

DRAFT REPORT

**USPS NATIONWIDE HISTORIC
CONTEXT STUDY: POSTAL
FACILITIES CONSTRUCTED OR
OCCUPIED BETWEEN 1940 AND 1971**



Prepared for

U.S. Postal Service
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Between March and September 2012, URS Group, Inc. (URS) of Germantown, Maryland prepared a historic context of United States Postal Service (USPS) buildings dating from the period between 1940 and 1971. The project expanded on the existing USPS historic post office context, *History of Post Office Construction 1900 – 1940* (USPS, 1982). As part of the project, URS surveyed 98 postal facilities throughout the United States, representing approximately 7 percent of the 1,461 properties in the USPS Electronic Facilities Management System (eFMS) property database that were built or occupied between 1940 and 1971.

The need to develop comprehensive National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) evaluation materials for post office facilities dating from this period is linked to the USPS initiation of a new “Mail Processing Network Rationalization Initiative” to create a more streamlined processing and distribution network that will use fewer facilities to handle an existing and projected decline in national mail volumes. This past year, national media have reported on the USPS and its attempts to speed up closure of facilities to offset operating deficits. The rationalization initiative will result in the sale of excess post offices and related building types, which will initiate Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act for each property transfer or sale out of federal ownership. To facilitate the NRHP evaluation required by Section 106, the National Register Interim Keeper, Carol Shull, recommended the USPS undertake a nationwide context study to facilitate the evaluation of the NRHP eligibility of these buildings.

The *History and Context Study of Postal Facilities Constructed or Occupied Between 1940 and 1971* study has gathered and organized information about the expansion and evolution of USPS activities during this timeframe. Many significant national forces shaped the American landscape during this period, including the growth of the Interstate Highway System and airline industry, suburbanization, and the prolific use of Modern architecture in commercial and federal buildings. Within the USPS, many of these national forces resulted in shifts in the location and types of facilities that were constructed. Changing technological practices, such as the 1963 implementation of the Zone Improvement Program (ZIP) Code system, also changed the way mail was processed and delivered. The changing shape of communities resulted in greater dependence on motorized vehicles for national distribution and local delivery. Changes in architectural practices, which resulted in the use of new materials and the development of more uniform architectural designs, also affected the range and style of USPS facilities erected during this period.

The project has the following goals:

- Provide a recognized and acknowledged reference document that defines significant periods of operational changes and design of USPS buildings constructed between 1940 and 1971; and
- Identify and evaluate significant architecture as well as historic character-defining features of USPS-owned/constructed buildings from the identified period.

The Study is intended to be used by that the USPS, State Historic Preservation Officers (SHPOs), the Keeper of the National Register (Keeper), the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, and members of the public to evaluate eligibility of USPS properties constructed or occupied between 1940 and 1971 for listing in the NRHP.

This comprehensive analysis of the events, trends, architecture, management, mechanization, and labor during this time documents the historically significant decisions and events that shaped the USPS and its buildings. Distinct building types resulted from historical technological or design innovation trends. These building types are reflective of and associated with these changes, and are potentially eligible for NRHP listing. This Study articulates the framework for determining NRHP eligibility for these properties.

The Study identifies the character-defining features for NRHP-eligible properties, which can help guide management and rehabilitation. When designing a rehabilitation project, those features often need to be preserved for the building to meet the terms and conditions of a preservation easement and/or qualify a project for tax credits. Identification of character-defining features can help potential developers and future users determine if a historic building is suitable for their needs. This information may also help the USPS determine the future use of the building and provide a means for predicting adverse effects and the potential for mitigation.

The results of this Study identify two distinct building periods for the USPS during the 1940 to 1971 timeframe. Prior to the start of American involvement in WWII, the Post Office Department constructed many Public Works Administration era post offices that are similar in design and intent to those constructed during the Great Depression. Innovation, rather than construction, was the focus of activity after the war, and existing buildings were adapted to house new machines and deal with the ever-expanding volume of mail. Design brochures developed by the Post Office Department in the late 1950s and early 1960s guided the contract-built “Thousand Series” of small post offices around the country, which were privately financed through a lease-purchase program. Large postal processing factories built outside cities near freeways helped expedite delivery of the mail. Unlike the Depression era post offices but similar to much of the commercial and institutional architecture of the era, most of the processing centers and small post offices were designed in the Modern style and do not have an iconic street presence. These building have interior plans that are distinct to post offices, and the larger processing centers may have machinery or work system zones that clearly convey their historic function.

As the USPS continues to explore future disposition and management of these facilities, it is important to work with the SHPOs on developing statewide contexts, as many of the larger centers had a regional function. In addition, further management and maintenance of the USPS property database, eFMS, would help us understand regional and statewide historic trends. Most importantly, this Study will streamline NRHP eligibility evaluation of postal facilities from the 1940 to 1971 period, and can be leveraged into a nationwide Programmatic Agreement to guide Section 106 compliance throughout the USPS Mail Processing Network Rationalization Initiative.

SECTION ONE: INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

1.1 PROJECT PURPOSE AND NEED

As described in the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards on Preservation Planning*, decisions about the identification, evaluation, registration and treatment of historic properties are best made when the relationship of individual properties to similar properties is understood.¹ Information about historic properties representing aspects of history and architecture must be collected and organized to help define these relationships within an organizational framework called a historic context. This framework organizes information by first developing broad historic themes or patterns, and then adding geographical limits and associated temporal periods. With this framework in hand, better and more justifiable decisions can be made regarding the identification, evaluation, and treatment of historic properties.

This is especially needed today, as the passage of time has resulted in many mid-century properties becoming 50 years old or older without adequate contexts, studies, or analyses to understand and evaluate these resources. For example, the National Park Service's National Register Bulletin 13, "How to Apply the National Register Criteria to Post Offices" (1984, updated 1994), the United States Post Office's (USPS's) *History of Post Office Construction 1900–1940* (1982), and James Bruns' *Great American Post Offices* (1998) provide very useful information; however, these studies generally end at 1940. For the modern period, there is a dearth of current professional National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) historic context documentation pertaining to post office facilities and their design. An exception is Jesse Vogler's important 2007 thesis "Postal Space: Territories and Temporalities."

The need to develop more comprehensive NRHP evaluation materials for post office facilities was highlighted in correspondence from the National Park Service to the USPS in early 2011. Interim Keeper of the National Register of Historic Places, Carol Shull, wrote to the USPS on January 20, 2011, regarding a recent NRHP Determination of Eligibility request for the Portland, OR, Processing and Distribution Center related to a National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) Section 106 undertaking. Ms. Shull pointed out that "...it is likely that a number of mid-20th century postal properties will need evaluation in the coming years. To facilitate determining which ones are eligible for the National Register, we recommend that the Postal Service develop an up-to-date nationwide context for evaluating post office facilities. This will make evaluating individual postal properties more efficient and consistent and save the USPS time and money by minimizing conflicts."² Ms. Shull suggested that such a study could be used as the basis for updating National Register Bulletin 13, entitled "How to Apply the National Register Criteria to Post Offices." This Study was completed as a Multiple Property Document context to be submitted by the USPS to the Keeper of the NRHP for listing. For future evaluations of

¹ *Secretary of the Interior's Standards on Preservation Planning*, http://www.cr.nps.gov/local-law/arch_stnds_1.htm, accessed July 30, 2012.

² Carol Shull to Tom Samra, VP Facilities USPS and Stephen C. Roth, AIA, MCR, USPS and USPS, January 20, 2011.

individual resources associated with this context, this Study will be referenced under item 5 “Name of related multiple property listing” on related individual nomination forms.

To address an ongoing pattern of major operating budget deficits caused by declining first-class mail volume, challenges from other private mail and parcel delivery firms, and the requirement to pre-pay retiree health benefits and pension funds, the USPS has initiated a new “Mail Processing Network Rationalization Initiative” to create a more streamlined processing and distribution network that will use fewer facilities to handle an existing and projected decline in national mail volumes. In an April 1, 2011, article in the *Washington Post* entitled “USPS seeks to speed up closures,” a new USPS review process was highlighted that will be used to expedite decisions on postal closures. An important component in its downsizing is the sale of excess post offices and related building types. However, the current process of identifying and evaluating historic properties under the Section 106 review process is time-consuming, and often leaves the USPS and potential buyers without clear direction on disposition.

1.1.1 Request for Proposals

During the winter of 2011, the USPS issued a Request for Proposal (RFP) for a Scope of Work and budget to complete a *History and Context Study of Postal Facilities Constructed or Occupied Between 1940 and 1971*. This Study would include a review of the evolution of the Post Office Department, predecessor of the USPS, its operations and the effects of these operations on USPS currently owned facilities built or first occupied between a roughly 30-year span from the period just preceding World War II through the Postal Reorganization Act of 1971. The Study had two stated objectives:

- Provide a recognized and acknowledged reference document that defines significant periods of operational changes and design of USPS buildings constructed between 1940 and 1971 on the national and state levels; and
- Identify and evaluate significant architecture as well as historic character-defining features, if any, of USPS-owned/constructed buildings from the identified period.

The principal focus of the project was the production of a technical Study that the USPS, State Historic Preservation Officers (SHPOs), the Keeper of the National Register (Keeper), the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP), and members of the public can use to evaluate eligibility of USPS properties constructed or occupied between 1940 and 1971 for listing in the NRHP. The USPS has requested that this Study be completed in sufficient detail to allow its use as a reference tool.

URS Group, Inc. (URS) submitted a technical proposal and cost for this Study to the USPS on April 14, 2011. The USPS evaluated three proposals submitted, one from URS and two from other companies. After review of technical approaches, personnel resumes, and project qualifications, in early June the USPS directed URS to submit a best and final technical approach and budget to complete this Study. This was done on June 20, 2011.

On January 18, 2012, URS was selected to complete this Study. The project was initiated on March 1, 2012, and completed in September, 2012.

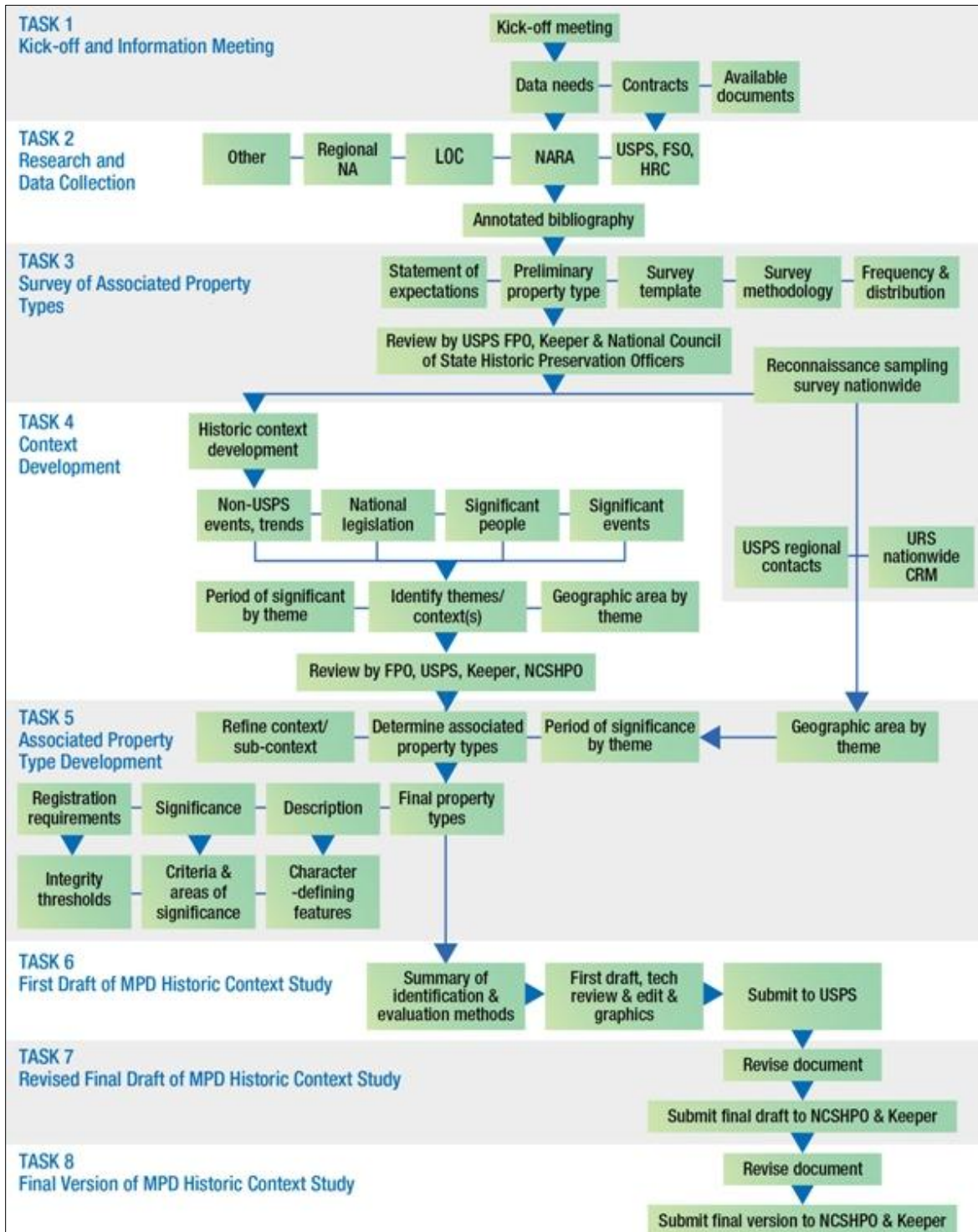
The *History and Context Study of Postal Facilities Constructed or Occupied Between 1940 and 1971* has gathered and organized information about the expansion and evolution of USPS activities during this timeframe. Many significant national forces shaped the American landscape during this period, including the growth of the Interstate Highway System and airline industry, suburbanization, and the Civil Rights movement. Within the USPS, many of these national forces resulted in shifts in the locations and types of facilities that were constructed. Changing technological practices, such as the 1963 implementation of the Zone Improvement Program (ZIP) Code system, changed the way mail was processed and delivered. National architectural practices, which resulted in the use of new materials and the development of more uniform architectural designs, also affected the range and style of USPS facilities erected during this period.

The overall value of this Study is its use as a resource for the USPS to plan, protect, and manage their buildings. The historic context developed as a result of this Study also provides the USPS with a new tool to speed the evaluation of the recent past resources within the Section 106 consultation process, and a to help the agency meet its Section 110 responsibilities. As federal agencies grapple with an increasingly large number of properties turning 50 years old, tools like this evaluation framework are essential to ensuring that evaluation efforts are handled in the most efficient and expeditious manner possible.

1.1.2 Study Work Tasks

URS completed the project through a series of eight discrete tasks. These tasks were organized to carry out USPS's stated goals for the project. URS employed a series of methods that take advantage of its strengths of service delivery through its significant number of professional offices located throughout the United States.

Figure 1-1 on the following page illustrates the linkage between different tasks. The eight tasks included: 1) Kick-off and Information Meeting; 2) Research and Data Collection; 3) Survey of Associated Property Types; 4) Context Development; 5) Associated Property Type Development; 6) First Draft of Multiple Property Documentation (MPD) Historic Context; 7) Final Draft of MPD Historic Context; and 8) Final Version of MPD Historic Context Study.



Source: URS

Figure 1-1: USPS Historic Context Study, 1940 – 1971 Project Process

1.1.3 Utilization of Study Report

The *History and Context Study of Postal Facilities Constructed or Occupied Between 1940 and 1971* was designed to guide future protection and utilization or sale of USPS properties. This comprehensive analysis of the events, trends, architects, management, and labor during this time has documented the historically significant decisions and events that shaped the USPS and the buildings where these events occurred. In addition, distinct building types that resulted from historical technological or design innovation trends were developed. Significant national trends in consumerism, transportation, and development took place during this period, and these trends affected how the USPS continually adapted its central economic and community role in twentieth century American life. Distinct types of buildings are reflective of those changes and are potentially eligible for NRHP listing. This Study articulates the framework for determining NRHP eligibility for these properties.

To avoid an NHPA Section 106 Adverse Effect determination, de-accessioning properties from federal ownership that are listed in the NRHP has generally meant attaching preservation easements to the titles, which require that changes to the property be in conformance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. Listing in the NRHP allows these rehabilitation standards to potentially qualify a commercial property for a 20 percent federal tax credit for qualified rehabilitation expenses. Several states have similar programs for the provision of state tax credits, and some local property taxing authorities may provide lower valuations for properties with an easement. The Federal Rehabilitation Income Tax Credit, along with similar state and local programs, provides incentives for preserving these buildings that often played key roles in a community's history and sense of place.

The Study has identified the character-defining features for NRHP-eligible properties, which can help guide management and rehabilitation. Historic integrity for a property is determined by the presence or absence of architectural features that convey historic significance. When designing a rehabilitation project, those features often need to be preserved for the building to retain its historic status. Identification of character-defining features can assist potential developers or future users in determining if a historic building is suitable for their needs. Identification of character-defining features may also help the USPS determine the future use of the building and provide a means for predicting adverse effects and potential mitigation strategies.

1.2 RESEARCH AND DATA COLLECTION

To document and evaluate Post Office Department built resources, URS began with a review of the previous 1900 – 1940 context study and reference materials identified in the USPS RFP. URS identified and examined an additional 17 context studies for specific states covering the Post Office Department from 1900 to the 1940s. From March through June 2012, a team of historians and architectural historians focused on national repositories in the Washington, DC region, including those listed below.

The Library of Congress

Research focused on collecting data from hearings before the U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Post Office and Civil Service 1940 – 1971, general USPS histories, USPS-related periodicals (i.e., *Post Haste*, 1940 – 1971; *Postal Life*, 1967 – 1971; and *Postal Service News*, 1955 – 1961). Little information on USPS design and construction from the period was found.

National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC

Record Group 28, Records of the Post Office Department, was accessed. Researchers searched collections 28.2.10 Bureau of Facilities, 28.2.11 Bureau of Research and Engineering, 28.2.12 Bureau of Transportation and International Services, 28.4.2 Domestic Transportation Division, 28.4.3 Division of Railway Mail Service, 28.4.6 Division of Air Mail Service, 28.6.3. Division of Motor Vehicle Service, 28.6.5 Division of Post Office Quarters, and 28.9 Bureau of Transportation 1915–1966. Records from at least three records groups were identified with materials pertinent to post office design, including the records from the Post Office Department, Public Buildings Service, and the Federal Works Agency, (FWA) the federal agency responsible for post office construction after the Public Works Administration (PWA) closed in 1939.

National Postal Museum Library, Washington, DC

The National Postal Museum library collection focuses on stamps and postal markings. There is smaller collection of materials related to postmasters. Almost no information related to post office design and construction is in this repository. Some historical information was accessed through their website: <http://www.postalmuseum.si.edu/research/index.html>.

USPS Corporate Library

Research materials at the USPS Corporate Library consist mostly of books on USPS history and the Postmaster General Annual Reports from 1940 to 1971. There was little information on postal construction other than Building Guides (1950, 1959, and 1964), Standardized Details (1960), and *Development of Standard Plans for Regional Postal Facilities* (1969). Construction information for processing and distribution centers was found in the publications *Introductory Meeting Project Turnkey* (ca. 1959), *Gateway Interim Progress Report* (1961), and *Evaluation of Structural Systems for Postal Facility Construction* (1968).

USPS Federal Preservation Officer Files

The USPS Federal Preservation Officer files mostly contain data related to New Deal era murals. Also included are a small number of NRHP nominations for USPS facilities or districts with USPS facilities that primarily predate 1940. Additional materials include a historic image collection of Post Office Department facilities that primarily date from the 1920s to the early 1940s.

The repositories above contained both primary and secondary source materials. Among those investigated were periodicals from the target period including *Architectural Record*, *Postal*

Bulletin, and *Postal Service News*, which offered insights on postal designs, theory, and mechanization. This information is supplemented by Congressional hearings, the Annual Reports of the Postmaster General, and various secondary sources. Two sources of particular interest related to federal architecture from the period are *The Federal Presence: Architecture, Politics, and Symbols in U.S. Government Building, Growth, Efficiency, and Modernism: GSA Buildings of the 1950s, 60s, and 70s*, and *Architecture of the Great Society: Assessing the GSA Portfolio of Buildings Constructed During the 1960s and 1970s*. A number of reports and books, including *Research, Development and Mechanization in the United States Post Office Department: an Interim Report to the Postmaster General*, by the Post Office Department Advisory Board, that detail the development of technology within the Postal Office Department and its ramifications were also reviewed. Concurrently, URS historians attempted to collect data from the regional Facilities Headquarters offices around the country and from A/E managers at Facilities Service Offices (FSOs). Researchers also utilized the USPS Electronic Facilities Management System (eFMS) database of real property and maintenance records. In addition, URS collected data from design guidelines, manuals, and construction drawings from USPS headquarters, regional offices, and individual post offices. These sources are included in both a Bibliography and Sources Consulted list at the end of this Study.

1.3 SURVEY OF ASSOCIATED PROPERTY TYPES

1.3.1 Survey Expectations

The methodology for this Study was carefully crafted to gather information in a way that controlled overall Study costs. For example, while one approach to the survey of the 1,466 facilities built or occupied within the Study period would be to examine all of these facilities, the significant cost of this approach made this option infeasible. URS took a different approach, focusing on a sampling (7 percent) of these resources. This provided statistically valid, high-quality information that was used for the identification of character-defining features and integrity levels, gathered in a manner that also contained costs for the Study as a whole. A URS Senior Economist reviewed and made recommendations on the data analysis and statistical validity of the methodology as it was developed. The following process was used to determine a 7 percent sample that would legitimately represent dominant characteristics of the total collection of facilities in the 2011 USPS eFMS database.

The project's survey methodology was based on winnowing down a large number of facilities—1,461 within the 1940–1971 time period (Appendix A)—to a 7 percent representative sample. This downsizing was determined by sorting on four factors: year of construction or occupancy, facility type, interior square footage, and state. The resulting properties selected to be surveyed as a result of this process have several of the above factors in common. Research suggests additional commonalities due to building and design standards used at different time periods.

The largest group surveyed consisted of properties (approximately 50 percent) that were constructed in the 1960s, less than 10,000 interior square feet, and classified as post offices. A 1964 USPS publication, *Building Designs*, prepared by the Post Office Department, Office of

Research and Engineering, contains a foreword that states, “This brochure provides designs for obtaining uniformly efficient and architecturally attractive small post office buildings throughout the United States.”³ The 50 percent of the survey sample is consistent with the age of the brochure and the square footage requirements.

The brochure designs are meant for buildings ranging from 500 to 12,000 square feet. Rectilinear and box-shaped forms are dominant, as is the use of overhanging canopies. Setbacks are very limited or non-existent in these renderings, and there appear to be no mention or reference to parking facilities, which is not likely to represent site plans in the field. In addition, the majority of the renderings in the brochure show these post offices on arterial roads that contain strip mall-type commercial establishments, rather than in traditional main street central business districts. Designs and general notes in the brochure indicate flat or very low-slope gable roofs, frequent use of window walls, with aluminum or steel frames, exposed panels of precast concrete or brick veneer skins, partition walls, and offset or corner recessed main entries. The predominant architecture style is Modern.

The second survey group is predominately characterized by its occupancy or construction dates, which include the very early, pre-WWII years. As expected, these buildings were mostly located within traditional downtown commercial areas. They showed more stylistic variety than the 1960s designs; however, many were consistent with predominate styles found in Works Progress Administration (WPA)-era post office constructions, such as Stripped Classicism and Colonial Revival. More regional expressions of revivals may be apparent, especially in the South, Southwest, and West. Windows were expected to be more operational and functional, not simply a means to allow light to enter the building. Entrances are largely centered and visually dominate the façade of the building. Although plans were mainly rectangular, the forms had some plasticity with projecting and receding wall planes rather than pure box-like forms. Flat roofs dominated, although other roofs had a more traditionally articulated form and lacked canopies and wide eaves for providing shade to interior spaces enclosed by window walls. Wall cladding was brick or stone, with stucco being used in the south and west in revival styles.

The last group of buildings is more utilitarian. Building types in this group include vehicle maintenance facilities (VMFs) and processing and distribution centers (P&DCs), along with a few post office annexes and combined federal buildings. Operational support facilities have larger footprints, and are sited where they can accommodate fleets of trucks in addition to employee parking spaces. Façades may be clad in brick or stone veneer, but exterior walls are likely to consist of metal panels and concrete masonry unit block, with flat membrane or built-up composition roofs. These facilities are mainly on major arterial roads and have plans organized by the functional division of space, with an emphasis on horizontal operations, rather than a vertical integration of processing.

³ Post Office Department, Office of Research and Engineering, *Building Design*, Washington D.C., United States Post Office Department, 1964. Foreword.

1.3.2 Sampling Methodology

The sampled 7 percent of USPS facilities constructed or occupied between 1940 and 1971 were chosen to be representative of the master list of 1,461 facilities.⁴ The USPS-generated master list of facilities was organized into groups based on the following common attributes:

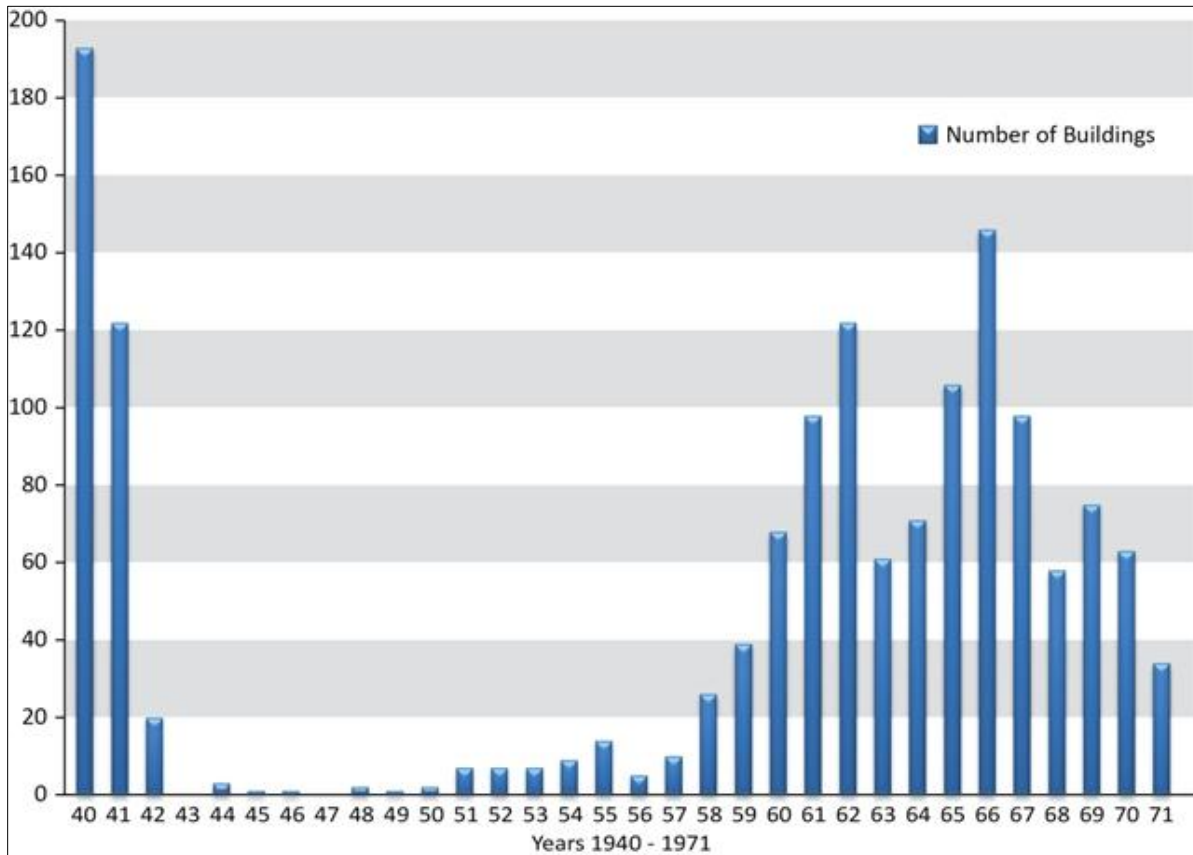
- Year facilities were constructed/occupied.
- USPS facility type.
- Interior square footage.
- State where facility is located.

The evaluation of the master property list by group is described in more detail below.

1.3.2.1 Years When Facilities Were Constructed/Occupied

For analysis, the data from the master property list were sorted by the year each facility was constructed/occupied during the Study period, from 1940 to 1971. Figure 1-2 shows that the early 1940s and the 1960s were when most construction occurred. The pre-WWII years of 1940 to 42 indicate a spike in construction followed by no or little activity until the beginning of the 1960s. There was a sustained period of construction throughout the 1960s, with notable spikes in 1962 and 1966. Of the 1,461 facilities, 61 percent were constructed during the 1960s.

⁴ The discrepancy between the total numbers is due to duplicate entries in the database.

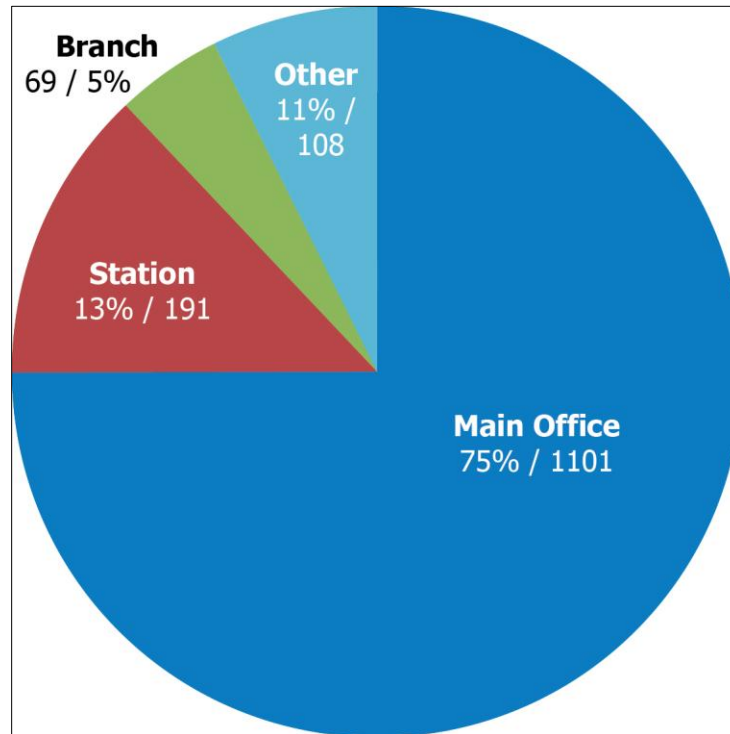


Source: URS

Figure 1-2: Number of USPS Facilities Constructed or Occupied by Year

1.3.2.2 USPS Facility Types

The property master list provided by the USPS contains 15 facility type classifications, ranging from Main Office to retail unit. The vast majority—75 percent of the 1,461 facilities—are classified as a Main Office, as indicated in Figure 1-3. About 13 percent are Stations and 5 percent are Branches, both of which are subsidiary or support post offices, the difference being that Branches are located outside city limits and Stations are located within city limits. The “other” category includes facilities identified as a VMF, P&DC, Annex, Federal Building, Retail Unit, Main Post Office (MPO), Area Office, Destination Delivery Unit, General Mail Facility (GMF), or not classified. (See Table 1-1 for definitions.) Less than 2 percent of the properties were not classified. It is important to note that the USPS eFMS database does contain some multiple entries, and some entries do not identify property types. It is, however, the working list of USPS properties in the Nation and adequately serves this purpose of determining a legitimate sampling methodology.



Source: URS

Figure 1-3: Percentage of USPS Property Types 1940 – 1971⁵

Table 1-1: Analysis of Facility Types by Total Number and Percentage

Facility Type	Definition	Number of Facilities	Percentage
Main Office	Formerly known as a general post office, is the primary postal facility in a community.	1,096	75%
Station	Facility located within the corporate limits or city carrier delivery area of the city or town in which the main office is located.	191	13%
Branch	A postal facility that is not a main post office, and is outside the corporate limits of the community.	69	5%
VMF	A USPS repair shop and garage that maintains USPS vehicles and that provides support documents for vehicle cost and accounting reports.	28	2%
P&DC	A central mail facility that processes and dispatches part or all of both incoming mail and outgoing mail for designated service area.	19	1%

⁵ “Other” is defined as one of the following facility type classifications: VMF, P&DC, Annex, , Undefined, Federal Building, Retail Unit, MPO, Area Office, Destination Delivery Unit, GMF, and GMF/VMF.

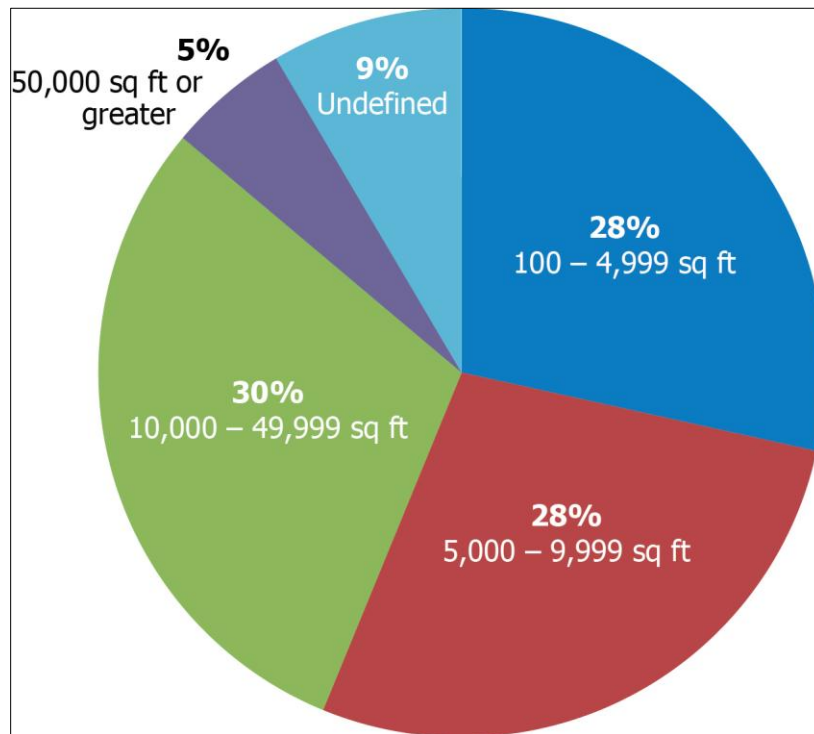
Facility Type	Definition	Number of Facilities	Percentage
Annex	A building equipped principally to handle Parcel Post. However, this usually has a general post office facility for the public on the street floor. Sometimes this is referred to as Parcel Post Station or Parcel Post Building.	16	1%
Other	Not defined in USPS Publication 32, Glossary of Postal Terms.	15	1%
Undefined	Not defined in USPS Publication 32, Glossary of Postal Terms.	11	1%
Federal Bldg.	Building constructed by non-USPS agency into which a USPS Post Office or other facility was incorporated.	6	0%
Retail Unit	A postal unit that sells postage stamps and provides other postal retail services to customers. Subordinate units are within the service area of an MPO and include Post Office Stations, Branches, and non-personnel units.	5	0%
MPO	Same as Main Office	1	0%
Area Office	Not defined in USPS Publication 32, Glossary of Postal Terms.	1	0%
Destination Delivery Unit	The delivery unit or other postal facility designated by USPS as a delivery unit where a mailer enters mail designed for addresses served by the carriers of the unit.	1	0%
GMF	Not defined in USPS Publication 32, Glossary of Postal Terms.	1	0%
GMF/VMF	Combination of GMF and VMF, a USPS repair shop and garage that maintains USPS vehicles and provides support documents for vehicle cost and accounting reports.	1	0%
Grand Total		1,461	99%

1.3.2.3 Interior Square Footage

The property master list was sorted according to the interior square footage of the facilities. Interior square footage was chosen to provide a sense of the size and scale of the resources. The square footage for this group of facilities varies from 100 square feet to 884,916 square feet. The facilities were categorized according to the following sub-categories:

- 100 – 4,999 square feet
- 5,000 – 9,999 square feet
- 10,000 – 49,999 square feet
- 50,000 square feet or greater
- Undefined

Figure 1-4 illustrates the breakdown of the property master list facilities by the above square footage sub-categories.



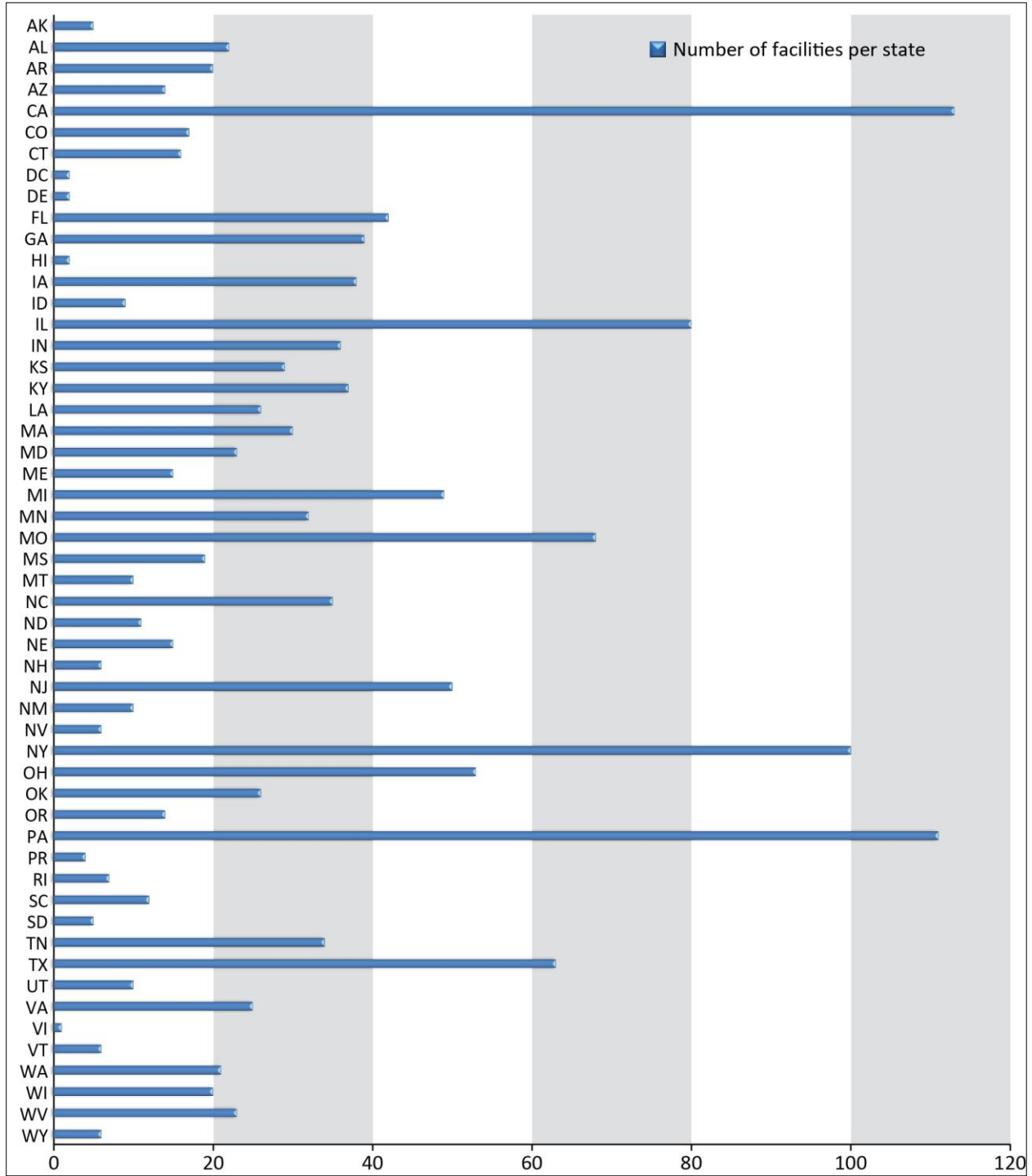
Source: URS

Figure 1-4: Square Footage Subgroups for USPS Property Types, 1940 – 1971

The majority of the facilities, about 86 percent, are less than 50,000 square feet. More than half, 56 percent of the 1,461 property master list facilities have fewer than 10,000 square feet of interior space.

1.3.2.4 Location of Facilities

The property master list was sorted by state to determine the number of USPS facilities constructed in each state between 1940 and 1971. As expected, a large number of facilities were constructed in states with the highest populations during this time period, specifically New York, Pennsylvania, California, and Illinois. Figure 1-5 shows the geographic distribution of the facilities by state for the entire country.



Source: URS

Figure 1-5: Distribution of USPS Facilities 1940 – 1971 by State

The distribution of the facilities by state indicates that over half, about 52 percent of the 1,461 property master list facilities, were constructed in 11 states,⁶ and 80 percent of the facilities are located in 25 states. These percentages were selected because they represented the two largest groups resulting from this sort.

1.3.2.5 Results of the Master Property List Evaluation

The facility data was sorted for each of the following categories: year constructed/occupied, type, interior square footage, and location. The pre-determined survey sample was 7 percent, or 103 facilities out of 1,461.

After the data was evaluated for each category individually, it was then sorted sequentially, which resulted in a de-facto value or weight for each of these four categories. In general, the first category used for sorting is the most heavily weighted or valued. Because the context is defined by a specific period of time, a temporal factor was chosen as the most important or heavily weighted value. The second and third sorting categories were facility type and interior square footage, respectively. Lastly, the data was sorted according to location and screened for facilities located in the top 11 states. Although the location information can provide a geographic distribution of these facilities, and may correlate to national trends that influenced their locations, it may not be the strongest determinant for identifying individual property types that are nationally representative. Because this is a nationwide context, these different sorts were prioritized to emphasize national, rather than local, trends in the history of the USPS during the Study period.

The sub-categories shown in Table 1-2 define the characteristics of each of the three groups. This sorting by categories represents the sampling method used for determining which 103 facilities out of the 1,461 facilities on the USPS-generated property master list of facilities to be included in the survey.

Table 1-2: USPS History Context 1940 - 1971 Survey Sample Property Groups

	Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
Percentage of total 103 properties	50 percent	25 percent	25 percent
Construction/occupied	1960s	1940-1942	Other
Facility type	Post office	Post Office	Other facility type
Size interior square feet	< 10,000	10,000 - 49,999	> 50,000
Location	One of 11 states*	One of 14 states**	Other states

* (Listed in order of most post offices to fewest) California, Pennsylvania, New York, Illinois, Missouri, Texas, Ohio, New Jersey, Michigan, Florida, and Georgia

** Iowa, Kentucky, Indiana, North Carolina, Tennessee, Minnesota, Massachusetts, Kansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Virginia, Maryland, West Virginia, and Alabama

⁶ California, Pennsylvania, New York, Illinois, Missouri, Texas, Ohio, New Jersey, Michigan, Florida, and Georgia.

1.3.2.6 Group 1

The property master list was first sorted according to year constructed or occupied, and over 50 percent of the facilities were constructed or occupied in the 1960s. Facilities constructed or occupied in the 1960s were further evaluated to determine how many were MPOs with less than 10,000 square feet, which is the predominant facility type and size. Because over 50 percent of the 1,461 facilities on the property master list of facilities are located in only 11 states, the next sort was done to determine which of the facilities were located in one of these states. A definition of each sub-category used to sort the group is provided below and listed in the sequence of the sort, from first to last.

- Constructed or occupied in the 1960s.
- Classified as a Main Post Office.
- Under 10,000 square feet of interior space.
- Located in one of the top 11 states.⁷

Using the aforementioned sorting process, the resulting number of facilities was 188, or approximately 13 percent of the total 1,461 facilities.

1.3.2.7 Group 2

After determining how many facilities represented Group 1, Group 2 facilities were determined by sorting on the following second-tier sub-categories:

- Constructed or occupied between 1940 and 1942.
- Classified as a Main Post Office.
- Less than 49,999 but at least 10,000 square feet of interior space.
- Located in one of the second group of 14 states.⁸

Of the total property master list facilities (1,461), 23 percent were constructed or occupied between 1940 and 1942; an additional 25 percent are classified as MPOs, 30 percent had an interior square footage of less than 49,999 but at least 10,000 square feet, and, beyond the top 11 states, about 28 percent are within 14 states.⁹

A total of 38 facilities represented all four second-tier sub-categories that define Group 2.

⁷ California, Pennsylvania, New York, Illinois, Missouri, Texas, Ohio, New Jersey, Michigan, Florida, and Georgia.

⁸ Iowa, Kentucky, Indiana, North Carolina, Tennessee, Minnesota, Massachusetts, Kansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Virginia, Maryland, West Virginia, and Alabama.

⁹ Ibid.

1.3.2.8 Group 3

After determining how many facilities represent Group 2, the remaining facilities were sorted and weighted according to the third-tier sub-categories below:

- Constructed or occupied between 1944 and 1959, or 1970 and 1971.
- Located in the remaining 25 states—all those not used in the first and second sort.
- USPS facility types identified as Stations, Branches, VMF, P&DC, Annex, or other.
- Have an interior area of 50,000 square feet or more.

Only eight facilities fall into all of the third-tier sub-categories.

Collectively, the sample derived by the above method, which sorted the facilities into three representative groups, totals 234 facilities, or approximately 16 percent of the total number of facilities, 1,461. The survey sample pre-determined by the Scope of Work is 7 percent, or 103 facilities out of 1,461. Based on the three groups determined by the three different categories described above (Groups 1, 2, and 3), the proportional breakdown of the 234 is as follows:

- Group 1: 81 percent
- Group 2: 16 percent
- Group 3: 3 percent

Using these percentages to determine the number of facilities from Groups 1, 2, and 3 to represent the 103 total facilities to be surveyed, the following number of facilities representing each group would be surveyed:

- Group 1: 83 facilities (81 percent of 103)
- Group 2: 17 facilities (16 percent of 103)
- Group 3: 3 facilities (3 percent of 103)

The above number of facilities and percentages per Group is markedly different from the percentages used for the initial sorts (Group 1: 50 percent, Group 2: 25 percent and Group 3: 25 percent). The initial sort percentages were based on the largest groupings that could be achieved using the sorting categories described above (year, type, square footage, and state). For the next sort, these factors were weighted from greatest value to smallest value, with the first factor used to sort (year) having the greatest value, since the focus of the Study is on USPS facilities constructed or occupied between 1940 and 1971. Clearly, the 103 facilities for survey broken down by group and percentage shown above (Group 1: 81 percent of 103; Group 2: 16 percent of 103 and Group 3: 3 percent) does not capture the percentages of the initial property master list sort (Group 1: 50 percent, Group 2: 25 percent and Group 3: 25 percent).

The distinction lies in the difference between each group being defined as either A) containing facilities that fall into **one or more of the 4 sub-categories**, such as 1) being constructed or occupied in the 1960s, 2) classified as a MPO, 3) having less than 10,000 interior square feet, and 4) being located in one of 11 states; or B) containing facilities that fall into **all 4 sub-categories**, as determined by the weighted order of the sort. The weighted order of the sort is an important eliminating factor; a facility could have been in the pre-sort Group 1, (MPO, less than 10,000 interior square feet, and located in one of the 11 states), but it would not be in the second sorted Group 1 because it did not meet the most valued or important criteria: having been built or occupied in the 1960s. Therefore, the second sorted groups do not represent the percentages (50 percent, 25 percent, and 25 percent) of the initial groups. The second sorted groups are the facilities that best represent each of the initial groups by meeting all 4 filters or characteristics.

Although the second sorted groups best represent the filters used to determine the initial groups, the resulting percentages (81 percent, 16 percent and 3 percent) would provide a skewed picture of the entire property master list of facilities: approximately four-fifths of second sort facilities—the “representative sample” of 103 facilities to be surveyed—would be 1960s MPOs with less than 10,000 square feet located in 11 states. The extent to which such a group would “represent” buildings constructed between 1940 and 1971, including examples of each of the 15 property types, with interior space ranging from 100 to over 800,000 square feet and located in 50 states, is highly questionable. This is not to say that the individual facilities identified through the grouping and sorting process described above are not representative. In fact, by meeting all 4 criteria used to determine the sort filters, they are the most representative. The percentages from the pre-weighted sort (50 percent, 25 percent, and 25 percent) are, however, more representative of the entire property master list than the percentages that reflect the number of facilities for each group resulting from the weighted or second sort. These percentages are applied to the pre-determined survey sample of 7 percent of 1,461 facilities on the property master list, or 103 facilities. The resulting collection of facilities, representing the percentages (as achieved through the initial sort) of the most facilities (as identified through the second or weighted sort), will be more characteristic of the 1,461 facilities in the property master list.

An additional concern about the above breakdown is the large number of one facility type: Main Post Offices, which represent 75 percent of the total facilities. As Table 1-2 demonstrates, there are more property types in the database than can be represented by Group 3 with only three facilities. A historic context requires that all associated property types be represented, so several of these property types need to be represented in the survey sample. At least two properties classified as Branch, VMF, Annex, or federal building were selected and incorporated into the survey list, which slightly skewed the representativeness of the group sizes above. A total of 16 P&DCs was included in this third group. Because the context period is during a time of great mechanization and automation of the postal system, this is a highly significant property type in regard to understanding key themes of USPS development. Eleven of the P&DCs were selected for additional survey because they are near URS offices. The remaining types either are not classified as a type (Undefined) or represent only one facility and are not thought to be representative of the larger context being evaluated.

Determining the exact locations of the 103 facilities was completed by evaluating at their proximity to URS offices throughout the county. As delineated in the URS proposal, local offices throughout the United States were used to survey selected facilities that are within a day's drive, to reduce lodging costs as much as possible.

1.3.3 Field Survey Methodology

Based on information provided by the USPS, 1,461 properties were occupied by the USPS that fall into the temporal period of this Study (1,329 currently owned, and 132 disposed; see Appendix A for a state-by-state listing of all facilities). The 1,466 USPS facilities that were built within the 1940–1971 timeframe are dispersed throughout the country. Seven distinct USPS FSO regions that were operational at the beginning of the Study provided an organizational framework for the facilities. Based on an initial review of USPS real estate records, facility types appeared to be primarily categorized as Main Office, Branch Office, Stations, Annexes, VMFs/Garages, and P&DCs. This list of properties included structures that were built and occupied, or simply occupied, during the Study time period. It is possible that some of these buildings pre-date 1940, while others were originally constructed for other purposes and became leased facilities that were later taken over by the USPS. The eFMS database does not provide these distinctions.

Correlations of construction or occupancy dates with known trends in USPS development during the period of study, such as the *Building Designs* standard manual issued by the Post Office Department on April 1, 1959, and the Lease-Purchase Program during the 1950s and 1960s, that established a set of standardized specifications and drawings issued and put out for bids among contractors, were analyzed. These trends were defined further by the research done as part of Task 2 – Research and Data Collection.

Architectural historians meeting or exceeding the *Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualification Standards* (36 Code of Federal Regulations [CFR] Part 61) then examined the building images from *Google Earth Pro* for dominant character-defining architectural features or building elements, creating initial stylistic classifications. Performing this level of analysis, the Study preparers identified the dominant or highly representative property types associated with the significant themes and sub-themes that make up the national context. Each pre-survey and online regional analysis and draft survey plan were discussed with FSO representatives, when they could be reached and had useful information, for additional guidance, identification of significant properties not considered, and concurrence with final approach.

Representative examples of these building types that were near URS offices were then surveyed. Because URS has offices throughout the country, this methodology decreased project costs by eliminating overnight travel expenses while developing a meaningful database to support an effective nationwide historic context. The Study's survey methodology included matching URS offices with CRM capabilities with corresponding FSOs, as shown in Figure 1-6 below. This map depicts the location of URS offices in relation to FSOs and regional boundaries. URS also developed survey documentation materials, including survey forms and instructional guides, so

that other URS offices without CRM capability could also be used in the survey effort. In this manner, we were able to enhance our capacity to provide nationwide coverage for the survey process.



Source: URS

Figure 1-6: USPS Facility Service Office Regions in Relation to URS Offices Nationwide

The survey template included entries for major building components and identification of materials. It is structured to feed into a database that can be sorted for further analysis and clarification of significant property types. Once the survey guidance materials were completed, URS Germantown staff held a nationwide telephone training sessions with other URS CRM and office staff to review survey requirements.

In early June 2012, URS then completed the survey of representative property types across the United States (Appendix B). This process gathered a limited amount of written information and historic photographs, and included new photographs identifying exterior and interior character-defining features of each surveyed building (Appendix C).

1.4 CONTEXT DEVELOPMENT

Based on research and discussions, and information provided by USPS during Tasks 1, 2, and 3, a chronology of significant events and people that influenced the development of USPS facilities was developed (see Appendix D). Also assembled were a list of nationally relevant legislation and a list of non-USPS events and trends, such as suburbanization and transportation system growth, that affected USPS property design. This information was used to determine historic contexts and sub-contexts for the time period, which include:

- Historic themes and NRHP areas of significance
- Period of significance
- Geographical impression
- Level of significance

At the beginning of the Study, it was believed that USPS properties were most likely to be eligible for listing in the NRHP for events or patterns of an area's development (Criterion A), association with the life of an important person (Criterion B), and the building form, architectural style, and use of materials or method of construction of postal facilities and their impact on shaping the historic identity of an area (Criterion C).

The historic context that was developed included a study of development patterns in transportation, suburbanization, and architecture of the time period. Development patterns were examined to identify both their characteristics and the influences that shaped them. These influences included transportation trends, economic factors, and philosophical views of sociology and planning, which all encouraged design trends. In particular, the historical context took into consideration the impacts of the shift of mail from rail to trucks and airplanes for long-distance mail, the increasing use of vehicles for mail carriers, and the influence of vehicle use on postal facilities. Economic factors that were researched included the amount of mail processed, cost of handling mail, and transportation costs. The transfer of the responsibility of designing postal facilities was also investigated.

In addition, the mechanization of postal activities was examined for its influence on the layout of individual postal facilities, types of postal facilities built, and its impact on the spatial distribution between and location of particular postal facilities. Changing technological practices, such as the 1963 implementation of the Zone Improvement Program (ZIP) Code system, also changed the way mail was processed and delivered. Architectural practices, the use of new materials, and the development of more uniform architectural designs were investigated for their impacts on the range and style of USPS facilities erected during this period.

URS anticipated that the postal facilities significant under Criterion A should retain integrity of location, design, materials, and association. It was also anticipated that the historic function and form of the building should be evident and significant in the commercial history of the community. It was thought that resources may be eligible under Criterion B if the resource was associated with the postal context. Buildings with such association should retain sufficient integrity of materials, design, setting, and location to physically represent the contribution of the individual. To be eligible under Criterion C, it was anticipated that the resource must retain characteristics of its style, type, period, or method of construction and convey its role in postal history.

URS submitted materials for review and comment to USPS Federal Preservation Officer (FPO), the ACHP, and Keeper of the National Register. Comments were incorporated into the final version of the Study.

1.5 ASSOCIATED PROPERTY TYPE DEVELOPMENT

1.5.1 General Process Overview

The *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Preservation Planning* define a property type as a “grouping of individual properties based on shared physical or associative characteristics.”¹⁰

Property types represent the physical embodiment of the broad historic themes that form the most basic component of a historic context. Property types that are associated with each historic context represent the built manifestations of the broad historical force or forces being evaluated.

This process generally involves three steps. First, the preparer identifies a range of property types that are expected within a defined geographic area and timeframe. These are generally organized into groups or clusters of property types that are most useful in representing important historic trends. Second, the preparer characterizes the locational pattern of where particular types of properties should be located; this helps guide identification and treatment measures. Locational patterns of property types should be based on models that have an explicit theoretical or historical basis and can be tested in the field. The model may be the result of historical research, a sampling strategy, or both. Finally, the preparer should characterize the current condition of property types. This involves the determination of what physical elements of an individual building should be present to represent the various property types, which in turn results in varied levels of integrity being developed based on the relative abundance or rarity of certain property types.

1.5.2 Study Approach

NRHP guidance states that for a property to qualify for listing, it must meet one of the NRHP Criteria for Evaluation by 1) being associated with an important historic context **and** 2) retaining historic integrity of features necessary to convey its significance. The approach to the development of associated property types described in this Study provides information that can be used for future evaluation of a wide range of USPS property types.

