

PH0001821

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM**

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE:
COUNTY:
FOR NPS USE ONLY
ENTRY DATE
APR 11 1973

**1. NAME**

COMMON:  
Old Post Office Clock and Tower  
AND/OR HISTORIC: (Within the Boundaries of the Pennsylvania Avenue National Historic Site)

**2. LOCATION**

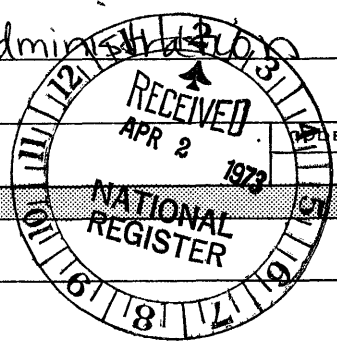
STREET AND NUMBER:  
Pennsylvania Avenue and 12th Street, N.W.  
CITY OR TOWN:  
Washington  
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT: Congressman Walter E. Fauntroy, D.C.  
STATE: District of Columbia  
CODE: 11  
COUNTY: District of Columbia  
CODE: 001

**3. CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Object <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Structure	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public <input type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered	Yes: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Park <input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) <input type="checkbox"/> Comments

**4. OWNER OF PROPERTY**

OWNER'S NAME:  
United States of America - General Services Administration  
STREET AND NUMBER:  
CITY OR TOWN:  
STATE:



**5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:  
Recorder of Deeds  
STREET AND NUMBER:  
Sixth and D Streets, N.W.  
CITY OR TOWN:  
Washington  
STATE: District of Columbia  
CODE: 11

**6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

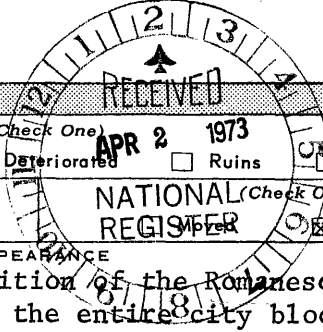
TITLE OF SURVEY: Proposed District of Columbia Additions to the National Register of Historic Places recommended by the Joint Committee on Landmarks  
DATE OF SURVEY: March 7, 1968  
 Federal  State  County  Local  
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:  
National Capital Planning Commission  
STREET AND NUMBER:  
1325 G Street, N.W.  
CITY OR TOWN:  
Washington  
STATE: District of Columbia  
CODE: 11

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

STATE:  
COUNTY:  
ENTRY NUMBER:  
DATE:

FOR NPS USE ONLY

7. DESCRIPTION



CONDITION

Excellent     Good     Fair     Deteriorated     Ruins     Unexposed  
 (Check One)  
 Altered     Unaltered     Original Site  
 (Check One)

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Old Post Office, designed in the tradition of the Romanesque Revival architecture of H.H. Richardson, occupies the entire city block bounded by 11th, 12th, C and D Streets at the juncture of Pennsylvania Avenue. A massive, rectangular structure, it measures approximately 200 feet from east to west and 300 feet from north to south. The 9-story building rises 135 feet to the flat portion of the roof. The tower, located in the center of the north facade, rises to a height of 315 feet above grade.

The massive structure is faced with Vinalhaven, Maine, granite, has solid masonry walls over five feet thick, and is apparently a solid masonry wall-bearing structure. The plans indicate that the exterior walls of the building are self-supporting, not supported by steel girders at each floor, as was customary for tall buildings. The steel columns embedded in the walls seem only to support the interior floor beams. (The above structural information from the paper by Watterson).

The heavy masonry, massing and detailing of the building are typical of the Romanesque Revival. The main Pennsylvania Avenue entrance is defined by three massive arches with smooth faced voussoirs, ornamented archivolt and the ciphers US and PO in richly foliated spandrels. On the second story, with its contrasting surface of smooth, rusticated masonry, are found three rectangular windows above each arch. Above the windows is an ornamented parapet. The entrances on the east and west sides contain one large arch flanked by two smaller arched openings. The south facade contains a loading dock.

