

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

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**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

received **SEP 27 1983**  
date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

**1. Name**

historic Mayflower Hotel

and/or common Mayflower Hotel

**2. Location**

street & number 1127 Connecticut Ave., NW n/a not for publication

city, town Washington — vicinity of n/a

state D. C. code 11 county n/a code 001

**3. Classification**

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<u>n/a</u> district	<u>n/a</u> public	<u>X</u> occupied	<u>n/a</u> agriculture	<u>n/a</u> museum
<u>X</u> building(s)	<u>X</u> private	<u>n/a</u> unoccupied	<u>X</u> commercial	<u>n/a</u> park
<u>n/a</u> structure	<u>n/a</u> both	<u>X</u> work in progress	<u>n/a</u> educational	<u>n/a</u> private residence
<u>n/a</u> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<u>n/a</u> entertainment	<u>n/a</u> religious
<u>n/a</u> object	<u>n/a</u> in process	<u>n/a</u> yes: restricted	<u>n/a</u> government	<u>n/a</u> scientific
	<u>n/a</u> being considered	<u>X</u> yes: unrestricted	<u>n/a</u> industrial	<u>n/a</u> transportation
		<u>n/a</u> no	<u>n/a</u> military	<u>n/a</u> other:

**4. Owner of Property**

name May-Wash Associates Limited Partnership

street & number Suite 900, 1725 DeSales St., NW

city, town Washington — vicinity of n/a state D.C. 20036

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Office of Recorder of Deeds, District of Columbia

street & number 515 D St., NW

city, town Washington state D.C. 20001

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title District of Columbia Inventory  
of Historic Sites

has this property been determined eligible? \_\_\_ yes X no

date February 24, 1983 n/a federal X state n/a county n/a local

depository for survey records Historic Preservation Office, D. C. Department of  
Housing and Community Development

city, town Washington state D.C.

# 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>	
<u>n/a</u> excellent	<u>n/a</u> deteriorated	<u>n/a</u> unaltered	<u>x</u> original site	
<u>x</u> good	<u>n/a</u> ruins	<u>x</u> altered	<u>n/a</u> moved	date <u>n/a</u>
<u>n/a</u> fair	<u>n/a</u> unexposed			

**Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance**

## EXTERIOR DESCRIPTION

The Mayflower Hotel is an impressive ten-story building in a restrained Beaux-Arts style, constructed of steel and concrete and finished in buff-colored brick set in common bond above an ashlar limestone base, with terra-cotta trim and quoins. It is bounded on the north by DeSales Street, N. W., on the east by Seventeenth Street, N. W., and on the west by Connecticut Avenue, N. W. The greater part of the southern side is detached, facing on a service alley. The extreme southwestern corner is attached to 1101 Connecticut Avenue, N. W. A ten-story addition (once called the Annex or the Piedmont) was constructed on the south side of the main hotel section in the same year the hotel was completed.

The exterior of the renovated and restored east end of the building is in excellent condition; the west end, awaiting renovation, is in fair to good condition. The original exterior appearance is essentially unaltered. Exceptions, including changes to first-floor doors and windows and a partial two-story addition to the eastern portion, are described below.

The building plan is generally trapezoidal through the first and mezzanine floors. The northeastern and southeastern corners form right angles; the western wall parallels the diagonal course of Connecticut Avenue, forming an acute angle at the northwestern corner and an oblique angle at the southwest. Above the second floor, the eastern section, originally the apartment section, consists of a central spine running east and west with three perpendicular transverse wings. The legs of the U-shaped western, or hotel, section, point west. The northern leg is longer than the southern one and the western walls of both legs have a slight convex curve to the west. The Annex tower is connected to the south wall of the southern leg. The western wall of the Annex parallels Connecticut Avenue.

The hotel section of the Mayflower is ten stories high. Recent construction increased the height of the apartment section from eight to ten stories, completing the original scheme for the building.

Above a granite watertable the walls of the first and mezzanine floors are clad with Indiana limestone. Decorative terra-cotta elements above the mezzanine match the color of the limestone.

The west, or major, facade provides the most striking view of the Mayflower. Above the monumental limestone base rise the elegantly curved faces of the two towers of the hotel. The recessed southern tower follows the diagonal course of Connecticut Avenue, yet stands in interesting contrast to the flat facades of adjacent buildings. The Annex facade supplies a sedate transition to the more confined structure to the south. The articulation of the tenth floor as an attic story provides a strong vertical termination to the composition.

The west facade has six bays on each of the legs, four bays on the recessed area and two bays of double windows on the Annex facade. The

(continued)

# 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
n/a prehistoric	n/a archeology-prehistoric	n/a community planning	n/a landscape architecture	n/a religion
n/a 1400-1499	n/a archeology-historic	n/a conservation	n/a law	n/a science
n/a 1500-1599	n/a agriculture	n/a economics	n/a literature	n/a sculpture
n/a 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	n/a education	n/a military	n/a social/
n/a 1700-1799	n/a art	n/a engineering	n/a music	humanitarian
n/a 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	n/a exploration/settlement	n/a philosophy	n/a theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	n/a communications	n/a industry	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> politics/government	n/a transportation
		n/a invention		n/a other (specify)

**Specific dates** 1922-25; 1982      **Builder/Architect** Warren and Wetmore, Architects; Robert F. Beresford, Assoc. Arch.

**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)**

The Joint Committee on Landmarks of the National Capital has designated the Mayflower Hotel as a Historic Landmark in Category III in the Inventory of Historic Sites and has recommended it for nomination to the National Register of Historic Places for the following reasons:

1. Designed by the New York architectural firm of Warren and Wetmore in association with Washington architect Robert F. Beresford, the Mayflower is a large, first-class hotel by a firm noted as national leaders in the design of this building type. It was erected during the Golden Age of hotel building, an era when American cities vied with each other to promote hotels of elegance and grandeur.

2. Frequently called the "Hotel of Presidents," the Mayflower has been host to a large number of personages of national and international importance who have figured prominently in the social, political and diplomatic activities of the nation's capital.

The freedom and originality of its plan, the chaste elegance of its decoration, its handsome public function rooms, the range of its guest facilities and its advanced mechanical systems, have for six decades set standards by which the capital's best hotels have been judged. Designed by the eminent New York firm of Warren and Wetmore, famed for their work on New York's Grand Central Terminal, the hotel presents a dynamic solution to the design problems posed by its trapezoidal lot. The dramatic angle of the west facade, with its two curved towers, combined with the imposing yet carefully proportioned bulk of the hotel's north wing along DeSales Street, uses the site to generate a spectacular grand perspective up Connecticut Avenue. The Mayflower, the only Washington building designed by Warren and Wetmore, is a splendid-- and splendidly intact-- representation of America's golden age of grand hotels. The Mayflower quickly eclipsed its Washington rivals, including the smaller Willard Hotel, then 24 years old and lacking the Mayflower's formidable array of modern appointments and expansive public spaces. Nearly a quarter of a mile in perimeter, with 440 guest rooms and a hundred apartment suites, the new building offered air-cooled public rooms (among the first uses of such a system on a large scale by a hotel), ice water and fans in each of the guest rooms and unparalleled service that included maid, laundry and catering facilities, barber and beauty shops, a garage, a house doctor and a small emergency hospital, as well as the city's first "Multiple Switchboard" telephone system, installed in 1925.

It also provided unheard of conveniences in apartment living for residents of its one hundred permanent suites. Working fireplaces,

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

Columbia Historical Society, Washington, D.C., Vertical Files: The Mayflower.

Columbia University, Avery Architectural Library, Archive, New York: Vertical Files: Warren and Wetmore, photocopies of architects' original renderings  
(continued)

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 1.36 acres

Quadrangle name Washington, West-DC-MD-VA

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References

A 

1	8	3	2	3	1	2	0	4	3	0	7	9	1	4	0
Zone		Easting				Northing									

B 

Zone		Easting				Northing									

C 

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D 

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H 

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**Verbal boundary description and justification** (See also under Item 7: Description)

The Mayflower Hotel is located on Lots 88 and 91, Square 162, of the District of Columbia. It is bounded on the north by DeSales St., NW; on the west by Connecticut Avenue, NW; on the east by 17th St., NW; and on the south by a service alley.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state None code n/a county n/a code n/a

state None code n/a county n/a code n/a

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Shirley Maxwell, Partner

organization Massey Maxwell Associates

date August 15, 1983

street & number 614 S. Lee St.

telephone (703) 549-3394

city or town Alexandria

state VA 22314

## 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

*Carol B. Thompson*

Director

title Department of Consumer & Regulatory Affairs

date SEP 21 1983

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I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

*Carol B. Thompson*

date NOV 14 1983

Keeper of the National Register

Attest: *Carol O. Shull*

date 11-14-83

Chief of Registration

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recessed area is nine bays deep on the north and five bays deep on the south. The second, third and fourth bays of each leg are more tightly spaced, heightening the effect of the curved facade. The east or Seventeenth Street elevation is an unbroken 11-bay surface. The three central bays are emphasized by paired windows. Two columns of small bathroom and dressing room windows that originally occupied the wall areas immediately adjacent to the corner bays have been bricked in flush with the surface, leaving their original perimeters intact. (Other bricked-in windows are on the transverse wings of the apartment section.)

On the north facade, three transverse wings have six bays and the recessed areas have four. The hotel portion to the west contains fourteen bays.

All of the roofs are flat. The roof covering the base of the building is of terra-cotta tile; the tower roofs are covered with built-up slag.

The hotel section is topped by a finely detailed penthouse composed of two pavilions connected by an arcade. The sides of the pavilion are decorated by blind arches with false balconies. A narrow terra-cotta cornice completes the composition.

The main entrances are covered by marquees of varying sizes, each suspended by rods with foliated turn-bolts and lion's-head anchor brackets. The most ornate is at the three-arched Connecticut Avenue entrance. Supported by two rods, it has elegantly notched corners and metal cresting with classical urns, cornucopias, wreaths and palmettes. A simpler, broad marquee supported by four suspension rods covers the Seventeenth Street entrance. Metal cresting with an urn and scroll work dominates the center of the front edge above a molded cornice. Original metal panels are visible on the underside of the marquee and the outer edge of the underside is ringed by bar lightbulbs, probably the original means of illumination. A third marquee supported by three suspension rods on the north side of the second transverse wing, formerly the apartment lobby entrance, was modernized in 1960 by the addition of stainless steel panels to the sides, covering a molded cornice. There is no evidence now of cresting. At the DeSales Street entrance to the hotel section a small marquee suspended by two rods has a molded cornice and a finely detailed cresting motif on the top edge.

Above the mezzanine level, double-hung six-over-six-light vinyl-clad wood windows are replications of the deteriorated wood originals. Windows on the first-floor level of the north and east facades have original six-over-six-light double-hung sash with fixed, three-light transoms. Most mezzanine windows on the same facades are three-over-six-light double-hung wood sash. All windows have limestone sills. Two windows directly west of the DeSales Street entrance and one directly east of the entrance have been filled with terra-cotta block screens. In the portion of the north facade corresponding to the East and State Rooms, double-hung wood sash twelve-light windows rise through the mezzanine level.

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Three sets of double bronze-and-glass doors at the Connecticut Avenue entrance, separated by large plate-glass windows, although not original, are of high quality. The Seventeenth Street entrance has three sets of double brushed-aluminum-and-glass doors. The DeSales Street entrance has one set of double bronze-finished aluminum-and-glass doors. Doors to the old apartment entrance on DeSales Street have been removed and replacements have not yet been installed.

