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

NAME

HISTORIC
U.S. Post Office, The Dalles, Oregon
AND/OR COMMON
U.S. Post Office, The Dalles, Oregon

LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER
100 West Second Street

NA VICTINITY OF
The Dalles

STATE
Oregon
41
Wasco
065

CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

OWNERSHIP

PUBLIC

STATUS

X OCCUPIED

PRESENT USE

X AGRICULTURE

PRIVATE

COMMERCIAL

BUILDING(S)

UNOCCUPIED

PARK

STRUCTURE

WORK IN PROGRESS

EDUCATIONAL

SITE

ACCESSIBLE

PRIVATE RESIDENCE

OBJECT

X YES: RESTRICTED

OTHER:

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

X YES: UNRESTRICTED

INDUSTRIAL

X IN PROCESS

TRANSPORTATION

X BEING CONSIDERED

GOVERNMENT

NO

SCIENTIFIC

MILITARY

OTHER:

AGENCY

REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS: (If applicable)
U.S. Postal Service

STREET & NUMBER
850 Cherry Avenue

NA VICTINITY OF
San Bruno

STATE
California 94099

LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.
Wasco County Assessor's Office

STREET & NUMBER
5th and Washington

CITY, TOWN
The Dalles

STATE
Oregon 97058

REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE
Federal Government Buildings in Oregon

DATE
July, 1968

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS
Oregon State Historic Preservation Office

CITY, TOWN
Salem

STATE
Oregon 97310
The Dalles Post Office is a well preserved and unaltered example of the Classical design style. The sandstone building is two stories in height on a raised basement and is symmetrical in elevation. A colonnade of colossal order fronts the recessed entry and window bays of the central portion of the building. The central section is flanked by identical flat single-bayed wings. The building is topped by a low metal clad hipped roof, which is obscured by the balustraded parapet wall.

Physical Appearance

The basement footings consist of concrete with brick piers and foundation walls. The floors of the basement and first floor are poured concrete. The walls of the first and second floors are brick reinforced with steel framing and faced (exterior) with Tenino sandstone. A metal covered hipped roof covers the main portion of the building, while the rear flat roof over the mailing platform consists of tar composition. Granite is used for the main entry stairs and a portion of the mailing platform. Wrought iron and cast iron are used for grilles, railings, and other detailing.

The Dalles post office is two stories in height, symmetrical in plan, and classically proportioned. The basic design style is Classical Revival, Greek. The front facade (north) is dominated by a colonnade of colossal order (more than one story). Four smooth, tapered columns (of sandstone) with Corinthian capitals create a monumental entry porch. Square pilasters with Corinthian capitals form the exterior corners of the entry porch. The ends of the buildings each contain two double hung wood sash windows (6-over-6 on the second floor, located directly above the 12-over-12 first floor windows).

Quions, slightly raised, delineate the building's corners. The columns support a relatively simple entablature with nominal frieze ornamentation (raised circles aligned with columns). Molded dentils hang from the underside of the cornice. The parapet consists of balustrade (sandstone) aligned over the entry porch with a solid wall over the ends of the building.

The main entry door is framed by a sandstone molding which projects slightly from the facade. Pilasters with Corinthian capitals support a simple entablature over the door frame. A panel "Post Office" separates the double aluminum (with single glass panels in each with raised letters) doors and cast iron hypaethrum. (The original doors were replaced in the 1960s.)

Flanking each side of the doors on the first floor level are two double hung wood sash windows (12-over-12 lights). Five equally spaced double hung wood sash windows (8-over-8 lights) are located at the second floor level. Other entry features include wrought iron ballisters between the porch columns, granite steps, and flanking sandstone buttresses extending from the front facade to the sidewalk. A cast iron light standard is set on each of the buttresses. The light standards are embellished by an ornate leafwork pattern and topped by a milk glass globe.
The east (along Union) and west facades are identical. The main portion of the building is two stories in height with a relatively flat facade of sandstone. Quions (slightly raised) delineate the corners. Three windows, equally spaced, are located at the first floor level. These windows are double hung wood sash (12-over-12). The smaller second floor windows (8-over-8) are aligned with the first floor windows. The entablature detailing is identical to the front facade. The parapet wall is solid sandstone block. A rear wing, one story in height, extends from the rear of the main building. This wing is also of cut sandstone. Two Venetian windows with flat arch dominate the facade of this wing (double hung wood sash, 9-over-9, with 3-over-3 side lights). A simple cornice tops the wall. A glass enclosed mailing vestibule extends from the rear wing to the alley. The windows are multi-paned set in wood sash. The roof of both the rear wing and mailing vestibule are flat, built-up tar composition.

