

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Name of Property \_\_\_\_\_

County and State \_\_\_\_\_

Section number \_\_\_\_\_ Page \_\_\_\_\_

Name of multiple property listing (if applicable) \_\_\_\_\_

### SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 100003582

Date Listed: 4/2/2019

Property Name: Cocoa Post office (Florida's New Deal Resources MPS)

County: Brevard

State: FL

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This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.



Signature of the Keeper

4-2-2019

Date of Action

Amended Items in Nomination:

Section 8: Areas of Significance

COMMERCE is hereby deleted as an area of significance. It was mistakenly added to Section 8 and does not pertain to this property.

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The Florida State Historic Preservation Office was notified of this amendment.

**DISTRIBUTION:****National Register property file****Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)**

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 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 any 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 Cocoa Post Office

other names/site number Tebeau-Field Library of Florida History, FMSF# 8BR1825

2. Location

street & number 435 Brevard Avenue ☐ not for publication

city or town Cocoa ☐ vicinity

state Florida code FL county Brevard code 009 zip code 32922

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.)

Alisse Spaine, Deputy SHPO 2/11/19  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

Florida Department of State, Division of Historical Resources, Bureau of Historic Preservation  
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 Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the 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  
☐ See continuation sheet.  
☐ removed from the National  
Register.  
☐ other, (explain) \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

Jim Walker

4-2-2019

Cocoa Post Office  
Name of Property

Brevard, Florida  
County and 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)

- ☒ buildings  
☐ district  
☐ site  
☐ structure  
☐ object

### Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include any previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	total

### Name of related multiple property listings

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

Florida's New Deal Resources

### Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

## 6. Function or Use

### Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

GOVERNMENT /Post Office

GOVERNMENT /Government Office

## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

MODERN MOVEMENT / Art Deco

### Narrative Description

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

### Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

EDUCATION/Library

### Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete

walls Concrete

Stucco

roof Asphalt

other

**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**Areas of Significance****Narrative Statement of Significance**

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

**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 36) 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

(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

COMMERCE

POLITICS/GOVERNMENT

**Period of Significance**

1940-1970

**Significant Dates**

1940

1966

**Significant Person****Cultural Affiliation****Architect/Builder**

ARCHITECT-Simon, Louis A.

BUILDER-Raymond, J.M. (J.M. Raymond Construction Company, Jacksonville, FL)

**Primary location of additional data:**

- ☒ State Historic Preservation Office
- ☐ Other State Agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☒ Other

Name of Repository

Florida Historical Society

# \_\_\_\_\_

Cocoa Post Office  
Name of Property

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## 10. Geographical Data

Acree of Property Less than an acre

### UTM References

(Place additional references on a continuation sheet.)

1	1	7	5	2	6	8	0	1	3	1	3	6	4	2	5
Zone	Easting			Northing											
2															

3															
Zone	Easting			Northing											
4															

☐ 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 Ben DiBiase, Director of Educational Resources; Max Adriel Imberman, Historic Preservationist

organization Florida Historical Society date December 2018

street & number 435 Brevard Ave. telephone 321-690-1971

city or town Cocoa, state FL zip code 32955

### 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 Florida Historical Society Inc.

street & number 435 Brevard Avenue telephone 321-690-1971

city or town Cocoa state FL zip code 32922

**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 amend 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 Reduction Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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Cocoa Post Office

Name of Property

Brevard County, FL

County and State

Florida's New Deal Resources

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

**SUMMARY**

The Cocoa Post Office was built under the auspices of the Works Projects Administration (WPA), and was a symbol of the Federal government in the relatively small, rural city of Cocoa. Construction started in 1939 and the building opened to the public in 1940. The Cocoa Post Office was built on the corner of Orange Street and Brevard Avenue in the heart of the city's downtown. It functioned as a post office from 1940 until 1965, when ownership of the building was transferred from the Treasury Department to the General Services Administration (GSA). At this point, the building was repurposed as an office space for various Federal entities including the Federal Bureau of Investigations, Field Operations, the U.S. Draft Board and Military Recruitment Office, as well as other federal offices. In 1997, the building was again sold, this time to the Florida Historical Society for use as a research library and office space, functions it still holds today. The building is single-story and made of poured concrete, representing the WPA/PWA Moderne architectural style. The main front entrance faces east towards Brevard Avenue with a rear entrance facing west towards Brevard Court and the City of Cocoa's City Hall building.

**SETTING**

Cocoa is located in central Brevard County, on the eastern shore of the Indian River Lagoon, directly across the river from Merritt Island. Both US HWY-1 and Interstate 95 run through the city from north to south. The old Dixie Highway at one point ran directly through downtown Cocoa, and is now part of a historic drive along the Indian River Lagoon. On the western edge of the city of Cocoa is the upper St. Johns River watershed, the headwaters of Florida's longest river. Directly west of the Cocoa Post Office is the new Cocoa City Hall, completed in 2008. The Cocoa Post Office building sits on the corner of Orange Street and Brevard Avenue. Directly across Brevard Avenue to the east is the Space Coast Office of Tourism, once occupied by a department store. The downtown Cocoa area experienced a revival in the late 1980s. Once the economic and agricultural center of Brevard County, it has now become a cultural center with many shops, a 1920s-era theater, and several early 20<sup>th</sup> century commercial buildings that are collectively branded as "Cocoa Village." The concerted effort to preserve this quaint historic downtown is a major success story. Both north and south of the Cocoa Village area along the Indian River Lagoon are historic neighborhoods dating back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. There are several 21<sup>st</sup> century condominiums immediately north and south of downtown and one marina north of the downtown. There are several banks and law offices still occupying the downtown area, although shopping and entertainment have become the primary draw for visitors to the area. There is a large public park featuring an open-air band shell one block east of the Cocoa Post Office. The streets surrounding the Cocoa Post Office regularly host craft fairs and car shows, bringing thousands to the downtown area every year.



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**NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION**Exterior

The eastern façade of the Cocoa Post Office has served as its main entrance for the entirety of its existence. The building is made of flat concrete masonry. Its façade has many features representative of the WPA Moderne architectural style, which it has retained since its construction. The Cocoa Post Office has a predominantly-flat asphalt roof, with a slight shingled hip over the eastern half of the building. The building is surrounded by a grassy area to the south and east, and the area leading from Brevard Avenue to the main entrance (Photo 1) features a concrete pathway with two wooden benches. Two sets of stairs lie along this path and each features original wrought-iron handrails. The eastern stairway is straight and subdivided into two sections by a handrail in the center. The second stairway which goes directly to the eastern entrance door, narrows as it ascends, accompanied with a curved handrail on either side. These curved handrails highlight a set of matched concrete posts, each of which features a large original globed iron lamp. The design of the eastern façade is symmetrical, with the central doorway flanked by two evenly-spaced windows on each side. The doorway area (Photo 2) has the most elaborate ornamentation of the main entrance façade, with a cast concrete federal seal on each side of the door, and a cast concrete eagle with 13 stars above the door. The entrance itself features a pair of four-light cast iron doorways with a two-light transom on top. The entrance is recessed and flanked by a stylized stepped vertical detail consisting of three steps currently painted grey. Two thin painted beads are placed around two feet below the roofline and run around the entire building. The four windows on the eastern façade are each covered with aluminum Bahamian-style shutters for wind and debris mitigation. The southern end of the eastern façade has the building's cornerstone (Photo 3).

The southern façade (Photo 4) of the Cocoa Post Office is relatively unadorned. It continues the wrap-around lines near the roof which continue around the entire building. This façade has five windows, each of which match the four visible on the eastern façade, covered with aluminum Bahamian-style shutters. At the western end of this façade is a light-well surrounded by a metal railing. In this light-well are two windows which align vertically with the two southern-most windows on the southern façade.

The western façade (Photo 5) of the Cocoa Post Office serves as the back entrance to the building. Like the other facades of the Cocoa Post Office, it does not have much ornamentation. This façade has six window bays, with the third from the southern end filled in. The fenestration remains the same, with the exact location of the original location being visible, but filled in with concrete. The northernmost window on the western façade has been removed and replaced with an entryway (Photo 6) accessible via a ramp, a change instituted during the period of significance. The ramp is made of concrete and is bounded by a railing. The doorway itself is enclosed by a concrete structure. Like the southern façade, the west side of a building features a light-well at its southern end, with two windows matching

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vertically the location of the two southernmost windows. The northern half of this façade, defined by the three northernmost windows of the six on this side of the building, features a staircase leading downward to the basement level. An entrance doorway is placed under the second-northernmost first-floor window, and the concrete entranceway structure can be walked under. The roof-level wraparound projecting bead continues on this elevation of the building. Four small grey squares are placed above the bead between the five northernmost window bays on this elevation.

The northern façade of the Cocoa Post Office (Photo 7) faces the building's parking lot. The western end of this elevation features the post office's original raised loading dock entrance, which has been closed off and filled in but is still visible (present in Figure 1). A small air-conditioning unit is built into the filled-in former loading dock space. There is also a doorway accessible by a small stairway leading to a concrete platform with a tubular steel handrail and a four-light wooden door. This door and the filled-in loading dock entrance are both covered by a projecting roof, which is at a lower height than the roofline of the rest of the building. The entire loading dock section of the building projects northward from the rectangular bulk of the building and is clearly distinguishable from the more public-facing part of the original post office architecture. This side of the building has matching windows to the other three sides, with the same type of aluminum Bahamian-style shutters. It also has the roof-level bead, with five small grey squares above it, heavily weighted toward the western end of the elevation.

Interior

The main entrance foyer of the Cocoa Post Office building (Photo 8), located on the eastern façade, leads into a lobby which would have served the same purpose in the building's original configuration as a post office. During that time period, it would have been the only room accessible to the public. This room has terrazzo flooring with brown marble wainscoting around most of the walls. The ceilings feature curved concrete crown molding. It is centrally-located along the eastern façade of the Cocoa Post Office, and is a symmetrical space. Exits from the lobby lead to the north, west, and south.

The northeastern room of the building (Photo 9) served as a P.O. box room in the historic period, but is currently a gift shop and bookstore. The P.O. boxes have been removed since the historic period. The ceiling in this room matches that in the lobby. This room is separated from a large sorting room to the west by a short wall (Photo 10). The historic P.O. boxes were located on this wall.

To the west of the entrance lobby is the previously-mentioned large sorting room (Photo 11), which in the historic period was the main workspace for the post office staff. It is now a large library and research space. This room takes up the bulk of the building's first floor. It is primarily an open space, but in the 1990s a mezzanine (Photo 12) was opened along the western wall's second floor. Under this mezzanine



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are two restrooms and the staircase to the basement. At the southern end of this room is the original post office vault of the building (Photo 13), which has the original painted seal and combination lock.

To the south of the entrance foyer is a short hallway (Photo 14) leading to a small office and a large conference room (Photo 15). This area of the building was the Postmaster's office during the historic period. This section of the building has drop ceilings.

