United Shoe Machinery Corporation Building

Boston Landmarks Commission Study Report

Petition #52, 138-164 Federal Street & 38-66 High Street, Boston

United Shoe Machinery Corporation Building

Boston Landmarks Commission

This is to certify that the attached is a true and accurate copy of the United Shoe Machinery Corporation Building Study Report, as revised, which was adopted by the Boston Landmarks Commission on December 20, 1983.

BOSTON LANDMARKS COMMISSION

By: Marcia Myers
Marcia Myers, Executive Director/
Secretary

Report of the Boston Landmarks Commission

on the Potential Designation of the

UNITED SHOE MACHINERY CORPORATION BUILDING

as a Landmark

under Chapter 772 of the Acts of 1975

Approved: Marcia Myers 12/20/83
(Executive Director) (Date)

Approved: Pauline Chase Harrell 12/20/83
(Chairman) (Date)

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Approved By Marcia Myers 5/6/80
Executive Director Date

Accepted by Pauline Chase Harrell 5/6/80
Chairman Date

Revised 1/27/81

superceded

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1. LOCATION OF THE PROPERTY

1.1 Address and Assessor's Parcel Number:

The address of the United Shoe Machinery Corporation Building is 138-164 Federal Street, and 38-66 High Street. It is in Ward 3, Precinct 6. The assessor's parcel number is 4406.

1.2 Area in Which the Property is Located:

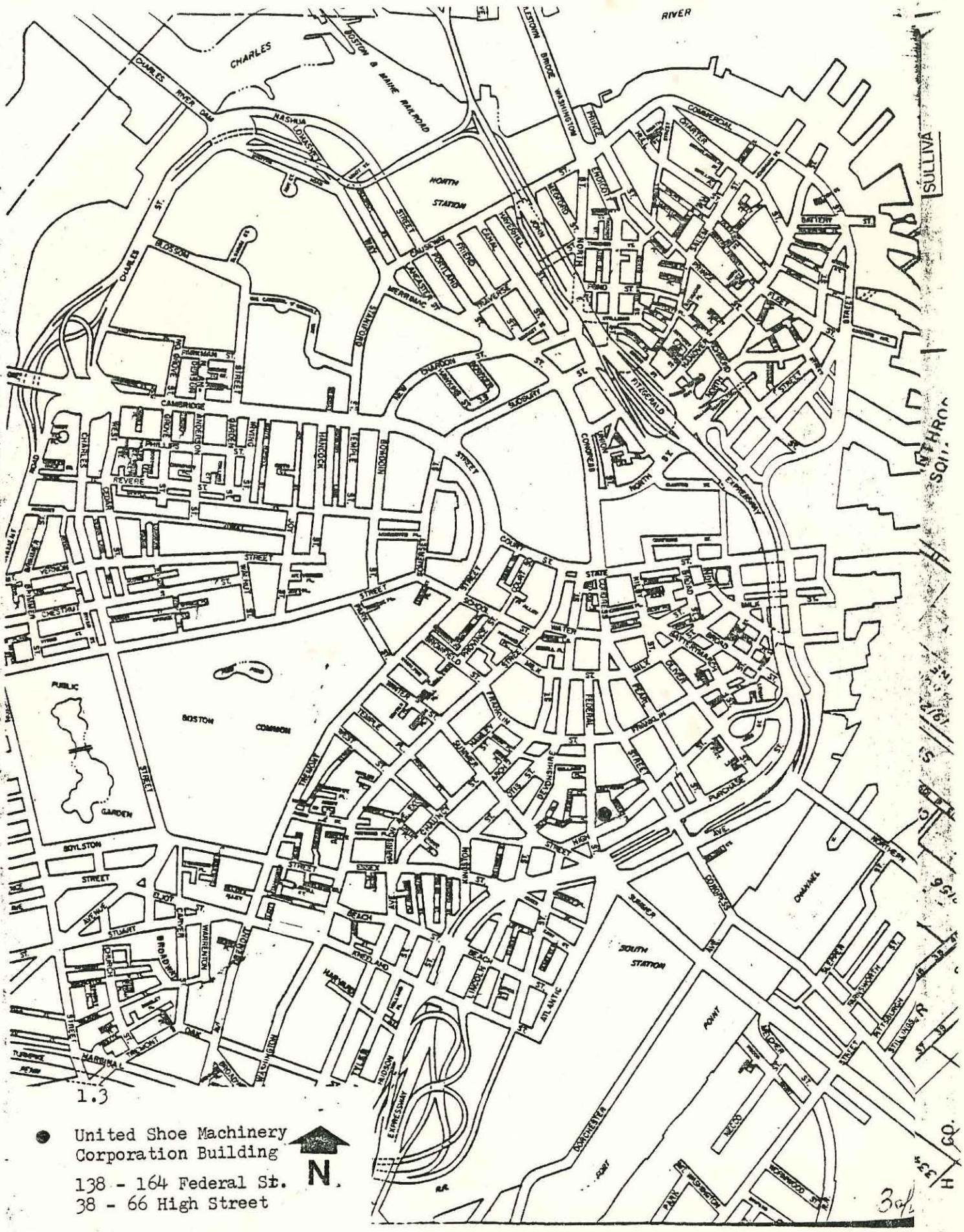
The building is located on the corner of Federal and High Streets at the edge of the Downtown Financial District. It is bounded on the southwest by Federal Street, on the northwest by a masonry party wall between it and 136 Federal Street, on the northeast by High Street Place, a public way, and on the southeast by High Street. Next door at 80 High Street is a 270 car, 3-story parking garage. Number 130-136 Federal Street is a 7-story, early 1900's commercial building, the top two stories of which are a modern addition. The northwest side of 130 Federal Street is bounded by Matthews Street.

The immediate area is characterized by a mix of 4 and 5-story commercial buildings, 8 to 15-story turn-of-the-century elevator office buildings, and modern high-rise office towers. The United Shoe Building is located caty-corner across Federal and High Streets from the Fiduciary Trust Building and a small, landscaped brick paved pedestrian area at the end of Federal Street between Purchase and High Streets. The First National Bank of Boston headquarters is located down the block from the United Shoe Machinery Corporation Building. It is one block from the Dewey Square intersection passing over the Fitzgerald Expressway. Directly across this intersection is the South Station complex and the new Federal Reserve Bank. A new twelve-story structure is under construction at the corner of High and Federal Sts. opposite the building.

