

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICENATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR FEDERAL PROPERTIES

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

Four Building Act of 1926 Post Offices and Thirty-Two Public Works  
Administration Post Offices Thematic Resources

AND/OR COMMON

**2 LOCATION**

STREET &amp; NUMBER

See individual inventory forms

CITY, TOWN

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

STATE

VICINITY OF  
CODE

COUNTY

CODE

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

## CATEGORY

☐ DISTRICT  
☐ BUILDING(S)  
☐ STRUCTURE  
☐ SITE  
☐ OBJECT(X) Thematic  
Group

## OWNERSHIP

☒ PUBLIC  
☐ PRIVATE  
☐ BOTH

## PUBLIC ACQUISITION

☐ IN PROCESS  
☐ BEING CONSIDERED

## STATUS

☒ OCCUPIED  
☐ UNOCCUPIED  
☐ WORK IN PROGRESS

## ACCESSIBLE

☒ YES: RESTRICTED  
☐ YES: UNRESTRICTED  
☐ NO

## PRESENT USE

☐ AGRICULTURE ☐ MUSEUM  
☐ COMMERCIAL ☐ PARK  
☐ EDUCATIONAL ☐ PRIVATE RESIDENCE  
☐ ENTERTAINMENT ☐ RELIGIOUS  
☒ GOVERNMENT ☐ SCIENTIFIC  
☐ INDUSTRIAL ☐ TRANSPORTATION  
☐ MILITARY ☐ OTHER**4 AGENCY**

REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS (If applicable)

Owner: United States Postal Service

STREET &amp; NUMBER

Memphis Field Real Estate and Buildings Office

Agency: 1 North Front Street

CITY, TOWN

Memphis

VICINITY OF

STATE

TN 38103

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**COURTHOUSE  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

STREET &amp; NUMBER

See individual inventory forms

CITY, TOWN

STATE

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

Survey work carried out as an integral part of this thematic nomination

DATE

☐ FEDERAL ☐ STATE ☐ COUNTY ☐ LOCALDEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

# 7 DESCRIPTION

## CONDITION

— EXCELLENT  
— GOOD  
— FAIR

— DETERIORATED  
— RUINS  
— UNEXPOSED

## CHECK ONE

— UNALTERED  
— ALTERED

## CI

— O  
— M

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Note: See individual inventory forms for specific descriptions.

All of the Post Offices included in this thematic nomination are located in Mississippi and were constructed in the late 1930's and early 1940's under the Public Building Act of 1926 or the Public Works Administration of the Federal Government, set up in 1933. The sites and their architects and builders (if known) are as follows:

### Constructed under Public Building Act of 1926

Site	Architect	Builder
Crystal Springs (1940-41)	Office of the Supervising Architect (OSA)	Dye-Mullins Const. Co. Columbus, MS
Eupora (1941)	OSA	Algernon-Blair Montgomery, AL
Macon (1940)	OSA	Unknown
Poplarville (1941)	OSA	H.D. White & Co. Chicago, IL

### Constructed under Public Works Administration

Site	Architect	Builder
Amory (1937)	Unknown	Pittman Brothers New Orleans, LA
Bay St. Louis (1935)	Office of the Supervising Architect (OSA)	Dye-Mullins Const. Co. Columbus, MS
Batesville (1940)	OSA	H.D. White & Co. Chicago, IL
Belzoni (1937)	OSA	James C. Miller Campbellsville, KY
Booneville (1939)	Leroy Barton	Murphy Pound
Carthage (1939)	Shelby Olvy Yarborough	Unknown
Charleston (1939)	OSA	Unknown
Cleveland (1934)	OSA	Unknown
* Columbia (1931) (PBA'26)	Shourds & Bean	Dye-Mullins
Columbus (1938)	R. Stanley Brown	Murphy Pound
Durant (1937)	OSA	B.L. Knost Pass Christian, MS
Forest (1938)	OSA	Algernon-Blair Montgomery, AL
Hattiesburg (1933-34)	Juan G. Landry & Rathbone Depuys	Mathew Rauen Const. Co. Chicago, IL
Hazlehurst (1938)	OSA	Algernon-Blair
Houston (1940)	OSA	Charles Davis, Inc. Jacksonville, FL
Indianola (1935)	OSA	Unknown
* Kosciusko (1932) (PBA'26)	OSA	Algernon-Blair
Leland (1938)	OSA	Unknown
Lexington (1937)	Unknown	Algernon-Blair
Louisville (1935)	OSA	Dye-Mullins