The exterior of the Mayflower is notably free of excessive ornamentation and decorative elements are generally rendered in low relief. Major decorative features are of limestone matching that covering the first and mezzanine levels. The limestone covering ends in a heavy belt course and a simple egg-and-dart molding running the entire length of the public-facing facades. The corners of the hotel are sharply defined by smooth terra-cotta quoins. Double quoins on the west facade emphasize the point between the main hotel and the Annex.

The major cornice line of the hotel towers occurs above the ninth floor in a detailed terra-cotta cornice with a fluted fascia enriched by molded female heads placed at intervals. A shallow cornice of simpler molding above a wave-scrolled fascia caps the parapet above the tenth floor. The use of two cornice lines allows the tenth floor to serve as the capital element of a classical tripartite composition. Large terra-cotta urns decorating the parapet of the hotel towers along the Connecticut Avenue and DeSales Street elevations replicate severely deteriorated originals, and the apartment towers are topped by a simple molding, suggesting the anticipated construction of additional floors.

In the robust decoration of the west facade alternating arches and oval windows obscure the visual differentiation between the first and mezzanine levels. The main entrance is emphasized by a bold three-arch composition in which the arches are carried by spiral columns with Ionic capitals and feature console keystones. Flanking the triple arches are two double-arch compositions with single spiral columns between the arches. Above them, large limestone medallions, with carvings of roses, ribbons and wheat sheaves surrounding a lion's head, burst through the confines of the belt course. The northern double arch has been filled with terra-cotta-block screens set against the original windows and a dark green marble background, which are to be restored. The southern double arch has been modified to serve as an entrance to the Carvery Restaurant and is scheduled for restoration. Dark-stained wood planking fills the left side while the right side is occupied by carved antique doors. The original windows are to be restored. Between the arches and at the extreme ends of the facade are rectangular openings with simple entablature lintels. Above the rectangular openings are oval windows crowned with women's heads and festooned garlands. The northernmost rectangle and oval are located on the curved surface of the hotel's northwest corner.

A triple arch similar to the one at the entrance maintains continuity of  
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design on the facade of the Annex. The arches are filled with metal-framed windows. Marble infill is used in the area between the first and mezzanine floors, and a series of four foliated finials is on top of the limestone parapet wall directly above the main entrance. On the western facade heavy terra-cotta window surrounds are topped by relief urn motifs. Large terra-cotta medallions and festooning are between the seventh and eighth floors. The windows are six-over-six-light double-hung original wood sash. Original awning hardware survives.

The relative severity of the east (Seventeenth Street) facade is partially relieved by varying window treatments. Heavy terra-cotta surrounds punctuate the first, fourth and seventh floors, while the heads of the second-floor windows carry urns and garlands in relief. Seventh-floor windows show terra-cotta drapery below the sill and a festooned garland above the head. At the second and seventh floors, except for the extreme end bays, the terra-cotta detailing was partially destroyed by the addition of air-conditioning vents, perhaps in the 1930s. A terra-cotta plaque is at the center of the facade between the fourth and fifth floors. The Seventeenth Street entrance is surrounded by a finely detailed spiral ribbon motif with a clustered composition of basket, ferns, rose and flute in the center of the entrance head. Four foliated metal flag brackets are directly above the entrance at the second-floor level. Between the second and third floors are four sets of bolts for anchoring the flag cables.

The northern (DeSales Street) facade is unified by a series of very shallow relieving arches along the limestone area of the hotel section. Each window of the East and State Rooms is set within one of these arches. The tympanum above the window is decorated by wheat sheaves and a heroic profile in relief. Two more relieving arches are on the first transverse wing of the apartment section. The severity of the upper floors is relieved by heavy terra-cotta window surrounds at the second and seventh floors with decoration identical to that used on the eastern facade. On the hotel tower to the west, the surrounds are further embellished by pairs of flanking medallions applied at a raked angle and decorated with a fleur-de-lis, an open book and ribbons in terra cotta.

**INTERIOR DESCRIPTION**

The Mayflower is characterized by grandly proportioned public spaces enriched by luxurious finishes and fine decorative detail. Walls, floors, stairs, pilasters and wainscoting in the lobby and the major function rooms are clad in a wide array of American and imported marbles, and ceilings and walls throughout the first floor and mezzanine are ornamented by finely cast, low-relief plaster decorations, often further embellished with gold leaf. The wealth of surviving original material adds significantly to the historical and architectural interest of the hotel. The current, ongoing program of rehabilitation and restoration of the lobby, mezzanine and meeting rooms has corrected various problems of maintenance and inappropriate redecorations and

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renovations. (A chronological listing of previous alterations and major redecorations is attached. See Addendum A.) Care has also been taken in the renovation of guest rooms to preserve and/or restore significant original features such as windows, fireplaces and hearths whenever possible.

**MAIN LOBBY**

The irregularly shaped Main Lobby, directly inside the Connecticut Avenue entrance, consists of a court, which serves as the primary reception center, and, to the east, an elevator lobby.

Two stories high in the center, the cruciform-shaped court was originally surrounded by the open mezzanine on the north, south and west sides. Modernizations completed in 1962 closed off the mezzanine, seriously compromising the lofty quality of the lobby and giving a boxy look to the upper walls. Marble-clad attached piers define the central space and divide the north and south walls into three bays each. Ornate plaster pier capitals were removed in 1962. A small cocktail lounge is along the north wall and the south wall recedes into the front desk area.

Beneath the mezzanine, the southern portion of the west wall is clad with Botticino marble, while the portion to the north is finished with flush wood paneling. The walls of the elevator lobby are finished with tan Botticino marble.

The primary entrance to the Main Lobby is through a bronze-and-glass airlock opening from Connecticut Avenue, set at an angle parallel to the avenue. Directly inside the entrance is a low-ceilinged vestibule area. A stairway of tan St. Genevieve marble leads up to the mezzanine and down to the restrooms, barber shop and original marble shoeshine stand. Secondary hallways lead from the four corners of the central court to the Town and Country Restaurant on the northwest; the Carvery Restaurant on the southeast; the DeSales Street entrance. An added doorway inserted in the curved south wall of the elevator lobby has now been sealed. A modern marble stairway flanked by wheelchair ramps leads down to the State Room Foyer. The elevator bank contains four shafts with flush bronze doors etched with stylized pictures of the ship Mayflower.

