



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

### 1. Name of Property

Historic name: United States Post Office Annex  
Other names/site number: John O. Pastore Federal Building and U.S. Post Office  
Name of related multiple property listing:  
N/A  
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

### 2. Location

Street & number: 2 Exchange Terrace  
City or town: Providence State: RI County: Providence  
Not For Publication:  Vicinity:

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

national  statewide  local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

A  B  C  D

	<u>10/24/2017</u>
<b>Signature of certifying official/Title:</b>	<b>Date</b>
<u>U.S. General Services Administration, Federal Preservation</u>	<u>officer</u>
<b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b>	

In my opinion, the property <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> meets <input type="checkbox"/> does not meet the National Register criteria.	
	<u>10/17/2017</u>
<b>Signature of commenting official:</b>	<b>Date</b>
<u>Rhode Island Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission</u>	
<b>Title:</b> <u>State Historic Preservation</u>	<b>State or Federal agency/bureau</b>
<u>officer</u>	<b>or Tribal Government</b>

United States Post Office Annex  
Name of Property

Providence, Rhode Island  
County and State

**4. National Park Service Certification**

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain:)

For Edson H. Beall  
Signature of the Keeper

12.7.17  
Date of Action

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

**Category of Property**

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

United States Post Office Annex  
Name of Property

Providence, Rhode Island  
County and State

**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
_____	_____	buildings
_____	_____	sites
_____	_____	structures
_____	_____	objects
_____	_____	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 1  
The United States Post Office Annex is a contributing resource in the Downtown Providence  
Historic District.

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**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

GOVERNMENT: Post Office; Government Office

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

GOVERNMENT: Post Office; Government Office; Courthouse

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

United States Post Office Annex  
Name of Property

Providence, Rhode Island  
County and State

## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

MODERN MOVEMENT

OTHER: Simplified Classical

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**Materials:** (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: STONE: Granite; Limestone; BRICK; METAL: Steel; Copper; WOOD

### Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

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### Summary Paragraph

The United States Post Office Annex (John O. Pastore Federal Building and U.S. Post Office) occupies a 1.1-acre lot on the south side of Exchange Terrace in downtown Providence, Rhode Island. The building, banked into a hill that slopes downward from east to west, is bounded by Exchange Street to the west, Exchange Terrace to the north, Memorial Boulevard to the east, and Washington Street to the south and is located in a grouping known as Exchange Place. The United States Post Office Annex was built in 1938-1940 as an annex for the main branch of the Providence United States Post Office (USPO). The building houses the Annex Finance Station branch of the Providence USPO as well as offices for the U.S. Marshals Service and three courtrooms and supporting offices for the U.S. District Court. The United States Post Office Annex is a skillful example of the Simplified Classical architectural style (also known as "Stripped Classical") with Art Deco-style detailing, common to many public and quasi-public buildings of the 1930s and 1940s. Notable exterior features include bas-relief sculptural panels on the west (front) elevation and the largely unaltered postal lobby with many original features. Constructed of high-quality materials, including granite, limestone, and brick, the building remains in excellent condition with few alterations to its 1940 exterior appearance and configuration.

United States Post Office Annex  
Name of Property

Providence, Rhode Island  
County and State

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## Narrative Description

### Exterior Description<sup>1</sup>

The United States Post Office Annex measures three stories in height with a full, elevated basement and a partial fourth story, only visible from the roof. The exterior walls of the basement are clad with granite panels. With the exception of portions of the west elevation (facade), semi-antique, water-struck brick, laid in common bond with headers every sixth course, clads the exterior walls of the steel frame building. A limestone water table wraps around all four elevations of the building, which feature a modillioned limestone cornice above the second story. The windows are predominantly multi-light, double-hung wood windows. A hipped roof, composed of standing seam lead coated copper and membrane, accentuated by a simple molded, limestone cornice and coping shelters the building. Metal roof-top ventilators are located throughout the interior slopes of the roof.

#### *West Elevation*

The west elevation (facade), which faces Exchange Street, is symmetrical and measures nine-bays wide. Limestone panels, accentuated by simple two-story limestone pilasters and a simple cornice with modillions, clad the exterior walls of the five centermost bays of the first and second stories of the west elevation. The limestone-clad central section is recessed approximately two feet from the face of the elevation. Projecting two-story, two-bay-wide brick pavilions capped by gabled parapets flank the five-bay central section.

The first story is lit by twelve-over-twelve light, double-hung, wood windows, each topped by a four-light transom. These and nearly all the windows in the building were rehabilitated in 2006 when blast shields were installed on the interior of selected windows as a security measure. The second-story windows are eight-over-twelve light, double-hung, wood windows. Originally, these windows were taller, but were shortened with the addition of a panel at the top of the window opening when the second story ceiling was lowered circa 1971. At the same time, a plain limestone panel replaced the original sill band with Greek key motif that had accented each second-story window.<sup>2</sup> Small square eight-over-eight light, double-hung, wood windows light the third story.

A raised granite terrace, which spans the width of the five-bay central section and features a granite balustrade, provides access to the main entries situated in the northernmost and southernmost bays of the central section of the facade. A steel flagpole with a bronze base set into a granite pier is centrally located on the terrace balustrade. A concrete ramp with granite base, installed in 1983, is situated at the north end of the elevation and provides access to the northernmost entry.<sup>3</sup> Two sets of four splayed, granite steps, situated in the west wall of the

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<sup>1</sup> For the purposes of this document, Exchange Street and Memorial Boulevard run north-south, and Exchange Terrace and Washington Street run east-west.

<sup>2</sup> Ann Beha Associates, *Pastore Federal Building, Historic Structures Report*. Prepared for the U.S. General Services Administration by Ann Beha Associates, Boston, Massachusetts, May 1990, 12.

<sup>3</sup> Ann Beha Associates, 14.

United States Post Office Annex  
Name of Property

Providence, Rhode Island  
County and State

terrace, provide access to both the northernmost and southernmost entries. The ramp and steps are flanked by simple metal railings, installed after 1990. Each entry consists of a set of double-leaf, six-light over solid-panel, bronze doors. These doors, installed recently, replicate the original entry doors, which were removed sometime prior to 1990. The entries are topped by a one-light transom and surmounted by an abstract limestone pediment. Two original bas-relief limestone panels, sculpted by Raymond Barger and depicting a stylized eagle with outspread wings are situated above each pediment.

The gabled end pavilions each feature one centrally located window accentuated by limestone panels. A single iron sconce is affixed to the wall at the interior side of each of the first-story window openings. Each pavilion features a decorative bas-relief limestone spandrel panel between the first- and second-story window openings. The spandrel panels, both sculpted by Raymond Barger, illustrate a postal theme in the Art Deco-style. The northernmost features the relief entitled "Transportation," which depicts a centrally located figure framed by the sun, stars, streamlined bus, and streamlined railroad; the southernmost relief, entitled "Distribution of the Mail," features a similar centrally located figure atop a streamlined ship and holding an airplane, with the sun in the top-left corner. Bronze letters, added after the building was re-dedicated in 1977, are affixed to the wall, south of the first-story window opening in the southern pavilion and read:

JOHN O. PASTORE  
FEDERAL BUILDING  
UNITED STATES POST OFFICE

Prior to this, UNITED STATES POST OFFICE ANNEX had been inscribed in the frieze band of the cornice above the centermost bays. A cornerstone, situated in the top block of the southernmost corner of the basement level, is engraved with the following:

HENRY MORGENTHAU JR  
SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY  
JAMES A FARLEY  
POSTMASTER GENERAL  
LOUIS A SIMON  
SUPERVISING ARCHITECT  
NEAL A MELICK  
SUPERVISING ENGINEER  
JACKSON, ROBERTSON AND ADAMS  
ARCHITECTS  
1938

### *North Elevation*

The north elevation, which faces Exchange Terrace, measures ten-bays wide. The eight centermost bays are spaced more closely together than the two end bays. Each opening in the first and second stories is recessed and separated by brick pilasters. Evenly spaced iron sconces are hung on the wall at the first-story level across the elevation. The north elevation shares the same fenestration types as the façade with the exception of the decorative treatment. The windows in the first story are set into a simple limestone surrounds. A continuous limestone

United States Post Office Annex  
Name of Property

Providence, Rhode Island  
County and State

lintel tops the eight centermost second-story windows, which have shallow limestone sills. Like the second story windows on the west elevation, these have been shortened by the addition of a panel at the top. The westernmost window in the grouping is shorter in height, lacks the panel at the top, and sits atop a wide limestone sill. The second-story windows in the easternmost and westernmost bays are topped by shallow pedimented, limestone lintels and retain the original limestone sills engraved with a Greek key motif.

### *East Elevation*

The east (rear) elevation, which faces Memorial Boulevard, measures ten-bays wide. The first story consists of a loading dock area. A one-story one-bay, sally port addition, constructed circa 2001, is attached to the south corner of the elevation. The addition has the same exterior finishes, including granite base, brick exterior walls, and molded limestone cornice, as the building. The sally port addition is accessed via one centrally located steel, overhead, garage door situated in the east elevation. A metal-clad shed roof supported by slender steel posts extends from the sally port and shelters a metal landing that extends the width of the rest of the first story of the east elevation. The landing is accessed by three metal steps, flanked by a metal railing, situated near the northern end of the landing. A prefabricated glass and steel security station is located on the landing, to the south of the steps. An HVAC unit is also located on the landing, further south.

The first story of the east elevation features multiple replacement doors, the majority of which are single-leaf steel doors. Three sets of double-leaf single-light, steel doors are situated in the southern end of the first story. A single nine-light, fixed-sash window is located to the north of the double-leaf entries. The second story consists primarily of six-over-nine light, double-hung, wood windows with limestone surrounds. A number of these windows have been shortened with the addition of a panel at the top.<sup>4</sup> Two of the former window openings have been replaced with metal louvers. Two long, rectangular, twenty-four light, fixed-sash windows surrounded by limestone panels are located in the second and ninth bays of the elevation. A continuous limestone beltcourse divides the second and third stories. The third-story windows primarily consist of small, square six-over-six light, double-hung, wood sash. Two nine-light, fixed-sash octagonal windows are located in the third story, above the fixed-sash windows.

### *South Elevation*

The south elevation, which faces Washington Street, measures ten-bays wide and shares the same fenestration pattern and exterior detailing as the north elevation. A recessed entryway leads to a single-leaf steel door at the west end of the sally port addition where it joins the east end of the south elevation of the 1940 building.

### *Light Well*

The roof of the building features a centrally located light well, open above the second story. A metal ladder provides access from the roof level into the light well. Granite panels clad the base of the light well, and rubber membrane roofing material clads the floor. Originally, two

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<sup>4</sup> The northernmost and southernmost windows, as well as the fixed-sash windows and louvers, do not have the panel.

United States Post Office Annex  
Name of Property

Providence, Rhode Island  
County and State

skylights located within the light well floor lit the second floor postal workroom below. The walls of the light well are yellow brick laid in common bond and contain large banks of twenty-light, fixed-sash, steel windows. A band of vertically laid stretchers circles the walls above the windows and limestone coping caps the walls.

#### *Fourth Story*

The exterior of the fourth story is visible only from the third-story roof level. The fourth story is banked into the northern roof slope of the south elevation. The exterior walls and the hipped roof are sheathed in standing-seam metal. A hipped-roof ventilator is located at the apex of the roof. The east, north, and west elevations each contain a set of paired nine-over-six light, double-hung, wood windows. The north elevation features a centrally located single-leaf, one-light, steel door. A set of paired metal louvers is situated to the east of the door.<sup>5</sup>

#### Exterior Landscape Features and Setting

The exterior landscape features of the United States Post Office Annex were altered when the Woonasquatucket and Moshassuck rivers were rechanneled in the mid-1990s.<sup>6</sup> As a result, the parking lot area located to the rear (east) of the building is situated atop the former river bed. The paved-asphalt employee parking lot is bordered by a wrought-iron fence set into a granite block and poured concrete wall with brick veneer. A concrete sidewalk surrounds the building on each elevation. Shoulder-high iron posts, used as bollards to control pedestrian traffic and keep vehicles off of the sidewalk, are located on the sidewalk along the north and south sides of the building.

