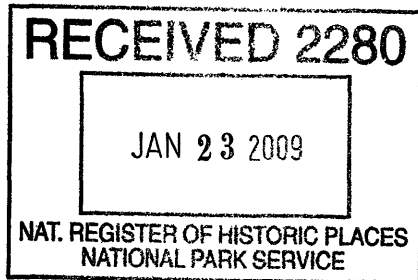


United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

071



National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "X" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable". For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

Historic name North Platte U.S. Post Office and Federal Building

Other names/site number LN06-038

2. Location

Street & number 416 North Jeffers Street

Not for publication

City or town North Platte

Vicinity

State Nebraska Code NE County Lincoln Code 111 Zip code 69101

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, 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. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Michael J. Paul  
Signature of certifying official

January 16, 2009  
Date

Director, Nebraska 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 for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official/Title

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

4. 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): \_\_\_\_\_

Edgar H. Beall

3-4-09

for

Signature of Keeper

Date of Action

**North Platte U.S. Post Office and Federal Building**

Name of Property

**Lincoln County, Nebraska**

County and State

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- Private
- Public-local
- Public-state
- Public-federal

**Category of Property**

(Check only one box)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing		Noncontributing	
1			Buildings
			Sites
			Structures
			Objects
1		0	Total

**Name of related multiple property listing**

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

N/A

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

GOVERNMENT/post office

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

VACANT/NOT IN USE

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> CENTURY REVIVALS/Italian

Renaissance Revival

**Materials**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Foundation Concrete/ Limestone

Walls Brick

Roof Ceramic Tile

Other

**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "X" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- X A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
X C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
B Removed from its original location.
C A birthplace or a grave.
D A cemetery.
E A reconstructed building, object, or structure.
F A commemorative property.
G Less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ARCHITECTURE

POLITICS/GOVERNMENT

Period of Significance

1913-1959

Significant Dates

1913

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

James Knox Taylor

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

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 for additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
Other State agency
Federal agency
X Local Government
University
Other
Name of repository:

North Platte U.S. Post Office and Federal Building

Name of Property

Lincoln County, Nebraska

County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property .35 acres

UTM References (place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet).

Table with 7 columns: Zone, Easting, Northing, Zone, Easting, Northing. Includes rows for 1, 2, 3, 4 and a note: [ ] See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Jill E. Dolberg/Historic Buildings Survey Coordinator
organization Nebraska State Historical Society date December 1, 2008
street & number 1500 R Street/Box 82554 Telephone (402) 471-4773
city or town Lincoln state Nebraska zip code 68501-2554

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
A Sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name/title Creativity Unlimited Arts Council
street & number 312 South Dewey, #1 Telephone
city or town North Platte state Nebraska zip code 69101-5473

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determined eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, (15 USC 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

North Platte U.S. Post Office and Federal Building

Name of Property

Lincoln County, Nebraska

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The North Platte U.S. Post Office and Federal Building is located in Lincoln County. North Platte is equidistant from Omaha and Denver, and is located along Interstate 80, the major thoroughfare through Nebraska. The city is found between the North and South Platte Rivers, in the triangle just above the forks. The area is considered part of the dissected plains, an area of hilly land with moderate to steep slopes, sharp ridge crests, and remnants of the old nearly level plain. Essentially, the dissected plains are plains eroded by water and wind. If you travel a short distance from the rivers, the landscape changes into the Nebraska Sand Hills.

This Italian Renaissance Revival Post Office is a rectangular shaped, three story, brick veneer structure with a clay tile hipped roof. The roof has wide overhanging eaves with exposed rafter ends and elaborate paired brackets. In between the paired brackets, diamond-shaped pieces of marble are set in the brick to embellish the cornice. The main decorative element on the main façade is a series of four ionic curved stone pilasters flanked on either side by broader squared stone pilasters that also have ionic capitals. The pilasters are set between the windows, and run the height of the building from the second to the third floors. The first floor's brick masonry is distinguished from the rest of the building by occasional courses of recessed brick, giving a varied appearance to the masonry and a hint of rustication. The first floor materials are visually separated from the second floor with a stone belt course.

