## Thomas J. McIntyre Federal Building Portsmouth, New Hampshire Character-defining Features Analysis

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Note: for ease of discussion about the building, the following compass points will be used in describing the property and building: Daniel Street – south, Penhallow Street – west, Bow Street – north, and Chapel Street – east. In addition, the building is discussed in three sections: the Main Building, the one-story section on Penhallow Street, and the one-story wing on Daniel Street (the location of the current Post Office), with all exteriors described before all interiors.

The Thomas J. McIntyre Federal Building was designed in the New Formalist style by the architectural firm of Koehler and Isaak for the U.S. government. It was completed in 1967 and, in 1981, the building was rededicated and named for New Hampshire's U.S. Senator from 1962 to 1979, Thomas J. McIntyre.

In September 2003, the General Services Administration published "Growth, Efficiency and Modernism: GSA Buildings of the 1950s, 60s and 70s" based on a study of federal building construction within the larger context of American architectural history and the history of federal building construction. The full text of this publication can be found at <a href="https://www.gsa.gov/graphics/pbs/GEMbook.pdf">https://www.gsa.gov/graphics/pbs/GEMbook.pdf</a> The following discussion contains excerpts from this document to place the construction and architectural style of the Thomas J. McIntyre Federal Building in the context of the federal government's mid-20<sup>th</sup> century building program:

The federal government often constructed its buildings in the current architectural style and as the era of Modern Architecture unfolded, the federal government embraced this style for their needs. "One of the most noticeable changes in Modern Architecture was the diminishing distinction between public and private buildings. In the past, the symbolism of public buildings was important, and formal, hierarchical sequences of ceremonial spaces were common. However, the Modern era ushered in an emphasis on functionalism, and the economy of interior space reflected this new design mode. Grand lobbies were absent from Modern designs; instead, plazas served as exterior gateways to sites, while the use of transparent building materials served to visually unite exterior and interior spaces."

"Office spaces also changed dramatically. Individual offices became less common and large open areas, referred to as either universal space or flexible plans, became common. Moveable room dividers allowed spaces to be altered as necessary."

"Modern architecture sought to break from the past by embracing new technology. Using electrical and mechanical innovations and methods and materials—such as steel, glass, plastic, and reinforced concrete—that were previously unavailable, buildings took on appearances that were wholly different

from their predecessors. Architecture was influenced by Modern art and used abstract forms, space, light, and sometimes bold colors. Also coupled with this new architectural aesthetic were social goals. Architects hoped that the machine age would bring about equality and democratic values for all citizens."

"More so than in the past, architecture became practical. Functional efficiency, coupled with economic efficiency, overshadowed elaborate buildings of earlier eras, and perhaps one of the greatest reasons for the success of Modernism is that it was substantially less expensive than previous methods of building."

From its creation in 1949, GSA utilized private architects and architectural firms to create designs for federal buildings, eventually relying on private architects almost exclusively. "In the United States, conservative private architects rather than notable, cutting-edge architects were increasingly responsible for the design of Federal buildings. Generally, more concerned with efficiency and economy than with aesthetics, designers planned buildings that were utilitarian in nature. It was also during this era that the prominent, ceremonial entrances previously found on most public buildings all but disappeared. Cautious use of Modernism appeared with varying degrees of success. While public buildings followed the trends and technology of the larger architectural community, it was often with hesitation and delay. No longer were Federal buildings at the forefront of innovative design. However, technological advances in building design—most notably the use of metal skeletons sheathed with glass and other types of panels—were incorporated into Federal buildings."

"In 1962, the Public Buildings Service (the branch within GSA assigned civilian construction responsibilities) (PBS) issued a series of design objectives for new and remodeled spaces in buildings that were GSA-controlled. These objectives were as follows:

- A high ratio of net usable space to gross area.
- Maximum flexibility of space assignment and utilization.
- Maximum economy and efficiency in the operation of buildings.
- Constant improvement of office space to improve employee morale, reduce personnel turnover, and increase employee efficiency.
- Protection of life and property."

"To realize these objectives, PBS recommended that the circulation "core" of the building be carefully designed using adequate but minimum permanent corridors, toilets, stairways, elevators, and lobbies. The general office space was to be designed on approved "modular lines" with full flexibility of fenestration, lighting, power, and air-conditioning in order to permit the installation of movable partitions. Special-purpose space and custodial space was to be carefully designed for long-range usefulness derived from "painstaking" research and effective contacts with the tenant agencies. The partition layouts were to be responsive to

the functional space studies as well as consistent with good architectural and engineering practice."

