

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

PH0677221

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RECEIVED MAR 28 1979
DATE ENTERED APR 30 1979

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR FEDERAL PROPERTIES

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

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Federal Office Building

AND/OR COMMON

Old Federal Office Building

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

909 First Avenue

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Seattle

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

VICINITY OF

07

STATE

Washington

CODE

53

COUNTY

King

CODE

033

2 CLASSIFICATION

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

4 AGENCY

General Services Administration

REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS: (If applicable)

Regional Headquarters Building

STREET & NUMBER

GSA Center, 10PG

CITY, TOWN

Auburn

VICINITY OF

STATE

Washington 98002

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

King County Administration Building

STREET & NUMBER

Fourth Avenue and James Street

CITY, TOWN

Seattle

STATE

Washington 98002

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Washington State Inventory of Historic Places

DATE

1969

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission

CITY, TOWN

Olympia

STATE

Washington 98002

7 DESCRIPTION

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

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

SITE

The Seattle Federal Office Building (FOB) was built between 1931 and 1933 to house various governmental agencies. The block-square First Avenue site is bounded by Madison and Marion Streets on the north and south and First and Western Avenues on the east and west.

The site lies between Seattle's two major Historic Districts. One block to the south, at Columbia Street, is the northern boundary of the Pioneer Square Historical District. Four blocks north of the FOB is the southern boundary of the Pike Place Market Historical District, in the center of which is Seattle's famous public market.

The FOB's principal facade overlooks First Avenue. Directly across the street is the 31 storey "New" Federal Building (FB), completed in 1976. The New FB was located on the northern part of its sloped site, thus freeing the southern part of the site for an elaborate system of brick stairways and overlooks. The principal facade of the FOB serves as a visual border to the "mini park" created by the New FB's cascade of steps.

One block west of the FOB are the remodeled wharf buildings lining Alaskan Way. An elevated walkway for pedestrians, called the "skybridge," crosses over Alaskan Way from the upper level of the State Ferry Terminal. The terminus of the skybridge is at the corner of Marion Street and First Avenue, directly across from the south facade of the FOB.

The 220' wide X 230' long FOB covers all of its site. The shorter side is the principal facade at First Avenue. On all four sides the building is set back from surrounding sidewalks by 4' wide areaways. Interspersed between the areaways, at the corners of the building and flanking major entrances, are 4' wide planting areas with low shrubs (Spreading Japanese Yew, American Holly, and Baltic English Ivy).

The site slopes approximately 12' from First to Western Avenue.

BUILDING-GENERAL

The subbasement, basement, and first floor occupy the full 220' X 230' dimensions of the building; they form a tan terra cotta-clad base, from which the rest of the building rises.

The red brick second through fifth floors are wrapped around the north, east, and west walls of the building, thus forming a "U"-shaped light court which has its open end at Western Avenue.

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Seattle Historical Society List of Historic Sites
1953
Seattle Historical Society
2161 East Hamlin Street
Seattle, Washington 98102

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Floors six through nine comprise the "tower" above the principal facade. These floors become progressively smaller. The tower is capped by a concrete step pyramid faced with blocks of tan terra cotta.

EXTERIOR-GENERAL

The Modernistic style FOB is a distinctive landmark in downtown Seattle. Typical to the Modernistic style, the brick FOB exterior is dominated by vertical piers running between the bays of windows. Cast aluminum spandrel panels with raised geometric designs accent the verticality of the window bays. The tan terra cotta parapet leads the eye up to the tower in the middle of the principal facade. The dramatic stepping-back of the main facade tower and the step pyramid at the top of the tower are characteristic elements of the Modernistic style.

STRUCTURE-GENERAL

The FOB has a supporting steel frame skeleton with brick exterior walls. For fire protection, steel structural beams are encased in concrete. "Fireproof" terra cotta hollowtile interior partitions are surfaced with smooth plaster. The second through ninth floors have 4" hollowtile walls and the basement and subbasement have 6" hollowtile walls.

All facades of the building are of light red brick. The matte-faced, medium rough textured brick is laid in American bond with flush joints and cream colored mortar.

