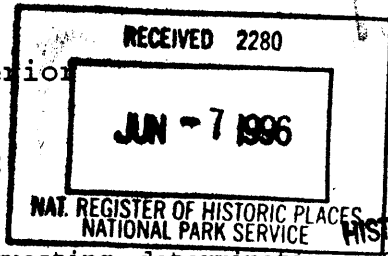


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service



MAR 11 1996

OFFICE OF HISTORIC PRESERVATION DIVISION

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

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 from 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 U.S. Post Office

other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number 122 North Main Street

city or town Sylvester not for publication
state Georgia code GA county Worth vicinity
zip code 31791 code 321

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this x 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 X meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally X statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

John B. Brown, FPO Date 5-30-96
Signature of certifying official

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.)

Richard Coates Date 4-2-96
Signature of commenting or other official

Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer, Georgia
Historic Preservation Division, Georgia Department of Natural Resources
State or Federal agency and bureau

4. 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): _____

Edson H. Beall 7-5-96

Entered in the
National Register _____

Signature of Keeper

Date of Action

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)

- 1 building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</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 (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.) N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)
GOVERNMENT/post office

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)
VACANT/NOT IN USE

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)
MODERN MOVEMENT/International Style
LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS/
Colonial Revival

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)
foundation: CONCRETE
walls: BRICK
roof: ASPHALT
other: STONE/Limestone

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.)

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or a 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.

Areas of Significance
(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE
ART

Period of Significance

1937-1939

Significant Dates

1937-1938
1939

Significant Person
(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Simon, Louis A. (Supervising Architect)
Seiz, Emil C., Jr. (Construction Engineer)
Tingler, Chester J. (Mural Artist)

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

9. Major Bibliographical References

(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 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

Name of repository: National Archives, College Park, Maryland

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property ½ acre

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
A	<u>17</u>	<u>230790</u>	<u>3491320</u>	D	_____	_____
B	_____	_____	_____	F	_____	_____
C	_____	_____	_____	F	_____	_____
	<u>See continuation sheet.</u>					

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 Steven H. Moffson, Architectural Historian

organization Dames & Moore

date March 7, 1996

street & number 7101 Wisconsin Avenue

telephone (301 652-2215

city or town Bethesda

state MD

zip code 20895

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 the SHPO or FPO.)

name U.S. Postal Service, Atlanta Facilities Service Center

street & number 4000 Dekalb Technology Parkway, Building 300, Suite 3000

city or town Atlanta

state GA

zip code 30340-2799

telephone (770) 454-0644

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Description of Historic Resources Summary

The U.S. Post Office in Sylvester, Georgia, is a rectangular, one-story building with Colonial Revival details applied to an International-style building form. The classical entrance surround, multi-light sash window, English bond brickwork, and other Colonial Revival elements accent the smooth, planar walls, plain window treatment, and the flat composition roof that are more characteristic of the International style. The symmetrical five-bay facade is a feature of earlier colonial architectural styles. The interior is organized around a large workroom, with the postmaster's office, vault, swing room, and janitor's closet set against the south wall. The public lobby is located along the main (west) facade and features a marble wainscot and a mural of the cantaloupe industry in Southwest Georgia painted by Chester J. Tingle.

Description of Historic Resources

The U.S. Post Office in Sylvester, Georgia, is a rectangular, one-story, five-bay building with Colonial Revival decorative details. The post office is located in Worth County in Southwest Georgia. The building occupies the southeast corner of Main and Kelly streets, across Main Street from the Sylvester Commercial Historic District to the east. The Worth County Courthouse is located on the northwest corner of Main and Kelly streets, opposite the post office.

The post office is set on a poured concrete foundation and framed with structural steel. The brick walls are laid in English bond. Interior walls are built of hollow terra-cotta tile. The tile was furred to receive plaster, or smooth in areas where plaster was not applied. The flat composition roof drains on the east side and features a brick parapet lined with white limestone coping.

The main facade features four large 8-over-12 sash windows with limestone lintels that match the coping on the parapet. A recessed brick panel is located below each window. The aluminum-and-glass double doors are flanked by fluted pilasters that support a dentil entablature. Six granite steps lined with wrought iron hand rails ascend to the main entrance, which is flanked by two Colonial Revival-style wall-mounted lamps. Aluminum letters painted black above the entrance read: United States Post Office/Sylvester Georgia.

A white marble corner stone on the southwest corner on the main facade reads: Henry Morganthau, Jr., Secretary of the Treasury; James A. Farley, Postmaster General; Louis A. Simon, Supervising Architect; Neal A. Melick, Supervising Engineer; 1937.

The north and south elevations feature four bays with large sash windows similar to those on the main facade. Ventilating equipment located on the exterior of the building fills the easternmost bay on the north side of the building. A blind window on the south facade forms part of the exterior wall of the vault. A narrow sash window is on each side of the blind window to provide light and

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ventilation for the postmaster's bathroom and the carriers' bathroom. An exterior basement entrance and a small coal window are also located along the south side of the building.

The rear elevation, like the main facade, features five-bays, a center entrance flanked by four large sash windows. A small mailing vestibule and a mailing platform project twenty-five feet from the rear wall. The south side of the platform is open to receive mail from postal service vehicles. A small set of poured concrete steps provides pedestrian access to the rear entrance. The flat roof and white limestone coping of the vestibule platform echo the roof treatment of the block. A tall, exterior brick chimney is located on the west side of the building, against the north side of the mailing vestibule.

The interior plan is organized around the large work room where the mail was handled and sorted for delivery, where post office boxes were serviced, and where walk-in customer service operations were performed. Typically, mail was brought to the mailing platform by truck from the regional post office in Albany. Inside the work room, postal workers sorted each sack of mail by carrier route. The four to six carriers at the Sylvester post office sorted their mail at stations along the north and west walls in the order it was to be delivered. The sorting stations have been removed to the temporary post office location in Sylvester. Clerks serviced several banks of post office boxes located in the northwest corner of the workroom. These boxes were also removed from the post office and reinstalled at a temporary location.

The customer service counter is located along the west side of the work room and features three service windows to assist customers in the public lobby. Each of the bays includes a sliding decorative metal grille and a sash window. Two additional service bays were added later. Elements of the original wood cabinets survive along the entire service counter, though only the southernmost bay retains both its original wood counter and cabinets. The work room features a dark lacquered wood floor that matches the cabinets and wainscoting. Like all rooms on the main floor, the work room has a thirteen-foot ceiling.

The public lobby is an L-shaped room along the west side of the building that wraps around the north side to include several banks of post office boxes. The lobby is entered through a small glazed vestibule with entrance and exit doors. The ceramic-tile floor is laid in a parquet brick pattern. The wainscot is faced with pink Etowah marble. The darker lobby border and bases are finished with Georgia verde antique marble. Several decorative panels are located above the service counter bays. A cove cornice molding joins the ceiling and the wall. Lobby furnishings included in the original post office design remain in situ and include: the circular lobby desks with brass pen stands built from standard Public Building Service plans; and four wall-mounted bulletin boards with glass doors and incised subject headings, such as "Bulletins," and "United States-Civil Service." These were also built from standard designs.