1.3 Map Showing Location:

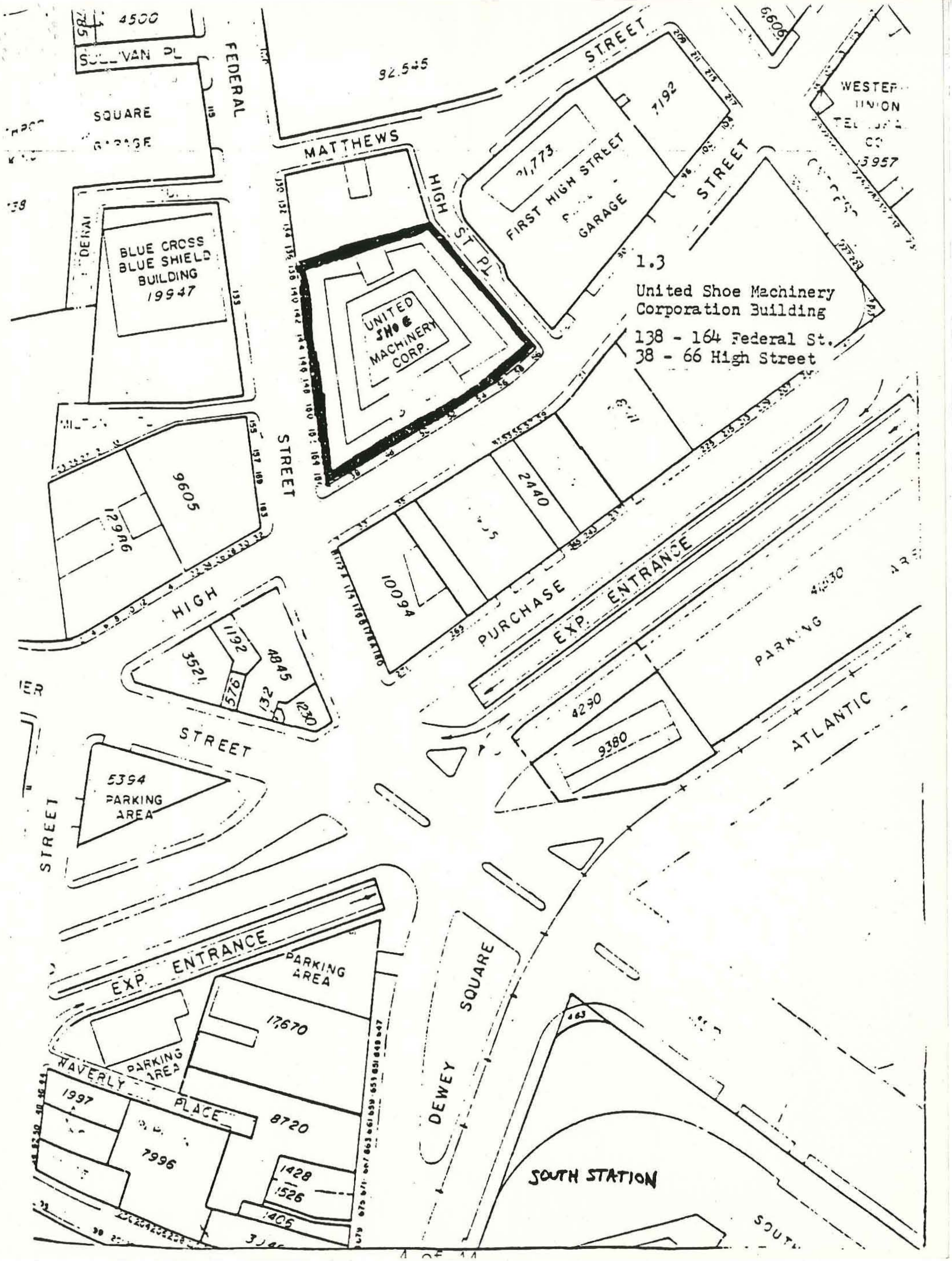
Attached.

Revised 12/20/83



● United Shoe Machinery Corporation Building

138 - 164 Federal St.
38 - 66 High Street



1.3
United Shoe Machinery Corporation Building
138 - 164 Federal St.
38 - 66 High Street

2.0 DESCRIPTION

2.1 Type and Use:

The United Shoe Machinery Corporation Building is a 24-story Art Deco style skyscraper office structure. Its use today, as when built, is for offices and ground floor commercial establishments.

2.2 Physical Description:

Constructed in 1929 and 1930, the United Shoe Machinery Corporation incorporates a major list of the elements common to Art Deco style office buildings: ziggurat massing -- a series of successively smaller vertical geometric blocks set one on top of the other, capped by an ornamented, graduated geometric roofline; vertical emphasis based on piers with recessed windows and spandrels; a facade which accents the inner steel structure; textural varieties -- brick and stone, stone and metal, major decorative elements at street level and rooflines; Art Deco decorative motifs -- geometric shapes and lines, stylized flowers, leaves, fruit, fountains, eagles, abstracted nude figures, and machine parts; and finally theatricality --illustrated primarily in the building's essentially unaltered lobby, with dazzling bronze door and window treatments, gilded ceilings and suspended frosted glass light fixtures.

The United Shoe Machine Corporation Building has a complicated ziggurat massing combined with a trapezium shaped plan. The building appears to sit directly on a low limestone and black granite platform which serves the gound floor commercial establishments. The ground floor section has no setback from the sidewalks. The bulk of the office building is composed of a major central shaft with flanking lateral masses, all sheathed in dark sand colored brick. The flanking masses rise directly from the platform and are set back at the eleventh and twelth stories and terminate at the sixteenth floor. On the primary High Street facade a major light court is created above the platform by the flanking masses. On axis at the Matthews Street party wall, a smaller light court is similarly created. The central shaft's mass is set back at the twenty-first, twenty-third, and twenty-fourth floors. It is capped by a two and one half story enclosed penthouse enclosed by a truncated hip roof covered with gold-colored terra cotta tiles.

The ziggurat massing is formed by the following sections. The two lower and larger portions of the building mass (including the second through eleventh floors) have the following number of bays:

Federal Street: 19
High Street: 18
High Street Light Court: 8 across by 4 deep

High Street Place: 16
Rear Party Wall (visible only above the eighth floor): 8
Rear Light Court: 2 across by 3 deep

The next portion of the building mass in which the flanking sections terminate (twelth through fifteenth floors) has the following number of bays:

Federal Street: 15
High Street: 16
High Street Light Court: 8 across by 2 deep
High Street Place: 11
Rear Elevation: 8
Rear Light Court: 2 across by 1 deep

The next portion is the central shaft (sixteenth through twentieth floors) and has the following number of bays:

Federal Street: 9
High Street: 10
High Street Place: 6
Rear Elevation: 6

The next setback of the central shaft (twenty-first and twenty-second floors) maintains the same bay count in the next higher setback (the twenty-third floor). They have the following number of bays:

Federal Street: 7
High Street: 8
High Street Place: 4
Rear: 4

The final setback portion below the penthouse (the twenty-fourth floor) has the following number of bays:

Federal Street: 5
High Street: 6
High Street Place: 2
Rear: 2

At each setback, the elevation terminates with a special decorative treatment of the piers and spandrels combined with stringcourses at the corners and a beveled coping. In hierarchical fashion approaching the summit, the ornamentation becomes more intensified. Light colored caste stone is uniformly used to contrast with the sandy brick tone; the cast stone provides a visual termination to each mass as well as a subtle horizontal band around the interconnected ziggurat mass.

There are a variety of patterns in low relief used to decorate spandrels, pier "capitals", and caststone stringcourses on each of the setbacks of the building. In each case the patterns are very typical Art Deco motifs, fountains, pineapples,

radiant suns, spirals and flowers. Cast stone is used decoratively in the upper ziggurat portions: thick applied pilasters instead of the brick piers alternate with window bands.

Above the ground floor platform, the elevations are organized with the same fenestration system but with the number of bays differing on each facade. Essentially, each elevation has a symmetrical arrangement consisting of a pier, window spandrel grid configuration flanked by plain corner piers. The grid comprises uniformly sized windows that are separated vertically by and are recessed behind brick piers. The windows alternate with brick spandrels, which have decorative bond patterns on the High Street flanking masses but otherwise are plain. Subtle emphasis is given at the corners by chamfering of the corner angles.

The windows are original with some random exceptions which have single pane lights. They are dark brown painted steel sash, double hung, 3 over 3, with the lights divided by mullions. This configuration adds to the building's overall vertical emphasis. The window sills are cast stone The lintels are a soldier course of brick, except at the top row on some of the setbacks, when the lintels combine with cast stone spandrels.

Ground Floor

The United Shoe Machinery Building is unique among buildings of its age in Boston in having essentially unaltered ground floor storefronts and entrances. The ground floor platform is sheathed in limestone with a two foot high polished black granite watertable. The main entrance to the office building is centered on High Street with another off-center on Federal Street. On High Street, pairs of storefronts of unequal length flank the entrance, and each are divided into display windows and shop doors. On Federal Street, the entrance is set near the party wall corner and is flanked with window bays; the remainder of the level contains a long storefront divided into display windows and shop doors. The High Street Place ground floor is undressed and is used as a service alley.