Originally, all ornamentation (and the basement exterior) was to have been Wilkeson sandstone. As an economy measure, light tan colored terra cotta was substituted.

The building rests on a reinforced concrete foundation which, in turn, is supported by approximately 3,800 timber piles. Each pile was driven through the site's sand and debris into blue clay, 10' below ground level. The upper ends were cut off at water level (at minus 2') and capped with reinforced concrete, thus leaving the piles entirely submerged under water (total submersion acts to preserve the wood). The capacity of each pile is 25 tons.

Horizontal roofs over the principal facade tower and office wings are surfaced with built-up asphalt and gravel.

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PRINCIPAL FACADE

The entire principal facade at First Avenue is stepped-up, giving it a towerlike appearance. Three bays at the outer corners of the building rise to only the sixth storey. The next four bays (to either side of the bays at the outer corners) rise to the ninth storey. Finally, the central three bays rise two more storeys before being topped by a terra cotta-faced step pyramid. The overall effect is to lead the eye to the center bay and its culminating pyramid at the apex of which is the American flag.

Although the principal facade presents a Modernistic outward appearance, its massing and proportion are in accord with the Beaux-Arts tradition that dominated Federal buildings prior to the 1930's. In the Beaux-Arts manner, the facade is divided into four basic horizontal sections: 1) a granite foundation, 4' tall, 2) a smooth-rusticated, terra cotta-faced ground storey, one storey tall, 3) a brick middle section, five to eight storeys tall, and 4) an ornate "entablature" at the parapets.

The foundation, composed of several courses of light gray granite blocks, acts as a "pedestal" from which the rest of the building rises. A granite moulding curves upward to the ground storey level.

Smooth, tan colored terra cotta blocks make the ground storey appear as if it were made of stone (the originally specified sandstone was eliminated for economic reasons). Three 5' X 12' openings in the center of the ground storey are the main entrances to the building. The voussoirs in the segmental arch above each of the portals have alternating miniature terra cotta rams and lions heads.

The terra cotta spandrel panel above the central opening has the raised letters "Federal Office Building." A floral ornamentation surrounds the building name and entwines the second storey window directly above the center door. The window has a terra cotta lintel accented by a raised art-deco style American eagle.

Terra cotta spandrel panels above the two doors flanking the center door are entirely filled with the same floral motif as used in the central spandrel. Floral ornamentation climbs around the windows directly above the spandrel panels.

The piers separating each of the entry bays are clad with terra cotta panels up to the third storey. Fluting around these piers is Neo-Gothic in character.

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An octagonal cast bronze lamp with a floral motif is bracketed to the wall to either side of the center opening. Beside each of the flanking portals is a granite cheek block, topped with a 5' tall cast bronze urn. Each urn is ornamented with geometric designs. The urns once held spotlights that highlighted the vertical piers around the main entrances--the urn-lights were converted to planters for hanging evergreens in 1958.

Double-swing, bronze-framed glass doors lead from each of the entryways to the building's interior. The glass transom above each door is protected by a delicate cast bronze grille.

The remaining ground storey openings are 10' X 12' windows with segmental arches and radiating voussoirs. All ground storey windows have a single double-hung window in the center (broken into six panes) with flanking lights and a glass transom above.

The six storey tall brick middle section rises from the terra cotta-faced ground storey. The middle section is dominated by vertical brick piers separating the various window bays. Windows of each storey are separated by cast aluminum spandrel panels. Spandrel panels in the three bays above the main entrances have a geometric-diamond design. All other spandrel panels have a simple "ribbed" ornamentation. Each of the middle section windows has two double-hung windows with four panes per window.

An ornate parapet, capping the piers and window bays, creates the effect of a formal entablature. Terra cotta ornamentation at the parapet consists of embossed chevrons and fluted panels. The terra cotta panels above window bays have symmetrically opposed floral patterns. A terra cotta ram's head looks down from the top of each of the three center bays. Terra cotta quoins at the corners of the parapet diminish in size, gradually tapering into the brick piers at the corners of the building.