A great, multipaned skylight with wide acanthus-leaf molding covers the Main Lobby. Old photographs indicate that the skylight was painted out at an early date. A large crystal chandelier is suspended from the center of the skylight. A recessed cove containing indirect lighting occupies most of the ceiling area in the elevator lobby. During the 1962 remodeling, the ceiling was lowered to its present height, covering a plaster relief sculpture on the east wall and a sunburst ceiling medallion. Both features remain largely intact.

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PRESIDENTIAL ROOM

The much altered Presidential Room acquired its present Classical decoration in 1957 and its asymmetrical plan through a series of remodelings that removed most of the eastern bay. The room contains two important murals of Italian Renaissance garden scenes painted by Edward Laning and framed with architectural elements to simulate vistas from columned verandahs. Originally the entire north side of the room (then known as the Palm Court) opened to the Promenade. Partitions installed in 1934 and 1947 are being removed in the current rehabilitation. In 1950 arches were constructed between the piers and the pilasters of the north and south walls.

On the east wall, an arched and columned alcove area is dominated by a small oriel balcony at the mezzanine level. The area beneath the balcony has recently been reopened to its full original depth.

The room has a base of St. Genevieve golden vein marble and a deep, full-entablature crown ceiling molding. The original American travertine flooring and maple dance floor still exist.

EAST AND STATE ROOMS

The East and State Rooms (formerly the Presidential Dining Room) were designed and built as a visual and decorative unity. Except for the addition of a movable steel partition across the center of the room, few changes have been made since the opening of the hotel in 1925. Chaste, clean lines, cool expanses of marble and fine Adamesque detailing produce an exceptional mood of understated elegance.

The East and State Rooms form a long rectangle measuring 48' x 169'. Two rows of straight, boxed piers range the length of the room about seven feet from the walls. The simple, flared capitals of the piers are decorated with gilt heads and festoons. A four-foot wainscot of white Alabama marble above a base of verde-antique marble surrounds the entire room and each of the piers. The ceiling line is defined by an acanthus-leaf crown molding, and gilt molding in a finial motif outlines each architectural element above the wainscot and gilt and polychrome state crests line the walls.

A service pavilion about seven feet wide and half the height of the room projects from the south wall between the second and fourth piers. Its top forms a balcony enclosed by a decorative metal railing. A narrow flight of stairs giving access to the balcony at the east end of the pavilion has been removed. The sides of the pavilion are now finished with beveled block mirrors set between narrow pilasters but a few of the original turned wood spindles that once decorated the north wall are still visible below the mirrors.

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Plain boxed partitions rising the full height of the room have been constructed at either end of the movable partition. On the south wall the partition cuts directly through the service pavilion.

Nine long, double windows set into the north wall are surrounded above the wainscot by gilt finial molding. The ceiling is enriched with finely detailed Adamesque decoration in low relief. At the east and west ends are two shallow, circular domes surrounded by gilt wreath molding, their centers dominated by circular grates from which are suspended large, delicately proportioned gilt chandeliers with silk shades. Between the two domes is a long rectangular panel surrounded by a gilt wreath molding and centered with another identical chandelier.

The floor of white Vermont marble tiles, cut by thin diagonal lines of verde-antique marble, is bordered by verde-antique marble within a three-foot outer border of dark-veined and white Italian Pavonazzo marble.

#### THE PROMENADE

The Promenade extends 212' from the Main Lobby to the 17th Street entrance, its six structural bays clearly articulated by pilasters with capitals bearing heroic profiles and exquisitely designed plaster drapery. The walls have a three-foot-high wainscot of white Alabama marble with a base of verde-antique marble and a gray marble chair rail. A gilt acanthus-leaf crown molding surrounds the area. Access from the Seventeenth Street entrance is by means of a flight of six marble steps leading down from the raised vestibule and air lock.

Three shallow recessed arches on the north wall, once entrances to small meeting rooms, are now filled with beveled mirror panels. A gilt plaster crest ornaments the wall directly above the arches. On the north and south walls, original heavy, molded architraves of white Alabama marble surround the apertures leading to the major function rooms: The Grand Ballroom and the Chinese Room on the south, the East and State Rooms on the north. (Access to the Presidential Room, which was originally completely open to the south side of the Promenade, has been closed off while the room is being restored to its original configuration.) The wall areas within and around the marble moldings are filled with beveled mirror, similar to that used in the original decoration, and modern, fire-rated triple doors with applied molding have been inserted. On the north wall the original coatroom is set within a molded marble opening and a single marble doorway surround, now sealed, marks the former entrance to the apartment lobby. Two modern doors with applied molding lead to service areas. The south wall has a small paneled, double door. The upper area of the wall surface is decorated with a gilt plaster crest.

The gently vaulted ceiling of the Promenade displays a bold pattern of large, octagonal coffers alternating with small coffered squares centered

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by gilt rosettes. The floor is of white Vermont and verde-antique marbles, with a verde-antique border. Engaged verde-antique pedestals at the bases of the pilasters have fluted shafts embellished by rosettes and gilt wreaths.

**THE GRAND BALLROOM**

The Grand Ballroom, the most opulent space in the hotel, consists of a broad central space rising to the full height of the mezzanine level and flanked by two narrow, double galleries. At the west end of the room is a small stage under a proscenium arch. Under a similar archway at the east end is a wall of mirror-paned French doors which can be drawn back to allow free circulation between the Ballroom and the Chinese Room. The upper area of the arch is filled by a curved balcony.

