

B-83

Equitable Building

Architectural Survey File

This is the architectural survey file for this MIHP record. The survey file is organized reverse-chronological (that is, with the latest material on top). It contains all MIHP inventory forms, National Register nomination forms, determinations of eligibility (DOE) forms, and accompanying documentation such as photographs and maps.

Users should be aware that additional undigitized material about this property may be found in on-site architectural reports, copies of HABS/HAER or other documentation, drawings, and the “vertical files” at the MHT Library in Crownsville. The vertical files may include newspaper clippings, field notes, draft versions of forms and architectural reports, photographs, maps, and drawings. Researchers who need a thorough understanding of this property should plan to visit the MHT Library as part of their research project; look at the MHT web site (mht.maryland.gov) for details about how to make an appointment.

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Last Updated: 03-10-2011

AREA: Financial District

MAGI NO.: 0400835611

Address: 12 North Calvert Street
 Current Name: Equitable Building

Block: 636	Lot: 1	Lot size: 118' x 227'
Height: 9 stories		Materials: Brick, stone & terra cotta
Condition: Good		Owner: Baltimore Investment Associates
Use: Offices		Accessible: Yes
Designation: None		Liber/Folio: WA 3749-854



Historic Name: Equitable Building

Date: 1891-1893

Architect/Builder: Charles L. Carson & Joseph E. Sperry/Norcross Builders

Style (if appropriate):

Description:

This nine story high brick building with a granite base and terra cotta trim is five bays wide at the Calvert Street facade and thirteen bays wide at the Fayette Street elevation. The base of the building is made up of vermiculated, rusticated granite. Five arched openings which are lavishly decorated punctuate the stone walls of the first floor level. The central entrance features a bronze revolving door surmounted by a transom and a sign panel displaying "EQUITABLE." Above the panel is intricate wrought iron work filling the arch which is made up of foliated designs. The other arches feature below grade storefronts and double windows above highly decorative iron panels. The stone second floor walls feature smooth granite columns, decorative shields, a date stone and lions heads. Three large central arches define the next five floors. There are three windows within each arch on each floor. The floor levels are defined by intricate terra cotta panels. The corner bays are decorated with bands of terra cotta molding giving the impression of rustication. The eighth floor is relatively flat, but features decoration at the window surrounds. A large foliated band defines the ninth floor level which features intricate terra cotta panels. The building is capped by a heavy cornice that features dentils, consoles and lions head decorations. The side Calvert Street elevation features an ornate, projecting arched entrance and the first floor arches are only along the five easternmost bays.

Significance:

Area: Architecture

Level: Local

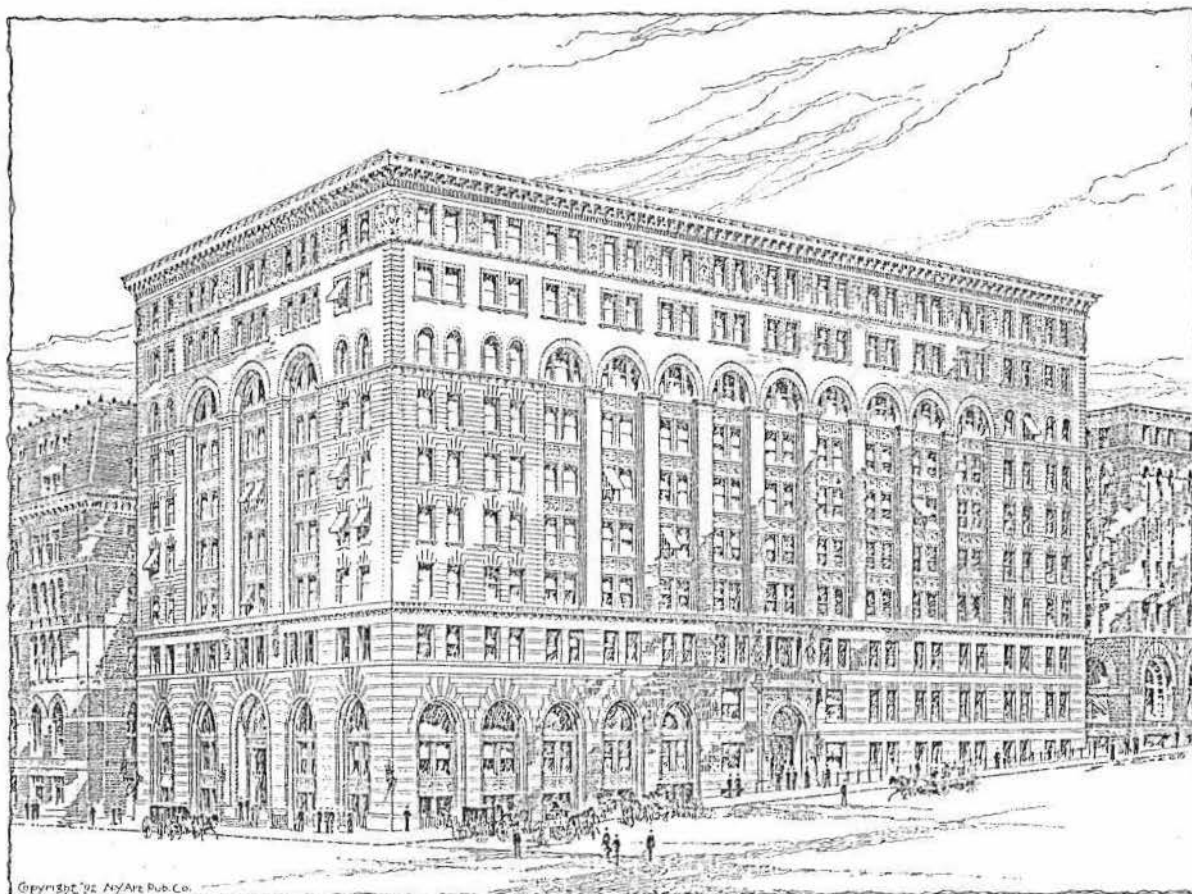
The Equitable Building is significant as one of the first high rise office buildings in downtown Baltimore. It was the largest office structure in Baltimore when it was built. The interior "cage" type construction of cast iron frames supporting steel floor beams was unique for a Baltimore structure. The interior of the building was severely damaged in the Baltimore Fire of 1904, however the exterior faced little damage and the building was soon repaired. Not only is the exterior fairly intact, but the vaulted interior ceilings of the lobby are extant. The Equitable Building is the oldest building at Courthouse Square. It was originally designed by the noted architect Charles L. Carson. After his death, Joseph Evans Sperry completed the drawings.

Sources: Equitable Building Baltimore

Surveyor and Date: Fred B. Shoken, July 1985.

BALTIMORE FINANCIAL DISTRICT SURVEY

Equitable Building
12 North Calvert Street



EQUITABLE BUILDING, BALTIMORE.

Book of the Equitable Building, This publication has many similar illustrations of the interior and exterior of the building.

Maryland Historical Trust State Historic Sites Inventory Form

1. Name (indicate preferred name)

historic Equitable Building

and/or common

2. Location

street & number 12 N. Calvert Street ___ not for publication

city, town Baltimore ___ vicinity of congressional district 3rd

state Maryland county

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> not applicable	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property (give names and mailing addresses of all owners)

name Baltimore Investment Associates - c/o David Bavar

street & number 1 North Charles Street, Suite 1100 telephone no.:

city, town Baltimore state and zip code Maryland 21201

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Baltimore City Land Records liber WA 3749

street & number 100 N. Calvert Street, Courthouse West, Room 610 folio 854

city, town Baltimore state Maryland

6. Representation in Existing Historical Surveys

title

date ___ federal ___ state ___ county ___ local

depository for survey records

city, town state

7. Description

Survey No. B-0083

Condition

excellent
 good
 fair

deteriorated
 ruins
 unexposed

Check one

unaltered
 altered

Check one

original site
 moved date of move _____

Prepare both a summary paragraph and a general description of the resource and its various elements as it exists today.

Summary:

The Equitable Building is located at the southwest corner of Calvert and Fayette Streets on Monument Square. This nine story high brick building with a granite base and terra cotta trim is five bays wide at the Calvert Street facade and thirteen bays wide at the Fayette Street elevation. The base of the building is made up of vermiculated, rusticated granite. Five arched openings which are lavishly decorated punctuate the stone walls of the first floor level at Calvert Street. The central entrance features a bronze revolving door surmounted by a transom and a sign panel displaying "EQUITABLE." The upper floors are intricately decorated with smooth granite columns, decorative shields, lions head ornamentation, large recessed arches and terra cotta moldings and panels. The building is capped by a heavy cornice that features dentils, consoles and lions head decorations. The side Fayette Street elevation features an ornate, projecting arched entrance and the first floor arches are only along the five easternmost bays. The interior lobby is lavishly decorated with marble floors and vaulted ceilings, however, the upper floor office space has been modernized.

(continue, please)

8. Significance

Survey No.

B-0083

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

Specific dates

Builder/Architect

check: Applicable Criteria: A B C D
and/or

Applicable Exception: A B C D E F G

Level of Significance: national state local

Prepare both a summary paragraph of significance and a general statement of history and support.

Summary:

The Equitable Building is significant as one of the first high rise office buildings in downtown Baltimore. It was the largest office structure in Baltimore when it was built. The interior "cage" construction of cast iron frames supporting steel floor beams was unique for a Baltimore structure. The interior of the building was severely damaged in the Baltimore Fire of 1904, however the exterior faced little damage and the building was soon repaired. Not only is the exterior fairly intact, but the vaulted interior ceilings of the lobby are extant. The Equitable Building is the oldest building at Monument Square. It was originally designed by the noted architect Charles L. Carson. After his death, Joseph Evans Sperry completed the drawings.

(continue, please)

Equitable Building (B-0083)
Baltimore (City), Maryland

Description Continued Page 1
General Description:

The Calvert Street elevation of the Equitable Building features a central entrance above a flight of stone steps. The highly decorative entrance is set into a foliated arch. Above a set of bronze and glass doors and a sign panel, intricate wrought iron work fills the tympanum of the arch. The other arches feature below grade storefronts and double windows above highly decorative iron panels. Rusticated stone work radiates from the top of the arches to a stone band course of wave molding which divides the first and second floors. The stone second floor walls feature smooth granite columns, decorative shields, a date stone and lion heads. An intricately detailed cornice featuring egg and dart molding and fretwork completes the stone base of the building.

Three large central arches define the next five floors which are made of buff colored brick with decorated bands of terra cotta molding. Plain pilasters divide the recessed arches which feature three windows on each floor. The floor levels are defined by intricate terra cotta panels. The corner bays are decorated with bands of terra cotta molding giving the impression of rustication. Another intricate band course above the sixth floor stops the "rusticated" terra cotta molding and defines the relatively smooth building walls of the seventh floor level which are punctuated by arched windows. The eighth floor is relatively flat, but features decoration at the window surrounds. A large foliated band defines the ninth floor level which features intricate terra cotta panels between the windows. Smooth granite columns decorate the three windows of the central bay. An elaborate cornice completes the facade. The cornice is decorated with a series of moldings, consoles, dentils and lion head decorations.

The Fayette Street elevation is similar to the Calvert Street facade. It features an ornate projecting arched entrance. Wide pilasters with panels featuring egg and dart moldings and circular designs, which once surrounded lanterns, support the heavy arch featuring a series of moldings and a foliated keystone. The spandrels of the arch are decorated with foliated motifs. A cornice made up of dentils, egg and dart molding, wave molding and lion head details caps the entrance which is surmounted by a balustrade. Above the balustrade on the second floor level are three windows divided by smooth stone columns. The windows are surmounted by a sign panel and lion head details holding decorative shields.