The lobby is ornately detailed with ceramic tile floor edged with grey marble, green marble base molding, and wood panel (white oak) walls. Square pilasters with ionic capitals support exposed oak ceiling beams. The beams are framed by oak molding and embellished with denticulation. Other interior materials include:

* Post master's office: vinyl asbestos tile floor, plaster walls, and ceiling;
* Work room: hardwood floors, plaster walls with wainscoting, and plaster ceiling;
* Swing room: concrete floors, plaster walls, and ceiling; and
* Rest rooms: terrazzo floors with marble border, plaster walls with 6-foot high marble wainscoting, and plaster ceiling.
The Dalles Post Office represents an outstanding example of early 20th Century federal construction in the Classical design motif. The use of the colonnade fronting the recessed entry section is the sole example of such use in post office construction in the State of Oregon (and one of two such examples in northwest post office construction, the other located in Vancouver, Washington (1916)).

Architecture

The Dalles Post Office was the first federal building constructed in the city of The Dalles and one of nine constructed in the State of Oregon between 1910 and 1920. It (along with the Pendleton post office and courthouse, also included in this nomination) is one of the two remaining postal facilities from this era administered and operated by the U.S. Postal Service in the state. As with most all its counterparts, the building was constructed from standardized plans under the direction of Supervising Architect Oscar Wenderoth. The design of this relatively small building is well executed and the construction displays fine craftsmanship in its stonework. Particularly outstanding is the monumental entrance—provided by four smooth columns topped with corinthian capitals—which manifests the dignity of the federal presence in the city.

Local Context

Lewis and Clark camped at The Dalles in 1805. They were followed by David Thompson, Dr. Marcus Whitman, and Rev. H.H. Spalding. A Methodist mission was established in 1838. In 1843, 800 people arrived by wagon after traveling the Oregon Trail (The Dalles is the end of the Oregon Trail). The Whitman Massacre in 1847 led to the establishment of a stockade at The Dalles. The first post office was established in 1851, and steamboat service began in 1854. The discovery of gold in Eastern Oregon in 1860 created a boom as gold seekers used The Dalles as an outfitting center. The Dalles maintained its position as the trade and commercial center of the region and grew rapidly from a population of 972 in 1870 to 2,232 in 1880. The Dalles received a setback in the early 1880s when the Oregon Railroad and Navigation Company moved its shops to Portland. The city continued to grow, however, with populations of 3,029 in 1890 and 3,542 by the turn of the century. Railroads again played an important role in The Dalles history between 1907 and 1910 when James J. Hill constructed his lines through the area. By 1910 the population had reached 4,480 and expanded to 5,807 in 1920. The Dalles today is the hub of the area's agricultural industry. The Dalles Dam and port district also foster industry related to river transportation. The Dalles 1980 population was 10,900.
MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES
1) Blueprints and construction documents.

GEOGRAPHICAL DATA
ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 0.33 acres

ZONE EASTING NORTHING
A 0.0 6,4,11,0,5 5,0,5,11,2,6,5
B
C
D

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION
The NE 1/4 of Block B, Trevitts Addition to Dalles City. The site is rectangular in shape with a frontage of 143' 2" along Second Street and a depth of 100' along Union Street.

FORM PREPARED BY
H.J. Kolva, Senior Associate
Haworth and Anderson, Inc.
Institute for Urban and Local Studies
West 705 First Avenue
Spokane, Washington 99204

CERTIFICATION OF NOMINATION
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 ___.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER 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
The Dalles Post Office is located near the west end of the city's central business district. It lies within a commercial zone and is surrounded by commercial uses: to the west, motel; to the north, machine shop, parking lot, auto repair; to the east, auto repair and various retail; and to the south, masonic lodge and various commercial. The Masonic Lodge, adjacent to the post office to the south, was the second Wasco County Courthouse. This two-story brick building (Italianate style) was constructed in 1881 and is on the local and state historic registers. The old courthouse and the post office (also included on both the local and state historic registers) are included in a proposed historic district and overlay zone (which would include only the two structures). The other immediately surrounding structures are of recent vintage and of conflicting architectural character.

Local News Coverage of The Dalles Post Office Construction

The history of the planning and construction of The Dalles federal building was reported in The Dalles Weekly Chronicle between April of 1910 and July of 1916. On April 15, 1910 the Chronicle reported that Congressman William R. Ellis had recommended an appropriation for a public building at The Dalles to the Public Buildings Committee.

