

0128

United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

JAN 30 1989

NATIONAL REGISTER

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Blackfoot Main Post Office
other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number 165 West Pacific
city, town Blackfoot
state Idaho code ID county Bingham code 011 zip code 83221

3. Classification

Ownership of Property: private, public-local, public-State, public-Federal
Category of Property: building(s), district, site, structure, object
Number of Resources within Property: Contributing (1), Noncontributing (0) buildings, sites, structures, objects, Total (1)

Name of related multiple property listing: Historic U.S. Post Offices in Idaho 1900-1941
Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. 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. See continuation sheet.
Signature of certifying official: [Signature] Date: 1-18-89
United States Postal Service
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.
Signature of commenting or other official: [Signature] Date: 12/14/88
Idaho State Historic Preservation Office
State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:
[checked] 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:)
Signature of the Keeper: Bruce J. Noble, Jr. Date of Action: 3/16/89

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number _____ Page _____

SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 89000128 Date Listed: 3/16/89

<u>Property Name</u>	<u>County</u>	<u>ID State</u>
US Post Office--Blackfoot Main	Bingham	

US Post Offices in Idaho 1900-1941 MPS
Multiple Name

This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.

Bruce J. Noble, Jr.
for Signature of the Keeper

3/16/89
Date of Action

=====
Amended Items in Nomination:

The period of significance defined for this property is 1900-1941. This period pre-dates the property's date of construction and also extends into the less-than-fifty-year-old range without addressing criterion exception G. To resolve this issue, this property will be listed with a period of significance defined as 1936-1939. Also, 1934 will not be entered as a significant date because this date corresponds with the acquisition of the site and pre-dates the construction of the property. These changes were discussed with Steven S. Stielstra of the United States Postal Service during a 3/14/89 telephone conversation.

DISTRIBUTION:

- National Register property file
- Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Art

Politics/Government

Period of Significance

1900-1941

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Dates

Site acq.-1934

Const.-1936

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Gilbert Stanley Underwood, Consult-

ing Architect/Federal Government

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

Outstanding in design execution and attention to detail, the Blackfoot MPO is a fine example of a small-town combined post office and federal office building. Among the best examples of an Art Deco-influenced building in Idaho, it is the only post office of this style in the state. The building's design quality, facade detailing, and lobby mural create a distinguishable architectural entity. The mural is one of six post office murals that were completed in Idaho under the public arts programs of the Depression. The building and mural are symbolic of the federal government's aid to small communities during a period of national economic emergency. Both also exemplify the link between the federal government and the community and the efforts of the community to obtain its first federally-constructed post office. Though the building received an addition in the 1970s, the integrity of the original building remains good.

ARCHITECTURE

The Blackfoot MPO, a small-town combined post office and federal office building, is the only example of Art Deco styling in a federally-constructed post office in the entire state. It is also among the best public buildings in the state in this style. Although the building has been altered by a rear addition, the integrity of the original building has not been significantly affected. Rigidly formal in its symmetry and massing (exemplifying the Classical form) and enriched by its fine brick and stone-work, the building is an imposing symbol of the federal government. The attention to detail by the architect, Gilbert Stanley Underwood, as exemplified by the vertical elements (the fluted brick pilasters, grooved copper spandrels, fluted limestone cornice) and the zigzag pattern (in the stone panel over the entry, carved

See continuation sheet

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1 Blackfoot MPO

the central portion is divided into five bays. Paired, flat pilasters delineate the corners of the central portion and single pilasters divide the bays. Brick corners aligned in vertical columns form "V" channels which provide a fluted appearance. Square capitals with single recessed panels in a low-relief stylized-foilage-form top the pilasters. This foliage motif and zigzag belt course impart an Art Deco flavor to the building's design.

Centered in the facade, the main entry consists of double aluminum-framed glass panel doors (single panel). (The original brass-framed doors have been replaced.) Above the doors is a carved stone panel (low-relief) depicting an eagle with outstretched wings (stylized Indian motif). The panel is carved Arkansas fossil marble, as is the zigzag belt course. Behind the carved panel is an eight-light metal sash transom window. Seven granite steps and landing, which stretch across the three center bays, provide access to the main entry. Square granite buttresses, upon which rest cast-iron lanterns, flank the entry stairs.

Hinged metal sash windows with fixed metal sash transom windows occupy four of the first floor bays. Ten lights are in each side of the hinged sections and eight lights are in the transom. Vertically-grooved copper spandrels divide the first- and second-story windows. The second-story windows are also hinged metal sash with eight lights in each section.

