

Form 10-300
(Rev. 6-72)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE:
COUNTY:
FOR NPS USE ONLY
ENTRY DATE

1. NAME

COMMON:
Federal Triangle

AND/OR HISTORIC:
In the Pennsylvania Avenue National Historic Site

2. LOCATION (For exact boundary see "Description" under Number 7)

STREET AND NUMBER: **Formed by the intersection of Pennsylvania Avenue and Constitution Avenue & 15th St., N.W.**

CITY OR TOWN: **Washington** CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT: **Congressman Walter E. Fauntroy, D.C.**

STATE	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
District of Columbia	11	District of Columbia	001

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public <input type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both Public Acquisition: <input type="checkbox"/> In Process <input type="checkbox"/> Being Considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress	Yes: <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Park <input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ _____

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:
United States of America and District of Columbia

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN: STATE: CODE

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC:
Recorder of Deeds

STREET AND NUMBER:
6th and D Streets, N.W.

CITY OR TOWN: STATE CODE
Washington District of Columbia 11

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY: **Proposed District of Columbia Additions to the National Register of Historic Properties recommended by the Joint Committee on Landmarks**

DATE OF SURVEY: **March 7, 1968** Federal State County Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:
National Capital Planning Commission

STREET AND NUMBER:
1325 G Street, N.W.

CITY OR TOWN: STATE CODE
Washington District of Columbia 11

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

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COUNTY
ENTRY NUMBER
DATE
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7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Size		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (If known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Federal Triangle is a 75 acre complex of government office buildings located in downtown Washington between the White House and the Capitol. The buildings form an almost perfect right angle triangle, except for the northwestern tip at Pennsylvania Avenue and 15th Street and the southeastern tip at Pennsylvania and Constitution Avenues, which are filled by small, triangular landscaped parks. The western leg of the Triangle, formed by 15th Street, is about 1,500 feet long; the base of the Triangle, formed by Constitution Avenue, is more than three-quarters of a mile long (about 4,100 feet); and the Triangle's hypotenuse, formed by Pennsylvania Avenue, extends for more than three-quarters of a mile (about 4,400 feet). The block long size and ornate Neo-Classical design of these buildings provide a monumental facade for Pennsylvania and Constitution Avenues, as well as the Ellipse, which is west of 15th Street.

General Description of the Mellon Board Buildings

Except for the Old Post Office and the District Building, the Neo-Classical complex was constructed between 1928 and 1938 under a plan provided by the Treasury Department under Secretary of the Treasury Mellon, with the assistance of a board of architectural consultants. The individual buildings were designed by different architectural firms; however, partners in each of the firms were members of the architectural consultant board. Consequently, the building designs were integrated to form a cohesive whole.

Except for the National Archives, all of the buildings are constructed around large, open, interior courts, some of which are landscaped and others which are used as service areas. The western half of the complex is built around a grand plaza and a partially built circular plaza. Two of the city's north-south streets and almost all of its east-west streets are interrupted at the Triangle's periphery, thus heightening the complex's cloistered and massive character.

The Triangle buildings are set back from the street and simply landscaped. Except for the National Archives, the buildings sit parallel to the streets upon which they front. They are steel framed, dressed masonry buildings, constructed of limestone (sometimes with a granite base), and have mansard, red tile roofs. The buildings have a uniform cornice line of between 125 and 130 feet, which, combined with their block long lengths and geometrically regular shapes, cause them to appear lower than their seven-story height.

The buildings' designs are further unified by a usual three part division-- a two-story base, a four-story central portion, and a top story set back behind a balustrade. In most of the buildings the sixth floor is hidden by a frieze, and only has windows facing an inner court.

The most striking and unifying element in the buildings' designs is the repeated use of colossal order colonnades and porticos. These columns, which stretch across the whole central section of the buildings, rise from the third through the fifth stories. They complement the enormous scale of the individual buildings and the overall Triangle project. Additional visual

(Continued on Form 10-300a)

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

5. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- Pre-Columbian; 16th Century 18th Century 20th Century
- 15th Century 17th Century 19th Century

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) 1891, 1904, 1928-1938

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

- | | | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal | <input type="checkbox"/> Education | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Political | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric | <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Phi- | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Historic | <input type="checkbox"/> Industry | osophy | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture | <input type="checkbox"/> Invention | <input type="checkbox"/> Science | _____ |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art | Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Human- | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature | itarian | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communications | <input type="checkbox"/> Military | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater | _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation | <input type="checkbox"/> Music | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation | _____ |

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Joint Committee on Landmarks has designated the Federal Triangle a Category II Landmark of importance which contributes significantly to the cultural heritage and visual beauty of the District of Columbia.

The first of the Triangle buildings, the Romanesque-Revival Old Post Office, was constructed in 1891-1899, followed by the Neo-Classical Beaux Arts District Building in 1904-1908. However the bulk of the area's buildings and its overall design were developed between 1928 and 1938 under the direction of a consultant board of architects to Secretary of the Treasury Andrew Mellon, popularly known as the Mellon Board. Designed by the leading architects of the period, the Mellon Board's handsome Neo-Classical ensemble consists of nine enormous federal buildings constructed around a series of outdoor plazas and inner courts. It is this country's most imposing example of the monumental civic center concept, a planning ideal in the early decades of the twentieth century. The Triangle's massiveness symbolizes the tremendous growth of the Federal government in this century.

The Federal Triangle has a rich urban design heritage. Inspired by the magnificence of the Chicago World's Fair of 1893, cities throughout the country hired consultant planners to design local civic centers. These civic center plans usually consisted of a grand open plaza around which were located various government and institutional buildings designed in the Neo-Classical style with uniform cornice lines. The monumentality and unity of these proposed building schemes greatly impressed turn of the century Americans who were accustomed to the irregularity of Victorian architecture and small scale builders. These civic center plans symbolized the nineteenth century growth of these cities from frontier outposts to industrial and commercial centers, prepared to challenge the supremacy of Europe. Such projects were also often viewed as a means of eliminating deteriorated commercial and tenement areas.

