

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

FOR FEDERAL PROPERTIES

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

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

U.S. Post Offices in Colorado, 1900-1941 (Thematic Resource)

AND/OR COMMON

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

See individual nomination/inventory forms.

NA NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

See individual forms

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

See individual forms

NA VICINITY OF

STATE

Colorado

CODE

08

COUNTY

See individual forms.

CODE

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

**CATEGORY**

DISTRICT

BUILDING(S)

STRUCTURE

SITE

OBJECT

Thematic  
Group

**OWNERSHIP**

PUBLIC

PRIVATE

BOTH

**PUBLIC ACQUISITION**

NA IN PROCESS

BEING CONSIDERED

**STATUS**

OCCUPIED

UNOCCUPIED

WORK IN PROGRESS

**ACCESSIBLE**

YES: RESTRICTED

YES: UNRESTRICTED

NO

**PRESENT USE**

AGRICULTURE

COMMERCIAL

EDUCATIONAL

ENTERTAINMENT

GOVERNMENT

INDUSTRIAL

MILITARY

MUSEUM

PARK

PRIVATE RESIDENCE

RELIGIOUS

SCIENTIFIC

TRANSPORTATION

OTHER:

**4 AGENCY**

REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS: (If applicable)

United States Postal Service, Western Regional Office

STREET & NUMBER

850 Cherry Avenue

CITY, TOWN

San Bruno

NA VICINITY OF

STATE

CA

94099

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE.

REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

See individual forms.

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

STATE

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

See individual forms.

DATE

FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

# 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED (see	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE <u>NA</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED	individual nomination forms)	

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

This thematic nomination is for 13 United States Post Offices owned by the U.S. Postal Service and distributed throughout the State of Colorado. Though the buildings included in the nomination vary greatly in size and style, when considered as a group they provide a 40-year chronology of the development of the post office as a building type. Since this thematic nomination is concerned with such a wide geographical scope, the buildings naturally vary in building material and type of construction from unreinforced brick to heavily reinforced poured concrete. They universally share an aesthetic conservatism characteristic of many buildings erected by the U.S. Government. This nomination is concerned with the various stylistic and functional divisions which can be made in post office construction, and they ways these divisions reflected changing political and economic conditions in Colorado and the nation as a whole. All buildings are on their original sites and have been well maintained throughout their existence. Integrity is high for all properties in this nomination.

I. ORGANIZATION OF THIS NOMINATION

This nomination is divided into two parts: a cover document explaining the theme and setting the historic and regional context for the individual properties, and 13 individual inventory/nomination forms prepared for each of the buildings included in this theme.

The cover document seeks to articulate the central theme and several subthemes of this nomination, and to define the criteria with which one can determine the significance of individual properties within that theme. In addition, the cover document provides the historic context in which the buildings and themes are to be evaluated, as well as the list of buildings included in this nomination.

The individual nomination/inventory forms were prepared to provide a quick and easily accessible way of finding data pertinent to individual buildings. These forms contain descriptions of the individual properties and discussions of their individual significance and their relation and significance within the theme.

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The list of buildings which follows also includes post office buildings already listed in the National Register as an aid to individuals engaged in research on Colorado post offices.

PROPERTIES NOMINATED

<u>OFFICE</u>	<u>DATE OCCUPIED</u>	<u>ARCHITECT</u>
Boulder MPO <sup>1</sup>	1910	James Knox Taylor/OSA <sup>2</sup>
Canon City MPO	1932	James A. Wetmore/OSA
Colorado Springs MPO	1910	James Knox Taylor/OSA
Delta MPO	1038	Louis A. Simon/OSA Harry B. Carter, Consulting Architect
Florence MPO	1937	Louis A. Simon/OSA
Fort Morgan MPO	1918	James A. Wetmore/OSA
Lamar MPO	1936	Walter De Mordaunt
Manitou Springs MPO	1940	Louis A. Simon/OSA
Monte Vista MPO	1933	James A. Wetmore/OSA
Montrose MPO	1932	James A. Wetmore/OSA
Rifle MPO	1940	Louis A. Simon/OSA
Sterling MPO	1931	James A. Wetmore/OSA
Trinidad MPO	1910	James Knox Taylor/OSA

FEDERALLY-OWNED POST OFFICE BUILDINGS CURRENTLY LISTED ON THE  
NATIONAL REGISTER

<u>OFFICE</u>	<u>DATE OCCUPIED</u>	<u>ADMINISTERED by</u>
Denver MPO	1616/1935	USPS
La Junta MPO (HD)	1916	USPS
Pueblo MPO	1898	USPS
Grand Junction Post Office (Wayne N. Aspinall Fed.Bldg.)	1918	GSA

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Former Post Offices in Non-Federal Ownership Currently Listed  
in the National Register

<u>OFFICE</u>	<u>DATE OCCUPIED</u>	<u>Current Use and/ Or Ownership</u>
Durango (HD) <sup>5</sup>	1929	Private
Fort Collins	1912	Private (Office Bldg)
Leadville (HD)	1905	Leadville City Hall

1. MPO - Main Post Office
2. OSA - Office of the Supervising Architect
3. This list includes properties published in the Federal Register through July 1, 1984. (Federal Register Volume 49)
4. USPS - United States Postal Service  
GSA - General Services Administration
5. (HD) - Indicates that a building is on the National Register as a contributing structure to a designated Historic District.

The Boulder MPO, Trinidad MPO, and Manitou Springs MPO are currently within Historic Districts. They are included in these Thematic Nominations because of lack of prior documentation, and to insure inclusion of all eligible Post owned facilities in this Thematic Nomination.

Two post offices in Colorado within designated Historic Districts are not included in this Thematic Nomination because of the age of their construction. They are the Leadville MPO, 1976, and Central City MPO, 1978.

The following list shows the relationship between post offices included in this Thematic Nomination and designated National Register listed Historic Districts.

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POST OFFICES AND HISTORIC DISTRICTS

<u>Post Office</u>	<u>Historic Districts</u>	<u>Status in this Nomination</u>
Boulder MPO	Downtown Boulder H.D. (12-08)	Included T.N.
Durango MPO	Main Avenue H.D. (8-80)	listed N.R.
Manitou Sprgs	Manitou Springs H.D. (10-83)	included T.N.
Trinidad MPO	Corazon De Trinidad H.D. (4-83)	included T.N.
La Junta MPO	Plaza De Triempo La Junta H.D. (7-77)	listed N.R.

T.N. = This Thematic Nomination, N.R. = The National Register of Historic Places.

According to Postal Service records, 27 facilities occupied before 1941 remain under Postal Service control in Colorado. In consultation with the Colorado State Historic Preservation Officer the Postal Service determined that its list of pre-1941 buildings was complete and accurate. Post Office construction was suspended during World War II. During the post war years, the policy of owning facilities was replaced by one of leasing new facilities, resulting in the next postal-owned facility in Colorado not being constructed until 1960.

Each of the buildings occupied by 1941 was surveyed by Beland/Associates, Inc., under contract to the U.S. Postal Service, except for several buildings already listed on the National Register either singularly or as contributing factors to Historic Districts.

Beland/Associates, Inc., is located at 16 South Oakland Avenue, Pasadena, California 91101, (818) 796-8093. The following individuals completed the Beland/Associates, Inc., survey:

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R. Dale Beland, AIA, /AICP  
(Architect and Urban Planning)

Paul R. Secord  
(Architecture and Urban Planning)

Doug Robertson  
(Art and Architectural History)

Each of the buildings surveyed was visited by a member of the Beland/Associates staff listed above. During the on-site inspections, photographs were taken and the buildings were visually inspected for signs of deterioration, neglect and alteration.

Additional research and evaluation has been completed by H. James Kolva of the Institute for Urban and Local Studies, W. 705 First Avenue, Spokane, Washington, 99204 (509) 458-6219. The topical areas included in this research is as follows: evaluation of several post offices less than 50 years old relating to the local historical context of their construction period, and the relationship of the post offices to the communities overall architectural environment; development of postal service in Colorado; and a historical overview of federal post office construction in Colorado. One of the primary goals of the field research was to determine the extent of alterations. In most cases, blueprint copies of the original working drawings were found, which allowed an accurate comparison to be made between the buildings' extant and planned design. In some cases, progress photographs were available to aid in the conceptual reconstruction of the site and surrounding area before construction of the post office, and to more accurately determine the extent of any alterations. Research other primary sources consisted of interviews with existing Postal Service employees, many of whom have had long tenure at the building surveyed. In some cases, it was possible to located and interview retired postal employees, as well as individuals who had assisted in the construction of some Post Office buildings. Local

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library and newspaper files were searched for relevant information. Local historical societies and municipal historic preservation departments (usually part of the city's planning department) were consulted whenever possible. In all cases, the Count Assessor's office was checked for any data available on previous uses of the post office site and Sanborn insurance maps.

Beland/Associates, Inc., conducted basic library research on federal building programs and the various Depression-era Federal Art Programs. The results of this research are included throughout this nomination.

A preliminary evaluation of the surveyed building's significance was given at the time of the survey. The survey data were later compiled and compared with the information gathered during the basic library research. The result of this comparison was a set of eligibility criteria based on National Register Criteria A, B and C. These criteria (included in Section 8 of this nomination form) were applied to the inventoried properties\*, and a final list of 13 buildings was selected as eligible from the buildings surveyed.

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\*This methodology is outlined in the draft, "How to Evaluate Post Offices as a Resource Type," by the staff of the Office of the Keeper, National Register of Historic Places, U.S. Department of the Interior, Washington, D.C., 1983.

II. THEME

The central theme of this nomination concerns the evolution of Colorado post offices as a building type during the first four decades of this century. The buildings surveyed are scattered over a large geographic area in radically different social and natural environments. Buildings were surveyed in small mountain and plain towns and in metropolitan Denver. Finally, though the buildings surveyed were constructed within a brief time span, a wide range of stylistic types is observable. To bring some order to this great diversity four conceptual divisions are made in the surveyed material.

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These themes, though dependent on some of the same variables, lack a direct, one-to-one correspondence. One can find examples of each of the three broad stylistic categories in each of the four building types. In general, however, before ornament, greater use of marble and other expensive materials, and a more monumental scale as well as size. After 1933, the large project were almost uniformly executed in what Lois Craig calls "Starved Classical" style.

A greater stylistic diversity can be found in the smaller buildings. While the Beaux-Arts Classical and Starved Classical designs were well represented, one also finds Colonial and several Art Deco designs. Mediterranean inspired design, common in California, is represented by only a single post office in this nomination. There is some evidence to suggest that the inclusion of the federal courts in a building indicated that a monumental Beaux-Arts Classical or "Starved Classical" design be used; that is, however, a topic for further research.

A. FUNCTIONAL

Functional divisions reflect political as well as operational requirements and changed over time. Generally, the largest projects were also the latest. This is the most ephemeral and least quantifiable of the four categories used in this nomination. Nevertheless,

the categories, taken broadly, represent the four basic building types constructed in Colorado between 1910 and 1940:

(1) Single-purpose Post Offices:

Most often constructed in smaller towns, and serving only as post offices or post office substations. The Rifle MPO, Boulder MPO, Florence MPO, Fort Morgan MPO, Lamar MPO, Montrose MPO, and Trinidad MPO are within this category.



