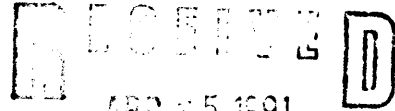


657

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service



National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

NATIONAL REGISTER

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Vancouver Main Post Office  
other names/site number Vancouver Downtown Station

2. Location

street & number 1211 Daniels N/A not for publication  
city, town Vancouver N/A vicinity  
state Washington code WA county Clark code 011 zip code 98660

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
		Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>    </u>	<u>    </u> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u>    </u>	<u>    </u> structures
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u>    </u>	<u>    </u> objects
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing:  
Historic U.S. Post Offices In Washington, 1893 - 1941  
Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

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

[Signature] 1-11-90  
Signature of certifying official Date  
U.S. 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. [Signature] 5/30/91  
 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] 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)Neo-Classical

---

---

---

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Brick

---

walls Brick

---

---

roof Tar composition

---

other Sandstone

---

---

---

**Describe present and historic physical appearance.**

The Vancouver Downtown Station is a two-story buff brick building on a raised basement. Resting on concrete footings, the basement walls are brick. Brick, supported by structural steel framing, also comprises the above-grade walls. The symmetrical facade consists of a seven-bay, two-story central salient flanked by single-bay, one-story wings. Vertical emphasis to the first story and focus on the entry is provided by a projecting sandstone portico which is supported by eight smooth sandstone columns with Greek Corinthian capitals. A slightly projecting molded cornice extends from the portico along the facade to terminate the wings. Flat sandstone pilasters, corresponding to the columns, divide the second floor into seven bays (six window bays and a centered decorative panel). A balustraded parapet terminates the facade. The roof is flat built-up tar composition.

**PHYSICAL APPEARANCE**

The front facade (west, facing Daniels Street) consists of the main two-story central salient and one-story flanking wings. The first story is emphasized by its increased height relative to the second story and a colonnaded portico which extends across the central section. The sandstone portico consists of a simple entablature supported by eight smooth columns. Greek Corinthian capitals (early form) crown the columns which rest on a sandstone platform that is extended from the raised sandstone-faced basement wall. The entablature frieze is unadorned except for "United States Post Office" in raised bronze letters. Marking the juncture of the frieze and the projecting cornice is a dentil band, all of which extend to the main facade and terminate the single-story wings.

The main facade is divided into seven bays (entry flanked by three windows) which are separated by flat sandstone pilasters. The entry consists of double aluminum-framed glass doors (originals replaced) with access from the street provided by five granite steps. Above a wooden door head,

 See continuation sheet

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1 VANCOUVER DOWNTOWN STATION

---

the elongated bay opening contains a wood sash fanlight set within a stilted arch. (The lower section contains five vertical lights--four terminate at the springing line of the arch and the center light extends to become the semi-circular center of the eight-light fan window.) The entry architrave is formed by surrounds and an intrados of brick headers. Framing the headers are flat brick pilasters, simple sandstone springers, and a semi-circular brick arch. Projecting from the brick voussoir arch is a scrolled keystone of carved sandstone.

The window bays flanking the entry are framed with flat sandstone sills and flat voussoired brick arches. The sash is double-hung wood with eight-over-eight lights. Over the bays and framed with brick headers are sandstone panels decorated with a bas-relief festoon.

The wings flanking the central section are slightly recessed and are identical to each other. Each contains a single window bay, identical in size and configuration to the bays of the central section. The facade detailing is identical to the main facade except that the decorative sandstone panels above the window bays have been omitted and replaced by a diamond pattern of brick.

The second story is divided into seven bays which correspond to those of the first floor. Flat sandstone pilasters divide the window bays and support a sandstone entablature which is identical to that of the portico. The windows, which are eight-over-eight-light, double-hung, wood sash (smaller than first floor windows) framed by a flat brick arch, flank a sandstone bas-relief panel in the center bay. This panel consists of a Roman shield and ax motif. Terminating the facade is a parapet with seven balustraded sections. The baluster, columns, and rails are sandstone with sandstone-framed brick pedestals. Sandstone is also used for the coping atop the brick corners of the parapet.

