

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

FOR FEDERAL PROPERTIES

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

1 NAME

HISTORIC

SIGNIFICANT U.S. POST OFFICES IN CALIFORNIA-1900-1941-THEMATIC RESOURCES
AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

See individual nomination/inventory forms

NA NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

See individual forms.

NA VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

See individual forms.

STATE

California

CODE
06

COUNTY CODE

See individual forms.

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

- DISTRICT
- BUILDING(S)
- STRUCTURE
- SITE
- OBJECT

X Thematic Group

OWNERSHIP

- X PUBLIC
- PRIVATE
- BOTH

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

- NA IN PROCESS
- BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS

- X OCCUPIED
- UNOCCUPIED
- WORK IN PROGRESS

ACCESSIBLE

- X YES: RESTRICTED
- YES: UNRESTRICTED
- NO

PRESENT USE

- AGRICULTURE
- MUSEUM
- COMMERCIAL
- PARK
- EDUCATIONAL
- PRIVATE RESIDENCE
- ENTERTAINMENT
- RELIGIOUS
- X GOVERNMENT
- SCIENTIFIC
- INDUSTRIAL
- TRANSPORTATION
- MILITARY
- 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 94099

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

See individual nomination/inventory forms.

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

STATE

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

See individual nomination/inventory forms.

DATE

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" 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 DATE <u>NA</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

This thematic nomination is for 22 United States Post Offices owned by the U.S. Postal Service and distributed throughout the state of California. Though the buildings included in the nomination vary greatly in size and style, when considered as a group, they provide a 40-year chronology of the development of the post office as a building type. Since this thematic nomination is concerned with such a wide geographical scope, the buildings naturally vary in building material and type of construction- from unreinforced brick to heavily reinforced poured concrete. They universally share an aesthetic conservatism characteristic of many buildings erected by the U.S. Government. This nomination is concerned with the various stylistic and functional divisions which can be made in post office construction, and the ways these divisions reflected changing political and economic conditions in California and the nation as a whole. All buildings are on their original sites and have been well maintained throughout their existence. Integrity is high for all properties in this nomination.

ORGANIZATION OF THIS NOMINATION

This nomination is divided into two parts: a cover document, explaining the theme, and setting the historic and regional context for the individual properties; and 22 individual nomination/inventory forms prepared for each of the buildings included in this theme.

The cover document seeks to articulate the central theme and several subthemes of this nomination, and to define the criteria with which one can determine the significance of individual properties within that theme. These themes and criteria are discussed in the cover document which provides the historic context in which the buildings and themes are to be evaluated, as well as the list of buildings included in this nomination.

The individual nomination/inventory forms were prepared to provide a quickly and easily accessible way of finding data pertinent to individual buildings. These forms contain descriptions of the individual properties and discussions of their individual significance and their relation and significance within the theme.

A list of post office buildings already listed in the National Register is provided here as an aid to individuals engaged in research on California post offices.

PROPERTIES NOMINATED

OFFICE:	DATE OCCUPIED:	ARCHITECT:
Beverly Hills, MPO	1933	Ralph C. Flewelling, Allison and Allison
Burbank, Downtown Station	1937	Gilbert Stanley Underwood
Chico, MPO	1914	Oscar Wenderoth/OSA *
El Centro, MPO	1932	James A. Wetmore/OSA

*Office of the Supervising Architect

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OFFICE	DATE OCCUPIED	ARCHITECT
Glendale, MPO	1934	George M. Lindsay
Long Beach, MPO	1934	Louis A. Simon/OSA
Los Angeles, Hollywood Station	1937	Claude Beelman/ Allison and Allison
Los Angeles, Terminal Annex	1939	Gilbert Stanley Underwood
Marysville	1934	James A. Wetmore/OSA
Napa, Franklin Station	1933	William H. Corlett
Oroville, MPO	1933	James A. Wetmore/OSA
Petaluma, MPO	1933	James A. Wetmore/OSA
Porterville, MPO	1933	H. Rafael Lake
Redlands, MPO	1934	G. Stanley Wilson
San Bernardino, Downtown Station	1931	James A. Wetmore/OSA
San Diego, MPO	1938	William Templeton Johnson
San Pedro, MPO	1936	Louis A. Simon/OSA
Santa Ana, Spurgeon Station	1931	James A. Wetmore/OSA
Santa Barbara, MPO	1937	Reginald D. Johnson
Santa Cruz, MPO	1912	James Knox Taylor, OSA
Visalia, Town Center Station	1933	William D. Coates
Willows, MPO	1918	Walter D. Blis/Bliss and Faville

FEDERALLY OWNED POST OFFICE BUILDINGS

CURRENTLY * LISTED ON THE NATIONAL REGISTER

OFFICE	DATE OCCUPIED	ADMINISTERED BY **
Berkeley, U.S. Post Office	1914	USPS
Eureka, U.S. Post Office and Courthouse	1910	GSA
Merced U.S. Post Office	1933	GSA
Modesto, U.S. Post Office	1933	GSA
Oakland, Main Post Office and Federal Bldg.	1933	USPS
Palo Alto, U.S. Post Office	1933	USPS
Pasadena, U.S. Post Office, included in the Pasadena Civic Center District	1915	USPS

* This list includes properties published in the Federal Register through February 7, 1984. (Federal Register Volume 49, No. 26, P. 4608)

** USPS- United States Postal Service
GSA- General Services Administration

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OFFICE:	DATE OCCUPIED:	ADMINISTERED BY**:
Sacramento, U.S. Post Office, Courthouse and Federal Building	1933	GSA
San Francisco, Rincon Annex, U.S. Post Office and Courthouse	1939	USPS
San Jose, U.S. Post Office; included in St. James Square Historic District	1934	USPS
Stockton, U.S. Post Office	1933	GSA

According to Postal Service records, 99 facilities occupied before 1942 remain under Postal Service control in California. The status of each of these buildings was reviewed with the California State Office of Historic Preservation for determination of both accuracy of listing and for potential eligibility of Post Office buildings for nomination to the National Register.

The cut-off for the purposes of this nomination is Post Office buildings constructed and occupied before 1942. All owned Post Offices through 1982 were reviewed by the Postal Service and the California State Historic Preservation Office for possible sensitivity either owing to unusual historic circumstances or resulting from location in or near historic districts. Virtually all recent Post Offices were eliminated by virtue of age. Any owned Postal Service building will be subject to review or re-review either when the building reaches a 50-year age or becomes historically sensitive by virtue of location or situation.

All surveys were reviewed and controlled by the U.S. Postal Service. Seventy-two (72) were surveyed under contract. The California Historic Preservation Office was consulted and concurred in all reviews. Buildings included in this nomination were surveyed by one of the following two contract firms or by the U.S. Postal Service:

Environmental Services, Associates, Inc., located at 1291 Hillsdale Boulevard, Foster City, CA 94404, (415) 573-8500, surveyed the northern half of the state. Personnel and disciplines involved are as follows:

Michelle A Schaefer (Planning and Architectural History)

The southern half of the state was surveyed by Beland/Associates, Inc., located at 16 South Oakland Avenue, Suite 204, Pasadena, CA 91101, (818) 796-8093. The following individuals completed the Beland/Associates survey:

R. Dale Beland, AIA, AICP (Architecture and Urban Planning)
Paul R. Secord (Geology/Paleontology and Archaeology)

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Doug Robertson
(Art and Architectural History)

Though the personnel differed in the two surveys, both employed essentially the same methods. Each of the 72 buildings in the survey was visited by a member of one of the two teams. During the on-site inspections, photographs were taken, and the buildings were visually inspected for signs of deterioration, neglect, and alteration.

