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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 determination for individual properties and districts. See instruction 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 from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name United States Post Office Madill

other names/site number

2. Location

street & number 223 West Lillie Boulevard [N/A] not for publication

city or town Madill [N/A] vicinity

state Oklahoma code OK county Marshall code 095 zip code 73446

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this
[nomination] request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property [meets] does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant [nationally] statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

State Historic Preservation Officer 10-20-08 Date

Oklahoma Historical Society
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.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

Federal Preservation Officer 10/28/08 Date

United States Postal Service
State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- [x] 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
[] See continuation sheet.
[] other, explain
[] See continuation sheet.

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action 4/17/09

United States Post Office Madill
Name of Property

Marshall County, Oklahoma
County/State

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 count previously listed resources.)

| Contributing | Noncontributing | |
|--------------|-----------------|------------|
| 1 | 0 | buildings |
| 0 | 0 | sites |
| 0 | 0 | structures |
| 0 | 0 | objects |
| 1 | 0 | Total |

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

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register.

Oklahoma Post Offices with Section Art

6. Function or Use

Historic Function

(Enter categories from instructions)

GOVERNMENT: Post Office

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

GOVERNMENT: Post Office

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURY
REVIVALS: Colonial Revival

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

| | |
|------------|----------|
| foundation | BRICK |
| walls | BRICK |
| | CONCRETE |
| roof | ASPHALT |
| other | _____ |
| | _____ |

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

United States Post Office Madill
Name of Property

Marshall County, Oklahoma
County/State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

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.)

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Politics/Government

Art

Periods of Significance

1938-1940

Significant Dates

N/A

Significant Person(s)

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above).

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

SIMON, LOUIS A., SUPERVISING ARCHITECT
MAGAFAN ETHEL MURAL ARTIST

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
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey

- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State Agency
- Federal Agency
- Local Government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

Oklahoma Historical Society/SHPO

United States Post Office Madill
Name of Property

Marshall County, Oklahoma
County/State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property less than 1 acre

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1. 14 705489 3774230
Zone Easting Northing

2. Zone Easting Northing

3. Zone Easting Northing

4. Zone Easting Northing

[] 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 Alyson Greiner / Associate Professor

organization Oklahoma State University, Dept. of Geography date August 11, 2007

street & number 225 Scott Hall telephone 405-744-9169

city or town Stillwater state OK zip code 74078

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 SHPO or FPO.)

name United States Postal Service

street & number 475 L'Enfant Plaza SW telephone 800-275-8777

city or town Washington state DC zip code 20260-3100

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.

**National Register of Historic Places
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National Park Service**United States Post Office Madill
Marshall County, OklahomaSection number 7 Page 1**DESCRIPTION**

The United States Post Office in Madill, Oklahoma was built in 1938 on the southeast corner of the intersection of North Third Avenue and West Lillie Boulevard. The post office is surrounded by grass on all but the back side, and occupies a spacious lot with a deeper setback than nearby commercial buildings. The post office is a one and a half story Colonial Revival style building with a basement. The lobby area and front portion of the building has a hipped roof that gives way to a flat roof at the back of the building. A single copper-plated chimney stack with louvers stands at each end of the ridge of the roof. Both chimney stacks show traces of green coloration, an indication of ongoing oxidation. The wall cladding consists primarily of buff bricks though concrete has been used below most of the windows. There is a loading dock that projects from the back of the building, but other than this the building follows a square plan. Decorative details are minimal but include the fenestration, which is dominated by semi-elliptical arched windows, and attractive brickwork. For example, the brickwork at the tops of the walls creates the effect of a dentiled cornice and recessed bricks decorate the window surrounds.

The north elevation, or front of the building, is symmetrical with two large windows flanking the central doorway. Semi-elliptical arches top the main entrance as well as all of the windows. The entrance to the post office is pronounced, in part because of its size, extensive use of glass, and the tapered stairway leading to it. Three wide concrete steps rise from the sidewalk to a broad, level platform that leads to a rank of five additional steps—narrower than those below them—up to the main doors. The original metal railings outline the edges of the stairway, and for safety, an additional railing has been added in the center of the stairway. For security purposes, the entrance has been modified to include locking glazed slab double doors. These doors are flanked by sidelights, two wall-mounted exterior electric lights, and are topped with a large glass transom. Centered above the entrance in black letters are the words "UNITED STATES POST OFFICE MADILL OKLAHOMA." Shrubs planted on either side of the entranceway continue the symmetry of the façade.

