



Name of Property: U.S. Post Office and Courthouse (Frank M. Johnson Jr. Federal Building and U.S. Courthouse)

City, State: Montgomery, Alabama

Significant Dates: 1961-1967

NHL Criteria: 1, 2

NHL Theme: II. Creating Social Institutions and Movements
2. Reform movements
IV. Shaping the Political Landscape
1. Parties, protests, and movements

Previous Recognition: 1998 National Register of Historic Places

National Historic Context: 2000 *Racial Desegregation in Public Education in the United States National Historic Landmark Theme Study*
2004, rev. 2009 *Civil Rights in America: Racial Desegregation of Public Accommodations Theme Study*
2007, rev. 2009 *Civil Rights in America: Racial Voting Rights Theme Study*

NHL Significance:

- The U.S. Post Office and Courthouse in Montgomery, Alabama, has exceptional national significance under National Historic Landmark (NHL) Criterion 1 for its association with



the preeminent role that the U.S. Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals and the U.S. District Court for the Middle District of Alabama played in reshaping the South during the modern civil rights movement. Jurisprudence developed by these courts dealt effectively with southern massive resistance and obstructionism as its rulings both fostered and implemented nationally significant civil rights legislation.

- The courthouse also has exceptional national significance under NHL Criterion 2 for its association with three judges considered critical to the social and political transformation of the segregationist South during the 1950s and 1960s. District Judge Frank M. Johnson Jr. and Fifth Circuit appellate judges Richard T. Rives and John R. Brown contributed to the emergence of civil rights in America and led the courts through new legal territory during a decade of social upheaval and the judicial remaking of the South.

Integrity:

- Overall: The courthouse's excellent state of preservation, decades as a federal courthouse, and relatively intact setting all create a strong sense of place that is highly evocative of the period when the district and circuit courts pronounced decisions on landmark civil rights cases. Primarily, its setting has not been perfectly preserved with some new nearby construction and the addition of a courthouse annex which connects via a rear walkway to the original courthouse. However, the annex is considered a separate building and does not impact the historic integrity of the courthouse.
- Exterior: The building exterior retains its historic features other than the sympathetic replacement of historic bronze window frames with enameled metal.
- Interior: Replacement lanterns blend with the Classical Revival detailing of the lobby, the alteration of the post office to a courtroom left the lobby walls and doors intact, and other than new carpet, draperies, and flat screen computer monitors, the historic character of the courtrooms remain intact.

Owner of Property: U.S. General Services Administration

Acres of Property: Less than one acre

Origins of Nomination: In 1998, the U.S. Congress authorized the National Park Service (NPS) to study the history of racial desegregation in public education, and in 1999, the U.S. Congress



authorized the NPS to conduct a special resource study of civil rights sites. As a result of these two Congressional directives, the NHL Program began either preparing or contracting for the completion of NHL nomination forms for properties associated with the civil rights movement in the United States and racial desegregation in public education. Nominations for the three courthouses associated with the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals were drafted as part of this special study.

Potential for Positive Public Response or Reflection on NHL Program:

- NHL designation will complete the recognition of the federal government's impact on the modern civil rights movement through its executive, legislative, and now, judicial branches.

Potential for Negative Public Response or Reflection on NHL Program: None known.

Landmarks Committee Comments:

Landmarks Committee Recommendation: Designation. Dr. Young moved, Dr. Leavitt seconded; unanimous approval.

Public Comments Favoring Designation (received as of 2/4/15):

The Honorable Todd Strange, Mayor, City of Montgomery, Alabama

Advisory Board Recommendation: