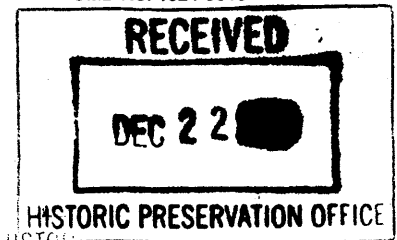
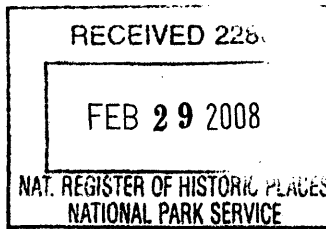


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service



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 *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 an 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 listed in 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.

270

1. Name of Property

historic name United States Post Office

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 360 Main St not for publication

city or town Metuchen Borough vicinity

state New Jersey code NJ county Middlesex code 023 zip code 08840

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I 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. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. See continuation sheet for additional comments.

Dallan C. Wordekemper 2/27/08
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

Dallan C. Wordekemper, FPO United States 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.

Amy Cradic 8/27/07
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

Amy Cradic, Assistant Commissioner Natural & Historic Resources/DSHPO

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:) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

Patricia Andrews

4/2/2008

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)

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

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

GOVERNMENT/post office

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

GOVERNMENT/post office

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Colonial Revival

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation concrete

walls brick

structural tile

roof asphalt

other

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.
[x] 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.)

Property is:

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

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(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
[x] previously determined eligible by the National Register
designated a National Historic Landmark
recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

- Architecture
Art
Communications
Politics/Government

Period of Significance

1939-42

Significant Dates

1940
1942

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Simon, Louis Adolphe (Supervising Architect)
Melick, Neal A. (engineer)

Primary location of additional data

- State Historic Preservation Office
Other State agency
Federal agency
Local government
University
Other

Name of repository:

U.S. Post Office (Metuchen)
Name of Property

Middlesex Co., NJ
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property Less than one acre

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	18	554168	4487865	3			
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
2				4			

See continuation sheet

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 Kevin M. Hale
organization _____ date May 2004
street & number 5 Lawrence Street telephone (732) 548-4437
city or town Metuchen state NJ zip code 08840

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 United States Postal Service - New York FSO
street & number 2 HUDSON PLACE telephone 201-714-5431
city or town HOBOKEN state NJ zip code 07030-5502

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.470 *et seq.*)

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Metuchen Post Office
Middlesex Co., NJ

Section number 7 Page 1

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

Introduction

Located at 360 Main Street, Metuchen, New Jersey, on the southeast corner of the intersection with Woodbridge Avenue, the United States Post Office is a one-story red brick Colonial Revival building with a raised basement set back from the adjoining streets and lots on landscaped grounds with a parking lot and loading area bounded by retaining walls to the rear.ⁱ Essentially unchanged since it was constructed, some physical alterations have been made to accommodate new technologies (e.g., central air conditioning during the 1970s) and social policies (e.g., accessibility for the physically disabled during the 1990s). Despite these changes, the building has maintained its architectural integrity for six and a half decades.

Property Site and Setting

The post office property consists of slightly more than one half-acre at the southeast corner of the intersection of Main Street and Woodbridge Avenue and is listed on the revised 1939 tax assessment map of the Borough of Metuchen as Block 182, Lots 33 and 33.02 [photograph 1]. Trapezoidal in shape, the lot runs for 139 feet of frontage along Main Street (formerly Bonhamtown-Oak Tree Road) and for 177 feet of depth along Woodbridge Avenue (formerly Woodbridge Road) for a total of approximately 23,803 square feet.ⁱⁱ Originally much steeper in slope, the property underwent soil removal and regrading to reduce the incline after demolition of the two detached houses which formerly stood on the site [historic views "D", "E", and "F"].

To the immediate south along Main Street is a large Colonial Revival dwelling which has been added onto and converted to offices for a law firm. A retaining wall along the Main Street frontage of this house's grounds gives some indication of the original height of the Post Office property.

Across Main Street to the west are several other detached private residences, mostly late nineteenth century vernacular in style, which have also been converted to various professional offices and a music school. Northwest of the intersection lies the former Presbyterian Church cemetery dating from 1731, now Borough-owned and usually referred to as the "Old Colonial Cemetery". The Presbyterian meetinghouse once stood adjacent to the cemetery, probably on land now encompassed by the Northeast Corridor rail line right-of-way.ⁱⁱⁱ Main Street utilizes an underpass to cross the Northeast Corridor rail line. This underpass was constructed sometime in the early twentieth century and regrading of Main Street to create approaches for the underpass probably exacerbated the steep slope situation for the homes on what would become the post office property.

Immediately to the north of the post office and across Woodbridge Avenue lies the Metuchen Railroad Station. Originally constructed by the Pennsylvania Railroad in 1888, the station is typical of small town commuter rail stations constructed by the major railroads in the late nineteenth century.^{iv} Adjacent to the train station and northwest of the post office is the First Presbyterian Church of Metuchen. Built in 1836, after the railroad came through and caused the demolition of the meetinghouse, the church underwent a substantial renovation and remodeling in the 1950s which removed the lancet Gothic Revival windows and provided it with the Colonial Revival exterior it has retained to the present.^v

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Metuchen Post Office
Middlesex Co., NJ

Section number 7 Page 2

East of the post office, and partially obscured by a screen of coniferous trees planted behind a retaining wall for the post office parking lot, is a small complex of red brick condominium townhouses built in the late twentieth century which replaced a detached single family dwelling.

In harmony with most of the surrounding structures, the post office is set back substantially from the property lines. Its position on a slight rise and the elevating of the main floor several feet above ground level, as if on a dais, give the structure an aura of monumentality. At the same time, the scale and form of the building harmonize with the surrounding residential-scale buildings allowing for a seamless transition from a commercial to a residential environment.

The entrance steps and building foundation are edged with low-lying shrubs and bushes. Most of the remainder of the front and side-yards are graded and planted as lawn. A tall flagpole about halfway between the sidewalk and front elevation with a stepped concrete base leading to it from the Main Street sidewalk is located to the left of the entrance steps. When the flag is flying at full-mast, it is above the roof-line of the building. Five mature trees are planted flanking the building, three on the north side and two on the south side. Around the year 2000, in the north setback, a new curvilinear brick-paved path following the contour of the slope was constructed between the Woodbridge Avenue sidewalk and the wheelchair-accessible ramp (see below) and a wood-plank bench with metal frame was installed, along with small flower beds and a memorial stone with plaque commemorating former municipal librarian Grace Halsey. The late Miss Halsey had bequeathed the funds used to construct this landscape feature and it was dedicated as "Grace's Garden" in her honor [photograph 2]. Lawn occupies the south setback. Combined, the south, west and north setbacks create a park-like setting for the building. No notable landscape features are situated in the rear (east) setback since it is almost entirely occupied by the parking lot, retaining wall and conifer screen referred to earlier.

Exterior - General Features

Measuring sixty-seven feet wide by sixty-two feet deep with an eleven foot deep rear wing and ten foot deep loading dock, the Metuchen Post Office is a roughly square building marked by bilateral symmetry. From a design point of view, it consists of two distinct masses divided vertically from side to side, a pitched-roofed gable-ended front section and a flat-roofed parapeted rear section [photographs 3, 4, and 16]. The parapet is topped with concrete cast stone coping blocks. A concrete base projects slightly outward from the walls below the main floor suggestive of a water table.

Walls are composed of structural brick tile covered with a veneer of red brick. Brickwork is laid in the common bond pattern in which five courses of staggered stretchers alternate with one course of headers [photograph 14]. Window openings, actual or blind, are accented with concrete cast stone lintels and sills. Lintels are three courses wide and sills are two courses wide. Spandrel panels beneath the main windows are slightly recessed [photograph 5]. Decorative trim, including a wrap-around entablature, raking gable cornices, cupola, windows and doors were originally all wood [photograph 6]. The windows have since been replaced with white factory-finished metal elements that replicate the original sash configuration. All standard windows are double-hung sash with twelve-over-twelve lights (three vertical-four horizontal). The front doors were also

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetMetuchen Post Office
Middlesex Co., NJSection number 7 Page 3

replaced in white factory-finished metal with a single wider door and single fixed sidelight to better accommodate the handicapped [photograph 12].

A low-pitched asphalt shingle roof is crowned over the central bay by a four-sided square cupola with chamfered corners [photograph 7]. An arrow weathervane surmounts a pyramidal cap with similarly chamfered corners, giving it a somewhat octagonal shape. Encircling the cupola top is a plain unadorned entablature. The four faces of the cupola feature semi-circular arch louvered openings flanked by Doric pilasters. The presence of a cupola suggests that this is a public building, as opposed to a commercial or residential structure, since few stores or residences ever had cupolas.^{vi}

Exterior - West Elevation (Main Facade)

Facing west onto Main Street, the main elevation is five bays wide with the cupola centered over the middle bay [photograph 8]. Below the roof line is a full entablature adorned with a series of mouldings. Emblazoned along the frieze above the three middle bays are metal serif letters spelling out "UNITED STATES POST OFFICE". The most notable feature here is the denticulated cornice. Also noteworthy is the fact that the denticulated cornice and lower sections of the entablature are articulated slightly outward over the two end bays as though they were set off as separate pavilions while the running cornice remains straight along the roof edge forming a box cornice over the middle three bays [photograph 9]. This effect is further enhanced by brick piers, suggestive of pilasters, flanking each of the two outer bays [photograph 10]. Set in the concrete base beneath the leftmost pier is a carved cornerstone bearing an inscription of names and date^{vii} [photograph 11]. A central doorway and two standard windows on either side form the primary pattern of the five-bay elevation. Against the brick work above the central bay are metal serif letters spelling out "METUCHEN, NEW JERSEY".

The doorway is encased in an opening topped by a segmental arch [photograph 12]. The segmental arch contains a blind fanlight comprising a painted wooden flat background and spread-winged eagle sculpture, the eagle being a national symbol and popular decorative motif for federal government buildings throughout history. This sculpture, a defining feature of this particular standard design, is purportedly made of cast metal.^{viii} Below the segmental arch is another entablature which recapitulates the denticulated main elevation entablature, albeit on a smaller scale. Beneath this entablature is a rectangular transom window with a leaded half-spider's web muntin pattern. Below the transom originally were a pair of wooden sash doors with six (three vertical-two horizontal) lights over a single chamfered panel each [historic views "A", "B", and "C"]. These were replaced with a factory-finished single metal door and left sidelight panel when alterations were made to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) in the 1990s. The door now has eight lights (four vertical-two horizontal) over a projecting decorative moulding delineating a lower panel. Similarly, the matching sidelight panel features four vertical lights above a decorative panel moulding.^{ix} Set *in antis* flanking the transom and door are a pair of slightly flared, engaged, fluted Doric half-columns strongly reminiscent of columns widely used on Greek Revival buildings. Next to these columns against the outer walls of the bay are matching unfluted Doric pilasters in the reveals of the doorway.

Two flights of granite steps separated by a landing and a top platform originally led to the doors. When the ADA changes were made, the top platform was extended outward to increase the wheelchair turning radius,

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetMetuchen Post Office
Middlesex Co., NJSection number 7 Page 4

the landing was eliminated and a single flight of steps was substituted. The new steps are concrete with metal tread covers over a concrete base. Wrought iron baluster-type railings from the platform originally flanked the upper flight of steps and terminated in spiral curves attached to wrought iron lamp standards. The lower flight of steps was flanked by simpler open-walled wrought iron railings [historic view "A"]. With the ADA changes, the lamp standards have been relocated to the edge of the platform and the baluster-type railings top rails do not terminate in spirals at the bottom of the steps, but rather end somewhat abruptly with reverse curves forming hand-holds [photograph 12]. A two-sloped wheelchair-accessible ramp with intermediate landing now leads from the left side of the platform and articulates around the north elevation of the building toward Woodbridge Avenue. It consists of a concrete ramp surface atop a brick-veneered base composed of staggered courses of stretchers.^x Downward-directed box-like wall sconce lights have been mounted on the brick walls of both the west and north elevations to illuminate this ramp.

Exterior - North Elevation

The north elevation consists of five bays, the two to the right being in the front section, the three to the left being in the rear section [photograph 13]. The rightmost of the rear bays contains a blind window complete with recessed spandrel panel [photograph 14]. Tucked away near the seam with the front section is a small, narrow, vertically-oriented double-hung sash window with two-over-two lights usually associated with a restroom. While it has a cast stone sill, it lacks a lintel, apparently to make it less obtrusive. The pediment formed by the end gable over the front section continues the brickwork of the lower walls and contains a lunette window with a cast stone sill [photograph 15]. Along the upper edges of the pediment is a denticulated raking cornice similar to the cornice of the main entablature. Two projecting piers similar to those on the west elevation further delineate the front section. A concrete window well surrounds the three rear bays accommodating three full double-hung sash basement windows with eight-over-eight lights (each sash containing four horizontal and two vertical lights). A wrought-iron railing similar to the original front steps railing rises around the well to just below the sills of the main floor bays to protect passing pedestrians. One double-hung sash window in a similar window well with railing is located beneath the fourth bay's main floor window and one single three-light basement sash is located in the fifth bay.

Exterior - South Elevation

Almost a mirror image of the north elevation, the south elevation has a few distinguishing features [photograph 17]. First there is no blind window and accompanying narrow vertical window in the rear section. Instead there is a full window occupying this bay. Instead of a window well along the rear section, there is a poured concrete stairwell leading from the rear of the building along the wall. The basement wall has a central pair of solid metal doors accessing the boiler room, flanked on each side by a double-hung sash window with eight-over-eight lights (each sash containing four horizontal and two vertical lights) in alignment with the main floor windows above. In contrast to the north elevation's wrought iron window well railing, this stairwell is topped with a two-rung metal pipe railing painted black with a winching device mounted on the upper railing closest to the west end of the well, presumably to facilitate hoisting deliveries of equipment and other heavy objects to the basement level. A similar, black-painted metal pipe railing is also mounted along the rear roof immediately behind the parapet, also presumably to assist in controlling the movement of heavy items (such as

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetMetuchen Post Office
Middlesex Co., NJSection number 7 Page 5

boilers) into or out of the basement. Two sash basement windows, of an undetermined operational nature, with three lights apiece are located beneath the main floor windows of the front section. All other features mirror those of the north elevation.

Exterior - East Elevation

The east or rear elevation is the least architecturally significant of the four elevations [photographs 18 and 19]. The entablature wraps completely across the wall, interrupted only by a plain brick chimney projecting outward from the wall on the left side at the intersection where a lower loading dock vestibule wing also projects from the rear block. At the left and right edges of the elevation are paired versions of the double-hung sash windows used elsewhere on the main floor of the building. A typical Colonial Revival feature often used on residential buildings, paired windows on post offices designed by Louis A. Simon are almost always confined to rear sections or rear elevations (i.e., out of primary public view for the most part) where admitting natural light to the workroom was a concern. A series of small, paired double-hung clerestory windows run above the loading dock vestibule providing additional natural light to the sorting room. The mailing vestibule wing also has small double-hung sash windows similar to the main windows, but without cast stone lintels. Originally, the clerestory windows were probably opened on hot summer days to facilitate cross-ventilation of the sorting area. A pair of doors capable of swinging in either direction and accommodating mail hoppers lead from the loading dock into the vestibule. An adjacent solid metal door provides individual pedestrian access. The loading dock is poured concrete with a cantilevered roof projecting upward away from the building and over the loading area to provide clearance for delivery trucks and protection from inclement weather. The roof cantilevers on a wide transverse beam supported on each end by a metal lolly column with flanges at top and bottom. Three concrete steps on the right side lead down from the loading dock and are separated from the loading dock by a two-rung, black-painted, metal pipe railing. On the extreme right side beneath the paired windows of the main block is a concrete ramp leading down from the loading dock with brick side walls capped with cast stone copings. Additional metal pipe hand railings are mounted along the inner walls of the ramp.

Interior - Basement

The interior of the basement is a rather unremarkable strictly utilitarian space. Access is achieved by a stairway leading down from the mailing vestibule. Several storage rooms cluster toward the front of the building as well as beneath the mailing vestibule wing and loading dock. The staff lunchroom-lounge, staff restrooms, and postal inspector's office are situated to the north side of a central corridor. On the south side of the corridor is another storage room and the boiler room. A pair of doors leads from the boiler room to the south elevation's exterior stairwell. The boiler room originally used coal as a heating source.

Interior - Main Floor (Except Service Lobby)

The main floor consists of a small entrance vestibule leading into a service lobby (see below for more detail). In the northwest corner of the building is the postmaster's office which has plaster walls and ceiling and wooden floor and trim. A restroom for the postmaster and a vault are situated along the north elevation adjacent to the postmaster's office. The remainder of the main block is occupied by the mail sorting room with

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetMetuchen Post Office
Middlesex Co., NJSection number 7 Page 6

plaster walls and ceiling and a wooden floor. A small staff restroom and janitor's closet as well as the stairs to the basement are located in the mailing vestibule wing. As with the basement, all of these spaces, except the lobby, are strictly utilitarian.

Interior - Service Lobby

The service lobby is a long rectangular room with plaster walls and ceiling stretching across the three middle bays of the west elevation [photographs 20 and 21]. It is accessed through a dark, stained and varnished, glazed, wooden vestibule enclosure with chamfered corners. This enclosure serves to reduce drafts of cold air in winter and hot air in summer [photograph 22]. Single sash doors containing twelve lights (three horizontal and four vertical) with metal pull handles (inside vestibule) and push bars (outside vestibule) lead into the lobby from the north and south ends of the vestibule. The bottom halves of the doors are solid with no panels. Chamfered corners on the enclosure facing into the lobby contain window-pane glazing as well (two horizontal and four vertical lights) and solid wood bottoms with no panels. Parallel to the service window screen wall the vestibule wall consists of three additional side-by-side glazed units similar to the chamfered corner units of the vestibule. A denticulated cornice runs atop the vestibule sides facing into the lobby, thereby linking the decoration of the exterior to that of the interior. The inside of the entrance doorway's transom (above the vestibule enclosure) is surmounted by a moulded cornice. Flooring is terrazzo divided by metal strips into squares and the wainscoting is white marble with brown veining. Large white finished metal baseboard-type radiators have been installed beneath the two front windows. All trim is dark stained and varnished wood.

One striking feature is the doorway to the postmaster's office [photograph 23]. This is a solid wood paneled door consisting of two chamfered panels, a larger one (above) and a smaller one (below) set in rails and stiles. A large brass doorknob, plate and keyhole are located in the left stile. The door is surrounded by a moulded frame. A rectangular signboard bearing the word "POSTMASTER" in gold serif letters sits atop the frame as an entablature with a moulded cornice similar to the one above the entrance doorway transom window. Directly on the wall over the door is Harold Ambellan's well-preserved plaster relief sculpture "Gardeners" installed in 1942 under the Section of Fine Arts program of public artworks [photograph 24]. Two square wooden single-door glazed bulletin board cases at eye-level flank the postmaster's door [photograph 25]. Carved into the upper frame of each in wedge-style upper case lettering is the word "BULLETIN". Identical bulletin board cases are located on the west wall to the north of the northerly window and to the south of the southerly window. To the left of the postmaster's door is a wooden double-pedestal counter-level table of a design and finish compatible with the room's woodwork for customer preparation of paperwork and parcels^{xi} [photograph 26].

Postal lock boxes occupy the south end of the lobby. However, documentation indicates that the lobby originally extended further south into the area that is now part of the sorting room^{xiii} [photograph 21].

Service windows form a screenline along the east wall of the lobby [photograph 27]. This service window screen consists of wood-framed single sash windows with single panes of frosted glass alternating with clear-glass doored bulletin boards above the marble wainscoting. The central service window, taller than the others, features an ornamental metal grille at the top. Originally a painted wooden grillework stretched high

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Metuchen Post Office
Middlesex Co., NJ

Section number 7 Page 7

above the service windows to provide cross-ventilation through to the sorting room on hot summer days. With the installation of central air-conditioning in the 1970s, this grillework was covered over with a solid wall to zone the air conditioning system. A band of up-and-down lighting was also installed along this wall immediately above the service windows at the same time.

The lobby ceiling is separated from the walls by a coved cornice [photograph 28]. When the solid wall was erected above the service window screen, its section of coving had to be moved slightly to accommodate the new wall. Ceiling lighting was most likely originally provided by suspended globe lamps. Probably at the same time other lobby renovations were undertaken, the original lamps were replaced with suspended cylinder lamps.

As the only public room in the building, the service lobby is an impressive space. However, the presence of twenty-first century clutter - such as postage stamp vending machines and free-standing cardboard philatelic promotional displays - reduces the impact and visibility of the room's decorative features. Fortunately, the historic character of the room remains intact beneath these reversible intrusions.

Conclusion

The Metuchen Post Office remains substantially unaltered from the time it was constructed. Such changes as have occurred over time involve missing elements which are well-documented and can easily be replicated and restored. Other changes in elements which are concerned with ADA compliance and the utilization of new technologies could be addressed in more preservation-sensitive ways so as not to mar the overall character of the building's public aspects as an outstanding example of a New Deal-era small town Colonial Revival post office.

Endnotes

-
- i Metuchen, New Jersey, also has a branch post office located at 195 Central Avenue designated as "Brainy Boro Station" which was constructed after World War II. This nomination covers exclusively the main facility at 360 Main Street.
- ii "New Post Office", Metuchen Recorder, April 7, 1938, p.1.
- iii Stacy E. Spies, Images of America: Metuchen [New Jersey], p.95.
- iv Spies, Images, p.56.
- v Spies, Images, pp.93-4.
- vi Occasionally the country seats of the wealthiest and most prominent Americans would be adorned with a cupola. Three examples which come readily to mind are the William Trent House in Trenton, New Jersey, Hampton in Towson, Maryland, and Mount Vernon in Mount Vernon, Virginia, all of the Georgian period. In general, though, cupolas most often signified public buildings during the Colonial Revival period. Similarly, the use of cupolas on commercial buildings date to yet another period - that of

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Metuchen Post Office
Middlesex Co., NJ

Section number 7 Page 8

the Colonial Revival of the 1950s and 1960s - when they were used on structures as diverse as gasoline stations, restaurants, banks, and insurance offices.

vii The cornerstone inscription reads as follows: "Henry Morgenthau Jr., Secretary of the Treasury; James A. Farley, Postmaster General; Louis A. Simon, Supervising Architect; Neal A. Melick, Supervising Engineer; 1939".

viii The assumption of cast metal is based on a report of a similar decorative eagle sculpture found on the Harrison, New York, Post Office, which has been described as "cast aluminium". See: National Register nomination for that property.

ix Replacement of the doors, while attempting to replicate the spirit of the originals, failed to maintain the emphasis on bilateral symmetry so characteristic of Colonial Revival buildings. Other post offices of the same period have been more successful in addressing this problem. For example, the Madison, New Jersey, post office has replaced a double-door with a single door flanked by two matching sidelights, thereby maintaining bilateral symmetry on its main elevation. Fortunately, this asymmetrical change is easily reversible at the Metuchen Post Office.

x It is unclear why this brickwork was necessary since the basement of the building itself is completely covered in concrete and use of the brickwork merely causes the ramp to be more obvious. Again, this is a reversible feature.

xi One of a pair originally located in the lobby, the mate of this table has since been replaced with a more modern molded hard plastic counter table containing built-in under-the-counter storage compartments for postal forms, etc. The disposition of the second original table is unknown, but may be in use elsewhere in the facility.

xii An undated document in the collections of the Metuchen-Edison Historical Society, apparently a summary of the construction project prepared by Postmaster Kramer, mentions an L-shaped service lobby. There is no indication of when the lobby shape was changed. The current lobby appears, from the coved ceiling cornice, marble wainscoting, and wooden trim, as if it has always been rectangular. Consequently, a change in the shape of the lobby may have occurred within a few years of construction. References to many of the other similar post offices of the period also refer to L-shaped service lobbies. What appears to be a surviving L-shaped lobby can be found in the Washington, New Jersey, post office, although that building has undergone other significant changes in the years since it was built. In any event, the lock boxes in virtually all of these New Deal-era post offices have, at one time or another, been replaced with newer models and the lock box portion of the lobby is of relatively minor aesthetic importance.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Metuchen Post Office
Middlesex Co., NJ

Section number 8 Page 1

NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Introduction

The United States Post Office, Metuchen, New Jersey, (hereafter "Metuchen Post Office") qualifies for listing on the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria "A" and "C" as a public building deriving primary significance from its place in political and social history and its architectural and artistic distinction. Constructed in 1939, the Metuchen Post Office is significant as an unusually intact example of federally-sponsored construction projects intended to relieve the widespread unemployment brought on by the Great Depression. Initially intended by Congress simply as "pork barrel" spending under the Public Buildings Act of 1926, public works programs took on a new meaning during Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal as a major vehicle for rescuing the construction industry from oblivion and keeping construction workers from joining the ranks of the unemployed on relief. President Franklin Roosevelt took a particular interest in having the federal government set an example in matters of design and probably played a key role in approving the standard designs utilized throughout the country.¹ The building also reflects the growth and changing nature of postal services in small-town America in the first half of the twentieth century. Growth in the quantities of mail handled and in the technologies used in sorting and transporting the mail both contributed to changes in the design of post office buildings.

