

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 6-26-86

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

HISTORIC

United States Post Office Garage

AND/OR COMMON

Vehicle Maintenance Facility, Boston MA

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

135 "A" Street

N/A NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

South Boston

N/A VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Ninth Congressional District

STATE

Massachusetts 02210

CODE

0007

COUNTY

Suffolk

CODE

005025

3 CLASSIFICATION**CATEGORY**☐ DISTRICT
☒ BUILDING(S)
☐ STRUCTURE
☐ SITE
☐ OBJECT**OWNERSHIP**☒ PUBLIC
☐ PRIVATE
☐ BOTH**PUBLIC ACQUISITION**☐ IN PROCESS
☐ BEING CONSIDERED**STATUS**☒ OCCUPIED
☐ UNOCCUPIED
☐ WORK IN PROGRESS
ACCESSIBLE
☐ YES: RESTRICTED
☐ YES: UNRESTRICTED
☒ NO**PRESENT USE**☐ AGRICULTURE
☐ COMMERCIAL
☐ EDUCATIONAL
☐ ENTERTAINMENT
☒ GOVERNMENT
☐ INDUSTRIAL
☐ MILITARY
☐ MUSEUM
☐ PARK
☐ PRIVATE RESIDENCE
☐ RELIGIOUS
☐ SCIENTIFIC
☐ TRANSPORTATION
☐ OTHER:**4 AGENCY**

REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS: (If applicable)

New England Field Real Estate and Buildings Office

STREET & NUMBER

1050 Waltham Street

CITY, TOWN

Lexington

STATE

Massachusetts 02173

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

Suffolk County Registry of Deeds

STREET & NUMBER

Suffolk County Courthouse, Fifth Floor, Government Center

CITY, TOWN

Boston

STATE

Massachusetts 02135

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

This two-story building is trapezoidal in plan, almost totally occupying the site. The exterior walls are poured concrete on a pile foundation, scored to suggest panelization, and have streamlined curved corners. It has a steel roof frame and gypsum and concrete roof decks. A base is suggested by slightly projecting the concrete foundation around the building. Some minor deterioration and discoloration is visible, but considering the wear and tear the building must endure, it is in very good condition. Previously stark concrete in color, the building was painted bright yellow in 1983, which can withstand abuse better than a paler color.

The functional nature of the building is expressed on the exterior by window placement and the building is divided into two areas: maintenance and operations. The maintenance area for the storage and repair of vehicles is distinguished by large expanses of steel sash, wire glass windows with operable awning sections and metal louvers. The operations area for the running of the building, dispatch, and inventory control is juxtaposed by utilizing smaller areas of windows. Where the plan places the operations and smaller maintenance areas along the exterior wall, a playful composition of windows is established. A small mezzanine level in the rear adds another dialog by its need of light at an in-between level.

Three features of the garage's program add another layer of intrigue to the total composition of the building. First, the vehicle entry (located at the southeast corner on "A" Street) is defined by sweeping curves indicating the flow of traffic in and out. Gilded aluminum letters above on a thin awning are the only embellishment to the exterior. Within the curved walls are small security windows for the dispatcher and general foreman. Secondly, looking into the entry, is the two-car ramp along the south wall to the second floor maintenance areas. The final element is the vehicle

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 Vehicle Maintenance Facility Item number 7

Page 2

elevator, assessible from both floors and "A" Street. Its tall penthouse is used as a organizing element to tie together the building's different flat roof and parapet heights. The building's play with copings and layering to break down its large scale contributes to its appeal.

The vehicle entrance leads to two large truck storage areas with the maintenance rooms along the east end. Proceeding up the asphalt block ramp, one arrives at two additional truck storage areas wrapped by specialty repair rooms. Large metal framed skylights are on the roof (some are now permanently sealed). Above the entrance are the operations offices, including the Fleet Manager's office in the southeast corner. Most of the interior walls are of either brick or poured concrete; additions are of concrete block or plasterboard. The floors and ceilings are primarily exposed concrete; offices now have acoustical tile ceilings and tile floors.

ALTERATIONS

In addition to the exterior painting, the covering of some skylights, and the installation of insulated tiles in some window panels, two exterior doors, one set of fire stairs, and several interior doors have been added to the building, and a large centéred column and island at the vehicle entry has been removed around 1960.

