

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR FEDERAL PROPERTIES

|                  |             |
|------------------|-------------|
| FOR NPS USE ONLY |             |
| RECEIVED         | NOV 27 1984 |
| DATE ENTERED     | JAN 11 1985 |

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

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

U.S. Post Office

AND/OR COMMON

Chico Midtown Station

**LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

141 West 5th Street

CITY, TOWN

Chico

STATE

California

NA VICINITY OF

CODE

06

NA NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

2

COUNTY

Butte

CODE

007

**CLASSIFICATION**

| CATEGORY                             | OWNERSHIP                                  | STATUS  | PRESENT USE                                    |
|--------------------------------------|--|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT    | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED          | <input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S) | <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE           | <input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED                   | <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE   | <input type="checkbox"/> BOTH              | <input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS             | <input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> SITE        | <b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>                  | <input type="checkbox"/> ACCESSIBLE                   | <input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT      | NA IN PROCESS                              | <input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED              | <input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT         |
| <b>X Thematic Group</b>              | <input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT |
|                                      |  | <input type="checkbox"/> NO                           | <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS             |
|                                      |  |   | <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE     |
|                                      |  |   | <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC            |
|                                      |  |   | <input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL            |
|                                      |  |   | <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION        |
|                                      |  |   | <input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY              |
|                                      |  |   | <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:                |

**AGENCY**

REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS: (If applicable)

U.S. Postal Service, Western Regional Office

STREET & NUMBER

850 Cherry Ave.

CITY, TOWN

San Bruno

NA VICINITY OF

STATE

CA 94099

**LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Chico County Recorder

STREET & NUMBER

25 County Center Drive

CITY, TOWN

Oroville

STATE

CA

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

Chico Historic Survey

DATE

1983

FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

California Office of Historic Preservation, P.O. Box 2390

CITY, TOWN

Sacramento

STATE

CA 95811

## 7 DESCRIPTION

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

4/27/84

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Chico Midtown Station is a squat rectangular box with Classical and Renaissance Revival detailing. The front elevation is articulated by five arches, leading to a loggia. The composition is topped with a red tile roof. The lobby has white plaster walls, a terracotta tile floor, and a marble baseboard.

### LOCAL CONTEXT

The Chico Midtown Station served as the Main Post Office until 1960, when a new Main Office was completed approximately two miles to the north. The Midtown Station is within the central business district, and the surrounding uses are commercial and government offices. City Plaza, a one-block square city park, is located directly across from the main entrance of the post office.

Many early buildings survive in Chico, and several National Register properties are located within the town's corporate boundaries. The town's best known residence is that of the town's founder, John Bidwell. Henry W. Cleveland was hired to design other Italianate style house, the Standsbury house, is located two blocks to the west of the post office.

### PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The basement and foundations are reinforced concrete on spread concrete footings, and the floors are concrete beam and solid slab. The exterior is faced with smooth granite ashlar, and the front steps are granite.

Consistent with other buildings designed during Oscar Wenderoth's reign as Supervising Architect, the Chico Midtown Station was designed in the Second Italian Renaissance style. The symmetrical facade is articulated by five circular arches with bracketed keystones. Each arch is supported by two Doric half-columns attached to a square pier. Two double-hung six-over-six light windows are placed above each arch, and a dentil molding runs just beneath the eaves. A molded belt course divides the first and second floor lines on the front and side elevations.

The side elevations, as originally designed, are identical. Three windows, identical with those of the second floor windows on the front elevation are aligned on each side elevation. An entrance has been added to the west side elevation.

The public lobby runs the length of the north side of the building, and has terracotta tile floors and a marble baseboard. The original service windows have been retained at the western end of the lobby, but additional post office boxes have been installed in the eastern portion.

The second floor, reached by hardwood stairs, contains, the carriers' swing room in the northeastern corner, and the office space on the north and west sides of the floor.