The Metuchen Post Office is architecturally significant as a largely intact representative example of the federal architecture erected as part of the massive public works projects initiated by the United States government during the Great Depression of the 1930s. Its design illustrates forms and decoration characteristic of the Colonial Revival style of architecture widely favored for public buildings in the second quarter of the twentieth century. The Colonial Revival became the accepted style for numerous post offices and other federal government buildings during the 1920s and 1930s. The use of a standard plan for this building reflects the increasing emphasis on simplification and standardization of form which characterizes post offices of this period. During the eight years from Franklin Delano Roosevelt's inauguration in 1933 until the United States entered World War II in late 1941, approximately 1,100 post offices were erected in the country, making this period the most prolific period of post office construction in the nation's history. There are about 50 post office buildings extant in New Jersey which represent this phase of federal construction. The dominant figure in the design of post offices during this period was Louis A. Simon, Supervising Architect of the Treasury Department from 1933-9 and of the Federal Works Agency's Public Buildings Administration from 1939-41. Although an administrative re-organization in 1939 diminished the influence of his office, he retained his title until he retired in 1941 and his designs continued to be utilized until the nation's entry into World War II brought to a temporary halt most civilian government construction programs. The design for the Metuchen Post Office was one of the most popular in the state and throughout much of the country. It was utilized for at least seven virtually identical buildings in New Jersey alone.¹¹ The Metuchen example is one of the few that retains its architectural integrity with only superficial inappropriate alterations which are easily reversible. In addition to the architectural importance of the Metuchen Post Office, the building contains an artistically significant and well-preserved plaster relief sculpture executed in 1942 under the auspices of the Section of Fine Arts agency.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetMetuchen Post Office
Middlesex Co., NJSection number 8 Page 2Early Development of Metuchen as a Community

The Borough of Metuchen, a suburban community in the greater New York metropolitan area, originally was included in parts of the towns of Woodbridge and Piscataway. These early towns had both been founded and settled in the 1660s through inter-colonial migration by New Englanders. Lying in that portion of Middlesex County north of the Raritan River (excepting the area occupied by the City of Perth Amboy), Woodbridge occupied the easterly section and Piscataway the westerly section. Metuchen was situated atop an upland dividing the east- and west-flowing watersheds. In 1701, Woodbridge appointed an overseer of roads for "Metuchen District" and, by at least 1730, a Presbyterian meetinghouse had been constructed. With the end of royal rule, both towns were re-designated "townships" in 1798 when the state legislature undertook a major re-organization of municipal government in the state.ⁱⁱⁱ Metuchen, most of which was situated in Woodbridge, remained a modest rural crossroads until the opening of a station of the New Jersey (later Pennsylvania) Railroad in 1836. The speed and convenience of railroad travel soon attracted an influx of individuals who lived in Metuchen and worked in Trenton, New Brunswick, Newark, New York and other more urban locales along the rail line. The ability to reach these urban centers within an hour ushered in the commutation phenomenon.

Following the Civil War, growing population and changing patterns of travel led to a movement for a third, middle, township in Middlesex County north of the Raritan River. In 1870, the state legislature passed an act to create the Township of Raritan to address these needs.^{iv} The settlement of Metuchen lay at the heart of the new township and became the site of the township hall. By the 1890s, however, new pressures began to build for "improvements" (urban infrastructure amenities) on the part of the residents of the Metuchen section where a substantial village had begun to nucleate at the heart of the township. Faced with the reluctance of rural residents to fund facilities seen as extravagant luxuries, the more urbanized residents of Metuchen began a movement to secede from the remainder of the township. After a temporary setback at the polls in the 1890s, the secessionist movement finally achieved a majority at the ballot box and subsequently secured passage of a bill in the state legislature creating the separate Borough of Metuchen in 1900.^v Thereafter, many of the long-sought-after infrastructure improvements were implemented and Metuchen's population and commercial activity continued its growth.

Evolution of Postal Service in Metuchen to 1940

Postal service in early America was rather primitive and unreliable.^{vi} Initially, only major urban centers such as Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Charleston could boast of mail service. Inter-urban mail service was primarily conducted on waterway "post roads" until Andrew Hamilton was appointed Postmaster-General for North America in 1693. Hamilton's Intercolonial Postal Union constructed land-based post roads cut through the wilderness or improved upon already existing trails or paths. By the time Hamilton died in 1703, these post roads served not only post riders, but general travelers and the public at large. One such route known variously as the King's Highway or King George's Post Road was located to the south of present-day Metuchen and was a key link in the principal land route between New York and Philadelphia. Roughly following present-day Woodbridge Avenue in Edison Township, vestiges of the former alignment survive in that township's Old Post Road.^{vii} Eighteenth century Metuchen residents most likely traveled

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Metuchen Post Office
Middlesex Co., NJ

Section number 8 Page 3

either to locations in Woodbridge proper (east) or in Bonhamtown (south) along this post road to send or receive mail.

By 1810, the colonial-era post road was replaced by the Middlesex-Essex Turnpike which ran diagonally across Metuchen and provided a more direct route linking urban centers of the two namesake counties. With this shorter and straighter route, mail coaches were diverted to a stop at Campbell's Tavern located where the Middlesex-Essex Turnpike intersected with the Perth Amboy-Bound Brook Turnpike, the present-day intersection of Middlesex Avenue and New Durham Road. Campbell's Tavern remained the mail pick-up and drop-off point for the next 22 years.

Official recognition as a post office came on April 4, 1832, when storekeeper Lewis Thomas was formally appointed by Postmaster General William T. Barry as the first local postmaster and promptly relocated the post office to his store across the street from Campbell's Tavern. The section where Campbell's and Thomas' establishments were situated was known at that time as "Montville" and when Thomas was appointed postmaster, he apparently changed the name to "Metuchen" to avoid confusion with Montville Township in Morris County. For the remainder of the nineteenth century the post office perambulated around the community among various houses, stores, taverns, and railroad stations, gradually shifting easterly toward Main Street, the principal north-south thoroughfare in town.

Beginning during the Civil War, the range of services offered by post offices grew tremendously. The postal money order system was started (1864), U.S. postal cards were first issued (1873) and special delivery was instituted (1885).^{viii} By 1877, the quantity and variety of activity in Metuchen was sufficient to justify the employment of an assistant postmaster. Eight years later, under Postmaster Alexander C. Kelly, the post office moved to its own separately partitioned office in Kelly's building at 433 Main Street. In 1889, Postmaster Charles Ayres moved the operation to the "Keenan Building" at 400 Main Street where it was to remain for over a decade despite changes in postmasters.

In April 1902, the crush of business again necessitated a move to larger quarters, this time to a large new brick mixed-use retail and office building (the "Burroughs Building") constructed by Postmaster Edward Burroughs (who was also a building contractor) at the corner of Main Street and Pennsylvania Avenue across from the railroad station. Burroughs later resigned to operate a pharmacy located in the same building, leaving to his successor Truman T. Pierson the task of securing Rural Free Delivery (R.F.D.) for the borough and environs. R.F.D. had been established permanently nationwide in 1902 and Metuchen residents were eager to benefit from this service. Pierson struggled for two years, including four trips to the nation's capital, and finally prevailed on April 1, 1909, when R.F.D. service was inaugurated with "two brilliant white and gold R.F.D. wagons" driven by uniformed deliverymen. Metuchen was a third class post office when Pierson assumed office.^{ix} He increased local office revenue by over a thousand dollars within one year, and predicted it would exceed \$8,000 within two years, qualifying the office for second class status. Continued growth in activity, caused by the establishment of such services as Collect on Delivery (C.O.D.) and Parcel Post (both 1913) and non-profit second class rates (1918), prompted Postmaster David A. Power to move the operation to a building of its own which Power had arranged for the construction of at 407 Main Street and he hired two mail carriers for home delivery service. During Power's tenure, second class status was finally achieved. By this time the operation consisted of nine persons, including the postmaster.^x

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetMetuchen Post Office
Middlesex Co., NJSection number 8 Page 4

In 1921, Anna Quint, affectionately known as "Annie", became Metuchen's first female postmaster and remained in the position for 13 years.^{xi} The quantity of business transacted during her tenure required yet another move, this time to a privately-owned building erected by former Postmaster Edward Burroughs to meet Post Office Department specifications adjacent to his earlier "Burroughs Building" on Pennsylvania Avenue. During Miss Quint's postmastership, in-town mail deliveries were increased to twice daily and parcel post service was instituted. All of this growth in activity required a further addition to the post office building which was completed in 1930. The highlight of Miss Quint's term was when she received a telegram on March 6, 1931, from U.S. Senator Hamilton Fish Kean informing her that Congress had allotted an appropriation of \$85,000.00 for construction of a new post office building in Metuchen. However, Miss Quint never had the opportunity to preside from a new building. With the election of Democrat Franklin Roosevelt as president in 1932, Miss Quint, a Republican, was eventually replaced as postmaster in 1934 by Harry Kramer, a Democrat.^{xii}

The Office of the Supervising Architect and Federal Design

At the time the Metuchen Post Office was built, the process for designing federal government buildings had reached a high level of sophistication. Gradually, centralized control over design and construction had been established in the Office of the Supervising Architect (OSA), an agency within the Treasury Department which had undergone numerous transformations since its origins in the middle of the nineteenth century.^{xiii} Beginning in the latter part of that century, standardization of designs, especially for smaller buildings intended to serve identical functions outside of the major metropolitan centers, had been instituted as a means of achieving economies of scale in the design process. Under this system, although the supervising architect received the official credit for a given design (as indicated on the cornerstone), standardized designs were usually the result of a collaborative process among the OSA's staff architects. In the absence of a specific staff architect's name on a cornerstone, it may be difficult to pinpoint who, if anyone, was the fountainhead for a given standardized design.

