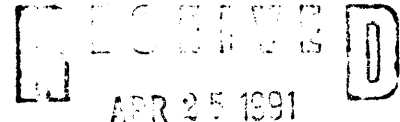


1003

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 Prosser Main Post Office

other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number 1103 Meade Avenue

N/A not for publication

city, town Prosser

N/A vicinity

state Washington code WA county Benton

code 005 zip code 99350

3. Classification

Ownership of Property

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing	Total
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	<u>1</u>
	buildings	
	sites	
	structures	
	objects	

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]
Signature of certifying official

1-11-90
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]
Signature of commenting or other official

12/15/89
Date

[Signature]
State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register.

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]

8/7/91

[Signature] Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

U.S. Post Office

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

U.S. Post Office

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Moderne

Other: Starved Classicism

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete

walls Brick

roof Tar composition

other Sandstone

Wood

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Prosser Main Post Office is one story in height on a raised basement platform. The basement is constructed of reinforced concrete and the above-grade structure is formed by structural steel and terra-cotta block. Red brick in common bond faces the exterior walls. Five bays occupy the flat front facade. The arrangement of the bays is asymmetrical with the entry bay on the east side of the four window bays. A pedimented entry architrave provides the only ornamentation to the otherwise plain facade. The roof is flat built-up tar composition.

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The front facade (northwest) is flat, horizontally-emphasized, and devoid of significant historical architectural detailing. Sandstone water table and belt courses accentuate the horizontal orientation of the building. The water table defines the juncture of the basement and main floor walls (both brick) while the belt course defines the juncture of the main floor and parapet walls. Centered in the facade, between the belt and coping courses, are "United States Post Office" (above) and "Prosser, Washington 99350" (below) in raised aluminum letters. Although the five bays of the facade are symmetrically-arranged, the placement of the main entry bay at one end creates an asymmetrical design. The four window bays are identical, with three equally-spaced bays positioned in the center and a single bay in the northwest corner to balance the entry bay. The windows are twelve-over-twelve-light, double-hung, wood sash framed by flat vousoired brick arches and flat sandstone sills.

The entry consists of double aluminum-framed glass doors (originals replaced) over which is set a five-light transom window in an arcade motif. Surrounding the sash is an elaborate wooden architrave composed of flat fluted pilasters, a plain frieze, and a broken round pediment. Scrolled brackets support the pediment cornices. A painted cast-metal eagle is set within the pediment gap. Square bas-relief rosette insets, centered over the pilasters, adorn the ends of the

 See continuation sheet

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frieze. Five concrete steps with wrought-iron railings provide access to the concrete entry landing. Bronze lanterns, affixed to the wall, flank each side of the entry bay.

The side facades are essentially identical in detail and use of materials. As with the front facade, the walls are faced with red brick and detailed by sandstone water table and belt and coping courses. Each side contains six window bays, but differ somewhat in the configuration of the bays. The southwest facade contains four bays identical to those of the front and two small bays with four-over-four-light, double-hung, wood sash (second and third windows from front corner). The northeast facade contains six equally-spaced bays, one consisting of a brick niche (front corner), also identical to those of the front facade.

The rear facade (southeast) is flat, faced with red brick, and dominated by the loading platform. The platform is concrete and covered by a flat, wooden roof (tar composition). Iron pipe columns and a steel I-beam carry the roof load. A double loading door, single pedestrian door, and three window bays provide facade openings. Two window bays consist of twelve-over-twelve-light, double-hung, wood sash; the third consists of eight-over-eight-light, double-hung, wood sash. A square brick chimney, rising above the parapet, occupies the east corner of the building.

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

1935-1941

Significant Dates

Site acq.-1934
Const.-1935

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 Prosser MPO is a well-preserved and unaltered example of a small town single-purpose post office. The design is modern with historical detailing limited to the Colonial motif entry architrave. The building was the first and only federally-constructed post office in Prosser. It is also symbolic of the federal government's recognition of the city's regional importance and the community's success in getting their building. Constructed during the massive federal public building programs of the Depression era, it and its lobby mural are legacies of the government's response to a national economic emergency. The mural, entitled "Mail Train in the 80's," and completed by Ernest Norling in 1937, is significant to the community as a New Deal artwork and as depicting a local historical event.

