



North Elevation & Terrace - 2002

C. Physical Description of Existing Conditions

This section of the report presents the results of an historic survey of the Crescent Drive Post Office by the consultant team. The information in this Historic Structures Report is intended to establish the primary character defining elements and existing original historic fabric of the Post Office, which must be preserved and renovated in concert with the proposed adaptive reuse of the building.

The goals of this survey are as follows:

1. To provide a baseline inventory and documentation of the character defining elements of the building and site, and documentation as to the extent and condition of the historic fabric, in order to guide the design team in developing and evaluating proposed design concepts, spatial reconfiguration and code and life safety interventions.

2. To evaluate the significance of the character defining elements and historic fabric, creating a hierarchy of Primary, Secondary, Tertiary, Minimal and Non-Historic Spaces. This is a first step in setting priorities and evaluating impacts of any proposed scope of work.

3. To evaluate the condition of the existing character defining elements and historic fabric to identify deficiencies which should be addressed as part of the rehabilitation.

The raw data of the survey were recorded on survey forms which are included in the Appendix of this report. The following section is a summary of those forms.

C1. Exterior Conditions

The Crescent Drive Post Office, located off of Santa Monica Boulevard between Canon and Crescent Drives in Beverly Hills, is a partial two story building that was designed in the Italian Renaissance Revival style and faced in slip covered Roman brick trimmed with natural colored terra cotta. The building is flanked on the north side by a terrace that is detailed in terra cotta and was originally paved in slate.

A loading dock projects from the east side of the building and the loading area and service yard are surrounded by a 7' tall concrete wall which blocks it from public view. The loading dock is covered by a standing seam copper roof with concealed gutters. The main body of the building is roofed with clay tiles, complimentary to the Italian Renaissance Revival style of the building. The flat roofs, directly adjacent to the large workroom inside, once contained large skylights to illuminate the interior of the workroom which were covered in the 1961 remodel. Almost

all of the windows are original with the exception of one window on the south elevation that was converted into a door. All of the windows on the first floor are covered by wrought iron grilles which are original to the building.

The building has had numerous repairs to the exterior although there are visible signs of distress on some of the terra cotta elements including the original corner stone. A detailed description of the exterior building survey can be found in Appendix III.

North Façade

The north façade of the building, which faces Santa Monica Boulevard, is the most formal of the four elevations and the most symmetrical. Faced in brick veneer and terra cotta, the north façade appears to be the main entrance to the building even though it is not. Three sets of ornate bronze double doors with terra cotta surrounds and architraves act as the focal point of the elevation with the center door, the only one that originally operated, distinguished by a different architrave than the other two. Ornate bronze lanterns which are still operable flank the center door. The doors are accessed off of a stone terrace with a terra cotta balustrade which has been repaired in the past but is still in need of work.

Above the doors a band of terra cotta runs the entire length of the two-story portion of the building and is incised with "UNITED STATES POST OFFICE" in large letters. In the center of the terra cotta band, a large terra cotta cartouche draws attention to the center of the building, directly above the sole operating door on this elevation.

The windows, on the single story wings of the buildings, also have terra cotta surrounds and architraves, with the architraves of the windows matching the architraves of the non-operating doors.

The bottom course of terra cotta has been painted all the way around the building and can be easily distinguished from the non-painted terra cotta surfaces by its pink instead of orange appearance.

South Façade

The south façade of the building, facing Burton Way, has many more distinct elements due to the ins and outs of the floor plan. The elevation is partially obscured by a wall surrounding the service yard but the numerous windows types are plainly visible. All of the windows have been coated with a mirrored film to prevent visibility into the non-public working spaces of the building. A small balcony with a wrought iron railing is located off the second floor which adds a sense of scale to the elevation.



North Elevation



South Elevation - Loading Dock

The boiler flue also protrudes from the roof on the south side of the building, well disguised as a chimney.

East Façade

The Crescent Drive elevation was one of two primary entrances into the building. The entry doors, originally bronze but replaced with aluminum doors in 1951, are flanked by terra cotta trim and a terra cotta architrave with an elaborate terra cotta cartouche. The loading dock is located on this side of the building and is covered by a copper marquee which is in need of some repairs due to encounters with large trucks backing in to it and tearing off part of the copper.

West Façade

The Canon Drive elevation was the other primary entrance into the building. The entry doors are mirror images of the doors on the east side of the building and similarly are flanked by terra cotta trim and a terra cotta architrave with an elaborate terra cotta cartouche. The east elevation of the workroom matches the rest of the building with its masonry veneer, terra cotta trim and steel frame windows.

C2. Interior Conditions

While almost the entire exterior of the Crescent Drive Post Office remains intact, the interior has been aggressively altered in many locations and carefully preserved in others. In spite of the remodels, the most historically important areas have been left predominately intact with small areas of modifications that occurred in order for the post office to continue to function. A detailed description of each space follows with each space keyed to the floor plans included at the end of this section. Also included in this section are floor plans that show the extent of modifications on each floor.

First Floor



South Elevation - Offices



East Elevation (West Similar)

The first floor of the building housed all of the public uses with postal workrooms and offices discreetly hidden behind large expanses of marble clad walls. Today the public rooms stand much as they did upon opening in 1934 with all modifications detailed below.

