

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR FEDERAL PROPERTIES

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	FEB 12 1986
DATE ENTERED	MAR 14 1986

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Miles City Main Post Office

AND/OR COMMON

Miles City Main Post Office

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

106 North 7th Street

NA NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Miles City

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

2

STATE

Montana

CODE

30

COUNTY

Custer

CODE

017

2 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE	
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Thematic Group	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
	NA	<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

4 AGENCY

REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS: (If applicable)

U.S. Postal Service, Western Regional Headquarters

STREET & NUMBER

850 Cherry Avenue

CITY, TOWN

San Bruno

NA VICINITY OF

STATE

California

94099

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Custer County Assessor's Office

STREET & NUMBER

1010 Main Street

CITY, TOWN

Miles City

STATE

Montana

59301

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

None

DATE

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE <u>NA</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Miles City Main Post Office is a two story reinforced brick structure with a full basement and flat roof. The building is a well-preserved example of the Second Renaissance Revival design style. Buff-colored brick faces the exterior facades with detailing provided by limestone (belt courses, cornice, keystones, sills, and pilaster bases and capitals). The front facade is symmetrical, divided into five bays, and terminated by a balustraded parapet atop a molded cornice with block modillions. The first story is emphasized by its height relative to the second story and the use of paired flat brick pilasters dividing the round-arched window bays and centered entry bay. Smaller, flat-arched paired windows corresponding to the first floor bays are used in the second story. The side elevations, with four bays each, are consistent with the front facade. A rear addition was constructed in 1967, and although not totally consistent with the original design does not seriously affect the integrity of the original design.

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The basement and foundations are constructed of concrete in both the original building and addition (1967). Brick is used for the basement wall, atop the concrete, from grade to the first floor level in the original structure. Exterior above grade walls are brick. The structure is supported by steel framing. Indiana Limestone is used for base and belt course moldings, window sills, balustrades, and other detailing. Concrete is used for the belt courses and cornice of the addition. The roof is flat, built-up tar composition.

The building is two stories in height and faced with light buff colored brick. The facade is flat, symmetrical in elevation, and displays classical proportions. The front facade (west) is divided into five bays with the main entry in the center bay. The first floor is emphasized by its arched windows and limestone fascia molding above the window arches. Paired flat brick pilasters with simple limestone capitals rest atop a belt course molding of limestone (at the first floor level) and support the fascia molding marking the top of the emphasized first floor. The pilaster pairs flank and divide the

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first floor window bays. The entry bay consists of double aluminum framed glass doors topped by a rectangular decorative transom panel (formed of metal). The lower portion of the panel contains "Miles City, MT" over "106 N. 7th 59301" (added since original construction). "U.S. Post Office" in raised letters (original) is located above. An architrave with honeysuckle and scroll pattern rise above the top of the panel.

A 5-light transom window is set above the panel. A fanlight rests atop the transom window. A double arch is provided by a thickened arch mullion which extends vertically through the horizontal mullion of the transom into the transom window. Six lights are set in the outside arch with six lights over a single semi-circular light in the inside arch. The brick framing over the entry is slightly recessed with a gauged arch semi-circular arch above the fanlight. A single header course on the outside of the arch provides added emphasis. The arches rest on square limestone springers. A carved limestone keystone (scroll motif) projects out from and above the arch.

The windows flanking the entry are of the same size and proportion as the entry and consist of 9-over-9 light double-hung wood sash with 3-over-3 side window. The fanlights are identical to those described over the entry transom window. The sills are flat dressed limestone. A decorative panel (consisting of vertically set brick courses with diamond in center) is located between the sill and first floor level limestone belt course.