To cope with the tremendous expansion of federal building projects during the New Deal era, OSA recruited approximately 25 architects of recognized ability from all parts of the nation to produce both standardized and unique designs for post offices and other in-demand facilities. Even where a standard plan and design was used repeatedly across the nation, there were usually subtle variations which differentiated one standard design small-town post office from another of the same design. These variations could range from type and color of materials used, to form and treatment of the cupola, to the number of lights in a window sash. Any one of the staff architects could have conceptualized the specific design employed for the Metuchen Post Office, or perhaps the Supervising Architect himself, Louis A. Simon, drew up the design with critical input from his staff.^{xiv}

The McAdoo System of Classification

A major influence on the design of American post offices was brought about by Treasury Secretary William Gibbs McAdoo. In 1915, he directed OSA (which was under the Treasury Department) to design post

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetMetuchen Post Office
Middlesex Co., NJSection number 8 Page 5

offices and other federal buildings to be in keeping with existing structures in the communities where they would be located. Building design and materials were to be reflective of the locale. In effect, McAdoo ordered that OSA practice what would now be referred to as contextual design.

In order to implement his directive, McAdoo devised a general classification system comprised of four categories of construction, "A" through "D", which established the size, style, materials, and embellishments for a given post office. Class "A" comprised first class locations with annual receipts over \$800,000 and called for marble or granite exteriors with interiors of marble, bronze, and mahogany and specially crafted lighting fixtures. Class "B" included first class facilities with annual receipts between \$60,000 and \$800,000 and provided for limestone or sandstone exteriors and interiors of less expensive stones and woods. Only iron was deemed suitable for ornamental metalwork features. Second class facilities with between \$15,000 and \$60,000 in annual receipts comprised Class "C". These buildings were to have brick or inexpensive stone exteriors with stone or terra cotta trim and interiors using less expensive woods and stones. Finally Class "D" consisted of buildings with annual receipts less than \$15,000. These buildings were to have brick exteriors with a minimum of inexpensive stone or terra cotta trim and spartan unadorned interiors utilizing less expensive woods. Class "D" buildings were intended to be "an ordinary class of building such as any businessman would consider a reasonable investment in a small town."^{xv} Utilizing the criteria of the McAdoo scheme, the Metuchen Post Office would be categorized as a class "C" facility.

The Supervising Architect: Louis A. Simon

The Metuchen Post Office project came under the control of OSA's head, Louis Adolphe Simon (1867-1958). Born in Baltimore, he graduated from the then-new architecture program at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (class of 1891) where he received a Beaux-Arts-inspired education. The Ecole des Beaux-Arts (literally "School of Fine Arts") in Paris, France, was the leading training ground for American architects prior to the establishment of architecture schools in the U.S. in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Beaux-Arts-influenced curricula emphasized a number of guiding principles, including that exterior volumes should express interior functions, axiality, a hierarchy of parts, a procession of spaces, symmetry, balance and variety.^{xvi}

Following the completion of his formal education, Simon took what in those days was an almost obligatory grand tour of Europe to absorb architectural ideas before opening an architectural practice in his native city in 1894. Only two years later he was recruited by Edward A. Crane for a position in the OSA. By 1915, he had risen to become Chief of the Engineering and Drafting Division. From then on until 1933 he exercised substantial control over the OSA's work, especially its design process. This control was largely facilitated by the fact that the long-time acting head of the OSA during this time was James A. Wetmore. Popularly known as "Judge", in recognition of a previous position of honor, Wetmore was an attorney and had no formal training as an architect. Under these circumstances, he could never actually be nominated for appointment on a permanent basis and remained "acting" throughout his extended tenure. Given this state of affairs, Simon assumed responsibility for virtually all design matters while Wetmore administered the OSA.^{xvii}

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetMetuchen Post Office
Middlesex Co., NJSection number 8 Page 6

In 1933, with Wetmore's retirement from government service, President Franklin D. Roosevelt appointed Simon as Supervising Architect, a position for which he had effectively been training throughout his entire career. Although he retired as head of OSA in 1941, exigencies brought on by World War II caused him to return to federal service in a consulting role in 1942, concentrating principally on the design of war-time housing complexes. Two years later, he finally left for permanent retirement. He died in 1958.^{xviii}

The Colonial Revival Style of Architecture

The style chosen for the Metuchen Post Office was the Colonial Revival.^{xix} As its name suggests, the style was an attempt to revive earlier American architectural styles from the period before the American Revolution. Despite this professed intention, architects proceeded to draw upon a whole series of classically-inspired historical styles stretching from about 1700 to 1850, well beyond the "colonial" period of history. In this sense, Colonial Revival is somewhat of a misnomer. Colonial Revivalists looked to three successive historical styles for their cues. The Georgian (or "colonial") period stretched from circa 1700 to 1780. It was followed by the Federal period from 1780 to 1830 which, in turn, was supplanted by the Greek Revival period from 1830 to roughly 1850. Colonial Revival architects did not feel restrained about mixing and matching various elements from the Georgian, Federal and Greek Revival styles in novel combinations. Indeed, the Metuchen Post Office exhibits some features unique to each of the three earlier American styles.

The Centennial Celebration of 1876 had first raised historical awareness of early American design and gradually this consciousness was expressed in architecture beginning in the 1890s. By the 1920s, the Colonial Revival style was well-established and used throughout the country for various types of buildings and not just in the original thirteen states. It remained the dominant style for certain types of government buildings, at all levels of government (federal, state, and local), and throughout much of the country until about 1950 when modernism rapidly began to displace it.^{xx}

Reportedly the first American post office to be designed in Colonial Revival style was at Salem, Massachusetts, (1882-1883, Peabody and Stearns, architects). The OSA was so pleased with the reaction to this building that it soon adopted the style for locales with surviving architectural riches from the Georgian, Federal, and Greek Revival periods. Among the early twentieth century examples of the style are post offices at Annapolis, Maryland (James Knox Taylor, Supervising Architect), Charlottesville, Virginia (Percy Ash, architect), and Bristol, Pennsylvania (Heacock and Hokanson, architects). Even at this early date, Colonial Revival designs were not confined to the Atlantic seaboard states. For example, Freeport, Illinois, received an OSA-designed Colonial Revival post office (James Knox Taylor, Supervising Architect).^{xxi}

A major motivating factor in the development and spread of the Colonial Revival was American nationalism. It is no coincidence that the style emerged precisely at the moment that the United States began to take its place on the world stage. Architects, no less than others, sought to create a "national" style, distinct from "foreign" styles, in spite of the fact that the Colonial Revival itself drew upon European Renaissance models for its inspiration. The style gained particular impetus during World War I when numerous civilian war worker housing projects were designed in Colonial Revival style.^{xxii} Increasing isolationism and the American rejection of European-perceived styles in the wake of World War I gave further impetus to the

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Metuchen Post Office
Middlesex Co., NJ

Section number 8 Page 7

Colonial Revivalists. Colonial Revival architecture was also seen as a useful device for “Americanizing” ethnic immigrant communities in the wake of the 1920s imposition of restrictions on immigration.^{xxiii} Therefore, it is perfectly understandable that the United States government would adopt the Colonial Revival style for such a ubiquitous building type as the small town post office.

The specific choice of Colonial Revival for the Metuchen Post Office was heavily influenced by the presence in the community of two other notable Colonial Revival government buildings, the Metuchen Borough Hall (1925, razed 2002) and the Metuchen Public Library (1937). By the summer of 1938, the local newspaper was reporting that the building was expected to be, “...of brick construction along the general architectural lines of the new public library or the borough hall.”^{xxiv} Both of these buildings were built with exteriors of red brick and white wooden or terra cotta trim. A November 1938 local newspaper article featured an architect’s drawing of the proposed building with the headline “Colonial Post Office for New Jersey”.^{xxv} Furthermore, the choice of a louvered cupola may have been a nod toward the Franklin Schoolhouse (also known as the “Borough Improvement League Building”), an early 1800s vernacular structure with Greek Revival decoration which features a louvered cupola (albeit of a different design). As a result, the design adhered to Secretary McAdoo’s admonition for post offices to harmonize with other existing buildings in the community.

The Public Buildings Act of 1926

Although the Metuchen Post Office was built under Franklin Roosevelt’s New Deal, its legislative origins go back to the Public Buildings Act of 1926 enacted during the Coolidge administration.^{xxvi} The act initially authorized an expenditure of \$165 million over an 11-year period. However, appropriation of funds to carry out the act did not occur until 1928 at which time the spending limit was increased to \$290 million. The onset of the Great Depression caused a further rise to \$620 million in the early 1930s. Coupled with the sale of various obsolete government properties amounting to nearly \$70 million, approximately \$700 million overall was expended on the construction of new federal buildings during the Depression-era for various purposes, the vast bulk of them post offices.^{xxvii}

The proposal for a Metuchen Post Office is first mentioned specifically in a congressional report dated February 27, 1931, recommending locales slated to receive new federal facilities.^{xxviii} The report allocated an appropriation of \$85,000 for a post office building, exclusive of accommodations for other federal purposes. Apparently the funds were not actually appropriated, however, since by 1934, a separate House appropriations committee report concerning deficiencies in appropriations listed the Metuchen post office as a candidate for allocation. This report recommended reducing the allocation to \$69,000, possibly reflecting the deflationary pressure on construction costs brought on by the Great Depression.^{xxix}

Another underlying factor affecting the delay in actually appropriating the funds for the Metuchen project was the partisan politics of leasing property versus owning it. Correspondence exchanged among landlord Edward Burroughs, prominent local lawyer Alonzo U. Quint (and not coincidentally the father of Postmaster Anna Quint), U.S. Representative Charles A. Eaton, and U.S. Senator Hamilton F. Kean (all four Republicans) indicates that Mr. Burroughs was concerned that his relatively recent (1930) investment in

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetMetuchen Post Office
Middlesex Co., NJSection number 8 Page 8

expanding a building for the post office would not be recoverable, nor, because of the overall depressed economy, would he be able to attract a new tenant for the building if the post office should move. Burroughs and Quint were attempting to use their powers of persuasion with Congressman Eaton and Senator Kean to block, or at least delay, the selection of Metuchen for receipt of a new post office building. At the time, postmasterships were considered fair game for partisan patronage and postmasters were, almost without exception, local political party leaders. The eventual construction of the post office itself was most probably an act of partisan retaliation, i.e., an effort to terminate a lease with a landlord who was a source of party campaign funds for the opposition.^{xxx} With a Democratic administration in Washington (1933), the appointment of Harry Kramer as postmaster (1934), and the need for local work relief projects, the construction of a new post office in Metuchen became more of a reality. Still, five years were to elapse between Kramer's appointment and construction.

Operational Factors Affecting Site and Design

A number of operational factors strongly affected the choice of a specific site and the form of an individual design. From the mid-nineteenth century until the mid-twentieth century, the dominant mode of transport for long-distance mail and packages in the nation was the railroad.^{xxxi} Almost all communities fortunate enough to secure a government-owned building for the post office also had a train station. Invariably, when it came time to select a site for these post offices, a site adjacent to or close by the railroad station was chosen. There were a number of reasons for this co-location policy, but the two most important were: (1) the mail could be hand-wheeled on dollies to the station (obviating the need for wagons or later trucks) and (2) the less time spent in transit to the station, the less likelihood there was that the mail would be stolen by thieves. This co-location policy was true in Metuchen. The site ultimately selected was directly across Woodbridge Avenue from the Pennsylvania Railroad Station. Main Street, as its name indicates, was a major north-south route through town and Woodbridge Avenue was a major route running eastward out of town. Thus the site of the post office was convenient to both roads and railroad and in the heart of the downtown commercial district.

