Form No. 10-306 (Rev. 10-74)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR FEDERAL PROPERTIES

PH06761 44

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED MAR 28 1979
DATE ENTERED MAY 31 1979

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

1 NAME

HISTORIC
United States Post Office, Idaho Falls, Idaho

AND/OR COMMON
Federal Office Building, Idaho Falls, Idaho

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER
581 Park Avenue (at "C" Street) — NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN
Idaho Falls — VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT
02

STATE
Idaho

CODE
16

COUNTY
Bonneville

CODE
019

2 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE	
— DISTRICT	X PUBLIC	X OCCUPIED	— AGRICULTURE	— MUSEUM
X BUILDING(S)	— PRIVATE	— UNOCCUPIED	— COMMERCIAL	— PARK
— STRUCTURE	— BOTH	— WORK IN PROGRESS	— EDUCATIONAL	— PRIVATE RESIDENCE
— SITE	**PUBLIC ACQUISITION**	**ACCESSIBLE**	— ENTERTAINMENT	— RELIGIOUS
— OBJECT	— IN PROCESS	X YES: RESTRICTED	X GOVERNMENT	— SCIENTIFIC
	— BEING CONSIDERED	— YES: UNRESTRICTED	— INDUSTRIAL	— TRANSPORTATION
		— NO	— MILITARY	— OTHER:

4 AGENCY

General Services Administration

REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS: *(If applicable)*
Regional Headquarters Building

STREET & NUMBER
GSA Center, 10PG

CITY, TOWN
Auburn — VICINITY OF

STATE
Washington 98002

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.
Bonneville County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER
605 N. Capital Street

CITY, TOWN
Idaho Falls

STATE
Idaho

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE
Region #10 Inventory List of Public Buildings of Historic Interest

DATE
July, 1972

X FEDERAL — STATE — COUNTY — LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS
Regional Headquarters Building, GSA Center

CITY, TOWN
Auburn

STATE
Washington

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
__EXCELLENT	__DETERIORATED	__UNALTERED	X ORIGINAL SITE
X GOOD	__RUINS	X ALTERED	__MOVED DATE_____
__FAIR	__UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

SITE

The Federal Office Building, built between 1914 and 1916, is an integral part of the Central Business District of Idaho Falls. Three blocks to the west is the historic crossing of the Snake River (where an 1865 bridge brought about the establishment of the community). Within the immediate vicinity of the FOB are the County Courthouse (a Beaux-Arts Revival brick and stone building erected in 1913), the City Hall (a 1930's Neo-Classical, colonnaded building), and numerous turn-of-the-century brick or stone commercial buildings.

Idaho Falls' CBD centers around two principal streets: Park Avenue, running parallel to the north-south course of the Snake River, and Broadway, which intersects Park Avenue perpendicularly before crossing the river. The northernmost boundary of the CBD is formed by a row of public buildings along "C" Street. The Bonneville County Courthouse and the Idaho Falls City Hall occupy sites on "C" Street to either site of Park Avenue. The FOB at the corner of Park Avenue and "C" Street (between the County Courthouse and City Hall) marks the end of the commercial part of the downtown and the beginning of the governmental district of the city.

As a result of a recently completed downtown revitalization program, the facades of the FOB have become even more important elements of the streetscape. The urban renewal project has widened sidewalks, removed parking meters, planted trees at intersections, and unified the entire downtown with an interconnecting system of parks. A mini park is being installed at the corner of "B" Street and Park Avenue. The main facade of the Federal Building will act as a visual border of this new pedestrian resting place in the CBD.

