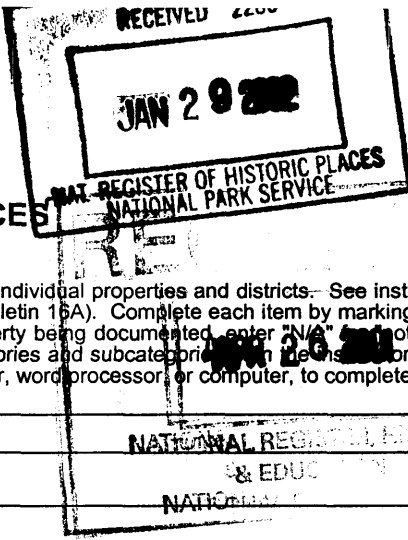


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM



567

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for not applicable. For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories in the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Fort Pierce Old Post Office

other names/site number Fort Pierce Post Office

2. Location

street & number 500 Orange Avenue n/a not for publication

city or town Fort Pierce n/a vicinity

state FLORIDA code FL county St. Lucie code 111 zip code 34950

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

John B. ... 12-24-01
Signature of certifying official/Title Date
U.S. Postal Service
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Janet ... 4/18/2001
Signature of certifying official/Title Date
Florida State Historic Preservation Officer, Division of Historical Resources
State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the 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 See continuation sheet.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain) _____

Signature of the Keeper (for)

Date of Action

Annah D. Pope

2/11/02

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

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

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

- buildings
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include any previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	total

Name of related multiple property listings
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

GOVERNMENT/Post Office

GOVERNMENT/Federal Courthouse

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

GOVERNMENT/Post Office

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE 19TH & 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS/
Mediterranean Revival

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation STUCCO

walls STUCCO

roof BITUMEN

other TILE

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 36) 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

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

POLITICS/GOVERNMENT

ART

Period of Significance

1935

Significant Dates

1935

Significant Person

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Simon, Louis A. (Architect)

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State Agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of Repository

Fort Pierce Old Post Office
Name of Property

St. Lucie, Florida
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property Less than 1 acre

UTM References

(Place additional references on a continuation sheet.)

1	1	7	5	6	6	4	6	0	3	0	3	5	9	4	0
	Zone		Easting						Northing						
2															

3															
	Zone		Easting						Northing						
4															

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Tim Harrington, Consultant; Gary V. Goodwin, Historic Preservation Planner

organization Bureau of Historic Preservation date April, 2001

street & number R.A. Gray Building, 500 S. Bronough Street telephone (850) 487-2333

city or town Tallahassee state Florida zip code 32399-0250

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items

(check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name United States Postal Service

street & number _____ telephone _____

city or town _____ state _____ zip code _____

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and amend listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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National Park Service**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 7 Page 1

**Fort Pierce Old Post Office
Fort Pierce, St. Lucie County, Florida**

SUMMARY

The Old Post Office, built in 1935, is a two-story building of asymmetrical plan, Mediterranean Revival in style. Its structure is steel frame on pilings. The walls are 12" terra cotta tile finished in smooth beige stucco. Of six roof levels, four are flat and parapeted; a red clay tile hipped roof covers the upper story level at the southwest corner, and the northwest corner tower. Fenestration is single-hung sash, commonly in groups of three. Several interior rooms apart from the public postal spaces were remodeled in the 1960's and 1970's for use by other government agencies. The building anchors the western quadrant of Fort Pierce's community redevelopment area, comprising the traditional downtown as developed in the 1920's.

SETTING

Fort Pierce is on the east coast of Florida, approximately 238 miles south of Jacksonville and 58 miles north of West Palm Beach. The city consists of nine square miles of irregularly shaped land surrounded by unincorporated areas of St. Lucie County. Fort Pierce is the county seat. It occupies the banks of the Indian River lagoon and the northern tip of Hutchinson Island, a barrier island separating the lagoon from the ocean. The city contains several residential neighborhoods, an oceanfront resort area and the county's historic downtown. The major traffic arteries serving the city are Interstate Highway 95, U. S. Route 1, and Coastal Highway A1A. There is a small airport. A commercial seaport and the city marina can be reached from the Intercoastal Waterway and through the Fort Pierce Inlet to the Atlantic Ocean.

The building stands on an 18,924 sq. ft. lot at the northwest corner of Orange Avenue and Fifth Street, with the entrance facing south on Orange Avenue. Except for the paving for parking, the site remains much as it was when the post office was built. There is a narrow parking lot for employees at the north end, and a larger one for customers at the west end of the property. Orange Avenue is a main thoroughfare leading to downtown Fort Pierce, running from the post office a block south to City Hall, a block farther to the FEC railway tracks and Depot Drive, a third block south to Second Street ("Main Street"), a fourth to Indian River Drive, and a fifth to the river itself. Across Fifth Street which runs north and south, is the Arcade, a Mediterranean style mixed-use building occupying most of the block along U.S. 1, one block east of, and parallel to, Fifth Street. It had extended all the way to the southwest corner of Fifth and Orange until a fire destroyed part of the west wing. To its north on Fifth is the old Masonic Hall, now an office building. Across Orange are a series of small storefront businesses. Farther west along Orange are more storefronts on the south side and an elaborate Moorishly-ornamented Mediterranean Revival house, and finally the Mexican-baroque, Mission style Methodist Church. The immediate neighborhood of the Old Post Office comprises the westernmost end of the city's community redevelopment area.

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**Fort Pierce Old Post Office
Fort Pierce, St. Lucie County, Florida**

EXTERIOR

The Old Post Office has six roofs, or roof levels—seven, if the portico is included (Photo 1). The south (Photo 2) and east (Photo 5) elevations are the most developed in architectural detailing. The building is surrounded by a parapet with water table and precast concrete coping (Photo 1) and maintains its harmonious proportions on all sides. A projecting base rising 2-½ ft. above grade also surrounds and unites the building. It occupies a space approximately 104 feet north by 72 feet west on its lot.

At the south elevation (Photo 2), facing Orange Avenue, three central 8/12 single-hung sash windows are set in recessed round arches, separated by pilasters (Photo 7). A fourth window, similarly recessed, is centered on the west corner bay, and contains a picture window. Each sill is adorned below with a recessed rectangular apron. The entrance is at the east corner. A stone plaque at the west corner is engraved with the date of construction and names of officials, architect and builder (Photo 8).

The entrance consists of a flat-roofed portico sheltering steps up to a double door. The metal and glass door is framed by wood pilasters and header with a wood frame fanlight above (Photos 9, 10). Both sides of the portico echo the recessed round arch, and sill treatment, of the windows, but feature open clay tile grillwork in place of glass (Photo 6). The facade is similar, with wrought iron tracery set into the arch above the door opening. A coped parapet tops the portico. An ornamental scupper is centered below the point at which the main roof parapet rises to a stepped segmental arch, crowning the entrance (Photo 1).

The east elevation features five recessed-arched windows in a one-three-one group to the south, with typical pilaster and apron treatment. Toward the north end of this elevation follow three unadorned windows, the last two separated by a door set in a recessed arch. All the windows are 8/12 single-hung sash. The door is topped by a four-pane transom and reached by an uncovered concrete stoop (Photo 5).

The north elevation has two distinct parts (Photo 4). The east corner houses a recessed mailing platform. This loading dock is accessible on foot by a concrete, handicapped-accessible ramp and is sheltered by a marquee. The marquee is suspended by means of four steel stanchions hooked to the facade at ornamental medallions. The lower, west wing features a double door with metal louvers above, and an unadorned 8/12 single-hung sash window (Photo 12). Electric utilities connect to the building at this corner. Within lies the boiler room, below grade.

The west elevation (Photo 3) includes the boiler room wing projecting furthest west with one plain 8/12 single-hung sash window centered, and a chimney in the shape of a mission bell tower with hipped tile roof (Photo 11). A central section of the elevation features one 8/12 single-hung sash window, a second filled in opening of the same size and shape, and a door with concrete stoop covered by a small marquee-like awning. The southwestern corner contains a second story topped by a hipped tile roof. This level is penetrated by a row

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**Fort Pierce Old Post Office
Fort Pierce, St. Lucie County, Florida**

of five smaller 6/6 single-hung sash windows grouped one-two-three. Below, on the ground level, is one window similar to the above next to an identical filled opening. Last is a plain picture window of the typical 8/12 proportion.

INTERIOR

Interiors to the building are public and private spaces. The presently unoccupied private spaces are divided into those used for postal functions and those formerly leased to other governmental agencies. The foyer receives natural light from the fanlight over the double entry doors (Photo 16). To the west is the customer service lobby, continuous in form and finish with the foyer, although separated by a glass and aluminum partition (Photo 17). On the north wall, facing the entrance is a wood-framed panel containing mail deposit slots (Photo 18), similar to the bulletin cases below the mural in the customer services lobby. To the right of the mail deposit panel, an arched opening leads to the box lobby.

The customer service lobby runs along the front of the building (Photos 19, 22), parallel to Orange Avenue, and receives the light of the windows in the southern wall. Stretching across the west wall at the end of the lobby, from the crown molding down, is a mural commissioned under the Treasury Department program, painted by Lucille Blanch, depicting "Osceola Holding Informal Court with his Chiefs" (Photo 20). It is in relatively good condition. Below are two original wood-framed bulletin cases (Photos 21, 23). There is a panel door set into the north wall at its western end. The postal counter, and service window, runs along the north wall, beginning after the door (Photos 22, 24).

Straight through the foyer and perpendicular to the customer service lobby is the box lobby (Photos 13, 14), a long hallway, with brass mailboxes along the western wall. At the north end of the lobby is a wood panel door leading to an office and the work area. A flat-arched opening connects the box lobby to the foyer. The ceiling throughout the L-shaped lobby/foyer area is 14 feet high, coffered and trimmed with crown molding (Photo 15). Marble wainscoting runs along the walls. The flooring throughout is red and brown quarry tile.

Behind and parallel to the customer service counter is the window service room (Photo 25), leading to the work room beyond, which is parallel to the box lobby (Photos 26, 27, 28). At the end of the workroom, north, is the mailing vestibule, which adjoins the mailing platform at the rear of the building. The northeast corner of the building is divided into an office and restrooms, and a break, or "swing," room at the corner (Photo 29). The foyer of the eastern entrance was turned into a storage room (site of the original postal inspector's entrance).

The mailing platform, at the rear of the building, has a door at the west end of the dock (Photo 30) which leads down two steps to a concrete platform also accessed by a double door on the north wall (Photo 4). A ladder adjacent to that door, inside, reaches through a hatch to the roof (Photo 31). From the concrete platform,

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**Fort Pierce Old Post Office
Fort Pierce, St. Lucie County, Florida**

several steps descend to a sunken boiler room, where boiler equipment and the base of the chimney are located. A hatch low on the south wall of the room opens onto the crawl space below the building (Photos 32-35).

The spaces recently used by the Federal Circuit Court consist of the southeast third of the building, including its upper story. The public entrance to the courtroom was on the west wall of the building (Photo 3, center door), through a lobby. The lobby led north to the clerk's office (Photo 36), east to the courtroom, and south to a secretary's office, beyond which was the judge's chamber. Stairs to the immediate south of the door (Photo 37) lead up to two rooms. The first was used by the probate officer; the second was the jury room (Photos 38, 39). These two rooms, and the restrooms between them, make up the building's upper story at the southwest corner, the portion with the tiled hip roof, lighted by the windows on the west elevation (Photo 3). The judge's bench stands at the southwest corner of the courtroom, looking northeast (Photo 40). The jury area is on the judge's right hand, behind a knee-wall, and the witness box on his left (Photo 41). Behind the bench, a hallway (Photo 42) leads to the paneled door in the lobby or to the judge's chambers. The chambers occupy the southwestern corner of the building at ground level, and were originally designed to be the postmaster's office (Photo 43). On the north wall of the loading dock, the westernmost of three doors was the Federal Marshall's entrance (Photo 30), which led south to the courtroom, or west and north, upstairs (Photo 44) to a hall overlooking the marquee through three windows (Photo 4). To the east of the stairwell, the first room is a holding cell (Photo 45), having a waiting foyer and a cell with a bench facing the door and a toilet concealed behind the wall. A room at the east end of the hall, and another off the hall to the south, are office spaces (Photo 46). This portion of the building is the flat-roofed, second-story block at the center of the north end of the post office (Photos 1, 4).

ALTERATIONS

The main exterior alteration is the addition in the 1960's of the portico. The portico, is compatible in style, material and proportion with the rest of the building. The relocation of the wrought iron tracery from the fanlight to the portico entry preserves the original intent. The earlier entry doors have been replaced by metal-and-glass doors with panic-bars.

Other exterior changes include the two windows at the southwest corner of the building, east and west (Photos 2, 3). They were replaced with bullet-resistant glass. A second floor window on the south elevation, and two first floor windows on the west elevation have been filled in. The east and west entry doors are later replacements, as are most of those on the north elevation at the loading dock. The flagpole was not originally in its present spot on the lawn. It was on the roof, centered at the front (south).

In the interior, the foyer was created by installing a glass and aluminum partition at the entrance to the customer service lobby area so that the space could be locked while providing after-hours access to the mailboxes (Photos 17, 22). Originally a roll-up door had closed off the counter, and both lobbies were open 24

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**Fort Pierce Old Post Office
Fort Pierce, St. Lucie County, Florida**

hours a day. The panels high along the wall above the post office boxes were originally windows with open grillwork (the post office lobby windows were left open in good weather and the sea breezes provided fresh air). They were later filled in (Photos 13, 15, 47). Freestanding interior furnishings are of various later dates. The customer service window trim and counter have been redone. The ceiling lights are recent. The wall-mounted mailboxes are original, as are the wood-framed bulletin cases below the mural (Photo 48). The mural is intact and maintains its historical place as an integral part of the post office lobby.

The postal workspaces have undergone some alteration over time. The wood flooring, some doors, parts of the mailbox interior section, and wall finishes, up to the point of alteration for the sake of air conditioning, are intact. Some of the office floors have been covered with linoleum. An inspector's gallery that might have looked out on all of the various postal operations below is not in evidence. The eastern entrance is blocked from within, that space now being used for storage; traditionally it would have been the inspector's entrance. From his office at the northeast corner, now the swing room, he could have climbed through a trap door (Photo 49) to the gallery above to observe the employees through "peepholes."

The non-postal interior has been considerably altered for the use of other federal agencies. The workroom was partitioned off. Most of the walls are paneled. A drop ceiling hides the ductwork that occupies the formerly open ceiling space. Beneath the carpet that covers most of this section, the early hardwood flooring can be glimpsed (Photo 50). Original molding and trim is still apparent in places (Photo 39). Although some of the work may have started around the time of the Second World War, when armed forces recruiters had their offices in the building, most of the partitioning was done in 1964 and 1973

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Section number 8 Page 1

**Fort Pierce Old Post Office
Fort Pierce, St. Lucie County, Florida**

SUMMARY

The Old Post Office is significant at the local level under Criterion C in the areas of Architecture and Art, and under Criterion A in the area of Politics/Government. It exemplifies the Public Works Administration (PWA) in Fort Pierce, and PWA architecture as adapted to the Mediterranean Revival that defined an era in Fort Pierce and South Florida. It was built under the supervision of architect Louis A. Simon, who designed several other Florida post offices during the depression. It represents the city's first dignified federal presence as expressed architecturally. It is one of only two significant examples of New Deal architecture in the county. Its centerpiece is a mural in the lobby depicting a scene from the life of Seminole Chief Osceola. The mural is one of 14 that were sponsored by the Works Progress Administration (WPA), through the Treasury Department's Section of Fine Arts, in Florida between 1936 and 1942. The post office continues to function as the Downtown Station.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The United States took possession of Florida from Spain in 1821. The Ais of the south-central coast and other prehistoric Indians were virtually extinct by then, their few descendants melding with the mixture of immigrant tribes and runaway slaves who became the Seminoles. There were about 5,000 in Florida at the time. Friction with surveyors and settlers culminated in the 1835 attack on plantations south of St. Augustine that set off the Second Seminole War (1835-1842). The United States Army built a series of forts to counter the attacks and expedite the Policy of Indian Removal. One was founded on a bluff, the highest point visible, on the west bank four miles south of the Indian River Inlet, near an Ais mound and a spring. This took place in late 1837 by some accounts, perhaps on the morning of January 2, 1838, according to the journal of Dr. Jacob Rhett Motte, physician to the party of scouts. They named it after their commander, Lieutenant Colonel Benjamin Pierce, a career officer whose brother was Franklin Pierce, fourteenth President of the United States. The fort was deactivated after the war and burned down in 1843.

The war stopped rather than ended, and settlers replaced soldiers under the Armed Occupation Act passed by Congress in 1842, providing for the homesteading of 160-acre lots of land. The sporadic pioneers of the 1840's along the Indian River often used the ruins of Fort Pierce as a reference point in describing claims. The first attempt of an "Indian River Colony" to settle an area a few miles north of the fort was interrupted by the stabbing to death of John Barker, keeper of a trading post, by some Indians he had cheated. The family and neighbors escaped to St. Augustine, not to return until the 1850's, after the government had Fort Capron built near their homesteads, the site of present day St. Lucie Village. St. Lucie County had been created out of vast Mosquito County in 1844, the year before Florida became a state. The 1850 U.S. Census reported a county population of nearly 140, of whom 30 were soldiers and 27 slaves, commenting that "The inhabitants of the County were driven from it on account of the Indian hostilities and only a few of them have, as yet, returned." It was not until the 1870's that a settlement was founded that would be the beginning of Fort Pierce as a city.

