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JAN 16 1990

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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 Yerington Main Post Office

other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number 28 North Main Street

N/A not for publication

city, town Yerington

N/A vicinity

state Nevada

code NV

county Lyon

code 019

zip code 89447

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 Nevada, 1891-1941

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.

Ronald M. Ganez, Deputy SHPD
Signature of certifying official

11/3/89
Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Alan A. Smith
Signature of commenting or other official

1-10-90
Date

U.S. Postal Service
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:)

Amy Federman

2/28/90

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)Colonial Revival

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concretewalls Brick

roof Copperother Tar composition

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Yerington Main Post Office is a one-story red brick building which rests upon a raised basement platform. The front elevation is flat, symmetrical, and Classically-proportioned. Five bays divide the facade--two flat-arched bays and a centered, round-arched entry bay. Sandstone and wood are used for trim details. A copper-clad hipped roof covers the building.

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The building's structure consists of reinforced concrete footings, basement and floor slab, steel framing, and brick walls. Red brick in common bond faces the basement and first floor exterior walls. A sandstone water table divides the basement and first floor. The window sills and lintels are also sandstone. Wood is used for the frieze and cornice, and entry architrave. Ribbed-copper clads the hipped roof over the front portion of the building, while the rear portion is covered by a flat built-up tar composition roof.

The front facade (west-facing Main St.) is horizontal in orientation and symmetrically-arranged. Five bays divide the facade--a centered entry bay with two window bays on each side. Six granite steps and granite landing provide access to the main entry. Wrought-iron balustrades with integrated lamp standards flank the stairs. The entry consists of double aluminum-framed glass panel doors. Above the doors is a two-panel wooden transom bar. Framing the doors, and slightly recessed from the wall plane, are fluted, half-round pilasters which support a simple wooden entablature with dentils. The bronze letters "YERINGTON NEVADA" are affixed to the frieze. Within the brick segmental arch and over the entablature is a painted cast-aluminum eagle. The window bays, with stone lintels and sills, each contain a double-hung wood sash with 12-over-12 lights. Terminating the first floor is a wooden frieze and dentil cornice. "UNITED STATES POST OFFICE" in bronze letters is centered over the entry and

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

1939-1941

Significant Dates

Site Acq.-1938

Const.-1939

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Simon, Louis A., Supervising Architect/
Federal Government; Dow, L.F. & Co.,
Los Angeles, CA, Contractor

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

The Yerington Main Post Office is significant on the state level for art and on the local level for architecture and politics/government. An unaltered example of a small-town post office and federal office building, the building's design, based on standardized plans, is typical of a number of other small town post offices constructed in Nevada, the West, and the nation during the Depression era. The Post Office and the mural it contains 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 is one of only three post office murals completed in Nevada during the Depression. It represents a significant type, period, and style of artistic expression which relates to the history of its locality. Finally, the building is the city's first and only federal building and symbolizes the linkage between the federal government and the local citizens.

ARCHITECTURE

The building is the only federally-constructed post office in Yerington and is patterned after one of eleven or so standardized plans developed by the Department of the Treasury. Although the building does not constitute a unique architectural entity in the body of statewide architecture, it is the only building of this particular style in the city of Yerington. The Yerington Post Office, as most of the buildings constructed during the Depression era, utilizes Classical symmetry and proportion. The facade is flat and essentially stripped of architectural detail. Detailing is limited to the entry bay: a Classical entry architrave with fluted pilasters, an arched tympanum in which rests a cast

See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

1. Mason Valley News (Yerington), various articles 1936-40.
2. Yerington Chamber of Commerce. "A Wonderful Place to Live ..." (Brochure, 1967).
3. Meyers, Bernards, ed. McGraw-Hill Dictionary of Art. London, England: McGraw-Hill Publishing Co., 1969.
4. Original Architectural Drawings, 1938.
5. Construction Progress Photos, April 27-November 16, 1939.

See continuation sheet

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 # _____

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 0.60

UTM References

A

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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: Yerington

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The property is on the east side of Main Street with its southwest corner approximately 252' north of the northeast corner of Main Street and Broadway Street. The property is described as follows: beginning at the southwest corner, thence north 145', east 181.8', south 145', west 181.8' to point of beginning.

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 February 1989
street & number West 705 1st Avenue telephone (509) 458-6219
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affixed to the frieze. Sloping rearward from the cornice is a copper-clad hipped roof.

