

United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms (National Register Bulletin 16).

1. Name of Property

historic name Crawford United States Post Office
other names/site number DW04-007

2. Location

street & number 144 Main Street
city, town Crawford
state Nebraska code NE county Dawes code 045 zip code 69339

3. Classification

Ownership of Property: public-Federal (checked)
Category of Property: building(s) (checked)
Number of Resources within Property: Contributing (1), Noncontributing (3), Total (4)

Name of related multiple property listing: Nebraska Post Offices Which Contain Section Artwork (1938-1942)
Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.
Signature of certifying official: [Signature]
Date: 4/2/92
Director, Nebraska State Historical Society

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

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:
entered in the National Register. (checked)
determined eligible for the National Register.
determined not eligible for the National Register.
removed from the National Register.
other, (explain):
Signature of the Keeper: [Signature]
Date of Action: 5/11/92

**6. Function or Use**

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Government/Post Office

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Government/Post Office**7. Description**Architectural Classification  
(enter categories from instructions)Moderne

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concretewalls Brickroof Other: tar & gravelother Limestone

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Crawford United States Post Office is located at the corner of Main and Second Streets at the northwest edge of the central business district of Crawford, a small northwestern Nebraska town (1990 population: 1,115). The one-story Modernistic style building, constructed in 1938-1939, is a typical example of a Class C or D post office built from standardized plans developed in the 1930's. The nomination also includes three contributing objects: two ornamental lamp posts located on either side of the front entry, and a flag pole.

Symmetrical in design, the rectangular red brick building measures approximately 60 by 50 feet and features a concrete base and limestone parapet. The flat roof has a composition tar and gravel surface. The words: "United States Post Office, Crawford Nebraska" are carved into the limestone above the main entrance. The raised central entrance features a white painted ornamental aluminum grill with a centered, stylized eagle. The main entrance is flanked by two pairs of recessed multi-paned triple hung sash windows with limestone sills; the upper portions of the windows have been filled in with wood panels. Similar fenestration is found on the remaining facades. The building exhibits good integrity; modifications include removal of the workroom skylight and replacement of the front entry doors. Construction began in November, 1938, and the completed building was dedicated during the community's 1939 Labor Day celebration (Northwestern Nebraska News, Nov. 18, 1938; Sept. 7, 1939).

A mural entitled "The Crossing," by G. Glenn Newell is located on the lobby wall above the postmaster's door which is flanked by wood framed, glass enclosed bulletin boards. The oil-on-canvas mural which measures approximately 6 feet 9 inches by 12 feet occupies the typical space for murals commissioned by the Treasury Department's Section of Fine Arts program in a small Class C or D post office. The mural enframes the postmaster's door which projects approximately 9 inches above the bulletin boards. The shape of the mural caused by projecting doorways and bulletin boards is typical of the physical building features Section artists had to take into consideration. The Crawford commission was awarded to G. Glenn Newell, a Dutchess County, New York, artist and dairy farmer in August, 1939. The completed mural was installed by Crawford postal employees in May, 1940 (Northwestern Nebraska News, May 9, 16, 1940; RG 121, Entry 133, Box 61).

 See continuation sheet

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Painted in shades of blue, gold, and grey, the mural depicts a panoramic view of a wagon train which has begun to ford a stream. In the foreground, sunlight shines on the lead wagon and the stream; the background sky is dark with storm clouds. Several wagons are silhouetted on the horizon and the left background features Crow Butte, a prominent northwestern Nebraska landmark. The stream occupies the entire foreground and the water shimmers with light, shadows, and distorted reflections. The lead wagon which occupies the center of the scene, enters the stream in the sunlight, its torn canvas reveals ribbed, wooden framework. A woman's face is visible inside the circular opening with two small children beside her. A man and dog enter the stream beside the wagon; on the other side, a man on horseback and cattle prepare to enter the stream. The remaining wagons, cattle, oxen and horses curve into the distance at the right edge of the scene beneath a dark blue sky. On the horizon, several wagons are silhouetted near storm clouds.

The lobby interior is in excellent condition and retains its original marble tile floor, marble wainscoting, and woodwork. Sometime after the mural was installed, the original light fixtures were replaced. Currently the lobby has enclosed florescent lights flush to the ceiling. A varnished wooden vestibule projects into the lobby; it is an original design feature, typical of small Class C or D post offices built from standardized plans developed in the 1930's. In 1981 the mural was cleaned and restored by an art conservator under contract with the United States Postal Service; it is in excellent condition.

