

PH0354694

DATA SHEET

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 | FEB 18 1977 |
| DATE ENTERED | MAR 25 1977 |

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

1 NAME

HISTORIC United States Post Office and Courthouse, Baltimore, Md.

**

AND/OR COMMON

Federal Building and Courthouse, Fayette and Calvert Streets, Baltimore, Md.

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER 111 North Calvert Street

CITY, TOWN

Baltimore

STATE Md.

VICINITY OF
CODE

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Paul Sarabanes

COUNTY

CODE

Baltimore City

2 CLASSIFICATION

| CATEGORY | OWNERSHIP | STATUS | PRESENT USE | |
|---|--|---|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED | <input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE | <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S) | <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE | <input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED | <input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL | <input type="checkbox"/> PARK |
| <input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE | <input type="checkbox"/> BOTH | <input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS | <input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL | <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE |
| <input type="checkbox"/> SITE | PUBLIC ACQUISITION | ACCESSIBLE | <input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT | <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS |
| <input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT | <input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT | <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED | <input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED | <input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL | <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> NO | <input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY | <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER: |

4 AGENCY

REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS: *(if applicable)*

General Services Administration - Region 3

STREET & NUMBER

7th and D Streets

CITY, TOWN

Washington

STATE

D.C.

VICINITY OF

20407

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Baltimore City Courthouse, Room 610

STREET & NUMBER

Saint Paul and Fayette Streets

CITY, TOWN

Baltimore

STATE

Md.

21202

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

See Continuation Sheet Item #6, page 2

DATE

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

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Survey File

1975-76 Local
City of Baltimore
Commission for Historical and Architectural Preservation
Room 900
26 South Calvert Street
Baltimore, Maryland 21202

Unpublished: typescripts and clippings of newspaper articles, 1930-1976

Maryland: A Guide to the Old Line State

1940
Federal Writers' Project
Works Progress Administration
Published: New York, Oxford University Press (p. 226)

7 DESCRIPTION

| CONDITION | | CHECK ONE | CHECK ONE |
|---|---------------------------------------|---|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT | <input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED * | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE |
| <input type="checkbox"/> GOOD | <input type="checkbox"/> RUINS | <input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED | <input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> FAIR | <input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED | * Externally | |

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The United States Post Office and Courthouse, Baltimore, Maryland (Federal Building and Courthouse) occupies the entire city block and measures:

| | |
|---|---------------------------|
| 238 feet 2 inches Calvert Street (west) | Cecil Avenue (east) |
| 279 feet 10 inches Fayette Street (south) | Lexington Street (north). |

The building is of steel frame construction with concrete floors and tile roof, basement of granite and outer walls of white Indiana limestone, six storeys in height and provided with basement and two sub-basements. Except for a slight change in the hanging of the two front entrance doors, the building presents the same outward appearance today (1976) as on its completion in 1932.

Style of the building is that form of Renaissance architecture distinguished as 1930's neo-classical. The design is attributed by the cornerstone to Acting Supervising Architect James A. Wetmore (and by Francis J. Gorman's history of the Baltimore Federal Courts to John A. Lane) and seems to represent a compromise between pure functionalism and the "imposing" appearance of its predecessor postal facility. What was needed in 1930 was a lobby for postal patrons, two large open work areas for mail sorting and for city carrier routes, and entrances and loading platforms designed for motor trucks rather than trolley-car post offices and horse-drawn wagons. Any building on this site would face an existing structure across Monument Square, the formal, Renaissance revival city courthouse. By filling out the entire block, the Federal building pushed its utilitarian, east facade and loading doors close to the seldom noticed rear of the French Second Empire city hall--the two buildings separated only by Cecil Avenue, which is here little more than an alley.

In the 1920's, the two city blocks east of the city hall had been razed: one left open as a war memorial plaza, the other occupied by a war memorial building, a formal auditorium. Thus, by 1932, five full blocks in a row were reserved to formal buildings of three different jurisdictions. Presumably, the traditional design was tailored to fit Baltimore's cluster of civic structures--by way of comparison, the Chicago post office, built in the same Hoover-era accelerated construction program, was in a largely undecorated "Twenties Modern" style.