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**Fort Pierce Old Post Office
Fort Pierce, St. Lucie County, Florida**

Alexander Bell had started a trading post at the site of the old fort in 1871, later homesteaded the land between Taylor Creek to the north and Moore's Creek to the south. Moore's Creek remains the northern border of the commercial downtown. This would become Fort Pierce's first residential neighborhood. It was named Edgartown after the grandson of A.G. LaGow, one of the pioneers. Other founders were the families of Frank and James Bell, and Reuben Carlton. Edgartown had a post office, named after the first postmaster, Thomas C. Bass. School was taught by Miss Ella Bell in her home until the first schoolhouse was built in the form of a "one-room palmetto-thatched shack" in 1881.

In 1879 Captain Benjamin Hogg and his wife Annie surprised and delighted the isolated settlers when they landed near Moore's Creek with a shipload of goods for sale. They considered the site of the old fort, about a mile and a half away, for setting up shop. Finally, in 1882, they built a two-story wooden building, with a long wooden dock stretching out into the river, about a block south of the mouth of Moore's Creek. Annie tended store while the Captain sailed his schooner between Fort Pierce, the Bahamas and Jacksonville trading green turtles and coconuts for goods with which to stock his trading post. Annie found a much-needed assistant in Peter P. Cobb, who came from Cazenovia, New York, in 1883.

When some New England investors bought the building to start an oyster cannery in the mid 1880's, Cobb stayed on to run the store. They called the place "Cantown." After a year Cobb bought the cannery out and turned it into P.P. Cobb's General Merchandise Store. He also expanded the pier into Cobb's Dock which eventually extended twelve hundred feet into the Indian River, accommodating steam ships, fish houses, an oyster house, and tracks for carting ice out and fish back. Bass Post Office in Edgartown was closed down in favor of a new post office opened in the store in 1888, with Cobb as postmaster. The new post office was named "Fort Pierce." The commercial district that grew up around the river landing and general store followed suit. Throughout the pioneer period, when the Indian River settlements were only accessible by boat, the Hoggs' trading post and Cobb's store was famous from Eau Gallie to Jupiter. Its fame extended inland, too, both among Indians and cowmen, to Fort Drum and Okeechobee. It was the eastern origin of the cattle drives, along a route now designated the Florida Cracker Trail, which ended with the sale of cattle in Fort Myers for shipment to Cuba from the port of Punta Rassa.

The arrival in 1894 of Henry Flagler's railway, on its way south from Jacksonville, opened Fort Pierce to a new wave of settlers and a new range of economic possibilities. Pineapple growing was added to fishing and cattle raising. The city grew from a village to a town and was incorporated on February 2, 1901. The Indian River Telephone Company was established in 1902, with exchanges in Jensen and Fort Pierce, salvaging parts of the one-wire telegraph line laid by the army from one end of the Indian River to the other during the Seminole wars. The Fee family opened the Bank of Fort Pierce in 1903. In 1905 Fort Pierce became the seat of St. Lucie County, population about 3000, recreated out of Brevard County, the seat of which was Titusville. The Florida East Coast Railroad had established a division point at Fort Pierce, boosting the job market. A proper county courthouse was built in 1909. The St. Lucie County Bank moved from Jensen to Fort Pierce in

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**Fort Pierce Old Post Office
Fort Pierce, St. Lucie County, Florida**

1910 in recognition of the fact that the city's progress. It had become the center of commerce for the entire county. The population of the county was over 4,000, that of the city just fewer than 1,500. Citizens had electricity by 1912. In 1914, Fort Pierce High School was built. This outstanding example of Mission style architecture for many years housed the only high school from Stuart to Melbourne. Although the pineapple farming declined, the citrus industry took its place, followed by winter vegetables. Tourism was beginning to figure in the economy. By the end of the decade, the town had six churches, several hotels, a semi-weekly newspaper, Golf and Country Club, a Rod and Gun Club and a Chamber of Commerce with a dedicated promotional program. The Fort Pierce ocean inlet was being dredged and scheduled to open in 1921. The population was over 2,000 and growing fast. Fort Pierce was ready to take advantage of the land boom of the 1920's.

The early twenties saw plans under way for the opening of an ocean inlet and for a causeway to the barrier island. Symbolic of the optimism of the time, the Sunrise Theater was built by one of the town's leading entrepreneurs, Rupert Koblegard. It was, at the time of its construction in 1923, the largest theater between Jacksonville and Miami. Fort Pierce began to call itself "The Sunrise City." The city capitalized on its growing population and expansion of revenues with a series of community improvements. Street paving and widening, sewers, canals and bridges were given high priority. A water filtration plant, incinerator, parks and wharves for the new port were planned from 1921 to 1923 more than 200 houses, the theater, a school and several businesses and office buildings were constructed at a cost of over \$1,000,000. In 1924, the population was 4,000 and expenditures on development were expected to exceed \$1,500,000. Most of the local lawyers were busy with work for real estate dealers. The largest payroll in the city was that of the Florida East Coast Railroad. In 1925, the population peaked at 8,500. A new fire station and jail, and an elegant Mediterranean style City Hall were built. The county had 67 miles of paved road, mainly the Dixie Highway and Indian River Drive. The causeway from downtown to the beach on Hutchinson Island was complete. Of luxury projects, a casino was built at on the beach, a man-made island, in the manner of those between Miami and Miami Beach, was on the drawing boards; and several grandiose subdivisions were planned by private developers.

The city's own Venetian Island and the Coral Gables-style developments like Indrio turned out to be sand castles when the real estate market collapsed, exacerbated by the south Florida hurricane of 1926. In Fort Pierce, an ingenious method was devised to put people to work for the city and paying them in scrip. Development continued at a slower pace until the Bank of Fort Pierce closed in 1927; two hurricanes, back to back, hit closer to home in 1928; and the stock market crashed in 1929. The St. Lucie County Bank was saved. The port was finished, giving Fort Pierce an important deep-water harbor between Jacksonville and Miami. Completion of the Dixie Highway kept the city on the tourist map. The county built a 167-acre airport. The Chamber of Commerce, somewhat diminished in both resources and exuberance, continued to promote the Fort Pierce that was perfected during the golden age of the twenties. In 1930, the population of the city had declined to less than 5,000, but rose to over 6,000 in 1935.

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**Fort Pierce Old Post Office
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In 1931 P. P. Cobb's store closed. The *News Tribune* wrote: "The closing of Cobb's store will mark the passing of a landmark, an institution that has been largely responsible for the development of this section. Thousands of families and individuals, both in pioneer and in later days, have been materially aided through the liberal but quiet generosity of its owner." Only two significant buildings went up during the depression: the post office, in 1935, and the Coast Guard station, in 1937. Cattle ranchers and tomato farmers found a mutually beneficial arrangement whereby a pasture was lent to tomatoes one year and grass the next. People, who could, went back to living off the land. For the average person, subsistence was his economic level, barter his medium of exchange. Nevertheless, community spirit was well—the beaches were pristine, there were always dances to attend and movies to see, and the fishing was still good.

In 1940, the city estimated its population at 8,000 in summer and 11,000 in winter. One of 17 State Farmer's Markets was built in Fort Pierce and opened in 1941, primarily to serve tomato growers. As the Second World War began, construction came to a dead stop, but the depression was banished. The Navy chose Fort Pierce for the site of an amphibious training base, and many service men became part of community after the war. With its \$380,000 citrus pre-cooling and refrigeration plant, the port of Fort Pierce was rated fifth in importance in the state. In 1946, the city's first radio station, WIRA, began broadcasting. The marina, beaches and fishing spots began to thrive again with tourists, and retirees discovered that the area was an affordable paradise. Post-war prosperity buoyed the economy throughout the fifties and sixties, although it brought with it serious new challenges to the city's viability.

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

After the Civil War, mail intended for the Indian River settlers came from Jacksonville by steamboat along the St. John's River as far as Salt Lake Landing. From there it was loaded on a trolley and pulled by mule to Titusville. James Paine, whose father had pioneered the St. Lucie settlement near Fort Capron, was commissioned to carry the mail up and down the Indian River partly by virtue of his skill with a sailboat. He would blow a conch shell as he approached a dock when he had a delivery, or stop at a signal flag for a pick-up. At the end of his route, he passed his letters on to the "barefoot mailman" in Jupiter for delivery to points south. Paine became postmaster at St. Lucie, and served for 37 years.

The first post office in what would be Fort Pierce was started in 1885 in the neighborhood of Edgartown, and was named Bass Post Office after its first postmaster, Charlie (Thomas C.) Bass. Bass's successor was a reluctant Mr. Beecher, who was ready to retire, but could not find a man to replace him. His problem was solved when the office closed after "Cantown", across the creek, a half-mile south of Edgartown, successfully applied to have a post office at their headquarters in the former Hogg's trading post. It was granted under the name "Fort Pierce", after the old fort, the site of which was a mile and a half down river. The date was January 29, 1888, and Peter P. Cobb became the first postmaster.