Three major transverse bays, expressed by massive piers, divide the length of the room. Smaller piers define three sub-bays in each of the major ones. All are spanned by basket-handle arches.

A wainscot of tan St. Genevieve marble surrounds the room and beveled mirrors fill the recessed area between wainscot and gallery. A base of black-and-gold Italian marble is at the back of the gallery.

Six sets of raised-panel doors open through the north wall into the Promenade, the center set reached by a flight of three steps. Each of the end doors is reached by a broad curved flight of five steps. The balustrades rest on graceful, curved, monolithic bases of black-and-gold Italian marble. A platform clad in tan St. Genevieve marble with four steps on either side gives access to the service alley on the south. Four stair towers, one in each corner of the room, lead to the upper galleries.

A wooden dance floor covers most of the central area; the balance of the floor is marble.

Intricately designed low-relief decorations picked out in gold-leaf cover the piers, walls and ceiling, and Ionic pier capitals feature exquisitely rendered satanic faces. Iron balustrades with winged female torsos and fruit-filled urns enclose both levels of the gallery.

**CHINESE ROOM**

The Chinese Room is roughly square in plan, with alcoves to the east and south set off from the main body of the room by large, square piers that divide the alcoves into three bays each. A slightly elevated platform in the center bay of the south alcove leads to a mirror-paned door. The rear walls of the flanking bays have been moved forward to screen two short flights of stairs leading to fire exits.

Most of the western wall is composed of an eight-part, mirror-paned

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partition that can be folded back to allow free circulation between the Chinese Room and the Grand Ballroom.

A base of verde-antique marble surrounds the room and piers. Crown molding with gilt acanthus leaves is at the ceiling. The main entrance is recessed in the curved north wall. Mirror panes inserted in the original sash fill a pair of false casement windows on the east wall.

A dramatic elliptical dome, with intricate chinoiserie paintings of people, trees and animals, covers nearly the entire ceiling. A wide gilt wreath molding surrounds the outer edge of the dome, and a two-tiered crystal chandelier hangs from its center. Beneath the dome is a hardwood dance floor.

#### COLONIAL ROOM

The present appearance of the Colonial Room dates from a 1950s remodeling. A description is included here because the room is of superior design and contributes to the overall sense of elegance of the hotel. It is also an attractive example of the Colonial Revival decorative trend that swept the country after World War II.

The room is surrounded on three sides by a gallery enclosed by a classical balustrade with turned balusters and an oak handrail, and by a shallow, concave stage on the fourth side. Other fine Colonial Revival detailing includes paneled pilasters, wainscot and chair rail and heavily molded, shouldered architraves with broken pediments and carved ornament at the entrances.

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complete kitchens and a private entrance lobby ensured a homelike atmosphere. Servants were housed in a 40-room section in which each room adjoined a private bath-- unprecedented luxury for the service class. The Piedmont, a million-dollar annex built in 1925, the year the hotel opened, contained the Presidential and Vice Presidential Suites, intended to correspond to the royal suites of European hotels, each containing 13 rooms luxuriously appointed in the best tradition of Beaux-Arts eclecticism with fine French, English and American antiques.

But it is, perhaps above all, the size and elegance of its public spaces that has earned for the Mayflower its enduring place in the social, political and diplomatic life of the capital. Its block-long long lobby and promenade form what is probably the grandest indoor "street" in Washington, and its ballroom and other function rooms, shimmering with gold leaf and marble, have served through six decades and eleven national administrations as a backdrop for official and quasi-official entertainment and housing for Presidents and Presidents-elect, diplomats and foreign functionaries, corporate and political movers and shakers, artists and entertainers.

The Mayflower's architects, Whitney Warren and Charles Wetmore, are perhaps best remembered for their work with Reed and Stem on the Grand Central Terminal in New York City. They became partners in 1896 and had already established the supremacy of their firm in the design of large, Beaux-Arts hotels by the time they received the Mayflower commission. Among others to their credit are New York's Biltmore and Commodore Hotels, adjacent to the Grand Central Terminal, the Ritz Carlton, the Vanderbilt, the Ambassador and additions to the Plaza, all in New York; the Ritz Carlton in Atlantic City, the old Belmont in Providence, the Westchester in Rye, N. Y., the Broadmoor in Colorado Springs and the Royal Hawaiian in Honolulu. They also designed the Steinway Building, Aeolean Hall and the New York Central Railroad Office Building in New York and received commissions from the Michigan Central, Canadian National and Erie Railroads.

Charles Wetmore graduated from Harvard and received most of his architectural training in New York before joining Whitney Warren, the better known and more individualistic of the partners. Warren attended the Ecole des Beaux Arts and lived for ten years in Paris before returning to New York, where he was a co-founder and director of the Beaux Art Institute of Design and the originator of the famous Beaux Arts Ball. Warren was proud of his firm's design for the reconstructed Louvain Library in Belgium, which had been destroyed during World War I. He retired in 1931 and died in 1943. Wetmore died in 1941.

Robert F. Beresford, the third architect associated with the construction of the Mayflower, began his private practice in Washington in 1915, after having served on the staff of the Supervising Architect of the Treasury and in the office of the Superintendent of the Capitol. He designed

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the Tower Building at 14th and K Streets, N. W., as well as numerous residences in Washington and its suburbs and at least one house in Annapolis. He was President of the Washington Chapter of the American Institute of Architects in 1927-8 and served on The District of Columbia Architects Registration Board from 1928-48. He retired in 1950 and died in 1966. There is no evidence that Beresford provided design input for the Mayflower. It seems probable that Warren and Wetmore contracted with him to serve as their site supervisor and representative in handling local requirements.

The Mayflower was the dream of Washington developer Allen E. Walker, a prominent business man and city booster credited with developing Brookland and large areas of northwest Washington during the boom that followed World War I. The Walker Hotel Corporation began construction of the city's largest, most modern, most luxurious hotel in July 1922, five blocks from the White House at a site formerly occupied by a convent on what was then a street of large and fashionable residences. In September 1924 Walker's investment corporation, constantly skirting bankruptcy in the face of construction delays and soaring costs, sold controlling interest in the hotel corporation to C. C. Mitchell. Walker died suddenly in May 1925; his hotel, newly renamed the Mayflower, had opened in February of that year.

