**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR**

**NATIONAL PARK SERVICE**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES**

**INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

**FOR FEDERAL PROPERTIES**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN "HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS"

**TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS**

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### 1. NAME

**HISTORIC**

U. S. Post Office

**AND/OR COMMON**

Los Angeles Terminal Annex Post Office

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### 2. LOCATION

**STREET & NUMBER**

900 N. Alameda Street

**CITY, TOWN**

Los Angeles

**STATE**

California

**VICTINITY OF**

05

**COUNTY**

Los Angeles

**CODE**

037

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### 2. CLASSIFICATION

**CATEGORY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Building(s)</th>
<th>Structure</th>
<th>Site</th>
<th>Object</th>
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**OWNERSHIP**

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<th>Work in Progress</th>
<th>Accessibility</th>
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**PRESENT USE**

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<th>Commercial</th>
<th>Park</th>
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<th>Private Residence</th>
<th>Entertainment</th>
<th>Religious</th>
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<tr>
<th>Government</th>
<th>Industrial</th>
<th>Transportation</th>
<th>Other</th>
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**ADDRESS**

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### 3. AGENCY

**REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS (If applicable)**

U. S. Postal Service, Western Regional Office

**STREET & NUMBER**

850 Cherry Avenue

**CITY, TOWN**

San Bruno

**STATE**

California

**VICTINITY OF**

94099

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### 5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

**COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.**

Los Angeles County Recorder

**STREET & NUMBER**

227 N. Broadway

**CITY, TOWN**

Los Angeles

**STATE**

California

**VICTINITY OF**

90017

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### 6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

**TITLE**

Los Angeles Rapid Rail Project Survey and Determination of Eligibility

**DATE**

Determined eligible 5/24/83

**DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS**

U. S. Urban Mass Transportation Administration

**CITY, TOWN**

Los Angeles

**STATE**

CA
The Terminal Annex, in terms of usable square footage, is the largest building included in this nomination. Though the structure is anomalous in scale, its architecture is consistent with 1930s post office construction throughout California. The building is an eclectic mix of Mission and Spanish Colonial Revival Styles, with elements of Pueblo and Islamic.

LOCAL CONTEXT

The Terminal Annex facility is located one block northeast of El Pueblo de Los Angeles State Historic Park near the center of older Los Angeles. The area includes Chinatown to the west and north, Union Station to the south, and substantial older industrial and commercial uses in the periphery. In addition to the age and significance of these abutting uses, there is substantial new development underway in Chinatown and the area easterly of Union Station is under consideration as a part of the proposed Metro Rail Project for Los Angeles. In general, this is an area of great complexity and importance.

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

The building appears to be in excellent structural condition, and is being well maintained. The Terminal Annex building is an example of a simplified version of the Spanish Colonial Revival style which was the dominant idiom of government construction in the 1930s in Southern California. The two domes, placed near the front of the building, are covered with blue and tan glazed terracotta tiles, and rest on hexagonal drums. Stylistically, the domes are tied to both Spanish Baroque and Islamic traditions. Large canales, or waterspouts, are placed along the front and side elevations just below the third-floor cornice. Concrete buttresses add structural stability, and recall elements of Spanish Colonial design as seen in some California missions. The thickness of the walls is emphasized by incising the entrances and windows into the wall surface; the general effect recalls the thick, buttressed adobe walls seen in Spanish Colonial design throughout California. The bronze doors at the public entrances are richly detailed, though they relate stylistically to Beaux-Arts design of the first decades of the twentieth century. The ceiling in the public lobby is formed in a cast-concrete imitation of vaulting, which divides the lobby into vaguely defined bays. The design of the terrazzo floor reflects this division of the lobby, with an ornamental double-triangle motif in white and green outlining each bay. The center of each bay is marked by a design in red, black, yellow, white, and green terrazzo, and resembles Southwestern American Indian textile decorative motifs.

ALTERATIONS

A large addition, which bears no stylistic resemblance to the original structure, was constructed on the north side of the building in the 1960s. The south side of the building acquired a flamboyant, but more compatible, fire escape in the early 1970s. The original service windows have been removed and replaced with plastic laminate topped service counters and self-service areas. Several bays of new lockboxes have been added on the southern portion of the lobby, and the original lobby light fixtures have been replaced with new incandescent fixtures. The site is landscaped with olive and palm trees, trimmed shrubs, and mown grass, all of which are well cared for.
### Specific Dates

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<th>Period</th>
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**Builder/Architect:** Gilbert Stanley Underwood

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### Statement of Significance

The Terminal Annex's exceptional significance resides in several areas, including its architecture, its urban design impact on the surrounding area, and in its lobby murals. The Annex represents a building type transitional between the decentralized mail handling systems of the years before 1940, and the highly centralized and increasingly mechanized systems used after the Second World War. In combination with the Union Passenger Terminal to the south and El Pueblo de Los Angeles State Park, the Terminal Annex takes on an urban design focus it would not otherwise have; it is an essential part of this historic section of Los Angeles. The lobby murals date from the end of the New Deal public art programs, and are examples of one of the larger commissions awarded during the program.

### Architecture

The Los Angeles Terminal Annex is the newest building included in this nomination, and is, at present, 46 years old. The building is nevertheless eligible for inclusion in the National Register because of its exceptional significance.

By 1937, most federal construction, whether designed by the Office of the Supervising Architect or by private architects, was in the Starved Classical style. The anomalous use of the Spanish Colonial Revival in the Terminal Annex relates to the buildings constructed during the Mexican period in the nearby Plaza de Los Angeles and Olvera Street, a part of Los Angeles now included in El Pueblo de Los Angeles State Historic Park. The building retains the rigid symmetry, monumental proportions, and minimal ornament of the Starved classical, and could be called a "Starved Spanish" design.

Gilbert Stanley Underwood, Architect:
A prominent Los Angeles architect, Underwood received numerous commissions for federal projects in the 1930s. He designed most of his structures in a simple, unadorned style fully compatible with the Starved Classicism of the Supervising Architect's office.

### Community Planning

Apart from the important urban design relationship the building has with El Pueblo de Los Angeles State Historic Park, the siting of the Terminal Annex and Union Station fundamentally changed the character of the immediately surrounding area. By the late 1930s, the site was covered by multi-story tenement buildings, occupied mostly by Americans of Chinese descent, and marked the eastern border of Los Angeles' Chinatown.

*The property was determined eligible for listing in the National Register on 5/24/83.*
MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Building records: progress photographs, blueprints.

GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: 3.75

UTM REFERENCES

ZONE EASTING NORTHING

A 1,1 5990 295
C

ZONE EASTING NORTHING

B
D

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Los Angeles County Assessor's Map Book 5409, p. 15, Kerckoff, Cuzner and Co. tract. M.R. 6-565, Parcels: 902 (lots A, B, 27-732); 903 (unnumbered lot); 904 (lots 4-13); 905 (lots 14-23); 900.

The site is an irregular trapezoid with a 916' frontage on Macy Street, and an original 168' frontage on Alameda Street.

FORM PREPARED BY

Doug Robertson, Planner

ORGANIZATION

Beland/Associates, Inc.

STREET & NUMBER

16 South Oakland Avenue, Suite 204

CITY OR TOWN

Pasadena

DATE

April 27, 1984

TELEPHONE

818-796-8093

STATE

California 91101

CERTIFICATION OF NOMINATION

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER RECOMMENDATION

YES___ NO___ NONE___

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

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

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

1/1/85
The lobby contains twelve murals painted between 1941 and 1943 by Boris Deutsch, a well known project artist. Most of the murals painted between 1941 and 1943 depict various Meso-American Indian cultures and people. Two of the 1943 murals depict the Spanish colonization of California— one showing settlers with domestic animals and wagons, and another showing the Franciscan Father Junipero Serra with several Mission Indians. Two murals painted in 1943 depict modern scientists studying astronomy and chemistry. One 1944 mural shows modern telecommunications, and the last mural, also painted in 1944, depicts American military men, ships, and guns.

Item 8

Terminal Annex and Union Station site was razed, the Chinatown area was constrained to areas to the north and west of the post office site. Terminal Annex is directly north of the Union Passenger Terminal, constructed in 1939 in a Spanish/Streamline Moderne style. These two large buildings form a major focus, and eastern terminus, of the Pueblo de Los Angeles area.

ART

The murals conform to the representational style which was standard for Federal Art Project murals. Iconographically, the bulk of the murals seem to depict the history of Central America and California. Deutsch was apparently concerned primarily with cultural history, and so chose to depict Central American Indian cultures, which loom large in Mexico's popular consciousness and in the art of such painters as Orozco and Rivera. By depicting Mexican Indian cultures and the Spanish settlement of California, he provides an alternative to the Anglo concept of settlement and civilization in the Americas. The military mural is anomalous, and appears to have been painted last in a show of patriotic fervor. The murals depicting the scientific pursuits of the twentieth century compliment the scenes depicting the scenes of ceremonial and daily life in pre-European contact America. The juxtaposition of the murals suggests that Deutsch considered the ceremonies surrounding technology are analogous to earlier Indian ceremonies.

The iconography of the Terminal Annex murals is highly unusual for post office murals, and Deutsch employed an expressionistic style that was on the fringe of the accepted representationalism. The murals possess exceptional significance on the local level, in the context of Los Angeles' Spanish, Mexican, and native American history. The murals are significant on the state level for their unusually large size, as examples of expressionism in Federal Art Project murals, and for their unusual iconography.
Note: Post office site outlined in red.

Source: Sanborn Map, Los Angeles Book, Vol. 3, page 304, 1923-52; Geography Map Library, California State University, Northridge, CA.