One of the primary goals of the field research was determining the extent of alterations. In most cases, blueprint copies of the original working drawings were found, which allowed an accurate comparison to be made between the building's extant and planned design. In some cases, progress photographs were available to aid in the conceptual reconstruction of the site and surrounding area before construction of the post office, and to more accurately determine the extent of any alterations. Research in other primary sources consisted of interviews with existing Postal Service employees, many of whom have had long tenure at the building surveyed. In some cases, it was possible to locate and interview retired postal employees. Local library and newspaper files were searched for relevant information. Local historical societies, municipal historic preservation departments (usually part of the city's Planning Department), were consulted whenever possible. In all cases, the County Assessor's office was checked for any data available on previous uses of the post office site.

Beland/Associates, Inc. conducted basic library research on federal building programs, and the various Depression-era Federal Art Programs. The results of this research are included as Parts II-VI of Section 7 of this nomination.

A preliminary evaluation of the surveyed building's significance was given at the time of the survey. The survey data were later compiled and compared with the information gathered during the basic library research. The result of this comparison was a set of eligibility criteria based on National Register Criteria A, B, and C. These criteria (included in Section 8 of this nomination form) were applied to the inventoried properties*, and a final list of 22 buildings was selected as eligible from the 72 buildings surveyed.

*This methodology is outlined in the draft: "How to Evaluate Post Offices as a Resource Type", by the staff of the Office of the Keeper, National Register of Historic Places, U.S. Department of the Interior, Washington, D.C., 1983.

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THEME

The central theme of this nomination concerns the evolution of the Post Office as a building type during the first four decades of this century in California. The buildings surveyed are scattered over a large geographic area, in radically different social and natural environments. Buildings were surveyed in small desert towns, and in the metropolitan centers. Finally, though the buildings surveyed were constructed within a brief time span, a wide range of stylistic types is observable. To bring some order to this great diversity, four conceptual divisions are made in the surveyed material.

These themes, though dependent on some of the same variables, lack a direct, one-to-one correspondence. One can, for instance, find examples of each of the four broad, stylistic categories in each of the four building types. In general, however, before 1933, the larger projects tended toward more classical ornament, greater use of marble and other expensive materials, and a more monumental scale as well as size. After 1933, the large projects were almost uniformly executed in what Lois Craig calls the "Starved Classical" style.

A greater stylistic diversity can be found in the smaller buildings. While the Beaux-Arts Classical and Starved Classical designs were well represented, one also finds Mediterranean and Art Deco designs. There is some evidence to suggest that the inclusion of the federal courts in a building dictated that a monumental Beaux-Arts Classical or Starved Classical design be used; this is, however, a topic for further research.

The four themes, included in the following outline, are also presented in a table on Continuation Sheet 8.

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(1) Functional

Functional divisions reflect political as well as operational requirements, and changed over time. Generally, the largest projects were also the latest. This is the most ephemeral and least quantifiable of the four categories used in this nomination. Nevertheless, the categories, taken broadly, represent the four basic building types constructed in California between 1900 and 1939:

- a) Small, single-purpose post offices-
Most often constructed in smaller towns, and serving only as post offices or post office substations.
- b) Small, combined Post Office and Federal Building-
Though only slightly larger than single-purpose post offices, it was a relatively common practice to combine offices for various federal agencies, courts, etc., in the post office in smaller towns. Quite often, this combined federal building was the first and only federal building in a town. The post office remained the primary or co-equal use in this building type.
- c) Combined large Federal Office/Post Office-
Usually constructed in major metropolitan areas, the post office was usually only an incidental use in this building type. Federal courts often occupied most of the space, though various federal agencies were also housed in these structures.
- d) Large Post Office/Annex-
These buildings were constructed in the late 1930s and 1940s in major metropolitan centers, and handled enormous volumes of mail. Occasionally, federal offices were provided, but the Post Office Department constituted the primary use.

(2) Stylistic

This category seeks to trace the chronological development, evolution, and change in the styles used in the post office buildings. Five major stylistic divisions are considered:

- a) Beaux-Arts Classicism-
 - 1. Renaissance Revivalism.

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- b) Mediterranean Styles-
 - 1. Mission Style;
 - 2. Spanish Colonial Revival;
 - 3. Italianate Revivals.
- c) Art Deco.
- d) Starved Classicism.

Renaissance Revival is included under the heading of Beaux-Arts Classicism primarily for convenience in organizing the large number of buildings surveyed. There is a certain intellectual validity as well; eclecticism was still the order of the day, and Renaissance Revival styles were acceptable alternatives to Beaux-Arts architects working in federal projects.

(3) Funding Bills

- a) Omnibus Funding Bills-
Provided funding from 1903-1926, and were supplemented with annual allocations in sundry civil appropriation acts. Provided enormous opportunities for "pork-barreling".
- b) Keyes-Elliott Act of 1926-1934-
Was the authorization for most of the post offices constructed in California in the 1930s.
- c) 1933-1939-
National Industrial Recovery Act (WPA); after 1933, the Administrator of the WPA had control over funding allocations for all federal building programs. In effect, the Post Office building program developed along the lines developed under the 1926 Keyes-Elliott Act.

(4) Use of Non-Government Architectural Firms

- a) 1893-1912-
In 1893, the Tarnsey Act was passed, which allowed the Secretary of the Treasury to conduct competitions to select private architects to design federal buildings. The Tarnsey Act remained in force until August 14, 1912, when it was repealed, and it became illegal for the Treasury Department to contract for outside architectural services.

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b) 1912-1926-

From 1912 to 1926, all federal design work was ostensibly done in the Office of the Supervising Architect.

c) 1926-1939-

In 1926, the Keyes-Elliot Act again authorized competitions to select private architects to design federal buildings. Though the Supervising Architect opposed this policy, the larger commissions were generally given to private firms.

It is interesting to note that from 1926 to 1933, a large number of smaller post offices were designed by private architects. After 1933, few buildings under 10,000 square feet included in the survey for this nomination were designed outside of the Supervising Architect's office.

In addition to the significance individual post offices included in this nomination have as illustrations of the above themes, all of the buildings clearly document the federal government's changing building policy.

When considered as a group, the primary significance of the buildings becomes Political/Governmental and Economic. The sum of these buildings acts as a record of public building in California through the 1930s, and shows that the Hoover Administration, rather than Roosevelt, began the massive increase of public building soon after the effects of the Depression began to be felt. The earlier post offices likewise demonstrate regional trends to build monumental, important-looking buildings in small towns.

The graph on the following page illustrates the relationships of style, time, funding act, and type of the various post offices considered in this nomination.

