenth century, significant growth in production and use of cotton brought attention to the lack of uniform quality standards in stateside and international cotton markets. In 1907, a resolution adopted by an international group of cotton industry representatives called for the establishment of uniform cotton standards to "eliminate price differences between markets, provide a means of settling disputes, make the farmer more cognizant of the value of his product and, therefore, put him in a better bargaining position, and in general be of great benefit to the cotton trade."[38] As a result of this resolution, USDA developed the first set of standards for nine grades of American upland cotton in 1909. Despite this effort, USDA never implemented the standards.[39]

With the passage of the United States Cotton Futures Act of 1914 (reenacted in 1916), USDA established a set of physical standards to be used to determine the grade of color, length and strength of a staple, and other qualities and properties. By 1915, national markets largely complied with this second set of physical standards and quality guidelines.[40] A subsequent

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32 United States Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Marketing Service, "Agricultural Marketing Service, Organization and Functions" (Washington, D.C: United States Department of Agriculture, 1940), 15.

33 Although initially known as "Divisions," changes within the USDA within recent years reclassified the "Divisions" as "Programs."

34 United States Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Marketing Service Website "An Overview of AMS Programs and Services," (http://www.ams.usda.gov/admin/overview.htm), accessed January 23, 2007.

35 United States Geological Survey, Toxic Substances Hydrology Program Website "Cotton Agriculture - Southern United States," (http://toxics.usgs.gov/regional/cotton.html), accessed January 22, 2007.

36 N.M. Keyes, J. Knowlton, and B. Patterson, "ASTM Cotton Fiber Standards, Support for International Commerce," *Standardization News* (September 2005), (http://www.astm.org/SNEWS/SEPTEMBER_2005/kkp_sep05.html), accessed February 8, 2007.

37 United States Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Marketing Service Website, "Agricultural Marketing Service, Organization and Functions" (Washington, D.C: United States Department of Agriculture, 1940), 24.

38 United States Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Marketing Service Website.

39 United States Department of Agriculture," The Classification of Cotton," 11.

40 United States Department of Agriculture," The Classification of Cotton," 11.

agreement in 1923 among the USDA and 23 cotton associations in 21 countries not only incorporated these standards for international market use, but also provided a commitment to the continual development and improvement of cotton standards.

Subsequently, the USDA created the Division of Cotton Marketing within BAE to oversee the classification and standardization processes. The daily activities of the Division of Cotton Marketing, which operated as a service agency for cotton, included sharing key findings of the physical and chemical properties of cotton with the standardization, classification, and grading programs; evaluating established marketing practices with an eye to improving market methods and organization; publishing timely market news and price quotations; and compiling reports on the quality of the cotton and cottonseed.[41] The most important function of the Division of Cotton Marketing centered on the preparation and distribution of cotton standards because they provided the "basis for purchases and sales of American cotton on description."[42] Each cotton "standard" actually referred to a box composed of 12 physical samples known as "biscuits."[43] The samples varied in terms of quality, thus giving the "standard" a ranking of that specific grade of cotton. Each sample, or biscuit, was sewn into a cardboard container and the box, consisting of the 12 biscuits, was photographed.[44] The boxed "standards" were then distributed to various USDA offices throughout the United States for classing purposes. The work was completed by hand in laboratories with superior natural lighting conditions.[45]

Three factors determined the quality of the cotton fiber and, in turn, the standards—color, purity and quality of the ginning process, and the length of fibers.[46] Standards for cotton color were initially based on physical samples that exhibited a range of color.[47] The fiber length, or staple length, was determined by "a human cotton classer using a manual technique that involved pulling fibers away from small bundles into a spread of fibers from which the fiber

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41 United States Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Marketing Service Website, 23.

42 United States Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Marketing Service Website, 24.

43 A biscuit is about the size of a palm and about 4 inches thick. From J. Boyd, retired employee of the Cotton Program, Agriculture Marketing Service, United States Department of Agriculture, telephone interview with C.M. Dluzak, January 19, 2007.