A hotel is currently under construction on the triangular-shaped lot located to the north of the United States Post Office Annex, across Exchange Terrace, in a reclaimed area where the Woonasquatucket River used to flow. Memorial Boulevard and the confluence of the relocated Woonasquatucket and Moshassuck rivers are to the northeast and east of the building. The 1908 U.S. Post Office and Courthouse is located immediately to the south of the building, across Washington Street.<sup>7</sup> Mid- to late-twentieth-century skyscrapers situated in a financial and government area known as Kennedy Plaza are located further to the south. Burnside Park, a small memorial park, occupies the block across Exchange Street, to the west of the United States Post Office Annex. On the opposite side of Burnside Park, southwest of the building, is the 1878 Providence City Hall.

The United States Post Office Annex is located within and contributes to the Downtown Providence Historic District, a multi-block area containing a concentration of buildings largely dating between 1800 and 1940 comprising the financial and commercial center of the state and

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<sup>5</sup> This space was historically used by the U.S. Weather Bureau; Ann Beha Associates, 10.

<sup>6</sup> The confluence of the two rivers is located to the northeast of the United States Post Office Annex, across Memorial Boulevard. The Woonasquatucket River was relocated further to the north, and the Moshassuck River was relocated further to the east across Memorial Boulevard.

<sup>7</sup> The Federal Building (72000040) was listed in the National Register of Historic Places on 13 April 1972.



United States Post Office Annex  
Name of Property

Providence, Rhode Island  
County and State

representing a wide array of architectural styles and types. The area also contains a number of federal and local governmental buildings.<sup>8</sup>

### Interior Description

The interior of the United States Post Office Annex underwent renovations circa 1971 when the second floor postal workroom area was converted to office space and again, circa 2001, when the U.S. District Court moved into the building. The building features two primary entries, both located in the west elevation, that facilitate public movement through a vestibule into the postal lobby of the building. The cavernous postal workroom dominates the first floor of the building, and three courtrooms, installed circa 2001, comprise the majority of the second-floor space. Support offices for the U.S. Marshals Service, Probations Office, and additional storage space, comprise the remaining first, second, and third floors. The basement contains mechanical and storage space, and the fourth floor is unoccupied. The vestibules and postal, post box, and elevator lobbies, which were originally the only spaces open to the public, retain more original details and features than any other spaces in the building.

The majority of the original interior doors have been replaced with steel fire or solid wood doors. Industrial carpeting conceals a large portion of the multi-colored terrazzo floor, which originally characterized the corridors of each floor. Dropped, acoustical-tile ceilings featuring inset fluorescent lighting conceal the original plaster ceilings on each floor, with the exception of the first-floor public lobby and the third-floor corridor.

#### *First Floor*

The first floor of the United States Post Office Annex includes the entry vestibules, postal lobby, post box lobby, elevator lobby, postal workroom, and various ancillary offices. The floors are comprised of the original rose-colored terrazzo, surrounded by a dark rose-colored marble border, except where noted. The dark-colored granite baseboard remains in the public lobbies, as well as the gypsum plaster walls featuring beige-colored, Tennessee marble wainscoting. The public lobbies have plaster ceilings and retain the original hanging Art Deco-style light fixtures comprised of opaque glass set into an octagonal bronze frame.

#### Entry Vestibules

The two main entries, located at the north and south ends of the central section of the west elevation, each lead into a small entry vestibule. All-weather industrial carpeting covers the floor of each vestibule. Dark-colored marble baseboards run below the seven-foot-high beige-colored, Tennessee marble wainscoting that covers the walls. A bronze radiator grille is situated in the north wall of the northern vestibule and the south wall of the southern vestibule. Plaster comprises the ceilings. The east walls of each vestibule contain a centrally located nine-light, fixed-sash, bronze window, flanked to each side by a three-light, fixed-sash, bronze windows. A set of double-leaf, nine-light over one-panel, brass doors are situated in the south wall of the

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<sup>8</sup> The Downtown Providence Historic District (84001967) was listed in the National Register of Historic Places on 10 February 1984.

United States Post Office Annex  
Name of Property

Providence, Rhode Island  
County and State

north vestibule and north wall of the south vestibule. These entries, each topped by a five-light transom, provide access from the vestibule into the postal lobby.

### Postal Lobby

The postal lobby measures five-bays wide with arched openings leading to the postal box lobby on the south and the elevator lobby on the north. Carpets conceal portions of the original terrazzo floor.

The west wall of the lobby includes two waist-high, bronze, Art Deco-style writing tables topped by heavy glass writing surfaces and featuring integral Art Deco-style desk lamps. Two sets of paired bulletin boards, each set into a bronze guilloche frame, are hung on the west wall at the end of each table. Two additional bulletin boards are hung on the west wall, adjacent to each vestibule.

A full bank of service windows comprises the east wall of the postal lobby. The service windows feature bronze-plated window frames below an open grille featuring Greek key fretwork. Stainless steel covers the counters. Eight service windows remain unaltered; each is denoted by the words "Parcel Post" engraved into the bronze window frame above. The remaining service window openings are in-filled with frosted glass panes, bronze post drop-boxes, plywood for bulletin boards, or laterally operated, steel-and-bronze-plated curtains.

### Elevator Lobby

The elevator lobby is accessed from the postal lobby via the north archway. A modern glass and aluminum movable security partition is located in the archway. A bronze guilloche-framed bulletin board hangs on the west wall of the lobby, to the north of a set of double-leaf, brass-plated doors. Two brass-plated elevator doors, set into a brass surround, dominate the east wall.

Two narrow, single-leaf, brass-plated doors flank each side of a narrow archway centered in the north wall of the elevator lobby. The archway leads to the first-floor corridor and office space that comprises the north and northeast sides of the building.

### Northwest Stairway

The northwest stairway, which provides access to the basement as well as the first through third floors, is accessed via a set of double-leaf brass-plated doors located in the west wall of the elevator lobby. The treads are clad in brown-colored terrazzo, and the balustrade is steel and features an Art Deco-style geometric pattern. A brass-plated handrail caps the balustrade. The stairway has a plaster ceiling featuring crown molding.

### Post Box Lobby

The post box lobby is accessed from the postal lobby via the south archway. Originally, the post box lobby was square in plan and contained more service windows; however post boxes were inserted in the place of windows and the lobby was extended to the southeast in 1956. A dark rose-colored double marble border in the floor denotes the extension.

United States Post Office Annex  
Name of Property

Providence, Rhode Island  
County and State

The west wall of the post box lobby contains two sets of bronze post boxes topped by an open grille featuring Greek key fretwork. A round writing table of similar design and style to the writing tables in the postal lobby is set into a dark rose-colored, diamond-shaped terrazzo floor panel in the center of the lobby.

The east wall of the post box lobby contains a bank of service windows topped by an open grille featuring Greek key fretwork. An original cast-bronze sign reading "Special Request Envelopes" is attached to the southern end of the grille. Two open, rectangular windows, equipped with vertical bronze grilles, are topped by a one-light transom and flanked by fixed rectangular windows inset with frosted glass. A marble-topped wooden desk is located in front of the service window area.

The extension continues from the southwest corner of the post box lobby and wraps around to the south side of the building. The south wall of the extension contains additional banks of bronze post boxes, while the north wall contains four service windows set into bronze frames and featuring vertical bronze grilles. The windows are flanked to each side by fixed-sash rectangular windows, some of which retain the original frosted glass, while others have been replaced with plywood. The bank of windows in the north wall is topped by a simple molded, wood lintel. Recessed lighting is set into the plaster ceiling in this area.

#### Postal Workroom

The postal workroom is accessed via a door situated in the north wall of the southern extended post box lobby area. The postal workroom consists of a central open area off of the postal lobby service windows and a postal workroom extension to the north and east.

The floor of the postal workroom is comprised of poured concrete. The gypsum plaster walls feature glazed beige-colored, clay-tile wainscoting. Large load-bearing concrete columns that extend to the ceiling are located throughout the space. Suspended fluorescent light fixtures and air conditioning ducts are attached to the plaster ceiling of the workroom.

Wood and metal sorting tables, as well as metal lockers and shelves, are situated throughout the space. Continuous banks of built-in wooden cupboards topped by stainless steel-clad counters are located at the service windows in the west and south walls. A massive steel door leads into a safe located in the southeast corner of the area.

The postal workroom continues through a narrow single-leaf door in the east wall of the main area to the rear (east) of the building. This long, narrow extension contains the same finishes and details as the main postal workroom. Several small offices for the post master and postal workers are also located in this space.

#### First Floor Office Space

The remainder of the first floor space of the United States Post Office Annex is comprised of various supporting offices for the U.S. District Court, accessed by a central corridor. This area contains replacement finishes, including industrial carpeting on the floors, drywall partitions, and dropped acoustical-tile ceilings with inset fluorescent lighting.

United States Post Office Annex  
Name of Property

Providence, Rhode Island  
County and State

Of note in this area is a large service elevator installed in the southeast corner of the building circa 2001. This elevator, fitted with steel mesh, assists in transporting prisoners from the basement to the second floor of the building.

### *Second Floor*

Offices located on the second floor were created circa 1971 when the original open second-floor workroom was converted to office space. In 2001, the second floor was further altered to accommodate the U.S. District Court which moved into the building at that time.<sup>9</sup> Original finishes that remain on this floor include the dark-colored granite baseboard and marble door sills in some areas.

Three courtrooms were installed on the second floor circa 2001. Two larger courtrooms occupy the center portion of the floor and one smaller courtroom is located towards the rear (east). Each courtroom consists of plush carpeting, acoustical-tile walls, and plaster ceilings inset with recessed lighting. Modern Art Deco-style lamps hang from the ceiling and modern Art Deco-style sconces are located on the west and east walls. Polished hardwood panels clad the south walls, immediately behind the judge's bench. The judge's bench, jury box, and audience benches also consist of polished hardwood.

The remainder of the second floor consists of industrial carpeting in the corridors and offices; plaster walls featuring a modern oak baseboard and chair rail in the corridor; and plaster ceilings in the corridors with dropped acoustical-tile ceilings in the offices.

### *Third Floor*

The third floor is accessed from the northwest stairway and elevator or the southeast stairway. The elevator lobby features a vinyl tile-clad floor, plaster walls and ceiling, and wood crown molding above the elevators in the east wall. A single-leaf metal door, flanked by one-light sidelights and topped by a three-light transom, is situated in the north wall of the lobby, while an archway in the south wall provides access to the third-floor corridor.

The third floor features a central corridor that provides access to the small courtroom, exercise room, and numerous offices that occupy the floor. Industrial carpeting covers the original terrazzo floor of the corridor. The original gray-colored marble baseboard remains, as well as the plaster walls and ceiling. Replacement hanging brass pendant light fixtures are suspended from the corridor ceiling. The walls of the north, west, and south sides of the corridor retain the original openings including single-leaf and double-leaf metal doors inset with a beveled-glass window. Some of the doors are flanked by paired two-light, fixed-sash beveled-glass windows.

The discontinuation of the marble baseboard and the beginning of a vinyl baseboard denotes the beginning of the 1971 alterations to the floor which converted open space situated at the rear (east) into smaller offices. As a result, the original U-shaped corridor was continued around to

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<sup>9</sup> Gary Smith, U.S. General Services Administration Building Manager, in conversation with Emma Young, September 30, 2008.

United States Post Office Annex  
Name of Property

Providence, Rhode Island  
County and State

the rear of the building. This area features single-leaf wood doors, plastered drywall partitions, and a plaster ceiling.

The long narrow rectangular central light well lights the center of the third floor. The light well is lit by banks of multi-light steel windows. Various offices, as well as a small courtroom and exercise room, are located between the light well and the primary corridor.

The office spaces of the third floor have floors clad in industrial carpeting and dropped acoustical tile ceilings with inset fluorescent lighting. The offices on the north, south, and east sides of the floor also feature a secondary interior corridor. A narrow metal, spiral staircase, located in the north side of the building, was installed circa 2001 to provide immediate access between the easternmost courtroom on the second floor and the judge's chambers on the third floor.

#### *Fourth Floor*

A stairway off the north wall of the southern section of the third-floor corridor provides the only access to the fourth floor, which is currently unoccupied. The stairs to the fourth floor consist of concrete treads and a flanking iron pipe handrail, painted white.

The centrally located stairway divides the fourth floor into two areas. The western side contains an open office space, and the eastern side of the fourth floor is divided into two smaller rooms, separated by a restroom. The fourth floor has industrial carpeting on the floors, particleboard wall partitions, and dropped acoustical tile ceilings with inset fluorescent lighting.

