

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

1. Name of Property

Historic name: Mail Equipment Shops

Other names/site number: _____

Name of related multiple property listing:

N/A

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

2. Location

Street & number: 2135 5th Street NE

City or town: Washington State: D.C. County: _____

Not For Publication: Vicinity:

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this x nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property x meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

x national ___ statewide x local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

x A ___ B x C ___ D

<p>_____</p> <p>Signature of certifying official/Title:</p> <p>_____</p> <p>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</p>	<p>_____</p> <p>Date</p>
<p>In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.</p>	
<p>_____</p> <p>Signature of commenting official:</p> <p>_____</p> <p>Title :</p>	<p>_____</p> <p>Date</p> <p>_____</p> <p>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</p>

Mail Equipment Shops
Name of Property

Washington, D.C.
County and State

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

Mail Equipment Shops
Name of Property

Washington, D.C.
County and State

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>1</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

GOVERNMENT/warehouse
GOVERNMENT/manufacturing

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

VACANT

Mail Equipment Shops
Name of Property

Washington, D.C.
County and State

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Other: reinforced concrete industrial

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: CONCRETE

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

The Mail Equipment Shops (MES) building is a two-story poured-in-place concrete industrial building erected in 1918 on the corner of 5th and W streets in the Eckington neighborhood of Northeast Washington, D.C. (Figures 1 and 2). Like many buildings of this type built in the years surrounding the turn of the twentieth century in Washington, the building is sited adjacent to the former Metropolitan Branch of the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad (B&O) tracks for delivery and shipping purposes. The area surrounding the MES remains, as it was historically, as a mixed-use area with both commercial/industrial and residential buildings. Several warehouses and commercial buildings are located in the immediate vicinity of the MES along 5th Street and the railroad tracks. West of 5th Street are clusters of row houses and other residential buildings.

The long rectangular MES building has a simple grid-like form created by evenly spaced rectangular bays and a flat built-up roof. The bays contain brick spandrels, original to the building, and large glass-block windows that replaced the original steel windows around 1961. The concrete wall surfaces of the building's exterior are uniformly covered in rendered concrete. The building lacks exterior ornamentation except for two classically inspired pavilions on the 5th Street (southwest) elevation and a pedimented entrance pavilion near the center of the northeast

Mail Equipment Shops

Washington, D.C.

Name of Property

County and State

elevation. The interior of the building is characterized by its concrete finishes, including floors, ceilings, and octagonal mushroom columns with drop plates, and large open rooms that formerly held manufacturing equipment and storage areas.

The MES building retains sufficient integrity to convey its significance as the sole mail equipment shop of the Post Office Department and as an early example of a fireproof reinforced concrete warehouse in Washington, D.C. The MES was the sole manufacturer of mailbags, locks, individual mail boxes, and keys until 2002. Through 1954 it was also the only major location where repairs were made to the mail equipment. Within its setting the MES also retains sufficient integrity to convey its significance at the local level as an example of the early twentieth-century construction of industrial buildings along the Metropolitan Branch of the B&O Railroad. Although aspects of the building have been altered, the majority of these changes were made within the established period of significance and illustrate the upgrading of the building as technology and the needs of the MES changed. Despite these changes, the building retains its essential features, such as its overall footprint, massing, fenestration patterns, and reinforced concrete structural elements, to convey its historic identity.

Narrative Description

Setting

The Washington MES building at 2135 5th Street NE stands on the southeast corner of 5th and W streets. At this intersection the direction of W Street shifts approximately 30 degrees to the north, paralleling the diagonal path of Rhode Island Avenue, located to the north. The MES sits on an almost triangular parcel bounded by 5th Street on the west, W Street on the north, and a railroad corridor encompassing the Metropolitan Branch Trail, the CSX railroad, and Metrorail on the east. A bus lot lies along the southern boundary of the MES parcel.

The vicinity of the MES consists of a mixture of both residential and industrial buildings characteristic of the Eckington neighborhood. Buildings located on the east side of 5th Street, adjacent to the railroad tracks, are decidedly industrial. Rows of residential buildings are located west of the MES along W Street and 4th Street. The southern portion of the parcel is a large asphalt parking lot. A concrete sidewalk lines the north and south elevations of the building along W Street and the parking lot. Adjacent to the 5th Street entrance to the building is a small green space, surrounded by a sidewalk. A flagpole stands on the south side of the green space, adjacent to the entrance.

Exterior

The MES building has a long rectangular footprint oriented southwest-northeast. Rising two stories above a basement, the building sits on a poured concrete pier foundation and is constructed of a poured-in-place reinforced concrete that is evenly divided into a series of rectangular bays. The concrete frame is accentuated by the recession of the wall planes and

Mail Equipment Shops

Washington, D.C.
County and State

Name of Property

windows between the exterior columns, giving the building a grid-like modular form. The bays contain brick spandrels, original to the building, and large glass-block windows that replaced the original steel windows around 1961. These original windows were large, multi-light, and industrial in style. They likely had operable awning sashes.

The southwest and northeast elevations of the building are three bays wide and measure 62 feet, 7 inches. The northwest and southeast elevations are 27 bays wide and measure 541 feet, 8 inches. A built-up flat roof with a parapet and copper coping caps the building, which is approximately 35 feet high. Parapets along the southwest elevation and over the entrance on the northwest elevation have terracotta caps; the rest of the parapets have copper caps. The exterior of the building is uniformly clad in cement render. The topography of the site slopes slightly upward to the east toward the railroad tracks, and therefore the basement on the western portion of the building is partially exposed on the northwest and southeast elevations while the four easternmost bays of the building's first story are below grade.

All of the original windows and doors of the building have been replaced. On the western half of the building, the majority of the basement bays are filled with replacement glass blocks or concrete block and a single or triple one-light aluminum sliding sash windows. Most of the bays of the first and second stories hold large glass-block windows that sit on a concrete sill. The lower third of the bays, below the sills, are filled with stretcher-bond brick spandrels. Centered on the lower portion of each of the glass-block windows is a horizontal row of three one-light aluminum sliding-sash windows.

The original main entrance to the building is located slightly off-center on the northwest elevation and is marked by a one-bay-wide two-story portico. Flanking the portico are wide concrete pilasters with recessed panels. Historical photographs suggest that these panels were originally ornamented with a decorative flower motif in the panel recession. This motif has since been removed or covered. The portico is further decorated by a pedimented parapet capped with terracotta tiles. The parapet has a wide, splayed cornice of concrete and three oversized concrete modillions. The center modillion displays the letters "U.S." inscribed in the concrete. A replacement non-historic double-leaf flush metal door with sidelights is located on the first story of the entrance bay and is accessed via concrete steps. Above the door is a transom window filled with glass blocks and a second-story window, also filled with glass blocks. The northwest and southwest corners of the building along 5th Street are ornamented by pavilions with similar details, including pilasters with recessed panels, wide cornices, and exaggerated modillions. These pavilions are capped with flat parapet roofs capped with terracotta tiles. By 1968 the primary entrance to the building had shifted to the southwest elevation of the building via a one-story brick vestibule.

Northwest Elevation

The northwest elevation is 27 bays wide and measures 541 feet, 8 inches. Slightly off-center on the elevation is the original main entrance to the building, set in a full-height classically inspired portico with wide pilasters and a pediment. Two bays east of the original entrance bay on the northwest elevation is a non-historic concrete-block elevator shaft that projects from the building

Mail Equipment Shops

Washington, D.C.

Name of Property

County and State

(constructed between 1954 and 1971). East of the elevator shaft, the bays of the first story are filled with concrete block and hold non-historic triple one-light aluminum sliding-sash windows with brick rowlock sills. The second and fourth bays were originally loading/unloading platforms that have been filled in with concrete block and triple one-light aluminum sliding-sash windows. Along the four westernmost bays is a concrete railroad siding.

