

NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK NOMINATION

NPS Form 10-934 (Rev. 12-2015)

OMB Control No. 1024-0276 (Exp. 01/31/2019)

NATIONAL ARCHIVES BUILDING

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United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Historic Landmarks Nomination Form

1. NAME AND LOCATION OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: National Archives Building

Other Name/Site Number: National Archives and Records Administration Headquarters

Street and Number (if applicable): 700 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW, Washington, DC

City/Town: Washington **County:** N/A **State:** District of Columbia

2. SIGNIFICANCE DATA

NHL Criteria: 1, 4

NHL Criteria Exceptions: N/A

NHL Theme(s): III. Expressing Cultural Values

- 5. Architecture, Landscape Architecture, and Urban Design

IV. Shaping the Political Landscape

- 2. Governmental Institutions

Period(s) of Significance: 1931-1938 (Criterion 4: Architecture) and 1931-1965 (Criterion 1: History)

Significant Person(s) (only Criterion 2):

Cultural Affiliation (only Criterion 6):

Designer/Creator/Architect/Builder:

Architects/Engineers:

John Russell Pope, Architect

Horace Balcom, Structural Engineer

Clyde R. Place, Mechanical Engineer

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement. We are collecting this information under the authority of the Historic Sites Act of 1935 (16 U.S.C. 461-467) and 36 CFR part 65. Your response is required to obtain or retain a benefit. We will use the information you provide to evaluate properties nominated as National Historic Landmarks. We may not conduct or sponsor and you are not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number. OMB has approved this collection of information and assigned Control No. 1024-0276.

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Builders:

Frederick Crawford (foundation pilings)
George A. Fuller (General Contractor)

Sculptors and Carvers:

A.A. Weinman
James Earle Fraser
Laura Gardin Fraser
Robert Aitken
Sidney Waugh
John Donnelly Company
Indiana Limestone Corporation carvers under the supervision of Harry Easton
Attilio Piccirilli
G.A. Ratti
Edward Ardolino

Historic Contexts:

- VII. Political and Military Affairs 1865-1939
 - H. The Great Depression and the New Deal, 1929-1941

- XXVII. Education
 - G. Adjunct Educational Institutions
 - 1. Museums, Archives, and Botanical Gardens

3. WITHHOLDING SENSITIVE INFORMATION

Does this nomination contain sensitive information that should be withheld under Section 304 of the National Historic Preservation Act?

- Yes
- No

4. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

- 1. Acreage of Property: 5.32 acres
- 2. Use either Latitude/Longitude Coordinates or the UTM system:
 - Latitude/Longitude Coordinates:**
 - Datum if other than WGS84 (enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

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Latitude:38.890056 **Longitude:** 77.023056

OR

UTM References: Zone Easting Northing

3. Verbal Boundary Description: The boundary is the 5.32-acre parcel in Northwest Washington designated on District land maps as Square 0432. It is bounded on the north by Pennsylvania Avenue, on the east by 7th Street NW, on the south by Constitution Avenue, and on the west by 9th Street NW.

4. Boundary Justification: This boundary encompasses the parcel designated as the location for the National Archives Building by Secretary of the Treasury Andrew Mellon and the Board of Architectural Consultants for the Federal Triangle in 1931.

5. SIGNIFICANCE STATEMENT AND DISCUSSION

SUMMARY STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Overview

Built between 1931 and 1938, the monumental headquarters of the National Archives in downtown Washington, DC is both an exceptional example of American Classicism in art and architecture designed by one of its foremost practitioners, John Russell Pope [National Historic Landmark (NHL) CRITERION 4], and the preeminent repository of the primary documents that record the origins of our democracy [NHL CRITERION 1]. In addition, the building, and the institution it houses reflect important historical trends in twentieth century government reform [NHL CRITERION 1]. As the product of Progressive-Era government activists and other powerful elites, the creation of the National Archives demonstrates how reformers of the era strove to apply expertise and scientific inquiry to improve government operations and to establish America as the cultural equal of Europe.

The building's architectural period of significance spans its construction between 1931 and 1938, the period when it acquired the design attributes that identify it as a monument of American Classicism. The National Archives Building's historical significance [NHL Criterion 1] extends from 1931 through its period of early development ending in 1965. From its opening in 1935 through 1965, the National Archives pursued and pioneered innovative archival techniques, building a world-class institution, and promulgating methods and practices that other archives followed. This period includes the year (1952) when the founding documents of American democracy, the Declaration of Independence, the United States Constitution, and the Bill of Rights, collectively known as the Charters of Freedom, were moved to the building, and put on permanent display there, thus establishing the Archives as a major civic pilgrimage site. Although important work continued there after 1965, 1931 to 1965 is the period when the institution acquired the characteristics and made the contributions that reflect its national significance in American historical trends.

CRITERION 1: Politics/Government

Under Criterion 1 (Politics/Government) the National Archives Building is exceptional as the first purpose-built national repository for the United States' federal documents. Its creation reflects the confluence of the growing power and reach of the federal bureaucracy with the desire of citizens, especially historians, to have reliable

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access to the nation's records. The institution and its iconic building are emblematic of Progressive-Era goals of creating an educated, civic-minded populace by facilitating access to knowledge. For the newly professionalized discipline of the historian, which placed a premium on scientific study of the past using primary sources of evidence, the National Archives was essential. The institution reflected Progressive reform ideals that strove for the scientific administration of government. The government created the archives to provide a safe and efficient location to store documents and perform research, thus allowing unprecedented public access to federal records. In addition, the creation of a national archive served to legitimize the American past, a goal that resonated with both Progressive reformers and nationalist elements of the early twentieth century.

The archive was ultimately realized during a period of cultural nationalism in America, when elites sought to prove that American culture was equal or superior to Europe's. From the 1890s through the 1920s, this effort to prove cultural equivalence or superiority was one of the driving impulses behind the City Beautiful movement, an American urban-planning movement that asserted that good city planning and design could help solve social problems, and which carried with it a host of progressive and nationalistic ideas that revolved around the creation of public spaces that inspired civic pride and reinforced the nation's legitimacy. These same ideals shaped the federal government's desire to make Washington into a world-class capital city and, in turn, in 1901 prompted Congress to revise and expand the city's eighteenth-century Baroque city plan created by Pierre L'Enfant in 1791. The resulting plan, known as the Senate Park Commission Plan of the City of Washington (Senate Park Commission Plan), guided the development of the National Archives Building and the surrounding complex of government buildings, known as the Federal Triangle. The archives building realized a nationalist expression of America's legitimacy as a world power by creating a world-class architectural monument that, in turn, provided a heroic space to display the nation's founding documents. In 1952, as originally envisioned, the building's exhibit hall became the permanent home and display space for the Declaration of Independence, the United States Constitution, and the Bill of Rights.

Beginning in the late nineteenth century and culminating in the 1920s, progressive government reformers and early professional historians pressed for the creation of an archive to absorb, organize, and make accessible the ever-increasing volume of documents produced by the federal government. According to Cynthia M. Koch, a historian of the Progressive Era, in the late nineteenth century, "American historians followed the lead of the German historian Leopold von Ranke, who professionalized the practice of historical writing as a science based on primary sources as evidence."¹ Consequently, access to the records of the nation became vital to the new generation of professional historians.

Although the need for proper space to store important government documents in Washington, DC had grown critical by the late nineteenth century, by the end of World War I, the need for adequate space to store, protect, and review important documents had reached a crisis point. Regularly, records were lost because of inadequate and dangerous conditions across government agencies. Destruction of irreplaceable documents in a series of devastating fires added to a growing sense of urgency to protect the documents that were seen as the factual basis for America's great political experiment.²

¹ Cynthia M. Koch, "National Archives Building, Washington, D.C.," NHL Nomination, review comments, October 26, 2020. Dr. Koch serves as Historian in Residence and Director of History Programming for the Franklin Delano Roosevelt Foundation at Adams House, Harvard University.

² Although fires in federal buildings had occurred since the beginning of the nineteenth century, critical losses were the result of the 1910 fire in the New York State Capitol, where many seventeenth-century records were lost; the 1911 fire at the Geological Survey; and the 1921 fire in the Commerce Department Building, where critical census data was lost. These losses in particular spurred

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The desire of progressive reformers to create civic-minded citizens through education, and to improve government and end corruption by providing access to original documents to both officials and the public, drove a sustained and extended grass-roots campaign to create a centralized federal archive. The campaign began in the 1890s and extended through the 1920s. The demand for preservation of original documents and the provision for public access to federal records was a long-awaited goal of Progressive-Era historians, who wanted direct evidence to form a basis for a “scientific” understanding of the past.³ Proponents of government efficiency, including Theodore Roosevelt, William Howard Taft, Woodrow Wilson, and Herbert Hoover, all considered an archive system essential to government productivity.⁴ The building itself, part of a slum clearance program, stands as a symbol of what civic reformers at the time wanted to see, and its design and contents were an expression of nationalist sentiments.⁵ Despite reformers lofty goals of civic improvement through large government development like the archives, these projects often displaced people of color.⁶

Public interest in an archive was also initially driven by the members of the relatively new discipline of the professional historian. The progressively minded American Historical Association (AHA) spearheaded the archives campaign. Founded in 1884, the AHA acted as a public advocate for the field, set professional publication standards, and was instrumental in the professionalization of the field. As the history discipline transitioned from an amateur to a professional practice, the AHA turned its focus to obtaining the resources that would validate their professional status: original documents that permitted historians to scientifically interpret the past.⁷ The long public campaign for a national archive was led by the AHA and the head of the Carnegie Institution’s Bureau of Historical Research, J. Franklin Jameson.⁸

interest in an archives. See Victor Gondos, *J. Franklin Jameson and the Birth of the National Archives, 1906-1926* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1971), 26, 56, 92.

³ Theodore S. Hamerow, “The Professionalization of Historical Learning,” *Reviews in American History* 14 (2-3) (September 1986):319-333.

⁴ Gondos.

⁵ Waldo G. Leland, “The National Archives: A Programme,” *The American Historical Review* 18(1-Oct. 1912), 1-28 (see especially pp. 1, 2, and 28); Marion Casey, “Efficiency, Taylorism, and Libraries in Progressive America,” *Journal of Library History* 16(2-Spring 1981):265-279 (see especially pp. 265-266).

⁶ While construction of the National Archives Building does not appear to have resulted in the demolition of any residential buildings, the larger government expansion program in downtown DC certainly did. In 1945, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) and others testified before the Senate Committee on the District of Columbia regarding low-cost housing in DC. Among their arguments was that African Americans were displaced with no rehousing options at a much higher rate than Whites. The NAACP’s representative and Dean of the Howard University Law School William H. Hastie stated that the construction of the Social Security Building (1940; now the Ford House Office Building), the Railroad Retirement Board Building (1940; now the Switzer Memorial Building at 330 C Street, SW), and the Census annex in southwest Washington, DC, displaced 137 units occupied by African Americans and only 16 occupied by Whites. Likewise, another testimonial in 1939 stated that 300 families would be displaced by the construction of a new War Department Building between 21st and 23rd Streets in Northwest Washington (the building is now the Harry S. Truman Department of State Building, 1940-41). Gillette, 142 and “Low-cost Housing in District of Columbia: Hearings before a Subcommittee of the Committee on the District of Columbia United States Senate 79th Congress” (Washington, DC Government Printing Office, 1945) 193, 213.

⁷ American Historical Association [AHA] website, <https://www.historians.org/about-aha-and-membership>, accessed December 9, 2020. Washington, DC: AHA.

⁸ From AHA website, <https://www.historians.org/about-aha-and-membership/aha-history-and-archives/presidential-addresses/j-franklin-jameson/j-franklin-jameson-biography>: “After receiving his PhD from Johns Hopkins University in 1882, Jameson taught at Johns Hopkins, Brown, and Chicago. He served as the managing editor of the *American Historical Review* 1895-1928. As director of the historical research department at the Carnegie Institution, he worked tirelessly for the establishment of a National Archives building. He subsequently served as chief of the Manuscripts Division at the Library of Congress from 1928 to 1937.” The Bureau of Historical Research was founded in 1903. Its mandate was to maintain a national clearing house for historians, publish documentary materials, explore European Archives for American history-related materials and edit the *American Historical Review*. See Gondos, 14.

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A groundswell of public concern for the safety and preservation of the primary records of the nation's history, spearheaded by the American Legion and William Randolph Hearst's *Washington Herald*, eventually convinced Congress to fund construction of a national archive in 1926. By the time the building was begun, the initial practical idea of erecting a national "hall of records" birthed in the 1890s had been swept away in favor of a true professional archive, a term that implied preservation and special care of America's primary documents rather than just a storage space.

Like other national archives around the world, the United States' archive became the repository of the records by which the national past was legitimized and from which the most authoritative national historical narrative emerged.⁹ While creation of the national historical narrative was dominated by elite White scholars who excluded the voices and stories of African Americans, recent immigrants, and other cultural and ethnic minorities, beginning as early as the turn of the twentieth century, historians and activists like the pioneering Carter G. Woodson began to utilize primary source materials to tell the story of Black Americans as a way to counter anti-Black sentiments and racism. By the 1940s, Black historians were actively using records from the National Archives to counter racial stereotypes and legitimize Black history.¹⁰

As the archives acquired the nation's most important documents, culminating in the acquisition of the Charters of Freedom in 1952, the National Archives Building became the location where the records underpinning the American democratic experiment were held in a symbolically sacred space. From its opening in 1935, the public was actively invited in to view documents and learn about the nation's past. In an effort to disseminate information easily and to protect original records, the National Archives developed groundbreaking procedures and technologies for handling voluminous and sometimes fragile documents. Throughout its early operation, the archives staff innovated in the use of microfilm to duplicate and preserve records. In addition, the institution pioneered the development of finding aids that provide easier access to complex collections, now a widely used practice in archives across the world.

CRITERION 4: Architecture

The National Archives Building is an exceptional example of the work of master architect John Russell Pope, one of the most accomplished and influential of America's second generation of Classicist architects. The building's architectural details and design represent Pope's distinctive approach to a major building project wherein he accommodated an economically laid out plan for a largely unprecedented program in a bold, academically precise monumental building appropriate to the institution's location and purpose. The careful integration of the arts of architecture and sculpture articulate the symbolic importance of the building as a repository for democracy. Pope realized the symbolic aspect of the National Archives as an institution and intended it to be not only the first permanent home for historically valuable records of the federal government but also an imposing structure to rival the great monuments of the nation's capital. He incorporated neoclassical architectural themes to symbolize the tradition of our democracy derived from ancient Greece and Rome, making the building symbolic of America's heritage and its perceived destiny. Pope designed the Archives Building to be a signature structure marking an important cross axis of the National Mall and providing a terminus for 8th Street NW. It is one of several buildings designed by Pope, all important monuments, that

⁹ Stefan Berger, "The Role of National Archives in Constructing National Master Narratives in Europe," *Archival Science* 13(2013):1-22.

¹⁰ See later section of this nomination titled "Records and Rights: Public Use of the National Archives." Also, Robert L. Harris, Jr., "Segregation and Scholarship: The American Council of Learned Societies' Committee on Negro Studies, 1941-1950," *Journal of Black Studies* Vol.12, No.3 (March 1982), 315-331; James R. Mock, "The National Archives with Respect to the Records of the Negro," *The Journal of Negro History*, Vol. 23, No. 1 (January 1938), 49-56; Roland C. McConnell, "Importance of Records in the National Archives on the History of the Negro," *The Journal of Negro History*, Vol. 34, No. 2 (April, 1949), 135-152.

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carefully integrate artistic works of well-known painters and sculptors with the architecture to create the overall symbolic image of the building. Finally, the building stands as a signature element of the Federal Triangle, one of the costliest and most expansive government office building programs in the nation's history. The completion of the Federal Triangle complex realized a major part of the City Beautiful-inspired Senate Park Commission Plan for the City of Washington completed in 1901 by the Senate Park Committee on the District of Columbia.

The location of the archives building was in part dictated by the City Beautiful-era Senate Park Commission Plan which called for the creation of major government buildings in the triangular area bounded by Pennsylvania Avenue, Constitution Avenue, 15th Street NW, and 6th Street NW.¹¹ At the time that area of the city was viewed as a slum and an embarrassment to the nation.¹² A true plan of the Progressive Era, the Senate Park Commission Plan reflected that era's widely held belief that civic art and architecture, as part of the various elements of urban reform, could improve the lives of Americans.¹³ The architectural forms advocated in the plan were then associated with Progressive ideals of "public order, progress; civilization, refined taste; civic pride; and national wealth and power."¹⁴ As historian Howard Gillette, Jr. has argued, the high ideals of social reform through civic art were rarely realized, and in many cases the planners of these projects willfully ignored major social issues like housing for the poor and the dislocation of people of color.¹⁵

The Senate Park Commission was chaired by the powerful Senator James McMillan of Michigan, who also served as the chairman of the Senate Committee on the District of Columbia. The Park Commission included prominent architects Daniel Burnham and Charles McKim, landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., sculptor Augustus Saint-Gaudens, and, acting as its secretary, Charles Moore. With the exception of McMillan and Moore, all had been involved to varying degrees in planning the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893 in Chicago, a spectacularly successful fabrication of an idealized classical city that essentially launched the City Beautiful movement in America.

The 1901-1902 Senate Park Commission Plan focused on improving the design and appearance of Washington, DC, particularly its central governmental core. Considered the nation's first comprehensive city plan, the document combined the civic vision of American architects demonstrated at the World's Columbian Exposition with earlier plans for the city that incorporated an urban fringe park system, a gateway railroad station, a memorial bridge across the Potomac River, slum clearance, and improved playgrounds and public schoolyards. The plan aimed to restore the primary elements of Pierre L'Enfant's eighteenth-century Baroque city plan, including the formal grandeur of an extended, cruciform National Mall framed by elm trees and flanked by low monumental neoclassical buildings along with monuments at the termini of the Mall.¹⁶ The proposed slum

¹¹ U.S. Congress, Senate, Park Committee on the District of Columbia, *The Improvement of the Park System of the District of Columbia*, 57th Cong., 1st Sess., 1902, S. Report 166 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 2002).

¹² Jon Peterson, *The Birth of City Planning in the United States* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press), 84. Businessmen had been advocating for improvements along Pennsylvania Avenue, especially that particular triangular area. Known as "Murder Bay," it was a collection of slum buildings where prostitution flourished, especially along 13th and 14th Streets. See also a report delivered by Colonel Sherrill to Senator Reed Smoot, February 13, 1922, quoted in Gondos, 126.

¹³ Peterson, *Birth of City Planning*, 98-122.

¹⁴ Jon A. Peterson, "The Senate Park Commission Plan for Washington DC: A New Vision for the Capital and the Nation," in Sue Kohler and Pamela Scott, eds., *Designing the Nation's Capital: The 1901 Plan for Washington, DC* (Washington, DC: U.S. Commission of Fine Arts, 2006, accessed December 1, 2020, https://www.nps.gov/parkhistory/online_books/ncr/designing-capital/index.html).

¹⁵ Howard Gillette, Jr., *Between Justice & Beauty: Race, Planning, and the Failure of Urban Policy in Washington, DC* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995), chapters 5 and 6.

¹⁶ Peterson, *Birth of City Planning*, 77. Charles Moore, a journalist, was brought to Washington from Detroit by McMillan and would later play a large role in the creation of the National Archives Building. See also David Streatfield, "The Olmsteds and the Landscape

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clearing included the replacement of the buildings south of Pennsylvania Avenue to B Street (now Constitution Avenue) from 6th Street to 14th Street NW with governmental office buildings. Of all the major plans for American cities, the 1901 Senate Park Commission Plan for Washington was by far the most fully realized, and the central part of Washington today is almost entirely the result of the plan published and exhibited in 1902.¹⁷

Despite Progressive reformers belief that grand civic art and architecture would improve the city's social problems, many of the programs implemented under the City Beautiful and other Progressive reform campaigns ignored the pressing problems of poor people, and especially people of color. Grand civic projects like the Federal Triangle instead resulted in the removal of many homes and workplaces of marginalized communities including African Americans. Historian Howard Gillette, Jr. has argued that "the [McMillan] commission's perspective remained overwhelmingly shaped by aesthetic rather than social considerations" despite critiques from contemporary critics who bemoaned the Senate Park Commission plans inability to address larger social problems like adequate housing for the poor.¹⁸ Despite the efforts of Progressive reformers interested in addressing this problem, limited resources and "the powerful institutional backing for the City Beautiful philosophy" made it difficult for housing advocates to make headway, not to mention racial discrimination that denied African Americans replacement housing when they were displaced for construction of new buildings.¹⁹ In 1927, in a bid to revive earlier efforts to eliminate and replace unsafe and overcrowded alley dwellings, *The Washington Daily News* declared the housing crisis to be:

a festering sore that has gone unhealed while statesmen, legislators, artists, architects, public-spirited citizens, have planned the city beautiful.... Some of the same money, the same effort, and the same genius that is building this most beautiful of capitals must go into cleaning up the city's back yard.²⁰

In addition, the Washington Board of Trade complained of "cow sheds and stands crowded with country produce" near the National Mall, referring to Center Market that stood on the site that would become the National Archives Building.²¹

The opportunity to build the Archives Building was the result of a massive federal building program in Washington aimed at housing the growing federal departments. Congress passed the Public Buildings Act in 1926, which allocated \$50 million over five years for construction of seven major new government office buildings. The authors of the bill, proponents of the Senate Park Commission Plan, designated the location of the buildings in the aforementioned triangle, dubbed the Federal Triangle, with the goal of realizing an important element of the plan. The plan called for the location of a major building to serve as a focal point at the mid-point of the National Mall. The National Archives Building would eventually fulfill this vision.

This was the last monumental design that architect John Russell Pope lived to see through to its completion. It was designed with the assistance of his longtime associates Otto Eggers, T.J. Young, and Edwin Olsen. Olsen and Young also oversaw its construction. With its strong classical expression, Pope intentionally sought to link the Archives to the Old Patent Office and the Treasury Building, buildings that he believed were both seminal

of the Mall," in Richard Longstreth, ed., *The Mall in Washington 1791-1991* (Washington, DC: National Gallery of Art, 1991), 133; Sally Kress Tompkins, *A Quest for Grandeur: Charles Moore and the Federal Triangle* (Washington DC.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1985); Thomas E. Luebke, ed., *Civic Art: A Centennial History of the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts* (Washington, DC: Commission of Fine Arts, 2013).

