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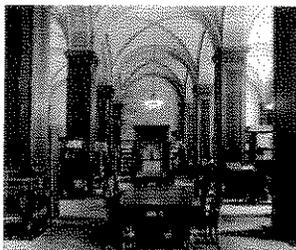
## Historic Buildings

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## Herbert Hoover Building (Commerce), Washington, DC

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### Building Overview



#### Building History

Created in 1903, the Department of Commerce and Labor was one of the largest and most complex federal entities of its time, with multiple bureaus dedicated to economic and job development. In his last day in office on March 4, 1913, President Howard Taft split the departments, creating the Department of Commerce as it presently exists, which is headquartered in the Herbert Clark Hoover Department of Commerce Building.

The building is located within the Federal Triangle: a dense seventy-acre enclave of monumental federal buildings. The Federal Triangle exists on land allocated for government use as part of the 1902 McMillan Plan, which amplified Pierre Charles L'Enfant's unfinished District of Columbia master plan. The McMillan Plan applied late-nineteenth century City Beautiful planning concepts. These advocated the orderly integration of landscape design, public art, and classically inspired Beaux-Arts architecture, in part to inspire civic virtue in the populace.

During the 1920s the Department of Commerce grew massively under Secretary of Commerce Herbert Hoover. By 1926 the department's numerous bureaus were scattered about the city in ten separate buildings. Using the same trowel that George Washington used to lay the U.S. Capitol's cornerstone, Herbert Hoover, then president, laid the building's cornerstone on June 10, 1929. The building was completed in 1932. The New York architectural firm of York and Sawyer designed the building, with Louis Ayres as principal architect. However, the Commission of Fine Arts, the Public Buildings Program, and Hoover himself all had input informing the building's design and location. Noted artist James Earle Fraser sculpted the various reliefs and figures upon the building.

Since its opening, the building has housed every secretary of Commerce in its fifth floor executive suite. In 1981 the building was renamed the Herbert Clark Hoover Department of Commerce Building. Since 1995 the White House Visitor's Center has occupied the former Patent Search room in the north wing. The National Aquarium, originally a display space associated with the Bureau of Fisheries, has been housed in the basement since the building's completion.

#### Architecture

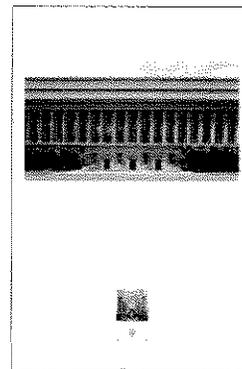
The Herbert Clark Hoover Department of Commerce Building, with 3,300 rooms and over 1.8 million square feet of floor area, was the largest federal building in the country when it opened in 1932, and was proclaimed the largest office building in the world. The building demonstrates academically rigorous adherence to the Italian-inspired Second Renaissance Revival style with consistent cornice lines, strong horizontality, stone facing, colonnades and red tile roof.

The Public Buildings Act of 1926, which allocated \$165 million for federal construction projects across the country, funded the Commerce Building's construction. The eight-acre building is a large, steel-framed rectangular mass pierced by six landscaped internal courtyards for daylight and ventilation. The seven-story building has a tall attic story concealing the top two floors. Various textures of Indiana limestone are applied, with accent elements in different granites. Following Renaissance precepts, the large slabs of limestone on the lower two floors are rusticated, channeled, and chamfered while the upper stories are faced with smooth limestone.

Its east-facing, Fourteenth Street facade contains sixty-three bays divided into five portions with projecting sections at the ends and the center. The center section contains a dramatic Doric colonnade of twenty-four fluted columns, each forty-two feet tall, comprising the third through fifth floors. This section also contains the major pedestrian entrances, and its roof-line is crowned with a repeating series of alternating carved eagles and torches. The facade's two receding portions contain three large twenty-one-foot-tall arched driveway portals accentuated by massive voussours. Elaborately treated bronze doors are set into each portal. Similar portals are used for the three central pedestrian doors, inset with elaborate rectangular granite openings and triangular pediments atop carved corbels. Clusters of three large, bronze, octagonal lamps, each with an acanthus base, rope molding, and spirales flank these doors.

Adjacent to many of the entries are bas-relief panels depicting the Commerce Department's

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(Commerce), Washington, DC

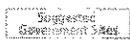
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