

NORTH CAROLINA STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE
Office of Archives and History
Department of Cultural Resources

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

United States Post Office

Kings Mountain, Cleveland County, CL0295, Listed 4/29/2015

Nomination by Davyd Foard Hood

Photographs by Annie McDonald, September 2011



Overall view



Entrance view

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 for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. **Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).**

1. Name of Property

historic name United States Post Office
 other names/site number Kings Mountain Historical Museum

2. Location

street & number 100 East Mountain Street N/A not for publication
 city or town Kings Mountain vicinity _____
 state North Carolina code NC county Cleveland code 045 zip code 28086

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,
 I hereby certify that this X 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 X meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:
 ___ national ___ statewide X local

Signature of certifying official/Title _____ Date _____
North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources
 State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.
 Signature of commenting official _____ Date _____
 Title _____ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:
 ___ entered in the National Register ___ determined eligible for the National Register
 ___ determined not eligible for the National Register ___ removed from the National Register
 ___ other (explain:) _____
 Signature of the Keeper _____ Date of Action _____

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5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply.)

Category of Property
(Check only **one** box.)

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

- Private
- public - Local
- public - State
- public - Federal

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

| Contributing | Noncontributing | |
|--------------|-----------------|--------------|
| 1 | 0 | buildings |
| 0 | 0 | sites |
| 0 | 1 | structures |
| 0 | 0 | objects |
| 1 | 1 | Total |

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

GOVERNMENT/Post Office

RECREATION AND CULTURE/Museum

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions.)

COLONIAL REVIVAL

foundation: Granite
walls: Brick
Limestone
roof: Asphalt
other: Concrete
Wood

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Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

Overview

The United States Post Office in Kings Mountain, designed by the Office of the Supervising Architect and constructed in 1939-1940 by L. B. Gallimore, Incorporated, of Greensboro, is a small one-story-on-basement Colonial Revival-style brick masonry building standing at 100 East Mountain Street. The well-preserved, remarkably intact building occupies an open rectangular lot in the southeast corner of South Piedmont Avenue and East Mountain Street with a frontage of 119 feet on East Mountain Street and a depth of 170 feet on South Piedmont Avenue. At the time of its construction, on the eve of World War II, Piedmont Avenue was a principal street in Kings Mountain, aligned on a north/south axis and lined by the residences of many of the leading citizens, imposing churches, and the Kings Mountain City Hall that was completed in 1937 at 112 South Piedmont Avenue. Members of the Carpenter family, one of Kings Mountain's important early families, had owned and occupied the site of the post office from 1875 until conveying it to the United States of America in 1939. King and Mountain streets, aligned in parallel fashion on east/west axes, were also primary arteries and the scene of both residential and commercial activity along their length. The mixed-use character of this central part of the city has survived while the Southern Colonial Revival-style mansion of the Hord family at 100 South Piedmont Avenue became the Jacob S. Mauney Memorial Library in 1947 and the 1937 city hall was replaced on site in 1999 by the Kings Mountain Police Department. Today, Central Methodist Church and Kings Mountain Baptist Church (the oldest church building in the city), occupying the northeast and southwest corners of the intersection of South Piedmont Avenue and Mountain Street, respectively, remain the immediate neighbors of the post office.

The grounds of the post office building, retaining their original (1939) acreage of approximately 20,262.50 square feet, also reflect the design prepared in 1940 by the Office of the Supervising Architect, Public Buildings Administration, Federal Works Agency. The surviving single-sheet "Planting Plan" for the building, dating to 1940 with handwritten approvals dating to February 1941, was installed in spring 1941 by the Mecklenburg Nurseries of Charlotte. It shows a simple, essentially symmetrical design that complements the Colonial Revival-style building. The position of the axial front walk, leading from the concrete sidewalk to the granite steps of the post office, the paved driveway on the east side of the lot leading to the service area and parking at the back of the building, and the grass-covered front lawn and verges remain intact. The plan also shows the location of a flagpole at the north, East Mountain Street edge of the grass-covered verge on the east side of the service drive. The original metal flagpole stands on a poured concrete base in this location and tapers in its rise to a ball finial.

The five-item plant list includes *Quercus nigra* (Water Oak) and four species of shrubs; *Laurocerasus caroliniana* (Carolina Cherry Laurel), *Osmanthus aquifolium* (Holly Osmanthus), *Abelia grandiflora* (Glossy Abelia), and *Ligustrum sinense* (Chinese Privet). Single Water Oaks were centered in the paired rectangular parts of the lawn on the front of the lot, three were aligned across the south, rear edge of the lot, and a sixth was positioned due west of the loading dock at the rear of the building. The shrubs were massed as foundation plantings flanking the open stoop and steps and the front northwest and northeast corners of the post office. Over time all of these plantings were lost or taken out except for the Cherry Laurel that anchors the present

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northwest corner foundation plantings and a single, very large Water Oak in the rear southeast corner of the lot. The present foundation plantings were installed by Cliff Laurich of CeeJay's Landscapes, a Kings Mountain firm, coincident with the opening of the Kings Mountain Historical Museum in the former post office in 2000. They include azaleas and evergreen shrubs and generally reflect the earlier historic planting arrangement, except for the use of paired evergreens that effectively link the corner plantings with those flanking the stoop. A single *Magnolia grandiflora* stands in the center of the paired rectangles of the front lawn. An L-shaped brick sign was built in the northwest corner of the front lawn in 2010. It features three capped piers holding blind panels, positioned parallel with East Mountain Street and South Piedmont Avenue, on which black-and-gold arched-top, composition plaques are mounted. Each plaque bears the inscription, "Kings Mountain Historical Museum Est. 1986," in raised letters on three lines. In the front, northwest corner of the lawn's east rectangle, three simple painted frame uprights, linked by a horizontal member, serve as the mount for banners announcing the museum's current exhibition.

A rudimentary rectangular frame shelter for vehicles of uncertain date, supported by four creosote poles, open-sided, and covered with a flat wood and asphalt roof stands in the near southeast corner of the lot, at the edge of the asphalt-paved parking area and under the limbs of the original Water Oak.

Exterior

The design, materials, finish, and construction of the United States Post Office in Kings Mountain combined to produce a building of character and presence that became an architectural and civic landmark upon its completion and a building of period, yet timeless, appearance that has assured its status to the present. The post office is essentially square in plan with a five-bay north-facing façade and five-bay east and west side elevations. On the south, rear elevation the square is enlarged by a shallow ell that links the main body of the post office with an open, flat-roof loading platform. The brick elevations are laid up in a one-to-five bond that rise from granite and poured concrete water tables to a flat limestone frieze, which carries under a molded classical cornice incorporating copper guttering and encircles the post office. The segmental arch-headed window openings in the main block have limestone sills and soldier-course lintels and contain six-over-six wood sash, except for the flat-headed windows in the façade frontispiece and the small four-over-four lavatory windows on the west elevation, which are set in blind arch-headed recesses that maintain the rhythm of the fenestration. The corresponding metal basement windows are set in poured concrete wells. The square mass of the post office is mitigated by simple architectural practices including shallow set backs on the side elevations that visually distinguish the two-bay public, service front block of the post office from the mail sorting and work area in the recessed, three-bay rear block. The front block is covered by a hipped roof and surmounted by an octagonal metal lantern mounted on a square base that is finished with an elegantly turned finial supporting a metal weathervane. The rear block is covered by a flat asphalt roof. Surviving construction-period correspondence documents the source of the brick, granite, and limestone used in building the post office. The J. D. Sargent Granite Company of Mt. Airy, North Carolina, supplied Mt. Airy granite for the front stoop and steps and dressed foundation. The Sare-Hoadley Company of Bloomington, Indiana, furnished Indiana limestone for the façade frontispiece, window sills, and frieze. The brick was manufactured and supplied by the Yadkin Brick Yards of New London, North Carolina.