Northeast Elevation

The northeast elevation of the building is three bays wide and measures 62 feet, 7 inches. Three large loading bays, added in 1954, occupy the east elevation of the building. These bays are located on the second story of the building because the first story at this end of the building is below grade. The two northern bays consist of a non-historic loading dock and hold large metal overhead doors. The southern bay is enclosed with concrete block and holds a non-historic single-leaf flush metal door accessed via wooden steps. Railroad siding originally ran along this side of the building. This siding was extant in the 1985 Sanborn map but was likely removed after the closure of the B&O Railroad in 1986.

Southeast Elevation

The southeast elevation, which faces the parking lot, is 27 bays wide and measures 541 feet, 8 inches. On the western end of the elevation a non-historic one-story projecting bay on the first story holds an emergency stairwell. The bay is clad in stretcher-bond brick and has a flat roof with metal coping. It has a soldier-brick stringcourse that serves as a sill for a rectangular glass-block window on the southeast elevation. The first story of the building's southeast elevation contains several secondary entrances and overhead doors. Seven bays from the western end of the building are a double-leaf door and a non-historic steel overhead door in an original opening. The double-leaf door is protected by a flat roof awning, and the overhead door is raised on a poured concrete loading platform covered by a flat roof awning. East of the overhead door is a one-story eight-bay-wide shelter that spans three bays of the building. The shelter has a flat roof supported by rounded metal posts. Approximately in the center of the southeast elevation is a brick boiler stack that projects from the building. Four bays east of the elevator shaft is a pair of non-historic steel overhead doors accessed by a downward sloping concrete ramp and sheltered by a flat-roof awning. An additional non-historic steel overhead door is located five bays east of the pair of overhead doors. Located adjacent to the four easternmost bays of the southeast elevation is one non-historic one-story concrete-block shed built during the 1950s. (Historically a group of sheds was located southwest of the current sheds from at least the 1930s through the early 1950s. The current shed appears in a 1957 aerial photograph.) The shed is a single building constructed a three levels; each level has a flat concrete roof with splayed concrete cornices. Double-leaf metal doors provide access to the sheds on their southeast elevations.

Southwest Elevation

The southwest elevation of the building is three bays wide and measures 62 feet, 7 inches wide. The elevation has two classically inspired pavilions that continue around to the first bay of the northwest and southeast elevations. Windows on the main block of the building are replacement

Mail Equipment Shops

Washington, D.C.

Name of Property

County and State

glass block with one-light aluminum sash windows in the pavilions. The center second-story bay has a glass-block window with triple one-light aluminum sliding-sash windows. By 1968 the main entrance to the building had shifted to the west elevation of the building facing 5th Street with the addition of a one-story vestibule with a projecting trapezoidal footprint. The entrance vestibule is constructed of stretcher-bond brick and has a flat roof with metal coping. The wall plane on the west elevation of the bay is set back from the north and south walls of the vestibule. The upper portion of the west elevation consists of 15 one-light fixed aluminum-sash windows set on a stone sill. On the south end of the vestibule is a double-leaf aluminum glazed door. Mounted on the wall adjacent to the doors are aluminum letters that read "U.S. POSTAL SERVICE MAIL EQUIPMENT SHOPS."

Roof

On the built-up flat roof of the building are three penthouses. One of the penthouses serves Stairwell No. 1 and is located above the building's original main entrance. Two additional penthouses that are original to the building house stairwells and elevator shafts and are located along the south side of the building. One is located near the eastern end (Stairwell No. 2) and one near the west end (Stairwell No. 4). These rectangular penthouses are one-story, constructed of poured-in-place concrete, and have built-up roofs with a cavetto-shaped cornice and copper gutters. Each penthouse has a single-leaf non-historic metal door. Windows have been enclosed, but the wide concrete sills remain intact. The concrete-block elevator enclosure, located on the north side of the building, is also accessible from the roof via a single-leaf flush metal door. Cooling equipment is also located on the roof.

Interior

The interior of the building, similar to the exterior, is divided into a series of bays. In the interior the bays are denoted by poured-in-place concrete octagonal mushroom columns with drop heads. Within each bay the interior columns are spaced closer to each other than the exterior walls, creating wide work spaces with a central passage. The floors are finished concrete, and the ceilings are unfinished concrete. Exposed utility pipes and heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) vents are visible along the ceilings and walls. All electrical wiring is external to the walls and encased in metal conduit. Rows of fluorescent lights hang from the ceilings. Because of its utilitarian function, the building lacks any formal public spaces and decorative finishes are nonexistent.

The building has five stairwells. Three stairwells and three elevators are located in the main block of the building and service all three floors. Stair No. 1 is located in the original main entrance. Stair No. 4 and Elevator No. 1 are adjacent to each other and located on the southwest side of the building. Elevator 2 and Stair No. 2 are located on the southeast end of the building and are separated by three bays.

Each of the building's three floors contains several large open rooms that historically held large equipment. These larger rooms are interspersed with smaller rooms located along the outer bays and separated by a central corridor. The smaller rooms are formed by concrete block walls or

Mail Equipment Shops

Washington, D.C.

Name of Property

County and State

metal partition walls with glass windows that allow a view of the mechanical/machinery areas. The machinery has been removed from the building, and all of the offices are vacant.

First Floor

The first floor is generally divided into four areas: offices located on the west end of the floor; a large open space that was the tool and die area and sewing machine mechanics area; the center area of the floor that contains restrooms and locker rooms, a cafeteria, and other personnel areas; and a large open space that occupies the east half of the building and contained a bag cutting area, storage, and the press room. The east end of the building contains additional restrooms and locker rooms.

The building is currently entered through the entrance vestibule on the southwest elevation. Directly adjacent to the exterior door of the vestibule is a stair that leads up to the building's first floor. The stair has a simple aluminum handrail. A double-leaf aluminum glazed door leads into the reception area. South of the entrance, the wall is composed of aluminum windows and transoms. The remaining walls of the vestibule are covered in paneling made to look like wood. The floor is covered in greenstone. Adjacent to the entrance is a trapezoidal-shaped planter. The west end of the floor, adjacent to the vestibule, contains several small rooms and offices, including a reception room, accounting office, plant manager office, and two small restrooms. The rooms and offices, with paneled partition walls, industrial carpeted floors, and drop ceilings with fluorescent lighting, are accessed via an L-shaped corridor. These rooms and offices were added to the building around the same time that the new adjacent entrance was built in 1968.

Upon exiting the office area, the corridor leads to an open area that contains what was the tool and die room. Along the north side of the room is the grinding room and two smaller rooms, one of which served as a heat treatment room. East of the tool and die room and on the north side of the floor was the location of the sewing machine mechanics area. Along the south side of the floor are Stair No. 4 and Elevator No. 1.

In the center of the floor, near the original main entrance, are several smaller rooms separated by a central corridor. Along the north side, west of the entrance, is a women's toilet and locker room and a series of rooms most recently used as computer rooms. Across from the entrance on the south side of the floor are a cafeteria, storage rooms, a conference room (added ca. 1987-89), and a men's toilet and locker room. The cafeteria has linoleum floor and a drop acoustical tile ceiling.

The east half of the building contains a large open room that served as a bag cutting area, a storage area, and a press room. Along the eastern end of the floor is a stairwell and women's and men's restrooms. Elevator No. 2 is located on the south side of the press room. East of the press room are men's and women's restrooms and locker rooms. The men's room is accessed via the press room; the women's locker room and restroom is accessed from Stair No. 2.

Mail Equipment Shops

Name of Property

Washington, D.C.

County and State

Second Floor

The second floor of the building primarily consists of what used to be the lock shop, located on the west end of the floor, and a large open area occupying the center of the building that was used for post office box manufacturing. Along the eastern end of the building are several storage and loading areas, accessed via the loading dock on the east side of the building.

The lock shop is a large open room three by five bays in size. On the southeast end of the room is a small foreman's office. Adjacent to the office are Stair No. 4 and Elevator No 1. The ceiling of the lock shop has original keyways that were used either for rail-conveyor system or belt systems for power machinery. Along the north side of the building, east of the lock shop, is a row of small rooms, including a key cutting room, men's and women's toilets and locker rooms, and Stair No. 1, which leads to the original main entrance. Along the south and east side of these rooms is the former sewing area. The main portion of the room measures three by seven bays.

