

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions on how to complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Amarillo U.S. Post Office and Courthouse
other names/site number J. Marvin Jones Federal Building

2. Location

street & number 205 East Fifth Street ☐ not for publication
city or town Amarillo ☐ vicinity
state Texas code TX county Potter code 375 zip code 79101

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this ☒ nomination ☐ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property ☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant ☐ nationally ☐ statewide ☒ locally. (☐ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Poland Texas Camp
Signature of certifying official

8-14-00
Date

GENERAL SERVICES ADMINISTRATION
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. (☐ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Thomas Ober
Signature of commenting or other official

7-13-02
Date

Texas Historical Commission
State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

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

Ben
Signature of Keeper

Date of Action

Edson H. Beall

9/29/00

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

☐ private
☐ public-local
☐ public-State
☒ public-Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

☒ building(s)
☐ district
☐ site
☐ structure
☐ object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Cat:	Sub:
GOVERNMENT	Post Office
GOVERNMENT	Courthouse
GOVERNMENT	Government offices

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Cat:	Sub:
GOVERNMENT	Courthouse
GOVERNMENT	Government offices

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Modern Movement: Art Deco/Moderne

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation STONE: Granite

walls STONE: Limestone

roof ASPHALT

other

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

See Continuation Sheets pp. 5-8.

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**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 5

**Amarillo U.S. Post Office and Courthouse
Potter County, Texas**

Narrative Description

The historic Amarillo U.S. Post Office and Courthouse is located in the 200 block of East Fifth Street. The building functions in both a practical and visual capacity, establishing a federal presence in Amarillo's courthouse square. Constructed in 1938 and dedicated in 1939, the attractive limestone-clad building is notable for the straightforwardness and simplicity of its planning and design. The Moderne style reiterates its Depression-era construction and the Art Moderne movement which influenced its design. Its symmetrical composition and box-like organization further suggest an element of Renaissance Revival architecture. The building was designed by Texas architect Wyatt C. Hedrick under the supervision of the Office of the Supervising Architect for the U.S. Treasury Department. No major additions have been made to the structure, and the primary interior spaces—the entry foyer and ceremonial courtroom—retain a significant level of historic fabric. Original interior features, such as terrazzo floors, polished Montana rose tan travertine wainscot, plaster ceilings, and Julius Woeltz murals, continue to grace the entry foyer. The main ceremonial courtroom, located on the second floor, still displays wood wainscot and plaster walls as well as the original judge's bench, witness stand, clerk's desk, and reporter's desk. Despite the loss of the building's postal function and the resulting modifications to the interior, the Amarillo U.S. Post Office and Courthouse retains a high degree of integrity of setting, location, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

Exterior

The Amarillo U.S. Post Office and Courthouse is an impressive, three-story (plus basement) Moderne building. A pink Texas granite base supports the structure's cream-colored, limestone-clad walls, which are smooth-finished with flush joints. A cornice, consisting of a two-course stone parapet, extends around the roofline.

The south, primary façade extends 13 bays in length, with regularly spaced, recessed, windows. The windows on the first floor are double-hung, four-over-four-light units, each with a four-light transom. Eleven of the second and third floor windows also are the double-hung, four-over-four-light type but are combined into single units with a four-over-four-light spandrel connecting the two floors. The two remaining second- and third-floor windows are located above the entries and are double-hung, six-over-six-light combined into single units with a six-over-six-light spandrel. Pilasters, capitals, lintels, and sills add emphasis to all of the elongated second/third floor windows. These features are not adorned, with the exception of the sills, which are engraved with a meander pattern. Incised in 18-inch-high lettering within the limestone frieze above the central second/third-floor window bays are the words:

United States Post Office and Court House

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Amarillo U.S. Post Office and Courthouse
Potter County, Texas

Narrative Description (continued)

Primary entries are located on the east and west ends of the south building face. These entries are marked by fluted pilasters that flank each doorway and extend to just above the third-floor window lintels. A custom, cast-aluminum eagle is perched over each doorway on the second-floor window sill. The doorways are modern storefront types set within the original metal anodized-aluminum frames. The frames display sand-blasted detailing, including a sunburst motif. Nonhistoric opaque transom panels, currently used as building signs, are visible above each doorway. Attractive granite steps as well as carved granite planters capped by a monolithic type stone add emphasis to both entries. Decorative, painted, wrought-iron railings on the south façade extend along the edges of the recessed light well and terminate at the granite planters.

The east and west elevations are similar in design to the main building face, except for the absence of a few decorative features. Both faces have six bays of windows that display the same configuration as the first-floor and combined second/third-floor windows of the primary façade. The decorative wrought-iron railings continue from the main elevation along the sides of the building adjacent to the recessed light well. Neither elevation, however, has an entry.

The north (rear) elevation is largely functional in nature. It is divided into two, three-story sections, which stand on both sides of a central two-story part of the building. In essence this gives the rear of the building the appearance of a vertical "U." It is constructed of a light cream brick with matching mortar laid in an American bond pattern. Limestone at the northeast and northwest corners adds some variety of materials to this secondary façade. The windows on the first floor are large, 15-light, steel-framed types, and those on the second and third floors are double-hung, three-over-three-light units. Originally designed as a loading zone for the post office, this building face continues to serve as a delivery area with adjacent parking. A large loading dock with modern pipe railing is still present along the western part of the building face. An automatic sliding glass door provides access to the building from the dock. A brick boiler stack protrudes from the east end of the north elevation and extends vertically above the roofline.

Green spaces, plantings, sidewalks, and other landscape features characterize the site area immediately surrounding the building. Sparse oak and locust trees and narrow lawn areas border the south and west elevations. Adjacent to the north elevation and, to a lesser degree, the east elevation is a parking and service area which is completely paved. Other site features include a contemporary flagpole on the southwest corner of the south lawn and a handicapped access ramp at the west entry of the front façade.

Interior

The Amarillo U.S. Post Office and Courthouse has a rectangular-shaped footprint. Originally, 83 percent of the first floor served as postal space. As the spatial needs of the post office increased, the postal service abandoned the 1938

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Amarillo U.S. Post Office and Courthouse
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Narrative Description (continued)

facility in 1977 for a newly constructed post office. Since that time, the former postal work area and portions of the postal lobby have been converted into office and tenant space. Only the western end of the former lobby remains intact. This space retains its original multicolored, patterned terrazzo floors, which are embellished with an arrowhead design. Likewise, the original polished Montana rose tan travertine wainscot, painted plaster ceiling, and wave-patterned plaster cornice are also extant.

The former postal lobby is the site of six historic murals painted by San Antonio-born artist Julius Woeltz in 1940. The colorful murals, which encircle the room above the travertine wainscot, depict the life and landscape of the Texas Panhandle. The largest of the murals, measuring 36 feet in length and 6.5 feet in height, is located on the west wall and illustrates the settlement of the region over time. At one end of the mural Spanish Conquistadors gaze across grassy plains and rocky mesas toward Native Americans engaged in conflict with white settlers who are bringing longhorn cattle into the area at the opposite end of the scene. The other, smaller murals illustrate the local industries of oil, cattle, and farming. On the north wall, cowboys coax domestic cattle into a railroad car. The east wall depicts two scenes, one of oil storage and petroleum refineries with oilfield laborers, and the other of farmhands branding cattle on a ranch. The south wall panels are divided into two sections, both of which display large plows tending fields.

The ceremonial courtroom also retains a high degree of architectural integrity. It is centrally located at the southern end of the second floor, and its doubled height extends to the third floor. The courtroom is entered through double, flush wooden doors with single lights; the doors are set in the west wall. The interior walls of the room are wood-paneled American Walnut wainscot and painted plaster. The wooden wainscot is 7 feet high, wrapping around the lower part of the courtroom wall. Natural light contributes to the illumination of the courtroom through five, long, three-part windows on the south wall. The tops of these windows are slightly obscured by a modern acoustical tile ceiling with recessed fluorescent lights. The acoustical tile ceiling also conceals the courtroom's original plaster ceiling that contains shallow steps aligned with the judge's bench. Although covered by carpeting, the original cork tile flooring appears to be intact. The cork floor is patterned with four-color tiles set in a diagonal pattern. The judge's bench, witness stand, clerk's desk, reporter's desk, and spectator benches are original to the room. These pieces are enriched with reeds, flutes, and stained inlay that contribute to the impressive character of the room. The jury box appears to have been added but conforms to the design of the original furniture.

The focal point of the courtroom is the judge's bench. The bench sits in front of a decorative surround composed of American Walnut panels that take on the appearance of pilasters rising to the ceiling on both sides of the bench. A wooden medallion, depicting an eagle with outstretched wings with a shield over its breast, is hung on another pilaster that extends directly behind the judge's bench.

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**Amarillo U.S. Post Office and Courthouse
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Narrative Description (continued)

Corridors, offices, maintenance and restroom facilities, and a skylight monitor comprise the building's remaining interior space. Of these, the corridors are the most historically intact. From the first through the third floors, all the main corridors have a U-shaped configuration; the base of the U forms the south corridor. Terrazzo floors with marble bases and plinth blocks enrich these spaces. The first- and third-floor corridor walls are plaster; the second floor is clad in vinyl covering. Dropped acoustical tile obscures the original plaster ceilings, altering the volume and character of the corridors. The former postal offices, the judicial offices, and the other federal tenant offices retain some original finishes. However, these spaces have been modified over the years to accommodate different uses and are not architecturally significant.

Alterations

Overall, the Amarillo U.S. Post Office and Courthouse retains a high degree of integrity of setting, location, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. While modifications have occurred, they have not impacted the building's ability to convey its historic significance as a federal building, nor its architectural significance as an excellent example of a Moderne-style public building. Alterations to the building have primarily been restricted to the interior. The loss of the building's postal function in 1977 resulted in the removal of all of the original postal boxes, sales windows, and postal tables. It also resulted in the renovation of much of the first floor, including the former postal workroom and postmaster offices.

Renovations have also taken their toll on the second- and third-floor office spaces. The installation of dropped acoustical tile ceilings, contemporary light fixtures and finishes, and carpeting has resulted in the loss of both the volume and character of the original office spaces. Dropped ceilings have been added to the corridor areas, creating a similar effect.

The second-floor main courtroom has not been significantly altered. Features such as original wood wainscot, plaster walls, and attractive courtroom furniture still ornament the room. Dropped acoustical tile ceilings, however, conceal the original plaster ceiling and the heads of the windows on the courtroom's south wall. Carpeting obscures the courtroom's original flooring.

Changes to the exterior of the building have been less extensive. A handicapped access ramp has been installed at the west end of the south elevation. Building sign panels have replaced the original transoms above the east and west entries on this same elevation. Aluminum doors and insensitive hardware have been added to these entries. On the rear façade, the loading dock has been extended and sliding glass doors installed near the former postal workroom. Finally, parking areas replace green spaces on the east and west sides of the building.