The exterior appearance of the post office remains as completed in 1940 except in three instances. On the façade, the original double-leaf door treatment in the center bay, under the eight-pane transom, was replaced with a double-leaf, fully-glazed metal door, probably in the late 1960s or 1970s. At the rear of the building, a wood handicap ramp was added on the west side of the ell and loading platform after the museum occupied the

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building and opened to the public. The last change of note occurred in 2011, when the terra cotta tiles covering the hipped roof, manufactured by the Ludowici Celadon Company and scored and finished to simulate slate, were replaced by CertainTeed Landmark architectural asphalt shingles. The original tiles, bearing the stamp “Ludowici Celadon Co” on their underside, were carefully removed and the many surviving intact tiles are stacked and stored in the basement of the former post office.

The symmetrical north façade of the Kings Mountain post office, its most highly developed elevation, is dominated by the three-part limestone dressed frontispiece that includes the center entrance and flanking bays. Four flat limestone pilasters with simple capitals rise from the granite water table to the frieze which bears a centered inscription in block capital letters of two sizes on two lines:

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Five granite steps, which engage the granite bases of paired, classically detailed period iron lamp standards, rise from the concrete-paved front walk to the granite stoop. Simple, original black-painted iron railings carry with the rise of the steps, ramp as they continue to protect the east and west sides of the stoop, and center on the pilasters flanking the entrance. It comprises a replacement, double-leaf aluminum door, with each leaf holding a large, single pane of glass below a narrow single-pane transom. These doors are framed by a classically-detailed molded wood architrave with corner blocks that also enframes the original eight-pane wood transom. The flanking window openings are fitted with molded-panel wood aprons below large-scale eight-over-twelve sash. The outer bays of the five-bay façade are segmental arch-headed openings fitted with classically detailed molded wood architraves with cornerblocks that hold six-over-six sash. The classically detailed octagonal metal lantern that crowns the roof rests on a square paneled wood base. Its eight sides are ornamented with elongated trellis work between molded bands at the base and top. The molded finial atop the lantern includes a ball, which supports a highly decorative metal weathervane.

The post office’s cornerstone, concealed now by the foundation plantings, comprises an inscription on a panel of the granite foundation at the west edge of the façade.

JAMES A FARLEY
POSTMASTER GENERAL
JOHN M CARMODY
FEDERAL WORKS ADMINISTRATOR
W ENGLEBERT REYNOLDS
COMMISSIONER OF PUBLIC BUILDINGS
LOUIS A SIMON
SUPERVISING ARCHITECT
NEAL A MELICK
SUPERVISING ENGINEER
1939

The post office’s west elevation, visible along South Piedmont Avenue, reflects the hierarchy of finish accorded the respective blocks of the building. The front block rests on a two-course ashlar granite foundation while the rear block has a poured-in-place concrete foundation. The shallow offset of the rear block can also be seen. However, the two blocks are architecturally united by consistent brick work, fenestration, and the frieze and molded cornice that completely encircle the building. As previously noted, the center and north center bays of

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the five-bay elevation have blind recessed brick fields in which small four-over-four sash windows are set. These windows have molded wood frames and illuminate and vent the male employees' lavatory and the postmaster's private lavatory, respectively. Corresponding basement level openings, holding three-pane metal windows with encased metal, mesh wire, are positioned under all but the south center bay. The tops of these openings and the poured concrete wells that protect them are visible from the street.

The building's east elevation repeats the general appearance of the west elevation except that the fenestration features six-over-six sash windows in all five arch-headed openings. At the basement level, a concrete well occupying the center and southernmost two bays encloses a stair leading down to a basement entrance. The north center and northernmost basement bays hold windows in protective concrete wells as before. The concrete stair descends to the north to the entrance in the center bay. Its molded wood architrave enframes a double-leaf door and five-pane transom. Each leaf has a molded wood panel below six panes of glass with encased wire screening that also appear in the transom. This entrance, which opens directly into the boiler room in the southeast corner of the basement, was originally fitted with double-leaf screen doors. They were taken down at some now unknown point and are stored in the boiler room with the roof tiles.

The south, rear elevation of the post office is finished with a general symmetry, but with variation. A shallow, flat-roof ell, linking the main building with the loading platform, occupies the center of the elevation. It is flanked on the west by two six-over-six sash windows and on the east by a like opening in the easternmost bay fitted with louvers above a six-pane sash. A trio of small rectangular window openings, set high in the center of the elevation, are effectively concealed by the height of the ell and not visible at ground level. A bold square-in-plan flue stack rises along the south elevation in the corner formed at its juncture with the east elevation of the ell. The ell has a wide opening in the center of its south elevation where a wide, single-leaf replacement door under a transom opens from a vestibule that links the interior workroom with the loading platform. Two four-over-four sash windows are symmetrically positioned in the east elevation of the ell and illuminate the female staff lavatory, accessible from the workroom, and the janitor's lavatory, accessible only from the vestibule, in the north and south bays, respectively. A single four-over-four sash window is centered in the ell's west wall, and it illuminates the stair enclosed in a well on the west side of the vestibule, which links the main and basement levels of the building and is accessible from the workroom.

The loading platform is an open-sided rectangular structure symmetrically positioned at the rear of the post office. It has a poured concrete foundation and floor that incorporates steps in its northeast and northwest corners that are protected with original metal pipe railings and descend to the parking lot level. Metal uprights support the canted flat roof, which is wood sheathed and projects southward, beyond the full south edge of the platform, to protect workers loading and unloading mail and parcels into and from vehicles backed up the platform.

Interior

Note: to facilitate an understanding of the interior plan and this narrative description, copies of the first-story and basement plans, prepared in 1963 by Wilber, Kendrick, Workman & Warren, an architectural firm based in Charlotte, as part of a mechanical upgrade, are included as Figures 1 and 2 in this nomination. Elements appearing on the first-story plan that were removed during city ownership in the late twentieth century or in the adaptation for museum use are noted.

