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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 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 Schuyler United States Post Office

other names/site number CX06-076

2. Location

street & number 119 East 11th Street

N/A not for publication

city, town Schuyler

N/A vicinity

state Nebraska

code NE

county Colfax

code 037

zip code 68661

3. Classification

Ownership of Property

- private
public-local
public-State
public-Federal

Category of Property

- building(s)
district
site
structure
object

Number of Resources within Property

Table with 2 columns: Contributing, Noncontributing. Rows for buildings, sites, structures, objects, Total.

Name of related multiple property listing: Nebraska Post Offices Which Contain Section Artwork (1938-1942)

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: Bob Roschendorf, Director, Nebraska State Historical Society

Date: 4/2/92

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

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: Alan Byron

Date of Action: 5/11/92

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Government/Post Office

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Government/Post Office

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Moderne

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete

walls Brick

roof Other: tar & gravel

other Limestone

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Schuyler United States Post Office is located at the southwest corner of 11th and A Streets, one block east of the city hall in Schuyler, the Colfax County seat, in northeast Nebraska (1990 population: 4,052). The one-story Modernistic style building, constructed in 1938-1939, is an excellent, well-preserved example of a Class C or D post office built from standardized plans developed in the 1930's. The nomination includes three contributing objects: two ornamental lamp posts located on either side of the front entry, and a flag pole.

Symmetrical in design, the rectangular red brick building measures approximately 60 by 50 feet and features a limestone base and parapet. The words "United States Post Office, Schuyler Nebraska" are carved into the limestone above the main entrance. The raised central entrance features a white painted ornamental aluminum grill with a centered, stylized eagle. The main entrance is flanked by two pairs of multi-paned triple hung sash windows with limestone sills. Similar fenestration is found on the east and west facades. The flat roof has a composition tar and gravel surface. On the main (north) and side facades, below grade area ways with steps and iron railings provided light and ventilation to the lower level. The building exhibits good integrity; modifications include removal of the workroom skylight and replacement of the front entry doors. Construction began in August, 1938, and the completed building was dedicated during the community's 1939 4th of July celebration (The Schuyler Sun, Aug. 18, 1938; July 6, 1939).

A mural entitled "Wild Horses by Moonlight," by Philip Von Saltza, is located on the east lobby wall above the postmaster's door which is flanked by wood framed, glass enclosed bulletin boards. The oil-on-canvas mural which measures 12 feet 2 inches by 6 feet 9 inches, occupies the typical space for murals commissioned by the Treasury Department's Section of Fine Arts program in a Class C or D post office. The mural was painted by Maine artist Philip von Saltza who received notice of the commission from the Section in October, 1939. The completed mural was installed by the artist in September, 1940 (The Schuyler Sun, Sept. 5, 1940). The Schuyler mural represents the design selected for placement in a Nebraska post office through the Section of Fine Arts 48 States competition which occurred in

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Continuation Sheet**

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1939 to provide winning mural designs for placement in a post office in every state.

Painted in dark blue, grey and brown tones, the mural depicts wild horses racing across a barren landscape. The thick brush strokes used by the artist to depict the grasses contribute to the sense of wind and motion. In the immediate foreground two horses with streaming manes rear at the sight of a rattlesnake near a cow skull. In the distance four horses race across the desolate landscape; bare trees frame the left and right sides of the scene. The moon is not visible in the dark blue sky but is suggested by light swirling clouds.

The lobby interior in is excellent condition; it retains its original woodwork and marble wainscoting. The original terrazzo lobby floor has been carpeted. Sometime after the mural was installed, the original light fixtures were replaced. Currently the lobby has enclosed fluorescent lights flush to the ceiling which do not obstruct the mural. A varnished wooden vestibule projects into the lobby; it is an original design feature typical of small Class C and D post offices built from standardized plans developed in the 1930's. In 1981, the mural was cleaned and restored by an art conservator under contract with the United States Postal Service; it is in excellent condition.

