

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

FOR FEDERAL PROPERTIES

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

JUN 18 1984

DATE ENTERED

JUL 19 1984

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

HISTORIC

United States Post Office

AND/OR COMMON

Downtown Station, Old Main Post Office

**2 LOCATION**

STREET &amp; NUMBER

219 Mills Avenue

N/A NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

El Paso

N/A VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

STATE

Texas

CODE

048

COUNTY

El Paso

CODE

141

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE	
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	N/A IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

**4 AGENCY**

REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS: (If applicable)

United States Postal Service

STREET &amp; NUMBER

475 L'Enfant Plaza

CITY, TOWN

Washington

N/A VICINITY OF

STATE

D.C.

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,

REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Office of the County Clerk

STREET &amp; NUMBER

El Paso County Courthouse

CITY, TOWN

El Paso

STATE

Texas

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

Historic Sites Inventory

DATE

January 1984

 FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCALDEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDSTexas Historical Commission  
Office of Historic Preservation, 2 Civic Center Plaza

CITY, TOWN

Austin; El Paso

STATE

Texas



## 7 DESCRIPTION

### CONDITION

—EXCELLENT  
GOOD  
—FAIR

—DETERIORATED  
—RUINS  
—UNEXPOSED

### CHECK ONE

—UNALTERED  
ALTERED

### CHECK ONE

ORIGINAL SITE  
—MOVED DATE N/A

### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The 1916 United States Post Office, located in the heart of El Paso's Central Business District, is a massively-scaled public building with noteworthy Beaux Arts detailing. The two-story structure is of sandstone and concrete ashlar masonry. Sited one-half block off El Paso's central plaza, the Post Office has been a local landmark since its construction.

The Old Main Post Office is a two-story masonry structure with a flat roof and sandstone and cast concrete-dressed, ashlar, exterior walls. The Mills Street (south-east) facade is the primary public entrance to the building. Six giant-order Ionic columns support the in antis portico. The central entrance doors are surmounted by a large, round-headed window covered with a grillwork with modified St. George's Cross motif. Windows with the same grillwork flank the entrance at ground-floor level. End pavilions to the south and east consist of center windows with 3/3/3 lights with sidelights at the ground-floor level, and 3/3 lights with sidelights above. Paired, giant-order, Doric pilasters frame each window, over which sun-screens have been placed to give either an eight- or four-light image. These and the portico are surmounted by bas-relief wreaths in the full entablature (with parapet) which encircles the structure. In the parapet above the portico the words United States Post Office are incised and have bas-relief decorative panels at each end.

The nine-bay Stanton Street (northeast) facade features windows similar to those on the main front, and its second-story windows are surmounted by keystones. The rear (northwest) elevator of the building has a seven-bay central section. A modern one-story addition with ramps and a covered loading dock are found at ground-floor level, but the historic double windows with 4/4 lights and eight-light transoms remain in all but one of the second-floor windows. Bays are separated by simple Doric pilasters. To the north and west are recessed corners whose upper and lower windows have 3/3 lights and 1/1 sidelights above the doors.

The most significant interior space is the principal lobby. Entered through a modern aluminum vestibule, the lobby is a high, two-story space topped by a massive, paneled, saucer-shaped dome. Polished marble laid in a common bond pattern rises above the first-floor level of the lobby walls to the plastered ceiling and pendentives. Huge, rounded, ornamental grills of bronze adorn the walls of the lobby on the upper level above the service counter and bronze lock boxes. The lobby's ceramic-tile floor dates from circa 1960, and contains mosaic depictions of eight contemporaneous commemorative U.S. postage stamps, including a 20¢ Air Mail stamp, a 5¢ Benjamin Franklin stamp, and a 9¢ Alamo stamp.

Other areas of the interior are essentially utilitarian. The large, central, sorting room to the rear is flanked on the sides by offices and rooms used for operational purposes. Walls are plastered, and detailing and hardware simple. Perhaps the most enigmatic features of the building are the safes which are set in the walls ten feet above the first-floor level. There is no ready access to them and apparently never has been.



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7

PAGE 1

The United States Post Office has experienced minor remodelling at various times. In 1928-29, a new elevator and mailing platform were installed. In 1956 new windows, air conditioning system, and tile floors were added, and in 1960 and 1966 the heating system was renovated and the masonry cleaned. Interior lighting and other interior fittings have also been changed over the years, but none of these modifications have affected the integrity of the major exterior elevations or interior public spaces. Some, such as the mosaic tile floors of 1960, will doubtless be considered as contributing to the building's history in years to come.



# 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 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 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 type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)		
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION				

SPECIFIC DATES 1916-1920

BUILDER/ARCHITECT Builder - Rowland Gilchrist, El Paso

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

El Paso's United States Post Office of 1916 is one of the most noteworthy Beaux Arts buildings in far West Texas. Reminiscent, on a smaller scale, of the early 20th-century federal buildings in Washington, D.C., the Post Office's dignified classical detailing and academic proportions make it a strong visual symbol of the U.S. government in this remote border city. Today, it still retains its visual prominence, integrity, and historic role in downtown El Paso.

According to an El Paso Herald-Post article (November 30, 1945), Indians were still attacking the mail carriers of the Butterfield Stage Coach six years after the first El Paso post office was established in 1852, which is to have been an adobe hut near the stage station. The post office was moved three times in the 19th century until it was moved, about 1900, to the Federal Building (since demolished) at Mills and Oregon streets.

The turn of the century was a boom period for El Paso. Between 1900 and 1910, the population of the city doubled, and that by 1920 was to double again to 77,000. Accordingly, in 1911, Congressman W.R. Smith of the 16th District requested that \$350,000 be appropriated for the construction of a new post office in El Paso. In 1916 land was acquired for the location of the new post office, at Mills and Stanton streets, the site of the Old Pacific Hotel. Construction of the new post office building began that same year. Architecturally, the new structure was to be of some significance to El Paso and the region. While the Prairie- and Mission-style buildings of Henry Trost are perhaps the best known turn-of-the-century structures in the city, there was also a substantial amount of Beaux Arts construction, and most was of a pleasant and decidedly unacademic mode. The construction of the new United States Post Office, however, brought formal Beaux Arts classicism to far West Texas.

The design of the post office was provided by the office of the Supervising Architect of the Department of the Treasury. The basic formula was not unlike others of its ilk: a central portico in antis with offices to the sides, main lobby at the center, and mail room to the back. This standardized plan was used in numerous large and small post offices throughout the country from about 1910 through World War II. The El Paso Post Office, however, was much more imposing than most of its contemporaries in Texas, and was one of the earliest and most noteworthy Beaux Arts structures in West Texas. The giant-order Ionic portico, rusticated stone exterior, and high, domed lobby create the ambiance of formality that reflects, on a smaller scale, such great Washington public buildings of the period as the Library of Congress or the Supreme Court building.



## 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

El Paso Herald 1-14-33; 11-30-45; 3-21-46; 7-27-52; 7-27-53.  
 U.S. Postal Service, "Historical Significance Survey Report: Main Post Office, El Paso, Texas 79110" 1978 (Copy on file, T.H.C. Austin)  
 John Karr to Peter Maxson, interviewed by telephone, 20 December, 1983.

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than one acre

UTM REFERENCES

A	1 3	3 5 9 1 8 1 0	3 5 1 4 6 2 0	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

A rectangular parcel of land out of Block 3, Mills Addition, City of El Paso, as follows: beginning at a point at the westernmost point at the intersection of Mills and Stanton streets; thence 120' in a southwesterly direction along Mills St. to an alley; thence 200' along the alley in a northwesterly direction; thence 120' in a northeasterly direction to Stanton St.; thence 200' in a southeasterly direction along Stanton St. to a point of beginning.

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
N/A			
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

## 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Peter Flagg Maxson

ORGANIZATION

Texas Historical Commission

DATE

15 January, 1984

STREET & NUMBER

P.O. Box 12276

TELEPHONE

(512) 475-3094

CITY OR TOWN

Austin

STATE

Texas 78711

## 12 CERTIFICATION OF NOMINATION

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER RECOMMENDATION

YES

NO

NONE

*Curtis Dunnell*  
 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

*Dore W. Berger*  
 TITLE Director, Office of Real Estate

DATE 6/7/84

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

*Carol D. Skel*

DATE

7-19-84

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER



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CONTINUATION SHEET

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In recent decades, the United States Post Office of 1916 has been replaced as the main post office of El Paso, and is now in an area of high-rise construction. Yet it remains important to the community, for the suburban location of the new Main Post Office encourages the continued utilization of the 1916 building. The massive scale and the low profile of the nominated property still make it a visual landmark in the city of El Paso.



NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

*Substantive Review*

U.S. Post Office  
El Paso County  
TEXAS

Working No. JUN 18 1984  
Fed. Reg. Date: 2.5.85  
Date Due: 7/19/84 - 8/2/84  
Action:  ACCEPT 7-19-84  
 RETURN  
 REJECT  
Federal Agency: U.S. Postal Service

- resubmission
- nomination by person or local government
- owner objection
- appeal

Substantive Review:  sample  request  appeal  NR decision

Reviewer's comments:

Recom./Criteria Accept - C  
Reviewer Enowen  
Discipline Historian  
Date 7/17/84  
see continuation sheet

Nomination returned for:  technical corrections cited below  
 substantive reasons discussed below

1. Name

2. Location

3. Classification

Category	Ownership Public Acquisition	Status Accessible	Present Use
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4. Owner of Property

5. Location of Legal Description

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

Has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

7. Description

Condition	Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed	
	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	
	<input type="checkbox"/> altered	

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

- summary paragraph
- completeness
- clarity
- alterations/integrity
- dates
- boundary selection



---

**8. Significance**

Period \_\_\_\_\_ Areas of Significance—Check and justify below

Specific dates \_\_\_\_\_ Builder/Architect \_\_\_\_\_

Statement of Significance *(in one paragraph)*

RECEIVED  
NATIONAL HISTORIC REVIEW

Post Office  
St. Albans County  
VT

- summary paragraph
- completeness
- clarity
- applicable criteria
- justification of areas checked
- relating significance to the resource
- context
- relationship of integrity to significance
- justification of exception
- other

1991 01 JUL

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**9. Major Bibliographical References**

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**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of nominated property \_\_\_\_\_

Quadrangle name \_\_\_\_\_

UTM References \_\_\_\_\_

Verbal boundary description and justification \_\_\_\_\_

---

**11. Form Prepared By**

---

**12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification**

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

\_\_\_\_ national    \_\_\_\_ state    \_\_\_\_ local

State Historic Preservation Officer signature \_\_\_\_\_

title \_\_\_\_\_ date \_\_\_\_\_

---

**13. Other**

- Maps
- Photographs
- Other

Questions concerning this nomination may be directed to \_\_\_\_\_

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_







United States Post Office  
219 Mills Avenue  
El Paso, El Paso County, Texas

Photo: September 1983 by Peter Ashkanaz; neg. on file  
at Texas Historical Commission, Austin.

View of front facade, looking northwest.

Photo 1 of 6







United States Post Office  
219 Mills Avenue  
El Paso, El Paso County, Texas

Photo: September 1983 by Peter Ashkanaz; neg. on file  
at Texas Historical Commission, Austin.

View of north corner of building, looking south.