Its opening function, the annual banquet of the Washington Chamber of Commerce, was totally eclipsed by Calvin Coolidge's Inaugural Charity Ball held two weeks later on March 4 in the Grand Ballroom. Coolidge, continuing a practice begun by Woodrow Wilson, found the Charity Ball an appropriately low-key way to begin his administration, although he did not himself attend, being still in mourning after the death of his son.

The ball began a long tradition of presidential use of the Mayflower. President-elect Herbert Hoover had his headquarters there. Franklin Roosevelt lived in Suite 776 during his pre-inaugural period and dictated his famous "We have nothing to fear but fear itself" speech there. Much of the planning for economic recovery took place in the hotel, which was the site of National Recovery Act Administration hearings.

Roosevelt's preference for the Mayflower may have been based not only on the hotel's convenient location and superb accommodations, but also on the role it played in his nomination to the Presidency. At a Democratic National Committee meeting held at the hotel in 1931 Chairman John J. Raskob, a supporter of front-running presidential contender Al Smith, offended prohibition-minded southern Democrats by advocating a "wet" plank in the party's platform, sending the southerners into the camp of the more "moderate" Roosevelt and virtually assuring his nomination.

For several years, Roosevelt's birthday party, benefiting infantile paralysis research, was held in the Grand Ballroom, with performers such as Mickey Rooney, John Garfield, Red Skelton, Eleanor Powell, Ray Bolger and Ralph Bellamy providing the entertainment.

Roosevelt attended a state dinner with British Prime Minister

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Winston Churchill in the hotel's Chinese Room in 1940. When America's entry into World War II became imminent following the sinking of the USS Kearny, Roosevelt made the announcement at the 1941 Navy Day dinner at the Mayflower.

In 1942 the hotel staged Washington's first blackout drill, installed air raid sirens and first aid stations on every floor, turned the roof into an observation post and made plans to convert the barbershop into an emergency hospital. The Mayflower was also the scene of the arrest of a Nazi saboteur, George Dasch.

Harry S. Truman announced his intention to run for the presidency in 1948 at a Jackson Day dinner at the Mayflower ("I want to say that during the next four years there will be a Democrat in the White House and you are looking at him.") Truman was a frequent guest at the hotel during and after his presidency.

Dwight D. Eisenhower also was often seen at the Mayflower and his vice president, Richard M. Nixon, attended the capital's first Prayer Breakfast there, along with 89 senators, 300 congressmen and members of the Cabinet and Supreme Court-- making it perhaps the closest thing to a joint session of Congress ever held at a hotel.

J. Edgar Hoover, late director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, lunched at the same table in the Mayflower every day that he was in Washington for the last twenty years of his life, inspiring a scene in the film, "The J. Edgar Hoover Story," in which actor Broderick Crawford played Hoover and Hoover's faithful waiter, Joe Chapman, played himself.

Following the establishment of diplomatic relations with the People's Republic of China, 35 Chinese officials set up a temporary liaison office and residence at the Mayflower. The hotel provided a ping-pong table and a chef skilled in Mandarin cuisine.

The Mayflower's history of ownership has reflected the changing economic and social history of the capital. Under the financial strains of the Great Depression, the hotel's holding company went into court-appointed receivership in July 1931, to be rescued in June 1934 by the Roosevelt administration's Corporate Reorganization Act. Twelve years later, on December 29, 1946, the Hilton Hotel Corporation purchased the hotel for \$2.6 million, occasioning legal action by minority stockholders of the Mayflower Corporation who contended they had been forced to accept an unfairly low price for their stock. The Hilton purchase was upheld by the U. S. Court of Appeals. In March 1956 the Mayflower was sold to A. M. Sonnabend and the Hotel Corporation of America for \$12.8 million, not much more than it had cost to build the hotel 31 years earlier.

In 1966, May-Wash Associates, the present owners, acquired the property. Rejecting a 1971 scheme to demolish the hotel section and convert the Seventeenth Street end into a shopping mall, May-Wash committed itself instead to a massive rehabilitation program, one of the largest private

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commitments to preservation in the Washington area, begun in 1982 and continuing today. The decision to restore the hotel emphasizes the Mayflower's historic and ongoing position as an architectural and social landmark in the capital city.

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# MAYFLOWER HOTEL, WASHINGTON, DC

## ADDENDUM A

### CHRONOLOGICAL LIST OF CHANGES TO MAJOR AREAS

#### I. THE PRESIDENTIAL ROOM

##### A. The Palm Court - 1925

As originally designed this room was considerably larger and included a part of the present service area to the east and all of the foyer between the present Presidential Room and the State Room. Dimension s of this total area are given as 76 feet by 86 feet.

A colonnade of six structural piers occupied the line of the present northern wall. Piers and walls were finished with a four foot high wainscot, the walls were covered with plaster which was scored and rusticated to simulate travertine. Robert Beresford's early description indicates that the walls were covered with Caen Stone. Physical evidence however suggests that the walls were always covered with plaster not Caen Stone. Unusual octagonal lattice medallions decorated the upper areas of the wall roughly 18 inches from the crown molding. The crown molding was rendered in a wave scroll motif. Recent demolition has revealed portions of the original plaster and marble cladding and acanthus leaf capitals on the piers at the Promenade.

Located at the east and west extremes of the south wall and at the center of the west wall were small niches. The depth of the niches was exaggerated by converging lines of wood lattice against the sloping niche. At least one niche on the south wall exists under subsequent redecoration. Symmetry would suggest that a niche was also located at the center of the east wall, but no contemporary photos of the east wall have been found to confirm this idea.

