

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form



265

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. Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).

1. Name of Property

historic name Martinez Downtown Post Office

other names/site number Post Office

2. Location

street & number 815 Court Street

city or town Martinez

state California code CA county Contra Costa code 013 zip code 94553

not for publication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 ☒ 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 at the following level(s) of significance:

☒ national ☐ statewide ☒ local

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

United States Postal Service
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property ☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official

Date

State Historic Preservation Officer
Title

California State Office of Historic Preservation
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

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

Date of Action

Martinez Downtown Post Office
Name of Property

Contra Costa County, CA
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

<input type="checkbox"/>	private
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Local
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - State
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	public - Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box.)

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	building(s)
<input type="checkbox"/>	district
<input type="checkbox"/>	site
<input type="checkbox"/>	structure
<input type="checkbox"/>	object

Number of Resources within Property

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1		Total

Name of related multiple property listing

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

U.S. Post Offices in California 1900-1941

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.)

Government/Post Office

Government/Sheriff's Office

Government/City Storage

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

MODERN MOVEMENT: Art Deco/Public Works

Administration (PWA) Moderne

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: Reinforced Concrete

walls: Reinforced Concrete

roof: Sheet Metal

Wood, glass, aluminum, bronze, iron,

other: steel, limestone, granite

Martinez Downtown Post Office
Name of Property

Contra Costa County, CA
County and State

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

Summary Paragraph

The Martínez Downtown Post Office is an example of Art Deco/Public Works Administration (PWA) Moderne style applied to civic architecture. It is the only extant building, and one of few extant Depression-era government relief projects, in Martinez and Contra Costa County. Designed by the United States Treasury Department's Office of the Supervising Architect, Procurement Division, Public Buildings Branch,¹ the Post Office was constructed in 1937 to be fireproof and with steel reinforced concrete. The Martinez Downtown Post Office is a symmetrical, monumental single-story building with a full basement and mezzanine. Its total area is 5,494 feet. The Martinez Downtown Post Office entrance faces west on Court Street and its north side faces Ward Street. The interior houses the mural "The Road to El Dorado" painted by noted artists Maynard Dixon and his wife, Edith Hamlin. "The Road to El Dorado" was commissioned by the U.S. Treasury Department Section of Fine Arts (1934-1943). The mural was installed on the south wall of the Martinez Downtown Post Office lobby above the two bulletin boards flanking the Postmaster's door. This is the traditional location for Section artwork in smaller post offices designed by the U.S. Treasury's Office of the Supervising Architect.² The mural is in good condition with a few spots of paint missing. The Martinez Downtown Post Office retains most of its interior and exterior integrity of location, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. The Martinez Downtown Post Office appears as it did when it was opened in 1937 with the exception of minor changes and additions. The building is structurally sound and in good condition, with maintenance investment needed.

Narrative Description

Setting

The Martinez Downtown Post Office (Post Office) is located at 815 Court Street, on the southeast corner of Court and Ward Streets. The location was chosen as part of the developing City and County Civic District that began in the 1850s, continued near the Southern Pacific railroad tracks on Court Street in the mid 1880s, and has continued to grow around and on Court Street. The Post Office property is adjacent to the multi-storied 1970s jail and court house buildings, and is across the street from the 1926 Veteran's Memorial Hall, the 1941 Art Deco City Library, and the transitional Art Deco 1932 Hall of Records (currently a court house). The latter two are on the National Register of Historic Places. More buildings within the Commercial and Civic Districts within one or two blocks of the Post Office are listed on various historic registers and buildings within the vicinity of the Post Office date from the 1850s to 2008. The site for the Post Office was owned by W.A. Hale on a lot that was 100 feet on Ward and Green Streets and 200 feet on Court Street.³

Parking

Parking for the public has always been parallel to the curb on the west side and for postal vehicles on the south end of the building where the loading awning and platform exist. The Contra Costa Sheriff's personnel parking is now against the building on the north portion of the property. There is a shared driveway with the adjacent jail to the south where Green Street previously existed. To the east of the Post Office is an alley way contained by the fence that runs on the property line.

Exterior

The Post Office is a single story reinforced concrete building with a full basement and mezzanine level. The building indents midpoint its north and south façades which make it a dwarfed "T" shape, or one box in front of another. The longer box faces Court Street, houses the lobby and Postmaster room, and is under a roof that rises while the back half of the

¹ National Archives Records Administration, Treasury Department, Procurement Division, Public Buildings Branch, *Martinez, CA Post Office Dedication*, July 27, 1937.

² F.K. Pohl, *Framing America: A Social History of American Art* (NY: Thames & Hudson, 2002), 368.

³ National Archives, *Dedication*.

Martinez Downtown Post Office

Name of Property

Contra Costa County, CA

County and State

roof does not. The Art Deco/PWA Moderne Post Office fronts 91 feet on Court Street, 62 feet on Ward and what was Green Street, and was built in line with the Hall of Records.⁴ Art Deco/PWA Moderne design characteristics include a central entrance in a rectangular massing, a dark green angular roof that rises behind a false cornice, windows that are abstracted columns with surrounds that are ziggurat-related low relief extensions of the façade, and ornamentation that is low-relief, lozenge, repeating floral abstracts that are extensions of the façade. The façade is on the whole smooth, white, and unadorned.

The building's entrance is centered on the façade, faces west, and is ascended by granite steps that land in front of the anodized aluminum and glass entrance doors that lead into the interior vestibule. The entrance can also be approached via the "L" shaped, walled wheelchair ramp on the northwest half of the property. One end of the ramp begins at sidewalk level in line with the north edge of the Post Office building, and the other end at the entrance landing. Above the entrance door, a 4' x 4' bronze U.S. Heraldic Eagle is positioned atop a floret accented grill that sits external to the fixed window crowning the door. The door has a detailed surround and above the bronze eagle and within the surround is attached "Martinez California." On either side of the entrance door is a four foot tall original bronze bracketed lamp. Both lamps rise mid-way from the exterior wall. The lamps are glass boxes set in floral abstraction bases and finished on top with a spindled square cover.

The Post Office's rectangular fenestration is spaced evenly on the west, north, and east sides of the building, lending to the building's overall cubic appearance. All windows in the Post Office are double sash and most are wood with clear panes. The two windows closest to the entrance have 15 panes in each of their two vertical sliding segments and have the most ornate surrounds that match the entrance's surround. There are two more windows on the west façade that are closest to both outer edges of the building and are 12 panes each in each of their vertical sliding segments. They have simpler surrounds. The four north wall windows are similarly configured, but the windows are covered with a locked metal grill and only the first (lobby) window is not boarded over on its upper segments. The east (back) wall contains five windows with 12 panes in each vertical sash segment and their upper half is boarded over and the lower half covered with a locking grill. The east wall also has two vertically sliding windows of frosted glass with four panes each segment, one on the main level of the building and the other at the mezzanine level.

75% of the south side of the building is the loading dock. The fenestration associated with the dock is not symmetrical or ornamental. These windows are simple double sash, frosted, and contain small quantities of panes. The remaining east 25% of the building's south docking side contains two windows exactly like those of the north side and an externally inaccessible gully with two vertically sliding windows with six panes each. The Post Office mail loading dock on the south side of the building is protected by an uptilting serrated metal awning. There are three double sash windows above this awning which are barely visible from the ground, and only when one is at a distance from the building. Three heavy-duty utilitarian doors (the middle one is double) lead from the dock to various parts of the building, including the mezzanine catwalk and basement. The "fallout" shelter sign is seen just inside the building from the dock. There is a short set of steps and archway on the east façade that lead to the south side's docking platform.

There is a basement entrance door on the east side of the building and one on the south half of the west side. Both are approached by cement steps with metal pipe railings, which are found throughout the inside and outside of the Post Office. The west façade gully mantle is the only instance of decorative external iron railing; all other railings are metal pipe. Just south of the west façade gully mantle is the Post Office's India Limestone cornerstone which acknowledges Henry Morgenthau Jr. as the U.S. Treasurer and Louis Simon as the Supervising Architect. There is a flagpole on the south half of the front lawn. The sheet metal roof has several eyebrow vents and a chimney-type vent extends from the south east side of the roof. This vent's grate is comprised of terra-cotta colored semi-circles. From the cornice rise low relief stars on three sides of the building and on the front "United States Post Office" is mounted on the false cornice. There is a foundation lip that extends from the façade and wraps around the building. There is a structural recess in the east half of the south wall that creates the docking platform area.

Landscaping

The Post Office's landscape includes four Canary Island Date Palms planted when the Post Office was built. Other landscape elements are more recent, including one Coast Live Oak and one Italian Cypress each about 25 years old; two Tobiras and two Arborvitae about 20 years old; and three Blue Point Junipers, two Lilacs, 16 Sweet Myrtles, and one Indian Hawthorn, all approximately 10 years old. In 2011, flowers were planted on the Ward Street edge of the property.⁵

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ F. Kluber, *Martinez Downtown Post Office Trees and Shrub Inventory*, 2011.

Martinez Downtown Post Office
Name of Property

Contra Costa County, CA
County and State

Exterior Alterations

The changes to the exterior of the Downtown Martinez Post Office are few and do not compromise the historic character of the building. The largest is the three-foot high, off white, wheelchair ramp. Built in 1994, the ramp obstructs the view of the bottom of the northern half of the west façade.⁶ While the north Ward Street side was once all lawn, it is now partially parking for the Sheriff's office. The Post Office's external walls contain surface fractures. The original hollowed bronze metal entrance doors were replaced with anodized aluminum and glass doors with fixed crown window above the doors. The cast metal Heraldic Eagle was painted at some point and has slight erosion.⁷ An extra railing was placed around the perimeter of the external entrance landing. A department of the Contra Costa Sheriff now occupies the back of the building. The windows on the back half of the building are boarded and painted over, and covered with locked grills while the corners of the building sport cameras. Where the windows are boarded over, the same brown paint as the window casings has been used to paint the boards and this camouflages the boards. The dock's metal awning paint is peeling. The four palm trees are original to the property and have grown taller. The landscaping is otherwise all new.

The Post Office retains the feel and integrity of its original character and remains a sturdy cubic building in need of regular capital maintenance which would require some hazardous materials remediation if the original interior basement lead paint, the asbestos wrapped pipes, and the lead rain gutters still exist. The contents of the exterior paint and/or plaster are unknown. It is unknown if the metal awning over the docking platform is original to the building. The 1949 Sanborn map does not explicitly describe its presence.

The setting around the Post Office has changed particularly to its east and south as the developing County Seat and Civic Center buildings replaced residences and smaller buildings with massive buildings. Because of the new jail adjacent to the Post Office, the southern edge of the property no longer runs on Green Street. The building of the current jail replaced multiple blocks of residences.

Interior

The Post Office was designed with a basement of 275 square feet for the Post Office Inspector, three postal storage rooms totaling 800 square feet, corridors, boiler, and fuel rooms. The first floor contained its public lobby, a Post Office screen, 240 square feet of space for the Postmaster, 240 square feet for the financial section, and a workroom with an area of 2,480 square feet. The Post Office was built with a ground area of 5,494 square feet and 155,177 cubic feet.⁸

The front entrance doors lead into a high quality wood and beveled glass paneled boxed vestibule which is somewhat wider than the entrance doors and sits below the silhouette of the back of the bronze Heraldic Eagle sculpture. The vestibule's north and south sides lead to the lobby which is the only area accessible by the public. The lobby is finished in birch wood paneling, terracotta quarry-tile floors and wainscoting, glass, two sets of pre-cast metal Heraldic Eagle emblazoned post office box fronts, high cubic ceiling, five brass light fixtures, art mural, and two carved and finished wood public work tables that now have linoleum tops placed over them. There are no other freestanding objects in the lobby except a few trash cans, a small modern table, and rugs. On the north side of the interior lobby wall that separates the public from the postal workers, one set of post office boxes has been rotated 90 degrees from its original position parallel to the other set of boxes in order to open an archway that creates an ante-room for the interior Sheriff's door. This vestibule shows the original red board floor which continues into the current postal work room. The mezzanine level suspends an interior catwalk overlooking the postal workroom floor.

The Postmaster's room on the south end of the building remains intact, although its use is unknown at this time. The door is stenciled "POST MASTER," with stained and stenciled wood trimmed glass covered bulletin boards on either side and the art mural above. The door also has a glass peephole. The north wall contains two more bulletin boards, and the west wall six total—three on each side of the vestibule. The east interior wall that separates the public from the workroom contains one set of post boxes, a ledged wood Dutch door, three sets of public service windows with vertically sliding decorative bronze grills and frosted glass stenciled with the intended purpose of the postal-public interface window. The service windows are framed in stained wood. Running above the public service windows are five rectangle vent windows

⁶ *Contra Costa Times*, "Over the Ramp Parts," April 12, 1994. Article located Martinez Historical Society, "Libraries" file #94-89-4.

⁷ National Archives Records Administration, Building 040048 Sheet 2, Fine Arts Inventory, Public Buildings Service, General Services Administration, *Heraldic Eagle*, July 3, 1972.

⁸ National Archives Records Administration, Post Office Department, Post Office Inspector In Charge, San Francisco, CA letter to Chief Inspector, Washington D.C., *Martinez, CA Post Office Dedication*, August 24, 1937.

Martinez Downtown Post Office

Contra Costa County, CA

Name of Property

County and State

with vertical turned iron bars. Above the southern four of these iron vents are smaller aluminum vents with shaded horizontal openings. Behind this public service wall is what is left of the postal work room.

The basement rooms not used by the Sheriff are accessed by a cement stairway with pipe railing through the lobby, dock, workroom, or through external basement doors. The City of Martinez rents storage in some of the basement rooms. The historic record states that the basement utility, storage, and corridor rooms are all cement with metal trim and cement water paint. The basement office floors were cement with plaster wainscot and walls, metal furring, wood trim, and cement water paint. The swing rooms were made with wood, plaster, metal and lead and oil paint. The toilet rooms were the same except their floors are tile and the janitor closets cement. The lookouts have cork floors, plaster walls and ceilings, and black paint and other details. The basement areas the City of Martinez rents have not changed, but the paint is peeling.

Maynard Dixon/Edith Hamlin Mural "The Road to El Dorado"

In 1939 "The Road to El Dorado" mural was installed above and around the Martinez Downtown Post Office Postmaster's door and flanking bulletin boards. The 15 x 18 foot mural was painted by husband and wife artists Maynard Dixon and Edith Hamlin. It contains a lunette rainbow form and presents a bold, stylized, and colorful gamut of early travelers and residents who stopped in Martinez for provisions on the "Road to El Dorado" en route to Gold Country in the Sierra Mountains. The mural is composed according to U.S. Treasury Department Section of Fine Arts (Section One) conventions. The mural emphasizes a Pony Express rider (Pony Express historically came through Martinez), a worn rider walking his horse, a well-dressed white male and female, a well-dressed Spanish woman between them, a young sailor, an indigenous person, and a miner. The latter three are heading east and the rest of the characters west. The characters are accompanying and helping one another. The Carquinez Straits, local hills, and a river steamer appear in the background.⁹

Internal modifications

The wood paneling in the lobby, the wood window casements, and the mural show moderate distresses that are repairable at this time. One of the original carved wood tables was removed. It sat under the southernmost window of the west interior wall near the mural. The linoleum table tops are additions to the original carved wood tables in the lobby. The Postmaster's door had its original "Office Hours" stenciling removed and a peep hole added to the door. In 1939 there were half-globe covers in the ceiling's light fixtures. Edith Hamlin worked on the mural circa 1969¹⁰ cleaning it and applying varnish.¹¹ The tile floor has two holes in the grout near the entrance and two holes in the tile where the table was removed. The floor was waxed at some point and the wax is worn and streaked. The archway to the ante-room to the interior Sheriff's door, the wood encasement around the post office box set in the ante-room, the low ceiling, and the venting above the post office boxes are not original. The Sheriff modernized the rooms in the east/back portion of the building.

⁹ *Contra Costa Gazette*, "Post Office Mural Here Depicts Early Residents," February 6, 1939, 1.

¹⁰ National Archives Records Administration, E.R. Devereux, Officer in Charge United States Post Office, Martinez, *Letter to Charles H. Elgar, Postmaster, San Gabriel California*, June 12, 1970.

¹¹ Edith Hamlin, *Edith Hamlin: Typescript*, 1981, 114, 136.

Martinez Downtown Post Office

Name of Property

Contra Costa County, CA

County and State

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.)

Property is:

- ☐ 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.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Politics/Government

Architecture

Art

Period of Significance

1937

1939

Significant Dates

1937

1939

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

U.S. Treasury Department, Office of the

Supervising Architect, Louis A. Simon

Period of Significance (justification)

1937 is the year the Martinez Downtown Post Office was completed and 1939 is the year the mural was finished and installed in the Post Office. The Post Office's real property, its architectural style, and the Dixon/Hamlin mural exist because of their association with, and resultant funding by, policies of Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal aimed at alleviating unemployment and reestablishing the national spirit during the Great Depression (1929-1941).

Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)

N/A

Martinez Downtown Post Office

Name of Property

Contra Costa County, CA

County and State

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria.)

The Martinez Downtown Post Office (Post Office) is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion "A" at the local level in the area of Politics/Government for the Post Office's association with the programs and policies of President Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal. The Post Office is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion "C" at the local level because the Post Office's architecture embodies the distinctive characteristics of Art Deco/Public Works Administration (PWA) Moderne architecture, as designed by the U.S. Treasury Department's Office of the Supervising Architect during the Great Depression. The Post Office is also eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion "C" at the local level for the artistic significance its mural embodies. The mural is an integral part of the Post Office, depicts the historic past of Martinez, and is an important Depression-era, local installment of Maynard Dixon's and Edith Hamlin's work. The Post Office is nominated under the *U.S. Post Offices in California 1900-1941* Multiple Property Submission, under the context of Funding Bills, specifically post offices built during the New Deal era.

