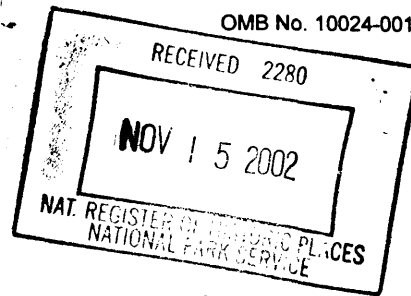


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

1575



This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name United States Parcel Post Station
other names Railway Express Building MIHP# B-4198

2. Location

street & number 1501 St. Paul Street not for publication
city or town Baltimore vicinity
state Maryland code MD county Baltimore City code 510 zip code 21201

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination
request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic
Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does
not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (
See continuation sheet for additional comments).

[Signature] 11-14-02
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments).

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:
 entered in the National Register.
 See continuation sheet.
 determined eligible for the National Register.
 See continuation sheet.
 Determined not eligible for the National Register.
 removed from the National Register.
 other (explain): _____

[Signature] 12/27/02
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action
Edson H. Beall

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1		Total

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

Government / post office

Government / government office

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

Late 19th Century & Early 20th Century Revival /
Classical Revival

foundation concrete
walls brick, terra-cotta & limestone

roof built-up bituminous membrane
other

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets)

See continuation sheet 7-1

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

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

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

Criteria Considerations

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

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets)

Area of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

- Architecture
- Communication
- Community Planning / Development
-
-
-
-

Period of Significance

1929

Significant Dates

1929

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Bishop, Knowlton & Crosson (architects)
Consolidated Engineering Company (builder)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets)

Previous documentation on files (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey

- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

United States Parcel Post Station / B-4198
Name of Property

Baltimore City, MD
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 1.638

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

1	18	360830	4351830	3			
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
2				4			

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Charles Belfoure
Organization _____ date 6/25/02
street & number 4596 Wilders Run Lane telephone 410-840-4494
city or town Westminster state MD zip code 21158

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

- A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- A Sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional Items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO)

name Railway Express, LLC (6/25/02) Attn. Stanley Keyser
street & number 1018 North Charles Street telephone 410-752-1616
city or town Baltimore state MD zip code 21201

Paperwork Reduction Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et. seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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Description Summary:

The U.S. Parcel Post Station is located on a 1.638 parcel in North Central Baltimore City bounded by the St. Paul St. bridge on the west and North Calvert St. bridge on the east that span the Jones Falls Expressway (Interstate 83) approximately 300' north of Mount Royal Avenue. The building is two stories high with the first floor at the St. Paul St. level and is supported by concrete piers that extend 35' down to the level of the expressway. A partial basement that includes mechanical spaces is located in the lower level along with parking directly underneath the structure between the piers. Directly adjacent to the property on the north are railroad tracks and right of ways belonging to Amtrak which operates out of Penn Station which is located to the northwest. Directly along the south side of the lot runs the north and sound bound lanes of the Jones Falls Expressway. Designed in a classical revival style and built of reinforced concrete with brick walls and limestone and terra cotta trim, the building is a parallelogram in plan measuring 142' on St. Paul and Calvert Streets and 269' deep totaling 39,005 square feet in area per floor with a 20' driveway along the south façade and a 40' driveway along the north façade for truck access into the building. Constructed in 1929, the building has retained its historical integrity. The exterior of the Parcel Post Station is in very good condition and has had minimal alteration. Although the original open space plan on both floors has been infilled by offices and workshops, the interior is in good condition with its structure and architecture features in place and unaltered.

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General Description:

The U.S. Parcel Post Station was built in one stage for the specific purpose of handling only parcel post mail for the United States Post Office in Baltimore in 1929. The two story building is a parallelogram in plan 39,005 square feet per floor 142' wide and 269' deep, built on concrete piers 35' +/- above grade. It is constructed out of reinforced concrete with buff brick in a running bond and Indiana limestone and terra-cotta detailing with a flat built up bituminous roof covered with gravel.

Exterior:

The overall exterior of the building is designed in a classical revival style that divides the all 4 façades into a base, a shaft and cornice.

West Elevation (main façade):

The west elevation along St. Paul St. where the main entry located is 7 bays wide with the center 5 bays containing a triple arrangement of steel framed true divided light windows per floor framed by 2 story unfluted limestone pilasters with a 4' high limestone base and terra cotta capitals molded in the form of an American bald eagle within a wreath (see attachment). Atop the capitals runs a continuous limestone cornice that projects 18" from the face of the building. On top of the cornice is a 36" high parapet wall of buff brick with a limestone coping. The outline of the words "Baltimore Post Office" can be seen on the face of the cornice. Double pilasters frame both ends of the center 5 bay section. The end bays contain one pair of steel framed, true divided light windows per floor divided into 3 equal sash sections with 3 lights a piece flanked by 2 story buff brick walls. The triple window combination in the 5 bay center section consists of a window divided into 3 equal sash sections with 4 lights a piece flanked by narrower windows divided into 3 sash sections with 2 lights a piece. The bottom sash of each window can be raised. Beneath the second story windows, is a terra-cotta sill and a spandrel panel divided into 3 sections each containing a raised striated pattern. Each center panel has a pair of terra-cotta wings flanking a scepter (see attachment). The spandrel under the first floor windows in the center 5 bays is also divided into identical panels but are only 18" high with a narrow horizontal raised panel. The top 2 sash sections of each window have been painted out. The spandrels and pilaster capitals have all been painted out in white and tones of grey. Each of the 4 corners of building has a chamfered edge from grade to the parapet coping.