The basement, which is accessible from the former main room of the post office, is made up of three large rooms, which are today used for storage (Photo 16), and four small offices. These rooms have drop ceilings which were added in the 1960s. A hallway runs through the basement floor connecting the various spaces (Photo 17).

**ALTERATIONS**

During the various periods of the Cocoa Post Office's existence, changes were made as the building evolved and was used by different agencies. The shape of the building has remained constant since its original construction (Figure 2). The building was a post office from 1940-1965 (Figure 3). In the early 1960s, in the building's final years as a post office, the northernmost rear window on the west elevation was removed and replaced with a covered doorway and ramp. The parking lot on the north elevation was enlarged. A window air-conditioner was installed in the window of the postmaster's office at the southern elevation of the building, which is no longer present. Apart from the removal and replacement of one window of the building, no significant exterior changes were made during this period.

From 1965-1997, the Cocoa Post Office Building served as the home for various government offices. During this period, changes were instituted to make the building hospitable for non-post office government work. The original wooden sash windows were replaced with current anodized aluminum windows. The ventilator skylight and mechanism were removed and the opening sealed, although an original large, non-functioning radiator remains in place immediately below where the skylight was sealed up (Photo 18). A portion of the loading dock was enclosed with a window air-conditioner installed in the new concrete block wall. A central air-conditioning system was installed, which included exterior units, one at ground level located at the northeast corner of the north elevation and three more units installed on the roof, not visible from the ground level. The original copper sheathed roof was covered with foam insulation and a built-up composite roof was installed. The post office counter, P.O. Boxes and other accoutrements associated with the post office were removed, with the exception of the large vault, exterior doors, molding, doors, and the interior of the foyer. The original heating unit was removed and a central air conditioning and heating system was installed. The main floor and basement were divided into offices, and a drop ceiling was installed in the main floor and basement. Carpeting, electrical services and climate control ductwork were also installed in the basement area.

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From 1997 through the present, the former Cocoa Post Office has served as the Library of Florida History, owned and operated by the Florida Historical Society. The foam insulation added to the roof during the GSA period was removed. The copper could not be salvaged and was again covered with built up roofing material and fiberglass shingles. All modifications made during the GSA-era were removed, excluding the drop ceiling and ductwork for air conditioning in the basement. The air conditioning systems were updated.

**INTEGRITY**

The Cocoa Post Office retains integrity for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. It retains integrity of location and setting, as it has not been moved and the area surrounding it retains historic character as a developed portion of downtown Cocoa. It retains integrity of design, materials, and workmanship, clearly identifiable as a WPA-era post office, despite the changes to the interior. Much of the original materials and workmanship were covered up during the later years of the building's history, but have since had the coverings removed and are once again accessible and visible. The reconfiguration of spaces mostly align with the historic use of the building. The exterior has had very few alterations, and those which did happen happened during the period of significance. The building also retains integrity of feeling and association, most directly expressed by the building's exteriors and the surviving post office vault. A visitor to the Cocoa Post Office would be able to identify when the building was constructed, who constructed it, and what its former use was.

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**SUMMARY**

The Cocoa Post Office is significant at the local level under Criterion A in the area of Politics/Government, and Criterion C in the area of Architecture. Its period of significance begins in 1940, when it was constructed as a modern post office through the New Deal WPA program, through 1970, after it had been converted into offices for several government organizations by the General Services Administration. Through these three decades, the Cocoa Post Office was a building from which the government of the United States served the Cocoa community, first as a post office, but then as a location for armed forces recruitment, also housing the local draft board during the Vietnam War. The building also served as a field office for the Federal Bureau of Investigation during the height of the 1960s Space Race. The building was constructed in a characteristic WPA Moderne style, and is the only Cocoa representative of this Moderne WPA influence, in a city downtown primarily defined by the earlier styles popular during the Florida Land Boom. Both visually and in terms of its usage through the first three decades of its history and beyond, the building is representative of the impact of the United States government upon the city of Cocoa.

The Cocoa Post Office also contributes to the **FLORIDA'S NEW DEAL RESOURCES** Multiple Property Submission under this historic context of The New Deal in Florida, 1933-1943 and the F.1 Property Type: Buildings.

**HISTORIC CONTEXT**

Development of Cocoa, Florida

The history of Cocoa's development in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century is typical for many small towns in the state of Florida during that time period, in that they grew organically around a particular industry, in this case, agriculture. Situated on the banks of the Indian River Lagoon, in central Brevard County, the area that would become Cocoa had been inhabited by pre-Columbian peoples for at least a few centuries after the arrival of Europeans.<sup>1</sup> When the United States took control of Florida in 1821, efforts to populate the southern portion of the peninsula began in earnest. With the passing of the Armed Occupation Act of 1842, settlers began claiming acreage in what would become Brevard County, but settlement remained sporadic and sparse leading up to the Civil War. During the Seminole Wars period (1835-1842) Federal military forces built roads and began exploring the central east coast of Florida. A small fort (known as Ft. Anne) was constructed at the head northern end of the Indian River Lagoon, connecting with Mosquito Lagoon. The fort was only briefly occupied during the winter of 1836/1837, but it meant that

<sup>1</sup> J.F. Lanham, Alan Brech, "Summer Pentoaya: Locating A Prominent Ais Indian Town Along The Indian River Lagoon, Florida," *The Florida Anthropologist*, Vol. 60 no 1, March, 2007, pg. 21.

