

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number _____ Page _____

SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 89001753

Date Listed: 11/1/89

Oakes Post Office
Property Name

Dickey
County

ND
State

US Post Offices in North Dakota, 1900 - 1940
Multiple Name

This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.

Beth Boland
Signature of the Keeper

11/1/89
Date of Action

=====
Amended Items in Nomination:

Due to the unavailability of a USGS map with UTM ticks for this quadrangle, UTM coordinates will have to be calculated from the following longitude and latitude coordinates, provided by Lauren McCrosky of the North Dakota SHPO:

Latitude: 98 degrees, 5 minutes, 30 seconds
Longitude: 46 degrees, 8 minutes

The nomination form is amended to include these coordinates.

DISTRIBUTION:

- National Register property file
- Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)

1753

SEP 19 1989

NATIONAL REGISTER

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

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

1. Name of Property

historic name Oakes Post Office

other names/site number same

2. Location

street & number 611 Main Avenue N/A not for publication
city, town Oakes N/A vicinity
state North Dakota code ND county Dickey code 021 zip code 58474

3. Classification

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

Name of related multiple property listing:
U. S. Post Offices in North Dakota, 1900-1940

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register none

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

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

Bradford W. Meador 8-22-89
Signature of certifying official Date
U.S. Postal Service
State or Federal agency and bureau

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

James E. Sperry September 15, 1989
Signature of commenting or other official Date
James E. Sperry
State Historic Preservation Officer (North Dakota)
State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register. *Patrick Andrews* 11/1/89
 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:)

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

post office

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

post office

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

other: Starved Classicism

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation brick

walls brick

roof composition

other

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

See attached continuation sheets.

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Multiple Property: U.S. Post Offices in North Dakota, 1900-1940

OAKES, DESCRIPTION:

Unlike a majority of the post offices built in the twentieth century, the building in Oakes is in the middle of the block, rather than on a corner lot. The Oakes Post Office, located on the north side of the street, faces south on Main Avenue, another departure from the usual practice of locating the post office a block off the principal downtown street. In the immediate area of the post office, there are commercial structures to the south, west, and north. There is a school building a block east on the south side of Main Avenue. One story business blocks are located on the east and west sides of the post office property. The central business district is located on the two blocks west of the post office on Main Avenue between the post office and the north-south Chicago and Northwestern Railroad tracks. Within two blocks east of the post office along Main Avenue, the character of the street becomes residential. Commercial and residential buildings alike in Oakes are modest wood frame or brick structures. The post office has no direct or indirect impact on buildings in the immediate area.

The Oakes Post Office building is in excellent condition. An excellent job of tuckpointing was done in 1984, and the original composition roof was replaced by a rubber membrane roof in the mid-1980s. The post office site is small, and a driveway runs along the east side of the building back to the rear mail platform and parking area. There is a 20 foot wide alley at the north end of the property. A small strip of grass 11 feet wide runs between the property line and the building on the west. Another 12 foot strip of grass runs between the front (south) face of the building and the sidewalk. The west property line is planted with a low deciduous hedge and there are several relatively recent evergreens as foundation plantings at the front of the building.

The construction is fireproof wood and steel with hollow tile walls, sheathed in a common but good quality red brick laid in American bond. Windows and storms are wood, with the windows having 12 over 8 lights and the storms having 20 lights. Front steps are concrete, as is the plinth or cheek blocks. Lamps flanking the front doors are bronze. The date and name block is limestone. The parapet has stone coping. The roof is new rubber membrane. Newer front entry doors are aluminum and glass, but were originally wood with 8 lights.

The interior of the building has plaster walls and ceilings. New flourescent lights have been installed in the first floor; in the lobby

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these are square box lights. The lobby has a wood vestibule which is totally original, with wood trim. The wainscot in the lobby is wood panelled. The lobby floor is grey-beige ceramic tile with an accent of black tile used as a border. The lobby is surrounded by a rust colored ceramic tile mopboard. Wood trim in the lobby has diamond florals above the windows. There are metal grilles between the lobby and workroom over the service windows. The postmaster's office has oak flooring and wood chair rails and picture rails painted green. The workroom has a tongue and groove wood wainscot and maple floor. Skylights above the service area have been blanked off. The original boiler has been converted from coal to oil.

A complete set of blueprints is located in Oakes with the postmaster. Blueprints showing the basement and first floor plans are attached. The Oakes Post Office is unusual in that the front (south) portion of the basement is unexcavated and has only a crawl space to service pipes and plumbing.

8. Statement of Significance

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

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

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

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Politics/ Government

Architecture

Economics

Period of Significance

1935-1939

Significant Dates

1935

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

OSA/ Louis A. Simon, Acting Supervising Architect

B: McGough Brothers, St. Paul, MN

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

See attached continuation sheets.