The south facade is divided into three segments--the two-bay front (over which is the hipped roof), the slightly recessed two-bay center, and five-bay rear wing. A sandstone water table and wooden frieze and cornice extend across the facade as in the front. A metal flashing covers the coping atop the cornice. The window bays of the front and center sections are configured identically to those of the front, except for the rear bay of the front section which has been filled with brick to form a niche. A small, vertically-aligned 2-over-2 light double-hung wood-sash window is centered in the niche. The rear wing includes a centered entry door with a concrete approach landing. Framed with wooden jambs and door head, the double door is metal-framed with a three-light glass panel in each. Except for narrow, horizontally-aligned four-light metal sash windows in the two forward bays, there are no windows on the ground level of the wing. Five equally-spaced windows, with the center one over the entry, are at the mezzanine level. These windows consist of double-hung wood sash with 8-over-8 lights. Beneath the window-sills are slightly recessed niches which extend to the water table.

The front and central sections of the north facade are essentially identical to the corresponding sections of the south facade. The windows are configured identically to the south, except for the following: the niche and small window have been replaced by a full-sized window and the second window from the front corner has been replaced by an aluminum-framed glass door. This door and the concrete approach ramp were added to provide handicapped access. The east wall of the rear wing is recessed 22 feet from the facade line of the forward sections. A loading platform, opening to the north and extending from the rear of the center section, is in front of the northern half of the wing (lower in height than the main building). The mailing vestibule, with a single metal and glass panel door, is between the open platform and the building. A flat metal roof with projecting marquee covers the loading platform. The facade of the rear wing includes two mezzanine-level windows (double-hung 8-over-8 light wood-sash) south of the platform, and three windows above the platform (three narrow, horizontally-

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aligned four-light metal sash). Double wooden doors with six-lights in each are beneath the window next to the east end of the platform. A six-light wood-sash transom window is above the doors.

The rear (east) facade consists of the three-bay rear wing, the blank brick wall of the mailing platform and the rear of the central section. The water table, frieze, and cornice are detailed identically to the front and sides. The rear facade contains windows only on the mezzanine level (configured identically to side). The single window of the center's rear facade consists of double-hung wood-sash with 8-over-8 lights (with metal bars in front).

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aluminum eagle, and a segmental brick arch. The building occupies an interior block site and is articulated by side-yards and a front yard setback which contrast with the solid front property line facades of the flanking buildings. The other major public building in the city is the two-story, brick, Neo-Classical Lyon County Courthouse, one and one-half blocks to the south. The building was designed by Frederick DeLongchamps and is listed on the National Register.

POLITICS/GOVERNMENT

As an example of the effort of the Federal government to aid small communities during the Depression era through its massive public works programs, the building is locally significant under Criterion A. The Post Office, "designed on Colonial lines with a modern touch," represents the link with the federal government and the successful lobbying efforts of local citizens in obtaining their first, and only, federal building. According to the local press, "the building fulfills a life time of hopes and dreams for the citizens of this community." Further, "The building is the show spot of Yerington and is a source of great pride to the people of the community." Finally, the dedication ceremony of Saturday, December 2, 1939 gave the townspeople the opportunity to listen to and thank Senator Pat McCarran and Congressman James Scrugham for their aid in securing the building. In addition, Yerington's newly formed high school band made its debut at the dedication, playing the "Star Spangled Banner."

ART

The Yerington Post Office is significant on the state level under Criterion A for its association with the federal government's New Deal public arts programs. The mural, through its visual presentation, relates the history of the locality and represents a significant period and type of American artistic expression. Thus, as an integral part of the building, it is also significant under Criterion C.

The mural, "Homestead on the Plain," is on the lobby wall over the postmaster's door. It was painted by Adolph Gottlieb in 1941. Approximately 5' by 12', the mural is oil on canvas and attached to the wall. The mural depicts the loneliness of a homestead on the Nevada plains.

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Adolph Gottlieb was born in New York in 1903 and died in 1974. He studied at the Art Students League from 1919 to 1921 with Robert Henri and John Sloan and at the Parsons School of Design in 1923. Gottlieb's initial works were in an essentially naturalistic style, but in the 1940s he developed a pictographic semiabstract methodology. In the 1950s his work became fully abstract-expressionist. Gottlieb was represented in many important annuals and international exhibitions, including the Whitney Museum of American Art's "The New Decade," the Tokyo International in 1955, the Carnegie International in 1958 and 1961, and the 1963 Sao Paulo Bienal. His mural in the Yerington Post Office was his only known Depression era mural work.

