

KEEPING POST OFFICES PUBLIC: THREE CASE STUDIES ON THE DISPOSAL
AND REHABILITATION OF HISTORIC POST OFFICES

A Thesis

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ABSTRACT

The United States Postal Service (USPS) plans to close thousands of its facilities over the next decade in response to a steady decline in patronage and severe budget deficits. Many of the buildings under review for closure and sale are historic post offices. These venerable civic structures often boast distinctive architectural designs and occupy prominent downtown locations. Given their favorable characteristics, historic post offices deemed to be excess by the federal government are prime candidates for redevelopment. Their closure and sale raises the important question of how these buildings can best be reused in the future.

Local post offices are icons of civic culture and a source of community pride. Traditionally, the buildings acted as civic and social centers. Everyone visited the post office on a regular basis to retrieve their mail, making it a place to meet neighbors and share news. Post offices continue to serve as true democratic spaces that allow equal access to all citizens and foster a greater sense of community identity. They are special places that revive poignant memories in the hearts of many. Optimally, historic post offices that are declared surplus will remain public amenities due to their vibrant civic legacy.

Keeping Post Offices Public examines how the disposal and rehabilitation of historic post offices for public purposes enables their civic legacy to be preserved. The opening chapters present evidence for *why* these buildings should continue to act as civic institutions while the closing chapters express *how* interested parties can acquire historic post offices and rehabilitate them for new public uses. The history of the postal system and its buildings was studied to show the important role post offices have played in the lives of individual citizens and in the greater community. The disposal process for

historic post offices was also researched to provide a better understanding of how surplus properties are conveyed to new owners and the mechanisms put in place by the federal government to protect the defining characteristics of these resources after disposition. Three case studies were then presented to illustrate the rehabilitation process and to evaluate the outcomes.

The case studies in Ithaca, New York; Rockville, Maryland; and Beverly Hills, California reveal that the civic and architectural legacies of a historic post office can be preserved through rehabilitation for a public use. The new uses have protected both the public nature of the buildings and significant architectural features. The case studies further demonstrate the need for community involvement in the rehabilitation process and the importance of commissioning qualified preservation professionals. The lessons learned from these case studies can be applied in other communities faced with the closure of a historic post office.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Katherine Victoria Coffield was raised in rural Augusta County, Virginia. Her upbringing in the Shenandoah Valley nurtured an early love and appreciation for history. As a youngster her favorite activities were visiting Civil War battlefields and Virginia historic sites. She became interested in historic preservation after seeing firsthand the revitalization of Staunton, Virginia. The dramatic transformation of the historic downtown was the direct result of a concerted preservation effort, focused on adaptive reuse and reinvestment in the city's historic resources. Staunton's successful redevelopment inspired Katherine to earn a Bachelor of Urban and Environmental Planning with a Minor in History at the University of Virginia in Charlottesville.

After graduation, she traveled north to New York State to pursue a career in Planning. She spent one-and-a-half years as a planner for the Laberge Group in Albany before pursuing graduate study. At Cornell University she majored in Historic Preservation Planning, with a focus on adaptive reuse and the role of preservation in economic development. In the future, she hopes to lead preservation projects that serve as a catalyst for community revitalization.

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INTRODUCTION

The United States Postal Service (USPS) generated widespread public outcry in 2011 when the agency announced its plans to study thousands of postal facilities across the nation for closure by means of the Retail Access Optimization Initiative (RAOI). The goal of the RAOI was to create a more efficient retail network by consolidating facilities and contracting out basic postal services to local businesses. The disposal of thousands of postal facilities would address a multi-billion dollar budget deficit caused by declining first-class mail volumes and a Congressional mandate to prefund retirement healthcare benefits. The USPS released the initial list of 3,650 properties that the agency planned to review for discontinuance on July 26, 2011. Future rounds of studies and closures were anticipated as Postmaster General Patrick Donahoe predicted that nearly half of the agency's estimated 32,000 facilities that it owns and leases would be closed in the next six to seven years.¹

The potential closure of thousands of postal facilities quickly became the focus of national media attention as residents of affected communities engaged in public protests to save their local post offices. Petitions were signed and numerous letters were written to lawmakers in an effort to stop the closings. For residents of these municipalities, the discontinuance of service was more than a matter of inconvenience. The closures of local post offices represented the loss of jobs and the demise of a valued civic institution. To add insult to injury, among the thousands of facilities under review were historic post offices that had long served as local landmarks and a great source of community pride.

¹ Tierney, Jim. "PMG: USPS Needs Congress's Help." *MultiChannel Merchant*. Penton Media, Inc., 27 June 2011. Web. 2 January 2012.

Scores of historic post offices nationwide face uncertain futures as the USPS continues efforts to scale back its property inventory. According to a post from the *Save the Post Office* blog, the Postal Service retains only an “ad hoc” inventory of its historic buildings that is not regularly updated. The record contains 2,530 properties that are already listed or are eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. The USPS considers any building that is over 50 years old to be eligible for listing, regardless of a formal determination of eligibility through consultation with the State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) or Tribal Historic Preservation Officer (THPO). Of the 2,100 buildings that are thought to still operate as post offices, approximately 1,825 were constructed before 1945. *Save the Post Office* estimates that at least 400 historic post offices have been closed and sold over time.²

Historic post offices are considered to be valuable, yet underutilized assets by the USPS.³ Prior to World War II post offices were built in prominent downtown locations to serve urban populations. As development patterns shifted and new mail sorting technology became available after the war, postal services were moved from downtown post offices to annexes in the suburbs. The affected historic downtown post offices either closed their doors permanently or continued to operate with significantly reduced services. The result was millions of square feet of valuable office space left vacant in central business districts across the country. Given the perceived obsolescence and favorable redevelopment potential of historic post offices, the properties have become prime candidates for closure and sale.

² Hutkins, Steve. “Historic Post Offices: An Inventory of the Legacy.” *Save the Post Office*. Save the Post Office, 14 June 2012. Web. 14 June 2012.

³ “Property for Sale: USPS Real Estate Sales Produce Revenue.” *USPS News Link*. USPS News Link, 7 November 2011. Web. 12 June 2012.

The National Trust for Historic Preservation placed historic post office buildings on its list of *America's 11 Most Endangered Historic Places* in 2012 to raise awareness about the threats facing these important resources. The non-profit organization stated to the press that it does not intend to stop the closures, but rather seeks to work with the USPS to develop a consistent and transparent process that will promote the adaptation and reuse of historic post offices, as they are disposed from the federal inventory.⁴ Concerns about the disposal process were raised after attempts to rehabilitate several former post offices were frustrated by communication issues with the USPS. A press release from the National Trust cited examples of stalled re-use efforts in Geneva, Illinois; Fernandina Beach, Florida; Gulfport, Mississippi; and La Jolla, California. The organization went on to say that the current approach needlessly puts historic post offices at risk and that it hopes to encourage a process that will better protect the buildings targeted for disposition.⁵

The National Trust helped to underscore historic post office closures as a significant concern for preservationists by placing the vulnerable group of buildings on its *Most Endangered* list. While the disposal process dominates the current conversation on the issue, little discussion has been broached on how these buildings should optimally be reused in the future. Post offices have long stood as quintessential elements of the public realm. Situated on Main Streets across the country, these buildings provide a concrete connection to a community's civic past. Local post offices are often the most visible and architecturally distinctive buildings in town. They have traditionally served as the focal point of a community, acting as important hubs for

⁴ Zongker, Brett. "Post Offices, Ellis Island Join Endangered List." *Associated Press*. 6 June 2012. Web. 12 June 2012.

⁵ "National Trust for Historic Preservation Names Historic U.S. Post Office Buildings to its 2012 List of America's 11 Most Endangered Historic Places." *National Trust for Historic Preservation*. 6 June 2012. Web. 14 June 2012.

social interaction. The revered buildings continue to foster a sense of local identity and pride today.

The USPS is now selling off these important symbols of civic culture to the highest bidder. The agency has partnered with CB Richard Ellis, a worldwide commercial real estate broker, to handle the sale and lease of its surplus properties. Twenty-four of the eighty-one properties listed for sale as of June 2012 were historic.⁶ The post offices on the list are being sold to private developers to be redeveloped as restaurants, offices, and high-end retail. Most private uses restrict or prevent public access to these buildings that were constructed using taxpayer dollars. While restaurants and retail provide opportunities for the public to enter the buildings, admittance is limited to those with the ability to pay. Even if unrestricted access to the interiors were to be granted on occasion, many members of the public may not feel comfortable entering the private space. By transferring ownership to the private sector, these once public buildings lose their egalitarian nature.

However, historic post offices are not fated to lose their longstanding civic connection to the community after closure and sale. The USPS is obligated to offer the first option on the buildings to governments and non-profit organizations before putting them out to public auction. The agency will often work out an agreement where the entity assumes ownership of the building at a discount or without charge. Numerous communities have successfully procured and rehabilitated their historic post offices for use as museums, libraries, and government offices. The buildings continue to serve as important anchors that generate foot traffic for downtown businesses, while enduring as democratic spaces that can be used appreciated by all members of the public.

⁶ “Buildings.” *USPS Properties for Sale*. CBRE, n.d. Web. 14 June 2012.

The broad intent of this thesis is to examine *why* historic post office buildings should be retained as public amenities. Chapter I offers a history of the postal system and demonstrates how it has served as an essential public institution. Chapter II provides the context for why post offices are invaluable historical and cultural resources worthy of preservation. The chapter goes further to illustrate how post offices have traditionally functioned as community gathering places in an attempt to show the importance of reusing these buildings for public purposes. Chapter III concludes with an argument for how the reuse of historic post offices for public purposes ensures continued public access, maintains a valued civic gathering place, and promotes vibrant city centers in a way that a private use cannot.

The narrow aim of this thesis is to demonstrate *how* communities can acquire historic post offices and implement new public uses while preserving significant architectural features during the rehabilitation process. Chapter IV begins with an introduction to federal stewardship responsibilities and the historic property disposal process. The focus will be on the extent to which the process favors continued public use as well as the extent to which the federal government protects a building's architectural integrity after disposition. Three case studies are then presented in the following chapters to illustrate the experiences of real communities with rehabilitating historic post offices for public uses and to evaluate the outcomes. The successful reuse projects in Ithaca, New York; Rockville, Maryland; and Beverly Hills, California can be used as models for other historic post offices across the nation.

CHAPTER I

THE POSTAL SERVICE AS A PUBLIC INSTITUTION

The United States Postal Service (USPS) has affected the lives of Americans on a more intimate level than any other division of the federal government. Every citizen has experienced the excitement of receiving a letter or package in the mail. The daily trip to the mailbox is a routine task in homes and businesses across the country. Regular contact with the public has made the USPS more than just a faceless government agency. People trust their letter carriers and often know them by name. As the second largest civilian employer in the country, the USPS employs the friends and relatives of countless individuals. Postmaster General John Wannamaker best described the importance of the postal system as a public institution in the *Annual Report of the Postmaster General* in 1889:

The Post Office is the visible form of the Federal Government to every community and to every citizen. Its hand is the only one that touches the local life, the social interests, and business concern of every neighborhood. It brings the Government to every door in the land and makes it the ready and faithful servitor of every interest of commerce and society.⁷

The postal system has had a significant impact on the growth and development of the United States. Initially devised to connect the citizenry through the conveyance of information and ideas, the system evolved to become an agent for economic prosperity. The USPS continues to affect the daily lives of the people in a positive manner in the present day. Its prominence as a public institution makes it an essential component of the civic realm.

⁷*Annual Report of the Postmaster General*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. G.P.O, 1889.

Origins of the Postal System

The American Postal System began in the colonial period of United States history. Early settlers established an informal communications network using merchants and friends to transport correspondence among the colonies and to Europe. Local jurisdictions attempted to create a more structured postal system by designating mail repositories and post routes as the colonies expanded. Mail service continued to be limited and unreliable, however, as no central governing authority existed at that time to oversee the fragmented system.

The first centralized postal system formed in the colonies when the British Crown bestowed a patent to Thomas Neale to establish the North American Postal Service in 1692. Neale devised the plan for the enterprise and collected earnings from postage without ever setting foot in North America. New Jersey Governor Andrew Hamilton was appointed by Neale to handle operations in the colonies. Hamilton faced a major challenge persuading the colonists to cooperate with the intercolonial and intracolony posts. Since the official system was nearly impossible to enforce, colonists deprived it of revenues by using unsanctioned networks. Neale was bankrupted by the struggling system and died in 1699. The Crown purchased the patent from his estate and brought the postal service under public control in 1707.⁸

Benjamin Franklin emerged as a significant figure in the North American Postal Service during his tenure as the Postmaster of Philadelphia and as the Joint Postmaster General for the Crown. He made a notable impact on the colonial postal system by

⁸ Cullinan, Gerald. *The Post Office Department*. New York: F.A. Praeger, 1968. 7-9.

improving efficiency and establishing new post routes. Despite his contributions, Franklin was removed from his position in 1774 due to his political sympathies.⁹

William Goddard founded the Constitutional Post Office soon after Franklin's dismissal. The formation of the independent postal system was a reaction to what colonists believed to be an unfair tax paid to Great Britain via postage. The Constitutional Post was attractive to colonists because it was financed by subscribers who were able to participate in the system by selecting postmasters and sharing revenues. The new system was also favorable because it provided a secure means for conveying intercolonial correspondence. British officials often used their authority to open mail to monitor and report subversive behavior in the colonies. The Constitutional Post protected the sanctity of the mail and created a communications network that strengthened the colonial alliance.¹⁰

The American Revolutionary War began in April 1775 with the Battles of Lexington and Concord. The Second Continental Congress convened in Philadelphia a month later to discuss independence. Since the transfer of correspondence and intelligence would be essential to the insurrection, a Committee of Investigation was formed to consider the formation of an official postal system for the thirteen colonies. Benjamin Franklin was appointed to serve as the committee chairman given his prior experience as postmaster. The committee recommended in a report to the Continental Congress the creation of a postal system headed by a postmaster general that would extend between Falmouth, Massachusetts and Savannah, Georgia. The members of the

⁹ *The United States Postal Service: An American History, 1775-2006*. Washington, D.C.: (475 L'Enfant Plaza, SW, 20260: Government Relations) U.S. Postal Service, 2007. 4-5.

¹⁰ Cullinan, 15-16.

Continental Congress approved the recommendation and appointed Benjamin Franklin as the first Postmaster General.¹¹

The thirteen colonies officially declared their independence from Great Britain on July 4, 1776 with the signing of the Declaration of Independence by the Second Continental Congress. The main purpose of the postal system during the years of war that followed was to maintain open communication channels between the Continental Congress and the armed forces. All postmasters and post riders were excused from military obligations to ensure continued mail service and to support the quest for freedom.¹²

Binding the Nation

The American Revolutionary War ended in North America following the surrender of General Lord Cornwallis at Yorktown in 1781. The population migrated west over the Allegheny Mountains after the war to settle the new frontier. The Founding Fathers grew increasingly concerned that allegiance to the new government would wane if communication lines were not extended to the western settlements.¹³

George Washington was especially aware that a common belief in democracy was not enough to bind the loose confederation of states. He believed that connecting the nation through the mail was critical for maintaining national allegiance. He expected the postal system to be “the principal means by which the people of the United States [would be] bound together in loyalty to the central government.”¹⁴ The Forefathers recognized the importance of a national postal system for fostering national unity and

¹¹ Ibid, 16.

¹² *The United States Postal Service*, 6-7.

¹³ Bruns, James H. *Great American Post Offices*. Washington, DC: Preservation Press, 1998. 7.

¹⁴ Cullinan, 29-30.

incorporated provisions for its creation into the founding documents of the United States.

The Articles of Confederation were formally ratified by the thirteen states in 1781. The purpose of the document was to establish the guiding principles for the new independent nation. Article IX gave Congress the exclusive power to establish and regulate post offices throughout the states. It also allowed Congress to charge and collect postage to support the system. Ebenezer Hazard was appointed to the position of Postmaster from 1782 to 1789. Hazard was essential to the successful reorganization of the postal system and worked to improve the efficiency of the service with only limited staff. The Constitution was ratified seven years after the Articles of Confederation in 1788. Article One, Section Eight empowered Congress to “establish Post Offices and post Roads” and formed the basis for what would later become the Post Office Department.¹⁵

George Washington was inaugurated as the first President of the United States in April 1789. He appointed Samuel Osgood as the first Postmaster General under the United States Constitution in the same year. At that time, there were seventy-five post offices and less than two-thousand miles of post roads serving over three million people. Most of postal infrastructure was concentrated in major population centers along the East Coast.¹⁶ Washington reaffirmed the importance of the expanding service to the frontier during an address to Second Congress in 1791. He stated that the future development of the communications system was critical for “diffusing a knowledge of

¹⁵ *The United States Postal Service*, 6-7.

¹⁶ Cullinan, 24.

the laws and proceedings of the Government, especially to some of the important points in the western and northern parts of the Union.”¹⁷

A number of legislative acts were adopted in the following years that cemented postal policies and extended the existence of the department. One of the most notable decrees was the Post Office Act of 1792. The act expanded post routes, ensured the sanctity of the mail, and required that all newspapers be carried by the post office at low rates. The low postal rates for newspapers encouraged the spread of information and helped to maintain an informed electorate. The most important piece of postal legislation during this period was the Post Office Act of 1794, which established the Post Office Department as a permanent fixture in the United States government.

Fueling National Growth and Development

The population continued to disperse across the country after the turn of the nineteenth century. Pioneers guided the growth and development of the nation by petitioning Congress to construct post roads and establish service along the routes. According to historian Beth M. Boland, the number of post offices and miles of post roads nearly quadrupled between 1800 and 1820.¹⁸ The expansion of the postal infrastructure to the frontier mirrored the nation’s westward growth and development.

Efforts to expand service and increase efficiency advanced the national transportation system and supported the growth of commerce. Mail was delivered by stagecoach and boats during the early years of the American postal system. The federal government continually sought new ways to speed the delivery of the mail to the far reaches of the country. The advent of the modern steam railroad proved to be

¹⁷ Bruns, 7.

¹⁸ Boland, Beth M. “National Register Bulletin 13: How to Apply the National Register Criteria to Post Offices.” Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Interior, 1984 (Revised 1994). 2.

advantageous for mail delivery. Railroads began transporting the mail in the 1830s due to the speed of the system. Congress had declared all railroads as post routes by 1838. The Railway Post Office (RPO) was introduced in 1862 to further improve postal efficiency. The cars were specially equipped to facilitate the sorting and distribution of the mail while in transit.¹⁹

The Post Office Department's dependence on rail transportation stimulated railroad development throughout the country. The United States possessed only 23 miles of track in 1830. The railroad emerged as the dominant form of postal transportation by the middle of the nineteenth century. Over 30,500 miles of track were laid by 1860 and 88.5 percent of them were used to transport the mail.²⁰ The federal government encouraged the development of the new railroad lines by using public land grants and reducing iron tariffs.²¹ Public investment in the national railroad system helped to subsidize less profitable passenger and commercial routes.

The postal system supported the growth of the aviation industry in a way similar to the fashion in which the railroads were assisted. Airmail was officially introduced in the United States in 1918 when Congress appropriated \$100 thousand dollars to institute experimental air routes. The first route was established between New York and Washington, DC. Transporting the mail via airplane reduced transit time and improved the efficiency of the mail service. Congress encouraged the Post Office Department to contract with commercial aviation to support the new, but growing business. The Post Office Department's investment in airmail service strengthened the growing commercial aviation industry.²²

¹⁹ *The United States Postal Service*, 15-16.

²⁰ Cullinan, 73.

²¹ Shaw, Christopher. *Preserving the People's Post Office*. Washington, D.C.: Essential Books, 2006. 10.

²² *The United States Postal Service*, 29-31.

The modern postal system continues to support the growth of commerce by expanding the national and international communications network. The mail is “the indispensable organ through which the financial, commercial, and mercantile communities of the nation conduct their business” according to postal historian Gerald Cullinan.²³ It has experienced success encouraging business development because the system provides a secure and efficient means to support the flow of commerce, facilitate transactions, and nurture business relationships. Therefore, the system that was designed to unite a fragmented populace has evolved over the course of American history to play an essential role in national economic development.

Expanding Service to the American Public

The Post Office Department substantially expanded its services to ordinary Americans in the mid-nineteenth century. Until that time, the postal system was primarily used to transport news, special announcements, and business correspondence. The personal letter had not yet emerged as a widespread means of communication.²⁴ A major reason why the general public was reluctant to use the mail service for the conveyance of personal messages was the price of postage. Congress democratized the postal system when it voted to reduce postage rates in 1845 and 1851.²⁵ The action allowed citizens of even modest means to connect with friends and family through the mail.

The advent of free home delivery service made the postal system even more accessible to the public. The introduction of letter carriers to transport mail to the doorsteps of citizens allowed the public to cease daily trips to the post office to retrieve their mail. The major cities of New York, Philadelphia, Boston, Baltimore, and New

²³ Cullinan, 205.

²⁴ Henkin, David M. *The Postal Age: The Emergence of Modern Communications in Nineteenth-Century America*. Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 2006. 93.

²⁵ Shaw, 13.

Orleans had letter carriers prior to 1857. Free delivery of mail to private urban residences did not emerge elsewhere in the nation until Congress approved Free City Delivery in 1863. The service was initially launched in 49 northern cities, but rapidly expanded to hundreds of urban centers before the twentieth century.²⁶

Farmers and rural residents lobbied for home delivery service in the late nineteenth century. Rural Free Delivery was implemented in selected areas on a trial basis in 1896 and was eventually adopted permanently in 1902. The service was extremely popular and the number of rural routes grew quickly. The conditions of rural roadways had to be improved in order to establish new routes. Local governments spent an estimated \$72 million on road improvements between 1897 and 1900 to ensure that their roads qualified for Rural Free Delivery.²⁷ Upgrading the transportation network had the additional benefits, such as decreasing isolation and providing greater mobility for rural residents. People were able to travel outside of their communities for shopping or entertainment for the first time. While road improvements made the world more accessible to rural communities, it also drained important business away from rural hamlets and accelerated their demise.²⁸

The expansion of the Post Office Department into the everyday lives of Americans continued throughout the early decades of the twentieth century. Department store magnate John Wanamaker introduced a variety of new services during his tenure as Postmaster General. The Postal Savings System was established in 1911 as an alternative to the private banking system. According to the USPS, the savings system “aimed to get money out of hiding, attract the savings of immigrants accustomed to saving at post offices in their native countries, provide safe depositories for people who

²⁶ Bruns, 19.

²⁷ Ibid, 48.

²⁸ Ibid.

had lost confidence in banks, and furnish more convenient depositories for working people.”²⁹ The program was popular and increased many citizens’ daily interactions with the postal system until its official termination in 1967.

Wanamaker was also Postmaster General when the Parcel Post Service was launched in 1913. The public was dependent on six private express companies for package delivery service prior to the Parcel Post. The express companies were known for charging high rates and for having a limited service area. The Parcel Post allowed packages to be mailed affordably and extended service to overlooked locales.³⁰

The success of the service was immediately visible by the effect on the national economy. The service allowed mail-order houses like Sears Roebuck and Montgomery Ward and Company to expand their customer base and profits. Sears’ revenues tripled in the five years following its introduction.³¹ Farmers also benefited from the Parcel Post with the implementation of the Farm-to-Table program in 1914. The program allowed farmers to sell and deliver their goods to consumers through the mail. The Parcel Post benefited the American economy by providing consumers with options and by easing transactions.³²

The Transformation of the Postal System

The postal system’s business model endured major changes in the late twentieth century to better meet the demands of the prospering nation. The population swelled and the economy expanded in the decades following World War II. The volume of mail processed by the postal system increased dramatically during this period of unprecedented growth. At a time when substantial investment was needed to support the

²⁹ *The United States Postal Service*, 29.

³⁰ Shaw, 14-15.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 15.

³² Bruns, 88-90.

expanding system, the Post Office Department was allotting a mere 3 percent of its annual budget for research and development of new technologies. Decades of financial disregard perpetuated inefficient management practices and led to the use of outdated infrastructure.³³

The Post Office Department's organizational deficiencies came to the national forefront in October 1966 when operations at the Chicago Main Post Office – the largest postal distribution center in the world – ground to a halt for three weeks. The delivery of ten million pieces of mail was delayed as letters and parcels sat in unprocessed piles on the sorting room floor.³⁴ The crisis prompted a Congressional investigation of the federal agency. During the hearings of February 1967, Postmaster General Lawrence F. O'Brien informed the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Departments of Treasury and Post Office that the postal system was “in a race with catastrophe.” When asked to explain the cause of the situation in Chicago, he replied: “The answer is not that something specific happened in 1966, but that enough did not happen in the previous 33 years...we are trying to move our mail through facilities largely unchanged since the days of Jim Farley when our mail volume was 30 percent of what it is today.”³⁵

The incident in Chicago triggered an intensive effort to reform the Post Office Department. President Lyndon B. Johnson established the Commission on Postal Organization in 1967 to determine the optimal management structure for the postal system. Johnson appointed Frederick Kappel, the retired head of AT&T, as the chairman. The Kappel Commission deliberated for 15 months before recommending

³³ Ibid, 100-103.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ U.S. House. Hearings, Committee on Appropriations. Subcommittee on Departments of Treasury and Post Office and Executive Office of the President. 90th Congress, 1st Session, 27 February 1967 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1967). 5.

that the Post Office Department be reorganized as a self-supporting public corporation rather than a service branch of the federal government. The Kappel Commission also recommended the elimination of patronage from the postal system and the removal of the department from the presidential cabinet in order to distance it from the sphere of political influence.³⁶

The recommendations of the Kappel Commission were not well received by postal workers and union leaders. As a compromise measure, the House Post Office and Civil Service Committee announced a 5.4 percent retroactive pay raise to boost the workers' notoriously low wages. The amount of the raise was deemed inadequate and a nationwide strike began on March 18, 1970. The work stoppage ended after one week when Postmaster General Winton M. Blount agreed to negotiate with the postal union. The parties agreed to a 6 percent raise for all federal workers and an additional 8 percent raise for postal workers if they agreed to the reorganization plan.³⁷

President Richard M. Nixon signed the Postal Reorganization Act into law on August 12, 1970. The act eliminated the Post Office Department and created the United States Postal Service (USPS). The provisions of the Postal Reorganization Act were shaped by the recommendations of the Kappel Commission. The USPS was designated under act as an independent government corporation. The legislation required the agency to operate as a revenue-neutral business since it was to receive no federal appropriations for operations. An eleven-member Board of Governors was created to control the agency's expenditures and policies and to appoint the Postmaster General.³⁸

³⁶ Bruns, 100-103.