In 1910 the Treasury Department acquired the 121' X 141' Park Avenue site. The 78' X 88' FOB occupies almost half of the site. The long major facade at Park Avenue is set back from the sidewalk by a 15' wide immaculately trimmed lawn. To either side of the main entrance is a 20' tall Chinese elm. The shorter facade at "C" Street is set back 5' from the sidewalk by an iron railing, protecting basement level windows. A 20' wide parking strip separates the south facade from adjacent buildings. A 43' wide paved area at the rear of the building provides parking for post office employees and turn-around space for the post office loading dock.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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Idaho State Historic Sites Inventory

Idaho State Historical Society
610 N. Julia Davis Drive
Boise, Idaho 83706

BUILDING - GENERAL

Originally, the overall plan of the two-storey Federal Building was rectangular. But in 1936, an additional bay was added to the rear of the building, resulting in the present almost equal-sided proportions.

The building has a gross area of 20,520 sq. ft. over three floors. A partly below ground level day-light basement, occupying the full 141' X 121' dimension of the building, is divided into mechanical, storage, and offices. Basement offices are now temporarily used by the Bureau of Reclamation for handling claims of the 1976 Teton Dam flood.

The first floor also follows the foundation dimensions. One quarter of the space of the first floor is utilized as a public lobby with post office lock-boxes. Behind the lock-boxes is the workroom of the Eagle Rock Post Office Substation. A row of offices lining the north and south walls constitute the remainder of the first floor area. These offices are now largely vacant, with the exception of the offices of the Agriculture Marketing Service and the Civil Service Commission Investigator along the south wall and the Building Manager's office at the north end of the lobby.

The U-shaped second floor wraps around the east (Park Avenue), north ("C" Street) and south (alley) walls of the first floor, thus forming a light-court. The central portion of the second floor "U" measures 88' X 34' and each wing measures 40' X 20'. Individual offices located along outside walls have windows opening onto the streets below. The longest row of offices is along the Park Avenue wall of the building. Second floor offices are presently occupied by the U.S. Geological Survey, Water Resources Division, and by U.S. Senator James McClure and U.S. Congressman George Hansen.

EXTERIOR - GENERAL

The Georgian Revival style of the Federal Building complements both commercial and governmental buildings in the area. The predominantly brick exterior of the Federal Building blends with nearby low-scaled department stores and office buildings. At the same time, the classi-

cal ordering (massing, proportion and ornamentation) of the Federal Building facades is in harmony with the surrounding public buildings. The facades of the Federal Building act to unify the commercial sector with the public sector of Idaho Falls' CBD.

Typical to the Georgian Revival style, the Federal Building has a buff-colored brick exterior, with window bays divided into tall, arched openings on the ground storey and rectangular windows on the second storey. A denticulated stone entablature with a stone balustrade crowns the building.

STRUCTURE - GENERAL

The building has brick bearing walls with a steel-concrete superstructure. "Fireproof" terra cotta hollowtile interior partitions are surfaced with smooth plaster.

All facades of the building, including the 1936 rear addition, are of buff-colored brick, laid in stretcher bond throughout (the bricks are laid lengthwise in every course). A variation of brickwork occurs in the tympanae above the arched windows on the first storey. Here, brick are laid in perpendicular rows, without staggering of courses.

Carved Boise sandstone, from a quarry in the state capital city of that name fifty miles to the west, is used for facade ornamentation. Window surrounds, string courses, balustrades and elements of the entablature are highlighted by the grey-green sandstone.

Concrete spread footings transmit the weight and mass of the building over the site's sandy riverbottom soil. Floors are steel-reinforced concrete flat slab. Metal furring on the first and second floor ceilings supports metal lath and plaster.

The horizontal roof is surfaced with built-up asphalt and gravel.

PRINCIPAL - FACADE

The Park Avenue facade is the most dominant, in accord with its

function as the main entrance to the building. The facade may be divided into three basic horizontal sections: 1. A stone foundation, 2. A brick middle section, 3. A stone entablature with balustrade.

The foundation, composed of three courses of 1' X 2' Boise sandstone blocks, acts as a "pedestal" from which the rest of the buildings rises. A moulded sandstone plinth at the top of the foundation accentuates the foundation's supportive function and signals the junction between foundation and upper levels.

