



MAIN POST OFFICE

349 WEST GEORGIA STREET, VANCOUVER, BC

CONSERVATION PLAN

APRIL 23, 2018

DONALD LUXTON
AND ASSOCIATES INC



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Artistic rendering of the built Main Post Office.

1.0 INTRODUCTION

HISTORIC NAME: Main Post Office

CIVIC ADDRESS: 349 West Georgia Street, Vancouver

DESIGN/CONSTRUCTION DATE: 1953-1958

ORIGINAL ARCHITECT: McCarter Nairne & Partners, in association with Federal Department of Public Works

ORIGINAL BUILDER: Smith Brothers & Wilson Limited

The Main Post Office is a historic five-storey landmark in downtown Vancouver that was completed in 1958 to replace the original Post Office Building (1905-1910) at the corner of West Hastings Street & Granville Street. It is one of the largest steel-framed buildings in Vancouver, and is an excellent example of the International Style of architecture, designed by the prolific local architecture firm of McCarter Nairne & Partners, in association with the Federal Department of Public Works.

The massive postal facility is addressed at 349 West Georgia Street, situated on the entire city block bounded by West Georgia, Homer, Dunsmuir, and Hamilton Streets. The building has retained most of its original character-defining elements, particularly its overall original form, scale, and massing, original granite and concrete cladding, aluminum windows, and terra cotta panels. In addition, the original commissioned artworks found both in the interior and exterior of the Main Post Office remain intact and in good condition.

An overall rehabilitation scheme has been prepared by Musson Cattell Mackey Partnership (MCMP). The major proposed interventions of the overall project are to: preserve the exterior character-defining elements of the Main Post Office; rehabilitate the front plaza along West Georgia Street with a new design that would animate the proposed new storefronts; rehabilitate the exterior walls at ground level to accommodate for proposed new storefronts and street-oriented entrances; rehabilitate the interior spaces, including the addition of new floors between existing floors; demolish the three-storey rooftop office block to accommodate for proposed new additions above the roofline; and construct two office towers connected by a double-storey massing above the roofline of the historic building.

This Conservation Plan is based on Parks Canada's *Standards & Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada*. It outlines the preservation, restoration, and rehabilitation that will occur as part of the proposed development.

2.0 HISTORIC CONTEXT

2.1 HISTORIC CONTEXT

The Royal Mail was a key service that provided a crucial connection to the outside world, and the earliest settlers of Vancouver would have visited the post office regularly to send and receive their mail. As the city grew, so did the postal system; letter carrier service commenced in 1895. A network of post offices developed at the community level, providing identity and focus to each local settlement. Originally transported by rail, ship and stages, over time the movement of mail shifted primarily to air, but mail continues to be delivered to its destination by postal carriers.

Postal services were under the control of British authorities until 1851. At the time of Confederation in 1867, the post office was created as a federal department. In 1869, Maximilian “Maxie” Michaud arrived at Burrard Inlet, after walking from Montreal. He bought the New Brighton Hotel, and on July 2nd, 1869 he opened an unofficial post office in the hotel kitchen – the first postal station on Burrard Inlet. On April 1, 1874, a post office was established at Granville with Henry Harvey as postmaster; a post office was also opened in the store at Hastings Mill. When the city was incorporated, Jonathan Miller was appointed first postmaster. The post office burned down during the Great Fire, and a new structure was built rapidly and opened on July 2, 1886 at 329 Hastings Street. Surrounded by charred stumps, it was heated by a wood stove and lit by kerosene lights. When it opened, the planked sidewalk on Hastings Street was raised on posts, and there were complaints that the site was located too far from the business district on Hastings Street. The following year the station was moved to the Lady Stephen Block, which served as the main Vancouver post office until 1892.

During the late Victorian era, growing communities required enhanced federally-administered facilities. Landmark structures were started in the key cities, providing immediately recognizable symbols of a federal presence. This was evident in the designs for new post offices, provided by the Federal Department of Public Works, executed in distinctive Romanesque and Second Empire forms. Thomas

Fuller, Chief Architect, provided plans for structures throughout British Columbia, including an imposing stone post office for Vancouver, located at the corner of Granville and Pender Streets, designed in 1889 and completed in 1892. It was located in the heart of the burgeoning new business core at Granville and Pender Streets. Letter carrier service commenced on January 7, 1895.

During the Edwardian-era boom years, the prosperity of the booming west attracted the full attention of the Ottawa establishment. DPW Chief Architect David Ewart’s 1905 design for the new Vancouver Post Office was influenced by the Edwardian Baroque style, and demonstrated the incredible growth of Vancouver and its new-found prominence within the federal hierarchy. Alongside the Post Office, the DPW constructed the Customs Examining Warehouse, as greater volumes of transshipped goods created a need for a large scale, purpose-built warehouse.

Supplemental post offices were constructed to meet the growing demand, including Postal Station C (Heritage Hall) in Mount Pleasant, which also provided space for the Dominion Department of Agriculture as a seed laboratory and by the RCMP. There were also innovations in the delivery of mail. During Robert G. Macpherson’s tenure as Postmaster, he authorized E.S. Knowlton to arrange for the first delivery of mail between Canada and the United States by air. On March 3, 1919, William Boeing flew a seaplane out of Vancouver, carrying the mail sack to Seattle.

This era of postwar optimism fostered a rapid pace of development that remade downtown Vancouver into a modern city centre, complete with new commercial and civic facilities. Vancouver’s primary post office, located at the corner of West Hastings Street and Granville Street, completed in 1909 and expanded 1935-37, was deemed insufficient to meet the demands of the growing city. The opening of the new Main Post Office in 1958 marked a new phase in Vancouver’s development and growth as a regional centre in the postwar era, and reflected the growing strategic importance of the Pacific coastal region to the entire country.

2.0 HISTORIC CONTEXT



Post Office building, Hastings Street between Homer and Hamilton Streets, 1886. (CVA A24565)



Vancouver Post Office (opened in 1892), 1910. (Department of Public Works. LAC PA-046418)



Exterior of the Post Office Block (Lady Stephen Block), 309-313 West Hastings Street, circa 1888. (CVA A25109)



Vancouver Postal Station under construction, August 13, 1906. (Department of Public Works. LAC PA-046684)



Letter carriers and inside workers in the post office at Pender Street and Granville Street, 1904; Mr. Cornwall (seated), Mr. Carr, Mr. Cruickshanks and others. (CVA A35196)

2.0 HISTORIC CONTEXT

In the post-Second World War era, there was an improvement in public services in response to the sustained growth of Vancouver's population. The pent-up demand for goods and services spurred a sustained economic expansion that would define the middle of the twentieth century. This increased economic activity began to translate into substantial change in downtown Vancouver, as buildings with larger and more efficient floor plans were constructed outside of the city's historic commercial core. This era of postwar optimism fostered a rapid pace of development that remade downtown Vancouver into a modern city centre, replete with new commercial and civic facilities. The decision to build the replacement on an entire block between West Georgia Street, Homer Street, Dunsmuir Street and Hamilton Street helped solidify downtown Vancouver as the heart of the region's commercial, service and distribution network. Built at a cost of \$13,000,000 (approximately \$106,000,000 today) with the support of the Federal Department of Public Works, the new, Main Post Office in downtown Vancouver reflected the strategic importance of the area to the highest levels of government.

When the Main Post Office opened in 1958, it was the largest single building in Vancouver and was the world's largest welded steel structure, incorporating state-of-the-art engineering and technology, such as ramps and elevators to move trucks between levels, and a 730-metre long underground conveyor belt system linking the building with Waterfront Station. The conveyor belt system, which illustrates Vancouver's historic role as a transshipment point, was only in use for a short time before Canada Post switched to air service, rendering the direct connection to the railway obsolete. Canada Post has continuously operated in its expansive downtown base for more than fifty years.

On October 16, 1981, the Canada Post Corporation Act came into effect, abolishing the Post Office Department and creating the present day Crown corporation that provides postal service. Over time, as automation replaced most of the postal handlers, and mail shifted to air transportation, the massive downtown post office became redundant. Again responding to the changing demands and



Vancouver's Main Post Office at Hastings & Granville Streets, 191- (CVA A18105)



Aerial view of Downtown Vancouver and Coal Harbour, 1956 (CVA A23514)

2.0 HISTORIC CONTEXT



*Employees sorting mail at the post office, December 23, 1943.
(Jack Lindsay, photographer. CVA A10563)*

function of the system, the organization has now moved to a new regional facility at the Vancouver International Airport. The robust Main Post Office at 349 West Georgia Street is a landmark of downtown Vancouver, representing the postwar growth and expansion of the city and region.

2.2 POSTWAR MODERNISM AND THE DESIGN OF THE MAIN POST OFFICE

Postwar optimism not only fuelled a real estate boom, but also the desire to build in a new, 'Modern' way. The style of Vancouver's mid-century buildings generally subscribed to Modernist tenets, as architects, corporations and politicians sought to remake downtown in the 'Modern' image. The roots of Modernism encompass the rejection of historic styles and the theory that design can lead to better living. New technologies and engineering abilities made possible building sizes and forms that would streamline commercial, institutional, residential and industrial functions. The need to build rapidly and a lingering shortage of materials also lead to a clean-line aesthetic that relied on surfaces and materials, rather than ornament, for its articulation.