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(2) Combined Post Office and Federal Offices:

Though only slightly larger than singlepurpose post offices, it was a relatively common practice to combine offices for various federal agencies with the post office in regional centers. Quite often, this combined federal building was the first and only federal building in a town. The post office remained the primary or co-equal use in this building type. Delta MPO and Canon City MPO are within this category.

(3) Combined Post Office/Federal Offices Federal Court:

Constructed in major cities the post office was usually only an incidental use in this building type. Federal courts often occupied most of the space, though various federal agencies were also housed in these structures. The Colorado Springs MPO and the Sterling MPO are the only such facilities listed in this nomination, as well as being the only two known in Colorado.

(4) Large Post Office/Annex:

These buildings were constructed in the late 1930s and 1940s in major metropolitan centers, and handled enormous volumes of mail. Occasionally, federal offices were provided, but the Post Office department constituted the primary use. The Denver MPO, which is currently listed on the National Register of Historic places is the only facility in Colorado within this category.

B. STYLISTIC

This category traces the chronological development, evolution and change in styles used in the post office buildings. All of the post offices constructed between

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1910 and 1941 are conceptually derived from classical forms. The basic layout, site orientation and floor plan of all of the post offices from this period relate directly to concepts of design exposed by the Ecole de Beaux-Arts in Paris during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Nearly all of the post office exteriors also reflect fenestration and massing associated by the Beaux-Arts tradition. However, none of the architects involved with post office design in Colorado are known to have been trained at the Ecole de Beaux-Arts. This fact, coupled with a general trend towards eclecticism, and a sensitivity to regional architectural styles, results in there being no buildings which rigidly adhere to a given style. Given these factors, the post offices considered in this nomination have been placed in three major stylistic classifications, with several sub-classes, as follows;

- (1) -Beaux-Arts Classicism:
  - Neo-Classicism;
  - Sterling MPO,
  - Trinidad MPO,
  - Monte Vista MPO.
  
  - Renaissance Revivalism;
  - Boulder MPO,
  - Canon City MPO,
  - Colorado Springs MPO,
  - Montrose MPO.
  
- (2) -Georgian Derived:
  - Fort Morgan, MPO
  
- (3) -Starved Classicism:
  - Mediterranean;
  - Lamar MPO.
  - Colonial;
  - Rifle MPO.
  - Manitou Springs MPO.
  - Art Deco
  - Florence MPO.
  - Neo-Classicism;
  - Delta MPO.

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Renaissance Revivalism is included with the heading of Beaux-Arts Classicism for convenience in organizing the large number of buildings surveyed. It is also stylistically valid since eclecticism was still the order of the day, and Renaissance Revival motifs were acceptable alternatives to Beaux-Arts architects working on Federal projects.

The Georgian derived style is applied to only one building included in the nomination, and apparently the only such post office in Colorado. This style relates directly to the Colonial architecture of the east coast, where it is used for numerous buildings.

Starved Classicism relates to the buildings constructed during the depression. While retaining many classical forms these buildings often exhibit ornamentation derived from regional and popular styles. As a result, four subcategories are defined based on the predominant exterior ornamentation style of the building considered.

These stylistic classifications proved to be inclusive of all of the 1910 to 1941 post office facilities surveyed in Colorado. In all cases, except the Georgian derived Fort Morgan Post Office, other post offices can be found in Colorado which are representative of each of the classifications and sub-classifications listed.

C. FUNDING BILLS

(1) Omnibus Funding Bills 1903 - 1926:

Provided funding from 1903-1926, and were supplemented with annual allocations in sundry civil appropriation acts. Provided enormous opportunities for "porkbarreling".

(2) Keyes-Elliott Act of 1926-1939:

Was the authorization for many of the post offices constructed in Colorado in the 1930s.

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(3) 1933-1939:

National Industrial Recovery Act (WPA); after 1933, the Administrator of the WPA had control over funding allocations for all federal building programs. In effect, the Post Office building program developed along the lines developed under the 1926 Keyes-Elliott Act.

E. Theme Conclusions

Each of the post offices included has significance in relation to one of the above listed themes. The buildings also, when taken collectively, clearly document the federal government's changing building policy.

When considered as a group, the primary significance of the buildings becomes Political/Governmental and Economic. The sum of these buildings act as a record of public building in Colorado through the 1930s, and shows that the Hoover Administration, rather than Roosevelt, began the massive increase of public building soon after the effects of the Depression began to be felt. The earlier post offices likewise demonstrate a trend to build monumental, important-looking buildings in small towns.

The graph on the following page illustrates the relationships of style, time, funding act and type of the various post offices considered in this nomination. It is followed by a map of Colorado showing the general location of the structures included in this nomination.

Federal building policy can be broken into discrete eras which relate more to politics and attendant economic policies than to demonstrable needs for public building. The era from 1903 to the passage of the Keyes-Elliott Act in 1926 was marked by flagrant congressional "pork-

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-barreling" in the terms of siting and sizing federal buildings. Of the buildings included in this nomination, the Boulder MPO, Colorado Springs MPO, Fort Morgan MPO and Trinidad MPO are excellent examples from this era. No post offices included in this nomination, and only one in Colorado, (the Durango MPO (1929) which is currently listed on the National Register), were constructed during the 1920s.

The building program initiated by the Keyes-Elliot Act was begun in 1928, and sought to introduce a more rational selection process. It would be naive to assume that Congress intended to relinquish control to the Treasury Department, but the Act provided a rational foundation for subsequent building programs. The buildings constructed under this act also provide evidence of the application of Keynesian economic theories under the Hoover Administration.

In 1931, the program was greatly accelerated and expanded. The designs of the buildings constructed before 1933 tended, however, to be larger and include more expensive detailing and finishing than the later 1930s post offices. The Canon City MPO, Montrose MPO, Monte Vista MPO, and Sterling MPO Post Office buildings included in this nomination are evidence of this "first wave" of Keyes-Elliot public buildings.

In 1933, the nature of federal buildings again changed, and Keynesian justifications were used openly. Not only were the buildings constructed quickly using labor intensive construction methods, the buildings used extraordinary amounts of structural steel; sometimes to the extent of providing a structural steel frame in a building with reinforced concrete walls. In any event, reinforcing rod was typically placed four inches on

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center in a one-foot concrete wall- a clear effort to help the stricken steel industry, as well as the construction trades. The buildings constructed in this period; the Delta MPO, Florence MPO, Lamar MPO, Manitou Springs MPO, and Rifle MPO, have significance on the state level as particularly well-preserved examples of the New Deal building program.

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Year	Building Type									Fund Bill	
	Single Purpose Post Offices			Combined P.O.'s Federal Build.			Combined P.O.'s Fed. Bld./Court				
1910											Tarn Rpl.
1911	● Boulder						● Colorado Springs				
1912	● Trinidad										
1913											
1914											
1915											
1916											
1917											
1918											
1919		● Fort Morgan									
1920											
1921											
1922											
1923											
1924											
1925											
1926											
1927											
1928											
1929											
1930											
1931											
1932							● Sterling				
1933	● Montrose			● Canon City							
1934				● Monte Vista							
1935											
1936											
1937			● Lamar								
1938			● Florence*								
1939							● Delta				
1940				● Rifle & Manitou Springs							
	Beaux-Arts	Georgian	Starved Classic.	Beaux-Arts	Georgian	Starved Classic.	Beaux-Arts	Georgian	Starved Classic.		

Architectural Stylistic Categories

\*The Florence MPO was constructed under WPA Legislation.

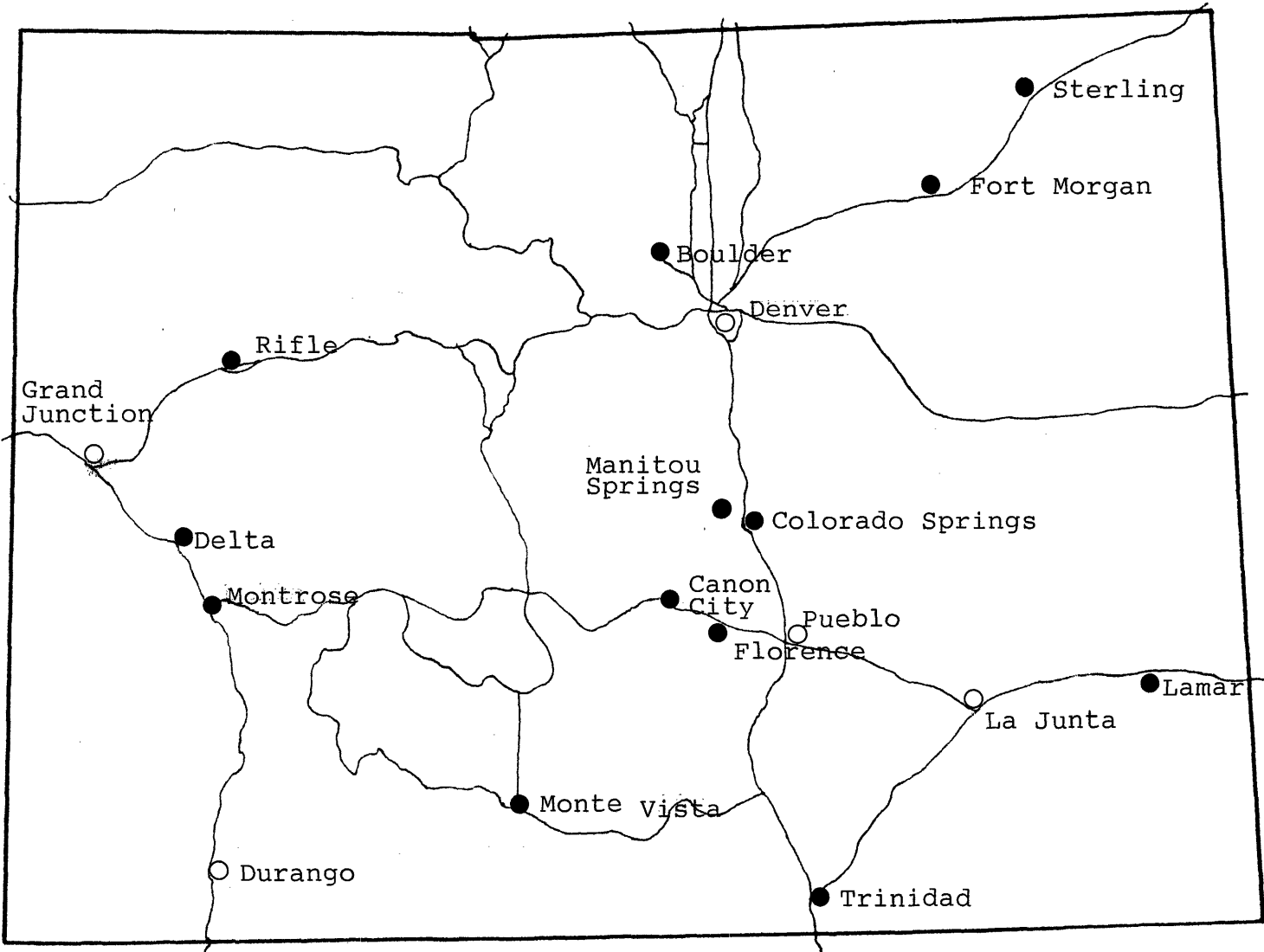
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GENERAL LOCATION MAP OF POST OFFICES INCLUDED IN THE THEMATIC  
NOMINATION FOR THE STATE OF COLORADO



- Buildings currently listed on the National Register.
- Buildings included in this Thematic Nomination.