Photo 2 of 6







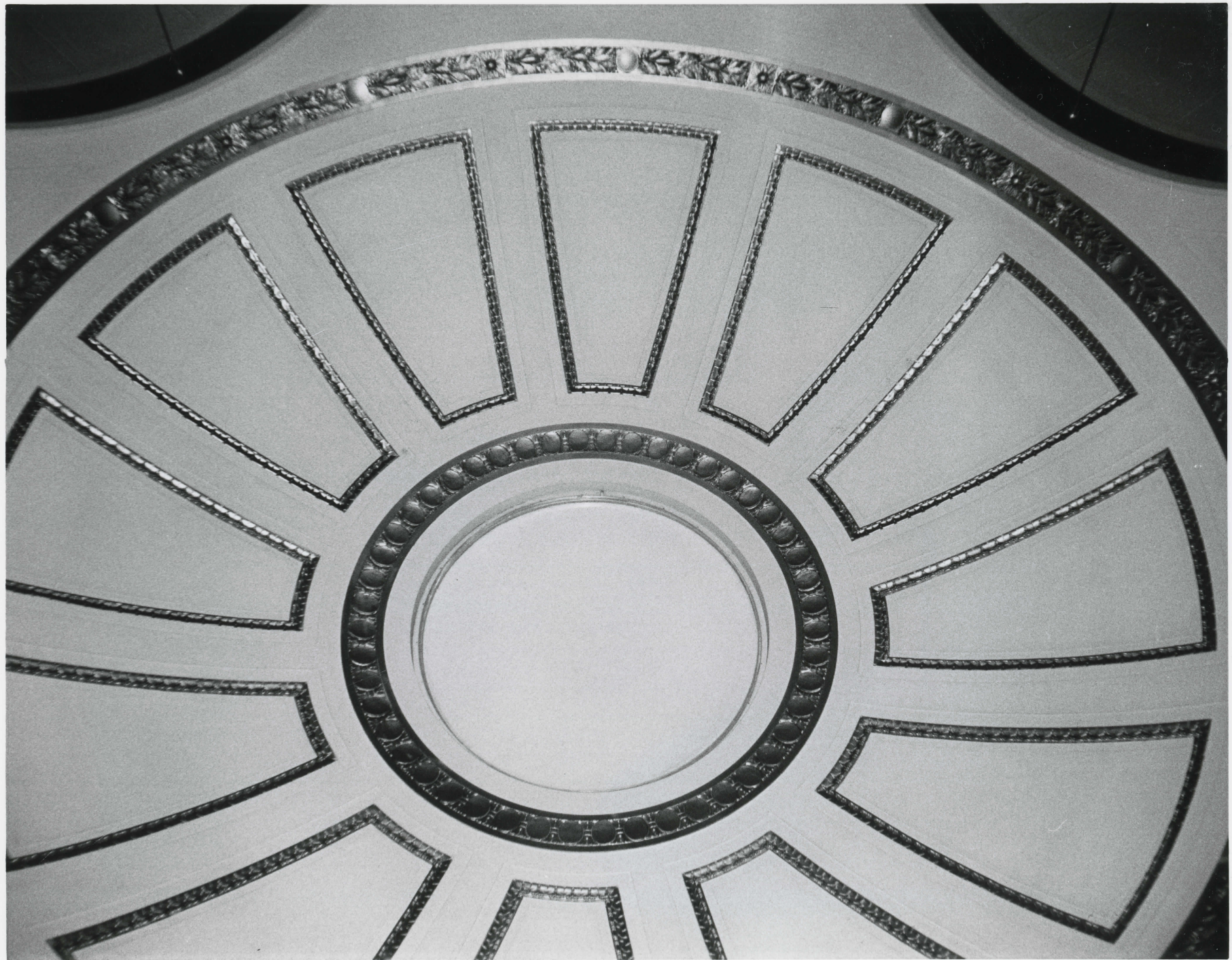
United States Post Office  
219 Mills Street  
El Paso, El Paso County, Texas

Photo: September 1983 by Peter Ashkanaz; neg. on file  
at Texas Historical Commission, Austin

Close-up oblique view of west facade, looking east.