44 I.D. Foos, "House that Standardization Built," *Textile World* (July 24, 1926), n.p. Obtained from the personal collection of J. Knowlton, Chief, Standardization & Engineering Branch, United States Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Marketing Service, Cotton Program.

45 Jerome Boyd, retired employee of the Cotton Program, Agriculture Marketing Service, United States Department of Agriculture, telephone interview with C.M. Dluzak, January 19, 2007.

46 Info Comm. "[Cotton] Quality," (http://r0.unctad.org/infocomm/anglais/cotton/quality.htm) accessed January 22, 2007.

47 As explained in the "[Cotton] Quality" webpage, cotton ranges in color from white to yellowish and is classed into four groupings: "White"; "Light Spotted"; "Spotted Tinged"; and "Yellow Stained." American upland cotton has 25 official color grades, ranging from "Good Middling" color through "Middling Yellow Stained" color. In addition, there is a descriptive "Below Color Grade" standard for five categories of American upland cotton. Fifteen of these grades are each within the range represented by a set of physical samples in the custody of the USDA, whereas the remaining ten grades (the six "Light Spotted" grades, "Good Middling Spotted Color", "Strict Middling Tinged Color", and the two "Yellow Stained" grades), as well as the five "below grade" categories, are descriptions based on the physical color grade standards. For a more detailed explanation of color, see Info Comm's website.

length…could be determined."[48] The classer would take a cotton sample, compare it to the appropriate physical (or sometime descriptive) standard, and then give it an appropriate grade for use at market.[49]

Although the physical samples and descriptive standards allowed for greater quality control, factors, such as the amount of natural light and the ability of the human classer, still allowed for some variation. Work on instruments to control or replicate natural light and evaluate the color of cotton purportedly commenced at the Cotton Annex almost as soon as BAE occupied the building.[50] Dorothy Nickerson, who joined the USDA in 1927 as a color technician, worked on developing instruments at the Cotton Annex to measure the color of cotton and other commodities throughout her tenure with the USDA. In 1950, Nickerson introduced the Nickerson-Hunter Color Colorimeter.[51] Whereas the color of cotton was previously determined by a human classer, the colorimeter measured a physical sample and provided an equivalent grade of color.[52] Nickerson's work was considered a key to color measurement.[53]

Instrument-based classification in the latter half of the twentieth century eventually aided the classification of cotton by other properties, such as length, strength, and micronaire (air permeability). The USDA developed further standardization practices in the 1960s and 1970s with the use of high volume instrument (HVI) systems that combined a full range of cotton fiber quality measurements into an instrumental system. The HVI systems also increased classing volume and reduced the dependence on human classers. All USDA classing offices converted to an HVI system by 1991.[54]

U.S. Department of Agriculture Cotton Annex: 1937–Present

In 1931, the Federal government purchased the lots in the western portion of Square 326 along 12th Street for a new BAE building. At that time, BAE was housed in a building on the southeast corner of Linworth Place SW (also known as 13½ Street) and C Street SW in Square 266. The expansion of the Bureau of Engraving and Printing necessitated the demolition of BAE building, thus prompting the need for a new headquarters.[55]

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48 Keyes, Knowlton, and Patterson, 2005.

49 United States Department of Agriculture, "The Classification of Cotton," Miscellaneous Publication No. 310 (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, revised January 1965), 17-18.

50 A.G. Black, "Achievements in Cotton Research," article sent to various publications by the Department of Agriculture, #1459-37, cover letter dated April 19, 1937, 2.

51 J. Knowlton, Chief, Standardization and Engineering Branch, United States Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Marketing Service, Cotton Program, emails to C.M. Dluzak, February 14, 2007, and March 22, 2007.

52 D. Nickerson and F.E. Newton, "Grade and Color Indexes Developed for Evaluating Results of USDA Cotton Finishing Tests," Agricultural Marketing Service Publication #245 (Washington, D.C.: United States Department of Agriculture, Agricultural Marketing Service, Cotton Division, June 1958).

53 *The Washington Post,* "Dorothy Nickerson," April 30, 1985, B6.