The side facades are identical to each other except for the arrangement of the windows. The materials and detailing are an extension of the front facades of the wings. The facade arrangement consists of the horizontal one-story wing and the vertical second story of the central section. In the north facade there are five equally-spaced window bays in the

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 2 VANCOUVER DOWNTOWN STATION

---

first story and three equally-spaced bays in the second story. The south facade contains three window bays in the first story (center and end bays) and two window bays in the second story (center omitted). The detailing of the bays and the sash is identical to that of the front of the wings. The wings and the central section are terminated as described for the front facade.

The rear facade consists of the concrete mail platform, which was originally centered, and flanking window bays (two on each side). The flat metal roof over the mail platform has been extended rearward (to provide a marquee) and northward (encompassing one window bay). Each window bay consists of sets of four six-over-six-light, double-hung, wood sash windows topped with a three-light transom window. Wood is used to frame the window bays and for the plain panels beneath the windows. Sandstone is used for the basement wall facing, belt course, and cornice. The visible portion of the second floor is U-shaped and opens to the rear. Each of the ends contain two eight-over-eight-light, double-hung, wood sash windows. A brick parapet with two balustraded sections rests atop the sandstone cornice and terminates the facade.

**8. Statement of Significance**

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

nationally     statewide     locally

Applicable National Register Criteria     A     B     C     D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions)     A     B     C     D     E     F     G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Architecture  
Politics/Government

Period of Significance

1918-1941

Significant Dates

Site acq.-1911  
Const.-1918

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Wetmore, James A., Acting Supervising Architect/Federal Government

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

The Vancouver post office is a well-preserved and essentially unaltered example of a small town post office and federal office building. The Neo-Classical building dates from the city's early Twentieth-Century growth period and is one of the principal buildings remaining from that time. Architecturally, the building clearly pronounces its Beaux-Arts origin, particularly in its colonnaded sandstone portico. The building's design is unique among other significant classically-inspired structures in the city. It is also the city's first federally-constructed post office. It symbolizes not only the federal presence, but also the recognition by that government that Vancouver was an important regional center.

ARCHITECTURE

The Vancouver Downtown Station is a fine example of early Twentieth-Century Neo-Classical design. The front facade displays the formality of classical symmetry and proportion to which has been added the monumentality of the Greek-influenced entry portico. Although the Beaux-Arts was in favor with the Supervising Architect during the early 1900s, as is demonstrated by other examples in the state, this is the only example of a projecting, colonnaded portico. The building appears to have been constructed from standardized plans which were developed "in-house" to fit the needs of any number of small town post offices across the nation. Variance in exterior facade treatment was used to provide individual community identity. This was achieved in Vancouver, since its design is unique for a post office in the state. Further, its design in the context of other significant city buildings is also unique. As such it is locally-significant under Criterion C.

See continuation sheet

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

1. Vancouver Columbian; various articles 1915 - 1917.
2. Original Building Plans; 1916.
3. Construction Progress Photograph; 8 January 1917.
4. Ramsey, Guy Reed. "Postmarked Washington: Clark County Post Offices." Clark County History (Vancouver, WA: Fort Vancouver Historical Society, 1963) IX: 4-38.

See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS): N/A

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

Primary location of additional data:

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

Specify repository:

USPS Facilities Service Center  
San Bruno, CA 94099-0330

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of property 0.55

UTM References

A 1|0 | 5|2|5|4|6|0 | 5|0|5|2|8|8|0  
Zone Easting Northing

B | | ||||||||||  
Zone Easting Northing

C | | ||||||||||  
D | | ||||||||||

D | | ||||||||||

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

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The site is on the northeast corner of Daniels Street and 12th Street. Beginning at the southwest corner, thence N200' to the intersection of Daniels Street and 13th Street, then E120', S200', thence W120' 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

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**Section number 8 Page 1 VANCOUVER DOWNTOWN STATION

Although other classically-inspired buildings exist in Vancouver, they differ in scale and facade treatment from the post office. Buildings of the same era (1900 to 1920) include the Carnegie Library (1901, Romanesque, brick), Ford Building (1912, Renaissance Revival, terra cotta), State Blind School (1916, Classical Revival, three-story, brick), and Elks (1913, Spanish Colonial, three-story, brick).

