

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR FEDERAL PROPERTIES

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	MAR 27 1986
DATE ENTERED	MAY 9 1986

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC

United States Post Office

AND/OR COMMON

Portland Main Post Office

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

125 Forest Avenue at Portland Street *N/A* NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Portland

N/A VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

First Congressional District

STATE

Maine 04101

CODE

6400

COUNTY

Cumberland

CODE

005

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<i>N/A</i> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

4 AGENCY

REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS: *(if applicable)*

USPO
New England Field Real Estate and Buildings Office

STREET & NUMBER

1050 Waltham Street

CITY, TOWN

Lexington

N/A VICINITY OF

STATE
Massachusetts 02173

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Cumberland County Registry of Deeds

STREET & NUMBER

P.O. Box 183 - 142 Federal Street

CITY, TOWN

Portland

STATE
Maine 04112

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

None

DATE

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		DATE _____

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Situated on Forest Avenue, a broad sloping street along the eastern edge of a large city park complete with a duck pond and traversed by a series of roadways leading to the revitalized old port and central commercial/business district several blocks away, the Portland Post Office occupies a prominent site at the gateway to the City; and can be viewed across some 800 feet of open green lawns from the area of Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's Deering Oaks. The immediate neighborhood contains no other noteworthy structures, and consists primarily of older marginal housing and commercial enterprises. The post office covers a site originally containing some twenty-two buildings, and when constructed was said to be the second largest Post Office in New England; Boston having the largest.

Rectangular in plan, some 232 feet long by 157 feet deep, consisting of two stories plus basement, the building contains approximately 76,000 square feet of floor space. The original appropriation for both site and building was \$850,000.00.

Despite its size the floor plan is similar to many other Post Offices of its time, with a 20 foot wide interior lobby running along the length of the building between the Postmaster and other offices on the front of the building, and the large one story workroom and mailing platform toward the rear. In addition to the main monumental front entrance, a secondary side entrance serves the public parking area on Portland Street. A second story office floor extends along the front of the building over the lobby area. The basement consists of utility, storage and supply rooms as well as the carriers' swing room and toilet facilities.

The building has a pile foundation, steel frame structure with concrete rib slab floors formed with tile blocks, and masonry walls. The exterior materials are red brick laid in a flemish bond with white granite trim and ornamentation, sitting on a white granite foundation base. Windows are wood, double hung of varying size.

The wall of the main facade on Forest Avenue is broken up into thirteen bays formed by brick pilasters from the granite base up to the granite caps, which support a granite architrave and cornice. A brick parapet wall above also reflects the brick pilasters and is trimmed with a continuous granite coping. At the first floor each bay contains a tall arched brick opening with granite spring blocks and a keystone block containing a 10/15 double hung window and fan light, trimmed with a granite surround (except for the center three entrance arches). The second story has a 10/10 double hung window in each bay with a star decoration granite keystone block above (total of thirteen) and granite sill. The parapet features one granite rectangular plaque per bay. Behind the parapet wall a slate covered pitched roof rises over the second story offices. Both ends of the facade contain projecting walls with granite trimmed brick pediments containing a circular window, three double hung windows at the second story, one arched brick opening at the first story with a double hung window and fan light flanked by double hung windows with rectangular granite plaques above. The corners of the projected portion feature brick quoins. The center three arched openings of the Forest Avenue facade comprise the main entrance and are reached by a broad flight of granite steps. Each entrance arch is recessed to form granite faced walls and vaulted ceiling from which original lanterns are suspended. Each arch features two granite spring blocks, and a sculptured keystone block supporting a granite shield and festoon. The center shield

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet PORTLAND MAIN POST OFFICE

Item number 7

Page 2

features thirteen stars (representing original colonies); the left shield bears the crest of the coat of arms of the State of Maine, a star, and the word "Dirigio"; the right shield pictures a galley with sails and oars which is the arms of the City of Portland with its motto "Resurgam." High above the center entrance arch sitting on top of the granite cornice in a niche of the parapet is the sculptured granite eagle (4'-4" x 2'-2" x 6'-0") which was executed at the Maine and New Hampshire Granite Corporation, North Jay, Maine and is controversial for facing the "wrong" way to the left (towards the old port) instead of the traditional "right" facing eagle. (The Architect said that he was looking to see where the business was coming from.)

Turning the corner at the right on Portland Street, the two story portion of the building continues with a projecting wall containing a pediment, double hung windows, red brick quoins and granite trim. Similar to the ends described for the main facade, except the first story arched opening contains the side entrance similar in detail and ornament to the main facade center entrance, complete with a shield of thirteen stars and festoon. A hanging lantern is supplemented by flanking light standards of three lanterns each.