*This summary lists these four as P.B.A. 1926 bldgs. they were the actual PBA 1926 bldgs. w/ Asterisk.*

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* Lumberton (1932)(PBA'26)	OSA	Algernon-Blair
Magnolia (1936-37)	OSA	Pittman Bros.
New Albany (1936)	OSA	Unknown
Newton (1936)	OSA	Murphy Pound
Okolona (1937)	OSA	Unknown
Philadelphia (1935-36)	CSA	Unknown
Picayune (1938)	OSA	Henry I. Flynn Const. Co.
Pontotoc (1937)	OSA	Unknown
Ripley (1938)	OSA	Algernon-Blair
Tylertown (1940)	OSA	Dye-Mullins
Waynesboro (1939)	OSA	Chandler Const. Co.
		Springfield, IL
* Winona (1932)(PBA'26)	OSA	Unknown

Four themes are interwoven in this research group: 1) the circumstances of construction involving the Public Building Act of 1926 and the Public Works Administration, 2) commonalities of architectural style, 3) artworks contained within twenty-eight of the thirty-six buildings, 4) small town settings.

Together these structures represent a significant government response to public need at a difficult time in this country's development, following the most severe depression in its history. The first Public Buildings Act of 1913 and the second Public Building Act of 1926 were supplemented in 1933 by Congress, on the urging of Franklin Delano Roosevelt, with the Federal Emergency Administration of Public Works. Between 1933 and 1941 a tremendous amount of construction resulted in the United States, including four post offices in Mississippi constructed under the 1926 Act and thirty-two post offices in Mississippi constructed under 1933 PWA legislation. See the accompanying document entitled "Federal Construction Work, 1913-1941," for a more complete discussion of such work carried out across the country under various legislative programs.

Stylistic analysis and evaluation of architectural quality may be subdivided as follows. An initial group of six buildings shows outstanding architectural qualities; Columbus, Leland, Winona and Lumberton exemplify the Colonial Revival Style. They share such features as hipped or gabled roofs with cupolas, brickwork articulated by such details as quoins, classically inspired wooden and limestone cornices, and by other limestone elements such as belt courses and water tables, decorative window lintels, and especially entryway elements ranging from frontispieces to retilinear and curvilinear, projecting porticoes. The Columbia structure, on the other hand, is a lone--but excellent--example of Beaux Arts Classicism within the group. Finally the Carthage site combines Colonial Revival and Style Moderne qualities with an exceptional result, and at Hattiesburg a truly extraordinary Style Moderne structure was built including exceptional interior and exterior lighting fixtures and interior furniture and wall finishes as well as the typically massive, prismatic body of the building itself.

also:

Vicksburg (1935-37)  
Jackson (1932-34)  
Meridian (1932)

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A second group of twenty-five buildings represents less extraordinary but still skillfully conceived Colonial Revival Style structures (Lexington and Eupora also show some Style Moderne qualities). This group may be divided into three sub-groups arranged in order of merit: Amory, Belzoni, Booneville, Crystal Springs, Forest, Hazlehurst, Houston, Magnolia, New Albany, Tylertown; and Cleveland, Durant, Eupora, Kosciusko, Lexington, Louisville, Newton, Pontotoc, Waynesboro; and Batesville, Bay St. Louis, Charleston, Macon, Picayune, Ripley. These buildings share similar, though less developed features with the first group.

A third group shows limited architectural merit but displays occasional Colonial Revival Style features. This group includes Indianola, Okolona, Philadelphia, Poplarville.

These post office buildings were often designed, according to Karel Yasko,<sup>1</sup> in collective studios or ateliers in Washington, D.C., often under the guidance of well-known practitioners; George Howe, for instance, participated in this unique process which grew out of post-depression attempts by the Federal Government to give work to unemployed architects. Although many of these post offices have architects' names associated with them, even to specific designations on cornerstones, they often cannot be precisely attributed to any one hand; Mr. Yasko emphasized this point. The same designs were often repeatedly constructed, both in Mississippi and across the country. Names of architects and builders are shown in the preceding list, but attribution of designer must often simply be made to the Office of the Supervising Architect.

