

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 APR 17 1987
DATE ENTERED MAY 22 1987

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

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Powell Main Post Office

AND/OR COMMON

Powell Main Post Office

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

270 N. Bent Street

NA NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Powell

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

NA VICINITY OF

NA

STATE

Wyoming 82435

CODE

056

COUNTY

Park

CODE

029

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

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

OWNERSHIP

- PUBLIC
- PRIVATE
- BOTH
- PUBLIC ACQUISITION**
- IN PROCESS
- BEING CONSIDERED
- NA

STATUS

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

PRESENT USE

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

4 AGENCY

REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS: *(If applicable)*

United States 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. Park County Assessor's Office

STREET & NUMBER

Park County Courthouse

CITY, TOWN

Cody

STATE

Wyoming 82414

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 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 Powell Main Post Office is a single story red brick building on a raised concrete basement. The front facade is symmetrical, divided into five bays, and devoid of significant detailing. A centered entry bay with two window bays (all flat-arched) on either side break the otherwise plain facade. Granite steps and landing, flanked by square buttresses, provide access to the doubled-door entry. A three-light transom window is located above the entry doors. The window bays immediately flanking the entry are of the same size as the entry bay. Plain sandstone panels are inset beneath the sill and bas relief decorative panels are inset above the sash. The two panels, including one above the entry transom, depict the three modes of transportation (locomotive, ship and airplane). Narrower than the interior windows, those of the end are framed by flat sandstone lintels and sills with a plain sandstone panel beneath. A narrow belt course marking the tops of the three central bays extends along the entire front facade. The facade is completed by a plain brick parapet, topped with sandstone coping. Behind the parapet is a flat roof of built-up tar composition. An addition to the rear which enlarged and extended the loading platform was completed in 1973.

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Post Office consists of the original building constructed in 1937 and a one story addition to the rear, completed in 1973. The basement is reinforced concrete. The first floor consists of a steel frame structure with brick walls. Red brick faces the exterior of the raised basement and first floor walls. The roof is flat, built-up tar composition. Sandstone is used for trim, and granite for the main entry stairs and landing.

The front facade (east) is symmetrical, classically proportioned, and flat with nominal ornamentation. The first floor rests on a raised basement faced with red

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 type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES Site Acquisition - 1936
 Building Completed - 1937

BUILDER/ARCHITECT Federal Government/Louis A. Simon, OSA

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Though not yet 50 years old, the Powell Post Office is of exceptional significance on the local level. As one of only five properties in the state of Wyoming that contain public artwork commissioned by the Treasury Department's Section of Painting and Sculpture during the Depression era, the building carries a strong association with the federal programs designed to provide economic relief. The artwork, which depicts a farm family and their livestock with a background of cultivated fields, is an example of the American Regionalism fostered by the Section during the New Deal. The building itself is locally significant in its symbolism of the federal presence and the massive public works programs that were initiated to aid small communities during a period of national economic emergency. Both the mural and the building exemplify the link between the federal government and the community.

ART

According to Dieterich and Petravage in their article on New Deal Art in Wyoming, the federal art programs found little on which to build in Wyoming. There were few professional artists and not much interest in the tradition they represented. The first of the programs to be established in Wyoming, the Public Works of Art Project (PWAP), undertook three projects in the state which included two works in the McCormick Junior High School and the dome of the State Capitol in Cheyenne. After the demise of the PWAP program in April, 1934, the Treasury Relief Art Project (TRAP) was established in July, 1935. Intended to shift artists from local relief rolls to projects involving the decoration of federal buildings, the program had little impact in Wyoming. No artists needing support in Wyoming could be identified. The program was terminated in 1938.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

1. Churchill, Beryl Gail, People Working Together: A 75th Anniversary Salute to Powell Wyoming, Powell; Custom Printing, May 25, 1984.
2. Dieterich, H.R. and Jacqueline Petrave, "New Deal Art in Wyoming: Some Case Studies." "Annals of Wyoming, Spring 1973, pp. 54-67.
3. Wardell, "Thirty Years Have Been Completed:", WPA MS#1208 (Cheyenne, Wyoming: State Archives Museums and Historical Department).
4. Powell Post Office-various floor and construction plans, 1936.
5. The Powell Tribune, various articles 1935-1937.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 0.48

UTM REFERENCES

A	12	677510	4958000	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Lots 1 and 2, Block 45, Original Town of Powell.

The site is rectangular with 150 feet of frontage along Bent Street (eastern boundary) and a depth of 140 feet with frontage Third Street (northern boundary).