On June 10, 1910 the Chronicle quoted Representative Ellis as stating he was reasonably sure that he could secure an appropriation for a federal building site in The Dalles that year and that there was a good chance he could get an appropriation for the building itself in the next session of Congress. The article noted that The Dalles held an advantage over some cities seeking the funding for federal buildings in that good land was available and a suitable parcel could be secured soon after the appropriation for the site was made. It also noted that many had suggested that the county property east of the Hotel Dalles would make an ideal site for the new federal building.

Two weeks later (June 24, 1910) the Chronicle reported that the Senate Public Buildings Committee had retained the House Committee proposal to appropriate $80,000 for a site and the construction of a building on the site in The Dalles. No funding was appropriated, however.

On July 8, 1910 the Chronicle ran an article focusing on the desirability of selecting a site for the new federal building as soon as possible. It was noted that Postmaster Edgar Hostetler had been making inquiries about possible sites and had found several desirable locations. However, the prices were in some cases prohibitive, having increased by $6,000 or $7,000 within the last year. The article also noted that the city's merchants generally wanted the site to be in the heart of the business section and would probably cost in the neighborhood of $11,000 or $12,000.
On November 23, 1910 the Chronicle reported that a city council meeting had been called at the request of J.W. Hill of Portland, who had been appointed by the government to select the sites for the federal buildings in The Dalles and Portland. Mr. Hill had asked the city to set a price for a parcel it owned along Third Street, between Washington and Court. The article stated that the locally favored building site included this city parcel and adjacent parcels consisting of a flat building owned by a Mr. Condon (priced at $15,000) and a home owned by the Brogans (priced at $7,500). The Chronicle reported that several businessmen had subscribed a few thousand dollars to enable the federal government to secure this site for $12,000 to $15,000. The three-parcel site would provide 174 feet of frontage along Third Street.

On January 12, 1912 the Chronicle reported that the Wasco County Treasurer had received a $14,000 check for the county-owned site just north of the courthouse and that the new federal building would thus be erected on the parcel east of the Hotel Dalles. It was not known at that time just when construction would begin, but it was thought that ground would be broken in the early spring.

On March 22, 1912 the Chronicle announced that a bill had been introduced by Congressman A.M. Lafferty to increase the appropriation for the site and building by $24,000, bringing the total amount of the appropriation to $104,000. The Business Men's Association had urged the Congressman to ask for an additional $14,000, and the Department of the Treasury had pointed out that the building could be fireproofed for $10,000 more. The Congressman opted to ask for the full $24,000. On April 24th the Chronicle announced that the bill including the requested addition had been passed by Congress.

Bids for the federal building construction were opened in November, 1914. Thirteen firms had submitted bids, with Campbell Construction Company of Salt Lake City the low bidder with a bid of $79,468. On February 13, 1915 the Chronicle reported that the contract had been let to George Issackson of Portland with a bid of $79,658.

An article that appeared in the Chronicle on February 25, 1915 described the proposed structure in some detail, declaring that it would be a "handsome structure" with six massive stone columns from the top to the bottom of the two-story front, with a sandstone exterior. The building was to be completely fireproof, with a steel frame and front steps and porch constructed of granite. The interior finish would be of yellow pine and oak, with marble and terrazzo floors and marble wainscotting and stairs.

The March 25, 1915 issue of the Chronicle noted that ground had been broken for the federal building. The next mention of the construction is in the July 3rd issue, which reported that there had been a delay relating to the stone for the structure, as a communication from Senator George E. Chamberlain indicated that the government could not decide on what stone to use; Tenino sandstone was then under consideration. In the December 2nd issue it was announced that Oregon fir had been selected for the federal building over southern yellow pine.
The modified plans for the building were described in the December 16, 1915 edition of the Chronicle, where it was noted that the $100,000 structure would have everything for the convenience of the local postal force, including a hot air system "second to none on the coast." The outer architecture of the building was said to follow "the simple, yet elegant Greek style." The immense front columns, with solid stone handsomely-cut ornaments, the wide windows and the spacious front steps, will mark the structure as one of the handsomest in the city." It was also pointed out that the building would be a decidedly attractive addition to the part of the city in which it was to be situated.

On July 13, 1916 the Chronicle reported that the federal building was to be in use soon. The July 27th issue announced that the public could view the handsome structure Friday of that week and that the building would open the following Monday. The U.S. Land Office was to move to the new building on Saturday. A number of prominent citizens had been invited to participate in the opening ceremonies.