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 1940-1941

BUILDER/ARCHITECT Gilbert Stnaley Underwood, Con. Architect

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Grande & Volpe, Inc. - Contractor

The Post Office Vehicle Maintenance Facility is located in an industrial district of South Boston on "A" Street between West First Street and Sobin Park. Manufacturing and warehouse structures, many constructed before 1900 and built of brick, predominate in this area. This building is an important landmark within its urban context by virtue of its striking design and bright yellow coloration.

Although less than fifty (50) years old, this building is eligible to the National Register of Historic Places as a rare Boston-area example of the International style. It is reminiscent of Pre-World War II structure in Western Europe, the birth place of this style - The International style emerged during the 1920's and 1930's in Germany, Holland, France, etc. Its rallying cry was "ornament is crime." Proponents of this style viewed buildings as space enclosing envelopes. This view fits in well with the functional needs of man organizations-such as the U.S. Post Office-for interchangeable work areas. The Vehicle Maintenance Facility's scored concrete exterior simulating individual panels, and the large glass and steel sash areas are consistent with the style's design tenets based on factory fabricated components. Its emphasis on functionalism, stark simplicity, open planning and usage of mundane components (i.e. the elevator and ramp) as visible design elements are the hallmarks of the Federal Government's move away from classical tradition to one heralding the modern machine age. Indeed, the International style presented a challenge to Ecole der Beaux Arts trained architects steeped in the Classical style which had been revived during the 1890's and 1900's. This building represents the work of West Coast modernist Gilbert Stanley Underwood (no citation in Withey's Dictionary of American Architects). He served as consulting architect on federal government building projects during the 1930's-1950's. He was responsible for the Federal Building in Los Angeles (1941), U.S. Court House, Seattle Washington (1941) and the P.H.A. residence for Women, Washington, D.C. (1942). He is perhaps best known for his stylish, streamlined, terra cotta covered San Francisco Mint Building (1937). Underwood was the Architect of several articles including "Illustrating the Perfection of Terra Cotta Ceramic Veneer" (American Architect and Engineer, April 1941).

Photographs date this structure's reinforced steel footings to December 1940. The second floor ground slab reads "March 31, 1941." The building was completed at the end of 1941. Innovative features of this structure included a traveling crane and monorail system (now exists only in parts of the second floor). It was capable of producing

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

History of Post Office Construction 1900-1940, July 1982

Bibliography - United States Post Office Garage Vehicle Maintenance Facility, Boston, MA
Encyclopedia of Modern Architecture, Gerd Hatje, 1964

The Federal Presence-Lois Craig - p. 282

Avery Architectural Index listings - Gilbert Stanley Underwood-"Illustrating the Perfection of Terra Cotta Ceramic Veneer" - Architect and Engineers V.145 - 1941

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 2.504

UTM REFERENCES

A 19 330820 4689730
ZONE EASTING NORTHING
C

B
ZONE EASTING NORTHING
D

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

North to South - 365.15' along "A" Street
West to East - 272.46' along West First Street
South to North - 349.84' along rear lot line
East to West - 347.75' along Sobin Park

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

STATE CODE COUNTY CODE

STATE CODE COUNTY CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

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 X

NONE

Valerie A. Talmage

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 X State Local.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

John L. Sullivan

TITLE Realty Specialist, Senior

DATE

May 8, 1986

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

DATE

6/26/86

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION
ATTEST:

DATE

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

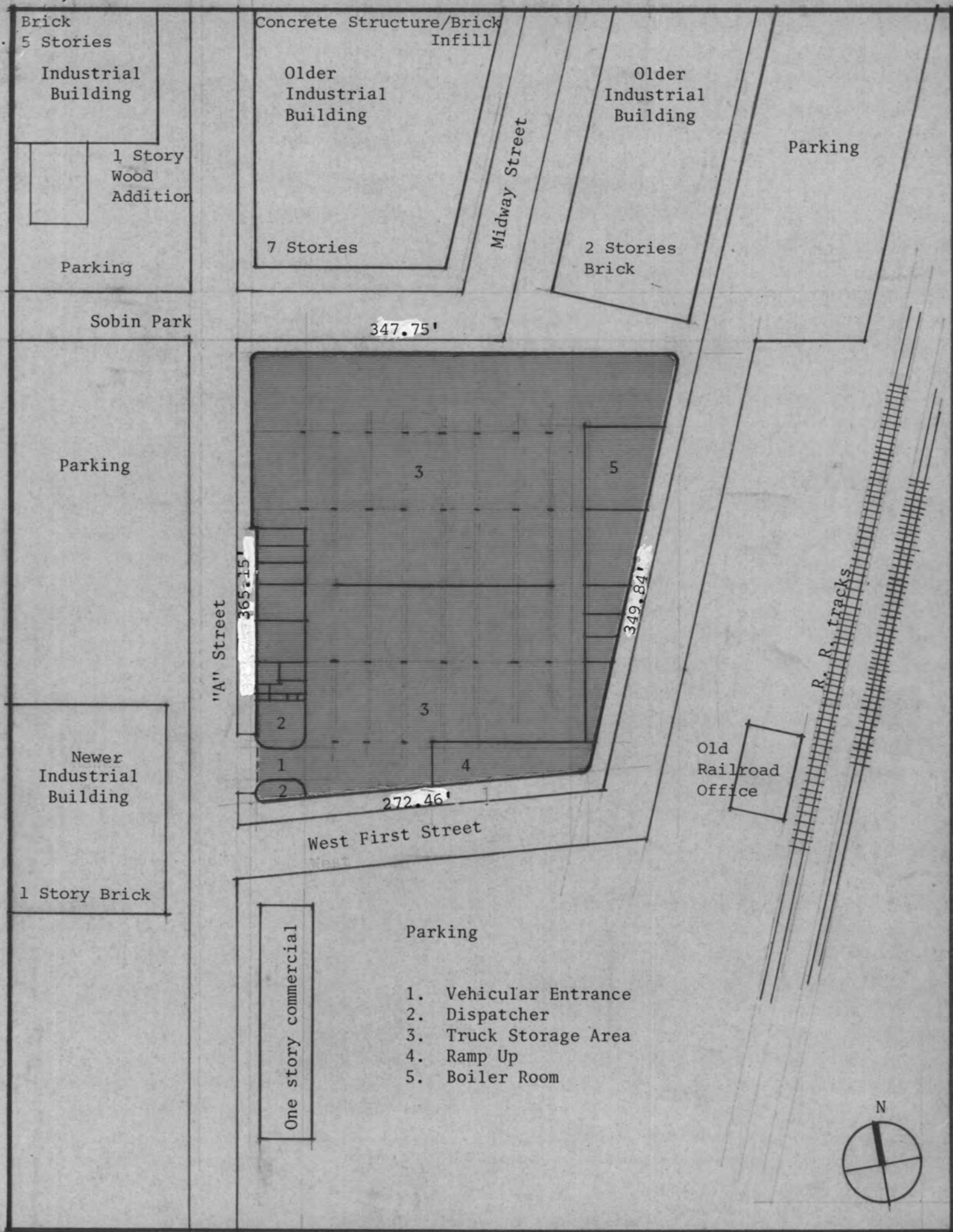
received

date entered

Continuation sheet VEHICLE MAINTENANCE FACILITY Item number 8

Page 2

entire cars right through the 1940's. Today, the garage is still self sufficient though it now purchases its vehicles. A granite plaque on the "A" Street elevation reads "Frank C. Walker, Postmaster General; John M. Carmoody, Federal Works Administrator; W. Signlehert Reynolds, Commissioner of Public Buildings; Louis A. Simon, Supervising Architect; Neal A. Melnick, Supervising Engineer; Gilbert Stanley Underwood, Consulting Architect, 1940."



Post Office Vehicle Maintenance Facility ° South Boston, Massachusetts



less than 50 yrs
86001378

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

U. S. Post Office Garage
Suffolk County
MASSACHUSETTS

Substantive Review

MAY 12 1986

Working No. _____
Fed. Reg. Date: 2/3/7
Date Due: 6/13/86 - 6/26/86
Action: ☒ ACCEPT 6-26-86
☐ RETURN
☐ REJECT
Federal Agency: USPS

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

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

Reviewer's comments:

see attached sheet

Recom./Criteria Accept C
Reviewer Savage
Discipline Architectural History
Date 6-18-86
_____ 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: _____