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Multiple Property: U.S. Post Offices in North Dakota, 1900-1940

OAKES, SIGNIFICANCE:

The Oakes Post Office is significant under Criteria A and C on a state and local level as one of a small group of 20 extant federally-built post offices in North Dakota constructed between 1900-1940. Under Criterion A, this post office is associated with various federal policies in post office funding, design, and method of construction in the early 20th century. Under Criterion C, this facility shares the distinctive characteristics of federally-funded post offices as a property type built in North Dakota before the Second World War. The major areas of significance are Politics/Government, Architecture, and Economics. The Oakes Post Office is significant architecturally on a state level as an excellent and only example of a 1930s Class D postal facility in North Dakota and as one of six post offices built between 1935-1940 in Starved Classical style. Its design is unique in North Dakota during this 5 year period in being nearly devoid of obvious Colonial Revival detailing. The integrity of this facility is very good. It is noteworthy that as a Class D facility, the Oakes Post Office is the only federally-built one in the state erected in a city which is not a county seat. Economically, the Oakes Post Office is one of nine post offices in the state erected as a result of the federal government's efforts to relieve economic suffering and provide jobs in the aftermath of the Depression.

Guidelines for standardized post office designs were recommended in 1913 by the Public Buildings Commission, which became known in 1915 as the McAdoo system. This system of classifying government buildings was instituted as a cost saving measure and as a way to clear up a large backlog of undrawn designs for authorized federal facilities. Class D post offices such as the Oakes Post Office were built in towns having receipts of under \$15,000 in cities where real estate values indicated only a limited investment for improvements. This classification system for federal buildings began under Secretary of the Treasury William McAdoo in 1915. The character of Class D buildings were brick facing; little stone or terra cotta; only the first floor fireproof; stock sash, frames, and doors; and an ordinary class of building "such as any businessman would consider a reasonable investment in a small town."

Although the Oakes Post Office is small in size, its floorplan follows closely a standard plan which was in effect around 1930-1941. A cost saving measure seems to have been taken by putting unexcavated crawl space in the lower front of the building rather than a full basement. This, too, is unique in North Dakota post office design. It is also the only

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post office constructed without stone trim around its windows or used for decoration on the front facade. It fits the Class D Treasury Department guidelines and appears to be an excellent example of the Class D type of facility. With basically Colonial Revival massing and design, it is an excellent example of Starved Classicism in that it has no overtly revival design elements. Its window surrounds and reveals are brick. No expensive stone was used. The parapet coping is cast stone and the front steps and cheek blocks are poured concrete. Stepped-back brick window surrounds extend below the window frames to form a simple spandrel. Brick is laid in contrasting courses to the walls, with headers showing, to form a stylized water table and window spandrels below. The design is simple but elegant, and unusual for the region. Hints of Colonial Revival style are evident in the symmetrical facade, formal centered entry, carriage lamps flanking the front entry, and small multi-paned windows.

This is an outstanding example of a Class D post office by Supervising Architect Louis A. Simon's administration. It is the only one of its class in North Dakota. It is no more elaborate than some of the commercial buildings in Oakes. The city hall burned 20-30 years ago. The public library is housed in a school building, and Oakes is not a county seat. It is the major governmental building in Oakes.

When the Oakes Post Office was announced in 1934, the Acting Postmaster was J.B. Thompson. Plans for the \$39,000 post office with \$10,000 reserved for acquisition of the site, fixtures and furniture were announced locally in September 1934. Oakes was the only town in North Dakota to get the green light on a new postal facility in 1933. It was part of a 110 million dollar appropriation for some 626 towns across the U.S. The government wanted to expedite these buildings to relieve unemployment across the country (The Oakes Times, 11/16/33, p. 1; 9/13/34, p. 1; 9/20/34, p. 10). McGough Brothers of St. Paul was the low bidder at \$34,800 for construction of the building. The local newspaper alluded to a "battle" of "many years" duration to secure a post office, but during acquisition and construction the newspaper was very quiet about any local excitement these activities might have occasioned. Since the federal intent was, in part, to relieve unemployment, the Oakes job was a success: around 20 local men were used as laborers and carpenters on the building (The Oakes Times, 10/18/34, p. 1). Before the building was completed, Frank Gallagher was appointed permanent postmaster (The Oakes Times, 5/30/35, p. 1).

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Oakes P.O.

When the post office was completed in August 1935, there were local complaints about the cheap brick and the local paper noted that "few if any other buildings in town strike one as having such poor material (The Oakes Times, 8/1/35, p. 2). On the blueprints, the brick used is indicated as high quality common brick, but it looks like face brick compared to today's common brick. Unfortunately, children in town badly mutilated the cornerstone in the week after the building was completed (The Oakes Times, 8/8/35, p. 2), but it was repaired.

The post office follows the usual system of construction during these years and does not appear to have unusual significance historically. Post office construction had by 1934 become somewhat commonplace.

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OAKES, BIBLIOGRAPHY:

Blueprints (original). On file: Oakes Postmaster.

The Oakes Times, November 16, 1933.

The Oakes Times, September 13 and 20, 1934.

The Oakes Times, October 18, 1934.

The Oakes Times, May 30, 1935.

The Oakes Times, August 1 and 8, 1935.