

VLR-10/18/83 NRHP-10/10/84

Form No. 10-306 (Rev 10-74)

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

DATE ENTERED

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

## 1 NAME

HISTORIC

UNITED STATES POST OFFICE AND COURTHOUSE (Preferred) (VHLC 122-58)

AND/OR COMMON

FEDERAL BUILDING *The Courthouse, Harrison 265 Courthouse*

## 2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

600 GRANBY STREET

N/A - NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

NORFOLK

N/A VICINITY OF

STATE

CODE

COUNTY

CODE

VIRGINIA

51

(in city)

710

## 3 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	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES RESTRICTED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER

## 4 AGENCY

REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS (if applicable)

GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION

STREET & NUMBER

9th AND MARKET STREETS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

PHILADELPHIA

N/A VICINITY OF

PENNSYLVANIA 19107

## 5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC

NORFOLK CIRCUIT COURT  
HUGH L. STOVALL, CLERK

STREET & NUMBER

100 ST. PAULS BOULEVARD

CITY, TOWN

STATE

NORFOLK

VIRGINIA 23510

## 6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

DATE

FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

## 7 DESCRIPTION

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

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

### SUMMARY DESCRIPTION

The United States Post Office and Courthouse, located at 600 Granby Street in Norfolk, Virginia, is the only prominent public building of Art Deco style in the area. The building was constructed in accordance with the plans of Benjamin F. Mitchell, a Norfolk architect, in association with the Norfolk architectural firm of Rudolph, Cooke, and VanLeeuwen. Upon completion in 1934, the four-story tiered gray limestone building, ornamented by carved geometric bands, was praised for its "magnificent" appearance". One courtroom and the interior lobbies exhibit fine craftsmanship of materials and Art Deco detailing. The building is in excellent condition and, with few exceptions, retains its original appearance and detailing.

### ARCHITECTURAL ANALYSIS

The United States Post Office and Courthouse at Norfolk, Virginia was constructed between 1932 and 1934 to accommodate the Norfolk Post Office, United States Court for the Eastern District of Virginia, and miscellaneous government offices which had outgrown the old Federal Building in downtown Norfolk. The four-story, steel framed building is situated on an irregular shaped site, covering a two-city block area. The building's overall plan dimensions measure approximately 311 feet along the west elevation, 218 feet along the north, 321 feet along the east, and 140 feet along the south. Above the flat built-up roof of the first floor, the upper three stories completely enclose an interior court which provides natural lighting to interior courtrooms and office spaces.

The exterior facades of the building are faced in gray limestone, above a polished black granite base at the basement. The fifteen-bay west facade, or front, Granby Street elevation varies in vertical heights. The first and fifteenth bays are one-story, with bays two through seven and nine through fourteen extending the full four-story height. The eighth, or middle, bay extends to the penthouse height and projects out from the main face of the building.

The full height projection bears special architectural detailing, distinguishing it as the main entrance. The six risers of pink granite steps which approach the building are flanked by polished black granite plinths supporting tiered octagonal black granite bases with Art Deco lanterns. Each of the two cast aluminum framed lanterns feature translucent panels of "flashed opal glass"<sup>1</sup> and an ornamental pierced cast aluminum cap topped with an eagle. At the entrance, limestone jambs step back to four aluminum framed plate glass doors with tall, hinged aluminum and glass transom panels above. Ornamental cast aluminum grillwork protects the transoms, and cast aluminum panels ornament the transom bar. Tall narrow windows with carved limestone screens flank the entrance doors. The second floor string course above is delineated with a carved limestone band in an alternating floral and shield pattern. Centered within the string course, a carved limestone shield bears the United States emblem of an eagle with shield, clutching oak branches and arrows. Above the string course, the second through fourth floors recede from the facade, and are flanked by two, full height, fluted Corinthian columns carved in limestone. Within the recess, triple 1/1 double hung, aluminum framed windows are separated vertically

1. Mitchell, B.F. and Rudolph, Cooke, and VanLeeuwen, "Detail for Lanterns at Entrance", on United States Post Office - Courthouse, Etc. - Norfolk, Virginia drawings, August 19, 1932, sheet number 208.

# 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	1932-1934	BUILDER/ARCHITECT	Benjamin F. Mitchell Firm of Rudolph, Cooke, and Van Leeuwen
STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE			

### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The United States Post Office and Courthouse in Norfolk, Virginia was constructed between 1932 and 1934 primarily to accommodate the "8-fold" increased volume of the local postal service since 1900. The Norfolk architects were Benjamin F. Mitchell in association with the firm of Rudolph, Cooke, and VanLeeuwen, all of whom had been involved with other large projects in the area including the Norfolk City Market, Southgate Terminal and the Booker T. Washington High School. As a result of their efforts, this building is the only federal building of the Art Deco style in the Virginia Tidewater area. The building's design follows a trend of that time for federal buildings to be constructed as monumental symbols "expressive of democratic ideals" and the strength of the government. It was also a trend at that time to utilize classical features in government buildings, and the U.S. Post Office and Courthouse is no exception as may be seen in its fluted Corinthian columns at the main entrance projection and in repetition of fluted and stylized leaf patterns carved in the facade. According to a survey conducted by the Norfolk Department of City Planning in 1981, the "construction of this building provided vital employment to many of Norfolk's laborers" during the years of the Depression. Since this building is the only federal building of Art Deco style in the area and until recently was the site of the main post office in Norfolk for 50 years, the building has become a local landmark. Also, the building is still greatly admired today by the general public for its beauty and excellent craftsmanship of fine materials of marble, limestone, granite, aluminum, and brass just to name a few. It is one of only four buildings in downtown Norfolk given special merit by a 1976 survey conducted for the city of Norfolk, and it is a credit to the immediate city-scape which is predominantly occupied by commercial structures of little or no design and/or historical significance, with the exception of the Scope Cultural and Convention Center across a terraced plaza opposite the east side of the building. At the present time, the only plans for restoration include restoring the ornamental plaster ceiling and patterned marble floor of the east/west portion of the main post office lobby which has been closed off. As the postal service has now moved to a new facility, current plans for the remainder of the building include rehabilitation to accommodate future needs of the U.S. District Court of Eastern Virginia. The District Court will be the primary occupant, and the building was recently dedicated as the Walter E. Hoffman Courthouse.

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

"Cornerstone Laid at New Post Office," Norfolk Ledger Dispatch, Norfolk, Virginia  
September 7, 1933, pp. 1, 14.

(See Continuation Sheet #12)

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 1.87

UTM REFERENCES

A	18	381511110	407921010	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

"Beginning at a point on the west side of Monticello Avenue, which point in the northwest corner of the intersection of Monticello Avenue and Bute Street; thence northwardly along the west side of Monticello Avenue  
(See Continuation Sheet #13)

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

STATE	N/A	CODE	N/A	COUNTY	N/A	CODE	N/A
STATE	N/A	CODE	N/A	COUNTY	N/A	CODE	N/A

# 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME/TITLE James Lee Williams, Jr., AIA/President of Williams and Tazewell & Associates, Carroll H. Walker/Historian & Photographer Inc.

ORGANIZATION Williams and Tazewell & Associates, Inc. DATE July 27, 1983  
STREET & NUMBER 710 West 21st Street TELEPHONE (804) 623-6621  
CITY OR TOWN Norfolk STATE Virginia 23517

# 12 CERTIFICATION OF NOMINATION

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER RECOMMENDATION

YES X NO \_\_\_\_\_ NONE \_\_\_\_\_

A. Bryan Mitchell  
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

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

DATE

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**

United States Post Office and Courthouse, Norfolk, Va.

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Continuation sheet #1

Item number 7

Page 1

**7. DESCRIPTION**  
**ARCHITECTURAL ANALYSIS (Continued)**

and horizontally with decorative cast aluminum mullions and spandrels. The limestone facade over the recess bears the carved inscription UNITED STATES/POST OFFICE AND COURTHOUSE. Centered within a band of carved Greek frets, a second eagle clutching oak branches, arrows and fasces projects onto the one-story high penthouse facade. Two windows with carved limestone screens flank the eagle. The entire entrance projection then terminates in a carved three-dimensional sawtoothed parapet above a geometric patterned band at the penthouse roof level.

Secondary entrance projections rise three stories in height and are located in the second and fourteenth bays of the west and east elevations. Several architectural features at these entrances are similar in smaller scale to those of the main entrance. At each entrance, pink granite steps are flanked by polished black granite plinths with Art Deco lanterns. Limestone jambs step back to paired, aluminum framed plate glass doors, with transoms above protected by ornamental cast aluminum grillework. The second floor string courses are delineated in the same alternating floral and shield pattern. Centered within each string course, an eagle with shield of simpler design is carved into the limestone. Between the top of the transom and the second floor string course at only the southwest Post Office entrance, the limestone facade bears the inscription UNITED STATES/POST OFFICE. At each secondary entrance, the second and third floors are set back in a less pronounced recess. Within the recess, triple 1/1 double hung, aluminum frame windows are separated vertically and horizontally with ornamental cast aluminum mullions and spandrel panels. Each secondary entrance projection then terminates with a plain parapet above a band of carved Greek frets at the third floor roof level.

The facades of the remaining bays are less ornate. Paired, rectangular basement windows are located in the polished black granite base. In the limestone facade above, paired 1/1 double hung aluminum framed windows are slightly recessed and separated vertically by stepped limestone mullions. Transoms with ornamental cast aluminum bars are located at only the first floor windows. Limestone spandrel panels in a carved fluted pattern separate the second and third floor windows, whereas carved spandrels in a stylized leaf pattern separate the third and fourth floor windows. The second floor string course is delineated with a carved pattern of encircled five-point stars alternating with fluted square panels. The facades terminate with a less prominent three-dimensional sawtoothed parapet above a geometric patterned band at the fourth floor roof level.

