

Eureka Post Office
205 Main
Southeast corner of Main
and Wallace Alley
~~City of Eureka~~
Juab County
Utah

HABS No. UT-136

HABS
UTAH
12-EUR,
2-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
Rocky Mountain System Support Office
National Park Service
P.O. Box 25287
Denver, Colorado 80225-0287

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
EUREKA POST OFFICE
EUREKA, UTAH
HABS No. UT-136

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Location: 205 Main, the southeast corner of Main and Wallace Alley, City of Eureka, Juab County, Utah

Quadrangle Map: Eureka, Utah (1992)
UTM Coordinates, 12/404480/4423120

Date of Construction: 1922-23

Present Owner: U.S. Postal Service, 205 Main, Eureka, Utah 84628

Present Use: U.S. Post Office occupies first floor and basement

Significance: The Eureka Post Office was the first federal building erected in the city. The building was constructed at the peak of the Tintic Mining District's prosperity and has continuously housed Eureka's main post office for more than seventy years. The building was designed by the Office of the Supervising Architect for the U.S. Treasury Department, under the administration of James A. Wetmore, Acting Supervising Architect. A new post office is currently under construction near the eastern edge of town.

Historians: Thomas H. Simmons and R. Laurie Simmons, Front Range Research Associates, Inc., Denver, Colorado, October 1996

Historical Background

Introduction

Mining areas in Western states have historically experienced periods of growth and decline, as minerals were discovered, exploited, and faded. The Tintic Mining District of west-central Utah, whose principal ores included gold, silver, lead, and copper, was organized in December 1869, following the discovery of silver earlier in the year. In February 1870, the Eureka Hill property was located, giving its name to the gulch below, and the mining camps of Eureka, Silver City, Diamond, and Mammoth were established. While the Utah Southern Railroad reached the Tintic area by 1878, the "lack of adequate competitive transportation facilities" hindered development of the district until the arrival of the Rio Grande Western Railroad in 1891.¹

Weathering the Panic of 1893 and a major business district fire in the same year, Eureka was described by 1897 as "the metropolis of Tintic." Shafthouses, headframes, tramways, and concentrating mills on the surrounding hills looked down upon the town in the gulch. Stephen L. Carr observed that "unlike the Mormon farming towns that were surveyed and staked off squarely, Eureka grew up everywhere and anywhere. The main street followed the bottom of a canyon, but the side streets wandered around without seeming purpose."²

Eureka's population nearly doubled during the 1890s, growing from 1,733 in 1890 to 3,325 in 1900. The area enjoyed continuing prosperity during the first decades of the twentieth century. The town's population grew to nearly four thousand (3,908) in 1920 and "commercial activity boomed in the early and mid-twenties." The Tintic Mining District enjoyed its peak production in 1925 and 1926, when output values of \$16.1 and \$15.0 million, respectively, were recorded. Eureka's population fell to 3,041 in 1930 as mining production declined. Many mines closed during the 1930s due to water problems and high operating costs, and the last major mine in the area ceased operations in 1957. Eureka's 1990 population was

¹Philip F. Notarianni, **Faith, Hope, and Prosperity: The Tintic Mining District** (Eureka, Utah: Tintic Historical Society, 1982), 14, 15, 24, 25, and 39.

²Henry L.J. Warren, **Story of the Tintic Mining District**, Utah Mining Series, No. 2 (Salt Lake City: Rio Grande Western Railway Passenger Department, 1897), 13-14 and Stephen L. Carr, **The Historical Guide to Utah Ghost Towns** (Salt Lake City: Western Press, 1972), 88.