# 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)	
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION			

SPECIFIC DATES      1900-1941      BUILDER/ARCHITECT      See individual nomination forms.

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Though the entire thematic group has primary significance in the area of Architecture with secondary significance in Art, Community Planning, Economics, Politics/Government and Sculpture, none of the individual buildings possesses every type of significance. The nominated buildings were chosen as particularly well crafted and notable examples of their type or style. The buildings in the smaller towns were frequently the first, and for many years the only, federal buildings, and were usually one of the two or three most monumental and imposing structures in town. Several contain lobby murals commissioned by the federal art project, and are thus iconographically connected to the ideology and aesthetics of the New Deal. The buildings constructed after 1932 are themselves monuments to the New Deal's public works program, and are thus associated with major federal legislation and building programs. The number of buildings constructed before 1932, however, is evidence that the accelerated building program began with the Hoover Administration; these buildings will be increasingly important as revisionist history continues to be written about the early 1930s. Finally, and perhaps most obviously, the individual buildings have local importance in the history of the Postal Service in their regions; commonly, the building provided the first permanent home for the post office.

Specific areas of significance are addressed below. The following criteria explain the ways in which National Register Criteria A, B and C related to Colorado post offices. They are divided by areas of significance, level of significance (national, state or local) and level of integrity needed to qualify as significant. The headings also indicate which of the three National Register criteria was judged to be most relevant for each area of significance.

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

See continuation Sheet.

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY                      See individual nomination/inventory forms.

UTM REFERENCES See individual nomination/inventory forms.

A	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING	B	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING	D	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING

## VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

See individual forms for VBD. In all cases, boundaries are drawn on the historic lot lines of the nominated properties.

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
NA	NA	NA	NA
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
NA	NA	NA	NA

# 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Paul R. Secord, Vice President/H. James Kolva

ORGANIZATION

Institute for Urban

DATE

Beland/Associates, Inc./and Local Studies August 1984/August 1985

STREET & NUMBER

TELEPHONE

16 S. Oakland Ave., Suite 204/W. 705 1st Ave. (818) 796-8093/(509) 458-6219

CITY OR TOWN

STATE

Pasadena

/Spokane

CA 91101/WA 99204

# 12 CERTIFICATION OF NOMINATION

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER RECOMMENDATION

YES

NO

NONE

*Barbara Judler*

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

*James T. Coe*

TITLE

Director, Office of Real Estate

DATE

December 17, 1985

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

*John F. [Signature]*

DATE

1/24/85

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

*See continuation sheet for other listings*

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I.    AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE

Of the 28 "areas of significance" listed under this section of the nomination form, the following six are considered relevant to this Thematic Nomination:

- ARCHITECTURE
- ART
- ECONOMICS
- COMMUNITY PLANNING
- POLITICS/GOVERNMENT
- SCULPTURE

A.    ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE:

(1)    LOCAL LEVEL:

a.    Criterion C

In most cases, the post office, though not architecturally distinguished when compared to contemporary buildings throughout the nation or state, is of local importance as one of the most monumental, imposing or sophisticated buildings in a town. This is true for the eight pre-1933 post offices, as well as for the Florence MPO and the Delta MPO. All of the post offices included in this nomination are locally important, and in most cases locally unique examples of a given architectural style. The Beaux-Arts design buildings, represent locally unique examples of a style common to government, and certain commercial buildings, especially banks, in larger cities throughout the country. The larger cities throughout the country. The Federal Style building in Fort Morgan is unique to post office buildings in Colorado, and is reflective of a style common to the East Coast, but extremely rare in the West. The post-1933 buildings are reflective of regional and popular styles. The Spanish

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Colonial motifs of the Lamar MPO relate to the Spanish heritage of Southern Colorado. It is an uncommon style to Colorado, but is common throughout the Southwestern United States, and is often found in California post offices. The Art Deco motifs of the Delta MPO and Florence MPO represent designs considered modern and forward looking at the time the structures were built. However, the execution as applied to the two post offices in Colorado is conservative and relates directly to the Beaux-Arts aesthetic of the entire building. Buildings with Colonial ornamentation (e.g., the Rifle MPO and Manitou Springs MPO) are like the one Federal Style building, reflective of an architecture style which developed in the eastern United States.

It is doubtful that the influence a post office design had on the development of a town's architectural history can be shown. The post office is a unique type. Though it plays an essentially commercial role in terms of land use, post office design did not follow designs characteristic for commercial development, nor did subsequent development tend to imitate the style of the post office. There is a reason for this. Post offices were designed to look like post offices; that is, certain symbols or signifiers were included as subliminal messages of the building's function. Commercial buildings also employ signifiers but use them in different ways. Less than direct links can be shown, but these are more properly dealt with under the Community Development section of this nomination.

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b. Criterion A

The architectural signifiers and symbols discussed above also carry a burden of meaning and associative values beyond their ostensible aesthetic meanings. A post office design is a record of the Post Office's and the Federal Government's self-image, and of the image which the Federal Government wished to project to those it governed. A post office in a small town may provide one of the few, perhaps the only, such record of the various "Persona" assumed by the Federal Government.

(2) STATE LEVEL:

a. Criterion C

A post office may be aesthetically important on the state as well as the local levels, as an example of particularly fine craftsmanship, or as a sophisticated, imposing, and well-articulated example of its style or type. The Supervising Architect's office also used standard designs for a great many post offices though few have survived unaltered or even in substantially intact configuration. As per National Register Guidelines, a post office may have state significance because it is a first, an excellent, or a prototype of a standardized design. The Monte Vista MPO, as well as the post-1933 post offices are reflective of this factor.

b. Criterion A

A group of post offices from different periods can, by the associative values contained in their architecture, act as a record of the progress of the federal government's self and projected images. Post

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offices in such a group would not have to be individually significant; the significance would lie in the relation of one building to another.

Colorado's geographic position in the center of the country is clearly reflected in the architectural style of its post offices. There are buildings which can be considered both eastern and western in style as well as structures which express nationwide trends.

B. ART SIGNIFICANCE:

(1) LOCAL LEVEL:

a. Criterion A

Murals in post office lobbies were, in many towns, the only examples of the Treasury Department's fine arts program. More so than even the architecture of the building, these murals represent the only example of trained artists' work easily and publicly visible. Murals may be significant if they are the only publicly accessible examples of their types. The iconographic and iconological content of the murals may also have local significance. In most cases, the murals derived their styles from local history and economy. As such, they are valuable documents of a region's political and economic history. This fact means that the murals derive much of their meaning from the context, not only of the post office lobby, but also of the town or county in which the post office is located. Two of the post offices included in this nomination contain murals: the Florence MPO and Montrose MPO. Two murals which originally hung in the Colorado Springs MPO have been removed and

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are now in the Federal Building in Denver, Colorado.

b. Criterion C

The general quality of post office murals can be described as competent. Nevertheless, a mural may have local significance as possessing "high artistic values" if it is particularly accomplished, or the town in which it is located is particularly poor in art. This criterion is applicable in Montrose and Florence.

c. Criterion B

A mural would be locally significant if, as noted above, it is a rare or unique example of a locally famous artist's work. This has not been clearly demonstrated for any of the murals being considered.

(2) STATE LEVEL:

a. Criterion C

The vast majority of murals commissioned for the post office lobbies were oil or tempura on canvas, which was then adhered to the wall. Frescoes or other techniques, then, would possess importance on the state level based on their rarity. In a few rare instances, too, a mural is acknowledged to possess "high artistic values" on a par with the artistic achievements of the country's best artists. No such cases are found in Colorado and all of the murals are painted on canvas.

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b. Criterion B

A mural could have state significance if it is the work of an artist famous or known

throughout the state, or if its iconographic or iconological content relates to Colorado as a whole.

Integrity - Requires integrity of design, materials, association, and in many cases, location. Any major changes to a lobby interior which have converted or removed portions of the mural may impair its integrity. In addition, since many murals are context-dependent, their location in a specific town, even a specific post office, may be essential to their understanding.

C. POLITICS/GOVERNMENT/ECONOMIC SIGNIFICANCE:

(1) LOCAL LEVEL:

a. Criterion A

It is probably not possible to quantify the economic impact a post office had on a particular town. An individual post office may, however, be an important local example of national economic trends and the federal government's policies in dealing with those trends. In particular, those post offices built during the 1930s as part of the accelerated public works programs under the Hoover and Roosevelt Administrations are concrete examples of the New Deal and the Depression. A post office may qualify as locally significant if it is the only, or one of the few, surviving examples of New Deal public work projects. This is applicable to the four post-1933 post offices considered in this nomination.



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(2) STATE LEVEL:

a. Criterion A

Many post offices will qualify as significant on the state level for the same reasons as the local level-as examples of the federal government's response to the Depression. Since relatively few post office buildings from this era have survived intact, particularly well-preserved and unaltered examples will have state importance as with all of the post-1930 buildings.

Integrity-Requires integrity of design, setting, location, materials, workmanship and association. The associative values expressed by the government are dependent on the building's architecture; the clarity with which we can read those values is dependent on subsequent changes to that architecture.

D. COMMUNITY PLANNING SIGNIFICANCE:

(1) LOCAL LEVEL:

a. Criterion A

A post office may have played an active role in a town's development, or it may act as a passive record of that development. A post office would be significant as an active participant in a town's evolution if it can be demonstrated that the building's siting played a role in the direction, shape and nature of a town's growth. A post office may also act as an important document of a town's past, even if it did not have a particularly strong effect on its development. This criteria cannot be positively demonstrated for the structures under consideration.

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b. Criterion B

A post office may be associated with a locally important person through its siting. In some cases, local landowners would donate a parcel to the Post Office Department as was the case in Colorado Springs.

Integrity- Requires integrity of design, setting and location. For a property to retain significance as a record of a town's development, the building's relationship to other contemporary buildings should be apparent.

E. SCULPTURE SIGNIFICANCE:

1. LOCAL LEVEL:

a. Criterion C

As part of the Beaux-Arts architectural tradition, many post offices included cast bronze and aluminum, decorative plaster work, and ornamental lighting fixtures. In some smaller towns, these decorative elements were unique, and were, in many cases, of extraordinarily high quality. Other locally significant elements might include a particularly intricate or well-crafted terrazzo floor, or outdoor lighting standards. Such features are evident in all of the buildings considered in this nomination. In addition, there are fine sculpture panels in the Delta MPO.

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2. STATE LEVEL:

a. Criterion C

Some decorative elements used in post offices could take on significance at the state level in that they are unique or rare uses of forms in public buildings. This is true of the Colonial ornamentation of the Rifle MPO and Manitou Springs MPO as well as the Art Deco motifs of the Florence and Delta MPOs.