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The interior plan and interior decoration of the post office, which ceased use as a post office in November 1986 and gained a new use in 2000 as the Kings Mountain Historical Museum, retains a remarkable degree of integrity of plan, materials, design, fittings, and finish. Although the removal in 1989 of the mural depicting an incident in the Revolutionary War Battle of Kings Mountain and its re-hanging in the Kings Mountain City Hall represent a regrettable loss to the building as an example of the collaborative public works efforts of the federal government in the last years of its Depression-era programs, it exists on display and could possibly be returned to its original location above the door to the postmaster's office at the west end of the lobby. The other changes to the interior are few, given the changed use of the building, and do not compromise the significance of the building. In the lobby the waist-high counter in the near center of its south elevation, being about a third-part of the service area aligned here, was removed to provide an opening for public access into the large workroom that is now the museum's principal exhibition area. The wall and its finish above the service counter remain in place. The original post office boxes, which were located in the south extension of the lobby, on its west and south walls, were removed at some uncertain date, probably in the late 1980s. The wood molding that originally enframed these grouped boxes remains in place and now surrounds infill sheathing. The third change, coincident with removal of the service counters, was the removal of the wood partition walls, which formed the background to the service work stations and set them apart from the workroom, and the adjoining walls to the west, which enclosed a financial office that, in turn, had direct access from the postmaster's office in the northwest corner of the building and into the walk-in vault on the west side of the interior plan, as well as a door into the workroom.

In plan, the post office has three principal areas whose appearance and finish reflect a descending hierarchy of treatment. The L-shaped public lobby, which occupies the front of the building, except for the postmaster's office in the northwest corner, and at the east end continues to the south as an interior ell, enjoys the highest degree of development and is finished with the finest materials employed in the post office's interior decoration. The postmaster's office has a similar enhanced decorative scheme. The workroom, together with the break room and men's lavatory on the west side of the building and the lavatories in the rear ell have a high quality workmanlike finish with good materials and fittings. The vestibule, the stair well in the southwest corner of the post office, and the rooms on the basement level have an altogether plain utilitarian appearance with little enhancement of any kind.

At Kings Mountain, as at some other known post offices of this size, scale, and period, customers entering the post office first came into a shallow, glazed hexagonal vestibule with doors at its east and west ends. The vestibule elevations are fully glazed above a low sheathed wood wainscot whose height corresponds with the solid wood, lower part of the doors, which are glazed with twelve panes, and fitted with brass kick plates and push bars. The clear panes in the other elevations generally align with those in the doors. The ceiling of the vestibule is fitted with frosted glass panes whose arrangement corresponds with those in the elevations. The terrazzo floor features a darkish rose-brown, multi-tone border enclosing a rose-beige, multi-tone center field. The post office lobby retains the handsome character of its original appearance, with intact floor, wall, and ceiling finishes, varnished oak moldings and sheathing framing the service area, door and window surrounds, and doors, its original pendant light fixtures, and one of its original oak service tables. The terrazzo floor repeats the color pattern established in the vestibule, however, the field of rose-beige terrazzo is divided into squares. A complementing rose-brown marble serves as the base of the beige-tan marble wainscot that encircles the lobby and has a simple cap. The base is identified in construction-period correspondence as "Dark Cedar Marble" and the wainscot as "Anderson Tavernelle Marble." Both were supplied by the Tennessee Marble Company. The upper walls of the lobby are painted plaster and finished with a molded cornice that overlaps as a border for the flat, painted plaster ceiling. A door opening into the postmaster's office is centered in the west wall of the lobby and marked by "POSTMASTER" in gilt lettering. Framed by a molded architrave, it has a two-panel

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arrangement. The door is flanked by rectangular glass-fronted wood cases for bulletins that are also identified by gilt lettering spelling "BULLETIN."

Stations and facilities for customer service, mailing, money orders, mail deposits, and parcel shipping were aligned in a bank of counters and receptacles on the south side of the lobby that are framed by an overall encompassing architrave and like framing and sheathing around the individual counters and mail receptacles. The marble wainscot continues under the counter stations along the wall. "PARCEL POST STAMPS" remains visible above one opening and the paired slots in the mail drop retain their gilt labeling; "CITY LETTERS," and "OUT OF TOWN LETTERS." A trio of large rectangular openings are positioned in the upper wall above this service area and fitted with metal, railing-like grills composed of decorative vertical members. These openings are for ventilation. Like-finished openings also appear in the upper south and west walls of the south extension of the lobby. Here the architraves that enframed the two banks of removed rental post office boxes now frame sheathing, which is the backdrop for sales displays for the museum gift shop that operates in the east and south parts of the lobby. A door in the south wall opens into the workroom.

Located in the northeast corner of the post office, the postmaster's office is finished with an oak floor, molded oak woodwork including the baseboard, chairrail, and door and window surrounds, and oak molded paneled doors opening into the lobby, lavatory, and the financial office formerly partitioned in the northeast corner of the workroom. The lavatory is finished with a floor of gray, hexagonal ceramic tiles, a white ceramic tile baseboard, and painted plaster walls and ceiling. Although the commode and wall-hung sink have been removed, lesser fittings including a framed mirror, the chrome tissue holder, and the electric light mount remain. A metal ladder is mounted against the room's south wall which allowed the postal inspectors to (secretly) overlook activity in the workroom.

The workroom is the principal interior space in the post office, and it is simply finished with a maple floor, a varnished vertical board pine wainscot with a plain cap, and painted plaster walls and ceiling. Seams in the maple flooring reflect the positions of the original partitioning here that formed the back wall of the service stations and enclosed a financial office in the northwest corner. Also visible is the taller wainscot on the south side of the partition wall that separates the workroom from the lobby, which reflects a marginally better finish to the former service stations aligned on the south side of the lobby. A metal utility ladder in the northeast corner of the workroom provides access to the attic level of the front block. A second utility ladder mounted on the workroom's east wall between the paired windows provides access from the workroom to the roof. A walk-in vault, men's lavatory, and staff room are aligned on the west side of the room. The masonry and metal vault is fitted with a black painted steel door with gilt lettering and a stencil reading "THE SCHWAB SAFE CO., LAFAYETTE, IND. U.S.A., 1940" on three lines on its interior face. Centered in the east wall of the vault, and originally accessible from the financial office, this single door opened on the west into a shallow enclosure with paired, black-painted steel doors into the actual vault. The staff break room is enclosed by a tall vertical pine wainscot in panel work on its east and south walls that enframes a double-tier of frosted glass panels around its top. The men's lavatory, accessible from a door in the north wall of the staff break room, has a gray, hexagonal ceramic tile floor, a tall white ceramic tile wainscot with a simple base and cap, and painted plaster walls and ceiling. Although the commode and wall-hung sinks are replacements, the lavatory's original chrome tissue holder and a towel bar with a glass rod and a pine-framed mirror remain in place.

