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### **United States Department of the Interior** National Park Service

JAN 1 7 1990

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines* for Completing National Register Forms (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

(Point 10-900a). Type all entities.					
1. Name of Property					
historic name Truth or Conseq	uences Main	Post Offic	ce		
other names/site number Original				e	
2. Location					
street & number 400 Main Stree	t		N	/A Inot	for publication
city, town Truth or Conse				/A U vici	nity
state New Mexico code NM		Sierra	code	051	zip code 87901
11011 1111					
3. Classification					
Ownership of Property C	ategory of Property		Number of R	esources w	vithin Property
	building(s)		Contributing		contributing
public-local	district		1		buildings
public-State	site				sites
X public-Federal	structure		<del></del>		structures
public-1 cacitai	object				objects
L			1		Objects
Name of related multiple property listing:			Number of or		<del></del>
Historia II S Dost Office	oc in Now M	ovi ao		_	resources previously
Historic U.S. Post Offic 1900-1941	es III New Me	exico,	iisted in the i	National ne	egister0
4. State/Federal Agency Certificatio					
In my opinion, the property meets  Signature of certifying official  In my opinion, the property meets  State or Federal agency and bureau  In my opinion, the property meets  Signature of commenting or other official  Historic Preservation Dix  State or Federal agency and bureau  State or Federal agency and bureau	does not meet the	National Registe  National Registe  of Cultural	er criteria. S	See continua	ation sheet.
State of Federal agency and bureau St	ate of New Mex	K1CO			
5. National Park Service Certificatio	n				
I, hereby, certify that this property is:					
entered in the National Register.  See continuation sheet.  determined eligible for the National	Beth "	Boland			2/23/90
Register. See continuation sheet.					
determined not eligible for the	-				
National Register.					
. attoriar riogister.					
removed from the National Register.					
other, (explain:)					
	_				
		Signature of the k	Gener		Date of Action

6. Function or Use	
Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)	Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)
Post Office	Post Office
7. Description	
Architectural Classification (enter categories from instructions)	Materials (enter categories from instructions)
	foundation Concrete
Classical Revival	walls <u>Cast concrete</u>
	roof <u>Tar composition</u>
	other <u>Cast concrete</u>

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Truth or Consequences Main Post Office is a onestory concrete building which rests upon a raised basement platform. The front elevation is flat, symmetrical, and Classically-proportioned. Five flat-arched bays divide the facade--two window bays on each side of a centered entry bay. Facade detailing is nominal. The building is topped by a flat roof.

#### PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The building's structure consists of reinforced concrete footings, floors slabs, and basement and first floor walls. In sum, the entire building, except the structural steel framing and roof, is reinforced poured in-place concrete. This also includes facade detailing. The roof is flat built-up tar composition.

The front facade (north-facing Main Street) is horizontal in orientation and symmetrically-arranged. Five bays divide the facade -- a centered entry bay with two window bays on each side. The entry bay contains two wooden doors each with a recessed panel in the lower half and a six-light glass panel above. Set over the doors is a wooden doorhead with a wood sash three-light transom window above. Flat concrete pilasters separate the entry bay and immediately flanking window bays. These windows bays, as does the entry bay, extend from the water table to a slightly projecting belt Above the tops of the window and door sash are bas relief panels (also cast concrete) depicting a locomotive, an airplane, and a steamship. Below the concrete sills are recessed concrete panels. Extending horizontally across the facade at the tops and bottoms of the window sash are two narrow grooves incised in the wall. The sash is double-hung wood with three-over-three lights (vertically-oriented with narrow sidelights flanking a wider center light). The outside window bays rise to the tops of the sash flanking the entry bay. Although the sash has the same vertical dimension as and is configured identically to the interior bays, it is

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narrower. Plain recessed concrete panels lie beneath these bays with the cornerstone in the left panel. Incised letters "UNITED STATES POST OFFICE" above and "TRUTH OR CONSEQUENCES NEW MEXICO" below are centered over the entry. (Note: this lettering is on a cast concrete panel which has been placed over the original inscription "HOT SPRINGS NEW MEXICO.") Six concrete steps and a concrete landing flanked by square concrete buttresses provide access to the main entry. On the right side is a concrete handicap ramp.