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**Fort Pierce Old Post Office
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Other early postmasters were Reuben Carlton, Robert Lee Brown and Miss Ella Hankins. Even after the railroad came through Fort Pierce in 1894, there were only two men on duty in the corner room at Cobb's Store. According to an article in the old *Fort Pierce News* from the early 1900's, "Residents used to gather there, mosquito brushes in hand, early in the evening after F.E.C. train No. 29 came in from Jacksonville, to get their mail and visit with each other.

Eventually the post office outgrew Cobb's store and moved across Avenue A to the south of the Fort Pierce Bank Building, which was on the corner of Second Street and Avenue A. It was the beginning of the south Florida land boom. Thomas Roden was appointed postmaster by President Harding in 1922. For the first time, Fort Pierce needed a letter carrier. Charles Croghan took the civil service exam, applied to Roden, and got the job in 1923. He delivered the mail for the next three decades, mainly on foot, and accompanied by his dog, Blackie. Rodan also hired the first black postal clerk in Fort Pierce, Chester A. Moore. Moore lasted a day and Rodan was fired. He was replaced by Wilbur C. Russell, who resigned in 1925, to be succeeded by W. S. Moe, commissioned by President Coolidge.

The demise of the land boom was not really accepted in Fort Pierce until 1927, when the Bank of Fort Pierce closed. Development slowed to a halt, and the architects who had gathered to direct it, one by one, left to seek their fortunes elsewhere. In the midst of its newly built charm, the city went back in time to live off the land. There were 15,000,000 unemployed workers in the country in 1933, when President Roosevelt proposed a New Deal, featuring radical programs like the Public Works Administration, which instituted a national public building program. Over \$700,000,000 would provide more than 1000 communities across the country with their first federal buildings. Fort Pierce became one of those communities.

In 1934, the city could announce that the government had appropriated \$72,000 for a new post office building. This because the postal receipts for each quarter of 1934 showed an increase over the corresponding quarter of 1933. Postmaster Moe's term was up and Charlie W. Peters was the candidate endorsed by local Democrats. He won the position with a salary of \$2800 per year. He would preside over the new Fort Pierce post office building, dedicated in 1935.

Throughout the 40's and 50's, and even into the 60's, the post office was still known as a community meeting place and activity center. The roof was a popular vantagepoint for viewing street events, such as the Cattleman's Parade and the Sandy Shoes festival. It could also be used as a stakeout spot for the police, should the need arise. When the United States entered World War II, spare portions of the building were first leased to recruiting offices of the armed services. Later the FBI had its quarters in the building; and last the Federal Circuit Court. The Federal Marshall maintained his office there until 1997 when he moved to a new building nearby. Several trials were held there entailing high security, and the windows in the judge's chambers were replaced with bullet-resistant glass. What was formerly the postmaster's private entrance through the lobby became the judge's emergency exit.

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The building was the main post office until 1964, when a larger facility that could accommodate the loading and unloading of trailer trucks was built several blocks west. It then became known as Station A, and finally the Downtown Station. Unofficially, and popularly, it became known as the "Old Post Office."

The Post Office Mural

The Old Post Office's simplicity—in the sense of ornamental restraint—is relieved and—in the sense of attractiveness of design—accentuated by the mural in the lobby. The mural was sponsored by the U. S. Treasury Department's Section of Fine Arts, which achieved its best results in post offices. That is where most of its fourteen Florida murals were done, between 1936 and 1942.

In 1934, Roosevelt created an emergency program called the Works Progress Administration. The WPA set out with \$5 billion to create enough jobs—quickly—to take 3,500,000 people off relief, and became the first federal agency to put artists to work. Until the 1930's, in the rare cases where the U.S. government bought art, it patronized the European market. The WPA's secondary objective was not only to employ American artists, but also to put them to work on "the best possible projects". Many American artists themselves were still under the influence of Old World styles and themes, and concern had been growing since the 1920's that there was a lack of identity in American art. The federal government's experiment as a patron of the arts in the 1930's did much to change that. It was policy that the commissioned art should embody a vision of America that would be an accurate representation of the local history or current occupations of the town where it was located. Post office murals in particular were aimed at putting people in touch with their traditions and fostering a positive outlook on the future of their community and the nation.

"The Section"

There were four major programs for employing artists during the depression: the PWAP (Public Works of Art Project, 1933-34), TRAP (Treasury Relief Art Project, 1935-39), WPA/FAP (Works Progress Administration Federal Art Program, 1935-43), and "The Section" (Treasury Department's Section of Painting and Sculpture, later called the Section of Fine Arts, 1934-43). The Section was least, of all the four, a relief agency. Nationwide competitions were held, judged by juries of experts. The Section's primary duty was to "Secure the best quality art to embellish public buildings." It reviewed newly designed Federal buildings and funded appropriate artwork through a 1% reserve of the construction cost, with approval of the Supervising Architect. Awards to individual artists ranged from \$10 to \$20 per square foot for murals. Two years were allowed for completion.

The Section of Fine Arts was devoted to sponsoring work of high quality regardless of the artist's need. The policy was controversial and the program only survived by keeping a low profile. As the nation began focusing on war, art lost its priority. In 1940, funding for federal building projects was cut, and by 1943, the

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**Fort Pierce Old Post Office
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funds left to finance existing projects were spent. The program was abolished the same year. During its ten-year history, the Section had commissioned 1,118 murals, 10,000 easel paintings and 300 sculptures. From 1933 to 1943, the New Deal as a whole had sponsored more than 10,000 artists.

Lucille Blanch

Lucille Blanch was commissioned in late 1936 to paint a mural for the newly built Fort Pierce Post Office, based on work from a previous competition. The award was \$630 for a painting to measure approximately 4 x 11 feet. It was to be done in oils on canvas, and she proposed that it be mounted on stretcher strips that could be attached to the wall. The Section staff vetoed her method of installation because it would look like a "large painting", and asked her to "proceed in the usual manner." They were also in the habit of making suggestions as to content and execution.

Lucille Blanch was born in Hawley, Minnesota, on December 13, 1895. She studied at the Minneapolis Art Institute under Goeteh and Koehler; and the Art Students' League in New York under Dumond, Robinson and Gruger. She taught at Sarah Lawrence College and at the Ringling School of Art in Sarasota. Her artwork was in the collection of the Metropolitan, Whitney, Minneapolis and University of Nebraska Museums. Blanch received a Guggenheim Fellowship in 1933. She was a member of the Woodstock, New York, art community at the time she won the commission.

She was unable to visit the town, due to teaching obligations, until after installation of the mural. She corresponded with the Chamber of Commerce in developing her subject. In a 1976 interview she recalled, "I did my research and the planning of the painting of the mural in New York City. I enjoyed falling in love with Osceola. I went to the Indian Museum and other places in the City that might have helpful information on the subject. I was deeply touched when I came upon a water color portrait of Osceola done by an artist sent by our government to paint him." She wrote to the Section on one occasion that she "became fascinated with the costumes."

Osceola Holding Informal Court With His Chiefs depicts Chief Osceola, in the costume he wore at the time of his final capture, in discussion with other Indian officers. His gun is an old powder type used by the Indians, which is in the Metropolitan Museum. His military rank is expressed by three silver plates on his chest. The feathers were from the heron, the leggings made of dyed deer skin. The white shirts were typical of the times, often heavily ruffled. To the left of the men is an informal domestic scene of two women and a child within a chickee. The women's costumes are of a later date. A puma lies at the center, and the surrounding landscape is composed entirely of native flora.

The mural was installed in August of 1938. The Chamber of Commerce wrote to the artist, "It is very colorful, typical Floridian and beautifully done throughout. Comment on your work has been most favorable

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and enthusiastic.” The local newspaper reported, “Miss Lucille Blanch...(is) in the top ranks of American contemporary artists and Fort Pierce is indeed privileged to possess so comprehensive and representative an example of her work.” She was subsequently commissioned to paint a mural for the Appalachian Post Office in Virginia, and for post offices in Hemingberg, Kentucky; Tylertown, Mississippi and Sparta, Georgia.

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

The Panama-California Exposition of 1915 in San Diego had stimulated an interest in the use of vernacular architectural elements originating from the cultures around the Mediterranean Sea. The resulting styles became popular in areas of appropriate climate and history such as California and Florida. Mediterranean Revival became the signatory style of the land boom in southeast Florida. It includes elements common to Mission, Spanish Colonial and Italian Renaissance styles, such as classical and Moorish columns; low pitched, clay tile, gabled, hipped or flat parapet roofs; stucco exteriors with terra cotta decorative features; and multi-level plans. Loggias, arcades, and courtyards are frequently found. Walls may be decorated with cartouches, tile and terra cotta inserts. Decoration is often concentrated at door and window surrounds.

The simpler and cheaper Art Moderne style gained favor with commercial builders in the depression era of the 1930's. Its influence on national public architecture caused the dressing down of the earlier Federal style into a more Spartan classicism. New Deal architects also made an effort to tailor their styles to regional themes, such as Colonial on the Atlantic coast, French Provincial on the Gulf coast and Mediterranean Revival in Florida.