³⁷ *The United States Postal Service*, 38-39.

³⁸ Postal Reorganization Act of 1970. 1970. Public Law 91-375.

Conclusions

The Postal Reorganization Act permanently changed the character of the postal system. The act shifted the primary focus of the agency from public service provision to cost reduction. Postal historian Wayne E. Fuller said it best when he lamented: “No longer was the Post Office to be the people’s homespun Post Office, to be used as an instrument of government policy for whatever purposed Americans desired. Rather, it was to be a business.”³⁹ The USPS faces new challenges in the new millennium. Many Americans correspond via phone or electronic mail instead of sending letters in the mail. Younger generations turn to electronic news and entertainment sources rather than print media. Private couriers, such as Federal Express and the United Parcel Service, control the market for expedited parcel delivery. A combination of these factors has affected the viability of the postal system and its requirements for the future. The USPS must determine how to best preserve its legacy as a public institution as it transforms to meet the needs of twenty-first century America.

³⁹ Fuller, Wayne E. *The American Mail: Enlarger of the Common Life*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1972. 331-332.

CHAPTER II

SIGNIFICANCE OF HISTORIC POST OFFICES

Post offices are the most visible manifestation of the postal system in the minds of the public. Tens of thousands were established as mail service extended across the country. The local landmarks are fixtures in the central business districts of big cities and small towns in America. People used to travel to the post office on a daily basis to send and receive their mail. The postal lobby became a hub for social interaction as customers stopped to chat with their neighbors while running errands. People also visited the post office to obtain tax forms, purchase savings bonds, or register with the local draft board. These services were administered at the post office because it was often the only place in the community where the public could go to engage with the federal government. Post offices are at the heart of a system that fosters important connections and exchanges every day. As the civic and social centers of communities, the buildings represent an important part of the nation's heritage.

Post offices are also architectural icons in many communities. They are often the largest and most elaborate buildings in town, especially those constructed by the federal government. The design of post offices evolved to accommodate stylistic preferences and the expansion of services. The period of construction is often revealed by scale or architectural style. Design schemes varied based on the community as well. Geographic location and population dictated the types of materials used and the building size. Vernacular styles and elements were incorporated into post office design in areas with strong local building traditions. The variations of design resulted in a diverse collection of resources that comprise the post office building type.

Early American Post Offices

The earliest American post offices date back before the establishment of the national postal system to colonial times. Richard Fairbanks' tavern in Boston became the first post office in the colonies when the General Court of Massachusetts declared it to be the official repository for overseas correspondence in 1639. The legislature's selection of the popular public gathering place was consistent with the English tradition of using taverns and coffeehouses as mail stations.⁴⁰ Other colonial port cities along the Eastern Seaboard followed suit to support the steady stream of correspondence between the colonies and Europe. These meeting places where citizens collected their mail were described as, "the headquarters of life and action, the pulsating heart of excitement, enterprise, and patriotism."⁴¹ Awaiting the mail was a social event and post offices were the hub of interaction. As the colonies developed, mail stations were established in other venues. The homes of postmasters and newspaper print shops were common locations for post offices in the late colonial period.

The demand for new post offices continued after the colonies gained independence from Great Britain. While the Constitution empowered Congress to build post offices through the Postal Clause, a formal campaign to construct buildings for the postal system was not introduced until the mid-nineteenth century. The public buildings program in its entirety was very limited during the first six decades of nationhood. The Department of the Treasury assumed responsibility for the design and construction of public buildings as the manager of federal appropriations and finances. Resources were largely devoted to executing the vision for the capital city during the formative years of

⁴⁰ *The United States Postal Service*, 4-5.

⁴¹ Bruns, 3.

the nation.⁴² The White House and the Capitol were constructed in the late eighteenth century in the neoclassical style that would come to define early federal architecture. The campaign to construct major public buildings in the capital continued well into the next century. Robert Mills completed the General Post Office in 1842 during his tenure as Federal Architect and Engineer. The monumental marble edifice housed the Post Office Department Headquarters and was one of the first post office buildings to be commissioned and owned by the government.⁴³

The public buildings program was very limited in areas outside of the capital during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The federal government was hesitant to put forward an extensive program due to financing considerations. The Treasury Department focused most of its attention on custom houses and marine hospitals since they collected revenues and were essential to federal commerce.⁴⁴ However, the demand for post offices escalated as the urban population flourished and mail service expanded. The Treasury Department responded to the needs of the postal system by renting and adapting buildings rather than constructing new facilities. A variety of building types were converted into post offices in urban areas, ranging from churches to hotels. The converted buildings were usually inadequate since they were not built specifically to accommodate the unique functions of the postal system.⁴⁵

Rural post offices were even less sophisticated than those in major cities. Most postmasters in small towns were responsible for providing their own facilities and located their post offices in their homes or businesses to reduce costs. General stores were common sites for post offices since the mail guaranteed a steady flow of

⁴² National Register of Historic Places. *United States Post Offices in New York State – 1858 to 1943 – Thematic Resources*. New York. National Register # 64000597. 4.

⁴³ Bruns, xi.

⁴⁴ Lee, Antoinette J. *Architects to the Nation: The Rise and Decline of the Supervising Architect's Office*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000, 11-12.

⁴⁵ Bruns, 14-16.

customers. The postal business was usually an unprofitable sideline for rural postmasters. The salary amounted to a trivial sum and the government provided little in terms of equipment and furnishings. The amount of floor space that postmasters would devote to postal functions was often limited since providing mail service was so uneconomical.⁴⁶

Rural post offices were not impressive or complicated structures. Mail service was usually housed in vernacular buildings that reflected regional building traditions and were constructed using local materials. Frontier post offices were even more rudimentary than those located in established locales. A railroad settlement in Cheyenne, Wyoming stationed its first post office in a tent. Mail service was seldom afforded a permanent structure given the transient nature of life on the frontier. More enduring buildings replaced the provisional post offices as the settlements matured and expanded.⁴⁷

The postal system was primarily housed in non-federal facilities until the mid-nineteenth century. Even when a systematic effort to construct buildings for the postal system was implemented, not every community possessed enough political clout to command a post office. Many small municipalities retained mail service in a non-federal post office for more than a century. Approximately fifteen thousand post offices in the United States were located in buildings constructed and owned by the local postmaster as late as 1956.⁴⁸ Some examples that are still in use include the Wood and Swink Old Store and Post Office in Evinston, Florida and the Hinsville Post Office in Hinsville, New Hampshire. These modest buildings continue to function as local gathering places and are beloved landmarks for the communities that they serve.

⁴⁶ Ibid, 29-30.

⁴⁷ Ibid, 9.

⁴⁸ Ibid, 201.

Advent of the Public Buildings Program

The nation experienced an extraordinary period of growth and prosperity during the decade that preceded the Civil War. The scope and scale of the federal government increased to meet the needs of the burgeoning populace. Converted buildings were no longer appropriate for housing the distinct functions of the Post Office Department and other federal agencies. The collection of unremarkable buildings used by the federal bureaucracy also failed to project a sense of national unity and power. As the demand for public buildings mounted, it became clear that a centralized program was necessary to form an architecturally cohesive building inventory that would support the needs of the federal government.⁴⁹

The Office of Construction was established under the Department of the Treasury in 1852 to centralize the management of federal projects. The Treasury Department had previously allocated public building contracts to local building commissions around the country prior to the creation of the Office of Construction. The commissions controlled all aspects of site selection, materials, construction, and design. However, their actions were subject to approval by the Secretary of the Treasury.⁵⁰ The cumbersome practice was fragmented and often abused. The Office of Construction eliminated the indiscriminant use of local commissions in favor of a more cohesive and economical design process. The result was a more consistent and efficient process for planning and constructing federal projects.⁵¹

⁴⁹ Lee, 39-40.

⁵⁰ Lowry, Bates. *Building a National Image: Architectural Drawings for the American Democracy, 1789-1912*. Washington, D.C: National Building Museum, 1985. 52.

⁵¹ Craig, Lois A. *The Federal Presence: Architecture, Politics, and Symbols in United States Government Building*. Cambridge, Mass: MIT Press, 1978. 99.

Captain Alexander H. Bowman of the Army Corps of Engineers was appointed by the Secretary of the Treasury to head the Office of Construction. Ammi B. Young was selected to assist Bowman as the nation's first supervising architect, although the position would not be officially established until after the Civil War.⁵² The Treasury Department was able to streamline the development of federal projects under the leadership of Bowman and Young. According to architectural historian Bates Lowry, the two men "would put into practice a system for designing and constructing public buildings on a national scale that had no parallel elsewhere in the world."⁵³

Bowman and Young's system relied on the use of uniform building types to expedite the construction process. Standardization was possible since government buildings that served the same purpose had similar requirements regardless of their location in the country. Young was able to further improve the system by introducing lithographic prints of building plans to reduce the time spent by architects creating copies of working drawings for contractors, manufacturers, and field supervisors. Identical designs were used for federal buildings throughout the nation with only minor modifications made to accommodate local preferences.⁵⁴

The centralization of the public buildings program created efficiencies that were previously unachievable. The Office of Construction was able to design and issue specifications for 35 new federal buildings between 1855 and 1856. Young was able to reach this unprecedented number by preparing a total of 15 designs that could be used for all of the buildings.⁵⁵ Young also helped to promulgate a new national style during his tenure as supervising architect. He departed from the pure classical forms favored by

⁵² Ibid, 99.

⁵³ Lowry, 52.

⁵⁴ Ibid, 52-53.

⁵⁵ Ibid.

his predecessor, Robert Mills, in favor of the Renaissance Revival. The simple building style was less elaborate than the Greek Revival and allowed him to develop standard plans that could be easily modified for use in various communities. The new unified national style projected an image of stability and permanence to the people of the United States.⁵⁶

Post Offices of the Gilded Age

The Department of the Treasury was inundated with federal projects in the period that followed the Civil War. The Office of the Supervising Architect had replaced the Office of Construction in 1864 and was charged with handling the deluge of new commissions. The demand for post offices mounted significantly during these years. Record mail volumes generated during the war had underscored the deficiencies of the postal system's existing buildings. The federal government answered appeals for improved facilities by housing the postal system in grand federal buildings that combined various government functions under one roof.⁵⁷ An increasing number of federal buildings were constructed to accommodate the workforce as the national bureaucracy grew. Nearly 300 were built between 1866 and 1897; an eightfold increase since the Office of Construction was established. Almost every major city in the nation had a distinctive federal building by the turn of the twentieth century.⁵⁸

Alfred B. Mullett was appointed supervising architect in 1866. Mullett abandoned Alexander Bowman and Ammi B. Young's system of standardization at a time when the demand for public buildings required maximum efficiency. He denounced the use of standard plans because he believed that their repeated use in every

⁵⁶ Ibid, 54-55.

⁵⁷ Bruns, 56.

⁵⁸ Lowry, 58.

community “retarded instead of encouraged the cultivation of correct taste and love of art, without effecting the slightest saving, except in the labors of the designer.”⁵⁹ Mullett’s departure from the system of standardization applied to all aspects of design. He devised a unique plan for each building with distinctive interior and exterior elements to accommodate the requirements of the various locales. Hundreds of detailed drawings were prepared for every project. This labor intensive practice endured into the early decades of the following century.⁶⁰

A progression of architectural styles embodied the public buildings campaign of the period. Nine men held the supervising architect position between 1866 and 1897. Each architect’s designs reflected personal taste and the popular styles of the day. Mullett was one of the most conspicuous architects of the period. He had a penchant for the Second Empire style and used it extensively for the design of federal buildings. William A. Potter succeeded Mullett in 1875. Potter subscribed to the High Victorian Gothic style during his brief tenure. James B. Hill acquired Potter’s position in 1876. During his six-year term he championed Romanesque buildings that featured massive towers. The eclectic styles employed by the supervising architects were based on revivals of historic archetypes common in Victorian architecture. The absence of a consistent architectural language during the period revealed a divergence of opinions about the proper form for public buildings.⁶¹

The public buildings of the era did share a monumental quality that reflected the emerging economic might of the United States. Lawrence Wodehouse remarked in the *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* that the government spared no

⁵⁹ *Secretary of the United States Treasury Department, Annual Report on the Finances*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1866. 189.

⁶⁰ Lowry, 58-59.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*

expense to ensure the dignity of federal buildings during the latter half of the nineteenth century.⁶² An excerpt from the Treasury Department's *History of Public Buildings, 1901* illustrates the extravagance of the materials used to adorn the post office housed in the Courthouse and Customhouse in St. Paul, Minnesota:

[The] corridors and halls are wainscoted with marble, and have ornamented ceilings, enriched with gold and bronze, the floors throughout being of marble and terrazzo. . . . With the exception of the corridors, etc., the entire first floor is finished in quartered white oak with floors of hardwood.⁶³

Opulent post office interiors of this kind were hardly unusual. The use of marble in postal lobbies and fine woods in office areas was common practice. Sections of federal buildings that housed other government functions demonstrated similar excess. The public buildings program had very much emerged as an instrument for demonstrating national prosperity and power in the Gilded Age.

Post Offices of the Progressive Era

The nature of post office construction underwent dramatic change at the turn of the twentieth century. The concept of a multipurpose structure to house multiple government agencies fell out of favor with government officials as the availability of space became a constant issue for the postal system. Mail volumes swelled as the Post Office Department expanded its services. The advent of home delivery, the postal savings system, and the parcel post service affected the building plans of federal post offices. The success of the postal savings system and the parcel post service had immense design implications, requiring additional space for banking and parcel

⁶² Wodehouse, Lawrence. "Alfred B. Mullett and His French Style Government Buildings." *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians*, 32.1 (March 1972): 22-37.

⁶³ Craig, 168-169.

processing.⁶⁴ The introduction of these services also caused the postal workforce to grow and thrive. As the ranks of letter carriers and clerks increased, break rooms and locker rooms had to be expanded to accommodate the needs of employees. The sum of these changes led officials to reconsider important elements of post office design.⁶⁵

The increasing space requirements required buildings specifically designed to meet the needs of the postal system. A federal policy was put forward in 1910 to construct buildings “exclusively for post office purposes” in major urban areas.⁶⁶ The practice spread so that stand-alone post offices were eventually built in smaller municipalities as well. Obsolete facilities were abandoned and new buildings were constructed to accommodate the expansion of services and personnel. The transition from multipurpose federal buildings also provided an opportunity to relocate postal functions from congested areas where moving the mail was a challenge. Many new post offices were constructed near union stations to take advantage of the convergence of the railroads. The strategy expedited the mail service since the railroad was the principle means of transporting correspondence during the period.⁶⁷

The new post offices were made possible by a series of omnibus public buildings acts enacted by Congress in the early decades of the twentieth century. Prior to the omnibus legislation, an individual bill was needed to authorize each public building. The omnibus acts simplified the authorization process by consolidating requests for public buildings under a single piece of legislation. A major consequence of the new system was a surge of pork barrel projects since hundreds of authorizations could be attached to one bill.⁶⁸ Congress passed the first Omnibus Public Buildings Act

⁶⁴ Bruns, 89-90.

⁶⁵ Ibid, 76-77.

⁶⁶ Scheele, Carl H. *A Short History of the Mail Service*. Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1970. 125.

⁶⁷ Bruns, 76-77.

⁶⁸ Lowry, 80.

in 1902 and an additional two were approved in 1908 and 1910. The acts effectively opened the door to an era of excessive spending on public buildings.

A building spree ensued as representatives from every district clamored for a federal project. The Treasury Department was faced with growing pressure from politicians to build in their districts. A federal building put a community on the map and signified the potential for future growth and prosperity.⁶⁹ A politician's ability to secure a federal building was essential for gaining the favor of constituents and generating votes. Post offices were a favored pet project since the buildings were so visible to the public. Over 100 post offices were approved under the omnibus legislation adopted in 1902.⁷⁰ While these federal projects were considered to be flagrant displays of government excess, their authorization expedited the spread of post offices and the federal presence to small cities and developing towns across the nation.

Most community post offices of the Progressive Era were designed within the Office of the Supervising Architect. Control of these projects was wrested from private architects at a time when the profession was expanding and practitioners pushed for opportunities to design public buildings. Congress passed the Tarsney Act in 1903, which allowed private architects to compete for public building commissions. The three-dozen commissions granted under the act were large projects in major cities featuring prominent architects.⁷¹ The Office of the Supervising Architect felt that the government was better equipped to design small scale public buildings. A series of competitions held in 1903 and 1904 confirmed that buildings with budgets of less than \$500,000 could not attract skilled private architects.⁷²

⁶⁹ Lee, 7.

⁷⁰ *United States Post Offices in New York State*, 16.

⁷¹ Bruns, 75.

⁷² *History of Post Office Construction, 1900-1940*. Washington, D.C.: United States Postal Service, 1982. 4.

James Knox Taylor presided over the Office of the Supervising Architect during the early twentieth century building boom. Taylor managed the construction of over 800 buildings from 1897 to 1912. His accomplishments were significant considering 313 buildings were commissioned by the federal government prior to his term.⁷³ Taylor had a profound impact on federal architecture since he was involved with many projects. The classical style that was unveiled at the 1893 World Columbian Exposition in Chicago was dominant in his designs. He declared the federal government's official return to "the classic style of architecture" in his annual report of 1901.⁷⁴ Taylor maintained a fundamental classical vocabulary as his designs evolved over time. His stylistic tendencies were carried on by his successor Oscar Wenderoth, who was supervising architect from 1913 to 1914.

Post Offices of the Great War & Jazz Age

The torrent of projects authorized after the turn of the twentieth century placed a strain on the United States Treasury. The omnibus approach became controversial as questions were raised about the necessity of various buildings. A movement to economize the public buildings program materialized that reflected national discontent with government waste and excess. Congress passed a final Omnibus Public Buildings Act in 1913 that responded to the concerns of the public by including a number of provisions designed to constrain inefficiencies. To start, the act precluded the authorization of new post offices in communities where postal receipts totaled less than \$10,000 per year in order to discourage wasteful spending on federal construction in

⁷³ Lowry, 77-79.

⁷⁴ *Secretary of the United States Treasury Department, Annual Report on the Finances*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1901. 36.

remote and sparsely populated areas.⁷⁵ The act also established the Public Buildings Commission, chaired by the Secretary of the Treasury, William McAdoo. The purpose of the commission was to present to Congress with an efficient way to manage the construction of numerous federal buildings that had been authorized but not contracted. Officials hoped that the commission's recommendations would depoliticize the construction process and create a more economically efficient program.⁷⁶

McAdoo led the charge to limit excessive spending. The public buildings program had drained nearly \$180 million from the Treasury since 1900. McAdoo criticized the spree when he said that "the major part of this great sum [was] expended on costly structures in small localities where neither the Government business nor the convenience of the people justified their construction."⁷⁷ Immediate action had to be taken to limit the construction of unnecessary public buildings.

McAdoo presented the Public Building Commission's report to Congress in 1914. He argued that the supervising architect should base design decisions on the architectural character and needs of a community rather than building the most extravagant building that money would allow. He also proposed that the trend of preparing individual building designs be reversed for a standardized process. He developed a classification system to ensure that future public buildings were appropriately designed. Suitable attributes were described for four distinct categories. Each was based on the annual receipts generated by the local post office.⁷⁸ McAdoo laid out the following classification system in his *Annual Report on Finances* in 1915 (Appendix A).

⁷⁵ *History of Post Office Construction*, 7-8.

⁷⁶ *United States Post Offices in New York State*, 17.

⁷⁷ *Secretary of the United States Treasury Department, Annual Report on the Finances*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1916. 21.

⁷⁸ Bruns, 81-82.

No new federal buildings were authorized between 1913 and 1926.⁷⁹ McAdoo's system was applied to the backlog that had accrued under the previous omnibus building acts. The classification system economized the public buildings program by promoting standardization instead of the production of individual building plans. McAdoo instituted a policy of "utilizing, whenever practicable, the plans of buildings previously constructed," which allowed the Office of the Supervising Architect to increase productivity and lower construction costs.⁸⁰ The system encouraged simplicity over the extravagant building practices of the past. It remained in place throughout the rest of the decade and into the 1920s.

The public buildings program came to a halt with the onset of World War I as labor and materials costs skyrocketed. The result was a shortage of post offices and other federal buildings in the 1920s. The federal government launched Keyes Elliott Act in 1926 to meet the demand for post offices. The act differed from the omnibus acts by allocating a lump sum value. A total of \$100 million was apportioned for the construction of federal buildings outside of the District of Columbia over a four year period. Each state was limited to \$5 million.⁸¹

The legislation enabled the Treasury Secretary and Postmaster General to identify and select municipalities that required post offices. A joint committee was formed to undertake a comprehensive survey of post office need across the country. The committee determined that 2,300 locales required post offices, but recommended that the funds go to only 181 communities due to budgetary constraints. Furthermore, the act allowed the Secretary of the Treasury to hire private architects in "special cases" to prepare designs for federal buildings. The legislation marked the first time private

⁷⁹ Craig, 281.

⁸⁰ *History of Post Office Construction*, 10-11.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

architects were sanctioned to work for the federal government since the repeal of the Tarsney Act.⁸²

James A. Wetmore oversaw the public buildings program as the acting supervising architect from 1915 to 1933. A lawyer by profession, he had previously served as the head of the Treasury's Law and Records Division. Wetmore handled the administrative functions and left design responsibilities to his staff.⁸³ Standardization was common practice and post office plans were often used in multiple communities. Interior arrangements did not vary unless the community expressed a specific need. Designs under Wetmore retained the basic elements of Beaux Arts massing and plan that were employed under Knox and Wenderoth. However, architectural detail and ornamentation were kept to a minimum to save on cost. The simple designs opened the door to a new era of restrained classicism.⁸⁴

Post Offices of the Great Depression

The Wall Street Crash of 1929 had a devastating impact on the national economy. The building trades were especially affected, with nearly half of the nation's architectural firms failing during the first year of the depression.⁸⁵ To infuse funds into the construction trades, an amendment to the Public Buildings Act was passed in 1930 to allocate additional funds to provide federal buildings in areas of the country that had no federal buildings. Under the amendment, funds were designated for an additional 293 post offices. Congress passed the Emergency Stabilization Act of 1931 to help further

⁸² Ibid,12-13.

⁸³ Lee, 222-223.

⁸⁴ *History of Post Office Construction*, 11-12.

⁸⁵ Craig, 327.

curb unemployment by allowing the government to accelerate its public buildings program.⁸⁶

The United States was in the throes of the Great Depression when Franklin Delano Roosevelt assumed the Presidency in 1933. With approximately 13 million Americans unemployed, citizens looked to the federal government to revitalize the stagnant national economy. Roosevelt instituted the “New Deal” within his first hundred days in office to provide much needed relief, recovery, and reform. Under the New Deal, the federal government implemented a major public building program to help curtail widespread unemployment and reinvigorate the construction industry. Various alphabet agencies funded the construction of tens of thousands of public buildings. Since the activities of the postal system directly affected the everyday lives of citizens through the delivery of the mail, the most visible of the New Deal buildings were post offices.

New Deal programs supported the construction of approximately eleven hundred post offices across the country. The public buildings campaign of the 1930s nearly tripled the number of post offices constructed in the previous five decades.⁸⁷ The federal government recognized that in addition to creating meaningful employment for millions of Americans on relief, post office construction could also help to instill confidence in public institutions during one of the most trying decades in the nation’s history. Situated prominently in communities across the country, post offices connected every citizen to the federal government.

⁸⁶ *History of Post Office Construction*, 15.

⁸⁷ Boland, 3.

The Office of the Supervising Architect was relocated to the Procurement Division of the Public Works Branch shortly after Roosevelt took office. While the federal government restructured to create a national program for economic recovery, the funds appropriated for public building projects planned under the Keyes Elliott Act were made unavailable. The National Industrial Recovery Act, which created the Public Works Administration, passed in 1933. All future public building projects would be funded under the new legislation. The Public Works Administration (PWA) financed over 400 post offices. The other hundreds of post offices built during the Great Depression Era were funded through a variety of other emergency construction programs.⁸⁸

Louis A. Simon served as the supervising architect from 1933 to 1939. Simon had worked in the Office of the Supervising Architect for several decades and was in charge of all aspects of the design process under Wetmore. The goal of the public buildings program during the Great Depression was to place as many buildings under contract as quickly as possible. Standardization was important in the interest of time and cost. Sets of stock floor plans were produced to reduce the number of individual drawings. Eleven designs had been created for small post offices and were in use by 1937.⁸⁹ Standardization reduced the amount of time spent drafting plans and hastened construction. The streamlined process put men back to work and infused money into the economy as hundreds of new projects commenced.

The post offices of this era reflect a preference for restrained classicism. Buildings consisted of simple forms with basic classical detailing. The sleek columns and intricate entablatures that characterized earlier building campaigns did not match

⁸⁸ *History of Post Office Construction*, 16-17.

