

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 Colville Main Post Office

other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number 204 South Oak

N/A not for publication

city, town Colville

N/A vicinity

state Washington code WA county Stevens

code 065 zip code 99114

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 |
|---------------|--------------------------|
| <u>1</u> | <u> </u> buildings |
| <u> </u> | <u> </u> sites |
| <u> </u> | <u> </u> structures |
| <u> </u> | <u> </u> objects |
| <u>1</u> | <u>0</u> Total |

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] 1/11/90
Signature of certifying official Date

U.S. Post Service
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

[Signature] 12/15/89
Signature of commenting or other official Date

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

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete

walls Brick

Terra cotta

roof Tar composition

other

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Colville Main Post Office is a one-story buff-colored brick building which rests on a raised basement platform. Its structure consists of reinforced concrete footings and floor slabs, brick walls, and steel framing. The exterior, including the basement, is faced with brick in Common bond. The front elevation is flat, symmetrical, and Classically-proportioned. Five flat-arched bays divide the facade--two window bays flanking a centered entry bay. Facade detailing is nominal. A flat built-up tar roof covers the building.

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The front facade (south) is horizontal in orientation and symmetrically-arranged. Five flat-arched bays divide the facade--a centered entry bay with two window bays on each side. The bays are defined rather simply: by corbeling the sides inward from the facade plane to the openings. The corbeling effect extends from the water table to the lintel course. Two aluminum-framed glass doors (originals replaced) provide access. Above the doors is a single-light transom window framed with aluminum. The entry is approached by seven steps (two concrete, five granite) and a granite landing. Wrought-iron railings and buttresses of brick and concrete flank the steps. Anchored to the granite slab capping the brick buttresses are free-standing cast bronze lamp standards in a torch motif. The window bays are defined by the corbeled sides, terra-cotta lintel course and sills, and a plain brick panel beneath the sills. The sash is aluminum with single double-glazed lights (originals replaced). Above the lintel course defining the tops of the bays, is a plain brick field. Centered over the entry are the raised bronze letters "UNITED STATES POST OFFICE" above and, in smaller letters, "COLVILLE WASHINGTON" below. A molded terra cotta coping course terminates the facade.

The north facade contains four equally-spaced window bays. They are detailed similarly to those of the front except that the corbeling of the sides has been omitted. The second bay from the front has been filled with brick to form

See continuation sheet

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a niche (original construction). On each side of this bay are small vertical windows with one-over-one-light, double-hung, wooden sash. Except for the west corner window, the original sash has been replaced by windows similar to those of the front. This window consists of eight-over-eight, double-hung, wood sash in front of which is an aluminum-framed storm window. As with the front, a terra-cotta water table, lintel course, and coping course detail the side.

The south facade is divided into four equally-spaced window bays which are configured identically to the north. All the bays contain sash (all original replaced) and the two small windows have been omitted.

The rear facade uses the same detailing elements as the front and sides and consists of a centered, rearward projecting loading platform with two window bays flanking either side. The bays are detailed identically to those of the sides. Original sash, with aluminum-framed storm windows, remains in place. A square brick chimney, which projects several feet above the building, is at the juncture of the loading platform and main building (southern corner). The platform is concrete and enclosed on the south and east sides by brick walls. The north side of the platform contains the open loading bay and a single pedestrian door. A flat metal roof with projecting marquee covers the platform.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

MAR 25 1998

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

1938-1941

Significant Dates

Site acq.-1936

Const.-1938

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Simon, Louis A., Supervising Archi-
tect/Federal Government

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

The Colville Post Office is an unaltered (except for window sash) example of a small town single-purpose post office. Although the building is not particularly impressive architecturally, it has local significance for its inclusion in an enclave of public buildings which comprise the city's civic center (with city hall and county courthouse all constructed within a year of the Post Office). The building is also significant as a legacy of the Federal public works and arts programs of the Depression era. It symbolizes the Federal presence and democratic process as experienced by its citizens in lobbying for their Post Office. Its mural, through its visual presentation, relates the history of the locality and represents a significant period and type of American artistic expression.

ARCHITECTURE

The design is typical of a number of other small post offices constructed in the state, the Northwest, and nation during the Depression era. The design exhibits Classical proportion and symmetry, but the facades are totally devoid of historical architectural detailing elements. Stability, formalism and simplicity characterize the design which can be termed as Starved Classicism. Based on standardized plans developed by the Department of the Treasury, the building is the first Federally-constructed post office in Colville. The detailing of the front facade is somewhat unique in that there are no other duplicates in the state; however, thirteen or so state post offices have almost identical dimensions and entry/window bay arrangements.

See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

1. Colville Examiner; various articles 1934-1938.
2. Original Building Plans; 1936-1937.
3. Construction Progress Photographs; 20 August 1937 - 31 March 1938.
4. Daily Construction Record; 4 August 1937 - 30 April 1938.

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:

U.S.P.S. Facilities Service Center
San Bruno, CA 94099-0330

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property 0.50

UTM References

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

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

Lots 15, 16, 17, 18, 19 & 20, Block 13, Original Colville. Southwest corner of Astor Avenue and Oak Street. Beginning at the Northeast corner of the site, thence S180', W120', N180', E120' 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 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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The building symbolizes the effort of the Federal government to aid small communities during the Depression era through its public works programs. It is locally significant under Criterion A. Further, the Post Office is included in an enclave of public buildings, all constructed during the 1930s, which occupy the four corners of the intersection of Oak Street and Astor Avenue. The Stevens County Courthouse (1938) and the City Hall (1937) were projects funded by the WPA. The Library (1932) was constructed with the assistance of a local civic group. The architectural styles are complementary and, to some degree, influenced by the overall desire to have a civic center. As such, Colville is the only city in the state to have the three levels of government represented by their individual buildings in a single civic complex. Finally, these buildings, individually and collectively, represent the successful lobbying efforts of local civic groups through their elected officials in Washington to obtain Colville's public buildings. They are all strongly associated with Depression era New Deal programs.

ART

Over the postmaster's door on the north wall of the lobby is a mural entitled "The Pathfinders." Oil on canvas, it was executed by James Edmond Fitzgerald in 1939. It symbolizes the role of Hudson's Bay company trappers and traders in the development of the Pacific Northwest. Included is a trapper paddling a birch bark canoe, a log fort on the far side of the river, and three Indians before a tepee on the near side. One of the Indians, old and dejected, represents, according to the artist, the philosophy of a dying race.

James Edmond Fitzgerald was born in Seattle in 1912 and studied at the California School of Fine Arts and with Mark Tobey. During the 1930s he also completed murals in Preston, Idaho and Ontario, Oregon. After serving as a combat artist during World War II, Fitzgerald held exhibitions at the American Watercolor Society, N.Y.; Seattle Art Museum; National Academy of Design; and Metropolitan Museum of Art. He worked primarily as a marine painter, muralist, and watercolorist. Fitzgerald is listed in Who's Who In American Art (17th ed., 1986).

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The Colville Post Office 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

Colville, with an estimated 1987 population of 4,760, is the seat of Stevens County in northeastern Washington. Located in the Colville Valley, the city serves as the commercial and governmental center for the local agricultural and forestry-based economy. Colville is 71 miles north of Spokane and 40 miles south of the Canadian border.

Rich in history, the area was first explored by David Thompson in 1811. In 1825 Fort Colville, named for Lord Andrew Colville of the Hudson's Bay Co., was established at Kettle Falls, a few miles west of present-day Colville. The Fort functioned as the center of trade in the northwest. Upon the establishment of Washington Territory in 1853, Hudson's Bay Co. moved back into Canada. A military post, "Harney's Depot," (later Ft. Colville) was established northeast of the present townsite in 1859. Judge B. F. Vantis served as the first postmaster of the Fort.

The present town of Colville was founded in 1882 after the abandonment of Fort Colville. John Hofstelter, on whose land the townsite was platted, is generally recognized as the founder of Colville. Although the discovery of gold in the late 1850s brought some settlers to the area it was not until the 1880s that the area began to grow. In 1885 the post office was moved from Ft. Colville to Colville with C. H. Montgomery as postmaster. In 1889, the Spokane Falls and

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Northern Railroad Company reached Colville in its northward push from Spokane. Mining activity again flourished in the 1890s. At the turn-of-the-century Colville had a population of 594. Lumbering and logging became the region's most important industries and combined with mining and agriculture to form the economic base. The city's population surged to 1,533 in 1910 and then leveled at 1,718 in 1920 and 1,803 in 1930. The relative boom of the early century turned to recession after World War I. Agriculture, mining, and timber all suffered periodic reversals. Although the 1930s brought more of the same for the local economy, the population of Colville increased to 2,418 in 1940. The New Deal, through its Civilian Conservation Corps and WPA building programs, was a positive factor in the City's and County's progress through the Depression. The City's governmental complex, in which the Post Office anchors a corner, received the City Hall and new County Courthouse through WPA programs. Also constructed with WPA assistance was a new hospital and grade school. Colville's population grew to 3,033 in 1950 and to 3,806 in 1960, before falling slightly to 3,742 in 1970. By 1980 it had grown to 4,510.

