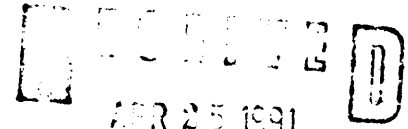


United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service



# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

NATIONAL  
REGISTER

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). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

### 1. Name of Property

historic name Camas Main Post Office  
other names/site number N/A

### 2. Location

street & number 440 NE Fifth Avenue N/A  not for publication  
city, town Camas N/A  vicinity  
state Washington code WA county Clark code 011 zip code 98607

### 3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
		Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>    </u>	<u>    </u> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u>    </u>	<u>    </u> structures
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u>    </u>	<u>    </u> objects
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing:  
Historic U.S. Post Offices In Washington,  
1893 - 1941

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] 1/1/90  
Signature of certifying official Date  
U.S. Postal Service  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  See continuation sheet.

[Signature] 12/15/89  
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. Antoinette Lee 8/7/91  
 See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register.  See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain:)

[Signature] for Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

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**6. Function or Use**

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Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

U.S. Post Office

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Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

U.S. Post Office

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**7. Description**

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Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Colonial Revival

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Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concretewalls BrickWoodroof Copperother Tar composition

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Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Camas Main Post Office is a one-story red brick building which rests upon a raised basement platform. Its structure consists of reinforced concrete footings, basement, and floor slabs, steel framing, and brick walls. The front elevation is flat, symmetrical, and Classically-proportioned. Five bays divide the facade--two flat-arched window bays and a centered round-arched entry bay. A gable roof topped with a square wooden cupola covers the front portion of the building, while the rear portion is covered by a flat built-up tar composition roof.

**PHYSICAL APPEARANCE**

The front facade (north) is horizontal in orientation and symmetrically-arranged. Red brick in common bond faces the basement and first floor exterior walls. A stone water table divides the basement and first floor. The facade is divided by five bays--a centered entry bay with two window bays on each side. Four granite steps and granite landing provide access to the main entry. Wrought-iron balustrades with integrated lamp standards flank the stairs. The entry consists of double wooden doors, each with a molded wooden panel in the lower portion and a six-light glass panel in the upper. Above the doors is a wooden transom with two raised molded panels. Framing the doors and slightly recessed from the brick wall is a Doric order architrave (wood)--half-round fluted columns with Doric capitals supporting a simple entablature with dentils. Within the brick segmental arch and over the entablature is a painted cast-aluminum eagle. The window bays, with stone lintels and sills, each contain double-hung wood sash with twelve-over-twelve lights. Terminating the first floor is a wooden frieze and dentil cornice. Sloping rearward from the cornice is a copper-clad gable roof topped by a square wooden cupola.

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Divided into six window bays, the west and east facades of the building are identical. (The side facades of the loading vestibule and platform, extending from the rear, however, differ from each other.) By slightly projecting the front portion of the building relative to the rear, the sides are divided into two sections. Additional articulation is provided by use of a gable roof over the front and flat roof over the rear. A stone water table and wood frieze and dentil cornice unify the two sections horizontally. Two bays divide the front portion and four bays divide the rear. All the bays are identical with stone sills and lintels and twelve-over-twelve-light, double-hung, wood sash. Ten-light fan windows are centered in each of the wooden shiplap gable ends. The rear portion is covered by a built-up tar composition roof set behind a brick parapet.

The rear facade consists of the rear of the main building and rearward-projecting loading vestibule and loading platform. As with the side facades, the walls are red brick with a stone watertable, wooden frieze and cornice, and brick parapet. One window and a square brick chimney on the west side and two windows on the east side flank the centered loading vestibule (windows are identical to the front and sides). The vestibule, extending in height to the frieze, contains two small window bays on the west side and one on the east side--six-over-six-light, double-hung, wood sash. Enclosed on the east and south sides by brick, the loading platform opens to the west. A flat metal marquee projects over the loading area.