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A mural painted in oils on linen measuring 11 by 5 feet is located above the post master's office door at the south end of the public lobby. Spanning the width of the lobby, the mural depicts all aspects of the cantaloupe industry in Southwest Georgia from plowing the fields to trucking the vegetables to markets in distant cities. The central grouping of figures is shown harvesting, stacking, and counting cantaloupes brought in from the fields. The two center figures holding cantaloupe halves represent allegories of the industry (the standing man), and the consumer (the seated woman).

A series of small rooms is located along the south side of the post office. The postmaster's office is located in the southwest corner and is entered from both the work room and the lobby. The postmaster's office includes molded window surrounds, door surrounds, chair rail, and baseboard. The postmaster's office includes a small bathroom and the entrance to the lookout gallery. Entered from a ladder and located above the vault, the lookout gallery provided postal inspectors with ability to monitor the conduct of postal employees in the work room. Because the interior of the room was painted black and the viewing windows consisted of only three narrow bands of glass set in the ceiling against a small black field, it was impossible for employees to know they were being monitored.

The vault was used to store money, stamps, and registered mail. It consists of a concrete floor, walls, and ceiling, and is secured with large steel door, with a combination lock. A second secured area in the vault is located behind a wire mesh grille. Adjacent to the vault is the carrier's toilet, which contains many original fixtures, including the toilet, sink, soap dispenser, towel bar, and toilet paper dispenser. The carrier's toilet is entered from the swing room, a 10 by 10-foot room located in the center of the south wall. The swing room features wood floors and molded baseboards and chair rails. The janitor's closet containing a toilet and sink and the women's toilet join the east wall of the swing room. The women's toilet contains original fixtures similar to those found in the carriers' toilet. Stairs to the basement are located in the southeast corner of the building, between the women's bathroom and the east wall. Stenciled room labels survive on all of the doors except that of the postmaster's office.

The full basement is divided into five large rooms. The boiler room is entered from the work room and features a second, exterior entrance. The large, rectangular boiler room contains its original mechanical equipment. Three storage rooms, identified as fuel (coal) storage and storage rooms nos. 1 and 2, are located adjacent to the boiler room. The fifth basement room is a large storage room that occupies the entire west of the basement.

A planting plan produced for the Sylvester post office in 1938 identifies the types of plantings and their proposed locations.¹ Most of the lot was planted in

¹"Planting Plan, U.S. Post Office Sylvester, Georgia,"
September 9, 1938. Treasury Department, Public Buildings Branch.
U.S. Post Office, Sylvester, Ga.

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grass. The plantings, many of which survive, included water oaks planted along the north and south property lines and clusters of tobira and cherry laurel located on both sides of the front steps and at the corners of the building. Privet was planted at the corners of the lot. Photographs of the post office taken in November 1938 indicate a row of mature water oaks along Main Street, west of the sidewalk. These trees, which were not depicted in the planting plan, have not survived.²

Historic Integrity

The U.S. Post Office in Sylvester, Georgia, has sustained few alterations since its completion in 1939 and retains all seven aspects of historic integrity: location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. The building was operated continuously as a post office until 1995, when petroleum fumes entering through the basement presented health hazards to the workers in the building. Ventilating equipment has been placed around the northeast corner of the building to control the fumes. The exterior of the building is little changed from its 1939 appearance. Minor changes to the exterior include metal double doors that replaced the original wood double doors and a single-light transom which replaced the original five-light transom. A concrete handicap ramp and an entrance were added to the north side of the mailing platform.

The interior floor plan has not been altered and it retains much of its original building fabric. Most important, the public lobby has sustained only minor changes (mostly related to the relocation of postal service operations to another facility in Sylvester) and the mural above the postmaster's office door remains intact and in good condition. Minor changes to the interior include: fluorescent lighting added in the 1960s; a lightly framed bank of post office boxes added to the north end of the lobby; the service counter altered to accommodate vending machines; removal of wire-screen partition walls in the southwest corner of the workroom near the vault that secured money orders and registered mail. There is no evidence to suggest that the skylight above the work room depicted in architectural drawings was built.

The 1938 landscape plan has been altered with the expansion of the concrete driveway, which provided access to the mailing platform, to include an asphalt parking lot across the back of the lot and an entrance drive to Kelly Street. In addition, a drive-through lane was added to the north side of the lot along Kelly Street. The small, circular drive-through enables motorists to pull off Kelly

²"Sylvester, Ga. P.O., November 30, 1937, Final photograph, Front view," Records of the Public Building Service, Completion views of Federal Buildings, Record Group 121, BS Series, Box 19, Photograph no. 121-BS-19K-2, National Archives, College Park, Maryland.

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Street and place mail in a mail box located at the curb. These changes did not result in the loss of any historic plantings.

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Statement of Significance

The U.S. Post Office in Sylvester, Georgia, is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C as a representative example of post offices constructed in small towns in Georgia and throughout the United States between 1932 and 1942 by the Office of the Supervising Architect of the Treasury under the auspices of various New Deal programs. Designed in a combination of modern and Colonial Revival styles, the small, one-story, brick post office in Southwest Georgia is similar in size, scale, materials, and architectural style to many of the other approximately sixty-five post offices built in Georgia during this period. In addition, the Sylvester post office, like others throughout the U. S., contains a mural depicting a scene of regional importance. Commissioned by the Section of Painting and Sculpture, the Sylvester mural depicts the cantaloupe industry in Southwest Georgia, and is a valuable document of the region's economic history.

The Building of U.S Post Offices in Georgia and the United States, 1932-1942

During the 1930s, the number of post offices built in the United States increased dramatically as numerous public works programs were initiated to spur economic recovery and provide work for the unemployed, many of whom worked in the building trades. In 1933, the Public Works Administration (PWA) was formed to administer the planning and construction of Federal and non-Federal public works projects. The Public Buildings Act (1926), and the Federal Employment Stabilization Act (1931), enabled the PWA to begin its program without delay by starting with Federal projects such as post offices. By 1939, the PWA completed 406 post offices, nearly one-eighth of the total 3,174 construction projects funded by the Public Works Administration.³

The role of the PWA in construction projects was similar to that of a bank or a large building and loan association. The PWA determined which projects received funding and ensured that its projects were completed according to the appropriate specifications. The Office of the Supervising Architect of the Treasury retained primary responsibility for design, construction, and allocation of post offices until the Office of the Supervising Architect was reorganized in 1939. By 1935, Treasury Department building projects were funded under the auspices of five separate programs: the original Public Building Program (1926); the PWA; the Emergency Relief and Construction Act (1932); the Emergency Construction Program (1934); and the Building Program for the District of Columbia (1926).⁴

³Emily Harris, *History of Post Office Construction, 1900-1940* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Postal Service, 1982), 16.

⁴Emily Harris, *History of Post Office Construction*, 17.

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In 1934, the Office of the Supervising Architect was reorganized and Louis A. Simon replaced Supervising Architect James W. Wetmore. The Supervising Architect's office, which lost its independence as a separate office in the Office of the Treasury Secretary, was replaced by the Public Buildings Branch of the Procurement Division of the Treasury Department. In February 1934, the Supervising Architect's office was moved from the Treasury Building to the Federal Warehouse Building, renamed the Procurement Building. In addition, the Office was reorganized into four divisions consisting of a Supervising Architect, a Supervising Engineer, a Chairman of the Board of Award, and a Chief of the Legal Section.

