

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 APR 17 1987
DATE ENTERED MAY 19 1987

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

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Basin Main Post Office

AND/OR COMMON

Basin Main Post Office

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

402 West C. Street

NA NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Basin

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

NA VICINITY OF

NA

STATE

Wyoming

CODE

056

COUNTY

Big Horn

CODE

003

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

- DISTRICT
- BUILDING(S)
- STRUCTURE
- SITE
- OBJECT
- Thematic Group

OWNERSHIP

- PUBLIC
- PRIVATE
- BOTH
- PUBLIC ACQUISITION**
- IN PROCESS
- BEING CONSIDERED
- NA

STATUS

- OCCUPIED
- UNOCCUPIED
- WORK IN PROGRESS
- ACCESSIBLE**
- YES: RESTRICTED
- YES: UNRESTRICTED
- NO

PRESENT USE

- AGRICULTURE
- MUSEUM
- COMMERCIAL
- PARK
- EDUCATIONAL
- PRIVATE RESIDENCE
- ENTERTAINMENT
- RELIGIOUS
- GOVERNMENT
- SCIENTIFIC
- INDUSTRIAL
- TRANSPORTATION
- MILITARY
- OTHER:

4 AGENCY

REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS: (if applicable)

United States Postal Service, Western Regional Headquarters

STREET & NUMBER

850 Cherry Avenue

CITY, TOWN

San Bruno

NA VICINITY OF

STATE

CA 94099

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Big Horn County Assessor's Office

STREET & NUMBER

PO Box 109

CITY, TOWN

Basin

STATE

Wyoming

82410

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

None

DATE

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE <u>NA</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Basin MPO is a one story, buff-colored brick building on a raised basement. Neo-Classical in design, the five-bayed front facade is symmetrically arranged around the main entry which occupies a slightly projecting central salient. The single entry door is framed by reeded flat pilasters which support a wooden entablature and semicircular-arched window. Single, small wooden sash windows (4-over-4), over which are placed roundel insets, flank either side of the entry bay (flat-arched). The side wings each contain single, large wooden sash windows (12-over-12) framed with flat arches. A rectangular panel is inset above each window. A plain frieze, dentils and slightly projecting cornice terminate the facade wall. The building is topped by a hipped red tile shingle roof. The building is unaltered with the exception of removal of the original multi-paned glass-enclosed main entry portico.

PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The basement is constructed of reinforced concrete. Structural steel frames the main floor which is faced with buff-colored brick. The roof is hipped with a flat top. Red glazed tile shingles cover the hipped portion with built-up tar composition on the flat portion. Brick is also used to face the exposed basement wall. Cast concrete is used for facade detailing and the entry stairs.

The front facade (south) is symmetrical and vertically emphasized in elevation. The facade is relatively flat with the central section articulated by slightly projecting it from the flanking wings. The central section contains a centered entry bay and single windows flanking each side of the entry. The wings each contain single window bays (centered) that are larger in size than the windows immediately flanking the entry bay. Buff-colored brick faces the basement wall from grade to a cast concrete water table course. A vertically aligned brick stretcher course rests atop

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD		AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)	
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION			

SPECIFIC DATES	Site Acquisition	1913	BUILDER/ARCHITECT	Federal Government/James A. Wetmore, OSA
	Building Completed	1919		

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Basin Post Office is a well-preserved example of Neo-Classical design and, except for the removal of the original entry portico, is unaltered. Although the building is small and relatively simple in design, it manifests a character of stateliness in its classic proportions and crisp facade detailing. The articulation of the central entry section and detailing of the arched central bay further reinforce this character. The building's floor plan, with its centrally located square lobby, is only one of two such examples of this layout in the west. The square upon which the building is sited was planned by the community as its civic core and also contains the Basin County Courthouse (1918) and City Library that replaced the original Carnegie Library on the same site. Finally, the building was the city's first and only federally constructed post office and, as such, was a major civic event. Construction of the post office took place during the city's most significant period of growth and is the legacy of an era from which expectations of future growth were never realized.

ARCHITECTURE

The building is an excellent example of a small single-purpose post office in the Neo-Classical design mode. Although relatively simple in design, the front facade is crisply-articulated with its slightly projecting central salient and Classical semicircular-arched entry bay. The proportions are well-balanced, but with emphasis toward vertical massing rather than the horizontal typical of smaller single-story federal buildings. The square, centrally located public lobby, around which are arranged the offices and post office boxes, is a rare example of this particular floor plan. The unique design treatment of the facade and floor plan contribute to the building's statewide significance under Criterion C.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

1. "Basin, Wyoming", Chamber of Commerce Brochure, 1920.
2. "Big Horn's Progressive Towns", The Midwest Review, Vol. VII, No.2, February 1926, pp 13-19.
3. Big Horn County Rustler, various articles 1917-1919.
4. Basin Republican, various articles 1919, 1920.
5. Construction Progress Photos - May 1918-January 1919.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 0.23

UTM REFERENCES

A	12	713,519,00	4,911,812,9,0	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Lot 51, Township 51 North, Range 93 west 150 x 140 feet, in the SE corner of Court House Square in the town of Basin, Wyoming.