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infrastructure was coming to Brevard.<sup>2</sup> The military built supply roads to connect its string of forts along the east coast, laying the foundation for north-south travel that helped Cocoa grow into the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

By 1878, only a few dozen families called the Indian River Country home. Two early entrepreneurs, A.L. Hatch and G.S. Hardee, located a deep creek navigable by steam boat that was only four miles south from present-day Cocoa. They built a store wharf on the Indian River and began moving people and goods into and out of this remote region via steamboat. When A.L. Hatch sold his store, two brothers named Benjamin and Columbus Willard set up stores just north of Hardee in what would become Cocoa.<sup>3</sup> In 1882, the Willard wharf was the only structure in Cocoa, but soon property was purchased and sub-divided, sold into lots, and settlers began trickling in along the newly established Hart-Smith Steamboat Line running up the St. Johns River from Sanford to Rockledge Landing.<sup>4</sup> Hotels and boarding houses were built, and people began investing in citrus growing operations in both Cocoa, and the neighboring barrier islands of Merritt Island. Cocoa quickly became the center for commercial production in Brevard County, especially after the arrival of the Florida East Coast Railway line in 1893. Goods could be shipped out of the county faster, and more passengers began to visit and move to Cocoa as a result.<sup>5</sup> This quickly changed during the winter of 1894/95 when a massive freeze killed many citrus plants, and forced many grove owners to move out.<sup>6</sup> The town of Cocoa was incorporated in 1895, despite the setback of the freeze, and the local paper boasted several thriving businesses including a dry goods store, shipping operation and dairy.<sup>7</sup> By 1920, Cocoa's population had grown from a few hundred in the 1890s to 2,216 by 1925.<sup>8</sup>

This tremendous growth was halted by 1926 when Florida's housing bubble burst, and the years of land speculation and development slowed to a trickle. The effects of the Great Depression in Florida, and specifically in Brevard County were felt acutely. By 1933, every municipality in Brevard County, including Cocoa, had defaulted on their bonds.<sup>9</sup> When the post office was moved from 315 Brevard Avenue to the new location at 435 Brevard Avenue, only eight people worked for the post office.<sup>10</sup> It

<sup>2</sup> Jacob R. Motte, *Journey into Wilderness: An Army Surgeon's Account of Life in Camp and Field during the Creek and Seminole Wars, 1836-1838* (Gainesville: University of Florida Press, 1958), 157-159.

<sup>3</sup> Roy Laughlin, Robert Kronowitz, and Michael Boonstra, *Not To Be Missed; Cocoa's Architectural Heritage and Its People, 1880-1950*, (Cocoa: Black and Tan Inc., 2014) 1-2.

<sup>4</sup> Fred Hopwood, *Rockledge Steamboat Line*, (Melbourne, FL, 1992) 23.

<sup>5</sup> John M. Eriksen, *Brevard County: A History to 1955*. (Tampa, Florida Historical Society Press), 127-129.

<sup>6</sup> Laughlin, Kronowitz, Boonstra, *Not To Be Missed*. 9.

<sup>7</sup> Jerrell Shofner, *History of Brevard County Vol. I*. (Stuart: Southeastern Printing Co. Inc.), 127.

<sup>8</sup> Nathan Mayo. The Fifth Census of the State of Florida Taken in the Year 1925. Tallahassee, J.T. Appleyard, Inc. 78.

<sup>9</sup> Jerrell Shofner, *History of Brevard County Vol. II* (Stuart: Southeastern Printing Co. Inc.), 54.

<sup>10</sup> "Cocoa Post Office Grows From Tiny Box," *Cocoa Tribune* (Cocoa, FL) October 29, 1965.

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came at a time when the federal government had very little presence in Cocoa, but rapid change was just around the corner for the community, some administered through the Cocoa Post Office.

**HISTORIC SIGNIFICANCE**

The settlement of Cocoa had first established a post office on September 11, 1884, roughly a decade before the city was incorporated.<sup>11</sup> William Barton Smith became the first postmaster for Cocoa, then referred to as Indian River City.<sup>12</sup> The City of Cocoa had five different locations for its post office before construction of the Cocoa Post Office building commenced in 1939. Prior to the 435 Brevard Avenue location, the post office had been located in a Masonic Temple a block to the north at 315 Brevard Avenue, which held the post office from 1920-1938. Cocoa relied heavily on its postal system in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. It was at that time serviced by the Florida East Coast railroad. Even after the introduction of the railroad, mail was delivered by boat to neighboring Merritt Island and Cocoa Beach until 1917.<sup>13</sup> As the city grew, so too did the various post office locations which had served it.

By the end of the Florida Land Boom in the late 1920s, the city required an even larger facility to handle both personal and commercial mailing requirements.<sup>14</sup> Cocoa began accepting bids for a new post office building in July of 1939.<sup>15</sup> On July 1, 1939, the U.S. Congress appropriated \$70,000 for the construction of a new post office in Cocoa. Although no Brevard County construction firms submitted bids, a company out of Jacksonville, J.M. Raymond Construction Company, ultimately won the bid for construction, and subsequently hired local contractors to prepare the empty lot on the corner of Brevard Ave and Orange Street.<sup>16</sup> The official laying of the cornerstone on December 15, 1939 was a major local event. At least 1,000 people were in attendance. Stores officially closed in the surrounding downtown area at 2:55 p.m. to watch the dedication ceremony at 3:00 p.m., and the Cocoa High School band led a parade.<sup>17</sup> The design for the building was a departure from the styles which had come to define Cocoa's architecture, with the styles of the Florida Land Boom being dominant in the downtown area at the time.

