

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations 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 Minden United States Post Office
other names/site number KN04-007

2. Location

street & number 410 North Minden Street N/A not for publication
city, town Minden N/A vicinity
state Nebraska code NE county Kearney code 099 zip code 68595

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
		Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<u>1</u>	<u> </u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u> </u>	<u> </u> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u> </u>	<u> </u> structures
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u>3</u>	<u> </u> objects
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>4</u>	<u> </u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing:
Nebraska Post Offices Which Contain
Section Artwork (1938-1942)

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 Date
Director, Nebraska State Historical Society
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 Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register.
 See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register. See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)
Government/Post Office

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)
Government/Post Office

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(enter categories from instructions)

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete

walls Brick

roof Other: tar & gravel

other Limestone

Moderne

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Minden United States Post Office is located at the corner of Minden Avenue and 4th Streets in Minden, the Kearney county seat in south central Nebraska (1990 population: 2,749). The one-story buff colored brick and limestone Modernistic style building, constructed in 1936-1937, is an excellent example of a Class C or D post office built from standardized plans developed in the 1930's. The nomination also includes three contributing objects: two ornamental lamp posts located on either side of the main entry, and a flag pole.

The post office is a five-bay symmetrical building which measures 64 by 74 feet. The raised central entry with transom and flanking window units of multi-paned sash are framed with limestone trim. The two outside units of 6-over-6 paned double hung windows are also framed with limestone trim and show airplane propellers carved in the stonework over the windows. Similar fenestration is found on the east and west facades. Stone trim is also used in the beltcourse and coping. The words: "United States Post Office" in large aluminum letters are anchored to the brick above the main entrance. "Minden, Nebraska" in bronze letters and a decorative aluminum American eagle are located directly above the entry. The flat roof has a composition tar and gravel surface. The building exhibits good integrity; modifications include replacement of the front entry doors and minor interior alterations. Construction of the post office began in July, 1936, and the completed building was dedicated in May, 1937 (The Minden Courier, May 27, 1937).

A mural entitled "1848--Fort Kearney, Protectorate on the Overland Trail--1871" is located on the south lobby wall above the postmaster's door which is flanked by wooden glass enclosed bulletin boards. The mural, which measures approximately 13 feet by 6 feet, occupies the typical space for murals commissioned by the Treasury Department's Section of Fine Arts program for a small Class C or D post office. The Minden commission was awarded to Iowa artist William E. L. Bunn in August, 1937, and the completed mural was installed by the artist in January, 1939 (The Minden Courier, Jan. 12, 1939).

Painted in predominantly blue-green and white tones offset by a full range of colors in various details, the mural represents the artist's recreation of Fort Kearney, based on extensive historical research. Delineated in precise, sharp lines and forms reminiscent of Grant Wood's

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artistic style, the mural depicts the approximately 20 buildings associated with the fort. The precise geometric shapes of the white military buildings surround a parade ground which is located slightly off-center. In the foreground five linear rows of pioneers, wagons, and animals symbolize the history of transportation and westward migration associated with the Fort. The five rows depict hundreds of highly detailed figures and wagons: pioneers, cowboys, freighters, soldiers, and Mormons with handcarts. The wagons include conestogas, prairie schooners, Studebakers, stagecoaches, and carts, one with the words, "Pike's Peak or Bust" painted on its side.

Beyond the precise shapes of fort buildings, the vivid blue-green landscape simply fades into the horizon. The lack of additional elements in the background conveys a dream-like quality and a sense of vast space. At the time the mural was painted, Fort Kearney was a site with depressions where buildings had been and enormous cottonwood trees planted by the soldiers. Bunn acknowledged that his scene was an artistic recreation when he stated that, "at some time in its history, all of the buildings pictured were a part of the fort" (The Minden Courier, Jan. 12, 1939).

The lobby interior is in excellent condition and retains its original ceramic tile floor, wainscotting, and woodwork. Sometime after the mural was installed the original light fixtures were replaced. Currently, the lobby has enclosed, fluorescent lights flush to the ceiling. A varnished wooden vestibule projects into the lobby, an original design feature typical of small class C or D post offices built from standardized plans in the 1930's. In 1981 the mural was cleaned and restored by an art conservator under contract with the United States Postal Service; it is in excellent condition.

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)

Art
Politics/Government

Period of Significance

1939

Significant Dates

1939

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Bunn, William E. L.: Artist
Simon, Louis: Supervising Architect
Busboom & Rauh: Contractor

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

The Minden United States Post Office is being nominated to the National Register as part of the Nebraska Post Offices Which Contain Section Artwork (1938-1942) multiple property nomination at the state level of significance under Criterion A for its association with the United States Treasury Department's Section of Fine Arts program (1934-1943) and under Criterion C for the artistic significance of the mural it contains. The mural entitled "1848--Fort Kearney, Protectorate on the Overland Trail--1871" is located on the south lobby wall directly above the postmaster's door in the typical space for Section artwork installed in Class C or D post offices. The mural is an excellent example of artwork commissioned for new post offices through the Treasury Department's Section of Fine Arts program from 1934-1943. Painted in predominantly blue-green and white tones, the mural depicts the artist's recreation of Fort Kearney with precisely delineated buildings and people, animals, and wagons in a linear fashion that symbolize transportation and westward migration associated with the Fort. The mural's historical theme associated with the frontier era and westward migration, painted in a realistic style reminiscent of Grant Wood, make it an excellent example of government-sponsored Regionalism.