The first and last bays of the north elevation project as one-story wings terminating with a plain parapet above the carved continuation of the second floor string course. The brick-faced loading dock on the north elevation is protected by a canopy extending the full length between the wings. The loading dock is also flanked by two full height limestone-clad towers.

(See Continuation Sheet #2)

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7. DESCRIPTION  
ARCHITECTURAL ANALYSIS (Continued)

At the present time, the functions of each floor are altered from those at the time of original occupancy. The basement still houses major building machinery, yet the storage spaces are unoccupied. The first and second floors, which were once occupied by the Post Office, are now vacant, and the third and fourth floors are occupied by judges, clerks and other officers of the Federal District Court. The most significant interior spaces, which include the Post Office lobby and the main courtroom area, exhibit fine detailing and craftsmanship of materials.

The Post Office lobby was originally L-shaped in plan, with the north/south lobby measuring approximately 25 feet wide by 160 feet long and the east/west lobby measuring approximately 24 feet wide by 90 feet long. Around the year 1971, the east/west lobby was closed off to enlarge the Post Office work space, and the north marble wall was removed. A 30 foot section of marble was also removed from the south wall and was the marble used to close off the opening in the north/south lobby. 12-inch by 24-inch asphalt planks were laid on top of the original patterned marble floor. Metal rods, steel beams, and light gauge metal members were installed for suspension of an acoustical tile ceiling below the original ornamental plaster ceiling.

The north/south lobby remained unaltered. A green marble base and border edges a marble tiled floor with a herringbone pattern in alternating tones of pale and dark pink. A chevron patterned band in alternating tones of green and pale pink separates the herringbone pattern from the solid border. At the intersection of the lobbies, the marble floor pattern features a central octagon radiating out in geometric forms to a circular border.

The marble paneled walls of the Post Office lobby are divided into bays with reeded pilasters. Lower panels to a height of approximately 7 feet and pilasters to a full height of approximately 16 feet are dark rose in color. The light rose colored upper panels are arranged in a butterfly pattern to provide an effect similar to "crotch mahogany".<sup>2</sup> Supply and return air wall ducts are screened with ornamental cast aluminum grilles. Doors, service windows, and lock boxes are trimmed with ornamental cast aluminum. Each cast aluminum door penetrating the west wall of the lobby is further ornamented with an eagle clutching oak branches and arrows.

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2. "New Federal Building Soon Ready for Use", in the Virginian-Pilot and the Norfolk Landmark, Norfolk, Virginia, September 22, 1934, pp. 7, 16.

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Continuation sheet #3

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7. DESCRIPTION  
ARCHITECTURAL ANALYSIS (Continued)

The ceilings of the Post Office lobby are bounded by an ornamental cast aluminum cornice. Square aluminum framed light fixtures border the outer extremities of the ceiling. The plaster ceiling then steps up in four shallow increments to a continuous bas-relief plaster border of a stylized leaf pattern. This painted border is interrupted at regular intervals by polychrome squares of geometric pattern. Rectilinear aluminum framed "flashed opal glass"<sup>3</sup> light fixtures are centered in the ceiling. At the intersection of the lobbies, the plaster ceiling steps up to an octagonal border in the same painted bas-relief stylized leaf pattern. Each point of the octagon is punctuated with a small polychrome octagon. An octagonal aluminum framed glass light fixture at the center generates a star burst pattern with 16 aluminum leafed plaster rays toward the octagonal border.

The original oblong writing tables constructed of marble with built-in aluminum waste baskets also remain in the north/south lobby.

The large work space, which is situated in the middle of the building behind the Post Office lobby, originally obtained natural lighting from the light well through eight skylights in the first floor roof. At an unknown date, the skylights were removed, and the flat roof slab, insulation, and built-up roofing were closed to matched existing.

The main courtroom area including the lobby, courtroom, judge's chamber and law library on the third floor displays a similar excellence in materials craftsmanship. A green marble base and border edges a terrazzo floor. At the center of the lobby, a geometric pattern formed by metal strips and green marble inserts radiates out to a ring of metal stars enclosed by a green marble octagonal border.

The cream colored marble walls, which are now discolored from the application of a sealant, of the courtroom lobby extend full height. Ribbed marble jambs in a dark rose color curve back to cast aluminum sliding doors to the main courtroom. Each door is covered with pigskin with a square panel left exposed to reveal an eagle with wings spread above a tall, narrow ribbed panel. The bi-parting sliding doors open to reveal double-acting swing doors on the courtroom side.

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3. Mitchell, B.F. and Rudolph, Cooke, and VanLeeuwen, "Plan at Bays BH and AA Showing Ceiling Reflected", on United States Post Office - Courthouse, Etc. - Norfolk, Virginia drawings, August 19, 1932, sheet number 202.

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7. DESCRIPTION  
ARCHITECTURAL ANALYSIS (Continued)

The plaster ceiling of the courtroom lobby is bordered with a painted bas-relief pattern, similar to that in the ceiling of the Post Office lobby. The ceiling bays are stepped up in increments. The original elongated octagonal, aluminum framed glass light fixtures centered in each bay were replaced, at an unknown date, with square translucent acrylic light fixtures.