#### *Restrooms*

The restrooms throughout each floor of the United States Post Office Annex have been upgraded to comply with accessibility standards. Additional alterations include the application of vinyl- or ceramic-tile flooring replacing the original terrazzo floors and replacement plumbing fixtures. Some restrooms on the third floor retain the original buff-colored marble wainscoting.

#### *Basement Level*

The basement level is accessed by the northwest stairway and the elevators. A central corridor leads from the stairway and elevator areas to various storage and mechanical rooms, accessed through single-leaf or double-leaf steel doors. Portions of the corridor feature massive supports, which are continuous from those located above in the first-floor postal workroom.

The basement level generally lacks finishes and detailing. The rooms primarily consist of poured-concrete floors; brick, plaster, or concrete block walls; and dropped acoustical tile ceilings with inset fluorescent lighting. Some of the rooms retain the original plaster ceilings but feature hanging fluorescent light fixtures and exposed ductwork.

#### Alterations and Integrity

The United States Post Office Annex retains a high degree of exterior integrity as alterations to the facade of the building have been minimal. Original materials and features remain largely

United States Post Office Annex  
Name of Property

Providence, Rhode Island  
County and State

intact, including those representative of early twentieth century post offices: brick, granite and limestone exterior cladding and trim, classical detailing, and bas-relief sculptures. Alterations have generally been in-kind, replicating the materials, finishes, and details of the original building.

Perhaps the most substantial single alteration occurred circa 1995 when the contact room located on the north elevation at the second story level was removed with the rechanneling of the adjacent Woonasquatucket and Moshassuck rivers. The contact room originally connected the second floor postal workroom to the railway across the river. Encapsulating two bays of the north elevation of the United States Post Office Annex, the contact room was eleven bays long, clad in painted sheet metal, lit by multi-light windows, and supported on columns set into the river on granite piers.<sup>10</sup> As the area of contact on the north elevation was relatively small, the removal of the contact room had minimal impact on the face of the north elevation, which retains integrity of materials, design, and workmanship from the period of construction.

The circa 1971 conversion of the second floor former postal workroom into office space resulted in alterations to the second story windows, consisting of shortened window height, the addition of a panel at the top of the window and the removal of most of the sill bands with Greek key motif. Although unfortunate, this alteration has a minor impact on the building's exterior appearance. The addition of the entry ramp on the west elevation in 1983 was required by accessibility standards and was accomplished in a manner sympathetic to the original design and materials. The relocation of the U.S. District Courts to the building circa 2001 necessitated additional alterations to the rear (east) of the building, including the addition of the sally port, for security purposes. Located at the rear of the building, these alterations have minimal impact on the public perception of the building. The circa 2001 sally port addition was designed in a manner sympathetic to the original design and materials.

Overall, the interior of the building is in relatively good condition and retains a sufficient integrity to represent an early twentieth century post office. The original public areas in the building, including the entry vestibules and postal, post box, and elevator lobbies on the first floor, as well as the original third-floor corridor, remain largely as constructed with original finishes, including terrazzo floors and marble wainscoting, and features. The postal and post box lobbies are particularly notable for their retention of original light fixtures, postal tables, desk lamps, signage, windows and boxes. The remaining interior spaces have been highly altered in order to meet the needs of the tenants. Many of the spaces have new interior finishes that include industrial carpeting, acoustical-tile drop ceilings, and inset fluorescent lighting. However, a number of these alterations, including dropped ceilings and carpeting are reversible.

In conclusion, despite some exterior and interior alterations to accommodate the changing and continuous federal use of the building, the United States Post Office Annex retains its overall integrity of design, materials, and workmanship. In addition, the building retains its original location. As is typical of many downtown areas, however, the blocks surrounding the building

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<sup>10</sup> Page & Turnbull, *Building Preservation Plan Update: Final Report, John O. Pastore Federal Building*, Prepared for U.S. General Services Administration, September 2011, Section 2.

United States Post Office Annex  
Name of Property

Providence, Rhode Island  
County and State

have been re-developed to various degrees and now contain large mid- to late-twentieth-century, multi-story commercial edifices as well as buildings that predate the construction of the United States Post Office Annex. In addition, the rechanneling of the Woonasquatucket and Moshassuck rivers has altered the immediate setting to the north and east of the building, somewhat diminishing the integrity of setting. The United States Post Office Annex retains its overall monumentality as a governmental entity and continues in use as a postal facility and federal building, all of which contribute to integrity of feeling and association. The building's retention of integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association results in its continued ability to convey its significance as an early twentieth-century post office erected in the Simplified Classical architectural style.

United States Post Office Annex  
Name of Property

Providence, Rhode Island  
County and State

## 8. Statement of Significance

### Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

### Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years



United States Post Office Annex  
Name of Property

Providence, Rhode Island  
County and State

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ARCHITECTURE  
POLITICS/GOVERNMENT

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1940  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

1940  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

Simon, Louis; Supervising Architect  
Jackson, F. Ellis: Architect  
Melick, Neal A: Supervising Engineer

United States Post Office Annex  
Name of Property

Providence, Rhode Island  
County and State

**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The United States Post Office Annex possesses local significance under Criterion A in the area of Politics/Government as a notable example of a federal government building in Providence, Rhode Island, erected under the New Deal-era federal programs designed in the 1930s to relieve the economic problems caused by the Great Depression. The building embodies the ideals of the federal building campaign initiated by the Hoover and Roosevelt administrations under the direction of Supervising Architect Louis A. Simon (1934-1943). The erection of the building was perceived as a symbol of community pride and achievement and as a representation of the federal presence in Providence. The federal building is also locally significant under Criterion C in the area of Architecture as a notable example of the Simplified Classical architectural style with Art Deco-style detailing, popularized through the federal building projects of the 1930s and 1940s. The United States Post Office was designed by Jackson, Robertson, & Adams, a prominent Providence architectural firm of the period.

The period of significance for the United States Post Office Annex is the year 1940, the date of its completion.

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**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

#### Brief History of Providence, Rhode Island

The Providence area was first settled in 1636 by Roger Williams, who had been expelled from the Massachusetts Bay Colony for his religious views. Williams sought to resettle elsewhere and secured a title to the land from the local Narragansett natives around this time. In honor of “God’s merciful Providence,” which he believed had aided him in finding the location, Williams named his settlement “Providence.” Maritime trade proved the most viable, as Williams’ settlement was positioned at the head of Narragansett Bay, with the Providence River running into the bay through the center of the city, formed by the confluence of the Moshassuck and Woonasquatucket rivers.<sup>11</sup>

Providence, as a city, did not develop until almost a century had passed. The city developed in a unique way compared to its contemporaries. Lacking a common square or meetinghouse, it grew in a linear fashion along the east side of the Providence River. In 1771, a bridge was erected connecting the residential area along the east side of the river to the downtown area, known as Weybosset Neck, west of the river.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> City of Providence, “Providence Tomorrow: The Interim Comprehensive Plan,” (Prepared for City of Providence Department of Planning and Zoning, Providence, Rhode Island, December 2007), 2.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

United States Post Office Annex  
Name of Property

Providence, Rhode Island  
County and State

Maritime endeavors drove the city's economy from its establishment through the eighteenth and into the nineteenth century. By the start of the nineteenth century, Providence was the ninth largest city in the country. However, as the nineteenth century progressed, the economy shifted to manufacturing, particularly machine tools, silverware, jewelry and textiles. During the Civil War, the city's manufacturing proved invaluable to the Union army. Postwar trolley lines covering the city enabled its growth, and Providence thrived with waves of immigrants and land annexations bringing the population from 54,595 in 1865, to 175,597 by 1900.<sup>13</sup> The city's industries attracted immigrants from Ireland, Germany, Sweden, England, Italy, Portugal, Cape Verde, and French Canada. By the end of the nineteenth century, Providence had transformed from "a small shipping town to the major economic center of the most highly industrialized state in the nation," boasting some of the largest manufacturing plants in the country.<sup>14</sup> In 1900, Providence was designated as the capital of the State of Rhode Island.

By the mid-1920s as industries, notably textiles, shut down, Providence began to experience economic decline. The Great Depression hit the city hard, and the downtown was subsequently flooded by the Great New England Hurricane of September 21, 1938. The hurricane, also known as the "Long Island Express," wreaked havoc across New York and New England and inundated parts of downtown Providence with seven feet of water, damaging buildings and their contents, felling thousands of trees and power lines, demolishing the wharves of the inner harbor, and washing away countless coastal landmarks. Surging waters and falling walls, trees, and chimneys caused by the 120 mile-per-hour winds killed 311 Rhode Island residents, four of whom were drowned in the center of downtown.<sup>15</sup>

From 1940 through 1980, the population of Providence steadily decreased as a result of suburbanization and the construction of routes 6/10 and Interstates 95 and 195 in the 1950s and 1960s. Not only did these new roadways isolate neighborhoods from each other and from downtown, they also destroyed a significant part of the city's urban fabric.<sup>16</sup> In 1980, Providence reached its lowest population count of the century with only 156,804 residents.

Throughout the years of decline, the City Plan Commission sought to address the city's physical and economic ills with various proposals, many of which were never enacted. Its update of the city's 1964 Master Plan included revisions to neighborhood plans in order to take into account preservation on the neighborhood level and revitalization plans for downtown and the port area. The Old Harbor Plan, which was developed in 1992 out of the Master Plan, proposed shifting Interstate 195 away from downtown, reconnecting downtown streets to the waterfront, and relocating the Woonasquatucket and Moshassuck rivers in order to open up more developable land.<sup>17</sup>

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13 City of Providence Website, "Three-and-One-Half Centuries of History at a Glance," (<http://www.providenceri.com/history/centuries2.html>) accessed 13 January 2009.

14 Ibid.

15 Ibid.

16 City of Providence, 3.

17 Ibid.

United States Post Office Annex  
Name of Property

Providence, Rhode Island  
County and State

By the beginning of the twenty-first century, the Old Harbor Plan had been enacted, and a revitalized Providence had rebounded to become the third-largest city in the New England Region. The city still serves as the state's capital, housing the Rhode Island General Assembly as well as the offices of the Governor and the Lieutenant Governor in the Rhode Island State House. Its population stood at 179,219 in July 2016.<sup>18</sup>

### History of the Postal Service in the United States and in Providence, Rhode Island

#### *Postal Service in the United States*

The establishment of the postal service began as a means to provide communication among the colonies during the Revolutionary War. On July 26, 1775, the Second Continental Congress developed the post office under its first Postmaster General, Benjamin Franklin. The post office was the only agency to remain intact through the Revolutionary War, the Confederacy period, and the years after the Constitution was adopted. Subsequently, the newly established federal government viewed the post office as the means for conveying knowledge of its laws and proceedings to all parts of the country.<sup>19</sup>

During the postal service's early growth period, the number of post offices expanded from 75 in 1789 to 16,749 in 1849.<sup>20</sup> Throughout the nineteenth century, the postal system served as the principal means of long distance communication. Postal service provided both a physical and intellectual link between great distances as the nation expanded across the continent.<sup>21</sup> By 1820, the number of post offices and miles of post roads approximately quadrupled that of 1800.<sup>22</sup> Local taverns, grocery stores, coffeehouses, and inns, all focal points of community life, housed the first post offices.<sup>23</sup>

Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Congress established or improved postal services and facilities throughout the nation. Efforts to increase the speed and efficiency of mail delivery encouraged the growth of roads, railroads, shipping lines, and eventually airlines. The postal presence, through its sheer number, distribution, and types of services, provided tangible reminders to otherwise isolated communities of the role and ideals of the central government. Consequently, the buildings constructed for use as post offices have reflected governmental and architectural philosophies throughout the nation.<sup>24</sup>

The postal service built structures for receiving, processing, and distributing mail to provide services for the expanding population during the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. For

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18 United States Census Bureau website, "Quick Facts, Providence, RI,"

(<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/providencacityrhodeisland/PST045216>) accessed 18 July 2017.

19 Rita L. Maroney, *History of the U.S. Postal Service: 1775-1982* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1982), 3.

20 Ellis L. Armstrong, *History of Public Works of the United States, 1776-1945* (Chicago: American Public Works Association, 1976), 327.

21 Beth Boland, National Register of Historic Places, Bulletin 13, "How to Apply National Register Criteria to Post Offices" (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1984), Section II, 1.

