

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR FEDERAL PROPERTIES

PH 0693570

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
RECEIVED	DEC 12 1978
DATE ENTERED	JAN 25 1979

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

United States Post Office and Federal Building, LaGrande, Oregon

AND/OR COMMON

Federal Building, LaGrande, Oregon

**2 LOCATION**

STREET &amp; NUMBER

1010 Adams Street

\_\_ NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

LaGrande

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

02

STATE

Oregon

CODE

41

COUNTY

Union

CODE

061

**2 CLASSIFICATION****CATEGORY** DISTRICT BUILDING(S) STRUCTURE SITE OBJECT**OWNERSHIP** PUBLIC PRIVATE BOTH**PUBLIC ACQUISITION** IN PROCESS BEING CONSIDERED**STATUS** OCCUPIED UNOCCUPIED WORK IN PROGRESS**ACCESSIBLE** YES: RESTRICTED YES: UNRESTRICTED NO**PRESENT USE** AGRICULTURE COMMERCIAL EDUCATIONAL ENTERTAINMENT GOVERNMENT INDUSTRIAL MILITARY MUSEUM PARK PRIVATE RESIDENCE RELIGIOUS SCIENTIFIC TRANSPORTATION OTHER:**4 AGENCY**

General Services Administration, Region 10

REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS: (If applicable)

Regional Headquarters Building

STREET &amp; NUMBER

GSA Center, 10PG

CITY, TOWN

Auburn

VICINITY OF

STATE

Washington 98002

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,

REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Union County Courthouse

STREET &amp; NUMBER

1100 L Avenue

CITY, TOWN

LaGrande

STATE

Oregon

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

Inventory of Historic Places, General Services Administration

DATE

July 31, 1972

 FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCALDEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

GSA Center, Regional Headquarters Building

CITY, TOWN

Auburn

STATE

Washington 98002

# 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

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

The Federal Building marks the Northwestern end of LaGrande's central retail core. It fronts onto Adams Avenue, LaGrande's "Main Street." Deciduous trees shield the building's north (Adams Avenue) and west (4th Street) facades and the small grassy areas at the two main building entrances. Plantings of lilacs, rhododendrons, dwarf cyprus, barberry, and bridal wreath, dating from 1967, surround the base of the building and the entrance pathways. The rest of the site is occupied by 18 parking spaces and a driveway. (The original macadam drive was replaced by concrete and extended in 1931.) An August 1909 site plan shows assorted firs, box elders, locusts, maples, pear and cherry trees and a rose garden. The foundations of the "Berry Building" were in the south-east corner of the site. The small brick building was moved to a new location at the time of the government purchase. A public drinking fountain was in use at the corner of 4th and Adams until at least 1927. The lot next door, across an alley, was vacant until 1923 when the Arcade theater was built.

The Federal Building is only 80' wide and 47' deep. It is a detached, rectangular building consisting of two storeys and a basement. Its style is Georgian Revival. The building is of brick wall-bearing construction with wood beams and joist floors, steel trussed second floor ceiling, and steel trussed and wood joist roof. The foundation is a spread-footing.

Dark red brick laid in Flemish Bond faces the building and forms "quoins" at each corner. String course, window sills, lintels and keystones are of stone, as are the cheek blocks of the stairways at the two main entrances on the Adams Avenue and 4th Street facades. The granite steps were replaced by concrete in 1931. The low hipped, metal roof with small, rounded dormers is mostly hidden from street level view by a wood and sheet metal parapet and balustrade over a wood cornice. A single brick chimney stack may be seen near the east end of the roof. All of the wood trim is painted white.

The main facade is horizontally divided into a granite base, brick first and second storeys separated by a stone string course, and a wood entablature. Five bays form the vertical division. The portion of the facade containing the three central bays is recessed about six inches. Simulated quoins, like those on the building corners, embellish the intersection of the recessed central portion with the two end bays.

The end bays are identical. A small grilled opening in the base admits light to the basement. Directly above, in the first storey, is a vertical 4' X 8' double-hung window. It has wood mullions dividing its 16 lights and a wood sash. The sill is stone as is the keystone in the flat arch above the window. Over the flat arch is a stucco semi-circular blind arch. A brick frame, 12" wide and recessed slightly from the

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Survey of Federal Government Property in Oregon  
1968  X  State  
Department of Transportation  
State Historic Preservation Office  
525 Trade Street, S.E.  
Salem, Oregon 97310

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plane of the wall surface surrounds the window and its arch. The frame has a stone keystone and impost. In the second storey is a 4' X 6' window similar to the one below, with only a protruding brick panel below its sill and a shaped stone lintel. Three pairs of similar windows, with 12 lights are distributed symmetrically across the second storey of the central bays.