Integrity- Requires integrity of design, materials, workmanship and setting within a particular building. In most cases, decorative elements were mass-produced and thus require only that they be in good physical condition to have retained integrity. Some light fixtures were modified to accept fluorescent bulbs, and plastic has replaced the original milk glass globes. The total effect of such modifications will have to be considered. Some decorative elements were designed for specific post offices and thus are more significant in their original settings as seen with most of the Colonial and Art Deco motifs.

F. AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE CONCLUSIONS

Not all of these areas of significance are attached to individual properties included in this survey. It was not thought necessary for every building to be significant in all of the area identified. Rather, the cumulative significance of a building's importance to the theme, its integrity, and its individual importance were considered. As defined in the introduction to this section, architecture proved to be the primary significance criteria used in this nomination.

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II. FEDERAL BUILDING PROGRAMS

A. 1902-1926:

Throughout the 19th century all public buildings were funded on an ad hoc basis, with one funding bill seldom containing allocations for more than three buildings.<sup>1</sup> Between June of 1902 and March of 1913, three "Public Buildings Omnibus Acts"<sup>2</sup> were approved. These bills consolidated appropriations for new public buildings as well as providing for expansion and maintenance of existing buildings. Four post offices in Colorado, three of which are included in this nomination, were funded under one of these Omnibus Acts; (i.e., the Boulder MPO, Colorado Springs MPO, and Trinidad MPO, all built in 1910), while the La Junta MPO, built in 1915, is currently listed on the National Register as a contributing factor to an historic district.

The Omnibus Bill funding approach was rife with potential for abuse and led to complaints from the professional bureaucratic staff of the federal government that "in many instances the buildings authorized are unnecessary for the public business..., it frequently happens that a number of buildings are authorized which are not required, and, on the other hand, no appropriations are made for localities in which the government is urgently in need of adequate buildings, and it is in all probability paying large rent for insufficient quarters".<sup>3</sup>

It appears that the Omnibus Bills provided an opportunity for individual congressmen to give, as Lois Craig calls it, a "federal present" to important constituents. Not only the location, but the size and ornament of public buildings seem to have been determined by political rather than operational requirements. James A. Garner, a representative from Texas, illustrated the pork-barrel approach when he discussed federal building practices in his state: "Every time one of these Yankees get ham, I'm going to get a hog".<sup>4</sup>

In order to reduce the tendency towards pork-barreling, Treasury Secretary McAdoo recommended in 1915 that a set of rational criteria be applied to federal building

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projects. Only one post office in Colorado, Fort Morgan, built in 1918, was funded after the final Omnibus Act of 1913 and before the Keyes-Elliott Act of 1926. This building is included within this Nomination. McAdoo divided post offices into four categories based on an office's receipts for the previous year, and defined the level of ornamentation appropriate to each category. This classification system is described below.

CLASS A:

Definition: Buildings that include a post office of the first class with annual receipts of \$800,000 or over; the site forming part of a city development plan or situated on an important thoroughfare of a great city; improvement on an adjoining property reaching the higher valuation of metropolitan real estate.

Character of Building: Marble or granite facing; fire-proofing throughout; metal frames, sashes and doors, interior finish to include the finer grade of marble, ornamental bronze work, mahogany, etc. Public spaces to have monumental treatment, mural decorations; special interior lighting fixtures.

CLASS B:

Definition: Buildings that include a post office of the first class with receipt from \$60,000 to \$800,000; valuation of adjoining property somewhat below the higher valuation of metropolitan real estate.

Character of Building: Limestone or sandstone facing; exterior frames and sash metal; interior frames, sash and doors wood; interior finish to exclude the more expensive woods and marbles; ornamental metal to be used only where iron is suitable. Restricted ornament in public space

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CLASS C:

Definition: Buildings that include a post office of the second class with receipts of \$15,000 or over, and of the first class to \$60,000 receipts, valuation of surrounding property that of a second class city. The Fort Morgan MPO appears to fall within this classification.

Character of Building: Brick facing with stone or terracotta trimmings, fireproof floors; non-fireproof roof; frames, sashes and doors wood; interior finish to exclude the more expensive woods and marbles; the latter used only where sanitary conditions demand; public spaces restricted to very simple forms of ornament.

CLASS D:

Definition: Buildings that include a post office having annual receipts of less than \$15,000; real estate values justifying only a limited investment for improvements.

Character of Building: Brick facing, little stone or terracotta used; only first floor fireproof; stock sash frames, doors, etc., where advisable; ordinary class of building, such as any business man would consider a reasonable investment in a small town.

B. 1926-1933:

Reform finally came with the passage of the Public Building Act of May 25, 1926, also referred to as the Keyes-Elliot Act.

This legislation expanded the scope and consolidated the funding of post office construction. It did not specify which cities or areas were to receive new post offices, but directed the Secretary of the Treasury and the

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Postmaster General to determine which cities required postal facilities. This "interdepartmental commission", as it was called, reported to Congress in 1927<sup>6</sup> and made the following recommendations:

- That the \$100,000,000 allocation in the 1926 Act be increased by \$100,000,000;
- That at least two new buildings be constructed per state; and
- That no building be constructed where the post office's receipts were less than \$10,000 per year.

This document also included a list of projects, including additions to the Boulder MPO, and construction for the Monte Vista, Montrose and Sterling MPOs.

Subsequent legislation<sup>7</sup> increased the allocation and requested further information from the<sup>8</sup> interdepartmental commission, which was provided in 1929<sup>8</sup>.

The commission's 1929 report added new recommendations for appropriations, and refined the criteria for choosing a location, as follows:

- 1) Two buildings per state were to be situated in towns with post offices having annual receipts of \$10,000 or more;
- 2) The remaining three were to be located in towns having postal receipts of \$20,000 or more, and a) a population of 2,000 or a served population of 4,000 and b) post office must not be dependent on only one industry for receipts.

In addition to the building projects recommended in the 1927 report, the 1929 report recommended funding for the Delta and Lamar MPOs.

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At the close of the twenties, 14 new post offices were planned in Colorado, and the "estimated cost for providing for all of the needs of the country, based on data secured the year 1928 was \$398 million."

Though the Keyes-Elliott Act continued to be a primary source of funding allocations during the 1930s, the nature of the public building program was fundamentally changed early in 1931. With the seriousness and tenacity of the economic Depression apparent, President Hoover directed Secretary of the Treasury Mellon to expedite the federal building program.<sup>10</sup> Mellon complied by reducing the time allowed for completion of the program from ten years, as originally contemplated in the 1926 Act, to five. The annual report of the Secretary of the Treasury for fiscal year 1931 shows that \$500 million had been allocated for public buildings since 1926.

Of the buildings included in this nomination, all but three, (the Rifle MPO, Manitou Springs MPO and Florence MPO) had been funded or recommended for funding by June of 1932. The design and scale of the buildings may well have been influenced by subsequent Roosevelt Administration policies, but this research shows that the bulk of post office buildings were constructed under some provision of the Keyes-Elliott Act.

C. 1933-1939:

Federal involvement in public building increased greatly after the formation of the Public Works Administration in 1933. Though the record is confused, research for this nomination indicates that primary responsibility for post office design, construction and allocation remained with the Treasury Department until 1939, when federal building activities were consolidated in a new Federal Works Agency.



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Ostensibly, all public building construction by the Treasury Department became subject to allotment by the Administrator of Public Works.<sup>11</sup>

Subsequent annual reports<sup>12</sup> suggest that the Treasury Department kept control of these projects. The construction program under the auspices of the original public buildings program was reported completed in 1937.<sup>13</sup> By 1935, however, Treasury Department building programs were accounted for in six separate headings: 1) the Combined Building Program; 2) the Original Public Building Program (Keyes-Elliott Act); 3) the program under the WPA; 4) the Emergency Relief Construction Program; and 5) the Program for the District of Columbia, authorized in the 1926 Act.<sup>14</sup>

In all, nine Post Offices, two of which are included in this nomination, were funded after the founding of the Public Works Administration in 1933 and prior to World War II. The three such buildings in this nomination are the Rifle MPO, Manitou Springs MPO, and the Florence MPO. Although not verified by research. It appears likely that these three buildings were funded by the WPA.

III. HISTORY AND ORGANIZATION OF THE OFFICE OF THE SUPER-  
VISING

ARCHITECT

A. 1893-1934:

The origins of the Office of the Supervising Architect (OSA) can be traced to a decision in 1853 to create a construction branch in the Treasury Department.<sup>15</sup> The Supervising Architect's office remained attached to the Treasury Department until 1939, when it was transferred to the Federal Works Agency.<sup>16</sup>

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The OSA was organized as a unit of the Secretary of the Treasury's office and never became a separate Treasury Department bureau.

This nomination is concerned with the administrations of:

James Knox Taylor, 1898-1912;  
James A. Wetmore (Acting), 1912-1913;  
Oscar Wenderoth, 1913-1915;  
James A. Wetmore (Acting), 1915-1934; and  
Louis A. Simon, 1935-1941

The Supervising Architect, as the chief administrative officer of his office, had a strong impact on the design policies of the federal government, and on the outcome of architectural competitions held by the federal government.

During the last half of the 19th century, all federal construction was ostensibly designed in this office. In 1893, the Tarnsey Act<sup>17</sup> allowed the Secretary of the Treasury to hold competitions to allow private architects to design public buildings. The Supervising Architect, in this case, took on the role of the client, supervising the design and construction of buildings designed by outside firms. Under the provisions of this Act, the larger post offices were designed by private firms, while the Office of the Supervising Architect designed offices in small towns. The Tarnsey Act was repealed on August 14, 1912,<sup>18</sup> leaving the Treasury Department without authorization to contract with independent architects.

Public buildings constructed under Supervising Architect Taylor are marked by a richness of ornament and their imposing, monumental character.

The dominant design idiom of this period was inspired by French Neo-Classicism, as interpreted by the Beaux-Arts trained architects in the OSA and private practice.

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This commitment to classicism was stated in Taylor's 1901 report:

"The Department...decided to adopt the classical style of architecture for all building...this style is best suited for government buildings. The experience of centuries has demonstrated that no form of architecture is so pleasing to the great mass of mankind as the classic, or some modified form of the classic."<sup>19</sup>

Aside from this belief in the aesthetic superiority of Beaux-Arts classicism, Taylor expressed his faith in the didactic quality of federal design:

"It (the federal government) cannot avoid affecting in a pronounced degree the architectural taste, knowledge and enjoyment of the nation...The government, therefore, enjoys in its building operations a tremendous opportunity for good in the judgement of all who regard architecture as one of the important factors of the higher civilization."<sup>20</sup>

The Boulder, Colorado Springs and Trinidad post offices are characteristic of Taylor's design ideology.

The one-year interlude during which James A. Wetmore served as Acting Supervising Architect followed the previously established pattern.

The two-year administration of Oscar Wenderoth continued the Beaux-Arts tradition, but the emphasis shifted from French Neo-Classical to Renaissance Revival and Italianate design.

Throughout this period, designs of federal buildings, which in most cases were synonymous with post offices, tended to ignore local architectural traditions and instead reflect national trends.