"In 1962, GSA declared that economical, functionally suitable, and, where possible, aesthetically acceptable materials should be used. Specifications were to be written to permit the most favorable use of the optional materials and those produced in the general locality of the project. Consideration was given to local products when they were suitable and cost effective. The use of foreign stone was prohibited. Architects were to list marble and granite by trade names, and give specifications as to the appearance of acceptable limestone and sandstone."

"In 1963, GSA issued a directive regarding materials and finishes for projects with construction costs of \$1 million or more. The following materials and finishes for exterior features were stipulated:

- wall facing: brick, stone, cast stone, ceramics
- trim: stone, granite, aluminum, stainless steel, enameled iron
- spandrels: brick, tile, stone, marble, aluminum, steel
- window frames: aluminum, bronze, steel
- entrance doors: aluminum, stainless steel
- title letters: aluminum, stainless steel
- flat roofs: composition
- pitched roofs: slate, copper"

"Stipulations involving interior spaces were more detailed and were outlined according to the intended use for the space. Generally, spaces such as basements, rooms containing mechanical equipment, storage spaces, and holding cells were finished in unpainted concrete. Typical office spaces and public toilets were finished with mid-grade materials such as vinyl flooring, plaster or ceramic tile walls, and acoustical tiles or plaster ceilings. Public spaces such as entrances and elevator lobbies and courtrooms were finished in higher-quality materials. There were generally terrazzo or tile floors, marble or wood wainscot, and plaster walls and ceilings. Ease of maintenance was repeatedly cited as a factor in choosing materials."

From 1967 to 1997, the public Post Office functions were located in the first floor of the Main Building- the Box Lobby was north of the elevators – and in a portion of the one-story wing east of the Main Building – the location of the Service Lobby (six windows for public services) and offices for Post Office officials. Access to the Service Lobby was through the set of double doors in the east wall of the vestibule. At the north end of the first floor were the areas for receiving, distributing and sorting mail. In 1997, the Post Office moved its public functions and access into the one-story wing to the east of the Main Building, modifying this wing to allow for public access and change in use. As with the exterior, the finishes on the interior of the first

floor are different from those of the upper floors – the first floors of both the exterior and interior are where any elements of higher grade materials or details are concentrated.

## **Determining Character-defining Features**

While the Thomas J. McIntyre Federal Building has suffered its share of significant alterations over its short life span, it retains many original features that convey its purpose and the New Formalist style of its time. It is interesting to note that some of these changes, while removing historic fabric and altering the original design of the building, used the same (or visually similar) materials and were composed in such a way that they are often mistaken for original features and designs.

Primary features are those that, in and of themselves, identify this particular building as the Thomas J. McIntyre Federal Building and as no other. Secondary features are those that contribute to this identity and/or of a particular architectural style but, in and of themselves, do not distinguish this building from any other. In distinguishing between "primary" and "secondary" features, the condition of the feature, if original, was taken into account. Those original features that are altered or significantly deteriorated were determined to also be "secondary." More recent alterations, such as the remodeling of the one-story wing as new space for the Post Office in 1997, are considered neither a reflection of an important event nor have these modifications existed long enough in time to be evaluated as significant to the redesign of the McIntyre Building (the general time frame used in this kind of evaluation is 50 years). They are, therefore, determined to be non-character-defining features.

This document does not presume to identify which specific features of the Thomas J. McIntyre Federal Building must be retained or may be altered in a rehabilitation that meets the Secretary of the Interior's *Standards for Rehabilitation*. These ten standards collectively call for the sensitive treatment of features and specific materials of a historic property as it is returned to "an efficient contemporary use" in order to "assist the long term preservation of a property's significance through the preservation of historic materials and features." This document does, however, identify those features with which great caution and care **must** be taken in contemplating any changes to them.

Any evaluation of retained, altered, or removed features must be evaluated in separate process. The evaluation of any changes to **any** feature of the property must be evaluated within the context of any individual rehabilitation proposal and its proposed total impact on the property. These impacts can be very positive or deleterious and the combination of these impacts should be evaluated on a case by case basis.

