

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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 National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. 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.

1. Name of Property

Historic name: United States Post Office Purcell

Other names/site number: _____

Name of related multiple property listing:
Oklahoma Post Offices with Section Art

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

DEC 15 2017

2. Location

Street & number: 228 West Main Street

City or town: Purcell State: Oklahoma County: McClain

Not For Publication: Vicinity:

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this X 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 X meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

___ national ___ statewide X local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

X A ___ B X C ___ D

| | |
|--|------|
| <u>[Signature]</u> FEDERAL PRESERVATION OFFICER 12/11/17 | |
| Signature of certifying official/Title: | Date |
| <u>UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE</u> | |
| State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government | |

| | |
|--|---|
| In my opinion, the property <u>✓</u> meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria. | |
| <u>[Signature]</u> | <u>11/2/17</u> |
| Signature of commenting official: | Date |
| <u>State Historic Preservation officer</u> | |
| Title : | State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government |

United States Post Office Purcell
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4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain:)


Signature of the Keeper

1/29/2012
Date of Action

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

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Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

| Contributing | Noncontributing | |
|--------------|-----------------|------------|
| <u>1</u> | <u>0</u> | buildings |
| <u>0</u> | <u>0</u> | sites |
| <u>0</u> | <u>0</u> | structures |
| <u>0</u> | <u>0</u> | objects |
| <u>1</u> | <u>0</u> | Total |

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Government:
Post Office

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Government:
Post Office

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Modern Movement:

Art Deco

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: Brick

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

The United States Post Office Purcell was built in 1938. It is located to the southeast of the intersection of South Third Avenue and West Main Street and is immediately east of the Purcell City Hall. Situated just one block southwest of the McClain County Courthouse (NRIS #84003347) and three blocks west of the railroad tracks the post office stands in the center of downtown Purcell. The footprint of the post office follows a simple plan that is nearly square in shape. Though the building can be stylistically classified as Art Deco, the details are modest. Despite altered windows and the addition of an ADA ramp, the historical integrity of the building is sound, appearing much the way it did during the New Deal era.

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Narrative Description

When constructed in 1938, the United States Post Office in Purcell, unlike the other typical commercial buildings on Main Street, had a further setback from the street. The deeper setback visually and physically distinguished the building. The post office building is bordered by a grassy strip on the west, a parking lot and loading zone on the south, a paved driveway on the east and shrubs as well as spaces for 45-degree angle parking on the north. Two beds planted to shrubs and surrounded by small grassy strips flank the stairway on the north side, the building's façade. A flagpole stands to the northeast of the building. The post office is constructed of orange brick, limestone and concrete. It is a one-story building with a basement. At the top of the walls a narrow cornice, or band of limestone coping, surrounds the building, below which is a broader band of smooth-surface limestone capping the edifice. This element and the flat roof line give the building an imposing, heavy appearance. Shrubs on the north elevation slightly obscure the limestone cornerstone, which lists the date of the building's construction and the names of the project and government officials. All of the original wooden windows have been replaced with aluminum windows, as have the windows on the basement level.

The north elevation is symmetrical and is divided by four slender, vertically oriented windows; two are located on either side of the central entry. The fenestration and the entrance are divided by sections of brick wall of the same horizontal dimensions. The upper part of each window consists of a fixed pane of glass while the lower part consists of a hung window. The wall space below each window is filled with a light beige limestone which matches the parapet. A small metal awning tops the entrance in the middle of the elevation with a simple aluminum horizontal strip embellishment. A curving stylized metal grille, painted white, covers the large transom window above the awning. Standing out in the center of the grille is a large, stylized gold-painted eagle. Five concrete steps rise to the aluminum double entry door. The doors were replaced at the same time as the fenestration. Initially, two lampposts stood on either side of the porch. However, only the west lamppost remains. Carved into the limestone parapet just above the entrance and below the roofline are the words "UNITED STATES POST OFFICE." Below that, in similar font, are the words "PURCELL OKLAHOMA."

The primary wall material on the west elevation consists of orange brick cladding. Small sections of the walls below three of the windows are clad with beige-colored limestone. This elevation contains three windows and doorway. The doorway is located two openings from the north of the building. The side door has been fitted with a concrete ADA ramp. The upper part of the windows consists of a fixed pane of glass while the lower part consists of a hung window. An outside staircase provides access to the basement which has a door and two vents.

The east elevation closely resembles the west elevation in the wall cladding and window style. Similar to the west elevation, the east elevation has three slender tall windows with the small limestone section below each opening. What corresponds to the door on the west elevation has been covered in brick. Two significantly smaller, slender single hung windows, without sills or lintels, are in that space.