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

Politics/Government Context

The Downtown Martinez Post Office is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion "A" on a local level for its association with the New Deal, President Franklin D. Roosevelt's response to the Great Depression. The Downtown Martinez Post Office is a result of New Deal policies, programs, and funding.

Along with World War II, the Great Depression was the greatest shaping force of the 20th Century. It was not only a financial crisis, but also a crisis of national and individual values. The hardship of the Great Depression moved people away from consumption-oriented, self-centered values heightened in the 1920s. In the decade that followed his taking office in 1933, President Franklin D. Roosevelt and everything he espoused fit the disaster-driven sentiments of 1930s America. The New Deal was manifested from this. The New Deal was borne from the idea expressed by Progressives at the Century's turn that a democratic government can be used to advance the well-being of the people. This concept had not been evidenced tangibly in U.S. history and required bold experimentation. The New Deal met its primary goal – to ease the suffering of the people in their democracy. Roosevelt felt that direct relief programs would cripple the spirit of the nation, making recovery less likely.

In September 1933, Congressman Albert Edward Carter reported a new Martinez Post Office on the "preferred list" submitted to Harold Ickes, Administrator of the \$3.3 billion federal Public Works fund.¹² January 24, 1934 Carter relayed that there was no chance that the federal government would be approving funds for a new Martinez post office, but that Carter would continue to press for funds should Congress make more available.¹³ On August 12, 1935, the Second Deficiency Appropriation Bill was passed in Congress (c.508, 49 Stats 571)¹⁴ allocating over \$58 million dollars for 351 buildings¹⁵ that were almost all post offices and court houses.¹⁶ Martinez, CA was one of those chosen for an "emergency construction fund." The Secretary of the Treasury and the Postmaster General chose the 351 sites based on wording in the Act which called for relief of unemployment. The Second Deficiency Appropriation Act passed the same week as the enactment of Social Security, Works Progress Administration (WPA), and other important legislation, and the passage of these programs is collectively known as the beginning of the Second New Deal.

On September 6, 1934, Martinez Postmaster J.J. Anderson submitted to the U.S. Government potential sites for the new Congress-appropriated \$95,000 post office.¹⁷ That amount would increase to \$106,846. W.A. Hale sold the lot for \$13,350. September 18, 1936 it was reported that George Peterson, San Leandro contractor, received word from Washington, D.C.

¹² *Contra Costa Gazette*, "P.O. Project is Receiving Attention Now," September 7, 1933, 1.

¹³ *Contra Costa Gazette*, "Carter Amplifies His Statement on Post Office Here," January 24, 1934, 1.

¹⁴ U.S. Secretary of State, Statutes at Large of the United States of America from January 1935 to June 1936: Concurrent resolutions, recent treaties and conventions, executive proclamations and agreements, V. 49 (571) (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1936), 620.

¹⁵ *Contra Costa Gazette*, "Martinez Post Office Fund...: Appropriation to Allow Purchase of Site and Building," August 14, 1935, 1.

¹⁶ *American Political Science Review*, V.29,6, December 1935, 985-1000.

¹⁷ *Contra Costa Gazette*, "15 Federal Building Sites...", September 6, 1935, 1.

Martinez Downtown Post Office

Contra Costa County, CA

Name of Property

County and State

that he could proceed constructing the Post Office. Peterson hired Oakland wrecker C.F. Roberts to remove the Hale home and to excavate 1,600 yards of dirt. The Construction Engineer, Fred A. Roemer, listed 22 subcontractors. Martinez Sheet Metal completed the roof materials and was the only Martinez supplier. The rest were from San Francisco and its East Bay area, two from Chicago, one from Ohio, and one from Connecticut. The tile work was completed by Miering Tile Company of Berkeley.¹⁸ The Second New Deal was fulfilling its purpose – to alleviate unemployment and stimulate the economy.

On December 23, 1936 the U.S. Treasury Office of Construction Engineer wrote to George Petersen that the reinforcing steel, slabs, and beams were inspected and met standards such that permission to pour concrete was granted.¹⁹ In July of 1937 a dedication celebration for the new post office was planned, but was cancelled due to strikes in the eastern U.S. and the building was still incomplete.²⁰ Instead there was an "Inspection Day" on July 31, 1937 which drew hundreds including postal and federal officials from other cities. Mail dispatch started from the new building the next day. Box holders could gather their mail as well on this day.²¹ On August 24, 1937 the Post Office Department, San Francisco Division wrote to the Chief Inspector, Washington D.C., that ceremonies had been cancelled, the new quarters at Martinez occupied, and the case of the Martinez Post Office development completed.²²

The Depression did not actually end until 1941, when the U.S. entered World War II. However, the Great Depression and Roosevelt's resultant New Deal recalibrated political issues such as labor unions, community values, welfare, the role and size of government, mutual obligations of citizens to each other, the obligation of institutions and private corporations to those citizens, and more. Nationally and in Martinez, the New Deal's policies, programs, and physical manifestations continue their legacy in everyday lives. Roosevelt's programs did relieve unemployment, rekindled the National spirit, proliferated art and its appreciation, contributed to the physical development of millions of places throughout the Nation, instilled hope and action, and helped farmers. The Downtown Martinez Post Office exists because of the New Deal.

The Post Office's U.S. Heraldic eagle sculpture is a representation of the U.S. government's attempt to identify itself in every part of the nation during the Great Depression, but the Post Office's heraldic eagle is also a relevant symbol in the context of other world regimes of the 1930s. Mass infrastructure projects had never been undertaken in a democracy and there was doubt that a democracy would successfully accomplish such. The U.S., through New Deal projects, proved that infrastructure projects were indeed possible in a democracy and that a democratic government could further its people by furthering their welfare.²³ Although the Downtown Martinez Post Office is historically significant on a local level, it is also a symbol of the broader efforts and meaning of the Administration of President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

Art Deco/PWA Moderne Post Office Architecture Context

The Martinez Downtown Post Office is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion "C" because it embodies the distinct characteristics of Art Deco/Public Works Administration (PWA) Moderne architecture.

In the late 1920s architects embraced a new design language which is today recognized as "Art Deco." Art Deco is based on geometric proportions and severe lines with contrasting but limited exterior sculpture, color, iron, ceramic, and glass ornamentation. Art Deco's low relief exterior wall sculpture reflected the era's Modern Art trends and created its own visual language by abstracting in combination primitive, nature, machine, transportation, communication, and folk symbols in a Cubist style.²⁴ The modernity was enhanced by the machine rhythms found in Art Deco's repetitive patterns and exterior smoothness that aimed to emulate machined surfaces. The combined effect is a hovering tension between surface and

¹⁸ National Archives Records Administration, Treasury Department, Procurement Division, Public Buildings Branch, *Historical Record*, August 30, 1937.

¹⁹ National Archives Records Administration, Treasury Department, Procurement Division, Public Buildings Branch, Field Force, Office of Construction Engineer *Letter to George Peterson: Martinez Post Office Steel*, December 23, 1936.

²⁰ *Contra Costa Gazette*, "Post Office Dedication on July 31," July 21, 1937, 1.

²¹ *Contra Costa Gazette*, "Inspection Day Finds Hundreds at Post Office," July 31, 1937, 1.

²² National Archives Records Administration, Post Office Inspector in Charge, San Francisco, California *Letter to Chief Inspector, Washington D.C. Martinez, California: Attendance of an inspector at the dedication of the new Federal building on July 31, 1937*, August 24, 1937.

²³ R. Leighninger, *Long-Range Public Investment: The Forgotten Legacy of the New Deal* (Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina, 2007).

²⁴ D. Gebhard, *The National Trust Guide to Art Deco in America* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1996).

Martinez Downtown Post Office

Contra Costa County, CA

Name of Property

County and State

ornament and between antiquity and futurism. Art Deco building interiors sport murals, sculpture, mosaics, metal work, ornate light fixtures, and walls of high quality materials such as wood veneers. Civic architecture between 1920 and 1960 tended to be suggestive of a bilateral relationship between citizens and officials where authority imposes a dialogue with its citizenry.²⁵ This is especially true of New Deal buildings where the role of government had expanded in order to benefit, assure, and empower people.²⁶

PWA Moderne is a subclass of Art Deco and is a result of the 1930s Great Depression which suspended most non-governmental construction. Art Deco/PWA Moderne flourished during this time, especially since Art Deco was conducive to frugal municipal building design. PWA Moderne utilized Art Deco characteristics such as low relief, single cubic massing exteriors with abstracted, lightly embellished architectural elements. PWA Moderne is inseparable from the New Deal Programs that in the 1930s built hundreds of Post Offices and thousands of other municipal constructs throughout the United States. Thus PWA Moderne is the most widely represented Art Deco example in the United States.²⁷

The Martinez Downtown Post Office is built as a relatively smooth off-white cubical rectangle, with a dark green, angular roof that rises behind the strong, white horizontal line of the abstracted cornice. The Post Office's entrance and fenestration are symmetrically placed, and the windows and their surrounds are abstractions of Classical columns. The Post Office's exterior ornamentation employs the lightly embellished PWA Moderne style low-relief, sharply contoured Mayan floral scrolls, sunbursts, and repeating lozenged rosettes projecting from the façade as window and door surrounds. The ziggurat-echo window and door surrounds, similarly detailed monumental lighting fixtures, and federalist detailing – including an independent eagle sculpture and façade-relief stars – are typical of Art Deco/PWA Moderne. The Post Office's interior is fitted with a New Deal mural, wood veneers, window bases of graduated rectangles, high cubical ceilings, high quality metal work, and high quality ceramic tile on the floor and wainscot.²⁸ The Martinez Downtown Post Office is a significant local example of Art Deco/PWA Moderne architecture designed by the U.S. Treasury's Office of the Supervising Architect during, and as a result of, the Great Depression.

Dixon/Hamlin "The Road to El Dorado" Mural Art Context

The Martinez Downtown Post Office (Post Office) is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion "C" in the area of Art because of the artistic and historic significance the Post Office's mural embodies.

"The Road to El Dorado" was painted by Maynard Dixon (1875-1946), a nationally recognized 20th Century American Western artist, and his second wife, regionally active artist Edith Hamlin (1902-1992). In 1938, Dixon and Hamlin won the Martinez Post Office mural commission in a U.S. Treasury Section One/Section of Fine Arts (Section One) competition through the standard method of submitting sketches and cartoons.²⁹ Dixon did not win many of the Section One competitions for which he applied. "The Road to El Dorado" was begun in the San Diego Mountains while Dixon recuperated from a surgery and then completed in Dixon's San Francisco studio.³⁰ "The Road to El Dorado" symbolizes the great journey to and dream of the West and fulfills the purpose of Section One art placed in public places: not only to stimulate the economy and save American culture by hiring artists, but more importantly to inspire the Depression-riddled locality by reminding it of its pioneer roots and spirit.³¹ "The Road to El Dorado" depicts Martinez's 1850s terrain and activity – including Martinez's contribution to the California Gold Rush – as a significant harbor, ferry, and supply hub, and a stop on the Pony Express.

²⁵ C. Goodsell, *The Social Meaning of Civic Space: Studying Political Authority Through Architecture* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1988).

²⁶ E. Weber, *Art Deco in America* (New York: Exeter Books, 1985).

²⁷ Gebhard.

²⁸ Tile Heritage, *Tile Analysis Statement: Martinez Downtown Post Office*, July 13, 2008.

²⁹ National Archives Records Administration, Treasury Department, Procurement Division, Public Buildings Branch, Washington, *Memorandum to the Director of Procurement (Through the Supervising Architect) Martinez, California, P.O. X Painting and Sculpture*, June 7, 1938.

³⁰ W.M. Burnside, *Maynard Dixon, Artist of the West* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 1974); D. Hagerty, *Desert Dreams: The Art and Life of Maynard Dixon* (Salt Lake City: Gibbs Smith, 1998).

³¹ B. Haskell, *The American Century: Art & Culture 1900-1950* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1999) 236-237.

Martinez Downtown Post Office

Name of Property

Contra Costa County, CA

County and State

Maynard Dixon's close friend and colleague, photographer Ansel Adams, thought Dixon's Depression-era "socially significant" work was not Dixon's best.³² Section One rules for murals were strict in terms of content and composition.³³ Dixon's murals were "dramatic," but they were also "flat, and stylized and premeditated. They don't convey emotions, they make statements."³⁴ Dixon was initiated into New Deal painting for a living by his first wife, photographer Dorothea Lange, and it was a means for him to support himself as an artist.³⁵ Consequently, Dixon's and Lange's combined portfolio is an art index of the Great Depression. To date, "The Road to El Dorado" is the only found New Deal mural and one of the few extant New Deal art works of any scale in Contra Costa County.

Lafayette Maynard Dixon was born to cultured parents on a wealthy ranch in Fresno. He experienced the real Wild West as a boy, saw the close of the Frontier, and was influenced by and directly communicated with Frederic Remington. Dixon was mostly self-taught. Early on, Dixon began to study simplification of form and distillation of spirit in his paintings although he would never receive formal training. Ansel Adams described Dixon as a free man in a free country whose painting was magnificently inspired, and that Dixon uniquely understood the whole of the land.³⁶ Dixon dressed as a cowboy and traveled the remote, undeveloped West making sketches of and interacting with its landscapes and peoples. He then painted those sketches.³⁷ He worked for *Sunset* magazine as an illustrator, with some of his covers becoming famous.³⁸ He also worked in New York as a graphic artist, book illustrator, and draftsman. Through these skills Dixon was able to paint compositions that that pulled the viewer into the experience of the scene – no matter how abstracted – that created a mesmerizing tension between the open landscape and the focal point from which he commanded the viewer to experience it. Dixon called this technique "Space Division"³⁹ and from its effect was the term "Maynard Dixon Sky" coined.⁴⁰ Dixon was and is continued to be known as perhaps the only Western Landscape Cubist-realist painter.⁴¹ He was also unique in his commitment to unsentimental, non-romanticized authentic depictions of what had been the American Frontier and its peoples.

Maynard Dixon was a known artist during his lifetime with major exhibitions, commissions for the California State Library and other landmark venues, and series of canvases acquired by permanent university, gallery, and national museum collections.⁴² Since his death some of his frame-size paintings have sold for a million and a half dollars. Dixon is the subject of a documentary narrated by a major cinema star.⁴³ Dixon's two sons (by Lange) and Dixon's two wives published a book about him.⁴⁴ Dixon and Lange's children go on tours discussing their parents and their work. Other books have been written about Dixon's work and life. Dixon's sobriquet is the namesake of the "Thunderbird Foundation for the Arts" in Mt. Carmel, Utah which is a non-profit organization furthering the legacy of American artist Maynard Dixon by preserving his estate and educating the public about his immeasurable contributions to American art. On the Thunderbird Foundation's grounds are Dixon's and Hamlin's home and studio buildings. The property is on the National Register of Historic Places.

Dixon's second wife, Edith Hamlin, was born in Oakland, CA. She was an active muralist painting in San Francisco's Coit Tower and several other municipal projects. She was also a successful canvas painter.⁴⁵ She was a major support to Dixon in the latter part of his life, making "The Road to El Dorado" possible.⁴⁶ Hamlin visited their murals in the late 1960s and 1970s, preserving them with cleaning and varnish. She attended to "The Road to El Dorado" circa 1969.

³² Ansel Adams, *Maynard Dixon: An Artist, a Friend in Four Winds* V. 2,3 (1981, Winter), 35-42.

³³ University of Kansas Art Department, *The Treasury Department's Section of Fine Arts*; retrieved December 18, 2008 from <http://www.uca.edu/cfac/art/murals/murals/thesection.htm>.

³⁴ Dorothea Lange, Edith Hamlin, Daniel Dixon, and John Dixon, *The Thunderbird Remembered: Maynard Dixon, the Man and the Artist* (Los Angeles: Gene Autry Western Heritage Museum in Association with University of Washington Press, 1994), 40.

³⁵ Adams.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Hamlin.

³⁸ P. Fish, "The Maynard Dixon Sky" in *Sunset*, v. 217, August 2006, 136.

³⁹ Hamlin, 44, 147.

⁴⁰ Fish, 136.

⁴¹ A.M. Workman, "Modernism and the Desert: Maynard Dixon" in *Vanguard* v.11,2, 1982, 22-25.

⁴² Kevin Starr, *Endangered Dreams: The Great Depression in California* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).

⁴³ Jane McKay and Daniel Dixon, "Maynard Dixon: Art and Spirit," visual material (Los Angeles: Cloud World LLC, 2007).

⁴⁴ *Thunderbird Remembered*.

⁴⁵ Hamlin, 110-114.

⁴⁶ National Archives Records Administration, Building 040048, Sheet 3, Fine Arts Inventory, Public Buildings Service, General Services Administration, *Artist's Biographical Notes*, July 3, 1972.

Martinez Downtown Post Office

Name of Property

Contra Costa County, CA

County and State

U.S. Post Offices in California 1900-1941 Multiple Property Submission Context

The Martinez Downtown Post Office (Post Office) is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places on a local level because it is associated with the evolution of post offices in California, as described by *U.S. Post Offices in California 1900-1941 Multiple Property Submission*.

