

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

1650  
SEP 26 1989  
NATIONAL REGISTER

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

1. Name of Property

historic name Sabetha United States Post Office  
other names/site number Same

2. Location

street & number 122 S. 9th Street  not for publication  
city, town Sabetha  vicinity  
state Kansas code KS county Nemaha code 131 zip code 66534

3. Classification

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

Name of related multiple property listing:  
Kansas Post Offices that Contain Treasury  
Department Section Artwork, 1936-1942  
Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

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

R. Cameron Brown State Historic Preservation Officer March 8, 1989  
Signature of certifying official Date  
Kansas State Historical Society  
State or Federal agency and bureau

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting or other official Date  
\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

5. 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:)

Beth Boland 10/12/89  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

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**6. Function or Use**

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Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Government: Post Office

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Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Government: Post Office

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**7. Description**

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Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Modern Movement: Moderne

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Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Brick

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walls Brick

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roof Limestone

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other Other: tar and gravel

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**Describe present and historic physical appearance.**

The Sabetha United States Post Office (c. 1936-1937) is located at 122 S. 9th Street in Sabetha, Nemaha County, Kansas (pop. 2,286). The one-story, buff brick and limestone building has a western facade orientation. The building measures approximately sixty-five feet from north to south and seventy-four feet from east to west. A transomed, double door pierces the center of the building's facade. Steps lead up to the doorway. Two pairs of large, multi-paned windows flank the doorway. Similar windows fenestrate the lesser elevations. This post office is an example of the smaller class C or D standardized design type that was repeated throughout the country during the 1930s.

The mural "The Hare and the Tortoise" was installed on the south wall of the Sabetha Post Office lobby above the postmaster's door and the two bulletin boards that flank it. This is the traditional location for Section artwork in the smaller class C and D post offices. "The Hare and the Tortoise" is an oil on canvas mural that depicts a Pony Express rider galloping past an Overland Stagecoach on the pony express route that crossed northeastern Kansas between 1860 and 1861. The coach and the rider have just rounded a rock outcropping as they continue along the rutted trail. The rider waves to the stagecoach as he speeds past them. The guard waves back and smiles. The mid-spring, northeastern Kansas countryside is marked by low shrubs and some trees. Bluish hills mark the horizon. Reid employs a primary palette of green, brown, blue, and yellow for the mural.

The mural was installed on October 14, 1937. It measured 14' by 4' before installation, a small frame surrounds it and a dentilled cornice surmounts it. In August, 1973 the mural's condition was assessed as good and remains as such.

A varnished, wooden vestibule projects into the lobby, cutting off some view of the mural. This is a traditional design feature found in most of the post offices included in this nomination. The floors and wainscoting retain their original tiles. The postmaster's door and bulletin boards retain their varnished wooden surrounds. The original hanging lights have been replaced with hanging fluorescent lights that obstruct the mural.

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with nary a rest. The average run for each rider was fifty miles. The Pony Express was a shortlived express mail service that was quickly rendered obsolete by the advent of the transcontinental telegraph and the continued expansion of the railroad, but its spirit captured the imagination of the American people and has lived on as part of the glorified American past.

Reid was a Concordia, Kansas native whose father operated a stagecoach line from Concordia to Marysville. Robert Richmond writes that until the advent of the automobile, stagecoaches continued to provide transportation in areas of Kansas not served by the railroad. The period newspapers and Reid's own correspondence with the Section make much of his first hand knowledge of stagecoaching, emphasizing that the horses are properly hitched, the shiny brass harnesses are accurate, and the horses, the rider, stage driver, and guard are portrayed correctly. Local public criticism about details in the Section murals occurred occasionally, giving the artist bad press. Reid, being a seasoned professional and very aware of the impact of public opinion probably hedged his bets, even though it wasn't necessary.

The extent of community involvement in the development of the subject material and presentation of the mural is not clear in the Sabetha case. Reid was awarded the commission based on an honorable mention received in a Section competition. Reid received the contract on March 22, 1937 and the mural was installed on October 14, 1937. "The Hare and the Tortoise" was installed on the south wall of the post office lobby above the postmaster's door and the two bulletin boards that flank it. The mural measured 14' by 4' before installation, a small frame surrounds it and dentilled cornice surmounts it. Preston Plumb Flenniken, a native Topekan who had studied under Reid and had assisted in other Section installations, installed the Reid's Sabetha work.

Local reaction to the mural was very favorable. The Sabetha Herald wrote of the mural that, "This is upstage stuff and most positively it is nothing rowdy like Thomas Hart Benton foisted on the Missouri state house at Jeff. City." Reid spent several months working on the mural at his Long Beach, New York studio. He received \$570 for the mural. Several years later during a talk in Topeka he described mural painting, saying, "It's just as easy as painting an easel picture, only you put away your fine brushes and use big ones from a dime store." Reid also painted the Section murals for the Olathe, Kansas and Sulpher, Oklahoma post offices. The Sabetha Post Office is an example of one of the many smaller class C or D type post offices that received Section artwork in Kansas.

