

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED OCT 3 1979
DATE ENTERED NOV 16 1979

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

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

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Rincon Annex

NOV 27 1978

AND/OR COMMON

(same)

OHP

LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

101-199 Mission Street

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

6th

CITY, TOWN

San Francisco

VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

STATE

California

CODE

06

COUNTY

San Francisco

CODE

075

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:

OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

United States Postal Service

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Washington

VICINITY OF

STATE

D.C. 20260

LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

San Francisco Hall of Records

STREET & NUMBER

City Hall - Civic Center

CITY, TOWN

San Francisco

STATE

California

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Department of City Planning Architectural Inventory

DATE

1976

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Department of City Planning - 100 Larkin Street

CITY, TOWN

San Francisco

STATE

California

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input 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

Title: Description of Architecture

The Rincon Annex to the United States Post Office is one of the finest examples of a large public building designed in the Streamlined Moderne style of architecture in San Francisco. One of the similarly sponsored W.P.A. buildings built throughout the nation in the 1930's, Rincon Annex, built in 1939, shares an approach to building design in which classically derived architectural principles - a large compact mass, regularly treated, symmetrical at least in main facade, with expression of pilasters or piers, and an emphasis on weight rather than volume in the overall building envelope - are merged with the then-moderist design principles that required smooth clean machine-like surfaces and detailing, and a use of "modern" materials - aluminum, glass block, special concealed or reflective lighting. Aside from the decorative murals within the building (actually post-war murals) the building itself is a superb specimen of its type.

The wall of the main facade, on Mission Street, is treated as a series of 8 colossal piers supporting an "attic" story of small, regular windows. The monumental scale of the piers reflects the high public lobby space immediately behind the wall, and is appropriate to a public building. The piers have no true capitals, but their vertical thrust is restrained by horizontal stringcourses which suggest the existence of capitals and emphasize the modernity of flowing continuous horizontal lines. Each pier is punctured by a niche lined with stars and stripes flanking a stub-winged eagle.

Between the piers grand windows rise up to spandrels decorated with leaping dolphins. Nautical devices (portholes, railings, flagpoles) are frequent references and decorative features of Streamlined Moderne buildings, and this reference seems appropriate as well as delightful.

The architecture of the interior includes tables, doors, and transition hall spaces decorated with aluminum in moderistic panels or configurations; even clocks, signs, and lettering are designed in typical Streamlined Moderne fashion.

Rincon Annex is constructed of reinforced concrete and trimmed with marble. The main building measures 310 feet by 266 feet with a total plot area measuring 550 feet by 275 feet. The main building has three floors with a half basement which contains heating and air circulation equipment. The first floor has a high ceiling measuring approximately 25 feet. This area comprises mail sorting and customer service areas in the shape of an L. The main lobby is 208 feet long and the L opening off the westerly end of it measures 34 feet long. The third floor is mainly employee lounge areas, dressing rooms, maintenance departments and administrative office space situated in a "U" fashion. Rincon Annex was originally designed for future vertical expansion for 4th and 5th floors but was never implemented. The area of the main structure is

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326,000 square feet plus an additional 59,000 square feet for the newer platform and parking areas which in total covers 385,000 square feet. The first floor windows of the building are slightly recessed, very tall and rectangular in shape, and the third floor windows are double hung. The building is of a flat slab construction with 18 inch floors plus surfacing and 15 inch walls. The third floor area totals 83,891 square feet roof totaling 9,461 square feet and a mezzanine above the roof totaling 5,690 square feet.

The building as a whole is very well ventilated mechanically to accommodate the large numbers of people and machinery which generate a great amount of heat. A unique feature of Rincon Annex is the ventilation ducts that run vertically up and down the three floors of the building.

These ducts are located in the hollow steele columns which support the structure's 18 inch concrete slab floors. Every other column is used as an exhaust and air inlet. With an estimated 1,000 to 1,500 people working in the building at once and because temperatures in the building normally reached 90 degrees on winter nights, ^{air} conditioning was installed in 1958.