In terms of building plan, small town post offices of the 1930s reflected the shift in mail-handling from a clerical to an industrial model. As such, they were all equipped with wide loading docks capable of accommodating at least two trucks simultaneously (one being loaded while the other was being unloaded). At the time the Metuchen Post Office was built, trucks were primarily used to transport mail between Metuchen and nearby towns where using the railroad would have been far less efficient. The development of services such as Parcel Post created a need for more storage space in post offices for the growing glut of packages. As post offices increasingly handled greater sums of money (and, indeed, after 1911 they functioned to a certain degree as banks with the establishment of the Postal Savings System), they became targets for robbery.^{xxxii} The Metuchen Post Office was, in fact, robbed a number of times prior to 1940. This fear of robbery led to the development of a windowed screenline, similar to those in banks, across the service counter separating customers from employees. Unlike most banks of the post-World War I period whose screenlines reached only about seven or eight feet in height, the screenline in post offices stretched all the way to the ceiling forming, in effect, a windowed wall.^{xxxiii} All of these features; a wide loading dock, large storage rooms, and a floor-to-ceiling service screenline; were present in the design for the Metuchen Post Office.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetMetuchen Post Office
Middlesex Co., NJSection number 8 Page 9Selection of a Site

Twenty-one bids were received in 1932 offering a site for the post office. Prices ranged from \$3,750 to \$36,000 for lots of varying sizes and locations. All bids were apparently rejected as overpriced and/or inadequately located. By 1936, it was reported again that property bids were excessive and Metuchen, along with South River, Dunellen, Manville and Bernardsville were temporarily dropped from consideration for new post offices. One year later, the situation had changed and the bidding was opened again.^{xxxiv}

When the new round of bidding ended, twenty-five bids had been received. This time the bids ranged from \$3,900 to \$25,000. A combination bid of \$14,500 was received for three adjoining properties on the southeast corner of Main Street and Woodbridge Avenue from Frederick C. Ayers, Katherine Wiley, and Mortgage Management Corporation of New Brunswick.^{xxxv} A temporary delay in site selection was engendered by the offer of a free lot on Hillside Avenue by Gregory Costa. By that time the property at Woodbridge and Main had increased in value to \$18,000. Less than a month later it was reported that the Woodbridge and Main property had been selected at a cost of \$18,500, after negotiations. This inflation in property values may have reflected an economic recovery.^{xxxvi} The revised combination bid of \$18,500 was accepted by the federal government and the property was transferred on December 30, 1938.^{xxxvii}

Construction and Dedication of the Building

Bids for construction of the post office were opened in Washington on March 22, 1939. The firm of W.F. Sutter of Nescopeck, Pennsylvania, won the low bid as general contractor at \$58,300.^{xxxviii} The project was expected to take ten months to complete. Construction began in about May. Numerous local construction companies participated as subcontractors. Landscaping of the grounds was done by Baumann Brothers of Rahway, New Jersey.

By mid-October 1939, the local Chamber of Commerce was planning a gala dedication ceremony under the chairmanship of Metuchen Recorder owner Charles N. Prickett. Within a week, it was reported that the dedication ceremony would be postponed until later in the new year to avoid conflicting with the year-end holiday season. By mid-November, this delay was confirmed since the facility would not be ready for occupancy until the end of December. Postmaster General James A. Farley was invited to attend the planned outdoor ceremony, but a previous engagement in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, precluded his attendance. Another Post Office Department official was designated to speak in his absence.^{xxxix}

On Saturday, February 10, 1940, a dedication ceremony for the new building was held. Due to inclement weather, the ceremony was moved to the Forum Theater, one block south on Main Street. Appropriate patriotic music was featured including "The Stars and Stripes Forever", "God Bless America", and the national anthem, "The Star Spangled Banner". Speakers included Charles N. Prickett (dedication committee chair and owner of the local newspaper), Mayor Charles Taylor, Postmaster Kramer, and Joseph F. Betterley, the Post Office Department official sent in lieu of Postmaster General Farley. Participation by

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetMetuchen Post Office
Middlesex Co., NJSection number 8 Page 10

uniformed veterans and scouting groups also lent an air of pomp and pageantry to the ceremony. Afterwards, the public was invited to inspect the new facility.^{xi}

A "Dedication Supplement" which accompanied the next issue of the Metuchen Recorder, the local newspaper, was drawn from a history of the United States Post Office in New Jersey written under the auspices of the Federal Writers' Project. Henry Soskin, District Supervisor for the Project, wrote to thank the newspaper for the inclusion of this supplement and to comment on the excellence of the content.^{xii}

Artwork

At the north end of the lobby, above the solid paneled door to the postmaster's office, is a plaster relief sculpture executed in 1942 entitled "Gardeners". The piece depicts stylized male and female figures seated on the ground engaged in gardening. An obvious inspiration for the piece is the biblical story of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. Both the style and subject matter are rather unusual for a federal post office installation. The style is very "modern" for a Colonial Revival building, although its location on an otherwise blank wall does not seem out of place. Furthermore, the subject matter is also quite radical for its time. The Treasury Department's Section of Fine Arts (later transferred to the Public Buildings Administration) provided artworks for many of the new federal buildings constructed in the 1930s. Artwork for post offices generally reflected some aspect of local color (e.g., history, folklife, literature, music, agriculture, commerce and industry) or related specifically to the postal service function in some way (e.g., posting, delivering, waiting for, and reading the mail). "Gardeners" falls into neither of these categories. Its only seeming connection with Metuchen is that New Jersey is referred to as "The Garden State" and Metuchen is in New Jersey. The Metuchen Recorder, the local newspaper which had earlier devoted a special supplement to the dedication of the building, took no notice of the installation of the work nor referred to it at all, perhaps due to its somewhat controversial subject matter and a desire not to inflame local passions and engender divisiveness in the midst of a nation at war.^{xiii}

The Sculptor: Harold Ambellan

"Gardeners" is a work by Harold Ambellan (b. 1912).^{xiii} Raised in Buffalo, New York, Ambellan studied briefly at the Buffalo Art Institute and then traveled the country in search of work during the Great Depression. By 1930, he was able to continue his studies with the Art Student League in New York.

At some point he married Elisabeth Higgins (1914-2002), a New Jersey native, who eventually (after their divorce) became a research biochemist from 1966 to 1981 at the University of Connecticut. Earlier in her career, she had worked for the International Ladies Garment Workers Union (ILGWU) and the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU). Together, the Ambellans operated a New York business specializing in "designer tiles" from 1941 to 1960. Their New York loft apartment was a meeting place for many early blues and protest singers, including Leadbelly, Woody Guthrie, and Pete Seeger.^{xiv} These associations with left-wing movements would eventually cause problems for Harold Ambellan.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetMetuchen Post Office
Middlesex Co., NJSection number 8 Page 11

In 1935, he exhibited at the ACA Gallery and two years later he participated in a collective exposition of the "Bombshell Group." The Museum of Modern Art invited him to join its "Art in the Subway" project in 1938 and he designed several sculptures intended for installation in subway stations. None of these works were ever executed or installed.^{xlv} By 1941, he was elected president of the Sculptors Guild of America. Ambellan executed sculptures for a number of Works Progress (later Work Projects) Administration-funded facilities around the nation, most notably the Willets Park Housing Project (1939) and the Buffalo Zoological Gardens (1942), both in his native city. He also competed in 1940 for a \$16,000 commission to design two sculptures for the auditorium of the then-new Social Security Building in Washington, a competition won instead by Robert Cronbach.^{xlvi} During this time he also designed a presentation plaque for "meritorious housing service" given by the New York City-Wide Tenants Council to Manhattan Borough President Stanley Isaacs at an awards dinner attended by Eleanor Roosevelt, Governor Herbert Lehman, Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia and other luminaries.^{xlvii} Shortly after he installed "Gardeners" in the Metuchen Post Office in 1942, he chose to enlist in the U.S. Navy and later participated in the Normandy landing of World War II.

Within a year after the war's end, he was teaching three-dimensional art at the Workshop School back in New York. In response to the rising tide of anti-communist and anti-leftist rhetoric led by U.S. Senator Joseph McCarthy in the 1950s, Ambellan chose to expatriate himself and moved to France in 1954, eventually settling in the southern part of the country at Arles. There he gradually gained widespread recognition and acclaim throughout Europe and eventually in America as well where he returned for brief visits. Major art institutions collecting his works include: the Metropolitan Museum of Art (New York) and the Museum of Modern Art (New York).^{xlviii}

Conclusion

In the more than six decades since the construction of the Metuchen Post Office, the building has remained largely intact, retaining its architectural integrity despite some minor alterations. New technologies (e.g., fluorescent lighting, central air conditioning) and new social requirements (e.g., Americans with Disabilities Act-compliant access door and wheelchair accessible ramp) have only slightly altered the building's appearance. Sufficient documentation exists to recreate missing elements and some of the changes undertaken are readily reversible. Other post offices of its vintage in New Jersey have not fared as well. In many instances, radically inappropriate intrusions have altered the very fabric of these post offices (e.g., removal of the glazed wooden vestibule enclosure at the Hawthorne Post Office; additions at the Short Hills and Matawan Post Offices). Virtually all of these buildings have been subject to some form of inappropriate alteration. The Metuchen, New Jersey, United States Post Office building is worthy of listing on the National Register of Historic Places as a well-preserved example of (1) a 1930s era post office reflecting the transition from railroad to motor vehicle transport of the mail and the industrialization of mail handling, (2) the New Deal's social policy of using public works projects as a means of relieving unemployment in the construction industry, (3) the Colonial Revival style of architecture as applied to a public building, (4) the work of master architect Louis A. Simon, and (5) the use of public art to adorn government buildings through its plaster relief sculpture "Gardeners" by internationally recognized sculptor Harold Ambellan. Each of these add to the building's significance under criteria "A" and "C" in the areas of architecture, art, communications, politics/government, and social history.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Metuchen Post Office
Middlesex Co., NJ

Section number 8 Page 12

Endnotes

ⁱ A group of six post offices was constructed in the mid-Hudson River Valley of New York (In order of construction at: Beacon, Poughkeepsie, Hyde Park, Wappingers Falls, Rhinebeck, and Ellenville) custom-designed to Franklin Roosevelt's taste for Dutch Colonial Revival architecture. Where standard plans and designs were used elsewhere in the country, these six post offices featured variations in either plan or design, or both, which make them unique. Some of the designs were, in fact, based upon historic structures which had disappeared from the local landscape. In that sense, these post offices served to preserve the memory of the lost sites. It is worth noting that, unlike the others in the mid-Hudson group, the plan of the Ellenville Post Office does appear to conform, more or less, to the standard plan utilized in Metuchen, although the exterior design treatment of Ellenville is unique. Bernice L. Thomas, The Stamp of FDR: New Deal Post Offices in the Mid-Hudson Valley (Fleischmanns, NY: Purple Mountain Press, c2002).

ⁱⁱ The other six New Jersey post offices utilizing variations on this basic design are: Glen Ridge (Essex Co.), Hawthorne (Passaic Co.), Matawan (Monmouth Co.), Paulsboro (Gloucester Co.), Short Hills (Essex Co.), and Washington (Warren Co.). This particular design was widely used elsewhere in the country as well. Two other out-of-state examples listed on the National Register of Historic Places include one close by in Harrison, New York (Westchester Co.) listed May 11, 1989, and one quite distant in Manitou Springs, Colorado (El Paso Co.) listed January 24, 1986.

ⁱⁱⁱ "An Act incorporating the inhabitants of townships, designating their powers, and regulating their meetings.", passed 21 February 1798; Laws of the State of New Jersey (Trenton: Joseph Justice, printer, 1821), pp. 332-346.

^{iv} "An Act to establish a new township in the county of Middlesex to be called the township of Raritan.", approved March 17, 1870; Session of 1870, chapter 313; Laws of New Jersey, 94th Legislature, (Newark: E.N. Fuller, printer, 1870), pp. 684-689.

^v "An Act to incorporate the borough of Metuchen, in the county of Middlesex.", approved March 20, 1900; Session of 1900, chapter 57; Laws of New Jersey, 124th Legislature, (Trenton: MacCrellish & Quigley, State Printers, 1900)

^{vi} Information contained in this section is largely derived from an article in the "dedication supplement" entitled "Local Post Office 108 Years Old", Metuchen Recorder, February 8, 1940, pp. 1-3.

^{vii} In 1954, the former Township of Raritan voted in a referendum to change its name to the Township of Edison, honoring the noted inventor Thomas Alva Edison who had lived and worked in the township at one time. A powerful motivating factor in this change was the confusion in mail delivery engendered by the presence of other municipalities named "Raritan" in the state, i.e. Raritan Borough in Somerset County, Raritan Township (later also changed to Hazlet) in Monmouth County, and Raritan Township in Hunterdon County.

