

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number _____ Page _____

SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 89000130 Date Listed: 3/16/89

<u>US Post Office--Buhl Main</u>	<u>Twin Falls</u>	<u>ID</u>
Property Name	County	State

US Post Offices in Idaho 1900-1941 MPS
Multiple Name

This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.

Carol D. Skell
Signature of the Keeper

3-16-89
Date of Action

=====
Amended Items in Nomination:

The period of significance defined for this property is 1900-1941. However, this period pre-dates the property's date of construction. To resolve this issue, this property will be listed with a period of significance defined as 1940-1941. Also, 1938 will not be entered as a significant date because this date corresponds with the acquisition of the site and pre-dates the construction of the property. These changes were discussed with Steven S. Stielstra of the United States Postal Service during a 3/14/89 telephone conversation.

DISTRIBUTION:

- National Register property file
- Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

JAN 30 1989

NATIONAL REGISTER

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

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 Buhl Main Post Office
other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number 830 Main N/A not for publication
city, town Buhl N/A vicinity
state Idaho code ID county Twin Falls code 083 zip code 83316

3. Classification

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

Name of related multiple property listing:
Historic U.S. Post Offices in Idaho 1900-1941

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] 1-15-89
Signature of certifying official Date
United States 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] 12/14/88
Signature of commenting or other official Date
Idaho State Historic Preservation Office
State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register. Coral Ashkill 3-16-89
 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 of the Keeper

Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

U.S. Post Office

U.S. Post Office

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(enter categories from instructions)

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

Moderne

Other: Colonial Revival

foundation Concrete

walls Brick

roof Copper

other Sandstone, Tar composition

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Buhl Main Post Office is a one-story building on a raised basement platform. The front facade is flat, symmetrical, divided into five bays, and devoid of significant detailing. Granite steps and landing, flanked by square concrete buttresses with sandstone caps, provide access to the centered entry. Bronze lanterns rest atop the buttresses. Constructed of reinforced concrete foundation, floor slabs, and basement walls and structural steel framing, the building is faced with buff-colored brick. A plain sandstone frieze with slightly projecting molded cornice completes the facade. The front portion of the building is covered by a hipped copper roof, which is topped by a square copper and glass cupola. The rear portion of the roof is flat built-up tar composition.

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The front facade (southeast) is flat and divided into five equally-spaced flat-arched bays. The main entry bay is centered and flanked on each side by two window bays. The entry bay is slightly recessed from the brick-faced facade and framed in bronze-anodized aluminum (originally wood). The entry consists of double aluminum-framed glass doors topped by a two-panel metal transom (replacing the original nine-light transom window). A bronze-colored transom bar separates the doors and transom. An ornate aluminum grille, in which a low-relief sculpted eagle is centered, is set in front of the transom panel. Granite steps and landing, flanked by square concrete buttresses topped with a sandstone slab, provide access to the entry bay. Single free-standing bronze lanterns in a torch motif rest atop each of the buttresses.

The window bays are identical to each other and of the same dimension as the entry bay. The windows in the bays have been altered: the original triple-hung 6-light windows of wood sash have been replaced by bronze-anodized aluminum sash windows. The upper portion of the replacement thermo-

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)

Politics/Government

Architecture

Art

Significant Person

N/A

Period of Significance

1900-1941

Significant Dates

Site acq.-1938

Const.-1940

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Louis A. Simon, Supervising Archi-

Tect/Federal Government

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

Though not yet fifty years old, the Buhl Post Office is exceptionally significant on the state level for art and architecture and on the local level for politics/government. Although the design is a duplicate of several other western post offices, it is the only example of Depression-era Federal architecture in Buhl. Moreover, it is the only example of its design-type in Idaho. The building and the mural therein represent the efforts of the federal government, through its public works and art programs, to assist communities during a period of economic emergency. The mural, one of six post office murals in the state, represents a significant type, period, and style of artistic expression which, through its visual expression, relates to the social history of its locality. Finally, the building, the city's first federally-constructed post office, symbolizes the linkage between the federal government and the local community.