562.³

As new areas of the nation were settled during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, federal buildings proliferated in America and growing towns across the country sought their erection as an indication of municipal importance and permanence.⁴ Federal buildings reflected "the latest in architectural style and technology and, symbolically, membership in the Union."⁵ These buildings, serving often as focal points of the urban environment, were viewed by local residents as important additions to the architectural heritage of the city. As **The Architect** noted in 1918, small town post offices "are generally the most important of local buildings, and taken together, are seen daily by thousands, who have little opportunity to feel the influence of the great architectural works in the large cities."⁶

Planning, Design, and Construction

As mining expanded in the early years of the Tintic Mining District, post offices were established at Eureka, Diamond, and Silver City. The first post office at Eureka opened 23 September 1870.⁷ Over the next half-century the post office was housed in privately-owned structures. By the early 1910s, local interest in acquiring a federal post office building arose. C.E. Huish, the editor of the **Eureka Reporter**, took an active role in securing a post office building for the town, as explained by the newspaper in 1922:

The Reporter editor cannot help but feel just a little bit proud because of the part which this paper has played in the matter of getting this new building. Several years ago, Mr. Huish, in the absence of a commercial club or other civic organization, started this movement single-handed. He communicated with Senator Reed Smoot and was given assurance that a bill would be introduced in the senate, appropriating money for a building. Senator Smoot, in line with his usual custom, kept right on the job and eventually brought about the

³Notarianni, 121 and 124 and Carr, 89.

⁴Robert Peck, "US Property Keep Off," **Progressive Architecture** (July 1976): 46-51.

⁵Lois A. Craig, **The Federal Presence: Architecture, Politics, and National Design** (Cambridge, Mass.: The M.I.T. Press, 1984).

⁶**The Architect**, 15 (March 1918), 188.

⁷**La Posta**, October 1981, 16.

appropriation.⁸

An Act of Congress on 4 March 1913 authorized the acquisition of a site and erection of a building to house a United States post office in Eureka at a cost not to exceed \$50,000. The Act did not appropriate any funds for construction. The first appropriation of funds for the structure (\$5,000) was made on 29 July 1914, followed by appropriations of \$10,000 in June 1917 and \$35,000 in July 1919. The acquisition of the mineral rights to the site was authorized in February 1919.⁹

The site selected for the Eureka Post Office building was on the east end of Main, at the southeast corner of Main and Wallace Alley. The sloping, irregularly-shaped parcel was about 0.33 acre in area and contained two frame dwellings. By December 1917, condemnation proceedings were underway to acquire the site, and W.E. Cook of the U.S. Attorney's Office in Salt Lake City visited Eureka for the purpose of assessing the valuation of the parcel.¹⁰ The entry of the United States into the First World War in April 1917 curtailed government construction projects during the war emergency.

The Superintendent of Construction in the Office of the Supervising Architect came to Eureka in 1919 to survey the proposed building site. L.R. Whitted's April 1919 drawing showed the extant structures on the site as well as its topography. P.J. Fennell and the Margaret Duggan Estate, the property's owners, were paid \$5,000 for the land. Fennell moved the standing structures to new locations near the original Tintic High School in October 1922.¹¹