^{viii} [anonymous]. The United States Postal Service: An American History, 1775-2002 [publication 100]. (Washington: United States Postal Service, c2003), p. 54.

^{ix} [anon.]. The United States Postal Service, pp. 20-24. Post office classes were determined by the dollar amount of business transacted. In architectural terms, a given post office's class became significant when construction of a federally-owned building was proposed, since the higher a post office's class ranking, the larger the amount of money that would be allocated for design enhancements. This further contributed indirectly to the contextual nature of the buildings since more elaborate and expensive buildings were almost always constructed in large cities rather than small towns.

^x [anon.]. The United States Postal Service, p. 54.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Metuchen Post Office
Middlesex Co., NJ

Section number 8 Page 13

- ^{xi} News accounts of the time refer to her as "postmistress", a term which was undoubtedly used in everyday parlance. Because postmasterships were government political appointments, women were more able to secure these positions than would have been the case in private business at the time. Female postmasters were not uncommon by the twentieth century, but the first recorded American postmistress was Mrs. Lydia Hill who was appointed by the Crown and served at Salem, Massachusetts, prior to her death in 1768. James H. Bruns, Great American Post Offices (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1998), pp. 30-33.
- ^{xii} "Harry Kramer is new postmaster", Metuchen Recorder, July 20, 1934, p. 1; "Kramer must pass civil service exam to hold position", Metuchen Recorder, July 27, 1934, p. 1; and "Kramer Appointment Approved in Senate", Metuchen Recorder, February 15, 1935, p. 1.
- ^{xiii} For a detailed discussion of the Office of the Supervising Architect's history, see James H. Bruns, Great American Post Offices, (New York: John Wiley & Sons, c1998), pp 55-69.
- ^{xiv} Among the 25 architects recruited for the OSA were: Gilbert Stanley Underwood of Sun Valley, Idaho; Rudolph Stanley-Brown of Cleveland, Ohio; Eric Kebbon of New York, New York; Wesley Sherwood Bessell of Washington, D.C.; and Alan Balch Mills, Sr., of Florham Park, New Jersey. For a fuller discussion of the roles played by Underwood, Stanley-Brown, and Kebbon in the design of post offices, see: Thomas, The Stamp of FDR.
- ^{xv} Bruns, pp. 81-2.
- ^{xvi} Mardges Bacon, "Toward a National Style of Architecture: The Beaux-Arts Interpretation of the Colonial Revival", especially pp. 92-93; included in Alan Axelrod, ed., The Colonial Revival in America (New York: Norton, c1985), pp. 91-121.
- ^{xvii} Antoinette J. Lee, Architects to the Nation: The Rise and Decline of the Supervising Architect's Office, (New York: Oxford University Press), 2000, pp. 258-60; and Lois A. Craig and the staff of the Federal Architecture Project, The Federal Presence: Architecture, Politics, and Symbols in United States Government Building, (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press) c1978, p.329.
- ^{xviii} "Simon, Louis A[dolphe]." Who Was Who in America. (Chicago: Marquis-Who's Who), 1960, vol. 3, p. 788.
- ^{xix} This discussion of the Colonial Revival is largely drawn from the following: William B. Rhoads, The Colonial Revival (New York: Garland Publishing, 1977); William B. Rhoads, "The Colonial Revival and American Nationalism", Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians 35: 239-254 (December 1976); and Alan Axelrod, ed., The Colonial Revival in America (New York: Norton, c1985).
- ^{xx} The Colonial Revival was the dominant style for government buildings in the East and Midwest parts of the country during the 1920s and 1930s. It was displaced along the southern rim (Florida, Louisiana, Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and California) by a competing style, the Spanish Colonial Revival. The northern Rocky Mountain states and Pacific Northwest (presumably because they did not have a "colonial" heritage) were more amenable to the emergence of modernism during this period. However, anomalies did occur. For example, the Pleasantville (New Jersey) Post Office, built at this time was Spanish Colonial Revival in style. Its location close to the seashore, always noted for its "exotic" styles and forms of architecture, may partially explain this choice of style.
- ^{xxi} Rhoads, The Colonial Revival, pp. 236-239.
- ^{xxii} Among the World War I civilian war worker housing projects were: Merchant Shipyard Corporation housing at Bristol, Pennsylvania; Atlas Powder Company housing at Perryville, Maryland; Yorkship Village, Camden, New Jersey; and Eclipse Park, Beloit, Wisconsin. Rhoads, "The Colonial Revival and American Nationalism", pp. 247-249.
- ^{xxiii} See: Rhoads, "The Colonial Revival and the Americanization of Immigrants".

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Metuchen Post Office
Middlesex Co., NJ

Section number 8 Page 14

- xxiv "Bids on Proposed New Post Office Soon Advertised", Metuchen Recorder, August 11, 1938, p.1.
- xxv "New Postoffice Bids Expected Quite Soon As Plans Are Rushed", Metuchen Recorder, November 17, 1938, p. 1. Colonial Revivalists themselves did not perceive their works as something new, hence the use of the term "Colonial". The term "Colonial Revival" was only later applied to this style. The drawing was labeled as "Courtesy: Newark [NJ] Ledger", a newspaper whose archives have apparently since been lost.
- xxvi "An Act to provide for the construction of certain public buildings, and for other purposes"; Public Laws of 1926, chapter 380; volume 44, United States Statutes-at-Large, pp. 630+, approved May 25, 1926.
- xxvii Bruns, p. 85.
- xxviii "Construction of Public Buildings Outside the District of Columbia", 71st Congress, 3d session, House of Representatives, Document No. 788, February 27, 1931, p. 14; see also "To Propose New Metuchen Office", [New Brunswick] Daily Home News, August 25, 1932, p. 1.
- xxix "Deficiency Appropriation Bill, Fiscal Year 1934 - Emergency Appropriation Bill, Fiscal Year 1935", 73d Congress, 2d session, House of Representatives, Report No. 1879, June 2, 1934, p. 29.
- xxx Edward Burroughs to Hon. Charles A. Eaton, September 2, 1932; A[lonzo].U. Quint to Hon. Charles A. Eaton, August 31, 1932; A[lonzo].U. Quint to Hon. Hamilton F. Kean, September 2, 1932; National Archives at College Park, Maryland; Record Group 121; Records of the Public Buildings Service; General Correspondence and Related Records. For more on Alonzo U. Quint, see "A.U. Quint Dies Wednesday Morning", Metuchen Recorder, January 14, 1937, p. 1. In eventually renewing its five-year lease with Edward Burroughs for 1933-8, the federal government had decreased its annual rent payments by \$270 from a previous total of \$1,920, undoubtedly reflecting price deflation; see: "Bids Open for Post Office Site", Metuchen Recorder, November 4, 1932, p. 4.
- xxxi For example, in 1930, more than 10,000 trains were engaged in moving the mail throughout the nation. [anon.]. The United States Postal Service, p. 16.
- xxxii The Postal Savings System was terminated as of July 1, 1967. With the creation of the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation and the higher post-World War II interest rates paid by private banks on savings accounts, the security and competitiveness of a postally-based system came to be regarded as unnecessary. Bruns, p. 88.
- xxxiii Bruns, pp. 85-94.
- xxxiv "Bids Received for Post Office Site", Metuchen Recorder, December 16, 1932, p. 1; "\$69,000 Appropriation for New Post Office Here", Metuchen Recorder, January 25, 1935, p. 1; "Plans for New Post Office in Boro Dropped", Metuchen Recorder, July 2, 1936, p. 1; "Bids for Site of New Post Office to be Opened Oct.4", Metuchen Recorder, September 16, 1937, p. 1.
- xxxv "Choice of Twenty-Five Sites for New Post Office Building", Metuchen Recorder, October 7, 1937, p. 1.
- xxxvi "Offer of Free Site Delays Post Office", Metuchen Recorder, March 10, 1938, p. 1; "New Post Office", Metuchen Recorder, April 7, 1938, p. 1.
- xxxvii Frederick C. Ayers et ux. et al. to United States of America, Middlesex Co. (NJ) Deeds, vol. 1144, p. 276 (price \$6,500); Katherine Wiley et vir. to United States of America, Middlesex Co. (NJ) Deeds, vol. 1144, p. 274 (price \$7,000) and Mortgage Management Corporation to United States of America, Middlesex Co. (NJ) Deeds, vol. 1144, p. 272 (price \$5,000). Katherine Wiley was the wife of Samuel Wiley, former Democratic Borough Councilman who went on to hold higher political office, once again illustrating the intensely political nature of post office site selection and construction.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Metuchen Post Office
Middlesex Co., NJ

Section number 8 Page 15

xxxviii Bids ranged from Sutter's low of \$58,300 to Balsamel Construction Company's (Bernardsville, New Jersey) high of \$68,390. The "Lump Sum" bids submitted were for the use of marble for the base and wainscot of the public lobby, in contrast to "Alternate Price A" which called for using architectural terra cotta in lieu of the marble. Synopsis of Proposals for the Construction of the Post Office at Metuchen, New Jersey (April 21, 1939). National Archives at College Park, Maryland; Record Group 121; Records of the Public Buildings Service; General Correspondence and Related Records.

xxxix Metuchen Recorder: February 23, 1939, p. 1; March 23, 1939, p. 1; October 19, 1939, p. 1; October 26, 1939, p. 1; November 16, 1939, p. 1; January 11, 1940, p. 1; January 18, 1940, p. 1; and January 25, 1940, p. 1.

xl "New Post Office Dedicated Here Last Saturday", Metuchen Recorder, February 15, 1940, p. 1; "New \$75,000 Post Office Is Dedicated at Metuchen", [New Brunswick] Daily Home News, February 11, 1940, pp. 1, 10; [Post Office] Dedication Program, Saturday, February 10th, 1940, Post Office file, Metuchen-Edison Historical Society Collections, Grimstead Room, Metuchen Public Library.

xli "Expresses Approval of Post Office Issue", Metuchen Recorder, February 15, 1940, p. 1.

xlii Marlene Park and Gerald E. Markowitz, Democratic Vistas: Post Offices and Public Art in the New Deal (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, c1984), p. 218.

xliii Information on Harold Ambellan and Elisabeth Higgins Ambellan was drawn from: McGraw-Hill Dictionary of Art (New York: McGraw-Hill), c1969, vol. 1, p. 79; and The University of Connecticut Advance, February 11, 2002.

xliv For example, Harold Ambellan participated as one of the singers in "A Cavalcade of American Song" a benefit concert hosted by actor Will Geer at New York's Town Hall for the New York Committee to Aid Agricultural Workers; "Cavalcade of Song Given for Charity", New York Times, June 5, 1941, p. 26.

xlv Howard Alden Jewell, "Decorating the Subway", New York Times, February 13, 1938, section 10, p. 9.

xlvi "New York Sculptor [Robert Cronbach] Wins Federal Award", New York Times, September 21, 1940, p. 21.

xlvii "Tenants Honor Isaacs", New York Times, April 19, 1941, p. 27.

xlviixlviii Most biographical information on Ambellan's post-World War II activities can be found on the Internet website: www.cecibo.com/haroldfile/ [in French]. See also: entry on Ambellan in McGraw-Hill Dictionary of Art (New York: McGraw-Hill, c1969), vol. 1, p. 79.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Metuchen Post Office
Middlesex Co., NJ

Section number 9 Page 1

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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Metuchen Post Office
Middlesex Co., NJ

Section number 9 Page 2

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- "Bids Received for Post Office Site", December 16, 1932, p. 1.
- "Postmistress' Term Ends December 22; Four Others Seek Post", February 17, 1933, p. 1.
- "Committee Decides Not to Designate New Postmaster", March 24, 1933, p. 1.
- "Harry Kramer is New Postmast'r", July 20, 1934, p. 1.
- "Kramer Must Pass Civil Service Exam to Hold Position", July 27, 1934, p. 1.
- "\$69,000 Appropriated for New Post Office Here", January 25, 1935, p. 1.
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- "A[lonzo].U. Quint Dies Wednesday Morning", January 14, 1937, p. 1.
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- "Bids Will Be Opened Monday for Site of New Post Office", September 30, 1937, p. 1.
- "Choice of Twenty-five Sites for New Post Office Building", October 7, 1937, p. 1.
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- "Plan Dedication of Post Office for December 15", October 19, 1939, p. 1.
- "To Change Date of Dedication of Local Post Office", October 26, 1939, p. 1.
- "P.O. Dedication Is Scheduled for January", November 16, 1939, p. 1.
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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Metuchen Post Office
Middlesex Co., NJ

Section number 9 Page 3

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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Metuchen Post Office
Middlesex Co., NJ

Section number 9 Page 4

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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Metuchen Post Office
Middlesex Co., NJ

Section number 10 Page 1

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The United States Post Office, Metuchen, New Jersey, occupies Block 182, Lots 33 and 33.02, on the revised 1939 Tax Assessment Map of the Borough of Metuchen, Middlesex County, New Jersey. Said boundaries form a roughly rectangular trapezoid stretching 139 feet along Main Street and 177 feet along Woodbridge Avenue, with a short off-set area extending into the center of the block. The nominated site encompasses approximately 23,803 square feet or slightly more than half (.546) of an acre.