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- ☒ **A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ **B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☒ **C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- ☐ **D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- ☐ **A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ **B** removed from its original location.
- ☐ **C** a birthplace or a grave.
- ☐ **D** a cemetery.
- ☐ **E** a reconstructed building, object or structure.
- ☐ **F** a commemorative property.
- ☐ **G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

See Continuation Sheets pp. 9-17.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.) See Continuation Sheets pp. 18-20.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey

- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record

Primary location of additional data:

- ☐ State Historic Preservation Office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☒ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☒ Other

Name of repository:

General Services Administration, Greater Southwest Region, Fort Worth, TX
Potter County Library, Amarillo, TX
Alexander Architectural Archive, University of Texas at Austin

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Politics/Government
Architecture
Art

Period of Significance

1938-1950

Significant Dates

1939, 1940

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Hedrick, Wyatt C.—Architect
Simon, Louis A.—Supervising Architect, U.S. Treasury Department
Melnik, Neal—Government Engineer
Blair, Algernon—Contractor (Montgomery, Alabama)
Woeltz, Julius—Artist

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Amarillo U.S. Post Office and Courthouse
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Narrative Statement of Significance

Summary

The Amarillo U.S. Post Office and Courthouse, also called the J. Marvin Jones Federal Building, is eligible for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its association with federal construction and art programs designed to relieve the economic Depression of the 1930s. From 1938, when construction was completed, through 1950, the building provided a federal presence in Amarillo, as well as many federal services, including postal and legal. Like other public buildings built in the 1930s, the design and construction of the Amarillo U.S. Post Office and Courthouse were also part of the federal construction programs enacted to reduce unemployment during the Depression. It is also eligible under Criterion C as an example of Moderne architecture, which was employed in the design of a number of federal buildings in Texas during that period. The murals themselves are also eligible for the National Register under Criterion C as an integral part of a building that represents a significant type, period, and style of artistic expression. Furthermore, the building was associated with the New Deal public arts programs. The former postal lobby still displays murals designed to beautify public buildings and to develop American art while, at the same time, building community pride by representing regionally significant themes.

Historical Significance

Background

The city of Amarillo was founded in 1887 under the name of Oneida and was situated at a bend in the Fort Worth and Denver City railroad tracks, the first railroad through the Texas Panhandle. The town was laid out in 1888, parallel to the railroad line, and within three months had become a small city with a post office, hotel, stores, and a courthouse square. In 1890, the town moved approximately one mile east, and the town center was relocated to the intersection of First and Polk streets. Though the community grew quickly with an economy based mainly on the cattle industry, life in the public sector was chaotic. Economic problems caused the city to be officially dissolved in 1894, leaving residents with no public services whatsoever.

After the Santa Fe railroad bought the FW & DC railroad in 1899, the city was reincorporated and was improved tremendously through new construction and public works. Its population grew from a meager 482 people to 1,442 by 1900. The twentieth century brought architects and a range of architectural styles to the area. The Victorian era had

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**Amarillo U.S. Post Office and Courthouse
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Narrative Statement of Significance (continued)

ended, and homes were generally built in spare, simple styles such as Colonial Revival and Craftsman Bungalow. The preferred styles for commercial buildings, on the other hand, were the Italianate and Romanesque designs.¹ In 1912, city streets began to be paved. A year later, a city charter was drafted, and the Women's Club lobbied for public sanitation and landscaping. This was followed by the installation of a police department in 1914 and, finally in 1920, the construction of a municipal building.

The period between 1900 and 1910 was dubbed the "homeseeker's era" as the population of Amarillo grew to 9,957.² While the population continued to climb steadily during the following decade, its most dramatic growth occurred during the 1920s, reaching 43,132 people by 1930. The discovery of natural gas and oil brought prosperity to the region, and Amarillo developed an impressive skyline and big-city culture. Buildings built during this period were larger and more sophisticated than their predecessors. Despite the 1929 stock market crash and the Dust Bowl, the oil and gas market kept the community afloat. The 1930s brought modern architectural styles to Amarillo, rejecting traditional construction for the streamlined, industrial look of Art Deco design.

Amarillo's first post office opened on November 23, 1887, when the town was just three months old. Robert McKenzie Moore built the fourth-class post office from a few dry goods boxes with pigeonholes, appointed himself postmaster, and set up shop on a counter in a downtown store.³ Shortly after, Moore resigned and was replaced by George Berry, Jr., who was the son of the part owner of Amarillo town site. Berry moved the post office to his real estate office and rented lock boxes to supplement his income. When the town moved, Berry resigned. Ms. Martha Ingerton became postmistress, and the post office was relocated to its third location near where the present-day Amarillo federal building is situated. The post office became a third-class post office when its annual revenue exceeded \$1,000 per year, and its increasing size led to its move to the First National Bank at Fourth and Polk streets. By 1904, it offered the first free postal delivery, with two carriers, and had achieved a second-class ranking.

Capt. W. H. Ingerton, former postmistress Ingerton's son, became postmaster in 1907; he was preceded by several postmasters between his and his mother's service. Continued growth led to construction of a new brick building on 112 East Fifth Street in 1908, and the post office's status was raised to first class. Between 1908 and 1914, mail volume increased, parcel post was established, and employees were added. In 1914, Amarillo's first federally built post office was constructed at 620 Taylor Street at a cost of \$200,000. The Treasury Department's Supervising Architect, Oscar

¹ Charles H. Page and Associates. *Amarillo Historic Building Survey and Preservation Program*. Amarillo, Texas: Whitney Russell Printers, 1981.

² Franks, Ray, and Jay Ketelle. *Amarillo, Texas: The First Hundred Years 1887-1987*. Amarillo, Texas: Ray Franks Publishing Ranch, 1986.

³ *Amarillo Sunday News-Globe*, 14 May 1939.

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Narrative Statement of Significance (continued)

Wenderoth, designed the new building. The three-story Renaissance Revival structure was clad in limestone and ornamented by composite pilasters and second-story balconied windows. The first postmaster to serve in it was Dr. M. W. Cunningham. Cunningham was appointed several months before occupation of the post office in May 1915. A succession of postmasters passed briefly through this building as the post office grew rapidly. Several years after the building was occupied, an addition was added at a cost of \$52,000.

Amarillo's tremendous growth in the 1920s necessitated the erection of a new federal building because space had become cramped in the 1914 building, even with the addition. Although the post office was the primary precipitant for the construction of a new building, the new facility was also designed to house federal offices and a courthouse. The new post office and courthouse would be twice the size of the old postal facility. The project was authorized under the act of June 22, 1936, with a cost set at \$595,000. Texas architect Wyatt C. Hedrick served as the building's architect under the supervision of the Treasury Department's Supervising Architect, Louis A. Simon.