1a. West Foyer

Given the siting of the building, the two main entrances were off of Canon Drive to the west and Crescent Drive to the east. A patrons first first encounter with the building is through either the east or west foyer which have retained most of their original finishes; only the exterior doors and a new set of doors separating the foyer from the lobby have been modified or added. The floor of the west foyer matches the rest of the lobby with its tri-color marble floor, installed and supplied by the Vermont Marble Company. The walls, also clad in marble supplied by the Vermont Marble Company, are finished in Roseal Marble, originally specified as Campania Rose, from floor to ceiling with ornate pediments and surrounds around the doors in the south and east walls. A marble plaque, created out of the same marble as the walls, acts as an accent element on the south wall directly above the centerline of the door pediment. The east wall of the room was modified in 1961 due to the extension of the terrazzo stair behind the wall down to the basement. A janitor's closet and door into the closet were removed in order to extend the stair down. Replacement marble was supplied by the same quarry as the original marble and no visible indication of the original configuration is apparent.

The marble is topped by a 2' plaster cornice that was run in place and accented with adhered plaster stars. According to an article written by the architect, Ralph Flewelling, "practically all the ornamental plaster work was run in place on the job and the result is testimony to their plastic artisanship."¹ The ceiling is flat plaster, suspended on metal lath from the concrete structure above with the original metal chandelier suspended in the center of the room.

The main entry door in the west wall was replaced in 1950 with aluminum frame doors and in 1961, metal lovers were added on the exterior in the vestibule surrounding the door for air intake. The north wall of the room is taken up by an aluminum and glass partition with a set of double doors that was added in 1961.

1b. West Lobby

The west lobby acts as transition space from the foyer to the main lobby and originally housed two transaction windows in the south walls. The marble floor from the foyer continues through the space into the main lobby although the floor pattern changes in the west lobby to a chevron pattern of French gray marble set in a field of Verde Antique Dark. The Roseal marble walls plaster



West Foyer - North Wall with Added Door & Partition



West Lobby - 1934

ceiling and cornice continue into the room as well. Suspended from the ceiling are two metal fixtures which match those hanging in the foyers.

The west wall houses one of two original bronze plaques set in a curved recess that lists the original contributors to the building. The large metal windows in the north wall are surrounded by ornately carved marble trim and topped by a carved marble architrave with radiator recesses concealed in the wall directly below the windows. The south wall originally contained two teller windows, slightly recessed in a surround of fluted marble with marble deal plates for transactions. Aluminum grilles covered the transaction windows and decorative metal lights were located on the wall directly above the teller windows. The teller windows, fluted marble surround panels, marble deal plates and wall-mounted lights were removed in the 1961 remodel for the addition of post office boxes. Those boxes were removed when the post office was decommissioned and today a large opening in the wall is all that remains.

Two historic artifacts also remain in place, the original aluminum bulletin boards and the aluminum lobby desks that were design specifically for the space.

1c. Main Lobby

The main lobby has the same level of finish as the east and west lobbies but on a grander scale due to the double height space and barrel vaulted ceiling. Roseal marble covers the north and south walls and the marble floor continues through the space, once again changing pattern to fields of verde green surrounded by a wide border of French gray.

The marble on the walls remains at a constant height, matching the marble in the east and west lobbies while the space above, created by the change to a two story space, is occupied by plaster coves in which a layer of canvas was applied and artist Charles Kassler painted his murals. The north and south walls contain the mural titled "Construction - PWA" in six panels, three on the north wall and three on the south wall. The west wall contains the mural "Air Mail" while the east wall houses "Post Rider". The marble below the murals had many distinct features on the south and north walls, some of which still remains in place. The north wall has six fluted marble radiator enclosures as well as ornate marble surrounds and architraves at the doors. A different inscription is carved into each marble architrave above the three doors which, from west to east, read "Commitment", "Cooperation", and "Enlightenment".

The south wall once housed four teller windows with wall mounted lights, identical to those in the west lobby, and three



West Lobby - 2002



Main Lobby - 1934

groupings of post office boxes all located in fluted marble surrounds. Above each of the post office box groups is located a decorative circular element, on the two outer banks it was a carved marble plaque and above the center bank it was a decorative metal clock. Increased patronage by the 1960s resulted in a need for additional post office boxes and in the 1961 remodels the teller windows and original boxes were removed to allow for installation of more modern post offices boxes. In the two bays to the west post office box alcoves were built, extending into the workroom space behind. New brick tile floors were laid in the alcoves and dropped ceilings were added. When the post office was decommissioned, the boxes were removed and today the alcoves remain as shells with clear views through the openings that once housed the P.O. boxes into the empty workroom beyond. Windows located in the south wall at mural level that once provided views from the second floor into the lobby have been blocked off to allow for the supply of air into the room through ductwork that was also added in the 1961 remodel.

Lighting is provided by uplights concealed in the plaster cornice above the marble. According to architect Flewelling the lighting was "located above the molds of the main cornice in order to leave the vaulting system unbroken by fixtures and to provide a well distributed, reflected light."²

1d. East Lobby

The east lobby is a mirror image of the west lobby with the exception of the south wall. The wall, which originally contained 5 teller windows unlike the west lobby which only contained 2 teller windows, was modified in 1961 to allow for expansion of retail sales. The fluted marble recesses that once housed the teller windows were cut out to allow for access into a new room that was created behind the wall in the workroom space. This new room will be discussed in section "1g. - Workroom".

1e. East Foyer

The east foyer, similar to the west foyer, has retained most of its original finishes, only the exterior doors and a new set of doors separating the foyer from the lobby have been modified or added. The floor of the foyer matches the rest of the lobby with its tri-color marble floor and the walls, clad in Roseal Marble from floor to ceiling has an ornate pediment and surround at the door in the south wall. A marble plaque, created out of the same marble as the walls, acts as an accent element on the south wall directly above the centerline of the door pediment.