A five-bay brick middle section rises two storeys from the foundation to the entablature. The three central bays are bordered by four, two-storey tall brick pilasters. The 2' wide pilasters extend 4 in. from the wall surface and have sandstone ionic capitals and bases. Each of the three central bays has a 13' tall arched opening on the ground floor and a pair of rectangular windows on the second floor.

The central arched opening is the main entrance to the building. Each of the arched openings to either side of the main entrance is divided into three double-hung windows with a semi-circular fanlight above. These double-hung windows are divided into six or nine panes per window. The fanlight, originally transparent, has been painted-over. Each half of the double-hung second storey windows is divided into six panes.

A flight of granite steps rises from street level up four feet to the main entrance within the center arched opening. The semi-circular fanlight above the front door is protected by an intricate floral motif wrought iron grille (glass behind the grille has been painted). Fluted wooden pilasters, painted white, support a wooden entablature above the entrydoors. The frieze of the entablature has brass letters that read "FEDERAL OFFICE BUILDING." The original pair of oak front doors has been replaced with aluminum double-swing doors. Two ornate cast iron lamps once were fixed to cheek blocks flanking the main entrance. These were replaced with concrete planters during a 1950's remodelling of the building.

The ornamentation around the central arched opening is balanced by decorative elements on the two arched side bays. Each of the side window bays has a 2' high sandstone balustrade that extends from the windowsill to the stone foundation. The balusters are identical to those of the parapet balustrade.

First storey arched windows have sandstone surrounds with a scrolled keystone. Second storey windows above the three central bays have sandstone lintels with rosettes carved into the corners. Sandstone surrounds at the sides of second storey windows have carved geometric designs. Beneath each pair of second storey windows, a sandstone lugsill with a wave motif separates second and first storey windows.

The center three bays are emphasized by two 18' wide bays projecting from either side of the building. Each side bay has a single 3' wide X 8' tall double-hung window on the first storey and a double-hung window of the same dimension directly above on the second storey. The first storey windows are protected by intricate wrought iron grilles, painted white.

The pilasters of the principal facade appear to "support" the formal entablature. The capitals of the pilasters are connected to a sandstone belt course above second storey lintels. A brick frieze separates the belt course from sandstone dentils of the entablature. A sandstone balustrade and coping rises from the cornice above the three central bays.

NORTH AND SOUTH FACADES

Originally, the north and south facades of the building each had only three bays, which made the five bay front facade more pronounced. But in 1936, the post office workroom in the rear of the boulding was enlarged, thus adding an additional bay to the north and south facades. Although the addition destroyed much of the original proportion between side and front facades, the new work meticulously followed the original details, so that today it is difficult to discern the junction between the original 1915 work and the 1936 revision.

The four bays at the north and south sides of the building are less ornate than those of the front facade. Each bay is offset by pairs of two-storey tall brick pilasters with stone bases and doric capitals. Ornamentation around the pairs of rectangular windows on the second storey and the arched openings on the first floor is the same as on the front facade windows. Below each first storey window a single 2' tall sandstone panel fills the space between the windowsill and the foundation; there are no balusters as at the front facade. Fanlights within the arched first storey openings are glazed (now painted-over). Conforming with original designs, the fanlight in the second bay from the front facade (originally the middle bay) is bricked-in. A concave disk of lavender pavonazzo marble adorns the center of the brick half-circle.

WEST (REAR) FACADE

Originally an ornate wrought iron mailing platform, used for loading mail bags onto wagons and trucks, was attached to the rear of the building. During the 1936 revision, this sturcture was removed and replaced with a one-storey, concrete and brick platform.

As the "working side" of the building, unexposed to the public eye, the rear facade has less ornamentation than other facades. A brick chimney extends from the southern-most wing of the rear facade.

INTERIOR - FIRST FLOOR

Typical to many turn of the century post offices, the Idaho Falls building had a richly decorated high-ceilinged lobby. The ornamented groin vaults and intricate pilasters that once highlighted the public lobby were removed during the 1936 renovation. A cast iron vestibule within the lobby was replaced with the present stained hardwood vestibule. Subsequent alterations have brought the lobby to its present 16' wide X 60' long dimensions.

