

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 Red Cloud United States Post Office
other names/site number WT07-195

2. Location

street & number 300 North Webster N/A not for publication
city, town Red Cloud N/A vicinity
state Nebraska code NE county Webster code 181 zip code 68970

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 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u>3</u>	<u> </u> structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>4</u>	<u> </u> objects
			<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.
[Signature] DSHPO 4/2/92
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:)

[Signature] 5/11/92
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

Entered in the
National Register

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Government/Post Office

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Government/Post Office

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(enter categories from instructions)

Moderne

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete

walls Brick

roof Other: tar & gravel

other Limestone

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Red Cloud United States Post Office is located at the southwest corner of 3rd and Webster Streets in Red Cloud, the Webster County seat in south central Nebraska (1990 population: 1,204). The one-story Modernistic style building is an excellent example of a Class C or D post office built from standardized plans developed in the 1930's. The nomination includes three contributing objects: two ornamental lamp posts located on either side of the front entry and a flag pole.

Symmetrical in design, the five-bay buff-colored brick building measures approximately 60 by 60 feet and features a limestone base and parapet. The words "United States Post Office, Red Cloud Nebraska" are carved into the limestone above the main entrance. A white painted ornamental aluminum grill with a centered, stylized eagle is featured over the raised central entry. The main entrance is flanked by two pairs of multi-paned triple hung sash windows with limestone sills. Similar fenestration is found on the north and south facades. The flat roof has a composition tar and gravel surface. On the main (west) and side facades, below grade area ways with steps and iron railings provide light and ventilation to the lower level. The building exhibits good integrity; modifications include replacement of the original front entry doors and lobby light fixtures. Construction began in February, 1939, and the completed building was dedicated in November of the same year (The Commercial Advertiser, Feb. 6, Nov. 13, 1939).

A three panel mural is located on the south and east lobby walls. The main panel entitled "Loading Cattle" measures approximately 12 feet by 5 feet 6 inches and is located on the south lobby wall directly above the postmaster's door in the typical space for artwork commissioned by the Treasury Department's Section of Fine Arts program for a Class C or D post office. The two related oil-on-canvas panels, entitled "Moving Westward" and "Stockade Builders," are located on the east lobby wall above the service window, each measures 5 feet 6 inches square. Painted in predominantly green, grey, blue, and brown tones, the murals represent various aspects of the area's settlement period. Each scene includes numerous detailed foreground and background figures and activities painted in a sinewy, slightly elongated style reminiscent of Thomas Hart Benton. Each

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 2

panel has a similar background with rolling hills, a river, cartoon-like trees, and additional figures or animals including bison, wild horses, and cattle. The Red Cloud commission was awarded to Colorado Springs artist Archie Musik and the three panel mural was installed by the artist in April, 1941.

When viewing the murals from left to right upon entering the lobby, the panel entitled "Moving Westward" is the first in the group. The scene suggests the advance of white settlers and the migration of the Indian tribes westward. In the foreground, a white haired Indian, intended to represent Chief Red Cloud, is astride a horse with an arm extended. The background of the scene curves and recedes with sinuous lines of hills, ridges and a river. The figures of the Indians move through the foreground and background on foot or horseback, their belongings piled onto travois. A herd of buffalo recede into the far distance where rolling hills and cartoon-like trees meet the horizon.

The second panel above the lobby service window also measures 5 feet 6 inches square. Entitled, "Stockade Builders," it also features detailed foreground, background activity, a river, and rolling hills with cartoon-like trees. The scene is intended to suggest or represent the 1870's stockade built near the present-day town of Red Cloud. In the right foreground, two men chop trees and the scene recedes to the middleground where others engage in related activities. Two figures carry an enormous log toward the stockade which occupies the left center of the scene. Inside the compound, created from both horizontal and vertically placed logs, three women tend a kettle over a fire. Beyond the stockade the scene recedes into the distance with a river, cartoon-like trees, rolling hills, and wild horses that race across the landscape.

The largest of the three panels which measures approximately 12 feet by 5 feet is located above the postmaster's door. Entitled "Loading Cattle," the scene depicts several cowboys in the process of loading cattle into a railroad boxcar. The scene is divided by cattle pens in the right and left foreground. In the right foreground a cowboy on a horse pauses to light a cigarette. To the left, a cowboy sits on the side of the pen, guiding the cattle into the boxcar; other figures are located on the boxcar. The scene recedes into the background where a cowboy on horseback gallops after a herd of longhorns. On the horizon are distinctive rolling hills, cartoon-like trees and cattle.

The lobby interior is in good condition and retains its original marble tile floor, wainscotting, and woodwork. Sometime after the mural was installed, the original light fixtures were replaced. Currently the lobby has enclosed fluorescent fixtures suspended from the ceiling. A

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 3

varnished wooden vestibule projects into the lobby, an original design feature typical of Class C or D post offices built from standardized plans in the 1930's. In 1981 the mural was cleaned and restored by an art conservator under contract with the United States Postal Service; it is in excellent condition.

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)

Period of Significance

Significant Dates

Art

1941

1941

Politics/Government

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Bunn, William E. L.: Artist

Simon, Louis: Supervising Architect

Sothman Co.: Contractor

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

The Red Cloud United States Post Office is being nominated to the National Register as part of the Nebraska Post Offices Which Contain Section Artwork (1938-1942) multiple property nomination at the state level of significance 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, which is in three panels entitled "Moving Westward," "Stockade Builders," and "Loading Cattle," was painted by Colorado Springs artist Archie Musik and installed in April, 1941.