**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)

Architecture  
Art  
Politics/Government

Period of Significance

1939-1941

Significant Dates

Site acq.-1938

Const.-1939

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Simon, Louis A., Supervising Architect/Federal Government

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

The Camas Main Post Office is significant on the local level for its art and its legacy of the Federal public works programs of the Depression era. The Camas MPO is an unaltered example of a small town single-purpose post office. The building and mural within symbolize the assistance to small communities by the Federal government, through its public buildings and arts programs, during a period of national economic emergency. It also represents the efforts of local citizens in obtaining their first and only Federal building. The mural, through its visual presentation, relates the history of the locality and represents a significant period and type of American artistic expression.

**ARCHITECTURE**

The design is standard and the front facade is nearly identical to the post offices in Snohomish (1938), Raymond (1940), and Shelton (1938). Moreover, the design, with minor variations in trim detailing, is typical of numerous other small town post offices constructed throughout the Northwest during the mid- to late-1930s; it is patterned after one of several standardized plans developed by the Department of the Treasury. Although the building does not constitute a unique entity in the body of state-wide architecture, it is the only building of this particular style in Camas. The Camas MPO, as most federal buildings of the era, utilizes Classical symmetry and proportion. The facade is flat and features nominal architectural detail. A round arch and sculpted eagle emphasize the entry bay and a cupola atop a gable roof lends a Colonial flavor. The design exemplified in this building is a signifier of the Federal tradition. Its use was favored in the late Depression and, as such, the building is locally significant under Criterion C.

See continuation sheet

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

1. Camas Post-Record; various articles 1936 - 1939.
2. Original Building Plans; 1938.
3. Welsh, William D. A Brief History of Camas Washington. 18th Printing August, 1970 (no publisher listed).
4. Parsons, Mark E. Looking Back 100 Years of Camas & Washougal History. Camas, WA: Post Publications, 1983.

See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS): N/A

- 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:

USPS Facilities Service Center  
San Bruno, CA 94099-0330

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of property 0.34

UTM References

A 10 546420 5048080  
Zone Easting Northing

B           
Zone Easting Northing

C         

D         

Quadrangle Name: Camas

Quadrangle Scale: 1:24,000

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

Lots 5, 6 & 7, Block 37, Camas. The site is on the Southwest corner of NE 5th Street and NE Dallas Street. Beginning at the northeast corner, thence S100', W150', N100', E150' to point of beginning.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes the property originally purchased by the federal government for the post office site.

See continuation sheet

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title H.J. "Jim" Kolva, Project Manager; Steve Franks, Research Assistant  
organization Institute for Urban & Local Studies date March 1989  
street & number West 705 First Avenue telephone (509) 458-6219  
city or town Spokane state WA zip code 99204

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The building is locally significant under Criterion A because it symbolizes the effort of the Federal government to aid small communities during the Depression era through its massive public works programs. It is also a legacy of the success on the part of local citizens in lobbying efforts through their elected officials in Washington.

Congressman Martin F. Smith, at a luncheon in his honor in February of 1936, revealed that a federal post office for Camas was assured. He also strongly defended the New Deal program and cited its positive influence on the economy. A year later, the local businessman's club took up the issue: it would solicit the aid of leading civic organizations and the unions to show strong community support for Smith's efforts to gain a federal post office. The local campaign continued through the summer and bore fruit in September when it was announced that \$80,000 had been authorized for the new post office. Though the fate of the post office hung in the balance through 1938 (because a well-located and reasonably-price site was seemingly unavailable), the project moved forward.

The reward at the end of the long and frustrating path to the building came on August 15, 1939 when Second Assistant Postmaster General Ambrose O'Connell, while making his dedicatory address, termed the building "a symbol of a great democracy and its ideals." He also lauded the efforts of Congressman Smith in gaining the building. Smith, who also addressed the audience, said that the occasion marked the realization of a dream of his and of the public-spirited citizens who worked so long for an adequate post office.

