9. 1884 to 1938: United States Post Office and Courthouse Building, West Side of Ninth Street Between Market and Chestnut Streets

In 1872, the University of Pennsylvania vacated its property a few blocks away from the Library Street Courthouse on the west side of Ninth Street between Market and Chestnut Streets and moved to its more spacious campus in West Philadelphia. The Government, having purchased the property, constructed a large five-story granite United States Courthouse and Post Office on the site with the main post office on the first floor and the Court on the second. It was designed in the French Second Empire style and was completed in 1884. On the cornice high above the entrance on Ninth Street stood a large allegorical sculpture in marble entitled "Law, Prosperity, and Power" by Daniel Chester French. He later sculpted the widely acclaimed statue of Abraham Lincoln at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C.

The new edifice exhibited a far grander appearance than its more modest predecessor and evidenced the wider role that the federal courts were destined to play in American life. Nonetheless, the building would be dwarfed by Philadelphia's new City Hall, which was being erected in the same architectural style at Broad and Market Streets. This elegant structure with its tower topped with Alexander Calder's statue of William Penn would occupy an entire block and contain not only a number of large courtrooms for the various state trial courts serving Philadelphia County but also a courtroom to accommodate the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania.