

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR FEDERAL PROPERTIES

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED MAY 12 1986

DATE ENTERED JUN 18 1986

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

United States Post Office

AND/OR COMMON

Central Square Post Office; Cambridge "A Branch" Post Office

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

770 Massachusetts Avenue

N/A NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Cambridge

N/A VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Eighth Congressional District

STATE

Massachusetts 02139

CODE

0170

COUNTY

Middlesex

CODE

017

3 CLASSIFICATION**CATEGORY**☐ DISTRICT☒ BUILDING(S)☐ STRUCTURE☐ SITE☐ OBJECT**OWNERSHIP**☒ PUBLIC☐ PRIVATE☐ BOTH**PUBLIC ACQUISITION**

N/A IN PROCESS

☐ BEING CONSIDERED**STATUS**☒ OCCUPIED☐ UNOCCUPIED☐ WORK IN PROGRESS**ACCESSIBLE**☒ YES: RESTRICTED☐ YES: UNRESTRICTED☐ NO**PRESENT USE**☐ AGRICULTURE☐ MUSEUM☐ COMMERCIAL☐ PARK☐ EDUCATIONAL☐ PRIVATE RESIDENCE☐ ENTERTAINMENT☐ RELIGIOUS☒ GOVERNMENT☐ SCIENTIFIC☐ INDUSTRIAL☐ TRANSPORTATION☐ MILITARY☐ OTHER:**4 AGENCY**

REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS: (If applicable)

New England Field Real Estate and Buildings Office

STREET & NUMBER

1050 Waltham Street

CITY, TOWN

Lexington

N/A VICINITY OF

STATE

Massachusetts 02173

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTIONCOURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Registry of Deeds, Cambridge Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

208 Cambridge Street

CITY, TOWN

Cambridge

STATE

Massachusetts 02141

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

None

DATE

☐ FEDERAL ☐ STATE ☐ COUNTY ☐ LOCALDEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

☒ EXCELLENT

☐ GOOD

☐ FAIR

☐ DETERIORATED

☐ RUINS

☐ UNEXPOSED

CHECK ONE

☐ UNALTERED

☒ ALTERED

CHECK ONE

☒ ORIGINAL SITE

☐ MOVED DATE _____

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The building is surrounded on three sides by a granite wall; the site slopes down towards the rear. In plan, the Post Office is fronted with a wide vestibule and public lobby flanked by the Postmaster's office and second floor stairway to the left and various service areas for the workers to the right. Beyond the service screen is the workroom, mail vestibule and platform.

Nine wide granite steps with a landing create the main approach to the building. They are flanked by wing walls which terminate with a block-like pedestal base inset with a decorative panel and topped with a series of low, "stubby" wrought-iron lantern fixtures. The building's base slightly projects, topped with a thin band of Virginia black serpentine marble. The front of the building is a two-story public-access block which is attached to a large one-story (plus basement wing) work area. The front (northeast) elevation is an eleven-bay, steel-framed structure with a three-bay central entrance. The metal-framed wing windows are within deeply recessed vertical slots running from base to entablature; the different floors are marked by a metal spandrel panel with an infill of Virginia black serpentine marble and a centered square of cast white metal with Art Deco detailing. The windows pivot open in a casement fashion. Four wide, flat pilasters mark the entrance pavilion; they are acalloped and topped with simple capitals with a modified Greek key motif. A plain architrave frames each of the three sets of entry doors; above are recessed, wrought-iron framed windows with the same spandrel panels as in the flanking windows. The top of the building has a projecting massive entablature with expressed architrave, denticulated cornice, and large, round decorative palques within the plain frieze located above the windows. A low parapet with a central crest, bracketed by two seated human draped figures (on the left holding a boat, the right holding a book), caps the central entry bays.

The architectural treatment of the front continues to the sides of the two-story block for a width of three bays. The entablature area stops shortly after it wraps around to the rear side of public block. Basement windows are covered by decorative wrought-iron grilles. The rear part of the building is eight bays in length, containing basement and first floor windows. A belt course above the base is carried around the remainder of the building as is a low, plain entablature with a simple projecting architrave and cornice. The rear (southwest) elevation contains a covered truck loading platform which leads to the basement and elevators to the workroom above.

One enters the building through the vestibule which is surfaced in marble. Marble cabinets that house heaters and iron grilles are found below the iron-framed, glass panel windows. The ends of the vestibule angle out and contain a pair of replaced doors. Another set of doors is centered in the vestibule's southwest wall. The ceiling is thinly coffered plaster with geometric shapes and the floor is black terrazzo with a serpentine border. The iron-work forms an entablature around the vestibule exterior, with small medallions located in the frieze. The ceiling has recessed circular lights.

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

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received

date entered

Continuation sheet CENTRAL SQUARE POST OFFICE
CAMBRIDGE "A" BRANCH P.O. Item number 7

Page 2

The lobby has a black and green checkerboard terrazzo floor with a wide black terrazzo strip surrounding it inset with yellow triangles; a marble wainscot, plaster walls, moulding, and ceiling. The northeast wall has marble-framed windows and sills with iron grilles below. The southeast wall has a recessed, smaller lobby framed by a marble architrave and entablature leading to the postmaster's office and stairs to second floor offices. This entry has a glass and aluminum partition sealing it. The lobby walls are topped by a cornice with ornament similar to open fans with scrolls below. The ceiling molding has floral motifs. Ornament on the ceiling includes palmettes, lotus buds and other design loosely based on Greek sources. The ceiling is divide into a series of lighted coffers.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW				
☐ PREHISTORIC	☐ ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	☐ COMMUNITY PLANNING	☐ LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	☐ RELIGION	
☐ 1400-1499	☐ ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	☐ CONSERVATION	☐ LAW	☐ SCIENCE	
☐ 1500-1599	☐ AGRICULTURE	☐ ECONOMICS	☐ LITERATURE	☐ SCULPTURE	
☐ 1600-1699	☒ ARCHITECTURE	☐ EDUCATION	☐ MILITARY	☐ SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN	
☐ 1700-1799	☐ ART	☐ ENGINEERING	☐ MUSIC	☐ THEATER	
☐ 1800-1899	☐ COMMERCE	☐ EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	☐ PHILOSOPHY	☐ TRANSPORTATION	
☒ 1900-	☐ COMMUNICATIONS	☐ INDUSTRY	☐ POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	☐ OTHER (SPECIFY)	
		☐ INVENTION			

SPECIFIC DATES: Started construction: Nov. 20, 1933
Dedication: June 25, 1935
STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE: Alterations: 1974

BUILDER/ARCHITECT: J.D. Leland & Co. and Charles P. Greco, Collaborating Architects
John Baven Co., Inc. - Contractors

Built in 1933, the Cambridge Main Post Office or Cambridge A Branch Post Office provided the first permanent home of the city's postal service. Situated across the street from the Richardsonian Romanesque Cambridge City Hall (1887), this buildings smooth streamlined, monodromatic classicism dramatically contrasts with the City Hall's rock faced granite walls, curvilinear forms and polchromatic surfaces. The Cambridge Main Post Office building should be considered eligible for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places by virtue of its siting, design and the contribution its construction made to Cambridge's economy during the Depression.

Architecturally, it represents a successful marriage of Classical tradition with the Art Deco style. Though bound by Classical tradition (particularly in its rigid symmetrical tripartite facade and its suggestion of pilasters and entablature) the building uses Classical elements in an unorthodox, almost self conscious way. Capitals are not really Capitals, though those over the central pilasters have Greek lay motifs in a kind of parody of the Ionic. Granite ashlar masonry walls give a feeling of solidity and permanence important in public buildings constructed during the Depression. Art Deco influence is evident in the overall streamlined verticillately of its planar pilasters and window bays. In addition, the stylized, seated sculptured figures at the center of the main facade parapet are also Art Deco in style. The Municipal Building at Western Avenue and Green Street and the Cambridge Main Post Office building are the only example of structures blending classical and art deco style in Cambridge. Behind the formal facade lies an interior which is designed to be formal and efficient. Attached to the two-story public access block along Massachusetts Avenue is a much larger one-story-plus basement wing with unobstructed work areas and a range of truck-loading docks along Green Street. Initially, offices were provided for officials of the I.R.S. and agricultural departments. For the first time all mail would be sorted and

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

"Cambridge Chronicle", July 27, 1935; The Cambridge Tribune, June 1, 1934; June 28, 1935
The Quincy Patriot Ledger - November 4, 1933
Survey of Architectural History in Cambridge Report 3 - Cambridgeport
Cambridge Historical Society - MA MIT Press, 1971

History of Post Office Construction 1900-1940, July, 1982

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 0.932

UTM REFERENCES

A 19 326540 4692370
ZONE EASTING NORTHING
C

B
ZONE EASTING NORTHING
D

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Southeast to Northwest, 180.55' along Massachusetts Avenue

Northeast to Southwest, 105.0' along side lot line

Southeast to Northwest, 4.65' along side lot line

Northeast to Southwest, 101.58' along side lot line

Northwest to Southeast, 200.0' along Green Street

Southwest to Northeast, 184.88' along Pleasant Street

East corner - 23.68' rounded between Pleasant and Massachusetts Avenues

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
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STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
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11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Steven M. Smith, Project Manager

ORGANIZATION

SULLIVAN DESIGN GROUP, INC.

DATE

September 24, 1985

STREET & NUMBER

44 Adams Street

TELEPHONE

(617) 848-1545

CITY OR TOWN

Braintree

STATE

Massachusetts 02184

12 CERTIFICATION OF NOMINATION

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER RECOMMENDATION

YES ☒

NO ☐

NONE ☐

Valerie Talmace

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

In compliance with Executive Order 11593, I hereby nominate this property to the National Register, certifying that the State Historic Preservation Officer has been allowed 90 days in which to present the nomination to the State Review Board and to evaluate its significance. The evaluated level of significance is ☐ National ☒ State ☒ Local.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

TITLE Realty Specialist, Senior

DATE

4/28/86

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

Peter Anders

DATE

6/18/86

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

John X. Savage

DATE

6-17-86

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet CENTRAL SQUARE POST OFFICE - "A" Branch
Cambridge Main Post Office Item number 8

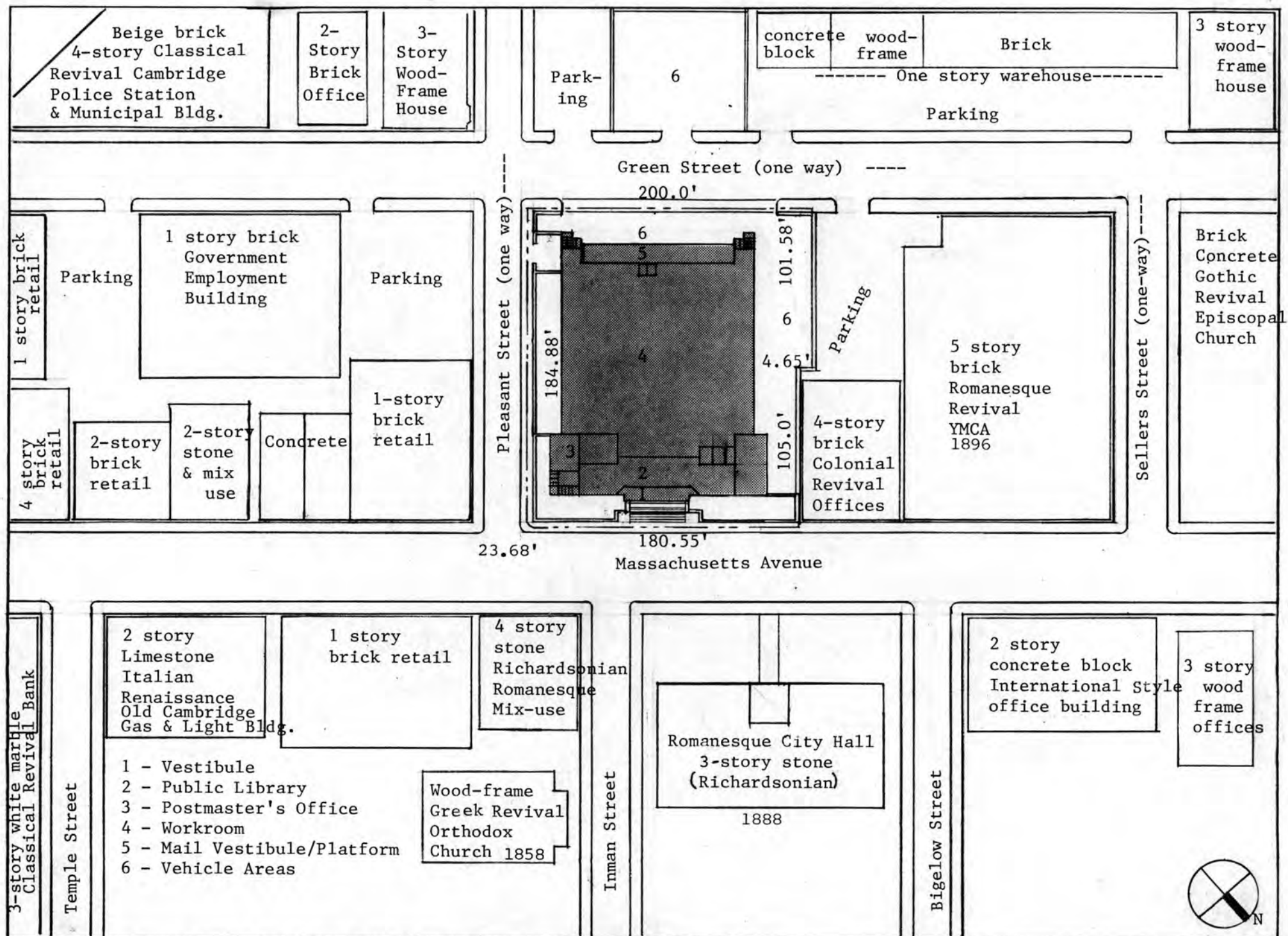
Page 2

delivered from this Cambridge office rather than having to go to Boston first.

Funding for the Cambridge Main Post Office building was delayed many months during 1932 due to the Depression. Cost reductions resulted in drastic revisions of the plans. The cornerstone was laid in mid 1934 and reads "Henry Morgenthau, Jr., Secretary of the Treasury, James A. Farley, Postmaster General, Louis A. Simon, Supervising Architect, George O. Von Nesta, Supervising Engineer, J.D. Leland and Co., Architects and Engineers, Charles R. Greco, Architect collaborating, 1933. The Cambridge Main Post Office building was dedicated on June 25, 1935. It was built at a cost of \$1,000,000.

The Cambridge Main Post Office building's construction provided a boost for Cambridge's economy during the height of the Depression. Upon completion, it provided 150 permanent jobs to "nearly 150 men", more than double the staff of the old office at Central Square. During the 1930's, Cambridge's population decreased by 4%. Assessed property values dropped from \$191,237,400 in 1932 to \$170,603,600 in 1940 while the tax rate continued to rise. This building's construction also provided work for Quincy citizens - after much controversy over whether to use limestone or granite for the building materials. Quincy granite was chosen as the facing material for the Cambridge Main Post Office.

The architect for the Cambridge Main Post Office was James D. Leland. The consulting architect was Charles R. Greco, (1892-1963). He graduated from English High School in 1892 (Cambridge) and studied engineering at Harvard. For many years he was associated with the Boston architectural firm of Wait and Culter. He was the chief architect of court houses at Malden, West Roxbury, and Cambridge. His practice was national in scope with projects in Miami, Chicago and Cleveland. He was the architect of Boston area churches and synagogues, including Blessed Sacrament Church (1910-1917) in Jamaica Plain. *Neither the Boston Public Library Architect's file or the Dictionary of American Architects (deceased) by Henry Withrey provided information on James D. Leland.

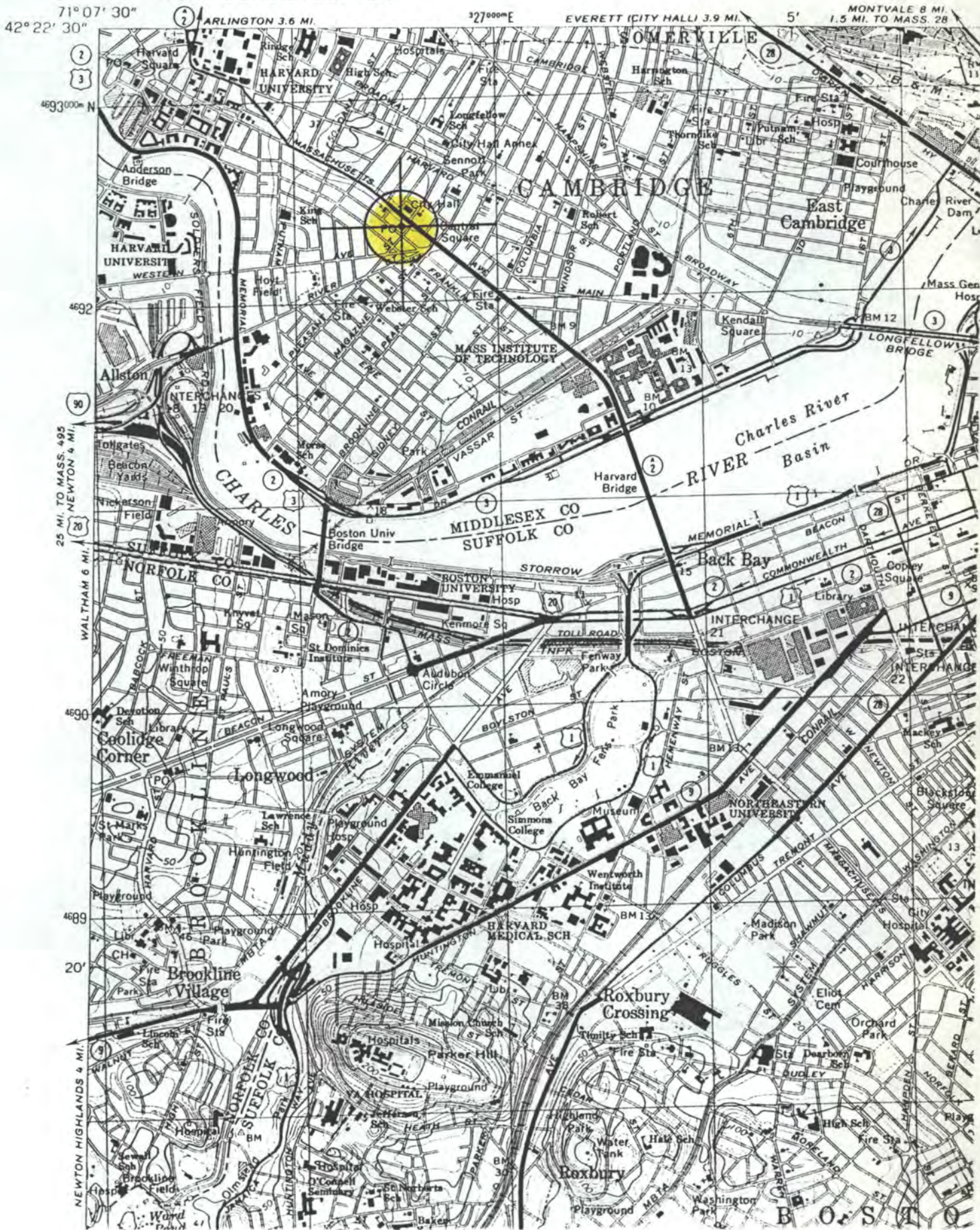


UNITED STATES POST OFFICE - CENTRAL SQUARE, CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS

67°08' 14" W
(LEXINGTON)

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

COMM



NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Central Square Post Office
Middlesex County
MASSACHUSETTS

Substantive Review

- ☐ resubmission
☐ nomination by person or local government
☐ owner objection
☐ appeal