Flanking the arched entrance are two large windows on the first floor and mezzanine level. On the base of the building east of the entrance are five large arches identical to those on Calvert Street. The western half of the base is punctuated by plain window openings at the mezzanine level and below ground level entrances into a few retail establishments. The upper floors of the Fayette Street elevation is decorated in a similar manner as the Calvert Street facade. The upper floors are defined by nine arched bays in the center. The two corner bays feature the intricate stone molding immitating rustication.

The southern and eastern elevations do not feature the degree of decoration on the major elevations, although the major elevations wrap around to the corners of the side and rear. Today the southern elevation is visible because it fronts on a small temporary park just east of the Metro station. A few of the ground floor windows have been converted into storefronts in order to take advantage of

Equitable Building (B-0083)
Baltimore (City), Maryland

Description Continued Page 2

the location next to the subway entrance.

The interior lobby of the Equitable Building features marble floors and walls and vaulted ceilings. The main twenty-two foot wide corridor leads from the Calvert Street entrance to what was originally the main stairway. From the Fayette Street entrance, a fourteen foot wide corridor bisects the main corridor at the main and extends through to the southern Wilkes Lane elevation. The building was designed with two banking spaces along the main corridor, a Turkish bath in the basement and a restaurant on the top, ninth floor.

Equitable Building (B-0083)
Baltimore (City), Maryland

Significance Continued Page 1
History and Support:

From 1825 to 1889, the site of the Equitable Building was occupied by Barnum's City Hotel. This hotel was internationally famous and renowned for its elegant accommodations, gracious service and excellent cuisine. The hotel was praised by Charles Dickens as the finest in America. By the late 1800s, other hotels such as the Carrollton and the Rennert had replaced Barnum's as Baltimore's best hotel. It was demolished in 1890 to make way for Baltimore's largest office building, the Equitable Building.

The Equitable Building was built for the Calvert Building and Construction Company. The officers and directors of this company included many of Baltimore's leading businessmen: William A. Fisher, Daniel E. Conklin, Lawrason Riggs, James A. Gary, William H. Whitridge, Thomas K. Worthington, William C. Seddon, Edwin F. Abell, and Sherlock Swann. Charles L. Carson was selected to be the architect. Upon his death, Joseph Evans Sperry completed the drawings and supervised the construction of the building.

Both Carson and Sperry were important local architects. Carson, the son of the developer of Waverly Terrace, was responsible for some of Baltimore's most notable Romanesque designs, including: Goucher Hall, the Central Savings Bank and the Strouse Building in the loft district. Joseph Evans Sperry was the architect of many important local buildings: the Mercantile Trust Company (with J. B. Noel Wyatt), Provident Savings Bank, Emerson Tower, Title Building and the Eutaw Place Temple.

The Equitable Building was designed to be the largest office building in Baltimore. The style of architecture was the Italian Renaissance which is most acutely expressed at the heavy first floor arches. It is the most highly decorated early high rise office building in Baltimore with its excellent terra cotta panels, intricate moldings, mosaic tile panels and decorative entrances. The interior lobby spaces with vaulted ceilings and marble floors and walls is among the most opulent in all of downtown Baltimore.

The most significant aspect of the design of this building is its structural system. The Equitable Building was the first building in Baltimore that features the "cage" form of construction. A system of columns and girders supports the entire floor loads and interior of the building. The entire interior of the building is independent of the exterior. The exterior walls were built as screens over the self supporting iron cage. The walls are massive in appearance, yet they are only thick enough to support its own weight and that of the ornamental details. Within a few years of the Equitable Building, other local buildings were built with steel or iron frame construction. It is still the basic method of design for modern day office buildings.

The building was designed to be absolutely fire-proof, but it would be severely tested ten years after the Equitable Building was constructed. During the Baltimore Fire of 1904, much of the interior collapsed and heavy safes in the upper floors crashed all the way down to the basement. Like all of the high rise offices, the interior of the building was virtually destroyed. The exterior walls were not severely damaged and reconstruction began immediately after the fire. It was soon re-occupied and continued to house offices of important businesses.

Larger office buildings were built in the Financial District after the Baltimore

Equitable Building (B-0083)
Baltimore (City), Maryland

Significance Continued Page 2

Fire, but the Equitable Building was the first of its kind. The rough stone walls and massive appearance is a hold-over from the time when massive exterior walls were needed for tall structures. The degree of decoration is still unsurpassed. The original exterior design of the building is relatively intact, despite a modernization of the interior that has destroyed or hidden much of its turn of the century opulence.

In the 1960s, the owner of the Equitable Building wanted to cover its exterior walls with aluminum panels. This was apparently an attempt to make it compatible to the modern architecture in construction at Charles Center. Preservationists fought the idea and the City Planning Commission did not approve of the plan (their approval was needed since the panels would overhang into the public right of way). This building and the Munsey building across the street were recently purchased by Washington developers who have refurbished both structures. The Equitable Building remains an important office building in the area and the oldest building surrounding Monument Square.

Maryland Historical Trust State Historic Sites Inventory Form

Survey No.

Magi No.

B- 83

DOE yes no

1. Name (indicate preferred name)

historic Equitable Building

and/or common

2. Location

street & number 112 North Calvert Street not for publicationcity, town Baltimore vicinity of congressional district 3

state Maryland county Baltimore

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> not applicable	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property (give names and mailing addresses of all owners)

name Baltimore Investment Associates

street & number 101 Fayette St. Suite 437 telephone no.: 539-5210

city, town Baltimore, Maryland state and zip code Md. 21208

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Baltimore City Courthouse liber

street & number Saratoga and St. Paul Streets folio

city, town Baltimore state Md.

6. Representation in Existing Historical Surveys

title

date federal state county local

depository for survey records

city, town state

7. Description

Survey No. B-83

Condition

excellent
 good
 fair

deteriorated
 ruins
 unexposed

Check one

unaltered
 altered

Check one

original site
 moved date of move _____

Prepare both a summary paragraph and a general description of the resource and its various elements as it exists today.

Industrial?

Description Summary;

The Equitable Building is a large commercial office building on the corner of North Calvert and Fayette Streets on the southern edge of Monument Square in the industrial district of Baltimore. The exterior walls are built with buffed brick, Worcestor mottled granite and terra cotta; the interior ones are panelled with marble and mosaic. The nine-story building's most distinctive characteristics are the exterior walls and the interior first level lobby. The building has a rectangular shape but is centrally divided by a courtyard.

Interior

Of the five archades of the front of the building, the middle (third) archade provides the entranceway to the lobby. This semi-circular arch is filled clear glass window, brass spandrels and ironwork in the top of the archade. A four panel semi-circular window looks through to the exterior elliptical decorative ironwork following the shape of the arch opening. Surrounding these upper set of windows and totally enclosing the arch is Worchester mottled granite with decorative large-scale molding. Under these elliptical windows is simply decorated stone, and the main glass and brass floorway area. In the central part of the arch, encompassed by square brass columes are nine square windows with brass transoms and beneath, a glass revolving door. On either side of this central area sided by columes are four rectangular windows creating a vertical rectangular area, and beneath, a single-panelled door. The use of this glass and brass archaded entranceway provides the occupants of the building with a panorama view of the street scene on Calvert Street and adds dimension to the entirety of the lobby area, making the room appear larger than its actual size.

The walls and domed ceiling perpendicular to the entranceway display intricate artistic decorations by use of alterntion and variety of marble color, pattern and texture and adds richness to the 22-foot wide and 24-foot high foyer. The highly embellished ceiling

consists of 56 marble mosaic square panels, employing white, mustard and brown colors to bring out the modified guilloche style pattern. On all sides of these square panels are rectangular strips of white marble, each panel sharing adjacent panels' strips. At the corner of every panel is a gold, raised medieval paterae adding even more decoration. The ceiling ends with a marble cornice that extends the width of the foyer and employs dentils, egg-and-dart and cable pattern moldings.

Exterior

The bottom section of the Equitable facade which is constructed with Worcester mottled granite, holds the interior lobby and mezzanine floors. This embellished rusticated ground level consists of five semi-circular arches, the middle arch (a compound arch) providing the entranceway to the lobby. The rounded protruding archivolt surrounding this arched entry is decorated with Flower and leaf pattern and helps to break the repetition of pattern. In the tympanum is an arch of terra cotta guilloche pattern, a thin patterned rounded arch and finally a highly decorative semi circular iron gas light. Under this rounded top part of the arch are three layers of decorative molding in the pattern of enriched talon, wave and egg-and-dart, respectively. Below is a strip of brownstone marking the building's identity, and then a area of glass, transoms, revolving doors, sided by single doors with brass ribbing. On both sides of this front portal are two glass and decorated iron arches with cabled archivolts. Small retail stores occupy the bottoms of these arches. Above this area of arches and background of rusticated stone jointing is a strip of wave molding and then a succession of ten deep-set windows placed in pairs of two; The three central pairs are in back of Doric columns separated by terra cotta spandrels.

Above the ground level, which is separated from the upper floors of the building by an egg-and-dart and wave patterned cornice are four levels of buffed brick and deep-set vertical 2/2 windows. These vertical entresol windows are highly decorative terra cotta panels; Vertically separating the central windows are two long strings of panelled buffed brick.

Finally, the upper most floors, also constructed with buffed brick and embellished with terra cotta, provides the elliptical crown to the central arches. The three pairs of windows fill the crown. The central arches have succession of decorative molding in egg-and-dart and bead and reel. Above this are five groups of triple paired entresol windows, each triplet is separated by a panel of highly decorated terra cotta. The cornice employs small dentils, vertical protruding fluted shafts and other embellishments.

8. Significance

Survey No. B-83

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

Specific dates

Builder/Architect

check: Applicable Criteria: A B C D
and/or

Applicable Exception: A B C D E F G

Level of Significance: national state local

Prepare both a summary paragraph of significance and a general statement of history and support.

8. SIGNIFICANCE

Prepare both a summary paragraph of significance and a general statement of history and support.

Summary:

The Equitable is historically and architecturally significant to Baltimore and to Maryland. The building was completed in 1894 by two of Baltimore's prominent architects, Charles L. Carson and Joseph Evans Sperry, primarily following the Richardsonian Romanesque style of architecture. It is representative of the architectural styles before the turn of the century, the "cage" method of construction, the use of iron of the time, and, in general, the need for a proud industrial society. The creators of this building have recognized industrialization, but have reacted to it by turning to the past styles of buildings and their romantic appearances.

The building was considered to be Baltimore's first skyscraper, was described as the "largest and most superbly appointed office building south of New York" and survived the Baltimore fire of 1904, making it the oldest existing structure on Monument Square.

The Equitable Building was built in 1894 by Baltimore architects Joseph E. Sperry and Charles L. Carson in the Richardsonian-Sullivan-esque Romanesque style. American architect H.H. Richardson, said to be the most influential and greatest architect of his time, adapted Romanesque to fit his own style and society's mood and need. This Romanesque Revival (1860-1900) stemmed from the period of Industrial Romanticism (1860-1900) and the period of Eclecticism (1860-1930). While the style romantically looked back to classical traditions for expression with its stone masonry, wood, and tasteful manner, its design was also a reflection of the modern tastes and needs—the mood for structures of permanence, boldness, greatness which were efficient for modern living and working space. The overall effect depended on mass, volume and scale created by a straightforward treatment of stone, broad roof planes, deep-set windows and lastly, large arches. Richardson's Trinity Church of Copley Square (voted best building in America), Boston, Mass.; The Church of the Unity, Springfield, Mass.; three important Massachusetts libraries; City Hall, Albany, New York; Allegany County Courthouse and jail, Penn. and many famous houses display some of the most important designs in America. The Equitable Building, one of the last buildings to be designed in Richardsonian Romanesque preserves a short-lived national style that touched the architecture of Baltimore. The influence of eclecticism (a predominant style for large buildings) of the time is shown by the Sullivan-esque embellishment of low relief sculptural ornamentation in terra cotta, and the background of buffed brick.