The east end of the second floor contains a stock room office and storage areas. Along the north and south sides of the floor, adjacent to the stockroom office and separated by a central corridor, the storage area is enclosed by chain-link metal dividers. Adjacent to the loading dock doors on the east end of the building are an open storage and loading area and a small men's locker room and toilet.

Basement

The basement of the building is divided into two sections from east to west. Until at least ca. 1941, the eastern section of the basement in its entirety was crawlspace. In 1941 plans called for the excavation of a three-bay by four-bay section of the crawlspace, adjacent to the boiler room, for use as a storage area. It is unclear when the excavation took place.

The west portion consists of an open room at the west end that was used for maintenance. Along the south side of the maintenance area is a fire stairwell that leads outside. Adjacent to the open room are several small offices and rooms separated by a central corridor. Rooms and offices include an A/C equipment room, key room, maintenance office, storage, office, men's locker room, and men's and women's toilets. On the east end of the basement's west section is the boiler room, which contains the boilers and an air compressor and chiller for the HVAC system. Stair No. 5 along the east wall of the boiler room leads down to the storage area that was added around the same time a portion of the crawlspace was excavated. Wood supports were added in the storage area at an undetermined date to provide structural support for machinery on the first story.

Integrity

The MES building retains sufficient integrity to convey its significance as the sole mail equipment shop of the Post Office Department and as an early and rare example of a fireproof reinforced concrete warehouse in Washington, D.C. The MES was the sole manufacturer of mailbags, locks, individual mail boxes, and keys until 2002. Through 1954 it was also the only

Mail Equipment Shops

Washington, D.C.
County and State

Name of Property

major location where repairs were made to mail equipment. Although aspects of the building have been altered, these changes illustrate the upgrading of the building as technology and the needs of the MES changed. Despite these changes, the building retains its essential features, such as its overall rectangular footprint, two-story massing, fenestration patterns, and reinforced concrete structural elements, to convey its historic identity. Integrity of setting and location remain intact, so the MES also retains significance at the local level as an example of the early twentieth-century construction of industrial buildings along the Metropolitan Branch of the B&O Railroad.

Location: The place where the historic property was constructed or the place where the historic event occurred.

The MES building retains its integrity of location as it is in the place of its original construction. The site of the MES was chosen in part because of its location adjacent to the Metropolitan Branch of the B&O Railroad, which allowed the shipment and receiving of mailbags, locks, and equipment.

Setting: The physical environment of a historic property.

Around the time of the MES building's construction, the Eckington neighborhood consisted of a mix of residential, commercial, and industrial buildings. In the vicinity of the MES site were industrial buildings and warehouses along the B&O Railroad line. West of the railroad, city squares were divided into smaller lots for residential buildings, and several row houses had been built by 1920. This arrangement allowed the MES and other industrial buildings to create a buffer between these residential buildings and the rail tracks. The MES building retains its integrity of setting as its surroundings remain mostly a mixture of industrial buildings along the railroad tracks and rows of residential buildings to the west. Directly north of the MES building is the former Eagle Bedding Co. building (constructed ca. 1925), currently used by U-Haul. Across 5th Street and to the south are low-rise commercial buildings that were constructed by 1927.¹

Design: The combination of the elements that create the form, plan, space, structure, and style of a property.

The design characteristics that are essential to the MES building are its simple two-story rectangular footprint and massing, and its structural grid—a poured-in-place reinforced concrete frame that allowed large expanses of industrial windows on the exterior, and large open spaces for machinery and storage on the interior. The building's simple stark industrial form was relieved by the classically derived pavilions on the southwest elevation and the original entrance pavilion on the northwest elevation.

¹ G.W. Baist, *Baist's Real Estate Atlas of Surveys of Washington, District of Columbia* (Philadelphia: G.W. Baist Company, 1927).

Mail Equipment Shops
Name of Property

Washington, D.C.
County and State

For the most part these design characteristics remain intact. As per the *National Register Bulletin 15: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation*, the rarity of an early twentieth-century poured-in-place concrete warehouse in Washington, D.C. justifies the acceptance of a greater degree of alteration to its design.² Primary changes made to the design features on the exterior include the addition of an entrance vestibule on the 5th Street (southwest) elevation of the building, and the removal and addition of loading bays as shipping and deliveries shifted from rail to truck. The interior of the building has been modernized, and additional offices and smaller rooms have been added over the years as needed. Despite these alterations, the design features of the building are apparent, primarily through the retention of the building's form, massing, and fenestration patterns on the exterior as well as the large open rooms on the interior. Thus, the MES retains its integrity of design.

Materials: The physical elements that were combined or deposited during a particular period of time and in a particular pattern of configuration to form a historic property.

The most prominent exterior and interior material of the MES building is its poured-in-place reinforced concrete. On the exterior the poured concrete appears to have been always finished with cement render. The concrete materials are intact throughout the building, illustrating its fireproof character. The second most important material feature was the building's steel industrial windows. The original steel windows were removed and replaced with glass block in the 1960s. The replacement of these windows was essential to the activities within the building because they reduced glare.

Although the windows have been replaced, the primary material of the building, poured reinforced concrete, is still intact and thus the MES building retains its integrity of materials. The rarity of the MES building as an example of a poured-in-place reinforced concrete warehouse in the District of Columbia also justifies accepting a greater degree of change to the building's materials.

Workmanship: The physical evidence of the crafts of a particular culture or people during any given time in history or prehistory.

The MES building retains its integrity of workmanship through its reinforced concrete structure, which is most prominently illustrated on its interior through exposed concrete finishes and mushroom columns. On the building's exterior the concrete was deliberately covered in cement render, which was not uncommon during the era because the render would cover the rough concrete surface created by wood formwork before the uses of plywood and form release coatings. The reinforced concrete frame and finishes of the exterior and interior of the building have not been altered since the building's construction.

² National Park Service, *National Register Bulletin 15: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Interior, 1995), 47.

Mail Equipment Shops

Name of Property

Washington, D.C.

County and State

Feeling: A property's expression of the aesthetic or historic sense of a particular period of time.

The MES building maintains integrity of feeling as an early twentieth-century concrete warehouse in the Eckington neighborhood through its form, massing, and fenestration patterns, which remain predominantly intact. These characteristics, along with its setting and location between the railroad and residential blocks, convey the property's historical character.

Association: The direct link between an important historic event or person and a historic property.

The MES building is significant for its association with the Post Office Department/U.S. Postal Service (USPS) as the sole manufacturer of mail bags, locks, and keys between 1918 and 2002 (keys and locks were manufactured until 2014). After the closing of the MES in June 2014, all of the manufacturing equipment was removed from the building. Although the USPS remains the owner of the building, the MES has lost its integrity of association as an equipment shop because the machinery is gone and the building is vacant.

Mail Equipment Shops
Name of Property

Washington, D.C.
County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes
- B. Removed from its original location
- C. A birthplace or grave
- D. A cemetery
- E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure
- F. A commemorative property
- G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

Mail Equipment Shops
Name of Property

Washington, D.C.
County and State

Areas of Significance
(Enter categories from instructions.)

ARCHITECTURE

GOVERNMENT

Period of Significance
1918-1966

Significant Dates

1918

1954

1961

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Mail Equipment Shops

Name of Property

Washington, D.C.
County and State

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The MES is nationally significant under Criterion A for its contribution to the maintenance of the USPS as the only mail equipment shop in the USPS. It was the sole manufacturer of mailbags, locks, individual mail boxes, and keys until 2002. Through 1954 this was also the only major location where repairs were made to mail equipment.

Within its setting the MES is locally significant under Criterion A as an example of the early twentieth-century construction of industrial buildings along the Metropolitan Branch of the B&O Railroad. Under Criterion C the MES is locally significant as a rare, early example of a fireproof poured-in-place reinforced concrete warehouse in Washington, D.C. Its design and use of reinforced concrete specifically relates to its operation as the MES and the need to hold heavy machinery used in the manufacturing of mail bags and locks.