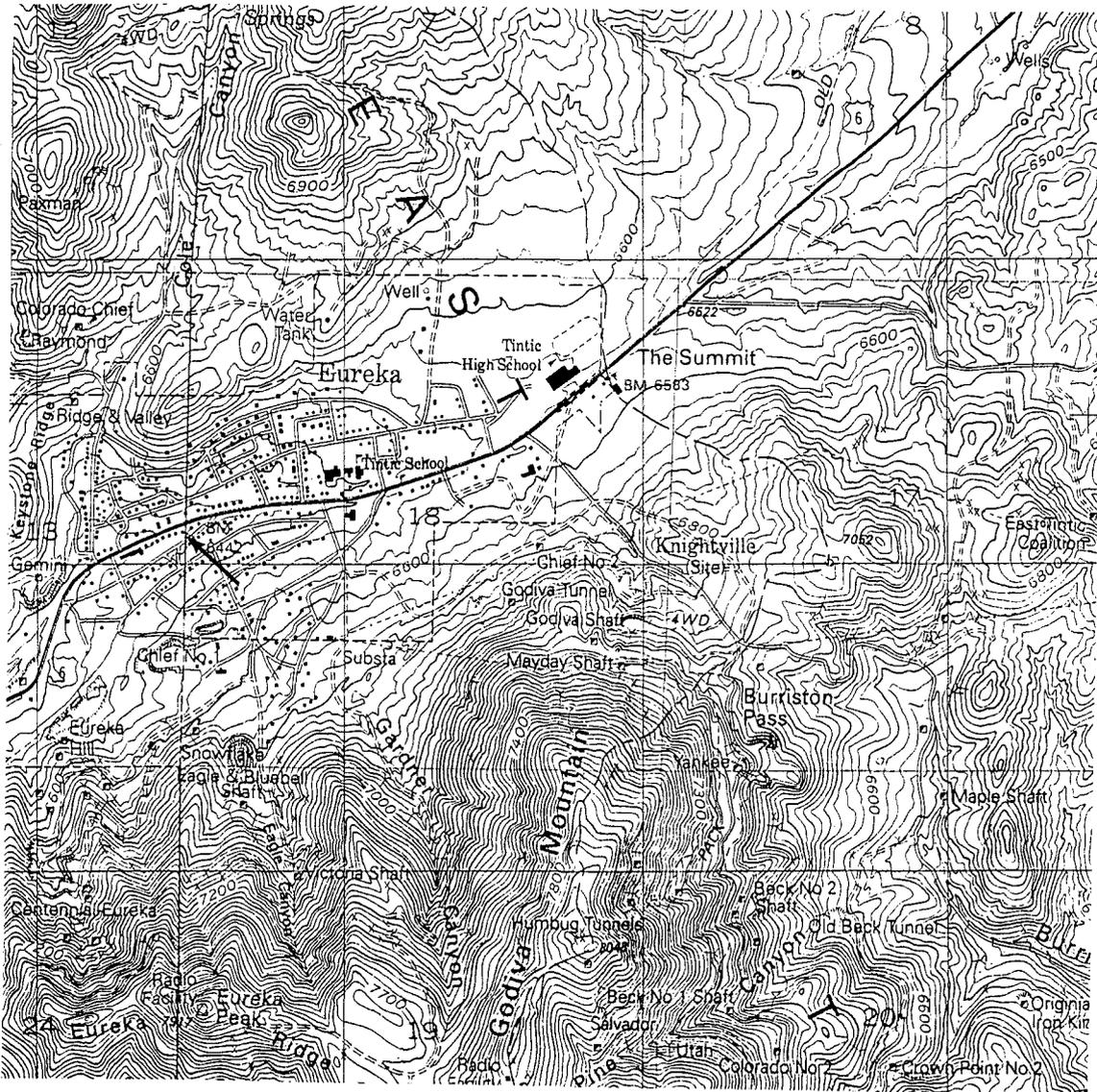
The Eureka Post Office was designed at a time when post office plans were becoming increasingly standardized in order to speed construction and to save money. Congress had established the position of Supervising Architect in 1864 to manage the burgeoning roster of Treasury Department construction projects, and, through the 1910s, new federal buildings and post offices were designed on

⁸**Eureka Reporter**, 23 June 1922, 1.

⁹U.S. Department of the Treasury, **Annual Report of the Supervising Architect to the Secretary of the Treasury for the Year Ending September 30, 1920** (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1920), 152-53.

¹⁰**Eureka Reporter**, 28 December 1917.

¹¹U.S. Department of the Treasury, Office of the Supervising Architect, Eureka Post Office Architectural Drawings, Drawing Number X-1, April 1919, in the files of the U.S. Post Office, Eureka, Utah; **Eureka Reporter**, 6 October 1922.



LOCATION MAP

SOURCE: Extract of U.S. Geological Survey, "Eureka, Utah," 7.5 minute quadrangle map, 1:24,000 scale (Reston, Virginia: U.S. Geological Survey, 1992). The arrow indicates the location of the Eureka Post Office.



SANBORN FIRE INSURANCE MAP, 1923 (1930 update)

SOURCE: Sanborn Map Company, "Eureka, Utah," fire insurance map, 1923 (with updates through 1930). In the files of the Utah Historical Society, Salt Lake City, Utah.

an individual basis. The Public Buildings Commission of 1915, chaired by U.S. Treasury Secretary William McAdoo, recommended that post office construction be standardized. In his **Annual Report** of 1915, McAdoo developed a four-tier classification system for federal building construction based on the level of postal receipts and the character of the surrounding city. Most small towns, such as Eureka, fell into McAdoo's Class D: post offices with receipts of less than \$15,000 and "real estate values justifying only a limited investment for improvements." Post office buildings in this class should be an "ordinary class of building, such as any business man would consider a reasonable investment in a small town."¹²