The new Fort Pierce Post Office was completed in early 1936 under the PWA (Public Works Administration), created by President Roosevelt in 1933. The PWA built 75% of new schools, 65% of new courthouses and city buildings, and 35% of all new hospitals in the nation. The post office was built from plans supplied by the U.S. Treasury Department, with Louis A. Simon as Supervising Architect and Neal A. Melick as Supervising Engineer. At the same time, Simon supervised construction of the Old Perry Post Office (NR 1989) in Taylor County—very similar in design, but smaller overall. While the latter stood out in contrast to the prevailing north Florida architecture, the Fort Pierce Post Office fit in well with the Mediterranean ambience created throughout the city during the land boom of the 1920's. Louis A. Simon was also responsible for the Palm Beach Post Office (NR 1983), built in 1937, replacing Addison Mizner's design, which was adjudged too costly. Simon's building, which would have been upscale in Fort Pierce, is too plain for its neighbors. It continues to operate as Palm Beach's post office. Simon had previously collaborated with George Albee Freeman in 1934 on the Classical Revival U.S. Post Office and Federal Building in Sarasota (NR 1984).

The Mediterranean Revival style was most effectively used in Fort Pierce to set apart prominent public buildings, such as City Hall, and was therefore a fitting style for a new Federal building downtown. The Old Post Office stands as the last example of any such public building constructed in the city until the present day.

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It is also one of only two significant examples of New Deal architecture in the county. It features St. Lucie County's only WPA/Treasury Department mural.

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**Fort Pierce Old Post Office
Fort Pierce, St. Lucie County, Florida**

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**Fort Pierce Old Post Office
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Verbal Boundary Description

The legal description of the property is: "Amended plat of block 2 of re-subdivision of receiver's subdivision lot 4 (map 24/10D)." The Old Post Office is built on the southeastern portion of the above described property, occupying about two thirds of the lot. See attached site plan.

Boundary Justification

The boundary encompasses the lot historically associated with the Fort Pierce Old Post Office.

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**Fort Pierce Old Post Office
Fort Pierce, St. Lucie County, Florida**

PHOTOGRAPHIC INVENTORY

1. Old Fort Pierce Post Office, 500 Orange Avenue
2. Fort Pierce, St. Lucie County, Florida
3. Trent Greenan
4. May 10, 1999
5. Planning Department, City of Fort Pierce
6. Camera facing northeast
7. 1 of 50

Item 5 is the same for photos 1 - 50.

3. Tim Harrington
4. June 24, 1999
6. South elevation-Camera facing north
7. 2 of 50

Items 3 & 4 are the same for photos 2 - 24.

6. West elevation-Camera facing east
7. 3 of 50

6. North elevation-Camera facing south
7. 4 of 50

6. East elevation-Camera facing southwest
7. 5 of 50

6. Junction of portico and south wall-Camera facing northeast
7. 6 of 50

6. Detail of pilaster, south elevation-Camera facing north
7. 7 of 50

6. Detail of dedication plaque-Camera facing north
7. 8 of 50

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**Fort Pierce Old Post Office
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-
6. Portico, east elevation-Camera facing north
7. 9 of 50
6. Front entrance, east elevation-Camera facing north
7. 10 of 50
6. Chimney top-Camera facing northeast
7. 11 of 50
6. Detail of medallion at stanchion, north elevation-Camera facing south
7. 12 of 50
6. Box lobby-Camera facing north
7. 13 of 50
6. Box lobby-Camera facing south
7. 14 of 50
6. Detail of arch and ceiling in box lobby-Camera facing south
7. 15 of 50
6. Detail of fanlight over entry door-Camera facing south
7. 16 of 50
6. Foyer, showing partition-Camera facing southwest
7. 17 of 50
6. Detail of mail drop panel in foyer-Camera facing north
7. 18 of 50
6. Customer service lobby-Camera facing west
7. 19 of 50
6. Detail of mural-Camera facing west
7. 20 of 50
6. Detail of south bulletin case-Camera facing west
7. 21 of 50

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**Fort Pierce Old Post Office
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-
6. Customer service lobby-Camera facing east
7. 22 of 50
6. Detail of north bulletin case-Camera facing west
7. 23 of 50
3. Tim Harrington
4. March 1, 2000
6. Door at northwest corner of customer service lobby-Camera facing northwest
7. 24 of 50

Items 3 & 4 are the same for photos 24 - 50.

6. Window service back room-Camera facing east
7. 25 of 50
6. Work room-Camera facing south
7. 26 of 50
6. Work room-Camera facing north
7. 27 of 50
6. Work room-Camera facing southeast
7. 28 of 50
6. East end of vestibule, swing room left, east entry center, work room door right-Camera facing east
7. 29 of 50
6. Mailing platform-Camera facing west
7. 30 of 50
6. Ladder to hatch in boiler room roof-Camera facing north
7. 31 of 50
6. Boiler room, boiler and chimney-Camera facing southwest
7. 32 of 50

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**Fort Pierce Old Post Office
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-
6. Boiler room, platform and new door to mailing platform-Camera facing east
7. 33 of 50
6. Boiler room, access hatch to crawl space-Camera facing south
7. 34 of 50
6. Boiler room, old door to mailing platform-Camera facing north
7. 35 of 50
6. Clerk's of court's office-Camera facing northwest
7. 36 of 50
6. Stairs to probate office and jury room-Camera facing south
7. 37 of 50
6. Jury room-Camera facing northwest
7. 38 of 50
6. Jury room window detail-Camera facing west
7. 39 of 50
6. Courtroom from judge's bench-Camera facing northeast
7. 40 of 50
6. Courtroom from jury box, judge's bench left, witness box center-Camera facing northwest
7. 41 of 50
6. Hallway from lobby and judge's chambers to courtroom-Camera facing north
7. 42 of 50
6. Judge's chambers/postmaster's office-Camera facing southwest
7. 43 of 50
6. Stairs to federal marshal's offices-Camera facing north
7. 44 of 50
6. Holding cell-Camera facing south
7. 45 of 50
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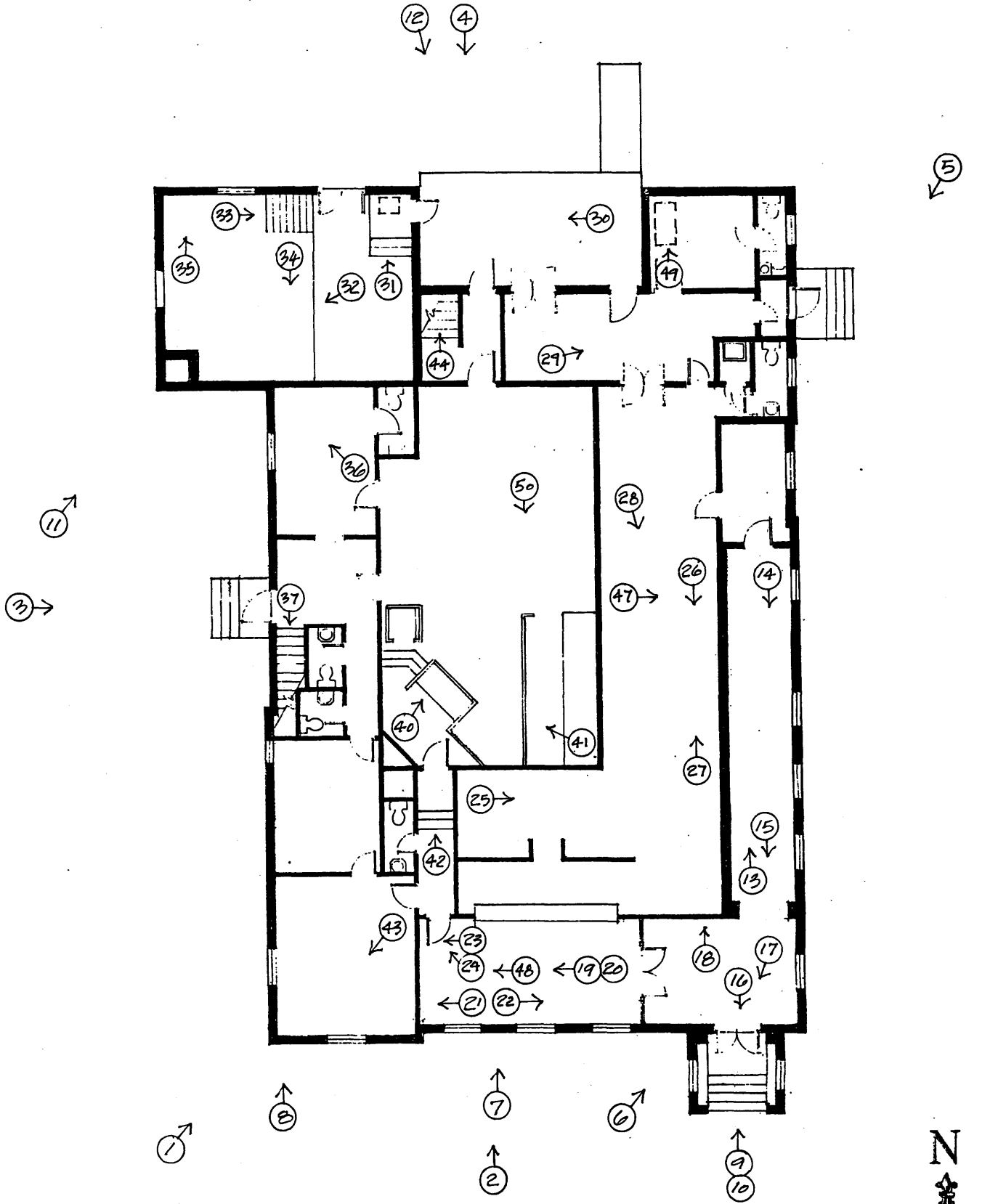
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Section number PHOTOS Page 5