Within the realm of architectural 'Modernism' however, existed many parallel streams of building design, including Brutalism, International Style, Neo Expressionism and Formalism. The Main Post Office was designed at a time when local architects drew their inspiration from examples abroad; the design of the building alludes to the Royal Festival Hall in London, which was completed in 1951. Both buildings subscribe to the general principles of the International Style of Modernism. Originating in the 1920s, the International Style was still popular in the 1950s, and was characterized by rectilinear forms of steel and concrete, devoid of non-structural ornamentation. While subtle forms of ornamentation, notably the terra cotta panels and arms of Canada, were applied to the façade of the Main Post Office, the monumental volume of five, full-block storeys and the extensive use of concrete are the most obvious design features of the building. A later design scheme, developed after 1965, proposed a vertical expansion of the office tower, illustrated on the next page.

2.0 HISTORIC CONTEXT



Artistic rendering showing the unbuilt tower of the original design scheme for the Main Post Office.



View of the south side of the 300 block Dunsmuir Street, Oct 1948, (CVA A24869)



Artistic rendering of the built Main Post Office.



View of the new Post Office construction site from Dunsmuir & Hamilton Streets, Sept 1954, (CVA A24928)



Artistic rendering of an interior space of the Main Post Office.



The new Post Office building under construction from the corner of Dunsmuir & Hamilton Streets, Apr 1955, (CVA A24931)

Architectural drawing of the exterior elevation of the National Academy of Sciences building. The drawing shows a long, multi-story structure with a grid of windows and various material specifications. Key features include:

- Top Section:** A long horizontal section with a grid of windows. Labels include "TERRAZZO-COTTA", "TYPE 1/2", "CONCRETE", "ALUMINUM", "SUNSHADES", "ARCHITECTURAL CONCRETE", "3/4\" PLAS. FILL", and "OPEN AIR DUCT UNITS".
- Middle Section:** A section with a grid of windows and a central area labeled "TERRAZZO-COTTA". Labels include "TYPE 1/2", "CONCRETE", "ALUMINUM", "SUNSHADES", "ARCHITECTURAL CONCRETE", "3/4\" PLAS. FILL", and "OPEN AIR DUCT UNITS".
- Bottom Section:** A section with a grid of windows and a central area labeled "TERRAZZO-COTTA". Labels include "TYPE 1/2", "CONCRETE", "ALUMINUM", "SUNSHADES", "ARCHITECTURAL CONCRETE", "3/4\" PLAS. FILL", and "OPEN AIR DUCT UNITS".

The drawing is a detailed architectural elevation showing the building's facade, including window patterns, material callouts, and structural details. The text is in all caps and includes various material and construction specifications.

A black and white photograph of the New York City skyline. The New York City Hall is prominent on the left, with its distinctive dome. To its right is the New York City Police Department building, a large, modern structure with a grid-like facade. The foreground shows a dense urban landscape with various buildings, streets, and a large parking lot filled with cars. The background shows the city extending to the horizon under a clear sky.

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2.0 HISTORIC CONTEXT

Designed by McCarter Nairne & Partners, one of the leading architectural firms in Vancouver, in association with the Federal Department of Public Works, the Main Post Office has been a Modernist landmark in downtown Vancouver since its completion in 1958. The building's aesthetic appeal supersedes its otherwise industrial usage as a postal sorting facility, and it fulfills its role as a public building that was constructed to modernize the institutional face of downtown Vancouver.

2.3 BUILDING FEATURES

The building's primary elevation on Georgia Street was set back to make room for vehicular access and parking, as well as a colonnade, which provided a covered pedestrian pathway along the entire length of the block. Expressed as pilotis, the columns were clad in polished grey granite, with glazing on the main floor that extended to the ceiling of the colonnade. The public postal hall formerly stretched along the entire length of the Georgia Street façade.

The interior of the postal hall originally featured red and green terrazzo flooring with geometric black, green and white insets, marble wall panels and heavy aluminum trim, as well as original mailboxes. A glass curtain wall separated the entrance lobby from the main postal hall, with random insets of etched glass. At the southeast corner of the main floor, there was a tile mural of a woman and child. The staircases into the hall from street level featured aluminum balustrades with a heavy profile maple banister. Public entrances to the postal hall were found along Georgia Street and both side streets. The elevator lobby at the Homer Street entrance featured a large painted mural above the original door panels.

The elevations along Homer, Dunsmuir and Hamilton Streets were clad with polished red granite along the base of the building. These elevations featured continuous bands of glazing above the granite walls, to bring daylight into the working areas and to separate the main floor from the upper floors, helping to reduce the apparent bulk of the building.



Final proof, Vancouver Post Office, 1960, (Jewish Museum & Archives of BC, LF 03001)



Post Office construction, 1969, (Jewish Museum & Archives of BC, LF 3005)



Post Office under Construction, 1957, (Jewish Museum & Archives of BC, LF 03000)

2.0 HISTORIC CONTEXT



Vancouver General Post Office, course of construction, Vancouver, BC, circa 1957 (Jewish Museum & Archives of BC, LF 02999)



Vancouver General Post Office, No. 17, third floor, transverse conveyors in north corner, 1959, (Jewish Museum & Archives of BC, LF 03858)

2.0 HISTORIC CONTEXT

The upper floors of each elevation were clad in concrete, articulated by large rectangular concrete grids of windows with brick red terra cotta spandrel panels. The window grids alternated with precast concrete panels featuring blue terra cotta insets. The original aluminum windows were supplied by Crittall Windows, one of England's most venerable window manufacturers. As steel was in short supply after the end of the Second World War, Crittall developed the technology for aluminum windows; the Main Post Office was one of the largest known installations of their windows in western Canada.

Despite its massive scale and adherence to the sometimes-austere International Style of Modernism, the Main Post Office, through its use of high quality materials and art installations, manages to stand as an admired addition to the urban streetscape of downtown Vancouver. At the time of construction, it was referred to as a "Taj Mahal with escalators."



Vancouver General Post Office, tunnel, junction of T11 and TC4 conveyors, 1959, (Jewish Museum & Archives of BC, LF 03810)

3.0 STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

MAIN POST OFFICE

349 WEST GEORGIA STREET, VANCOUVER, BC

Description of the Historic Place

The Main Post Office is an five-storey institutional building located on an entire city block bounded by West Georgia, Homer, Dunsmuir and Hamilton Streets, at 349 West Georgia Street in downtown Vancouver. The steel-framed building, conceived and constructed in 1953-58, was designed in the International Style of Modernism and features articulated concrete facades, terra cotta infill panels and aluminum windows. Two massive cast aluminum arms of Canada are mounted on the Georgia Street facade.

Heritage Value of the Historic Place

The Main Post Office is valued for its association with the modern development of Vancouver's downtown core, its role as an economic driver of regional and national importance, its architectural features of the International Style, and its original commissioned artwork.

Through the first half of the twentieth century, the centre of downtown Vancouver gradually migrated southwest from its origins in Gastown, and as the business district shifted, the main post office was established at the corner of Granville and Hastings Streets in 1909. By the middle of the 20th century, the country's administrative and governmental infrastructure reacted to pent-up demand and the changing requirements of the modern workplace. The postwar evolution of downtown Vancouver encompassed the provision of larger civic and institutional facilities, including a new Central Library (1957) and Performing Arts Centre (Queen Elizabeth Theatre, 1959), demonstrating the increasing growth, status and maturity of this once remote outpost. The institutional nature of Georgia Street increased over the next four decades with the construction of the CBC building (1975) and the Vancouver Public Library (1995).

With the explosive growth of the second half of the 20th century, and the development of international shipping and air networks, Vancouver continued to gain in importance as a vital transshipment point and

Canada's portal to the Orient. The massive size of this new postal facility indicates Vancouver's strategic importance within this global communications network. The gigantic scale of the building indicates postwar confidence in the growth of international trade and commerce, and the importance of mail as a regional and national economic driver. Over time, as mail service became increasingly automated, fewer workers were required as part of the sorting process, and substantial labour unrest, strikes and back-to-work orders occurred throughout the postal system during the 1970s and 1980s. As the delivery of mail shifted from rail to air, the downtown location, and the proximity to the railway, declined in importance, and Vancouver's main postal station has now been moved to an airport location.

Design and construction occurred over a five-year period, on a site that helped spur the development of Georgia Street as a ceremonial thoroughfare. Incorporating state-of-the-art engineering and technologies, the Main Post Office features ramps and elevators to move trucks between levels, and a 730-metre long underground conveyor belt system that linked the building with Waterfront Station. The Main Post Office represents not only the modern development of Vancouver's downtown core, but was also significant as the largest building in the City of Vancouver and the largest welded steel frame structure in the world, with a floor area of nearly 64,000 square metres.

The Main Post Office is also valued as a very good example of the International Style of architecture, designed by the prolific local architecture firm of McCarter Nairne & Partners, in association with the Federal Department of Public Works. Inspired by leading-edge design such as the Royal Festival Hall in London (1951), the architects articulated the rectilinear volume through a grid of horizontal and vertical elements, adorned with few but high-quality embellishments. The exterior of the Main Post Office has maintained its original integrity, featuring granite cladding on its base and concrete cladding above, punctuated by aluminum windows and terra cotta panels. The Main Post Office is further valued for its original commissioned artwork, including a carved granite bas-relief of a postman

3.0 STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

on the southwest corner of the building and two interior murals: one in the west elevator lobby and another on the eastern wall of the postal hall. The high degree of refinement in its architectural design reinforces the status of the Main Post Office as a downtown Vancouver landmark.

