

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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.

1. Name of Property

historic name Valentine United States Post Office
other names/site number Cherry County Sawyer Memorial Library Educational Service Unit 17,
Media Center; CE14-090

2. Location

street & number 348 North Main ST N/A not for publication
city, town Valentine N/A vicinity
state Nebraska code NE county Cherry code 031 zip code 69201

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>1</u>	<u> </u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u> </u>	<u> </u> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u> </u>	<u> </u> structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>2</u>	<u> </u> objects
		<u>3</u>	<u> </u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing:
Nebraska Post Offices Which Contain
Section Artwork (1938-1942)

Number of contributing resources previously
listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.
James A. Hanson October 21, 1991
Signature of certifying official Date
Director, Nebraska State Historical Society
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register.
 See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register. See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain:)

Beth Boland 12/13/91

Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Government/Post Office

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Education/Library**7. Description**Architectural Classification
(enter categories from instructions)Moderne

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concretewalls Brickroof Other: tar & gravelother Limestone

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The former Valentine United States Post Office building is located on North Main Street in Valentine, the Cherry County seat in north central Nebraska (1990 population: 2,826). The one-story brick and limestone Modernistic style building, constructed in 1936-1937, is an excellent example of a Class C or D post office built from standardized plans developed in the 1930's. The nomination includes two contributing objects: two ornamental lamp posts located on either side of the main entry.

The post office building is a five-bay symmetrical structure which measures 64 by 55 feet. The raised central entry with transom and flanking window units of multi-paned sash are framed within limestone pilasters. The two outside units of 6-over-6 paned double hung windows are framed with limestone trim, which feature motifs of airplane propellers carved in the stonework over the windows. Similar fenestration is found on the north and south facades. Stone trim is also used in the beltcourse and coping. The words "Cherry Co. Sawyer Memorial Library Educational Service Unit 17, Media Center" are located on a sign above the main entry which also features a decorative aluminum American eagle. The flat roof has a composition tar and gravel surface. The building exhibits good integrity; modifications include replacement of the front entry doors and minor interior alterations. Construction of the post office began in the summer of 1936, and the completed building was dedicated on July 5, 1939 (The Republican, July 2, 1937).

A mural entitled "End of the Line" is located on the south lobby wall directly above the former postmaster's door which is flanked by wooden glass enclosed bulletin boards. The mural, which measures approximately 12 by 5 feet, occupies the typical space for artwork commissioned by the Treasury Department's Section of Fine Arts program for a small Class C or D post office. The Valentine commission was awarded to Nebraska artist Kady Faulkner in June, 1938, and the completed mural was installed by the artist in April, 1939 (The Republican, April 14, 1939).

Painted in a range of colors including bright blue, green, reds, brown white and grey, the mural represents the railroad's terminus at Valentine, activity of people and commerce, and a regional landscape in the background. A steam engine train is visible to the left in the immediate

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foreground and a wooden platform extends almost the entire length of the scene. The left edge of the mural is framed by the railroad depot, a two-story red gable-roofed structure. Near the depot, several men lift barrels and wooden boxes onto a covered wagon. In the center of the scene is a pile of bags and boxes; a man holding a box steps onto the platform toward the pile. The left edge of the scene is framed by a red building with the words, "General Merchandise" above the entrance. In front of the building are a man, a little girl, and a woman holding a baby.

Beyond the foreground activity are covered wagons with the words, "Niobrara Transportation" painted on the canvas. A woman in a long red dress accompanied by a child stands on a wooden platform on the other side of the train. An itinerant carrying pack on his back, crosses beyond. A river is visible in the background with a herd of cattle on its banks. Flat-topped hills meet the horizon and covered wagons descend to the water.

The artist incorporated the irregular space available for the mural into her design. The postmaster's door extends into the mural and the artist utilized the space by incorporating two complimentary vignettes, broke horizontally by a dark brown band of color which contains brand symbols from area ranches. Beneath the pattern of brand symbols, the artist painted area ranch landscapes. The scene on the left features distinctive northern Nebraska Sandhills with a view of grazing animals in the distance, evocative of the open range. The scene on the right features a contemporary ranch landscape, including a barbed wire fence which dominates the foreground and hills, windmills, and cattle in the background.

The lobby interior is in excellent condition and retains its original tile floor, wainscotting, and woodwork. Minor modifications, including removal of the post office service counter, have been made to accommodate the property's new use as a media center. According to Section records, soon after the mural was installed, the Valentine Post Office was authorized to shorten the length of chains on the suspended light fixtures to prevent obstruction of the mural. Currently, the former post office lobby appears to retain its original suspended, globe light fixtures which extend approximately two feet from the ceiling. A varnished wooden vestibule projects into the lobby, an original design feature typical of small Class C or D post offices built from standardized plans in the 1930's. The mural is intact and in its original location.

The property is the only Nebraska post office with a Section mural which is currently not in ownership of the U. S. Postal Service. Therefore, it was not included in the 1981 cleaning of Nebraska post office murals done by an art conservator under contract with the Postal Service.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Art
Politics/Government

Period of Significance

1939

Significant Dates

1939

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Faulkner, Kady: Artist
Simon, Louis: Supervising Architect

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

The former Valentine United States Post Office building is being nominated to the National Register as part of the Nebraska Post Offices Which Contain Section Artwork (1938-1942) multiple property nomination under Criterion A for its association with the United States Treasury Department's Section of Fine Arts program (1934-1943) and under Criterion C for the artistic significance of the mural it contains. The mural entitled "End of the Line" was painted by Lincoln, Nebraska, artist Kady Faulkner and installed in April, 1939. The oil-on-canvas mural measures approximately 12 by 5 feet and is located on the south lobby wall directly above the former postmaster's door in the typical space for Section artwork installed in Class C or D post offices. The mural is an excellent example of artwork commissioned for new post offices through the Treasury Department's Section of Fine Arts program from 1934-1943.