Four door openings centered in the south wall of the workroom provide access to areas aligned in the building's shallow rear ell. The westernmost of these openings is fitted with a double-panel pine door, inscribed "JANITOR," that opens into the janitor's closet. It has a painted concrete floor, painted masonry walls, a painted plywood ceiling, and it retains its enamel-on-cast-iron utility sink. To the east a painted metal door opens into

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the enclosed painted masonry well that contains the concrete stair to the post office's basement. The stair has metal railings, and the well retains its original pendant light fixture with a white glass globe at the end of a linked chain. The larger, center opening contains paired metal doors with four panes in their upper half, which open into the vestibule leading to the exterior loading platform. The vestibule has a maple floor, painted masonry walls, and a painted wood-sheathed ceiling. A two-panel door wood in its east wall opens into the janitor's lavatory, which has a painted concrete floor, masonry walls, and plaster ceiling. The fixtures are removed, however, a chrome tissue holder remains in place. The fourth, easternmost door opening in the workroom's south wall opens into the female staff lavatory and retains its original "WOMEN" lettering. It is finished with a gray, hexagonal ceramic tile floor and complementing gray ceramic tile baseboard, painted plaster walls and ceiling, and a metal stall partition enclosing the commode in the south half of the lavatory. The women's lavatory retains its original wall-hung sink and all of its original chrome and glass fittings, as well as its wood-frame mirror. A trio of small rectangular window openings are centered and symmetrically positioned at the top of the south elevation of the workroom. The center and west openings are now filled with mechanical system ductwork. The east opening holds a three-pane sash.

The basement of the post office contains a large storage room, which occupies the north half of this level, three smaller storage rooms that flank the passage opening from the foot of the stair in the southwest quarter of the basement, and a large boiler room in the southeast quarter that connects with the fuel room under the ell and loading platform. These areas have painted concrete floors, and painted masonry or plaster walls and ceilings. The door openings contain single or paired painted metal, two-panel doors with painted "STORAGE" inscriptions. Some openings are also fitted with screen doors of metal grillwork that allow for ventilation. Openings in the upper partition walls also hold metal grillwork that allows for air flow. Paired doors in the east wall of the passage open into the boiler room, with the south leaf labeled "BOILER ROOM". The boiler, manufactured by the "Farrar & Trefts" company of Buffalo, New York, remains in place along with its fittings and related equipment. An opening at the south edge of the boiler room's west wall is fitted with paired two-panel wood doors and labeled "FUEL" on the north leaf. A large quantity of coal remains in the fuel room. Shovels, buckets, and other equipment also remain here and in the boiler room.

Vehicle Storage

Ca. 1970-1980

Noncontributing structure

This small, rectangular open-sided frame storage structure has four creosote supports that rise from the paving parking lot to the wood and metal roof that is encircled by an openwork wood railing.

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Architecture

Politics/Government

Period of Significance

1939-1940

Significant Dates

1939

1940

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Office of the Supervising Architect, Treasury

Department/Federal Works Agency

L. B. Gallimore, Incorporated, Builder

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria.)

Summary

The United States Post Office in Kings Mountain, a well-preserved, intact one-story Colonial Revival-style brick building erected in 1939-1940, holds a distinct architectural presence and historic significance in the city while also being one of the many such necessary federal buildings, mostly post offices, erected throughout the nation as part of the public works programs launched to alleviate distress during the Great Depression. Although the history of postal service in this area of eastern Cleveland County dates to the mid-nineteenth century, when the area was known as White Plains, the first Kings Mountain post office dates to 1873 when William A. Mauney was named the first postmaster of the town, incorporated in 1874, which would grow up along the tracks of the Atlanta and Richmond Air-Line Railway. For nearly half of its history, from 1873 until this building was placed in service in 1940, the post office was located either on the premises of the postmaster or in rented space. Designed by the Office of the Supervising Architect of the Treasury Department, while Louis A. Simon was the Supervising Architect, this building was the first building in Kings Mountain erected specifically for use as a post office and the first, and most impressive, of only two important public buildings erected by the federal government in the city. Constructed by the Greensboro-based firm of L. B. Gallimore, Incorporated, which completed the United States Post Office in Belmont, North Carolina, in 1939, this building remained in use until November 1986, when postal service operations were relocated to a newly-built post office building at 101 West Gold Street. Acquired by the City of Kings Mountain in 1990, the former United States Post Office has housed the Kings Mountain Historical Museum since 2000.

The United States Post Office meets National Register Criteria A and C and holds local significance in the areas of politics/government and architecture for its association with the federal government's role as the provider of postal services to the citizens of the United States, its construction of buildings to house those operations, and its especial role in the 1930s to design and erect public buildings to ease the effects of the Great Depression throughout the nation through the National Industrial Recovery Act of 1933 and related programs. The United States Post Office also meets National Register Criterion C and holds local significance in the area of architecture as it embodies the distinguishing characteristics of interwar-period Colonial Revival-style buildings, particularly those erected under federal auspices, and represents an elegant amalgam of the architectural forms, features, and detailing of the American Colonial and early-national period. Its symmetrical façade and complementing elevations, realized in a skillful combination of granite, brick, limestone, and molded wood, with arch-headed fenestration, comprise an imposing building crowned by a cupola and ornate weathervane that are also favored features of its style and period. The period of significance begins in 1939 with the onset of construction and ends in 1940, when the first purpose-built post office in Kings Mountain was placed in service.

Historical Background

The history of postal service in today's Kings Mountain can be traced to the 1850s, when this area on the eastern edge of Cleveland County was known as White Plains and attracted Dr. James Wright Tracy (1819-1896), a native of South Carolina, and his wife, Regina Minerva Stone (1824-1894), as residents in 1857. In November 1850, after receiving his medical degree from Transylvania University, Dr. Tracy acquired property in Shelby, established residence in the Cleveland County seat, and began his medical practice. In January 1857, Dr. Tracy

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purchased the James A. Falls farm at White Plains, which comprised a residence and some 115 acres of land. That acreage in today's west Kings Mountain comprises the greater part of an important residential neighborhood now known as the West End.¹ Whether, and for how long, the Tracys might have occupied the existing Falls residence is unknown, as is knowledge of where it stood. According to tradition the Tracys were living in a now-lost house in the southwest corner of West Gold and Tracy streets in the 1890s. In the event two critical facts are known: Mrs. Tracy served as postmaster of White Plains, and it was during her tenure that she gave the name, Kings Mountain, to the place that blossomed into the present day town.²

The character of the White Plains settlement, here at the eastern edge of Cleveland County and just inside its east border with Gaston County, was forever changed in the 1870s when the tracks of the Atlanta and Richmond Air-Line Railway were laid through this area and the decision was made to establish a station here. It would be the first stop on the rail line above the North Carolina/South Carolina border. "The locating railroad engineers placed the station for the new town about two blocks east of the White Plains post office which in the early 1870s was in my grandfather Tracy's home."³

The construction of the Atlanta and Richmond Air-Line Railway through the countryside and the opening of this critical transportation artery linking Atlanta and Richmond, two centers of the post-Civil War New South, in 1873 effectively gave birth to the town of Kings Mountain. It also attracted a number of enterprising men, who joined Dr. Tracy as citizens of this new place. They all prospered by launching a series of mercantile operations, small manufacturing concerns, and related enterprises that formed the foundations of a promising textile industry in the closing decades of the nineteenth century. Captain Freno Dilling (1839-1924), among the first to come to Kings Mountain, moved his sawmilling operations in May 1872 from Cherryville and milled cross ties for the railroad and lumber for other new arrivals. In spring 1873 two brothers, William Andrew (1841-1929) and Jacob Simri (1846-1936) Mauney, came to Kings Mountain from eastern Cleveland County, acquired acreage on the east side of the railroad line, built houses, and jointly operated a mercantile store. In February 1874, when the town was chartered, Dr. Tracy, Mr. Dilling, William Andrew Mauney, and D. C. Beam were named commissioners. Mr. Mauney, who was the town's first postmaster, also became its first mayor.