ART

The Post Office contains a mural in the lobby over the Postmaster's door (west side). Entitled "Beginning of a New World," the mural is executed in egg tempera on canvas (which has been glued to the wall). Approximately 5' by 12', the mural was completed by Douglas Nicholson in 1941. According to a press release for the mural, the aim of the muralist was to project a theme of primary interest to the community on the wall of the post office, a building accessible to every-

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one. The theme is the land and its physical and human resources as the settler in the Northwest found and began to develop them. Lumber, dairying, fruit and grain, and fishing were the industries to be developed in the region. The Indian is represented with her contribution of the salmon.

Douglas Nicholson was born in Omaha, Nebraska in 1907 and studied at the University of California under H. Hofmann, W. Ryder, and R. Boynton. He exhibited at the San Francisco Museum of Art in 1938. In addition to the completion of murals in California, Nicholson was an illustrator with the U.S. War Department in 1946.

The Camas MPO was one of eighteen in the state of Washington to receive a mural under the auspices of the Federal Works Agency Section of Fine Arts. Thus, it is locally significant under Criterion A for its association with the New Deal arts programs. The building is also significant under Criterion C in that the mural, as an integral part of the building, represents a significant type, period, and style of artistic expression.

LOCAL CONTEXT

Camas lies along the Columbia River in southwestern Washington's Clark County. Adjacent to the city of Washougal and approximately 15 miles east of Vancouver, Camas has an economy based primarily on the wood products industry. In 1987 it had an estimated population of 5,890.

In 1792 Lt. William R. Broughton of His Majesty's British Navy and a party of sailors were the first white men to explore the Columbia River upstream from its mouth. Lewis and Clark became the second exploring party to reach the Camas-Washougal area, arriving in 1805. Camas' history began in 1846 when Jacobo Hansaker built a sawmill where Camas now stands. This mill and a subsequent one burned and the area was without an industry until 1883.

In 1883 the LaCamas Colony Company decided to build a papermill in the present area of Camas. On September 10,

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1883 the original Camas townsite was laid out by the company two weeks after the first dam on the Lackamas Lake had been completed and 50 men had begun work constructing the mill. Camas, or LaCamas as it was called then, was already a busy community. A. E. MacMaster constructed the first store in 1883; a year later the new town's first post office was set up in the store, with Aaron F. Mills postmaster. (The first post office in the Camas region was established in 1874 in the area now known as Grass Valley; Henry M. Knapp was postmaster.) The first school building was erected in 1886. By the time Washington became a state in 1889 Camas had grown to a flourishing town of 1,000 people and the paper mill was the largest in the Columbia River area, employing 200 men.

Camas enjoyed consistent growth as the paper mill merged and expanded through the years. In 1906 a bag factory was constructed and LaCamas became an incorporated town. A year later its name was changed to Camas and franchises were given for a telephone system and electric service. From 1920 to 1930 the town's population grew from 1,843 to 4,239. Even during the depression the mill continued to expand and the town grew along with it; Camas grew from 4,433 in 1940 to 4,725 in 1950 to 5,666 in 1960. The town's population peaked at 5,790 in 1970 before falling slightly to 5,681 in 1980.

The Camas Main Post Office is on the northeast corner of NE 5th Avenue and NE Dallas Street, one block north of NE 4th Avenue, the city's primary downtown business street. The one-story masonry Peeble's Plumbing building is adjacent to the west of the MPO. The rears of one- to three-story brick buildings are adjacent to the south (they front NE 4th Ave.). All of these buildings predate the post office. East across Dallas is a convenience grocery store. Across the Dallas/5th intersection to the northwest is the one-story concrete AWPW Hall. An abandoned gas station is across 5th to the north, and to its west is a two-story bank building (former dentist offices and apartments built in the late 1930s).