The east and west facades are also concrete, detailed similarly to the front. Both are divided into four equally-spaced window bays. In the east facade (along Jones Street) however, the second bay from the front is a recessed niche without a window. On each side of the niche is a small, narrow, vertically-aligned wood sash window with one-over-one lights. The other sash and detailing is identical to that of the end bays of the front.

The rear facade is also solid concrete and consists of a centered, rearward projecting loading platform with two window bays flanking each side. The windows are detailed identically to those of the side facades. A square concrete chimney, which projects several feet above the parapet, is at the southwest corner of the building. A small window, identical to those of the east facade, is in the southeast corner. The platform is concrete and enclosed on the south and west sides by concrete walls. The east side of the platform contains the open loading bay and a single pedestrian door. A flat metal roof with projecting marquee covers the platform.

8. Statement of Significance	
Certifying official has considered the significance of this property	in relation to other properties: tewide X locally
Applicable National Register Criteria X A B X C X	D
Criteria Considerations (Exceptions)	D TE TF XG
Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)  Architecture  Politics/government  Art	Period of Significance  1940 -1941  Const1940
	Cultural Affiliation N/A
Significant Person N/A	Architect/Builder Louis A. Simon, Supervising Arch- itect/Federal government

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The Truth or Consequences Main Post Office is an unaltered example of a small town single-purpose post office. The design of the building, which can be termed Starved Classical, is a standard design that was frequently used The same design, in fact, was used in throughout the West. Portales and Deming. This particular building, however, is one of the rare examples in which the design was executed in poured-in-place concrete. The building was the first and is the only federally-constructed post office in the city. is symbolic of the federal government's recognition of the city's regional importance. Constructed during the massive federal public buildings programs of the Depression era, it is also a legacy of the government's response to that national economic emergency. The lobby of the building contains a mural, "The Indian Bear Dance," executed by Boris Deutsch, winner of the Fine Arts section of the Federal Works Agency 48-state competition. It too, carries a strong association with the relief programs of the Depression.

#### **ARCHITECTURE**

The building was designed from standardized plans developed by the Office of the Supervising Architect. The movement to standardize buildings, which had been debated in the Office since the early-1900s, became the rule during the Depression era. Standardization could provide economies as well as expedite the construction of the vast number of federal relief projects. Based on the Classical box and stripped of significant historical architectural detailing, the building exemplifies the term "Starved Classical." Although the post offices in Portales and Deming are of the same design, executed in brick with stone detailing, the

9. Major Bibliographical References	
1. Sierra County Advocate (Truth or 1934-1940.	Consequences), various articles
<ol> <li>History of Sierra County, NM. Tr County Historical Society, Inc.,</li> </ol>	ruth or Consequences, NM: Sierra 1979.
<ol> <li>Construction Progress Photographs (monthly).</li> </ol>	s - July 28, 1939 - December 1939
4. Original Floor Plans - 1939.	
	See continuation sheet
Previous documentation on file (NPS):  preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested previously listed in the National Register previously determined eligible by the National Register designated a National Historic Landmark recorded by Historic American Buildings	Primary location of additional data:  State historic preservation office Other State agency Federal agency Local government University
Survey # recorded by Historic American Engineering	Other
Record #	Specify repository: USPS Facilities Service Center
	San Bruno, CA 94099-0330
10. Geographical Data	
Acreage of property 0.26	
UTM References  A 1 3 2 8 9 8 4 0 3 6 6 7 7 4 0  Zone Easting Northing	B Zone Easting Northing D
Quadrangle name: Chuchillo	See continuation sheet
Verbal Boundary Description	
The site is legally described as Lots adjacent to Lot 1, Block 96, Original the southwest corner of Main Street an 119 feet of frontage along Jones Stree feet of frontage along Main Street, th northern boundary.	Townsite. The property is on d Jones Street with approximately t, the eastern boundary, and 109
Boundary Justification	
The boundary includes the property ori government for the post office site.	ginally purchased by the federal
	See continuation sheet
11. Form Prepared By	
name/title H.J. "Jim" Kolva, Project Manag	
organization <u>Institute for Urban &amp; Local St</u> street & number <u>West 705 lst Avenue</u>	<u>udies</u> date <u>September 1988</u> telephone <u>(509) 458-6219</u>
THE PARTY OF THE P	