Construction on federal building projects was slow to resume following World War I. In the case of the Eureka Post Office, the Treasury Department was reluctant to proceed with the building, believing that the \$50,000 appropriated for the project in 1913 was no longer adequate, given subsequent increases in construction costs. Realizing that any effort to increase the appropriation would mean further delay, the editor of the **Eureka Reporter** obtained a special investigation on building costs and again enlisted the aid of Utah Senator Reed Smoot. Senator Smoot "put the matter squarely up to the proper officials and told them that Eureka would be satisfied with a \$50,000 building." The Eureka Post Office was one of only twelve federal buildings completed throughout the nation in fiscal year 1924 (1 July 1923 to 30 June 1924).¹³

In April 1922, initial sketches for the Eureka Post Office were sent to postmaster Frank Beesley and L.R. Whitted was reportedly considering another site visit to the town. The final architectural plans for the Eureka Post Office were approved in July 1922. Bids for construction of the new building were opened

¹²Craig, 99; Darrell H. Smith, **The Office of the Supervising Architect of the Treasury: Its History, Activities, and Organization**, Service Monographs of the United States Government, No. 23 (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1923), 37-38; and Institute for Urban and Local Studies, "Historic U.S. Post Offices in Utah: 1900-1941," National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form, prepared for the U.S. Postal Service, Facilities Service Center, San Bruno, California (Spokane, Washington: Institute for Urban and Local Studies, August 1988).

¹³U.S. Department of the Treasury, **Annual Report of the Secretary of the Treasury on the State of the Finances** (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1925), 309; and **Eureka Reporter**, 23 June 1922.

on 29 September.¹⁴

The general contractor selected for the Eureka Post Office project was George A. Whitmeyer and Sons of Ogden, Utah, for a total contract amount of \$35,200. Whitmeyer and Sons also erected the post office in Spanish Fork, Utah, and the **Eureka Reporter** observed that the firm "is entirely familiar with the requirements of the government and also has a knowledge of local conditions, hence the building operations should be carried along in a rapid and highly satisfactory manner."¹⁵

John H. Suttle was sent to Eureka by the Office of the Supervising Architect to oversee construction of the building and remained in the town until the building was completed. Suttle opened an office in the basement of the Eureka Public Library. Formal construction of the post office began in mid-November 1922, when Morgan Beck of Spanish Fork began excavation for the foundation using "three or four teams and a bunch of men." A heavy storm in late November caused some delay in construction, but excavation was completed and foundation footings poured by early December, after which construction was suspended until spring.¹⁶

By early May 1923, the basement had been completed and the terra cotta block walls were in place. Construction progress photographs taken in early July showed the building nearing completion. The **Eureka Reporter** of 24 August 1923 reported that finishing touches on the grounds were underway and that the "big flagpole" was to be erected the following week.¹⁷

There will be little to move aside from the mail and

¹⁴**Eureka Reporter**, 7 April 1922; U.S. Department of the Treasury, Office of the Supervising Architect, Eureka Post Office Architectural Drawings, 1922, in the files of the U.S. Post Office, Eureka, Utah; U.S. Department of the Treasury, **Annual Report of the Secretary of the Treasury on the State of the Finances**, 309; and **Eureka Reporter**, 8 September 1922.

¹⁵**Eureka Reporter**, 13 October 1922.

¹⁶**Eureka Reporter**, 17 November 1922 and 8 December 1922; Institute for Urban and Local Studies, "Eureka Main Post Office," National Register of Historic Places Nomination, prepared for the U.S. Postal Service, Facilities Service Center, San Bruno, California (Spokane, Washington: Institute for Urban and Local Studies, August 1988).