NORTH AND SOUTH FACADES

The side facades facing Madison and Marion Streets have ornamentation and proportions identical to the principal facade. Side facades rise to only the fifth floor, thus acting to emphasize the higher tower of the principal facade. Because the site slopes toward the western waterfront, the ground storey level on the side facades is actually two storeys tall; it includes both the basement and first floors.

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A 12-bay middle section on the side facades is sandwiched in between a towerlike projection at either corner of the building. Each "tower" is three window bays wide and projects one foot from the wall.

All of the cast aluminum spandrel panels on the side facades have a simple ribbed design.

REAR FACADE

Because Western Avenue has always been an important commercial thoroughfare, the rear facade is as extensively detailed as other sections of the building. The north and south wings of the building terminate at the rear of the building, thus creating two towerlike facades which have ornamentation and massing reminiscent of the center bays of the principal facade.

Each rear facade "tower" is divided into five bays. As on the principal facade, the three center bays are accented by brick piers projecting from the wall surface. Each of the cast aluminum spandrel panels of the center bays has a single octagonal coffer with the raised ensignia of one of the Federal agencies originally housed in the building. Aluminum spandrel panels flanking the center three panels have simple ribbed ornamentation.

A 5' X 10' entryway is located in the center of the ground floor of each side facade "tower." The entryways have double-swing glass doors with bronze frames. The delicate bronze screen covering the transom above the doors is identical to the transom screens of the principal facade.

Terra cotta plaques are set into the terra cotta entablature above each rear facade entry. In the center plaque is an art-deco style American eagle. Flanking plaques have symmetrically opposed scenes of a city shaded by eagle wings. Below the plaques are the raised terra cotta letters, "Federal Office Building."

An octagonal cast bronze lamp is bracketed to the wall at either side of the rear facade entry doors.

The loading dock is bounded by the rear facade "towers." Light gray granite blocks surface the entire two storey loading dock portion of the rear facade. Three cavernous openings, 18' X 14' lead into the dock area. The openings have segmental arches with radiating voussoirs. Supporting the arches are two smooth granite columns, having egg and dart capitals.

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Eight unadorned 4' X 6' windows are evenly spaced in the storey above the loading dock arches. A geometric-floral motif moulding is carved into the granite blocks at the top of the facade, thus creating a cornicelike effect.

INTERIORS-SUBBASEMENT AND BASEMENT

The FOB has a gross area of 307,170 square feet over nine floors. A below ground level subbasement with a gross area of 50,450 square feet is partially illuminated by areaways opening onto the streets above. The major portion of the subbasement is a motorpool parking area, which is illuminated by skylights to the light court above. Offices are located along the east wall. The pump room and the boiler room line the north wall.

The 44,005 square foot basement has windows facing onto Madison and Marion Streets and Western Avenue. Offices line the east, north, and south walls of the basement. Interior spaces are used for storage and service rooms. A covered loading dock and concrete driveway opens from the basement onto Western Avenue.

FIRST FLOOR

The first floor has a gross area of 46,690 square feet. The floor has offices lining all four walls of the building. The main entrance to the building is in the first floor's First Avenue facade. Visitors to the building pass through the main entrance doors, into a vestibule appointed with cast bronze mouldings. Opening onto the north end of the vestibule is the U.S. Post Office "Federal Station." Bronze-framed glass doors open from the vestibule onto the 30' wide X 20' long public lobby.

The FOB's public lobby has remained basically unchanged since the building's completion. Walls are surfaced with blocks of light gray Wilkeson sandstone (which, unfortunately, have been painted with off-white, semigloss paint). Square coffers break up the 12' high ceiling. The polished rust red quarry tile floors have white token marble cross strips and bases.

Across the public lobby, directly opposite the front doors, is the elevator lobby. Two elevators on the north wall and two on the south wall face onto the elevator lobby. Each elevator has cast bronze doors with art-deco floral reliefs. A floral design is carved into the lintel above elevator doors.