city or town \_\_\_\_Spokane

state <u>WA</u> zip code <u>99204</u>

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Truth or Consequences building provides the absolute distillation of the design. By pouring concrete into a steel-reinforced mold, the facades could reach a higher plane of simplification. Details were reduced to hard edges without the aid of contrasting materials for definition. Finally, although this particular design is relatively common in the West, only two other post offices, Lynden, WA and Reedley, CA, make use of this material. For that matter, the use of poured-in-place concrete generally did not take place in post office construction until the late-1930s and, even then, its use was relatively rare in the West. The building is locally significant under Criterion C.

#### POLITICS/GOVERNMENT

As Truth or Consequences first and only federallyconstructed post office, the building is locally significant under Criterion A. It represents the link between the federal government and the local community, and functions as both a symbol and as an agency of the federal government. The building further symbolizes the massive public building programs of the 1930s which were intended to assist communities during a period of national economic emergency. the Post Office was constructed during a period of significant WPA-sponsored and other public-sponsored construction in the city and local area. Local newspaper articles carried the news of the new high school gym, the new Sierra County Courthouse (Hot Springs, as the city was then called, had just wrested the county seat from Hillsboro), a city water works, street paving, the Tingley Hospital (with Postmaster General James A. Farely attending the dedication), the Caballo Dam project, and the Elephant Butte Dam powerhouse. Over \$5,000,000 was spent by the federal government in the immediate area through the WPA and other emergency relief programs. The construction of the post office was a source of strong community pride. The local newspaper, the Sierra "Perhaps the people generally County Advocate, observed: have never been prouder of anything than they are of their new post office. As one of the people attending the dedication was overhead to say: "Don't you feel like you were in a big city post office." Hot Springs had come a long way since its incorporation in 1916.

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#### ART

The Truth or Consequences Post Office is significant under Criterion A for its historic association with the federal government's New Deal public arts programs. The mural is also significant under Criterion C as an integral part of a building that represents a significant type, period, and style of artistic expression. Finally, the building is eligible under Criterion D because of its information potential relating to artistic expression and techniques of the period, and social history of its locality.

The Truth or Consequences mural, entitled "The Indian Bear Dance," (5' x 12' over the Postmaster's door) was executed in oil on canvas by Boris Deutsch and installed in June of 1940. The mural design was a prizewinner in the 48-state competition sponsored by the Fine Arts Section of the Federal Works Agency. The winning designs, to be placed in one post office in each of the 48 states, were selected from 1,475 anonymously submitted sketches. According to Maurice Stern, jury chairman, the competition, the largest ever held in the country, made a distinct contribution to American mural art.

The mural depicts a group of Indians, some watching and others in mask and costume performing a traditional dance. The mural was depicted in the December 4, 1939 issue of <u>Life</u> magazine along with the other winning entries. According to Life:

As mural sketches, these are interesting not only in themselves but also as barometers by which the everyday art taste of rural America may be judged. Designed mostly for village post offices, they represent in most cases the collective taste of the citizens of the community, together with the individual taste of the artist. ...

Apparently rural Americans are artistic "stay-at-homes" with a preference for paintings that reproduce experiences and scenes and parts of history with which they are familiar. In spirit, many of these sketches are local American epics.

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Apparently, the final mural was altered slightly from the sketch that was originally submitted. The photo of the mural in <u>Life</u> had the following caption beneath: "Boris Deutsch's amusing sketch plays off a real Indian chief against a new railroad "Chief"." The "Chief" referenced was a diesel locomotive. Perhaps, the amusement did not extend to the local community. In any case, the "Chief," in the final work, became a mountain backdrop and a man riding a horse became a masked dancer. The balance of the final work is essentially the same as the sketch.

Boris Deutsch was born in 1892 in Krasnagorka, Lithuania and studied in Russia and Germany. Deutsch resided in Los Angeles and exhibited widely in California. His mural work is in the following buildings: Reedley (CA) and Los Angeles Terminal Annex (CA) post offices, Palace Legion of Honor (San Francisco, CA), Mills College (CA), Portland Museum of Art (OR), and the Carnegie Institute.