The scale of most of these plans, however, far exceeded the financial resources or needs of the aspiring cities, and construction was usually limited to a new city hall and plaza. In Washington, however, grand plans corresponded to the critical need for more government office space. Federal employment in the District increased from 28,044 in 1901 to 64,722 in 1926, as the government shed its narrow nineteenth century role and undertook major responsibilities in domestic affairs with the initiation of a federal income tax and the establishment of various regulatory agencies and numerous industry supportive programs. The Federal Triangle reflected the major, new

(Continued on Form 10-300a, page 5)

SEE INSTRUCTIONS.

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Much of the historical information for this report comes from a typescript "The Old Naval Hospital Building" by Emilia L. Gorau, 6/4/64 on file at NCPC.

Information provided by GSA

Moore, Charles, ed. Joint Select Committee to Investigate the Charities and Reformatory Institutions in the District of Columbia - Part III. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1898.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	° ' "	° ' "		38° 52' 59"	76° 59' 31"	
NE	° ' "	° ' "				
SE	° ' "	° ' "				
SW	° ' "	° ' "				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: .705 acre

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

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE:
Suzanne Ganschietz, Architectural Historian

ORGANIZATION: National Capital Planning Commission DATE: June 19, 1973

STREET AND NUMBER:
1325 G Street, N.W.

CITY OR TOWN: Washington STATE: District of Columbia CODE: 001

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison 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. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National State Local

Name _____

Title _____

Date _____

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

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

Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date _____

ATTEST:

Keeper of The National Register

Date _____

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

"Annual Reports of the Public Buildings Commission, 1925-1932." Congressional Serial Set.

Annual Report of the Supervising Architect to the Secretary of the Treasury for the Year Ending September 30, 1896. Washington: GPO 1897. pp. 6-7.

National Capital Planning Commission. Landmark Files.

Work Projects Administration. A Guide to the Nation's Capital. New York: Hastings House. 1942. pp. 184-200.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY				OR	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES				
CORNER	LATITUDE				LONGITUDE			LATITUDE	LONGITUDE
	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds	Degrees	Minutes	Seconds
NW	38°	53'	46"	77°	02'	02"			
NE	38°	53'	46"	77°	01'	11"			
SE	38°	53'	32"	77°	01'	11"			
SW	38°	53'	32"	77°	02'	02"			

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 74.5368 acres

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

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE
STATE:	CODE	COUNTY:	CODE

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE:

Leonard H. Gerson, Urban Historian

ORGANIZATION

National Capital Planning Commission

DATE

August 14, 1973

STREET AND NUMBER:

1325 G Street, N.W.

CITY OR TOWN:

Washington

STATE

District of Columbia

CODE

11

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison 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. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National State Local

Name _____

Title Assistant to the Mayor for Housing Programs

Date _____

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

Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date _____

ATTEST:

Keeper of The National Register

Date _____

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7. Description - Federal Triangle

interest is provided by sculptured pediments, friezes with bas-reliefs and decorative sculpture.

The interiors of the Triangle buildings are generally divided into traditional office space with marble or terrazzo floors and plaster walls. However, some of the spaces, especially in the entrance and lobby areas, have rich decorative features such as rusticated walls, arches, classical columns and coffered ceilings. The Post Office and Justice Departments contain numerous murals depicting the history of the United States in relation to the work of their departments. The National Aquarium is located in the basement of the Commerce Department. The Aquarium usually displays over 2,000 specimens which are contained in 67 aquariums ranging from 20 to 2,500 gallons.

The most significant of the Triangle display areas is the Exhibition Hall at the Constitution Avenue entrance of the National Archives. The room has a 75 foot high coffered, half-domed ceiling and two walls murals by Barry Faulkner depicting the submission of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution. Air conditioned, bronze exhibition cases contain the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and other documents relating to the founding the United States.

Commerce Department Building. The building housing the Department of Commerce is the largest of the Triangle buildings. It is a rectangular shaped structure which measures about 320 feet (east-west) by 1,020 feet (north-south), and forms almost the entire west side of the Triangle from Constitution Avenue to E Street between 14th and 15th Streets. The building has a rusticated, granite base; a Doric colonnade on three sides and four, tetrastyle, Doric, pedimented porticos on its west side. The building was designed by the architectural firm of York and Sawyer and was completed in 1932.

The Grand Plaza and the District Building. East of the central section of the Commerce Department (across 14th Street) is a large open area about 600 feet (north-south) by 750 feet (east-west). It was intended as the Triangle's Grand Plaza, but is now used as a parking lot. The large, circular, Oscar Straus Memorial Fountain on its western border is a forlorn reminder of this square's original purpose. The west end of the north side of the Grand Plaza is bordered by the District Building, whose frontage extends along E Street from 14th to 13-1/2 Streets. This National Register landmark was designed by Cope and Stewardson and erected in 1904-08. Its Neo-Classical Beaux Arts design and smaller scale distinguish it from the other, less ornate, Triangle buildings, and the Mellon Board plans proposed its removal. The east end of the north side of the Grand Plaza is bordered by a vacant space, which is now used as a parking lot. This lot was formerly the site of the Coast Guard building which was demolished several years ago.

The southern side of the Grand Plaza (between 12th and 14th Streets) is formed by a single architectural group which houses the Labor Department, a massive

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7. Description (continued) - Federal Triangle

government auditorium, and the Interstate Commerce Commission. This building group, which measures about 930 feet (east-west) by 240 feet (north-south), appears to be a single 5 part edifice from its principal frontage on Constitution Avenue. The hexastyle, Doric, pedimented portico of the Auditorium provides the central accent on the Constitution Avenue facade, and it is flanked on the east and west by short hyphens and the rectangular shaped Interstate Commerce Commission and the Department of Labor, which have smaller, tetrastyle, Doric, pedimented corner pavilions. These three buildings, designed by Arthur Brown, were completed in 1935.