Although most shop doors on both major facades have been replaced, the storefronts retain an unaltered character because of their original bronze architraves. This ornamentation encloses the windows and upper fascia and has floral, fruit and abstract zig-zag line decoration on the vertical sections, rising to an abstracted fountain pattern. The decorated bronze rod-shaped fixtures attached to either side of each storefront originally were associated with awning mechanisms.

The upper edge of the architrave includes the decorative motifs, heads of cattle wearing headdresses (representing leather used in shoe making). Bunting and garlands are

strung from the horns of each cattle head to a formal vase of fruit and flowers. The bronze door frames and doors of stores at 48 and 58 High Street are original, with floral, leaf and abstract zig-zag motifs, a transom above and Art Deco style number on the address. The doors are set in from the property line, with tiled entranceway floors from the sidewalk to the door.

The cast stone door surround of the High Street entance is massive and monumental. It rises about four feet above the termination of the first floor cast stone facade, up into the light court area. The flat rectangular blocks of cast stone forming the surround are carved to represent abstract classical forms of columns, terminating in carved "capitals" with spiral, floral, radiant motifs. Between the "capitals" is a three part spandrel. The middle section is an unornamented octagonal cartouche in relief from the rest of the surface. The two side sections have rectangular bas relief panels carved with stylized cornucopias. Set back slightly above this spandrel is a dentilated "entablature" with a small central "pediment". Bevelled coping tops this, above which is a rectangular base for a flag pole which rises three stories and is topped dramatically with a golden eagle.

The bronze High Street doorway is recessed and fitted with four equal sized doors. The bronze architrave contains figures of stylized nude men, some working with leather and hand tools for shoes. Above these images are the classical figures of two women resting on a piece of shoe machinery, representing the many inventions that brought the shoe industry up from an individual handcraft to the powerful economic success that commissioned this building. Behind the female figures is an intricate, delicate and airy bronze screen that rises approximately six feet to the underside of the limestone lintel. This screen is backed with glass.

The Federal Street first story facade and entrance way is similar to that on High Street, in terms of limestone and granite facade, shop window surround ornamentation and the abstract classical form of the door surround. This door surround is two stories high: the spandrel is more ornate and detailed than on High Street, with a flying griffin motif and dentillated underside.

The same figure and machinery motifs are featured on the Federal Street door surround as on High Street, but the ornamentation is stretched with the addition of twelve glass lights between the door head and the panel of stylized figures. The bronze screen above is similar to that on High Street.

The four outer and inner doors in this entrance have been replaced with bronze colored annodized aluminum doors.

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Bronze Art Deco lettering signage announces the 140 Federal Street address on the right hand entrance "column". Similar lettering on the left hand column reading "United Shoe Machinery Corporation" has been removed.

Lobby

On the ground floor interior, the lobby has an L-shaped plan with entrances from High and Federal Streets. One descends eight steps from the High Street entrance to the main level of the lobby: the walls are greenish gray marble, with a base-board of polished black granite. The floors are white terrazzo with geometric border patterns inlaid in black. The ceilings have gold painted ornamental molding and border patterns.

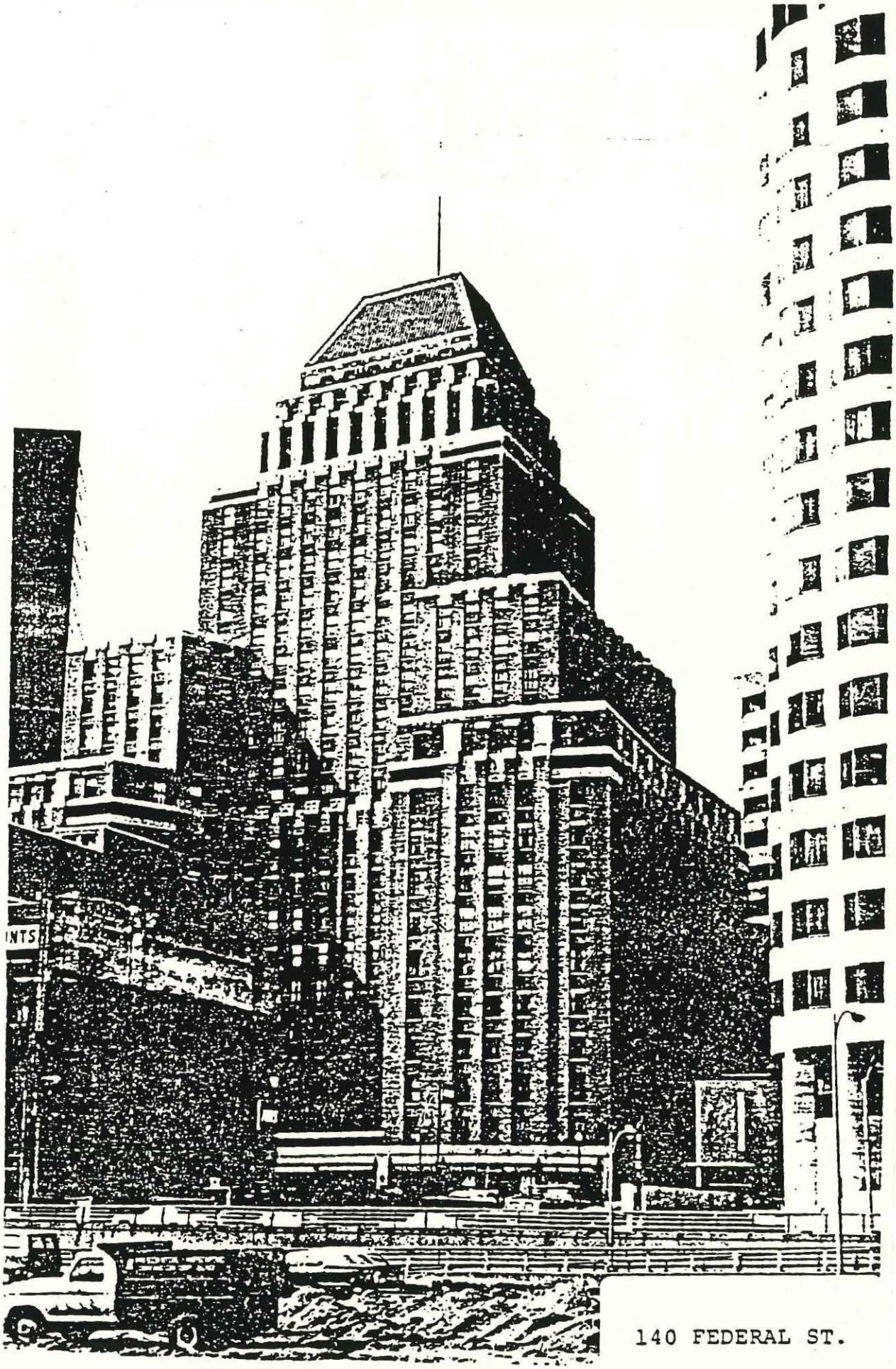
Among the outstanding decorative elements of the lobby are: the entrance foyers, with gold leaf ceilings; intricately ornamented bronze radiator screens; highly polished brass and bronze doors and a light fixture of sandblasted glass and bronze; the ten original bronze elevator doors and casings exemplary of the extremely fine detailing of Art Deco metalwork, incised with stylized scenes of fountains, flower baskets and birds; and the original bronze elevator monitoring panels.

