

## THE 1891 DRAFTING STUDIO OF THE OFFICE OF THE SUPERVISING ARCHITECT

*“Attention is respectfully asked to the fact that the present draughting room of the office is inadequate in size and poorly lighted; frequent absence of the draughtsmen is occasioned by ophthalmia.”*

- James Windrim, Supervising Architect, 1889



*This photograph was taken soon after the drafting studio was completed -- a time when more than 100 designers worked in this building.  
(National Archives and Records Administration)*



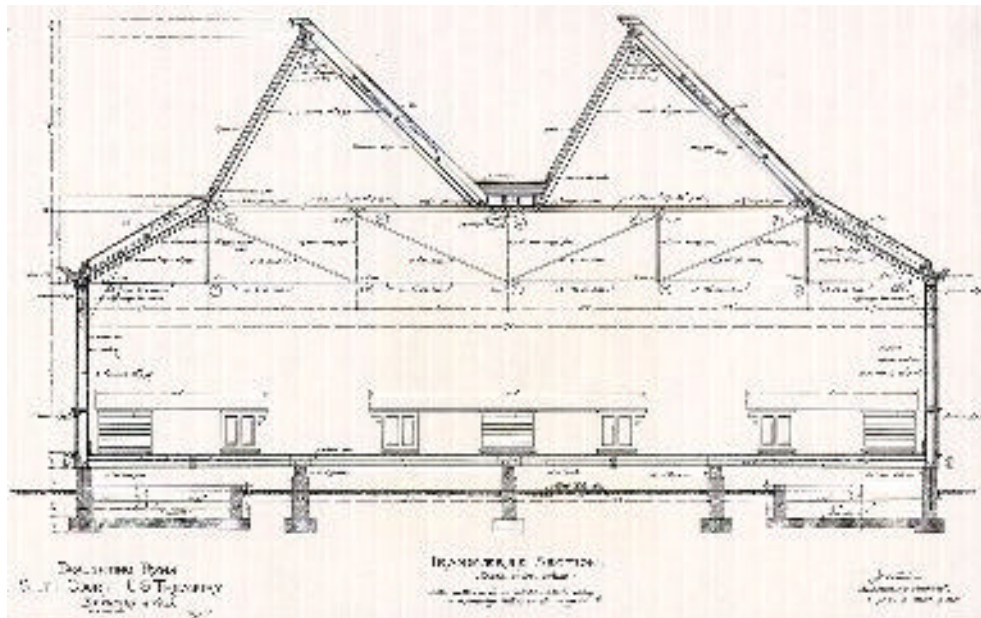
*In the background of this c. 1891 view of the drafting studio can be seen renderings of some of the federal buildings designed by the Supervising Architect in the late nineteenth century. (National Archives and Records Administration)*





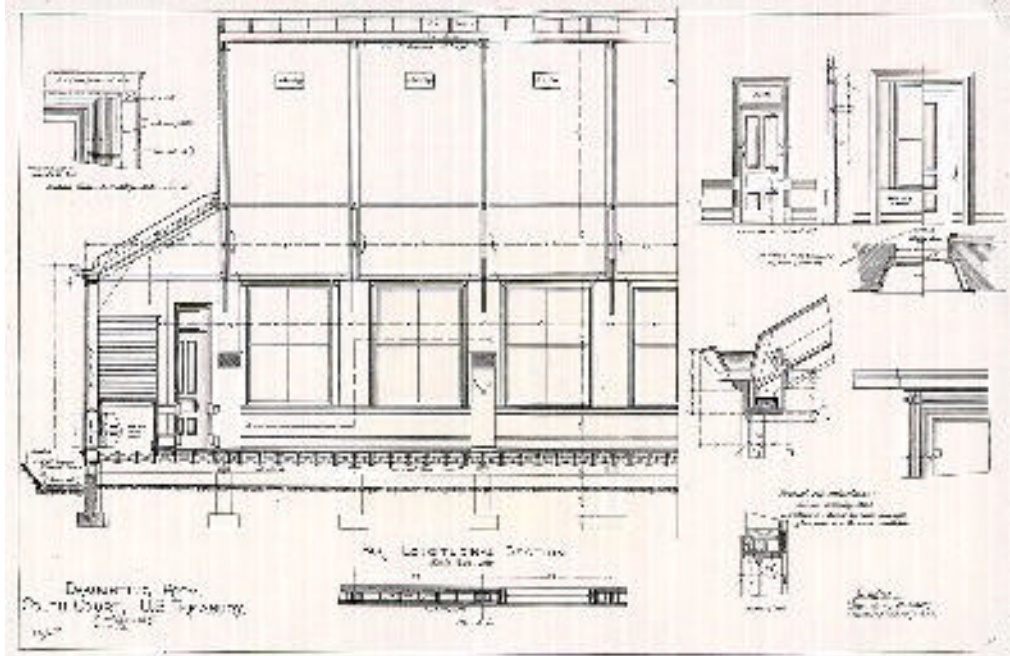
One of the important historical responsibilities of the United States Treasury Department was the design and construction of federal buildings including courthouses, post offices, mints, marine hospitals, and custom houses. This work was the responsibility of the Office of the Supervising Architect, which was part of the Treasury Department from 1852 to 1939. Remarkably, the architectural drafting studio erected in 1891 to alleviate the crowded conditions and poor lighting described by Supervising Architect James Windrim in the quote above, survives today in the interior courtyard of the Main Treasury Building.