The building has a concrete foundation dressed in limestone on the outside. The façade contains a central entrance under a brick segmented arch. Stone steps lead to the front door, and a newer ramp has been added along the side to allow for accessibility. The door itself has been changed to a glass panel door. The window openings vary in size from one floor to the next. On the first floor, they are quite large and are located under brick segmented arches and have stone sills. On the second floor, they are tall, and are set in stone lintels and sills which are squared. The stone sills have small stone brackets underneath. On the third floor, the window openings are smaller, but also have stone sills with brackets, although these are narrower in profile than the ones on the second floor. The windows themselves were all replaced in the 1960s, when the post office was repurposed for a junior college. The window openings were filled with glass block in most cases.

The secondary façade faces north, and bears the second entrance. The door, which is approached by several stone steps, is located on the northeast corner, and has also been replaced with two glass panel doors and a large arched transom window. It is flanked by two torchiere light fixtures. The rest of the elevation echoes the main façade in terms of fenestration and decorative cornice. One window on each floor has been bricked in to allow for additional bathrooms when the building became an educational facility.

Rounding the west side of the building, the rear of the building exhibits the most change. There is an early one story addition that was built to allow for additional space for processing mail. It is rectangular in shape, and does not quite run the entire width of the building. It has a flat roof, and its windows are also glass block. A fire escape has been added to the north end of the west side, and the alterations this change has wrought to former window openings that have now become doors is evident, however necessary for the safety of students.

The south elevation mirrors the north elevation, with the exception of the entrance that is found on the north side. The fenestration pattern is the same, and is little changed, with the exception of one window each on the first and second floors that have been bricked in. Several spaces in the center that give the appearance of windows always were brick, and mark the location of the main stair and elevator.

Upon entering the building from the north doors, one enters a long corridor that runs the entire length of the building. The flooring is terrazzo, and there is a scar in the floor by the door that indicates there was once a rotating door. The corridor

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North Platte U.S. Post Office and Federal Building

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has grey marble baseboard with oak paneled wainscoting above. The segmented arched openings of the windows are mimicked in shallowly recessed spaces in the walls across the corridor. At the ceiling, an egg and dart cornice is found above the remnants of a drop ceiling. Large rooms are found behind the walls of this corridor, but their purpose as a post office is difficult to discern. They are a series of large empty rooms, whose main historic features are their original oak doors.

At the far end of the corridor, a short series of marble steps leads to a landing, the stairway to the floors above, and the former elevator shaft. The stair has been enclosed for fire safety, but the original iron balustrade with a Greek key and cross hatched design is extant behind the new drywall wall. The stair treads themselves are also marble. The stair climbs around the original elevator shaft at right angles. The elevator was removed long ago, as evidenced by the extremely early looking utility closet accoutrements that have filled the floor at each level, including mop sinks and aged plumbing. The walls of the elevator shaft are textured glass, so stair climbers would have been able to see the elevator ascend or descend. The glass was painted to prevent people from having to gaze upon the utility closets.

The second floor opens into a hallway of former federal offices. The door surrounds, baseboards and doors are all oak. The doors have working transom windows. One office has a large safe that is approximately a third of the size of the office, and has a seal with the bald eagle, arrows in one talon, olive branch of peace in the other, and the motto *E pluribus unam* in a ribbon in his beak. At the third floor, an iron railing with the Greek key and cross hatching prevents one from tumbling back into the stairs. There are more offices upstairs, as well as some larger rooms, with the same oak woodwork. The bathrooms have marble stall walls, and decorative iron vents.

### Historic Integrity

The North Platte U.S. Post Office and Federal Building served as a post office for fifty-one years, until a new federal building was built in 1964. At that time, the building was given to the community for a junior college. Several changes were made to the building to make the building viable for an educational facility. Several windows, on non-primary elevations, were altered and bricked in to add extra bathrooms. The fire escape was likely added around this time. Additionally, and perhaps most drastically, the windows were changed from their original multi-lite double-hung woodframe configurations to glass block. While this is a considerable alteration, it is significant to note that the openings themselves were not altered, and the arched configurations remain. The Post Office has had sufficient importance to the city of North Platte, and the style of the building is so unique in this part of the State of Nebraska, that this alteration, while regrettable, is not significant enough to preclude its eligibility for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

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North Platte U.S. Post Office and Federal Building

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The North Platte U.S. Post Office and Federal Building is significant at the local level under Criterion A under the area of government, and under Criterion C for its architectural significance. The building demonstrates the growth of governmental services at the local level, and helps represent an important period of growth and prosperity in North Platte. From the beginning of its construction in 1911, in addition to providing services in a growing city located along main transportation and trade routes, this building served as a federal presence in North Platte and the regional area. Architecturally speaking, this Italian Renaissance Revival building was built in a style that is unusual for western Nebraska, but is not particularly common in the eastern parts of Nebraska either. As such, it is an interesting example of the style that is worthy of preservation.