The built resources examined in this Study come from the USPS's master list of properties database, eFMS. The database has numerous fields, including occupied or construction date. Occupied refers to when the Post Office Department established postal service functions in the building. For federal buildings, this may not be the date of construction, as was discovered in the field. For example, a post office was established in the Beaumont, TX Federal Courthouse in the 1950s, according to the master list information, but the large Beaux Arts building clearly dates from before 1940, the start of this project's study period. Although the USPS uses occupancy and construction dates synonymously, they are differentiated for the purposes of this Study.

¹⁰ *Secretary of the Interior's Standards on Preservation Planning*, *ibid.*

The group of buildings considered for the representative 7 percent survey sample contains only Post Office Department facilities that were purpose built during the study period. The scope of the Study is specific to postal history from 1940 to 1971, and evaluating buildings that acquired a postal function but predate this period would make NRHP eligibility evaluations more complex. In fact, historic contexts would need to be developed outside of and in addition to those associated to the Post Office Department between 1940 and 1971, which is outside of the project scope. Because of the size and complexity of this database, there were a few duplicate entries, and some of the property type names appear to be applied inconsistently. For example, some facilities have the square footage and mechanical capacity to be considered Processing and Distribution Centers, but also functioned as a post office and apparently were entered into the database as a post office. Such anomalies required adjusting the approach to sampling used for the survey, depending on the need to have sufficient survey information for USPS facility types and their proximity to URS offices and available staff.

Three major components led to the development of a working set of property types associated with identified historic themes. The first step of this process involved a thorough review of the results of the survey findings. The survey data from Task 4, a 7 percent sample (the final sample size was 98 buildings¹¹) of the total number of USPS-owned or disposed properties from this time period (1,461), were examined in relation to the broad set of survey expectations. This “ground-truthing” helped the preparers understand how the surveyed properties compared to the “ideal” of each property type.

Second, the preparers then grouped property types by broad context or sub-context. Based on the results of the sampling survey, some property types were changed or dropped from further consideration. The Branch and Station property types were folded into the Main Post Office property type because the survey results indicated that, despite the different name, they are the same building type. The difference between a Main Post Office and a Branch or Station is one of location and service area at the time of construction or occupancy. During this time period, communities grew, and what was a suburb may have become a part of the incorporated municipal boundary, or may have become a separate municipality. The result of this analysis was that the master set of contexts and sub-contexts was solidified based on real-world information and evaluation.

From this analysis, a final set of property types was produced. Each property type has a distinctly different set of character-defining features through which NRHP significance is evaluated and expressed. These character-defining features have been described, and then linked to NRHP Areas of Significance. Finally, for each property type, integrity levels were also described, with some aspects of integrity (location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association) judged as being more important for certain property types than others. The result is a

¹¹ Although the intention was to survey 103 facilities (7% of the 1,461) plans had to be adjusted in the field due to an inability to access facilities, facilities that were built outside of the study period but were identified differently, and facilities listed as post offices but consisted of 3 or more individual property types, such as the Postal Complex in Omaha.

defined set of NRHP registration requirements that can then be used as a benchmark for future evaluation of property types.

The URS team that conducted this Study consisted principally of historians and architectural historians that exceed the *Secretary of the Interior's Professional Qualification Standards* cited in 36 CFR Part 61. Project Manager Mark Edwards, and Technical Lead and Assistant Project Manager Jeff Winstel headed this team of URS Germantown Cultural Resource Management professionals. Architectural Historians Brian Cleven, Kirsten Johnson and Melanie Lytle, and Architectural Team Lead Carrie Albee, assisted with conducting research, developing historic themes and identifying Associated Property Types. This effort was also greatly assisted by 49 URS employees located in offices throughout the country who coordinated site visits to survey and photo-document USPS properties in their areas. Numerous local USPS postmasters and building supervisors assisted them by providing access to buildings and sharing historic photographs and plans. Ms. Albee and Architectural Historian Marvin Brown from the URS Morrisville, North Carolina office provided technical reviews of the document. NRHP staff members provided valuable guidance and input on draft sections, as did a working committee of the National Conference of State Historic Preservation Officers, including the states of California, Florida, Illinois, New York, Pennsylvania and Texas, and Paul Lusignan, representing the National Register of Historic Places, also provided invaluable review of draft documents. USPS Historian Jennifer Lynch, Facilities Environmental Specialist Ann Yarnell, and Real Estate Specialist and Federal Preservation Officer Dallan C. Wordekemper, provided invaluable and responsive assistance, access, and guidance throughout the implementation of this many-faceted project.

SECTION TWO: HISTORIC CONTEXT

2.1 OVERVIEW

2.1.1 Summary

The year 1940 ended a decade characterized by America's most far-reaching economic challenge, the Great Depression, and began a decade that would be dominated by the greatest armed conflict in the history of mankind, World War II (WWII). The United States Post Office Department had benefited from its largest increase in facilities during the Depression due to the Federal New Deal construction programs of the 1930s, several of which continued into the early 1940s. U.S. entry into WWII in December 1941 dramatically changed the Nation's course and concomitantly that of the Post Office Department. The vast deployment of troops throughout the country and overseas increased mail volumes exponentially. Despite the military delivering mail to the troops, post offices were overburdened; in addition to increasing mail volumes, many former postal workers were serving in the armed forces.

Following the end of the war in 1945, the Post Office Department had to contend with a rapidly growing population, massive migration to the suburbs, and radical changes to the Nation's transportation system. Trains played a decreasing role in the movement of goods and mail; as passenger service declined, long-haul trucking was advanced by the development of a national Interstate Highway System, and air transportation became increasingly viable. Technological innovations were seen as the future of the Post Office Department, as workers struggled with out-of-date facilities that had been designed to create employment and a federal presence rather than to accommodate an exponentially growing volume of mail. From 1950 to 1960, the country's population increased by 28.6 million, from 150.7 million to 179.3 million, and the volume of mail handled by the Department climbed by 18.6 million pieces.¹² Despite this expansion in volume and customers, less than 9 percent of postal facilities currently used were built or occupied in the 1950s.

In spite of the boom in mail volume and population, between 1940 and 1971 the number of postal facilities declined by over 12,000, as the Post Office Department phased out older, fourth class post offices; these facilities, which stood in rural locations, plummeted in number from 28,195 in 1942 to 8,401 in 1966. As postmasters in small offices retired, the Department reviewed the efficiency of the operation and often determined that replacing outmoded and inadequate facilities with rural delivery or star route service,¹³ or by converting the office to a rural station or branch could save a great deal of money.¹⁴ In 1966 alone, the Department closed

¹² Frank Hobbs and Nicole Stoop, 2002, *Demographic Trends in the 20th Century*, pg. 13.

¹³ National Postal Museum, Smithsonian Institution, <http://arago.si.edu/index.asp?>, accessed May 22, 2012.

Beginning in 1845, legislation allowed mail to be transported by the lowest bidder that would provide "celerity, certainty, and security." These contract routes became known as "star routes" because they were designated by an asterisk or star in postal records.

¹⁴ United States Post Office Department, 1965, *Annual Report of the Postmaster General*, pg. 65.

or converted 505 fourth class post offices, which resulted in a savings of over \$1.2 million.¹⁵ Just as the mapping of postal routes marked the expansion of nineteenth-century settlement, the post-WWII consolidation of post offices reflected the increasing urbanization of the country and expansion of free home delivery of the mail.

However, the drop in the number of postal facilities from 1940 to 1971 is deceptive, for the Post Office Department continued to erect new facilities during the period. In particular, during the 1960s, a decade during which mail volume continued to soar, the Department markedly increased its construction program. In addition to building standardized suburban and urban post offices, it erected several large processing facilities designed to centralize and facilitate processing and distribution for post offices within an 80- to 100-mile radius of each other. With extensive conveyor systems and long rows of truck bays, these facilities operated 24 hours a day. To better serve growing fleets of postal vehicles and rising mail volume, the Department expanded vehicle maintenance facilities and added new annexes. In 1963, it developed and implemented the Zone Improvement Plan, commonly known as the ZIP Code, as a way of processing mail more efficiently.

Despite all of these efforts, the Department had difficulty handling the increasing volume of mail and number of customers. In October of 1966, for example the Chicago Post Office, the world's then-largest postal facility, became gridlocked by a logjam of more than 5 million pieces of mail.¹⁶ This led to a congressional inquiry, reorganization of the Post Office Department in 1971 by the Postal Reorganization Act, and the start of the newly formed United States Postal Service (USPS) in 1971.

2.1.2 The 1940s

As noted repeatedly in Post Office Department Annual Reports during the study period, 1938 was the last year before WWII that a new postal facility was authorized. Despite this, a total of 335 new postal facilities began operations between 1940 and 1942. These facilities, which were apparently already in the pipeline, resulted from an activist federal government that wished to assist towns throughout the country with badly needed economic growth. These dignified public buildings, commonly located in the center of towns, were often the only federal buildings in these locations and came to symbolize the role of the federal government in everyday life. These buildings often featured large wall murals depicting scenes from the town's history or character. For a number of people, these murals were their first exposure to an actual work of art, rather than a printed image or copy.

According to the Public Buildings Act of 1926, for a location to be considered for a new post office, postal receipts had to exceed \$10,000 per year, based on a 10-year period of projected growth.¹⁷ The sites and locations for these post offices were selected by federal postal officials,

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ National Postal Museum, <http://www.postalmuseum.si.edu>, pg. 1, accessed May 17, 2012, pg. 1.

¹⁷ Causier, Charles W., ACIP and Jurkiewicz, Joseph G., AIA, revised by Daina Penkiunas, State Historical Society of Wisconsin. 2000. United States Post Office Construction from 1913-1943: State of Wisconsin- Milwaukee

with input from local postmasters. An engineer would do a topographical study, the postmaster would be given survey questionnaires about the local requirement for the facility, and this information along with other data, was analyzed by the Public Building Administration “Architectural Group,” consisting of a designer and mechanical and structural engineers.¹⁸

Most of these buildings were designed in a style referred to as Stripped Classicism. The design of post offices was under control of the Office of the Supervising Architect in the Treasury Department, Louis A. Simon, a MIT-educated architect who managed the Architecture Section of the office during the tenure of James Wetmore (1915 – 1933), and became the Supervising Architect after Wetmore until the office was disbanded in 1939. Simon is regarded as principally responsible for these Stripped Classicism buildings. He was known as a conservative designer and oversaw the design and construction of these post offices.¹⁹ These buildings were constructed by the contractors who submitted the lowest bids. Although the Public Works Administration (PWA) was intended to stimulate local economic activity, most of the contracts were awarded to regional contractors who moved crews from site to site.²⁰

World War II dramatically increased the volume of mail as the ranks of the military greatly expanded and troops were sent throughout the country and deployed overseas. Mail service was free to the troops. The United States Army and Navy delivered mail for the military, largely due to the need to keep troop movements and maneuvers secret. In 1945, U.S. mail volume reached over 37 billion pieces of mail, an all-time high, and an increase of 10 billion pieces from 1940. While mail volume increased, the number of experienced workers dramatically decreased. One of many strategies to cope with this was the development of a numeric coding system for the 124 largest cities in the country—a precursor of the ZIP Code.

The year 1943 was very profitable for the Post Office Department; it ended with excess revenue over expenses of \$1,334,551. This was the first time in 24 years that there was no deficit, or as described in the Postmaster General’s Annual Report “no permanent withdrawal of public funds from the Treasury for postal expenses,”²¹ it appears to be the only reference to revenue exceeding costs in the annual reports for the next 27 years, as Table 2-1 indicates.

District, National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form. P. 22. Available at <http://pdfhost.focus.nps.gov/docs/NRHP/Text/64500723.pdf>. Viewed July 17, 2012.

2000, p. 22

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 23.

¹⁹ Bruns, James, *H Great American Post Offices* Preservation Press, Washington DC, 1998. P. 95.

²⁰ Causier and Jurkiewicz, 2000. p. F-31.

²¹ United States Post Office Department, 1943, *Annual Report of the Postmaster General*, p. 2.

Table 2-1: US Post Office Department’s Annual Deficit, 1940 - 1971

USPS 1940 - 1971							
Annual Deficit based on Postmaster General's Annual Reports							
1940s	Deficit \$	1950s	Deficit \$	1960s	Deficit \$	1970s	Deficit \$
1940	NA	1950	543,571,086 (est.)	1960	597,000,000	1970	NA
1941	NA	1951	554,607,000 (est.)	1961	826,400,000	1971	NA
1942	NA	1952	727,050,218	1962	811,900,000		
1943	(+) 1334551	1953	NA	1963	497,000,000		
1944	NA	1954	399,100,000	1964	199,000,000		
1945	NA	1955	362,100,000	1965	281,000,000		
1946	NA	1956	463,900,000	1966	NA		
1947	295,150,543 (est.)	1957	521,800,000	1967	NA		
1948	352,679,250 (est.)	1958	890,500,000	1968	NA		
1949	NA	1959	605,000,000	1969	NA		

NOTE: 2 year projected estimates were required by law 5 U.S.C. 388, according Postmaster General Anr

Source: Annual Report of the Postmaster General 1940 – 1954, The Postmaster General Reports on the Services of the United States Post Office Department during the Fiscal Year(s) 1955 – 1965, Annual Report of the Postmaster General, United States Post Office Department, 1965 -1971.

The 1943 report makes note that the revenue and expenses for the year do not take into consideration the “free services rendered to the public and other departments and agencies that would have amounted to \$122,343,000.²² The first year for free United States solidier mail was 1944, and the estimate for this service exceeded \$100,000,000. Although the annual deficit did decrease some years, a comment by the postmaster general in the 1957 conveys the limited extent to which the Post Office Department had control over its finances.²³ The total deficit would have decreased from \$463 million to \$220 million if Congress had not mandated cost increases, including well-deserved raises for clerks and carriers, that amounted to almost half a billion dollars.²⁴ Throughout the period of study, the Postmaster General’s Annual Reports make the case for increasing postal rates to keep up with the rapidly growing demand. The growing volume of mail and the large operating deficits of the Post Office Department make clear that this federal government program was viewed as a necessity and was heavily subsidized.

2.1.3 Post-World War II

After the war, various federal agencies were reorganized or merged. The Hoover Commission, formally known as the Commission on Organization of the Executive Branch of the Government,

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

was organized in 1947 in accordance with Public Law 162 to modernize the government. The Commission investigated all agencies within the federal government and forwarded its findings and a total of 273 recommendations in a series of 19 separate reports. In January 1949, the Hoover Commission stated that the Post Office Department needed research facilities to inform Postal management on improving its mail services. The Commission recommended the recruitment of technically trained men to “plan, develop, and assist in the installation of cost controls and new or improved methods, equipment, and clerical systems and procedures.”^{25, 26}

In 1949, the FWA was subsumed by the General Services Administration (GSA), in accordance with Public Law No. 152.²⁷ The *United States Post Offices*, a design manual first published by the GSA Public Building Service on July 1, 1948 (amended in 1950), documents specific requirements of the Post Office Department and standards of the Public Building Service in post office design.²⁸ This manual was developed by both agencies in anticipation of federal funds being allocated for the badly needed additional postal facilities. The document provides very specific information ranging from the appropriateness of wire-mesh grilles for certain customer service windows to appropriate view distances for wall-mounted clocks.

The General Instructions section of the 1950 manual provides straightforward information on how these buildings were perceived, designed, classified, and typed. These government-owned buildings are described as

*...usually built for permanent Federal use. Post-office quarters should be designed to meet present needs and, to a reasonable extent, future needs. Since the post office, in smaller communities, is often the only visible symbol of our Government, it is important that all of the architect's ability be devoted to making the building and its grounds a source of local pride.*²⁹

The Architectural Drawing Requirements section of the design manual mandated study of the space directive, data compiled by the GSA including information on gross receipts, population of the city, number of employees, and size of the mailing platform. Architects were also told they must “study the flow of the mail and the functional relationship of each space to the other spaces to get the best arrangement for working efficiency.”³⁰

In the 1948 design manual, post office buildings were grouped into four classes—First Class through Fourth Class, and two types—One-Man and Multiple. The classes of post office were determined by the gross annual receipts as follows:

²⁵ Seagle, M.S. 1965. History of Office of Research & Engineering: Training Presentation. United States Post Office Department, Washington D.C 1965, p. 1-2.

²⁶ Chronological History of Current Research and Development Effort." n.d. RG 28 Records of the Post Office Department, Management Systems Division, Reorganization Studies, 1950-1968.

²⁷ General Services Administration, 1948, revised 1950, p. 50-121.

²⁸ Ibid., p. vii.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 1

³⁰ Ibid., p. 2

First Class Post Offices: Vary in size from large metropolitan centers doing multi-million dollar business to those with gross annual receipts of \$40,000 or more. All classes of mail are processed through first class post offices. Stamps are cancelled, records are prepared, and mail is sorted into classes for distribution locally or to other destinations.

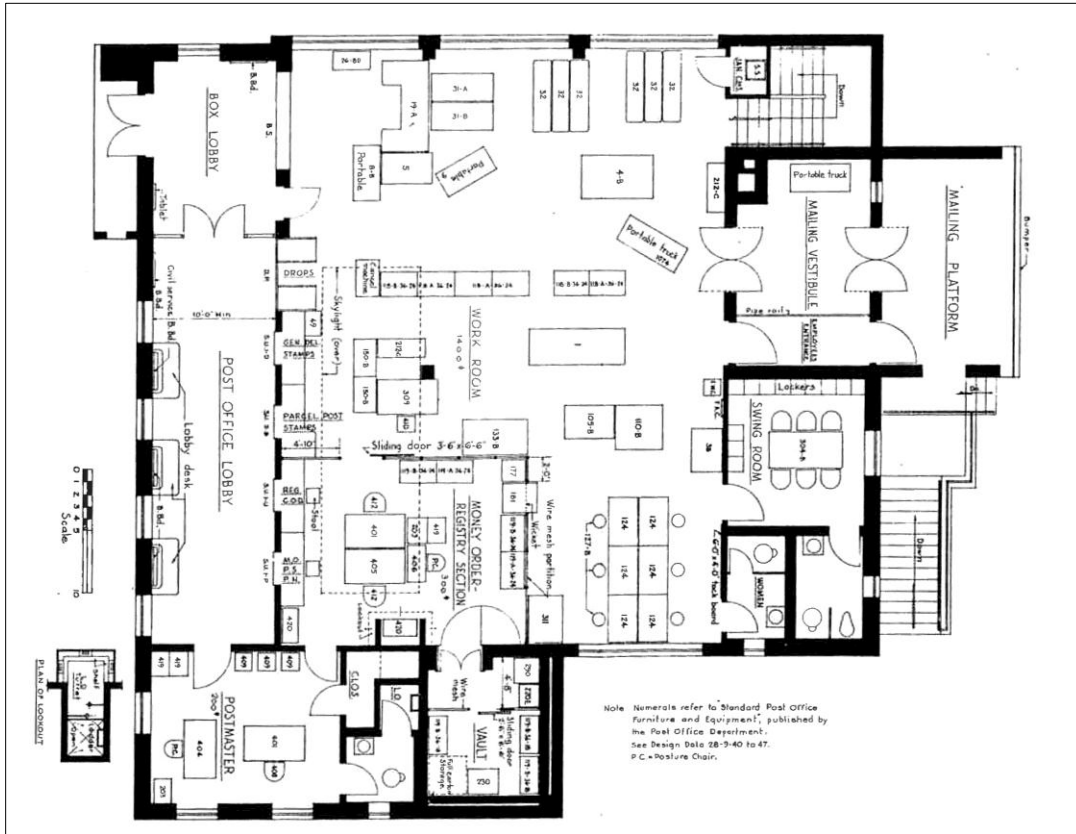
Second Class Post Offices: Annual gross receipts of \$8,000 to \$40,000, usually one-story government-owned structures located in villages or small cities.

Third Class Post Offices: Annual gross receipts between \$1,500 and \$8,000, located in villages in government-leased space in non-government buildings, and equipped with service window, lockboxes, and a screen line separating the post office lobby from the workroom.

Fourth Class Post Office: Annual gross receipts less than \$1,500, located in small villages and communities, generally occupying a portion of a store or other quarters.

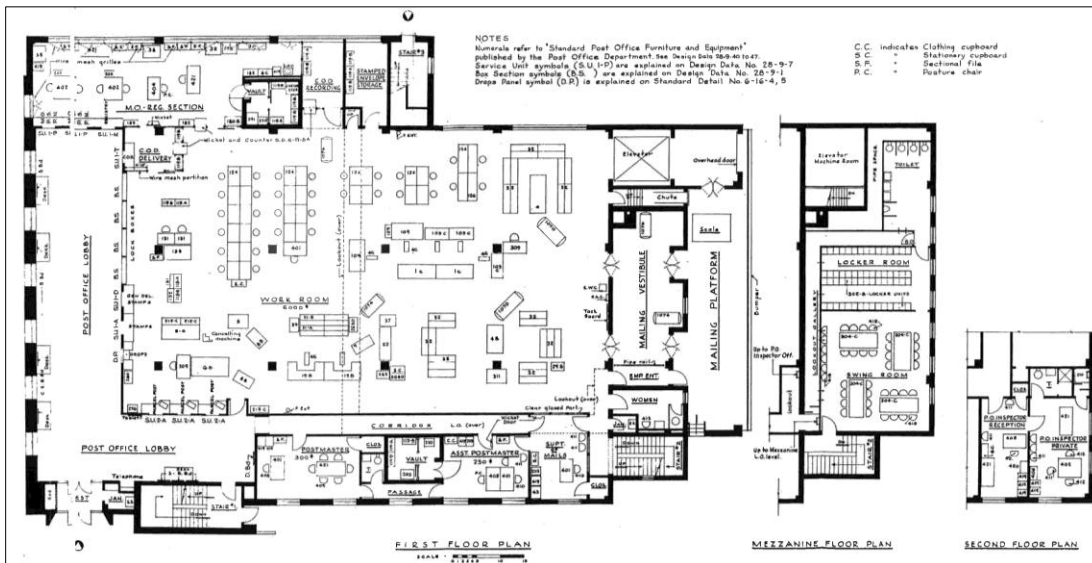
The two types of post offices were the One-Man Type and the Multiple Type. The One-Man Post Office refers to offices where “one clerk, during slack periods, can take care of all the service windows that are then in use.”³¹ On the other hand, a Multiple-Type Post Office had a money order-registry section that did not connect to the postmaster’s office. In addition, a post office that had six or more service windows was typically a Multiple-Type. Plans for the One-Man and Multiple Types are shown in Figures 2-1 and 2-2, respectively.

³¹ Ibid.



Source: United States Post Offices, General Services Administration Public Services Division, Washington, DC, 1948, revised 1950, dwg. No. 28-9-33A

Figure 2-1: Typical One-Man Plan

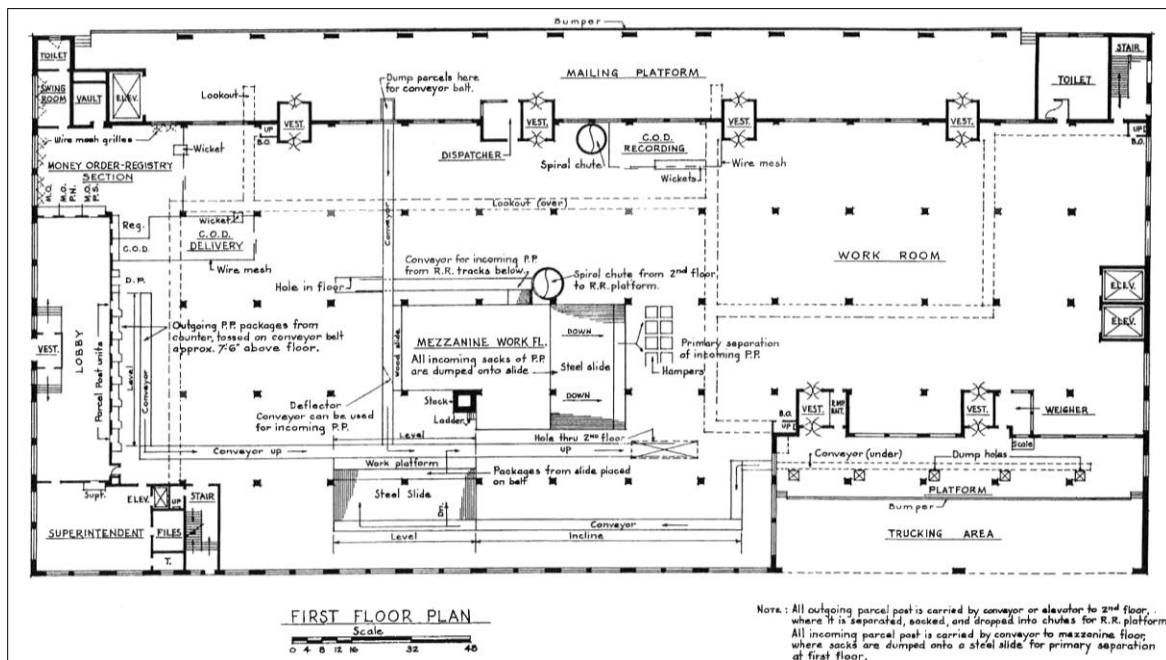


Source: United States Post Offices, General Services Administration Public Services Division, Washington, DC, 1948, revised 1950, dwg. No. 28-9-38

Figure 2-2: Typical Multiple-Type Plan

Additional building types in the 1950 manual include Parcel Post Buildings, Postal Stations, and Branch Offices.

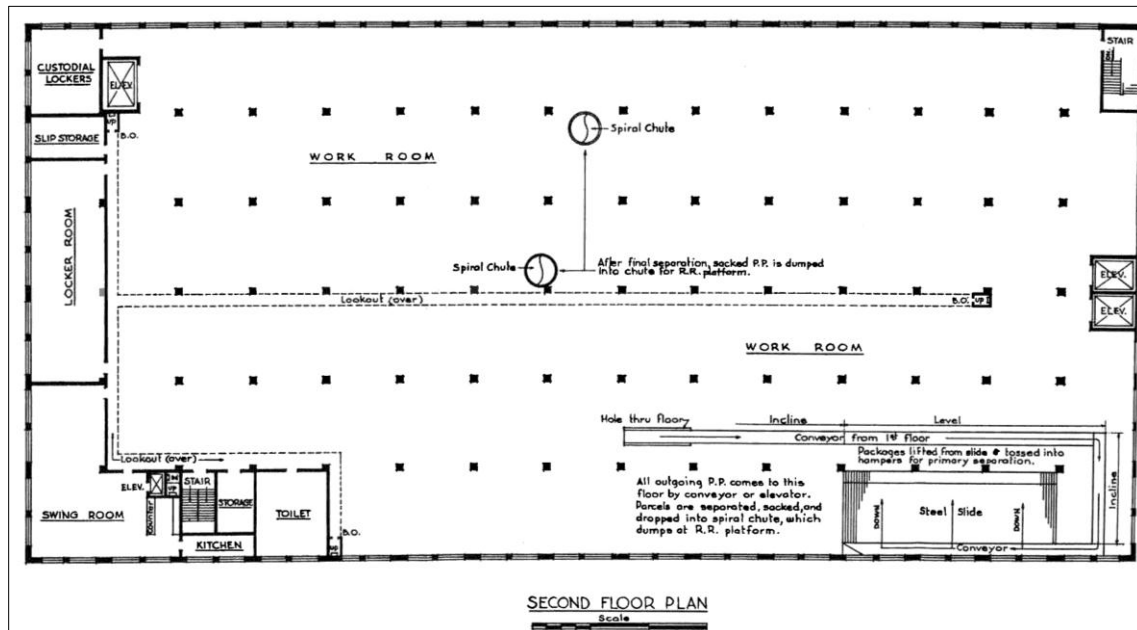
Parcel Post Buildings are defined as separate buildings for the handling of parcels, papers, etc., received from other cities, as well as local matter, separation or delivery, recording, inspection and administration. “Practically all of the activities required in ... regular first-class post offices are required in parcel-post buildings. Therefore, Chapter II, First Class Post Offices [design guidelines for first class post offices found in Chapter II], should be followed for requirements in designing a parcel post building.”³² The manual’s plan for a Parcel Post Building is shown on Figures 2-3 and 2-4.



Source: United States Post Offices, General Services Administration Public Services Division, Washington, DC, 1948, revised 1950, dwg. No. 28-9-38. Sheet 2A of 3.

Figure 2-3: Plan -- Parcel Post Building, First Floor

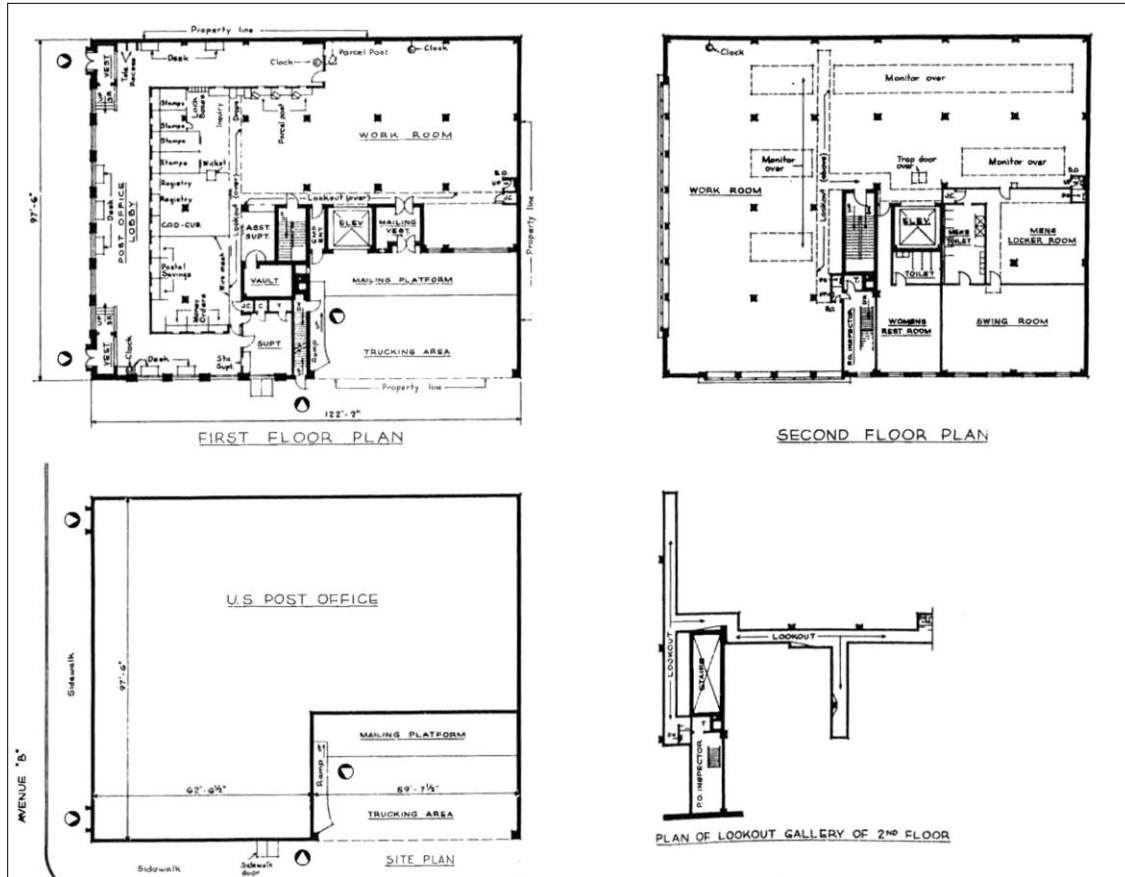
³² General Services Administration, 1950, p. 267.



Source: United States Post Offices, General Services Administration Public Services Division, Washington, DC, 1948, revised 1950, dwg. No. 28-9-38, Sheet 3 of 3

Figure 2-4: Plan -- Parcel Post Building, Second Floor

Postal Stations and Branch Post Offices are additional mail-handling centers established to serve areas where the volume of mail is heaviest. Postal Stations are located inside city limits, and Branch Post Offices are outside city limits. Branches and Stations followed the typical plans of One-Man and Multiple Type Post Offices. The typical plan for a Postal Station is shown on Figure 2-5.



Source: United States Post Offices, General Services Administration Public Services Division, Washington, DC, 1948, revised 1950, dwg. No. 28-9-35

Figure 2-5: Plans – Postal Station

2.1.4 The 1950s

The Postal Reorganization Plan of 1949 resulted from President Truman’s post-WWII Commission on Organization of the Executive Branch, also referred to as the Hoover Commission. The 1949 plan was intended to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the federal government and resulted in the reorganization of nine departments of the Executive Branch, including the decentralization of the Post Office Department. Postmaster Jesse M. Donaldson strongly advocated against this, stating that the equality of service provided to every business and every citizen regardless of race, class, or creed would be compromised.³³ In 1950, residential deliveries were reduced from twice a day to once a day in an effort to reduce expenditures and stay within appropriated budgets. The Annual Report for this year, similar to many reports of the post-war period, also stated that the Post Office Department had been striving to keep up with the additional service required by the Nation’s rapidly growing new subdivisions.

³³ United States Post Office Department, 1950, *Annual Report of the Postmaster General*, p. 9.

A 1949 report by the Commission on Organization of the Executive Branch of the Government recommended the appointment of a Presidential advisory board for the Post Office Department. The board was selected the following year, and in 1952, the President submitted to Congress Reorganization Plan No. 2 of 1952. The plan called for the gradual elimination of the Presidential appointment and Senate confirmation of all new postmasters for First, Second, and Third class post offices. The Senate disapproved the plan by resolution the same year, and thus maintained the practice of postal patronage appointments.

The 1953 reorganization of Post Office Department attempted to transition an institution that “fostered little change from the status quo” and was entrenched in “established methods of operation and work habits” to meet its responsibility to the public as articulated by the President in his directive to “...institute a program directed at improving service, while at the same time reducing costs and decreasing deficits.”³⁴ The new management team included top management appointments based on “demonstrated business competence” for the positions of postmaster general and assistant postmasters general, rather than these appointments being made “as a matter of political reward with little regard for business competence.”³⁵ It was not until House Resolution 8518, a bill to provide that appointments and promotions in the Post Office Department and postal field service be made on the basis of merit and fitness, introduced to Congress on March 10, 1969, and finally approved as Public Law 91-375 on August 12, 1970, that the individuals were no longer selected by Presidential appointment and Senate confirmation alone.³⁶ Experience with the Post Office Department and meritorious performance were not required.

In an effort to improve efficiencies, the Department changed the way mail was transported. In 1953, studies were conducted on trucking mail to regional assembly centers, where it was repackaged for transport to trains. The Post Office Department found that this reduced the number of partially loaded rail cars and described the operation as “similar to commercial freight forwarding.”³⁷ The following year, postal real estate functions were overhauled. The Division of Real Estate now included a Master Planning Section of community planning experts to study municipal development, population growth, transportation routes, and facilities.³⁸ Other changes included hiring a real estate negotiation staff and completing new engineering studies for better management of fuel consumption, equipment maintenance, and use of space.³⁹ Two large terminals were also constructed that year “... as part of the Post Office program to move its mail handling and transportation facilities to factory type space away from centers of cities.”⁴⁰

An even more significant change to postal property was the Post Office Department Property Act of 1954 (Public Law 83-159), which gave the Department the authority to lease a property for up

³⁴ Ibid., p. 1

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ United States House of Representatives, Ninety-First Congress, 1969.

³⁷ United States Post Office Department, 1953, *Annual Report of the Postmaster General*, p. 13.

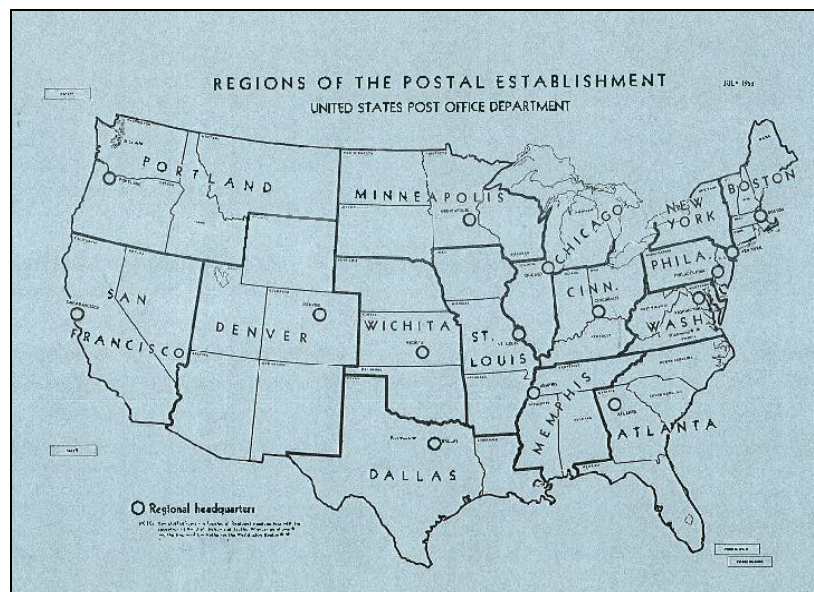
³⁸ United States Post Office Department, 1954, *Annual Report of the Postmaster General*, p. 21.

³⁹ Ibid, p. 21-22.

⁴⁰ Ibid, pg. 22.

to 30 years instead of being limited by a 20-year lease. In addition, and perhaps more importantly, the bill allowed buildings to be leased to the government for a term of 10 years, after which the title could be passed to the government. This allowed contractors to obtain much more favorable financing and helped to fund the additional postal facilities sorely needed to keep up with the ever-increasing volumes of mail. In 1955, the bill passed both houses of Congress and became law. The program was described as a “buy-out-of-rent program” that enabled the Post Office Department to “buy modern, desperately needed facilities substantially in the same way that the average citizen purchases a home.”⁴¹ Under this authority, the Post Office Department approved 11 new projects the first year after enactment.

The 1956 Postmaster General’s Annual Report boasted that “despite the handicaps still existent because of the inertia of the past and present lack of adequate revenues, much material progress was made during fiscal 1956.”⁴² The report went on to reiterate that “Congress has not appropriated funds for the construction of any postal facility since 1938, and since our postal volume has doubled in that time, most of the facilities are hopelessly antiquated and inadequate.” Despite this, between January of 1953 and the release of the 1956 Annual Report, approximately 1,400 new facilities were constructed with private capital to be leased by the Post Office Department. This new leasing program averaged over two new buildings a day being contracted. In 1956, the Post Office Department completed its decentralization recommended by the 1949 Commission on Organization of the Executive Branch, resulting in 15 regional offices, 91 operations district offices, and 111 transportation district offices across the country (see Figure 2-6). This reportedly allowed “postal employees of long experience and proven ability” to make swift decisions, “many times on the spot.”



Source: USPS Historian’s Office

⁴¹ United States Post Office Department, 1955, *Annual Report of the Postmaster General*, p. 28.

⁴² United States Post Office Department, 1956, *Annual Report of the Postmaster General*, p. 2.

Figure 2-6: Regions of the Postal Establishment, United States Post Office Department, July 1958

Technology also played a central role in the 1956 report, which stated that real progress had been made toward developing machines to automatically face and cancel letter mail. Production models were expected in 1958. Working models of automatic letter sorters with a capacity of 300 to 500 separations were expected the next year, and electronic address readers were in development, along with modern conveyor systems and keyboard-controlled sorting machines. Even preliminary discussions of electronic transmission of facsimile messages were taking place. The 1956 Annual Report also pointed out that this amazing new technology had to be developed by the Post Office Department *from scratch*, since “As recently as January, 1953, there was no real program of research and development in the Post Office Department and none was contemplated.”⁴³

In 1956, the first semiautomatic parcel sorting machine was introduced in Baltimore. The next year, “Transorma,” a foreign-built multi-position letter sorting machine, was installed and tested in the Silver Spring, Maryland, Post Office. With all five keyboards operating, the Transorma machine was designed to sort letters, cards, and circulars at a rate of 15,000 pieces per hour. Other advantages included simultaneously sorting incoming and outgoing mail, and eliminating all secondary or additional incoming mail sorts and 75 percent of secondary outgoing mail sorts. In addition, the operator could be seated. For Parcel Post, the Greller Semiautomatic Parcel Post Sorting System began operation the same year. With the ability to make 21 primary separations (groupings), more parcels could be brought into the area, maximizing savings and reducing damage to the parcels from overcrowding and the drudgery of mail sorting from hamper (heavy-duty canvas container on rolling pallets) to hamper.⁴⁴

In 1958, the Federal-Aid Highway Act (Public Law-85-381) allowed increased use of regulated highway carriers, which increased the number of star routes (later referred to as Highway Contract Routes) in the 1960s as the Interstate Highway System grew. This legislation was introduced by the American Trucking Association and allowed regulated carriers to use rates set by the Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC) rather than submit bids for transport of mail along approved Post Office Department routes.⁴⁵ This system was very similar to that used by the railways, which continued to abandon local service passenger trains that also delivered mail. By the end of 1958, 214 highway routes were being operated by 49 separate contractors. Ironically, railroads operated 33 of these routes in place of former Railway Post Offices that had been discontinued or abandoned.⁴⁶

The Postal Modernization Act of 1958 (Public Law 85-426) laid the groundwork for changes that would take place well into the 1960s. The primary goal of this act was the modernization of the

⁴³ United States Post Office Department, 1956, *Annual Report of the Postmaster General*, p. 1

⁴⁴ United States Post Office Department, 1957, *Annual Report of the Postmaster General*, p. 27

⁴⁵ United States Post Office Department, 1959, *Annual Report of the Postmaster General*, p. 32.

⁴⁶ United States Post Office Department, 1958, *Annual Report of the Postmaster General*, p. 32.

physical plant. The Annual Report from 1959 pointed out the difference between the existing Post Office Department physical plant and the physical plant that was now needed:

In discussing the post office of tomorrow, it is important to direct the public's attention to the changing characteristics of these buildings. Two developments are making largely obsolete the colonnaded monumental building on the public square. One is the phenomenal increase in volume, which compels us to prepare to handle by machines the mail predicted for the future; the other is the rapid decline in the nation's passenger rail service, which requires that we be more ready to move more and more mail by truck and air each successive year.

While the familiar post office in the business center of town will probably continue to survive to accept mailings, sell stamps, and transact other customer business, the shipment sorting and preparation of the mail must be taken to large ground areas whereon buildings can be erected which will accommodate machines inside and large over-the-road vans outside. Most cities can provide appropriate ground areas and traffic freedom for truck maneuvering only in their peripheral areas. It is there that the buildings to house the principal mail handling operations of the future will ideally be located.⁴⁷

The 1959 annual report went on to point out that during the past 6 years, private industry constructed or contracted to construct more than 3,000 new buildings for lease to the Department. Of this number, 665 were contracted for in fiscal 1959 at an estimated cost of \$62 million and containing 4.6 million square feet of space. By the end of the year, more than three new buildings were being leased each working day. Private industry invested an average of more than \$5 million a month in new postal buildings.⁴⁸

A point stressed by the postmaster general was that all of this investment in individual buildings was an attempt to solve the need for more space to process a larger volume of mail in specific locations. Given the increasing volume of mail during this period, a systemic correction to the outdated nationwide facility plan was needed. Coordinated planning that included all the communities that were served by the Post Office Department was needed or "inefficiencies and service breakdowns would continue to plague postal operations."⁴⁹

Although Congress denied a postal rate increase, \$80 million was appropriated for plant rehabilitation in 1959 through Title III of Public Law 85-426, which recognized the need to modernize or completely replace 12,000 to 15,000 facilities. The program would cost approximately \$2 billion, three-quarters of which was expected to be invested by the private sector.⁵⁰

This new building program stressed standardization. The previous year, the Post Office Department established Capital Equipment Warehouses, which sought to "provide, at strategic

⁴⁷ United States Post Office Department, 1959, *Annual Report of the Postmaster General*, Foreword VIII.

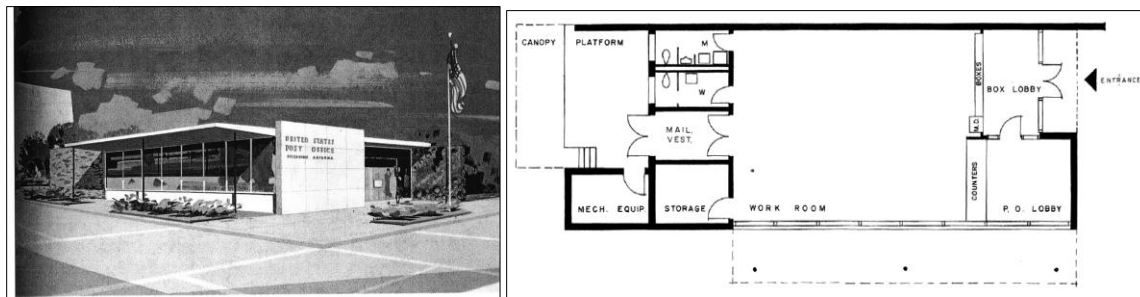
⁴⁸ United States Post Office Department, 1959, *Annual Report of the Postmaster General*, p. 49.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

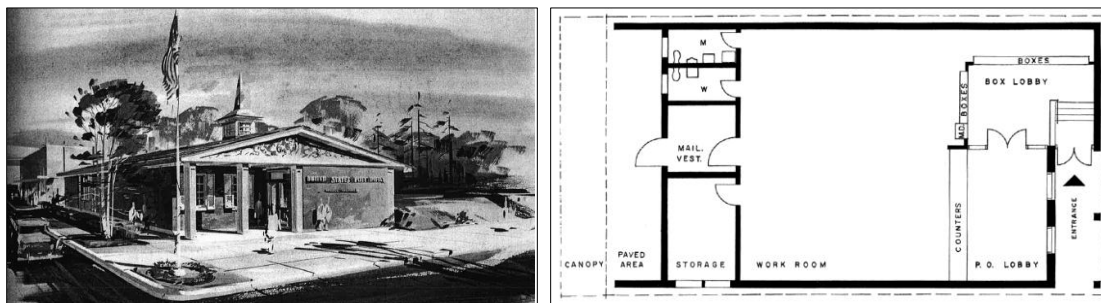
points around the country, readily available stocks of new equipment (modern counterlines, lock boxes, workroom furniture, office equipment).”⁵¹ The Department issued the 1959 *Building Designs*, a standard design manual that reflected Postmaster Arthur Summerfield’s desire for modern buildings focusing on efficiency and clean lines. These designs were used in the Lease-Purchase Program; the standardized specifications and drawings were issued for contractor bids and were typically won by the lowest responsible contractor.

Building Designs featured two styles of post office: International (Figure 2-7) and Colonial Revival (Figure 2-8). The International Style predominated, and the building plans provided straightforward delineations of spaces.



Source: *Building Designs*, 1959

Figure 2-7: Plate 15, Design for 1,500-Square-Foot Area

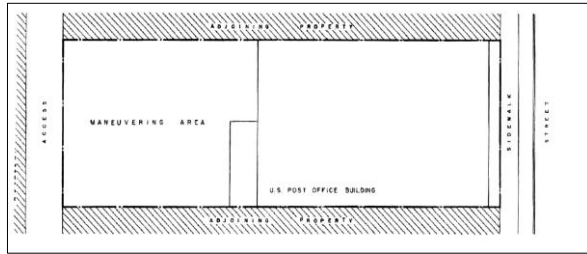


Source: *Building Designs*, 1959

Figure 2-8: Plate 21, Design for 2,000-Square-Foot Area

A change in the design manuals evidenced by the 1959 publication and consistent with the Post Office Department’s need to accommodate increased truck capacity is evidenced by the lot arrangement designs, as shown in Figures 2-9 through 2-12. All of the lot arrangements provide access and space for maneuvering, and Lot D is forward thinking enough to provide for patron parking, a feature that would dominate site design for almost every commercial or public facility for decades to come.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, pg. 54.



Source: *Building Designs, 1959*

Figure 2-9: Plate 600 Lot A

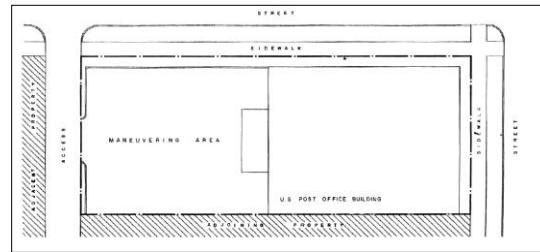
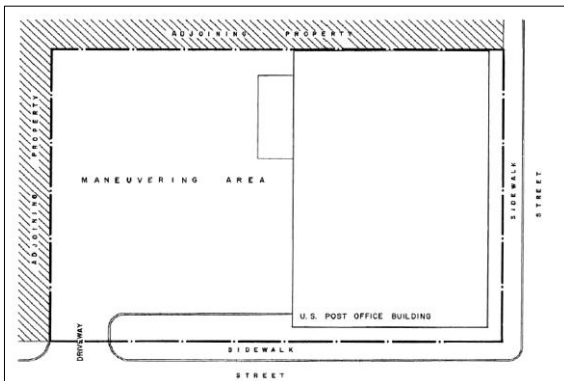


Figure 2-10: Plate 600 Lot B



Source: *Building Designs, 1959*

Figure 2-11: Plate 600 Lot C

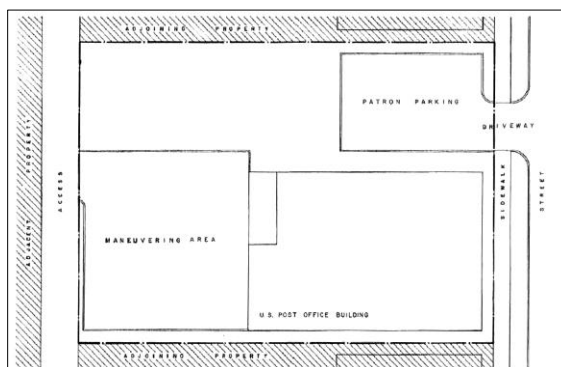


Figure 2-12: Plate 600 Lot D

2.1.5 The 1960s

The years 1959 and 1960 brought a number of mechanical innovations around the country. These innovations included:

- First American-built letter sorter
- First volume order for mechanization to Pitney-Bowes Inc., for production of 75 Mark II facer cancelers
- Construction of the first completely mechanized post office in Providence, Rhode Island, named “Project Turnkey” because it was to be “complete in all respects and ready for operation by the Post Office Department by the private contractor handing over the key”⁵²
- Missile mail dispatched from submarine to coast of Florida

⁵² United States General Accounting Office, *Review of postal operations relating to experimental mail-processing plant, Providence, Rhode Island, Post Office Department; report to the Congress of the United States, 1962*, Washington DC, p. 2.

- Facsimile mail offered
- Installation of Mailflo system of mail processing⁵³

In 1961, newly elected President John F. Kennedy inherited an economic recession. Kennedy's efforts to stimulate the economy included directing the Post Office Department to fast-track construction and revise locations for new construction to target communities with surplus labor, which may have derailed the coordinated nationwide planning effort. The recession had resulted in a high national unemployment rate of 7.1 percent, but only lasted 10 months. By the end of fiscal 1961, the employment situation had improved, and post office construction was once again based on service needs.⁵⁴

Sites for new post offices were "determined by postal technicians," according to a Post Office Department 1963 *Special Report*.⁵⁵ The lease purchase program would select developers through a competitive bid process based on the lowest bid. Bidders would choose designs from the *Building Design* brochure, with stylistic variation based more on lower material costs rather than local compatibility, as suggested in the brochures. Typically, the resulting buildings were not designed by architects, but by the construction contractor using the brochure renderings and guidelines for reference.

Although the brochures depict these designs in a Modern architectural urban environment, as noted by Bruns in his 1998 *History of the Postal Service*:

In far too many instances the heavy-handed, modern styles imposed upon local communities either overpowered or understated the prevailing architectural flavor of the host communities. In such instances, all too often it became easy to pick out the post office simply because it visually did not fit in with the rest of the buildings in town.⁵⁶

In 1963, the Zone Improvement Program was implemented, along with the "sectional center plan,"⁵⁷ which concentrated delivery of mail from tributary post offices to central points that had adequate distribution and transportation. According to the Postmaster's Annual Report, "the ZIP Code is a five-digit code that identified every individual post office and metropolitan area delivery station for dispatch of mail from any point in the United States."⁵⁸ One of the goals of the ZIP Code was to increase private business efficiencies, since firms had invested billions of dollars in electronic data processing equipment that used repetitive actions to process large

⁵³ Unsorted letter mail starts at the beginning of Mailflo in trays "ordered" by a supervisor to proceed to designated work or storage areas. The trays carry their own switching orders in coded devices attached to them called "pre-coded elements." At the proper point along the main line, each tray turns onto a branch line to take its load to the place ordered in advance. Summerfield Arthur E., as told to Hurd, Charles, *U.S. Mail: the story of the United States Postal Service*, New York, Holt, Rhinehart and Winston, 1960 page 181.

⁵⁴ United States Post Office Department, 1961, *Annual Report of the Postmaster General*, p. 17.

⁵⁵ United States Post Office Department, 1963, *Special Report*, p. 20.

⁵⁶ Bruns, 1998, p. 28.

⁵⁷ United States Post Office Department, 1961, *Annual Report of the Postmaster General*, p. XXII, defines the sectional center plan as "a concept geared to speeding delivery by concentrating mail from tributary post offices at central points having suitable transportation available and staffed with competent distribution personnel."

⁵⁸ *Ibid*, p. X.

volumes of similar information, such as bank transactions by account number, stock updates applied to inventory records, or sales per ZIP Code. Of course, the Post Office Department anticipated great benefits for their operations as well, claiming it would “eliminate repetitious address reading, speed sorting, and delivery of mail, and reduce handling costs.” As the Department was developing optical character recognition techniques, it anticipated that within the next few years a machine would “read and recognize numerical characters in a wide variety of typefaces and sizes in envelope addresses and automatically feed mail to presently available letter sorter(s).”⁵⁹

The ZIP Code also enabled the Post Office Department to reduce the number of facilities needed and realize manpower savings through the concentration of mail sorting at sectional centers, which was considered essential to future facility planning. This goal required “constant study of population changes, mail volume growth and forecasts of all transportation patterns.” All 50 states had designated sectional centers, and 60 percent had been activated by 1963.

Advances over the next few years suggest that the Post Office Department continued to improve and modernize. The 1959 *Building Designs* standard manual was updated in 1964, and the next year a high-speed optical character reader was placed in service in the Detroit Post Office. By 1965, sectional centers were complete throughout the county, with 522 in operation. The 1965 Annual Report referred to this as the “most comprehensive change in distribution and transportation patterns made in a great many years.”⁶⁰

The year 1966 began with the Post Office Department announcing a “massive program to accelerate mechanization and modernization of the postal system, involving installation of the most modern mail handling equipment in 109 post offices handling 60 percent of the mail.”⁶¹ In October of that year, the Department’s efforts to keep pace with the increased mail volume, the explosion in population, and the dramatic changes in transportation systems met with disaster as the Chicago Post Office—the world’s largest postal facility at the time—completely shut down for 3 weeks due to a massive backlog of mail.

Hearings before the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Departments of Treasury and Post Office were conducted. Postmaster General Lawrence O’Brien testified that “the sorting floors were bursting with more than five million letters ... that could not be processed,” and the shutdown was the result of 33 years of “trying to move our mail through facilities largely unchanged since the days ... when our mail volume was 30 percent of what it is today.”⁶² A Post Office Department task force was established and made recommendations to the Kappel Commission, which was appointed by President Lyndon Johnson to determine the needed structural changes.

⁵⁹ United States Post Office Department, 1966, *Annual Report of the Postmaster General*, p. NA.

⁶⁰ United States Post Office Department, 1965, *Annual Report of the Postmaster General*, p. NA.

