

110 S. McDowell Street History

The building at 110 S McDowell Street took thirteen years to complete from the initial plan in 1947 until the building dedication in 1960.

There were three failed bond issues to fund the building, three separate locations identified, as well as a deeply divided council. The final vote to build in the present location being a 4-3 council vote, using a form of bond financing that did not require a public vote as well as sale of surplus City land. One of the three no votes came from a young council member named Jesse Helms.

After sixteen months of construction, the fourth City municipal building was finally dedicated on October 16th, 1960, for the first time consolidating all City administrative functions under one roof.

At the time of the dedication, City Manager W.H. Carper stated, "Barring unforeseen catastrophe, there should be no need for another building struggle until sometime after the year 2000."

Building Facts:

William F. Clarke first bought the tract of land in 1833. It was owned and occupied by his descendants, the Jefferson, Fisher, and Coke families until 1958 when purchased by the city. At the time of sale, the property contained a funeral home.

The building was designed by architect George Milton Small, Jr. (known as G. Milton Small). He was/is a big deal for the Raleigh design community. Here's why:

- Milton Small (1916-1992) was a leading practitioner of modernist architecture in the Triangle in the 1950s and 1960s, particularly in the International Style of Mies van der Rohe.
- Small had many associations with nationally prominent modernist architects and Triangle design figureheads and studied under Mies van der Rohe in Illinois
- Henry Kamphoefner (founding dean of the NC State School of Design) was his undergrad professor at University of Oklahoma

Use of unique blue-glazed accent bricks. From an NPS report, "Vertical strips of glazing interspersed with vertical panels of blue-glazed brick, and with Miesian cusped corners, made up the planar facades of the building. In true Miesian fashion, there was no exterior expression of the interior uses of the building."

The site is below the adjacent street level on McDowell, so Small set the cubical mass of the building on concrete-enclosed steel columns above a recessed brick basement. A bridge joined the main level of the building with Dawson St, creating a formal sense of entry, but orienting the building toward a blank wall rather than the adjacent Nash Square.

G. Milton Small also designed the Home Security Life Insurance Building (1959) in Durham at 505 W Chapel Hill St, which is the old Durham Police Headquarters. The commonalities between the former Durham and Raleigh Police Headquarter buildings are striking. The City of Durham is considering an adaptive reuse solution that prioritizes affordable housing and historic preservation of their building. Only a handful of Small's commercial and institutional buildings survive.

When constructed, the old Municipal Building was intended to be the statement architecture piece of its time for Raleigh. Another goal was to consolidate several City government departments in one central

location. Like many construction projects, cost was a major issue. The building cost \$1.42 million – or \$14.31 per square foot.

Building Function:

The building continued to serve all City functions until the fifth municipal building adjacent was dedicated on Sunday, September 30th, 1984.

At that time, the McDowell building became exclusively Raleigh Police Headquarters.

March 30th, 2010 the Raleigh Police Department lowered the flags at 110 South McDowell and formally decommissioned the building.

Chief Dolan – “We want everyone to know how proud we were of all the people who worked in that building and all the citizens we served.”

The building was vacant for 14 years

Police Chiefs in S McDowell

- Thomas Woodrow Davis: 1960-1971
- Robert Ernest Goodwin: 1971-1978
- Frederick Kenneth Heineman: 1978-1994
- Mitchell Watt Brown: 1994-2000
- Jane Ellen Perlov: 2001-2007
- Harry Patrick Dolan: 2007-2010

Mayor William Enloe at the dedication of 110 S McDowell Street – “This is the beginning of an era that points to the greatest growth in the history of Raleigh. We must recognize the downtown area as the hub for our whole enterprise. Raleigh’s future growth,” he said “is in doubt only if future leaders become less concerned with bold action and more interested in avoiding risk.”