The period of significance spans the period from the building's construction in 1918 to 1966. This period of significance begins when the building was completed and production of mail bags, keys, locks, and equipment began at the property. The property continued to be used for this purpose through 2014 as the sole manufacturer of locks and keys, and of mail bags through 2002. For cases in which a property historically continued to have importance that extends beyond the limit of 50 years from the date of evaluation, 50 years ago is used as the closing date for the period of significance unless exceptional importance can be argued to justify extending the period of significance beyond that date. The MES does not have exceptional significance, and therefore the closing date of the period of significance is 1966.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least one paragraph for each area of significance.)

Criterion A: USPS Mail Equipment Shops

Beginning in 1888, the small Post Office Department repair shops in various parts of the country, with the exception of one shop in Chicago, were consolidated in a single shop located in Washington, D.C., at 479-481 C Street, NW.³ By 1902 the building was not large enough for the 250 employees, equipment, and storage space needed to house reserve stocks of pouches and

³ U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, *Report of the Postmaster-General of the United States*, 51st Congress, 1st Session (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1889), 248; U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, *Annual Reports of the Post-Office Department for the Fiscal year Ended June 30, 1902. Report of the Postmaster-General*, 57th Congress, 2nd Session, Document No. 4 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1902), 201.

Mail Equipment Shops

Washington, D.C.
County and State

Name of Property

sacks.⁴ In 1907 a larger building at 1st and K Streets NE was leased for 10 years at a cost of \$32,000 per year.⁵

By 1914 the Post Office Department wanted to construct a purpose-built repair shop. The new building was to be a “reinforced-concrete and all-glass factory-type building” containing approximately 70,000 square feet of floor space at an estimated cost of \$200,000, including the purchase of the site. The Post Office Department specifically looked for a site located on the railroad tracks, since proximity to rail lines was essential for efficient shipment of equipment.⁶ Attempts to have the building constructed through the Treasury Department’s Office of the Supervising Architect were unproductive because the Supervising Architect responded that it would not be able to design and construct the building until 1920. Furthermore, the building would cost \$400,000, and the Treasury Department preferred to build the new shop at the back of the site for the City Post Office Building (2 Massachusetts Avenue NE, constructed in 1914), requiring that the building be faced with white brick or granite to match its surroundings. The site was not accessible to railroad tracks or considered suitable for an industrial building.

Rather than construct a building on an unsuitable site for twice the price after years of delay, the Post Office Department followed a suggestion from the Treasury Department and sought to secure an appropriation from Congress to construct the building on its own.⁷ The Post Office Department purchased parcel 131/47, a diagonal lot including portions of the W Street right-of-way and Squares 3623 and 3624. The department received the \$200,000 appropriation from Congress for land acquisition and construction of the new building. The MES building was completed in April 1918, one year and five months after a contract was issued for its construction. The completed building was as “a steel and concrete manufacturing establishment, second to none in the city of Washington, fireproof and sanitary, thoroughly lighted and ventilated.”⁸

The building housed employees working in two eight-hour shifts. The MES manufactured and repaired almost all mail bag and mail lock equipment used by the Post Office Department, at less than the cost of using contracts with private firms. The shops also manufactured and supplied cord fasteners, grommets, and other metal attachments for the bags. The shops adopted new methods of production that streamlined productions, such as an automatic die for making

⁴ U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, *Annual Reports of the Post-Office Department for the Fiscal year Ended June 30, 1902. Report of the Postmaster-General, 57th Congress, 2nd Session, Document No. 4* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1902), 201-202.

⁵ U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, *Hearings before the Committee on Public Buildings and Grounds. Equipment Shop for Post Office Department at Washington, D.C. H.R. 6827* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1916), 4.

⁶ U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, *Hearings before the Committee on Public Buildings and Grounds. Equipment Shop for Post Office Department at Washington, D.C., 4.*

⁷ U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, *Hearings before the Committee on Public Buildings and Grounds. Equipment Shop for Post Office Department at Washington, D.C., 5.*

⁸ U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, *Annual Report of the Postmaster General for the Fiscal year Ended June 30 1919, 66th Congress, 2nd Session, Doc. No. 497* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1919), 76.

Mail Equipment Shops

Washington, D.C.
County and State

Name of Property

grommet rings.⁹ In 1920 a third shift was begun to handle an increase in work and the manufacture of new mail bags.¹⁰

The Mail Equipment Shops department was formed on July 1, 1921. The new department was formed out of the MES, Mail Bag Repair Shop, and Mail Lock Shop, which were operating under the Division of Equipment and Supplies. The Mail Equipment Shops operated under the Fourth Assistant Postmaster General, charged with the manufacture and repair of mail bags, mail containers and attachments, mail locks, keys, chains, tools, machinery, and "other equipment for the postal service as may be deemed expedient."¹¹ It also prepared specifications for these items, kept records of them, and issued items to postmasters and other officials.¹² The shops designed and made innovative equipment to be used in post offices across the country, such as fireproof mail containers for airplanes, automobile bodies, and the revolving pickup table used in tandem with canceling machines. The table was reported to have saved the government \$110,000.¹³ The shops also repaired scales, canceling-machine motors, numbering machines, and similar equipment. By 1923 the bag shop employed 213 people and the tool shop 94 people.¹⁴ During the 1930s it was estimated that upwards of 1,500,000 mail sacks and 800,000 locks were produced in a given year.¹⁵

By 1927 the federal government had purchased a triangular-shaped parcel south of the building, parcel 131/76.¹⁶ In 1939 a plan to landscape part of the land and use the rest for parking was developed, but it was never carried out.¹⁷ The parcel remained vacant through 1951 and was developed as a parking lot by the early 1960s.

By 1952 the MES remained the only major repair plant in the country. It employed 517 personnel; 402 worked the day shift and 115 worked the night shift.¹⁸ Although certain general minor repairs, such as putting new lacings into sacks, were done in the field, all major repairs took place at the MES. A centralized equipment shop was seen as the most economical option because the movement of mail was primarily from the Northeast United States to the rest of the

⁹ U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, *Annual Report of the Postmaster General for the Fiscal year Ended June 30 1919*, 77-78.

¹⁰ U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, *Annual Report of the Postmaster General For the Fiscal Year Ended June 30 1920*, 66th Congress, 3rd Session, Doc. No. 875 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1921), 121.

¹¹ "Mail Repair Work Transferred to New Postal Shop," *Washington Post*, July 1, 1921.

¹² "Mail Repair Work Transferred to New Postal Shop," *Washington Post*, July 1, 1921.

¹³ U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, *Annual Report of the Postmaster General For the Fiscal Year Ended June 30 1920*, 121; Photo of New Revolving Pickup Table, *Washington Post*, August 5, 1922.

¹⁴ Joint Commission on Postal Service, *Reports to the Joint Commission on Postal Service by the Committee of Postal Service Officials and the Efficiency Engineers*, Part 2 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1923), 1165.

¹⁵ "The Story Behind the Mail Bags: Story of Mail Bags," *Washington Post*, April 15, 1934.

¹⁶ Baist

¹⁷ United States Postal Service [USPS], *Maps and Plans of the Mail Equipment Shop, 1939* (Washington, D.C.: USPS Asset Management Planning).

¹⁸ U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, *Modernization of Mail-Equipment Shops. Hearing before the Committee on Post Office and Civil Service*, 82nd Congress, 2nd Session, H.R. 7471 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1952), 11.

Mail Equipment Shops

Washington, D.C.