In each of the bays framing the central opening in the first storey is a window of the same general size and shape as those of the end bays, but the brick frame and blind arch are replaced by a Palladianesque fanlight and sidelights. The sill and a panel beneath it is of wood. The original clear glass in the fanlights was replaced by obscure glass in 1964.

Wood pilasters modeled after columns of the Roman Doric order and a heavy entablature frame the centrally located entrance. Over the entablature is a fanlight like that of the windows. The original wood door was replaced in 1964 by a door of aluminum and glass. The original black wrought iron hand rails capped with brass remain on the landing. Six other sets of hand rails were added between 1951 and 1964 on the 12 riser stairway. Two original metal lamps capped by white glass globes remain mounted on the wall on either side of the entrance. Eight inch high cast aluminum letters reading "Federal Office Building" were added in 1964 along with two circular United States seals over the entrance. The original sign reading "United States Post Office, LaGrande, Oregon" was removed as was the 21' flagpole that had risen from the roof in front of the central dormer.

The details of the 4th Street facade are almost identical to those of the Adams Avenue facade except in arrangement and number. Symmetrically distributed across three bays are an entrance (with pilasters, entablature, fanlight, aluminum door and wall lamps) on the left, and two large, arched windows with a tiny, two light window between the second storey of the main facade flanking a set of two twelve light windows. The nine riser stairway has the original wrought iron handrails on the landing. One basement window with a wrought iron grille opens in the stone base.

The east facade is simpler. Three bays of second storey sixteen light rectangular windows are above windows similar to those of the main facade's first storey end bays.

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While the three other facades have not been substantially altered since construction, the rear facade has seen considerable change. In 1931 an 8' X 11' mailing vestibule was enlarged to four times its original size. Later, three large and two smaller windows in the main building behind and to the left of the vestibule were removed and replaced by two smaller windows. A metal fire escape was added in 1964 and new access stairs to the basement were installed. In the two end bays of the rear facade are arched windows like those in the central bays of the main facade. Above them in the second storey are two sixteen light windows similar to those described previously. One small four light window and three sets of two twelve light windows are distributed across the central bays of the second storey. One set of two twelve light windows is on the left of the mailing vestibule on the ground floor. The vestibule itself is of brick. It is a single storey with a flat roof, small rectangular windows and a door on either end, and a windowless south facade.

Much of the 6,020 square feet of usable space in the LaGrande Federal Building was originally graced with "Average Green" and Alaska marble stairs and wainscoting, wood, moulded plaster and bronze detailing, terrazzo floors and gold lettering on postal service windows. The 2,256 square foot Post Office lobby just inside the two main entrances was especially rich in ornament.

The first interior alterations came in 1930 when the Adams Avenue entrance vestibule was enlarged by about 2 feet in both horizontal dimensions. The new vestibule, designed in the office of the Treasury Department Supervising Architect, J. A. Wetmore, was specified to match the existing one. The 1931 enlargement of the mailing vestibule affected mostly the workroom in the rear of the building. Again, the details were to match those existing.

Little further change was seen until the Post Office moved to a new location in 1963. Wesley A. Korman, a Pendleton, Oregon, architect, was hired for the "modernization and conversion" of the building and its site. Some marble and fixtures were removed from the restrooms. Both entrance vestibules, all marble base and oak wainscoting, directory

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boards, bulletin boards, counters, built-in desks, hanging glass lighting fixtures and the screen of arched bays containing lock boxes and service windows were removed from the first storey. All wood and terrazzo floors were covered with grey-green vinyl asbestos tile with a black rubber base. Gypboard ceilings were installed at 15'2" in the lobby and 8' in the corridor. Suspended ceilings of 12" X 12" acoustical tile were installed in the other usable spaces. Ranks of fluorescent lighting fixtures were installed throughout. The existing marble treads on the stairway from the lobby to the second storey were removed, inverted, ground, polished and reset on their risers. A new 3/4" rift oak plywood wainscot was added in the staircase.