Not only does the Equitable display the style of a national master architect, it shows the talent and craftsmanship of two prominent Baltimore architects—Charles L. Carson and Joseph E. Sperry. When in 1870 Charles Carson with seven other architects from Baltimore, formed the Baltimore Chapter of the American Institute of Architects, their objective was to "promote the artistic, scientific and best ethical standards of the profession". Carson designed Goucher Hall (Richardson Romanesque),

The Western National Bank, The First Enoch Pratt Library, and in partnership with Thomas Dixon, he created Mount Vernon Place Methodist Church and Lafayette Square Presbyterian Church. Sperry made an equally impressive mark on Baltimore architecture, designing the Eutaw Place Temple (Richardsonian Romanesque), The Booth-Epstein House, The Johns Hopkins University Hospital and Medical School buildings, Union Memorial Hospital, the Calvert buildings, and, in partnership, The Mercantile Trust and Deposit Co. and The St. Michaels and All Angels Church, the latter two in Richardsonian Romanesque style. He also made renovations on Provident Savings Bank (Richardsonian Romanesque), The Masonic Temple, and The First Unitarian Church. The buildings ranked amongst the most important buildings in Baltimore, and certainly exemplified the revival styles before the turn of the century.

Combining the talents of both Carson and Sperry, the Equitable Building was designed and finally completed in 1894. The property had been purchased by the Baltimore Trust and Guarantee Company through the Messrs. David L. Bartlett and James A. Gary to the Calvert Building and Construction Company. The building's downtown location was ideal for the tenants' objective of commercial, manufacturing, and professional success. The existing famous Barnum Hotel (which Charles Dickens described as the only comfortable hotel in America) was sold October 9, 1890, it was later removed, and excavations and construction of the Equitable commenced and progressed without interruption. The Norcross Brothers, who were builders of the large experience and erected many large buildings of the designs of Richardson, were the General Contractors of the Equitable Building. The finished building represented the abilities of more than one individual and was the result of a relationship between architect, client and builder.

The creation of the building utilized many of the services and

resources available in Baltimore and Maryland. For instance, the high grade, hand and machine pressed brick was bought from the Maryland Brick Company, the lumber was obtained from Wilson and Merryman of Baltimore, and the furniture was provided by Messrs, Klipper, Webster and Co.

Representative of many of the large structures in other cities, the building's general plan of construction was that of the "cage" form. Support to the entire floor loads and interior ^{was} provided by a system of cast iron columns and steel girders. In this plan, the outside walls are of a thickness sufficient to support their own weight and the ornamental cornices, and constructional columns are built inside these walls, rising in sections from the massive foundations piers to the top of the walls. The exterior walls are self-supporting and perform the duty of screens only. Great strength of construction is obtained in the free use of iron and efficiency of the building is enhanced with the gain of floor space. Architects Carson and Sperry had great confidence in this method of construction and contributed to make architectural and constructional plans complement each other; This illuminates the fact that the jobs of architect and engineer were merging at this time.

In the tragic Baltimore fire of February 7, 1904 the Equitable Building was one block away from the hottest part (2,500 degrees) of the fire. The course of the fire was a one half circle, its northern and eastern edges curving from Lombard Street and Liberty Street to Fayette Street and St. Paul Street; The Equitable Building was in the North Eastern part of the fire's path. In the magazine The Bricklayer: An Architectural Monthly, The Equitable, The Union Trust, the old Herald, the Calvert, the Baltimore and Ohio and the (previous existing) Continental Trust and the Maryland Trust Buildings were mentioned as "what might be termed a chain of modern first class constructed office

buildings," forming "a barrier directly across the path of the flame." Twenty four blocks burned of the central business district, many of the buildings swept clean by the surging flames. The fire caught on to the roof of the Equitable and damaged some of the interior , but the exterior walls emerged relatively unscathed. During the fire many securities of the valuables of a number of jewelers who were burned out of their buildings were taken over to the Equitable Building. The Equitable safes stood the tests to which they were subjected. Architectural writers, after a thorough investigation, cited the building as a "remarkable example of lasting construction." After the fire, damages were immediately reconstructed and the Equitable Building, Baltimore's first skyscraper, emerged as the oldest existing structure on Monument Square.

The Equitable Building has experienced some changes of ownership since its first owner of Calvert Building and Construction Company, which was purchased with a grant of twelve thousand dollars from William Whitridge. On May 3, 1952 the Equitable Building Corporation of Marvin and Daniel Goldman bought the Building by the aid of a one million dollar loan. The structure continued to house offices of law, government, business, insurance and banking. Ten Calvert Corporation bought the building, and finally in 1979, Baltimore Investment Associates, its present owners, purchased it and the Munsey Building located across the street for four million dollars. These latter owners expressed the strong desire to maintain and upkeep the existing architecture and character of the Equitable.

During the late 1960's the building was threatened by a proposal by the Ten Calvert Corporation to cover the recently bird stained facade of the Equitable with a blue-gray metal paneling, creating a big box on top of a little box effect. After much deliberation the company was dissuaded by the feasibility of the project and took the advice of city and local preservationists to restore the building to its "original traditional beauty and dignity." The preservation committee had informed to them that "the structure is one of the buildings included on the commission's prepared list of historic landmarks as a major surviving example of the American high-rise business commercial structures in the Richardsonian-Sullivan tradition."

The Equitable Building, which is in good condition, has maintained its integrity because the features with which it is most

identified and most significant are still intact. The embellished facade of the building has been totally maintained, except for a minimal alteration in which workmen had to shear off a terra cotta lion head (which was weathered by moisture and ice) in order that it would not fall and cause an accident. This change would go unnoticed by anyone but a careful observer. The well-known Equitable lobby has received equally unsubstantial alterations. The interior arches on the walls of the lobby were at one time open to the two flanking banking rooms but are now filled with plaster. There was a skylight on the vaulted ceiling which was, in World War II, painted black to protect the building from air raids. These minor alterations do not compromise or change the appearance in whole of the exterior and the lobby, the two most distinguishable and significant elements of the building.

The Equitable's upper floors are partitioned off into offices of different sizes and may be used singly or by suite depending on what tenants require. Some walls have been removed on some floors as extra open space as extra open space was needed by tenants. The Turkish baths, small restaurant and roof garden were removed years ago. Also a small addition was added to the back of the building, although this change is hardly visible while on the Equitable's surrounding streets. These changes do not compromise the building's historic qualities and associations. The exterior design and architecture, the interior lobby structure, the marble, mosaic, and plaster embellishments, the marble staircase and brass elevators have remained virtually untouched.

This important building is located in an important and dignified section of downtown Baltimore called Monument Square. It is surrounded by high rises of equal mass such as the Munsey Building, Union Trust and Merritt Savings and Loan. These buildings and this location, along with the adjacent Baltimore subway stop and the increasing potential for downtown Baltimore make the lot of the Equitable extremely valuable.

Nomination of the Equitable to the National Register would give recognition and encourage sensitivity to the distinctive character and high artistic values of this important Baltimore building.

8-23

FAYETTE STREET

(D)

HALLS

Close

(H)

EQUITABLE BUILDING

LIGHT COURT

ELEVATORS

ELEVATORS

ELEVATOR LOBBY

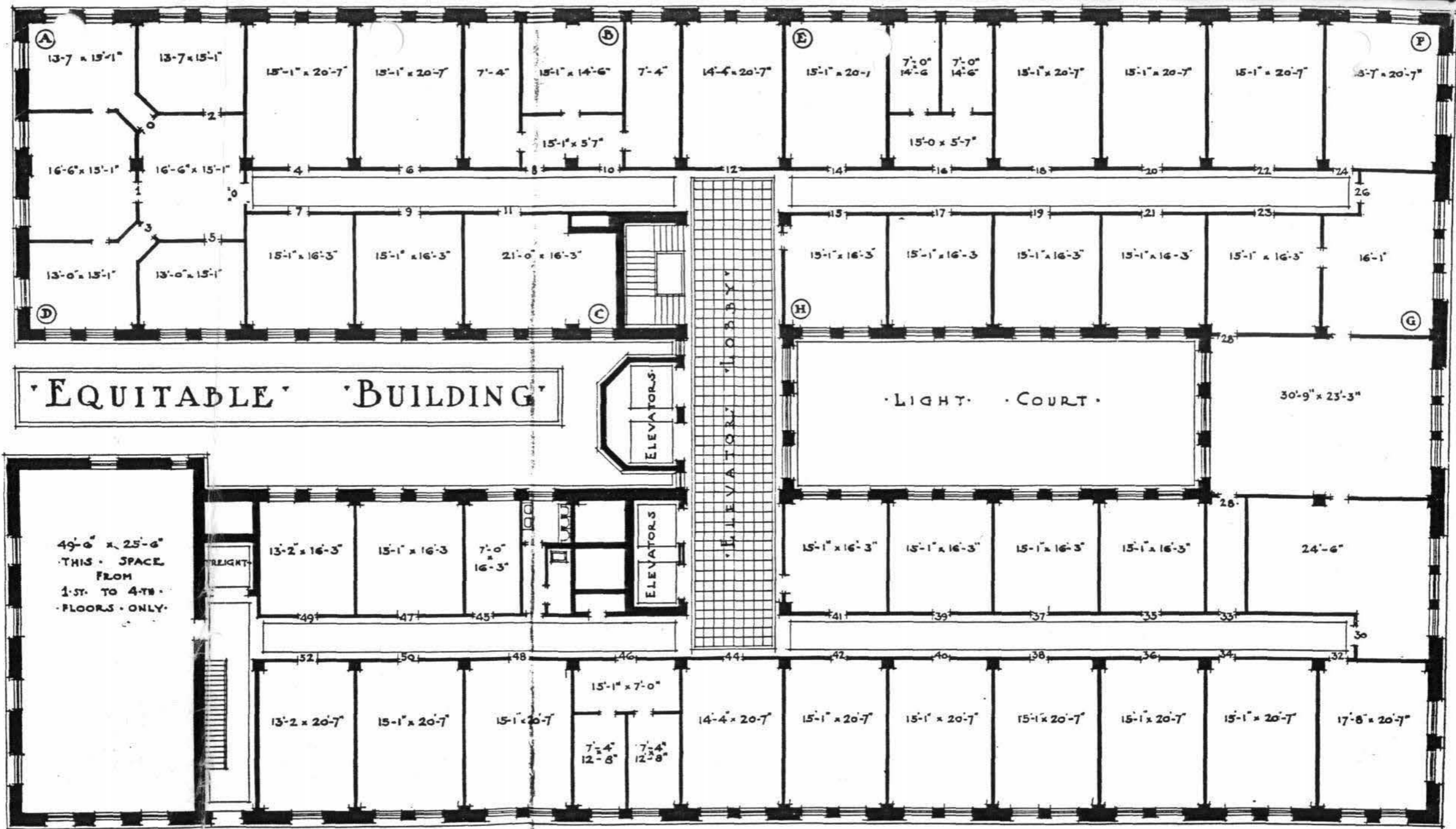
FREIGHT

THIS SPACE FROM 1-ST. TO 4TH FLOORS ONLY

49' 47' 45'