¹⁷ Peterson, *Birth of City Planning*, 300.

¹⁸ Howard Gillette, Jr., *Between Justice & Beauty: Race, Planning, and the Failure of Urban Policy in Washington, DC* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1995), 110.

¹⁹ Gillette, 46. See footnote 6.

²⁰ Quoted in Gillette, 123.

²¹ Quoted in Gillette, 127.

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in the history of architecture in Washington, DC and that were among the buildings that he identified as the best sources for a modern American classicism. The simple parti or general organizational scheme of the exterior was adorned with powerful forms with origins in ancient Classical models that could be related to both the early American republic and the Roman republic. The interior exhibition spaces were also designed with the grandeur of Rome's Pantheon in mind—suitable surroundings for the founding documents. This Roman-influenced architecture was informed by the style suggested in the renderings and models for the Senate Park Commission Plan, which were overseen by one of Pope's mentors, Charles McKim, who in predicting the style of American architecture, stated "the scale is Roman and it will have to be sustained."²²

In terms of Pope's career, the National Archives Building, was extremely successful in conveying the image of the United States as a country with an important and gloried past. In many ways it is similar to his Temple of the Scottish Rite located a short distance away on 16th Street, NW in that he used the same classic Beaux-Arts parti in which the large plastic screen of a colonnade is played against the plainer walls of the main structure. Although Pope is generally known for his spare treatment of details and his focus on massing because the National Archives Building was the repository of a great nation's history, Pope determined that it should be highly expressive and dignified at the same time. Pope, who believed in a distinctive American based on the architecture of the Federal period, naturally referred to the nearby works of early federal era architecture like George Hadfield's DC City Hall and Robert Mills' Treasury Building, along with the U.S. Capitol.

The National Archives Building was also technologically advanced for its time. At the time of its opening in 1935, it was the first large federal building to be fully air-conditioned.²³ Because the building housed fragile documents, special measures were taken to remove all pollutants from the incoming air, and all its hardware was made of metals that were corrosion-resistant. Special spaces were required for the storage of film, and other areas were designed to handle incoming materials. There was also an elaborate security and fire protection system.

The building was designed at a time of great change in American architecture. When it was conceived in 1927-1928, the design of modern public buildings was dominated by the classic tradition. Recognized as separate from a revival, what was described as Modern American Classicism was "a new sort of classic." Architects of the period were described as having "wed Renaissance cleverness to the dignity of ancient Rome," Architectural critic John Hamlin explained how, in his designs, Pope "treated a building with monumental planning, based on modern complex needs."²⁴

Between inception and completion of the National Archives Building, American architecture underwent an upheaval. Trade journals were taking notice of the Modern movement in Europe. The 1932 International Style exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art accelerated the acceptance of the Modern movement as a forceful polemic. Pope's American classicism came under attack as soon as the Archives building was occupied in 1935. The building immediately became an important catalyst in the debate between architects and critics who supported the classical tradition in American art and architecture, and the proponents of the new Modern movement. The Archives and its Pope-designed contemporaries in Washington, DC (the National Gallery of Art

²² Charles McKim to Lawrence Grant White, 1909, in Leland Roth, *McKim, Mead & White, Architects* (New York: Harper & Row, 1983), 335.

²³ Large portions of the Capitol Building were first air conditioned in 1928. The West Wing of the White House was air conditioned in 1929, but the National Archives Building's air conditioning system was fully operational at the building's opening in 1935. The next building to have air conditioning was the Department of the Interior Building, which opened in 1936. See Joseph M. Siry, "Air-Conditioning Comes to the Nation's Capital 1928-1960," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 77(4-December 2018):448-472.

²⁴ Talbot Hamlin, *The American Spirit in Architecture* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1926), 200-201 (see also the chapter on public buildings, 200-218).

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and the Jefferson Memorial) became the focus of derision by the art and architectural press as symbols of outdated classicism, a style considered irrelevant to modern life. The National Archives Building marks the crucial and sometimes bitter transition between American Classicism and the Modern movement.

Although the effort to create the National Archives originated in the nineteenth century, the physical expression of this effort was not realized until 1935. The building as a symbol of the spirit of American democracy reached its apogee just after the transfer of the founding documents in 1952, and the Archives staff continued to be at the vanguard of innovation in document preservation and collection management techniques through 1965. Consequently, the period of significance for the National Archives Building extends from 1935 to 1965.

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PROVIDE RELEVANT PROPERTY-SPECIFIC HISTORY, HISTORICAL CONTEXT, AND THEMES. JUSTIFY CRITERIA, EXCEPTIONS, AND PERIODS OF SIGNIFICANCE LISTED IN SECTION 2.

Archives: European Precedents

The idea of establishing a national archive dedicated to preserving the official historical documents of the government traces its origin to late eighteenth-century France. In 1796, toward the end of the French Revolution, a national archive was created in reaction to the earlier destruction of historical records across France during the unrest. The French interest in archives throughout the nineteenth century led to the publication of the earliest works on archival theory. The French National Archive was also the first to permit universal public access. In Great Britain the Public Records Office was created in the 1830s, but there was no true public access until 1866. The development of the German national archives was the result of the efforts of Leopold von Ranke, considered the father of scientific history, and his work in the Hessian, Prussian, English, and French archives from 1836 to 1866.²⁵

Early Archival Efforts in the United States

Early efforts at assembling and preserving records in America began at the state and local levels in the seventeenth century with each colony maintaining individual court and land records. Most states approached the preservation of historical records by publishing select documents as a means of disseminating and preserving records instead of focusing on preserving and organizing the bulk of the state's original documents.²⁶

Poor preservation methods and inattention to safety led to disastrous losses of federal records in the nineteenth century. Fires, such as the 1833 conflagration at the Treasury Building and the 1836 fire at the Patent Office and Post Office, caused serious losses of irreplaceable papers and models.²⁷ The Secretary of the Treasury then recommended the construction of a central fireproof repository for the records of all public offices.²⁸ In the 1830s architect Robert Mills was commissioned to design and build a new fireproof Treasury, Patent Office, and Post Office.

Before 1870, the preservation of public records was primarily an activity of private individuals and institutions.²⁹ This lack of regard for important government papers was lamented as early as 1784, when Thomas Jefferson complained that few government officials and members of Congress personally documented their work and personal opinions, writing that without those documents, "history becomes fable instead of fact."³⁰ In 1809 John Adams claimed that his fellow countrymen lacked interest in the history of their own country.³¹ During the Civil War James Madison's archives were thrown out of the Capitol to make room for a

²⁵ Maynard Brichford, "The Origins of Modern Archival Theory," *Midwestern Archivist* 7(2-1982):87-101 (<https://www.jstor.org/stable/41101570>, accessed January 29, 2020).

²⁶ G. Phillip Bauer, "Public Archives in the United States," in William B. Hesseltine and Donald R. McNeil, eds., *In Support of Clío: Essays in Honor of Herbert A. Kellar* (Madison: State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1958), 49-63.

²⁷ Bauer, 49-60.

²⁸ Gondos, 5.

²⁹ Michael C. Kammen, *Mystic Chords of Memory: The Transformation of Tradition in American Culture* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993), 76-79

³⁰ Quoted in Kammen, 47.

³¹ Kammen, 49.

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bakery.³² Historian Michael C. Kammen has observed that many at the time were more interested in destiny than history.³³

In a move that was something of an aberration for the period, the Library of Congress purchased Peter Force's massive private collection in 1867 to established its "first major collection of eighteenth-century American newspapers, incunabula,³⁴ early American imprints, manuscripts, and rare maps and atlases."³⁵ Other celebrated personal collections of national importance were sold or given to local historical societies or academic institutions.³⁶ This purchase was a rarity at the time, as the federal government was "not ready to expand its role as custodian of the national past."³⁷ At the same time the government was not a good steward of its own most important records. The Department of State, the designated guardian of the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the papers of the Continental Congress, regularly gave casual access to those texts.³⁸ As interest in American history increased as the centennial approached, efforts were made to influence the U.S. government to become more invested in understanding the nation's past, but as the AHA noted, it was not until about 1875 that the "Government and people of the United States seemed to realize that our country has a history."³⁹ Still, in the latter years of the nineteenth century, Congress showed no interest in the preservation of documents or in any celebration of the past.

Evolution of State Archives

Archivist Victoria Irons Walch noted that in 1897 there were no state archives in the United States and that "No single agency had been designated to care for the records of each state's past." But after 1899, when the AHA began reporting on the deplorable condition of state records, 23 states created central locations for their archives before 1910.⁴⁰ Many of the earliest, such as Alabama (1901) and Mississippi (1902), were in part Progressive-Era efforts to educate and inform the populace to make them better civic-minded citizens. They were also monuments to the Lost Cause of the Confederacy that facilitated Southern historians' revisionist histories of the Civil War and slavery. As noted by historian Patricia Galloway, "The creation of early state archives everywhere in the United States was most often motivated by filio-pietistic⁴¹ desire to preserve evidence important to the people who promoted their foundation. Just as culture is always being constructed, education always has a purpose, and archives as the basis for both are also purposely constructed."⁴² The Pennsylvania

³² Kammen, 55.

³³ Kammen, 50.

³⁴ According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, "a book printed before 1501" or "a work of art or of industry of an early period."

³⁵ Peter Force Library, Manuscripts and maps relating to American history, early American imprints, and incunabula (Washington, DC: Library of Congress, Manuscript Division, loc.gov/r/mss/coll/084, accessed October 28, 2020).

³⁶ Kammen, 77. For instance, cites sale of the William Gilmore Simms collection of Revolutionary-era material to the Long Island Historical Society (now the Brooklyn Historical Society) in 1866 and Cornell University's 1872 purchase of Jared Sparks's Library (Sparks, among many other things, was an early contributor to the theology and philosophy of Unitarianism, served as Chaplain of the House of Representatives in 1821-1823 and as president of Harvard College in 1849-1853, and had obtained most of Washington's papers. His Library included 2,982 titles of books, 82 maps, and 105 volumes of manuscripts related to the early history of the United States collected between 1819 and 1866. See *Catalogue of the Library of Jared Sparks* (Cambridge, MA: Riverside Press, 1871). His manuscripts and papers were bequeathed to Harvard.

³⁷ Kammen, 78.

³⁸ Kammen, 75.

³⁹ A. Howard Clark, "What the United States has done for History," in *Annual Report of the AHA for 1894* (Washington, DC: AHA), 549.

⁴⁰ Victoria Irons Walch, "State Archives in 1997, Diverse Conditions, Common Directions," *American Archivist* 60 (2-Spring 1997):133.

⁴¹ According to Merriam-Webster, "of or relating to an often-excessive veneration of ancestors or tradition."

⁴² Patricia Galloway, "Archives, Power and History: Dunbar Rowland and the Beginning of the State Archives of Mississippi (1902-1936)," *American Archivist* 69(1-Spring-Summer 2006):82-83.

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State Archives was created in 1903 as the Division of Public Records in the State Library. Lucian Lamar Knight founded and directed the first archives for Georgia from 1919 to 1925.⁴³

Early archival processes in the United States were based on the European tradition. The interpretation of educational ideas and approaches in North America came only after the large-scale development of archival institutions and the working archivist profession, both concurrent with the need to manage large volumes of modern records. The education and academic preparation of the archivist, following the European model, was essentially based on a relatively high level of scholarly achievement in historiography prior to entry into the field.⁴⁴ This expectation was clearly stated in the Society of American Archivists' first assessment of education requirements:

It is the historical scholar, equipped now with technical archival training, who dominates the staffs of the best European archives. We think it should be so here, with the emphasis on American history and political science. But there is a distinct danger in turning over archives to librarians who are not at the same time erudite and critical historical scholars.⁴⁵

There was an early desire to distinguish the work of the archivist from that of the librarian and manuscript curator, to begin the professionalization that had been anticipated by Waldo Gifford Leland at the turn of the century: "We must disabuse ourselves of the idea that anyone can become an archivist." It was important that the archivist have a well-developed historical awareness in order to effectively appraise historical records and discern their enduring value for purposes of research and administration. "Experience in historical research enables one to appreciate how manuscripts and records are used. The archivist must be able to judge the probable value of sources to a scholar or research worker, and this ability can be developed best by personal experience in research."⁴⁶ Archivists were committed to the ideal of public service, and the Society of American Archivists and the Association of Canadian Archivists were established in part in the hopes of creating standards. Both were called upon to fulfill their mandate.⁴⁷

Expansion of the Bureaucracy and Civic Reform, Civil War to the 1920s

The end of the Civil War signaled the beginning of a new era in which the federal government played an expanded role in American life. With the mass of records generated by the War and Navy Departments during and after the Civil War, as well as the formation of the Department of Justice and the growth of the departments of Agriculture and Interior, the need for safe storage space grew exponentially. Between 1861 and 1916, the federal government's accumulation of records increased from 108,000 to 1,031,000 cubic feet.⁴⁸ The increase was problematic because the government lacked space to store the records, leading to poor record-storage conditions.

To handle the large volume of records, various departments called for the creation of a hall of records. After an 1877 fire at the Department of the Interior, President Rutherford B. Hayes appointed a commission to look into the fire safety of all federal buildings in Washington, which ultimately recommended building a fireproof hall of records "so remote from all other buildings so as to place it beyond danger from exterior fires." Hayes

⁴³ A full list of state archives and their founding is discussed in Ernst Posner, *American State Archives* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964).

⁴⁴ Roy Schaeffer, "From Craft to Profession: The Evolution of Archival Education and Theory in North America," *Archivaria* 37(1994):22.

⁴⁵ Schaeffer.

⁴⁶ W. Kaye Lamb, "The Modern Archivist: Formally Trained or Self-Educated," *American Archivist* 31(April 1968):176.

⁴⁷ Schaeffer, 24.

⁴⁸ Lamb, 6.

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subsequently called for the construction of a fireproof hall of records in addresses to Congress in 1878 and 1879.⁴⁹

After an 1879 change in requirements for Civil War pension eligibility, the War Department's Pension Office was deluged with petitions. The passage of the Arrears Act of 1879 resulted in a flood of claims that required hundreds of people to process them.⁵⁰ In 1887 the massive new Pension Office Building was completed in Washington, DC to house the growing bureaucracy needed to administer the federal pension programs. With each war, pension program, or any other action by the federal government came massive amounts of records, which, for the most part, were stored in deplorable conditions and mostly inaccessible to the public.

Following the Spanish American War in 1898, there was another increase in the number of employees needed to handle the records resulting from that war. During the Progressive Era more cabinet-level departments were created—Commerce (1903), the Food and Drug Administration (1906), Labor (1913), the Federal Trade Commission (1914)—thus increasing the need for more federal record space. The growth in federal employment in the District was so rapid that the federal workforce had almost doubled between 1901 and 1915, and the amount of new construction had not kept pace.⁵¹ During World War I the number of federal employees in Washington, DC jumped from 41,417 in 1917 to 117,760 in 1918,⁵² remaining higher than the prewar employment numbers by at least a third through the 1920s. Each increase in employee numbers meant that there were more records to keep, file, and store. At the same time, there was no corresponding increase in federal building space.⁵³ A survey by Jameson and Leland in 1906 revealed that over 500,000 square feet of space were immediately needed to store the government's current records, and the prospects of any sort of building in which to store them properly were bleak.⁵⁴ In fact, with the exception of temporary buildings erected on the Mall to accommodate war workers, no federal buildings were built in Washington between 1913 and 1926.

This lack of access to documents ran counter to the needs of civic reformists. Progressive reformers, motivated by corrupt practices employed by political machines in alliances with corporations and criminal organizations, had created the National Municipal League in 1894, which, by the turn of the century, had developed a model for city government run by trained public administrators who would be held accountable by publicizing their activities. The League's desire for professional expertise and transparency in local government led to a need for depositories of information to aid municipal officials and employees in the performance of their jobs as well as to educate and inform citizens about their city's activities and past decisions. In 1908 the National Municipal League called for the establishment of municipal reference libraries in all major cities and recommended that

⁴⁹ Rutherford B. Hayes, Second and Third Annual Messages, December 2, 1878, December 1, 1879 (Charlottesville: website, Miller Center, University of Virginia, <https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-speeches/december-2-1878-second-annual-message> and https://www.rbhayes.org/clientuploads/RBHSpeeches/speech_472_presidents_annual_address_to_congress.htm). In 1878 he stated that the request came from the Secretary of War, and in 1879 he stated that the request came from the Quartermaster-General. *Report of the Commission appointed to examine into the security of the public buildings in the city of Washington against fire*, 45th Cong., 2nd sess. H. Exec. Doc. 10, December 10, 1877 (Serial set vol. 1802), 9.

⁵⁰ The Arrears of Pension Act of 1879 directed that all Union veterans be allowed to reapply for pensions and receive back payments to the date of their discharge, regardless of when they may have previously applied. Stuart McConnell, *Glorious Contentment: The Grand Army of the Republic, 1865–1900* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 146.

⁵¹ U.S. Senate, *Public Buildings in the District of Columbia; Report of the Public Buildings Commission*, 65th Cong., 2nd sess., 1917–1918, S. Doc 155, 528. The building was proposed to be located on Squares 294 and 295 (north of B Street, between 12th and 13th Streets NW).

⁵² U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, *Historical Statistics of the United States 1789–1945* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1949, Series P62-68).

⁵³ Major buildings built between 1902 and 1913 included Union Station, the Agriculture Building, various Senate and House Office Buildings, the National Museum, the Daughters of the American Revolution Building, the Pan American Union Building, the Army War College, and the District Building.

⁵⁴ Gondos, 18–21.

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they be managed by public library directors chosen by impartial, nonpartisan boards to minimize political interference.⁵⁵ This would have carried over to the federal government in Washington, as it was responsible for the city. Thus, in part, the desire to have public records repositories as tools to hold government accountable grew out of the civic reform movements of the Progressive Era.

Federal Efforts to Preserve Records, 1865-1906

Within this context of post-Civil War government growth, the need for organization, preservation, and access to government records became increasingly apparent. Many attempts were made to solve the problem. Between 1889 and 1903, over 30 bills related to the construction of a centralized repository for federal records in Washington were introduced before Congress. Referred to the Congressional Committees on Buildings and Grounds, these bills were rarely voted out of committee. In 1898 the Secretary of the Treasury reported that a hall of records to adequately maintain and preserve the official records of the American government could require as much as 4 million cubic feet of space.⁵⁶ On March 3, 1902, the Secretary of the Treasury reported to the Senate Committee on Public Buildings that because of the large volume of records generated during the Spanish-American War, the government's rented storage space was nearly full.⁵⁷ Finally, in 1903 the Public Building Act authorized the purchase of a site for a hall of records. By 1904 the Office of the Supervising Architect had produced plans for the building, and a site was purchased in 1906, but there was no further action and no appropriations were made for the building's construction.⁵⁸ Most department and agency heads were not concerned with records. Legislators were more interested in projects that would benefit their states than in central federal government documents.

Victor Gondos argues that "legislative sloth" is the reason none of the efforts to establish a national archive succeeded. Legislators simply had other, seemingly more important problems to occupy their attention. He further attributed that sloth to congressional ignorance of the values at stake, suspicion of the motives of the proponents, and the tradition of pork barrel that kept these efforts from succeeding.⁵⁹ Historian Cynthia Koch points out that politics likely played a large role in the long-delayed funding of the archives project. Congressmen and Senators from much of the South, Central, and Western parts of the country did not subscribe to the same Progressive ideals as the urban, East Coast elites, and were not interested in a large project that, in their view, would not benefit their constituencies at home.⁶⁰

Private and Public Efforts Toward an Archive, 1893-1914

Despite the failure of Congress to approve and fund the development of a national repository, private organizations like the AHA continued to promote the creation of a national archive to provide historians access to America's records. At the group's annual convention in 1893, Ellen Hardin Walworth called for an archive building, in part stating that "Archives hold the evidence of Facts; what the Bible is to the Theologian, and what statute law is to the Lawyer the state archive is to the historian." According to the AHA, without records it was

⁵⁵ Barry W. Seaver, "Rebecca Rankin's Campaign for a Municipal Archives in New York, 1920-1952," *Libraries and the Cultural Record* 45(3-2010):263-296.

⁵⁶ Gondos, 9-10.

⁵⁷ U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, Committee on Public Buildings and Grounds, *Hearings Before the Committee on Public Buildings and Grounds Relating to the Preservation of Government Archives May 12, 1911*, 62nd Cong., 1st session:10, later printed as U.S. Congress, Senate, *A History of the Movement for a National Archives Building in Washington, DC*, 62nd Cong., 2nd Sess., 1912, S. Doc 297.

⁵⁸ Gondos, 9-10

⁵⁹ Gondos, 176.

⁶⁰ Koch.

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impossible to authenticate the facts of the nation's history.⁶¹ By 1899 the AHA had established a Public Archives Commission, and in 1901 it passed a resolution calling for a national hall of records, pointing out its importance for writing a fact-based American history.

J. Franklin Jameson, Congress, and the Presidents

The eventual success of the campaign to create a national archive was largely a result of the lobbying efforts of the AHA and of one man in particular, J. Franklin Jameson. Jameson, a historian and editor, was well equipped to conduct the crusade for an archives building. He came to Washington, DC in 1905 to be the director of the Bureau of Historical Research of the Carnegie Institution of Washington, an independent research organization funded by Andrew Carnegie.⁶² As part of his charge, Jameson made a survey of European universities and archives in 1905 and 1906. Jameson was determined to make all primary documentary resources accessible to scholars who would use them as the basis for creating a "scientific history of the country."⁶³ Using his Carnegie Institution credentials, he met with President Theodore Roosevelt, and as a result Roosevelt issued Executive Order 721 in 1908 for all executive branch departments to allow Jameson access to all archives and administrative records for historical purposes. The order also allowed Jameson to estimate how much space would be immediately required for an archive and what each agency's future needs would be.⁶⁴ In 1908, armed with this information and in cooperation with the AHA, Jameson joined a committee whose charge it was to lobby the President and Congress to build an archives building.⁶⁵ The massive loss of historical records, some dating back to the seventeenth century, in a fire at the New York State Capitol in March 1911 underscored Jameson's points.