The first storey that had been occupied by the Post Office was divided into five smaller offices for Selective Service System, U.S. Geological Survey, U.S. Forest Service, Agricultural Stabilization and Conservation Service, and Navy Recruiting. The basic arrangement of the second storey remained the same with seven offices for the Civil Service Commission, Internal Revenue Service, Soil Conservation Service, and Agricultural Extension Service. Original doors, transoms, and wood trim were left intact there, although fire doors were installed.

In 1967 air conditioning was installed, but no further major alterations have occurred. A proposed 1975 renovation was abandoned when the Selective Service System abolished its LaGrande office. The building is now occupied mostly by agricultural agencies.

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD		AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)	
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION			

SPECIFIC DATES	Designed	1911	BUILDER/ARCHITECT	Treasury Department, Supervising
	Built	1913		Architect, James Knox Taylor

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

LaGrande is a town of about 10,500 people in Eastern Oregon's beautiful Grande Ronde Valley, a prosperous farming and lumbering area. The site was first settled by Mr. and Mrs. Ben Brown in 1861 and narrowly escaped being named "Brownsville" when a town of that name was noted in a neighboring county. A Frenchman named Henri Dause was responsible for the name "LaGrande."

In 1862 a hotel and livery stable opened. Union County was created in 1864, during crucial days of the Civil War. After a brief but dramatic tussle with the nearby settlement of Union, LaGrande became the county seat. In 1876 Blue Mountain University was founded in LaGrande, but failed financially eight years later. The Indian wars of 1876 brushed the town, but no actual battles occurred there. The first mail delivery was via emigrant wagon, then by Pony Express and later by stagecoach. The railroad came through in 1883 and LaGrande's future was securely established.

In 1909 the Federal Government purchased a site on Adams Avenue for the construction of a Post Office and Federal Building. The LaGrande Evening Observer reported the sale of the property by Jonas M. Berry and his wife, S. Spratte Berry on May 4, 1909:

"An Oregonian dispatch says the Treasury Department at Washington has mailed the J. M. Berry check of \$8,750.00 to District Attorney McCourt at Portland to be transferred to Mr. Berry here. It will probably be several days yet before the payment reaches LaGrande.

Mr. and Mrs. Berry are disposing of their household goods rapidly and immediately on receipt of their check will take the train for Portland, their future home."

The building drawings entitled "U.S. Post Office, LaGrande, Oregon" date from 1911. A similar building had been constructed as a Post Office in New London, Connecticut. The Supervising Architect for the Treasury

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

See continuation sheet number 8.

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 16,648 square feet *less than 200*

UTM REFERENCES

A	1 1	4 1 4	180	5 0 1 9	8 7 0	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING	ZONE	EASTING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C						D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Lots 1,2,3,4 and 5 in Block 105, Chaplin's Addition to LaGrande, Union County, Oregon

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
NONE			
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

## 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Kristine Bak Operational Planning Staff

ORGANIZATION

General Services Administration, PBS

DATE

STREET & NUMBER

Regional Headquarters Building, GSA Center, 10PG

TELEPHONE

(206) 833-6500

CITY OR TOWN

Auburn

STATE

Washington 98002

## 12 CERTIFICATION OF NOMINATION

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER RECOMMENDATION

YES

NO

NONE

*Michael F. Mulloy*  
STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

In compliance with Executive Order 11593, I hereby nominate this property to the National Register, certifying that the State Historic Preservation Officer has been allowed 90 days in which to present the nomination to the State Review Board and to evaluate its significance. The evaluated level of significance is  National  State  Local.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

*Michael F. Mulloy*

12-6-78

TITLE

Historic Preservation Officer, GSA Region 10

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

*W. Ray Luce*  
DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST: *W. Ray Luce*  
KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

1-25-79

DATE

1-25-79



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Department at that time was James Knox Taylor who had worked for Cass Gilbert in New York before joining the Supervising Architect's office in 1897. The drawings were also signed by a J. S. Willis, but exactly who was the designer of the building is not known.

The total amount allocated by Congress for the site acquisition and construction in LaGrande was \$65,000. Work on the building seems to have progressed steadily. The Evening Observer of February 11, 1913, was able to make the following report:

"Albeit probably along makeshift propositions, the LaGrande Post Office continues to plan on moving February 22 into its new commodious quarters in the Federal Building. The arrival of the permanent furniture is the only stickler, but Postmaster Richey is contemplating moving in on that day even though under the most crude conditions. . .Furniture for the new home is slow in arriving, but other details, such as the constructors have in tow, will be sufficiently advanced on that date to permit occupancy."