The mural was completed under the auspices of the Federal Works Agency Section of Fine Arts. Federal sponsorship of visual arts programs began in 1933 when President Roosevelt authorized the development of the Public Works of Art Project (PWAP). This and subsequent programs were intended to provide work-relief for artists. After the demise of the PWAP program in June 1934, the Treasury Relief Art Project (TRAP) was established in July 1935. The Section of Painting and Sculpture, later the Section of Fine Arts, was established in October of 1934 by the Treasury Department. was the program primarily responsible for murals and sculpture found in post offices throughout the country. sions were awarded on the basis of anonymous competitions without reference to artists need. In July of 1939, after reorganization of the Executive Branch, the entire building program of the Treasury Department and the Section were transferred to the new Federal Works Agency. The Section of Fine Arts-Federal Works Agency operated the program until June of 1943 when the activities of World War II shifted priorities.

The Section, which was administered in Washington, dealt directly with the artists, and selected them through national and regional design competitions. The Section sought the best decorative art that it could find for

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designated federal buildings. The intent of the program's administrators was that the work would reflect the themes and styles of the American Scene, with a hope that it would strike a responsive chord in the general public. Although the program is attributed with having fostered an American Regionalism, art critics could never find a coherent body of work that was truly Regionalist or representative of particular sections of the country. The work that was created did, however, portray the American Scene in the form of localized subject matter. Further, the work resulting from the program tended to pursue an inoffensive middle ground of style and content which was sometimes viewed as producing limp platitudes rather than strong statements. This resulted from the requirement for final approval from Washington as well as compliance with local preferences. strife or dark side of the Depression was not portrayed, but instead the nostalgic and positive events of the American Scene were depicted.

Eight New Mexico post offices received murals under various New Deal Arts programs: Alamogordo, Clovis, Deming, Gallup, Hot Springs (now Truth or Consequences), Portales, Roswell, and Raton. In addition, there are Depression-era murals and other artworks in numerous other public buildings throughout the state, which contribute to New Mexico's rich legacy of Southwestern art.

#### LOCAL CONTEXT

Truth or Consequences is in southcentral New Mexico, 149 miles south of Albuquerque and 118 miles north of El Paso. Originally named "Hot Springs," its name was changed in 1950 as part of a promotional contest for the popular radio show of the time. The region's warm, sunny climate and nearby Elephant Butte Lake, New Mexico's largest lake, contribute to Truth or Consequences' appeal for tourism and recreation, which are the base for its stable economy. It is also the county seat of Sierra County. In 1980 Truth or Consequences had a population of 5,223; 65 percent of its population is retired.

Hot mineral springs and bogs originally covered the area that is now downtown Truth or Consequences and the Rio Grande River flowed down what is now Main Street. It was the "heal-

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ing" water of the hot mineral springs that led to the initial development of Hot Springs, as an early health resort. dians (including Geronimo), soldiers, and cowboys were attracted to the springs long before there was any settlement. The first bath shelter was built in about 1882 by cowboys from the John Cross Ranch. But it was not until 1910 that the first public bath house was built, the course of the Rio Grande was altered, other bath houses were built, and visitors were attracted to the "healing" waters. Early settleement of Hot Springs may have been discouraged by the fact that the land near the Springs had been withdrawn from settlement; while it could be lived on it could not be purchased. It was not until 1912 (the same year New Mexico became a state) that the land was surveyed by the Government and it was sold. An Irishman named Fount Sullivan was one of the first settlers.

The construction of the Elephant Butte dam between 1911 and 1916, which provided irrigation for the lower Rio Grande Valley, spurred growth near the Springs. The dam, a U.S. Bureau of Reclamation project, created the largest lake in New Mexico and provided opportunities for recreation as well as irrigation. By 1913 the settlement near the springs included 2 hotels, a barber shop, and 10 students attending classes in a tent. Hot Springs' first official postmaster, M. L. Casey, was appointed in 1915 (a year earlier there had been a "Palomas Springs" post office). In 1916 the dam was completed and the town was incorporated, as Hot Springs (when the townsite was first laid out it was called Palomas Hot Springs). In 1919 the State of New Mexico built a State Bath House, which provided 25 cent baths. Over the next 20 years Hot Springs grew to be the largest town in the county; it grew from 455 in 1920 to 1,336 in 1930 to 2,940 in 1940.