The matter of where the post office in Kings Mountain was located in the first quarter-century of the town's existence remains to be firmly confirmed. Traditionally, in this period and in small towns and villages across the North Carolina Piedmont, the post office was located in either the home or place of business of the postmaster or in small rented quarters. According to family tradition, Mrs. Tracy operated the White Plains post office in her house. The White Plains post office effectively ceased operation, and it was succeeded by a new post office in the new town of Kings Mountain. William Andrew Mauney was named the first postmaster of the United States Post Office at Kings Mountain in 1873 and held the position until 1889. According to local tradition, Mr. Mauney operated the post office from his mercantile premises in the 100 block of today's South Battleground Avenue, including his second store, a two-story brick building erected in 1878, the first brick commercial building in the small town.⁴ The location(s) of the post office between 1889 and 1901, while James W. Brown, Rufus S. Plonk, and Samuel Sylvester Weir Sr. were postmasters, successively, is unconfirmed. Edwin Lee Weir's appointment as postmaster became effective in November 1901.

The first documented location of the post office in Kings Mountain appears on the Sanborn Map Company's first map of the town, a single sheet published in April 1902. The abbreviation "P. O." is inscribed inside the plan of a two-story building standing at the south end of the then-existing South Battleground Avenue commercial streetscape in the 100 block of the street between Mountain and Gold streets. It was about midway

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of the block and east/northeast of the Southern Railway Freight Depot, which stood on the immediate east side of the railroad tracks and in the edge of the street carrying between the tracks and the continuous row of one- and two-story commercial buildings. The owner of the property at that time has not been identified as yet. By May 1908, when the Sanborn Map Company published its second map of Kings Mountain and while Edwin Lee Ware (1878-1959) was postmaster, the post office had been relocated to a one-story building comprising the north block of a multiple-block building labeled "General Store."

In May 1919, when the third map of Kings Mountain was published by the Sanborn Map Company, the post office is occupying rented premises in the three-storefront Hord Building in the 100 block of West Mountain Street. That now-lost rental commercial building, owned by the heirs of Dr. Jacob George Van Buren Hord, stood in the southwest corner of West Mountain and Cherokee streets. The post office was in the second storefront west of the corner. The decision to relocate the post office to the Hord Building was probably made by Arthur Hunter Patterson (1881-1972), who became postmaster on 24 April 1914 and served for about eight and one-half years.⁵ He was succeeded as postmaster on 10 January 1923 by Samuel Sylvester Weir (1867-1955), who, in turn, was succeeded by James Sloan Ware (1892-1958) in May 1932. The United States Post Office remained in the Hord Building through their terms of office and until this building was completed and occupied in 1940.

The initiative to secure a permanent post office facility for Kings Mountain appears to have coincided with, or followed shortly on, the appointment of William Edgar Blakely (1898-1956) as postmaster. Mr. Blakely, James Edward Herndon (1893-1959), mayor of Kings Mountain (1933-1939), and other prominent men of Kings Mountain sought the assistance of Alfred Lee Bulwinkle (1883-1950), the long-serving (1921-1929, 1931-1950) representative of North Carolina's Tenth Congressional District. Congressman Bulwinkle had succeeded in 1937 in securing an appropriation for a new post office in Belmont, Gaston County, and he was successful again in securing funding for the Kings Mountain post office.⁶

The choice of a site for the building was made in 1938. It comprised the Carpenter house and lot in the southeast corner of South Piedmont Avenue and East Mountain Street and a smaller, adjoining parcel on the south that was owned by the heirs of Dr. Jacob George Van Buren Hord. The site was both prominent and accessible, being a short distance from the newly-completed Kings Mountain City Hall at 112 South Piedmont Avenue and a block east of the existing post office on West Mountain Street.

The Carpenter property was part of a larger acreage fronting on East Mountain Street acquired in 1875 and 1877 by Anderson P. (1846-1912) and Marcus M. (1848-1928) Carpenter, brothers who came to Kings Mountain from Cherryville and like their kinsmen, the Mauney brothers, operated a general mercantile store on Battleground Avenue.⁷ Members of the Carpenter family are said to have built at least three houses on this tract. Only the Anderson P. Carpenter House at 118 East Mountain Street survives. Marcus M. Carpenter married Frances Jane Rudisill (1858-1942) in 1879. They are said to have occupied the two-story frame house and lot that Mrs. Frances Jane Carpenter sold to the United States of America on 8 June 1939 for \$6,247.50.⁸ The rectangular lot enjoyed a frontage of 119 feet on East Mountain Street and a depth of 137.50 feet on South Piedmont Avenue. The acquisition of the smaller rectangular tract on the south side of the Carpenter property, measuring 120 feet by 32.5 feet (on South Piedmont Avenue) was made through condemnation proceedings entered against Mrs. Carrie B. White Hord, administrator of her husband's estate. The condemnation was effected on 31 October 1939 with payment of \$1,500.00 to the Hord estate.⁹

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Meanwhile, on Thursday, 4 May 1939, the *Kings Mountain Herald* published an account of an inspection of the property by postal officials and Congressman Bulwinkle.

“It’s a beautiful site, in fact it is one of the prettiest I have ever seen”, said S. W. Purdum, 4th Assistant Postmaster General in reference to the site selected for the post office building. Mr. Purdum of Washington, D.C., was in Kings Mountain Wednesday morning on an inspection trip. He was accompanied by Congressman A. L. Bulwinkle, Postmaster Paul Younts, of Charlotte, and Postmaster C. W. Bosheimer of Gastonia.

The group did not remain long after a conference with Postmaster W. E. Blakely, as Major Bulwinkle had a speaking engagement in Charlotte.

The design of the post office was executed by the Office of the Supervising Architect, Louis A. Simon, which was moved in 1939 from the Treasury Department to the Federal Works Agency and placed under its Public Buildings Administration. Its Colonial Revival style was typical of many such post offices erected in towns and small cities in the period which had essentially identical plans with subtle differences in exterior detailing and some variety in materials, namely the substitution of stone for brick in areas where stone was locally or regionally available and a tradition of stone masonry existed. The Kings Mountain Post Office standard plan façade treatment is identical to that of the United States Post Office in Lancaster, Erie County, New York, erected in 1938-1939.

On 10 August 1939, the *Kings Mountain Herald* reported on the proposed federal building under the caption, “Bids For Post Office To Be Opened Sept. 6th.”

Bids for the construction of Kings Mountain’s \$73,000 Post Office Building will be opened in Washington September 6th according to a legal advertisement in this issue of the *Kings Mountain Herald*The complete cost of the building, real estate and equipment will amount to \$73,000.

According to the advertisement drawings and specifications will be submitted free to general contractors interested in submitting bids.

It is understood that it will take about one month from the opening of the bids until the contract can be let and the actual construction begun. according to this, the work should begin sometime during the first part of October.¹⁰

A week later, on 17 August 1939, the *Herald* editor, Haywood Eugene Lynch, reported in his column “Here and There ” that “Clyde Bennett received a set of plans and specifications for the new Post Office building. The set of specifications is almost as thick as a Sears, Roebuck catalog.” Clyde Thomas Bennett Sr. (1903-1959) was a local contractor and owner of a brick plant.