The main entry door in the east wall was replaced in 1950 with aluminum frame doors and in 1961, metal lovers were added on the exterior in the vestibule surrounding the door for air intake. The north wall of the room is taken up by an aluminum and glass partition with a set of double doors that was added in 1961.



Main Lobby - 2002



East Lobby - 1934



East Lobby - 2002



Superintendent of Mails Office - 2002

1f. Superintendent of Mails Office

The Superintendent of Mails office has been modified over the life of the building resulting in a room that retains only some of its original stature. The original wood block floor has been covered with carpet although the wood base is still intact, and a lowered gypsum board ceiling was added in 1961 along with flush mounted 2'x4' florescent lights. The lowered ceiling partially obscures the steel window. The original metal doors and trim are still in place.

1g. Workroom

The workroom occupies most of the first floor with three anterooms off of the east side for loading and delivery purposes. Numerous changes have been made to this room over the years and will be discussed in this section. Although no historic photographs of the room have been located, original finish schedules indicate that the room had a wood block floor, glazed masonry wainscot, plaster coated concrete walls and a suspended plaster ceiling. Large windows, skylights and clerestories filled the room with natural light. A viewing corridor, where the postmaster or superintendent could monitor employees through 1'x1" viewing slots was located up near the ceiling and was accessed by steel ladders hidden in closets off of the main floor. A safe was also located off of the workroom, directly adjacent to the superintendent of mails' office. A concrete stair on the north side of the room provided access to the men's swing room and toilets which were located on the second floor.

Today the volume of the workroom remains much as it did in 1934 but numerous items have been added or changed over the years. The wood block floor has been covered by a vinyl sheet floor that resembles wood parquet flooring. Four new rooms or elements have been added in the space including a retail service center off of the east lobby, a women's lounge at the south end of the room and two P.O. box alcoves off of the main lobby. The floor of the retail service center and the P.O. box alcoves were covered in masonry tile while the floor of the women's lounge was covered in vinyl. Dropped gypsum board ceilings were constructed in all four spaces, interrupting the continuity and height of the room.

The loading and delivery areas to the east of the workroom have been modified as well, reconfiguring doors and walls, leaving little in place aside from the physical loading dock, elevator and vestibule. All of the exterior steel doors and windows are original with the exception of the exterior door located in the west wing of the workroom. A window was modified in 1961 to allow for the addition of the door. Although unused, the viewing corridor also remains in place.

The original lights in the workroom have been replaced with suspended 1'x8' florescent fixtures.



Workroom with Women's Lounge at End - South Elevation



Post Office Box Alcoves



Retail Sales Room

1h. Postmaster's Suite

The Postmaster's Suite contained five rooms: the postmaster's office, secretary/reception, assistant postmaster's office, private toilet and a safe. Specified with a higher level of finish than the rest of the non-public spaces, the suite was finished with American walnut trim instead of metal including wood window surrounds. The ceilings are suspended plaster with plaster cove transitions from wall to ceiling. The walls separating the secretarial area from the two offices contained pivoting wood windows which remain on the east wall. The windows were removed on the west wall and replaced with a fixed pane of translucent glass. The walls of the postmaster's office are covered in 8' American walnut wainscot.

The original wood block floor in the offices and terrazzo floor in the toilet have been covered with red carpet and red velour curtains were added to the windows in the 1980s. All of the wood in the office suite was refinished during this time period as well. The safe that was once accessed through the postmaster's suite was reconfigured and the opening filled in. The safe door is now off of the workroom.

Mezzanine

The mezzanine contains two spaces, the stair vestibule and a mechanical platform. The stair vestibule is a transition space from the first floor to the Postoffice Inspector's office on the second floor. It has a terrazzo floor with plaster walls. Directly off of the vestibule is an opening into the attic of the west wing which houses mechanical equipment.

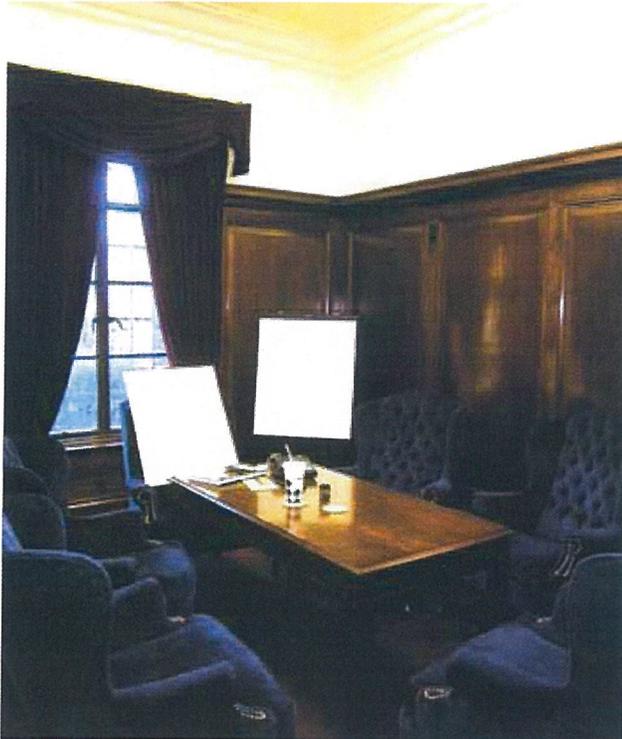
Second Floor

2a. Hallway

The original hallway at the top of the stairs from the workroom has been subdivided into two rooms but little else has changed with the exception of the windows into the main lobby. The original terrazzo floors, plaster coated concrete walls, metal trim, plaster cornice and ceiling are all still in place. The two windows that once opened into the main lobby have been fixed in place and the glass replaced with painted wood. HVAC ducts come down from the ceiling of the room and penetrate through the wood to provide air to the main lobby below.

