

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

FOR FEDERAL PROPERTIES

<b>FOR NPS USE ONLY</b>	
RECEIVED	MAR 12 1986
DATE ENTERED	MAR 14 1986

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

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC  
Lewistown Federal Building & Post Office  
AND/OR COMMON  
Lewistown Main Post Office

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER  
204 Third Avenue North  
CITY, TOWN  
Lewistown  
STATE  
Montana

NA NOT FOR PUBLICATION  
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT  
2

NA VICINITY OF

CODE  
30

COUNTY  
Fergus

CODE  
027

**2 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 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	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Thematic Group	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
	NA	<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

**4 AGENCY**

REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS: *(If applicable)*  
U.S. Postal Service, Western Regional Headquarters  
STREET & NUMBER  
850 Cherry Avenue  
CITY, TOWN  
San Bruno  
STATE  
California  
VICINITY OF  
94099

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.  
Fergus County Assessor's Office  
STREET & NUMBER  
712 W. Main Street  
CITY, TOWN  
Lewistown  
STATE  
Montana  
59457

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE  
Historic Resources of Lewistown  
DATE  
1984  
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS  
Montana State Historic Preservation Office  
CITY, TOWN  
Helena  
STATE  
Montana

FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

## 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 DATE <u>NA</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Lewistown Main Post Office is one story in height, strongly horizontal in elevation, and topped by a low metal-clad hipped roof, which rises from behind a solid brick parapet. The building's structure is supported by reinforced concrete with red brick and white terra cotta facing the exterior. The symmetrically arranged front facade is flat with slight articulation of the single-bayed end wings and of the centered entry section. White terra cotta is used to demark the quoins of the end wings and as a medium for the richly molded entry ensemble. The otherwise plain facade of red brick establishes a field against which a white Greek temple is placed. Engaged fluted columns with Ionic capitals, triangular pediment and dentil molding enrich the entry. The building is well-preserved and essentially unaltered from its original design.

### PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The basement is constructed of reinforced concrete. Terra cotta block is used for dividing walls. The first floor is brick with brick facing. Terra cotta is used for the entry detailing, corner quoins, water table, and coping. Granite is used for the entry stairs. The hipped portion of the roof is clad with copper and the flat portion consists of built-up tar composition. A rectangular dormer with triangular gable extends from the sloped roof to the parapet wall and is centered over the pedimented entry.

The building is one story in height on a raised platform. Although the building is strongly horizontal in its front elevation (northeast), vertical emphasis is provided by extending the single story brick wall 26 feet from the first floor level (marked by terra cotta water table resting on a sandstone belt course) to the top of the parapet. (It might be noted that the building was designed and constructed to accommodate an additional two stories.)

The front facade is symmetrical and essentially flat, with articulation provided by slightly projecting the end sections and entry section. Emphasis is provided to the end segments by terra cotta quoins. The end

**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

Lewistown PO

Item number 7

Page

1

bays each contain a single window (originally, paired 4-over-4 light double hung wood sash with 2-light transom windows) which consist of "terra-tone" vinyl clad wood casements with "sanspray" infilled transoms (installed in 1980).

Two additional window bays, identical to the end bays, flank each side of the imposing terra cotta entry section. The entry section is centered on the facade and projects slightly on the same plane as the end sections. The entry is designed in a Classical Revival motif (Greek). Fluted half-round pilasters with ionic capitals, set within flat molded pilasters, support a triangular pediment. The pediment has a plain tympanum and foliated cornice. "United States Post Office" in gold incised letters adorns the otherwise plain frieze. The cornice and plain frieze extend along the entire front facade, set below the terra cotta capped brick parapet wall.

Double aluminum framed glass doors (replaced original paneled doors) framed by projected architrave are set within the portico. This architrave is surrounded by a rosette pattern. Dentils adorn the projected door cornice which is supported by scrolled brackets. Egg and dart molding and fretwork provide additional embellishment to the architrave. Narrow, vertically oriented single light windows break the flat terra cotta plane on either side of the entry portico.

The granite entry stairs access an intermediate landing, flanked by square buttresses, then narrow and continue their straight run to the entry landing. Free-standing cast iron light standards, resting atop the buttresses, flank the entry doors.

The end facades are essentially identical. Articulation is provided by slightly projecting the main portion of the building and marking its corners

**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

Lewistown PO

Item number 7

Page

2

with terra cotta quoins. The entablature of the main portion of the facades are extended from the front facades. Three equally spaced window bays, identical to those of the front, are located on the facades.