On 14 September 1939 the *Kings Mountain Herald* published a list of the eleven firms submitting bids for the construction of the post office and their bids. The list included Clyde Bennett’s, three from Charlotte-based companies including the J. A. Jones Construction Company that had built the Kings Mountain City Hall in 1937, three bids from concerns in Morganton, High Point, and Greensboro, North Carolina, as well as four bids from concerns in the states of Georgia (two), Alabama, and Illinois. The bid of O. J. Havrid and Company of

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Augusta, Georgia, was the lowest at \$45,000. In the event the bid was awarded to the Greensboro, North Carolina, firm of L. B. Gallimore, Incorporated, at \$46,900.

On 9 November 1939 the *Kings Mountain Herald* announced to its readers that ground had been broken for the post office in a story under the heading “Work On New Post Office Started Monday.” Monday was 6 November 1939.

Neal Hawkins Construction Contracting Company of Gastonia broke ground on Kings Mountain’s new \$70,000 Post Office Monday, beginning a 2200 square feet excavation in preparation for the Gallimore Construction Company of Greensboro who will construct the building.

The new Post Office will be located on the corner of Piedmont Avenue and Mountain street, just opposite the Baptist and Methodist Churches. Time required for building the post office could not be learned by the *Herald*, but Mr. Harry Dixon, in charge of excavating for Neal Hawkins, stated that the excavation would be completed within the next few days and that the Contractors could move in immediately thereafter.

Lloyd Boyles Gallimore (1909-1981) was a native of Guilford County, North Carolina, and the owner of the construction company that bore his name. He was the eldest of three (known) sons of William Steven Gallimore (1880-1963) and his wife Louella Teague Gallimore (1883-1946). In both the 1910 and 1920 federal censuses William Steven Gallimore reported his occupation as “carpenter.” Lloyd Boyles Gallimore likely gained valuable experience in carpentry and construction from his father, and the organization of a building firm in his name probably developed from that familial association. The selection of Mr. Gallimore’s bid was based on his experience and reputation as a contractor. His firm had received the contract for the new United States Post Office in Belmont in April 1939. It was completed in November and dedicated in ceremonies on 4 December 1939.¹¹

On 29 February 1940, an anecdotal account on the progress of the building, based on an on-site interview with Mr. Gallimore, was published on the front page of the *Kings Mountain Herald* under the headline, “New Post Office About Half Completed.” Although the weather had delayed work on the building, Mr. Gallimore indicated the post office would be completed in mid-June.¹²

As work on the post office continued in spring 1940, two other matters of note advanced to resolution. One, in response to the provisions of civil service legislation, was the naming of William Edgar Blakely as the permanent postmaster in Kings Mountain. Heretofore, postmasters, including Mr. Blakely, had been appointed for four-year terms. The *Kings Mountain Herald* reported on Congressman Bulwinkle’s recommendation of Mr. Blakely for the permanent position on 2 May 1940. On 23 May 1940 the newspaper published a short article under the heading, “Blakely Named Postmaster,” announcing President Franklin Delano Roosevelt’s nomination of Mr. Blakely to succeed himself. Meanwhile, Horatio Thomas Fulton Jr. (1906-1988), an influential city councilman, was pursuing support for a mural for the building with Congressman Bulwinkle. On 13 June 1940 the *Kings Mountain Herald* announced the success of his efforts in an article published under the caption “\$730 Alloted For Post Office Picture.” The article included the text of a letter to Mr. Fulton from Edward B. Rowan, Assistant Chief, Section of Fine Arts, Public Building Administration, relating the details of the appropriation. Mr. Rowan concluded his letter noting “You no doubt have some specific subject matter in

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mind which you wish used and I will appreciate your furnishing this office with a statement on this in the near future.”

The approaching completion of the post office was the subject of another front-page article, “New Post Office is Nearing Completion,” in the *Kings Mountain Herald* on 13 June 1940.

King’s Mountain’s new handsome \$70,000 Post Office is nearing completion and will soon be ready for the dedication, which is scheduled for June 28th, according to Postmaster W. E. Blakely. Workmen are putting the finishing touches to the building which will be complete in every respect. Contractor Gallimore has done an excellent job, and the building is one of which all of Kings Mountain may be justly proud.

Boxes in the now Post Office are now for rent, and patrons may secure same by applying to Postmaster Blakely. The rates are the same as in the old building with the same as in the old building with the exception of an addition of a large box group. The prices which are based on the receipts of the Post Office will be 60¢, 75¢, \$1.00 and \$1.50. The boxes are equipped with keys instead of the old style combinations.

Postmaster Blakely stated that moving would begin Friday and they would start uncrating and placing furniture today.

The new building will be opened for business June 30th, which is the end of the quarter and also the end of the fiscal year.

Complete details of the dedication program which will be held Friday June 28th will be published in a later issue of The Herald.

In the event plans did not go as expected. Under the heading, “Post Office Dedication Postponed,” the *Kings Mountain Herald* informed its readers of the change on Thursday, 20 June 1940.

The dedication of the Kings Mountain Post Office which had been tentatively scheduled for June 28th has been indefinitely postponed due to the National Emergency which necessitates the presence of all Congressmen and High Postal Officials in Washington. Postmaster Blakely regrets the delay but a more appropriate dedication can be had by waiting.

However, the new building will be occupied on June 30th as planned and patrons will be served from the new office beginning Monday, July 1.

Boxes in the new Post Office are now on sale, and citizens are asked to please secure keys as soon as possible to avoid delay in receiving mail in the new building.

The final front-page article in the *Kings Mountain Herald* concerning the newly-completed post office appeared on 27 June 1940 under the heading, “Service in New Post Office Begins Monday.”

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Another milestone along the road of progress in the history of Kings Mountain is about to be passed. Since the beginning, of the Best Town in the State, citizens have received their mail from rented quarters, but beginning Monday, July 1, 1940, patrons will be served from their own, Federal Building, which stands as a monument to the growth and progress of Kings Mountain....

Mail will be put in boxes at the old location for the last time Sunday. Patrons desiring boxes are reminded to secure them as soon as possible, so as to avoid delay in receiving mail in the new building. Dedication exercise for the new building has been delayed, but will be held later.

There is no known record, at present, of a dedication ceremony for the new building during the year after it was placed in operation.

In 1941 the new post office enjoyed improvements to its grounds and the installation of the mural. The "Planting Plan" for the post office was prepared in the Office of the Supervising Architect in 1940, but it apparently was not advertised for bids until spring 1941. A front-page article in the *Kings Mountain Herald* on 27 March 1941, published under the heading, "Post Office Grounds To Be Beautified," informed readers that Mr. Blakely recommended to his superiors that the low bid of \$319 by the Mecklenburg Nurseries of Charlotte be accepted for the work. "The bid included the planting of shrubbery and trees and landscaping the grounds around the Post Office Building. The project is to be completed by April 15th and the firm awarded the contract will tend to the newly planted shrubs and trees for one year." The landscape design, simple in plan and utilizing water oaks and four varieties of shrubbery, complemented the symmetrical design of the Colonial Revival-style post office.