**Fort Pierce Old Post Office
Fort Pierce, St. Lucie County, Florida**

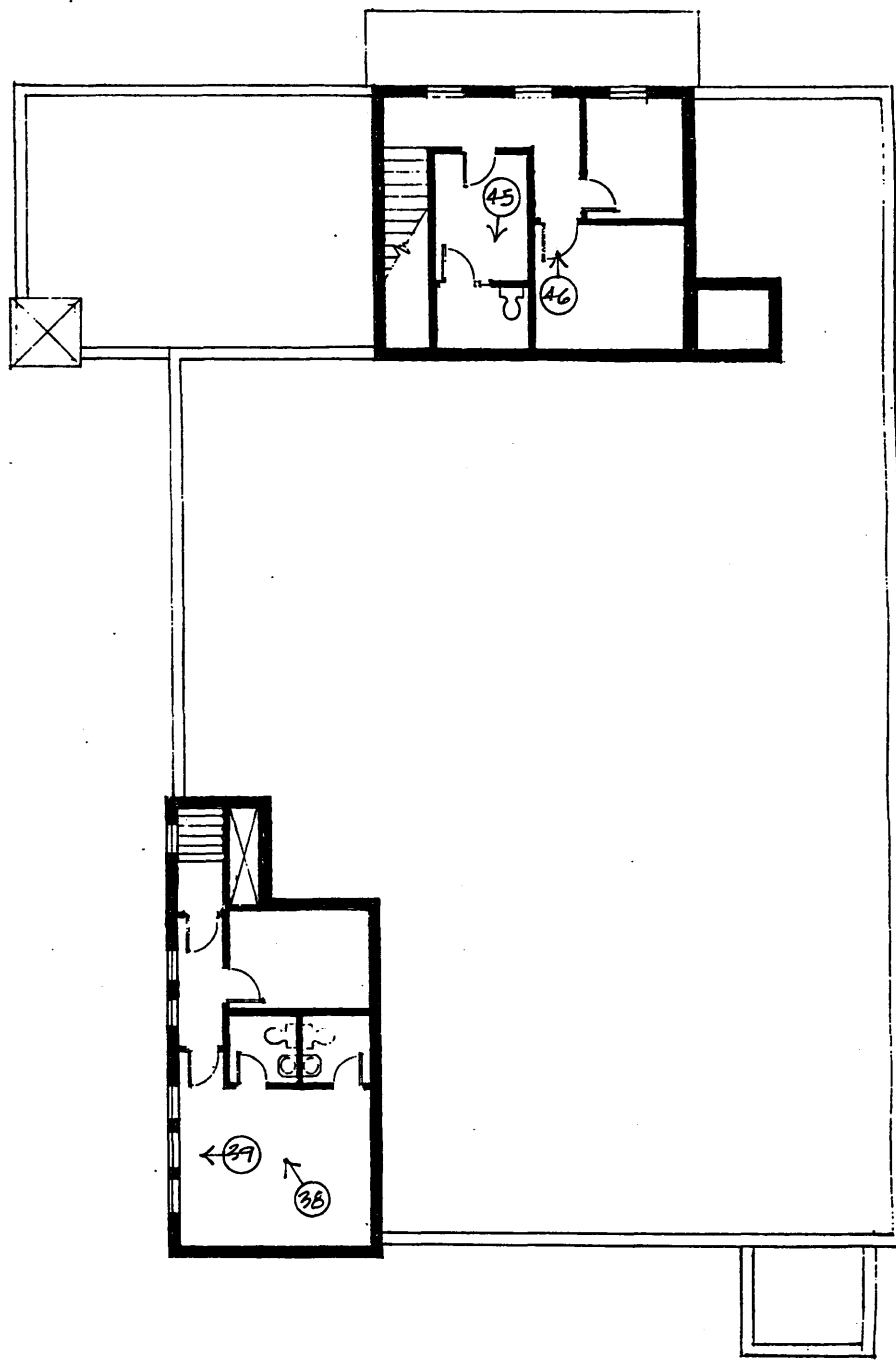
-
6. Marshall's office right, hallway along marquee wall left, from south office-Camera facing north
7. 46 of 50
6. Grillwork above post office boxes-Camera facing east
7. 47 of 50
6. Mural in customer service lobby-Camera facing west
7. 48 of 50
6. Trap door in swing room ceiling-Camera facing north
7. 49 of 50
6. Original wood floor showing through courtroom carpet-Camera facing downward
7. 50 of 50