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In 1915, James A. Wetmore was again designated Acting Supervising Architect. Wetmore, a lawyer by training, was less involved with the actual design of the buildings than had been his predecessors. During his administration, the Superintendent of the Architectural Division, Louis A. Simon, exercised considerable influence on the design of the federal buildings. After 1915, designs became standardized and ornament less lavish. The La Junta MPO, built in 1915, and currently listed on the National Register was the last of the early Italianate Beaux-Arts designs in Colorado which may indicate that it had been designed prior to Wenderoth's resignation. The buildings designed by private architects conformed to the dimensional and operations requirements of the Post Office Department, but tended to contain a more liberal use of ornament than those designed in the Office of the Supervising Architect itself.

By 1922, the office was divided into a Technical and an Administrative (Executive) Branch. The Technical Branch embraced a computing division which was concerned with costing and accounting; a drafting division; a structural division; a mechanical engineering division; and a repairs division. The drafting division was headed by a superintendent who exercised a great deal of influence on the design practices of the office.

The Executive Branch embraced the office proper of the Supervising Architect, and other administrative duties of the office.

B. 1934-1941:

The Supervising Architect's office was reorganized in 1934, and in 1935, James Wetmore was replaced by Louis A. Simon. The Supervising Architect lost its independence as a separate office in the Secretary's office, and was replaced by the Public Building Branch

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of the Procurement Division of the Treasury Department. The office was moved in February of 1934 from the Treasury Building to new quarters in the Federal Warehouse Building, renamed the Procurement Buildings. The office was reorganized into four divisions, consisting of a Supervising Architect, a Supervising Engineer, a Chairman<sub>2</sub> of the Board of Award, and a Chief of the Legal Section.<sup>21</sup>

Federal design in this period exhibited greater stylistic variety than in the previous 25 years.

During this period, too, more consideration was given to regional architectural traditions, resulting in designs recalling "Mediterranean/Spanish/Mission/Pueblo" styles popular along the West Coast and in the Southwest during the 1920s and early 1930s. The Lamar MPO is an example of this trend. Colonial style motifs were also popular, having been derived from a stylistic tradition long popular on the East Coast. The Rifle MPO and Manitou Springs MPO are examples of this tradition.

Designs by independent architects followed a pattern similar to those designed by the OSA, though some buildings employed Art Deco motifs. During the 1930s, federal projects retained the Beaux-Arts inspired symmetry of the Taylor and Wenderoth eras, though Simon used far less ornament than had his predecessors. The ornament that was used tended to be derived from Art Deco motifs, and emphasized geometricized floral and abstract forms. Such ornament can be observed on the Florence and Delta MPOs.

**IV. BACKGROUND ON FEDERAL ART PROJECTS**

The New Deal Federal Art Projects were designed to alleviate unemployment in the arts, and to decorate the architecture produced in the Office of the Supervising Architect. Three programs were administered through the Treasury Department, and one through the Works Progress Administration.

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The Treasury Department programs were as follows:<sup>22</sup>

- 1) The Public Works of Art Project (PWAP), which lasted from December, 1933 to June, 1934. This was an "emergency" relief program, applied without a strict relief test, which employed roughly 3,700 artists and costs \$1,312,000.
- 2) The Section of Painting and Sculpture, later the Section of Fine Arts. This was the program primarily responsible for murals and sculpture found in post office buildings throughout the country. Commissions were awarded based on anonymous competitions without reference to the artists' economic need, i.e., it was not, strictly speaking, a relief program. The program began in October, 1934; the final commission was completed in 1943. Fourteen hundred contracts were awarded at a total cost of about \$2,571,000.
- 3) Treasury Relief Art Project (TRAP) was created in July of 1935 by a funding allocation from the WPA employment. Four hundred forty six people were employed by the project, which cost \$833,784, and was discontinued in 1939. The project's primary output was painting and sculpture used to decorate federal buildings.

The Work Progress Administration Federal Art Project (WPA/FAP) was a large relief project devoted to the plastic arts. The WPA/FAP was part of the larger program called Federal Project No. 1, which included the WPA drama, music and writing programs. The overall program began in August, 1935, employed over 4,000 people, cost \$35,000,000 and was terminated in 1943.

The present state of scholarship indicates that the quality, size, iconography, iconology, and style were independent of the particular program under which a program was funded.

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It was beyond the scope of this nomination effort to determine which of these various federal programs commissioned particular murals in Colorado.

Though the federal art programs brought together the young Mark Rothko, Jackson Pollock, and other artists who would form the nucleus of the New York School in the 1950s, art sponsored by the program tended to be representational and stylistically conservative. The iconography of federal murals centered on local and regional themes, often showing the daily occupations common people. The style and content of the murals were intimately tied together, and the art depended on its context for most of its meaning.

Holger Cahill, the director of the Treasury Department's Section of Fine Arts, commented on the social function of public murals, on numerous occasions. In 1937, he observed that "Mural painting is not a studio art; by its very nature, it is social. In its great periods, it has always been associated with the expression of social meanings, the experience,<sup>23</sup> ideas, history and beliefs of a community."

The Project, as the federal art program was referred to at the time, employed significant numbers of young artists, many of whom had become radicalized by the Depression. Mitchell Siporin, a Project muralist from Chicago, expressed the political sentiments of much of the art, saying "Ours is the story of Labor and Progressivism, of Jane Addams and Mary McDowell, of Eugene Debs and Robert LaFollette, Sr., of Rachel Lindsay and Theodor Drieser, of Haymarket and Hull House."<sup>24</sup> A Boston artist, Jack Levine, expressed similar political sentiments: "I find my approach to painting inseparable from my approach to the world. Justice is more important than good looks."<sup>25</sup>

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Though the publicized statements of many Project artists emphasize the social and political meaning and importance of their work, like all artists, they were also concerned with the aesthetic and formal problems of their work. Cahill commented on this problem, saying, "The mural must have a definite relation to its surrounding and be an integral part of the architectural scheme...The composition as a whole must have clarity, largeness, carrying power, and a rhythmic order that leads the eye through the whole space."<sup>26</sup>

A central contention of this nomination is that the murals and architecture of 1930s post offices are mutually interdependent for aesthetic and iconographic meaning. As Cahill observed in 1937, "...the transportable murals lose much of their significance apart from their setting...".<sup>27</sup>

The sculpture placed in post offices in the 1930s followed the same stylistic lines established by the muralists, but subject matter tended to simplified allegorical figures such as those found in the lobby of the Delta MPO. They consist of two cast panels showing cattle and aboriginal people done by Mary Kittredge in 1942.

Several years ago the United States Postal Service reached an agreement with the Smithsonian Institution to ensure the preservation of all murals in Postal-owned facilities. This agreement, in the form of a Memorandum of Understanding, establishes guidelines for the retention of murals in local post offices, or if not possible, within the local community.

Murals are found in three of the post offices included in this nomination; the Florence MPO, Manitou Springs MPO, and the Montrose MPO.



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V. ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY BACKGROUND

Several of the buildings included in this nomination are evidence of the federal government's tendency towards classicism during the first forty years of this century. The American fascination with classical antiquity can be traced to the late 18th century. The discoveries of well preserved Roman towns at Herculaneum and Pompeii resulted in a neo-classical movement in Europe, but classicism was embraced with greater enthusiasm in America than it had received in Europe. Thomas Jefferson was one of the strongest proponents of architectural classicism in this country. The associative values of Greek Revival architecture, for Jefferson, recalled the democratic ideals of Periclean Athens. By building an imitation of the antique, Jefferson hoped to symbolically embody the democratic, liberal ideals of his republic in its architecture.

The classical tradition was carried on by the Capitol's first architect, Benjamin Latrobe. The original symbol of the Post Office Department was, in fact, a figure of Mercury, the messenger of the Greek and Roman Gods. A strong thread of classicism ran throughout the nineteenth century, often in opposition to other revival movements, notably the Gothic, and the progressive "avant garde" architects, i.e., H.H. Richardson and Louis Sullivan.

The Chicago World's Fair of 1893, (also known as the World Columbian Exhibition) reinvigorated the classical as the dominant architectural mode of the century, and inaugurated the "City Beautiful" movement of the last decade of the nineteenth century and the first two decades of the twentieth. Government building never exhibited cognizance of the developing modern movement, and has been, consistently, a bastion of conservative design.

The classical symbols used in federal architects of the nineteenth century were freighted with specific meanings, alluding to their classical antecedents. By the early years of the twentieth century, these

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architectural symbols had lost their specific meanings. Now inscriptions had to substitute or clarify the iconography. Unidentified classical elements have simply come to be symbols of wealth, power, and dignity, and are no longer burdened with reference to specific concepts or allusions to Periclean democracy as Jefferson's original designs had intended.

The history of architecture in Colorado is in many ways the history of architecture in Denver. As the principal urban center of the state, its buildings most clearly reflect national and regional trends. Development in the eastern half of the state is closely tied with the coming of the railroads in the 1870s, while a number of mountain communities began to develop during the previous decade with the beginning of intensive mining. The architecture of Denver, as well as other communities, is typical of that found in cities throughout the Mid-West. There is no strong regional style. A considerable amount of building occurred in Colorado during the 1870s and 80s, which culminated during the great crash of 1893. While there are many excellent examples of specific styles of buildings, especially in Denver, eclecticism marks the design of numerous structures. The motifs expressed in these buildings are derived predominantly from eastern, and midwestern architectural traditions. These include elaborate Beaux-Arts and Second Empire Revival styles, as well as a strong Richardsonian influence.

Development during the early 20th century tended to look back to the late 19th century for inspiration. Pre-World War I buildings now appear to be "conservative" in their design.

During the 1920s, Denver, and to some extent other communities in Colorado, were influenced by the rise in Revival architectural styles. This resulted in some Mediterranean style buildings, which are more closely associated with the Southwest and California. More often, the influence was from eastern styles, with

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various English and Colonial American trends predominating. The zigzag ornament, stylized floral motifs and symmetrical facades which characterize the Art Deco movement are also evident in Colorado architecture of this period.

The influence of European Modernism did not have a major effect on Commercial architect in Colorado until the late 1950s, when the International style became the dominant design idiom.

**VI. POST OFFICE OPERATIONS**

As in the rest of the United States, the development of postal services is closely tied to improvements in transportation. Early post offices were often located in stores, and local merchants were designated as postmaster.

The greatest factor influencing siting the post offices included in this nomination was the existence of rail lines. The Railway Mail Service, inaugurated in 1862, provided the primary means of transporting bulk mail through the 1930s. Several lines acted as mobile post offices, sorting mail enroute and reducing the time needed to deliver the mail.

The interior arrangements of both the public lobby and the workroom areas were also dictated by postal operational requirements. In the lobby, the windows were organized according to the type of service provided. By the 1930s, this function of the post office, especially during the Depression, was the Postal Savings Bank. This operation, which allowed savings accounts of up to \$5,000 added an element of stability to the turbulence and uncertainty surrounding banking during the early years of the Depression. A separate window was provided for the functioning of the Postal Savings Bank. Then, as now, post office boxes were placed in the lobby and created a demand for wall space that would not have existed otherwise.

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In the post offices included in this survey, both the postmaster and his assistant had individual offices, usually in the front corners of these buildings. In addition, an office of the postal inspector was provided in most buildings.