Patterns in the brickwork on the north elevation create the effect of a colonnaded front with six pilasters linked by the semi-elliptical arches that span the windows and main entrance. The top of each of these pilasters is marked by several rows of bricks that project slightly to resemble a dentiled capital. Brickwork adjacent to these pilasters is recessed and frames the windows which are centered below each of the semi-elliptical arches. The top part of each window has a fixed glass pane painted in a dark brown color to serve as a window shade, while the bottom includes a double-hung metal window. The window sill and wall space below the windows consists of a beige-colored concrete that matches the surrounding bricks. Each of the window sills extends beyond the bottom of the window to the adjacent pilasters.

The east elevation consists of two parts: (1) the front or lobby area below the hipped roof, and (2) the back area with the flat roof. The cladding on the lobby side continues the pattern on the north elevation, with three pilasters linked by semi-elliptical arches above two windows. The window on the right is in the same style as the windows on the north elevation, but the window on the left has been converted into a wheelchair-accessible entrance. An I-shaped concrete ramp with metal railings extends from the sidewalk to this entrance. The doorway consists of a glazed slab with a sidelight to the left of the door and a large transom above that matches the fixed pane in the window to the right. Three tall windows mark the back portion of the east elevation. The pane of glass in the top portion of the window is fixed, and there is a double-hung sash in the bottom. Semi-elliptical arches span the tops of these windows, but the arches here are flatter than those over the windows in the lobby area. Concrete sills give way to square panels of concrete below the windows. Approximately one and a half feet above the ground a brick watercourse extends the length of wall. There are two window wells on

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this elevation marked by concrete curbing. The top sashes of these basement windows are visible from ground level. These are 6 x 6 double-hung windows with metal mesh screens added for security.

The south elevation is the back of the post office and it includes two prominent exterior features. One is a square chimneystack topped with a metal ventilator cap. The other is the rectangular loading dock that projects in perpendicular fashion from the middle section of the south elevation. The loading dock is a single story structure with a wide loading bay on the west side. A flat roof extends over this loading area, and the tops of the walls of the loading dock have concrete coping and exterior lighting. There is a concrete ramp up to the door on the east side of the loading dock and a short flight of steps up to the door on the west side. The remainder of the south elevation is distinguished by its windows. There are four large semi-elliptical arched windows—two on either side of the loading dock—in the same style as the windows on back portion of the east elevation. Also, on the left side near the southwestern corner of the building there is another window approximately one-third the width and three-quarters the height of the large windows. This small window matches the style of the other windows on this elevation except that there is brick below the sill rather than concrete and instead of a semi-elliptical arch there is a decorative soldier brick lintel above it. Just below the window a staircase descends to the basement level. A brick watercourse, interrupted by the loading dock, extends across the south elevation.

The fenestration on the west elevation is slightly different from the other elevations. The lobby area has two large window bays with semi-elliptical arches like those on the north and east elevations. However, only the bay on the left contains a window. The bay on the right is filled with brick in a honeycomb pattern. A rectangular section of these bricks in the bottom left corner of the window bay is significantly darker than the others and rust-colored stains have bled onto the window sill as well. On the back part of the west elevation there is a single large window below a semi-elliptical arch. This window matches the other large windows on the back of the building. Flanking this window are two small, slender windows in the same style as the small window on the south elevation. These, too, have decorative soldier brick lintels. There is a round metal ventilator on the wall beside each of these small windows and a brick watercourse stretching the length of the wall. A metal railing surrounds the opening and staircase to the basement level.

The lobby area is accessible through a three-sided wood and glass vestibule that protrudes into the post office lobby. There are two doors, one to the left and one to the right of the landing at the top of the stairway. Both doors are wood panel with multipane glazing in the top half. There is also a large multipane transom (4 x 4) above each door and a sidelight with four panes of glass on the lobby side of the doors. The semi-elliptical arch on the exterior front entrance is matched by a semi-elliptical arch at the top of the back side of the vestibule. There are sixteen panes of glass below this arch.

The floor plan of the post office lobby has an I-shape. The counter is opposite the vestibule, has two service bays, and is framed by wood paneling. There is a wood panel door adjacent to these service bays. Next are the slots for mail, and then post office boxes. Above the counter there are two vents in the top part of the wall. Marble wainscoting fills the bottom third of the interior walls. The floor consists of a beige-colored terrazzo tile bordered by a burgundy-colored tile that forms a band at the base of the walls. Two racks containing shipping supplies have been added between the vestibule and the counter. In addition, hanging fluorescent lights have been added throughout the lobby area.