**8. Statement of Significance**

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally  statewide  locally

Applicable National Register Criteria  A  B  C  D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions)  A  B  C  D  E  F  G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Art  
Politics/Government

Period of Significance

1940

Significant Dates

1940

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Newell, G. Glenn: Artist  
Simon, Louis: Supervising Architect  
Busboom & Rauh: Contractor

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

The Crawford United States Post Office is being nominated to the National Register as part of the Nebraska Post Offices Which Contain Section Artwork (1938-1942) multiple property nomination at the state level of significance under Criterion A for its association with the United States Treasury Department's Section of Fine Arts program (1934-1943) and under Criterion C for the artistic significance of the mural it contains. The mural, entitled "The Crossing," was painted by New York State artist G. Glenn Newell and installed in May, 1940.

The oil-on-canvas mural which measures 6 feet 9 inches by 12 feet, is located on the lobby wall directly above the postmaster's door in the typical location for murals installed in Class C or D post offices such as Crawford. The mural is an excellent example of artwork commissioned for post offices through the Treasury Department's Section of Fine Arts from 1934-1943. Painted in blue, gold and white tones, the mural depicts a wagon train fording a stream with Crow Butte, a prominent area landmark in the background. The mural's historical theme associated with 19th-century westward migration, executed in a realistic style, make it an excellent example of government sponsored Regionalism.

In August, 1939, Dutchess County, New York, artist and dairy farmer G. Glenn Newell received a notice from the Section which invited him to submit designs for the Crawford, Nebraska, post office mural. Newell was selected for the commission on the basis of designs submitted for a Poughkeepsie, New York, mural competition. The letter cited the commission amount, \$800, and payment schedule: one-third after preliminary sketches were approved; one-third when a full-size cartoon was approved; and the remainder when the mural was installed and photographed. Newell immediately accepted the commission and informed Assistant Section Chief Rowan that he had several ideas for the mural. He questioned the "economy" of visiting Crawford to develop sketches and Rowan replied that given the amount of the commission, such a trip was not necessary.

See continuation sheet

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

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

Northwestern Nebraska News. Nov. 18, 1938; Sept. 7, 1939; May 9, 16, 1940.

Optiz, Glenn B., ed. Mantle Fielding's dictionary of American Painters, Sculptors & Engravers. (Poughkeepsie, NY: Apollo, 1986).

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

See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

Primary location of additional data:

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

Specify repository: \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of property Less than one acre.

UTM References

A 

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

C 

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B 

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 Zone Easting Northing

D 

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See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The property is described as Lots 7-12, Block 4, Original Town of Crawford, Dawes County, Nebraska.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

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

See continuation sheet

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Carol Ahlgren, Architectural Historian date August, 1991  
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In October, 1939, Newell submitted the required color sketches; he proposed two designs: a western sky, and a wagon train crossing a stream. The Section informed him to proceed with the scene of "pioneers crossing the river," but advised him to rework scale, proportion, and overall composition. In January, 1940, Newell submitted the required photograph of the full-size cartoon and noted that he would alter the design to incorporate Crow Butte, based on photographs he had recently received from the Crawford postmaster. Newell stated that including the butte, "A beautiful castellated [sic] formation," would make the scene more "local." He indicated that he would conduct research at the New York City Library to check historical accuracy of such features as the wagons. Although he did not visit the Crawford area during his contract with the Section, Newell claimed, "I have lived with this for three months and have really taken a trip West."

A month later in February, 1940, Newell submitted an 8 x 10 photograph of the nearly completed mural and was advised to rework several animals. The artist agreed with the suggestions and responded that perhaps he would pose a horse outside his studio window. Newell stated that his design intent was to portray "sunshine, youth, action in the foreground, a storm in the background." The artist asked Rowan if he should include a poem in the mural: "Seeking the westward sunshine/ Leaving storms behind/ Taking sires of the future with them/ And dams of a better kind." Rowan politely informed Newell that the verse was unnecessary.

In April, 1940, the completed mural was shipped to Crawford with explicit instructions from Newell regarding preparation of the wall. The mural was installed by Crawford postal employees in May, 1940 (RG 121: Entry 133, Box 61). The local newspaper described it as "a thing of beauty. . .appropriate to this northwestern country and [it] will bring vivid memories to many of our pioneers." (Northwestern Nebraska News, May 9, 1940).

After completion of his commission, Newell wrote to the Section several times to ask for additional work or an administrative job. The Crawford mural, however, was his only work with the Section of Fine Arts. Newell was 70 years old when he completed the Crawford mural and died 7 years later. A graduate of Columbia University, he was a member of the National Academy, the American Society of Animal Painters, and President of the Allied Artists of America from 1919-1926. His work is in the collections of the National Gallery, Washington, D.C.; the Detroit Institute; and was in President Roosevelt's private art collection (Northwest Nebraska News, May 16, 1940; Optiz, 1986).

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