VII. ESTABLISHMENT OF EARLY POSTAL SERVICE IN COLORADO

The following discussion concerning the development of Postal Service in Colorado has been drawn extensively from the following Authors: Morris F. Taylor (First Mail West, 1971); and Dr. LeRoy R. Hafen, PHD (The Overland Mail 1849-1869, 1926).

The area included in present day Colorado was located between and skirted by two of the primary mail routes in America's westward expansion. On March 3, 1847, Congress authorized the transportation of the U.S. Mail by two routes, both originating in Independence, Missouri (9 Stat. 194). One would follow the Santa Fe Trail (an established commercial route) via Bent's Fort (between present day La Junta and Las Animas on the Arkansas River) then southward through the Raton Pass to Fort Union, then to Santa Fe. The other would follow the Oregon Trail route (via Fort Laramie) to Astoria, Oregon. It was not until, May 11, 1850 that David Waldo was awarded the contract for carrying the U.S. mail from Fort Leavenworth to Santa Fe via Bent's Fort. The first mule-drawn wagons of the Waldo, Hall and Company lumbered out of Independence (terminus changed from Fort Leavenworth) on July 1, 1850 and traveled the 840 mile route to Santa Fe in approximately 28 days. However, this route used a slightly shorter route called the Cimaron Cutoff (Bent's Fort had been abandoned) instead of the Mountain Route through the Raton Pass. Thus began the first government subsidized stage coach mail service across the Great American Desert. Although the Cimaron Cutoff route of the Santa Fe Trail crossed the southeastern corner of Colorado, there were no major settlements that received mail service from this route until the early 1860s.

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The discovery of gold by W. Green Russell on the mouth of Cherry Creek (present site of Denver) and the establishment of Denver City and Auraria on the opposite banks of Cherry Creek, brought about the first call for mail service in present-day Colorado. Although accounts vary, the first post office appears to have been established in Auraria in late 1858-early 1859. The cry for mail service began and a trader by the name of Jim Saunders agreed to carry express mail between Auraria/Denver City and Fort Laramie, Wyoming (on the Oregon Trail Route). Since this was not an official U.S. mail route, Saunders was paid by mail recipients for each piece carried. Saunders departed for Fort Laramie on November 23, 1858 and returned with mail in hand on January 8, 1859. His operation was short-lived and was soon replaced by the Leavenworth and Pike's Peak Express (L. & P.P. Ex.) in the spring of 1859. On May 7th, the first mail coaches arrived in Denver, taking 19 days from Leavenworth along a 687 mile route that generally followed the drainage of the Republican river (between the northerly Oregon Trail and the southerly Santa Fe Trail). It might be noted that this mail service was not under U.S. contract, and that in addition to the U.S. postal rate, payment was made to the carrier for each piece carried, which, naturally, brought complaints about the high cost of mail delivery.

The L. & P.P. Ex. was absorbed by the Central Overland California and Pike's Peak Express Company (C.O.C. & P.P. Ex. Co.) which in February 1860 was granted a charter by the Kansas Legislature. The company also obtained the U.S. mail contract for Utah via the Central Route (through Wyoming). This resulted in a change in the route and the by-passing of Colorado. Although the C.O.C. & P.P. was running tri-weekly service to Denver from the Missouri, service was for passengers and express only (non-U.S. postal service). The official U.S. mail route did not include Denver. On March 27, 1860, Congress authorized the establishment of Mail Routes in the Territory of Kansas (12 Stat. 4). Denver, gold fields, was the distribution point for this mail

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service. Denver would receive mail from the Central Route via Julesburg (northeastern corner of Colorado). Denver routes were authorized to Missouri City, Breckenridge, Boulder and Colorado City. However, it was not until August, 1860 that the first U.S. mail route from Julesburg to Denver was opened for service.

In the meantime, action was being taken on the Santa Fe Trail route to provide service to the Colorado gold camps. Upon the establishment of Fort Wise on the upper Arkansas (west of present-day Lamar) plans were under formulation to shift the Santa Fe Route to the Mountain Branch over the Raton Pass. These plans also envisioned the extension of a branch line to Colorado City. In December 1860, the Missouri Stage Company announced that it would establish service with Canon City, Tarryall, Colorado City and Denver City (to compete with the Platte River route from Julesburg). The service would be express, without government contract. In February 1861, the route to Fort Wise was approved, but with U.S. contracted mail service only along the Santa Fe Trail (branch lines to the northwest serving Colorado would remain express, or unsubsidized by government contract).

In spite of the lack of government contract, the Canon City boosters were elated. They anticipated that Canon City would become the focal point for service to the nearby mining camps, thereby solidifying its position as a trade center. Until the spring of 1861, Canon City had relied on mail service via Denver City and Colorado City (which, in turn, received mail from Julesburg on the Central Route). Service was poor and unreliable. Service at that time was provided by a pony express route between Canon City and Denver. In October 1860, wagon service provided somewhat better reliability. However, a more direct easterly connection as well as a southerly connection to New Mexico was being strongly pushed. The official mail route to New Mexico was especially circuitous. Mail would travel to Denver, to the States via Julesburg, then to Santa Fe via the Santa Fe Trail (a the supply center for the distance of 1,600

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miles). A direct route between Denver and Santa Fe would be only 500 miles in length.

Canon City was the scene of jubilation on May 13, 1861 when the first express coach completed the trip from Kansas City via the branch from the Santa Fe route. Soon thereafter, the Kansas City, Santa Fe and Canon City Fast Line began regular service between Canon City and Bent's Old Fort. Official U.S. mail service was implemented in June 1861 from Fort Wise via Colorado City (subsequently changed from Colorado City to Pueblo). In addition, to service to Canon City, the direct service to Denver also branched off the Santa Fe Trail. Service was established from Bent's Old Fort via Pueblo and Russellville by the Cottrill, Vickroy and Company in September 1862 (private, non-U.S. contract).

In early 1862, the citizens of Denver City were campaigning for a Missouri River-to-California stageline through their city. Ben Holladay, who had recently acquired the C.O.C. & P.P. Ex. Co., considered their proposition to change the route through Denver (Julesburg was the nearest point to Denver). A route was proposed through Berthould Pass, but was found to be too steep for a stage road. Indian troubles resulted in the rerouting of the Oregon Trail route along the Platte River to the mouth of the Cache la Poudre where the Latham station was established. Denver received mail service three times a week from this station. In order to convince Holladay to include Denver on the main route, the Colorado Legislature (August, 1862) granted the Holladay Overland Stage Line the right to collect tolls on bridges and ferries it would construct. Naturally, Holladay changed the routing. The route now followed the Platte to Junction (later Fort Morgan) then to Denver. From Denver the route returned to the northerly central route via Laporte.

Indian hostilities in August of 1864 led to the closure of the stageline between the Missouri River and Denver City (Platte River route). The disruption of service

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to eastern points was such that Colorado's new mail route from the east included the Isthmus of Panama and California. From California the Overland Stage provided eastbound service to Denver. According to the Rocky Mountain News mail left by way of "Salt Lake, Carson Valley. San Francisco, the isles of the Pacific, the Isthmus of Darien, Cape Horn and God knows where all!"

On September 23, 1865, Holladay encountered a competitor when the first stage of the Butterfield Overland Dispatch reached Denver via the Smoky Hill Trail from Leavenworth. In March 1866, Butterfield sold out to Holladay, and in November, Holladay sold his business to Wells, Fargo & Co.

However, the stagecoach era was nearing its end, with routes being shortened by the railroads as steel rails slowly extended westward. Within two years of Wells Fargo's acquisition of the stage line, the Union Pacific Railroad had reached Cheyenne. Wells Fargo now carried the mails, express and passengers between Cheyenne and Denver. The same events were reducing the scale of the Sante Fe Trail to the south. By 1869, the eastern-most point served on the Trail was Fort Lyon (formerly Fort Wise) on the Arkansas. In 1870, the Kansas Pacific line reached Denver, generally following the Smoky Hill Trail route. In October 1871, the Denver and Rio Grande Railroad was extended south from Denver to Colorado City, and by 1876 was four miles south of Trinidad. The Achison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad (extended from Fort Lyon) reached West Las Animas in September of 1875, and La Junta in February 1876. The line then followed the Mountain Branch of the Santa Fe Trail to Santa Fe and with the arrival of the first train in Santa Fe in February 1880, the stagecoach era was essentially over. Now, only local service from railroad terminal points was provided by stagecoach.

The Report of the Postmaster General, for the year 1875, indicated a total of 2,979 miles of postal routes in Colorado, with 329 miles by rail. Denver was the focal



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point with routes to Pueblo (branch to Canon City), Boulder, Blackhawk (branches from Golden Junction to Longmont and from Forks of Clear Creek to Floyd's Hill. In addition, a route from Kit Carson extended to West Las Animas. By 1880, the total route miles had doubled to 5,890 with 1,164 rail miles. Rail routes had been extended to El Moro, Georgetown, Alamosa, Buena Vista, and from La Junta to Alberquerque. In 1900 there was a total of 8,137 route miles, with 3,808 being served by rail.

Construction of the first post offices by the federal government did not come to Colorado until the completion of the Denver Court House and Post Office in 1892. Prior to this building, post offices were located in homes, stores, trading posts, and office buildings on a lease basis or by contract with the postmaster, who in many cases was the owner of the post office structure. This is still the case in some small town post offices today. The establishment of a post office in a community by petition to the federal government gave the community a name and place on the map; essentially, it was one of the first steps in becoming a town, or growing to a a large city. Receiving the first federal building was not only the next step but was also an important event in a growing frontier community. The construction of federal buildings generally coincided with the erection of those buildings which formed the foundation of the city--the Carnegie Library, Masonic Lodge, railroad depot, city hall, county courthouse, schools, and churches. In most cases, the early federal buildings in Colorado fit into this era, although they typically followed the other buildings by a couple of years. The towns that received the post offices were the ones that had become established, were recognized by the federal government, and would become "great cities". Actually, during this period of state building and communications expansion prior to 1900, only two cities received federally constructed post offices--Denver (1892) and Pueblo (1898). These were Colorado's major cities. The next group of federal buildings/post

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offices came in the era from 1900 to 1920 to the towns along railroads that were becoming local distribution centers. These included Colorado Springs, Trinidad, La Junta, Greeley, Fort Morgan, and Fort Collins.

The final group of post offices with which this nomination is concerned is that group completed during the 1930s. These federally constructed post offices were received by smaller towns, towns that had matured but which had not been previously recognized by the federal government for federal buildings. The symbolic values of these facilities are different from those of the first two decades of the century. The earlier federal buildings manifested the government's recognition of a "frontier" town's stability (not always, as in the case of Leadville), while the federal buildings of the 1930s manifested the government's role in providing assistance during a period of economic emergency.