The rear section is of the same height as the main and contains a single window bay (identical to others). A slightly projecting cornice extends from the cornice and frieze of the main portion. A solid parapet with terra cotta coping extends above the cornice (at same level as main portion). The roof is flat, built-up tar composition. A flat metal marquee, supported by steel pipe columns, extends over the concrete loading platform to the rear of the building.

The rear facade is symmetrical with the loading platform centered. Three windows flank each side of the platform (identical to front and sides) and three windows are located above the marquee. The terra cotta water table, cornice, and coping of the end facades extend to and along the rear facade.

Interior materials of the basement consist of concrete floors, ceiling, and walls (with quarry block partition walls) in the storage and work areas. The halls in the public area consist of terrazzo floors with marble edge and base strips, plaster walls, and plaster ceiling. The offices contain vinyl asbestos tile floors, plaster walls and acoustical tile ceilings. The first floor contains the lobby, postmaster's office, and work room. The lobby floors are terrazzo with marble edge strips and marble base strips; the walls and ceiling are plaster. The postmaster's office has carpeted floors with plaster walls and ceiling. The work room has vinyl asbestos tile floors, plaster walls with 7-foot tongue and groove wood wainscotting, and plaster ceiling.



## 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

1. Floor Plans 1931.
2. Sanborn Map, September 1922, sheet 9.
3. Sievert, Ken, "Montana Historical Architectural Survey (Lewistown MPO)," December 15, 1983.
4. Lewistown Democrat News, various articles, 1930-1931.

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 1.033 acres

UTM REFERENCES

A 

1	2	6	1	9	5	2	0	52	1	3	4	0	0
ZONE				EASTING				NORTHING					

B 

ZONE				EASTING				NORTHING					

C 

ZONE				EASTING				NORTHING					

D 

ZONE				EASTING				NORTHING					

### VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Lots 1-3 and -7-9, Block J4, original townsite.  
 The site is rectangular and contains 200 feet of frontage along Third Avenue with a depth and frontages along Broadway and Washington Street of 150 feet.  
 Site size = 45,000 sq.ft.

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
NA	NA	NA	NA
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
NA	NA	NA	NA

## 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

H. J. "Jim" Kolva

ORGANIZATION

Institute for Urban and Local Studies

STREET & NUMBER

W. 705 1st Avenue

CITY OR TOWN

Spokane

DATE

September 1985

TELEPHONE

(509) 458-6219

STATE

Washington 99204

## 12 CERTIFICATION OF NOMINATION

### STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER RECOMMENDATION

YES  NO  NONE

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. Col

TITLE

Director, Office of Real Estate

DATE

02/06/86

### FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

See Continuation Sheet for listing DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

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 Lewistown PO ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 1

characterized the federal building programs of the mid-to late-1930s. Lewistown best exemplifies this transition among the Montana examples, and is of state-wide significance under Criterion C.

POLITICS/GOVERNMENT

At the time of the construction of the post office Lewistown was fully embroiled in the Depression, which had actually begun in this section of Montana during the early 1920s with drought and low grain prices. The city's population which had doubled from 1910 to 1920 declined in 1930. No new construction was in progress, nor would there be any through the Depression era. Thus, the federal building represents not only the first federally-constructed post office in the city, but one of the very few buildings erected in the city during the Depression. The effort to secure the building involved the interaction between local civic groups and their elected representatives. As a symbol of this community action and the federal government's Depression era public building programs, the building is locally significant under Criterion A. The effort resulted in a strong feeling of pride toward one of the most beautiful, modern and well-appointed federal buildings in the entire country, population being considered. Congressman Scott Leavitt delivered the primary address at the building's cornerstone ceremony which was attended by two thousand people--over one-third of the city's population.

LOCAL CONTEXT

Lewistown, with a 1980 population of over 10,000, is the county seat of Fergus County and is located in the geographical center of the State of Montana. The Lewistown area was settled by early traders and on May 10, 1874, Company F of the 7th Infantry established Camp Lewis near Story's Fort to protect commerce on the Carrol Trail. In 1879 Metis settlers established a settlement at Big Spring Creek. The present site of Lewistown was homesteaded by Francis A. Janeaux and Paul Morase. Janeaux constructed a trading post on Big Spring Creek (near Third Avenue North and Broadway) and in 1812 platted a portion of his land for a village. In 1883 Janeaux turned over his property to T.C. Power

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 Lewistown PO ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 2

and Brothers, who dispatched N.M. Erickson to manage the operation. Erickson arrived in July of 1883 and began to build a town. On March 10, 1884, Erickson was named Lewistown's first postmaster after successfully petitioning for a post office designation of "Lewistown". With the formation of Fergus County in 1885, Lewistown was named the county seat. In 1889 Lewistown was incorporated.

