NPS Form 10-900 (January 1992) Wisconsin Word Processing Format (Approved 1/92)

# **United States Department of Interior National Park Service**

State or Federal agency and bureau

## **National Register of Historic Places Registration Form**





This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and 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 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 Propo	erty								
historic name Shother names/site num	eboygan Post C nber N/A	Office	-						
2. Location									
street & number	522 North Ni	nth Str	eet				N/A		ublication
city or town	Sheboygan						N/A	vicinity	
state Wisconsin	code	WI	county	Sheboygan		code	117	zip code	53081
3. State/Federal A	Agency Cert	ificat	ion						
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Signature of certifying	g official/Title					Date			
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Sheboygan	Post	Office
Mama of Dra	norty	

Sheboygan County

Wisconsin

Name of Property

County and State

I hereby certify that the property is:  I entered in the National Register.  See continuation sheet.  determined eligible for the National Register.  See continuation sheet.  determined not eligible for the National Register.  See continuation sheet.  removed from the National Register.  other, (explain:)	Colson.	H. Ball	10/24/
	Signature of the	Keeper Da	te of Action
5. Classification			
Ownership of Property (check as many boxes as as apply) private public-local public-State	Category of Property (Check only one box)  X building(s) district structure	Number of Resources within Proper (Do not include previously listed resour in the count)  contributing noncontribution of buildings sites	rces
X public-Federal	site object	structures objects  1 0 total	
Name of related multiple pro (Enter "N/A" if property not p listing.) United States Post Office Con- State of Wisconsin – Milwauk	art of a multiple property struction 1913 - 1943	Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Reg	ister
6. Function or Use			
Historic Functions (Enter categories from instru Government / Post Office	ctions)	Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions) Government / Post Office	
7. Description			-
· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·			
Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions) Classical Revival		Materials (Enter categories from instructions) Foundation Granite walls Limestone	

## **Narrative Description**

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

Name of Property

County and State

8. St:	atement of Significance	
(Mark	icable National Register Criteria  ("x" in one or more boxes for the criteria  Tying the property for the National Register listing.)	Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)  Art
_ A	Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.	Architecture
_ B	Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.	
<u>X</u> C	Property embodies the distinctive characteristics	Period of Significance
<del>-</del> -	of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses	1932-1938
	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.	Significant Dates
C	de Canaldanada a	1938
	ria Considerations x "x" in all the boxes that apply.)	
Prope	rty is:	Significant Person
_ A	owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.	(Complete if Criterion B is marked)  N/A
B	removed from its original location.	
C	a birthplace or grave.	Cultural Affiliation
_ D	a cemetery.	N/A
_ E	a reconstructed building, object, or structure.	
F	a commemorative property.	Architect/Builder
G	less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.	Stubenrauch, Edgar A.

## Narrative Statement of Significance

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

Adjor Bibliographic References  the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)  vious Documentation on File (National Park Service):  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 #   Geographical Data	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 #  D. Geographical Data  Preage of Property Less Than One Acre  TM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet and the state of the property of the proper	or more continuation shee	ts.)
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organization

city or town

street & number

HNTB

Milwaukee

11270 West Park Place

Wisconsin

12-29-93

53224

414-359-2300

date

Wisconsin

state

tclephone

zip code

Sheboygan Post Office	Sheboygan County	Wisconsin
Name of Property	County and State	

#### **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/title	John S. Sorenson, Program	Manager, Historic Preservatio	n	
organization	US Postal Service, Custome	r Service Facilities		
street&number	475 L'Enfant Plaza		telephone	202-268-3107
city or town	Washington	state DC	zip code	20260-6235

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 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**

Section

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Page 1

Sheboygan Post Office

Sheboygan, Sheboygan County, Wisconsin

### **Narrative Description**

The Sheboygan Post Office is a large, two-story building constructed in 1932 in the Neo-Classical Revival style. It was built by the Treasury Department to the designs of Sheboygan architect Edgar A. Stubenrauch. The limestone clad building is located near the Sheboygan City Hall in the city's downtown business district and has been designated a local landmark. The cornerstone reads: "Ogden L. Mills, Secretary of the Treasury, Feppy K. Heath, Assistant Secretary, James Wetmore, Acting Supervising Architect, E.A. Stubenrauch, Architect, 1932."

