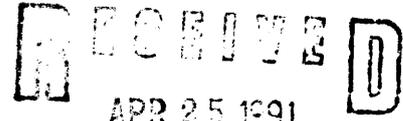


United States Department of the Interior National Park Service



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 Centralia Main Post Office
other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number 214 West Locust
city, town Centralia
state Washington code WA county Lewis code 041 zip code 98531

3. Classification

Table with 3 columns: Ownership of Property, Category of Property, and Number of Resources within Property. Includes checkboxes for private/public ownership and building/site/structure/object categories.

Name of related multiple property listing: Historic U.S. Post Offices In Washington, 1893 - 1941

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. Signature of certifying official: [Signature] Date: 1-11-90 State or Federal agency and bureau: U.S. Postal Service

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet. Signature of commenting or other official: [Signature] Date: 12/15/89 State or Federal agency and bureau:

5. 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 Date of Action

**6. Function or Use**

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

U.S. Post Office

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

U.S. Post Office

**7. Description**

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Moderne

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete

walls Brick

Sandstone

roof Tar Composition

other

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Centralia MPO is a single-story red brick building on a raised basement platform. The footings, basement walls, and floor slab are reinforced concrete; steel framing provides structural support. The facade is flat, symmetrical, divided into five bays, and devoid of significant detailing. Granite steps and landing, flanked by square sandstone buttresses, provide access to the double-door entry. Sandstone window and door surrounds, decorative panels above the entry and immediately flanking window bays, plain panels beneath the sill, lintels, and belt courses provide detailing. A plain brick parapet capped by a sandstone coping course terminates the facade. Behind the parapet is a flat built-up tar composition roof.

**PHYSICAL APPEARANCE**

The front facade (south, facing Locust Street) is divided into five bays: a centered entry bay and flanking window bays. The entry bay and immediately flanking window bays are of equal size and slightly recessed. They extend from the top of the basement wall to a sandstone belt course. Tenino sandstone is used to face the exposed basement wall, window lintels, window bay decorative panels, belt course, and coping. (The locally-quarried stone was cut by a Mr. Wilson, a Scottish stone cutter who operated a quarry in Tenino until the end of World War II.) The entry consists of double, aluminum-framed doors with a single glass panel in each. A plain transom bar separates the doors and a three-light transom window. Narrow sandstone surrounds frame the doors and transom window and extend to a low relief sandstone panel which depicts an airplane. The immediately flanking window bays are configured identically to the entry bay. The panels above the windows, however, depict a locomotive and an ocean steamer. The sash is double-hung wood with three-over-three lights. Beneath the sash are flat sills and unadorned panels (sandstone).

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The end window bays extend from the top of the basement wall to a line extending from the tops of the interior bay window sash. Narrower than the interior bays, the sash is also double-hung with three-over-three lights. Flat sandstone lintels and sills with plain sandstone panels beneath provide detailing. A sandstone belt course, set at the tops of the central bays, extends along the facade to the corners. A narrow sandstone course also defines the water table.

Granite and concrete are used for the entry stairs which extend across the three central bays. Sandstone buttresses flank the stairs; resting atop them are bronze lanterns in a torch motif. Two aluminum railings ascend the stairs.

The west facade (facing Silver Street) and east facades are essentially identical to each other (and the front) in use of materials and detailing. The facade is divided into two segments--the single-bay front corner and the four-bay rear--by slightly projecting the front corner. The corner window bays and sash are identical to those of the front corners. The rear window bays are equally-spaced, double-hung wood sash with 12-over-12 lights. They are framed with a flat brick soldier course arch and sandstone sills. At the end of the building--slightly recessed and lower in height--is the plain brick side-wall of the loading platform.

The east facade is the same as the west with the following exceptions: the four window bays of the rear portion are not spaced equally within the wall, and the two forward bays are smaller than the rear bays. (The rear bays are identical to those of the west side.) The smaller bays contain six-over-six-light, double-hung, wood sash windows. Horizontally-aligned metal louvers are set above these windows.

The rear facade contains the mailing platform which consists of a concrete platform, brick walls, and built-up tar composition roof. During the 1975 remodel, the platform and roof were extended across the entire width of the rear. The area between the original building was filled in during this project. The rear of the original mailing area (same height as main building) is visible above the roof and consists of red brick with a sandstone belt course set directly above three equally-spaced, six-over-six-light, double-hung, wood sash windows.