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

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

SPECIFIC DATES **Begun 1912,  
Completed 1914.**

BUILDER/ARCHITECT **OSA/Oscar Wenderoth**

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Chico Post Office is a well preserved and rare example of the type of post office building constructed during Oscar Wenderoth's tenure as Supervising Architect. The building is a notable interpretation of Classical and Renaissance Revival styling and has considerable urban design significance in relation to the town's civic center.

## ARCHITECTURE

The Chico Midtown Station is significant as an example of a small combined Post Office and Federal Building. A relatively small number of this building type were constructed in California before 1926, and even fewer have survived. As noted in the cover document, Wenderoth continued his predecessor's design philosophy, and maintained a strong commitment to Beaux-Arts Classicism and Second Renaissance Revival styles. The Chico Midtown Station has importance on the state and local levels as a particularly sophisticated and refined example of Wenderoth's Italianate designs and of the intended didactic qualities of federal buildings in the early years of this century. On a local level, the Midtown Station is the best example of Beaux-Arts influenced commercial architecture.

Though this building is attributed to Supervising Architect Oscar Wenderoth, even in 1912 the Supervising Architect's office was large, and the architect or architects who actually designed the building are unknown at this time. Nevertheless, the Supervising Architect exercised a good measure of control over the design practices of his office. Wenderoth was born in Philadelphia, and received his architectural training in offices of that city. He joined the Supervising Architect's office in 1897, and was promoted to chief draftsman in 1907. President Taft appointed him to the Supervising Architect's job in 1912, but he was forced to resign after only two and half years in office due to failing eyesight.

## COMMUNITY PLANNING

When the building was constructed, the site was on the northern fringe of what was then the town's central business district. Subsequent development surrounded the post office, to place it in the center of the city's civic center and commercial district. It would be reasonable to assume that the siting of the post office had a positive effect on the town's northward development, and the later siting of the municipal buildings near the post office.

## 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Gebhard, David; Winter, Robert, "A Guide to Architecture in San Francisco and Northern California", 2nd. Ed., Santa Barbara, Peregrine Smith, Inc., 1976.

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY .5

UTM REFERENCES

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ZONE EASTING NORTHING

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ZONE EASTING NORTHING

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Blk. 1, Lot 1, original townsite, Butte County Assessor, The site is roughly square with a 130' north frontage along 5th Street, and a 140' west frontage along Broadway Street.

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

|                            |                           |                             |                           |
|----------------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------|
| <small>STATE</small><br>NA | <small>CODE</small><br>NA | <small>COUNTY</small><br>NA | <small>CODE</small><br>NA |
| <small>STATE</small><br>NA | <small>CODE</small><br>NA | <small>COUNTY</small><br>NA | <small>CODE</small><br>NA |

## 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Doug Robertson, Planner

ORGANIZATION

Beland/ Associates Inc.

DATE

April 27, 1984

STREET & NUMBER

16 S. Oakland Ave. #204

TELEPHONE

(818) 796-8093

CITY OR TOWN

Pasadena

STATE

CA 91101

## 12 CERTIFICATION OF NOMINATION

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER RECOMMENDATION

YES  NO  NONE

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

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

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

TITLE

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
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CONTINUATION SHEET Chico Midtown Stn. ITEM NUMBER 7

PAGE one

The basement is only partially finished, and houses the structure's mechanical equipment. The bulk of the basement floor area is devoted to storage.

Though existing documents disagree on the site's exact measurements, it is roughly square, approximately 140' x 130' (roughly 19,000 square feet). The building is in the north central portions of the site, and a paved parking and maneuvering area is to the rear.

ALTERATIONS

As originally constructed, the first and second floors were open to the skylight. When a new HVAC system was installed, hung ceilings were added to both floors. The screen line and part of the box section line was recently removed to allow the installation of new post office boxes. The effect of this remodeling was to add space to the lobby at the expense of the workroom. An access ramp for the handicapped is planned for completion in 1984.