**POLITICS/GOVERNMENT**

The building is the first federally-constructed post office in Vancouver and is a local symbol of the federal presence (although the federal presence had been historically important with the U.S. Army Vancouver Barracks since the 1840s). At the turn of the century, Vancouver, while losing its position as one of the state's largest cities, was growing rapidly. Local lobbying efforts for a new post office, reinforced by a population gain of 6,000 people, were successful when the city was granted monies for a site in 1910 and for a building in 1913. Although four more years would elapse before the building was completed, it was nonetheless an important event in the city's history. As a local citizen stated at the time of the cornerstone laying ceremony, the "cornerstone laying denotes progress" and "some events mark epochs in the history of a community. The official laying of the cornerstone of the new federal building yesterday is one of these events." The building is thus locally significant under Criterion A.

**LOCAL CONTEXT**

Vancouver, Washington, quite often confused with its northerly neighbor, Vancouver, B.C., in Canada, is actually located 100 miles inland on the Columbia River, one bridge north of Portland, Oregon, across the river. This growing community, with an estimated 1987 population of 43,390, is the largest city in and county seat for Clark County. Its economic base is quite varied, ranging from heavy industrial and electronics manufacturing to government services and commercial shopping centers. In addition, many of the city's residents commute to Portland for work.

Vancouver is the oldest community in the state of Washington, founded in 1825 when the Hudson's Bay Company

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 2 VANCOUVER DOWNTOWN STATION

---

built a fort at the site of the present city. By 1845, Fort Vancouver (as it was known then) was in its heyday as the regional headquarters for the Hudson's Bay Company. After Great Britain and the United States settled on their national boundaries, the first U.S. Army base in the Northwest was established near Fort Vancouver. Trading continued for a time but activity diminished and the fort was closed in 1860. With settlement of the Willamette Valley of Oregon and growth of Portland, Vancouver became a satellite of Portland in the 1870s. The Northern Pacific Railroad tracks were extended to Vancouver and a car ferry was established across the Columbia in 1879. In 1880, Vancouver City had 1,722 residents, making it the state's third largest city behind Walla Walla and Seattle.

The region experienced rapid growth between 1900 and 1910, when Vancouver's population jumped from 3,126 to 9,300. Substantial migration occurred during this time from areas within the state and from other sections of the nation. The first deep sea commerce reached Vancouver in 1906, which enhanced its position as a shipping point.

The federal government provided aid to clear the sand bar from the port area between 1914-1918; this allowed the construction of World War I naval shipping in Vancouver. Rail and highway bridges were also constructed across the Columbia River between 1906 and 1917 and the link to Oregon became established. By 1920 the population of the city reached 12,637. Growth was moderate up to 1940, but then exploded with the coming of World War II. Between 1940 and 1950 Vancouver's population more than doubled, from 18,788 to 41,664. After falling to 32,464 in 1960, Vancouver's population rose to 42,493 in 1970. Since that time it has remained stable; in 1980 its population was 42,834 and in 1987 it was estimated at 43,390.

The Vancouver Downtown Station is on the western half the block bounded by Daniels Street (on which the building fronts), 12th and 13th Streets, and Columbia Street. A parking lot occupies the east half of the block. North of the Downtown Station, across 13th, is a parking lot. East, across Columbia is the St. James Catholic Church (1884, Neo-Gothic). A mix of new and large older residential struc-



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 3 VANCOUVER DOWNTOWN STATION

tures are along the frontages west and south of the Station. Most have been converted to offices or apartments.

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

Vancouver experienced relatively stable growth through the late 1800s and early 1900s as a minor transportation hub and port of entry from Oregon to Washington. During the years of post office construction (1916-1917), the Vancouver Columbian reported the optimism of the community in its economic outlook. The growth of river traffic, new port facilities, and the construction of the first highway bridge connecting Vancouver to the Oregon side of the Columbia River were topics of the day. The threat of war in Europe and exploits of Pancho Villa in Mexico were pushing aside local events on the front page.