54 Keyes, Knowlton, and Patterson, 2005.

55 Sunday Star, "$4,657,300 Contract Awarded by Treasury," June 7, 1936, G.W. Baist, *Baist's Real Estate Atlas of Surveys of Washington, D.C.*, Volume II, Plate 1 (Philadelphia: G.W. Baist, Philadelphia, 1928).

The Office of the Supervising Architect submitted its designs for the new BAE building to CFA in November 1935. Charles Moore, chairman of CFA, wrote to Louis A. Simon, Supervising Architect, on October 24, 1936, approving the preliminary designs. Plans for the building included in the CFA case file, along with other original plans of the Cotton Annex, indicate that the building was intended for future additions that would create an interior courtyard and a footprint that would encompass the block bounded on the west by 12th Street, on the north by C Street, on the east by 11th Street, and on the south by D Street.[56] A $1.6 million addition was included in the 1941 budget, but plans for the proposed addition did not move forward.[57]

The contract for the addition to the Bureau of Engraving and Printing and for the BAE building was awarded to John McShain, Inc., of Philadelphia in June 1936.[58] By late March 1937, the BAE building was nearing completion, and in early April, equipment for 150 workers was to be moved from the old building on C Street to the new "Standardization Building." Between ground breaking and occupation, the construction of the approximately $300,000 building took around seven-and-a-half months.[59]

A.G. Black, Chief of BAE, indicated the new building, composed of 75 offices and laboratories "is dedicated to research, service, and regulatory work centering in the standardization and marketing of cotton, hay, wool, and a number of other farm products."[60]

An announcement in the Washington Post on the completion of the building stated:

> The new building will be devoted to measuring and classifying farm products such as cotton, wool, hay, etc. so that standards in color, thickness, quality, etc. can be set up for use in trade in agriculture, both American and international. Great care was taken in construction of the building to provide the most modern facilities. Storage rooms for specimens are guarded around the clock by watchmen, special windows will assure technicians pure north light, and complete fireproofing systems have been installed. [61]

The creation of cotton standards was one of the building's most important functions from its opening until the mid-twentieth century. A.G. Black expanded on the importance of the laboratories in 1937, calling them the "last word in equipment and lighting arrangement." The

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[56] Treasury Department, Public Works Branch, Architectural drawings for "Bureau of Economics, Dept. of Agriculture," dated March 11, 1936, sheet No. 4-1. Commission of Fine Arts, Records Relation Primarily to Projects, Record Group 66, Box 2, PI79-Entry 17, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.

[57] *The Washington Post,* "$33,000,000 in U.S. Building Planned Here," January 5, 1940, 1. Reasons for the non-expansion include: the USDA did not need the additional space; moved operations planned for this site to other locations; infrastructure improvements in the general area prohibited the planned expansion; and the United States involvement in World War II redirected funds planned for the addition.

[58] Washington Evening Star, "$4,657,300 Contract Awarded by Treasury," June 7, 1936.

[59] Washington Evening Star, "Standardizing Rules Rigid in New Federal Building," May 3, 1937.

[60] A.G. Black, "Achievements in Cotton Research," speculative article sent to various publications by the Department of Agriculture, #1459-37, cover letter dated April 19, 1937, 1.

[61] *The Washington Post,* "Farm Researchers' New 6-Story Home to Be Ready Today," March 29, 1937, 3.

laboratories provided modern facilities that promoted further work in technological and economic research in regards to the cotton industry.[62]

The design of the building reflected both the laboratory and office functions of the building. The main portion of the building, which fronted 12th and C Streets, primarily housed offices, while the rear wing contained warehouses for storage as well as large, open laboratories. Half a million pounds of cotton, worth around $70,000 in 1937, were stored in the warehouses that featured a fireproofing system said to be "the most complete and elaborate in Washington."[63] Within the warehouse, cotton bales were stored on the concrete floors in tin compartments. Asbestos-treated curtains were used to cover the openings of the compartments. For additional fire protection, the warehouse wing had only one connecting entrance.[64]