As mentioned previously, the second story has the appearance of being quite low in height as a result of the emphasis of the first story. Five sets of paired 1-over-1 light double-hung wood sash windows are aligned over the window bays of the first floor. The windows are framed in brick courses which are slightly projected. The flat arches of the frame consists of a single vertically aligned brick course. The bottoms of the windows rest on the limestone fascia molding. The window bays are separated by slightly raised brick panels aligned over the paired pilasters of the first floor. A square pattern is provided by slightly recessing brick courses. The panels support a limestone entablature. The frieze is flat and unadorned and block modillions rest beneath the molded, projecting cornice. A parapet consisting of limestone balusters

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with brick pedestals (which project slightly from the balusters) sits atop the cornice. Limestone is used for the rails which also top the pedestals as coping. A rectangular pattern is formed by recessed brick courses in the pedestals.

The end facades of the original building are identical and carry the same design motif as the front facade. Each facade consists of four window bays, divided by paired flat brick pilasters. The lower first floor belt courses, upper first floor fascia, entablature, and parapet of the front facade are continued to the end facades. Windows are identical to those of the front.

The addition to the rear, completed in 1967, is one story in height (aligned with the raised first story of the original building, and projects out from the south facade of the original building. Light buff colored brick is used to face the basement and first floor walls (south side.) A concrete belt course, aligned with that of the original building, divides the basement and first floor walls. Concrete is also used for the base course. Molded concrete is also used for the cornice which is aligned with the upper first floor fascia molding. Other than a vertically aligned brick course immediately beneath the cornice, the south wall of the addition is unadorned. Three equally spaced windows, 15-over-15 light double hung wood sash, are located on the addition facade. The windows are framed by a slightly recessed brick course, a flat arch with vertically aligned brick, and flat concrete sill. A slightly recessed brick panel is located between the sill and lower belt courses. Vertical brick courses provide emphasis to the panel.

An entry vestibule is located in the corner formed by the juncture of the original building and addition. The vestibule is lower in height than the addition. Light buff colored brick is also used for the vestibule. Double wooden paneled doors open to the west. An 18-light transom window of wood sash is located above the doors. The south side contains 15-over-15 light window (identical to those of the addition facade) which is lowered in relation to the other windows of the addition's facade. Concrete is used for the base course, sill, and cornice.

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The north facade of the addition consists of the mail loading platform. Materials consist of brick for the exposed walls, flat metal roof and marquee set below the top of the wall, and concrete platform and cornice. The roof of the addition, as with the original building, consists of built-up tar composition with gravel. The rear facade (east) consists of a blank brick wall topped with molded concrete cornice. Concrete is also used for the base and belt courses.

The interior consists of a full basement, first floor, and second floor. The basement is used primarily for storage and mechanical equipment. These rooms includes base concrete floors, walls, and ceilings. A basement conference room consists of vinyl asbestos tile floors, plaster walls, and acoustical tile ceiling. The first floor consists of the lobby, offices, workroom, and swing room. The lobby consists of terrazzo floors, travertine wainscotting (4-foot) over plaster walls, and acoustical tile ceiling. The travertine replaced the original marble. The offices consist of vinyl asbestos tile floors with carpeting in the postmaster's office, plaster walls, and acoustical tile ceiling. The workroom consists of hardwood floors with asphalt plank in the addition, concrete block and plaster walls and ceiling. The swing room, located in the addition, consists of vinyl asbestos tile floors, a concrete block walls, and plaster ceiling. The second floor contains various federal offices. The offices and hallways consist of vinyl asbestos tile floors, plaster walls, and acoustical tile ceilings. Marble is used for the base strips in the halls and wainscotting (6-foot) in the restrooms. The stairs between the first and second floors are terrazzo with marble base strip and aluminum handrails.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

1. Sanborn Map, November 1910, sheet 7; July 1916, sheet 13.
2. Floor Plans 1914.
3. Miles City Independent, various articles, 1911-1916.
4. Smith, Clare Flynn. "Miles City" "Cowboy Country" (no date).