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Typical to all floors of the building, the service core is located around the centrally located elevators. The women's restroom backs onto the northern bank of elevators and the men's restroom has a common wall with the southern bank of elevators. All restrooms still have white token marble stalls and wainscots. Beside each restroom is a stairwell with white token marble treads and risers and wrought iron balusters and newel posts.

The corridor running north-south from the public lobby has a marble wainscot and a grapevine motif terra cotta moulding at the junction of walls and ceiling. The terrazzo floor is composed of 70% white marble chips and 30% marble chips of varied colors. Cross strips are polished brass.

Offices lining the walls have oak doors, chair moulds, and picture mouldings. Oak also surrounds the transoms above the doors. Because the building is only a block from Elliott Bay, this natural ventilation system appears to function well. Offices have piped-steam radiators.

The Federal Station Post Office on the first floor has remained in its original condition. The floor and base are polished red colored quarrytile. Oak tongue and groove wainscoting, 4' high, surrounds all walls. The original floral terra cotta moulding at the ceiling has been covered by a suspended acoustical tile ceiling (which has fluorescent light panels). The door from the post office into the public lobby vestibule has an oak frame with an oak entablature. A hyacinth design is carved into the frieze of the entablature.

UPPER FLOORS

The U-shaped second through sixth floors are similar in plan, with offices lining the outside walls of the building and an elevator-restroom core located in the middle section of the "U." Each of these floors has a gross area of 32,485 square feet. All upper floor hallways have terrazzo floors and marble wainscots identical to first floor office corridors. As on the first floor, all upper floor office doors, mouldings and transoms are framed in oak.

The sixth floor is a single wing along the principal (east) facade of the building. The sixth floor has a gross area of 11,990 square feet. The seventh and eighth floors are similar to the sixth floor but are smaller; each has a gross area of 7,715 square feet.

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The 4,143 square foot ninth floor is the FOB's "penthouse." Ninth floor offices have 18' high ceilings. The two storey tall central tower, with its culminating step pyramid, rises from the ninth floor.

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 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 checked="" 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		

SPECIFIC DATES	Built: 1932-1933	BUILDER/ARCHITECT	James A. Wetmore, Acting Supervising Architect
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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Federal Office Building is a landmark in Seattle's Central Business District. In addition to being the city's first building specially designed for Federal offices, the FOB was one of the first Modernistic-styled Federal buildings to be designed by the Office of the Supervising Architect of the Department of the Treasury. The brick facades with their art deco-era ornamentation are an integral part of many pedestrian walkways through the CBD. With the improvement of walkways linking nearby Historic Districts, the FOB will become an increasingly well known part of Seattle's architectural history.

The building lies in the center of one of the city's most historic areas. In the winter of 1851, city founder A. A. Denny, with William Bell and C. D. Boren in his canoe, sounded the entire shoreline of Elliott Bay in search of the bay's most appropriate docksite. Their task completed, they beached their craft on the ground now occupied by the FOB. A. A. Denny claimed the area that now includes the FOB site and surrounding neighborhood, building his cabin where the "New" FB stands today.

The site was then a bluff above the beach. The street between Denny's cabin and the bluff came to be called "Front Street" (which was later changed to the present First Avenue). Denny's cabin site, on the east side of First Avenue opposite the FOB, has been placed on the Washington State Register of Historic Places.

The city grew around the plat drawn up by Denny and Henry Yesler. A block away from Denny's cabin, Yesler founded a sawmill on the waterfront, at the foot of the log slide that came to be named "Skid Road." Wooden buildings lined the streets laid out by Denny and by the 1880's the future of the active lumber and trade community looked promising.

On June 6, 1889 a fire began in a cabinet shop on the corner of Front and Madison Street (the northeast corner of the FOB site). The conflagration spread to adjoining buildings and during the night burned through Seattle's entire business district. Over 64 acres of the town's new commercial district were destroyed. In 1974 the Start of the Seattle Fire Site was placed on the Washington State Register of Historic Places. Two plaques commemorating the event are located, along with the cornerstone, at the northeast corner of the FOB.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

See continuation sheet number 13.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 1.2

UTM REFERENCES

A	3, 1	5, 4, 9, 9, 9, 0	5, 2, 7, 2, 3, 2, 0	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Lots 1, 2, 3, and 4 in Block 189 of Seattle Tide Lands, and Lots 1, 2, 3, and 4, in Block 190 of Seattle Tide Lands, and Lots 2, 3, 6, and 7 in Block "A" of A. A. Denny's First Addition.

