

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 Toppenish Main Post Office

other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number 14 Jefferson Avenue

N/A not for publication

city, town Toppenish

N/A vicinity

state Washington code WA county Yakima

code 077

zip code 98948

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

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

Name of related multiple property listing:

Historic U.S. Post Offices In Washington, 1893 - 1941

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

[Signature] 1-11-90
Signature of certifying official Date

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

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

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

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register.

See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register. See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain:)

[Signature] 8/7/91

Signature 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 Toppenish Main Post Office is a one-story building which rests upon a raised basement platform. Its structure consists of reinforced concrete footings, basement, and floor slabs, steel framing, and brick walls. The exterior, including the basement, is faced with red brick in common bond. The front elevation is flat, symmetrical, and Classically-proportioned. Five flat-arched bays divide the front facade--two window bays flanking a centered entry bay. Facade detailing is nominal. The roof over the front portion of the building is hipped and clad with copper and the rear is flat built-up tar composition.

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The front facade (south-facing Jefferson) is horizontal in orientation and symmetrically-arranged. Five bays divide the facade--a centered entry bay with two window bays on each side. The centered entry bay contains two aluminum-framed glass doors (originals replaced). Set above is a single-light transom window framed with aluminum. The entry bay is framed by flat wooden pilasters which support a simple wooden entablature. The entry is approached by seven granite steps and a granite landing which are flanked by wrought-iron balusters with integrated lamp standards.

Two window bays flank each side of the entry. Framed with flat sandstone sills and a flat voussoired brick arch, the sash is double-hung wood with twelve-over-eight-lights. Raised brass letters "UNITED STATES POST OFFICE" are affixed to the frieze and centered over the entry. The copper-clad hipped roof slopes back from the slightly projecting cornice.

The east facade contains four window bays--two in the front portion and two in the rear. They are detailed identically to those of the front facade. Only slight articulation delineates the front and rear portions: the front projects one brick-width from the rear and is covered by the hipped roof while the rear is covered by the flat roof. The facade is faced entirely in red brick.

See continuation sheet

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With a couple of minor exceptions, the west and east facades are identical. In the west facade, one of the window bays have been filled with brick (original construction) to form a niche (second bay from front). One small vertically-oriented window, consisting of fixed, four-light, wooden sash, is set within the niche.

The rear facade is faced with red brick and consists of a centered, rearward projecting loading platform with two window bays flanking either side. The windows are detailed identically to those of the south facade. A square brick chimney, which projects several feet above the building, is at the juncture of the loading platform and main building (eastern corner). The platform is concrete and enclosed on the north and east sides by red brick walls. The west side of the platform contains the open loading bay and a single pedestrian door. A flat metal roof with projecting marquee covers the platform.

8. Statement of Significance

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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

1938-1941

Significant Dates

Site acq.-1937
Const.-1938

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

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

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

The Toppenish Main Post Office is significant on the local level for its art and its legacy of the federal public works programs of the Depression era. The Toppenish MPO is an unaltered example of a small town single-purpose post office. The building and mural within symbolize the assistance to small communities by the federal government, through its public buildings and arts programs, during a period of national economic emergency. It also represents the efforts of local citizens in obtaining their first and only federal building. The mural, through its visual presentation, relates the history of the locality and represents a significant period and type of American artistic expression.

ARCHITECTURE

The design is standard and, with minor variations in trim detailing, is typical of numerous other small town post offices constructed in the state and throughout the Northwest during the mid- to late-1930s. The building is the first and only federally-constructed post office in Toppenish and is patterned after one of several standardized plans developed by the Department of the Treasury to allow more rapid and efficient construction of its buildings. Although the building does not constitute a unique architectural entity in the body of state-wide architecture, it is the only building of this particular style in Toppenish. The Toppenish 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. Aside from the Classically-flavored entry bay (which, with the building's low hipped roof, suggests a Colonial influence), the building is devoid of ornamentation. The building is locally significant under Criterion C.

See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

1. The Toppenish Review; various articles 1935 - 1940.
2. Original Building Plans; 1939.
3. Construction Progress Photographs; 27 September 1937 - 19 April 1938.

Previous documentation on file (NPS): N/A

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository:

USPS Facilities Service Center
San Bruno, CA 94099

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property 0.37

UTM References

A 110 706800 5139100
Zone Easting Northing

B _____
Zone Easting Northing

C _____

D _____

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

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

Lots 13, 14, 15, 16, 17 & 18, Block 3, Gilbert's Addition to Toppenish. The site is on the northeast corner of S. Alder Street and Jefferson Street. Beginning at the southwest corner, thence NE160', SE100', SW160', NW100' 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 March 1989
street & number West 705 First Avenue telephone (509) 458-6219
city or town Spokane state WA zip code 99204

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The building is locally significant under Criterion A as a symbol of the federal government's aid to small communities during the Depression era through its massive public works programs. It also symbolizes the federal presence and is a legacy of the successful lobbying of local citizens.

Congressman Knute Hill made the announcement in June 1936 that Toppenish was on the list of cities to receive a new federally-constructed post office. Other Washington cities were Clarkston, Kennewick, Ritzville, and Dayton. (As it turned out, only Toppenish and Clarkston got buildings.) The dream of local Toppenish boosters of getting a building from Uncle Sam would soon become reality. With only minimal controversy over site acquisition, the project progressed rapidly. When the building was dedicated on April 20, 1938, businesses closed in deference to the occasion and various civic groups took part in the ceremony. Water J. Robinson, State Director of Agriculture, presented the dedicatory address (Governor Clarence D. Martin, who had been invited, was unable to attend).

ART

The lobby contains a mural on the west end over the Postmaster's door. Entitled "Local Theme," the mural is oil on canvas. The mural depicts various activities which characterize the area's development. They include cattlemen branding a steer, Indian hunters, Whites trading horses with the Indians, and a farm. The artist, Andrew McDuffie Vincent, completed the mural in 1940. Vincent was born in Hutchinson, Kansas in 1898 and studied at the Art Institute of Chicago. He exhibited through the West and Midwest and was a professor at the University of Oregon. He also completed a post office mural in Salem, Oregon. Vincent is listed in Who Was Who in American Art.

The Toppenish MPO was one of eighteen in the state of Washington to receive a mural under the auspices of the Federal Works Agency Section of Fine Arts. Thus, it is locally significant under Criterion A for its association with the New Deal arts programs. The building is also sig-

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nificant under Criterion C in that the mural, as an integral part, represents a significant type, period, and style of artistic expression.

LOCAL CONTEXT

Toppenish, the "Capital of the Yakima Indian Nation," is in central Washington's Yakima County. The irrigated farmlands of the Yakima River provide the basis for the local and county-wide economy. Fruits, grapes and wine, hops, hay, and vegetables are major crops. Toppenish is also home to the Yakima Indian Agency and Cultural Center. Toppenish's estimated 1987 population was 6,550.

In 1883-84 the Northern Pacific Railroad in its westward drive spanned the Yakima Valley. Roughly midway across the railroad erected a section house, telegraph office, and water tank. This place was named Toppenish (an Indian word meaning "sloping downward and spreading"). The surrounding land, all within the boundaries of the Yakima Indian Reservation, was tribally owned. Five Indian families moved to and "squatted" upon the land surrounding the Toppenish Station when it was rumored that tribal land was to be allotted to individual members of the tribe. Among the five families were N. H. and Josephine Lillie; in 1886 they built a house and the next year began a small store which also served as the first Toppenish post office, with Mrs. Lillie as postmaster.

Allotment of the tribal land took place in 1887. An influx of ranchers-settlers followed who leased the land, attracted to the settlement by the fertility of the land when irrigated and its location as a shipping point. The first government irrigation canal was constructed in 1896-97; alfalfa was the major crop. Mr. and Mrs. W. L. Shearer came to Toppenish in 1896; Mr. Shearer served as Station Agent and Mrs. Shearer as postmaster. The post office was located in the depot. By 1900 Toppenish also had a church/school building, a trading post, and a few scattered dwellings. In 1901 the first school building was built. In 1903 the Washington Nursery Company opened in Toppenish; for many years it provided the town with its major payroll. Toppenish was the

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principal trading point on the reservation and was hailed as a center for shipping.

In 1905 Josephine Lillie platted part of her allotment into lots and for the first time purchase of private land in the settlement was possible. Construction of businesses and residences boomed. By 1907 Toppenish had a population of approximately 800. On April 29, 1907 Toppenish was incorporated as a Fourth Class Municipality; Leonard Talbot was elected as the first mayor. In 1910 the town had ten saloons and a population of 1,598. By 1920 the population had doubled, to 3,120. While the population declined to 2,774 in 1930, until the about the mid-1950s Toppenish was the second largest city in Yakima County. In 1936 the Utah-Idaho Sugar Company reopened in Toppenish and a food caning plant was started. Toppenish's population increased to 3,621 in 1940 and to 5,265 in 1950. It has increased slowly but steadily ever since, to a 1980 population of 6,517.