2b. Men's Swing Room & Toilet

The swing room is very plain with vinyl floor, metal base and chair



Postmaster's Office - 2002

rail and a coved plaster cornice and plaster ceiling. The metal doors and windows are original although the western window has been modified to allow for an HVAC duct to enter the room and then transition up to the attic. Large ducts run just below the ceiling which have been painted to match the rest of the room.

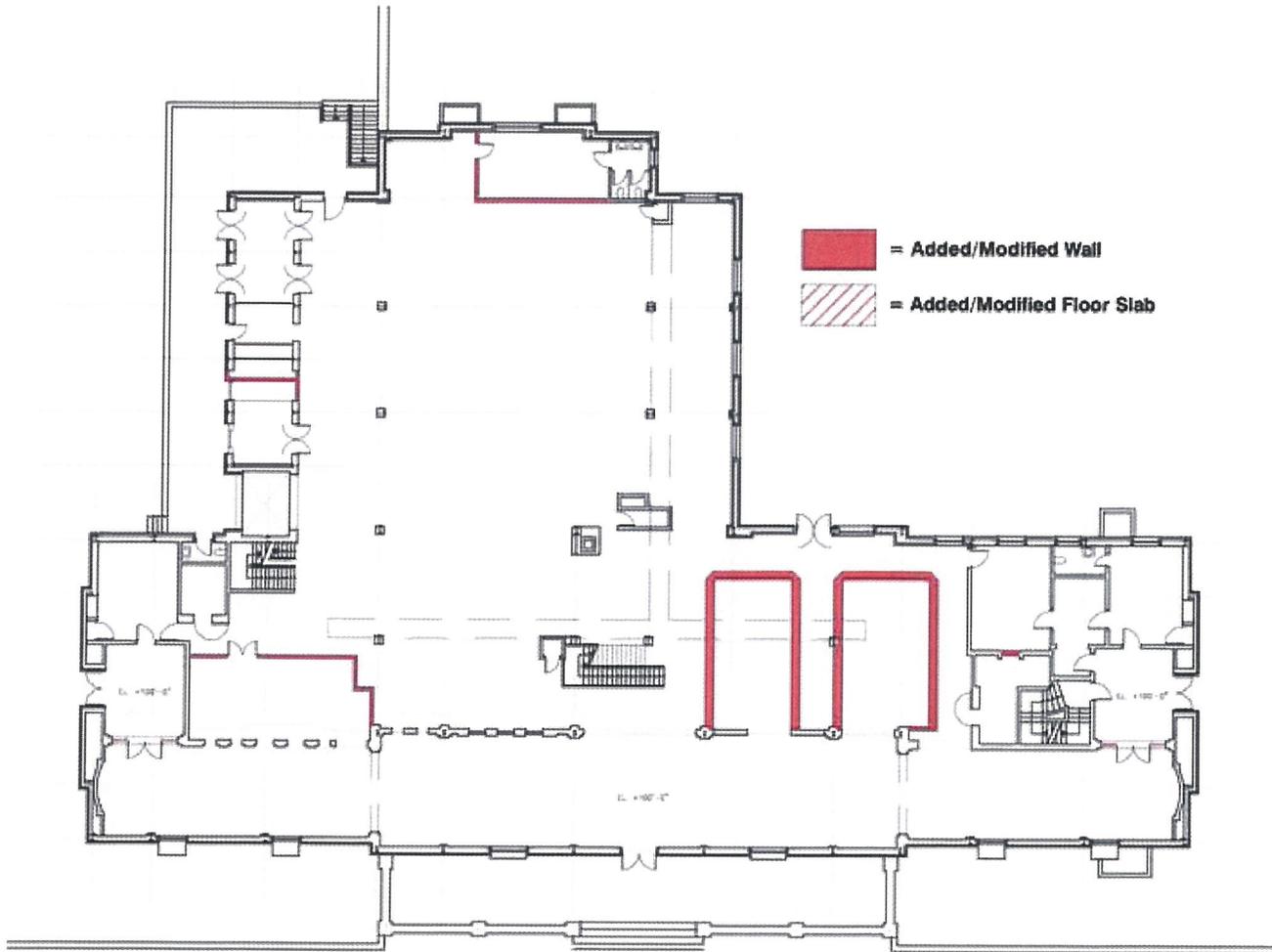
The men's toilet room off of the swing room has had very few modifications during the 68-year occupancy of the building. The terrazzo floor and sanitary wall base remain in place with small patches where fixtures and toilet partitions have been added or moved. The walls are clad in distinctive black and white marble wainscot, 8' high in the shower area and 6' high in the toilet area. The two showers are built-in and are faced in marble on the floors, walls and dividing partitions between the changing areas. Some of the lavatories and water closets appear to be original but haven't been used in three years.

The walls above the marble wainscot are plaster coated concrete and transition via a sanitary cove to the plaster ceiling above. The shower area and janitor's closet in the room have three original light fixtures, the only ones in the building aside from those found in the public lobby spaces. Only two of the fixtures have globes which have been removed and placed in the janitor's closet.