¹⁷Institute for Urban and Local Studies, "Eureka Main Post Office," National Register of Historic Places Nomination, Institute for Urban and Local Studies, Spokane, Washington, August 1988.

office records, as the federal building here has been equipped with modern furniture, up-to-date mail boxes and in fact everything necessary in the transaction of postal business.¹⁸

Transfer of services to the new building was anticipated by early September, but delays in receipt of certain furniture and fixtures postponed the opening of the new building until 19 September. The cost of the new facility included \$35,800 for construction and \$4,200 for fixtures. The building was finished with a surplus of \$2,500 remaining in the project budget. Construction superintendent Suttle stated "that there isn't a finer federal structure in the state although there are some that are larger and more expensive." The **Eureka Reporter** concluded that "Eureka now has a federal building that is a credit to the district. Such an elaborately equipped post office would be a credit to any city in this or any other state..."¹⁹

Historical Uses

The Eureka Post Office has been in continuous use since 1923. The 1924 **Official Postal Guide** described the Eureka facility as a post office of the second class, serving as a postal savings depository and an international money order office. The salary of the postmaster was then \$2,400 yearly.²⁰

As the mining prospects of the surrounding area declined, the population of Eureka and other towns fell dramatically. In 1947, local historian Alice P. McCune still described Eureka as "the metropolis of the Tintic Mining District," but noted that the number of business establishments had fallen to around twenty from a peak of about seventy-five. McCune observed that "for quite sometime [sic], Eureka has had a modern and beautiful post office building on Main Street."²¹ Population losses continued throughout the postwar decades, declining to 771 in 1960 and 562 in 1990. In his 1982 history of the Tintic Mining District, Philip F. Notarianni featured contemporary photographs of the post office and

¹⁸**Eureka Reporter**, 24 August 1923, 1.

¹⁹**Eureka Reporter**, 24 August 1923, 21 September 1923, and 2 November 1923.

²⁰U.S. Department of the Post Office, **Official Postal Guide**, vol. 4, no. 1 (Washington: U.S. Government Printing Office, July 1924).

²¹Alice P. McCune, **History of Juab County** (Springville, Utah: Juab Company of the Daughters Utah Pioneers, 1947), 212.



PHOTOGRAPH OF FACADE, 1923

This 5 July 1923 photograph (view south) shows construction progress on the nearly completed building. Note the original stair railing and concrete wall (now replaced) and the mission tiles flanking the panel above the entrance. SOURCE: In the files of the Postmaster, Eureka Post office, Eureka, Utah.



PHOTOGRAPH OF REAR, 1923

This 2 July 1923 photograph (view northeast) depicts construction progress on the rear of the nearly completed building, showing the mailing vestibule and construction debris still littering the site. SOURCE: In the files of the Postmaster, Eureka Post office, Eureka, Utah.



PHOTOGRAPH OF FACADE AND EAST SIDE, 1920s

The completed Eureka Post Office is shown in this 1920s era photograph (view southwest), which documents the width of the original stair retaining wall. SOURCE: In the files of the Tintic Historical Society, Eureka, Utah.

described it as "a Eureka gathering place."²² In 1996, a new post office was under construction on the east edge of town and bids were being taken for the sale of the old building.

Acting Supervising Architect James A. Wetmore

The drawings for the Eureka Post Office were completed under the administration of James A. Wetmore, the Acting Supervising Architect of the U.S. Treasury Department. Wetmore was born in Bath, New York, in 1863 and educated in the public schools of that state. He began a career as a court stenographer and joined the U.S. Treasury Department in Washington in 1885. In 1896, Wetmore received a law degree from Georgetown University. Wetmore served as Acting Supervising Architect of the Treasury from 1915 to 1933. The **New York Times** reported that "though untrained as an architect, he rose to the office of architectural supervisor through his ability as an administrator and organizer." After his retirement Wetmore moved to Florida where he died in 1940. According to one source, during Wetmore's tenure "the Superintendent of the Architectural Division, Louis A. Simon, exercised considerable influence on the design of federal buildings."²³

Architectural Description

The original 1922 architectural drawings of the Eureka Post Office are housed in the files of the Postmaster in the building. Included with this report are photographic copies of drawings which encompass all elevations, two renderings of interior floor plans, and a general view of the site (HABS photo nos. UT-136-13 through UT-136-17). Also included in the report (in the Historical Background) are photocopies of historic photographs of the building.