The site is rectangular with 150 feet of frontage along "C" street and a depth of 140 feet with frontage along Fourth Street.

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
NA	NA	NA	NA
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
NA	NA	NA	NA

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

H. J. "Jim" Kolva, Senior Associate

ORGANIZATION

Institute for Urban & Local Studies

STREET & NUMBER

W. 705 1st Avenue

CITY OR TOWN

Spokane

DATE

April 1986

TELEPHONE

(509) 458-6219

STATE

WA

99204

12 CERTIFICATION OF NOMINATION

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER RECOMMENDATION

YES _____ NO _____ NONE _____

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

In compliance with Executive Order 11593, I hereby nominate this property to the National Register, certifying that the State Historic Preservation Officer has been allowed 90 days in which to present the nomination to the State Review Board and to evaluate its significance. The evaluated level of significance is National State Local.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE *John S. ...*

DATE

2-9-87

TITLE
Realty Acquisition Specialist, Principal

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

DATE

MAY 19 1987

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

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the water table. The remainder of the main facade is continued with buff-colored brick. A brick header course completes the brickwork.

The facade wall is terminated by a simple wooden frieze and slightly projecting cornice (with dentils beneath). Painted metal flashing caps the low parapet above the cornice. The tile-clad hipped roof (truncated) rises from behind the parapet.

The entry bay is approached by six concrete steps which are flanked by square brick buttresses capped by cast concrete. Free-standing cast iron lanterns rest atop the buttresses. The entry consists of a single, paneled wooden door with nine lights. A horizontally aligned 5-light transom window rests atop the molded wooden door head. The door is framed with reeded flat pilasters which support a wooden entablature and semicircular arch. Low relief triglyphs and rosettes embellish the frieze and arch. The cornice is molded and projects slightly. A 5-light fan window is located within the arch. Definition is provided to the arch by the slight recession of the field and use of a brick header course around the outside frame. (A construction photo of the building at completion shows a multi-paned glass entry portico in front of the entry. The date of removal could not be documented.)

The single window bays flanking each side of the entry bay are centered between the bay and the edge of the wall. Flat arches of vertically-aligned brick stretchers top the windows. The sash is double-hung wood with 4-over-4 lights. Cast concrete (painted) roundels are inset over the window bays. The larger window bays of the flanking wings are also topped with vertically aligned brick stretchers in a flat arch. A molded wooden panel is located beneath the windows. The sash

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consists of double-hung wood with 12-over-12 lights. Rectangular cast concrete panels equal in width to the window openings are inset above the window bays.

The side facades are identical. They are flat and divided into four equally spaced window bays. With the exception of the window of the northwest corner, the window bays and sash are treated identically to those of the flanking wings of the front facade. The differing window consists of an upper and lower panel each divided into 6-light and wood paneled sections. Aluminum air vents are located in the wooden paneled sections.

The rear facade is flat with a centered loading platform, flanked by two window bays on the east side, and a single window bay on the west side. The platform is enclosed with vertical wood siding and topped with a flat roof. Double aluminum-framed glass doors with a single-light transom window overhead provide access. The platform and access stairs are concrete. The window bays are identical to those of the sides except that the decorative roundels are deleted.

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COMMUNITY PLANNING

The building occupies the southeastern corner of the city's Court House Square which was planned to site the major civic buildings of the community. The opposite corner of the square (southwest corner) is occupied by the city library which replaced the original Carnegie Library. These buildings flank the Neo-Classical Basin County Courthouse which occupies the center of the square. Both buildings preceded the post office, and the specific siting of the post office was readjusted from the original plan in order to balance the arrangement of the square. Thus, the city now has a beautiful civic square which symbolizes the community's era of development. As such, the building is locally significant under Criterion A.

POLITICS AND GOVERNMENT

The success of Basin in getting a federal building was a reinforcement to the city's faith in its future growth and development, particularly as given recognition by the federal government. In spite of the community's small size (population of around 1,000 at the time of construction) it had received its federal building. The building now stands as a historic marker of the city's most significant growth period. The securing of appropriations for the building involved the efforts of the Basin Chamber of Commerce and of the Wyoming congressional delegation. The coordination of the building's siting within Court House Square by local groups, the contractor, and the federal government culminated in the completion of the civic core. In this context, the building is locally significant under Criterion A.