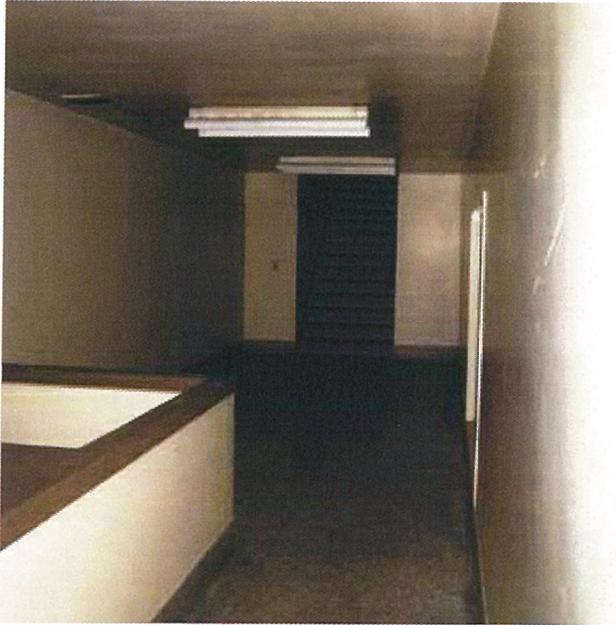
2c. Postoffice Inspector's Office



Assistant Postmaster's Office - 2002



Modifications - First Floor



Mezzanine - 2002

The Postoffice Inspector's office is located in the southwest corner of the second floor and has access to it from the stair and mezzanine off of the west foyer on the first floor. The office contains a private toilet, a large closet, an entry vestibule off of the mezzanine and a janitor's closet just off of the vestibule. It also contains access to a viewing corridor that was used to monitor the male employees in the swing room, toilet room and hallway on the second floor. The viewing corridor is similar to the one on the first floor that was used to monitor the workroom. 1'x1' slots are spaced approximately 3' on center to allow visual inspection of each room. The corridor is two feet above the finished floor of the second floor.

The Postoffice Inspector's Office originally had a wood block floor that has been covered with sheet vinyl. The walls are plaster-covered concrete which beginning at 8' above the finished floor have been covered with direct glue acoustic tile that transitions onto the suspended plaster ceiling. The private toilet off of the office is finished in the same marble as the men's toilet off of the swing room with a terrazzo floor.

The windows and doors in the office are all original and the two windows are actually double doors that lead onto a small balcony with wrought iron railing. The doors need to be repaired, as they currently do not close due to corrosion.

Basement

The basement has been drastically modified and enlarged since it was originally constructed. Originally used for storage, mechanical and custodial purposes the floors, walls and ceilings are all concrete, some of which have integral color or have been painted. None of the original rooms in the basement remain with the exception of the boiler room which was depressed an additional two feet from the rest of the original basement.

In 1961, the crawl space under the remainder of the building was excavated and the available space in the basement tripled. An exterior stair was modified to allow for the expansion and areaways were added to get air to the equipment placed in new mechanical rooms. The original caissons, which range from 35'-42' deep were partially exposed and stand freely in the space. A viewing corridor was added on this level, as were additional mechanical rooms, toilet rooms and storage areas. Overall the basement has little or no historic value.

C3. Prioritization of Space

The historic significance of the identified spaces and individual items were categorized as follows: Primary, Secondary, Tertiary, Minimal and Non-Historic.



Men's Toilet Room Shower Area



Postoffice Inspector's Office - 2002

Primary Spaces

The Primary Spaces are the original major public spaces of the building - the East and West Foyers, the East and West Lobbies and the Main Lobby. These spaces are of the highest historical significance and contain the most historic fabric. Typically these spaces are highly decorated with marble walls, patterned marble floors and ornate metal fixtures. They establish the character, quality and imagery of the interior architecture which support and enhance the overall experience of the building.