Inside the main courtroom, the original cork tile floor with marble border and base is now covered by carpet. A 6-foot pink marble wainscot is now discolored from the application of a sealant. Above the wainscot, "acoustic stone"<sup>4</sup> walls and pilasters with a decorative cornice rise to the overall room height of approximately 23'-9". Ornamental cast aluminum grilles pierce the upper walls on either side of the main entrance and the judge's desk.

All doors in the main courtroom are cast aluminum covered with pigskin. In the east wall, two doors on either side of the judge's desk lead to the U.S. Marshall's rooms and detention cells. Three windows in the detention cells facing the lightwell are now bricked in for security reasons. In the west wall, the main entrance doors, with elongated hexagonal vision panels, are surrounded by a marble facing. The doorhead marble facing is ornamented with a carved band of five-point stars and a marble eagle clutching oak branches and arrows at the center. A clock with aluminum hour markings and hands is built into the wall above the eagle.

The bays of the ornamental white plaster ceiling are stepped up in three scallop-bordered, shallow increments, with the outermost border being painted. Painted bas-relief squares of geometric pattern are located at the bay intersections. At an unknown date, some of these squares were replaced with square air diffuser grilles. Translucent, square acrylic lensed light fixtures have also replaced the original aluminum framed "flashed opal glass"<sup>5</sup> light fixtures at the center of each bay.

Other features within the main courtroom include the pink marble frontals on the judge's and clerk's desks and the jury box. At a later date, the jury box was extended with wood railings to accommodate a 14 member jury. The courtroom also still utilizes the original ribbed cast aluminum rail standards supporting a cord railing.

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4. Mitchell, op. cit., (Miscellaneous interior courtroom details), sheet number 204.

5. Ibid.

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National Park Service

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7. DESCRIPTION

ARCHITECTURAL ANALYSIS (Continued)

In the judge's chamber south of the main courtroom, the walnut wood tiled floor has been covered with carpet. The floor-to-ceiling wall panels with carved, decorative cornices, fire place mantel, and door casings are in walnut. A window with deep walnut sill is centered in a semicircular east wall. Doors to the two closets flanking the window are curved to match the radius of the wall.

In the vicinity of the judge's chamber, the original walnut tile floor with marble base and border is exposed and maintained in the law library. Adjustable shelving is set into walls paneled with knotty pine. At an unknown date, the law library was expanded into the judge's corridor along the south wall of the main courtroom, where the addition of shelving and carpeting now conceal the marble walls and terrazzo floor.

A smaller courtroom at the north side of the third floor was altered around 1970 from its original construction. The room was enlarged, and carpet was installed over the original wood tile floor with marble border and base. Walnut paneling and trim were added to the extended partitions and new doors to match the original paneling and trim. The ornamental plastered ceiling was covered with new plaster, and the original bronze framed "flashed opal glass" <sup>6</sup> light fixtures at the center of each ceiling bay were replaced with modern fixtures. At a more recent date, the plaster ceiling was concealed entirely with suspended acoustical ceiling tile. A new wood rail replaced the original rope rail supported by ribbed cast bronze railing standards, and a new jury box and judge's bench were also installed.

The first and third floor stair/elevator lobbies also exhibit fine detailing. The first floor lobby is more elaborate, displaying a marble floor of a radial geometric pattern in tones of green and pale and dark pink with a green border and base. Above the lower, dark rose colored wall panels, the upper light rose colored panels are arranged in a "butterfly" <sup>7</sup> pattern. An ornamental cast aluminum grille penetrates the marble paneled north wall above a cast aluminum framed building directory with bevelled plate glass. On the south wall, the original ornamental cast aluminum elevator doors once displayed a stylized wheat pattern. The current elevator doors are not ornamented.

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6. Mitchell, op. cit., "Details and Elevations of Courtroom #2", sheet number 205.

7. Mitchell, op. cit., "Elevation in Elevator Lobby Looking Towards Directory", sheet number 208.

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7. DESCRIPTION  
ARCHITECTURAL ANALYSIS (Continued)

The stairs off the lobby are marble with aluminum balusters and handrails. An eagle carved in marble is centered above the opening between the entrance lobby and the Post Office lobby.

The third floor stair/elevator lobby walls are paneled in a dark rose colored marble, now discolored from the application of a sealant. Like that of the first floor lobby, the white plaster ceiling steps up in four shallow increments toward a central, square aluminum framed light fixture. The floor is finished in terrazzo with a green border and base, as are the floors of the second and fourth floor elevator lobbies.

In general, the corridors are finished with terrazzo floors and plain plaster walls and ceilings. As an exception, the walls of the third floor corridors are paneled in either a pink or rose tone marble which is now discolored from the application of a sealant.