ARCHITECTURE

With the exception of the alteration of the windows, the Buhl MPO is a well-preserved and unaltered example of a small-town single-purpose post office in the Starved Classical style. The building exhibits the modern or International design influence in its flat facades and lack of explicitly articulated historical design elements, yet retains Classical symmetry and proportion. Flat brick piers, extending from the exposed basement wall to a broad sandstone band, divide the five bays of the facade. These elements are reductions of the pilasters or columns, and the entablature of the Beaux-Arts designs. Ornamentation is stripped and limited to an ornate grille in which is set a low-relief eagle sculpture (also standardized) which rests above the entry doors. Although the building is given an American Colonial flavor by

See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

1. Buhl Herald, various articles 1937-1940.
2. Buhl Diamond Anniversary Committee, pub. From Desert Brown To Valley Green. Filer, ID: Print Shoppe, 1981.
3. Original Floor Plans, 1939.

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

Acreeage of property 0.41

UTM References

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4	7	1	8	6	2	0
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Zone Easting Northing

B

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Zone Easting Northing

C

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D

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Quadrangle name: Buhl
 Quadrangle scale: 1:24,000

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

Lots 26, 27, 28, 30, & 31, Block 68 of Buhl Townsite.
 North corner of 9th Avenue and Main Street. Beginning at the Southwest corner, thence NW120', NE150', SE120', SW150' to point of beginning.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes the site 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 August 1988
 street & number West 705 1st Avenue telephone (509) 458-6219
 city or town Spokane state WA zip code 99204

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pane windows consist of a solid panel, the middle portion is a single fixed light, and the lower portion contains a two-light slider. Plain sandstone panels are set beneath the molded sills. The panels are slightly recessed and rest on the painted concrete of the raised basement wall.

A plain sandstone frieze extends across the facade between the tops of the bays to a slightly projecting molded sandstone cornice. "United States Post Office", "Buhl Idaho" is carved into the frieze and centered over the entry. The hipped copper roof is topped by a square cupola. The cupola consists of a copper base, copper louvers flanked by vertical 4-light glass panels, and a flat copper cap. A weather vane is set atop the cap.

The northeast facade is flat and divided into four window bays: two in the front section and two in the rear. The front and rear sections of the building are articulated by slightly recessing the rear and by the use of a hipped roof over the front and a flat roof over the rear. The window bays are identical in design and detail as those of the front facade. Also identical in detailing to the front facade are the sandstone frieze and cornice, painted basement wall, and brick facing.

The southwest facade is essentially identical to the west facade. It differs in the following manner: one window bay is filled with brick (original construction) and one small single-light window flanks each side of the bricked-in window.

The rear facade is similar in design to and use of material as the front. The loading platform is slightly offset from the center of the building and projects to the rear. A plain brick wall, resting on the concrete loading platform, encloses the south end. The west side is enclosed by brick except for a single loading bay. The east side is open and also used for loading. The platform is covered by a flat metal roof with metal marquees that project over both the east and west sides.

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use of a hipped roof and cupola, the design is modern.

The design represents the culmination of the evolution of federal design in the vastly expanded public buildings programs beginning at the turn of the century. The buildings prior to 1920 were designed in the Beaux-Arts tradition. Those buildings of the early-1930s carry over this tradition, yet begin to show the transition to the modern. While the Classical influence remains clear and the historical detailing retains its definition, the facades become flatter and tend toward simplicity. Federal architecture after the mid-1930s evidences greater refinement and attention to the modern influence. Standardization and economy became the rule. This is strongly evident in the Buhl Post Office which represents the end of the design evolution, which essentially ended at the onset of World War II. As such, it is a significant element in the state's legacy of federal architecture and is integral to the group of post offices included in this thematic nomination. Therefore, the building has statewide significance under Criterion C.

POLITICS/GOVERNMENT

As the city's first federally-constructed post office and a legacy of the massive federal public works programs which were designed to assist local communities during a period of national economic emergency, the building is locally significant under Criterion A. It also represents nearly a decade of lobbying on the part of local citizens, through their elected officials in Washington, to secure a federal building. The appropriation and construction phases of the building's evolution were important local events that were followed closely in the local press.

ART

Like the building which houses it, the Buhl mural represents the efforts of the Federal government, through its public works and arts programs, to assist communities during a period of economic emergency, and is thus locally significant under Criterion A. The mural, one of six post office murals in the state, also represents a significant type, period, and style of artistic expression which, through its visual expression, relates the social history of its

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locality. Consequently, it is also locally significant under Criterion C.

The mural, "Snake River Ferry," is located over the Postmaster's door. It was completed by Richard G. Walton in 1941. Approximately 6' X 12', oil on canvas, the mural depicts a stage coach and several passengers as they prepare to shove-off on their ferry trip across the Snake River. There is no listing of Richard Walton in the standard artist biographies.