Name of Property

County and State

country. As mail was sent from the Northeast, the rest of the country had empty mail bags that required shipment back to the east for reuse. Shipment of bags for repair at one central point in the East was seen as more economical because creating decentralized shops would require construction of new facilities and additional overhead costs.¹⁹

As of 1952 no modernization or enlargement of the building had occurred since its original construction in 1918.²⁰ Plans developed for the expansion and reorganization of the building provide an indication of the original layout and use of spaces prior to the 1950s renovation. These descriptions of the building's use stated that, through 1952, lock manufacturing was located on the second floor. The manufacturing and repair of mail equipment were both located on two floors, although exact locations were not noted. The only stockroom in the building was located in the basement.²¹ Materials were transported throughout the building using baggage trucks.²² Machinery in the building was described as "ancient," such as the machine used to cut canvas for mail sacks and pouches and stencil identification.²³

Plans for expansion and modernization of the building were made in the early 1950s, including rearranging processes to place all manufacturing on the first floor and all repairing on the second floor. An addition was to be constructed to house toilet and restroom facilities so that space could be rearranged for the regrouping of operations. Other plans included moving heavy press and stamp machines to the basement; new electric power distribution and lighting systems; interior painting; replacement of motors; resurfacing floors; placing stockrooms adjacent to operations that they would support, rather than one large stockroom; installing new techniques and procedures for the flow of materials and mail bags; and relocation of plant maintenance equipment, shops, etc.²⁴

Concurrently with plans for the MES expansion, the Post Office Department shifted toward decentralization. Studies were made to determine whether production of parts was as economical as outside procurement. As a result, in November 1953 grommets were procured from private industry rather than produced in-house. In 1954 the Post Office Department developed a decentralization plan, shifting 225 postal workers from the District of Columbia to save an expected \$250,000 annually. Repair centers were to be established in New York City, Cincinnati, Philadelphia, Chicago, St. Louis, and Atlanta. These areas were constantly in need of mail bags, and the plan to move facilities to these areas also meant that bags could be repaired and put back

¹⁹ U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, *Modernization of Mail-Equipment Shops. Hearing before the Committee on Post Office and Civil Service*, 9.

²⁰ U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, *Modernization of Mail-Equipment Shops. Hearing before the Committee on Post Office and Civil Service*, 5.

²¹ U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, *Modernization of Mail-Equipment Shops. Hearing before the Committee on Post Office and Civil Service*, 6.

²² U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, *Modernization of Mail-Equipment Shops. Hearing before the Committee on Post Office and Civil Service*, 7.

²³ U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, *Modernization of Mail-Equipment Shops. Hearing before the Committee on Post Office and Civil Service*, 6.

²⁴ U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, *Modernization of Mail-Equipment Shops. Hearing before the Committee on Post Office and Civil Service*, 3.

Mail Equipment Shops

Washington, D.C.
County and State

Name of Property

into circulation quickly. The first center was to be set up in New York City in May; the entire transition took place over a period of four months.²⁵

A contract for \$500,000 was awarded in June 1954 to modernize the shops. The work included building alterations to allow better placement of machinery, installation of additional facilities, maximizing space utilization to allow the use of modern production techniques, and labor-saving equipment.²⁶ Noticeably absent from the appropriation was an addition to the building, likely because the decentralization efforts that shifted work from the MES to other locations across the country reduced the need for additional space within the building. After the renovation, reorganization, and modernization of the plant was completed in 1955, the MES continued to manufacture locks, postal keys, mail bags, and pouches used by the Post Office Department.²⁷

Equipment updates continued throughout the latter half of the twentieth century. For instance, in 1961 a new bag-cutting, printing, and folding machine was installed, with twice the productive capacity of older machines. Five old presses were replaced by three modern presses that were equipped with progressive stage tools and automatic safety devices.²⁸ A *Washington Post* article from 1961 noted that the building also housed the Post Office Department's cartographic section, but provided no details about its location within the building.

The MES continued to manufacture mail bags, locks, and keys from the 1960s until 2002. Equipment in the shops was updated with technological changes, but it appears that few changes were made to the building. Up until 2002, the basement level held the production of post office box keys; the first story held tool and die areas, a bag cutting area, and the press room; and the second story was used for the production of canvas, express, and #1 and #2 domestic bags. In 2002 production of mail bags was outsourced because production became too costly. From 2002 until 2014, the MES continued as the sole manufacturer of locks and keys for the USPS. Once mail bag production was discontinued, the second floor was used for the production of post office box keys, and the basement was used as a maintenance area. The MES continued to produce locks and keys until it was closed on June 13, 2014.²⁹

²⁵ "225 Postal Workers Here Face Transfer," *Washington Evening Star*, March 6, 1954.

²⁶ U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, *1954 Annual Report, Postmaster General for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1954*, 84th Congress, 1st Session, House Doc. No. 2 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1954), 25.

²⁷ U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, *The Postmaster General reports on the services of the United States Post Office Department during the Fiscal Year 1955*, 84th Congress, 2nd Session, House Document No. 242 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1955), 31.

²⁸ U.S. Congress, House of Representatives, *The Postmaster General reports on the services of the United States Post Office Department during the Fiscal Year 1961*, 87th Congress, 2nd Session, House Document No. 252 (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1961), 64.

²⁹ Philip Villanueva, Lead Supply Chain Planner, United States Postal Service, Conversation with Sarah Groesbeck, Louis Berger Architectural Historian, August 14, 2014.

Mail Equipment Shops

Name of Property

Washington, D.C.

County and State

Criterion C: Concrete Warehouses in Washington, D.C.

Historically the term *warehouse* was used broadly to include industrial architecture related to storage, manufacturing, and processing of equipment and goods. Warehouses in the nineteenth century were most often constructed with brick walls inside and out, yet these buildings were only semi-fireproof because they had wood interiors. The earliest known industrial concrete building was constructed in 1887, attributed to Ernest L. Ransome. Reinforced concrete was more fireproof and allowed walls and floors to bear large amounts of weight without internal supports, allowing increased spans and efficiency of spatial use within the building. The flat roof that typified concrete buildings was ideal for warehouse construction because an attic story was not useable space for typical warehouse activities.³⁰

Modern fireproof buildings of the 1910s were either of structural steel or reinforced concrete construction following guidelines established by the National Board of Fire Underwriters. Additionally, as reinforced concrete building progressed, the need for load-bearing interior walls was removed, and the frame design freed wall space for larger amounts of light through fireproof steel-sash windows. Steel windows were considered a necessity by the 1920s; typically these windows had at least 20 lights with a pivot sash in the center. Industrial buildings of the twentieth century were frequently decorated with simplified architectural ornament, usually a derivative of a particular style, which emphasized the building's utilitarian character. The cost of materials and space requirements often limited the decorative elements to construction rather than applied materials.³¹ The MES building exhibits these modest stylistic details through its entrance pavilion on W Street. The projecting bays on the building's northwest and southwest corners visible from 5th Street have simplified pilasters, cornices, and modillions, and, in the case of the entrance pavilion, a pediment. The remainder of the building remains unadorned with its prominent features consisting of the plain concrete structure and large industrial windows.

The MES building also represents a rare extant and early example of this building type in Washington, D.C. A 1991-1992 warehouse study by the firm Tracerics established that concrete warehouses were uncommon in Washington, most likely because the modest size and scale of the warehouses in D.C. did not require sophisticated heavy construction techniques. The majority were one-story warehouses constructed of brick.³² In the case of the MES building, the reinforced concrete structure was necessary to support the loads of the heavy mechanical presses required for the production of locks and mail boxes. Its skeletal concrete frame construction also permitted the large expanses of windows for daylighting and ventilation, which improved

³⁰ Tracerics, *D.C. Warehouse Survey Project*, Final Report (Washington, D.C.: prepared for the D.C. Historic Preservation Division, 1991), 12-13. In 1991-1992 the D.C. Preservation League and the consulting firm Tracerics completed a D.C. Warehouse Survey for the DC SHPO. Divided into two phases (1991 and 1992), the goals of Phase I of the study were to provide an inventory of warehouses within specific defined boundaries in Washington, D.C.; provide an inventory of warehouses in that area; record basic information about the buildings' architecture; research and design a historic context statement; evaluate the identified buildings within that historic context; and make recommendations for future studies and actions. The study area included the area around Union Station and the B&O Railroad tracks in Northeast Washington. The MES is located in that study area and was included in the Phase I reconnaissance survey. The studies were accepted by the DC Historic Preservation Office (DCHPO).

³¹ Tracerics (Phase I), 13.

³² Tracerics (Phase I), 17.