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 & Local Studies

DATE

June 1986

STREET & NUMBER

W. 705 First Avenue

TELEPHONE

(509) 458-6219

CITY OR TOWN

Spokane

STATE

WA 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

John S. Buser

TITLE

Realty Acquisition Specialist, Principal

DATE

2-9-87

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

see sheet for signature

DATE

MAY 22 1987

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

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brick. A sandstone water table course separates the basement and red brick wall of the first floor. A flat sandstone belt course runs along the facade at the tops of the entry and flanking window bays. The wall is topped with a sandstone coping course.

The facade is divided into five bays. The entry bay is located at the center of the building and is flanked by a window bay on each side. These bays are recessed slightly and extend from the entry platform to the sandstone belt course which extends across the facade. The entry consists of double aluminum framed glass doors (original doors replaced in 1973). A 3-light transom window is set above the doors. A flat sandstone panel with a bas relief airplane tops the transom window. The flanking window bays consist of 3-over-3-light, double-hung wood sash windows with a plain sandstone panel below and a bas relief panel above. The bas relief panels depict an ocean liner and a locomotive.

The end window bays extend from the sandstone water table to a line extending from the tops of the entry and flanking window bays. Flat sandstone lintels top the windows and sandstone sills with plain sandstone panels beneath are located below the windows. The sash consists of 3-over-3-light, double-hung wood (identical to central bays).

The six steps and landing of the main entry are granite. Wrought iron and bronze are used for the railings along the stairs and landing. Free-standing lanterns in a torch motif rest atop the buttresses flanking the entry stairs.

The side facades of the original building (north and south) are identical to each other. The walls are flat, faced with red brick with nominal detailing provided by sandstone water table, belt course, and coping (extended from front facade). Five window bays divide the facades. The end bays are identical to the end bays of the front facade. However, the three interior bays lack the sandstone panel beneath the

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sills. The windows, as the front, consist of 3-over-3-light, double-hung wood sash. Two of the windows on the south facade have had the upper portions replaced by wood panels inset with round aluminum vents.

The 1973 addition extends rearward 57 feet from the loading vestibule of the original building. It encloses the original loading platform and extends it. The addition is lower in height than the original building, is flat and faced with red brick. A cast stone coping tops the wall. The roof is flat and metal coated with built-up tar composition. The south facade consists of three metal overhead doors for vehicle access, a smaller metal overhead door to provide access to the raised concrete loading platform, and a single metal pedestrian door. The north facade contains two metal overhead doors which provides access to the raised concrete loading platform and a single fixed metal sash window (fronted by wire grilles).

A mural entitled "Powell's Agriculture Resulting from Shoshone Irrigation Project" is located at the south end of the lobby over the postmaster's door (approximately 12 feet by 6 feet in size). The mural was executed by Verona Burkhard in 1939 for a sum of \$880.

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It was the Treasury Department's Section of Painting and Sculpture that was established in the fall of 1934 (renamed Section of Fine Arts in 1938) under which the Powell mural and five other works were completed (in Greybull, Kemmerer, Riverton, Worland and Yellowstone Post Offices). The Section, which was administered in Washington, dealt directly with the artists, and selected artists through national and regional design competitions. The Section sought the best decorative art that it could find for designated federal buildings. The intent of the program's administrators was that the work would reflect the themes and styles of the American scene, with a hope that it would strike a responsive chord in the general public. Although the program is attributed with having fostered an American Regionalism, art critics could never find a coherent body of work that was truly Regionalist or representative of particular sections of the country. The work that was created did, however, portray the American Scene in the form of localized subject matter. Further, the work resulting from the programs tended to pursue an inoffensive middle ground of style and content which was sometimes viewed as producing limp platitudes rather than strong statements. This resulted from the requirement for final approval from Washington as well as compliance with local preferences. The strife or dark side of the Depression was not portrayed, but instead the nostalgic and positive events of the American Scene were depicted.

The Powell mural, "Powell's Agriculture Resulting from Shoshone Irrigation Project", was completed by Verona Burkhard in 1939. As suggested by the title, the mural depicts a farm family surrounded by the fruits of their labor: cattle, sheep and bountiful fields. Ms. Burkhard was selected to complete the Powell mural on the basis of designs that she had submitted for a Dallas, Texas post office completion. After visiting Powell in July, 1938, she decided that local agriculture would be the theme for her painting. The final work was well

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received by the post office staff and local citizens. According to the artist in a letter to Edward B. Rowan, Assistant Chief of the Section of Fine Arts (December 2, 1938);

"...all the stockmen that have seen it think the animals are just right. I realize that most of the people here know little or nothing about painting; however, I have tried my best to put quality and good painting in this work - as well as make it understandable to the layman."

This in essence sums up the intent of the program--to provide artwork that was relevant to the local context and that was understandable to the common citizen whose only exposure to art may have been a wall calendar.