22 Boland, Section II, 1.

23 Maroney, 1.

24 Boland, Section II, 2.

United States Post Office Annex  
Name of Property

Providence, Rhode Island  
County and State

smaller communities, a special counter in a local store served as the post office. In larger villages or towns, a separate post office building was constructed with a public service counter, workroom for mail processing, and a loading dock. Urban post offices handling large volumes of mail required larger buildings with extensive workrooms, offices, employee facilities, loading platforms, and windows or counters to serve the public. Urban post offices often shared space in federal buildings with courts and branch offices of federal agencies. The Supervising Architect of the U.S. Treasury Department oversaw the design and development of these early postal facilities.<sup>25</sup>

Criteria used to determine the placement of postal offices reflected the uses of the facilities and the manner in which they were designed to function. Post offices that included other federal offices or courts were often located near other government buildings in the community. Single-function post offices built prior to the 1930s were often located on or near main transportation corridors and commercial centers and near the railroad station to facilitate movement of mail to and from trains. Facilities constructed during the 1930s and later became more truck and auto-oriented and were located near the downtown, but perhaps a block or two from the town's main street. This made the post office easy to find, but also allowed better access to truck activity. In the second half of the twentieth century, in response to suburbanization, postal facilities moved even further from the downtown area, often locating on the edge of town where large parking lots and tractor trailer-friendly loading bays could be accommodated. As a consequence, many of the earlier post offices became redundant.

The modern-day United States Postal Service (USPS) was officially established as an independent federal agency on July 1, 1971, when Congress implemented the Postal Reorganization Act.<sup>26</sup>

#### *Early Postal Service in Providence, Rhode Island*

In 1758, federal mail service began in Providence, Rhode Island, with Samuel Chase serving as the first postmaster. Chase operated the post office out of his bookstore and served as postmaster until 1772, after which John Carter, serving as postmaster, operated the post office from his print shop at Shakespeare's Head on Meeting Street. Carter served as postmaster until 1792, during which time the Providence Post Office was officially established by an act of the U.S. Congress on February 16, 1790.<sup>27</sup>

Throughout its first one-hundred years, Providence's Post Office moved serially to various buildings, the majority of which were located near Market Square. The rapid growth of the city throughout the early nineteenth century pointed to the need for a permanent post office and federal building. In 1855, the first federal building and customhouse in the city, erected in the Italianate

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25 Maroney, 5.

26 Ibid.

27 Rhode Island did not ratify its constitution until May 29, 1790; Rhode Island Historical Society Website, "Rhode Island Historical Society Postal History Collection," (<http://thesaltsailor.com/rhodeisland-philatelic/rhodeisland/1960-1.htm>) accessed 18 July 2017.

United States Post Office Annex  
Name of Property

Providence, Rhode Island  
County and State

Renaissance style under the supervision of Supervising Architect Ammi B. Young, was erected at 24 Weybossett Street.<sup>28</sup>

However, by the late-nineteenth century, the building had become overcrowded, and plans were begun for a new federal building to house the courts, customs offices, and post office for the city. Completed in 1908, the Beaux Arts-style U.S. Post Office and Courthouse building was erected at the northeast end of Exchange Place Mall.<sup>29</sup> Despite official predictions that the new \$1,600,000 building would meet all federal needs for the next fifty years, the U.S. Post Office and Courthouse was badly overcrowded within a decade as a result of the city's rapid population growth and in part from the unexpected popularity of the parcel post service instituted by the U.S. Postal Service in 1913.<sup>30</sup> Initially, these demands were accommodated by piecemeal additions and accommodations. However, by 1921, demands for parcel post service had so overwhelmed the U.S. Post Office and Courthouse that the 1855 building on Weybosset Street was put back into service to house this function and provide additional office space for various federal agencies.<sup>31</sup> Thus, by the early 1920s, the need for a new postal facility was widely recognized.

#### Planning for the United States Post Office Annex, 1926 – 1937

Serious consideration of a new federal building for Providence to serve as a post office annex coincided with passage of the Public Buildings Act of 1926, which provided funds for federal building construction for the first time since 1913. Although Providence was included in the 1927 survey of need, it was not approved for federal funding until 1937, several years after emergency funding programs replaced the 1926 Act. In the interim, alterations were undertaken again on the U.S. Post Office and Courthouse in order to meet the needs of the still growing Providence population.

The debate on a suitable site for the new postal annex began in earnest in 1932 and continued through 1935. From the beginning, the federal government favored a site that was located between the existing facility and Union Station, as proximity to both locations would fulfill the operational needs of the annex. The site was also attractive to the city of Providence because it reinforced the objectives of the 1913 City Plan Commission, as stated by Chairman John Hutchins Cady:

Public buildings are a very great civic and architectural asset to a community and their suitable locations are of equally great importance. Cities more and more are establishing public building groups which dominate their civic centers...What the city will gain [with choice of this site] will be a further step in the orderly architectural development of Exchange Place and Memorial Square...<sup>32</sup>

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28 The United States Custom House was listed in the National Register of Historic Places as "Customs House" (72000005) on 13 April 1972. The building is now owned by the State of Rhode Island and known as the John E. Fogarty Judicial Complex.

29 Today known as the Federal Building, this building is located immediately south of the U.S. Post Office Annex.

30 Ann Beha Associates, 5.

31 Ibid.

32 As quoted in Ann Beha Associates, 6.

United States Post Office Annex  
Name of Property

Providence, Rhode Island  
County and State

The city wanted the building to be located near the 1908 federal building in order to centralize government offices. However, the favored site at the time of investigation in 1935 was occupied by the 1903 Central Fire Station. The high cost of land in the center city coupled with the fact that proceeds from the sale of real estate were earmarked for the city's debt retirement made relocation of the fire station difficult.<sup>33</sup> Therefore, Pershing Square, located immediately north of Union Station, was advanced as the choice site for the new post office annex.

Yet in the fall of 1935, the City Council passed a resolution authorizing Mayor James Dunne to convey the Central Fire Station to the federal government. In January 1935, the federal government purchased the fire station site for \$200,000 after an appraisal was completed by the Providence Real Estate Exchange. The sale of the property was contingent with the city's conveyance of all of its riparian rights with respect to the Woonasquatucket and Moshassuck rivers located to the rear of the building.<sup>34</sup> Nine months later, in October 1935, Federal Judge John Mahoney issued a decree condemning the fire station site.<sup>35</sup>

Inadequate funding coupled with the debate over the desirability of adding a third story of office space to the proposed United States Post Office Annex, as advocated by Senator Theodore F. Greene, delayed construction of the new building even after the completion of the condemnation proceedings. An additional \$150,000 above the \$975,000 allotted was needed to complete the building as planned, while \$250,000 more was required to include the third story. An article in the March 4, 1937 edition of *The Providence Journal* voiced local citizens' disgust with the delays.<sup>36</sup>

The article was the first to reveal that, with a site chosen and the appropriate funds allotted, Louis A. Simon, serving as Supervising Architect of the U.S. Treasury Department, had selected the local architectural firm of Jackson, Robertson, & Adams to design the new United States Post Office Annex. The Chamber of Commerce had urged the employment of a local architectural firm since 1932, when Great Depression-era federal policies were directed at alleviating the nation's unemployment. The selection of the locally prominent architectural firm was also helped by the fact that the firm's senior partner, F. Ellis Jackson, served on the City Plan Commission.<sup>37</sup>

#### *Supervising Architect Louis A. Simon*

In 1934, Louis A. Simon, at the age of sixty-six, succeeded James A. Wetmore as Supervising Architect.<sup>38</sup> At the time of his appointment, Simon had worked for the Office of the Supervising Architect for almost four decades and was well-known to the architectural community. The 1933 reorganization of the federal architecture program placed the newly named Public Works Branch at a lower level within the U.S. Treasury Department than the old Office of the

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33 Ibid.

34 "Arrange Deal for Post Office Site," *The Providence Journal* (Providence, Rhode Island), 8 January 1935.

35 "Land Condemned for New Post Office," *The Providence Journal* (Providence, Rhode Island), 19 October 1935.

36 As quoted in Ann Beha Associates, 7.

37 Ibid.

38 Antoinette Lee, *Architects to the Nation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 258.

United States Post Office Annex  
Name of Property

Providence, Rhode Island  
County and State

Supervising Architect had previously enjoyed. However, Louis Simon retained control over the architectural design of the federal buildings designed within his office. Simon served as Supervising Architect from 1934 until 1941, during which time the United States Post Office Annex was designed and constructed.

Louis A. Simon was born in Baltimore, Maryland, in 1867 and received his education from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. After an extended tour throughout Europe, he opened an architectural office in Baltimore in 1894. Two years later, Simon joined the Office of the Supervising Architect, where he spent the rest of his working career.<sup>39</sup>

Simon favored classical styles of architecture, although many of the postal buildings designed during his tenure were greatly influenced by the new interest in modernism. Simon predominately utilized a simplified classical style that blended modern and classical elements, characterized by symmetrical massing and relatively plain surfaces.<sup>40</sup> The style has come to be known as Simplified Classical or Stripped Classical.

Simon's influence was notable during his predecessor, James Wetmore's tenure. A lawyer, rather than an architect, Wetmore used the title, acting supervising architect, rather than supervising architect and relied on Simon, who served as the principal architectural designer during Wetmore's term. In addition to the United States Post Office Annex, Simon influenced the design of numerous federal buildings throughout the United States during the course of his tenure, including the Internal Revenue Service Building in Washington, D.C.; the U.S. Courthouse in Los Angeles, California; the United States Post Office and Courthouse (Potter Stewart U.S. Courthouse) in Cincinnati, Ohio; and a series of U.S. Border Stations along the nation's northern and southern borders.<sup>41</sup>

Upon Simon's retirement in 1941, the *Federal Architect* praised Simon for his leadership and insistence on quality designs:

Louis A. Simon will have a thousand or more buildings throughout the land, some bearing his name, some not, which are tokens of his architectural ability. Words concerning that ability are relatively ineffectual. It is the buildings themselves which are the best commentary of his judgment and his service to the country.<sup>42</sup>

Louis A. Simon died in 1958 at the age of ninety-one.

*Architect F. Ellis Jackson*<sup>43</sup>

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39 Ibid., 258.

40 Ibid., 260.

41 U.S. General Services Administration, Historic Federal Buildings Database, U.S. General Services Administration (<http://www.gsa.gov/portal/ext/html/site/hb/category/25431/hostUri/portal>) accessed 18 July 2017.

42 As quoted in Lee, 280.

43 The following is taken from Henry F. and Elsie Withey, *Biographical Dictionary of American Architects (Deceased)* (Los Angeles: Hennessey & Ingalls, Inc., 1970), 318, except where noted.



United States Post Office Annex  
Name of Property

Providence, Rhode Island  
County and State

By 1937, Supervising Architect Louis A. Simon had selected the firm of Jackson, Robertson, & Adams to design the United States Post Office Annex in Providence. F. Ellis Jackson, senior-partner of the firm, was born in 1879 at Tarrytown, New York, a year before his parents moved to Providence, Rhode Island. Jackson received his degree from Cornell's School of Architecture in 1900 before receiving supplementary training in Paris at the Ecole des Beaux Arts.

In 1903, Jackson opened an office in Providence in partnership with Howard K. Hilton. The firm of Jackson & Hilton was identified with the design of several churches, schools, hospitals, and various other buildings throughout Providence, including: Woodbury Memorial Church; East Providence Public Library; Centerville, Rhode Island Methodist Church; Girls Dormitory at East Greenwich Academy; Surgical Ward and Operating Theatre, Homeopathic Hospital in Providence; and the Cushing Apartment House in Providence.

Two years after his partner's death in 1909, Jackson invited fellow architect Wayland H. Robertson to become a senior partner.<sup>44</sup> Jackson later employed John Howard Adams as well, and the firm of Jackson, Robertson, & Adams was created.<sup>45</sup> The firm established their office in the Turks Head Office Building in downtown Providence.

The firm of Jackson, Robertson, & Adams designed numerous churches, hospitals, libraries, town and city public structures throughout Providence, including the 1932 Rhode Island State Airport Terminal; the 1933 Providence County Courthouse; Nurses Home at Butler Hospital; Central Baptist Church; alterations to the Providence City Hall; and various residences throughout Rhode Island and Connecticut. The firm's work included an extensive portfolio of Colonial Revival style buildings, such as the Providence County Courthouse.