Laboratories in the building were specifically designed for identification and standardization activities. Northern light provided the optimum conditions, so the laboratories were primarily located on the northern end of the building or lit by north-facing windows. The hay laboratory, located on the northern end of the warehouse wing's fifth floor, had large bands of windows for natural light, while large north-facing skylights illuminated the cotton standards laboratories on the sixth floor and the wool laboratory, located in the attic.[65] Within these laboratories, cotton, wool, and hay were packaged in cardboard boxes with charts showing their origination. Cotton boxes contained photographs of the contents on the outside lid, while hay boxes had cellophane windows for viewing the contents. The Evening Star described the activities and lighting conditions within the laboratories in a May 1937 article: "Men in aprons furry with lint work at long tables in a bluish light, gentle but easy to see by."[66]

Although the following article specifically refers to the 1926 Standardization Building, it succinctly describes the operations within the Cotton Annex, which likely carried over to the USDA's 1937 inception:

> The cotton is routed from a storeroom to the room in which the preparatory work and preliminary inspection is done. Then it goes to the final inspection room and thence to the "sewing room" where it is basted in its cardboard container. Finally each box is photographed and the print is pasted in the lid. The loose cotton remaining from the preparation of the standards boxes is dispatched through a chute from the preparatory room to a compress in the basement, where it is baled. About 600 bales of such cotton are sold every year on advertised bids.
>
> Ten thousand boxes of the cotton standards now are being prepared and distributed every year. The distribution of sets of the new wool standards will commence Aug.1

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62 Black 1937, 1-3.
63 Evening Star, 1937.
64 Washington Evening Star, "Standardizing Rules Rigid in New Federal Building," May 3, 1937.
65 Treasury Department, Public Works Branch, Architectural drawings for "Bureau of Economics, Dept. of Agriculture."
66 Washington Evening Star, "Standardizing Rules Rigid in New Federal Building," May 3, 1937.

> and also will run into the thousands. The distribution of both is worldwide. For the purpose of preparing the standards, the Government purchases and stores in the Standardization Building a wider variety of types and grades of wool and cotton than has ever been assembled elsewhere under one roof. Approximately 1,000 bales of cotton are carried in stock. They come from all parts of the Belt and also from the irrigated regions of the West. Incidentally samples are preserved of cotton grown from year to year. Some of these date back to the 'Sixties.[67]

A light-to-moderately overcast north sky was discovered to be the optimum daylight in the production of the cotton standards—and the subsequent classification of cotton.[68] With that knowledge, the designers of the Cotton Annex fitted the sixth floor laboratories with special skylights on the roof that allowed for the northern light.[69]

In 1964, the Standards section of the Cotton Division moved its operations to Memphis, Tennessee. At the time of its move, the Cotton Division occupied the top three floors of the Cotton Annex building. Later, the division occupied only the third and sixth floors, and finally only the sixth floor.[70] As the Cotton Division's presence in the Cotton Annex grew smaller, other divisions of the USDA moved in to occupy the vacated spaces. By the early 1950s, the fifth floor of the Cotton Annex provided space for the headquarters, laboratories, and storage for the Tobacco Division of AMS. Consequently, the USDA installed tobacco vaults and a separate, central air unit in two rooms on the fifth floor to properly and safely house the tobacco samples. By the mid-1970s, the Food Safety and Inspection Service also had offices in the building. The headquarters of the Cotton Division relocated from the Cotton Annex to the Department of Agriculture South Building ca. 1982.[71] The U.S. General Services Administration, which currently retains ownership of the property, acquired it during this transition. By 2010, only a few offices for administrative staff of the Tobacco Division remained in the Cotton Annex Building. The building is currently vacant.

Supervising Architect Louis A. Simon

Louis A. Simon (1867–1958) graduated from the architectural school at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. After an extended tour throughout Europe, he opened an architectural office in Baltimore in 1894. Two years later, Simon began working at the Office of the Supervising Architect, where he spent the rest of his professional career.[72]

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67 I.D. Foos, "House that Standardization Built," *Textile World* (24 July 1926), n.p. Obtained from the personal collection of J. Knowlton, Chief, Standardization & Engineering Branch, United States.