Many new baths were built in the 1930s, as was the Carrie Tinley Hospital for Crippled Children, built by the WPA in 1937 and established primarily as a polio hospital. In 1938, as a result of population shifts and the closing of silver mines, the county seat moved from Hillsboro to Hot Springs. A new courthouse was built by the WPA in 1939.

By 1950 Hot Springs had a population of 4,563. That year, as part of a promotional contest for the 10th anniversary of the popular radio show, Hot Springs' name was changed to Truth or Consequences; it was hoped the name change would

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publicize the town and its baths and climate. (An annual "Fiesta" celebrates the name change; Ralph Edwards and other celebrities arrive in Truth or Consequences each year for the event. A highlight of the first fiesta was the breaking of a bottle of mineral water over the head of the late Senator Burton Roach.) Recreation and tourism remain important forces in the local economy. The population of Truth or Consequences has remained fairly stable since 1950, growing only slightly through the years, to 5,223 in 1980.

The Post Office is on the southwest corner of Main Street and Jones Street, in the city's Central Business District. Adjacent to the west are one-story commercial buildings. Across the alley to the south is a wood-frame and stucco laundry. Across Main Street (north) is a vacant lot with commercial uses to its west and the Geronimo Springs Museum and Historical Marker to its east. A modern commercial building is on the southeast corner of the intersection.

### NEWSPAPER COVERAGE OF THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE HOT SPRINGS (TRUTH OR CONSEQUENCES) MAIN POST OFFICE

"High Wages Go With Town's First Paving" reported the Sierra County Advocate on March 25th, 1934. A \$75,000 PWA project to pave Dale and Petain Streets and Hobbs Avenue would spend \$30,000 on local wages; unskilled workers were paid 50 cents per hour and skilled workers 75 cents per hour. (It should be noted that at this time Truth or Consequences was named Hot Springs.) That fall the Advocate reported that a CCC camp was being built at Elephant Butte Dam (September 28th article) and a new general merchandise store would be opening in anticipation of the Caballo Dam (November 30th).

On March 22nd, 1935 it was reported that Governor Tingley hoped to build a infantile paralysis hospital with FERA aid. On August 30th it was announced that \$2.5 million had been allocated for Caballo Dam construction. An Advocate editorial of October 18th listed some of the many activities in Hot Springs, including oil paving of streets, a new city hall and park that had just been approved, a \$65,000 water project, and school house expansion, and observed that: "Hot Springs has very little unemployment, but very much activity, and splendid worthwhile projects of great interest to the city." At the end of 1935 it was reported that a crippled children's hospital had been approved for the area (November

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15th article). In 1936 the <u>Advocate</u> reported that local business was increasing (April 24th), the new El Cortez movie theatre had opened (May 29th), construction was continuing to rise (July 3rd), and that Hot Springs had become the county seat of Sierra County-by a vote of 2,012 to 572, voters had decided to move the seat from Hillsboro (November 20th).

In 1937 the new hospital opened with much fanfare and the local post office, with Mrs. Verda J. Speight as post-master, received a 2nd Class rating (May 28th article). On August 20th the Advocate headlined "\$75,000 Appropriation for Hot Springs Post Office Passes House." The paper reported that:

The news of the partial success of the bill that would provide Hot Springs with a desperately needed post office caused more general rejoicing than any news since that two years ago which assured the building of the Crippled Children's Hospital....

Twenty-five telegrams were sent from the Mayor, Council, Chamber of Commerce, and individuals thanking Congressman John J. Dempsey. Telegrams had also been received from Senators Carl A. Hatch and Dennis Chavez. More good news followed on August 20th when it was reported that Hot Springs' community center had been approved; \$17,000 of WPA labor would be used to construct the Spanish colonial building.

On January 7th, 1938 the Advocate reported that post office site agent M. A. Clark of Denver was in Hot Springs considering the 11 sites that had been submitted. Clark had advised Hot Spring citizens to cooperate and warned that contention had caused other towns to lose appropriations or experience years of delay. It was also reported that the hospital had been completed at a cost of \$1 million and that 1937 would be one of Hot Springs biggest building years: 64 permits totalling \$71,690 had been taken out. On May 6th it was reported that a site had been selected: the corner of Jones and Main, submitted by Dr. A. C. White for \$4,681.60. In addition, a \$32,000 bond issue for a new Sierra County Courthouse had been approved.