Through the 1920s, the staff of the Office of the Supervising Architect developed standardized designs and floor plans for its buildings. The Supervising Architect's office rarely hired local architects to design its buildings as it had during the nineteenth and the early twentieth centuries. This practice resumed from 1930 to 1934, when many of the Federal recovery programs were getting underway. In June 1934, the Treasury Department determined that it was not practical for private architects to handle small architectural projects. The staff of the Office of the Supervising Architect designed all of the remaining Federal buildings.⁵

Designs for post offices built between 1932 and 1942 followed standardized plans. Some stylistic variation was permitted on the facades, but the floor plans were well established by the early 1930s. Post offices built in small towns were usually one-story, rectangular-plan buildings. Much of the building was devoted to the large, full-width work room, where much of the mail handling and sorting operations were conducted. The work room included a vault and sometimes an area enclosed with wire-mesh screen to secure money orders and registered mail. The rear of the building contained the mailing vestibule and mailing platform for receiving deliveries of mail. The public lobby was located across the front of the post office. It contained an entrance vestibule, post office boxes, and customer service windows. Lobbies were usually L-shaped to provide space for additional post office boxes. As the only public space in the building, the lobby was often adorned with decorative architectural elements, including marble wainscoting, terrazzo floors, and coffered ceilings and furnishings, such as lobby desks. The postmaster's office was generally located in a front corner of the building, with lobby and work room entrances.

The U.S. Post Office in Newport, New Hampshire, is an example of a small, so-called "one-man" post office where the postmaster managed the work unaided by an assistant postmaster. Completed in 1935, the one-story, five-bay brick building features a large work room, rear mailing platform, and an L-shaped lobby. The postmaster's office is located in a front corner of the building with direct access to the L-shaped lobby and work room.

⁵Beth M. Boland, *National Register Bulletin 13: How to Apply the National Register Criteria to Post Offices* (Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, 1991), 4.

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The acceptance of standardized floor plans for post offices left little room for ingenuity on the part of the architect, except for the facades. Designs generated in the Office of the Supervising Architect under Louis A. Simon demonstrated greater stylistic variety than in the previous twenty-five years. During this period, more consideration was given to local architectural traditions. In California, for example, the Spanish or Mission style became popular. The small, Mission-style post office in La Jolla, built in 1935, is an example. The Colonial Revival-style, built throughout the East, remained the most popular historical revival style for post offices, as well as other PWA building types. Middle-Atlantic examples include the two U.S. Post Offices in New Castle, Delaware, and in Easton, Maryland, both completed in 1936.

Most popular were modern designs (such as streamline moderne or Art Deco) or designs that mixed one or more historical styles with the "starved classicism" that dominated Federal building during the 1930s.⁶ Starved classicism, sometimes called PWA Modern, was described by Historian Lois Craig as a simplified classical style characterized by symmetrical massing, smooth expanses of unadorned planar surfaces, and reduced ornamentation. The style derived from the Beaux-Arts tradition and featured inspirational names or phrases incised on the facade as an economical decorative motif.⁷

The PWA was organized in seven administrative regions that comprised the continental United States. Region No. 3, the Southeast, included the states of Virginia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Georgia, Florida, Alabama, Mississippi, Tennessee, and Kentucky. C. W. Short and R. Stanley Brown observed in their survey *Architecture under the Public Works Administration, 1933-1939*, that "traditional architecture of the Colonial period still dominates design [in Region No. 3], except in Florida and Gulf coasts of Alabama and Mississippi where 'modern' has crept in."⁸

In Georgia, the Treasury Department built approximately 65 post offices between 1932 and 1942. Most of these buildings were small, rectangular- or square-plan post offices built in small towns throughout the state. Built from

⁶Beland/Associates, Inc., "U.S. Post Offices in California, 1900-1941," National Register of Historic Places multiple property nomination (Washington, D.C.: National Park Service, National Register of Historic Places, 1984), 8.14-.15

⁷Lois A. Craig, *The Federal Presence: Architecture, Politics, and National Design* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1984), 286.

⁸C. W. Short and R. Stanley Brown, *Public Buildings: A Survey of Architecture of Projects Constructed by Federal and Other Governmental Bodies between the Years of 1933 and 1939 with the Assistance of the Public Works Administration* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1939), xii.

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standardized plans, these post offices featured essentially the same layouts and decorative schemes seen in post offices built throughout the nation during this period. The prevailing building type in Georgia was the one-story, five-bay brick building with a center entrance. The work room occupied most of the building. The public lobby and postmaster's office were located across the main facade. Smaller rooms were placed along a side wall. The plans for each building were modified to meet the requirements of the site. Often the mailing platform was sometimes reversed or located across the rear wall. Some of the larger post office buildings featured second stories tucked beneath hip roofs.

The vast majority of post offices built in Georgia during this period were designed in the Colonial Revival style. Small post offices featured hip or side gable roofs with cupolas, elaborate pedimented door surrounds, sometimes with fanlights, and window treatments that included plain stone lintels or gauged arches with keystones. Decorative details varied at each building, some included stone beltcourses, dentil cornices, brick panels and quoins, or incised lettering. Examples of this type include post offices built in the following towns in Georgia: Adel (1940), Ashburn (1940), Calhoun (1936), Commerce (1937), Corneila (1937), Cuthbert (1937), East Point (1935), Hawkinsville (1938), Millen (1938), Summerville (1938), and Sylvester (1937).

The Neoclassical style was another popular historical revival style for post offices built in Georgia. Built mostly in the early 1930s, these one-and-one-half-story brick buildings are larger than the post offices designed in the Colonial Revival style. The buildings include low hip roofs with dormers set behind brick parapet walls and stone cornices, decorative panels, and gauged arches above the windows. The decorative programs for these buildings were executed consistently and with little variation, unlike the majority of Colonial Revival-style post offices in which decorative elements appear to have been applied to the exteriors of standardized building types. Variation among the Neoclassical post offices is most obvious in the treatment of the entrance portico. Most often an elaborate semicircular Adamesque entrance with slender columns, variations on the portico include *in antis* and *prostyle temple fronts*.⁹ Neoclassical-style Georgia post offices were built in: Blackshear (1940), Fort Valley (1933), Madison (1932), Monroe (1932), Rossville (1932), Sandersville (1932), Thomaston (1934), Toccoa (1932), Waynesboro (1932), and West Point (1932).

Less than a dozen post offices in Georgia were built in historical idioms other than the Colonial Revival or Neoclassical styles. Post offices in Buford (1941) and Vidalia (1936) were built in the Greek Revival style. Based on the same building type as the small Colonial Revival post offices, the two buildings feature modified Doric porticos with stout, unfluted columns, and incised lettering across

⁹Columns are *in antis* when they are set in an opening in the same plane as the wall into which the opening is cut. In this case, the portico features front and side walls. A *prostyle* portico features columns across the front.

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the entablature. The post office in Eatonton (1932), is one of the few Mission-style post offices in Georgia.