68 United States Department of Agriculture, "The Classification of Cotton," Miscellaneous Publication No. 310 (Washington, D.C.: United States Government Printing Office, revised January 1965), 17.

69 North-facing windows in the fifth floor hay laboratory were built to capture northern light. Similarly, the fifth-floor wool laboratory had a north-facing skylight on the attic level.

70 Boyd, 2007.

71 J. Moore, retired director of the Cotton Program, Agriculture Marketing Service, United States Department of Agriculture, telephone interview with C.M. Dluzak, January 23, 2007.

72 Lee, 2000: 258.

When Simon took over the role as Supervising Architect of the Treasury in 1933, he had already worked for the Supervising Architect's Office for more than four decades and was well known in the architectural community. That same year, the office was placed within the Procurement Division and divided between five separate offices of the new Public Works Branch of the Treasury Department. Nonetheless, Simon retained control over the design of Federal buildings, both those designed by his staff and by consulting architects. As Supervising Architect, Simon's architectural philosophy was prominently reflected in the buildings designed under his direction. Simon's contemporaries described his work as being "characterized by an effort toward simplicity and restraint and the attainment of pleasing results, by a studied consideration of mass and proportion, rather than by excess of elaboration or non-functional expression, such as characterized by some of the early work of the Supervising Architect's Office."[73]

In addition to the Cotton Annex, Simon influenced the design of numerous Federal buildings throughout the United States during the course of his tenure, including the Department of Agriculture South Building, Social Security Building, Railroad Retirement Board Building, and Internal Revenue Building in Washington, D.C.; the United States Post Office and Courthouse in Cincinnati, Ohio; the Coeur d'Alene Federal Building in Coeur d'Alene, Idaho; and the Federal Office Building in Laconia, New Hampshire.[74] Simon was a member of the Board of Architectural Consultants appointed by Secretary of the Treasury Andrew A. Mellon to represent the Treasury Department in the design of the Federal Triangle. In 1937, Simon became a Fellow in the American Institute of Architects, an honor bestowed only on architects who had notably contributed to the profession in design, construction, literature, education, or public service.[75] Simon retired in 1941 following five executive orders signed by Roosevelt to extend his term beyond the statutory retirement age. The *Federal Architect* praised Simon for his leadership and insistence on quality designs:

> Louis A. Simon will have a thousand or more buildings throughout the land, some bearing his name, some not, which are tokens of his architectural ability. Words concerning that ability are relatively ineffectual. It is the buildings themselves which are the best commentary of his judgment and his service to the country.[76]

John McShain

John McShain served as contractor during the construction of the Cotton Annex. From the beginning of his career as a general contractor in 1926 until his retirement in 1976, McShain completed more than 300 projects in the Middle Atlantic Region.[77]

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[73] American Institute of Architects, Louis A. Simon, American Institute of Architects Fellowship Application, AIA Archives, (public.aia.org/sites/hdoaa/wiki) accessed June 2014.

[74] General Services Administration Historic Federal Buildings website, (http://www.gsa.gov/portal/ext/html/site/hb/category/25431/hostUri/portal) accessed September 1, 2010.

[75] American Institute of Architects, Louis A. Simon, American Institute of Architects Fellowship Application.

[76] As quoted in Lee, 280.

[77] Wheeling Jesuit University Website, "McShain Plaza and Administrative Center," (http://www.wju.edu/about/history/bldgs/mcshain.asp) accessed April 10, 2007.

Born on December 21, 1898, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, McShain's father founded a successful construction company based in the Philadelphia area that worked mainly on projects sponsored by the Catholic Church. After briefly considering a career in the priesthood, John McShain opted instead to study law first at Georgetown University and then at St. Joseph's College in Philadelphia; however, after his father's death in 1919, McShain forsook his education and took over the family construction business.