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 Kvapil, Operational Planning Staff

ORGANIZATION

DATE

General Services Administration, 10PG

STREET & NUMBER

TELEPHONE

GSA Center

(206) 833-6500, Ext. 317

CITY OR TOWN

STATE

Auburn,

Washington 98002

12 CERTIFICATION OF NOMINATION

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER RECOMMENDATION

YES NO NONE

Janice M. Welch
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

Michael F. Mulvey

TITLE

Historic Preservation Officer, ~~GSA Center~~ Region 10

DATE

3/23/79

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

W. Ray Jace

DATE

4/30/79

ATTEST:

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

9/38/79

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Following Chicago's example, Seattle's commercial district was rebuilt using less flammable brick, steel, and stone construction. The Pioneer Square area, a block south of the FOB site, became the heart of Seattle's new CBD.

On May 29, 1928, Congress approved funds for site acquisition and construction of a new facility to house scattered Federal agencies in Seattle. A total cost limit was placed at \$2,175,000 (in 1930, before construction commenced, this limit was raised to \$2,375,000).

The site, covering an entire city block just east of the waterfront, was purchased in March 1929. The western half of the site was purchased from the Exeter Company. Their two storey brick buildings lining Western Avenue (Lots 1, 2, 3, and 4 of Block 189 of Seattle Tidelands) sold for \$287,868.40. The Eastern half of the site was purchased from the Noyes estate (Lots 1, 2, and 3 of Seattle Tidelands) for \$287,868.40. The remaining southeast quarter of the site was purchased from the Richie Estate (the north half of lot 4) for \$62,371.50, and the Campbell estate for \$61,891.70. The four and six storey brick commercial buildings on the eastern half of the site had been part of the post-fire rebuilding effort. In preparation for construction, all buildings on the site were razed.

Post Street (now popularly called "Post Alley") ran north-south through the center of the site. The city government granted the petitions of Federal officials and the street was closed, thus leaving a complete city block for the new Federal building.

The site was ideally located within Seattle's newly reestablished business district. One block to the south was the Pioneer Square area, with its then 30-40 year-old commercial structures. At the southern end of the Pioneer Square district, less than a mile from the FOB site, were King Street Station and Union Station railroad depots. Both First and Western Avenues, connecting Pioneer Square with the Pike Market several blocks to the north of the FOB, had electric trolleys. The terminus of the Madison Street cablecar, which connected the downtown with Capitol Hill, was at the FOB site's northwest corner. One block to the West were the bustling wharfs of the Port of Seattle. The Colman Dock, at the foot of Marion Street (a block from the FOB), was Seattle's major ferry terminal. In the 1960's the terminal was torn down and the new Washington State Ferry Terminal built on the site. The Colman Dock site is now on the Washington State Register of Historic Places.

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The FOB was designed during the winter of 1930 in the Office of the Supervising Architect, a branch of the Department of the Treasury. The 300,000 square foot brick and steel building was to be one of the Office's first Modernistic-styled buildings. Working plans were approved in June 1931 by the superintendents of the Structural, Drafting and Mechanical divisions of the office. The Supervising Architect directing design and construction was James A. Wetmore.

Born in Bath, New York, James Wetmore began work in Washington, DC as a Court Stenographer in the Treasury Department. He later became a member of the Architectural branch of the Department and gradually worked his way up to Supervising Architect. He retired in the 1930's after a prolific career with the Federal government; over 2,000 buildings were designed in his office.

The terra cotta cornerstone at the northeast corner of the building reads: "A. W. MELLON, SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY, JAMES A. WETMORE, ACTING SUPERVISING ARCHITECT, 1931."