Mail Equipment Shops

Washington, D.C.
 County and State

Name of Property

working conditions. The simplicity and the utilitarian nature of the building is conveyed on the exterior by the clearly visible spandrel and on the interior through the exposed structure of the mushroom columns and concrete frame. Within the context of warehouses in Washington, D.C., the reinforced concrete MES represented a technological advance in construction; reinforced concrete was a structural form that was uncommon in early twentieth-century Washington, which was not considered a city with any need for manufacturing facilities.

Phase I and Phase II of Tracerics' *D.C. Warehouse Survey Project* identified the Columbia Warehouse Development Corporation building, built in 1917 and located at 1126 1st Street NE, as one of the earliest examples of a concrete warehouse in Washington, D.C. This warehouse, which has since been demolished, was similar to the MES. It was a two-story warehouse with large bands of steel-sash windows separated by the narrow piers created by the building's concrete frame. The building's primary elevations had projecting end bays with parapet roofs and a central projecting pavilion that was the building's main entrance. During Phase II of the warehouse study, the Columbia Warehouse was determined eligible for the National Register of Historic Places.³³

The use of concrete was not uncommon for warehouses built by the federal government, but the MES building is also the first known concrete warehouse built by the federal government in Washington. Table 1 shows warehouses built by the federal government according to a recent evaluation of the General Services Administration's Regional Office Building (historically the Procurement Division of the Treasury Department warehouse).³⁴

Table 1. Federal Warehouses in Washington, D.C.³⁵

<i>Warehouse Name</i>	<i>Date</i>	<i>No. of Stories</i>	<i>Material</i>	<i>Address</i>
U.S. Postal Equipment Shops	1918	2	Concrete	2135 5th St. NE
U.S. Gov't Bridge Department	1920-1940	1	Brick	3501 K St., NW
Procurement Division Warehouse	1931-1935	7	Concrete	7th & D Streets SW
U.S. Gov't Warehouse	1932	2	Concrete and Brick	800 9th St. SW
U.S. Gov't Garage and Auto Repair	circa 1930	2	Brick	49 L St. SE
Treasury Dep't, U.S. Customs Service	1935	1	Unknown	16-20 M St. NW
U.S. Gov't Printing Office Paper Warehouse (Building 4)	1939	3	Concrete	23 G Pl. NE

³³ Tracerics, *D.C. Warehouse Survey Phase II, Final Report* (Washington, D.C.: prepared for the D.C. Historic Preservation Division, 1992), 41.

³⁴ Bill Marzella, EHT Tracerics, *Determination of Eligibility for the General Services Administration Regional Office Building* (Washington, D.C.: prepared for the General Services Administration, 2013), 14.

³⁵ Marzella, 14.

Mail Equipment Shops

Washington, D.C.

Name of Property

County and State

The structure of the MES is simple in concept but represents state-of-the-art design for a reinforced concrete structure of the era. It consists of four-way flat slab reinforced concrete floor plates supported by reinforced concrete mushroom columns with drop heads on the interior. They are so-called because each column flares outward, suggesting a mushroom shape, at each upper floor connection to accommodate increased reinforcement to react to the moment forces at those locations and to provide material to resist the increased shear forces at the columns. The exterior columns also have diagonal projections on the interior, presumably to resist the increased shear at those locations. The exterior walls are essentially masonry and glass curtain walls resting on the concrete floor slabs. The major floor openings for stairs and elevators are framed as separate reinforced concrete columns and beams that tie back into the rest of the structure.

Although the building's structural frame is not the earliest of its type in the United States, its design was still a relatively new system that is ideally suited for buildings such as factories and warehouses with heavy live loads and a need for relatively column-free space. The mushroom-column four-way flat-slab design had been in use since 1906, when Claude Turner completed the Johnson-Bovey Building in Minneapolis. The appeal of a system that was fireproof and economical (its construction was alleged to be cheaper than heavy timber) and could carry heavy live loads was propitious in a time when American manufacturing was booming.³⁶ By 1914 Turner and Eddy boasted that more than 2,000 buildings using this structural system of this type had been built, tested, and erected without a serious accident.³⁷

The popularity of this type of design also resulted in several companies developing proprietary variants of Turner's design. By 1918 there were at least nine different flat slab systems with a corresponding variation in details and reinforcing bar sizes and layouts.³⁸ The particular details of the structure, such as the drop heads and treatment of the column heads, indicate that the system used for the MES building may be one of three: the Cantilever Flat Slab systems designed by the Concrete Steel Products Company of Chicago, the Simplex System developed by the Concrete Steel Company of New York, or the Akme [sic] System created by the Condron Company.³⁹ Of particular interest is the design of the interior wall-to-column connection on the exterior columns. This does not appear to be a common detail in most flat slab structural systems.

This type of construction also lent itself to large-scale industrial buildings because of their high design live loads and relatively column-free spaces. In the case of the MES, keyways were also

³⁶ Donald Friedman, *Historical Building Construction: Design, Materials, and Technology* (New York: Norton and Company, 2010), 144-145.

³⁷ Friedman, 144; Charles Turner and Henry Eddy, *A Treatise on the Principles of Design and Execution of Reinforced Concrete Work in Buildings* (Minneapolis, 1914), viii-11.

³⁸ D.A. Gasparini, "Contributions of C.A.P. Turner to Development of Reinforced Concrete Flat Slabs 1905-1909," *Journal of Structural Engineering* (2002), 1251.

³⁹ George Hool and Nathan Johnson, *Data for the Design and Construction of Plain and Reinforced Concrete Structures* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1918), 463-467.

Mail Equipment Shops

Washington, D.C.

Name of Property

County and State

inserted into the form work to permit the insertion of both a rail-conveyor system or other support for belt systems that might have been used to power machinery.

Criterion A: Warehouse Construction in Washington, D.C.

The history and construction of warehouses in the District of Columbia was directly related to the development of railroads in the district. Railroad development in Washington during the nineteenth century was decentralized; each rail system had freight and passenger stations scattered throughout the city. The 1902 McMillan Plan called for establishing one central station, eventually called Union Station, which created a single depot for the various rail lines passing through the city. The completion of Union Station in 1907 spurred the development of industry and the construction of manufacturing and warehouse-type buildings north of the station along the main rail line in Northeast Washington.

Prior to MES's opening, the area northeast of Union Station along the railroad corridor to New York Avenue was lightly developed, with larger numbers of buildings south of L Street. Development in the area surrounding the railroad corridor pre-1907 was primarily residential with some industrial buildings along the Metropolitan Branch of the B&O Railroad. Construction of the main line railroad tracks north of Union Station spurred construction of warehouses on vacant lots and residential blocks near the tracks. The buildings tended to be clustered in groups close to the tracks. Areas behind the warehouses remained primarily residential, with the industrial architecture creating a buffer between houses and the railroads.⁴⁰

The Eckington neighborhood within which the MES building is located provides an example of the effect that the railroad had on neighborhoods along the rail line. Laid out as a residential subdivision in 1887, Eckington was forever altered when the B&O uprooted the neighborhood's east end. Residents of the area were said to have been relatively supportive, however, as the railroad brought with it commercial and industrial prospects. One of their primary concerns was the proximity of their homes to the rail tracks. An early wall was proposed to create a barrier between the residential area and rail line, but it was never constructed. Ironically, as mentioned above, the industrial buildings that came as a result of the railroad served as the buffer themselves.⁴¹

The comparatively small size and scale of warehouse buildings in Washington, D.C., typically only one or two stories, limited the need for more modern materials. A 1991 study of pre-1945 warehouses in the area surrounding the MES identified exterior material of warehouse buildings as brick more than 92 percent of the time, brick and concrete less than 2 percent of the time, and concrete approximately 6 percent of the time. The survey revealed that structural material was also predominantly brick: eight concrete frame buildings were identified. The study noted that:

...despite the fact that the use of concrete in industrial architecture had reached maturity by 1910 or 1911 in the United States and Europe, its use as a structural material in the warehouse in the

⁴⁰ Tracerics (Phase I), 14-16.

⁴¹ "History," *Eckington Civic Association* (accessed February 28, 2016, at <http://eckingtoncivicassociation.org/eckington/history-3/>).

Mail Equipment Shops

Washington, D.C.

