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\$126-Million F.B.I.  
Building, Named for  
Hoover, Dedicated  
In Washington

**\$126-Mil  
Building Viewed  
as Dullest of  
a Dull Lot**

By PAUL GOLDBERGER  
Special to The New York Times

WASHINGTON, Sept. 30—  
There is one small bit of  
color in the new J. Edgar  
Hoover Building on Pennsyl-  
vania Avenue here—in the  
rug and desk implements from  
the office of J.  
Edgar Hoover,  
An part of which  
Appraisal has been re-  
created for the  
amusement (or  
inspiration) of the tourists  
who are expected to flow  
through the new structure at  
the rate of 500,000 a year.  
Everything else in the build-  
ing is so neutral that it can  
fairly be said that the color  
scheme runs the gamut from  
white to beige.

There are white vinyl floor  
tiles, white ceilings and white  
walls. The concrete arcade is  
beige, and the paving block  
in the large central court is a  
darker, more grayish beige.

The building, designed by  
C. F. Murphy Associates of  
Chicago, is a 11-story struc-  
ture of precast and cast-in-  
place concrete, lowered to  
seven stories along Pennsyl-  
vania Avenue to conform to  
height limitations suggested  
by the Pennsylvania Avenue  
Commission.

The lower wing is arranged  
around a trapezoidal court-  
yard; from afar, the massing  
suggests that the upper sec-  
tion was set down on four  
heavy piers atop the rear part  
of the courtyard.

The detailing throughout  
is hard, but with none of the  
sharpness of the best brutalist  
buildings—it is better de-  
scribed as blank. There are  
monotonous square windows  
set into the concrete, stark  
walls of unbroken concrete  
facing the pedestrian at  
streetside and feeble echoes  
of a colonnade surrounding  
the base.

The visitor enters in the  
center of the Pennsylvania  
Avenue wing, passing under  
the structure into the central  
court, which the F.B.I. admits  
was designed more as a "stag-  
ing area" for controlling the  
tour crowds than as anything  
else.

A vast concrete stair  
mounts to a terrace overlook-  
ing the courtyard from there  
two identical arcades, 20 feet  
high and lined with concrete  
columns, cut their useless and  
pretentious way through to  
the building.

#### White Walls and Emptiness

The halls offer endless  
vistas of white walls and em-  
pty space—it is obvious that  
none of the things that have  
been learned in the last few  
years about the role of warm  
materials and varied shapes,  
not to mention color, in the  
making of a good work penet-  
rated the F.B.I.

How does a fiasco like this  
occur? The process of creat-  
ing Federal architecture is so  
complicated that it is hard to  
describe at less than book  
length—but that is itself a  
large part of the problem.  
The F.B.I. building took 12  
years to design and build,  
and most of those years were  
spent in pushing and pulling  
between several huge bu-  
reaucracies—the F.B.I., the  
General Services Administra-  
tion, which acts as the offi-  
cial "client" for Federal build-  
ings, and the architect's of-  
fice itself. This situation was  
complicated by the F.B.I.'s  
interest in security as a  
priority, and the Pennsylvania  
Avenue Commission's role as  
yet another layer of bu-  
reaucracy, albeit one advocat-  
ing better design.

Doubtless there will be  
some observers who will say  
that this is not so bad be-  
cause it is, after all, an ap-  
propriate symbol of the F.B.I.  
True enough.

As the dedication program  
says, the building is a "fit-  
ting tribute to its namesake,  
Mr. Hoover. (Indeed, it is  
understood that the F.B.I. Di-  
rector argued for an even  
more massive, closed struc-  
ture than what was built.

But, tempting as it is to  
pass off the F.B.I. building as  
an amusing reflection of gov-  
ernment's banality, such a  
view remains unconvincing  
and cynical at bottom.

For a building exists to do  
more than symbolize the uses  
within; it must play an active  
role in the cityscape without.  
This building turns its back  
on the city and substitutes  
for responsible architecture a  
pompous, empty monumen-  
tality that is, in the end, not  
so much a symbol as a symp-  
tom—a symptom of some-  
thing wrong in Government  
and just as wrong in architec-  
ture.