The mural was completed under the auspices of the Federal Works Agency Section of Fine Arts. Federal sponsorship of visual arts programs began in 1933 when President Roosevelt authorized the development of the Public Works of Art Project (PWAP). This and subsequent programs were intended to provide work-relief for artists. After the demise of the PWAP program in June 1934, the Treasury Relief Art Project (TRAP) was established in July 1935. The Section of Painting and Sculpture, later the Section of Fine Arts, was established in October of 1934 by the Treasury Department. This was the program primarily responsible for murals and sculpture found in post offices throughout the country. Commissions were awarded on the basis of anonymous competitions without reference to artists need. In July of 1939, after reorganization of the Executive Branch, the entire building program of the Treasury Department and the Section were transferred to the new Federal Works Agency. The Section of Fine Arts-Federal Works Agency operated the program until June of 1943 when the activities of WWII shifted priorities. It was under this program that the Buhl mural and murals in Burley, Blackfoot, Kellogg, Preston, and St. Anthony were completed.

The Section, which was administered in Washington, dealt directly with the artists and selected artists through national and regional design competition. The Section sought the best decorative art that it could find for designated federal buildings. The intent of the program's administrators was that the work would reflect the themes and styles of the American scene, with a hope that it would strike a responsive chord in the general public. Although the program is attributed with having fostered an American Regionalism, art critics could never find a coherent body of work that was truly Regionalist or representative of particular sections of the American scene in the form of localized subject matter.

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Further, the work resulting from the programs tended to pursue an inoffensive middle ground of style and content which was sometimes viewed as producing limp platitudes rather than strong statements. This resulted from the requirement for final approval from Washington as well as compliance with local preferences. The strife or dark side of the Depression was not portrayed, but instead the nostalgic and positive events of the American Scene were depicted.

LOCAL CONTEXT

Buhl, in southcentral Idaho and approximately 16 miles west of Twin Falls, is the hub of a diversified agricultural area. Potatoes, sugar beets, onions, hay, beans, grain, fruits, and dairying all contribute to the local economy. The Buhl area is also noted for its Snake River trout farms. In 1980 Buhl's population was 3,629.

Buhl was born on April 17th, 1906, when the first drawing for town lots was held. The new town was established as a business center for the newly irrigated tract of the Twin Falls Investment Company. The tract was a part of the lands opened by the Twin Falls Project. The town was named for Frank H. Buhl, a wealthy mining man who played an important part in the development of the South Side Irrigation project. In 1906 the first school was opened, a post office was established, and a newspaper--the Buhl Pioneer--began publication. In 1907 the railroad was extended from Twin Falls. A year later the first permanent school building was erected. In 1908 the county authorized village government and in 1909 Buhl became a city of the second class.

From 1910 to 1920 Buhl's population grew from 639 to 2,245 and the downtown business district experienced its most significant growth. As today, agriculture and food production provided the foundation for the town's growth. Never a boom town, Buhl has experienced fairly stable and moderate growth since then. In 1930 its population fell to 1,883 before climbing to 2,414 in 1940 and 2,870 in 1950. Buhl's population fell from 3,059 in 1960 to 2,975 in 1970, before climbing to 3,629 in 1980.

The Buhl MPO is on the north corner of the Main Street/-9th Street intersection (town platted diagonally), one block east of Broadway Avenue, the city's primary business street.

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Adjacent to the northeast is a single-family residence, and adjacent to it, a chiropractic clinic. Adjacent to the northwest of the post office are single-family residences (some used as businesses). The modern Idaho First National Bank building is across Main Street, southeast of the post office. A parking lot, with one- and two-story commercial buildings to its west and a supermarket to its north, is across 9th Street, southwest of the post office. None of the buildings in the immediate vicinity of the post office appear to be historically significant.

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

"Business of Buhl Postoffice Reaches New High During 1936" reported the Buhl Herald on January 7th, 1937. The paper reported a "constant rise" in Buhl's post office receipts, from \$15,509.93 in 1934 to \$17,190.34 in 1935 to \$18,728.64 in 1936. On February 4th the paper, under the headline "Renew Efforts For A Federal Building Here," reported that Buhl's Chamber of Commerce had written Senators Borah and Pope and Congressman Clark "asking them to use their good offices to see that the long-promised Buhl Federal building is not forgotten."