The Eureka Post Office is a one-story, symmetrical, rectangular building with raised basement and flat roof with central flat parapet (HABS photo no. UT-136-1). The walls of the building are composed of clay tile blocks finished with smooth stucco, while the foundation and basement walls are constructed of reinforced concrete. A row of mission tile forms coping along the roofline; the flat roof is composed of built up tar and gravel. The

²²Notarianni, 167.

²³**New York Times**, 15 March 1940, 23; Henry F. Withey and Elsie R. Withey, **Biographical Dictionary of American Architects (Deceased)** (Los Angeles, California.: New Age Publishing Co., 1956), 647; Craig, 195; and Institute for Urban and Local Studies, "Historic U.S. Post Offices in Utah, 1900-1941."

Neoclassical proportions and elaboration of the entrance of the post office are complemented by the Spanish influence reflected in the stucco finish, roof parapet, and mission tile. The building is individually listed in the National Register of Historic Places and is located within the boundaries of the Eureka National Register Historic District.

The facade (north) is divided into five bays, with a central entrance flanked on each side by two bays of windows (HABS photo nos. UT-136-2 and UT-136-14). Exterior ornamentation is limited principally to the entrance, which features slightly recessed, double, wood frame ten-light doors (HABS photo no. UT-136-6). The doors are set in a paneled alcove. An elaborate wood surround consists of paneled pilasters with molded capitals with triglyph carving supporting an entablature with shield ornament and projecting cornice with dentils. Above the entrance is a precast concrete plaque inscribed "UNITED STATES POST OFFICE." Wrought iron hexagonal lanterns flank the entrance. Adjacent to the entrance on the west is a plaque providing historical information about the building. At the northeast corner of the building is a precast concrete cornerstone inscribed with the names of the Secretary of the Treasury, the Acting Supervising Architect, and the building's date of construction.

The evenly spaced, flat arched windows are eight-over-eight-light double-hung sash with flat concrete sills. The windows are unframed and covered with aluminum frame storm windows. Basement windows are eight-light hopper windows covered with aluminum frame storm windows. Centered above the window bays are slightly inset rectangular grilles of round agricultural tiles placed in panels.

The east and west sides of the building are similar in design (HABS photo no. UT-136-15). Mission tile coping extends along the roofline. Each wall has three eight-over-eight-light double-hung sash windows (HABS photo no. UT-136-3). Centered above each window is a rectangular grille of agricultural tiles. Evenly spaced under each window at foundation level is a basement window. The two southernmost windows on the east side have eight-over-eight-light windows with wells with low concrete walls and tubular metal railings (HABS photo no. UT-136-5). The remaining basement window on the east wall is an eight-light hopper window. The basement windows on the west are all eight-light hopper windows. Both walls have a metal downspout between the northern two windows. A tall, stuccoed chimney is near the east center of the roof. Diagonally from the northeast corner of the building is a tapered steel flag pole on a square concrete base.

The rear (south) side of the building has a lower, projecting,

central mailing vestibule flanked by window bays which each consist of groups of three nine-over-nine-light windows (HABS photo nos. UT-136-4 and UT-136-14). Beneath the windows are wooden panels. The projecting frame vestibule has board and batten siding and a concrete pier foundation with wood lattice screening. The vestibule has a flat roof with molding at the cornice. A nine-light door on the west side of the vestibule is accessed by concrete stairs with a pipe railing. On the south wall are two sets of metal double doors with small, square, reinforced windows. Beneath and flanking the doors are timber bumpers. Above the entrance vestibule are three horizontal hopper windows with three lights each.

A rear basement entrance is accessed by concrete stairs with metal pipe railings at the west end of the building. The basement entrance has double paneled and glazed doors surmounted by a transom. An opening on the wall adjacent to the stairs that was used for coal delivery has padlocked metal doors. A USGS benchmark "Eureka 1934" is set into the top of the stair wall. A curving metal davit is located at the east end of the stairs. An eight-over-eight-light double hung window faces a window well with low wall topped by metal railings on the east end of the rear wall.

The post office is elevated above the street on a sloping site. A concrete retaining wall in front of the building at sidewalk level has stair access at each end. The concrete stairs rise to separate intermediate landings, make ninety degree turns toward a shared intermediate landing, and join to form a single run to the entrance landing.