Most other office spaces not described heretofore are finished in simpler materials. Many of the original wood tiled floors have been covered with carpet to reduce noise levels and maintenance requirements. Plain plaster walls are accentuated only by wood chair rails, bases, door casings, and deep window stools. Most of the plain plaster ceilings are now concealed by suspended acoustical ceiling tile. With exception to this general description, the new bankruptcy court and judge's chamber, added on the fourth floor in 1970, are walnut paneled with matching bases and cornice with dentil mouldings.

Most of the building's mechanical equipment is located in the basement, with auxiliary equipment located on the various floors, in the attic, and on the roof as required for equipment modifications through the years. Around 1957, in accordance with drawings and specifications from the Newport News office of Williams, Coile and Blanchard and Associates - Architects and Engineers, new air conditioning was installed throughout. Air handling units for air conditioning zones were installed on each floor, and two new cooling towers were installed on the roof.

Around 1970, in accordance with drawings and specifications from the Norfolk office of McGaughy, Marshall and McMillan - Architects and Consulting Engineers, modifications were made to the HVAC system, plumbing, and lighting. New HVAC ducts were installed on the third and fourth floors, and new reheat coils were installed in the attic. Plumbing was installed to supply various new toilet rooms for private office spaces and judges' chambers on the third and fourth floors. New lighting fixtures were also installed in various remodeled general office spaces.

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7. DESCRIPTION

ARCHITECTURAL ANALYSIS (Continued)

Presently building heat is provided by a two-pipe gravity steam system. Perimeter heating is accomplished by direct radiation. The air handling units serving interior areas are equipped with heating coils. Steam is piped from two 125 HP Clever Brooks Boilers located in the basement. The boilers, installed in 1978, are equipped to burn #6 fuel oil. Boiler operation is controlled manually.

For cooling, the building is presently served by two 250 ton Trane Central Pak centrifugal chillers installed in 1977. Chillers are located in the basement, distributing chilled water to single and multizone air handling units throughout the building. Air conditioning and mechanical ventilation are supplied to spaces by these air handlers. The HVAC equipment is powered at 440 volts, 3 phase, 60 hertz.

The Norfolk Post Office, U.S. District Court, and miscellaneous government offices functioned in the United States Post and Courthouse for over 48 years; however, as the Post Office and Courthouse had finally outgrown the building, the Post Office moved to a new facility in January 1983. The existing building will now become the Walter E. Hoffman U. S. District Courthouse.

RKW

8. SIGNIFICANCE

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

In 1914 a committee was appointed by Mayor Wyndham R. Mayo to petition Congress for an appropriation for the construction of a building in Norfolk that would house all Federal activities, and which would be one of the finest public buildings in the state. The committee was headed by Mayor Mayo and was composed of Barton Myers, then President of the Chamber of Commerce, S.L. Slover, publisher, F.H. Hobbs, President of the Gardner Baking Company, Inc., and Major C.L. Wright, Postmaster. World War I prevented its consideration.

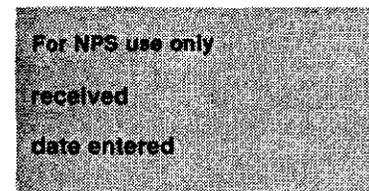
In 1926 the House of Representatives approved a bill providing for appropriations for public buildings throughout the country on a large sum bill, attaching to it, informally, a list of needed improvements, among which was a proposed Federal building in Norfolk for which \$2,500,000 had been recommended. This was the same as requested in 1914. Mayor S. Heth Tyler in 1926 headed a committee of Norfolk citizens who went to Washington to urge the new building project, but no action was taken.

In the Virginian-Pilot for March 1, 1929, announcement was made that a tentative allocation of \$1,150,000 out of a \$300,000,000 building program then before Congress had been made. Menalcus Lankford, Congressman elect from Norfolk, who had been at work on the new Federal Building appropriation ever since his election in November, 1928 and had been assisted by Major Clinton L. Wright, Postmaster at Norfolk, and felt that the appropriation

(See Continuation Sheet #8)

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8. SIGNIFICANCE  
HISTORICAL BACKGROUND (Continued)

would be approved. It was stated that this appropriation would provide little more than the site for the building and that the Government already had on file a report from the superintendent of construction for the Treasury Department showing eleven prospective sites, with one recommended as the preferred site. This, however, would have to be solved by an investigating committee.

Mr. Lankford stated that as soon as he took the oath of office as a member of Congress, he would insist that the committee come to Norfolk without delay to look into the question of a site in order to get the project underway.

On July 21, 1929, James L. Lawlor, architectural engineer from the office of the supervising architect of the office of the Treasury Department, came to Norfolk to discuss with those interested the possible sites that might be available for the construction of the new building. He remained here several days discussing the subject with many. It appeared that a difference of opinion had developed as to whether the building should be located in the heart of the downtown Norfolk district or should be constructed somewhere in the path of business which appeared to be moving north. When Mr. Lawlor completed his hearing, he stated before he departed for Washington that a thorough study would be made of the sites available and that Mr. Lankford would be notified accordingly.