Partly spurred on by the fire in Albany, Jameson launched a widespread and many-pronged campaign in 1911 to generate greater support for an archives building. He successfully convinced Senator Miles Poindexter of Washington and Representative John Morris Sheppard of Texas to introduce bills calling for the construction of an archives building in Washington in June 1911. Also in 1911, Jameson influenced President Taft's decision to advocate for an archives building, something Jameson would succeed in doing with each subsequent president through Herbert Hoover. That same year Jameson mounted several public relations campaigns in the press and through presentations to historical societies across the nation. He arranged for articles to be placed in *The Nation* and *McClure's Magazine*. In his presentations Jameson argued that the nation's historical documents were kept in poor condition in various government offices, leaving them largely inaccessible and in danger of destruction.⁶⁶

⁶¹ Quoted in Gondos, 11; *U.S. Statutes at Large*, Vol. XXXII, pp. 1039, 1040, 1212.

⁶² Now known as the Carnegie Institution for Science, the original articles of incorporation of the Carnegie Institution called for the establishment of an organization that would promote original research in science, literature, and art. The historical division was originally organized as the Carnegie Bureau of Historical Research in 1903 and became an official department in 1905. It was terminated as a department and became the Section of United States History in a new Division of Historical Research in 1930. The archaeological work begun by Sylvanus G. Morely and Earl E. Morris continued under this heading. In 1951 the Division became the Department of Archaeology; the Division was closed in 1958. Carnegie Institution of Washington Administration Archives Finding Aid written by Jennifer Snyder and Charles Hargrove, December 2004.

⁶³ Gondos, 13-15. Jameson's duties were "to maintain a national clearing house for historians, publish documentary, explore European archives for materials related to American history and edit the *American Historical Review*" (14).

⁶⁴ U.S. Congress, Senate, *History of the Movement for a National Archives Building in Washington, DC*, 62nd Cong., 2nd Sess., 1912. S. Doc. 297, 12.

⁶⁵ U.S. Congress, Senate, *History of the Movement for a National Archives Building*, 14.

⁶⁶ For a detailed description of the events and Jameson's involvement, see Gondos, 22-60.

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As noted by Harvard historian Jill Lepore, the “National Archives uphold a particular vision of a nation and its power.”⁶⁷ In 1912 Waldo Leland Gifford of the AHA reflected that sentiment when he wrote:

It is the plain duty of Congress to provide a better method, a system adequate to the administrative needs of a great government, in which both the requirements of public business and those of historical scholarship shall be completely satisfied. The very absence of a system and of a building leaves us with carte blanche for arrangements marked by ideal excellence. Why should the nation not have the best of all national archive buildings? Is it not incumbent on all who cherish our history and who desire that the rightful heritage of future generations shall pass to them unimpaired, to urge vigorously upon Congress the performance of this long-neglected duty, the meeting of this pressing problem by an ideal solution?⁶⁸

In 1913 the chief of the manuscript division of the Library of Congress and the president of Williams College wrote supporting letters to President Wilson.⁶⁹

Assisted by Senator Poindexter, Jameson’s lobbying campaign resulted in the provision of \$5,000 for the design of a national archives building in the Appropriations Bill of 1913.⁷⁰ In 1914 Supervising Architect of the Treasury Oscar Wenderoth stated that the money allocated was not enough to complete the plans for the building. When James A. Wetmore replaced Wenderoth in 1915, Wetmore proved to be more flexible, and his chief designer, Louis A. Simon, would continue working with Jameson to design the building until 1927. By the end of 1915, sketches were developed enough that Simon was able to present them at the annual meeting of the AHA in Washington, DC. While the drawings were nearing completion, the national press took notice of the proposal and, when combined with accounts of a recent fire in a government-rented building, resulted in increased public demand for the government to act to protect its documents. Drawings for an archives building were completed in early 1916.⁷¹

Efforts to create a national archive can also be attributed to Waldo G. Leland, historian, surveyor of archival repositories in the United States and France, archival theorist, head of the American Council of Learned Societies, and patron of the AHA’s Conference of Archivists. Leland’s first opportunity to acquire the expertise he would later sharpen was in 1903, when he and Claude H. Van Tyne compiled the Guide to the Archives of the Government of the United States in Washington with a grant made to the Library of Congress. The funds came from the Jameson’s Carnegie Institution of Washington, an organization for which Leland would align himself for 24 years. In 1907 the Carnegie Institution of Washington sent him on a mission to Paris to find and duplicate American history research materials that were held in European repositories. For the next several years he spent most of his time in Europe, until World War I interrupted his mission. He eventually returned to Paris in 1922, and during his time there wrote a guide to research materials in Paris.⁷²

⁶⁷ Jill Lepore, “The Trump Papers,” *The New Yorker* (November 23, 2020):22.

⁶⁸ Leland, 28.

⁶⁹ Gondos, 46.

⁷⁰ *United States Statutes at Large*, Vol. XXXVII, p. 884.

⁷¹ Gondos, 73-74.

⁷² Jessie Kratz, “Waldo G. Leland: A Founder of the National Archives” (Washington, DC: National Archives, Pieces of History, <https://prologue.blogs.archives.gov/2019/06/19/waldo-g-leland-a-founder-of-the-national-archives/>). His interaction with leading archivists throughout Europe were integral in the move away from prevailing library and historical society practices to develop a practical archives tradition. The Dutch manual (an 1898 manual by three Dutchmen defining archival principles) heavily influenced his archival theories and he promoted those concepts in the United States. Leland shared these ideas and concepts at the AHA annual meetings by securing acclaimed guest speakers. He also introduced the principles of provenance and original order to American audiences, pushed for formal training in history and law for archivists, and encouraged colleagues who shared his enthusiasm to produce an English-language manual that could compete with the Dutch

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Growth of the Federal Bureaucracy and the Public Buildings Commission

As Progressive-Era reforms in the areas of labor and business were instituted, the number of federal employees in Washington increased, as did the number of official government documents. This continued government growth led to a lack of office space for government departments. In an effort to rationalize the chaotic allocation of space and the deplorable conditions of records storage spaces, in 1913 Congress gave the Public Buildings Commission (PBC)⁷³ the mandate to determine how to provide permanent quarters for all governmental activities in the District of Columbia. Although new federal buildings in Washington, DC and across the country were authorized by Congress, funding was never appropriated because of World War I.

The commission's fifth report noted a rapid growth in federal employment in the District, showing that it had almost doubled between 1901 and 1915 while the amount of new construction had not kept pace.⁷⁴ The PBC's recommendations included designing and locating buildings following the guidance laid out in the 1901 Senate Park Commission Plan, designating the triangular space east of 14th Street NW between Pennsylvania Avenue and the Mall for occupation by departmental buildings and the national archives.⁷⁵

Early Design Concepts and Locations

The Commission of Fine Arts (CFA), created in 1910 to oversee federal design in DC and beyond, weighed in on the issue of housing the records of the growing federal bureaucracy, stating that although it was not an easy problem, it should be taken up at once. The CFA felt that despite its rather humble function, a records repository could be designed with "such dignity as will enable the building to take a place among the distinguished structures devoted to the purposes of the government."⁷⁶ It should also be noted that Jameson had already developed a professional relationship with Charles Moore, who, as secretary to Senator James McMillan, had played a significant role in the Senate Park Commission Plan for the development of Washington in 1901, and was by 1916 about to become chair of the CFA. As chair of the CFA, Moore guided the design of the archives building as it neared fruition. In its Annual Report of 1916-1918, the CFA noted that "the archives of a nation are the basis of its history." Further, the Commission recommended that the archives building be placed south of Pennsylvania Avenue and north of Avenue B (Constitution Avenue) to be part of the collection of permanent government buildings proposed in the Senate Park Commission Plan as "having such prominence as to call for a building of high class."⁷⁷

World War I and an Office Space Crisis

As the military mobilized for World War I, there was a huge demand for personnel to handle the logistics of running a war, from keeping personnel records to procuring weapons and munitions, building bases for training, and arranging transport to France. The number of federal employees in Washington, DC jumped from 41,417 in

manual for professionals in the United States. Leland joined in petitioning Congress to establish a national archives and provided sturdy support for it in an essay, "The National Archives: A Programme," which rebuked Congress for neglect and apathy toward the official records of the national government. He also provided a template for what was required through his recent survey and guide and spoke before the AHA's Public Archives Commission on "Some Fundamental Principles in Relation to Archives."

⁷³ The Public Buildings Commission was first authorized in 1913(37 Stat. 884). It was dissolved after its fifth report in 1916.

⁷⁴ U.S. Congress, Senate, *Public Buildings in the District of Columbia*, 528.

⁷⁵ U.S. Senate, *Public Buildings in the District of Columbia*.

⁷⁶ U.S. Senate, *Public Buildings in the District of Columbia*, 457. John Russell Pope was on the CFA at the time, but his individual opinion has not been found. It should also be noted that the CFA report was never officially discussed by Congress or the Public Buildings Commission.

⁷⁷ Commission of Fine Arts [CFA], *Annual Report of the Commission of Fine Arts from June 30, 1916- January 1, 1918* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1919), 17, 23.

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1917 to 117,760 in 1918, remaining higher than the prewar employment numbers by at least a third through the 1920s.⁷⁸ Even though Washington was awash in new employees, the federal government suspended the acquisition of property in 1914 and would not acquire more property until 1926.⁷⁹ With only temporary construction occurring in Washington, the federal government rented any available space in the district. After the war the pressure to complete an archives building increased. An avalanche of war records arrived in 1919, swamping the War Department. This was followed by a fire in a Commerce Department building in 1921 that damaged or destroyed crucial census data; in fact, the 1890 federal census was lost. That year, Secretary of Commerce Herbert Hoover called for the creation of an archives building in his annual report.⁸⁰

Gathering Supporters

At the same time Jameson was gathering new allies. Beginning in 1921, support came from the Conference of Historical Societies, the Daughters of the American Revolution, the American Library Association, the Washington DC Board of Trade, and from within the federal government, from Secretary of the Treasury Andrew Mellon and Secretary of Commerce Herbert Hoover, who both voiced their support.⁸¹

One group was both deeply interested and heavily involved: the American Legion, whose members were adamant that historical military records be preserved.⁸² Soon after the American Legion was chartered in 1919, they took up the issue of a national archives. Chartered by Congress as a patriotic veterans' organization focused on service to veterans, service members, and their communities, the Legion established a National Memorials Committee to pursue establishing war memorials in Washington, DC and around the country. The committee also took on the function of caring for the World War I veteran service records. The Committee met with the AHA's Military History Committee, who briefed them on the need for a national archives, and the Memorials Committee agreed. The Committee's 1921 annual report advocated for a national archives and urged Congress to provide an appropriation for an archives building. The report included data on the location, amount, and conditions of record storage of records related to World War I. In response to the report, the American Legion passed a resolution urging legislation to create a national archives to safeguard records of the federal government.⁸³ This large membership organization became very influential in the fight for the archives because they represented a large voting bloc.⁸⁴

Public Buildings Commission of 1919, Depression, and Stagnation

On March 1, 1919, Congress established a new Public Buildings Commission to control and allot space in buildings owned or rented by the U.S. government in the District of Columbia. The chair, Senator Reed Smoot, was a proponent of the 1901 Senate Park Commission Plan.⁸⁵

The Commerce Department fire of 1921 provided new political impetus for an archives building. That year Secretaries of the Treasury and Commerce Mellon and Hoover asked Congress to appropriate funds for the creation of an archives building. Hoover, in particular, cited the need to protect census records. Various locations were proposed over the next three years, including the site where a new Commerce Building was

⁷⁸ U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census.

⁷⁹ Congressional Research Service, *Federal Buildings, Funding Limitations and Their Implications* (March 21, 2008), 2.

⁸⁰ Gondos, 93. Hoover was a proponent of government efficiency and viewed a central archive as a time-saving measure.

⁸¹ *Idem*, 102, 113-115.

⁸² *Idem*, 104-112.

⁸³ *Idem*, 104-112.

⁸⁴ *Idem*, 176.

⁸⁵ Thomas Alexander, "Red Rock and Gray Stone; Senator Reed Smoot, the Establishment of Zion and Bryce Canyon National Parks and the Rebuilding of Downtown Washington," *Pacific Historical Review* 72(1-February 2003).

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under construction. The PBC called for the creation of an archives building in several of its annual reports.⁸⁶ Between 1921 and 1924, at least five locations for an archives building were suggested. Among these was a proposal to convert the Old Pension Building into an archives building as a stopgap measure.⁸⁷ The failure to build an archives was at least in part a result of the economic situation in the United States, as the postwar depression and slow recovery from 1919 to 1922 contributed to slowing the prospects of any spending on federal buildings.

Recognizing that although the 1913 legislation had authorized an archives building, Smoot and others understood that an archive was only one of the nation's many needs. In 1922 Colonel Sherrill, of the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, in charge of the public buildings and grounds in the national capital and a member of Smoot's PBC, analyzed 30 sites that were government-owned and found none of them to be acceptable for archives storage. He instead recommended that the government acquire all of the land south of Pennsylvania Avenue between the Capitol and the Treasury for future buildings and also noted that the "present condition of buildings in this area is a disgrace to the National Capital and a source of humiliation to every true American that has an iota of national pride."⁸⁸ In 1923 the PBC urged Congress to authorize new buildings.⁸⁹

In 1923 Colonel Sherrill, who was also an aide to President Calvin Coolidge, announced to the press that the city had run out of office space to house the government.⁹⁰ In 1923 and 1924, Coolidge noted the need for new federal buildings and unsuccessfully requested an appropriation of \$5 million per year to construct buildings to meet the needs of government.⁹¹ From 1922 through 1927, the *Annual Reports of the Public Buildings Commission* adamantly argued for the construction of an archives building.

The Hearst newspapers became involved in the fight for an archives building in January 1924, mounting a barrage of articles decrying the condition of records under federal control. Running into February, the *Herald* ran several columns a day in favor of an archives building. The attack was timed to coincide with the Congressional debate on the issue.⁹² Hearst may also have been using the issue to attack Coolidge over his veto of the War Bonus Bill and to put additional pressure on Congress to pass that bill.⁹³

From 1924 onward, the creation of an archives building was inextricably tied to the urgent need for more federal buildings in Washington. Senator Reed Smoot, as chairman of the PBC, and Charles Moore, as

⁸⁶ The Public Buildings Commission (PBC) was established by an act of March 1, 1919 (40 Stat. 1269), to control and allot space in buildings owned or rented by the U.S. government in the District of Columbia. An act of May 25, 1926 (44 Stat. 634) gave the PBC supervision over the public building program in the National Capital. The Officer in Charge of Public Buildings and Grounds and the Director of Public Buildings and Public Parks of the National Capital served successively as executive and disbursing officer. The Commission was abolished effective August 10, 1933, by Executive Order 6166, June 10, 1933, with functions transferred to the Office of Public Parks, Buildings, and Reservations, Department of the Interior. See National Archives finding aid for Record Group (RG) 42, <https://www.archives.gov/research/guide-fed-records/groups/042.html>.

⁸⁷ Gondos, 116-125, The proposal to convert the Pension Office was met with derision, describing it as a giant furnace for records.

⁸⁸ Quoted in Gondos, 126.

⁸⁹ Ibid.

⁹⁰ *Washington Star*, October 9, 1923.

⁹¹ Gondos, 152, 162; Calvin Coolidge, First and Second Annual Messages, December 6, 1923, and December 3, 1924 (Charlottesville: website, Miller Center, University of Virginia, <https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-speeches/december-6-1923-first-annual-message> and <https://millercenter.org/the-presidency/presidential-speeches/december-3-1924-second-annual-message>, accessed February 2020).

⁹² Gondos, 132-154.

⁹³ U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, "A Bonus for World War I Veterans, May 02, 1922 (Washington, DC: U.S. House of Representatives, Office of the Historian, History, Art & Archives, <https://history.house.gov/HistoricalHighlight/Detail/36100?ret=True> , accessed December 18, 2020).

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chairman of the CFA, pushed the agenda, linking the construction of needed office and archive space to the advancement of the Senate Park Commission Plan.

Smoot met with President Coolidge in November 1924 to encourage him to repeat his plea for new buildings in Washington in a special message to Congress. Smoot stressed the importance of carrying out the building program under the general supervision of one centralized authority, rather than allowing various departments to scatter their buildings over Washington in their present haphazard manner. The new buildings, he said, could save the government a million dollars a year or more in rent.⁹⁴ Coolidge agreed and reiterated the need in his third Annual Message to Congress. Smoot also convinced Secretary of the Treasury Mellon to meet with Congressional leaders to urge them to support a bill to authorize new building construction, including a national archives building in Washington.⁹⁵ Smoot introduced Senate bill 2248 in 1924 to authorize and appropriate money for buildings for the Internal Revenue Service, Justice Department, General Accounting Office, Agriculture Department, National Archives, General Supply Committee (predecessor of the General Services Administration), Commerce Department, Labor Department, Interstate Commerce Commission, and several independent agencies.⁹⁶

Smoot's effort failed to gain Congressional approval and then failed again in 1925, primarily because other members of Congress had a longstanding desire to build previously promised federal buildings in their districts. Those federal buildings, mostly post offices, had been approved in 1913, but funding was never appropriated. Smoot kept out any effort to add pork to the bill, but any interest in building archives was focused on congressmen's attaining buildings for their own constituencies.⁹⁷ Although supported again by Coolidge in 1925, Smoot's bill went nowhere without the pork.

Success

Smoot finally succumbed to the necessity of funding projects outside Washington to get construction approved for an archives building in Washington. Debate in the Senate seemed to take new construction as a given and discussed siting and design. Maryland Senator William Cable Bruce opined that standard plans should be used rather than constructing buildings of monumental character. Smoot and the commission had anticipated such an argument by preparing a preliminary plan for the Federal Triangle, the area between Pennsylvania and Constitution Avenues and 6th and 15th Streets NW. When Smoot displayed the plan, North Carolina Senator Lee Overman called it one of the most beautiful pictures of public buildings he had ever seen. Contradicting Bruce, Overman insisted that such buildings should be ornamental and monumental.

In January 1926 both houses of Congress passed legislation authorizing new federal building construction across the country, including in the nation's capital. The Public Buildings Act, which was signed by President Coolidge on May 25, 1926, put the PBC in charge of the grounds, design, and construction of a series of monumental government buildings intended to combine both the "utility and beauty requisite to efficient and economical administration [of the government]... as well as to the dignity and character of the National Capital."⁹⁸

⁹⁴ Alexander, 31.

⁹⁵ Coolidge; Alexander, 31.

⁹⁶ Alexander, 31.

⁹⁷ "Buildings Group to Draw Program," *Washington Star*, May 26, 1926.

⁹⁸ U.S. Congress, Senate, *Annual Report of the Public Buildings Commission for 1928*, 70th Cong., 2nd sess. S. Doc 227, 3; Alexander, 33.

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Smoot was a strong proponent of the Senate Park Commission Plan and, as one of the architects of the bill, saw this as an opportunity to complete a portion of the design of the plan⁹⁹ by siting the new public buildings in the Federal Triangle. The Public Buildings Act of 1926 intended for the architecture of the Federal Triangle to help in “beautifying and embellishing their surroundings and [be] as nearly in harmony with the plan of Peter Charles L’Enfant as practicable.”¹⁰⁰ As previously noted, the area, known as “Murder Bay,” consisted of slums and areas of prostitution along with Center Market. In 1797 President George Washington had set aside land in the heart of Washington for a new public market, and since 1801 a market had stood on that site. In the 1870s the Center Market was housed in a red brick Victorian building designed by Adolf Cluss. The National Archives Building was eventually placed on the site originally occupied by the Center Market.

The Project Begins

Just two days after the act was signed into law, Senator Smoot invited the CFA to participate in a joint meeting with the PBC, at which they agreed that the archives building should be constructed first “as it would provide more general relief than any one other building ...[and would provide] a systematic documentary history of the nation.”¹⁰¹ In July the commissions established an initial site location for the archives building between 12th and 13th Streets and North B and C Streets (now Constitution Avenue and C Street NW).¹⁰²

Although Smoot’s PBC was charged with overseeing the cost and location of the buildings, it was Secretary of the Treasury Andrew Mellon who was responsible for the design of the buildings.¹⁰³ Both Mellon and Smoot intended these buildings to be beautiful, grand, monumental edifices that would rival the buildings found in any world capital and that “as nearly as possible harmonize with the L’Enfant Plan,” and the CFA was to act in an advisory capacity.¹⁰⁴ To ensure this, in October 1926 Mellon appointed architect and town planner Edward H. Bennett¹⁰⁵ to collaborate with the Office of the Supervising Architect of the Treasury, the PBC, the National Capital Park and Planning Commission, and the CFA in forming a unified plan for the Federal Triangle.¹⁰⁶

Bennett’s Federal Triangle Plan

After Bennett had presented a plan to the CFA in December 1926, the CFA reacted with disappointment, writing Mellon that Bennett’s plan needed considerable revisions. The CFA preferred an approach similar to that of the Louvre-Tuileries complex in Paris. That seventeenth-century complex occupies an area almost twice the size of the Federal Triangle and is notable for its unified architectural treatment that focuses on symmetry, order, and long perspectives, creating the impression of a unified ensemble. The CFA criticized Bennett’s scheme for the lack of integration of the buildings on the site, and for the fact that each building was discernible

⁹⁹ Alexander, 26-28.

¹⁰⁰ H.R. 6559; Public Buildings Act of 1926, May 25, 1926, 44 Stat. 630, ch.380.

¹⁰¹ U.S. Congress, Senate, *Annual Report of the Public Buildings Commission for 1926*, 69th Cong., 2nd sess., S. Doc 240, 6-7; David Cannadine, *Mellon: An American Life* (Knopf: New York, 2006), 372-376.

¹⁰² As B Street was widened and extended during the 1920s and the Federal Triangle redevelopment was underway, there were calls to rename B Street as it was not a fitting name for such a grand thoroughfare. In 1930 Representative Henry Allen Cooper of Wisconsin introduced H.R. Res. 404 to rename the street Constitution Avenue. The bill passed both the House and Senate, and President Herbert Hoover signed it into law on February 25, 1931. (H.R. Rep. No. 2492, 71st Cong., 3d Sess., U.S. Congressional Serial Set, 9326, H. Report 2492 (1930); *The New York Times*, “Plan 4 Federal Buildings,” July 8, 1926.

¹⁰³ *Washington Star*, May 26, 1926

¹⁰⁴ *Washington Star*, May 26, 1926; Tompkins, 39.

¹⁰⁵ Bennett was recommended to Mellon by his Assistant Secretary Charles S. Dewey. Bennett was classically trained and eventually became the protégé of pioneer city planner Daniel Burnham, a proponent of the City Beautiful movement. Bennett had assisted in preparing plans for multiple cities, including San Francisco (1904), Chicago (1909), Portland (1912), and Buffalo (1922).