The Post Office meets the requirements of inclusion to the *U.S. Post Offices in California 1900-1941* multiple property submission because the Post Office was built as the single post office for Martinez and remained the only one until a second was built for Martinez in the 1970s. The Martinez, CA Post Office was established July 28, 1851.⁴⁷ Martinez was a Pony Express relay station in 1860.⁴⁸ In 1927 a new Martinez post office building was dedicated near Main Street,⁴⁹ but Congressman Carter still lobbied for the funds for a new post office and eventually won them. Carter had reported that prior to this only two postal projects had been authorized in California and in areas with acute postal needs.⁵⁰

The Post Office embodies the characteristics of Art Deco/PWA Moderne architecture as designed directly by the U.S. Treasury Department, Office of the Supervising Architect, Louis A. Simon. The Post Office is not a WPA nor PWA project. Its funding was through the Second Deficiency Act which was a segment of the "Second New Deal" legislation in 1935. The Second Deficiency Act funded 351 buildings, mostly post offices. Post offices of this era were built to provide employment during the Great Depression. Downtown Martinez's Post Office has always been the most local elaborate example of projects that resulted from these New Deal policies. The result of the new Post Office was a Martinez record set in 1938 Postal Business.⁵¹

The "Road to El Dorado" mural in the public lobby of the Post Office is the only example of the U.S. Treasury's Section One arts program in Martinez and likely Contra Costa County. The "Road to El Dorado" embodies local history and the economy of the Gold Rush as the Gold Rush manifested itself in Martinez. The mural also depicts other aspects of Martinez's past. The mural would not be nearly as significant outside the Post Office for which it was created, regardless of the provenance of its artists. That it is a mural of Maynard Dixon's and Edith Hamlin's heightens its artistic significance. "The Road to El Dorado" is associated with the development of post offices in California because post offices built during the last half of the 1930s often had comparable murals installed in them.

The Post Office remains the only federal building in Martinez and is a monument of the New Deal. As a unique semblance of function, style, funding, and use of government architecture, the Downtown Martinez Post Office is eligible to be added to the *U.S. Post Offices in California 1900-1941 MPS* because of its association with the development of California's post offices, signifying how and why post offices were built in California in the latter half of the 1930s.

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⁴⁷ National Archives Records Administration, Post Office Department, Office of the Chief Inspector, Washington, Library, *Martinez, CA Post Office Dedication History* July 27, 1937.

⁴⁸ A. Godfrey, *Historic Resource Study: The Pony Express National Historic Trail*, United States Department of the Interior/National Park Service, 1994, 222.

⁴⁹ *Contra Costa Gazette*, "New Post Office Dedication," July 24, 1927, 1.

⁵⁰ *Contra Costa Gazette*, "Martinez Post Office Hope is Slight," January 18, 1934, 1.

⁵¹ *Contra Costa Gazette*, "1938 Postal Business Sets Martinez Record," January 5, 1939, 1.

Martinez Downtown Post Office

Name of Property

Contra Costa County, CA

County and State

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Contra Costa County, CA

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2. Record Group 121 Records of the Public Building Service: Entry 133 Case Files Concerning Embellishments of Federal Buildings, 1934-1943, Box 7, Folder: Martinez—PO (CA). Location: Washington D.C.;
3. T-935 rolls 3 to 6, T-936 rolls 1 and 2, T-937 rolls 2 and 3. Location: San Bruno, CA.
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Martinez Downtown Post Office
Name of Property

Contra Costa County, CA
County and State

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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

National Archive Records, Contra Costa Library,
Martinez Historical Society, Bancroft Library,
Name of repository: Berkeley, USPS General Services

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):

Martinez Downtown Post Office
Name of Property

Contra Costa County, CA
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Less than one acre
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	<u>10</u> Zone	<u>576 099</u> Easting	<u>4208 201</u> Northing	3	<u></u> Zone	<u></u> Easting	<u></u> Northing
2	<u></u> Zone	<u></u> Easting	<u></u> Northing	4	<u></u> Zone	<u></u> Easting	<u></u> Northing

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

The boundary is the property lines of the Downtown Martinez Post property.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The Property lines have not changed since the property was first purchased for the building of the Post Office.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Kristin Henderson, M.L.I.S.
organization Martinez Architectural Heritage Association date January 01, 2012
street & number 2241 LaSalle Street telephone 925-219-5756
city or town Martinez state CA zip code 94553
e-mail hendersonkristin@hotmail.com

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **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. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Continuation Sheets:** Photograph Log and 9 additional figures which include sketch map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

Martinez Downtown Post Office

Name of Property

Contra Costa County, CA

County and State

Photographs:

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

Please see Additional Documentation on Continuation Sheets including Sketch Map/Photo Key (Figure 1) and Photograph Log (Additional Documentation Page 10).

Property Owner:

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

name United States Postal Service/District Office

street & number 1675 7th Street

telephone _____

city or town Oakland

state CA

zip code 94618

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 18 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 Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Downtown Martinez Post Office

Name of Property

Contra Costa County, CA

County and State

U.S. Post Offices in California 1900-1941

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

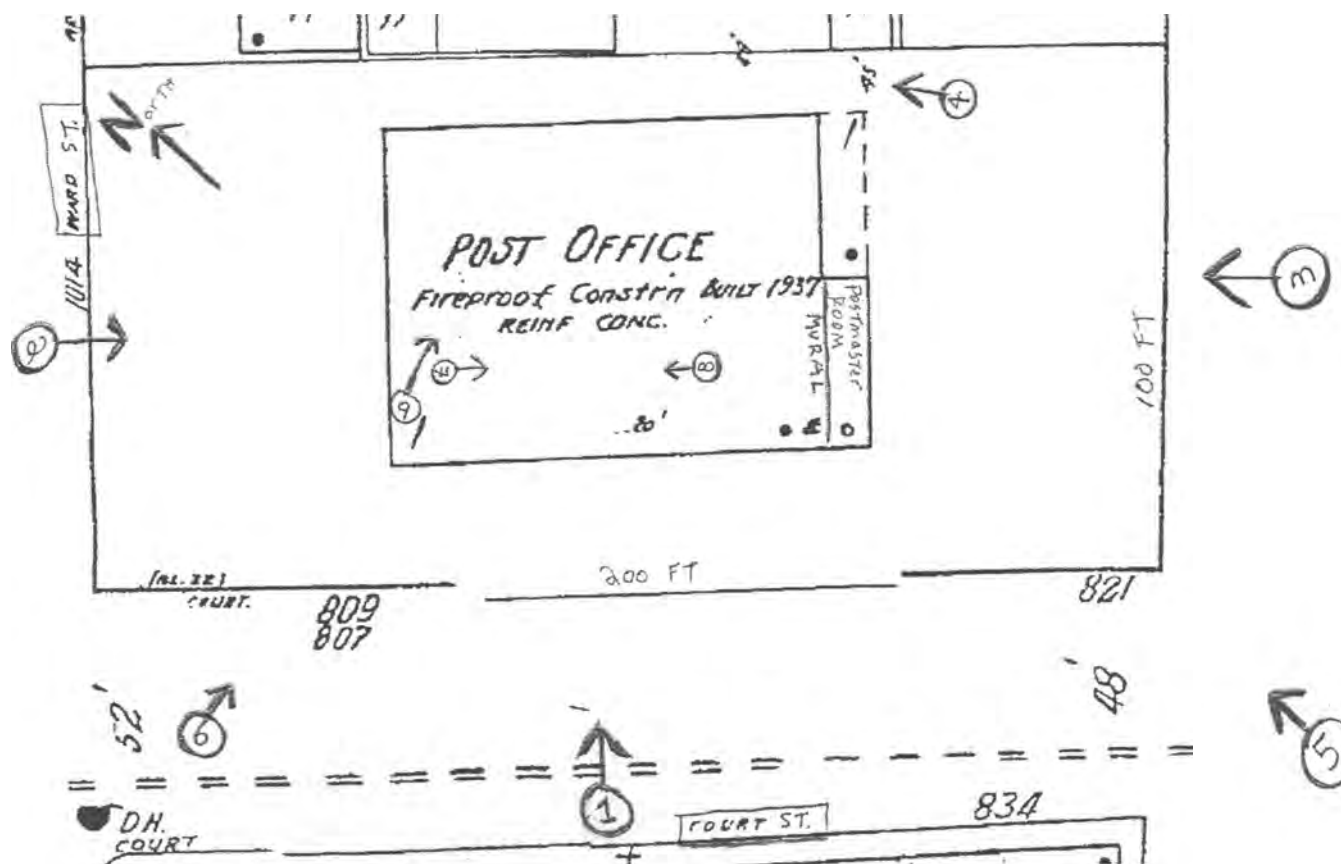
Section number Additional Documentation

Page 1

DESCRIPTION

Figure 1. Sketch Map/Photo Key of Downtown Martinez Post Office.

Numbers in circles correspond to the photographs. The circles' position and point correspond to the photographer's position and point.



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Downtown Martinez Post Office

Name of Property

Contra Costa County, CA

County and State

U.S. Post Offices in California 1900-1941

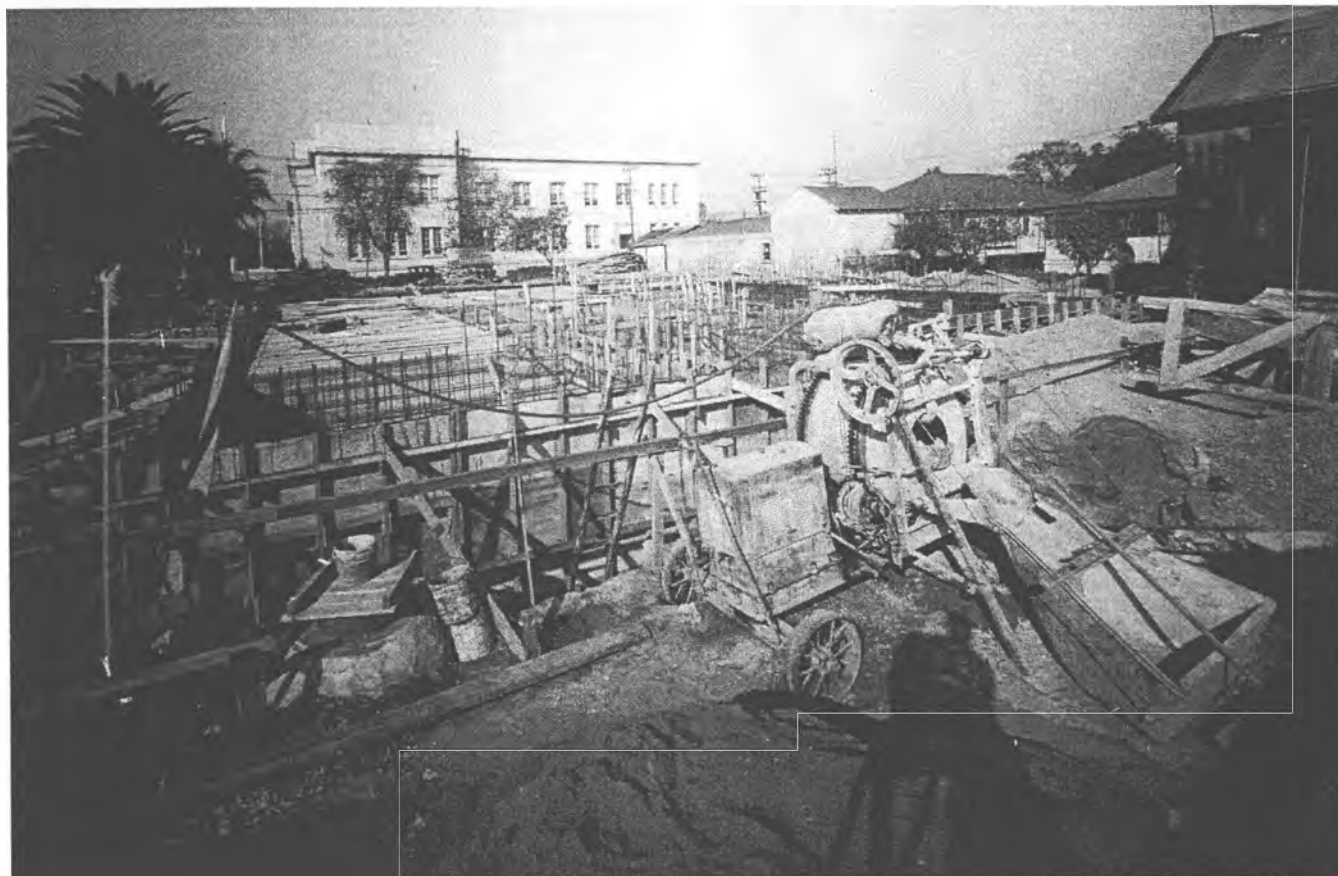
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Additional Documentation

Page 2

Figure 2. Scan of 1936 Photograph.

Available at Martinez Historic Society, "Buildings, Federal IV" file, #5267-18.
Camera facing north, showing Post Office foundation installation and Hall of Records.



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Downtown Martinez Post Office

Name of Property

Contra Costa County, CA

County and State

U.S. Post Offices in California 1900-1941

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Additional Documentation

Page 3

Figure 3. Scan of Historic Photograph circa 1936.

Available at Contra Costa Historic Society.

Camera facing east showing excavation and former surrounding residences.



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Downtown Martinez Post Office

Name of Property

Contra Costa County, CA

County and State

U.S. Post Offices in California 1900-1941

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Additional Documentation

Page 4

Figure 4. Scan of Historic Photograph circa 1965.

Available at Contra Costa Historic Society.
Camera facing east showing west façade of Post Office.



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Downtown Martinez Post Office

Name of Property

Contra Costa County, CA

County and State

U.S. Post Offices in California 1900-1941

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Additional Documentation

Page 5

Figure 5. Scan of Historic Photograph circa 1965.

Available at Martinez Historical Society, file "Buildings—Federal IV" #6-121-5 & 8-150.
Camera facing north showing west façade of Post Office.



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Downtown Martinez Post Office

Name of Property

Contra Costa County, CA

County and State

U.S. Post Offices in California 1900-1941

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Additional Documentation

Page 6

Figure 6. Scan of two Historic Photographs circa 1973.

Available at Martinez Historical Society, file "Buildings—County IV" #8-146-2.
Camera facing east showing west façade of Post Office and pre-jail setting.



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Downtown Martinez Post Office

Name of Property

Contra Costa County, CA

County and State

U.S. Post Offices in California 1900-1941

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

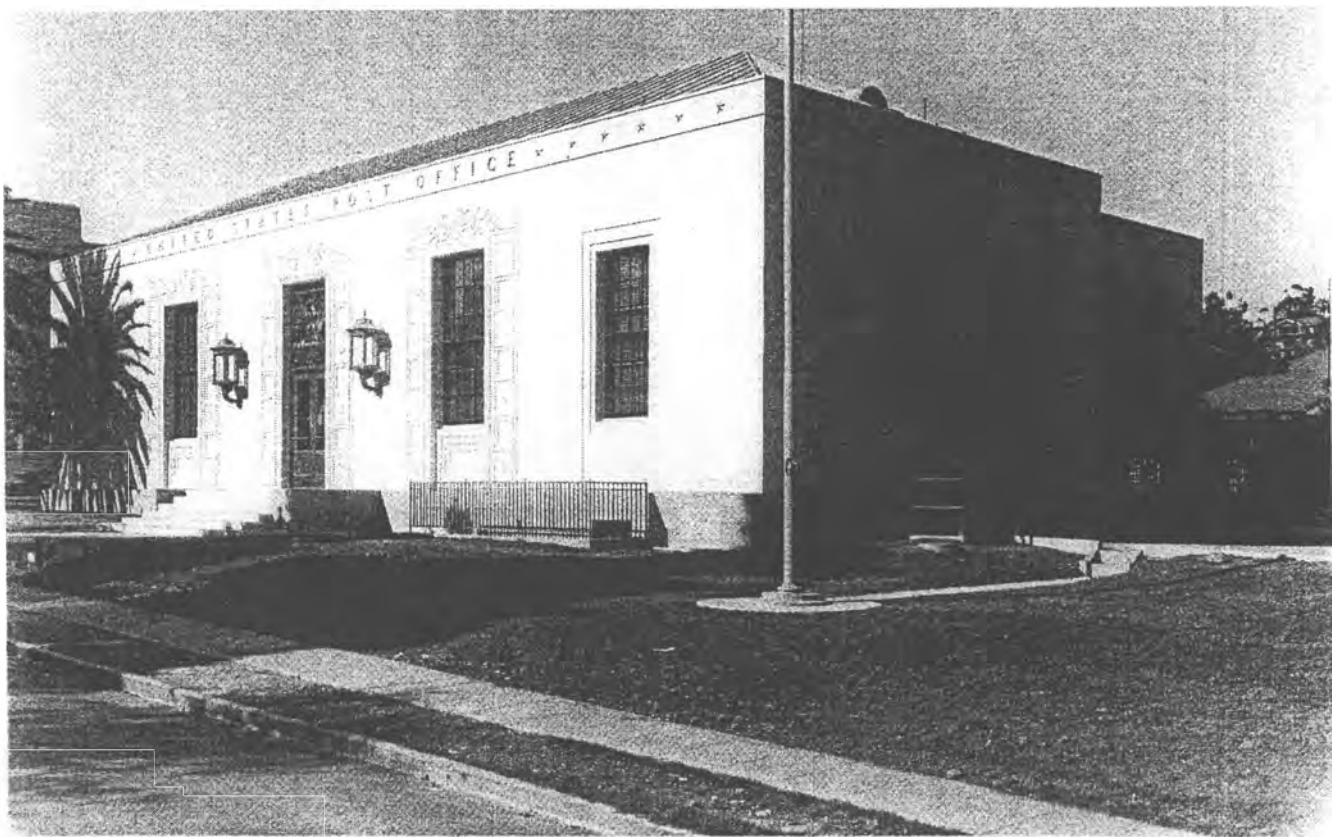
Section number Additional Documentation

Page 7

Figure 7. Photocopy of Historic Photograph dated September 27, 1937.