The commission for the mural was awarded to Verona Lorraine Burkhard (1910-2004), who had previously painted murals for post offices in Powell, Wyoming, and Deer Lodge, Montana. The mural was installed by the artist in the post office on Monday, 16 June 1941, and described in an account, "Mural Now On Wall of Post Office," in the *Kings Mountain Herald* on 19 June 1941.

The oil painting on canvass (sic) cost approximately \$700 and according to Miss Burkhard depicts, "The meeting of the 70th and 71st regiment of British soldiers augmented by various other units, including detachments of Tories, under the famous Major Patrick Ferguson; and volunteer continental troops.

These continental troops were from the Carolinas and Virginia, especially North Carolina.

The battle of Kings Mountain which resulted was fought on October 7, 1780. The British force was surrounded and caught in a surprise attack which forced them to make a final stand along the rocky ridges approaching Kings Mountain.

During the fighting a subordinate British officer, Captain DePeyster attempted to surrender but Major Ferguson cut down the flag of truce with his broken sword.

This is the specific incident in the battle which serves as a subject for the mural. It will be noted that in the painting the Major holds his sword in his left hand, as his right arm was rendered

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useless by a wound received two years before. He is also wearing a checked duster which was his habit. This marked him out to the Continental soldiers.

Shortly after this incident Major Ferguson was killed and the British surrendered.

The battle lasted a little over an hour, it was fierce and dramatic and the victory tremendously important to the American cause. It was one of the main reasons for the subsequent surrender of Cornwallis to General Fashrington (sic).”

The United States Post Office served the citizens of Kings Mountain and the surrounding area encompassing its rural routes for over forty-six years, until being replaced by the present post office building in November 1986. William Edgar Blakely held the office of postmaster for eighteen and one-half years and resigned the position effective 15 January 1955. The account of his resignation, published on 13 January 1955 in the *Kings Mountain Herald*, noted that annual receipts at the post office had quadrupled from about \$15,000, when he was appointed postmaster in 1936, to over \$60,000 in 1954. An editorial, written by Martin Harmon, in the issue of 20 January 1955 noted “The record of the growth of the post office here, improvements in service, and expansion of the service area during Mr. Blakely’s tenure has been good, and he is due credit for this record.”

Mr. Blakely was succeeded immediately by William Theodore Weir (1901-1978), who was named acting postmaster and held the office until Charles Leonard Alexander (1921-2010) was named permanent postmaster effective 24 August 1956. In his 20 January 1955 editorial Martin Harmon wrote “In the new acting postmaster, W. T. Weir, the postal patrons will find a familiar figure of whom they may expect a good job. Mr. Weir’s background for the position is ideal. For almost all his adult life, Mr. Weir has been in service businesses.” Mr. Weir was a son of Samuel Sylvester Weir Sr. (1867-1955), who had served as postmaster for a short period in 1901 and again from 1923 into 1932. Mr. Alexander held the office of postmaster from 24 August 1956 until 25 July 1977 and has the distinction of being the longest-serving postmaster in Kings Mountain’s history. In 1978 he was succeeded by Odus Fred Weaver (b. 1923) who oversaw the construction of the new post office building and the relocation of services from this building to the new facility.

The second purpose-built, present United States Post Office in Kings Mountain stands at 115 East Gold Street a few hundred feet southeast of this building and in the southeast corner of the city block bounded by East Mountain, South Gaston, and East Gold streets and South Piedmont Avenue. Designed by the Charlotte architectural firm of Ferebee Walters and Associates and built by the Kenneth Reed Construction Company of Huntersville, the new post office covers 12,300 square feet and provides larger customer and service areas, an increased number of post office boxes, and increased customer and service parking. It was placed in operation on Friday, 28 November 1986.

The future of the now redundant former post office building and its possible adaptive reuse were matters affected by other actions and considerations in the city. The increasing spatial needs of the offices and departments of city government, which were housed in the Kings Mountain City Hall erected in 1937, prompted address in the 1970s, and the decision was made to erect a new city hall on the south side of the 100 block of West Gold Street on the former Bonnie Mill property. In 1979 the new Kings Mountain City Hall was completed at 101 West Gold Street and occupied by the administrative offices of city government and the fire department. The police department, which had formerly shared limited space in the Depression-era city hall, expanded into the partially-vacated building. In spring 1986 a group of prominent citizens organized the Kings

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Mountain Historical Museum Foundation and filed articles of incorporation, stating as its first purpose “To collect, preserve and display items and documents relating to the history of the City of Kings Mountain.” The city granted the organization initial operating space in the former city hall not being utilized by the police department.

In 1987-1988 the city reached an agreement with the United States Postal Service to buy the former post office building and the lot comprising its grounds. A disagreement between the two parties soon arose in regard to the ownership of the mural. The city expressed the view that the purchase of the property included the mural mounted on the lobby wall. The United States Postal Service maintained that its ownership of the mural was not affected by the property sale. A compromise was reached whereby the two parties contributed funds for the cleaning and restoration of the mural which afterward was placed on loan by the United States Postal Service to the City of Kings Mountain. The mural was placed on a wall in the lobby of the 1979 City Hall and dedicated anew in ceremonies in 3 March 1990. The United States Postal Service conveyed the former post office property to the City of Kings Mountain on 31 August 1990 for the price of \$90,000. The deed included protective covenants naming historically significant features of the building and the requirement that any rehabilitation work be undertaken in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior’s “Standards for Rehabilitation” and in consultation with the North Carolina State Historic Preservation Officer.

The former post office had a new owner but lacked an appropriate use. In the 1990s the City of Kings Mountain decided to demolish the 1937 city hall and erect a new, purpose-built facility for its police department on the site. During this period the city police department occupied temporary quarters in the former Kings Mountain Herald building at 210 South Piedmont Avenue and utilized the basement of the former post office for storage. The Kings Mountain Historical Museum Foundation stored its growing collections and artifacts on the main level. In July 1999 the Kings Mountain Police Department placed its new facility in operation and ceased use of space in the former post office.

The Kings Mountain Historical Museum Foundation entered into a lease agreement with the City of Kings Mountain and became the sole occupant of the former post office. The essential fabric, appearance, and integrity of the interior was preserved in the adaptation for museum use: the principal change of note was the removal of the waist-high retail sales counter in the near center of the south lobby wall to provide access to the former service and work areas that were utilized for display and exhibitions. On Thursday evening, 26 October 2000, the Kings Mountain Historical Museum opened at a benefit reception. Today the museum utilizes all parts of the building for administrative, exhibition, sales, and collections storage purposes. The City of Kings Mountain and the Kings Mountain Historical Museum have remained exemplary stewards of the former United States Post Office.

