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NATIONAL REGISTER

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 Grafton Post Office

other names/site number same

2. Location

street & number 506 S. Griggs Avenue N/A not for publication
city, town Grafton N/A vicinity
state North Dakota code ND county Walsh code 099 zip code 58237

3. Classification

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

Name of related multiple property listing:
U. S. Post Offices in North Dakota, 1900-1940

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register none

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.

Bradford W. Meador 8-22-89
Signature of certifying official 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.

James E. Sperry September 15, 1989
Signature of commenting or other official Date
State Historic Preservation Officer (North Dakota)
State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register. Patrick Andrus 11/1/89
 See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register. See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

post office

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

post office

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Colonial Revival

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation poured concretewalls brick

roof slateother

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

See attached continuation sheets.

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Multiple Property: U.S. Post Offices in North Dakota, 1900-1940

GRAFTON POST OFFICE, DESCRIPTION:

The Grafton Post Office faces west on the southeast corner of Griggs Avenue S. and Fifth Street W. The post office faces a low building across Griggs which houses the Red River Regional Planning Commission offices. The post office facing Griggs Avenue is one block west of the main commercial thoroughfare, Hill Avenue. The central business district runs along Hill between Fifth and Eighth streets. The location of the Grafton Post Office is typical of the siting at the time: just off the main commercial area on a secondary commercial street. The corner lot has a large flagpole at the intersection and a grassy small lawn with low evergreen shrubs along the foundation. There are several large trees along the south side of the property in the small grassy lawn area. The location of the post office is in a light commercial area transitional to the residential area to the west.

The Grafton Post Office is in good condition. It is clean and well-kept. The major change which mars the architectural integrity of the building is new aluminum windows which are infilled with tan metal panels in the upper lights and two lights in the lower sash. Original windows were double-hung 12-over-12. These changes have occurred to side and rear loading dock windows as well as ones on the front facade. The new windows (including dormer windows) were installed in 1980, as was a new heating and air conditioning system. The rear loading dock was extended in 1961 and new swinging doors were added. The lobby is basically intact, but was changed from an L-configuration to a rectangular one by removal of the finance section (money order and claims) in 1961 and the customer service counter (formica) was remodelled and a small section of lock boxes added at the same time. The lobby woodwork has been painted. The 1986 NDCRS Site Form mentions a garage at the rear of the property. This is in error. There is no such structure on the property.

The foundation of the post office is poured concrete. Raised basement windows have been infilled with glass block. The exterior walls are red brick laid in English bond. The exterior is trimmed in limestone at the sills, watertable, front portico columns, window lintels, keystones, and panels above the first story windows. The front steps and plinths are granite. The wall surrounding the front entrance at the portico is stuccoed and is original. The double 15-light original front doors have been replaced with single lights. The deck roof is slate and original and is punctuated by low small shed-roofed dormers. Dormer windows as well as main floor windows are aluminum and were entirely replaced in 1980. The rear loading dock and extension has a flat roof and tar and gravel surface.

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The lobby woodwork has been painted and was originally a fine grained wood such as birch or maple. The lobby floor is red quarry tile. Fluorescent lights are in the lobby and workroom area behind the service windows. The skylight in the workroom is original and was repaired several years ago. All interior walls and ceilings are plaster except dry wall where the lobby configuration was changed to rectangular shape in 1961. The lobby vestibule is original, but traffic is now directed to either the lock box section or service section from the vestibule. Vestibule doors are original wood and glass.

The building footprint is basically square, less the mailing vestibule and loading dock at the rear and the front projecting portico. The building is 54 feet deep by 56 feet across the front. The building with a raised deck roof is functionally two stories tall, but appears to be one or one-and-a-half from the exterior.

Original 1931 blueprints are available only for the first (main) floor. The raised basement contains heating equipment and once held the original heating system. There were also several offices in the basement originally. The public lobby stretches across the front and was originally L-shaped with the stairs and lock boxes in a small end and door to the postmaster's office on the north side of the lobby. At the south end of the lobby was the original finance section. Behind this to the east was and is the workroom and at the very back is the mailing vestibule and larger 1961 loading dock.

The second story contains the swing room above the workroom and other offices, such as Soil Conservation Service, an insurance agency, and a community development office. Save for the addition of this second story, the shape of the roof and the roof dormers, this building is the same standardized design as was used, for example, for the post offices in Vermillion, South Dakota; Carrington, North Dakota; and Easthampton, Massachusetts.

