

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR FEDERAL PROPERTIES

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	NOV 27 1984
DATE ENTERED	JAN 11 1985

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC

U.S. Post Office

AND/OR COMMON

El Centro Main Post Office

LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

230 South 5th Street

NA NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

El Centro

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

43

STATE

California

NA VICINITY OF

CODE
06

COUNTY

Imperial

CODE

025

CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE	
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Thematic Group	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

AGENCY

REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS: (if applicable)

U.S. Postal Service, Western Regional Office

STREET & NUMBER

850 Cherry Ave.

CITY, TOWN

San Bruno

NA VICINITY OF

STATE

CA 94099

LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Imperial County Recorder

STREET & NUMBER

150 South Ninth

CITY, TOWN

El Centro

STATE

CA

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

None

DATE

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		DATE <u>NA</u>

4/27/84

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The building is constructed of reinforced concrete, and rests on spread concrete footing. The front elevation is marked by a seven-bay arcade, supported on thinly proportioned ionic columns. The flat roof is surrounded by a red-tiled pitched roof at the sides of the building, giving the appearance of a pitched roof without the expense. Wrought iron, terracotta and cast stone (a type of high-quality concrete) are used extensively on the exterior to enrich the building's visual appearance.

LOCAL CONTEXT

El Centro is situated in the Imperial Valley, roughly 100 miles east of San Diego, and 20 miles north of the Mexican Border. The site survey prepared for the building in April, 1931, shows that the parcel was vacant, and has no indication that any permanent structures had ever been erected on the site prior to its use as a post office. The post office is currently surrounded by mixed one-story commercial and residential uses.

El Centro is an incorporated community with a current (1982) population of 31,965. It is located approximately 100 miles east of San Diego. Interstate Highway 8 and State Highway 86 intersect in El Centro. The principal industry is farming and related activities. Government employment is also important, as El Centro is the County Seat of Imperial County and there is a Naval Air Station nearby.

A survey of the post office site, prepared in April, 1931, shows the property as vacant with no indication of there ever having been a major structure on the site. This corresponds with records maintained by the Imperial Valley Pioneers, the local Historic Society.

There are no structures or sites in the immediate vicinity of the post office which appear to be of historic, archaeological, or paleontologic interest.

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The exterior of the building has not been altered. Several flights of granite steps lead to an arched loggia and the main entrance. Public lobby areas contain extensive classically inspired decoration in plaster, marble, and cast aluminum. Floors are of tile bordered by pink Tennessee marble in the lobby area, and hardwood parquet in the workrooms.

The building is one story with a full basement. It is constructed of brick covered with stucco as well as stone and terracotta. The roof is tile and there are two large skylights.

Most of the structure's architectural elements are in the style of Beaux-Arts Neo-Classicism, most popular from 1890-1920. The large loggia which dominates the front elevation gives the building an openness more common to the Italianate/Second Renaissance Revival style. Specific features of note include the following:

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CONTINUATION SHEET El Centro MPO ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE one

- Loggia extending across nearly the entire front elevation;
- Classical columns with smooth shafts on an unenriched base and having Corinthian capitals. The pilasters are in the same style;
- Wide frieze with terracotta ornamentation, dentils and an overhanging soffit of painted wooden panels;
- Wrought iron window grates, railings, transom covers and brackets supporting a bronze lantern above the main entrance. This iron work may have been manufactured or designed in Memphis, Tennessee;
- Tile roof with copper gutters and scuppers;
- Fan lights above windows and doors on the front elevation; and
- Extensive use of marble, terracotta and cast aluminum ornamentation in the public lobby.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES **Begun 1931,
Completed 1932**

BUILDER/ARCHITECT **OSA/James A. Wetmore
Louis A. Simon**

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The El Centro Post Office is primarily significant on the local level, as one of the most monumental and sophisticated structures in town. On the state level, the structure has secondary significance as an example of a heavily ornamented small post office. In both cases, the building is an aesthetically successful piece of architecture.

ARCHITECTURE

The El Centro Main Office is anomalous, both in terms of its size, its style, and in the use of expensive materials. Stylistically, the El Centro Post Office is essentially Beaux-Arts Classicism, though by 1932, this style was at least 15 years out of date. It is unique among 1930s post offices for its unusual style alone; the other Beaux-Arts buildings from the early thirties also housed federal courts or other federal agencies, and were designed by private architects. By 1932, the Office of the Supervising Architect was developing the Starved Classical style, and the most common style used for small post offices in California was some form of Mediterranean Revival. In any event, the post office is the most sophisticated Beaux-Arts building in town, and acts as a major urban design focus for the town's architecture and public spaces. On the state level, the building is important as a stylistically anachronistic example of the small post office building type.