The Toppenish Post Office is on the northeast corner of Jefferson Avenue and Alder Street (Toppenish streets are platted in a NE/SW direction; the site would actually be on the east corner). A city park occupies the triangular block south of the Post Office. Adjacent to the east is a two-story brick commercial building (occupied by J.C. Penney at the time of Post Office construction). The building faces Toppenish Avenue, the city's primary downtown business street. Adjacent to the north of the Post Office is a one-story brick office building, and to its north a one-story concrete commercial building (Art Deco). Across Alder Street to the east is a commercial block with one- and two-story brick, frame, and stucco buildings. Kitty-cornered from the Post Office, on the southwest corner of the intersection, are single-family residences (one-story, cast concrete block).

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

"Toppenish To Have \$70,000 PO" reported the Toppenish Review on June 26th, 1936. Dr. William T. Davis, the postmaster, stated that while nothing was definite yet, several sites had been suggested and he expected work to begin that year under the WPA. Congressman Knute Hill was quoted

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as saying new buildings at Clarkston, Kennewick, Ritzville, Dayton, and Toppenish were requested.

In July the Review reported that the U&I Sugar Company was planning a new factory in Toppenish (July 3rd article) and that work was starting on a \$7,000 city pool WPA project, for which the city needed to raise \$900 (July 24th article). On the 31st the paper reported that there was no decision yet in the controversy over the post office site; federal inspector J. E. Fitzgerald was quoted as stating "We want to put the new building where it will be of the greatest possible benefit to the largest number of people." That Fall construction of the sugar plant began and the WPA approved a street light project, agreeing to pay \$5,500 of the \$12,500 total cost. On November 6th it was announced that the post office would be built across from the park; \$4,250 would be paid for six lots owned by W. A. Bell of Yakima.

The news of January 8, 1937 was that post office business in Toppenish in 1936 totalled \$19,472.93, \$705.12 more than in 1935. In February, Treasury Department engineer E. J. Wiener completed a survey of the post office site. That spring 2,000 people attended a celebration for the new street lights ("finest thing that has happened in our town in years") and work began on a new cannery. According to the May 14th issue of the Review, Postmaster Davis received the following request from Postmaster Floyd Brown of Puyallup: "could you let me know where I could obtain six live jackrabbits and how much they would be worth crated and laid down in the express office." Mr. Davis could only wonder "just how much would a live jackrabbit be worth and crated down anywhere." On June 4th the paper reported that construction of a new movie theatre on East Toppenish Avenue would begin on July 1st. On June 25th it was reported that bids for the post office would be opened on August 10th. Postmaster Davis announced on August 13th that the West Coast Construction Company of Seattle, which also had post office contracts in Sunnyside and Colville, had submitted the low bid of \$40,355. The total allocation for the post office was \$75,000. On September 3rd it was reported that the contract was awarded and construction would start immediately. A week later it was reported that the site had been bought from W. A. Bell and the H. M. Gilbert Company (September 10th article).

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Excavation work began on September 16th. In October it was reported that the building crew expected to be able to pour footings for the post office and many dignitaries planned to attend the opening of the new U&I sugar plant (articles of October 8th and 22nd). On November 5th a sketch of the post office was published along with the news that the structural steel work was finished and brick work would begin. An article of November 26th reported that work was ahead of schedule and would be completed by April 15th. By early December brick work was completed and the roof started (December 10th article).

"'37 PO Receipts Smash Records" reported the Review on January 7th, 1938; a net gain of \$11,000 made 1937 the best year ever for the Toppenish post office. An article of February 11th reported that Senator Knute Hill had indicated that the post office might get a \$700 wall mural. Before long the Chamber of Commerce was planning a dedication program for April 29th (March 18th article). Dedication plans were revealed on April 8th: the Toppenish Masonic Order was in charge of the cornerstone laying and the Boy Scouts, school band and Mayor would also participate. On April 22nd it was reported that Governor Martin would speak at the cornerstone ceremony and that 3,000 people had attended the recent 4th Annual Fine Arts Festival. On April 29th the paper detailed the plans for the ceremony that day and noted that the state director of agriculture would take the place of the governor. All "business houses" in town were expected to close for an hour for the ceremony. The completed building would be open to the public after the ceremony, though it would not be open to public use since the government had not yet sent the public mail boxes.