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 N/A

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Politics/ Government
Architecture
Economics
Community Planning

Period of Significance

1932-1939

Significant Dates

1932

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

OSA/ James A. Wetmore, Acting Supervising Architect

b: West Englewood Const. & Supply Co, Chicago

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

See attached continuation sheets.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet.

See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- 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: State Historical Society of N.D., Bismarck

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property less than one acre

UTM References

A

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

C

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B

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Zone Easting Northing

D

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See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

Lots 19, 20, 21, 22, 23, & 24, Block 24, Plat of Grafton (Original Townsite), ND.

N/A See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes all city lots which have been historically associated with the property.

N/A See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Dr. Norene Roberts, President
organization Historical Research, Inc. date July, 1989
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city or town Minneapolis state MN zip code 55445

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The Grafton Post Office is significant under Criteria A and C on a state and local level as one of a small group of 20 extant federally-built post offices in North Dakota constructed between 1900-1940. Under Criterion A, this post office is associated with various federal policies in post office funding, design, and method of construction in the early 20th century. Under Criterion C, this facility shares the distinctive characteristics of federally-funded post offices as a property type built in North Dakota before the Second World War. The major areas of significance are Politics/Government, Architecture, Economics, and Community Planning. The 1932 Grafton Post Office is the first of nine post offices in North Dakota built between 1932-1940. It is somewhat larger than the other eight later ones built from standard plans issued by the Treasury Department. The facility is 54 x 56 feet, but with useable space in the raised basement and second story. It is architecturally significant as one of only three North Dakota examples of the Colonial Revival style in post office design. The other two are located at Pembina and Carrington. The Grafton Post Office building is an exact duplicate of one built the year before in Spring Valley, Illinois, by the same Chicago construction contractor. As the only federal building in Grafton the post office is significant locally under Politics/ Government because it occasioned unusual interest on the part of local civic groups who tried to influence unsuccessfully its design.

In most respects, the Grafton Post Office building history followed the standard policy in the Treasury Department on post office construction. However, there was unusual local support and interest in Grafton for the new facility. Representative O. Burtness of North Dakota announced in April, 1930, that \$80-85,000 was slated for a new post office building in Grafton and that this money was part of a 28 million dollar budget submitted to Congress in the Spring of 1930 by President Hoover. All public buildings in 1930 were to be erected under a program outlined in 1927 calling for no less than 200 million dollars to be spent on public buildings over a five year period (Walsh County Record (hereafter WCR), April 24, 1930, p. 1). Apparently, the Grafton Civic Club, the American Legion, and the Mayor had been in touch with the two North Dakota Senators, Frazier and Nye, as well as their Congressional Representative, O. Burtness, some time before and had been lobbying for a new postal facility. Some seven months before the announcement that Grafton was to receive a new post office, the City Council offered to donate six city-owned lots at the corner of Fifth and Griggs for the new building. In a City Council resolution, it was noted that this donation by the city

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would save a year in construction time for the new facility (WCR, Oct. 10, 1929, p. 1).

The generous gift of the city fathers was not immediately accepted. There was a small matter of some 115 feet at the back of the proffered lots which was not owned by the city, and the Post Office Department deemed the gift too small. The city then tried to buy the whole half block at the corner of 5th and Griggs, but the federal inspectors then decided that gift would be too large. In October, 1930, over a year later, the Post Office Department was looking at two sites offered by private parties for a price. Finally, in November, 1931, in a special session of the City Council, it was decided to buy the west 115 feet of lots 19-24 in Block 24, at the rear of the Fifth and Griggs location. This purchase had been recommended by the local Post Office Committee made up of the Mayor and the Grafton Civic Club. Consequently, the Postal Service officially accepted the Grafton City Council's donation of the 5th and Griggs site in late January, 1931, some 15 months after the city first made the offer (WCR, Oct. 30, 1930; Nov. 20, 1930; Jan. 22, 1931).

For a time, things went smoothly and followed the usual policy of post office construction. Design plans were ready by the end of December, 1931 and Postal officials put out a request for bids. It was found that no local general contractors intended to bid (WCR, Dec. 24, 1931). In late January, the low bid of the West Englewood Construction and Supply Company of Chicago was chosen for a price of \$44,646 out of a national field of 45 bidders from around the country. Because the land was donated, it was noted that the low bid would leave the government with a substantial balance left over from the original appropriation of \$85,000 (WCR, January 21, 1932). It was learned in early March that the Chicago contractor had just completed an identical building in Spring Valley, Illinois (WCR, March 3, 1932).