¹⁰⁶ *Washington Post*, October 22, 1926; *Washington Herald*, October 21, 1926.

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as a distinct entity rather than part of a larger complex.¹⁰⁷ They advocated for the extensive use of colonnades, open courts, arched driveways, and extended façades along the major avenues to unite the architecture of the buildings. Charles Moore met frequently with Mellon to promote the CFA's vision. Finally, during a meeting in April 1927, the CFA revamped Bennett's plan by emphasizing the importance of "stylistic unity among the buildings whose interrelated facades would define the boundaries along 15th Street NW, Pennsylvania Avenue and what is now Constitution Avenue. The Commission proposed creating a tightly composed ensemble of larger buildings unified by colonnaded street elevations, converting east-west streets within the triangle from traffic bearing thoroughfares into open landscaped courts, with vehicles and pedestrians to be channeled through passages through the buildings."¹⁰⁸ During this part of the design process, the National Archives Building location was intended to be between 9th and 10th Streets NW and Pennsylvania Avenue and B Street (Constitution Avenue).

The Board of Architectural Consultants

Many in the architectural and planning community were concerned that Bennett and the Office of the Supervising Architect of the Treasury (OSA) led by Louis A. Simon could not produce an appropriate design for the site.¹⁰⁹ Moore frequently communicated his concerns to Mellon that Bennett and Simon were incapable of solving the design problem by themselves, and the American Institute of Architects (AIA) echoed these concerns.¹¹⁰ After a meeting at which representatives of the CFA, the National Capital Park and Planning Commission, and the AIA voiced their concerns about the abilities of Bennett and Simon, newly appointed Assistant Secretary for buildings of the Treasury Charles Dewey wrote a memorandum to Mellon on May 12, 1927, requesting that a Board of Architectural Consultants (BAC) be formed to lead the design of the complex. The law authorized Secretary Mellon to bring in as many professionals as he wished to aid in the completion of the Federal Triangle. Dewey, most likely influenced by Moore, suggested that Mellon invite Louis Ayres, Milton Medary, William Adams Delano, Arthur Brown, and John Russell Pope, all preeminent architects with experience in designing monumental structures, to work on the project.¹¹¹ Mellon approved the idea between

¹⁰⁷ Commission on Fine Arts [CFA], CFA Minutes, December 2, 1926, February 5, 1927, April 14-15, 1927 (Washington, DC: RG 66, National Archives); Tompkins, 96; Luebke, 123. See also notes 10 and 11 above.

¹⁰⁸ CFA Minutes, December 2, 1926, February 5, 1927, April 14-15, 1927; Charles Moore, unpublished autobiography (CFA Files, Washington, DC: RG 66, National Archives), 312; George Gurney, *Sculpture and the Federal Triangle* (Washington, DC Smithsonian Institution Press, 1985), 51; Luebke, 123.

¹⁰⁹ Louis A. Simon (1867-1958) would dominate the design work from the OSA for over 40 years. He was educated at MIT, followed by a year in Europe. He then opened an office in Baltimore before joining the OSA in 1896. He rose rapidly through the OSA, becoming head of the Engineering and Drafting Division in 1915. From 1915 until 1934, he was responsible for all designs emanating from the OSA, which meant he was the final word on designs for all federal buildings with the exception of the Federal Triangle. He oversaw the design of hundreds of buildings, including courthouses, post offices, border stations, customs offices, hospitals, and federal office buildings. In the 1930s he advocated for a "Progressive-Conservative" approach to architecture "not based on the disregard of precedent but on a different, more subtle and more creative way of using and reflecting that part of tradition which is universal--giving to inherited forms a power of adaptation to new materials, structure and processes." See "Some Recent Buildings of the United States Government," *American Architect and Architecture* 151(August 1937):51.

¹¹⁰ Charles Moore, unpublished autobiography (Washington, DC: Records of the U.S. Commission on Fine Arts, RG 66, National Archives, 312; Gurney, 50, 51. Following the repeal of the Tarsney Act, only the OSA could design federal buildings. By influencing Mellon to bring in private architects as consultants, Moore and the AIA succeeded in wresting control of the project from the OSA and creating a foothold for private architects to work on federal buildings. The 1930 Keyes Eliot Bill would permit the Secretary of the Treasury to contract with private architects. See Antoinette Lee, *Architects to the Nation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 240-260.

¹¹¹ Each one of these architects would participate in further developing the plan and each was assigned a building: Arthur Brown-Labor, OSA-IRS; Milton Medary-Justice; Delano-Post Office; Bennett-Apex Building. See BAC minutes July 12, 1927, and September 23, 1927 (Suitland, MD: RG 121, National Records Center).

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May 12 and May 23, 1927¹¹² and invited all of the named architects to participate.¹¹³ All except Pope accepted Mellon's invitation.¹¹⁴ According to his biographer, Mellon spent much of 1927 onward focused on the Federal Triangle.¹¹⁵ At the urging of Charles Moore and the CFA, John Russell Pope would later join the group and would play a key role in defining the ultimate shape and character of the Federal Triangle in general and the archives building in particular.

John Russell Pope

Born in 1873, John Russell Pope was the son of two painters, John and Mary Pope. He attended public schools in New York and in the fall of 1888 entered the sub-freshman class at the City College of New York (CCNY). In 1891 he transferred to the program in Architecture at the School of Mines at Columbia College, where he excelled, graduating in 1894. In 1895, he won the Charles McKim Traveling Fellowship and was simultaneously selected as the first architect to win the Rome Prize from the newly formed American School of Architecture in Rome (later known as the American Academy in Rome). After spending 18 months in Rome and touring Italy, Pope entered the École des Beaux-Arts, the world-renowned art and design school in Paris, France. Pope spent the next three years studying in Paris before returning to New York in 1900. Between 1900 and 1903, Pope worked with Bruce Price before establishing his own independent architectural practice in 1903.¹¹⁶

Through his connections with the renowned architect Charles McKim,¹¹⁷ Pope received important commissions for summer houses in Newport, Rhode Island, and important residences in Washington, DC.¹¹⁸ He became known for his spare approach to both the classical idiom as well more eclectic Tudor and French Renaissance and more exuberant designs then referred to as "Modern French."¹¹⁹ Starting with the McLean House at 15th and Eye Streets in 1907, Pope began a 15-year stint of producing a series of well-designed residences in the fashionable sections of Washington and the city's surroundings. By the time he began work on the National Archives Building, he was considered one of the country's preeminent residential architects, adding his own careful touch to any number of styles, such as the Adamesque style in the S.R. Hitt House on Dupont Circle in Washington, the exuberant French Hunting Box for George Gould on Long Island, and well-studied Tudors for Allan Lehman and W. Stuart Duncan. His Henry White House on Washington's Meridian Hill with its careful

¹¹² The BAC first met on May 23, 1927, which indicates that he approved of the idea almost immediately so as to allow the team time to respond and arrange a meeting.

¹¹³ Memorandum, Charles S. Dewey to Andrew Mellon, May 12, 1927, Records of the Public Buildings Commission (Suitland, MD: RG 121, National Records Center); Leonard H. Gerson, "Federal Triangle, Washington, DC," National Register of Historic Places Inventory-Nomination Form, (Washington, DC: National Capital Planning Commission, August 14, 1973), <https://planning.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/op/publication/attachments/Federal%20Triangle%20NR%20Nomination.pdf>), 6. The Board of Architectural Consultants first met in May 1927.

¹¹⁴ Pope did not reply because he was in Europe at the time. CFA project files show that Pope's office did indeed reply, stating that Pope would answer on his return. See CFA project files, June through July 1928, 588.

¹¹⁵ Cannadine, 375.

¹¹⁶ For a full discussion of Pope's education see Steven Bedford, *The Architectural Career of John Russell Pope*, PhD diss. (Columbia University, 1994), 1-30.

¹¹⁷ Pope ran McKim's Atelier at Columbia's school of architecture until 1907.

¹¹⁸ Early designs included Newport cottages for Harry Barton Jacobs and W. Stuart Duncan, and major houses on Long Island and in New York City for scions of New York society, including Reginald De Koven, William Stow, W. Storrs Wells, Ogden Mills, Arthur Scott Burden, three houses for Alva Vanderbilt, Robert Low Bacon, and Seward Pulitzer. See footnote 114 below for a list of houses in and around Washington.

¹¹⁹ For a full discussion of Pope's domestic architecture and its importance, see Bedford, PhD diss., 106-214 and 552-561.

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massing and academically correct details was called one of America's greatest houses. By his death he had built 17 buildings and monuments in and around Washington.¹²⁰

Pope's design abilities won him invitations to major competitions, which he frequently won. Although he lost his first major competition, to design the new Agriculture Building in Washington, DC, his subsequent wins for the Freedmen's Hospital in DC and the Lincoln Birthplace Memorial in Hodgenville, Kentucky, solidified Pope's reputation as a fierce architectural competitor. His potential as an architect capable of creating major monuments was recognized early in his career when he was invited to compete against the more practically educated architect Henry Bacon (and a close protégé of Charles McKim) for the design of the Lincoln Memorial in the nation's capital. Pope lost the competition to Bacon, who completed the Lincoln Memorial (1922). Between 1903 and 1926, Pope's firm designed eight celebrated houses in Washington, DC as well as major houses and estates in and around New York City, Philadelphia, and Baltimore.¹²¹ After the Lincoln Memorial loss, he won the competition (with Bruce Price and Henri De Sibour) for the Freedman's Hospital in Washington. His spare Neoclassical design for the Temple of the Scottish Rite in Washington, DC (1910-1917) won him national acclaim. As late as 1932, the *Federal Architect* listed the Temple as one of America's outstanding buildings.¹²² The Temple is still held in high regard.¹²³

In 1917 Pope developed classical revival sketches for the remodeling of the State, War, and Navy Building completed for Assistant Secretary of the Navy Franklin Roosevelt. By 1925 he had won competitions for a city hall, a train station, memorials, mausoleums, and a museum. The memorial wins included a pair honoring Theodore Roosevelt in New York and Washington. His unbuilt design for George Washington (1925) was located in the Tidal Basin; Pope planned to frame the view along the south axis of the White House into Virginia, near where the Jefferson Memorial was ultimately located in 1939. With the Roosevelt Memorial's two massive Doric peristyles and four grandiloquent sculptural groups rising out of a long rectangular pool that traversed the Mall, Pope planned to frame the White House's southern vista, rather than terminate it, as had been done at the Lincoln Memorial.¹²⁴ Pope also prepared collegiate campus plans, including Yale University, Johns Hopkins University, Dartmouth College, Syracuse University, Hartwick College, and Hunter College.¹²⁵

At the time that the BAC's work on the Federal Triangle began in 1927, Pope's office was at the height of its production. Pope and his firm were actively working on the Baltimore Museum of Art, Constitution Hall for the Daughters of the American Revolution in Washington, DC (which was designated an NHL in 1972), the Theodore Roosevelt wing of the American Museum of Natural History, the Huntington Mausoleum in California, the Payne Whitney Gymnasium at Yale University, at least five country houses, two large club buildings, and a private school in New York City. Pope was also designing the American Pharmaceutical Building that faces onto Washington's National Mall across Constitution Avenue. Just before Pope began his

¹²⁰ Bedford, PhD diss., 562-570.

¹²¹ These included houses for the Perrin and Howard families (with Bruce Price), "Friendship" for the McLean family, S.R. Hitt House, McLean House at 15th and Eye; Henry White, George Hewitt Myers, Meridian House (Irwin Boyle Laughlin), Levi P. Morton (remodeling), Robert S. McCormick (now Brazilian Embassy), John F. Wilkins (Rockville, Maryland), James Swan Frick (Baltimore), and James Carstairs (Ardmore, Pennsylvania).

¹²² The commission earned Pope a place in the 1928 edition of Banister Fletcher's *History of Architecture on the Comparative Method*. "What are the Outstanding Buildings," *Federal Architect* 2 (April 1932):10. The buildings listed, in order, were Lincoln Memorial; Empire State Building; Nebraska Capitol; Morgan Library; St. Thomas Church, New York; Daily News, Chicago; Temple of the Scottish Rite; Low Library, Columbia University; Harkness Memorial Library, Yale; Folger Library. More recent scholarship still holds the building in high regard for its spare treatment of the style, with a focus on the mass of the building.

¹²³ See for instance, Roger Clark and Michael Pause, *Precedents in Architecture* (New York: Van Nostrand Reinhold, 1985), 156.

¹²⁴ Pamela Scott, "Two Centuries of Architectural Practice in Washington, DC" (Washington, DC: SAH Archipedia, Society of Architectural Historians, <https://sah-archipedia.org/essays/DC-01>, accessed December 12, 2020).

¹²⁵ Bedford, PhD diss., 328-359.

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work on the National Archives Building, the famed and influential art dealer Joseph Duveen telegraphed American railroad magnate Henry E. Huntington in 1925 that Pope was the “greatest architect [of] modern times and only man for you.”¹²⁶ By his death in 1937, Pope had designed more buildings on the National Mall in Washington, DC than any other architect.

Pope’s firm would continue to work in the same manner for the next decade with projects ranging from small houses to major monuments. Following the death of his daughter in 1930, Pope limited his role in the firm, focusing his energy on designing the most important buildings and major monuments of his career, including the National Archives Building, several wings of the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the Tate Gallery and the Elgin Marble Wing at the British Museum in London, the conversion of the Frick residence in New York to a museum, the design of the National Gallery of Art in Washington, DC, and the early iterations of the Jefferson Memorial.¹²⁷

Pope’s Work with the Board of Architectural Consultants

As the BAC held their first meeting, Pope was just returning from France after meeting with General John J. Pershing concerning the American Battle Monuments Commission memorial in Montfaucon. Pope’s apparent failure to respond to Mellon’s invitation to join the BAC was extremely uncharacteristic, particularly because the Advisory Committee on a National Archives Building had sent Pope materials on a proposed archives building in September 1926. At the time Pope was in Europe, and his office replied to Mellon that he would be available as soon as he returned. This letter, according to Pope, went unanswered. Despite this, no member of the BAC seemed concerned with Pope’s apparent lack of response. At the early meetings of the BAC, buildings were assigned and a plan was slowly developed. A uniform cornice line, corresponding to the height of the cornice on the National Museum (later renamed the Smithsonian Museum of Natural History), was established. On July 14, 1927, the issue of Pope’s involvement was brought up and Edward Bennett suggested that “the matter rest as at present, namely undetermined.”¹²⁸ By the end of December, the BAC had revised the overall plan to make the complex more inward looking.¹²⁹ It was assumed that the archives building would be assigned to architect Louis A. Simon of the Office of the Supervising Architect, as he and Jameson had worked on its design for the previous 13 years.

As Bennett and other members of the board began to produce unsuccessful studies for the archives building, the BAC’s meeting minutes for July 1927 record that “discussion arose as to the desirability of recommending to the department that the services of John Russell Pope be retained in connection with the design of the Archives Building.”¹³⁰ In this capacity Pope was merely to advise the OSA in the design of the Archives Building. Pope had been proposed at the instigation of his friend and colleague Charles Moore, who had been personally involved with the problem of an archives building for decades as a result of membership on the Archives Committee of the AHA and also as Chief of the Manuscript Division of the Library of Congress. On June 9, 1928, Moore wrote to Pope claiming that having the OSA design the building would be:

¹²⁶ Telegram, Duveen to Huntington, Paris, August 11, 1925, HEH 10697, Henry Huntington papers, used by permission of Henry E. Huntington Library and Art Gallery, San Marino, California.

¹²⁷ Bedford, PhD diss., 359-409.

¹²⁸ Pope to Moore, New York, July 11, 1928, CFA project files (Washington, DC: RG 66, National Archives); memorandum found in minutes of the BAC meeting, July 14, 1927 (Suitland, MD: RG 121, National Records Center).

¹²⁹ Gerson.

¹³⁰ BAC minutes, July 17, 1928 (Suitland, MD: RG 121, National Records Center).

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...most unfortunate. This building in one sense represents the keystone of the Triangle group. It may have to rise above the general line of the other buildings. Now have you any information and can you suggest any way in which the design of the Archives can be placed in your hands at once[?]¹³¹

Pope worked with Moore to arrange his insertion into the BAC. William Adams Delano, a jealous competitor, was discouraging Pope from trying to participate, but Pope was keen to get the commission, writing, "This building is of a nature to fit my personal equation. Never has there been anything so attractive presented to me before and never has the office been so well organized or able to handle it."¹³²

After much lobbying, Moore succeeded in persuading Carl Schunemann, Assistant Secretary of the Treasury in charge of the Public Buildings Program, to recommend to Mellon that Pope design the National Archives Building.¹³³ Pope shortly thereafter relayed to Moore that he had met with Delano, who informed him that the BAC had formally recommended that Pope design the Archives Building and that he would "immediately be called for in connection with the proposed model of the Triangle."¹³⁴ Within six months, perhaps as a result of Pope's assessment of the situation, Congress would increase the appropriation for the National Archives Building to \$8,750,000.

Pope's assignment to work on the model was the result of the overall plan's failure to satisfy the CFA, despite the presentation of the project at a grand evening reception staged by Secretary Mellon, who had timed the event to coincide with the annual Convention of the American Institute of Architects, which was meeting in Washington that year where President Hoover, Senator Smoot, and Andrew Mellon were among the distinguished speakers.¹³⁵ The BAC had unwisely refused to consult formally with the CFA for the previous two years, however, and despite a seemingly polite reception during these gala festivities, the CFA was not pleased with the model. At its May 28, 1929, meeting, during informal discussions of the Triangle plan, the CFA generally condemned the model. Commission member and architect Benjamin Wistar Morris noted a lack of cohesiveness in the design.¹³⁶ After giving further general criticism of the Archives Building design, the CFA suggested that:

the model be placed in the hands of a great architect like John Russell Pope who would put freshness into the model, and at the same time adhere to classical motives. As a former member of the Commission and acquainted with the Washington development Mr. Pope would also relate the model for the Triangle to the plan of the National Capital.¹³⁷

Pope was appointed to the BAC on September 17, 1929, and was given leadership over the other Board members, as suggested by the CFA. In November Pope brought his colleagues to task over the design of the Archives Building and its surrounding buildings. Initially accepting its location between 9th and 10th Streets, he suggested that the Pennsylvania Avenue frontage be further studied to "relieve the tendency of monotony occurring in the long Pennsylvania Avenue facade."¹³⁸ This meant that Simon's office would have to start over. Pope continued in gentle criticism of various buildings and concentrated his efforts on solving the problems

¹³¹ Moore to Pope, Washington, DC, June 9, 1928, CFA project files (Washington, DC: RG 66, National Archives).

¹³² Pope to Moore, New York, July 11, 1928, CFA project files (Washington, DC: RG 66, National Archives).

¹³³ Telegram, Moore to Pope, July 22, 1922, CFA project files (Washington, DC: RG 66, National Archives).

¹³⁴ Pope to Moore, New York, July 24, 1928, (CFA project files (Washington, DC: RG 66, National Archives).

¹³⁵ "The Development of the National Capital," *American Architect* 135(May 20, 1929):638-45.

¹³⁶ CFA Minutes, May 28, 1929 (Washington, DC: RG 66, National Archives), 8.

¹³⁷ CFA Minutes, May 28, 1929, 8.

¹³⁸ BAC Minutes, November 11, 1929 (Suitland, MD: RG 121, National Records Center).

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pointed out by the CFA.¹³⁹ In January 1930 Pope proposed that the Pennsylvania Avenue façade be broken at the Archives Building to form a small square in front of the building. The following month Pope presented his most radical series of proposals, all directly related to the Archives Building. At the BAC meeting Pope presented three alternative designs for the National Archives Building, with a clear preference for the third scheme.

Scheme One was simply an expression of the volume necessary to house the Archives. Its 10 million cubic feet literally filled the site to the pre-established cornice height. Pope did not raise the central portion of the building, as the BAC had previously suggested, because he felt that the interruption of the skyline at that point served no point and was “not sympathetic or helpful to the Group composition.”¹⁴⁰

Scheme Two was a preliminary study of the earlier suggestion that a forecourt be created in front of the Archives Building to give both more interest to the Pennsylvania Avenue façade and a better setting for the Archives Building. In his report Pope immediately pointed out the problem with such a suggestion: it was in the wrong place. Pope observed that such an “important treatment and accent would only be desirable as the easterly terminal to the Group at a point in connection with the general Washington Mall Plan—in other words at the head of the Cross Axis of the Mall.”¹⁴¹

With these two drawings Pope had used the suggestions of the Board and the information provided by them to force the issue of the proper siting of the Archives Building. As Pope put it:

If the Archives Building is designed to express its plan and purpose, it must result in a building different in character from the general office type of the Group. With this difference, intentionally subdued, as indicated in Scheme Two the arrangement, I believe is still of a dangerous monumental character. It not only tends to divide the general Group, but also tends to subordinate, by contrast, the importance of the motive now planned as the Cross-Axis of the Mall accent, to such an extent that this motive would be inadequate.¹⁴²

As his solution to this perceived dilemma, Pope offered his third scheme. In this radical solution he suggested moving the Archives Building to the 8th Street Cross Axis of the National Mall, where the building’s monumental qualities could be best set off. This resulted in the relocation of the completely designed Justice Department Building one block to the west. Pope further suggested that the Archives Building break the established façade line along Pennsylvania Avenue so that a square could be formed north of the building, giving one the sense that the Mall would be carried around the Archives Building. Set off in this manner, Pope reasoned, the building could be given its appropriate monumental treatment, which he envisioned as a massive stone box whose four sides were decorated with classical pediments. Pope himself later justified this architectural treatment, professing that it was inspired by his mentor Charles McKim’s statement that the Archives Building was the one building that he most wanted to design because he would like to see what he could do with plain walls and the simplest surfaces.¹⁴³ Pope also justified the location as the best place to break the standard cornice line in the group, namely at one end of the triangle. Here it signaled something important in

¹³⁹ He pushed the Board to develop an acceptable terminus to the Great Plaza and to make the pediment of the Justice Building conform to the form specified by the CFA and ordered a restudy of the Pennsylvania Avenue façade. The Archives building consisted of a lower (100 feet tall) block along the perimeter of the site with a cube rising 170 feet out of the center of the site.

¹⁴⁰ John Russell Pope, “Report to the Board of Architectural Consultants for the Planning of Washington, on the Archives Building,” February 10, 1930 (Washington, DC: Finley Papers, Library of Congress).