The North Platte U.S. Post Office and Federal Building is located in Lincoln County. North Platte was historically and remains the largest population center in Lincoln County, with a current population of 24,079 according to 2007 U.S. Census records. The city is also the county seat. North Platte is the largest community in western Nebraska, and serves as a commercial hub for the surrounding counties. North Platte was established along the Union Pacific railroad by General Grenville M. Dodge in 1866.<sup>1</sup> As soon as the railroad was completed to this point, a post office was established, with William Healy as the first Postmaster. Over the years, the post office was housed in various locations. In an 1889 advertisement for the City Pharmacy, the pharmacy indicated it was located three doors north of the post office. The 1907-1910 City Directories indicate the post office was located at 422 North Dewey Street.<sup>2</sup>

In 1908, Congress appropriated \$110,000.00 for the construction of a federal building in North Platte, Nebraska. The North Platte city council was asked by the Department of the Interior what effect a future viaduct over the railroad would have on proposed building sites.<sup>3</sup> All of the proposed building sites were in the area of the 5th Street and Locust Street intersection. After discussion, the council concluded that a future viaduct would make the land more valuable; however there seemed little chance of obtaining funding for a viaduct. The letter also asked for recommendations regarding the choice of sites for the building. The council was loathe to make a choice on behalf of the government, and made no recommendation. The U.S. government purchased the Woodhurst property for \$9,000.00.<sup>4</sup> General contract papers indicate that the building cost \$88,475.00 to build.<sup>5</sup> Construction began soon after the contract was let on May 13, 1911, and the building was completed July 26, 1913.

During the period in which the post office was being built, Congress enacted legislation that established a postal savings system in post offices, to be effective on January 1, 1911. The goal of the legislation was to get money out of hiding in mattresses, attract the savings of immigrants to the country accustomed to similar savings programs in their home countries, provide safe depositories for people unsettled with the idea of private banks, and to furnish more convenient locations for the deposits of workers, since post offices' hours more closely mirrored the working day of the average worker in America than traditional banks. The postal savings program would pay 2% interest per year with a minimum deposit of \$1, and a maximum deposit of \$2,500. Slow to gain acceptance, by 1929, \$153 million was on deposit. Savings grew to \$1.2 billion during the 1930s and peaked at \$3.4 billion in 1947. After World War II, banks' interest rates improved and offered better guarantees, diminishing the appeal of the postal savings program. In 1966, the post office stopped accepting deposits on existing accounts, and the system officially ended in 1967.

<sup>1</sup> A.T. Andreas, *History of the State of Nebraska* (Chicago: The Western Historical Company, 1882).

<sup>2</sup> North Platte City Directories, 1907-1910.

<sup>3</sup> *North Platte Telegraph*, 23 October 1908.

<sup>4</sup> *North Platte Telegraph*, 10 November 1908.

<sup>5</sup> Contract papers, Lincoln County Historical Museum.

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**North Platte U.S. Post Office and Federal Building**

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Newspaper articles in North Platte began advertising the availability of this service during the period of the building's construction, between 1910 and 1913. The *North Platte Telegraph* advertised that deposits would be accepted at the new federal post office as soon as it was completed, and that this was a fine service that the community could look forward to taking advantage of.<sup>6</sup> It seems likely that the presence of the large safe on the second floor was installed for the purpose of securing the funds deposited with the post office.

North Platte achieved another highlight in its growth and development in 1964 when a new post office and federal building were built at a cost of \$1,479,000.00, located at 300 East 3<sup>rd</sup> Street. When the 1913 Post Office and Federal Building became vacant, they were transferred to Junior College District #1 via a Quit Claim deed, and the building was remodeled to suit its new purpose. The building became home to the North Platte College with an enrollment of 215 students the first year. The first floor housed the library and the science labs; the second floor held class rooms, the teachers' lounge, dean's office, and a book store, and the third floor housed more class rooms and teachers' offices. In May 2000, the junior college that had become the Mid-Plains Community College sold the building to Six Dimension, LLC, which in turn seventeen months later donated the building to the city of North Platte, in hopes it would be preserved as the new City Hall. While this plan has not come to fruition, current plans call for the building to be used as an arts center.