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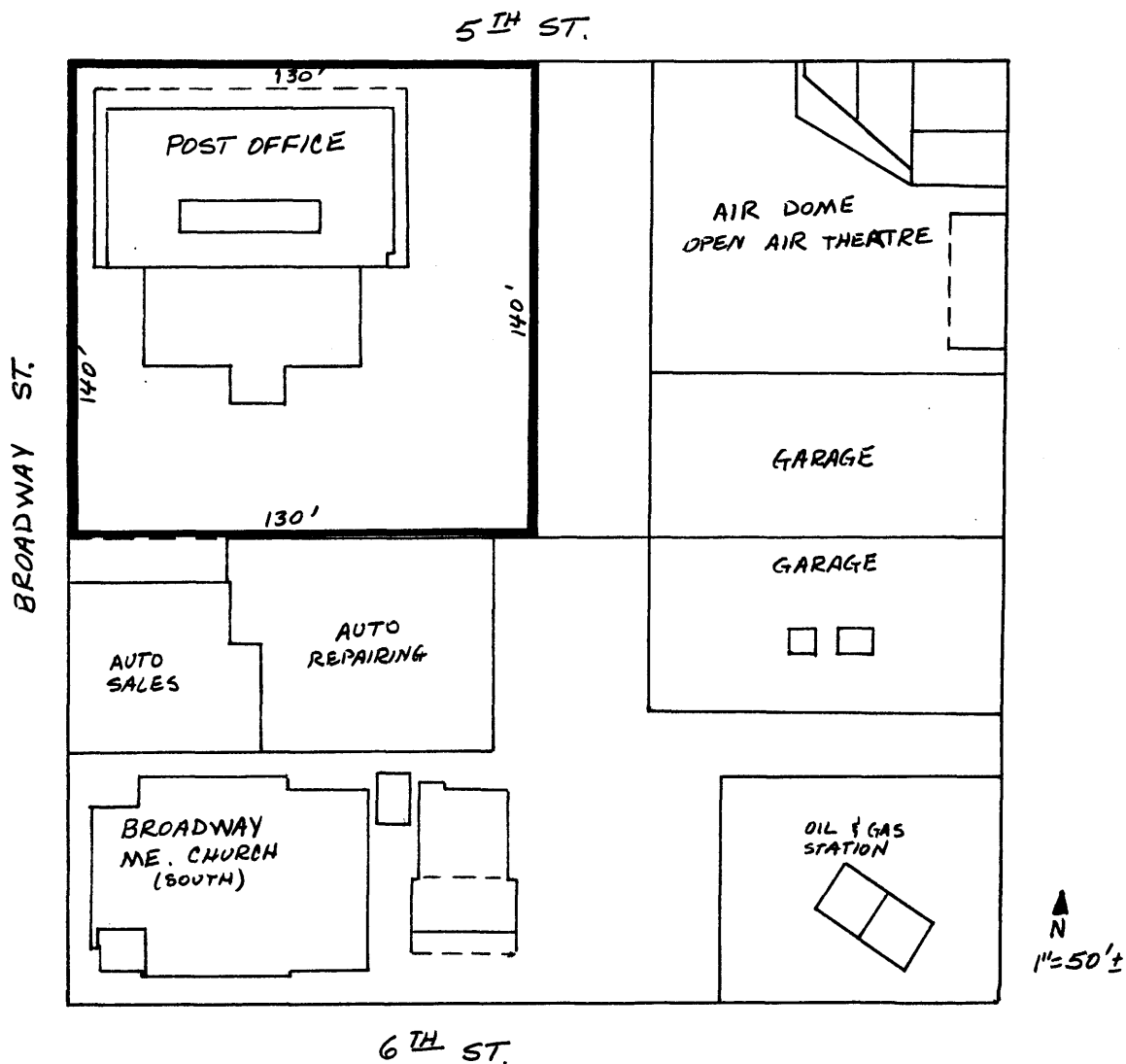
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|--------------------------|
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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
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CONTINUATION SHEET Chico PO

ITEM NUMBER 10

PAGE two



Note: Post Office site outlined in red.

Source: Sanborn Map, Chico Book, page 33, 1921; Geography Map Library,  
California State University, Northridge, CA.

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