Many of the original lobby details have survived the remodellings. White Alaska marble strips, 6" wide, are set into the white terrazzo floor. Floor bases are of pink Tennessee marble and wainscots are

yellow Kasota marble from Minnesota. The original 15' ceiling height remains, as does the denticulated moulding at the ceiling bay in front of the former postmaster's office (at the north end of the lobby).

A stairway with white Alaska marble risers and treads and yellow Kasota marble stringers, gracefully curves up the wall at the north end of the lobby. The handrails, the newel and balusters are dark-stained mahogany. Balusters are turned and the newel is intricately carved.

Post office mail boxes still line the walls between tellers' windows.

The first floor post office workroom and adjacent offices have undergone continuous revisions since the 1930's. The former spaces of the mail order office and the postmaster's office have been subdivided into smaller offices for individual government agencies.

SECOND FLOOR

Much of the original second floor layout has remained intact. A window corridor separates offices from the light court. The white terrazzo corridor floor has white Alaska marble crass strips and borders. Plaster mouldings accent the junction between ceiling and walls.

Second floor restrooms still have the original white Alaska marble stalls and wall panelling. Plumbing fixtures have been modernized.

Each second floor office has an obscure chipped-glass door light with chipped-glass transoms and ventilating windows at each side of the door. It is possible that this intact natural ventillation system could be restored for use in a time of energy shortage.

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
__PREHISTORIC	__ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	__COMMUNITY PLANNING	__LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	__RELIGION
__1400-1499	__ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	__CONSERVATION	__LAW	__SCIENCE
__1500-1599	__AGRICULTURE	__ECONOMICS	__LITERATURE	__SCULPTURE
__1600-1699	X ARCHITECTURE	__EDUCATION	__MILITARY	__SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
__1700-1799	__ART	__ENGINEERING	__MUSIC	__THEATER
__1800-1899	__COMMERCE	__EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	__PHILOSOPHY	__TRANSPORTATION
X 1900-	__COMMUNICATIONS	__INDUSTRY	X POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	__OTHER (SPECIFY)
		__INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES Designed: 1914 Built: 1914-1916

BUILDER/ARCHITECT Oscar Wenderoth: Supervising Architect, James A. Wetmore: Acting Supervising Architect

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Idaho Falls Federal Office Building is a downtown landmark. In addition to being the town's first specially designed post office, the building is the best preserved Georgian Revival style structure in the city. The finely proportioned and detailed facades reflect a period of federal architecture in which buildings (in the case of Idaho Falls, the first U.S. government building in the town) were meant to evoke a spirit of stability and permanence.

During recent years many turn of the century buildings in the CBD have been razed, making the Federal Building one of the city's most important early 20th century structures. The building will attain increased significance as a vital part of the newly revitalized downtown business district.

Idaho Falls is located in southeast Idaho, in the heart of the fertile Snake River Valley. The city was founded in the early 1860's, as a safe river crossing between the Montana gold mines and Salt Lake City. Later, a toll bridge encouraged permanent growth as well as through-travel.

The original town was called Eagle Rock, after a riverside stone formation where eagles nested. In 1890, when Idaho was admitted to the Union, Eagle Rock changed its name to Idaho Falls (in tribute to nearby rapids). At that time the town's population was around 600 persons.

As the surrounding land was irrigated and cultivated, Idaho Falls continued to grow. By 1904, the town boasted a population of 1500. In 1911, Idaho Falls was designated the seat of the newly formed Bonneville County.