Secondary Spaces

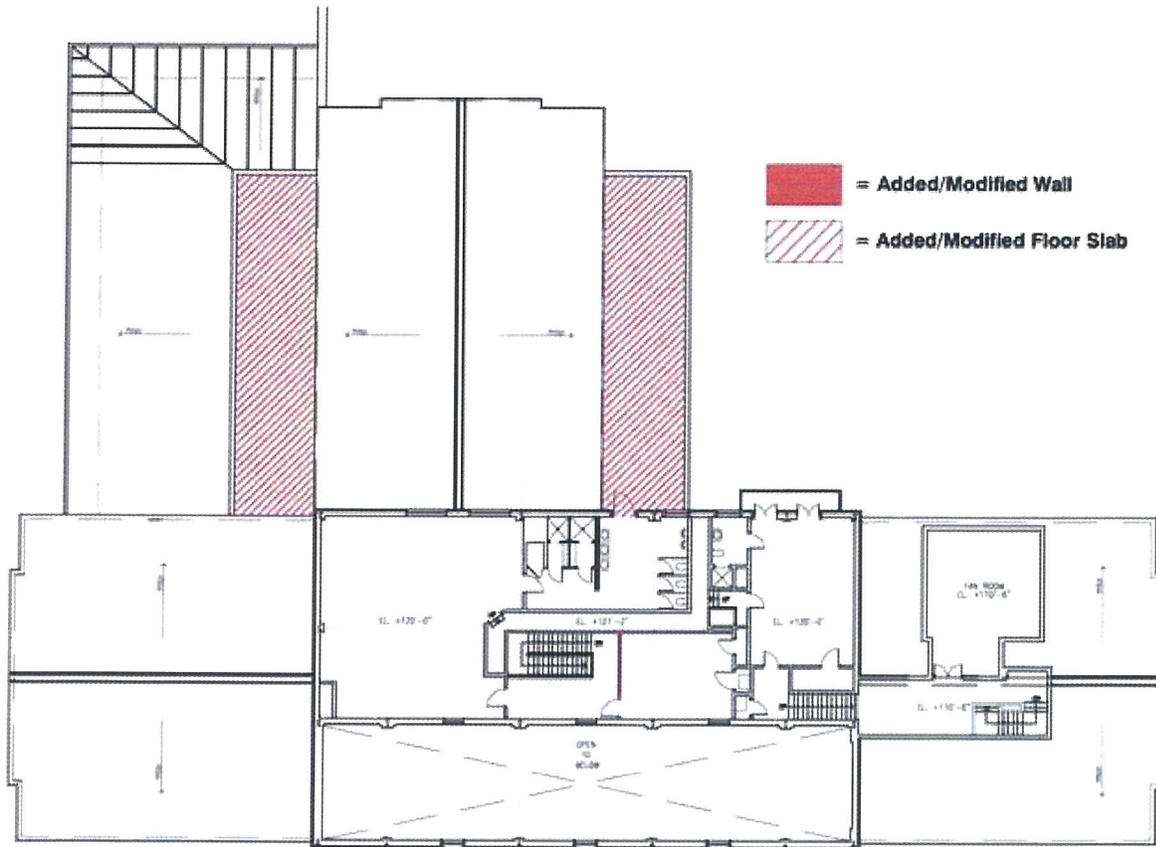
A second tier of spaces can be identified that are original to the building and have historic significance by virtue of their finish materials or historic association. These spaces are smaller, less grand, and functional in use. They include the Postmaster's Office and the second floor Men's Toilet.

Tertiary Spaces

A third tier of spaces can be identified that are also original to the building but have been modified during the life of the building. Similar to the secondary spaces, these spaces are smaller, less grand and functional in use. Some original finishes remain in tact but alterations have changed the appearance of the rooms. These spaces include the remainder of the Postmaster's Suite and the old Superintendent of Mails Office. The Viewing corridor on the second floor is also included in this category due to its unique function.

Minimal Historic Spaces

The minimally historic spaces are areas which are original to the building but which housed utilitarian functions and have undergone dramatic modifications and/or additions. Some original finishes remain although most have been removed or