The completion of a local WPA project--the construction of a new dormitory at the McCluskey children's health camp--was reported on March 11th. On June 17th it was reported that between 400 to 500 men were working on the construction of the Upper Salmon River power plant, boosting local employment and "purchasing power."

On September 16th the Buhl Herald reported that that year's federal building had been awarded to Preston, though Buhl was still one of four cities in line for a new building. Congressman Clark had written with the news in response to a letter urging the building for Buhl; the paper noted "his letter further said that the selection was made by the procurement division of the treasury department and that he, Clark, had nothing to do with it."

Early in the new year of 1938 the Herald reported that Buhl's 1937 postal receipts had increased 11 percent over 1936 (January 13th article) and that federal funds had been allotted for a WPA swimming pool in Buhl (February 10th

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article). Another WPA project was reported on June 30th: a \$132,648 project to widen the road between Buhl and Hansen.

"Federal Bldg. Push Revived" read a Herald headline of July 28th, 1938. Representatives from the Chamber of Commerce, Junior Chamber, Kiwanis, and Rotary Club were serving on a committee seeking the building. On August 4th the Herald announced "Buhl Is Granted New \$80,000 Federal Building." The paper, which gave full credit to Congressman Clark, reported that "the news of the final success was joyfully received here as the culmination of efforts over the last 8-10 years" and noted that "the community committee ... took steps to preserve harmony here so that the town should not become embroiled in a contest for selecting a site for the new building."

On August 25th it was reported that nine bids, ranging from \$5 to \$2500, had been received for the post office site. Articles of September 1st reported that the sites were being inspected and that Buhl had received WPA funds of \$5,252 to improve its school buildings and grounds. "Ninth and Main Selected for Post Office" reported the Herald on October 20th; the owners were selling the lots at cost and the site was strongly supported by local businessmen. On November 10th it was reported that ground had been broken for survey work and that Postmaster Runyon had been directed to turn in photos of three to four local buildings so that the federal building could be made to conform.

It was not until August 24th, 1939 that the Herald could report that construction bids were being called for (to be opened September 22nd) and that the "latest unofficial news" was that construction might start that winter. The September 7th Herald featured a large front page photograph with the caption "New Buhl Federal Building Is Shown." The paper explained "The secret of this Herald 'scoop' is that the office is to look almost exactly like the new building at Deer Lodge, Montana, so we merely print the Deer Lodge picture to show you how Buhl's building will look." George Goedhart of Altadena, California was announced as the low bidder on October 12th, with a bid of \$55,158. By November several Goedhart employees were in Buhl and it was expected that work would start soon, with local workers being used principally (November 30th article).

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On December 7th it was reported that "with the moral support of an ever-increasing number of sidewalk engineers" excavation had begun three days before and that "by yesterday the hole in the ground actually looked as big as that one in your mouth felt right after the wisdom tooth had been pulled." Work was expected to continue through the winter unless the weather was extremely bad.

In 1940 it was reported that the preliminary figures for the 1940 census showed Buhl's population had increased 29 percent from 1930, from 1,883 to 2,430, and that there were 600 or more in Buhl's "additions" (May 16th article). An article of May 30th listed the following as active WPA projects in Buhl: the swimming pool, improvements in the city park and McClusky health camp, and a city water main project.

On July 4th the Herald reported that the Post Office was completed and would be ready for occupancy once furniture was installed. A week later the paper announced that the Merchants Committee of Buhl's Chamber of Commerce was making arrangements for a public dedication (July 11th article). On July 18th the planned "Gala Event" was described in detail: the mayor, "numerous officials," and Boy Scouts would be participating, the Chamber of Commerce was planning to give away 100 books of uncanceled stamps "just to add spice to the day," a special cachet stamp would be used on all Buhl mail that day, and the public could tour the new building with the post office staff demonstrating how the mail is handled. A banner headline of July 25th announced "New Buhl Post Office To Be Dedicated This Friday Afternoon"; the days events were described and the paper noted "'Once in a lifetime' does a community dedicate a structure like the new Federal building on Main and Ninth which will be thrown open to the public with appropriate exercises tomorrow (Friday) afternoon."

Two weeks later, on August 8th, the Herald reported that Buhl's July 1940 postal receipts had increased a "thumping" 35 percent over the July 1939 figures (increasing from \$1,384.29 to \$1,908.07), "as if proving the need of its new building."