Several post offices in Georgia were ~~in~~ built in the Art Deco style. Primarily built after 1935, these buildings are based on the same standardized plans that the Treasury Department used for its Colonial Revival-style post offices. These buildings feature no historical references. Ornament is minimal, often composed of corbelled brick window surrounds, stone beltcourses and coping, and relief sculptures above the windows and entrance on the main facade. Free-standing Art Deco lamps flank the entrance. Examples of this type include: Cairo (1935), Decatur (1936), Hartwell (1937), Manchester (1940), and Sylvania (1940).

The U.S. Post Office in Sylvester is based on standardized plans developed by the Treasury Department and used to build post offices throughout Georgia and the nation. Most post offices built in Georgia between 1932 and 1942 were based on these plans. Most often, Colonial Revival ornamentation was applied to the exteriors of the buildings. The Sylvester post office is among several especially restrained examples of the Colonial Revival style in which elements of modernism, such as planar wall surfaces, minimal ornamentation, and flat roofs, predominate. Post offices constructed in Baxley (1936), Greensboro (1937), McRae (1938), and Wrightsville (1938), are nearly identical to the U.S. Post Office in Sylvester, Georgia.

The New Deal Federal Art Project and the Commissioning of Murals for United States Post Offices, 1934-1943

Many post offices built during the 1930s were adorned with murals that depicted scenes of local or regional significance. These murals were commissioned by programs designed to alleviate unemployment in the arts and to decorate buildings produced by the Office of the Supervising Architect. The New Deal Federal Art Project was managed in three Treasury Department programs: the Public Works of Art Project (PWAP); the Section of Painting and Sculpture; and the Treasury Relief Art Project (TRAP). A fourth program for the arts, the Works Progress Administration Federal Art Project (WPA/FAP) was managed by the WPA.

The Section of Painting and Sculpture, later called the Section of Fine Arts, was primarily responsible for the murals found in post offices throughout the nation. Artists were commissioned based on their ability as demonstrated in previous work, or were selected from anonymous competitions. Some of the nation's best known artists were solicited, but more often commissions were awarded to local artists. The Section urged artists to visit the sites of potential mural themes and discuss possible mural subjects with local residents. The program, which began in October 1934 and ended in 1943, paid commissions from \$500 to \$800. After nine years, the Section had commissioned 1,400 works of art at a total cost of approximately \$2,571,000.

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The iconography of Federal murals centered on local and regional themes, often depicting the daily occupations of local residents, or historical scenes from the community's past. Images of agriculture and industry were especially popular. These murals emphasize what people in a community shared, and played down differences based on race, sex, class, and religion. In most cases, "assimilation is the rule, and religious and ethnic differences are treated as phenomena of the past."¹⁰ Some completed murals were highly criticized for their content or the quality of the executed work. In Jenkintown, Pennsylvania, the postmaster gave the completed mural to a local high school because of sharp criticism of the work. Most communities, however, were proud of their murals and felt the work "spoke to their sense of themselves."¹¹

The post office murals presented their subjects in a clear narrative, without complicated time/space sequences or challenging perspective views. In most murals, "the style and content . . . were intimately tied together and the art depended on its context for most of its meaning."¹² Lloyd R. Ney's "New London Facets," painted in New London, Ohio, in 1940, is the only abstract mural approved for a post office by the Section of Painting and Sculpture.¹³

In Georgia, the Section commissioned murals for thirty-three post offices located throughout the state. The themes represented in Georgia murals are characteristic of those found throughout the United States: contemporary scenes of agricultural or industrial workers; panoramic town or landscape views, and depictions of local historical events. Many of the murals depict scenes of Georgia's rich agricultural heritage, most often the cultivation cotton. An equally large number of murals depict historical events such as treaties and battles with Indians.¹⁴

The few Georgia murals that depict industrial subjects include Reuben Gambrell's "Kiln Room, Cement Plant" in the Rockmart post office and two murals devoted to railroad themes in the College Park and Commerce post offices. None of the thirty-three Georgia murals was produced by a native Georgian. Approximately

¹⁰Marlene Park and Gerald E. Markowitz. *Democratic Vistas: Post Offices and Public Art in the New Deal* (Philadelphia: Temple University, 1984), 32.

¹¹Ibid., 25-28.

¹²Beland/Associates, Inc., "U.S. Post Offices in California," 8.16.

¹³Lois A. Craig, *The Federal Presence*, 374.

¹⁴Stephen Goldfarb, "The Artists Who Painted Georgia." *Brown's Guide to Georgia* (May-June 1977): 71-72.

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twenty-four Georgia murals remain in their original locations; the other nine have either been damaged or destroyed, or remounted in museums or new post office buildings.¹⁵

The post office murals are significant components of the buildings for which they were designed. The works document the political and economic history of a community and reflect the way in which that subject was interpreted in public art in the 1930s. The murals graphically represent a unique national solution to national problems of economic depression and unemployment. As part of an ambitious Federal program, works of art were placed not in the nation's capital or museums, but in small isolated towns. The murals (art) were deemed necessary in the same way that roads, dams, and other public works projects were indispensable during the New Deal.

Design and Construction of the U.S. Post Office in Sylvester, Georgia

Plans for the new U.S. Post Office in Sylvester, Georgia, were prepared by the Office of the Supervising Architect of the Treasury. Plans and elevations for the Sylvester post office were approved in February 1937. The set of plans included standard designs for entrance lamps, bulletin boards, lobby desks, and metal grilles and railings.

On February 1, 1937, the Public Buildings Branch of the Treasury Department purchased the 70-by-120-foot site at the southeast corner of Main and Kelly streets from Amanda Jane Perry for \$6,000. The new site was opposite the site of the old post office, which was located in a one-story brick commercial building on the west side of Main Street. The site was cleared for construction of the post office in the Spring of 1937.¹⁶

J. M. Raymond Construction Company's bid of \$39,889 was selected as the lowest from among twenty-one general contractors who submitted proposals to build the post

¹⁵Patricia Phagan, "New Deal Art in Georgia: A Guide to Post Office Murals and Sculpture." Pamphlet. (Athens, Ga.: Georgia Museum of Art, University of Georgia, n.d.), n.p.

¹⁶"Site Acquisition Account," Records of the Public Building Service, General Correspondence and Related Records, 1910-1939, Record Group 121, Box no. 3796, National Archives, College Park, Maryland.

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office. The contract was awarded to the Jacksonville, Florida, company on April 14, 1937, with the provision that the work be completed by December 14, 1937.¹⁷

On May 20, 1937, Emil C. Seiz, Jr., construction engineer for the Treasury Department, was relieved of his work at post offices in Ozark, Alabama, and Cuthbert, Georgia, to direct the construction of the Sylvester post office.¹⁸ In June, Seiz rented a second-floor room in the Alford Building to serve as a construction office. The Alford Building is located one block south of the post office site, which may have been visible from Seiz's rented space.

