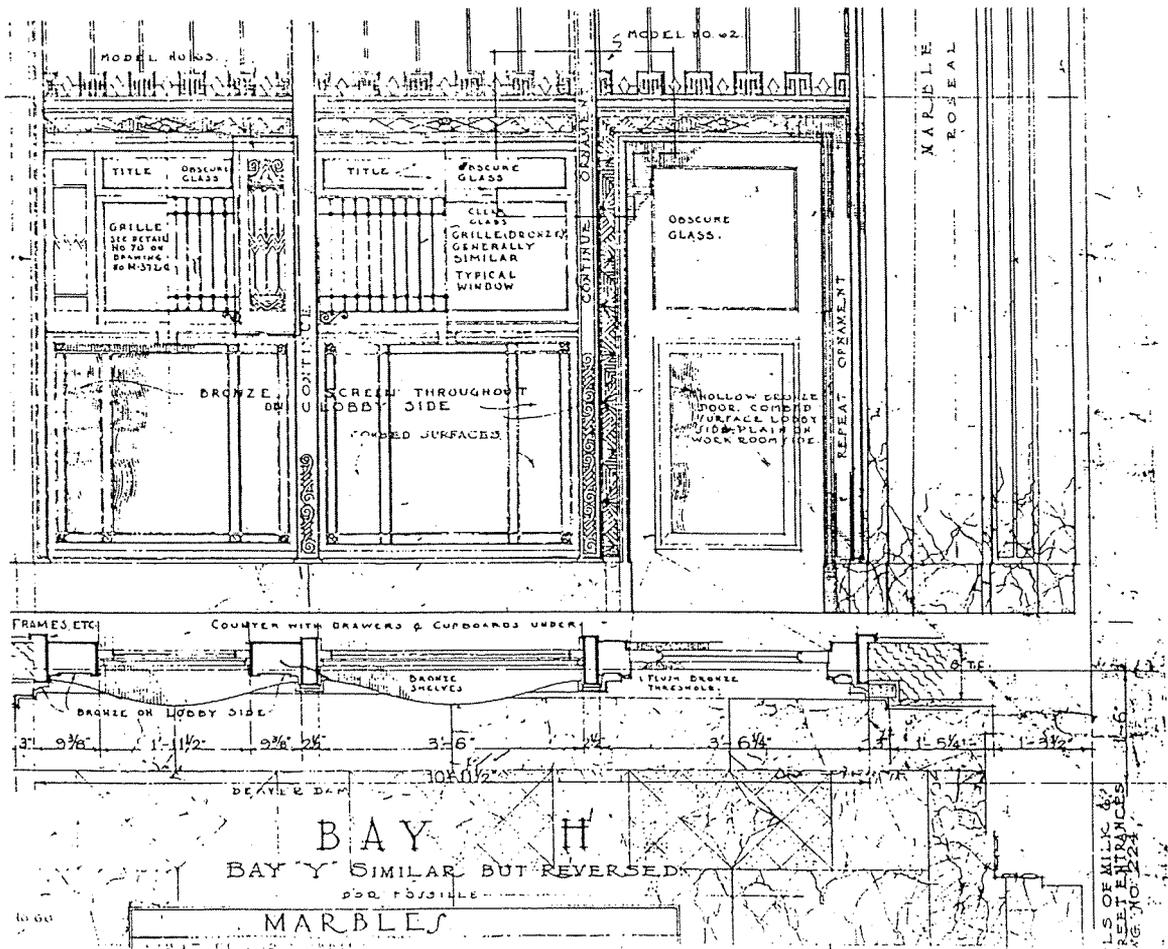


JOHN W. McCORMACK POST OFFICE AND COURT HOUSE

BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS

GSA BUILDING # 0013ZZ

HISTORIC BUILDING PRESERVATION PLAN APPENDIX



ANN BEHA ASSOCIATES

BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS

**John W. McCormack Post Office and Courthouse
Boston, MA
Historic Building Preservation Plan
March 1995**

TABLE OF CONTENTS

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ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY

INTRODUCTION

This chapter of the Historic Building Preservation Plan contains background information on the historical and architectural associations of the John W. McCormack Post Office and Courthouse. It is organized in two main sections. "Historical Context" examines the historical and architectural milieu that produced the building. "Construction History" provides building specific data about planning, legislation, site acquisition, construction, and design. Together these two sections provide an understanding of how and why the John W. McCormack Post Office and Courthouse developed as it did. The overall importance of the building and of its extant physical features are then evaluated within that framework. The remainder of this chapter refers to the John W. McCormack Post Office and Courthouse by its historic name: United States Post Office, Courthouse, and Federal Building, or more simply as the Boston Federal Building.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The United States Post Office, Courthouse, and Federal Building was constructed in downtown Boston in 1931-1933 as a monumental expression of the city's regional and national stature. It replaced a handsome but overcrowded Second Empire style Post Office and Sub-Treasury Building that had occupied the site on Post Office Square since the early 1870s. Design of the replacement building resulted from an unusual collaboration between the Supervising Architect of the Treasury's office and the noted private architectural firm of Cram & Ferguson. Government architects provided the general interior layout which was based on their standardized plans, while Cram & Ferguson designed the exterior and the primary interior spaces. Along with the United Shoe Machinery Corporation Building (1928), the Batterymarch Building (1927), and the State Street Bank & Trust Company Building (1929), it is one of the finest Art Deco style buildings constructed in downtown Boston in the 1920s and 1930s. Its history embodies the strength of Boston's community in the early to mid-20th century, and the inception of federal relief programs developed in the 1930s to counteract the effect of the Great Depression.

It was rededicated as the John W. McCormack Post Office and Courthouse in 1972, in honor of one of the Commonwealth's most powerful and respected politicians.

THE LOCAL CONTEXT

Boston was established as the capital of the Massachusetts Bay Colony in 1630, soon after settlement. Throughout the Colonial period, its population hovered around 15,000.¹ Cessation of the Revolutionary War unleashed a sustained period of exponential growth that continued throughout the 19th and early-20th centuries. During that period, Boston developed as a mercantile, financial, and cultural center of international stature. Its population doubled between 1775 and 1810, rising from about 16,000 to 32,896. It doubled again over the next twenty years, reaching 61,392 by 1830.² During that time, on February 22, 1822, Boston was incorporated as a city. Ammi B. Young's handsome Greek Revival style United States Customhouse (1837-1847) arose on the waterfront in 1837-1847 as Boston's first major federal building, proclaiming the city's stature as a major port of call.

By 1865, Boston's population had soared to 141,083.³ Three years later, in 1868, the federal government purchased 41,330 square feet of land bounded by Water, Devonshire, Milk, and Congress Streets. Ground was broken for a large and expensive Post Office and Sub-Treasury Building in 1869. This well-conceived Second Empire style building was designed by the federal government's Supervising Architect, Alfred B. Mullet.

Boston's Great Fire of November 9-10, 1872 leveled much of Boston's emerging commercial district, but miraculously spared the Post Office building which was still under construction. The Bostonian Society placed a bronze tablet on the Milk Street side of the present building to commemorate the northeasterly point at which the fire was halted. The fire-cleared area in front of the Post Office was dedicated as Post Office Square in 1873, providing a formal urban setting for the imposing new building.

¹ MHC 1981: 6

² MHC 1981: 9

³ MHC 1981: 15

Boston's population continued to grow at a rapid pace, totaling 196,300 by 1915.⁴ By 1931, the Boston metropolitan area was noted as the fourth largest postal district in the United States. This territory encompassed 270 square miles and 24 communities with a total population of 2,000,000. A staff of 5,134 employees, at seventy-two stations handled 527,000,000 pieces of mail annually, with postal receipts that exceeded \$18,000,000 annually.⁵

The area around the new Post Office building was quickly built up with commercial edifices in the popular architectural styles of the period. Designed with fireproofing in mind, they exhibited a variety of exterior materials including traditional brick, granite, sandstone, marble, terra cotta, and cast iron. Most were larger than their predecessors, and some like the Post Office, began to dominate entire blocks. The introduction of steel frame construction, along with passenger and freight elevators, in the 1890s resulted in taller buildings of eight to ten stories. Further increases were curbed by city regulations that imposed a 125' limit in 1904. That cap was raised to 155' in 1923. Another amendment of 1928 allowed taller buildings with set back massing, just in time to influence design of the new Federal Building.⁶

CONSTRUCTION HISTORY

Planning for the Boston Federal Building: 1915-1928

Boston's Federal Building is a product of the Public Buildings Act passed by Congress in 1926 as the first authorization for a new federal construction program since 1913. Passage of this act unleashed a floodgate of backlogged projects, and resulted in a flurry of design and construction activity in the late-1920s and early-1930s. This timing was fortuitous, because it allowed the federal government to hit the ground running in the development of depression-related jobs legislation with an already instituted program. Boston, which was the undisputed metropolitan center of New England, and the self-styled "Hub of the Universe" represents a typical case. It also illustrates the early efforts of political leaders to use federal largesse to offset the impact of the Great Depression on their constituents.

Public debate over the need for a new post office and federal building suited to Boston's size and stature began in the 1910s. By that time, the city's great industrial and commercial expansion of the late-19th and early-20th centuries had clearly demonstrated the need for a new building to house the varied activities of the federal government. Overcrowding of the existing 1870s building, which was seen as a serious threat to the local economy, prompted business and political leaders to join together in an intense congressional lobbying effort.

Boston's experience in bringing the planning process to fruition was typical of communities throughout the nation where economic prosperity, population growth, and civic pride demanded new public buildings. All were caught up in the log jam that resulted from virtual cessation of the federal building program in the late-1910s and 1920s. Like many other communities, Boston followed a path of compromise that eventually produced a solution acceptable to all parties.

The new building had to achieve the programmatic needs of federal agencies, while also staying within budget in a period of massive economic instability. In addition, it had to fulfill the local desire for job creation and civic beautification. The Boston Chamber of Commerce, which was a major advocate for the new building, described the process thus:

The new Boston Post Office and Federal Courts Building is the result of long continued cooperative efforts by many organizations and individuals in Boston, working with the city and State officials and the Massachusetts delegation in Congress.

The records show that these efforts have been carried on steadily since before 1915. This building is a striking example of continued cooperative effort in which the Boston Chamber of Commerce has taken a conspicuous part.⁷

⁴ MHC 1981: 21

⁵ Boston Evening Globe 1/5/1932: 23; Boston Herald 3/29/1931: 1

⁶ BLC 1980: 8-10; Cavanaugh 1989: 23

⁷ Boston Evening Globe 1/5/1932: 23

The planning process took its first major step forward in 1927 when U. S. Congressman Tinkham filed a bill to tap into the new federal construction appropriation. He and other promoters sought approval for a large, modern, twelve-story facility that would replace the "cramped and ugly" existing building. From the beginning, they argued their case on aesthetic as well as pragmatic grounds, stressing the importance of Boston's civic image. Typically, they said that the....

... massive, ugly, Cape Ann granite French Renaissance structure would be taken down stone by stone and laboriously replaced with something entirely modern. ⁸

Site Selection and Clearance: 1928-1930

All parties favored the existing site at Post Office Square as the location for Boston's new Federal Building. In preparation, postal operations were moved to the Brewer Building on State Street in 1928, while the courts assumed temporary quarters in Young's Hotel the following year. The old building was dismantled in the late summer and fall, following award of the demolition contract in July, 1929.⁹ The much admired figural statues by Daniel Chester French that had graced the front roofline were moved to Franklin Park.¹⁰

Building Construction: 1930-1933

Construction of the Boston Federal Building was supervised by Franklin M. Hull, a construction engineer with the Supervising Architect's office. Work commenced on March 15, 1930 when a contract was awarded to study potential excavation problems. The foundation contract was awarded on July 17, 1930, and work was completed the following February at a cost of \$600,000.¹¹

During this period, New England's congressional delegation waged a successful lobbying effort to substitute more expensive New England granite for Indiana limestone as the primary exterior facing material. Through their efforts, the project allocation was raised from \$4,500,000 to \$6,000,000 in early April, 1930. Representatives Edith Rogers of Lowell and Richard Wigglesworth of Milton, who represented the granite-producing towns of Chelmsford and Quincy, led the campaign.¹² Their goal was to provide some relief from the effects of the Great Depression by providing maximum employment opportunities for the New England region in general and their constituents in particular.

The contract for the superstructure was advertised on December 12, 1930. Bidders were asked to submit two proposals, one for an all-granite exterior, and one for a limestone exterior. When the twelve initial bids were opened on January 20, all of those for the granite exterior were well above the authorized budget, jeopardizing Roger's and Wiggleworth's efforts. Specifications were revised, and a second round of supplementary bids was solicited from the original group of contractors. When these were opened in February, the low bid of \$4,799,900 from the N. P. Severin Company of Chicago, was still over budget.¹³ Over the next several weeks, project specifications were substantially revised. The result.....