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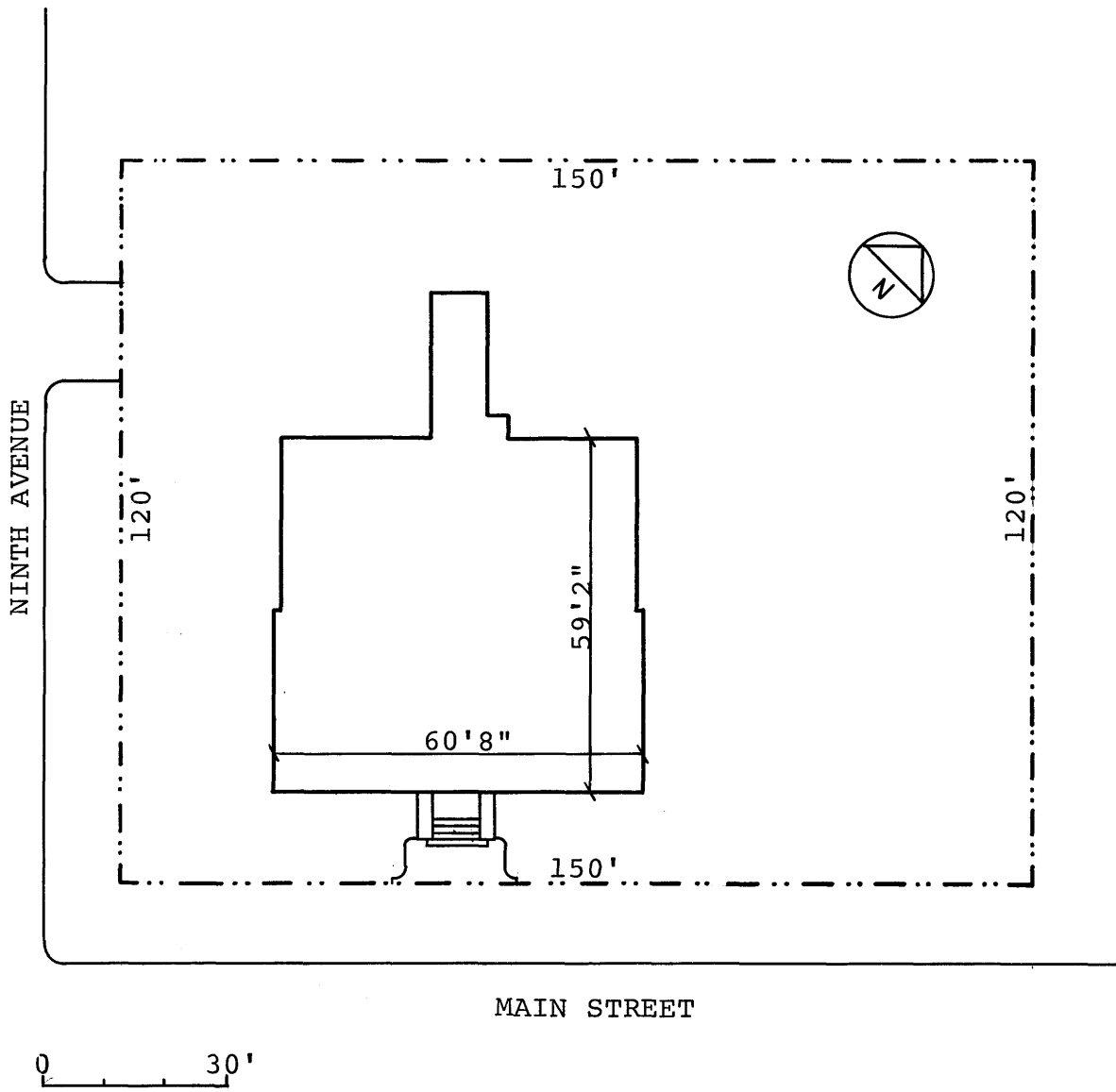
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Inventory—Nomination Form**

For NPS use only
received
date entered

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

1. Buhl MPO
2. Buhl, Idaho
3. Jim Kolva
4. August 1986
5. Negatives on file at USPS Facilities Service Center, San Bruno, CA.

Photo No. 1 (negative #3)

6. View to north

Photo No. 2 (negative #2)

6. View to northwest)

Photo No. 3 (negative #6)

6. View to west

Photo No. 4 (negative #14)

6. Lobby mural