Photo 3 of 6







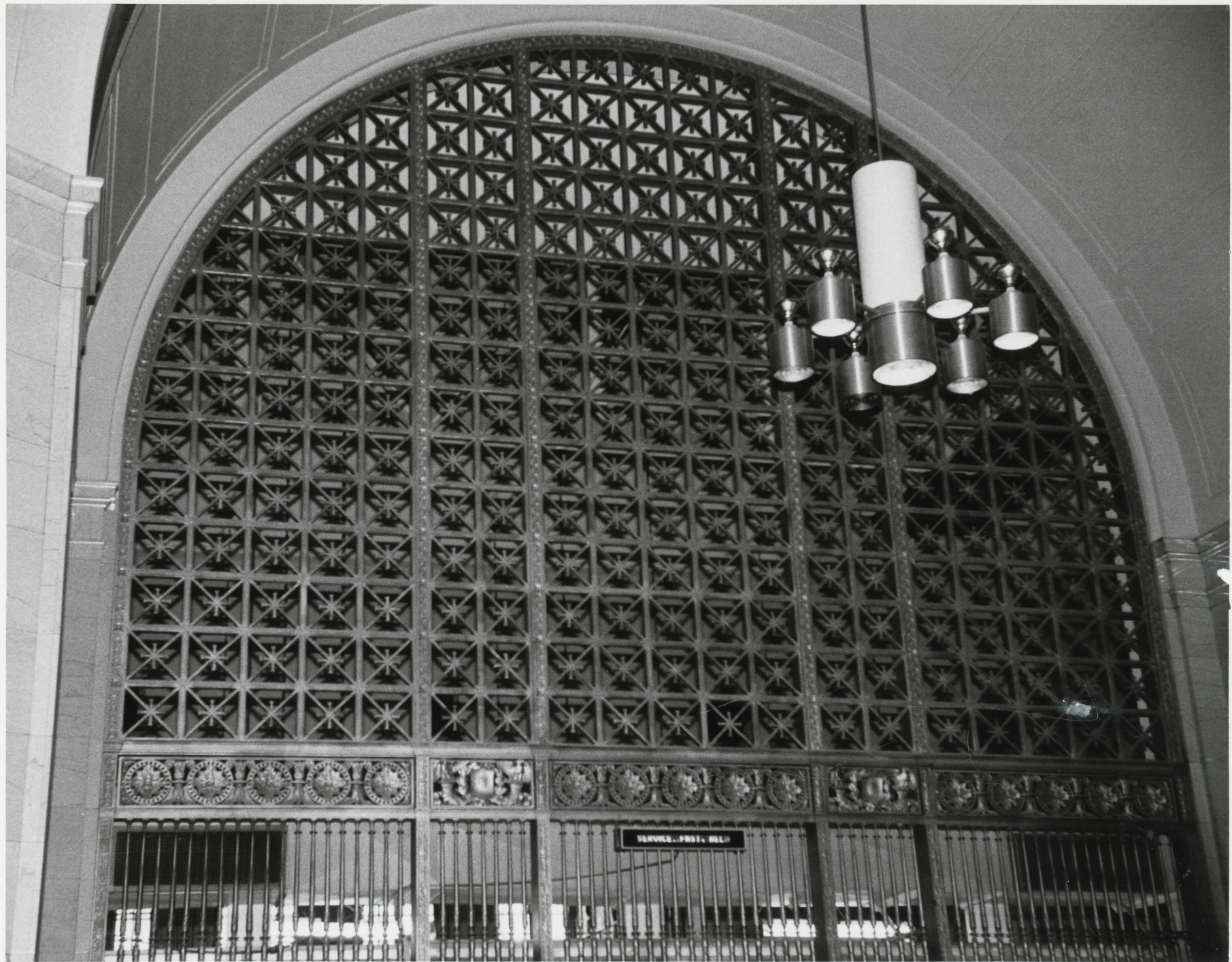
United States Post Office  
219 Mills Avenue  
El Paso, El Paso County, Texas

Photo: September 1983 by Peter Ashkanaz; neg. on file  
at Texas Historical Commission, Austin

Detail of dome, main lobby.