Working No. MAY 12 1986
Fed. Reg. Date: 2/3/87
Date Due: 6/13/86 - 6/26/86
Action: ☒ ACCEPT 6-18-86
☐ RETURN
☐ REJECT
Federal Agency: USPS

Substantive Review: ☒ sample ☐ request ☐ appeal ☐ NR decision

Reviewer's comments:

*Interesting example of Stripped Classicism
combined with Art Deco detailing.
Important Cambridge construction project
during the Depression.*

Recom./Criteria Accept C 4A
Reviewer Savage
Discipline Architectural History
Date 6-17-86
_____ see continuation sheet

Nomination returned for: _____ technical corrections cited below
_____ substantive reasons discussed below

1. Name

2. Location

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
	Public Acquisition	Accessible	

4. Owner of Property

5. Location of Legal Description

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

Has this property been determined eligible? ☐ yes ☐ no

7. Description

Condition

- | | |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| ☐ excellent | ☐ deteriorated |
| ☐ good | ☐ ruins |
| ☐ fair | ☐ unexposed |

Check one

- ☐ unaltered
☐ altered

Check one

- ☐ original site
☐ moved date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

- ☐ summary paragraph
☐ completeness
☐ clarity
☐ alterations/integrity
☐ dates
☐ boundary selection

8. Significance

Period Areas of Significance—Check and justify below

Specific dates Builder/Architect

Statement of Significance (*in one paragraph*)

- ☐ summary paragraph
- ☐ completeness
- ☐ clarity
- ☐ applicable criteria
- ☐ justification of areas checked
- ☐ relating significance to the resource
- ☐ context
- ☐ relationship of integrity to significance
- ☐ justification of exception
- ☐ other

9. Major Bibliographical References

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property _____

Quadrangle name _____

UTM References _____

Verbal boundary description and justification _____

11. Form Prepared By

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

____ national ____ state ____ local

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title

date

13. Other

- ☐ Maps
- ☐ Photographs
- ☐ Other

Questions concerning this nomination may be directed to _____

Signed _____ Date _____ Phone: _____

Comments for any item may be continued on an attached sheet



Cambridge Post Office
770 Mass Ave
Cambridge, MA

CENTRAL SQUARE POST OFFICE
Cambridge "A" Branch" Post Office
Cambridge, MA
David R. Hooker
Earl R. Flansburgh and Associates
May 1983
Front elevation



Cambridge Post Office
770 Mass Ave
Cambridge, MA

CENTRAL SQUARE POST OFFICE
Cambridge "A Branch" Post Office
Cambridge, MA
David R. Hooker
Earl R. Flansburgh and Associates
May 1983
Front elevation. Left view



Cambridge Post Office
770 Mass Ave.
Cambridge, MA

CENTRAL SQUARE POST OFFICE
Cambridge "A Branch" Post Office
Cambridge, MA
David R. Hooker
Earl R. Flansburgh and Associates
May 1983
Lobby

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

BOSTON SOUTH QUADRANGLE
MASSACHUSETTS
7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)



Maped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey
Control by USGS, USC&GS, and Massachusetts Geodetic Survey
Topography by planetable surveys 1943. Revised from
aerial photographs taken 1969. Field checked 1970
Selected hydrographic data compiled from USC&GS Charts 246
and 248 (1971). This information is not intended for navigational
purposes
Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum
10,000-foot grid based on Massachusetts coordinate system,
mainland zone
1 000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid,
zone 19
Boundaries in tidalwater areas from information supplied
by Massachusetts Department of Public Works
Red tint indicates areas in which only landmark buildings are shown

UTM GRID AND 1979 MAGNETIC NORTH
DECLINATION AT CENTER OF SHEET

SCALE 1:25 000

CONTOUR INTERVAL 10 FEET
NATIONAL GEODETIC VERTICAL DATUM OF 1929
DEPTH CURVES AND SOUNDINGS IN FEET—DATUM IS MEAN LOW WATER
THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE TWO DATUM IS VARIABLE
SHORELINE SHOWN REPRESENTS THE APPROXIMATE LINE ON MEAN HIGH WATER
THE MEAN RANGE OF TIDE IS APPROXIMATELY 9.5 FEET