By November 1936, a building site at Fifth and Taylor streets had been selected and purchased for \$100,000. The Treasury Department awarded the \$369,400 construction contract to a well-known firm, Algernon Blair of Montgomery, Alabama, a leader in federal construction fields at the time. Algernon Blair was founded in 1896 and managed dozens of public building projects during the 1930s, including the construction of a large number of U.S. post offices. Groundbreaking for the new building took place on February 10, 1938. Construction proceeded in a timely manner and was completed on schedule on December 31, 1938. Federal staff moved in on January 9, 1939.

Four years prior to the construction of the new U.S. post office and courthouse, W. D. DeGrassi was named Amarillo's postmaster. DeGrassi was the first postmaster to serve in the building and as such was a primary participant in the building's dedication on May 17, 1939. The event included a parade that attracted an estimated 50,000 observers and featured 291 horses, marching bands, and various dignitaries from Texas and neighboring states. The Postmaster General, "Smiling Jim" Farley, traveled from Washington, D.C., as the guest of honor at the celebration and was gifted with a white Arabian horse, "Dynamite," who had been raised by a young 4-H member in Amarillo. Farley, also the Democratic party chief and rumored future presidential candidate, took the opportunity to predict a Democratic win in the next election. Farley stated in a brief speech that he viewed the postal business as a barometer of national economic trends and therefore anticipated a quick upswing in the national economic scene. He described the Amarillo post office growth as "phenomenal . . . [paralleling] the growth of the entire United States Postal Service," and he urged people to forget the lingering fear of the Great Depression.⁴ During a confident statement about the improvement of mail delivery in the area, an airmail plane passed overhead and dropped the mail bag on the roof of the post office, frightening many of the onlookers as the bag nearly missed its intended destination.

⁴ *Amarillo Globe*, 17 May 1939.

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Amarillo U.S. Post Office and Courthouse
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Narrative Statement of Significance (continued)

Two design elements caused some complaint among the first visitors in the building. First, the Italian marble used on the interior walls was generally described as "moth-eaten." Contrary to popular speculation, however, the marble was both expensive and in such demand that its delivery was delayed, setting construction back two weeks.⁵ Architects preferred this marble for public buildings of the time because it was harder and less absorbent than other marble.⁶ Second, locals complained that the building looked like "a shoe box with windows in it," and in response, a new cornice was installed around the upper edge of the exterior walls.⁷

The construction of the Amarillo U.S. Post Office and Courthouse during the Depression era in 1938 provided a positive indication of better times to come. Economically, the new federal building provided much-needed efficiency in handling the ever-growing volume of mail in Amarillo and facilitated business growth at the local level. Its construction also provided employment opportunities during economic hardship, and, as a federal undertaking, it further served as a powerful symbol of United States permanency and security.

The Amarillo U.S. Post Office and Courthouse has served the citizens of Amarillo and Potter County for over 50 years. When opened, the building housed the post office on its first floor, while the basement and second and third floors were dedicated to federal offices. The basement contained the county agent, as well as the Emergency Crop and Feed Loan and Department of Agriculture, the Federal Housing Administration offices, and the Civil Service Commission. The U.S. courtroom, the judge's chambers, and the jury room, along with the offices of the U.S. Marshall, the U.S. District Attorney, the U.S. Clerk, and the probation officer, were located on the second floor. The third floor housed the office of the congressional representative, the grand jury room, the witnesses' rooms, the offices of the Collector of Internal Revenue, the Soil Conservation Service (USDA), the Social Security Board, the Department of alcohol tax, and the Home Owners corporation. Additions in the mid-1950s included an expanded mail platform at the rear of the building. In 1977, the post office left the building for a new, more modern facility. In 1980, the building was renamed the J. Marvin Jones Federal Building in honor of the longtime congressman who nominated DeGrassi as postmaster and who occupied one of the building's third floor offices. The building still houses the United States District Court for the Northern District of Texas, as well as other related and unrelated government offices.

⁵ *Amarillo Sunday News-Globe*, 8 January 1939.

⁶ *Amarillo Globe*, 11 January 1939.

⁷ *Amarillo Globe*, 25 January 1939.

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Amarillo U.S. Post Office and Courthouse
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Narrative Statement of Significance (continued)

Mural

The Amarillo U.S. Post Office and Courthouse was constructed at the end of the Depression years and benefited from other federal programs designed to renew national optimism and to provide jobs for the unemployed. The development of murals inspired by regional history and culture that were to be displayed in public places was one such program. Murals were introduced in the U.S. in 1876 but were primarily utilized on the East Coast until the WPA began promoting them in the 1930s. The federal building was the first in Amarillo to benefit from this program. The first federal New Deal arts program was the Public Works of Art Project (PWAP); the PWAP, however, was intended to provide only short-term relief to unemployed artists. It ended in June 1934 but was replaced in 1935 by the Treasury Relief Art Project (TRAP) and the Federal Art Project (FAP). The latter program operated under the Works Progress Administration (WPA) and was the largest of the new government programs, providing art to state and municipal institutions and governments. Although funded by the WPA, TRAP operated under the Treasury Department and employed artists to decorate federal buildings built and administered by that department. Under this program, artists completed 89 murals, 65 sculptures, and 10,000 easel paintings.⁸

A year before TRAP, the Treasury Department had a non-relief arts program known as the Section of Painting and Sculpture. This program later evolved into the Section for Fine Arts. The new section was the program primarily responsible for the murals and sculpture found in post offices throughout the country and was often known simply as "the Section." Its intent was to create art that reflected the themes and style of the American scene. Buildings selected for art were chosen by the Section staff, who conferred with the project's architect, and then submitted proposals to the procurement division. Since about one percent of construction monies would be used for funding a building's art, projects near or at construction budget were not candidates. Commissions were awarded through regional competitions in which artists submitted anonymous sketches.