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POST OFFICE BUILDING PROGRAM

BLDG. TYPE	Garnsey Act Repeal	Second Omnibus Bill	Keyes-Elliott Act	WPA Legislation	STYLISTIC CATEGORIES	
Large Post Office/Annex					BEAUX-ARTS	1910
Large Federal Building					MEDITERRANEAN	1911
Small Combined Federal Bldg.					ART DECO	1912
Small Single Purpose P.O.					STARVED CLASSICISM	1913
					BEAUX-ARTS	1914
					MEDITERRANEAN	1915
					ART DECO	1916
					STARVED CLASSICISM	1917
					BEAUX-ARTS	1918
					MEDITERRANEAN	1919
					ART DECO	1920
					STARVED CLASSICISM	1921
					BEAUX-ARTS	1922
					MEDITERRANEAN	1923
					ART DECO	1924
					STARVED CLASSICISM	1925
					BEAUX-ARTS	1926
					MEDITERRANEAN	1927
					ART DECO	1928
					STARVED CLASSICISM	1929
					BEAUX-ARTS	1930
					MEDITERRANEAN	1931
					ART DECO	1932
					STARVED CLASSICISM	1933
					BEAUX-ARTS	1934
					MEDITERRANEAN	1935
					ART DECO	1936
					STARVED CLASSICISM	1937
					BEAUX-ARTS	1938
					MEDITERRANEAN	1939
					ART DECO	1940
					STARVED CLASSICISM	1941

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Federal building policy can be broken into discrete eras which relate more to politics and attendant economic policies than to demonstrable needs for public buildings. The era from 1903 to the passage of the Keyes-Elliott Act in 1926 was marked by flagrant congressional "pork-barreling", in the terms of siting and sizing federal buildings. Of the buildings included in this nomination, the Santa Cruz, Chico, and Willows are excellent examples from this era.

The building program initiated by the Keyes-Elliott Act was begun in 1928, and sought to introduce a more rational selection process. It would be naive to assume that Congress intended to relinquish control to the Treasury Department, but the Act provided a rational foundation for subsequent building programs. The buildings constructed under this Act also provide evidence of the application of Keynesian economic theories under the Hoover Administration.

In 1931, the program was greatly accelerated and expanded. The designs of the buildings constructed before 1933 tended, however, to be larger and include more expensive detailing and finishing than the later 1930's post offices. The Santa Ana, San Bernardino and El Centro Post Office buildings included in this nomination are evidence of this "first wave" of Keyes-Elliott public buildings.

In 1933, the nature of federal building again changed, and Keynesian justifications were used openly. Not only were the buildings constructed quickly using labor intensive construction methods, the buildings used extraordinary amounts of structural steel; sometimes to the extent of providing a structural steel frame in a building with reinforced concrete walls. In any event, reinforcing rod was typically placed four inches on center in a one-foot concrete wall- a clear effort to help the stricken industry, as well as the construction trades. The buildings constructed in this period: the Redlands, Glendale, Long Beach, San Pedro, Burbank, Santa Barbara, Hollywood, San Diego and Los Angeles, Terminal Annex, have significance on the state level as particularly well-preserved examples of the New Deal building program.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD		AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW				
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input checked="" 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 checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)		
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION				

SPECIFIC DATES **1900-1941**

BUILDER/ARCHITECT **See individual forms**

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Though the entire thematic group has significance in the areas of Architecture, Art, Community Planning, Economics, Politics/Government and Sculpture, none of the individual buildings possesses every type of significance. The nominated buildings were chosen as particularly well crafted and notable examples of their type or style. The buildings in the smaller towns were frequently the first, and for many years only, federal building; and were usually one of the two or three most monumental and imposing structures in town. Several contain lobby murals commissioned by the federal art project, are are thus iconographically connected to the ideology and aesthetics of the New Deal. The buildings constructed after 1932 are themselves monuments to the New Deal's public works program, and are thus associated with major federal legislation and building programs. The number of buildings constructed before 1932, however, is evidence that the accelerated building program began with the Hoover Administration; these buildings will be increasingly important as revisionist history continues to be written about the early 1930s. Finally, and most obviously perhaps, the individual buildings have local importance in the history of the postal service in their regions: commonly, the building provided the first permanent home for the Post Office.

Though the group of buildings taken as a whole has significance in the areas of Architecture, Art, Community Planning, Economics, Politics/Government and Sculpture, not all of the individual buildings possess each type of significance. All of the nominated buildings were chosen as particularly good and well preserved examples of their type, and are thus important when considered in the context of the large number of buildings constructed during the first four decades of this century.

Several areas of significance are addressed below. The following criteria explain the ways in which National Register Criteria A, B, and C relate to California Post Offices. They are divided by areas of significance, level of significance (national, state or local), and level of integrity needed to qualify as significant. The headings also indicate which of the three National Register criteria were judged to be most relevant for each area of significance.

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE

Of the 28 "areas of significance" listed under this section of the nomination form, the following six are considered relevant to this Thematic Nomination:

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

See continuation sheet.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY See individual nomination/inventory forms.

UTM REFERENCES See individual nomination/inventory forms.

A	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING	B	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING	D	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

See individual forms for VBD. In all cases, boundaries are drawn on the historic lot lines of the nominated properties.

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; R. Dale Beland, AIA, AICP	DATE July 23, 1984
ORGANIZATION Beland/Associates, Inc.	TELEPHONE (818) 796-8093
STREET & NUMBER 16 South Oakland Avenue, Suite 204	STATE California
CITY OR TOWN Pasadena	

12 CERTIFICATION OF NOMINATION

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER RECOMMENDATION

YES NO NONE

Marian Mitchell-Wilson
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 *Rone W. DeLoach*

TITLE Director, Office of Real Estate DATE November 7, 1984

FOR NPS USE ONLY	
I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER	
<i>Chy L. ...</i>	DATE 1/11/85
DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION	DATE
ATTEST:	DATE
KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER	
<i>See Continuation Sheet for listings</i>	

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- ARCHITECTURE
- ART
- POLITICS/GOVERNMENT
- ECONOMICS
- COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT
- SCULPTURE

A. ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE:

1. LOCAL LEVEL:

a. Criterion C

In some cases, the post office, though not architecturally distinguished when compared to contemporary buildings throughout the nation or state, is of local importance as one of the most monumental, imposing, or sophisticated buildings in a town. A post office may be a locally unique example of a style popular throughout the state. It is doubtful that the influence a post office design had on the development of a town's architectural history can be shown. The post office is a unique type. Though it plays an essentially commercial role in terms of land use, post office design did not follow design practice for commercial development, nor did subsequent development tend to imitate the style of the post office. There is a reason for this. Post offices were designed to look like post offices; that is, certain symbols or signifiers were included as subliminal messages of the building's function. Commercial buildings also employ signifiers but use them in different ways. Less than direct links can be shown, but these are more properly dealt with under the Community Development section of this nomination.

b. Criterion A

The architectural signifiers and symbols discussed above also carry a burden of meaning and associative values beyond their ostensible aesthetic meanings. A post office design is a record of the Post Office's and the federal government's self-image, and of the image which the federal government wished to project to those it governed. A post office in a small town may provide one of the few, perhaps the only, such record of the various "Persona" assumed by the federal government.

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2. STATE LEVEL:

a. Criterion C

A post office may be aesthetically important on the state as well as the local levels, as an example of particularly fine craftsmanship, or as a sophisticated, imposing, and well-articulated example of its style or type. The Supervising Architect's office also used standard designs for a great many post offices built in California, though few have survived unaltered or even in substantially intact configuration. As per National Register Guidelines, a post office may have state significance because it is a first, an excellent, or a prototype of a standardized design.

b. Criterion A

A group of post offices from different periods can, by the associative values contained in their architecture, act as a record of the progress of the federal government's self- and projected images. Post offices in such a group would not have to be individually significant; the significance would lie in the relation of one building to another.

Integrity- Requires integrity of design, materials, workmanship, and association. Simply changing a light fixture or adding a ramp to provide access to the handicapped does not significantly impair the building's architectural integrity. Even major additions, when sensitive to the original style of the building, can leave its aesthetic honor unoffended.

