

RAINBOW BRIDGE TOLL PLAZA ,  
SECONDARY CANOPY  
Rainbow Plaza  
Niagara Falls  
Niagara County  
New York

HABS No. NY-6348-C

HABS  
NY  
32-NIAF  
5C-

PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
National Park Service  
Northeast Region  
Philadelphia Support Office  
U.S. Custom House  
200 Chestnut Street  
Philadelphia, P.A. 19106

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDING SURVEY

RAINBOW BRIDGE TOLL PLAZA, SECONDARY CANOPY

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Location: Rainbow Plaza, Niagara Falls, Niagara County, New York

USGS Map Quadrant: USGS SE/4 Niagara Falls 7.5' Quadrangle,  
Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates:

Point A, 17.657430.4772280; Point B, 17.657490.4772230;

Point C, 17.657400.4772120; Point D, 17.657350.4772190;

Significance: At the time of this survey, the Rainbow Bridge Toll Plaza border crossing is the second largest international northern entrance to the United States and seventy five percent of the traffic is non-Canadian and non-American. The Secondary Canopy is part of the site of the Rainbow Bridge Toll Plaza that is within the Niagara Reservation. The Secondary Canopy was added to the Inspection Office Building in 1951. The Architect for this structure was Cannon, Thiele, Betz and Cannon of Niagara Falls.

This Historic American Building Survey is being prepared because the original plaza buildings are National Register eligible, and they must be demolished in order to renovate the plaza. The HABS report is part of the 106 federal process that must be followed when a National Register property will be affected by federal actions.

Description: The Secondary Canopy is a one story curving structure of twelve bays that was attached to the front facade of the existing 1941 Inspection Office Building in 1951. It is open to the plaza on the east but closed by the existing building and new facades to the south and west. The column lines of the canopy align with the structure of the Inspection Building.

The steel frame structure extends ninety-five feet, seven inches south beyond the existing office building and is twenty four feet, six inches deep. The structure is composed of a row of columns sitting on three foot, four inch by four foot, six inch footings that extend six feet, ten inches below grade, according to the drawings. The enclosing wall is of one foot by one foot, greenish-gray colored terra cotta veneer panels on the interior surfaces and stone veneer on the exterior surfaces. The foundations are one foot, seven inches thick under this wall.

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The articulation of the exterior of the canopy building is a simplified version of the 1941 buildings. A ten-inch high fluted stone coping sits above the stone veneer facades and a concrete coping frames the openings on the plaza side of the building. The top of the copings are at fourteen feet, three inches above grade.

At the southwestern side of the building there are five windows. Each of the two-foot wide by six foot, six inch high windows is framed by a two-foot width of flat limestone and thin greenstone bands like on the 1941 section of the exterior of the building (there are no pilasters.) There is a small indented square underneath each window, in the same location of the carved relief stone at the old inspection shed windows. There are surface-mounted decorative fixtures on this facade that match those on the 1941 portion of the building.

The windows are metal and glass and are divided into three equal panes. The center pane is operable. The sill height of the windows is four feet, one inch above the slab of the inspection floor, like those in the adjacent inspection shed.

There is a built-up roof on six-inch thick flexicore with steel inserts, which sits on top of tapered steel beams. The canopy is lit by two pendant-mounted, two-hundred watt fixtures per bay. The floor of the inspection area is an exposed concrete slab.

History:

The secondary canopy was added to the Inspection Office Building at the Rainbow Bridge Toll Plaza in 1951 to accommodate greater traffic at the border crossing.

Sources:

Copies of the original drawings by Cannon, Thiele, Betz and Cannon of Niagara Fall, dated 2-9-51 are in the archives of Hardesty and Hanover, consulting engineers. (1501 Broadway New York, NY 10036)

Hardy Holzman Pfeiffer Associates, "State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) Report, Alternative Scheme Analysis for Expansion of United States. Plaza at the Rainbow Bridge" (Niagara Falls Bridge Commission, New York, August 1993).

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Kideney, Smith, Fitzgerald and Partners "Report to the Niagara Falls Bridge Commission on Renovation of the Existing facilities of the Rainbow Bridge Toll Plaza" (Buffalo, New York, May 1976).

McFarland-Johnson, Inc., "Draft of Environmental Impact Study for the Renovation of the U. S. Plaza at Rainbow Bridge" (Niagara Falls Bridge Commission, New York, June 1994).

Historian:

Alison Roede  
Hardy Holzman Pfeiffer Architects  
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