Post Office Department Building. The Post Office Department, which forms the eastern side of the Grand Plaza and the western side of the Great Circle, is a tri-unit building, located between 12th and 13th Streets. It was designed by the firm of Delano and Aldrich and completed in 1934. The central section is comprised of two huge, back to back, semi-circular units which are tangent to each other at the center. These units are located within the interior of the Triangle and front neither on Constitution Avenue nor on Pennsylvania Avenue. The third unit, trapezoid in shape, is attached to the north end of the semi-circular units, and fronts on Pennsylvania Avenue. (The Post Office Department is bordered on the south by the Interstate Commerce Commission Building.)

The western facade of the building's main section is a semi-circular Doric colonnade with corner, pedimented tetrastyle pavilions. The east facade is designed with a central pedimented portico with four pairs of Ionic columns, corner Ionic pavilions and a sidewalk arcade.

The Great Circle and the Old Post Office Building. The semi-circular units of the Post Office Department are pierced at the center by three monumental arches which lead through an arcade to the Grand Plaza to the west, and a half completed circular plaza (now used as a parking area) to the east. The circular plaza, known as the Great Circle, has not been completed due to the presence of the Old Post Office on the proposed circle's northeastern side. The Old Post Office, now a separately listed National Register landmark, was designed in the Office of the Supervising Architect of the Treasury, W.J. Edbrooke, and was completed in 1899. The building's Romanesque Revival design, 315' high tower, and aged gray color provide a dramatic break in the Neo-Classical design, and usual 129 foot height and buff color of the other Triangle buildings.

Internal Revenue Service Building. South of the Old Post Office and Interstate Commerce Commission Building between 10th and 12th Streets is the Internal Revenue Building. The main section of the building, completed in 1930, is built around four interior courts, and is almost square shaped, measuring about 450 feet (east-west) by 395 feet (north-south). Its main facade on Constitution Avenue has a Doric colonnade and three bronze entranceways which are flanked by sculptured urns. This section's northwest corner is curved, as it was to form part of the eastern side of the Great Circle. In 1935 an L-shaped wing which fronts on Pennsylvania Avenue between 10th and 11th Streets was

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7. Description (continued) - Federal Triangle

added. Both the main section and wing were designed by the Office of the Supervising Architect of the Treasury, Louis Simon.

Justice Department Building. East of the Department of Internal Revenue is the trapezoid-shaped headquarters of the Department of Justice, which takes up the whole square bounded by Constitution Avenue, Pennsylvania Avenue, 10th Street, and 9th Street. The building, designed by the architectural firm of Zantlinger, Borie and Medary, was completed in 1934. The building's design is marked by three-story high Ionic colonnades and corner pavilions, and the innovative use of aluminum, rather than bronze, for the central entrance doors on Constitution and Pennsylvania Avenues. The central section of the building is constructed around the largest of the Triangle buildings' interior courts, which is adorned with a large aluminum fountain bowl on a terraced platform.

National Archives Building. The most singular and dramatic of the Triangle buildings is the National Archives. The building is the sole occupant of the square to the east of the Justice Department, but, instead of covering the whole area, it has a considerable setback from Pennsylvania and Constitution Avenues, thus heightening its monumental effect.

The building, which measures about 330 feet (east-west) by 206 feet (north-south), was designed by John Russel Pope and built in two stages. Between 1931 and 1935 the colonnaded, rectangular shaped outer core was constructed. Between 1935 and 1937 the Archives' interior court was filled with an extension whose flat roof rises to a height of 168 feet, 76 feet above the building's cornice line.

The building is distinguished from the other Neo-Classical structures by its somewhat greater height of 168 feet, its greater setback and cross axis position to 8th Street (which gives it a more freestanding appearance), and its temple like quality. Its Roman temple appearance is a result of its deep Corinthian portico on the Constitution Avenue side which is approached by a monumental flight of steps, and 53 foot high Corinthian colonnades which project from each of its exterior walls and hide the building's windows. Consequently, the Archives' exterior has a cloistered look, and an even horizontal rhythm resulting from the alternating colonnades and plain wall surfaces.

Federal Trade Commission Building. At the apex of the Triangle is the Federal Trade Commission Building, the smallest of the Triangle buildings proposed by the Mellon Board. Bordered by Pennsylvania and Constitution Avenues and 6th and 7th Streets, this triangular-shaped building measures about 200 feet (north-south) by 315 feet (east-west) by 345 feet (northwest-southwest). The main focus of the building is at the apex formed by the meeting of Pennsylvania and Constitution Avenues at 6th Street. At this point a semi-circular colossal

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7. Description (continued) - Federal Triangle

Ionic colonnade extends from the third through the fifth stories. The building is approached from the apex by a low, granite stairway which leads to a raised platform adorned with heroic sculptured figures, symbolizing Man Controlling Trade. These figures were sculptured in limestone by Michael Lantz. The platform extends around the eastern end of the building to the main entrances on Constitution and Pennsylvania Avenues. All four of the building's entrance doors (two on both the Constitution and Pennsylvania Avenue sides) are made of aluminum and decorated with panels illustrating the development of trade and communication.

Federal Triangle boundary: Beginning at the northeast corner of the intersection of Constitution Avenue and 15th Street, N.W.; then proceeding northerly along the east side of 15th Street, N.W., to the southeast corner of the intersection of 15th Street and Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.; then proceeding southeasterly along the south side of Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W., to its intersection with the north side of Constitution Avenue, N.W.; then proceeding easterly along the north side of Constitution Avenue, N.W., to the point of beginning.

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8. Significance - Federal Triangle

role that the national government was assuming in the twentieth century. It was a part of a massive government building program in the 1920's and 1930's which also included the construction of the Library of Congress Annex, a second House Office Building, and the Supreme Court.