## **<u>Site/Setting</u>** (See photos 1-9, 12, 14, and 15)

The Thomas J. McIntyre Federal Building occupies the southern half of a 2.1-acre parcel in downtown Portsmouth. The site is bounded by Daniel Street, Penhallow Street, Bow Street, and the rears of structures on the west side of Chapel Street; the main entrance and elevation are on Daniel Street. The immediately surrounding blocks of this downtown area are densely developed with most buildings built to the property lines and three stories high. The site is

bounded on three sides by city-owned, concrete sidewalks. It drops in elevation thirteen feet from Daniel Street to Bow Street, a grade change of 4%. Immediately adjacent to the east of the McIntyre Building on Daniel Street is the Old City Hall, a red brick, two-and-one half story, gable end building combining elements of both Greek Revival and Italianate Styles. It is set back from the sidewalk approximately 25 feet behind a grass lawn.

Although approximately one half of the site is given to parking, there are remnants of the landscaping and public spaces created on Daniel Street when the building was constructed. While the small parking lot on Daniel Street (public parking for approximately ten cars) has not been altered, the area that is the entrance to the current Post Office has been greatly modified. The grassy area along Daniel Street has been reduced in size and paved to allow for the installation of mail drop boxes and the grass strip that originally existed between the walkway from the parking lot to the main entrance has now been almost completely lost to a handicap ramp and additional paving. A new brick portico was constructed in 1997 when the Post Office moved to the one-story wing and created a new entrance by enlarging a former window. It is four red brick piers supporting a pyramidal Plexiglas skylight. Along the east elevation of the one-story wing (current Post Office) is an area of shrubs, grass, a brick path, and a picnic table. The path ends at the wall of the loading docks.

Along the main (south) elevation is a small, low concrete planting box against the building's foundation at the west corner and there is a ground-level planting area in front of the westernmost bay of the one-story wing (current Post Office). There are also concrete planting boxes with knee-high walls on either side of the entrance on Penhallow Street, also against the foundation. There are free-standing planters presumed to be placed after September 11, 2001 – six at the Daniel Street entrance and one at the entrance on Penhallow Street.

The north half of the property is occupied by parking – a two-tiered parking facility as well as surface parking. The extent of surface parking found on this site is an anomaly in the historic downtown. The first floor of the north elevation of the building contains seventeen loading docks. On Penhallow and Bow Streets, brick walls capped with concrete (approximately five feet in height) surround and shield the view of the parking; these walls are original to the construction of the building. There are three points of egress to/from the parking – one on Penhallow Street and two on Bow Street; these seem to be the original locations.

There are two flag poles: one at the corner of Daniel and Penhallow Streets (original) and a second pole erected in 1997 in front of the current Post Office entrance.

Site/Setting		
Primary features	Secondary features	Non-character-defining features
Urban pattern of building to/nearly to property line	Parking lot on Daniel St.	1997 portico for new Post Office
Limited public space and green space on site	Remnants of grassy area on Daniel St.	Concrete planters from post-September 11, 2001
Original concrete planters on Daniel St. and at Penhallow St. entrance	Modified green space along east elevation of one-story wing (current Post Office)	Flag pole added 1997
	Flag pole at corner of Daniel and Penhallow Streets	Parking lot north of building
	Brick walls surrounding north parking area	

#### **Building**

The Thomas J. McIntyre Federal Building has three major design components and, although each will be discussed separately to facilitate the description, it is important to note the original design intent of the interplay of the height and massing of the three components and the use of single-story elements at the main entrance on Daniel Street and along Penhallow Street. The red brick and limited use of concrete details seems to be a clear intent to be harmonious with the overall character of downtown Portsmouth.

The three main components for discussion purposes are:

- Main Building four stories, seven by seventeen bays
- One-story section along Penhallow Street
- One-story wing to the east of the Main Building, currently the Post Office

#### Main Building – Exterior

(See photos 1-5, 9, 10, and 17; for photo of main entry showing columns of arcade without stainless steel sheathing, go to http://www.nh1.com/news/bomb-squad-called-portsmouth-federal-building-exacuated-after-discovery-of-suspicious-backpack/page/15/

A four-story (with basement), steel frame, red brick and concrete rectangular building with a tar and gravel flat roof. It has two primary elevations on Daniel and Penhallow Streets, a secondary elevation on Bow Street, and a tertiary elevation facing Chapel Street.