The postmaster's office is on the west wall, immediately to the right of the vestibule and entrance. Square wood and glass display cases for bulletins flank the postmaster's door. The door to the postmaster's office stands out from the remainder of the west wall in part because it is topped with a wood cornice that carries yellow painted letters outlined with black spelling "POSTMASTER," and a

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beveled crown molding. To the left of the postmaster's door a standing glass and metal display case has been added. Filling the wall space above the postmaster's door and appearing as though supported by the crown molding, is the mural, *Prairie Fire*, painted by Ethel Magafan and installed in 1940. The mural is painted in tempera on canvas. Its earthy hues match the wood used on the vestibule, postmaster's door, and counter area. The mural shows a woman grasping a child in a Conestoga wagon about to be engulfed in flames. The wagon is pulled by four yoked oxen agitated by the conflagration. Two men carrying shovels rush to dig a break to stop the fire from spreading. Magafan's scene vividly depicts the action and chaos associated with traveling across and settling the prairies.

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Marshall County, OklahomaSection number 8 Page 1**SIGNIFICANCE**Significance:

The United States Post Office in Madill is significant within the Multiple Property Nomination, "Oklahoma Post Offices with Section Art" because it reflects government attitudes that exposure to art was a public good. The post office was built in 1938 and as a federal building there were funds set aside for the decoration of its interior. Since 1934 a New Deal program under the auspices of the Treasury Department had coordinated the decoration of federal buildings. That program was known as the Section of Painting and Sculpture, or simply "the Section." As envisioned by the director of the Section, the decorations for these public buildings should consist of respectable art produced by accomplished artists. Consequently, competitions were held to identify prospective artists for the various public buildings. Sometimes a competition for one building would yield commissions for other buildings as well, and this was the case for Madill's post office. On the basis of her artwork submitted to the competition for the post office in Amarillo, Texas, Ethel Magafan, was awarded the commission for the Madill post office.

These events demonstrate that the post office in Madill is significant in the area of politics/government, and art. As a result of the New Deal program known as the Section, the Madill post office received a mural intended to embellish the interior space and make respectable art more accessible to the public. That mural remains in excellent condition and is an integral part of the post office today. Consequently, Criteria A and C are the applicable National Register criteria.

Historical Significance:

Ethel Magafan (1916-1993), and her twin sister Jenne, were born in Chicago but spent most of their lives in Colorado. Their art education and careers are closely connected until Jenne's tragically early death in 1952. In 1934 Jenne received a Carter Memorial Art Scholarship and used the money to enroll herself and Ethel in the Colorado Springs Fine Art Center (formerly the Broadmoor Art Academy). They were both trained by Frank Mechau, and developed a firm foundation in mural painting. Impressed with their artistic talent, he hired them as assistants. After just three years at the Colorado Springs Fine Art Center the Magafans began to compete for Treasury Department mural projects. Ethel won the competition for the Lawrence, Kansas Post Office in April 1937. Nevertheless, her study, *The Lawrence Massacre*, was rejected by the local committee. Residents found the subject of Quantrill's violent raid on the abolitionist town during the Civil War an unwelcome reminder of past tragedies and urged that another mural be chosen. The national committee awarded Ethel the Auburn, Nebraska mural as compensation. Ethel completed six murals over the course of her career, including *Prairie Fire* for Madill in 1940.

Ethel and Jenne worked in Colorado Springs but permanently relocated to Woodstock, New York in 1945. Their decision to move east was influenced by fellow artists Doris Lee and Arnold Blanch, whom they met while on a vacation in California. Lee and Blanch encouraged the Magafans to visit the growing art community in Woodstock. Soon after the move Ethel met Bruce Currie and the two were married in 1946. Ethel's successes grew with a Tiffany Foundation Award in 1949 and a Fulbright Scholarship in 1951, which she used to work in Greece. Ethel continued to living and working in Woodstock after Jenne's death.

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Ethel Magafan received the commission for the mural for the Madill Post Office in November 1939 but only chose her subject, *Prairie Fire*, after consulting with the local residents. She completed the mural at her Colorado Springs studio and came to Madill to personally install it. Madill lies in the midst of the Oklahoma prairies, which experienced untold numbers of prairie fires in its prehistory. In the nineteenth century, both artists and the popular press had reacted to stories of prairie fires with fascination. The fires often reached staggering proportions and destroyed huge tracts of land. Magafan attempts to capture the terror and sublime beauty of the fire by depicting a small band of pioneers attempting to escape the approaching blaze. As one group tries to quiet the frightened oxen, two others prepare to create an earthen break to slow the fire's progress.