Also outstanding are: original signage for bronze door surrounds, doors, and ornamental screens leading to ancillary spaces and shops; original bronze mail chute and box; hanging light fixtures of bronze and white frosted glass. They are mounted to the ceiling by white metal star-shaped attachments set in the middle of gold painted ornamental plaster rosettes.

The lobby has recently been finely restored.

2.3 Photographs:

Attached.



140 FEDERAL ST.

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3.0 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PROPERTY

3.1 Summary of Historical Significance

The building at 140 Federal Street was the headquarters of the United Shoe Machinery Corporation -- an industrial leader when shoe and leatherworking industries dominated the economic life of Massachusetts and the region.

The success of the shoe industry in Massachusetts was due to the mechanization of the manufacturing process; and the evolution of the United Shoe Machinery Corporation, formed in 1899 to consolidate the manufacture and distribution of shoe making machinery represents the conversion of shoe making from a cottage industry to a modern manufacturing process.

The first shoemakers in America set up shop in Salem, Massachusetts in 1629. Up until the mid-1800's shoes were made entirely by hand. Shoe factories were set up to buy materials in quantity and sell the products of manufacture. Shoemakers bought materials at the factory and made shoes at home.[1] In the early 1850's only finishing of shoes was done in Boston. With the invention of many types of shoe machinery from about 1850 on, consolidated factories were established in an area south of the present financial district. After this, the leatherworking trade grew and expanded in Boston. By 1875 it had moved into the warehouse district on Atlantic Avenue and the old waterfront south of State Street. In the 1890's most of the shoe manufacturers had left Boston to the other prominent centers such as Lynn, Brockton, and Beverly. The wholesale trade in footwear remained in town.[2]

In 1909 of the 1,918 U.S. factories making shoes and allied products, nearly half were in Massachusetts. By 1916 the industry had grown 15% and Boston was recognized as the leading center of the world in the shoe and leather trade.[3] Even though this industry suffered during the Depression, shoe, leather and allied products were still listed as the 4th largest industry in terms of employment in Massachusetts in 1965.[4] Foreign manufacture has led to a decline in the industry in recent years. However, the physical and cultural effects of its days of growth and prosperity remain. These include factory towns such as Lynn, Brockton and Beverly, wholesale trade establishments in the so-called Leather District near South Station, and the United Shoe Machinery Corporation Building.

The days of expansion and success for the Massachusetts shoe industry were brought on by mechanization of the manufacturing process. Some of the labor saving machinery and methods for leatherworking and shoe manufacture developed in Massachusetts which led to this growth include: the sewing machine, invented in Cambridge by Elias Howe of Spencer, Massachusetts and further developed in Cambridge by Issac

Merit Singer; a machine to sew shoe uppers to soles, patented in 1858 by Lyman Black of South Abington, Massachusetts; the rotary horn, invented by Robert H. Mathies of Massachusetts; the automatic clinching machine, the product of J.M. Estabrook, Milford, Massachusetts; the pegging machine, the work of Benjamin F. Sturtevant of Boston; a nail making machine by D.C. Knowlton and O.R. Chapin of Boston, and the lasting machine the invention of Jans Ernzt Matzeliger, resident of Lynn, Massachusetts. Scores of other shoe working devices were produced by Massachusetts inventors, all of which changed the shoe industry from a cottage hand industry to an urban and suburban factory manufacturing process.[5]

By 1899, the rights to the manufacture and distribution of these inventions were primarily in the hands of three shoe machinery companies -- the Goodyear Shoe Machinery Company, the McKay Lasting Machine Company, and the McKay Shoe Machinery Company. In 1899, Sidney W. Winslow, a native of Brewster, Massachusetts and a man of broad industrial vision, consolidated these companies to form the United Shoe Machinery Corporation. The purposes of this merger were to avoid confusion and duplication of efforts in shoe machinery manufacture, to halt patent litigation between the companies, and to accumulate capital and machinery design expertise in order to improve shoe production.[6]

Winslow, as president of the United Shoe Machinery Corporation, was described as "a man possessing the patience to discover machine experts, the art of winning capital, the executive ability to coordinate the rival shoe machinery producers and the vision to market the machines manufactured."[7]

The U.S.M. Corp., under Winslow's direction, grew rapidly to an extremely important position in the shoe machinery industry of the country. Within ten years of its formation, the U.S.M. Corp., controlled 98% of the shoe machinery business in the United States.[8] By the late 1920's it had subsidiary companies throughout the world -- in South America, Canada, England, Europe, Scandinavia, South Africa and Australia.[9] Among its board of directors in 1912 were Louis D. Brandeis,[10] William H. Coolidge, Gordon McKay and James J. Storrow. It was among the major investors in Boston's First National Bank and was considered to hold a controlling position in the city's money establishment.[11] The corporation can be said to have held a commanding position in the manufacturing affairs of Boston, the state and the world.

The corporation began purchasing properties on High and Federal Streets in 1928. The office building which was commissioned for this site was an expressive monument to the power of the United Shoe Machinery Corporation. As such it represents the impact of the development of industry on the growth of the downtown business district.

Although the building was sold by the United Shoe Machinery Corp., to Maurice Gordon in 1964, United Shoe stayed on as a building tenant until September, 1977, when the offices moved to Farmington, Connecticut.

The site of the United Shoe Machinery Corporation Building is of some historical significance. The birthplace of Phillips Brooks, fomrer rector of Trinity Church, Boston, originally stood on the site. A plaque near the High Street entrance notes Brooks and the donor, Episcopalian Club of Massachusetts, on December 13, 1917. The original sign was clearly replaced, as the current plaque is of the same bronze and similar detailing as other metal decorative elements of the building.

3.2 Summary of Architectural Significance:

The United Shoe Machinery Corporation Building is the most intact and refined Boston example of the Art Deco skyscraper. Executed by a prominent Boston architectural firm, it was the first building to utilize the height and massing provisions of the 1928 amendment to the Boston Zoning Law and, as such, represents the impact of such regulatory powers on the form and character of urban design in general and downtown Boston in particular.

The architectural firm of Parker, Thomas and Rice designed the United Shoe Machinery Corporation in 1929. The firm had offices in Boston and Baltimore and did a large volume of work in Boston and the vicinity from around 1908 through the late 1920's.

J. Harleston Parker (1873-1930) F.A.I.A., a graduate of Harvard College, studied architecture at M.I.T. and the Ecole des Beaux Arts. On his return to Boston in 1900, he began architectural practice in partnership with Douglas H. Thomas (1872-1915), F.A.I.A., a Johns Hopkins graduate who also trained at M.I.T. and the Ecole des Beaux Arts. In 1907, after designing the Fenway Studios (NR), Arthur Wallace Rice joined the firm, and it was under the name of Parker, Thomas and Rice that most the firm's well known commissions were completed.

While the two original principals were trained at the Ecole des Beaux Arts, no one school or style dominated their work. In "Notes on the work of Parker, Thomas & Rice", the Architectural Record in 1913 stated that "there have, of course, been other architectural firms the volumn of whose work has been larger, but it is safe to say that there is none whose work has been more varied."[12] They worked with facility in a number of architectural styles and vocabularies. The firm's major Boston works include the R.H. Stearns Co. Building (1909-NR in process), the Harvard Club of Boston, the Tennis and Racquet Club, the State Street Trust Co (1926) and the John Hancock Building (1923).[13]

The associate in charge of this particular commission was Henry Bailey Alden who had also studied at M.I.T. In addition to the United Shoe Building, he designed the Herald-Traveler Building also in the Art Deco style, although much more modest, as well as commercial and residential structures in the greater Boston area. Upon his death in 1939, the New York Times cited him as "one of Boston's prominent architects for nearly half a century."[14]

The U.S.M. Corp. Building was one of the first skyscrapers designed in Boston after the 1928 passage of an amendment to the 1924 Boston Zoning Law. The amendment related to setbacks and building heights. Its purpose was to provide an increase in allowable building heights from the previous 155 foot height limit without restricting light and air for abutting structures. It also allowed for increased flexibility in design.