¹⁴¹ Pope, “Report,” February 10, 1930.

¹⁴² Pope, “Report,” February 10, 1930.

¹⁴³ Moore, 330.

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the plan of the city. His suggestion to create a square north of the building was a feature that was initially proposed in the L'Enfant plan.

The immediate reaction to Pope's third scheme was swift and negative. With Mellon not yet in attendance, the group generally rejected Pope's plan. Delano disliked the plan because it meant that the uninterrupted line of the Pennsylvania Avenue façade would be broken, while Bennett, missing Pope's point about the special nature of the building, suggested that the Justice Department Building just be treated differently.

Arguments for and against Pope's suggestions continued in this manner for almost three months. In late February 1930 both Pope and Clarence C. Zantzinger, the designer of the Justice Department Building, submitted alternative schemes for the Cross-Axis site. Zantzinger's 10-story building had many supporters, but the Board simply could not come to any sort of agreement.¹⁴⁴ Finally, on April 10, 1930, Louis Simon realized that the previous discussions were based on the fact that, on the L'Enfant plan, an open square was indicated at the intersection of Pennsylvania Avenue and 8th Street. This feature could not be preserved with the Department of Justice building located on the Mall's 8th Street Cross-Axis unless it towered over the rest of the Triangle. Delano, surprisingly, given his initial opposition to changes in the plan and to Pope, then moved that the Board recommend that the Archives Building and the Justice Building sites be switched, a motion which finally carried.¹⁴⁵

Pope's general approach to the problem was quite simple. It was a simple colonnaded box with a hole in the center to allow expansion. An exhibition hall, initially a very small one, could be reached from the Mall-side entrance to the building, with offices and research spaces facing Pennsylvania Avenue.¹⁴⁶ Pope followed his well-proven design method, basing the pedimented part of his scheme on one of his nearly contemporaneous designs: the Temple of the Scottish Rite in Baltimore and the rest of the exterior design on the Temple of the Scottish Rite in Washington, DC, where the stepped box and colonnaded treatment of the exterior have their genesis.

Taking a rational approach, Pope created a bifurcated building. The ceremonial spaces facing the Mall were virtually sealed off from the rest of the structure. The north section, devoted to research, was organized logically. An elevated reading room faced Pennsylvania Avenue, with access controlled at the entry at ground level. Administrative offices ringed the exterior of the building, and document storage space in the interior block of the building. Pope's planning was, once again, clear, direct, and simple. It is still easily understood by the user. It was not until July 1930 that Simon presented Pope with a preliminary program for the building that included only a very small exhibition hall.¹⁴⁷ It would be another four months before the Advisory Committee on the National Archives submitted a program that outlined space requirements.

Pope then submitted a design that differed in exterior design from the first proposal. It was described by one of his associates as a "large box that we wrapped a colonnade around."¹⁴⁸ The design was more elaborate than the current building, for it included a large mass rising above the colonnade with six setbacks and balusters along the first parapet above pediments. In consultation with Ayres and Delano, Pope simplified the massing of the

¹⁴⁴ BAC Minutes, February 20, 1930 (Suitland, MD: RG 121, National Records Center).

¹⁴⁵ BAC Minutes, April 10, 1930 (Suitland, MD: RG 121, National Records Center).

¹⁴⁶ The location of these offices would shift more than once, but it would finally end up on the Pennsylvania Avenue side, allowing a complete separation of ceremonial and official functions. See Eggers to Simon, New York, March 5, 1931 (Suitland, MD: RG 121, National Records Center).

¹⁴⁷ Planning Memorandum, July 18, 1930, Records of the Advisory Committee on the National Archives Building, 1910-39 (Suitland, MD: RG 121, National Records Center).

¹⁴⁸ Interview with Theodore J. Young by Steven Bedford, August 1983.

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building by reducing the number of wall setbacks from six to three. The balusters were replaced by a visually strong solid parapet. He introduced decorative elements including a series of aediculae, small pedimented niches, in the intercolumniations of the main façades and at each corner, and the pedimented colonnades on the side façades were reduced in height. The frieze band consisted of alternating shields and fasces that wrapped around the upper portion of the building, constituting the only decoration on the huge vault-like cube. It was not until sometime in 1932 that this frieze was abandoned in favor of a simplified treatment that incorporates circular bas-reliefs and inscriptions. Most of Pope's general organization on the interior was set by January 1931. Even as late as September 1931, the exhibition hall was a small Ionic-colonnaded hemicycle in the center of a large interior courtyard that could be filled to meet expansion needs. On the north side of the building, the library and reading room were flanked by administrative offices, and the offices of records administrators ranged up the east and west walls.

The final presentation drawings, known as cabinet drawings, were finished in January 1932; they met with great approval. David Finley, then Mellon's lawyer and personal secretary, wrote that, "I am delighted with them. They are beautifully rendered and the building itself is all that one could desire. I like very much the large room and the approach to it. Mr. Mellon also thinks the building very good indeed and was greatly interested in seeing the drawings which you left for me."¹⁴⁹

As one examines the drawings and the completed building, this project especially demonstrates Pope's strict adherence to the Roman style, as interpreted through French print sources, to the point that certain working drawings included reference notes to plates of Roman details from Hector D'Espouy's *Fragments d'Architecture Antique* (1905).¹⁵⁰ Not only was the interior shrine based on the Pantheon, but the reading room is reminiscent of a Renaissance palazzo. The Corinthian columns, with capitals based on the Pantheon, illustrate the design's roots in Roman Classicism.

Pope's adherence to Roman and Classical roots was a continuation of a long American architectural tradition of using Classical forms to connect the American Republic to the ancient republics of Greece and Rome. In the early years of the country, Classical architecture was used to legitimize the new American democracy. By the early twentieth century Pope, the BAC, and the CFA were applying monumental Classical forms to modern office buildings in a nationalist attempt to continue this connection and to demonstrate America's cultural equivalency to Europe. As Cynthia Koch has postulated, "The desire to make Washington into a world-class capital city with the construction of the Federal Triangle anchored by a great public building dedicated to American democracy was part of this [nationalist] impulse."¹⁵¹

Pope's urban vision did not end at Pennsylvania Avenue. He envisioned a series of classically designed structures lining 8th Street, terminating at the Old Patent Office, and providing a controlled visual approach from the north and terminating 8th Street with the high central mass of the archive's stacks.

Creating a Shrine to Democracy: The Exhibition Hall

Sometime in January 1932, the form of the exhibition hall dramatically changed. The record is silent as to the reason for the change, but it is likely that the idea of exhibiting the nation's founding documents there necessitated the expansion and elaboration of the space. Since its creators viewed the building as a symbol of

¹⁴⁹ Finley to Pope, Washington, DC, January 20, 1932, Finley papers, Library of Congress. David Finley later became the first director of the National Gallery of Art 1938-1956, and chairman of the Commission of Fine Arts 1950-1963.

¹⁵⁰ See the working drawings in Suitland, MD: RG 121, National Records Center. Daniel Gurney has also noted this in his work, *Sculpture and the Federal Triangle* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1985), 81.

¹⁵¹ Koch, NHL Draft Review, October 26, 2020.

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the nation's past, it was logical that the shrine for displaying the country's most important documents would be an elaborate space designed to complement the significance of the items on display. Pope created a spacious Pantheon-like shrine to house the United States Declaration of Independence, Constitution, and Bill of Rights.¹⁵² These were to be placed in altar-like display cases that were clearly based on the segmental-arch-pedimented altars found in the interior of the Pantheon in Rome.

Integration of the Arts

Painting and Sculpture

An essential part of Pope's design and a signature of Beaux-Arts design principles was the integral use of the fine arts of sculpture and painting to realize the full impact of the building. Although this tradition of incorporating all three arts to create a complete image dates to the Greeks, its use in America follows a relatively slow path. Before the 1850s, outside the Capitol building and the pediments of major structures, few building exteriors had architectural sculpture as key elements in their design. As American architecture began to follow French trends, the additions to the Louvre between 1852 and 1857 had an effect on the use of architectural sculpture in this country. The first building in Washington to emulate the Louvre was William Corcoran's art gallery (now the Smithsonian Institution's Renwick Gallery), begun in 1859. The use of architectural sculpture in public buildings was led by Alfred B. Mullett beginning with the State, War, and Navy building (1871-1888) adjacent to the White House, and continuing with Post Offices and courthouses in St. Louis, Philadelphia, and San Francisco in the late 1870s and early 1880s. This was followed by John McArthur's Philadelphia City Hall, which was not completed until 1901 but did mark the first close collaboration between an architect and sculptor. However, the real flowering of the use of architectural sculpture began with the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893 in Chicago, whose buildings were predominantly designed by architects trained at the École des Beaux-Arts, which taught that buildings should incorporate all of the arts. As the architectural theories and pedagogical techniques of the École permeated American architecture, it is no surprise that the buildings of the Federal Triangle were meant to use architectural sculpture and murals to greatest effect. In May 1927 Charles Moore stated that he expected the architecture of the Federal Triangle to do what the Chicago World's Fair had done for a season would be done in Washington forever.¹⁵³

The Sculpture, Sculptors, and Carvers

Pope all along planned the extensive use of sculpture, bas reliefs, and inscriptions. In addition to the architectural ornament that came with the use of the Corinthian order, Pope employed 22 statues and bas-reliefs to complete his exterior design. The iconography of the sculptural program is laden with references to the building's dual role as a ceremonial space and repository of the nation's great records. In total, \$360,000 was spent on the sculptural decorations on the National Archives Building, proportionally more than on any other structure in the Federal Triangle. The sculptural elements emphasize and are limited to the north and south façades. Each façade has three principal sculptural elements: two statures at ground level and the pediment,

¹⁵² Pope's drawings show this change occurring in January 1932; however, Milton Gustafson noted that the first description of the change does not come until March 2, 1932. Records of the Advisory Committee on the National Archives Building, 1910-39, Records of the Public Buildings Service (Suitland, MD: RG 121, National Records Center); Milton O. Gustafson, "The Empty Shrine: The Transfer of the Declaration of Independence and the Constitution to the National Archives," *The American Archivist* 39 (3-July 1976):271-285.

¹⁵³ "Federal Building Ideals Outlined," *Washington Star*, May 14, 1927.

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which form a tight triangular composition that draws the eye toward the building. Pope is currently credited with the sculptural program and the choice of inscriptions.¹⁵⁴

To execute his vision, Pope commissioned well-known sculptors James Earle Fraser for the Constitution Avenue side and Adolph Alexander Weinman for the Pennsylvania Avenue side. Pope added sculptor Robert Aitken, who was working on the west pediment of the Supreme Court building, to do most of the Pennsylvania Avenue work.

At the south entry, two seated statues symbolizing *Guardianship* and *Heritage* flank the stairs leading up to the south portico. The south pediment, designed by sculptor James Earle Fraser, is a depiction of *The Recorder of the Archives*. He was assisted by his wife, Laura Fraser. The medallions on the attic frieze represent each of the 12 departments that contributed records to the Archives in addition to the Great Seal of the United States. The medallions were designed by both Fraser and Aitken. On the north façade the pediment sculpture is entitled *Destiny*, A.A. Weinman's only contribution to the building. At the entry itself two bas-reliefs depicting the *Guardians of the Portal* flank the entrance, which are in turn flanked by statues symbolizing the *Past* and the *Future*, both designed by Aitken and sculpted by Attilio Piccirilli.¹⁵⁵

Weinman, who executed the north pediment, *Destiny*, began his career in architectural sculpture in 1893 when he completed architectural sculpture for the Columbian Exhibition in Chicago. He was subsequently both a student and an assistant to famed American sculptor Augustus Saint-Gaudens. By the time of his commission for the National Archives Building, Weinman was a very successful architectural sculptor. He had created works for several of McKim, Mead & White's most famous buildings, including Pennsylvania Station and Madison Square Presbyterian Church, both in New York City. Pope most likely made Weinman's acquaintance while they were both working on the Lincoln Birthplace Memorial in Hodgenville, Kentucky (1908-1909). Pope commissioned him in 1911 to create the sphinxes guarding the entry to the Temple of the Scottish Rite in Washington, DC. Pope subsequently worked with him on at least three other commissions, including the Baltimore Museum of Art, the Jefferson Memorial, and the American War Memorial at Montfaucon, France, which were going on simultaneously.¹⁵⁶

Pope had just finished working with sculptor James Earle Fraser on the Second Division Memorial in Washington, DC's President's Park when he took the National Archives commission. Fraser had studied in France, where he was awarded \$1,000 from the American Art Association of Paris. He was later an assistant to Saint-Gaudens, and then designed the Buffalo Nickel and the United States Victory Medal. He was commissioned to create sculptures for the Supreme Court and Department of Commerce buildings in addition to the National Archives Building, as well as historical, presidential, and military portraits. He was the recipient of the gold medal for sculpture from the National Institute and American Academy of Arts and Letters. Fraser married his former student, artist Laura Gardin, and they lived and worked together in Connecticut.¹⁵⁷ In total, Fraser was responsible for the *Heritage* and *Guardianship* statues, the *Recorder of the Archives* pediment, and six of the department medallions (Commerce, Interior, War, State, Treasury, and Navy).

Fraser employed classically trained sculptors Sidney Waugh and David Rubins to model *Heritage* and *Guardianship* prior to sending them to the stone carvers. Waugh spent three years in architecture school at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology before going to the École Des Beaux-Arts and subsequently winning the

¹⁵⁴ Gurney, 205.

¹⁵⁵ For a full discussion of the sculptural program of the Archives Building, see Gurney, 198-240.

¹⁵⁶ See Bedford, PhD diss.

¹⁵⁷ "James Earle Fraser" (Washington, DC: biography from the Smithsonian American Art Museum, <https://americanart.si.edu/artist/james-earle-fraser-1647>, accessed August 31, 2020).

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Rome Prize in 1929. Rubins was educated at Dartmouth College, won the Paris Prize in in Sculpture in 1924, and in 1929 was also a Rome Prize winner.¹⁵⁸ Like Pope, Fraser had a favorite stone carving company, the Gino A. Ratti Company of Chicago.¹⁵⁹

Laura Gardin Fraser (1889-1966) studied at the Art Students League in New York from 1907 to 1911, and in 1913 married James Earle Fraser, her instructor there. She designed the Alabama Centennial half dollar in 1921, earning her the distinction as the first woman to design a coin for the United States Treasury. Alone or with her husband, she designed a number of U.S. coins, notably the 1922 Grant Memorial half dollar, the 1925 Fort Vancouver Centennial half dollar, and the 1926 Oregon Trail Memorial half dollar. She designed a large number of medals, including the Lindbergh, George C. Marshall, and Benjamin Franklin Congressional Medals of Honor, and the U.S. Army and Navy Chaplains medal, as well as medals for the National Geographic Society, the American Bar Association, the National Sculpture Society, and many others. Her early works were mostly of small size, and babies and animals, especially horses and dogs, were her favorite subjects. Later she turned to work on a larger scale, completing the reclining elks in front of the Elks Club National Memorial. In 1936 Laura Fraser won an invitational competition for a double equestrian statue of Robert E. Lee and Stonewall Jackson to be placed in Baltimore. Twelve years were required to complete that work. She also completed *Pegasus* for Brookgreen Gardens in South Carolina, a 20-foot relief entitled *Oklahoma Run*, busts of Gilbert Stuart and Mary Lyon, and three large relief panels depicting American history that were placed in the West Point Library.¹⁶⁰

Attilio Piccirilli was born in Massa, Italy, coming to the United States in in 1887 with his family of six brothers. All stone carvers, the family achieved great success, but Attilio was the most gifted. He studied sculpture for five years at the Accademia di San Luca in Rome. After achieving some financial success in Manhattan, they moved to the Bronx in 1890 and created two large studios. At about the same time, the Piccirillis met Daniel Chester French, who over the next 35 years had all but two of his stone sculptures carved by the brothers, including the statue of Abraham Lincoln (1922) at the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, DC. They carved many iconic monuments in New York, including the pediment of the New York Stock exchange (done by brother Getulio in 1904), the lions at the New York Public Library for Edward Clark Potter (1911), and the spandrels and eagles on the Washington Arch, among other commissions. Attilio separately carved the *Maine Monument* and the *Firemen's Monument* in Manhattan. Piccirilli carved *The Future*, *The Past*, *The Guardians of the Portal*, and the reliefs on the granite pedestals for statues.¹⁶¹

The George Fuller Company, the contractor, had subcontracted with The Indiana Limestone Company, the supplier of the stone, to do the carving on the capitals, the general ornamental details, and the 13 medallions in the attic frieze. The carving for the Limestone Company was to be done by the Easton studios of Bedford, Indiana. Pope informed the Treasury that he objected to the use of the Easton studios as he found their work to be substandard.¹⁶² After much negotiation, Pope agreed to use Easton Studios but to have carver John Donnelly supervise and interpret the models for Easton Studios.¹⁶³ The major decorative sculptures Easton worked on

¹⁵⁸ Gurney, 140, 210.

¹⁵⁹ Gurney, 115.

¹⁶⁰ Biography from finding aid for the James Earle and Laura Gardin Fraser papers (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Libraries, Special Collections Research Center, https://library.syr.edu/digital/guides/f/fraser_je_lg.htm, accessed December 8, 2020).

¹⁶¹ Gurney, 198, 318; Piccirilli Studios, History (New York: Lehman College, School of Arts and Humanities, <http://www.lehman.edu/academics/arts-humanities/piccirilli/history.php#footnote3>).

¹⁶² Gurney, 236-237.

¹⁶³ Gurney, 236-237; *The New York Times*, John Donnelly obituary, July 12, 1947. John Donnelly was a leading stone carver, who it was reported had done 90 percent of the stone carving in Washington, DC, including the Supreme Court. He did all the stone carving on the New York Public Library aside from the lions as well as on many buildings in New York, including Riverside Church, Grand Central Terminal, the Vanderbilt Mansion, and the Woolworth Building.

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were the series of four rows of eight capitals beneath the pediment on the Constitution Avenue side of the building. Harry Easton employed 66 stone cutters, carvers, and supporting carpenters, foremen, and shop stewards, plus an engineer for the air compressor. It is purported that it was the largest assemblage of cutters and carvers ever to work on a single project in the United States.¹⁶⁴

Edward Ardolino, who carved *Destiny*, was an Italian immigrant who became a prolific stone carver and architectural sculptor in the first half of the twentieth century. He was a favorite of the architect Bertram Goodhue and sculptor Lee Lawrie, working on nine projects for that team. He worked on four buildings in the Federal Triangle (Commerce, Post Office, Departmental Auditorium, and National Archives). In rejecting the work of the Easton studio, Pope stated that only three firms could do the carving properly: Ardolino, John Donnelly, and Piccirilli Brothers. Ardolino is credited with over 50 major architectural sculpture commissions.¹⁶⁵

The Rotunda Murals and Barry Faulkner

When one enters the rotunda and faces the Charters of Freedom, flanking the documents are lower display cases and spaces for large murals depicting the signing of the documents. In 1933 painter Barry Faulkner was commissioned to prepare these murals on the subject of the writing and adoption of the founding documents.¹⁶⁶

Faulkner was born in 1881 in Keene, New Hampshire. He studied at the American Academy in Rome, and after returning to the United States in 1910, he worked as a muralist in New York City. The National Archives Building contract provided a \$42,000 budget and required Faulkner's designs to be approved by the CFA. Faulkner created several preliminary sketches for the commission to evaluate, but the commissioners reacted unfavorably, citing lack of unity and focus. After getting advice from J. Franklin Jameson, the noted historian who had worked so hard to establish a national archives, Faulkner was able to produce sketches that pleased the commission. These sketches included a landscape—rather than architecture—background that would fit better in the Rotunda and give the feeling of distance and space in the hall.

The commission approved the final studies in January 1935, and Faulkner immediately began creating the full-sized murals. He rented a large space above Grand Central Station in New York City to house the canvases. After enlarging the sketches, Faulkner traced the design onto the canvas and painted on the detail, completing the murals in September 1936.

The murals, which when complete measured 14 by 37.5 feet, were installed in the Rotunda on October 15 and were available for public viewing in November. Faulkner's mural designs convey the spirit of democracy and illustrate the differing opinions on American government that went into drafting the Declaration and the Constitution. The Declaration mural imagines the moment the Declaration was formally presented to the Continental Congress. The Constitution mural shows James Madison giving the Constitution to George Washington, President of the Constitutional Convention.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁴ William Easton Collection, Memorial Album (Washington, DC: RG 200, National Archives).

¹⁶⁵ Gurney, 236; *The New York Times*, Edward Ardolino obituary, April 13, 1945.

¹⁶⁶ See National Archives, "1936 Faulkner Murals" (Washington, DC: America's Founding Documents, National Archives, <https://www.archives.gov/founding-docs/faulkner-murals>).

¹⁶⁷ Lester Gorelic, "Depicting the Creation of a Nation: The Story Behind the Murals About Our Founding Documents," *Prologue* 46(Spring 2014):44-54.

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Pope and Monumental Classicism in Federal Design

Pope knew the National Archives Building was to be different from the other buildings in the Federal Triangle project because it was more than an office space for workers; it would store the most valuable records of the government. He kept in mind the practical aspects of storing records and chose materials that conveyed permanence and were fireproof. All materials came from the United States. Pope also realized the symbolic aspect of the National Archives Building and incorporated neoclassical architectural themes on the building to symbolize the tradition of American democracy derived from ancient Greece and Rome. He designed both the interior and exterior in “monumental proportions” with the aim “always in mind that the general public is to gain from these features a proper realization of the significance and importance of the building itself as a complete record of the history of the National Government.”¹⁶⁸ The building had to be grand to express the nation’s belief in the superiority of the American democracy.

The design of modern public buildings at the time was characterized by the “universal domination of the classic tradition.” Recognized as separate from a revival, the style described as Modern American Classicism was “a new sort of classic.” Architects of the period were described as having “wed Renaissance cleverness to the dignity of ancient Rome.... [treating] a building with monumental planning, based on modern complex needs.”¹⁶⁹ It is in the National Archives Building and the Federal Triangle project that Pope, in one of his final explorations of Classical architecture, came to the fore as the architect most responsible for the creation of a monumental solution to the problem of creating a building that held so many meanings.