From 1931 to 1944, Jackson served on the Providence City Plan Commission. A member of the American Institute of Architects (AIA), Jackson was raised to fellowship in 1930 and served as President for the AIA Rhode Island Chapter from 1921-1923.

On February 9, 1950, F. Ellis Jackson died at the age of seventy. His obituary was featured in *The New York Times* under the headline, "F. Ellis Jackson, Noted Architect; Designer of Government and Other Buildings in Several Cities Dies in Providence."<sup>46</sup>

#### United States Post Office Annex, 1938-2010

By February 1938, the architectural drawings and descriptions of Providence's newest federal building were made available to the public. The design was not intended to achieve the monumental scale and character to the 1908 U.S. Post Office and Courthouse. Instead, the building was to "harmonize more or less with the brick Union Station [1898] and the [nearby]

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44 Withey, 516; Wayland H. Robertson (1873-1935) was a senior partner in the firm of Jackson, Robertson, & Adams from 1911 until shortly before his death in 1935. Robertson died before the design and construction of the United States Post Office Annex.

45 Withey, 8; Architect John Howard Adams (1876-1924), educated at MIT and the Ecole des Beaux Arts, died in 1924, before the commission of the United States Post Office Annex.

46 "F. Ellis Jackson, Noted Architect," *The New York Times* (New York, New York) 10 February 1950.

United States Post Office Annex

Providence, Rhode Island

Name of Property

County and State

Biltmore Hotel [1922].<sup>47</sup> The proposed building was to be three stories in height with a full basement and partial attic; a portion of the building (the contact room) was to be built over the Woonasquatucket River on piers. The exterior materials would include brick with limestone trim and a granite base.

*The Providence Journal* described the architectural style of the building as “modernized Federal style with simple Grecian ornament.”<sup>48</sup> In addition, the article further noted that the building was originally intended to be used exclusively by the U.S. Postal Service as a parcel post annex. In early 1938, at the insistence of Rhode Island Senator Theodore F. Green, an additional \$400,000 was appropriated over the original \$975,000 cost estimate in order to expand the building to house additional federal agencies and offices.<sup>49</sup>

Despite progress with the design, bids for demolition of the Central Fire Station and construction of the United States Post Office Annex were not awarded until November 1938. All bidders were asked to submit prices for six alternatives, which included: the substitution of limestone for Westerly granite on the exterior; substitution of terne plate for lead-coated copper as roofing material; substitution of hollow-tile plaster partitions with wood doors for metal partitions and doors at the third story; substitution of glazed-tile wainscoting for wood; omission of the second-story contact bridge to the railway station; and omission of the underground tunnel to the existing 1908 U.S. Post Office and Courthouse.<sup>50</sup> Supported by Supervising Architect Louis A. Simon, the construction firm of George A. Fuller Company of New York City, which submitted the lowest bid of \$895,000 for the construction of Jackson, Adams, & Robertson’s design, was chosen to carry out the erection of the new building.<sup>51</sup> The only substitution that was included in Fuller’s proposal, which was eventually carried out in the building’s construction, was that of glazed tile for wood wainscoting at an additional cost of \$1,000. At a reduced cost of \$30,000 to \$43,000, the construction firm agreed to substitute limestone for the originally proposed Rhode Island Westerly granite.<sup>52</sup> The contract specified that work was to be completed within 360 days of award.<sup>53</sup> The project was one of many federal building projects undertaken during the Great Depression era in attempt to combat unemployment. Local residents provided the majority of the workforce in the construction of the federal building.<sup>54</sup>

The confluence of the Woonasquatucket and Moshassuck Rivers to the rear of the site presented an engineering challenge to the initial stages of construction. Site preparation began in late winter with the driving of piles and installation of a cofferdam. Work progressed slowly:

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47 “Federal Building Sketches Shown,” *The Providence Journal* (Providence, Rhode Island) 19 February 1938.

48 Ibid.

49 Ibid.

50 Ann Beha Associates, 8; the building was erected with the second-story contact bridge and the underground tunnel.

51 “Limestone for New Federal Building,” *The Providence Journal* (Providence, Rhode Island) 3 November 1938.

52 Ibid.

53 Ibid.

54 City of Providence Website.

United States Post Office Annex

Providence, Rhode Island

Name of Property

County and State

It was not until July, that a photo was published showing the entire foundation in place including a tunnel to the existing building. At the time of the building's opening, it was reported that 2,000, 25-foot-long New Hampshire spruce pilings had been used to support the 917 tons of steel framework above.<sup>55</sup>

By December 1938, only the excavation and the base for the foundation of the building were complete. The cornerstone for Providence's new federal building was not laid until nine months later. The cornerstone dedication took place on September 14, 1939, in a ceremony presided over by Senator Theodore F. Green. The ceremony was held on the street-level concrete flooring and included representatives of the federal, state, and city governments.<sup>56</sup> A sealed metal box containing "documentary evidence of the nature of these times" was placed in the cornerstone located in the southwest corner of the building.<sup>57</sup> Senator Green gave a speech that pointed to the "contrast between peaceful construction in this county and wartime destruction abroad."<sup>58</sup> Dr. Edward F. Carroll, Providence Postmaster, also noted that the building should be ready by mid-March with additional ceremonial exercises to be held upon completion.<sup>59</sup>

The building's formal dedication took place less than a year after the cornerstone was laid, on June 11, 1940.<sup>60</sup> Dedication exercises included numerous speakers as well as the installation of an American flag on the sixty-five-foot-high flagpole in front of the new building. The flag, donated by employees of the U.S. Postal Service belonging to the American Legion, "was hauled aloft while the Providence Letter Carriers' Band played the national anthem."<sup>61</sup> Wrightson Chambers, Superintendent of the Division of Engineering and Research for the U.S. Postal Service, oversaw the dedication ceremony, which was attended by "several hundred persons." Invited guests included architect F. Ellis Jackson, Providence Mayor John F. Collins, Postmaster Dr. Edward F. Carroll, who read a "telegram of congratulations from Postmaster General James A. Farley"; U.S. Judges John C. Mahoney and John P. Hartigan; U.S. District Attorney J. Howard McGrath and two of his assistants; representatives of the U.S. Army Engineers, as well as the public. Superintendent Chambers called the new United States Post Office Annex a symbol of the "progress" of Providence. Dr. Carroll professed to the audience that the new public building "belongs to you in every sense of the word" and urged the public to "visit and use" the building as often as possible in order to learn "what the Government is doing for your convenience and service."<sup>62</sup> Dr. Carroll invited "schools and other groups" to arrange appointments with his office in order to tour the new building.

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55 Ann Beha Associates, 8.

56 "Cornerstone is Laid by Senator Green," *The Providence Journal* (Providence, Rhode Island) 15 September 1939.

57 Ibid.

58 Ibid.

59 Ibid.

60 "Exercises Held at Post Office," *The Providence Journal* (Providence, Rhode Island) 12 June 1940.

61 Ibid.

62 Ibid.

United States Post Office Annex  
Name of Property

Providence, Rhode Island  
County and State

Agencies had occupied their allotted space by late summer 1940. The first floor was reserved for the U.S. Postal Service and included a public lobby, workroom, Supervisor's Office, and finance section with a mail platform at the rear. The workroom was encircled by raised lookout galleries through which supervisors could monitor the performance of the workers.<sup>63</sup> The second floor contained an additional workroom, carriers' service room and lavatories, and an office for the postal inspector. The third floor housed offices for the War Department (U.S. Army Engineers), the Federal Housing Administration, the Civil Service Commission, the Social Security Board, Veterans' Administration, and a branch of the Commerce Department. The U.S. Weather Bureau was located in the partial fourth-story, as was common to many federal buildings of the period.<sup>64</sup>

As completed, the interior finishes included terrazzo floors with inlaid marble borders, brass doors, decorative brass bulletin and directory boards, brass decorative grilles above the parcel post windows, brass elevator doors, and various marble detailing throughout each floor, including marble baseboards and wainscoting. In addition, the Section of Fine Arts under the U.S. Treasury Department commissioned Maryland sculptor Raymond G. Barger to create the limestone panels for the exterior. Barger employed Art Deco-style themes depicting U.S. Postal Service history, as well as an Art Deco-style "Federal Eagle."

The executed plan of the United States Post Office Annex measured 145-feet-wide by 191-feet long and consisted of three stories plus a full basement and partial fourth story.

Mail entered the annex through an unusual second-story "contact room" that connected directly to Union Station, located to the north...the first story workroom was devoted to the sorting of incoming mail and its distribution to the carriers. It was fronted by an elaborate public lobby with service windows and writing desks. The Supervisor's Office and elevator/stair core opened off the lobby's north end, while the southern end was devoted to the Registry functions. The second story workroom was the center for outgoing parcel post items...the basement was occupied almost entirely by storage rooms...the third floor contained offices arranged around a small central lightwell with skylights...Facilities for stamp sales, box distribution, money orders, and administrative offices remained in the old building.<sup>65</sup>

The United States Post Office Annex was the last major public edifice to be constructed in Providence prior to World War II. Within six years, the building, like its predecessor, was deemed overcrowded. As early as 1945, local and federal officials met to discuss the need for a new federal building in Providence to assume some of the functions of the United States Post Office Annex. In 1958, Postmaster General Arthur Summerfield ordered the construction of the first fully automated post office, which would assume some of the functions and services housed

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63 The lookout galleries have been concealed through the application of dropped acoustical-tile ceilings and modern ductwork.

64 "Federal Building Sketches Shown," *The Providence Journal* (Providence, Rhode Island) 19 February 1938.

65 Ann Beha Associates, 10.

United States Post Office Annex  
Name of Property

Providence, Rhode Island  
County and State

at the United States Post Office Annex. The new post office building, erected in the West River Development Area, was completed in 1960.<sup>66</sup>

Between 1945 and 1960, the annex underwent minor maintenance and aesthetic repairs, including interior painting, upkeep of mechanical systems, and repairs to flooring and roof areas. In 1960, changes were made to the southwest parcel post lobby in order to accommodate the mail boxes that had been moved from the U.S. Post Office and Courthouse. Service windows, which had previously bordered the south side of the lobby, were moved to the east wall.<sup>67</sup>

In January 1961, the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA) assumed ownership of the United States Post Office Annex. A year later, GSA announced plans for an \$875,000 rehabilitation project that would include interior alterations in order to consolidate a number of federal agencies under one roof. Although Congress approved appropriations in 1962, almost a decade passed before actual construction was initiated. The main component of the rehabilitation included the conversion of the second-story postal workroom into office space for six federal agencies that were located throughout the city.<sup>68</sup> The move was estimated to reduce government expenditures on leased space from \$5.00/square foot to \$2.08/square foot, based on remodeling costs for the annex.<sup>69</sup> Rehabilitation work included: lowering the fourteen-foot-high ceiling and installing office partitions on the second floor; lowering the second-story windows in order to accommodate the dropped acoustical-tile ceiling on the interior; realigning wall partitions on the third floor; installation of air conditioning on the second and third floors; and the installation of two new elevators.<sup>70</sup> A year later, the Alrae Construction Company of Providence, Rhode Island undertook additional rehabilitation of the second floor that included the conversion of unimproved space to office space; installation of additional restrooms; and construction of an emergency stairwell.<sup>71</sup>

In 1977, GSA renamed the United States Post Office Annex the John O. Pastore Federal Building in honor of former Rhode Island Governor and U.S. Senator John O. Pastore. Senator Pastore's office was located on the third floor of the building throughout all of his twenty-six years in the U.S. Senate. The renaming had been championed by Senator Claiborne Pell.<sup>72</sup>

Changes to the setting and portions of the exterior of the United States Post Office Annex occurred in the mid-1990s when the City of Providence undertook a \$40 million urban renewal project that included a new convention center, rerouting of train tracks, relocation of portions of Interstate 95, and the opening up and rechanneling of the Woonasquatucket and Moshassuck rivers.<sup>73</sup> Consequently, the rivers were moved farther north and east from the United States Post Office Annex, resulting in the demolition of the contact room on the north elevation that was

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66 Ibid., 11.

67 Ibid.

68 Ibid.; The second-story workroom was vacated upon completion of the automated post office.

69 "OKs P.O. Annex Remodeling," *The Providence Journal* (Providence, Rhode Island), 30 March 1962.