The Section sponsored the competition to select an artist to paint six murals in the Amarillo federal building. This competition was open to artists from Louisiana, Mississippi, Arkansas, Missouri, Kansas, Oklahoma, Colorado, New Mexico, and Texas. The prize was \$6,500, and by May 11, 1939, 175 artists had requested forms on which to submit designs for consideration. The media felt that "the federal building is the building of the people. It is the place where their government carries on their business . . . and so, it is only fitting that its scheme of decoration should record their

⁸ Christ, Mark. *Arkansas Post Offices with Section Art*. National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form, 1998.

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Narrative Statement of Significance (continued)

progress."⁹ Therefore, the *Amarillo Globe* asked readers to send suggestions in the form of letters to the editor to give the local selection committee guidance in their recommendations to send to Washington.¹⁰ In general, suggested themes covered mail history, local history, local industry, pursuit, and landscape.

From the 64 total applicants, the local committee members selected their top five but sent all drawings to Washington in late August for final judging. In September, painter Julius Woeltz was unanimously approved by both the local committee and the Washington judges. He began painting the murals in June 1940, working nights and some days for six months so as not to disturb use of the building. The murals, including one called "Cattle Loading," illustrated scenes of such historic Panhandle activities as farming as well as the cattle and oil industries.

While the construction and opening of the federal building attracted some attention from local residents, the installation of the post office murals was by far a more emotional issue. By design, the program instigated by the U.S. Treasury Department's Section of Fine Arts for mural painting inside federal buildings was intended to generate pride through inspirational depictions of American ideals and regional history, and to expose people to the artistic quality not readily accessible before, while employing many out-of-work artists. Even though local residents supported the competition, there were outcries from those who felt Panhandle artists of equal merit had been overlooked when the press announced that Julius Woeltz was from New Orleans. It was argued that at least two local men painted with better historical accuracy and were generally more appropriate choices for regional illustrations.¹¹ In addition, Woeltz's style was viewed by some as too modern to be appreciated by the layman. The *Amarillo Globe* mediated the controversy by emphasizing that Woeltz had been born in San Antonio and studied there under Xavier Gonzales. After further study in Paris, he moved to New Orleans to work again with Gonzales, who had relocated there.¹² Woeltz was, in fact, a very respected Southwestern muralist who, while studying in Paris, was reportedly influenced by Impressionist artists Cezanne, Gauguin, and van Gogh and had studied at the Chicago Art Institute. He had already painted murals for the Section in Louisiana. Woeltz later painted murals for U.S. post offices in Arkansas and in Elgin, Texas.

In fact, Woeltz was extremely flexible in his artistic representation. In response to suggestions by the Amarillo judging committee, Woeltz revised one of the six murals in December 1939 to illustrate the history and development of the area, replacing his original design that depicted the Southwest in general. The actual painting was followed daily in the *Amarillo Globe*, and a steady stream of advice and criticism from local laymen led him to make many changes as the

⁹ *Amarillo Globe*, 11 May 1939.

¹⁰ *Amarillo Globe*, 11 May 1939.

¹¹ *Amarillo Globe*, 16 September 1939.

¹² *Amarillo Sunday News-Globe*, 13 September 1939.

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Amarillo U.S. Post Office and Courthouse
Potter County, Texas

Narrative Statement of Significance (continued)

work progressed in order to make the murals as realistic as possible. When finished, most of the citizens of Amarillo were pleased with the results.¹³

Woeltz's problems didn't end with the completion of the murals, however. Soon after their installation, distinguished folklorist J. Frank Dobie published a scathing criticism of the mural and "the Section" in the *San Antonio Light*.¹⁴ Dobie, a World War I veteran, Longhorn breeder, writer, and Texas Folklore Society director with strong feelings about academia and politics, was both eloquent and flamboyant and has been considered by many to be Texas's greatest folklorist.¹⁵ Dobie considered himself a patriot and a Texas "realist," (sic) and was a strong supporter of the "everyman" concept and of "character building." He also mistakenly believed Woeltz to be a foreigner and accused the federal art supervisors of being "strongly foreign in character with a strong leaning toward communism."¹⁶ Dobie's accusations illustrated an increasing national resentment by conservatives of the liberal, modernistic stance of the New Deal art agencies. Woeltz responded to the attack by writing a speedy rebuttal, citing his Texas origins and the support of the Amarillo community who, in the end, approved of the mural completely.¹⁷

Architectural Significance

Texas architect Wyatt Cephas Hedrick was chosen to design the federal building. Hedrick, born in Virginia, moved to Texas in 1913 at the age of 25 to work for an engineering firm in Dallas. After owning his own construction company in Fort Worth between 1914 and 1921, Hedrick became a partner in the architectural firm of Sanguinet and Staats of Fort Worth and Houston. In 1925, Hedrick started his own architectural firm with offices in Dallas, Fort Worth, and Houston. A year later, his former partners, Sanguinet and Staats, retired, and Hedrick bought the remaining interest in their practice.

His company was very active from the 1920s through the 1950s and was once considered the third largest in the country. Most of Hedrick's well-known works are located in the Houston, Fort Worth, and Dallas areas, and include both historical as well as a number of modern style buildings. The Amarillo U.S. Post Office and Courthouse was not the most distinguished of his buildings, but it was well planned and followed the federal government's standard for post offices and courthouses of the era.

¹³ Grauer, Michael. "The Artistic Legacy." *Panhandle-Plains Historical Review*, 1994.

¹⁴ Dobie, J. Frank. "To One who Knows Its History, Texas Is Beautiful and Interesting, But Calling Gully a Creek, Foreign Art In Postoffices, Modern Edifices In Old West Settings Offend." *San Antonio Light*, 25 August 1940.

¹⁵ Abernethy, Francis E. *T for Texas: A State Full of Folklore*. Nacogdoches, Texas: Texas Folklore Society Vol. XLIV, 1982.

¹⁶ Grauer, Michael. "The Artistic Legacy." *Panhandle-Plains Historical Review*, 1994.

¹⁷ Woeltz, Julius. "An Artist Answers J. Frank Dobie," *San Antonio Light*, 13 September 1940.