The Colville Main Post Office is on the southwest corner of Astor Avenue and Oak Street. Facing east, the building faces Oak Street. Across the alley to the west, and fronting on Main Street, is a modern one-story bank building. Adjacent to the south of the post office is a modern one-story brick office building. Occupying the entire block east of Oak Street is the Stevens County Courthouse. Two stories in height, the buff-colored brick building was completed in 1938 (addition and complete rebuilding of the original courthouse, WPA Moderne). On the northeast corner of the intersection is the one-story brick Public Library (Neo-Classical, 1932). To its east is a one-story brick church (1931). On the northwest corner of the intersection is the one-story brick City Hall (Art Deco, WPA, 1937).

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

In January 1934 the Colville Valley National Bank declared a 3% dividend, prompting the bank president to say "I am of the firm belief that this depression is fast drawing to a close" (January 6th article, the Colville Examiner). A

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week later the Examiner reported that \$11,784.20 of federal funds had been allotted for the improvement of Colville's Airport (January 13th article). On March 17th the paper reported that the Winslow Mill would reopen and employ 50 men after being closed for two years; how long it would remain open would depend on the lumber market. And according to an article of March 31st, bank deposits in Colville increased \$133,769.60 during the past year.

"House Approves New PO" reported the Examiner on June 9th. Under the Public Works Bill Colville would get a \$77,000 structure; there would also be new post offices for Wenatchee and 10 other western Washington cities. The paper noted that "such a building has been considered in the past and urged by the Chamber of Commerce." In October, Congressman Hill spoke to the local Kiwanis Club and stated that Colville was on the list of approved buildings, but money would not be available until the next session of Congress.

On January 5th, 1935 the Examiner examined Colville's economy of the previous year. It revealed that local retailers had reported an increase over 1933 and that the bank had just declared a 4% dividend. It also noted that "one of the reliable barometers of business is the post office" and that Postmaster W. W. Campbell had stated that there was an increase of over \$800 for the fourth quarter of 1934 compared to the same period for 1933.

An article of February 2nd reported that Colville's proposed post office had been submitted to the House Committee on Appropriations. "New PO Included in Bill" headlined the Examiner on June 29th; Colville's post office was included in the \$58,000,000 deficiency appropriation passed by Congress.

At the beginning of the new year 1936 the Examiner once again reviewed the previous year's economy. While property taxes had continued to decrease (from \$661,014 in 1929 to \$307,982 in 1934) bank deposits were up \$250,000 from 1934, post office receipts were up \$1,300, Stevens County was operating in the black, and building activity included a new American Legion building, new State forestry building, new church, a WPA sewer project, and Al & Bob's new service station. On June 6th it was reported that Elliot Curry would

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replace W. W. Campbell as postmaster. An article of June 20th reported that the county's mines produced 37% of the state's gold, silver, copper, lead, and zinc.

On the 4th of July the Examiner reported that bids were being requested for the post office, to be opened on July 21st; the paper noted that "such a building has been authorized from time to time, but this is the first definite step." On July 25th it was reported that 11 sites had been offered and that federal inspector J. E. Fitzgerald was in town to examine the sites. (Another article that day reported that "An egg placed on the sidewalk in front of the Examiner simply refused to fry. It ran all over the pavement, and was just as limpid an hour later as when taken out of its shell. So its evident that the residents of Dallas, Atlanta and Pullman are quite a bit more cooked than those of Colville.")

On September 19th it was reported that a site at the corner of Main and Oak had been selected. The site cost \$5,425 and consisted of property owned by W. L. Sax, J. C. Harrigan and Richard Thomas. Structures on the site included a shop building occupied by Mrs. Ada Durkee, a corner residence occupied by Mrs. Gertrude Morrow, and the residence of Richard Thomas.