B. ART SIGNIFICANCE:

1. LOCAL LEVEL:

a. Criterion A

Murals in post office lobbies were, in many towns, the only examples of the Treasury Department's fine arts program. More so than even the architecture of the building, these murals represent the only example of trained artists' work easily and publicly visible. Murals may be significant if they are the only publicly accessible examples of their types. The iconographic and iconological content of the murals may also have local significance. In most cases, the murals derived their styles from local history and economy. As such, they are valuable documents of a region's political and economic history. This fact means that the murals derive much of their meaning from the context, not only of the post of-

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office lobby, but also of the town or county in which the post office is located. Much of the meaning would be lost if the murals were moved to another city, even if reinstalled in a post office.

b. Criterion C

The general quality of post office murals can be described as competent. Nevertheless, a mural may have local significance as possessing "high artistic values" if it is particularly accomplished, or the town in which it is located is particularly poor in art.

c. Criterion B

A mural would be locally significant if, as noted above, it is a rare or unique example of a locally famous artist's work.

2. STATE LEVEL:

a. Criterion C

The vast majority of murals commissioned for the post office lobbies were oil or tempura on canvas, which was then adhered to the wall. Frescoes or other techniques, then, would possess importance on the state level based on their rarity. In a few rare instances, too, a mural is acknowledged to possess "high artistic values" on a par with the artistic achievements of the country's best artists. The murals in San Francisco's Rincon Annex are an example.

b. Criterion B

A mural could have state significance if it is the work of an artist famous or known throughout the state, or if its iconographic or iconological content relates to California as a whole.

Integrity— Requires integrity of design, materials, association, and in many cases, location. Any major changes to a lobby interior which have covered or removed portions of the mural may impair its integrity. In addition, since many murals are context-dependent, their location in a specific town, even a specific post office, may be essential to their understanding.

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C. POLITICS/GOVERNMENT/ECONOMIC SIGNIFICANCE:

1. LOCAL LEVEL:

a. Criterion A

It is probably not possible to quantify the economic impact a post office had on a particular town. An individual post office may, however, be an important local example of national economic trends and the federal government's policies in dealing with those trends. In particular, those post offices built during the 1930s as part of the accelerated public works programs under the Hoover and Roosevelt Administrations are concrete examples of the New Deal and the Depression. A post office may qualify as locally significant if it is the only, or one of the few, surviving examples of New Deal public work projects.

2. STATE LEVEL:

a. Criterion A

Many post offices will qualify as significant on the state level for the same reasons as the local level- as examples of the federal government's response to the Depression. Since relatively few post office buildings from this era have survived intact, particularly well-preserved and unaltered examples will have state importance.

Integrity- Requires integrity of design, setting, location, materials, workmanship and association. The associative values expressed by the government are dependent on the building's architecture; the clarity with which we can read those values is dependent on subsequent changes to that architecture.

D. SCULPTURE SIGNIFICANCE:

1. LOCAL LEVEL:

a. Criterion C

As part of the Beaux-Arts architectural tradition, many post offices included cast bronze and aluminum, decorative plaster work, and ornamental

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lighting fixtures. In some smaller towns, these decorative elements were unique, and were, in many cases, of extraordinarily high quality. Other locally significant elements might include a particularly intricate or well-crafted terrazzo floor, or outdoor lighting standards.

2. STATE LEVEL:

a. Criterion C

Some decorative elements used in post offices could take on significance at the state level in that they are unique or rare uses of forms in public buildings.

Integrity- Requires integrity of design, materials, workmanship and setting within a particular building. In most cases, decorative elements were mass-produced, and thus require only that they be in good physical condition to have retained integrity. Some light fixtures were modified to accept fluorescent bulbs, and plastic has replaced the original milk glass globes. The total effect of such modifications will have to be considered. Some decorative elements were designed for specific post offices, and thus are more significant in their original settings.

E. COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT SIGNIFICANCE:

1. LOCAL LEVEL:

a. Criterion A

A post office may have played an active role in a town's development, or it may act as a passive record of that development. A post office would be significant as an active participant in a town's evolution if it can be demonstrated that the building's siting played a role in the direction, shape, and nature of a town's growth. A post office may also act as an important document of a town's past, even if it did not have a particularly strong effect on its development.

b. Criterion B

A post office may be associated with a locally important person through its siting. In some cases, local landowners would donate a parcel to the Post Office Department, etc.

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Integrity- Requires integrity of design, setting, and location. For a property to retain significance as a record of a town's development, the building's relationship to other contemporary buildings should be apparent.

Not all of these areas of significance are attached to individual properties included in this survey. It was not thought necessary for every building to be significant in all of the areas identified. Rather, the cumulative significance of a building's importance to the theme, its integrity, and its individual importance was considered.

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FEDERAL BUILDING PROGRAMS

A. 1902-1926

Throughout the 19th century, all public buildings were funded on an ad hoc basis, with one funding bill seldom containing allocations for more than three buildings.¹ In June of 1902, the first "Public Buildings Omnibus Act"² was approved. This bill consolidated appropriations for new public buildings, as well as providing for expansion and maintenance of existing buildings. Though no buildings in California were funded by this Act, it set a precedent which was followed in May of 1908,² when funding was allocated for construction of the Riverside Post Office and Federal Building, currently listed in the National Register of Historic Places. The 1908 Act also authorized site acquisition for the Pasadena Post Office,³ which was constructed in 1915 with funding from subsequent Acts. The last "omnibus" funding bill was passed in March of 1913⁴; it allocated funds for the San Pedro Post Office and Federal Building, and the Willows Post Office.

The omnibus bill funding approach was rife with potential for abuse, and led to complaints from the professional bureaucratic staff of the federal government that "in many instances the buildings authorized are unnecessary for the public business ... if frequently happens that a number of buildings are authorized which are not required, and, on the other hand, no appropriations are made for localities in which the government is urgently in need of adequate buildings, and it is in all probability paying large rent for insufficient quarters".⁵

It appears that the omnibus bills provided an opportunity for individual congressmen to give, as Lois Craig calls it, a "federal present" to important constituents. Not only the location, but the size and ornament of public buildings seem to have been determined by political, rather than operational requirements. James A. Garner, a representative from Texas, illustrated the pork-barrel approach when he discussed federal building practices in his state: "Every time one of these Yankees gets a ham, I'm going to get a hog".⁶

¹Craig, et al, "The Federal Presence", p. 240

²32 Stat 310 et seq.

³35 Stat 530

⁴35 Stat 532; 39 Stat 873

⁵Annual Board Report of the State of the Finances, 1908, p. 60

⁶Craig, op. cit., p. 242

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In order to reduce the tendency towards pork-barreling, Treasury Secretary McAdoo recommended in 1915¹ that a set of rational criteria be applied to federal building projects. McAdoo divided post offices into four categories based on an office's receipts for the previous year, and defined the level of ornamentation appropriate to each category. This classification system is shown below.

◦ CLASS A:

Definition: Buildings that include a post office of the first class with annual receipts of \$800,000 or over; the site forming part of a city development plan or situated on an important thoroughfare of a great city; improvement on an adjoining property reaching the higher valuation of metropolitan real estate.