A few buildings using Art Deco features predated the U.S.M. Corp. Building, but most of these did not exceed the 155 foot limit for the building mass. Two earlier Art Deco buildings, the Batterymarch (Public Service Building) and Hotel Madison, begun in 1927 and 1928 respectively have small setbacks for mechanical penthouses which are a little over the 155 foot limit. Similarly, the Ritz Hotel (1926) -- not an Art Deco building -- uses the setbacks for a proportionately small penthouse. The U.S.M. Corp. Building, however, was the precedent setting example of fully utilizing the provisions of the 1928 amendment. In a November 1928 article which chronicled major municipal regulations that had occurred in Boston in the decade of the 1920's, American Architect chose the U.S.M. Corp. Building to illustrate the '28 zoning amendment.[15]

The impact of the 1928 amendment on architectural design in general and specifically on the appearance of Boston's Central Business District was significant. Following the lead of the U.S.M. Corp. Building both in style and ziggurat massing came the State Street Bank, Franklin Street (1929) Thomas M. James; New England Telephone Company Building, Bowdoin Square (1930) architect unknown; Federal Courthouse and Post Office (1931) Cram and Ferguson; Western Union Co. Building (1930), architect unknown; and New Suffolk County Courthouse (1936), Desmond & Lord. The New England Telephone and Telegraph Co. Building on Franklin Street, designed by Cram and Ferguson, still utilized the ziggurat massing but is Art Modern in style. In all, the Art Deco style buildings in central Boston numbered about 20.

The term Art Deco comes from an abbreviation of "Exposition des Arts Decoratifs et Industriels", a Parisian design fair of 1925. It identifies an eclectic art style popular in the late 1920's, 1930's and early 1940's which had roots in cubism, Aztec and Egyptian Art, American Indian Art, Art Nouveau and the machine aesthetic. As a design style, Art Deco has

influenced many artistic realms including graphics, furniture, jewelry design and theatrical design, as well as architecture.

The style developed and reached its height of popularity during the Depression. It incorporates theatricality, lavishness and the imagery of man's domination and control of nature through machinery into one artistic sensibility considered to be a particularly American reaction to the economic conditions of the time.

As an architectural style, Art Deco was seen as an answer to the problem of how to articulate the tall steel-framed building.[16] It found expression in all types of buildings. As Don Vlack in Art Deco Architecture in New York 1920-1940 states, the style was used "to show the strength (banks), solidty (warehouses/factories), and hope (skyscrapers) of a disillusioned economic period and to make symbolically manifest the nature of a new imagination of speed, communications, energy and science".[17]

Of all types of Art Deco buildings designed, the skyscraper most typifies the style. Its vertical imagery implied a reaching upward, aspiring past the traumatic Depression to a time when business and industry would rebuild the wounded economy. Vlack calls the skyscraper "a machine-age cathedral".[18]

New York City examples of Art Deco skyscrapers are better known representatives of the style because of the flamboyance of the Chrysler Building and the grandiose interiors of Radio City. However, Boston examples represent excellent, though restrained examples of the style.

Built at the beginning of the Depression as an expressive monument to the corporate imagery of the United States Machinery Corporation, the U.S.M. Corp. Building typifies the Art Deco skyscraper in Boston. The two major images of the style -- nature and the machine -- find very appropriate expression in the headquarters of a business based on the success of machinery methods over handworking methods to manipulate the natural material of leather. As previously mentioned (Section 2.2) the U.S.M. Corp. Building incorporates a major list of the elements common to Art Deco skyscrapers, including ziggurat massing, an ornamental graduated roofline, vertical window treatment, textural varieties, standard decorative motifs and theatricality.

An important aspect of the U.S.M. Corp. Building is the * degree to which its exterior appearance and lobby are intact. While some modifications have been made to the doors and display areas of the ground floor shopfronts, the decorated bronze architraves are almost entirely intact -- a feature rarely seen today. Similarly, the main lobby of the building, while displaying newly installed carpeting and planters, is

*HOWEVER, DETERIORATION DUE TO IMPROPERLY DESIGNED PROTECTION FROM WATER DAMAGE HAS PLACED AREAS OF MASONRY AND WINDOW OPENINGS (HEADERS, FRAMES AND SILLS) IN JEOPARDY.
Revised 12/20/83

essentially intact and recently restored. It is an exceptionally fine example of a refined, luxurious treatment of Art Deco motifs.

The U.S.M. Corporation building serves, and has served as a landmark in the sense of providing visual orientation in the City. Along with contemporary structures and the venerable Custom House Tower, the U.S.M. headquarters dominated the skyline from the early 1930's until the late 1950's. It still holds a commanding position in the urban scene, especially as viewed from the South Station, Central Artery area.

In a sense, U.S.M. and its contemporaries represent a particular strata in the successively higher elevations corresponding to major development periods in the City's history. More recent high-rise buildings have claimed the Boston skyline just as New Yorks' newer towers have dwarfed her Empire State Building. But the U.S.M. building, with its distinctive setback and unique shimmering golden tile trapezoidal roof remains a counterpoint to the rectilinear shafts of recent eras.*

3.3 Relationship to Criteria for Landmarks Designation:

The U.S.M. Corp. Building meets the criteria for Landmark designation, as defined in Chapter 772 of the Acts of 1975 as follows:

(1) As a structure identified prominently with an important aspect of the economic and social history of the city, the Commonwealth and the New England region;

(2) As a structure representative of elements of architectural design embodying distinctive characteristics of a type inherently valuable for a study of the style of Art Deco architecture;

(3) As a notable work of an architectural firm and architect whose work influenced the development of the city and its environs.

(4) As a property listed in the National Register of Historical Places. **

* Preceding 2 paragraphs inserted November 21, 1980
** Revised 12/20/83

4.0 ECONOMIC STATUS

4.1 Current Assessed Value and Property Tax:

The assessed value of the property for fiscal year 1984 is $19,634,170, of which $3,730,000 is for the land and $15,904,170 is for the building. This assessment, it will be noted, includes the building, 136 Federal Street, adjacent to the building under study. These two properties, the total area of which is 37,301 square feet, are taxed as a unit. The current property tax is $638,895.89 (Abated for FY'82). In addition, the same owner holds 80 High Street, a 3-story parking garage with facilities for 270 vehicles located on a 21,773 square foot lot. The assessment on the garage is $2,966,435 with a land value of $2,721,500 and a building value of $244,935. The property tax for 80 High Street is $96,527.79. There are about 300,000 total square feet of space in the building.[19]

4.2 Current Ownership and Occupancy:

The United Shoe Machinery Building, as well as 136 Federal Street and 80 High Street are owned by Herbert W. Vaughn and Thomas M. Horan, Trustees, c/o Meredith & Grew. The previous owner of record was the William H. Kent Trust which purchased the building in 1975 from the estate of Maurice Gordon.

The ground floor storefronts are fully occupied by several travel agencies, a restaurant, the Bank and specialty stores. The office floor tenants are a mixture of high grade service activities, including many transportation (particularly rail) oriented businesses and organizations. The executive offices of the MBTA are no longer tenants in the building.

Revised 4/11/84

5.0 PLANNING CONTEXT

5.1 Background:

The United Shoe Machinery Corporation Building is located in the Central Business District. This district has gone through many phases of development throughout its history, as a result of both the changing processes of urban growth and the influences that the remnants of each era had on its successor.