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 0.517 acres

UTM REFERENCES

A	1 3	43 47 10	5 13 95 00	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Lots 1-6, Block 51, Original Townsite.
 The site is rectangular and contains 150 feet of frontage on North 7th Street, with a depth and frontage of 150 feet along Pleasant Street.
 Site Size = 22,500 sq. ft.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
NA	NA	NA	NA
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
NA	NA	NA	NA

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

H. J. "Jim" Kolva

ORGANIZATION

Institute for Urban and Local Studies

DATE

September, 1985

STREET & NUMBER

W. 705 1st Avenue

TELEPHONE

(509) 458-6219

CITY OR TOWN

Spokane

STATE

Washington

99204

12 CERTIFICATION OF NOMINATION

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER RECOMMENDATION

YES ___ NO ___ NONE ___

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

In compliance with Executive Order 11593, I hereby nominate this property to the National Register, certifying that the State Historic Preservation Officer has been allowed 90 days in which to present the nomination to the State Review Board and to evaluate its significance. The evaluated level of significance is National State ___ Local ___

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE *James T. Coe*

TITLE

Director, Office of Real Estate

DATE

02/06/86

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I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

See continuation sheet for listing
 DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

DATE

ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

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In terms of preservation and design character, the post office ranks highly among these structures which as a grouping represent an important period of Miles City's development. Although the addition to the rear does not compliment the original design, the southwest corner of the original facade dominates the primary approach view and thus lessens the intrusive influence.

POLITICS/GOVERNMENT/COMMUNITY PLANNING

Although the siting of the Miles City Post Office did not have a perceivable influence in the growth of Miles City, it is associated with the city's most significant growth period and, therefore is locally significant under Criterion A. The selection of the site was referenced as an issue in the mayoral race of 1911 when the city park was considered as a potential site. The federal building was the burgeoning city's first manifestation of the federal presence, and came at a period when Miles City was transforming from a cowtown to a "virile commercial city". As such, the building represented the recognition of the city's growth and stability, and its position as a major regional center.

LOCAL CONTEXT

Miles City, the county seat of Custer County, is central to the energy developing area of Eastern Montana. The city also serves as the retail center for the surrounding rural area, medical center for southeastern Montana, and is a stop over point for travelers along interstate 94. The 1980 population for Miles City was 9,620, an increase of 6.7% over the 1970 population of 9,023 (county population of 13,070 in 1980).

Settlement in the Miles City area took place in the 1870s after the establishment of Fort Keogh at the mouth of the Tongue River on the Yellowstone River. The purpose of the fort was to house the Fifth Infantry, under the command of General Nelson Miles, in their pursuit of the Indians (immediately following the Custer massacre). In 1876 General Miles forced the "camp followers" to a point two miles from the fort--to rid his troops of their demoralizing influence. Within weeks, two saloons, a

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gambling house, and tents were set up. In 1877 the town site of Milestown was platted, but Milestown was moved in 1878 with the completion of the permanent fort and was renamed Miles City. The first post office was established on November 16, 1877 with Louis Payette as the postmaster. With the coming of the Northern Pacific Railroad in 1881, Miles City became a transportation hub.

With the growth of cattle and sheep raising in the early 1880s Miles City became a major shipping center. Livestock markets including horses contributed to early growth and the town grew from 200 in 1877 to 2,000 in 1883. The Milwaukee Road Railroad entered Miles City in 1907 which became a division point. The shipping center created by rail service and the coming of homesteaders brought about a building boom and by 1914 the population was over 7,600. Most of the major downtown buildings, currently standing, were constructed between 1910 and 1920.

The post office is located one block north of the center of the central business district in the original townsite. The block including the post office and blocks to the north, east, south, and west are zoned for commercial use (block to the northeast is zoned residential). The uses are generally commercial in character. The Elks Lodge (three-story brick circa 1914) is located on the corner opposite the post office (to the west). Non-descript brick and frame buildings of various styles and age are located to the north of the post office and Elks Lodge buildings along 7th Street. Gas stations are located on each side of the corners to the south, across Pleasant Street. Between the gas station and Main Street along the east side of 7th are two attractive two-storied brick buildings which predate the post office. The Lewis and Clark Apartments (old Palace Hotel), which housed the post office prior to the construction of the present facility, and Big Sky Pharmacy Building (old Foster Drug Store, circa 1906) are generally well preserved. Development along the west side of 7th consists of modern bank and drive-in buildings.