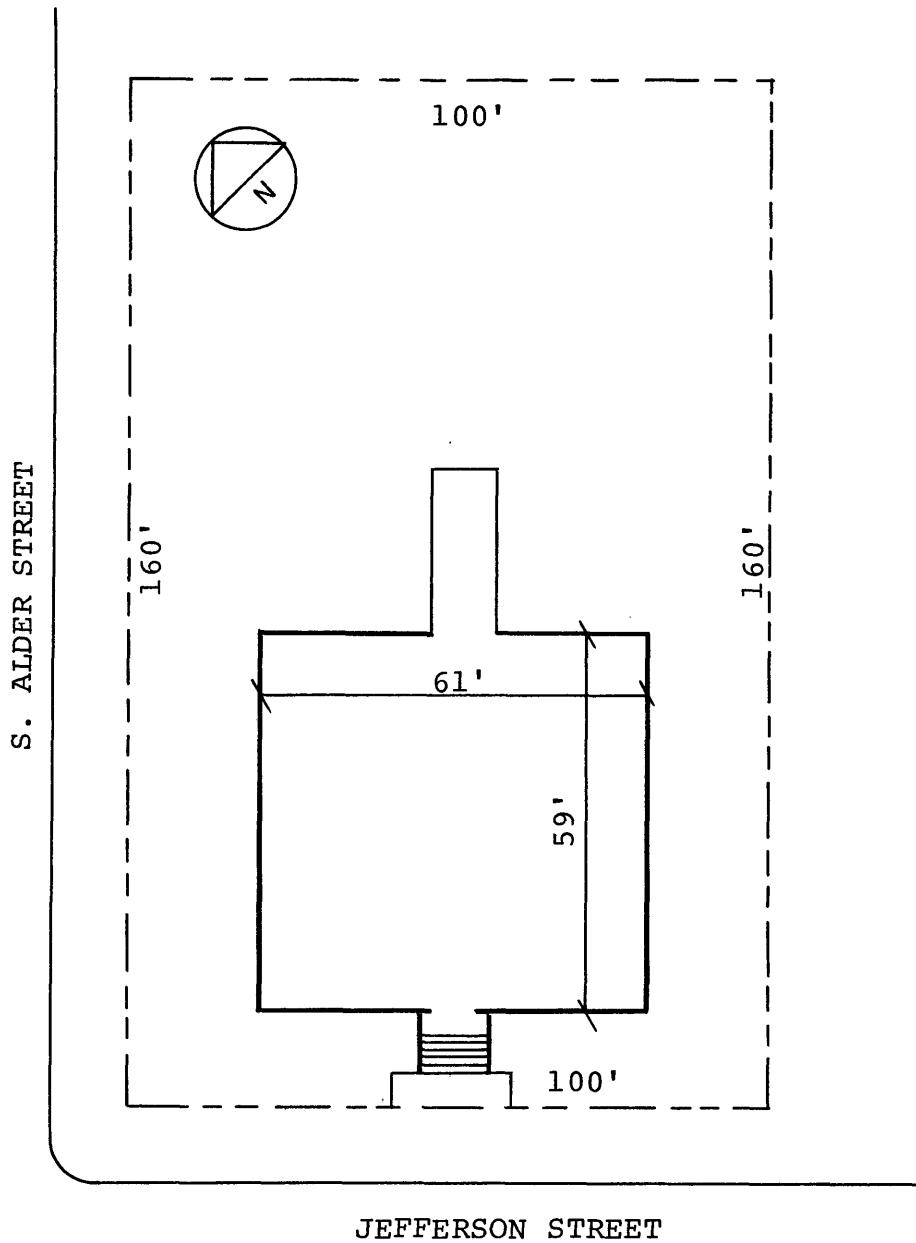
On August 19th the Review reported that Washington had authorized the move into the new post office and it would open on August 23rd. A brief article of August 26th reported that the new post office was open to the public.

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

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

Photo No. 1 (negative #20A)

6. View to east

Photo No. 2 (negative #19A)

6. View to northeast

Photo No. 3 (negative #15A)

6. View to north

Photo No. 4 (negative #22A)

6. Lobby mural