

**DATA SHEET**

**PH0695238**

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY  
RECEIVED JAN 22 1979  
DATE ENTERED MAR 28 1979

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

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

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

Old Morgantown Post Office

AND/OR COMMON

Old Morgantown Post Office; Monongalia Arts Center

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

107 High Street

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Morgantown

VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Second

STATE

West Virginia

CODE

54

COUNTY

Monongalia

CODE

061

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

**CATEGORY**

- DISTRICT
- BUILDING(S)
- STRUCTURE
- SITE
- OBJECT

**OWNERSHIP**

- PUBLIC
- PRIVATE
- BOTH

**PUBLIC ACQUISITION**

- IN PROCESS
- BEING CONSIDERED

**STATUS**

- OCCUPIED
- UNOCCUPIED
- WORK IN PROGRESS
- ACCESSIBLE
- YES: RESTRICTED
- YES: UNRESTRICTED
- NO

**PRESENT USE**

- AGRICULTURE
- COMMERCIAL
- EDUCATIONAL
- ENTERTAINMENT
- GOVERNMENT
- INDUSTRIAL
- MILITARY
- MUSEUM
- PARK
- PRIVATE RESIDENCE
- RELIGIOUS
- SCIENTIFIC
- TRANSPORTATION
- OTHER:

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME Monongalia County Arts Center Association, Inc., c/o Mr. Terry Jones, President

Heirs of Mable DeVries Tanner AND c/o Tanner and Tanner

STREET & NUMBER

P.O. Box 239

111 High Street

CITY, TOWN

Morgantown

VICINITY OF

West Virginia, 26505

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Monongalia County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

High Street

CITY, TOWN

Morgantown

STATE

West Virginia

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

DATE

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

# 7 DESCRIPTION

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

## DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Old Morgantown Post Office, now the Monongalia Arts Center, is situated in a detached position on a town lot. It is rectangular in shape and consists of two attached units. The section completed in 1914 has three stories, including basement, while the 1931 portion has only one level above the basement. There are five bays along the High Street (front) elevation, and the older part is three bays deep.

Stone is the major building material, with sandstone used in the foundation to the level of the high water table and limestone used above. All stonework is laid in a smooth or plain ashlar bond, but indentations and projections along the walls break the surface and present a facade of pleasing lines and proportions. While stone predominates, a yellow-colored brick is in the rear and northeast walls of the addition, and glass windows play a major role in developing the building's character. The hipped roof has a low pitch and is hidden from view by both a projecting cornice and parapet that enhance the Neo-Classical flavor.

The exterior is, above all, symmetrical. There is an entrance with dual sliding doors at the center of the front flanked by four bays with 2/2 windows and solid glass transoms. Fenestration at the basement and on the second floor is in line with that of the first, but the windows are shorter and those on the upper floor have a paneled stone divider placed between 1/1 sash windows on either side. The latter feature is repeated in breaking the openings of the parapet; here stone balusters fill the space occupied by windows below.

Reaction against the variety and seeming complexity of Victorian-era buildings began producing designs of more subdued and simple styles by the late nineteenth century. Government buildings proliferated during this time and frequently reflected changed attitudes. The Morgantown Post Office, though a fairly small and provincial structure, is indicative of the activity of U.S. Treasury Department architects under direction of Supervising Architect, Oscar Wenderoth. Among styles they employed for new federal buildings was the Neo-Classical, evident in this former post office. Smooth lines, attached Doric columns and pilasters distinctly separating bays, trabeated openings, a high but simple entablature with dentils and modillions in the cornice, and characteristic balustrade are all complementary. Such features as iron grilles on the basement windows and above the main entrance, a fretwork band between first and second levels, and handsome metal lampposts at the entrance stair all subtly enhance its appeal.

The interior was planned to be functional. A lobby provided window and box service, workroom space was behind a walled off area, and the second floor was used for offices. This is not to say that there was no character to the inside, but to point out that detail was concentrated on the public area with its marble walls, revolving entrance door, high ceiling with a dentil cornice, and fine

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Morgantown Post Office, Morgantown, West Virginia

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decorative iron baluster at the two-flight, open stair. The main work area behind the lobby had a skylight toward the rear, a feature permitted by placing a U-shaped second floor above a rectangular first level.