Located National Archives Records Administration, Record Group 121, Records of the Public Building Service, Entry 31, Office of the Supervising Architect, General Correspondence and Related Records, 1910-1939 (1934-1939), Box 2580, Folder: Martinez, CA Post Office.

Camera facing north showing just completed Post Office west and south façades.



121-ES-8F-1

U.S. POST OFFICE MARTINEZ, CAL. 9-27-37

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Downtown Martinez Post Office

Name of Property

Contra Costa County, CA

County and State

U.S. Post Offices in California 1900-1941

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

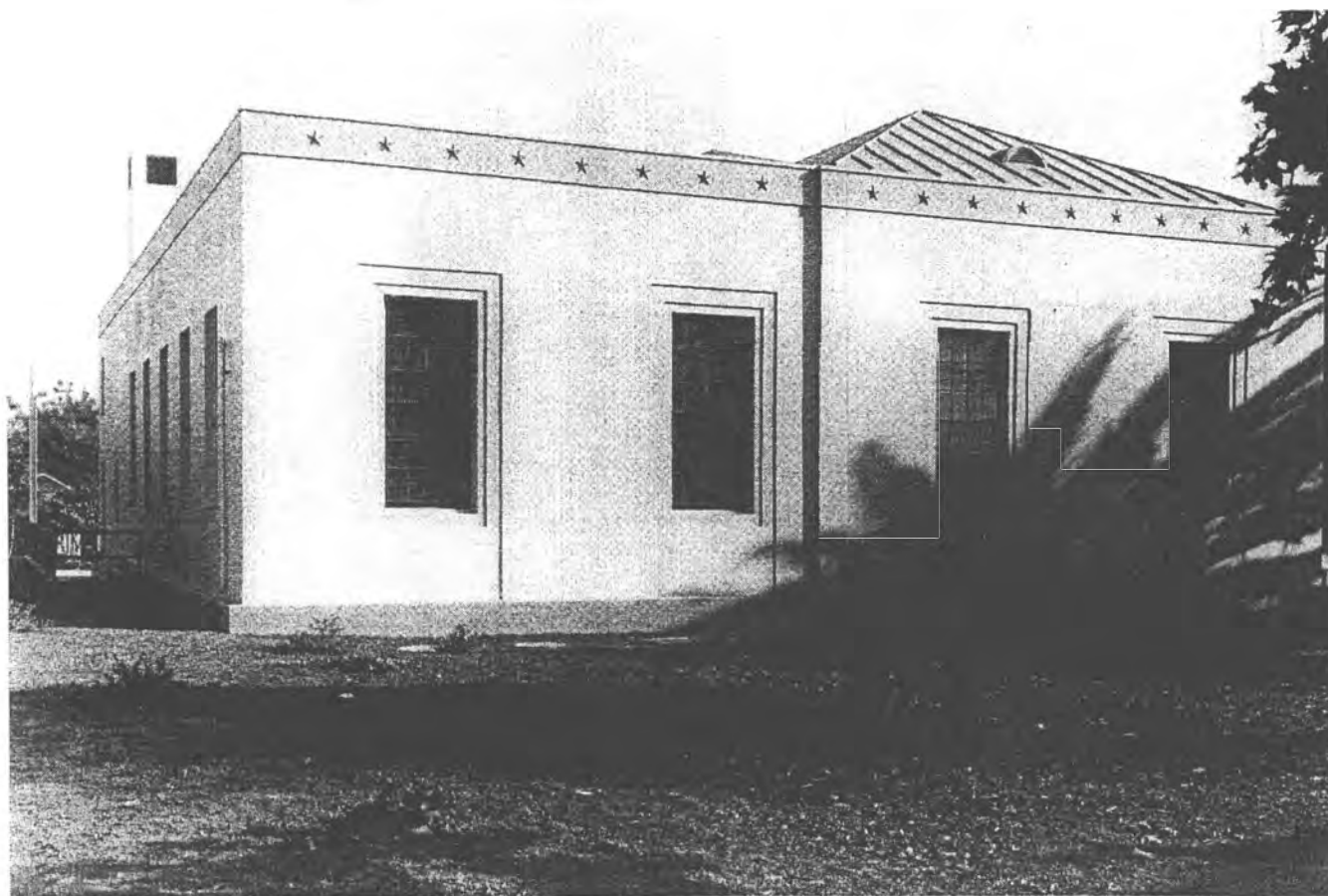
Section number Additional Documentation

Page 8

Figure 8. Photocopy of Historic Photograph dated September 27, 1937.

Located National Archives Records Administration, Record Group 121, Records of the Public Building Service, Entry 31, Office of the Supervising Architect, General Correspondence and Related Records, 1910-1939 (1934-1939), Box 2580, Folder: Martinez, CA Post Office.

Camera on Ward Street facing southeast showing just completed Post Office north façade.



U. S. POST OFFICE MARTINEZ, CAL. 9-27-37

121-BS-8F-2

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Downtown Martinez Post Office

Name of Property

Contra Costa County, CA

County and State

U.S. Post Offices in California 1900-1941

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Additional Documentation

Page 9

Figure 9. Photocopy of Historic Photograph circa 1940.

Located National Archives Records Administration, Record Group 121, Records of the Public Building Service, Entry 133, Case Files Concerning Embellishments of Federal Buildings, 1934-1943, Box 7, Folder: Martinez—PO (CA).

Camera in lobby facing southeast showing installed mural.



121-GA-14-Dixon-PS 4167

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Downtown Martinez Post Office

Name of Property

Contra Costa County, CA

County and State

U.S. Post Offices in California 1900-1941

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Additional Documentation

Page 10

PHOTOGRAPH LOG

Name of Property: Martinez Downtown Post Office
City: Martinez
County: Contra Costa
State: California
Name of Photographer: Kristin Henderson
Date of Photographs: January 2011

Photograph #1 of 9

CA_ContraCostaCounty_MartinezDowntownPostOffice_0001
West entrance façade, camera facing northeast.

Photograph #2 of 9

CA_ContraCostaCounty_MartinezDowntownPostOffice_0002
North façade Post Office (left), north façade 2008 District Attorney Office (right), west façade (1970's) Bray Courthouse (left).
Camera facing southeast.

Photograph #3 of 9

CA_ContraCostaCounty_MartinezDowntownPostOffice_0003
South façade Post Office (dock), west façade Bray Courthouse (right). Shared driveway where Green Street formerly existed (foreground). Camera facing northwest.

Photograph #4 of 9

CA_ContraCostaCounty_MartinezDowntownPostOffice_0004
East façade Post Office, South façade of (1932) Hall of Records (now Courthouse) west façade (background), Bray Courthouse (right). Camera facing northwest.

Photograph #5 of 9

CA_ContraCostaCounty_MartinezDowntownPostOffice_0005
West and south facades of Post Office, (1901) Court House (Finance Building), Hall of Records, (1960's) County Administration Building, Bray Court House, and Court Street roadway. Camera facing north.

Photograph #6 of 9

CA_ContraCostaCounty_MartinezDowntownPostOffice_0006
North and west façade Post Office. West façade Bray Courthouse (left) and (1970) County Jail (right). Camera facing east.

Photograph #7 of 9

CA_ContraCostaCounty_MartinezDowntownPostOffice_0007
Post Office lobby: mural, vestibule, public service windows and vents, bulletin boards, post office box faces, wainscot tile, floor tile, Dutch door, light fixtures, back of exterior eagle. Camera facing southeast.

Photograph #8 of 9

CA_ContraCostaCounty_MartinezDowntownPostOffice_0008
Post Office lobby windows, tables, tile floor and wainscot, post office box faces, light fixtures, and bulletin boards. Camera facing northwest.

Photograph #9 of 9

CA_ContraCostaCounty_MartinezDowntownPostOffice_0009
Post Office Lobby: northern half of east side showing wainscot tile, second set of post office box faces in unoriginal vestibule, original postal workroom floor, vents, and Dutch door. Camera facing east.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section _____ Page _____

=====

SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 12000265 Date Listed: 5/8/2012

Martinez Downtown Post Office
Property Name

Contra Costa
County

CA
State

U.S. Post Offices in California 1900-1941 TR
Multiple Name

This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.



Signature of the Keeper

5/8/12

Date of Action

Amended Items in Nomination:

Certification/Level of Significance:

The appropriate level of significance is *local*, as identified in the narrative text of the nomination.
[The FPO certification block inadvertently checked both national and local.]

These clarifications were confirmed with the USPS FPO office.

DISTRIBUTION:

National Register property file
Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY NAME: Martinez Downtown Post Office

MULTIPLE NAME: US Post Office in California 1900-1941 TR

STATE & COUNTY: CALIFORNIA, Contra Costa

DATE RECEIVED: 3/31/12 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 4/20/12
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 5/7/12 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 5/17/12
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 12000265

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N
REQUEST: Y SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: Y

COMMENT WAIVER: N

___ACCEPT ___RETURN ___REJECT _____DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

The Martinez Downtown Post Office is locally significant under National Register Criteria A and C in the areas of Art, Architecture, and Politics/Government. Completed in 1937, the single-story, reinforced concrete building is a physical manifestation of the New Deal era public works programs sponsored by the Federal government. The building's simple form and restrained detailing mark it as a fine local example of Art Deco/PWA Moderne architecture. The post office building also includes a significant Section of Fine Arts mural by noted western artists Maynard Dixon and Edith Hamlin.

RECOM./CRITERIA Accept Criteria A+C
REVIEWER PAUL R. LUSIGNEAUX DISCIPLINE HISTORIAN
TELEPHONE _____ DATE 5/2/12

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR YN

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.









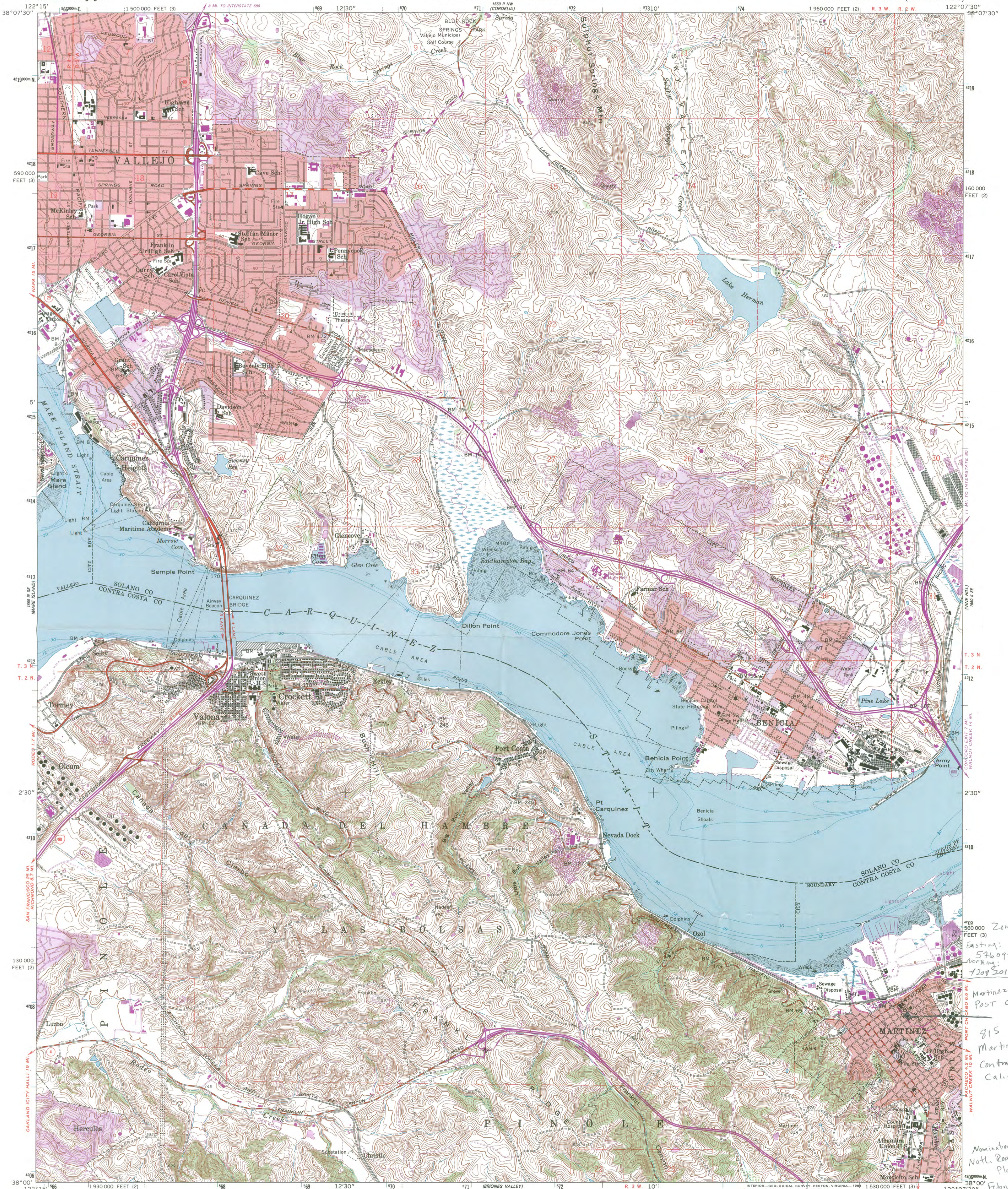




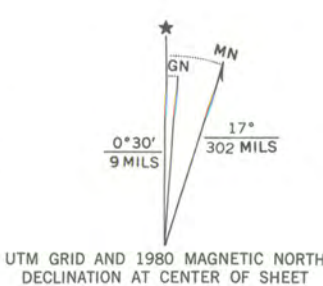








Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey
Control by USGS, NOS/NOAA, and USCE
Topography from aerial photographs by photogrammetric methods
Aerial photographs taken 1943 and 1958
Revised from aerial photographs taken 1958. Field checked 1959
Hydrography compiled from NOS charts 5526 (1956), 5534, and 5574 (1958)
Polyconic projection
10,000-foot grids based on California coordinate system, zones 2 and 3
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks,
zone 10, shown in blue. 1927 North American Datum
To place on the predicted North American Datum 1983
move the projection lines 14 meters north and
95 meters east as shown by dashed corner ticks
Red tint indicates areas in which only landmark buildings are shown
Dashed land lines indicate approximate locations
There may be private inholdings within the boundaries of
the National or State reservations shown on this map



SCALE 1:24,000
1 1000 2000 3000 4000 5000 6000 7000 FEET
1 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 KILOMETER
CONTOUR INTERVAL 20 FEET
DOTTED LINES REPRESENT 5-FOOT CONTOURS
NATIONAL GEODETIC VERTICAL DATUM OF 1929
DEPTH CURVES AND SOUNDINGS IN FEET—DATUM IS MEAN LOW WATER
THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE TWO DATUMS IS VARIABLE
SHORELINE SHOWN REPRESENTS THE APPROXIMATE LINE OF MEAN HIGH WATER
THE AVERAGE RANGE OF TIDE IS APPROXIMATELY 2 FEET



ROAD CLASSIFICATION
Heavy-duty ——— Light-duty ———
Medium-duty ——— Unimproved dirt ———
Interstate Route ——— State Route ———

BENICIA, CALIF.
N3800-W12207.5/7.5

1959
PHOTOREVISED 1980
DMA 1560 II SW-SERIES V895

Revisions shown in purple and woodland compiled from
aerial photographs taken 1979 and other source data
This information not field checked. Map edited 1980
Purple tint indicates extension of urban areas

Zone 10
Easting: 576099, 4283
Northing: 4208301, 18185
Martinez Downtown
Post office
815 Court St.
Martinez,
Contra Costa,
California
Nomination to the
Natl. Reg. Historic
Places
February 2012



**OFFICE OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION
DEPARTMENT OF PARKS AND RECREATION**

1725 23rd Street, Suite 100
SACRAMENTO, CA 95816-7100
(916) 445-7000 Fax: (916) 445-7053
calshpo@parks.ca.gov
www.ohp.parks.ca.gov



January 17, 2012

Dallan C Wordekemper, CCIM
Real Estate Specialist/Federal Preservation Officer
475 L'Enfant Plaza SW, Suite 6670
Washington DC 20260-1862

Subject: **Martinez Downtown Post Office
Contra Costa County, California
Nomination to the National Register of Historic Places**

Dear Mr. Wordekemper:

Enclosed please find the **Martinez Downtown Post Office** nomination to the National Register of Historic Places.

I concur that the **Martinez Downtown Post Office** is eligible for listing at the local level of significance in the area of Politics/Government under Criterion A, and at the local level of significance in the areas of Architecture and Art under Criterion C. The nomination is presented for association with the *U.S. Post Offices in California 1900-1941 Thematic Resources* Multiple Property Submission, entered January 11, 1985.

I have signed the signature page of the nomination as commenting official and will retain a copy of the nomination and a set of photographs for our records.

If you have any questions regarding this nomination, please contact Amy Crain of my staff at 916-445-7009.

Sincerely,

Milford Wayne Donaldson, FAIA
State Historic Preservation Officer

Enclosure

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. Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).