LOCAL CONTEXT

Basin, which now has a population of approximately 1,200, is the county seat of Big Horn County in northcentral Wyoming. The town supports governmental

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offices and a small retail core. Agriculture and mining provide the base for the local economy.

Basin City was founded in 1896 by W.S. Collins. On September 30th of that year, the first Post Office was established with Charles F. Judkins as postmaster. In the following year, Basin City was declared the county seat of the newly formed Big Horn County. The city began as a few scattered log houses among the sagebrush and developed, according to an early description, into one of the most "beautiful home-like towns in the state". The town was incorporated as Basin in 1903. The entry of the C.B. & O. Railroad in 1909 stimulated limited growth, but the refusal of local townspeople to donate land for a division point led to the creation of Greybull (eight miles north) as the terminal point. As a consequence, the town's development was curtailed.

The population in 1910 was 763 and increased to 1,088 in 1920. The period from 1910 to 1920 was probably Basin's most significant developmental period. The county courthouse, Carnegie Library (replaced by a modern structure on the same site), Fraternity Hall, Pioneer Block, and other buildings within the downtown core as well as the Post Office were constructed during this period. Wood production, agricultural crops, and oil exploration contributed to the local economy. The great expectations of the late 1910s failed to materialize and the city lost population through the 1920s. The population in 1930 declined to 903, then rose slightly to 1,099 in 1940. Since that time, the population has leveled at approximately 1,200 with a peak in 1960 of 1,319.

The Basin Post Office is located on the northwest corner of the intersection of C and 4th streets. The Post Office is located in the courthouse square which was planned as the civic center of the community. The square houses the Big Horn County Courthouse (1917), the city library, and a city park. The two-story sandstone block Eagles hall is located diagonally

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across from the Post Office at the southeast corner of the C/4th streets intersection. The main business block, (1900 to 1920) consisting of one to three-story brick and stone buildings, is located south of the Eagle building.

Commercial uses are located across C Street to the south of the Post Office. The buildings are brick and stucco and most are from the same era as the Post Office. A single-story frame building (sided with asbestos shingles) housing the local Girl Scout troop is located adjacent to the rear of the Post Office. Tennis courts are located to its north. Across 4th Street to the east are single-story commercial buildings (non descript) separated by the surface parking lots.

LOCAL NEWS COVERAGE OF THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE BASIN MAIN POST OFFICE

The Big Horn County Rustler proclaimed on January 5 that "1917 promises to be great year". 1916 had been the best year in the history of Basin with more construction than had occurred in the past seven years, the expansion in oil exploration, and over \$1 million deposited in Basin banks. The citizens of Basin were also optimistic that the big increase in the amount of mail at the post office and its change to a second class rating would put Basin in a position of getting a new building. On March 23rd, 1917, the Big Horn County Rustler reported that the \$53,000 contract for the new county courthouse had been let. Work would begin immediately.

Plans for a new post office were drawn and, according to an article of May 18th, the Basin Chamber of Commerce voted to accept them. These plans had already been approved by the Postmaster General and the Secretary of the Treasury. Now the Chamber was urging the Wyoming congressional delegation to secure funding for the building and have construction commence immediately.

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On June 29th an article reported that Postmaster A.W. Coons had received instruction to remove the bell tower from the federal building site so that construction of the federal building could begin. The site had been deeded to the government by the Big Horn Company. The Big Horn County Rustler published that bids for construction of the post office were being accepted in October of 1917. The bids were opened on November 22nd and on November 30th it was announced that of the five contractors submitting bids, W.D. Lovell of Minneapolis, had been selected. Lovell had bid \$35,700 using wood columns and \$36,500 using steel columns. The choice was made to build the post office with steel columns.

An article of January 4, 1918 reported that the post office contractor, W.D. Lovell, had recommended that the location of the post office be shifted slightly. It was his opinion that this would help beautify the civic center. On February 1st, the Big Horn County Rustler reported that the location of the post office would be moved 25 feet north and 15 feet west to place the buildings in symmetry with the library and the county courthouse. It was also decided that the brick should be changed to a buff color.

Excavation for the building commenced on April 11, 1918 (April 12th article). An article of July 19th reported that five bricklayers were pushing ahead on the walls and on August 9th it was reported that the building would be completed by December 1st. However, on November 29th the Big Horn County Rustler reported that a delay in the millwork and furniture arrival would preclude the immediate opening of the building.

Although no local newspaper accounts reported the opening of the new Basin Post Office, construction documents indicate it was opened for business in January of 1919.

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