Painted in bright shades of blue, green, white, red, and brown, the mural depicts the railroad's terminus at Valentine, with covered wagons, settlers, and a steam engine train. In the background a river is visible with steep, flat-topped hills on the horizon. Below, the artist incorporated the cattle brands of local ranches into a partial border which divide the main mural from two small ranch landscape scenes. The mural's historical theme of the area's settlement period, accomplished in a realistic style, make it an excellent example of government-sponsored Regionalism.

In June, 1938, University of Nebraska art professor Kady Faulkner received a notice from the Section of Fine Arts inviting her to submit designs for the Valentine mural on the basis of previously submitted examples of her work. The letter cited the commission amount, \$620, and payment schedule: one-third after preliminary sketches were approved; one-third upon approval of full-size cartoon; and the remainder when the completed mural was installed and photographed. The letter included building blue-prints with dimensions of the mural space. The Section advised Miss Faulkner to visit the post office to develop a subject appropriate to the

See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

The Cherry County News: April 13, 1939.

Gilbert, Dorothy B., ed. Who's Who in American Art. (New York: R. R. Bowker Company, 1956).

Marling, Karal Ann. Wall-to-Wall America. (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1982).

National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C. Record Group 121: Preliminary inventory of the Records of the Public Building Service. Entry 133: Case Files Concerning Embellishments of Federal Buildings, 1934-1943. Box 61: Nebraska.

The Republican: June 24, July 8, 1938; Feb. 24, March 10, April 14, 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 Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acres of property Less than one acre.

UTM References

A

1	4	3	7	3	4	2	0	4	7	4	7	9	8	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

C

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

B

Zone		Easting				Northing								

D

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The property is described as Lots 22-27, Block 7, Original Town, Valentine, Cherry County, Nebraska.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary is described as that parcel of land which has historically been associated with the property.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Carol Ahlgren, Architectural Historian

organization Nebraska State Historical Society date August, 1991

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city or town Lincoln state Lincoln zip code 68501

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building or the Valentine area. Faulkner immediately accepted the commission and informed Section Superintendent Rowan that she would begin to develop the preliminary sketches.

In June or July, Faulkner visited the Valentine Post Office then submitted preliminary sketches. Her proposed design incorporated covered wagons from the Niobrara Transportation company, a train, and a partial border which featured cattle brands of area ranches and small landscape scenes. A month later the preliminary sketches were approved; the Section commended her design but suggested that several figures be reworked to improve the overall composition. Within a month the color sketch was completed and approved as was the full-size cartoon, submitted in November.

In February, 1939, a photograph and description of the completed mural appeared in the Lincoln newspaper. A few days later the Valentine Republican commented on the mural in an article entitled "Historical or Allegorical?" The Valentine newspaper criticized Miss Faulkner for her statement that the mural was historically accurate, and claimed that the landscape and depot were incorrect and that the wagons looked like "rolls." The detail that had aroused the most criticism was the "toy train" which the newspaper pointed out was typical of the 1850's vintage and therefore incorrect. The article concluded that it had planned to print the photograph of the mural but did not want to irritate readers (The Republican, Feb. 24, 1939).

Several weeks later in March, 1939, a second article appeared in the Republican in response to an editorial in the Lincoln newspaper. Faulkner had stated that historical accuracy had not been her original intent. The Republican noted that discussion was "probably useless" since the mural would soon be installed, but pointed out that Faulkner had acknowledged the inaccuracy of the train but claimed that it fit better into the overall design. "This statement," the article claimed, "indicates that artists do not give much importance to truth in detail" (Republican, March 10, 1939). Another local paper, the Cherry County News, briefly noted the mural's installation and commented that it "supposedly" represented area sandhills, historic wagon trains, and cattle brands but added, "We hope those early-day residents possessed neither faces nor feet such as those pictured" (Cherry County News, April 13, 1939).

Through arrangements made by the Valentine postmaster, Faulkner met with a group of local residents to explain and defend the mural. The postmaster diplomatically reported to the Section that the "colorful" mural had attracted much attention. She suggested that a "pioneer committee"

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should have seen the design beforehand to ensure its popularity; "communities are so touchy about their local history." She noted that Faulkner unfortunately had painted "what anyone from the East would like." In Lincoln, the mural was defended by Dr. Lester Longman, head of the University of Iowa Art Department attending a Nebraska Art Association meeting. The Section also defended the mural and commended Faulkner for the admirable way she had handled the controversy. She was invited to submit designs for the "48 states" competition but the Valentine mural, however, was her only Section commission.

An art professor at the University of Nebraska, Faulkner painted the Valentine mural in a Morrill Hall campus studio in Lincoln. Faulkner received her B.A. and M.F.A degrees from Syracuse (New York) University and studied with Boardman Robinson and Henry Varnum Poor. A painter, lithographer, silk-screener and teacher, her work was exhibited throughout the United States in the 1940's and 1950's. In 1956, Faulkner was head of the Art Department at the University of Wisconsin-Kenosha (Gilbert, 1956).

For additional information refer to the Nebraska Post Offices Which Contain Section Artwork (1938-1942) multiple property form.

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Park, Marlene and Gerald Markowitz. Democratic Vistas. (Philadelphia:
Temple University Press, 1984).

Whiffen, Marcus. American Architecture Since 1780: A Guide to the Styles.
(Cambridge, MA: The M.I.T. Press, 1969).