Many of the buildings contain mural paintings and sculpture completed under the Department of the Treasury's Section of the Fine Arts Program. These sites and the artists responsible are as follows:

<u>Town</u>	<u>Artist</u>	<u>Art Work Title</u>
Amory*	John McCrady	Amory, Mississippi--1839
Batesville	Eve Kottgon	Cotton Plantation
Bay St. Louis	Louis Raynaud	Life on the Coast
Biloxi		Bill of Rights
		U.S. Constitution
		Declaration of Independence (documents in a case)

\*Mural painting unless otherwise indicated.

<sup>1</sup>Karel Yasko is the Counselor for Fine Arts and Historic Preservation, Public Buildings Service, Washington, D.C. Mr. Yasko conducted the Fine Arts Inventory for the United States which included post offices and post office mural paintings. Mr. Yasko is the country's leading authority on PWA post offices and their art work. He was interviewed in August of 1979 in Washington, D.C. by Michael Fazio.

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<u>Town</u>	<u>Artist</u>	<u>Art Work Title</u>
Booneville*	Stefan Hirsch	Scenic and Historic Booneville
Carthage (sculpture)	Peter Dalton	Lumbermen Rolling a Log
Columbus	Beulah Bettersworth	Out of the Soil
Crystal Springs	Henry L. Cagnina	Harvest
Durant	Isidore Teberoff	Erosion, Reclamation, and Conservation of the Soil
Eupora	Tom Savage	Cotton Farm
Forest	Julian Binford	Forest Loggers
Hazlehurst	Auriel Bessemer	Life in Mississippi Cotton Belt
Houston	Byron Burford, Jr.	Post Near Houston, Natchez Trace, 1803
Indianola	Beulah Bettersworth	White Gold in the Delta (destroyed)
Leland	Stuart R. Purser	Ginnin' Cotton
Laurel		Bill of Rights
		U.S. Constitution
		Declaration of Independence (documents)
Louisville	Karl Wolfe	Crossroads, Mississippi
Macon	Douglas Crockwell	Signing of the Treaty of Dancing Rabbit
Magnolia	John H. Fyfe	Magnolia, 1880
		Cotton Harvest
		July 4th Celebration
New Albany	Robert C. Purdy	Milking Time
Newton	Mary and Franklin Boggs	Economic Life in Newton in Early '40's
Okolona	Harold Egan	The Richness of the Soil (not present) (destroyed?)
Pascagoula	Lorin Thompson	Legend of the Singing River (not present) (destroyed?)
Picayune	Donald H. Robertson	Lumber Region of Mississippi
Pontotoc	Joseph Pollet	Wedding of Ortiz and Sewanea, Christmas, 1540
Ripley (sculpture)	George Aarons	Development of the Postal Service
Tylertown	Lucile Blanch	Rural Mississippi from Early Times

\*Mural painting unless otherwise indicated.

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Waynesboro

Ross E. Braught

Waynesboro Landscape

See individual inventory forms for further descriptions of this artwork. See accompanying document entitled "Biographical Sketches of PWA Artists" for further information about the artists as known. See accompanying document entitled "The Department of the Treasury's Section of the Fine Arts Program" for a broader discussion of this art work program as it was carried out across the country.

The survey was carried out by a four man team:

1. Michael Fazio, Architect, Professor of Architecture (with specialization in architectural history) Mississippi State University
2. William E. Parrish, Ph.D, Head of the Department of History, Mississippi State University
3. Tomas Blackwell, student, School of Architecture, Mississippi State University (also holding a degree from Milsaps College in history)
4. Curtis Franks, Ph. D. candidate, Department of History, Mississippi State University

All thirty-six sites were visited by individual team members. Buildings were photographed. Postal employees were interviewed, including retired employees where possible. Post office files were examined. Local libraries and newspaper files were examined. General library research was carried out on the subjects of Federal building programs and the Department of the Treasury's Section of Fine Arts Program. Archival work in the Department of Archives and History in Jackson was done, including studies of WPA materials still uninventoried and in boxes, and investigation of newspaper files there.