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National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 16

Amarillo U.S. Post Office and Courthouse
Potter County, Texas

Narrative Statement of Significance (continued)

The Amarillo U.S. Post Office and Courthouse was one of the last public buildings designed under the auspices of the Office of the Supervising Architect for the Treasury Department. Louis A. Simon was Supervising Architect at the time, and Neal Melnick, also of the U.S. Treasury Department, served as supervising engineer. For more than 75 years (1850s-1939), this office was responsible for the design and construction of such public buildings as custom houses, post offices, and courthouses. The buildings it created were not only designed to serve a federal function but to express the permanence and presence of the federal government in the cities and communities in which the buildings were located. Early in its history, the Office of the Supervising Architect employed a variety of architectural styles to convey this presence. At the turn of the century, however, classically inspired styles such as Classical Revival and Beaux-Arts began to predominate. These styles were thought to express democratic values. Additionally, they reflected the government's assertion that "government buildings should be monumental and beautiful, and should represent the ideals of democracy and high standards of architectural sophistication in their communities."¹⁸

While these ideals continued to be applied for many years, the expense of constructing "monumental and beautiful" buildings became a concern. In 1913, federal construction policy measured the cost of constructing post offices against both the postal receipts taken in by a city or community and the value of the real estate where the building was to be built. Following the passage of the Public Buildings Act in 1926, the evaluation of the cost of constructing public buildings coincided with a new architectural movement that promoted modernism. As the nation entered into the Depression, the Treasury Department used restrained—or "starved"—versions of classically inspired styles of architecture in its designs. At the same time, private architects hired to design public buildings for the Treasury Department moved in a more modern direction. WPA or PWA Moderne, as the style has come to be known, is derived from the earlier "zigzag," or Art Deco, and Streamline Moderne of the 1920s to form the Art Moderne movement. The terms "PWA" or "WPA" come from the heavy use of the style in government-sponsored public building programs during the 1930s. PWA or WPA Moderne has been described as,

... pristine, formally balanced compositions employing piers rather than columns, with windows arranged as vertical recessed panels, and smooth surfaces for interiors and exteriors. Smooth stone, polished marble, and granite often face these buildings which are sprinkled with stylized embellishments. Additional decorative features may include ornamental metal-work, restrained sculptural decorations, murals, and pictorial friezes.¹⁹

¹⁸ Boland, Beth. *How to Apply the National Register Criteria to Post Offices*. National Register Bulletin 13. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Interagency Resources Division, 1994.

¹⁹ Cohen, Judith Singer. *Cowtown Moderne: Art Deco Architecture of Fort Worth*. College Station, Texas: Texas A&M University Press, 1986: p. 15.

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National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 17

**Amarillo U.S. Post Office and Courthouse
Potter County, Texas**

Narrative Statement of Significance (continued)

In the New Deal architecture of the 1930s, most Texas federal buildings were designed in the Moderne style. The Amarillo U.S. Post Office and Courthouse is characteristic of this trend and was built with strong Moderne elements. It also, however, exhibited a Renaissance-derived organization. The architect designed the building in the latter years of the American Renaissance Movement, a short-lived art and architecture period emphasizing nationalism, adopted from the similar Italian Renaissance movement. The Renaissance style complemented Moderne architecture, as they together emphasized the tenets of governmental authority, local pride, and nationalism. Interestingly, the Julius Woeltz murals also illustrated this nationalism and local pride in their subject matter and, as a New Deal art project, reflected governmental organization. Taken together, these elements represent the apex of New Deal federal presence in Amarillo.

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Amarillo U.S. Post Office and Courthouse
Potter County, Texas

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- Amarillo Sunday News-Globe*, "Inspection Tour Notes Modern Arrangement," 8 January 1939, n.pg.
- Amarillo Globe*, "Search Day At Post Office," 9 January 1939, pg. 1.
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National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 19

Amarillo U.S. Post Office and Courthouse
Potter County, Texas

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- Amarillo Globe*, "Holes In Postoffice Marble High," 11 January 1939, pg. 1.
- Amarillo Globe*, "The P.O. Primps," 25 January 1939, pg. 1.
- Amarillo Globe*, "Federal Court Opens For PO Visitors," 4 April 1939, pg. 2.
- Amarillo Globe*, "Interest High in P.O. Murals," 11 May 1939, pg. 1.
- Amarillo Sunday News-Globe*, "Amarillo's First Post Office Opened in 1887: Dry Goods Box Utilized By Robert M. Moore for Initial Postal Station," 14 May 1939, pg. 1.
- Amarillo Globe*, "Cow County Roars Welcome To Farley," 17 May 1939, pg. 1, 2
- Amarillo Globe*, "Between Us Horses, Jim's Better Politician Than Rider—Dynamite," 18 May 1939, pg. 1.
- Amarillo Globe*, "P.O. Mural Contest Increases Interest," 19 May 1939, pg. 4.
- Amarillo Globe*, "What Motif Should Be expressed by Amarillo Postoffice Murals?" 11 August 1939, pg. 1.
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- Amarillo Globe*, "Murals Sent to Washington," 25 August 1939, pg. 16.
- Amarillo Globe*, "Woeltz Murals Winner," 13 September 1939, n.pg.
- Amarillo Globe*, "Choice of Artist For Murals Approved By Local Committee," 15 September 1939, n.pg.
- Amarillo Globe*, "Landscaping Contract for Postoffice Awarded," 25 September 1939, pg. 9.
- Amarillo Globe*, "Artist Ready To Paint P.O. Murals," 7 June 1940, pg. 7.
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National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 9 Page 20

Amarillo U.S. Post Office and Courthouse
Potter County, Texas

Bibliography (continued)

Dobie, J. Frank. "To One Who Knows Its History, Texas Is Beautiful and Interesting, But Calling Gully a Creek, Foreign Art In Postoffices, Modern Edifices In Old West Settings Offend." *San Antonio Light*, 25 August 1940.