The earliest proposal for concentrating federal buildings in the Triangle area (bordered by Pennsylvania Avenue, Constitution Avenue, and 15th Street) was made in 1896 by William Aiken, Supervising Architect to the Secretary of the Treasury. At this time the building now known as the Old Post Office, the first of the Triangle buildings, was being constructed at 12th Street and Pennsylvania Avenue under the direction of the Treasury Department.

Six years later, the McMillan Commission recommended that the Triangle area become the center for the administrative and service functions of the District of Columbia and that the existing sprawling and unsightly animal and produce markets in the area be replaced by a new, more concentrated series of market buildings. The classical revival government buildings which the Commission proposed are similar in overall design to the buildings which were eventually constructed.

In 1908, the District Building, designed by Cope and Stewardson, was completed on the south side of E Street between 13-1/2 and 14th Streets. In 1910 the government purchased the land at the western end of the present day Triangle between 14th and 15th Streets, for the site of three new executive department buildings--Justice, Commerce and Labor, and State. Construction of these buildings, however, was not undertaken.

The great potential for the Triangle area as a center for government buildings was again stressed in a 1917 report by a subcommittee of the Public Buildings Commission on the need for permanent office space for government functions. The subcommittee recommended the purchase of the nongovernment owned land in the Triangle, and the location of a new market and government buildings in the area, as an alternative to the growing practice of renting office space. In a letter included in the subcommittee report, the Commission of Fine Arts emphasized the importance of this project as a means of revitalizing the deteriorating older downtown area, in opposition to the government's growing tendency to locate their offices west of 17th Street.

No further progress was made on the Triangle project until a new Public Buildings Act was passed in 1926. The law gave Secretary of the Treasury Mellon the responsibility for constructing new federal office buildings, and limited the purchase of District land for this purpose to the area south of Pennsylvania Avenue and west of Maryland Avenue, except for the sites for the Supreme Court and the extension of the Government Printing Office.

A plan for the Federal Triangle was prepared by the Treasury Department in the same year. The Department was assisted by Edward H. Bennett, a former associate

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8. Significance - Federal Triangle

of Daniel Burnham, the major figure in the planning of the 1893 Chicago World's Fair, the McMillan Commission Plan of 1902, and numerous other turn of the century civic plans. Although Congressional authorization was limited to only a few buildings, the plan covered the entire Triangle area, so as to allow for orderly development in the future. As was the case with the McMillan Plan, classical revival architecture was envisioned for the area, but the 1926 plan differed greatly from the 1902 proposal. The Triangle was given over totally to government office space without any provision for a new market. The Eighth Street vista was ignored, and a building intruded upon the southern half of Market Square. Another building blocked the line of Indiana Avenue south of the Square, and, instead of extending outward to the city's streets, the 1926 plan was inwardly oriented around a large L-shaped central plaza between 13th Street and 14th Street.

In 1927 a six-man advisory board of architects was established to assist the Secretary of the Treasury and in December of that year a revised Triangle plan was approved by the Public Buildings Commission. This plan was even more inwardly oriented than the 1926 proposal. Almost all of C Street was to be closed within the Triangle, and the Old Post Office was to be demolished to allow for the construction of another plaza on the line of 12th Street. The succession of plazas was to be an important element in the Triangle's overall design.

The final major change in the Triangle Plan occurred in 1930. The National Archives was moved to 8th Street and Pennsylvania Avenue and was set facing 8th Street, rather than parallel to Pennsylvania Avenue. This recognition of the Eighth Street Vista was an exception to the usual lack of concern which the Triangle's architects showed for the streets which their buildings terminated. Although the Federal Triangle was supposedly designed within the framework of the L'Enfant Plan, its very essence--the inward orientation, the enormous concentration of government activities--is in conflict with the original plan for the city.

Congress authorized the purchase of the remaining non-government owned land within the Triangle in 1928. Construction of the first Mellon Board buildings--the Commerce Department and the Internal Revenue Service--began in that year. They were followed over the next decade by the construction of buildings in the Triangle area for the Labor Department, the Interstate Commerce Commission, an Auditorium, the Post Office Department, the Justice Department, the National Archives, and lastly the Federal Trade Commission in 1938. Of special note is John Russell Pope's handsome design for the National Archives, a separately listed National Register landmark. Pope was a member of the board of consulting architects to the Treasury, as were all the firms which designed the individual buildings within the Triangle.

Although construction of the Triangle ended in 1938, an important element, the Great Circle at 12th Street, remained unfinished. The President's Temporary

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8. Significance (continued) - Federal Triangle

Commission on Pennsylvania Avenue, a body formed in the 1960's to provide a plan for the development of Pennsylvania Avenue from the Capitol to the White House, proposed that the Great Circle be completed. Such an undertaking, however, necessitates the demolition of the Old Post Office, a separately listed National Register landmark. Congress refused to allow the destruction of the building in 1934, and has yet to appropriate the funds for such a project. The General Services Administration is now seeking a means of preserving the building.

The Pennsylvania Avenue Commission also recommended that the Grand Plaza be formally landscaped, and the existing parking lot be located underground. The Commission Plan envisioned the completion of the Grand Plaza with the construction of a Neo-Classical Post Office extension on the now vacant site at Pennsylvania Avenue and 13-1/2 Street, then the location of the Coast Guard Building. However, no funds have been appropriated for these projects.