Review Comments

USPO Garage, Boston

The Boston USPO Garage, constructed in 1940-41 is exceptionally significant architecturally at the local level as a rare surviving example of the streamlined International Style. According to the SHPO, between the years 1934-54 no major public buildings were constructed in Boston. The garage is the only Boston public building executed in the streamlined International Style. It is relatively intact and in a good state of preservation. It's distinguishing design features characteristic of the style are: steel reinforced poured concrete construction, steel sash, wire glass industrial windows with operable awning sections and metal louvers, sculptural massing, sweeping curvilinear corners, and the lack of decorative detailing with the exception of the hallmark gilded aluminum lettering at the entrance. The building's emphasis on functionalism, stark simplicity, open planning, factory fabricated components, lack of decorative ornamentation, and the use of utilitarian/mechanical components such as the elevator and the circulation ramp as elements consciously integrated into the building's design are indicative of the US Postal Service's move away from the classical and revival styles toward a modernist aesthetic.

The SHPO made a recommendation of "no" in section #12 in response to the State Review Board's failure to recommend nomination of this building, although the State staff strongly recommends that the building is very significant and meets the National Register criteria for listing as a fine representative of the International Style at the local level.



Boston Vehicle
Maintenance Facility

VEHICLE MAINTENANCE FACILITY
Boston, MA
Dennis Griggs
Sullivan Design Group, Inc.
July 1983
Front elevation. Right view



VEHICLE MAINTENANCE FACILITY
Boston, MA
Dennis Griggs
Sullivan Design Group, Inc.
July 1983
Front elevation. Left view

Boston Vehicle
Maintenance Facility



Boston Vehicle
Maintenance Facility

VEHICLE MAINTENANCE FACILITY
Boston, MA
Dennis Griggs
Sullivan Design Group, Inc.
July 1983
Rear view

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

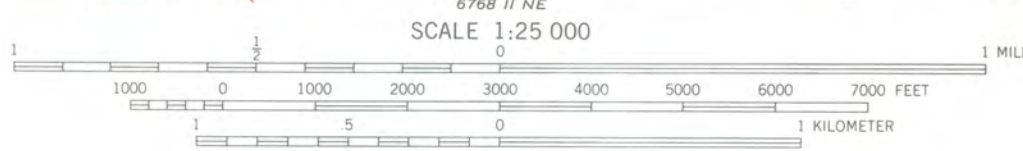
COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

BOSTON SOUTH QUADRANGLE
MASSACHUSETTS
7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)



Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey
Control by USGS, USC&GS, and Massachusetts Geodetic Survey
Topography by planimetric 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



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 DATUMS 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

There may be private inholdings within the boundaries of
the National or State reservations shown on this map
Revisions shown in purple compiled in cooperation with the State of
Massachusetts agencies from aerial photographs taken 1975 and other
source data. This information not field checked. Map edited 1979

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

BOSTON SOUTH, MASS.
N4215—W7100/7.5

1970
PHOTOREVISED 1979
AMS 6768 I SE—SERIES V814

U.S. POST OFFICE
SOUTH BOSTON, MA
UTM REFERENCE:
19/330820/4689730



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

August 19, 1985

The Honorable Raymond Flynn
Mayor, City of Boston
Boston City Hall
One City Hall Plaza
Boston, MA 02201

Dear Mayor Flynn:

The U.S. Postal Service in conjunction with the Massachusetts State Historic Preservation Officer in Boston has evaluated the Vehicle Maintenance Facility in Boston 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



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

May 8, 1986

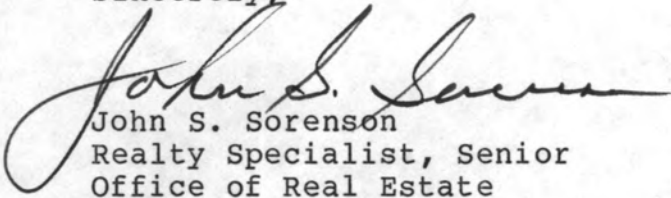
Ms. Carol D. Shull
Chief of Registration
National Register of Historic Places
National Park Service
Department of Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240-1002

Dear Ms. Shull:

The Postal Service hereby submits a nomination for the post office located at 135 "A" Street, Suffolk County, Boston, 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