<sup>11</sup> Alford G. Bradbury and E. Story Hallock, *A Chronology of Florida Post Offices*, (Sewall's Point, FL: Sewalls, Point Company, 1993), 17

<sup>12</sup> Shofner, *History of Brevard Vol. I*, 125.

<sup>13</sup> Ada E. Parrish, Clyde Field, George Leeland (Speedy) Harrell. *Images of America: Central Brevard County*. (Charleston: Arcadia Publishing, 1998), 9.

<sup>14</sup> Roy Laughlin, Robert Krownowitt, Michael J. Boonstra. *Not To Be Missed: Cocoa's Architectural Heritage and Its People, 1880-1950*. Cocoa: Black and Tan Inc., 2014. 66-67.

<sup>15</sup> "Officials Will Open Bids for Cocoa P.O. Building Tomorrow. *Cocoa Tribune* (Cocoa, FL) July 27, 1939.

<sup>16</sup> "Jacksonville Firm Low Bidder On The Cocoa Post Office," *Cocoa Tribune* (Cocoa, FL) August 3, 1939.; September 14, 1939 "Local Labor to Be Employed on Post Office Job.

<sup>17</sup> "Over 1,000 People Attended Post Office Cornerstone Program in Cocoa Friday Afternoon at 3." *Cocoa Tribune* (Cocoa, FL) December 21, 1939.

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The construction of a WPA Moderne post office broke the local mold, reflecting the broader national trends which were taking hold across the country due to the New Deal work of the WPA.

The City of Cocoa, and the State of Florida as a whole had been hit particularly hard by the effects of the Great Depression. Unemployment was still high by the close of the 1930s, and Cocoa, which relied heavily on unskilled labor in its agricultural industries, specifically citrus, needed some federal assistance. The Post Office became a symbol of the Federal Government's place in rural American society, which was often far from the minds of those working in the orange fields of Brevard County. On April 25, 1940, the *Cocoa Tribune* announced that the new Post Office was ready for occupancy.<sup>18</sup>

The timing of Cocoa's new Post Office was serendipitous as the Second World War brought with it a new influx of residents coming to Cocoa, and using its public facilities, such as the post office. The post office was not the only federal facility built in the area, the Banana River Naval Air Station (BRNAS), in nearby Cocoa Beach, became a major training facility for Navy personnel flying PB-Y Catalina Flying Boats.<sup>19</sup> An unpublished report by Chairman of the Brevard County Air Base Committee, C. Sweet Smith argued for the establishment of an airbase in Brevard near Cocoa because it could be easily built with available labor and would be a boon for the local economy. In the report, the committee also stressed that new infrastructure that would be required to supply such an installation, and mentions the commitment of the State Road Board to build and enhance causeways to the barrier islands from Cocoa.<sup>20</sup> The base was originally planned as a coastal defense, but soon, pilot and bombardier training became the primary role.<sup>21</sup> As a result of the federal expansion into the military base near Cocoa, the need for a large post office to replace the much smaller post office was realized with the 1939 Cocoa Post Office structure. Early descriptions of the road and infrastructure conditions in and around Cocoa to get to the BRNAS were bleak at best.<sup>22</sup> When President Roosevelt signed the documents authorizing funds for the BRNAS, bids for the Cocoa Post Office were being received. The Cocoa terminal was the closest rail line to the new BRNAS. The railroad brought people associated with the new federal presence and thus, the post office became even more important as a community center. The large post office structure most likely would not have been funded had the Naval Air Station not been approved at the same time. The establishment of both the BRNAS and the Cocoa Post Office, both opening within months of each other in 1940, were galvanizing events for the Cocoa community.

<sup>18</sup> "City's New Post Office Ready for Occupancy," *Cocoa Tribune*, April 25, 1940.

<sup>19</sup> "Bill Authorizing \$1,800,000 Patrol Boat For Sea Planes Signed Tuesday By President," *Cocoa Tribune*, April 27, 1939

<sup>20</sup> C. Sweet Smith, "Statement of Establishment of Naval Air Base in the Lower Reaches of the Banana River Brevard County, Florida" unpublished manuscript, Library of Florida History, Florida Historical Society, Cocoa, FL.

<sup>21</sup> Frank M. Childers, *History of Cape Canaveral*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Cocoa: Brevard Museum, Inc. (1997). appears in *Port Canaveral*, as "Wings Over Brevard," March/April 2002. pg 3.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 2.

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After years of economic hardship, things were changing fast in the community and the Cocoa Post Office helped to usher in that change. Freight increased significantly as soon as the post office opened in 1940. Within a year, the U.S. was directly involved in WWII and the post office stood as a symbol of the federal government's strength and resolve during a time of international crisis. Letters to and from home written by and for soldiers and sailors who were stationed far from home came through the Cocoa Post Office. It became a place to meet and wait for the latest information from home. Thousands of U.S. Naval airmen and support members passed through the City of Cocoa, and the Cocoa Post Office building on their way to fight around the world. This building was a link to the federal government, but also a link to home during a time of great uncertainty and fear.