Among those multiple meanings is the use of Roman forms, connecting it visually with the major monuments of the American early republic, associating the Archives Building with the same democratic principles that created the early republic. Pope was very explicit in this association, declaring the need for the building to “harmonize with the Capitol, the White House and the Treasury Building.”¹⁷⁰ This connection with these three buildings, along with the Patent Office and George Hadfield’s old City Hall, cement the visual and ideological connection to the early republic, whose most important records were enshrined in the Archives Building. Second, the grand exterior also celebrates the history of the nation as legitimate and powerful, appropriately representing the country whose holdings stretched to the Philippines, Alaska, Hawaii, Panama, and the Caribbean.

Also figuring in the analysis is the building’s relationship to the Mall, the 8th Street Cross-Axis, the termination of 8th Street, and the rest of the buildings in the Federal Triangle. As prescribed by the Senate Park Commission Plan, an important building was to be located at the mid-point of the Mall and halfway between the Capitol and 16th Street. The grand colonnade and ascent into the building at the 8th Street mid-point provided a strong termination delineating the limits of the Mall at its mid-point and creating a grand entrance that befits the contents inside. Underscoring its special status, the National Archives Building is the only building in the Federal Triangle that is not primarily office space. The substantial interior mass with decorated setbacks pushing above the cornice line gave the building a physical presence that along with its location toward the east end of the grouping established it visually as the most important structure in the Triangle. Its local dominance confirmed it as the appropriate location for America’s most important documents. Although never explicitly

¹⁶⁸ Robert D. Conner, *First Annual Report of the Archivist of the United States: 1934-1935* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1935), 6.

¹⁶⁹ Hamlin, 200-201, see also chapter on public buildings, pp. 200-218.

¹⁷⁰ Pope was quoted by the Archivist of the United States in Conner, 6. This is also cited in Gurney, 197. In citing these aforementioned buildings, Pope was also invoking the authority of the precedents previously approved as models by the CFA. He invoked the authority of these buildings frequently during the 1930s.

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stated in the records, Pope may have subconsciously borrowed his colonnaded and pedimented treatment from the U.S. Capitol, correcting the original with the proper Roman elements.

If one examines the architecture alone, Pope achieved McKim's ideal of trying to do as much as possible with plain walls and the simplest surfaces. Using a minimum of distinct architectural elements, Pope created a robust monumental icon of American Classicism in the early 1930s. It achieves its impact through severe, refined classic elements, its proportions, and its monumentality.¹⁷¹ Here Pope again demonstrated his mastery of the decoration of the blank wall. Above a drafted-margin granite masonry base, a course of vertically laid, orthostat-like limestone slabs encircle the entire building. Above, carefully modulated limestone courses rise to the height of the Corinthian capitals. In areas that are shaded by the colonnades, the limestone is laid with deep drafted margins, providing a more vibrant sculptural counterpoint to the massive columns. The orthostat-like treatment is repeated at the level of the column capitals. Above the cornice line, the stark severity of form is broken only by a series of bas-relief medallions. Overall, the composition creates the perception of a massive, monumental box adorned by Roman temple-like colonnades on all four sides.

The interior design continues the monumental imagery of the exterior. The public reading rooms, with their large wood beams, display the formality of a simplified Renaissance palazzo, and the exhibition hall, with its 75-foot-high dome, inspires the awe appropriate for viewing the famous documents displayed there.¹⁷² The Pantheon-like semi-dome and the altar-like display case reference the architecture of imperial Rome and transfer the image to a powerful American empire founded on the documents in the room. The grand dome elicits both awe and silence as one approaches the altar-like home of the documents. Pope adopted the classical mode as the appropriate architectural vocabulary to use both for the associated era of the documents and as an expression of public architecture of its time.

Although state archives buildings were built across America before 1925, the National Archives program was essentially without an architectural precedent in antiquity or in American architecture. Not only did it have to play multiple functional roles, serving as a safe document repository, movie storage, a theater, and storage and playback for sound recordings, the also needed to house the important ceremonial space as the home to the founding documents. Pope's solution is a unique mass decorated with appropriately imperial Roman forms in the ceremonial areas, and the other public areas as Renaissance-inspired spaces that express a dignified formality appropriate to the important work conducted there. The strict references to an architecture of the past were meant to create a direct link to the architecture of the early republic and thus to the democratic principles embodied in other monuments to our democracy, including the U.S. Capitol, the White House, and the Treasury building.

The National Archives Building is one of the last major expressions of this American tradition of associating the architecture of Greece and Rome to that of the early American republic and to monumental government architecture. It was among the last significant demonstrations of monumental classical architecture produced in America in the 1930s. Three major public monuments—the National Gallery of Art, the Jefferson Memorial, and the Supreme Court Building—would be completed after this in Washington, DC, two of which were in progress as the Archives building was reaching completion.

¹⁷¹ This was a characteristic previously noted in Pope's work by G.H. Edgell, Harvard's Dean of Architecture, in *The American Architecture of Today* (New York: Charles Scribner, 1928), 284.

¹⁷² "Archives Building," *Federal Architect* 5 (July 1934), n.p.

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Current scholars have come to acknowledge Pope's prowess in creating monumental spaces through the use of massing, blank walls, and refined detailing, and to respect the National Archives Building and the National Gallery of Art. Architecture critic Phillip Kennicott praised the Archives Building thus:

The National Archives is one of the most imposing and beautiful buildings designed by architect John Russell Pope, . . . he was an architect keenly alert to the power of symbols in urban design. When planning the Archives, he succeeded in persuading the government to situate it where it now stands, on Pennsylvania Avenue halfway between the U.S. Capitol and the White House, suggesting its neutrality within the checks-and-balances system of the government.¹⁷³

Historian Mark Gelernter described the Federal Triangle in general as using over-scale Classical forms to convey the authority of the centralized government. He described Pope's work in particular as "the Classical Language is tripped to its simplest possible underlying geometry, and then sleekly elaborated with the barest of moldings and the slightest of projections and recessions. The visual effect is one of confident refinement, like the self-assured manners of Roosevelt himself."¹⁷⁴

Modern Structure and Mechanical Innovations

Beneath the limestone cladding, the National Archives Building is a very modern structure. Although clad in granite and limestone and wrapped in a colonnade based on Roman temples, the building has a steel frame set on a specially designed reinforced concrete foundation. Since the site stood over the submerged Tiber Creek, the engineering of the foundations required careful attention. To avoid any issue with differential settlement, the structural engineer Horace G. Balcom, who also worked on the Empire State Building at the same time, was hired as an expert in foundation design. He designed a thick concrete mat or raft supported by 8,575 pilings to support the structure. The foundation was constructed so that the interior court of the building could be infilled with more stacks when the need arose.¹⁷⁵

Other design complications included the fact that as many stacks as possible needed to be placed inside the pre-determined volume and the tremendous weight of the archived materials needed to be taken into consideration. To solve this problem, the stack heights were lowered and the floors coordinated so that there were three layers of stacks inserted between each structural floor of the building, and the structural floors were placed every three floors to carry the loads of each set of stacks. To maximize space, a truck turntable was used in the delivery entrance to eliminate the need to provide space for the truck to drive through the building to turn around.

One of the charges in the architectural program was to provide an ideal climate for the preservation of documents. Although air conditioning in some form had been used in a few large office buildings up to that time, developing a system that maintained constant temperature and humidity, and filtered out air pollutants such as sulphur dioxide, was a complicated task. This was performed by Clyde R. Place, who had designed large air handling systems for many public buildings, including Rockefeller Center and Grand Central Terminal in New York City, churches, hospitals, industrial plants, colleges, hotels, Beijing University, and the British Museum. He devised a method of using the water from the submerged Tiber Creek below the building to help maintain a constant temperature and to obviate the need for large chillers. The air was then washed with an

¹⁷³ "The National Archives used to stand for independence. That mission has been compromised," *Washington Post*, January 18, 2020.

¹⁷⁴ Mark Gelernter, *A History of American Architecture* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1999), 248.

¹⁷⁵ See Balcom's obituary in *ASCE Transactions* 108 (New York: American Society of Civil Engineers).

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alkaline solution to eliminate any acidic air pollutants.¹⁷⁶ The potential for oxidation of surfaces was further addressed by the use of non-ferrous or stainless steel on interior finishes such as door jambs.

It has been claimed that the Archives building was the most complex federal building built up to that date. The claim is plausible when one considers the complex structural and mechanical systems and the many functions that needed to be accommodated within the structure, including storage of fragile materials and spaces for receiving, cataloging, cleaning, and preserving documents, plus the added complications of accommodating public spaces for a library, auditorium, and grand exhibition hall coupled with an extensive fire and burglary alarm system.¹⁷⁷

During construction, budget and space issues arose. Pope planned to use granite for the entire building; however, it was deemed too costly in 1933, and as a result only the basement level of the building is granite and the rest of the exterior is clad in Indiana limestone.¹⁷⁸

Establishment of the National Archives

While construction of the National Archives Building was well underway, there was no agency to occupy it. This changed on June 19, 1934, when President Franklin D. Roosevelt signed legislation creating the National Archives as an independent agency. The legislation created the Office of the Archivist of the United States to be appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate. The act also allowed the Archivist to appoint staff without regard to civil service law, although any employee making more than \$5,000 a year needed to be appointed by the President and have Senate approval. Other provisions allowed the Archivist to take control of all records of the government—legislative, executive, judicial, and other—and gave the Archivist power to inspect records of any agency and arrange for their transfer to the National Archives. Finally, the act put the National Archives Building into the immediate custody of the Archivist.

On October 10, 1934, President Roosevelt nominated Robert Digges Wimberly Connor, a historian and professor at the University of North Carolina, to be the first Archivist of the United States. One of Connor's first tasks was to lobby for more space for records. In 1935 the Treasury Department determined that another three levels of stacks could be added to the building by adding a pitched roof to the top of the building. Over Pope's objections, a rendering of the building with the new roof was prepared; however, President Roosevelt rejected it.¹⁷⁹

The building was ready for occupation by the new Archivist of the United States in October 1935; however, archivist Connor was given a building that was still being fitted out and would not be fully completed until 1938. The push for more stack space was eventually successful, and in August 1935 McCloskey and Company won a bid to infill the courtyard with stack space, essentially doubling the space for records storage. The work was completed in February 1937.

¹⁷⁶ "Fortress of Knowledge to Defy Ravages of Time," *Popular Mechanics* 64 (August 1935):237, 238, 127A; "Clyde R. Place, Engineer, is Dead," *The New York Times*, March 29, 1946. The use of water supply in place of chillers is not entirely novel; it was considered for the Capitol but rejected. See Siry.

¹⁷⁷ This claim was made by Donald McCoy in *The National Archives; America's Ministry of Documents* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1978), 31-32.

¹⁷⁸ The best chronology of this issue is found in Franklin Delano Roosevelt Papers, file OF 221 (Hyde Park, NY: Franklin D. Roosevelt Presidential Museum and Library).

¹⁷⁹ Franklin Delano Roosevelt Papers, file OF 221. At one point the contract to complete the interior stacks was to be let to another firm, but Roosevelt insisted that Pope finish the building.

The National Archives Building as Architectural Anachronism

In terms of its architecture, the timing of the design and construction was out of sync with architectural trends. As early as 1931, the Federal Triangle project was under attack by a new generation of architects who described the architectural design of the Triangle as elitist, pretentious, and anachronistic.¹⁸⁰ By 1932 the influence of the European Modern movement was being felt in America. American architects who had attended the Bauhaus School in Germany returned with new ideas for American architecture. The 1932 exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City drew large crowds: 33,000 people attended during its six-week duration. The accompanying catalog *The International Style: Architecture since 1922* identified the basic planning and three-dimensional forms the curators identified as the components of the style, serving as a guidebook for the next generation of American architects.

At the laying of the National Archives Building's corner stone in 1933, President Hoover stated: "This temple of our history will appropriately be one of the most beautiful buildings in America, an expression of the American soul. It will be one of the most durable, an expression of the American character."¹⁸¹ Even in 1935 the *Washington Star* described it as "an impressive temple honoring Clio."¹⁸² This would be the high water mark of praise for Pope and the National Archives Building, for the *Washington Post* had already begun a vivisection of the Federal Triangle project, stating that the buildings "may be classically beautiful to look at but have little relationship in their design to their obvious function."¹⁸³ The *Post* continued its diatribe in November 1934 by allocating dates in antiquity to the Triangle buildings, based on the type of column used, and instead proposed that "we might best of all expect a broad adaptation of the soaring steel and glass of the skyscraper-builders who have given our country a new world of art."¹⁸⁴

Others also poked fun at the architecture of official Washington. An article appeared in *Vanity Fair* suggesting that "under the present Administration, with the energetic support of Secretary Mellon and President Hoover, great advances are being made. Of them, it may also be said that they found Washington a city of bricks and are trying to leave it a city of marble." The author jokingly suggested that Washington's official dress be changed to the toga to match its architecture.¹⁸⁵

Harper's Magazine continued to lambaste the excessive extravagance of such monumental structures and the inappropriateness of using emblems of Imperial Rome for democratic America.¹⁸⁶ The author of the article, William Harlan Hale, denounced the Archives Building in particular, describing it as excessive:

...one might assume that a structure erected for the sole purpose of storing old government records would not have to be much more than a good fireproof warehouse.... But far from it! Washington's warehouse is actually the most artistic ornament of the entire triangle.... Apparently no one ever thought of housing the government records in the simple way...no one thought of questioning the artistic taste of erecting a Hellenistic temple around them.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁰ Cannadine, 399.

¹⁸¹ Herbert Hoover, speech at cornerstone ceremony, February 20, 1933, in Percy Scott Flippen, compiler, "The Archives of the United States Government: A Documentary History, 1774-1934," Vol. 22 (Washington, DC: RG 64, National Archives).

¹⁸² *Washington Star*, February 3, 1935. In Greek mythology Clio was the muse of history.

¹⁸³ "Is it Architecture," *Washington Post*, October 1, 1934.

¹⁸⁴ "The New Deal in Limestone," *Washington Post*, November 26, 1934.

¹⁸⁵ Vladimir Potts, "The Romanization of Washington," *Vanity Fair* 37(October 1931):64.

¹⁸⁶ William Harlan Hale, "The Grandeur that is Washington," *Harper's Magazine* 168(April 1934):560-69.

¹⁸⁷ Hale, 565.

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Pope was condemned as one of the elite, favored practitioners “who design equally brilliantly in all styles that are safely dead,” and took commissions away from progressive architects like William Lescaze and Frank Lloyd Wright.¹⁸⁸ Pope and Classicism still had a few defenders, however: architect Henry Van Buren Magonigle wrote in *Pencil Points* in 1935 that American architecture needed the “discipline of the Classic.”¹⁸⁹

Even though such magazines as the *Federal Architect* and the *American Architect* were turning from presenting images of the past to a series of discussions of modernism,¹⁹⁰ Pope insisted on remaining insulated from the Modern movement. With the completion of the National Archives Building and the corresponding rise in interest in European Modernism, Pope, in his late fifties, was now intentionally out of step with rising American architectural tastes. One of Pope’s employees of the period, Ralph Colyer, wrote that “the office did not embrace the Modern movement, nor understand it.” Pope, more by actions than by words, was inseparably linked to the cause of perpetuating Classicism in the United States.¹⁹¹

Pope’s steadfast allegiance to classically inspired architecture was so unerring that his three major works of the 1930s became the primary targets of derision from the new wave of Modernists. The National Archives Building, the National Gallery of Art, and the Jefferson Memorial were all subjected to severe criticism. Pope and his three monumental buildings on the Mall became the major symbols for everything that was wrong with American architecture and the profession. This rancor over the buildings’ classical roots included what were seen as elitist associations attached to the style and the fact that the commissions were awarded without competition. Well after completion, the National Archives Building figured in the bitter debate between modern and classical design. During the American Federation of Arts convention in Washington in the spring of 1937, champions of the Modern movement Joseph Hudnut, then Dean of Harvard’s Graduate School of Design, and William Lescaze, the Swiss-born modernist designer of the PSFS building in Philadelphia, slammed the irrelevance of the design of classical Washington.

Later, Hudnut’s now famous 1941 tract, “The Last of the Romans” in the *Magazine of Art*, virtually guaranteed that Pope’s work would sink into obscurity. He echoed previous attacks on the elitist associations of Classicism in general and its irrelevance to modern American society, describing American Classicism as “an international style, based upon the study of the antique—generalized, documented, unweighted by reality, the work of esthetes rather than of builders.”¹⁹² Hudnut echoed the standard modernist critique that cladding a steel structure in marble, giving the impression that it was a stone building, fooled no one and was a tired architectural lie. He bemoaned the failure to express the vast array of modern machinery that was required to maintain the appropriate environment. Identifying nine separate styles in the Federal Triangle, Hudnut pointed out that the need to conform to a prevailing style was, to his mind, a fallacy. He concluded that the Modern style would soon be accepted in Washington. Referring specifically to Pope’s work in Washington, he claimed: “Surely the time cannot be far distant when we shall understand how inadequate is the death-mask of an ancient culture to express the heroic soul of America: when we shall re-establish architecture, not as the plaything of the Academy, but as discoverer and guardian of spiritual values.” Describing Pope’s National Gallery of Art, which was in the early stages of design as the National Archives Building was being built, Hudnut wrote: “I thought that I could discern over its doorway the inscription, dim but growing distinct: *Ultimis Romanorum*.”

¹⁸⁸ Ibid.

¹⁸⁹ Henry V.B. Magonigle, “A Half century of Architecture 5,” reprinted in G. Hartman and J. Cigliano, eds., *Pencil Points Reader* (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 2004), 350.

¹⁹⁰ See, for instance; “This Modern a Simplified Symposium,” *Federal Architect* 7(October 1936):16-25

¹⁹¹ Ralph Colyer to Steven Bedford, Huntington, New York, May 17, 1983.

¹⁹² Joseph Hudnut, “The Last of the Romans,” *Magazine of Art* 34(April 1941):169.

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Hudnut's use of Pope's work as the whipping boy for everything classical made Pope's buildings lightning rods for criticism of American Classicism. Pope's monumental buildings, especially those on the Mall, were the subject of derision. His National Gallery of Art was described as "a pink marble whorehouse,"¹⁹³ and a "costly mummy" in the seminal 1944 Museum of Modern Art exhibition titled "Built in the U.S.A."¹⁹⁴ As American architects began to embrace the Modern movement, the more Pope's buildings came under blistering attack. In a history of American architecture commissioned by the AIA to celebrate their centennial, authors John Burchard and Albert Bush-Brown repeatedly leveled vituperative criticism on Pope's buildings to advance their embrace of the Modernist polemic.¹⁹⁵

Pope's Reputation Rehabilitated

Interest in forms that were outside the architectural canon of the day, i.e., Modernism, were ignited by Robert Venturi's *Complexity and Contradiction in Architecture* of 1966, which proposed architectural design that rebelled against the purism of modernism. It was the Museum of Modern Art's 1975-1976 exhibition on the Beaux-Arts tradition, "The Architecture of the École des Beaux-Arts," and its accompanying encyclopedic catalog that began the rehabilitation of American classical architects.¹⁹⁶ The stunning drawings and clarity of design greatly increased interest among contemporary architects.

As Post-Modernist historians and architects reexamined the classical tradition, and as the oldest architectural schools were reaching their centennials in the 1970s and 1980s, there was more scholarly interest in American classicists. The works of McKim, Mead & White, Cass Gilbert, Carrere and Hastings, and Bertram Goodhue were reevaluated. Between 1983 and 1986, the Architectural History Foundation published a series of monographs on American classical architects. The 1986 publication of Robert A.M. Stern's *New York 1900* further fueled interest in American architects of the first third of the twentieth century.

Scholarly interest in John Russell Pope also grew during this period, with the publication of David Van Zanten's article on Pope's design method in *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* in 1975.¹⁹⁷ Donald Drew Egbert's analysis of Beaux-Arts design methods added to interest among architects.¹⁹⁸ The renewed interest in Pope was centered around Washington with exhibitions on the Pope's houses on Meridian Hill and the 50th anniversary of the National Gallery. As noted by Roxanne Williamson, John Russell Pope was a familiar name to architects and historians in Washington, DC;¹⁹⁹ however, because of extreme difficulties and the lack of a partnership agreement in the office, obtaining information on Pope was time consuming and expensive as his records stretched from Pasadena, California, to Paris. The first formal systematic analysis of the architectural career of John Russell Pope was Steven Bedford's PhD dissertation (1994, Columbia University), followed in 1998 by a monographic study on Pope (Rizzoli). Bedford's book was followed by James Garrison's study on Pope's residential architecture.²⁰⁰ Pope is now regarded as one of the leading architects of his generation.

¹⁹³ Quoted in the footnotes of Richard McKinzie, *The New Deal for Artists* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1973), 43.

¹⁹⁴ Phillip Goodwin, *Built in the U.S.A.* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1944), preface.

¹⁹⁵ John Burchard and Albert Bush-Brown, *The Architecture of America, A Social and Cultural History* (New York: Knopf, second edition, 1966), see especially 379, 389.

¹⁹⁶ Museum of Modern Art, *The Architecture of the École des Beaux-Arts* (New York: museum exhibition, October 29, 1975-January 4, 1976). The accompanying catalogue was Arthur Drexler, Richard Chafee, Neil Levine, David Van Zanten, *The Architecture of the École des Beaux-Arts* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 1977).

¹⁹⁷ David Van Zanten, "Le Système des Beaux-Arts," *L'Architecture d'Aujourd'hui* 182 (December 1975):97-106.

¹⁹⁸ Donald Drew Egbert, *The Beaux-Arts Tradition in French Architecture* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980).

¹⁹⁹ Roxanne Williamson, *American Architects and the Mechanics of Fame* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1991), 13.

²⁰⁰ James Garrison, *Mastering Tradition: The Residential Architecture of John Russell Pope* (New York: Acanthus Press, 2004).

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Developing the Institution

The Archives under the control of Archivist of the United States Robert D. W. Connor immediately began accepting documents. Between 1787 and 1935, the records created by the federal government lacked a stable, secure environment, and the National Archives Building now provided both a safe place for records storage and a way to make the records accessible to the public. The new agency's first task was locating the records stored all over the city and the country. Archives staff surveyed records located in the DC area, and Works Progress Administration workers took on the massive task of surveying federal records nationwide. Staff found records in basements, attics, carriage houses, abandoned buildings, and alcoves. The records had suffered from neglect, pest infestation, water damage, and theft, abuses common to records housed in unsuitable and unsupervised storage areas. The condition of the records itself justified the creation of the Archives. The first batch of records arrived in early 1936. They were chosen not for their value but because they had been stored in the "White House Garage" at 21st and L Streets NW. The "Garage" was particularly notable because of its extremely unsuitable storage conditions.