#### VIII. FEDERAL POST OFFICE CONSTRUCTION IN COLORADO

Although Colorado's first post office was established in late 1858 or early 1859, it was over thirty years before Colorado received its first federally-constructed post office. An Act of Congress approved May 8, 1882, authorized a building in Denver which would house a court house, post office and other government offices with a cost limited to \$300,000. Yet Denver citizens had to maintain their patience for another ten years before the building would open for public business. An act of February 24, 1887 increased the cost limit to \$575,000. Appropriations were made by acts of May 8, 1882, May 3, 1883, July 7, 1884, March 3, 1885, March 3, 1887, March 30, 1888, October 2, 1889, and March 3, 1891, and the building was finally occupied in late 1892. (This pattern of appropriations exemplifies the "piecemeal" nature of federal building appropriations during the era.) Colorado's second federal building was received by Pueblo (NR 1/3/78) which was occupied by the post office on May 28, 1898. Other federal occupants

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associated with the U.S. courts, customs, internal-revenue service and other agencies moved in during the following month. Approximately \$275,000 was spent on the construction of this limestone Italian Renaissance Revival edifice.

The first major post office construction era in Colorado took place between 1900 and 1920, during which eleven Colorado cities received public buildings. This corresponded to the adoption of the first omnibus public buildings law in 1902 (32 Sta. 590) which authorized site acquisition and building construction for 150 new projects throughout the nation. Previous to this, individual bills had been passed for each project. Leadville was the recipient of the first post office of the new century from an appropriation received in March, 1899 (30 Stat. 999) for an amount not to exceed \$50,000. Subsequent appropriations increased the limit to \$75,000. The building was completed and occupied in 1905 (presently the Leadville City Hall and within the Leadville Historic District NR 10/15/66). Colorado Springs was gifted with the next building appropriation on June 6, 1902 (32 Stat. 317), but was not completed and occupied until 1910. Four separate legislative authorizations with eight appropriation bills between 1902 and 1911 were required before completion of the building. The limit was increased three times, once for additional land, and an additional \$15,000 was added for use of granite in lieu of sandstone. The final appropriation which came in 1911, after the building was occupied, was for the construction of a balustrade around the roof. An article in March 13, 1910 issue of the Colorado Springs Gazette reported the formal establishment of the post office in the new building as the culmination of a long series of attempts to secure a federal building, as long ago as 1899.

At the completion of the Colorado Springs buildings, Colorado's four major cities had received public buildings. At the turn of the century Denver was the state's capital, leading commercial center and had a

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growing population of 133,859. Pueblo, the next largest city, was a growing industrial and supply center with a population of 28,157. Colorado Springs, founded as a resort and tourist center, with a population of 21,085, had boomed as a result of the mining boom in the Cripple Creek area. Finally, Leadville, a town which boomed as a result of mining reached a population of 12,455, which was to drop precipitously to 7,508 in 1910 and 4,959 by 1920.

Colorado's next group of public buildings originated in the Omnibus Public Buildings Act of June 30, 1906 which authorized acquisition of sites and construction of buildings in Boulder and Trinidad, and the acquisition of a site only in Denver for replacement of the existing post office. Construction proceeded on the Trinidad and Boulder post offices which were completed in 1910. The Public Buildings Omnibus Act of May 30, 1908 authorized a site and building in Fort Collins, a building in Denver, and sites in Greeley and Grand Junction. The Fort Collins Post Office (presently a privately-owned office building, NR 1/30/78) was completed and occupied in 1912. Ten years elapsed from initial appropriation to completion of the Denver Post Office and Federal Building (NR 3/20/73). The building was occupied in 1916 and replaced the city's "Old Post Office" which was later razed. The magnificent classical structure was constructed of Colorado Yule Marble for a total cost of \$1,990,132 plus a site cost of \$486,879. As with federal projects past and future, the impatience of expectant local citizens was raised by the seemingly endless process of appropriation and construction.

The Act of June 25, 1910 added the building authorizations to the previous sites which had been appropriated in Greeley and Grand Junction. In addition, a site and building were authorized in La Junta, with sites in Fort Morgan and Durango. The Greeley Post Office was completed and occupied in 1915, expanded and remodeled in the 1930s, and razed in the late 1960s. La Junta's post office (NR 7/12/76) was

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open to the public in 1916, and Grand Junction completed in late 1918. (In 1965, post use ceased and in 1973, the Grand Junction building received its third and present, name, Wayne N. Aspinall Federal Building and United States Court House-NR (1/31/80).)

The final group of communities to receive appropriations prior to the Public Buildings Act of May 25, 1926 were included in the Public Buildings Act of March 4, 1913. Under this legislation a site and building for Glenwood Springs, and buildings were authorized for Fort Morgan and Durango. The following cities received appropriations for sites only: Sterling, Montrose, Canon City and Monte Vista. The Fort Morgan Post Office was completed and occupied in 1918, and the completion of Glenwood Springs followed in 1919 (vacated by the postal service in 1966 and presently occupied by the U.S. Forest Service).

If the patience of Denver citizens was tried in awaiting their new federal building, that of Durangos' citizens and boosters must have turned to despair. They, as well as those of Sterling, Montrose, Canon City and Monte Vista, found that appropriation for sites or construction did not guarantee that a post office would soon follow, although in most cases they did. Three years had elapsed from site to building authorization. Another three years passed before a provision for courts was made on June 12, 1916 (39 Stat. 225). World War I caused further delay. Finally, under the provisions of Section 3 of the Public Buildings Act of May 25, 1926, and appropriation of \$20,000 was authorized, with an estimated limit of \$200,000 for a post office, courthouse and other government offices in the Deficiency Act of July 3, 1926 (44 Stat. 870). After another two years, \$50,000 was appropriated under the Annual (Treasury) Act, March 5, 1928, with a limit of \$150,000 in lieu of \$200,000 with the provision that work would be done so that a court could be added later (45 Stat. 176). The building was finally completed in 1929, almost 20 years after its initial appropriation

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(included in the Durango Main Avenue Historic District  
(NRD 08/07/80)).

The post offices/federal buildings constructed in Colorado in the first two decades of the century reflected the Beaux-Arts Classicism and Revival styles that were dominating the federal design philosophy at that time. Trinidad and Fort Morgan, smaller single-story post offices of brick, display their Classical inspiration in triangular pedimented porticos supported by Ionic and Doric columns, respectively. The buildings of La Junta, in stucco, and Fort Collins, in limestone are somewhat larger and included a second story for federal offices. Both are of similar scale and form with their presentation of five-bayed facades, topped by hipped, red mission-tile roofs with overhanging, bracketed eaves. The La Junta building reflects the Spanish heritage of its region, while Fort Collins favors the Second Renaissance Revival style. Boulder's building executed in brick. Its treatment is somewhat unique to the period in its use of a dormered, metal-clad roof which rises from behind a solid parapet. These buildings, as well as those erected in Leadville and Glenwood Springs were constructed for under \$100,000. Greeley and the much larger Colorado Springs and Grand Junction buildings were similar in the use of stone in the Renaissance Revival tradition. Both Denver and Pueblo, with the largest buildings of the period, received buildings of outstanding architectural merit. The earlier three story brick and stone Pueblo building possesses a richly ornamented facade in the revival of the Italian Renaissance Plazzo of Florence and Rome. The Denver building, with its fluted Ionic colonnades of colossal order represents the Neo-Classical in its finest tradition.

The period between 1921 and 1930 was one of the re-assessment of the federal construction programs and one of few construction projects. On a national basis, the federal government constructed 394 federal buildings during this period, of which 122 were post offices. The

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only Colorado city to receive a post office during the 1920s was Durango which was finally completed in 1929. The Public Buildings Act of May 25, 1926 (also known as the Keyes-Elliott Act), which expanded the scope and consolidated the funding of post office construction, and subsequent building programs promulgated in response to the Great Depression, provided the authority for the massive post office construction programs of the 1930s. Between 1931 and 1939, for example, 1,584 post offices were constructed across the nation--three times as many as had been constructed in the previous 50 years. During this period (through 1941), the state of Colorado received 21 of its 35 federally constructed post offices. All of these were in communities which had not been previously "gifted" with a federally-constructed post offices.

Although the Durango Post Office was funded under the 1926 Act (\$15,000,000 to render old appropriations adequate), its origin was in the pre-1920 era. Section 5 of the 1926 Act authorized new buildings in Sterling and Canon City as well as the U.S. Custom House in Denver (1931, NR 10/16/79) and expansion of the Boulder Post Office. House Document 613 (February 26, 1929) continued to carry these projects with the inclusion of Montrose. In addition, eight cities were listed as being in line for future buildings, but not yet authorized. Included in this group were Alamosa, Delta, Lamarie, Salida, Longmont and Monte Vista. House Document 788 (February 27, 1931) continued to list these cities but provided authorization and allocation for Montrose, Monte Vista, Alamosa, Canyon City and Sterling (for a total of 17 projects including expansion of Pueblo, Boulder and Greeley).

These appropriations resulted in the construction of four new post office buildings in Colorado between 1930 and 1933. Sterling and Canon City were both authorized under Deficiency Act of May 29, 1928 (45 Stat. 919 & 924) and were completed in 1931 and 1933, respectively.

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It might be noted that Sterling, in the Second Deficiency Act of March 4, 1929 (45 Stat. 1662), received an increase in appropriation from \$125,000 to \$225,000 in order to accommodate a U.S. Court. Montrose received its post office in 1932, and Monte Vista followed in 1933. The Alamosa Post Office (privately owned, Blue Peaks Learning Center) was not completed until 1935.

The buildings constructed during this period are transitional in post office design style. They represent a stage in the evolution from the Beaux-Arts Classicism-- Renaissance Revivalism and Neo-Classicism--of the first two decades of the century to the International Style which began to influence American design in the 1920s. Although these post offices are of modern influence, they are not stripped of historical architectural detailing to the extent of those post offices which were constructed between 1935 and 1941. Indeed, these four Colorado buildings extend without major stylistic change from the pre-1920s. The later buildings reflected the urgent response to the national economic emergency, which dictated a greater degree of standardization and simplification, particularly of facades (since interior design had long been standardized).

Both Sterling and Monte Vista flow from the Neo-Classic style. Of note is Monte Vista with its recessed portico fronted by six fluted Ionic columns of colossal order (reminiscent of Denver's 1915 post office/federal building). The Montrose Post Office is finely executed in its modern interpretation of the Renaissance Revival style. The use of white terracotta with mortar-recessed joints and demarked corner quions provide an expertly crafted crispness to the building. The Canyon City Post Office is also an excellent example of the Renaissance Revival, again crafted in terracotta. Comparable in size and scale, the building is much more elaborate, and perhaps less interpretive than the Montrose building.



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The Colorado post offices constructed between 1935 and 1941 represent those constructed under various emergency appropriations that were authorized "with a view to relieving countrywide unemployment". However, as noted previously, most had been identified as potential projects prior to 1930s. The Secretary of the Treasury and Post Master General were directed to distribute the projects equitably throughout the country so far as may be consistent with the needs of the public services. They also had the latitude to select projects not included in the report promulgated by the direction of the 1926 Act. The Federal Employment Stabilization Act (February 11, 1931) had addressed the use of planned and accelerated emergency construction to aid in preventing unemployment. This act plus several other federal programs to provide economic relief, provided the foundation for the next wave of post office construction in Colorado.

Colorado's economic climate during the 1930s was one of deterioration, one that had actually begun after WWI. The agricultural and mining sectors had been experiencing a general weakening through the 1920s. The optimism that had been maintained faded with the "Crash of 1929", however. Agricultural prices dropped, banks were bursting, the mining industry was in decline, tourist traffic slowed and population growth slowed to around eight per cent. Although all of the cities which would receive post offices in the accelerated wave of federal construction were affected by the Depression, all experienced slight gains in population between 1930 and 1940, except Salida which declined slightly.

The four cities that had received post offices prior to 1935, had essentially been authorized and appropriated prior to 1930. During the six year period, from 1935 to 1940, 17 Colorado communities, none of which had previously had a federal building, received post offices. Eight of these communities had been added by subsequent legislative studies to the list of allocated buildings included in House Document 788. Most all of

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these buildings were in small towns which had demonstrated sufficient stability to warrant a federal building. Included in this group of eight additional communities were Florence, Manitou Springs and Rifle. Salida, a railroad and distribution center, and Longmont, an agricultural community, received their post offices in 1935 (both are now privately owned). Florence, received its post office in 1937. In Florence's case, the post office was the only major building, public or private, constructed during the 1930s. Six new buildings were constructed in 1938 and 1939. Delta was in this group. The last of the Depression era post offices in Colorado were received by Manitou Springs and Rifle in 1940. These two buildings represent not only the end of a major construction area by the federal government, but also the end of a philosophy in design style.

The end of the era, with its closure evidenced in the Rifle and Manitou Springs buildings, also signified the end of the hopes of other small town citizens across Colorado. Their long awaited federal buildings did not come. For example, the August 17, 1937 issue of the Delta Independent reported that new \$75,000 post offices were planned for Paonia, Rifle, Steam Boat Springs and Craig. Certainly, the expectations and hopes of the citizens of these communities were raised when the same news was reported in the local press. However, of this group only Rifle received a new post office. House Document No. 177 of the 76 Congress provided a long list of potential public buildings that remained eligible under the Acts approved August 25, 1937 and June 21, 1938, and future authorizations. The above buildings were included in the list of projects not authorized to date. They remained unauthorized unappropriated, and unconstructed.

The post offices constructed between 1935 and 1940 continue to exhibit Classical design influence in their symmetry and proportion, but they are simplified in their lack of extensive detailing and architectural

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ornamentation. As stated by Louis Craig, in The Federal Presence, "...the facades became simplified, their classical ornaments turning angular and disappearing into the masonry, their walls becoming more planar and their window openings shallow and anonymous. What resulted was a gaunt, underfed, "starved" classicism, denoted as much by white masonry and the rhythm of wall and window as by vestigial columns." Generally, the post offices of the Starved Classicism genre are reductions of the American Colonial and Neo-classicism.

Starved Classicism is exemplified in the designs of the final four post offices included in this nomination; all from the late 1930's. The Florence Post Office, is smaller single purpose building exhibits a refined design in the Classical mode flavored by Art Deco. Of note is the use of cast concrete in a board fluted pattern which encompasses the entry and flanking window bays. A zig-zag modern design embellishes the tansom bar over the door. The Delta Post Office, a two story combined post office/federal office building is exceptionally well executed in its interpretation and reduction of the Neo-Classical style. Marble panels, extending from the water table to the suggested marble architrave, provide vertical emphasis to the entry and flanking windows bays against a buff brick field. This design treatment is the sole example in the state of Colorado. The two post offices completed in 1940 represent the end of the Depression era federal building program. Both revert to the American Colonial style for their design inspiration. Rifle's post office is a single-story red brick building with five, recessed segmentally-arched bays dividing the front facade. Topped by a slate-clad hipped roof, the design is exceptional in its execution and detail, particularly when compared to other western examples of the period. Although the design of the Manitou Springs building is truer to the traditional American Colonial, in its single-story interpretation, its use in Colorado is rare. A gable roof, upon which rests a wooden cupola, tops the five-bayed front facade. Two flat-arched

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window bays flank each side of the circular-arched entry bay. An exceptional feature of the Manitou Springs building is the use of local stone for the facade obtained by intensive local lobbying. The material is readily distinguishable as Manitou Greenstone (unlike nature marble used in other Colorado federal buildings), and the post office was the last building in the community using the stone prior to the closing of the quarry.

In summary, the buildings included in this nomination represent the of range of federal design philosophy in the first forty years of the twentieth century. From the buildings in this nomination, the transition in design, both philosophically and economically inspired, from the turn of the century to the end of a major federal building era can be traced from their use in Colorado cities. The Colorado Springs, Boulder, Trinidad and Fort Morgan buildings represent the beginning, those of the pre-1920 era and the Beaux-Arts tradition. The buildings in Sterling, Montrose, Canon City an Monte Vista represent the transition with strong roots in the Beaux-Arts; but foretelling the modern. Lamar, Florence and Delta exemplify the reduction of the Classical to the "Starved Classicism" of the 1930s. Finally Rifle and Manitou Springs represent the close, but with a return to more identifiable traditional forms. Each building included in the nomination is an integral element to the entire body represented in the Thematic Group.

These buildings although, in most cases using national building styles, also are important in the history of each community. The earlier buildings often coincided with the development of the core of the community. Those of the 1930s are associated with the Depression, and symbolize the economic assistance of Uncle Sam. Even more so, they symbolize the recognition by the federal government of the stability of the community.

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GLOSSARY OF STYLISTIC TERMS

This glossary will seek to clarify the terms used to identify architectural styles in this report. The process is complicated by a lack of consensus among architectural historians on what to call various styles, and by some confusion on the part of the buildings; architects themselves. Most of the Architects discussed in this report adhered to the "decorated shed" concept; that is, the shape of a building was pre-defined as a classical box, and the style could be determined by adding the appropriate ornament. The dates given for styles will be somewhat later than their eastern counterparts.

Beaux-Arts Classicism, 1890-1920:

This term is used rather loosely to describe buildings derivation of design ideology taught at the Ecole des Beaux Arts, the leading architecture and art school in France during the 19th and early 20th centuries. In this nomination, we are concerned with the last phase of that School, and more precisely of the American interpretation of that School. Though the term Classicism recalls antique Roman and Greek motifs, a more correct antecedent of the style is the French Baroque of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This was the dominant style of the 1893 World Columbian Exhibition in Chicago, and of the ensuing City Beautiful movement. The Monte Vista MPO is an example of this style.

Second Renaissance Revival, 1890-1920:

This, like the proceeding term, refers to an academic style, not at all incompatible with the Beaux-Arts style. The inspiration for this style derived from the Northern Italian Renaissance. The Montrose MPO is an example of the style derived from Michelangelo's architecture. The term refers not to a Second Renaissance, but to the Revival; the Renaissance enjoyed popularity earlier in the nineteenth century (1840-1890).

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Spanish Colonial Revival 1915-1940:

This term describes a style that enjoyed enormous popularity in many California communities and throughout the Southwest for residential and commercial architecture. Its antecedents were the buildings for Spanish and Mexican California and Spanish Mexico. Though similar in some way to the earlier Mission Style, the Spanish Colonial was more refined, used more applied ornament and had generally lighter proportions. The Lamar MPO is reflective of some aspects of this style.

Mediterranean, 1915-1940:

This term is used to describe eclectic buildings that combine Italianate, Spanish Colonial Revival, and other styles. It is also used as a general term to include the Spanish Colonial Revival. The Lamar MPO is of this style.

Art Deco, 1920-1930:

Art Deco was a decorative style, used extensively on commercial projects, especially in Southern California, New York and Florida. The style used sharp angles, and abstract and geometricized renderings of plant forms, and made extensive use of etched glass and expensive materials. As used in post office construction, the ornament usually recalled classical motifs, or standard federal motifs, such as stars and eagles.

Colonial Revivalism 1870-Present:

Colonial Revivalism often combines various Colonial styles and contemporary elements. In some cases individual elements are exaggerated or out of proportion with other parts of the building. In post office architecture it usually consists of Colonial motifs, eg. a cupola or pedimented entrance, applied to a standard Beaux-Arts/Starved Classical building form, as in Rifle and Manitou Springs. The Fort Morgan Post Office

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(1917), described in this nomination as Georgian/Colonial Revival, has a symmetrical composition and classical detailing, including a balustrade, Palladian window and pedimented entry with fluted columns, commonly associated with the Georgian Period (1700-1800). While this is essentially a variant of Colonial Revivalism, it is stylistically distinct from the post offices with Colonial Revival detailing built in the 1930s and early 1940s.

Starved Classicism, 1930-1942:

Also referred to as PWA Moderne by some writers, this was the dominant mode of government construction during the 1930s and its a direct descendant of the Supervising Architect's earlier Beaux-Arts inspired buildings. The facade and plan of these buildings remain symmetrical; the primary shift is in the ornament. Starved Classicism, in an effort to reduce costs and speed construction, eliminated or reduced ornament to a minimum. The ornament that was used often owed a stylistic debt to the Art Deco of the twenties, though sculpture tended almost exclusively to the Social Realism of the Treasury Department's Section of Fine Arts. The Delta MPO and Florence MPO are excellent examples of this style.

International Style, 1935-Present:

This term, coined in 1935 by Phillip Johnson and Henry Russell Hitchcock, originally referred to the designs of the European modernists: Ludwig Mies van der Rohe and Walter Gropius. When used in this nomination, it is meant to signify the work of such diverse modernists as Richard Neutra and R.M. Schindler, as well as the Miesien glass box.

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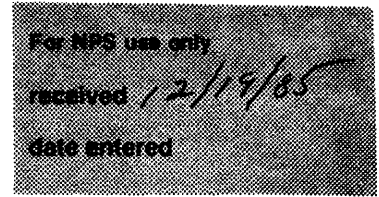
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Thematic Group

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State Boulder and other counties, COLORADO

*Cover* \_\_\_\_\_ *1/24/86*

Nomination/Type of Review

Date/Signature

1. Boulder Post Office

*Substantive Review* *for* Keeper

*William B. Bushong* *1/22/86*

Attest

2. Canon City Post Office  
and Federal Building

*Substantive Review* *for* Keeper

*William B. Bushong* *1/22/86*

Attest

3. Colorado Springs Post Office  
and Federal Courthouse

*Substantive Review* *for* Keeper

*William B. Bushong* *1/22/86*

Attest

*50* 4. Delta Post Office and Federal  
Building

*Substantive Review* *for* Keeper

*Ang A. [Signature]* *1/24/86*

Attest

5. Florence Post Office

*Substantive Review* *for* Keeper

*William B. Bushong* *1/22/86*

Attest

6. Fort Morgan Post Office

*Substantive Review* *for* Keeper

*William B. Bushong* *1/22/86*

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7. Lamar Post Office

*Substantive Review* *for* Keeper

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*50* 8. Manitou Springs Post Office

*Substantive Review* *for* Keeper

*Ang A. [Signature]* *1/24/86*

Attest

9. Monte Vista Post Office and  
Federal Building

*Substantive Review* *for* Keeper

*William B. Bushong* *1/22/86*

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10. Montrose Post Office

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Name U.S. Post Offices in Colorado 1900--1941 Thematic Resources  
State \_\_\_\_\_

Nomination/Type of Review

Date/Signature

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11. Rifle Post Office

Substantive Review Keeper

Chy [Signature] 1/24/86

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12. Sterling Post Office, Federal Building and Federal Courthouse

Substantive Review Keeper

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Attest

13. Trinidad Post Office

Substantive Review Keeper

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