⁸⁹ *Ibid*, 16-20.

the government's need for quick construction and frugality. A form of "starved" classicism emerged that eliminated unnecessary ornament. As described by the Postal Service's Federal Preservation Officer, John Sorenson:

Starved Classicism was the dominant mode of government construction during the 1930s and it is a direct descendant of the Treasury Department's Supervising Architect's earlier Beaux-Arts-inspired buildings. The facades and plans of these buildings remained symmetrical; the primary shift is the ornament. Starved Classicism, in an effort to reduce costs and speed construction, eliminated or reduced architectural ornamentation to a minimum. The ornamentation that was used often owed a stylistic debt to the Art Deco of the 1920s.⁹⁰

Starved Classicism allowed post offices to retain the symbolic republican and democratic elements of earlier classical federal buildings without compromising cost or speed. The style allowed the federal government to project a sense of stability and order during a volatile chapter of American history.

A special feature of the post offices constructed during the Great Depression is the murals that adorn the interior lobby walls. The Treasury Department's Section of Painting and Sculpture, later the Section of Fine Arts, commissioned artists from around the country to create murals for the new post office buildings. In addition to providing artists with much needed jobs, the murals were also intended to inspire a sense of community pride and accomplishment by mirroring important aspects of local culture. The murals portrayed community interests rather than federal symbols to better connect with the American public. As the "one concrete link between every community of individuals and the federal government," post offices were ideal locations to infuse art and culture into the everyday lives of citizens.⁹¹

⁹⁰ Bruns, 95.

⁹¹ Park, Marlene, and Gerald E. Markowitz. *Democratic Vistas: Post Offices and Public Art in the New Deal*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1984, 8.

Under the direction of Postmaster General James A. Farley, thousands of new post offices were opened during the Great Depression. Many of the new facilities were located in small towns that previously had no permanent federal post office. The massive building campaign ended when America entered World War II. The focus of the public buildings program changed when it was transferred from the Treasury Department to the Federal Works Agency in 1939. Resources were diverted for buildings that housed national defense functions as the country prepared for war. Post office construction was minimal during the years of the conflict as funds and manpower went towards supporting the war effort.⁹²

Post Offices of the Post-World War II Era

The public buildings program underwent significant change after World War II. A new system was implemented to address the increased demand for federal buildings. The public buildings program was reorganized under the General Services Administration (GSA) in 1949. The goal of the new agency was to reduce construction and maintenance costs through standardization and simple design.⁹³ The Post Office Department began to lease space financed and constructed by private investors through the lease-purchase program soon after the GSA was established. The program reduced the amount of federal dollars needed to cover the construction costs of new post offices. More than 85 percent of post offices were located in leased spaces by 1954.⁹⁴

Post offices assumed a new look in the post-war era. Postmaster General Arthur Summerfield called for “modern post office structures” that were designed to be functional. He objected to the use extraneous frills, such as flights of stairs leading to

⁹² Boland, 5.

⁹³ Lee, 286.

⁹⁴ Mickel, Ernest. “A Washington Report.” *Architectural Record*. 116 (November 1954): 12-13.

the entrance.⁹⁵ Simple buildings constructed with clean lines and modern materials replaced the ornate edifices designed to showcase the power of the federal government.

Standard drawings and specifications were developed to assist private architects with post office design and construction. The guidelines were flexible, leaving the architectural treatment of the exterior to the discretion of the building owner and the architect. Only the interior spaces had to be designed to meet the specifications of the Post Office Department.⁹⁶ The lease-purchase program was so successful that it was adopted for other public buildings in 1954. The Post Office Department assumed responsibility for all future projects that were exclusively post offices upon the implementation of the program. The GSA retained control of all other federal construction projects, including those that combined post offices with other federal functions.⁹⁷

Post offices moved from central cities to suburban areas as the population dispersed after the war. Major roadways became a prime location for modern post offices as the automobile came to dominate mail transportation. To accommodate automobiles, post office plans featured parking areas and drive-in service.⁹⁸ Many new post offices were also built near airports as planes replaced trains as the principal means of transporting mail for long distances. The large suburban parcels were ideal for constructing the sizable “mail factories” needed to support increasing mail volumes. The postal mechanization program that originated in the 1950s to automate the mail system required larger buildings than were constructed prior to the war. The size and

⁹⁵ Mickel, Ernest. “Washington Topics.” *Architectural Record*. 114 (November 1953): 38.

⁹⁶ Mickel. “A Washington Report.”

⁹⁷ Mickel. “Washington Topics.” *Architectural Record*. 116 (September 1954): 38, 304.

⁹⁸ Mickel. “Washington Topics.” (November 1953)

configuration of the mechanized equipment significantly influenced the design and character of modern post offices.⁹⁹

Conclusions

Many post offices constructed prior to World War II are now considered to be obsolete. New technologies and increasing mail volumes changed the amount of space needed to perform postal functions. The old workrooms became too small to handle mail sorting operations and modern equipment. Maneuvering large delivery trucks in dense downtown locations also grew increasingly problematic. As a result, mail sorting and letter carrying operations were relocated to new postal annexes. Retail services and post office boxes are often all that remain in historic post offices. The retention of even these limited functions, however, has been called into question as the USPS pushes to consolidate its real estate holdings.

Today, historic post offices sit underutilized or vacant in communities across the country. The buildings have significant architectural and cultural value that makes them worth saving. Other factors make them ideal candidates for reuse. For starters, their manageable size makes programming and financing relatively simple in comparison to larger complexes. The open floor plan of the workrooms also creates a flexible space that can house various activities. Their locations are an important aspect as well. The downtown sites of historic post offices are prime focus areas for municipalities attempting to enliven their central business districts. The futures of many of these proud buildings hang in the balance as they are decommissioned as post offices.

⁹⁹ Bruns, 99.

CHAPTER III

REUSE FOR PUBLIC PURPOSES

In a perfect world, buildings would forever retain the uses for which they were originally constructed. Changes occur, however, that can make them insufficient for serving their intended functions. These buildings are often abandoned for newer structures that are specifically designed to meet modern needs. In other cases, they are deserted because their original use no longer exists. Many historic buildings across the nation face obsolescence in these changing times. Historic post offices are prime examples. The continued existence of these important resources will require them to be put back into productive use. The buildings must either be returned to their intended use as post offices or be reused for compatible new functions.

While restoring postal functions to former post offices would be the most sensitive option, it not viable in most cases given the real estate consolidation plan put forward by the USPS. The federal government has been transferring historic post offices to new owners who have established alternative uses for the properties. These buildings most likely needed to be adapted to house any use other than a post office. The process of redeveloping a building for contemporary use while retaining its historic character and features is known as “rehabilitation.” The official definition provided by the Secretary of the Interior is “the act or process of making possible a compatible use for a property through repair, alterations, and additions while preserving those portions or features which convey its historical, cultural, or architectural values.”¹⁰⁰

¹⁰⁰ Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties. Code of Federal Regulations; Title 36, CFR 67. 1995.

Many historic post offices have been successfully rehabilitated for new uses. Their manageable size and flexible floor plans allow them to be transformed to accommodate a range of functions with relative ease. Former post offices are now used as public libraries, restaurants, municipal offices, and department stores. Most of these buildings were able to retain their historic character and architectural features through the rehabilitation process. These formerly vacant or underutilized properties have inspired new life in their respective downtown areas. The private uses also have the added benefit being placed on the tax rolls for the first time in recent history.

There is more to a historic post office than its architectural features and its potential to accrue tax revenues for a municipality, however. All historic post offices also have an important civic legacy that should be preserved through rehabilitation. As the most visible and accessible government buildings in a community, the people have developed special relationships with their post offices over the years. Numerous articles about impending sales indicate that these intrinsically public buildings should remain in the public sector. Residents of La Jolla, California agreed that they could envision their historic post office as a civic center but not as a restaurant or movie theater.¹⁰¹ A similar consensus was made by communities about the reuse of other historic post offices around the country.

Given the significance of historic post offices in the civic realm, communities should make every effort to find compatible public reuse options for these buildings. The three case studies featured in this thesis illustrate how communities have retained public uses in their post offices with great success. A public use benefits the community and the historic resource in ways that a private use cannot. A public use maintains

¹⁰¹ Schwab, Dave. "Community: Post Office Should be Some Sort of Civic Center." *La Jolla Light*. 3 April 2012. Web. 23 August 2012.

public access and a valued community gathering space while strengthening downtown economies.

Maintain Public Access

American citizens built and paid for those post offices that are now considered to be historic. These buildings belong to the people. The grand post office lobbies were designed for the public to view and appreciate. The lavish spaces make a statement about the power of the federal government and the ambitions of their respective municipalities. The continued use of a post office for its original purpose assures unrestricted access to the building's designated public spaces.

Public access can no longer be guaranteed once a post office is sold. This is problematic in cases where a post office is sold to a private owner. Numerous communities face the prospect of losing access to these important public spaces as many post offices are reused as private offices. The new owner would have to agree to place a covenant in the deed in order to assure continued public access. A post office with a mural, however, is required to provide some public access for viewing. The USPS negotiates an art loan agreement with the new owner to determine the hours the mural can be viewed by the public. The question becomes how much public access should be allowed under the agreement.

This issue is currently under debate in Venice, California. Hollywood producer Joel Silver has purchased the New Deal-era Venice Post Office and plans to use the building to house his production companies. The lobby of the building features a mural by the artist Edward Biberman that must remain accessible to the public, as per the art loan agreement. The Coalition to Save the Venice Post Office drafted a motion to keep

the lobby open for the same hours it was open while it was a public building, Monday through Saturday from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m.¹⁰²

It is uncertain whether this amount of access will actually be granted to the people of Venice, California. Other communities are offered much less. The Birmingham Post Office in Birmingham, Michigan was purchased by the Sunrow Company and reused as a private office building. The mural that used to be featured with pride in the public lobby is now hidden in a private office due to the reconfiguration of the building. It is only available for view upon request.¹⁰³ Even with guaranteed hours for public viewing of the murals, people may be unaware when access is allowed or may not feel comfortable entering a private place of business. People had an acceptable reason to enter these buildings when they were post offices. As private offices, the only reason to enter these buildings would be to observe the lobbies and their murals.

Post offices have also been reused for private uses that provide more public access than private offices. Some examples include restaurants and retail stores. Although patrons are allowed to enter these buildings on a regular basis, the use could be considered exclusive depending on the nature of the establishment. A restaurant requires a person to purchase a food or a beverage to remain in the building. Likewise, some members of the public might also not feel comfortable in a high-end retail store. These private uses do not provide the same egalitarian experience as a post office or another public use. To preserve public access, as well as the democratic and classless nature of these buildings, they should remain in the public domain.

¹⁰² "Coalition to Save the Venice Post Office: Substitute Motion." *Yo! Venice*. yovenice.com. 22 August 2012. 24 August 2012.

¹⁰³ Wordekemper, Dallan. "Case Studies." *EO 13287 Report 2011*. United States Postal Service. Unpublished Report. 10 January 2012.

Preserve a Valued Community Gathering Place

Historically, post offices were the center of social interaction within a community. The odds were good that a trip to the post office would result in an encounter with a familiar face. In the past it was common for friends and neighbors to congregate in the lobbies of post offices to exchange news and gossip while running their daily errands. The communal nature of the setting also promoted casual interactions between complete strangers. The post office was often the hub of the civic sphere. In many municipalities they are still regarded as important community meeting spaces that are central to open public dialogue.

Urban sociologist Ray Oldenberg classifies post offices as “third places” in his book *The Great Good Place*. Third places are neutral social environments that are separate from both home and work. These informal gathering places encourage interactions between individuals from all walks of life due to their inclusive nature. The bonds and connections established in these public places help to build a strong sense of community. Oldenberg considers third spaces to be “the heart of a community’s social vitality and the foundation of a functioning democracy.” He goes on to say that they “promote social equality by leveling the status of guests, provide a setting for grassroots politics, create habits of public association, and offer psychological support to individuals and communities.”¹⁰⁴

These essential venues for face-to-face public discourse are gradually disappearing. Social networking sites that offer virtual community have started to replace more tangible third places. The author of the blog *Connecticut Yankee Out West*

¹⁰⁴ Oldenburg, Ray. *The Great Good Place: Cafés, Coffee Shops, Bookstores, Bars, Hair Salons, and Other Hangouts at the Heart of a Community*. New York: Marlowe, 1999.

proposes that former post offices be reused as third places to restore the buildings as community focal points and to rebuild the public social realm.¹⁰⁵ The reuse of former post offices for public purposes would create third places where people could interact in the flesh once again. Most public buildings are neutral and inclusive, but special care will need to be taken to select uses that attract a range of people and encourage conversation between them.

Strengthen Downtown Economies

Post offices are quintessential elements of Main Street America. Traditionally, people traveled downtown on a weekly or even daily basis to send and receive their mail at the local post office. The regular event ensured the presence of people downtown and generated foot traffic for businesses. With the advent of home delivery service, people made the trip to the post office less frequently. Regardless, the average post office still manages to attract 600 customers per week.¹⁰⁶ The destination gives many people a compelling reason to go downtown. The rash of post office closures threatens central business districts across the country as this important downtown draw fades away.

Former post offices can continue to enhance the downtown economy if adapted and reused for a public purpose. Writer Philip Langdon argues in his article “Public Buildings Keep Town Centers Alive” that public buildings are an essential component of a vibrant business district.¹⁰⁷ A thriving town center needs a solid mix of public buildings in addition to stores and restaurants. The public buildings are important because they act as anchors that draw people to the downtown area. According to an

¹⁰⁵ “U.S. Postal Service’s Infrastructure: How Can We Maintain and Expand Our Public Realm?” *A Connecticut Yankee Out West*. 2 March 2010. Web. 27 August 2012.

¹⁰⁶ Censky, Annalyn. “\$238 Billion Loss for U.S. Mail; Saturday Delivery May End.” *CNNMoney.com*. 2 March 2010. Web. 23 August 2012.

¹⁰⁷ Langdon, Philip. “Public Buildings Keep Town Centers Alive.” *Planning Commissioners Journal*. 49 (2003): 1-7.

interview that Langdon conducted with Robert Gibbs of Gibbs Planning Group, a typical library draws between 500 and 1,500 people a day while a typical town hall draws between 200 and 500 people a day. Langdon says that these people “enliven the sidewalks” and “put money in the cash registers” of downtown businesses.¹⁰⁸

Another interview that Langdon conducted with Donovan Rypkema of Place Economics demonstrates that workers in public buildings can also have a positive impact on the downtown economy. Rypkema is quoted in the article saying that, “a downtown worker will spend between \$2,500 and \$3,500 a year in the downtown economy.”¹⁰⁹ Post offices that are vacant or underutilized do not maximize their economic contributions to communities because they are staffed under full capacity. Putting them to use as government offices or community centers will not only draw people downtown, but will also fill them with additional workers who can engage in the downtown economy.

Both Gibbs and Rypkema agree that public buildings can strengthen downtowns in ways beyond economic development. Gibbs is quoted in the article saying that public buildings “add to the authenticity of a town . . . [and] make it less of a shopping center and more of a town center.”¹¹⁰ Rypkema offers another perspective. He says that basing public functions downtown could foster cooperation between community leadership and encourage other businesses to locate in the area.¹¹¹ Both of these opinions reinforce the argument that the reuse of a post office for a public purpose can benefit communities in ways that a private purpose cannot.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid, 2.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

Langdon cautions in his article, however, that not all public buildings result in equal gain for a downtown. He says that, “public buildings that generate community activity and social life are more critical to downtown than are routine government office buildings.”¹¹² A post office is an excellent example of a public building that a downtown would want to attract. They are known to draw people downtown and function as local gathering places. Therefore, it is important that the uses put forth for these buildings generate as much or more activity and social life as a post office.

Conclusions

When a community is faced with a decommissioned post office, the question is not what they *can* become but what they *should* become. Historic post offices are best suited for public reuse options based on their legacies as valued civic structures. Ensuring that these buildings continue to serve as public amenities maintains public access and preserves valued community gathering spaces. Downtown economies also benefit from retaining an important anchor that will serve to draw people to nearby businesses. It is up to communities to take the initiative to find owners who will rehabilitate historic post offices for public uses.

Upholding the tradition of public use alone, however, does not guarantee a successful rehabilitation. The new use also needs to be compatible with the physical elements of a building. Special attention must be paid to the spaces and architectural features that make a building significant. Fortunately, the federal government is required to take actions during the disposal process to ensure that new owners protect important architectural features when rehabilitating historic post offices for contemporary uses. These protections are the subject of the next chapter.

¹¹² Ibid, 7.

CHAPTER IV

FEDERAL DISPOSAL PROCESS

The federal disposal process is the mechanism used to transfer historic post office properties to new owners. It provides a hierarchical system for making excess properties available to non-federal entities. The process also offers a means of avoiding and mitigating adverse effects that could result under new ownership. Properties that are disposed from the federal inventory are no longer afforded protections under the federal preservation policy. That means that alterations that may occur to adapt a property for a new use to are no longer subject to a federal review process. The federal government often places preservation provisions in the deed to provide some protection to the historic resource. Therefore, the disposal process is important for ensuring positive outcomes for historic post offices after they are declared surplus to the federal government.

Federal Stewardship Responsibilities

Historic properties owned or controlled by the federal government are afforded certain protections under the federal preservation policy. The general procedures and requirements for historic preservation applicable to the federal government were set out in Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966, Sections 110 and 111 of the NHPA Amendments of 1980, and in the federal regulations issued to carry out these provisions of law. The USPS Board of Governors chose to abide by these federal procedures and requirements with the approval of Resolution No. 82-7 in November 1982.¹¹³

¹¹³ Wordekemper, Dallan. "Re: Post Office Thesis." Message to author. 9 December 2011. E-mail.

The stewardship principles of the NHPA were reconfirmed with the passage of the Preserve America Executive Order 13287 in 2003. The Executive Order charges federal agencies to provide leadership in protecting and enhancing historic properties under their ownership. An accountability system to ensure agency compliance with NHPA and EO objectives was placed under the purview of the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP).¹¹⁴ These stewardship responsibilities extend to all properties currently in the federal inventory that are listed or eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP). The policy intends to protect the longevity of the historic resources under the jurisdiction of the federal government in order to retain them as viable public buildings.

The protections offered by the federal preservation policy do not extend to properties that are no longer owned or controlled by a federal agency. Landholding agencies have the right to “retain or excess” historic property under Section 110 of the NHPA, according to the ACHP.¹¹⁵ The *U.S. Postal Service Facilities Guide to Real Property Acquisitions and Related Services* more specifically asserts that the USPS retains the right to dispose of any real property that is deemed excess to the agency’s mission through exchange, sublease, outlease, or sale.¹¹⁶ After a property is disposed from the federal inventory, the federal government is no longer accountable for its continued stewardship. However, the landholding agency can guide the future use and preservation of a historic post office through the disposal process.

¹¹⁴ Bush, George W. “Executive Order 13287: Preserve America.” Washington, D.C.: White House, 3 March 2003.

¹¹⁵ *Historic Property Disposal Guide*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. General Services Administration Public Buildings Service, 2008. 8.

¹¹⁶ *U.S. Postal Service Facilities Guide to Real Property Acquisitions and Related Services*. Washington, D.C.: United States Postal Service, 2008.

Disposal Process

If a property is no longer essential to the mission of the USPS, the agency must first attempt to retain the resource in the federal inventory. Section 110(a)(1) of the NHPA states that federal agencies are required to consider all historic properties available for the purpose of carrying out agency responsibilities before acquiring, constructing, or leasing new buildings.¹¹⁷ This policy not only keeps historic properties in productive use, but also ensures that they continue to be protected by the federal government's historic preservation policies.

Surplus properties are first offered to the General Services Administration (GSA), the property management agency of the federal government. Through the GSA, the USPS is permitted to exchange excess real property with other federal agencies. Funds do not change hands between federal agencies for excess properties under this system. Rather, the USPS can use the credits from the exchange to acquire property from the federal surplus property pool when the need arises.¹¹⁸ If GSA cannot find a viable use for the property, it is declared surplus to the needs of the federal government.

The GSA itself is an important steward of historic post offices. It controls the large multi-purpose buildings that combine post offices with other federal functions. It also controls some USPS properties that the agency has declared to be surplus. The GSA uses former USPS buildings for its own purposes, as well as finds innovative ways to outlease or dispose of the buildings to other non-federal users. The agency identifies post offices as “good candidates for community-based advocacy building for public-

¹¹⁷ National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, 16 U.S.C. § 470h-2(a)(1) (1994).

¹¹⁸ *Embracing the Future: Making the Tough Choices to Preserve Universal Mail Service: Report of the President's Commission on the United States Postal Service*. Washington, DC: President's Commission on the United States Postal Service, 2003. 97.

private or public-public (federal-state-local) partnerships” and is working with regional offices to identify appropriate groups to support their sympathetic reuse.¹¹⁹

Properties not essential to the mission of the federal government are made available through sale or lease to non-federal entities. Surplus property must first be offered as a homeless conveyance before any other use can be considered, according to the Department of Housing and Urban Development.¹²⁰ The USPS disposal policy then provides state, county and municipal governments with the opportunity to assume ownership and control of excess properties. In select cases, these properties are transferred to government entities or not-for-profit organizations without reimbursement. Since the policy of the USPS is to dispose of excess property in a way that maximizes revenue, transfers without compensation usually only occur in communities that lack adequate market demand.¹²¹

Similar to the USPS disposal policy, the GSA also provides the public sector with the first opportunity to assume ownership of excess historic properties. However, the agency’s *Historic Property Disposal Guide* differentiates between two types of public transfers: a public benefit conveyance and a negotiated sale. A public benefit conveyance is described as, “conveyances to public bodies or (where authorized) nonprofit institutions for educational, park and recreation, historic monument, homeless assistance, and other public purposes. These authorities allow transfer at below market value (at up to 100 percent discount, at the option of the Government) to provide public benefits, including preservation and continued public access.” The conveyance can be overturned if the new property owner fails to use the property as defined in the

¹¹⁹ *Held in Public Trust: PBS Strategy for Using Historic Buildings*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. General Services Administration Public Buildings Service, 1999. 29.

¹²⁰ *Property Disposal: Customer Guide to Real Property Disposal*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. General Services Administration Public Buildings Service, n.d. 6.

¹²¹ *Embracing the Future*, 82.

agreement.¹²² In contrast, a negotiated sale allows for transfer of surplus property at fair market value to “states, territories, local governments, or tax-supported agencies.” This type of transfer does not impose any public use restrictions, but is more costly for the transferee.¹²³

If the properties are not purchased or leased by a government entity or a not-for-profit organization, the disposal process is formally opened to the private sector. The USPS disposal policy does not describe in any detail the terms of a sale to the private sector. In contrast, the GSA policy explains the process at greater length, stating that “...surplus property not conveyed to State or local governments and other eligible recipients for public purposes may be disposed of by competitive public sale or lease at fair market value.”¹²⁴

The disposal of historic postal offices out of the hands of the federal government raises questions about the future preservation responsibilities. Once a property is sold or leased to a non-federal entity, federal agencies are no longer accountable for its continued preservation and maintenance. Future alterations to the building or new construction on the site by the owner will no longer be afforded Section 106 review since the property is no longer federally owned. However, the federal disposal policy provides the agency with the ability to impart proper legal protections to ensure that adequate preservation and maintenance is implemented following disposition.¹²⁵

¹²² *Historic Property Disposal Guide*, 18.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 20.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵ Beisert, Oscar, Piia Helve, Frederick M. Holycross, Sarah Stokely. *Executive Order 13287: Preserve America, Report to the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation*. Arlington, V.A.: United States Postal Service, September 2008. 5-2.

Section 106 Review & the Memorandum of Agreement

The disposal of a historic post office property to a non-federal entity is defined as a federal undertaking and is subject to review under Section 106 of the NHPA. The purpose of the Section 106 review process is to identify any adverse effects that may result from a federal undertaking and distinguish ways to mitigate potential damage to the historic property. As the lead agency, the USPS or the GSA must enter into consultation with the SHPO or THPO to assess the potential for adverse effects. According to the criteria provided by the ACHP, an adverse effect occurs “when an undertaking may directly or indirectly alter characteristics of a historic property that qualify it for inclusion in the Register.”¹²⁶

If adverse effects are identified, the USPS or the GSA must seek to “avoid, minimize and mitigate” damage to the historic property.¹²⁷ The property-holding agency consults to resolve adverse effects with the SHPO or THPO, local governments, involved parties, and members of the public. These stakeholders are invited to participate in the planning phase of projects and can provide comment on the proposed changes to the building through public hearings.¹²⁸ The ACHP may also intervene in the consultation process during particularly important or contentious projects.

Through consultation, the USPS or GSA will enter into a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with the appropriate parties, which outlines the measures required to avoid, minimize, and mitigate the adverse effects to the affected post office.¹²⁹ The MOA will require preservation provisions, such as covenants or easements, as a legal

¹²⁶“Apply Criteria of Adverse Effect.” Washington, D.C.: Advisory Council of Historic Preservation, n.d. Web. 20 January 2012.

¹²⁷ “Section 106 Regulations Summary.” Washington, D.C.: Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, 26 April 2002. Web. 20 January 2012.

¹²⁸ Beisert, 6-3.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

requirement of sale or transfer. The disposal policy of the USPS goes even further to say that the agency "...will not lease or exchange a historic property to any party if the Postal Service determines that the proposed lease or exchange will not adequately insure the preservation of the historic property."¹³⁰ While this statement demonstrates the agency's concern for the continued stewardship of a property, protective covenants and property easements provide the real teeth for safeguarding the historic character of a post office in the future.

Preservation Provisions

Covenants and easements provide legally enforceable means of ensuring the long-term stewardship of historic post offices after they have been disposed from the federal inventory. They are similar in that both are mechanisms for protecting historic properties through oversight from an outside entity. The GSA differentiates between covenants and easements in its *Historic Property Disposal Guide* stating that the easements are less detailed than covenants and can reduce the consultation period.¹³¹ Preservation provisions are stipulated in the MOA between the involved federal agency and the SHPO. The covenant or easement is then added to the deed and recorded upon the transfer of the property. The SHPO, or any other named beneficiary, assumes responsibility for upholding the preservation provisions as the covenant or easement holder and is charged with overseeing its continued value going forward.¹³²

¹³⁰ Ibid, 6-2.