By June 1941 the accumulated records had reached a point where the Archives had become the largest collections center and the most important center for historical research in America.²⁰¹ The entire structure, however, was not fully outfitted until 1941, raising the total expenditure for the building to \$12,250,794.

Some agencies, particularly the State and War Departments, were reluctant to release their historical documents, but President Roosevelt eventually convinced both departments to begin slowly to release their records.²⁰² In 1938 the Department of State transferred their historical records to the National Archives, including the engrossed Bill of Rights, but that document continued to be housed at the Library of Congress. The Declaration of Independence and Constitution had been transferred from the State Department to the Library of Congress in 1921, so Connor began efforts to gain the transfer of those documents almost immediately. Despite lobbying President Roosevelt, Connor could never get the president to urge the introduction of appropriate legislation. More importantly at the time, the archives became the home of the new *Federal Register*, the first compendium of rules and regulations of the federal government.²⁰³

Collecting and preserving records of all types required dozens of experts in the cleaning, preservation, cataloging, and storage of records created on widely diverse media. When the records arrived, many were filthy, moldy, and pest infested, and some were highly flammable. The Archives staff pioneered methods to fumigate, clean, unroll, and prepare them for use or further conservation.²⁰⁴

The Archives was also faced with conserving thousands of documents. The traditional method was through a laborious process known as "silking." This was not possible for such a large number of records, so instead the Archives staff developed the technique of laminating them in a stable clear plastic.

The archives also pioneered the collection and preservation of audio-visual materials. The Motion Pictures and Sound Recordings Division was established in 1935 and developed methods and externally vented fireproof cabinets for film storage. Working in tandem with the Division of Photographic Reproduction and Research and the Division of Repair, John G. Bradley, the head of the division, formed a national film library that collected

²⁰¹ McCoy, 69. The material on the Archives post 1935 is entirely drawn from McCoy.

²⁰² Idem, 73.

²⁰³ Idem, 55.

²⁰⁴ Idem, 76.

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private donations of non-federal materials. By the end of June 1939, the Archives had collected over 1,546,000 running feet of film and 331 sound recordings.²⁰⁵

When materials arrived at the Archives, their arrangement reflected the organization method used by the donating agency. Rather than change the cataloging method, the archivists followed the existing organization method. Also, documents from one agency were not to be commingled with documents from another. The staff also did pioneering work in cataloging and classifying documents, to the extent that their work was published and methods followed.²⁰⁶

In the late 1930s there was both an urgent need for greater access to certain documents and a need to preserve records in a minimal amount of space. The Archives looked to the new field of microphotography and became pioneers in the field. Although production was initially slow, the microfilming process developed at the National Archives became a standard method of preservation worldwide.²⁰⁷

The archives maintained a policy of public access and transparency: they welcomed the public, and the public responded. Within eight months more than 10,000 people had visited the National Archives. By 1940 there were more than 48,000 visitors annually. In 1938 there were over 11,000 service requests, but in 1941 over 87,180 documents were requested in person with another 11,000 queries coming by letter. In 1940 the first comprehensive guide to the Archives holdings was published in a 303-page volume.²⁰⁸ By 1948 the guide was 648 pages long, and by 1953 there were 473,658 requests for service annually.²⁰⁹

After World War II the Archives faced the problem of too many documents unnecessarily coming to the archives, and therefore they developed a records management approach under which careful decisions were made as to what to keep.²¹⁰ In 1949 the National Archives was folded into the newly created General Services Administration (GSA). Because the Archives had gained new responsibilities for current records, its name was changed to the National Archives and Records Service (NARS). The next year, Congress passed the Federal Records Act of 1950, further expanding the agency's records management role. The National Archives gained independence from the GSA in 1985, becoming the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA).²¹¹

Displaying the Charters of Freedom

In 1951 the Library of Congress tried to provide better protection for the Declaration of Independence, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights; however, every president from Herbert Hoover through Harry Truman expected the founding documents to be transferred from the Library of Congress to the Archives. To move these documents to the Archives, Wayne Grover, the third Archivist of the United States, believed that he could requisition the documents but worried that a bitter fight would ensue. Instead, Grover reviewed the vulnerability of the documents, showing that they would be safer at the Archives than in the Library of Congress. When faced with the evidence, in 1952 Librarian of Congress Luther H. Evans agreed that the Declaration, Constitution, and Bill of Rights should go to the National Archives. In a grand procession on December 13, 1952, guarded by servicemen, the documents traveled to the Archives in an armored personnel carrier, proceeded and followed by tanks. The documents were then placed in a 50-ton, steel and concrete, bomb- and

²⁰⁵ Idem, 58-59.

²⁰⁶ Idem, 77-89.

²⁰⁷ Idem, 129.

²⁰⁸ Idem, 88-90.

²⁰⁹ Idem, 170.

²¹⁰ Idem, 156-167.

²¹¹ Idem, 228-248

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fire-proof safe that was built by the Mosler Safe Company and had been installed earlier that month. Later in June, the remaining records of the Continental Congress and the Constitutional Convention were moved to the Archives. With their arrival the Archives held all of the key documents of the nation and became one of the most popular places to visit in Washington.²¹²

Records and Rights: Public Use of the National Archives

In the past as today, the National Archives maintained a vital link between citizens and their federal government. By making the historic documents of the nation available to the public, the National Archives has contributed to democracy by allowing Americans to understand and claim their rights of citizenship, to hold their government accountable, and to better understand their history. For many years, the National Archives Building served as the only point of access to the nation's official records. While most of those visiting and utilizing the records were White Americans, it became an important place where underrepresented and marginalized communities could and do research relevant records to expand and demand their right to full citizenship.

After Abraham Lincoln issued the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863, it sat in the files at the State Department out of public view. Upon its transfer to the National Archives, the Emancipation Proclamation was put on public display in 1937.²¹³ This led to increased interest in African American history, and later that year an archivist at the National Archives, James R. Mock, attended the Association for the Study of African American Life and History's (ASALH) 23rd annual conference in Washington, DC. There, he spoke about the relevant records in the National Archives related to African American history.²¹⁴ In 1963, Attorney General Robert Kennedy spoke in the Rotunda of the National Archives Building at the opening of a special exhibit on the centennial of the Emancipation Proclamation. His speech focused on the legacy of the document and the further work that needed to be done to secure equal rights for Black Americans.²¹⁵

On February 19, 1942, President Franklin D. Roosevelt issued Executive Order 9066 (EO 9066) authorizing the forced evacuation and relocation of all people in military areas who might pose a threat to national security. Over the next six months, 120,000 men, women, and children of Japanese descent were forced from their homes and incarcerated in camps—nearly 70,000 were American citizens. In 1980, Congress established a commission to review the facts surrounding EO 9066 and its impact on American citizens and others. The commission held hearings and completed copious research at the National Archives Building. In its 467-page report, entitled "Personal Justice Denied," which cited numerous Record Groups housed within the National Archives Building, the commission found that the U.S. Government unjustly detained people of Japanese ancestry despite a complete lack of evidence of any threat and without any direct military necessity. Congress subsequently passed legislation implementing the commission's recommendations, acknowledging the fundamental injustice of the mass incarceration of Japanese Americans, and apologizing on behalf of the people of the United States. The legislation granted each of the estimated 60,000 surviving internees \$20,000 in compensation, stating the government's actions were motivated "by racial prejudice, war hysteria, and a failure of political leadership."²¹⁶

²¹² Gustafson.

²¹³ Jessie Kratz, "The "EP" at the National Archives," Pieces of History blog, 12 February 2018. (Accessed online 01/18/2022: <https://prologue.blogs.archives.gov/2018/02/12/the-ep-at-the-national-archives/>)

²¹⁴ [A Phenomenon Called "Roots," 1977 – Rediscovering Black History \(archives.gov\)](https://www.archives.gov/research/black-history/a-phenomenon-called-roots-1977-rediscovering-black-history)

²¹⁵ Kratz, "The "EP"'"

²¹⁶ *Personal Justice Denied: Report of the Commission on Wartime Relocation and Internment of Civilians*. Washington, DC, 1982, <https://www.archives.gov/research/japanese-americans/justice-denied>, accessed May 10, 2021.

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Similarly, the National Archive's records associated with Native Americans have played a pivotal role in helping tribes define themselves and reassert their sovereign rights. One author maintains that "For many tribes, the documents housed in the [National Archives] building are a key resource for protecting their rights as Indigenous nations." The documents and treaties held in the archives help tribes gain federal recognition and retain or gain sovereign status.²¹⁷

During World War II the U.S. Marine Corps, in an effort to find quicker and more secure ways to send and receive code, enlisted member of the Navajo nation as "code talkers," with an estimated four hundred Navajo serving. Returning home, the soldiers were sworn to secrecy about the existence of the code, and the Navajo code talker program was highly classified throughout the war and remained so until 1968. Records from the National Archives Building helped support the "Honoring the Code Talkers Act," of 2000 which recognized the Navajo code talkers, and recommended the government award Congressional Gold and Silver Medals to member of this specialized corps who developed a code based on their indigenous language that proved impossible for the Japanese to decode.²¹⁸

In 1964, writer and historian Alex Haley visited the National Archives Building to research his family history. Looking in the 1870 census records for Alamance County, NC, he was able to confirm some details he had learned through family oral histories. This set him on a 13-year journey to find his family's origins in Africa. From his research he published the book *Roots: The Saga of an American Family* in 1976. The novel is based on the lives of six generations, starting with perhaps the most well-known character, Kunta Kinte, who was captured in Gambia and brought to America to be sold into slavery. The book became a best seller and the following year was adapted into a popular television miniseries that sparked a national interest in genealogy and flooded the National Archives Building with African American family historians. In 1977, the Microfilm Reading Room in National Archives Building in Washington, DC, had wait lines for the first time in its history, and the volume of reference letters increased exponentially, with a high of 7,000 letters in just one week that year. An August 1977 news piece in *Jet* magazine indicated that the number of Black researchers at the Archives had tripled since the airing of the *Roots* miniseries.²¹⁹

The National Archives Building has also served as a space to engage, educate, and promote the experiences of the nation's diverse society. Reflecting that mission, its records include a contextual history of the experience of LGBTQ+ citizens. NARA's holdings include the 1778 documentation of the expulsion of gay officer, Lt. Frederick Enslin from the United States Army during the Revolutionary War, the personnel records related to Walt Whitman, and documents related to Harvey Milk, one of the first openly-gay elected officials in the United States, among others. In addition, the National Archives' records encompass court filings, patents, legislation, and Supreme Court decisions that intertwine and chronicle the extensive history of the LGBTQ+ narrative and the issues of sexual identity and civil rights.²²⁰

Women's rights has also held a prominent space within the National Archives, and its holdings document women's struggle for the right to vote, equal pay, and reproductive rights. In May 2019 through June 2021, the National Archives developed and presented an exhibit titled, *Rightfully Hers* which documented the struggle of diverse activists throughout U.S. history to secure voting rights for all American women. The exhibit centered

²¹⁷ Manola Secaira, "Tribes join lawsuit to keep National Archives collection in Seattle," Crosscut 27 January 2021 (Accessed online 01/18/20: <https://crosscut.com/news/2021/01/tribes-join-lawsuit-keep-national-archives-collection-seattle>)

²¹⁸ Adam Jevic and Lee Ann Potter. "Memorandum re the Enlistment of Navajo Indians." *Social Education* 65, 5 (September 2001): 262-268. Accessed March 13, 2022 <https://www.archives.gov/education/lessons/code-talkers>

²¹⁹ [The "Roots" of Genealogy at the National Archives \(archives.gov\)](https://www.archives.gov/exhibitions/exhibitions/roots)

²²⁰ Jessie Kratz, Featured Document: Harvey Milk, May 17, 2016. See other resources at <https://www.archives.gov/news/topics/lgbt-pride-month>.

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on National Archives collections including letters from Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, and Lucy Stone. In celebration of the 100th anniversary of the 19th Amendment, the National Archives provided the public with access to records that dramatically expanded democratic principles through the amendment of the U.S. Constitution providing women the right to vote.

Employment and Access

While the National Archives Building itself was never officially segregated, in its early years the professional staff was devoid of women and people of color. Furthermore, for nearly its first four decades, there was no diversity in the highest levels of the agency.

In 1941, when Franklin D. Roosevelt issued an Executive Order banning discriminatory employment practices by Federal agencies engaged in war-related work, including the National Archives, 15 percent of National Archives employees were African American. Most held custodial, labor, mechanic, or messenger positions. In 1942, the National Archives hired its first Black archivist, Harold T. Pinkett.²²¹

In his oral history, Pinkett describes his experience as a Black man working at the National Archives from 1942 to 1979. He said he didn't feel his colleagues treated him differently because of his race, however, he talked about the awkward social situation in his early years when colleagues would invite him to lunch and much of downtown Washington had segregated dining facilities. The only places he could dine with White colleagues were DC's Recorder of Deeds Building, which was desegregated, or at a five-and-dime.²²²

By the mid-1940s, the National Archives employed a few other Black professionals. In 1944 African American teacher, Sara Dunlap Jackson was hired as an archival assistant. Over the course of her career, Jackson became a specialist in African American history in the records and celebrated historian Ira Berlin eulogized her at her death in 1991.²²³ In 1949, prominent historian and civil rights activist Carter G. Woodson invited Roland McConnell a young African American employee of the National Archives to give a paper at the 1949 annual meeting of the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History (now the Association for the Study of African American Life and History) and later published it in a paper titled "Importance of Records in the National Archives on the History of the Negro."²²⁴

The modern Civil Rights era saw Black employees begin to make gains in securing higher level positions. Harold Pinkett was promoted to head a branch at the National Archives, and the Franklin D. Roosevelt Library selected J. C. James as the first Black director of a Presidential library in 1971.²²⁵

When the National Archives first opened, women were relegated mainly to secretarial and administrative positions. In the late 1930s, the National Archives had a few female junior archivists but no archivists. Elizabeth Drewry was a reference supervisor as early as 1936; she later became the first female director of a presidential

²²¹ <https://meridian.allenpress.com/american-archivist/article/80/2/296/24414/Harold-T-Pinkett-and-the-Lonely-Crusade-of-African>

²²² U.S. National Archives and Records Administration, Transcript of Oral History Interview, Subject: Harold Pinkett. Accessed March 13, 2022, <https://www.archives.gov/files/about/history/harold-pinkett-transcript.pdf>

²²³ "In Memory of Sara Dunlap Jackson, May 28, 1919–April 19, 1991" Prologue (Summer 1997, Vol. 29, No. 2) Accessed March 13, 2022, <https://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/1997/summer/sara-dunlap-jackson.html>

²²⁴ Walter B. Hill, Jr., "[Institutions of Memory and the Documentation of African Americans in Federal Records](#)" National Archives Prologue Magazine - Federal Records and African American History (Summer 1997, Vol. 29, No. 2). Accessed <https://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/1997/summer/institutions-of-memory.html>

²²⁵ <https://prologue.blogs.archives.gov/2016/02/04/celebrating-black-history-month/>

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library. By the early 1940s, women were well-represented in divisions related to exhibits and document preservation, with only a few women in the professional position of archivist.

Up until the 1970s and 1980s, female archivists continued to constitute a small percentage of National Archives staff, and it wasn't until the 1970s that a woman broke into the highest ranks at the National Archives with Mabel Deutrich's appointment as Assistant Archivist for the Office of the National Archives in 1975.²²⁶

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the Archives also began to pay more attention to records relating to underrepresented groups. In 1970 the Archives appointed historian Robert Clarke to be a specialist in Black history and compile a guide to related records. The National Archives also hosted conferences to highlight the records pertaining to various subjects. In 1972, the Archives hosted a conference on Native American resources at the National Archives.²²⁷ The following year, the Archives hosted a conference on federal archives as sources for Afro-American research; and in 1976, the National Archives hosted a conference on women's history in conjunction with an exhibit titled, "Her Infinite Variety: A 200-Year Record of American Women," on display in the National Archives Building from July 1975 to February 1976.

Comparative Analysis

Architectural Significance

Within Pope's overall body of work, the National Archives Building is an exceptional design that demonstrates his mastery of applying classical design principles, forms, and elements to a thoroughly new and modern building program. The multiple functions of the building as an archive, exhibition hall, office building, research space, and laboratory was handled more successfully than at his Temple of the Scottish Rite (1907-1917). In both cases a large mass consisting of a ceremonial space is surrounded by a colonnade raised on a plinth. The upper levels of the massing step back from the street. The Temple was also a great expression of power, but it possesses a less complex program and, located on 16th Street, it occupies a less important location in Washington. That combination of facts allowed a freer architectural expression in general. Pope's American Pharmaceutical Building, also facing the National Mall in Washington, DC, was designed as a backdrop to the Lincoln Memorial and therefore is not as demonstrative and public as the Archives Building. The architectural expression found in the National Archives Building is one of Pope's most distinctive public buildings. *The New York Times* described it in 1937 as a reflection of our grandest national aspirations:

Those dreams—those temples that sit serene in the moil and toil of modern commerce—belong to a specific period in our development as a nation; help express and interpret what has been called the "sweeping orgy of architectural embellishment and aggrandizement" of the era through which we have just lived and in which we still strive to come to grips with our national soul.²²⁸

At the same time the building occupies an important place in American architectural history. It became a focal point for the aesthetic and intellectual struggle that consumed the design profession in the 1920s and 1930s. As architectural designers moved on from immutable definitions of beauty to embrace new forms and principles,

²²⁶ Jessie Kratz, "Ms. Archivist," National Archives Pieces of History blog, March 1, 2016. Accessed <https://prologue.blogs.archives.gov/2016/03/01/ms-archivist/>

²²⁷ Jessie Kratz, "'Observations' of Native American Records at the National Archives," Pieces of History blog, 20 November 2018. (Accessed online 01/18/2022: <https://prologue.blogs.archives.gov/2018/11/20/observations-of-native-american-records-at-the-national-archives/>)

²²⁸ "John Russell Pope," *The New York Times*, August 29, 1937.

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Pope's late works, including the National Archives Building, stand as the apogee of an art form just before its decline.

Institutional Significance

The Library of Congress is the only institution comparable to the National Archives with a national scope. Originating in 1800 as the reference library for the U.S. Congress, the library's mission has expanded into a national library with a global collection. While aligned, the two institutions have distinct missions. The library collects creative and historical works that document American and international history, while the National Archives is a record-keeping institution for the federal government. It acquires, preserves, and makes available select records determined to have long-term value to the government and the public. The Library of Congress's first freestanding building completed in 1897 was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1965 as part of a study identifying places with national significance in the area of education. At that time, the National Archives Building and the institution itself was only 30 years old and this would not have been considered for designation. While there are many regional or state archive buildings that reflect the same Progressive-era government reform ideals, none are national in scope and none have as prominent a location in the heart of the nation's capital.

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6. PROPERTY DESCRIPTION AND STATEMENT OF INTEGRITY

Ownership of Property

Private:
Public-Local:
Public-State:
Public-Federal: X

Category of Property

Building(s): X
District:
Site:
Structure:
Object:

Number of Resources within Boundary of Property:

Contributing

Buildings: 1
Sites:
Structures:
Objects:
Total:

Noncontributing

Buildings:
Sites:
Structures: 2
Objects: 1
Total:

PROVIDE PRESENT AND PAST PHYSICAL DESCRIPTIONS OF PROPERTY

(Please see specific guidance for type of resource[s] being nominated.)

SUMMARY DESCRIPTION

The National Archives Building is a seven-story box-like, neo-classical stone-clad structure wrapped in a Corinthian colonnade and surrounded by a moat that has been partially infilled. The upper two levels of the structure step back from the main mass of the building and figural bas-relief and freestanding sculptures adorn all sides with concentrations at the north and south entrances. The building is multi-functional, serving as a document repository, a research center, a theater, and an exhibition hall for America's founding documents. The building plan is bifurcated with entrances for researchers on the north side of the building and a southside grand entrance into the exhibition rotunda where the Charters of Freedom are displayed. The building sits near the center of a 5.32-acre city block in a highly visible location at the mid-point of the National Mall in Washington, DC. The nominated property includes the building, its moat and surrounding walls, fences and gates, surrounding greensward and sidewalks, torchieres and light fixtures dating from the era, freestanding sculptures, walls and decorative elements, and the flagpole on the southwest corner of the greensward. Exterior non-contributing elements include the guardhouse, security barriers, and the memorial garden and stone dedicated to Franklin Delano Roosevelt, all of which were constructed or substantially rebuilt outside the period of significance.

EXTERIOR

Location and Setting

Located ceremoniously on the cross-axis of the National Mall, on a trapezoidal lot forming Square 432 in Washington, DC, the National Archives site is bounded on the north by Pennsylvania Avenue NW, on the east by 7th Street NW, on the south by Constitution Avenue NW, and the west by 9th Street NW. As part of the Federal Triangle, a complex of seven federal and three city buildings housing government agencies, the

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Archives Building is flanked on the east by the Federal Trade Commission, or Apex, Building, and on the west by the Robert F. Kennedy Department of Justice Building. To the north across Pennsylvania Avenue is the Navy Memorial. Unlike other Federal Triangle buildings, the National Archives building is set back substantially from each street, providing areas for wide sidewalks and landscaping on all sides.

Landscape

The area formerly occupied by Louisiana (now Indiana) Avenue was closed in the 1980s, but prior to then a small triangular space formed by the intersection of 9th Street and Indiana and Pennsylvania Avenues was made into a small memorial park with a marble block monument in honor of President Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1965 (**1 Non-Contributing Object**). The site around the stone is landscaped with turf and boxwoods to relate it to the adjacent National Archives Building, and a bronze plaque raised on a granite plinth, located along a concrete walkway that cuts diagonally across the memorial space, explains the memorial.²²⁹ A paved plaza at the Pennsylvania Avenue entrance to the building is associated with the Navy Memorial across Pennsylvania Avenue. Street trees have been planted at regular intervals on all four sides of the building. Flower beds, light standards, and stone benches all designed in a classical manner by the building's architect John Russell Pope flank the entry on the Pennsylvania Avenue side (**Uncounted Contributing historic associated landscape features**). The remainder of the lighting was designed by Raymond Grenald Associates for the Pennsylvania Avenue Development Corporation Plan and installed there in 1988²³⁰ (**Uncounted, Non-contributing landscape features**).