The building above the first floor is red brick with a flat concrete fascia and cast concrete brackets with parallel raised edges. The brackets on the south and east elevations have been encased in a wire mesh netting since 2008 to capture any falling pieces of failed concrete (first in a temporary black netting and currently in a heavy duty beige netting). The single-pane,

aluminum frame pivoting windows are equally spaced and are aligned both vertically and horizontally within each elevation; they are deeply recessed from the exterior plane of the building and are set within large-aggregate, unadorned white cast concrete window frames.

The main entrance to the building on Daniel Street is recessed two bays behind three flat segmental arches supported by four concrete columns currently encased in stainless steel (sometime after September 2015); each column is surmounted by a single concrete bracket in the same design as those at the roof line. This covered entryway has a cast concrete groin vaulted ceiling the springing of which rests on single fluted concrete pilasters opposite the columns. There are three full-height glass walls aligned with each arch and vault of the entry surmounted by demi-lune transoms above a concrete lintel; the center glass wall contains the main entry doors. These full-height glass walls are divided into three vertical components which is the common pattern found in all of the full-height glass elements in the McIntyre Building: squares at the top and base with a single pane of glass in between approximately three times the height of the squares; they are either five or six bays wide. At the entry on Daniel Street, a pair of glass and aluminum doors have been inserted to the right and a single glass door (access to a stairwell) is to the left; the original configuration was a pair of doors in both of these openings. In front of the windows to either side of the entrance are balustrades, originally aluminum panels with oval openings, now replaced with simple square wrought iron balusters and railing.

The first floor of the north elevation contains nine of eighteen loading dock bays that are protected by a cantilevered concrete roof.

There are solar panels on top of the mechanical room on the roof.

Main Building – Exterior		
Primary features	Secondary features	Non-character-defining features
Height, scale and massing	Loading docks	Replacement doors
South and west elevations	North elevation (east elevation is tertiary)	Balustrades in front of windows on Daniel St.
Regular pattern of windows on upper	Failing cornice	Roof material
floors/relationship of solid to void	brackets	
Materials: red brick, concrete details,		Solar panels
aluminum, glass		
Flat roof		
Recessed entry and open arcade		
First floor full-height windows and entry and		
their configuration		
Upper floor single-pane, deeply recessed,		
pivoting windows		
Concrete window surrounds		
Concrete brackets at cornice and main entry		

One-story section along Penhallow Street (See photos 2, 3, 11-13)

This section of the building is set back two bays from the Daniel Street façade and extends northward the entire length of the Main Building. It is red brick with a flat concrete parapet. On the small portion of this section facing Daniel Street is mounted both sides of the Great Seal of the United States, the name of the building (1981), and the corner stone. Note: when the building is transferred out of federal ownership, these signs must be removed.

Nearly centered in the west elevation is a second entrance to the Main Building, originally the 24-hour entrance to the Box Lobby. To the north of this entrance is a flat brick wall, and to the south are three bays of full-height windows alternating with recessed brick wall panels. These full-height windows have the standard pane configuration (see description under Main Building) although some have been modified to provide for the insertion of operable window panes.

The entrance is recessed with the portion located within the one-story section covered by skylight covered pergola while the portion located within the Main Building has a plaster ceiling. The standard full-height window wall has been modified to accept a pair of glass and aluminum entry doors to the right and a single glass and aluminum entry door to the left (access to a stairwell).

One-story section, Penhallow Street – Exterior		
Primary features	Secondary	Non-character-defining
	features	features
Height, scale and massing	Signage	
Flat roof	Cornerstone	
Materials: red brick, concrete, glass and		
aluminum		
Recessed entry and pergola		
Full-height windows		
Blank brick wall north of entrance		

One-story wing east of the Main Building, current location of the Post Office (See photos 1, 5-8, 15, and 16)

Constructed of red brick with concrete details, this one-story wing is recessed three bays from the façade of the Main Building and extends northward its entire length. As originally constructed, the Daniel Street elevation consists of three sections:

- The western-most section abutting the Main Building contains a full-height window of the standard design. [This was the location of the Service Lobby.]
- The center section projects from the two side sections and originally was punctuated by three single-pane, pivoting, deeply recessed windows with concrete window frames alternating with two slightly bowed, full-height windows of the standard design. The center single-paned window was removed and a new entryway installed in 1997.

• The eastern-most section was a flat blank brick wall. A new full-height window replicating the original first floor full-height windows was installed in this wall in 1997.

There are currently four full height windows on the east elevation of this wing. The two center windows are original and helped to provide light to the large Workroom. The two flanking windows are new openings from the 1997 renovation, replacing narrow slit windows providing light into the locker rooms.