The Calvert Street, or west, elevation is the main facade, 17 bays wide. The facades on Fayette Street (south) and Lexington Street (north) are fully developed and number 24 bays. At each corner of the main facade is a rectangular pavilion that projects about 8 feet forward. The pavilion effect is repeated at the opposite, rear corners of the building, but on the side

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streets, the pavilions project only a foot or two from the middle sections. Most of the classical ornamentation is confined to the pavilions. The northwest and southwest pavilions are three bays wide on Calvert Street and five bays long on the two side street elevations (i.e., Fayette and Lexington Streets).

The pavilions are provided with balustrades beneath the second storey window sills, and fluted pilasters terminating in Corinthian capitals rise from the second-storey balustrades to the entablature above the fourth-storey windows.

Only on the second storey are the pavilion windows ornamented with pediments; three rounded pediments are used on each Calvert Street facade of the northwest and southwest pavilions. On the side streets of these pavilions, three windows with rounded pediments are flanked by one window with a triangular pediment. At the rear pavilions, three rounded pediments are used on the side street facades.

The two rear pavilions, at the northeast and southeast corners of the building nearest Guilford Avenue number three bays on the side streets and five bays on the back street. The side street windows are also flanked by fluted pilasters. The rear pavilions are surmounted with triangular pediments above the fourth storey; the tympanums contain a single ornamental circle in slight relief. On this end of the building, the classic ornamentation is not continued around the corner to the drive-in facade on Guilford Avenue, although the cornice is extended along that mainly plain surface.

A strip of banded rustication running from the second storey through the fourth is applied to each corner of the four pavilions. Each strip ends in a square fret, the same height as the pilaster capitals.

In the main, Calvert Street, facade, the middle section between pavilions is the less adorned portion of the design. The windows are flanked by a screen of faintly relieved pilasters, running from second storey sills to the fourth storey entablature and terminating in plain capitals. On this facade, only three of the windows (on the fifth storey) are pedimented. All apertures are 8 on 8 double-hung sash windows with modest architraves. All first-storey windows are topped by keystones; the windows on the first and second storeys have transoms with four lights; those on the fifth storey appear from a distance to be square because the lower sashes are screened behind a balustrade. Rectangular aprons are found beneath all windows of the first through fourth storeys.

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Window sills on the first storey are provided with brackets as well as aprons, and small brackets not reaching the aprons are applied to the fourth storey windows.

The double bronze doors with glass panels (installed 1938) are set in a rounded arch opening flanked by two ornamental but uninscribed cartouches and surmounted by one console. The entrance is decorated with lines of banded rustication which radiate from the arch to form the shape of voussoirs and bend at various angles to merge with the general rustication pattern of the entire building. A bronze framed fanlight surmounts the doors. Access is had via four steps from the sidewalk. The entrance is flanked by two large bronze lanterns on pedestals. Balustrades on either side of the steps screen basement windows set in a well that runs the width of the middle section.

Above the fourth storey there is a narrow architrave and a cornice with dentils that continues on all facades of the building, including the pavilions. A balustrade surmounts the cornice on all three formal sides of the building, stopping short at the rear (northeast and southeast) pavilions and resuming on the Guilford Avenue facade. A modest, unornamented cornice surmounts the fifth storey windows on all facades.

An elevator penthouse five bays wide is set back slightly from the Calvert Street facade and houses the upper part of the four elevator shafts in the front lobby of the building. The structure contains five narrow windows of three lights each, set below shallowly detailed arches. These windows are flanked by pilasters in low relief, and vertical panels at the ends of the penthouse are decorated with small festoons. Lunettes open on the north and south ends of the penthouse.

A few dormer windows projecting through the roof are the only external indication of the sixth storey and can be seen from a position about a half-block north of the building on an alley called Davis Street. The roof cannot be seen at all from the pavement immediately adjacent to the building.

The ground storey is treated with a banded rustication that continues on all facades, including the rear. Basement windows are visible on the main, Calvert Street facade, set just above sidewalk level; they become prominent and high as the ground slopes sharply to the east along the north (Lexington Street) facade; these windows are covered with iron bars monogrammed "US."

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On the two side streets, the middle sections are treated in a manner similar to the main facade, with shallowly detailed pilaster screen and aprons, the same use of transoms and 8 on 8 sash windows; however, no windows are pedimented.