As mentioned, the corner wings are stepped down from the central salient and main building line to the rear. Other than the extension of the horizontal limestone and fossil marble courses and first-floor window bays, the wings are unadorned. Of fixed metal sash, the windows each contain ten lights.

The side facades (east and west) of the original building are identical. As with the front facade, a central salient projects slightly from flanking corner wings. Three bays, configured identically to those of the front facade except for the entry, divide the central section. The corner wings are also treated identically to the front facade. It might be noted that a metal fire escape has been added to the west facade with access through a solid metal door which has replaced the southern-most window of the second floor.

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 2 Blackfoot MPO

The rear addition is set back approximately ten feet from the original building and connected by a recessed wall which clearly defines the juncture of the two buildings. One-story in height, the east and west facades are identical. Concrete, with horizontal grooves to match the limestone courses of the original building, is used for the lower portion of the facade. The remainder of the wall is faced with buff-colored brick. A concrete belt course extends along the facade at the same level as the tops of the first floor windows. Brick, in a fluted pattern, forms the cornice which is capped by a concrete coping. An entry bay with an overhanging metal marquee occupies the juncture of the two buildings on the east side.

The rear facade consists of the single-story addition and the second story of the original building. The original building is "U"-shaped with projecting end wings. Removed during construction of the addition were the mezzanine and loading dock. The facade of the addition is treated similarly to those of the sides. Four truck-loading bays with overhead metal doors, and two pedestrian doors provide access to the dock area.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**Section number 8 Page 2 Blackfoot MPO

vide work-relief for artists. After the demise of the PWAP program in June 1934, the Treasury Relief Art Project (TRAP) was established in July 1935. The Section of Painting and Sculpture, later the Section of Fine Arts, was established in October of 1934 by the Treasury Department. This was the program primarily responsible for murals and sculpture found in post offices throughout the country. Commissions were awarded on the basis of anonymous competitions without reference to artists need. In July of 1939, after reorganization of the Executive Branch, the entire building program of the Treasury Department and the Section were transferred to the new Federal Works Agency. The Section of Fine Arts-Federal Works Agency operated the program until June of 1943 when the activities of WWII shifted priorities. It was under this program that the Blackfoot mural and post office murals in Buhl, Burley, Kellogg, Preston, and St. Anthony were completed.

The Section, which was administered in Washington, dealt directly with the artists, and selected artists through national and regional design competition. The Section sought the best decorative art that it could find for designated federal buildings. The intent of the program's administrators was that the work would reflect the themes and styles of the American scene, with a hope that it would strike a responsive chord in the general public. Although the program is attributed with having fostered an American Regionalism, art critics could never find a coherent body of work that was truly Regionalist or representative of particular sections of the country. The work that was created did, however, portray the American Scene in the form of localized subject matter. Further, the work resulting from the programs tended to pursue an inoffensive middle ground of style and content which was sometimes viewed as producing limp platitudes rather than strong statements. This resulted from the requirement for final approval from Washington as well as compliance with local preferences. The strife or dark side of the Depression was not portrayed, but instead the nostalgic and positive events of the American Scene were depicted.

POLITICS/GOVERNMENT

As the city's first federal building, and having been constructed during the Depression era, the building carries the symbolism of the federal government's assistance to small

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 1 Blackfoot MPO

belt course, and lobby detailing) has created a building of outstanding visual appeal. The building is significant on the state level under Criterion C.

The Blackfoot Post Office was designed by Gilbert Stanley Underwood. Educated at the Yale School of Architecture, Underwood acted as consulting architect for numerous federal construction projects. Prior to his move to Washington D.C. during the Depression, he had worked in Los Angeles. The Union Pacific Railroad was one of his major clients (including Sun Valley). As consulting architect for the Public Buildings Administration his design projects included the San Francisco Mint, Los Angeles Federal Building, Seattle Federal Court House, and numerous post offices throughout the nation.

ART

Like the building which houses it, the Blackfoot mural--"The Arrival Celebration"--represents the efforts of the Federal government, through its public works and arts programs, to assist communities during a period of economic emergency, and is thus locally significant under Criterion A. It is also significant under Criterion C as an integral part of a building that represents a significant type, period, and style of artistic expression.

The mural was completed in 1939 by Anthony Standing Soldier for \$2,000. The 5-panel mural covers a major portion of the lobby walls. Executed on canvas attached to the wall, an egg emulsion with color pigment added was used instead of oil paint. Clear starch was used as a protective coating.

