

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

**DATA SHEET**

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED DEC 13 1976

DATE ENTERED MAY 27 1977

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

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

U. S. Post Office and ~~Post Office~~ Annex, Wenatchee, Washington

AND/OR COMMON

Old Wenatchee Post Office and Annex

**2 LOCATION**

STREET &amp; NUMBER

Mission and Yakima Streets

\_\_NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Wenatchee

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

4th - Mike McCormack

STATE

Washington

\_\_ VICINITY OF

CODE

53

COUNTY

Chelan

CODE

007

**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

City of Wenatchee

STREET &amp; NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Wenatchee

\_\_ VICINITY OF

STATE

Washington

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,

REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Chelan County Courthouse

STREET &amp; NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Wenatchee

STATE

Washington

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

Washington State Inventory of Historic Places

DATE

1974

\_\_FEDERAL  STATE \_\_COUNTY \_\_LOCALDEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission

CITY, TOWN

Olympia

STATE

Washington

## 7 DESCRIPTION

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

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

The old U. S. Post Office and Post Office Annex in Wenatchee, Washington are two separate buildings completed in 1938 and 1918 respectively. They are located at the corner of Mission and Yakima Streets on adjoining lots divided by a service driveway. Each represent a different architectural style, although the design of the new building is skillfully planned to compliment the neighboring structure in scale, setback, materials and surface detailing.

The older Post Office, now referred to as the annex, is a box-like building surfaced in light grey pressed brick with dimensioned sandstone architectural features. The sandstone elements include a water table and base course, a classical entablature and parapet coping, pilaster capitals and window sills.

Measuring a total of 101 by 64 feet in plan (long dimension in front), the forward two-thirds of the building is two stories in height, while the remaining rearward portion is a single story. This one story attachment is shorter in overall length so that its end walls are set back four and a half feet from the ends of the main structure. Also, the architectural treatment is simplified on the rear wall surfaces; the cornice and pilasters are discontinued, although the coping and water table are extended around the entire building.

On the southwest elevation facing Mission Street, the main entrance is centered along the facade which is detailed symmetrically on either side. Below the cornice level approximate one-half the wall surface is divided into seven bays by strip pilasters. Between each pilaster there is a large nine-over-nine light double-hung window and a plain sandstone panel with border moulding centered in the area above the window but below the frieze. Three separate single leaf doors for the main entrance are located in the central bays (below proportionately shorter windows) each door being separated by a pilaster.

The remaining wall areas flanking the series of bays are nearly solid brick masonry surfaces. They are interrupted only by a minimal projection formed by a thickening of the brickwork into an eight foot wide vertical band at the edge of the first and last pilaster. The bands continue from the water table to the parapet and they include a corresponding deviation in the line of the cornice where the projections occur.

The end walls of the building are an abbreviated repetition of the main facade. They differ in that the central portion divided by pilasters and windows is set forward a few inches from the remaining wall plane reversing the relationship of background to projecting surface as established in front.

When the new Post Office was under construction in 1938, the existing building was extensively modified on the interior for use as laboratories and office space. In the course of this work few changes were made on the exterior of the earlier Post Office, which remained basically unaltered until 1950 when the building underwent a second major remodeling. The public lobby inside the main entrance was originally provided with high ceilings which reduced the second story space above to the status of a storage attic. The ceilings were lowered in this area to make headroom for five additional second floor offices. In the process twelve new windows were cut through the brickwork between the cornice and coping to provide natural light and ventilation. Other exterior alterations include the removal of bronze or iron grillwork originally provided over glazed areas.

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The building that replaced the old Wenatchee Post Office in 1938 is a reinforced concrete frame structure with a pressed brick and sandstone veneer. It measures 180 by 90 feet in plan dimensions. Like the older building, it has a two-story section at the front extending 50 feet toward the rear and covering approximately half the ground floor.

In terms of its architecture the newer building is a box-like simplified design in the late Modernistic style. The long Mission Street elevation is a discreet reference to the rhythm and massing of the older Post Office Annex next door. Seven regular bays divide the central half of the facade, and, like the older building, these are flanked by relatively uninterrupted brick masonry surfaces at either side. Although the proportions are taller and somewhat wider, the total number of bays is identical to that of the annex, and without the use of a capital and base the glazed areas are separated by masonry piers the equivalent of strip pilasters. Between piers, the windows are set in recessed panels.

Each panel consists of a tall double-hung window at the ground floor and a shorter window on the upper floor, half the height of the sash below it. These are joined by a smooth dressed sandstone spandrel with a cut stone sill and horizontally ribbed cornice. Resting on the cornice against the dressed stone spandrel there is a small carved ornament in an abstract motif characteristic of the Moderne style.

Sandstone is used elsewhere on the facade for a plain frieze and slightly projecting ribbed cornice that span the series of piers and continue around the building. Also, a finely carved spread-winged eagle stands framed in a rectangular panel above the head of the main entrance.

Unlike the old building, the newer Post Office has a plain, utilitarian appearance at the sides and back. Facing the service driveway on the south wall there is a full-length shipping platform and sheltering canopy installed in recent years. It is a replacement for a short loading dock originally located off the workroom toward the rear. Mounting the canopy required minor modifications in the first floor windows; the heads were lowered and the openings partially bricked in. Otherwise the building is substantially unaltered on the exterior.