...eliminated some of the exterior granite, simplified the exterior design of the building, eliminated most of the interior marble, and substituted iron and other metal for all of the bronze inside and out originally specified. ¹⁴

The Treasury Department accepted the low bid of \$4,648,900, which was once again submitted by the N. P. Severin Company of Chicago, on March 25, 1931. This represented a substantial reduction of \$1,029,000 from their original bid of \$5,678,500 for an all granite exterior. This amount was also \$100,000 below the lowest bid for a limestone exterior. A contract with a time limit of 720 days, was quickly signed on March 28, with the general anticipation that work would begin immediately. Local newspapers happily reported that Severin had promised to use local labor supervised by his Chicago staff, and that....

...New England is now definitely assured a federal building of beauty consistent with the power and dignity of the federal government, adequate for the purposes for which it

⁸ Boston Transcript 1/17/1927

⁹ Boston Evening Globe 1/5/1932: 23; Boston Globe 5/6/1931: 10

¹⁰ on site GSA building file; unmarked newspaper clipping

¹¹ Boston Post 3/25/1931: 2; Boston Globe 5/6/1931: 1

¹² Boston Herald 3/29/1931: 1

¹³ Boston Globe 3/25/1931: 6; the total \$6,000,000 budget included demolition and site preparation costs as well as new construction

¹⁴ Boston Post 3/25/1931: 2;

is designed, and faced, with certain exceptions, entirely with granite, the traditional building material of New England. The decision of the treasury also means that the granite industry is assured of many months' work.¹⁵

Nevertheless, work was delayed, and much of the 1931 construction season was lost, when federal Comptroller-General J. R. McCarl raised questions about the legality of the contract on April 16, after Severin had already committed about \$1,000,000 in materials to the project.¹⁶ McCarl's concern was prompted by the Associated General Contractors of America who criticized the process of supplemental bidding. They complained that....

When government agencies repeatedly call for supplemental bids on the same project before awarding a contract, the procedure is indistinguishable from notoriously detrimental practices known as peddling.¹⁷

In response to intense congressional pressure, McCarl withdrew his concerns on May 5, 1931. Work finally commenced in July after a 10,000 ton shipment of steel arrived from Pennsylvania. At that time, it was still hoped that the original target completion date of March 31, 1933 could be met.¹⁸

Formal cornerstone ceremonies took place on January 5, 1932. The Boston Chamber of Commerce, whose committee on postal facilities had represented local business interests in the long planning process, organized the event. Dignitaries in attendance included Mayor James M. Curley, Federal Judge James M. Lowell, Postmaster William E. Hurley, and Louis F. Fowler and Carl P. Dennett of the Chamber of Commerce. Miss Emma W. Burt and her sister Mrs. Gilbert Brown Jr. were accorded the special honor of front row seats. They were the daughters of former Boston Postmaster, Gen. William L. Burt, and had been present at similar ceremonies for the 1870s building.¹⁹

The cornerstone exercises attracted thousands of observers, and received front page coverage in the Boston Evening Globe, including text and a photograph. That was just one illustration of the importance of this project to a community mired in the Great Depression. Hope for relief from that economic disaster was cited in many remarks. Speakers noted that 50,000 persons lacked the means to provide for themselves, and that programs to meet basic survival needs were costing the city \$22,000 daily. To meet the crisis the governor and mayor had joined with religious and business leaders to solicit \$3,000,000 in voluntary contributions. This massive effort to engage a broad spectrum of citizens in a public-spirited effort, had formally been launched on January 25, 1931.²⁰

The Boston Federal Building was one of several large-scale federal construction projects initiated just prior to the Great Depression that served as models for the various public works programs of the 1930s. Both local and federal leaders quickly realized that construction of federal buildings provided an important boost to sagging local economies, by offering employment opportunities to both building contractors and materials suppliers. Boston's successful campaign to substitute New England granite for limestone as the exterior facing of the Boston Federal Building, is directly related to depression relief efforts. A similar campaign was waged in Worcester, where Townsend granite was substituted for limestone on that city's contemporary Federal Building of 1930-1931. Additionally, enlarged federal buildings offered the promise of permanent jobs for increased numbers of employees. In Boston, it was anticipated that 2,363 workers would occupy the new building.²¹

At the time of the cornerstone laying ceremonies in January, 1932, 300 construction workers were employed at the site. That number was expected to increase to 400-500 as work progressed. The Boston Federal Building opened twenty months later on September 16, 1933.²²

¹⁵ Herald 3/29/31: 10

¹⁶ Boston Herald 5/6/1931: 1

¹⁷ Boston Post 5/6/1931: 7

¹⁸ Boston Globe 5/6/1931: 1.6

¹⁹ Boston Evening Globe 1/15/32: 1

²⁰ Boston Evening Globe 1/15/32: 1

²¹ Boston Evening Globe 1/5/1932: 1

²² on site GSA building file

DESIGN OF THE BOSTON FEDERAL BUILDING

The Boston Federal Building was one of several around the country that were chosen to illustrate the September, 1933 issue of *Architectural Forum* which was devoted to the "The Planning of Public Buildings". This issue recognized the important role that public sector commissions had come to play in private architectural practice since the 1930 amendment to the 1926 Public Buildings Act had been passed to encourage the use of private firms.

Designed in 1928-1931, the Boston Federal Building represents an unusual collaboration between the public and private sectors, and a bridge between the pre-1928 and post-1930 periods. Supervising Architect James A. Wetmore directed the efforts of his office to produce the general plan for the new building, using standardized models that had been developed over the past two decades. The nationally respected, and locally based, firm of Cram & Ferguson undertook the more creative task of designing the building exterior along with the finishes of the most important and visible interior spaces.

Cram, who was not entirely happy with the joint venture arrangement, described it thus:

Here we were indeed appointed architects, but, shortly thereafter, were told that, on second thoughts, the Treasury Department would make all the plans and working drawings in its own construction office, while we could design and apply an exterior to the predetermined floor-plans and steel frame. In the end we did rather more than this, for we were called in to re-plan the floors given to the United States Courts and to design their finish, together with that of the main corridors. As for the exterior, while the office of the Supervising Architect was, through its personnel, very considerate and disposed to make minor concessions in the disposition of the steel frame in order that a certain amount of orderliness might result, it was not a very happy arrangement, nor one that gave us to show what we could do along a line so widely severed from our usual practice.²³

James A. Wetmore (1863-3/4/1940) was a lawyer, born and educated in New York. He began his government career as a court stenographer, and served as Acting Supervising Architect from 1915-1933 under the administrations of Woodrow Wilson, Warren Harding, Calvin Coolidge, and Herbert Hoover.²⁴

It is likely that design decisions during his tenure were made by Louis A. Simon, superintendent of the office's architectural division from 1905-1933. Simon, who graduated from M.I.T. in 1891 and joined the Supervising Architect's office in 1896, was also the last person to hold the top position of Supervising Architect. He served from 1933-39 when the office was abolished. Noted as a conservative designer and decorous man, Simon was the first president of the Association of Federal Architects, founded in 1927 as a forum for architects employed by the federal government.²⁵

Ralph Adams Cram (1863-9/22/1942) was one of the best known architects of his time, achieving national renown through both the quality of his work and the extent of his philosophical writings. He was best known for his ecclesiastical commissions and as a passionate proponent of the Gothic Revival style. Cram was born in Hampton Falls, New Hampshire, was trained in New England, and opened his first architectural office in Boston at the age of 24 in partnership with Charles Wentworth. Bertram G. Goodhue and Frank W. Ferguson joined the firm soon thereafter. Goodhue remained a partner until 1910 when he established his own office in New York. Ferguson remained until his death in 1926. Three younger architects, Frank Cleveland, Chester Godfrey, and Alexander Hoyle, were in partnership with Cram at the time the Boston Federal Building was designed, although the firm retained the name of Cram & Ferguson. Cram went into semi-retirement in 1930, spending much of his time at his estate "Whitehall" in Sudbury, Mass.²⁶

²³ Cram 1936: 257

²⁴ Withey 1970: 647

²⁵ Craig 1978: 180, 298, 328

²⁶ Withey 1970: 145-147

Style

The Boston Federal Building is the tallest of four important examples of the local Art Deco style that evolved in Boston in the 1920s and 1930s. This quartet of dramatic skyscrapers included the:

- Federal Building at 22 stories, and a height of 336 feet;
- United Shoe Machinery Company Building, 138-164 Federal Street (1929; Parker, Thomas & Rice) at 24 stories, and a height of 298 feet;²⁷
- State Street Bank & Trust Company Building, 70-75 Federal Street (1929; Thomas M. James) at 22 stories;
- Batterymarch Building, 60 Batterymarch Street (1928; Harold Field Kellogg) at 16 stories.

These four buildings had a major and unprecedented impact on the center city as their bulk loomed above all predecessors, to pierce Boston's skyline. They served as urban beacons, providing orientation for both pedestrians and motorists.

All but the slightly earlier Batterymarch Building responded to a 1928 zoning amendment that allowed buildings to rise above the previous 155 foot limit if they followed defined setback rules that... .. resulted in a greater flexibility of design and a substantial increase in height on large lots, without restricting the air and light of surrounding properties. The main shaft of the buildings rose directly from the street, but near the top, an inner core climbed to successively higher rooflines. Vertical bands of piers and windows also emphasized light.²⁸

This distinctive "ziggurat" massing, fostered by zoning laws in Boston and other large cities around the country, was a hallmark of the Art Deco style. Ornamental elements evolved from an early-20th century minimalist design vocabulary that emphasized flat, planar surfaces incised with sparsely applied, stylized geometric elements. Common motifs included fluting and reeding, chevrons or zigzags, and various patterns of fretwork. In some cases a unique iconography was developed to express the spirit and conditions of the modern age, or to reflect the specific building function. Subtle color gradations that lightened with height were another element of the style. Massing, ornament, and color were all intended to emphasize the impression of verticality and height. The Paris Exposition des Arts Decoratifs of 1925 was the seminal event in the popular acceptance of this style.

Although the Art Deco style was in vogue at the time, its choice for the Boston Federal Building was unusual for several reasons. First, it was seldom used for federal buildings, most of which were designed in a spare interpretation of the Classical Revival style. In addition, Boston was known as a conservative city, that generally favored classically oriented approaches to architectural design rather than experimentation with modern ideas. Finally, Ralph Adams Cram, who produced the exterior design, was a vocal critic of modern architecture whose published diatribes reached a national audience.

Nevertheless, contemporary critics praised the Boston Federal Building's handling of hallmark Art Deco elements to create a romantic urban image, reflective of the modern city. Writing for a professional audience in the American Architect, critic Charles G. Loring, described its design, and the effect on ordinary citizens thus:

But it is neither period nor detailing which is the essential feature. It is the upbuilding of masses into the arrogant bleakness of a mesa overtopping fussy office buildings below. And the Euclidean simplicity is enlivened because it can be seen only in abrupt and oblique views.

²⁷ The height and story discrepancy between the Federal and United Shoe Buildings is accounted for by the public (courts and post office), rather than purely office, functions housed in the federal building. Lofty, imposing public spaces were intended to express the dignity and solidity of the federal government.

²⁸ BLC CBD Survey Report 1980: 10

To the pedestrian and motorist, the house of government is known through unexpected glimpses of a dazzling cliff with hidden fenestration rising athwart a cross street, or a squared group of weather-eroded crags seen across half the city dead ahead, down the last straight mile of Commonwealth Avenue.²⁹

According to Loring, Cram chose the Art Deco style because Gothic "trappings" on such a large building would have been a sham, and a false interpretation of the style he admired so much. Whatever Cram's rationale, the resulting design was praised for its response to the dense urban environment that formed its context.

If a free hand was given the architects to select the mode of the exterior, the resulting Euclidean simplicity is enlivened because it can be seen only in abrupt and oblique views. Granite cases the seventeen stories of the main bulk of the building. But little ornament has been used above the lower stories, for the structure is flanked on three sides by narrow, dark streets. Even the main entrance has an unobstructed view of only 150 yards across Post Office Square.³⁰

Cram exploited the full potential of a difficult urban site by relying on dramatic massing to create striking distance views. This was combined with judiciously applied ornament, concentrated at lower levels, to attract the attention of passersby. Height was emphasized by a vertical alignment of windows separated by dark aluminum spandrels, and recessed behind a veneer of thin granite piers. Lack of projecting cornices or visible roofs compounded the soaring effect. Photographic views accompanying the American Architect article clearly demonstrated the new Federal Building's resulting drama as played against the backdrop of its smaller and more conventional neighbors.