Building materials were purchased from companies throughout the United States, but especially from companies in the South and in Georgia. The Bethlehem Steel Company in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, supplied the approximately eight tons of structural steel for the post office. This steel was fabricated by the Aetna Iron and Steel Company plant in Jacksonville, Florida. The approximately sixteen tons of reinforcing steel was rolled and fabricated at the Atlantic Steel Company plant in Atlanta, Georgia.¹⁹ Native Georgia stone for the granite front steps and marble and limestone building trim was provided by the Georgia Marble Company.²⁰

Construction of the U.S. Post Office in Sylvester was completed December 1, 1937, two weeks ahead of schedule. Postal workers occupied the building two weeks later on December 16, 1937. The final inspection report prepared by Seiz on January 15, 1938, indicated that, "all work embraced in this contract is now

¹⁷C. J. Peoples to J. M. Raymond Construction Company, 14 April 1937, Records of the Public Building Service, General Correspondence and Related Records, 1910-1939, Record Group 121, Box no. 3796, National Archives, College Park, Maryland.

¹⁸Wayne C. Taylor to Emil C. Seiz, Jr., 20 May 1937, Records of the Public Building Service, General Correspondence and Related Records, 1910-1939, Record Group 121, Box no. 3796, National Archives, College Park, Maryland.

¹⁹J. M. Raymond to Assistant Director for Public Buildings, 27 April 1937, Records of the Public Building Service, General Correspondence and Related Records, 1910-1939, Record Group 121, Box no. 3796, National Archives, College Park, Maryland.

²⁰Acting Assistant Superintendent of Project Management to J. M. Raymond Construction Company, 29 May 1937, Records of the Public Building Service, General Correspondence and Related Records, 1910-1939, Record Group 121, Box no. 3796, National Archives, College Park, Maryland.

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completed in accordance with the drawings and specifications."²¹ The following month, Emil C. Seiz, Jr., was transferred to Middle Georgia to supervise the construction of a post office in Hawkinsville.²² The planting plan for the post office lot was approved in September 1938. On December 5, 1938, Postmaster Nellie H. Woolard reported to the Treasury Department that the contractor had completed the landscape work according to the specifications in the contract.²³

The completed U.S. Post Office building established a strong Federal presence in the town of Sylvester. Though small by Treasury Department standards, the Sylvester post office was among the most prominent buildings in Sylvester when it was completed in 1937. Because of its style and setting, the post office contrasted with other neighboring buildings. The post office is located adjacent to the Worth County Courthouse in the Sylvester commercial district, situated near the front and center of its large lot, which occupies one-fourth of a town block. The building features three formal facades and is surrounded by plantings that follow a 1938 planting plan. This provided a strong contrast to most buildings in the Sylvester commercial district, which are organized in long rows of adjoining storefronts, called commercial blocks. These buildings occupy virtually their entire lots and feature only one facade that is set close to the street or sidewalk. Little, if any, space is devoted to decorative plantings. The U.S. Post Office in Sylvester may be compared to the nearby county courthouse, a substantial brick building that occupies an entire town block on Main Street.

Design and Production of the "Cantaloupe Industry" Mural by Chester J. Tingler

On June 18, 1938, Chester J. Tingler, an artist from Coral Gables, Florida, was invited by Edward B. Rowan, Superintendent of the Section of Painting and Sculpture, to submit designs for a mural for the Sylvester, Georgia, Post Office. Rowan's offer was based on "competent designs" that Tingler had submitted in a competition for the post office in Miami, Florida. His design was not selected for the Miami post office, but it brought his work to the attention of Edward Rowan.

²¹Emil C. Seiz, Jr., to Supervising Engineer, Records of the Public Building Service, General Correspondence and Related Records, 1934-1939, Record Group 121, Box no. 3795, National Archives, College Park, Maryland.

²²Wayne C. Taylor to Emil C. Seiz, Jr., 28 January 1938, Records of the Public Building Service, General Correspondence and Related Records, 1934-1939, Record Group 121, Box no. 3795, National Archives, College Park, Maryland.

²³Nettie H. Woolard to Treasury Department, Procurement Division, 5 December 1938. Records of the Public Building Service, General Correspondence and Related Records, 1934-1939, Record Group 121, Box no. 3795, National Archives, College Park, Maryland.

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The submission of designs for the Sylvester post office was not competitive and paid \$650 for the completed mural: \$200 for the approved preliminary sketches; \$200 for the approved full-size cartoon; and \$250 for the completed, installed, and approved mural.²⁴

The proposed mural was to measure 11 feet by 4 feet and be completed in the public lobby above the postmaster's door. Rowan advised Tingler to select subject matter which "embodies some idea appropriate to the particular locale of Sylvester." Rowan added, "what we want most is a simple and vital design."²⁵

In July 1938, Tingler accepted the commission to paint the Sylvester post office mural. Tingler was born in Buffalo, New York, in 1886, and studied at the Art Students League. His mural in Sylvester, Georgia, is the only artwork he produced for the Section of Fine Arts.

Chester Tingler traveled to Sylvester in the summer of 1938 to visit the post office and note the location of the mural. While visiting Southwest Georgia, Tingler identified several themes for the painting. He wrote to Rowan, "The cantaloupe industry is very important and also cotton, but I think the former is a bit more unusual, so I am making studies of that as a subject."²⁶ Tingler then visited the nearby Indiana Fruit Company, founded by C. H. Strangward in 1896. Strangward introduced the cantaloupe industry to Georgia. By the 1930s, cantaloupes had become one of the leading crops in Worth County, and in 1934, Lillie Grubbs, a local historian, declared Sylvester "the cantaloupe center of the world."²⁷ According to Strangward's son, Charles W. Strangward, the artist watched

²⁴Edward B. Rowan to Chester J. Tingler, 18 June 1938, Records of the Public Building Service, General Correspondence and Related Records, 1934-1939, Record Group 121, Box no. 3795, National Archives, College Park, Maryland.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Chester J. Tingler to Edward B. Rowan, 26 July 1938, Records of the Public Building Service; Records of the Section of Fine Arts, Public Building Administration, and Its Predecessors; Case Files Concerning the Embellishment of Public Buildings, 1934-1943, Record Group 121, Box no. 18, National Archives, College Park, Maryland.

²⁷Lillie Martin Grubbs, *History of Worth County, Georgia: For the First Eighty Years, 1854-1934* (Macon, Ga.: J. W. Burke Company, 1934), 260-262.

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the cantaloupe harvesting and produced sketches of a scene typical of the peak season.²⁸

The following month, Tingler sent three alternative sketches of cantaloupe industry scenes to Edward Rowan for his selection. The first sketch depicted a bountiful harvest with a central group of figures examining the fruit at different stages in its development. The background featured trains, trucks, and cars, illustrating how the cantaloupes were transported from the fields to the consumer. The second sketch included a central group of figures that represent the cantaloupe industry.²⁹ Figures to the left stack fruit; three men to the right bring crated cantaloupes in from the fields and present them to the fruit checker. The background features a tractor plowing under a field which has just been harvested, a truck carrying produce to market in a distant town, and teams of mules plowing a field and pulling a cart. The third sketch depicted "more weighty groups" of figures at noon day rest to the left and right of composition. The center featured rolling fields with fruit pickers.³⁰

The second sketch was selected as the preferred design by the members of the Section of Painting and Sculpture and the Supervising Architect of the Treasury. Rowan wrote, "the design is interesting in all but the lower right hand section and it is suggested that you devote more time to this part of the composition in order to balance the composition somewhat more successfully."³¹ Rowan continued,

²⁸[Lillie Martin Grubbs], *History of Worth County, Georgia: For the Third Forty Years, 1934-1974*. Volume 2 (Ann Arbor, Mich.: Edward Brothers, 1975), 61-62.