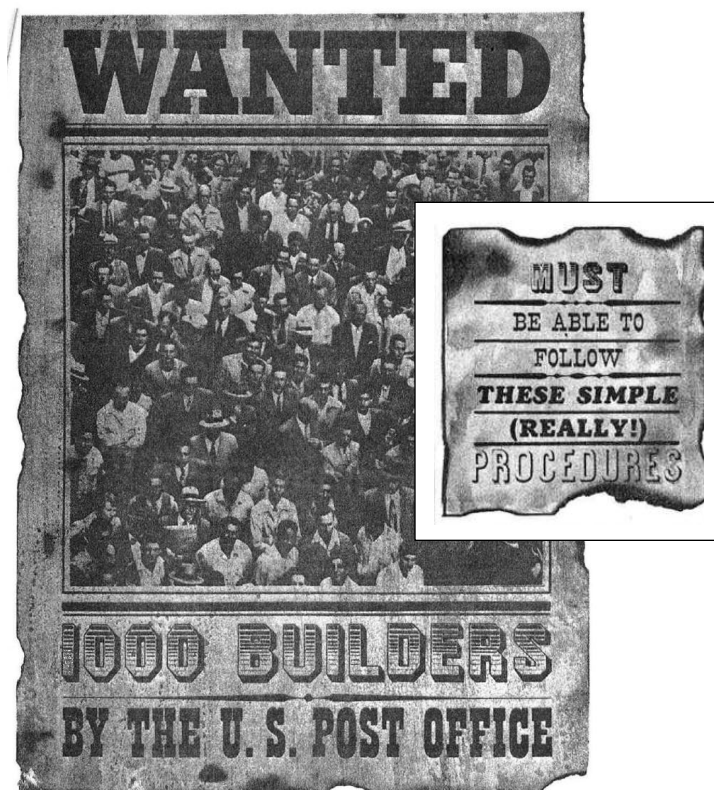
⁶¹ United States Post Office Department, 1966, *Annual Report of the Postmaster General*, “Foreword”

⁶² Boyd and Chen, n.d. from U.S. House Hearings Committee on Appropriations. Subcommittee on Departments of Treasury and Post Office and Executive Office of the President. 90th Congress, 1st Session, 27 Feb. 1967 (Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 1967), pg. 5.

At the same time, the Department continued to advocate for the lease-purchase approach to facility development. The 1966 Annual Report highlights the completion of 10 new major leased facilities and another 17 new major leased facilities under construction.⁶³ The same year, regional engineers inspected 950 lease-prepared construction projects.⁶⁴ A 1967 issue of *Practical Builder* (Figure 2-13) evidenced the need for private contractors to invest in the lease-purchase program. It stated:

During the next 12 months it is likely that an additional 1000 buildings will be built for and occupied by Uncle Sam. Of this number nearly 85% will be built by small contractors who will retain the buildings and act as a lessor and realize a good Annual Return on their original investment.⁶⁵

The article also stated that these buildings would not be white elephants that the contractor would be stuck with if the Department did not exercise its lease options. They would be located near the center of town, and their designs would allow easy conversion to small commercial office buildings or supermarkets.



Source: *Practical Builder*, June 1967 Issue

Figure 2-13: *Practical Builder*, June 1967 Issue, cover and pg. 72 graphic

⁶³ United States Post Office Department, 1966, *Annual Report of the Postmaster General*, p. NA.

⁶⁴ Ibid.

⁶⁵ "Wanted: A Thousand Builders by the U.S. Post Office", 1967, p. 68-72.

In 1968, the Post Office Department made several strides in its facility designs, including adopting design standards that accommodated handicapped persons. A significant facilities project included the installation of mail processing equipment in 196 buildings at a cost of \$5 million, and additional systems were in the planning stages for many more facilities. The Postal Public Building Program provided funding for additional major facilities, and the Public Works Committee approved 24 prospectuses, which permitted Department or regional architects and engineers to create tentative plans. Also in 1968, the establishment of the National Maintenance Technical Centers provided technical backup and training for maintenance personnel on vehicles and equipment.⁶⁶

In June of 1968, the Kappel Commission published its findings. The report stated that the Post Office Department's "principal failure is one of management," and went on to observe that "the failure is one of method rather than of men."⁶⁷ The initiative of individual managers had been sacrificed to the centralization of authority, where decisions were made without knowledge of operations. The postal appropriations process took at least three times as long as the average time span for private industry. Additional problems cited by the commission included management by legislation, poor relations between management and labor, and the problem of political appointees.

The chief recommendation of the Kappel Commission was the establishment of a Postal Corporation to be owned entirely by the federal government and chartered by Congress. The corporation would be operated by a newly created the Postal Service on a self-supporting basis and have the legal status of a corporation, including the right to sue, borrow money, enter into contracts, and own property. A nationwide strike of postal workers in 1970 helped to implement the recommendations of the commission.

The 2-week strike in 1970 was the Nation's largest wildcat strike,⁶⁸ challenging the federal government over poor working conditions, low pay, and inability to use collective bargaining. The Nation's mail system was crippled, and delivery of pension checks, welfare checks, tax refunds, census forms, and over 9,000 military draft notices was disrupted. The stock market fell due to the decrease in trading volume, and some feared the market would have to close. Because of the large percentage of African-American workers in the postal work force, many saw the refusal of collective bargaining rights as a racist policy. President Nixon declared a national emergency and ordered the National Guard to deliver the mail.⁶⁹

2.1.6 Postal Reorganization Act

The Postal Reorganization Act of 1970 implemented the recommendations of the Kappel Commission and abolished the United States Post Office Department, which had been a part of the Cabinet, and created a corporation in its place. Postal unions were given the right of

⁶⁶ United States Post Office Department, 1968, *Annual Report of the Postmaster General*, p. 136-138.

⁶⁷ Kappel et al. 1968. pg. 33.

⁶⁸ Wildcat strike refers to a strike called without consent or vote of approval from a union.

⁶⁹ Boyd and Chen, n.d..

collective bargaining. The new United States Postal Service had an official monopoly on the delivery of letter mail in the country.

The first paragraph of the 1970 Act reads:

The United States Postal Service shall be operated as a basic and fundamental service provided to the people by the Government of the United States, authorized by the Constitution, created by Act of Congress, and supported by the people. The Postal Service shall have as its basic function the obligation to provide postal services to bind the Nation together through the personal, educational, literary, and business correspondence of the people. It shall provide prompt, reliable, and efficient services to patrons in all areas and shall render postal services to all communities. The costs of establishing and maintaining the Postal Service shall not be apportioned to impair the overall value of such service to the people.⁷⁰

The years between 1940 and 1971 were characterized by unparalleled social, cultural, and technological shifts in American society that affected the United States Post Office Department, but no more or less than they affected the American public. Yet, as the major form of communication across the country, the Post Office Department was a network that held the country together and was a part of everyone's day-to-day lives. The following analysis highlights how some dominant historic themes shaped the postal landscape of the period and are still reflected in our national built environment. These themes are associated with property types that convey this history in communities across the country. In Section 3 of this Study, each property type will be described and evaluated using National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) Criteria and Areas of Historic Integrity. The property type evaluation will provide a framework for evaluating individual Post Office Department resources or groups of resources for purposes of NRHP eligibility and National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) Section 106 analysis.

2.2 PUBLIC WORKS ADMINISTRATION POST OFFICE LEGACY, 1940–1942

2.2.1 Summary

From 1940 to the start of World War II, the Post Office Department continued to build, thanks to the prolongation of the federal government's activist role in economic recovery and the New Deal's PWA. The construction of post offices throughout the country was a very successful aspect of this program, representing nearly one-eighth of the 3,174 total PWA construction projects.⁷¹ Almost three times more post offices were constructed during the Great Depression than during the previous 50 years. Although these buildings were largely designed with economics in mind, for local communities they represented the government's effort to restore

⁷⁰ United States Congress. 1970.

⁷¹ Causier and Jurkiewicz, 2000, p. E-10.

economic health in their town.⁷² The program resulted in the spread of federal architecture to communities around the country and the establishment of a more nationwide federal presence.⁷³

2.2.2 Inherited Legacy of Public Works Administration Post Office Construction

From 1939 to 1943, post office construction continued, largely due to the completion of approved projects. Legislative changes made during this period evidence a time of transition from the federal government playing a less activist role in the economy to one of military preparation. The federal government's Public Building Program created by the Public Buildings Act of 1926 was greatly expanded in the 1930s. In 1931, the Act was amended, allowing the Treasury Department's Office of the Supervisory Architect to employ outside professionals and firms as needed. Almost half of the country's architectural firms went out of business during the 1930s, and this Act helped reduce unemployment in the profession. As a result, the Supervising Architect's office staff grew by 267 positions, and 133 architectural firms received federal commissions in 1931.

In 1933, the Department of the Treasury was reorganized, and the level of bureaucracy increased for federal construction projects. The PWA was created by the National Industrial Recovery Act, which allowed the dispersal of construction funds to federal and non-federal agencies. Also, the funds appropriated under the Public Buildings Act of 1926 became unavailable except to complete projects already under contract. Funds for new construction would be authorized through an emergency construction program.⁷⁴

The increasing complexity of the government funding authorities used to construct post offices is reflected in the Treasury Department Annual Report for fiscal year 1935. Funding sources included the Public Buildings Act of 1926, the Emergency Relief and Construction Act of 1932, the Emergency Construction Program under the Appropriation Act of 1934, and the Building Program for the District of Columbia Act of 1926.⁷⁵ In 1939, the Reorganization Act removed the federal architecture program from the Treasury Department and created the Public Building Administration as part of the FWA. This agency combined the Public Buildings Branch from the Procurement Office of the Department of the Treasury with the Branch of Buildings Management of the Department of the Interior's National Park Service. The Federal Works Administrator appointed a Commissioner of Public Buildings to head the new agency.

The Office of the Supervising Architect had been in the Treasury Department for 100 years, a period of time when the inventory of federal buildings was relatively small. Claiming a legacy that goes back to Robert Mills, one of the first native-born American architects and the designer of the Treasury Department Building and the Washington Monument, the Office of the Supervising Architect was characterized by high-minded decisions about the role of public

⁷² Short and Stanley-Brown, 1939, 20.

⁷³ United States Postal Service, Office of Real Estate, *A History of Post Office Construction 1900 to 1940*, United States Postal Service, Washington, DC, 1982, p. 22.

⁷⁴ *Ibid*, 16.

⁷⁵ *Ibid*, 17.

architecture and a desire for government buildings “to express Classical and democratic ideals and to symbolize power, organization and institutionalization.”⁷⁶

The FWA had a very different approach for government buildings. Its 1940 annual report described the FWA as “primarily an organization for building.”⁷⁷ Government architecture would become a part of a vast procurement bureau. Although the reorganization reflects a major shift in philosophy, there is little evidence to indicate it changed post office construction policies for the next few years.⁷⁸ In 1940, over 200 small post offices were constructed.

2.2.3 Standardized Plans and Dominant Styles

Standardization of post office plans began in the early 1900s. Acting Supervising Architect of the Treasury Department, James A. Wetmore, reported in 1916 that a single building type was being used in 30 communities, and an additional 27 were under contract. This practice continued into the 1920s, especially in small communities, with some adjustments made to conform to community needs and existing conditions. Although removed from the final version of the 1926 Public Buildings Act, the original legislation referred to preference being given “so far as practicable, to standardized types, and in other cases where possible and appropriate to commercial types modified to meet government requirements, rather than to buildings of monumental character.”⁷⁹ This statement reflected the policies of the Treasury Department, and was in reaction to the federal building program being characterized as constructing superfluous buildings as a way of elected officials gaining local favor.

The increased volume of post office design and construction during the Depression did not increase the variety of design. A series of “cabinet sketches” produced in 1931 by the Treasury Department provided standard floor plans for post offices of different sizes. This approach reduced the number of individual drawings needed, decreasing the time needed for the design process and allowing projects to be constructed sooner, which advanced economic recovery.⁸⁰ The standardization of post office plans is reflected in a September 1933 article in *Architectural Forum*, which explained:

The routine of the Post Office Department has been highly perfected and demands a building in absolute adjustment to its needs. Through the years of specialization in post office design, the Office of the Supervising Architect has developed a technique and a constantly improved standardization of plan and detail to fill these needs efficiently and economically. In architectural design the Department has provided local post office buildings that are a credit to the communities and one in accord with the traditions of the localities.⁸¹

⁷⁶ Ibid, 5, note 4.

⁷⁷ U.S. Department of the Interior, 1940, p. 9-10, as cited in Boland, 1994, p. 5.

⁷⁸ United States Post Office, Office of Real Estate, 1982, p. 22.

⁷⁹ Ibid, p. 14 footnote 17.

⁸⁰ Ibid, p. 17, footnote 23.

⁸¹ Ibid, p. 18.

The Annual Report of 1937 states that the Office of the Supervising Architect prepared a design manual that codified methods of design and construction of post office buildings. Eleven designs were developed to meet the “varying requirements of the Post Office Department and the sectional architectural traditions.”⁸² The goal of meeting “sectional architectural traditions” was justified by the observation that “the use of materials and products native to the localities has resulted in stimulating employment and spreading the benefits of the building program.”⁸³ The annual reports of the Treasury Department provide little information about the implementation of a design agenda focused on regionalism, but the overwhelming number of post office buildings constructed during this time were either Stripped Classicism or Colonial Revival.

The FWA Annual Report for 1940 includes the Mayville, Wisconsin, Post Office as typical of those constructed during the year (Figure 2-14). Its floor plan was typical not only of post offices constructed in 1940, but of those built throughout the 1930s. It featured a public lobby separated from the workroom, and a standard arrangement of offices, platform, and “look-out.”⁸⁴ Mayville was an agricultural and small-industry town. To conform to the prevailing style of the local community, “a simple contemporary design was created.”⁸⁵ Like all 1940 designs for federal buildings outside of the District of Columbia, the building was designed by the Public Buildings Administration.



Source: <http://www.postofficefreak.com/2012/06/23/mayville-wi-post-office>

Figure 2-14: Mayville, WI, Post Office, c. 1940

Criteria used to site post offices reflected the use of the facility and the manner in which it was designed to function. Post offices that included other federal offices or courts were often located near other governmental buildings in the community. Single-function post offices were often located near the downtown, but perhaps a block or two from Main Street. This made the post

⁸² Ibid, 20, footnote 31.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ Ibid, 23

⁸⁵ Ibid.

office easy to find, but also allowed better access to truck activity, which increasingly was used with rail to transport mail.⁸⁶

With the formation of the Procurement Division and the allotment of funds to the Treasury Department made possible through the National Industrial Recovery Act of 1933, many in the federal government felt that the budgets for federal buildings projects were extravagant and needed to be reduced. Assistant Director of the Public Works Branch, W.E. Reynolds, asked the Board of Consulting Architects to develop a paragraph that should guide the design of all federal public buildings.⁸⁷ The following three recommendations were submitted as that guide:

1. The buildings should be of simple governmental character in consonance with the region in which they are located and the surroundings of the specific sites.
2. Materials shall be such as to require no excessive maintenance.
3. The buildings shall be of sufficient capacity to reasonably meet the needs of the federal government as may be anticipated for a 10-year period.⁸⁸

2.2.4 Regionalism

Later the “consonance with the region” was determined on a state level. The Board of Consulting Architects stated that:

Architectural traditions, as well as the utilization of natural or manufactured products of the vicinity, are given every practicable consideration. Thus in New England will be found examples of Colonial architecture with exterior facing of brick or stone; in the southwest, many of the buildings designed for that locality will reflect the Spanish influence in elevation and materials, and in sections of more recent traditions, buildings of contemporary character have been designed. In the larger centers of population, design tends toward monumental structures, expressing the strength and dignity of the Federal Government rather than local color.”⁸⁹

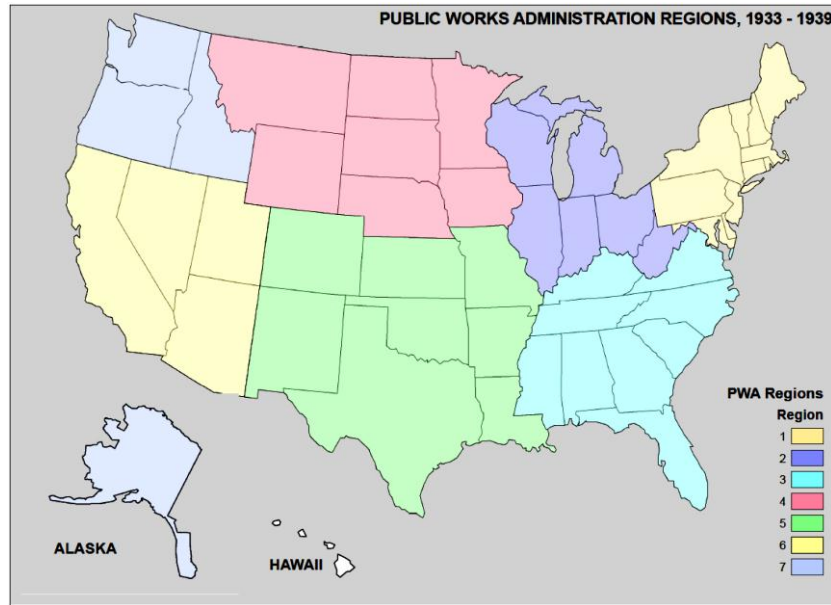
Public Buildings: Architecture under the Public Works Administration, written by C.W. Short and R. Stanley-Brown in 1939 with assistance from the PWA, provides a contemporary survey of public buildings erected between 1933 and 1939 discussing regionalism. The authors were appointed by the Administrator of the Federal Emergency Administration of Public Works and the Director of Procurement of the Treasury Department. The book was based on a report made to the President in 1939 by the “Committee of Architectural Surveys.” The report splits the country into seven PWA regions (Figure 2-15), each with a different approach to building design.

⁸⁶ Casier and Jurkiewicz, 2000.

⁸⁷ Lee, 2000, p. 262.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Ibid.



Source: URS as adapted from Short and Stanley-Brown

Figure 2-15: Public Works Administration Regions

Region 1 included the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic states. Short and Stanley-Brown describe this region as containing the “ablest architects in the country” and the Nation’s most outstanding examples of good architecture, both traditional and modern. They describe the materials as standard to the region and include a list of what would commonly be used in building construction throughout much of the country, such as hardwood, brick, metal products, and terra cotta, although these are referenced as “native to the area.” The most common construction method they identified was steel frame and reinforced-concrete floors with brick or stone facing over hollow tile, which is typically not discussed as a regionalism in current architectural histories.⁹⁰

The authors define Region 2 as parts of the Midwest and Upper Midwest. They describe the architecture of this area as relying on a tendency to reproduce work completed in the past, pointing out that not much advancement in the “planning of buildings” had been achieved. Despite this lack of advancement, they credit the region with using the same native materials as those found in Region 1 and employing the same construction techniques, except for not using concrete frame construction.

Region 3 comprised the area south from Kentucky to Alabama and east to the Atlantic coast. Traditional architecture of the colonial era characterized this region, although some Spanish influences were present and some modern design had crept in.⁹¹ As with Region 2, the authors observe that there had not been much advancement in building planning. Native materials included steel, cement, brick, lumber, and stone. There is no explanation of how “native

⁹⁰ Short and Stanley-Brown, 1939, p. XII-XIV.

⁹¹ Ibid.

materials” is defined, and the application of the term, as in this case, does not seem thought out. Exterior walls are characterized as load bearing.

Region 4 embraced Plains and High Plains states, as well as Missouri, Iowa, and Minnesota. Again, design had purportedly advanced little, although “modern” design predominated, particularly in Missouri. Native materials and construction methods were similar to those of the first three regions with minor variations, most notably glass block construction.

Part of the Southwest comprised Region 5. The authors found a diversity of native styles of architecture attributed to variations in climate, which prompted a predominance of small windows and thick walls. New Mexico produced the work most interesting to them. Native materials were similar to those in the previous four regions, but metal products and steel were imported. The authors observe that reinforced concrete and steel were faced with brick, stone, or stucco, and walls were commonly of hollow tile.

California, Utah, Arizona, and Nevada made up Region 6. Short and Stanley-Brown ascribe little advancement in design to the region, except for California, which they identified as starting an entirely new school of architecture. This school they credited to the “Field Bill” enacted by the California legislature following the 1933 earthquake. The bill abolished all types of veneer construction and the eliminated projecting cornices and free or loose ornamental features; it also confined all construction to three types: all concrete, combined concrete and steel, and wood.⁹² They referenced a native material—gunite—which was pneumatically applied or blasted concrete.

The Pacific Northwest and Alaska fell within Region 7, which Short and Stanley-Brown characterize as lacking in a deeply rooted architectural tradition. They did not identify anything regional about native materials and construction methods, although the authors do note that the use of stucco directly applied to concrete exterior walls was particularly present along the seacoast.

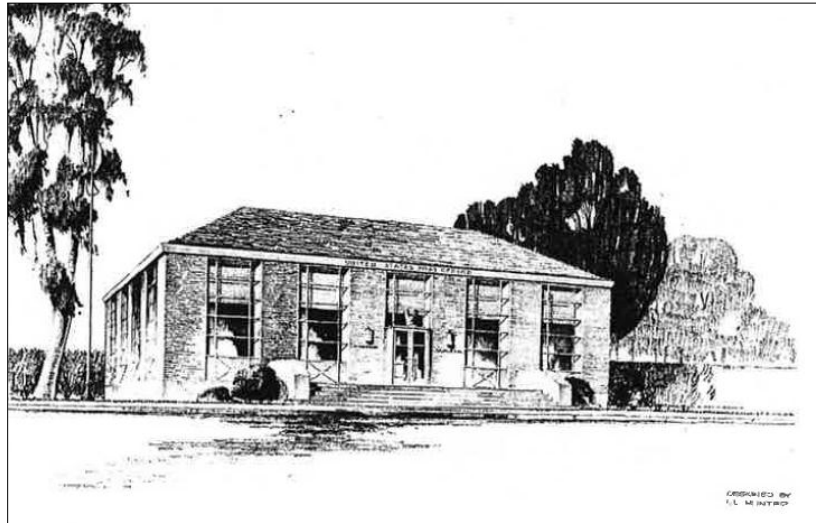
Short and Stanley-Brown’s book seems to use the term “regionalism” as more of a simple classification system rather than aesthetic typologies. Many of the materials described as native were mass produced, and their higher regard for Northeastern architecture and architects is obviously biased. Despite this, it is interesting to note the use of regionalism as a reference point in an official report to the President, and this does provide evidence that aesthetic considerations were very much a part of the design process for Depression-era post offices.

2.2.5 Colonial Revival and Stripped Classicism

Dominant styles for post office construction in the early 1940s included the progressive Stripped Classicism, also referred to as Starved Classicism, and the conservative Colonial Revival. The Treasury Department’s Office of the Supervising Architect held a competition during its last year (1939) to design a small post office. The purpose was to select a certain number of designs that

⁹² Ibid.

could be used as types. Of the 189 designs entered, 12 were selected. One was by Leonard L. Hunter, who became a leading figure in federal architecture of the 1950s. In 1956, Hunter became the Assistant Commissioner for Design and Construction, which is one of the highest positions an architect can hold in the federal government. His design included vertical stacks of windows between unadorned brick piers, a central entrance fronted by exterior stairs, and the inscription of the post office's name in the front cornice (Figure 2-16). These features, fit well within what Lois Craig described in *The Federal Presence* as “Starved Classicism”—a synthesis of Modern and Classical elements.



Source: Courtesy National Archives, Lee, *Architects to the Nation*, 273.

Figure 2-16: U.S. Post Office Type Buildings Office Competition, 1939, Leonard L. Hunter

Stripped or Starved Classicism is credited to French-born architect Paul Philippe Cret⁹³ who interpreted Modernism within the framework of traditional forms. Cret valued the restraint used in Modernism, the design of volumes rather than the mere application of decoration, and the use of void as an element of composition. His design philosophy is often represented by the use of vertical strips of windows, plain expanses of exterior walls, and vertical columns (Figure 2-17).⁹⁴ A frequent characteristic of the style, often used in federal buildings, is the inscription of the building name (or sometimes the agency name or its motto or philosophy) on the façade (Figure 2-18).⁹⁵

⁹³ Paul Phillip Cret was an architect and industrial designer born in Lyon, France in 1876. For over 30 years he headed the Architecture Department at the University of Pennsylvania. He designed numerous buildings at the University of Texas in Austin and the Headquarters of the Federal Reserve (Eccles Building) in Washington, DC. He won the gold Medal of the American Institute of Architects in 1939 and died in 1945.

⁹⁴ Craig, 1978, p. 294 -295.

⁹⁵ Causier and Jurkiewicz, 2000, p. 22, footnote 32.



Source: URS

Figure 2-17: Crawfordsville, IA Post Office, c. 1941



Source: URS

Figure 2-18: Window Detail

The other commonly used architectural style for post offices during the early 1940s was Colonial Revival (Figures 2-19 and 2-20). This practically ubiquitous post office architectural style was employed throughout the country during the first half of the twentieth century.



Source: URS

Figure 2-19: Tonawanda, NY Post Office, c. 1940



Source: URS

Figure 2-20: Front Entry Detail

According to Short and Stanley-Brown's PWA definitions of regionalism in architecture, it would seem that the American Colonial Revival style would be limited to the Northeast and Southeast. Although the style is extensively represented in these areas, it is not confined to these regions. Many examples of Colonial Revival post offices are found throughout the Midwest and other regions that have no link to the colonial past. The style had become so associated with patriotism in twentieth-century American culture that its use extended far beyond the original 13 colonies. In fact, the use of the style for city halls, libraries, school buildings, and post offices is found throughout the country and is practically a stock character in the built environment of the American small town.

2.2.6 Public Art

The practice of commissioning post office art work, almost always in the form of murals, was continued in the construction of post offices in the early 1940s. President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal Arts Program supported the arts through several programs, including the

Treasury Department’s Section of Painting and Sculpture (known as the Section). Rather than functioning as a relief program for artists, like the Works Progress Administration (WPA) art program, the Treasury Department’s program sought to provide murals and sculpture for newly constructed federal buildings from project funding appropriations. Artists were selected from regional and national competitions. The artists were commissioned to represent a theme from local history or commerce, and their work was reviewed and critiqued by the program administrators and local community.⁹⁶ Contemporary realism defines the majority of the Section’s post office murals (Figure 2-21). Art was seen as a “dialogue between the artists and the public” and “the language of the public was realism.”⁹⁷ The murals were not realistic in that they depicted what was seen; they were the simplification of form to highlight and convey an ideal. Often the ideal was consistent with New Deal optimism. These artworks express a general faith in life or in America and often convey work as a “communal and productive activity in which men work harmoniously with each other and with machines.”⁹⁸



Source: URS

Figure 2-21: Venice Beach, CA, Post Office Lobby Wall Mural, “The Story of Venice” by Edward Biberman, 1940

Post offices are the federal buildings that are perhaps the most familiar to the American public. In many communities the post office is the only federal building and the New Deal emphasis on constructing “public works of an enduring character and lasting benefits” made these buildings into landmarks in many town streetscapes. Built on prominent downtown intersections, post offices provided evidence of the federal government supporting the local economy in an active and tangible manner. The resulting buildings were used by most people in a town and represented a type of democratic access to art and a function of government. These buildings

⁹⁶ URS Group, Inc., 2012, The Postal Service’s New Arts Deal Collection, 2003; p. 1

⁹⁷ Park and Markowitz, 1984, p. 139

⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 139.

characterize Short and Stanley-Brown's 1939 description of the PWA: "For the first time the people have been building public works in unison, bettering the living conditions of all men."⁹⁹

2.2.7 The Early 1940s: Economic Recovery and Wartime Transition

The 1940 Annual Report of the Postmaster General noted that the Post Office Department continued to work with FWA and realize public building projects that had been funded by Congress. By June of 1940, 229 Post Office Department building projects had been completed during the year, 237 were under contract, and 43 were put out to bid.¹⁰⁰ In addition, 90 sites were recommended to the Interdepartmental Committee on Public Buildings, consisting of the fourth assistant postmaster general and the commissioner of public buildings for the FWA, for future projects.

The 1941 Annual Report also discussed the completion of projects, but did not report on projects in the planning phase. In addition to the "200 new additional Government owned post office buildings placed into operation, 29 extensions to existing buildings were completed and occupied and 10 new Federal buildings replaced a similar number of old buildings which had become inadequate for Government purposes."¹⁰¹ The report also noted that the reassignment of postal space to other federal agencies represented a substantial savings to the government. The 1942 Annual Report stated that 58 new government-owned post offices were placed in operation, seven extensions were added to existing buildings, and six new federal buildings replaced older buildings. The report also noted that due to the war, the public building program had been suspended.

Although the Post Office Department building program was suspended during the war, the United States Army and Navy were put in the position of building postal facilities on their bases. The designs for the naval facilities were to "be acceptable to representatives of the Post Office Department and the Navy."¹⁰² The Army had four standard types of wooden building they could use, ranging from over 1,000 to over 5,000 square feet. After the first year, it was decided that many bases could use much smaller buildings for their postal needs, and three additional types were developed that consisted of one, two, or three units, with each unit containing 200 square feet.

At several of the larger bases, the postal facility was one of the last buildings to be constructed. In a few instances, the local post office became overrun with mail to be delivered to soldiers at a base where there were no postal facilities set up, so initial mail service was conducted open-air as emergency buildings were erected. The Navy had to contend with inadequate space for mail service at domestic shore stations, and new postal rooms had to be constructed. It was estimated that for every 1,000 active military personnel, one civilian mail clerk was needed. As the war effort continued, the military found it appropriate to use their own personnel for mail services.

⁹⁹ Short and Stanley-Brown, 1939, p. 193.

¹⁰⁰ United States Post Office Department, 1941, *Annual Report of the Postmaster General*, p. 58.

¹⁰¹ United States Post Office Department, 1942, *Annual Report of the Postmaster General*, p. 45.

¹⁰² United States Post Office Department, 1951, *A Wartime History of the Post Office Department*, p. 157.

Many of these workers came from the women's services, including the Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service (WAVES), U.S. Coast Guard Women's Reserve (SPARS), and members of the Women's Reserve of the Marine Corps, who were bonded and sworn in.¹⁰³

The end year for this context theme is 1942 because the public building program was suspended due to the war.¹⁰⁴ Subsequent years would see a decline in post office construction until the late 1950s, when mechanization and changing demographics and transportation would call for a different type of postal physical plant.

2.3 CHANGING DEMOGRAPHICS AND THE GROWTH OF SUBURBIA

2.3.1 World War II and the U.S. Post Office Department

World War II transformed American culture and society. Where Americans lived and how they got around changed radically after the war, which had profound impacts on how the Post Office Department functioned. Measures taken by the Department to accommodate the demands of the war laid the groundwork for operational changes to the postal system in the postwar years. World War II increased mail volume, changed delivery routes, and brought about changes in the way mail was processed.

Mail was the lifeline between thousands of soldiers and their families. Mail was also a vital aspect of communication for war planning and execution of maneuvers. Therefore, the U.S. Army and Navy assumed responsibility for the delivery of mail to the American military. As noted in the 1942 Postmaster General's Annual Report:

The Post Office, War and Navy Departments realize fully that frequent and rapid communication with parents, associates and others strengthens fortitude, enlivens patriotism, makes loneliness endurable and inspires to even greater devotion the men and women who carry on the fight far from home and friends.

And at the same time

...The immense amount of official mail entrusted to us for Army and Navy, much of it secret and confidential, requires the utmost care and handling.¹⁰⁵

The Post Office Department made plans to turn over to the military mail delivery to the troops during large troop maneuvers in 1940 and 1941. After the start of the war, keeping troop movements secret while still delivering mail to the troops could not be accomplished without the armed services taking over responsibility for delivery. Beginning in March 22, 1942, letters sent by ordinary mail to the members of the armed services was free.

The amount of mail generated by the armed forces greatly increased volume and changed distribution patterns. Before the Declaration of War following the attack on Pearl Harbor in

¹⁰³ Ibid., 162

¹⁰⁴ United States Post Office Department, 1942, *Annual Report of the Postmaster General*, p. 24.

¹⁰⁵ United States Post Office Department, 1942, *Annual Report of the Postmaster General*, p. 3.

December of 1941, the average serviceman received three pieces of mail a week. This increased 50 percent by March of 1942. In 1918, during World War I, 35 million letters and 15 million parcels and papers were mailed to expeditionary forces in France. By contrast, during World War II, overseas letters for October 1944 alone topped 65 million.¹⁰⁶ Between 1944 and 1945, mail volume increased from about 34 billion letters to 37.91 billion. WWII created mail volume far beyond anything the Post Office Department had experienced before.

Not only did the war greatly increase the volume of mail, it created a need for new post offices and a need to process more mail with fewer hands, since many postal workers were now in the military. In 1942, the Department began the “Postal Delivery Zone Number System”—the precursor of the ZIP Code. The delivery units, or zones, were identified by one or two numbers that listed the city first and then the state.¹⁰⁷ By 1945, this 3-year-old experiment operating in 124 of the larger cities’ post offices was reported to “exceed all expectations” and was considered of immeasurable benefit at large offices that had acute shortages of experienced manpower. The system was anticipated to be of continued benefit throughout the Department in peacetime.¹⁰⁸ In 1948, the Post Office Department described the use of zone numbers as permitting “the Department to use inexperienced personnel for distribution, thereby effecting economy and expediting delivery.”¹⁰⁹

In addition, factories and manufacturing facilities were established for war purposes in outlying districts, which required the migration of large numbers of laborers, new towns to be built, and buildings to house convenient postal facilities.¹¹⁰ Although the establishment of outlying company towns hardly started with WWII, the scale of mobilization for the war effort enlarged the need and hastened the urgency of providing new services to these areas. Therefore, Public Law 368 chapter 297 (H.R. 4517) was passed in 1944 to establish post office branches and stations beyond the limits of existing post offices. Post-WWII, the need for expanded service to outlying districts would increase exponentially, but for a different reason: the American suburb was redefining the landscape of the Nation.

2.3.2 America Growing and Moving

Between 1940 and 1971, the population of the United States soared from 131,669,361 to 203,211,926 people, or by approximately 65 percent. During this time, the demographic profile of the country was changed by social, economic, and technological factors. Not only did the number of people the Post Office Department served greatly increase, but the areas where the largest number of people lived also changed. In general, the increased population had moved west and south, and was shifting from central cities to suburbs of large metropolitan areas.

¹⁰⁶ United States Post Office Department, 1944, *Annual Report of the Postmaster General*, p. 2-3.

¹⁰⁷ United States Postal Service, 2007, p. 33.

¹⁰⁸ United States Post Office Department, 1945, *Annual Report of the Postmaster General*, p. 4.

¹⁰⁹ United States Post Office Department, 1948, *Annual Report of the Postmaster General*, p. 19.

¹¹⁰ United States Post Office Department, 1944, *Annual Report of the Postmaster General*, p. 5.

While the late-nineteenth century was a period of urbanization, with people moving away from farms and rural communities, the twentieth century was a period of suburbanization. Americans relocated in increasing numbers from urban cores to new suburban subdivisions. During the 1940s, suburban areas saw an average increase in population of 36 percent, while urban core populations only increased by 14 percent. The post-war suburban housing boom escalated the suburbanization trend so much that by the 1960s more people lived in suburbs than in urban cores.¹¹¹

During the mid to late twentieth century, urban cores were increasingly viewed as dangerous, dirty places that were unsuitable for raising a family. Government policies, in the form of Federal Housing Administration (FHA) standards and land use zoning, encouraged the segregation of land uses that is characteristic of suburban planning and development. People who could secure a mortgage moved to the suburbs—generally middle- and upper-class white people—and did so in large numbers. The shift was in part due to the appeal of new, clean neighborhoods and in part due to FHA practices of refusing to back mortgages in inner-city neighborhoods and areas it considered “blighted.”

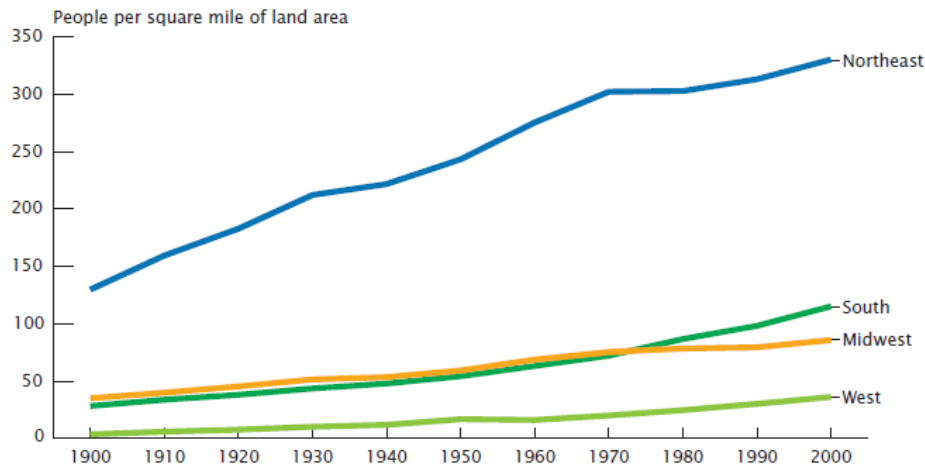
At the same time middle- and upper-class whites were moving to the suburbs, African-Americans from the South headed for the cities of the Northeast, Midwest, and West. During the Great Migration, from 1910 to 1970, six million people made this move. Some historians make a distinction between the first Great Migration (1910–1930), numbering about 1.6 million migrants who left mostly rural areas to migrate to northern and Midwestern industrial cities, and a Second Great Migration (1940 to 1970), during which five million or more people moved to the Northeast, Midwest, California, and Western cities. More townspeople with urban skills moved during the second migration compared to the first migration.¹¹² By the end of the Second Great Migration, African-Americans had become an urbanized population.

The most substantial change to U.S. demographics from 1940 to 1970 was the growth of the metropolitan areas, including the suburbs. Before WWII, the majority of Americans lived outside a metropolitan area. Statistics on population density show that the majority of the “metropolitanization” occurred in the Northeast, as indicated by the U.S. Census Bureau line chart on the number of people per square mile (Figure 2-22). In 1940, the number of persons per square mile in this region was 221.7. By 1970, it had increased to 302.2 people per square mile. Connecticut’s population density almost doubled, and substantial increases also occurred in New

¹¹¹ D.L. Ames and L.F. McClelland, National Register Bulletin: Guidelines for the Evaluation and Documentation for the National Register of Historic Places. U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service. 2002, p. 2.

¹¹² Frey, William H. 2004. "The New Great Migration: Black Americans' Return to the South, 1965–2000." The Brookings Institution, Center on Urban and Metropolitan Policy, Washington D.C. May 2004. Available at http://www.brookings.edu/~media/research/files/reports/2004/5/demographics%20frey/20040524_frey.pdf accessed March 19 2008.

Jersey, New York, Rhode Island, and Massachusetts. California’s density increased from 44.3 to 127.9 people per square mile—almost tripling. Notable increases were also seen in Illinois, Ohio, and Maryland. Most of this increased density was the result of growth in the suburban metropolitan areas. In addition, the Great Migration and the increasingly urban character of the African-American population during this period suggest that the central cities were not losing population, but the racial profile of central cities was changing.



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, decennial census of population, 1900 to 2000

Figure 2-22: Population Density by Region: 1900 to 2000

FHA policies contributed to the country’s white population shift to the suburbs, and the personal automobile made suburban living possible. During the course of the twentieth century, cars became the primary means of transportation for most people, and the roadway network was expanded to accommodate the ever-increasing traffic volumes. The creation of interstate highways was a tremendous boon to automobile use and ownership, making suburban life far from commercial and industrial employment centers even more accessible.

The private automobile played a very important role in the development and shaping of subdivisions. Americans quickly adopted the automobile during the first half of the twentieth century, increasing pressure to improve the roadway network to accommodate the new traffic. FHA guidelines for residential subdivisions emphasized the concept of street hierarchy, wherein traffic is funneled to major streets to minimize the volume of cars on local residential streets.¹¹³ Suburbs were laid out and designed in response to the noise and danger that automobiles present and the desire to keep cars as far from residential areas as possible while recognizing suburban residents’ complete dependence on cars. As congestion increased on urban streets, people began pushing for a new system of roads to handle urban and inter-urban traffic.

¹¹³ Michael Southworth and Ben-Joseph Eran, *American Planning Association Journal*, “Street Standards and the Shaping of Suburbia,” Winter 1995, p. 74, <http://web.mit.edu/ejb/www/doc/JAPAv61n1.pdf>. Accessed July 21, 2012.

Construction of the Nation's Interstate Highway System began slowly after the passage of the Federal-Aid Highway Act of 1944, an act that authorized the national system of limited access roads, including expressways, highways, and freeways, but did not include funding. The Federal Aid-Highway Act of 1956, which included substantial funding for the Interstate system, dramatically increased the construction. Interstate highways greatly decreased travel times, and thereby opened new land for development. The new highways made "bedroom communities" possible far from the employment bases and commercial developments on which the residents depended.

The increase in suburban population also resulted in the expansion of government services such as mail service to these areas. Thus, the population increase in the suburbs caused the Post Office Department to change its station siting standards and mail delivery techniques. Anticipation of these societal shifts is reflected in the Postmaster General's Annual Report of 1948:

This year the postal needs of patrons expanded in some areas and contracted in others, because of increased population, mass migration from one section of the country to another, and the gigantic construction program of new businesses buildings and homes in areas that had formerly been undeveloped.¹¹⁴

In many areas adjacent to large cities, rural routes became more and more heavily patronized, requiring their conversion to city delivery service, which overburdened the mail carriers.¹¹⁵ The conversion of rural route and village delivery service to city delivery service continued throughout the remainder of the 1940s and well into the 1950s.

2.3.3 Mass Production of Housing in the Post-War Period

By increasing the credit available to private builders, the National Housing Act amendments made it possible for much larger tracts of land to be developed than ever before. Those amendments created the funding for builders to buy these larger tracts and embark on more ambitious construction plans. The post-war housing shortage, combined with the expansion of government-backed mortgage programs, ensured builders of a strong market for whatever housing they could create. The mass production of houses on these large tracts of land resulted in a great number of new residential subdivisions being created in a very short time frame. With this tremendous increase in housing, more mail routes had to be added or expanded to make sure the new addresses received mail.

FHA was particularly important in addressing the housing shortage in the years following World War II. New home construction rates had slowed considerably during the Depression and remained low during WWII. This relative lack of construction combined with the high post-war demand for housing created by the large number of soldiers returning from duty and starting families resulted in a severe housing shortage. To help address the post-war housing shortage,

¹¹⁴ United States Post Office Department, 1948, *Annual Report of the Postmaster General*, p. 14.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

the National Housing Act was amended in 1948 to increase credit available to private builders and liberalize the terms of FHA-approved home mortgages.

Levitt and Sons, the building firm headed by Abraham Levitt and sons William and Alfred, applied the concepts of mass production to housing development and revolutionized the post-war housing industry. Rather than have one team of builders perform multiple tasks to complete a house, the Levitts had specialized teams that each performed a single task. A team would arrive at the site and perform its task, such as pouring a foundation or framing the walls, and then move on to the next house to perform exactly the same task as before. All of the houses were identical, so the teams only had to learn the dimensions and specifications of that one design, thus speeding the construction even further. Levittown, New York was the first (and best-known) of their four “Levittowns” and became a symbol of post-war suburbia.¹¹⁶ An example of a Levittown is shown in Figure 2-23.



Source: *Levittown through the Years*, 2012¹¹⁷

Figure 2-23: Levittown, NY, 1948

2.3.4 Land Use Planning and the Federal Housing Administration

When the stock market crashed in 1929, existing private home-financing systems collapsed. The FHA was established by the National Housing Act of 1934 to provide government mortgage insurance plans and help restructure the home financing systems. The mortgage insurance program turned out to be very successful, helping millions of Americans secure mortgages to

¹¹⁶ For more information on the development and impact of American suburbs, see *Building the Dream: A Social History of Housing in America* by Gwendolyn Wright, 1981 Random House, New York; *Picture Windows*, by Roselyn Baxandall and Elizabeth Ewen, 2000, Basic Books, New York; *Building Suburbia*, by Dolores Hayden, 2003, Pantheon Books, New York; and *World War II and the American Dream: How Wartime Building Changed a Nation*, Edited by Donald Albrecht, 1995, MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts and American Building Museum, Washington, D.C.

¹¹⁷ *Levittown Through the Years* 2012. *The New York Times*. Available at http://www.nytimes.com/slideshow/2007/10/12/nyregion/20071013_LEVITTOWN_SLIDESHOW_index.html. Viewed May 25, 2012.

buy homes that met the FHA developed standards and underwriting criteria for housing developments. The FHA financial backing was so important to the homebuilding industry that its standards became the guiding principle in housing design and, in particular, subdivision layout.

The shape of our Nation's suburbs was largely determined by the twentieth-century development of land-use planning and zoning, and their influence on FHA guidelines and standards. Early FHA guidelines for the layout of residential subdivisions called for a hierarchy of streets, with arterials or major collector streets on the periphery, and the neighborhood laid out to discourage through traffic. The guidelines recommended using curvilinear streets and cul-de-sacs or loop streets rather than a grid pattern of streets to keep the neighborhood free of cut-through traffic. Funneling traffic onto major streets became increasingly important as overall traffic volumes increased. This also facilitated the rise of strip commercial development along those high-traffic streets. A key feature of twentieth-century residential subdivisions was the segregation of land uses. Residential areas might include a school, library, or community center, but all other uses that support residential activities, including post offices, were typically restricted to the commercial strips or shopping malls.

2.3.5 Post Office Development and Suburban Development

The 1949 Postmaster General's Annual Report noted that

The rapid and combined expansion of the Nation-wide housing program, both in urban and suburban sections of the cities, has necessitated some expansion of postal service to the new communities.¹¹⁸

Later in the report, the need for expansion is stated more directly.

The postal requirements of the public continued to increase during the year owing to the growth of population and the changes in populated areas, used by home and business construction in outlying areas adjacent to the large cities. The need for additional housing facilities and the congestion in the cities made it necessary to build homes, apartments, and shopping centers in formerly undeveloped sections on the outskirts of such cities. Postal facilities must be provided to these areas notwithstanding the fact that the movement to these new sections may not effect [sic] any saving or reduction in the service required in the older communities. Constant study must be made of requests for extension or expansion of service in order that adequate postal service may be accorded without unreasonable increase in cost.

Congress enacted certain legislation to increase the number of postal facilities. The Public Buildings Act of 1949 allowed the Post Office Department and the FWA to submit reports on eligible building projects that could be used in whole or in part as post offices. The act also allowed "the acceptance of unconditional gifts of real, personal or other property in aid of project

¹¹⁸ United States Post Office Department, 1949, *Annual Report of the Postmaster General*, p. 4.

or function within their jurisdiction.”¹¹⁹ A Parcel Post annex was built with money from the private business community in Racine, WI, the same year.

As land uses became increasingly separated during the twentieth century, commercial areas developed along major streets and in strip malls—horizontally massed, single-story commercial blocks fronted by parking. Shoppers would arrive by car and park as close as possible to their destination. While strip commercial developments were primarily auto-oriented, shopping malls offered a pedestrian-oriented experience, albeit one that was reached by the automobile. In relatively rare cases, commercial areas were planned and built in conjunction with an adjacent residential subdivision, but those commercial areas were still typically segregated from residential areas, built at their perimeter on the busiest streets.

These separate residential and commercial areas each began to embrace elements of Modern architecture. Modern commercial architecture in particular became predominated by expanses of glass in aluminum or steel frames to create a clean, geometric façade. Technological advances in glass manufacturing made it possible to create large storefront windows. The sleek glass was typically contrasted with expanses of brick, stone, or tile. Bricks were often highly textured and of non-standard dimensions. Vertical bond, which created a clean grid of mortar lines, was common. Stone veneer was also a popular Modern building material that provided a textured contrast to glass. Stone could be either natural or cast concrete. Tile, usually more expensive than brick or stone, tended to be used in smaller quantities. The most typical tile was small squares arranged in abstract Modern patterns.

Many of the buildings in the Post Office Department’s 1964 Building Designs catalog look similar to other strip commercial buildings of that time, particularly those with flat roofs, large plate-glass windows, and brick or concrete facades, but most are freestanding. That catalog also includes designs that have more traditional features, such as mullioned windows, gabled roofs, and decorative shutters. Those designs were more stylistically consistent in locations closer to residential areas, where Colonial Revival residences dominated and commercial district were included in development plans.

The growth of suburbia created a major shift in demographics and population densities. This shift made it necessary for the Department to modify its station siting and delivery practices. Suburbanization also changed the way the mail was delivered. Until the 1950s, motorized vehicles were used only on rural routes. The majority of urban and suburban postal carriers walked their routes. However, the new suburbs were not well suited for pedestrian mail delivery. Large lots meant that houses were spaced farther apart than in urban cores, and many subdivision streets lacked sidewalks. Recognizing the changing residential landscape, the Post Office

¹¹⁹ Ibid, p. 15.

Department started to motorize metropolitan delivery routes in the 1950s. By 1969, more than half of the Department's residential routes were motorized.¹²⁰

The nineteenth century organization of the Department, which persisted well into the twentieth century, was to place an independent post office in each city, town, or village. This strategy worked well when cities, towns, and villages were separated, transportation was slower, and mail volumes were relatively low. However, as suburban communities developed—by definition, at the periphery of urban areas—and populations shifted to those new communities, the Department recognized that it would be more cost-effective to serve the dispersed suburban population with a postal station or branch office than with its own independent post office. This was also the period when the Post Office Department was beginning to mechanize its mail handling systems and attempting to process higher volumes of mail more efficiently.

In 1958, the Post Office Department made an official request to the House of Representatives to change the law regarding the establishment of postal stations and branch post offices. The original act of June 9, 1896 (29 Stat. 313) authorized the establishment of postal stations and branch offices within 5 miles of a city's limits. Outside the 5-mile limit, the department relied on independent post offices that processed their own mail rather than sending it to a centralized facility. The 1958 request was to increase the distance to 10 miles so that the Department could avoid having to create independent post offices to serve the new suburban communities. The House Report associated with this request included the following statement:

In the year 1896, and for many years thereafter, the situation was such that this 5-mile limitation was adequate to permit the Post Office Department to provide efficient mail service through appropriate use of its authority to establish postal stations and branch post offices within the prescribed distance from the outer boundaries of cities and towns. However, in recent years the rapid growth of urban and suburban population, particularly in the periphery of major industrial, commercial, and governmental centers, has rendered the limitation established in 1896 completely obsolete. The limitation has the effect of preventing the establishment of postal stations and branch offices in a number of instances where such stations and offices would be in the public interest and would result in greater economy and efficiency in the postal service.¹²¹

Expanding the geographic area around a main post office that could include a branch or station would provide greater efficiency for the Post Office Department and was more convenient for postal carriers. Mail not addressed to locations within the branch or station service boundaries was sent downtown to take advantage of the larger processing capacities associated with a main post office. Carriers could distribute mail from these satellite stations or branches instead of going into the central city main post office. Likewise, suburban residents could access postal

¹²⁰ *United States Postal Service, An American History: 1775 – 2006*. United States Postal Service Publication 100, 2007, p. 75.

¹²¹ United States House of Representatives, Eighty-Fifth Congress. 1958. PG. NA

services without traveling downtown to the main branch. In addition, the Post Office Department could save money by building these support facilities rather than new first class post offices.

The 1966 Postmaster General's Annual Report starts with the announcement of a new program that will "chart alternative programs that would anticipate future postal needs" and "meet the rapidly increasing mail volume and tremendous problem we face in population, suburban sprawl, big city bottlenecks, and the like."¹²² The 1970 Annual Report of the Postmaster General notes, "The continuing growth of suburban areas, coupled with urban renewal, required extension of city delivery to 997,931 million [sic] residences and 32,057 business establishments" that year alone.¹²³ The 1970 United States Census of Population reports that the total population of the country was 203,210,158, and total number of household was 63,637,721. Although the Department was starting to work with new communities by developing cluster mailboxes and self-service stands, the explosive population growth and geographic spread of residences strained the Post Office Department beyond its capacity to update a pre-World War II model to meet the needs of post-World War II America.

2.4 TRANSPORTATION

Timely delivery of the mail is dependent on effective modes of transportation, and the Post Office Department has consistently contributed to the development and advancement of all types of transportation technology.¹²⁴

After the establishment of the Parcel Post service in 1913, the Post Office Department began to acquire its own fleet of vehicles to accommodate the increased mail volume that resulted. That fleet consisted of a variety of vehicle types, many unsuitable for postal delivery, produced by numerous manufacturers. The Post Office Department continued to maintain its existing vehicle fleet first during the Great Depression because funds were not available to replace the old vehicles, and then during World War II because wartime restrictions prevented the manufacture of new motor vehicles.

After the war, the use of the automobile became more widespread, which led to a dramatic decrease in the ridership on passenger trains. Because the Post Office Department had previously relied on passenger trains to deliver a majority of the mail, they had to change the way they transported the mail and came to rely more on freight trains and motor vehicles, which was facilitated by improvements to America's highways and roads. In addition, the Post Office Department took advantage of air travel technologies developed during World War II, and the Department's use of airmail increased in the post-war years. The growth of the American suburb also influenced the way that the Department transported the mail. New residential developments located away from city centers necessitated the development of a mechanized mail delivery system, and the Post Office Department developed standardized lightweight vehicles to efficiently deliver mail in those areas.

¹²² United States Post Office Department, 1966, *Annual Report of the Postmaster General*, p. 1.

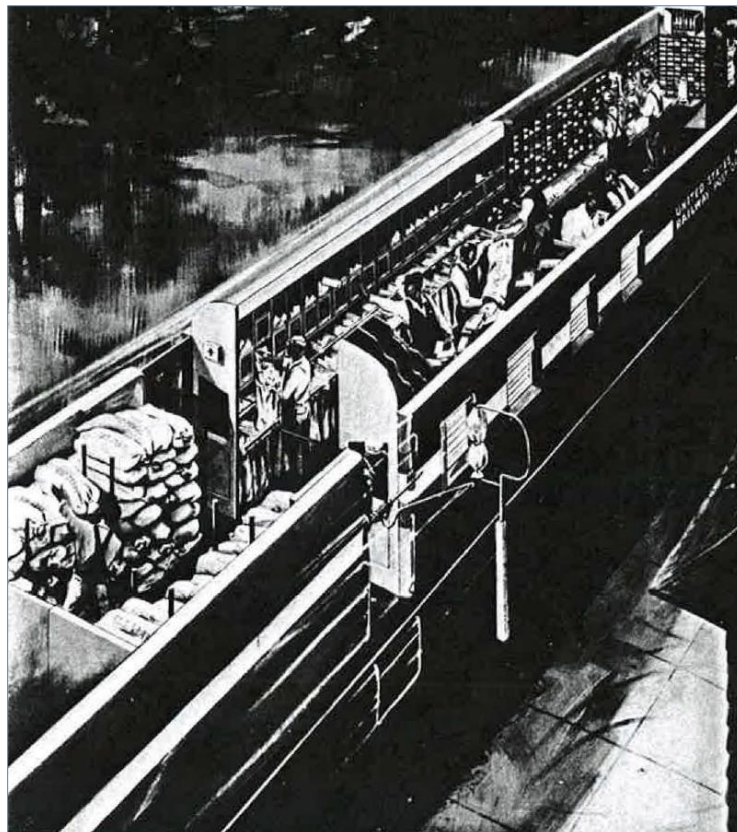
¹²³ United States Post Office Department, 1970, *Annual Report of the Postmaster General*, p. 4 and 5.

¹²⁴ United States Postal Service, 2007, p. 10.

Reflecting the evolution from foot, horse and carriage, steamboat, and rail, postal facilities increasingly focused on new types of buildings that supported emerging transportation modes: the car, truck, and airplane. The purpose-built transportation fleet support facilities, such as vehicle maintenance and garage buildings that emerged in the decades prior to World War II were improved and replaced in the 1950s and 1960s. As mail transport shifted from rail and sea to air after World War II, sorting facilities were needed to transfer mail to surface transportation. Post offices constructed during this time had loading docks and one or more truck bays to accommodate deliveries. In the 1960s, processing and distribution centers constructed specifically to house mechanized mail sorting equipment were designed with multiple truck bays and vehicle parking areas to accommodate delivery trucks.

2.4.1 Postal Transportation

Until the 1960s, most of the mail transported between U.S. cities traveled by train, either on baggage cars, which held loads of sorted mail, or on Railway Post Office (RPO) cars (Figure 2-24). RPOs were “post offices on wheels” staffed with mail clerks who sorted mail en route and picked up and dropped off mail at train stations and sidings.