The first news that a federal building for the city would become a reality was reported in 1910. On July 5th, it was reported that Congressman W. W. McCredie was home--resting up and looking over the \$300,000 in public improvements that had been constructed since his last visit in December. McCredie had been successful in gaining a \$12,500 appropriation for a federal building site in the city: advertisements for sites would begin publication the following day. In addition to the federal post office, McCredie had also introduced a bill for a federal court in Vancouver. A month passed while site offers were collected in Washington, D.C. On August 4th, six bids were opened; they ranged from \$11,500 to \$12,500. Later in the month, Fletcher Maddock, government site agent, visited Vancouver to inspect the sites offered for Uncle Sam's building. As reported on August 23rd, he favored two sites but would not divulge their locations. He did state, however, that:

Real estate prices are high here in comparison to other towns of the west of the class of Vancouver. Land values are on the boom everywhere in the west for that matter. The sites offered in Vancouver are as good as would be bought for the appropriation and they will throw the federal building a little out of the business section.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 4 VANCOUVER DOWNTOWN STATION

---

"New Federal Building Sure" announced the Columbian on February 1, 1911. Property owned by the Catholic Church would become the site of the new post office. The article confidently predicted that the approval of the site purchase would ensure the erection of a federal building even though a building appropriation had not yet been approved. It was hoped that \$200,000 to \$250,000 would be appropriated for the building which would house the post office, United States Land Office, and a United States federal court room.

Two years elapsed before the promise of the building appeared certain. On March 5, 1913, news reached Vancouver citizens that President Taft had just signed a bill that appropriated \$140,000 for their public building. Although it was not the amount that had been requested, the Columbian, none the less, boasted: "This means that Vancouver will have one of the best public buildings in the state and a structure of which its citizens may well feel proud."

It was not until 1916 that the building began to take form of steel, brick, and stone. An article of August 31st, 1916 reported that Pioneer Truck had received the contract for supplying structural steel for the building while the contract for the overall construction project had gone to the Campbell Building Company of Salt Lake. A week later, on September 7th, ground was broken for the new building.

On January 4, 1917, the Columbian reported that the sandstone for the building had arrived and that the steel work was nearly in place for the \$120,000 building. The portico columns were 18 feet high and weighed three tons each. The February 1st edition announced the upcoming cornerstone ceremony; Dr. C. S. Irwin would preside, and D.S. Cohen, prominent Portland attorney, would deliver the cornerstone oratory. The event was reported on February 5th, when Cohen stated that: "cornerstone laying denotes progress" and "some events mark epochs in the history of a community. The official laying of the cornerstone of the new federal building yesterday is one of these events." The Columbian reported that a record crowd had attended the ceremony. This event, however, was overshadowed by the dedication of the Columbia River bridge on February 15th. The "mammoth bridge of steel" across the Columbia had broken the last barrier in the Pacific Highway. That event was witnessed by thousands.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 5 VANCOUVER DOWNTOWN STATION