The building is T-Shaped in plan. The front portion of the building, containing the lobby, is taller. The base of the "T" is a one-story extension with an exposed basement at the back. The building sits close to the sidewalk with a wide flight of stairs leading to the landing before the front doors. On either side of the stairs is a low wall. Each has an elaborate lighting fixture, Art Deco in style, consisting of a glass orb with an encircling ring and finial top. A decorative pedestal supports the lamp.

The central portion of the building steps forward. Four pairs of large pilasters, pierlike in their massiveness, frame the openings. Above the pilasters is a frieze with the inscription: United States Post Office. Above the frieze is a large projecting cornice with modillion blocks that wraps around the building. A parapet terminates the building. The parapet is taller above this central portion, giving it added prominence.

At the center of this elevation is a pair of doors with a transom above. A decorative metal lintel separates the door and transom opening from the window above. This window grouping consists of a fixed nine-light panel with three-light casements on either side. Above this three-part grouping is a five light transom. As in the window below, a mullion separates the two end lights from the set of three in the center. The same window organization is repeated in the two bays on either side of the doors. Instead of doors, these side bays contain a nine-light fixed pane with three-light casements below the level of the decorative lintel. Each bay contains a decorative metal panel between these first floor window groupings and those of the top floor. The decorative triptych contains an eagle with a shield in the larger central portion and bundled reeds in the flanking panels. The windows of the top floor are the same as those of the second level.

The last bay of the central pavilion is a wide expanse of wall with one narrow window per floor. The remainder of the front elevation consists of a single bay expanse of wall with one six-over-six window with a three-light transom on the ground floor and the same window without a transom on the second floor. Between the windows is a slightly recessed panel.

The side elevations of the main block are three bays wide. The lower floor has pairs of eight-light casements with transoms. The upper floor has the same window without a transom. The recessed panel found on the front elevation is repeated on the side elevations. On the south elevation, the central, lower window opening is left blind.

## **United States Department of the Interior**National Park Service

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Sheboygan Post Office

Shebovgan, Shebovgan County, Wisconsin

The extension of the side elevations continues the cornice and parapet treatment. Each side contains four windows per floor. The first floor windows are more industrial in appearance. These are large, eight-light windows with louvered panes. The upper floor has four pairs of six-over-six windows. At the rear of the building is a loading dock. This portion of the building is lower, without the projecting cornice found on the main part of the building.

The austerity of the exterior is contrasted by the richness of the interior lobby. This richly detailed space was the result of the work of two artists. The interior ornamental designs are by Elizabeth Tuttle Holsman. The five murals on the lobby walls are by Wisconsin artist Schomer Lichtner.<sup>1</sup>

The postal lobby is divided into a series of bays by brown marble pilasters with Art Deco capitals. The brown marble is also found on the walls to a height of about seven feet. The plaster capitals are mixtures of classical and modern motifs, including acanthus leaves, rosettes, fronds, sunburst and lightning motifs. The acanthus is repeated in the cornice molding of the coved, plaster ceiling. Other Art Deco features in the lobby include the original writing tables executed in bronze and marble.

Lichtner's murals, installed in 1938, complete the decoration of the lobby. The five murals lining the lobby walls depict the growth of the area from the time of the Native Americans to the present. The first mural in the series shows an Indian returning home with a string of trout. The wigwam is located deep in a forest of maples. Ferns and other woodland plants grow in profusion on the forest floor. This is the largest of the five murals and is placed at the end of the lobby over the door to the postmaster's office. The colors of this mural are rich greens, browns and golds. A similar color palette is used for the other paintings. The second, third and fourth scenes are of the same size. Each is located in the upper area of the wall framed by the marble pilasters. In the second scene, a frontiersman is depicted chopping down the trees; a second man is plowing the cleared land with a team of oxen. The house in the distance is of logs and chinking. In the third scene, agriculture is well established. Corn grows in tall rows and a woman is driving cattle. The two-story house in the distance is of stone construction. In the fourth scene, a city and industry are already established. Houses hug the hillside, while men bundled against the cold go off to work. The fifth panel is much smaller than the others and depicts herring gulls in the Sheboygan harbor. This mural is located on a narrow strip of wall by the stairs. A blank expanse of wall remains at the far end of the lobby. This was intended for a sixth mural by Lichtner. It was never completed due to the absence of further funds.