Building Statistics

The Boston Federal Building consisted of three towers rising above a five story base. It occupied an entire city block that measured 227' x 207' x 248' x 201'. The 16 story main mass rose to a height of 258' on Post Office Square, and 331' on Devonshire Street where the below-grade basement and subbasement stories were partially exposed. The set back tower added another 78' and six stories. The height most commonly cited was the lower Post Office Square total of 336'. The building enclosed 10,290,000 cubic feet, with a total floor space of 600,000 square feet.³¹

Foundation and Structure

Typically, the Boston Federal Building was constructed with a steel and reinforced-concrete frame clad in masonry. The frame included 10,000 tons of steel and \$485,000 worth of concrete. The more unusual foundation rested on a reinforced nine foot thick concrete mat that represented a new approach in Boston.³²

Exterior Materials and Features

Materials played an unusually important role in design of the Boston Federal Building. As previously described, this resulted from the strong desire to use New England granite for the exterior cladding as a device to stimulate local industry. The granite supply contract was worth over \$913,000, while concrete totaled \$485,000.³³ The substitution of more expensive granite for limestone as the primary exterior material was achieved through deletion of some interior marble, and substitution of terra cotta for some exterior ornament. These materials are typical of early-20th century public buildings. Parochial lobbying for use of local materials was also seen elsewhere during the lean years of the Great Depression.

A combination of several eastern granites were chosen to face the seventeen stories of the main block. Polished dark Quincy granite was used for the basement stories, Concord granite for the first two stories, and Chelmsford granite for the upper stories. The six story tower and the lightwell were faced with "Ingalls" limestone. Iconography included giant bundled staves at the upper corners illustrating the concept

²⁹ American Architect. 11/1933: 18

³⁰ American Architect. 11/1933: 17

³¹ Boston Evening Globe 1/5/1932: 23

³² Boston Evening Globe 1/5/1932: 23

³³ Boston Evening Globe 1/5/1932: 23

of "united we stand, divided we fall". The serpent entwined wands of Mercury, known as caducei, appeared on the spandrels of the main beltcourse to symbolize Mercury's role as the postman of Olympia.³⁴

Interior Materials and Features

The interior of the Boston Federal Building was largely devoted to office space for the employees of ten federal agencies. Public access was generally confined to the first floor post office, upper story courtrooms, and associated halls, stairs, and elevators. Fine finishes were confined to those areas. Charles Loring provided the following description in the American Architect:

Except for an effective main corridor lined with a "sport" Tennessee marble and linking upper and lower street levels, and for seven court rooms on the twelfth and fifteenth floors, the interior is just a loft building of one story after another. The court rooms vary one from the other in design. Some are in the main Classic or Renaissance, some are sheathed in stained walnut with early Pullman leanings, while some in "Pink Levanto" tend toward Modernistic in a manner hard to reconcile with Mr. Cram's published invectives against the Chicago Exposition.³⁵

LATER HISTORY OF THE BOSTON FEDERAL BUILDING

The Boston Federal Building was renamed the John W. McCormack Post Office and Courthouse by Public Law 91-653, passed on January 5, 1971. Rededication ceremonies were held on May 19, 1972. John William McCormack (1891-1980) devoted most of his long adult life to state and national politics. His career began when he passed the Massachusetts Bar and opened his own law firm in 1913 at the age of twenty-one. He served in the Massachusetts House of Representatives in 1920-1922, moving on to the state Senate in 1923-1926. In 1928 he was elected to the United States House of Representatives, where he served until 1971 when he voluntarily resigned at the age of 81. McCormack occupied the powerful position of Speaker of the House from 1962 until his resignation. He died on November 22, 1980. A bronze plaque in the main post office hallway commemorates the rededication.³⁶

PRESERVATION STATUS OF THE BOSTON FEDERAL BUILDING

A comprehensive survey of the Central Business District conducted by the Boston Landmarks Commission in 1980 recommended the John W. McCormack Post Office and Courthouse for listing in the National Register of Historic Places as part of the Exchange Historic District. It was determined eligible for individual listing in the National Register on November 8, 1985. A 1990 update of the original 1980 BLC survey proposed individual National Register listing to formalize that 1985 determination. Since that time, a landmark petition has been filed with the BLC and has received a favorable initial response. Designation is pending preparation and acceptance of a landmark study report.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The GSA specifically limited the research goals of this Building Preservation Plan to review of readily available materials. Thus, historical research was limited to resources available in the Boston area. Repositories that were consulted include the Boston office of the General Service Administration, the Boston Landmarks Commission, the Massachusetts Historical Commission, the Massachusetts State Library, the Massachusetts State Archives, the Boston Public Library, the Bostonian Society, and the Society for the Preservation of New England Antiquities.

In addition, the General Reference Branch of the National Archives holds a substantial collection of documents related to the planning and construction of federal buildings as part of its Public Building Service records (Record Group 121). This source should be consulted for more detailed information on materials, finishes, construction methods, lighting, furnishings, etc. before any work on primary features or spaces is undertaken. The September 16, 1933 opening date cited in GSA files should be confirmed. A search through all major Boston newspapers of the period, through a two week bracketing period, did not produce coverage of the event. Such an article is likely to include a wealth of information.

³⁴ American Architect 11/1933: 16

³⁵ American Architect 11/1933: 17

³⁶ on site GSA building file

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JOHN W. McCORMACK POST OFFICE & COURTHOUSE TIMELINE

- 1873: First Boston Federal Building opened, establishing major federal presence in downtown area (ca. 140,000 population)
- 1915: Boston population reached 196,300
- 1927: \$4,500,000 allocated for the new Federal Building
- 1928: Post office functions moved to the Brewer Building on State Street
- 1929: Court relocated to the Young's Hotel
- 7/1929: Demolition contract for 1873 building awarded
- 1930: Private architectural firms allowed to participate in the federal building program
- 3/15/1930: Site survey contract awarded
- 4/1930: Allocation increased to \$6,000,000 (*Globe* 5/6/31)
- 7/17/1930: Foundation contract awarded
- 12/12/1930: First advertisement for superstructure bids
- 1/20/1931: Superstructure bids opened; over budget
- 2/1931: Supplemental bids based on revised granite specs solicited of original 14 bidders; low bid of 4,799,900 submitted by Severin Co. still over budget
- 2/1931: Foundation work complete
- 3/1931: Second round of supplemental bids sought
- 3/25/1931: \$4,648,000.00 construction contract for superstructure awarded to N.P. Severin Co. of Chicago
- 3/28/1931: Construction contract for superstructure signed
- 4/16/1931: Comptroller-general questions legality of contract based on supplemental bid process
- 5/5/1931: Comptroller-general withdraws objections and contract for superstructure approved
- 7/1931: Construction of superstructure initiated
- 1/5/1932: Cornerstone ceremonies
- 3/31/1933: Projected date of completion
- 9/16/1933: New Federal Building opens
- 5/19/1972: Rededicated as John W. McCormack Post Office & Courthouse

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

This section summarizes the historical processes that produced the Boston Federal Building. Outlined below are: the evolution of the national postal service and judiciary; the history of federal building construction including legislation and design issues; and the growth of federal services in Boston prior to 1930. Some knowledge of these issues is a prerequisite to understanding the historical development and significance of the Boston Federal Building.

Evolution of the Federal Postal Service and Judiciary System

The foundations of the United States Postal Service were established during the Colonial period. Following the Revolution, the federal government assumed its control along with several other essential systems like the customs service and the courts. The first Postmaster General was appointed under the Continental Congress in 1775, and under the Constitution in 1789. The Post Office Act was passed in 1794. The federal system provided an opportunity for citizens to petition Congress which was empowered to establish post roads and post offices. The Postmaster General was responsible for providing service along those roads. The system expanded rapidly, increasing the numbers of post offices and miles of post roads fourfold between 1800 and 1820. The Postmaster General gained cabinet level status in 1829.³⁷

Many key aspects of the modern postal system had taken shape by the time of the Civil War including flat rates, stamps and envelopes, registered mail and money orders, and free delivery for larger cities. Rural free delivery, parcel post, and postal savings banks were among the important services established at the turn-of-the-century.³⁸

The constitution created the judicial branch of government, defined its scope of authority, and conferred the power to appoint justices on the President. The framework of a Supreme Court, a District Court for each of the new states, and three Circuit Courts was established by the Judiciary Act of 1789.³⁹ In later years, to compensate for the large volume of trials and to equitably distribute federal government influence, the judiciary divided the country into ninety federal court districts.⁴⁰

History of Federal Building Construction

The history of federal building construction reflects several common themes. One is the steady trend away from an individualized authorization and design process, toward omnibus public building legislation and standardized design. Another is the recurrent tug-of-war between a centralized federal design office and private architectural firms, both of which had been credited with efficiency and quality, and condemned for corruption and waste. A third theme is the progression of national taste as reflected in popular architectural styles. Finally, the use of federal buildings changed dramatically over time as the relative importance of the Customs Service declined while that of the Judiciary and Postal Service increased, and new agencies were rapidly created to serve an expanding and increasingly complex society. The name Federal Building came to replace Post Office, Customhouse, or Courthouse in the 1920s, as a myriad of federal agencies became tenants of large-scale office buildings.

1800-1851

During the early years of the republic, when federal government functions were few and the population small, rented quarters were usually sufficient for the basic needs of the Customs Service, Courts, and Postal Service. It was not until 1836 that the scope of construction activities had grown sufficiently to warrant appointment of a Federal Architect. Robert Mills served in this position until 1842 when he was succeeded by Anni B. Young. During this early period, no uniform method of construction was observed, and local/architect builders contracted by the Federal government often worked without close supervision.

1852-1891

The Office of the Supervising Architect was created within the Treasury Department in 1852, in response to the enormously increased volume of federal construction projects. Anni B. Young (1852-1862) was the first to serve in this position with key support from Capt. Alexander Bowman as chief engineer. The office was given responsibility for all architectural design and construction supervision in an effort to circumvent

³⁷ Grosvenor 1984

³⁸ Grosvenor 1984

³⁹ Morison 1965: 321

⁴⁰ Beard 1944: 162

the often cumbersome and corrupt practice of awarding public design contracts. One of the early innovations of the office was the development of standardized building types to house the prevalent customhouse, post office and courthouse functions. The eclectic architectural styles selected for these buildings, reflected prevailing national taste. The scope of the office's effort is revealed in the numbers of Federal buildings which increased from 23 in 1853, to 297 with 95 more under construction by 1892.⁴¹

1892-1912

By the turn-of-the-century, the federal design process was once again perceived as flawed and corrupt, triggering two important changes. The first was passage of the Tarsney Act which allowed, but did not require, the Treasury Department to hire private architects. The chief proponent of this piece of legislation was the American Institute of Architects. Enacted in 1892, the Tarsney Act was not implemented until 1897 when a change in administration occurred; it was repealed in 1912 due to the excessive cost of employing outside architects. In general, private firms were interested only in the larger-scale urban projects, leaving small building design to the Supervising Architect.⁴² The short-lived Tarsney Act thus had little effect on federal building construction, but it did set the stage for the next wave of privatization in the 1930s.

Passage of the first omnibus public buildings law in 1902 initiated more wide-spread and influential changes. Unlike the Tarsney Act, this piece of legislation was the first of many which would totally change the federal construction process. It authorized construction of 150 buildings around the nation, in contrast to the 19th century practice which had required individual legislation for each building. The scope of this law is illustrated by the massive increase in federal buildings which rose from 399 in 1899 to 1,126 by 1912.⁴³ Most of these buildings were post offices. Some scholars have linked the popularity of omnibus public building laws with Congressional desires to distribute "Federal presents".⁴⁴

Under the leadership of Supervising Architect James Knox Taylor (1897-1912), there was a brief return to individualized building plans. Taylor also favored the use of fine materials and Classical Revival styles to express the dignity, monumentality, and enduring nature of government. During this period, 206 post offices were constructed.⁴⁵

1913-1925

The 1902 omnibus bill prompted many questions about the actual need for the buildings authorized, and was widely criticized as "pork barrel" legislation. At the same time, Taylor's high architectural standards had led to rising construction costs. Thus, in 1913, Congress was persuaded to take two actions aimed at fairness, efficiency, and economy. One was passage of the Public Buildings Act, which combined omnibus authorization with a prohibition on the construction of new post offices in communities with postal receipts of less than \$10,000. The other was creation of the Public Building Commission.