Name of Property

County and State

survey area was not widespread. This discrepancy is not only attributed to the fact that the small size and scale of the buildings did not require sophisticated technological achievements, but is also indicative of the delay in the acceptance and implementation of technological advances in Washington, which was never considered an industrial city.⁴²

The first building constructed in Washington, D.C., using concrete was completed in 1917: Center City Community Corporation, 1126 1st Street NE. Three of the eight concrete buildings identified in the study were government warehouses: the U.S. Government Warehouse (15th Street NE, 1940-41), the U.S. Government Printing Office warehouse (23 G Place, 1939), and the MES.⁴³

A follow-up Phase II study that included six survey areas along railroad corridors in Washington, D.C., showed that the 1991 survey was consistent with development in the greater Washington area, in which 87 percent of buildings were of brick construction and less than 7 percent were of concrete construction.⁴⁴

⁴² Tracerics (Phase I), 17.

⁴³ Tracerics (Phase I), 17.

⁴⁴ Tracerics (Phase II), 25-26.

Mail Equipment Shops
Name of Property

Washington, D.C.
County and State

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

- Baist, G.W. *Baist's Real Estate Atlas of Surveys of Washington, District of Columbia*. Philadelphia: G.W. Baist Company, 1927.
- Friedman, Donald. *Historical Building Construction: Design, Materials, and Technology*. New York: Norton and Company, 2010.
- Gasparini, D.A. "Contributions of C.A.P. Turner to Development of Reinforced Concrete Flat Slabs 1905-1909." *Journal of Structural Engineering* (2002):1233-1252.
- "History." *Eckington Civic Association*. Accessed February 28, 2016, at <http://eckingtoncivicassociation.org/eckington/history-3/>.
- Hool, George, and Johnson, Nathan. *Data for the Design and Construction of Plain and Reinforced Concrete Structures*. New York: McGraw Hill, 1918.
- Joint Commission on Postal Service. *Reports to the Joint Commission on Postal Service by the Committee of Postal Service Officials and the Efficiency Engineers*. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1923. Part 2.
- "Main Equipment, Sewing Room." Photograph, ca. 1926. New York Public Library: *The Pageant of America Photography Collection, Wallach Division*. Accessed July 2014 at <http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47d9-b7f2-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99>.
- "Main Equipment, Stamping Sacks." Photograph, ca. 1926. New York Public Library: *The Pageant of America Photography Collection, Wallach Division*. Accessed July 2014 at <http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47d9-b7f2-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99>.
- "Main Equipment Shop, Damaged Sacks." Photograph, ca. 1926. New York Public Library: *The Pageant of America Photography Collection, Wallach Division*. Accessed July 2014 at <http://digitalcollections.nypl.org/items/510d47d9-b7f2-a3d9-e040-e00a18064a99>.
- Marzella, Bill. *Determination of Eligibility for the General Services Administration Regional Office Building*. Washington, D.C.: Prepared by EHT Tracerics for the General Services Administration, 2013.
- National Park Service. *National Register Bulletin 15: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Interior, 1997.
- . *National Register Bulletin 16: How to Complete the National Register Registration Form*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Interior, 1995.

Mail Equipment Shops

Washington, D.C.
County and State

Name of Property

"Post Office 5th and W Sts., N.E." Photograph, 1918. Image No. 11818. District of Columbia Public Library: Prints and Photographs Collection.

Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps of Washington, Volume 4, Plate 453. New York: Sanborn Map Publishing Company, 1985.

Tracerics. *D.C. Warehouse Survey Project*. Washington, D.C.: prepared for the D.C. Historic Preservation Division, 1991. Final Report.

Tracerics. *D.C. Warehouse Survey Phase II*. Washington, D.C.: prepared for the D.C. Historic Preservation Division, 1992. Final Report.

Turner, Charles, and Eddy, Henry. *A Treatise on the Principles of Design and Execution of Reinforced Concrete Work in Buildings*. Minneapolis, 1914.

U.S. Congress, House of Representatives. *Report of the Postmaster-General of the United States*. 51st Congress, 1st Session. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1889.

U.S. Congress, House of Representatives. *Annual Reports of the Post-Office Department for the Fiscal year Ended June 30, 1902. Report of the Postmaster-General*. 57th Congress, 2nd Session. Document No. 4. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1902.

U.S. Congress, House of Representatives. *Hearings before the Committee on Public Buildings and Grounds. Equipment Shop for Post Office Department at Washington, D.C.* H.R. 6827. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1916.

U.S. Congress, House of Representatives. *Annual Report of the Postmaster General for the Fiscal year Ended June 30 1919*. 66th Congress, 2nd Session. Doc. No. 497. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1919.

U.S. Congress, House of Representatives. *Annual Report of the Postmaster General For the Fiscal Year Ended June 30 1920*. 66th Congress, 3rd Session. Doc. No. 875. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1921.

U.S. Congress, House of Representatives. *Modernization of Mail-Equipment Shops. Hearing before the Committee on Post Office and Civil Service*. 82nd Congress, 2nd Session. H.R. 7471. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1952.

U.S. Congress, House of Representatives. *1954 Annual Report, Postmaster General for the Fiscal Year Ended June 30, 1954*. 84th Congress, 1st Session. House Doc. No. 2. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1954.

U.S. Congress, House of Representatives. *The Postmaster General reports on the services of the United States Post Office Department during the Fiscal Year 1955*. 84th Congress, 2nd Session. House Document No. 242. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1955.

Mail Equipment Shops

Washington, D.C.

Name of Property

County and State

U.S. Congress, House of Representatives. *The Postmaster General reports on the services of the United States Post Office Department during the Fiscal Year 1961*. 87th Congress, 2nd Session. House Document No. 252. Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1961.

United States Geological Survey [USGS]. USGS High Resolution Orthoimagery, National Map Viewer. Reston, Virginia: United States Geological Survey.

———. *Washington East, District of Columbia-Maryland-Virginia.7.5-Minute Series Topographic Quadrangle*, 2014a. Reston, Virginia: United States Geological Survey.

———. *Washington West, District of Columbia-Maryland-Virginia.7.5-Minute Series Topographic Quadrangle*, 2014b. Reston, Virginia: United States Geological Survey.

United States Postal Service [USPS]. *Maps and Plans of the Mail Equipment Shop*. Washington, D.C.: USPS Asset Management Planning.

Villanueva, Philip, Lead Supply Chain Planner, United States Postal Service. Conversation with Sarah Groesbeck, Louis Berger Architectural Historian. August 14, 2014.

“225 Postal Workers Here Face Transfer.” *Washington Evening Star*. March 6, 1954.

[No Title.] *Washington Evening Star*. June 9, 1975.

“Mail Repair Work Transferred to New Postal Shop.” *Washington Post*. July 1, 1921.

[No Title.] Photo of New Revolving Pickup Table. *Washington Post*. August 5, 1922.

“Modernizing Postal Plant is Approved.” *Washington Post*. July 13, 1961.

“The Story Behind the Mail Bags: Story of Mail Bags.” *Washington Post*. April 15, 1934.

Wymer, John P. “5th Street NE West of W Street (U.S. Mail Equipment Shop and American Wholesalers).” Photograph, 1949. Catalog Number WY 0671.13. Washington, D.C.: Historical Society of Washington, D.C., John P. Wymer Photograph Collection.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested

previously listed in the National Register

previously determined eligible by the National Register

designated a National Historic Landmark

recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____

recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Mail Equipment Shops
Name of Property _____

Washington, D.C.
County and State _____

Primary location of additional data:

State Historic Preservation Office

Other State agency

Federal agency

Local government

University

Other

Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property 2.5

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates (decimal degrees)

Datum if other than WGS84: N/A

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. Latitude: 38.919335 Longitude: -76.998530

2. Latitude: Longitude:

3. Latitude: Longitude:

4. Latitude: Longitude:

Or

UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or NAD 1983

1. Zone: Easting: Northing:

2. Zone: Easting: Northing:

Mail Equipment Shops

Washington, D.C.
County and State

Name of Property

3. Zone: Easting: Northing:
4. Zone: Easting : Northing:

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The MES property includes the entire parcel owned by the United States government on Square 3624 (parcels 131/47 and 131/76) in Washington, D.C., as shown on the accompanying boundary map.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary of the MES includes the parcels purchased by the United States government for the construction and operation of the MES.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Patti Kuhn, Sarah Groesbeck, and Amber Anderson, Architectural Historians
organization: Louis Berger Group, Inc.
street & number: 1250 23rd Street NW
city or town: Washington state: DC zip code: 20037
e-mail sgroesbeck@louisberger.com, aanderson@louisberger.com
telephone: 202-303-2799, 518-514-9322
date: March 2016

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A USGS map or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.