There is a flat concrete cornice atop this wing with the exception of the section abutting the Main Building; this section is capped by a wider parapet.

One-story wing east of Main Building – Exterior		
Primary features	Secondary	Non-character-
	features	defining features
Height, scale, set back and massing		New entry (1997)
Materials: red brick, concrete, aluminum and glass		New full-height
		windows (1997)
Remaining original full-height window and pivoting,		
single-pane window with concrete frame		

#### Main Building – Interior, First Floor

(No photos can be made available due to security concerns.)

Entry to the vestibule from Daniel Street is through a pair of glass and aluminum doors. The east wall of the vestibule is a full-height, glass wall with a pair of doors in the center; all glass is opaque. [These are the doors that lead to the Service Lobby in the one-story wing.] The west wall is covered with a veneer of polished white marble panels; a building directory (aluminum case with two locking glass doors, not original) is attached to the wall and a single solid metal door to the left (south) of the directory leads to a full-height stairwell. The north wall of the vestibule is a full-height glass partition wall.

Immediately beyond this partition is the Elevator Lobby: to the west is the hallway to the offices in the one-story section on Penhallow Street and two elevators. On the wall to the left of the elevators is a bronze plaque commemorating the rededication and naming of the building in 1981 (this is likely the location of the original Building Directory). On the west wall opposite the elevators is a built-in, tripartite aluminum and glass document case. In the early 1960s, document cases began to be added to public lobbies of federal buildings. These cases were designed to hold replicas of the Constitution, the Declaration of Independence, and the Bill of Rights. In the upper corners of the center section of the case are both sides of the Great Seal of the United States in brass, surmounted by a brass American eagle with its wings unfurled. All of the walls are covered with a veneer of polished white marble panels in a pattern that replicates those of the full-height windows: squares at the top and base with a single piece of marble in between approximately three times the height of the squares.

Beyond the Elevator Lobby area is the former Box Lobby; the boxes were located on the east wall and two bulletin boards and Lobby Desks were located on the west wall; there are no extant original fixtures to indicate the use of this space. [The boxes measured 5'6" above the baseboard with plaster wall above to the ceiling.] All of the walls are covered with a veneer of polished white marble panels, as are the walls to the vestibule to the Penhallow Street entrance; the marble on the east wall dates from the 1997 renovation. Inside the Penhallow Street entrance, on the north wall, is a bronze plaque commemorating the construction of the building in 1967. On the east wall are doors to the loading dock area, former storage areas for envelopes and mail bags, and modern office spaces (inserted into the former Workroom).

All visible floors in the vestibule, lobbies and hallway area are terrazzo; the cornice and ceilings are plaster.

## Main Building – Interior, Floors Two Through Four

(No photos can be made available due to security concerns.)

Note: As of May 2017, access to spaces beyond the hallways was severely limited due to security issues for the federal agencies occupying the offices.

Typical of most federal office buildings, the floors with no, or limited, public access meant for federal workers are devoid of any architectural interest in spaces or finishes. It is instructive to note that on the original drawings for the second floor (meant to be typical for floors two through four), the only spaces shown in any detail are the stairwells, rest rooms, elevators, duct chases, and utility closets; the remainder of the entire floor is blank and marked "General Office Space." See discussion on page two of GSA's design intent for office space.

Each floor is dedicated to office space with a north-south hallway immediately adjacent to the elevators. The fiberboard walls are punctuated by doors; there are no windows or transoms in the hallways. On the second floor, directly opposite the elevators is a pair of wood and glass doors providing public access to the Social Security Offices. Restrooms and service closets are clustered near the elevator core and stairwells. Full-height stairwells are located in the northwest and southwest corners of the Main Building; the northwest stairwell provides access to the roof. The floors throughout are carpeted. Each window has a deep window sill; there is no trim.

#### Main Building – Interior, Basement Level

(No photos can be made available due to security concerns.)

Half of the basement floor area is dedicated to underground parking; the remainder contains spaces and uses typical of a basement: boiler room, trash collection, and storage areas. The parking garage is concrete with concrete encased steel columns. The finishes in the interior spaces are linoleum floor tile, dropped ceilings, boxed fluorescent light fixtures, and a mixture of fiber board and concrete block walls.