Title: Description of Art

In selecting his program for the twenty-seven panels, Refregier had recourse to two interpretations of California history, these being the glorious, romantic ~~vision~~ version of folk tales, or the realistic depiction of the hardships and struggles of the early settlers. Refregier selected the realistic representation as being more accurate, more interesting, and more dramatic. This deviation from the accepted, or preferred, view of history was the source of much of the dispute over the murals, but one California historian noted that in addition to his adherence to documentary records, Refregier was "remarkably sensitive to early American types." The series consists of the following twenty-seven panels:

1. A California Indian Creates
2. Indians by the Golden Gate
3. Sir Francis Drake
4. Conquistadores Discover the Pacific
5. Monks Building the Missions
6. Preaching and Farming at Mission Dolores
7. Fort Ross-Russian Trade Post
8. Hardships of the Emigrant Trail
9. An Early Newspaper Office
10. Raising the Bear Flag
11. Finding Gold at Sutter's Mill
12. Miners Panning Gold

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13. Arrival by Ship
14. Torchlight Parade
15. Pioneers Receiving Mail
16. Building the Railroad
17. Vigilante Days
18. Civil War Issues
19. The Sand Lot Riots of 1870
20. San Francisco as a Cultural Center
21. Earthquake and Fire of 1906
22. Reconstruction After the Fire
23. The Mooney Case
24. The Waterfront-1934
25. Building the Golden Gate Bridge
26. Shipyards During the War
27. War and Peace

Clearly the selection of scenes in this program conforms to a carefully ordered history of California. This program can be interpreted on several levels. While ostensibly relating to the history of California, these paintings also reflect a microcosmic view of the history of America, and in the largest sense, the development of human civilization. Thematically Refregier traces the progress of mankind from the natural paradise of the primitive Indians to the technological paradise of modern man. Civilization becomes in this context man's increasing ability to adapt to a hostile world and to create order and function from chaos and disaster. This, then makes history a human, social drama in which progress is only achieved through social unity and individual perseverance.

The first panel, A California Indian Creates, initiates the theme of material progress by stressing at the outset the importance of invention and construction. These are the intellectual and manual skills by which man accommodates himself to the land even in the most primitive state. A contrast is drawn between this primitive state of civilization, represented in the second panel as Indians by the Golden Gate, and the modern technology of The Building of the Golden Gate Bridge. Here the setting is similar, but technological progress has provided man with the means to overcome the physical barriers of the landscape. Civilization is not seen as destroying the landscape of America's pastoral paradise, but as recreating it with the beautiful and functional forms of the industrial landscape. Many of the scenes relate to American industry in the construction of missions, railroads, bridges, and ships. In glorifying America's industrial strength Refregier essentially renews the optimistic attitude of Charles Sheeler and Charles Demuth toward the technological landscape.

Title: The Artist

After early studies in Paris, Refregier enrolled in and graduated from the

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Rhode Island School of Design, (1921-25). In 1927, he studied drawing with artist Hans Hofmann in Munich.

After ten years of exhibitions and mural paintings in New York, Refregier was elected a member of the National Society of Mural Painters (1938), and in 1941, he won the national competition for murals in the Rincon Annex post office in San Francisco.

Other Federal and private commissions include: Murals for post office, Plainsfield, N.J. (1942); Murals for SS President Polk (U.S. Maritime Commission) 1942; Posters for War Bond Drive (U.S. Treasury) 1943; Drawings commissioned by Fortune Magazine for the United Nations Conference in San Francisco 1945; Murals for S.S. Lurline, 1949; Ceramic mural for Hillcrest Jewish Center, Long Island, 1952; Murals in Mayo Clinic, 1954; Mural for University of Kentucky Medical Center, 1962; Professor of painting, Bard College 1962-64; Fifty-foot mosaic mural for facade of Martin Luther King Memorial Building, Hospital Workers Union, New York City, 1969; large painting of new construction at Grand Coulee Dam commissioned by U.S. Department of the Interior, 1971; At present (1978), he is working on his autobiography.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD		AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW				
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)		
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION				

SPECIFIC DATES 1939-1940

BUILDER/ARCHITECT Gilbert S. Underwood

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

TITLE: SIGNIFICANCE OF ARCHITECTURE

Rincon Annex was designed by Gilbert S. Underwood and built by the George A. Fuller Construction company under the supervision of George Hale, Chief Engineer.

The land on which Rincon Annex is located was previously owned by the Southern Pacific Railroad and was a proposed site for the location of a train depot. The railroad decided not to locate the depot there because of the newly constructed Bay Bridge; the increased popularity of the automobile also made it an undesirable location.