Building

Immediate Surroundings

The building is surrounded by a wide moat that descends 15 feet below grade. The moat is surrounded by a high stone wall treated as a continuous pedestal that sits several feet back from the edge of the moat. The space between the wall and the moat creates a flat space that is planted with grass. Manicured shrubbery and small trees are planted at the corners of the building. The moat is breached only by steep driveways located on the east and west sides of the building. A truck entry descends on the east side of the building. Each entry is secured by large bronze spear-topped gates with each gate post capped by a stone eagle. The north half of the moat has been infilled to create office space at the lower levels of the building. A guardhouse is located at the east vehicular entry (**1 Non-Contributing Structure**).

²²⁹ National Park Service, "Pennsylvania Avenue, NW-White House to the Capitol: National Mall and Memorial Parks-L'Enfant Plan Reservations." Cultural Landscapes Inventory (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, May 10, 2016), 63. Architect Eric Gugler designed the memorial dedicated in 1965. As explained in the bronze plaque, it is the result of conversation between Associate Justice of the Supreme Court Felix Frankfurter and Roosevelt in 1941 in which Roosevelt said that if he were to have a monument in Washington, it should be in front of the National Archives, and should be no larger than his desk. Consequently, the memorial is a 3-foot tall, 7-foot long, 4-foot-wide block of white marble.

²³⁰ National Park Service, Cultural Landscapes Inventory, 57. Pennsylvania Avenue between the U.S. Capitol and the White House has three unique light fixtures as a result of the Pennsylvania Avenue Development Corporation's (PADC) work in the late 1970s. As stated by Dana Marks in "Washington's Streetlights": To accommodate for transportation along the roadway, the PADC designed cutoff luminaries mounted on poles set back from the curb and centered on the tree line. Tree uprights mounted on poles adjacent to the trees provide lighting for sidewalks and pedestrian areas. The third and most decorative type of street light is a special iteration of the Washington Globe with an eagle finial on top of the luminary globe. It emphasizes the prominence and importance of Pennsylvania Avenue as a symbolic and material connection between the White House and the Capitol." National Capital Planning Commission [NCPC], The Pennsylvania Avenue Initiative (Washington, DC: [NCPC.gov/initiatives/pennave/](https://www.ncpc.gov/initiatives/pennave/), accessed February 24, 2021).

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Overall Description and Lower Level

The building's general massing is that of a rectangular block that steps back at three levels, at 92 feet, 123 feet, and 147 feet, reaching a final height of 168 feet. The exterior is organized in the manner of a Classical temple with a strong base and a full and academically correct Corinthian order including base, shaft, capital, and full entablature (architrave, blank frieze, and full cornice). The entablature runs around the building 93 feet above the ground, uniting the four porticos. The four corners of the building do not have columns. The base level of the steel-frame building is clad in coursed granite with drafted margin (articulated) edges and dressed (flat) faces. This section terminates in two courses of classically molded granite, whose upper two moldings serve as the common bases of the temple-like limestone-faced structure above.

On the north side of the building, in the granite base, windows are placed below the intercolumniations of the colonnades that flank the entrance portico. They are covered by triangular grillwork in the shape of windows found in a Roman bath. Eighteen columns form a projecting portico. Behind each column is a Corinthian pilaster or, in the case of the eight central columns, an engaged column. Vertically stacked windows, with the lowest window topped by a thick classically decorated spandrel, are located between each pilaster or column.

North Entrance

Researchers and staff enter the building on the north side at the base of the central portico. The bronze double door's frame is decorated by carved jambs, and bas-reliefs depicting the *Guardians of the Portal* flank the door. The left relief depicts a Roman soldier holding a sword and shield. The torch behind him symbolizes the nation's heritage. The Roman numerals read "1776," the year the Declaration of Independence was signed, which is represented by a scroll in the figure's left hand. The figure in the right relief wears a wolf skin and holds a sword and shield. The Roman numerals behind him read "1935," the year the National Archives Building opened. Roman-inspired torchieres flank each bas-relief.

At this ground level two low walls, located at the edge of the central portico, project north, and form a forecourt. Each wall is terminated by a sculpture; the west one depicts *Past* and the east figure depicts *Future*. Each statue is more than 10 feet high and, with their bases, tower 25 feet above the sidewalk. They are by Robert Aitken who was assisted by sculptor Attilio Piccirilli. The two statues were carved in 1934-1935, and each came from a single piece of Indiana limestone. The sculptors and carvers worked on site in temporary structures created for them. Because the stones were so large and heavy, they had to be brought by train to Washington from Indiana on specially designed flat cars. *Future* is a youthful woman gazing in contemplation of things to come. She has an open book symbolizing what has yet to be written. "What is Past is Prologue," from Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, is written on the base. The base carvings represent arts and sciences—books and a lyre, an urn symbolizing the past, eagles, torches, and swords. In contrast to *Future*, *Past* is an old man gazing down the corridors of time. He has a closed book representing history. The inscription, a paraphrase of Confucius, reads: "Study the Past" (study the past if you would divine the future). The bas-reliefs include symbols of strength and unity—shields, fasces, and an anchor along with rams and eagles. It also includes the Roman god Mercury, symbolizing wisdom.

The north side frieze is inscribed with "ARCHIVES OF THE UNITED STATES" flanked by carved stone laurels. Above the portico entablature is a triangular pediment whose tympanum is a multi-figural sculpture entitled *Destiny*, by A.A. Weinman and carved by Edward Ardolino. Measuring 118 feet wide and 18 feet high at their peaks, the pediments on the north and south sides of the National Archives Building are the largest in Washington, DC. In the center *Destiny* is flanked by the opposing forces of *Peace* and *War*, implying that the country's future is dependent on its knowledge of the past, a message repeated in Robert Aitken's sculptures *Future* and *Past*. Twelve-foot stone eagles are placed at the corners of the pediment.

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East and West Elevations

The east and west sides of the building have centrally placed decastyle (10 columns) Corinthian colonnades with Corinthian three-quarter pilasters located against the wall of the building. In total, 72 Corinthian columns encircle the building. Each column stands 53 feet high, 5 feet 8 inches in diameter, and weighs 95 tons. The stones to construct the capitals were roughed out in Bedford, Indiana, by the Henry Easton Studios. The plaster model consisted of one vertical impression, which was repeated around the stone four times.

On the identical east and west sides of the building, above the granite base, a course of tall, vertically oriented stones (orthostats) with dressed faces and drafted margins form the next unifying band. Beneath the colonnades and porticos, those centrally located stones visible in the intercolumniations of the east and west colonnades are carved with military cartouches symbolizing the protection and shielding of various kinds of knowledge. The central three intercolumniations of the 10-column portico contain modern, possibly replacement windows. The windows rise to the height of the orthostat course and end at a window spandrel carved with festoons linked by bucrania (cow skulls). The multi-pane windows continue to the height of the columns. The orthostat course is topped by another string course of fretting, and the tops of the walls in the intercolumniations are each decorated with a Greek Key motif. In each corner are window frames with simple sills, molded casings, blind spandrels, and triangular pediments supported by brackets. The blank windows on the southeast and southwest were meant to contain inscriptions but were never inscribed.

Wall Treatment and Attic Story

The bulk of the stone treatment outside the area shaded by the colonnades is evenly coursed high-grade Indiana limestone. However, the stone shaded by the colonnades and porticoes on all four sides is treated differently from the stone that is not underneath a portico. Behind the colonnades, the evenly coursed stone has drafted margin (articulated) edges, making it more visible. Each intercolumniation that does not have a window (i.e., is stone) is topped by a large Greek key design in limestone.

The upper setbacks are also decorated. At approximately 125 feet above the ground, the top of the first setback is treated as a frieze and partial entablature running up to 147 feet above the ground. In the blank walls of what could be considered a frieze are roundel bas-reliefs of the Seal of the United States, the House of Representatives, the Senate, and the departments of Post Office, Justice, War, State, Navy, Treasury, Commerce, Interior, Labor, and Agriculture. In between the seals on the east, west, and south sides are inscriptions. The west side reads: "The glory and romance of our history are here preserved in the chronicles of those who conceived and builded [sic] the structure of our nation." The east side reads: "This building holds in trust the records of our national life and symbolizes our faith in the permanency of our national institutions." The south side reads: "The ties that bind the lives of our people in one indissoluble union are perpetuated in the archives of our government and to their custody this building is dedicated." Above the roundels, a decorated band, which would be called a corona on a classical entablature, has acroterion- (fan-shaped decoration) and guilloche-type decorations made up of intertwined vegetal forms.

South Façade

The south portico is the ceremonial entrance from the Mall. A grand approach stairway necessitated by the drop in topography dominates this façade and emphasizes the importance of this entry to the hemicycle that contains the founding documents. Most of the exterior treatment is the same arrangement as the Pennsylvania Avenue side, with colonnades of five columns with pilasters flanking a central portico.

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The ceremonial stairs are flanked by statues symbolizing *Guardianship* and *Heritage*. They are by James Earle Fraser, assisted by sculptors David Rubins and Sidney Waugh and carver G.A. Ratti. The sculpture on the southwest corner, on 9th and Constitution, is *Heritage*, a bare-breasted woman holding wheat and a child. She symbolizes the government's role in preserving the home. Wheat symbolizes fertility, a child symbolizes future generations, a snake-bordered robe symbolizes the protection of Athena, the Greek goddess of wisdom, and an urn symbolizes the ashes of past generations. The quotation on the base—"The heritage of the past is the seed that brings forth the harvest of the future"—is from abolitionist Wendell Phillips. The accompanying reliefs on the pedestal includes a plow, cornucopia, lamp, and books—all symbols of the importance of home. The base also includes a winged globe with the United States in front, and an ox and horse. In contrast, *Guardianship* is a muscular man holding a plumed helmet. For protection he is wearing a lion skin and holding a shield and sword. He is also holding a fasces that represents government, authority, and the unity and strength of working together. His quotation, "Eternal Vigilance is the Price of Liberty," is attributed to Thomas Jefferson. The pedestal reliefs show a quiver with arrows, a sword, a shield, and helmets, invoking protection or guardianship. His lion skin represents the strength of Hercules.

On this side the portico, also serving as an entry, is three columns deep (tripteral). Atop the National Archives' grand staircase (39 steps) are two giant bronze doors leading to the Rotunda. This was the core of Pope's plan—an impressive portico from which massive doors open into the exhibit hall. These are the largest bronze doors in the world with a tall transom whose windows have a circular metal lattice, known as a hypaethrum. Each door weighs 6.5 tons and is 38.7 feet high, 10 feet wide, and 11 inches thick.²³¹

The pediment sculpture depicting the *Recorder of the Archives* was designed by James Earle Fraser. James's wife Laura Fraser helped model the pediment. The Recorder is receiving documents, symbolic of the Archives' obligation to protect the nation's past. As on the Pennsylvania Avenue side, the corresponding statues, *Heritage* and *Guardianship*, complement the symbolism and visually form a triangle that draws the eye to the building.

Other Sculptural/Carving Work

With the exception of the pediments and large statues, all other carving on the National Archives Building was done by Indiana Limestone Corporation carvers under the supervision of Harry Easton. To complete such a large amount of decorative carving, Easton employed 66 stone cutters, carvers, and carpenters, plus a foreman, shop stewards, and an engineer to work the air compressor. All the materials used in the building came from the United States. Easton's workers were responsible for decorative elements on attic level frieze, such as the palmetto leaves and lions, pineapples, egg and dart, and dentils, in addition to the 7th Street, 9th Street, and Constitution Avenue reliefs, the coffers with decorative rosettes on the South Portico, and the 13 medallions in the attic frieze.

Exterior Alterations

Very little on the exterior of the building has changed since the building's opening in 1935. Some windows have been replaced on the east, west, and north sides of the building, but they match the original window muntin or sash design. The only major change on the exterior was the infill of the moat on the north side of the building, an addition that is only minimally visible because it is below grade. There are no changes to the exterior that substantially affect the building's integrity. Its integrity of design, workmanship, materials, location, setting, feeling, and association are unaffected. Ground-level entrances at the side of the stairs were added in the 2000s and are not character-defining elements of the building.

²³¹ The doors at Nashville's Parthenon are slightly heavier but shorter in height. See About the Parthenon (Nashville: The Parthenon website, <https://www.nashvilleparthenon.com/history>, accessed December 2020).

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INTERIOR

General Arrangement of Plan and Interior Spaces

In general, the building's function is divided into two distinct physical zones—the south side is ceremonial, and the north is for research and administration—however, the plan of the Archives building is complex because of the arrangement of stacks and storage space. The building was originally organized around a large open court intended to be remodeled into stacks when needed. Almost as soon as the building opened in 1935, the inner court area was filled with stack space, doubling the space for record storage from 374,000 cubic feet to 757,000 cubic feet.²³² The actual structure of the building varied in depth around the courtyard, reflecting the various uses in each general location. The east and west sides, which in addition to document storage accommodated archivists' offices, document preparation and filing areas, and one tier of stacks, were approximately 80 feet deep. The north side of the building was much narrower, approximately 30 feet deep, and housed the Central Research room (second floor), library (third floor), and offices for the upper-level management (main floor). The south side of the building, with the exception of the Rotunda, generally extends 38 feet into the interior courtyard. The exhibition rotunda and circular corridor is 120 feet wide and 72 feet deep and rises 92 feet into the original interior courtyard.

General Organization

Vertically the building is organized as a system of floors and stack tiers. For most of the seven floors there are three intermediate tiers supported by that floor. Each stack is approximately 7 feet tall with cork flooring and shelves that hang from the stack columns, which have been relatively unchanged since installation in the 1930s.

Vertical Circulation

The vertical organization of circulation consists of banks of elevators for researchers and visitors at the north entrance. Another two banks of elevators exist on the east and west sides of the stacks, just south of the midline of the building, providing the Archives staff access to all the stacks on both sides of the building.

Lowest Levels

Beginning at the base of the building, the area within the plinth with its granite interior walls was devoted primarily to spaces for support and mechanical use. At the very base of the building, resting immediately on the concrete raft foundation, are the chillers, pumps, air handlers, and electrical panels that support the interior environment. A portion of the east side of the plinth was (and still is) taken up by a receiving area with loading docks and a truck turntable. The rooms adjacent were used for cleaning and assessing documents, and the repair and preservation group also occupied the northwest corner in a space that receives natural light. Since the building's opening, B1 has been the conservation lab, which is now completely modernized with a dropped acoustical ceiling. Virtually all the rest of the floor was devoted to document storage, with the documents of each executive branch grouped together, an organization system that extends throughout the building. Originally the area beneath the ceremonial staircase was used for parking, but it is now occupied by a modern theater completed in 2004.

²³² On September 18, 1934, Harold L. Ickes, as Administrator of the Public Works Administration, allotted \$3,610,000 for the inner courtyard to be converted to stack space. In August 1935 McCloskey and Company won with a bid of \$1,333,000 to carry out the work. It was completed in February 1937.

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Meeting Rooms and Special Offices

As a result of the arrangement of tiers and floors, the north entry, the ground floor at grade on Pennsylvania Avenue, is at tier three, and access to the Rotunda via the grand stairs is at tier five, which is considered the main floor. The north side of tier five, which contains offices and meeting spaces, has been modernized with carpeting and hallways with plaster walls and wood chair rails and baseboards. Tier five is the location of the Colonial Revival-style Office of the Archivist, the Archivist's Reception Room with Colonial Revival wainscoting and wood flooring. Although remodeled, these spaces retain much of their original design and thus are considered character defining spaces.

This tier also contains conference rooms in the southeast corner. Created from stack space during renovations completed in 2007, they are named after the first four presidents of the United States. Since all of the conference rooms were created outside the period of significance, they are not character-defining spaces. The Washington Conference Room has modern dry-wall finishes, acoustical-tile ceilings, and recessed fluorescent lighting. The Jefferson Conference Room has tall wood paneled wainscoting that dates to the first decade of the twenty-first century.

Designed in the manner of a Renaissance palazzo, the original Central Research Room features pedimented entryways, stone walls, and a wood-beamed ceiling. The room, located on tier seven or the second floor, is an important public space that retains its historic character. Above tier eight the building is either given over to staff offices or original stack areas that remain relatively unchanged since the 1930s. Most office spaces have been modernized post period of significance with typical office cubical arrangements and dropped acoustical-tile ceilings and thus are not considered character-defining elements of the arrangement.

Rotunda Level

Visitors traditionally entered the Rotunda or exhibit hall from the south through a high portal topped by a horizontal Corinthian cornice supported by volute scrolled brackets. The antepagmentos (decorative edge) along the jambs and head of the door consist of an egg-shaped (ovolo) molding with an egg-and-dart motif, surrounding a triple fascia decoration (three-level). Within the limestone frame is a bronze surround that is decorated with Greek key motif and rosettes. This frame surrounds the hypethral (curved shape) bronze latticework and the bronze depictions of fasces topped by shields. A decorated bronze doorframe with a horizontal cornice frames the leather-padded entry door and high transom. On the inside of the door is another large doorframe with a horizontal Corinthian cornice that reaches approximately 40 feet above the marble floor. The entry itself is flanked by former coatrooms.

This central portion of the foyer is capped by a barrel vault with a 60-foot-high ceiling made of artificial stone in the shape of square coffers with a central rose decoration. Lower limestone arches provide access to the east and west foyers with stepped coffer vaults made of artificial stone. The foyers have limestone walls and marble floors, steps, and low wainscots. They terminate in hemicycles and with limestone walls and artificial stone half-domes decorated with false latticework. Doors on the north side of both foyers provide access to a circular corridor that doubles as a display space and wraps around the outside of the rotunda. One enters the Rotunda through a high portal topped by a horizontal Corinthian cornice supported by volute scrolled brackets. The floor in the entryway to the rotunda contains a bronze circular inlay in low relief depicting figures that represent the documents kept in the Archives. Justice appears as a winged figure holding a sword and scale; "War and Defense" as a winged figure holding a sword and shield; "History" as a winged figure holding the globe, quill pen, and book; and "Legislation" as a winged figure clutching a "Senate" tablet and a fasces.

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In line with the entry from the south is the Rotunda displaying the founding documents, or Charters of Freedom. Two eagles, as symbols of the United States and freedom, strength, and courage, stand guard high above the Charters. One passes through a bronze spear-topped gate decorated with griffins and the Roman god Mercury, and another 60-foot archway with coffers decorated with rosettes and blind niches in its piers to the Rotunda. The hemicycle has a marble floor patterned after the Roman Pantheon. Low display cases encircle the room except in the central section, where the founding documents are located. The lower section of the wall is marble, and limestone runs up the rest of the wall to meet the 36-foot radius artificial-stone half dome. The dome consists of octagonal and diamond-shaped coffers with intervening ribs. The shrine for the documents consists of display cases constructed of colored marble Corinthian columns set on pedestals with the entablature *en ressalt* (projecting from the wall) flanking a segmental arched pediment supported by two shorter colored-marble Corinthian columns. Barry Faulkner's murals line the walls of the Rotunda above the cases. The Declaration mural, on the west side of the rotunda, depicts the moment the Declaration was formally presented to the Continental Congress. The Constitution mural on the east side shows James Madison giving the Constitution to George Washington, President of the Constitutional Convention.

Interior Alterations

During the early 2000s (completed in 2007), the public spaces of the lower level of the Archives building underwent a substantial renovation. When the building first opened, there was a theater on the fifth floor, which was converted to office space during the early 2000s renovation (only the seats were removed; the space could be reverted to a theater if needed). A 1930s-style theater that echoes the architecture of the building was built under the south approach to the building under the grand entrance stairs. The theater was modeled loosely after Pope's auditorium for the Daughters for the American Revolution Constitution Hall in Washington, DC. The area around the outside of the Rotunda (tier five), former vaults and stack space, was converted for use as exhibit space. A new gallery and a resource center, carved out of stack space on the southwest side of tier five is a recent addition.

Less substantial changes were made in the Rotunda, where the display of the Charters of Freedom was rearranged and made more accessible. On the Pennsylvania Avenue side of the building, the 2000s renovation included moving the research consultation areas down to the ground floor and creating a new "Innovation Hub" allowing scanning and other digital means of copying. Although the 2000s renovations did alter areas of the interior, it retained the character of the primary public and private spaces and enhanced the visitor experience. The renovations do not detract from Pope's original design.

In late 2012 a new method of accessing the museum side of the building opened. Using the ground floor entrances on the south side of the building as access, a new visitor orientation space was created at that ground level. It provides access to a new gallery and a gift shop on the same level as well as the theater below and the rotunda level above. The orientation space includes a ceiling painting that shows the rotunda as if seen from that level, a means of depiction often described as *sotto in su*. The architecture of the orientation space is sympathetic to Pope's classicism and this does not detract from the overall historic character of the building.

Materials

Generally, the materials in halls and other public spaces were selected both for durability and resistance to oxidation. Marble, limestone, and artificial stone were used on the floors with high artificial stone wainscoting. Nickel alloys and stainless steel were used in areas where wear and oxidation were a threat, such on as door jambs, baseboards, and elevators. These materials are characteristic of the original interiors of the building.

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Records of the Public Buildings Commission, Record Group 121, National Records Center, Suitland, Maryland.

Records of U.S. Commission of Fine Arts, Project files, Record Group 66, National Archives, Washington, DC.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

Previously listed in the National Register (fill in 1 through 6 below)

Not previously listed in the National Register (fill in **only** 4, 5, and 6 below)

1. NR #: 715110010
2. Date of listing: May 27, 1971
3. Level of significance: State (Category II)
4. Applicable National Register Criteria: A B C D
5. Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): A B C D E F G
6. Areas of Significance: Architecture, Government.

Previously Determined Eligible for the National Register: Date of determination: 05/27/1971

Designated a National Historic Landmark: Date of designation:

Recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey: HABS No. DC-296

Recorded by Historic American Engineering Record: HAER No.

Recorded by Historic American Landscapes Survey: HALS No.

Location of additional data:

State Historic Preservation Office: Historic Preservation Office, DC Office of Planning, 1100 4th St. SW, Suite 650 East, Washington, DC 20024

Other State Agency: National Capital Planning Commission, 401 9th St. NW, #500N, Washington, DC 20004

Federal Agency: National Archives and Records Administration, Washington DC and College Park, MD; U.S. Commission of Fine Arts, Washington, DC; Franklin Delano Roosevelt Presidential Library, Hyde Park, NY; Herbert Hoover Presidential Library, West Branch, Iowa.

Local Government:

University: Syracuse University, Syracuse, NY.

Other (Specify Repository): Archives of American Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC; Burnham and Ryerson Library, Art Institute of Chicago.

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