Main Building, all floors – Interior		
Primary features	Secondary features	Non-character-defining
		features
Height of lobby ceilings	Vestibule	Modern partition walls
Sequence of and distinction between	Two bronze plaques	Hallway finishes
vestibule, Elevator Lobby and Box		
Lobby		
Open plan of Box Lobby	Stairwells	Polished white marble veneer
		on east wall of Box Lobby
Polished white marble wall veneer	Consolidation of	Finishes in basement level
(with exception of east wall in Box	service functions	
Lobby)	surrounding elevator	
	core	
Terrazzo floors in main lobby		Parking garage
Aluminum and glass document case		
Window recess		

## One-story Section on Penhallow Street – Interior

(No photos can be made available due to security concerns.)

Offices and a conference room line the exterior walls of this section. There is a dedicated hallway accessed from near the main entrance on Daniel Street as well as near the entrance on Penhallow Street. The hallway to these spaces is behind the elevators. On the opposite side of the hallway, directly behind the elevators are restrooms and storage rooms; originally an office for a secretary was located here, the only dedicated office in this area on the original drawings. The conference room is paneled in wood and the offices have dropped ceilings with boxed fluorescent lighting features and modern partition walls. There is no conference room identified on the original drawings so it is presumed that the wood paneling is from a later date. The hallway floor is terrazzo.

One-story section on Penhallow Street – Interior		
Primary features	Secondary	Non-character-defining features
	features	
The location of office spaces on	Terrazzo floor	All modern office partitions, ceilings, light
exterior walls		fixtures and finishes

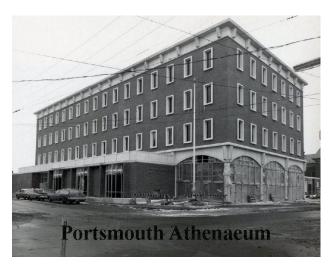
One-story wing east of the Main Building, current location of the Post Office (No photos can be made available due to security concerns.)

The Service Lobby was located in this wing with six service windows. Past the Service Lobby, along Daniel Street from west to east, there was a reception area; the Post Master's Office; an area with a hall, storage and a toilet; the Assistant Post Master's Office; an office for the

Superintendent of Mail; and, behind the blank brick wall, the Women's Swing and Locker Room and Toilet. At the north end of the wing were the Men's Swing Room, Locker Room and Toilets. The center of this wing, and the majority of the floor space, was given over to a Workroom. There were two vaults near the Service Lobby.

In 1997, the public Post Office functions moved to this wing and a separate entrance directly into this space was created by converting a window opening to a doorway. As far as is visible, all historic finishes were removed with the exception of some of the polished marble wall veneer at the area that was the entrance to the Service Lobby from the vestibule.

	One-story wing east of Main Building - Interior		
Primary features	Secondary features	Non-character-defining features	
	Remaining marble veneer in former Service Lobby	All interior finishes (1997) in pubic post office space	
		Mail sorting and support spaces	



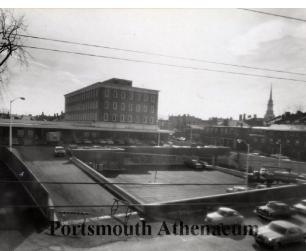
Under construction, circa 1966/1967



Under construction, circa 1966/1967



Under construction, circa 1966/1967



Shortly after construction, circa 1967



Photo 1
South elevation (Daniel Street)



Photo 2

South and west elevations



Photo 3
South elevation



Photo 4

North elevation



Photo 5

North and east elevations



Photo 6

East elevation of one-story wing

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Photo 7
South elevation – Daniel Street parking lot



Photo 8

East elevation – new mail drop boxes



Photo 9

East elevation – Main Building



Photo 10
South elevation - Stainless steel encased columns



Photo 11
West elevation - One-story section
Penhallow Street



Photo 12
West elevation - Penhallow Street entrance



Photo 13
West elevation - Penhallow Street entrance



Photo 14

South elevation - One-story wing (current Post Office)



Photo 15

South elevation - One-story wing (current Post Office), south elevation, 1997 modifications

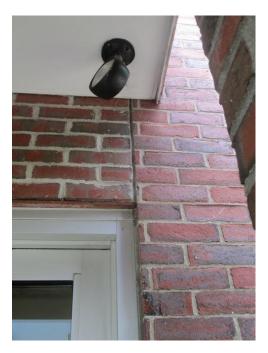


Photo 16

South elevation - One-story wing (current Post Office), 1997 new entry detail



Photo 17

South elevation detail – protective wrapping around failing cornice