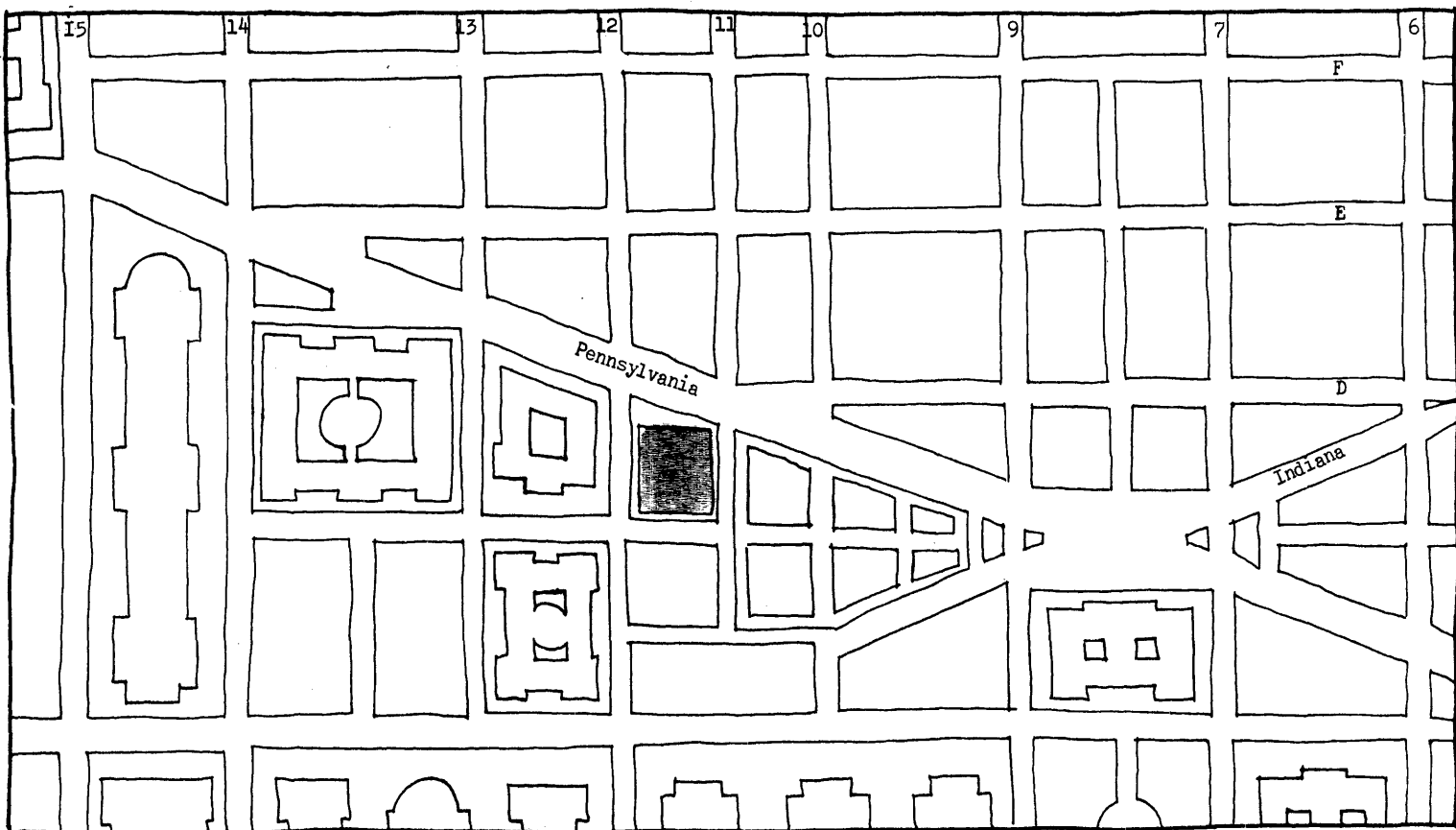


Fig. 1, Sketch of the MacMillan Plan of 1901, showing the Old Post Office being kept. ()