The exterior of the first, mezzanine, and second floors flanking the entrance, and on the other sides of the building, is of rock-faced masonry. The second story is separated from the upper stories by a molded string course which continues around the building. Twin arched windows flank the main entrance. On the second floor are found narrow, rectangular, two-light windows.

In contrast to the rock-faced masonry of the lower floors, the upper walls are of smooth, rusticated masonry. Above the main entrance, on the 3rd story a terrace is cut into the building, allowing the east and west ends to project, forming wings. Each wing is terminated on both ends by round towers, with conical roofs topped by stone finials. The windows in the tower are narrow and rectangular. The fenestration for the 3rd, 4th and 5th floors is conceived as a unit: rectangular windows on the 3rd and 4th floors and round-headed windows on the 5th with each bay separated by a pilaster terminating in a cornice from which springs an arch forming, on the front wings, 2 arcades, and on the sides, 6 arcades. The cornice and the archivolts are of contrasting trim. The ordering of the windows and the placement of the terraces above the entrances is similar for all sides of the building.

The 6th and 7th floors are separated from the lower floors by a string course. The fenestration is conceived as a two-story unit terminating in round-headed windows below the arches which are supported by twin-columned mullions forming 4 arcades on the east and west wings and 12 arcades on the

(Continued on Form 10-300a)

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE	
COUNTY	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE
APR 11 1973	

(Number all entries)

7. Description - Old Post Office Building

sides. Above the machicolated cornice rises the steep slate Chateau roof containing large stone dormers terminating in stone finials.

The tower rises 315 feet above grade from the center of the main facade. Below the cornice line, its massing is accentuated by a projection of several feet from the central facade. Above the arched 5th story window is the inscription: ANNO DOMINI MDCCCXCVII (reflecting the architect's optimism that the building would be finished by 1897.) From the cornice line the tower rises as a solid mass with only narrow slits for openings and decorative arches above the clock face on each of the four sides. Above the clocks are found three bay arcades capped by a machicolated cornice from which rise four turrets, one on each corner, separated by five narrow arched windows. Above rises the steeply slanting roof.

The interior of the building opens onto a grand court or cortile which is 99 ft. by 184 ft. by 157 ft. high to the cornice line, plus the open trusses above. The court is ringed by offices that open onto corridors overlooking the court. The court was originally roofed in glass and flooded with light, but at present has been covered over with insulation material resulting in a very dark open space. After the building was completed, it was discovered that it did not furnish enough floor space for the needs of the Post Office Department, and the first floor of the cortile was roofed over with a steel and glass roof so that it could be heated and used. The interior corridors on the first floor are lined with marble wainscoting. The open cage elevators are also of interest.

The Office of Buildings Management, Public Buildings Service, described the building in 1962 as obsolete and recommended the limitation of improvements to those required for seven to ten years occupancy. The report warned that an extension of the life expectancy to an indefinite period would require complete and very expensive modernization.

8. Significance

and huge clock tower, has long been one of Washington's favorite landmarks. In recent years, the clock tower, which is visible from a distance of several miles, has received particular acclaim as an element of great vitality in the otherwise sterile skyline of the Federal Triangle.



Not true; The cover is of original design and construction, with the area below always planned as part of work area.

**SIGNIFICANCE**

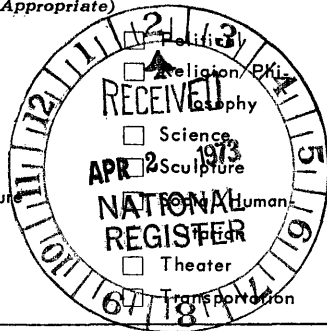
PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- Pre-Columbian |  16th Century |  18th Century |  20th Century  
 15th Century |  17th Century |  19th Century

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) 1891-99 construction

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- |  |                                       |   |
|--|---------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal              | <input type="checkbox"/> Education    | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric             | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic                | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry     | <u>Flag Day Initiated</u>                           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture             | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention    | _____   |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape    | _____   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art                     | <input type="checkbox"/> Architecture | _____   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce                | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature   | _____   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications          | <input type="checkbox"/> Military     | _____   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation            | <input type="checkbox"/> Music        | _____   |



STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Joint Committee on Landmarks has designated the Old Post Office and Clock Tower a Category II Landmark of importance which contributes significantly to the cultural heritage and visual beauty of the District of Columbia. The Old Post Office is one of Washington's few significant Romanesque Revival buildings on a monumental scale. It was the first Federal building erected on Pennsylvania Avenue in the area now known as the Federal Triangle. Plans for the building were prepared in 1891 in the office of the Supervising Architect of the Treasury, W.J. Edbrooke. Many similarly-styled Richardson-inspired Federal buildings erected throughout the country in the 1890's were designed in Edbrooke's office. At the time of its completion in 1899 (cost \$2,585,835.00), the building with its 315-foot high clock tower was the third highest in Washington, exceeded only by the Capitol and the Washington Monument. Its central enclosed court was one of the largest in the world.

Designed to house the Post Office Department as well as the City Post Office, the building served as the headquarters of every Postmaster General from 1899 to 1934. It was there in 1908 that the observance of Flag Day was initiated by some employees who met on the second floor balcony overlooking the court and sang homage to "The Star Spangled Banner." Every Flag Day a complete collection of State flags was displayed from the walls of the central court. Normally on display was the largest (70'4" x 37") correctly proportioned U.S. Flag in existence. This flag, which hung down nearly 7 stories from the skylighted room, was furled on Flag Day to avoid dwarfing the smaller State flags.

In 1914 the City Post Office moved to a new building adjacent to Union Station. The Department remained in its headquarters until 1934 when the new Post Office Building across 12th Street was ready for their use. The Old Post Office has since been shared by a number of Federal Executive Departments and agencies.

For over 30 years, the Old Post Office has prevented completion of the final quadrant of the Great Circle on 12th Street, an important element in the Federal Triangle Plan of 1928-38. Despite adverse architectural criticism during the early years of the 20th century, this monumental Romanesque structure, with its heavy stone arches, turrets, dormers, high chateau roof

(Continued on Form 10-300a)

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

Watterson, Joseph, "Section 106 Report, Verification of Significance and Evaluation of Effect, The Old Post Office Building in Washington," Feb. 4-5, 1970, typescript.

Research materials from Donald Lehman, Historian, General Services Administration.

Washington Board of Trade, The Book of Washington, Washington, D.C.: Cleveland C. McDevitt, 1930.

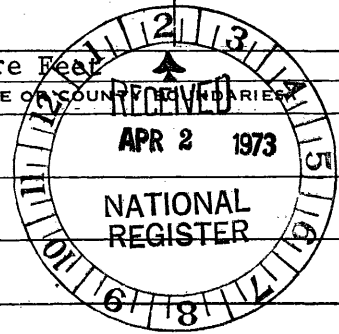
18/324,000,420,000  
OTM 247  
1-5-76 um

**10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	OR		
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds
NW	° ' "	° ' "	38°	53'	39"
NE	° ' "	° ' "	77°	01'	40"
SE	° ' "	° ' "			
SW	° ' "	° ' "			

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 61,433 Square Feet

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OF COUNTY AND PARISH			
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE



SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**11. FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME AND TITLE: Suzanne Ganschietz, Architectural Historian  
Nancy C. Taylor, Landmarks Historian

ORGANIZATION: National Capital Planning Commission      DATE: March 23, 1973

STREET AND NUMBER: 1325 G Street, N.W.

CITY OR TOWN: Washington      STATE: District of Columbia      CODE: 11

**12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION**

As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National  State  Local

Name: James G. Parker

Title: Assistant to the Mayor for Housing Programs

Date: MAR 30 1973

**NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION**

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

Robert H. Utley  
Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date: 4/11/73

ATTEST: W. J. [Signature]  
Keeper of the National Register

Date: 4 4 73