John McShain's construction firm primarily operated out of Philadelphia with ancillary offices maintained in Trenton, New Jersey, and Baltimore, Maryland. During the Great Depression, McShain started bidding on projects in Washington, D.C., after projects in Philadelphia became scarce. McShain soon proved to be a success in Washington, D.C., in part due to his skill at estimating costs, which often enabled him to submit the lowest bid for a project.[78] In addition, his "capable staff of foreman and superintendents," allowed McShain to manage as many as 20 projects at a time so that by the late 1950s, John McShain, Inc., had become one of the nation's five largest general contractors.

Some of the more than 100 projects that McShain worked on in the greater Washington metropolitan area included the Jefferson Memorial, Pentagon, Bureau of Engraving and Prints, the Department of Agriculture South Building, the John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts, the Pentagon, and the renovation of the White House.[79] Shortly after McShain completed the National Airport (now known as the Ronald Reagan National Airport) terminal building in 1941, he summarized his building philosophy: "Public buildings must exemplify the best in national architecture; they must meet functional demands successfully; [and] they must incorporate the finest of planning, material, [and] workmanship."[80]

Stripped Classicism in Washington

The architectural form of the Cotton Annex, now commonly described as Stripped Classicism, illustrates an evolutionary step in the development of architecture worldwide. In the United States, these stripped down classical forms that barely refer to their classical roots mark the end to the American search to create a national classical architecture, a quest that began in earnest with the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition. In fact, this reductionist approach to architecture, distillations of the formal repertory of classical architecture, was recognized abroad as a distinct trait of American architecture, developing a particular following in Great Britain, where Charles Herbert Reilly at Liverpool University's School of Architecture was a great proponent of American architecture. This approach to form in general was also an evolutionary response to architectural issues that continuously concerned American architects: the appropriate expression of function and the resolution of paradox between historically based form and modern structural

[78] National Building Museum, (http://www.nbm.org/blueprints/winter97/page4/page4.htm) accessed March 30, 2007.
[79] National Building Museum Website.
[80] C.M. Brauer, *The Man Who Built Washington: A Life of John McShain* (Wilmington, Delaware: Hagley Museum and Library, 1996), 52.

systems.[81] These forms were better integrated into the building envelope than previous architectural elements, reflecting to some extent the nature of a building's structure while still referring to familiar classical elements.

This process of reduction created an essentially conservative architecture that some have interpreted as an attempt to accommodate the modern without abandoning the comfortable forms of the past, creating yet another paradox that a conservative style—Classicism—was the architectural form that most appealed to the proponents of both the Progressive and the New Deal political movements.

In the American mind, Classicism, even as a reduced expression, was inextricably linked with government, and in the seat of American government, this connection had been codified in the McMillan Plan. All subsequent Federal buildings built up to World War II in some way expressed the classical canon. The National Mall is surrounded with Stripped Classical buildings, including the National Academy of Sciences, the Folger Shakespeare Library, and the American Pharmaceutical Association building. The Cotton Annex was no exception.

The style is characterized by the abstraction of classical features, emphasis on symmetry and repeating elements, and often features flat rectangular piers; vertical bands of windows; columns without bases or capitals; smooth marble, limestone, or concrete planes; and decorative accents using varying color or contrasting material textures. Exterior ornament, while rare, sometimes appears in the form or sculpture or a pattern applied to one element. While sharing characteristics with the "moderne" style, Stripped Classicism references the overall massing and features of Classicism, while moderne contains no allusions to decorative classical elements. [82]

The Cotton Annex's design may be one of the final Federal office buildings in Washington to adhere to this style. From the inception of the building to its completion, architectural Classicism in any guise was under siege, but the design and construction of the Cotton Annex appear to have avoided the controversy and criticism then being directed at the plans for the National Gallery of Art and the Jefferson Memorial, both of which were in the planning stage as the Cotton Annex was planned and built.

[81] D. Pokinski, *The Development of the American Modern Style*. (Ann Arbor: Umi Press, 1984), 2.

[82] D.P. Sefton, Recorder of Deeds Building National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form, 2010, (http://planning.dc.gov/DC/Planning/Planning%20Publication%20Files/OP/HP/Pending%20Landmarks/Recorder%20of%20Deeds%20Building.pdf) accessed June 2014.