ARCHITECTURE

The design of the Prosser Main Post Office is modern and typical of the Starved Classicism federal architectural style during the mid to late-1930s. With the exception of the Neo-Classical entry ensemble, the front facade is devoid of architectural ornamentation. The simple, classically-proportioned box with nominal or historical architectural detailing typifies the Starved Classicism which dominated the federal design philosophy of the period. The floor plans and scale of the structure are based on standardized plans typical of numerous small, single-purpose post offices completed in the state and nation during the mid-to late-Depression era. This particular front facade design and floor plan with an end rather than centered entry is the only example in the state. Aside from that, the facade is simple and not particularly remarkable when compared to the body of state architecture. Within the local context, however, the design is significant

See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

1. Prosser Record Bulletin; various articles 1932 - 1937.
2. Original Building Plans; 1934.
3. Construction Progress Photographs; 30 March 1935 - 23 September 1935.
4. Daily Construction Record; 16 February 1935 - 23 November 1935.

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 # _____

See continuation sheet

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 0.32

UTM References

A

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2	8	6	3	6	0
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5	1	2	0	2	5	0
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 Zone Easting Northing

C

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B

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 Zone Easting Northing

D

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Quadrangle Name: Prosser
Quadrangle Scale: 1:24,000

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

Lots 1 & 2, Block 85, Prosser First Subdivision. The site is on the south side of East Meade Avenue east of the intersection with 5th Street. It has 100' of frontage on East Meade Avenue and is 140' deep.

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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under Criterion C as exemplifying the design philosophy and quality construction of the federal government.

POLITICS/GOVERNMENT

As a legacy of the Depression era federal building programs, the Prosser MPO is locally significant under Criterion A. The construction of public buildings during the Depression era represents the use of public building programs to aid local economies through a period of national economic emergency. The city's first and only federally-constructed post office, the building symbolizes the recognition by the federal government of Prosser's regional importance. It represents the link between the federal government and the local community. Finally, it is a legacy of the work by local boosters, through their elected representatives in Washington D.C., to gain a federal building for their city. It also involved politics on the local level in that the location of the federal building was an important issue for the downtown business community.

At a meeting of the Prosser Commercial Club in July 1934, it was urged that harmony prevail when the site for the proposed federal building was being discussed. A Mr. Beardley pointed out: "since the post office is to be built with public funds it should not be used to disturb the present setup. A site should be selected which will not disturb the present business equilibrium."

ART

The lobby of the Prosser MPO contains a mural entitled "Mail Train in the 80's." Painted by Ernest Norling in 1937 at a cost of \$550, the mural is oil on canvas (approximately 6 feet by 14 feet) and glued to the wall over the postmaster's door. The mural depicts the activity on the Northern Pacific's depot platform, while a smoke-belching steam engine and railroad cars rest in the background. Indian teepees and a telegraph pole are revealed beyond the engine. Wooden kegs and crates, a plow, and sacks of grain furnish the set upon which Indians, school children, farmers, and cowboys read their just-arrived mail.

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Ernest Norling was born in Pasco, Washington on September 26, 1892. He was educated at Whitman College and studied at the Chicago Art Institute and Tiffany Foundation in New York. Norling moved to Seattle in 1930 and showed his works at the Seattle Art Museum, Frye Gallery in Seattle, and the Anderson Gallery in New York. One of his oils, entitled "Timber Bucker" was selected for hanging in the White House during the 1930s. He also completed a mural in the Bremer-ton, Washington MPO in 1938. He died in Seattle in 1974.

The Prosser 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, represents a significant type, period, and style of artistic expression.

LOCAL CONTEXT

Prosser, the county seat of Benton County, is on the south bank of the Yakima River in southcentral Washington. With an estimated 1987 population of 4,000, Prosser's economy is based on agriculture and food production.

Prior to the establishment of a homestead by Colonel William Prosser in 1882, the area by the falls of the Yakima River was used by Indians for fishing. Two years after Prosser first settled his homestead, the townsite of Prosser Falls was established. Also in 1884 the Northern Pacific Railroad constructed its line through the new town and the first post office was established, on March 20th, with Mrs. William Prosser as postmaster. The town of Prosser was incorporated in 1899; at the turn of the century 229 people resided within its limits. The construction of a low dam on the Yakima River falls in Prosser in 1904 and development of irrigation in the area contributed to the city's early growth period. Farming and ranching supported by the irrigation brought a rush of homesteaders to the area and by 1910 the

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population of Prosser boomed to 1,298. The population and city continued to grow through the teens, to 1,697 in 1920, and then declined slightly in the 1920s, to 1,569 in 1930. Prosser's population grew slightly in the 1930s, to 1,719 in 1940, before growing dramatically in the 1940s, to 2,636 in 1950. Since that time the growth of the city has been fairly slow but steady, to 2,763 in 1960 to 2,954 in 1970; in 1980 Prosser had a population of 3,896.