LOCAL NEWSPAPER COVERAGE OF THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE  
CAMAS MAIN POST OFFICE

The year 1936, in which a new post office for Camas seemed to finally have been appropriated, was one of progress



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for the city. Several WPA projects were approved and underway, private construction was booming, and the financial outlook was good. On January 10th, the Camas Post-Record noted that postal receipts (an indicator of economic growth) had increased from \$18,567 in 1934 to \$20,845 in 1935. A survey also revealed that the population was over 5,000, with 10,000 in the Camas-Washougal area. Contracts for a new WPA-funded junior high school to cost \$109,000 were let in January. In addition, the WPA approved a \$15,000 city water reservoir. On April 7th, Frank B. Collins, a local Democratic leader, was nominated to be the city's new postmaster. Wages at the local paper mill (the mainstay of the local economy) were raised 5 cents per hour (with 2 cents for women) in June. A June 30th article reported that "Building Is Booming." In July more good news appeared: deposits in local banks and savings and loans as well as postal receipts were increasing. A new city hall was proposed by the City Council on July 17th: a WPA grant would be requested for the \$30,000 combined City Hall and Library. September 4th brought the news that "New P.O. Building Assured for Camas." Congressman Martin F. Smith revealed at a noon luncheon that the new federal building had met the approval of the post office department and would be on the preferential list of buildings to be submitted in the 1937-38 budget. Smith provided no further details, but "launched a vigorous defense of the New Deal" and discussed its positive impact on the Depression economy.

Although no news of the post office was reported in the remainder of 1936, the Post-Record opened the new year with a January 5th announcement that a drive would be launched to ensure the city's federal building. The previous night's Business Club's meeting resulted in a committee to contact leading civic organizations and unions and enlist their support. The new session of Congress would begin that day and the Club felt that it was necessary to demonstrate strong and unified community support so as to bolster Smith's effort to ensure Camas' position on the new federal building list. It was also noted that nearby Vancouver was also making a bid for a new building (which, if successful, might delay Camas' position since allocations were limited). January 12th brought the news "Bill is Filed to Build \$80,000 Postoffice Here." Smith submitted a proposal which included nine buildings in the third district. These included Winlock, Raymond,

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Stevenson, Vanouver, South Bend, Aberdeen, Olympia, and Pe Ell. Only two were considered probable. Smith was optimistic that Camas would eventually get a federal building but urged that local citizens demonstrate a strong demand for such a building. The new junior high was dedicated on March 5th. June brought the news that the paper workers would get a 10 cent per hour wage increase and that the payroll of June 25th was the largest in the history of the mill: \$90,000-95,000 was paid in the monthly payroll. In July, local savings (\$1.1 million) and postal receipts were up, the Bonneville Dam was near completion, a 20-block, \$34,000 paving project was approved, and a new movie theatre would be built.

On August 17, 1937 the Post-Record announced that Camas had made the list of the House Appropriations Committee for a new post office. Thirty other communities in the state were also on the list to be included in the \$23,000,000 third deficiency appropriation. Postmaster Collins reemphasized the need for local citizens to demonstrate strong support for the building and, taking heed, the Business Men's Club renewed its campaign for the building. Construction of three other local buildings was reported on August 20th: a theater, the Trosper Building, and a medical building on NE 5th and Cedar. On August 31st it was announced that a \$2.4 million deep sea channel between Vancouver and the Bonneville dam had been approved. In addition, a survey would be made of the Port of Camas-Washougal for potential development.

The news local civic leaders had been anxiously awaiting headed the Post-Record on September 10, 1937: "NEW POSTOFFICE APPROVED." "Treasury Dept. Allows \$80,000 For Structure" captioned the good news from Congressman Smith. Funds had just been allotted for acquisition of a site and erection of a federal building. Credit was given to Smith and Postmaster Collins for their diligent efforts. The work of Camas civic organizations, unions, and individuals in their appeals to Smith, Senators Bone and Schwellenbach, and the Treasury Department was also credited. Bids for a post office site were called on September 14th. In the next week's issue, it was reported that only \$68,000 would be available for actual construction of the building, tentative plans indicated a one-story building with basement, and the design would be from the Office of Supervising Architect standardized plans. The visit of C. W. Linebaugh, federal site inspector, was

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reported on October 21st. His comments on the sites offered thus far was that they were "plenty high." Apparently, the offers were so unfavorable that the issue of the following week stated "Fate of Postoffice in Balance." On November 11th, the paper reminded those interested in submitting bids that the deadline was next week. Local businessmen were working on two locations. The year closed with the good news that the WPA had approved a \$51,133 sewer project for Camas.