The offices not open to the public also contain decorative plasterwork. In one office is an elaborate grape vine cornice consisting of alternating leaves and grape clusters. The offices also contain paneled wood wainscoting.

Both the interior and exterior of the building and the murals are in good condition.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> "Murals Brighten Walls of Post Office Building Here," <u>Sheboygan Press</u>, 6 May 1938, p.2.

Wisconsin Word Processing Format (Approved 1/92)

## **United States Department of the Interior**

National Park Service

# **National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet**

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Sheboygan Post Office

Sheboygan, Sheboygan County, Wisconsin

#### **Narrative Statement of Significance**

The Sheboygan Post Office is evaluated in the context of the multiple property nomination: United States Post Office Construction from 1913 to 1943, State of Wisconsin – Milwaukee District. The building is nominated under Criterion C for Art and Architecture. It is both a locally significant example of the Neo-Classical Revival style by local architect Edgar Stubenrauch and has an intact series of murals by Wisconsin artist Schomer Lichtner.

#### **Historic Context**

Sheboygan is a port city located on the west shore of Lake Michigan. Industrialization of the area began in 1834 when William Pane erected a crude sawmill on the shore of the Sheboygan River, midway between the Falls and the present site of the city. William Trowbridge platted the City of Sheboygan, north of the Sheboygan River, in 1835-1836. Initially growth in the region was slow, but, by the early twentieth century, Sheboygan had become a major manufacturing center in Wisconsin.

The Sheboygan Post Office was first established in 1844 after moving from its earlier site in nearby Sheboygan Falls. The first postmaster was Samuel B. Ormsbee. The current post office building, constructed in 1932, replaced an earlier post office building, built in 1892 and expanded in 1907. The current Sheboygan Post Office is one of a series of post offices built in Wisconsin by the federal Public Works Administration in the 1930s. The Sheboygan Post Office is one of the largest post offices constructed during this period in Wisconsin and was built to the designs of an outside architect, rather than from standard plans from the Office of the Supervising Architect of the Department of the Treasury. Architect E.A. Stubenrauch was the only building designer identified in the survey for the multiple property nomination who was not part of the federal government's design office.

#### Art

Marlene Park and Gerald Markowitz identified the series of murals in the Sheboygan Post Office as the only post office art commission in Wisconsin painted with funding of the Treasury Relief Art Project (TRAP).<sup>2</sup> TRAP (1935-1939) largely employed artists on relief, rather than granting commissions based solely on artistic merit. The works themselves, however, are some of the highest quality found in the state's post offices. In addition, the Sheboygan Post Office murals are the most extensive project of its type undertaken in Wisconsin by the Department of the Treasury.

On September 9, 1935, artist Schomer Lichtner received the following message from Olin Dows, the Chief of the Treasury Relief Project: "Will you act as supervisor for Treasury Relief Art Project and execute

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Marlene Park and Gerald E. Markowitz, <u>Democratic Vistas: Post Office Art in the New Deal</u> (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1984), 232-233.

# United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Sheboygan Post Office

Sheboygan, Sheboygan County, Wisconsin

murals in federal building with relief assistants? Pay ninety-four dollars monthly ninety-eight hours work. Materials supplied. Wire me collect."