No information about the artist is available in the standard biographies. An article in the Idaho State Journal (Pocatello) entitled "Murals of Indian Life Makes Blackfoot Post Office Unique" (Jan. 3, 1980, p.B6), however, reported that Andrew Standing Soldier was a young Souix Indian artist from Pine Ridge, South Dakota.

The mural was completed under the auspices of the Federal Works Agency Section of Fine Arts. Federal sponsorship of visual arts programs began in 1933 when President Roosevelt authorized the development of the Public Works of Art Project (PWAP). This and subsequent programs were intended to pro-

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 7 Blackfoot MPO

streamers; the Chamber of Commerce had been busy for three weeks with the dedication preparations. On December 5th the paper published a special "Progress Edition" in honor of the occasion, described as "an epoch in the history of this community." The town was "mighty proud" of the new structure, a "long step in progress" which "embodies [the] hopes and ambitions of the community."

"Hope Of Half A Century Becomes Reality Today" reported the Bulletin on December 7th. The building had been dedicated that day as planned, with a "huge throng" inspecting the building at the conclusion of the "celebration."

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 6 Blackfoot MPO

On March 29th, 1935 the Bulletin published an A.P. dispatch stating that the Treasury Department had awarded the contract to J. O. Jordan and Sons of Boise. An editorial of April 12th stated that "This looks like a big year for Blackfoot!," referring to new building projects, including the federal building, in Blackfoot. On April 17th the Bulletin reported "Work Starts on U.S. Building Next Monday"; "Monday is to be a day that has been long and patiently awaited by the people of Blackfoot." Construction was to be a reality "after years of falsely raised hopes and much tedious argument over a suitable site." The cost was to be \$82,000 with local labor used primarily. "The plans and specifications indicate that it will undoubtedly be one of the most beautiful buildings in Blackfoot ... to see that work is actually beginning on the federal building is expected to lead a strong boost to the feeling that Blackfoot is going to make rapid strides forward in the near future."

On June 14th it was reported that construction was being delayed; the concrete for the first floor had been poured but deliveries of stone and brick were needed. It was noted that as many as 30 men had been working on construction at one time, all local men except for two or three supervisors.

"New Postoffice Gem of Beauty, Plans Disclose" wrote the Bulletin on July 8th. Work was progressing; the contract required that the building be ready for occupancy by December 15th. The paper described some of the building's details--the eagle and frieze of Indian patterns carved from Arkansas fossil marble, the brickwork, the concrete foundations with elithic Indiana limestone--and stated "the Federal building being erected at Blackfoot has only one other in the west that is of the same class as to excellence of materials and architectural designs. Hollywood was favored with one like it in that respect...." The Bulletin concluded by stating that the post office workers would have "a complete new setup that the state should be proud of."

On November 25th the paper announced that the dedication of the new post office was scheduled for December 7th, with an elaborate ceremony and banquet being planned to celebrate the occasion. Articles of December 3rd and 4th revealed that the new post office (Blackfoot's "latest and most beautiful public building") and other city sights would be "dressed up" in "gala holiday dress" with spotlights and colored

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 5 Blackfoot MPO

an example of the disaster which can come with continued unpreparedness or disinterest in the future." The county had "come to a full realization of her greatness and supremacy. She is building well for the future...."

"Blackfoot Allotted \$145,000 For Postoffice In New Public Works Program Being Planned" reported the Bulletin on June 6th. Idaho was to get five post-office buildings that had "long been on" the public works building program: St. Anthony, \$74,000; Blackfoot, \$145,000; Burley \$77,000; Payette, \$71,000; and Wallace, \$101,000. An editorial that day stated: "If we really want the post office now is the time to say so. If we get into another squabble about sites, we'll find this coveted site slipping away from us. The matter of site should be a dead issue. The question to be settled is one for the best interests of the town. So in the final analysis, the question is up to all of us."

An article of June 27th reported that Blackfoot's \$145,000 had been appropriated by "the \$65,000,000 emergency construction fund authorized by the deficiency act." On July 9th bids were requested for the post office site, to be opened in Blackfoot on July 19th. Bids ranging from \$6,000 to \$19,000 were submitted (July 19th article); on August 1st it was announced that the post office site inspector would be arriving the next day. The site at the corner of Ash and Pacific streets, consisting of six lots owned by J. A. Stewart and costing \$6,500, was selected (September 10th article).