The first story central bay contains a double door which is not original with a leaded glass transom in a design of a globe flanked by wings symbolizing flight. The doors and transom which have wood frames, are flanked by fluted terra cotta pilasters supporting an entablature atop of which is a medallion within which is centered an escutcheon with the letters "US" in

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relief. A swan's neck pediment infilled by a grille of an undulating pattern frames the medallion. On each pilaster is mounted a copper lantern-style lighting fixture mounted on a bracket.

Directly above the main entry, atop the cornice and projecting above the coping is a terra cotta decoration consisting of a medallion outlined by a wreath. Within the medallion is bas relief of a 1920's tri-motor airplane, similar in design to Lindbergh's Spirit of St. Louis which is set against a globe with bas relief continents. The medallion is centered on a rectangular terra-cotta concrete panel infilled with 5-point stars with an escutcheon with stars and stripes centered at its base which is flanked by spoked tires which are in turn flanked by wings. The medallion has been painted out in tones of grey, green, blue and white. Centered above this is a steel flagpole that is mounted behind the parapet wall on the roof.

East Elevation:

The east elevation along Calvert St. exactly matches the west elevation except there is no decoration above the cornice and a unadorned double door is located in the end bay at the northeast corner of the building. Because of a rise in elevation on Calvert St. the limestone base is shorter in height. The bottom sash of each window can be raised and the top 2 sash sections of each window have been painted out.

North Elevation:

The north elevation is 13 bays wide with segmentally arched openings in the middle 11 bays that are openings to a loading dock 4' above the driveway. Above the arches on the second floor is the same triple window arrangement and end bay double windows as on the west and east elevations including the same spandrel design. The bottom sash of each window on the second floor can be raised and the top 2 sash sections of each window have been painted out. The first floor windows directly above the loading dock overhang are fixed, triple wide units of the same width as the second floor windows above but are only 1 sash in height. In the end bays, there is a double window arrangement, 1 sash high directly above a double steel door. There are no limestone pilasters on this elevation, only buff brick piers inset with a square terra-cotta panel with the same eagle design medallion aligned with the top of the second floor windows. The north elevation is not symmetrical, at its east end is a brick wall with a single double hung steel framed window per floor. The overhang is suspended from the face of the building by double steel rods attached to a semi-circular steel plate. A 40' wide driveway constructed out of reinforced concrete with a 6' high concrete wall along its entire length parallels the north elevation, running from St. Paul St. to Calvert St.

South Elevation:

The south elevation is divided into 2 sections, a 7 bay section on the west with the same triple window arrangement and spandrel design as on the west and east elevations. As on the north elevation, there are no limestone pilasters, only buff brick piers inset with square terra-cotta panels. The other section is 6 bays wide with an identical window arrangement and spandrel design on the second floor, but there are 2 openings directly below the windows spanning 3 bays

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each on the first floor through which vehicles can back up to a loading dock that is recessed in the openings. There are no square terra-cotta panels between the second floor windows in this section.

The bottom sash of each window can be raised and the top 2 sash sections of each window have been painted out. A 20' wide driveway constructed out of reinforced concrete a 6' high concrete wall along its entire length parallels the south elevation, running from St. Paul St. to Calvert St.

Track Level:

The two story building is built on round concrete piers, 4' in diameter that rise 35' +/- above grade which is level with the expressway and the railroad tracks on the north. There is a partial basement that takes up the middle third of the floor area constructed of structural hollow clay tile with partially glazed double doors. On either side of the basement area, directly underneath the first floor and between the piers is parking. At the eastern end of the lot is a separate brick freight elevator that terminates at a concrete loading dock, 4' above grade. At the northwestern corner of the lot is another brick elevator shaft that terminates at grade.

Due to almost no deterioration or alteration including replacement of original windows and because of its construction of long lasting, quality materials, the exterior of the U.S. Parcel Post Station is in excellent condition and has retained its historical integrity despite the insensitive painting of its terra cotta architectural detailing which was originally left unpainted.

Interior

1st Floor:

The original interiors of the first and second floors were essentially large open spaces for the processing of parcel post mail but have been cut up into offices and workshops by the City of Baltimore Housing Authority. No postal equipment such as conveyor belts or chutes remain. Through the main entrance on St. Paul St. is the original glass enclosed vestibule detailed with wood pilasters at the corners. From the vestibule are stairs rising 4' to the main floor that was once the service lobby for postal customers and is now the customer service lobby for the Housing Authority. A railing of turned wood balusters runs along the stairs. The original counters have been removed and replaced by plastic laminate counters with plexi-glass windows. Behind the lobby is an open area punctuated by 2' diameter concrete columns 20' apart in the east-west direction and 25' in the north-south direction. The floor to ceiling height is 17'-5" and the underside of the concrete slab is exposed.

The perimeter walls and existing interior walls are painted plaster with buff brick wainscoting. The floor is a reinforced concrete slab with 2" high wood blocks set atop it which were used to protect and cushion the slab from wear and tear of carts. The City has since poured concrete or nailed plywood panels atop the wooden blocks. Along the north side of the first floor is the loading dock that stretches for 11 bays of the building, each of which has a sliding metal grate. At the northwest corner and east side of the first and second floors are freight elevators, 12' wide and 8' deep with upward acting doors. Enclosed exit stairways with steel stairs are located in the southwest and northeast corners of the first

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and second floors. At the southeast corner of the first floor are 50' wide garage bays accessible from the driveway. The main architectural feature of both the first and second floors is the surveillance catwalks used by postal inspectors to observe employees in order to prevent theft. The catwalk is entered via a concrete tower that contains a steel spiral stair that leads to a landing that in turn leads to an enclosed catwalk that extends above the floor space. At 2' intervals along the walls of the catwalk, are 1" high by 12" wide slits to look down on the work floor. On the floors of walkway are 1" diameter peep holes where inspectors can look at employees working directly under the catwalks. The catwalk is hung from the concrete slab above by steel angles that support a 4" concrete deck. The walls that enclose the catwalk are made of a reinforcing mesh covered with about 2.5" of cement stucco and extend from the catwalk floor to the underside of the concrete slab. They are painted flat black on the inside and are in very good condition. The first floor catwalk is located at the western end and extends in the north-south direction (see floor plan).

