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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

SEP 19 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 U. S. Custom House and Post Office

other names/site number Pembina Post Office

2. Location

street & number 125 S. Cavalier Street N/A not for publication
city, town Pembina N/A vicinity
state North Dakota code ND county Pembina code 067 zip code 58271

3. Classification

Ownership of Property

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property

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

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing Noncontributing
1 _____ buildings
_____ sites
_____ structures
_____ objects
_____ 1 Total

Name of related multiple property listing:
U. S. Post Offices in North Dakota, 1900-1940

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register none

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.

Richard W. Meador
Signature of certifying official

8-22-89
Date

U.S. Postal Service
State or Federal agency and bureau

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

James E. Sperry
Signature of commenting or other official James E. Sperry

September 15, 1989
Date

State Historic Preservation Officer (North Dakota)
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): _____

Patrick Andrus

11/1/89

for Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

customhouse and post office

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

customhouse and post office

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Colonial Revival

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation poured concrete, brick

walls brick

roof slate

other

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

See attached continuation sheets.

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 1

Multiple Property: U.S. Post Offices in North Dakota, 1900-1940

U.S. CUSTOM HOUSE AND POST OFFICE, DESCRIPTION:

The Pembina Customs House and Post Office is located on the southeast corner of Stutsman Street and Cavalier Street on the main business street of Pembina. This is the most imposing building in the town, and it shares the business district with a mere handful of businesses (no more than 8-10). The building faces Stutsman Street (northeast), which is also State Highway 59. But the post office entrance faces southeast on fronting on Cavalier Street. Across Cavalier to the southeast is the Pembina River, crossed by the Highway 59 bridge. To the northwest are business buildings.

The Pembina Customs House and Post Office is in excellent condition, with the exception of the wooden porch. The porch is structurally sound, and its lines are straight. The wood is weathered, however. The concrete porch floor is in good condition. The brick of the exterior walls is in fine condition, and does not need tuckpointing. The windows are original and in excellent condition. The slate portion of the roof is intact, with no missing slates. The grounds are well kept. In the wing opposite the postal facility, a door has been let into an outside wall. This door is compatible in style and does no harm to the historic integrity of the building. A ramp for handicapped access has been added to the postal facility. The ramp is on the back facade and is not noticeable. It does no harm to the historic integrity of the building.

The exterior walls of the building are deep red wire-faced brick laid in English bond (alternating courses of headers and stretchers). At the bottom of the walls is a soldier course which runs around the building like a water table. The soldier course is at grade in places and as high as 1-2' above grade in others. The building is Dutch Colonial in style, with a gambrel-style roof and classical detailing. The first floor windows are wood double-hung 12 over 12s. They are covered by matching wood storm windows. All the windows are original and in excellent condition. The windows and all the wood on the building are painted white. The window sills are limestone. The lintels have a limestone keystone flanked by fan-shaped rows of headers. The front porch is wood with a concrete floor. The entry doors to the postal facility is fully pedimented and dentilled with fluted pilasters on each side of the entry. These details are executed in wood painted white. The doors are glass and metal and are not original. The main entry door in the front facade is much plainer, with minimal decorative pilasters on each side and a leaded

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 7 Page 2

Multiple Property: U.S. Post Offices in North Dakota, 1900-1940 Pembina P.O.

glass transom. The second floor is lighted by dormers cut into the gambrel-style slate roof. The dormer windows are plain to the rear of the roof but the front dormers have extensive classical detailing; i.e., they are gabled with returned eaves and pilasters flanking the windows. The windows are round arched with mock keystones above them and an intricate pattern of lights.

The post office lobby has a floor of red ceramic tiles which measure 6"x6". The grout channels are a half inch wide. A white marble mopboard extends up from the floor 8". Above the mopboard is a wood-panelled wainscot painted white. Atop the wainscot is a white-painted wood molding which projects approximately 1.5". The interior walls and ceilings throughout the facility are plaster. The ceiling fixtures are fluorescent and are not original. The vestibule is metal and glass and is original except for the vestibule doors. The vestibule doors are aluminum and glass and are not original. The service window area is substantially original. The wall which holds the service windows extends about 8' above the floor with open metal grillwork reaching on up to the ceiling.