A banner headline of December 27th declared "Government Asks Bid For Blackfoot's New Postoffice." The Bulletin stated that this was "the best news that has been here for some time" and that "Blackfoot has been led to believe many times that she was about to have a new post-office, but the many delays in completion of the negotiations which have occurred had discouraged many people to the point of disbelief that any such project would ever be completed." The paper noted that the site was now comprised of vacant lots and that the building would "be an imposing addition to the Blackfoot business district." Since recent commercial expansion in Blackfoot had been along Broadway it was also observed that "the placing of this important institution on Pacific street may inaugurate a trend of building toward the west."

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 4 Blackfoot MPO

On the northeast corner of N. Ash Street and W. Pacific Street and occupying the western half of the block, the Blackfoot MPO is in the city's central business district. East of the Post Office, across the alley, are the R.G. Bills Building (two story, red brick, 1920), public library (one story, red brick, WPA, 1941), city hall (one story, red brick), and Nuart Theater (circa 1930, Art Deco). Across Ash Street to the west are the Elks Lodge (two story, red brick, circa 1910) and Latter Day Saints Church (red brick, 1928-33). A parking lot and grocery store (one story, concrete block) are kitty-cornered from the Post Office. A gravel parking lot is across Pacific south of the Post Office. Across the alley, east of the parking lot is the Pilmore Hotel Building (three story, red brick, circa 1910). All of these buildings except the library, city hall, and grocery store are good examples of local period architecture.

LOCAL NEWSPAPER COVERAGE OF THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE BLACKFOOT MAIN POST OFFICE

"Does This Defer Action On Local Post Office Site?" asked Blackfoot's The Daily Bulletin on August 17th, 1933. The paper reported that Secretary of the Interior Harold Ickes had objected to a \$160,000 post office being erected in his hometown, stating "We could use that much money in Winnetka, but not for that," and that he had the plans for proposed post offices "put aside" for further study.

Daily Bulletin articles of the time noted the importance of agriculture to the area: "Sugar beets do not glitter, but they're gold in Bingham County" (November 22nd) and "Bingham county leads Idaho in the production and value of all vegetables" (November 27th). Other articles reported on government projects in the area: Bingham County was allotted \$120,000 in the new civil works program to employ 175 men on road projects (November 23rd) and 30 CWA workers were improving the school and cemetery grounds (December 14th). In early 1934 other CWA projects involved the grading of West Center Street and the employment of women to repair garments (articles of January 9th and January 31st, 1934).

On February 27th, 1934 the Daily Bulletin published an editorial titled "A Tribute To Bingham County's Progress," stating "Bingham County has not been content with merely overcoming the depression. Rather her people have used it as

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**Section number 8 Page 3 Blackfoot MPO

communities through its public buildings programs. The building represents the success of the local citizens and their elected officials in Washington in the procurement of a Federal building for their city. Locally, the construction of the post office was a major civic event and viewed as a major accomplishment in the city's development. As the local paper--which diligently reported news of the building throughout its evolution--wrote when the post office was dedicated, Blackfoot was "mighty proud" of the new building, which was a "long step in progress" that "embodies [the] hopes and ambitions of the community."

LOCAL CONTEXT

Blackfoot is the county seat of Bingham County in southeastern Idaho. Agriculture, dairying, food processing, and retail trade provide the base for the local economy. In 1980 Blackfoot's population was 10,065.

The first permanent settlers of Bingham County settled near present-day Blackfoot in the mid-1860s and began successful farming communities. Among the first pioneers were the Stevens, White, Higham, Thompson, and Garrett families. Blackfoot, established in 1878, was first laid out as a rail switch to accommodate the transfer of supplies and equipment to freight wagons bound for the mines of central Idaho. The same year the area's first post office was established, under the name "Central Ferry," with Theodore T. Danilson as postmaster. (The name of the office was changed to Blackfoot in 1879.) The railroad arrived in 1880 and, as a terminal, Blackfoot became a prosperous and populous community. The first newspaper in eastern Idaho was established in Blackfoot in 1880. The town was designated seat of the newly created Bingham County in 1885. By 1890 Blackfoot had a population of 1,174; from 1900 to 1910 it grew from 1,330 to 2,202.

As freighting decreased, agriculture (primarily Idaho's "famous potatoes") became, and still is, the area's most important industry. Irrigated and dry farms, dairying, and related industries also established Blackfoot as an important regional trade center. By 1920 Blackfoot's population was 3,937. It dropped to 3,199 in 1930 before climbing to 3,681 in 1940 and 5,180 in 1950. Blackfoot's growth since then has continued to be steady: between 1960 and 1970 its population grew from 7,378 to 8,716; in 1980 its population was 10,065.