1. Name of Property

historic name Martinez Downtown Post Office

other names/site number Post Office

2. Location

street & number 815 Court Street

city or town Martinez

state California code CA county Contra Costa code 013 zip code 94553

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 ___ 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 at the following level(s) of significance:

___ national ___ statewide ___ local

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property X meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official

Date

17 January 2012

State Historic Preservation Officer
Title

California State Office of Historic Preservation
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

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

Date of Action

Martinez Downtown Post Office
Name of Property

Contra Costa County, CA
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		Total

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

U.S. Post Offices in California 1900-1941

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.)

Government/Post Office
Government/Sheriff's Office
Government/City Storage

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions.)

MODERN MOVEMENT: Art Deco/Public Works
Administration (PWA) Moderne

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: Reinforced Concrete
walls: Reinforced Concrete

roof: Sheet Metal
Wood, glass, aluminum, bronze, iron,
other: steel, limestone, granite

Martinez Downtown Post Office
Name of Property

Contra Costa County, CA
County and State

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

Summary Paragraph

The Martinez Downtown Post Office is an example of Art Deco/Public Works Administration (PWA) Moderne style applied to civic architecture. It is the only extant building, and one of few extant Depression-era government relief projects, in Martinez and Contra Costa County. Designed by the United States Treasury Department's Office of the Supervising Architect, Procurement Division, Public Buildings Branch,¹ the Post Office was constructed in 1937 to be fireproof and with steel reinforced concrete. The Martinez Downtown Post Office is a symmetrical, monumental single-story building with a full basement and mezzanine. Its total area is 5,494 feet. The Martinez Downtown Post Office entrance faces west on Court Street and its north side faces Ward Street. The interior houses the mural "The Road to El Dorado" painted by noted artists Maynard Dixon and his wife, Edith Hamlin. "The Road to El Dorado" was commissioned by the U.S. Treasury Department Section of Fine Arts (1934-1943). The mural was installed on the south wall of the Martinez Downtown Post Office lobby above the two bulletin boards flanking the Postmaster's door. This is the traditional location for Section artwork in smaller post offices designed by the U.S. Treasury's Office of the Supervising Architect.² The mural is in good condition with a few spots of paint missing. The Martinez Downtown Post Office retains most of its interior and exterior integrity of location, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. The Martinez Downtown Post Office appears as it did when it was opened in 1937 with the exception of minor changes and additions. The building is structurally sound and in good condition, with maintenance investment needed.

Narrative Description

Setting

The Martinez Downtown Post Office (Post Office) is located at 815 Court Street, on the southeast corner of Court and Ward Streets. The location was chosen as part of the developing City and County Civic District that began in the 1850s, continued near the Southern Pacific railroad tracks on Court Street in the mid 1880s, and has continued to grow around and on Court Street. The Post Office property is adjacent to the multi-storied 1970s jail and court house buildings, and is across the street from the 1926 Veteran's Memorial Hall, the 1941 Art Deco City Library, and the transitional Art Deco 1932 Hall of Records (currently a court house). The latter two are on the National Register of Historic Places. More buildings within the Commercial and Civic Districts within one or two blocks of the Post Office are listed on various historic registers and buildings within the vicinity of the Post Office date from the 1850s to 2008. The site for the Post Office was owned by W.A. Hale on a lot that was 100 feet on Ward and Green Streets and 200 feet on Court Street.³

Parking

Parking for the public has always been parallel to the curb on the west side and for postal vehicles on the south end of the building where the loading awning and platform exist. The Contra Costa Sheriff's personnel parking is now against the building on the north portion of the property. There is a shared driveway with the adjacent jail to the south where Green Street previously existed. To the east of the Post Office is an alley way contained by the fence that runs on the property line.

Exterior

The Post Office is a single story reinforced concrete building with a full basement and mezzanine level. The building indents midpoint its north and south façades which make it a dwarfed "T" shape, or one box in front of another. The longer box faces Court Street, houses the lobby and Postmaster room, and is under a roof that rises while the back half of the

¹ National Archives Records Administration, Treasury Department, Procurement Division, Public Buildings Branch, *Martinez, CA Post Office Dedication*, July 27, 1937.

² F.K. Pohl, *Framing America: A Social History of American Art* (NY: Thames & Hudson, 2002), 368.

³ National Archives, *Dedication*.

Martinez Downtown Post Office

Name of Property

Contra Costa County, CA

County and State

roof does not. The Art Deco/PWA Moderne Post Office fronts 91 feet on Court Street, 62 feet on Ward and what was Green Street, and was built in line with the Hall of Records.⁴ Art Deco/PWA Moderne design characteristics include a central entrance in a rectangular massing, a dark green angular roof that rises behind a false cornice, windows that are abstracted columns with surrounds that are ziggurat-related low relief extensions of the façade, and ornamentation that is low-relief, lozenged, repeating floral abstracts that are extensions of the façade. The façade is on the whole smooth, white, and unadorned.

The building's entrance is centered on the façade, faces west, and is ascended by granite steps that land in front of the anodized aluminum and glass entrance doors that lead into the interior vestibule. The entrance can also be approached via the "L" shaped, walled wheelchair ramp on the northwest half of the property. One end of the ramp begins at sidewalk level in line with the north edge of the Post Office building, and the other end at the entrance landing. Above the entrance door, a 4' x 4' bronze U.S. Heraldic Eagle is positioned atop a floret accented grill that sits external to the fixed window crowning the door. The door has a detailed surround and above the bronze eagle and within the surround is attached "Martinez California." On either side of the entrance door is a four foot tall original bronze bracketed lamp. Both lamps rise mid-way from the exterior wall. The lamps are glass boxes set in floral abstraction bases and finished on top with a spindled square cover.

The Post Office's rectangular fenestration is spaced evenly on the west, north, and east sides of the building, lending to the building's overall cubic appearance. All windows in the Post Office are double sash and most are wood with clear panes. The two windows closest to the entrance have 15 panes in each of their two vertical sliding segments and have the most ornate surrounds that match the entrance's surround. There are two more windows on the west façade that are closest to both outer edges of the building and are 12 panes each in each of their vertical sliding segments. They have simpler surrounds. The four north wall windows are similarly configured, but the windows are covered with a locked metal grill and only the first (lobby) window is not boarded over on its upper segments. The east (back) wall contains five windows with 12 panes in each vertical sash segment and their upper half is boarded over and the lower half covered with a locking grill. The east wall also has two vertically sliding windows of frosted glass with four panes each segment, one on the main level of the building and the other at the mezzanine level.

75% of the south side of the building is the loading dock. The fenestration associated with the dock is not symmetrical or ornamental. These windows are simple double sash, frosted, and contain small quantities of panes. The remaining east 25% of the building's south docking side contains two windows exactly like those of the north side and an externally inaccessible gully with two vertically sliding windows with six panes each. The Post Office mail loading dock on the south side of the building is protected by an uptilting serrated metal awning. There are three double sash windows above this awning which are barely visible from the ground, and only when one is at a distance from the building. Three heavy-duty utilitarian doors (the middle one is double) lead from the dock to various parts of the building, including the mezzanine catwalk and basement. The "fallout" shelter sign is seen just inside the building from the dock. There is a short set of steps and archway on the east façade that lead to the south side's docking platform.

There is a basement entrance door on the east side of the building and one on the south half of the west side. Both are approached by cement steps with metal pipe railings, which are found throughout the inside and outside of the Post Office. The west façade gully mantle is the only instance of decorative external iron railing; all other railings are metal pipe. Just south of the west façade gully mantle is the Post Office's India Limestone cornerstone which acknowledges Henry Morgenthau Jr. as the U.S. Treasurer and Louis Simon as the Supervising Architect. There is a flagpole on the south half of the front lawn. The sheet metal roof has several eyebrow vents and a chimney-type vent extends from the south east side of the roof. This vent's grate is comprised of terra-cotta colored semi-circles. From the cornice rise low relief stars on three sides of the building and on the front "United States Post Office" is mounted on the false cornice. There is a foundation lip that extends from the façade and wraps around the building. There is a structural recess in the east half of the south wall that creates the docking platform area.

Landscaping

The Post Office's landscape includes four Canary Island Date Palms planted when the Post Office was built. Other landscape elements are more recent, including one Coast Live Oak and one Italian Cypress each about 25 years old; two Tobiras and two Arborvitae about 20 years old; and three Blue Point Junipers, two Lilacs, 16 Sweet Myrtles, and one Indian Hawthorn, all approximately 10 years old. In 2011, flowers were planted on the Ward Street edge of the property.⁵

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ F. Kluber, *Martinez Downtown Post Office Trees and Shrub Inventory*, 2011.

Martinez Downtown Post Office
Name of Property

Contra Costa County, CA
County and State

Exterior Alterations

The changes to the exterior of the Downtown Martinez Post Office are few and do not compromise the historic character of the building. The largest is the three-foot high, off white, wheelchair ramp. Built in 1994, the ramp obstructs the view of the bottom of the northern half of the west façade.⁶ While the north Ward Street side was once all lawn, it is now partially parking for the Sheriff's office. The Post Office's external walls contain surface fractures. The original hollowed bronze metal entrance doors were replaced with anodized aluminum and glass doors with fixed crown window above the doors. The cast metal Heraldic Eagle was painted at some point and has slight erosion.⁷ An extra railing was placed around the perimeter of the external entrance landing. A department of the Contra Costa Sheriff now occupies the back of the building. The windows on the back half of the building are boarded and painted over, and covered with locked grills while the corners of the building sport cameras. Where the windows are boarded over, the same brown paint as the window casings has been used to paint the boards and this camouflages the boards. The dock's metal awning paint is peeling. The four palm trees are original to the property and have grown taller. The landscaping is otherwise all new.

The Post Office retains the feel and integrity of its original character and remains a sturdy cubic building in need of regular capital maintenance which would require some hazardous materials remediation if the original interior basement lead paint, the asbestos wrapped pipes, and the lead rain gutters still exist. The contents of the exterior paint and/or plaster are unknown. It is unknown if the metal awning over the docking platform is original to the building. The 1949 Sanborn map does not explicitly describe its presence.

The setting around the Post Office has changed particularly to its east and south as the developing County Seat and Civic Center buildings replaced residences and smaller buildings with massive buildings. Because of the new jail adjacent to the Post Office, the southern edge of the property no longer runs on Green Street. The building of the current jail replaced multiple blocks of residences.

Interior

The Post Office was designed with a basement of 275 square feet for the Post Office Inspector, three postal storage rooms totaling 800 square feet, corridors, boiler, and fuel rooms. The first floor contained its public lobby, a Post Office screen, 240 square feet of space for the Postmaster, 240 square feet for the financial section, and a workroom with an area of 2,480 square feet. The Post Office was built with a ground area of 5,494 square feet and 155,177 cubic feet.⁸

The front entrance doors lead into a high quality wood and beveled glass paneled boxed vestibule which is somewhat wider than the entrance doors and sits below the silhouette of the back of the bronze Heraldic Eagle sculpture. The vestibule's north and south sides lead to the lobby which is the only area accessible by the public. The lobby is finished in birch wood paneling, terracotta quarry-tile floors and wainscoting, glass, two sets of pre-cast metal Heraldic Eagle emblazoned post office box fronts, high cubic ceiling, five brass light fixtures, art mural, and two carved and finished wood public work tables that now have linoleum tops placed over them. There are no other freestanding objects in the lobby except a few trash cans, a small modern table, and rugs. On the north side of the interior lobby wall that separates the public from the postal workers, one set of post office boxes has been rotated 90 degrees from its original position parallel to the other set of boxes in order to open an archway that creates an ante-room for the interior Sheriff's door. This vestibule shows the original red board floor which continues into the current postal work room. The mezzanine level suspends an interior catwalk overlooking the postal workroom floor.

The Postmaster's room on the south end of the building remains intact, although its use is unknown at this time. The door is stenciled "POST MASTER," with stained and stenciled wood trimmed glass covered bulletin boards on either side and the art mural above. The door also has a glass peephole. The north wall contains two more bulletin boards, and the west wall six total—three on each side of the vestibule. The east interior wall that separates the public from the workroom contains one set of post boxes, a ledged wood Dutch door, three sets of public service windows with vertically sliding decorative bronze grills and frosted glass stenciled with the intended purpose of the postal-public interface window. The service windows are framed in stained wood. Running above the public service windows are five rectangle vent windows

⁶ *Contra Costa Times*, "Over the Ramp Parts," April 12, 1994. Article located Martinez Historical Society, "Libraries" file #94-89-4.

⁷ National Archives Records Administration, Building 040048 Sheet 2, Fine Arts Inventory, Public Buildings Service, General Services Administration, *Heraldic Eagle*, July 3, 1972.

⁸ National Archives Records Administration, Post Office Department, Post Office Inspector In Charge, San Francisco, CA letter to Chief Inspector, Washington D.C., *Martinez, CA Post Office Dedication*, August 24, 1937.

Martinez Downtown Post Office

Name of Property

Contra Costa County, CA

County and State

with vertical turned iron bars. Above the southern four of these iron vents are smaller aluminum vents with shaded horizontal openings. Behind this public service wall is what is left of the postal work room.

The basement rooms not used by the Sheriff are accessed by a cement stairway with pipe railing through the lobby, dock, workroom, or through external basement doors. The City of Martinez rents storage in some of the basement rooms. The historic record states that the basement utility, storage, and corridor rooms are all cement with metal trim and cement water paint. The basement office floors were cement with plaster wainscot and walls, metal furring, wood trim, and cement water paint. The swing rooms were made with wood, plaster, metal and lead and oil paint. The toilet rooms were the same except their floors are tile and the janitor closets cement. The lookouts have cork floors, plaster walls and ceilings, and black paint and other details. The basement areas the City of Martinez rents have not changed, but the paint is peeling.

Maynard Dixon/Edith Hamlin Mural "The Road to El Dorado"

In 1939 "The Road to El Dorado" mural was installed above and around the Martinez Downtown Post Office Postmaster's door and flanking bulletin boards. The 15 x 18 foot mural was painted by husband and wife artists Maynard Dixon and Edith Hamlin. It contains a lunette rainbow form and presents a bold, stylized, and colorful gamut of early travelers and residents who stopped in Martinez for provisions on the "Road to El Dorado" en route to Gold Country in the Sierra Mountains. The mural is composed according to U.S. Treasury Department Section of Fine Arts (Section One) conventions. The mural emphasizes a Pony Express rider (Pony Express historically came through Martinez), a worn rider walking his horse, a well-dressed white male and female, a well-dressed Spanish woman between them, a young sailor, an indigenous person, and a miner. The latter three are heading east and the rest of the characters west. The characters are accompanying and helping one another. The Carquinez Straits, local hills, and a river steamer appear in the background.⁹

Internal modifications

The wood paneling in the lobby, the wood window casements, and the mural show moderate distresses that are repairable at this time. One of the original carved wood tables was removed. It sat under the southernmost window of the west interior wall near the mural. The linoleum table tops are additions to the original carved wood tables in the lobby. The Postmaster's door had its original "Office Hours" stenciling removed and a peep hole added to the door. In 1939 there were half-globe covers in the ceiling's light fixtures. Edith Hamlin worked on the mural in the 1960s¹⁰ cleaning it and applying varnish.¹¹ The tile floor has two holes in the grout near the entrance and two holes in the tile where the table was removed. The floor was waxed at some point and the wax is worn and streaked. The archway to the ante-room to the interior Sheriff's door, the wood encasement around the post office box set in the ante-room, the low ceiling, and the venting above the post office boxes are not original. The Sheriff modernized the rooms in the east/back portion of the building.

⁹ *Contra Costa Gazette*, "Post Office Mural Here Depicts Early Residents," February 6, 1939, 1.

¹⁰ National Archives Records Administration, E.R. Devereux, Officer in Charge United States Post Office, Martinez, *Letter to Charles H. Elgar, Postmaster, San Gabriel California*, June 12, 1970.

¹¹ Edith Hamlin, *Edith Hamlin: Typescript*, 1981, 114, 136.

Martinez Downtown Post Office
Name of Property

Contra Costa County, CA
County and State

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.)

Property is:

- ☐ 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.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Politics/Government

Architecture

Art

Period of Significance

1937

1939

Significant Dates

1937

1939

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

U.S. Treasury Department, Office of the

Supervising Architect, Louis A. Simon

Period of Significance (justification)

1937 is the year the Martinez Downtown Post Office was completed and 1939 is the year the mural was finished and installed in the Post Office. The Post Office's real property, its architectural style, and the Dixon/Hamlin mural exist because of their association with, and resultant funding by, policies of Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal aimed at alleviating unemployment and reestablishing the national spirit during the Great Depression (1929-1941).

Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)

N/A

Martinez Downtown Post Office
Name of Property

Contra Costa County, CA
County and State

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria.)

The Martinez Downtown Post Office (Post Office) is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion "A" at the local level in the area of Politics/Government for the Post Office's association with the programs and policies of President Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal. The Post Office is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion "C" at the local level because the Post Office's architecture embodies the distinctive characteristics of Art Deco/Public Works Administration (PWA) Moderne architecture, as designed by the U.S. Treasury Department's Office of the Supervising Architect during the Great Depression. The Post Office is also eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion "C" at the local level for the artistic significance its mural embodies. The mural is an integral part of the Post Office, depicts the historic past of Martinez, and is an important Depression-era, local installment of Maynard Dixon's and Edith Hamlin's work. The Post Office is nominated under the *U.S. Post Offices in California 1900-1941* Multiple Property Submission, under the context of Funding Bills, specifically post offices built during the New Deal era.

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

Politics/Government Context

The Downtown Martinez Post Office is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion "A" on a local level for its association with the New Deal, President Franklin D. Roosevelt's response to the Great Depression. The Downtown Martinez Post Office is a result of New Deal policies, programs, and funding.