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input 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 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

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

See individual inventory forms for specific statements of significance. This significance falls into four areas: 1) politics/government as the buildings relate to the Public Building Act of 1926 and the Public Works Administration of 1933, 2) architecture as most of the structures are stylistically cohesive, 3) art, because twenty-eight sites contain mural paintings or sculpture produced under the Treasury Department's Section of the Fine Arts, and 4) small town settings.

The first Public Buildings Act in the United States was enacted in 1913 but little construction was completed under it. Yet the need for Federal buildings, including post offices, grew increasingly acute during the 1920's. Consequently, in 1926 a second Public Building Act became law. Some buildings were built as a result of this legislation but, subsequently, the Depression all but stopped PBA construction. In 1933 Franklin Delano Roosevelt set out to alleviate the problem of unemployment in the country by moving along two fronts: relief and public works. To stimulate the public works he motivated Congress to set up the Federal Emergency Administration of Public Works. The PWA acted upon requests by local municipalities, and if these requests were approved building funds were allocated. From 1933 to 1941 a tremendous amount of construction resulted, including projects in Mississippi as discussed following. The post offices within this thematic nomination are significant because four (Crystal Springs, Eupora, Macon, and Poplarville) were constructed under the Building Act of 1926 and the remainder were constructed under the 1933 PWA legislation. See the accompanying document entitled "Federal Construction Work, 1913-1941" for a more complete discussion of such work as carried out across the country under the various legislative programs mentioned above.

In terms of architectural significance these structures present an interesting spectrum of design idioms in active use in the 1930's and 1940's. The numerous Colonial Revival Style examples represent the most cohesive collection of structures in this style in Mississippi. The Style Moderne examples are among only a very few buildings in this style ever constructed in the state. As architecture these post offices represent a significant governmental response to public need at a difficult time in this country's development, following the most severe depression in its history. The design process, primarily that of ateliers working as components of the Office of the Supervising Architect, was unique in this country's history.

Twenty-eight of these buildings contain (or once contained) mural paintings or sculpture completed under the Department of the Treasury's Section of Fine Arts Program. For a complete listing of the sites included, see "Section 7--Description." This program was begun by Franklin Delano Roosevelt at the urging of his friend George Biddle, and was intended to give financial aid to artists as well as to provide art in public buildings. Edward Bruce of the Treasury Department was chosen to head up the project and proposed a Division of Fine Arts in the Treasury to be funded by Public Works Administration funds with revenues to be generated by a decree that one percent of each building's construction

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Statement of Significance--Continued (2)

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cost could be used for building embellishments. The program's first phase, the Public Works of Art Project, was actually funded by the Civil Works Administration and produced some 15,663 pieces of art and employed 3,749 artists. These works were chosen, as were all subsequent submissions, by regional juries (subject to final approval in Washington) from small-scaled competition schemes submitted by artists. Later Bruce set up the Section of Painting and Sculpture under the direction of supervising architect, Louis Simon. Throughout these programs, work was encouraged which concentrated upon themes dealing with local history, industry, landscapes, and the like. Ultimately some 15,426 artists entered into 190 competitions. Murals were the most popular medium; some 1124 being produced in all, along with 289 contracts for sculpture. Work under the "Section" continued until curtailed by World War II.

The twenty-eight sites in this thematic nomination which contain art work, include sculpture at Carthage and Ripley and oil-paint-on-canvas murals at the remaining sites. Their subject matter (as listed in Section 7--Description) was chosen by the respective artists to reflect local circumstances of life in the communities in which the murals were placed. The most popular themes are historic events which occurred nearby, local agriculture and industry, and American patriotic circumstances. The style of the work tends, as it did across the country, to social realism often depicted by means of distorted forms. Critics have argued over the virtues of the New Deal arts programs and the quality of the art itself. However, there can be no doubt that the post office art works in Mississippi represent a special resource in the state and for the country. Many of the murals are in a poor state of repair. National Register status should be sought in order to protect these pieces of art and encourage their restoration and preservation. Many of the artists who created this work have fallen into relative obscurity; their careers demand further study. In many cases their New Deal art work represents their most significant artistic achievements. See accompanying document entitled "Biographical Sketches of PWA Artists" for further information about artists as known.