Two entrances are provided on each side street; those on Lexington Street (north) are set in rectangular openings. On Fayette Street (south), one entrance, the westernmost, is set in a rectangular opening surmounted with a masonry bas-relief while the easternmost is set in a rounded arch with a solid bronze bas-relief panel above the doors and banded rustication lines fanning out from the arch. Each entrance is provided with bronze bracket lamps.

On the Guilford Avenue (east) facade, the middle section between pavilions is 12 bays wide and projects slightly to the rear. Three corrugated roll-up truck entrances punctuate the middle section, giving access at basement level. This section rises two stories to a plain cornice. The 8 on 8 double-hung sash windows are topped by transoms with four lights each. A large air-conditioning unit, installed more than two decades after completion of the building, rises from the second-storey roof here and is fairly prominent from the street.

Office windows of the third to fifth storeys open into a well above the covered delivery area on Guilford Avenue; on these inner walls, the fifth storey cornice and balustrade arrangement is similar to that on the formal street facades.

The overall execution of this building represents a trend away from the full scale duplication of classic forms. Only 33 years separate the Federal building from the city courthouse across the street. The older building is fitted with fully developed pillars and massive window frames in strong relief. The Federal building, even in its neo-classic corner pavilions, is less ponderous in every respect--few windows pedimented, all windows in plain architraves, no decorative frieze. The three middle sections between pavilions look almost unornamented at first glance, the pilaster screens, aprons, and penthouse decoration scarcely noticed on a casual glance. All these details are applied in a shallow, crisp, hard-lined, neo-grec style, typical of the 1930's neo-classical architecture.

Inside the building, the postal patron lobby has been reduced to a few sales windows designated as Calvert Station, and other former stamp and registry window locations are now behind glass walls and new office partitions

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designed for the operations of the present tenant, Baltimore City. The public entering by the Calvert Street doors ascends nine interior steps of pink marble, passing through a barrel-vaulted vestibule decorated overhead with octagonal coffering in plaster. The most prominent decorative features still visible in the shrunken lobby are the embossed elevator doors. The postal clerks work in cubicles behind brass panels decorated with horizontal frets; the stamp windows are barricaded behind bronze bars.

The third to fifth storeys do not cover the entire area of the building lot as do the floors designed for postal activity. The upper three levels take the form of the letter "E" with two long wings and a shorter central wing stretching back (eastward) from the main facade. Corridors run through each of the long wings with offices spaced on either side. Each office opens to daylight, either through the side street facades or onto the inner well overlooking the skylights and roof over the second storey.

In the fifth storey, the eastern ends of the wings, which correspond to the northeast and southeast pavilions, contain what were designed to be matching courtrooms: Courtroom No. 2 in the south wing, No. 3 in the north wing. These rooms are paneled in Honduras mahogany and seem somewhat dark. Courtroom No. 1 is found in the central wing, located on the main axis of the building, and the public has access from the fifth storey front lobby. Rear access is had by a bridge-corridor to the rear of the courtroom and witness rooms. This, the largest and most formal of the courtrooms and brighter in atmosphere, is provided on both sides with windows opening on an air shaft. The high ceiling extends into the space of the storey above. Ornamentation takes the form of plaster pilasters, plaster cornice, and plaster coffered ceiling. A large glass hanging light fixture is attached to the ceiling.

All three courtrooms were built with acoustical ceilings, and courtroom No. 1 was also completed with acoustical walls. Trial areas are separated from public audience areas by embossed bronze railings. The lobby outside the main courtroom is decorated with marble pilasters, plaster cornice, and floor-to-cornice marble panels.

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Some other interior features considered noteworthy at the time of completion were the underground tunnel to the Federal Reserve bank building diagonally across the intersection of Calvert and Lexington Streets, a third-storey meeting room 54 by 55 feet, the sub-basement pistol range, and elevators that counted stops and mileage per month. Corridor floors were laid in Maryland marble and some walls were set in Mankato marble. There are six public elevators and six freight elevators.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

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

SPECIFIC DATES

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Baltimore had been served by make-shift post offices at some ten different downtown locations before a building specifically designed for postal operations was opened for public inspection on March 22, 1890. That post office stood on the east side of Calvert Street, stretching from Fayette Street on the south to Lexington Street on the north, occupying about half a city block. The necessary ground had been purchased from the owners of Guy's Monument House hotel, from the Mayor and City Council, and from other individuals, beginning in August, 1880.¹ Construction, however, did not begin until May 8, 1881, and numerous delays were encountered before supervising architect J.H. Windrim and officials of the Treasury and other Federal agencies inspected the completed work in 1890. The greater part of the post office, including the 189-foot tower, was complete by 1886 when shown in a promotional book about Baltimore; it was described in the text as "a departure from the uninviting architecture heretofore adopted by the Government for this class of buildings, and adds very much to the appearance of this section of the city."² The post office shared the city block with a small Federal Court Building on the north side of Fayette Street, just west of North Street (now called Guilford Avenue); the court structure dated to 1865.³