²⁹The height dimension of the mural increased to five feet when the bottom border was extended below the top of the postmaster's door. "Chester J. Tingler #2 Cantaloupe Ind., Sylvester, Ga., P.O." March 20, 1939. Records of the Public Building Service; Prints: Photographs of Paintings and Sculptures Commissioned by the Section of Fine Arts, 1934-1943. Record Group 121-GA, Box No. 53, Print no. 121-PS-K. National Archives, College Park, Maryland.

³⁰Chester J. Tingler to Edward B. Rowan, 6 August 1938, Records of the Public Building Service; Records of the Section of Fine Arts, Public Building Administration, and Its Predecessors; Case Files Concerning the Embellishment of Public Buildings, 1934-1943, Record Group 121, Box no. 18, National Archives, College Park, Maryland.

³¹Edward B. Rowan to Chester J. Tingler, 15 August 1938, Records of the Public Building Service; Records of the Section of Fine Arts, Public Building Administration, and Its Predecessors; Case Files Concerning the Embellishment of Public Buildings, 1934-

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suggesting the inclusion of melons in the lower right-hand section such as Tingler had depicted in his first sketch. The artist incorporated Rowan's suggestions in the final mural design, which includes a man holding a basket of melons in the lower right quadrant of the painting.³²

In October 1938, Tingler produced a two-inch scale color sketch for the mural that was well received by the Section of Fine Arts. Rowan offered minor suggestions, but approved the sketch for the next phase of the design process, the production of a full-size cartoon.³³ Tingler completed the 11-by-5-foot cartoon in January 1939.³⁴ As stipulated in his contract, Tingler mailed a photograph of the mural drawing to the Section of Fine Arts for review. The artist noted that several changes were necessary when the drawing was enlarged. Tingler also wrote that "the drawing looks more stiff than the finished job will be. I never try to make my rhythms flow until I start to paint."³⁵

Rowan responded positively to the cartoon, but noted several minor details that required further attention. In addition, Rowan wrote, "don't you feel that the diagonal direction of the tree on the right makes your elliptical composition a little too obvious? It occurs to me that the architectural relationship of your design would be more harmoniously achieved if this diagonal were not

1943, Record Group 121, Box no. 18, National Archives, College Park, Maryland.

³²Ibid.

³³Edward B. Rowan to Chester J. Tingle, 20 October 1937, Records of the Public Building Service; Records of the Section of Fine Arts, Public Building Administration, and Its Predecessors; Case Files Concerning the Embellishment of Public Buildings, 1934-1943, Record Group 121, Box no. 18, National Archives, College Park, Maryland.

³⁴"Sylvester, Ga., P.O., C. Tingler," n.d. Records of the Public Building Service; Prints: Photographs of Paintings and Sculptures Commissioned by the Section of Fine Arts, 1934-1943. Record Group 121-GA, Box No. 53, Print no. 121-PS-2651. National Archives, College Park, Maryland.

³⁵Chester J. Tingler to Edward B. Rowan, n.d., Records of the Public Building Service; Records of the Section of Fine Arts, Public Building Administration, and Its Predecessors; Case Files Concerning the Embellishment of Public Buildings, 1934-1943, Record Group 121, Box no. 18, National Archives, College Park, Maryland.

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overemphasized."³⁶ Tingler addressed Rowan's concerns and completed the mural in less than two weeks. The mural was executed in oil paints on a pure linen canvas that was affixed to the wall above the door to the postmaster's office. On February 26, 1939, the artist mailed Rowan a photograph of the completed mural, stating that, "the painting quality is more pronounced than in most murals. I believe you would like the handling, it is not just a colored drawing."³⁷

The mural by Chester J. Tingler in the Sylvester post office is a significant part of the overall building program. During the 1930s and early 1940s, the Treasury Department constructed post offices in Georgia and throughout the nation from standardized plans. Decorative details varied among the buildings, but often nearly identical post office buildings could be found in one state, such as Georgia. Artists commissioned by the Section of Painting and Sculpture distinguished each post office building with artwork that was often derived from the history or culture of the surrounding community. Chester Tingler's depiction of the cantaloupe industry in Southwest Georgia was both a source of community pride and a monument to Sylvester's agricultural accomplishments.

³⁶Edward B. Rowan to Chester J. Tingler, 14 February 1939, Records of the Public Service, General Correspondence and Related Records, 1934-1939, Record Group 121, Box no. 3795, National Archives, College Park, Maryland.

³⁷Chester J. Tingler to Edward B. Rowan, 26 February 1939, Records of the Public Building Service; Records of the Section of Fine Arts, Public Building Administration, and Its Predecessors; Case Files Concerning the Embellishment of Public Buildings, 1934-1943, Record Group 121, Box no. 18, National Archives, College Park, Maryland.

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Verbal Boundary Description

The rectangular lot is located at the northwest corner of Main and Kelly streets in Sylvester, Georgia. The boundary begins at a point on the inside corner of two concrete sidewalks that run along Main and Kelly streets. The boundary proceeds east along the south edge of the Kelly Street sidewalk 170 feet to the east end of the property. The boundary line then proceeds south 120 feet to the southeast corner of the property line. The boundary then proceeds 170 feet west to the west end of the property at the east edge of the Main Street sidewalk. The boundary proceeds 120 feet north along the west edge of the Main Street sidewalk to the south edge of the Kelly Street Sidewalk and the place of the beginning.

Boundary Justification

The National Register boundary for the U.S. Post Office in Sylvester, Georgia, follows the current property boundary for the post office lot, which has not changed since it was purchased by the Public Building Service in 1936 for the construction of the post office. The lot includes all resources historically associated with the U.S. Post Office in Sylvester, Georgia.