JUSTIFICATION

The nominated property includes all that land currently and historically associated with the building known as the United States Post Office, Metuchen, New Jersey.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Metuchen Post Office
Middlesex Co., NJ

Section number Photos Page 1

KEY TO PHOTOGRAPHS

Uniform Information for All Photographs

Kevin M. Hale, photographer.

Photos taken April/May 2004.

Negatives held by: State of New Jersey, Historic Preservation Office, P.O. Box 404, Trenton, NJ 08625-0404.

Individual Photographs

1. Overall view of building, from northwest, Woodbridge Avenue to the left, Main Street to the right.
2. "Grace's Garden", view from north.
3. Front section of building, view from south.
4. Rear section of building, view from south.
5. Typical window with recessed spandrel panel.
6. Section of Entablature.
7. Cupola with weathervane.
8. West elevation.
9. Close-up of straight running cornice and articulated denticulated cornice.
10. Pier.
11. Cornerstone.
126. Doorway.
136. North elevation.
14. Blind window and narrow vertical window.
15. Endgable pediment with lunette window and raking cornice.
16. Seam between front and rear sections with articulated entablature.
17. South elevation.
18. East elevation, from southeast.
19. East elevation, from northeast.
20. Service lobby, from southeast.
21. Service lobby, from northeast.
22. Service lobby entrance vestibule.
23. Service lobby, postmaster's office door.
24. Service lobby, plaster relief sculpture "Gardeners" by Harold Ambellan.
25. Service lobby, typical glazed-door bulletin board case.
26. Service lobby, pedestal-type counter-table.
27. Service lobby, frosted-glass service windows, marble wainscoting.
28. Service lobby, coved cornice.

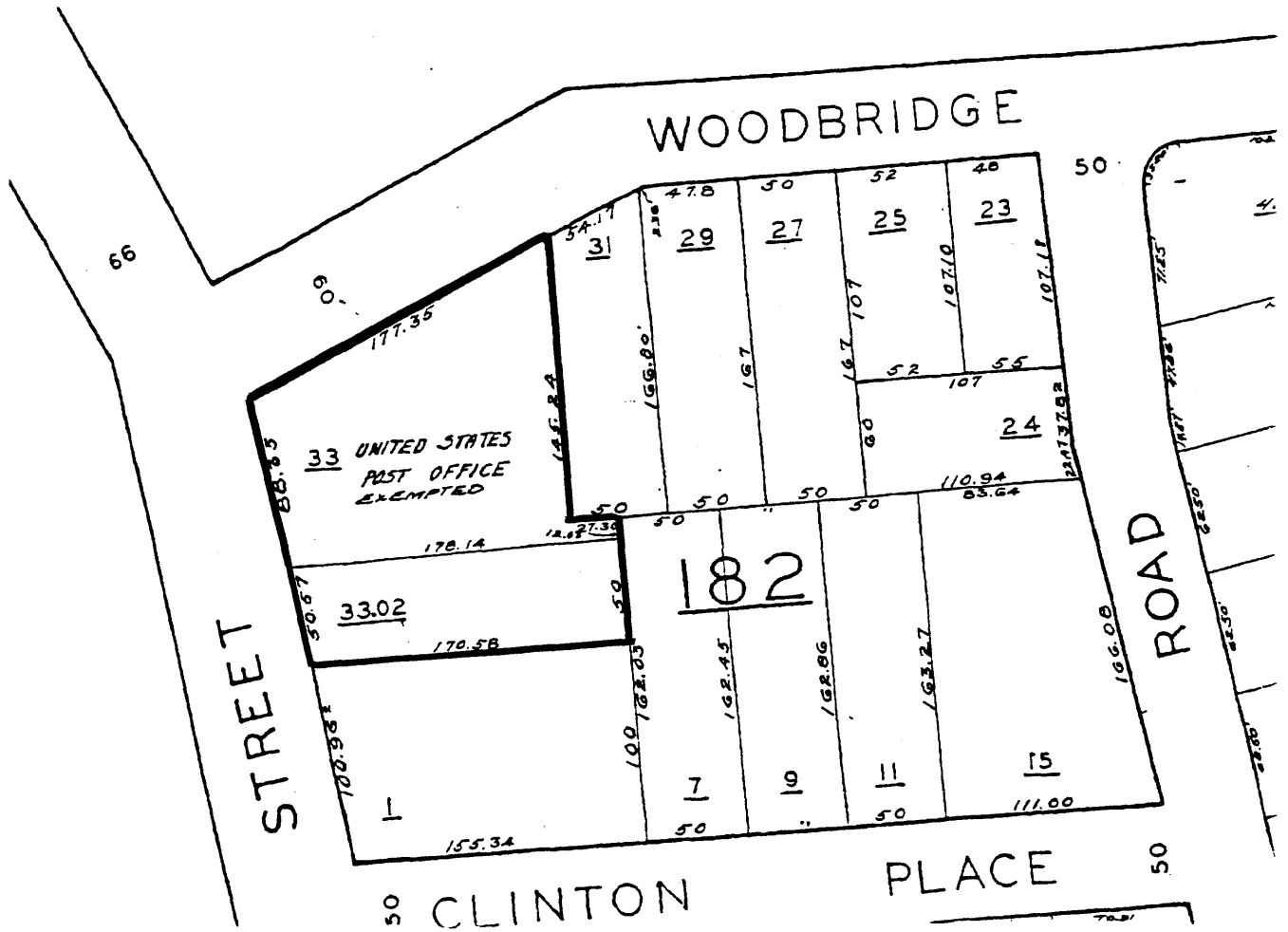
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CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section _____ Page _____



Tax Assessment Map

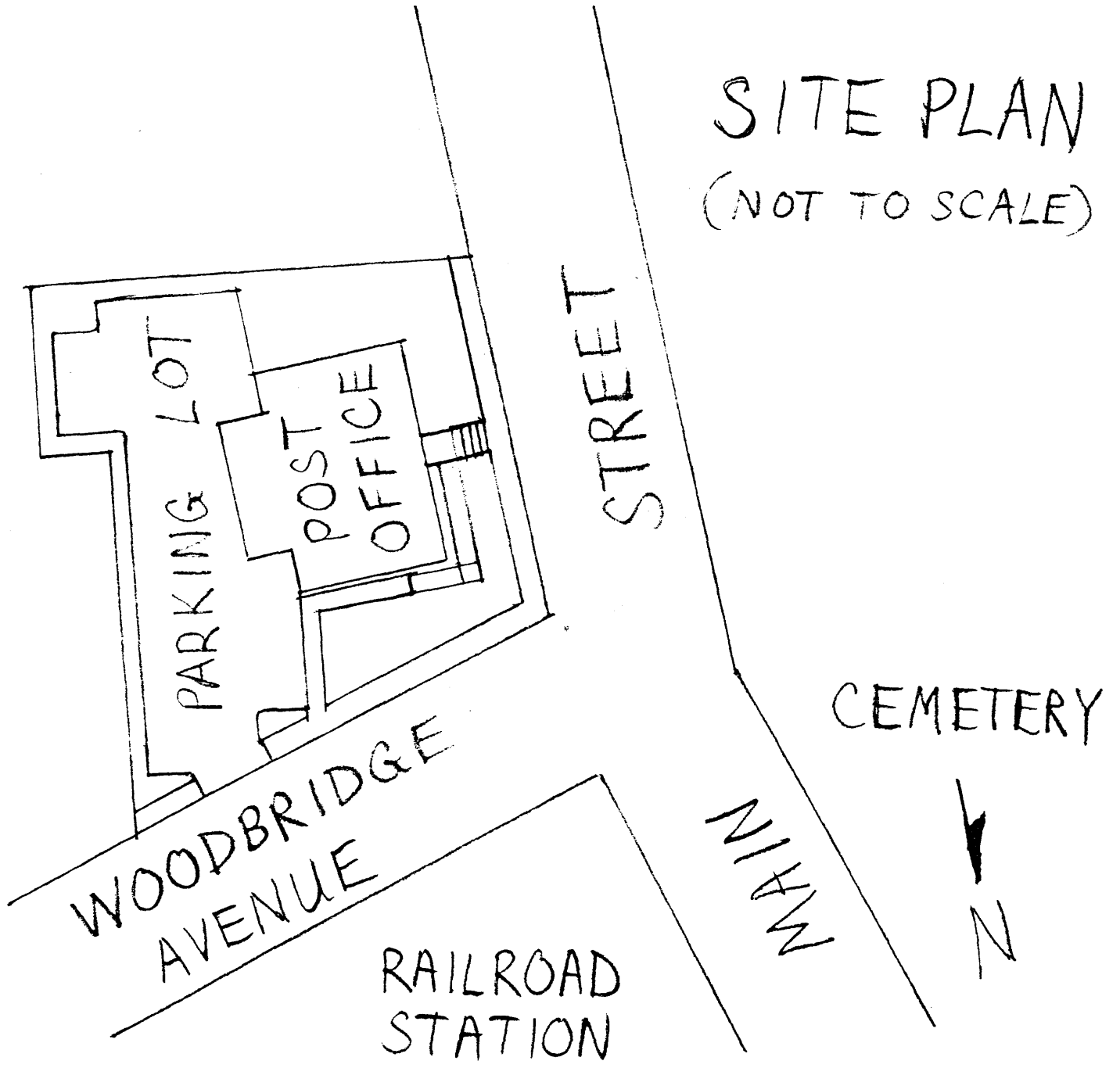
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CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section _____ Page _____