Character-Defining Elements

Key elements that define the heritage character of the Main Post Office are its:

- location at 349 West Georgia Street on a full-block lot in Vancouver's downtown core;
- sheer vertical walls on each elevation except the Georgia Street façade, which features a recessed colonnade;
- institutional form, scale and massing, as expressed through the symmetry of each façade, five-storey full-block height with flat roof;
- International Style design features, including grey granite columns; polished red granite elements; and concrete cladding on the upper floors, articulated by an alternating pattern of gridded concrete window bays with red terra cotta spandrel panels, and precast concrete panels featuring square blue terra cotta insets;
- original aluminum Crittall Windows;
- three original, flat-roof awnings over the pedestrian entrances on Homer and Hamilton Streets;
- original commissioned artworks including: a 4.9-metre high, carved granite postman bas-relief by Paul Huba (1956) and corner stone inscription (1955) on the southwest corner of the building; Paul Huba's tile mural of a woman and child in the southeast corner of the postal hall; and elevator lobby at the Homer Street entrance featuring Orville Fisher's large painted mural by above the original door panels depicting early mail transportation methods in British Columbia; and
- two 5.8-metre aluminum arms of Canada cast by Pearson Iron Works set upon the gridded panels on the front façade.

4.0 CONSERVATION GUIDELINES

4.1 STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES

The Main Post Office at 349 West Georgia Street is a significant modernist landmark in the City of Vancouver. The Parks Canada's *Standards & Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada* is the source used to assess the appropriate level of conservation and intervention. Under the *Standards & Guidelines*, the work proposed for the Main Post Office includes aspects of preservation, restoration, and rehabilitation.

Preservation: *the action or process of protecting, maintaining, and/or stabilizing the existing materials, form, and integrity of a historic place or of an individual component, while protecting its heritage value.*

Restoration: *the action or process of accurately revealing, recovering or representing the state of a historic place or of an individual component, as it appeared at a particular period in its history, while protecting its heritage value.*

Rehabilitation: *the action or process of making possible a continuing or compatible contemporary use of a historic place or an individual component, through repair, alterations, and/or additions, while protecting its heritage value.*

Interventions to the Main Post Office should be based upon the Standards outlined in the *Standards & Guidelines*, which are conservation principles of best practice. The following **General Standards** should be followed when carrying out any work to an historic property.

STANDARDS

Standards relating to all Conservation Projects

1. Conserve the heritage value of a historic place. Do not remove, replace, or substantially alter its intact or repairable character-defining elements. Do not move a part of a historic place if its current location is a character-defining element.
2. Conserve changes to a historic place, which over time, have become character-defining elements in their own right.
3. Conserve heritage value by adopting an approach calling for minimal intervention.
4. Recognize each historic place as a physical record of its time, place and use. Do not create a false sense of historical development by adding elements from other historic places or other properties or by combining features of the same property that never coexisted.
5. Find a use for a historic place that requires minimal or no change to its character defining elements.
6. Protect and, if necessary, stabilize a historic place until any subsequent intervention is undertaken. Protect and preserve archaeological resources in place. Where there is potential for disturbance of archaeological resources, take mitigation measures to limit damage and loss of information.
7. Evaluate the existing condition of character-defining elements to determine the appropriate intervention needed. Use the gentlest means possible for any intervention. Respect heritage value when undertaking an intervention.
8. Maintain character-defining elements on an ongoing basis. Repair character-defining elements by reinforcing the materials using recognized conservation methods. Replace in kind any extensively deteriorated or missing parts of character-defining elements, where there are surviving prototypes.
9. Make any intervention needed to preserve character-defining elements physically and visually compatible with the historic place and identifiable upon close inspection. Document any intervention for future reference.

4.0 CONSERVATION GUIDELINES

Additional Standards relating to Rehabilitation

10. Repair rather than replace character-defining elements. Where character-defining elements are too severely deteriorated to repair, and where sufficient physical evidence exists, replace them with new elements that match the forms, materials and detailing of sound versions of the same elements. Where there is insufficient physical evidence, make the form, material and detailing of the new elements compatible with the character of the historic place.
11. Conserve the heritage value and character-defining elements when creating any new additions to a historic place and any related new construction. Make the new work physically and visually compatible with, subordinate to and distinguishable from the historic place.
12. Create any new additions or related new construction so that the essential form and integrity of a historic place will not be impaired if the new work is removed in the future.

Additional Standards relating to Restoration

13. Repair rather than replace character-defining elements from the restoration period. Where character-defining elements are too severely deteriorated to repair and where sufficient physical evidence exists, replace them with new elements that match the forms, materials and detailing of sound versions of the same elements.
14. Replace missing features from the restoration period with new features whose forms, materials and detailing are based on sufficient physical, documentary and/or oral evidence.

4.2 CONSERVATION REFERENCES

The proposed work entails the preservation, restoration, and rehabilitation of the character-defining elements of the Main Post Office. The following conservation resources should be referred to:

Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada, Parks Canada, 2010.

<http://www.historicplaces.ca/en/pages/standards-normes/document.aspx>

National Park Service, Technical Preservation Services. Preservation Briefs:

Preservation Brief 1: Assessing Cleaning and Water-Repellent Treatments for Historic Masonry Buildings.

<http://www.nps.gov/tps/how-to-preserve/briefs/1-cleaning-water-repellent.htm>

Preservation Brief 2: Repointing Mortar Joints in Historic Masonry Buildings.

<http://www.nps.gov/tps/how-to-preserve/briefs/2-repoint-mortar-joints.htm>

Preservation Brief 3: Improving Energy Efficiency in Historic Buildings.

<http://www.nps.gov/tps/how-to-preserve/briefs/3-improve-energy-efficiency.htm>

Preservation Brief 6: Dangers of Abrasive Cleaning to Historic Buildings.

<http://www.nps.gov/tps/how-to-preserve/briefs/6-dangers-abrasive-cleaning.htm>

Preservation Brief 7: The Preservation of Historic Glazed Architectural Terra-Cotta

<http://www.nps.gov/tps/how-to-preserve/briefs/7-terra-cotta.htm>

Preservation Brief 13: The Repair and Thermal Upgrading of Historic Steel Windows.

<http://www.nps.gov/tps/how-to-preserve/briefs/13-steel-windows.htm>

4.0 CONSERVATION GUIDELINES

Preservation Brief 14: New Exterior Additions to Historic Buildings: Preservation Concerns.

<http://www.nps.gov/tps/how-to-preserve/briefs/14-exterior-additions.htm>

Preservation Brief 15: Preservation of Historic Concrete.

<http://www.nps.gov/tps/how-to-preserve/briefs/15-concrete.htm>

Preservation Brief 18: Rehabilitating Interiors in Historic Buildings – Identifying Character-Defining Elements.

<http://www.nps.gov/tps/how-to-preserve/briefs/18-rehabilitating-interiors.htm>

Preservation Brief 25: The Preservation of Historic Signs.

<http://www.nps.gov/tps/how-to-preserve/briefs/25-signs.htm>

Preservation Brief 27: The Maintenance and Repair of Architectural Cast Iron.

<http://www.nps.gov/tps/how-to-preserve/briefs/27-cast-iron.htm>

Preservation Brief 32: Making Historic Properties Accessible.

<http://www.nps.gov/tps/how-to-preserve/briefs/32-accessibility.htm>

Preservation Brief 39: Holding the Line: Controlling Unwanted Moisture in Historic Buildings.

<http://www.nps.gov/tps/how-to-preserve/briefs/39-control-unwanted-moisture.htm>

Preservation Brief 41: The Seismic Retrofit of Historic Buildings: Keeping Preservation in the Forefront.

<http://www.nps.gov/tps/how-to-preserve/briefs/41-seismic-retrofit.htm>

4.3 GENERAL CONSERVATION STRATEGY

The general intent is to preserve the existing historic structure, while undertaking a rehabilitation that will upgrade its structure and services to allow for proposed new commercial, retail, and office uses. As part of the scope of work, all exterior character-defining elements will be preserved, while missing or deteriorated elements will be restored. A number of interior character-defining elements will also be salvaged, and reinstated and/or repurposed in other parts of the building, where possible.

An overall rehabilitation scheme has been prepared by Musson Cattell Mackey Partnership (MCMP). The major proposed interventions of the overall project are to:

- Preserve the exterior character-defining elements of the Main Post Office;
- Rehabilitate the front plaza along West Georgia Street with a new design that would animate the proposed new storefronts;
- Rehabilitate the exterior walls at ground level to accommodate for proposed new storefronts and street-oriented entrances;
- Rehabilitate the interior spaces, including the addition of new floors between existing floors
- Demolish the three-storey rooftop office block to accommodate for proposed new additions above the roofline;
- Construct two office towers connected by a double-storey massing above the roofline of the historic building.

Due to the proposed addition to the historic building, all new visible construction will be considered a modern addition to the historic structure. The *Standards & Guidelines* list recommendations for new additions to historic places.

The proposed design scheme should follow these principles:

- Designing a new addition in a manner that draws a clear distinction between what is historic and what is new.

4.0 CONSERVATION GUIDELINES

- Design for the new work may be contemporary or may reference design motifs from the historic place. In either case, it should be compatible in terms of mass, materials, relationship of solids to voids, and colour, yet be distinguishable from the historic place.
- The new additions should be physically and visually compatible with, subordinate to and distinguishable from the preserved historic façades.