All of these post offices are located in small towns; only Hattiesburg (pop. 38,000) might be considered an exception. In such communities the triad of Post Office, City Hall, and (often) Courthouse are extraordinary social and image elements. These governmental public buildings lie at the heart of small town civic and governmental life. Also, while an analysis of town growth patterns was not a part of this study, there can be no doubt about the significant impact of these structures on the development (physical and economic) of each community. In a large city a post office may be lost amidst the dense urban fabric, but in a small town a post office is a centerpiece, a source of civic pride, and a link with the world at large.

Although all of the properties nominated here are less than fifty years old, they warrant inclusion on the National Register as a thematic group because of the unique governmental/political circumstances which led to their creation. Furthermore, the cohesive then (1930's and 1940's) topical character of the architectural styles in evidence and the unique atelier method by which most of the structures were designed gives these post offices an architectural significance which, if only moderate in national terms, is paramount in their small town Mississippi settings. Furthermore, at

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no time in our country's history have artists been so mobilized and their work given so broad an audience to so significant a cross section of the American public. The art styles and thematic material found in this artwork represent the results of a unique governmental response to the Fine Arts in a peculiar period in this country's history. Collectively, these murals and sculpture capture an image of Mississippi at a particular time in history, an image which does not exist so completely and with such quality in any other artistic medium. Mississippi shared in this unique period of American history and should be among the first in the Nation to formally recognize the important historic resources created by the special circumstances of the time. Finally, these post office buildings are important local landmarks in each of their small town settings; they are critical to the life, activity, and economy of the thirty-six communities which they serve.

The results of this survey and nomination will be used by the United States Postal Service in coordinating its program of post office building preservation, modification, and expansion. National Register nomination would assure proper supervision of these activities. This survey gives the postal service its most complete physical record of a selected group of its buildings and their artwork in Mississippi.

## 9.


See bibliography attached to narratives entitled "The Treasury Department's Section of the Fine Arts Program" and "Federal Construction Work, 1913-1941" and Composite Biographical Sketches of PWA Artists".


## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

#### UTM REFERENCES

See individual inventory forms.

A     
ZONE EASTING NORTHING

B   
ZONE EASTING NORTHING

D   
ZONE EASTING NORTHING

### VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

See individual inventory forms.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

CODE

CODE

CODE

CODE

## 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Michael W. Fazio

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

Tomas Blackwell

TELEPHONE

40 Eutaw Street

STATE

## Starkville

## 12 CERTIFICATION OF NOMINATION

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER RECOMMENDATION

NO\_\_\_\_\_

NONE\_\_\_\_\_

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

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

DATE \_\_\_\_\_

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 1 & 7 Page 6

AMENDMENT:  
Mississippi Post Offices  
Thematic Resources Nomination  
1931-1941

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AMENDMENT

#1 Name

The name of the nomination has been changed to "Mississippi Post Offices Thematic Resources, 1931-1941."

#7 Narrative Description

The information in the original cover nomination concerning the acts which funded the construction of the post offices is inaccurate. Please see the letter from Carol D. Shull to Dave W. Dogan dated June 11, 1982. Secondly, a study by Susan M. Enzweiler of the annual reports of the Treasury Department and the Postmaster General from 1926 to 1943 did not usually indicate which act funded which specific post office construction except in the case of major projects such as post offices in Jackson, Mississippi; New York City or Chicago.

All post offices included in this nomination have a first class designation.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

## AMENDMENT:

Mississippi Post Offices  
Thematic Resources Nomination  
1931-1941Section number 8 Page 4

## #8 Statement of Significance

The areas of significance cited in the original cover nomination were architecture, art and politics/government. The following additional information strengthens the case for each area of significance.

## ARCHITECTURE

The architecture created by various Federal government programs during the Depression years was a response to the economic hardships of the time which greatly impacted the country's physical development. Under Franklin Delano Roosevelt's administration, national government made a commitment to social progress through work relief and construction programs. Therefore, the very existence of New Deal buildings, such as Mississippi post offices, symbolized the Federal government's shift "from neutral arbiter to social welfare activist" (Craig 1979: 342-343).