Character of Building: Marble or granite facing; fireproof throughout; metal frames, sashes, and doors, interior finish to include the finer grade of marble, ornamental bronze work, mahogany, etc. Public spaces to have monumental treatment, mural decorations; special interior lighting fixtures

◦ CLASS B:

Definition: Buildings that include a post office of the first class with receipts from \$60,000 to \$800,000; valuation of adjoining property somewhat below the higher valuation of metropolitan real estate.

Character of Building: Limestone or sandstone facing; exterior frames and sash metal; interior frames, sash and doors wood; interior finish to exclude the more expensive woods and marbles; ornamental metal to be used only where iron is suitable. Restricted ornament in public spaces.

- Definition: Buildings that include a post office of the second class with receipts of \$15,000 or over, and of the first class to \$60,000 receipts; valuation of surrounding property that of a second class city.

¹Annual Report of the State of the Finances, 1915

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Character of Building: Brick facing with stone or terracotta trimmings; fireproof floors; non-fireproof roof; frames, sashes and doors wood; interior finish to exclude the more expensive woods and marbles; the latter used only where sanitary conditions demand; public spaces restricted to very simple forms of ornament.

◦ CLASS D:

Definition: Buildings that include a post office having annual receipts of less than \$15,000; real estate values justifying only a limited investment for improvements.

Character of Building: Brick facing, little stone or terracotta used; only first floor fireproof; stock sash frames, doors, etc., where advisable; ordinary class of building, such as any business man would consider a reasonable investment in a small town.

B. 1926-1933

Reform finally came with the passage of the Public Building Act of May 25, 1926, also referred to as the Keyes-Elliot Act.

This legislation expanded the scope and consolidated the funding of post office construction. It did not specify which cities or areas were to receive new post offices, but directed the Secretary of the Treasury and the Postmaster General to determine which cities required postal facilities. This "interdepartmental commission", as it was called, reported to congress in 1927¹ and made the following recommendations:

- That the \$100,000,000 allocation in the 1926 Act be increased by \$100,000,000;
- That at least two new buildings be constructed per state; and
- That no building be constructed where the post office's receipts were less than \$10,000 per year.

¹ 38 Stat 630.

² House document 710, 69th Congress, 2d Session.

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This document also included a list of projects, including the Oakland Post Office and Federal Building, and the Long Beach, San Bernardino, and Santa Ana Post Office Buildings.

Subsequent legislation¹ increased the allocation and requested further information from the interdepartmental commission, which was provided in 1929.²

The commission's 1929 report added new recommendations for appropriations, and refined the criteria for choosing a location, as follows:

- 1) Two buildings per state were to be situated in towns with post offices having annual receipts of \$10,000 or more;
- 2) The remaining three were to be located in towns having postal receipts of \$20,000 or more, and a) a population of 2,000 or a served population of 4,000, and b) post office must not be dependent on only one industry for receipts.

In addition to the building projects recommended in the 1927 report, the 1929 report recommended funding for the El Centro, Marysville, Napa, Oroville, Palo Alto, Petaluma, Porterville, Redlands, and Visalia post offices. At the close of the twenties, 20 new post offices were planned in California, and the "estimated cost for providing for all of the needs of the country based on data secured the year 1928"³ was \$398 million. Many of the buildings included in the 1926 and 1928 funding legislation in California have been found to be of historic interest.

Though the Keyes-Elliot Act continued to be a primary source of funding allocations during the 1930s, the nature of the public building program was fundamentally changed early in 1931. With the seriousness and tenacity of the economic Depression apparent, President Hoover directed Secretary of the Treasury Mellon to expedite the federal building program.⁴ Mellon

¹45 Stat 137

²House document, 613, 70th Congress, 2d Session

³Ibid, p. 1.

⁴Annual Report of the State of the Finances, 1932, USGPO 1933, p. 204.

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complied by reducing the time allowed for completion of the program from ten years, as originally contemplated in the 1926 Act, to five. The annual report of the Secretary of the Treasury for fiscal year 1931 shows that \$500 million had been allocated for public buildings since 1926.

Of the buildings included in this nomination, all but three* had been funded or recommended for funding by June of 1932. The design and scale of the buildings may well have been influenced by subsequent Roosevelt Administration policies, but this research shows that the bulk of post office buildings were constructed under some provision of the Keyes-Elliott Act. Research did not reveal whether any of these three buildings was funded by the WPA.

C 1933-1939

Federal involvement in public building increased greatly after the formation of the Public Works Administration in 1933. Though the record is confused, research for this nomination indicates that primary responsibility for post office design, construction, and allocation remained with the Treasury Department until 1939, when federal building activities were consolidated in a new Federal Works Agency.

Ostensibly, all public building construction by the Treasury Department became subject to allotment by the Administrator of Public Works.

Subsequent annual reports² suggest that the Treasury Department kept control of these projects. The construction program under the auspices³ of the original public buildings program was reported completed in 1937. By 1935, however, Treasury Department building programs were accounted for in six separate headings: 1) the Combined Building Program; 2) the Original Public Building Program (Keyes-Elliott Act); 3) the program under the WPA; 4) the Emergency Relief Construction Program; and 5) the Program for the District of Columbia, authorized in the 1926 Act.⁴

* Los Angeles, Terminal Annex, San Diego, MPO, and San Pedro, MPO. The funding for the San Pedro office is unclear. House document 613 lists an allocation for a building in San Pedro, but lacking more precise evidence, it cannot be said decisively that the San Pedro Main Post Office building was planned before 1932.

¹ Report of the State of the Finances, fiscal year 1933, June, 1935, p. 128.

² Report of the State of the Finances, fiscal years 1934-1939.

³ U. S. Treasury Department, op. cit., 1937, p. 183.

⁴ Ibid.

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III. HISTORY AND ORGANIZATION OF THE OFFICE OF THE SUPERVISING ARCHITECT

A. 1893-1934

The origins of the Office of the Supervising Architect (OSA) can be traced to a decision in 1853 to create a construction branch in the Treasury Department.¹ The Supervising Architect's office remained attached to the Treasury Department until 1939, when it was transferred to the Federal Works Agency.²

The OSA was organized as a unit of the Secretary of the Treasury's office, and never became a separate Treasury Department bureau.

This nomination is concerned with the administrations of:

James Knox Taylor, 1898-1912;
James A. Wetmore (Acting), 1912-1913;
Oscar Wenderoth, 1913-1915;
James A. Wetmore (Acting), 1915-1934; and
Louis A. Simon, 1935-1941.

The Supervising Architect, as the chief administrative officer of his office, had a strong impact on the design policies of the federal government, and on the outcome of architectural competitions held by the federal government.

During the last half of the 19th century, all federal construction was ostensibly designed in this office. In 1893, the Tarnsey Act³ allowed the Secretary of the Treasury to hold competitions to allow private architects to design public buildings. The Supervising Architect, in this case, took on the role of the client, supervising the design and construction of buildings designed by outside firms. Under the provisions of this Act, the larger post offices were designed by private firms, while the Office of the Supervising Architect designed offices in small towns. The Tarnsey Act was repealed on August 14, 1912,³ leaving the Treasury Department without authorization to contract with independent architects.

Public buildings constructed under Supervising Architect Taylor are marked by a richness of ornament and their imposing, monumental character.

¹Lois Craig, et al, op. cit., p. 195.

²54 Stat 611.

³37 Stat 417.

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The dominant design idiom of this period was inspired by French Neo-classicism, as interpreted by the Beaux-Arts trained architects in the OSA and private practice. This commitment to classicism was stated in Taylor's 1901 report:

"The Department ... decided to adopt the classical style of architecture for all buildings ... this style is best suited for government buildings. The experience of centuries has demonstrated that no form of architecture is so pleasing to the great mass of mankind as the classic, or some modified form of the classic."¹

Aside from his belief in the aesthetic superiority of Beaux-Arts classicism, Taylor expressed his faith in the didactic quality of federal design:

"It (the federal government) cannot avoid affecting in a pronounced degree the architectural taste, knowledge, and enjoyment of the nation ... The government, therefore, enjoys in its building operations a tremendous opportunity for good in the judgement of all who regard architecture as one of the important factors of the higher civilization."²

The Chico, Willows, and Pasadena Main Offices are characteristic of Taylor's design ideology.

The two-year administration of Oscar Wenderoth continued the Beaux-Arts tradition, but the emphasis shifted from French Neo-classical to Renaissance Revival and Italianate designs.

The one-year interlude during which James A. Wetmore served as Acting Supervising Architect followed the same previously established patterns.

Throughout this period, designs of federal buildings, which in most cases were synonymous with post offices, tended to ignore local architectural traditions and instead reflect national trends.

¹ Report of the Supervising Architect of the Treasury, 1901.

² Annual Report on the State of the Finances, 1912.

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In 1915, James A. Wetmore was again designated Acting Supervising Architect. Wetmore, a lawyer by training, was less involved with the actual design of the buildings than had been his predecessors. During his administration, the Superintendent of the Architectural Division, Louis A. Simon, exercised considerable influence on the design of federal buildings. After 1915, designs became standardized, and ornament less lavish. The Willows Main Office (1915) was the last of the early Italianate Beaux-Arts designs, which may indicate that it had been designed prior to Wenderoth's resignation. The buildings designed by private architects conformed to the dimensional and operations requirements of the Post Office Department, but tended to contain a more liberal use of ornament than those designed in the Office of the Supervising Architect itself.

By 1922, the office was divided into a Technical and an Administrative (Executive) Branch. The Technical Branch embraced a computing division which was concerned with costing and accounting; a drafting division; a structural division; a mechanical engineering division; and a repairs division. The drafting division was headed by a superintendant who exercised a great deal of influence on the design practices of the office.

The Executive Branch embraced the office proper of the Supervising Architect, and other administrative duties of the office.

B. 1934-1939

The Supervising Architect's office was reorganized in 1934, and James Wetmore was replaced by Louis A. Simon. The Supervising Architect lost its independence as a separate office in the Secretary's office, and was replaced by the Public Building Branch of the Procurement Division of the Treasury Department. The office was moved in February of 1934 from the Treasury Building to new quarters in the Federal Warehouse Building, renamed the Procurement Building. The office was reorganized into five divisions, consisting of a Supervising Architect, a Supervising Engineer, a Chairman of the Board of Award, and a Chief of the Legal Section.

Federal design in this period exhibited greater stylistic variety than in the previous 25 years.

¹Treasury Annual Report, 1934, p. 127.

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During this period, too, more consideration was given to local architectural traditions, resulting, in California, in designs recalling "Spanish" or Mission Style" architecture popular in the state during the twenties and early thirties. Confusion with southwestern architectural motifs later led to the use of "Pueblo Style" elements in some buildings.

Designs by independent architects followed a pattern similar to those designed by the OSA, though some buildings employed Art Deco motifs. During the 1930s, federal projects retained the Beaux-Arts inspired symmetry of the Taylor and Wenderoth eras, though Simon used far less ornament than had his predecessors. The ornament that was used tended to be derived from Art Deco motifs, and emphasized geometricized floral and abstract forms.

BACKGROUND ON FEDERAL ART PROJECTS

The New Deal Federal Art Projects were designed to alleviate unemployment in the arts, and to decorate the architecture produced in the Office of the Supervising Architect. Three programs were administered through the Treasury Department, and one through the Works Progress Administration.

The Treasury Department programs were as follows:¹

- 1) The Public Works of Art Project (PWAP), which lasted from December, 1933, to June, 1934. This was an "emergency" relief program, applied without a strict relief test, which employed roughly 3,700 artists and cost \$1,312,000.
- 2) The Section of Painting and Sculpture, later the Section of Fine Arts. This was the program primarily responsible for murals and sculpture found in post office buildings throughout the country. Commissions were awarded based on anonymous competitions without reference to the artists' economic need, i.e., it was not, strictly speaking, a relief program. The program began in October, 1934; the final commission was completed in 1943. Fourteen hundred contracts were awarded at a total cost of about \$2,571,000.

¹O'Connor, 1972, p. 12.

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- 3) Treasury Relief Art Project (TRAP) was created in July of 1935 by a funding allocation from the WPA to the Treasury Department. TRAP was administered by the Section of Fine Arts, applying the same relief rules that governed WPA employment. Four hundred forty six persons were employed by the project, which cost \$833,784, and was discontinued in 1939. The project's primary output was painting and sculpture used to decorate federal buildings.

The Work Progress Administration Federal Art Project (WPA/FAP). This was a large relief project devoted to the plastic arts. The WPA/FAP was part of a larger program called Federal Project No. 1, which included the WPA drama, music, and writing projects. The overall project began in August, 1935, employed over 4,000 persons, cost \$35,000,000, and was terminated in 1943.

The present state of scholarship indicates that the quality, size, iconography, iconology, and style were independent of the particular program under which a program was funded.

It was beyond the scope of this nomination effort to determine which of these various federal programs commissioned particular murals in California.

Though the federal art programs brought together the young Mark Rothko, Jackson Pollock, and other artists who would form the nucleus of the New York School in the 1950s, art sponsored by the program tended to be representational and stylistically conservative. The iconography of federal murals centered on local and regional themes, often showing the daily occupations of common people. The style and content of the murals were intimately tied together, and the art depended on its context for most of its meaning.

Holger Cahill, the director of the Treasury Department's Section of Fine Arts, commented on the social function of public murals on numerous occasions. In 1937, he observed that "Mural painting is not a studio art; by its very nature, it is social. In its great periods, it has always been associated with the expression of social meanings, the experience, ideas, history, and beliefs of a community." The Project, as the federal art program was referred to at the time, employed significant numbers of young artists, many of whom had become radicalized by the Depression. Mitchell Siporin, a Project muralist from Chicago, expressed the political sentiments of much of the art, saying "Ours is

¹Cahill, 1937.

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the story of Labor and Progressivism, of Jane Addams and Mary McDowell, of Eugene Debs and Robert LaFollette, Sr., of Rachel Lindsay and Theodor Drieser, of Haymarket and Hull House."¹ A Boston artist, Jack Levine, expressed similar political sentiments: "I find my approach to painting inseparable from my approach to the world. Justice is more important than good looks."²

Though the publicized statements of many Project artists emphasize the social and political meaning and importance of their work, like all artists, they were also concerned with the aesthetic and formal problems of their work. Cahill commented on this problem, saying, "The mural must have a definite relation to its surrounding and be an integral part of the architectural scheme ... The composition as a whole must have clarity, largeness, carrying power, and a rhythmic order that leads the eye through the whole space."³

A central contention of this nomination is that the murals and architecture of 1930s post offices are mutually interdependent for aesthetic and iconographic meaning. As Cahill observed in 1937, "... the transportable murals lose much of their significance apart from their setting ...".⁴

The sculpture placed in post offices in the 1930s followed the same stylistic lines established by the muralists, but subject matter tended to simplified allegorical figures, such as the "transportation" reliefs at the Santa Barbara and San Diego Offices.