Photo 4 of 6







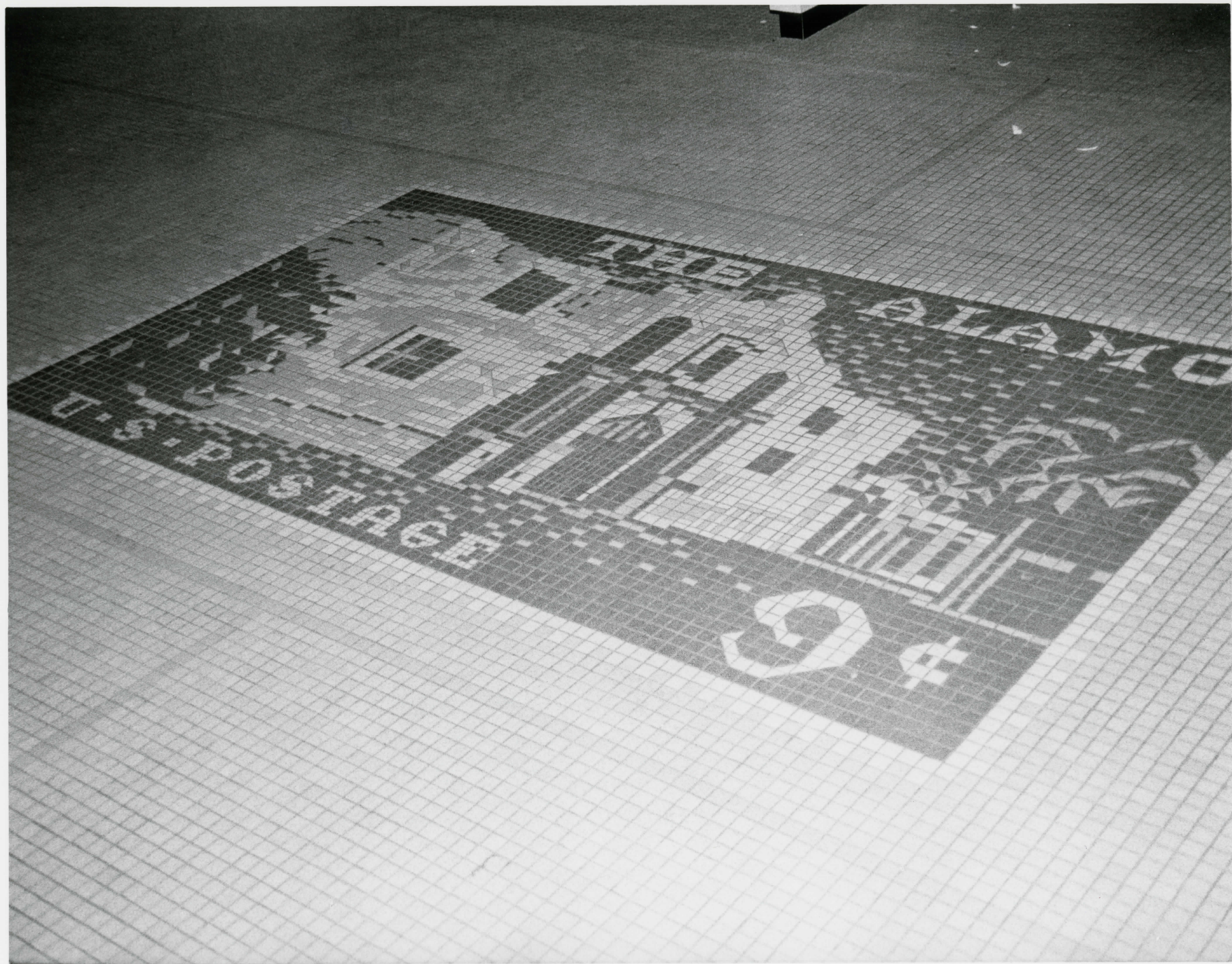
United States Post Office  
219 Mills Avenue  
El Paso, El Paso County, Texas

Photo: September 1983 by Peter Ashkanaz; neg. on file  
at Texas Historical Commission, Austin

Detail of grillwork, main lobby.

Photo 5 of 6







United States Post Office  
219 Mills Avenue  
El Paso, El Paso County, Texas

Photo: September 1983 by Peter Ashkanaz, neg. on file  
at Texas Historical Commission, Austin

Mosaic floor of main lobby showing 9¢ Alamo stamp.