At the center of the south wall, two polished monolithic ionic columns supported an arch. The tympanum area of the arch was filled with plaster filigree. Set below was a fountain shaped like a sea shell supported by two dolphins. Water was supplied through a spouting mask located on the wall behind. On the walls were octagonal rosettes, in a radiating lattice that recalls the dome lattice.

The center of the ceiling was dominated by an octagonal open lattice dome with a structural steel dome above with glazing. The dome was framed with plaster moldings and the rest of the ceiling was decorated with low relief plaster ornamentation.

The floor was covered with American travertine which still can be observed in the room today as well as in the foyer (Promenade) and in the present service area.

In addition to the dome lighting, decorative wall sconces were located on the wall and columns.

A press release stated that the garden mood was enhanced by the use of palms, trailing vines and even caged birds. Early corporate minutes verify the purchase of birds and cages, although their exact placement is not known.

#### B. The Mayflower Lounge - 1934

Design:	Samuel Reveness of Walter M. Ballard Co., New York
General Contractors:	Davis, Wick, Rosengarten Co., Inc.
Grille Work:	Fred S. Gichner Iron Works, Inc.
Air Conditioning:	Westinghouse
Cost:	\$45,000

The Palm Court was renovated and renamed the Lounge in 1934, after the repeal of prohibition. The color scheme was reported to be ivory and gold with highlights of pompeian red. Mirrors set in plain gold frames were added to the south and west walls. The octagonal wall medallions were replaced or covered with figure medallions of the same shape.

A partition of glass panes set in metal mullions was erected between the piers on the north side of the room, thus separating the Lounge from the foyer area. The head of the center door was decorated with a heavy broken pediment similar to those already present over the entrances to the East and State Rooms. In the process the new frames covered the sides of the pier capitals. Selective demolition confirms that the new marble wainscot and plaster was applied to a metal framework about six inches out from the original line of the piers to provide a frame for the new glass and metal partitions.

A service bar was built at the eastern end of the room and enclosed by a mirror screen roughly on the line of the present east wall. Restrooms were constructed in the southeast corner of the room.

The marble fountain and the glass dome were retained in this alteration. A small band platform was erected to the left of the fountain while the central section of travertine flooring was removed to be replaced by a wooden dance floor.

#### C. The Mayflower Lounge - 1947

Design: Walker and Poor, Architects, New York  
Murals: Jean Pages  
Cost: \$75,000

During the major renovation of 1947, attempts were made to modernize the Lounge by removing nearly every bit of ornamental plaster work from the walls and ceiling. Only the pier capitals and the border of the dome were spared.

The areas of the north wall (Promenade wall) with glass partitions and doors were walled over except for a double entrance door. A ten foot high upholstered leather screen was placed across the alcove to the east.

At the center of the south wall, facing the entrance was a mural depicting an arched opening flanked by two rectangular pedimented openings. Through these simulated openings one viewed the U. S. Capitol set against the turquoise sky. The fountain was probably removed at this time. Above the main entrance was a painted pediment supported by two painted caryatids. Painted arches on either side of the entrance framed views of the Jefferson and Lincoln Memorials. Another simulated pedimented opening at the center of the west wall framed a view of the Washington Monument. An identical mural, without the monument, balanced the composition of the east wall.

A contemporary press release reports that the turquoise sky and clouds motif was repeated in the dome. This represents the first mention of the dome being closed. By 1950, photos of the room show the dome covered with gathered draperies.

#### D. The Mayflower Lounge - 1950

Design: David T. Williams, Marshal Field

The 1950 renovation of the Lounge represents a change from the modern mode of only three years earlier. This time the room was decorated in a Georgian Manner, carried out entirely in shades of rose. Molding was added to expose areas of wall to simulate paneling. Floor-length drapery covered the western quarter of the north and south walls. A simple crown molding was placed around the room. Remnants of this crown molding were found beneath the present full entablature cornice during current renovation.

A new service door was cut into the southern end of the west wall. To balance this door a simulated door was framed on the northern end of the same wall. Both were topped by pediments as was the main entrance in the north wall. (A ghost line of the entrance pediment was also discovered beneath the present cornice). A three-part simulated opening was framed at the center of the south wall in the area formerly occupied by the Capitol mural. These openings were hung with antique taffeta drapery.

A raised terrace was constructed across the western side of the room and enclosed with a white classical balustrade. A similar balustrade enclosed the band platform against the south wall.

The focus of the new renovated Lounge was the specially designed crystal chandelier suspended from the center of the dome. The theme established by the chandelier was elaborated by matching crystal sconces hung at intervals around the room. Many of these lighting fixtures still grace the room.

#### E. The Presidential Room and Le Chatelaine Restaurant - 1957

Design: ?

To date no documentation has been found relating to this remodeling, but it is believed that the Presidential Room assumed the appearance that continued until 1982. An article entitled "It's Sophistication 18th Century Style", appeared in the Washington Post, September 13, 1957, is the sole mention of a major remodeling of the Presidential Room. The article states that except for the chandelier, there was hardly a trace of the old Lounge. The arches between the piers can be attributed to this design. The colonades and murals on the south and west walls probably date from 1957 as does the oriel balcony to the east. The full-entablature cornice was applied directly over the smaller cornice installed in 1950. The service door that had been cut in the southern end of the west wall in 1950 was again blocked up. A closet located in the service area on the other side of the west wall may mark the location of the former door. The doorway and stair

leading to the Lobby through the north end of the west wall probably were installed in 1962.

## II. THE PROMENADE

Originally, the area of the Promenade, east of the Lobby, between the present State Room and the Presidential Room was an extension of then then Palm Court. Beginning with the closing of the Palm Court entrance with glass paned doors, and the subsequent creation of the Lounge, this foyer gradually became part of the axial orientation of the Promenade. In the period 1947-1948, the walling-over of the glass paned entrances to the State Room and the Lounge as well as the removal of the glass paned partition between the foyer and the Main Promenade, further consolidated the foyer and Promenade.