Ground breaking for Rincon Annex began June 1, 1939, through the Construction Act of Public Buildings (PBA) established on June 22, 1936. On October 15, 1940, construction was finished and the facility officially opened on October 26, 1940. Rincon Annex was primarily built to handle mail and parcel post but when the United States entered World War II, the Postal Department had to move its bulk mail facility to Oakland because of the abundance of military mail. A unique feature of Rincon Annex is the ventilation ducts that run vertically up and down the three floors of the building.

Between 1959-1960, the Postal Department expanded its facility to the rear which primarily consists of loading areas and a conveyor belt system to handle incoming and outgoing mail. In 1963, automated machinery was installed to speed up service. In 1966, automated letter sorting equipment was installed, and during the period 1968 through 1978, a large assortment of newer electronic opticle character reading machines was installed.

In 1972, the Postal Department, which was then a branch of the U.S. Treasury Department, formed a government corporation and changed its name to the U.S. Postal Service. At this time, under an agreement with the General Services Administration (GSA), any building occupied more than fifty percent by the Postal Department, would be officially turned over to them.

Because of the inefficiency of multi-story vertical movement, new mail handling techniques and high land values, the Rincon Annex in the near future will move its facility to a more efficient one story facility.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- Anton Refregier: Essays on the artist inspired by an Exhibition at the University of Virginia Art Museum, November - December 1977 by David B. Lawall, Curator, and Brian N. Wallis as published by the University of Virginia Art Museum, Charlottesville, Virginia 22903.
- Case Report - Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board - November 1, 1978, prepared by Miss Emmy Lou Packard et al.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 1.89 acres

UTM REFERENCES

UTM NOT VERIFIED

A

1	0
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5	5	3	5	4	0
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4	1	8	2	7	7	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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ZONE EASTING NORTHING

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

A portion of Lot 1 in Assessor's Block 3716, having a frontage of 266 foot frontage on Mission Street and a depth of 310 feet on Spear Street and Stuart Street.

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

Mrs. Bland Platt - President - 11/17/1978

ORGANIZATION

Landmarks Preservation Advisory Board - 415 - (558-3055) (922-3579)

STREET & NUMBER

100 Larkin Street

DATE

TELEPHONE

CITY OR TOWN

San Francisco, California 94102

STATE

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

Kroy Mellon

TITLE SHPO

DATE 3/19/1979

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

Coral D. Shell

DATE 11-16-79

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHITECTURE AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

KEEPER ON THE NATIONAL REGISTER

ATTEST: *Kristin O'Connell*

DATE 11/19/79

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

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TITLE: SIGNIFICANCE OF ART

Illustrative of the hazards as well as the great potentialities of public mural painting is the famous series of murals created by Anton Refregier for the Rincon Post Office Annex in San Francisco. These murals are important in the history of American mural painting for a number of reasons. At the time the murals were commissioned in 1941, the project represented the largest mural series ever awarded by the government. The task required Refregier to cover the entire four hundred foot length of the "L"-shaped post office lobby with a six foot nine inch high frieze depicting the history of California. The commission prize was also the largest awarded by the government and, at the standard rate of ten dollars per square foot, amounted to twenty-six thousand dollars. As a result of the size of the project and the sum of money involved, the nationwide competition was widely publicized at the time, but the greatest national recognition was afforded these murals after their completion, when the threat of destruction aroused the interest and the defense of the art world. Yet, these points only emphasize the historical importance of the Rincon murals and do not suggest the fundamental aesthetic significance of the paintings. Although the history of California was specified as the subject matter of the murals, Refregier created a series which encompasses not only California, but stands, in a larger sense, for the evolution of civilization. The founding of the United Nations, depicted in the final panel, becomes in this context not just an historical event but the hope for a new level of civilization which might transcend the struggles illustrated in the previous panels. It is for this broader vision as well as the technical excellence of his murals that Refregier's Rincon Post Office murals deserve to be ranked among the handful of WPA mural commissions which qualify as major artistic achievements.

Despite the many problems that confronted Refregier's mural project from beginning to end, the Rincon Annex mural program remains one of the triumphs of mural painting sponsored by the Treasury Department. In this series, Refregier shows sophistication not only in his organization of the design of the murals and in relating the paintings to their architectural setting, but in his development of an iconography of California history. Although the Section of Fine Arts often provided muralists with themes which were broader in implication, such as Edward Laning's Role of the Immigrant in the Industrial Development of America or James Newell's Evolution of Western Civilization, few artists succeeded in developing these into murals of universal significance. Refregier's murals embody implications beyond the level of California history and thus constitute a significant cultural and intellectual statement.