2nd Floor & Roof:

The construction of the second floor matches the first floor and has a floor to ceiling height of 16'-11". The surveillance catwalks are of the same construction as the one on the first floor and extend in the rows in the east-west direction (see floor plan). The perimeter walls and original existing interior walls are constructed of plaster with buff brick wainscoting. Approximately 80' from the west wall of the floor is a rectangular clerestory window, 25' by 40' with the original steel framed industrial sash that has been painted over but is in good condition. A steel stair leads to the roof which is a built up bituminous membrane covered with gravel. The entire roof perimeter is surrounded by a 6' brick parapet wall.

In spite of a great deal of infill addition of gypsum board walls, the original concrete structure has remained intact and interior of the building has retained its historic integrity including its entire catwalk system and its freight elevators.

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Summary Statement of Significance:

The U.S. Parcel Post Station is significant under National Register Criteria "C" & "A" under the categories of architecture, communication and community planning & development.

Architecture:

The design of the Parcel Post Station is a very good example of federal government building of the period which followed the philosophy of the Office of the Supervising Architect of the Treasury, the agency in charge of post office construction at the time, who believed that government buildings should be examples of architectural beauty with a high standard of design quality. Post offices especially those in large cities with high postal receipts and real estate values, according to the Treasury Department, could be monumental and imposing. Though it was basically a warehouse to process parcel post mail and could have been entirely utilitarian looking, the architect's classical revival design with details like two-story limestone pilasters and terra cotta eagle's head capitals give it a feel of civic importance that is no longer found in postal facilities today. The station's decoration is representative of the detailing of government buildings of the 1920's with its literally depicted images, presaging the more abstracted Moderne or Art Deco detailing that would be prevalent on government buildings of the 1930's. The main entry with its leaded glass transom's image of flight surrounded by terra cotta pilasters and entablature and the decoration above the cornice all give the front façade a sense of prominence and distinction that was expected of government buildings in the early 20th century.

The Supervising Architect's Office believed that post offices should be built to last and constructed of high quality materials. The Parcel Post Station followed this dictum and as a result, 73 years later, its concrete construction, brick, terra-cotta and limestone work are in remarkably good condition. The functionality of its design was noteworthy for its time and is still impressive with a well scaled, two story building at street level for easy customer and truck access and a lower level that interconnected with a railroad station to facilitate efficient mail handling.

On the interior, the reinforced concrete structure is an example of early 20th century warehouse construction especially for its high floor to ceiling heights and original, intact steel industrial glazing. The most interesting interior feature is the original surveillance catwalks, an early example of postal theft prevention. Faced with mounting theft by employees, in the early 20th century, the Post Office built these structures to stop it. The 1929 catwalks are quite similar in design to the ones the Post Office uses in its facilities today.

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Communication:

The building played an important role in the development of a newly modernized postal system in Baltimore but also mail service for the northeastern part of the country. The St. Paul St. facility and its location next to the Pennsylvania Railroad according to the U.S. Post Office Department in 1928 “would affect handling of parcel-post matter in Washington and delivery points as far as New York and Canada.” The only other comparable facility of the period was adjacent to Cleveland’s Union Station that served both the Pennsylvania and New York Central Railroads.

It was considered a state of the art facility that would specifically handle parcels, especially those sent by Baltimore businesses. Products as diverse as cans of oysters and straw hats could be sent anywhere in the nation and abroad for a modest cost. The Parcel Post Act of 1913 had made it much easier and cheaper for Americans to ship packages and the Parcel Post Station was a direct result of the growing demand for this new service of the U.S. Post Office. The station was seen by the business community as an efficient and speedy process to ship their goods. They no longer had to rely on the traditional express companies. The building also had a great influence on the methods and technological advances in mail handling that still are used today – the use of conveyor belts, chutes and elevators for the receipt and dispatching of mail. Despite the telephone and telegraph, mail service was still the major means of communication in America but was undergoing a transformation in the 1920’s. To increase the speed and efficiency of mail delivery including parcel post service, the federal government not only encouraged the use of the railroad and ships to transport mail which it had done since the Civil War, but new forms of transportation like the automobile and especially the airplane. The medallion depicting airmail service atop the front façade of the building attested to this new direction. The Parcel Post Station was designed not only for easy access to the railroad but for trucking parcels to the waterfront and to Logan Field, Baltimore’s first airport that handled airmail service.

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Community Planning & Development:

The U.S. Parcel Post Station is unique in the planning and development history of Baltimore because of its method of site development. It was the first air rights development in the city. Air rights is the right to occupy the space above a designated property that can be either leased, sold or donated to another party. A private development company, the Postal Service Corporation of Indianapolis, won the right over 9 other bidders to build the station in large part by leasing the air rights from the Pennsylvania Railroad on a piece of property it owned between what was then the Jones Falls and the tracks of Penn Station. According to the Post Office Department, the location directly next to the railroad was the deciding factor in awarding the project to the developer. Except for ground occupied by the supporting columns, the Pennsylvania Railroad reserved the use of the space under the building. Tracks which are no longer extant ran between the columns which easily facilitated the loading of mail. Postal Service Corporation leased the building to the Post Office Department for fifteen years at an annual rent of \$81,600, then sold the building and the land underneath it outright to the federal government in 1944. Air rights were first used extensively by the Pennsylvania's rival, the New York Central, in the construction of Grand Central Terminal when it allowed hotel, office buildings and apartment houses to be built above its rail yards from 42nd St. to 59th St. from 1913 to 1930. The Pennsylvania had been reluctant to use this development tool even with its own New York City terminal in 1911 but throughout the 1920's participated in an increasing number of air rights deals such as in Baltimore.