Source: *Postal Life*, March- April Volume No. 5, 1968

Figure 2-24: Rendering of Railway Post Office Interior

At stations where passenger stops were not scheduled, the mail transfers were conducted while the train was in motion using trackside poles and hooks.¹²⁵ In 1913, Parcel Post service was introduced. RPOs lacked sufficient space to process packages, so terminals were established adjacent to major railway stations to process packages prior to loading on the RPOs. By 1930, mail was being transported across the country on more than 10,000 trains.¹²⁶

The Post Office Department began using motor cars experimentally at the end of the nineteenth century, but automobiles were not used on a large-scale until the advent of Parcel Post in 1913. Up to that point, the department had used rented vehicles to move bulk mail, but the increased volume of packages resulting from the popularity of the Parcel Post service required the Post Office Department to purchase its own vehicles to keep up with demand (Figure 2-25). At that time, there were numerous manufacturers of motor vehicles in the United States, but because the industry was so new, none of those manufacturers had proven track records. Because the Department urgently needed the trucks to supplement their rental fleet, no design standards were presented to the manufacturers.



Source: *United States Postal Service, 2000, photo 43.*

Figure 2-25: White Truck, 1913

The lack of design standards, along with the diversity of vehicle manufacturers, left the Post Office Department with a fleet of mismatched trucks. By 1925, many of the vehicle manufacturers had gone out of business, and replacement parts for the vehicles were no longer available. By the 1930s, the fleet of Post Office Department vehicles was in poor condition, and because of the Great Depression, no money was available for replacements.¹²⁷

¹²⁵ National Museum of American History. 2012. *Postal Employees Sorting Mail in a Railway Post Office Car*

¹²⁶ United States Postal Service, 2007, p. 16.

¹²⁷ Bruns, James H. n.d. *Motorized Mail*. Krause Publications, Iola, Wisconsin. n.d. p. 10.

The Post Office Department was an innovator in the field of air travel and began conducting experimental air mail drops in 1911, just 8 years after Wilbur and Orville Wright flew the first airplane. In 1916, Congress appropriated \$100,000 for an experimental airmail route from Washington, D.C. to New York, which operated 6 days a week using U.S. Army airplanes and pilots (Figure 2-26). In 1918, the Post Office Department established the Aerial Mail Service and began using its own planes and pilots.¹²⁸ The Air Mail Act of 1925 authorized the postmaster general to contract domestic airmail service with commercial air carriers, which facilitated the development of the commercial aviation industry.



Source: United States Postal Service, 2000, photo 59

Figure 2-26: Starting Propeller, U.S. Mail

By 1927, all airmail routes were flown by private companies using their own airplanes and pilots.¹²⁹ The income from the postal contracts allowed those private companies to begin offering passenger service.

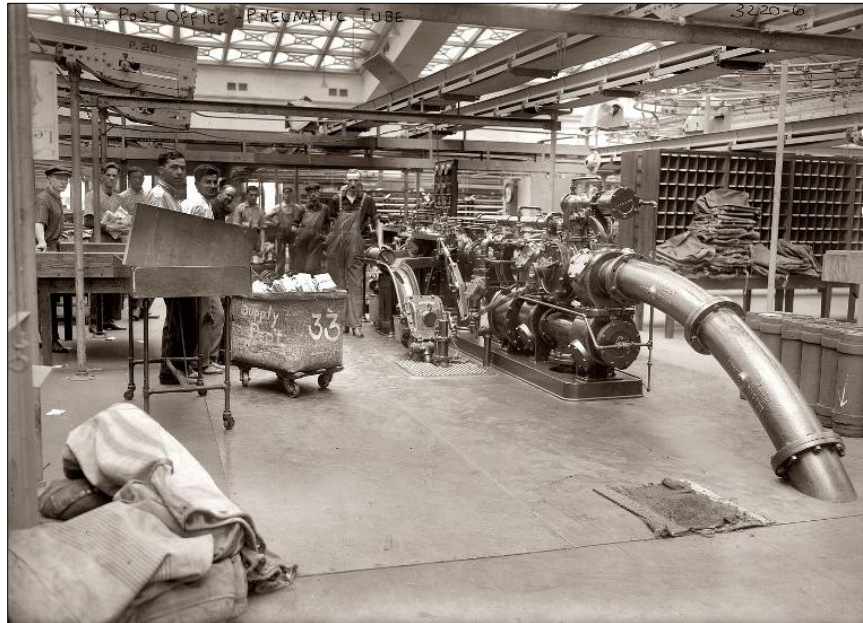
By the late 1930s, air travel had become so commonplace that Congress passed the Civil Aeronautics Act in 1938, which established federal regulation of air transportation and the Civil Aeronautics Board. The Civil Aeronautics Board licensed all aircraft and set airmail rates.¹³⁰

Another Post Office Department innovation was the pneumatic tube system, which was a subterranean network of tubes that transported priority mail with pressurized air at speeds up to 30 miles per hour (Figure 2-27). Post offices in major cities, including New York City, Boston, Philadelphia, Chicago, and St. Louis, had pneumatic tube systems, and at one time there were more than 56 miles of mail tubes on the east coast.

¹²⁸ United States Postal Department, *Postal Life*, Volume 1, Number 6. May/June. 1968, p. 9.

¹²⁹ United States Centennial of Flight Commission. 2012.

¹³⁰ *Postal Life*, Volume 1, Number 6. May/June. 1968, p. 13.



Source: http://www.flickr.com/photos/library_of_congress/in/photostream/

Figure 2-27: New York Post Office Pneumatic Tube

Most pneumatic tube systems were abandoned in the late 1910s, when motor vehicles came into wider use. The tube system in New York City remained in use, and others were used on an auxiliary basis, into the 1950s.¹³¹

2.4.2 Postal Transportation During World War II

During World War II, the Post Office Department faced challenges in the transportation of mail. Many rail lines decreased or discontinued service, and airmail planes were appropriated by the Army and Navy for wartime use. International mail, with the exception of Allied and neutral countries, was curtailed, and the faster steamships formerly used to transport mail were similarly being utilized by the U.S. military.¹³² The sea post service was eventually completely suspended during the war, and overseas mail was transported by the military. Exacerbating the already challenging situation was the fact that the importance and overall volume of mail increased dramatically during World War II, spurred by Americans' desire to maintain the morale of troops overseas with letters and parcels from home. In 1945, the postmaster general reported that mail volume for that year had reached almost 38 billion pieces, up from about 28 billion pieces in 1940.

Along with the rest of the country, the Post Office Department was experiencing cutbacks and shortages due to the war. In 1944, the postmaster general noted in his Annual Report that transportation of the mail was “the most pressing immediate problem but also our greatest future one.” Movement of military supplies received priority over the mail, and deficient transportation

¹³¹ Pogrebin 2001; United States Post Office Department, 1951, *Annual Report of the Postmaster General*, PG. NA.

¹³² United States Post Office Department, 1942, *Annual Report of the Postmaster General*, PG. NA.

facilities proved challenging while moving the “greatest volume of mail in history.”¹³³ In 1941, the Post Office Department’s Division of Motor Vehicle Service, which oversaw the authorization, operation, and maintenance of government-owned postal vehicles, reported that new equipment was needed, but as part of the National Defense Program’s emphasis on wartime economizing, the Post Office Department was repairing and reconditioning its existing vehicles.¹³⁴ The Division of Motor Vehicle Service continued to conserve resources throughout the war years. Planning ahead to a time without wartime restrictions, the Post Office Department studied potential changes to the way mail had been transported. They recognized that more airplanes would be available to transport mail when the war ended and their use of railroads and steamships would continue to decrease; this could enable innovative changes to their transportation plans.¹³⁵

The primary mode of postal transportation during World War II continued to be the railroad. However, some railway companies decreased or discontinued service during this time, and the Post Office Department supplemented those routes with extended star routes and three experimental Highway Post Offices (HPOs) (Figure 2-28).¹³⁶ The first HPOs were buses manufactured by International Harvester. The function and interior design of those buses were similar to that of the RPO in that mail was processed and sorted while en route.



Source: United States Postal Service, 2000, photo 108

Figure 2-28: 1953 Highway Post Office

¹³³ United States Post Office Department, 1944, *Annual Report of the Postmaster General*, p. 31.

¹³⁴ United States Post Office Department, 1941, *Annual Report of the Postmaster General*, PG. NA.

¹³⁵ United States Post Office Department, 1944, *Annual Report of the Postmaster General*, Page 31.

¹³⁶ United States Post Office Department, 1942, *Annual Report of the Postmaster General*, PG. NA.

HPOs proved to be more efficient than RPOs because they were able to deliver mail directly to the post office door, eliminating delivery time between railroad depots and the post office, and because the HPO was not dependent on railroad schedules. The first HPO bus ran from Washington, D.C. to Harrisonburg, Virginia, in 1941. The other two experimental routes were based in Indiana and California. Despite the success of the HPO, the program was not expanded until after World War II because of wartime restrictions imposed after the attack on Pearl Harbor.¹³⁷

2.4.3 Post World War II

After the war, the Post Office Department was poised to take advantage of technological advances developed during the war to improve the speed of mail delivery. The Department conducted a survey of the airmail service with the goal of reducing rates on both domestic and international levels. The postmaster general and second assistant postmaster general conferred with officials from foreign countries in an effort to expedite the removal of wartime mail restrictions and introduced a bill in Congress to establish an air Parcel Post program. The Post Office Department was recognized on a national level as a major contributor to the advancement of air travel when the postmaster general was designated a member of the Air Coordinating Committee on March 25, 1946, along with representatives from the Civil Aeronautics Board, and the Departments of State, War, Navy, and Commerce. The Post Office Department expected airmail to become the new hub for the postal delivery system and accordingly was committed to exploring the possibilities. For example, they implemented an experimental program in Los Angeles, Chicago, and New York in 1946 that used helicopters to transfer mail from post offices to the larger airports in an effort to speed up that process.¹³⁸ In 1946, the Post Office Department planned to resume the sea post service once regular steamship schedules were established, but international transport of the mail by sea never reached its pre-war levels. By 1951, more than half of all international mail was sent via air mail.¹³⁹

Improvements to surface transportation of the mail were also among the post-war goals. The Department worked with the Association of American Railroads to alter railroad schedules to accommodate faster mail delivery and planned to expand the HPO program. Post Office Department studies indicated that more than 200 additional HPO routes were needed, but establishment of those routes was on hold because a shortage of materials, such as steel, impeded the manufacture of new HPO vehicles. The Post Office Department planned to integrate both HPO routes and star routes with airmail.¹⁴⁰

In 1946, the Motor Vehicle Service had 9,448 government-owned trucks servicing 1,561 cities, which consisted of a fleet of ½-ton and 5½-ton trucks. The fleet was serviced by central repair and supply shops, which continued to repair and overhaul the old trucks, most of which had been

¹³⁷ Pope, 2012.

¹³⁸ United States Post Office Department, 1946, *Annual Report of the Postmaster General*, p. 15 -16.

¹³⁹ United States Post Office Department, 1947, *Annual Report of the Postmaster General*, p. 3; United States Post Office Department, 1951, *Annual Report of the Postmaster General*, p. 8.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid*, 1951 p. 17-18.

in use since before World War II. Funds were appropriated in 1946 to purchase new vehicles, but those funds were not used because of the shortage of materials available to vehicle manufacturers in the post-war economy. They continued to use contractors to transport mail between post offices, depots, and other mail processing centers. Contract costs exceeded the costs to operate the existing government-owned vehicle fleet, which the Motor Vehicle Service hoped to offset with the purchase of new government vehicles.¹⁴¹

In his 1947 Annual Report, the postmaster general reiterated the Department's commitment to answer the challenge of the evolving transportation age. The Department's objective was to:

...keep all mail and money coming into its possession constantly moving ... that it may reach the addresses with "certainty, security, and celerity"; money, that it may be carried and placed in the channels of trade and commerce with speed and fidelity.¹⁴²

He also stated that:

The future of improved postal service rests chiefly in speedier transportation. That is our goal. To accomplish this, the Department is searching out improvements and new methods, adapting them to its needs, putting them to use. Air mail transportation constantly assumes greater importance; rail, automotive, and sea transportation, upon which the service relies principally, have been quick to respond to the demand for faster performance.¹⁴³

While the Post Office Department worked to improve the speed of mail transportation and its Motor Vehicle Service struggled to maintain its outdated vehicles, the United States was undergoing the major demographic shift that would characterize the post-World War II period: the growth of the suburbs.

2.4.4 Suburbia and the Growth of Interstate Highways

Between 1921 and 1936, more than 420,000 miles of road were constructed in the United States, including high-speed roads connecting metropolitan areas to suburban and rural areas. In a 1938 report, the Bureau of Public Roads stated that a master plan was needed for the development of highways, including expressways for traffic relief in cities and six transcontinental highways. Government road planning was put on hold during World War II, but in 1944, the Federal Highway Act was passed, which authorized a National System of Interstate Highways, including metropolitan expressways.¹⁴⁴

After World War II, much of America experienced a housing boom and tremendous growth. Automobile ownership increased, which provided the average American with more mobility and freedom. Numerous large self-contained residential subdivisions that were connected to major

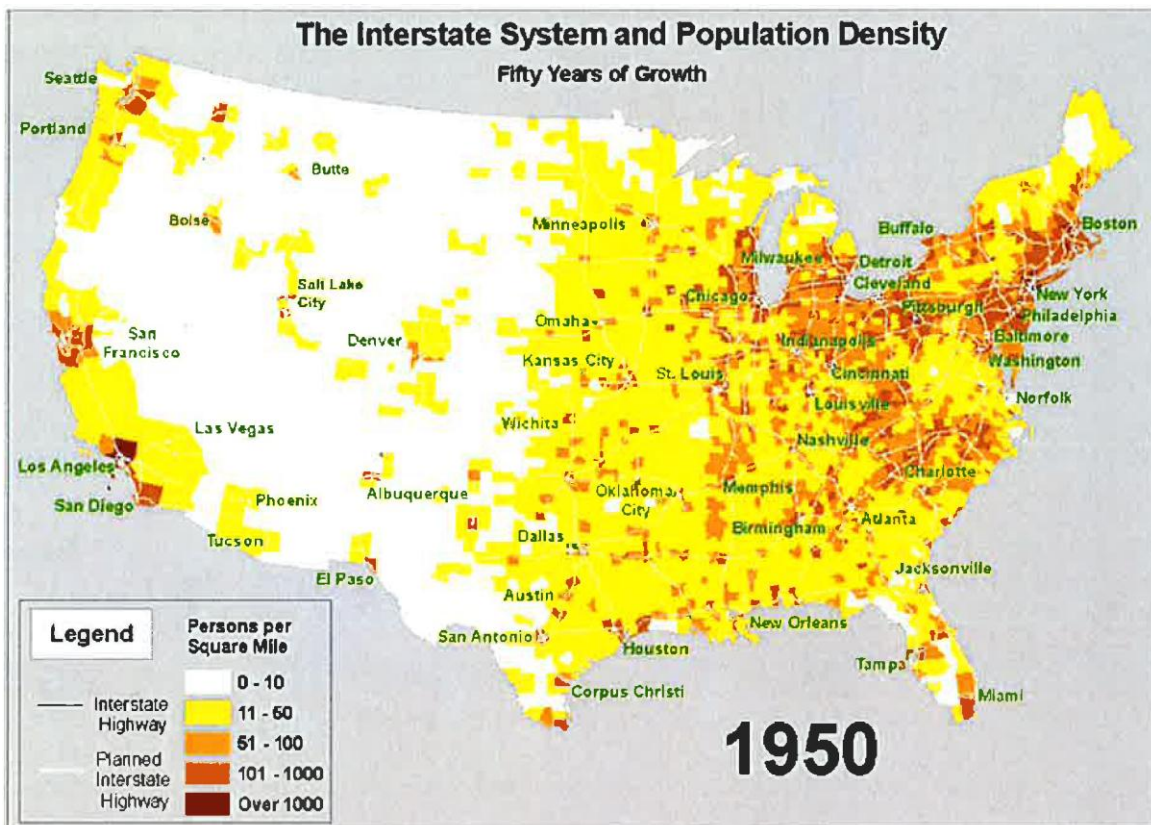
¹⁴¹ United States Post Office Department, 1946, *Annual Report of the Postmaster General*, p. 38-39.

¹⁴² United States Post Office Department, 1947, *Annual Report of the Postmaster General*, p. 2.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

¹⁴⁴ Ames and McClelland, 2002, pp. 16-24.

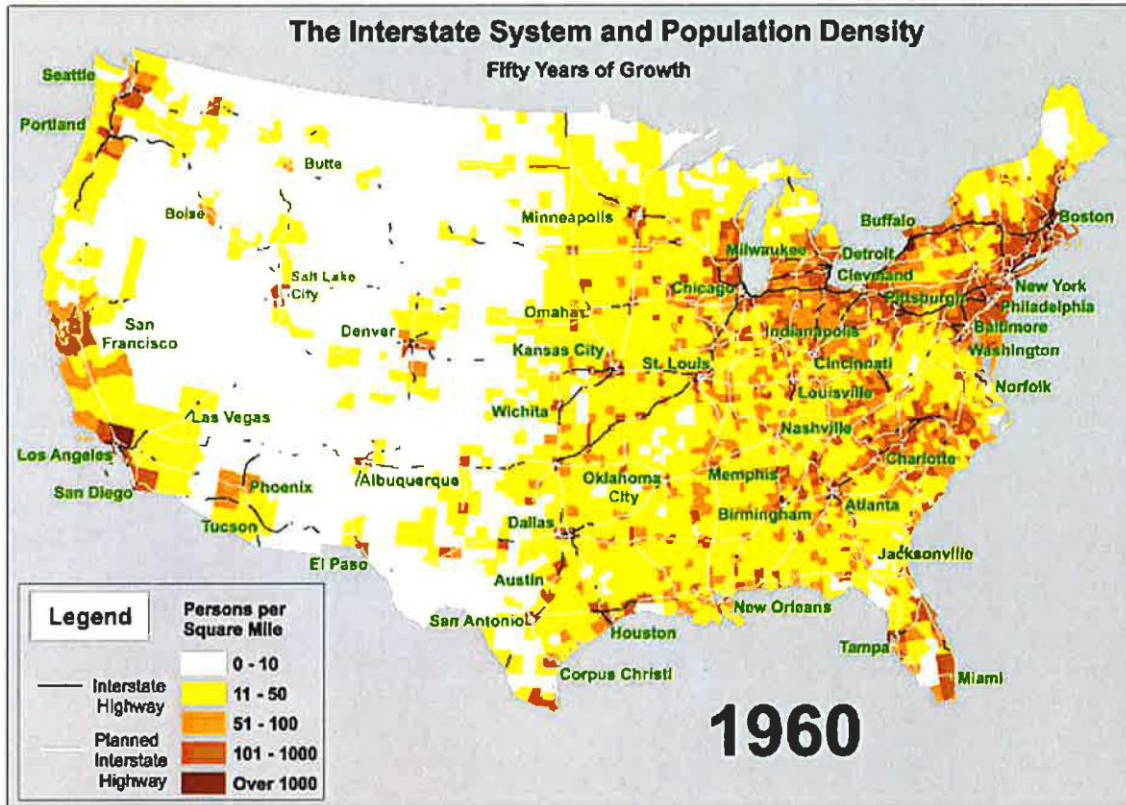
cities by highways and freeways developed outside of major urban areas. Commercial shopping centers and retail facilities were also constructed to serve the suburban communities, and by 1960, industrial and office parks were being developed in suburban areas.¹⁴⁵ In 1956, Congress passed the Federal Highway Act, which called for the construction of a 41,000-mile transportation system designed to reach every city with a population exceeding 100,000. The construction of the Interstate Highway System increased the development of suburban areas, reinforcing America’s growing dependency on the automobile. Figures 2-29 and 2-30 show the Interstate system and population densities throughout the contiguous United States in 1950 and 1960, respectively.



Source: <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/interstate/densitymap.htm>

Figure 2-29: The Interstate System and Population Density, 1950

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.



Source: <http://www.fhwa.dot.gov/interstate/densitymap.htm>

Figure 2-30: The Interstate System and Population Density, 1960

Although post-World War II suburban development and highway construction allowed more Americans to own their own houses and increased industrial activity, it also led to hardship for urban communities abandoned by former residents and bisected by the freeways, and roadside businesses bypassed by the superhighways.¹⁴⁶ The new interstates also had a profound impact on long-distance trucking, allowing faster and more economical transport of freight. Commercial and distribution centers were moved to highway interchanges, allowing trucks to bypass crowded urban centers.¹⁴⁷

2.4.5 The U.S. Post Office Department in the Late 1940s and 1950s

In the late 1940s, more than 90 percent of the mail was still transported by passenger trains (Figure 2-31), but the improvements to the Nation’s highways, in combination with rising rail postage rates and a decrease in passenger train service lines that also functioned as mail delivery lines, resulted in an increased focus on expanding the Post Office Department’s motor vehicle department.

¹⁴⁶ National Museum of American History, 2012, *A Nation of Highways*

¹⁴⁷ National Museum of American History, 2012, *The Interstate Economy*



Source: <http://www.postcrossing.com/blog/2011/05/24/railway-post-office>

Figure 2-31: Mail Car, United States Railway Post Office

The Post Office Department expanded its HPO program to offset decreases in rail service. Mail volume continued to increase, and postal processing facilities at railroad depots and terminals were inadequate, as they were not designed to effectively accommodate vehicles. Most post office facilities at the time were not designed to accommodate heavy trucks and did not have adequate loading platform space or storage. Congress approved the establishment of air Parcel Post in 1948, which made improvement of the government-owned department motor vehicle fleet to transport packages to and from air terminals even more important. In 1947, the Post Office Department ordered 1,820 2-ton trucks, and in 1948, 1,480 ½-ton trucks and 240 3-ton trucks. Because manufacturers still had difficulty acquiring steel in the post-war economy, only about 800 trucks had been delivered by mid-1948.¹⁴⁸ In 1950, a modernization program for the Motor Vehicle Service was initiated. This program called for the replacement of all government-owned vehicles purchased before 1947 and the modernization of vehicle repair and maintenance facilities by the end of the 1952 fiscal year.¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁸ United States Post Office Department, 1947, *Annual Report of the Postmaster General*, PG, NA; United States Post Office Department, 1948, *Annual Report of the Postmaster General*, PG, NA.

¹⁴⁹ United States Post Office Department, 1950, *Annual Report of the Postmaster General*, PG, NA.

The development of the suburbs also led to changes in the way the Post Office Department delivered mail. Because subdivisions tended to have larger lots and cover more area than the typical intercity residential area, the Post Office Department began to experiment with various types of light motor vehicles to expedite mail delivery and provide service to new housing developments in an efficient and timely manner. In addition to light motor vehicles, the Department also tested carts and hand vehicles. While these modes were being evaluated, some carriers were provided with bicycles to deliver mail in large developments and financial compensation for public transportation to reach their delivery routes.¹⁵⁰

By 1953, the Motor Vehicle Service observed that more than 90 percent of their existing fleet was over-engineered and more standardized, smaller commercial vehicles could be used.¹⁵¹ In 1954, the Functional Motor Vehicles Project was initiated with the goal of designing, constructing, and testing smaller, standardized “prototype light-weight functional vehicles to replace the high-cost vehicles” that were then in use, highlighting the heightened need in response to “unprecedented suburban growth throughout the country which has made obsolete many of the old methods for delivering mail.”¹⁵² Many of the new residential developments were far from existing postal facilities; some had curbside mail boxes and others required door-to-door delivery. The department felt that if delivery was to be economical and efficient that mechanization was required to replace, or at least supplement, the traditional on-foot mail carrier.

The first delivery vehicle prototypes under this initiative were ¾-ton, 4-wheel, sit- or stand-drive vehicles with right-hand steering and sliding doors. The right-hand steering allowed carriers to deposit mail in curbside mail boxes without leaving the vehicle. For warmer climates, a 3-wheeled, ¼-ton vehicle with a plastic top and body was tested. The goal was to protect mail carriers and the mail from the weather while allowing the carriers to enter and exit the vehicles easily and efficiently. By 1955, the right-hand drive and sit- or stand-drive vehicles had been designated as standard equipment for mail carriers: 1,791 right-hand drive vehicles were already in service, and 2,000 had been ordered. The 3-wheeled vehicle, which was called the Mailster, was in use in three communities in Florida, and experimental use of small, right-hand drive Jeeps was underway in colder communities, where the plastic-bodied Mailster would not provide protection from snow and ice.¹⁵³ By the end of the 1950s, the Post Office Department had almost completed the transition to standard commercial lightweight vehicles, and 11 new vehicle maintenance facilities were opened. Those facilities included servicing equipment, analyzers, and precision tools.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵⁰ United States Post Office Department, 1952, *Annual Report of the Postmaster General*, p. 36-38.

¹⁵¹ United States Post Office Department, 1953, *Annual Report of the Postmaster General*, p. 17.

¹⁵² United States Post Office Department, 1954, *Annual Report of the Postmaster General*, p. 13.

¹⁵³ United States Post Office Department, 1955, *Annual Report of the Postmaster General*, p. 11.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 55-56.

By the end of the 1950s, the postmaster general reported that:

...postal transportation was in the midst of one of the greatest transition periods since the great expansion era of the railroads since the latter part of the last century.¹⁵⁵

He attributed this transition to:

1. Increased intercity use of airlines by passengers and the subsequent decline of passenger trains that formerly carried the mail.
2. The introduction of jet service, which reduced transcontinental travel time.
3. The first official transport of the mail by missile.¹⁵⁶

In June 8, 1959, the Post Office Department demonstrated its pioneering spirit in the development of alternative transportation methods when they sent U.S. mail by guided missile. The missile was launched from a submarine at sea and successfully delivered mail to the Naval Auxiliary Air Station in Mayport, Florida. Encouraged by this success, the Post Office Department planned to continue its research in this area and use guided missiles as a method of sending mail at high speeds over long distances.¹⁵⁷ Subsequent reports do not make reference to this project, however, implying it was not further developed.

In 1959, only 2,300 passenger trains with schedules compatible with postal delivery were in service, and the postmaster general reported that “only about 31 percent of the Nation’s post offices are now served by passenger trains compared to 60 percent in 1925.”¹⁵⁸ The Post Office Department completed a study of the postal transportation system to improve the economy and efficiency of mail delivery. They proposed to do this by transporting bulk mail on freight trains, which would be transferred to trucks at terminal facilities. The Post Office Department developed a “railvan,” which had dual retractable highway and rail wheels. The department also was working to coordinate the schedules of the railroads and the trucking companies contracted to haul mail. HPOs continued to operate, and the Post Office Department entered into area-wide agreements with passenger buses, such as the Central Greyhound Lines, to carry mail from city to city. Fast truck routes between widely separated urban areas were also established.¹⁵⁹ Between 1953 and 1960, 119 new vehicle maintenance facilities were constructed and equipped to service the postal fleet; these replaced existing vehicle garage facilities that were inefficient and incompatible with the new vehicle types. Some of the new facilities were service-station type buildings that the Post Office Department referred to as “lubritorium.” Those facilities were constructed using plans developed in 1954. By June 1960, 10 additional vehicle maintenance facilities were under construction and plans were in progress for 25 others.¹⁶⁰

¹⁵⁵ United States Post Office Department, 1959, *Annual Report of the Postmaster General*, p. 29.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid., p. vi and 29.

¹⁵⁸ United States Post Office Department, 1959, *Annual Report of the Postmaster General*, p. 29.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 29-34.

¹⁶⁰ United States Post Office Department, 1960, *Annual Report of the Postmaster General*, p. 74.

2.4.6 The 1960s

The 1960s was a time of technological advancement for the United States and the Post Office Department. Technological and economic changes to the transportation industry shifted further from the railroad and toward increased automobile/highway and airline use. Mail volume, particularly business mail, continued to increase, and the Department kept up with demand by implementing a combination of travel modes to provide the fastest and most efficient service possible.

The use of Railway Mail Service declined significantly in the 1960s, especially after the Post Office Department canceled the majority of its railroad contracts in the 1967. The height of Railway Mail Service was in 1930, when over 10,000 trains moved mail across the United States.¹⁶¹ After the passage of the Transportation Act of 1958, the number of mail-carrying passenger trains declined. The HPOs were meant to supplement the Railway Mail Service, but often replaced the lines that closed due to reduction in passenger service. The increase in airmail and the Post Office Department sectional centers for sorting and distributing mail lead to a decrease in the use of mail sorting railroad cars. Most first class mail was transported by truck or air, and airmail no longer required an additional fee. In 1967, the Post Office Department canceled all “rail by mail” contracts. Many of the remaining passenger lines were heavily dependent on these contracts, and without this source of income, many of the Nation’s railroad passenger lines were terminated.¹⁶² Air transportation continued to change the way that mail was delivered in the 1960s.

In 1968, the Post Office Department estimated that 17 billion pieces of First-Class Mail would be transported by air via approximately 12,000 scheduled daily flights and supplemental small aircraft, known as air taxis (Figure 2-32), which transported the mail between major air terminals on Department schedules (Figure 2-33).¹⁶³

¹⁶¹ Mary Bellis, 2012, *The Post Office Role in U.S. Development*.

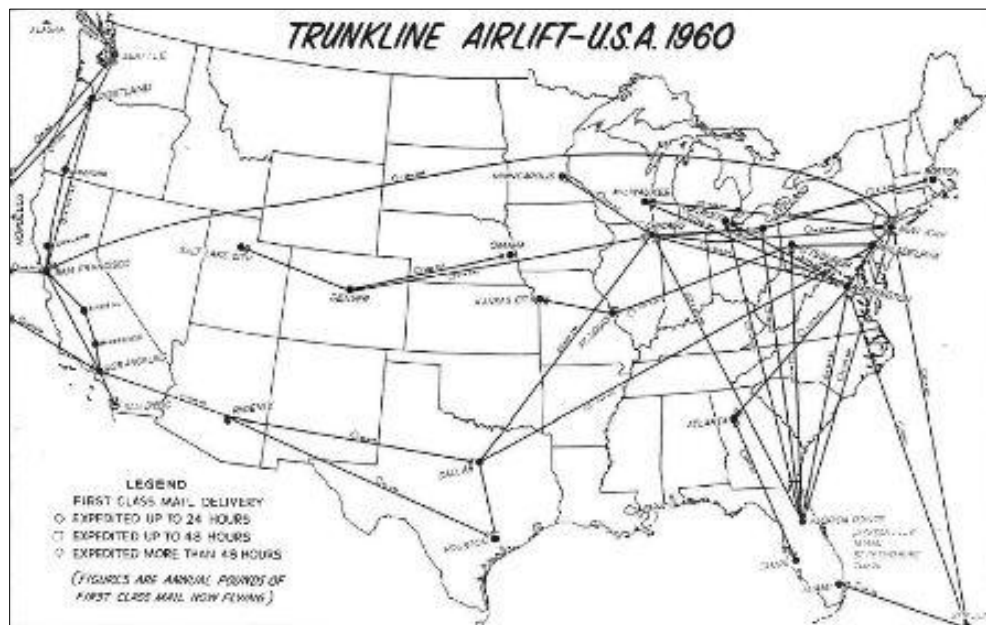
¹⁶² Wilking, 1985, p. 9.

¹⁶³ United States Post Office Department, *Postal Life*, Volume 1, Number 5. March/April. 1968, p. 8.



Source: United States Postal Service, 2000, photo 59

Figure 2-32: Midnight Express Flying Post Office



Source: Bureau of Transportation, 1959 – 1960

Figure 2-33: Airlift 1960, Major Accomplishments

Surface transportation of bulk mail relied on fast-scheduled freight trains in combination with tractor trailers. Loaded containers were transferred from flat-bed freight train cars directly to tractor trailers, which created a need for facilities designed specifically for unloading and reloading trucks. Railroad processing and handling facilities and existing post office facilities

were constructed prior to the development of “piggyback” or loaded containers, and were not designed with multiple truck bays or to accommodate truck loading activities. To solve this problem, the Department advertised for contractors to provide truck terminal facilities as well as employees to sort and process mail and transportation for mail containers from railroad stations to those facilities.¹⁶⁴

By the early 1960s, more than 80 percent of U.S. mail was business mail, and mail volume in general continued to increase. In 1962, the Post Office Department handled more than 66 billion pieces of mail, compared to about 50 billion pieces in 1952. The Metropolitan Area Service Improvement Plans or Metro System, which established transportation centers around the largest cities that served as hubs for air, highway, and rail transportation, was initiated in 1959 to provide next-business-day delivery service for letters mailed before 5 p.m. in major metropolitan areas. This was accomplished by assigning major metropolitan areas postal sections and establishing sectional centers in those sections that served as hubs for all mail going out and into that section. These centers were constructed on the outskirts of cities near transportation arteries, away from congested city centers. By 1960, the Metro System had been installed in 81 of the largest metropolitan areas.¹⁶⁵

In 1963, the Post Office Department introduced the ZIP Code sorting system for separating mail into zones. To accommodate the new ZIP Code program, the Metro System was expanded to include 552 sectional centers based on population density and transportation facilities that served post offices in the surrounding areas.¹⁶⁶ Both the ZIP Code program and the sectional centers increased the speed of mail delivery by directing bulk mail to central transportation points where the mail would be sorted and loaded onto trucks for delivery to the local post offices. Implementation of the sectional center plan was inhibited by the lack of adequate truck-handling facilities. Because most existing facilities were overcrowded, did not have truck handling areas, and were located in areas inconvenient to modern transportation, the department initiated a 5-year building program in 1963. In addition to constructing new facilities and modernizing existing facilities, the Post Office Department planned to lease 6,000 new buildings, including post offices and sorting facilities compatible with truck delivery.¹⁶⁷

By 1965, 56 percent of the Department’s transportation funds were still spent on rail service. This number indicates that the Post Office Department was still very reliant on the railways to move the mail, despite the continued decline in passenger rail service that began following World War II. The decline in passenger service necessitated a shift in how the railway system was used. Instead of relying on the railroad to deliver the mail to each town or stop on a passenger route, railroad stations were now transferring bulk mail from freight trains to trucks, which delivered mail to sorting and processing centers. The Post Office Department continued to

¹⁶⁴ United States Post Office Department, 1968, *Annual Report of the Postmaster General*, p. 24.

¹⁶⁵ United States Post Office Department, 1959, *Annual Report of the Postmaster General*, p. v; United States Post Office Department, 1960, *Annual Report of the Postmaster General*, p. 9-10.

¹⁶⁶ United States Postal Service, 2007, p. 33.

¹⁶⁷ United States Post Office Department, 1963, *Special Report for Fiscal Year 1963*, p. 20.

use contractors for highway transportation for star routes, intercity transport, truck terminal facilities, and bus transport. The HPO program was still in place, and larger buses were on order. At the end of the decade, the Post Office Department was once again exploring the procurement of new delivery vehicles.¹⁶⁸ In 1971, President Nixon signed the Postal Reorganization Act. Although the act extended most of the existing laws on postal transportation, the new United States Postal Service had more control over the purchase of equipment and the construction of its facilities.¹⁶⁹

2.5 MECHANIZATION AND OPERATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

2.5.1 Overview

Into the first quarter of the twentieth century, despite increasing mail volume and limited work space, the Post Office Department relied entirely upon antiquated mail handling methods. There were five basic steps to processing mail: culling, facing, canceling, sorting, and sacking. In culling, the mail was dumped on a table and separated by size and type of mail until the mail of regular size was neatly stacked. The mail was then faced so it all faced the same direction with the stamp in the same position. The mail was then hand canceled. Regular mail was sorted by the pigeonhole method in which the postmaster or clerk deftly flipped letters into individual boxes (Figures 2-34 and 2-35). The method was limited by the speed of the man's eyes and hands and the reach of his arms. Due to the limited number of boxes, the mail was usually sorted several times, e.g., by state, then by city, then by post office, to find its final destination. The letters were then bundled with twine and placed into labeled mail sacks in which it was carried to its destination. One of the common methods for sorting Parcel Post, or packages, was to dump a consignment of parcels into an inclined trough, down which they slowly slid as men rummaged through them, picking out individual pieces, reading the address, and then dropping the parcel into an open bag for delivery to its next sorting station (Figure 2-36).

¹⁶⁸ United States Post Office Department, 1965, *Annual Report of the Postmaster General*, PG, NA; United States Post Office Department, 1969, *Annual Report of the Postmaster General*, PG, NA.

¹⁶⁹ United States Postal Service, 2007, p. 38-41.



Source: Library of Congress

Figure 2-34: Sorting Mail on Board a Rail Mail Car in 1938



Source: Library of Congress

Figure 2-35: Sorting Mail at the Washington, D.C. Post Office in 1938



Source: Library of Congress

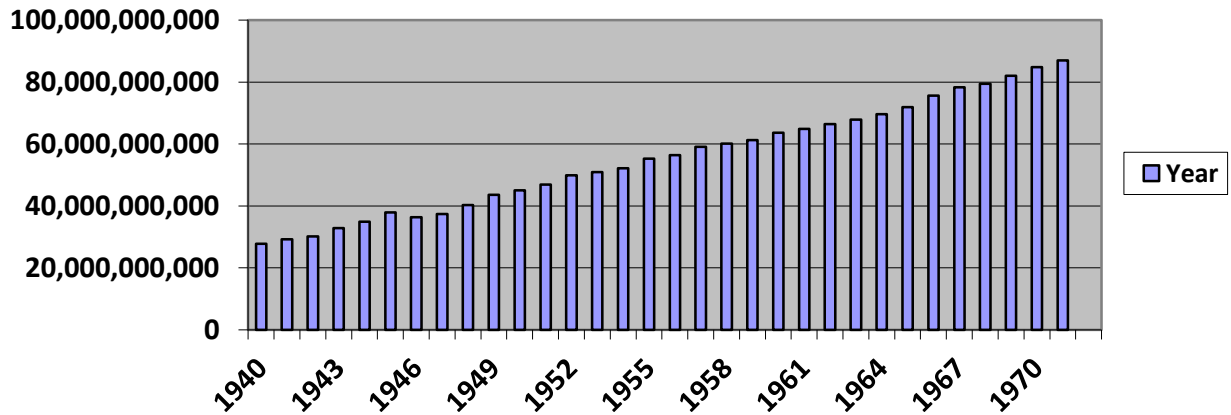
Figure 2-36: Handling Christmas Packages at Washington, D.C. Post Office in 1938

The population and mail volume were rapidly increasing (Table 2-2). In 1935, the Nation's 127 million people mailed 22 billion pieces of mail; by 1960, these numbers had grown to 177 million and 62 billion, respectively.¹⁷⁰ The social correspondence of the nineteenth century had given way, gradually then rapidly, to business mail as businesses generated a growing mass of utility bills and payments, advertising, magazines, mortgage bills and payments, and Social Security checks. By 1963, 80 percent of all mail in the United States was business mail.¹⁷¹

¹⁷⁰ Post Office Department Advisory Board, 1961.

¹⁷¹ United States Postal Service, 2007, p. 33.

Table 2-2: Pieces of Mail Handled per Year



Source: Post Office Department Advisory Board, *Anywhere U.S.A., Next Day Delivery*

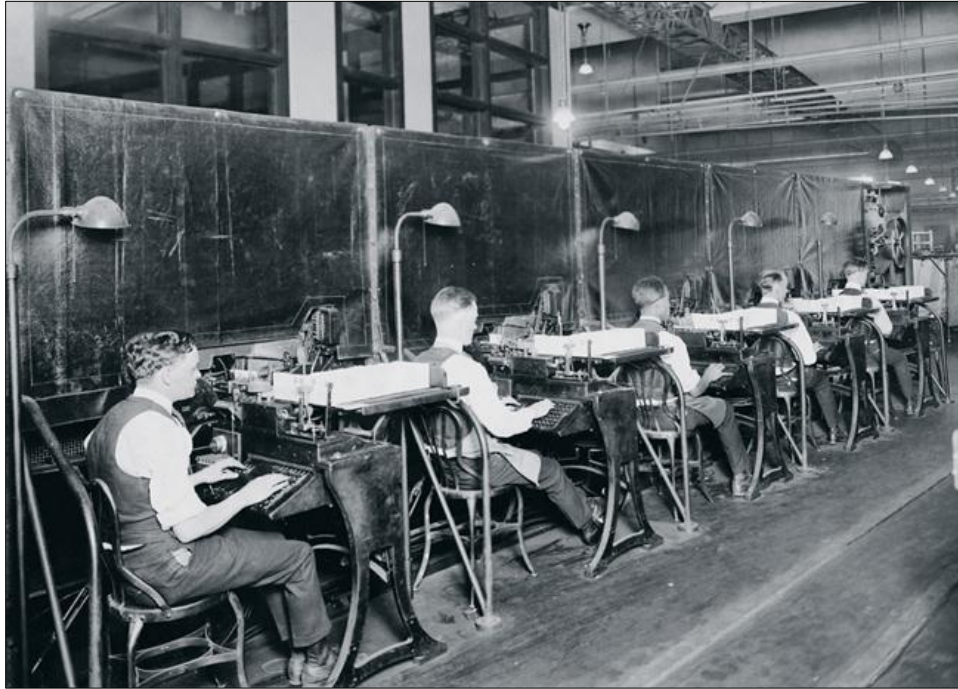
The processing of mail was very labor intensive. As the volume of mail increased, the Post Office Department added more personnel and consequently needed more space to process the mail. Sorting the mail was typically the most time consuming. The Post Office Department began to look seriously at mechanizing post offices in the early 1950s. This would prove to be difficult due to the wide ranges in sizes, shapes, and weights of mail and because the mail must be handled as a fragile, perishable, time-sensitive product. Consequently, the first generation machines were only becoming available in the late 1950s. Due to the high cost of the new machines, the Department’s policy was to install only those machines proven under operating conditions.¹⁷²

2.5.2 Postal Research and Engineering

A single-keyboard model of the Gehring Mail Distributing Machine was tested in Chicago for about a year beginning in 1918. A five-operator model, also called a “multiple distributor,” was tested at the Washington, D.C., Post Office in 1922 and 1923 (Figure 2-37). Despite reportedly doubling mail distributing speed, no further use was documented.¹⁷³ Consequently, the Department continued to rely on the practice of adding personnel as the need arose. Because of the slow implementation of the mechanization, the Post Office Department would be required to continue this practice even as the effects of mechanization were finally being felt in the late 1960s.

¹⁷² United States Post Office Department, 1965, *Annual Report of the Postmaster General*, p. 19.

¹⁷³ United States Postal Service, Photo Gallery: Equipment, 2012 <http://about.usps.com/who-we-are/postal-history/equipment-gallery-details.htm#p=2>.



Source: U.S. Post Office, "Photo Gallery Equipment"

Figure 2-37: Gehring Mail Distributing Machine, 1922

As a result of the 1949 Hoover Commission report on reorganizing the Executive Branch, Congress enacted Public Law 231, effective August 16, 1949, requiring the Post Office Department to conduct a research and development program to initiate modern technology and apply it to improve postal operations. The Director of Research was established in April 1950 as a three-person office, and began the first exploratory efforts to devise specialized equipment for mail processing.^{174, 175}

The 1950 Annual Report of the Postmaster General notes that the Division of Research has been set up as a unit of the Office of the Administrative Assistant to the Postmaster General. The report further notes:

Research will be intensified thereby and the research activities being carried on in various units of the Department will be coordinated. I am appointing to this division, under the Director, five able persons, three of the best postal experts procurable and two outside the postal service who have special qualifications in the fields of engineering and business. The objective will be a more efficient postal service and if possible the reduction of unit costs.¹⁷⁶

Also in 1950, Congress authorized "original or exploratory research and development work, and \$500,000 for the purchase and installation of improved devices and systems." The 1953 re-

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Seagle, 1965, pp. 2-3, 8.

¹⁷⁶ United States Post Office Department, 1950, *Annual Report of the Postmaster General*, p. 14.

organization of the Post Office Department, emphasized in the 1953 annual report, does not reference a Division of Research, implying its discontinuation. The 1956 report states that, as recently as January 1953, “there was no real program of research and development in the Post Office Department and none was contemplated.” In other sections of the report, reference is made to 2 years of extensive research, the Department believing in competition in private sector research, and the Bureau of Standards being used to “apply operational research.”¹⁷⁷

In 1950, John Sestak, a Senior Assistant Superintendent at Chicago, developed a prototype mechanical letter sorting machine from scrap materials and without material aid from the Department, and tested it in the Chicago and Washington, D.C. Post Offices (Figure 2-38). This machine was a modification of the conventional separation case. A chute was attached to each pigeonhole that permitted mail to be swept out of the cases automatically, a task that took 12 minutes of a clerk’s time each hour. By adding the saved time to the clerk’s sorting time, his output was increased approximately 20 percent. The machine was not accepted by the department due to the large floor space it required and because it could not handle both long and short letters, but the tests provided valuable information for the development of more advanced machines.^{178, 179} In the same year, a pilot automatic twine tying machines for tying bundles of letters together was installed, which would save time as all letters were bundled at once. After a successful trial, twine and wire tying machines were adopted for postal use a year later and became standard equipment throughout the Department.¹⁸⁰

In 1952, the Department studied the use of paper and throw-away sacks; contracted a project to develop a machine to cull, face, and cancel mail; and tested a sack label producing machine. The machine was in service-wide use by 1965.¹⁸¹

With the moratorium on new construction, the Post Office Department had been short on space for many years, and labor costs were excessive due to manual mail handling. Almost all mail was processed by hand, and all heavy bulk mail, with the exception of a few large flat belt conveyors and mail chutes in the larger post offices, was moved manually. Therefore, to handle increasing mail volumes, it was always necessary to employ more personnel.¹⁸² The situation was intensified by the rapid increase in mail volume since the start of World War II (see Table 2-2).

¹⁷⁷ United States Post Office Department, 1956, *Annual Report of the Postmaster General*, p. 1.

¹⁷⁸ United States Postal Service Historian. 1988.

¹⁷⁹ Mustafa, 1971, p. 104.

¹⁸⁰ Seagle 1965, p. 3.

¹⁸¹ Seagle 1965, p. 4

¹⁸² United States Post Office Department, Office of Research and Engineering. 1961.



Source: National Postal Museum

Figure 2-38: Sestak Letter Sorter at Chicago Post Office, n.d.

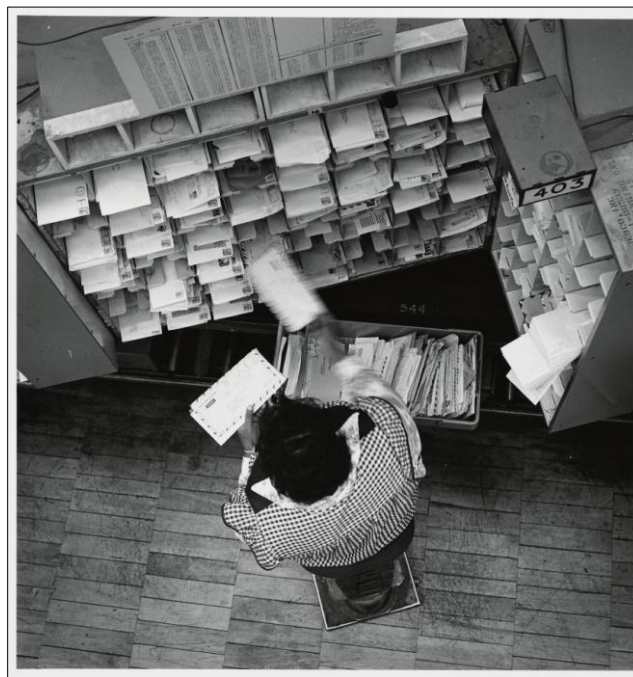
Consequently, in November 1953, the Office of the Chief Engineer (formerly the Director of Research) began surveying postal operations to determine what common industrial equipment could be applied to bulk mail operations. Mechanization of postal operations was difficult due to lack of content and size restrictions and the resulting wide ranges in sizes, shapes, and weights of mail. In addition, most mail had to be handled as a fragile, perishable, time-sensitive product. As a result of these surveys, a small amount of portable bulk handling equipment, such as bundled mail typing machines, fixed conveyors, heavy-duty loading/unloading conveyors, fork lifts, dock boards, skids, and pallets, other materials handling equipment began to be provided to large post offices to assist with the movement of mail within the office. Meanwhile, engineering surveys and studies were undertaken to determine additional requirements for a long-range mechanization program specifically designed for post office work.¹⁸³

The Department tested loose-pack (untied) sacking of letter mail, initiated patron separation of local and out-of-town mail, and developed a clerk-operated stamp machine in 1954. The Department also continued research to electronically read and sort letter mail and concluded from engineering tests that it was feasible to read and sort machine-imprinted mail using an

¹⁸³ Ibid.

electronic reading machine. The department contracted with Reed Research to develop an automatic culling, facing, and canceling machine, which resulted in the prototype facer-canceler called the “Fast Mac.” Intensive studies were undertaken to expand the use of bulk mail handling equipment such as fixed conveyor systems, fork lifts, and palletized storage and movement. Mail flow and production analyses were undertaken in large post offices to improve work methods and layout.^{184, 185}

In 1955, the Bureau of Standards was contracted to perform operational analysis of mechanical sorting methods and develop recommended systems. The department continued research on electronically reading and sorting mail, tested bulk mail containers, and developed a larger manual mail sorting case that contained from 49 to 77 separation shelves (Figure 2-39).



Source: *USPS American Postal Portrait: A Photographic Legacy* (2000)

Figure 2-39: Mail Sorting Case

The new case permitted both incoming and originating mail to be handled simultaneously, providing significant advantages over the former equipment, as fewer separations were required. Extensive studies were undertaken of mail volume and flow patterns, growth, and space requirements in conjunction with a program for new facility construction. In addition, a prototype of an automatic culling, facing, and canceling machine was developed and tested at the Washington, D.C. Post Office.¹⁸⁶

¹⁸⁴ Seagle 1965, 9.

¹⁸⁵ United States Postal Service Historian, 1988.

¹⁸⁶ Seagle 1965.

On July 1, 1956, the research program became the Office of Research and Engineering, which provided the office the same stature as the other bureaus and offices in the Post Office Department. This was indicative of the increasing importance of the Department's research.¹⁸⁷

New machines continued to make their appearances. The Mailflo system was installed and tested in the Roosevelt Park Annex of the Detroit, Michigan Post Office in 1956. The system permitted automatic control and movement of letter mail through the production stages, from receipt to dispatch. It was comprised of a series of conveyors carrying trays that carried mail between each of the designated work areas to be culled, faced, canceled, manually sorted, and then sacked. The Mailflo system was seen by the Department as an important advance in mail handling for large city post offices, as it was adaptable to most buildings and permitted integration of automatic devices already in production or being tested.¹⁸⁸ The Department also installed and tested a Greller keyboard-controlled Parcel Post sorting machine, first used in Baltimore in 1956. The machine provided valuable experience that guided development of future Parcel Post sorting systems that began being installed in 1962.¹⁸⁹

In its efforts to sort an ever-increasing mail volume, the Post Office Department officially placed its first semiautomatic letter sorting machine in operation in the Blair Annex of the Silver Spring, MD Post Office in 1957. Called the "Transorma," it was developed and manufactured by Werkspoor N.V. of Amsterdam, Holland (Figure 2-40). Standing 13 feet high, the Transorma Letter Sorting Machine consisted of upper and lower sections separated by a platform that surrounded the entire machine. A conveyor belt transported mail from the lower level to one of five operators sitting in front of sorting keyboards on the upper level. The operators read the destination and keyed a sorting code. The letter was then automatically transferred to a letter tray and deposited into one of 300 chutes that returned the mail neatly stacked to the lower level. At full operation with five keyboard operators, the Transorma could sort 15,000 letters per hour, double the amount that the same number of clerks could do by hand. The second foreign-built semi-automatic letter sorting machine, the Bell keyboard-operated letter sorting machine developed by the International Telephone and Telegraph Corporation, was installed in the Washington, D.C. Post Office in 1958. Together, these machines were procured to determine the economics of key sort equipment, and they proved the potential for expediting mail processing at a reduced cost, but they also showed the limitations of semi-automatic machinery.^{190, 191} They also provided design guidance that assisted in the development of American-made letter sorting machines that used a new concept. The Burroughs Corporation was awarded a contract for the construction and installation of the first 10 of these American-made machines.

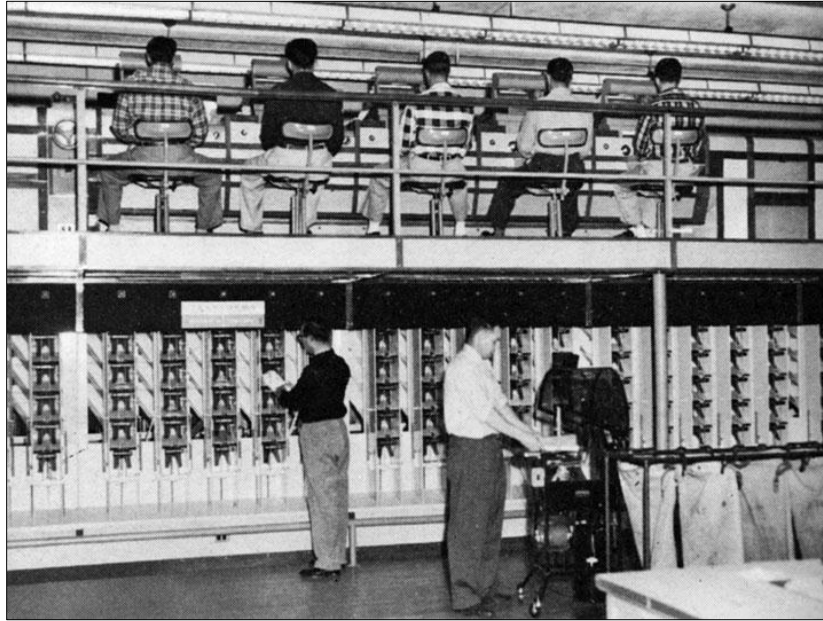
¹⁸⁷ Post Office Department, *Chronological History of Current Research and Development Effort*, n.d., and Seagle 1965.

¹⁸⁸ Post Office Department Advisory Board, 1961.

¹⁸⁹ Seagle 1965, p. 7, and United States Postal Service Historian 1988.

¹⁹⁰ Smithsonian Institution. 2012.

¹⁹¹ United States Postal Service Historian, 1988.



Source: National Postal Museum

Figure 2-40: Transorma Semi-Automatic Letter Sorting Machine

The Postal Policy Act, Public Law 85-426, dated May 27, 1958, raised the price of a first class stamp for only the second time since 1885 and provided additional funding for modernizing the postal infrastructure by constructing new facilities that used new machinery.¹⁹² Because of the phenomenal increase in mail volume, which more than doubled from 26 billion pieces in 1938 to 60 billion pieces in 1958, and the rapid decline in the Nation's passenger train service, the Department was required to move more mail by truck and air each successive year. Consequently, the Department was in need of large sites for new postal facilities that could accommodate these new machines inside and trucks and enough room for them to maneuver outside. Most cities could only accommodate these needs on their peripheries. Therefore, the Department realized the future development would be away from monumental post offices in the heart of the cities to large, industrial facilities on the cities' edges, close to the new highways.¹⁹³

The first sign of the Post Office Departments transformation of its physical plant came with the March 1959 re-dedication of the Washington, D.C. Post Office, originally built in 1914, after complete modernization and mechanization, which, at the time, made it the world's largest mechanized post office (Figure 2-41). Located within the Washington, D.C. Post Office, the Postal Laboratory, where future postal research was based, was dedicated at the same time. In addition, installations of the Mailflo conveyor system were completed at the Boston and Los Angeles Post Offices; Grand Central Station, West Side, and Pennsylvania Terminals in New York City; and the Ogden Mail Terminal in Utah.¹⁹⁴ Pitney-Bowes completed two production models of the Mark II facer-canceler that underwent tests at the Washington, D.C. Post Office in

¹⁹² Chronological History of Current Research and Development Effort n.d.

¹⁹³ U.S. Post Office Department, Postmaster General Annual Report, 1958, p. VIII.

¹⁹⁴ Seagle 1965.