At this point, the Grafton City Council decided that the plans for the new post office were not satisfactory, because the building could be constructed for under \$50,000, but the appropriation had been \$80,000. The city council resolved that a larger and better building should be constructed to cost closer to the original Congressional appropriation (WCR, March 10, 1932). Two weeks later, the Government signed the contract with West Englewood to build the new facility, but the deed transfer to the property was held up because the City Council inserted a provision by which the Government would pay for the special improvement

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taxes outstanding against the property. The U.S. attorney initially refused holding that the Government was immune from all taxes, but finally approved the deed and passed it on to the Treasury Department. It was unclear if the Government would later contend that it did not have to pay taxes, so while this issue was pending, the City Council decided that it would waive the taxes if need be, but would have Congressman O. Burtness later introduce a bill in Congress reimbursing the city for the improvements it would have to pay. In addition the Council asked reassurance from the construction company that it would use local labor as much as possible. Company officials reassured the Council that it would use some local subcontractors and that all common labor would be recruited locally (WCR, March 24, 1932).

By May 26, 1932, ground was broken for the new facility, and work progressed until late summer when construction was temporarily halted because the Government did not like the color of the stone trim for the front facade and had to look for a new source in St. Cloud, Minnesota. Work resumed in early October after the stone arrived (WCR, May 26, 1932; Sept. 1, 1932; October 6, 1932).

Defeated by the Treasury Department and Post Office on their request for a larger and more expensive building, the local group, nonetheless, continued to give the new structure intense scrutiny. In July, 1932, a joint committee of the City Council, the American Legion, and the Grafton Civic Club, made several recommendations for seven changes to the building's design which they proposed to the construction supervisor and sent to the supervising architect's office in Washington, D.C. After waiting two months without a word from Washington, they enlisted the help of Senators Nye and Frazier and Congressman O. Burtness. The two major changes requested was to change the front entrance surround from wood and stucco, as called for in the standard plans, to Bedford stone, and to change the wood wainscot in the lobby to marble. Other changes were minor (WCR, Sept. 1, 1932). The local joint committee soon learned that the Government does not change its mind easily: officials in Washington stonewalled (WCR, October 20, 1932, p. 1). In January, 1933, the Government finally asked the general contractor, West Englewood, to cost out the two major requested changes, but the stucco has already been applied around the front entrance and would have to be removed. The local group was sanguine that the changes would be made (WCR, January 12, 1933, p. 1). However, no further mention was made in the newspaper about the requested alterations to the standardized plan. Today the Grafton Post

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Office sports both wood wainscot in the lobby and stucco around the front door. Thus, even vigorous local efforts and the assistance of the Congressional delegation were not enough to alter the standardized plans of the Post Office and Treasury Departments during these years. The building opened June 15, 1933, without a single change requested by the local group (WCR, June 15, 1933, p. 1).

The Grafton Post Office is the only federal building in the city. Of the governmental buildings in the central business district, the post office building is the oldest remaining public structure, having been built in 1932, and the only one in federal Colonial Revival design. The Walsh County Courthouse, built in 1940 with W. P.A. monies from designs by Theodore B. Wells of Grand Forks, is an excellent example of the Moderne Style. Built as a Depression-era public relief project, it shares this in common with Central School (1935, P.W.A.); Chase School (1939, W.P.A.); the Grafton City Hall (1939, W.P.A.); and the Walsh County Garage (circa 1939, W.P.A.). The Grafton Carnegie Library building, designed in Neo Classical style by Joseph Bell DeRemer of Grand Forks, it was not a public building at the turn-of-the-century when constructed (Susan Granger and Scott Kelly, "The Grafton Historic Sites Inventory Project, North Dakota Cultural Resources Survey, 1986-87," State Historical Society of North Dakota, Bismarck.

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SECTION 9 GRAFTON, BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Granger, Susan, Scott Kelly. "The Grafton Historic Sites Inventory Project, North Dakota Cultural Resources Survey, Final Report." Morris, Minnesota: Gemini Research, April, 1987. On file: State Historical Society of North Dakota, MS#004282.

- The Walsh County Record, Oct. 10, 1929.
- The Walsh County Record, April 24, 1930.
- The Walsh County Record, Oct. 30, 1930.
- The Walsh County Record, Nov. 20, 1930.
- The Walsh County Record, Jan. 22, 1931.
- The Walsh County Record, Dec. 24, 1931.
- The Walsh County Record, January 21, 1932.
- The Walsh County Record, March 3, 1932.
- The Walsh County Record, March 10, 1932.
- The Walsh County Record, March 24, 1932.
- The Walsh County Record, Sept. 1, 1932.
- The Walsh County Record, October 20, 1932.
- The Walsh County Record, January 12, 1933.
- The Walsh County Record, June 15, 1933.