The first floor of the post office includes a large public lobby extending across the center front of the building (HABS photo no. UT-136-16). The public lobby is entered through a paneled interior wood vestibule with walls ornamented with marble baseboards and pilasters supporting architrave molding. The vestibule has two paneled and glazed doors and a glass fronted bulletin board. The lobby features paneled wainscot, six-light interior hopper windows, architrave molding, marble baseboards, and linoleum flooring (HABS photo no. UT-136-7). The west end of the lobby has glass and brass mail boxes with fret ornamentation along the south and west walls and a small alcove with mailboxes illuminated by a six-light interior skylight (HABS photo no. UT-136-9). The customer service area to the east includes four windows, three with metal grilles and one with a pull down shutter (HABS photo no. UT-136-8). Beneath the windows is paneled wainscot.

A work room occupying the largest amount of space on the first floor includes most of the area behind the service windows and mail

boxes on the south and west (HABS photo no. UT-136-10). The walls of the work room are clad with tongue and groove wainscot under the windows. Walls above the windows and the ceiling are finished with plaster. At the northeast corner of the building is the postmaster's office, which has tongue and groove wainscot and an original hanging light fixture. At the center of the east wall of the building is the vault, manufactured by Diebold Safe and Lock of Canton, Ohio (HABS photo no. UT-136-11). A restroom and janitor's closet are located south of the vault area. The mailing vestibule at the center rear of the building has tongue and groove walls and ceiling. All rooms of the first floor except the lobby have wood floors.

Elevated observation points for mail inspectors to view employees are found near the east and west ends of the building. The inspection lookouts consist of iron ladders leading to enclosed areas with louvered openings through which employees could be observed while working or on breaks.

At the southeast corner of the building is a narrow circular metal staircase leading to the basement (HABS photo no. UT-136-12). The staircase was manufactured by Shepherd Ornamental Iron Works. The basement has concrete floors and walls finished with plaster. A boiler room in the central section of the basement has a propane furnace which replaced the original coal furnace. A fuel storage room is located at the southwest corner (HABS photo no. UT-136-17). A toilet room in the east central portion of the basement includes two toilets, a sink and a urinal. The toilet stall walls are composed of gray marble. A large storage area stretches across the north end of the basement.

The exterior of the building retains substantial integrity and the interior is basically unaltered. A thick layer of new stucco was applied to the exterior walls in the 1970s. The restuccoing of the building made the new surface thicker than the original and altered the appearance of the panels and window sills, which previously projected slightly outward and now appear slightly inset or flush with the walls of the building. During the restuccoing, metal relief joints were added in the stucco along the outside of the windows. Two mission tiles which were located on either side of the name plaque may have been removed at this time.

The stairs leading to the front entrance of the building were reconfigured and the railings were replaced prior to 1969. The original stairs extended to each end of the building, the railing had a metal balustrade, and the wall in front of the stairs was stepped.

Other alterations include the covering up of the southernmost basement window on the west wall and the construction of a new rear access drive from the street south of the post office. The replacement of the coal burning furnace with the propane one necessitated the installation of a propane tank on the east side of the building.

Project Information

This Historic American Buildings Survey of the Eureka, Utah, Post Office was prepared because the building is being transferred out of federal ownership. A new post office is under construction further east on Main and the old building was offered for sale in September 1996. The documentation was produced by Front Range Research Associates, Inc., Denver, Colorado for the U.S. Postal Service. Thomas H. Simmons and R. Laurie Simmons served as project historians, researched the history of the building, and wrote the documentation narrative. Mr. Simmons conducted a field examination of the exterior and interior of the building in September 1996. Large format, archival photography of the exterior and interior of the building and of architectural drawings was completed in September 1996 by Roger Whitacre, Denver, Colorado.

Project participants for the U.S. Postal Service included Ms. Pat Ferrari, Major Facilities Office, Asset Management, Memphis, Tennessee, who administered the project. Photography, fieldwork, and research in Eureka was facilitated by Ms. Julie Sorenson, Postmaster. Mr. June McNulty of the Tintic Historical Society provided the historians with an historic photograph of the building and with newspaper clippings describing its construction.

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