In 1931, an addition was made at the rear to help handle the increased volume of processing. This section, because it was not a public area, was less refined than the older unit, but limestone walls were included on the Kirk Street side and along the part of the rear, thus blending the newer part with the overall appearance of the existing building. At the time of this construction, the 1914 section underwent renovations that included removing the revolving door and installing the present wood-and-glass vestibule and extending the lobby area along the Kirk Street side. Between the time of initial construction and these renovations, lighting had undergone several changes, and by 1931, all fixtures were electric, whereas gas was planned for use to some extent originally.

Among contractors and suppliers of building materials were Champion Iron Works of Kenton, Ohio (interior stair baluster and window grilles); John A. Rowe Cut-Stone Company of Bedford, Indiana (limestone 1914 section); Vermont Marble Company of Proctor, Vermont (marble); J.G. Unkefer and Company of Minerva, Ohio (general contractors, 1914 section); Atchison Revolving Door Company of Atchison, Kansas (revolving door); Mutual Oolitic Cut Stone Company of Bloomington, Indiana (limestone, 1931 section); and Sameul Plato of Louisville, Kentucky (general contractor, 1931 section).

To allow the U.S. Post Office Department to continue to serve the people of Morgantown efficiently from the quarters, minor renovations were constantly in order. Delicate screening in an early lobby was replaced to provide more work space, partitions around the main workroom were moved and stairs were re-located, but the exterior remained the same. The U.S. General Services Administration closed the building when postal services and other federal offices moved to a new structure in the early 1970s. A local family obtained ownership and in 1976 conveyed the 1914 section to the Monongalia County Arts Center Association while retaining the 1931 unit for use as offices. Changes made to permit reuse have been relatively minor, and these mainly consist of renovations to meet fire codes (enclosed stairs, an additional exit cut into the basement level along Kirk Street, fire doors, etc.) All facets of the arts will have a working and presentation place in the Old Morgantown Post Office, and educational opportunities will be offered to the community.

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY) Community Development
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1913-1914, 1931

BUILDER/ARCHITECT Oscar Wenderoth, Supervising Architect

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

What is now the Monongalia Arts Center in Morgantown, Monongalia County, West Virginia, was originally constructed in 1913-14 (with an addition in 1931) in recognition of the need for upgrading postal services in the community. This was the first federal building and post office constructed and owned by the U.S. Government in Morgantown, and it is the only non-residential Neo-Classical building in the city today.

Although Morgantown has its origins in the late 1700s, growth was slow throughout much of the nineteenth century. Even with important schools in the town before the Civil War and the establishing of West Virginia University here after the formation of the new state in 1863, the population of Morgantown was only 749 in 1860, and it decreased to 745 in 1880. But the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad passed nearby and had reached the Ohio River at Wheeling in 1852, and oil and gas development progressed enormously in the 1880s and 1890s; a glass industry was founded, and the 1890s could be proclaimed as the "period of awakening preceding the larger transformation of the era after 1900" (James Morton Callahan in the Sesqui-Centennial of Monongalia County, West Virginia, p.66).

As the city expanded in population from 1,895 in 1900 to 9,150 in 1910, with corresponding growth in the surrounding countryside, both private and public services were stretched to try to keep pace. One of these services was the post office, an agency that was itself in a period of change and growth with the introduction of such improvements as parcel post. In some part, because of political maneuvering and in large part because of displayed need, the Post Office Department decided to construct a new federal building and post office in Morgantown. In 1915, only one year after the structure's completion, it was one of only twelve post offices throughout the entire state of West Virginia located in a federally constructed and owned building.

As an indicator of the growth of Morgantown as an industrial, commercial and educational center, the post office building readily reflected the city's energy. What is more, it provided the community with a landmark from the time of construction and introduced the town to ideas of twentieth century architecture. The post office would become an esthetic asset as well as a commercial and economic asset.

