

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 NOV 27 1984
DATE ENTERED

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

1 NAME

HISTORIC
U.S. Post Office

AND/OR COMMON
Long Beach Main Post Office

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER
300 Long Beach Boulevard

NA
NOT FOR PUBLICATION
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT
32

CITY, TOWN
Long Beach

NA
VICINITY OF
CODE
06

COUNTY
Los Angeles
CODE
037

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	NA 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
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

4 AGENCY

REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS: (If applicable)
U.S. Postal Service, Western Regional Office

STREET & NUMBER
850 Cherry Ave.

CITY, TOWN
San Bruno

NA
VICINITY OF

STATE
CA 94099

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Los Angeles County Recorder

STREET & NUMBER
227 N. Broadway

CITY, TOWN
Los Angeles

STATE
CA 90017

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE
Long Beach Cultural Resources Survey

DATE
1981
FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS
Long Beach Planning and Building Department, City of Long Beach

CITY, TOWN
Long Beach
STATE
CA

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

EXCELLENT DETERIORATED
 GOOD RUINS
 FAIR UNEXPOSED

CHECK ONE

UNALTERED
 ALTERED

CHECK ONE

ORIGINAL SITE
 MOVED DATE NA

4/27/84

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Long Beach Post Office is a large, monumental example of what has been variously called the "Starved Classical" and the "PWA Moderne" styles. It is basically classical in plan and massing, i.e., a symmetrical facade and plan with clearly defined, heavy forms describing the interior volumes from the exterior. Ornament is derived from Art Deco motifs, consisting primarily of geometricized plant forms. The central tower, rising four and a half stories above the main mass of the building, provides a focus for the surrounding urban environment as well as the composition of the building itself.

LOCAL CONTEXT

The Long Beach Main Office is located in what was, in the 1930s, the downtown area of Long Beach. Though the post office is surrounded by structures built in the late 1930s, it is not within a local historic district. The city was platted in 1882, and was originally planned to be an agricultural community. Five years later, the town was reorganized by the Long Beach Land and Water Company, which developed the city as a seaside resort. The discovery of oil at Signal Hill, just north of Long Beach, and the development of the harbor as a major center of international shipping, have defined the town's twentieth century economy.

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The 1932 site survey indicates that three structures occupied the site prior to the construction of the post office: a one-story frame house, a two-story brick apartment, and one three-story brick apartment. A photograph in the Long Beach Public Library picture file, dated 1931, shows that the two-story building was occupied by a print shop in the first floor, with rental rooms on the second. Basement excavations for the present building have probably destroyed any trace of these previous structures. No additional archaeological or paleontological resources are known to exist within or adjacent to the subject property. Further research or subsurface investigation does not appear to be warranted.

The seven-story building is constructed of reinforced site-poured concrete, with terracotta ornament and tile on the north, west, and south elevations. Reinforced brick forms the first two floors of the east elevation, while the basement is faced with granite ashlar. The public lobby has a marble wainscoting and a terrazzo floor, while the first and second floor workrooms have industrial pine floors, composed of wooden blocks set on end grain to resist excessive wear.

The first two floors form a rectangle 202' by 135', and were originally designed as workroom space. A square tower, with a 64' exterior dimension, rises an additional five floors at the west end of the building.

The building appears to be excellent structural condition with no visible spalling, flaking, or other signs of deterioration. The grounds are landscaped with palm trees and rubber plants, which are well cared for.

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Architecturally, the building is an excellent and well-preserved example of Starved Classicism, a style commonly used for federal projects in the early 1930s. Though the exterior elevations are sheathed in terracotta blocks, designed to look like sandstone, ornament is restrained, and confined to small areas on the facade. Most detailing is classically inspired, such as the acanthus leaf capitals on the attached pilasters on the front facade, and the frieze carried by these pilasters. An egg-and-dart molding adorns the intersection of the walls and ceiling in the public lobby, and frames the elevator doors. Molded terracotta panels containing a characteristically moderne four-part fan shape are located on the top two floors of the main facade. The front facade is made more imposing through the use of giant-order pilasters, which extend to the second floor ceiling line.

Cast bronze balusters, recalling turned wooden spindles, fill the transoms above all public entrances, while three concrete plaques, cast to resemble opus sectile, are placed directly above the transoms on the main entrance. The combined effect of the building's mass and the classically derived ornament is a powerful presence; the architect sought to impress the pedestrian with the size and importance of his building.

ALTERATIONS

A concrete access ramp for the handicapped was installed on the west (Long Beach Boulevard) elevation in the early 1970s. Interior modification has been more extensive. The original Greek Revival bronze and glass lobby fixtures have been removed and replaced with fluorescent fixtures, and the ceiling fans which were located in the workroom have been removed and replaced by an HVAC system, installed in the late 1960s. The ceiling in the lobby has been painted with a series of brightly colored squares, radiating concentrically from the light fixtures. A similar motif adorns the doors of the elevators. Recent remodeling has added several new lockbox bays, though newly installed boxes match the older bronze boxes. A plastic laminate designed to resemble the older marble wainscoting surrounds the new lockbox bays.

The lobby occupies the western portion of the first floor, and has a terrazzo floor with marble wainscoting. Several of the original bronze lockbox bays are still in use, though service counters have been installed along the south wall of the lobby. The second floor was devoted to workroom space, but is currently vacant. The upper floors were devoted to federal offices, and have white plaster walls with oak trim. The floors on the office levels are now covered with carpet; the original flooring material is not known.

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 type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)		
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION				

SPECIFIC DATES **Begun 1932,
completed 1934.**

BUILDER/ARCHITECT **OSA/James A. Wetmore
Louis A. Simon**

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Long Beach Main Post Office has been determined eligible by the Keeper of the National Register. (See Federal Register, Volume 48, No. 22, p. 10623.)