The building was utilized as a post office during the early years of Brevard County's "Space Race." Nearby Cape Canaveral had been selected as the site for manned space flight. Cocoa was one of the closest towns, and the post office accommodated this influx of new visitors. Brevard County boasted a population of over 111,000 people in 1960, a massive increase from just a decade prior.<sup>23</sup> On February 20, 1962, when John Glenn successfully landed back on earth after his Project Mercury mission, a call was placed at the Cocoa Post Office to open a bag which had been stored under lock and key in the Cocoa Post Office vault. The contents of the bag were special commemorative stamps, known as the "Project Mercury" stamps, that were printed in complete secrecy, and the Cocoa Post Office received the first batch for sale. The sealed packages containing the stamps could not be opened until it was certain Glenn had returned safely. The Post Office also received special philatelic canceling machines that were used in the Cocoa Post Office to meet the demand of thousands of stamp customers.<sup>24</sup> This single national event marked the busiest few days for this small, rural post office, as they worked tirelessly to process the 1 million pieces of mail they received in just a few weeks after the successful launch.<sup>25</sup> This site was the only place that letters could be cancelled with the "Cape Canaveral" lettering to indicate where the stamps came from. For collectors, and for the nation as a whole, the manned space flight operations were fascinating. Initially, the postal employees in the Cocoa Post Office set up a small van with a cancelling machine out at Cape Canaveral, but later, the stamps and envelopes were all canceled in the Cocoa Post Office building.<sup>26</sup> This major national event and the local post office that played a part in how the public understood the significance of the work going on related to space travel in Brevard is an important link between the city of Cocoa's heritage and its tangible legacy.

As the space industry grew in Brevard County, Cocoa became a natural base for commercial and public life. The Cocoa Post Office had now swelled to over 100 employees, including carriers and part-time staff, and the facility was too small to accommodate the large staff. By 1965, the U.S. government

<sup>23</sup> Shofner, *History of Florida Vol. II* 187.

<sup>24</sup> "Cocoa P.O. In Orbit; Mercury Stamp Sales Soar, Rationed." *Cocoa Tribune*, February 21, 1962.

<sup>25</sup> *Cocoa Tribune*, February 22, 1962. (BCHC)

<sup>26</sup> Interview with George Leland (Speedy) Harrell, former postal employee on August 8, 2018. Cocoa.



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authorized the construction of a newer, larger post office directly west of the Cocoa Post Office building. This new facility boasted nearly 23,000 square feet of work space, which was much larger than the 4,000 square feet in the old Cocoa Post Office.<sup>27</sup> The massive improvement in size also included the addition of ten new service windows, compared to only one at the Brevard Avenue Cocoa Post Office.<sup>28</sup>

Due to the Cocoa Post Office's connection with the federal government, the decision was made to make the building a "general use" federal building under the auspices of the General Services Administration (GSA). The GSA planned to use the now-former Cocoa Post Office as offices for the Selective Service, as well as recruitment offices for the armed forces, and a field office for the Federal Bureau of Investigation. From 1966-1993, the building served as recruitment offices, including during the Vietnam War, during which thousands of young men joined the armed forces through the Cocoa Post Office Building, whether voluntarily or through conscription. During the space race of the 1960s and subsequent manned missions to outer space, the FBI operated from the Cocoa Post Office building. Very little is known about the specific operations and investigations carried out by the FBI during this time period as much of that information is not currently accessible to the public, but with the Space Race being such a hotly contested international event, FBI agents in Brevard County would have been involved in defending American interests in that field. The Cocoa Post Office building, over a period of five decades, became synonymous with the presence of federal authority in the growing community of greater Cocoa. From the Great Depression and New Deal, through the Space Race and Vietnam War eras, the Cocoa Post Office served as a place through which the federal government impacted the lives of Cocoa's citizenry.

The building remained in the hands of the GSA until 1993, when it was sold to the City of Cocoa, who subsequently sold the building to the Florida Historical Society, Inc., its current owners. The building functions now as a research library, open to the public. This building has been, and continues to be a central part of the Cocoa downtown district.

### **ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE**

The Cocoa Post Office stands as a unique piece of federal government WPA Moderne architecture in the Space Coast region of Central Florida's east coast. Constructed under the New Deal Program then known as the Work Projects Administration (WPA), construction of the Cocoa Post Office started in 1939, and was completed in 1940. Despite being built in what was at the time a less developed portion of the state of Florida, the building employs many of the characteristic attributes that one would expect to find in a building of its type constructed in a larger metropolitan area. The provincial setting of Cocoa

<sup>27</sup> "Cocoa Post Office Grows From Tiny Box." *Cocoa Tribune* (Cocoa, FL) October 29, 1960.

<sup>28</sup> "As Cocoa Grows—" *Cocoa Tribune* (Cocoa, FL) November 11, 1965.

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makes this building unique as a federal Moderne structure, built in an area where that style was not and is not prominent. Many earlier and contemporary buildings in Cocoa were modeled after the Mediterranean Revival Style, yet the Cocoa Post Office is very much in the realm of WPA Moderne, featuring large, recessed windows and a roof that is half-hipped, half-flat. The building also features the linear features characteristic of WPA architectural design, with straight, vertical lines near the entrance, and a thin longitudinal bead running around the top of the building, with small squares molded into the concrete. The Cocoa Post Office is a simple rectangular building with a small loading dock portion to the north, with a roof that is hipped along the entrance façade and flat elsewhere, straight vertical and horizontal features, molded inset windows, large metal doors, federal seals and a molded concrete eagle that are emblematic of the WPA Moderne architectural style. The design was authorized under the Department of the Treasury, and the supervising architect was Louis A. Simon, who was Supervising Architect for the Procurement Division of the U.S. Treasury Department. As a significant surviving local example of the New Deal-era construction and infrastructure-building projects which defined their era, the Cocoa Post Office building holds a unique distinction within its community.

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Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

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July 28, 1938, "Four Submit Bids for Site of Post Office in the City of Cocoa."

August 8, 1938, "Agent Inspects Sites for P.O. Building Here."