Under the leadership of Treasury Secretary William McAdoo, the PBC developed several policies to direct federal construction projects. One was development of standardized designs and floor plans wherever possible to reduce drafting time. Another was institution of a four-part classification system to provide a standard relationship between the cost of a post office, and the value of land and postal receipts in the city where it was to be located. In McAdoo's own words, the purpose of the classification system was to provide a rational system of uniformity and business economy in designing and constructing public buildings so that buildings suitable to the public need may be built without waste of government money.

The classification system was fully implemented by 1917.⁴⁶

This policy signaled a retreat from Taylor's insistence on individuality and monumentality in public buildings, regardless of their location. In the words of the PBC,

⁴¹ Craig 1978: 202

⁴² Craig 1978: 202-203

⁴³ Harris 1982: 4

⁴⁴ Craig 1978: 239

⁴⁵ Harris 1982: 28

⁴⁶ Harris 1982: 8-10

While monumental structures have a place in Government construction, there should be discrimination in the selection of cities in which they shall be erected.⁴⁷

During this period 421 post offices were constructed.⁴⁸ Classical Revival styles remained prevalent. Oscar Wenderoth, who was employed by the Supervising Architect's office from 1897-1929, served briefly as its head in 1913-14.⁴⁹ For the remainder of this period, the office was held by James A. Wetmore, a lawyer who had begun his career with the Treasury Department as a court stenographer.⁵⁰ The appointment of a non-architect to the position of Supervising Architect may reflect the increased complexity of administering the job/federal building construction process, the lowered prestige of the office at this time, and the emphasis on business economy and efficiency over considerations of architectural design and quality.

1926-1939

Federal building projects ground to a near halt in 1917 when the United States entered World War I. It resumed only slowly in the 1920s as funds for buildings that had been authorized by the 1913 building act were finally released. Congressional failure to pass new public building legislation in a period of intense national growth led to a \$20,000,000 rental bill for federal agencies by 1923.⁵¹

When the Public Buildings Act of 1926 was finally passed on May 25 it represented a new step in mass appropriations that did not even specify buildings as the 1902 and 1913 acts had. Rather, it allocated \$100,000,000 for construction of buildings outside Washington D. C., with no more than \$5,000,000 to be spent annually in any one state. It also directed the Secretary of the Treasury and the Postmaster General to identify communities that would receive new buildings through a nationwide survey of need.⁵² Once again, this bill attempted to curtail individual Congressional privilege, while streamlining efficiency and economy in anticipation of a massively enlarged public building program..

Oscar Wenderoth, who briefly served as Supervising Architect in 1913-1914, explained the intent and provisions of this innovative legislation to private architectural firms in a 1927 Architectural Forum article entitled "The Building Program of the Government". He termed the Act
.... a very remarkable piece of federal legislation. It inaugurates in an impressive manner a public building program that will undoubtedly require years for its execution. It also establishes an entirely new legislative policy in connection with the distribution, authorization, designing and construction of federal buildings....⁵³

Implementation of this act was delayed by the "needs" survey, and then by the catastrophic economic crash of 1929. In response to the resulting massive unemployment, it was amended in 1930 with increased funding along with authorization to employ private architects and engineers "without reference to Civil Service Regulations".⁵⁴ This latter component was the result of intense lobbying by the American Institute of Architects, and reflected the fact that almost 50% of the nation's architectural firms went bankrupt in the first years of the depression. This legislation provided the precedent for subsequent public works programs designed to alleviate the nation's unemployment. Buildings constructed during the 1930s continued to be selected from the 1927 survey of need.⁵⁵

Even though public building legislation of the 1930s directed the Treasury Department to employ private firms, the goals of standardization and economy remained in effect. A set of "Cabinet Sketches" was developed which provided standard floor plans for post offices of various sizes in order to reduce the number of construction drawings. The Department also produced a publication entitled "Instructions to

⁴⁷ Harris 1982: 8

⁴⁸ Harris 1982: 28

⁴⁹ Withey 1970: 644

⁵⁰ Withey 1970: 647

⁵¹ Craig 1978: 281

⁵² Harris 1982: 12-13

⁵³ Architectural Forum 1927: 225

⁵⁴ Harris 1982: 15

⁵⁵ Harris 1982: 16-17

Private Architects Engaged on Public Building Work under the Jurisdiction of the Treasury Department". The GSA Office of Fine Arts and Historic Preservation retains copies of the "Cabinet Sketches" but no copies of the instructional pamphlet are known to exist.⁵⁶ While the plan of post offices was well defined by the Treasury Department, room for individuality remained in the building details, especially on the exterior.

The actual participation of private firms in the federal building program varied throughout the decade. Beginning with a trickle in 1930, the number of privately contracted projects jumped to a high of 301 in Fiscal Year 1934.⁵⁷ The massive scale of the construction effort produced a mutually beneficial and dependent relationship between private firms and the Supervising Architect's office. Despite major staff increases from 432 in 1929, to almost 750 in 1932,⁵⁸ the central office could not handle the volume of work. At the same time, the architectural profession acknowledged the growing importance of government contracts with the publication of several related articles in the September 1933 issue of *Architectural Forum*. One, entitled "The Planning of Public Buildings", explained the requirements for constructing various types of public building including post offices and courthouses. The Boston Federal Building was one of several prototypes featured in this issue.⁵⁹ After 1934, the use of private firms dropped sharply, falling to 165 in 1935, and to only 4 in 1937. At the end of fiscal year 1937, the use of private firms was curtailed altogether.⁶⁰

During this period 1,973 post offices were constructed, with 1,787 of that total appearing after 1932.⁶¹ Classical Revival styles, in a minimalist schematic form known as "Starved Classicism", remained prevalent. James Wetmore retained the office of Supervising Architect until 1933 when he was replaced by Louis A. Simon. Simon had served as superintendent of the architectural division of the Supervising Architect's office since 1905, and probably made most of the important design decisions for the office under lawyer Wetmore's tenure.⁶²

⁵⁶ Harris 1982: 18, 27

⁵⁷ Harris 1982: 17

⁵⁸ Craig 1978: 327

⁵⁹ *Architectural Forum* 1933: 223-225; the Boston Federal Building was one example highlighted in this article.

⁶⁰ Harris 1982: 19

⁶¹ Harris 1982: 28

⁶² Craig 1978: 328

ARCHITECTURAL ZONE DESCRIPTIONS

ZONE 1A: EXTERIOR

A. POST OFFICE PARK

Because all four sides of the John W. McCormack Post Office and Courthouse Building are fully exposed, each can be called a facade. The Post Office Park facade, which faces east, is the most dramatic and tallest due to the sloping site. Because Milk and Water Streets slope down toward Post Office Park, this facade is one story higher than the other three. The facade is comprised of a five-story main entrance flanked by symmetrical twelve-story towers. Set back behind the entry grouping and fronting on the central light court is the main tower of the building which rises 23 stories. The entrance pavilion, opening onto Congress Street and leading to a grand stair from the Post Office Square lobby to the main level (first floor), consists of three bays of anodized aluminum and glass doors, which replaced a like number of double bronze and glass decorative doors, fabricated with multi-lite glazing. Each of the three door sets is framed with a polished black marble surround which feature an inscribed eagle medallion at the door head. Above each surround is an aluminum transom panel, and above the transom is a three-story-high columnar aluminum-framed window behind a decorative bronze grille. A bronze medallion in each column divides the vertical grilles into a larger, lower segment, and a smaller, upper segment. The three door/grille columns are separated by granite pilasters, each with a base, shaft and carved masonry ornament in an abstracted floral motif typical of the Art Deco architectural style. The parapet of the entrance composition. The pilasters above an intermediate cornice, culminating with a crenelated parapet with a carved floral ornament terminating each pilaster. A bronze flagpole sits atop the center bay at the parapet.

The main entrance composition is an adroit combination of verticality and three-dimensionality that is typical of the entire building and is a hallmark of the Art Deco Style for tall buildings. The ziggarut-like setbacks in the vertical dimension and steps and projections in the horizontal plane are all intended to emphasize verticality, as are the vertical window strips and pilasters. This same characteristic is evident in all of the elevations.

The two towers that flank the Post Office Park entrance rise 17 stories above Congress Street. Each tower consists of a one-story granite-covered sub-base (which disappears along the Milk and Water Street facades as the sidewalk rises to the high side of the site along Devonshire street) which incorporates several aluminum sash that are covered with decorative metal grilles, as well as overhead doors which provide access to basement loading bays; a water table featuring carved Greek fret work. A two-story base is topped by a solid balustrade with recessed carved masonry panels at each window bay. Above the base, an 11-story shaft consisting of granite faced walls and vertical ribbons of aluminum sash separated from each other by aluminum spandrel panels. The shaft is interrupted by a pair of belt courses defining a broad frieze band hiding an intermediate 'construction floor,' housing mechanical equipment. Carved vertical panels atop each of the double window strips are located within the freeze. A decorative element identified as a 'battle ax' in the original drawings is located in this frieze band at all major corners formed by setbacks and recesses.

From the 14th to the 17th floor, the towers form a subtle but distinctive profile defined by a series of setbacks of the main body and projecting pilasters, culminating in a flat, undecorated parapet of the same stone as the body of the tower. A story-high carved masonry eagle with wings spread resides above each dual window strip. The set-back center tower rises 13 stories above the entrance to the 17th floor where a decorative band covers a construction floor and relates to the parapets of the two shorter towers. The band is defined at top and bottom by simple limestone belt courses and features carved panels in a wheat flower motif above four of the seven pairs of vertical window strips. Above the 17th floor, the tower continues uninterrupted to the 22nd floor and elevator machinery penthouse. Window columns rise to the 19th floor where the outer columns terminate in setbacks. The flat tower parapet features a simple, faceted band of carved terra cotta. Stone grilles front two sets of double windows at the elevator machine room. The central tower on the Post Office Park side is faced with limestone for its entire height.

B. DEVONSHIRE STREET ELEVATION

The Devonshire Street facade is the most massive due to fewer setbacks of major segments of the building and the continuous ascent of the 22-story central tower to the full height of the structure. The composition of this elevation is similar to the primary facade in that it consists of a sub-base, base, shaft and top. At this elevation, however, the sub-base is only a half-story due to the one-story difference in height between Congress Street and Devonshire. The sub-base incorporates several windows which are covered with decorative grilles. The base is separated from the sub-base by a continuation of the fretted water table. The facade is divided into three segments.

The tower segment at the center is slightly recessed and contains the Devonshire Street entrance, which forms one of the five vertical bays rising continuously to the full height of the building. Flanking the center portion are two 17-story segments, each with four bays of vertical window groupings of aluminum sash and spandrel panels. A decorative frieze band, identical to that on the Post Office Park facade, separates the base from the tower shaft. The shaft continues to the mechanical floor that separates the 13th and 14th floors, where wheat-motif carved panels, panels are used in place of windows. The tower extends three more stories to the 17th floor break, where the granite facing stops and limestone facing begins. Wheat-motif panels are incorporated as delineating devices between the 17th floor and the tower continuation, serving to emphasize the distinction between the tower and the broader portion of the building below.

The central tower continues to the elevator penthouse level. The parapet at the top of the tower is as described previously. This uppermost portion of the tower recedes in four steps to the top in true Art Deco fashion.

The two corner segments of this elevation are identical and feature the same components and fenestration as the center tower but terminate at the 17th floor. As on the lower Post Office Park elevation towers, the two inner vertical columns of window pairs are topped by one-story-high carved eagles. The battle ax corner ornaments recur at major setbacks and projections.

C. MILK AND WATER STREET ELEVATIONS

The two side street elevations are more monolithic and less decorative than the other two facades and are basically block-long 17-story compositions. The one-story sub-base slopes to accommodate the falling street level. Bronze grilles protect double windows from sidewalk damage. The two-story base rests on top of the continuous fretted water table. Each elevation features a single-bay entrance consisting of one pair of double doors with aluminum decorative transom panel and polished black marble surround with the requisite eagle at the head of the door. A two-story window with bronze grille allows light into the stairway behind. The slightly-projected entrance bay is topped with a carved medallion and floral carvings at a simple frieze. The frieze band features carved, recessed panels below the 3rd floor windows, varying in width depending on whether they are beneath single or double windows. The main body of each elevation - from the 4th to the 13th floor - incorporates 11 single and double window/transom columns. Between the 13th and 14th floors is the broad band defined by horizontal belt courses that continues from the other two elevations. Each of the two elevations includes four pairs of decorative panels above every other pair of windows. From the 14th floor to the 17th, these elevations continue with minimal decoration, terminating at a flat, unembellished, parapet.