Windrim's innovative structure employed a light structural system of steel posts that supported a series of steel roof trusses. Large skylights on the northern facing gables flooded the drafting room with natural light. The Supervising Architect's structure is presently used for office space.

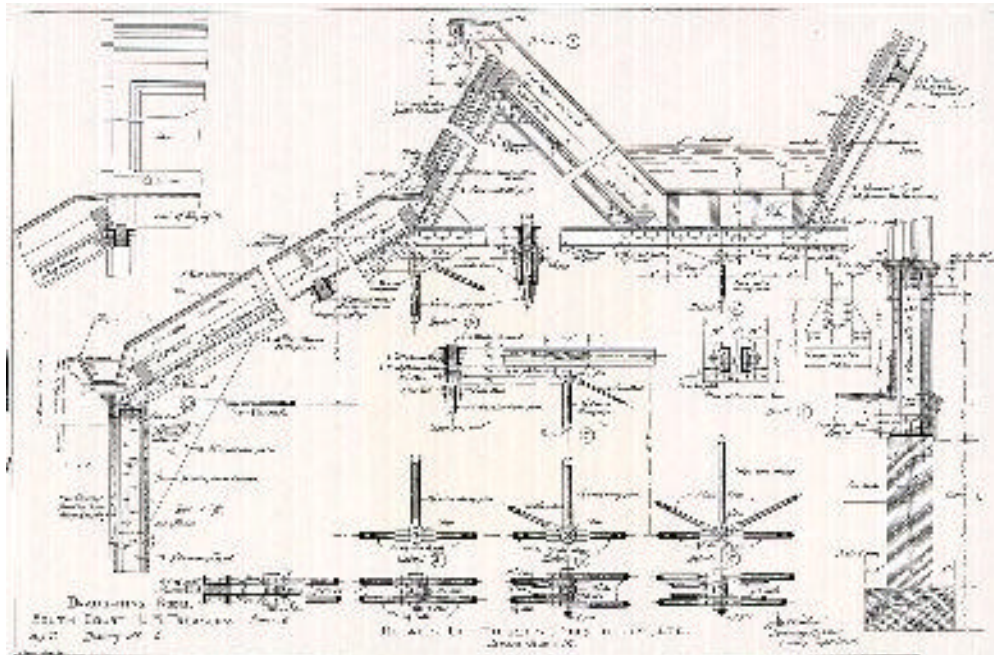


*This transverse section of the 1891 Drafting Studio shows the double gabled roof with northern facing skylights. (National Records Center)*





*Much of the original interior woodwork shown in this longitudinal section of the Drafting Studio survives. (National Records Center)*

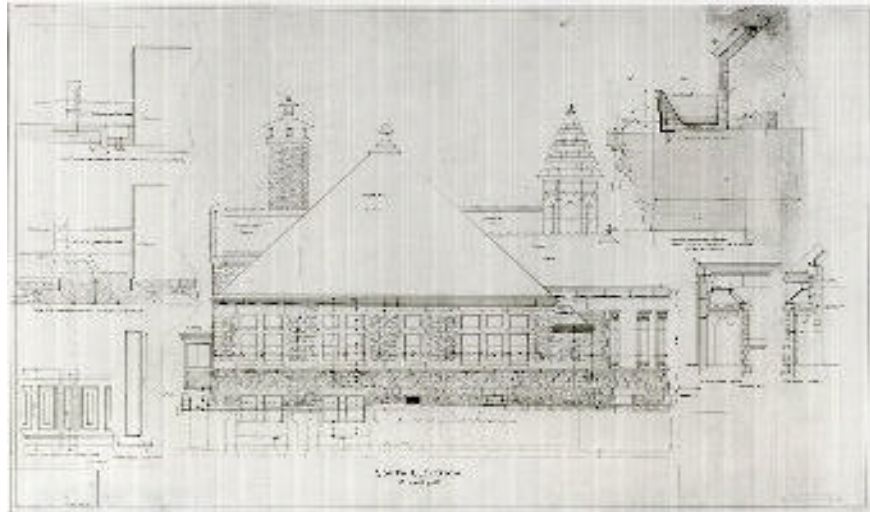


*This detailed drawing documents how the trusses and skylights were assembled. (National Records Center)*





Buildings designed while the Supervising Architect occupied this structure included the U.S. Mint in Philadelphia; the U.S. Mint in Denver, Colorado; the Pueblo, Colorado Post Office; the Post Office in Buffalo, New York; the New London, Connecticut Custom House and the Lafayette, Indiana Post Office.



*This design for the Post Office in Lafayette, Indiana was done by Supervising Architect W. J. Edbrooke during the period in which the office was located in the Drafting Studio. (Historic Treasury Collection)*



This historical significance of Treasury's Office of the Supervising Architect stems from the contributions that this office made to the development of public architecture in this country in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. At the height of its operation, the Office of the Supervising Architect was the largest "architectural firm" in the country.

The Office of the Supervising Architect was phased into the Public Buildings Administration in 1939 and Treasury ceased its responsibility for federal architectural design at that time. In 1949, the architectural function for the executive branch was consolidated into the newly created General Services Administration (GSA).