Amerson

CALVERT STREET



'EQUITABLE' BUILDING

'LIGHT COURT'

'ELEVATORS' LOBBY

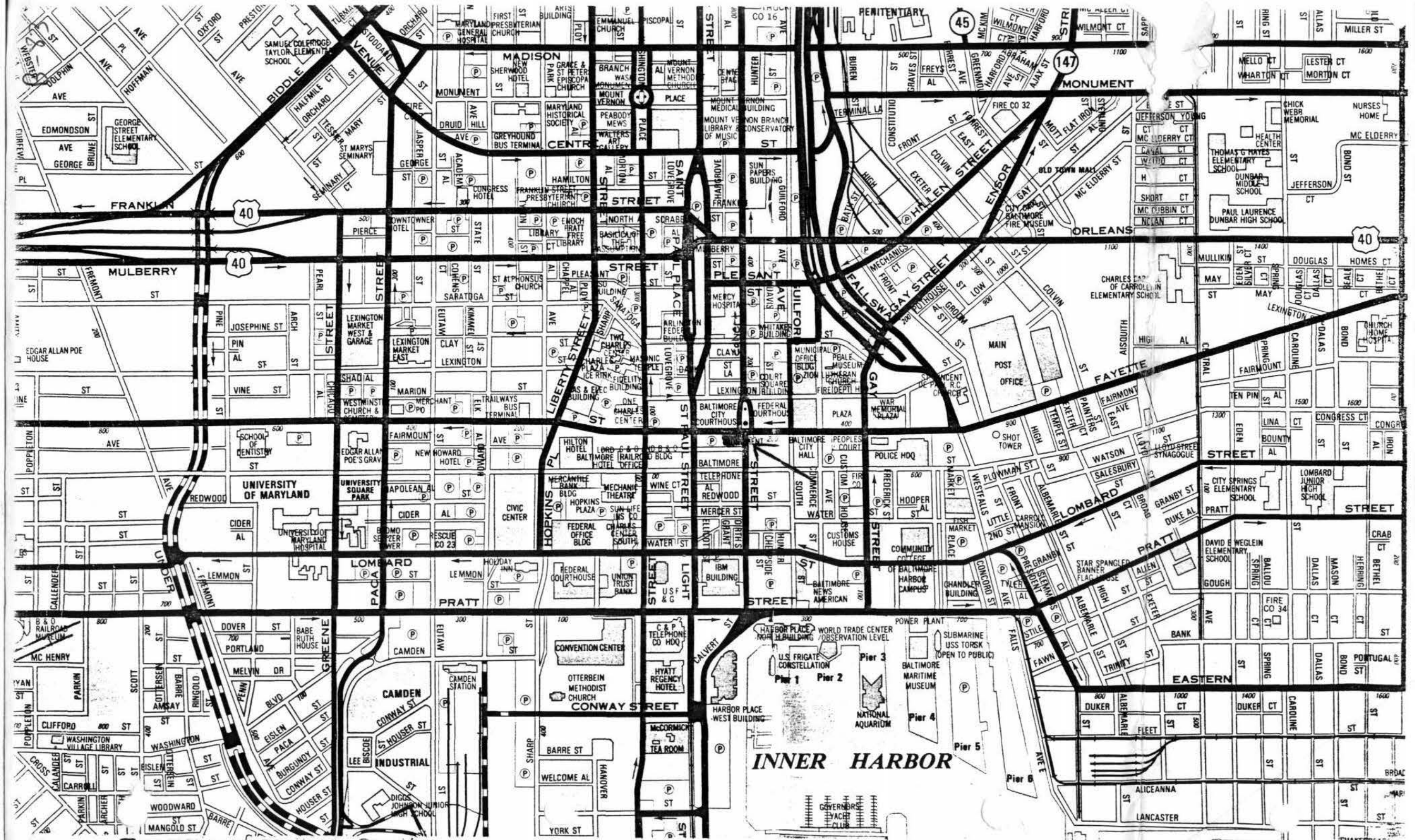
ELEVATORS

FREIGHT

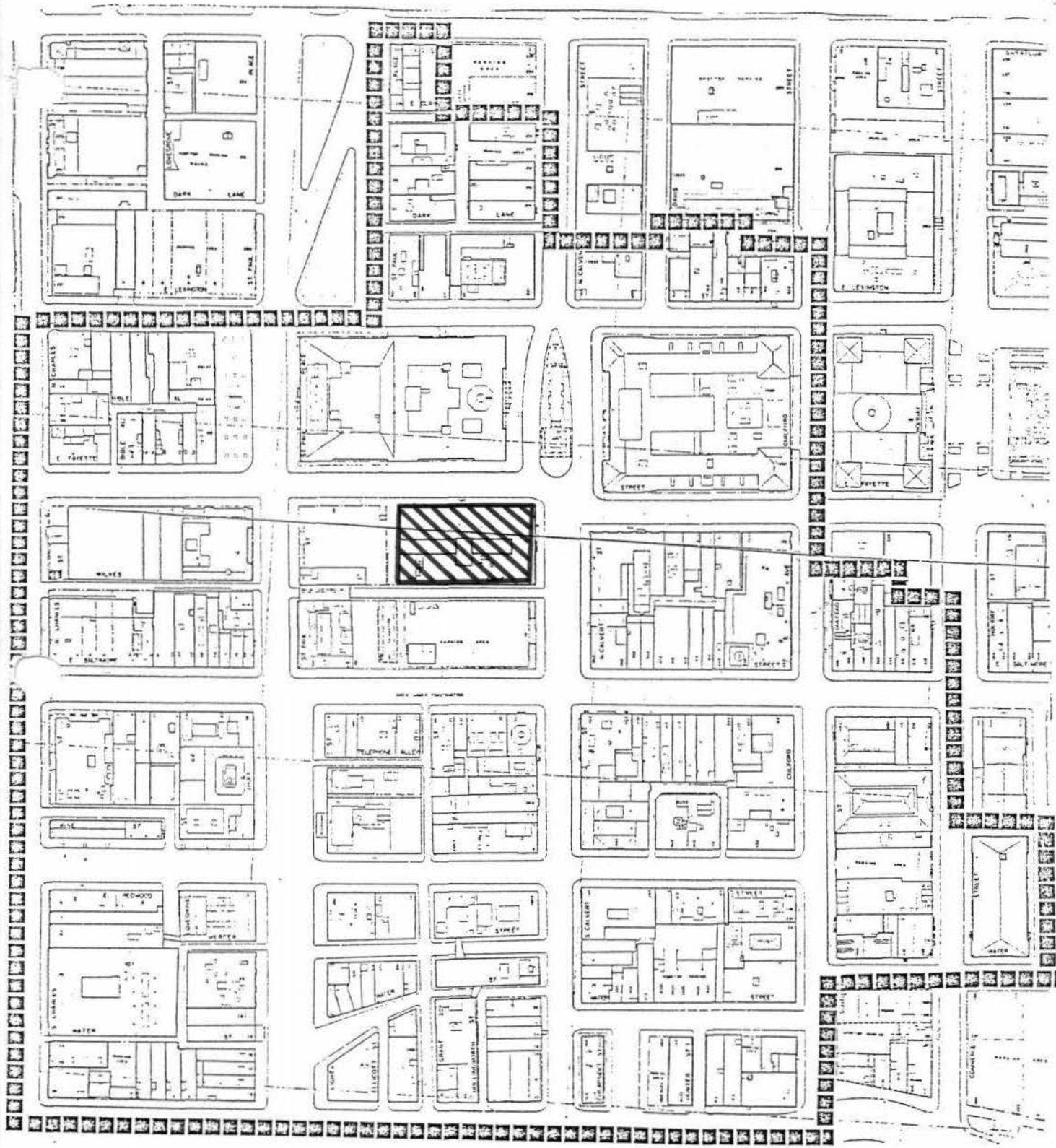
49'-0" x 25'-0"
THIS SPACE FROM
1-ST. TO 4-TH
FLOORS ONLY.

THE EQUITABLE BUILDING , TYPICAL FLOOR PLAN , SCALE 1/16"=1'