Close to the original waterfront settlement of Boston, the district was first a residential area. Financial and insurance facilities to serve the needs of the shipping trade and the textile industry were established in part of this residential area, originally making use of existing houses for office space, later constructing their own buildings. Warehouses were built in the area, as storage and merchandising space for the carrying trade. When an economic recession in the late 1850's left these warehouses vacant, many were taken over as factories for the boot and leather industry. The invention of leather fabricating machinery had just made centralized shoe production economical. The area became a center for trade in dry goods, food, wool and leather. Each of these trade specialties and various manufacturing concerns developed a specific section of the district for its own use. The specialized use of these sections grew and shrank as the need for their goods changed and as the economics of being located in the area changed, in part due to new developments in transportation. A retail district emerged by the 1880's. Streetcar development facilitated the expansion of financial and business offices. Manufacturing eventually moved to the suburbs and the district took on its primary functions of wholesaling, retail and finance.[20]

From the early 1930's through the 1950's the pace of development slowed considerably in this district. Much of the new construction was for parking garages. During the 1960's and 1970's, the area again became the job center for the metropolitan region, with new jobs in the high grade services created by and creating the need for many office towers, changing the skyline of the Central Business District.

Substantial changes have occurred in recent years in the vicinity of the United Shoe Machinery Corp. Building and now it is bordered on three sides by new office buildings: the First National Bank, the Blue Cross Building, and the Keystone Building. On its fourth side, 140 Federal is separated by a block of low rise buildings from the Central Artery, South Station and Dewey Square are nearby.

5.2 Current Planning Issues:

Central to the current planning issues involving the United Shoe Machinery Corp. Building are the owners' plans for the

building and the property. Representatives of the owners indicate that they intend to develop the property. They have suggested that they are currently evaluating the U.S.M. Corp. property and studying the options available. Such options may include maintaining the property as it stands; upgrading it further in light of energy requirements; partial demolition, removing all but the internal structure of the building for use in construction of a new building; and total clearance and redevelopment.

As it stands, the building is near the ceiling of its zoning limit (ca. 300,000 square feet of 373,000 allowed). However, adding the square footage of the adjacent properties at 80 High Street and 136 Federal Street to that of the property in question would allow for an additional 300,000 square feet to be constructed within the zoning limit.

Recent planning philosophy for the Downtown Financial District has been directed toward balanced rehabilitation and new development, that is, toward promoting new economic and physical growth through conversion or redevelopment designed in such a way as to be compatible with existing uses and structures. The Landmark designations and selective development decisions involved with the Old Federal Reserve complex and with 53 State Street reflect an interest on the part of the city in promoting new construction while accommodating the historic fabric of the city.

Within the past decade, about 14 million square feet of office space has been constructed in Boston, most of it within the Central Business District. Despite this, the vacancy rate is almost non-existent for Class A office space (.4% as of December 1979).

A recent survey by the Boston Redevelopment Authority of the Office Industry (March, 1979) anticipates that the next four years will see a healthy absorption rate for both Class A office space (ca. 600,000 sq.ft. per year) and Class B and C office space (250,000 sq.ft. per year). Based on these projections, the BRA forsees a need for an additional one million square feet of office space supply per year during the early 1980's. At the same time, the BRA identifies projects in the planning and early construction stage totalling 4.4 million square feet of private office space and 1.5 million square feet in governmental offices.[21]

In its September 1979 report, The Outlook for Boston: Development in the 1980's, the Boston Redevelopment Authority notes that investor interest in Boston is strong, that in the next decade the city "must cope with the problems of success rather than the problems of failure", and that it is "now in a stronger position when considering development proposals. Today, the city can focus on development".[22] As identified in the report, the issues to be addressed pertain to the

design quality of projects, the kinds of jobs generated, and the tax revenues generated. Other broader issues which the city can also afford to address pertain to the appropriate direction of the area traditionally known as the Financial District. Should housing be allowed in this area? Should new construction be concentrated here or encouraged to disperse into areas where market forces are weaker? What effort should be made to encourage the upgrading of Class B and C office space in older buildings, as opposed to site assembly and clearance for new construction? Will the special character of Boston be destroyed by continued high rise development?

In general, the BRA projects a modest shift in emphasis in new construction in the downtown from offices to hotels, with growth in retail and housing also occurring. The Authority also sees increasing development of the tourism industry.

Specific development projects underway which may have an impact on the future of this site are:

The Old Federal Reserve Site, with 9 floor luxury hotel, 39-story office building and 350 car garage;

Lafayette Place, a Mondev Sefrius joint development on Lower Washington Street with a 1,200 car underground garage, 500 room hotel and 200,000 square feet of retail space;

South Station, with Phase I a 600 car parking deck and major intercity and commuter bus terminal and Phase II including a 1,400 car parking garage, a 600 room hotel and 400,00 square foot office building. The city plans a pedestrianization of the complicated road system between South Station and the downtown Financial District;

Dewey Square, has the potential for another 1 million square foot office building;

The State Transportation Building, 600,000 square feet of new office space and 20,000 square feet of retail space. It is reported that when this building is complete, the major tenants of the U.S.M. Corp. Building, particularly the MBTA, will relocate to this site; and

The Downtown Crossing, major upgrading of central retail area on Washington Street is almost complete.

All of these developments are certain to spell major long range changes in the area in real estate values, rent levels, vacancy rates and intensity of speculation on underdeveloped parcels.

5.2 Current Planning Issues (cont'd)

Specific development projects itemized in the 1980/81 study report are all completed or under construction. In addition, several other office buildings in the immediate vicinity are also under construction.

The Boston Landmarks Commission voted to designate the property in February 10, 1981. This designation was vetoed by the Mayor on March 4, 1981. The Boston Landmarks Commission voted to reconsider the designation on March 10, 1981, as per section 4 of Chapter 772, as amended.

5.3 Relationship to Current Zoning:

The United Shoe Machinery Corporation Building is within a B-10 zone, permitting all standard commercial uses up to an allowable physical density (measured by the Floor Area Ratio, or FAR) of ten times the total site area. At roughly 300,000 square feet, the present structure is near the 373,000 square foot ceiling of this FAR limit, on its own parcel. The FAR of the entire site under present ownership is approximately 591,000 square feet.

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6.0 ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES

6.1 Alternatives:

Both the significance of the structure and the language of the Commission's enabling statute, which precludes all but Landmark designation in the central city, limit the designation category to that of landmark.

The building is listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

The Commission also retains the option of not designating the building as a Landmark.

6.2 Impact of Alternatives:

Protection from federally-sponsored actions is provided by the inclusion of the building in the National Register and is undertaken by the Section 106 Review process. National Register listing also provides various federal income tax incentives for rehabilitation under the provisions of the Economic Recovery TaX act of 1981. Similar protection from state-sponsored activities is achieved by the concurrent listing of all National Register properties in the recently created State Register of Historic Places under Chapter 152, Massachusetts General Laws.

Additionally, but not necessarily relevant in this instance, a Section 106 Review is required when Federal funds are involved in the demolition or significant alteration of a National Register property. This review process gives the Federal agency involved, as well as the President's Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, a chance to comment and make recommendations on the proposed change.

7.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

The staff of the Boston Landmarks Commission recommends that the United Shoe Machinery Corporation Building be designated as a Landmark & its ground floor lobby be designated as a Landmark.

The recommended boundary is shown on the map in Section 2.