### A. The Promenade - 1948

Design: Walker and Poor, Architects, New York

Although not specifically documented, yet because of a similar specification in the remodeling of the Lounge by this firm during the previous year, it is believed that the glass paned entrances to the East and State Rooms were walled over in 1948. It is also probable that the glass paned partition between the State Room foyer and the Main Promenade were also removed at the same time. Photos of existing conditions supplied as part of the remodeling proposals of 1961, however, indicate that the glass areas were removed prior to 1961.

Since the Walker and Poo's work is the only recorded modification of the Promenade during the time 1939-1961, it is reasonable to assume they are responsible for the changes. Current selective demolition has revealed the glass paned entrances to the East and State Room and the similar entrances to present Presidential Room to be largely intact within the walled-over areas. Ghost lines on the mullioned frames indicate the location of heavy broken pediments over the central doorways. Remnants of the metal festooning on the transoms were also discovered.

A contemporary article in the Washington Post indicates that the large statues, "LaSirena", "Merope", and "Flora" were sold to the National Memorial Park in Falls Church during October 1948. As of this writing, the statues remain at the Falls Church location.

### The Promenade and Main Lobby 1961/1962

Design: Henry End Associates, Interior Designers,  
Miami, Florida.

General Contractors:

Davis, Wick, Rosengarten Co. (Inc.)  
Arlington, Virginia

1. Promenade

The mirror-paned entrances to the Grand Ballroom and Chinese Room were removed at this time. In their place the present walnut veneer box paneling was installed. For the first time, the rough plaster walls were finished with the present "brocade" vinyl wall covering. Larger underarms were added to the chandeliers.

2. Main Lobby

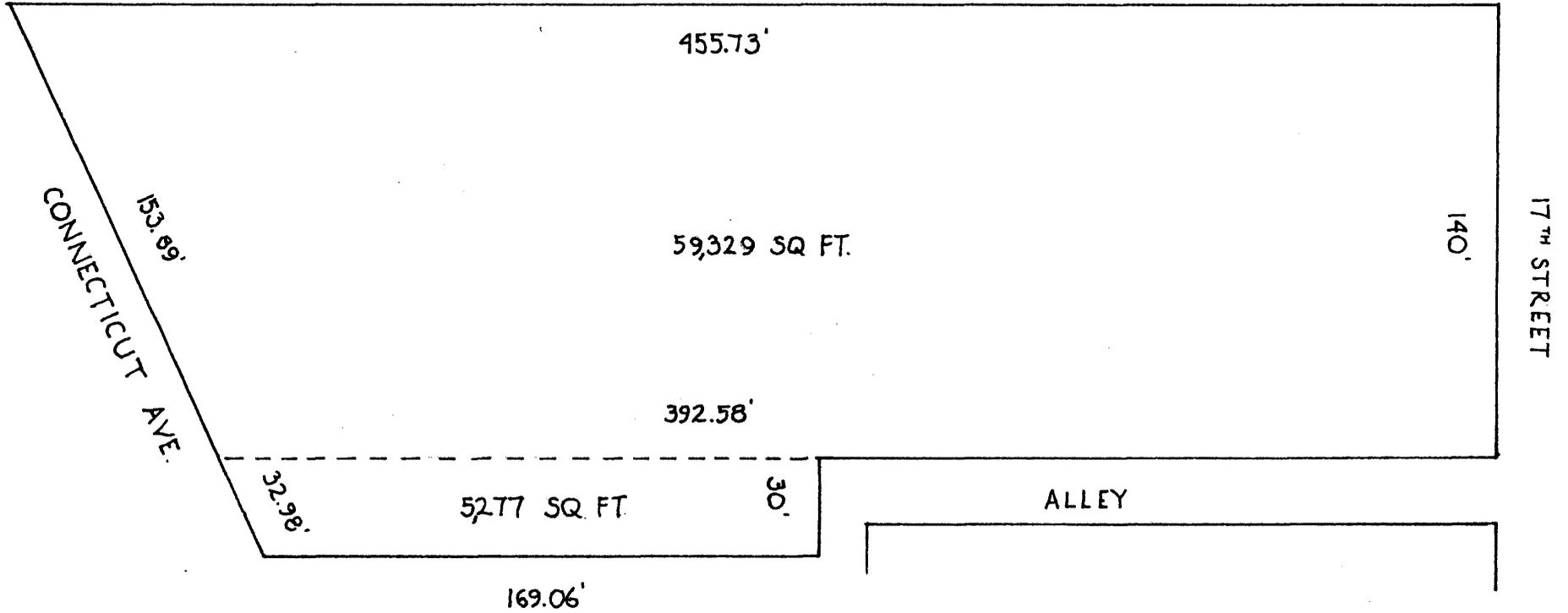
Apparently this was the first major alteration of this space since installation of air conditioning in 1934 and the present appearance of the Lobby is chiefly the result of the End design.

The most striking change was the enclosure of the Mezzanine and the construction of offices on that level. The new walls were finished with walnut veneer box paneling and textured vinyl wall covering. The ornate piers capitals were also removed and replaced by marble sections probably taken from the walls of the Town and Country foyer. The front desk was altered to its present modern appearance. The large fixture that once hung above the desk can now be seen in the western stairwell.

Although not directly mentioned in the designers specifications, the modern dropped ceiling and indirect lighting over the elevator lobby was probably installed simultaneously with the mezzanine enclosure. From an aesthetic standpoint it is difficult to see how these alterations could have been done independently. The original mezzanine rail, the relief sculpture on the east wall, the sunburst ceiling medallion, and the end portion of the skylight can be viewed behind the dropped ceiling, on the mezzanine level.

Alteration of the curved south wall of the elevator lobby was to accommodate the entrance to the Presidential Room.

DESALES STREET



MAYFLOWER HOTEL  
SCALE 1"=50 FT