For the above reasons (see also Description and the attached additional

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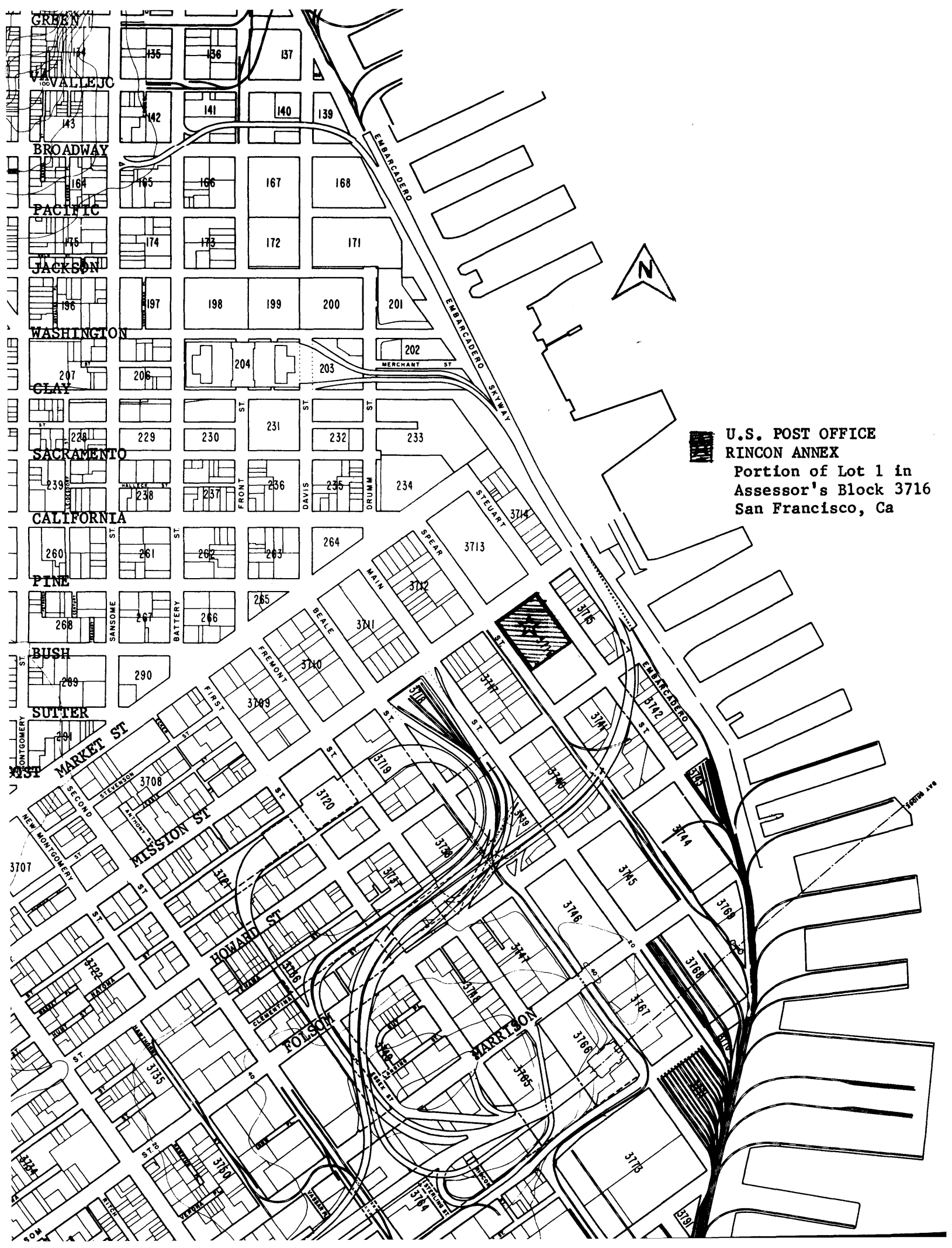
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documentation), and because of the building's overwhelming architectural significance coupled with the WPA murals which are integral to both the building and the site, and because the interior is intact from the time of construction, the interior as well as the exterior of the building is hereby submitted for National Register Consideration even though Rincon Annex is not fifty years old.

②



 **U.S. POST OFFICE
RINCON ANNEX**
Portion of Lot 1 in
Assessor's Block 3716
San Francisco, Ca