In July, 1937, Iowa artist William E. L. Bunn received a notice from the Section of Fine Arts inviting him to submit designs for the Minden, Nebraska, mural on the basis of previously submitted designs. The letter cited the commission amount, \$630, and payment schedule: one-third after preliminary sketches were approved; one-third upon approval of a full-size cartoon; and the remainder when the completed mural was installed and photographed. The letter included building blueprints with dimensions of the mural space. The Section advised the artist to visit the post office to develop a subject appropriate to the building or the Minden area. Bunn immediately accepted the commission and informed Superintendent Rowan of his plans to visit Minden to develop preliminary sketches.

In the fall of 1937 Bunn visited Minden and began historical research. In November, he reported to the Section that he had corresponded with

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several historians to develop an appropriate theme. A month later he submitted preliminary sketches of a "military post on the overland trail". He noted that Fort Kearney would provide a theme "vital to the community" given their pride and interest in developing the site into a park. The Section approved his design and complimented him on its "sense of great space."

In January, 1938, Bunn submitted the required color sketch to the Section who criticized his "dull" color scheme and overall composition. In May, Bunn submitted a revised color sketch and informed the Section that he was willing to try again if the design was still unsatisfactory. The Section, however, approved his work and authorized him to proceed with the full-size cartoon. The revised color sketch was selected for inclusion in an Iowa State Fair exhibit of Section work by Iowa artists, and was also exhibited at the University of Iowa. In the meantime, Bunn wrote to ask for a 50-day extension to his original contract; he explained that several historians had found inaccuracies in the design which he wished to correct. Bunn received the extension and an additional one in November but was informed that the mural should be completed after the first of the year. On January 3-4, 1939, Bunn installed the mural and spoke to interested locals who watched and to the Minden Rotary Club. The postmaster reported that the mural "went over very big" and had "revived" interest in the Fort.

A native of Iowa, William Bunn received a B.A. in graphic design at the University of Iowa. While completing his M.A. from the same institution, he served as a graduate assistant in Dramatic Arts and studied mural design under Grant Wood. Bunn also received Section commissions for post office murals in Dubuque and Hamburg, Iowa, and in Kentucky. During the 1930's and 1940's, his work was exhibited at art galleries throughout the country. In 1946 he became Manager of the Design Department of the Sheaffer Pen Company in Iowa.

For additional information refer to the Nebraska Post Offices Which Contain Section Artwork (1938-1942) multiple property form.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Falk, Peter Hastings. Who Was Who in American Art. (Madison, CT: Soundview Press, 1985).

Marling, Karal Ann. Wall-to-Wall America. (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota press, 1982).

The Minden Courier. Feb. 4, 1937; May 27, 1937; Jan. 12, 1939.

National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C. Record Group 121: Preliminary Inventory of the Records of the Public Building Service. Entry 133: Case Files Concerning Embellishments of Federal Buildings, 1934-1943. Box 61: Nebraska.

Omaha World-Herald. Jan. 15, 1939.

See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

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

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of property Less than one acre.

UTM References

A

1	4
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5	0	4	4	9	0
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4	4	8	2	9	0	5
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Zone Easting Northing

B

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Zone Easting Northing

C

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Zone Easting Northing

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The property is described as lots 7-8, and the south half of lot 9, block 29, original town plat of Minden, Kearney County, Nebraska.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes that parcel of land which has been historically associated with the property.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Carol Ahlgren, Architectural Historian

organization Nebraska State Historical Society date August, 1991

street & number 1500 R Street telephone (402) 471-4773

city or town Lincoln state Nebraska zip code 68501

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Opitz, Glenn B., ed. Mantle Fielding's Dictionary of American Painters, Sculptors & Engravers. (Poughkeepsie, NY: Apollo, 1986).

Park, Marlene and Gerald Markowitz. Democratic Vistas. (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1984).

Whiffen, Marcus. American Architecture Since 1780: A Guide to the Styles. (Cambridge, MA: The M. I. T. Press, 1969).



Photo 1 of 3 — view looking northwest showing south and east facades
Photo by Jeffrey Bebee, Oct. 1989, NSHS (H673.5-4914)



Photo 2 of 3 — view looking east showing lobby and mural (1848 Fort Kearney Protectorate on the Overland Trail, 1871, oil on canvas by William E.L. Bunn, 1939)
Photo by Jeffrey Bebee, Oct. 1989, NSHS (H673-5-4915)



Photo 3 of 3 — view looking east showing mural (1848 Fort Kearney Protectorate on the Overland Trail 1871, oil on canvas by William E.L. Bunn, 1939)
Photo by Jeffrey Bebee, Oct. 1989, NSHS (H673.5-4918)