The rest of the interior has plaster walls and ceiling. It is devoted to offices for U.S. Customs and Immigration. The first floor has a dropped ceiling. The second floor ceiling shows the original plaster, and follows the gambrel roof line. Most of the floors are covered in indoor-outdoor carpeting.

The Pembina Customs House and Post Office includes a main two-story building with a gambrel roof flanked to east and west by gambrel-roofed wings. Flat-roofed one-story wings extend south from the left and right wings perpendicular to the ridge line of the gambrel-roofed wings. The gambrel-roofed wings have two stories; the second story is offices for Customs and Immigration. The major part of the building is devoted to offices for U.S. Customs and Immigration and other federal agencies. The postal facility occupies the first floor of the gambrel-roofed east wing and the entirety of the flat-roofed wing which projects back from the gambrel-roofed wing. The entry to the postal facility opens into an L-shaped lobby. The legs of the L run along the front (north) facade and the east wall of the east wing. The postmaster's office, now leased to Customs and Immigration, sits west of the lobby along the north wall. The workroom for the postal facility occupies the space west and south of the lobby and postmaster's office. The basement houses a boiler room, former coal room, and general storage.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See attached continuation sheet.

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:

State Historical Society of N.D., Bismarck

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property Less than one acre

UTM References

A

1	4
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6	2	8	5	2	0
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5	4	2	4	9	9	5
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Zone Easting Northing

C

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B

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Zone Easting Northing

D

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See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

Lots 10, 11, & 12, Block 16, Original Townsite, Pembina, ND.

N/A See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes all city lots which have been historically associated with the property.

N/A See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title	Dr. Norene Roberts, President		
organization	Historical Research, Inc.	date	July, 1989
street & number	7800 Tessman Drive	telephone	(612) 560-4348
city or town	Minneapolis	state	MN zip code 55445

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 1

Multiple Property: U.S. Post Offices in North Dakota, 1900-1940

PEMBINA POST OFFICE, SIGNIFICANCE:

The U. S. Custom House and Post Office at Pembina is significant under Criteria A and C on a state and local level as one of a small group of 20 extant federally-built post offices in North Dakota constructed between 1900-1940. Under Criterion A, this post office is associated with various federal policies in post office funding, design, and method of construction in the early 20th century. Under Criterion C, this facility shares the distinctive characteristics of federally-funded post offices as a property type built in North Dakota before the Second World War. It is one of only three postal buildings in North Dakota designed in the Colonial Revival style by the government. It is one of nine postal facilities built in North Dakota as a governmental response to the economic dislocations and hardships of the Great Depression. The major areas of significance are Politics/Government, Architecture, Economics, and Community Planning. The U. S. Custom House and Post Office at Pembina (Pembina Post Office) building is significant in North Dakota postal history for its unique architecture and functional history. It is locally significant as the grandest and best-designed building in Pembina today, public or private.

Functionally, this structure was primarily built to house the U. S. Customs and Immigration departments and is located at a major entry point between the United States and Winnipeg, Canada. Only secondarily is it a post office, this function taking less than one-third of the interior floor space. To some extent, the architecture, massing, and size follow from functional considerations: the post office is located in one wing of the ground floor with a side entrance of its own facing Cavalier Street. It has no internal interchange with the Customs and Immigration functions. It was built at a cost of \$115,000 because of its combined function as border inspection station and post office. During the same time, the government also funded North Dakota border inspection stations at Portal, Ambrose, and St. John--all on the Canadian border and all built at a cost of between \$54,000-74,000, far less than at Pembina (The Foster County Independent, Oct. 6, 1932, pp. 1, 5).