The oil-on-canvas panels are located on the east and south lobby walls. Two of the panels, entitled "Moving Westward" and "Stockade Builders," measure 5 feet 6 inches square and are located on the east wall directly above the service window. The remaining oil-on-canvas panel, entitled "Loading Cattle," is located on the south lobby wall directly above the postmaster's door. The three murals are painted in green, grey and brown tones and represent various aspects of white settlement and the frontier era. Although the landscapes with distinctive cartoon-like trees are only representative or suggestive of the Red Cloud locality, the use of elongated sinewy forms and shapes are stylistically reminiscent of Thomas Hart Benton. The mural's historical themes, executed in a representational style, make them an excellent example of government-sponsored Regionalism.

In January, 1940, Colorado Springs artist Archie Musik received a notice from the Section of Fine Arts inviting him to submit designs for the Red Cloud, Nebraska, mural on the basis of designs submitted for the "48 States" competition. The letter cited the commission amount, \$800, and payment schedule: one-third after preliminary sketches were approved; one-third upon approval of a full-size cartoon; and the remainder when the completed mural was installed and photographed. The letter included building blueprints with dimensions of the mural space. Musik immediately

See continuation sheet

Biographical References

Commercial Advertiser: Feb. 6, Nov. 13, 1939; April 25, 1941.

Brophy B., ed. Who's Who in American Art. (New York: Bowker
Co., 1953).

Carroll, 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.

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

Acreage of property Less than one acre.

UTM References

A 14 541035 4437425
Zone Easting Northing

C _____

B _____
Zone Easting Northing

D _____

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The property is described as Lots 12-16, Block 31, Original Town, Red
Cloud, Webster County, Nebraska.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes 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

street & number 1500 R Street telephone (402) 471-4773

city or town Lincoln state Nebraska zip code 68501

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 2

accepted the commission and informed Section Superintendent Edward Rowan that he would visit Red Cloud to develop preliminary sketches.

In February, 1940, Musik visited Red Cloud and discussed the proposed mural with area residents. He proposed to use a previously submitted design of cattle being loaded onto a boxcar since "hundreds of tons of beef" including Texas longhorns had "traversed" the area. Musik noted, however, that the postmaster and the majority of the townspeople preferred some reference to Chief Red Cloud. Musik claimed that since Red Cloud "didn't do anything of importance pertaining to the town" he saw no reason to include him in the mural. He asked the Section to make a decision since he did not know "how great a weight the people's preference should carry." The Section proposed that two panels could be included for an additional \$500 since a small amount of money remained from the building's construction and the citizens were "anxious" to include the Indian Chief in the mural. Musik immediately accepted the proposal and soon submitted pencil sketches.

In March, 1940, Rowan critiqued the pencil sketches and informed the artist that the two sketches did not convey the same "inspiration" evident in the "Loading Cattle" design. Musik revised the two sketches and resubmitted them a few months later. He explained that the "Moving Westward" panel which included Chief Red Cloud was not intended to portray any "specific historic incident" since the chief had never been active in the area. Musik added that his general idea was to portray Indian tribes forced westward because of encroaching white settlers "who in turn seek [ing] new fields beyond the borders of the cattle industry." The Section approved the designs but suggested improvements to the background figures.

The designs were revised and the required color sketches submitted to the Section in July, 1940. Musik was told to proceed with the full-size cartoons but was again cautioned to check proportions and details of several figures. Four months later, Musik had completed and photographed full-size cartoons of the murals. Installation was delayed for several months because a large clock had been placed on the south wall in the space allocated for the "Loading Cattle" panel. The Section corresponded with the Red Cloud postmaster and the Office of Supervising Architect to authorize the clock's relocation which occurred in February, 1941; and in April, the completed murals were installed by the artist. The local newspaper stated that the "vividly done" murals had attracted attention and comment. (The Commercial Advertiser, April 25, 1941). The Red Cloud postmaster, C.H. Miner, reported to the Section: "There is varied comment on the work. The younger people are critical as they consider the conditions portrayed in the pictures could not have existed even in pioneer

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 3

days." He noted that the "older people," however, considered the murals "typical of early day conditions."

A Missouri native, Archie Musik studied under Regionalist painter Thomas Hart Benton. In the early 1930's he was a student at the Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center (Broadmoor Academy) and studied with Boardman Robinson. Through the Public Works of Art Project (PWAP) he painted murals for the municipal auditorium and the Fine Arts Center in Colorado Springs. In addition to the Red Cloud mural Musik received a Section commission for the Manitou Springs, Colorado post office. From the 1940's through the 1980's he taught intermittently at the University of Missouri, Columbia (MO) College and the University of Colorado. Musik also wrote and illustrated several books and articles including: Oil Painting for Beginners, (1930); Musik Medley: Intimate Memories of a Rocky Mountain Art Colony (1971); and a newspaper column entitled, "Artists and Art." He died in Colorado Springs in 1978 at the age of 76.

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

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 9 Page 2

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

Pikes Peak Vision: The Broadmoor Art Academy, 1919-1945. Exhibit Catalog, Colorado Springs Fine Arts Center, 1989.

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