### James Knox Taylor: Architect

The North Platte U.S. Post Office and Federal Building was designed in the Italian Renaissance Revival style under the auspices of James Knox Taylor, the Supervising Architect of the Treasury Department from 1897 to 1912. After receiving his training from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Taylor began his work as a temporary draftsman in the office of the Supervising Architect in 1895. He was appointed to chief draftsman by 1897 and was appointed to Supervising Architect later that same year.<sup>7</sup> As Supervising Architect of the Treasury, Taylor headed a group of architects in charge of designing federally funded buildings nationwide. Taylor's office was responsible for the design of plans for most small federal post office facilities, while the larger design projects were often contracted to outside, private-sector architects. During Taylor's tenure, the Federal government promoted the concept that government buildings should be monumental and beautiful, and should represent the ideals of democracy and high standards of architectural sophistication in their communities.<sup>8</sup> The North Platte U.S. Post Office and Federal Building reflects these turn of the century ideals, representing American democratic values and architectural sophistication.

### Italian Renaissance Revival

The Italian Renaissance Revival style is found in early 20<sup>th</sup> century buildings throughout the country, but is considerably less common than its other contemporary styles. It was primarily a style that was executed in architect-designed landmark buildings in metropolitan areas prior to World War I, such as the example we find in North Platte. The details that are common to most Italian Renaissance Revival buildings are essentially borrowed from buildings in Italy.<sup>9</sup> Most characteristic are the tall first story windows, with smaller windows as one looks up the elevation of the building. Roofs

<sup>6</sup> *North Platte Telegraph*, 5 February 1913.

<sup>7</sup> Antoinette J. Lee, *Architects to the Nation: The Rise and Decline of the Supervising Architect's Office* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 199.

<sup>8</sup> Beth M. Boland., *How to Apply the National Register Criteria to Post Offices, National Register Bulletin 13* (Washington D.C.: U.S. Department of Interior, 1994) 3.

<sup>9</sup> Virginia McAlester and Lee McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1997), 397.



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commonly are hipped, with broad overhanging eaves, and decorative brackets underneath. Masonry or masonry-veneered walls are universal, and the buildings usually have decorative cornices and belt courses.<sup>10</sup>

In the case of the North Platte U.S. Post Office and Federal Building, many of these distinctive characteristics are in evidence. The hipped roof retains its clay tile covering, another feature typical to the style. The broad eaves are embellished with decorative brackets and marble diamonds in the cornice. The windows vary in size, from almost floor to ceiling on the first floor to much more diminutive on the third floor. Additionally, the first floor windows are arched, a slightly scaled back nod to the style. Most striking, perhaps, is the change in wall texture on either side of the stone belt course, achieved through the differing courses in the brick masonry, a nod to the common rusticated masonry common to the first floors of more elaborate stone examples. Above the belt course, the six pilasters, four curved and two squared, that separate the windows into bays provide the impression of what might have been a recessed arcaded porch on a domestic example of the style.

Only eighteen Italian Renaissance Revival buildings are surveyed in the Nebraska Historic Buildings Survey, which contains over 70,000 records of historic properties within the state of Nebraska. Of those eighteen, all but the post office building in North Platte are located in eastern Nebraska. Eleven of the eighteen are found in Omaha, and four are located in Lincoln, Nebraska's largest metropolitan areas. The Italian Renaissance Revival as a style is rare outside our largest cities, making the example in North Platte perhaps all the more significant.

The North Platte U.S. Post Office and Federal Building is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places for its significance under Criterion A in the area of government, and for its architectural significance under Criterion C. The building served its community for a period of over fifty years, processing the mail, providing a safe if conservative rate of interest for savings for the working man, and a location for signing up for the Civil Service, in addition to many other functions of government. Architecturally speaking, the building was designed in the Italian Renaissance Revival style, a style that is altogether rare in Nebraska, but unheard of in western Nebraska. Its elaborate façade and bracketed eaves speak to the sophistication and grandeur that Supervising Architect James Knox Taylor thought that architecture should lend to federal buildings. The period of significance extends from the year the building was built, 1913, to fifty years before the date of this nomination, 1959. It is locally significant for the services that it provided to North Platte.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 398.

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**Verbal Boundary Description**

The North Platte U.S. Post Office and Federal Building encompasses all of lots 1 and 2, block 131, Original Town of North Platte, Lincoln County, Nebraska.

**Boundary Justification**

This boundary includes all the property that has historically been associated with the post office.