Modifications - Second Floor

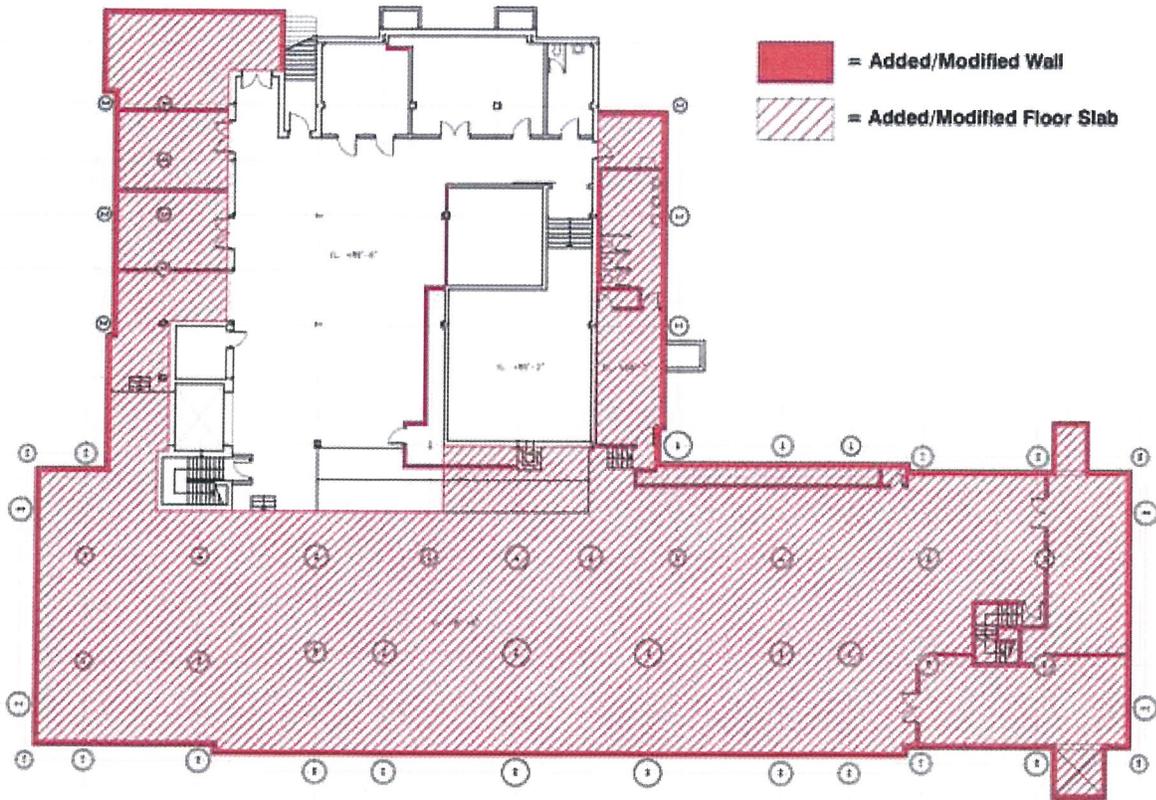


Basement Expansion

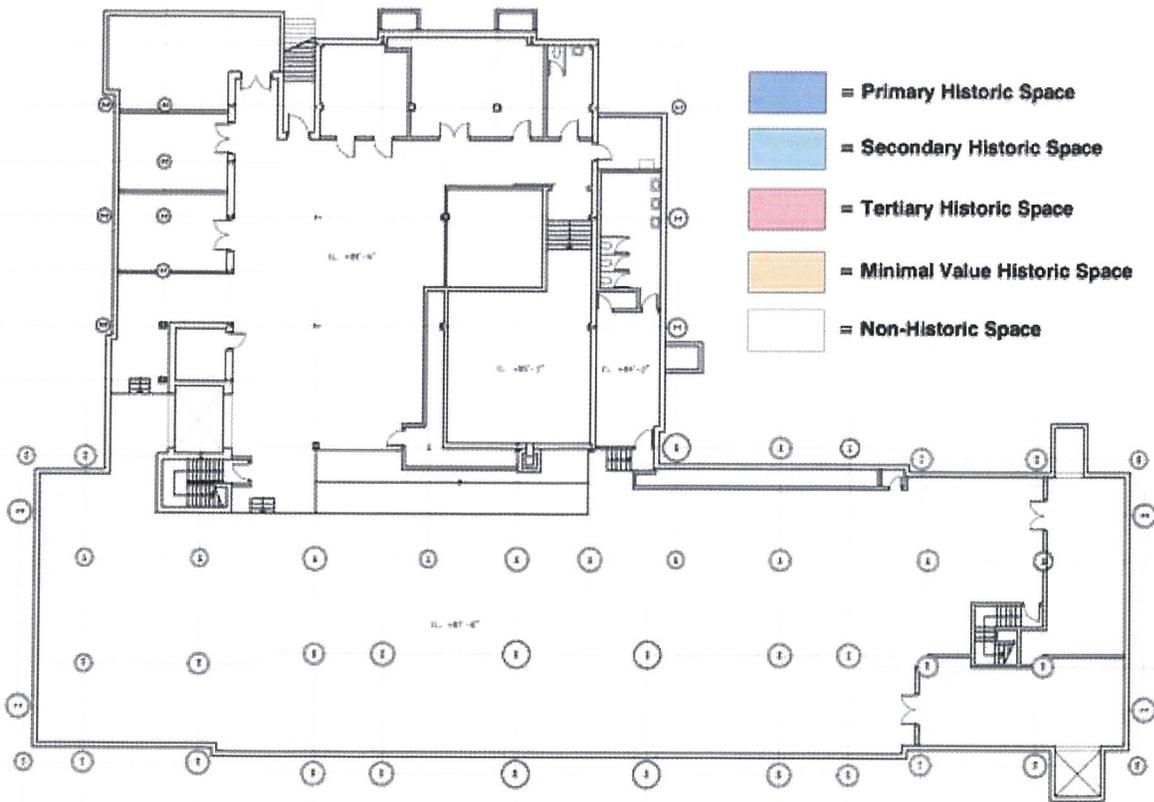
covered. These spaces include the workroom, the loading/delivery areas on the first floor and the hallway, men's swing room and old postoffice inspector's office on the second floor.

Non-Historic Spaces

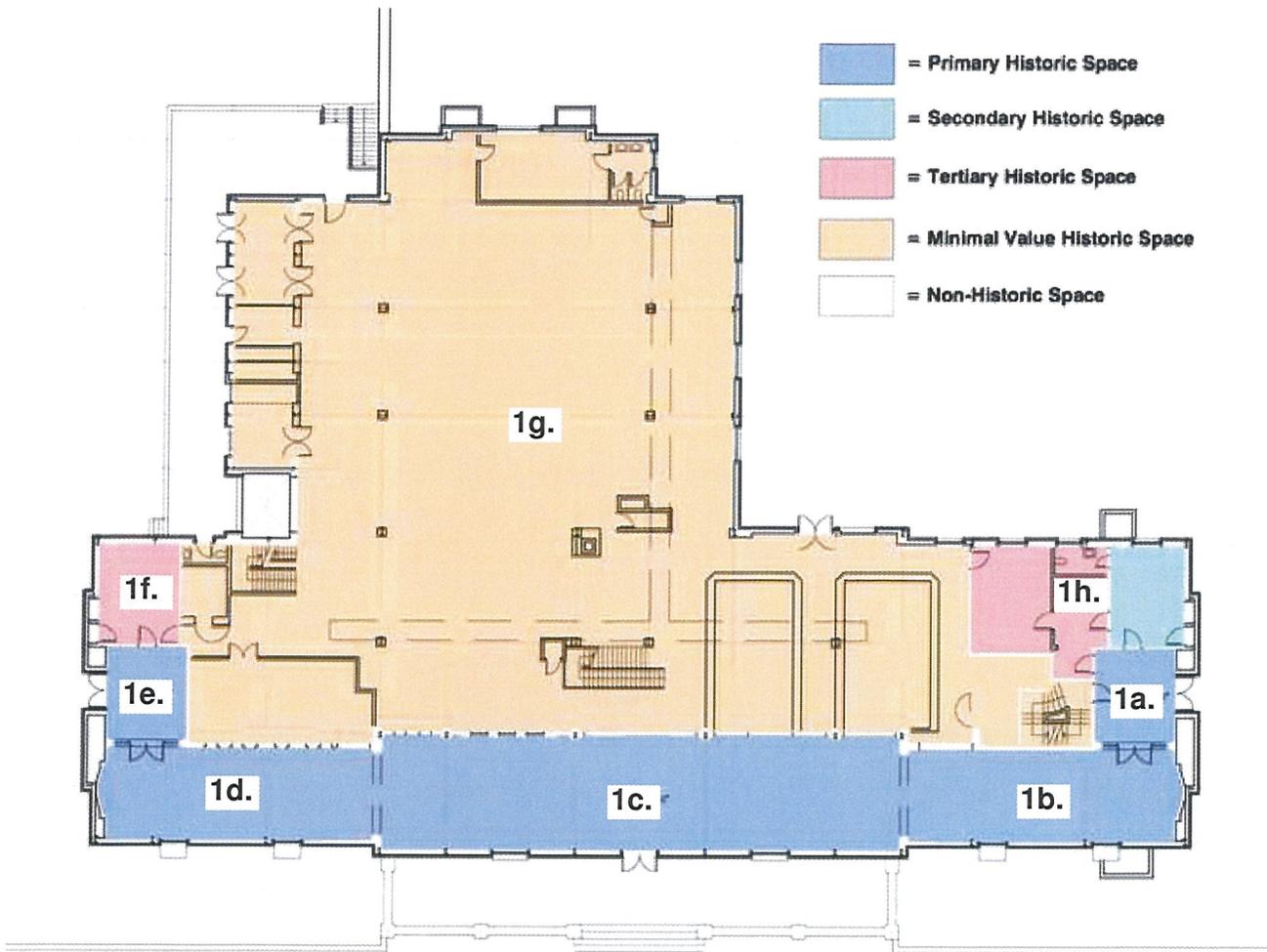
This category includes all additions to the building as well as mechanical rooms, electrical rooms, custodial areas and the remainder of the basement which has been drastically remodeled and was always intended for uses including storage and files.