An addition should be subordinate to the historic place. This is best understood to mean that the addition must not detract from the historic place or impair its heritage value. Subordination is not a question of size; a small, ill-conceived addition could adversely affect an historic place more than a large, well-designed addition.

Additions or new construction should be visually compatible with, yet distinguishable from, the historic place. To accomplish this, an appropriate balance must be struck between mere imitation of the existing form and pointed contrast, thus complementing the historic place in a manner that respects its heritage value.

4.4 SUSTAINABILITY STRATEGY

Heritage conservation and sustainable development can go hand in hand with the mutual effort of all stakeholders. In a practical context, the conservation and re-use of historic and existing structures contributes to environmental sustainability by reducing solid waste disposal, saving embodied energy, and conserving historic materials that are often less consumptive of energy than many new replacement materials.

In 2016, the Federal Provincial Territorial Ministers of Culture & Heritage in Canada (FPTMCHC) published a document entitled, *Building Resilience: Practical Guidelines for the Retrofit and Rehabilitation of Buildings in Canada* that is “intended to establish a common pan-Canadian ‘how-to’ approach for practitioners, professionals, building owners, and operators alike.”

The following is an excerpt from the introduction of the document:

*[Building Resilience] is intended to serve as a “sustainable building toolkit” that will enhance understanding of the environmental benefits of heritage conservation and of the strong interrelationship between natural and built heritage conservation. Intended as a useful set of best practices, the guidelines in **Building Resilience** can be applied to existing and traditionally constructed buildings as well as formally recognized heritage places.*

These guidelines are primarily aimed at assisting designers, owners, and builders in providing existing buildings with increased levels of sustainability while protecting character-defining elements and, thus, their heritage value. The guidelines are also intended for a broader audience of architects, building developers, owners, custodians and managers, contractors, crafts and trades people, energy advisers and sustainability specialists, engineers, heritage professionals, and officials responsible for built heritage and the existing built environment at all jurisdictional levels.

***Building Resilience** is not meant to provide case-specific advice. It is intended to provide guidance with some measure of flexibility, acknowledging the difficulty of evaluating the impact of every scenario and the realities of projects where buildings may contain inherently sustainable elements but limited or no heritage value. All interventions must be evaluated based on their unique context, on a case-by-case basis, by experts equipped with the necessary knowledge and experience to ensure a balanced consideration of heritage value and sustainable rehabilitation measures.*

4.0 CONSERVATION GUIDELINES

Building Resilience can be read as a stand-alone document, but it may also further illustrate and build on the sustainability considerations in the Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada.

4.5 ALTERNATE COMPLIANCE

The Main Post Office may be eligible for heritage variances that will enable a higher degree of heritage conservation and retention of original material, including considerations available under the following municipal legislation.

4.5.1 VANCOUVER BUILDING BY-LAW

Building Code upgrading is the most important aspect of heritage building rehabilitation, as it ensures life safety and long-term protection for the resource. It is essential to consider heritage buildings on a case-by-case basis, as the blanket application of Code requirements does not recognize the individual requirements and inherent performance strengths of each building. Given that Code compliance is such a significant factor in the conservation of heritage buildings, the most important consideration is to provide viable economic methods of achieving building upgrades.

This is recognized in the Vancouver Building By-Law (VBBL), in which a number of equivalencies have been developed and adopted that enable more sensitive and appropriate heritage building upgrades. The heritage equivalencies available under the VBBL are available for this project as required. In addition to the equivalencies offered under the VBBL, the City can also accept the report of a Building Code Engineer as to acceptable levels of code performance.

4.5.2 ENERGY EFFICIENCY ACT

The provincial Energy Efficiency Act (Energy Efficiency Standards Regulation) was amended in 2009 to exempt buildings protected through heritage designation or listed on a community heritage

register from compliance with the regulations. Energy Efficiency standards therefore do not apply to windows, glazing products, door slabs or products installed in heritage buildings. This means that exemptions can be allowed to energy upgrading measures that would destroy heritage character-defining elements such as original windows and doors.

These provisions do not preclude that heritage buildings must be made more energy efficient, but they do allow a more sensitive approach of alternate compliance to individual situations and a higher degree of retained integrity. Increased energy performance can be provided through non-intrusive methods of alternate compliance, such as improved insulation and mechanical systems. Please refer to the *Standards & Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada* for further detail about “Energy Efficiency Considerations.”

4.6 SITE PROTECTION & STABILIZATION

It is the responsibility of the owner to ensure the heritage resource is protected from damage at all times. At any time that the building is left vacant, it should be secured against unauthorized access or damage through the use of appropriate fencing and security measures. Additional measures to be taken include:

- Are smoke and fire detectors in working order?
- Are wall openings boarded up and exterior doors securely fastened once the building is vacant?
- Have the following been removed from the interior: trash, hazardous materials such as inflammable liquids, poisons, and paints and canned goods that could freeze and burst?

The historic resource should be protected from movement and other damage at all times during demolition, excavation and construction work. Install monitoring devices to document and assess cracks and possible settlement of the heritage façades.

5.0 CONSERVATION RECOMMENDATIONS

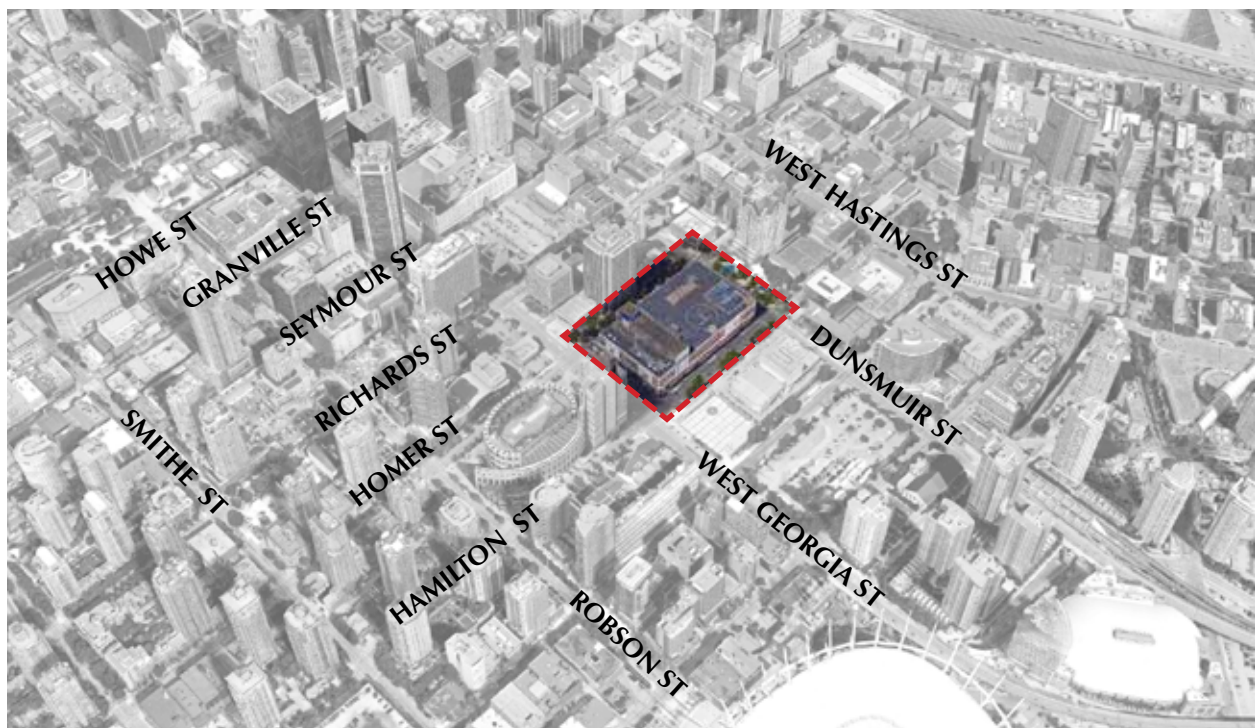
A condition review of the Main Post Office was carried out during a series of site visits between November 2015 & December 2017. The preliminary condition assessments were limited to visual review and photodocumentation of surviving character-defining elements, both interior and exterior, where access was granted. The recommendations for the preservation, restoration, and rehabilitation of the historic building are based on the site review, material samples and archival documents that provide valuable information about the original appearance of the historic building. Further investigation is required to determine appropriate extent of conservation that will be

The following section describes the materials, physical condition and recommended conservation strategy for the Main Post Office based on Parks Canada Standards & Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada.

5.1 SITE

The Main Post Office is located on an entire city block, bounded by West Georgia, Homer, Dunsmuir and Hamilton Streets. The Main Post Office has an imposing presence as a federal institution, and is situated prominently on the ceremonial thoroughfare of West Georgia Street. Other civic facilities nearby include the Central Library (1955) across West Georgia Street to the south, and the Queen Elizabeth Theatre (1959) across Hamilton Street to the east. The historic front facade of the Main Post Office along West Georgia Street is setback from the sidewalk, with an existing public parking lot, and a colonnade that provides a covered pedestrian pathway along the entire length of the block.

As part of the redevelopment scheme, a series of trees are proposed along the entire perimeter of the Main Post Office. The existing parking lot will be rehabilitated with a new landscape plan that features a terraced plaza. This would allow for a



Aerial map showing location of the Main Post Office at 349 West Georgia Street.