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No historic surveys of Miles City have been completed. However, the central business district does include a relatively intact street front including a few buildings from the 1880s with the majority from 1910 to 1920. Unfortunately, the two gas stations on the corners south of the post office disrupt the continuity of the frontage between the post office and Main Street. (A map showing buildings/owners, circa 1918, shows tin buildings on the southeast corner and Yellowstone Journal Building on the southwest corner.) The Elks Building, in a relatively poor state of preservation, was a significant building in its time and was complemented by the post office.

LOCAL NEWS COVERAGE OF THE MILES CITY POST OFFICE CONSTRUCTION

The acquisition of the site and the construction of the Miles City Post Office was reported in the Miles City Independent between 1911 and 1916. This was a period of significant growth in Miles City. Large numbers of homesteaders were settling in eastern Montana and new buildings seemed to be rising daily in the city's business and residential districts. In March 1911, it was reported that farmland under production in Montana had increased nearly 400% in the past ten years. The Northern Pacific Railroad was seeking a site in Miles City for a passenger station.

An article of March 8th announced "New Federal Building to be in Miles City Park". The site and building had been authorized for Miles City in the Public Building Omnibus Act of June 25, 1910. Subsequent legislation of March 4, 1911 provided that the site may be selected from ground in Miles City Park, with the \$15,000 appropriated for the site to be applied to the construction fund. An April 1st article, captioned "Post Office Site is not an Issue", reported that the citizens of Miles City would be involved in the siting of the proposed federal building in the park. It added that this might also be an issue in the upcoming mayoral race.

The sudden transformation of Miles City in the past three years was described in an April 29th article. The Miles City land office had received 3,500 new homestead applications. Over \$600,000 would be spent on new buildings including a new

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Methodist church (\$25,000), school (\$50,000), Masonic Temple (\$50,000), and a new business block (\$15,000 to \$20,000). The YMCA had cost \$50,000. Over 100 new residences were planned. A water works system and 12 miles of new sewer would be constructed. The coming of the Milwaukee Road had transformed Miles City from an "ordinary western cowtown to a virile commercial city".

On January 9, 1913, the Independent reported that the population of Miles City had almost doubled in the past three years and was now between 7,000 and 7,500. The Elks Lodge cornerstone was laid on July 3rd.

In 1915 news of the post office again appeared. On January 20th, the general plan of the post office to be located at 7th and Pleasant was described by Postmaster Tom Gibb. It was to be in the style of the First National Bank. On February 12th it was reported that an appropriation of \$118,000 for a new federal building had been approved. The post office was described as follows: "...will be a valued addition to the architectural displays of Miles City, but Miles City, on the other hand, has so many buildings built by private capital that are no dugouts themselves, that the government-built building will neither be lonesome for want of good company or exclusive because of no equals in style and appearance."

The letting of the building contract to the Hiram Lloyd Co. of St. Louis was announced on April 9th. The bid amount was \$87,717. Brick, limestone, and granite would be used in construction. Construction progressed and the upcoming cornerstone ceremony was announced in the September 17th issue of the Independent. Judge Loud, George W. Farr (former mayor) and H.C. Plimpton had formed a committee two weeks ago to plan the ceremony. The cornerstone was laid on September 23, 1915 and reported the following day. Mayor Mott laid the stone and former mayor Farr delivered a patriotic address. Senator McLean was present and he and the other Miles City citizens in attendance enjoyed the songs of a high school choir.

The post office was opened in late 1916 with no particular ceremony in the local press. The war in Europe had relegated

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local news to the rear pages, particularly the progress of the post office. Neither a dedication ceremony nor a public inspection of the new facility was reported. However, a December 29th article did report that the main entry door was on the wrong side of the building and that wind had blown snow through the doors, which caused people to slip.

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