The mural design was a prizewinner in the 48-state competition sponsored by the Fine Arts Section of the Federal Works Agency in 1939. The winning designs, to be placed in one post office in each of the 48 states, were selected from 1,475 anonymously submitted sketches. According to Maurice Stern, jury chairman, the competition, the largest ever held in the country, made a distinct contribution to American mural art.

The mural was depicted in the December 4, 1939 issue of Life magazine along with the other winning entries. The caption beneath the photograph of the mural reported that Gottlieb, a Brooklynite, traveled to Nevada to get the lonely feel of this homestead on the plains. According to Life:

As mural sketches, there are interesting not only in themselves but also as barometers by which the everyday art taste of rural America may be judged. Designed mostly for village post offices, they represent in most cases the collective taste of the citizens of the community, together with the individual taste of the artist. ...

Apparently rural Americans are artistic "stay-at-homes" with a preference for paintings that reproduce experiences and scenes and parts of history with which they are familiar. In spirit, many of these sketches are local American epics.

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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 Yerington mural and murals in Winnemucca and Lovelock were completed.

The Section, which was administered in Washington, dealt directly with 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. 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.

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LOCAL CONTEXT

Yerington is located in the central-west portion of Nevada, approximately 50 miles from the California border and 80 miles southwest of Reno. It is the county seat of Lyon County. Mining provided an economic base for the town until 1977 when the Anaconda Mining Company ceased operations. The city's economy is now based primarily on ranching. In 1980 Yerington's population was 2,021.

Yerington's location in a broad valley surrounded by mountains made it a natural site for farming and ranching. In the early 1870s the entire valley was known as "Pizen Switch"; a saloon in the vicinity of the present City Hall constructed entirely of willows was known as the "Switch," and cowboys in the area would venture there to get some "Pizen." But by 1878, when the valley also featured a livery stable, store, saloons, blacksmith shop, and hotel, some residents decided the area needed a different name than Pizen Switch or just "Valley." Due to the green fields on either side of the street, the name "Greenfield" was decided upon (though the mailing address remained "Mason Valley"). When the Lyon County Times reported the name change (which was celebrated on November 26th, 1879 in conjunction with the construction of a new dance hall) in 1879, it reflected the spirit of the times:

"Whiskey and hard cider flowed freely, but there were no fights. The music was furnished by a fiddle and two banjos. The place was re-Christened "Greenfield" and an organization formed to be known as the Committee of Vengeance, whose duty it shall be to murder and scalp any and every person who shall hereafter call it "Pizen Switch."

The town's name was later changed yet again, to Yerington, in an unsuccessful attempt to encourage railroad magnate H. M. Yerington to bring the Carson & Colorado Railroad to the community (the Nevada Copper Belt Railroad would finally reach the community in 1910). The residents of the area prospered at farming, though by the turn of the century mining, which had been known in the area since the 1860s, also became an important factor in the local economy.

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Due to its economy based on a combination of agriculture and mining, Yerington would become known as the "Cattle Kingdom in the Copper Hills." In 1913 Lyon County produced 100,000 tons of alfalfa, 20,000 tons of potatoes, 1,000 tons of barley, 50 tons of onions, 175,000 pounds of butter, 100,000 pounds of honey, and 250,000 pounds of wool. Copper was the main mining product, though silver and gold was also extracted from the area's mines. By 1913 Yerington featured tree-lined streets, a new \$50,000 County Courthouse, county high school, county hospital, churches, drug stores, garages, hotels, cafes, livery barns, general stores, an ice plant, and bottling works. From 1910 to 1920 Yerington's population jumped from 682 to 1,169. Yerington's population then dropped, however, to 1,005 in 1930 and to 964 in 1940, reflecting the decline of the area's mining business. Since then Yerington has experienced slow but steady growth, to 1,157 in 1950 to 1,764 in 1960 to 2,010 in 1970. In 1980 its population was 2,021.

The Yerington Main Post Office is on North Main Street near the northern edge of the central business district. Land uses to the north, south, and west are primarily mixed-use commercial. The area to the east is residential. Commercial uses adjacent to the post office include a pharmacy, a hardware store, a food market, and a bank.

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

In the beginning of 1936 the Mason Valley News ("The Only Newspaper in the World That Gives a Damn About Yerington") reported on State economic conditions. The paper reported that cash income from crops and livestock in Nevada had grown from \$5,741,000 in the lowest year of 1932 to \$8,500,000 in 1935. It was noted that price levels and drought conditions were keys to Nevada farm incomes and that cash income in the late 1920s--before the drought and depression years--had ranged from \$15 to \$20 million a year.

