

**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

**1. Name**

historic MAIN POST OFFICE and FEDERAL BUILDING

and/or common CIVIC CENTER POST OFFICE (present name)

**2. Location**

street & number 201 13th Street \_\_\_ not for publication

city, town Oakland \_\_\_ vicinity of congressional district 007

state California code 006 county Alameda code 001

**3. 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 checked="" 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	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<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:

**4. Owner of Property**

name United States Postal Service - Real Estate & Buildings

street & number 850 Cherry Avenue

city, town San Bruno \_\_\_ vicinity of state California 94099

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Alameda County - County Recorder

street & number 1221 Oak Street

city, town Oakland state California

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title Not represented in 1979 has this property been determined eligible? \_\_\_ yes  no

date \_\_\_ federal \_\_\_ state \_\_\_ county \_\_\_ local

depository for survey records

city, town state

## 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<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 date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Oakland's former Main Post Office and Federal Building is representative of the Neo-Classic Style that was the fashionable mode for public buildings in the United States from about 1890 into the 1930s. The style combined elements of Greek, Roman and Renaissance architecture and was associated with the academic design tradition of the Ecole des Beaux Arts.

The principal facade has a central portion fifteen bays long and two stories high, flanked by end sections which contain the entranceways. Entrance doors are reached by short flights of stone steps embellished with large metal framed lanterns.

The main, two-story block is off-set from a raised basement with a water table and sheathed in granite and terra cotta over brick walls. A tiled, gable roof covers the perimeter of the building. The roof over the Jackson and Alice Streets frontage terminates in a triangular pediment with a ranking, Classical cornice which, coupled with the colossal Corinthian columns flanking the entrance doors, gives these end sections the appearance of a temple front.

On the main, Thirteenth Street facade the central bays are divided by giant Corinthian columns; balustraded sections run between the bays at the ground floor level. The ground floor windows have aluminum frames and sash with muntins cast in a fan pattern in the upper section. Second floor windows have rectangular aluminum frames set in a molded architrave. The wall section terminates in a full Classical entablature.

The side elevations repeat the pattern of the main facade with the substitution of pilasters for columns.

The rear Twelveth Street frontage has a pair of ramped drives, one to the street level parking area and one to the underground parking. With the exception of landscaped areas on either side and in front of the central section of the Thirteenth Street facade, the structure occupies the whole of the block site to the sidewalks.

On the interior the public space consists of a wide corridor around the perimeter of the building. On the main side, the customer service windows correspond in placement, form and material to the exterior windows. This pattern creates a barrell-vaulted space with transverse arches where the windows occur.

The space is sheathed to the springing of the arches, approximately ten feet, with light gray Columbian marble; marble is also used on the floors. Glass topped, cast aluminum tables with modified Classical motifs are spaced along the corridor. Oval, hanging, lighting fixtures with cast aluminum frames spaced along the ceiling contribute to the general elegance of the public lobby.

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
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Offices are located on the side corridors. In each corner of the main facade to either side of the entranceways are stair halls with slightly curved, balustraded flights of marble steps broken by a corner landing.

The architectural quality of both the exterior and interior space for the public is high. The structure has been well maintained and preserves interior furnishings that contribute to its architectural richness.

The Postal Service has proposed some alterations to increase public service. In the Spring of 1979, an Expanded Environmental Assessment was prepared by the Environmental Impact Planning Corporation, 319 Eleventh Street, San Francisco, that resulted in a finding of no effect on the architectural integrity of the building of the proposed alterations. These involve replacing the customer service windows with recessed alcoves to provide additional lock boxes and the conversion of the space on the Jackson Street side to a customer service area and philatelic display section. The other alteration is a modification of the present handicapped access ramp that will alter the entrance doors at the rear of the Alice Street corridor, but will not impact the architectural character of the exterior.

# 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 checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

**Specific dates** 1931-32 **Builder/Architect** James Wetmore, Wm. A. Newman

**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)**

The former Main Post Office and Federal Building, now the Civic Center Post Office, was Oakland's first building constructed as such and replaced the out-moded facility of 1891 at Seventeenth Street and Broadway.