Historically, there seems to have been no pressing need for expanded postal facilities which prompted the government to erect this building. Rather, the government appears to have needed larger facilities for Customs and Immigration at Pembina, the main route to Winnipeg, Canada. Finally, the Pembina Customs House and Post Office is the grandest structure in Pembina and the only representative of the Federal presence in town. The building is owned by the General Services Administration.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 2

Multiple Property: U.S. Post Offices in North Dakota, 1900-1940

Pembina P. O.

According to the original blueprints, most of the Pembina Custom House and Post Office is devoted to non-postal functions. Of a gross floor area of 15,929 square feet, the building is allocated in the following way: net postal service area, 2,704 sq. ft.; non-postal federal agency net area, 8,412 sq. ft. (Customs and Immigration); and mechanical and circulation area, 4,813 sq. ft. The Cavalier Chronical described the proposed building as "a federal immigration and customs inspection building" in the initial announcement on August 21, 1931. It went on to note that the new building would house the customs and immigration inspection services. When the facility was completed in 1932, the first floor was devoted largely to Customs and Immigration functions with a customs work room, office space, a customs waiting room, and an immigration office. The post office consisted of a work room, a small mail vestibule, and the postmaster's office in the east wing. On the second floor were rooms for the customs patrol, the U.S. Customs Court room, several detention cells, an animal inspections room run by the Department of Agriculture, and two offices. The basement was originally devoted to storage, custodial supplies, the fuel and boiler rooms, and Customs and Immigration storage rooms. Today, the Post Office has less space in the building than originally. It leases the postmaster's office to Immigration and a door has been put into the Immigration offices on the first floor. The current postmistress offices in the postal work room. The U.S. Border Patrol is currently located on the second floor.

The Pembina Customs House and Post Office does not appear to have been built because of a local need for additional postal facilities. Pembina was not growing at the time of its construction. The County seat of Pembina County was moved to the city of Cavalier some 34 miles west in 1911 (Pembina Centennial Committee, A History of Pembina County, 1967, p. 17). It is difficult to determine cause and effect, but the initiation of air mail service to Pembina might have influenced the construction of the new facility. The Cavalier Chronicle noted in its December 19, 1930 issue that Pembina was to be a transfer point for air mail service between Winnipeg and the Twin Cities in Minnesota. Some \$750,000 was made available by Congress to have Northwest Airways fly mail from Minneapolis to Pembina. Canadian Airways would fly the mail from Pembina to Winnipeg some 69 miles to the north. American flyers wished the entire route, but were stopped by the Canadian government who insisted on using Canadian flyers over Canada (p. 1). As a result of this new service, the new Northwest Airways airport at Pembina was dedicated in the fall of 1931

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 3

Multiple Property: U.S. Post Offices in North Dakota, 1900-1940 Pembina P.O.

(Pembina Centennial Committee, p. 17). It is not clear how much of the air mail might have been sorted at the new Pembina post office when it was completed.

The Pembina Custom House and Post Office is an unusual design, not one of the standard designs of the times. It is also historically the most important building in town and has been such for over 50 years. It was designed in the office of James Wetmore, Acting Supervising Architect of the Treasury Department. It is Colonial Revival in style with a gambrel roof. Detailing consists of 12 over 12 small paned windows, limestone trim and keystones, pediments, fluted pilasters, leaded transoms, and dentilling. It is architecturally the most imposing building in the city. Most of the buildings in the city, especially on Cavalier Street burned and several were rebuilt. Of the government buildings, two city halls have burned, the 1881 Pembina County Courthouse was condemned in 1933 and razed. The 1919 school building has had large and major additions in 1958 and 1966 and has little original integrity. The downtown today has only a two story former hotel building and a handful of one story modest stores and garages (Pembina Centennial Committee, pp. 17-18).

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 9 Page 1

Pembina P. O.

Multiple Property: U.S. Post Offices in North Dakota, 1900-1940

The Cavalier Chronicle, December 19, 1930.

The Cavalier Chronicle, August 21, 1931.

The Foster County Independent, October 6, 1932.

Pembina Centennial Committee. A History of Pembina County. Pembina: 1967.