---

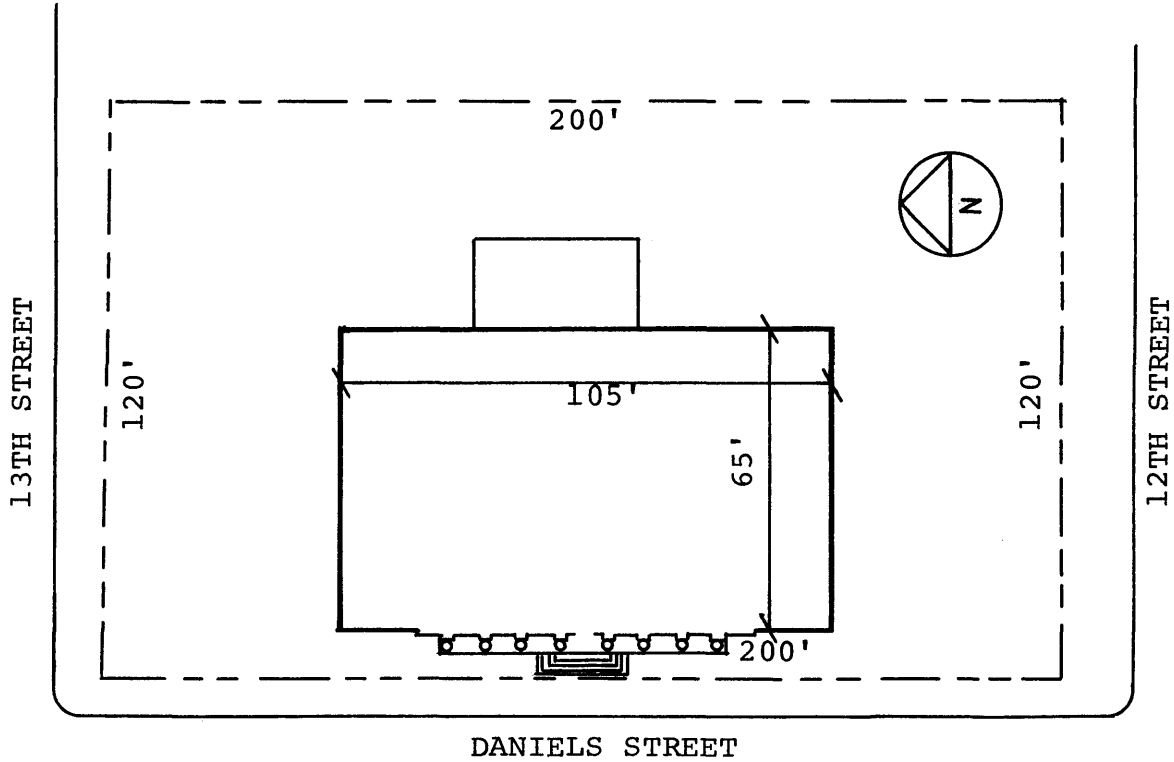
As the year evolved, the news was that of progress. New commercial buildings, army facilities, and ship yards were being constructed as the federal building rose. On August 18th, it was reported that the federal building would be completed in ten weeks. News of the war and the great growth of the city and its ship building industry were dominating the Columbian's front pages. In October it was announced that the furniture for the federal building was arriving; but "... slowly." Some delay was incurred because the maple trim was late in arriving. An article of November 8th told that the building was 98 per cent complete and would open to the public on December 1st. December passed, however, without news of that opening. Instead, the news included the prospect that ten steel ships would be built at the Vancouver ship yards; a saw mill was being constructed on the grounds of the barracks for production of spruce which would be used in the construction of airplanes for the war effort; and twelve more buildings would be added to the Vancouver barracks.

The next news of the post office came on January 22nd, 1918 when the Columbian reported that the post office would open in its new home on Friday. Although the lighting fixtures had not yet arrived from Los Angeles, that would not delay the post office move. Four days later it was announced that the post office on Washington Street (in the Odd Fellows Building) would close its doors that night for the last time. The move was finally made and as reported on January 28th, many people were disappointed--the "old bulletin board would be gone forever" after 25 years at the same location. "Patrons of the old bulletin board will miss that time honored institution. All those years it has served the lawyers for posting legal notices, announcements of various affairs have found place thereon." Under postal regulations such boards are not allowed in government-owned buildings.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 10 Page 1 VANCOUVER DOWNTOWN STATION



**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number Photos Page 1 VANCOUVER DOWNTOWN STATION

---

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

1. Vancouver Downtown Station
2. Vancouver, Washington
3. Jim Kolva
4. January 1984
5. Negatives on file at USPS Facilities Service Center, San Bruno, CA.

Photo No. 1 (negative #5)  
6. View to southeast

Photo No. 2 (negative #16)  
6. Detail, west facade

Photo No. 3 (negative #1)  
6. View to northeast