The Powell Post Office is significant under Criterion A for its historic association with the federal government's New Deal public arts programs. The mural is also significant under Criterion C as an integral part of a building that represents a significant type, period, and style of artistic expression. Finally, the building is eligible under Criterion D because of its information potential relating to artistic expression and techniques of the period and the social history of its locality.

Verona Burkhard was born of American parents in Paris shortly before World War I. After moving back to the United States, she studied in New York at the Arts Students League under Boardman Robinson. She then discontinued formal art studies to pursue her own studies. She was awarded other murals in the Deer Lodge (Montana) Post Office, Kings Mountain (North Carolina) Post Office, and Washington, D.C. Ms Burkhard was living at the Klondike Ranch near Buffalo, Wyoming when she received her Powell commission. After completing the murals in Deer Lodge and Powell, she

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studied at Columbia University under Frank Mehan. In 1949, she moved to Grand Junction, Colorado, where she presently resides. Ms. Burkhard has exhibited extensively and received numerous awards for her works.

POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT

As Powell's first and only federally constructed post office, the building is locally significant under Criterion A. It represented the link between the federal government and the local community, and acted as both a symbol and an agency of the federal government. The building further symbolizes the massive public buildings programs of the 1930s which were intended to assist local communities during a period of national economic emergency. Efforts to secure a federal building on the local level were coordinated by the Chamber of Commerce. In noting that Powell was the largest city in Wyoming that had not yet received a federal building, the Chamber worked diligently in urging Senator Joseph O'Malley to support a building in Powell. The success in obtaining the building through participatory democracy was also symbolized by the building as it rose to completion.

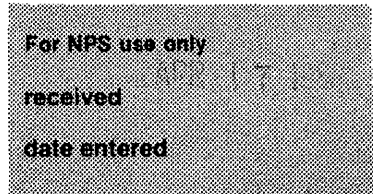
LOCAL CONTEXT

Powell, located in Park County, had an estimated 1984 population of 6,006. Powell serves as a service and retail center for the Park and Big Horn county areas. Agriculture and natural gas/oil provide the economic base of the area.

The first entry into the Powell area was made by John Colter in 1807. Colter's foray to the area was followed by trips of miners and various explorers. The first herd of cattle was moved into the area in the late 1870s. In 1888, the U.S. Geological Survey was ordered by Congress to investigate the potential for irrigation. One of the first three projects developed by the Bureau of Reclamation in the United States, the Sho-

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shone Project, was authorized in 1904. Headquarters for the project was established at Fort Colter in 1906, which was located near the present town site. Water from the project became available in June of 1908.

The first post office in the area was established on January 22, 1908 with Samuel Craig as the postmaster. With the completion of the project, settlers began moving to the area. In May of 1909 the federal government put town lots on the auction block. The town site of Powell was allocated out of a one square mile government tract. Powell was incorporated into Big Horn County in 1910 and was included in the newly formed Park County in 1911.

Oil was discovered in the Elk Basin in 1915 and by 1920, 150 oil wells were in production. By 1920, the population of Powell had grown substantially to 2,463. By the late 1920s oil production began to decline, and agricultural production, with water provided by the Shoshone Project, continued to provide the economic base. However, the city lost population as indicated in the 1930 census of 1,156. Agriculture improved somewhat through the Depression and Powell experienced a population increase to 1,948 by 1940. Growth was relatively significant in the next decade and in 1950 the population reached 3,804.

The post office is located along Bent Street, at the north end of the city's primary business district. Surrounding land uses include commercial adjacent to the south, across Bent Street to the east, and across Third Street to the north. The Bell Telephone offices are located across the alley to the west and a church is located across the intersection of Third and Bent to the northeast. Most of the surrounding buildings are one to two stories in height and are typically of brick construction. None of these buildings is particularly remarkable either historically or architecturally. There are no buildings of historic significance or historic districts located in proximity to the post office.

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LOCAL PRESS COVERAGE OF THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE POWELL
POST OFFICE

The acquisition and construction of Powell's first federally constructed post office was reported in The Powell Tribune between 1935 and 1937. During this period, Powell seemed to fare relatively well in spite of the national depression. The farm crop reports were good, school enrollment and postal receipts were up (both growth indicators). A new library and a \$90,000 addition to the high school (PWA project) were constructed, and the Heart Mountain Reclamation project was approved by the federal government.

On January 31, 1935 Frank Herrington took over as Powell's new postmaster. On July 25th, the Tribune reported that the local citizenry had urged Senator O'Mahoney to support a federal building in Powell.