Woeltz, Julius. "An Artist Answers J. Frank Dobie." *San Antonio Light*, 13 September 1940.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 1 acre

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

Zone	Easting	Northing
1 14	241990	3899660

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.) See Continuation Sheet p. 21.

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.) See Continuation Sheet p. 21.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Victoria Green Clow, Cultural Resources Project Manager, and Elizabeth Burson, Archivist/Historian

organization Geo-Marine, Inc. date March 20, 2000

street & number 550 East Fifteenth St. telephone (972) 423-5480

city or town Plano state TX zip code 75074

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name General Services Administration, Greater Southwest Region

street & number Fritz G. Lanham Federal Building, 819 Taylor Street telephone (817) 978-4229

city or town Fort Worth state TX zip code 76102

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 10 Page 21

Amarillo U.S. Post Office and Courthouse
Potter County, Texas

Verbal Boundary Description

Lot 6-18, Block 53, Glidden and Sanborn.

Boundary Justification

All property lines are as they existed at the time of the building's construction.

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 11 Page 22

**Amarillo U.S. Post Office and Courthouse
Potter County, Texas**

Photographs

1. Amarillo U.S. Post Office and Courthouse
2. Amarillo, Texas
3. Victoria Clow
4. October 29, 1999
5. Geo-Marine, Inc.
6. South (front) elevation
7. Photo 1

Item numbers 1-5 are the same for all photographs. Item numbers 6 and 7 are listed below for each photograph.

6. East (side) elevation
7. Photo 2

6. North (rear) and east (side) elevations
7. Photo 3

6. West (side) elevation
7. Photo 4

6. Front entry planter, west entry—south elevation
7. Photo 5

6. South wall, lobby
7. Photo 6

6. North wall, lobby
7. Photo 7

6. West wall, lobby
7. Photo 8

6. Courtroom, looking west from judge's bench
7. Photo 9

6. Judge's bench, east wall of courtroom
7. Photo 10

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY NAME: Amarillo US Post Office and Courthouse

MULTIPLE
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: TEXAS, Potter

DATE RECEIVED: 8/29/00 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 9/12/00
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 9/28/00 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 10/13/00
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 00001175

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

☒ ACCEPT ☐ RETURN ☐ REJECT 9/29/00 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