D. LIGHT WELL ELEVATIONS

The side elevations of the Post Office Park towers which face each other across the lightwell are faced in granite and consist of 3 bays of single window/transom columns. Fenestration of these elevations is similar to the main elevations, with belt courses and carved panels at the 13th-14th mechanical floor and with setbacks at the 17th floor and penthouses. These walls are capped with flat, undecorated parapets. Projections and setbacks increase toward the top, culminating at the 17th floor. The lightwell elevations of the Milk and Water Street portions of the building are faced with limestone. Each has four bays of paired vertical aluminum windows separated by aluminum spandrel panels. The only decorative elements on these elevations are belt courses and carved stone panels at the 17th floor. The parapet is plain with none of the decorative banding seen on major elevations.

E. SITE

Because the John W. McCormack Post Office and Courthouse Building occupies its entire one-square-block site, no site description is necessary.

ZONE 1C: COURTROOMS AND MAIN LIBRARY

With the exception of the basement and Devonshire stairway spaces, the most architecturally significant interior spaces of the John W. McCormack Post Office and Courthouse Building are the seven original courtrooms and the main law library. Courtrooms 1 through 5 and the library occupy most of the 12th floor (and, by virtue of their nearly two-story height, the 13th floor as well).

A. BASEMENT ENTRANCE, LOBBIES AND STAIRWAY

The main entrance to the building occurs at the basement level off Post Office Park. Here the visitor encounters three sets of double doors leading to one of two major public stairways rising to the first floor straight ahead. To the right and left immediately inside the doors are lobbies originally designed to serve as service counters for Parcel Post. At the end of each of the two side lobbies is a bank of elevators which services the 17-story office tower above. The side lobbies and stairway approach feature rich surfaces of smooth and carved marble at the exterior wall and service windows at the inner wall, both walls broken into bays by fluted marble pilasters. Four different types of marble are used for the floor field (interspersed with terrazzo tile), floor border, floor inlays and wainscot base. Coved plaster ceilings drop to form beams at the pilasters. Carved marble is used as a frieze band below the ceiling coffers and at transom panels over the exterior doors.

The original exterior entrance doors were aluminum with elaborately decorated aluminum push bars, while interior doors were bronze. This use, which is the reverse of what one would expect to see today on an important building, reflects the relative newness of aluminum as a building material and its appropriateness for use in an important new Art Deco-style building. The postal service windows consist of fixed and sliding sash of multiple lites in bronze frames and include decorative grilles above them. Postal windows are surrounded by ornamental bronze bands with carved marble inserts executed in Art Deco geometric, abstract and floral patterns. Counters of polished metal are above bronze wainscot panels. Most of the service windows are no longer used, and some have been covered over with modern materials.

A set of four bronze doors and frames with three-lite transom windows and ornamental marble lintels was originally present at each elevator bank to create a small elevator lobby and entrance to the two fire stairs. Original drawings show the elevators with marble surrounds and bronze doors and frames. The doors had richly-modeled upper panels and 'combed' bronze lower panels. As built, the elevator frames are unembellished metal in a marble field, while the doors are smooth, painted metal. Examination of GSA renovation records uncovered several elevator renovation projects over the years so it is certainly possible that the original plans were executed.

Another four-door group originally separated the Parcel Post lobby from the stairs leading to the first floor. This door wall has also been removed. The stairs rise in dramatic fashion toward the high-ceilinged extension lobby at the first floor. Sidewalls and ceiling continue the decorative motifs and materials of the lobbies but with more subtle pilasters and a more emphatic ceiling with deep coffers placed perpendicular to the ascent at close

intervals. Walls of Roseal polished marble rise to a decorative marble frieze band and a molded plaster cornice, while a stringer of D'or Fossile marble provides a base. The existing linear fluorescent light fixtures with aluminum grilles are parallel to the stair treads and contribute to the verticality of the staircase. Polished bronze center and side railings complete the stair composition.

B. FIRST FLOOR LOBBIES

Upon ascending the stair, one enters the "extension" lobby which runs east-west, crossing the main elevator lobbies (referred to on the plans as the Milk Street and the Water Street lobbies) and terminating at the Devonshire Street entrance. Taken together, the three lobbies originally provided public access to the most often-used postal functions as well as to the primary elevator banks.

The extension lobby is broken into four bays by columns and pilasters, while each of the other two lobbies consists of five bays. With the exception of door openings for the two main elevator banks (three cars in each), the lobbies were originally lined with service windows, and counters, desks, and lock boxes. None of the original windows remain today, having been replaced by new lock boxes and postal machines, snack bar, and other modern accoutrements of the contemporary post office building. The main public post office area, constructed in 1973, incorporates the original Milk Street lobby and entry in contemporary materials.

The ceilings of the first floor lobbies are coffered plaster with panels defined by decorative plaster borders. The ceilings start at an ornamental plaster cornices atop marble columns. At the center of each coffer is a simple medallion designed to accept pendant light fixtures (light fixtures were designed, but it is not none whether they were ever fabricated and installed - if so, none remain today).

Floors are primarily of Beaver Dam marble with inlays of terrazzo and D'or Fossile marble. The highlight of the floors in this space is a compass rose located at the crossing of the extension lobby and the Milk Street - Water Street lobbies. The rose consists of Beaver Dam and D'or Fossile marble with a bronze border and a Post Office Department seal executed in bronze at its center. Above the rose is a large brass clock which is not an original feature.

As originally constructed, the first floor lobbies contained several types of service windows and counters composed of glass sash in bronze frames; bronze panels and borders in combed, smooth and modeled surfaces; and elaborate bronze grille work above. The windows were combined in groups of three, and each group was framed with 12-foot-high surrounds of marble, rising to the decorative plaster cornice. In almost all cases, the surrounds remain as constructed, while the window groups have been removed and replaced with new infill of modern materials and functions.

The original configuration of the Milk Street lobby was altered and size reduced when public counters were replaced with office space and the corridor colonnade was infilled

The lobby walls consist of marble wainscot extending to a height equal to the top of the elevator door frames with plaster above, capped with a plaster cornice and coffered plaster ceiling. The recessed ceiling at each bay is slightly concave.

Floors are terrazzo tile on the diagonal with brass strips, offset by marble borders and base.

The original drawings show highly ornamental bronze elevator doors and surrounds with transom panels. The existing doors are unembellished, and the frames are plain painted metal, the change assumed to be the result of cost-cutting moves.

F. SECOND FLOOR REGISTRY LOBBY

The Registry was provided with its own lobby, located through a set of double doors at the south end of the elevator lobby. The Registry lobby itself, which remains in its original configuration, is quite simple, its most distinctive feature being the long wall of service windows executed in a design unique to this location. The window wall consists of vertically-oriented decorative bronze grilles over fixed, translucent glass above service windows of polished glass separated from each other by sliding bronze security bars. Ornamental bronze work is in abundance, above and between grilles and windows. Marble counters, wainscot panels, base and floor borders add to the richness of this space. The wall opposite the windows is flat and undecorated. A simple concave plaster ceiling with low relief panels springs from a decorative plaster band at the top of the walls.

G. THIRD FLOOR ELEVATOR LOBBY

The third floor lobby consists of five bays. It is reached from the second floor by way of the center main fire stair; there is no ornamental stair connecting these two floors. Only the east side of the northernmost two bays has service counters and windows, which are similar to the basement and 2nd floor window walls. The windows are no longer used and have been filled with marble panels. The elevator wall elevation is the same as that of the second floor. The floor is terrazzo tile with brass strips, borders of black and white check ceramic tile and Verde Antique marble, a Verde antique base. Original drawings indicate a carved marble ornamental band immediately below the ceiling. A decorative band exists today, but it is painted; thus it is uncertain whether it is marble or perhaps was executed in plaster as a cost-saving measure.

H. TWELFTH FLOOR LOBBY AND CORRIDORS

The 12th floor is the location of five of the seven original courtrooms. Thus the circulation elements of this floor were assigned a great deal of importance by the building's designers. This importance was emphasized by the placement of an inlaid floor medallion of Swanton Black, Beaver Dam and Verde marble with bronze borders in the center of the elevator lobby. At the same time, it is possible to get a feel for the budget constraints under which the designers and constructors of the building operated, as the floors were originally specified as Beaver Dam marble, but as constructed are diagonally-oriented terrazzo tile.

The elevator lobby consists of nine bays defined by engaged columns on the elevator wall and pilasters on the opposite wall. The side corridors, each five bays long, provided access to the courtrooms and the main library. Elevator surrounds at this floor are elaborately-modeled in bronze.

Materials used in these spaces include terrazzo floors with borders of Verde Verde and Swanton Black marble; door-head-height wainscot of Verdoso marble panels separated vertically by bronze strips; upper walls of plain plaster with decorative plaster panels at each column; and plain concave plaster ceilings with shallow beams crossing between the columns and pilasters. A continuous band of plaster ornament follows the curve of the ceiling and the sides of the beams at the top of walls. A continuous carved marble cap sits atop the wainscot at walls, columns and pilasters.

Additional ornament calls attention to major room functions through the use of bronze trim and heads at all courtroom and library doors (the door heads contain integral identification signage for the room within). Painted metal trim is used at doors of less importance.

At side corridors, the wainscot drops below the light well window sills, returning to full height between.

Strips of fluorescent lighting are recessed in the ceiling, spaced several feet apart and oriented parallel to the cross beams. The light fixtures have metal grilles which appear to be bronze.

I. 15TH FLOOR ELEVATOR LOBBY AND CORRIDORS

The elevator lobby at the 15th floor serves original courtrooms 6 and 7 and is nine bays long with a small corner bay at the south end leading to non-public spaces. The bays are delineated by engaged columns on the elevator wall and pilasters on the opposite wall, both finished to match adjoining wall surfaces. The pilasters and columns have decorative plaster capitals. This lobby is typical of floors not described under Zone 1 except for the floor, which is more elaborate.

This floor has the typical marble and black-and-white-check ceramic tile border with the addition of tile bands that correspond to the ceiling beams crossing overhead at pilasters and columns. This element is shown on the drawings as being typical of all upper floors. However, as built, the 15th is the only floor to be so embellished.

The main floor material is terrazzo tile with bronze strips and a ceramic tile and Verde Antique marble base. The wainscot, which carries up to a height of 3' - 4" above the floor, is Brocadillo marble. Upper walls are unadorned plaster. The ceiling is coffered with flat recesses between beams. An ornamental plaster cornice appears at all four sides of each coffer (with a few exceptions where the cornice is seen on only three sides).

ZONE 1 B: CIRCULATION SYSTEM

The major interior areas of the John W. McCormack Post Office and Courthouse Building which are historically and architecturally significant make up the main public circulation system for the original post office and courtroom areas. The circulation system at the basement, 1st floor, 2nd floor and 3rd floor levels, which originally served postal functions, and at the 12th and 15th floors, which serve courtrooms, is the subject of Zone 1B.

Courtroom #4 is not included in this zone. It was originally identical to Courtroom #2 and was a non-jury courtroom, thereby being without the ancillary spaces which are attached to courtrooms 1, 3 and 5. Courtroom #4 was converted to a jury courtroom in 1968. At that time, its original size and configuration were significantly altered, as was one end of the library. Because the renovation was carried out in a relatively sensitive way, and the original finishes for the most part remain in place under newer work, Courtroom #4 has been assigned Zone 3D and will be discussed under the description of that zone later in this report.

A. COURTROOMS 1 AND 5

Courtrooms 1 and 5 are mirror images of each other and are located at the northeast and southeast corners of the 12th floor. They are rectangular in plan and measure approximately 32 feet wide by 52 feet long and 21 feet high to the highest point of the ceiling. Although the following description is written in terms of a single room, all descriptions, with the exception of the summary of changes at the end, apply to both courtrooms.

This room has a cork tile floor with a border of Royal Red marble and a base of D'or Fossile marble, covered today by carpet.

The concave ceiling, divided into a small bay over the judge's bench platform and a larger bay over the remainder of the room is covered with 12" by 12" acoustical tile. Although the existing ceiling tile is not original, a similar tile was used when this building was constructed, in what was a fairly early use of this modern material. The ceiling treatment includes acoustical tile medallions that were probably intended to be the location for pendant lighting fixtures; and decorative plaster borders.

The wall behind the judge's bench is a textbook example of an Art Deco civic interior treatment which echoes the composition of the exterior building elevations. The raised bench of decorative wood paneling sits on a platform slightly over two feet above the main floor level. The judge's bench and clerk's desk are faced with wood panels with bronze diamond-shaped inlays and vertical bronze stripes separating the panels from frames. Behind the bench is a towering back panel with two ziggurat-like pilasters of fluted wood to either side of three vertical smooth wood panels with the same bronze detailing as seen at the bench but larger in scale. The panels are capped with a carved wood ornamental band, and the pilasters are terminated with a tooled bronze plaque which repeats the ziggurat motif in miniature. Over the center panel (centered over the

judge's bench) is an octagonal plaster medallion three feet across depicting the scales of justice with a rising sunburst in the background.