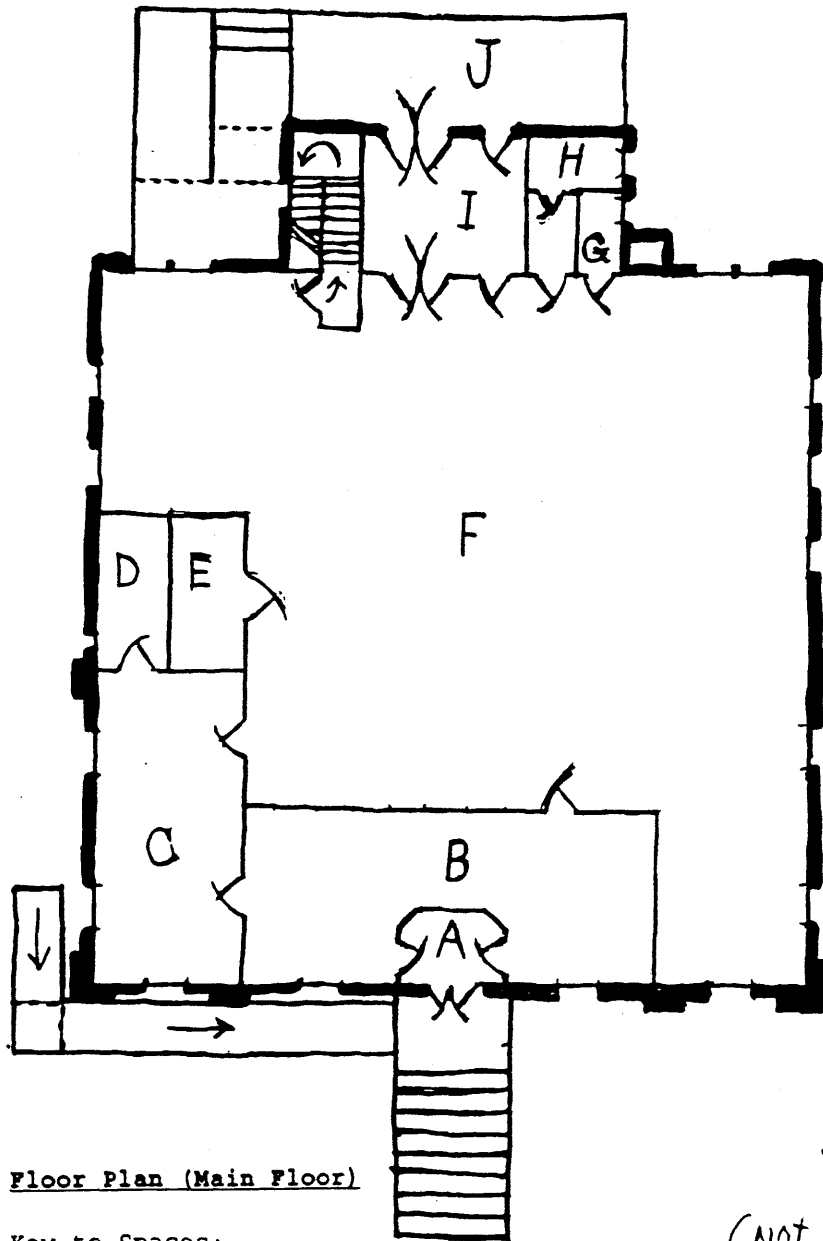
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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section _____ Page _____



Floor Plan (Main Floor)

Key to Spaces:

- A - Entrance Vestibule
- B - Service Lobby
- C - Postmaster's Office
- D - Postmaster's Restroom
- E - Vault
- F - Work Area

- G - Custodial Closet
- H - Staff Restroom
- I - Mailing Vestibule
- J - Loading Dock

← N
(NOT TO SCALE)

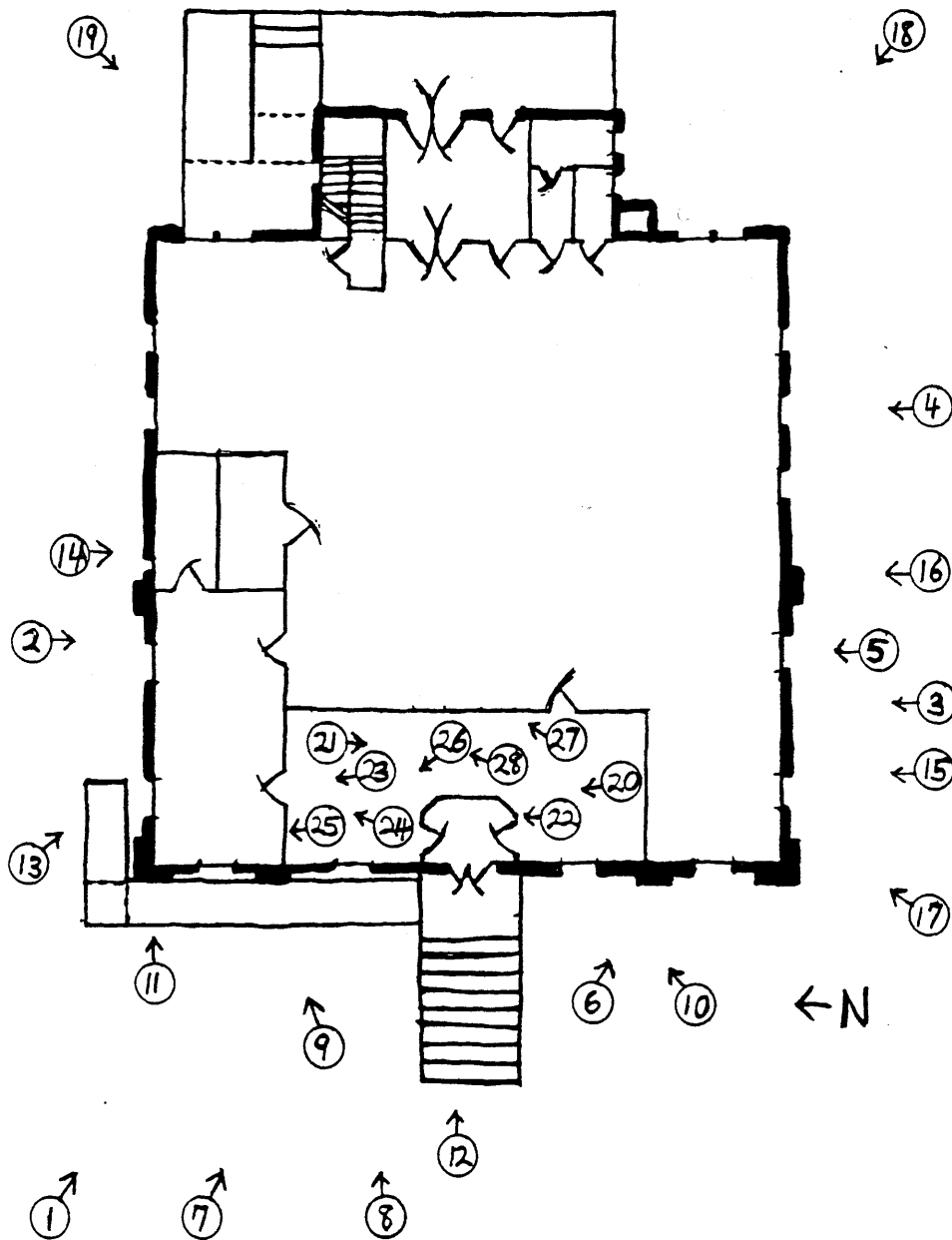
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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section _____ Page _____



Floor Plan (Main Floor)

(not to scale)

Photograph Locations

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section _____ Page _____

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KEY TO HISTORIC VIEWS

Historic View "A" -

Photograph of post office building looking to the northeast taken shortly after dedication.

Photographer: Nathaniel Rubel of New Brunswick, New Jersey.

Date: circa March 1940.

Historic View "B" -

Photographic post card of post office building looking to the southeast taken during warm weather (open windows).

Photographer: unknown.

Date: circa 1950.

Historic View "C" -

Photograph of post office building used on "Dedicatory Exercises" Program dated February 10, 1940.

Photographer: unknown.

Date: circa January 1940.

Historic View "D" -

Photograph of Alexander Ayers House, southeast corner of Main Street and Woodbridge Avenue (cut in two), built about 1800. Site of post office.

Photographer: unknown.

Date: unknown

Historic View "E" -

Photograph of new post office site looking across Main Street between Woodbridge Avenue and Clinton Place.

Photographer: unknown.

Date: August 14, 1938.

Historic View "F" -

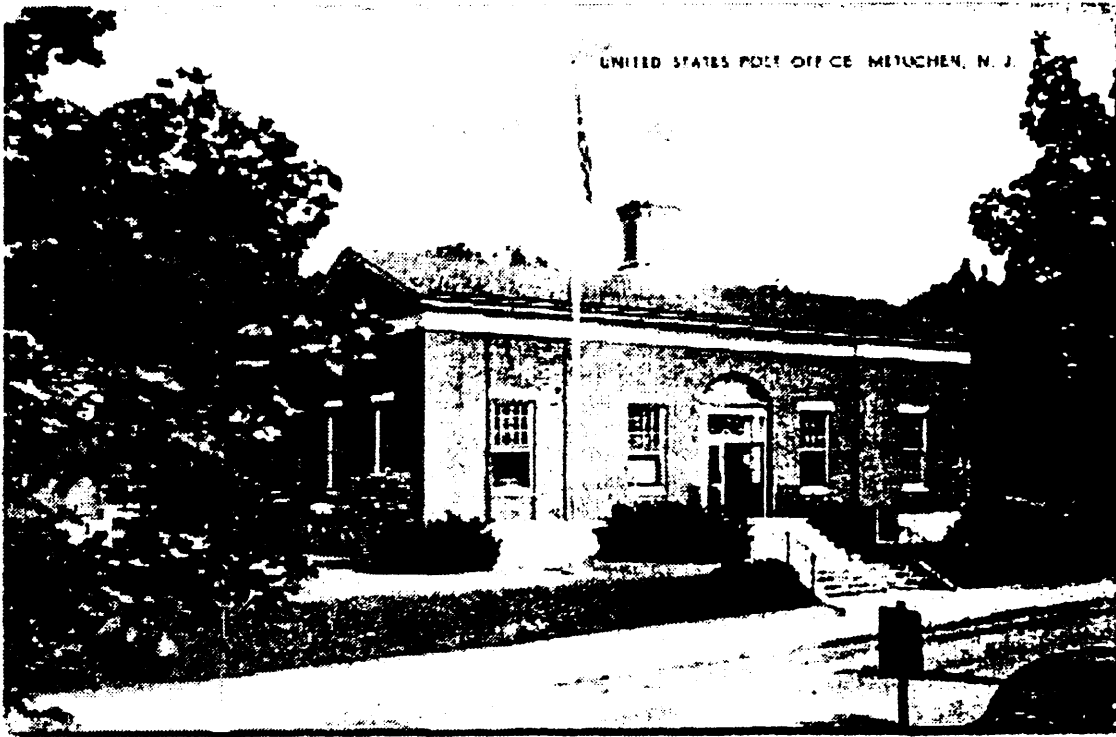
Photograph of new post office site looking across Main Street at corner of Woodbridge Avenue.

Photographer: unknown.

Date: August 14, 1938.

Historic View "A"

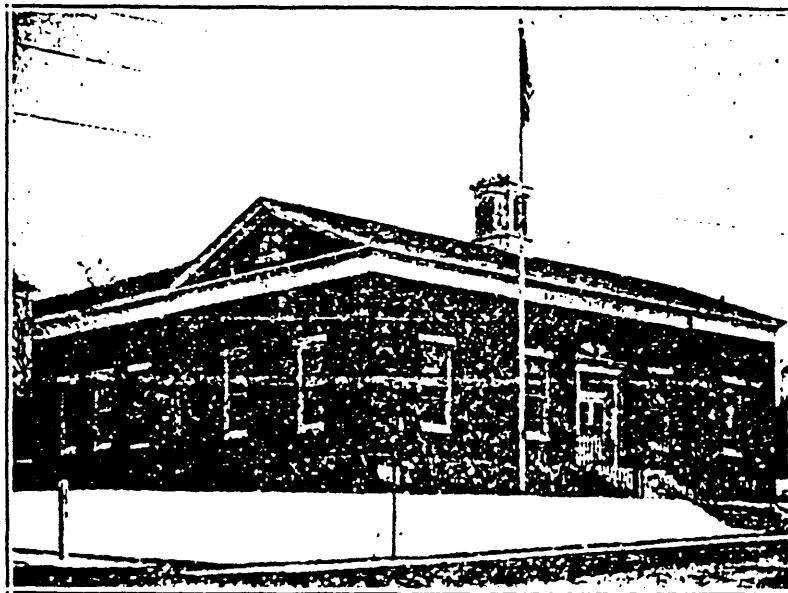




Historic View "B"

... PROGRAM ...

DEDICATORY EXERCISES



METUCHEN POST OFFICE BUILDING

Saturday, February 10th, 1940

Historic View "C"



Historic View "D"



Historic View "E"



Historic View "F"