ARCHITECTURE

The Long Beach Main Office was one of the first large-scale Starved Classical buildings constructed in California, and is a clear expression of the design concepts of this style. While the proportions and composition for the facade derive directly from Beaux-Arts concepts of monumentality and symmetry, the applied ornament has its roots in the Art Deco of the twenties.

Many older buildings in Long Beach were destroyed in an earthquake on Marh 10, 1933. The Main Post Offices is, therefore, one of the oldest buildings in downtown still standing.

Though this building is attributed to the Office of the Supervising Architect in this nomination, David Gebhard and Robert Winter attribute it to Gilbert Stanley Underwood. Building records and newspaper clippings in the Long Beach Library suggest that the building was designed in the Office of the Supervising Architect. Further research in documents held by the National Archives may resolve this attribution problem.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Long Beach City Library, Photograph Files, 48FR 10623

David Gebhard and Robert Winter, A Guide to Architecture in Los Angeles and Southern California, Peregrine Smith, Inc., Santa Barbara and Salt Lake City, 1977

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY .75

UTM REFERENCES

A	1 1	3 8,9 9,1,5	3, 7 3 7 ³³⁵ 2 6 4	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

L.A. County M.B. 7281, p. 9, parcel 900. Town of Long Beach Subdivision, Block 78, Lots 18,20,22,24,26,28. The rectangular site has a 250' frontage along 3rd. Street and E. Roble and a 150' frontage along Long Beach Boulevard and Alamo Ct.

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

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

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Doug Robertson, Planner

ORGANIZATION

Beland/Associates, Inc.

DATE
April 27, 1984

STREET & NUMBER

16 S. Oakland Ave. #204

TELEPHONE
(818) 7796-8093

CITY OR TOWN

Pasadena

STATE
CA 91101

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

TITLE

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

DATE

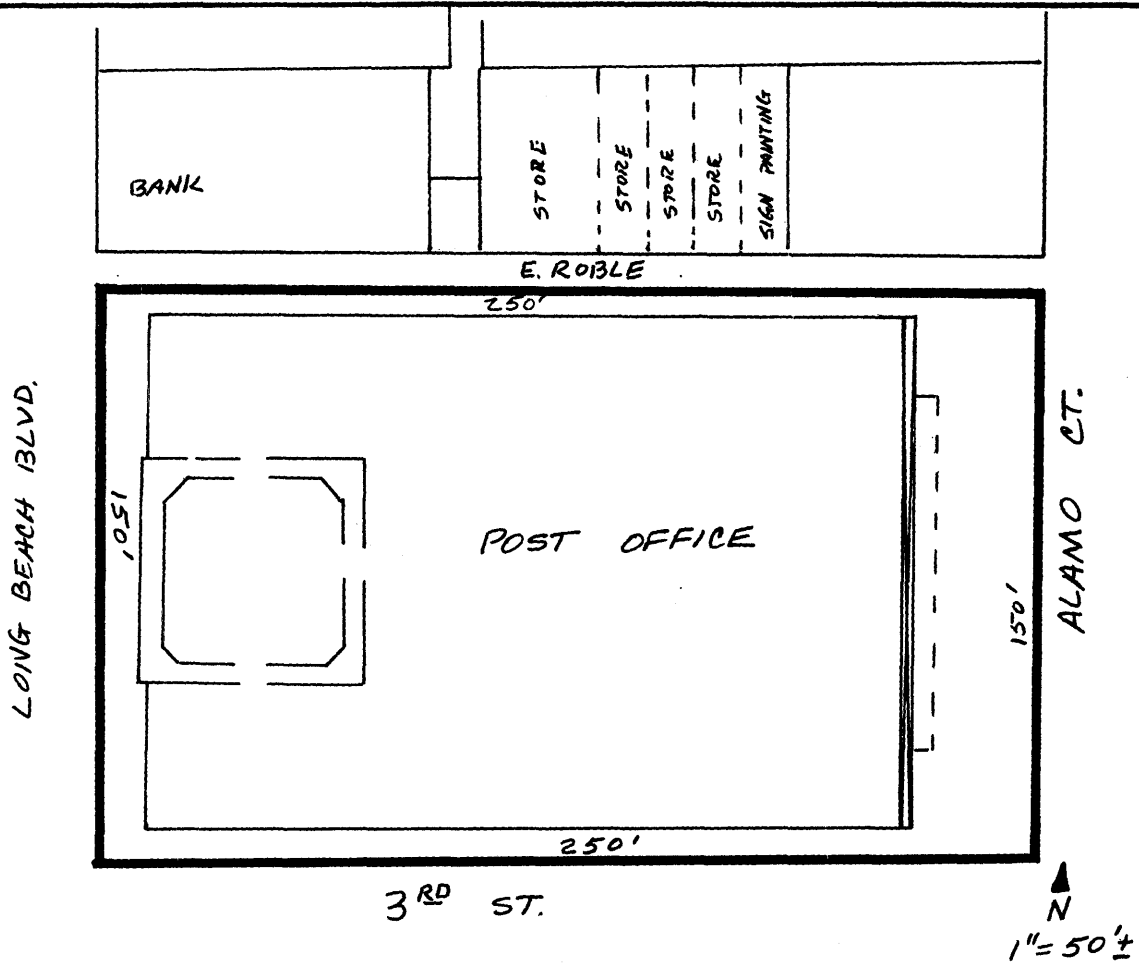
KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

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Note: Post office site outlined in red.

Source: Sanborn Map, Long Beach Book, Vol.1, page 50, 1914-51;
Geography Department, California State University,
Northridge, California.