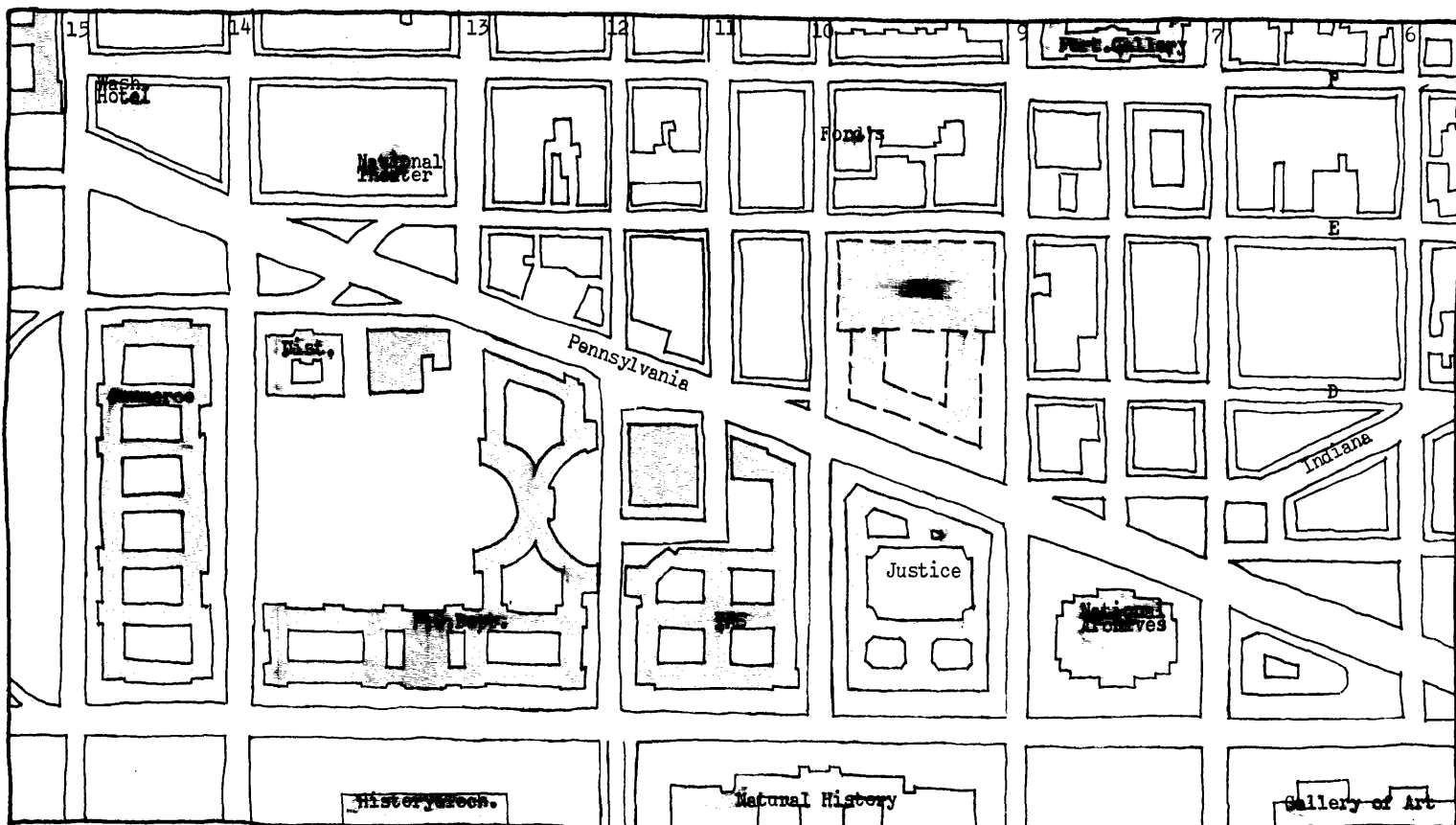


Fig. 2, Sketch of Present Conditions, showing Federal office buildings boxing in Pennsylvania Avenue (), and places of interest to tourists and local citizens ().

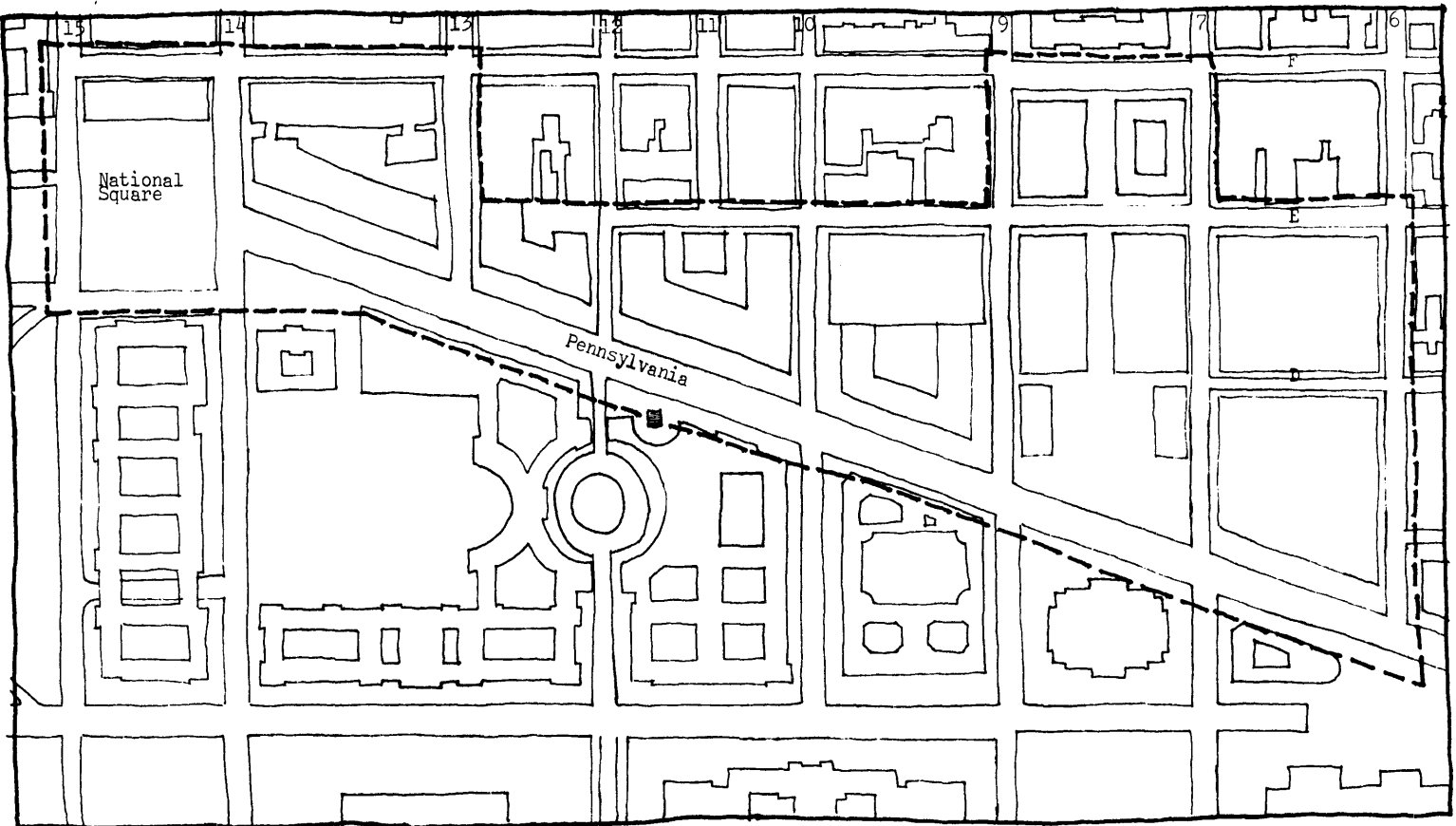


Fig. 3, Sketch of Current Planning, showing the Old Post Office reduced to a tower, and showing proposed area of the Bicentennial Corporation in broken lines.