The post office faced Monument Square, a once fashionable residential spot where stands the monument that since 1815 had made Baltimore "The Monumental City." The Battle Monument, designed by Maximilian Codefroy, commemorated the fallen citizen soldiers and militiamen who held back the British troops at the Battle of North Point in September of 1814. The Renaissance style post office was joined on that famous square by a Renaissance revival, heavily columned Baltimore City Courthouse on the opposite (west) side of Calvert Street in 1899. Both public buildings appeared for many years on the box lids of the "Monument Square" brand of cigar--long after the post office was replaced.

Beginning about 1922, postmasters and business people of the city urged construction of a new facility because the city was growing at a rate unforeseen in 1880 when Congress passed the original appropriation. Nathan Caplan, who had worked in the 1890 building, recalled that the place was

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beset by uncontrollable clouds of dust, and when the windows were opened in summer, chilling drafts of air whipped through the sorting rooms giving workers head-colds; in addition, the tower, however attractive as urban scenery, served no useful purpose beyond the storage of unused records. ⁴

After some years of petitioning, Congress passed an appropriation on May 29, 1928--the last day before vacation--to build a new Baltimore post office and Federal building. The design was executed by the Office of Supervising Architect, and drawings bear dates as early as May, 1929. The city's Chamber of Commerce magazine in the month before the famous stock market crash heralded the new structure:

The present postoffice building soon is to be replaced by a larger and more modern structure. The street railway car service is to be discontinued and automobile trucks substituted. ⁵

The obsolete plant was vacated on January 1, 1930, with the courts moving to the Cutman Building, a dry-goods store, on Eutaw Street, and the post office setting up interim mail operations at the parcel post station and financial affairs at a location on Lombard Street. By March of that year, the project was described as part of the administration's \$132-million building program, and Treasury Secretary Andrew Mellon announced that the accelerated spending activity was "in line with President Hoover's policy of increased construction as a means of relieving unemployment."

"Besides the Chicago building," said Mr. Mellon, "other mammoth structures, the contracts for which will be let this year, include a \$6,000,000 structure in Pittsburgh, a twenty-one story, \$6,000,000 structure in Boston, and a \$3,300,000 building which is to rise on the present site of the Federal building in Baltimore." ⁶

On April 1, the contract was awarded to the Chicago firm of N.P. Severin, which was given a 900-day deadline. The local firm of Potts and Callahan began to pry loose the granite blocks of the obsolete facility on May 21, starting on the walls facing Guilford Avenue. ⁷ The following day, the Baltimore Sun ran the headline, "Construction Work to Start As Post Office

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Is Being Razed/ As Guilford Avenue Wing Is Demolished, Foundations Will Be Started." Steam shovels were scheduled to move in promptly to excavate for the new basements. ⁸ Every stick and stone in the old building was reportedly sold--except for hardware items awarded to the employees: granite went to Loudon Park and Hebrew Cemeteries, paneling was sold, a bas-relief of cheruibs operating a still was sent to Druid Hill Park, and marble from the courtroom walls was put into a Catholic church at Hokessin, New Jersey. ⁹

On August 6, 1930, the official date marking the starting of the existing building, the Sun printed a photo taken the day before with the caption, "Only the walls of the first floor remain in parts of the old structure." ¹⁰

Cornerstone laying took place on January 22, 1931, with George Raymond Gorsuch, Grand Master of the Masons of Maryland, officiating. Postmaster Benjamin F. Woelfer, Jr. gave a history of mail service in Baltimore and U.S. Senator Phillips Lee Goldsborough delivered the principal address. Items recovered from the cornerstone of the razed building were sealed within the new one. John Philip Sousa, who had conducted the Marine Corps band at the earlier cornerstone laying, was present but unable to participate, being bundled in a blanket and sheltered in an automobile as a result of a recent hospitalization at Johns Hopkins. ¹¹ The cornerstone is inscribed with the names of Treasury Secretary Andrew W. Mellon and Acting Supervising Architect James A. Wetmore.