The recommended interior designation includes the entire ground floor lobby and its accessory spaces that are accessible to the public. The remainder of the ground floor interior and the upper floor interiors are excluded.
The standards and criteria for administering the regulatory functions provided for in Chapter 772 are attached in Section 10.[13]

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8.1 FOOTNOTES

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#5

9.0 BOSTON LANDMARKS COMMISSION - STANDARDS AND CRITERIA

9.1 Introductory Statement on Standards and Criteria to be Used in Evaluating Applications for Certificates

Per Sections 4, 5, 6, 7 and 8 of the enabling statute (Chapter 772 of the Acts of 1975 of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts) Standards and Criteria must be adopted for each Landmark Designation which shall be applied by the Commission in evaluating proposed changes to the property. Before a Certificate of Design Approval or Certificate of the Exemption can be issued for such changes, the changes must be reviewed by the Commission with regard to their conformance to the purposes of the statute.

The Standards and Criteria established thus note those features which must be conserved and/or enhanced to maintain the viability of the Landmark Designation. The intent of these guidelines is to help local officials, designers, and individual property owners to identify the characteristics that have led to designation, and thus to identify the limitation to the changes that can be made to them. It should be emphasized that conformance to the Standards and Criteria alone does not necessarily insure approval, nor are they absolute, but any request for variance from them must demonstrate the reasons for, and advantages gained by, such variance. The Commission's Certificate of Design Approval is only granted after careful review of each application and public hearing, in accordance with the statute.

As intended by the statute a wide variety of buildings and features are included within the area open to Landmark Designation, and an equally wide range exists in the latitude allowed for change. Some properties of truly exceptional architectural and/or historical value will permit only the most minor modifications, while for some others the Commission encourages changes and additions with a contemporary approach, consistent with the properties' existing features and changed uses.

In general, the intent of the Standards and Criteria is to preserve existing qualities that cause designation of a property; however, in some cases they have been so structured as to encourage the removal of additions that have lessened the integrity of the property.

It is recognized that changes will be required in designated properties for a wide variety of reasons, not all of which are under the complete control of the Commission or the owners. Primary examples are:

a) Building code conformance and safety requirements.

b) Changes necessitated by the introduction of modern mechanical and electrical systems.

c) Changes due to proposed new uses of a property.

The response to these requirements may, in some cases, present conflicts with the Standards and Criteria for a particular property. The Commission's evaluation of an application will be based upon the degree to which such changes are in harmony with the character of the property.

In some cases, priorities have been assigned within the Standards and Criteria as an aid to property owners in identifying the most critical design features.

The Standards and Criteria have been divided into two levels: (1) those general ones that are common to almost all landmark designations (with three different categories for buildings, building interiors and landscape features); and (2) those specific ones that apply to each particular property that is designated. In every case the Specific Standard and Criteria for a particular property shall take precedence over the General ones if there is a conflict.

9.2 General Standards and Criteria

A. APPROACH

1. The design approach to the property should begin with the premise that the features of historical and architectural significance described within the Study Report must be preserved. In general this will minimize the exterior alterations that will be allowed.

2. Changes and additions to the property and its environment which have taken place in the course of time are evidence of the history of the property and the neighborhood. These changes to the property may have developed significance in their own right, and this significance should be recognized and respected. ("Later integral features" shall be the term used to convey this concept.)

3. Deteriorated material or architectural features, whenever possible, should be repaired rather than replaced or removed.

4. When replacement of architectural features is necessary it should be based on physical or documentary evidence of original or later integral features.

5. New materials should, whenever possible, match the material being replaced in physical properties, design, color, texture and other visual qualities. The use of imitation replacement materials is generally discouraged.

6. New additions or alterations should not disrupt the essential form and integrity of the property and should be compatible with the size, scale, color, material and character of the property and its environment.

7. Contemporary design is encouraged for new additions; thus, they must not necessarily be imitative of an earlier style or period.

8. New additions or alterations should be done in such a way that if they were to be removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property would be unimpaired.

9. Priority shall be given to those portions of the property which are visible from public ways or which it can be reasonably inferred may be in the future.

10. Color will be considered as part of specific standards and criteria that apply to a particular property.

B. EXTERIOR WALLS

1. MASONRY

1. Retain whenever possible, original masonry and mortar.

2. Duplicate original mortar in composition, color, texture, joint size, joint profile and method of application.

3. Repair and replace deteriorated masonry with material which matches as closely as possible.

4. When necessary to clean masonry, use gentlest method possible. Do not sandblast. Doing so changes the visual quality of the material and accelerates deterioration. Test patches should always be carried out well in advance of cleaning (including exposure to all seasons if possible).

5. Avoid applying waterproofing or water repellent coating to masonry, unless required to solve a specific problem. Such coatings can accelerate deterioration.

6. In general, do not paint masonry surfaces. Painting masonry surfaces will be considered only when there is documentary evidence that this treatment was used at some point in the history of the property.

II NON-MASONRY

1. Retain and repair original or later integral material whenever possible.

2. Retain and repair, when necessary, deteriorated material with material that matches.

C. ROOFS

1. Preserve the integrity of the original or later integral roof shape.

2. Retain original roof covering whenever possible.

3. Whenever possible, replace deteriorated roof covering with material which matches the old in composition, size shape, color, texture, and installation detail.

4. Preserve architectural features which give the roof its character, such as cornices, gutters, iron filigree, cupolas, dormers, brackets.

D. WINDOWS AND DOORS

1. Retain original and later integral door and window openings where they exist. Do not enlarge or reduce door and window openings for the purpose of fitting stock window sash or doors, or air conditioners.

2. Whenever possible, repair and retain original or later integral window elements such as sash, lintels, sills, architraves, glass, shutters and other decorations and hardware. When replacement of materials or elements is necessary, it should be based on physical or documentary evidence.

3. On some properties consideration will be given to changing from the original window details to other expressions such as to a minimal anonymous treatment by the use of a single light, when consideration of cost, energy conservation or appropriateness override the desire for historical accuracy. In such cases, consideration must be given to the resulting effect on the interior as well as the exterior of the building.

E. PORCHES, STEPS AND EXTERIOR ARCHITECTURAL ELEMENTS

1. Retain and repair porches and steps that are original or later integral features including such items as railings, balusters, columns, posts, brackets, roofs, ironwork, benches, fountains, statues and decorative items.

F. SIGNS, MARQUEES AND AWNINGS

1. Signs, marquees and awnings integral to the building ornamentation or architectural detailing shall be retained and repaired where necessary.

2. New signs, marquees and awnings shall not detract from the essential form of the building nor obscure its architectural features.

3. New signs, marquees and awnings shall be of a size and material compatible with the building and its current use.

4. Signs, marquees and awnings applied to the building shall be applied in such a way that they could be removed without damaging the building.

5. All signs added to the building shall be part of one system of design, or reflect a design concept appropriate to the communication intent.

6. Lettering forms or typeface will be evaluated for the specific use intended, but generally shall either be contemporary or relate to the period of the building or its later integral features.

7. Lighting of signs will be evaluated for the specific use intended, but generally illumination of a sign shall not dominate illumination of the building.

8. The foregoing not withstanding, signs are viewed as the most appropriate vehicle for imaginative and creative expression, especially in structures being reused for purposes different from the original, and it is not the Commission's intent to stifle a creative approach to signage.

G PENTHOUSES

1. The objective of preserving the integrity of the original or later integral roof shape shall provide the basic criteria in judging whether a penthouse can be added to a roof. Height of a building, prominence of roof form, and visibility shall govern whether a penthouse will be approved.

2. Minimizing or eliminating the visual impact of the penthouse is the general objective and the following guidelines shall be followed:

   a) Location shall be selected where the penthouse is not visible from the street or adjacent buildings; setbacks shall be utilized.

   b) Overall height or other dimensions shall be kept to a point where the penthouse is not seen from the street or adjacent buildings.

   c) Exterior treatment shall relate to the materials, color and texture of the building or to other materials integral to the period and character of the building, typically used for appendages.

   d) Openings in a penthouse shall relate to the building in proportion, type and size of opening, wherever visually apparent.