1959. These would come into general use during the 1960s and provide the basis for the first large-scale use of a mechanized mail handling process.



Source: *Historic American Building Survey DC, WASH, 587—4*

Figure 2-41: Washington, D.C. Post Office, Built 1914, Rededicated 1959

New machinery was also installed in small facilities. Several types of electro-mechanical stamp-vending machines were put in operation nationwide in 1959, and plans for a small, fully automatic, self-service post office, open 24 hours a day were completed, with the first being placed at a shopping center in Wheaton, Maryland in 1964 (Figure 2-52).¹⁹⁵ By 1967, there would be 94 of these units in building lobbies and shopping centers, each equipped with stamp-vending machines, scales, and other postal equipment, as well as a 24-hour direct telephone line to a main post office.¹⁹⁶

The Post Office Department reaffirmed its dedication to mechanization as it initiated construction on the world's first purpose-built mechanized post office, the new Providence,

¹⁹⁵ Seagle 1965.

¹⁹⁶ Beatty, 1967, p. 14.

Rhode Island Post Office. Dubbed “Project Turnkey,” the 1960 project was the first postal facility in the country designed specifically for mechanized processing of mail. In 1961 a second mechanized post office, named “Gateway,” was planned for Oakland, California. Both were patterned on mechanization work completed at the Washington, D.C. Post Office.¹⁹⁷ In addition, these new facilities were equipped with loading platforms for a large number of trucks.

Providence was selected as being typical of American communities. The new post office, located on the edge of town, served the town and became the distribution center for approximately 100 other towns and cities. Turnkey was unique because, while it was a working post office, it was designed as an experimental laboratory for testing machines and operations.¹⁹⁸ The building was designed and constructed by Intelx Systems Incorporated and leased to the Department. It was built with only two interior columns to provide maximum flexibility for arranging work areas and their equipment. The Modern style building with intersecting barrel-vault roof sections was 420 feet long, 300 feet wide, and contained 126,000 square feet (Figure 2-42). A partial basement under the south portion of the building was 300 feet by 140 feet and provided 42,000 square feet to house maintenance shops, electrical transformer banks, a refrigeration plant, a storeroom, and sack cleaning equipment. A mezzanine along the front of the building above the lobby provided 17,500 square feet for administrative offices.¹⁹⁹

The main floor was divided into a small public lobby featuring an array of self-help machines, such as stamp-vending machines and machines that automatically weighed and stamped letters and parcels, and a workroom the size of two football fields. A Mailflo conveyor system carried the mail through each of four major operations, (1) culling, (2) facing and canceling, (3) automatic sorting, and (4) parcel sorting, all of which were overseen by a person in a 26-foot-tall control tower (Figure 2-43).



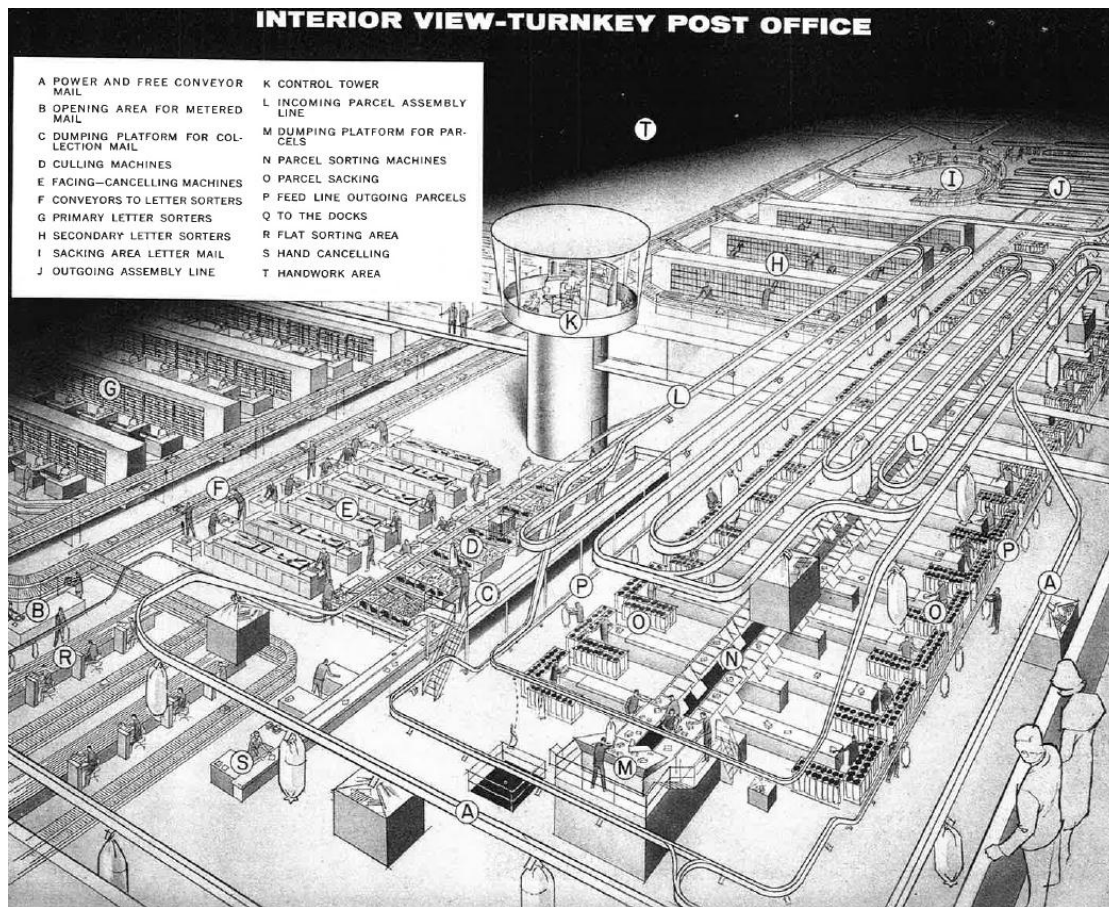
Source: <http://www.postalmuseum.si.edu/machinesorbust/p4.html>

Figure 2-42: Project Turnkey, Providence, RI Post Office, printed 1960

¹⁹⁷ Summerfield, 1960, p. 179.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., 179.

¹⁹⁹ Intelx Systems Incorporated, n.d., p. 12-13.



Source: United States Post Office Department Advisory Board, "Anywhere U.S.A.: Next Day Delivery" 1961

Figure 2-43: Interior View, Providence, Rhode Island Post Office Work Room

The first stop on the Mailflo conveyor system was the culling department. The mail was dumped and entered a receiving machine with vibrating tables that shook the mail to ensure no piece lay on another. It then traveled over a tent-shaped slide where moving arms nudged packages and thick pieces of mail into a bulk hopper, while letters and postal cards fell through slots to a lower conveyor; the process was repeated until the regular mail of similar size was stacked neatly into trays. The facing and canceling area scanned and turned each piece so the stamp was in the proper position for canceling. At the semi-automatic sorting area, trays of canceled letters were brought to one of six desks with keyboards. The operator coded in one of 300 different destinations, and each letter was conveyed to a box for its assigned area. From there the mail was sacked and sent on to its destination.²⁰⁰

For parcel sorting, the parcels were removed from the large mail sacks and dumped onto a conveyor belt of the Webb Parcel Post Machine. The parcels were taken by the belt to a chute and dropped into positioning areas where they were placed face up on little pallets that traveled

²⁰⁰ Summerfield, 1960, p. 182.

over short conveyor systems to coding stations. The sorting clerk read the address and entered a code, sending the parcel and its pallet to one of 40 destinations. There the pallet tilted and the parcel slid into a hopper to be re-sacked and sent to its destination. The machine had a capacity of 1,200 parcels an hour with one operator.^{201, 202}

The 1961 Gateway Post Office in Oakland, California, was designed by the Food Machinery and Chemical Corporation to be sufficiently mechanized for 1970 mail volumes and to have adequate building space for expansion to 1980 requirements. It was determined that for industry as well as for post offices mechanized processing operations required more room than equivalent manual operations. However, the additional building costs were compensated by operational savings from mechanization. For the Gateway project, 23 different building configurations were modeled and analyzed before determining the final layout based on the following factors:

- An unbroken straight-line flow of traffic.
- The interrelationship of operating parts.
- The functionality of the layout on its proposed site location.
- The compatibility of the building layout to modern construction practices.
- Post Office Department recommended area allocations.²⁰³

In addition, the building structure was dictated by:

- Clear height requirements of up to 30 feet on the work floor.
- Individual machine systems requiring up to 122,000 square feet for a single system.
- Vehicle maneuvering area requiring 100 clear spans.²⁰⁴

The specific location of individual system elements was primarily determined by the relationships of three major units: the Parcel Post machine system, the classified dispatch storage system, and the loading platform. The Parcel Post machine was the largest, and locating the system in relation to the building structural members and process flow was critical. The classified dispatch storage system consisted of a series of inclined chutes in which sacked mail was stored prior to dispatch. These chutes discharged onto conveyor belts that conveyed the mail through floor penetrations onto the mechanized truck loading and unloading equipment. The chute system occupied 60,000 square feet and required special framing. The loading platform was 51,800 square feet and was located under the elevated building structure. Most of the mail flowed over this platform, thus its location in relation to the workroom was critical. Process flow factors, equipment layout considerations, and construction economics dictated that an elevated

²⁰¹ Comptroller General of the United States, 1962, p. 53.

²⁰² Summerfield, 1960, p. 185.

²⁰³ Food Machinery and Chemical Corporation, 1961, p. 2.

²⁰⁴ Ibid, p. 5.

one-story structure utilizing surface area below the building for vehicle loading and maneuvering was more feasible than a two-story elevated structure.²⁰⁵

The new Turnkey and Gateway Post Offices exemplified the ideal for new large post offices serving as the processing and distributing centers for the Post Office Department, although the Turnkey project was not regarded as successful due to underutilization, lack of training on machinery, and the facility did not process mail for its intended geographic area. Nonetheless, they were described by Postmaster Summerfield as the post offices of the future.²⁰⁶ They used large sites close to major highways on the periphery of large towns. They were designed with large truck maneuvering areas and loading platforms sited to work efficiently with the machinery in a large work room. The work rooms were laid out to handle the mechanical mail handling systems and efficient movement of mail between the systems and required long clear spans, high ceilings, and floors designed for heavy loading capacities. Each building had an administration area and post office box and service lobbies to serve the public. These buildings required flexibility to meet future needs. Consequently, the building shells were determined by their function, which was determined by the layout of several engineering systems and the site constraints. This design process became the standard for sectional centers.

In 1960, the first generation of sorters, cullers, and other postal machines were slowly put into production and installed in key post offices, and a systematic program was started to modernize postal space in federal buildings. Twelve large facer-cancelers were installed at Detroit, Washington, D.C., and Philadelphia Post Offices. Also in 1960, the completely modernized and mechanized Detroit Post Office was dedicated. As opposed to Project Turnkey and Gateway, the Detroit Post Office was completely designed and mechanized by Office of Research and Engineering engineers.^{207, 208}

Postmaster General J. Edward Day recognized early in his tenure (1961-63) that the Nation's post offices were a bottleneck to better mail service.²⁰⁹ The Post Office Department continued to develop, improve, and put into operation semiautomatic machines for mail culling, facing, and canceling and for sorting letters, parcels, and sacked mail. Priorities were determined by what machines would have the most impact for the least money as the major problem continued to be the predominance of manual operations. "The mechanization program has been a race with catastrophe—the catastrophe of too little machinery too late to handle the increasing mail volume."^{210, 211}

This was exacerbated by the fact that the bulk of the Nation's mail volume was arriving at post offices after 5 p.m., when the offices were closed; despite new post offices and modernization of

²⁰⁵ Ibid, pp. 7-11.

²⁰⁶ <http://www.postalmuseum.si.edu/machinesorbust/p4.html#12>. Accessed July 19, 2012.

²⁰⁷ Seagle 1965.

²⁰⁸ United States Postal Service Historian 1988.

²⁰⁹ United States Post Office Department, 1961, *Nationwide Improved Mail Service Program*.

²¹⁰ United States Post Office Department, Office of Research and Engineering. 1961.

²¹¹ Seagle 1965.

old ones, the overwhelming volume of mail could not be handled efficiently.²¹² This was particularly true of producers of bulk mail, such as businesses and institutions, who held most of their mail until the close of the business day and then sent it to their post office after 5 p.m. Of the Nation's 65-billion-piece mail volume in 1961, three-quarters originated from business and industry.²¹³

On July 19, 1961, the Post Office Department established the "Nationwide Improved Mail Service (NIMS)" program to address the crush of mail. The principal goals of the NIMS program were:

- To establish local Mail Users Councils composed of volume mail users in larger cities throughout the county to consult with postmasters on ways and means to improve postal service.
- To encourage large-volume mailers and government agencies to schedule their mailings so that they can be handled in the order of importance for them.²¹⁴

With bulk mailers depositing their scheduled mail, such as dividend checks, monthly bills, and other periodic mailings, early in the day, this mail could be processed and dispatched before the daily business mail arrived in the post office late in the day. Scheduled mailings allowed more efficient use of manpower, equipment, and space, which also resulted in better working conditions for postal employees.²¹⁵

Funding for research and development was substantially reduced in 1962, when postal engineers focused their efforts on the physical plant modernization program. The planning and designs for both the structure and the equipment required active construction management and plant start-up assistance. The overall modernization program was redirected toward the larger offices, where more patrons and employees would benefit.²¹⁶ By October 1962, 93 facer-cancelers had been installed in 18 post offices; all were Mark II units except for six in Providence, RI, that were manufactured by Electric Lorenz of Berlin.²¹⁷ In addition, the Department had installed 69 letter sorting machines in six post offices, including 30 made by Burroughs, 24 by Keytronic, 11 by Bell, and 1 Transorma machine, as well as three experimental models in Washington, D.C.²¹⁸ This was a small start considering there were 34,797 post offices at the time, but they were being implemented at the largest post offices, where their impact would be greatest.

2.5.3 Introduction of the ZIP Code

The Department realized that the evolution of transportation systems was creating new focal points for air, highway, and rail transportation, and designated post offices at these transportation

²¹² United States Post Office Department, 1961, *Nationwide Improved Mail Service Program*.

²¹³ Ibid.

²¹⁴ Ibid.

²¹⁵ Ibid.

²¹⁶ Seagle 1965.

²¹⁷ United States Postal Service Historian 1988.

²¹⁸ Ibid.

hubs—around 85 of the country’s larger cities as part of the program called Metro System—to deflect mail from congested, heavily traveled city streets. This system was quickly expanded and became part of the ZIP Code, which began on July 1, 1963.²¹⁹ Perhaps more than any other factor, the ZIP Code system was necessitated by the reduction in the railway postal network’s capacity due to rapidly dwindling number of trains available for carrying mail, which dropped from 10,000 in 1930 to 923 in 1966.^{220, 221}

By July 1963, a five-digit code had been assigned to every address throughout the country. The first digit designated a broad geographical area of the United States, ranging from zero for the Northeast to nine for the far West. This was followed by two digits that more closely pinpointed population concentrations and those sectional centers accessible to common transportation networks. The final two digits designated small post offices or postal zones in larger zoned cities.²²² Initially, use of the new code was not mandatory for anyone, but in 1967, the Post Office Department required mailers of second- and third-class bulk mail to presort by ZIP Code.

Preparing for the new system was a major task involving realignment of the mail system. At the heart of the ZIP Code system were the 552 sectional centers that served as the clearinghouses for the 40 to 150 surrounding or associate post offices. The sectional center was generally the largest post office in the area and served as the focal point for mail entering and leaving a given area or moving between points in the sectional center area.^{223, 224}

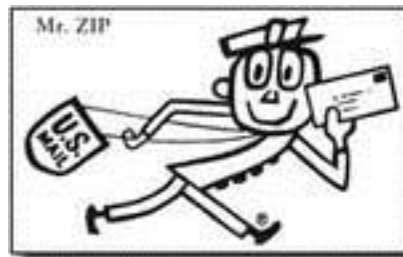


Figure 2-44: Mr. Zip

Source:

<http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/1/11/Mr.Zip-2003.PNG>

The associate offices collected mail originating in their designated service areas, postmarked it, and sorted it. They set up direct pouches, or mail sacks reserved for one specific post office for destinations where sufficient mail volumes warranted. The direct pouches received little or no handling by the sectional center before being sent to their destinations. If the associate office had

²¹⁹ Bellis, 2012, *History of Post Office Technology: Zip Codes*.

²²⁰ Ibid.

²²¹ Beatty, 1967, p. 9.

²²² Bellis, 2012, *History of Post Office Technology: Zip Codes*.

²²³ Ibid.

²²⁴ Comptroller General of the United States, 1967, p. 8.

insufficient mail to warrant a direct pouch, the mail was sent to the sectional center for further sorting before being sent to its destination. This process was reversed for incoming mail. Under the sectional center concept, the Department accomplished some consolidation of mail-processing operations; however, the associate offices still independently processed most of their own mail.²²⁵

During 1963, the top research priority was for specialized numeric readers to read ZIP Codes on letter mail while progress continued with the Postal Laboratory's automatic address reader. Additional projects included the airmail extraction, which identified and separated letters bearing "tagged" (specially treated) airmail stamps or airmail stickers from mail with untreated stamps, making it possible to speed airmail through sorting and handling steps. Field tests were begun at the Dayton, Ohio, Post Office. An advanced parcel-sorting system was installed in Miami, Florida. Money order print punch machines were placed throughout the domestic postal system and patron-operated postage dispensing machines were developed. Additional criteria were developed for justifying the types and extent of mechanization to install in major post offices. Postal engineers considered efficient use of space and structural requirements to ensure proper installation of mechanical mail-processing systems.^{226, 227}

In 1964, a contract was awarded to Burroughs Corporation for production of 26 high-speed letter sorting machines for use in 13 of the largest post offices. At this time, the department had 15 Mailflo conveyor systems and 7 tray transport systems in use for transporting letter-size mail. The department made the decision to only use the tray transport system for future installations.^{228, 229}

At the close of 1964, only 97 large post offices had some degree of mechanization installed or contracted for (Table 2-3). This number would quickly grow. On June 30, 1969, over 900 postal facilities had some type of mechanized equipment installed or scheduled for installation.²³⁰

²²⁵ Ibid.

²²⁶ Seagle 1965.

²²⁷ United States Postal Service Historian 1988.

²²⁸ United States Postal Service Historian 1988.

²²⁹ United States Post Office Department, 1964, *Annual Report of the Postmaster General*, p. 26.

²³⁰ United States Post Office Department, 1969, *Annual Report of the Postmaster General*, p. 7.

Table 2-3: Major Types of Mechanization Installed or Under Contract

Year	Facing & Canceling	Post Offices	Edger-Stackers	Post Offices	Letter Sorting	Post Offices	Parcel Post Tray Conveyors	Post Offices	Sack Sorting Machines	Post Offices
1959					1	1				
1960	12	3			3	3	4	4		
1961										
1962										
1963										
1964	204	72			43	6	69		45	
1965	204	72	60	42			72	27	46	28
1966	205	72			55	18	72	28	46	28
1967	300	130	190	108	108	36				
1968	418	161	348	190	137	37	88	57	105	92
1969	423	175	348	161	205	79	94	59	109	96
1970	733	710	523	224	257	124				

Source: U.S. Post Office Department, Postmaster General Annual Report, 1969

In 1965, numeric reading capability was incorporated into the mechanical automatic address reading machine at the Postal Laboratory, and the first high-speed optical character reader was put into operation in the Detroit Post Office on November 30, 1965. It could read 36,000 typed or printed codes per hour and place them into destination bins. It was placed in full-time operation in the Detroit Post Office on August 14, 1967. Within the next year, 10 optical character readers were placed into operation.^{231, 232, 233}

The extraction of “tagged” airmail letters was successfully established at the Dayton Post Office. Field tests were completed on 32 coin and eight currency machines in the Atlanta, Boston, Dallas, Philadelphia, St. Louis, and San Francisco regions. The patron-operated machines dispensed a variety of postal items such as stamps.²³⁴

At this time, the 321 largest post offices handled 68 percent of all mail volume (71.9 billion pieces in 1965 and 82 billion pieces in 1969) and collected 66 percent of the total postal receipts. The 25 largest post offices by volume between 1960 and 1970 are listed in Table 2-4.

Table 2-4: 25 Largest Post Offices by Volume, 1960 - 1970

Chicago	Detroit	Kansas City, Missouri	Cincinnati	Houston
New York	Boston	Dallas	Pittsburgh	Indianapolis
Los Angeles	San Francisco	Minneapolis	Baltimore	Seattle
Washington, D.C.	St. Louis	Brooklyn	Milwaukee	Miami

Source: Often-Used Facts & Figures²³⁵

²³¹ United States Postal Service Historian 1988.

²³² Beatty, 1967, pp. 11-14.

²³³ United States Postal Service Historian 1988.

²³⁴ Seagle, 1965.

²³⁵ “Often-Used Facts & Figures.” 1966. On file in United States Postal Service Historian Vertical Files, United States Postal Service Headquarters, Washington, D.C. April 1966.

With the ever-increasing mail volumes and the successful implementation of its first mechanical systems, the Department established a program in January 1966 for accelerating mechanization and modernization of the postal infrastructure. The initial stage involved the installation of mechanized mail-handling equipment in facilities that handled about 60 percent of the Nation's mail.²³⁶

In October 1966, the Post Office Department's attempts to increase efficiency and capacity through mechanization appeared to be unsuccessful when the Chicago Post Office ground to a virtual stop under a logjam of mail. More than 5 million unprocessed pieces of mail piled up, creating gridlock. At a Congressional hearing of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Treasury-Post Office in 1967, Postmaster General Lawrence F. O'Brien noted that the problem was not that something specific had happened in 1966, but that not enough had happened in the previous 33 years, and that the Post Office Department was trying to move mail through facilities largely unchanged since the days when mail volume was 30 percent of 1967 levels.²³⁷

Oklahoma Congressman Tom Steed, Chairman of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on Treasury-Post Office, stated the case for postal reform while questioning Postmaster General O'Brien. The Congressman asked:

“Would this be a fair summary—that at the present time, as manager of the Post Office Department, you have no control over your workload; over the rates or revenue; over the pay rates of the employees that you employ; you have very little control over the conditions of the service of these employees; you have virtually no control, by the nature of it, of your physical facilities; and you have only a limited control, at best, over the transportation facilities that you are compelled to use—all of which adds up to a staggering amount of 'no control' in terms of the duties you have to perform?”²³⁸

The Postmaster General's lack of control meant that, in many post offices, the mail was being handled virtually in the same way it had been handled 100 years earlier because modern mechanization could not be provided as rapidly as the need for such equipment arose, despite skyrocketing mail volume.^{239 240}

Despite all research and development efforts, mail handling in 1967 remained a highly labor-intensive activity. For the 30 years prior to 1955, labor costs averaged around 73 percent of capital, but from 1955 to 1966, when mechanization was first taking hold, labor costs actually increased to 80 percent (Table 2-5).²⁴¹

²³⁶ Comptroller General of the United States, 1970, p. 1.

²³⁷ Boyd and Chen, n.d.

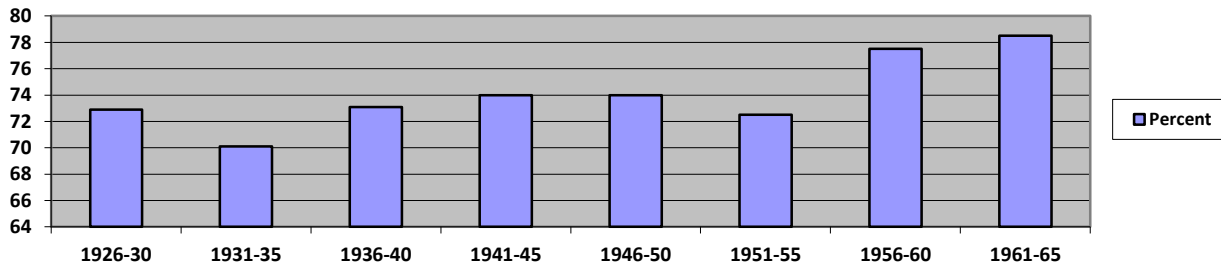
²³⁸ Bellis, 2012, *Post Office Reform*.

²³⁹ Ibid.

²⁴⁰ U.S. Post Office Department, Postmaster General Annual Report, 1969, pp. 10-11.

²⁴¹ Haldi, 1970, pp. 354-55.

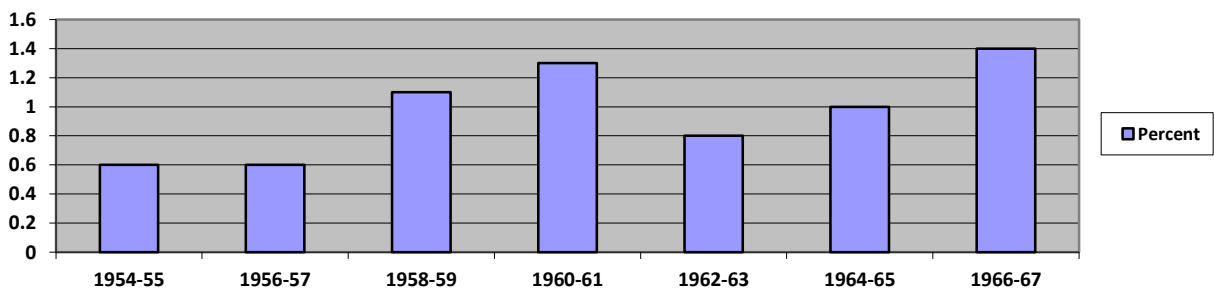
Table 2-5: Labor Costs as a Percentage of Total Postal Costs 1926-65



Source: Haldi, *Analysis of Public Output*. 1970

Capital spending by the Post Office Department had been almost exclusively on new buildings before 1920. After 1920, the Department began investing in trucks and other vehicles, but prior to 1945 the department spent virtually nothing on mechanization and equipment for handling mail. After 1945, spending for mechanization increased, but it still represented a small percentage compared to other industries. From 1945 to 1965, mechanization and equipment spending accounted for about 1 percent of total expenditures (Table 2-6).²⁴²

Table 2-6: Mechanization and Equipment Percentage of Total Postal Expenditures 1954-1967



Source: Haldi, *Analysis of Public Output*. 1970

The 1968 report of the President’s Postal Commission, *Towards Postal Excellence*, found that large postal facilities were generally overcrowded and there was no evidence that the Post Office Department was modernizing or automating at a rate that would significantly alter the capital-labor ratio in the foreseeable future. The report also stated that, given the 10-year period then required to plan and construct major new facilities, the situation would likely worsen before improving.²⁴³

Despite the dim outlook presented in these reports, mechanization was underway in the Nation’s largest post offices. These were usually sizable establishments in principal cities. The Chicago

²⁴² Ibid, p. 356.

²⁴³ Ibid, p. 378-379.

post office, for example, had about 15,000 full-time employees who did nothing but sort and process mail. In a major processing facility, originating mail typically went through the following distinct operations: edging-stacking, facing-canceling, and sorting. Of these operations, only facing-canceling had been more or less mechanized at large post offices. Sorting, which accounted for most of the costs, was still almost entirely done by hand. The chief exception was parcels, where various mechanical devices helped sort mail in large post offices.²⁴⁴

Even as the Post Office Department continued its efforts to accelerate mechanization and modernization of the postal infrastructure, the Comptroller of the United States found that “the present fragmentation of mail processing at thousands of independent post offices precludes the Department from realizing the full advantages of mechanization processes which are now available.”²⁴⁵

The Comptroller found that consolidation of mail processing operations of several post offices into one facility increased the volume of mail sorted by individual destinations, and thereby resulted in more mail being handled as direct pouches, reducing the need for further sorting at another post office. Additionally, mechanized mail-handling equipment could be used to process mail more rapidly and economically if sufficient mail was available.²⁴⁶ Department standards in 1967 stated that to qualify for a letter-sorting machine, an office must have a daily volume of 500,000 pieces of first-class originating mail. The letter-sorting machine not only processed mail faster than a manual operation, but also reduced the number of mail handlings because of the greater number of separations accomplished in each sort.²⁴⁷

Manual sorting of outgoing mail at the vast majority of post offices was normally accomplished on a 49-hole separation case at a rate of 30 letters a minute, whereas a letter-sorting machine allowed as many as 300 separations, using 12 operators, at a rate of 60 letters a minute for each operator. Tests showed that the letter-sorting machine saved from \$0.40 to \$2.00 for every thousand letters sorted compared to manual operations.²⁴⁸

The Mark II facer-canceler could produce substantial savings when used with a sufficient volume of mail. The Mark II could face and cancel mail at a rate of 30,000 letters an hour. The Department also had other equipment that could cancel letters automatically at high speed; however, the mail had to be faced manually before being fed into the machine. Tests found the Mark II to be about \$5.50 an hour less than the method using the manual facing.²⁴⁹

Acting on the Comptroller General’s suggestions, the Post Office Department instituted Area Mail Processing by 1970. Under this program, mail collected at smaller non-mechanized post

²⁴⁴ Ibid, p. 359.

²⁴⁵ Comptroller General, 1970, p. 17.

²⁴⁶ Ibid, p. 12.

²⁴⁷ Ibid, p. 12.

²⁴⁸ Ibid, p. 12.

²⁴⁹ Ibid, p. 12.

offices was sent to designated nearby large mechanized post office to be processed on machines. In addition, selected moderate-size post offices, which formerly did not have enough volume to warrant mechanization, were being mechanized and their volumes augmented sufficiently to justify purchasing the equipment. Although the Post Office Department had been slow to mechanize its operations, by the close of our study period, the Department began to reap the benefits of its efforts.

Between 1940 and 1971, mail volumes for the Post Office Department had increased from 27.7 billion pieces of mail to 87 billion pieces of mail. To cope with this phenomenal growth, the Post Office Department instituted a research program to develop machines for each of the mail handling processes: culling, facing and canceling, sorting, and sacking. In addition, the Department developed the ZIP Code, a more efficient system for sorting the mail that relied on 552 sectional centers to concentrate and distribute the mail. These were either existing large post offices or large new processing and distribution centers specifically built to contain the new conveyer systems, facer-cancelers, edger-stackers, and letter and parcel-sorting machines. This effort had been a “race with catastrophe—the catastrophe of too little machinery too late to handle the increasing mail volume.”^{250, 251} Mail volume overwhelmed mail processing in Chicago in 1966, but by 1971, mechanization of certain processes handled 50 percent of the mail volume and allowed the Postal Service to survive the mail crush and set it on course for the future.

2.6 MODERNISM

The popularity of Modern architecture in post-World War II America dramatically changed the aesthetic landscape of the country. During the two and half decades after the war, commercial, residential, industrial, and public buildings alike were frequently designed according to the Modern architectural language, a vernacular that had originated in post-World War I Europe and used new technologies to create buildings with few or no references to the past. Simplification of form and elimination of ornament distinguished these buildings as strikingly different from the Greek and Roman-inspired buildings of previous centuries.

The federal government was slower in adopting Modern architecture than the private sector. By the early 1960s, the influence of federal modernism began to be felt at the national scale, due in part to the Post Office Department’s extensive building program that commenced in 1959.²⁵² During the late 1950s and 1960s, a period during which the Post Office Department dramatically increased its number of facilities (primarily through the lease-purchase program), postal buildings were almost exclusively constructed according to the Modern predilections of the period. In the foreword of the 1959 Post Office Department building guidelines brochure, *Building Design*, Postmaster Arthur Summerfield called for Modern buildings that focused on

²⁵⁰ United States Post Office Department, Office of Research and Engineering. 1961.

²⁵¹ Seagle 1965.

²⁵² Robinson & Associates, Inc., 2003, p. 41.

efficiency and clean lines.²⁵³ The Department's design manuals and standardized building construction details dictated a uniform Modern aesthetic nationwide that was closely followed by the private builders who constructed most of the Department's buildings through the lease-purchase program. The notable exceptions to standardization were a few small post offices built in regional styles. Overall, during the period, postal facilities were no longer designed as formal and hierarchical spaces that represented the federal presence in the local community. Rather, they were hardly distinguishable from the private offices and commercial buildings of the time, which were designed to emphasize function and economy above all else.

By the early 1970s, explicit modernism, perceived by many to be nondescript and unimaginative, decreased in popularity in all sectors of the design community and was superseded by postmodernism.²⁵⁴ Modernism is now regarded as a historical style.²⁵⁵

The theme of Modern architecture was important to the Post Office Department during the 1960s because it fit the needs of its building program. The basic designs were easy for local builders and contractors to follow, although the lack of an architect in the construction process did affect the design quality of the completed building. Large-scale facilities, such as processing and distribution centers and combined federal buildings also lent themselves to the style. Processing and Distribution Centers were designed around the machinery and work system zones, which required a horizontal massing typically clad in expansive walls and lacking ornament. Combined federal buildings presented a monumental unified front that did not articulate different functions or agencies. Their aesthetics were aided by the expansive walls lacking in ornamentation. In a period when demands on postal operations were continuing to exceed resources and capacity, the choice of an architectural style that conveyed efficiency and modernity presented the Post Office Department in a positive way.

2.6.1 Origins of Modern Architecture

The origins of Modern architecture have their roots in post-World War I Europe. Stirred by advancing industrial production and surrounded by the results of a destructive war, a generation of European architects that included Le Corbusier, the professors and students of the Bauhaus in Germany such as Walter Gropius and Marcel Breuer, and organizations like the Congrès International d'Architecture Moderne (Congress of International Modern Architecture) promoted Modern architecture in the interwar period as a means of improving quality of life through the design of a simplified built environment that was free from historical references using technological innovation. They were frustrated with the pervasive influence of L'École des Beaux-Arts in Paris that dictated traditional designs with well-established forms and spatial relationships. Instead, these architecture revolutionaries envisioned an "attitude toward architecture...characterized by a belief in the performance of service and problem-solving, in the

²⁵³ Post Office Department, Washington D.C. *Building Designs* (1959).

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

²⁵⁵ Robinson & Associates, Inc., 2003, 12-13; San Diego Architectural Foundation, n.d., p. 34.

use of advanced building technologies, integrity of structures and materials, research and experimentation, and finally, a moral concern for our ecology and environment.”²⁵⁶

The early Modern designs, which were characterized by flat walls and roofs of concrete with stucco and steel strip windows, were an arresting departure from the masonry and wood buildings of the pre-World War I period.²⁵⁷ Architect and preservationist Theodore H. M. Prudon writes that those early buildings were “the visual starting point for subsequent developments, as reflected in many buildings and building typologies that, with their design simplicity, lack of ornament, spatial clarity, new ways of using materials, and abundance of light pouring through large windows, became in many people’s minds synonymous with modern architecture.”²⁵⁸

2.6.2 Modern Architecture in the United States

Scholars and professionals disagree on a specific date for the beginning of the modern period of architecture in the United States. The year 1932 is commonly summoned, the year Philip Johnson and Henry Russell Hitchcock published their book, *The International Style*, which was accompanied by an exhibit at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City.²⁵⁹ Through their book and exhibit, Johnson and Hitchcock introduced the American public, albeit a very small part of it, to the mostly international, and a few American, manifestations of a modern architecture movement they christened the International Style. They heavily referenced the work of European architects Mies van der Rohe and Walter Gropius.²⁶⁰

Nonetheless, unlike Europe, the United States did not have a strong Modern tradition during the interwar period. In the words of Philip Johnson in the 1995 edition of *The International Style*, he wryly admits that “The general public couldn’t have cared less...”²⁶¹ Rather, American architects commonly embellished buildings with Art Deco and Stripped Classicism stylistic elements. Architecture schools devotedly continued to offer architectural education that was based on L’École des Beaux-Arts theory and practice.²⁶² Architect Frank Lloyd Wright stood alone as the first American Modern architect to attain international recognition as a Modern architect of the early twentieth century by introducing simplified, less ornamental, and open plan buildings to the American landscape.

Modern architecture became mainstream in the United States after World War II.²⁶³ Corporate expansion, institutional growth, a need for housing, and civic improvements fueled an

²⁵⁶ Statement of Purpose of the Congress of International Modern Architects (CIMA) as quoted in San Diego Architectural Foundation, 4.

²⁵⁷ Prudon, 2008, pp. 2-4.

²⁵⁸ Ibid, p. 4.

²⁵⁹ Robinson & Associates, Inc., 2003, p. 12; Prudon, 2008, 14-15; Joan Ockman, 2004, p. 342; Whiffen and Koeper, 1983, p. 340.

²⁶⁰ Kentgens-Craig, 2004, p. 306.

²⁶¹ Hitchcock and Johnson, 1995, p. 15.

²⁶² Whiffen and Koeper, 1983, pp. 345-346.

²⁶³ Ibid, 345.

unprecedented construction boom.²⁶⁴ Peacetime was a jubilant time for America, which had emerged from the war in much better economic condition than Europe. Filling the void left by Europe, American corporations quickly rose to dominate the world's markets, and the American government secured leadership of the world's democracies.²⁶⁵ In this climate of positivism and enthusiasm for technology, Modern architecture symbolized the “shiny new age of peace and prosperity” that appealed to Americans who had become accustomed to applying rational problem-solving methods to win World War II.²⁶⁶ American's embrace of modernism coincided with the ascendancy of the United States as a military-industrial complex.²⁶⁷ The promise of Modern architecture, with its emphasis on practicality, affordability, decency, and cleanliness, was suited to the country's post-war forward-looking and progressive mood.²⁶⁸ However, in contrast to European Modern architecture, United States modernism was less influenced by social consciousness than by America's post-war optimism about the future and its faith in the validity of functionality, efficiency, and simplicity based on wartime technologies.²⁶⁹ Modernism was ideally suited to fulfill the country's building and social needs that had been waylaid by a long and expensive war.

Modern architecture became pervasive in the United States during the 1950s and 1960s. It was used in all building types—commercial buildings, airports, private residences, public housing, and government buildings.²⁷⁰ Equipped with modern technologies and materials, architects designed buildings with expansive walls of glass, steel and precast concrete, and even plastic.²⁷¹ By the 1960s, Modern architecture was the established and de-facto official style of the government, banks and corporations, churches, and houses of the middle-class and wealthy.²⁷² Notable Modern buildings from the period include the United Nations building, Lever House, TWA Terminal in New York, Farnsworth House, General Motors Technical Center, Kennedy Center, Lincoln Center, Washington Dulles International Airport, and Mies van der Rohe's 860-880 Lakeshore Drive Apartments.²⁷³

Modern landscape architecture design developed in conjunction with Modern building design. In general, Modern architecture integrated the interior and exterior and permitted the interaction of the building with the natural environment.²⁷⁴ The concept of transparency was a key characteristic of Modern design, and it naturally required architects to incorporate site design, topography, views, orientation, and vegetation. Writes Prudon, “Transparency gives the outside world a relationship with the goings-on inside a building. But it is also intended to give those

²⁶⁴ Prudon, 2008, p. 15.

²⁶⁵ Gelernter, 1999, p. 262-63.

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 263.

²⁶⁷ Ockman, 2004, p. 343.

²⁶⁸ Robinson & Associates, Inc., 2003, p. 30.

²⁶⁹ Prudon, 2008, p. 4-5.

²⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

²⁷¹ Robinson & Associates, Inc., 2003, p. 30; Wrenn and Mulloy, 1976, p. 59; Prudon, 2008, p. 37.

²⁷² Gelernter, 1999, p. 281.

²⁷³ Robinson & Associates, Inc., 2003, p. 31-32.

²⁷⁴ San Diego Architectural Foundation, n.d., p. 32-33.

inside the building access to the outside world—to participate in its activities or simply to admire the surrounding landscape.”²⁷⁵ The use of floor-to-ceiling glass facilitated effortless flow between the exterior and the interior, permitting the gardens outside to become part of the interior. Further, architects demonstrated the importance they placed on incorporation of the landscape by designing buildings to be orientated to sunlight and natural air currents of the site through the use of broad eaves, trellises, clerestory windows, skylights, and screens and fences.²⁷⁶

The International Style, widely used in governmental and commercial buildings, is the earliest of the Modern styles. It is characterized by a complete lack of applied ornament, flat roofs, smooth and uniform wall surfaces, windows with minimal exterior reveals, cantilevered upper floors and balconies, box shape, and horizontality, usually in the form of ribbon windows.²⁷⁷ Deviation from the International Style in post-World War II America resulted in other Modern styles. The Modern idiom used by the Post Office Department was almost exclusively International Style.

Though scholars continue to debate the end date for the Modern period (or if it has even ended at all), many professionals mark the publication of architect Robert Venturi’s *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* in 1966 as the point at which postmodern architecture begins.²⁷⁸ By the mid-1960s, a growing crowd of critics criticized the aesthetics of Modern architecture and condemned it for its presumed association with failed public housing experiments. Modern architecture was deposed by alternative architectural movements such as Venturi’s postmodernism by the early 1970s.²⁷⁹

2.6.3 The Post Office Department and Modern Architecture

The federal government was slow in adopting Modern architecture in the 1940s and early 1950s compared to the private sector. Federal building design placed little emphasis on stylistic standards during the decade and a half after the war. By necessity, government wartime building had actually been highly mechanized, used new and improved building materials, and emphasized cost-saving and efficiency, all principles that came to characterize the American Modern architecture that followed.²⁸⁰ After the war, the FWA of the Public Buildings Administration, which oversaw federal building design and management between 1939 and 1949, studied the character of building materials, designs, and construction methods used during the war years, and gauged the adaptability of the new materials and methods to post-war construction.²⁸¹ The government finally began to encourage the use of modern design principles in new federal buildings in the 1950s, but most of those early projects were high-profile

²⁷⁵ Prudon, 2008, p. 40, 16.

²⁷⁶ San Diego Architectural Foundation, n.d., 32-33.

²⁷⁷ Marcus Whiffen, 1996, p. 241-43; Robinson & Robinson Associates, Inc., 2003, p. 14.

²⁷⁸ Robinson & Associates, Inc., 2003, p. 12.

²⁷⁹ Gelernter, 1999, p. 281; Bristol, 2004, pp. 362-63.

²⁸⁰ Robinson & Associates, Inc., 2003, p. 25.

²⁸¹ Boland, 1994, p. 5.

embassies overseas.²⁸²

Congress had not granted any direct appropriations for new post offices since 1938, and construction of new postal facilities in the 15 years following the conclusion of World War II was rare.²⁸³ Post Office Department Annual Reports from the mid-1940s to late 1950s lamented the lack of funding, describing the Department's desperate need for additional and larger facilities to deal with the increasing volume of mail and rapid suburbanization of the populace.²⁸⁴ As a temporary solution, in 1954 the Department launched a lease-purchase program whereby private industry constructed postal buildings and then leased them to the Department for a specified term.

Stylistic guidance for postal facilities was lacking until the late 1950s. As with all federal buildings, the FWA oversaw design of post offices between 1939 and 1949, followed by the GSA in 1949 and then the Post Office Department itself beginning in 1954.²⁸⁵ The GSA issued *United States Post Offices* in 1949, a manual that provided plans for interior designs and furnishings of post offices. The GSA manual specifications focused on the functionality of the interior space, square footage of rooms, and technical components, but were devoid of any architectural stylistic guidance.²⁸⁶ Few postal facilities were actually constructed under this guidance due to lack of funds. Though stylistic guidance during the majority of the 1950s seemed to be nonexistent, the few facilities constructed during the mid-1950s and featured in the Post Office Department's Annual Reports demonstrate a Modern aesthetic in the form of International-style post offices (Figures 2-44 and 2-45).



Source: *The Postmaster General Reports on the Services of the United States Post Office Department during the Fiscal Year 1956.*, p. 57

Figure 2-45: First Image of Modern Postal Facility Design in Post Office Department Annual Reports

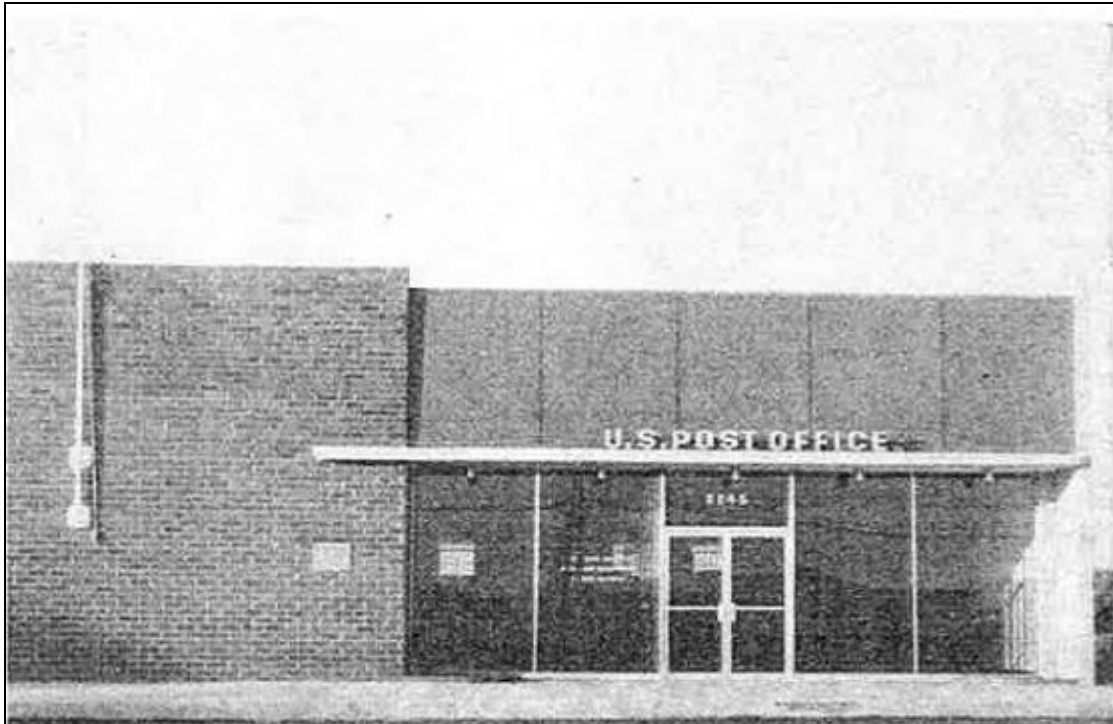
²⁸² Robinson & Associates, Inc. 2003, p. 25, 51.

²⁸³ Vogler, 2006, p. 8.

²⁸⁴ Post Office Department, *Annual Reports*, 1940-1970.

²⁸⁵ Boland, 1994, p. 5

²⁸⁶ General Services Administration, 1950.



Source: *The Postmaster General Reports on the Services of the United States Post Office Department during the Fiscal Year 1957.*, p. 58.

Figure 2-46: Modern Examples of Recently Constructed Lease-Purchase Postal Facilities

In 1958, the Department concluded a 5-year study of postal facilities and processes, and presented a Postal Modernization Program to Congress. Despite the Department's plea for implementation of the Postal Policy Act of 1958, which would have allocated funds for the

construction of much-needed new facilities, Congress was slow to act.²⁸⁷ To quickly and efficiently increase the number of postal facilities, the Department took advantage of the structure permitted in the Public Buildings Construction Act of 1959, which authorized a lease-purchase program for federal buildings that allowed lease terms of up to 30 years (rather than the shorter terms the Department had used earlier in the decade).²⁸⁸ The Department announced a \$1.5 billion building program in 1959, using the lease-purchase method.²⁸⁹

To ensure the its needs were met in these leased buildings, the Department issued a number of guidance documents that outlined technical specifications, including *Construction Requirements for Leased Postal Facilities, Bidders Instructions* (1959), *Standard Details for Building Construction, POD Publication 41* (1960), and *Construction Requirements for Leased Postal Facilities* (1966).²⁹⁰ The construction requirement documents detailed the expectations for post offices down to the chrome plating on the lock boxes, the number of coats of primer and the paint color to use on the flagpole, and the call bell to be installed in the workroom.

The Department also published a stylistic manual, *Building Designs*, in 1959 that gave examples of “acceptable” designs that could be used by sponsors in the construction of leased post offices between 1,000 and 12,000 square feet. The manual was reissued in 1964 relatively unchanged.²⁹¹ In the foreword to the 1959 manual, Postmaster General Arthur Summerfield asserted his desire that post offices be built as Modern buildings focusing on efficiency and clean lines.²⁹² The brochures contained artist renderings, schematic plans, suggested materials, and notes for post offices from 1,000 to 12,000 square feet (“Thousands Series”) (Figure 2-46). With the new emphasis on Processing and distribution centers, post offices did not require large spaces to process the mail; that was done at the section centers, now referred to as Processing and distribution centers. The brochures noted that the designs were adaptable to many variations and site characteristics, and because exterior design and materials could be adjusted to suit local conditions, suitable for all climates and geographical areas in the United States.

Of the designs recommended in the manuals, the International Style was predominant, which led architecture professor Jesse Vogler to write: “The brochure was the first explicit codification of a Modern architectural language adopted by the Post Office Department.”²⁹³ The International-style Thousand Series post offices all called for flat roofs; exterior wall materials of aluminum or stainless-steel framed window walls with stone, face brick, or precast concrete (less commonly called for were wood-framed window walls and wood siding and paneling, ceramic tile, and aluminum or insulated-metal panels); aluminum or stainless-steel entrance doors (less common options were wooden doors); metal or wood fascia with cement plaster soffit canopies above the

²⁸⁷ Post Office Department, *Annual Report* (1960), viii.

²⁸⁸ Lee, 2000, p. 289.

²⁸⁹ Post Office Department, *Annual Report* (1969), 142; Lee, 2000, p. 289-290.

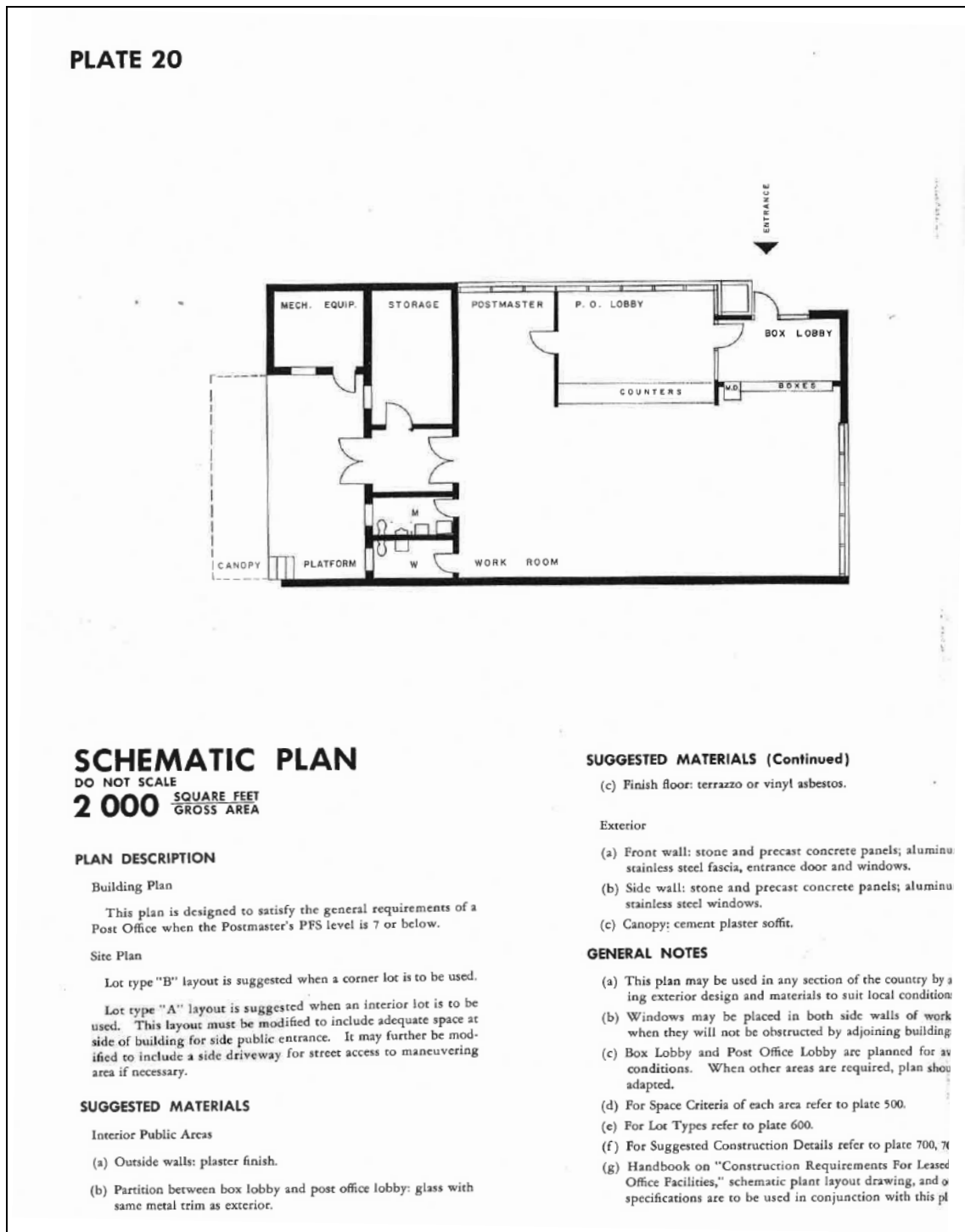
²⁹⁰ United States Post Office Department, 1959, *Construction Requirements for Leased Postal Facilities*; 1960, *Standard Details for Building Construction*; 1966, *Construction Requirements for Leased Postal Facilities*.

²⁹¹ United States Post Office Department, 1964, *Building Designs*.

²⁹² Ibid.

²⁹³ Vogler, 2006, p. 10

truck bays (more rarely recommended, concrete or steel); an interior partition between the box lobby and post office lobby of glass and metal trim; and vinyl or terrazzo interior floor material (infrequently suggested were quarry tile, slate, flagstone, or stone flagging).



Source: Building Designs manual, 1959

Figure 2-47: Example of Schematic Plan Details

The majority of the postal buildings constructed during the late 1950s and 1960s were masonry-clad structures in the International Style, which correlates with other federal building designs of the period. By the early 1960s, the influence of federal modernism began to be felt at the national scale, largely due to the Post Office Department's building program, since post offices are the most common federal building in America's many towns and cities.²⁹⁴ After President Kennedy's inauguration, federal construction rates increased dramatically.²⁹⁵ In tandem, the President formed an Ad Hoc Committee on Federal Office Space in 1961 to address the government's need for space. The committee issued their report in 1962, which included "Guiding Principles for Federal Architecture." These principles formed a three-point policy for federal building design. First, federal building design was to reflect "the dignity, enterprise, vigor, and stability of the American National Government." Second, there was to be no official style for government buildings to avoid uniformity and allow for the choice of designs that embodied the finest Modern American architectural thought. Third, the designs were to incorporate the landscape of the site and the surrounding streets and public places.²⁹⁶ President Lyndon B. Johnson followed Kennedy's initiative with the "Program for Beautification of Federal Buildings" in 1965.²⁹⁷

Architectural historian Mark Gelernter posits that for private corporations and the government, Modern architecture "seemed to sum up their own self-images: rational, efficient, the confident possessors of immense power and wealth."²⁹⁸ Of the various styles of Modern architecture, the International Style was the dominant choice of corporate America and the federal government. Joan Ockman, a historic architecture and urbanism scholar, has noted that "The International Style as developed in the corporate and administrative framework of postwar America explicitly embodied the values of *technocracy*—the ethos of rationalism, bureaucracy, and technoscientific progress on which both big business and government were predicated."²⁹⁹ Persistent characteristics of federal buildings such as massiveness, official emblems, towering spaces, setbacks, and neoclassical white exteriors were often retained from earlier building traditions. The International Style was well suited to the government's preference for more substantial-appearing Modern commercial/office building designs, such as those with concrete cladding, rather than glass and steel, because the masonry better reflected "responsible spending and [served] to project strength and dependability."³⁰⁰ The result of the increased emphasis on Modern design principles in federal buildings resulted in the erection of buildings that looked far more like the private-sector commercial office buildings of their time than the monumental governmental buildings common before World War II.³⁰¹

²⁹⁴ Robinson & Associates, Inc., 2003, p. 41.

²⁹⁵ Ibid., 41.