On each side of this projecting building portion is a wall with double hung windows, two over two, topped with a continuation of the architrave and cornice, parapet wall, and pitched roof behind.

The building then drops down to a one story height and sets back, reflecting the workroom behind and shows as a series of double hung windows in a flat brick wall, topped with a granite cornice.

Original wood panelled entrance doors have been replaced by the ubiquitous aluminum doors, and stair railings are also of modern aluminum design. Except for a large ventilation duct partially enclosed in brick along the workroom elevation, the main facade and side entrance facade appear to be all original.

The interior lobby has not been as fortunate, having undergone major renovations complete with hung acoustic ceilings with fluorescent lighting, and white glazed textured tile wainscot.

The original two revolving doors at the main entrance have been eliminated as has an ornamental wrought iron gate at the stairway to the second floor. A "self service" enclosure office on the lobby side blocks off the center entrance doors.

The original character of the lobby can only be sensed by the remnants of the original detailing existing at the two active main facade entrance doors with original fan lights above, vaulted plaster ceiling, original bronze lanterns decorated with eagles, decorative plaster cornice and two murals by Henry Mattson depicting a stormy ocean and landscape.

A Federal building was added at the lower end of Forest Avenue (the Post Office occupies the lower tow levels) to the left side of the main facade in 1967 approximately the same size and scale as the original Post Office building, but with a

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For NPS use only
received _____
date entered _____

Continuation sheet PORTLAND MAIN POST OFFICE Item number 7

Page 3

much simpler and flatter wall treatment reflective of its time. The connection to the original building is set back by a recessed wall. Due to its location towards the upper part of the street, and its rich architectural treatment, the Portland Post Office building naturally dominates the site and is the structure that immediately attracts the eye, and easily holds its place as the most prominent edifice in the area.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD		AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)	
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION			

SPECIFIC DATES	Designed: 1932	BUILDER/ARCHITECT	John Calvin Stevens & John Howard Stevens, Architects, Portland, ME
	Constructed: 1934		Poorvu-Heenan Construction Co.
STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE	Federal Office Addition: 1967		Richard B. Wright, Lewiston, Maine

The Portland Post Office incorporates the elements of both classical and colonial revival design, and was designed by the local Architects to be distinctively "New England Colonial."

Design policy for post office construction during the early years of the depression continued to be one of standardization of plans and details, so as to speed the design/construction process in the interest of creating jobs to help in the economic recovery. Private architects received contracts to design government buildings after 1930 in an effort to alleviate unemployment in the architectural profession. Working with post office standards, the local architect's primary contribution was in the treatment of the facades and public lobby.

Government buildings were always designed to express classical and democratic ideals, to symbolize power, organization and institutionalization, as well as exposing local populations to great architectural works. With the depression there was a renewed effort to create buildings symbolic of government strength, ideals and efforts to restore economic health.

The Post Office architects have performed their task exceedingly well and have been ingeneous in creating a richly ornamented architecture that breaks down the large scale of the building to one of lightness and liveliness, and provides a bit of history built into its ornamentation for the Nation, State and City. As older buildings in the City are revitalized and newer high rise structures start to dominate the sky line, the Portland Post Office by nature of its prominence, will continue to express the Federal presence and represent an important historical period in the growth of the United States of America, State of Maine and City of Portland. It provides a unique example of a one of a kind building developed from a government policy of standardization.

The two murals inside the entrance to the lobby by Henry Mattson were probably added at a later date when Government programs were initiated after 1933 to subsidize local artists, ornament public building interiors, and bring artwork to the American people.

As of this writing, we have not found any other background information on these two murals.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

History of Post Office Construction 1900-1940, July, 1982

Craig, Lois, ed. The Federal Presence: Architecture, Politics and Symbols in the United States Government Building, Cambridge, Massachusetts: The MIT Press 1979

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 4 acres

UTM REFERENCES

A	1, 9	3, 9, 7	8, 6, 0	4, 8	3, 4	5, 0, 0	B						
	ZONE	EASTING		NORTHING				ZONE	EASTING		NORTHING		
C							D						

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION (includes Federal Building Addition)

Northwest to Southeast 590'± along Forest Street
 West to East 264'± along Portland Street
 Southeast to Northwest 650'± along Brattle Street
 Northeast to Southwest 300'± along railroad tracks - parallel to Kennebeck Street

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Sylvan Limon, Architect

ORGANIZATION

SULLIVAN DESIGN GROUP, INC.

STREET & NUMBER

44 Adams Street

CITY OR TOWN

Braintree

DATE

August 27, 1985

TELEPHONE

(617) 848-1545

STATE

Massachusetts 02184

12 CERTIFICATION OF NOMINATION

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER RECOMMENDATION

YES

NO

NONE

Earle B. Shortworth, Jr.
STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

In compliance with Executive Order 11593, I hereby nominate this property to the National Register, certifying that the State Historic Preservation Officer has been allowed 90 days in which to present the nomination to the State Review Board and to evaluate its significance. The evaluated level of significance is National State Local.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

James T. Coe

TITLE Director, Office of Real Estate

DATE March 21, 1986

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER.