¹³¹ *Historic Property Disposal Guide*, 28-29.

¹³² Ibid.

The content and specificity of preservation provisions differ from property to property since the beneficiary retains the right to negotiate the level of protection that it provides. The primary intent of a covenant or easement is to protect and maintain the character-defining features that make a building eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. Preservation provisions generally require that major alternations be approved by the SHPO and conducted in a manner consistent with the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties.

Most covenants and easements do not specifically enumerate the features that define the historic character of a building. The identification of important materials, architectural elements, spaces, and spatial relationships is especially important during adaptive reuse projects since the alteration of these features must be avoided to satisfy the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation. For clarification purposes, a SHPO can request that the federal agency in charge of the disposal list the character-defining features in the covenant or easement.

The Florida SHPO made this appeal to the USPS during the Section 106 process for the Palm Beach Post Office. A request was made that the USPS “identify and list the *architecturally or historically significant exterior and interior features*” [their emphasis] and add them to the covenants.¹³³ The USPS retained a qualified historic preservation consultant to carry out the request. The consultant generated a list of interior and exterior features that were essential to the conveyance of the building’s historic significance. These features were incorporated into the preservation covenants to help guide the rehabilitation effort.

¹³³ Krammerer, Laura. “Re: DHR Project File Number: 2010-951, United States Postal Service, Proposed Excess Building and Land – Palm Beach Post Office at 95 North Country Road, Palm Beach, Palm Beach County.” Message to David Ashley. 25 March 2010. Letter.

While preservation covenants and easements generally help to guide rehabilitation projects, the provisions can be difficult to enforce in perpetuity. Covenants and easements may not survive subsequent conveyances of the property in some states.¹³⁴ Despite the apparent deficiencies of preservation provisions, they remain the most effective means for protecting the architectural integrity of historic post offices following the transfer from the federal government.¹³⁵

Protecting the New Deal Arts Collection

New Deal murals are not sold with post office buildings because the federal government considers them to be valuable historic assets. The USPS is able to maintain ownership of the murals through the negotiation of art loan agreements with the purchasers of the buildings. A typical agreement requires that the new owners provide insurance and regular maintenance for the murals. The new owners must also agree to openly display the murals in the buildings since the USPS is compelled by programmatic requirements to make the works of art reasonably accessible to the public.¹³⁶

The art loan agreements make certain that the historic artworks are protected and preserved after disposal so that they can be appreciated by future generations. The public access stipulation is especially important for post offices that are sold to private owners whom may otherwise not provide any means of public access to the building. If the terms of the agreement cannot be met, the works of art are removed from the post office and housed elsewhere.

¹³⁴ *Historic Property Disposal Guide*, 28-29.

¹³⁵ Wordekemper, "Re: Post Office Thesis."

¹³⁶ Stiles, Elaine. "Right-Sizing the Mail: Advocating to Retain or Reuse Historic Post Offices." *Forum Bulletin*. National Trust for Historic Preservation, 15 August 2011. Web. 3 January 2012.

Conclusions

The federal disposal process provides an opportunity for governments and non-profit organizations to assume ownership of historic post offices, often at a reasonable price. Granting top priority to entities that will rehabilitate these buildings for public purposes is critical for preserving their longstanding civic tradition. The process also provides some degree of protection to the buildings after they are transferred from federal ownership. The preservation provisions enumerated in the deeds encourage continued stewardship after disposition. They also provide baseline protection by requiring all reuse projects to follow the Secretary of Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. The enforcement of the Standards and any other provisions is left in the hands of the state governments. It is up to them to ensure that significant features are identified and protected and that the new use is compatible with the historic resource.

CHAPTER V

CASE STUDIES INTRODUCTION

The case studies presented in the following chapters provide examples of three historic post offices that were successfully rehabilitated for public purposes. The selected post offices include the Ithaca Post Office (Ithaca, New York), the Rockville Post Office (Rockville, Maryland), and the Beverly Hills Main Post Office (Beverly Hills, California). The futures of these valued local landmarks became uncertain after each was abandoned for a newer mail center. However, the local leaders of these communities recognized the importance of the buildings and took the initiative to rehabilitate them for new public purposes. The case studies offer three different examples of public uses that are compatible with both the civic and architectural legacies of historic post offices. These uses include a municipal office building, a police station, and a performing arts center.

The case studies vary in a number of ways to demonstrate that a successful rehabilitation can occur anywhere. The selected post offices are purposely located in different regions of the country in communities with distinctive political and cultural dynamics. They also contrast in era of construction and architectural style. Some characteristics were kept consistent for comparison purposes. The three post offices were constructed as part of the federal building program of the early twentieth century. They are medium in size, ranging from 9,000 to 38,000 square feet. The buildings were also all constructed in prominent downtown locations and housed postal functions exclusively.

The case studies demonstrate how the civic tradition of these buildings was preserved through continued public use. Each of the rehabilitation projects was able to maintain public access to the postal lobbies. The new uses provide members of the public with a valid reason to enter each lobby other than to simply admire the space. These communities intended that people from every walk of life feel comfortable entering these buildings under their new uses. They also envisioned that continued public use would retain the buildings as community gathering spaces and civic centers. Although only one of these case studies has actually been completed, each of the new uses has the potential to enliven their respective downtown areas. Placing these buildings back into productive public use will stimulate activity in the central business district by attracting both residents and visitors.

The case studies also show how architectural integrity was preserved during the rehabilitation of each post office. The three projects had to comply with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. The unique materials and features that defined the character of each building were retained and preserved in accordance with the Standards. The significant interior spaces and their relationships to each other also had to be retained and preserved. Maintaining these spaces and their relationships can be a challenge when introducing a new use into the historic fabric of a building and some uses prove to be more compatible than others.

Certain consistencies in design distinguish post offices from other building types. The defining spaces in most post offices include lobbies, workrooms, and service areas. The functions of these spaces are discerned by their design and ornamentation. Postal lobbies are generally monumental spaces that feature elaborate materials and

finishes. The public is meant to admire these impressive rooms as they conduct their business.

The “back of house” operations are contained in the office spaces and large open workrooms. These functional spaces are meant to house administrative duties and mail sorting activities that are off limits to the general public. In contrast to the postal lobbies, these spaces are designed for efficiency and are quite unadorned. The relationships between these spaces are as important as the spaces themselves. The public uses put forth in the case studies proved to be compatible with the original spatial relationships of the post offices.

The three case studies illustrate the positive impact that rehabilitation for public purposes can have on historic post office buildings and their communities. The goal of the comparison is to inform similar projects in the future. Other communities will be able to use the experiences of these three municipalities to better navigate the federal disposal process and to determine compatible rehabilitation options.

CHAPTER VI

ITHACA POST OFFICE

The Ithaca Post Office occupies the southeast corner of North Tioga and East Buffalo streets in Ithaca, New York. The building is located a block away from the central business district, in an area that was historically considered to be the civic center. The Ithaca Post Office was the first permanent post office in the city. It was completed in 1910 and operated as the primary mail depository until a new main post office was opened at a suburban location near the airport in 1992. The building was rehabilitated for use as the Ithaca Town Hall in the late 1990s. The Town leases a portion of the space to the USPS so that postal functions could be retained downtown. The impressive Beaux-Arts structure continues to serve as a landmark and a source of community pride.

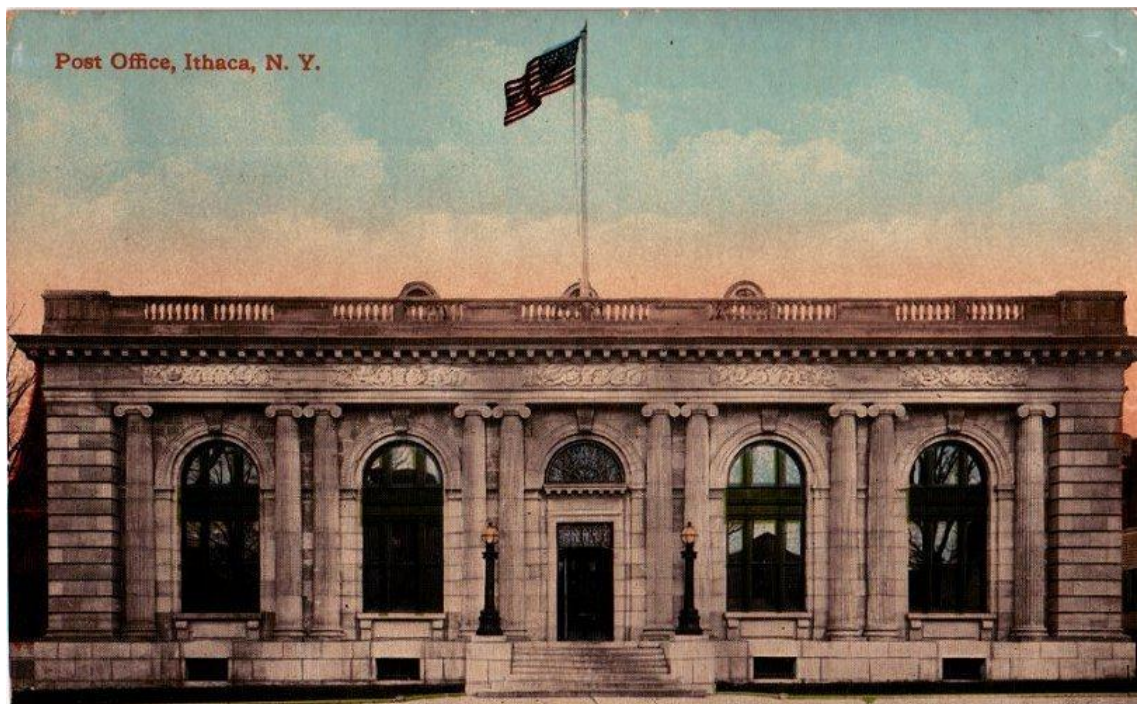


Illustration 1: Ithaca Post Office Postcard.

(Source: Leighton & Valentine Co. *Postcard 918277*. n.d. Retrieved from ebay.com. Nov. 2012.)

Community Context

The City of Ithaca is located in the Finger Lakes region of upstate New York. It is the seat of Tompkins County and boasts the largest population in the metropolitan area with 30,014 residents at the time of the 2010 Census. The city experienced minimal population growth between 2000 and 2010, with a population growth rate of 2.5 percent. The median household income for city residents is comparatively lower than the other two case study cities, hovering at \$30,919.¹³⁷

Ithaca is nestled around the southern shore of Cayuga Lake and is surrounded by natural beauty. The gorges and parks laced throughout the city fuel the local tourism industry. Major economic engines located within the boundaries of Ithaca are Cornell University and Ithaca College. The presence of these institutions has fostered an educated and politically active populace.

The community has generally been supportive of historic preservation efforts. Ithaca has many historic resources, including six local historic districts and various individual landmarks. The city adopted one of the earliest preservation ordinances in New York State in 1971. The city is also a Certified Local Government and provides tax incentives to promote investment in historic resources. Historic Ithaca serves as the local non-profit agency that advocates for preservation and offers technical assistance for property owners.

¹³⁷ United States Census 2010. "State and County QuickFacts: Ithaca, New York." *State and County QuickFacts*. United States Census Bureau, 31 January 2012. Web. 18 June 2012.

City of Ithaca Postal History

The first European settlers arrived in Ithaca in the late 1780s. These early residents inhabited the area at the base of East Hill, along Cascadilla Creek. Approximately 30 people lived in the settlement by 1790.¹³⁸ A gristmill and other commercial establishments emerged along the creek, taking advantage of the natural resource. Around the same time, land in the Central New York Military Tract was being distributed to soldiers as a reward for service during the Revolutionary War. Simeon DeWitt acquired the land that would become Ithaca from Abraham Bloodgood in 1795.

The region grew in the early decades of the nineteenth century. The westward extension of the Catskill Turnpike, named the Jericho-Bath Turnpike, was built in 1808 and passed through Ithaca along State Street. The commercial center moved from the banks of Cascadilla Creek to State and Tioga streets to take advantage of the roadway.¹³⁹ Ithaca's earliest post office was located at this intersection, at a counter in the Dwight Tavern. This "publick house" began accommodating postal functions in 1809.¹⁴⁰

The Village of Ithaca was incorporated in 1821 with a population of 1,000. Over the next two decades, Ithaca developed its transportation connections, eager to become a shipping center.¹⁴¹ The Erie Canal opened in 1825 and the village was connected to this important channel via a canal to Cayuga Lake. The Ithaca Owego Railroad opened in 1834, providing a connection to the south. The area continued to grow with the arrival of new industries after the Civil War.

¹³⁸ Snodderly, Daniel R. *Ithaca and Its Past: The History and Architecture of the Down-Town*. Ithaca, N.Y.: DeWitt Historical Society of Tompkins County, 1982, 11.

¹³⁹ Ibid, 11.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid, 68

¹⁴¹ Ibid, 12.

The post office relocated to a space in the Cornell Public Library circa 1866. Ezra Cornell chartered the library in 1863 and purchased a lot on Tioga Street along the south side of Seneca Street. To support the ongoing financial needs of the library, the building contained commercial space to be rented to the post office and other businesses.¹⁴² The post office again moved to the Colonial Building at 109-113 East State Street in 1882. The building was originally constructed for the Bank of Ithaca in 1830, but was vacated upon the Bank's merger with Tompkins County Bank in 1849. The post office occupied the space from 1882 to 1910.¹⁴³

By 1888, the Village of Ithaca had 11,000 residents and was finally incorporated as a city.¹⁴⁴ In response to the city's growth, the federal government decided to construct the first permanent post office in Ithaca at the turn of the twentieth century. According to a *Report of the Supervising Architect*, \$20,000 was appropriated for the project on June 28, 1902. The federal government purchased the lot at 213 North Tioga Street in 1903 for the site of the new post office.¹⁴⁵ Construction commenced in 1908 but the building was not completed until 1910. The total cost of the post office was \$101,500.¹⁴⁶ The building operated as Ithaca's main post office for decades until mail volumes finally outgrew the facility. A new main post office was opened on Warren Road in 1992. The suburban location provided more space for truck deliveries and sorting operations. The future of the historic downtown post office was called into question when much of its 23,000 square feet became underutilized after the major postal functions vacated the building.

¹⁴² "The Cornell Public Library." *Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections*. Cornell University, n.d. Web. 28 June 2012.

¹⁴³ Snodderly, 35.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 13.

¹⁴⁵ Hesch, Merrill, and Richard Pieper. *Ithaca Then & Now*. Ithaca, N.Y: McBooks Press, 1983, 61.

¹⁴⁶ *Report of the Supervising Architect*. Washington, D.C.: National Archives General Reference Branch, n.d.

The Post Office as a Historic Resource

The Ithaca Post Office occupies half a city block in the DeWitt Park Historic District of Downtown Ithaca. The City of Ithaca designated Dewitt Park as its first local historic district in 1971. It was then listed on the State and National Registers of Historic Places in the same year. A high concentration of educational, governmental, and religious buildings historically shaped the district's status as an important civic center.¹⁴⁷ Many of the buildings have retained their original uses and the district survives as a hub of civic and commercial activity. The Ithaca Post Office is an essential contributing resource in the district, given its distinct architectural character and historic use.

The plans for the Ithaca Post Office were produced under the Supervising Architect of the Treasury, James Knox Taylor. The Beaux-Arts building features the classical vocabulary championed by Taylor during his tenure. The original mass of the building is rectangular in plan and consists of one-and-one-half stories above a raised basement and granite-clad foundation. It is five bays wide and three bays deep, with large arcaded openings defining each bay. The exterior wall facing is composed of regularly coursed ashlar limestone with rusticated corners. A decorative frieze molding and a low, hipped metal roof with a balustrade and eight dormer windows crown the original building mass.¹⁴⁸

The primary façade of the Ithaca Post Office faces west to North Tioga Street. It is the most ornate of the four elevations, featuring paired ionic columns separating each bay and a fan-shaped grill over the main entrance. The original lobby comprises four of

¹⁴⁷ National Register of Historic Places. *DeWitt Park Historic District*. Ithaca, Tompkins County, N.Y. National Register # 71000561.

¹⁴⁸ U.S. Postal Service. *Historic, Architectural & Archeological Significance Survey*. Washington, D.C.: National Archives General Reference Branch, January 1983. PS Form 4902.

the five bays on the primary elevation and three bays on the north elevation.¹⁴⁹ Access to the space is gained through the main entrance in the central bay of the primary elevation and the side entrance in the western-most bay of the north elevation. The interior walls of the lobby are clad with marble and the floor is terrazzo. High vaulted plaster ceilings with decorative ribs give the space a monumental quality. The USPS altered the character of the space by erecting aluminum and glass partition walls and by covering the original arched windows.¹⁵⁰

Situated in the space adjacent to the lobby are several offices that were historically inhabited by the Postmaster and his staff. These work spaces occupy most of the bays on the south elevation of the post office. The remainder of the main level was designated for use as an open plan workroom. The materials and finishes used in this functional space were less ornate than those used in the grand public lobby.

Additions to the original building mass were constructed during two separate campaigns to create more workroom space. The Fred R. Comb Company completed the first addition in 1936. It included five additional bays that projected from the east façade of the original building mass. The addition consists of a single-story rectangular volume, crowned by a flat roof, above a raised basement. The design features a similar arcaded window system as the original post office building, but ornamentation was substantially simplified around the openings and in the entablature. A light colored brick was used rather than limestone to cover the exterior walls.

The 1965 addition includes an open loading dock at the rear of the building. A single-story rectangular volume that spans the entire south elevation of the 1936 addition was also added during this campaign. The addition included a mechanical

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ HOLT Architects. "Construction." Received by the Town of Ithaca Department of Planning & Development April 1999. Town of Ithaca Archives. Ithaca Town Hall, Ithaca, New York.

mezzanine and lookout gallery that allowed the postmaster to supervise employees. Two bays of the addition are visible on the primary elevation that faces Tioga Street. The two arched windows and ornamentation are simplified versions of features of the original building and are architecturally compatible.

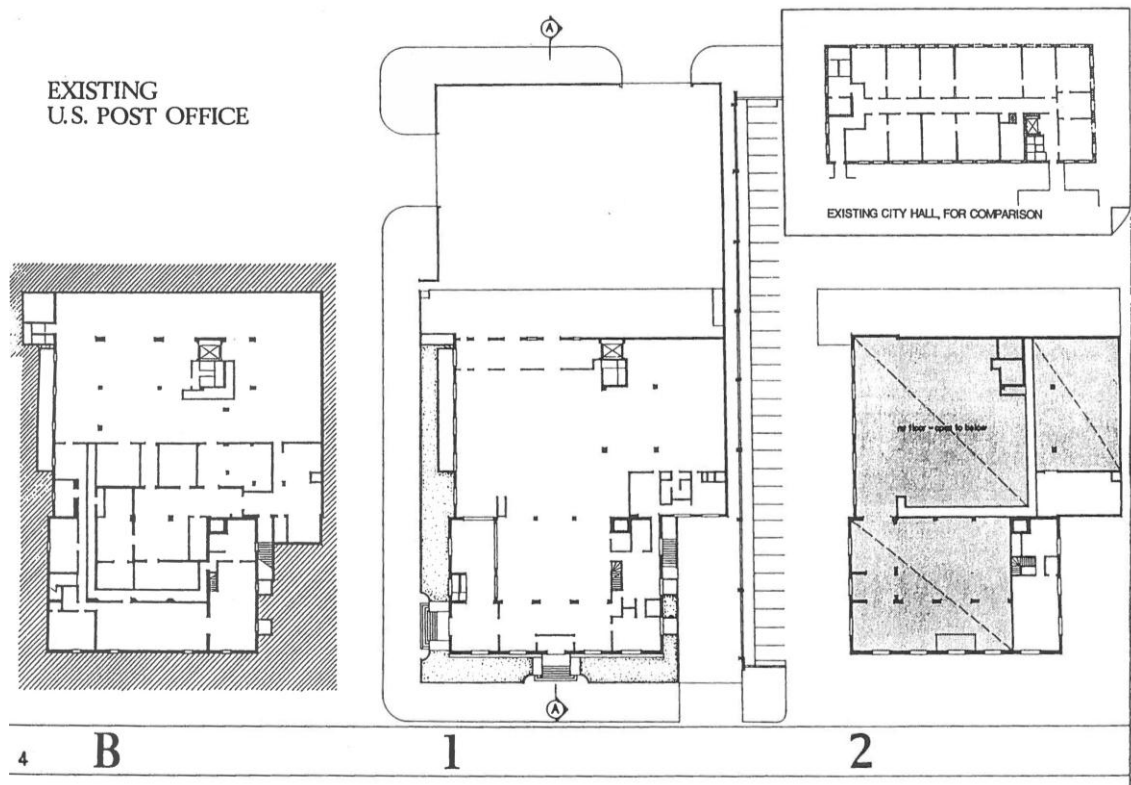


Illustration 2: Ithaca Post Office Floor Plans Prior to Rehabilitation.
 (Source: HOLT Architects. *Ithaca Town Hall Feasibility Study*. 1996.)

Disposal Process

Many Ithaca residents were apprehensive that service at the historic downtown Ithaca Post Office would be eliminated upon the opening of the new facility on Warren Road. In response to the public outcry, Mayor Benjamin Nichols and Postmaster Edward Gatch issued a joint statement in August of 1994 ensuring that USPS presence would not be further diminished downtown and that retail services would be available in the historic post office for the “indefinite future.” To further address concerns about future

changes to service at the downtown facility, the USPS proposed the establishment of a Customer Advisory Council to review postal operations and make recommendations. The joint statement also expressed the intentions of the USPS to continue meeting with local leaders to determine an appropriate use for portions of the building not needed for postal functions.¹⁵¹

Around the same time, the Town of Ithaca began its search for a new location to replace its Town Hall at 126 East Seneca Street. The existing facility lacked the adequate amount of square footage to house the needs of the local government, creating an overcrowded and inefficient work environment for employees.¹⁵² The Town began saving money for the future Town Hall in 1993. The municipality commissioned Hoffman O'Brien Look Taub & Chiang (HOLT) Architects in April 1995 to examine their space needs. The completed study confirmed that a new facility was necessary, with preliminary estimates calling for a building over twice the size of the existing 5,000 square foot structure.¹⁵³

Over ten potential sites were considered for the future Town Hall. The majority of the sites were located in the City of Ithaca but a few were situated in suburban locations. The Town Board approved a proposal to purchase 119 West Court Street in the downtown area in December 1995. Advantages of the downtown site enumerated by proponents included promoting economic vitality in the commercial core, the availability of multiple transportation options, and the opportunity to encourage intermunicipal cooperation.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵¹ Nichols, Benjamin and Edward Gatch. "Joint Statement by Mayor Benjamin Nichols and Postmaster Edward Gatch." 9 August 1994. Town of Ithaca Archives. Ithaca Town Hall, Ithaca, New York.

¹⁵² Ithaca Town Board. "Background Information on the Town of Ithaca's Proposed Town Hall." Letter to Town Residents. 31 January 1996.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

Not all Town residents agreed with the proposal. In January 1996 a group of citizens petitioned that it be sent to a public referendum. If the proposal failed to gain approval, the alternative site would be a suburban location past Elmira Road.¹⁵⁵ The referendum failed and led to the formation of the Town Hall Committee. According to the *Town Hall Committee Meeting Minutes* from March 21, 1996, the results of the referendum indicated that the public was concerned about the potential project cost and the proposed demolition of the functional building occupying the site. The negative public response to the proposed site led the committee to explore the availability of the Ithaca Post Office for the Town Hall.¹⁵⁶

The Town of Ithaca approached the USPS about the Ithaca Post Office later in 1996. The USPS commissioned a feasibility study as the two entities explored options for how to share the building. The Town of Ithaca became frustrated when the USPS failed to commit to an agreement. Town officials voted in late December of 1996 to hire HOLT Architects to conduct a feasibility study to assess the building and determine the estimated rehabilitation cost.¹⁵⁷ The USPS agreed to transfer the building to the Town in August 1997. However, the signing of the purchase agreement was delayed when the USPS switched attorneys and requested additional details on the project.¹⁵⁸

The Town of Ithaca was finally awarded the deed to the Ithaca Post Office in September 1998. Although the facility was assessed at \$7.7 million, the USPS agreed to sell it to the Town for \$1 under the condition that it would lease 5,000 square feet back to the USPS for a minimum of 20 years so that it could continue its downtown

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ "Town Hall Committee Meeting Minutes." 21 March 1996. Town of Ithaca Archives. Ithaca Town Hall, Ithaca, New York.

¹⁵⁷ Stanforth, Lauren. "Ithaca Consults Architects on Postal Site for Town Hall." *Ithaca Journal*. 3 January 1997.

¹⁵⁸ Stanforth, Lauren. "Town Finalizing Post Office Purchase." *Ithaca Journal*. 6 May 1998.

operations.¹⁵⁹ The deed includes preservation covenants to satisfy Section 106 requirements and to protect the historic and architectural integrity of the building (Appendix B). The New York State Historic Preservation Officer (NYSHPO) was charged with enforcing the covenants.

The covenants are intended to protect the historic and architectural integrity of the building given its listing on the National Register of Historic Places. Only four covenants are enumerated in the deed. They are rather general and leave a great deal of discretion to the NYSHPO. With regard to changes and alterations, the document states that the Town, "...will undertake any rehabilitation work on the Post Office herein described in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior's 'Standards for Rehabilitation'" and that "All rehabilitation proposals will be submitted to the State Historic Preservation Officer for review and approval." The covenants also include more specific protections for the exterior of the building, stating that "...no alterations, no physical or structural change and no change in color or surfacing should be made, changed or altered without prior consultation with and approval of the State Historic Preservation Officer."¹⁶⁰ The covenants do not offer any specific protections for the character-defining elements of the interior.