The remaining area of the end wall consists of shorter wood panels to either side of the center panels, identical to those behind the judge's bench, but only rising to 7' - 5" above the floor. The bays are separated by a plain wood pilaster which has a tooled bronze plaque of the scales of justice overlaying a sword at its top and a marble base at the bottom. The upper wall above the paneling features a single horizontal decorative plaster molding that joins with a cornice and frieze at the side walls to form an entablature.

The side wall on the corridor elevation is defined by nine bays of wood paneling divided by stepped pilasters identical to those found on the end wall. Wood wainscoting between the pilasters is 7 feet high and includes bronze inlays. The pilaster/wainscot wall finish is interrupted only by double doors at the public entry and single doors leading to the judge's robing room and the jury room. The sidewalls also have three decorative bronze grills above the wainscot. Upper walls are plaster, with the aforementioned entablature serving as a base for the curved ceiling.

The rear wall is five bays of wood paneling identical to that of the side walls. A decorative vertically-oriented bronze grille occupies the center panel in the two outermost bays.

The window wall is similar to the interior side wall, with wood paneling between pilasters that drops 20 inches to accommodate the 12-over-12 double hung aluminum windows. The doors were originally covered with pigskin and decorated with three vertical rows of square-headed bronze tacks. Each door has a diamond-shaped glass vision lite in a bronze frame. The doors are set in deep recesses opening onto the main elevator corridor. The walls and ceiling of the recesses are finished in the same materials and parti as the courtroom. This treatment, which carries the decor of the courtroom through interior partitions to the corridor, is typical of each courtroom and the library.

With the exception of carpeted floors; new recessed fluorescent lighting; recovered doors; and modern wood witness and jury boxes, rail and seating, both courtrooms are in original configuration and in excellent condition. The original drawings show a curved courtroom railing separating the spectator seating area from the floor reserved for court personnel and trial participants. Drawing notes indicate that this railing was to be made of velour-covered hemp rope, a seemingly exotic fabrication. Unfortunately, if these railings were installed, none survive today.

B. COURTROOM 2

Courtroom No. 2, like its original twin No. 4, was designed as a non-juried courtroom. Both 2 and 4 have been converted to juried courtrooms, though No. 4 was altered more extensively in the transition. Because of this, Courtroom No. 4 is included in this Plan as a Zone 3, Rehabilitation Zone, space, while No. 2 is described below as a Preservation Zone. Even though significantly altered, Courtroom No. 4 still retains much of its

of the inner two bays. The exterior wall has three bays with one six-over-six double hung aluminum window in each, and the fourth bay has two identical windows.

The wall behind the judge's bench is defined by a pair of doors, each of which is flanked by a pair of pilasters matching those of the side walls. The left door leads to a jurors' lobby, while the right leads to the robing room. Above each door is a decorative metal grille originally called out to be painted to match the faux stone walls.

The rear wall, framed in elevation by two-sided pilasters at the corners of the setback, is fully-rendered in the ashlar stone pattern. A pair of tall vertical metal grilles, each over a small, lower grille at the base, occupies a substantial portion of this wall.

A wide, plain frieze band of acoustical plaster separates the stone-patterned walls from the ceiling. Other than horizontal ornamental plaster top and bottom moldings, the only embellishment in the frieze is imitation stone capitals at the pilasters.

The two end wall doors behind the judge's bench are leather-covered, as originally specified with square-headed bronze tacks as ornament. Casings are of Swanton Black marble. An ornate metal grille is located above each door, and a bronze wall sconce is mounted at either side of each grille.

The double door pairs on the interior side wall are also leather covered with bronze tacks. Each door has an abstract geometric glass vision lite in a bronze frame. A leather transom panel is directly above each pair. The door surround is wide casings of Swanton Black marble with a massive stepped head with an octagonal bronze insert showing an eagle with wings spread.

Windows in the south wall are subtly finished with flush trim butting against the faux stone plaster wall returns.

Changes in Courtroom No. 3 include the new back panel behind the judge's bench as mentioned above. Also added in the more recent past is wood wainscot to window sill height, which matches the paneling behind the bench. A new judge's bench and clerk's desk were installed, simply designed and finished in wood to match the new wainscot. Jury box, witness box and fixed, church-pew-type seating complete the furniture replacement. Recessed fluorescent lighting has been installed in the ceiling coffers in a generally sympathetic way.

D. MAIN LIBRARY

The Main Library occupies the northwest corner of the 12th floor and the 13th floor as well. The main reading room, with balcony and mezzanine, is the portion of the Library that is included in Zone 1C. Other library spaces include a small reading room off the s. w. corner of the main room, a stairway to the thirteenth floor, support/office space at the first floor, and stack space at the twelfth floor. These spaces are considerably less decorative and significant, and are included under other, less stringent, zones.

The main room is a rectangular space approximately 80 feet long by 32 feet wide, divided into five longitudinal bays by columns at the exterior walls and by pilasters at interior walls. The bays are occupied by vertical stacks of bookshelves, and by doors and windows. A two-story-high central court is created by the superimposition of the mezzanine over the main floor plan. The floor of the main room and mezzanine was originally cork tile with a Royal Red marble border. The original floor has been covered with wall-to-wall carpet.

The ceiling is a grid of square plaster coffers roughly a foot on a side. No lighting was shown on the original drawings; thus it is not known how lighting was provided when the building opened. Today, there are surface-mounted fluorescent fixtures in substantial metal frames at the ceiling over the balcony. Other ceiling areas are now new suspended acoustic ceilings with recessed 2 by 4 fluorescent fixtures.

Interior walls without windows are characterized by continuous banks of bookcases of painted metal shelves with bronze facings, recessed into marble surrounds. The top shelf of each stack of bookcases has a hinged decorative bronze front (four shelf units on the south wall have ornamental bronze ventilation grilles in place of the storage bins). Double stack bookcases are separated from each other by substantial mullions of gold-veined black marble with vertical bronze panel inserts at their centers. The major bays are defined by fluted marble pilasters. Bookcases, mullions and pilasters rise to a continuous entablature with an architrave of carved fluted black marble, a simple plaster frieze decorated with widely-spaced diamond-shaped medallions, and a cornice with two continuous ornamental plaster cove moldings.

At the window walls, bookcase stacks are separated from the windows by black marble and bronze mullions. Below the windows are marble sills and radiator cabinets with decorative bronze grilles, trimmed in marble.

Perimeter walls at the mezzanine/balcony feature similar bookcase and window motifs, with an abundance of black marble and bronze in evidence. A balcony frieze is shown on the plans as being finished with black walnut with the names of prominent classical authors and philosophers (Plato, Socrates, Aristotle, Solon, etc.) inlaid in bronze. However, either the work was never done, or the frieze was executed in plaster without the names as this theme is not evident today. The balcony is ringed by an ornate bronze railing spanning between bronze stanchions and supported by bronze-encased steel hangers from beams above.

Free-standing floor cases were provided for the library and 13th floor stack room. These remain in place and consist of painted metal shelving stacks in cabinets of bronze.

The library entrance doors are the most elaborate of the building. Each leaf is a two-panel design fabricated totally in bronze, with a combination of hammered and etched finishes. The larger, lower panel of each door is decorated with three columns of wheat

sheaf clusters; the upper panel has a compass rose in an octagonal medallion. Intricately-patterned transom panels above are carved bronze. Deep door casings finished with vertical bronze panels set in gold-veined black marble carry the decorative theme of the library into the corridor.

The library and balcony/mezzanine remain largely intact. Modern fluorescent lighting fixtures, new supplementary bookcases of wood, and modern circulation and reception desks are the only significant changes.

The 13th floor stack room and 12th floor office spaces are not included in Zone 1C because the materials and finishes of these areas are generally similar to those found in general office space. The stack room, with its original free-standing bookcase units, remains basically intact.

E. COURTROOM NO. 6

Courtroom No. 6 is located at the southwest corner of the 15th floor. And is a distinctively Art Deco space.

The room is a 32-foot by 64-foot rectangle, with the end with the judge's bench platform (the west end) being somewhat narrower. The room is divided by free-standing columns (north wall only) and pilasters at all walls into three bays in both directions. One set of double doors in the north wall leads to the elevator lobby. A single door at the north end of the platform leads to the judge's robing room; another door in the main body of the room opens into jury spaces. The original floor was cork tile, with marbles borders, which has been covered over with wall-to-wall carpet. The ceiling is slightly concave from side wall to side wall. It is divided into 3 cross-bays by beams rising from pilasters and columns. Acoustical tile covers all ceiling surfaces except the beams. Cornice moldings provide relatively subtle decoration at the outer edges of the ceiling bays. The narrowed judge's platform is dramatically set off from the rest of the space by a plaster proscenium arch, reflected at the ceiling by a dropped arch and the smaller ceiling bay above the bench. The proscenium face has an edge band of decorative plaster tile around the opening.

At the end wall behind the judge's bench, panels of Pink Lepanto marble with a French Grey base rise to 13 feet above the platform. Five panels step up from either side to the tallest centered behind the bench. This center panel is topped by a bronze eagle with a six-foot wingspan. The eagle extends above the marble panel to the plaster upper wall, thereby heightening its three-dimensionality. Pilasters separate the two panels to either side of the center one. Each pilaster has a bronze plaque near its top. Each of the four side panels is dominated by a 10-foot-high decorative bronze grille. Above the panels is a continuous horizontal band of bronze ornament.

The judge's bench and clerk's desk, which are the originals, are simple rectangular forms faced with French Grey marble, topped with continuous bands of bronze fretwork on the fronts and sides.

The side walls at the platform end are paneled in marble to the same thirteen-foot height as the adjacent end wall. At the window in this area, the marble rises to fully surround the window opening, dropping back to 13 feet at either side. On the spectator area side of the proscenium, the marble waterspout drops to window-sill-height, forming a continuous surface around the remaining walls of the room. The upper wall at the exterior incorporates the deep window recesses in plaster fields at the four six-over-six aluminum sash. The upper surfaces of the interior side wall include a painted metal ventilation grille in each bay. The center bay incorporates the entrance doors. The rear wall includes two bronze grilles within the marble wainscot. The upper surface of the rear wall is unadorned plaster.

Columns and pilasters of Pink Lepanto marble with French Grey bases matching the wainscot separate the window and door bays. Vertical elements are capped with carved marble capitals which are unusual in that the capitals have inlaid bronze panels between the scrolls, with these panels in turn having marble inlays. The pilasters and columns visually support a zig-zag pattern molded plaster entablature that is continuous from the proscenium arch to the rear of the room on both sides.

The main entrance doors are leather-covered with the familiar square-headed bronze tacks as decoration. Each door has a vertical glass lite with bronze grille. The corridor side of these doors is finished in a simple design of two recessed wood panels in wood frames. The deep door recess from the corridor is finished with the Pink Lepanto marble with French Grey base. The jury door is detailed in a manner similar to the entrance doors. The judge's door differs from the others in that it has a simple glass lite without decoration.

This courtroom is remarkably intact, especially as the original bench and clerk's desk remain. Changes include carpeted floor, new recessed fluorescent ceiling lights, and modern wood jury box, witness box, railing and spectator seating.

F. COURTROOM NO. 7

Courtroom No. 7 is the smallest (30 feet by 44 feet) and most simple and traditional of the seven original courtrooms. It is almost entirely finished in American walnut, with none of the marble common to the other spaces in this Zone and with only a minimal amount of bronze or other metals. It is in the form of a basic rectangle, with five windows on its west wall and three doors in the south wall. It is located at the northwest corner of the 15th floor.

The floor was originally cork tile with a wood border, but is now covered with wall-to-wall carpet. The ceiling is finished in low-relief panels of plaster, all covered with acoustical ceiling tiles. Simple wood moldings provide the differentiation of panels. The judge's platform is raised 21 inches above the main floor and was originally finished in with wood steps and borders. The back panel behind the bench has six pilasters dividing the wall into three bays separated by plain bands of wood paneling. Two side

bays are dominated by vertically-oriented decorative bronze grilles. The center bay currently serves as background for a large portrait. Bronze wall sconces flank the portrait bay. The tall wood panels in and between the bays extend from a wood wainscot to a wood entablature that sits atop the pilasters. Above the entablature is a plain band of plaster which terminates at a minimal cornice molding below the flat ceiling. The judge's bench and clerk's desk are the originals and are faced with walnut paneling that matches the detailing of the wall design.