Photo 6 of 6



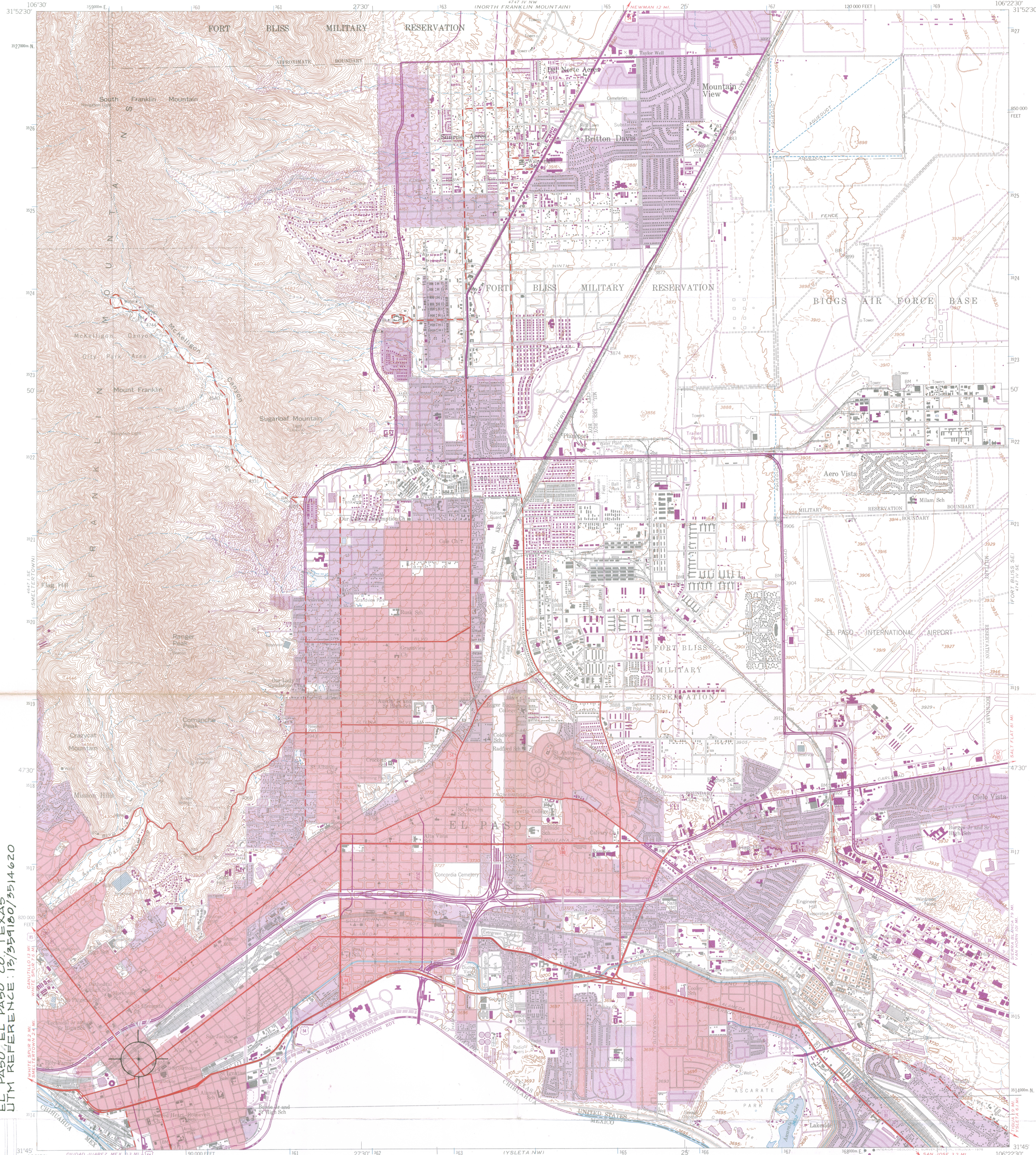
CANUTILED

UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY  
CORPS OF ENGINEERS

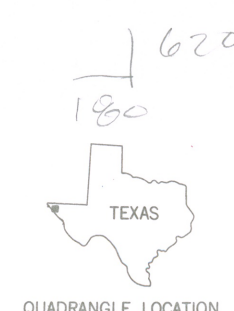
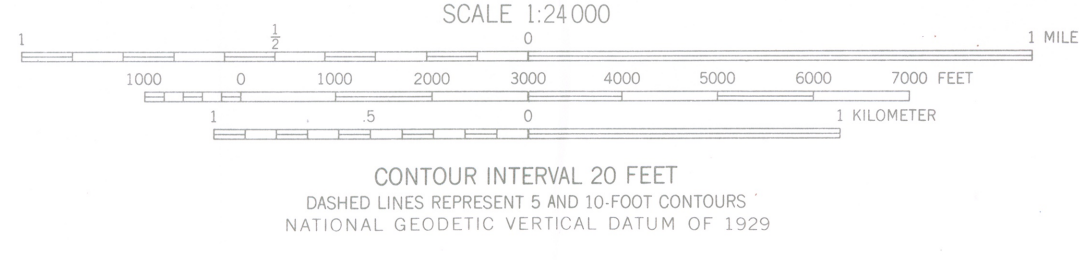
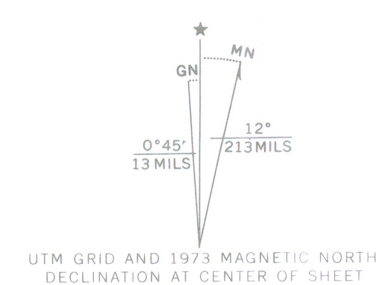
EL PASO QUADRANGLE  
TEXAS-EL PASO CO  
7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)  
SW 1/4 FORT BLISS 15' QUADRANGLE