An announcement was made on August 29th in the Virginian-Pilot that the new building would be located in the uptown area and three alternate sites had been selected. All of these sites were located in an area bounded on the east by Brewer Street, on the south by Charlotte Street, on the west by Monticello Avenue and on the north by a lane just above Brambleton Avenue. It was stated that the growth of the city northward was a controlling factor in the survey as well as prices and traffic.

On July 9th, 1930, F. W. Heath, Assistant Secretary of the Treasury Department, and John W. Philips, Assistant to the Postmaster General, held a public hearing in the courtroom of the old Post Office building on Plume and Atlantic Streets to give those desiring a chance to offer a prospective site for the building. Eleven prospective sites were offered. After the meeting, Messrs. Heath and Philips returned to Washington. They did announce that before any definite steps were taken by the Government to acquire a site, formal proposals would be sought through the regular channels and that at least thirty days notice would be given to all persons who desire to do so may offer their building sites in the form of bids. It was also stated that it would be sometime in the fall before any definite selection of site could be made. It was known that a strong effort would be made to have the building located in the downtown area. The city government was strongly in favor of a downtown site.

It was not until January 12, 1931, that the site to be acquired was made public. It consisted of two small blocks between Brambleton Avenue on the north, East Bute Street on the south, Monticello Avenue on the east and Granby Street on the west, bisected by York Street. The site consisted of approximately 81,000 square

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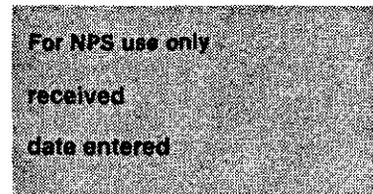
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8. SIGNIFICANCE

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND (Continued)

feet, a part of which formerly had been occupied by St. Luke's Episcopal Church, which had been destroyed by fire in 1921. It was estimated that the cost of the new building would be \$1,500,000.

It was announced in the Virginian-Pilot for April 9, 1931, that B. F. Mitchell, Rudolph, Cooke and VanLeeuwen and J. Wickham Taylor, all local architects, had been named to draw plans for the new building. B. F. Mitchell was the architect for the city on planning and building the City Market. He also was the architect for the Southgate Terminal, one of the largest construction projects of its kind ever undertaken in this area, and the Booker T. Washington High School and other projects. B. F. Mitchell, Rudolph, Cooke and VanLeeuwen also built a number of apartment houses in the area as well as the Virginia Beach Casino expansion and structures in North Carolina. J. Wickham Taylor, who was involved in only the preliminary design stages of the U. S. Post Office and Courthouse, had built a large number of buildings in this area, particularly those for Buick, Dodge and Overland automobile distributors in the 21st Street area, the Salvation Army Building on Talbot Street, the Park View Baptist Church in Portsmouth and an addition to the Chesapeake Knitting Mills.

Shortly after the selection of the architects, the City Council arranged to have that part of York Street between Granby Street and Monticello Avenue closed to facilitate acquiring the site. On November 28, 1931, Postmaster L. C. Page in charge of the building site stated that the work of clearing the site would start that week, E. L. Myers of Norfolk having the contract for this. The site was cleared within 90 days as required by the specifications.

The Depression had no significant effects on the planning and execution of the project with the following exceptions. During the planning stages, a delay in funds appropriation was partially attributable to the fact that every state in the Union was requesting a portion of the \$300,000,000 building program. Later during the execution stages, Representative Lankford encouraged the separate award of a contract for foundation construction in order to allow Virginia contractors a chance for work on at least a portion of the project and to create new jobs within his district.

Bids were opened in Washington on April 11, 1932, for the construction of the foundation of the new Post Office at Norfolk, with the Virginia Engineering Company, Newport News, Virginia making the lowest offer of \$210,000.

It was stated that because of the specifications in the contract that the Federal Building foundation must be completed in 120 days, it was felt that the contractors would have to work on a 24-hour day basis in order to complete the work on time, and that it would require three shifts of workmen, working eight hours each. It was also felt that driving more than 2,200 piles for support of the building would be the most laborious part of the task.

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8. SIGNIFICANCE  
HISTORICAL BACKGROUND (Continued)

After the October 21, 1932 bid opening for the remainder of the building construction, the Treasury Department on November 17th decided to make the building a four-story instead of a five-story structure and awarded the contract to the Consolidated Engineering Company of Baltimore, Maryland, the low bidder, at the figure of \$1,034,000. It had been the feeling of Postmaster L. C. Page that a five-story structure was necessary in order to accommodate all the Federal agencies in Norfolk. The only concession made to this was that the building was planned in such a way that another story could be added if found necessary. The contractor was to proceed with the work within ten days after formal papers were signed on both sides and bond filed. 480 calendar days were allowed for completion of the building following official notice to proceed. Consolidated also submitted a separate figure of \$1,129,000 of a five-story building. The original appropriation for the project was \$2,050,000, which was later cut to \$1,925,000. The cost of the site was \$575,000 plus an additional foundation cost of \$210,500.