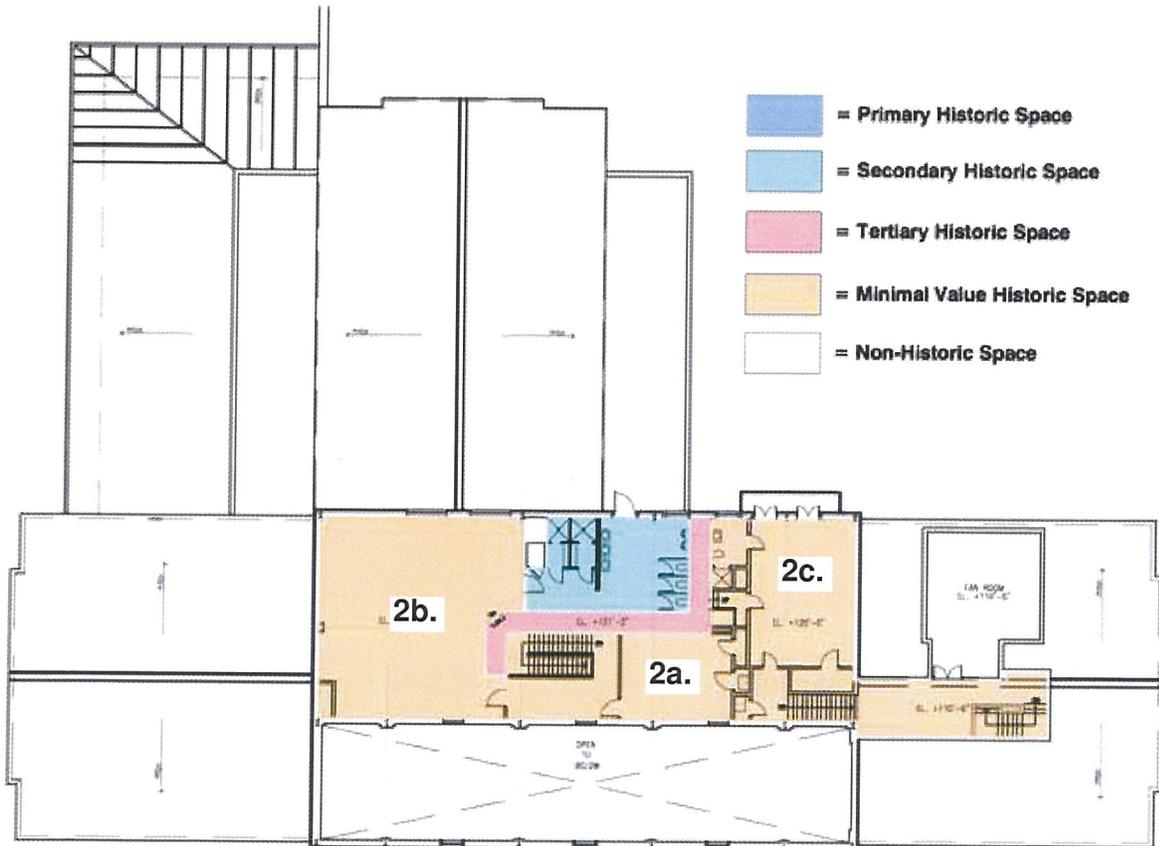
Modifications - Basement



Prioritization of Spaces - Basement



Prioritization of Spaces - First Floor



Prioritization of Spaces - Second Floor

PRESERVATION APPROACH & GOALS