CALVERT STREET



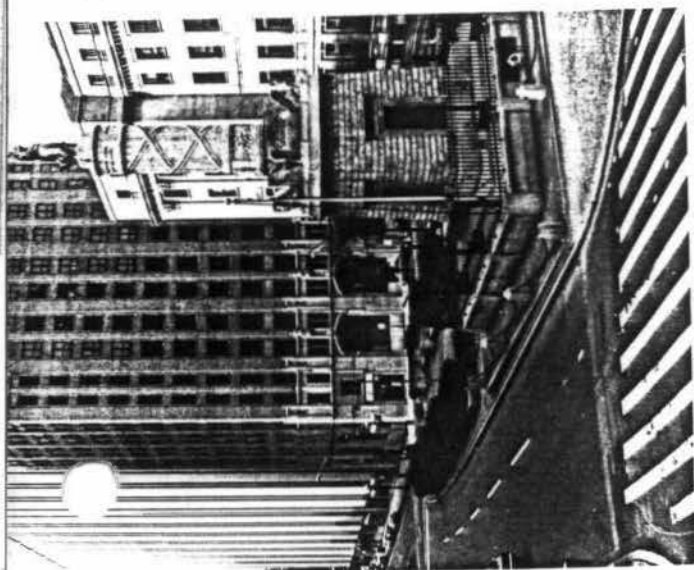
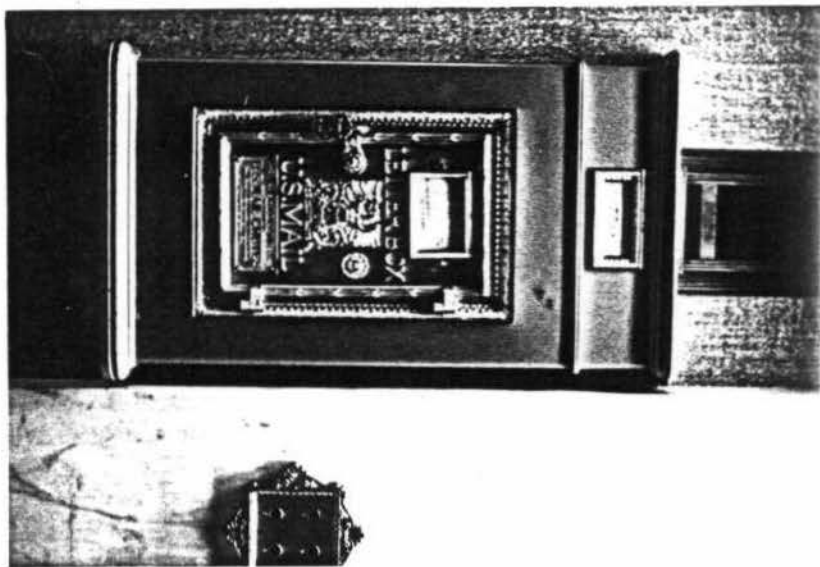
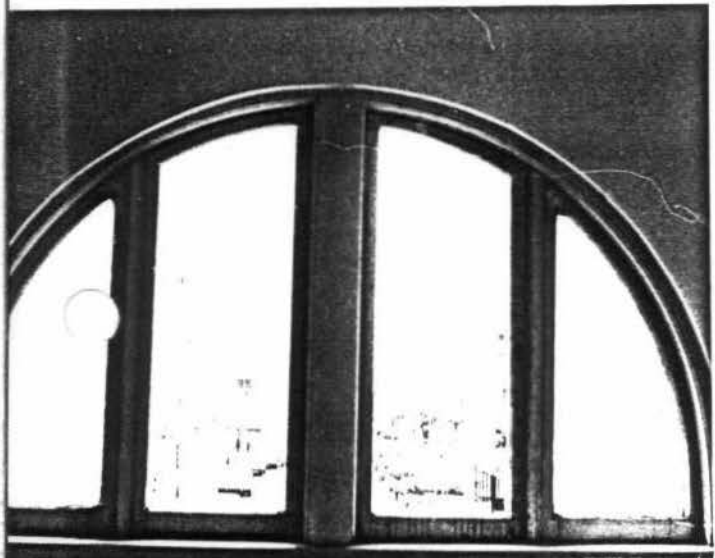
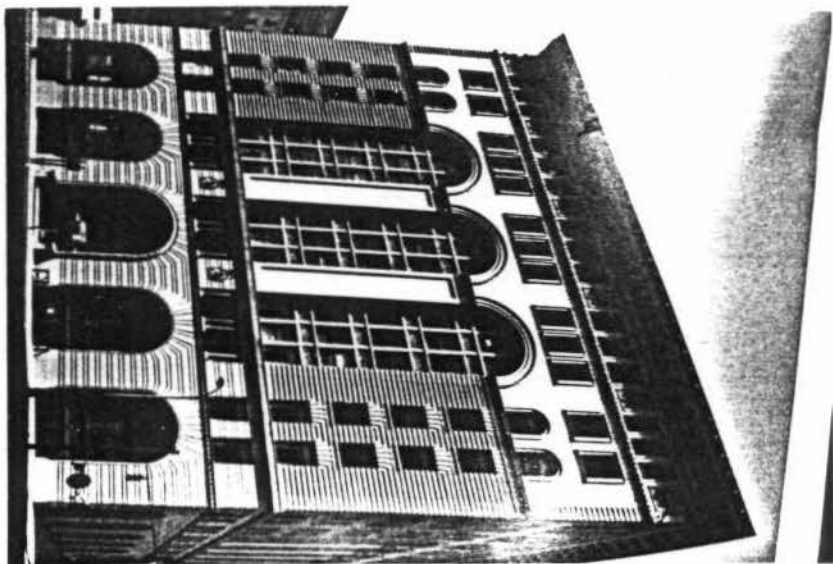
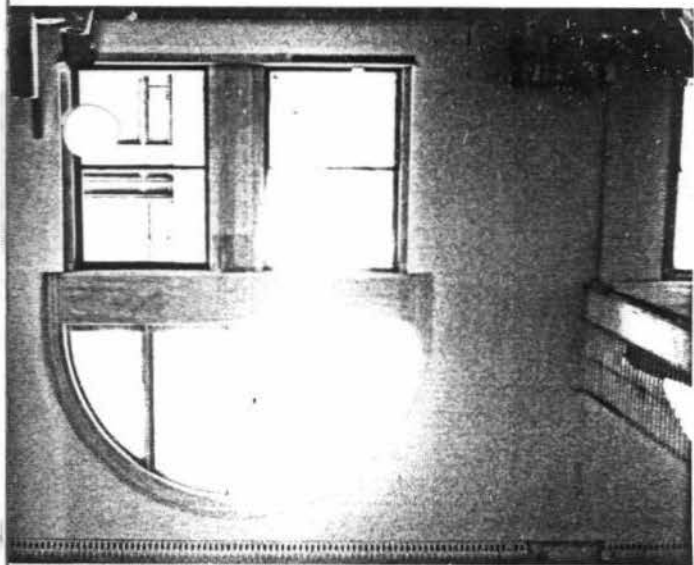
○ = location of Equitable Building

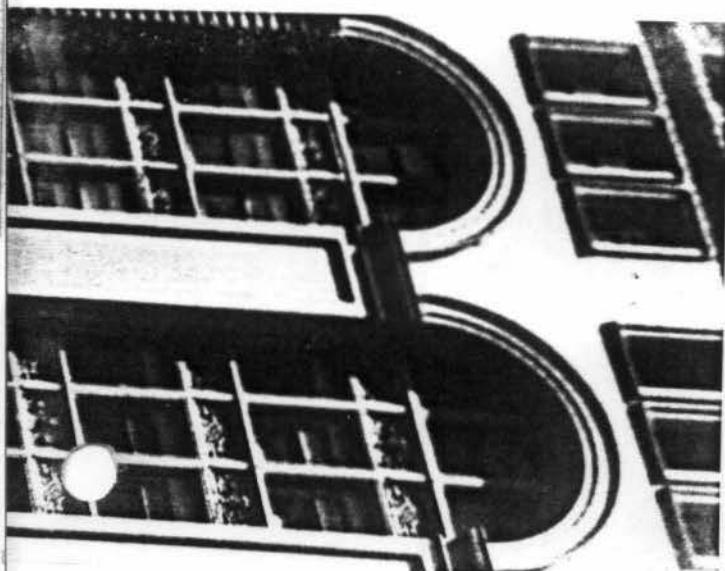
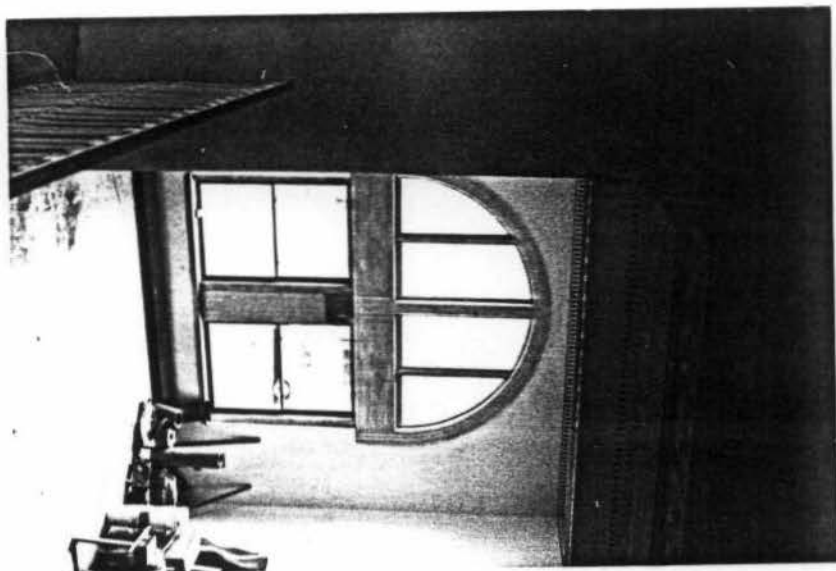
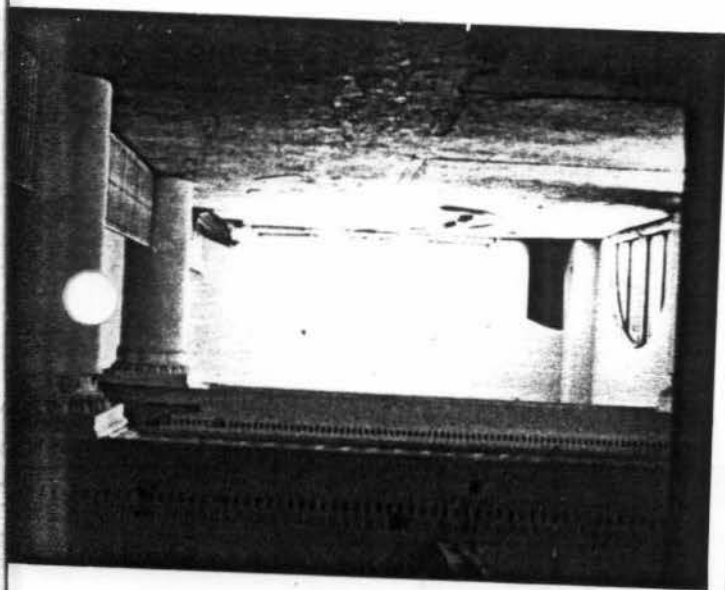
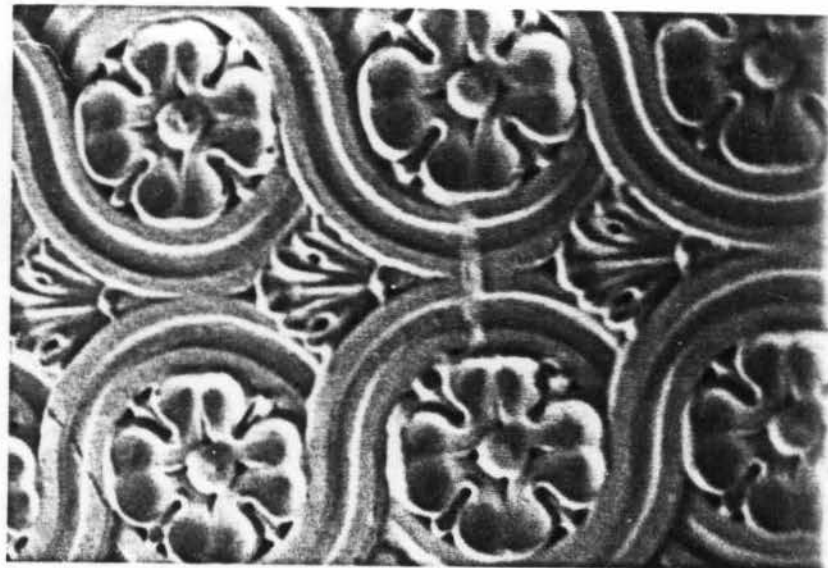