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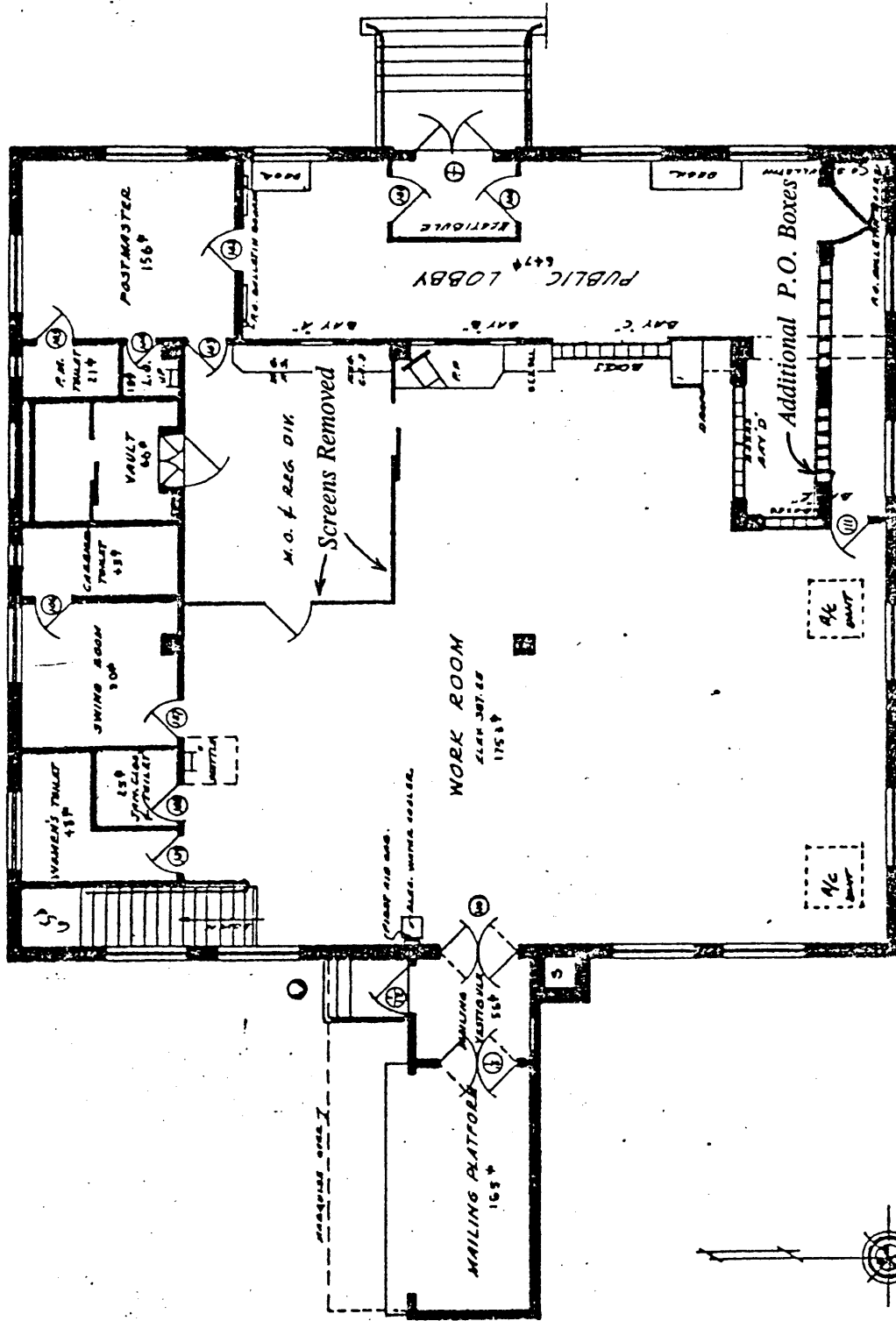
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Photographs

U.S. Post Office
Sylvester, Worth County, Georgia
Photo: Steven H. Moffson
Date: February 1996
Location of negative: USPS, Atlanta, Georgia

1. View from northwest
2. View from west
3. View from southwest
4. View from southeast
5. View from west
6. Interior, view of workroom
7. Interior, view of workroom
8. Interior, service counter
9. Interior, public lobby, with mural and vestibule
10. Interior, public lobby, with lobby desk
11. Interior, public lobby, service windows
12. Interior, public lobby, "Cantaloupe Industry" mural
13. Interior, public lobby, detail of mural
14. Interior, boiler room
15. Interior, basement (front) storage room



FIRST FLOOR PLAN
Scale 1/8" = 1'-0"

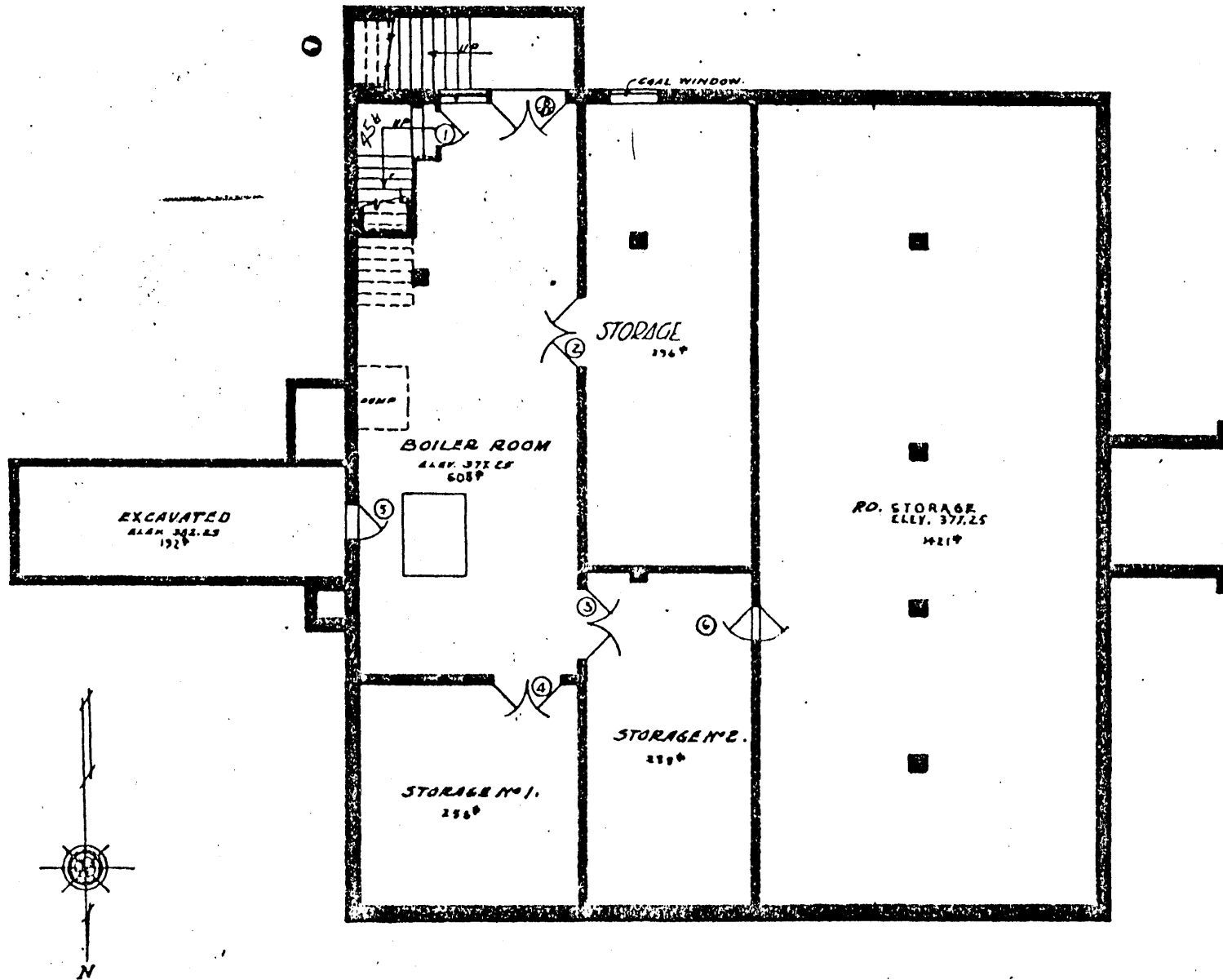
(Based on a 1965 Drawing)

ASSIGNMENT
U.S. POST OFFICE
SYLVESTER, GA.