An apparent setback for post office boosters introduced the year 1938 when, on January 13th, the Post-Record revealed that "Postoffice Seeks New Bid on Site." Three lots on NE 5th and Cedar had gained favor, but the requirement was changed from four lots to three. If the price of the three favored lots was reasonable, then they might be selected. An article of February 17th reviewed the "huge sums" that had been spent in Camas by the federal government: more than \$141,000 had already been spent on relief with another \$105,000 more put up by sponsors since the beginning of the New Deal's emergency relief program in 1933. In addition to these projects, another \$134,000 in WPA projects had been recently approved. Projects included the junior high wing, school cafeteria, school grounds and athletic fields improvements, street and sewer work, and a survey of the port. New site bids for the post office were called on March 3rd. Finally, on March 17th, a site on the corner of NE 5th and Dallas was selected for the new post office. Months of bargaining, rejecting bids, and scaling down the requirements had finally produced a result. Three lots costing \$8,525 would be the post office site. In an article of April 7th, local planners suggested that the design of the new post office be of a "modified Colonial type." It was felt by the Planning Commission that such a building, with a pitched roof, would make a more beautiful building.

The Post-Record Industrial Edition of May 1938 summarized the many accomplishments in the city's progress: a modern school system, many fine churches, a new medical building, its important businesses and factories, and the \$130,000 spent on 60 homes in 1937. In addition, an entire page was devoted to the planned post office. News of June through September centered on the proposed city Hall, the start of the Columbia River channel work, and that Camas would get the first power from the new Bonneville Dam. Plans for the new

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post office were disclosed on September 22nd. A sketch of Camas' \$70,000 building was on the front page. The building was described, and an insert, "What? Jitterbug Cage in New Postoffice," explained that the swing room shown on the plans was not a luxurious lounge with a radio blaring swing music where postal employees could give expression to the jitterbug but, instead, a room where they would wait between shifts. On November 3rd the post office moved closer to reality when Joseph H. Anderson of Portland had won the bid at \$53,333.