²⁹⁶ Lee, 2000, p. 290-291; Craig, 1984, p. 441; Robinson & Associates, Inc., 2003, p. 6, 48, chapter 9.

²⁹⁷ Robinson & Associates, Inc., 2003, p. 48.

²⁹⁸ Gelernter, 1999, p. 263.

²⁹⁹ Ockman, 2004, p. 342.

³⁰⁰ Craig, 1984, p. 441, 538; Prudon, 2008, 5.

³⁰¹ Craig, 1984, p. 441; Robinson & Associates, Inc., 2003, 9.

Rather than hire architects to design these buildings, the Post Office Department's private sponsors closely followed the technical specification documents and *Building Designs* brochures. The consequence was buildings developed by builders, not architects, that one contributor to the *Arts and Architecture* trade journal lamented "are patterned after antiquated, unimaginative standard designs."³⁰² Though the Modern architectural language emphasized ingenuity in the use of materials and the organization of space (and the *Building Designs* brochures permitted flexibility in use of materials) many of the postal facilities of the period, particularly the small post offices, were a-contextual and stylistically homogeneous. The Department boasted that "post offices were designed to complement their surroundings and local architecture," but in reality, its *Building Designs* manual and the standardized building construction details that were used by its private builders led to a uniform Modern aesthetic nationwide.³⁰³

The standardization of postal facility design was broad, but it was not all-encompassing. Writes Vogler, "Ultimately, it would be inaccurate to overemphasize too greatly the extent of post office standardization. The fact is, some buildings were standardized and some were not."³⁰⁴ There were certainly exceptions. The Post Office Department's 1963 Annual Report features six completed post offices that were "designed to complement their surroundings and local architecture," including a Colonial Revival-style post office in Richmond, VT; the Georgian-style post office in Williamsburg, VA; a natural stone-clad post office with wood-post-supported roof erected in the West; and a Frank Lloyd Wright-designed Civic Center Branch in San Rafael, CA (Figure 2-47).³⁰⁵ Indeed, the most common diversion of post office design from the International Style (and included in the *Building Designs* manuals in small numbers) was the Colonial Revival style small post office. Notably, this post office was Colonial Revival only in ornamentation; its interior and siting within its lot were identical to the Modern style post offices. These examples demonstrate the flexibility of the Post Office Department's stylistic preferences.

The Department appeared to allow exceptions from Modern architecture only for the sake of regionalism in small post offices. With the exception of the *Building Designs* manuals of 1959 and 1964, the Department is silent on architectural style during the period. The Post Office Department frequently engaged private architects to design the larger facilities, or regional staff engineers and architects collaborated to design special projects. Annual reports provide important clues to the stylistic preferences of the period for larger post office buildings such as processing and distribution centers, self-service post offices, and airport processing facilities. All were unilaterally constructed according to the Modern predilections of the period and overwhelmingly represented the International Style (Figures 2-48 through 2-53).

President Kennedy's "Guiding Principles for Federal Architecture," and President Johnson's "Program for Beautification of Federal Buildings" called for thoughtful architectural design, and the postmaster general in 1959 optimistically planned for "architecturally attractive" facilities,

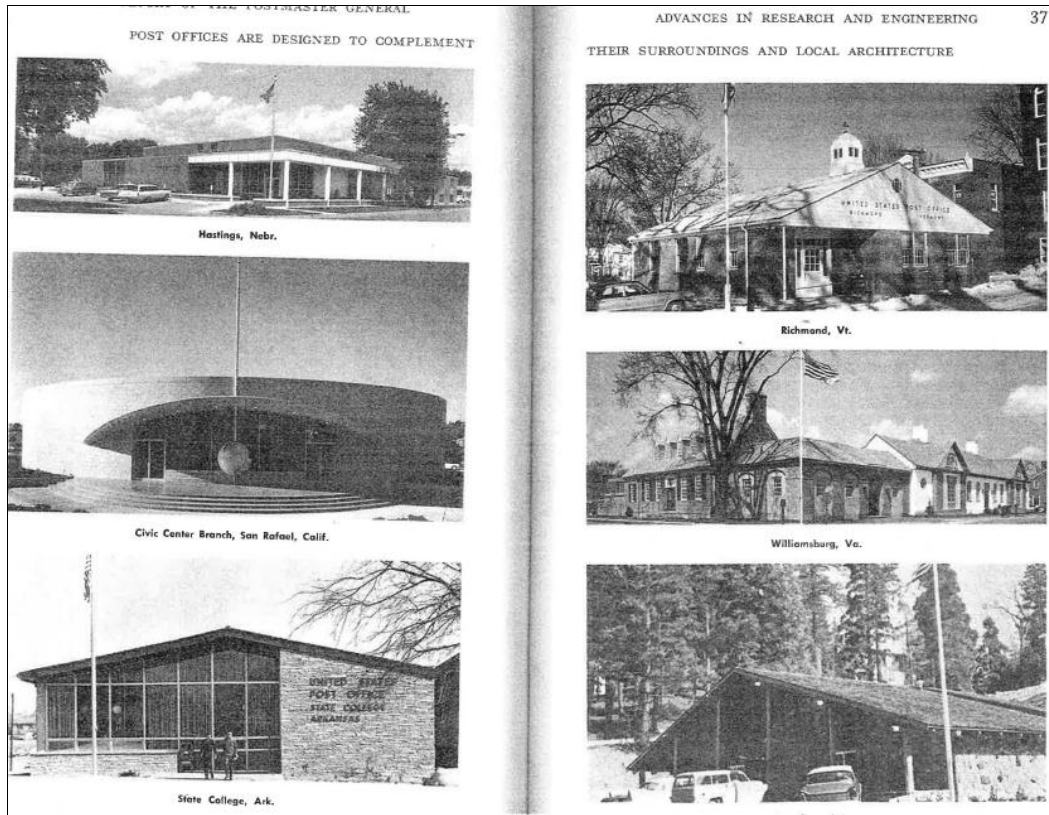
³⁰² Vogler, 2006, p. 9.

³⁰³ Ibid., p. 12.

³⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 16.

³⁰⁵ Post Office Department, *Annual Report* (1963), 36-37.

“economy was often a stronger driving force than architectural or physical distinction.”³⁰⁶ Because of the department’s reliance on private builders to construct facilities based on standard designs, post offices of this period reflect the trend in government building toward emphasizing economy over innovation and creativity. The International Style was a particularly simplified Modern style that could be easily adapted to less expensive materials.



Source: *The Postmaster General Reports on the Services of the United States Post Office Department during the Fiscal Year 1965.t*, pp. 36, 37

Figure 2-48: Regional Variations in Post Office Design

³⁰⁶ Robinson & Associates, Inc., 2003, p. 9. The government buildings of the time were subjected to quite a bit of criticism. Craig noted that there was “No detail or spaces to engage citizen participation” (Craig, 1984, 538); Robinson & Associates, Inc. write that the federal office building style was “massive, severe, and disengaged from its surroundings” (Robinson & Associates, Inc. 2003:9); and J. B. Jackson (as quoted in Craig, 539) claimed that “The very term ‘public building’ has become a contradiction: no one in his right mind now goes into a public building except on business.”



Source: The Postmaster General Reports on the Services of the United States Post Office Department during the Fiscal Year 1965., p. 14

Figure 2-49: Conceptual Drawings of “Project Gateway”



Source: The Postmaster General Reports on the Services of the United States Post Office Department during the Fiscal Year 1959., Self Service Post Office Conceptual Drawing, p. 25

Figure 2-50: Artist’s Conception of Planned New Customer-Operated Postal Substation



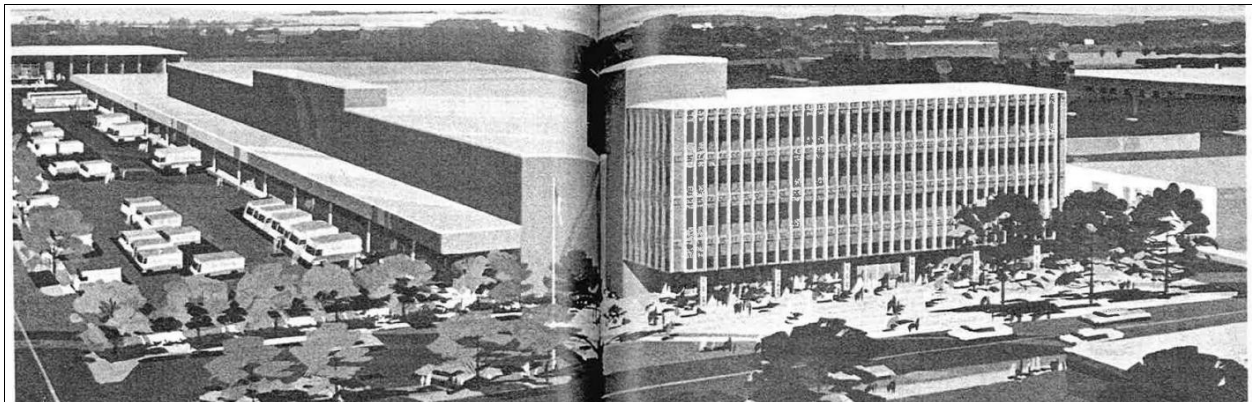
Source: The Postmaster General Reports on the Services of the United States Post Office Department during the Fiscal Year 1962, p. 72

Figure 2-51: New Edgewater, N.J., Mail Bag Facility Scheduled for Occupancy Early in Fiscal 1963



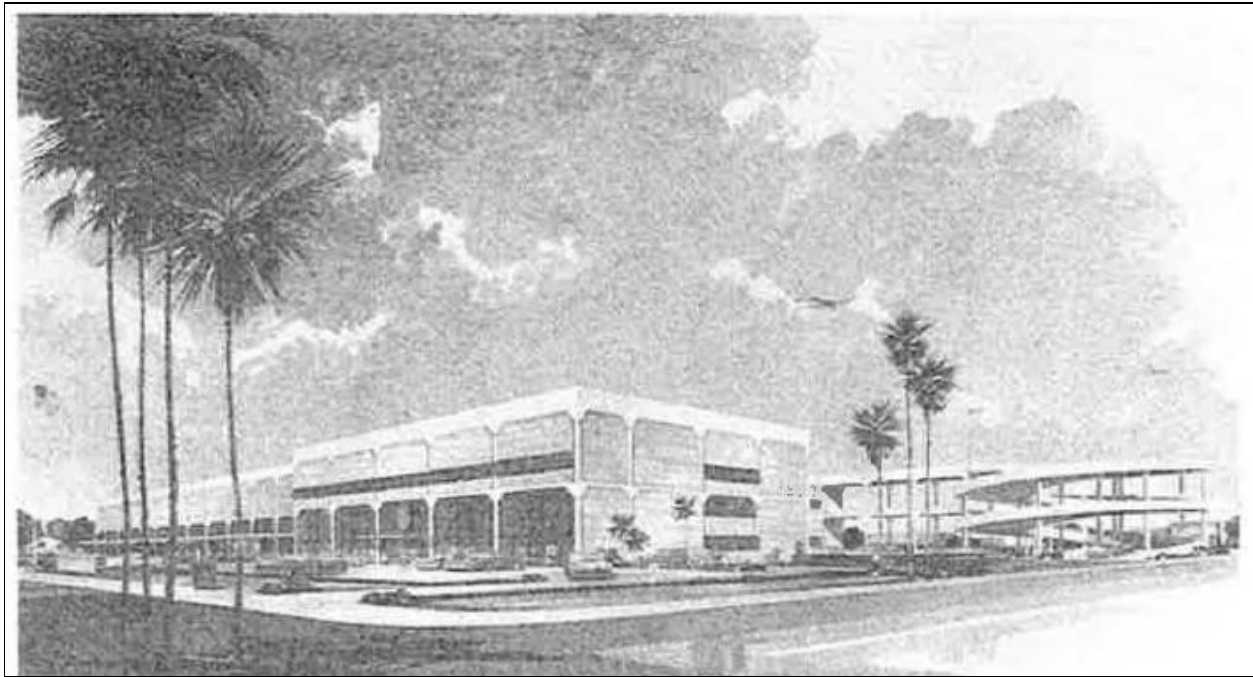
Source: The Postmaster General Reports on the Services of the United States Post Office Department during the Fiscal Year 1965., p. 37.

Figure 2-52: Self-Service Post Office



Source: The Postmaster General Reports on the Services of the United States Post Office Department during the Fiscal Year 1966., no page numbers

Figure 2-53: U.S. Post Office, Oklahoma City, OK



Source: The Postmaster General Reports on the Services of the United States Post Office Department during the Fiscal Year 1968., p. 125

Figure 2-54: Worldway Postal Center at Los Angeles Airport

Economy may have also affected the lack of deliberate Modern landscaping at postal facilities. Landscaping was an important characteristic in Modern design; however, post office design manuals and standards do not emphasize landscaping in the least. The only accounts of the Department’s concern with landscaping at its facilities were related to President Lyndon B. Johnson’s initiative “Program for Beautification of Federal Buildings,” launched in 1965. The program was intended to emphasize the importance of attractive landscaping around federal buildings and exteriors of federal buildings.³⁰⁷ As part of the President’s Natural Beauty Program, the Post Office Department launched the “Outdoor Beautification Program” in Fiscal Year 1965. Postmasters and regional officers were asked to assess the outdoor appearance of the post offices and seek the aid of local garden clubs, civic groups, lessors, and the GSA to assist in improvements. Regional officials conducted surveys, gathered pictures from offices, and then rated post office appearances as “Superior,” “Excellent,” “Good,” or “Poor.” Those judged “Superior” were recommended as eligible for the Certificate of Merit from the Postmaster General in the name of the President. Fifty-five post offices were recommended as eligible the first year of the program, of which, about half received the Citation of Merit. In fiscal year 1966, 6,000 post offices were evaluated and nearly 400 were judged “Superior,” of which, about 300 received the Citation of Merit. The first of the 16 citations were honored by receiving the awards personally from the First Lady at the White House on August 3, 1965. The program was still in place in fiscal year 1968, though the number of winners was not noted in the Annual Report.³⁰⁸ A

³⁰⁷ Robinson & Associates, Inc., 2003, p. 48-49.

³⁰⁸ Post Office Department, *Annual Report* (1965, 1966, and 1968).

survey report completed in 1973 of mostly small post offices constructed in the 1960s found that the quality of landscaping varied greatly from facility to facility, with no standard.³⁰⁹

As with other federal buildings, postal facilities of postwar United States were no longer designed as formal and hierarchical spaces that represented the federal presence in the local community as they had been in the past. Lois Craig writes that the government building of the 1960s began to represent the “big business of big government” and little “tangible local proof of nationality.”³¹⁰ Due to the widespread adoption of Modern architecture, postal facilities were hardly distinguishable from the private offices and commercial buildings of the time, which were designed to emphasize function and economy above all else.

³⁰⁹ Dalton, Dalton, Little, and Newport, 1973.

³¹⁰ Craig, 1984, p. 441.

SECTION THREE: ASSOCIATED PROPERTY TYPES

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The basis for the selection of the associated property types is the master list of currently operated USPS facilities (the United States Postal Service Electronic Facilities Management System [eFMS] 2011 database), which contains 1,461 properties located throughout the United States constructed or occupied by the USPS from 1940 to 1971. The Scope of Work (SOW) for this Study established a sampling approach for the survey of these properties. The targeted sample size for the survey effort is 7 percent of the master list total. Filters for age, temporal distribution, size (interior square footage) and USPS' internal property classification were applied to this universe of 1,461 properties to determine the individual properties that comprise the 7 percent sample. It is important to note that the USPS property classification is based on use rather than form or structural type, which can result in a particular building's property classification changing when it is adapted for a new use such as occurred during the 1950s and 1960s consolidation of operations. The application of the filters resulted in representative groups based on the frequency of occurrence for the key factors. This introduction briefly describes the property types and subtypes included in this analysis, and provides an overview of the NRHP criteria application and registration requirements for these property types. A detailed description of each property type, NRHP historical significance evaluation guidelines, and registration requirements for each property type are presented in the subsequent sections. Summary charts that depict exterior and interior views, with associated lists of character-defining features that support NRHP eligibility, are located after the individual property type description, significance assessments, and registration requirements.

3.1.1 Overview of Associated Property Types

The largest group of facilities identified using the criteria of age, temporal distribution, size and USPS property classification are post offices located in eleven states, constructed or occupied in the 1960s, and having less than 10,000 square feet of interior space. At least 50 percent of the total universe of buildings met all four of these criteria (Group 1). Another 25 percent (Group 2) of the buildings are also classified as Post Offices, were constructed or occupied between 1940 and 1942, are located in 14 states, and have an interior space that ranges from 10,000 to less than 50,000 square feet. These two groups make up the dominant property types, with subtype classification determined for each based on the results of survey field work. Additional property types include Processing and Distribution Centers (P&DCs), as these structures housed the mechanized systems that were central to the growth in volume and service expectations placed on the USPS as a result of the population and economic growth of the post-WWII period. Other related property types that are associated with this growth include Vehicle Maintenance Facilities (VMFs) and Postal Annexes (Annexes), Combined Federal Buildings and Postal Complexes.

A number of property types are known to have existed but were exempted from this analysis. For instance, some examples of these property types were buildings that had earlier, non-postal service functions; however, consideration of these retrofitted buildings is outside the scope of

this project. Additional property types not discussed include Railcar and Highway Post Offices (postal buses), self-serve postal kiosks, Missile mail, and pneumatic tubes. These facilities are not included in the master list of currently operated USPS facilities, may be more ephemeral and smaller in scale than the building types, and may be preserved and interpreted in museum settings such as the National Postal Museum in Washington, DC.

The following property types and subtypes are included in this analysis and briefly described below. A detailed description of each property type, historical significance evaluation guidelines, and registration requirements are presented in the subsequent sections.

Main Post Office – An office of the United States Post Office Department at which mail is received, sorted, dispatched, and distributed, and at which stamps are sold or other services rendered.³¹¹ From the Postal Service Act of 1793 through the present day, America’s post offices have taken on forms ranging from a tent in the frontier west to Beaux Arts palaces in major cities. For the period of this context, 1940 to 1971, the Main Post Office property type was the main postal facility in an identified urban unit, providing customer service, mail sorting, and distribution. It was a stand-alone building and contained a public service counter, post office boxes, a work room or mail sorting room, swing room, a postmaster’s office, and a loading dock.

- **Public Works Administration (PWA) Legacy Post Offices, 1940 - 1942** – A subtype of the Main Post Office associated with the PWA New Deal building programs. These facilities were located in prominent locations in a town’s central business district and were distinct buildings with an architectural presence, including an elevated entry, tall façade windows, public interior lobbies with high quality finishes and details, and often public art in the form of one or more wall murals. Historically, while these buildings functioned to process the mail, each made a statement about the federal government in the community and its role in economic recovery from the Great Depression. Surveyed samples of this property subtype indicate a predominance of regional preferences for Colonial Revival, Stripped Classicism and Spanish Colonial/Mission Revival styles.
- **Thousands Series Post Offices, 1960s** – A subtype of the Main Post Office associated the Post Office Department’s post-WWII emphasis on efficiency and clean lines and the rapid expansion of post office facilities in the 1960s. These typically one-story, flat roofed buildings were constructed by private builders based on a 1959 USPS building design manual that stressed modernity and convenience over regional identity or the role of the federal government in everyday life, which is so important to the PWA-era post offices. Many of these were located in or near suburban strip malls and often adopted the architecture of the surrounding built environment. Parking was typically provided and the service lobby and post office box lobby were separated, providing convenient customer access during non-business hours. Surveyed samples of this property subtype indicate that the predominant styles are the Modern and Colonial Revival.

³¹¹<http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/post+office>

Processing & Distribution Centers (P&DCs) – During the 1950s, the Post Office Department placed emphasis on developing machinery and methods that would increase the efficiency of processing the increasing volume of mail. The resulting machinery demanded larger open spaces due to their height and the horizontal orientation of operations. The 1959 Postmaster General’s Annual Report provides insight into the design process that led to the development of the P&DCs:

Mail processing methods and operational requirements are being critically analyzed by industrial engineers; new high-speed machines are being developed and tested by mechanical and electronic engineers; new functional type buildings are being designed by architectural and construction engineers and being leased by the department.³¹²

Processing methods and operation requirements created the need for high-speed machines to be housed in buildings designed for that function. Two prototypes were developed, one in Providence, Rhode Island and the other in Oakland, California. Sectional centers (now classified as P&DCs) were established near interstates that could service Main Post Offices within an 80 to 100 mile radius. These utilitarian buildings were typically Modern in style and often had customer service areas, but contained a much larger portion of the footprint for mail processing and distribution. The loading dock resembled a truck terminal with large paved areas for vehicle maneuvering.

Vehicle Maintenance Facilities (VMFs) – Following WWII, the increase in suburban communities and the decrease in passenger rail service meant that motor vehicles played an increasing role in the delivery of mail. As less mail was carried by train and more and more railway postal stations closed, more trucks were used to move the mail. As communities became increasingly spread out and housing was less dense, mail carriers increasingly used motor vehicles to deliver mail on their routes. Innovative, light-weight vehicles, such as the “Mailster” were developed, and along with other vehicles in the expanding Post Office Department fleet, had to be serviced. VMFs provided for the upkeep and cleaning of these vehicles. Many were located adjacent to P&DCs, along with regional offices.

Combined Federal Office Buildings – During WWII, federal agencies were encouraged to share spaces to produce greater savings for the government. This practice continued after the war, primarily because the Post Office Department lacked the authorization and funds to construct new facilities to keep up with constantly increasing volumes. Often associated with federal courts, some of these buildings were grand in scale and architectural embellishment. Two distinct subtypes were constructed during the study period: combined federal buildings with a primary function other than a post office, and combined federal buildings whose primary function was to facilitate postal operations. Past 1968, constructing a single-function post office had to be justified by proving that other federal buildings could not combine with or accommodate postal operations.

³¹² United States Post Office Department, 1959 *Annual Report of the Postmaster General*, p 13

Post Office Annex Building (Annex) – Typically associated with large metropolitan post offices, Post Office Annexes were first used for accommodating parcel post. After WWII, the relatively low parcel post rates offered by the Post Office Department, compared to the rates of the government-subsidized parcel shipping service Railway Express Agency (REA). The REA was a nationalized shipping service organized by the railroads themselves. It was the FedEx or United Parcel Service of the first half of the 20th century. In 1952, Congress enacted legislation that established weight and size limits on parcels shipped by the Post Office Department mainly due to concerns about REA going out of business. The legislation was successful and the Post Office Department saw a decrease in parcel post volume. Though the parcel post service declined in use, it still remained a viable part of the postal service. During the study period, many annexes were used to accommodate new machinery and processing operations, which included both parcels and conventional mail. Annexes were also built at airports, which had heliports for helicopters used to transport mail from the airports to downtown postal facilities.

Postal Complexes – Consolidation of Post Office Department operations in the 1950s and 1960s led to the creation of postal complexes or campuses that combined a couple or several property types on one site, such as a P&DC, regional office, and VMF. The P&DCs were usually located in centralized areas, and were a rational location for regional or section offices after the decentralization of the Post Office Department, which began in 1953 but was implemented slowly. Further, VMFs, with their considerable truck bays and fleet operations, were often included in these complexes.

3.1.2 Historic Significance Evaluation: NRHP Criteria Application

The historic significance evaluation involves the application of the National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) Criteria as it applies to the historic context of the Post Office Department during the study period of 1940 to 1971, based on the historic context and themes previously discussed. As a thematic based context, rather than a geographic based analysis, application of the criteria needs to be based primarily on Post Office Department history, rather than a broad application of all possible criteria and areas of significance. A building, therefore, may be eligible under Criterion C for Architecture as an important example of an academic style within the local context, but if that academic style is not important within the historic context of the Post Office Department 1940 to 1971, this document does not assess its potential architectural significance. The needed local architectural history context is beyond the scope of this project.

This Study does not endeavor to provide guidance for evaluating post office facilities at the state or regional levels of significance. It is assumed that separate state-level NRHP context studies will be developed in the future. An evaluation of state significance requires knowledge of the appropriate historical and architectural developments within the state in order to evaluate a property on that level. As noted in Bulletin 13, post offices are often important examples of

standardized federal designs, and it may be necessary to initiate a state-level survey of post offices to evaluate an individual post office at that level.³¹³

Although this is a national Study, survey work did not identify previously unidentified properties significant to the nation or possessing “exceptional value in representing or illustrating an important theme in the history of the nation.”³¹⁴ Individual buildings included in the survey sample of eFMS database, and buildings that are referenced in the literature were not directly associated with people, events, or designs that had national level impacts. Additionally, the experimental or developing technologies and machinery that were to have national level impacts have been removed or repurposed, which compromises the historic integrity of a property with this potential area of significance.

This history of the Post Office Department during this period and the history of related federal construction policies provide a chronological framework for assessing individual post offices, and potentially placing them in the context of national historical patterns. These factors, as well as the broader historical and architectural movements in this country, such as themes discussed in the context portion of this document, should be considered in evaluating possible national significance for a post office.

NRHP Criteria and Areas of Significance for the Associated Property Types are discussed in terms of local significance as follows, using the definitions of the Criteria as found in National Register Bulletin: How to Apply the Criteria for Evaluation:

Criterion A: An event, a series of events or activities, or patterns of an area's development

Post Office Department properties may be eligible under Criterion A in the areas of Politics/Government, Community Planning and Development, and Commerce.

- **Politics/Government:** Association with public buildings program of the New Deal, representing federal assistance to the community and community stability. In addition, Post Office Department buildings may be eligible for Politics/Government for their association with the administration, impact, and perception of government services and institutions.
- **Community Planning and Development:** Association with changing demographics and the rise of suburbia that influenced policies regarding Post Office Department services in communities throughout the country.
- **Commerce:** Association with the growth of business-related mail and the popularity of business-related parcel post service.

³¹³ <http://www.nps.gov/nr/publications/bulletins/nrb13/part3.htm>, accessed June 6, 2012.

³¹⁴ http://www.nps.gov/nr/publications/bulletins/nrb15/nrb15_5.htm#local, accessed July 5, 2012.

Criterion B: Association with the life of an important person

Criterion B is not being applied to any of the Associated Property Types because research and survey did not identify properties with strong associations with a person of historic significance within the context. No work of art was identified that is a good example of a particular significant artist's body of work. No one person's experience with the postal service had an important influence on business practices. No individual buildings were identified that have association with a person who had a significant influence on the development of the postal service, or whose postal service experience significantly impacted community development, education, their political career, or development of transportation facilities and technology.

Although prominent individuals did play influential roles in the history of the Post Office Department during the study period, many of these individuals made broad policy decisions or had influence on postal operations that are not necessarily associated with a particular property or property type. For example, Treasury Department Supervisory Architect Louis A. Simon may have influenced the use of Stripped Classicism in the design of many post offices, but he does not have a direct enough association with an individual Stripped Classicism-style post office.

Senior Assistant Superintendent at the Chicago Post Office, John Sestak, developed a prototype mechanical letter-sorting machine that influenced the development of more advanced machinery. The machine was tested at the Chicago and Washington D.C. Post Offices but was not officially adopted by the Post Office Department due to large size requirements. Although Mr. Sestak made an important contribution to the history of postal operations, the application of Criterion B would require an analysis of other mechanical contributions he made to postal operations, how it compared to similar types of mechanical developments, what level of association the Chicago and Washington, D.C. Post Offices have with the prototype compared to other properties where it was developed and/or tested. It is doubtful that the prototype still exists in these buildings, which would make the association between the significant contribution and the building very weak.

Further research on individual buildings may however, support eligibility under Criterion B.

Criterion C: A building form, architectural style, engineering technique, or artistic values, based on a stage of physical development, or the use of a material or method of construction that shaped the historic identity of an area

- **Architecture: PWA Colonial Revival\ Stripped Classicism\ Spanish Colonial and Mission Revival.** These properties are associated with PWA regional stylistic interpretations—PWA traditional and nationalistic styles that convey the Federal presence and dignity of classical architecture combined with modern efficiency, and may reflect regional Spanish or Native American heritage.
- **Architecture: Modern Style.** Association with Post Office Department's *Building Designs* brochure and Postmaster Summerfield's emphasis on efficiency and clean lines.

- **Art:** Treasury Department Section murals in post office lobbies that made art a part of daily life in small towns and through Social Realism, and style of art that elevated the values of the common man and everyday life such as hard work, industry, community and home life.

Criterion D: Likely to yield information important to prehistory or history

Criterion D is not being applied to the associated property types because there is little potential for these buildings to yield new information important to history. Substantial information pertaining to the context is readily available in existing literature and collections, including information on machinery and operations. Potential to yield new and important information on prehistory was not evaluated.

Criterion Consideration G: Properties that have achieved historic significance within the past 50 years

Many of the properties included in the 2011 master list of USPS facilities and the survey sample were constructed within the last 50 years (after 1963). Criterion Consideration G must be met for a property less than 50 years old to be eligible for listing in the NRHP. *National Register Bulletin: Guidelines for Evaluating and Nominating Properties that Have Achieved Significance within the last 50 years* makes a case that Criterion Consideration G may be met in the situation where a property less than 50 years old is evaluated as significant according to a historic context that has been developed as a result of scholarly evaluation, as opposed to popular social commentary.³¹⁵ The preceding context has been developed based on scholarly standards, as stated in the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Historic Documentation*, and is used as the basis for evaluating properties less than 50 years old that are associated with the Period of Significance of 1940 to 1971.

3.1.3 Registration Requirements: NRHP Aspects of Integrity and Character-Defining Features

Historic integrity consists of seven individual aspects of integrity that collectively provide a property with its ability to convey historic significance. For properties that are considered significant under Criterion A, more emphasis is placed on integrity of location, setting, feeling, and association. Integrity of design, materials, and workmanship are necessary to a degree that the physical features of the property are intact enough to convey historic association or a feeling of historic character. Conversely, properties considered significant under Criterion C rely primarily on integrity of design, materials and workmanship to convey significance as an example of important design, style, method of construction, building type or type engineering or work of art. Integrity of location, setting, feeling and association typically provide context to the

³¹⁵ *National Register Bulletin: Guidelines for Evaluating and Nominating Properties that Have Achieved Significance within the last 50 years*, Section III Scholarly Evaluations. http://www.nps.gov/nr/publications/bulletins/nrb22/nrb22_III.htm. Accessed 7 25 2012.

physical property and can provide enhance understanding of its significance and historic associations.

Discussion of registration requirements in the following associated property type sections includes how integrity is considered. Physical features needed to convey historic integrity and significance are identified and included in a check-list format that can be used to determine the potential eligibility for individual properties that reflect the Associated Property Types of this context Study.

3.2 PROPERTY TYPE: MAIN POST OFFICES

The master list of currently operated USPS facilities (eFMS 2011 database) indicates that between 1940 and 1971, approximately 75 percent of all the facilities constructed or occupied by the Post Office Department were classified as post offices. Many were Main Post Offices, some were identified as Branch or Station Post Offices, and others were listed as simply “post office.” The primary functions of these buildings were to provide postal services and goods (e.g. stamps, postal stationery, containers, etc.) to the American public, and to process and distribute the mail. Post offices also had an aesthetic function, depending on the time period.

During the 1940-1971 period, there were two post office building booms: 1940-1942 and the 1960s. The post offices built by the Public Works Administration (PWA) in the 1940s were a part of the Depression-era federal building program. They were often the most notable symbol of the federal government in a town, occupied a prominent location in the central business district, and represented economic recovery and national stability through classical motifs or use of the Colonial Revival style. As the nation’s economy grew post-WWII, post offices were an integrated part of the economy of convenience and the associated streamlined built environment, adopting Modern designs that were located in strip malls and other auto-accessible areas.

During the intervening years between the two post office building booms of the 1940 to 1971 period, new post offices were built or occupied but over 10,000 were closed, due to the reduction in 4th class individual post offices, typically in small general stores, and consolidation of rural delivery routes. Throughout the 1950s, the *Annual Report of the Postmaster General* repeatedly commented on the anemic federal building program, such as the following reference from the

1952 report:

There has been no Federal building program since the late 1930s. ...

When even the newest of the Federal buildings were erected in the 1930s it was assumed that the space provided would be ample for 50 years or more. The staggering growth of the mail in the next two decades could not have been foreseen.³¹⁶

The 1953 Annual Report pointedly stated the following:

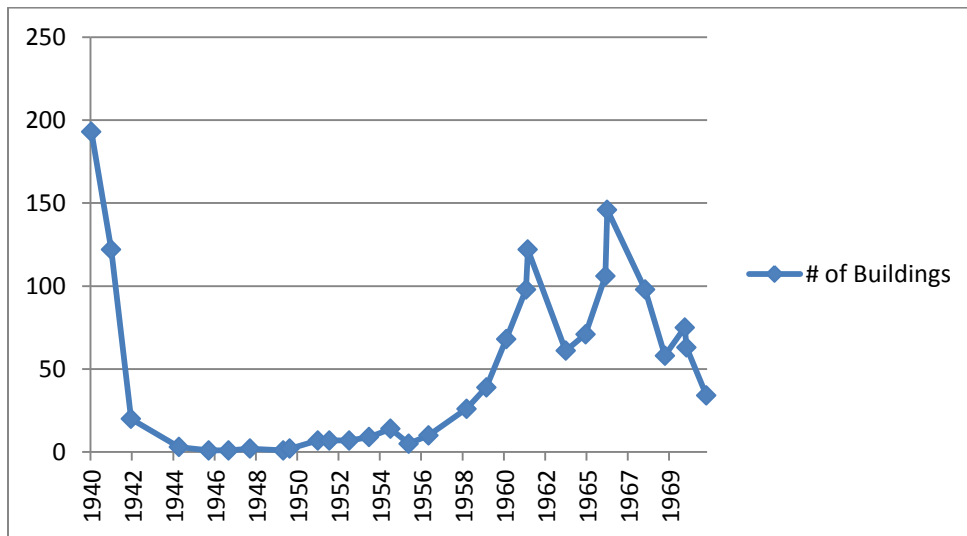
³¹⁶ United States Post Office Department, 1952, *Annual Report of the Postmaster General*, page 10.

The basic objective of our real estate program is to procure the most useable space at the most convenient location for the Government and the public at the least cost. This objective is complicated by the fact that Federal public buildings construction has been practically at a standstill since 1938. There has, moreover, been a general shortage of suitably located office space throughout the country because of the increased demands by both Government and industry.³¹⁷

New facilities were being built for the Post Office Department in the 1950s. The 1956 report credits private capital and the commercial leasing program with this activity, while noting its inadequacy.

Approximately 1,400 new facilities have been built for the Department by private capital since January, 1953, through a commercial leasing program, and an average of over 2 such new buildings are being contracted for every working day. However, this program must be greatly accelerated within the next five years if the Department is to keep up with its ever-present problem of obsolescence, let alone the problems presented by growing volume and mushrooming population.³¹⁸

The master list of currently operated USPS facilities provides a quick reference to building activity during this time as depicted in Figure 3-1.



Source; URS, USPS master list

Figure 3-1: Post Office Department Facilities Constructed/Occupied per Year

This chart depicts the lack of construction activity between WWII and the late 1950s. During this time, only 126 Post Office Department facilities out of a total of 1,463 were constructed or occupied by the department. A total of 82 of these 126 facilities were classified as Main Post

³¹⁷ United States Post Office, Annual Report of the Postmaster General, 1951, p. 10. The reference to no new construction since 1938 is made in the 1955 and 1956 reports as well.

³¹⁸ United States Post Office, Annual Report of the Postmaster General, 1956, p 2.

Offices, and 43 percent of these were built or occupied in 1959. The majority of the post offices built between 1943 and 1960 were less than 5,000 square feet, and five were less than 500 square feet. The largest facility in this group was the New Haven, Connecticut, Post Office at 167,980 square feet, followed by the Ann Arbor, Michigan, Post Office at 54,782 square feet and the Wheaton, Illinois, Post Office with 27,768 square feet.

The Postmasters' reports from the 1950s frequently stated that the basement areas of existing postal facilities were being studied for conversion to work rooms, and extensions were added to buildings to provide trucking platforms, driveways were expanded, and more efficient interior floor plans for better mail flow and space utilization were developed. In other words, during the 1950s, the Post Office Department placed emphasis on outside capital and making better use of what they had, rather than undertaking department driven new construction, despite escalating demand.

Post Office Department facilities that date from the late 1940s through 1950s do not represent a significant property type associated with the study period. The size of the survey sample is limited and the literature strongly suggests that facility renovations during this time emphasized improving mechanization and consolidating operations, due to a lack of funding appropriations for new construction.

The field survey of the Main Post Offices indicates the majority had the following physical features and architectural elements in common:

- One story in height, with only 18 percent being two stories.
- A slight majority of them had basements (62 percent).
- Window types widely varied but most were set in aluminum or steel frames.
- Most of the post offices had flat roofs or some combination of flat roof and another shape.
- Nearly half of the post offices had only one truck bay (49 percent) with two and three bay post offices making up an additional 27 percent of the survey sample.
- Service lobbies with counters were found in almost all post offices, along with post office box lobbies.
- Some form of patron parking was provided by 81 percent of these facilities.
- Interior spaces included a swing room, mail sorting area, postmaster office, lookout galleries, workrooms, and loading docks.

Further analysis of the survey information and research materials indicates two subtypes for the Main Post Office Property Type: Early 1940s-era PWA Legacy Post Office, and the 1960s Thousands Series Post Office. Both of these subtypes have distinct stylistic attributes.

3.2.1 Sub-Property Type: Project Works Administration Legacy Post Offices

OVERVIEW

The Government Reorganization Act of 1939 created the Public Buildings Administration as part of the Federal Work Agency (FWA). This act along with previous federal legislation relating to public construction and infrastructure projects resulted in the Post Office Department experiencing a heightened level of building activity during the 1930s and early 1940s. One aspect of this construction activity was an emphasis on regionalism. According to *Public Buildings: A Survey of Architecture of Projects Constructed by Federal and Other Governmental Bodies Between the Years 1933 and 1939 with Assistance of the Public Works Administration* by C.W. Short and R. Stanley-Brown, the country was split into seven Public Works Administration (PWA) regions, each with a differing approach to building design.

Of the USPS master list of facilities, 23 percent of facilities constructed during the study period were built or occupied between 1940 and 1942, reflecting the later end of the Depression-era period of postal facility construction. These facilities were predominately Main Post Offices. Additional criteria that defined this survey group include square footage and location. Thirty percent of the total number of post offices had an interior square footage of less than 49,999 but at least 10,000 square feet, and, beyond the top 11 states that contained 50 percent of all facilities constructed between 1940 and 1971, about 28 percent are within an additional 14 states.¹ The summary of the survey methodology criteria for this group (Group 2) and property type is as follows:

- Constructed or occupied between 1940 and 1942
- Classified as a Main Post Office
- Less than 49,999 but at least 10,000 square feet of interior space
- Located in one of 14 states³¹⁹

A total of 38 out of the survey sample facilities represented all four second tier sub-categories that define Group 2. The survey sample for this size is 15. Predominate styles evidenced by the survey sample include Spanish Colonial/Mission Revival, Stripped Classicism, and Colonial Revival, with the representative examples of these styles having some predominate geographic or regional commonalities.

Functionally, the buildings were very much the same, despite regional and stylistic differences. They had a public space that consisted of a service counter and post office boxes. These spaces typically contained quality finishes, stylistic embellishments, and a wood or metal frame and glass entry vestibule. In many of the extant post offices that represent this subtype, the lobbies contain a glass and metal dividing wall that separates the service counter area from the post boxes. This is a later alteration and not part of the original design. The door to the postmaster's

³¹⁹ New Jersey, Michigan, Florida, and Georgia, Iowa, Kentucky, Indiana, North Carolina, Tennessee, Minnesota, Massachusetts, Kansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Virginia, Maryland, West Virginia, and Alabama.

office was typically a prominent feature of the lobby and was labeled. Behind the counter was the work space or “sorting room,” which was a large open space. A lookout gallery was also a typical feature, along with a swing room and loading dock area that contained one to three bays.

Although these buildings date from the 1940s, the design influences are more a product of the by-then dismantled Office of the Supervising Architect. The Reorganization Act of 1939 removed the Federal Architecture program from the Treasury Department and created the Public Building Administration as part of the FWA. However, it was the Office of the Supervising Architect that prepared a Manual of Design in 1937 for post office buildings.

This agency combined the Public Buildings Branch from the Procurement Office of the Department of Treasury with the Branch of Buildings Management of the Department of the Interior’s National Park Service. The Federal Works Administrator appointed a Commissioner of Public Buildings to head the new agency.

A 1933 professional publication credited the Office of the Supervising Architect with developing standardized plans for post offices, known as “cabinet sketches” that enhanced efficiency and economy but also reflected regional values. The 1937 annual report indicated the Office of the Supervising Architect had prepared a Manual of Design that codified methods of design and construction of post office buildings. Eleven designs were developed to meet the “varying requirements of the Post Office Department and the sectional architectural traditions.”³²⁰ The goal of meeting “sectional architectural traditions” was justified in that “to the greatest possible extent the use of materials and products native to the localities has resulted in stimulating employment and spreading the benefits of the building program.”³²¹ Where the design for postal facilities in large urban areas should be expressions of the federal government’s “strength and dignity,” other postal facilities should be in “consonance with the region.” A 1940 annual report of the Federal Works Agency indicated that the agency would not be playing as much of a role in the design of federal buildings, and described the agency’s primary role as the construction of buildings. Federal government involvement in its architecture became largely a procurement process.

3.2.1.1 Sub-type: Colonial Revival

DESCRIPTION

Surveyed examples of the PWA-era Colonial Revival subtype were all located in the Northeast, East, or mid-Atlantic states, although some are known to exist in Georgia, Pennsylvania, and Ohio. Short and St. Brown’s *Public Buildings* identifies the locations of these subtype examples as Region No. 1, noting the large number of the ablest architects and outstanding examples of tradition architecture. They stated that the use of materials in the region was relatively standard and dominated by native materials. The construction type most common was steel frame with

³²⁰ *Annual Report of the Secretary of the Treasury*, Fiscal Year 1937 pages 182 – 183, as cited in *History of Post Office Construction: 1900 – 1940*, 1982, United States Postal Service, 1982, Washington D.C., page 20.

³²¹ *Ibid.*

reinforced-concrete floors with exterior walls faced with brick or stone and backed up with hollow clay tile.

These Colonial Revival/PWA Region 1 buildings are red brick with painted white trim, which is often in the form of pediments, entablatures, pilasters, columns, cupolas, and gable or hip roof forms. The setback from the sidewalk is between 8 and 20 feet, and contains a small lawn area with shrubs and decorative plantings. The roofs are covered in slate or presumably later asphalt shingles and there is an articulated water table in stone or brick. Windows are typically multi-paned double hung sash with segmental arch or flat headers. Lintels and sills are cut stone. Even with the smaller examples, the relationship between the mass of the building and the scale of the façade elements creates a monumental feeling and notable street presence, given the scale of the surrounding built environment.

Main entrances are centered or on one side and tend to typically be accessed by stairs since the buildings tend to be sited on an elevation higher than street level. Wall mounted or free-standing lighting fixtures often flank the entrance or entrance stairs. Double doors (usually replacements) have surrounding embellishments, such as pilasters, transoms, sidelight, pediments, fanlights, or simple inset masonry surrounds. Side walls are brick and the rear elevations contain metal canopied loading docks with multiple truck bays.

These buildings have basements with space originally labeled as storage, fuel room and boiler room, and a postal inspector's room. The first floor includes public lobby space that contains both the service counter and the post office boxes, and often has an interior wood frame vestibule. Several of these buildings also have WPA-painted murals commonly associated with Depression-era post office construction.

The master list of USPS properties includes eight PWA-Legacy Colonial Revival Post Offices. Surveyed properties are either one or two stories, with gable and flat or hip and flat roofs and brick or a combination of brick and stone, concrete and wood paneling. Window types are wood and double hung sash, or a combination of fixed, sliding, awning/hopper windows with a combination of wood, aluminum or steel frames. The number of truck bays ranges from one to ten, with 50 percent having only one or two bays. The interior includes a public service post office with a service lobby and counter, and a post office box lobby. Some have patron parking. The interior postal service areas has the typical spaces associated with a post office: swing room, work room, mail sorting area that would have had no machinery originally, Postmaster's Office, and lookout gallery. Only three of the properties have interior mailing platforms but all have loading docks.

HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE EVALUATION

Criterion A: Association with important Events or pattern of events

- Area of Significance: Politics/Government
- Period of Significance: 1940 – 1942

- Level of Significance: Local Level

The PWA Legacy Post Offices constructed in the 1940 to 1942 period are associated with the public buildings program of the New Deal. These buildings are significant in the area of Politics/Government during the period of 1940 through 1942 on the local level as representing federal assistance and stability in the community. Criterion A, Politics/Government applies to each of the PWA Legacy Main Post Office stylistic sub-types: Colonial Revival, Stripped Classicism, and Spanish Colonial/Mission Revival.

The Public Building Administration under the Federal Works Administration designed these buildings. As the town's post office, these facilities processed mail and serviced the postal needs of the community's residences and businesses. Often the only federal government building in town, the New Deal post offices also functioned as a reminder of the federal government's presence in the community and the role of the federal government in the recovery of the economy.

Roosevelt's New Deal changed the relationship between the federal government and the American citizen. With its broad expansion of the federal government and new plethora of federal agencies, the federal government during the Depression declared itself responsible for the well-being of its citizens and with an interest in the collective good.³²² The PWA's association with the New Deal and the resulting post office built throughout the country represent the New Deal's attempt to stimulate the local economy and providing a sense of assurance through federal government investment in future growth and improvement.

Criterion C: Embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction

- Area of Significance: Architecture: Colonial Revival
- Period of Significance: Construction date
- Level of Significance: Local level

Many of the PWA Legacy Post Offices are examples of the Colonial Revival style. This architectural style is an almost ubiquitous part of the 20th century American built environment and has strong associations with institutional buildings that strive to project a sense of permanence, stability, and nationalism. Red brick exteriors, symmetrical arrangements of solid and void, and the classical motifs including full entablatures, fanlights, trabeated main entry surrounds, and multi-paned sash windows combined to convey an ordered and stable fixture of a community. With the post office typically being the only building in the community to represent the federal government, the post office conveyed the federal message of order and stability in very troubled times. To the extent that these post offices represent regional forms, the Colonial Revival PWA post offices are most frequently located in the northeast, although a period survey

³²² Park, Marlene & Markowitz, Gerald E., *Democratic Vistas: Post Offices and Public Art in the New Deal*, Temple University Press, Philadelphia, 1984, page 4.

and overview of these buildings notes that the southeast also has these traditional style post offices. The Colonial Revival style was not limited to one region, as its nationalistic and patriotic associations were popular throughout the country, and particularly in the Midwest.

Criterion C: Possess high artistic values

- Area of Significance: Art
- Period of Significance: Construction date
- Level of Significance: Local level

Criterion C, Art applies to each of the PWA Legacy Post Office stylistic sub-types: Colonial Revival, Striped Classicism, and Spanish Colonial/Mission Revival, provided they have a Treasury Department Section wall mural.

Treasury Department Section murals decorate the lobbies of these PWA Legacy Post Offices. Typically painted on the wall above the door to the Postmaster's office, these murals aimed to make art a part of daily life in small towns and rural areas across the country.³²³ In most communities in America, going to the post office would be considered a task associated with everyday life. As expressed by one artist, depicting local scenes that had to do with daily life or local history gave citizens a sense of pride and expressed a sense of concern the government had for the citizen. The majority of these murals were completed in a style referred to as Social Realism and depicted everyday scenes that portrayed everyman as monumental figures in settings that were common place yet elevated to represent a community held belief, such as the value of hard work, industry, community and home life.

REGISTRATION REQUIREMENTS

PWA Legacy Post Offices eligible under **Criterion A for Politics/Government** should evidence integrity of location, setting, feeling, and association. The location of these properties should be within the central business district surrounded by commercial buildings. These buildings are set back enough for an exterior entrance stair and some minimal landscaping. Other setting elements include a rear or side space for a loading dock and truck turn-around. These buildings, through a combination of design, materials, workmanship, and setting should convey a feeling of and association with governmental presence in the community. Elements that convey the feeling and association of the federal government include a flagpole, "United States Post Office" incised in a stone surface or in metal letters attached to a prominent exterior wall plane, and the cornerstones inscribed with the year of construction and name of the Postmaster General and government agency affiliations.

Criterion A Events/Politics/Government Registration Requirements Elements:

- Original downtown location

³²³ Ibid., page 8.

- Exterior entrance stairs and minimal landscaping strip
- Loading dock and truck turn-around area
- Flagpole, cornerstone and “United States Post Office” lettering

PWA Legacy Post Offices eligible under **Criterion C for Architecture/Colonial Revival** should evidence integrity of design, materials, and workmanship. Architectural elements and stylistic motifs associated with the style should be evident, such as entablatures, cupolas prominent trabeated entrances with flanking light fixtures, fanlights, pediments, multi-paned windows, water tables, and gable roofs. Functional aspects of the design are conveyed through the division of interior space. Public space includes an interior lobby vestibule, and open service and postal lobby with a service counter and post office boxes. Interior non-public space includes a Postmaster office with vault located off the lobby, and behind the service counter, a work room, lookout gallery, swing room, mailing vestibule, and loading dock. Prominent materials include red brick, white wood trim, and slate roofs. Interior materials such as terrazzo floors, marble wainscoting, bronze fixtures, and wood paneling add to the historic integrity.

Criterion C Architecture/Colonial Revival Registration Requirements Elements:

- Colonial Revival motifs including entablature, trabeated entry with flanking lights, pediments, fanlights and cupolas
- Division of public and non-public interior space
 - Public space including entry vestibule, open lobby with service counter and post office boxes
 - Non-public spaces including postmaster’s office with vault, work room, swing room lookout gallery, mailing vestibule and loading dock
- Exterior materials including brick, wood trim and slate roofs
- Interior materials including terrazzo floors, marble wainscoting, wood paneling and bronze fixtures

PWA Legacy Post Offices eligible under **Criterion C for Art** should evidence integrity of design, materials, and workmanship. Section wall murals should be integral parts of the building and located in a publicly accessible space, such as the lobby. These painted wall murals are located on the upper walls of a lobby, above the average person’s height and be of a scale large enough to be visible from a majority of the lobby. Typically, but not exclusively, they are located above the Postmaster’s office door. These Social Realism-style murals reflect ways of life of the local community through the depictions of local scenery or scenes that include everyday citizens engaged in typical social interactions or industry and labor associated with the area.

Criterion C Art Registration Requirements Elements:

- Murals are integral parts of building and visible from majority of public area

- Large scale paintings located on upper wall area of lobby
- Subjects typically include local scenery, social interactions or industry/labor

The character-defining features of a PWA Colonial Revival Post Office are highlighted on Figure 3-2.

Associated Property Types



Delmar Post Office, New York, 1940



Original Entry Vestibule and Lobby

CHARACTER DEFINING FEATURES	
CHARACTER DEFINING FEATURE	INTACT FOR NRHP ELIGIBILITY
Red Brick exterior	Yes
White wood trim classical influences	Yes
Symmetrical or proportionally balanced facade	Yes
Water table	Yes
Multi-paned double-hung sash windows	Yes
Dominant Main Entrance with steps	Yes
Wood and glass entry vestibule	Yes
Open Service and PO Box lobby	Yes
WPA mural	Yes
1-3 Truck Bays	Yes
Notes: Survey samples are predominately located in northeast states, including New York.	

Source: URS



Postmaster Office Door and Mural

Figure 3-2: PWA Colonial Revival Post Office

3.2.1.2 Sub-type: Stripped Classicism

DESCRIPTION

The Stripped Classicism subtype survey samples are predominately located in the Midwest, or PWA Region 2. Additional surveyed examples are located in New Jersey, Oregon, and Florida. The PWA buildings in this region are not credited with innovation, as the Short and Stanley-Brown study notes “Little advance in design and a tendency in much of the work to reproduce work done in the past” as the initial description of Region 2 architecture, perhaps suggesting a Midwest conservatism. Native materials identified include limestone, sandstone, ceramic tile, and steel, and the construction is predominately steel frame or concrete frame with reinforced concrete floors and exterior walls of stone or brick, often backed up with brick or hollow clay tile.

These Stripped Classicism buildings tend to range in size from over 13,000 square feet to over 47,000 square feet and are one or two stories in height. Exterior materials were either stone or stone and brick. Classical forms are articulated through the vertical division of the wall plan: entablature, shaft, and foundation. They are predominately flat-roofed with a parapet wall, although some low profile hip roofs exist, the entablature area contains with as architrave, plain frieze, and cornice.

“United States Post Office” may be carved into the frieze or the frieze may contain restrained embellishments such as a few regularly spaced laurel wreaths, or Roman style banded rods (fasces). A common embellishment, whether located in the frieze or elsewhere on the façade, is a large American eagle. Symmetrical fenestration is common and can be separated by full height pilasters. Typical façade “shaft area” vertical division of space is pier and spandrel. Centrally located main entrances are fronted by stairs and articulated by a projecting pavilion, and or an outside transom feature. Windows tend to be metal frame and may have articulated apron panels on the façade. Side and rear wall materials are consistent with façade elevation materials and trim features, such as cornices, and can be carried around onto side and even rear walls.

Interior entrance vestibules made of wood or metal frame and glass are common and the lobby space was not typically divided between post office box and service lobbies originally. Lobbies feature high ceilings and tall windows, terrazzo floors, and are often embellished with marble wainscoting or wood paneling, period or stylistic details and even brass and marble counters for patron use. Postmaster offices are included in the floor plans as are vaults. Work rooms are large and open spaces, break rooms are common, and loading dock vestibules typical. The rear loading docks of these buildings has anywhere from three to seven bays, solid side walls and metal canopies.

Commonly sited on corner lots, these buildings read as major structures in the downtown streetscape. Setbacks from the sidewalk tend to be around 10 feet and contain grass and a few shrubs or ornamental trees. Patron parking lots are not evident originally and employees parking

and vehicle maneuvering space are located behind the buildings, often accessed from a side street, which forms the corner lot.

The master list of USPS properties includes eight Stripped Classicism Post Offices. The majority of surveyed properties have the following in common:

- One story but can have two or three stories and all of them have basements.
- Roof types are predominately flat, with one flat and hip roof combination.
- Exterior wall materials are masonry, the majority being stone or combinations of stucco and concrete, or brick and marble, or brick and concrete.
- Windows types vary but the largest percentage is double-hung steel sash.
- The number of truck bays range from one to nine with most having five or fewer.
- The interiors include a public service post office with a service lobby and counter, post box lobby and most have patron parking.
- The interior postal service areas have the typical spaces associated with a post office: swing room, work room, mail sorting area (only one of which had machinery), postmaster's office, and lookout gallery.
- The majority of these properties do not have mailing platforms but all have loading docks.

HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE EVALUATION

Criterion A: Association with important events or pattern of events

- Area of Significance: Politics/Government
- Period of Significance: 1940 – 1942
- Level of Significance: Local Level

See historic significance discussion of Criterion A: Politics/Government, PWA Legacy Post Offices above.

Criterion C: Embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction

- Area of Significance: Architecture: Stripped Classicism
- Period of Significance: Construction date
- Level of Significance: Local level

PWA Legacy Post Offices designed in the Stripped Classicism style combined the dignity of classical architecture with the economy and efficiency of Modern architecture. The use of

classical proportions, masonry cladding, and restrained detailing convey a sense of monumental presence through volume and the incorporation of empty surfaces as elements of the composition. Pier and spandrel arrangements express vertically through strips of windows divided by columns or pilasters. Emblematic decoration, such as an American eagle, is often incorporated into the centrally located main entry, and “United States Post Office” is frequently incised into a frieze band or adjacent to the entrance. The Stripped Classicism Post Office has strong association with the use of the post office to convey federal presence in the community through a monumental presence and classical references, and the need for economy rather than embellishment during the Depression. Like Colonial Revival, it conveys a sense of stability and is often located in areas associated with straightforward values and a conservative approach, such as the Midwest and heartland of the country.

Criterion C: Possess high artistic values

- Area of Significance: Art
- Period of Significance: Construction date
- Level of Significance: Local level

See historic significance discussion of Criterion C: Art, PWA Legacy Post Offices above.