On June 25, 1910, Congress authorized $100,000 for acquisition of land and construction of a new post office in the city. A suitable site was

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

See attached sheet.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than one

UTM REFERENCES

	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
A	~~19~~ 13	4 1 5 9 9 9	4 8 1 6 0 2 0	B			
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Holms Sub-Division to Railroad Addition
Block #19
Lots 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE
John Kvapil Operational Planning Staff

ORGANIZATION
General Services Administration, 10PG

DATE

STREET & NUMBER
GSA Center

TELEPHONE
(206)833-6500, ext. 558

CITY OR TOWN
Auburn

STATE
Washington 98002

12 CERTIFICATION OF NOMINATION

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER RECOMMENDATION

YES X NO ___ NONE ___

Merle Wells
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 Michael T. Hurley 5/4/79

TITLE GSA HPO DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

Charles Atherington DATE 5.31.79

~~DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION~~ KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

ATTEST: W. Ray Luce DATE 5/30/79

for KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

GPO 899-214

found on the corner of Park Avenue and "C" Street in the town's rapidly growing Central Business District.

The 141' X 121' site within "Holmes Subdivision" was acquired from S.D. and Susie H. Evans (lots 13, 14 and 15) for $4,000, Idaho Falls Development Company (lots 17 and 18) for $1,500, and Frank K. and Minnie M. Hitt (lot 16) for $1,500. Minnie M. Hitt, the president of Anderson Bank and later First Security Bank, was a prominent and influential businessperson in the community.

The location of the future Federal Building was well situated with respect to the growing business district. Commercial buildings were spreading along Park Avenue, north of Broadway. The new post office would be the northern focus of the downtown.

The Idaho Register noted that "the location of the building on the corner of Park and "C" Streets can mean but one thing, and that has been seen for the past two years, which is, that the business growth is to be north of Broadway and along Park, Capital and Shoup Avenues, with the building-up of "A", "B", and "C" Streets into business centers...the completion and use of that building will have a tendency to more rapidly develop that section of the city and will help in the development of the city generally."[1]

By the time construction of the Federal Building began on August 28, 1914, several other projects for official buildings were already in progress. In November, 1913, construction had begun on the new Beaux Arts Revival style Bonneville County Courthouse at the corner of "C" Street and Capital Avenue, one block west of the Federal Building. At the same time, "C" Street sites were being considered for location of a new city hall (the City Hall was finally built in the 1930's at the corner of "C" Street and Shoup Avenue). Several blocks away, the Idaho Falls Carnegie Library had commenced in May, 1914.

Design and construction of the Federal Building was performed under the auspices of the Federal Works Branch of the Department of the Treasury. Working plans were finished and approved in April, 1914, by the Office of the Supervising Architect of the Treasury Department. Oscar Wenderoth was Supervising Architect at that time.

Oscar Wenderoth had trained in several architectural firms in his native Philadelphia before joining the Office of the Supervising Architect in 1897. After working ten years as a draftsman, he was promoted to Chief Draftsman. Five years later, in 1912, he became Supervising Architect. For the next 17 years he was responsible for design and construction of many government buildings, mainly post offices. Because of failing eyesight, he resigned his position in 1929.[2]

Much of the correspondence between the architect's office and the contractor was overseen by James A. Wetmore, Acting Supervising Architect. Born in Bath, New York, James Wetmore began work in Washington, DC, as a Court Stenographer, in the Treasury Department. He later became a member of the Architectural Department, and gradually worked his way up to Supervising Architect. He retired in the 1930's after a prolific career with the Federal Government; over two thousand buildings were designed in his office.[3]

Although all of the working drawings received the Supervising Architect's stamped signature (in the case of Idaho Falls, all sheets are stamped Oscar Wenderoth), it is difficult to determine the extent of the Supervising Architect's involvement in a project. As with any sizeable architectural office, it seems safe to assume that various specialists contributed to the design. Each sheet was initialed by superintendents of the structural, drafting and mechanical divisions of the office. All of the Idaho Falls sheets, including change order drawings sent to the contractor, were checked by P.R. Hooton, who was probably the job captain in charge of design and construction.

A sandstone cornerstone at the northeast corner of the building reads: "WILLIAM G. MCADOO, SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY, OSCAR WENDEROTH SUPERVISING ARCHITECT 1914."