Mail Equipment Shops

Name of Property

Washington, D.C.

County and State

- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property: USPS Mail Equipment Shops

City or Vicinity: Washington

County: N/A

State: District of Columbia

Photographer: Sarah Groesbeck

Date Photographed: July 11, 2014

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

- 1 of 27 . View of USPS Mail Equipment Shops, West Corner Looking East
- 2 of 27 . View of Southwest Elevation, Looking Northeast
- 3 of 27 . View of Entrance Vestibule (ca. 1965), Looking North
- 4 of 27 . View of Original Main Entrance on Northwest Elevation, Looking Southwest
- 5 of 27 . View Northeast Elevation and Loading Dock, Looking South
- 6 of 27 . View of Southeast Elevation East End, Looking Northeast
- 7 of 27 . View of Southeast Elevation, Looking Northwest
- 8 of 27 . Basement, View of Maintenance Area
- 9 of 27 . Basement, View of Storage Area, Wooden Supports
- 10 of 27 . Basement, View of Storage Area

Mail Equipment Shops

Washington, D.C.
County and State

Name of Property

- 11 of 27. First Floor, Entrance Vestibule (ca. 1965) Looking South
- 12 of 27. First Floor, Receiving Room, Looking West Toward Entrance Vestibule
- 13 of 27. First Floor, Tool and Die Area, Looking East
- 14 of 27. First Floor, Tool and Die Area, Looking West
- 15 of 27. First Floor, Detail of Column
- 16 of 27. First Floor, View of Elevator No. 1
- 17 of 27. First Floor, Western Portion of Building, Corridor Adjacent to Cafeteria,
Looking Southeast
- 18 of 27. First Floor, View of Manufacturing and Storage Areas Looking Southeast
Toward Press Room
- 19 of 27. First Floor, Stairway No. 4
- 20 of 27. Second Floor, Storage and Loading Areas, Looking East
- 21 of 27. Second Floor, East Portion of Building, Corridor Looking East Toward Storage
Areas
- 22 of 27. Second Floor, Storage Area, Looking East Toward Stock Room Office
- 23 of 27. Second Floor, Key/Lock Manufacturing Area, Looking West
- 24 of 27. Second Floor, Key/Lock Manufacturing Area, Looking Southwest
- 25 of 27. Second Floor, Western Portion of Building, Women's Toilet
- 26 of 27. Second Floor, Western End of Building, Looking Northwest
- 27 of 27. Second Floor, Lock Shop Area Ceiling Showing Original Keyways

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.



FIGURE 1: Location Map (USGS Washington East 2014a, USGS Washington West 2014b)



FIGURE 2: Site Map (USGS 2013)



PHOTO 1: View of USPS Mail Equipment Shops, West Corner Looking East



PHOTO 2: View of Southwest Elevation, Looking Northeast



PHOTO 3: View of Entrance Vestibule (ca. 1965), Looking North



PHOTO 4: View of Original Main Entrance on Northwest Elevation,
Looking Southwest



PHOTO 5: View Northeast Elevation and Loading Dock, Looking South



PHOTO 6: View of Southeast Elevation East End, Looking Northeast



PHOTO 7: View of Southeast Elevation, Looking Northwest



PHOTO 8: Basement, View of Maintenance Area



PHOTO 9: Basement, View of Storage Area, Wooden Supports



PHOTO 10: Basement, View of Storage Area



PHOTO 11: First Floor, Entrance Vestibule (ca. 1965) Looking South



PHOTO 12: First Floor, Receiving Room, Looking West Toward Entrance Vestibule



PHOTO 13: First Floor, Tool and Die Area, Looking East



PHOTO 14: First Floor, Tool and Die Area, Looking West



PHOTO 15: First Floor, Detail of Column



PHOTO 16: First Floor, View of Elevator No. 1



PHOTO 17: First Floor, Western Portion of Building, Corridor Adjacent to Cafeteria, Looking Southeast



PHOTO 18: First Floor, View of Manufacturing and Storage Areas Looking Southeast Toward Press Room



PHOTO 19: First Floor, Stairway No. 4



PHOTO 20: Second Floor, Storage and Loading Areas, Looking East



PHOTO 21: Second Floor, East Portion Of Building, Corridor Looking East Toward Storage Areas



PHOTO 22: Second Floor, Storage Area, Looking East Toward Stock Room Office



PHOTO 23: Second Floor, Key/Lock Manufacturing Area, Looking West



PHOTO 24: Second Floor, Key/Lock Manufacturing Area, Looking Southwest

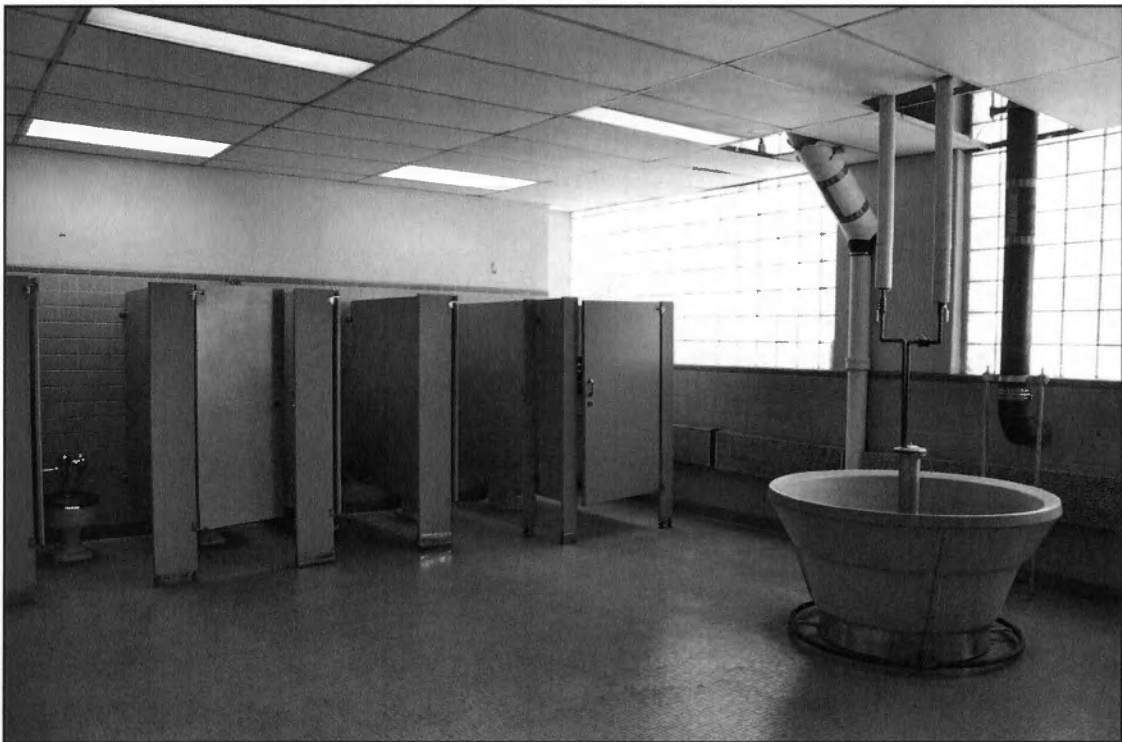


PHOTO 25: Second Floor, Western Portion of Building, Women's Toilet



PHOTO 26: Second Floor, Western End of Building, Looking Northwest



PHOTO 27: Second Floor, Lock Shop Area Ceiling Showing Original Keyways