OLD POST OFFICE, FORT PIERCE, ST. LUCIE, FLORIDA



KEY TO PHOTOGRAPHIC INVENTORY - FIRST FLOOR
Not To Scale

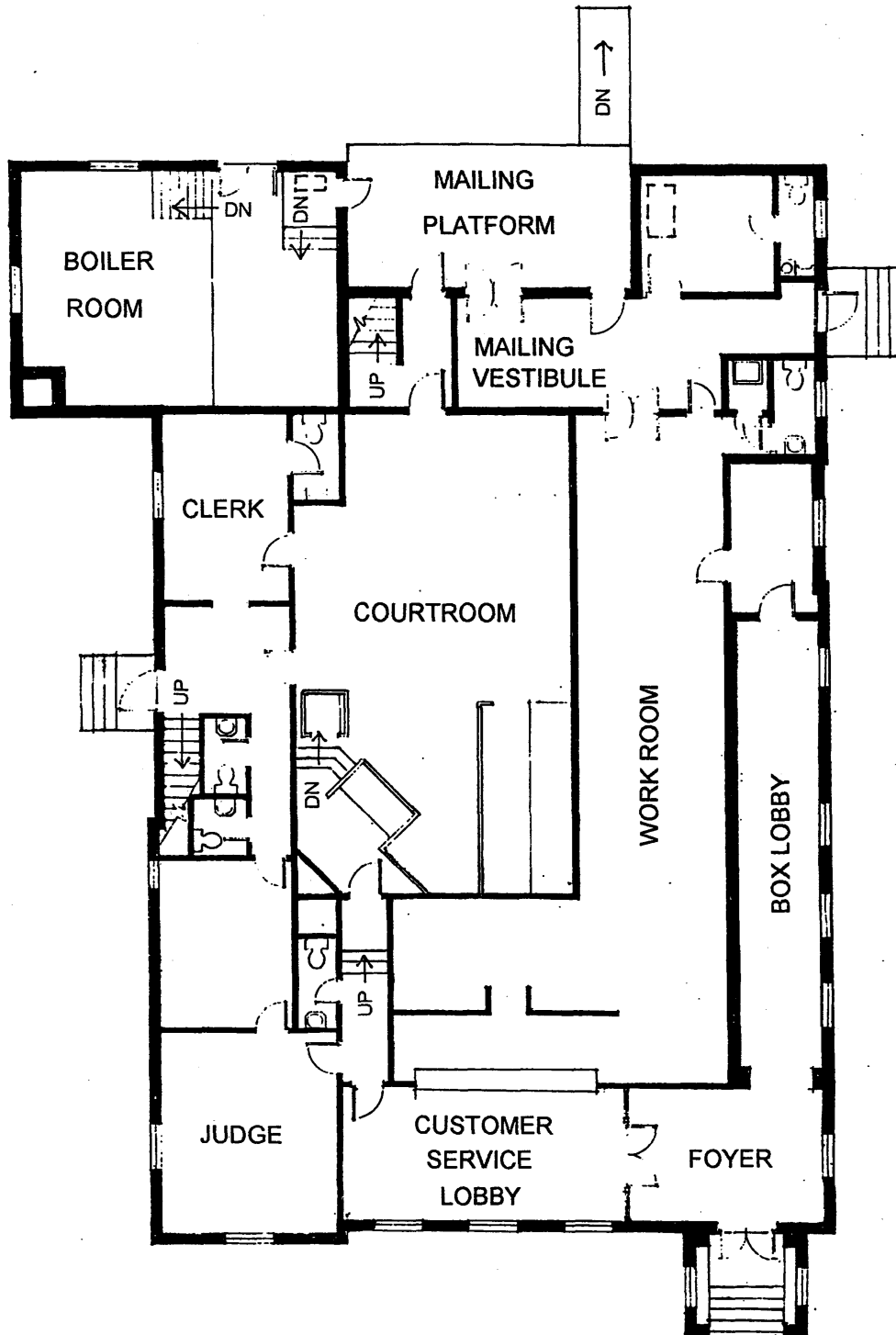
OLD POST OFFICE, FORT PIERCE, ST. LUCIE, FLORIDA



KEY TO PHOTOGRAPHIC INVENTORY - SECOND FLOOR
Not To Scale



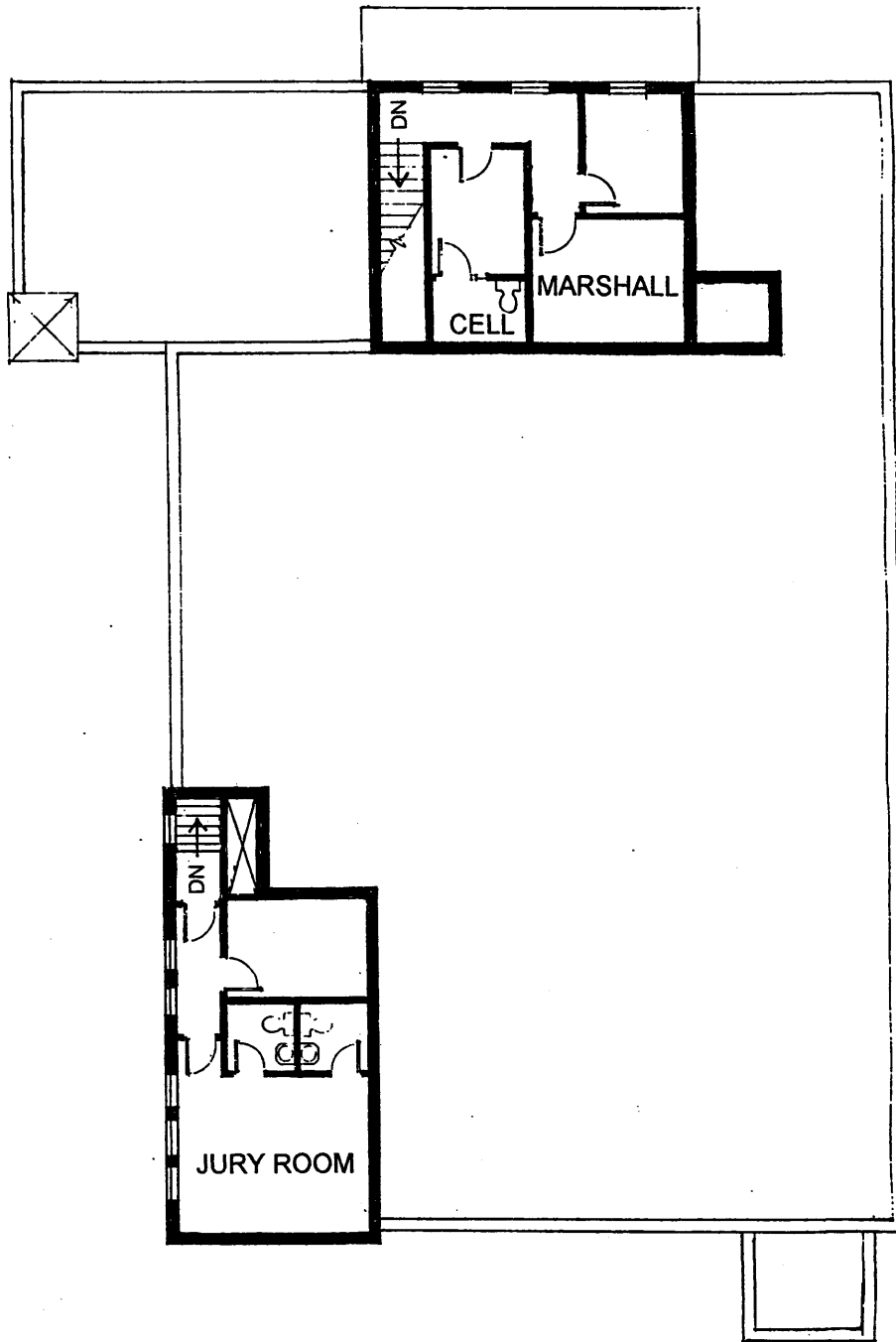
OLD POST OFFICE, FORT PIERCE, ST. LUCIE, FLORIDA



FIRST FLOOR PLAN
Not To Scale

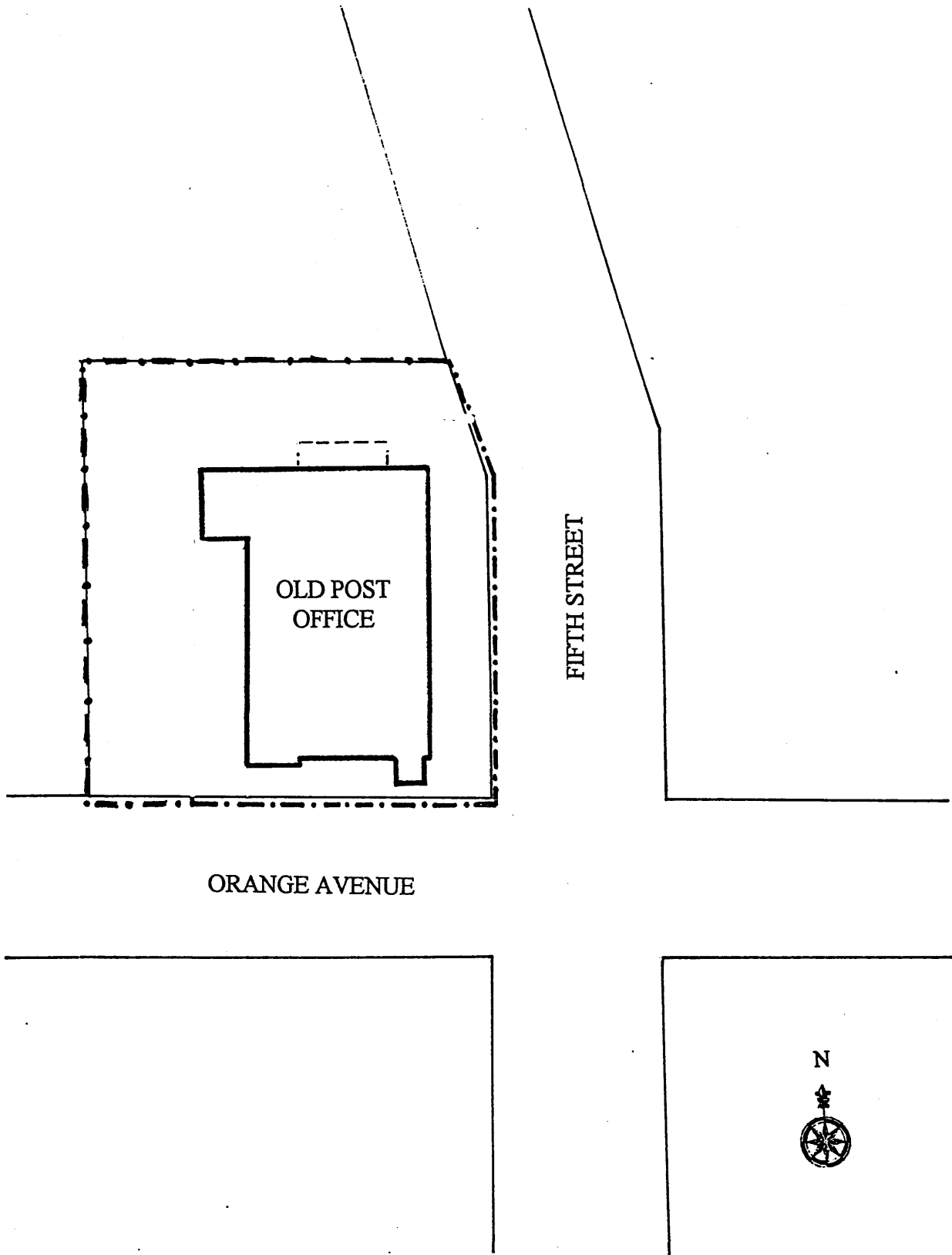


OLD POST OFFICE, FORT PIERCE, ST. LUCIE, FLORIDA

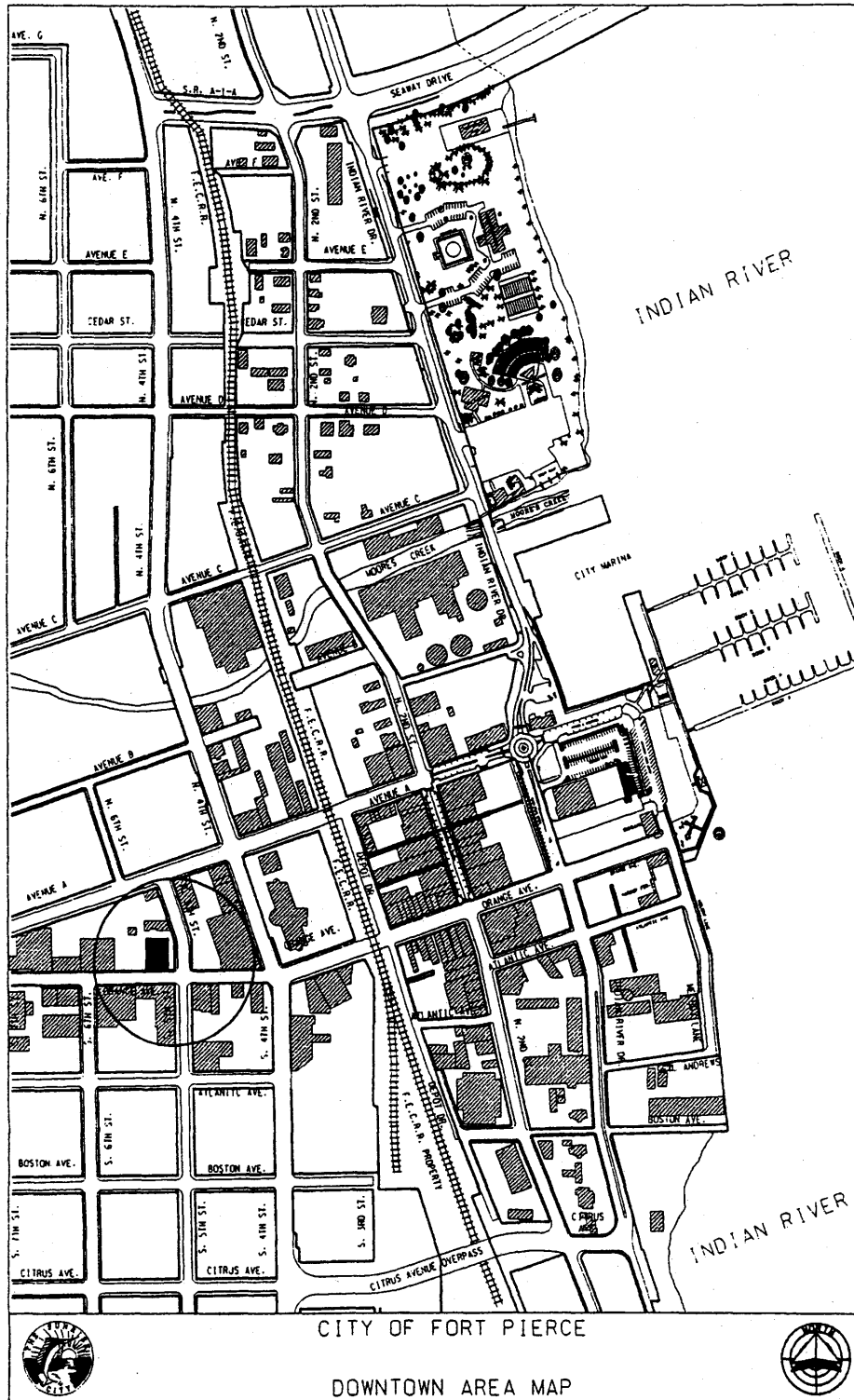


SECOND FLOOR AND ROOF PLAN
Not To Scale





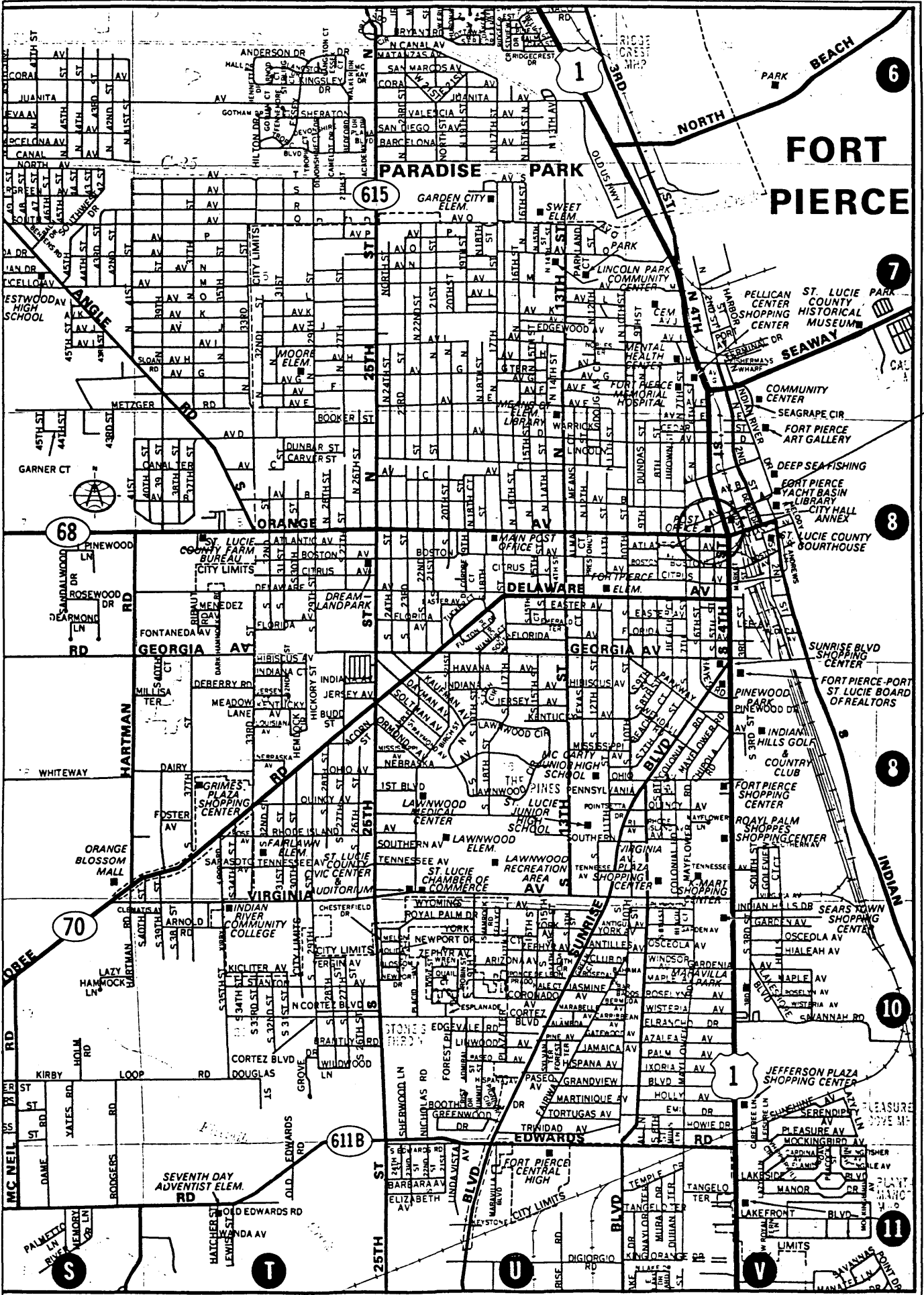
SITE PLAN
OLD POST OFFICE, Fort Pierce, St. Lucie, Florida
- · - · - = Boundary Line Approximate Scale: 1" = 500'



FILE BAR D:\DOW\POLICE\DTAREA2.DWG

DWG No. 97-04-000-006