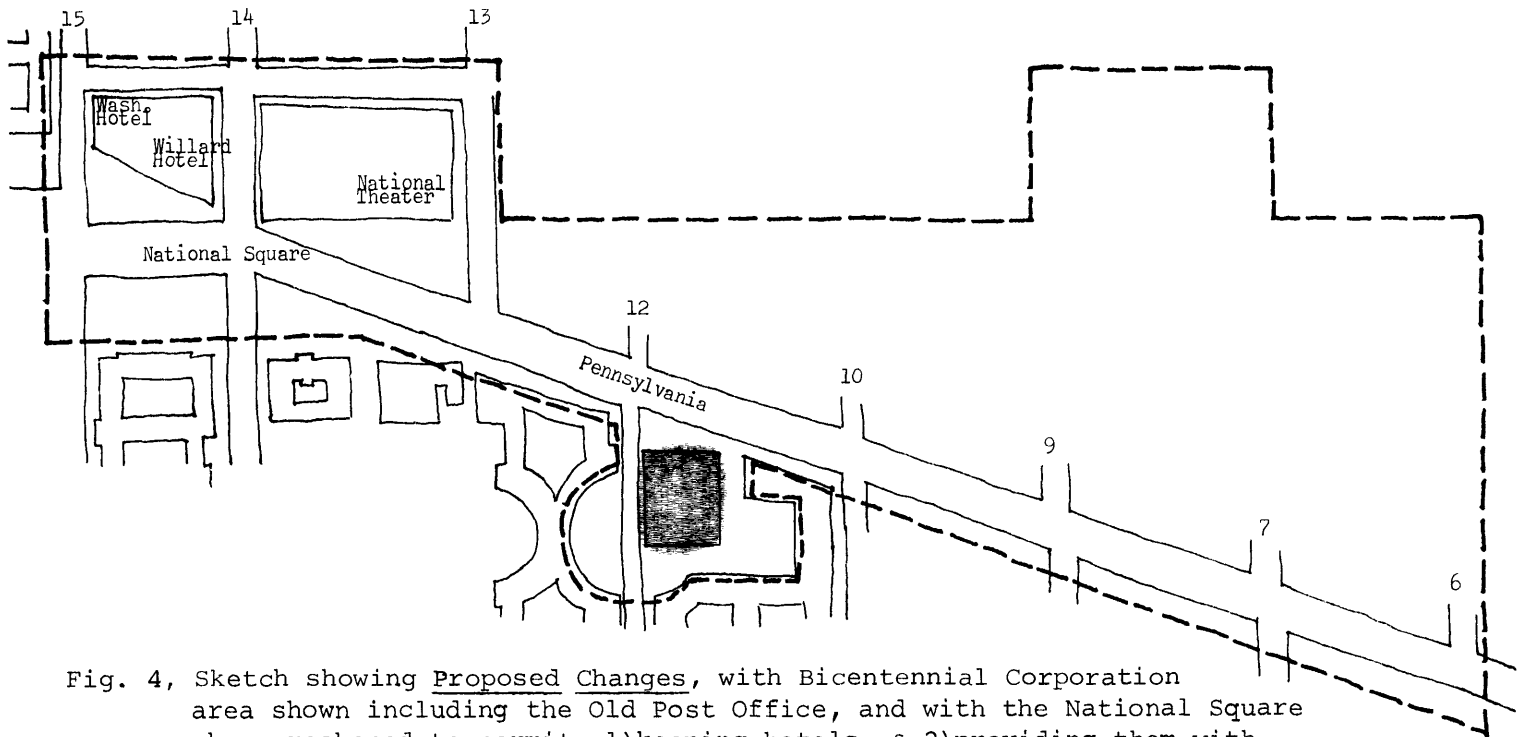


Fig. 4, Sketch showing Proposed Changes, with Bicentennial Corporation area shown including the Old Post Office, and with the National Square shown reshaped to permit: 1) keeping hotels, & 2) providing them with courts.