An article of October 24th stated that the post office would be a one-story masonry structure costing \$66,400. Test holes had been dug, a survey was being made, and bids would be advertised on November 15th. W. T. Pierce had asked the City Council to set the curb line outside of existing trees to save them. Another article that day reported that plans had been approved for the improvement of the Courthouse: a \$51,173 project (PWA to cover 45% of the cost) would shorten the tower, replace the peaked roof with a flat one, extend the structure, and modernize the interior. Another project was detailed on November 7th: the City Council had approved construction of a new \$27,000 City Hall (a \$12,150 PWA grant would cover part of the cost).

An article of November 14th discussed Colville's efforts to develop a "Civic Center" around the intersection of Oak and Aster. The Courthouse was on the southeast corner, the Carnegie Library on the northeast corner, and the federal building site on the southwest corner. Concerning the loca-

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tion of the future City Hall, the City owned three lots just north of the northwest corner, but it did not control the corner itself. The paper wrote that this would prevent the use of "similar styles and setbacks on each corner" and "would prevent realization of the hopes which inspired property owners of the southwest corner to give price concessions so the new post office could go on that corner and form part of a civic center." A subscription list was started to buy the needed lots for the city. On December 12th it was reported that the lots were "assured" for the city; businessmen had raised \$810.

On March 20, 1937 the Examiner reported that specifications for the \$85,000 post office were ready. Bids were called on April 11th; on May 15th it was reported that the contract was awarded to J. J. Lohrenz of Spokane who had bid \$50,684. Four bids had been submitted. An article of June 26th reported that buildings on the site were being removed and construction would begin in July. The West Coast Construction Company of Seattle was completing the project at a cost of \$51,058. On July 17th plans were revealed to add five rooms in the basement. On July 31 it was reported the work was being delayed now that a full basement was being planned. Work was resumed in August after the plans were ready; the five additional rooms would cost an extra \$6,700 (August 21 article). Credit was given to Congressman Leavy and Senators Bone and Schwollenbach who reported the desires of local citizens for a larger building. Excavation was now progressing.

An article of October 23rd detailed the "well-built" features of the building, such as the 17-inch thick, reinforced-concrete basement walls, remarking "it is becoming increasingly apparent that Uncle Sam really builds a building." On November 6th the Examiner reported that work was "in full swing" (22 men were at work) and listed the origins of the materials (lamp posts from Kentucky, maple flooring from Wisconsin, cement from Spokane, etc.). The cornerstone of Ohio sandstone had arrived and been laid without ceremony. By February 1938 the paper could write "PO Interior Is Attractive" and admire the black walnut trim, tile wainscoting from Ohio, and other features. "PO Inspection Set for Monday" wrote the Examiner on March 26th; the building was ready for its final inspection. Finally, on April 16th, the paper

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could write "New PO Is Open For Business."

On May 14th the Examiner described Colville's "half million" dollar building boom. The boom, which started in 1936, included the federal building (\$60,000), grammar school (\$65,000), courthouse (\$94,000), city hall (\$32,000), county hospital (\$20,000), J. H. Collins Building (\$30,000), stage depot (\$35,000), as well as other buildings, houses, and city street paving.

Additional post office news was reported in June. Plans were made to finish the basement offices (June 11th article) and on June 18th it was reported that "Dedication Is Success, Despite Rain." Two hundred people had gathered for the ceremony sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce. A history of the local post office was given and credit was given to Congressman Sam B. Hill for his "great work" in obtaining the post office (L. E. Jesseph had been the first to bring up the issue when he asked for an appropriation 10 years before). In September the basement space was allotted to the County Extension Service (there was no room for the Forest Service). "Commits Suicide in PO Washroom" read a headline of December 10th. Alvin Reitz, a 17-year postal employee, did the deed with a 45-caliber pistol he got a desk in the post office.

An article of January 14th, 1939 described the post office's new mural, which had been hung the previous Monday. Painted by 26-year old Washington-native Edward James Fitzgerald, who had started the work the previous October, the muras was described as "depicting old Ft. Colville as it probably appeared in its early days when the Hudson Bay Co. was helping to lay the groundwork for civilization in the Pacific Northwest." The mural included:

a dejected old Indian ... sitting before a teepee, and nearby, two young bucks, one with a long-barreled musket, who are gazing resentfully across the river at a rugged fort the white men have erected on the other bank. Paddling a canoe is a bewhiskered trapper wearing pioneer buckskin garb and he is being hailed by two men standing in front of the fort. Smoke can be seen rising within the rugged fortification, giving evidence there is warmth and safety within.