The customary architectural styles for post offices throughout the 1930s and early 1940s were the Colonial Revival and a "simplified classical style blending modern and classical elements, characterized by symmetrical massing and plain surfaces" (Bulletin 13 1984: 4).

Throughout most of the Great Depression, the design of post offices was the responsibility of the Office of the Supervising Architect located within the Department of the Treasury. By 1937, much of OSA's work concentrated on small post offices. Type designs were developed that met the various specifications of the Postal Service and also satisfied the "sectional architectural traditions" found throughout the country. The Treasury Department, however, did not elaborate on these traditions. Eleven designs were created to meet all these requirements. The following year these post office designs were improved and refined by OSA with input from the Advisory Committees on Architectural Design and Structural Engineering and from the Directive Board of the Public Buildings Branch. The Treasury Department reported that these designs "compare favorably with the highest standards of current practice in architectural and structural features." Additionally, OSA held a competition among American architects in 1938 for the designs of ten small post offices. Unfortunately, no information was given in the treasury reports on which designs were used for which post offices (Treasury Dept. Annual Report 1937: 182 and Treasury Dept. Annual Report 1938: 194).

Interest in the United States' colonial architectural heritage was sparked by the Philadelphia Centennial of 1876. The Colonial Revival style of the late nineteenth century flowed from the architects' free interpretations of the original, colonial details. In the early twentieth century, the

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

AMENDMENT:  
Mississippi Post Offices  
Thematic Resources Nomination  
1931-1941

Section number 8 Page 5

Colonial Revival style adhered more closely to its colonial precedents with greater attention on correct proportions and architectural details. The style as interpreted by OSA's post office plans was a simplified version of Colonial Revival which utilized the style's design elements in a very successful manner (McAlester 1984: 326).

The second "style" commonly applied to post offices during the 1930s was derived from traditional architectural motifs and the radical evolution in European architecture of the 1920s. American architecture sought a compromise between this progressive building design and traditional architecture. It was an attempt by moderate American architects to create a style that would be completely American and totally modern while also helping to inspire confidence in the future of the country (Sachs 1986: 203).

New Federal buildings were usually well-received in America's small communities. Critics sometimes charged that the designs of government buildings were monotonous but this was not an issue with the citizens of the towns that received new post offices and courthouses. To the people of these small communities, federal buildings represented the latest advances in architectural style and technology and symbolized their association with the United States of America. Their local post office represented the federal presence to many people (Craig 1979: 163, 165).

**ART**

The murals found in Mississippi's and other southern post offices offer a unique glimpse into southern culture of the 1930s and the early 1940s. Theoretically, at least, the artists were required to consider local public opinion on the subject matter. Most southern communities, including the small towns of Mississippi, favored historical themes. A large number of the post offices constructed during the Great Depression displayed murals or other art work that had been commissioned by the Federal government. Of the four governmental programs sponsoring the graphic arts during this period, the Treasury Department's Section of Painting and Sculpture (later known as the Section of Fine Arts) was the primary supporter of art for Federal buildings, especially post offices (Wilson and Ferris, v. 2, 1991: 427 and Bulletin 13 1984: 4).

The Section of Painting and Sculpture, which was simply called the Section, was allocated 1% or less of the total appropriation for a building's construction for original art work. Unlike the other major governmental art program, the Federal Art Project of the Works Progress Administration, the Section's objective was patronage rather than relief and it stressed quality over output. Artists were selected through competitions with criteria that promoted realism as the most appropriate

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 6AMENDMENT:  
Mississippi Post Offices  
Thematic Resources Nomination  
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style and "the American scene" as the most suitable subject. The Section awarded 1,371 commissions to artists between 1934 and 1943 (Bulletin 13 1984: 4-5 and Craig 1979: 372).

Overall, the goals of the Treasury Department's art program were threefold. The Section wanted to serve as a patron for the arts and encourage public beautification. In achieving this aim, the Section would also be realizing its second goal of making original, quality art available to those Americans who otherwise would have had little chance of seeing it. Edward Bruce, a Treasury official associated with the Section's work, believed the program was transforming rural post offices into "little cultural centers" that would help offset "all the unrest" by bringing beauty into people's lives. Finally, the Treasury Department viewed the art work as a means of conveying the social ideas of the New Deal to large numbers of Americans in a readily understandable form (Bulletin 13 1984: 4-5 and Craig 1979: 372-373).