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)

Period of Significance

Significant Dates

Art

1940

1940

Politics/Government

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Von Saltza, Philip: Artist

Simon, Louis: Supervising Architect

Busboom & Rauh: Contractor

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

The Schuyler United States Post Office is being nominated to the National Register as part of the Nebraska Post Offices Which Contain Section Artwork (1938-1942) multiple property nomination at the state level of significance under Criterion A for its association with the United States Treasury Department's Section of Fine Arts program (1934-1943) and under Criterion C for the artistic significance of the mural it contains. The mural entitled "Wild Horses By Moonlight," was painted by Maine artist Philip von Saltza and installed in September, 1940.

The oil-on-canvas mural which measures 12 feet 2 inches by 6 feet 9 inches is located on the east lobby wall directly above the postmaster's door in the typical location for murals installed in Class C or D post offices. The mural is an excellent example of artwork commissioned for post offices through the Treasury Department's Section of Fine Arts program from 1934-1943. Painted in dark blue, grey and brown tones, the mural depicts wild horses racing across a barren landscape beneath moonlit clouds.

The Schuyler mural is also significant for its association with the Section's "48 States Competition." Held in 1939, the competition solicited hundreds of designs to provide one post office mural for a newly constructed post office in each state. The competition also provided the Section with an enormous pool of new designs by artists who generally submitted more than one entry. The Schuyler mural is based on a design originally submitted for an Arizona post office but like many of the winning entries in the 48 states competition, it was placed elsewhere. Through the Section process, however, the design was reviewed, critiqued, and altered to be appropriate for a different locality (Marling, 1982).

In October, 1939, Maine artist Philip von Saltza was notified by the Section that his design for the Stafford, Arizona post office had been selected for placement in Schuyler, Nebraska; Von Saltza immediately accepted the \$740 commission. In November, 1939, Assistant Section Chief

See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

Gilbert, Dorothy B., ed. Who's Who in American Art. Vol. IV: 1940-1947. (Washington, D.C.: The American Federation of Art, 1947).

Marling, Karal Ann. Wall-to-Wall America. (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1982).

National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C. Record Group 121: Preliminary Inventory of the Records of the Public Buildings Service. Entry 133: Case Files Concerning Embellishments of Federal Buildings, 1934-1943. Box 61: Nebraska.

Schuyler Sun. August 18, 1938; July 6, 1939; September 5, 1940.

Whiffen, Marcus. American Architecture Since 1780: A Guide to the Styles. (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1969).

See continuation sheet

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 of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property Less than one acre.

UTM References

A

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

C

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

B

Zone				Easting				Northing						

D

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

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The property is described as Lots 1-4, Block 97, Original Town of Schuyler, Colfax County, Nebraska.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes that parcel of land which has historically been associated with the property.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Carol Ahlgren, Architectural Historian

organization Nebraska State Historical Society date August, 1991

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Rowan informed the artist that he should "restudy" the design to make it more appropriate for Nebraska. Von Saltza's original design featured tall cacti; Rowan noted that such plants were "not a usual element in the Nebraska landscape" and suggested that they be replaced with poplar trees. Rowan informed the artist that he had driven through Nebraska and had noticed the striking poplar trees, "polished like silver" from the wind, a likely reference to native cottonwood trees. He also suggested that Von Saltza add a more "lush quality" to the landscape (National Archives, RG 121; Entry 133, Box 61).

Since von Saltza's design had been approved before he received an official contract, Section requirements were less stringent. In January, 1940, Von Saltza's preliminary sketch was approved and in August, he submitted photographs of the half-completed mural. Assisted by his son, the artist travelled to Schuyler in September, 1940, and installed the mural. Schuyler Postmaster Mary Farrell reported to the Section that the community was "proud and happy" to receive the mural which had given people "a new and endless subject for discussion."

Philip von Saltza was born in Sweden in 1885; his family emigrated to the United States when he was a child. In addition to the Schuyler mural, von Saltza received Section commissions for post office murals in New Hampshire (1940), North Carolina (1940), and Vermont (1939).

For additional information, refer to the Nebraska Post Offices Which Contain Section Artwork (1938-1942) multiple property form.