In 1921, ten years before the building's completion, the Uptown Association began agitation for a new post office building worthy of Oakland's growing importance. Congressman Albert E. Carter assisted in the passage of the necessary legislation and appropriation in Congress; the bill authorizing the project was signed in February, 1928, by President Calvin Coolidge. By the time the contracts were let for the construction that began in 1931, major unemployment caused by the Depression greatly increased the importance to the local economy of this large project.

Ground breaking ceremonies took place January 28, 1931; the corner stone was laid November 14, 1931 with Mayor J.A. Davie and Postmaster William N. Friend officiating. The building was occupied July 4, 1932 and dedicated November 5 of that year. Appropriate civic festivities accompanied the ceremony with city officials and Congressman Carter in attendance. The building was heralded in the press as a major symbol of Oakland's civic achievement.

In respect to the design of the Post Office and Federal Building, the plans were prepared by the government architects under the immediate supervision of William Arthur Newman during the tenure of James Wetmore, Supervising Architect for the U.S. Department of the Treasury. A number of local contractors were involved; the major building Contractor was the K.E. Parker Company.

To summarize - the building is significant both as one of the city's outstanding examples of Beaux Arts Classicism and as a milestone in the city's progress. This was the first building constructed in what was shortly thereafter designated as the Civic Center. Thus the structure initiated the development of what has become the city's major district for governmental and other types of public buildings.

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

The Oakland Tribune, Articles appearing 2/25/28, 1/28/31, 11/14/31, 3/28/32 and 7/4/32 and 11/5/32

# 10. Geographical Data

UTM NOT VERIFIED

Acreeage of nominated property 0.48

ACREEAGE NOT VERIFIED

Quadrangle name Oakland West

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

### UMT References

A 

1	0	5	6	4	7	4	2	4	1	8	3	7	8	9
Zone			Easting				Northing							

B 

Zone			Easting				Northing							

C 

Zone			Easting				Northing							

D 

Zone			Easting				Northing							

E 

Zone			Easting				Northing							

F 

Zone			Easting				Northing							

G 

Zone			Easting				Northing							

H 

Zone			Easting				Northing							

### Verbal boundary description and justification

See attached continuation sheet

### List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code
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state	code	county	code
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# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Sally B. Woodbridge, Architectural Historian (and)

organization Environmental Impact Planning Corp. date July 27, 1979

street & number 319 Eleventh Street telephone (415) 626-9034

city or town San Francisco state California 94103

# 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature *Knott M. Ellison*

title \_\_\_\_\_ date 3/11/80

For HCPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is

*Patricia A. ...*  
Keeper of the National Register

Attest: *Patricia A. ...*

Chief of ...

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SERVICE

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CONTINUATION SHEET

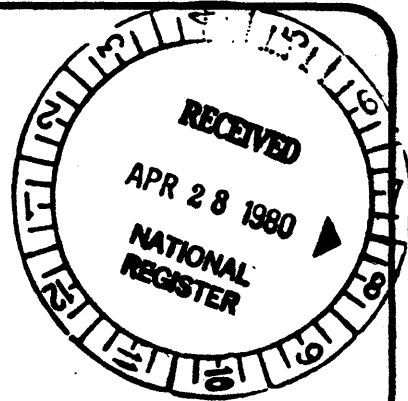
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1) Assessors' Parcel # 2-75-1

2) Verbal Boundary Description: Located on block defined by 12th,  
13th, Alice and Jackson Streets

Justification: This is the parcel of land owned by the Postal Service,  
as defined on Assessor's Parcel Map.



13th Street

Alice Street

Jackson Street

Oakland Civic Center P.O.

Loading Area (Underground)

Drive

Drive

12th Street

Boundary of area being Nominated

# Site Plan

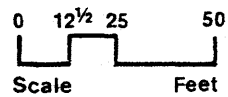


Figure No.1