The Municipal Journal of July 3, 1931, reported that the contractors were far ahead of schedule--about three months in advance of the July 11 delivery date the following year. ¹² The early trend continued, and in March of 1932, the U.S. Attorney's office, U.S. Marshall, Federal Courts, and 3rd Corps Area Headquarters personnel were ready to move in. ¹³

Thousands of visitors inspected the completed building on June 4, 1932, and were shown from sub-basement boiler room to the judicial chambers on the sixth floor. An orchestra entertained on the second floor. In the parcel post section, Acting Postmaster Ernest Green had arranged an exhibit depicting things that were accepted for shipment by mail, including tires, stoves, cut flowers, live plants, and ice cream (if packed in dry ice). ¹⁴ That year, an agreement was made with the local gas and electric company to purchase steam from their underground lines to provide heat in winter. ¹⁵

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The building was still new in 1934 when Judge W. Calvin Chesnut became the first jurist to strike down a New Deal era act of Congress when he declared unconstitutional the Frazier-Lemke amendment to the Bankruptcy Act--emergency legislation that provided a moratorium against farm foreclosures (Re Bradford, 7 Supp. 655). Judge Chesnut also tried a case brought by the Food and Drug Administration against a patent-medicine manufacturer who claimed that the product cured tuberculosis and pneumonia; the manufacturer had witnesses who were so convinced that they had been cured that they willingly submitted to X-ray examinations--only to find that TB was still with them.

Judge Chesnut believed that Judge Coleman had a flair for trying patent cases but he had to take one himself in "a contest between the two brands of white floating soap," New Ivory and Swan; he ruled that there was nothing innovative about making soap float, but that decision was reversed on appeal. 16

In 1948, two famous protagonists of the anti-Communist campaigns came together when Alger Hiss filed a libel action against Whittaker Chambers; the case, Hiss-vs-Chambers, was dismissed in 1950 following other complex legal developments. 17 A notable patent case of 1955 involved infringements on the pressurized shaving cream can (Carter Products-vs-Colgate Palmolive); the following year, the patent rights to the tubeless tire were disputed in the case of B.F. Goodrich-vs-U.S. Rubber Company. 18

Federal court dockets usually generated little news for the non-specialist until the late 1960's, when a number of trials and grand jury proceedings attracted crowds of onlookers and legions of reporters, photographers, and television newsreel crews. In 1968 and 1969, two Roman Catholic priests, the Revs. Philip and Daniel Berrigan, were involved with various defendants in two distinct incidents of attempting to destroy Federal office records as their form of protest against U.S. participation in the Vietnam War. 19 Numerous supporters of these clergymen and the other defendants--the self-styled "Catonsville Nine"--kept vigils and milled about in Monument Square, carrying lighted candles, praying, and singing, in a manner then considered bizarre and unprecedented.

A series of investigations by the U.S. District Attorney's office into alleged corruption in Maryland's State and County government drew more reporters and cameramen to film witnesses, attorneys, and the persons indicted as they came out the Calvert Street entrance, each participant usually insisting that he was not permitted to comment on unfinished court business. Finally, the bronze lanterns appeared on national network television as former county executives went to trial or emerged convicted.

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Probably the most noteworthy proceedings of the 1970's took place on an October afternoon when the Vice President of the United States and former Governor of Maryland, Spiro T. Agnew, appeared with his counsel in the mahogany-paneled Courtroom No. 3 and filed a plea of nolo contendere to one count of income tax evasion and also announced his resignation from the vice presidency. This was only the second vice presidential resignation in history and unprecedented in its other particulars. Prior to the brief proceedings, "Deputy federal marshalls had marched 40 reporters into the courtroom a half-hour before, warning them that they would not be allowed to leave until the conclusion of the hearing."²⁰ Had Mr. Agnew remained in office, he would have succeeded to the presidency some ten months later upon the resignation of President Nixon.