On June 3rd it was reported that government engineer Nichols was examining the site (Nichols was also building the

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Alamogordo Post office) and on October 14th it was reported that the plans were done and bids would be advertised before October 15th. But on December 23rd the Advocate reported that the drawings were still being checked and specifications would soon be completed, according to a report from Congressman Dempsey.

"Bids on New Post Office Sought By Department" read the Advocate on February 24th, 1939; the Procurement Division had submitted an advertisement, requesting submittals. also reported that J. D. Tafoys had just been appointed Hot Springs' new postmaster. In May it was reported that ground had been broken for the post office (Lundberg & Richter of Oklahoma had won the contract with a bid of \$50,100) and that pilings were being driven to a depth of 14 to 18 feet (May 19th and 26th). An article of June 30th reported that "steady progress" was being made, though mud from water in the excavation pit had caused a short delay. On September 1st it was reported that the roof would be on by September 20th and that 29 men were on the job. The second pour had been completed and two more were needed; into the next pour would be the plaster molds for the bas reliefs of the plane, ship, and locomotive. In October it was reported that the new \$85,000 WPA Spanish colonial county courthouse would be dedicated (October 20th article). An article of November 24th revealed that the post office would not be occupied until January 15th; all outside work was done but a delay was caused by a wait for wood trim.

The new year 1940 brought more good news for Hot Springs: its 1939 post office receipts had increased 40 percent over the 1938 receipts (January 5th article) and building permits for 1938 had totaled \$197,280 with 88 permits (January 26th). And on February 2nd the Advocate reported that the new post office had opened, on Wednesday January 31st. The paper reported such comments as "It's beautiful," Isn't it just wonderful," "Don't you feel just like you were in a big city post office," and "Isn't this just grand for Hot Springs." The paper observed that "Perhaps the people generally have never been prouder of anything than they are of their new post office."

On June 28th it was announced that a mural, "The Indian Bear Dance" by Boris Deutsch had been placed in the new post

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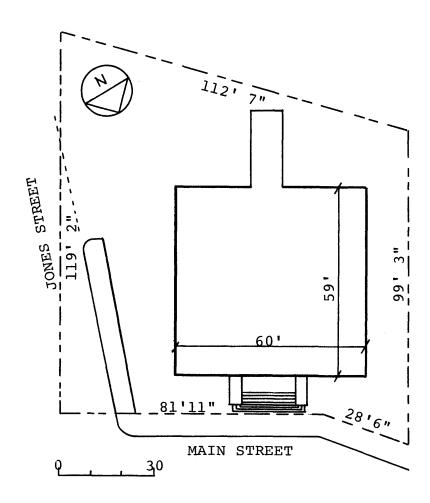
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office that week. The paper noted that Deutsch had won a 48-state competition to paint the mural, which was his first commission under the arts program, and gave a biography of the artist. The paper wrote that Deutsch, who was born in Lithuania, had been a U.S. citizen since 1916, lived in Los Angeles, and had received widespread recognition in the West. He had exhibited in Los Angeles, San Francisco, Berkeley, Seattle, Portland, Denver, and Dallas since 1926 and had recently worked as a designer for the Resettlement Administration. The Advocate wrote of the post office mural that:

... in Mr. D's composition the costumes—fantastic and gay—contrast strangely with the serious faces of the dancers for whom the pageant has the same deep significance that it held for generations of their forefathers.... Though some of the figures seem out of proportion, the composition has been deliberately planned by the artist in order to heighten the dramatic effect.

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The following information is the same for all the photographs listed:

- Truth or Consequences MPO
- Truth or Consequences, New Mexico
- 3. Jim Kolva
- 4. June 1988
- 5. Negatives on file at USPS Facilities Service Center, San Bruno, CA.

Photo No. 1 (negative #19A)

6. View to southeast

Photo No. 2 (negative #18A)

6. View to south

Photo No. 3 (negative #17A)

6. View to east

Photo No. 4 (negative #38A)

6. Lobby mural