The majority of post offices received a single work of art and, as a result, focused on one event in history or on a single theme tied to the area. The scale of the commission at Sheboygan allowed Lichtner to tell a story – the growth of the area from the time of the native Indians to the present. The first mural in the series, "Indian Life," shows an Indian returning home with a string of trout. The wigwam is located deep in a forest of maples. Ferns and other woodland plants grow in profusion on the forest floor. In the second scene, "The Pioneer," a frontiersman is depicted chopping down the trees; a second man is plowing the cleared land with a team of oxen. The house in the distance is of logs and chinking. In the third scene, "Agriculture," agriculture is well established. Corn grows in tall rows and a woman is driving cattle. The two-story house in the distance is of stone construction. In the fourth scene, "Present City," a city and industry are already established. Houses hug the hillside while men bundled against the cold go off to work. The fifth panel, "The Lake," is much smaller than the others and depicts herring gulls in the Sheboygan harbor.

Originally, Lichtner was asked to do six murals at the Sheboygan Post Office. However, money ran out and the south wall of the postal lobby remains blank. The intended theme was a blossoming fruit tree with a family scene. Lichtner installed the five completed works in May of 1938. The paintings as they appear now are improvements on the originals. During post office redecorating a few years after they were hung, the paintings became loose and were returned to Lichtner. When they arrived at his studio for repair, Lichtner repainted portions.<sup>3</sup>

Schomer Frank Lichtner was born 18 March 1905 in Peoria, Illinois. He studied at the Milwaukee State Teachers' College, The Art Institute of Chicago, the Art Students' League, and the University of Wisconsin in Madison. In addition to the post office in Sheboygan, Lichtner painted a mural for the post office in Hodgenville, Kentucky (1943), and a series for the Hamtramck Branch in Detroit, Michigan (1940). In May 1934, he married fellow artist Ruth Grotenrath. She is the painter of the post office murals in Hart, Michigan (1941), Wayzat, Minnesota (1947), and Hudson, Wisconsin (1943). From 1960 to 1969 Lichtner taught drawing and design at the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee. In the 1960s and 1970s Lichtner exhibited at various shows throughout the county. He also has won awards for his paintings and serigraphs. One of his works was selected by President Roosevelt and hangs in the White House. In addition to painting and print making, Lichtner worked in the media of architectural metals, stained glass, mosaic, ceramics, paper, and metal sculpture.

Contributing to the setting of the murals is the decorative work of Elizabeth Tuttle Holsman. The lobby work tables, moldings and column capitals are rich in Art Deco detailing. The pier and pilaster capitals are designed with a combination of classical and modern vocabulary, including bead and reel, sunbursts,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> "Schomer Lichtner Returns," Sheboygan Press, 18 March 1977, p.4.

Wisconsin Word Processing Format (Approved 1/92)

# **United States Department of the Interior** National Park Service

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rosettes, sunburst motifs, acroteria-like corners of palmette design, and lighting motifs. The browns and bronzes of the marble walls and furniture tie in with the palette of the paintings, presenting a unified appearance.

Painter and sculptor Elizabeth Tuttle Holsman was born in Brownville, Nebraska, in September 1873. She studied at the Art Institute of Chicago. Holsman was known primarily for her work in bronze bas-relief. At the Sheboygan Post Office, her plaster borders display abstract and naturalistic themes, including the Art Deco capitals and borders in the lobby and a grape vine border with grape clusters and leaves in a meeting room.

#### Architecture

The building is a local representative example of the simplified Neo-Classical revival style popular for government and institutional construction during the Depression. Unlike the majority of post offices built during the period, this one is not of a standardized design, but was commissioned by the Treasury Department and built to the designs of local architect Edgar A. Stubenrauch.

Edgar Stubenrauch was a native of Sheboygan, born in 1894. He graduated from the University of Illinois in 1918 and did post-graduate work at the University of London in 1919. For two years Stubenrauch worked in the Wisconsin State Architect's Office. He then went on to open his own firm in Sheboygan. Stubenrauch designed a number of large buildings in Wisconsin and in Upper Michigan, including the Waushara County Courthouse, Sheboygan Clinic, Kiel City Hall, Berlin City Hall, Rocky Knoll Sanatorium, and the Dane County Tuberculosis Sanatorium. He is known to have been practicing architecture as late as 1956. The successor firm still practices in Sheboygan.