The Rehabilitation

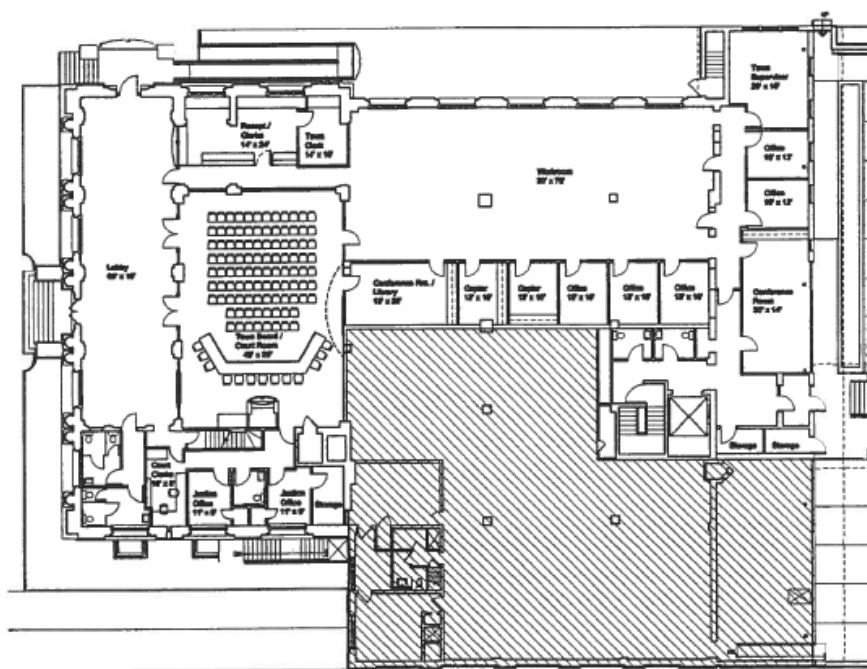
HOLT Architects was commissioned to provide the architectural drawings for the Town Hall. The design and development phase ended in February 1999 and the plans were forwarded to state and local review boards.¹⁶¹ The groundbreaking occurred in January 2000 following design approval from the NYSHPO and the Ithaca Landmarks

¹⁵⁹ Stanforth, "Town Finalizing Post Office Purchase."

¹⁶⁰ Deed between the United States Postal Service and the Town of Ithaca. 30 September 1998. Tompkins County, N.Y. Deed Book 831, page 82. County Clerk's Office.

¹⁶¹ Bishop, Lauren. "Officials Seek Possible Buyer for Town Hall." *Ithaca Journal*. 8 February 1999.

Preservation Commission (ILPC). The Town hired Sarkisian Brothers of Binghamton, New York as the general contractor for the project. The contracts for plumbing and HVAC were awarded to Piccirilli-Slavik & Vincent while the electrical contract was awarded to R.G. Burns Electric. After months of construction, the Ithaca Town Hall opened for business in July 2000. The final cost of the rehabilitation was well under the capital budget set by the Town Board, coming in at \$1,762,663.¹⁶² The project was financed with a capital reserve fund established by the Town for the new facility. The downtown post office reopened a few months later in January 2001.



First Floor
Scale: 1/8" = 1'0"



Illustration 3: Ithaca Town Hall First Floor Plan.
(Source: HOLT Architects. *Town of Ithaca Town Hall*. 8 Feb. 1999.)

¹⁶² "Town of Ithaca Town Hall." Town of Ithaca Planning Department, 19 October 2000. Town of Ithaca Archives. Ithaca Town Hall, Ithaca, New York.

Historic Post Office

The Ithaca Post Office rehabilitation focused on restoring rather than altering the character-defining features of the historic building's exterior. Significant architectural elements and the original footprint and building massing were successfully retained as a result of the design scheme. Major restoration work included repointing the stone façade and balustrade. The historic light fixtures at the Buffalo Street and Tioga Street entrances were retained and restored. Substantial efforts were undertaken to prevent future deterioration as well. The 90 year-old metal roof with deteriorating steel and timber framing was replaced in-kind with a new metal roof to prevent water damage.¹⁶³

The addition of two handicapped accessible ramps caused a minor change to the exterior appearance of the historic post office. One ramp is located at the rear of the building while the other is at the Buffalo Street entrance. Due to the visibility of the ramp at the Buffalo Street entrance, it was constructed using stone and concrete that complement the historic building materials.¹⁶⁴ The south and east elevations were also altered to accommodate the new postal store and to create additional functional space for the Town Hall. However, the visual impact of these changes is not substantial since the south elevation is adjacent to a parking deck and the east elevation is at the rear of the building. The character of the primary façade facing Tioga Street and the Buffalo Street façade remains largely intact.

The Ithaca Post Office retained its distinctive interior features and spatial functions through the rehabilitation. The new use as a Town Hall allowed the lobby to be preserved as an impressive public space and the workroom to continue as a functional back office area. Public access to the lobby was maintained by using the

¹⁶³ HOLT Architects. "Construction."

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

space as a reception area furnished with tables and chairs. The Town Clerk is situated in the lobby at a new wood faced transaction desk with a security glass window to direct and assist residents and visitors. The visual character of the lobby was also restored through the rehabilitation. The aluminum and glass vestibules installed by the USPS were removed and the space was returned to its intended openness. The marble faced walls and vaulted plaster ceiling were retained and restored, as were many of the original arched window elements on the back wall of the lobby. The original interior doors were removed, but their replacements were consistent with the style and material of the original doors.

The rehabilitation retained the workroom as a private functional area by converting it for use as offices and meeting rooms for the Town Hall and the Town of Ithaca Courts. The original 1910 workroom was adapted to function as a courtroom and meeting room. The 1936 workroom largely retained its open plan to accommodate office cubicles. Partition walls were erected along the south wall for a library and private offices. The loading dock was also enclosed to create additional offices and a conference room. The area features a new private entrance and a small loading dock for the postal store. The space was designed to be more modern than the rest of the building, yet still compatible with its historic character.¹⁶⁵

¹⁶⁵ "Town of Ithaca Town Hall."



Illustration 4: Lobby Prior to Rehabilitation.
(Source: Town Staff. Town of Ithaca Archives. n.d.)



Illustration 5: Lobby Following Rehabilitation.
(Source: Personal photograph by author. 25 July 2012.)



Illustration 6: Workroom Prior to Rehabilitation.
(Source: Town Staff. Town of Ithaca Archives. n.d.)



Illustration 7: Workroom Converted for Office Space and Meeting Room.
(Source: HOLT Architects. Retrieved from holt.com. 25 Nov. 2012.)



Illustration 8: View of Enclosed Loading Dock.
(Source: Personal photograph by author. 25 July 2012)

Partition walls were erected on the basement level to create additional spaces to house municipal functions. Rooms are allocated for an employee lounge, a kitchenette, a workspace, a conference room, and storage. A vault was built to accommodate records storage and a special machine was purchased for the purpose of monitoring air quality to prevent the deterioration of the documents. Since the existing mechanical systems were not able to support the needs of the Town Hall, new plumbing, electrical, HVAC, and communications systems were also installed. A hydraulic elevator was added to provide access between the main level and the basement.

The United States Post Office was assigned 5,000 square feet of the workroom built as part of the 1965 addition for the postal store and a full-service post office. Thomas Associates Architects and Engineers were responsible for the design of the space. The rehabilitation required the removal of the mechanical mezzanine and lookout gallery. A foyer with an entry vestibule for the postal store was built extending west from the two bays of the 1965 addition that faces Tioga Street. One of the two original windows of the addition was removed to create an opening between the foyer and the lobby of the postal store. The second window and the brick wall were left intact. The foyer and entry vestibule were built using glass and aluminum framing to create a transparent structure that would “allow visual continuity of the original building details without covering or destroying them.”¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁶ Drew, James K. “B76073 – Ithaca, New York Downtown Station Postal Store T + Project Number 4649.” *Letter to Richard Lord*. 22 June 1999.



Illustration 9: Opening Created by Removal of Window.
(Source: Personal photograph by author. 25 July 2012)



Illustration 10: Glass and Aluminum Entry Vestibule for Postal Store.
(Source: Personal photograph by author. 25 July 2012)

Outcome

The Ithaca Town Hall is at the center of downtown activity. The project has strengthened the social and economic fabric of the central business district by placing an underutilized building back into productive use. The convenient location of the Town Hall and Post Office draw people downtown and generate foot traffic on a daily basis. Court proceedings pull in lawyers and their clients while town meetings attract interested residents. There is a good chance that these people stay around to eat or shop while downtown. The thirty-plus municipal employees that work in the former post office are critical for supporting local businesses and stimulating the economy as well. The Town of Ithaca's central location also supports intermunicipal cooperation between other local government entities that also have offices downtown.

The rehabilitation of the former post office for a civic use has helped to raise awareness about the important local landmark in a way that a private use could not. Members of the public feel comfortable entering the building and admiring the restored ornate interior while visiting the town clerk or attending a public hearing. The adaptive reuse also caused minimal impact to the integrity of the building. Use as a municipal office building is compatible with the distinctive materials and the traditional functions of the spaces. Although the building no longer serves its historic purpose as a post office, the most important aspects of the building's character live on through its new function as the Ithaca Town Hall.

CHAPTER VII

ROCKVILLE POST OFFICE

The Rockville Post Office occupies the corner of Washington Street and Montgomery Avenue in downtown Rockville, Maryland. As the first permanent post office in the city, the building holds special significance for community residents. The post office was completed in 1939 as a project of the Works Progress Administration. It is one of three federally funded post offices built in Montgomery County under the New Deal. The Rockville Post Office operated as the primary mail depository until a new main post office was opened just outside of the city center in 1965. After decades of reduced mail service at the historic facility, the federal government declared the property to be surplus in September 2005. The Rockville Post Office underwent rehabilitation for use as the Rockville City Police Headquarters.

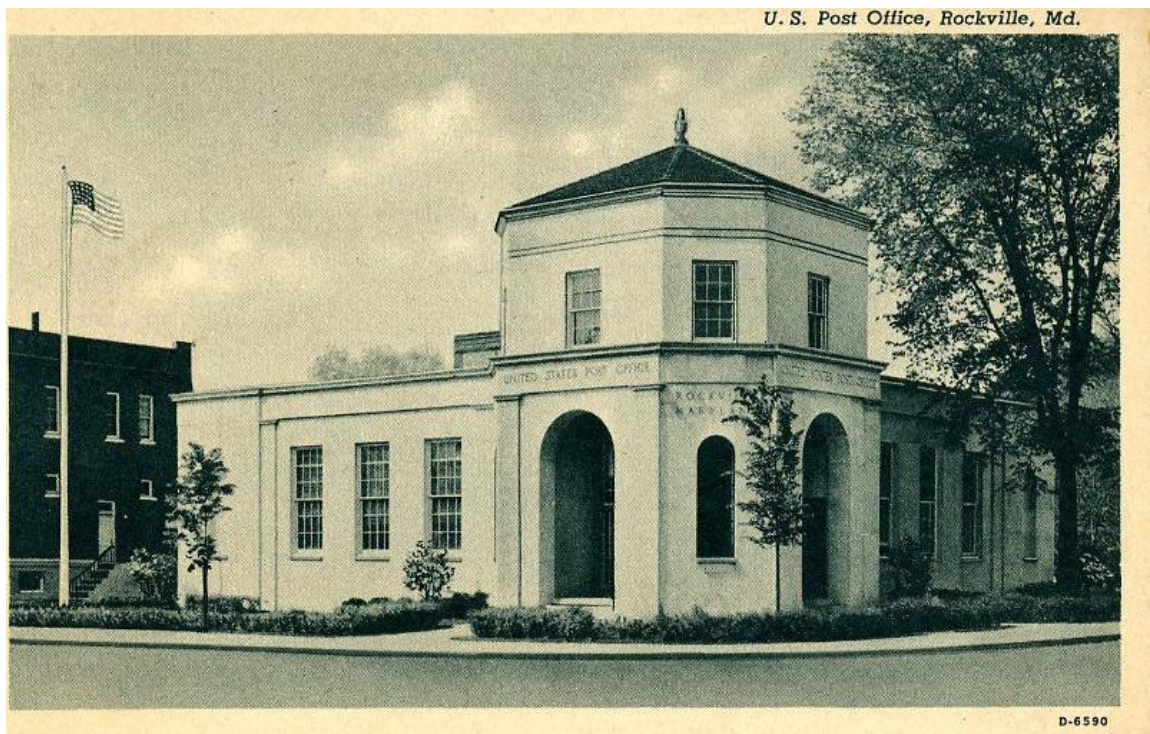


Illustration 11: Old Rockville Post Office.

(Source: Bonne Prettyman. Retrieved from peerlessrockville.org. 11 Oct. 2012. Accessed 25 Nov. 2012)

Community Context

The City of Rockville is the county seat of Montgomery County, Maryland. The city is located within the Washington, D.C. metropolitan area along the active I-270 corridor. Rockville is the third most populous city in the state with 61,209 residents at the time of the 2010 Census. Situated in one of the most rapidly growing regions in the nation, the city's population grew 29.2 percent between 2000 and 2010. Rockville also boasts a great deal of community wealth with a median household income of \$89,418.¹⁶⁷

The Rockville economy is dominated by the advanced technology and biotechnology sectors. Its reputation as an innovation hub has attracted the headquarters of various other major companies. The city is also the home of many federal and county government offices. Rockville infused life to its struggling downtown in 2007 with the opening of Rockville Town Square. The mixed-use development has become the heart of commercial and has stimulated urban redevelopment efforts.

Rockville has a wealth of historic resources, including eight local historic districts and various individual landmarks. The Historic District Commission was established in 1966 to designate historic district boundaries and to review applications for exterior alterations to buildings within the districts. Rockville is a Certified Local Government and provides tax incentives to promote investment in historic resources. Peerless Rockville is the principal local non-profit agency that advocates for preservation and offers technical assistance to property owners. The organization has long been involved with the historic post office. A number of countywide organizations also exist to support local preservation efforts.

¹⁶⁷ United States Census 2010. "State and County QuickFacts: Rockville, Maryland." *State and County QuickFacts*. United States Census Bureau, 31 January 2012. Web. 18 June 2012.

City of Rockville Postal History

The first federal mail service in Montgomery County began in Rockville in 1794. Rockville was then an unincorporated village known to residents as “Montgomery Court House.” The mail was transported via stagecoach along the post road that connected Georgetown to Frederick. No records exist that indicate the location of Rockville’s first post office. However, personal accounts from residents place post office functions in a variety of local residences and businesses over the course of a century-and-a-half.¹⁶⁸

Rockville experienced a building boom in the early twentieth century that stimulated considerable residential and business development. In the early 1930s, the Farmers Banking and Trust Company and the Grey Courthouse were constructed in the central business district to support the burgeoning population.¹⁶⁹ The period of sustained growth prompted Maryland Senator Stedman Prescott to convene with a special committee of the Rockville Chamber of Commerce to petition the federal government for the city’s first permanent post office building in 1937. The efforts of the Senator and the Chamber of Commerce were successful and plans to construct the Rockville Post Office were approved.¹⁷⁰

The site purchased by the federal government for the post office was the location of the *Montgomery County Sentinel*, which had occupied the site since 1855. The site was advantageously located in the center of the city, adjacent to the downtown and other important civic institutions. The *Sentinel* buildings were demolished in November 1938 and construction of the post office commenced later that month under

¹⁶⁸ Thompson, Noma. *Western Gateway to the National Capital (Rockville, Maryland)*. Washington, DC: Stewart Printing, 1949. 108-109.

¹⁶⁹ McGuckian, Eileen and William Neudorfer. *Old Post Office*. Rockville, Montgomery County, M.D. Maryland Historical Trust State Historic Sites Inventory Form # 1651113801.Part 8.

¹⁷⁰ Thompson, 109.

the auspices of the Works Projects Administration. The total cost of the project was estimated to be \$77,000 including a \$35,000 payment for the site.¹⁷¹

The City of Rockville celebrated the dedication of the post office in July 1939 with a parade attended by over 3,000 people. Hundreds of visitors arrived early to catch a glimpse of the building and only “comments of praise” were heard as people gathered along the streets.¹⁷² Following the parade, prominent state and local leaders in attendance gave a multitude of speeches extolling Rockville and its new post office. Special guests were later invited to attend an exclusive reception at Glenview Farm to celebrate the dedication.¹⁷³

The post office officially opened for business in September 1939. It operated as Rockville’s primary mail collection center until 1965 when a new main post office was opened a few blocks away on North Washington Street. The General Services Administration (GSA) assumed control of the historic post office building in 1949. The USPS maintained its presence in the building by leasing space from the GSA for its Courthouse Station branch. The building also housed other federal functions, including a recruiting office for the United States military. The GSA considered disposing of the building numerous times after the construction of the North Washington Street Post Office, but it was always reprieved by the interventions of concerned citizens.¹⁷⁴

The Post Office as a Historic Resource

The Rockville Post Office was listed on the National Register of Historic Places as a contributing resource in the Courthouse Square Historic District in 1986. The building

¹⁷¹ McGuckian, Part 8.

¹⁷² Thompson, 110.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Parish, Warren. “Historic Post Office to Close.” *Gazette*. 27 September 2006. Web. 5 January 2012.

is significant for its architecture and its association with the federal government.¹⁷⁵ Supervising Architect Louis A. Simon and Architect R. Stanley Brown designed the post office in the English Georgian style. The dressed gray limestone and restrained classical features of the building echo elements of the County Courthouse across Montgomery Avenue.¹⁷⁶ The design departs from the stripped classical style used by the Office of the Supervising Architect for the New Deal post offices in Silver Spring and Bethesda, which were built in 1936 and 1937, respectively.

The massing of the post office consists of a single-story with a basement level. A two-story octagonal tower with a clay tile roof and finial dominates the primary façade. Doric pilasters accent the tower. The stone paved entry vestibule at the base of the tower is accessed through two arched openings. Two identical wings with three large twelve-over-twelve double hung windows project west and south from the tower along Washington Street and Montgomery Avenue. A fourth bay is demarcated on each wing by a recessed niche. Inscribed in the stone over the main entry arches are the words, “United States Post Office.”

The most ornate portion of the interior is the public postal lobby, which occupies the majority of the wing parallel to Washington Street. The ceilings of the lobby extend fifteen feet into the air, creating a monumental space adorned with terrazzo floors and gray marble wainscoting. Other notable features include the original bulletin boards, bronze grillwork, and brass and glass postal boxes. A mural of Sugarloaf Mountain by Judson Smith covers the far interior wall above the postal boxes. The Treasury Department’s Fine Arts Section funded the mural in 1940.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁵ McGuckian, Part 8.

¹⁷⁶ Wordekemper, Dallan. “Case Studies.” *EO 13287 Report 2011*. United States Postal Service. Unpublished Report. 10 January 2012.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.



Illustration 12: Original Clerestory Windows in Monitor.
(Source: Personal photograph by author. 3 Mar. 2012)

Directly behind the postal windows of the lobby is the workroom where the mail was sorted. The materials and finishes used in this functional space were less elaborate than those used in the impressive public lobby. A mezzanine with twelve observation apertures, which historically allowed inspectors to observe the workers without making their presence known, overlooks the workroom.¹⁷⁸ The mezzanine level is contained in a 3-foot monitor with copper sheathing. Present on each elevation are four square, clerestory windows with 12-lights that provided natural light to the central workroom below. The wing parallel to Montgomery Street is comprised of administrative offices. Flanking the workroom to the south is another wing of offices, which gives the building an overall square footprint. Sanborn maps of the property show that loading docks were added on at the rear of the building between 1949 and 1960. The historic building fabric was kept significantly intact under GSA ownership, with only minor changes to the interior finishes.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁸ McGuckian, Part 7.

¹⁷⁹ *Feasibility Study for the Adaptive Reuse of the Former United States Post Office: Rockville Maryland*. Annapolis, M.D.: Wheeler Goodman Masek. 9 July 2007.

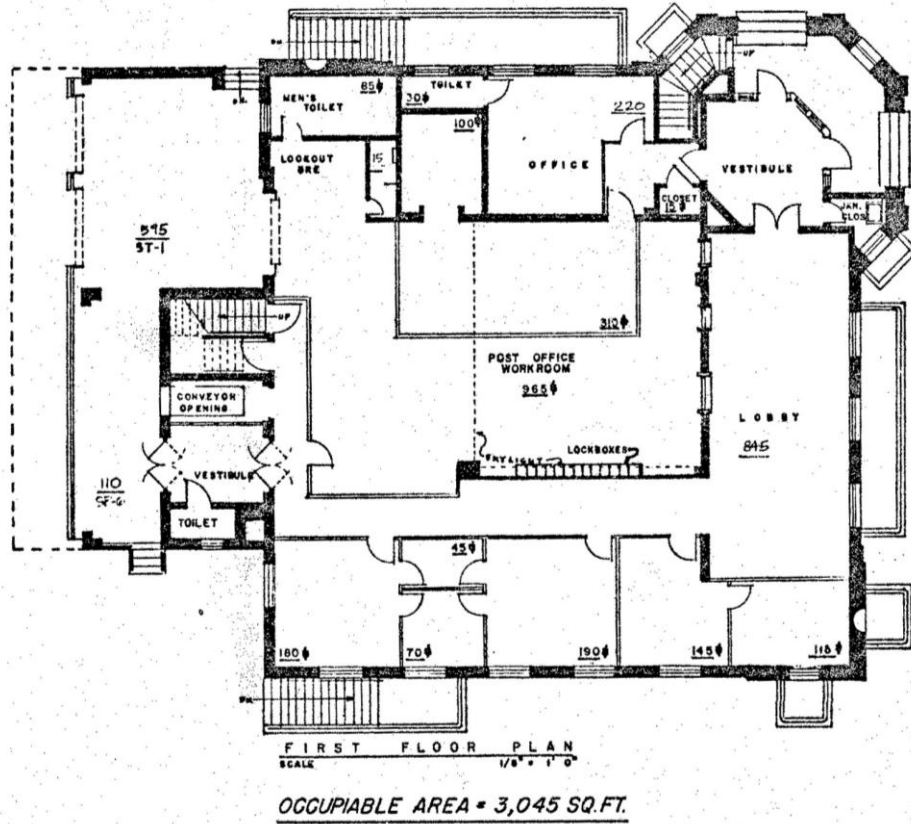


Illustration 13: First Floor Plan.
(Source: General Services Administration. *First Floor Plan*. 30 Aug. 1966)

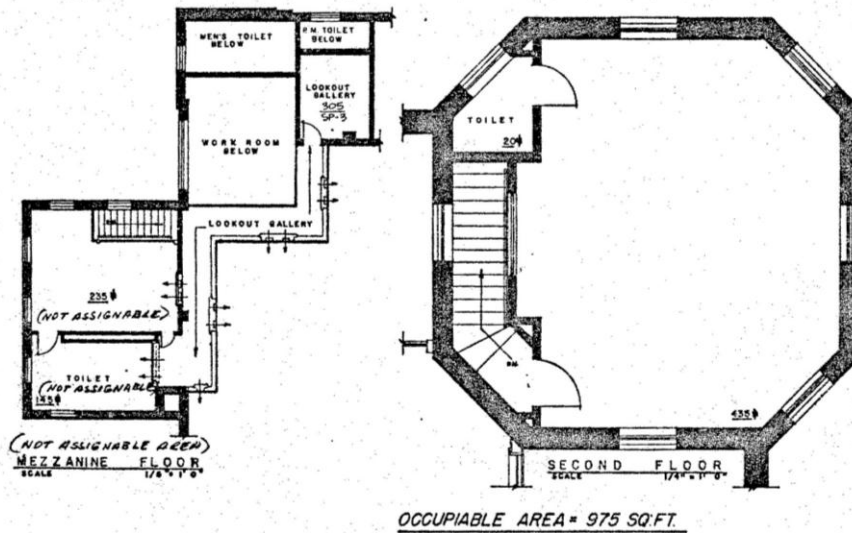


Illustration 14: Second Floor and Mezzanine Floor Plans.
(Source: General Services Administration. *Second Fl. & Mezzanine*. 30 Aug. 1966)

Disposal Process

In September 2005, the GSA announced that it would close the Old Rockville Post Office. Many residents were discontent with the decision and censured the lack of public notification on the issue. Members of the West End Citizens Association were the most vocal opponents of the closure. A *Rockville Gazette* article described a letter from the organization addressed to the city arguing that demand for the post office would swell after its closure due to the hundreds of new residents slated to move into the nearby Town Center.¹⁸⁰ Despite the protest, the post office closed in October 2006.

The GSA advertised the building to the community for a “public benefit” use in 2007. The City of Rockville expressed initial interest in the property for use as Police Headquarters. The police force at that time was housed in the basement of City Hall. The facility was built for thirty officers and had become cramped over the years as the department’s ranks swelled to one hundred. According to Burt Hall, Director of Recreation and Parks for the City of Rockville, the Rockville Post Office was ideal for the new police station since it occupied a central location within the city. The location was also proximate to other government buildings and the city’s mass transit hub.¹⁸¹

Wheeler Goodman Masek (WGM) Architects completed a study and due diligence report in July 2007 to gauge the feasibility of three adaptive reuse options. The main objective of the study was to find a design scheme that met the square footage requirements of the police program while causing minimal impact to the historic resource. The favored plan maintained much of the original building massing and footprint with the exception of the addition of a fire stair and elevator at the rear of the structure. A second floor addition would also be constructed to add more functional

¹⁸⁰ Parish.