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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 # _____
____ recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

____ State Historic Preservation Office
____ Other State agency
_X_ Federal agency
____ Local government
____ University
____ Other
Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

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10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property ____1.38_____

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates (decimal degrees)
Datum if other than WGS84: 38.885551,-77.027588
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)
1. Latitude: Longitude:

2. Latitude: Longitude:

3. Latitude: Longitude:

4. Latitude: Longitude:

Or
UTM References
Datum (indicated on USGS map):

☐ NAD 1927 or ☐ NAD 1983

1. Zone: Easting: Northing:

2. Zone: Easting: Northing:

3. Zone: Easting: Northing:

4. Zone: Easting: Northing:

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The boundary encompasses the entire 1.38-acre parcel that currently, in 2014, contains the Cotton Annex. The property is bounded by C Street SW to the north, D Street SW to the south, and 12th Street SW to the west. The 12th Street Expressway forms the east boundary of the property.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The National Register boundary for the Cotton Annex includes the entire portion of the 1.38-acre tax parcel (Washington, D.C., Tax Parcel 03260805) that is historically associated with the building during its period of significance (1937–1964). The boundary encompasses all of the significant resources and features that comprise the property.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Emma Young/Architectural Historian, Catherine Dluzak/Architectural Historian, Sarah Groesbeck/Architectural Historian, and Patti Kuhn/Architectural Historian
organization: A.D. Marble & Company (2010) and The Louis Berger Group (2015), prepared for U.S. General Services Administration
street & number: _____
city or town: _____ state: _____ zip code: _____
e-mail _____
telephone: _____
date: February 2015

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property: Cotton Annex Building

City or Vicinity: Washington

County: State: District of Columbia

Photographer: Patti Kuhn

Date Photographed: October 2013, December 2013, and October 2014

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

1 of 10. Cotton Annex building, Northwest corner, looking southeast.

2 of 10. Cotton Annex, Entrance on North Side of West Elevation, Looking Northeast.

3 of 10. Cotton Annex, North Elevation, Looking South

4 of 10. Cotton Annex, North and East Elevations, Looking Southwest

5 of 10. Cotton Annex, Southeast Corner, Looking Northwest

6 of 10. Cotton Annex, Southwest Corner, Looking Northeast

7 of 10. Cotton Annex, North Elevation, Detail of Skylight, Looking East

8 of 10. Cotton Annex, Interior, First Floor Vestibule, Administration Block

9 of 10. Cotton Annex, Interior, First Floor Lobby and Elevator

10 of 10. Cotton Annex, Interior, First Floor Corridor, Administration Block, Looking South

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.460 et seq.).
Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including 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 Office of Planning and Performance Management. U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, D.C.

Project Area Within Washington D.C.
0 5 10 20 Miles
0 10 20 40 Kilometers
N
Cotton Annex, 300 12th Street SW
Washington, DC 20024
38.885551,-77.027588
West End
SCOTT CIRCLE
M ST NW
Strayer Univ
THOMAS CIRCLE
WASHINGTON CIRCLE
L ST NW
JAMES MONROE PARK
Franklin-McPherson Square
FRANKLIN PARK
K ST
H ST NW
EDWARD R MURROW PARK
George Washington Univ
Northwest Rectangle
Sanz Sch
F ST NW
15TH ST NW
12TH ST NW
22ND ST NW
C ST NW
Ellipse Grounds South
CONSTITUTION AVE NW
Judiciary Square
East End
CONSTITUTION GARDEN
Smithsonian Grounds
Capitol Hill
Capitol Grounds
Reflecting Pool
Monument Grounds
NATIONAL MALL
TRIANGLE PARK
Kutz Bridge
WEST POTOMAC PARK
14TH ST SW
D ST SW
Tenth Street Mall Bridge
Outlet Bridge
Bathing Beach
BENJAMIN BANNEKER PARK
Southeastern Univ
TOWN CENTER PARK
Southwest
Washington Channel
WATER ST SW
Francis Case Memorial Bridge
George Mason Memorial Bridge
EAST POTOMAC PARK HAINS POINT
6TH ST SW
M ST SW
K ST SE
M ST SE
Potomac Railroad Bridge
Long Bridge
Morris and Nicholson Wharf
Buzzard Point
WASHINGTON
P ST SW
S CAPITOL ST SE
FORT LESLEY J MCNAIR
ARLINGTON CO
OHIO DR SW
1ST AVE SW
5TH AVE
2ND ST SW
1ST ST SW
HALF ST SW
Frederick Douglass Memorial Bridge
Gravelly Point
Buzzard Point
Buzzard Point Marina
James Creek Marina
Greenleaf Point
Greenleaf Point Golf Course
Anacostia River
ROBBINS RD W