The Neo-Classical Revival style is most often associated with large scale buildings with monumental proportions. The style is characterized by the use of colossal Greek order columns; a flat, parapetted roofline; absolute symmetry, and the use of smooth wall surfaces. Its architectural vocabulary of strength and permanence were especially suited to governmental and institutional buildings. Its application here follows the general precepts of the style. However, Stubenrauch departed somewhat from the established style in the use of paired Doric pilasters rather than single columns. The massive pilasters give the building a flat and boxlike appearance. The stolid nature of the façade makes the richness of the interior lobby more unexpected.

Sheboygan contains several large-scale public buildings. The closest comparative examples are the 1915-1916 Sheboygan City Hall and the 1934 Sheboygan County Courthouse. City Hall is a three-story, brick building with limestone trim. It was designed by H.W. Buemming in the Classical Revival style popular at the time. Its surface is more textural and ornate than that of the post office. However, the two buildings represent two different eras' interpretations of the Classical Revival style. The 1934 Sheboygan County Court House, designed by John Burns, has the blocky, stripped minimalism popular in the 1930s. The

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seven -story, Art Deco, Indiana limestone building was listed on the National Register in 1982. In the court house example, decorative elements have been reduced to a minimum; pier -like buttresses recall pilasters, but are not truly classical elements. The Sheboygan Post Office retains true classical vocabulary that has been pared down to a minimum. However, the classical precedents of the design are retained and are visible. As a result, the three public buildings represent distinct architectural vocabularies and each is a representative example of the styles of its period.

#### Conclusion

The Sheboygan Post Office is a good, local example of the Neo-Classical Revival style as applied to a large public building in the 1930s. Designed by local architect Edgar Stubenrauch, this example differs from the majority of other Public Works commissions in that it was individually designed, rather than built from a set of standard Treasury Department plans. The building's size and scale make it a prominent landmark in the city, an indicator of the federal presence and of the wealth and influence of Sheboygan at the time of its construction.

The post office lobby is a departure from the standard utilitarian treatment of these public spaces. The richness of the materials and of the architectural detailing, together with the abundance of murals, create a setting not found anywhere else in the survey. Schomer Lichtner's murals are an integral part of the building and are good examples of this Wisconsin artist's work. The extent of the commission also presents a rare collection of five canvases of Schomer's work. Together, the art and architecture of the Sheboygan Post Office mark this building as one of the highlights of the Treasury Department's post office projects in the state.

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#### 9. Major Bibliographic References

The following resources were consulted in addition to those included in the multiple property nomination:

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### 10. Geographical Data

### **Verbal Boundary Description**

The nominated property corresponds to the following legal description: Original Plat, lots 1, 2, 3, 4 and north 90 feet of lot 10 and north ½ of lots 11 and 12, Block 155, and vacated e-w alley between said lots.

## **Boundary Justification**

This boundary encompasses the Sheboygan Post Office, parking lot, and surrounding yard. This is the limit of the original property holding.

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### **Photographs**

The following information is the same for all of the photographs:

Sheboygan Post Office Sheboygan, Sheboygan County, Wisconsin Photographed by Joseph Jurkiewicz, 1993

- 1. General view, looking south.
- 2. Interior view, lobby writing tables.
- 3. Sheboygan County landmark plaque.
- 4. Exterior detail, front doors.
- 5. Interior detail, decorative capital and molding.
- 6. Interior view, lobby.
- 7. Mural, "The Lake."
- 8. Mural, "Present City."
- 9. Mural, "Agriculture."
- 10. Mural, "The Pioneer."
- 11. Mural, "Indian Life."
- 12. Rear elevation, looking east.
- 13. Side elevation, looking south.
- 14. Building cornerstone.
- 15. Front elevation detail.
- 16. Front elevation, looking west.

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- 17. Front elevation, cornice detail.
- 18. Side elevation, looking north.
- 19. Lighting fixture.