H LANDSCAPE FEATURES

1. The general intent is to preserve the existing or later integral landscape features that enhance the landmark property.

2. It is recognized that often the environment surrounding the property has a character, scale and street pattern quite different from that existing when the building was constructed. Thus, changes must frequently be made to accommodate the new condition, and the landscape treatment can be seen as a transition feature between the landmark and its newer surroundings.

3. The existing landforms of the site shall not be altered unless shown to be necessary for maintenance of the landmark or site. Additional lnadforms will only be considered if they will not obscure the exterior of the landmark.

4. Original layout and materials of the walks, steps, and paved areas should be maintained. Consideration will be given to alterations if it can be shown that better site circulation is necessary and that the alterations will improve this without altering the integrity of the landmark.

5. Existing healthy plant materials should be maintained as long as possible. New plant materials should be added on a schedule that will assure a continuity in the original landscape design and its later adaptations.

6. Maintenance of, removal of, and additions to plant materials should consider maintaining existing vistas of the landmark.

I EXTERIOR LIGHTING

1. There are three aspects of lighting related to the exterior of the building:

   a) Lighting fixtures as appurtenances to the building or elements of architectural ornamentation.

   b) Quality of illumination on building exterior.

   c) Interior lighting as seen from the exterior.

2. Wherever integral to the building, original lighting fixtures shall be retained. Supplementary illumination may be added where appropriate to the current use of the building.

3. New lighting shall conform to any of the following approaches as appropriate to the building and to the current or projected use:

   a) Accurate representation of the original period, based on physical or documentary evidence.

   b) Retention or restoration of fixtures which date from an interim installation and which are considered to be appropriate to the building and use.

c) New lighting fixtures which are contemporary in design and which illuminate the exterior of the building in a way which renders it visible at night and compatible with its environment.

4. If a fixture is to be replaced, the new exterior lighting shall be located where intended in the original design. If supplementary lighting is added, the new location shall fulfill the functional intent of the current use without obscuring the building form or architectural detailing.

5. Interior lighting shall only be reviewed when its character has a significant effect on the exterior of the building; that is, when the view of the illuminated fixtures themselves, or the quality and color of the light they produce, is clearly visible through the exterior fenestration.

J. REMOVAL OF LATER ADDITIONS AND ALTERATIONS

1. Each property will be separately studied to determine if later additions and alterations can, or should, be removed. It is not possible to provide one general guideline.

2. Factors that will be considered include:

a) Compatibility with the original property's integrity in scale, materials and character.

b) Historic association with the property.

c) Quality in the design and execution of the addition.

d) Functional usefulness.

10.0 SPECIFIC STANDARDS AND CRITERIA

UNITED SHOE MACHINERY CORPORATION BUILDING
138-164 Federal Street and 38-66 High Street, Boston

A. GENERAL

The intent of these standards is to preserve the stylistic integrity and appearance of the building which has been carefully maintained since its construction. The general approach is to allow minimal change to those elements which are essential to the style and to encourage or control change to other elements to enhance the appearance of the building. It must be understood that the particular quality of the Art Deco style which this building represents is in the treatment of the textures and details of the surface elements, so that slight changes are capable of creating significant negative impact.

Under these guidelines, no work is required unless initiated by the owner. "should" as verb indicates a recommended course of action; "shall and/or "will" as a verb indicates those actions which are specifically required to preserve and protect significant architectural elements. The Commission acknowledges that any preservation or restoration goal is theoretically possible (given unrestricted resources) and not always practical. The expectation is that best efforts will be made and documented relating to those items that require actions "whenever possible". In cases when compliance is not possible, financial feasibility, aesthetic appropriateness of the alternative, and significance of the affected feature are the criteria for determining the appropriateness of the alternatives.

B. BUILDING MASS

1. No addition will be permitted to the existing bulk of the building (as shown in Section 2) without approval. Buildings on adjacent parcels may abutt the building subject to review and approval of the abuttment details.

2. Any new construction abutting the building should be carefully designed to be compatible with the USMC building.

C. FACADE

1. No new openings will be allowed inthe masonry facade without specific approval.

2. Original openings which have been bricked-in (principally on alley side) may be reopened.

3. The various masonry portions of the building may be cleaned and stabilized. Methods of cleaning, stabilization and waterproofing shall be thoroughly tested in representative sample areas before general application. The selected method of cleaning, stabilization, and waterproofing must be approved by the commission. The Commission acknowledges that some change to surface appearance may be required and expects that change will be minimal.

4. Replacement of the missing masonry elements (especially the parapets on the 2nd and 3rd levels, High St. Place facade) is encouraged. If this work is undertaken, materials must carefully coordinate with the original. If replacement of missing decorative elements is proposed, the Commission would consider proposals to replace various existing moulded decorative elements with new elements produced by a minimal number of moulding casts. Preference would be given to this system rather than selective replacement of decorative elements with blank cast pieces.

D. PYRAMIDAL ROOF

1. The form and appearance of the uppermost roof must be retained. Any replacement materials must match original in appearance.

2. The lighting fixtures should be retained, and lighting of the roof is encouraged.

E. WINDOWS

1. The original double-hung windows with the distinctive three over three sash should be retained. If replacement sash is required, as shown by economic and engineering analysis, the replacement sash must be in a dark color such as black or brown. Preference would be given to proposals for replacement of double hung sash with narrow enframements closely resembling the original frame profile.

F. SHOPFRONTS

1. The original design and arrangement of the store fronts should be retained. If existing non-original storefronts are altered, changes that recapture the original design and arrangement are encouraged.

2. No original material or detail may be removed without approval. Replacement of missing details is encouraged wherever possible; this includes awning hardware, decorative banding and marble surrounds.

3. Materials for storefront alterations are limited to those used in the original designs and will match in detail and arrangement as closely as possible. The finish and joinery of these materials is especially important in this building.

4. Rebuilding of the existing storefronts which have been changed from the original design is encouraged. As many missing elements of the original storefront as possible should be replaced, particularly the vertical divisions located in the facade plane of the building, the raised sills, pannelling and surrounds of granite and marble.

5. New signs will only be allowed in the original sign band location. These signs should exactly fit within the molding of the sign band, as the majority of existing signs do, and be applied to a bronze-like background that exactly matches the original material, flush with the original material. Additional pedestrian oriented signs may be incorporated into the interior portions of the retail areas providing they do not obstruct any detail of the building facade.

6. Internally illuminated signs may be allowed providing the opaque surface is made of metal exactly matching the original bronze and protrude no more than one inch beyond the surface of the original sign place. Type face and sign design that resemble the period are encouraged.

7. Awnings are allowed provided they resemble the original design. Existing, original hardware will be retained to the maximum extent possible.

G. ENTRANCES

1. Original doors and door frames will be retained in situ, including vestibule entrance doors to shops on High Street.

2. Replacement of existing non-original doors is encouraged, especially outer doors on High Street. Although the existing doors are very sympathetically done, restoration of the originals would greatly enhance the character and impact of the building.

3. Vestibule materials will be retained except that change to flooring may be allowed for inclement weather protection.

H. LOBBY

1. No original material, surface covering, or texture will be removed or permanently obstructed. Flooring material may not be removed. Replacement or additional materials may be installed with specific approval.

2. Original details and furnishings will be retained including such items as signs, bronze elevator doors, lighting fixtures and interior store fronts and doors.

3. Replacement and supplemental signs may be allowed providing the design of the sign container and typeface strongly reinforces the period quality of the building. Contemporary typeface is jarring in the subtle sophistication of this space.

4. The interior spaces that open onto the lobby should be designed to reinforce the style of the building and must not substantially impact the lobby.

NOTES