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The south elevation, rear, is consistent in design to the other elevations with the exception of a loading dock, chimney, and a small flat-roof room. This room is used to handle the loading and unloading of mail and projects from the back of the building. There are metal double doors that are slightly off-center on the south elevation of this room. The double doors open onto a raised concrete platform added to facilitate the loading and unloading of mail trucks. A metal overhand supported by a wall on the west elevation has also been added to cover the loading zone.

Interior

The lobby shows fairly minimal changes and retains a relatively high degree of its historic integrity. Postal patrons entering the building still pass through the original five-sided glass and wood vestibule. The vestibule projects into the lobby which has an L-shape; one leg of the "L" parallels Main Street and the other, follows the west elevation. The lobby floor consists of terrazzo tile while the bottom of the walls have marble wainscoting. To the east of the entrance, and above the postmaster's door, hangs the mural *The Round-Up* painted by Frederick E. Conway on canvas. Wood and glass display cases fill the wall space below the mural on either side of the postmaster's door.

Most of the original woodwork, glass and brass grilles at the counter area remain intact and in excellent condition. Just one small section of the counter area is used today for transactions with the public; it is the part of the counter closest to the mural. An aluminum and glass partition has been added at the vestibule to divide the lobby into the post office box section on the west side of the lobby, and service counter section on the east side.

The mural, *The Round-Up*, depicts four trail riders attempting to herd their cattle during a drive in the midst of the Oklahoma prairie. The subject matter allowed Conway to experiment with form and color in a way that is abstracted near the mural's edges. The image of the Herefords on the move, almost blending into one another, suggests powerful and dynamic movement and the precarious nature of cowboy life while on a drive. Through the drama of the scene, Conway crafts an image of the turbulent life of the cowboy, often fraught with peril and the possibility of being trampled to death. Cattle drives had become increasingly rare in the early 20th century and the romantic cowboy that Conway depicts in *The Round-Up* was disappearing from the southwestern landscape during his lifetime. Conway's signature and the date appear in the top right corner of the mural.

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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.)

- 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.
- 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.)

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

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Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Politics/Government

Art

Period of Significance

1938-1940

Significant Dates

N/A

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Simon, Louis A., Supervising Architect

Conway, Frederick E., Mural Artist

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The United States Post Office in Purcell is significant within the Multiple Property Nomination, "Oklahoma Post Offices with Section Art." When built in 1938-9, the post office became another product of the New Deal public works program and it was targeted to receive artwork through the Section, a Depression-era program that commissioned artists to create artworks for the decoration of public buildings. Frederick E. Conway received the commission for the Purcell post office mural. The mural designed and painted by Conway constitutes an integral part of the building and is a good example of the work available through the Section. In the area of politics/government, the Purcell post office also represents important New Deal policies related to the construction and decoration of public buildings. Both Criteria A and C are applicable to this property.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

Frederick Conway was born in St. Louis, Missouri in 1900. He studied at the St. Louis School of Fine Art before studying art in France at the Academie Julian and Academie Moderne. In 1929, he accepted a position at Washington University in St. Louis where he continued to teach until 1970.

His Purcell post office mural, *The Round-Up*, is notable for its dynamism, and is one of the better known of all New Deal murals in Oklahoma. However, Conway was not originally commissioned to paint the mural today on display in Purcell. Conway was initially to paint a mural for the post office in the town of Jackson, Missouri. The people of Jackson were displeased with Conway's assignment for their post office, instead favoring a cattle-loading scene submitted by James B. Trumbull, another native Missourian. Trumbull's 1940 mural titled *Loading Cattle* is still on display at the post office in Jackson, Missouri. When the Purcell post office commission became available, Conway re-submitted the sketches, which he had completed for Jackson. That mural portrayed cattle grazing on a hilly pasture, and in Conway's thinking the pastoral imagery was easily transferable to Oklahoma. Yet, the postmaster in Purcell wanted another cattle-loading scene similar to the one Trumbull would paint on canvas that same year. Therefore, Conway would paint the oil on canvas mural in St. Louis in his studio, and personally supervised the mural's installation in Purcell after completion. It was rare for New Deal artists commissioned for post office pieces out of their immediate territory to assist with the installation.