¹⁸¹ Hall, Burt. Interview by author. 3 March 2012.

space to the 9,143 square foot historic building. The majority of the police program would be housed in a two-story stand-alone annex in order to minimize the impact to the historic building fabric. The proposed 14,350 square foot annex would sit at the southwest corner of the property and connect to the post office via an underground tunnel. The scheme accommodated the existing needs of the police department and possessed the capacity for 10 percent expansion.¹⁸²

The City of Rockville was awarded the deed to the Rockville Post Office in September 2008. The GSA transferred the property to the city at no cost, with the stipulation that it would be used in perpetuity for homeland security purposes. The deed explicitly states that if the property ceases to be used for law enforcement purposes, the GSA has the right to reassume ownership.¹⁸³ The federal government determined that the transfer of the historic property to the city would engender “no adverse effect” under Section 106 of NHPA since the deed would include a preservation easement (Appendix C). The easement is held by the Maryland Historical Trust (MHT), which is the state agency charged with preserving and maintaining historic properties.

The purpose of the easement is to promote the protection of the character-defining features of the property that made it eligible for the National Register of Historic Places. With regard to changes and alterations, the document clearly states that the City “...shall not cause, permit or suffer any construction which would alter or change the Property or the Exterior or Interior of any improvements thereon...” without the written consent of the Director of the MHT. Exterior and interior elements protected under the easement include “...the architectural style, the general design and arrangement, the color, the kind and texture of the building materials and the type and

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ *Deed of Sale from the United States of America to the City of Rockville*. 4 September 2008. Montgomery County, M.D. Deed Book 36659, page 303. County Clerk’s Office.

style of all windows, doors, light fixtures, signs and other similar exterior and interior features.”¹⁸⁴

The easement also states that the City “...may undertake the changes and alterations described in the architectural and engineering drawings by WGM Architects dated May 1, 2008...”¹⁸⁵ J. Rodney Little, Director of the MHT, had approved the firm’s preliminary design concept in a letter to the City of Rockville in August 2008. Little sanctioned the construction of the annex building, interior demolition, construction of the second floor addition and expansion of the roof monitor, modifications to existing site parking, and rehabilitation of the entry vestibule and public lobby. The MHT required that any features that were removed or demolished be documented with archival prints to be stored in the MHT Library.¹⁸⁶

The Rehabilitation

The Rockville Police Headquarters project was put out to bid in the fall of 2010 following design approval from the Maryland Historical Trust’s Easement Committee and the Rockville Historic District Commission. The City broke ground on the project in the spring of 2011. Costello Construction was hired as the general contractor and Baltimore Washington Restoration was hired as a subcontractor to perform the exterior restoration work. The final cost was anticipated to be \$7.9 million as of March 2012, with the City of Rockville investing a total of \$5.4 million from its Capital Improvements Program. The remaining amount was covered by state and federal grants. The project was completed in September 2012.

¹⁸⁴ *Deed of Easement between the Mayor and City Council of Rockville and the Maryland Historical Trust*. 29 October 2008. Montgomery County, M.D. Deed Book 36659, page 315. County Clerk’s Office.

¹⁸⁵ *Deed of Easement*, 316.

¹⁸⁶ Little, J. Rodney. “MHT Approval Letter with Conditions.” *Letter to Scott Ullery*. 26 August 2008.



Illustration 15: Rendering of Proposed Police Headquarters.

(Source: Wheeler Goodman Masek Architects. Retrieved from wgm-arch.com. Accessed 25 Nov. 2012)

Historic Post Office

The rehabilitation focused on restoring rather than altering the character-defining features of the historic building's exterior. Significant architectural elements and much of the original footprint and building massing were successfully retained as a result of the design scheme. Major restoration work included repointing the limestone and brick masonry and repairing the limestone parapet coping.¹⁸⁷ Two major changes to the exterior were the second floor addition to the roof monitor and the fire stair and elevator shaft at the southwest corner of the structure. These features were designed so that they would not be visible from the primary façades on Washington Street and Montgomery Avenue. The design scheme left the integrity of the historic exterior very much intact.

¹⁸⁷ "Invitation for Bid 29-11." *The Adaptive Reuse of the Former US Post Office for the City of Rockville Police Department*. City of Rockville, Maryland. 19 November 2010.

Similar to the Ithaca Post Office project, the Rockville Post Office retained its distinctive interior features and spatial functions through the rehabilitation. The new use as the City of Rockville Police Headquarters allowed the lobby to be preserved as a grand public space and the back of house to continue as a private functional area. Public access to the lobby was maintained by using the space as a reception area for non-security related police department functions, such as paying a parking ticket or getting a dog license.¹⁸⁸ The former workroom behind the historic postal windows is used as offices for the employees manning the counters. The original bronze post boxes, marble wainscoting, terrazzo floors, and mural were retained and restored as a part of the project. The bid document also indicated that the three-coat flat plaster ceiling, walls, and perimeter molding were targeted for restoration.¹⁸⁹ Although the second floor of the octagonal tower was restored as part of the project, the area is unusable due to code issues with the staircase.

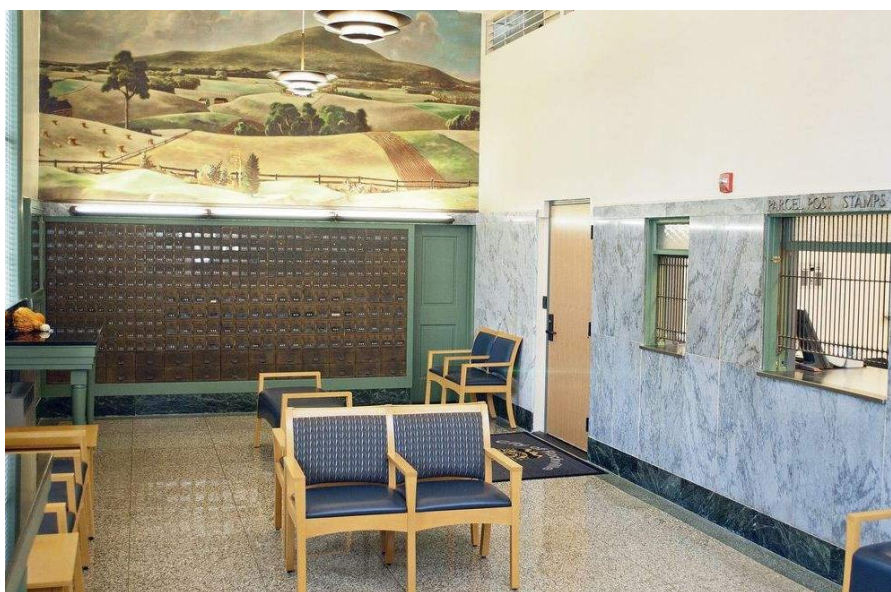


Illustration 16: Restored Lobby of Rockville Police Headquarters.

(Source: Tom Fedor. Retrieved from gazette.net. 18 Oct. 2012. Accessed 25 Nov. 2012.)

¹⁸⁸ Wordekemper.

¹⁸⁹ "Invitation for Bid 29-11 Project Manual" *The Adaptive Reuse of the Former US Post Office for the City of Rockville Police Department*. City of Rockville, Maryland. 23 November 2010.

The rehabilitation retained the back office and service areas as functional spaces with restricted access. Selective interior demolition occurred in the area behind the lobby as partition walls were removed and replaced to accommodate additional offices and a conference room. The original wood wainscoting and windows were retained and restored to keep important elements of the historic fabric intact. The drop ceilings installed by the GSA were removed as part of the rehabilitation since they blocked the upper two-thirds of the office windows. A step-back was devised in the new design so that the new drop ceiling no longer obstructs the openings. The back of house area continues to maintain its spatial and functional relationship with the lobby despite the new arrangement of the former workroom and offices.

The construction of a second floor addition opened up an extra 1,855 square feet to the existing roof monitor to accommodate office space for the Chief of Police. A fire stair and an elevator shaft were constructed to provide access between the floors. The addition complies with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation and the City of Rockville Technical Guidelines for new additions. The addition alters the secondary west and south elevations and the existing roof monitor, which is considered to be a character-defining feature. In keeping with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards, the rear or west elevation of the monitor was preserved as an interior architectural feature, allowing the building to be returned to its original conditions if the construction was reversed. The new roof monitor extends past the historic one and is clad in Kalwall, a translucent glazing material that brings light into the interior space.¹⁹⁰ The elevations of the monitor not covered by the addition retain their original square,

¹⁹⁰ "City of Rockville Historic District Commission Staff Report." *Old Post Office Addition*. City of Rockville Historic Preservation Office. 11 September 2008.

12-light clerestory windows. The height of the elevator shaft is the same height as the historic monitor and addition.



Illustration 17: New Roof Monitor and Elevator Shaft.
(Source: Personal photograph by author. 3 Mar. 2012)

Selective demolition occurred on the basement level to accommodate a gymnasium and the armory. Sections of the basement originally consisted of only crawlspaces. To create additional space the ceilings were expanded to full height. Since the existing mechanical systems were not able to support the needs of the police department, new plumbing, electrical, HVAC, and communications systems were also installed. A connection from the historic post office to the annex was provided via a subterranean tunnel on the basement level.

New Construction

The main operations of the police department are housed in the 14,350 square-foot annex at the southwest corner of the property. The stand-alone structure is two stories with a basement level. The annex accommodates a variety of non-public police functions, such as code enforcement and dispatch. The design includes adequate office space and locker rooms for the growing police force. The nature of the activities that occur in the annex required that it be armored with a blast and bullet resistant curtain wall. A green roof was constructed on top of the building to comply with green space requirements for the site. A sally port was also built to function as a controlled entrance.



Illustration 18: Construction of New Annex.

(Source: Sean R. Sedam. Retrieved from rockville.patch.com. 12 Oct. 2012. Accessed 25 Nov. 2012)

The design of the annex is compatible with the massing, size, scale and architectural features of the historic post office as per the Secretary of Interior's Standards and the City of Rockville Technical Guide. To reduce the visual impact of the new construction, WGM Architects situated the annex behind the post office, taking advantage of the downward sloping site. To further downplay the building, the roof is designed to be lower than the post office's parapet. The West Montgomery Avenue elevation is also designed to not project beyond the façade of the post office. To ensure that the new construction is compatible with the historic resource, the materials selected for the annex complement, yet are clearly distinct, from the historic building materials of the post office. The site does not have enough space to accommodate the 90 vehicles in the police fleet. The limited onsite parking is reserved for visitors while the police fleet is located in a number of garages near the facility, both owned and leased by the City of Rockville.



Illustration 19: View of Historic Post Office and Annex from Washington Street.
(Source: Personal photograph by author. 3 Mar. 2012)

Outcome

The new Rockville Police Headquarters officially opened its doors in September 2012. While the outcomes of the project are not immediately evident, it is probable that the rehabilitation will strengthen the economic and social vitality of the downtown by putting an underutilized building back into productive use. The police headquarters will generate some degree of foot traffic and activity in the area as members of the public walk to the building to pay a parking ticket or apply for a dog license. The continued presence of over one hundred police officers downtown is also critical for supporting local businesses. Furthermore, a visible twenty-four hour police presence in the center of the city is important for establishing confidence in community safety.

As was the case with the Ithaca Town Hall, rehabilitating the former post office for a civic use is anticipated to raise awareness about the local landmark in a way that a private use could not. The lobby of the historic post office used to serve as a public gathering place where lawyers, businessmen, and community members congregated to send and receive correspondence. Residents and visitors are still able to enter the lobby and admire the mural or appreciate the restored interior because the building continues to be open to the public under its new use. The project also caused minimal impact to the integrity of the building. The police functions that are housed in the historic structure are compatible with the distinctive materials and the original intent for the spaces. Although the building no longer serves its historic purpose as a post office, the most important aspects of the building's character live on through its new function as the Rockville City Police Headquarters.

CHAPTER VIII

BEVERLY HILLS POST OFFICE

The Beverly Hills Main Post Office occupies a trapezoidal site at the intersection of North Crescent Drive and Little Santa Monica Boulevard in Beverly Hills, California. The building is well situated between City Hall and the famous “Golden Triangle” retail district. The post office was constructed in 1933 under the Works Projects Administration and operated as the primary mail center for the city until a new main post office was opened on Maple Drive in 1991. The City Council entered negotiations with the USPS to purchase the former post office soon after the federal government declared it to be surplus property. The 38,000 square foot building is undergoing rehabilitation to become the Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts.



Illustration 20: Historic Photograph of the Beverly Hills Post Office.
(Source: *Historic Resource Report*. Christopher A. Joseph & Associates. Oct. 2007)

Community Context

The City of Beverly Hills is located in Los Angeles County, California. It is almost completely surrounded by the City of Los Angeles. The population of the city reached 34,109 after experiencing a 1 percent growth rate between 2000 and 2010. Beverly Hills is well known for the wealth of its celebrity and executive residents. The median household income for city residents was \$83,463 as of 2010.¹⁹¹

The local economy in Beverly Hills is powered by the entertainment services industry. Although the city originally formed as an affluent residential enclave, professional services and other sectors have located in the area to take advantage of the strong economic base. According to the *2008 Economic Summary*, the mere 9 percent of the city zoned for commercial use provides 75 percent of the city's revenue.¹⁹²

Beverly Hills has only recently taken actions to promote historic preservation efforts in the community. The city implemented the Mills Act Program in October 2011 to incentivize the maintenance and preservation of historic resources. The two-year pilot program provides tax relief for owners of designated landmarks that agree to a ten year contract to preserve the historic character and architectural features of their properties. Beverly Hills adopted its *Historic Preservation Ordinance* in January 2012 to further protect the city's historic resources. The plan established the Cultural Heritage Commission, which will compile and maintain an inventory of historic resources and act as a design review board. The completion of the plan makes Beverly Hills eligible to become a Certified Local Government.

¹⁹¹ United States Census 2010. "State and County QuickFacts: Beverly Hills, California." *State and County QuickFacts*. United States Census Bureau, 31 January 2012. Web. 18 June 2012.

¹⁹² "The 2008 City of Beverly Hills Economic Summary." The City of Beverly Hills, n.d. Web. 2 August 2012.

City of Beverly Hills Postal History

The City of Beverly Hills began to emerge in the early twentieth century. Burton Green purchased the fertile land for oil exploration in 1900. He developed the tract as a residential suburb soon after he failed to discover oil on the site. Green created the Rodeo Land and Water Company in 1906 and commissioned landscape architect Wilbur D. Cook to design a network of streets and green spaces. The glamorous Beverly Hills Hotel was constructed in 1912 to encourage development of the area. The hotel initially housed a primary school, a church, and a theater due to the absence of an established municipal center. As the focal point of the community, it is unsurprising that the hotel was also the location of the post office.¹⁹³

The local population swelled and Beverly Hills was incorporated as a city in 1914. As the movie industry emerged in Los Angeles movie stars came to the fashionable community to build their mansions. The city experienced an unprecedented wave of growth over the next decade. Between 1920 and 1926 the population increased from 700 to 12,000 residents.¹⁹⁴ The City Council made the decision to assemble important civic organizations in a central location in 1929. The site of the former Pacific Electric Railway Station was acquired to build a city hall, a police and a fire station, a library, and a post office. This proposed core of public activities would become the political and cultural heart of the city.

The political humorist Will Rogers became the Honorary Mayor of Beverly Hills in 1926. He is credited with winning the Beverly Hills Main Post Office. In 1928, civic leaders traveled to Washington to request federal funds the site and building. The federal government offered a total of \$85,000 to cover the construction. The figure was

¹⁹³ "History of Beverly Hills." The City of Beverly Hills, n.d. Web: 2 August 2012.

¹⁹⁴ *Documentation for CEQA Review*. Historic Resources Group. July 5, 2007. 5.

deemed in adequate. Rogers appealed to Secretary of the Treasury Andrew Mellon for additional funds in a letter dated 1930. He wrote, “It seems you owe us \$250,000 to build a post office and they can’t get the dough out of you...we are getting a lot of mail out here now, and they are handling it in a tent.”¹⁹⁵ Roger’s request was granted when the city received \$300,000 for the new post office.

The post office was constructed in 1933 under the Works Projects Administration. The building opened in 1934 and was dedicated with much fanfare in 1936. It operated as the main post office for decades until an annex was built on Maple Drive in 1960. The historic station retained its retail service and post office boxes, although the letter carrier operation was moved to the new building. A new Main Post Office was opened on the site of the annex in 1991. The future of the historic postal station grew uncertain when most of the remaining services were moved to the new building.¹⁹⁶

The Post Office as a Historic Resource

The Beverly Hills Main Post Office is listed on the National Register of Historic Places and the California Register of Historical Resources. The building achieved an individual listing on the National Register in 1984 due to its significance in the areas of architecture, art, and community planning. It is recognized as an “important example of the post office as a type; especially in its idiosyncratic use of the Renaissance Revival applied to a classic box.” Further significance is derived from the building’s prominent local architect and from the iconic murals painted on the walls of the lobby. The grand

¹⁹⁵ “Will Rogers’ Jokes Won Day for New Post Office.” *Citizen-News*. 23 March 1962.

¹⁹⁶ *Documentation for CEQA Review*. 9.

edifice also stands out as “unusually lavishly ornamented” for a post office built during the Great Depression.¹⁹⁷

The Beverly Hills Main Post Office was designed as part of the Beverly Hills Civic Center and is significant for the urban design role that it performs in the complex. The first phase of the master plan was completed when the city hall was constructed in 1932. The impressive Spanish Renaissance-style building designed by William J. Gage was built to house many municipal departments under one roof. The site across from the city hall was set aside for the new post office. The rights to the land were transferred to the federal government in May of 1931. Soon after, the architectural commission was granted to Ralph C. Flewelling, who worked in collaboration on the project with the notable Los Angeles architectural firm, Allison & Allison.

Flewelling arrived in Southern California in 1920 and worked as a draftsman until he formed his own office in Los Angeles in 1925. He gained a favorable reputation by designing buildings for local public schools and universities. His most notable prior commission was the Seeley W. Mudd Memorial Hall of Philosophy on the University of Southern California (USC) campus. Flewelling designed the post office in the Renaissance Revival style to complement the Spanish Renaissance style of the adjacent city hall. Abundant plantings and a series of paths and walls foster a visual connection between the two properties that are otherwise physically separated by Crescent Drive. The coherent landscaping scheme and compatible architecture make for a cohesive public complex with a distinct sense of place.¹⁹⁸

According to the building’s first Postmaster J. Lewis Ross, the post office was designed to be “a little better than the ordinary federal building” and was constructed

¹⁹⁷ National Register of Historic Places. *Beverly Hills Main Post Office*. Beverly Hills, Los Angeles County, C.A. National Register # 85000126.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

“in keeping with the high class nature of Beverly Hills.”¹⁹⁹ The primary mass of the magnificent building consists of a central one-and-one-half story rectangular volume that is flanked by two single-story wings. The central volume is three bays while both of the flanking wings are two bays. A workroom with a full basement extends south from the central volume to form a T-plan. A loading dock with a copper roof projects from the east side of the building. A high decorative wall that has since been replaced by a concrete wall encloses the surrounding service yard.

The building is composed of structural steel and reinforced concrete and sits on a poured concrete foundation that is clad at the ground level by a terracotta base. The solid structural system and small building spans were intended to provide earthquake resistance.²⁰⁰ The exterior wall facing is white Roman brick trimmed with rusticated terracotta quoins. Carved terracotta elements surround the windows and doors on the various elevations. Low gabled roofs clad with terracotta roof tiles crown each individual building volume. Below each roofline are decorative terracotta friezes and a bracketed terracotta cornices.

The primary elevation faces north to Little Santa Monica Boulevard. It is the most ornate of the four elevations, with the central volume featuring three bronze double doors with alternating segmental and pedimented terracotta frontispieces. Two bronze lanterns flank the center door. Three small square windows are located above on the partial second story to provide light for the lobby clerestory. A terracotta beltcourse carved to read “UNITED STATES POST OFFICE” divides the first and second stories. To the front of the central mass is a sandstone terrace with a terracotta balustrade.

¹⁹⁹ “Post Office Site Obstacle Waived.” *The Beverly Hills Citizen*. 17 September 1931.

²⁰⁰ “Renaissance of Northern Italy Style for Beverly Hills Post Office,” *Southwest Builder and Contractor*. 11 May 1934. 19.

Extending from the central mass to the east and west are single-story wings that are punctuated by windows with terracotta surrounds and architraves.

The impressive public lobby is the most ornate room in the post office. The space is comprised of a central double-height volume with adjoining east and west wings. A marble veneer capped by an ornamental plaster cornice covers the walls. Tri-color marble from the same quarry was used throughout the space as flooring. The south wall of the lobby used to be lined with teller windows and post office boxes that were grouped between fluted marble pilasters. The post office boxes were removed when the building was decommissioned, which resulted in the considerable voids that exist today.



Illustration 21: Photograph of the Postal Lobby Prior to Rehabilitation.
(Source: *Historic Resource Report*. Christopher A. Joseph & Associates. Oct. 2007)

The lobby is entered through the east and west foyers. The materials used to adorn these identical spaces are the same as those used for the lobby. The foyers open into the east and west wings, which serve as transition areas to the grand hall. The monumental grand hall features a high barrel vaulted ceiling with eight lunette murals in the spaces above the cornice. The frescoes, sponsored by the Treasury Section of Fine Arts and the Treasury Relief Art Project, were painted by Charles Kassler, Jr. and depict the history of the mail service and life during the Great Depression.

Behind the lobby are the Postmaster's Suite and the Superintendent of Mails' Office. Since the public did not have access to these areas, they are not as ornate as the lobbies. The Superintendent of Mails' Office is located on the east end of the building behind the east foyer. It has a wood block floor that has since been covered by carpet. Other facets of the space's historic appearance are more difficult to discern due to alterations. The Postmaster's Suite is on the west end of the building behind the west foyer. It is more elaborate than the other private offices. It features American walnut trim, window surrounds, and wainscot. The wood block floor in the office and the terrazzo floor in the restroom have also since been covered by carpet.

The workroom extends south from the main structure and was designed to be a large functional space. Three anterooms extend from the east side of the space towards the loading dock. The space did not have a high level of ornamentation due to its utilitarian purpose. Many original elements were removed or covered over the years including the wood block floor, glazed masonry wainscot, plaster coated concrete walls, and the suspended plaster ceiling.²⁰¹ The side aisles were also lit at one time by glass block skylights that have since been covered. A unique feature that still remains is the

²⁰¹ *Documentation for CEQA Review*, 16-17.

monitoring walkway system that hovers above the space. The Post Office Inspector used this system to secretly observe workers.



Illustration 22: Photograph of Workroom Prior to Rehabilitation.
(Source: Jeffrey Chusid. *Beverly Hills Post Office Preservation Study*. Sept. 2001)

The second floor is comprised of the Post Office Inspector's Office, the men's swing room and restroom, and a hallway. Each room features original plaster coated concrete walls and plaster cornices. The walls of the men's restroom are covered with black and white marble wainscot. The men's restroom and the hallway have original terrazzo floors. The Post Office Inspector's Office is a larger room with its own restroom and access to the mechanical mezzanine and the second floor monitoring walkway. The office originally had a wood block floor that was later covered.²⁰²

²⁰² Ibid, 18.



Illustration 23: Photograph of the Marble Wainscot in the Men's Restroom.
(Source: *Historic Resource Report*. Christopher A. Joseph & Associates. Oct. 2007)

In 1961, the post office underwent a major renovation after the letter carrier operation was moved to the new annex. Additional space was created when the basement was expanded and remodeled. Glass and aluminum partitions were inserted between the foyers and the lobby. The building was further altered throughout the 1980s. The most significant change during that period was the addition of retail windows and additional post offices boxes in the lobby. The modifications to the interior have seriously affected the character of several spaces. Most of the significant spaces, however, remain intact and retain their historic integrity.²⁰³

Disposal Process

The USPS declared the historic post office to be excess soon after the opening of the newer branch at Maple Drive. A great deal of space was left unused in the building

²⁰³ Ibid, 14.

since only the retail services and post office boxes remained. The USPS approached the City of Beverly Hills about taking over the property in the spring of 1993. The two entities entered into exclusive negotiations later that year.²⁰⁴ Vice Mayor Vicki Reynolds supported the city's efforts to purchase the property and led a campaign to preserve the historic post office and reuse it as a cultural center. She was an essential figure in the formation of the Beverly Hills Cultural Center Foundation, a public benefit corporation established in 1994 to support the cultural center proposal.²⁰⁵

The City of Beverly Hills purchased the property from the federal government for \$3.2 million in 1998. The remaining post office boxes were moved to the Maple Drive location following the official closure of the branch in March 1999.²⁰⁶ The deed includes preservation covenants to protect the historic character of the building (Appendix D). It states that the City of Beverly Hills, and its successors or assigns, agree to "preserve and maintain" the former post office in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation in order to "preserve and enhance" the qualities that make the building eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.²⁰⁷

The deed names the California Office of Historic Preservation the beneficiary in charge of enforcing the covenants. However, the California Office of Historic Preservation is not authorized by California state law to accept covenants or easements. Wayne Donaldson, the State Historic Preservation Officer and Chair of the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, has stated that the state office does not hold any

²⁰⁴ "Beverly Hills: Talks OK'd on Post Office." *Los Angeles Times*. 9 December 1993.

²⁰⁵ Huver, Scott. "Post Cultural: Will the Planned Beverly Hills Cultural Center Move Ahead and Leave Controversy Behind?" *Beverly Hills Weekly*. 23 November 2000.

²⁰⁶ "Historic Resource Report." *Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts Recirculated DEIR*. Christopher A. Joseph & Associates. October 2007. 8.

²⁰⁷ Deed between the United States Postal Service and the City of Beverly Hills. 15 December 1998. Los Angeles County, C.A. Recorder's Office.

covenants or easements at this time.²⁰⁸ Given this information, it seems probable that the California Office of Historic Preservation is unaware or is unable to enforce the covenants for the Beverly Hills Main Post Office.