## POLITICS/GOVERNMENT

The collapse of the economy and the social upheaval of the Great Depression stirred the Federal and the state governments to experiment with innovative programs in order to alleviate some of the misery. The Federal government, in particular, was forced to redefine its relationship with the American people, to become a prominent agent for social change. Over thirteen million workers were unemployed by 1933 with approximately one-third of them from the building trades. More than one thousand homes were foreclosed on every day, cities were going bankrupt and farmers were battered by dust storms, floods and drought (Craig 1979: 342-343 and Bulletin 13 1984: 3).

Mississippians, like other Americans, were suffering and ready for change. According to architectural historian David Sachs, Governor Theodore G. Bilbo told reporters in 1931 that "Folks are restless. Communism is gaining a foothold. Right here in Mississippi some people are about ready to lead a mob. In fact, I'm getting a little pink myself" (Sachs 1986: 197).

Several plans were carried out at the state level to help Mississippians. Martin Sennett Connor was elected governor in 1932 and pushed for the establishment of a state sales tax in order to reduce the state government's debt. Mississippi was the first state to adopt such a tax. Hugh L. White, the next governor, promoted a Balance Agriculture With Industry Program which allowed local governments to provide subsidies to private employers who would hire Mississippians. Again, the Magnolia State was leading the way with a new and innovative policy (Sachs 1986: 198).

Mississippians also welcomed assistance from the Federal government. They strongly supported Franklin Delano Roosevelt and eagerly participated in his social welfare programs. Fred Sullens,

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the Jackson Daily News editor, reported in 1936 that Mississippi was "standing squarely behind the New Deal; an overwhelming majority of the people are for it, stronger than horseradish." Mississippi Senator Pat Harrison as chairman of the Senate Finance Committee used his prestige to influence passage of FDR's programs and to ensure that the Magnolia State received its share of the New Deal pie (Sachs 1986: 198-199).

The construction of public buildings seemed to be the keystone to Roosevelt's New Deal program, although there were a variety of work relief plans. For more information on work relief for artists please refer to the Art section. The erection of a variety of buildings and structures was funded by several programs and authorizations with the ultimate responsibility lying with the Treasury Department until 1939. That year public building activities were transferred to the Public Buildings Administration thus ending 103 years of involvement by the Department of the Treasury (Bulletin 13 1984: 3 and Treasury Dept. Annual Report 1939: 44).

Post offices were among the most well-known projects with the general public. Approximately three times the number of post offices were built in the 1930s as in the preceding fifty years. These are amazing statistics considering that the overall number of post offices in the United States (and in Mississippi) was decreasing. In 1926 there were 50,601 post offices in the United States and its territories, including 921 in the Magnolia State. In 1933, the year Roosevelt assumed the presidency and launched his New Deal, Mississippi had 815 post offices and the country had a total of 47,642. By 1941 there were 43,806 post offices in the United States with 766 in Mississippi. The post offices located in Mississippi's small rural communities not only provided employment but were a source of pride for the local residents. Since passage of the Public Buildings Act of 1913, new post offices had been constructed only in cities with annual postal receipts totalling more than \$10,000.00. They were perceived to be part of the urban landscape. Their construction in small towns during the 1930s, when the total number of post offices was shrinking, seemed to signify the community's importance to the country at large, its connection to the rest of America (Bulletin 13 1984: 3-4 and Postmaster General Annual Reports 1926, 1933, 1941).

A number of acts authorized the Federal government to construct public buildings from 1931 to 1941, the period of significance for this nomination. A study of the annual reports of the Postmaster General and the Treasury Department did not reveal, in most cases, which act was responsible for which Mississippi post office. All of the acts, except for the Keyes-Elliott Act (also known as the Public Buildings Act of 1926), were created by the New Deal program. The public building construction authorized by the Keyes-Elliott Act, however, continued until 1937 and was thus identified in the public mind with the New Deal. Because of this identification, the uncertainty over how specific post offices were funded and the fact that all the post offices included in this nomination were built during the Great Depression, the construction of all the post offices

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being nominated is considered to be, in essence if not in actual appropriation, part of the New Deal agenda (Treasury Dept. Annual Report 1937: 46).

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