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The story of Conway's commission illustrated the political nature of murals supported by the Section. Sometimes communities, postmasters or Section officials preferred different images that did not always match the intent of the artist. Additionally, *The Round-Up* indicates the prominence of portraying local agricultural and economic activity in the New Deal Section murals. The cattle industry was important to Oklahoma's economy in the 1930s, especially so for railroad communities like Purcell. The town was connected to the national infrastructure as a stop on the Gulf, Colorado and Santa Fe Railroad and Atchinson, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad lines, and as such was genuinely linked to cattle drives and round-ups similar to those depicted in the herding of Herefords in the mural.

Conway's depiction of cowboy culture is made even more powerful by his spacing. He leaves no foreground in the mural, allowing viewers to almost feel the press of the herd by the up-close faces of the steers near the bottom of the piece. It has been postulated that Conway was commenting on the crowded nature of post office lines in this mural by representing more than ten large Hereford steers in such a relatively small space. The cowboys are all four on horseback attempting to create order, but to no avail. This commentary is merely anecdotal, yet amusing to consider when the post office is experiencing peak service hours.

Whether or not the commentary is actual, the visual of these large beasts on the move, is a powerful image, made all the more vibrant by the rich colors used. The hues meld together with broad brushstrokes that become increasingly abstract toward the edges of the painting. The center of the mural and the faces of the cattle are clear and crisp, allowing viewers to focus immediately on the great power of the scene. Because of the characteristic cattle theme, and the dynamic nature suggested in the movement and color scheme, the Conway mural in Purcell is an easily recognized, popular New Deal mural among the thirty-one post office murals commissioned for the state.

The Purcell post office makes a key contribution to the Multiple Property Nomination, "Oklahoma Post Offices with Section Art." Architecturally, the post office in Purcell provides a very good example of the Art Deco style. The exterior of the building remains in excellent condition, and though a few modifications have been made to the interior of the building, they represent an effort to keep pace with the changing service functions and security needs of post offices and constitute minor alterations. As a whole, the post office retains a high degree of integrity and has been in continuous use as a post office for more than seventy years. The controversy of Conway's mural exemplifies the political issues surrounding Section Art. Because of its association with the New Deal, the United States Post Office in Purcell qualifies for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A and under Criteria C for its architectural merit.

United States Post Office Purcell
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9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

- Calcagno, Nicholas A. 1976. *New Deal Murals in Oklahoma*. Miami, OK: Pioneer Printing.
- Falk, Peter H., ed. 1985. *Who Was Who in American Art: Compiled from the Original Thirty-four Volumes of American Art Annual—Who's Who in Art, Biographies of American Artists Active from 1898-1947*. Madison, CT: Sound View Press.
- Greiner, Alyson L., and Mark A. White. 2004. *Thematic Survey of New Deal Public Art in Oklahoma 2003-2004*. Oklahoma City: State Historic Preservation Office.
- Revelle, Harry H., Jr., 1969. *McClain County Historical Background*. Reprinted from McClain County Economic Base report. Oklahoma City, OK: Oklahoma Employment Security Commission.
- Rex, Joyce A. 1986. *McClain Count, Oklahoma: History and Heritage, Book 2*. Purcell, OK: McClain County Historical and Genealogical Society.
- Rogers, Kathleen Grisham. 1974. Incidence of New Deal Art in Oklahoma: An Historical Survey. Master's Thesis, University of Oklahoma.
- Scott, Barbara Kerr, and Sally Soelle. 1983. *New Deal Art—The Oklahoma Experience, 1933-1943*. Lawton, OK: Cameron University.
- Soelle, Sally. 1984. New Deal Art Projects in Oklahoma, 1933-1943. Master's thesis, University of Oklahoma.

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 # _____
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other
- Name of repository: _____

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Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property less than 1 acre

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Latitude: 35.012080 | Longitude: -97.362290 |
| 2. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 3. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 4. Latitude: | Longitude: |

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The property consists of Block 117, Lots 3 through 5 of the Original Purcell Addition.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary includes the property historically associated with the Purcell Post Office.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Jordan M. McAlister with edits by Lynda Ozan
organization: Department of Geography, Oklahoma State University
street & number: 337 Murray Hall, Oklahoma State University
city or town: Stillwater state: OK zip code: 74078
e-mail: jordan.mcalister@okstate.edu/lozan@okhistory.org
telephone: 405/522-4478
date: December 2016

United States Post Office Purcell
Name of Property

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Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property: United States Post Office Purcell

City or Vicinity: Purcell

County: McClain

State: Oklahoma

Photographer: Stephanie Ballard

Date Photographed: 1 February 2017

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

| Number | Subject | Direction |
|--------|---------------------------|-----------|
| 0001 | Facade | South |
| 0002 | Façade and West elevation | Southeast |
| 0003 | Façade and East elevation | Southwest |
| 0004 | Mural | Interior |
| 0005 | Mural | Interior |

