

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

FOR FEDERAL PROPERTIES

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

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

1 NAME

HISTORIC

U.S. Post Office

AND/OR COMMON

Porterville Main Post Office

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

65 West Mill Avenue

NA NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Porterville

NA VICINITY OF

1

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

STATE

California

CODE

06

COUNTY

Tulare

CODE

107

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)

U.S. Postal Service, Western Regional Office

STREET & NUMBER

850 Cherry Avenue

CITY, TOWN

San Bruno

NA VICINITY OF

STATE

California

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,

REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Tulare County Clerk/Recorder

STREET & NUMBER

County Civic Center

CITY, TOWN

Visalia

STATE

California

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

A Guide to Architecture in Los Angeles and Southern California,

DATE

(David Gebhard and Robert Winter, published by Peregrine Smith, Inc.)

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

C/o Dr. David Gebhard, Dept. of Art History
University of California

CITY, TOWN

Santa Barbara

STATE

California

7 DESCRIPTION

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

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The design of the Porterville Post Office is strongly influenced by the angular Art Deco of the 1920s. The basic form of the building conforms to the symmetrical box of the Supervising Architect's Office, with applied terracotta Art Deco ornament. The use of extruded aluminum for the muntins and mullions is of particular note, as are the two geometricized, nautically-inspired lanterns at the front entrance.

LOCAL CONTEXT

Porterville, located in California's San Joaquin Valley, is 71 miles south of Fresno on California State Highway Route 65. The town was platted in 1865, and had a 1982 population of approximately 21,500. Porterville is surrounded by agricultural areas, and has been a shipping center for citrus and other produce since the arrival of the railroad in the 1880s. The town's economy remains dependent on the surrounding agricultural areas. The fire station and city hall, located two blocks from the post office, are built in a simplified Art Deco style compatible with that of the post office. The monumnetal scale and extensive decoration seen in the post office building are unique in the Porterville area.

Review of past records and conversations with the local postmaster revealed no persons or events which wuld lend either local or regional historic significance to the property. The structure is not within a designated historic district, though its proximity to the contemporary Porterville City Hall and City Fire Station places it in a de facto historic district.

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The structure is constructed of brick and concrete blocks and has spread concrete footings with reinforced concrete floors. The above-grade foundation is faced with granite ashlar. It is topped with a gree terracotta tile roof. Specific features of note include:

- o Ornamental terracotta plaques above windows. The semicircular forms in these decorations could be read as representational of either flowers or sunrises/sunsets;
- o Fluted peirs supporting front facade frieze;
- o Terracotta frieze over front entrance. An acanthus leaf and rising sun pattern appears directly over each of the fluted peirs, vague;y recalling Corinthian capitals. Two stern eagles flank an octagonal marble panel; the entire pattern is repeated over each span flanking the front entrance;
- o Cast almunium plaques under windows on frant facade;

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Item 7

Physical Appearance, continued

- Lanterns flanking front entrance. Note especially the contrast of curved lines with sharp angular geometry. The polished aluminum lantern recalls a light-house or buoy, and a vegetative pattern is represented in the glass covering the lamp.

The applied ornament is representational in content, though there is a strong tendency toward geometric abstraction in style. This combination of form and content was common in Art Deco ornament.

Iconographically, the eagle and acanthus leaf pattern recalls imperial roman archetypes, and the rising sun was a standard motif of the Art Deco style.

Work began on the building in January of 1933; construction was completed in November of that year. The original site survey (attached) indicates that the site was occupied by a wood frame house, which was demolished when construction of the post office began. Due to excavations for the basement, it is unlikely that any trace of this structure remains. No additional archaeological or paleontologic resources are known to exist within or adjacent to the subject property. Subsurface investigation or additional research do not appear to be warranted.

The ornamental terracotta and cast aluminum have no counterparts in the Porterville area, and are, in fact, typical of more urbanized areas such as San Francisco or Los Angeles. The terracotta roof is unusual for buildings in this style, though it is consistent with the local vernacular version of the Mission Revival style.

The lobby occupies the northern half of the building footprint. A black and white marble floor originally complimented a series of cast bronze drop lights, but new fluorescent fixtures have been installed. A marble wainscoting extends roughly three feet up the lobby walls. The service counters are located on the south wall of the lobby, and the postmaster's office is on the northeast corner. The workroom is directly behind the service counter, and originally had a maple floor.

ALTERATIONS

A remodeling campaign in 1965 added additional square footage to the workroom on the south end of the structure. From the exterior, the remodeling has been consistent with the original style of the building. The interior lobby, workroom, and office spaces have been completely remodeled; only the black and white tile floor and marble wainscoting in the public lobby have been retained.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

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

SPECIFIC DATES **Begun 1933,
completed 1937**

BUILDER/ARCHITECT **H. Rafael Lake**

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Porterville Main Post Office is important on both the state and local levels. The structure is the most sophisticated Art Deco building in Porterville, and is one of two public buildings in the town: the other being the WPA-sponsored City Hall. The post office is one of three overtly Art Deco post offices remaining in the state, and is artistically successful within the constraints of the Art Deco aesthetic. The use of extruded aluminum in the building is precocious, and antedates general use of the material by at least ten years.

ARCHITECTURE

The exterior elevations of the Porterville Main Post Office retain substantial integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. The 1965 remodeling altered the interior workroom space, though the exterior was compatible with the original style. The lobby has been extensively remodeled, and retains no integrity or significance. The front elevation is important in its own right.

Though the ornament is heavily influenced by Art Deco motifs, the composition of the front elevation strongly suggests the influence of the developing Starved Classical style. The Porterville Main Office is one of three post offices constructed in the early thirties in agricultural areas of California using strongly Art Deco inspired ornament. These buildings may represent an attempt by the Supervising Architect's Office to develop a style suitable to smaller projects, using a standardized floor plan and simple detail.

The use of cast aluminum ornament is unusual, as are the extruded aluminum mullions in the front elevation.

Lake maintained his architectural office in Fresno, and designed small commercial and residential structures in towns throughout the Central Valley.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Lake, H. Rafael, "Mennonite Brethern Church, Reedley, California",
Architect and Engineer, Vol. 191, Dec. 1952.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 1.0

UTM REFERENCES

A 10 318520 3393460
ZONE EASTING NORTHING

B
ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C

D

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Site not subdivided. Lot is portion of east half of southeast quarter of Section 26 of Township 21 South, Range 27 East. Tulare County Assessor's No. 252-198-07. The site occupies the north half of the block, and has a 120' frontage on D Street, a 236' frontage on Mill Street, and a 120' frontage on Hockett Street.

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

Doug Robertson, Planner

ORGANIZATION

Beland/Associates, Inc.

DATE

April 27, 1984

STREET & NUMBER

16 South Oakland Avenue, Suite 204

TELEPHONE

(818) 796-8093

CITY OR TOWN

Pasadena

STATE

California

12 CERTIFICATION OF NOMINATION

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER RECOMMENDATION

YES NO NONE

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

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

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

TITLE

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION
ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

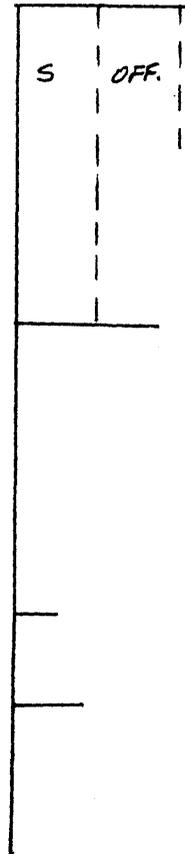
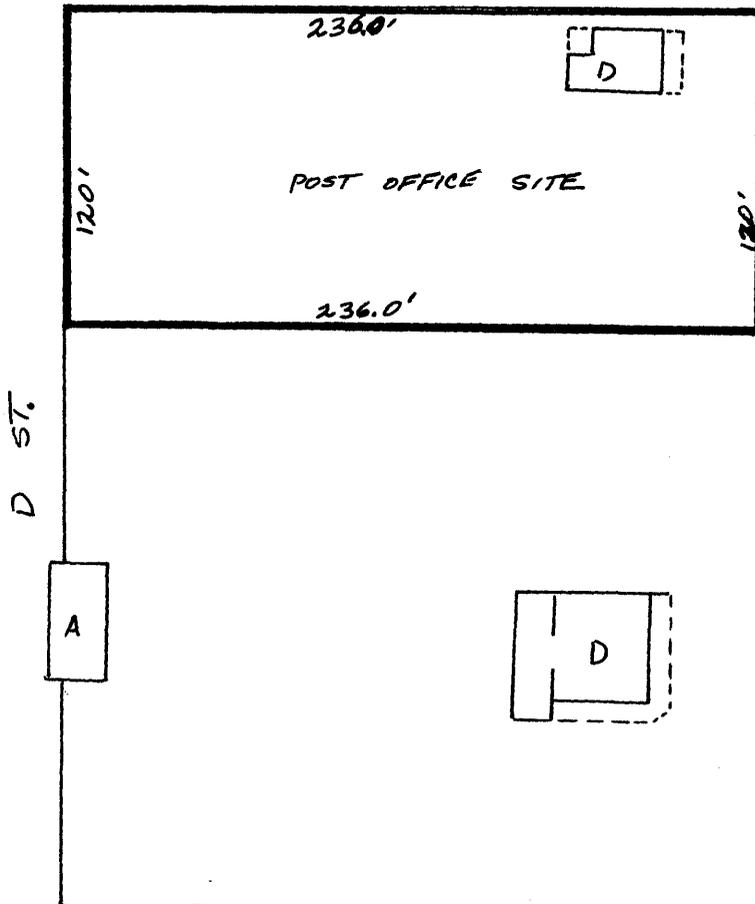
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CONTINUATION SHEET Porterville MPO ITEM NUMBER 10 PAGE two



MILL ST.



note: Post office site outlined in red.

Source: Sanbor Map, Porterville Book, page 12, 1925; Geography Dept Calif. State Univ., Northridge, Calif.

Structure shown was on the site prior to the construction of the Post office