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Architectural and Engineering Drawings for the Morgantown Post Office (approximately 150 dating from 1910 through 1941), on file at the Monongalia Arts Center, Morgantown, West Virginia.

(continued on attached sheet)

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 1/2 acre

QUADRANGLE NAME Morgantown, North, W.Va.-Pa.

QUADRANGLE SCALE 1:24000

UTM REFERENCES

A	<u>117</u>	<u>581941315</u>	<u>43868010</u>
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C			
E			
G			

B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
D			
F			
H			

## VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The Old Morgantown Post Office is on 2 city lots at the north corner of High and Kirk Streets, Morgantown, W. Va. Dimensions of the lot are approximately 165' along Kirk Street and 110' along High Street.

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

# 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

James E. Harding, Historian

ORGANIZATION Historic Preservation Unit  
Department of Culture and History

DATE October 30, 1978

STREET & NUMBER The Cultural Center, Capitol Complex

TELEPHONE (304) 348-0244

CITY OR TOWN Charleston

STATE West Virginia

# 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL     

STATE     

LOCAL X

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

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

*Clarence Moran*

1-16-79

TITLE

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE 3-28-79

ATTEST:

CHIEF OF REGISTRATION

DATE 3-29-79

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Under the direction of Oscar Wenderoth, Supervising Architect for the U.S. Treasury Department, plans were drawn to build a solid stone edifice that would be both functional and handsome. The New-Classical style had come into use in the late nineteenth century, and the U.S. Government became one of its primary promoters through the design of numerous buildings in its pattern. As the nation entered the twentieth century, the Post Office Department was expanding services and developing a more professional attitude. U.S. government buildings, especially in combinations including post offices, were being erected at an increased pace, and such styles as the Neo-Classical were being interpreted to fit into widely scattered localities.

Morgantown received a well-proportioned stone building that combined smooth lines and subtle details. Walls in some sections were about three feet thick, but such devices as the projection of Doric columns, water table and cornice and the recessing of window areas mellowed the massive aspect. The monochrome appearance of the limestone walls was offset somewhat by such subdued details in this same material as a dentil row and modillions at the cornice and a balustrade around the roof. In addition, cast and wrought iron were bent and welded to form decorative window grilles and an attractive baluster at the interior stair in the east corner of the first floor. The inside also boasted terrazzo floors, marble walls and steps and a plaster dentil cornice in the public lobby.

The \$97,000 building opened in the fall of 1914 to the general applause of the community. An open house on November 2, 1914, brought out thousands of residents who received a guided tour of the facility and scrutinized its every detail. What seemed to attract most attention was the innovative "lookout", a narrow passageway at ceiling height, that ran through work areas. Through it, the postal inspector would crawl, stopping at "black shutters" to watch employees. Incidentally, the inspector would wear a black mask while in the passageway so his face could not be distinguished behind the shutters.

For about the next sixty years this structure would continue as a post office and federal building, but, as usually happens, time outstripped the utility of its facilities. U.S. government officials decided to consolidate their services in a new edifice, and the old landmark was sold. Fortunately, for the community, its purchasers conveyed the 1914 section for use as an arts center. Today it is undergoing renovations and promises to become an accessible educational and cultural outlet that should serve as an important asset to Morgantown and Monongalia County.

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"Bids Submitted on New Federal Building", The New Dominion (Morgantown, W. Va.)  
January 15, 1913.

"\$93,393 is Lowest Bid on Building", The Weekly New Dominion (Morgantown, W. Va.)  
February 5, 1913.

"Thousands Shown Through the Fine New Post Office Building", Post-Chronicle,  
(Morgantown, W.Va.) November 3, 1914.

Callahan, James Morton, History of the Making of Morgantown, West Virginia.  
Morgantown, W.Va.; West Virginia University Studies in History, 1926.

Monongalia Historical Society. Sesqui-Centennial of Monongalia County,  
West Virginia (Morgantown, W.Va.); Monongalia Historical Society, 1926.