On February 6, 1936 it was reported that the Chamber of Commerce had discussed the progress toward obtaining a federal building in the city. The Chamber noted that Powell was the largest city in Wyoming that had not yet received a federal building. In the issue of February 27th, the Chamber announced that its effort in the year 1936 would be concentrated on procuring a new federal post office building. On May 14th, it was reported that Congress was considering an Emergency Appropriations Bill that included Powell for a new federal building. Ten buildings were considered in Wyoming including post offices in Lusk, Midwest, and Riverton.

Powell's new post office seemed assured when the June 25th issue announced that Powell would receive a federal building in the next fiscal year. A message from Congressman Greever indicated that the Post Office Department had approved site acquisition and building construction. On July 30th, it was reported that three lots located on Bent Street had been offered by Ed Althoff (owned by Mrs. A. Beyer) for the grand sum of \$1.00. The federal government had decided to accept

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the lots for the \$88,000 federal building. After several months delay the Chamber raised the question of what happened to the federal building, as reported on December 3rd.

Finally, on February 25, 1937, The Tribune announced that the Treasury Department was asking for bids on the federal building, which would house the post office and Bureau of Reclamation offices (in the basement). On April 1st, it was reported that Busboom & Rauh of Salina, Kansas had submitted the low and winning bid for post office construction -- \$63,900. As reported on May 13th, excavation was planned to commence the following Monday.

Little was reported of construction progress until November 25th, when it was reported that the basement plans would be changed to provide additional room for the Bureau of Reclamation offices (Shoshone Project). The article also noted that the building's dedication was planned for December 17th. An article of December 9th reconfirmed the 17th as the day for the dedication. An article of December 16th reported the preparation for the next day's dedication ceremony. In addition, several congratulatory ads were included in the issue. Extolling the handsome new building and the progress of the community, the ads, placed by local civic groups and materials suppliers, expressed local pride and enthusiastic acceptance of the post office. The dedication ceremonies were reported in the December 23rd issue of The Tribune. Mayor Swallow presided and speeches were given by Postmaster Frank Herrington, Chamber of Commerce Chairman Al Fryer, Shoshone Reclamation Superintendent Lloyd Windle, and others. On December 30th, it was reported that the post office was moving into the new building and that it would begin the new year's business (1938) in its new quarters.

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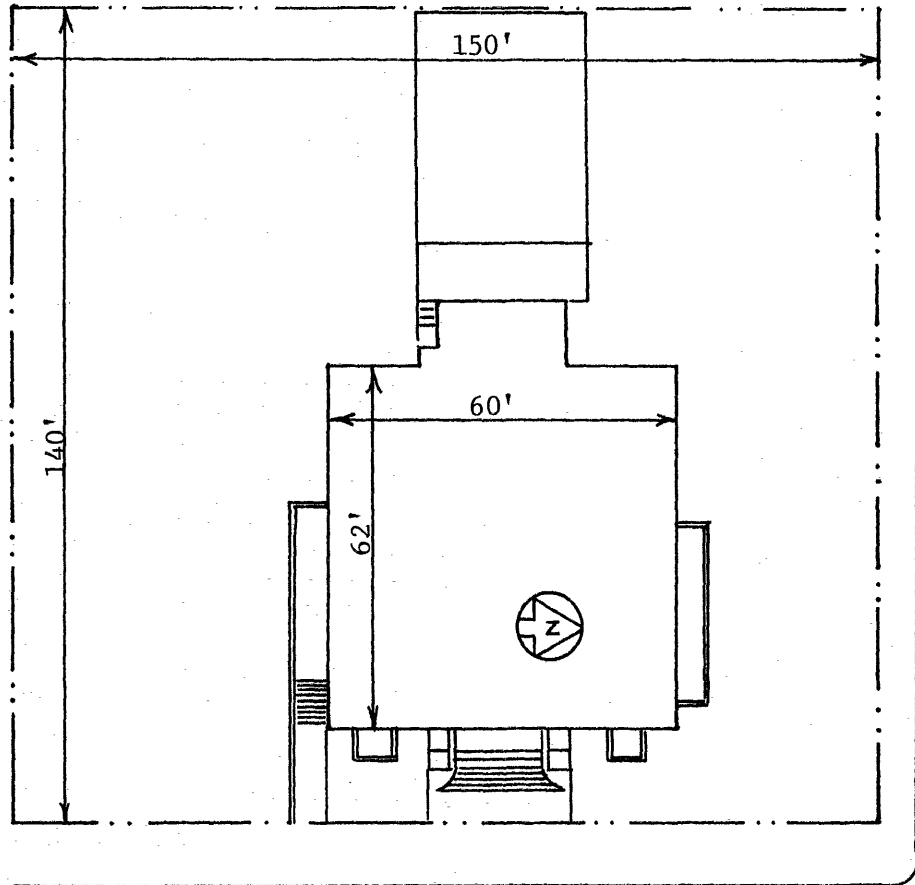
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Bent Street