The Post Office and postal authorities were to be on the first floor, the District Engineer and Department of Agriculture on the second floor, the Federal judiciary offices and two courtrooms on the third floor, and on the fourth floor would be space for the Weather Bureau, the Norfolk office of Foreign and Domestic Commerce, and a cafeteria. The Lighthouse Service, the Coast Guard and the Commissioner of Internal Revenue would be on the fifth floor should such a floor be built.

On January 22, 1933, it was announced in the Virginian-Pilot that the Consolidated Engineering Company had sublet contracts for work to four local firms, the Globe Iron & Construction Company for miscellaneous ornamental iron and steel; the Lone Star Cement Company, through C. M. Bayne & Company, cement; Mirabella & Febre, lathing and plastering; and Coley & Peterson, plumbing, heating and ventilation. On February 4th the Virginian-Pilot announced that John E. Rapelye, consulting engineer from the Treasury Department, would begin supervisory work on the building the following week.

On September 7, 1933, the cornerstone, a block of "gleaming Wisconsin black marble", was put in place. The event was attended by U. S. Postmaster General James A. Farley, Virginia's U. S. Senator Harry F. Byrd, Representative Colgate W. Darden, Jr., Mayor S. L. Slover, members of Norfolk Lodge #8 of Ancient Free and Accepted Masons, George F. VanLeeuwen, A. B. Swartzkopf of the Chamber of Commerce, and others.

By October 14, 1934, the new building was finished and formally turned over to the Post Office Department when John E. Rapelye, structural engineer of the Treasury Department, delivered the keys to Postmaster Robert W. Shultice in a simple ceremony occurring in Mr. Shultice's office in the old building at Atlantic and Plume Streets.

(See Continuation Sheet #11)

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8. SIGNIFICANCE  
HISTORICAL BACKGROUND (Continued)

The post office forces and the Federal Court completed their move into the new quarters on October 23rd, and on November 5th, at 10:00 AM, the dedication services of the new Post Office were held in a formal opening ceremony presided over by Judge Luther B. Way.

This attractive and outstanding Art Deco building is in an area containing other similarly styled buildings, adding much to a neighborhood in which are located Scope, Norfolk's large auditorium, and the Chrysler Theatre, both fronting on a large plaza with a rectangular pool and fountains.

As Norfolk and the surrounding area grew over the years, the activities of the Post Office Department increased. In the 1970s, it soon became apparent that more space was needed, and plans were soon under way for additional space. This resulted in the acquisition of a site in the vicinity of Church Street and Brambleton Avenue, which culminated in the erection of a new and more commodious building. On January 24, 1983, the activities of the Post Office Department on Granby Street were transferred to the new building.

The third and fourth floors of the U.S. Post Office and Courthouse are currently occupied by the U.S. District Court of Eastern Virginia, with the remaining floors now vacant. Following rehabilitation, the District Court will remain the primary occupant.

CHW

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9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES (Continued)

"Federal Building Contract may be Let in Ten Days," Norfolk Ledger-Dispatch, Norfolk Virginia, October 22, 1932, p.1.

"Federal Building Corner Stone Laid With Solemn Rites," Virginian-Pilot and the Norfolk Landmark, Norfolk, Virginia, September 8, 1933, pp. 1, 6.

"Federal Court Dedication to be Held Today," Virginian-Pilot and the Norfolk Landmark, Norfolk, Virginia, November 5, 1934, p. 12.

"Federal Court Moves to New Offices Today," Virginian-Pilot and the Norfolk Landmark, Norfolk, Virginia, October 23, 1934.

Herman, Frederick, Downtown West Historic Survey, NRHA, 1976.

Mitchell, B.F. and Rudolph, Cooke, and VanLeeuwen, United States Post Office - Courthouse, Etc. - Norfolk, Virginia drawings, August 19, 1932.

"New Federal Building Job Given Praise," Norfolk Ledger-Dispatch, Norfolk, Virginia, September 22, 1934, p. 3.

"New Federal Building Soon Ready for Use," Virginian-Pilot and the Norfolk Landmark, Norfolk, Virginia, September 22, 1934, pp. 7, 16.

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"Post Office Bids Being Opened," Norfolk Ledger Dispatch, Norfolk, Virginia October 21, 1932, p. 1.

"Post Office Force Now in New Quarters," Virginian-Pilot and the Norfolk Landmark, Norfolk, Virginia, October 21, 1934, Part 2: p. 2.

"Shultice Has Keys to New Building," Virginian-Pilot and the Norfolk Landmark, Norfolk, Virginia, October 14, 1934, pp. 1, 4.

"\$210,000 Low Bid on Post Office Foundation Job," Virginian-Pilot and the Norfolk Landmark, Norfolk, Virginia, April 12, 1932.