News of a new post office for Yerington was reported on February 7th, 1936. Congressman James G. Scrugham had introduced a bill to authorize construction of a building with a cost limit of \$100,000 (including site). One week later, on February 14th, the News reported "Post Office Bill Recvd."

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An article of February 28th reported on State economic news: the State had a cash surplus of over \$3,000,000, had no bonded debt outside the State, the State tax rate had declined, and \$3,719,510 had been received from the Federal government for highway construction in the previous year. That spring postmaster Fred L. Littell resigned and Mrs. Effie Perry became acting postmaster (March 28th article) and the \$41,000 remodeling and expansion of the courthouse was nearly finished (an \$18,000 government grant had been used--April 3rd article). On June 12th Nevada farm news was reported: the number of farms had dropped from a 1925 peak of 3,883 to 3,695 in 1935; the number of acres devoted to farming and ranching had dropped from a 1925 peak of 4,090,586 acres to 3,621,769 acres in 1935; and the value of farms had dropped to \$42,568,709 in 1935, the lowest since 1910 (the 1925 value was \$67,997,492).

"New PO for Yerington" reported the News on June 26th; Yerington's post office was included in the \$60,000,000 emergency construction fund that included 321 post offices and other public buildings. It was noted though that it might be some time before the building would be constructed, since Yerington's third class post office would have to become second class before construction could begin. On July 24th it was reported that post office lot bids had been opened the previous Monday by Postmistress Perry. Five bids, ranging from \$750 to \$5,370, had been submitted. A month later it was reported that postal inspector W. B. Mouser was inspecting the sites, and that it would probably be five months before the selection was made (August 21st article). Less than a month later, however, on September 11th, it was reported that a site on Main measuring 145 x 160 feet had been selected. The site cost \$3,625, and was owned by Mrs. Gertrude Webster, Lyon Co., Bank Mtg. Co., Mrs. Hulde Fox, and F. M. Johnson.

No news of the post office was reported in 1937, though an article of January 22nd reported that from April 1935 to December 1936 \$12,225,125 had been spent on work programs in the state (including over \$3,000,000 for highways, roads, and streets and over \$4,000,000 for conservation). On February 12th it was reported that a \$10,000 bond election for a WPA water system had passed.

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In March of 1938 the News reported that a suit had been brought to clear the title to the post office site; the delay in purchasing the site was blamed on the State not advising the Treasury Department that it had, in the last session of the legislature a year ago, ceded the land to the government (articles of March 4th and 11th). In May the first air mail delivery was made to Yerington: Ted Morrel flew in from Reno with 750 pieces of mail and left with 1,600. He was met by Mayor Ford, Postmistress Perry, and the high school band (May 20th article).

At this time it was also reported that post office bids were being prepared and would be available in September, once the plans were finished (articles of May 27th and June 24th). On November 4th it was reported that the post office's lease had expired and a temporary building was being sought until the new one was built.

On May 17, 1939 it was reported that work on the post office would start before April 9; L.F. Dow of Los Angeles had submitted the lowest of the eight bids submitted. On April 7th it was announced that work on excavation would start that week, and that local labor would be used where possible. The allocation for the project was \$75,000; Dow's bid was \$61,491. "Postoffice Job Near Half-Way Mark Today" reported the News on July 14th. Work had started on June 9th and was ahead of schedule.

"New Post Office To Have Special Mural Painting" was the news of July 28th. The Section of Fine Arts had listed Yerington as one of 48 post offices in the U.S. to have a mural, and "invites" were extended for the 48 state competition, which would end October 2nd. It was also noted that Miss Helen Forbes of San Francisco had been in town the previous week seeking "local color" for a painting she would enter.

The November 24th edition of the News included a photo of the new building and the announcement that its dedication was scheduled for December 2nd. The paper wrote: "the building fulfills a life time of hopes and dreams for the citizens of this community." Cong. James G. Scrugham was scheduled to speak and the building would be occupied on Monday. The paper also wrote "The building is the show spot of Yerington and is a source of great pride to the people of the communi-

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ty" and noted that the Lyon County farm bureau would occupy the mezzanine at the rear of the building. A complete description of the building was given ("designed on Colonial lines with a modern touch....").

On December 1st it was reported that both Senator Patrick McCannon and Congressman Scrugham would attend the ceremony. Mayor James F. Ford and the American Legion would participate, as would the newly formed high school band. The band had been marching and playing for three weeks, in preparation for its first public appearance. A week later, on December 8th, it was reported that a "large, attentive audience" had participated in the dedication. Congressman Scrugham had given the main address and the band had received much applause.