4747 IV NE  
FORT BLISS NE



UNITED STATES POST OFFICE  
219 MILLS AVENUE  
EL PASO, EL PASO CO, TEXAS  
UTM REFERENCE: 18/35E1180/3514620

Maped by the Army Map Service  
Published for civil use by the Geological Survey  
Control by USGS, USC&GS, and USCE  
Topography from aerial photographs by photogrammetric methods  
Aerial photographs taken 1954. Photography field annotated 1955  
Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum  
10,000-foot grid based on Texas coordinate system,  
central zone  
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks,  
zone 13, shown in blue  
Red tint indicates areas in which only  
landmark buildings are shown  
Revisions shown in purple compiled by the Geological Survey from aerial  
photographs taken 1967 and 1973. This information not field checked  
Purple tint indicates extension of urban areas



ROAD CLASSIFICATION

Heavy-duty	Light-duty
Medium-duty	Unimproved dirt
Interstate Route	U.S. Route
	State Route

EL PASO, TEX.  
N3145-W10622.5/7.5

3106-432

1955  
PHOTOREVISED 1967 AND 1973  
AMS 4747 IV SW-SERIES V882



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GALVESTON ISLAND  
DR. DAN A. WILLIS, HOUSTON

TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
P.O. BOX 12276 AUSTIN, TEXAS 78711 (512) 475-3092

October 26, 1983

Ms. Carol Shull  
Chief of Registration  
National Register of Historic  
Places  
National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior  
Washington, D.C. 20240

Re: Main Post Office, El Paso  
El Paso County, Texas  
Determination of Eligibility

Dear Ms. Shull:

Our office has reviewed information concerning the Main Post Office in El Paso, Texas. It is the opinion of the State Historic Preservation Office that the building is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion D since it embodies a distinctive type of architecture and construction technique.

Sincerely,

*LaVerne Herrington*  
LaVerne Herrington, Ph.D.  
Deputy  
State Historic Preservation  
Officer

NK/LH/lft

cc: Peter Maxon





JONATHAN ROGERS  
MAYOR

KENNETH E. BEASLEY  
EXECUTIVE ASSISTANT

ROBERT H. GABEL  
DIRECTOR, OMB

**CITY COUNCIL**

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DISTRICT NO. 6

W. L. RIEGER  
CITY CLERK

December 19, 1983

Mr. Gerald L. Barnett  
Realty Management and  
Acquisition Analyst  
Field Real Estate and  
Buildings Office  
U.S. Postal Service  
P.O. Drawer 239  
Dallas, TX 75221-0239

Dear Mr. Barnett:

The City of El Paso is very pleased to learn of your intent to nominate the Downtown El Paso Post Office for placement on the National Register of Historic Places and is fully supportive.

Your action is timely in view of current renovation of the historic Cortez Hotel, and its conversion into an office complex. As you are probably aware, the Cortez Hotel is located immediately west of the Post Office. Benefits will accrue to the Cortez Hotel developer, the El Paso Downtown, and the public in general.

Thank you for inquiry. The City's Historic Landmark Commission will provide any assistance you may require.

Sincerely,

*Polly Harris, Mayor pro-tem*  
for  
Jonathan W. Rogers, Mayor  
City of El Paso

cc: Joe Wilson, Chairman  
Historic Landmark Commission



*El Paso, Texas, The International City*





UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE  
475 L'Enfant Plaza, SW  
Washington, DC 20260

June 7, 1984

Ms. Carol D. Shull  
Chief of Registration  
National Register of Historic Places  
National Park Service  
Department of Interior  
Washington, D.C. 20240-1002

Dear Ms. Shull:

In compliance with Executive Order 11593, the Postal Service hereby submits a nomination for the U. S. Post Office located at 219 Mills Avenue, El Paso County, El Paso, Texas.

If you have any questions regarding this matter, please contact John Sorenson of my staff at (202) 245-4461.

Sincerely,

Dave W. Dogan  
Director  
Office of Real Estate  
Real Estate and Buildings Department

Attachments