In the entire history of the District of Maryland, starting in 1789, only nine clerks have served the court.²¹ A good picture of the routine in Courtroom No. 2 is given by Judge Chesnut in a chapter entitled, "A Day in Federal Court."²²

The structural history of the building is mainly concerned with internal changes. Six years after completion, a program of improvements was undertaken, which included weatherstripping and caulking of 753 windows, insulation of the attic, installation of tiling in the sixth-storey cafeteria, and "substitution of two-way swinging doors for the present entrance doors that open only one way." In the basement, a swing room was set up for post office chauffeurs, and the stone work of the entrance steps was repaired.²³

In 1954, Postmaster Neal A. Sibley announced a \$307,000 renovation to install continuous-strip fluorescent lighting in offices and mail sorting areas in the basement and first and second storeys. Exhaust fans were added to improve ventillation.²⁴

Four years later, the entire building was air conditioned at a cost of \$1.4 million; prime contractor was Poole and Kent Company.²⁵ In 1962, Baltimore was selected as the first office in the country to test a mail sorting machine capable of handling 6,000 letters an hour.²⁶

Although the building was in its early youth as structure, mail volume in Baltimore came to exceed the capacity of the work area, and a new post office and regional mail sorting plant of modernistic design was started on 13 acres in Shot Tower Industrial Park, opening on May 11, 1972.²⁷ The Federal Courts and prosecutorial staff also found the Calvert Street building inadequate, and in 1970 a site was selected for a separate Federal Courts building, and in mid-1976, that facility on Lombard Street between Hopkins Place and Hanover Street was nearing completion.

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The future of the 1930 building was much discussed, and in the autumn of 1972, it was announced that 110,000 square feet of former mail sorting space would be leased to the City of Baltimore, with alterations made at city expense. The local architectural firm of Nelson-Salabes, Inc. designed a ceiling system with built-in heat, air conditioning, and light distribution system. Moveable walls from 4 to 7 feet high served to carry line current and telephone conduits. The corridors were decorated with paneling marked with gold, red, and brown arrows to guide pedestrians to the appropriate office. General contractor on this \$1,030,000 renovation was Scrivener-Wilkes Development, Inc. 28

Nothing in contemporary accounts suggested that Baltimore's public was not pleased with the results in 1932. Baltimore editors would be quick to denounce some architectural work they found unattractive. Well designed, formal but not oppressive, with a wealth of classical detail executed with craftsmanship, the building is the right structure in the right place. It may indeed be taken for granted by local writers--it is not even mentioned in the Dorsey and Dilts Guide to Baltimore Architecture (1973)--but it would be sorely missed if razed, and the city hall--now being restored at enormous cost--would be dwarfed if a tall building came to occupy this spot in Baltimore's civic heart. In the words of Barbara A. Hoff, executive director of the city's Commission for Historical and Architectural Preservation:

The Commission is pleased that this historic structure is being nominated to the Register. Along with the Court House, it creates a most appropriate and irreplaceable setting for the Battle Monument. 29

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- 1 Baltimore City Land Records, Libers FAP 887, f. 71-77; FAP 879, f. 362-373, 478; FAP 881, f. 199 (1880).
- 2 Half-Century's Progress of the City of Baltimore (New York: International Publishing Co., 1885), pp. 34, 70.
- 3 G.M. Hopkins, Atlas of Baltimore City (Philadelphia, 1876), Plate A, p. 11. Francis J. Gorman, "Maryland's Federal Courthouses," Maryland Bar Journal, 9 (Baltimore, June, 1976): 18.
- 4 Nathan Caplan, "I Remember The Post Office That Baltimore Outgrew," Sunday Sun Magazine, Baltimore, July 29, 1962, p. 2.
- 5 "Goddard First Mail Carrier," Baltimore, 22 (September, 1929): 59.
- 6 "Mellon Trebles Building Program," New York Times, March 23, 1930, p. 23, col. 1.
- 7 "Post Office Razing Gets Underway," Sun, May 22, 1930, p. 28, col. 7.
- 8 "Construction Work to Start As Post Office Is Being Razed," Sun, May 23, 1930, p. 3, col. 2.
- 9 Gorman, p. 20. Also, Baltimore American, September 20, 1953.
- 10 "Razing of Old Post Office As Seen From City Hall," Sun, August 6, 1930, p. 3, cols. 2-5.
- 11 Baltimore News, January 23, 1931. Also, "Masons Attend Laying of P.O. Cornerstone," Evening Sun, January 22, 1931. Also, 4-page program from ceremonies with architect's drawing and starting date; filed in Enoch Pratt Free Library, Maryland Room, VF: "Buildings--Baltimore--Post Office."