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
FOR SALE BY U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

ROAD CLASSIFICATION

Primary highway,
hard surface
Secondary highway,
hard surface
Interstate Route
U.S. Route
State Route
Light-duty road, hard or
improved surface
Unimproved road

QUADRANGLE LOCATION

BOSTON SOUTH, MASS.
N4215—W7100/7.5
1970
PHOTOREVISED 1979
AMS 6768 I SE—SERIES V814

U.S. POST OFFICE
CAMBRIDGE, MA
UTM REFERENCE:
19/326540/4692370



FIELD REAL ESTATE AND BUILDINGS OFFICE
P.O. Box 324
Lexington, MA 02173-0324

August 19, 1985

The Honorable Robert W. Healey
City Manager, City of Cambridge
Cambridge City Hall
795 Massachusetts Avenue
Cambridge, MA 02139

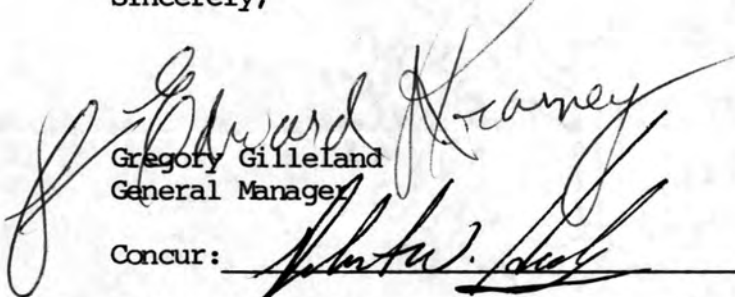
Dear City Manager Healey:

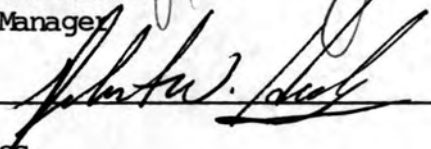
The U.S. Postal Service in conjunction with the Massachusetts State Historic Preservation Officer in Boston has evaluated the Main Post Office in Cambridge and has determined it is significant from an historical viewpoint.

In view of the above evaluation, the U.S. Postal Service intends to nominate this building to the National Register of Historic Places. We would, prior to our taking formal action, appreciate receiving your concurrence.

If you concur with our proposed action, kindly return a signed copy of this letter in the enclosed envelope.

Sincerely,


Gregory Gilleland
General Manager

Concur:  _____

Enclosures

JPC/ljr

FIVE
SEP 10 9 09 AM '85

TO: DIRECTOR
FROM: [illegible]
SUBJECT: [illegible]

URGENT

RE: [illegible]

[illegible text]

[illegible text]

[illegible text]

[illegible text]

RECEIVED
U.S. POSTAL SERVICE

SEP 10 10 34 PM '85

NEW ENGLAND FIELD REAL
ESTATE & BLDG. OFFICE
LEXINGTON, MA 02173

FIELD REAL ESTATE AND BUILDINGS OFFICE
SEP 10 9 09 AM '85
LEXINGTON, MA 02173





UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE
475 L'Enfant Plaza, SW
Washington, DC 20260

May 6, 1986

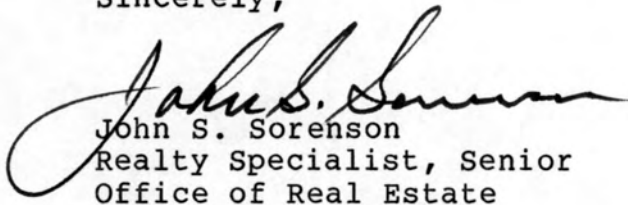
Ms. Carol D. Shull
Chief of Registration
National Register of Historic Places
National Park Service
Department of Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240-1002

Dear Ms. Shull:

The Postal Service hereby submits a nomination for the post office located at 770 Massachusetts Avenue, Middlesex County, Cambridge, Massachusetts.

If you have questions concerning this nomination, please call me at 202/268-3107.

Sincerely,


John S. Sorenson
Realty Specialist, Senior
Office of Real Estate

Enclosure

MAY 12 1986