REGISTRATION REQUIREMENTS

See discussion of **Criterion A: Politics/Government**, PWA Legacy Post Offices Registration Requirements above.

PWA Legacy Post Offices eligible under **Criterion C for Architecture/Stripped Classicism** should evidence integrity of design, materials, and workmanship. Architectural elements and stylistic motifs associated with the style should be evident, classical division of façades (capital, shaft, base) entablatures, pilasters, pier and spandrel elements, plan wall spaces, tall windows typically in metal frames, dominant main entrances, flat roofs, and classical embellishments, such as fasces, laurel wreaths and, more frequently, the American Eagle in the form of a metal sculpture.

Functional aspects of the design convey through the division of interior space. Public space includes an interior lobby vestibule, and open service and postal lobby with a service counter and post boxes. Interior non-public space includes a postmaster’s office with vault located off the lobby, and behind the service counter, a work room, lookout gallery, swing room, mailing vestibule and loading dock. Prominent materials include masonry panels or cut stone, minimal trim and flat roofs behind a parapet. Interior materials such as terrazzo floors, marble wainscoting, and bronze fixtures add to the historic integrity.

Criterion C Architecture/Stripped Classicism Registration Requirements Elements:

- Stylistic elements such as capital shaft base division of wall plane, dominant entry, blank wall space, pier and spandrel elements, tall windows and restrained classical motifs such as fasces and laurel wreaths, and American eagles.
- Division of public and non-public interior space
 - Public spaces including entry vestibule, open lobby with service counter and post office boxes
 - Non-public spaces including Postmaster office with vault, work room, swing room lookout gallery, mailing platform and loading dock
- Exterior materials including masonry panels and cut stone, metal windows and doors and flat roofs behind parapets
- Interior materials including terrazzo floors, marble wainscoting, and bronze fixtures

See discussion of **Criterion C: Art**, PWA Legacy Post Offices Registration Requirements above. The character-defining features of a PWA Stripped Classicism Post Office are highlighted on Figure 3-3.

Associated Property Types

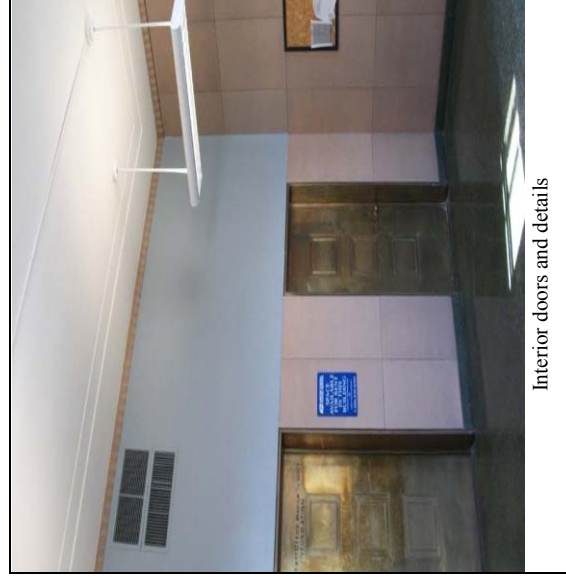


Marion Post Office, Indiana, 1941



Interior lobby vestibule

CHARACTER-DEFINING FEATURES		INTACT FOR NRHP ELIGIBILITY
CHARACTER DEFINING FEATURES		
1 to 2 stories		Yes
Classical division of vertical wall space		Yes
Flat roof		Yes
Articulated frieze space		Yes
Pier and spandrel exterior walls		Yes
Metal frame windows		Yes
High ceilings		Yes
Original Open Service and PO Box lobby		Yes
Corner location		Yes
Terrazzo floors		Yes
Notes: Survey samples predominately located in Midwest PWA Region 2.		
Source: URS		



Interior doors and details

Figure 3-3: PWA Stripped Classicism Post Office

3.2.1.3 Sub-type: Spanish Colonial/Mission Revival

DESCRIPTION

Surveyed examples of Post Offices constructed in the early 1940s in the Spanish Colonial or Mission Revival style are located in Region 3 (southeastern states) and Region 6 (southwestern states) however, they are only located in one state from each region: Florida and California, respectively. The Short and Stanley-Brown study's description of buildings in PWA Region 3 notes that although traditional architecture and colonial period dominate, Florida and gulf coastal areas demonstrate some Spanish influence. Native materials identified are similar to native materials identified for most other PWA regions (brick, steel, limestone, etc.) and structural elements include reinforced concrete, steel and wood framing, with all exterior walls being load bearing. Region 6 is described as not evidencing any great advances in design, except for California because of the "Field Bill" passed by the California legislature following the earthquakes of 1933 that abolished veneer construction, projecting cornices and confined construction to all reinforced concrete, or combined concrete and steel and wood.

The surveyed examples of these buildings range in size from 12,000 to 20,000 square feet. They are typically one story in height and commonly have white or light beige stucco exterior walls. A common feature is a clay tile roof with little to no overhang. Roof types are mostly flat but include gable and hip with very shallow slopes. Cornice details are very streamlined or are not evident. Main entry doors are the key focus of the façade and may be centered or off-centered. Doors are double doors or appear to have been double doors with modern single door and sidelight(s) replacements. Typically the main entrances have some type of articulated surround, – sometimes classically inspired or deeply recessed – and include a transom feature or upper panel. Above the main entrance are attached lettering "United States Post Office" with the municipality and state underneath. Façade windows tend to be multi-paned and have decorative apron panels and surrounds that are streamlined and/or classically inspired. The use of bas-relief or sculptural tiles is also evident. Side and rear walls often have the same fenestration pattern and surface materials as the façade.

Interior lobbies may or may not have included entry vestibules originally and are typically tall, somewhat narrow grand spaces. Many evidence original service windows of polished stone and bronze. Finishes include terrazzo tile and marble and polished stone wainscoting or wood paneling. Some have articulated ceiling cornices and period light fixtures. WPA murals are also evident. Postmaster offices are typical along with lookout galleries, vaults, large work rooms, basement areas, and loading dock vestibules. Loading docks have three to four bays and some type of canopy, either flat or shed roof type.

Setbacks from the sidewalk tend to be around 10 to 20 feet and provide enough room for some landscaping. Patron parking lots were not evident originally and employees parking and vehicle maneuvering space is located behind the building, often accessed from a side street which forms the corner lot.

The master list of USPS properties includes 14 Spanish Colonial/Mission Revival Post Offices. Surveyed properties have the following in common:

- One story, most have basements, and public parking.
- Roof types are flat and exterior walls are stucco except for one faced with concrete.
- A variety of window types: fixed, sliding, double hung sash and awning/hopper.
- Number of truck bays range from one to three.
- The interiors include a public service post office with a service lobby and counter, and post box lobby.
- Interior postal service areas have the typical spaces associated with a post office: swing room, work room, mail sorting area, postmaster's office, and lookout gallery.
- None of the work areas contains postal machinery and only one had a mailing platform, but all had loading docks.

HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE EVALUATION

Criterion A: Association with important events or pattern of events

- Area of Significance: Politics/Government
- Period of Significance: 1940 – 1942
- Level of Significance: Local Level

See Historic Significance discussion of Criterion A: Politics/Government, PWA Legacy Post Offices above.

Criterion C: Embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction

- Area of Significance: Architecture: Spanish Colonial/Mission Revival
- Period of Significance: Construction date
- Level of Significance: Local level

PWA Legacy Post Offices designed in the Spanish Colonial or Mission Revival style provide the most obvious articulation of regionalism found in the property type. These stucco-clad buildings with clay tile roofs or partial roofs are almost exclusively located in Florida and some southern coastal regions such as California and the Southwest. As expressed by the Board of Consulting Architects, “in the southwest, many of the buildings designed for that locality will reflect the Spanish influence in elevation and materials.” The survey of PWA buildings notes that buildings in the southeast may have some Spanish influence. These buildings have a direct association with the 1937 Treasury Department's Office of the Supervisory Architect Manual of Design sectional architectural traditions, which was justified by using materials and products native to

the locality to stimulate employment and spread the benefits of the program. As the federal presence in many community built environments, the post office conveyed this association.

Criterion C: Possess high artistic values

- Area of Significance: Art
- Period of Significance: Construction date
- Level of Significance: Local level

See Historic Significance discussion of Criterion A: Art, PWA Legacy Post Offices above.

REGISTRATION REQUIREMENTS

See discussion of **Criterion A: Politics/Government**, PWA Legacy Post Offices Registration Requirements above.

PWA Legacy Post Offices eligible under **Criterion C for Architecture/Spanish Colonial / Mission Revivals** evidence integrity of design, materials, and workmanship. Architectural elements and stylistic motifs associated with the style should be evident, such as stucco walls, red clay tile roofs and recessed main entrances flanked by attached metal light fixtures, and minimal window surrounds or other detailing. Functional aspects of the design convey through the division of interior space. Public space includes an interior lobby vestibule, and open service and postal lobby with a service counter and post boxes. Interior non-public space includes a postmaster office with vault located off the lobby, and behind the service counter, a work room, lookout gallery, swing room, mailing vestibule, and loading dock. Prominent materials include stucco finishes and clay tile roofs. Interior materials such as terrazzo floors, marble wainscoting, and bronze fixtures add to the historic integrity.

Criterion C Architecture/Spanish Colonial/Mission Revival Registration Requirements Elements:

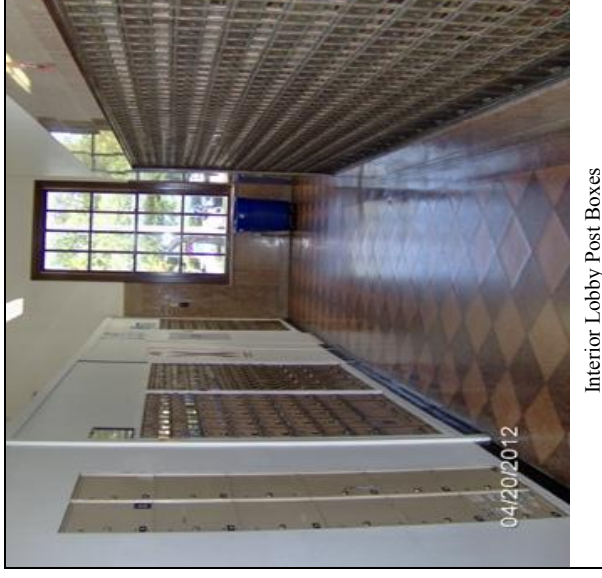
- Stylistic elements expressed through exterior materials such as stucco walls, red tile roofs, along with dominant entrances flanked by attached light fixtures and minimal decorative details
- Division of public and non-public interior space
 - Public spaces including entry vestibule, open lobby with service counter and post office boxes
 - Non-public spaces including postmaster office with vault, work room, swing room lookout gallery, mailing vestibule and loading dock
- Interior materials including terrazzo floors, marble wainscoting, and bronze fixtures

See discussion of **Criterion C: Art**, PWA Legacy Post Offices Registration Requirements above. The character-defining features of a PWA Spanish Colonial/Mission Revival Post Office are highlighted on Figure 3-4.

Associated Property Types



Lake Worth Post Office, Florida 1940



Interior Lobby Post Boxes

CHARACTER DEFINING FEATURES	
CHARACTER DEFINING FEATURE	INTACT FOR NRHP ELIGIBILITY
Stucco exterior	Yes
Red tile roof	Yes
Main entry with surround	Yes
Tall windows	Yes
Classical or streamline detailing	Yes
Marble wainscoting	Yes
Terrazzo floors	Yes
WPA mural	Yes
2 to 4 truck bays	Yes
Minimal setback with landscaping	Yes
Notes: Survey samples located in California and Florida only	

Source: URS



WPA Mural, Lobby

Figure 3-4: PWA Spanish Colonial/Mission Revival Post Office

3.2.2 Sub-Property Type: The Thousands Series Post Offices

OVERVIEW

Despite the Federal Works Agency (FWA) of the Public Buildings Administration studying the character of building materials, designs, and construction methods used during WWII years, very little emphasis was placed on stylistic standards for government buildings designed in the post war years. The Government Services Administration (GSA) oversaw the design of post offices beginning in 1949 and that year issued *United States Post Offices*, a manual that provided plans for interior designs and furnishings of post offices. The GSA manual focused on interior space functionality, square footage of rooms, and technical components, but made no stylistic references. Few postal facilities were actually constructed under this guidance due to lack of funds.

The 1959 \$1.5 billion Post Office Department building program used the lease-purchase method.³²⁴ Guidance documents supplied to potential bidders that year included *Construction Requirements for Leased Postal Facilities*, *Bidders Instructions*, and the stylistic manual, *Building Designs* that gave examples of “acceptable” designs that could be used by sponsors in the construction of leased post offices between 1,000 and 12,000 square feet.

In the foreword, Postmaster Arthur Summerfield called for Modern buildings that focused on efficiency and clean lines.³²⁵ The brochures contained artist renderings, schematic plans, suggested materials, and notes for post offices from 1,000 to 12,000 square feet (“Thousands Series”). The brochure claimed that the designs were highly adaptable and suitable for all climates and geographical areas in the United States, since exterior design and materials could be adjusted to suit local conditions.

Further design guidance was provided by President Kennedy’s Ad Hoc Committee on Federal Office Space and their 1962 report that maintained federal buildings should be guided by 3 principles: the dignity, enterprise, vigor, and stability of the American National Government; avoid uniformity, no official style, and allow for the finest contemporary American architectural thought; and attention should be given to the landscape of the site and the surrounding streets and public places.³²⁶ President Lyndon B. Johnson followed Kennedy’s initiative with the “Program for Beautification of Federal Buildings” in 1965.³²⁷

The strict adherence to the design manuals and interest in the lowest bid resulted in many builder-designed small post offices that tended to be a-contextual and homogeneous. Architect-

³²⁴ Lee, Antoinette J, *Architects to the Nation*. Oxford University Press, Oxford, England, 2000, pages 289-290 citing New York Post Office Department, *Annual Report*, 1969, page 142.

³²⁵ Post Office Department, Washington D.C. Post Office Department, *Building Designs* (1959).

³²⁶ Lee, 290-291; Lois A. Craig, *The Federal Presence* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1984), 441; Robinson & Associates, Inc., 6, 48, Chapter 9.

³²⁷ Robinson & Associates, Inc., 48.

designed postal facilities of the 1960s were typically larger processing centers and reflected the big business of the expanding economy and expressed an interest in simplicity over innovation

The majority of the surveyed post offices constructed between 1960 and 1970 are Thousand Series Post Offices. Out of the 103 buildings surveyed for this project, 57 were post offices constructed between 1960 and 1971 and were less than 12,000 square feet – the largest footprint for the Thousands Series. The Thousands Series Post Offices meet the specifications for Post Office design described in the United States Post Office Department's *Building Designs* manuals, which were published in 1959 and 1964. The *Building Designs* manuals were created to guide the construction of "uniformly efficient and architectural attractive small post office buildings throughout the United States." These contained artist renderings, schematic plans, suggested materials, and notes for the post offices between 1,000 to 12,000 square feet ("Thousands Series"). The designs were adaptable to many variations and site characteristics and suitable for all climates and geographical areas in the United States since exterior design and materials could be adjusted to suit local conditions.

Of the numerous designs recommended in the manuals, two major architectural styles are represented: Modern and Colonial Revival, both of which are reflected in the survey sample though the majority of the buildings surveyed in this group were designed in the Modern Style. The choice between the two styles could represent the American preference for modernism when it comes to business and commercial buildings, and traditional styles for residential construction. Modernism never really became popular in the residential market, but it dominated office buildings and commercial construction. Colonial Revival dominated residential construction during this period. In many communities, the post office represented both, providing business functions and personal services, catering to commercial needs and serving as a community social space. Indeed the extent to which the post office served a local residential community asset as opposed to being functional and spatially integrated into the business community may have driven the choice between the two styles, but there is no evidence in the literature that local community members played a role in stylistic selection.

All floor plans within the Thousands Series, regardless of style, had the customer entrance through a post office box lobby, contained a post office box lobby with boxes and mail drop, a post office lobby with counters, a partition between the post office box lobby and post office lobby, a work room, storage, men and women's bathrooms, and a rear vestibule with canopy and truck platform. Larger post offices of this type may also have had offices, a vault, a lookout gallery, and a mechanical equipment room. All of the designs were one story.

The *Building Design* brochures recommended designs for four lot types (A, B, C, and D). In lot types A, B, and C, the post office building was to be built adjacent to the street/sidewalk with a maneuvering area behind and no patron parking. Lot type D featured a maneuvering area behind and a small patron parking lot besides the building.

3.2.2.1 Subtype: Thousands Series Modern Style

DESCRIPTION

The 44 Modern Style Thousand Series Post Offices surveyed have the following in common:

- Predominately one story with flat roof , no basements and patron parking.
- Exterior wall materials typically brick (41 percent) or brick and some combination of the following: concrete, stone, metal, stucco, asbestos plank, and wood.
- Majority of windows are metal framed and fixed, or fixed and a combination of awning/hopper, sliding, double-hung sash, glass block, and jalousie.
- Over half of the properties had zero to three truck bays, with the remaining buildings having four to eleven truck bays.
- Interior public spaces almost universally contain a service counter service lobby and post box lobby. A glass-framed wall and door separates the post box lobby from the service lobby.
- Interior space typically contained swing rooms, mail sorting areas, postmaster’s office, work rooms, and loading docks.
- Approximately half of this subtype lacked mailing platforms.
- Slightly over one-third had no lookout gallery.
- Almost all of the properties lacked postal machinery in the mail sorting or work room areas.

HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE EVALUATION

Criterion A: Association with important events or pattern of events

- Area of Significance: Community Planning and Development
- Period of Significance: 1960 – 1971
- Level of Significance: Local Level

The Thousand Series Post Offices (both Colonial Revival and Modern styles) are significant in the area of Community Planning and Development for their association with events or patterns of events connected to changing demographics and the rise of suburbia that had an important influence on the policies of operating the postal service in communities throughout the country. As stated in the 1957 Report of the Postmaster General “The Department continued its policy of realigning post offices and delivery service to reflect shifts in population and highway

improvement.”³²⁸ The post-war suburban housing boom escalated the suburbanization trend so much that by the 1960s more people lived in suburbs than in urban cores.³²⁹

The most substantial change to U.S. demographics from 1940 to 1970 was the growth of the metropolitan areas, including the suburbs. Before WWII, the majority of Americans lived outside a metropolitan area. The impact of “metropolitanization” was the conversion of rural routes to city services. By 1958 city delivery service was expanded in 141 communities and served an additional 109,519 businesses and 1,577,336 additional families.

That same year the Post Office Department requested that the House of Representatives change the law regarding the establishment of postal stations and branch post offices. The original act of June 9, 1896 limited the establishment of postal stations and branch offices within five miles of a city’s limits. Outside the five-mile limit, the Department relied on independent post offices for handling mail. The 1958 request was to increase the distance to 10 miles so that the Department could avoid having to create independent post offices to serve new suburban communities. The 1966 Postmaster’s Annual Report starts with the announcement of a new program that will “chart alternative programs that would anticipate future postal needs” that will “meet the rapidly increasing mail volume and tremendous problem we face in population, suburban sprawl, big city bottlenecks, and the like.”³³⁰

Criterion C: Embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction

- Area of Significance: Architecture/International Style
- Period of Significance: Construction date
- Level of Significance: Local level

The Modern Style Post Offices represent Postmaster General Summerfield’s emphasis on efficiency and clean lines. Many of the buildings in the Post Office Department’s *Building Designs* catalog look similar to other strip commercial buildings of that time, particularly those with flat roofs, large plate glass windows, and brick or concrete facades. By addressing vehicle maneuvering space and even patron parking, these buildings reflect a concern for convenience and an auto-oriented society. Unlike previous post offices, there are no stairs leading to the entrance, and the entrance through the post office box lobby provides postal patrons access to the boxes during none retail service hours.

Although the brochures depict these Modern Style post offices in a modernists’ architectural urban environment, many of them are located in host communities that have a different, more traditional and established stylistic built environment. Too often, the buildings seem out of place

³²⁸ United States Post Office Department, *The Postmaster General Reports on the services of the United States Post Office Department during the Fiscal Year, 1955*, p. 8.

³²⁹ Ames, p. 2.

³³⁰ United States Post Office Department, *Annual Report of the Postmaster General, United States Post Office Department, July 1, 1965 – June 30, 1966*, p. 1.

within their context, and easy to pick out simply because it did not fit in with the rest of the buildings in the town.³³¹ In fact, less than 40% of the surveyed Thousand Series Modern style post offices dating from the 1960s are located in suburban environments. Although intended to meet the demand for new facilities in the new suburban communities, many of these post offices were constructed in small towns, such as Harvey's Lake, Pennsylvania and Unadilla New York, which have more traditional Main Street or small town commercial areas that do not represent a modernist urban environment. However, examples of this property type located within a suburban area also are not located in a modernist urban environment. Many of these Modern style post offices appear to be located in streetcar suburbs outside of Philadelphia and New York City, and cannot be described as reflecting a dominant modernist urban environment.

Out of the 103 buildings surveyed for this project, 57 were post offices constructed between 1960 and 1971 and were less than 12,000 square feet—the largest footprint for the Thousands Series. Forty-eight of the 57 post offices are Modern Style buildings.

REGISTRATION REQUIREMENTS

The Thousand Series Post Offices (Modern and Colonial Revival style) eligible under **Criterion A for Community Planning and Development** should evidence integrity of location, setting, feeling, and association. The location of these properties should be peripheral to central business districts with easy access to major automobile routes. These buildings have enough setback to accommodate minimal landscaping. Other setting elements important to this type include patron parking and a rear or side space for a loading dock, truck turn-around, and employee parking. These buildings, through a combination of design, materials, workmanship, and setting should convey a feeling of and association with efficient business environments and be consistent with other commercial or office buildings in the local community. Elements that convey the feeling and association of a contemporary business function include street or sidewalk level entrances, minimal signage, clean lines and box-like massing, and smooth surface materials such as glass and metal panels.

Criterion A Registration Requirements Elements:

- Peripheral urban commercial location with easy vehicle access.
- Exterior entrances at street/sidewalk level with minimal landscaping strip.
- Patron and employee parking, loading dock and truck turn-around area.
- Clean lines and smooth surfaces expressed through glass and metal panels.

Thousand Series Post Offices eligible under **Criterion C for Architecture/Modern Style** should evidence integrity of design, materials, and workmanship. Architectural elements and surface treatments associated with the style should be evident, such as rectilinear overhead canopies, window walls, entablatures, single story, flat roofs, recessed façade wall, and

³³¹ Burns, page 98.

occasionally, thin pole-like columns, and rectangular modular units. Functional aspects of the design convey through the division of interior space. The public entry is through the post box lobby, separated from the public lobby and service counter by a glass and frame-dividing wall with door. The lobby typically does not contain an entry vestibule.

Interior non-public space may or may not include a postmaster's office with vault. Behind the service counter, non-public space includes a work room, mechanical room, platform/loading dock, loading dock or platform canopy and storage. These designs do not include swing rooms or lookout galleries. Prominent materials include glass and metal panels, metal trim and framing, and modular sections of brick or stone facing.

Criterion C Registration Requirements Elements:

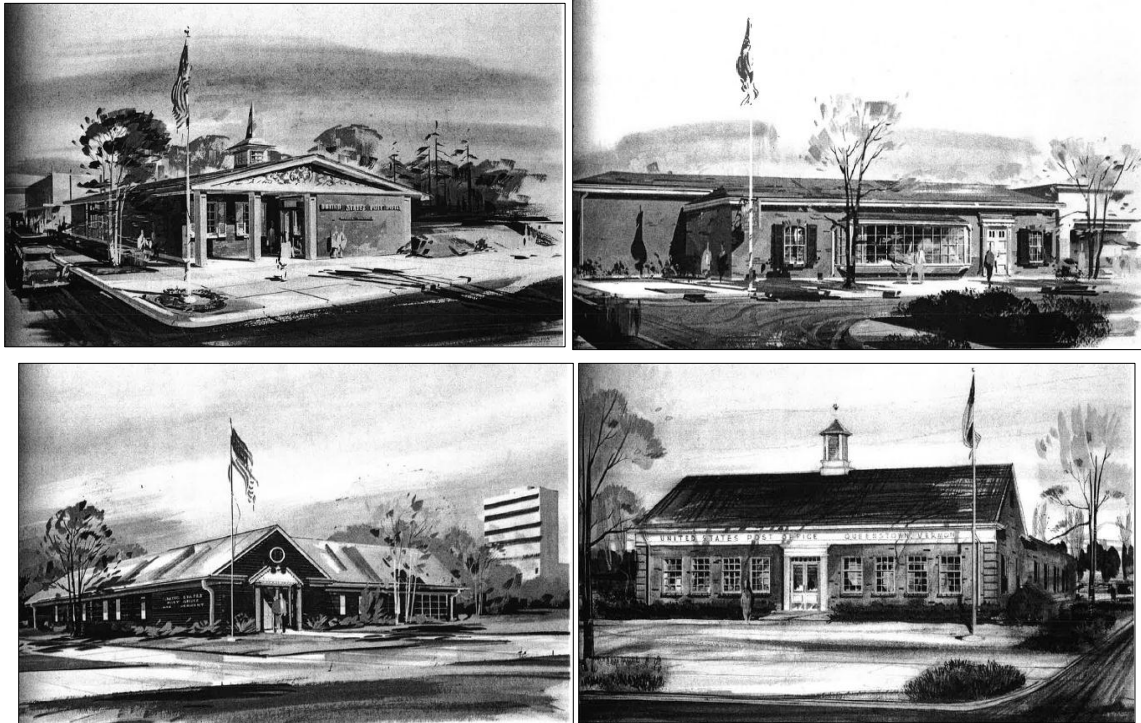
- Rectilinear modular components.
- Glass, metal panel, or masonry facing panels.
- Metal trim and framing of windows and entrance.
- Interior glass and panel wall separating post box lobby from public service and counter lobby.
- Flat roof and metal trimmed eave or fascia.

3.2.2.2 Subtype: *Thousands Series Colonial Revival*

DESCRIPTION

The Thousand Series Colonial Revival post offices are predominately Colonial Revival in ornamentation only since the interiors and siting were identical to the Modern style Thousand Series Post Offices. The Colonial Revival-style Thousand Series post offices all have gable roofs with shingles; cupolas, columns, shutters, and wooden window and door trim; exterior wall materials of face brick; wood frame entrance doors; an interior partition between the box lobby and post office lobby of glass and wood trim; and quarry tile floor material (more rarely stone flagging or vinyl).

Although the *Building Design* publication does not make any stylistic references, of the 37 design plates only 4 are Colonial Revival designs, as depicted in Figure 3-5 below. There are two plates that show renderings of building that appear to combine Colonial Revival with Modern, but the remainder of the designs are predominately Modern, with a few that would more easily be classified as Contemporary, and one that looks vaguely Spanish Colonial.



Source: Post Office Department, "Building Designs" brochure, 1959.

Figure 3-5: Building Designs, 1959
Plates #21, 41, 42, and 70

None of the design plates that could be considered Colonial Revival are consistent with surveyed properties that reflect the size limitations and date range associated with the Thousand Series. The Thousand Series Colonial Revival surveyed post offices fit the square footage and layout of the buildings in the brochure but not the renderings found in the reference brochures.

Only nine of the 57 Thousands Series post offices surveyed are Colonial Revival-style buildings. These buildings had the following in common:

- One story.
- Brick exterior walls with white painted trim.
- Five of the nine are gable-front, three bay-wide, with side bay or inset porch entrance.
- Front windows typically double hung sash, some multi-pane.
- Gable roofs predominate.
- Entrance leads into post office box lobby.
- Dividing wall with door between post office service lobby and post office box lobby.

The gable-front, three-bay wide, side bay or inset porch entrance examples were all located in Pennsylvania or New Jersey. The design similarities and the locations of the buildings may

suggest some type of regional prototype but the available plans reference different architectural firms.

Criterion A: Association with important events or pattern of events

- Area of Significance: Community Planning and Development
- Period of Significance: 1960 – 1971
- Level of Significance: Local level

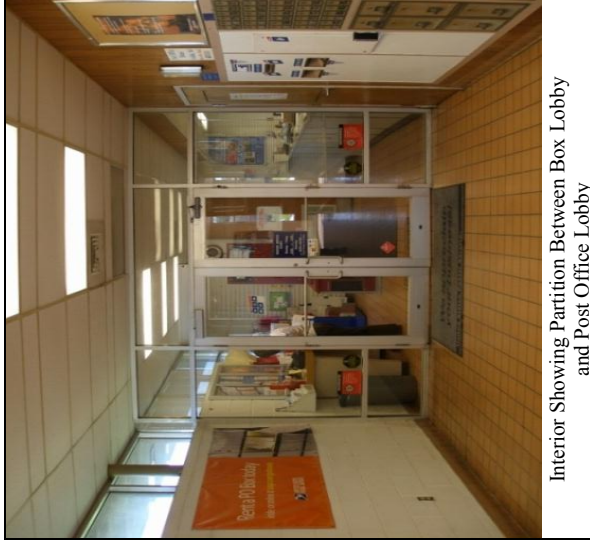
See previous Historic Significance Evaluation, Criterion A discussion for Subtype: Thousand Series Modern, and Registration Requirements.

Criterion C: Embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction

The literature does not support the notion that the Colonial Revival style during this period has an association with the Post Office Department. It is not advocated in the design literature and its representation in the *Building Design* brochure does not depict designs that integrate the style into the form and massing of the building. The Colonial Revival style post offices of this period appear to examples of stylistic association through applied ornament or motif. This building type does not represent significant examples of design associated with the Post Office Department during this period and are not eligible under Criterion C for architecture.

The character-defining features of a Thousands Series Posts Office, Modern Style are highlighted on Figure 3-6. The character-defining features of a Thousands Series Posts Office, Colonial Revival Style are highlighted on Figure 3-7.

Associated Property Types



CHARACTER DEFINING FEATURES	
CHARACTER DEFINING FEATURE	INTACT FOR NRHP
Design based on 1959 or 1964 <i>Building Designs</i> brochures	Yes
Less than 12,000 square feet, strong horizontality	Yes
Original floor plan with patron entrance through box lobby	Yes
Flat roof, one story	Yes
Aluminum/stainless steel window walls or rows of windows	Yes
Aluminum or stainless steel entrance door	Yes
Metal or wood fascia rear canopy with soffit	Yes
Vinyl, stone or terrazzo interior flooring	Yes
Glass and metal trim interior partition btw box lobby and post office lobby materials: (glass and wood trim okay)	Yes
Lot layout based on Lot Types A, B, C, or D, as described in 1959 or 1964 <i>Building Designs</i> brochures	Yes

Source: URS

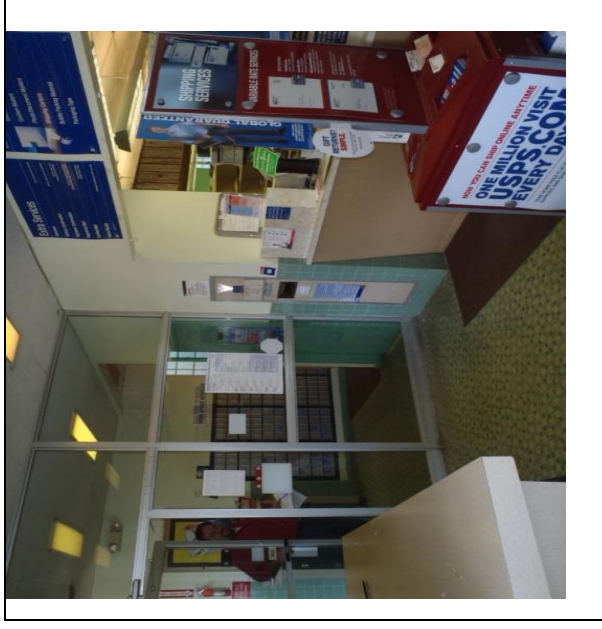


Figure 3-6: Thousands Series Posts Office, Modern Style

Associated Property Types



USPS, Post Office, Deal, New Jersey



Interior showing partition between box lobby and post office lobby

CHARACTER DEFINING FEATURES	
CHARACTER DEFINING FEATURE	INTACT FOR NRHP
Minimal Colonial Revival type elements	Yes
Less than 12,000 square feet	Yes
One story	Yes
Original floor plan with patron entrance through box lobby	Yes
Lot layout based on Lot Types A, B, C, or D, as described in 1959 or 1964 Building Designs brochures	Yes
Brick and wood trim	Yes

Source: URS



Single bay loading dock

Figure 3-7: Thousands Series Posts Office, Colonial Revival Style

3.2.3 Property Type: Processing and Distribution Centers

Until the early 1950s, most mail was sorted and distributed through the Main Post Offices of large cities using either the antiquated pigeonhole method or by men standing before racks of boxes. In addition, most of these post offices were large monumental structures built in the early twentieth century and designed more for solid appearance than for efficient handling of mail. As the volume of mail increased after WWII, the Post Office Department was running out of room to process the mail.

In an attempt to keep pace with increased volume and service expectations, the Department began the introduction of machinery in the 1950s, first with industrial machines adapted for postal use and later with new postal specific machines. In 1959, the Washington, D.C. Post Office was remodeled and became the first mechanized post office. A year later, the Providence, Rhode Island Post Office became the first “automated” post office while the Detroit, Michigan Post Office became the largest mechanized post office.

In the early 1960s, the Post Office Department created a nationwide system of sectional centers based on population density and transportation facilities. These centers increasingly were built near highways and airports. Due to the increasing cost of postal-specific machinery, the central processing of mail was completed at these large mechanized facilities.

These sectional centers serve as a central hub for 80 to 100 surrounding post offices. All incoming and outgoing mail for the area was routed through these Processing and Distribution Centers (P&DCs), as they are now known. All mail collected in the local towns would be trucked to these P&DCs and returned with the other incoming mail already sorted for each of the local carriers, allowing the post offices to be the public face of the Department that served walk-in customers and delivered the mail in the local community.

Mail handling equipment in use at the time included sack and pouch flat belt conveyors, carousel sorting machines, surge, loading and shake-out slides and multi-position letter sorting machines. The latter were 77 feet long, 12 feet wide and 9 feet high. Consequently, P&DCs required large, open workrooms.

The majority of the P&DCs surveyed are two stories with flat roofs, have basements, and masonry cladding, typically brick veneer, precast concrete or stone-faced panels. Windows are predominately metal-framed fixed with some type of upper or lower awning or hopper sash. The number of truck bays varies widely ranging from 18 and 54.

All of the P&DCs had public service spaces, which included service counters and lobbies, post box lobbies, and, for the majority (87.5 percent), ample parking. Predominate interior spaces include work rooms, mail sorting areas, lookout galleries, superintendent’s office, and loading docks. All the P&DCs surveyed also had some form of mail processing machinery.

A representative P&DC, based on the survey results, would be a two-story, flat-roofed, masonry-clad building with aluminum-frame windows that were a combination of fixed and

awning/hopper sashes. There would be ample parking and numerous truck bays. A fully functioning public service post office would be inside and a large interior that would include the typical spaces, such, offices, a swing room, lookout gallery, and large, open spaces as workrooms and mail sorting areas to accommodate machinery.

The P&DCs that were included in the survey sample were all constructed or occupied between 1960 and 1970. These facilities had the following in common:

- The overwhelming stylist influence of these building was reflected in common design elements such as continuous bands of windows, horizontal definition of wall planes, metal coping, the use of metal panels between windows, and patterned CMU block to create vertical screen effects.
- Window walls were common as are main entrances set back behind outside piers.
- Although some of these facilities had a square footage associated with larger post offices, (30,000 to 50,000 square feet) half of the survey sample buildings range from approximately 150,000 to over 350,000 square feet.
- These buildings ranged in height from one story to four stories, with most either two or three stories tall.
- Setbacks from the sidewalk and roadway covered a wide range. The smaller buildings have a more immediate spatial relation to the streets, while the larger facilities are sited on larger lots and accommodate a great deal of parking.

HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE EVALUATION

Criterion A: Associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history

- Area of Significance: Politics/Government
- Period of Significance: 1959 – 1971
- Level of Significance: Local level

The P&DCs constructed in the 1959 to 1971 period are associated with the Post Office Department as representatives of the administration, impact, and perception of government services and institutions and are potentially significant on the local level. State level significance for these resources will be determined in statewide context studies. National level significance was not considered because these facilities were not directly associated with people, events, or designs that had national level impacts. Additionally, the experimental or developing technologies and machinery that were to have national level impacts have been removed or repurposed, which compromises the historic integrity of a property with this potential level of significance.

In response to increased mail volume, transportation changing from rail to trucks and airplanes, growing metropolitan areas and the implementation of the ZIP Code, the Post Office Department found that machinery in existing large central city post offices or annexes could not meet the demand. They needed new larger facilities to accommodate the machinery to expedite the internal processing of large volumes of mail, and these facilities had to be located in areas that enabled efficient distribution. In contrast to the post office on Main Street, these facilities were the anonymous spaces of the postal department that focused on moving the mail.

A typical sectional center facility project started with a space study and mail flow projections. The preliminary layouts, space allocations for work areas, and critical dimensions for machines were all checked against the size of the site. Upon completion of preliminary planning, a local architect was retained and the architecture/engineering contract was awarded and administered by the Post Office Department's Bureau of Facilities. Process machinery designs were given to the architect so the building plans could accommodate the machinery and associated spatial needs.

The building plan was determined by the building function, which was fixed by the layout of several engineering systems and the site constraints. These facilities utilized large sites located close to major highways on the periphery of large metropolitan areas. The work rooms were laid out to handle the mechanical mail handling systems and efficient movement of mail between the systems, all of which required long clear spans, high ceilings, and floors with heavy load capacities. Although these buildings predominately evidence horizontal massing, systems of chutes and slides had angled elements that required vertical space. The buildings required long rows of truck docks and ample paved vehicle maneuvering space to meet their functional requirement and an important hub or link in the distribution of mail.

The design process for these facilities is indicated by the factors that went into an early prototype: the Gateway Post Office in Oakland, California. These factors included an unbroken straight line for traffic flow, clear height of 30 feet, 122,000 square feet per machine system and vehicle maneuvering areas of 100 clear spans. Most importantly, however, was the relationship of the three major systems needed to process and distribute the mail: parcel post machine system; classified dispatch storage system; and the loading platform.

The parcel post machine, which sorted parcels, was the largest so locating the system with regard to the building structural members and process flow was critical. The classified dispatch storage system consisted of a series of inclined chutes in which sacked mail was stored prior to dispatch. These chutes required special framing and discharged the mail onto conveyor belts that conveyed the mail through floor penetrations onto the mechanized truck loading and unloading equipment. The loading platform was located under the elevated building structure.

The P&DCs have a direct association with the Post Office Department's ability to administer government services during an important period of federal bureaucracy when the Post Office Department greatly expanded and modernized its physical plant from 1959 to 1971.

REGISTRATION REQUIREMENTS

P&DCs eligible under Criterion A for Politics/Government should evidence integrity of location, setting, feeling, and association. These buildings should be located near a freeway exchange or along a close-by major arterial that accommodates large truck traffic. Paved areas should surround the building to accommodate employee parking and vehicle maneuvering space. Surrounding business park or light industrial land uses contribute to the integrity of feeling and association, along with large horizontally massed plans, flat roofs, and multiple truck docks. Exteriors of masonry or metal panels, stucco, or brick veneer walls and limited numbers of windows that are metal framed fixed, some with awning/hopper sash, project the “postal plant” nature of these buildings. Large, open interior spaces dominate the floor plans, and three discreet work system zones—parcel post, classified dispatch storage, and loading—should be evident as well as machinery associated with processing mail, including conveyors, chutes and slides, and sorters.

Criterion A Registration Requirement Elements:

- Location adjacent to major arterial and freeway or interstate highway access,
- Adjacent land uses consistent with a business park or light industrial function,
- Ample parking and vehicle maneuvering space adjacent to multiple-bay truck loading,
- Exterior material associated with modernism: masonry panels, stacked brick veneer, metal-frame fixed or awning/hopper sash,
- Interior spaces include large open-span areas and a division of three work system zones: parcel post, classified mail storage, and loading docks,
- Postal sorting and distributing machinery evident including slides, chutes, conveyors, and sorters,

The character-defining features of a Processing and Distribution Center are highlighted on Figure 3-8.

Associated Property Types



Rocky Mount P&DC, North Carolina



Rocky Mount P&DC Truck Bays

CHARACTER DEFINING FEATURES	
CHARACTER DEFINING FEATURE	INTACT FOR NRHP
Masonry walls	Yes
Metal windows	Yes
Metal doors	Yes
Sprawling floor plan	Yes
Large work room	Yes
Multi-bay loading dock	Yes
Postal machinery	Yes
Lookout gallery	Yes
Service and post office box lobbies	Yes
Vehicle maintenance building	Yes
Notes: Postal machinery includes facing, canceling, letter sorting, sacking, and parcel post machines	

Source: URS



Interior Postal Machinery

Figure 3-8: Processing and Distribution Center

3.2.4 Property Type: Vehicle Maintenance Facility

DESCRIPTION

By 1953, the Post Office Department's Motor Vehicle Service determined that more than 90 percent of their existing fleet was over-engineered and initiated the 1954 Functional Motor Vehicles Project with the goal of creating standardized "prototype light-weight functional vehicles to replace the high-cost vehicles" in response to "unprecedented suburban growth throughout the country which has made obsolete many of the old methods for delivering mail."³³² Many of the new residential developments were far from existing postal facilities and some type of delivery system other than traditional on-foot mail carriers had to be developed.

In 1955, the right-hand drive and sit- or stand-drive vehicles became standard equipment for mail carriers. By the end of the 1950s, the Post Office Department had almost completed the transition to standard commercial lightweight vehicles, and 11 new vehicle maintenance facilities opened. Those facilities included servicing equipment, analyzers, and precision tools.³³³

In 1958, the management and control of the Vehicle Maintenance Facilities (VMFs) was returned to the postmasters from the department's Bureau of Operations in order that each postmaster would have full responsibility for all postal activities in the area. The Bureau of Facilities' Division of Vehicles and the Regional Vehicle Managers turned their attention to the technical problems of maintaining the fleet of vehicles, including maintenance procedures.³³⁴

During the same year, fourteen new modern lubritorium-type vehicle maintenance facilities opened. These small three-bay type buildings were designed to service up to 50 vehicles. Each of these facilities was equipped with the latest type of servicing equipment, including hydraulic lifts, lubrication systems, overhead reels, and compressed air and automatic truck washing equipment.

Between 1953 and 1960, 119 new vehicle maintenance facilities were constructed and equipped to service the postal fleet.³³⁵ During the same period "40 old and inefficient garage facilities have been replaced by more economical and efficient lubritorium-type facilities, and similar facilities have been provided in 79 selected locations throughout the nation." Facilities were constructed according to the 1954 approved lubritorium plans that provided "a maximum of working area under roof and minimum of outside storage space." June 30, 1960, 10 additional facilities were under construction and 25 more were in the planning stage. The 1963 Terminal Annex Central Post Office Garage in Los Angeles was the largest and contained 405,300 square feet of gross building area, covering 1 ½ acres, and having the capacity to accommodate 862 vehicles.

³³² United States Post Office Department, 1954 Annual Report of Postmaster General, p. 13.

³³³ Ibid, pp. 55-56.

³³⁴ United States Post Office Department, *The Postmaster General Reports on the Services of the United States Post Office Department during the Fiscal Year 1958*, p. 62

³³⁵ United States Post Office Department, *The Postmaster General Reports on the Services of the United States Post Office Department during the Fiscal Year 1962* pg. 71 – 74 "Modern Vehicle Facilities."

The 1965 *Report of the Postmaster General* discusses the need for indoor VMFs.³³⁶ To provide for indoor vehicle storage and garages, where needed in metropolitan areas (presumably due to weather conditions), regions have been applying the new criteria that accounted for economic factors including the availability and capability of commercial repair. At the close of fiscal year 1965, a total of 107 new and auxiliary vehicle maintenance facilities and 107 replacement facilities were in the planning stage.

In 1966, plans for typical VMFs were modified and improved.³³⁷ A new type was added which could maintain up to 175 predominately small vehicles. Of the 24 locations where VMFs had been approved for future establishment, 22 were to use one to five typical designs.

In 1967, it was reported that the “tremendous growth of the fleet in the past 10 years has required additional vehicle maintenance capabilities. Studies were done in cities with a Government owned fleet of 35 or more vehicles to determine the economic feasibility of constructing a Government vehicle maintenance facility. At that time, the Department operated two hundred and forty (240) VMFs and 39 auxiliary facilities. The auxiliaries were usually located in the larger cities, such as New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles. By 1970, there were 308 Postal VMFs and auxiliary garages in operation and 12 more were approved.”³³⁸

VMFs included in the survey had the following in common:

- Often part of a postal complex, typically with a P&DC and regional office (yet the master list of USPS properties indicates that most VMFs are stand-alone facilities).
- Only approximately one-third are next to another postal facility.
- Garages are predominately one to two stories.
- Brick or some type of masonry facing, aluminum frame windows of varying types, flat roofs, and multiple bays of overhead garage doors.
- Interiors have no public service components and consist of three typical spaces: office, swing room, and garage.
- Fueling stations consisting of some type of adjacent overhead canopy with gas pumps are typically adjacent to a VMF.

A VMF included in the survey sample is located in Zanesville, Ohio behind the post office. In front of the garage and extending to the post office is a large paved vehicle maneuvering space. This one-story red brick building was constructed in 1965 and has five service bays with

³³⁶ United States Post Office Department, *The Postmaster General Reports on the Services of the United States Post Office Department during the Fiscal Year 1965* p. 100

³³⁷ United States Post Office Department, *The Postmaster General Reports on the Services of the United States Post Office Department during the Fiscal Year 1966*, p. NA.

³³⁸ United States Post Office Department, *Annual Report of the Postmaster General – July 1, 1970 – June 30, 1971* p. 16-17.

overhead garage doors, each with two rows of lights. A metal faced canopy extends out a few feet above the doors, and a glass and colored metal panel partial wall defines the office space. Side walls exhibit horizontal aluminum frame windows consisting of two tiers containing four lights each with headers sills. The open service area is constructed of cement block walls and a metal roof truss system supporting an aluminum corrugated panel ceiling. Fluorescent lights and ceiling fans hang from the ceiling, along with a series of overhead reels.

A Cincinnati, Ohio, VMF is adjacent to a P&DC and Annex building. This structure is more Modern in style, similar to the other buildings in the complex, and is characterized by pebbled masonry panels and black glass panels. A fueling station with a formed concrete canopy is located next to the building. A series of small black glass panels runs above the garage door and creates a monitor window effect. The interior is open contains hydraulic lifts, overhead reels and metal roof truss system supporting aluminum sheet ceiling.

HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE EVALUATION

Criterion A: Associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history

- Area of Significance: Transportation
- Period of Significance: 1953 – 1971
- Level of Significance: Local level

The VMFs constructed in the 1953 to 1971 period are associated with the Post Office Department's endeavor to improve the transportation of mail by adjusting to the significant changes in the nation's transportation system brought on by the increased automobile ownership, development of the interstate highway system and the rise of the suburbs. These buildings are potentially significant under Criterion A, Transportation on the local level.

The period represents a substantial increase in VMFs in direct correlation to the Post Office Department's increased reliance on road vehicles to transport mail along the interstates and deliver mail in automobile-dependent suburbs. Between 1953 and 1960, 119 new vehicle maintenance facilities were constructed and equipped to service the postal fleet, which replaced existing vehicle garage facilities that were inefficient and incompatible with the new vehicle types. These facilities were service-station type buildings that the Post Office Department referred to as "lubritorium" and were constructed utilizing plans developed in 1954. The 1965 *Report of the Postmaster General* discusses the need for indoor VMFs for indoor vehicle storage and garages, where needed in metropolitan areas.³³⁹ At the close of fiscal year 1965, a total of 107 new and auxiliary vehicle maintenance facilities and 107 replacement facilities were in the planning stage. In 1966, plans for typical VMFs were modified and improved and a new type

³³⁹ United States Post Office Department, *The Postmaster General Reports on the Services of the United States Post Office Department during the Fiscal Year 1965* p. 100

was added which could maintain up to 175 predominately small vehicles.³⁴⁰ In 1967, it was reported that the “tremendous growth of the fleet in the past 10 years has required additional vehicle maintenance capabilities. At that time, the Department operated two hundred and forty (240) VMFs and 39 auxiliary facilities. The auxiliaries were usually located in the larger cities, such as New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles. By 1970, there were 308 Postal VMFs and auxiliary garages in operation and 12 more were approved.³⁴¹

REGISTRATION REQUIREMENTS

VMFs eligible under **Criterion A for Transportation** should evidence integrity of location, setting, feeling, and association. These buildings should be within a postal service complex, which may include processing and distribution centers, a post office and Post Office Department office buildings. Stand-alone VMFs, with no adjacent postal facilities, are not identifiable as postal facilities as opposed to garages, and lack the built context to convey historic association with the Post Office Department. Sufficiently paved areas surround the building to accommodate vehicle storage and maneuvering space. Adjacent fueling stations are common and often have overhead canopies. VMFs also convey their function through rows of overhead garage doors, three distinct interior functional spaces, and large open vehicle repair and maintenance areas containing service bays containing equipment such as overhead reels, hydraulic lifts, and lubrication systems. Poured cement floors, masonry walls with high, monitor level windows, and metal roof trusses with roofing panels characterize the garage work area.

Criterion A Registration Requirement Elements:

- Location adjacent to postal complex of two or more facilities.
- Adjacent fueling stations and ample paved vehicle storage and maneuvering area.
- Exterior wall with rows of overhead garage doors.
- Interior division of three spaces: office, break room, and garage.
- Garage area with individual service bays often containing hydraulic lifts, lubrication system and overhead reels.
- Poured cement garage floors, masonry construction, monitor level windows, metal roof truss and metal panel roof.

The character-defining features of a Vehicle Maintenance Facility are highlighted on Figure 3-9.

³⁴⁰ United States Post Office Department, *The Postmaster General Reports on the Services of the United States Post Office Department during the Fiscal Year 1966*, p. NA.

³⁴¹ United States Post Office Department, *Annual Report of the Postmaster General – July 1, 1970 – June 30, 1971*, pp. 16-17.

Associated Property Types



CHARACTER DEFINING FEATURES	
CHARACTER DEFINING FEATURE	INTACT FOR NRHP
1 to 2 stories	Yes
Masonry exterior walls	Yes
Steel roof trusses	Yes
Monitor light type windows	Yes
Office space separate from repair bays	Yes
Multiple garage bays	Yes
Hydraulic lift bays	Yes
Transmission fluid stations	Yes
Overhead reels	Yes



Source: URS

Figure 3-9: Vehicle Maintenance Facility

3.2.5 Property Type: Combined Federal Office and Post Office Buildings

DESCRIPTION

There is long-established precedence for combining the post office with other federal functions during the Depression. Period references note “Not only did the buildings take up more ground and air space, but they now often housed collections of seemingly indistinguishable government bureaus rather than a few discrete public offices. The name “Federal Building” began to replace “Post Office, Courthouse, and Customhouse,” as pointed out by Lois Craig in *The Federal Presence*.³⁴²

Ms. Craig goes on to make a comparison between the federal buildings of the era and H.P. L’Orange’s analysis of the architecture of the late Roman Empire. Both the federal building and that of the late Roman period evidence the loss of their “organic corporality,” meaning no articulation of functional parts and their relationship as these elements became subsumed by the overwhelming experience of massive walls. The monolithic presence of the federal building is consistent with Modern Style architecture. Buildings as space-enclosing envelope provide for “the functional needs of mass organizations for interchangeable work areas.”³⁴³ Government buildings that were associated with monumentality now appeared more monolithic with their flat, continuous, unembellished surfaces that may seem to represent impersonal bureaucracy, or an expression of economy and efficiency.

The *1945 Report of the Postmaster General*, Division of Federal Building Operations states “through the reassignment of space, agencies of the Government which were occupying commercial quarters or had intended to do so, were accommodated at a saving of \$55,037.14 to the Federal Government.”³⁴⁴ The economy of operations was of paramount concern during the years of WWII. After WWII, adequate space, not money seemed to be of greater importance. An early 1950s annual *Report of the Postmaster General* stated that the increase in mail volume, particularly the increase in parcel post, required additional space beyond what could be expected from sharing facilities or space in other federal buildings. By the mid-1950s, the Post Office Department, in cooperation with the General Services Administration, began assembling data and plans for the needed construction of post office facilities.³⁴⁵

Combined uses in federal buildings during the post-WWII period included mechanization planning for post office equipment. The 1962 *Postmaster General’s Annual Report* noted that mechanization planning is to be “completed for postal facilities to be located in new Federal buildings in Austin, Tex.; Sioux Falls, S. Dak.; and Tulsa, Okla.; and for a major extension to the post office located in a Federal building at St. Paul, Minn.” Federal buildings constructed for post office use appear to have been limited after 1968. Legislation introduced to both houses of

³⁴² Modernism book in searchable index, federal buildings, page 24, note 18 the Post Civil-War era.

³⁴³ Craig, Introduction, 282 – 283.

³⁴⁴ United States Post Office Department, *1945 Annual Report of of the Postmaster General*, p. NA.

³⁴⁵ United States Post Office Department *The Postmaster General Reports on the Services of the United States Post Office Department during the Fiscal Year 1955*, p. NA

Congress stipulates that the Post Office Department would only be permitted to construct postal use buildings “at those points where the Postmaster General, after consultation with General Services Administration, deems that a multitenant Federal building is unnecessary.”

The master list of USPS properties contains only six active properties that are identified as federal buildings. None of these buildings were surveyed; however, survey for other property types resulted in the identification of some Combined Federal Office and Post Office Buildings that were not identified as such in the master list of USPS properties, indicating inconsistencies in the how these types of buildings are identified in the master list.

The surveyed Combined Federal Office and Post Office Buildings have the following elements in common:

- Two to four stories with flat roofs, brick or precast concrete panel exteriors and double hung or fixed sash windows in aluminum or wood frames.
- Truck bays in numbers ranging from one to 27.
- Interior includes a public service post office with a service lobby and counter, and a post box lobby.
- The interior postal service with typical spaces associated with a post office: swing room, work room, mail sorting area, Postmaster Office, lookout gallery, mailing platform, and loading docks.
- Other indoor spaces associated with other federal government functions, such as a federal district courtroom, law library, hearing rooms, and various offices.
- Ample patron and employee parking.

HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE EVALUATION

Criterion A: Associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history

- Area of Significance: Politics/Government
- Period of Significance: 1940 – 1971
- Level of Significance: Local level

The Combined Federal Office and Post Office Buildings constructed between 1940 and 1971 are associated with the federal government’s need to economically accommodate increased government services, including postal services, due to the rapid increase in population and the expanded role of the federal government.³⁴⁶ After two world wars and the Great Depression, the federal government developed a much more activist role of protecting citizens from not only

³⁴⁶ http://www.independent.org/pdf/working_papers/58_government.pdf, accessed June 26, 2012

foreign invasion, but also economic disruptions and unsafe goods and services. The government provided the infrastructure needed for increased transportation and communications services and educational opportunities. In sum, the federal government played a larger role in people's lives after WWII. These large Combined Federal Office and Post Office Buildings accommodated more than one if not several government functions often behind a monolithic masonry wall of a "Federal Building." The building type is potentially eligible under Criterion A: Government for association with the Post Office Department's role in the post WWII expansion of federal government.

It was common practice to combine offices for various federal agencies with the post office in regional centers. Often, these buildings were the first and only federal building in town. These facilities are generally only slightly larger than single purpose post offices. Some combined federal buildings contain a Federal District Court. In these facilities, usually constructed in major cities, the post office function was generally incidental to the overall purpose of the building. Federal Courts often occupied most of the space, though other federal agencies were frequently included.