The window (west) wall encompasses a single bay at the bench end with pilasters at either side of the window. To separate the bench from the rest of the courtroom, designers fashioned what is called a "break" on the plans that is in actuality an extremely wide pilaster that projects slightly from the wall plane and is echoed in a false beam at the ceiling. Further toward the rear of the space, the window wall reverts to wood-paneled bays separated by wood pilasters, each bay containing a pair of six-over-six aluminum windows.

The door wall includes the judge's door with a metal ventilation grille above at the bench end; then the "break;" then two more bays, one with the jury door, and one with the double entrance doors. All the doors feature wood casings. The bulk of the surface area of each bay is wood paneling extending to the entablature.

The rear wall consists of three bays corresponding to those of the opposite wall behind the bench. Large, plain wood panels occupy the upper two-thirds of the wall, while the lower third is smaller panels between wood pilasters. Two panels between bays have bronze grilles in the lower portion. The main entrance doors are finished on the courtroom side in leather with bronze tacks and bronze frames. Each leaf has a rectangular glass lite. Wood casing that includes a Greek "elephant ear" widening toward the top of the jambs support a flat-arched head with center keystone, all rendered in walnut. The jury door is identical to the entry doors but has no vision lite and has simpler, straight casings. It has a ventilation grille of painted metal overhead. The judge's door is the same as the jury door.

Changes to this courtroom have been minimal, and include new hanging light fixtures, new ventilation grilles above the judge and jury doors, and wall-to-wall carpet on the floors.

ZONE 2A: UPPER LEVEL MAIN ELEVATOR LOBBIES & CORRIDORS; MAIN FIRE STAIR

The major public circulation areas of the upper floors, the main elevator lobbies and corridors, are basically identical in finish and detailing from the 4th to the 20th floor except for the two original courtroom floors, 12 and 15, which have been described previously. The configuration of corridors changes from floor to floor as the building floor plan changes from solid block at the base to 'O' to 'U' to the upper tower. Spatial characteristics and interior materials remain consistent, however.

A. ELEVATOR LOBBIES

Elevator lobbies at the main elevator banks from the 4th to the 16th floors, excluding the 12th, 14th and 15th, are the same in configuration and materials. All are five bays long and one bay wide, with the bays defined by engaged columns at the elevator wall and pilasters at the opposite wall. At the outer bays, sets of double fire doors establish the end of the lobby and the beginning of the corridor system. Materials are typically wainscot of Brocadillo marble to 3' - 4" above the floor with a black Verde Antique marble base and plaster upper walls. The wainscot wraps around columns and pilasters. The vertical elements have a simple decorative plaster cap, above which are plaster cross beams and soffits that divide the ceiling plane into coffers corresponding to the bays. The ceiling coffers, one per bay, have a flat surface bordered by a plaster crown molding.

Floors are square terrazzo tiles separated by brass strips. A border of 1" square white ceramic mosaic tile abuts the baseboard. Inside the white border is another, wider one of black and white check ceramic mosaic tile. Both borders follow all wall irregularities such as columns, pilasters, and door insets.

Elevator doors were quite elaborate as shown on the architect's plans, but ended up being simple and utilitarian. The drawings call for two-leaf paneled bronze doors, jambs, trim and transom panels; however, as built, the doors are flush metal in three leaves with no ornament. Trim is painted metal, again unadorned; and a flat painted metal transom rests atop the doors.

Doors opening onto the lobby, including those to toilets, closets and offices are of varying types, mostly wood, and most with vision lights of full-length or upper half only. The doors are in metal frames that were originally painted to match the wood finish. New doors are rare in the elevator lobbies. Where they occur, they are usually paneled wood, though a few a few flush wood doors can be found.

Lighting consists of modern surface mounted fluorescent fixtures.

The elevator lobbies at the 14th and 17th through 20th floors are identical to those just described except for the lack of marble wainscoting. A painted metal chair rail is the only wall decoration. There are no transom panels above the elevator doors, and the plaster molding at the ceiling is simplified. The 20th floor lobby is unique in that it is daylit at

the ends by tower windows, a condition brought about by the small footprint of this uppermost occupied floor.

B. UPPER FLOOR CORRIDORS

The public corridors at the upper floors vary in width, length and configuration depending on the floor plan and the original intended use of adjacent spaces. There is more variation now as some corridors have been truncated, eliminated or re-routed (see Zone floor plans).

The basic finishes of all corridors zoned 2B are identical. Floors are terra cotta and mosaic tile as described for the elevator lobbies in Zone 2A. Walls feature Brocadillo marble wainscot from level 4 to level 16, but only the metal chair rail at floors 17 and above. Original ceilings are flat plaster except for a decorative cove with ornamental plaster cornice found at angled corners, relating to building columns and pilasters at the corridor turns. All corridor ceilings are now obscured by contemporary suspended acoustical ceiling systems with recessed fluorescent light fixtures.

Doors opening onto these corridors were originally wood, for the most part, with a fenestration of three vertical lites running from 12" above the door bottom to a single horizontal light at the top. A 3-lite transom panel above and metal frames painted to match the dark brown stained walnut of the doors complete the door design. There are several corridors that possess all or almost all of their original doors (see photograph for this zone). Transom lights are partially obscured by the suspended ceiling system, but remain in place. Other corridors, particularly those where major office renovation projects have occurred, have a variety of door types, new and old, wood and metal, paneled and flush. Most new doors in new openings do not have transoms.

C. MAIN FIRE STAIR

The main fire stair serving the upper floors of the building begins at the second floor across the elevator lobby from the head of the Devonshire Street monumental stairway on the west side of the building, and proceeds to the roof. It is a fire stair, but was seen by its designers as the primary route for short trips between adjacent floors. Thus it is finished and detailed in a rather elegant manner using structural materials in a straightforward way. It is also bright and airy, due to the presence of two six-over-six aluminum window sash between each pair of floors above the 4th floor except at the construction "floors" that occur at between the 3rd and 4th, 13th and 14th, and 16th and 17th floors.

The stairway is separated from lobbies at all floors by non-original painted metal fire door pairs. Each door has a recessed full-length panel and a pointed lozenge-shaped vision light at eye level. The original doors were of wood with full-length multi-lite clear wire glass. These were no doubt removed in order to upgrade the fire code performance of the stairway enclosure.

The stair is constructed of a steel frame with reinforced concrete landings, cast iron fascias at the outside stringers and landing edges (with integral cast rosettes, three per run, for ornament), and cast iron newel posts. Railings feature a repetitive Roman grille design as a balustrade, with a wood handrail at about three feet above the stringer and a brass handrail eleven inches above the wooden rail. The wood rail dies into the side of the newel posts, while the brass railing terminates at a brass dome on top of each newel.

The steel stringer at the stairwell wall continues as a base at landings. Landing floors are terrazzo tile with a soapstone border. Soapstone is also used for treads and risers. Ceilings at the landings are plaster coves, while at each stair flight, the underside of the stair structure forms the ceiling.

Stairwell walls are of plaster, with a metal chair rail and metal window stools at chair rail height. The stairwell features a glass and bronze mail chute which empties into a decorative bronze collection box at the second floor.

There have been no changes in the stairway except for the addition of contemporary fire safety equipment and the metal fire doors. The original railing meets most modern day code requirements and thus remains unchanged. This is unusual as one of the typical and most difficult aspects of adapting a historic building for contemporary use is that of raising handrails to meet present-day life safety and accessibility requirements.

ZONE 2B: SIGNIFICANT PRIVATE OFFICES

Several handsomely finished areas that the public generally does not see remain from the original building design. These include the nine original judges' suites (there are now an additional 15 judges' suites, none of which is architecturally significant today); the former District Attorney's Office (now the U. S. Attorney's Office); and the original Postmaster's Office (now occupied by the regional director of the Federal Emergency Management Agency).

A. JUDGES' SUITES

All of the original judges' suites remain in that use today, though in varying degrees of alteration. Most have some original features remaining. Two are largely intact; but almost all of them have had the original parquet floors covered with wall-to-wall carpet and decorative plaster ceilings hidden by modern acoustical suspended ceiling tiles.

The photograph for this zone shows the suite, located at the northeast corner of the 16th floor. It is fairly typical in that it retains many original features, but the original character is compromised by modern floor and ceiling finishes. A typical judge's suite floor plan consists of the judge's chamber, a stenographer's office (these two spaces are separated by a hallway with a private toilet and a closet) and an anteroom, sometimes private and sometimes shared by two judges). Today, the judge's chamber remains in the original location, the stenographer's office is the realm of the secretary, and the anteroom is now a library and/or law clerk office.

Original flooring is oak parquet in foot-square tiles arranged in a basket weave design with parquet and solid wood linear borders around the perimeter of the room. Ceramic tile flooring is used in the toilets.

The walls of the three primary rooms are paneled in a distinctive walnut wainscot to a height of five feet above the floor, detailed in an Arts and Crafts motif of fluting at the top of each board, a wood peg about two thirds of the way up each board, and "v" joints between each board. A plain wood base rounds out the wainscot detailing. The wainscot goes in and out of window recesses created by the deep masonry exterior walls. Upper walls are plaster.

Ceilings are treated as stepped low-relief plaster coves with a flat center field. A decorative plaster cornice in a floral pattern is continuous around each room. Building beams are wrapped in plaster, and some feature an ornamental floral medallion next to pilasters and columns. Other beams have a fluted panel on the underside between columns, forming end-wall and doorway niches with lower ceilings. Pilasters and columns are undecorated plaster from the top of the wainscot to the ceiling coves.

Doors between the main rooms were originally of the four-lite glass and wood design described under Zone 2A above; but most of these have been replaced with single-panel wood doors. Toilet and closet doors are generally still the original two-panel wood units. Door trim consists of fluted jamb casings and decorative heads with spear point

keystones and floral corner blocks, all executed in American walnut. Windows are typical aluminum six-over-six sash in aluminum frames. The wainscot dies into the aluminum frames, as does the plaster upper wall finish, i. e. there is no window trim to speak of. This may speak to the novelty of the aluminum windows that the building's designers did not feel any embellishment of the sash and frames was necessary, even in the wood-paneled judges' chambers.

Newer, non-original judges' suites will be addressed under Renovated Office Space in Zone 4, as they are generally of no architectural significance.

B. POSTMASTER'S OFFICE

The original Postmaster's Office, which now serves as the office of the regional head of another government agency, can be found at the southeast corner of the fourth floor overlooking Post Office Park. It is a three-room suite consisting of a private office, secretary's office, and private toilet.

The wall, floor and ceiling treatments are identical to those of the judges' chambers. The same is true of the doors and windows. This office suite is in nearly original condition. It is one of few spaces in the building where the original wood parquet floor can still be seen. The only alterations are the suspended acoustical tile ceiling and the single panel doors.

C. DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE The original District Attorney's Office, now occupied by the U. S. Attorney for the Boston District, is a unique space consisting of three rooms: the private office, a secretary's office, and a library. The suite is located at the east end of the south leg of the eleventh floor facing Post Office Square. It is the only suite that is detailed as described below.

While the floor is finished in parquet similar to those of judges' suites, the ceiling is the only one of its kind. The ceiling consists of coved plaster with a simple linear, stepped, unornamented cornice. Plain soffits set off low-relief steps in the main ceiling panel. Plaster beams with the same stepped pattern at a smaller scale span between building columns within each space.

The walls of the private office are covered with a wainscot of American walnut patterned with continuous rows of two small square recessed panels over one tall rectangular panel on a plain wood base. Undecorated plaster is used between the top of the wainscot, which is at 7 feet 6 inches above the floor, to the cornice. The wainscot is capped with a dentilated crown molding. Single doors to adjacent spaces are paneled to match the wainscot and, due to the height of the wainscot, blend almost invisibly with the walls.

A pair of double matching doors leads from the office to the library. Wood bookcases rise to the same height as the wainscot and feature the same cap and base. Fluted mullions separate the banks of bookcases from each other; and wainscot matching that in the office is used as filler.

The wainscot in the office returns to the aluminum window frames. A special pattern is used under the windows and blends seamlessly with matching wood window sills. In the library, some windows are similarly surrounded by wainscot; others are recessed in bookcases with side panels that return to the window frames.

This office is basically intact, with all wainscot, doors and bookcases remaining in place. As with so many of the other private offices, these spaces have wall-to-wall carpeting and suspended acoustical ceiling tile; but these materials could be easily removed and the suite restored to its original appearance.