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- 12 "Lay Last Stone in New Post Office," Municipal Journal, Baltimore, July 3, 1931.
- 13 "U.S. Departments Prepare to Move to New Post Office," Sun, March 13, 1932.
- 14 "Baltimore's New Post Office Now in Operation; Houses 19 Federal Units," Baltimore, 25 (June, 1932): 11-12.
- 15 "New Baltimore Post Office," Power Pictorial, September, 1932, No. 23, p. 20.
- 16 W. Calvin Chesnut, A Federal Judge Sums Up (Baltimore, 1946), pp. 251, 253, 258.
- 17 Gorman, p. 22.
- 18 Gorman, p. 22.
- 19 Gorman, pp. 22-23.
- 20 "Agnew Resigns," Sun, October 11, 1973, pp. 1, 8. Also, Gorman, p. 23.
21. Gorman, p. 24.
- 22 Chesnut, pp. 153-180.
- 23 Federal Building to Be Improved," Sun, November 25, 1938.
- 24 "Main Post Office Getting \$307,730 Renovation," Evening Sun, November 11, 1954.

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25

"Engineer Hot for Cool Air," Sun, March 5, 1958.

26

Evening Sun, October 25, 1962.

27

"Fayette Street Post Office to Open Doors Tomorrow," Evening Sun, May 10, 1972.

28

"Recycling the Post Office," Sunday Sun, Real Estate, September 17, 1972, p. F-1.

29

Barbara A. Hoff to John W. McGrain, Baltimore, July 1, 1976.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

William T. Snyder, Jr., "The Baltimore Post Office," Baltimore, 39 (February, 1946): 45-46.
 Francis J. Gorman, "Maryland's Federal Courthouses," Maryland Bar Journal, Baltimore, 9 (May, 1976): 18-25.

See Continuation Sheet, Item 9, page 2

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 1.34

UTM REFERENCES

43 50-070

| | | | | | | | |
|---|-----------|---------------|--------------|---|------|---------|----------|
| A | <u>18</u> | <u>435008</u> | <u>36100</u> | B | | | |
| | ZONE | EASTING | NORTHING | | ZONE | EASTING | NORTHING |
| C | | | | D | | | |

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

| | | |
|--------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| West Property Line | 242 feet 4 inches | on Calvert Street |
| North " | 284 1 | on Lexington Street |
| South " | 279 12 | on Fayette Street |
| East " | 239 3 | on Guilford Avenue |

(Ward 4, Section 12, Block No. 625)

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

| STATE | CODE | COUNTY | CODE |
|-------|------|--------|------|
| none | | | |
| STATE | CODE | COUNTY | CODE |

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

John W. McGrain, Jr.

ORGANIZATION

self-employed, contractor

DATE

July 22, 1976 (Revised Aug. 2)

STREET & NUMBER

34 Willow Avenue

TELEPHONE

(301) 823-1849

CITY OR TOWN

Towson

STATE

Maryland 21204

12 CERTIFICATION OF NOMINATION

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER RECOMMENDATION

YES NO NONE

John N. Pearce 2/17/77
 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

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

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

TITLE *Historic Preservation Officer - GSA*

DATE 2-23-77

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

| | | | |
|--|--------------------|------|---------|
| CHIEF | <i>[Signature]</i> | DATE | 3/25/77 |
| DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION | <i>[Signature]</i> | DATE | 3/23/77 |
| ATTEST | <i>[Signature]</i> | | |
| KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER | | | |

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- "Agnew Resigns," Sun, Baltimore, October 11, 1973.
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- "Baltimore's New Post Office Now in Operation; Houses 19 Federal Units," Baltimore, Vol. XXV, No. 9 (June, 1932).
- Caplan, Nathan, "I Remember The Post Office That Baltimore Outgrew," Sunday Sun Magazine, Baltimore, July 29, 1962.
- Chesnut, W. Calvin, A Federal Judge Sums Up (Baltimore, 1946).
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- "Goddard First Mail Carrier," Baltimore, Volume XXII, No. 12 (September, 1929).
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- "Main Post Office Getting \$307,730 Renovation," Evening Sun, November 11, 1954.
- "Masons Attend Laying of P.O. Cornerstone," Evening Sun, January 22, 1931.
- "Mellon Trebles Building Program," The New York Times, March 23, 1930.