The inspiration for the mural arose in part from her earlier study for Lawrence, Kansas. Ethel recalled that she wanted a "historical subject," and the massive nineteenth-century prairie fires offered another opportunity to explore sensational themes: "I was back to something violent again, but I thought it was very exciting material and I enjoyed doing that mural tremendously" (quoted in Travato 1964). Both the stylized flames and the horse and rider at left compare closely to Magafan's aborted Lawrence mural. Her desire to recapture the intensity of the Lawrence composition prompted her originally to place the fire too close to the pioneers until the Section protested that the scene seemed unconvincing.

Despite the Section's reservations about the composition, they celebrated Magafan's stylistic approach. Both the simplified approach to form and the expressive coloration of her style enjoyed great popularity in the 1930s during the ascendancy of the American Scene. It was undoubtedly this formal approach that earned Magafan her numerous mural commissions during the 1930s and 1940s.

Summary:

The United States Post Office in Madill, Oklahoma is a contributing resource within the Multiple Property Nomination, "Oklahoma Post Offices with Section Art." Since its construction in 1938, this post office has been one of the signature structures in downtown Madill. The building is in excellent condition and provides a very good example of the Colonial Revival style, an architectural aesthetic that is comparatively uncommon in the cultural landscape of Oklahoma. That the post office also houses a Section mural sets it apart from most other post offices. Following Criterion C, then, the Madill Post Office is a distinguishable property. Because of the strong association between this post office and the New Deal program known as the Section, which facilitated the production of art to decorate public buildings and led to the commissioning of Magafan's mural, this property also qualifies under Criterion A. In short, the history of this property demonstrates the role played by politics and government in shaping the patterns of American history.

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BIBLIOGRAPHY

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- Falk, Peter H., ed. 1985. *Who Was Who in American Art: Compiled from the Original Thirty-four Volumes of American Art Annual—Who's Who in Art, Biographies of American Artists Active from 1898-1947*. Madison, CT: Sound View Press.
- Greiner, Alyson L., and Mark A. White. 2004. *Thematic Survey of New Deal Public Art in Oklahoma 2003-2004*. Oklahoma City: State Historic Preservation Office.
- Rogers, Kathleen Grisham. 1974. Incidence of New Deal Art in Oklahoma: An Historical Survey. Master's Thesis, University of Oklahoma.
- Scott, Barbara Kerr, and Sally Soelle. 1983. *New Deal Art—The Oklahoma Experience, 1933-1943*. Lawton, OK: Cameron University.
- Soelle, Sally. 1984. New Deal Art Projects in Oklahoma, 1933-1943. Master's thesis, University of Oklahoma.
- Trovato, Joseph. 1964. Interview with Ethel Magafan, 5 November, Ethel Magafan papers, Archives of American Art, reel 3949, frame 765.

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GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION**

This property consists of the west 15 feet of lot 7 and all of lots 8, 9, 10, 11, and 12 of Block 30, City of Madill.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

This boundary includes the property historically associated with the Madill Post Office.

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PHOTOGRAPH LOG

The following information pertains to photograph numbers 1-14 except as noted:

Name of Property: United States Post Office Madill
 Photographer: Alyson Greiner
 Date of Photographs: July 31, 2007
 Negatives: N/A; photos are digital TIFFs

| Photo No. | Photographic Information |
|-----------|--|
| 1 | View of exterior, west and south elevations; camera facing northeast |
| 2 | View of exterior, south elevation; camera facing north northeast |
| 3 | View of exterior, south and east elevations; camera facing north northwest |
| 4 | View of exterior, east elevation; camera facing north northwest |
| 5 | View of exterior, south elevation; camera facing north |
| 6 | View of exterior, north elevation; camera facing south |
| 7 | View of exterior, east elevation; camera facing west southwest |
| 8 | View of exterior, north elevation from across Lillie Boulevard; camera facing south |
| 9 | View of exterior, north and west elevations from Lillie Boulevard: camera facing southeast |
| 10 | View of interior mural; camera facing west |
| 11 | View of interior mural; camera facing west |
| 12 | View of interior vestibule, mural, and counter area; camera facing west |
| 13 | View of post office lobby area; camera facing west |
| 14 | View of post office lobby and counter area; camera facing southwest |