On August 4, 1914, a contract for construction was awarded to Sound Construction and Engineering Company, of Seattle, Washington. Their low bid of $86,199.00 covered a substitution of fireproof terra cotta tile interior partitions for wood stud partitions and a sandstone entablature for a less durable terra cotta entablature. The deadline for completion of the project was set at December, 1915.

Construction began in August, 1914, and was to last 18 months. In October, 1914, trenches for concrete footings had been excavated into the site's sandy riverbottom soil. By December, the brick foundation walls in the basement were complete. Steel columns were erected during a snowy February and March. In April, blocks of Boise sandstone were stacked and masons were preparing the stone for laying exterior basement walls. During the summer, wooden scaffolds were erected around the perimeter of the building and the buff-colored brick exterior walls began to rise from the sandstone foundation. When exterior walls reached the second storey in August, 1915, pre-carved cornice stones were hoisted into place. Sandstone balustrades and coping were installed in September, completing the building's exterior.

During the next three months carpenters and cabinet makers were finishing the interior details of the ornate lobby, the post office workroom and the various federal offices.

The new postmaster E.P. Coltman (a former mayor of Idaho Falls) and his 26 employees moved into the building on March 10, 1916, vacating the town's first post office located in a commercial building at Capital Avenue and Broadway. On opening day, it was proclaimed that "it is doubtful if there is as handsome or well-equiped post office as the one in Idaho Falls or one installed in as handsome or more convenient building."[4]

Visitors passing through the ornate cast iron vestibule into the public lobby were astounded by the grand scale of the interior space. "Entering the lobby, one is impressed with the general effect, the massiveness of the whole affair, the air of permanency and stability, none of which, however, detracts in any way from the beauty or general effect."

Groin vaults, following the curvature of the three arched lobby windows, created true ellipses as they spanned the 15' high interior space. Edges of the vaults were stenciled with guilded, polychrome floral patterns. Pilasters, sheathed with colored marbles, served as the "columns" from which the vaults sprung. Three ornate brass light fixtures with opalescent globes were suspended from the centers of the vaults, lending a sense of "counterpoint" to the springing of the vaults.

Unfortunately, many of the rich interior details disappeared during the 1936 renovation. The arched ceiling and the marble cladding on pilasters were removed as the lobby was expanded to meet the needs of the growing city.

The present lobby does, however, preserve some of the original proportion and detailing. The white terrazzo floor still has its Alaska marble cross strips and pink Tennessee marble base. Wainscots beneath teller's windows are yellow Kasota marble from Minnesota. Particularly significant is the stairway curving up the north wall to the second floor. Treads and risers are white Alaska marble. Rails, newel and balusters are dark-stained mahogany. The balusters are turned and the newel is carved with an acanthus motif.

The early post office was the communications center of the community. Several times during the day, mail was brought in from the nearby Union Pacific Depot at the eastern terminus of "C" Street. The post office lobby became an informal meeting place where locals came to retrieve mail from private boxes or from the general delivery window. Mail was delivered to homes twice daily, in the morning and again in the evening. So intense was post office activity that during the first years of operation, the public lobby remained open 24 hours a day.

Ths Postal Savings System made the post office a minor banking institution. Patrons could deposit up to $500 by purchasing Postal Savings Certificates that earned a specific amount of interest redeemable at a fixed time. Postal Money Orders were another banklike post office function. Because personal checking accounts were not common in the early 20th century, Postal Money Orders became a popular means of transferring money.

Money transactions are reflected in the building layout. Enclosed catwalks and hidden corridors were installed throughout the building. From these "lookouts" the postal inspector could peer through peepholes down to employees in the post office workroom, lounge or restrooms. The inspector could secretly enter any of the lookouts by way of a trapdoor in the closet of his second floor office.

The money order department and the postmaster's office still have large safes made by the Victor Safe and Lock Co., Cincinatti, Ohio. The safes were used as depositories for stamps, savings certificates and money orders.