The City agreed to lease the former post office to the Beverly Hills Cultural Center Foundation in March 2000. The property was leased for 55 years at \$1 per year. The arrangement required that the historic building be reused as a first rate performing arts center. The Foundation was responsible for amassing the necessary funds to rehabilitate and operate the venue. Millions of dollars were raised in private donations from affluent community members. The largest contribution was a \$15 million grant from the Annenberg Foundation. Wallis Annenberg announced the gift in 2004 and the cultural center was soon after named the “Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts” in her honor.

The Rehabilitation

The Beverly Hills Cultural Center Foundation carried out the first design competition for the performing arts center in 2000. Barton Myers Associates of Los Angeles was originally chosen to be the principal architect, however, Hardy Holzman Pfeiffer Associates (HHPA) of New York City replaced the firm in December 2001. The program and design concept developed by HHPA was also eventually discarded. A final design competition was held in 2006. It was won by Studio Pali Fekete (SPF:architects) of Culver City. The firm was selected based on its proposal to construct a separate building for the main theater while housing less intrusive uses within the historic

²⁰⁸ Hall, Caroline. “Re: Post Office Question – For Master’s Thesis.” Message to author. 28 August 2012. E-mail.

building envelope. The design scheme contrasts to the previous firms' plans to gut and expand the interior of the historic post office to house the main theater.²⁰⁹

Ground was broken on the project in March 2010. The initial phase was the construction of a three-level underground public parking garage below Crescent Drive. Construction on the historic post office and the new theater space both commenced in April 2011. The general contractor for the project is MATT Construction and the subcontractor responsible for historic restoration work is California Restoration and Waterproofing. Historic Resources Group was retained to provide historic preservation consulting services. The group augmented a Historic Structure Report prepared by HHPA that provided the initial documentation and analysis of the building. The revised document informed the rehabilitation process and was used in the Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) required under the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Historic Resources Group is in the process of preparing the application for the federal rehabilitation tax credit.

The State of California requires that the significance of impacts on a historic resource be determined before to the commencement of a rehabilitation project. The EIS identified and analyzed potential impacts and recommends mitigation measures. The proposed design scheme complied with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation according to the EIS. While some character-defining features were to be altered during the course of the project, mitigation measures were suggested to reduce adverse impacts on the historic resource. The main mitigation measures enumerated in the EIS included documentation of the building consistent with the standards of the Historic American Building Survey (HABS), salvage and reuse of the original historic

²⁰⁹ Walker, Alissa. "Going Postal." *The Architect's Newspaper*. The Architect's Newspaper, LLC, 3 February 2009.

fabric when possible, and the in-kind replacement of historically significant elements.²¹⁰ The project will undergo further review during the application process for the federal rehabilitation tax credit.

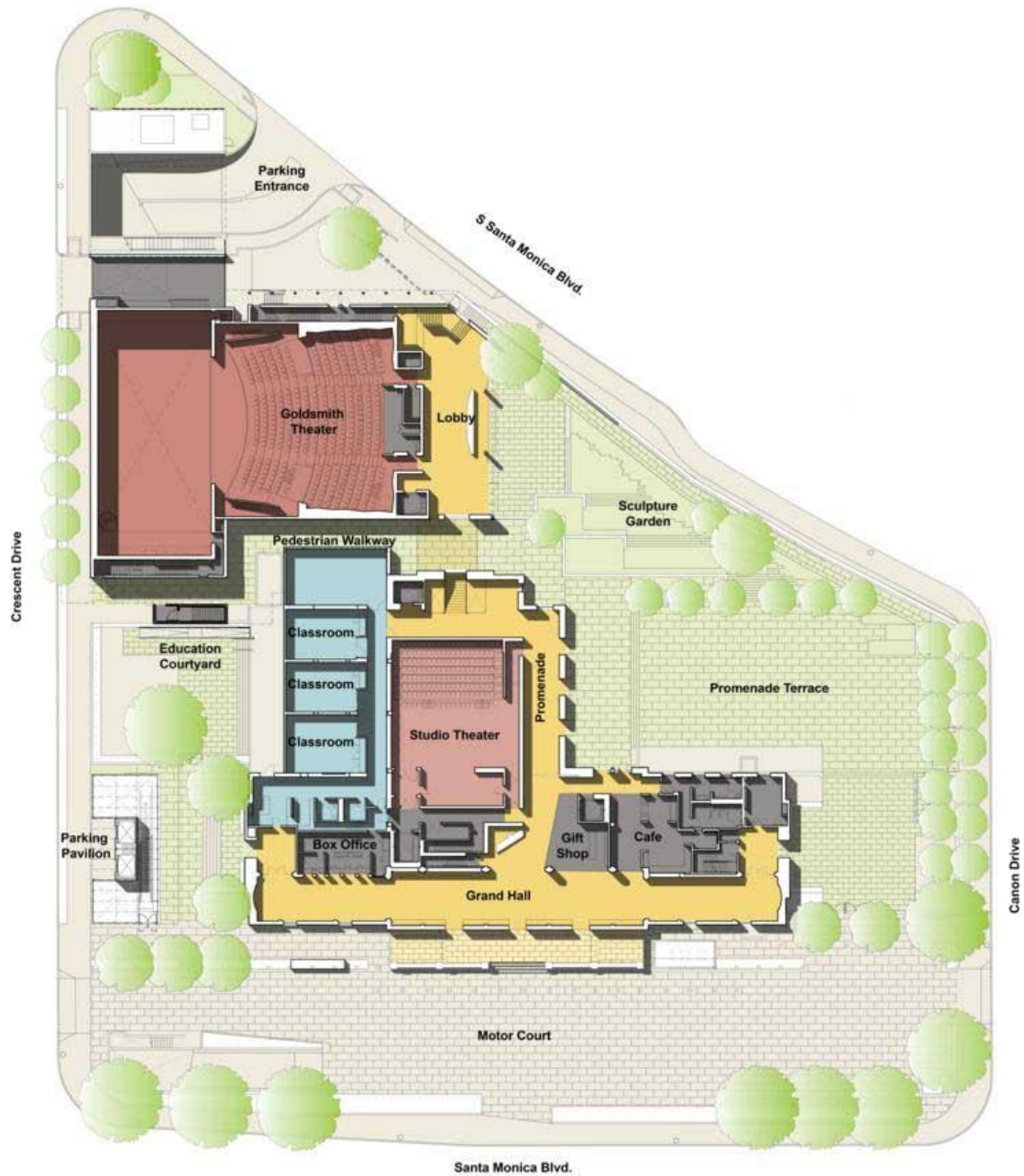


Illustration 24: Site Plan for the Center for the Performing Arts.
(Source: Studio Pali Fakete Architects. Retrieved from spfa.com. Accessed 25 Nov. 2012)

²¹⁰ "Historic Resource Report," 30-31.

Historic Post Office

The Beverly Hills Main Post Office rehabilitation focuses on restoring rather than altering the character-defining features of the historic building's exterior. Significant architectural elements and the original footprint and building massing will be retained as a result of the design scheme. Major restoration work includes repointing and cleaning the brick façade. The deteriorated portions of the terracotta base will also be repaired or replaced. The original windows will be retained and restored, with the exception of three windows on the west elevation that will be replaced with doors. Substantial efforts are planned to prevent future deterioration as well. All of the terracotta roof tiles are in the process of being removed and reinstalled over a new waterproof membrane. According to the EIS, the rehabilitation will improve rather than harm the condition and integrity of the historic exterior.²¹¹



Illustration 25: Rendering of the Historic Post Office and the Goldsmith Theater.
(Source: Studio Pali Fakete Architects. Retrieved from spfa.com. Accessed 25 Nov. 2012)

²¹¹ Ibid, 30.

The Beverly Hills Main Post Office will retain many of its distinctive interior features and spatial functions through the rehabilitation. The new use as a performing arts center allows the lobbies and the foyers to be preserved as grand public spaces. Public access to the main lobby will be maintained by using the space as a box office on the east end. The lobby is also planned to include a gift shop and a café on the west end. Significant features and materials in the lobbies and the foyers will be preserved as part of the project. The marble walls, lighting fixtures, and murals will be retained and the original marble floors will be restored. To accommodate the promenade hall to the rear of the building the existing openings in the south wall of the lobby will be raised and new openings will be cut. The EIS determined that the change was acceptable under the Standards since alterations to the building feature had occurred in the past.²¹²



Illustration 26: Section of Historic Post Office and Addition.

(Source: Studio Pali Fakete Architects. Retrieved from spfa.com. Accessed 25 Nov. 2012)

The rehabilitation will transform some back office and service areas to public spaces. The Superintendent of Mails' Office will become a reception area. The Postmaster's Office with its distinctive walnut wainscot will be preserved and reused as a private dining room for the café. The remaining rooms in the suite will be removed to

²¹² Ibid, 26-29.

support a catering kitchen and restrooms. According to the EIS, the significance of the space merits documentation and the reuse of the walnut trim in other parts of the building to mitigate the impact.²¹³

The rehabilitation will transform the workroom into a public space. It is planned to house a 150-seat studio theater for rehearsals and smaller performances. The promenade hall on the west elevation of the building provides access to the space. Minor partition walls will be removed to create space for the stage and seating area. Some of the glazed masonry wainscot will be lost during the process. The three anterooms off the east side of the space will be used as classrooms. The space to the south of the anterooms will be offices and a conference room. Many changes were made to the workroom over the years and it had few significant architectural elements due to its utilitarian function. Perhaps the most interesting features in the space were the viewing corridors, which were removed to accommodate the new program. Despite the changes to this section of the building, the design maintains the room as a large functional space that is contained within the original plan.

Adaptation of a building for a new use sometimes requires major alterations that change the character of certain spaces. These alterations are usually made in sections of the building that possess minor significance or have already undergone substantial changes. The entire second floor of the post office will be gutted and reorganized for administrative offices. Most of the spaces that will be affected were constructed using simple materials and had been previously altered. The men's restroom with its marble walls, however, is considered to be a significant piece of the historic fabric. Since its demolition does not comply with the Standards, the EIS recommended that the space be

²¹³ Ibid.

documented and the marble salvaged for use elsewhere in the building.²¹⁴ The basement will also endure major alterations to accommodate the new use. The reconfigured space will house dressing rooms, a green room, prop shops, and other theater support functions. The alterations are not considered to have a negative impact since the basement was deemed to have little or no historic value.²¹⁵

New Construction

A new building will be constructed on the site to accommodate the Goldsmith Theater. The 28,000 square foot space is planned to house a lobby and a 500-seat theater, with a stage and fly tower, for professional performances and lectures. The building is sited perpendicular and to the rear of the post office on the east side. This area was formerly the location of the postal truck loading area. The new building will connect to the post office via a subterranean bridge at the south end of the historic building. The remaining site will be landscaped with courtyards and gardens to create an attractive setting. An east-west pathway will also establish a needed connection between the civic center and the business triangle.

The National Park Service is currently reviewing the design of the new theater. The design needs to be distinct from that of the historic post office, yet the materials, massing, and scale have to be compatible, as per the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. While the theater is not intended to overwhelm the post office, it was designed to be an impressive building in its own right. To lessen the visual impact of the new construction, the roofline of the theater is planned to be approximately the same height as the top of the post office roof.

²¹⁴ Ibid, 26-29.

²¹⁵ Ibid.



Illustration 27: Rendering of the Goldsmith Theater.

(Source: Studio Pali Fakete Architects. Retrieved from spfa.com. Accessed 25 Nov. 2012)

The materials selected for the theater complement, yet are clearly distinct, from the historic building materials of the post office. The building is clad with 4 x 9 envelopes made of pre-weathered copper. The feature is an abstracted reference to the activities that historically occurred on the site and to the basic human experience of receiving mail.²¹⁶ A concrete base supports the cantilevered primary building mass. The incorporation of glass and steel elements on the west elevation gives the lobby entrance vestibule a transparent quality and reflects the original building. Although the building is already under construction, certain elements are subject to change after the National Park Service completes the review process.

Outcome

The Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts is scheduled to open in the fall of 2013. The impressive venue promises to enhance the arts community through the presentation of theater, dance, and music. It also has the potential to serve as a distinctive destination for both residents and visitors. The City of Beverly Hills has expressed the hope that the rehabilitation will strengthen the economic and social

²¹⁶ “Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts.” SPF:architects. Video. Web. 29 August 2012.

vitality of the area by putting an underutilized building back into productive use. The project is also intended to accomplish the vital objective of connecting the civic center to the business triangle. It is envisioned that patrons of the performing arts center will shop and dine in the local establishments situated nearby, infusing activity into the area and strengthening the corridor.

The City recognized that the building has long served as an important community gathering space and was wise to resume that function by rehabilitating it for use as a performing arts center. The civic use will raise awareness about the local landmark in a way that a private use could not. The theater is planned to host hundreds of events and performances each year that will draw the public to the site. Patrons and curious onlookers will be able to enter the historic lobbies to admire the murals and the restored interior.

The project will also cause minimal impact to the integrity of the building. Use as a performing arts center is compatible with the distinctive materials and the original intent for the spaces. The chosen scheme is also sensitive to the original design since it does not significantly alter the existing building envelope. Although the building no longer serves its historic purpose as a post office, the most important aspects of the building's character will live on through its new function as the Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts.

CONCLUSION

The case studies in Ithaca, New York; Rockville, Maryland; and Beverly Hills, California show that the civic legacies of historic post offices can be preserved even after the buildings are rehabilitated for new purposes. By retaining these former post offices as public amenities, citizens will be able to continue to engage with these buildings as they had in the past. The new uses maintain unrestricted access to the spaces that were traditionally open to the public. The new uses are also inclusive of all members of the community, allowing the buildings the potential to carry on as third places where citizens can gather and interact with others. Finally, the new uses are anticipated to act as downtown anchors that will enliven the sidewalks in a way similar to the former post offices. Given that two of the case studies were still under construction during the writing of *Keeping Post Offices Public*, future studies should be conducted to determine the actual levels of access, usage, and economic impact.

The architectural integrity of each case study post office was also preserved through the rehabilitations. The new uses were compatible with the most significant elements of the historic designs. The unique materials and spaces that defined the character of each post office were retained and preserved. The exteriors and lobbies were considered to be the most important features in all three of the projects and they were retained and restored to their historic appearances. The alterations that were necessary to accommodate the new uses occurred in the spaces that were of lesser historic value. The forms of the workrooms and their relationships to the lobbies were also maintained through the rehabilitations. Additions were designed and constructed to house any further functions that were not compatible within the original envelopes of the historic buildings.

It is unclear whether the preservation provisions enumerated in the deeds were responsible for the positive architectural outcomes that resulted from these projects. While the provisions did require the new owners to preserve and maintain the post offices in accordance with Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, the character-defining features that made these buildings eligible for the National Register of Historic Places were not specifically listed in the documents. The lack of specificity in the preservation provisions left the beneficiaries to determine what features would be retained and preserved during the rehabilitation processes.

It is also uncertain whether the USPS conducted the proper verification process to ensure that the covenants or easements were entrusted to beneficiaries who could actually monitor and enforce them. The Beverly Hills Main Post Office case study is one case of where a preservation covenant was entrusted to a beneficiary who was not able to accept it. There is evidence that this mistake has happened on more than one occasion. A more recent example of a preservation covenant assigned to an unable beneficiary occurred in Venice, California while the Venice Post Office was being transferred out of federal ownership. The USPS mistakenly named the California State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) as the covenant beneficiary in the deed. In this case, the SHPO caught the error and a new beneficiary was named.

These past instances raise concerns about the way the USPS is conducting the federal disposal process at present. Section 106 requires that a suitable beneficiary accept the covenant or easement in order for a finding of "no adverse effect" to be made. The beneficiary must also be given the chance to negotiate an appropriate level of protection for the historic resource. A covenant or easement provides no protection if the beneficiary is unable to accept it or is unaware of its existence. The communities

affected by post office closures have the greatest interest in the fate of these historic resources. Residents need to be aware of the how the federal disposal process works and the protections that it offers historic post offices. Armed with this knowledge, residents can get involved with the process and ensure that it is properly executed.

Even in cases when the federal disposal process is carried out correctly, many beneficiaries may not have the resources to keep track of the individual requirements of the covenants and easements and enforce them. The three case studies demonstrated that there are often mechanisms that can supplement preservation covenants and easements. Architectural review and mitigation measures are required as part of environmental impact statements and rehabilitation tax credit compliance. Local architectural review boards and citizen involvement also help to guide the rehabilitation projects. Although these mechanisms existed in the case studies and helped ensure that these projects followed the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation, they do not exist in every case. For this reason, it is important that communities make certain that adequate and enforceable preservation provisions are included in the deeds. It is also important to make sure that qualified preservation professionals are commissioned to conduct historic post office rehabilitations.

The future is uncertain for countless historic post offices across the nation. Closures have continued to take place despite considerable protest. There is no telling how many more historic post offices will be shuttered in the coming decades. The time to contemplate appropriate reuse options for these valuable historic resources is now. *Keeping Post Offices Public* provides valuable lessons for communities that wish to rehabilitate their historic post offices for public uses. The public must get involved early in the disposal process to ensure that the legacies of these important buildings are not

lost. Historic post offices should remain public amenities after closure and sale because the buildings can continue to serve as important anchors that generate foot traffic for downtown businesses, while enduring as democratic spaces that can be used appreciated by all members of the public. The rehabilitation of post offices for public purposes not only preserves their architecture, but also preserves their civic legacy and keeps the memory of the public mail service alive for generations to come.

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APPENDIX A

MCADOO'S CLASSIFICATION SYSTEM FOR FEDERAL BUILDINGS

Class A

Definition: Buildings that include a post office of the first class with annual receipts of \$800,000 or over; the site forming part of a city development plan or situated on an important thoroughfare of a great city; improvements on adjoining property reaching the higher valuation of metropolitan real estate.

Character of building: Marble or granite facing; fireproof throughout; metal frames, sashes, and doors; interior finish to include the finer grades of marble, ornamental bronze work, mahogany, etc. Public spaces to have monumental treatment, mural decorations; special interior lighting fixtures.

Class B

Definition: Buildings that include a post office of the first class with receipts from \$60,000 to \$800,000; valuation of adjoining property somewhat below the higher valuation of metropolitan real estate.

Character of building: Limestone or sandstone facing; fireproof throughout; exterior frames and sash metal; interior frames, sash, and doors wood; interior finish to exclude the more expensive woods and marbles; ornamental metal to be used only where iron is suitable. Restricted ornament in public spaces.

Class C

Definition: Buildings that include a post office of the second class with receipts of \$15,000 or over, and of the first class to \$60,000 receipts; valuation of surrounding property that of a second-class city.

Character of building: Brick facing with stone or terra-cotta trimmings; fireproof floors; non-fireproof roof; frames, sashes, and doors wood; interior finish to exclude the more expensive woods and marbles; the latter used only where sanitary conditions demand; public spaces restricted to very simple forms of ornament.

Class D

Definition: Buildings that include a post office having annual receipts of less than \$15,000; real estate values identifying only a limited investment for improvements.

Character of building: Brick facing, little stone or terra cotta used; only first floor fireproof; stock sash, frames, doors, etc., where advisable; ordinary class of building, such as any businessman would consider a reasonable investment in a small town.

Source: *Secretary of the United States Treasury Department, Annual Report on the Finances.* Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1915.

APPENDIX B
ITHACA POST OFFICE DEED

FORM 831 PAGE 82

09252

Revised 27.02
No stamp
Ret to John Barney

This Indenture, made the 30th day of September,
Nineteen Hundred and Ninety Eight.

Between the United States Postal Service, an independent establishment of
the Executive Branch of the Government of the United States, having an
office at Facilities Service Office, 6 Griffin Road North,
Windsor, Connecticut 06006-0300

party of the first part (grantor), and

The Town of Ithaca, a municipal entity existing under the laws of the State of
New York, having an office at 126 East Seneca Street,
Ithaca, NY 14850-9876

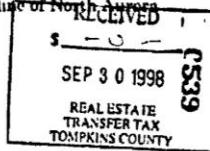
party of the second part (grantee),

Witnesseth that the party of the first part, in consideration of One Dollar
(\$1.00) paid by the party of the second part, and other good and valuable
consideration more fully set forth in the contract between the parties, does
hereby remise, release and quitclaim unto the party of the second part, its
successors and assigns forever.

ALL THAT TRACT OR PARCEL OF LAND situate in the City of
Ithaca, County of Tompkins, State of New York, and being more particularly
bounded and described as follows:

BEGINNING at the point of intersection of the south line of East
Buffalo Street with the east line of North Tioga Street in said City, marked
by a drill hole on concrete, which point of beginning is located South 44° 13'
58" East a distance of 87.50 feet from a street monument at the intersection
of the north line of East Buffalo Street with the west line of North Tioga
Street as shown on the survey map hereinafter referred to;

THENCE North 87° 47' 30" East along the south line of East Buffalo
Street a distance of 250.05 feet to the point of intersection of the south line of
East Buffalo Street with the west line of North Aurora Street in said City,
marked by a drill hole on concrete, which point is located South 09° 00' 20"
West a distance of 66.27 feet from a street monument at the intersection of
the north line of East Buffalo Street with the west line of North Aurora
Street;



See Misc. BK. 66 pg. 139

THENCE South 02° 18' 30" East along the west line of North Aurora Street a distance of 132.03 feet to a point, which point is located North 15°46' 48" East distance of 0.29 feet from an iron pin found, and which point is at the northeasterly corner of premises of the City of Ithaca (Liber 553 of Deeds at Page 1031);

THENCE South 87° 40' 30" West along the northerly line of said premises of the City of Ithaca a distance of 250.12 feet to a point in the east line of North Tioga Street marked by a drill hole on concrete;

THENCE North 02° 16' 33" West along the east line of North Tioga Street a distance of 132.54 feet to the point or place of beginning.

The above premises are described in accordance with a survey map entitled "BOUNDARY SURVEY OF UNITED STATES POST OFFICE, CITY OF ITHACA, TOMPKINS COUNTY, NEW YORK," dated June 17, 1998, by T.G. Miller P.C., Engineers and Surveyors.

The above-described premises comprises the same premises conveyed to or taken by eminent domain by the United States of America pursuant to the following:

1. Deed from Clarence W. Wyckoff and Maude Talmadge Wyckoff to the United States of America, dated May 20, 1903, recorded August 18, 1903 in the Tompkins County Clerk's Office in Liber 160 of Deeds at Page 373.
2. Deed from Flora A. Bingham to the United States of America, dated December 11, 1935, recorded January 6, 1936 in the Tompkins County Clerk's Office in Liber 238 of Deeds at Page 434.
3. Deed from Richard C. Warren and Anah H. Warren to the United States of America, dated April 8, 1937, recorded August 19, 1937 in the Tompkins County Clerk's Office in Liber 245 of Deeds at Page 217.
4. Declaration of Taking, United States of America, Plaintiff, vs. Certain Land in the City of Ithaca, County of Tompkins, State of New York, and Carrie M. Conlin, et al., Defendants, dated August 4, 1961, recorded September 19, 1961 in the Tompkins County Clerk's Office in Liber 15 of Miscellaneous Records at Page 463.

Together with the appurtenances and all the estate and rights of the party of the first part in and to said premises,

To have and to hold the premises herein granted unto the party of the second part, its successors and assigns forever, subject to the following restrictions and limitations:

This building, hereinafter referred to as "the Post Office," is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. In that regard, the following covenants are incorporated into and are part of this deed for the purpose of protecting the historical significance of the building:

1. The Grantee, its heirs, successors, and assigns agree to guarantee the maintenance of the architectural and historical integrity of the Post Office.
2. The Grantee, its successors, and assigns, will undertake any rehabilitation work on the Post Office herein described in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior's "Standards for Rehabilitation." All rehabilitation proposals will be submitted to the State Historic Preservation Officer for review and approval. Said approval shall not be unreasonably withheld.
3. With respect to the exterior of the Post Office, no alterations, no physical or structural change and no change in the color or surfacing shall be made, changed or altered without prior consultation with and approval of the State Historic Preservation Officer. Ordinary and necessary repairs and maintenance not materially affecting said exterior features shall not be considered alterations.
4. The New York State Historical Preservation Officer may, for good cause, modify or cancel any or all of the foregoing restrictions upon application of the grantee, its successors or assigns.

And the party of the first part, in compliance with Section 13 of the Lien Law, hereby covenants that the party of the first part will receive the consideration for this conveyance and will hold the right to receive such consideration as a trust fund to be applied first for the purpose of paying the cost of the improvement and will apply the same first to the payment of the cost of the improvement before using any part of the total of the same for any other purpose.

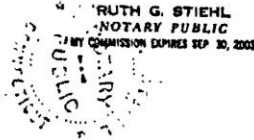
In Witness Whereof, this deed is duly executed by the United States Postal Service and the Town of Ithaca

UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE

By: Paul J. Senk
PAUL J. SENK
CONTRACTING OFFICER
MANAGER, REAL ESTATE
USPS FACILITIES SERVICE OFFICE

State of Connecticut, Hartford County, Town of Windsor
On this 30th day of September, 1998, before me,
Ruth G. Stiehl, the undersigned officer, appeared
Paul J. Senk, known to me to be the person whose name is subscribed to the
within instrument, and a duly authorized Contracting Officer of the United
States Postal Service, and acknowledged that he executed the same for the
purposes therein contained.

Ruth G. Stiehl
Notary Public

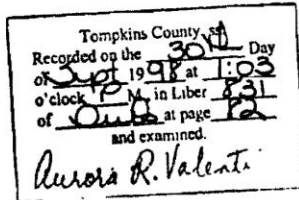


TOWN OF ITHACA

By: Catherine Valentino
CATHERINE VALENTINO
TOWN SUPERVISOR
TOWN OF ITHACA

State of New York, County of Tompkins, Town of Ithaca
On this 30th day of September, 1998, before me John C. Brown,
the undersigned officer, appeared Catherine Valentino,
known to me to be the person whose name is subscribed to the within
instrument, and a duly authorized agent of the Town of Ithaca, and
acknowledged that she executed the same for the purposes therein contained.