5.0 CONSERVATION RECOMMENDATIONS

cascade of public spaces that will be associated with the new storefronts along West Georgia Street.

Conservation Strategy: Rehabilitation

- Preserve the original location of the Main Post Office. All rehabilitation work should occur within the property lines.
- Retain the main frontage.
- Rehabilitation of the site can include a redesigned plaza or public space along West Georgia Street that will mark the change in use.

5.2 OVERALL FORM, SCALE & MASSING

The overall institutional form, scale and massing of the Main Post Office are expressed through the symmetry of its historic street facades, the building's five-storey full-block height with flat roof, and three-storey rooftop office block, and blue terra cotta-clad elevator penthouse.

The upper floors of the five-storey massing (characterized by precast concrete elements) are delineated from the lower levels by a continuous band of glazing that is occasionally interrupted by polished grey granite spandrel panels. The primary elevation is oriented to the south along West Georgia Street, characterized by a colonnade that is expressed as pilotis, clad in polished grey granite. In general, the overall form, scale and massing of the Main Post Office remain fully intact without any major alterations.

As part of the proposed redevelopment scheme, the upper three-storey rooftop office block will be demolished to accommodate the new additions above the roofline, as characterized by two office towers connected by a double-storey massing above the roofline of the historic building. Along the ground level, the pilotis expression will be extended to wrap along the base of the west elevation on Homer Street, including a recessed glazing that extends from floor to ceiling to match



Partial front elevation of Vancouver's Main Post Office along West Georgia Street.

5.0 CONSERVATION RECOMMENDATIONS



Northeast corner of Vancouver's Main Post Office, at Dunsmuir and Hamilton Streets.



Northwest corner of Vancouver's Main Post Office, at Dunsmuir and Homer Streets.



Partial east elevation of Vancouver's Main Post Office along Hamilton Street.

the colonnade along West Georgia Street. All efforts should be made to ensure that the contemporary addition is visually and physically compatible to, distinguishable from, and subordinate to the overall original form, scale, and massing of the Main Post Office.

Conservation Strategy: Rehabilitation

- Preserve the original form, scale and massing of the full-block five-storey portion of the Main Post Office.
- Demolish the three-storey rooftop office block to accommodate proposed addition above historic roofline.
- The perimeter exterior walls on the ground floor level may be rehabilitated in a sympathetic manner to accommodate new storefronts and entrances to the building.
- All new construction must be distinguishable from, compatible with, and subordinate to the preserved form, scale and massing of the Main Post Office.

5.3 WELDED STEEL-FRAME STRUCTURE

The Main Post Office is valued as the largest welded steel-frame structure in the world at the time of its completion. The integrity of the original structural grid remains intact, and is one of its important character-defining element that should be preserved.

As part of the proposed redevelopment scheme, the original steel-frame structure will be retained, as required. Any rehabilitation in the form of seismic and structural upgrading should be consolidated with the existing structural grid. Further investigation by structural engineers will be required to confirm their existing condition; the evaluation of their structural integrity is necessary to determine the appropriate level of intervention.

Conservation Strategy: Preservation & Rehabilitation

- Preserve the original welded steel-frame structure, as required; rehabilitate, as necessary, to achieve improved stability, seismic performance, and bearing capacity.

5.0 CONSERVATION RECOMMENDATIONS



- If the original welded steel-frame structure requires upgrading, replacement or removal in places, work should be undertaken from the interior, and should not affect the overall integrity of the original structural grid and the original exterior appearance of the Main Post Office.

5.4 EXTERIOR WALLS

5.4.1 GRANITE

The exterior walls of the Main Post Office feature surviving, original granite elements. The columns along West Georgia Street are also clad with polished grey granite panels. The southwest corner of the building features a commissioned artwork by Paul Huba — a bas-relief of a postman carved into Swedish red granite.

In general, the original granite panels appear to be in good condition, with minor signs of deterioration and damage in localized areas, as evident by staining, hairline cracking, redundant holes, surface scratching, missing parts, and varying degrees of impact damage. Missing grey granite spandrel panels have been replaced with pressed metal that are finished with paint in similar grey tone.



As part of the proposed redevelopment scheme, the base of the building will be rehabilitated to include a series of storefronts on all elevations. This would require the removal of polished red granite cladding to accommodate the new openings. All original stone panels in good and repairable condition that require dismantling should be salvaged and stored safely to replace any damaged stone as required, or repurposed where possible.

Conservation Strategy: Rehabilitation

- Preserve the original granite elements in situ, where possible.
- Rehabilitate any original granite elements to suit new openings. Make good using salvaged original granite panels.



Photos showing typical conditions of polished red granite at the base of the Main Post Office.

5.0 CONSERVATION RECOMMENDATIONS



Photos showing typical conditions of polished grey granite at the base of the Main Post Office.. Note some panels are missing (top, right).

- Salvage all original granite elements in good and repairable condition where new openings are proposed. All efforts should be made to minimize damaging historic materials retained in situ.
- Make good missing and/or damaged granite elements to match existing as close as possible.
- Holes and other small areas of damage should be repaired using an appropriate restoration mortar that matches the colour and finish of the granite.
- All repairs to the granite must be undertaken by qualified masons who are experienced in heritage restoration.
- The original granite elements should be cleaned using the gentlest means possible. Abrasive cleaning methods are not permitted.

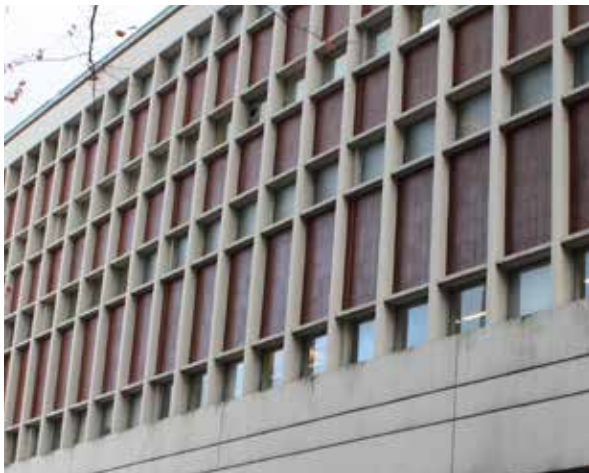
5.4.2 CONCRETE

The upper floors of the Main Post Office feature a mix of cast-in-place and precast concrete elements on all elevations. The exterior facades are articulated by large, rectangular concrete grids of window openings (with glazed, red terra cotta inset spandrel panels), alternating with projecting precast concrete panels (with blue terra cotta insets). The concrete elements are finished with paint. Some areas of the exterior wall show that the original steel-frame structure is embedded in the concrete wall assembly, including concrete masonry units on the interior side.

In general, the concrete elements appear to be in good condition, showing signs of varying degrees of deterioration, as evident by: staining and discolouration; organic build-up; paint loss; and localized crack. The majority of the staining and biological growth were notable in areas where water saturation and moisture retention are high, which could be attributed to limited sun exposure, particularly on the north elevation.

As part of the proposed redevelopment scheme, the concrete elements on all elevations should be preserved in situ, and repaired in-kind as necessary. Efforts should be made to ensure that all structural and/or envelope upgrades are limited from the interior side in order to minimize potential visual

5.0 CONSERVATION RECOMMENDATIONS



Photos showing typical deteriorated conditions of precast concrete and terra cotta elements of the exterior walls of the Main Post Office.

impact to the original precast concrete elements, as seen from the outside.

Conservation Strategy: Preservation

- Preserve the original painted concrete elements in situ.
- Damages to the original concrete elements should be repaired using an appropriate restoration mortar to match existing paint colour and finish of the concrete.
- Structural or envelope upgrades should be undertaken from the interior where possible, and should not affect the original exterior appearance of the Main Post Office.
- All repairs to the concrete walls must be undertaken by a qualified contractor who is experienced in heritage restoration.
- The painted concrete elements should be cleaned using the gentlest means possible. Abrasive cleaning methods are not permitted.

5.4.3 TERRA COTTA

The Main Post Office features original red and blue terra cotta elements. The red terra cotta spandrel panels are inset within the repetitive portions of the gridded concrete facades. The blue terra cotta tiles are arranged in a regimented pattern on protruding gridded panels on all elevations. The protruding gridded panels on all other elevations feature horizontal vents behind vertical concrete louvers. Overall the terra cotta tiles appear to be in good condition.

The terra cotta elements contribute to the historic character of the building, and should be preserved in-situ, and repaired in-kind as necessary. As part of the proposed redevelopment scheme, some of the terra cotta spandrel panels will require removal to accommodate interventions, such as introducing new window openings.

Conservation Strategy: Preservation or Rehabilitation

- Preserve the original red and blue terra cotta tiles in situ, where possible. In areas where original tiles require removal, carefully dismantle terra cotta tiles and salvage any

5.0 CONSERVATION RECOMMENDATIONS

original materials in good condition; reinstate salvaged materials where damaged tiles require replacement.

- All repairs to the terra cotta must be undertaken by a qualified contractor who is experienced in heritage restoration.
- The terra cotta should be cleaned using the gentlest means possible. Abrasive cleaning methods are not permitted.