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10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Verbal Bounday Description and Justification (Continued)

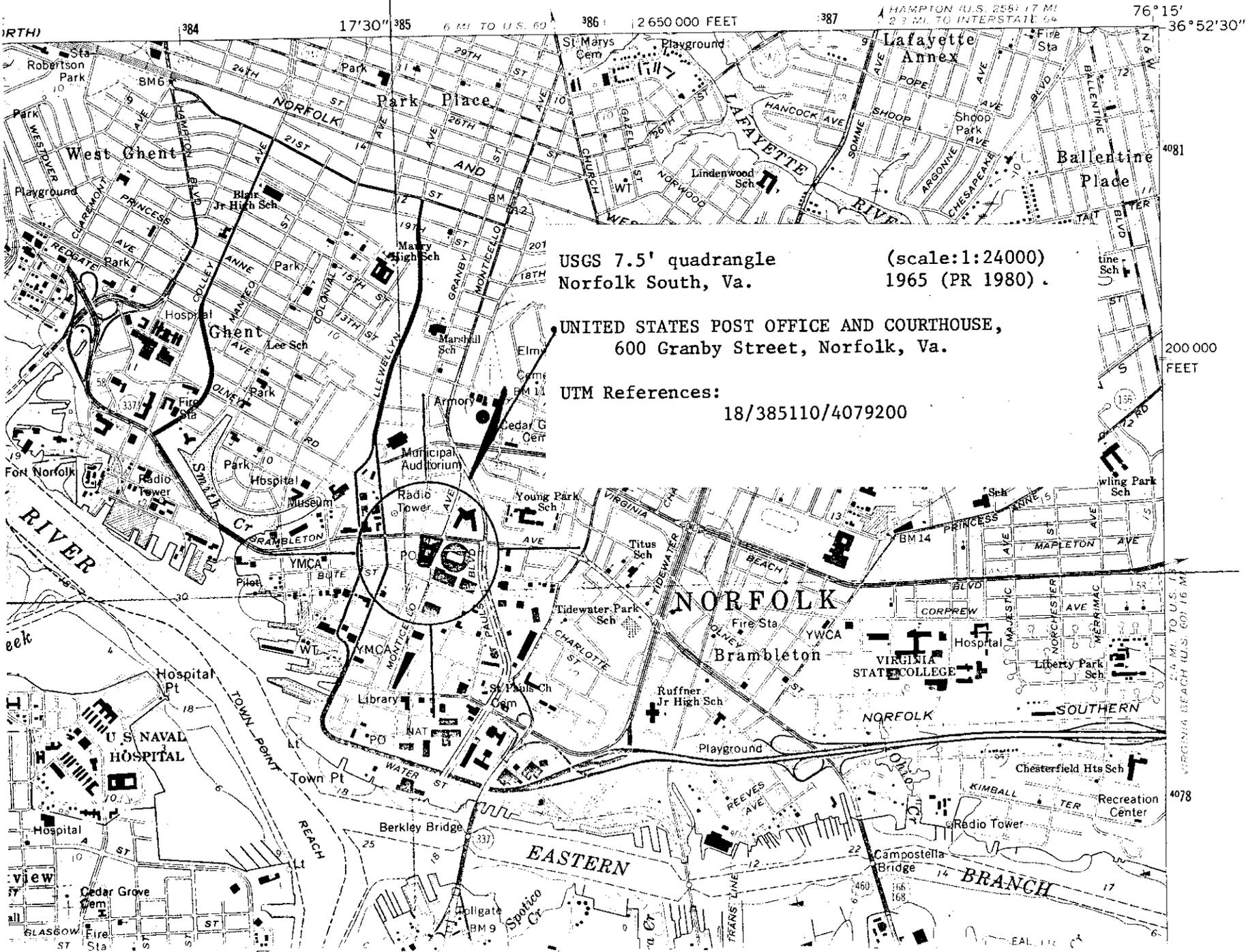
418.06 feet, more or less, to a point on the south side of Brambleton Avenue, which point is the southwest corner of the intersection of Brambleton and Monticello Avenues; thence westwardly along the south line of Brambleton Avenue a distance of 253.39 feet, more or less, to a point on the eastern line of Granby Street, which point is the southeast corner of the intersection of Granby Street and Brambleton Avenue; thence southwardly along the eastern line of Granby Street, 403.01 feet, more or less, to a point on the northern line of Bute Street, which point is the northeast corner of the intersection of Granby Street and Bute Street, thence outwardly along the northern line of Bute Street 151.58 feet, more or less, to a point on the western line of Monticello Avenue at the point of beginning."

(Verbal boundary description and justification from the Norfolk Deed Book 320A, p. 322, Deed #4740.)

**Justification:**

The boundaries for the building are the same as those contained in the deed of the site for the proposed building, Book 320A, Page 322, Deed #4740 recorded in 1931.

5757 1 NW  
(LITTLE CREEK)



USGS 7.5' quadrangle  
Norfolk South, Va. (scale:1:24000)  
1965 (PR 1980).

UNITED STATES POST OFFICE AND COURTHOUSE,  
600 Granby Street, Norfolk, Va.

UTM References:  
18/385110/4079200

200 000  
FEET

2.4 MI. TO U.S. 17  
VIRGINIA BEACH (U.S. 60) 16 MI.