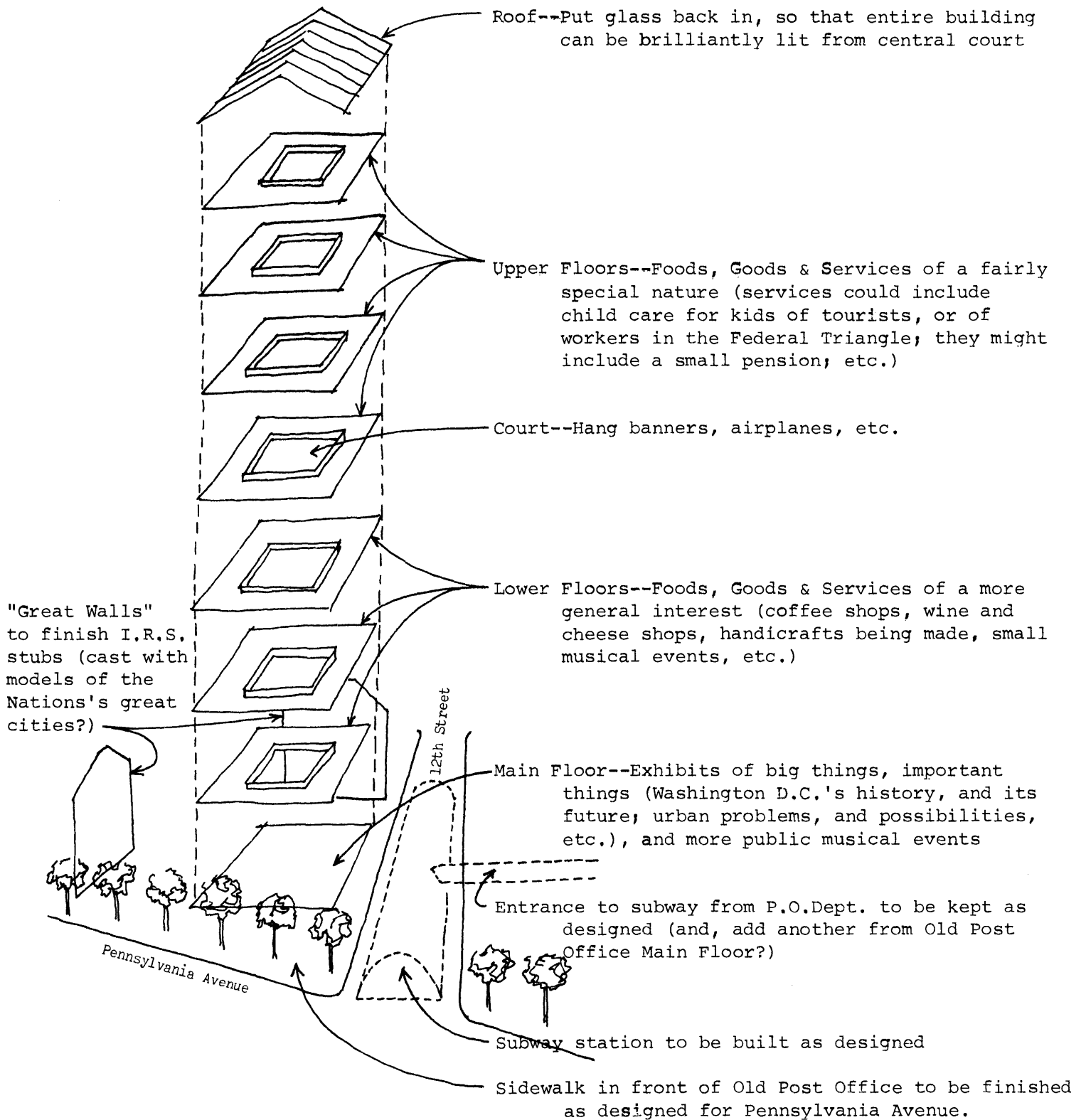


Fig. 5, Blow-up diagram of Ways to Use Old Post Office

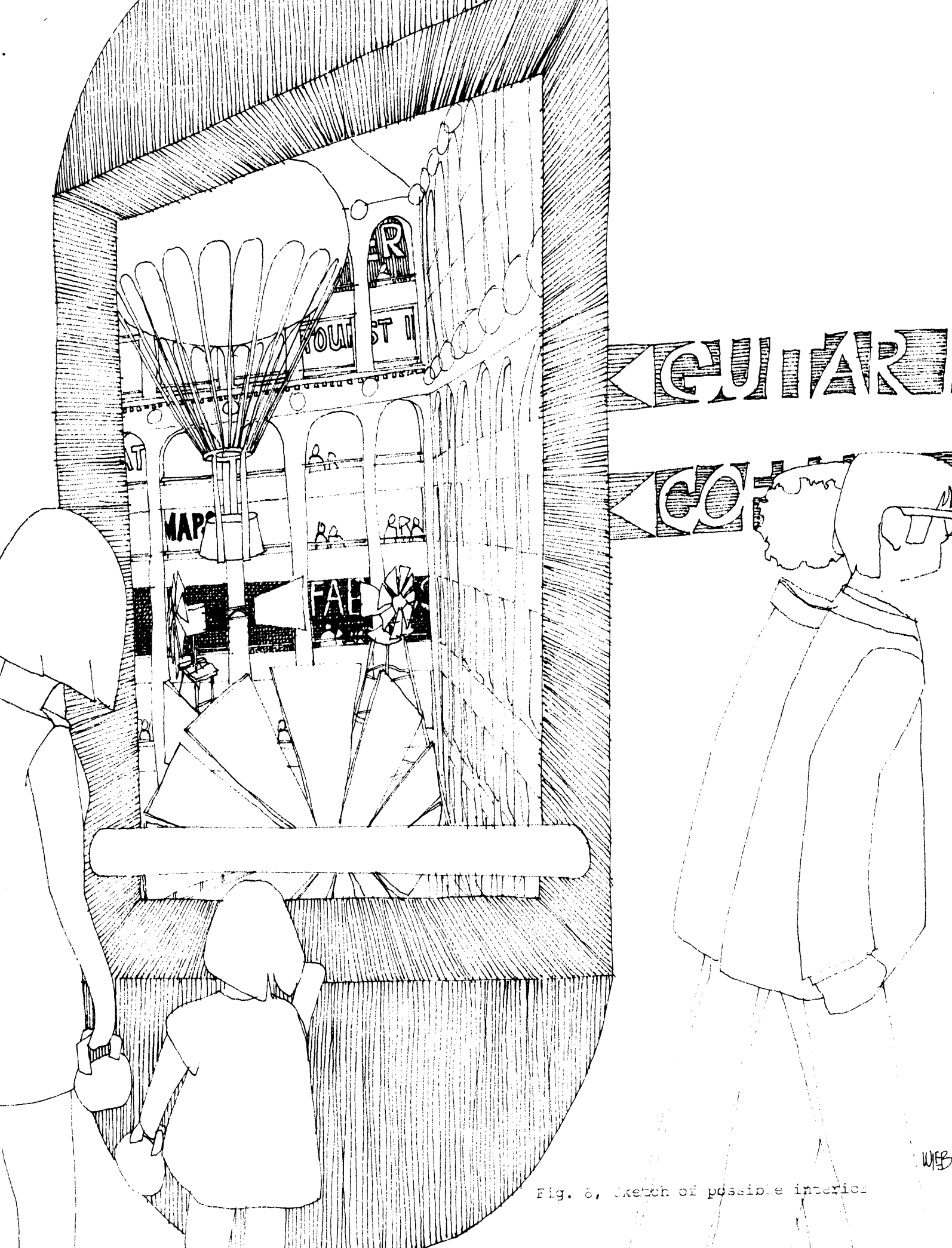


Fig. 8, Sketch of possible interiors



Fig. 77 Sketch of possible exterior