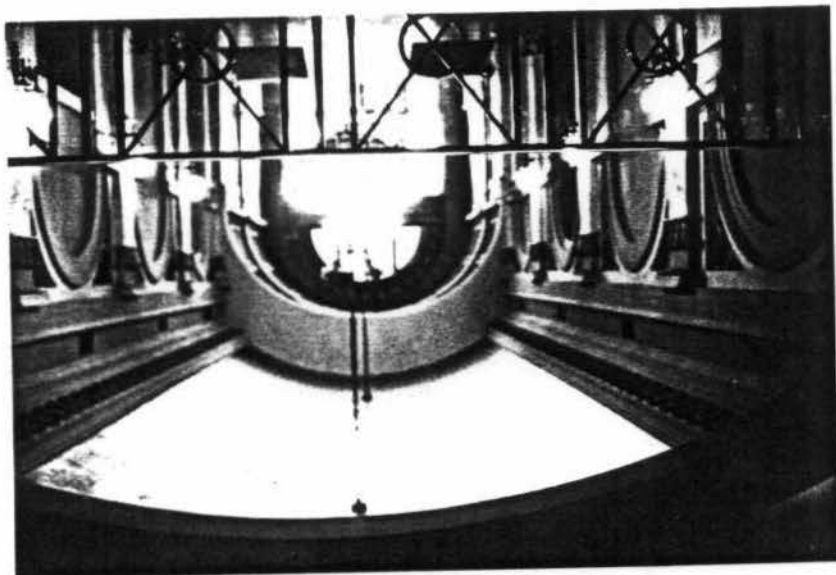
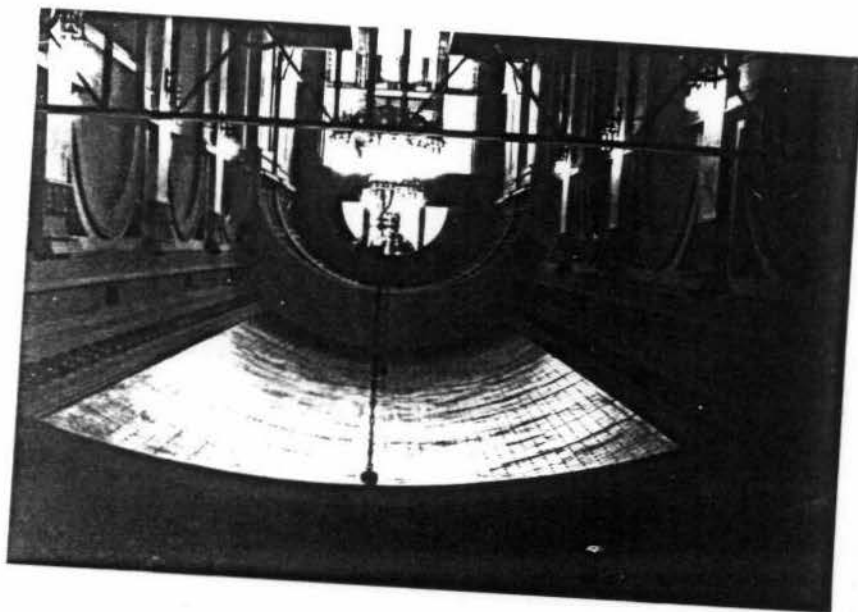
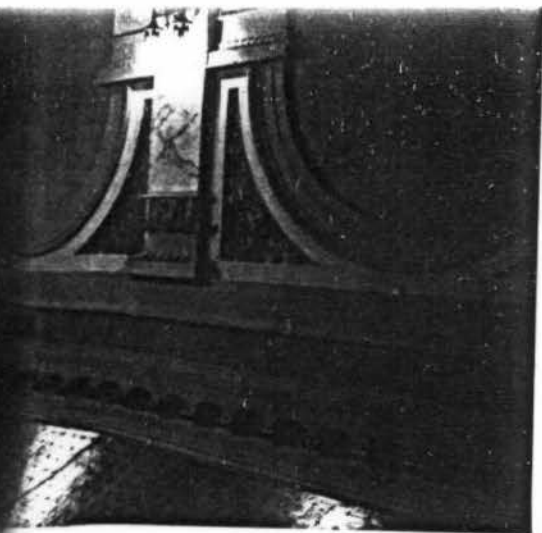
Baltimore Financial District Survey
 Baltimore (City), Maryland

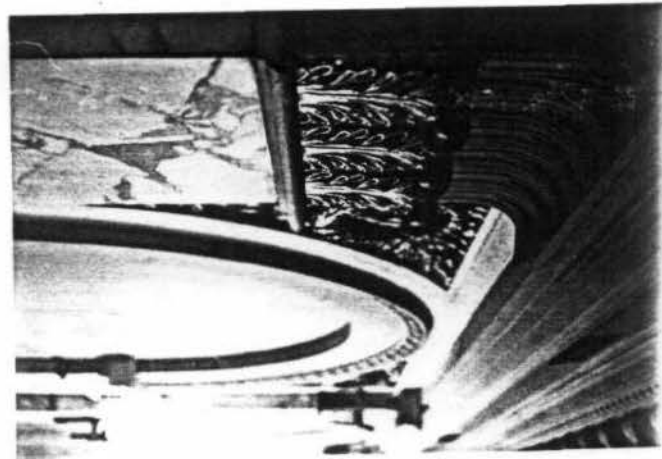
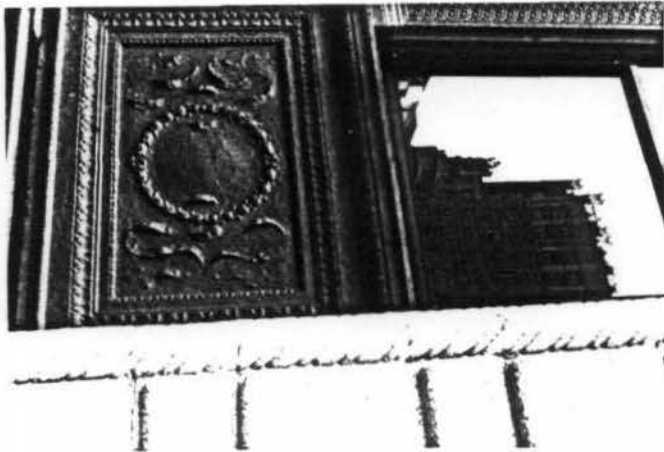
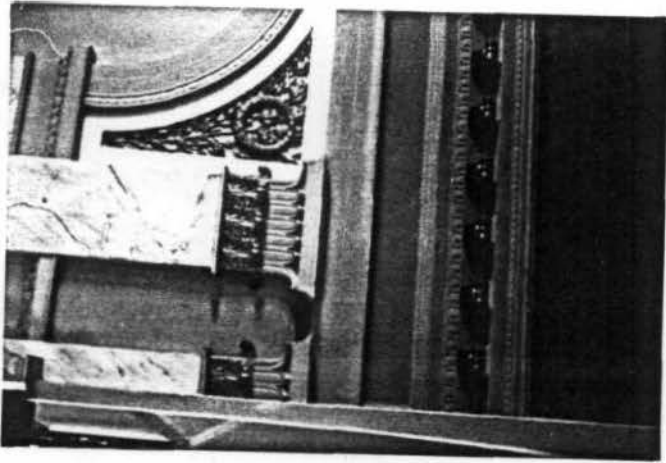
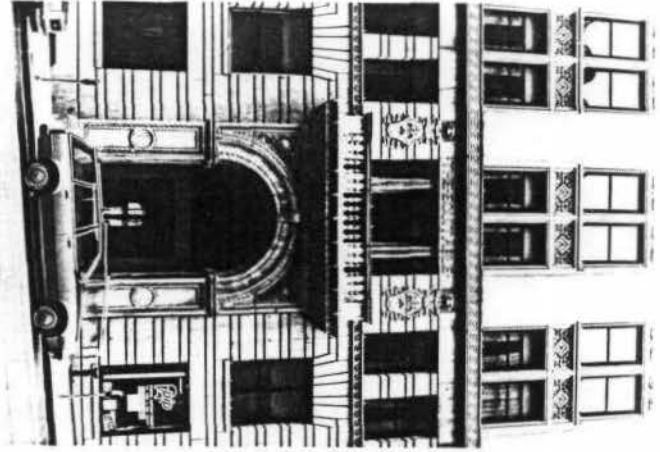
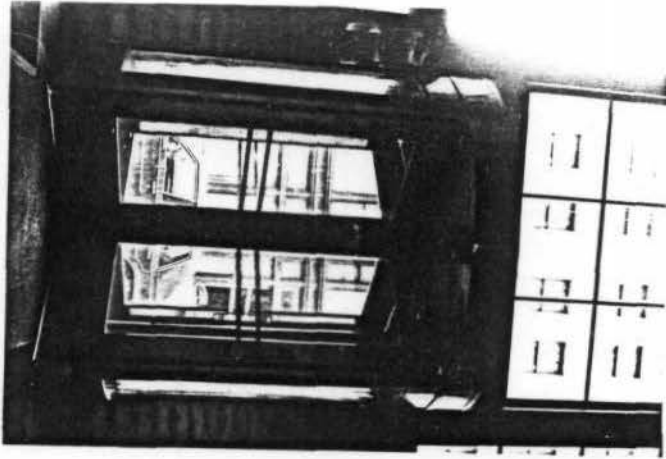


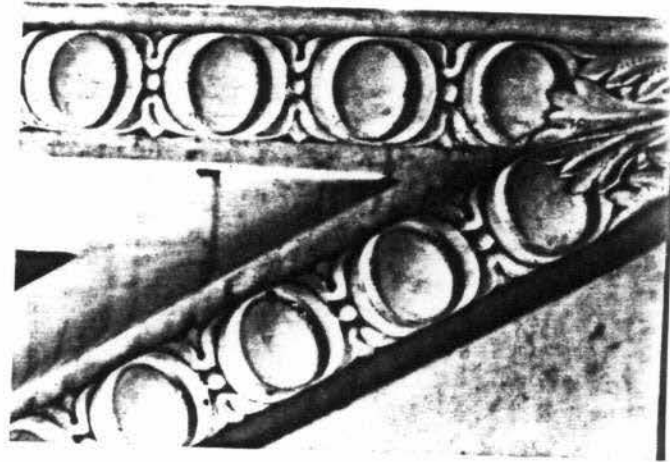
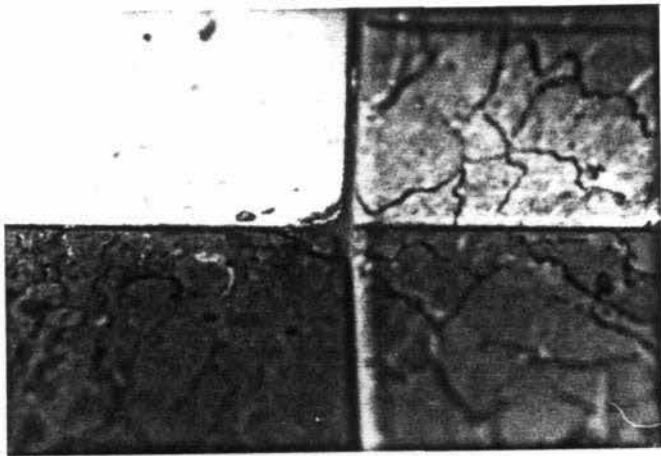
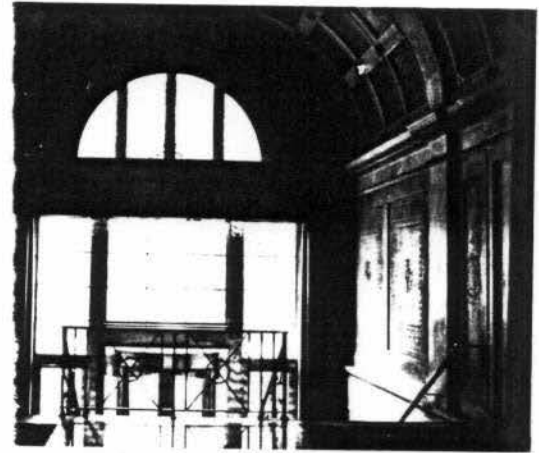
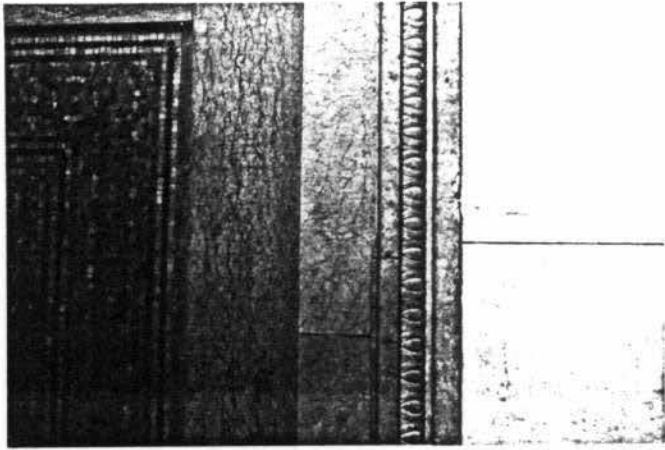
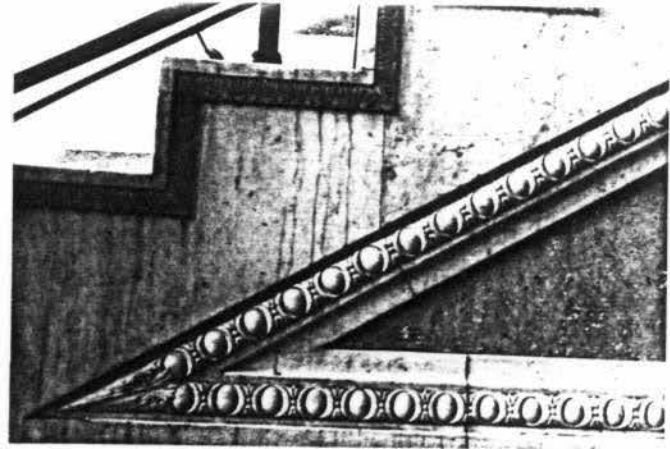
B-0083 Equitable Building
 12 North Calvert Street