September 22, 1938, "City's Lot Selected as Site on Which New Post Office be Built"

March 16, 1939, "Government Accepts Title of Lot Here for Post Office Building."

April 27, 1939. "Bill Authorizing \$1,800,000 Patol Base for Sea Planes Signed Tuesday By President."

April 29, 1939, "Preliminary Plans for Federal Building in Cocoa are Announced."

August 3, 1939, "Jacksonville Firm Low Bidder on the Cocoa Post Office."

September 14, 1939, "Local Labor to be Employed on Post Office Job."

November 23, 1939, "Cornerstone Laying for Post Office will be Held December 15."

December 21, 1939, "Over 1,000 People Attended the Post Office Cornerstone Program in Cocoa Friday Afternoon at 3."

January 4, 1940, "Delivery of Mail by Carrier Begins Here."

April 18, 1940, "Public to Inspect new Post Office April 27<sup>th</sup>"

April 25, 1940, "City's New Post Office is ready for Occupancy."

August 1, 1940. "Two Deliveries of Mail Per Day in Cocoa Go Into Effect Today."

February 21, 1962. "Cocoa P.O. In Orbit; Mercury Stamp Sales Soar, Rationed."

February 22, 1962. "P.O. Window Open For Space Stamp Sale."

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**Verbal Boundary Description**

Township 24S Range 36E Section 33

Government Lot #2

Lots 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10 of Davis' Subdivision of Hardee's Plat of Indian River City, now Cocoa, Florida.

**Boundary Justification**

All of the historic resources associated with the Cocoa Post Office are contained within the above boundaries.

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**Figure 1:** 1939 view of the Cocoa Post Office under construction, taken from the northeast corner of the building by an unknown photographer. Source: Brevard County Historical Commission Archives



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**Figure 2:** View of the walls of the Cocoa Post Office being poured, captured by an unknown photographer in 1939. Source: Brevard County Historical Commission Archives



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**Figure 3:** Postcard commemorating the Cocoa Post Office. Source: Florida Historical Society Archives

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**Additional Documentation (Figures, plans, historic photos)**

Property Name: Cocoa Post Office

City or Vicinity: Cocoa County: Brevard State: FL

Photographer: Benjamin DiBiase Date Photographed: October/December, 2018

**Description of photograph(s) and number, including description of view indicating direction of camera:**

1. Eastern façade, looking west
2. Main entrance details, looking west
3. Southeast corner cornerstone, looking west
4. Southern façade, looking east
5. Southwestern corner with southern and western facades, looking northeast
6. Rear entrance, looking east
7. Northern façade, looking south
8. Main entrance room facing into the former mail sorting room, looking west
9. Former P.O. Box room, looking northeast
10. Former P.O. Box room, looking northwest
11. Former mail sorting room, looking northeast
12. Ceiling and mezzanine of former mail sorting room, looking northwest
13. Entrance to vault, looking southwest
14. Hallway to former postmaster's office, looking south
15. Former postmaster's office, looking east
16. View of basement main room, looking east
17. Basement hallway at eastern edge of building, looking south
18. View of radiator in former mail sorting room, looking west

## Cocoa Post Office


435 Brevard Avenue  
Cocoa, Brevard County  
Florida, 32922

Lat./Long. Coordinates:  
28.353766, -80.726527

UTM:  
17R 526801 3136425

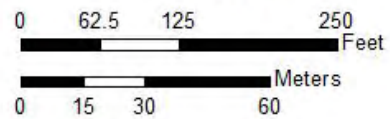
Datum: WGS84

### Legend

 Proposed NR Boundary

Date: 12/13/2018      N

1:1,500



Basemap Sources: Esri, DigitalGlobe, GeoEye,  
Earthstar Geographics, CNES/Airbus DS,  
USDA, USGS, AEX, Getmapping, Aerogrid,  
IGN, IGP, swisstopo, and the GIS  
User Community