70 Ann Beha Associates, 12.

71 Ibid.

72 "Post office annex to carry Pastore name," *The Providence Journal* (Providence, Rhode Island), 31 August 1977.

73 Peter Katz and Vincent Scully, *New Urbanism* (Columbus: McGraw Hill Professional, 1993), 155.

United States Post Office Annex  
Name of Property

Providence, Rhode Island  
County and State

supported by piers set into the riverbed of the Woonasquatucket River, and the construction of an associated parking area immediately east of the building in the former riverbed of the Moshassuck River.

Notable changes occurred to the interior of the building several years later when, in 2001, the second floor was altered to accommodate three courtrooms for the U.S. District Court and their supporting offices. A security partition and screening area was added to the first-floor elevator lobby. Again, the former second-floor postal workroom was altered from office space to two large courtrooms. A smaller courtroom was also constructed, to the east of the central courtroom. The third floor was altered to accommodate the U.S. Marshals Service, the primary tenant on that floor.

At this time, the first floor houses the Annex Finance Station branch of the Providence U.S. Post Office, as well as additional supporting offices for the U.S. District Court. The second and third floors continue to accommodate office space for the U.S. District Court, including four courtrooms, conference rooms, an exercise room, libraries, staff offices, and judge's chambers. The partial fourth floor is currently vacant.

*Senator John O. Pastore*<sup>74</sup>

John Orlando Pastore was a Rhode Island Democratic Party politician who served as Governor of Rhode Island from 1945 until 1950 and as one of Rhode Island's U.S. Senators from 1950 until 1976.

Born in Providence on March 17, 1907, Senator Pastore attended Classical High School and graduated from the law school of Northeastern University (Boston, Massachusetts) in 1931. He was admitted to the bar in 1932, and subsequently went on to practice law in Providence, Rhode Island for the next three years. From 1935 until 1937, he served as a member of the State House of Representatives before becoming the Assistant Attorney General of Rhode Island from 1937 until 1938 and again from 1940 until 1944. In 1944, he was elected Lieutenant Governor of the Rhode Island and assumed the office of Governor on October 5, 1945.

In 1948, Senator Pastore was reelected as Governor but resigned on December 18, 1950 after having been elected to the United States Senate to fill the vacancy caused by the resignation of J. Howard McGrath for the term ending January 3, 1953. Senator Pastore went on to be reelected to the U.S. Senate for four more terms. In the summer of 1964, he delivered the keynote address at the Democratic National Convention in Atlantic City, New Jersey, which nominated Lyndon B. Johnson for President of the United States.

Throughout his twenty-six years as a U.S. Senator, Senator Pastore maintained his Rhode Island office at the United States Post Office Annex. On December 28, 1976, Senator Pastore retired from politics after forty-one years of public service. He continued to live in Cranston, Rhode Island until his death on July 15, 2000 at the age of ninety-three.

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<sup>74</sup> The following is taken from Biographical Directory of the United States Congress, "John Orlando Pastore," (<http://bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=P000100>), accessed 18 July 2017.

United States Post Office Annex  
Name of Property

Providence, Rhode Island  
County and State

### Simplified Classical Architectural Style

The United States Post Office Annex exhibits features characteristic of the Simplified Classical architectural style. Under the tenure of Supervising Architect Louis A. Simon (1934-1941), during which the building was erected, the Simplified Classical style generally prevailed as the most common federal building style.

There has been no study of the distribution of major post office styles in the United States, nor is it clear if there was a deliberate policy on the part of the Supervising Architect to choose designs to match regional tastes of construction types. Simplified Classical was the style common to many public and quasi-public buildings of the 1930s and 1940s.<sup>75</sup> The strong effect of mass achieved a sense of monumentality, presence, and permanence, while simplified detailing satisfied the burgeoning taste for sleek surfaces and minimal ornamentation, as witnessed by the subsequent growth of Modern Architecture. The Simplified Classical style exhibits a symmetrical composition, with a repetitive rhythm of columns or column-like elements and a reliance on carefully considered proportions. Highly simplified cornices and pilasters or square piers are common elements found on Simplified Classical architecture.

The style was so named because the basic form and symmetry of Classicism was retained, but the ornamentation and motifs were reduced or removed. During the Great Depression era, the Office of the Supervising Architect of the U.S. Treasury Department embraced the concept of the Simplified Classical style because the form was still classical and dignified, which conveyed the nation's democratic lineage and the stability of the federal government during an uncertain time. Simultaneously, the lack of ornamentation characteristic of the Simplified Classical style allowed cost savings and an appearance of austerity at a time when exuberant details would have been out of place.

The United States Post Office Annex in Providence is representative of the Simplified Classical style in its monumental character, symmetrical massing, and stylized classical detailing including Greek key motifs, pilasters, modillioned cornice, and decorative bas-relief panels. However, it is unusual in its extensive use of red brick, as Simplified Classical style buildings are more typically constructed of light-colored stone such as limestone or marble. The use of brick may have been a cost saving measure, but could also reflect the design firm's affinity for the Colonial Revival style and respect for the city's rich colonial and federal architectural tradition.

### The Office of the Supervising Architect of the U.S. Treasury Department and the Public Works Administration (PWA)

The Office of the Supervising Architect of the U.S. Treasury Department (Supervising Architect) was responsible for the construction of federal buildings throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The Office was created within the U.S. Treasury Department in 1852 as a response to the enormous increase in federal construction. The office was given responsibility

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75 Carole Rifkind, *A Field Guide to Contemporary American Architecture* (New York: Plume, 1998), 107-110.

United States Post Office Annex  
Name of Property

Providence, Rhode Island  
County and State

for all architectural design and construction supervision. One of the earliest innovations of the office was the development of standardized building types to house the customs house, post office, and courthouse functions. The architectural style selected for these buildings reflected prevailing national taste. The scope of the Supervising Architect's office is reflected in the increase of federal buildings, from twenty-three in 1853, to 297 by 1892.<sup>76</sup>

From 1895 to 1933, the office reported to the U.S. Treasury Department. In the 1920s, the Office of the Supervising Architect was divided into a Technical Branch and an Administrative Branch. The Technical Branch included a division responsible for project costs and accounting; a drafting division, including a superintendent who greatly influenced design practices; a structural division; a mechanical engineering division; and a repairs division. In 1933, the U.S. Treasury Department was reorganized and the Office of the Supervising Architect was shifted to the Procurement Branch of the Division of Public Works of the Treasury. In July 1939, the public buildings program was removed from the U.S. Treasury Department and merged into the Federal Works Agency, Public Buildings Administration. In 1949, Congress established the U.S. General Services Administration (GSA), and the new agency assumed responsibility for public buildings.<sup>77</sup>

#### *World War I and the Public Buildings Act of 1926*

World War I brought the work of the Supervising Architect's Office to a halt due to the financial, industrial, and transportation resources strain that it placed on the country. The only buildings constructed during this period were those required for wartime use and those already under construction. New building construction commenced by 1922; however, the postponement of many projects authorized by the Public Buildings Act of 1913 and a backlog of new building requests necessitated the development of a major public building program. This resulted in the passage of a new Public Buildings Act on May 25, 1926.<sup>78</sup>

The Public Buildings Act of 1926 contained three principal provisions. First, the Secretary of the Treasury and the Postmaster General were directed to conduct a nationwide survey to determine the need for postal facilities with the intent that new facilities would be based upon need rather than political influence. Secondly, the supervising architect's office was permitted to consult private architects in "special cases." The staff of the supervising architect had previously handled all projects, since Supervising Architect James Knox Taylor decided in 1904 to effectively bar private architects from federal construction projects. Finally, the act provided for the continuation of building-design standardization.<sup>79</sup> The building-needs survey of 1926 resulted in the following:

- Doubling the \$100 million previously allocated through the act of 1926;
- The construction of at least two new buildings per state; and
- No buildings constructed in towns where postal receipts were less than \$10,000.<sup>80</sup>

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76 Lois A. Craig, et al., *The Federal Presence* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1978), 202.

77 *Ibid.*, 327.

78 Lee, 231-232, 239.

79 Louis Melius, *The American Postal Service: History of the Postal Service from the Earliest Times*, (Washington, D.C.: Louis Melius, 1917), 40-41.

80 *Ibid.*



United States Post Office Annex  
Name of Property

Providence, Rhode Island  
County and State

President Herbert Hoover worked with Congress to increase allocations for the building program in both 1930 and 1931 as the nation suffered the impacts of the Great Depression. However, the Administration of President Franklin D. Roosevelt substantially expanded the program.<sup>81</sup>

*The Great Depression and the Reorganization of the U.S. Treasury Department*

The building industry began to suffer from the stock market crash of 1929 and the onset of the Great Depression in the early 1930s. Using provisions of the Public Buildings Act of 1926, officials promoted employment within the building trades. Congress passed an amendment to the 1926 act, known as the Keyes-Elliott Bill, in 1930 to provide “increased authority to the secretary of the treasury to enter into contracts with private architects for full professional services.” Despite this directive, the Office of the Supervising Architect, still under Wetmore’s direction, only considered hiring private architects for large projects due to concerns related to efficiency. The American Institute of Architects (AIA) objected to the Treasury Department’s implementation of the amendment to the 1926 act and petitioned for the reorganization of the Supervising Architect’s Office. The AIA hoped that the office would serve only a supervisory function, allowing wider employment of private architects and resulting in greater diversity, vitality, and regional appropriateness in federal architecture. The President’s Emergency Committee for Employment and members of Congress echoed the AIA’s concerns, particularly regarding the need to employ local private architects. H.R. 6197, known as the Green Bill, was introduced in Congress in 1932 in an attempt to place all federal building design in the hands of private architects; however, the legislation did not pass. The AIA continued its campaign following the election of Franklin D. Roosevelt and the appointment of new officials to the U.S. Treasury Department, including Treasury Secretary William H. Woodin.<sup>82</sup>

Roosevelt’s Executive Order 6166, which reorganized the federal building program and promised unemployment relief, was announced in June 1933. The order resulted in the creation of the Procurement Division within the U.S. Treasury Department, the transfer of the Supervising Architect’s Office to the Procurement Division, and the change in name of the Supervising Architect’s Office to the Public Works Branch. W.E. Reynolds, Assistant Director of the Procurement Division, was put in charge of five units headed by the supervising engineer, the supervising architect, the office manager, the chairman of the board of award, and the chief of the legal section.<sup>83</sup>

New relief funding programs were initiated to allocate and supplement funding for public works simultaneously with the U.S. Treasury Department reorganization. Harold L. Ickes, the federal emergency administrator of public works, allocated funds to the U.S. Treasury Department for the construction of federal buildings under the provisions of the National Industrial Recovery Act of 1933, including two allotments in August 1933 in the amounts of \$6,971,648 and \$13,799,550, as well as additional funds for emergency construction projects throughout the country.<sup>84</sup>

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81 Boland, Section II, 3.

82 Lee, 248-252.

83 Ibid., 253.

84 Ibid., 254.

United States Post Office Annex  
Name of Property

Providence, Rhode Island  
County and State

*Public Works Administration, 1933-1939*

Although public works spending as a means to aiding recovery from the Great Depression began under the Hoover Administration, President Roosevelt's New Deal is credited with using the federal building program to achieve relief. These efforts were formalized in 1933, when the Public Works Administration (PWA) was organized to give structure to the recovery effort.

The PWA oversaw the planning and construction of federal and non-federal public works projects, including post office construction. To stimulate the economic recovery, the government rapidly expanded its public works program. This provided work for the unemployed, many of whom were in the building trades. The Bureau of Labor Statistics maintained statistics on employment, wages, cost of materials, and other PWA project data. During the 1930s, the number of public buildings constructed increased dramatically.