Along with World War II, the Great Depression was the greatest shaping force of the 20th Century. It was not only a financial crisis, but also a crisis of national and individual values. The hardship of the Great Depression moved people away from consumption-oriented, self-centered values heightened in the 1920s. In the decade that followed his taking office in 1933, President Franklin D. Roosevelt and everything he espoused fit the disaster-driven sentiments of 1930s America. The New Deal was manifested from this. The New Deal was borne from the idea expressed by Progressives at the Century's turn that a democratic government can be used to advance the well-being of the people. This concept had not been evidenced tangibly in U.S. history and required bold experimentation. The New Deal met its primary goal – to ease the suffering of the people in their democracy. Roosevelt felt that direct relief programs would cripple the spirit of the nation, making recovery less likely.

In September 1933, Congressman Albert Edward Carter reported a new Martinez Post Office on the "preferred list" submitted to Harold Ickes, Administrator of the \$3.3 billion federal Public Works fund.¹² January 24, 1934 Carter relayed that there was no chance that the federal government would be approving funds for a new Martinez post office, but that Carter would continue to press for funds should Congress make more available.¹³ On August 12, 1935, the Second Deficiency Appropriation Bill was passed in Congress (c.508, 49 Stats 571)¹⁴ allocating over \$58 million dollars for 351 buildings¹⁵ that were almost all post offices and court houses.¹⁶ Martinez, CA was one of those chosen for an "emergency construction fund." The Secretary of the Treasury and the Postmaster General chose the 351 sites based on wording in the Act which called for relief of unemployment. The Second Deficiency Appropriation Act passed the same week as the enactment of Social Security, Works Progress Administration (WPA), and other important legislation, and the passage of these programs is collectively known as the beginning of the Second New Deal.

On September 6, 1934, Martinez Postmaster J.J. Anderson submitted to the U.S. Government potential sites for the new Congress-appropriated \$95,000 post office.¹⁷ That amount would increase to \$106,846. W.A. Hale sold the lot for \$13,350. September 18, 1936 it was reported that George Peterson, San Leandro contractor, received word from Washington, D.C.

¹² *Contra Costa Gazette*, "P.O. Project is Receiving Attention Now," September 7, 1933, 1.

¹³ *Contra Costa Gazette*, "Carter Amplifies His Statement on Post Office Here," January 24, 1934, 1.

¹⁴ U.S. Secretary of State, Statutes at Large of the United States of America from January 1935 to June 1936: Concurrent resolutions, recent treaties and conventions, executive proclamations and agreements, V. 49 (571) (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1936), 620.

¹⁵ *Contra Costa Gazette*, "Martinez Post Office Fund...: Appropriation to Allow Purchase of Site and Building," August 14, 1935, 1.

¹⁶ *American Political Science Review*, V.29,6, December 1935, 985-1000.

¹⁷ *Contra Costa Gazette*, "15 Federal Building Sites...", September 6, 1935, 1.

Martinez Downtown Post Office

Name of Property

Contra Costa County, CA

County and State

that he could proceed constructing the Post Office. Peterson hired Oakland wrecker C.F. Roberts to remove the Hale home and to excavate 1,600 yards of dirt. The Construction Engineer, Fred A. Roemer, listed 22 subcontractors. Martinez Sheet Metal completed the roof materials and was the only Martinez supplier. The rest were from San Francisco and its East Bay area, two from Chicago, one from Ohio, and one from Connecticut. The tile work was completed by Miering Tile Company of Berkeley.¹⁸ The Second New Deal was fulfilling its purpose – to alleviate unemployment and stimulate the economy.

On December 23, 1936 the U.S. Treasury Office of Construction Engineer wrote to George Petersen that the reinforcing steel, slabs, and beams were inspected and met standards such that permission to pour concrete was granted.¹⁹ In July of 1937 a dedication celebration for the new post office was planned, but was cancelled due to strikes in the eastern U.S. and the building was still incomplete.²⁰ Instead there was an "Inspection Day" on July 31, 1937 which drew hundreds including postal and federal officials from other cities. Mail dispatch started from the new building the next day. Box holders could gather their mail as well on this day.²¹ On August 24, 1937 the Post Office Department, San Francisco Division wrote to the Chief Inspector, Washington D.C., that ceremonies had been cancelled, the new quarters at Martinez occupied, and the case of the Martinez Post Office development completed.²²

The Depression did not actually end until 1941, when the U.S. entered World War II. However, the Great Depression and Roosevelt's resultant New Deal recalibrated political issues such as labor unions, community values, welfare, the role and size of government, mutual obligations of citizens to each other, the obligation of institutions and private corporations to those citizens, and more. Nationally and in Martinez, the New Deal's policies, programs, and physical manifestations continue their legacy in everyday lives. Roosevelt's programs did relieve unemployment, rekindled the National spirit, proliferated art and its appreciation, contributed to the physical development of millions of places throughout the Nation, instilled hope and action, and helped farmers. The Downtown Martinez Post Office exists because of the New Deal.

The Post Office's U.S. Heraldic eagle sculpture is a representation of the U.S. government's attempt to identify itself in every part of the nation during the Great Depression, but the Post Office's heraldic eagle is also a relevant symbol in the context of other world regimes of the 1930s. Mass infrastructure projects had never been undertaken in a democracy and there was doubt that a democracy would successfully accomplish such. The U.S., through New Deal projects, proved that infrastructure projects were indeed possible in a democracy and that a democratic government could further its people by furthering their welfare.²³ Although the Downtown Martinez Post Office is historically significant on a local level, it is also a symbol of the broader efforts and meaning of the Administration of President Franklin D. Roosevelt.

Art Deco/PWA Moderne Post Office Architecture Context

The Martinez Downtown Post Office is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion "C" because it embodies the distinct characteristics of Art Deco/Public Works Administration (PWA) Moderne architecture.

In the late 1920s architects embraced a new design language which is today recognized as "Art Deco." Art Deco is based on geometric proportions and severe lines with contrasting but limited exterior sculpture, color, iron, ceramic, and glass ornamentation. Art Deco's low relief exterior wall sculpture reflected the era's Modern Art trends and created its own visual language by abstracting in combination primitive, nature, machine, transportation, communication, and folk symbols in a Cubist style.²⁴ The modernity was enhanced by the machine rhythms found in Art Deco's repetitive patterns and exterior smoothness that aimed to emulate machined surfaces. The combined effect is a hovering tension between surface and

¹⁸ National Archives Records Administration, Treasury Department, Procurement Division, Public Buildings Branch, *Historical Record*, August 30, 1937.

¹⁹ National Archives Records Administration, Treasury Department, Procurement Division, Public Buildings Branch, Field Force, Office of Construction Engineer *Letter to George Peterson: Martinez Post Office Steel*, December 23, 1936.

²⁰ *Contra Costa Gazette*, "Post Office Dedication on July 31," July 21, 1937, 1.

²¹ *Contra Costa Gazette*, "Inspection Day Finds Hundreds at Post Office," July 31, 1937, 1.

²² National Archives Records Administration, Post Office Inspector in Charge, San Francisco, California *Letter to Chief Inspector, Washington D.C. Martinez, California: Attendance of an inspector at the dedication of the new Federal building on July 31, 1937*, August 24, 1937.

²³ R. Leighninger, *Long-Range Public Investment: The Forgotten Legacy of the New Deal* (Columbia, South Carolina: University of South Carolina, 2007).

²⁴ D. Gebhard, *The National Trust Guide to Art Deco in America* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1996).

Martinez Downtown Post Office

Name of Property

Contra Costa County, CA

County and State

ornament and between antiquity and futurism. Art Deco building interiors sport murals, sculpture, mosaics, metal work, ornate light fixtures, and walls of high quality materials such as wood veneers. Civic architecture between 1920 and 1960 tended to be suggestive of a bilateral relationship between citizens and officials where authority imposes a dialogue with its citizenry.²⁵ This is especially true of New Deal buildings where the role of government had expanded in order to benefit, assure, and empower people.²⁶

PWA Moderne is a subclass of Art Deco and is a result of the 1930s Great Depression which suspended most non-governmental construction. Art Deco/PWA Moderne flourished during this time, especially since Art Deco was conducive to frugal municipal building design. PWA Moderne utilized Art Deco characteristics such as low relief, single cubic massing exteriors with abstracted, lightly embellished architectural elements. PWA Moderne is inseparable from the New Deal Programs that in the 1930s built hundreds of Post Offices and thousands of other municipal constructs throughout the United States. Thus PWA Moderne is the most widely represented Art Deco example in the United States.²⁷

The Martinez Downtown Post Office is built as a relatively smooth off-white cubical rectangle, with a dark green, angular roof that rises behind the strong, white horizontal line of the abstracted cornice. The Post Office's entrance and fenestration are symmetrically placed, and the windows and their surrounds are abstractions of Classical columns. The Post Office's exterior ornamentation employs the lightly embellished PWA Moderne style low-relief, sharply contoured Mayan floral scrolls, sunbursts, and repeating lozenged rosettes projecting from the façade as window and door surrounds. The ziggurat-echo window and door surrounds, similarly detailed monumental lighting fixtures, and federalist detailing – including an independent eagle sculpture and façade-relief stars – are typical of Art Deco/PWA Moderne. The Post Office's interior is fitted with a New Deal mural, wood veneers, window bases of graduated rectangles, high cubical ceilings, high quality metal work, and high quality ceramic tile on the floor and wainscot.²⁸ The Martinez Downtown Post Office is a significant local example of Art Deco/PWA Moderne architecture designed by the U.S. Treasury's Office of the Supervising Architect during, and as a result of, the Great Depression.

Dixon/Hamlin "The Road to El Dorado" Mural Art Context

The Martinez Downtown Post Office (Post Office) is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion "C" in the area of Art because of the artistic and historic significance the Post Office's mural embodies.

"The Road to El Dorado" was painted by Maynard Dixon (1875-1946), a nationally recognized 20th Century American Western artist, and his second wife, regionally active artist Edith Hamlin (1902-1992). In 1938, Dixon and Hamlin won the Martinez Post Office mural commission in a U.S. Treasury Section One/Section of Fine Arts (Section One) competition through the standard method of submitting sketches and cartoons.²⁹ Dixon did not win many of the Section One competitions for which he applied. "The Road to El Dorado" was begun in the San Diego Mountains while Dixon recuperated from a surgery and then completed in Dixon's San Francisco studio.³⁰ "The Road to El Dorado" symbolizes the great journey to and dream of the West and fulfills the purpose of Section One art placed in public places: not only to stimulate the economy and save American culture by hiring artists, but more importantly to inspire the Depression-riddled locality by reminding it of its pioneer roots and spirit.³¹ "The Road to El Dorado" depicts Martinez's 1850s terrain and activity – including Martinez's contribution to the California Gold Rush – as a significant harbor, ferry, and supply hub, and a stop on the Pony Express.

²⁵ C. Goodsell, *The Social Meaning of Civic Space: Studying Political Authority Through Architecture* (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1988).

²⁶ E. Weber, *Art Deco in America* (New York: Exeter Books, 1985).

²⁷ Gebhard.

²⁸ Tile Heritage, *Tile Analysis Statement: Martinez Downtown Post Office*, July 13, 2008.

²⁹ National Archives Records Administration, Treasury Department, Procurement Division, Public Buildings Branch, Washington, *Memorandum to the Director of Procurement (Through the Supervising Architect) Martinez, California, P.O. X Painting and Sculpture*, June 7, 1938.

³⁰ W.M. Burnside, *Maynard Dixon, Artist of the West* (Provo, UT: Brigham Young University Press, 1974); D. Hagerty, *Desert Dreams: The Art and Life of Maynard Dixon* (Salt Lake City: Gibbs Smith, 1998).

³¹ B. Haskell, *The American Century: Art & Culture 1900-1950* (New York: Whitney Museum of American Art, 1999) 236-237.

Martinez Downtown Post Office

Name of Property

Contra Costa County, CA

County and State

Maynard Dixon's close friend and colleague, photographer Ansel Adams, thought Dixon's Depression-era "socially significant" work was not Dixon's best.³² Section One rules for murals were strict in terms of content and composition.³³ Dixon's murals were "dramatic," but they were also "flat, and stylized and premeditated. They don't convey emotions, they make statements."³⁴ Dixon was initiated into New Deal painting for a living by his first wife, photographer Dorothea Lange, and it was a means for him to support himself as an artist.³⁵ Consequently, Dixon's and Lange's combined portfolio is an art index of the Great Depression. To date, "The Road to El Dorado" is the only found New Deal mural and one of the few extant New Deal art works of any scale in Contra Costa County.

Lafayette Maynard Dixon was born to cultured parents on a wealthy ranch in Fresno. He experienced the real Wild West as a boy, saw the close of the Frontier, and was influenced by and directly communicated with Frederic Remington. Dixon was mostly self-taught. Early on, Dixon began to study simplification of form and distillation of spirit in his paintings although he would never receive formal training. Ansel Adams described Dixon as a free man in a free country whose painting was magnificently inspired, and that Dixon uniquely understood the whole of the land.³⁶ Dixon dressed as a cowboy and traveled the remote, undeveloped West making sketches of and interacting with its landscapes and peoples. He then painted those sketches.³⁷ He worked for *Sunset* magazine as an illustrator, with some of his covers becoming famous.³⁸ He also worked in New York as a graphic artist, book illustrator, and draftsman. Through these skills Dixon was able to paint compositions that that pulled the viewer into the experience of the scene – no matter how abstracted – that created a mesmerizing tension between the open landscape and the focal point from which he commanded the viewer to experience it. Dixon called this technique "Space Division"³⁹ and from its effect was the term "Maynard Dixon Sky" coined.⁴⁰ Dixon was and is continued to be known as perhaps the only Western Landscape Cubist-realist painter.⁴¹ He was also unique in his commitment to unsentimental, non-romanticized authentic depictions of what had been the American Frontier and its peoples.

Maynard Dixon was a known artist during his lifetime with major exhibitions, commissions for the California State Library and other landmark venues, and series of canvases acquired by permanent university, gallery, and national museum collections.⁴² Since his death some of his frame-size paintings have sold for a million and a half dollars. Dixon is the subject of a documentary narrated by a major cinema star.⁴³ Dixon's two sons (by Lange) and Dixon's two wives published a book about him.⁴⁴ Dixon and Lange's children go on tours discussing their parents and their work. Other books have been written about Dixon's work and life. Dixon's sobriquet is the namesake of the "Thunderbird Foundation for the Arts" in Mt. Carmel, Utah which is a non-profit organization furthering the legacy of American artist Maynard Dixon by preserving his estate and educating the public about his immeasurable contributions to American art. On the Thunderbird Foundation's grounds are Dixon's and Hamlin's home and studio buildings. The property is on the National Register of Historic Places.

Dixon's second wife, Edith Hamlin, was born in Oakland, CA. She was an active muralist painting in San Francisco's Coit Tower and several other municipal projects. She was also a successful canvas painter.⁴⁵ She was a major support to Dixon in the latter part of his life, making "The Road to El Dorado" possible.⁴⁶ Hamlin visited their murals in the 1970s, preserving them with cleaning and varnish.

³² Ansel Adams, *Maynard Dixon: An Artist, a Friend in Four Winds* V. 2,3 (1981, Winter), 35-42.

³³ University of Kansas Art Department, *The Treasury Department's Section of Fine Arts*; retrieved December 18, 2008 from <http://www.uca.edu/cfac/art/murals/murals/thesection.htm>.

³⁴ Dorothea Lange, Edith Hamlin, Daniel Dixon, and John Dixon, *The Thunderbird Remembered: Maynard Dixon, the Man and the Artist* (Los Angeles: Gene Autry Western Heritage Museum in Association with University of Washington Press, 1994), 40.

³⁵ Adams.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Hamlin.

³⁸ P. Fish, "The Maynard Dixon Sky" in *Sunset*, v. 217, August 2006, 136.

³⁹ Hamlin, 44, 147.

⁴⁰ Fish, 136.

⁴¹ A.M. Workman, "Modernism and the Desert: Maynard Dixon" in *Vanguard* v.41,2, 1982, 22-25.

⁴² Kevin Starr, *Endangered Dreams: The Great Depression in California* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996).

⁴³ Jane McKay and Daniel Dixon, "Maynard Dixon: Art and Spirit," visual material (Los Angeles: Cloud World LLC, 2007).

⁴⁴ *Thunderbird Remembered*.

⁴⁵ Hamlin, 110-114.

⁴⁶ National Archives Records Administration, Building 040048, Sheet 3, Fine Arts Inventory, Public Buildings Service, General Services Administration, *Artist's Biographical Notes*, July 3, 1972.

Martinez Downtown Post Office

Name of Property

Contra Costa County, CA

County and State

U.S. Post Offices in California 1900-1941 Multiple Property Submission Context

The Martinez Downtown Post Office (Post Office) is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places on a local level because it is associated with the evolution of post offices in California, as described by *U.S. Post Offices in California 1900-1941 Multiple Property Submission*.