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Resource History and Historic Context:

By 1929, 37 years after the new post office had opened at Fayette and Calvert Streets, the population of Baltimore had increased by 377, 000 persons and its area more than doubled to 80 square miles. Postal receipts had gone from \$644,834 to \$6,750,000. There had been an increase of almost 500,000,000 pieces of mail handled since 1890. To Baltimore postmaster Benjamin F. Woelper Jr., it was time to build a new post office, not just one that would be able to handle the city's burgeoning population but a facility that would be technologically up to date. Since 1890, the invention of the automobile and the airplane had transformed America and Woelper and the U.S. Post Office Department were determined to take advantage of these new inventions along with the railroads to speed up the delivery and increase the efficiency of mail delivery.

A decision was made to build a new central post office on the site of the present 1890 building but there also needed to be an additional facility to exclusively handle parcel post mail. "This could be done, by the erection of a new building adjacent to the railroads, where mail can be received direct from the mail cars into the station and dispatched there from into outgoing mail cars without rehandling," said Woelper.

Parcel post service became an official part of the U.S. Post Office in 1913. Prior to that time, private express companies like Wells Fargo and Adams Express delivered parcels, especially goods from the catalogues of famous mail order companies like Sears Roebuck and Montgomery Ward to residents notably those who lived in rural areas. Free city delivery began in the 1860's in America but did not include parcels. It was the advent of Rural Free Delivery (RFD) in 1899 that hastened the adoption of parcel post service by the federal government. Before RFD, farmers and rural residents had to take a trip into town to pick up their mail which could mean a whole day's travel back and forth. As a result, people waited days and even weeks to pick up mail. Before radio, telephones and television, the printed word in the form of magazines, newspapers and letters were the main link to the outside world. Much of rural America lived in a state of isolation and it looked forward to the mail. RFD opened up a whole new world for a large part of the country, instead of traveling miles, the mail was delivered right to their door. The new service had a direct effect on America's road system. In order to qualify for RFD, roads had to be accessible and as a result, local governments made the necessary improvements. From 1897 to 1908, \$72 million was spent on roads, culverts and bridges.

After the introduction of RFD, rural residents who made up over 50% of America's population demanded parcel post service be provided by the U.S. Post Office instead of private companies who made what the public that were exorbitant profits. Many express companies simply refused to serve many rural areas because the routes were unprofitable. Congress passed the Parcel Post

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Act and on January 1, 1913, the service began with thousands of parcels mailed the first few days. It was a great boon to the mail order business which had prospered before introduction of the service, now greatly expanded. In most outlying areas of Maryland, residents could receive packages at a modest cost.

In 1928, the U.S. Post Office Department approved \$2,575,000 for a new main post office that would include a federal courthouse on the site of the old one and gave approval for a new parcel post station on a site to be determined. The development of the station would be done through a relatively sophisticated development process for the time. It would be built and paid for by a private developer who would then lease the facility to the Post Office Department for a specified period. After the lease expired, the building could be sold to the Post Office. Ten bids were considered including one by the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad to build a facility next to Camden Station. In November of 1928, the project was awarded to the Postal Service Corporation of Indianapolis, a company created by the R.D. Brown Company, a development concern from Indianapolis. The basis of their proposal was a unique development device, new to Baltimore – an air rights lease. The developer secured a lease with the Pennsylvania Railroad to build above a piece of land between the Jones Falls (the expressway would not be built until the late 1950's) and the tracks of Penn Station which had replaced old Union Station in 1911. The Pennsylvania Railroad retained the use of its space underneath the building. The selection committee determined this proposal "was the most suitable from the standpoint of transportation."

The Pennsylvania Railroad had been slow to use air rights. During the construction of Penn Station in New York, the railroad's architect McKim Meade & White tried unsuccessfully to convince it to use the air right over its property. Its rival, the New York Central, had been far more aggressive in using air rights with the construction of Grand Central Terminal and the development of Park Avenue over its rail yards. By the late 1920's, the Pennsylvania looked for development opportunities using their air rights.

The building which cost \$750,000 to construct would be leased to the Post Office for \$81,600 per year for a term of 20 years. Robert Garrett & Sons, Baltimore investment bankers financed the construction. Construction began in March of 1929 and was complete by October of 1929. Concrete piers were driven 22' into the earth next to the Jones Falls and rose 35' to support a two story 79,000 square foot building whose first floor was at the St. Paul St. level. Underneath the station between the piers were 4 tracks with platforms for mail cars so parcel post matter could be loaded and unloaded quickly. Concrete walls, 5' high with steel guard rails, enclosed each track under the building in order to protect the piers. A freight elevator on the east side of the building came down to a loading dock alongside a track and one at the northwest corner that came down to track level.

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The Post Office Department began using the railroads to transport mail in 1838. The mail cars originally only carried mail to be sorted in distributing post offices along a particular route, they did not actually function as post offices on wheels until 1862. Railway mail service, as it was called, only sorted letter mail and in 1869, other mail except packages was handled as well. The Parcel Post Act of 1913, forced the railroads to haul packages at a lesser rate than the express companies had. Because of the sheer volume of packages they would carry, the federal government felt it was entitled to a lesser rate.

At the time of the Parcel Post Station was built, railway mail service was at its height with more than 10,000 trains delivering mail all over America. In 1930, rates for parcels were 10 cents on parcels weighing less than 2 pounds, 15 cents on parcels weighing between 2 and 10 pounds and 20 cents on parcels weighing more than 10 pounds.