Research at the building itself and in other local resources could reveal that the building was designed by a private architect, which could explain some of its stylistic eccentricities. The post office in Yuma, Arizona, completed in 1933, is stylistically similar to the El Centro Main Office. The Architect of that building, Roy Place, of Tuscon, may have been responsible for the design of the El Centro Main Office as well.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Interviewer: Paul Secord with Postmaster Charles Courvaut, 9/15/82, El Centro, CA.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY .5

UTM REFERENCES

A

1	1	6	3	5	4	5	0	3	6	2	8	9	2	0
ZONE		EASTING					NORTHING							

B

ZONE		EASTING					NORTHING							

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Lots 32, 33, 35, Block 35, El Centro Original Townsite, Imperial County Assessor The rectangular site has 150' east frontage on 5th Street and a 180' southern frontage along Olive Street.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
NA	NA	NA	NA
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
NA	NA	NA	NA

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Doug Robertson, Planner

ORGANIZATION

Beland/Associates Inc.

DATE

April 27, 1984

STREET & NUMBER

16 S. Oakland Ave. #204

TELEPHONE

(818) 796-8093

CITY OR TOWN

Pasadena

STATE

CA 91101

12 CERTIFICATION OF NOMINATION

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER RECOMMENDATION

YES NO NONE

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

In compliance with Executive Order 11593, I hereby nominate this property to the National Register, certifying that the State Historic Preservation Officer has been allowed 90 days in which to present the nomination to the State Review Board and to evaluate its significance. The evaluated level of significance is National State Local.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

TITLE

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
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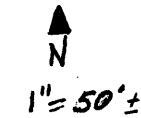
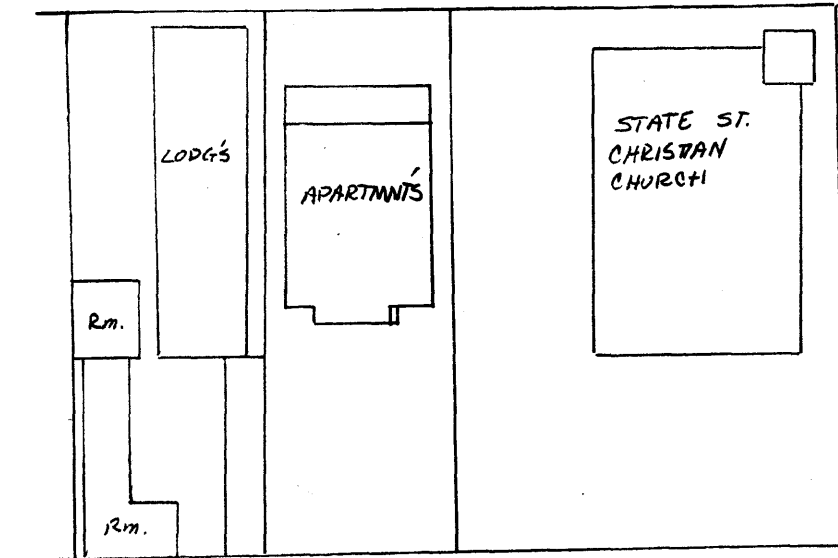
RECEIVED

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CONTINUATION SHEET El Centro MPO ITEM NUMBER 10 PAGE two

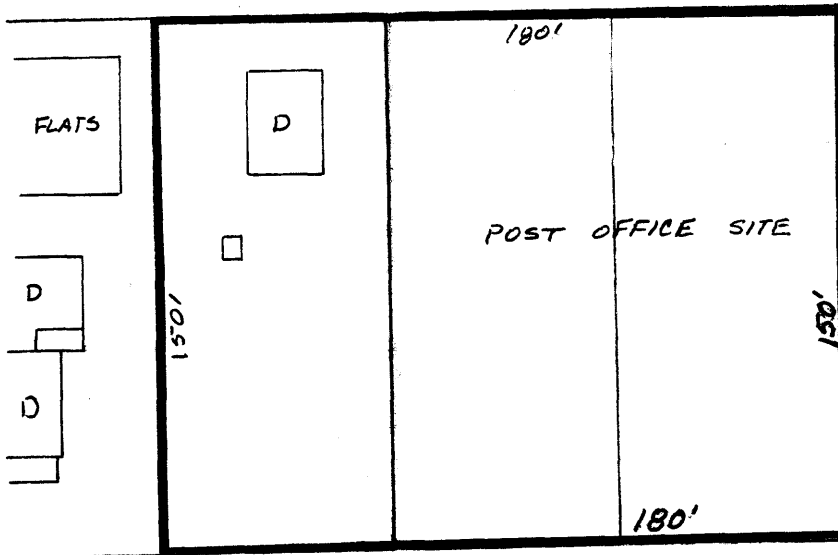
STATE ST.



Note: Post office site outlined in red.

Source: Sanborn Map, El Centro Book, page 13, 1922; Geography Dept., Calif. State University, Northridge, Calif.

Structures shown were on the site prior to the construction of the Post office.



S. 5TH ST.

OLIVE ST.