ARCHITECT
JAMES H. HARRIS
1000 N. W. 10th St.
MIAMI, FL 33136

DATE: 6/17/63
BY: J.H.H.

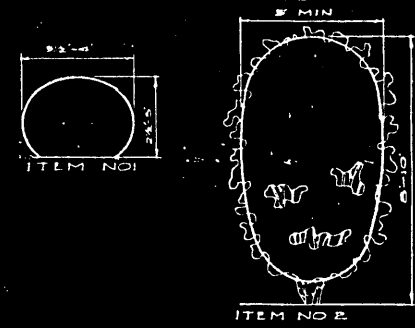
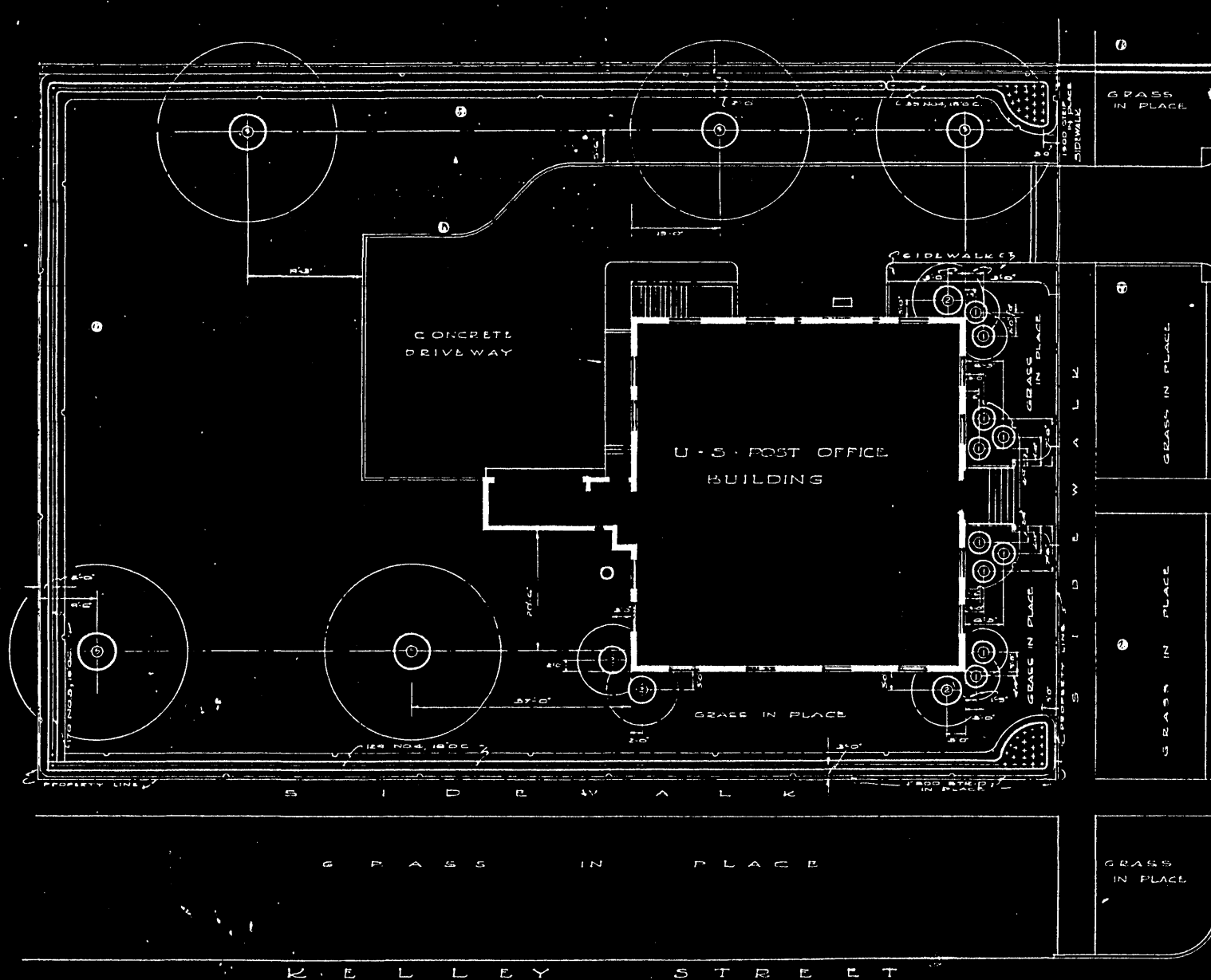
AS-3



BASEMENT FLOOR PLAN
 Scale 1/8" = 1'-0"

(Based on 1965 Drawing)

ASSIGNMENT U.S. POST OFFICE SYLVESTER, GA.		
DRAWN BY G. AL. FORT 11-2-37	REVISIONS NONE 11-2-37	DRAWING NUMBER AS-2



Above diagrams show size and shape of heavy full-branched specimens required in Item Land 2. Heavy line indicates body of plant which at time of completion must be no less than dimensions given.

Note:

Circles and crosses show exact location of plants; numbers in circles indicate varieties as listed.

All plants shall be checked for size and shape at the time of planting, after which Items 3 & 4 may be pruned back according to best practice. Care must be taken to preserve the original character of the plant.

Special attention is directed to the specification requirements covering Scope of Work, Supervision and Planting Materials.

Existing trees are shown thus: (O)

New plants are shown on plan by a light line representing ultimate spread and a heavy line representing spread at the time of planting.

Contractor shall repair any damage done to lawn areas injured by planting operations.

TREASURY DEPARTMENT
PROCUREMENT DIVISION
C. J. STOFFS
PUBLIC BUILDINGS BRANCH
BY S. BETHUNE
APPROVED: *[Signature]*

NO.	BOTANICAL NAME	COMMON NAME	PLANT	PLANT	PLANT
1	PITTOSPORUM TONICA	TONICA	10	10	10
2	LAUROCASCUS CAROLINIANA	CHERRY LAUREL	4	4	4
3	LIGUSTRUM SINENSE	AMUR PRIVET	170	170	170
4	AMELIA GRANDIFLORA	GLORIOUS AMELIA	164	164	164
5	QUERCUS NIGRA	WATER OAK	5	5	5

U.S. POST OFFICE
SYLVESTER, GA.
PLANTING PLAN
SCALE 1/8"=1'-0"



DRAWN BY: FRICK, 9536



REPRODUCED AT THE

"Sylvester, Ga., P.O., C. Tingler," n.d. Records of the Public Building Service; Prints: Photographs of Paintings and Sculptures Commissioned by the Section of Fine Arts, 1934-1943. Record Group 121-GA, Box No. 53, Print no. 121-PS-2651. National Archives, College Park, Maryland.

P. & S. 2651 - Sylvester Ga. C. Tingler



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Chester J. Tingler #2 Cantaloupe Ind. Sylvester Ga P.O.