Location of OLD POST OFFICE, Fort Pierce, St. Lucie, Florida



FORT PIERCE

PARADISE PARK

ORANGE

GEORGIA AV

DELAWARE

GEORGIA AV

VIRGINIA

DELAWARE

ST. LUCIE COUNTY HISTORICAL MUSEUM

ST. LUCIE COUNTY COURTHOUSE

DEEP SEA FISHING

FORT PIERCE YACHT BASIN

CITY HALL ANNEX

SUNRISE BLVD SHOPPING CENTER

FORT PIERCE-PORT ST. LUCIE BOARD OF REALTORS

INDIAN HILLS GOLF & COUNTRY CLUB

FORT PIERCE SHOPPING CENTER

ROYAL PALM SHOPPING CENTER

JEFFERSON PLAZA SHOPPING CENTER

OSCEOLA AV

OSCEOLA AV

OSCEOLA AV

OSCEOLA AV

OSCEOLA AV

OSCEOLA AV

OSCEOLA AV

OSCEOLA AV

OSCEOLA AV

OSCEOLA AV

68

615

611B

1

6

7

8

9

10

11

68

70

S

T

U

V

68

70

S

T

U

V

MURAL, OLD POST OFFICE LOBBY

DOWNTOWN FORT PIERCE, FLORIDA



MURAL IN POST OFFICE
"OSCEOLA HOLDING INFORMAL COURT WITH HIS CHIEFS" BY LUCILLE BLANCH, 1938