The Postal Service has reached an agreement with the Smithsonian Institution aimed at preserving all post office murals.

ARCHITECTURAL HISTORY BACKGROUND

Several of the buildings included in this nomination are evidence of the federal government's tendency towards classicism during the first forty years of this century. The American fascination with classical antiquity can be traced to the late 18th century. The discoveries of well preserved Roman towns at Herculaneum and Pompei resulted in a neo-classical movement in Europe, but classicism was embraced with greater enthusiasm in America than it had received in Europe. Thomas Jefferson was one of the strongest proponents of architectural classicism in this country. The associative values of Greek Revival architecture, for Jefferson, recalled the democratic ideals of Periclean Athens. By building in imitation of the antique, Jefferson hoped to symbolically embody the democratic, liberal ideals of his republic in its architecture.

¹O'Connor, 1973, p. 41.

²Ibid.

³Cahill, 1937.

⁴Ibid.

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The classical tradition was carried on by the Capitol's first architect, Benjamin Latrobe. The original symbol of the Post Office Department was, in fact, a figure of Mercury, the messenger of the Greek and Roman Gods. A strong thread of classicism ran throughout the nineteenth century, often in opposition to other revival movements, notably the Gothic, and the progressive "avant garde" architects, i.e., H. H. Richardson and Louis Sullivan.

The Chicago World's Fair of 1893, (also known as the World Columbian Exhibition) reinvigorated the classical as the dominant architectural mode of the century, and inaugurated the "City Beautiful" movement of the last decade of the nineteenth century and the first two decades of the twentieth. Government building never exhibited cognizance of the developing modern movement, and has been, consistently, a bastion of conservative design.

The classical symbols used in federal architecture of the nineteenth century were freighted with specific meanings, alluding to their classical antecedents. By the early years of the twentieth century, these architectural symbols had lost their specific meanings. Now inscriptions had to substitute or clarify the iconography. Unidentified classical elements have simply come to be symbols of wealth, power, and dignity, and are no longer burdened with reference to specific concepts or allusions to Periclean democracy as Jefferson's original designs had intended.

Leading California architects were strong proponents of the City Beautiful movement, and during the first two decades of the century, Beaux-Arts inspired design enjoyed an almost complete monopoly of major commissions. San Francisco was the state's financial and cultural capitol, and housed the home offices of the state's most prominent architectural and planning firms. Several cities planned civic centers during this period, most of which assumed that the post office would play an important urban design role.

A second major regional trend during the early years of this century ran counter to the elaborate Beaux-Arts designs of the major architectural firms. Irving Gill and other less talented architects developed an unornamented Mission Style, recalling the simple planes and massive adobe walls of the Spanish and Mexican Franciscan Missions established along the California coast in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Gill's designs also brought the influence of the European de Stijl movement to California. Throughout the twenties and thirties, a Spanish Colonial Revival style, based on romanticized versions of the architecture built by the Spanish in North America in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, was a popular style for commercial buildings.

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Along with Florida and New York, Southern California was the capital of Art Deco architecture during the 1920s. The zigzag ornament, stylized floral motifs, and symmetrical facades of this style were particularly popular in Los Angeles and Hollywood. The later curvilinear Streamline Moderne of the thirties was also among the most popular commercial styles for the little development that occurred during the 1930s.

Frank Lloyd Wright executed several projects in Los Angeles in the 1920s, and the influence of his use of decorative cast concrete blocks can be seen in several commercial buildings throughout Southern California.

The influence of European Modernism did not have a major effect on commercial architecture in California until the 1950s, when the International Style became the dominant design idiom.

POSTAL SERVICE OPERATIONS

As in the rest of the United States, the development of postal services is closely tied to improvements in transportation. Early Post Offices were often located in stores, and local merchants were designated as Postmasters.

The greatest factor influencing siting of Post Offices included in this nomination was the existence of rail lines. The Railway Mail Service, inaugurated in 1862,¹ provided the primary means of transporting bulk mail through the 1930s. Several lines acted as mobile Post Offices, sorting mail en route and reducing the time needed to deliver the mail.

The interior arrangements of both the public lobby and the workroom areas were also dictated by postal operational requirements. In the lobby, the windows were organized according to the type service provided. By the 1930s, this included parcel post as well as regular and special delivery. Another major function of the post office, especially during the Depression, was the Postal Savings Bank. This operation, which allowed savings accounts of up to \$5,000, added an element of stability to the turbulence and uncertainty surrounding banking during the early years of the Depression. A separate window was provided for the functioning of the Postal Savings Bank. Then, as now, Post Office boxes were placed in the lobby and created a demand for wall space that would not have existed otherwise.

¹History of the U.S. Postal Service, USPS Publication 100, April, 1984, p.4.

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The workroom was shaped by the need for racks to hand-sort the incoming mail, and for a loading bay to allow for the efficient handling of mail. Administrative space was greater than strictly functional requirements would suggest. Since the office of postmaster and assistant postmaster was appointive, and not fully under civil service regulations until 1969, such postal jobs were distributed as political "presents" by local congressmen. In the post offices included in this survey, both the postmaster and his assistant had individual offices, usually in the front corners of these buildings. In addition, an office of the postal inspector was provided in most buildings.

GLOSSARY OF STYLISTIC TERMS

This glossary will seek to clarify the terms used to identify architectural styles in this report. The process is complicated by a lack of consensus among architectural historians on what to call various styles, and by some confusion on the part of the building's architects themselves. Most of the architects discussed in this report adhered to the decorated shed concept; that is, the shape of a building was pre-defined as a classical box, and the style could be determined by adding the appropriate ornament. The dates given for styles will be somewhat later than their eastern counterparts.

Beaux-Arts Classicism, 1890-1920

This term is used rather loosely to describe buildings derivative of the design ideology taught at the Ecole des Beaux Arts, the leading architecture and art school in France during the 19th and early 20th centuries. In this nomination, we are concerned with the last phase of that school, and more precisely of the American interpretation of that School. Though the term Classicism

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recalls antique Roman and Greek motifs, a more correct antecedant of the style is the French Baroque of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This was the dominant style of the 1893 World Columbian Exhibition in Chicago, and of the ensuing City Beautiful movement.

Second Renaissance Revival, 1890-1920

This, like the above term, refers to an academic style, not at all incompatible with the Beaux-Arts style. The inspiration for this style derived from the Northern Italian Renaissance. The Beverly Hills Main Post Office is an example of the style derived from Michelangelo's architecture. The term refers not to a Second Renaissance, but to the Revival; the Renaissance enjoyed popularity earlier in the nineteenth century (1840-1890).

Mission Style, 1890-1920

This term refers not to the Franciscan Missions of Hispanic California, but to an early twentieth century romantic interpretation of certain elements of this adobe architecture. The dominant forms were arches, supported on piers, and smooth, unornamented wall surfaces. Though often identified in California with low-cost, quickly constructed commercial projects, some practitioners successfully used the style for residential and larger projects. Many train stations throughout California were designed in this style.

Spanish Colonial Revival, 1915-1940

This term describes a style that enjoyed enormous popularity in many California communities for residential and commercial architecture. Its antecedants were the buildings for Spanish and Mexican California and Spanish Mexico. Though similar in some ways to the earlier Mission Style, the Spanish Colonial was more refined, used more applied ornament and had generally lighter proportions.