ZONE 2C: ORIGINAL TOILETS AT PUBLIC LEVELS

Toilet rooms at the 2nd, 3rd and 12th floors were not originally significantly different from other floors; however, these levels have been maintained in nearly original condition due to heavy public use and the more decorative nature of the other spaces on these floors.

As originally designed the second floor had only a women's toilet room. That space was converted to a men's room and a new women's room was created to the south of the Devonshire Street stairway. At the 3rd floor, there were originally five toilet rooms along the west facade (the location of all large toilet rooms in the building is between the exterior wall of the west facade and the main elevator banks). From north to south, there was a men's room off a postal work room; the men's public restroom; the women's public restroom, and a men's "official" toilet room, all of which opened off the elevator lobby; and another men's room serving a work area. Today, the men's rooms at the north and south ends are used for other purposes. At most floors, the center facility is now private, and the large restrooms to the left and right are the public restrooms.

The typical upper floor layout is similar to that found at the 12th floor. The original configuration was the men's public toilet to the north, the women's room at the center, and the men's official restroom to the south, all opening off the elevator lobby. The layout of all three, which is typical of all floors, has toilets on the back of the elevator banks, and lavatories on end walls. Materials and finishes are the same in all three toilet rooms at the three levels being considered in Zone 2C. The floor is covered with 2" x 2" ceramic tile in "light brown granite." A 6" x 6" cove base, in a tan-yellow color called Oatmeal, topped by a band of 1/2" x 6" black tile, separates the floor from a six-foot-high wainscot of 4" x 4" enamel ceramic tile in the oatmeal color. A 6" x 2" tile cap in oatmeal terminates the wainscot. The remainder of the wall is painted plaster.

Doors are trimmed with 6" x 4" oatmeal tile, with plinths to match. The oatmeal wall tile returns to the aluminum window frames. The windows are trimmed with a window sill and surround of matching ceramic tile.

Toilet stalls are marble panels with four-panel wood doors in metal door frames and trim.

The twelfth floor restrooms are in original condition including original fixtures. The only new items are dispensers and surface-mounted linear fluorescent fixtures. In some toilet rooms, two stalls are combined to form one ADA-compliant stall, with a new toilet fixture, grab bars and accessories.

The 2nd, 3rd and 15th floor toilet rooms have several new fixtures but are otherwise intact.

ZONE 3A: COURT SUPPORT SPACES, GENERAL OFFICE SPACES AND POSTAL WORK SPACES

The spaces included in this zone are scattered throughout the building. In terms of finishes and features, they can be broken down into those areas finished in more rugged materials for heavy post office use; and those with simple materials for office and court support uses.

A. COURT SUPPORT SPACES

Court support spaces are generally arranged in suites adjacent to and/or above the courtrooms they serve. The rooms in each suite include the judge's robing room, a witness conference room and/or jury room, a stair (for those suites divided between two levels), a lobby, and toilets and closets for the use of the judge and the jury. Examples of these spaces can be found at the 12th, 13th, 15th and 16th floors.

Typical materials used in these areas include mastic floors; a metal conduit base; a metal chair rail; metal door frames and trim, with American walnut veneer doors; metal window stools; and marble thresholds at corridor doors. The metal items were painted to match the dark brown finish of the doors. Solid partitions as well as metal and glass window walls separate the rooms. The wood doors have frosted glass lites or solid wood panels. Some lobby spaces feature a soapstone border around the mastic floor. A flush metal picture rail can be found in most rooms. Stairways are constructed of steel stringers with cast iron and bronze railings and soapstone treads. Plaster walls and ceilings define the stairwells.

Toilet rooms in these spaces originally had the same finishes as the major public toilets; however, many of them have been updated with new fixtures, and some have been completely renovated.

B. GENERAL OFFICE SPACES

The greatest amount of space in the building originally was devoted to general office space, much of it open plan. Office use is still the most common use, although today floors are more often than not divided into a multitude of small offices and supplemental areas. Original materials and finishes still in evidence include mastic floors, a metal conduit base with bronze mop molding, metal chair rails, metal window stools, flush picture molding, metal door frames and trim. Marble thresholds are used at corridor doors.

Original solid partitions of 4" or 6" terra cotta blocks divide spaces. These partitions have been supplemented in most office areas by modern drywall partitions. The rugged masonry construction of original partitions may explain why the addition of new walls is much more common than the removal of old ones.

Walnut doors in a variety of configurations were used in the office areas. Many new types including flush hollow core doors have been added as part of modern renovation work.

Original ceilings and walls are lath and plaster on masonry and concrete structure.

As an example of original office areas, six rooms at the 12th floor which are in nearly original condition and typical of much of the original office space are designated Zone 3A. The only changes in these rooms are the addition of a suspended acoustical tile ceiling and wall-to-wall carpeting. The range of change in such spaces throughout the building is wide. Most have changed significantly in materials and configuration; thus most of the office space is included in Zone 4.

Postal work areas have nearly vanished as most of the floor area of the building has been taken over by other governmental agencies. The work areas were originally given wood finishes that could stand up to the abuse of a variety of wheeled carts and other vehicles that were used to move mail from place to place. Floors were of 5/4 maple strips or of heavy duty wood block composite with beaded or grooved wood wainscot to heights of 3 - 6" or 7' - 0." wood base, wood cap, and wood window sills. It is ironic that the only remaining area of exposed wood block flooring is in the corridors serving new colonial-style courtrooms at the 2nd floor, located in former post ironic in that the most utilitarian floor in the building was refinished for use in the most high-purposed of spaces.

Ceilings and upper walls are of plain plaster. Doors may be wood, metal or a combination of these materials. Metal door frames, some with wood trim, some with metal trim, were often painted to resemble the dark finish of wood doors. The best examples of these areas are delineated as Zone 3A on the zone floor plans at the first floor (the original and current main postal work room) and at the third floor jury lounge, originally the postal cashier work room. The postal workroom has a linoleum floor, and the original beamed plaster ceiling is one of the few, if not the only, plaster ceiling remaining exposed in a major space. The jury lounge ceiling is now hidden by suspended acoustic ceiling tiles; but the original four-lite full-height frosted glass doors with transoms, and all categories of wood and metal trim, remain in place.

ZONE 3B: ORIGINAL TOILETS AT OFFICE FLOORS

Many main toilet rooms on general office floors remain in or nearly in original condition. Most changes in those identified as Zone 3B are fixture replacements. Materials used in these toilet rooms are the same as those described under Zone 2C, or are the same materials but in different colors. For the second color scheme, floors are 1" by 2" gray ceramic tile in a basket-weave pattern with a 6" by 6" mat-glazed gray base tile which matches the color of the 4" by 4" mat-glazed gray wall tile used as wainscot. A matching 6" by 2" cap terminates the wainscot. Door trim and plinths are plain gray ceramic tiles measuring 6" by 2". Ceramic tile in gray is also used for window stools. Door thresholds and toilet stall partitions are of marble, with metal trim and frames supporting two-panel wood doors.

Other smaller toilet rooms, are scattered throughout the building, were originally in one of the two color schemes described, in oatmeal or gray. Many of these are in original condition; others have been renovated, and still others have been converted to other uses,

ZONE 3C: SECONDARY CORRIDORS, ELEVATOR LOBBIES AND FIRE STAIRWAYS

This zone includes center and back corridors at the 2nd and 3rd floors and the northwest corner portion of the 8th floor principal corridor. Also included are the elevator lobbies which serve the two banks of three elevators each that begin at the Post Office Square lobbies and rise to the 16th floor of the two shorter towers that face the park. Finally, the zone includes each of the fire stairways that wraps around the secondary elevator banks.

A. SECONDARY CORRIDORS

The center and rear corridors of the 2nd and 3rd floors were and are important public corridors, originally serving post office functions and now serving uses related to the courts. Floors are terrazzo tile with brass dividing strips, an inner border of black and white ceramic mosaic tile in a checkerboard pattern, and an outer border of white mosaic tile. A black marble base sets off wainscot panels of Brocadillo gray marble which rise to a height of 3' - 4" above the floor. Upper walls and ceilings are plaster, though the original ceilings are now hidden by modern acoustical ceiling tile grids. A variety of door types, both original and modern and in both metal and wood, are in metal frames.

The northwest corner of the 8th floor corridor originally served as a lobby for counter stations (function unknown), and was set off from the rest of the corridor by double doors at either end, long since removed. The finishes of this section of corridor differed from the remainder of the hallway. The floor was mastic with a metal base, chair rail and door frames. This piece of corridor is no longer separated from the typically-finished main corridor, and the counters have been removed and replaced by full-height walls and typical doors and transoms. The only hint of the original plan is the noticeable change in floor material.

B. SECONDARY ELEVATOR LOBBIES

The secondary elevator lobbies indicated as Zone 3C are typical of all floors from the 1st to the 16th (the basement lobbies serving these elevator banks were described under Zone 1B). They are utilitarian compared to the more publicly-oriented main elevator lobbies. Floors are rectangular terrazzo tiles with brass strips and soapstone borders and a marble base. The original plans show Brocadillo marble wainscot panels. However, it is doubtful the plans were ever carried out, as all the lobbies today have the typical metal chair rail found throughout the building as the only wall decoration. Walls are of painted plaster, rising to an ornamental plaster cornice that is continuous at the wall/ceiling interface and at the sides of the ceiling beams that span the lobby corridors. Except for the beams, the ceilings are flat plaster.

The original elevator doors had three leaves, each in a bronze, two-panel design. These have been replaced with modern, flush, three-leaf units of painted metal. Doors to adjacent spaces come in a variety of new and original configurations in wood and metal. The original pairs of four-lite clear wire glass doors leading to the corridors have been replaced with the new building-standard single-panel red metal fire doors with one lozenge-shape vision lite per leaf.

Other changes in these lobbies include the installation of modern, surface-mounted fluorescent light fixtures and contemporary fire safety equipment.

C. FIRE STAIRWAYS

A fire exit stairway can be found wrapped around the northeast and southeast elevator banks from the sub-basement to the 17th floor tower penthouses. The stairwells are completely utilitarian and devoid of ornament, with painted plaster walls and ceilings, reinforced concrete stairs with soapstone treads and risers, terrazzo landings, and simple wall-mounted railings. These stairways are consistently in original condition and have remained fully-functional.

ZONE 3D: COURTROOM NO. 4 AND ANTEROOM

Courtroom No. 4 on the 12th floor was originally identical to Courtroom No. 2, which is fully-described under Zone 1C. Both were built as non-juried courtrooms, but as the needs of the judicial system changed, both were converted to juried facilities. Alterations to No. 4 were more extensive than those to No. 2. The renovation project resulted in significant changes being made in the adjacent main library as well as in the courtroom.

The renovation project was undertaken in order to create a suite of courtroom support spaces similar to those associated with most of the other courtrooms. The original judge's robing room located to the east of the courtroom was converted to a public entrance vestibule and a public toilet. The judges bench was moved from the east end to the west end of the courtroom. The original leather-covered doors leading directly from the courtroom to the main corridor were relocated to the new vestibule. The eastern most bay of the library at the main level and the balcony was separated from the library by a new wall and converted to a new judge's lobby/office/conference room, toilet and vestibule at the twelfth floor. A new stairway led to a newly-created jury room with toilets and closets at the thirteenth floor.

Original finishes in the captured library space were covered over for the most part and remain in place under newer materials. Original materials and furnishings were re-used wherever possible, including the aforementioned leather doors, the original judge's bench and back panel, and original library bookcases and marble trim. The latter were simple dismantled and re-installed on the new end wall of the library at both levels.

Within the courtroom, finishes remain as described under Courtroom 2 in Zone 1C in spite of the change in orientation of the room. New wood wainscot to match the existing was installed where necessary. The division of the space into two parts by a single large-scale pilaster at each side wall and the proscenium-like ceiling beam connecting them remains in place, though the *raison-d'etre*, or these features, to define the judge's bench platform, has been lost now that the bench is at the opposite end. Ceiling surfaces, trim and lighting remain the same but with new acoustical tile in place.

A new wood entablature installed above the double entry doors matches the original; and the bronze wall sconces which flanked the original bench back panel now grace the walls at either side of the relocated entry doors.

A new leather false door was installed at the back panel to replace the former judge's door; and two new wood side doors, new jury and witness boxes, a new railing and new pew-type seating have been provided.

Finishes in the new court support areas are completely utilitarian and devoid of interest. They are more fully-addressed in the description of Zone 6B which deals exclusively with the library space renovated as part of the Courtroom No. 4 project.

Courtroom No. 4 is zoned a Rehabilitation Zone because the renovation of the room was sensitively done and for the most part, the changes are reversible. The negative impact of the project was felt in the library; thus the affected areas of the library are identified as an Impact Zone and discussed under Zone 6.