**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)

Art

Politics/Government

Period of Significance

1937-1941

Significant Dates

Site acq.-1935

Const.-1937

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Simon, Louis A., Supervising Architect/Federal Government

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

The Centralia MPO is an example of a small-town single-purpose post office. Although the loading platform was expanded in the mid-1970s, the building retains good design integrity. The design, which can be termed Starved Classical, is a standard design that was frequently used throughout the west (including in Renton and Lynden, WA). The building is the first and only federally-constructed post office in the city. It is symbolic of the federal government's recognition of the city and the lobbying efforts of its civic groups. Constructed during the Depression, the building is a legacy of the government's response to a national economic emergency as manifested by its massive public works and arts programs. The lobby of the post office contains a mural, "Industries of Lewis County," by Kenneth Callahan, one of the state's most prominent 20th century artists.

POLITICS/GOVERNMENT

As Centralia's first and only federally-constructed post office and for of its association with the New Deal public building programs, the building is locally significant under Criterion A. It represents the link between the federal government and the local community, and functions both as a symbol and agency of the federal government. The building further symbolizes the massive public building programs of the Depression which were intended to assist local economies. Perhaps most importantly, it is a legacy of the efforts of local citizens through their local officials in Washington to get their gift from Uncle Sam. Not only did they work to get a building, but they were also successful in gaining the use of local Tenino sandstone to detail the building.

See continuation sheet

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

1. Centralia Daily Chronicle; various articles 1935-1937.
2. Original Building Plans; 1936.
3. Construction Progress Photographs; 20 August 1936 - 20 May 1937.
4. Citizens of Centralia. Centralia's First Century 1845 - 1955.  
Tumwater, WA: H.J. Quality Printing, 1977.

See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS): N/A

- 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:  
U.S.P.S. Facilities Service Center  
San Bruno, CA 94099-0330

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of property 0.51

UTM References

A 

1	0	5	0	3	3	9	0	5	1	7	3	3	4	0
Zone				Easting				Northing						

C 

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

B 

Zone				Easting				Northing						

D 

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Quadrangle Name: Centralia  
 Quadrangle Scale: 1:24,000

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

Lots 5 & 6, Block 18, Washington's Addition. The site is on the Southeast corner of Locust Street and Silver Street. Beginning at the Northwest corner, thence E140', S160', W140', N160' to point of beginning

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes the site originally purchased by the federal government for the post office.

See continuation sheet

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title H.J. "Jim" Kolva, Project Manager; Steve Franks, Research Assistant  
 organization Institute for Urban & Local Studies date March 1989  
 street & number West 705 First Avenue telephone (509) 458-6219  
 city or town Spokane state WA zip code 99204

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ART

A mural entitled "Industries of Lewis County" (approximately 12 feet by 6 feet) is located on the east wall of the post office lobby, over the postmasters office door. The mural was painted by Kenneth Callahan in 1938 for a sum of \$870. The mural depicts a landscaped setting with a composite arrangement of figures representing the various industries of Lewis County (dairying, strawberry cultivation, lumbering, and poultry production).

Kenneth L. Callahan was born on October 30, 1907 and died in 1986. He attended the University of Washington. Between 1925 and 1929 he worked at odd jobs while painting in various parts of the country and while at sea as a merchant sailor. In 1930 he became an art critic for the Seattle Town Crier and later for the Seattle Times. After traveling to Mexico for several months he was employed by the Seattle Art Museum in 1933 where he completed a mural. Mr. Callahan also completed a mural in the Anacortes post office in 1940. He has since become a nationally recognized artist and is represented in major collections nationwide.

The Centralia MPO was one of eighteen in the state of Washington to receive a mural under the auspices of the Federal Works Agency Section of Fine Arts. Thus, it is locally significant under Criterion A for its association with the New Deal arts programs. The building is also significant under Criterion C in that the mural, as an integral part of the structure, represents a significant type, period and style of artistic expression.

LOCAL CONTEXT

Centralia is approximately midway between Seattle, Washington and Portland, Oregon along Interstate 5. It had a 1987 estimated population of 11,830, making it the largest city in Lewis County. Its economy is predominantly oriented to mining, lumber products, and food products with

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the remaining economic activity oriented to minor support services for the residents of the Centralia/Chehalis area.