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Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine 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 (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including 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 Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

United States Post Office Purcell
228 West Main Street
Purcell, McClain County, Oklahoma



Source: Esri, DigitalGlobe, GeoEye, Earthstar Geographics, CNES/Airbus DS, USDA, USGS, AEX, Getmapping, Aerogrid, IGN, IGP, swisstopo, and the GIS User Community

0 0.025 0.05 0.1 Miles

UNITED STATES POST OFFICE
PURCELL OKLAHOMA



73080

208



15 MINUTE
PARKING
DURING
POSTAL
HOURS





UNITED STATES POST OFFICE
PICHER OKLAHOMA



UNITED STATES POST OFFICE
MURCELL OKLAHOMA







UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Requested Action: Nomination

Property Name: United States Post Office Purcell

Multiple Name: _____

State & County: OKLAHOMA, McClain

Date Received: 12/15/2017 Date of Pending List: _____ Date of 16th Day: _____ Date of 45th Day: 1/29/2018 Date of Weekly List: _____

Reference number: MP100002056

Nominator: State

Reason For Review:

X Accept Return Reject 1/29/2018 Date

Abstract/Summary Comments: The U.S. Post Office Purcell is locally significant under National Register Criteria A and C in the area of Politics/Government and Art. Completed in 1938, the one-story, orange brick building represents a restrained Art Deco-style design reflective of the important New Deal public works program projects executed in Oklahoma. The building contains a significant example of Section Art mural work in Frederick Conway's The Round-Up, a powerful illustration of Oklahoma's ranching and cattle heritage. One of 31 Section art post office commissions in the state, the property meets the Registration Requirements of the Oklahoma Post Offices with Section Art MPS.

Recommendation/ Criteria Accept NR Criteria A and C

Reviewer Paul Lusignan

Discipline Historian

Telephone (202)354-2229

Date 1/29/2018

DOCUMENTATION: see attached comments : No see attached SLR : No

If a nomination is returned to the nomination authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the National Park Service.

Facilities



December 14, 2017

VIA HAND DELIVERY

Mr. Paul Loether
National Park Service 2280, 8th floor
National Register of Historic Places
1849 C Street, NW, Mail Stop 7228
Washington, DC 20240

Re: National Register of Historic Places Nomination
United States Post Office Purcell
Oklahoma Post Offices with Section Art
228 West Main Street
Purcell, Oklahoma, McClain County

Dear Mr. Loether:

The United States Postal Service (USPS) is submitting an original National Register of Historic Places form on disk. The enclosed Disk 1 contains the true and correct copy of the nomination for the above-referenced United States Post Office to the National Register of Historic Places. The enclosed Disk 2 contains photograph files in TIFF format.

Provided also are an original NRHP signature page signed by the Oklahoma State Historic Preservation Officer (SHPO) and the USPS Federal Preservation Officer, as well as hard copy correspondence between the USPS and the SHPO. The Oklahoma Historic Preservation Review Committee approved this nomination at its meeting of April 20, 2017.

If you do not concur with this submission, we request that you please express your specific concerns and/or objections in writing so that USPS may provide you a USPS product that will consistently meet your needs now and in future submissions.

We look forward to working with you. Thank you for your assistance in this matter. Point of contact for this submission is the undersigned, who may be reached at (202) 268-2782, or by email at daniel.b.delahaye@usps.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Daniel Delahaye".

Daniel Delahaye
Federal Preservation Officer



Oklahoma Historical Society

Founded May 27, 1893

State Historic Preservation Office

Oklahoma History Center • 800 Nazih Zuhdi Drive • Oklahoma City, OK 73105-7917
(405) 521-6249 • Fax (405) 522-0816 • www.okhistory.org/shpo/shpom.htm

April 27, 2017

Mr. Daniel B. Delahaye
Federal Preservation Officer
475 L'Enfant Plaza SW
Room 6670
Washington D.C. 20260-1861

Dear Mr. Delanhaye:

We are pleased to transmit a National Register of Historic Places nomination for Oklahoma properties. The nomination is for the following properties:

United States Post Office Purcell, McClain County

We look forward to the results of your review. If there may be any questions, please do not hesitate to contact either Lynda S. Ozan of my staff or myself.

Sincerely,

Melvena Heisch
Deputy State Historic
Preservation Officer

MKH:lso

Enclosures