Due to lack of space, the main post office moved to a new building on the east side of the city in 1960. At that time the post office workroom was reduced in size and new offices for the Internal Revenue Service were created along the south wall of the first floor. In addition, offices for the USDA Market News were moved behind the old postmaster's office at the north end of the first floor.

Aside from the post office, perhaps the most important original tenant in the building was the U.S. Geological Survey Watermaster's office on the second floor. Irrigation was the chief reason for the rapid growth of agriculture in the arid but fertile region around Idaho Falls. The Watermaster was in charge of overseeing the distribution of irrigation water throughout the district. He estimated the flow of the Snake River and regulated irrigation rights on the basis of seasonal water supply. The Watermaster's office (which moved out of the FOB in 1976) continues to be of crucial importance to the vitality of the area's agricultural economy.

The FOB is still a prominent structure in downtown Idaho Falls. The building signals the end of the commercial part of the CBD and the beginning of the "Governmental Sector.". A block away to the west, at the western terminus of "C" Street, is the Beaux-Arts Revival style Bonneville County Courthouse. A block away to the east, at the corner of "C" Street and Shoup Avenue, is the late Neo-Classical Revival City Hall. The corinthian ordered columns of the City Hall colonnade can be seen from the front steps of the FOB. The Union Pacific Depot, which formerly stood at the eastern terminus of "C" Street completed the ring of governmental buildings around "C" Street (the depot was destroyed in the early 1970's).

A recently completed urban renewal program to revitalize the downtown has highlighted the importance of the FOB. A "mini park" at the corner of "B" Street and Park Avenue, adjacent to the FOB, will provide a shady resting place for downtown shoppers and strollers. The principal facade of the FOB will both provide a sense of visual closure to this new park and signal an end to the pedestrian sector of the CBD. The urban open space will in effect become a small downtown "square." The facade of the FOB will serve as an interestingly textured (both historically and physically) visual border to the park.

With the current attention paid to the rebirth of Idaho Falls' downtown, the Federal Office Building becomes an increasingly important landmark of the city's architectural and cultural history.

1. "Construction Work Commenced." The Idaho Register. August 28, 1914. P.1.

2. Drawings. Blueprint Copies of Original Drawings for U.S. Post Office, Idaho Falls, 1914. Office of the Supervising Architect, Treasury Department. Provided by GSA Center, Auburn, Washington.

3. GSA Public Buildings Service. Supplemental Report No. 2 to Community Plan for Idaho Falls, Idaho. GSA Center, Auburn, Washington. October 18, 1968.

4. "History of Bonneville County, Idaho." Idaho Encyclopedia.

5. Hopkins, Hannival Allen. Practical Points for Post Office Patrons. Saint Clair, Michigan: Hops Print Shop, 1914.

6. "Local People Recall Idaho Falls' Early Days as Eagle Rock." The Post Register, Idaho Falls. June 18, 1978. P. D-1.

7. "New Federal Building Ready for Use." The Idaho Register. March 10, 1916. P. 1.

8. Office of the Supervising Architect, United States Treasury Department. Specification for the Construction of the U.S. Post Office at Idaho Falls, Idaho. Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1914.

9. Photographs. Set of photographs taken during construction of the U.S. Post Office, Idaho Falls, Idaho. Dated: October, 1914 - April, 1916. Provided by GSA Center, Auburn, Washington.

10. Withey, Henry F. and Withey, Elsie Rathburn, eds. Biographical Dictionary of American Architects (Deceased). Los Angeles, California: Hennessey and Ingolls, 1970.

11. "Yesterday Brings About Today." Snake River Echoes. Vol. 4, No. 4, P. 66.

NAME	DESCRIPTION	DATE OF INTERVIEW
1. Bateman, Linden.	Idaho Falls Historian, State Representative.	June 24, 1978.
2. Keefer, Fred.	Idaho Falls Historian, Retired Sheriff.	June 22, 1978.
3. Keller, George.	Retired Postman, Idaho Falls Post Office.	June 21, 1978.
4. Marker, Joe.	Staff Writer, Historian for the Post Register, Idaho Falls.	June 21, 1978.