Entered in the
National Register

RECOM./CRITERIA _____

REVIEWER _____ DISCIPLINE _____

TELEPHONE _____ DATE _____

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N



1140009 0231-1 N 1

U.S. Post Office and Courthouse
Amarillo, Texas
Photo 1



N 1-1820 6000GT1

US Post Office and Courthouse
Amarillo, TEXAS
Photo 2



N Y 1520 600511

US Post Office and Courthouse
Amarillo, Texas

Photo 13



2-H 1520 52420 [02]425 0231 H-2

US POST OFFICE AND
COURTHOUSE

AMARILLO, TX

PHOTO 4



N 1-1820 6000111

US POST OFFICE AND COURTHOUSE

AMARILLO, TEXAS

PHOTO 5



103009 0231-11

US POST OFFICE AND COURTHOUSE
AMARILLO, TEXAS
Photo 6



1023009 0231-1 H

US POST OFFICE AND COURTHOUSE
AMARILLO, TEXAS

PHOTO 7



DIRECTORY

DEPT. OF JUSTICE
FEDERAL DEPENDENT
AND A TIGER
DATE: 1980

DEPT. OF JUSTICE
FEDERAL DEPENDENT
AND A TIGER
DATE: 1980

DEPT. OF JUSTICE
FEDERAL DEPENDENT
AND A TIGER
DATE: 1980

DEPT. OF JUSTICE
FEDERAL DEPENDENT
AND A TIGER
DATE: 1980

N I-1520 800101

US Post office and Courthouse
Amarillo, TEXAS
PHOTO 8



11-1520 800011

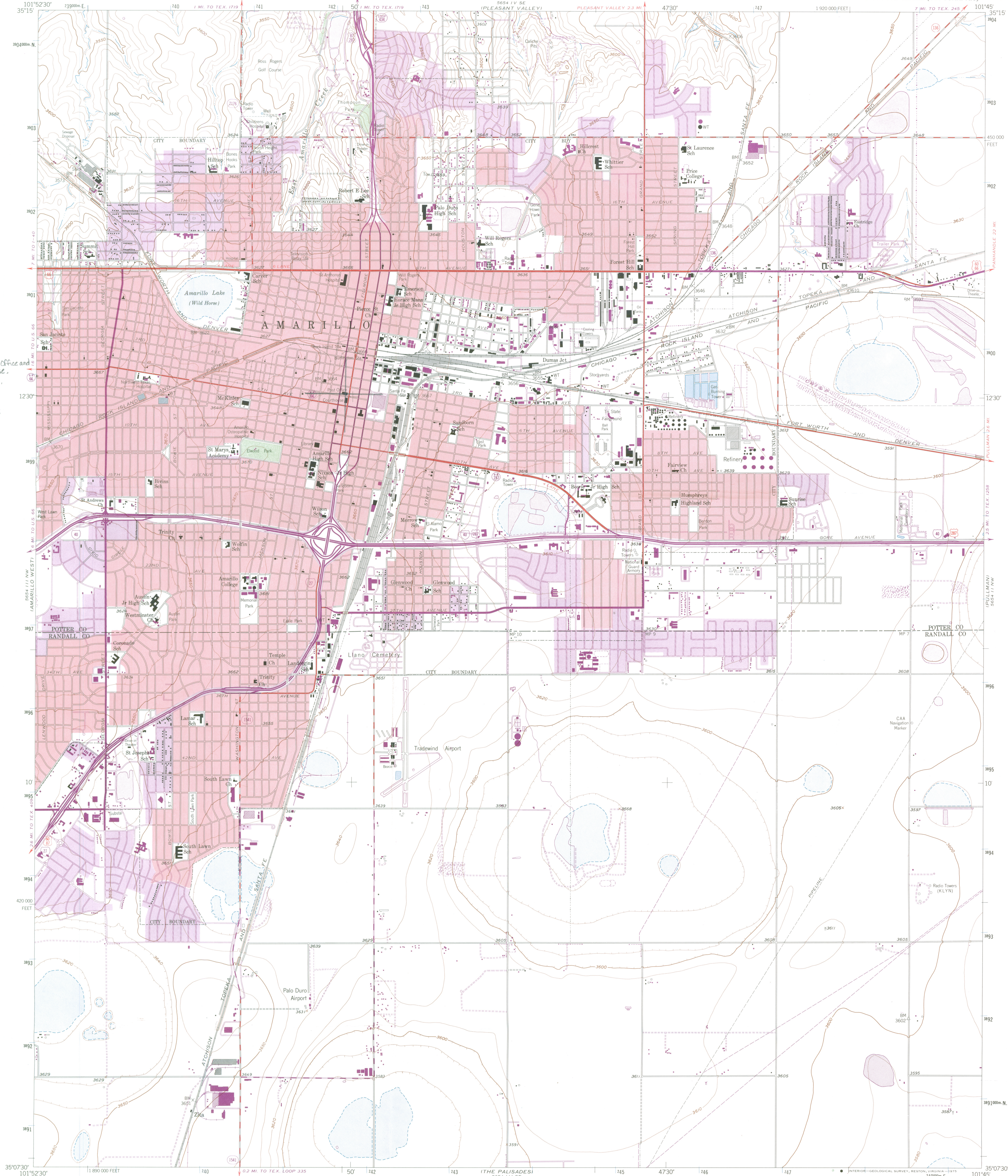
USPOST OFFICE AND COURTHOUSE
AMARILLO, TEXAS
PHOTO 9



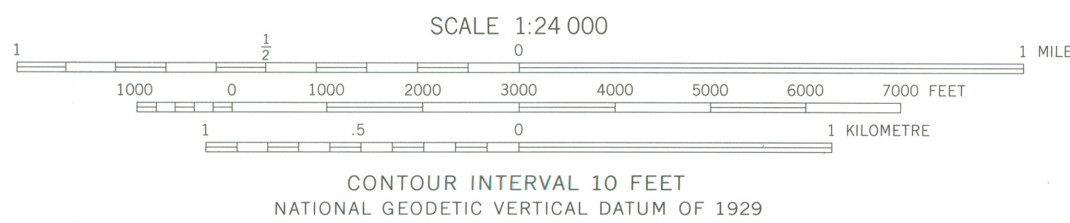
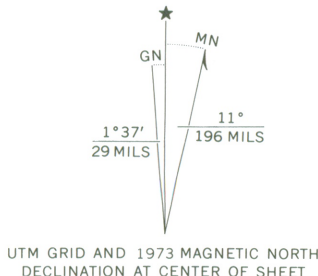
11-1520 6006901

U.S. POST OFFICE AND COURTHOUSE
AMARILLO, TEXAS
PHOTO 10

United States Post Office and
Courthouse,
Amarillo, Tx.
ZONE 14
241990E
389960N



Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey
Control by USGS and NOS/NOAA
Topography from aerial photographs by Kesh plotter
and by planetable surveys 1956. Aerial photographs taken 1953
Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum
10,000-foot grid based on Texas coordinate system, north zone
1000-metre Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks,
zone 14, shown in blue
Red tint indicates areas in which only landmark buildings are shown
Revisions shown in purple compiled from aerial photographs
taken 1967 and 1973. This information not field checked
Purple tint indicates extension of urban areas



ROAD CLASSIFICATION
Primary highway, hard surface
Secondary highway, hard surface
Light-duty road, hard or improved surface
Unimproved road
Interstate Route
U. S. Route
State Route

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
FOR SALE BY U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, DENVER, COLORADO 80225, OR RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

MAPSCO, INC.
6353 CAMP BOWIE #101B
FORT WORTH, 76116 817/731-1666

AMARILLO EAST, TEX.
N3507.5-W10145/7.5

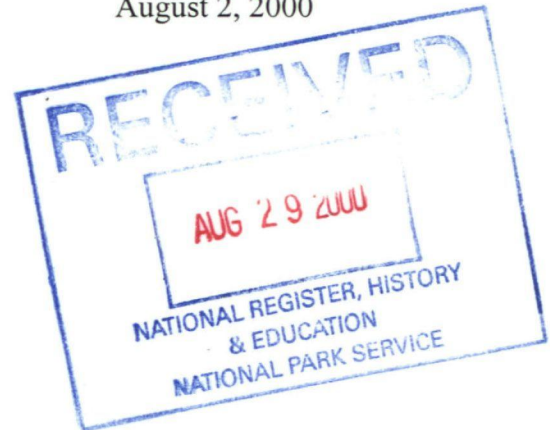
1956
PHOTOREVISED 1967 AND 1973
AMS 5654 III NE-SERIES V882



General Services Administration
Public Buildings Service
Washington, DC 20405

August 2, 2000

Ms. Carol Shull
Keeper, National Register of Historic Places
National Register History and Education Division
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
P.O. Box 37127
Washington, DC 20012-7127



Dear Ms. Shull:

Carol

Enclosed for your approval are National Register Nominations for the United States Post Office and Court House located at 205 East Fifth Street, Amarillo, TX; the United States Post Office and Court House located at 615 East Houston Street, San Antonio, TX; and the United States Post Office and Court House located at 101 East Pecan Street, Sherman, TX. These properties are under the authority of the U.S. General Services Administration.

The following documents are enclosed:

- Original National Register of Historic Places Registration Forms
- U.S.G.S. Maps, and
- Three sets of original labeled black and white photographs.

Should you have any questions or concerns regarding the nominations, please contact Douglas Pulak in my office at (202) 501-0190.

Sincerely,

Rolando Rivas-Camp

Rolando Rivas-Camp, AIA
Director,
Historic Buildings and the Arts Center of Expertise

Enclosures