The station's location next to the Pennsylvania tracks made it an ideal facility. At that time, railroads carried the bulk of the nation's letters as well as parcels, but the Pennsylvania controlled the Washington to New York corridor and had enormous capacity for hauling freight and mail. In 1930, 141 Pennsylvania passenger trains alone went through Baltimore's Penn Station a day. During the day but mostly at night, mail was transported by either passenger or freight runs. A train from Washington would carry as many as 7 sealed mail cars, some of which would be uncoupled at Baltimore and switched onto the tracks under the Parcel Post Station. Sealed cars of mail and packages loaded at the Parcel Post Station would be in turn switched to the Washington to New York train. The Pennsylvania also ran working railway post offices at night where a car acted as a mobile post office with postal or railroad employees sorting mail and parcels packed in pouches at the Parcel Post Station.

Another form of railway mail service in Baltimore not to be confused with railroad service was street railway service where designated streetcars owned by private companies carried mail from collection boxes to the main post office and local stations. This service lasted from 1903 to 1929 with the United Railway and Electric Company compensated for the use of the mail cars at 16 to 24 cents a mile. By the time the Parcel Post Station was built, this service had ended.

Although the railroads dominated mail service when the station was built, there was a major transportation change in the making. Fewer and fewer trains carried mail until 1970, when no trains carried first class mail. The last railway post office which ran between New York and Washington ended service in 1977. Trucks and air mail service had supplanted railway mail service by the late 1950's, due in large part to the construction of the nation's new interstate highway system. This dominance began in the late 1920's and Baltimore postal officials planned the Parcel Post Station with these new forms of transport in mind. The station was designed to accommodate truck pick-up with a 40' driveway connecting St. Paul and Calvert Streets that

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accessed 11 loading bays. Parcels were loaded onto trucks to deliver to shipping lines downtown for overseas deliveries and also to Logan Field, Baltimore's first airmail airport. At the time of the construction of the station, it was estimated that 1,000 pickups and deliveries of mail and parcel post matter had been made each day at the old main post office. Trucking was an important step for the Baltimore post office in 1929. Although the first truck was used in 1906, horse drawn carts were still being used to transport mail throughout the city, including parcel post at the time of the building's construction.

The medallion on the front façade of the building indicates the growing importance of airmail service to the Post Office. The relief shows a tri-motor mail plane very similar in design to Lindbergh's Spirit of St. Louis. The transportation industry had quickly realized the potential of air mail service. The Pennsylvania Railroad owned a one fifth share in the Transcontinental Air Transport Company and had even hired Lindbergh as a consultant. They hoped to dominate air transport as they had rail, but were seen as a monopoly by the Roosevelt administration in the 1930's and was forced to divest itself of its interest in the airline. In 1918, the Post office began experimental airmail routes using the planes of the U.S. Army Signal Corps. In 1921, the mail was flown in hops from San Francisco to New York. Congress authorized the Postmaster General to contract for airmail service and in 1926, the first commercial airmail flight took place. Lindbergh's solo flight across the Atlantic in 1927, created a mania about flight of all kinds. When the Parcel Post Station was being built, local newspapers carried daily accounts of Lindbergh's air flights in Central America and the week after the station was finished, world wide attention was focused on Richard Byrd's flight over the South Pole. Business interests called for more mail to be transported by air. In a January 27, 1928, article in the Baltimore Sun, a U.S. Post Office committee on the planning of Baltimore's new postal facilities seriously suggested that the new station's roof could be used to land airplanes carrying mail. Airmail service started in Baltimore in May 1929 and in 1930, mail could be transported from Baltimore to San Francisco in 34 hours each way as opposed to 5 days each way by train. About 150 cities were served by 31 airmail lines. Baltimore was on Air Mail Route No. 19 from New York to Atlanta. Sealed parcels not exceeding 50 pounds in weight and 84 inches in length and girth could be transported by air.

The Parcel Post Station was turned over to the Baltimore postmaster in October of 1929 and served as one of the two temporary main post offices until the new one was completed in 1932. Although intended to primarily handle parcel post material via the railroad and trucks, the station also had a lobby off St. Paul St. for regular customer service. In 1930, 31,324,946 pieces of parcel post mail were received and sent from the station. The building played a special role in the lives of Baltimoreans every Christmas, when people brought gifts to be sent to friends and family. Mountains of sacks filled with packages would take up space throughout the facility. But

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it was at Christmas during World War II, that station was most taxed. The majority of packages (with a weight limit of 11 pounds) were sent overseas to servicemen.

In 1944, the Post Office Department bought the parcel post station for \$525,000 from the developer and acquired through condemnation a 34,000 square foot piece of adjacent Pennsylvania Railroad land along the Jones Falls for \$166,312 with the hope of enlarging the building but it was never done. The railroad was still allowed to use the space under the building.

The Post Office Department vacated the building in the early 1970's after the construction of another new central post office on Fayette and Front Streets, which included parcel post handling. In 1973, the Post Office Department sold the building to the City of Baltimore for \$420,000. The

Housing Authority of Baltimore City has used the building for its Rehab Services Division for the last 30 years. In 2002, The City of Baltimore issued a request for proposal for the re-development of the building and awarded the project to Railway Express, L.L.C. which plans to convert the building into commercial, retail and residential space.