The 1940 Postmaster Generals Annual Report notes that space for larger post offices was usually leased for periods of 5 to 10 years. As of June 30, 1940, a total of 16,411 leased facilities were used by the Post Office Department. Of this total number only 2,869 were federal buildings that housed post offices. Truck storage space, which is not included in this figure, was also furnished in federal buildings.³⁴⁷

One of the federal government departments that shared space with the Post Office Department was the Department of Defense. The 1946 annual report notes that "at the request of the Secretaries of War and of the Navy, we accommodated and made possible the re-establishment of numerous recruiting offices."³⁴⁸

In accordance with Reorganization Plan no. 18, the operation of 93 federal buildings was transferred from the Post Office Department to the General Services Administration. These buildings were selected for transfer of operations if the Post Office Department occupied less than 50 percent of the space.³⁴⁹

The increase in mail volume and lack of facilities to handle this volume is reflected in this 1955 Postmaster General's assessment of the federal building stock in which the Post Office Department functions.

Our Federal buildings were all planned and designed more than 17 years ago (most of them from 30-35 years ago) and some are over 100 years old. They are badly run down, outmoded, and congested. These obsolete structures must be rehabilitated to provide work flow layouts, increase efficiency, and bring working conditions up to competitive

³⁴⁷ United States Post Office Department, *Annual Report of Postmaster General 1940* pp. 59 and 60

³⁴⁸ United States Post Office Department, *Annual Report of Postmaster General 1946* , p. 42

³⁴⁹ United States Post Office Department, *Annual Report of Postmaster General 1951* p. 6

opportunities. Morale is bound to suffer in run down, poorly lighted, crowded, and poorly ventilated workrooms. The number of new permanent nonfarm households—each a new stop for a mailman and some miles from existing distribution points has increased 51 percent in the last 15 years. All of this is continuing. If the Department is to meet this development with comparable mail service [it] need[s] to provide within the next 5 years millions of additional square feet of space and many new postal units.³⁵⁰

A perceived solution was the Lease-Purchase bill sponsored by the Post Office Department and the General Services Administration (GSA) and authorized by Title II of Public Law 519 (83rd Congress). The Post Office Department was now permitted to enter into contracts for the construction of facilities and then leased them for a period of time, with the title then passing to the Government. In 1955, 11 projects were approved under this program.³⁵¹ The next year the program expanded by 23 buildings and in 1957 a total of 48 projects had been approved since the enactment of the Lease-Purchase bill.

The 1958 annual report comments on another facet of post offices in federal buildings: “More than half of the post office space is concentrated in 3,300 Federal buildings, many located in key gateway cities. These buildings, some built in the late thirties and some earlier, with a few over 100 years old, are mostly monumental in character and totally unsuited for today’s mail-handling problems. The department has estimated that \$2 billion would be needed to modernize its physical the plant.”³⁵² The \$2 billion estimated was based on the private industry investing \$1 billion in building the facilities and the department paying for \$1 billion worth of new equipment.

By 1960 the Post Office Department reported that it “enjoyed highly satisfactory working relationships” with GSA in part due to the success of actuating projects where postal functions are only part of the overall government office space of the building.³⁵³ A joint agency site selection committee insures the location meets Post Office Department needs. The Commercial leasing program is regarded as the most important real estate tool used by the department to obtain new facilities. The government investment in these facilities was limited to equipment and machinery.

By 1962, the Commercial lease program had been inaugurated in every state in the nation. By limiting government investment primarily to equipment and machinery, the Post Office Department was able to needed space to:

1. Replace outmoded building.

³⁵⁰ United States Post Office Department, *The Postmaster General Reports on the Services of the United States Post Office Department during the Fiscal Year 1955* p. 30

³⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 28

³⁵² United States Post Office Department, *The Postmaster General Reports on the Services of the United States Post Office Department during the Fiscal Year 1958*, p. NA

³⁵³ United States Post Office Department, *The Postmaster General Reports on the Services of the United States Post Office Department during the Fiscal Year 1960*, p 20

2. Centralize the handling of mail in principal cities.
3. Provide new buildings in rapidly expanding localities.
4. Provide adequate mail distribution facilities at the many new and expanding airports.³⁵⁴

The Reassessment of Space Requirements initiative undertaken by the Post Office Department in 1961 found that 90 percent of the mail volume is processed through federally owned buildings, and that 95 percent of these building were constructed before WWII. Emphasis was placed on expansion and modernization of these buildings, when economically and operationally feasible, or developing a replacement schedule.

An aspect of meeting the need for new postal facilities was incorporating postal space needs in other federal construction projects. In 1963 “more than 140 Post Office-Federal Office Buildings or Post Office Court House Buildings were authorized by the General Services Administration.”³⁵⁵ By 1968, the Post Office Department was “one of the largest tenants in the Nation, occupying space in 30,274 leased, rented, and federally owned buildings.”³⁵⁶ The total square footage rented in federal buildings was 82 million.

Combined federal buildings that were surveyed include a large Modern Style building in Fayetteville, NC and the Classical Revival Macon, Georgia Post Office, which is a Combined Post Office and Federal Office Building.

The Fayetteville combined Federal District Court and Post Office Building was constructed in 1965 and is 137,934 square feet. This large facility has an extensive work space with many sorting and processing machines, and numerous truck bays. The postal service counter and post box lobby are separated and the building contains a lookout gallery. The district court portion of the building is characterized by wood paneling and trim and carpeting. Along with the courtroom itself, this portion of the building contains a law library and additional office space.

The Macon, Georgia Post Office, also known as the Henry McNeal Turner Building, was constructed in 1963 and is a high style example of a monumental Classical Revival building. It has a five-part façade and almost wedding cake-like massing. Massive, square Doric columns front the recessed central entry pavilion and engaged pilasters of brick with marble capitals line the elevation. A marble entablature with laurel wreaths in the frieze, and trabeated entrances with pediments also adorn the building. The letters for United States Post Office are mounted on the side of the building, and the entrance to the post office is on the side. The plans for the building identify it as a Government Services Administration (GSA)-owned property and titled the building “United States Post Office – Federal Office Bldg.”

³⁵⁴ United States Post Office Department, *The Postmaster General Reports on the Services of the United States Post Office Department during the Fiscal Year 1955* p. 59

³⁵⁵ United States Post Office Department, *The Postmaster General Reports on the Services of the United States Post Office Department during the Fiscal Year 1963* p. xv

³⁵⁶ United States Post Office Department, *Annual Report of the Postmaster General United States Post Office Department, July 1, 1967 – June 30, 1968* p. 24

Criterion C: Embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction

- Area of Significance: Architecture
- Period of Significance: 1940 – 1971
- Level of Significance: Local level

The Combined Federal Office and Post Office Building can be architecturally significant for representing an important building type associated with the Post Office Department: the Monumental Federal Building, which is important to the period as a reflection of the expansion of federal government, including the Post Office Department. These buildings should be large in scale and prominent buildings in a community in order to convey the presence and role of the federal government. Their potential architectural significance is determined by the extent to which they exhibit important character-defining features of the type such as a monumental-scaled façade that lacks a division of space by function.

REGISTRATION REQUIREMENTS

Combined Federal Buildings eligible under **Criterion A for Politics/Government** should evidence integrity of location, setting, feeling, and association. These buildings should be of prominent size in their respective communities and contain at least one other federal government function that is devoted to a sizeable percentage of the overall square footage. They are located in an area with accessible routes for truck traffic and freeway access. Extensive truck maneuvering areas are common, along with large employee parking areas. The central entrance leads to a shared common lobby, which contain entranceways to the post office section and the other and federal government facility section(s). The post office section typically has a processing and distribution function, as well as a public service area component, including service area and post boxes. These areas are often retrofitted with modular units as opposed to being architecturally integrated into the building. Interior space includes postmaster office and other offices, swing room, and a lookout gallery. The work room and mail processing areas are characterized by hoppers, conveyors, and sorters. Extensive loading platforms and large number of truck docks are also common features. These buildings have separate or side entrances for postal employees.

Criterion A Politics/Government Registration Requirement Elements:

- Prominent facility that contains post office and other federal agency facility.
- Setting that includes for extensive vehicle parking and truck maneuvering space.
- Central entrance and lobby, which leads to lobbies of different federal agencies or functions.
- Post office space typical for a Processing and Distribution Center.

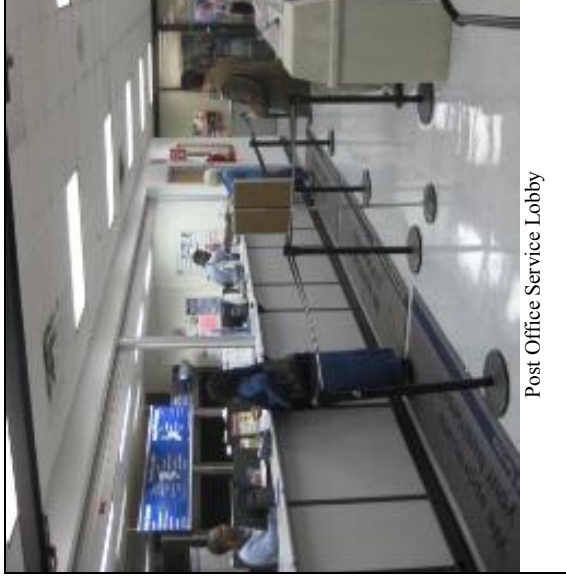
Combined Federal Office and Post Office Buildings eligible under **Criterion C for Architecture** should evidence integrity of design, materials, and workmanship. These large-scale buildings should present a unified exterior architectural style and envelope that contains all federal agencies or functions housed in the buildings; the exterior expression is of the federal government rather than the Federal Post Office Department of the Federal District Court. These buildings often represent a distinct architectural style. The building's expression of monumentality may be related to the style through cultural or historical association or the style's ability to clearly express a large institutional presence through uniform wall planes and regularly repeated fenestration.

Criterion C Architecture Registration Requirement Elements:

- Exterior envelop of one architectural stylistic expression
- Stylistic association with monumental or institutional presence
- Importance of architectural style to community
- Character defining elements of style present

The character-defining features of a Federal District Court with Post Office are highlighted on Figure 3-10. The character-defining features of a Federal Office Building and Post Office are highlighted on Figure 3-11.

Associated Property Types



CHARACTER DEFINING FEATURES	
CHARACTER DEFINING FEATURE	INTACT FOR NRHP
Post Office service lobby	Yes
Post Box lobby	Yes
Federal District Courtroom	Yes
Substantial parking	Yes
Large work room	Yes
Multi-bay loading dock	Yes
Postal machinery	Yes
Lookout gallery	Yes
Clear separation of postal functions from other federal agency function(s)	Yes

Source: URS

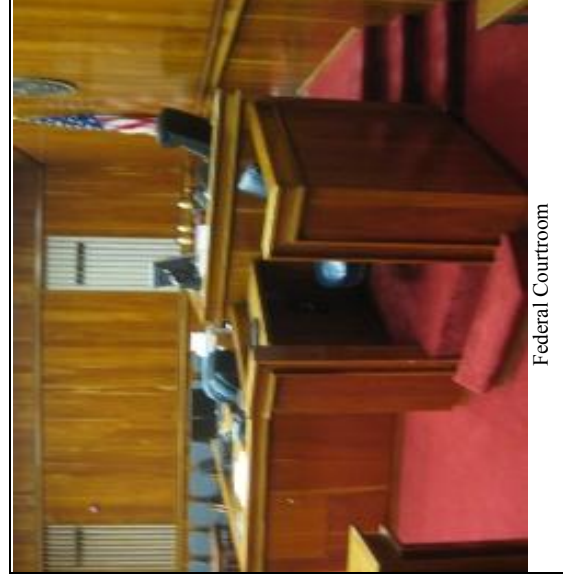


Figure 3-10: Federal District Court with Post Office

Associated Property Types



Macon, Georgia (1963 – 148,064 sq. ft.)



Side Elevation with Post Office Entrance

CHARACTER DEFINING FEATURES	
CHARACTER DEFINING FEATURE	INTACT FOR NRHP
Monumental presence	Yes
Division of function	Yes
Metal doors	Yes
Sprawling floor plan	Yes
Large work room	Yes
Multi-bay loading dock	Yes
Postal machinery	Yes
Separate service and box lobby areas	Yes

Source: URS



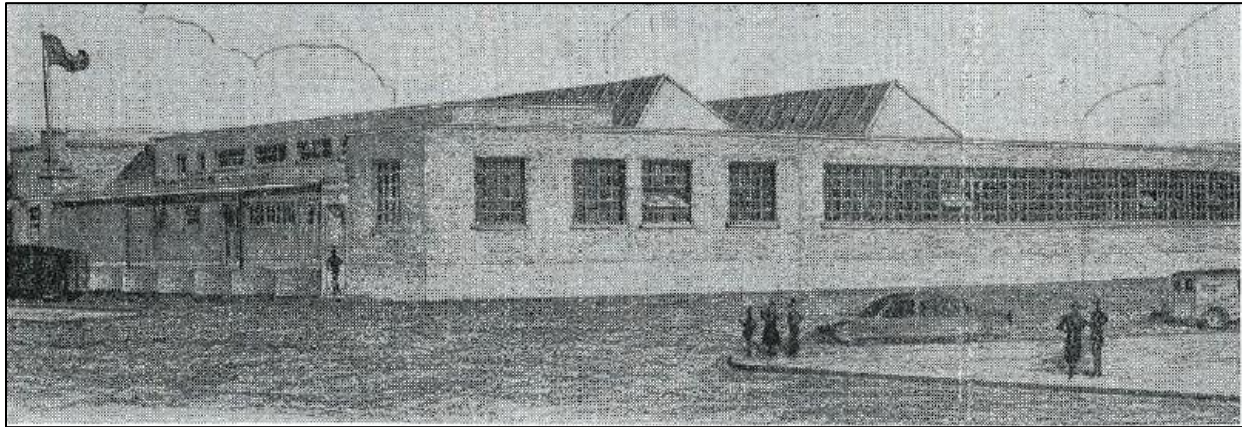
Lobby

Figure 3-11: Federal Office Building and Post Office

3.2.6 Property Type: Post Office Annex

DESCRIPTION

Post Office Annexes were introduced in the late 1930s in major metropolitan areas to provide additional space to handle the enormous volumes of mail. The buildings were equipped primarily to handle parcel post and were sometimes referred to as Parcel Post Stations or Parcel Post Buildings. An example of a Parcel Post Annex is shown in Figure 3-12.



Source: *Racine Journal Times*, 1948

Figure 3-12: Parcel Post Annex, Racine Wisconsin

As mail volume increased after WWII, Post Office Annexes were also constructed outside of major metropolitan areas. The Racine, Wisconsin Post Office Annex was one of the first parcel post buildings to be built outside of a major metropolitan area. The one-story, 100 foot by 130 foot building was constructed in 1949 by private interests and then leased to the government. Constructed of steel, masonry and red face brick, the building was equipped with seven saw-tooth truck loading platforms on the front and railroad track platform on the inside rear to accommodate two railroad cars. The single floor configuration eliminated excess handling of the mail. J. Harold Marks, inspector of the Chicago postal district stated: “We are not going to have any more of those marble palaces in the heart of the business district. No brass work to shine, no winding stairways, no Doric columns. Our buildings are going to be designed for one thing only – to handle mail on the ground level with speed, efficiency and without damage... You have done some pioneering, given us a forerunner of what is to come, and what will be expected in future post office structures in all parts of our nation.”³⁵⁷

The 1948 GSA United States Post Offices design drawings for “Plan – Parcel Post Building” depicts a two-story building that integrates the processing and distribution of parcel post into the building design. The building is clearly a railroad postal annex and includes references to

³⁵⁷ (Parcel Post to Result in Erection of Special Building, 1948) (Racine New Parcel Post Annex to be in Operation by Nov 1, 1949) (Racine Parcel Pst Station to be Copied by Other Cities, 1950)

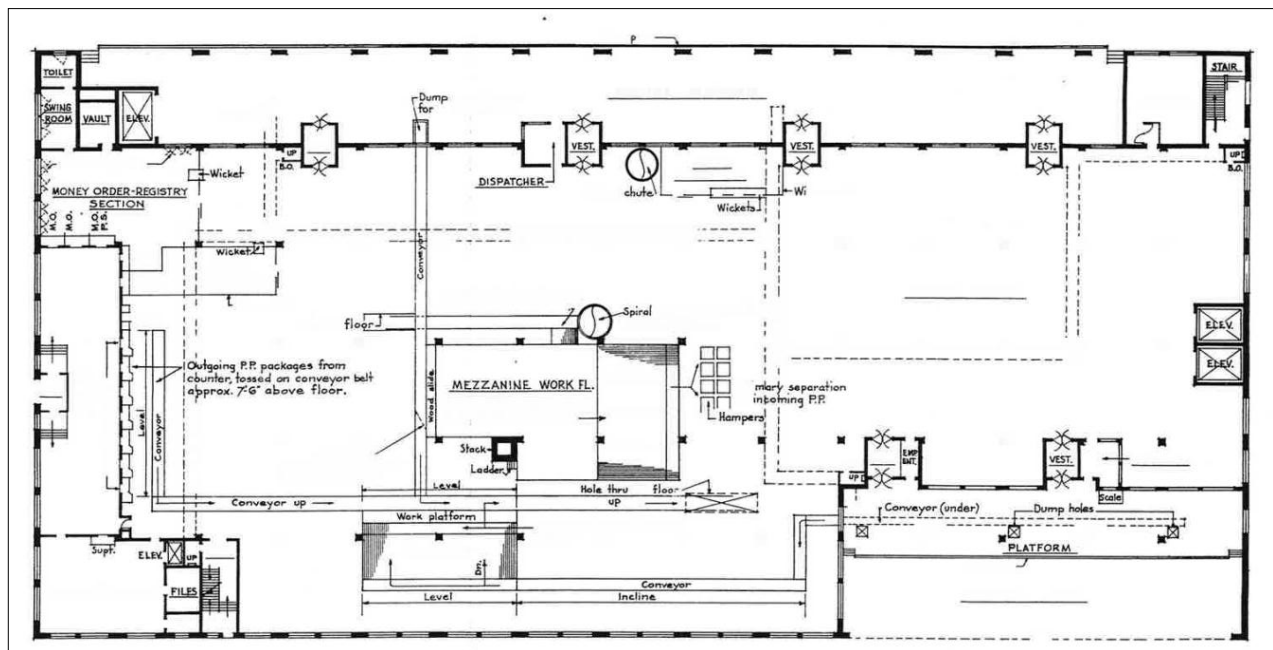
“conveyor for incoming P.P. from R.R. tracks below” and “Spiral chute from 2nd floor, to R.R. platform.” A prominent note on the drawing states:

All outgoing parcel post is carried by conveyor or elevator to 2nd floor, where it is separated, sacked, and dropped into chutes for R. R. platform. All incoming parcel post is carried by conveyor to mezzanine floor, where sacs are dumped onto a steel slide for primary separation at first floor.³⁵⁸

The second floor plan sheet informs:

All outgoing P.P. comes to this floor by conveyor or elevator. Parcels are separated, sacked, and dropped into spiral chute, which dumps at R.R. platform.³⁵⁹

Floor plans for the first and second floors of a Parcel Post building are shown in Figure 3-13 and 3-14.

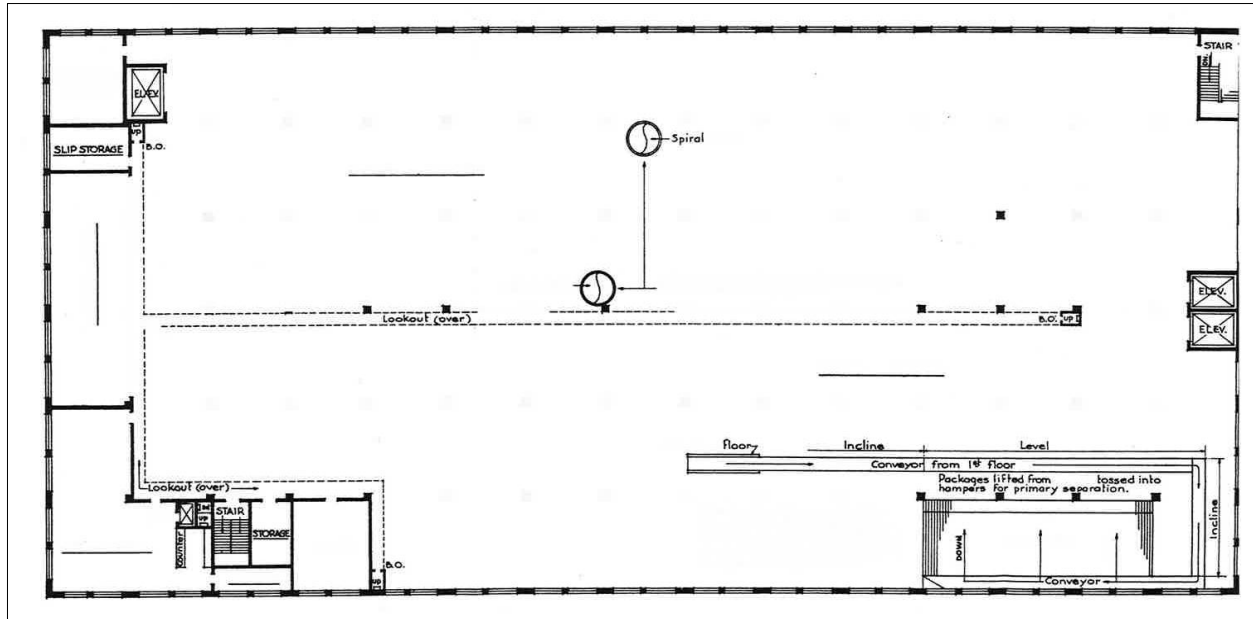


Source: GSA Post Office Building, 1947-8.

Figure 3-13: Plan -- Parcel Post Building, First Floor Plan

³⁵⁸ GSA Post Office Building, Plan – Parcel Post Building Dwg. No. 28-9-38, Sheet 2A of 3, 5-1-47, revised 3-1-48. Federal Works Agency, Public Buildings Administration, Washington D.C.

³⁵⁹ Ibid, Sheet 3 of 3.



Source: GSA Post Office Building, 1947-8.

Figure 3-14: Plan -- Parcel Post Building, Second Floor Plan

Space for processing mail was at a premium by the 1950s. The Post Office Department began the introduction of motorized loading conveyors, a hopper type conveyor, parcel post distributing conveyors, hand jacks, and electric low lift trucks to enable the maximum number of vehicles to arrive, unload and depart from the platform at the Parcel Post Annex at Houston, TX in 1952.



Source: Historic Silver Spring, Silver Spring Historical Society, Arcadia Publishing Co.

Figure 3-15: Blair Station Annex, Silver Spring, Maryland (1954.)

In 1954, the Blair Station Post Office Annex was constructed in Silver Spring, Maryland (Figure 3-15). About five times the size of the original post office, the annex was built as a two-story brick building and designed in the Modern style. The annex featured massive limestone

surrounds and steel sash fenestration, creating horizontal banding. It was the home of the first successful trial of Transorma, an automated mail sorting and processing machine from the Netherlands that was 13 feet tall and weighed 15 tons. The site was selected for the installation of the machine because of the very high mail volume.³⁶⁰

In 1961, one of the Post Office Department's goals for its commercial leasing program was to "provide adequate mail distribution facilities at the many new and expanding airports."

Preliminary mail processing layout plans were completed that year for new facilities at Chicago O'Hare Field and Los Angeles Airport Terminal. These projects emphasized mechanization and had a processing function. Another initiative mentioned in the report was "direct loading from Government Vehicle Service trucks to aircraft on the ramp. ... permitting the accumulation of more mail before dispatch time and direct dispatches of additional quantities of mail from local offices, by-passing the airport mail facility."³⁶¹ Although this process was referenced as being for delivery that was extremely time sensitive, it points out two distinct ways of handling airmail – processing it at the airport terminal annex, or trucking it directly from the sectional center or non-airport processing and distribution center to the airplane (Figure 3-16).



Source: The Postmaster General Reports on the Services of the United States Post Office Department during the Fiscal Year 1961

Figure 3-16: Trucks from Five New York City Stations Making Direct Connection with Transcontinental Plane to Provide Next Day Delivery of California Airmail.

³⁶⁰ (Berg, 2002)

³⁶¹ 1961

Emphasis continued on the truck to plane approach, and airport annex P&DC construction. In 1965 codified systems for mechanized airport mail facilities in San Francisco, Los Angeles, and Chicago O'Hare were installed and prototypes were planned for airport at Washington, D.C. and Houston. The next year's report boasts that exchanges between post office trucks and aircraft have increased to about 70 flights per day.³⁶² The report goes on to list advantages to this procedure:

1. Eliminate congestion at airport mail facilities (AMFs)
2. Secure maximum postal advantage from flights arriving close to the deadline for residential and first business delivery
3. Allow later closeout of airmail dispatches
4. Reduce postal and air carrier handling costs

Also in 1966, a new AMF was completed and occupied in Kansas City, and enlarged facilities were scheduled in Detroit, Minneapolis/St. Paul, and St. Louis. The report acknowledges that the need for AMFs will be decreasing as "originating sectional center facilities [SCFs/P&DCs] and large post offices accomplish more volume accumulations and more definitive sorting by ZIP Code, case distribution of letter mail will decrease at AMFs."³⁶³ More handling than processing or distribution functions would take place at the AMFs in the future. This did not, however, mean that AMFs would not continue to be built, as evidenced by the 1969 Los Angeles Airport Terminal Annex, depicted in the context on modernist architecture.

Annexes that were included in the survey sample include the Bradenton, Florida Annex and the Cincinnati, Ohio Annex. The Bradenton, Florida Annex, constructed in 1957, is a very plain utilitarian cement block building with three truck bays. It is located behind a streamlined Spanish Colonial Revival-influenced 1937 post office. Although identified as a parcel post annex, the building's interior does not contain any motorized loading conveyors, hopper type conveyors, parcel post distributing conveyors, hand jacks, or electric low lift trucks that were installed in the 1952 Houston, Texas annex described above. In fact, there is no machinery in the building at all.

The Cincinnati, Ohio Annex was constructed in 1963 and is part of a complex of four postal buildings, a P&DC, AMF and office tower. The P&DC is a large masonry, Stripped Classicism building constructed in 1932 that contains an ornate customer service post box lobby. The other buildings were constructed in the 1960s and 70s. The Cincinnati Annex is a Modern Style building with recessed ground floor covered with precast masonry panels and upper window wall, and cantilevered second and third floor characterized by precast masonry exterior panels and thin floor height irregularly spaced windows. The interior is open space divided by round concrete support columns and contains numerous conveyors, hoppers, jacks, and lifts. The building also has a large loading dock and numerous truck bays.

³⁶² United States Post Office Department, *Annual Report of the Postmaster General, United States Post Office Department, July 1, 1965 – June 30, 1966.*

³⁶³ *ibid.*

According to the master list of USPS properties, 18 annexes were constructed or occupied between 1940 and 1971. The list identifies different specific types of annexes, such as terminal annex, parcel post annex, carrier annex, and post office annex. The majority of these were constructed or occupied in the 1960s, and range in square footage from over 15,000 to more than 275,000 square feet.

The Post Office Annexes included in the field survey have the following in common:

- All properties are utilitarian in nature, are typically clad in CMU block or masonry panel, and have flat roofs.
- Exterior windows are fixed with frames made of wood, steel, or a combination of wood and metal.
- All properties featured between one and three truck bays.
- The annexes sometimes include public amenities, such as public counters, box lobbies, post office lobbies, and patron parking.
- Interior spaces include work rooms, mail sorting areas, lookout galleries, and loading docks.
- None of the surveyed annexes had superintendent's or postmaster's offices.

HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE EVALUATION

Criterion A: Associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history

- Area of Significance: Commerce
- Period of Significance: 1948 – 1971
- Level of Significance: Local level

Postal Annexes can be potentially eligible under Criterion A for Commerce. Associated with the growth of business related mail and the popularity of parcel post in the immediate post WWII years, postal annexes were often associated with railway stations and airports terminals. Postal annexes were also built for post offices, and became testing facilitates for new machinery needed to handle increased volumes. Post Office Annexes took on the additional processing and distribution functions in large metropolitan areas, or functioned as carrier annexes to support the branches and stations supported by large urban post offices. During the Period of Significance, Postal Annexes functioned in all the above capacities related to handling the business sector driven increase in volume.

The 1948 Postmaster's Annual Report credits the increased volume of mail to an "acceleration of business activity" and the "increased rates charged for express shipments", noting that these are rates are much higher than the Post Office Department's parcel post rates. Items such as

“typewriters, clothing, cooking utensils and shipments by wholesale concerns to retail outlets” that were formerly moved by express services were delivered in parcels too large to fit in mail sacks.³⁶⁴ Subsequently, not only did the number of parcels increase but also the weight and cubic volume of parcels, by 32 percent from 1945 to 1948. This exacerbated the shortage of space in post offices, requiring more square footage and more labor.

In 1952, the U.S. Congress enacted legislation that established weight and size limits on parcels shipped by the Post Office Department mainly due to concerns about the government subsidized Railway Express Agency going out of business. The legislation was successful and the Post Office Department saw a decrease in parcel post volume. In an effort to develop machinery to process the extra letter volume, postal annexes began housing experimental sorters, dumpers, hoppers, and conveyors in an effort to keep the mail constantly moving. After this, the postmasters’ annual report made frequent references to the annexes being used to test new and large machinery, but there were no references to new parcel post annex buildings except at airport terminals. In 1968, Congress expanded the size and weight of parcels that the Post Office Department could ship in the hope that parcel post business would increase.

REGISTRATION REQUIREMENTS

Post Office Annexes may be eligible under **Criterion A for Commerce** and should evidence integrity of location, setting, feeling, and association. Character-defining exterior features include a location next to adjacent postal facility, masonry exterior, flat roofs, truck bays, and some patron parking. Interior space includes a public service area typically retrofitted with modular units as opposed to service counters and public lobbies that are architecturally integrated into the building design. Behind the service counter is a large open work space with conveyors, hoppers, and sorting machinery, and a swing room.

Criterion A Registration Requirement Elements:

- Utilitarian facility proximate to other postal facilities
- Masonry or masonry panel exteriors, flat roofs, and steel frame windows
- Setting that includes some patron and employee parking and loading dock with and truck maneuvering space
- Interior work rooms that contain machinery such as conveyor belts, hoppers, and mail sorting equipment

The character-defining features of a Post Office Annex are highlighted on Figure 3-17.

³⁶⁴ 1948 Postmaster General’s Annual Report, page 2

Associated Property Types



CHARACTER DEFINING FEATURES	
CHARACTER DEFINING FEATURE	INTACT FOR NRHP
Masonry walls	Yes
Metal windows	Yes
Metal doors	Yes
Large work room	Yes
Multi-bay loading dock	Yes
Postal machinery	Yes
Flat roof	Yes
Adjacent to other postal facility	Yes



Source: URS

Figure 3-17: Post Office Annex

3.2.7 Property Type: Postal Complexes

DESCRIPTION

Consolidation of Post Office Department operations in the 1950s and 1960s led to the creation of postal complexes or campuses that combined a couple or several property types on one site, such as a P&DC, regional office, and VMF. The P&DCs were usually located in centralized areas, and were a rational location for regional or section offices after the decentralization of the Post Office Department. Further, VMFs, with their considerable truck bays and fleet operations, were often included in these complexes. An example of a postal complex is found in Omaha, Nebraska.

In 1963, the Post Office Department revised criteria for determining space needs in new and improved facilities. With the adoption of the ZIP Code, new mail handling problems emerged.

Emphasis was placed on “defining the functions of proposed major facilities which will serve as key points in future routing and distribution of the rapidly expanding mail load.”³⁶⁵ Guidelines entitled “Distribution and Operations Concepts” were used in facility planning to avoid delays in that had occurred due to imprecise definition of the function(s) of the new facility. Task forces consisting of local, regional and Headquarters personnel were assembled to expedite major facility projects by increasing coordination and communication, as the Post Office Department worked to keep up with every increasing volume.³⁶⁶

Although the primary source literature does not reference postal complexes, it specifically refers to “Major Facilities.” The 1968 Postmaster General’s Annual Report defines major facilities as “those that provide 50,000 square feet net interior and are usually located in large metropolitan areas.”³⁶⁷ Also in 1968, the “Five-Year Major Facility Plan” for the period of 1970 through 1974 was completed. Although it is not clear when a major facility included more than one building, the survey results do include few examples of postal complexes, or multi-building major facilities. As depicted in the image below, the Post Office Department was contemplating large facilities that involved several buildings.

³⁶⁵ United States Post Office Department, *The Postmaster General Reports on the Services of the United States Post Office Department during the Fiscal Year 1963*, p. 21

³⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 22

³⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p 125



Source: Postmaster General's Annual Report 1961

Figure 3-18: USPS Architects Rendering of Post Office and Garage Building, Omaha, Nebraska

Surveyed examples of postal complexes are characterized by the following:

- Grouping of three or more buildings that are connected by paved parking or vehicle maneuvering and storage areas.
- Located in large metropolitan areas, and include an office building, reflecting their role in regional or decentralized operations.
- At least one building has a combined net interior square footage exceeding 50,000 feet.
- Buildings can have processing and distribution functions and vehicle maintenance functions and facilities.
- Presence of an office building or tower distinguishes these complexes from groupings of post office and annex or P&DC and VMF.

HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE EVALUATION

Criterion A: Associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history

- Area of Significance: Politics/Government
- Period of Significance: 1963 – 1971
- Level of Significance: Local or Regional level

Postal Complexes potential eligible under Criterion A are significant to the decentralization of operations and implementation of a systemic network of operations. By combining several functions in one area, the Post Office Department developed facilities based on nodes of a network needed to expedite operations connected by and dependent on local, regional, and national transportation systems. These regional headquarters did more than represent the postal

service needs of a specific group of states or geographical boundary; they represented how the area's transportation network could facilitate the processing and delivery of mail throughout an interconnected and interdependent national network.

REGISTRATION REQUIREMENTS

Post Office Annexes may be eligible under **Criterion A for Politics/Government** and should evidence integrity of location, setting, feeling, and association. Character-defining exterior features include a location in a major metropolitan area, access to major roadways, and three or more buildings, including office tower and P&DC, connected with large surface pavement for parking and vehicle maneuvering.

Criterion A Politics/Government Registration Requirement Elements:

- Major metropolitan area near major roadway.
- A minimum of three buildings connected by paved parking vehicle maneuvering area.
- Net interior square footage greater than 50,000 for at least one building.
- A Post Office Department Office building and P&DC.

The character-defining features of Postal Complexes are highlighted on Figure 3-19.

Associated Property Types



CHARACTER DEFINING FEATURES	
CHARACTER DEFINING FEATURE	INTACT FOR NRHP
Masonry walls	Yes
Metal windows	Yes
Metal doors	Yes
Large work room	Yes
Multi-bay loading dock	Yes
Postal machinery	Yes
Flat roof	Yes
Adjacent to other postal facility	Yes



Source: URS

Figure 3-19: Postal Complexes

SECTION FOUR: SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The history of the United States Post Office Department from 1940 to 1971 is the story of a national institution undergoing rapid and large-scale change. Associated with the federal government since the founding fathers, the post office has played an important role in the lives of Americans through the history of the United States. The federal building program of the Great Depression's New Deal resulted in the Post Office Department becoming a widespread presence of the federal government throughout America, expressed in monumental buildings with public art. Administered through the Treasury Department's Office of the Supervising Architect, several of these Depression-era post offices were constructed between the years of 1940 and 1942, postdating the Great Depression but representing a legacy of the New Deal's Public Works Administration. World War II relocated millions of Americans as soldiers fighting throughout the world and as civilians laboring in the military-industrial complex. An effective United States postal system was regarded as essential to morale, and mail service to soldiers was free—and the volume of mail increased exponentially while the number of postal workers decreased.

The post-war years saw the decline of passenger rail service, implementation of the Interstate Highway System and Federal Housing Act, growth in the trucking and airline industries, and increasing demands on the United States Post Office Department. Population grew rapidly, and people moved to suburban areas linked to large cities, creating a need for more post offices and services in areas that had formerly been rural and serviced by fourth-class post offices in a general store. Parcel Post volume increased because rates were less expensive than freight services and involved few restrictions on the size and volume of parcels. Lacking federal appropriations for new post offices or facilities, the Post Office Department stressed a more efficient use of available space, including unused basements, for processing mail. Two other approaches focused on alternative ways to fund new construction and the mechanization of the mail processing and distribution process, which in many cases still relied on the Benjamin Franklin-era pigeon hole sorting process and mail carriers walking their routes.

New mail sorting machinery decreased processing time but also increased facility spatial needs, requiring large open spans to accommodate conveyors, hoppers, and sorters. The new machinery was initially developed and implemented in Parcel Post annexes, which had large open areas; however, these facilities sometimes lacked the truck loading docks needed to distribute the increasing volumes of mail. As passenger rail lines decreased during the 1950s, distribution of mail by truck overtook the rail mail cars. Major facility section centers, which came to be known as Processing and Distribution Centers (P&DCs), were constructed near freeways to process and distribute the mail within a radius ranging from 80 to 100 miles. These facilities contained large rows of truck bays and had ample vehicle maneuvering areas. Mail carriers acquired vehicles specially designed to service the less dense, more spread-out suburban addresses. The Post Office Department found it was more economical to service its own fleet rather than rely on commercial services and developed Vehicle Maintenance Facilities (VMFs), or lubritoriums.

The 1960s saw a boom in postal facility construction, thanks to federal appropriations and expansion of lease authority needed to develop these facilities. As the mail volume continued to grow, the spatial constraints of the existing Post Office Department physical plant became an increasing problem. In response, the United States Congress gave the Post Office Department expanded leasing authority, and the lease purchase program was developed. Contractors bid on projects that were constructed using general guidelines and suggested designs for small post offices, typically in the Modern style that stressed the cleanliness and efficiency associated with modernization. Large projects developed as prototypes, such as the Providence, Rhode Island P&DC and the Gateway P&DC in Oakland, California, established essential elements of these facilities, such as the work systems zones consisting of the Parcel Post machine system zone, classified dispatch storage system zone, and the loading platform zone. Across the country, new federal office buildings and federal district courthouses also housed post offices, and P&DCs began to be constructed as large federal buildings rather than agency purpose-specific buildings. Another trend in Post Office Department construction was the development of complexes to serve as regional centers. These concentrated groupings of buildings contained an office building or tower, along with P&DCs, a public service post office, and often a VMF.

Despite the numerous attempts to accommodate the increased volume and service demand, the Post Office Department experienced systemic problems in the 1960s, a decade marked by great social unrest and cultural change throughout the United States. In 1966, the Chicago Post Office, the largest mail processing facility in the world, shut down due to a huge backlog of mail needing to be processed. Congressional hearings on this economically crippling event revealed that the postmaster general had little authority to administer this national service due to congressional controls. Widespread labor unrest resulted in the Postal Workers' strike of 1970 for the right to collective bargaining. Again, major disruptions of mail service occurred throughout the country. The Postal Reorganization Act of 1970 did away with the old United States Post Office Department. In its place, the new United States Postal Service (USPS) was established as a corporation instead of a cabinet-level federal agency.

The identification and evaluation of Post Office Department properties from the study period involved an examination of two very distinct periods and groups of properties. Post offices constructed in the early pre-WWII 1940s are thematically associated with the New Deal federal government building program. Many National Register of Historic Places (NRHP) individual, district, and multiple property documents have identified and documented these buildings from the 1930s, but do not address the same building type from the early 1940s. This is presumably due to the NRHP 50-year threshold for a resource to be considered historic, and the date of documentation. Post office buildings constructed in the early 1940s are almost iconic examples of America's Great Depression history, especially those with murals, and are eligible for listing in the NRHP provided they exhibit acceptable levels of historic integrity.

The other major period of construction as identified in the context Study is the 1960s. Construction during this period stressed modernity, efficiency, and adaptability. Part of the lease-purchase program was contractors' ability to find alternative uses for these buildings if the Post

Office Department did not renew or establish their lease. P&DCs were designed to accommodate large machinery and large numbers of trucks near freeways. They do not represent the public face of the Post Office Department, and without the postal processing machinery, manifest the design elements of a typical warehouse during this era that could accommodate the processing and distribution of many types of commodities. Post offices that are part of a larger federal building or federal district courts are an expression of the growing physical presence of the federal government in communities across America, as the federal government grew in response to increasing population and re-conception of its role in everyday life. Annexes and VMFs have specific support functions and are not inherently postal property building types, but are generic buildings that derive their association with the Post Office Department by their proximity to other postal facilities.

Although these 1960s buildings may not have architecturally notable exteriors, or even look like postal facilities from the outside, the small “Thousands Series” post offices have distinct interior plans that delineate public and private space and contain character-defining elements such as walls of post boxes, service counters, work rooms, swing rooms, and postmaster offices. They are distinct building types and represent strong association with a community’s communication with the larger world. These post offices communicate their historic identity and function through interior elements.

The Combined Federal Building Post Office type does not rely solely on its interior elements to communicate its historic identity and function. The architectural impact of this property type was often expressed through a monolithic exterior that communicated a unified presence of the federal government in the community, as discussed in the Associated Property Types section. The 1970 Postal Reorganization Act removed the federal government status of the Post Office Department, converting the operation into a corporation. The Combined Federal Building Post Office, therefore, represents a historic period when the post office was very much a part of the large and expanding federal government, rather than an individual federal agency.

Recommendation #1 – Improve Quality of Data Included in eFMS

The first recommendation for analyzing postal properties constructed or occupied between 1940 and 1971 focuses on the need to develop a better understanding of information in the USPS the eFMS property database. This database contains some inconsistencies in the names and functions of units, no doubt reflecting the need to adapt existing physical plants to changing needs. Unfortunately, this complicates identifying and being able to analyze discrete property types. For example, buildings that have the operational capacity of a P&DC may be labeled as a Main Post Office. Changes in postal operations over time have presumably resulted in buildings changing functions. What once may have been an Annex or Station now functions as a post office, as former suburbs have incorporated or been annexed into adjacent municipalities.

Recommendation #2 – Analyze eFMS Data for Regional Variations

The second recommendation would be to analyze the property data for regional trends. The available data was organized to determine the most efficient survey methodology needed to

provide sufficient information for a meaningful context Study on a national scale. Initially, URS also charted USPS real estate record building types, noting high occurrences of a particular type by region. Square footage and construction or occupancy date were additional factors considered for regional classifications.

Table 4-1 lists the number of USPS buildings that were constructed or occupied for each year during the study period.

Table 4-1: Number of USPS Buildings Constructed or Occupied Between 1940 and 1971 by Year

Building Occupancy/ Construction	No.	Building Occupancy/ Construction	No.	Building Occupancy/ Construction	No.	Building Occupancy/ Construction	No.
1940	193	1948	2	1956	5	1964	71
1941	122	1949	1	1957	10	1965	106
1942	20	1950	2	1958	26	1966	116
1943	0	1951	7	1959	39	1967	128
1944	3	1952	7	1960	68	1968	58
1945	1	1953	7	1961	98	1969	75
1946	1	1954	9	1962	122	1970	63
1947	0	1955	14	1963	61	1971	34

Source: URS and USPS eFMS

A comparison of this information to a regional breakdown could show, for example, that a region with a large percentage of their USPS facilities constructed or occupied in the early to mid-1950s is markedly different from the national USPS facility development norm during the study period. This could indicate a social, economic, or other type of noteworthy trend that is distinctive to the region.

As an example, an analysis of Post Office Department built or occupied buildings during the 1940–1971 timeframe in the Southeast region shows similar dominant property types that characterize the national context. As Table 4-2 below indicates, the most prevalent building type is the Main Office, with the majority of these being constructed between 1940 and 1942 and between 1959 and 1971, and ranging in size from 5,000 to 20,000 square feet.

Table 4-2: Southeast Region USPS Buildings Constructed or Occupied 1940 – 1971

Building Type	Year Occupied			Square Footage							
	No.	1940-42	1959-71	0	<5K	<10K	<20K	<30K	<50K	<100K	>100K
Main Office	121	34	87	8	25	38	29	13	4	2	2
Branch	10	1	9	2	2	1	4			1	
Station	18	3	15	2	11	3	2				
Annex	2		2			1		1			
VMF/ Garage	3		3		2	1					
P&DC	1		1		1						
Other*	3	1	2		1	1				1	
Totals	158	39	119	12	42	45	35	14	4	4	2
*Other includes retail centers, federal office buildings, and parcel post facilities											

Source: URS and USPS eFMS

Although these figures are mostly consistent with national statistics, this information does suggest that more 10,000 to 20,000 square foot facilities were built in the Southeast during this period than in the nation as a whole. This could indicate fewer branch or station type post offices built in this region because it was less urbanized than other areas of the country.

Further data analysis on regional building trends could also provide new information on national programs, such as decentralization. Regional implementation of new construction programs could be correlated to the implementation of the Post Office Department’s decentralization program, which took place over many years and may have been driven by the development of the large section centers. This type of analysis could provide further information on how and where the Post Office Department physical plant grew during the study period.

Recommendation #3 – Develop State-Based Historic Contexts

State-level significance should be considered for individual properties as state-wide contexts for the study period are developed. This especially applies to resources such as P&DCs, which historically had a functional area of an 80- to 100-mile radius. Larger-scale resources, such as Postal Complexes and Combined Federal Buildings, likewise have the potential for statewide significance.

An anomaly that is apparent through the analysis of the property database and the research is the substantial number of postal facilities identified as occupied or constructed in Missouri during the study period. States that had the largest number of facilities were California, New York, Illinois, and Pennsylvania followed by Missouri. It is logical that states with the largest or fastest-growing populations would need the most postal facilities, but Missouri did not have the fifth largest population or experience a great deal of growth during the period. Between 1900 and 1950, Missouri was, in fact, one of the 10 slowest-growing states. Despite this, according to the

1950 population census, Missouri ranked eleventh of the 48 states and St. Louis was the ninth largest statistical metropolitan area in the country. By 1970, St. Louis had lost sufficient population to drop in its ranking to the tenth largest statistical metropolitan area. Although the number of postal facilities in the state during this time could suggest some political favoritism, the literature reviewed for this Study did not provide any evidence for this, nor any other potential explanation for this anomaly.

Recommendation # 4– Continue Organizing Historic Research Files to Make Information Electronically Accessible to Future Researchers

As postal facilities are disposed of and re-purposed, a concerted effort should be made to collect and archive construction plans and architectural drawings, and develop a database of this information. Although the standardization of designs and plans was often stated as a goal of postal facility design and construction, rapid changes in the circumstances in which the Post Office Department had to meet demand for services, coupled with the reality of being controlled by the legislative and executive branches of government, resulted in changes to planned operations and facilities. A more robust collection of these primary source design materials would provide a better understanding of the decision-making process that resulted in the period's building stock.

The Post Office Department during this period was a strong presence of the federal government in everyday American life. While evidence of inefficiencies and patronage are apparent, the Department's efforts to keep a nationwide system operational during a period when the services it provided and clients it served dramatically changed and it had limited control over allocation of resources, are remarkable. The retail cost of mailing an item through the United States Post Office Department never matched the value the Department actually provided the American people, especially American business, which was mostly responsible for the vast increase in mail volume during this period.

Operating deficits sustained by the Post Office Department year after year could almost be regarded as a large national economic development subsidy, the cost of which was shared by all citizens. With business today now dependent on electronic transmissions and transactions, further study of this period of national postal service should focus on the economic role the Post Office Department played during the 1950 and 1960s, which although marked by social and cultural upheaval, was also characterized by extensive expansion of the American economy. Such information could better illuminate the contribution of the Post Office Department on a community's economic development and suggest further levels of significance under a local or even regional commercial historic context. In addition, as we continue to debate the role of the federal government in everyday life and the Nation's economic vitality, such an analysis could enrich the discussion.

Recommendation #5– Develop a Programmatic Approach to NHPA Section 106 and 110 Responsibilities Regarding Property Disposal and Ongoing Historic Property Management

The USPS is subject to provisions of the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA) of 1966. In particular, two sections of the Nation’s most important historic preservation legislation must be met by federal agencies when programs or projects have the potential to affect historic properties (i.e., those that are listed or eligible for listing in the NRHP). Section 106 of the NHPA requires federal agencies to take into account the effects of their undertakings on historic properties and afford the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation (ACHP) a reasonable opportunity to comment on such undertakings. Section 110 of the NHPA describes the government’s responsibility for historic preservation in the management of properties under federal ownership or control. The National Park Service published Section 110, *Standards and Guidelines for Federal Agency Historic Preservation Programs Pursuant to the National Historic Preservation Act*, on April 24, 1998 (http://www.nps.gov/history/hps/fapa_110.htm).

Although the USPS continues to actively manage its historic properties using a variety of techniques, its new operational business plan, entitled “Network Rationalization” or “Network Optimization,” has been subject to intense negative publicity over the past year from a variety of organizations and individual citizens. At the core of this plan is the sale of numerous excess post offices and P&DCs across the United States in order to reduce the number of facilities owned and operated by USPS, coupled with a corresponding reduction in the number of USPS personnel. Both efforts are central to USPS’s plans to stem significant operating deficits and reorganize operations to better match services to existing postal volume realities.

In early June 2012, the National Trust for Historic Preservation (NTHP), the Nation’s largest and most well-known historic preservation advocacy organization, included “Historic Post Office Buildings” in its national list of 11 Most Endangered Properties (<http://www.preservationnation.org/issues/11-most-endangered/>), highlighting one representative case in Geneva, Illinois. The press release for this program stated:

Last year, the U.S. Postal Service identified nearly 4,400 post offices—large and small—that it plans to study for closure. Unfortunately, city officials and local preservationists who identified new buyers or uses for endangered post offices often find themselves frustrated by a lack of information and guidance from the U.S. Postal Service. In Geneva, developers interested in purchasing and rehabbing the downtown post office gave up because they could not get timely or clear answers from officials. Although the U.S. Postal Service has announced that it will seek to cut costs through reduced hours of operation rather than closures, many post offices are currently shuttered and many more face uncertain futures. The U.S. Postal Service needs to define and implement a clear process that will protect the historic buildings in its inventory.

Recommendation 5a: Section 106 Approach

USPS Federal Preservation Officer (FPO) Dallan Wordekemper held preliminary discussions with staff of the ACHP in early 2012 about pursuing a Section 106 Program Alternative (i.e., a

streamlined set of procedures for implementing Section 106 on a large scale in lieu of standard building-by-building Section 106 consultation). Since that time, however, no further development of this approach has yet occurred, and the agency continues to struggle through case-by-case compliance for each property that is sold. This means that for every post office that is sold out of federal ownership, the specific requirements of Section 106 must be followed step-by-step until resolved, a process that involves consultation and negotiation with multiple state and local parties, including State Historic Preservation Offices (SHPOs), federally recognized Indian tribes/Native Hawaiian organizations, local governments, individuals and organizations, and the public. This places tremendous time and cost pressures on the FPO and regional real estate specialists.

In June 2012, the USPS FPO indicated that he was involved in over 70 separate Section 106 actions nationwide. Clearly, current staffing levels cannot fully meet the needs required to carry out this responsibility in a timely manner, contributing to frustrated buyers and developers who may ultimately walk away. Additionally, in this climate of severe budget deficits and limited funding, every opportunity for the USPS to save money should be considered. Because the USPS will continue efforts to sell many of its historic post offices over the next 1 to 5 years, concrete steps to efficiently meet Section 106 and Section 110 responsibilities must occur in the next 6 to 12 months, if these efforts are not to be frustrated by a lack of clear guidance and information.

To meet challenges like those faced by the USPS, ACHP Section 106 regulations allow development of “program alternatives” instead of the usual Section 106 process. The regulations list five types of program alternatives, including a) alternate procedures, which can be adopted by an agency in lieu of the Section 106 regulations; b) Programmatic Agreements (PA); c) exempted categories of activities; d) standard treatments for certain types of resources and impacts; and e) program comments. The most commonly used approach is the Programmatic Agreement (PA). According to the ACHP, a PA is developed:

1. When effects on historic properties are similar and repetitive or are multi-state or regional in scope;
2. When effects on historic properties cannot be fully determined prior to approval of an undertaking;
3. When non-federal parties are delegated major decision-making responsibilities;
4. Where routine management activities are undertaken at federal installations, facilities, or other land-management units; or
5. Where other circumstances warrant a departure from the normal Section 106 process.

Under any program alternative the USPS is still responsible for carrying out the key components of the regulations but can use streamlined procedures.

It is clear that the sale of historic post office buildings and P&DCs would benefit from this approach. The USPS could implement either a single nationwide PA that applies to actions in all states or a state-based PA that applies to all actions in a particular state. Given the USPS

schedule for program implementation, state-based PAs may be preferable because they are more quickly negotiated. To develop one or more decision documents, a number of actions are required:

- Initiation of the process through coordination with the ACHP and holding 6 to 12 meetings with key staff to review document(s).
- Coordination with National Conference of State Historic Preservation Officers (NCSHPO) and coordinating with a working committee of selected SHPOs (probably 6 to 10) (nationwide PA, only).
- Identification of consulting parties (potentially other national organizations, such as the NTHP, other state-level historic preservation organizations, and local governments).
- Meetings with USPS FPO, real estate specialists, and USPS legal counsel to develop core concepts for the agreements.
- Development of up to eight drafts of the agreement.
- Assisting the USPS FPO with staffing for nationwide meetings with multiple organizations to outline the key components of the document.
- For a state-based PA, a combination of the actions outlined in the first five bullets would be needed, but focused on a given state.

Either type of PA would require the USPS to incorporate a variety of components to meet its responsibilities under Section 106, such as:

- Documenting how historic property identification and NRHP evaluations will be completed for both post offices and other facility types (using, for example, this report).
- Outlining steps the agency will take to avoid adverse effects associated with reuse of historic properties (such as reviewing rehabilitation plans to ensure they meet the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation*).
- Outlining steps the agency will take to avoid adverse effects associated with the sale of historic properties (such as developing legally enforceable Preservation Covenants that will ensure that historic features of post offices and other facilities will be preserved so that historic properties will be protected in perpetuity).
- Outlining mid- and long-term steps the agency will take to meet its Section 110 responsibilities.
- Documenting any other steps that USPS can take to mitigate adverse effects.

Recommendation 5b: Section 110 Approach

Mid- to long-term agency cultural resource management program components would be identified under this section of technical services. For example, two particular areas involving USPS management of historic properties have been highlighted for improvement. The first area

focuses on the need for clearer guidance on using national historic preservation standards and guidelines in historic building rehabilitation. The second area—highlighted by many as insufficient for meeting developer needs—is the need for information on how developers might take advantage of federal and state tax incentive programs when rehabilitating historic properties, and how assuming the cost of managing an easement could be offset by the corresponding decrease in the local tax valuation of the property.

With this in mind, one key outcome of this Study should be the development of written training materials for use of regional real estate specialists and potential purchasers that provides guidance on how they can successfully receive federal and/or state tax credits for rehabilitating USPS buildings that are listed, or eligible for listing, in the NRHP. The training materials should be developed by a Cultural Resources Management consultant with detailed knowledge of USPS operations and historic resources, with significant involvement of another subconsultant knowledgeable about historic property reuse and financing mechanisms.

Because purchasers of historic buildings would be subject to requirements of the *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation*, the goal of the training would be to place more specific information in the hands of developers prior to the execution of sales of historic properties, so that they recognize the benefit of the buildings' historic status as manifested in significant tax savings rather than see protective measures as a hindrance to their reuse. This effort would involve preparing materials on the federal investment tax credit and gathering information on other similar tax state-level incentive programs for historic building rehabilitation. A related component of project work would be the delivery of training, via webinar or in-person workshops, in all six USPS Facilities Department regions. These actions would result in accelerated de-accessioning of historic buildings *with appropriate preservation controls*, demonstrating the USPS' commitment to historic preservation and compliance with the NHPA. This would be viewed by national and state preservation interests much more favorably than the current situation.

Other long-term actions that could be taken include: 1) developing a system through which one or more state or not-for-profit historic preservation organizations would receive funding to complete annual historic preservation covenant reviews; 2) producing Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) documentation for selected significant building types (post offices, P&DCs, Annexes, etc.); and 3) developing information for public education (such as a summary of the Nationwide Historic Context Study or a Web site entry on the same).

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Appendix A
USPS 2011 eFMS Master List of Properties Database

Appendix B
URS USPS Property Survey Database

Appendix C

URS USPS Property Survey Forms, attached as disc

Appendix D
USPS Chronology of Significant Events