Because of the planning already completed under the 1926 legislation, these projects were able to start up quickly. Post office construction increased nearly threefold during this period compared to the previous fifty years; the PWA built 406 post offices in the years from 1933 to 1939, which represents more than one-eighth of the total 3,174 PWA construction projects built. Congress authorized a number of New Deal programs that were used to fund the construction of post offices. In addition, funds for post office construction came from the relief program authorized by the Emergency Relief and Construction Act of July 21, 1932; the Emergency Construction Program under the Appropriation Act of June 1934; and the Building Program for the District of Columbia, authorized by the Act of 1926. The U.S. Treasury Department retained responsibility for post office construction funding until 1939, utilizing a number of different programs and authorizations to fund the program.<sup>85</sup>

Post offices were among the most familiar government buildings to the general public. Despite the desire to complete projects rapidly, the PWA also stressed the importance of high quality in order to ensure "public works of an enduring character and lasting benefits."<sup>86</sup> The program's goals were to construct buildings as quickly as possible and to employ as many people as possible at efficient costs. The standardized design practice of 1915 was well-suited to this high-speed, efficient process. Reducing the number of drawings required for each new project, standardization shortened the time required for the production of drawings. Avoiding construction problems caused by design changes or incorrect plans also helped. Simplified ornamentation also meant less drawing time. While facade variations were allowed, standardized interior plans were well established and utilized. A publication entitled "Instructions to Private Architects Engaged on Public Building Work under the Jurisdiction of the Treasury Department" listed these standards. Simplified Classical and Colonial Revival, both characterized by symmetrical massing and plain surfaces, were the favored styles during this period.<sup>87</sup>

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85 Armstrong, 327.

86 Boland, Section II, 3.

87 Boland, Section II, 4.

United States Post Office Annex

Name of Property

The Section of Fine Arts

Providence, Rhode Island

County and State

From 1934 to 1943, the President Franklin D. Roosevelt Administration supported public art with a series of programs designed both to employ artists and artisans, and to improve the character of public buildings within which their work was placed. These programs employed over ten-thousand artists, producing a total of 100,000 paintings, eighteen-thousand sculptures, thirteen-thousand prints, and over four-thousand murals.<sup>88</sup>

The New Deal Arts Program strived to bring art to the American people by placing the artwork in accessible locations. The New Deal sought to change the relationship between the artist and society by democratizing art and culture. The projects combined an elitist belief in the value of high culture with the democratic ideal that everyone in the society could and should be the beneficiary of such efforts. Art project officials wrote that the mass of people were “underprivileged in art,” and they endeavored to make art accessible to all citizens, regardless of class, race, age, or gender.<sup>89</sup> In addition to the democratic ideals of federal patronage, New Dealers expected that the art projects would help create a national culture.

George Biddle, an artist and former classmate of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, spearheaded the early movement to obtain funding for the program. A public mural experiment in Mexico inspired Biddle to attempt the same thing in the United States. Joining forces with Edward Bruce, a Treasury Department official, Biddle obtained funding for a public arts program from Public Works Administrator Harold Ickes. Subsequently, Edward Bruce emerged as the chief promoter of public funding for artists and named the Public Works of Art Project (PWAP).

In September 1934, Secretary of the Treasury Henry Morgenthau, Jr., and Bruce agreed to spend a portion of new federal buildings’ construction costs on decoration administered by the art unit, not the architect. Approximately one-percent of the building cost was to be reserved for murals, sculpture, or both.<sup>90</sup> As a result of the interest in public art, a new Section of Painting and Sculpture became part of the Office of Supervising Architect in the Treasury Department. In 1938, the Section of Painting and Sculpture became the Section of Fine Arts. One year later, the entire building department within the art unit transferred from the Treasury Department to the New Federal Works Agency, Public Buildings Administration.

According to Edward Bruce, the Chief of the Section of Fine Arts in 1940, the aim of the Section of Fine Arts was to “secure the murals and sculpture of distinguished quality appropriate to the embellishment of federal buildings.”<sup>91</sup> Art for public buildings was determined through competitions, often judged at the local level. The largest competition, dubbed the 1939 Forty-

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88 Marlene Park and Gerald E. Markowitz, *Democratic Vistas: Post Offices and Public Art in the New Deal* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1984), 5.

89 Ibid., 5.

90 In reality, not all buildings contained artwork. If actual costs for construction exceeded the estimate, the building did not receive art. Consequently, some architects were reluctant to create spaces for murals or sculpture that may not be included. Richard D. McKinzie, *The New Deal for Artists* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1973), 38.

91 “Exhibition of Mural Designs for Federal Buildings” (Ottawa, Canada: The National Gallery of Canada, 1940), 4.

United States Post Office Annex  
Name of Property

Providence, Rhode Island  
County and State

Eight State Mural Competition, commissioned forty-eight mural panels to be executed for designated post offices, one in each state. Almost one-thousand artists submitted 1,477 designs. Overall, the Section held 190 competitions and awarded 1,371 commissions. Most of the commissions that did not host competitions went to artists who had submitted designs in previous competitions.<sup>92</sup>

### *Raymond Granville Barger*

In 1939, the Section of Fine Arts of the U.S. Treasury Department commissioned Raymond G. Barger to provide sculpted bas-relief panels for the exterior of the United States Post Office Annex. This was the only commission Barger received from the Section of Fine Arts.<sup>93</sup>

Raymond Granville Barger was born in 1906 in Brunswick, Maryland. He received his education from the Carnegie Institute of Technology (Carnegie Mellon), from which he graduated in 1932. He then went on to attend the Yale University School of Fine Art and was awarded a three-year fellowship from the American Academy in Rome from 1936 to 1939. Barger made his living as a sculptor, living in New York City, Bucks County, Pennsylvania, and California. He worked with metal, plastelina, and bronze, among other materials, and believed that artists and sculptors must work together with architects and industrial leaders. This sentiment is evident in his work for the United States Post Office Annex in Providence, Rhode Island, where his sculpted panels are incorporated, almost seamlessly, in the facade.

Barger's other sculptural work tends to be free-standing pieces, normally placed outdoors as part of the landscape. His 1963 sculpture "Transition" was designed to complement the J.C. Penney Building in New York, and remained at this location for twenty-three years, before it was moved to the James A. Michener Art Museum in Bucks County, Pennsylvania. Other notable commissions include the "Abraham Lincoln," for the Republic of San Marino (1937) and the Column of Perfection, for the H.J. Heinz Company, New York World's Fair (1939). Raymond G. Barger died in February 2001, in California. Aside from the sculpted panels that are visible on the exterior of the United States Post Office Annex, major collections of his work are found at the James A. Michener Art Museum, Doylestown, Pennsylvania and the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company, Park Chester, New York.<sup>94</sup>

### From PWA to GSA, 1939-1954

Federal building construction under PWA programs continued until 1942 when the American entry into World War II virtually halted all building activity. The few buildings finished in the years 1942-1943 were completions of old projects. The styles of architecture remained the same, as did the Supervising Architect's commitment to standardized design.

After World War II, federal architectural activities were well diffused throughout military and civilian agencies. In 1949, the United States General Services Administration (GSA) subsumed

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92 Park and Markowitz, 5.

93 Ibid., 227.

94 James A. Michener Art Collection, "Raymond G. Barger," (<http://www.michenerartmuseum.org/bucksartists/artist/309/>), accessed 18 July 2017.

United States Post Office Annex  
Name of Property

Providence, Rhode Island  
County and State

the Federal Works Agency, including its public building design function. With the Public Buildings Act of 1949, the Office of the Supervising Architect increasingly relied on private architectural firms to carry out public building designs.

In 1954, all exclusively post office projects were removed from the GSA and transferred to the United States Post Office Department. In 2010, the GSA retains holdings over non-military federal buildings, including those that house various federal agencies within one building, such as the United States Post Office Annex in Providence.<sup>95</sup>

### Statement of Significance<sup>96</sup>

#### *Criterion A - Politics/Government*

The United States Post Office Annex is significant on the local level under Criterion A for Politics/Government as an embodiment of the growth of Providence in the early twentieth century and the federal building construction campaign carried forth into the Great Depression and under the Public Works Administration. The building was designed and constructed as part of the federal construction programs that were enacted to reduce unemployment during the Depression. The building is partially faced with limestone, which emphasized the monumentality of the federal government during uncertain times. The lack of ornamentation conveys the government's frugality at a time when ostentatious displays would have been inappropriate. The incorporation of classical elements as well as the federally commissioned sculpted panels expresses the sense of a federal permanence and presence in the community and continuity of tradition. Finally, the federal building was perceived as a symbol of civic pride, and its placement amidst other prominent civic and federal buildings in Providence supports this sentiment. Furthermore, the building's location on Exchange Place Mall reinforced the objectives of Providence's City Plan Commission in an attempt to centralize all federal buildings in the downtown area.

#### *Criterion C - Architecture*

The United States Post Office Annex is significant on the local level under Criterion C for Architecture as a notable example of the Simplified Classical architectural style, the preferred style that characterizes the federal buildings erected during the late tenure of Supervising Architect Louis A. Simon. Characteristic of the Simplified Classical style, the United States Post Office Annex displays a strong sense of mass and permanence with simplified detailing. The restrained exterior detailing, the pilasters, and the detailed entry and window surrounds convey the building's public purpose while simultaneously emphasizing the economy of Depression-era federal government through the lack of extraneous and ornamental detail. In addition, the building's prominently placed bas-relief sculptures, exemplify the New Deal effort to bring art to the people by incorporating it into the design of federal buildings.

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<sup>95</sup> Lee, 285-290.

<sup>96</sup> The United States Post Office Annex is a contributing resource within the Downtown Providence Historic District, which was listed in the National Register of Historic Places on February 10, 1984.

United States Post Office Annex  
Name of Property

Providence, Rhode Island  
County and State

The United States Post Office Annex is significant in the areas of Politics/Government and Architecture for the year 1940, the date of its completion. Although it has been altered over time to accommodate the changing needs of the federal government tenants, the building retains sufficient integrity to convey its significance as a federal building constructed in the Simplified Classical architectural style in 1940.

United States Post Office Annex  
Name of Property

Providence, Rhode Island  
County and State

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United States Post Office Annex  
Name of Property

Providence, Rhode Island  
County and State

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City of Providence



United States Post Office Annex  
Name of Property

Providence, Rhode Island  
County and State

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United States Post Office Annex  
Name of Property

Providence, Rhode Island  
County and State

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Gary Smith (U.S. General Services Administration Building Manager), in conversation with Emma Young, 30 September 2008.

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**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested  
 previously listed in the National Register (Contributing to Downtown Providence Historic District)

previously determined eligible by the National Register

designated a National Historic Landmark

recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

State Historic Preservation Office

Other State agency

Federal agency (Northeast Region, U.S. General Services Administration)

Local government

University

Other

Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

**Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):** \_\_\_\_\_

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**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreege of Property** 1.1 acres

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

United States Post Office Annex  
Name of Property

Providence, Rhode Island  
County and State

**Latitude/Longitude Coordinates (decimal degrees)**

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- |              |            |
|--------------|------------|
| 1. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 2. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 3. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 4. Latitude: | Longitude: |

**Or**

**UTM References**

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or  NAD 1983

- |             |                 |                   |
|-------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| 1. Zone: 19 | Easting: 299783 | Northing: 4633294 |
| 2. Zone:    | Easting:        | Northing:         |
| 3. Zone:    | Easting:        | Northing:         |
| 4. Zone:    | Easting :       | Northing:         |

**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The boundary includes the approximately 1.1-acre tax parcel (01900330000) upon which the United States Post Office Annex is located. The western boundary is delineated by Exchange Street, and Exchange Terrace forms the northern boundary of the property. The eastern boundary is delineated by Memorial Boulevard. The southern boundary is defined by Washington Street.

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The National Register boundary for the United States Post Office Annex includes the entire portion of the 1.1-acre tax parcel that is historically associated with the building during its period of significance (1940). This boundary follows the tax parcel lines and includes the post office annex building that has occupied the lot since its construction in 1940. The boundary encompasses all of the significant resources and features that comprise the property.

