

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received

NOV 27 1987

date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Maine Central Railroad General Office Building

and or common

2. Location

street & number 222-224 St. John Street

N/A not for publication

city, town Portland,

N/A vicinity of

state Maine

code

ME

county Cumberland

code

005

3. Classification

Category

- district
- building(s)
- structure
- site
- object

Ownership

- public
  - private
  - both
- Public Acquisition**
- in process
  - being considered

Status

- occupied
  - unoccupied
  - work in progress
- Accessible**
- yes: restricted
  - yes: unrestricted
  - no

Present Use

- agriculture
  - commercial
  - educational
  - entertainment
  - government
  - industrial
  - military
- museum
  - park
  - private residence
  - religious
  - scientific
  - transportation
  - other:

4. Owner of Property

name First Atlantic Corporation

street & number 222 St. John Street

city, town Portland,

\_\_\_\_\_ vicinity of

state Maine 04102

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Cumberland County Registry of Deeds

street & number

city, town Portland,

state Maine 04101

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title N/A

has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date \_\_\_\_\_ federal \_\_\_\_\_ state \_\_\_\_\_ county \_\_\_\_\_ local

depository for survey records

city, town

state

## 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Dominating the western side of St. John Street the (former) Maine Central Railroad General Office Building is an impressive three-story Romanesque Revival style brick building covered by a hip roof. Its E-shaped configuration embraces a pair of landscaped courtyards.

The solidity and permanence of the building is achieved through the use of stone, brick and repetition of patterns. The building is executed in pressed red brick with Conway, New Hampshire granite used for ashlaring. The building is situated on a sloping lot and because of this the back side of the building appears to be four stories with its entryway in the basement while the front side is viewed as three stories.

The building's three main entrances (facing east toward St. John Street) are essentially the same in appearance. The wide, round arched entrances are flanked on both sides by two-story bay windows. Each story in the bays contains three curved two-over-two double-hung sash windows and internal storm windows surmounted by two-pane transoms. A heavy granite belt course with decorative modillion blocks separates the bays from the third story. The latter features paired double-hung sash in the middle bay and trios of sash over the bay windows. On either side of the arched entrances marble rosettes are set into the red brick. Coupled windows are located above the arch. The granite aslar trim is utilized throughout the building around all windows, quoins and chimney caps and is used as a decorative belt course between the second and third story. Three granite external stairways and stairwells lead from street-level down to the basement.

Each of the hyphens of the "E" plan is a five-bay extension from the main north-south block. However, the easternmost two bays project beyond the plane of the inner three. The bays contain paired two-over-two double-hung sash windows and two-pane transoms on the first two stories. A seven-bay connector employing a fenestration pattern similar to the one on the hyphens stretches between each of the entrance wings.

The rear elevation is an expansive wall of masonry twenty-five bays in width. it is interrupted only by a newly built arched entrance portico in the middle of the elevation and an historic addition at the northwest corner. This flat roofed two-story brick addition features a tall basement level punctuated by one window on each side and four along the rear. This pattern is repeated on the upper story.

The hipped roof supports several dormers. Those located above the three entrances have low pitched hipped roofs while others are a modified shed style with glass roofs to act as skylights. In addition, there are three actual skylights in two wings.

The interior features of the building, although at times obscured by a recent rehabilitation, are largely intact. In the two oldest wings wainscotting was used throughout but in the third wing, the executive wing, oak chairmolding replaced the poplar wainscotting.

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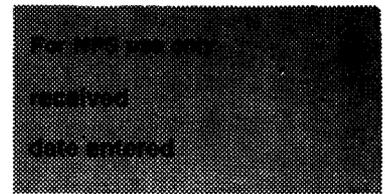
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Each bay was designed to house a manager's office and each one contained a private bath. Dumbwaiters, used for moving large and heavy objects, are present in two of the wings (now used as electrical conduits). The three original stairways in each wing have been either enclosed, sealed and or used as a skylight. However, all of the woodwork has been left in place where possible helping to maintain the building's integrity.

The structure contains ten to twelve large vaults which were used for storage of records. Several of these were used recently for elevator shafts but many still contain Maine Central's records. These vaults were constructed with safety in mind. Vaults which are positioned directly over other vaults have three to four foot arches to protect above and below from fire as well as to distribute the immense weight of the records.

The main corridor which runs down the spine of the "E" connects all three wings. The executive wing is the most outstanding and architecturally satisfying wing in the building, a characteristic quite common in administrative buildings. This wing housed the boardroom, the president's and the vice-president's offices.

The boardroom has raised oak panelling with detailed window and crown moldings. It contains the original furnishings. The boardroom bathroom has marbled floors and six foot marbled splash walls. The sink is an unusual porcelain pedestal sink and the oak doors to the two stalls match the oak panelling in the boardroom. The president's office has matched oak panelling covering eight of the twelve foot high walls. An ornately hand carved oak mantel surrounds the spacious fireplace. The vice-president's office is much the same as the president's.

## 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400–1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500–1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600–1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

**Specific dates** 1889, 1898, 1902, 1916 **Builder/Architect** Bradlee, Winslow & Wetherill;  
Winslow & Wetherill, Architects

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Constructed over a twenty-eight year period from 1888 to 1916, the (former) Maine Central Railroad General Office Building is the largest and among the most architecturally prominent buildings associated with one of the state's most significant transportation networks. It is also an important Maine commission by the Boston architectural firm of Bradlee, Winslow and Wetherill.