Kathleen Andrews

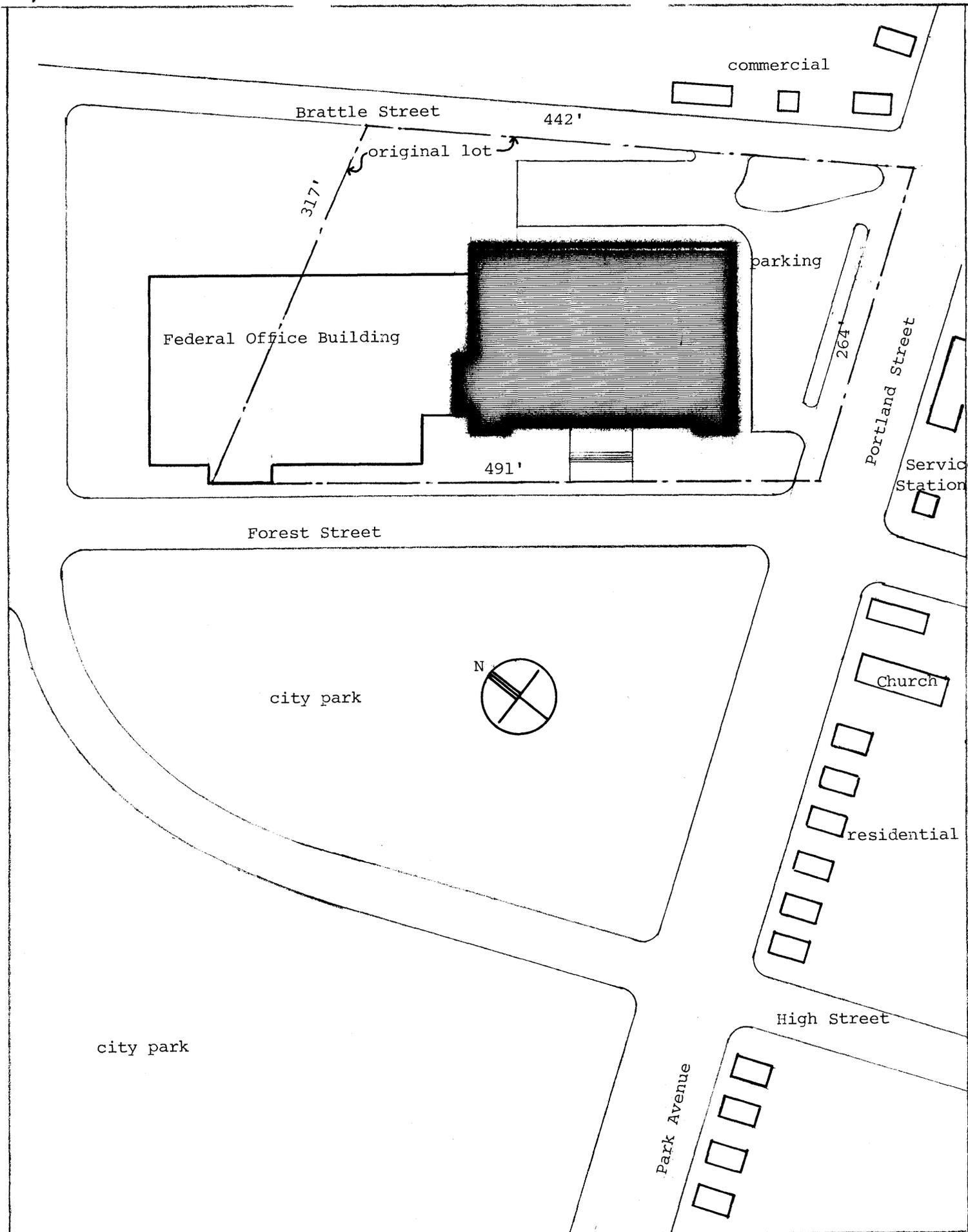
DATE 5/9/80

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

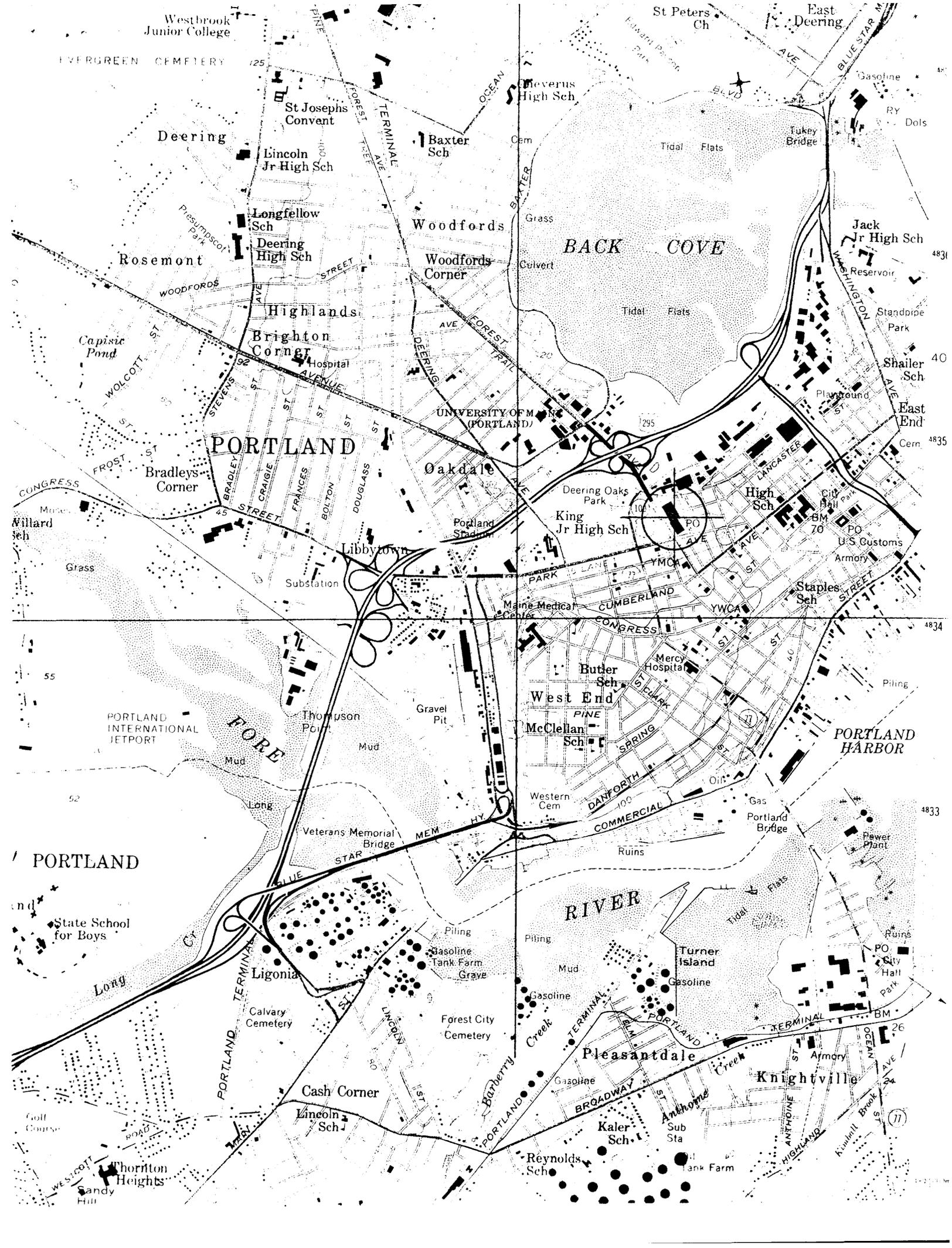
ATTEST *Paul L. Savage*

DATE 5-7-86

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER



United States Post Office ° Portland, Maine



Westbrook Junior College

EVERGREEN CEMETERY

St Josephs Convent

Deering

Lincoln Jr High Sch

Baxter Sch

Reverus High Sch

East Deering

Rosemont

Longfellow Sch

Deering High Sch

Woodfords

Woodfords Corner

BACK COVE

Jack Jr High Sch

Highlands

Brighton Corner

Oakdale

UNIVERSITY OF MAINE (PORTLAND)

Bradleys Corner

PORTLAND

Oakdale

Deering Oaks Park

King Jr High Sch

High Sch

Staples Sch

Willard Sch

Libbytown

Portland Stadium

Maine Medical Center

CUMBERLAND

YWCA

Staples Sch

PORTLAND INTERNATIONAL JETPORT

FORE

Thompson Point

Gravel Pit

Butler Sch

West End

McClellan Sch

PORTLAND HARBOR

PORTLAND

State School for Boys

Veterans Memorial Bridge

MEM. HY.

RIVER

Turner Island

City Hall

Long

Ligonias

Forest City Cemetery

Pleasantdale

Knightville

Cash Corner

Lincoln Sch

Reynolds Sch

Kaler Sch

Sub Sta

Armory

Whornton Heights

Sandy Hill

Knoll Brook