Pueblo Style, 1905-Present

Usually, this term refers not to the various architectural styles of southwestern Indian pueblos, but to a romantic interpretation of Pueblo archi-

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ecture. Though this style was used, and is still used, in Arizona and New Mexico, architects working in various Mediterranean styles frequently borrowed Pueblo Style elements.

Mediterranean, 1915-1940

This term is used to describe eclectic buildings that combine Italianate, Spanish Colonial Revival, and other styles. It is also used as a general term to include the Spanish Colonial Revival, the Chirriguesque Revival, and the Monterey Revival, all common styles in California.

Art Deco, 1920-1930

Art Deco was a decorative style, used extensively on commercial projects, especially in Southern California, New York and Florida. The style used sharp angles, and abstract and geometricized renderings of plant forms. The style made extensive use of etched glass and expensive materials. As used in post office construction, the ornament usually recalled classical motifs, or standard federal motifs, such as stars and eagles.

Starved Classicism, 1930-1942

Also referred to as PWA Moderne by some writers, this was the dominant mode of government construction during the 1930's and it's a direct descendant of the Supervising Architect's earlier Beaux-Arts inspired buildings. The facade and plan of these buildings remain symmetrical; the primary shift is in the ornament. Starved Classicism, in an effort to reduce costs and speed construction, eliminated or reduced ornament to a minimum. The ornament that was used often owed a stylistic debt to the Art Deco of the twenties, though sculpture tended almost exclusively to the Social Realism of the Treasury Department's Section of Fine Arts.

Streamline Moderne, 1933-1943

This was a popular style for commercial architecture throughout the 1930's. The Streamline Moderne, as the name implies, emphasized curvilinear "streamlined" shapes, simple aluminum moldings, and round "port-hole" windows. Though the style was not employed in any of the post offices included in the survey, an occasional streamlined lighting fixture can be found in 1930s lobbies.

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International Style, 1935-Present

This term, coined in 1935 by Philip Johnson and Henry Russell Hitchcock, originally referred to the designs of the European modernists: Ludwig Mies van der Rohe and Walter Gropius. When used in this nomination, it is meant to signify the work of such diverse California modernists as Richard Neutra and R. M. Schindler, as well as the Miesen glass box

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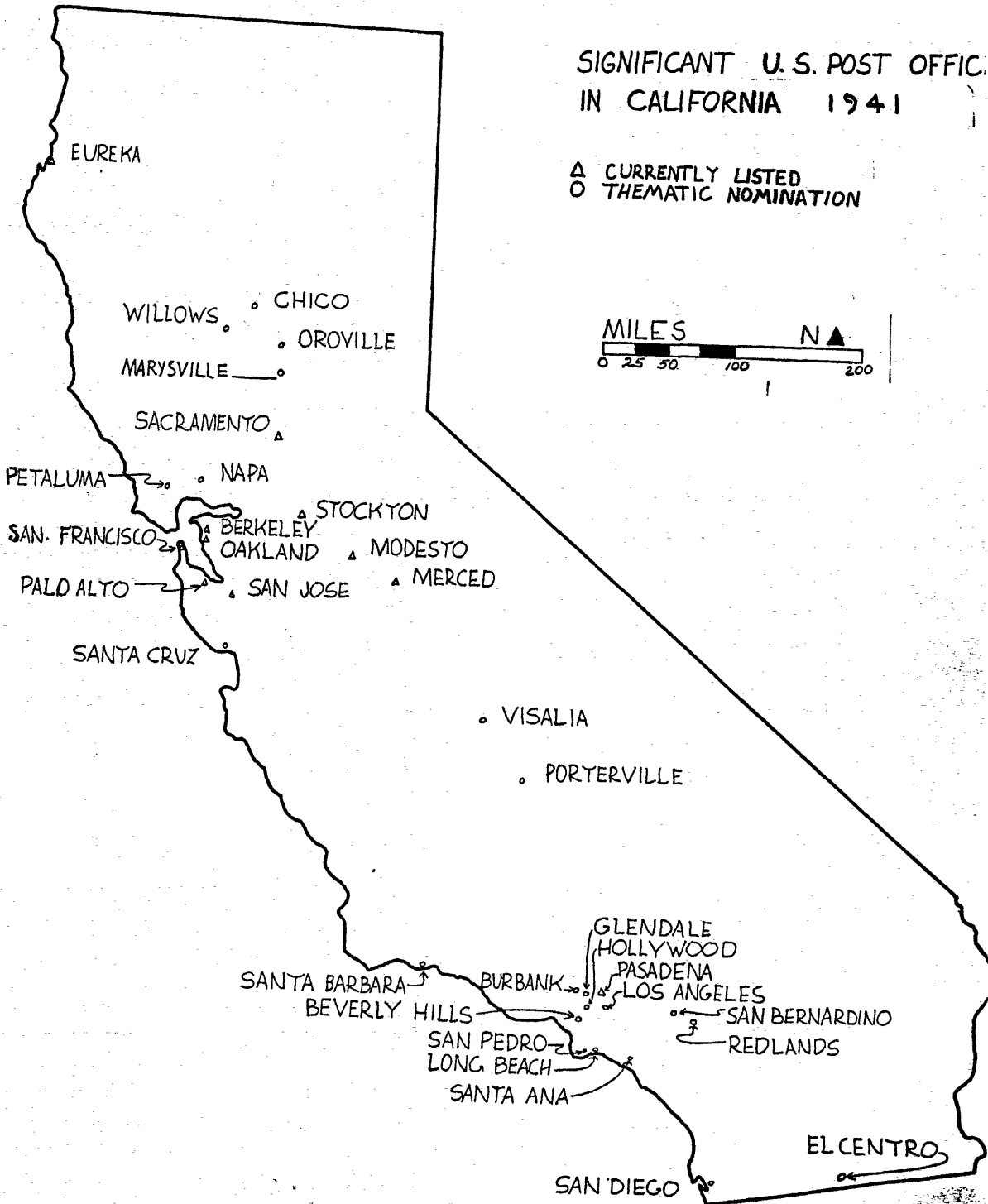
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Page 1

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Thematic Group

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State CALIFORNIA

Nomination/Type of Review

1. U.S. Post Office (Chico Midtown Station)

Substantive Review

Cover _____ 1-11-85

Date/Signature

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2. U.S. Post Office (Willows Main Post Office)

Substantive Review

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3. U.S. Post Office (El Centro Main Post Office)

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4. U.S. Post Office (Long Beach Main Post Office)

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9. U.S. Post Office (Redlands Main Post Office)

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10. U.S. Post Office (Santa Cruz Main Post Office)

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Nomination/Type of Review

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| 12. U.S. Post Office (Petaluma Post Office) SAN BERNARDINO | Substantive Review | for Keeper | <u>[Signature]</u> 1/16/85 |
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| 13. U.S. Post Office (Downtown Station) | Substantive Review | for Keeper | <u>[Signature]</u> 1/16/85 |
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| 14. U.S. Post Office (Porterville Main Post Office) | Substantive Review | for Keeper | <u>[Signature]</u> 1/16/85 |
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| 15. U.S. Post Office (Visalla Town Center Station) | Substantive Review | for Keeper | <u>[Signature]</u> 1/16/85 |
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| 16. U.S. Post Office (Marysville Main Post Office) | Substantive Review | for Keeper | <u>[Signature]</u> 1/16/85 |
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23. US Post Office (San Mateo Main) <u>Substantive Review</u>	Keeper <u><i>Wing Schladt 4/18/88</i></u>
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