The early history of Centralia is also a major part of the early history of Lewis County. Although the first settlers in the vicinity arrived in the 1840s, the real founder of Centralia was a man named George Washington. Washington, who was black, established his claims in early 1852, but since he could not legally hold the land he sold it to the white couple that had raised him, Mr. and Mrs. James Cochran. Washington and the Cochrans farmed their land and operated a pole ferry and way station for travelers, and the site became known as Cochran's landing. While mail service in the area reportedly began in 1851 with the postman carrying his light load in his pockets, the first post office opened on October 10, 1857, with Charles Van Wormer as postmaster. Known as the Skookumchuck Post Office, it was in Van Wormer's home on Ford's Prairie, which also served as a waystation for the stage line.

In 1872 the Northern Pacific Railroad came through the territory from the Columbia River to Puget Sound and Washington visualized his location as the center between the two destinations. On January 8, 1875 he filed a plat for the new town of Centerville. Lots in the four-block square townsite were could be had for \$10. Washington donated property for schools and churches and was extremely generous in developing the new area. Within a year Centerville had a population of 50. In 1883 its name was changed to Centralia, since there was a Centerville in eastern Washington, which caused mail confusion (a newcomer from Centralia, Illinois suggested the new name). In 1889, when the Territory of Washington gained statehood, Centralia was incorporated and had a population of 700. The area's timber resources caused the town to boom, as lumber mills, coal mines, and factories developed and farming continued to be an important part of the local economy. Its population grew to 2,026 in 1890 and to approximately 5,000 in 1891. The depression of the 1890s hit Centralia hard, and businesses collapsed and property values plummeted. By 1900 Centralia's population was only 1,600.

After the turn of the century, however, Centralia recovered (with one of its most urgent problems being trying to get cows off its streets); by 1910 its population had grown

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to 7,311 and it was the only city between Tacoma and Portland with paved streets and a sewer system. The 1920s saw major new development in Centralia, including a new city hall, three new schools, many new commercial buildings (including the 100-room Lewis and Clark Hotel), and an airport. The 1930s and the Depression brought many WPA projects to Centralia, including improvements to its fairgrounds, Borst Park, the airfield, library, city park, streets, and dikes. In 1938 a \$75,000 State Armory was built.

Other significant events in Centralia's history include a major flood in 1933 and a severe earthquake in 1949. Unlike its topography, however, Centralia's population has remained fairly stable since 1910, as lumbering, agriculture, and railroading continued as major industries. Since 1960 Centralia's population has grown from 8,586 to 10,054 in 1970 to 11,555 in 1980.

The Centralia MPO is one block west of the main business street (North Tower). A park with the Centralia public library (Carnegie, circa 1912) is across Locust Street, north of the post office. Adjacent to the east of the post office is the two-story brick Fissel-Reynolds Mortuary Building (now used for offices) and the three-story stone Elks Lodge (both buildings pre-date the MPO). Residential uses are west of and south of the Post Office.

LOCAL NEWSPAPER COVERAGE OF THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE  
CENTRALIA MAIN POST OFFICE

As was true of many of the post offices constructed during the Depression Era, several years lapsed from the original request for funding allocation for the Centralia post office to the actual construction. In February of 1931, for example, an allocation of \$110,000 was sought for the Centralia post office. A summary of allotments submitted by Secretary Mellon and Postmaster General Brown requested that Centralia be included in the proposed massive public works program, which included 1,624 projects (Longview Daily News, February 27, 1931). It was not until October 11, 1935, however, that the Centralia Daily Chronicle reported that a post office site had been selected. A 140 foot by 160 foot lot owned by John H. Dumon was one of 13 properties selected by the federal government (at a cost of \$6,500). A December

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23, 1935 article reported that the plans were being drawn and that Congressman Martin F. Smith was attempting to get Tenino sandstone included in the specifications.

On April 3, 1936, the Chronicle reported that the new post office would be a handsome structure. Tenino sandstone would be used. The article reported that "simplicity marks design" and "no decorative flourishes or fancy gewgaws will mar the rectangular red brick building." The following week's issue (April 8th) included a photo of a sketch of the \$100,000 building. An April 22nd article reported that Harry Boyer and Sons of Olympia would receive the construction contract with a low bid of \$62,000. The start of the work was reported on July 7th. Twenty-five to 30 local men would work on the building. On September 19th, the various PWA projects in process in Centralia were reported. These included a viaduct, high school gymnasium (now Centralia College gymnasium), armory, auditorium, and golf course.