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

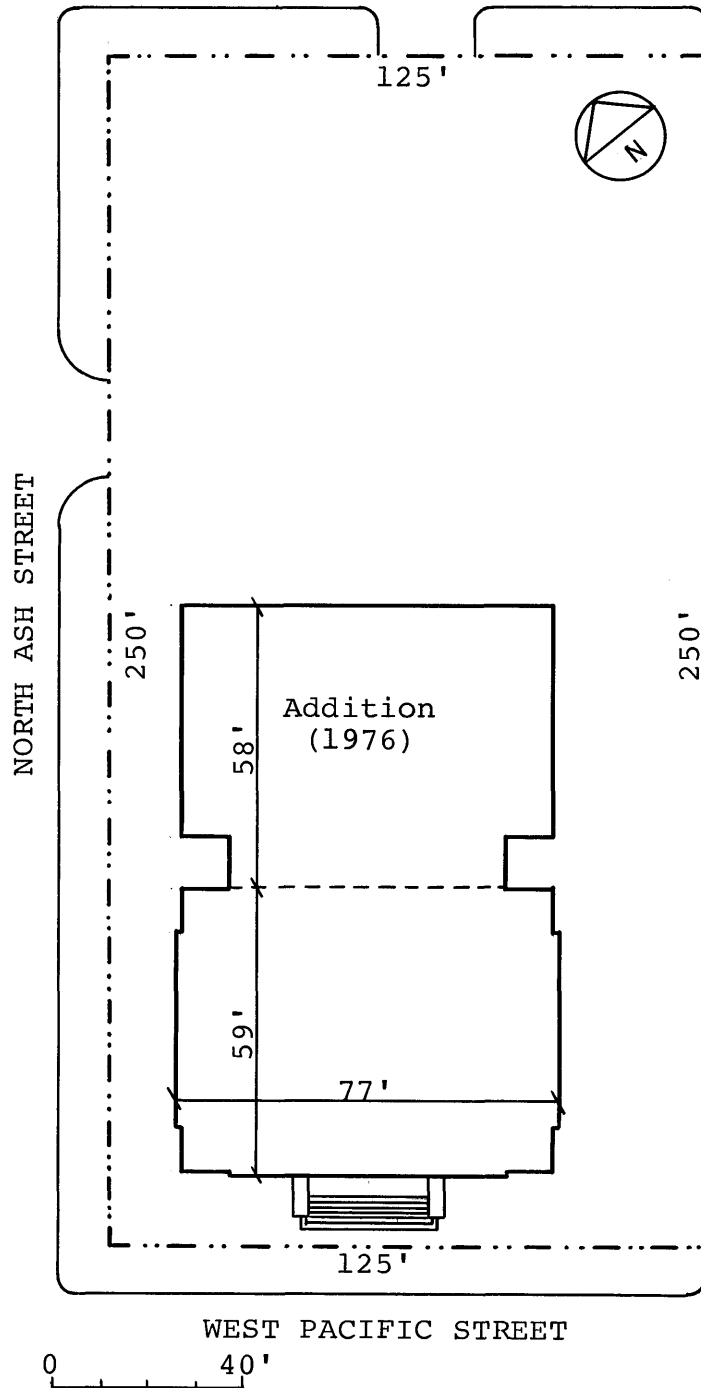
**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

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Continuation sheet BLACKFOOT MPO

Item number 10

Page 1



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number Photos Page 1 Blackfoot MPO

The following information is the same for all the
photographs listed:

1. Blackfoot MPO
2. Blackfoot, Idaho
3. Jim Kolva
4. August 1986
5. Negatives on file at USPS Facilities Service Center,
San Bruno, CA.

Photo No. 1 (negative #3A-4)

6. View to east

Photo No. 2 (negative #1A-2)

6. View to northeast

Photo No. 3 (negative #2A-3)

6. View to north

Photo No. 4 (negative #6-6A)

6. Lobby mural



UNITED STATES POST OFFICE
BLACKFOOT, IDAHO
1937

USPS - IDAHO

BLACKFOOT MPO

PHOTO NO. 1



UNITED STATES POST OFFICE BLACKFOOT IDAHO
UNITED STATES POST OFFICE BLACKFOOT IDAHO
1937

USPS - IDAHO

BLACKFOOT MPO

PHOTO NO. 2



UNITED STATES POST OFFICE BLACKFOOT IDAHO
UNITED STATES POST 1933
BLACKFOOT IDAHO

PRIVATE
PARKING

USPS - IDAHO

BLACKFOOT MPO

PHOTO NO. 3



USPS - IDAHO

BLACKFOOT MPO

PHOTO NO. 4