



**Post Office Apartments**  
**Old Post Office and Federal Courts Building**  
**200 N. 8th Street**  
**1886-1887, 1910-1911**  
**Office of the Supervising Architect of the U. S. Treasury**

Between the 1880s and World War I, the Treasury Department contained the largest architectural office in the country and one of the largest in the world. The primary task of that department was to design monster buildings that would combine judicial and post office functions, "USCH & POs" for short. Like Quincy's building in this genre, each exploited the latest in high styles with little regard for cost.

Mifflin E. Bell was Supervising Architect during the heyday of the office, when nationwide prosperity and a highly efficient railway system permitted construction of enormously complex projects in relatively short time. Designed between 1884 and 1885, this was one of Bell's most elaborate essays in the French Renaissance mode that was all the rage for wealthy town houses on the East Coast. If the design had come a year or two later, it likely would have been in a Richardsonian Romanesque vein.

The dressed stone facings are all of Bedford, Indiana limestone, which was more uniform in texture than the otherwise similar local limestone. Who put the building up and who manufactured its showy ironwork remains to be established. Like many of its cousins across the country, the Quincy USCH & PO, departed considerably from the severe dictates of style in its interiors. The elaborate decoration of the courtrooms and judge's chambers borrowed freely from the more ingratiating Queen Anne style.

BEHIND CLOSED DOORS  
OCTOBER 19, 1991