Murch Brothers Construction Company of St. Louis was the General Contractor. Their low bid included the substitution of sandstone with a more economical terra cotta at the parapets and the exterior wall of the first storey. At the time of construction of the FOB Murch Brothers were also the General Contractors for the New Courthouse in Portland, Oregon.

In March 1931, the Manson Construction and Engineering Company of Seattle began driving foundation piles. By May, the last of over 3,800 piles had been driven. During the summer reinforced concrete footings were constructed over the piles and in November, erection of the steel superstructure began. By January 1932, the framework of steel "I" beams had reached the top of the main facade tower. Structural steel was furnished by Pacific Coast Steel Corporation of Seattle. The steel erecting was carried out in record time and afforded employment of a substantial crew of Seattle workers.

By April 1932, all of the concrete slab floors had been poured and the reinforced concrete step pyramid atop the main facade was completed. During the spring and summer of 1932 the red brick walls rose around the building's exterior and cast aluminum spandrel panels were installed below windows. The terra cotta parapet ornaments were put into place as the main facade neared completion in September. During January and February of 1933, the building's interior was readied for occupancy.

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Quarrytile, terrazzo, plumbing materials, and metal work were all supplied and installed by Seattle area firms. Three cars of oak lumber were used by the Coast Sash and Door Company of Tacoma in the manufacture of all mill-work, hardwood doors, trim and cabinet work. Wilkeson sandstone, used throughout the first floor public lobby, came from the Walker Cut Stone Company quarry near Tacoma, Washington.

The innovative employment of cast aluminum spandrel panels beneath windows was the first extensive use of aluminum on the west coast and was at the time of construction the largest single order of aluminum for any building west of the Mississippi River. Twenty-one tons of the material were used for FOB ornamentation. Reliance Iron and Wire Works of Seattle fabricated and installed the aluminum spandrel panels. Use of ornamental aluminum was to become one of the distinguishing characteristics of Modernistic period buildings.

The FOB was the first building in Seattle specifically designed for offices of the Federal government. Upon completion, the building housed 52 different agencies of the U.S. Government, producing a combined workforce of over 1,000 persons. The largest agency at the time of occupancy was the Internal Revenue Service. The FOB continued to be the center of the activities of numerous Federal agencies in downtown Seattle until the completion of the New FB in 1975.

Today the FOB remains a conspicuous downtown building. The FOB's modernistic principal facade is a distinctive part of the First Avenue streetscape. Art deco ornamentation, red brick piers, and the gradual stepping-back of the facade produce a readily identifiable element to First Avenue pedestrians going from Pike Market to Pioneer Square.

Other FOB facades are the termini of several pedestrian pathways linking the CBD with Seattle's downtown recreational and historic districts. A recently awarded Local Improvement District will make it possible to develop Post Street into a new pedestrian corridor linking Pike Market and Pioneer Square. The northern facade of the FOB would play a vital role in the project; the facade is the physical and visual terminus of Post Alley. Another Local Improvement District proposes to turn Alaskan Way along the waterfront into a tree-lined pedestrian promenade.

The State Ferry Terminal on Alaskan Way is one block west of the FOB. Pedestrians disembarking from ferries enter the city by way of the skybridge along Marion Street. Their first view of Seattle is of the FOB's southern facade, which points the way up Marion Street to the New FB and Seattle's financial district. Many pedestrians leaving the CBD for the ferry use the

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intricate series of brick balconies and stairways along the southern end of the New FB site. The Old FOB's principal facade provides a sense of visual closure to the stairway. When weather is favorable the New FB stairs, overlooking Elliott Bay and the Old FOB, become a mini park where office workers lunch and watch passersby.

Because of its historic site in downtown Seattle and its Modernistic style, the FOB has become a prominent building in the CBD. The FOB lies in a triangle bordered by Seattle's major historic districts: Pioneer Square, Pike Market, and the Waterfront. As pedestrian routes linking these districts are developed, the Federal Office Building will become an increasingly important cultural and architectural landmark in Seattle.

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