

INVENTORY SHEET FOR GROUP NOMINATIONS: IDAHO STATE HISTORICAL SOCIETY, BOISE, IDAHO

NOMINATION: (TOURTELLOTTE AND HUMMEL ARCHITECTURE ~~IN IDAHO~~ (TR)),

✓ SITE NAME: Weiser Post Office ✓

SITE NUMBER: 125

✓ LOCATION: Main and ^{1st} ~~West First~~ streets, Weiser, Washington County ~~(087)~~, Idaho

OWNER'S NAME AND ADDRESS:

Office of Real Estate
United States Postal Service
Washington, D.C. 20260

QUADRANGLE AND SCALE: Weiser South, 7.5 minute

ACREAGE: less than one

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION:

The nomination includes the Weiser Post Office and the property on which it stands, lots 11-17, block 31, Watlington's addition. Legal description on file at the Washington County Courthouse, Weiser, Idaho.

UTM(S): 11/5,02,370/48,99,90

DATE OR PERIOD: 1932

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE: Architecture

EVALUATED LEVEL OF SIGNIFICANCE: Local

CONDITION: excellent

unaltered

original site

DESCRIPTION:

The Weiser Post Office is a Georgian revival style structure, its two-story main section rectangular in plan with a one-story ell at rear center. It is surfaced with red brick trimmed with smoothly dressed stone. The parapet of the flat roof is perforated with short ranges of enclosed balustrades. A round-arched entrance is centered in front.

The front elevation is seven bays wide. The middle five are very slightly outset in a single broad ell, its corners marked by stone quoins as are the outside corners of the main structure. Side elevations are two bays deep. The vertical organization is as follows: a foundation wall finished in ashlar to the bottom of the first story windows, a slightly outset ashlar band dividing the brick fabric of the two stories immediately under the second-story windows, and a smooth stone fireze and denticulated cornice beneath the brick parapet. The parapet is perforated by brief ranges of enclosed balustrade. Each range is five stocky, spindle-like balusters wide and aligned with a window in the central section below. The whole is finished with a narrow stone coping. The first-floor windows have smooth coffered lintels. Those on the second floor have flat-arched heads formed of header bricks, except for the center one on the front elevation, which is stone-framed; all are embellished with angular keystones. A few of the windows have been re-glazed, but most are original: twelve-over-twelve-light sashes below, eight-over-eight above.

SIGNIFICANCE:

The Weiser Post Office is architecturally significant as the last expression of the Thematic Group of the formal classicism which has been a part of the repertoire of this firm since Charles Hummel joined in it early in the century, and which revived around 1920. It is also significant as the first and a very fine example of the sort of big, federally financed public commission that would get this firm through the Depression, but which would a few years later be more typically rendered in an institutional deco style. It is an outstanding example of Georgian revival architecture, one of the finest post offices of its period and style in Idaho and of indisputable importance in its small-town setting.

Except in its stylization, this is not a forward-looking building. It shows very clear connections to the equally stylized neo-Georgian Wellman Apartments in Boise (site 118), but the materials are much more fine. The notes on the front elevation drawings call for the "face brick to be bright red, smooth-faced pressed brick; no range of color will be permitted." The buff mortar was mixed to match the trim, which was not concrete but elegantly carved sandstone. The balusters were carved in the round rather than cast in relief. In fact, the building cost twice as much as the Wellman Apartments, which it does not greatly exceed in size.

Though the commission lists for this period show that the firm continued to solicit all kinds of projects during the difficult early years of the Depression, and in fact to pursue them with particular energy (even taking over contracting tasks, for example, on a job for a children's home in 1936), big public commissions such as this one were the architects' most important source of income. Within a very few years, particularly with the return of Frank Hummel to Idaho and the decreasing activity of Charles Hummel, the stylization of traditional forms used in this first example of a federal commission would cross a line beyond which it must be classified as art deco. The later-1930s example which most powerfully demonstrates this trend in government buildings, and which therefore has been included in the Thematic Group, is Frank Hummel's Gem County Courthouse (site 134).

MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES:

Boise, Idaho. Hummel Jones Miller Hunsucker P.A. File 227G. Collection book reference 1932. "Volume-by-Year" list reference. Drawings and blueprints signed Tourtellotte and Hummel.