United States Post Office Annex  
Name of Property

Providence, Rhode Island  
County and State

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### 11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Emma K. Young/Architectural Historian  
organization: A.D. Marble & Company, prepared for U.S. General Services Administration  
street & number: 3913 Hartzdale Drive, Suite 1302  
city or town: Camp Hill state: PA zip code: 17011  
e-mail eyoung@admarble.com  
telephone: 717.731.9588  
date: September 2010

### Update and Revisions By:

name/title: Elizabeth Hannold/Preservation Specialist  
organization: U.S. General Services Administration  
street & number: 1800 F Street, NW, Suite 5400  
city or town: Washington state: DC zip code: 20405  
e-mail elizabeth.hannold@gsa.gov  
telephone: 202.501.2863  
date: August 2017

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### Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

United States Post Office Annex  
Name of Property

Providence, Rhode Island  
County and State

### Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

### Photo Log

Name of Property: United States Post Office Annex

City or Vicinity: Providence

County: Providence

State: RI

Photographer: E. Young  
A.D. Marble & Company  
375 E. Elm Street, Suite 200  
Conshohocken, PA 19428

Date Photographed: September 2008\*

Photo #1 of 12 (RI\_Providence County\_United States Post Office Annex\_0001)  
West elevation, view to southeast

Photo # 2 of 12 (RI\_Providence County\_United States Post Office Annex\_0002)  
North and east elevations, view to southwest

Photo # 3 of 12 (RI\_Providence County\_ United States Post Office Annex\_0003)  
East elevation, view to northwest

Photo # 4 of 12 (RI\_Providence County\_ United States Post Office Annex\_0004)  
South and east elevations, view to northwest

Photo # 5 of 12 (RI\_Providence County\_ United States Post Office Annex\_0005)  
Fourth story, view to southeast from roof top.

Photo # 6 of 12 (RI\_Providence County\_ United States Post Office Annex\_0006)  
Interior, postal lobby, looking southwest.

Photo # 7 of 12 (RI\_Providence County\_ United States Post Office Annex\_0007)  
Interior, postal lobby, looking southeast.

Photo # 8 of 12 (RI\_Providence County\_ United States Post Office Annex\_0008)

United States Post Office Annex  
Name of Property

Providence, Rhode Island  
County and State

Interior, post box lobby, view to southeast.

Photo # 9 of 12 (RI\_Providence County\_ United States Post Office Annex\_0009)  
Interior, postal workroom, view to southwest.

Photo # 10 of 12 (RI\_Providence County\_ United States Post Office Annex\_0010)  
Interior, second-floor courtroom, view to south.

Photo # 11 of 12 (RI\_Providence County\_ United States Post Office Annex\_0011)  
Interior, third-floor corridor, view to south.

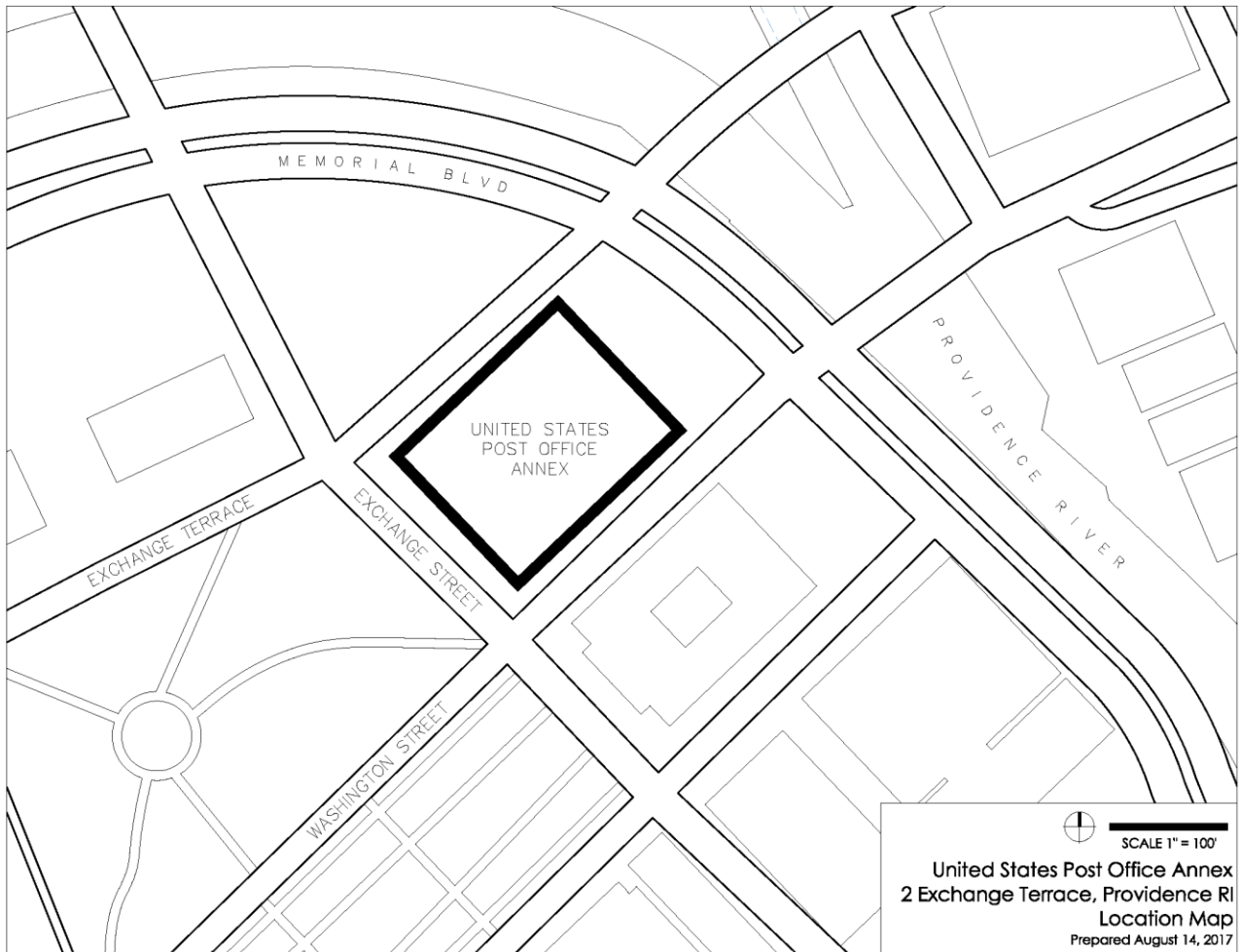
Photo # 12 of 12 (RI\_Providence County\_ United States Post Office Annex\_0012)  
Interior, fourth floor, view to southwest.

\*Note – GSA has verified that the building as shown in these views has not changed since the date of photography.

United States Post Office Annex  
Name of Property

Providence, Rhode Island  
County and State

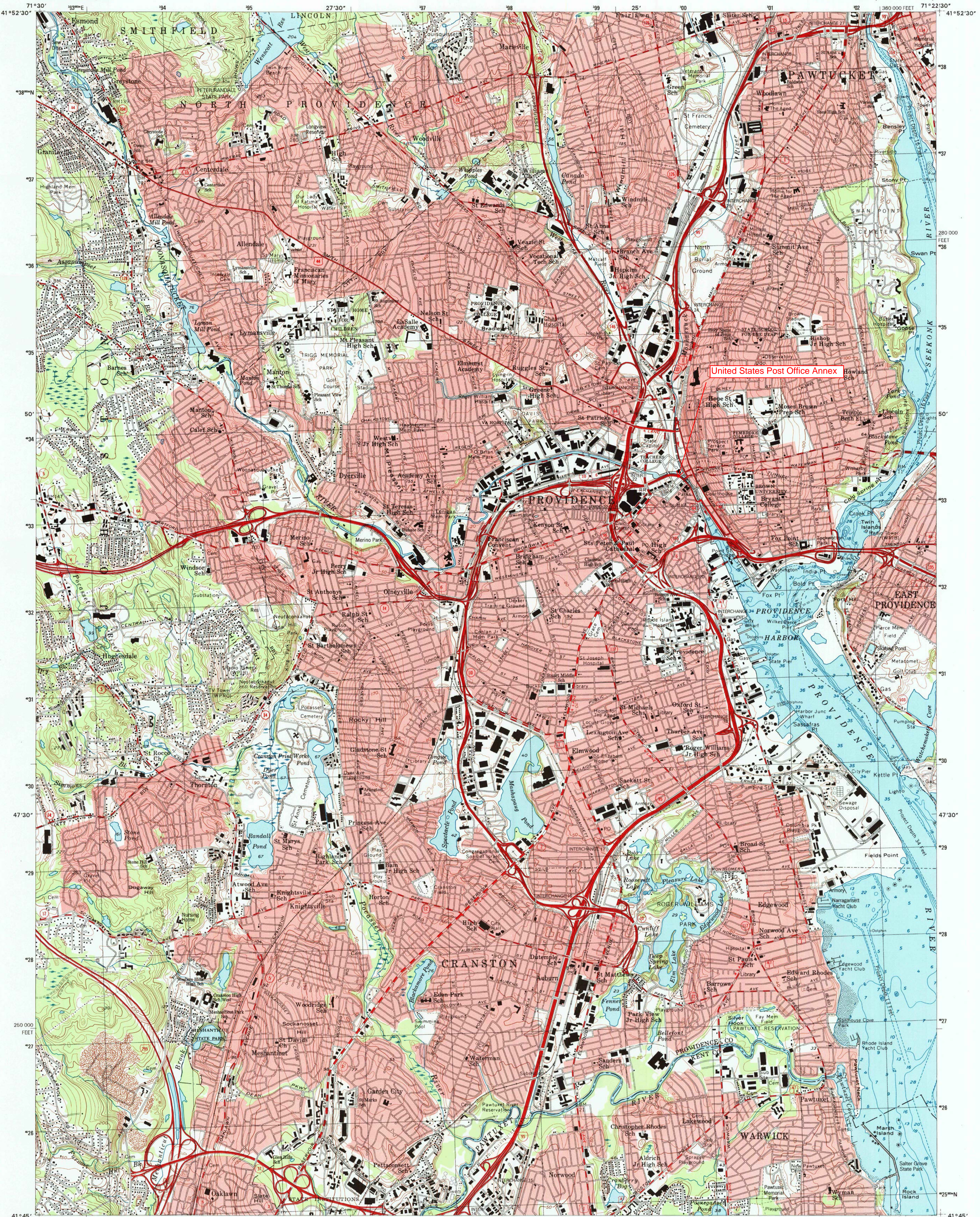
### Location Map



**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

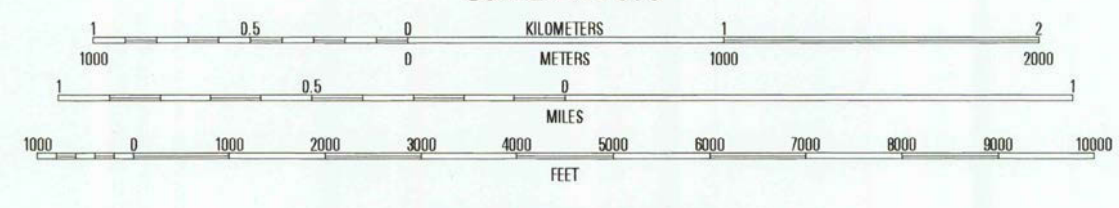
**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.





United States Post Office Annex

Produced by the United States Geological Survey Topography taken from 1:31,680 scale map of Providence 7.5 minute quadrangle, surveyed 1934-1935. Planimetry derived from imagery taken 1996 and other sources. Hydrography compiled from NOAA charts 278(1954) and 352(1957). North American Datum of 1983 (NAD 83). Projection and 1,000-meter grid: Universal Transverse Mercator, zone 19 10, 000-foot ticks based on Rhode Island Coordinate System of 1983 North American Datum of 1927 (NAD 27) is shown by dashed corner ticks. The values of the shift between NAD 83 and NAD 27 for 7.5-minute intersections are obtainable from National Geodetic Survey NADCON software. Survey control current as of 1957. Landmark buildings verified 1957.



ROAD CLASSIFICATION legend table with symbols for primary, secondary, and unimproved roads, and for interstate, U.S., and state routes.

QUADRANGLE LOCATION table with a grid of numbers 1-8 and corresponding quadrangle names: 1 GEORGIATOWN, 2 PAWTUCKET, 3 ATLEBORO, 4 NORTH SCITUATE, 5 EAST PROVIDENCE, 6 CROMPTON, 7 EAST GREENWICH, 8 BRISTOL.

PROVIDENCE, RI 1996 NIMA 6767 IV S-SERIES V815

CONTOUR INTERVAL 10 FEET NATIONAL GEODETIC VERTICAL DATUM OF 1929 TO CONVERT FROM FEET TO METERS, MULTIPLY BY 0.3048 DEPTH CURVES AND SOUNDINGS IN FEET - DATUM IS MEAN LOW WATER THE MEAN RANGE OF TIDE IS APPROXIMATELY 4.6 FEET THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS FOR SALE BY U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, P.O. BOX 25286, DENVER, COLORADO 80225 A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST





















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