The last news of the post office at the time appeared on January 12, 1940, when it was reported that the Farm Bureau had moved to the post office, and was occupying three offices on the mezzanine level.

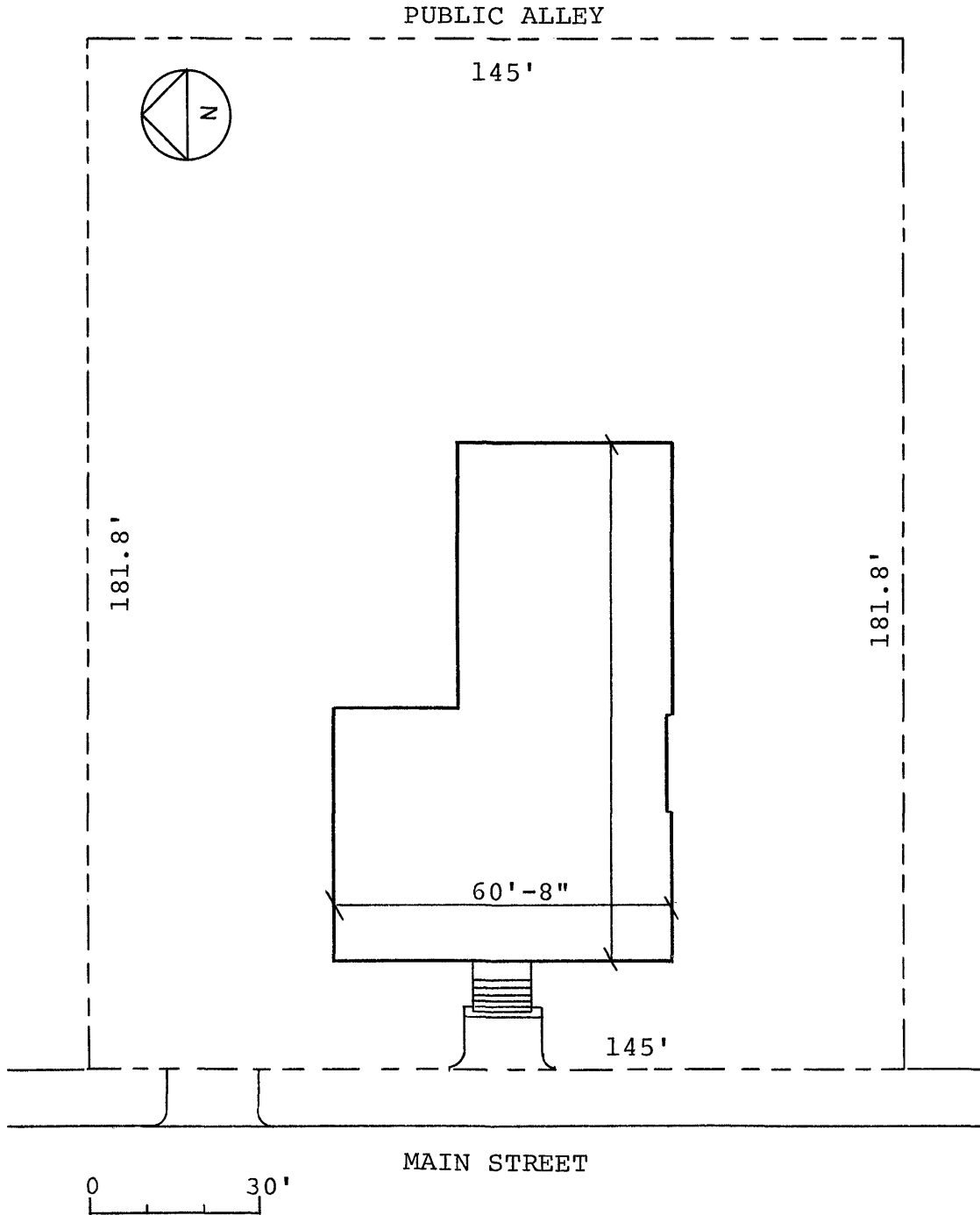
The three offices are presently occupied by the soil conservation service and the farm home administration while the main floor continues to host the functions of the city's main post office.

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

1. Yerington MPO
2. Yerington, Nevada
3. Jim Kolva
4. June 1988
5. Negatives on file at USPS Facilities Service Center, San Bruno, CA.

Photo No. 1 (negative #2)

6. View to east

Photo No. 2 (negative #9)

6. View to northwest

Photo No. 3 (negative #3)

6. View to southeast

Photo No. 4 (negative #24A)

6. Lobby mural