On February 21, 1913 the Evening Observer continued the story:

"After twenty two years, the LaGrande Post Office is 'on the move' and tomorrow, though somewhat crudely at first, it is true, LaGrande patrons on Uncle Sam's letter delivery service will be served from the new building. . . The Post Office has been so long established in the I.O.O.F. building that it has long since become a landmark. . . Due to the unavoidable condition of the non-arrival of the furniture, the building cannot be thrown open to inspection now. . .when the staircase to the upper floor is ready and the land office and full inspector office furniture arrives, Postmaster Richey contemplates a sort of housewarming. . . Prior to 1891 the Post Office was located in the building now occupied by Mox Bloch on Adams Avenue. In 1891 it was moved to its present site, but shortly afterwards during the H. L. Lincoln postmastership was moved to the Sommer building for a few months only to go back to its present location and there remain until tonight. . ."

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Today LaGrande is characterized by peaceful, tree-lined streets of older, single-family dwellings. The Italianate buildings of Eastern Oregon State College (established in 1929) occupy a hillside site. The campus, with 1,500 students, is just a few blocks from the main shopping area and is equally near the forested hills that surround the valley. In contrast to many small American towns, LaGrande has not lost its active central retail core to outlying shopping districts. It retains a commercial "main street" in six blocks of Adams Avenue. This commercial area is bounded on the northwest by the Federal Building and its neighbor across the street, the Foley Building. In contrast to most of the other buildings on downtown Adams Avenue, the Federal Building is free-standing and surrounded by lawn and trees.

David W. Powers, III, Preservation Architect for the Oregon State Historic Preservation Office, commented on the LaGrande Federal Building in a letter to the Acting Chief of the Operational Planning Staff of GSA on February 23, 1977. He wrote:

"The building is a handsomely proportioned and beautifully detailed example of the Georgian ('Colonial') Revival style of architecture which was popular in the United States from the 1890's through the early 1920's. . . The LaGrande building is a rather 'pure' example of the style in which stylistic elements (rectangular plan, strictly symmetrical elevations, hipped roof with balustrade, classically-inspired proportions and details) are handled with an exceptionally high degree of architectural quality.

The building is one of a limited number of quality non-residential examples of the style in Oregon. The only other generally recognized example is A. E. Doyle's Central Library in Portland, also built in 1913. . . The Building, because of its siting and function, has long been a public landmark in LaGrande. Further, it is associated with the period of largest growth and expansion of that city."

The Federal Building is almost alone as a monumental, architect-designed building in LaGrande. Only a few buildings on the college campus and one or two churches in town could be included in that category. It is certainly the only public building in LaGrande of a Georgian Colonial

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style retaining most of its original exterior appearance. The County Courthouse might have qualified, but has been almost obliterated by recent additions. The LaGrande Federal Building is clearly a unique community landmark.

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ARTICLES AND ABSTRACTS:

"Early History of LaGrande Told to Neighborhood Club Ladies by Mrs. George H. Curry," circa 1920, A Record of the Historic Society of Union County, Oregon, LaGrande: 1960.

LaGrande Evening Observer, May 4, 1909; February 11, 1913; February 21, 1913.

BOOKS:

Withey, Henry F., and Elsie Rathburn Withey, Biographical Dictionary of American Architects, Deceased, New Age Publishing Company, Los Angeles: 1956.

MISCELLANEOUS INFORMATION SOURCES, GSA FILES, REGION 10:

"Community Plan for Housing Federal Agencies," Public Buildings Service, GSA, Region 10, July 7, 1961.

Construction Drawings from the Office of the Supervising Architect, Treasury Department.

"Federal Space Situation Report," Operational Planning Staff, Public Buildings Service, GSA, Region 10, September 27, 1976.

"Inventory of Historic Places," GSA, Region 10, July 31, 1972.

"LaGrande, Oregon, Federal Office Building--Progress and Final Photos," GSA, Region 10, inspection photos.

Site Acquisition documents.

"Survey of Federal Government Property in Oregon," Department of Transportation, State Historic Preservation Office, Salem: 1968.