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Reid was one of the country's most prominent political cartoonist's, serving as the cartoonist for the Republican National Committee frequently during the first four decades of the twentieth century. His career as a political cartoonist began with a submission to the Topeka Mail and Breeze. His syndicated cartoons ran in such publications as the Kansas City Star, the New York Herald, McClure's, and the Saturday Evening Post. Reid published several Topeka and Leavenworth based newspapers and was active in Kansas' business community at large. He established the Reid-Stone School of Art with George M. Stone in Topeka, this eventually evolved into the Washburn University Art Department. In the 1920s Reid resettled in New York but retained his Kansas ties.

Please see the Kansas Post Office Artwork (1936-1942) Thematic Resources cover nomination for additional information.

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Park, Marlene and Gerald Markowitz. Democratic Vistas. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1984).

Richmond, Robert W. Kansas: A Land of Contrasts. (St. Charles, Missouri: Forum Press, 1974).

Sabetha Herald, 1 September 1937.

Sabetha Star, 23 September 1937.

Topeka Capital; 5 September 1937; 12 September 1937; 19 September 1937; 1 October 1937; 4 October 1937.

Topeka State Journal; 30 August 1937, 6 September 1937.

University of Kansas Alumni Magazine. December, 1955.

Wichita Eagle, 14 October 1937.

**8. Statement of Significance**

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

nationally  statewide  locally

Applicable National Register Criteria  A  B  C  D

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

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Art  
Politics/Government  
Social History

Period of Significance

1937  
1937  
1937

Significant Dates

1937  
1937  
1937

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Reid, Albert T.: Artist  
Simon, Louis: Supervising Architect  
Rokah and Sons: General Contractor

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

The Sabetha United States Post Office (c. 1936-1937) is being nominated to the National Register as part of the Kansas Post Office Artwork (1936-1942) Thematic Resources nomination at the local and state levels of significance under criteria A and C for its historical association with the Treasury Department's Section program and for the artistic significance of the mural that it contains. The mural, "The Hare and the Tortoise", was painted by Long Beach, New York artist Albert T. Reid (1873-1955) in 1937.

"The Hare and the Tortoise" is an oil on canvas mural that depicts a Pony Express rider galloping past an Overland Stagecoach on the pony express route that crossed northeastern Kansas between 1860 and 1861. The coach and rider have just rounded a rock outcropping as they continue along the rutted trail. The rider waves to the stagecoach guard and driver as he speeds past them. The guard waves back and smiles. The mid-spring, northeastern Kansas countryside is marked by low shrubs and some trees. Bluish hills mark the horizon. Reid employs a primary palette of green, brown, blue, and yellow for the mural. "The Hare and the Tortoise" is representative of the historically based, regional, illustrative realism that was funded under the Section.

The Pony Express mail service crossed through northeastern Kansas on a two thousand mile route from St. Joseph, Missouri to Sacramento, California. The delivery time averaged ten days. The Pony Express followed the Overland Stage route, crossing through Doniphan, Brown, Nemaha, and Marshall counties, where it merged with the Oregon/California Trail and headed northwest into Nebraska. There were three Pony Express stations in Nemaha County, Granda, Log Chain, and Seneca; the Log Chain station was the closest to Sabetha. Fresh horses were supplied at relay points every ten to fifteen miles along the trail. Arriving at his station, the young and lithe rider would leap off his spent mount, unstrap the mail bags, resecure them to a fresh horse, and speedily gallop off again

See continuation sheet

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

Falk, Peter Hastings. Who Was Who in American Art. (Madison, CT: Soundview Press, 1985).

General Services Administration, Treasury Deptmt Section Records. Kansas Post Offices. Sabetha, Kansas.

Kansas City Times, 28 August 1937.

National Archives. Public Building Services (RG 121), Technical Questionnaires (Series 134) and Correspondence with Artists (Series 126).

See continuation sheet

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

Specify repository:

Kansas State Historical Society

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of property Less than 1 acre

UTM References

A 1, 5 | 2, 6, 0 | 4, 8, 9 | 4, 4 | 2, 0 | 3, 2, 0  
 Zone Easting Northing

C [ ] | [ ] | [ ] | [ ] | [ ] | [ ]

B [ ] | [ ] | [ ] | [ ] | [ ] | [ ]  
 Zone Easting Northing

D [ ] | [ ] | [ ] | [ ] | [ ] | [ ]

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated property is located on lots 10, 11, and 12; Block 30, Sabetha, Kansas. The property is bounded to the west by S. 9th, to the south by Virginia, and to the north and east by adjacent property lines.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes the entire parcel that is historically associated with the property.

See continuation sheet

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Martha Hagedorn-Krass, Architectural Historian

organization Kansas State Historical Society date March 8, 1989

street & number 120 W. 10th telephone 913-296-5264

city or town Topeka state Kansas zip code 66612