The Prosser Main Post Office is one block southeast of the city's primary commercial street at the corner of Meade and Dudley Streets. Surrounding land uses include commercial uses along Meade across the street and to the northeast. Uses to the rear of the post office (south) include commercial, residential, and the Benton County Courthouse (two-story, brick, Neo-Classical, 1926, NHR). The commercial buildings across from and to the northeast of the post office are one-story in height and of brick or concrete block construction. None of the immediately surrounding buildings (except the courthouse) are of apparent architectural or historical significance. The architecturally prominent buildings of the city are along 6th Street and to its northeast. Most are brick, generally two stories in height, and date from the early 1900s. Prosser High School, at 6th and Prosser, was constructed in 1936 with a Public Works Administration grant (two-story, brick, modern with subtle Art Deco influence).

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

The construction of the Prosser Main Post Office was reported in the Prosser Record Bulletin during 1934 and 1935. January 1934 brought news of an \$8,000 improvement program at the Prosser High School and that plans were progressing on the municipal airport. On May 10th, the Bulletin announced that Paul Hamilton had received the nomination as postmaster for the Prosser Post Office. News of a new post office for Prosser was reported on July 12th, when an article captioned "Government Seeks Location for Post Office" stated that bids for a post office site would be accepted on July 23rd.

On July 19, 1934, an article reported that the Prosser Club had discussed the post office location in its last

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meeting. Several speakers urged that "harmony might prevail and that the present business alignment might not be unduly disturbed." A Mr. Beardsley pointed out that since the post office site is to be built with public funds it should not be used to disrupt "the present setup." Further, a site should be selected that would not disturb the present business equilibrium. Congressman Knute Hill, who was instrumental in getting the post office for Prosser, stated that he had received a telegram from Postmaster General James A. Farley informing him that \$60,000 was available for the building. An article of July 26th reported that 14 bids ranging from \$1,000 to \$15,000 had been received for the post office site.

A month passed before the post office inspector arrived in Prosser to review the sites. An article of August 23rd reported that fifty interested merchants attended a meeting with postal inspector J. E. Fitzgerald to discuss site locations. George O. Beardsley, a local attorney, stated at the meeting that: "the government has no right to disturb the business equilibrium of the town. I would rather see the whole project abandoned than to force a shift in the business section and cause some of our buildings to be emptied."

Much to the relief of local businessmen, the selection of the post office site was reported on September 20, 1934. A 100' by 140' lot owned by Mrs. Robert Moore, Sr. was purchased for a price of \$1,400. Court action required to clear the property title, however, delayed the start of work on the new building (November 29th). Finally, on December 27th, it was reported that the title technicalities had been resolved and that construction bids would be opened on January 16th.

January 1935 brought news of local optimism and the selection of a contractor for the post office. On January 24th, the Bulletin reported that Andrew F. Morrow of Seattle had been selected from among three bidders with a bid of \$37,700 for sandstone trim. Work on the building began on March 4th with G. M. Barber completing the excavation. According to an article of March 7th, Standard Construction of Tacoma was completing the overall construction at a cost of \$36,498. Apparently the original winning bidder had not been able to consummate the contract. Construction proceeded and an article of April 18th announced that the Masonic Grand

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Lodge would preside over the upcoming cornerstone dedication ceremony. An article of May 9th reported that preparations were completed and that the dedication would follow the May Fete. The Bulletin of May 16th reported the dedication of the post office. The Boy Scouts, prominent Masons, and local residents attended the ceremony at the post office.