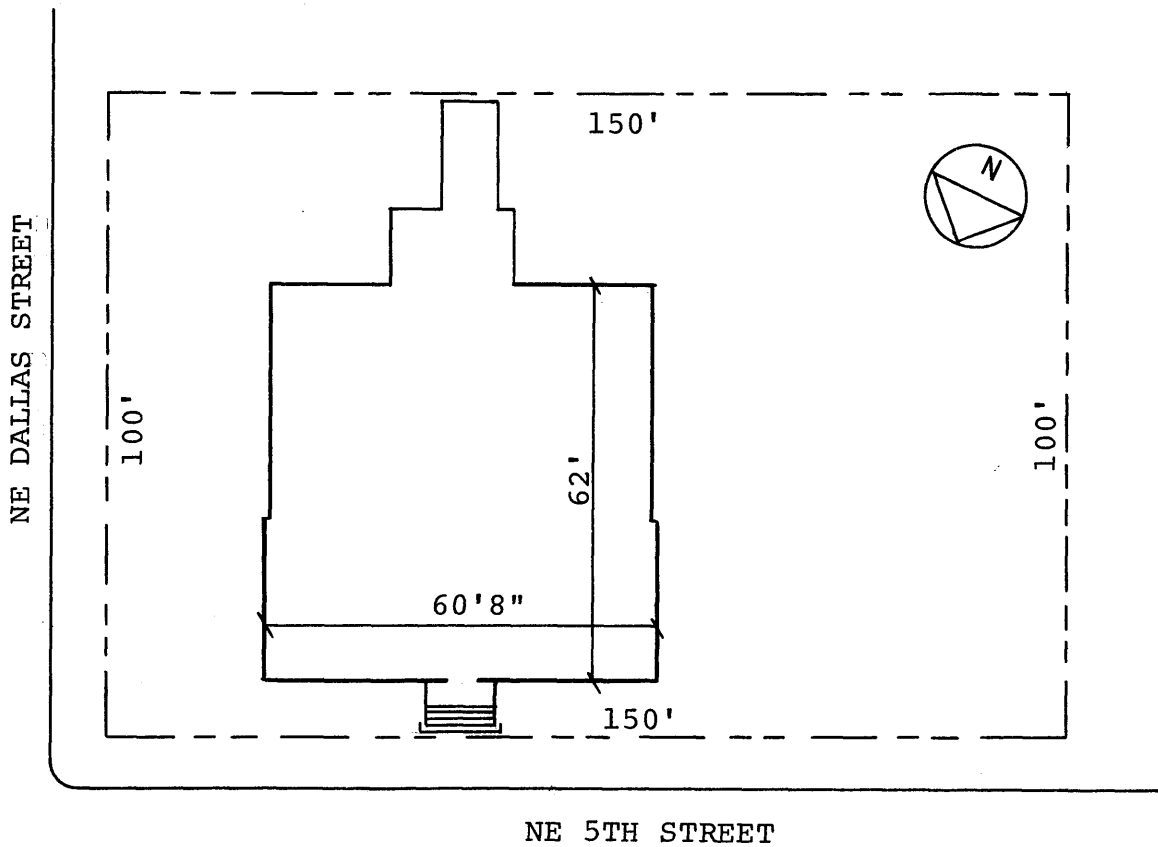
The year 1939 was another year of progress for the city. In January, Crown Zellerbach announced the plans to construct a new central laboratory building at the paper mill, the WPA approved the city's \$55,000 sewer project, and the city council called for a bond election for the proposed City Hall and library. June 1st brought the news that 78 percent of the city's voters supported the City Hall/library bond. News of the post office, after months of silence, was reported on July 20th; the building would be finished in September. A gala cornerstone ceremony was being planned with Congressman Smith as the speaker. The article noted the building's "bomb proof" construction with reinforced concrete basement walls and main floor brick walls over 16 inches thick. On August 10th, the Post-Record previewed Tuesday's post office dedication program. Photos of Ambrose O'Connell, second assistant postmaster general; Congressman Smith; and Postmaster Collins were placed prominently on the front page. These officials would preside at the ceremony and speak at an evening banquet. "600 Witness Dedication of New P.O." reported the Post-Record on August 17th. O'Connell declared the building a "symbol of a great democracy and its ideals" and lauded Congressman Smith for his securing the appropriation.

On September 21st, the Post-Record reported that the Post Office would be open in ten days. Another article announced that Douglas Nicholson of Berkeley, CA would complete a mural in the post office lobby. September 28th brought the news that the city was calling for bids for its new City Hall and library. An open house, with 500 citizens enjoying their tour of the new building, was reported on October 5th. Later that month it was also reported that the paper mill had run at full capacity for the first time in 12 years and that bids received on the new city hall assured its construction; it would be funded totally by the city without WPA funds.

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The following information is the same for all the  
photographs listed:

1. Camas MPO
2. Camas, Washington
3. Jim Kolva
4. August 1987
5. Negatives on file at USPS Facilities Service Center,  
San Bruno, CA.

Photo No. 1 (negative #8A)

6. View to southwest

Photo No. 2 (negative #9A)

6. View to south

Photo No. 3 (negative #10A)

6. View to southeast

Photo No. 4 (negative #2A)

6. Lobby mural