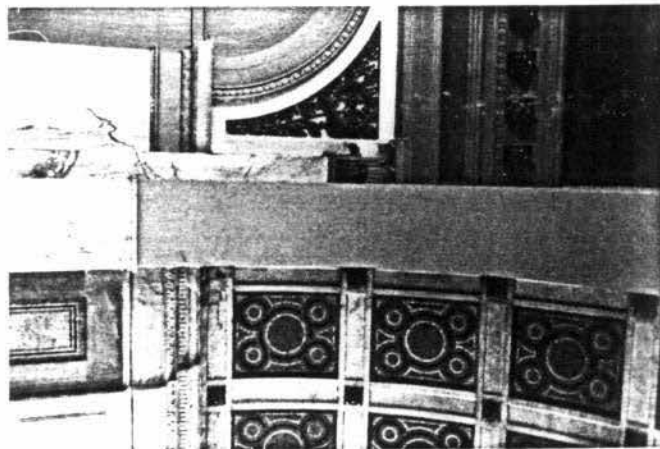
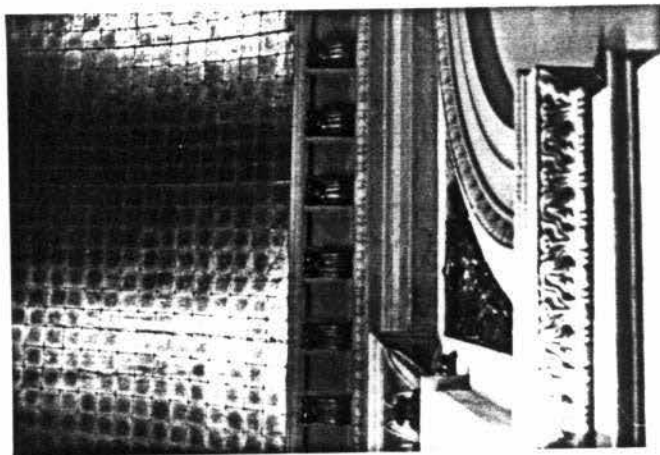
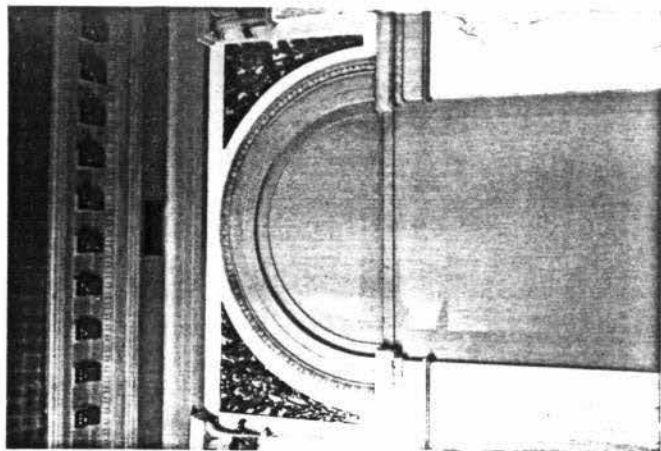
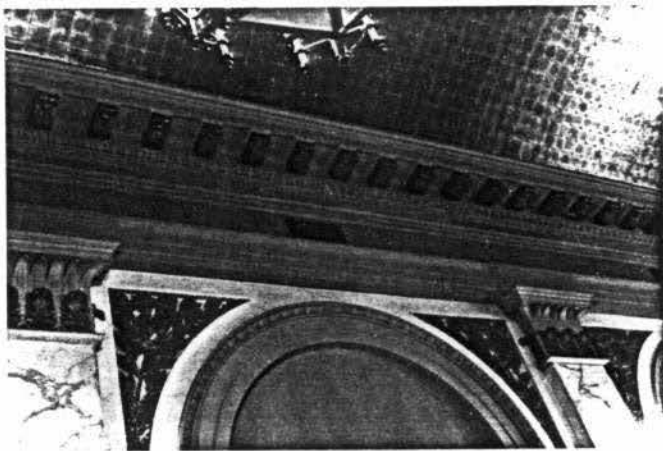


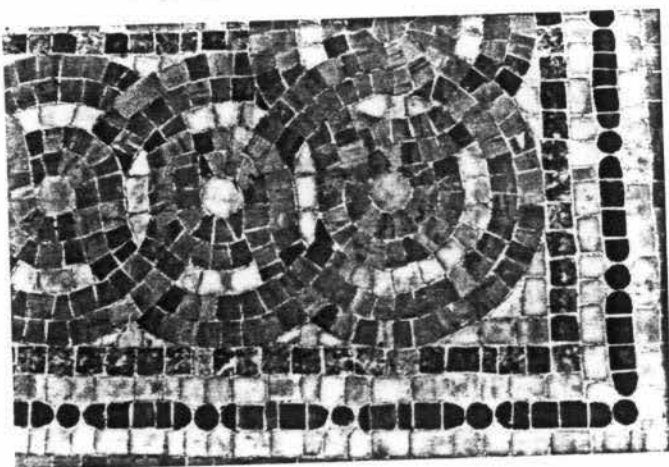
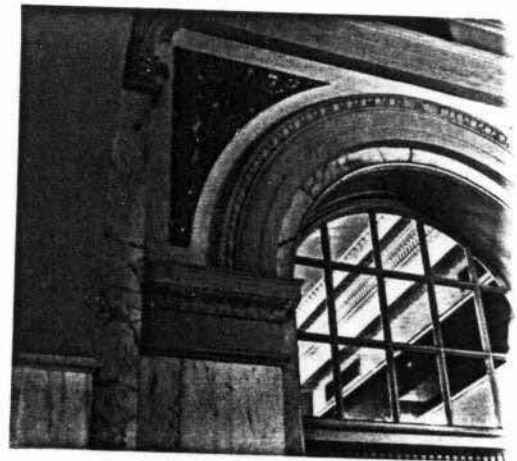
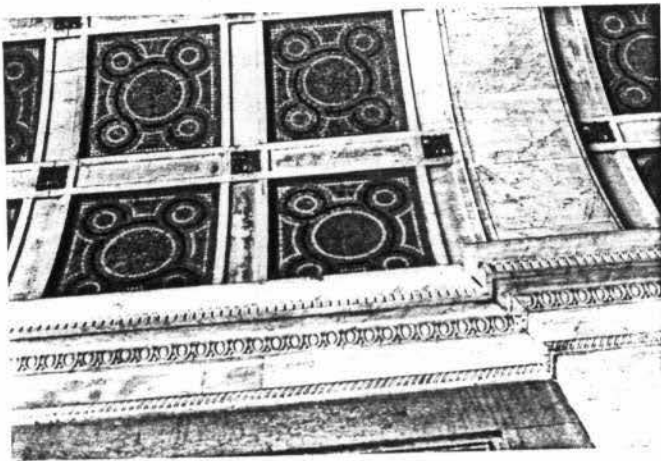
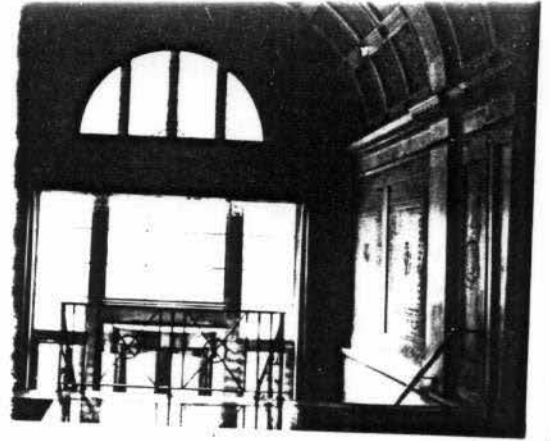
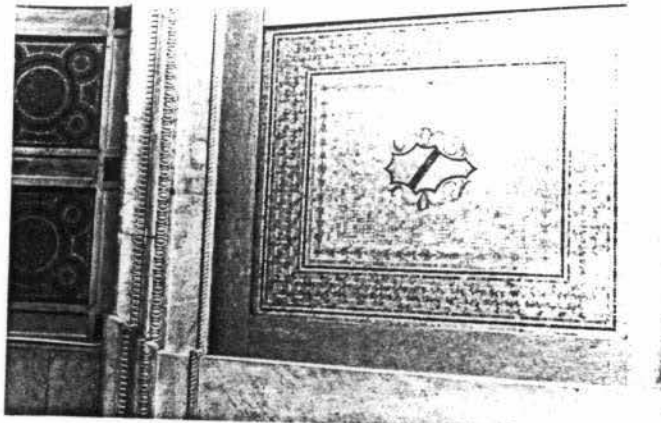