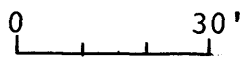
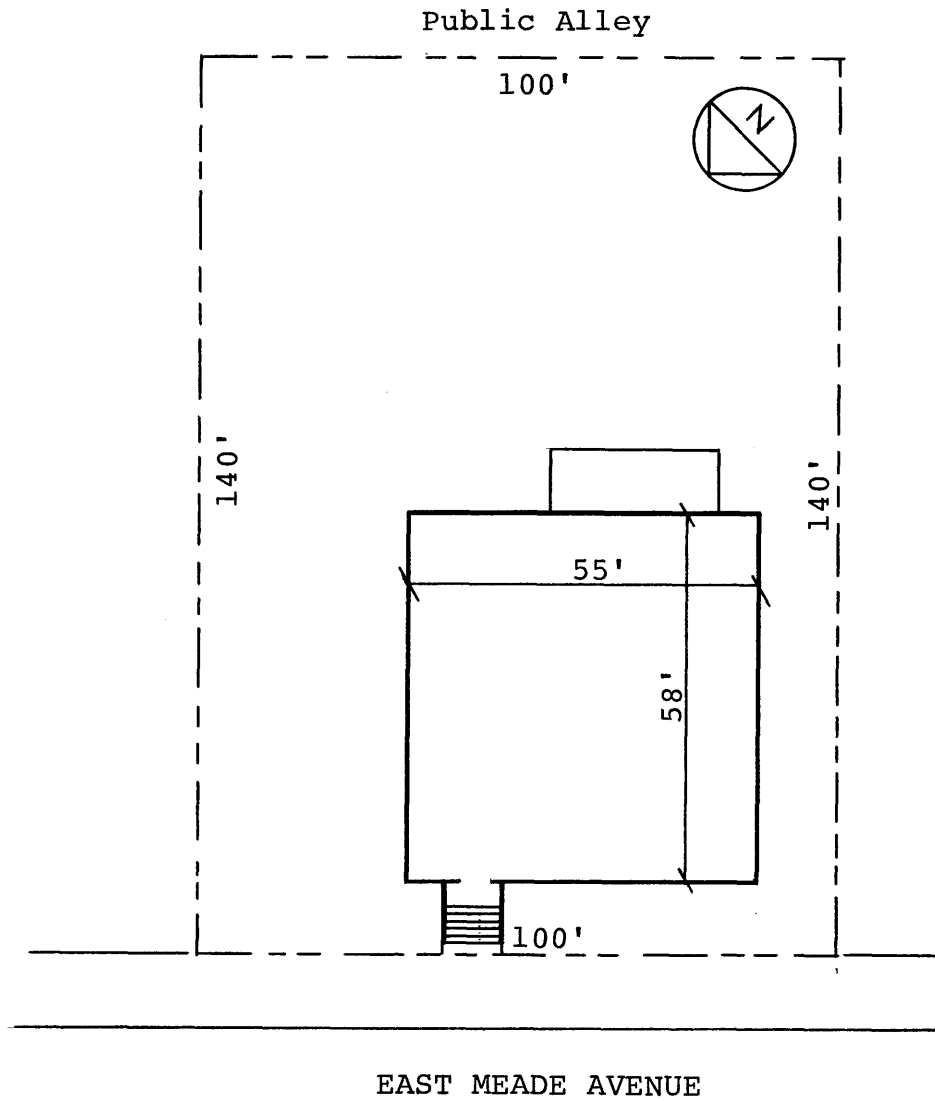
On September 12th bright news for the local economy was carried by the following headlines: "Roosevelt Gives Approval to Roza Project." A sum of \$5 million had been approved for a 72,000 acre reclamation project in the Yakima Valley. This was followed on October 3rd by the news that the Public Works Administration had approved a \$36,000 grant for a new \$82,000 junior high building (completed in 1936 and presently used as the high school) as well as \$23,100 for a new armory in Prosser (constructed, but has been razed).

The completion of the post office was marked by an open house on November 8, 1935 (as reported on November 14th). The article noted that although there was no formal program, many Prosser citizens took the opportunity to view the new building.

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Section number Photos Page 1 PROSSER MPO

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

1. Prosser MPO
2. Prosser, Washington
3. Jim Kolva
4. September 1985
5. Negatives on file at USPS Facilities Service Center, San Bruno, CA.

Photo No. 1 (negative #2)

6. View to south

Photo No. 2 (negative #3)

6. View to southeast

Photo No. 3 (negative #4)

6. View to east

Photo No. 4 (negative #12)

6. Lobby mural