

## **HERITAGE CHARACTER STATEMENT**

### **Former Main Post Office**

701 Hastings Street  
Vancouver, British Columbia

The former Vancouver Post Office was built in 1905-1910 to designs prepared in the Department of Public Works under the direction of David Ewart, Chief Architect. It is still the property of Public Works. It is identified by the City of Vancouver as a heritage building. See FHBRO Building Reports 83-24 to 83-27.

### **Reason for Designation**

On July 15, 1983, the building was designated Classified because it is a particularly fine and representative example of Beaux Arts federal architecture of the time, and because it is symbolically and visually an important landmark in Vancouver. The Old Post Office is the key element in an integrated, federally owned block of four buildings now known as the Sinclair Centre, of which two, the R.V. Winch Building and the Customs Examining Warehouse, were designated Recognized at the same time.

### **Character Defining Elements**

This designation applies to the Granville and Hastings Streets façades of the building, the whole of its tower, and visible roof elements, including surviving original doors, windows, and architectural hardware. This designation should be taken to extend to the main postal lobby and ground floor circulation space.

This is a solid, dignified, and imposing Beaux Arts design, executed in Agassiz granite. The engaged corner tower was in those years the icon of federal presence; its integration with a Beaux Arts building was something of a compositional challenge to the designers, here met by reference to Renaissance precedent. The exterior of the building is remarkably sound, and should receive only the gentlest treatment, if any. Every effort should be made to repair existing windows and doors; the size, proportion, and transparency of openings must not be altered.

The tower originally carried a substantial weathervane, which was an integral part of its aesthetic and symbolic function. It might be restored. It would also be appropriate for the clock once again to work and to sound the hours.

Considerable original material survives in the postal lobby and related circulation space. This material should be preserved and integrated in an appropriately formal design. The remaining interiors may be more freely altered, providing no changes are visible on the exterior.

The building is a formal, contained element in the streetscape. Its tower makes an important contribution to the vista down Granville Street to the harbour. The self-contained, almost forbidding aspect of the building and the block of which it is a part is fundamental to its symbolic role as "federal presence" as understood at the time it was built. While one may want to further integrate the four buildings of Block 15, any efforts in this direction should not breach the composed face that these buildings present to the rest of the city.

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