5.5 FENESTRATION

Windows and doors are among the most conspicuous feature of any building. In addition to their function — providing light, views, fresh air and access to the building — their arrangement and design is fundamental to the building's appearance and heritage value. Each element of fenestration is, in itself, a complex assembly whose function and operation must be considered as part of its conservation. — Standards and Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada.

5.5.1 WINDOWS

The Main Post Office features original aluminum window assemblies, supplied by Crittall® Windows Limited, one of England's prominent historic window manufacturers. The unpainted windows are characterized by single-glazed, aluminum assemblies in fixed, awning and horizontal pivot configurations.

In general, the original aluminum windows are intact, and appear to be in good to fair condition. Minor modifications were noted in some areas, including, but not limited to: the replacement of glazing units with metal louvres; and the removal of precast concrete mullions to accommodate an enlarged opening (on the east elevation). In general, the original aluminum window assemblies are in good condition, with signs of natural weathering

and deterioration, particularly on the north elevation. A number of the window hardware were also rehabilitated at some point in time.

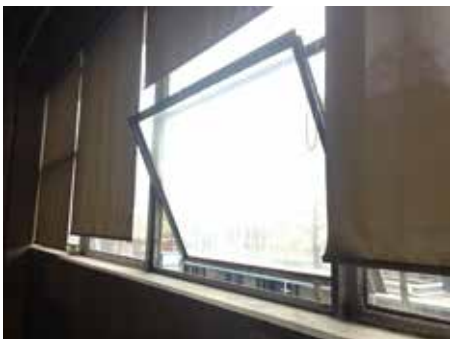
As part of the proposed rehabilitation scheme, existing original window assemblies will be retained in all areas associated with new parking spaces. In areas where new office or retail spaces are being proposed, the existing original frames will be retained with a vacuum-sealed unit, or with a custom extrusion added from the interior side of the existing frame to fit a typical double-glazed unit. In addition, some of the original window assemblies will also be removed to accommodate new mechanical louvres.

A number of new window openings are also being proposed that would require the removal of solid panels with red terra cotta tiles. All efforts should be made to ensure that all replacement and new window assemblies conform to the **Standards & Guidelines**.

Conservation Strategy: Preservation and/or Rehabilitation

- Inspect window condition and complete a detailed window inventory to determine extent of recommended repair or replacement.
- Develop a detailed window rehabilitation program for retained and replacement windows. Determine where new window openings, assemblies, and mechanical louvres are required for functional reasons.
- Retain original window openings throughout the structural grid of the main facades. New window openings may be added, as required, for functional reasons.
- Retain and rehabilitate original aluminum windows of the Main Post Office, where possible.
- Heritage Consultant should review all window shop drawings and mock-ups for replacement windows.
- Any coloured film on retained windows should be removed.

5.0 CONSERVATION RECOMMENDATIONS



Photos showing typical conditions of original windows, as seen from the exterior (top photos) and exterior (bottom photos) side of the Main Post Office.

5.0 CONSERVATION RECOMMENDATIONS



Photo showing primary staff entrance on the left, and public entrance to the postal hall on the right, including respective canopies.



Secondary public entrance to the postal hall on the east elevation along Hamilton Street.

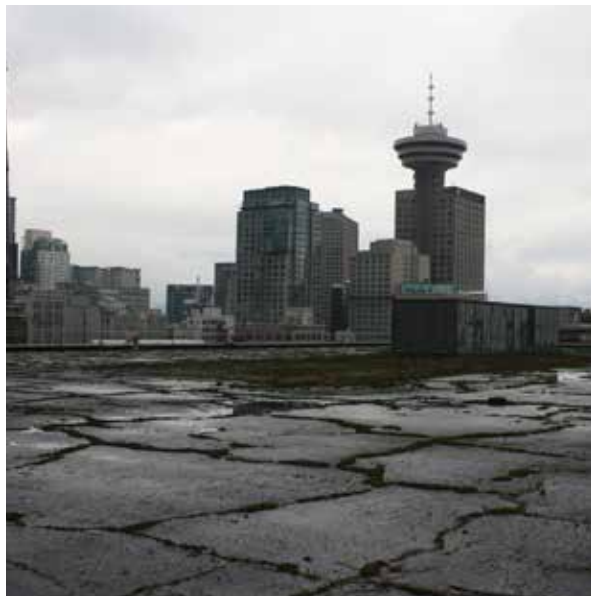


Secondary public entrance to the postal hall on the south elevation along West Georgia Street.

5.0 CONSERVATION RECOMMENDATIONS



Detail photo of canopy above the secondary storefront entrance on east elevation along Hamilton Street.



Photos showing typical deteriorating condition of the roof.

5.5.2 PUBLIC & STAFF ENTRANCE DOORS

The Main Post Office features original public and private entrances, including vehicular access. The public entrances to the postal hall are located to the south of the building along Homer and Hamilton Streets. The primary employee entrance is adjacent to the public entry doors along Homer Street, which leads to the elevator lobby that features a large painted mural above the original elevator door panels.

As part of the proposed rehabilitation scheme, the entrance door assemblies will be rehabilitated to accommodate the change in use of the building. Original door hardware may be salvaged, and reinstated or repurposed in other parts of the building, where possible.

Conservation Strategy: Rehabilitation

- Rehabilitate with new doors to accommodate new commercial and office use.
- Salvage any original door hardware in good condition, and reinstate and/or repurpose in other parts of the building, where possible.

5.6 CANOPIES

The Main Post Office features surviving original canopies that delineate the public and staff entrances along Homer, West Georgia, and Hamilton Streets. The canopies are characterized by extruded aluminum fascias, with plaster soffits and lighting fixtures. The underside of the colonnade along West Georgia Street features plaster soffits with square, metal vents. In general, the original canopies appear to be in good to fair condition, with signs of weathering and minor deterioration. They are important character-defining elements of the historic building that should be preserved, and repaired in-kind as necessary.

Conservation Strategy: Preservation

- Preserve the original canopies, as possible, and repair in-kind as required.

5.0 CONSERVATION RECOMMENDATIONS

5.7 ROOF

The Main Post Office features a low-slope roof, with a helipad in anticipation of sending mail by helicopter, and a large painting of a postal stamp on the northeast corner. The roof also features the three-storey rooftop office block, which includes a cafeteria, a semi-enclosed seating area, and a fenced-off outdoor seating area. Above the office block is the elevator penthouse that is characterized by blue terra cotta tiles.

Conservation Strategy: Demolition

- Demolish the three-storey rooftop office block and elevator penthouse.
- Preserve the original height of the parapet.

5.8 MATERIALS & COLOURS

The Main Post Office retains some of its original, distinct interior features that contribute to its historic character. Most of them are located within the postal hall, including, but not limited to: red and green terrazzo flooring, with geometric black, green, and white squares; acoustic ceiling tiles; marble panelled walls; wood panelling above doorways; aluminum mailboxes; aluminum & marble letter drop boxes; textured glass windows with aluminum mullions, some featuring Canadian-themed etched glasswork; aluminum double doors with Canada Post inscribed handles; double doors with sidelights featuring etched Canada Post Coat of Arms; custom tables with black stone tops and aluminum legs; rounded and curved wooden balusters with custom aluminum balustrade; and a number of pillars with black polished stone and caramel colour marble panelling.

As part of the proposed redevelopment scheme, a variety of interior features will be salvaged as possible for sympathetic repurposing in other areas of the building.

Conservation Strategy: Investigation

- Investigate the intrinsic colours of the original materials
- Restore the concrete walls by repainting the elements with historically appropriate colour, as possible.

5.9 EXTERIOR SIGNS & LIGHTING

An exterior program for signs and lighting will be developed that will mark the changes in use, identify business and entries, and enhance the exterior appearance through night-time illuminations.

Conservation Strategy: Rehabilitation

- Provide a sign program that is compatible with the character of the Main Post Office.
- Develop a lighting program that will enhance the night-time appearance of the building and its architectural details.

5.10 INTERIOR FEATURES

The Main Post Office retains a number of its original, distinct interior features that contribute to its historic character. Most of them are located within the postal hall, including, but not limited to: red and green terrazzo flooring, with geometric black, green, and white squares; acoustic ceiling tiles; marble panelled walls; wood panelling above doorways; aluminum mailboxes; aluminum & marble letter drop boxes; textured glass windows with aluminum mullions, some featuring Canadian-themed etched glasswork; aluminum double doors with Canada Post inscribed handles; double doors with sidelights featuring etched Canada Post Coat of Arms; custom tables with black stone tops and aluminum legs; rounded and curved wooden balusters with custom aluminum balustrade; and a number of pillars with black polished stone and caramel colour marble panelling.

As part of the proposed redevelopment scheme, the interior features will be salvaged for sympathetic repurposing in other areas of the building, where possible.

Conservation Strategy: Salvage

5.0 CONSERVATION RECOMMENDATIONS

PRELIMINARY COLOUR TABLE: MAIN POST OFFICE, 349 WEST GEORGIA STREET

Element	Colour	Code	Sample	Finish
Polished Red Granite	Original	-		Polished
Polished Grey Granite	Original	-		Polished
Painted Concrete	Beige	SW 2859		Satin
Red Terra Cotta	Original	-		-
Blue Terra Cotta	Original	-		-
Aluminum Windows	Original	-	-	-

6.0 PUBLIC ARTWORKS

As part of the proposed redevelopment scheme for the Main Post Office, a number of significant commissioned public artworks will be salvaged and stored in a safe place during construction, and reinstated in other areas of the rehabilitated building. This chapter provides a set of general guidelines for the retention and relocation of the public artworks that contribute to the historic character of the Main Post Office.