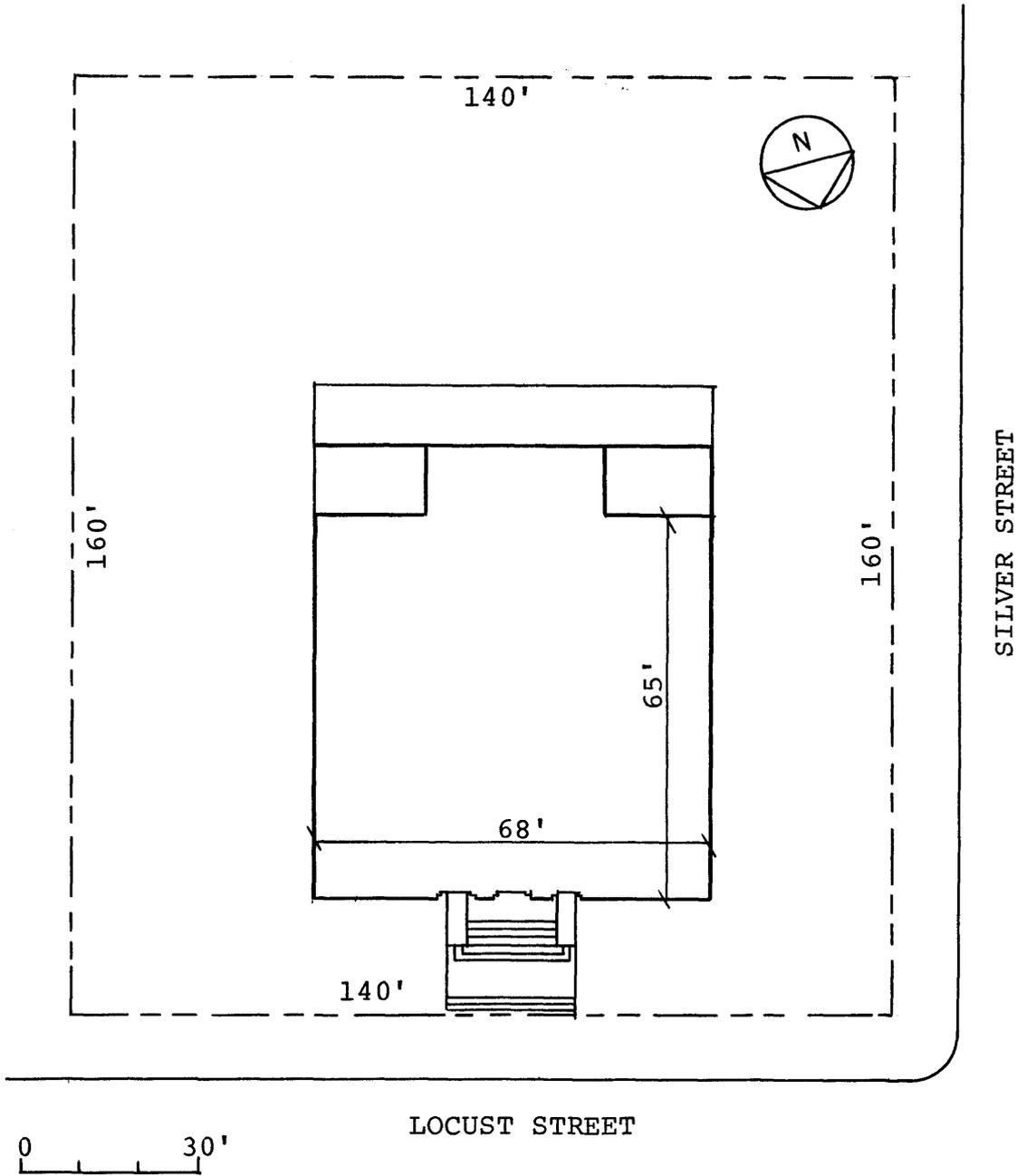
After a 70-day layoff because of weather, work resumed on the federal building in late February 1937 (February 23, 1937 article). By June 28th it was reported that the new post office was ready and open to public inspection. According to Postmaster Al Fision, efficiency and safety were the main themes. A July 1st article included a sketch of the building and recounted the history of the post office in Centralia.

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The following information is the same for all the  
photographs listed:

1. Centralia MPO
2. Centralia, Washington
3. Jim Kolva
4. January 1984
5. Negatives on file at USPS Facilities Service Center,  
San Bruno, CA.

Photo No. 1 (negative #9A)  
6. View to southwest

Photo No. 2 (negative #8A)  
6. View to south

Photo No. 3 (negative #6A)  
6. View to southeast

Photo No. 4 (negative #1A)  
6. Lobby mural