The Post Office meets the requirements of inclusion to the *U.S. Post Offices in California 1900-1941* multiple property submission because the Post Office was built as the single post office for Martinez and remained the only one until a second was built for Martinez in the 1970s. The Martinez, CA Post Office was established July 28, 1851.⁴⁷ Martinez was a Pony Express relay station in 1860.⁴⁸ In 1927 a new Martinez post office building was dedicated near Main Street,⁴⁹ but Congressman Carter still lobbied for the funds for a new post office and eventually won them. Carter had reported that prior to this only two postal projects had been authorized in California and in areas with acute postal needs.⁵⁰

The Post Office embodies the characteristics of Art Deco/PWA Moderne architecture as designed directly by the U.S. Treasury Department, Office of the Supervising Architect, Louis A. Simon. The Post Office is not a WPA nor PWA project. Its funding was through the Second Deficiency Act which was a segment of the "Second New Deal" legislation in 1935. The Second Deficiency Act funded 351 buildings, mostly post offices. Post offices of this era were built to provide employment during the Great Depression. Downtown Martinez's Post Office has always been the most local elaborate example of projects that resulted from these New Deal policies. The result of the new Post Office was a Martinez record set in 1938 Postal Business.⁵¹

The "Road to El Dorado" mural in the public lobby of the Post Office is the only example of the U.S. Treasury's Section One arts program in Martinez and likely Contra Costa County. The "Road to El Dorado" embodies local history and the economy of the Gold Rush as the Gold Rush manifested itself in Martinez. The mural also depicts other aspects of Martinez's past. The mural would not be nearly as significant outside the Post Office for which it was created, regardless of the provenance of its artists. That it is a mural of Maynard Dixon's and Edith Hamlin's heightens its artistic significance. "The Road to El Dorado" is associated with the development of post offices in California because post offices built during the last half of the 1930s often had comparable murals installed in them.

The Post Office remains the only federal building in Martinez and is a monument of the New Deal. As a unique semblance of function, style, funding, and use of government architecture, the Downtown Martinez Post Office is eligible to be added to the *U.S. Post Offices in California 1900-1941 MPS* because of its association with the development of California's post offices, signifying how and why post offices were built in California in the latter half of the 1930s.

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⁴⁷ National Archives Records Administration, Post Office Department, Office of the Chief Inspector, Washington, Library, *Martinez, CA Post Office Dedication History* July 27, 1937.

⁴⁸ A. Godfrey, *Historic Resource Study: The Pony Express National Historic Trail*, United States Department of the Interior/National Park Service, 1994, 222.

⁴⁹ *Contra Costa Gazette*, "New Post Office Dedication," July 24, 1927, 1.

⁵⁰ *Contra Costa Gazette*, "Martinez Post Office Hope is Slight," January 18, 1934, 1.

⁵¹ *Contra Costa Gazette*, "1938 Postal Business Sets Martinez Record," January 5, 1939, 1.

Martinez Downtown Post Office

Contra Costa County, CA

Name of Property

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Name of Property

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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: National Archive Records, Contra Costa Library,
Martinez Historical Society, Bancroft Library,
Berkeley, USPS General Services

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):

Martinez Downtown Post Office
Name of Property

Contra Costa County, CA
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Less than one acre
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	<u>10</u> Zone	<u>576 099</u> Easting	<u>4208 201</u> Northing	3	<u> </u> Zone	<u> </u> Easting	<u> </u> Northing
2	<u> </u> Zone	<u> </u> Easting	<u> </u> Northing	4	<u> </u> Zone	<u> </u> Easting	<u> </u> Northing

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

The boundary is the property lines of the Downtown Martinez Post property.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The Property lines have not changed since the property was first purchased for the building of the Post Office.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Kristin Henderson, M.L.I.S.
organization Martinez Architectural Heritage Association date January 01, 2012
street & number 2241 LaSalle Street telephone 925-219-5756
city or town Martinez state CA zip code 94553
e-mail hendersonkristin@hotmail.com

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **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. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Continuation Sheets:** Photograph Log and 9 additional figures which include sketch map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

Martinez Downtown Post Office
Name of Property

Contra Costa County, CA
County and State

Photographs:

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

Please see Additional Documentation on Continuation Sheets including Sketch Map/Photo Key (Figure 1) and Photograph Log (Additional Documentation Page 10).

Property Owner:

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

name United States Postal Service/District Office
street & number 1675 7th Street telephone _____
city or town Oakland state CA zip code 94618

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 18 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 Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Downtown Martinez Post Office

Name of Property

Contra Costa County, CA

County and State

U.S. Post Offices in California 1900-1941

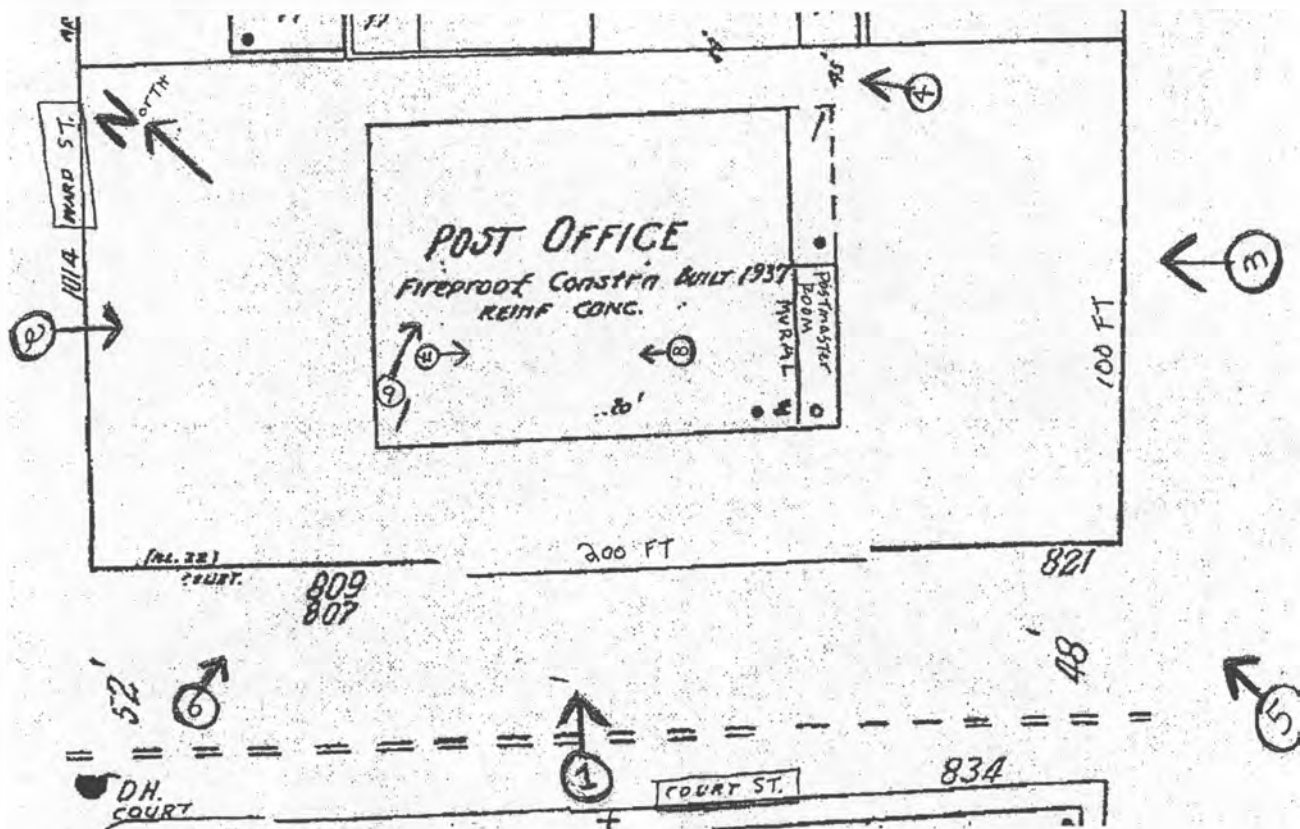
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Additional DocumentationPage 1

DESCRIPTION

Figure 1. Sketch Map/Photo Key of Downtown Martinez Post Office.

Numbers in circles correspond to the photographs. The circles' position and point correspond to the photographer's position and point.



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Downtown Martinez Post Office

Name of Property

Contra Costa County, CA

County and State

U.S. Post Offices in California 1900-1941

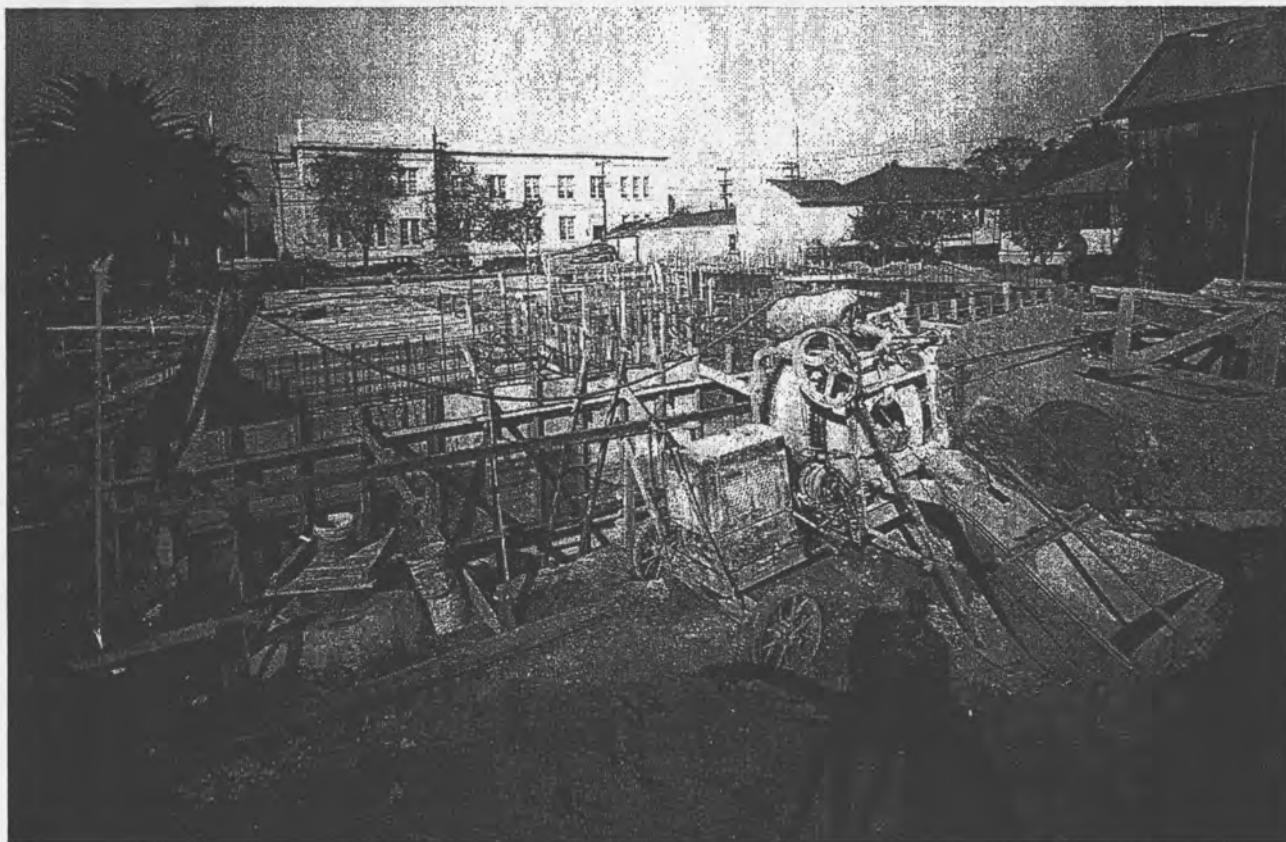
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Additional Documentation

Page 2

Figure 2. Scan of 1936 Photograph.

Available at Martinez Historic Society, "Buildings, Federal IV" file, #5267-18.
Camera facing north, showing Post Office foundation installation and Hall of Records.



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Downtown Martinez Post Office

Name of Property

Contra Costa County, CA

County and State

U.S. Post Offices in California 1900-1941

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Additional Documentation

Page 3

Figure 3. Scan of Historic Photograph circa 1936.

Available at Contra Costa Historic Society.

Camera facing east showing excavation and former surrounding residences.



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Downtown Martinez Post Office

Name of Property

Contra Costa County, CA

County and State

U.S. Post Offices in California 1900-1941

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Additional Documentation

Page 4

Figure 4. Scan of Historic Photograph circa 1965.

Available at Contra Costa Historic Society.
Camera facing east showing west façade of Post Office.



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Downtown Martinez Post Office

Name of Property

Contra Costa County, CA

County and State

U.S. Post Offices in California 1900-1941

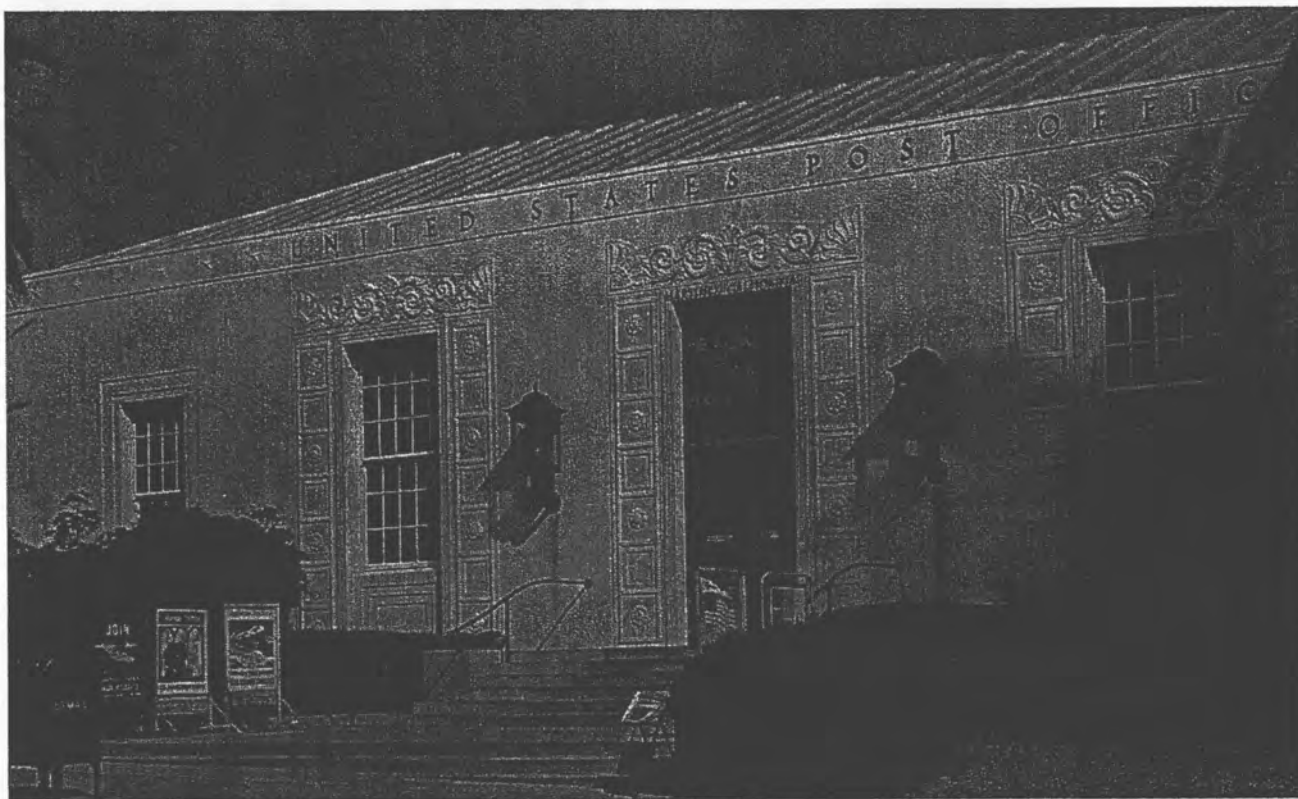
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Additional Documentation

Page 5

Figure 5. Scan of Historic Photograph circa 1965.

Available at Martinez Historical Society, file "Buildings—Federal IV" #6-121-5 & 8-150.
Camera facing north showing west façade of Post Office.



**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Downtown Martinez Post Office

Name of Property

Contra Costa County, CA

County and State

U.S. Post Offices in California 1900-1941

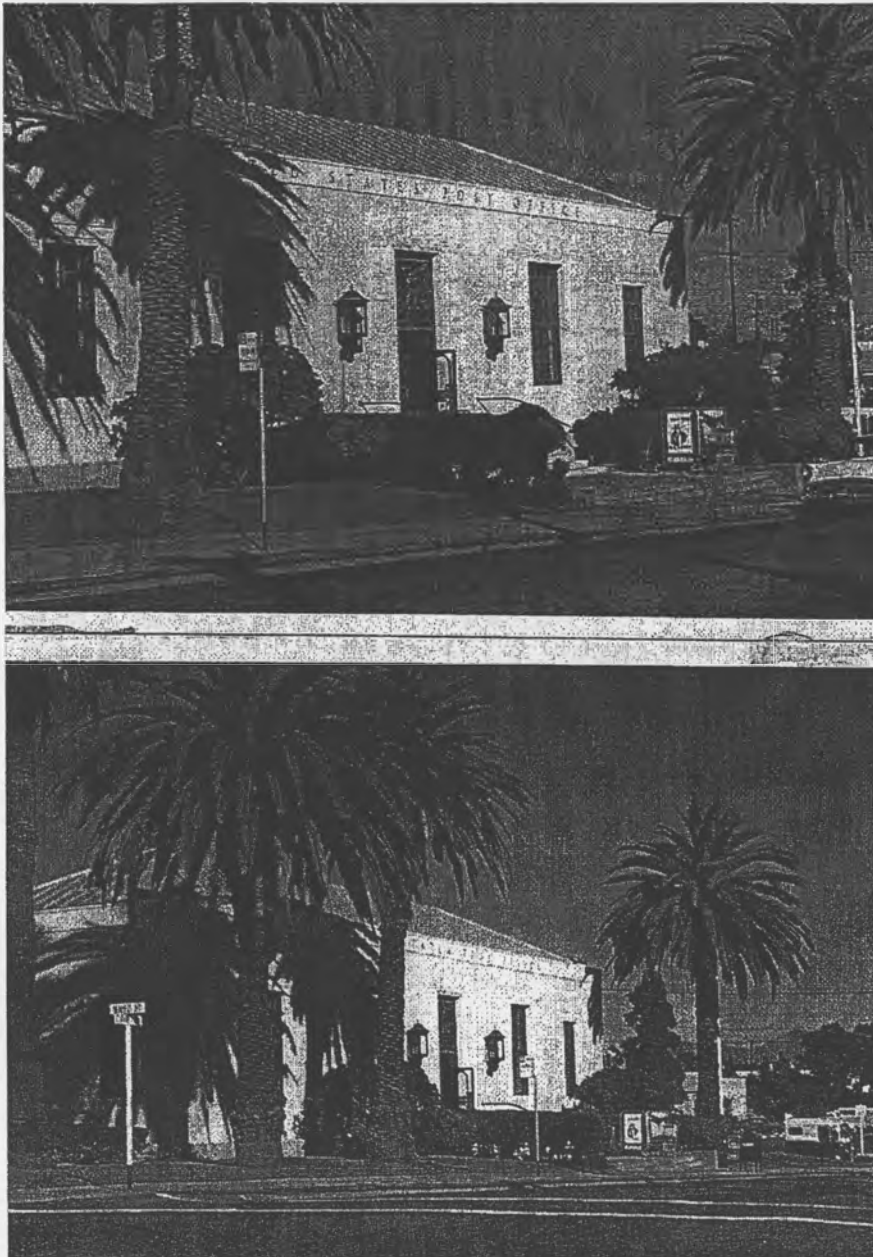
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Additional Documentation

Page 6

Figure 6. Scan of two Historic Photographs circa 1973.