The U.S. Parcel Post Station has been mistakenly referred to as the Railway Express Building. Railway Express was a privately owned express package company that was located in Shed A of the old Calvert Street station (now demolished) once owned by the Northern Central Railroad. It is now the Downtown Athletic Club. Railway Express never owned the Parcel Post Station. In the 1930's, the company leased a platform along a track under Penn Station to move freight on and off the Pennsylvania line. Access from St. Paul Street to the platforms of both Penn Station and the Parcel Post Station was via a curving driveway that has since been demolished for the construction of the Penn Station garage. Railway Express installed a 30' long sign by the driveway which railway historians believe led to the impression that the company owned the adjoining building. There was once a rail connection between the Calvert Street station and Penn Station for the switching of freight cars, many of which were Railway Express' signature hunter green cars that were often next to the building which contributed to the misconception. Railway Express went bankrupt in 1970.

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Baltimore City Commission for Historical and Architectural Preservation, Survey B-4198
Interview with Frank Wrabel, railroad historian, June 14, 2002

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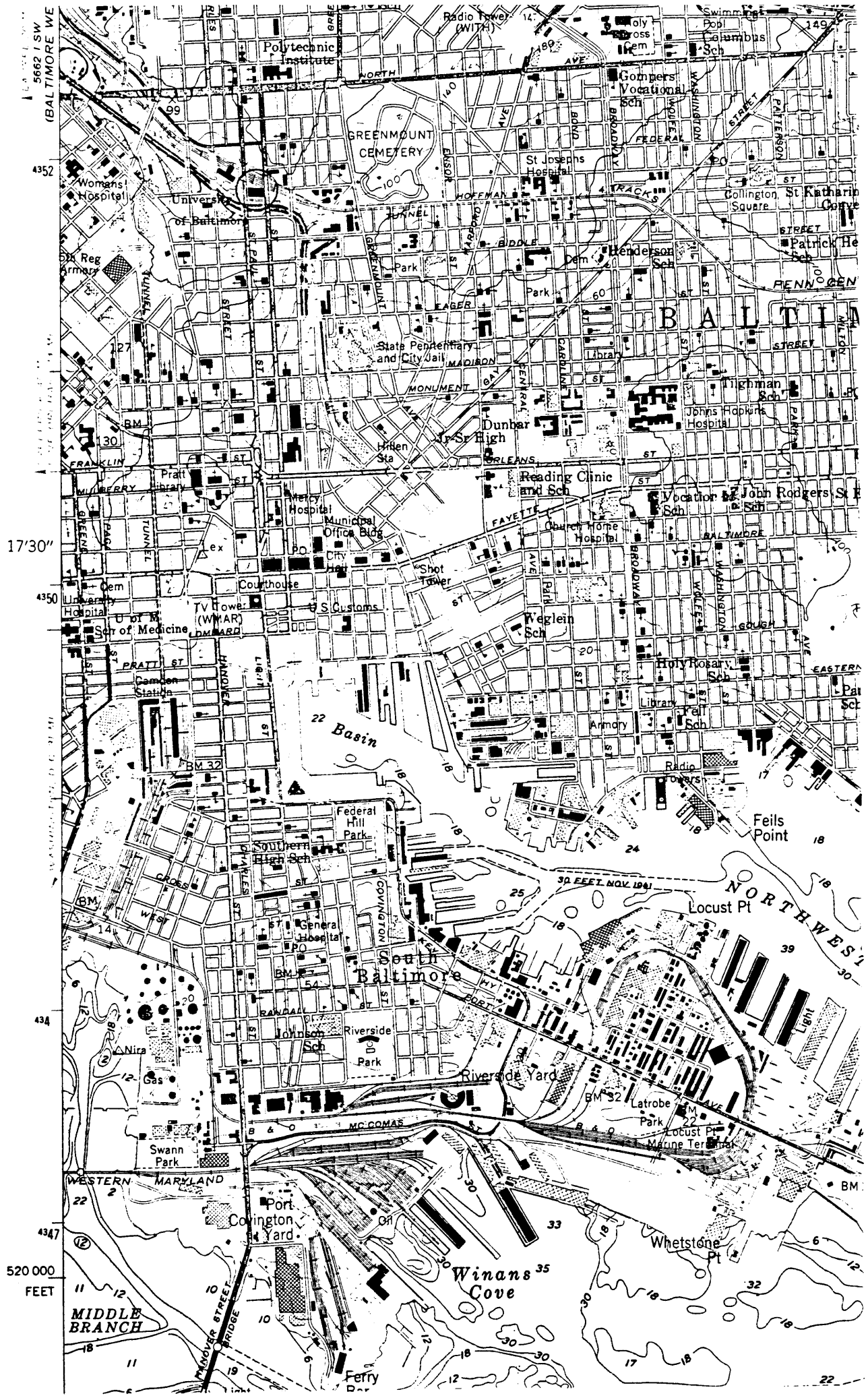
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Verbal Boundary Description:

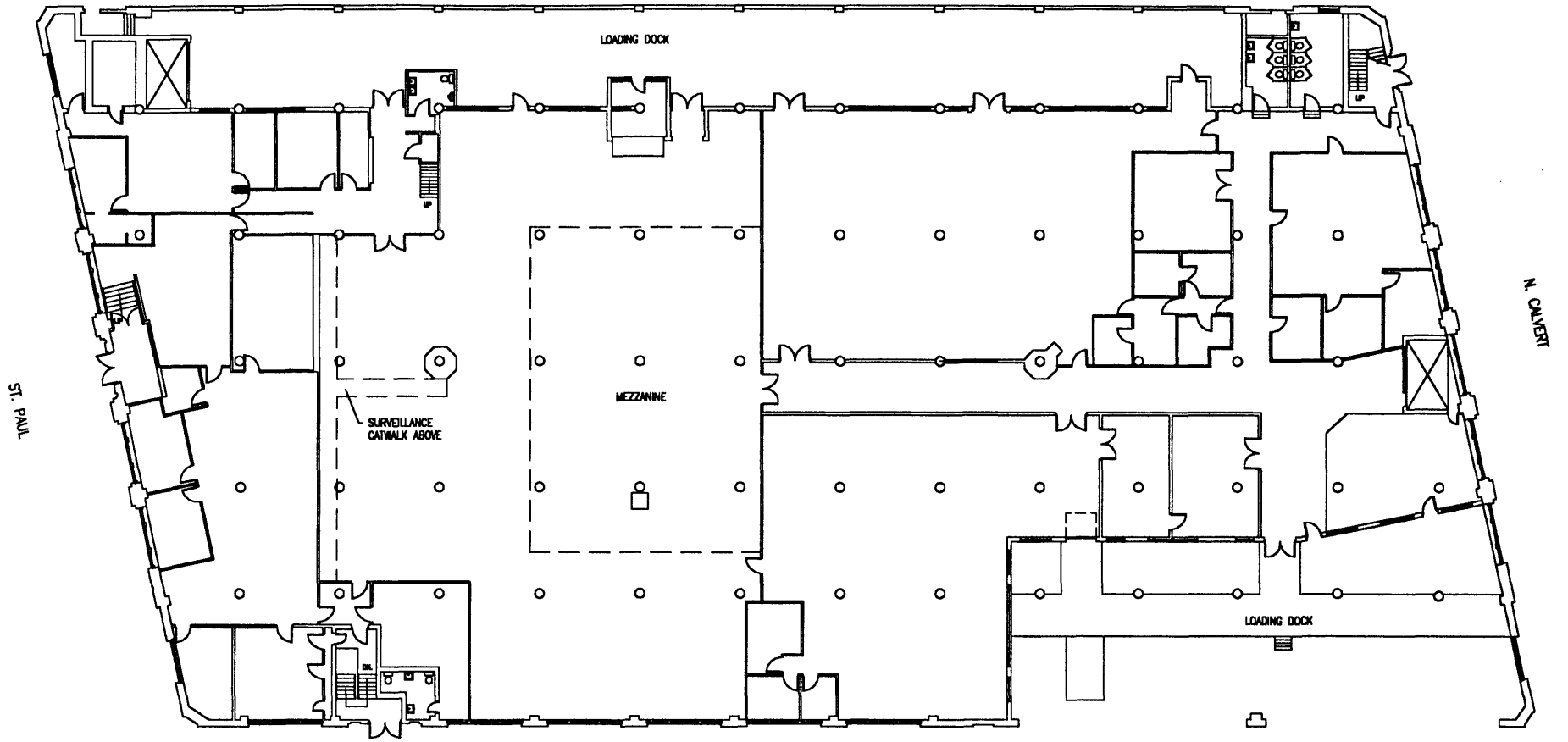
The boundaries of this historic resource are identified in the Baltimore City Land records as Block 446, Lot 5. It is bounded by St. Paul Street 301' on the west, by North Calvert Street 240' on the east, by the Jones Falls Expressway 270' on the south, by Amtrak yards 270' on the north.

Boundary Justification:

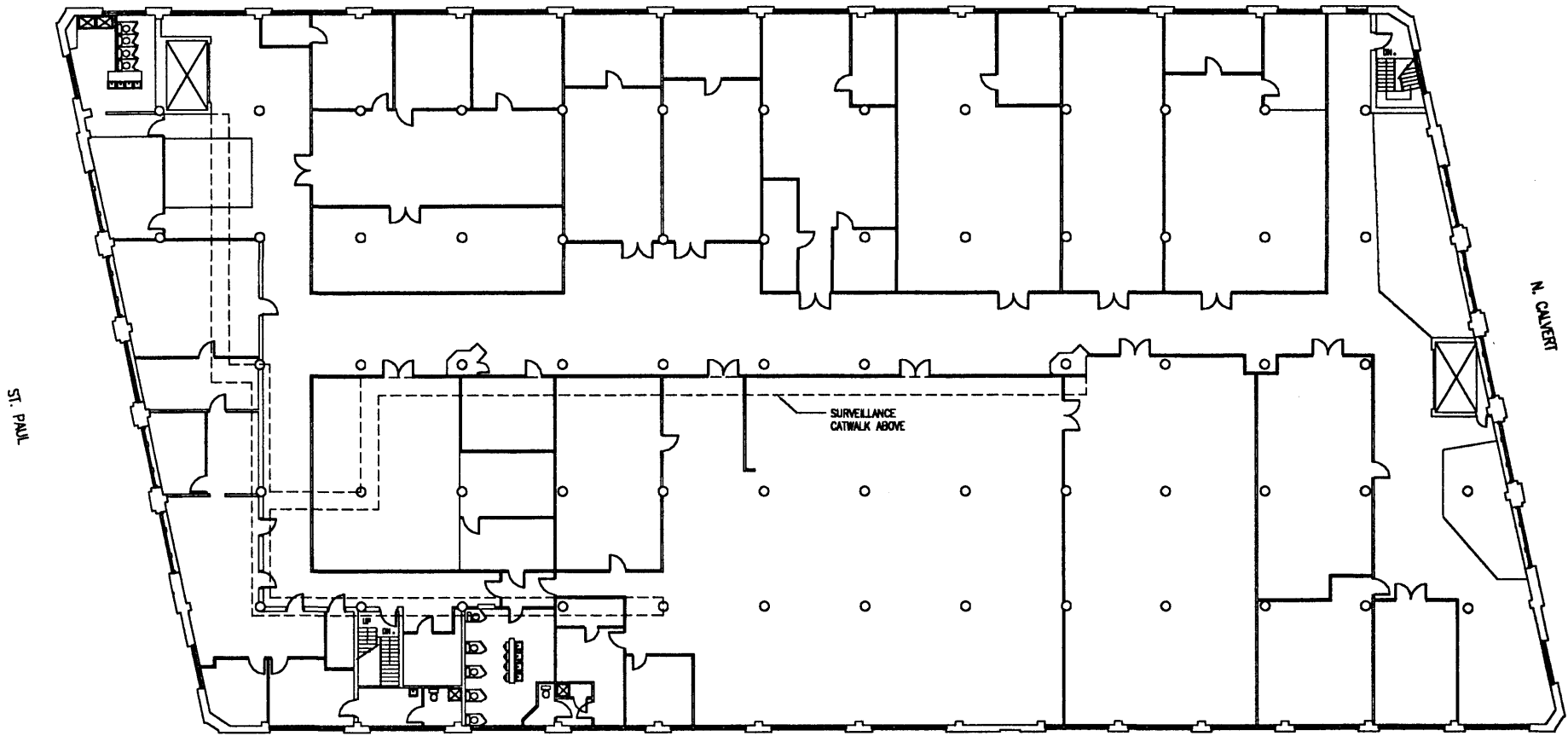
The boundary takes in the original lot of acquired in 1929 plus an additional parcel acquired by the U.S. Government in 1944.