Photo 1

Photo 2

Photo 3

Photo 4

Photo 5

Photo 6

Photo 7

Photo 8

Photo 9

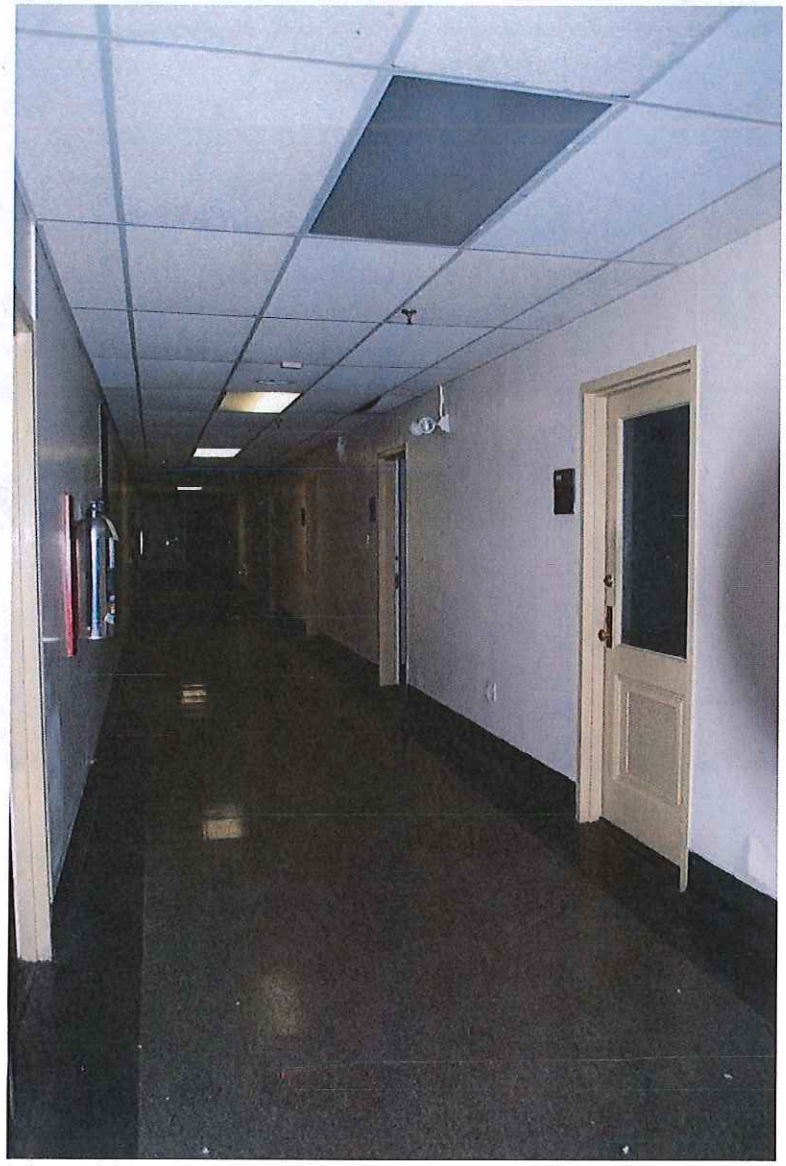

Photo 10