John C. Brown
Notary Public
Comm Exp. 9/30/99



APPENDIX C
ROCKVILLE POST OFFICE DEED

Parcel ID: 04-00157184

DEED OF EASEMENT

THIS DEED OF EASEMENT, made as of this 27th day of Oct, 2008, by and between the MAYOR AND CITY COUNCIL OF ROCKVILLE (the "Grantor"), and the MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST, an instrumentality of the State of Maryland (the "Grantee").

WHEREAS, Grantee is a body corporate and instrumentality of the State of Maryland created for the purpose generally of preserving and maintaining historic, aesthetic and cultural properties, all as is more particularly provided for by law; and

WHEREAS, the real property as hereinafter described (the "Property") has substantial historic, aesthetic and cultural character and this Deed of Easement (this "Deed") will promote the preservation and maintenance of the Property and its historic, cultural, scenic and aesthetic character; and

WHEREAS, Grantee is possessed with the power and duty to accept, hold and administer this Deed; and

WHEREAS, Grantee has determined that this Deed is exclusively for conservation purposes.

NOW, THEREFORE, in consideration of the foregoing recitals, and for other good and valuable considerations, the receipt and sufficiency of which are hereby acknowledged, the parties hereto agree as follows:

1. Grantor hereby grants and conveys to Grantee with Special Warranty of Title an easement (the "Easement") in all of those certain lots or parcels of land known as the Rockville Post Office property, 2 West Montgomery Avenue, Rockville, together with all of the improvements thereon, and appurtenances, rights and interests thereunto belonging, which is situate, lying and being in Montgomery County, State of Maryland, and which is more particularly set forth in Exhibit B, attached hereto and incorporated herein.

2. Exhibit A consists of 29 pages and includes as page 1 a schedule (which is recorded with this Deed) describing the documents, photographs of selected portions of the Property, and other things that are not recorded herewith but are nonetheless as fully and completely incorporated by reference into this Deed as though recorded herewith. Grantor acknowledges that Exhibit A may be modified and updated upon the conclusion of the restoration of the Property.

3. The terms of the Easement are as follows:

(A) Duration and Nature of the Easement. The Easement shall be perpetual in duration. The parties agree that it is and shall be considered an easement in gross and as such is inheritable and assignable and runs with the land as an incorporeal property interest in the Property enforceable by Grantee and its successors, transferees and assigns with respect to the Property and against Grantor and Grantor's heirs, successors, transferees and assigns, all of whom

2008 OCT 27 P 2:43

FILED
MONTGOMERY COUNTY
CLERK'S OFFICE
ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND

are collectively referred to herein as "Grantee" and "Grantor", respectively. The Easement is subject to any and all presently existing valid encumbrances, easements and rights-of-way upon the Property.

(B) Public Access. Grantor shall make the Exterior and Interior of the Property, open to the public on a minimum of 5 days per year from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., or the equivalent of 35 hours a year, and at other times by appointment as may be determined by Grantor.

(C) Maintenance and Administration. Grantor shall keep and maintain the Property, including the Exterior and Interior (as hereinafter defined) of the improvements thereon, in good, clean and safe condition. Grantor shall maintain, repair and administer the Property and the Exterior and Interior of the improvements thereon in a manner to preserve the historic, aesthetic and cultural character and appearance of the Property and the improvements thereon as shown and described in Exhibit A. The maintenance, repair and administration of the Property and the Exterior and Interior of the improvements thereon shall further conform to the requirements of Paragraph D below. This covenant does not require reconstruction of any improvements which are destroyed in whole or in part by casualty loss unless insurance proceeds are available for such purposes.

(D) Changes and Alterations.

(i) Without the express written consent of the Director of the Maryland Historical Trust (the "Director"), Grantor shall not cause, permit or suffer any construction which would alter or change the Property or the Exterior or Interior of any improvements thereon as described and depicted in Exhibit A, provided, however, that if damage has resulted to said Exterior or Interior from casualty loss, deterioration or wear and tear, then the maintenance, reconstruction, repair, repainting or refinishing to correct the damage shall be permitted without such written permission of the Director, provided that such maintenance, reconstruction, repair, repainting or refinishing is performed in a manner that will not substantially alter the appearance of such improvements upon conclusion of the restoration of the Property.

(ii) The terms Exterior and Interior mean the exterior and interior surfaces of an improvement on the Property including the architectural style, the general design and arrangement, the color, the kind and texture of the building materials and the type and style of all windows, doors, light fixtures, signs and other similar exterior and interior features. The term construction shall include all construction, reconstruction, improvement, enlargement, painting and decorating, alteration, demolition, maintenance or repair of any structure or works.

(iii) Without the express written consent of the Director, or as provided in paragraph 3(D)(iv) below, no building, structure, or improvement may be constructed or erected on the Property other than those buildings, structures, or improvements which are as of the date of this Agreement located on the Property, as described and depicted in Exhibit A.

(iv) Grantor may undertake the changes and alterations described in the architectural and engineering drawings by WGM Architects dated May 1, 2008 and approved by the Trust in a letter from J. Rodney Little, Director, dated August 26, 2008.

(E) Archeological Resources. Without the express written consent of the Director, Grantor shall not cause, permit or suffer any grading, excavation, plowing over 12 inches in depth, subsoiling, drainage improvement, or other undertaking which would materially disturb the surface or subsurface of the ground. Prior to granting such consent, the Director may require the Grantor to perform a survey in order to identify and determine the significance of archeological deposits. If subsequently deemed necessary by the Director, the Grantor shall conduct data recovery, excavation, curation, documentation and reporting of the affected deposits, all in a form and substance satisfactory to the Director.

(F) Inspection. Grantee shall have the right to enter the Property on reasonable notice to Grantor for the purpose of inspecting the Property to determine whether there is compliance by the Grantor with the terms of the Easement.

(G) Breach by Grantor. Upon any breach of the terms of the Easement by Grantor, Grantee may, after reasonable notice to Grantor, exercise any or all of the following remedies:

(i) institute suit(s) to enjoin any breach or enforce any covenant by ex parte, temporary, and/or permanent injunction;

(ii) demand that the Property be restored promptly to the condition required by the Easement; and

(iii) enter upon the Property, correct any breach, and hold Grantor responsible for the resulting cost.

Grantee's remedies shall be cumulative and shall be in addition to any other rights and remedies available to Grantee at law or equity. If Grantor is found to have breached any of Grantor's obligations under the Easement, Grantor shall reimburse Grantee for any costs or expenses incurred by Grantee, including court costs and reasonable attorneys' fees.

(H) Waiver. No waiver of any term or condition of the Easement shall have any force or effect unless it be in writing and approved by the parties hereto. No failure on the part of Grantee to enforce any covenant or provision herein nor the waiver of any right thereunder by Grantee shall discharge or invalidate such covenant or provision of any other covenant, condition, or provision hereof, or affect the right of Grantee to enforce the same in the event of a subsequent breach or default.

(I) Consent, Disapproval and Appeal. In any event where the terms of the Easement require the consent of the Director, such consent shall be requested by notice to the Director and consent shall be deemed to have been given within forty-five (45) days after receipt of notice by the Director unless the Director gives notice to the Grantor of specific reason for disapproval. In any event where the Director gives such notice of disapproval, Grantor may appeal the disapproval to the Board of Trustees of the Maryland Historical Trust for review by it or by such person or agency as may be designated by it to make such review. Appeal shall be made by notice

to the Director given within forty-five (45) days of receipt of notice of disapproval from the Director.

(J) Notice. Any notice required to be given by the Easement shall be in writing and may be given by certified or registered mail, with postage prepaid and return receipt requested, if to the Grantor, addressed to the Grantor as follows:

City Manager
Mayor & City Council of Rockville
111 Maryland Avenue
Rockville, Maryland 20850

or to the Grantor at such other address as the Grantor may from time to time designate by notice to the Director, or, if to the Grantee or the Director, addressed to the Grantee or Director as follows:

Director
Maryland Historical Trust
100 Community Place
Crownsville, Maryland 21032-2023

or to the Grantee or the Director at such other address as the Director may from time to time designate by notice to the Grantor. Any notice given in the foregoing manner shall be deemed to have been given upon receipt thereof, which shall be presumed to be two (2) days after the day notice has been deposited with the United States Post Office.

(K) Construction. The Easement is for the purpose of promoting and shall be construed to promote the purposes of the statutes creating and governing Grantee and of Section 2-118 of the Real Property Article of the Annotated Code of Maryland and to preserve the historic, cultural, scenic and aesthetic character of the Property.

(L) Subsequent Conveyance. Grantor agrees that the restrictions of the Easement will be inserted, verbatim or by express reference, in any subsequent deed or other legal instrument by which the Grantor's fee simple title to the Property or any other possessory interest in the Property, or any part thereof, is divested or conveyed.

(M) Transfer of Ownership. The Grantor agrees for itself, its personal representatives, heirs, successors, transferees and assigns, to notify the Grantee in writing of the names and addresses of any party to whom the Property, or any part thereof, is being transferred before or within forty-five (45) days of the time the transfer is consummated.

(N) Conservation Purposes. Grantee agrees that it will hold this Deed exclusively for conservation purposes *i.e.*, that it will not transfer this Deed whether or not for consideration. However, subject to the provisions of any applicable federal law, Grantee may assign or transfer its interest in this Deed to a governmental unit or organization which qualifies at the time of the transfer as an eligible donee of this Deed under any pertinent provisions of federal law.

(O) Property Right. Grantor agrees that the donation of this Deed gives rise to a property right, immediately vested in the Grantee, with a fair market value equal to the proportionate value that this Deed bears to the value of the Property as a whole.

(P) Governing Law. This Deed is made in, and shall be governed by, the laws of the State of Maryland.

WITNESS THE FOLLOWING SIGNATURES AND SEALS:

WITNESS/ATTEST:

GRANTOR:

Justin R. Heer

By: Scott J. Ullery (SEAL)
Name: SCOTT J. ULLERY
Title: CITY MANAGER

WITNESS:

ACCEPTED BY THE
MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST

Margaret A. Drake

By: Michael J. Little (SEAL)
For J. Rodney Little, Director

Attachments
Exhibit A Schedule
Exhibit B Property Description

STATE OF MARYLAND, Montgomery CITY/COUNTY, to wit:

I HEREBY CERTIFY, that on this 27th day of October, in the year 2008, before the subscriber, personally appeared Scott Ullery, who acknowledged that ~~he~~ he executed the foregoing instrument for the purposes therein contained as the duly authorized City Manager of the Mayor & Council of Rockville.

Amelia M. Combs
Notary Public
Amelia M. Combs

My Commission Expires: 10-01-10

STATE OF MARYLAND, Anne Arundel COUNTY, to wit:

I HEREBY CERTIFY, that on this 17th day of October, in the year 2008, before the subscriber, personally appeared Michael K. Day, and acknowledged that he executed the foregoing instrument for the purposes therein contained for the fully authorized Director of the Maryland Historical Trust.

Margaret Harwood Drake
Notary Public

My Commission Expires: April 1, 2010



Approved as to form and legal
sufficiency this 17th day of
October, 2008.
Philip J. Deters
Assistant Attorney General

CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that this instrument has been prepared by me or under my supervision and that I am an attorney admitted to practice before the Court of Appeals of Maryland.

Philip J. Deters (SEAL)
Philip J. Deters

EXHIBIT A
 SCHEDULE
 ROCKVILLE POST OFFICE
 2 WEST MONTGOMERY AVENUE
 ROCKVILLE, MARYLAND 20850

PAGE 1 OF 39	SCHEDULE
PAGE 2 OF 39	SITE PLAN ("Resurvey of Site, Post Office Rockville, MD, June 14, 1938)
PAGE 3 OF 39	SITE PLAN ("Land proposed to be acquired through condemnation" in Declaration of Taking, March 7, 1938)
PAGE 4 OF 39	VIEW OF FRONT ENTRANCE FROM ACROSS STREET
PAGE 5 OF 39	DETAILED VIEW OF FRONT ENTRANCE (SOUTHEAST CORNER)
PAGE 6 OF 39	VIEW OF EAST ELEVATION
PAGE 7 OF 39	DETAILED VIEW OF EAST ELEVATION FROM SOUTHEAST
PAGE 8 OF 39	DETAILED VIEW OF EAST ELEVATION FROM NORTHEAST
PAGE 9 OF 39	VIEW OF REAR ELEVATION FROM NORTHEAST CORNER
PAGE 10 OF 39	VIEW OF REAR FROM NORTHWEST CORNER
PAGE 11 OF 39	VIEW OF REAR ELEVATION FROM ACROSS THE STREET
PAGE 12 OF 39	DETAILED VIEW OF REAR ELEVATION FROM SOUTHEAST
PAGE 13 OF 39	DETAILED VIEW OF EAST SIDE OF REAR ELEVATION
PAGE 14 OF 39	VIEW OF WEST ELEVATION OF LOADING DOCK
PAGE 15 OF 39	VIEW OF WEST ELEVATION FROM SOUTHWEST CORNER
PAGE 16 OF 39	VIEW OF SOUTH ELEVATION FROM ACROSS THE STREET
PAGE 17 OF 39	DETAILED VIEW OF SOUTH ELEVATION
PAGE 18 OF 39	VIEW OF REAR PORTION OF PROPERTY (NOT YET DEVELOPED)
PAGE 19 OF 39	DETAILED VIEW OF SOUTH SIDE OF THE ENTRANCE TOWER (TOP)
PAGE 20 OF 39	DETAILED VIEW OF FRONT (SOUTHEAST) TOP OF ENTRANCE TOWER
PAGE 21 OF 39	DETAILED VIEW OF FRONT (SE) BOTTOM OF ENTRANCE TOWER
PAGE 22 OF 39	DETAILED VIEW OF FRONT (SE) ENTRANCEWAY
PAGE 23 OF 39	DETAILED VIEW OF THE NICHE ON THE SOUTH ELEVATION
PAGE 24 OF 39	DETAILED VIEW OF FRONT (SOUTHEAST) OF ENTRANCE TOWER
PAGE 25 OF 39	DETAILED VIEW STAIRWAY TO BASEMENT ENTRANCE (WEST ELEV)
PAGE 26 OF 39	WINDOW DETAIL (WEST ELEVATION)
PAGE 27 OF 39	WINDOW DETAIL (WEST ELEVATION)
PAGE 28 OF 39	VIEW OF INTERIOR LOBBY
PAGE 29 OF 39	VIEW OF INTERIOR LOBBY
PAGE 30 OF 39	DETAIL VIEW OF MURAL IN INTERIOR LOBBY
PAGE 31 OF 39	DETAIL VIEW OF INTERIOR LOBBY
PAGE 32 OF 39	VIEW OF INTERIOR SORTING ROOM
PAGE 33 OF 39	VIEW OF INTERIOR SECOND FLOOR
PAGE 34 OF 39	VIEW OF INTERIOR SECOND FLOOR
PAGE 35 OF 39	VIEW OF INTERIOR BASEMENT
PAGE 36 OF 39	VIEW OF INTERIOR BASEMENT
PAGE 37 OF 39	DETAILED VIEW OF INTERIOR
PAGE 38 OF 39	CONTACT SHEET PRINTS
PAGE 39 OF 39	IDENTIFICATION OF CONTACT SHEET PRINTS

ROCKVILLE POST OFFICE
 ROCKVILLE, MONTGOMERY COUNTY

SCHEDULE

EASEMENT EXHIBIT NO. A, Page 1 of 39

SCALE:
 PREPARED: ESS 10/2008
 MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST

SIGNED ORIGINAL ON FILE WITH THE M.H.T.
 GRANTOR

GRANTEE

EXHIBIT B
PROPERTY DESCRIPTION
ROCKVILLE POST OFFICE
2 WEST MONTGOMERY AVENUE
ROCKVILLE, MONTGOMERY COUNTY
MARYLAND 20850

A tract of land lying and being in the Town of Rockville, County of Montgomery, State of Maryland, and described as follows:

PARCEL I. All that certain piece or parcel of land situated in the Town of Rockville, County of Montgomery, State of Maryland, described as the Easterly 198.50 feet, by full width of Original Lot 22 of the original plan of the Town of Rockville as shown on the plat thereof recorded in Liber "L", Folio 188, of the Land Records of said county, and described by metes and bounds as follows:\

°Beginning at a point marked by a brass plug and formed by the intersection of the Southerly line of Commerce Street with the Westerly line of Washington Street and being the Northeast corner of said Original Lot 22 and running thence along the southerly line of Commerce Street South 88°43'55" West 198.50 feet to a point marked by a brass plug, thence South 1°6'45" East, along 66 feet to a point marked by a concrete monument in the dividing line between said Lot 22 and Original Lot 21 of the Town of Rockville; thence North 88°43'55" East, 198.50 feet to a point marked by a brass plug in the Westerly side of Washington Street and being a corner common to said Lots 22 and 21 and thence North 1°6'45" along said Westerly side of Washington Street, being the Easterly line of said Lot 22, 66 feet to the point of beginning, as shown by plat "Resurvey of Site of Post Office, Rockville, Md.", prepared by John G. McDonald, June 14, 1938, by reference made a part hereof, together with the improvements thereon.

PARCEL II. All that certain piece or parcel of land situated in the Town of Rockville, County of Montgomery, State of Maryland, described as the Easterly 237.50 feet, by full width of Original Lot 21 of the original plan of the Town of Rockville as shown on the plat thereof recorded in Liber "L", Folio 188, of the Land Records of said County, excepting the excluding therefrom a strip of land 2.30 feet in width by 21.35 feet in length located along the northerly line of said Lot 21 at the Northwest corner thereof; said Parcel No. 2 being described by metes and bounds as follows:

Beginning for the same at a point marked by a brass plug in the Westerly line of Washington Street South 1°6'45" East a distance of 66 feet from a point formed by the intersection of said Westerly line of Washington Street with the Southerly line of Commerce Street, said point of beginning being a corner r common to said Original Lot 21 and Original Lot 22 of the Town of Rockville, and running thence South 88°43'55" West along the dividing line between said lots 21 and 22, 216.15 feet to a point marked by a concrete monument; thence South 1°6'45" East 2.30 feet to a point marked by a concrete monument; thence South 88°43'55" West 21.35 feet to a point marked by a concrete monument in the Easterly line of a public alley 10 feet wide; thence South 1°6'45" East along said Easterly line of said public alley 60.60 feet to a point marked by a concrete monument in the Southerly line of said Lot 21; thence North 88°43'55" East along the said

Southerly line of said Lot 21, 237.50 feet to a point marked by a brass plug in the said Westerly line of Washington Street and being the Southerly corner of said Lot 21; and thence North 1°6'45" West along the said Westerly line of Washington Street, being the Easterly line of Lot 21, a distance of 62.90 feet to the point of beginning, as shown by plat "Resurvey of Site of Post Office, Rockville, Maryland", prepared by John G. McDonald, June 14, 1938

BEING, as to Parcels I and II, the same property acquired by the United States of America by Judgment of Declaration of Taking, October 14, 1938, in United States of America vs. Kate R. Warfield, et al, Case No. 6481 at Law, in the District Court of the United States for the District of Maryland.

ALSO BEING, as to Parcel II, that same property which was conveyed by deed dated December 20, 1938 from the Potomac Edison Power Company to the United States of America, recorded December 23, 1938 in the Land Records of Montgomery County, Maryland at Liber 723, folio 163.

APPENDIX D
BEVERLY HILLS POST OFFICE DEED

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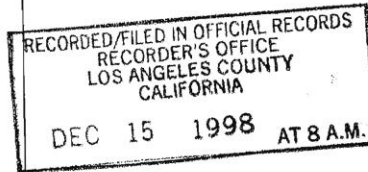
CITY OF BH

PAGE 02

CHICAGO TITLE INSURANCE CO.

98 2271321

Order No. 8130379 - X49
Escrow No. 8130379 - X70
Loan No.



WHEN RECORDED MAIL TO:

City Clerk
City of Beverly Hills
455 North Rexford Drive
Beverly Hills, California 90210



DOCUMENTARY TRANSFER TAX \$0--EXEMPT UNDER R & T §11922

SPACE ABOVE THIS LINE FOR RECORDER'S USE

.....Computed on the consideration or value of property conveyed; OR
.....Computed on the consideration or value less liens or encumbrances
remaining at time of sale.

[Signature]
Signature of Declarant or Agent determining tax -- Print Name

QUITCLAIM DEED

FOR A VALUABLE CONSIDERATION, receipt of which is hereby acknowledged,

the **UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE**,

an independent establishment of the executive branch of the Government of the United States, does hereby REMISE, RELEASE AND QUITCLAIM to

the **CITY OF BEVERLY HILLS, CALIFORNIA**

the real property in the City of Beverly Hills, County of Los Angeles, State of California, described in Exhibit A attached hereto and incorporated herein by this reference.

By acceptance of this deed, the grantee acknowledges that the former Beverly Hills Post Office, Crescent Station, located at 469 North Crescent Drive, Beverly Hills, California, on the subject property, has been listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

LEGAL ATTACHED
Grantee, its successors or assigns, covenants and promises, at its sole cost and expense, to preserve and maintain the former Beverly Hills Post Office-Crescent Station Branch substantially in accordance with the recommended approaches in the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitating Historic Buildings (36 CFR Part 67) as are established from time to time by the National Park Service, in order to preserve and enhance those qualities that make the former postal facility eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places.

The State Historic Preservation Officer may, for good cause, modify or cancel any or all of the foregoing restrictions upon application of the grantee, its successors or assigns. Failure of the Officer to exercise any right or remedy will not waive or limit the exercise of that or any other right or remedy under this instrument at any other time.

This covenant is binding on the grantee, its successors and assigns in perpetuity. Restrictions, stipulations, and covenants contained herein shall be inserted by the grantee verbatim or by express reference in any deed or other legal instrument by which it divests itself of fee simple title or any other lesser interest or estate in the property or any part thereof.

This covenant shall be a binding servitude upon the property and shall be deemed to run with the land. Acceptance of the deed or other instrument of conveyance of interests shall constitute affirmation and agreement to be bound by the foregoing conditions and restrictions, and obligations herein set forth.

Dated November 30, 1998

UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE

By *[Signature]*
Contracting Officer

C694 .aer

1145 (1/94)

8120279 V80

STATE OF ~~CALIFORNIA~~ Virginia }
 COUNTY OF _____ } ss
 On Nov. 30, 1998 before me.



personally appeared David E. Ross, USPS
Contracting Officer
 personally known to me (or proved to me on the basis of satisfactory evidence) to be the person(s) whose name(s) is/are subscribed to the within instrument and acknowledged to me that he/she/they executed the same in his/her/their authorized capacity(ies), and that by his/her/their signature(s) on the instrument the person(s) or the entity upon behalf of which the person(s) acted, executed the instrument.

WITNESS my hand and official seal.

Signature Arnette C. Warner

My Commission Expires April 30, 2002

(This area for official notarial seal)

MAIL TAX STATEMENTS TO: City Clerk, City of Beverly Hills, 455 North Rexford Drive, Beverly Hills, California 90210

98 2271321

A PARCEL OF LAND LYING AND BEING IN THE CITY OF BEVERLY HILLS, COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES, STATE OF CALIFORNIA, DESCRIBED AS FOLLOWS:

BEGINNING AT THE INTERSECTION OF THE SOUTHEASTERLY LINE OF PACIFIC ELECTRIC RAILWAY COMPANY RIGHT OF WAY (HOLLYWOOD DIVISION) AS GRANTED BY DEED RECORDED IN BOOK 2940 PAGE 77 OF DEEDS, RECORDS OF SAID COUNTY, WITH A LINE DISTANT 10 FEET MEASURED NORTHEASTERLY FROM AND AT RIGHT ANGLES TO THE NORTHEASTERLY LINE OF CANON DRIVE SHOWN ON TRACT BEVERLY, RECORDED IN BOOK 11 PAGE 94 OF MAPS, RECORDS OF SAID COUNTY; THENCE NORTHEASTERLY ALONG SAID RIGHT OF WAY LINE 312.10 FEET TO A POINT IN THE SOUTHWESTERLY LINE OF CRESCENT DRIVE; THENCE SOUTH 39 DEGREES 31 MINUTES 40 SECONDS EAST ALONG SAID SOUTHWESTERLY LINE OF CRESCENT DRIVE, A DISTANCE OF 275.68 FEET TO AN INTERSECTION WITH A LINE PARALLEL WITH AND DISTANT 135 FEET MEASURED NORTHERLY AT RIGHT ANGLES FROM THE SOUTHERLY LINE OF BURTON WAY AS SAID BURTON WAY IS SHOWN ON THE MAP OF SAID TRACT BEVERLY; THENCE BEARING SOUTH 89 DEGREES 50 MINUTES 35 SECONDS WEST, A DISTANCE OF 167.65 FEET TO THE BEGINNING OF A CURVE CONCAVE SOUTHERLY AND HAVING A RADIUS OF 894.95 FEET; THENCE WESTERLY ALONG SAID CURVE, A DISTANCE OF 216.75 FEET TO A POINT IN A LINE, SAID LINE BEING DISTANT 10 FEET MEASURED NORTHEASTERLY FROM AND AT RIGHT ANGLES TO SAID NORTHEASTERLY LINE OF CANON DRIVE; THENCE NORTHWESTERLY ALONG SAID LINE, A DISTANCE OF 53.38 FEET, MORE OR LESS, TO THE POINT OF BEGINNING.

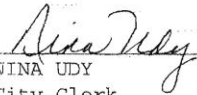
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CERTIFICATE OF ACCEPTANCE

This is to certify that the interest in real property conveyed by the deed or grant dated November 30, 1998, from the UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE, an independent establishment of the executive branch of the Government of the United States, to the CITY OF BEVERLY HILLS, a municipal corporation, is hereby accepted by order of the City Council on December 9, 1997, and the grantee consents to the recordation thereof by its duly authorized officer.

DATED: December 9, 1998

By:


NINA UDY
City Clerk

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