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U.S. Post Office #1 of 8

FEDERAL OFFICE BUILDING
IDAHO FALLS, IDAHO
FRONT AND SOUTH FACADES, LOOKING NORTH
FROM PARK AVENUE

MAR 28 1979
Bonneville Co.
MAY 31 1979

JOHN KVAPIL, OPERATIONAL PLANNING STAFF 6/78
GSA REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS, REGION 10
PHOTOGRAPH # 1 OF 8

FEDERAL · OFFICE · BUILDING
597

U.S. POST OFFICE

FEDERAL OFFICE BUILDING
IDAHO FALLS, IDAHO
MAIN ENTRY, LOOKING EAST FROM PARK AVENUE

MAR 28 1979

BONNEVILLE CO.

JOHN KVAPIL, OPERATIONAL PLANNING STAFF 6/78
GSA REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS, REGION 10
PHOTOGRAPH # 4 OF 8

MAY 31 1979

U.S. POST OFFICE

FEDERAL OFFICE BUILDING
IDAHO FALLS, IDAHO
REAR AND NORTH FACADES, LOOKING SOUTH
FROM "C" STREET

MAR 28 1979

BONNEVILLE CO.

MAY 31 1979

JOHN KVAPIL, OPERATIONAL PLANNING STAFF 6/78
GSA REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS, REGION 10
PHOTOGRAPH # 2 OF 8

POTATO POWER
HARRIS
PUBLISHING
INC.
Fashion
Hudson's
CAFE

U.S. Post Office

FEDERAL OFFICE BUILDING
IDAHO FALLS, IDAHO
FRONT FACADE FROM NEW "MINI PARK"
LOOKING NORTH FROM "B" STREET

MAR 28 1979

BONNEVILLE Co

MAY 31 1979

JOHN KVAPIL, OPERATIONAL PLANNING STAFF 6/78
GSA REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS, REGION 10
PHOTOGRAPH # 3 OF 8

U.S. Post OFFICE

FEDERAL OFFICE BUILDING
IDAHO FALLS, IDAHO
WINDOW GRILLE, FRONT FACADE,
LOOKING EAST FROM PARK AVENUE

BONNEVILLE CO.

MAR 28 1979

JOHN KVAPIL, OPERATIONAL PLANNING STAFF 6/78
GSA REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS, REGION 10
PHOTOGRAPH # 5 OF 8

MAY 31 1979

U.S. Post OFFICE

FEDERAL OFFICE BUILDING
IDAHO FALLS, IDAHO
SANDSTONE SRANDREL AT MAIN ENTRANCE
LOOKING EAST FROM PARK AVENUE Bonneville Co.

MAR 28 1979

JOHN KVAPIL, OPERATIONAL PLANNING STAFF 6/78
GSA REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS, REGION 10
PHOTOGRAPH # 6 OF 8

MAY 31 1979

STAMP COLLECTING
STAMP COLLECTING

U.S. POST OFFICE

Bonneville Co.

FEDERAL OFFICE BUILDING
IDAHO FALLS, IDAHO
PUBLIC LOBBY, FIRST FLOOR
LOOKING NORTH

MAR 28 1979

MAY 31 1979

JOHN KVAPIL, OPERATIONAL PLANNING STAFF 6/78
GSA REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS, REGION 10
PHOTOGRAPH # 7 OF 8

U.S. POST OFFICE

FEDERAL OFFICE BUILDING
IDAHO FALLS, IDAHO
STAIRWAY AT PUBLIC LOBBY,
LOOKING NORTH

BONNEVILLE CO.

MAR 28 1979

MAY 31 1979

JOHN KVAPIL, OPERATIONAL PLANNING STAFF 6/78
GSA REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS, REGION 10
PHOTOGRAPH # 8 OF 8