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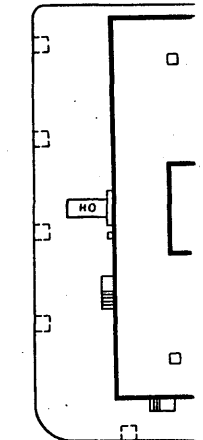
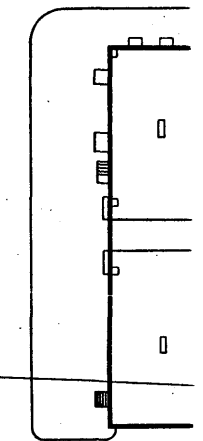
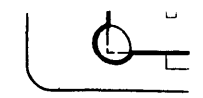
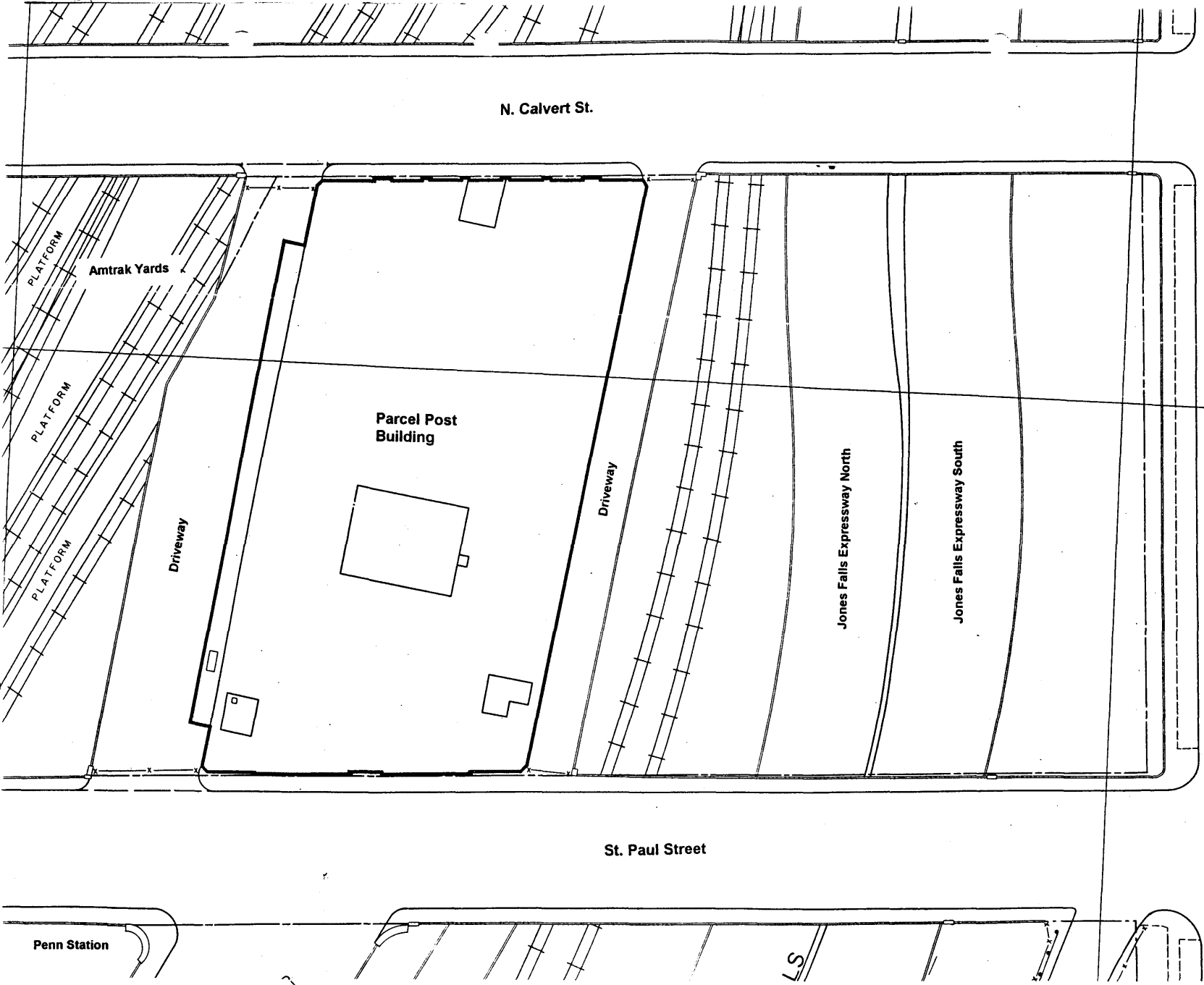


2ND FLOOR



NORTH

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Site Plan



1:40

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