6.1 PAINTED MURAL

The elevator lobby of the Main Post Office, accessed from Homer Street, features a large painted mural by Orville Fisher above the elevator doors. The mural depicts early methods of transportation in British Columbia. In general, the painted mural appears to be in good condition, with minor signs of deterioration, as evident by a few cracks, and some discolouration in localized areas. Further testing and investigation by a conservator is required to determine the appropriate extent of intervention

and protection of the painted mural prior to, during, and after its relocation within the site.

Conservation Strategy: Relocation & Restoration

- The painted mural should be relocated within the building. The new location must allow for the painted mural to exist in its full dimension, and should retain its prominence in an unobscured manner (i.e. not visually obstructed).
- A professional conservator should be retained to coordinate the relocation and restoration process.
- The painted mural may be cut into multiple sections in order to be relocated. The cut lines should follow the natural divisions of 'tiled' colours of the mural. Care should be taken to ensure that surrounding mural material is not damaged during cutting, removal, relocation, or reinstatement.
- Once relocated, the painted mural should be restored, which will include the repair of cut seams. A professional conservator should



Detail photo showing cracked plaster.



Painted mural at elevator lobby of the Main Post Office.

5.0 CONSERVATION RECOMMENDATIONS

undertake all restoration work on the relocated painted mural.

- Each section of painted mural should be protected during the entire relocation process, and until construction and restoration have been completed.
- If possible, the existing clock should be relocated with the painted mural.

6.2 TILE MURAL

Paul Huba's original tile mural of a woman and child remains intact at the southeast corner of the original postal hall. The original tilework should be carefully documented prior to dismantling to allow for appropriate reinstallation, including uneven grout lines, and ensure that all tiles are reinstated to match original, as possible.

Overall, the original tile mural is in good condition. Some of the tiles have minor damage, and one of the tiles were disturbed at some point in time to install a later thermostat in an unsympathetic manner. Further testing and investigation by a conservator is required to determine the appropriate extent of intervention and protection of the tile mural prior to, during, and after its relocation within the site.

Conservation Strategy: Relocation & Restoration

- The tile mural should be relocated within the building. The new location must allow for the tile mural to exist in its full dimension, and should retain its prominence in an unobscured manner (i.e. not visually obstructed).
- A professional conservator should be retained to coordinate the relocation and restoration process.
- The tile mural should be documented meticulously, particularly the uneven grout lines, in order to match original installation, as possible.
- The individual tiles should be carefully dismantled for restoration by a qualified conservator, and temporarily stored off-site until reinstallation at its final location.
- Care should be taken to ensure that the original mural pieces, including surrounding materials, are not damaged during removal, relocation, or reinstatement.



6.3 DEDICATION INSCRIPTION

On one of the marble-clad columns behind the glass wall that divides the entrance lobby from the main hall, there is a dedication inscription carved into the stone that reads:

THIS BUILDING WAS ERECTED
1954 - 1957

THE RT. HON. LOUIS S. ST. LAURENT
PRIME MINISTER OF CANADA

THE HON. HUGUES LAPOINTE
POSTMASTER GENERAL

THE HON. ROBERT WINTERS
MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS

MAJ-GEN. H.A. YOUNG
DEPUTY-MINISTER OF PUBLIC WORKS

E.A. GARDNER
CHIEF ARCHITECT OF PUBLIC WORKS

M^CCARTER, NAIRNE & PARTNERS
ARCHITECTS AND ENGINEERS

SMITH BROS. & WILSON LTD.
GENERAL CONTRACTORS

The inscription is spread across four slabs of marble, one of which had a rectangular opening cut into it, which has since been filled in. The lower stone panels also show weathering and surface damage that may require honing.

Conservation Strategy: Relocation & Restoration

- The four slabs of marble bearing the dedication inscription should be relocated to a prominent public area within the new interior space of the Main Post Office.
- The four slabs of marble should not be damaged during removal or relocation, and should be protected from damage for the duration of construction.



Dedication inscription across four slabs of marble.

6.4 POSTMAN BAS-RELIEF

The southwest corner of the Main Post Office features a Swedish red granite wall with Paul Huba's 4.9-metre tall bas-relief of a postman. The postman bas-relief dates from 1956, laid directly above the inscribed cornerstone from 1955. The original postman bas-relief appears to be in good condition, with signs of natural weathering and minor deterioration.

Conservation Strategy: Relocation & Restoration

- Relocate the original postman bas-relief, and repair in-kind as necessary.
- The postman bas-relief should be protected during construction, to ensure that it is not damaged. Document the existing bas-relief, and carefully dismantle and store temporarily in a secure place until relocation.

6.5 CANADIAN ARMS

The Main Post Office features two identical 5.8 metre cast-aluminum Arms of Canada by Pearson Iron Works on the primary historic facade facing West Georgia Street. The Arms generally appear to be in good condition, but have become a roosting place for birds, which is causing buildup of biological waste on the granite below.

Conservation Strategy: Preservation

- The Arms of Canada should be preserved.
- A professional conservator should be retained to be involved in any conservation work for the Arms.
- The Arms should be cleaned using the gentlest means possible.
- Visually minimal bird control should be implemented to ensure that birds cannot get behind the Arms.
- The Arms should be protected from damage during all stages of construction.



Overall photo (top) of the Postman bas-relief by Paul Huba, and a detail photo (bottom).



Overall photo of the cast aluminum Arms of Canada cast by Pearson Iron Works on the front facade of the Main Post Office.

7.0 MAINTENANCE PLAN

A Maintenance Plan should be adopted by the property owner, who is responsible for the long-term protection of the heritage features of the Main Post Office. The Maintenance Plan should include provisions for:

- Copies of the Maintenance Plan and this Conservation Report to be incorporated into the terms of reference for the management and maintenance contract for the building;
- Cyclical maintenance procedures to be adopted as outlined below;
- Record drawings and photos of the building to be kept by the management / maintenance contractor; and
- Records of all maintenance procedures to be kept by the owner.

A thorough maintenance plan will ensure the integrity of the Main Post Office is preserved. If existing materials are regularly maintained and deterioration is significantly reduced or prevented, the integrity of materials and workmanship of the building will be protected. Proper maintenance is the most cost effective method of extending the life of a building, and preserving its character-defining elements. The survival of historic buildings in good condition is primarily due to regular upkeep and the preservation of historic materials.

7.1 MAINTENANCE GUIDELINES

A maintenance schedule should be formulated that adheres to the *Standards & Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada*. As defined by the *Standards & Guidelines*, maintenance is defined as:

Routine, cyclical, non-destructive actions necessary to slow the deterioration of a historic place. It entails periodic inspection; routine, cyclical, non-destructive cleaning; minor repair and refinishing operations; replacement of damaged or deteriorated materials that are impractical to save.

The assumption that newly renovated buildings become immune to deterioration and require

less maintenance is a falsehood. Rather, newly renovated buildings require heightened vigilance to spot errors in construction where previous problems had not occurred, and where deterioration may gain a foothold.

Routine maintenance keeps water out of the building, which is the single most damaging element to a heritage building. Maintenance also prevents damage by sun, wind, snow, frost and all weather; prevents damage by insects and vermin; and aids in protecting all parts of the building against deterioration. The effort and expense expended on an aggressive maintenance will not only lead to a higher degree of preservation, but also over time potentially save large amount of money otherwise required for later repairs.

7.2 PERMITTING

Repair activities, such as simple in-kind repair of materials, or repainting in the same colour, should be exempt from requiring city permits. Other more intensive activities will require the issuance of a Heritage Alteration Permit.

7.3 ROUTINE, CYCLICAL AND NON-DESTRUCTIVE CLEANING

Following the *Standards & Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada*, be mindful of the principle that recommends “using the gentlest means possible”. Any cleaning procedures should be undertaken on a routine basis and should be undertaken with non-destructive methods. Cleaning should be limited to the exterior material such as concrete and stucco wall surfaces and wood elements such as storefront frames. All of these elements are usually easily cleaned, simply with a soft, natural bristle brush, without water, to remove dirt and other material. If a more intensive cleaning is required, this can be accomplished with warm water, mild detergent and a soft bristle brush. High-pressure washing, sandblasting or other abrasive cleaning should not be undertaken under any circumstances.

7.4 REPAIRS AND REPLACEMENT OF DETERIORATED MATERIALS

Interventions such as repairs and replacements must conform to the *Standards & Guidelines for the Conservation of Historic Places in Canada*. The building's character-defining elements – characteristics of the building that contribute to its heritage value (and identified in the Statement of Significance) such as materials, form, configuration, etc. – must be conserved, referencing the following principles to guide interventions:

- An approach of minimal intervention must be adopted - where intervention is carried out it will be by the least intrusive and most gentle means possible.
- Repair rather than replace character-defining elements.
- Repair character-defining elements using recognized conservation methods.
- Replace 'in kind' extensively deteriorated or missing parts of character-defining elements.
- Make interventions physically and visually compatible with the historic place.