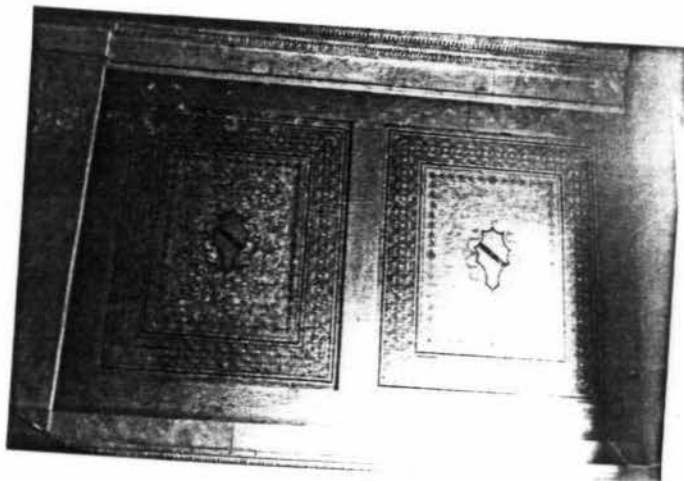
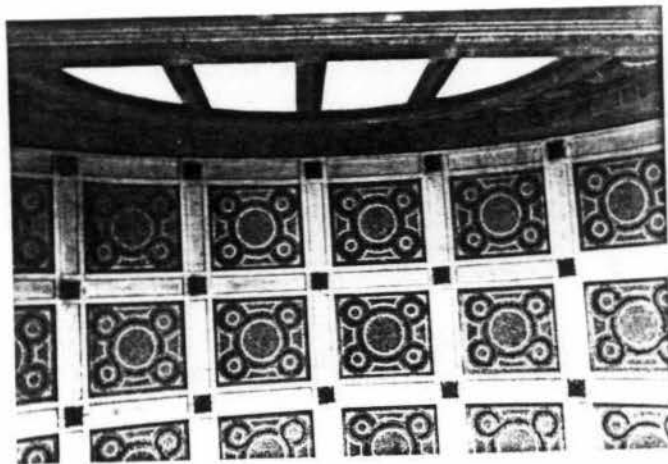
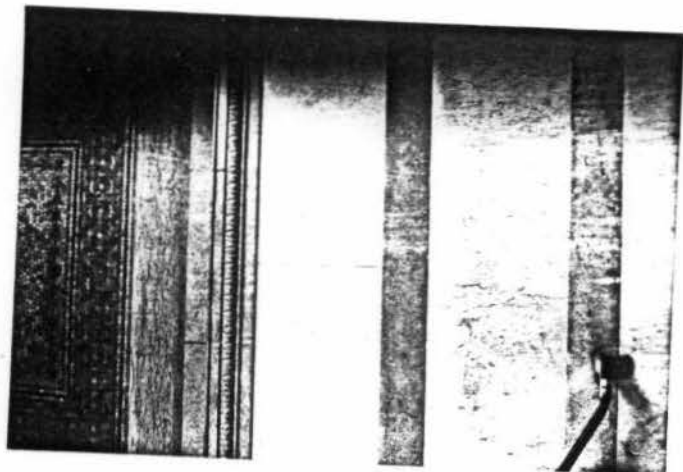
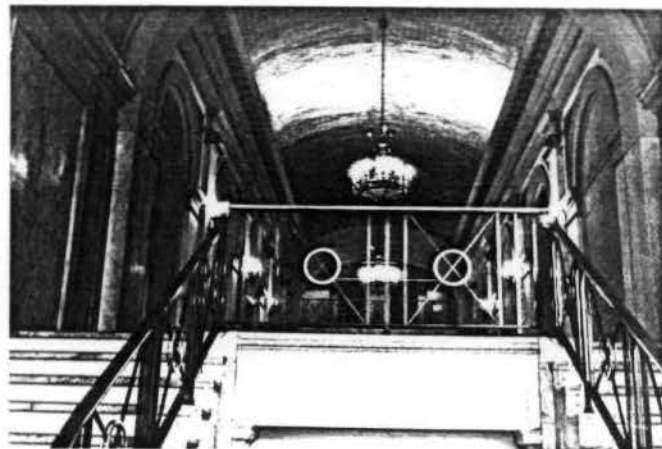
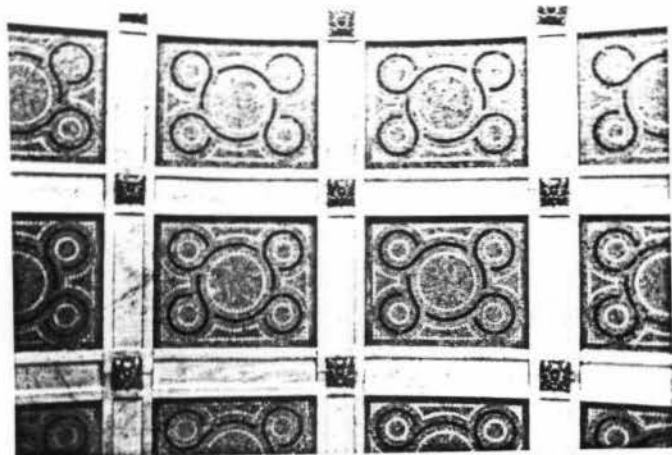




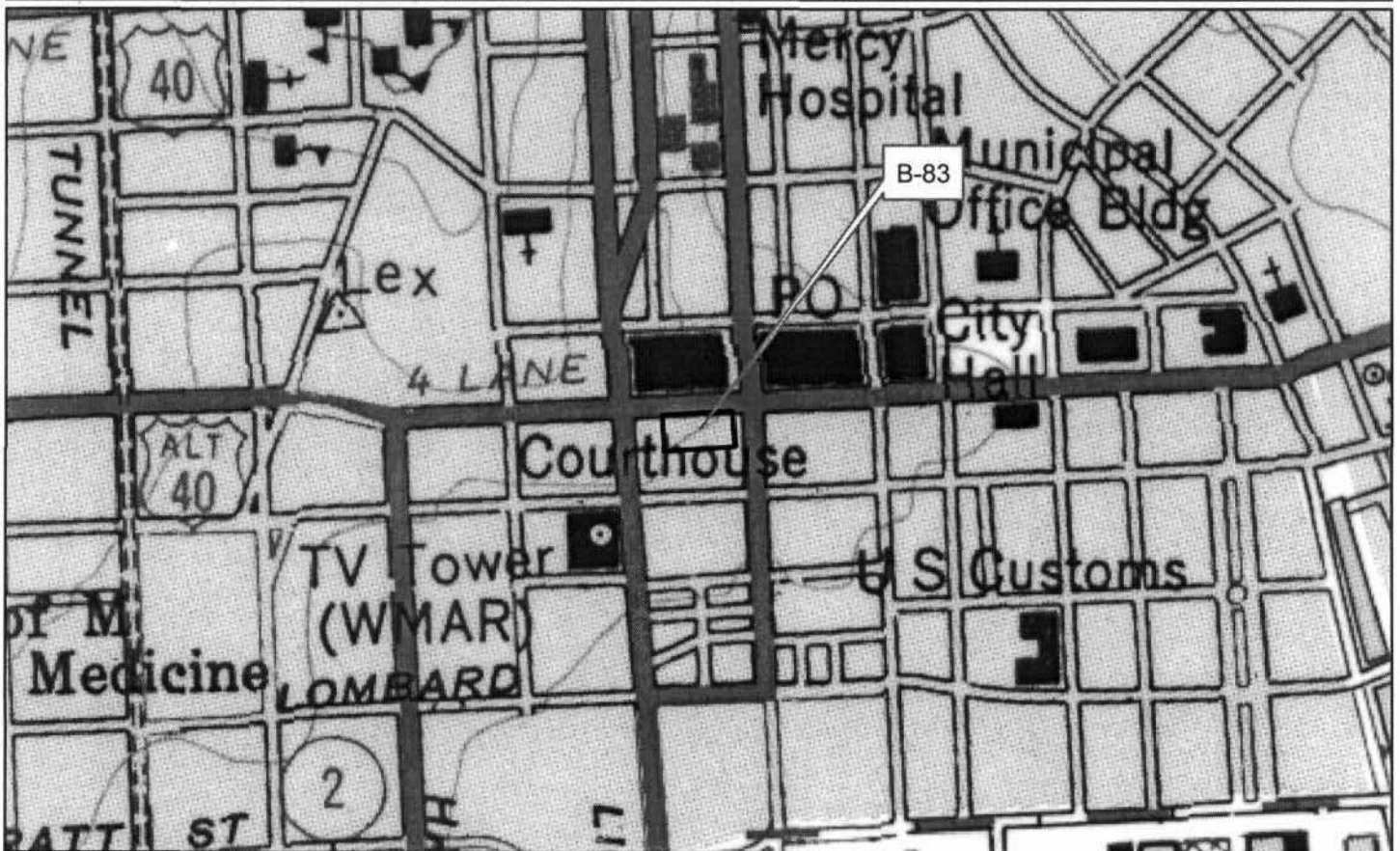
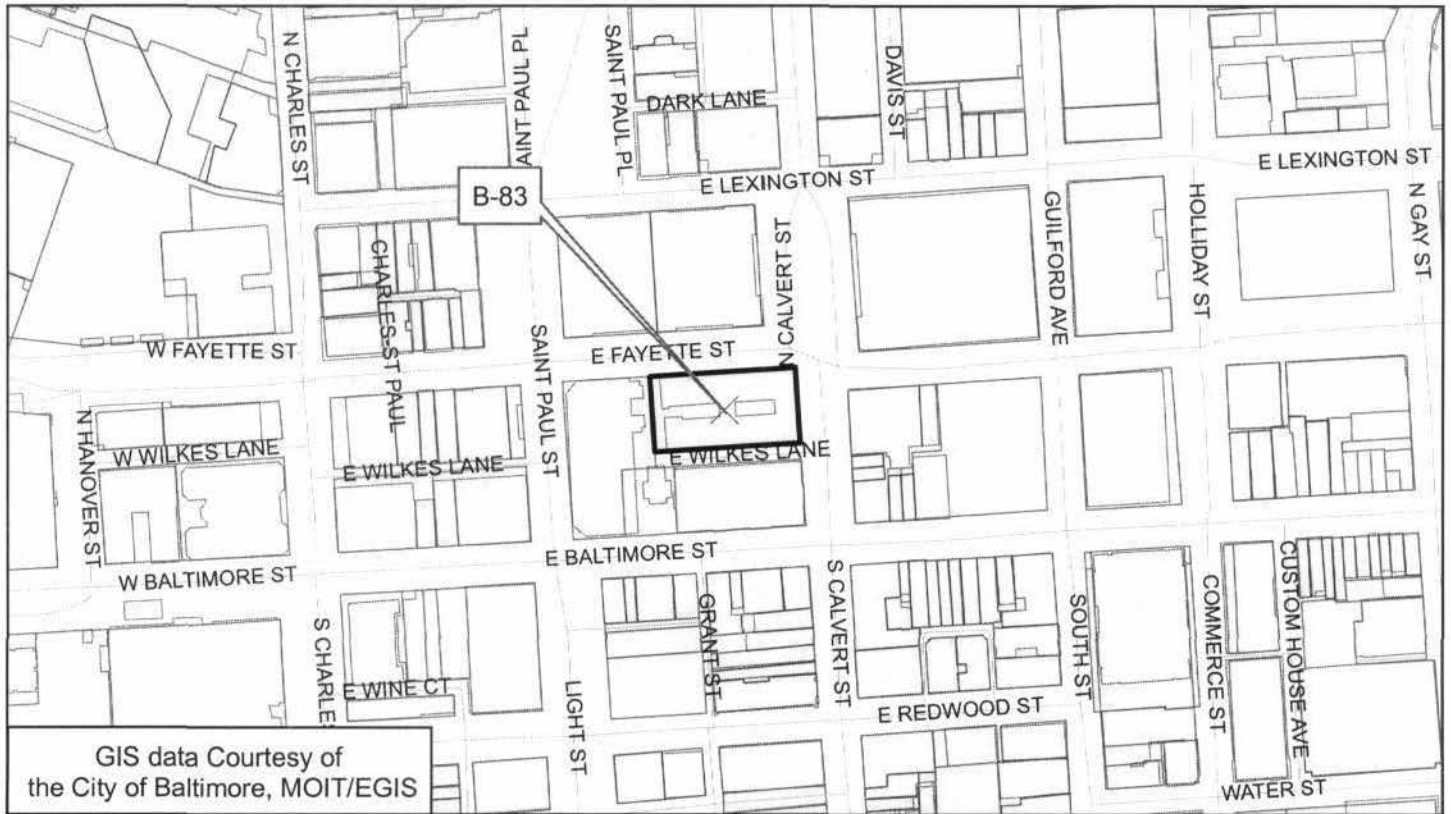








B-83
Equitable Building
12 North Calvert Street
Block 0636 Lot 001
Baltimore City
Baltimore East Quad.





B-0083

Equitable Building
12 North Calvert Street
Financial District-Metrocenter Survey
Baltimore (City), Maryland
Photo: Fred Shoken
Date: July 1985
Neg.loc.: Maryland Historical Trust
East elevation



B-0083

Equitable Building
12 North Calvert Street
Financial District-Metrocenter Survey
Baltimore (City), Maryland
Photo: Fred Shoken
Date: July 1985
Neg.loc.: Maryland Historical Trust
North elevation



B-0083

Equitable Building
12 North Calvert Street
Financial District-Metrocenter Survey
Baltimore (City), Maryland
Photo: Caroline Hardy
Date: July 1985
Neg.loc.: Maryland Historical Trust
Detail of main entrance arch