Available at Martinez Historical Society, file "Buildings—County IV" #8-146-2.
Camera facing east showing west façade of Post Office and pre-jail setting.



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Downtown Martinez Post Office

Name of Property

Contra Costa County, CA

County and State

U.S. Post Offices in California 1900-1941

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

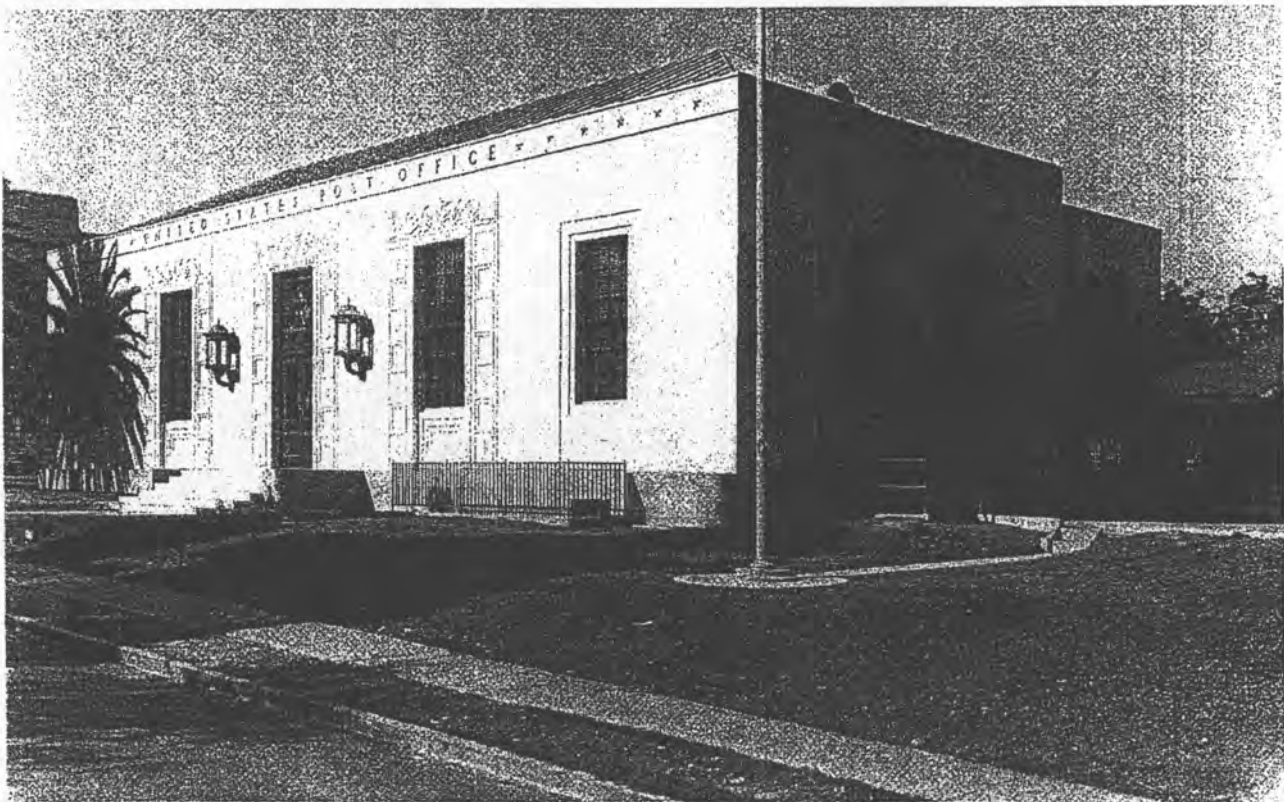
Section number Additional Documentation

Page 7

Figure 7. Photocopy of Historic Photograph dated September 27, 1937.

Located National Archives Records Administration, Record Group 121, Records of the Public Building Service, Entry 31, Office of the Supervising Architect, General Correspondence and Related Records, 1910-1939 (1934-1939), Box 2580, Folder: Martinez, CA Post Office.

Camera facing north showing just completed Post Office west and south façades.



121-BS-8F-1

U.S. POST OFFICE MARTINEZ, CAL. 9-27-37

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Downtown Martinez Post Office

Name of Property

Contra Costa County, CA

County and State

U.S. Post Offices in California 1900-1941

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

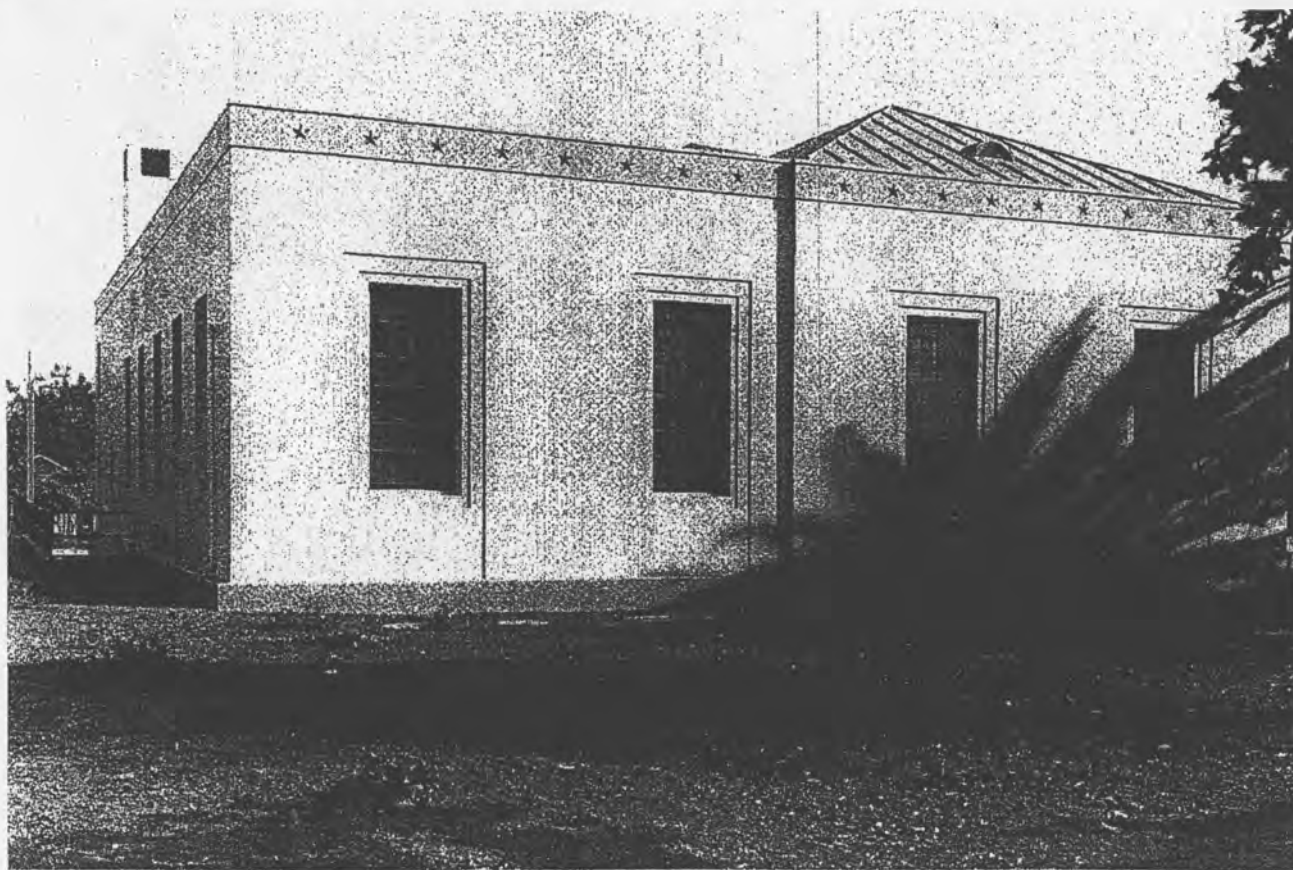
Section number Additional Documentation

Page 8

Figure 8. Photocopy of Historic Photograph dated September 27, 1937.

Located National Archives Records Administration, Record Group 121, Records of the Public Building Service, Entry 31, Office of the Supervising Architect, General Correspondence and Related Records, 1910-1939 (1934-1939), Box 2580, Folder: Martinez, CA Post Office.

Camera on Ward Street facing southeast showing just completed Post Office north façade.



U. S. POST OFFICE MARTINEZ, CAL. 9-27-37

121-BS-8F-2

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Downtown Martinez Post Office

Name of Property

Contra Costa County, CA

County and State

U.S. Post Offices in California 1900-1941

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

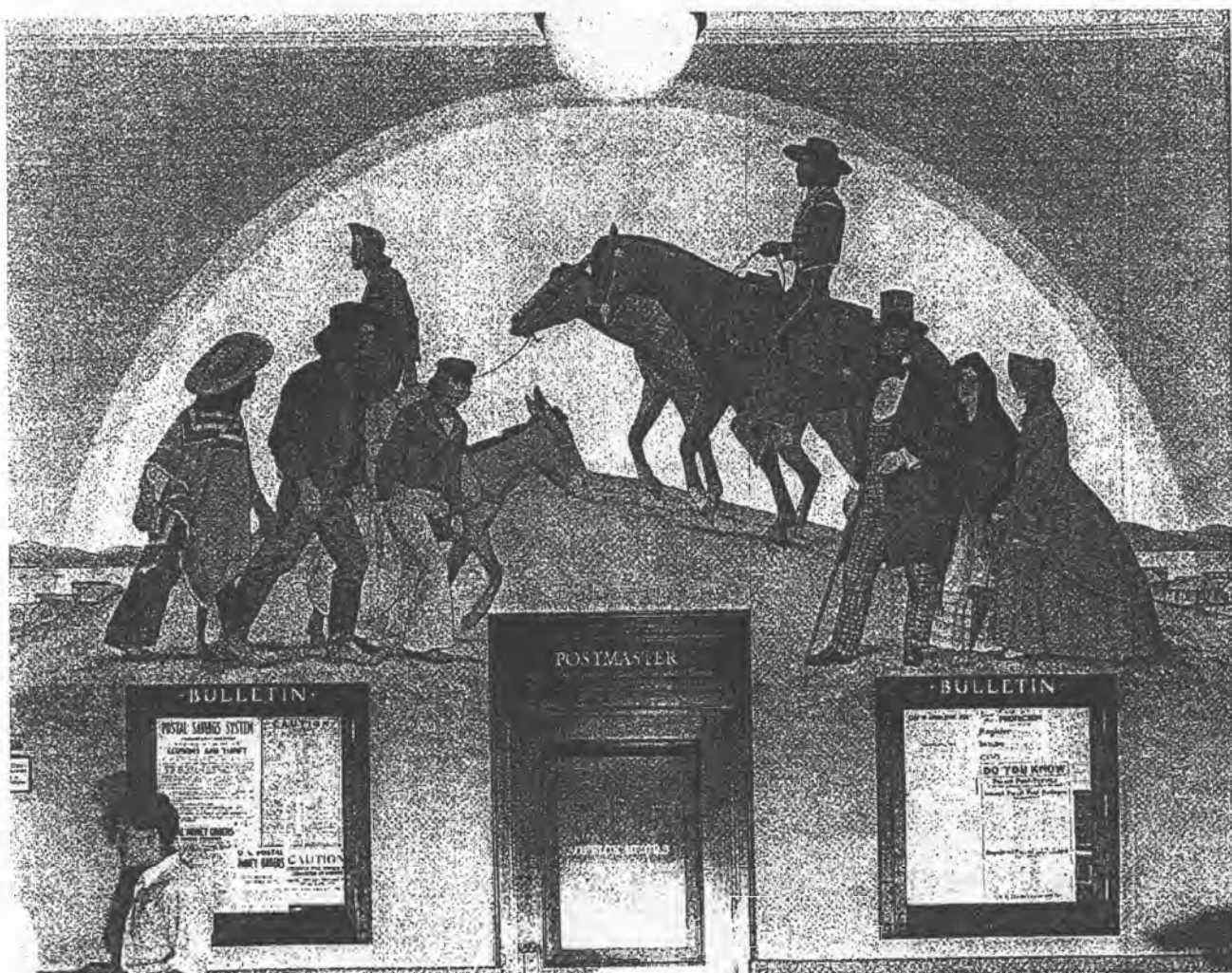
Section number Additional Documentation

Page 9

Figure 9. Photocopy of Historic Photograph circa 1940.

Located National Archives Records Administration, Record Group 121, Records of the Public Building Service, Entry 133, Case Files Concerning Embellishments of Federal Buildings, 1934-1943, Box 7, Folder: Martinez—PO (CA).

Camera in lobby facing southeast showing installed mural.



121-GA-14-Dixon-PS 4167

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Downtown Martinez Post Office

Name of Property

Contra Costa County, CA

County and State

U.S. Post Offices in California 1900-1941

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Additional Documentation

Page 10

PHOTOGRAPH LOG

Name of Property: Martinez Downtown Post Office
City: Martinez
County: Contra Costa
State: California
Name of Photographer: Kristin Henderson
Date of Photographs: January 2011

Photograph #1 of 9

CA_ContraCostaCounty_MartinezDowntownPostOffice_0001
West entrance façade, camera facing northeast.

Photograph #2 of 9

CA_ContraCostaCounty_MartinezDowntownPostOffice_0002
North façade Post Office (left), north façade 2008 District Attorney Office (right), west façade (1970's) Bray Courthouse (left).
Camera facing southeast.

Photograph #3 of 9

CA_ContraCostaCounty_MartinezDowntownPostOffice_0003
South façade Post Office (dock), west façade Bray Courthouse (right). Shared driveway where Green Street formerly existed (foreground). Camera facing northwest.

Photograph #4 of 9

CA_ContraCostaCounty_MartinezDowntownPostOffice_0004
East façade Post Office, South façade of (1932) Hall of Records (now Courthouse) west façade (background), Bray Courthouse (right). Camera facing northwest.

Photograph #5 of 9

CA_ContraCostaCounty_MartinezDowntownPostOffice_0005
West and south facades of Post Office, (1901) Court House (Finance Building), Hall of Records, (1960's) County Administration Building, Bray Court House, and Court Street roadway. Camera facing north.

Photograph #6 of 9

CA_ContraCostaCounty_MartinezDowntownPostOffice_0006
North and west façade Post Office. West façade Bray Courthouse (left) and (1970) County Jail (right). Camera facing east.

Photograph #7 of 9

CA_ContraCostaCounty_MartinezDowntownPostOffice_0007
Post Office lobby: mural, vestibule, public service windows and vents, bulletin boards, post office box faces, wainscot tile, floor tile, Dutch door, light fixtures, back of exterior eagle. Camera facing southeast.

Photograph #8 of 9

CA_ContraCostaCounty_MartinezDowntownPostOffice_0008
Post Office lobby windows, tables, tile floor and wainscot, post office box faces, light fixtures, and bulletin boards. Camera facing northwest.

Photograph #9 of 9

CA_ContraCostaCounty_MartinezDowntownPostOffice_0009
Post Office Lobby: northern half of east side showing wainscot tile, second set of post office box faces in unoriginal vestibule, original postal workroom floor, vents, and Dutch door. Camera facing east.



March 6, 2012

National Register of Historic Places
National Park Service
Attn: Keeper
1201 Eye St NW, 8th Floor
Washington, DC 20005

RE: Martinez Downtown Post Office
815 Court St
Martinez, Contra Costa County, CA 94553

Dear Keeper of the National Register of Historic Places;

Enclosed are the official papers signed on February 28, 2012 by the Certifying Official for the United States Postal Service. The Postal Service occupied a building within the community referenced above.

The United States Postal Service has no objections to this nomination.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Dallan C. Wordekemper", written over a horizontal line.

Dallan C. Wordekemper, CCIM
Federal Preservation Officer

Cc: USPS – Legal