## Cocoa Post Office


435 Brevard Avenue  
Cocoa, Brevard County  
Florida, 32922

Lat./Long. Coordinates:  
28.353766, -80.726527

UTM:  
17R 526801 3136425

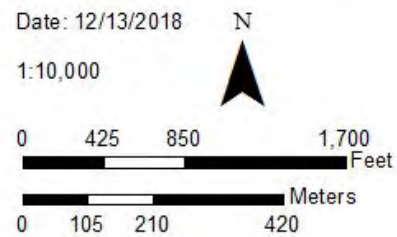
Datum: WGS84

### Legend

 Proposed NR Boundary

Date: 12/13/2018

1:10,000



Basemap Source: 2013 National  
Geographic Society, i-cubed









435



OPEN





JAMES A FARLEY  
POSTMASTER GENERAL

JOHN M CARMODY  
FEDERAL WORKS ADMINISTRATOR

W ENGLEBERT REYNOLDS  
COMMISSIONER OF PUBLIC BUILDINGS

LOUIS A SIMON  
SUPERVISING ARCHITECT

NEAL A MELICK  
SUPERVISING ENGINEER

1939































































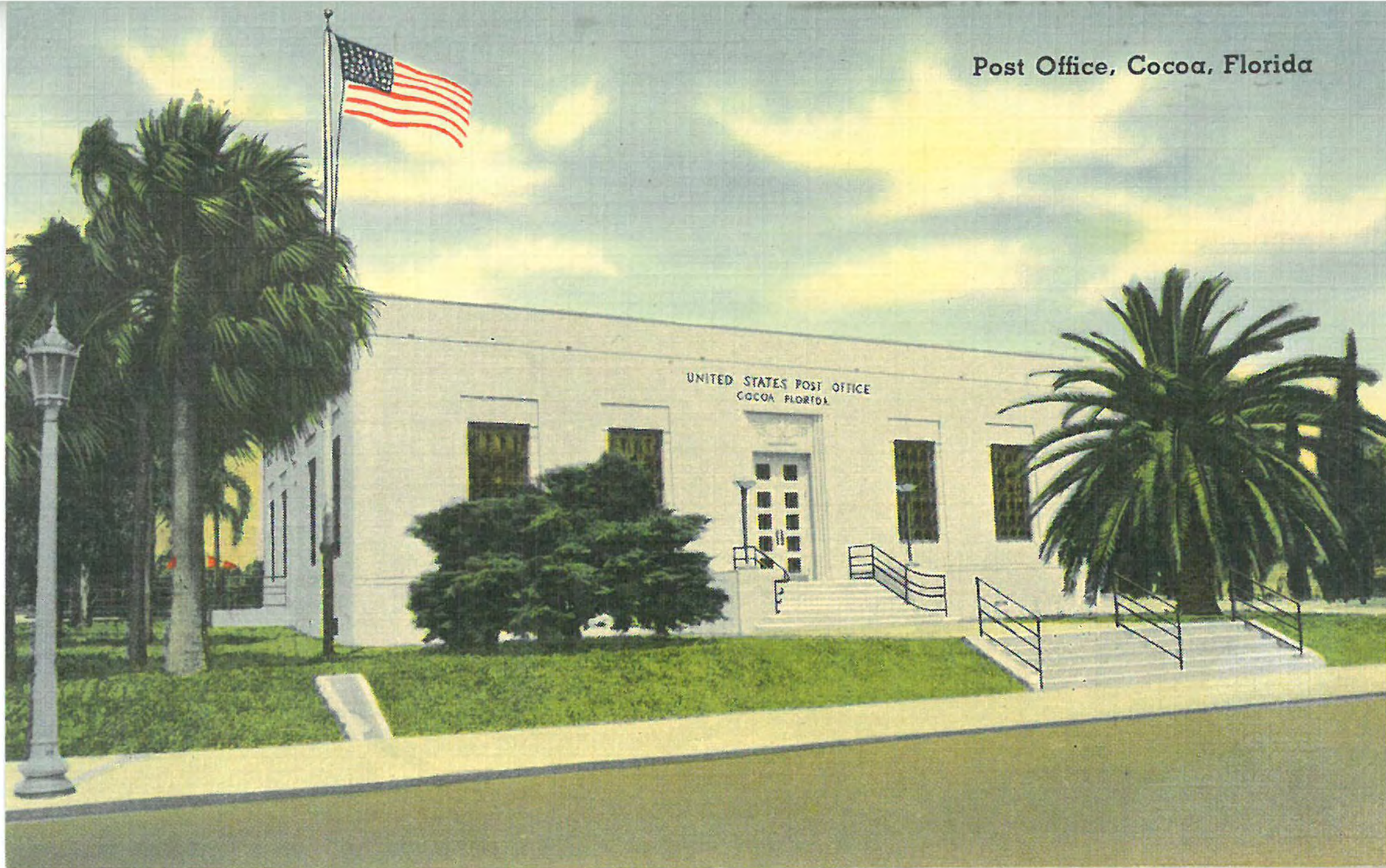




L. WALLER KATZ  
PHOTOGRAPHER



Post Office, Cocoa, Florida



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Requested Action: Nomination

Property Name: Cocoa Post Office

Multiple Name: Florida's New Deal Resources MPS

State & County: FLORIDA, Brevard

Date Received:  
2/19/2019

Date of Pending List:  
3/7/2019

Date of 16th Day:  
3/22/2019

Date of 45th Day:  
4/5/2019

Date of Weekly List:

Reference number: MP100003582

Nominator: SHPO

Reason For Review:

☐ Appeal

☐ SHPO Request

☐ Waiver

☐ Resubmission

☐ Other

☐ PDIL

☐ Landscape

☐ National

☐ Mobile Resource

☐ TCP

☐ CLG

☐ Text/Data Issue

☐ Photo

☐ Map/Boundary

☐ Period

☐ Less than 50 years

☒ Accept

☐ Return

☐ Reject

4/2/2019 Date

Abstract/Summary  
Comments:

Meets registration requirements of MPS. Good example of Art Moderne built with WPA labor in 1939/40; continued significance as Federal office after USPS left building.

Recommendation/  
Criteria

Accept / A & C

Reviewer Jim Gabbert

Discipline Historian

Telephone (202)354-2275

Date \_\_\_\_\_

DOCUMENTATION: see attached comments : No see attached SLR : Yes

If a nomination is returned to the nomination authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the National Park Service.





## FLORIDA DEPARTMENT of STATE

**RON DESANTIS**  
Governor

**LAUREL M. LEE**  
Secretary of State

February 12, 2019

Dr. Julie Ernstein, Deputy Keeper and Chief,  
National Register of Historic Places  
Mail Stop 7228  
1849 C St, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Dr. Ernstein:

The enclosed disks contain the true and correct copy of the nomination for **Cocoa Post Office (FMSF#: 8BR01825) in Brevard County**, to the National Register of Historic Places. The related materials (digital images, maps, and site plan) are included.

Please do not hesitate to contact me at (850) 245-6364 if you have any questions or require any additional information.

Sincerely,

Ruben A. Acosta  
Supervisor, Survey & Registration  
Bureau of Historic Preservation

RAA/raa

Enclosures