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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

SEP 08 1989

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

NATIONAL REGISTER

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Augusta United States Post Office

other names/site number Same

2. Location

street & number 119 East Fifth Street

not for publication

city, town Augusta

vicinity

state Kansas code KS county Butler code 015 zip code 67010

3. Classification

Ownership of Property

private

public-local

public-State

public-Federal

Category of Property

building(s)

district

site

structure(s)

object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing

Noncontributing

1 buildings

 sites

 structures

 objects

1 Total

Name of related multiple property listing:

Kansas Post Offices that contain Treasury Department Section Artwork, 1936-1942

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Ramon Powers State Historic Preservation Officer

December 6, 1988

Signature of certifying official

Date

Kansas State Historical Society

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register.

See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register. See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain:)

Caree D. Shull

10-17-89

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Government: Post Office

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Government: Post Office

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

20th Century Revival: Classical
Revival

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Brick

walls Brick

roof Asphalt; other: Tar

other Stone: Limestone

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Augusta United States Post Office (c. 1938-1939) is located at 119 E. Fifth Street in Augusta, Butler County, Kansas (pop. 6,968). The one-story, ridge hipped roof, red brick building has a northern facade orientation. The building measures approximately sixty-one feet from east to west and sixty-six feet from north to south. A double door pierces the center of the building's facade. Steps lead up to the doorway. Two pairs of large, double hung windows surmounted by plain brick lintels and underscored by limestone sills flank the doorway. Six windows with similar treatment pierce the east and west elevations of the building. This post office is an example of a smaller class C or D standardized design type that was repeated throughout the country during the 1930s.

The mural "A Kansas Gusher" was installed on the west wall of the Augusta Post Office lobby above the postmaster's door and the two bulletin boards which flank it. This is the traditional location for Section artwork in the smaller class C and D post offices. "A Kansas Gusher" is an oil on canvas mural of a south central Kansas landscape that combines cattle and wheat in the foreground with an oil gusher on the horizon, representing the region's three economies. Silks divides the landscape by color groups of greens, golds, and browns. The cattle and the rancher are placed on the left half of the canvas on a green field, a row of sunflowers divides the canvas. The wheat farmers are placed on the right half of the canvas on a brown and gold field. The colors merge into light browns and golds as the land meets the sky. All activity in the mural is oriented toward the gusher. The mural measured 13' 4" x 4' 6" before installation and is enframed with a small moulding.

The mural was installed on February 28, 1940. It was not varnished. The treatment recommended for cleaning by the artist called for dusting monthly with a soft brush or cloth and cleaning thoroughly with an art-gum eraser every six to twelve months. Liquid cleaners were not recommended. In August, 1973 the mural's condition was assessed as good. In 1985, Scott Heffly, Assistant Curator at the Nelson Atkins Museum in Kansas City, Missouri cleaned and restored the mural. It is in good condition.

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A varnished, wooden vestibule projects into the lobby, cutting off some view of the mural. This is a traditional design feature found in most of the post offices included in this nomination. The floors and wainscoting retain their original tiles. The post master's door and bulletin boards retain their varnished wood surrounds. The varnished wooden panelling is retained in the post office ell where the boxes are located. The original hanging light fixtures have been replaced with almost flush mounted fluorescent lights.

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or whether the award was made on the basis of previous submissions. Silks did enter the 48 State Competition in 1939. Silks received the contract for the mural on July 1, 1939 and the mural was installed on February 28, 1940. "A Kansas Gusher" was installed on the west wall of the lobby above the postmaster's door and the two bulletin boards that flank it. It measured 13' 4" x 4' 6" before installation and has a small moulding frame around it. Silks received \$670 for the commission. The Augusta Post Office is an example of one of the many smaller class C or D type post offices that received Section artwork in Kansas.

Please see the Kansas Post Office Artwork (1936-1942) Thematic Resources cover nomination for additional information.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Augusta Gazette; 29 December 1937; 11 August 1938; 27 December 1938; 28 December 1938.

Falk, Peter Hastings. Who Was Who in American Art. (Madison, Ct: Soundview Press, 1985).

General Services Administration. Treasury Department's Section Records - Augusta, Kansas.

Svedlow, Dr. Anthony V. (Mulvane Gallery, Washburn University, Topeka, Kansas). Personal interview with Martha Hagedorn-Krass, January 8, 1988.

See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository:

Kansas State Historical Society

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property Less than 1 acre

UTM References

A

1	4
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6	7	8	2	0	0
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4	7	7	1	5	6	0
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Zone Easting Northing

C

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B

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Zone Easting Northing

D

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See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated property is located on lots 6, 7, and 8; Block 17, Augusta, Kansas. The property is bounded to the north by Fifth, to the east by School, and to the south and west by adjacent property lines.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes the entire parcel that is historically associated with the property.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Martha Hagedorn-Krass, Architectural Historian

organization Kansas State Historical Society date December 6, 1988

street & number 120 W. 10th telephone 913-296-5264

city or town Topeka state Kansas zip code 66612

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)
Arts
Politics/Government
Social History

Period of Significance
1940
1940
1940

Significant Dates
1940
1940
1940

Cultural Affiliation
N/A

Significant Person
N/A

Architect/Builder
Silks, Donald K.: Artist
Simon, Louis A.: Supervising Architect
Armagost & Son: General Contractor

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The Augusta United States Post Office (c. 1938-1939) is being nominated to the National Register as part of the Kansas Post Office Artwork (1936-1942) Thematic Resources nomination at the local and state levels of significance under criteria A and C for its historical association with the Treasury Department's Section program and for the artistic significance of the mural that it contains. The mural, "A Kansas Gusher", was painted by Kansas City, Missouri artist Donald Kirk Silks (1912- ?) in 1940. Because the mural is less than fifty years old, criteria consideration G, which allows for exceptional significance in the case of properties achieving significance within the past fifty years, is also a factor. The National Register has identified post offices containing Section artwork as being exceptionally significant if they retain integrity from their period of significance.

"A Kansas Gusher" is an oil on canvas mural of a south central Kansas landscape that combines cattle and wheat in the foreground with an oil gusher on the horizon, representing the region's three economies. Silks divides the landscape by color groups of greens, golds, and browns. The cattle and the rancher are placed on the left half of the canvas on a green field, a row of sunflowers divides the canvas. The wheat farmers are placed on the right half of the canvas on a brown and gold field. The colors merge into light browns and golds as the land meets the sky. All activity in the mural is oriented toward the gusher. Silks employs an illustrative, naive style to depict this representation of the Augusta/Butler County economy. "A Kansas Gusher" is representative of the regional, illustrative realism that was funded under the Section program.

The extent of community involvement in the development of the subject material and presentation of the mural is not clear in the Augusta case, nor is it clear whether Silks received the commission as a result of a competition held explicitly for the Augusta United States Post Office

See continuation sheet

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Svedlow, Dr. Anthony V. (Mulvane Gallery, Washburn University, Topeka, Kansas). Personal interview with Martha Hagedorn-Krass, January 8, 1988.