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"New Baltimore Post Office," Power Pictorial, Vol. XXIII, No. 20 (Baltimore, September, 1932).

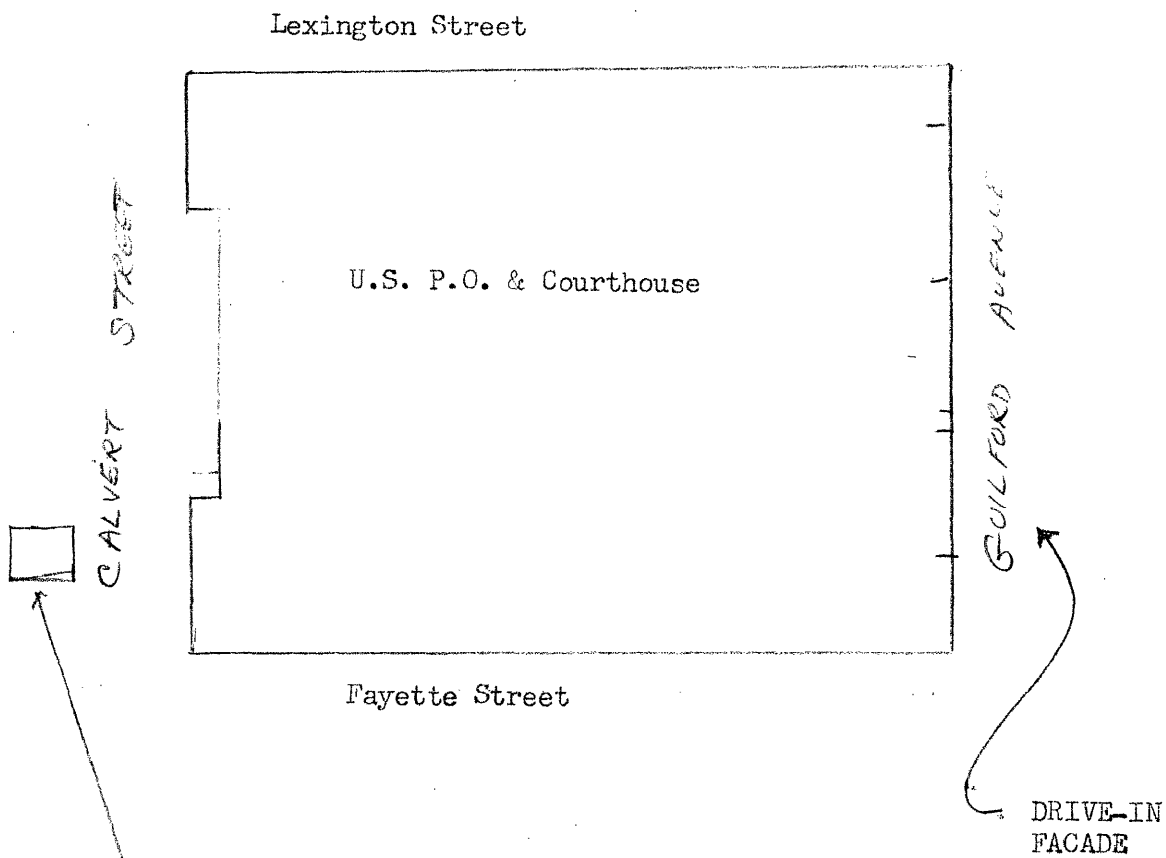
"Recycling the Post Office," Sunday Sun, Real Estate, September 17, 1962.

Sanborn Map Company, Insurance Maps of Baltimore Maryland, Volume 3 (New York, 1902, 1914); originals revised by inserts to show 1930 building.

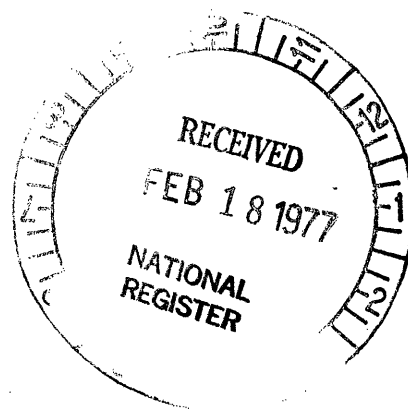
Snyder, William T., "The Baltimore Post Office," Baltimore, Vol. XXXIX, No. 5 (February, 1946).

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Reference:



BATTLE MONUMENT



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