

FBI-IV OCT 1 1975
NYTimes

\$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
dull, mottled green 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.