The interior has had a number of alterations since the structure was first completed. The most significant changes have taken place since the building was acquired by the City of Wenatchee for use as a municipal museum. All but a small number of the lock-boxes have been removed, and the lookout gallery above the workroom (an enclosed catwalk where postal inspectors observed mail handling) is now in the process of being dismantled.

Interior features of note include a 12 by 30 foot skylight above the work area, and a large W.P.A. mural of exceptional quality mounted on the south wall of the lobby. The mural is painted on canvass panels attached above the wainscoting and covering an area of approximately 10 by 16 feet - sharing the wall surface with the entrance to the Post-

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master's Office and two bronze framed building directories. Entitled "Saga of Wenatchee", the painting depicts Wenatchee past and present and four local industries. It is painted with a very precise technique in the stylized realism characteristic of Federally sponsored art works for public buildings produced during the Depression.

The Old U. S. Post Office and Post Office Annex retain the essential characteristics of their architectural styles, and they are Wenatchee's only examples of historic buildings designed by federal architects.



# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Miscellaneous news articles - The Wenatchee Daily World

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY One

UTM REFERENCES

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B 

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ZONE EASTING NORTHING

ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C 

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D 

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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

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

Jacob E. Thomas, Historic Preservation Specialist

ORGANIZATION

Office of Archaeology & Historic Preservation

DATE

October, 1976

STREET & NUMBER

P. O. Box 1128

TELEPHONE

(206) 753-4116

CITY OR TOWN

Olympia

STATE

Washington

## 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL

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

*Arthur M. Sherline*

TITLE State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE November 30, 1976

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

*Robert B. Pettig*

DATE 5/27/77

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST: *Herb Ward*

DATE 5/27/77

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

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the overcrowded conditions reported by the Postmaster.

As a Depression era public works project, the proposal for replacing the old Federal building drew considerable attention from the local press. In 1933, after three years and in the middle of a series of more than 30 first and second page news articles on the subject, headlines reported "Hope glimmers for postoffice building here."

Plans for the new building were not finalized until late in 1936. Congressman Sam B. Hill secured an appropriation of \$305,000 which was estimated as the cost of construction for the new Post Office and including the desired alterations to the old one. Plans and specifications required 175 single spaced pages of legal size paper and twenty-eight 30 by 42 inch blueprints.

The contract was let to Consolidated Engineering and Construction Company (E. G. Anderson, contractor). Clement J. Gerber, Federal Engineer supervised work on the job site representing the procurement division of the U. S. Treasury Department. Construction began in March, 1937 and the project was completed in 11 months.

In addition to functioning as a postal facility both buildings have housed Federal offices for other agencies such as the Civil Service Commission, Farmers' Home Administration, Soil Conservation Service, Department of Agriculture - Agricultural Research Service, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

At laboratories located in the Post Office Annex, Department of Agriculture scientists conducted experiments in the use of controlled atmosphere storage to preserve the quality and freshness of apples over extended periods. Although earlier studies were done in Britain, New England and California, the experiments in Wenatchee beginning in 1953 were the first tests of the controlled atmosphere method in the Pacific Northwest. These experiments were to have a significant effect in a community whose economy is based in large part on the raising and marketing of apples. The method has since been adopted commercially throughout most of the industry. Also, the Post Office service center was involved in the state's first Highway Post Office mail distribution experiments. A specially designed van equipped with mailrooms, sleeping quarters and living space for employees was built and operated under a contract with Eagle Transfer of Wenatchee. This vehicle made it possible to sort, cancel and prepare mail while enroute between Wenatchee and Oroville. This system remained in service between 1953 and 1966, when it was discontinued.

After the second Post Office was completed, a 10 foot by 16 foot oil-on-canvas mural was installed in 1940 on the south wall of the lobby in the newer building. Entitled "Saga of Wenatchee" the painting was commissioned by the Federal Art Project, within the Work Progress Administration. The mural was painted by Peggy Strong, a 26 year old artist from Tacoma, Washington. The design for the mural was the winner in a competition of 46 entries judged anonymously by juries at the Seattle Art Museum and Washington, D.C. Miss Strong

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studied art at the University of Washington and with Sarkis Sarkisian in Detroit, Michigan and Frederic Taubes, New York City. She had earlier exhibited paintings in the art museum of several major cities, and was invited to become a member of the San Francisco Society of Women Artists.

The mural represents the style referred to as illustrational realism in American Scene painting, typical of many works sponsored by the Federal Art Project. Miss Strong's draftsmanship and composition bear an unmistakable resemblance to the paintings by Thomas Hart Benton produced in the early 1930s. When the Post Office was later declared surplus and title to the property was eventually transferred to the City of Wenatchee, the mural was accessioned to the National Collection of Fine Arts, the Smithsonian Institution. It is presently protected by conditions made a part of the City's deed.

In 1974, the Wenatchee Post Office was again moved to different quarters in a newly constructed Federal Building, but at a different site. Although the City has since acquired title to the property, some Federal Offices remain in the Annex. The old Post Office itself is currently being converted for use as a museum.

The old U. S. Post Office and Post Office Annex in Wenatchee are representative of the growth in the services and influence of the federal government in a rural Eastern Washington agricultural community.