Lewistown, as a growing business center for livestock, mining, and farming interests, reached a population of 1,096 by 1900. The railroad arrived in 1903, and by 1913 both the Milwaukee and Great Northern railroads were operating branch lines into Lewistown. The opening of Montana for homesteading and the promotion of homesteading by the railroad resulted in significant growth for the city. The population doubled from 2,992 in 1910 to 6,120 in 1920, for example. The period between 1900 and 1920 was the most significant period of Lewistown's growth, and most all the central business district buildings are from this period.

In 1919, Montana recorded its worst drought in history. In the years immediately following, drought conditions, tumbling grain prices, and other factors reversed the influx of farmers and they flowed out of Montana. In 1924 all of Lewistown's banks closed and the town stopped growing. By 1930 the population had declined to 5,358. The city was hit hard by the Depression and major new construction in the 1930s was limited essentially to the post office (1931) and the Civic Center (1936 under the Works Progress Administration).

The Lewistown Post Office is located one block northwest of Main Street (oriented in a northeast/southwest grid), the primary business street of the city. The block on which the post office is sited also includes the National Register listed Lewistown Masonic Temple (three story sandstone, 1908), which occupies the southeast corner. The remainder of the lot is used for surface parking. The rear of the two-story sandstone Powers Merchantile Block is located across Broadway Street to the southeast of the post office. The buildings Third Avenue to the northeast include a former 1950s theater (one story brick), and a service station circa 1930 that has been renovated into offices (one story, brick).

**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    Lewistown PO    Item number 8    Page 3

Several notable residential structures are located north of the post office (north corner of the Third Avenue/Washington intersection). This area is known as the "silk stocking district" and presents fine examples of early Lewistown residential construction. This area, as well as the central business district (which includes the post office) and courthouse district have recently been listed in the National Register (June 27, 1985). The Lewistown Post Office is considered an integral structure within this district.

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

The Lewistown Post Office received its initial appropriation of \$50,000 (of a total estimated cost of \$165,000) for site acquisition and commencement of construction in the Deficiency Act of May 29, 1928. The appropriation had been long awaited, and culminated the efforts of three Montana congressmen. The construction of a federal building in Lewistown had been urged prior to World War I by Congressman Tom Stout, but his efforts were stymied by the outbreak of the war. Later, Congressman Carl Riddick tried unsuccessfully to obtain appropriations. Finally, Congressman Scott Leavett, with documentation gathered by postmaster Chauncey R. Fowler and support provided by local businessmen, was able to secure appropriations.

After some delay in clearing title to the site, the Lewistown Democrat News reported the start of site excavation on March 2, 1931. J.J. Willie, foreman of construction for McGough Brothers of Minneapolis, Minnesota, directed the work. On March 15th, the News reported "much interest" in the excavation site as contractor Walter O'Neill of Stanford directed his crew and the five teams of horses in removing the soil.

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

Lewistown PO

Item number 8

Page

4

Various articles throughout May reported progress on the new building and on May 11th the city celebrated the laying of the cornerstone. The local businessmen were obviously proud of the new building, as reflected by a full page ad devoted to the dedication ceremony and outlining the program. News accounts of May 12th were captioned with "Two Thousand Gather for Federal Building Ceremony." Congressman Scott Leavitt had made a special trip to deliver the main address. Various speakers recounted the history of the local post office, efforts to obtain their new federal building, and the symbol that it represented.

Work proceeded, delays were encountered, but progress was being made toward the expected opening around December 1st. On October 29th, the new Elks Building was dedicated.

On November 14th, federal inspectors made their final check of the building. The News announced on November 20th that the dedication of the new building was set for November 25th. The November 25th issue of the News was again marked by local pride in a two-page ad congratulating those involved in the building's construction. Pride was taken not only in "one of the most beautiful, commodius, modern and well appointed federal buildings in the entire country, population being considered," but especially in the local materials and "craftsmen" involved. The brick and tile were provided by the Lewistown Brick and Tile Company; lime, concrete, sand and gravel, terrazzo work, wood work, etc., were provided by Montana firms.

The article reporting the ceremony stated that almost 1,000 people attended and were impressed by the new building. Judge E.K. Cheadle provided the main address; F.F. Attix (Chamber of Commerce president) presided; and the Elks band played. Finally, the new building was occupied by Postmaster C.R. Fowler and his staff on November 30, 1931.

**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      Lewistown PO      Item number 10      Page 1