The (former) Maine Central office building served as the administrative headquarters for Maine's largest railroad. The Maine Central was chartered in 1856 and organized in 1862. Although Maine Central's genesis can be traced back to the Calais Railroad Company and the Bangor and Old Town Railway Company, at the time of its organization it was comprised of the Androscoggin and Kennebec Railroad Company, the Kennebec and Portland Railroad Company and the Penobscot and Kennebec Railroad Company. These three railroads enabled the Maine Central to play a leading role in the development of Maine's major industrial and resort communities. This is evidenced today by the prominence of such cities as Lewiston, Augusta, Waterville, and Bangor in the interior and Portland, Brunswick and Bath on the coast.

Through its many acquisitions Maine Central provided a comprehensive transportation system. Tis system at times included steamers and ferries, and in more recent years a bus line and an airline (of which Amelia Earhart was vice-president). Committed to its role in the development of Maine, Maine Central endeavored to heighten the attraction of wealthy patrons to Maine by providing timely and convenient travel routes. Two of these routes terminated at resorts owned by Maine Central, the Mount Kineo House on Moosehead Lake and the Samoset in Rockland.

The present building was the second facility constructed in Portland expressly for use by the railroad's administrative staff. Between 1875 and the relocation of the offices to the St. John Street location, the office complex was housed in a building on Commercial Street. By the 1880s, however, Maine Central had outgrown this space and plans were made to develop a new general headquarters. Maine Central contracted Bradlee, Winslow, and Wetherill, of Boston, Massachusetts to design a new larger administrative office building. The new building was to be erected in Railroad Square near the new Portland Union Station. (The latter was designed by the same firm but is no longer extant.)

Bradlee, Winslow, and Wetherill responded to Maine Central's needs by designing a two-story Romanesque Revival style building. The design allowed for expansion horizontally as well as vertically. M. C. Foster and Sons of Waterville, Maine were contracted for the construction and on October 8, 1888, the foundation was laid. The building upon completion in 1889 contained 17,000 square feet of floor space and was expected to provide sufficient room for future growth. However, by 1892 business had grown so rapidly, spurred on in part by the increased summer passenger traffic, that another two-story addition was added at the rear of the building which provided an

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

- Dole, R. F. "Story of Maine Central Office Building". Typed manuscript on file at the Maine Historic Preservation Commission, Augusta.
- Peters, Bradley L. Maine Central Railroad Company: A Story of Success and Independence. Maine Central Railroad Company, 1976.

## 10. Geographical Data

Acree of nominated property 5.2

Quadrangle name Portland West, Maine

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

### UTM References

A 

1	9	3	9	6	7	7	0	4	8	3	3	6	7	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

C 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

D 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

E 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

F 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

G 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

H 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

### Verbal boundary description and justification

The nominated property of 5.2 acres occupies the City of Portland, Tax Map 64, Lot A2.

### List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code

state	code	county	code

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Kathryn A. Miller/Kirk F. Mohney, Architectural Historian

organization Maine Historic Preservation Commission date October, 1987

street & number 55 Capitol Street, Station #65 telephone 207/289-2132

city or town Augusta, state Maine 04333

## 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

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

State Historic Preservation Officer signature *Eula S. Fitzsimonds*

title S.H.P.O. date 11/24/87

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

*Patrick W. Andrews*

date 1/2/88

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

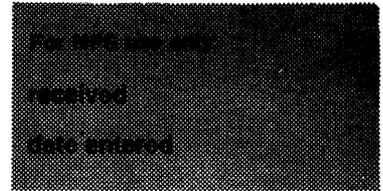
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additional 2,300 square feet.

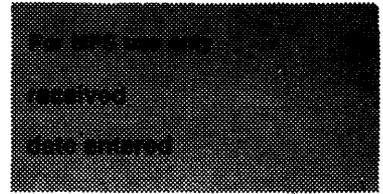
Within six years, despite the 1893-97 depression, Maine Central was again in need of more space and the original hipped roof was raised in 1898 to accommodate a third floor thereby adding 5,800 square feet to the already existing 19,300 square feet. This additional space was soon found to be inadequate and in 1902 another wing was added to the southern side of the existing building thus forming a U-shaped structure and increasing the square footage by 8,600 square feet. Again in need of space, Maine Central in 1916 added a third wing to the southern side of the 1902 wing thereby creating an E-shaped building and completing the shape and dimension of the building as it is today.

The firm of Bradlee, Winslow and Wetherill was composed of the partners Nathaniel J. Bradlee (1829-1888), Walter T. Winslow (1843-1909) and George Homans Wetherill (1854-1930). Design work on the Maine Central commission had apparently begun prior to Bradlee's death in 1888, but his successors completed the scheme as well as its subsequent additions. In addition to the Maine Central Railroad General Office Building and Union Station, the firm in its various partnerships is known to have designed the Unitarian Church (1878) in Brunswick, an addition to the Sea Shore House (1886) in Old Orchard Beach and the Bay Point Hotel in Rockland (1889).

The period of significance of the (former) Maine Central Railroad General Office Building terminates in 1916 with the final major addition.

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Bradbury, James W. "Railroad Reminiscences". Collections of the Maine Historical Society, Series 2, Vol. 7.