7.5 INSPECTIONS

Inspections are a key element in the maintenance plan, and should be carried out by a qualified person or firm, preferably with experience in the assessment of heritage buildings. These inspections should be conducted on a regular and timely schedule. The inspection should address all aspects of the building including exterior, interior and site conditions. It makes good sense to inspect a building in wet weather, as well as in dry, in order to see how water runs off – or through – a building. From this inspection, an inspection report should be compiled that will include notes, sketches and observations. It is helpful for the inspector to have copies of the building's elevation drawings on which to mark areas of concern such as cracks, staining and rot. These observations can then be included in the report. The report need not be overly complicated or formal, but must be thorough, clear and concise. Issues of concern, taken from the report should then be entered in a log book so that corrective action

can be documented and tracked. Major issues of concern should be extracted from the report by the property manager.

An appropriate schedule for regular, periodic inspections would be twice a year, preferably during spring and fall. The spring inspection should be more rigorous since in spring moisture-related deterioration is most visible, and because needed work, such as painting, can be completed during the good weather in summer. The fall inspection should focus on seasonal issues such as weather-sealants, mechanical (heating) systems and drainage issues. Comprehensive inspections should occur at five-year periods, comparing records from previous inspections and the original work, particularly in monitoring structural movement and durability of utilities. Inspections should also occur after major storms.

7.6 INFORMATION FILE

The building should have its own information file where an inspection report can be filed. This file should also contain the log book that itemizes problems and corrective action. Additionally, this file should contain building plans, building permits, heritage reports, photographs and other relevant documentation so that a complete understanding of the building and its evolution is readily available, which will aid in determining appropriate interventions when needed.

The file should also contain a list outlining the finishes and materials used, and information detailing where they are available (store, supplier). The building owner should keep on hand a stock of spare materials for minor repairs.

7.6.1 LOG BOOK

The maintenance log book is an important maintenance tool that should be kept to record all maintenance activities, recurring problems and building observations and will assist in the overall maintenance planning of the building.

6.0 MAINTENANCE PLAN

Routine maintenance work should be noted in the maintenance log to keep track of past and plan future activities. All items noted on the maintenance log should indicate the date, problem, type of repair, location and all other observations and information pertaining to each specific maintenance activity.

Each log should include the full list of recommended maintenance and inspection areas noted in this Maintenance Plan, to ensure a record of all activities is maintained. A full record of these activities will help in planning future repairs and provide valuable building information for all parties involved in the overall maintenance and operation of the building, and will provide essential information for long term programming and determining of future budgets. It will also serve as a reminder to amend the maintenance and inspection activities should new issues be discovered or previous recommendations prove inaccurate.

The log book will also indicate unexpectedly repeated repairs, which may help in solving more serious problems that may arise in the historic building. The log book is a living document that will require constant adding to, and should be kept in the information file along with other documentation noted in section **6.6 Information File**.

7.7 EXTERIOR MAINTENANCE

Water, in all its forms and sources (rain, snow, frost, rising ground water, leaking pipes, back-splash, etc.) is the single most damaging element to historic buildings.

The most common place for water to enter a building is through the roof. Keeping roofs repaired or renewed is the most cost-effective maintenance option. Evidence of a small interior leak should be viewed as a warning for a much larger and worrisome water damage problem elsewhere and should be fixed immediately.

7.7.1 INSPECTION CHECKLIST

The following checklist considers a wide range of potential problems specific to the Main Post Office, such as water/moisture penetration, material deterioration and structural deterioration. This does not include interior inspections.

EXTERIOR INSPECTION

Site Inspection:

- ☐ Is the lot well drained? Is there pooling of water?
- ☐ Does water drain away from foundation?

Foundation

- ☐ Moisture: Is rising damp present?
- ☐ Is there back splashing from ground to structure?
- ☐ Is any moisture problem general or local?
- ☐ Are there shrinkage cracks in the foundation?
- ☐ Are there movement cracks in the foundation?
- ☐ Is crack monitoring required?

Masonry

- ☐ Are moisture problems present? (Rising damp, rain penetration, condensation, water run-off from roof, sills, or ledges?)
- ☐ Need for pointing repair? Condition of existing pointing and re-pointing?
- ☐ Are there cracks due to shrinking and expansion?
- ☐ Are there cracks due to structural movement?
- ☐ Are there unexplained cracks?
- ☐ Do cracks require continued monitoring?
- ☐ Are there stains present? Rust, copper, organic, paints, oils / tars? Cause?
- ☐ Does the surface need cleaning?

Condition of Exterior Painted Materials

- ☐ Paint shows: blistering, sagging or wrinkling, alligating, peeling. Cause?
- ☐ Paint has the following stains: rust, bleeding knots, mildew, etc. Cause?
- ☐ Paint cleanliness, especially at air vents?

6.0 MAINTENANCE PLAN

Windows

- ☐ Is there glass cracked or missing?
- ☐ Are the beads in good condition?
- ☐ Is there condensation or water damage to the paint?
- ☐ Are the sashes easy to operate? If hinged, do they swing freely?
- ☐ Is the frame free from distortion?
- ☐ Do sills show weathering or deterioration?
- ☐ Is the caulking between the frame and the cladding in good condition?

INTERIOR INSPECTION

Basement

- ☐ Are there signs of moisture damage to the walls? Is masonry cracked, discoloured, spalling?
- ☐ Are there signs of past flooding, or leaks from the floor above? Is the floor damp?
- ☐ Are walls even or buckling or cracked? Is the floor cracked or heaved?
- ☐ Are there signs of insect or rodent infestation?

7.7.2 MAINTENANCE PROGRAMME

INSPECTION CYCLE:

Daily

- Observations noted during cleaning (cracks; damp, dripping pipes; malfunctioning hardware; etc.) to be noted in log book or building file.

Semi-annually

- Semi-annual inspection and report with special focus on seasonal issues.
- Thorough cleaning of drainage system to cope with winter rains and summer storms
- Check condition of weather sealants (Fall).
- Clean the exterior using a soft bristle broom/brush.

Annually (Spring)

- Inspect concrete for cracks, deterioration.
- Inspect metal elements, especially in areas that may trap water.
- Inspect windows for paint and glazing compound failure, corrosion and wood decay and proper operation.
- Complete annual inspection and report.
- Clean out of all perimeter drains and rainwater systems.
- Touch up worn paint on the building's exterior.
- Check for plant, insect or animal infestation.
- Routine cleaning, as required.

Five-Year Cycle

- A full inspection report should be undertaken every five years comparing records from previous inspections and the original work, particularly monitoring structural movement and durability of utilities.
- Repaint windows every five to fifteen years.

Ten-Year Cycle

- Check condition of roof every ten years after last replacement.

Twenty-Year Cycle

- Confirm condition of roof and estimate effective lifespan. Replace when required.

Major Maintenance Work (as required)

- Thorough repainting, downspout and drain replacement; replacement of deteriorated building materials; etc.

APPENDIX A: RESEARCH SUMMARY

NAME OF THE HISTORIC PLACE: Main Post Office

CIVIC ADDRESS: 349 West Georgia Street, Vancouver

LEGAL ADDRESS: Primary Lot E, Block 46, District Lot 541, Plan VAP226

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION: 1953-58

ARCHITECT: McCarter Nairne & Partners, in association with Federal Department of Public Works

CONTRACTOR: Smith Brothers and Wilson Ltd.

SOURCES OF ARCHITECTURAL PLANS:

- City of Vancouver Plans: General Post Office; DPW Chief Architect's Branch Associated Architects; McCarter Nairne & Partners, 1953-1955.
- City of Vancouver Archives Plans: AP #1430; 1953

OTHER SOURCES:

- *Building the West: The Early Architects of British Columbia*. Luxton, Donald. Talonbooks, Vancouver, 2nd Ed., 2007.
- City of Vancouver Archives
- *Exploring Vancouver: Ten Tours of the City and its Buildings*. Kalman, Harold and John Roaf (photographer). Vancouver: UBC Press. 1974.
- Heritage Vancouver Society
- Jewish Museum & Archives of British Columbia
- *Remaking Vancouver: 1940-1970*. Birmingham & Wood. Vancouver. 2006.
- The Canadian Architect journal article, June 1958, Pages 76-78
- Vancouver Public Library

NEWSPAPER AND JOURNAL SOURCES:

- *Sun*: Aug. 4, 1953, "*Taj Mahal with Escalators*" drawn as city post office, illus.
- *Province*: May 28, 1954, "*Work will start at once on Vancouver's new post office*" illus.
- *Province*: Oct. 26, 1955, "*Perpetuated in granite ...*"
- *Province*: Jan. 7, 1957, *Latest photo ...*, illus.
- *Sun*: Jan. 25, 1957, p. 3, *General Post Office ...*, illus.
- *Province*: Mar 14, 1958, *300 guests will inspect the new Vancouver post office lobby ...*, illus.
- *Province*: Mar 14, 1958, *Largest single building in Vancouver is the new post office which will be officially opened today...*, illus.
- *Main Post Office* Vancouver 3, BC, Post Office Department Canada, March 1958.
- *The Canadian Architect*: Vol. 3, June 1958, p. 76-77, illus. (R 720.5 C212).
- *Sun*: June 7, 1957, p. 8, *Complaints of noise delay mail tunnel*.
- *Postmark*: Vol. 12, May 1958, p. 3-7, *Vancouver post office opened*, illus. (NW 383.1 P85 Pam).
- *Cavalcade of Steel*: 1955, p. 67, *General Post Office*, Vancouver BC, illus. (R 338.74 D67c). (Picture only; frame under construction).
- *Sun*: Feb. 23, 1972, p. 17, *Contract awarded*.