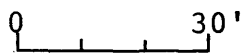
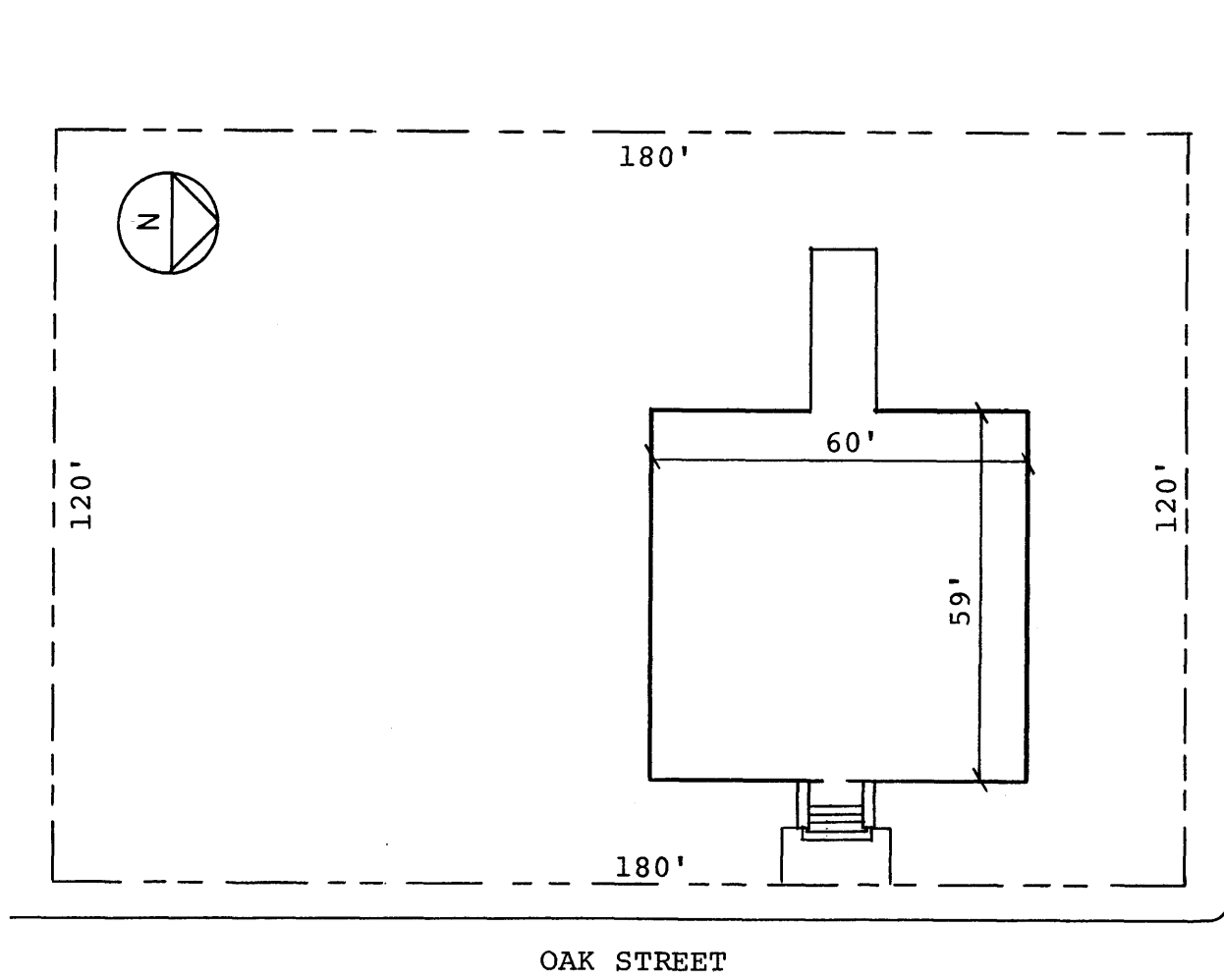
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The following information is the same for all the photographs listed:

1. Colville MPO
2. Colville, Washington
3. Jim Kolva
4. August 1987
5. Negatives on file at USPS Facilities Service Center, San Bruno, CA.

Photo No. 1 (negative #22)

6. View to northwest

Photo No. 2 (negative #23)

6. View to west

Photo No. 3 (negative #7)

6. View to southwest

Photo No. 4 (negative #4)

6. Lobby mural