Politics/Government and Architecture Significance

The local significance of the United States Post Office in Kings Mountain in the areas of Politics/Government and Architecture are intertwined in the role of the federal government in American life, its operation of the United States postal system and its construction of buildings to house postal operations, its efforts nationwide in the 1930s to alleviate unemployment and the effects of the Depression on society, and the role of the Office of the Supervising Architect, an important, influential federal agency, long housed in the Treasury Department, that was responsible for the design and construction of thousands of public buildings across the nation from the

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nineteenth century up to World War II. The United States Post Office in Kings Mountain, erected in 1939-1940, reflects all of these activities.

It also holds important associations with dramatic changes in the federal building program that occurred on the eve of World War II with the creation of the Federal Works Agency in 1939.

In July 1939, the Public Works Branch of the Procurement Division was taken out of the Treasury Department altogether and became part of the Public Buildings Administration of the Federal Works Agency under John M. Carmody. Under this reorganization, the former assistant director of the Procurement Division, W. E. Reynolds, became commissioner of public buildings. Louis A. Simon retained the title of supervising architect and was subordinate to Reynolds. . . . In addition, the building management functions of the National Park Service were consolidated into the Public Works Administration. The remainder of the Procurement Division was left in the Treasury Department.

The charge of the Public Buildings Administration was to design and construct all new federal buildings, exclusive of those for the War and Navy departments and the Veterans Administration. With the postmaster general, the Public Buildings Administration was also responsible for the development of a 'progressively expanding national plan' that would distribute future federal buildings in an equitable fashion.

The removal of the federal architecture program from the Treasury Department marked the end of an era. The Office of the Supervising Architect left the department that had nurtured, sustained, and defended it.

It is ironic that the 1930s marked both a high point in the fortunes of the Office of the Supervising Architect as well as its demise. Never before had the Office undertaken a building program of such enormous proportions. Under Louis A. Simon, the buildings received praise (albeit reluctant) from private practitioners.¹³

The United States Post Office in Kings Mountain was approved and funded while the Office of the Supervising Architect was in the Treasury Department, however, it was built and landscaped after Louis A. Simon, FAIA, Supervising Architect, Office of the Supervising Architect, was placed in the Federal Works Agency. The inscription on the cornerstone of the Kings Mountain post office reflects these changes in the federal building program and the diminution in status of the Office of the Supervising Architect and its head. Louis A. Simon is listed as the fourth of five federal officials, top to bottom in rank, on the stone. He is identified simply as "Supervising Architect." The once prominent "Office of the Supervising Architect" was subsumed within a reordered bureaucracy. James A. Farley, the "Postmaster General," appears at the top of the stone which includes the names of James M. Carmody and W. Englebert Reynolds and their positions, then Mr. Simon, and concludes with that of Neal A. Melick, the "Supervising Engineer."

While a post office could have been built in Kings Mountain in the opening decades of the twentieth century, when the local textile-based economy was flourishing and expanding, new mills were built, others enlarged, and their employment of local and regional residents increased year by year, it did not. The Kings Mountain post office would remain in rented premises until this building was completed. In retrospect, given the prosperity and

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prominence the town's textile operations reached in the 1920s, the town might well have erected its first, purpose-built city hall and sought a post office building, particularly after the passage of the Public Buildings Act of 1926, in that decade. It did not. Neither did construction occur in the early 1930s, when Kings Mountain, like so many other towns in the North Carolina Piedmont, the state, and the nation, was adjusting municipal expenditures and expectations as the effects of the Great Depression deepened and unemployment increased. In Kings Mountain, the economic situation was mitigated in part by the Neisler family's ability to continue to successfully own and operate its family-held Pauline, Patricia, and Margrace mills while other local and regional textile mills suffered significant disruptions and some went into receivership.

The increasing federal funding for public buildings in the 1930s, including that provided by the National Industrial Recovery Act of 1933, and a gradually improving economic situation brightened the outlook in Kings Mountain in the middle of the decade. Another important factor was the sustained interest and influence of Congressman Alfred Lee Bulwinkle (1883-1950). Mr. Bulwinkle served Kings Mountain and the region as the representative of the state's Tenth Congressional District from his election in 1920 until his death in 1950 except for a two-year period following his one-time defeat in 1928.

Newspaper accounts represent his role in securing federal support for the construction of both the first purpose-built town hall in Kings Mountain and the town's first post office, which was the first building erected in Kings Mountain reflecting the role of the federal government in civic and community life. The federal presence in Kings Mountain in the 1930s was seen first, to great effect, in 1936 when the town received funding to support construction of a town hall. That Colonial Revival-style building, completed in 1937 at 112 South Piedmont Avenue, replaced a house acquired in 1923 and adapted for use as a town hall. The new building was the first erected to house the offices and departments of city government, and it served as the center of municipal government until the present Kings Mountain City Hall was completed and occupied in 1979. That now-lost building was a source of pride for the citizens of Kings Mountain, and its presence may well have fueled the efforts of city leaders to turn again to Congressman Bulwinkle and other officials to secure a post office building.

As local economic conditions improved in the late 1930s, public spirits in Kings Mountain swelled anew in 1939 when an appropriation was secured for the post office and citizens saw it under construction. The additional funding obtained in 1940 for a mural was further cause for civic celebration. The United States Post Office, enhanced by the mural installed in 1941 and landscaping completed that same year, became a handsome embodiment of the federal government and the United States postal system. It remains today, in service as a local history museum, the most imposing and handsomely-detailed public building erected in the city of Kings Mountain and the first of only two such major federal buildings constructed in Kings Mountain.

The United States Post Office's significance in the area of architecture is associated with the role of the Office of the Supervising Architect and its head, Louis A. Simon, in the construction of public buildings, the office and Mr. Simon's favored usage of the Colonial Revival Style for federal buildings, and the post office's survival as an important, well-preserved example of the style and its realization by the Office of the Supervising Architect. The United States Post Office in Kings Mountain was built during the tenure of Louis Adolphe Simon (1867-1958) as Supervising Architect in the Office of the Supervising Architect. A native of Baltimore, he was educated at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and after two years in private practice he gained appointment in 1896 to the Office of the Supervising Architect in the United States Treasury Department, which had responsibility for the design and construction of buildings to house agencies, offices, and activities of the

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federal government throughout the nation. Talented and skillful, he quickly advanced in the Office of the Supervising Architect and served as chief of the Architectural Division until 1934 when he succeeded James Alfonso Wetmore (1863-1940), the long serving Acting Supervising Architect. Although his tenure as Supervising Architect was relatively brief, and ended in 1941, at the age of seventy-three (or seventy-four), his influence on the design of public buildings was highly significant. That long service was the subject of a two-part article, "The Simon Era in the Supervising Architect's Office," published in 1942 in *The Federal Architect*. "Louis A. Simon will have a thousand or more buildings throughout the land, some bearing his name, some not, which are tokens of his ability. Words concerning that ability are relatively ineffectual. It is the buildings themselves which are the best commentary of his judgement and his service to the country."¹⁴

The article cited a marked difference in the buildings he designed or whose design he supervised and those of his predecessors in the Office of the Supervising Architect. As Antoinette J. Lee notes in *Architects to the Nation*, paraphrasing a point made in the 1942 article, "The design of federal buildings under Simon was described as a 'suitable bromide' to the exuberance of the French renaissance promulgated by his predecessors."¹⁵ In 1942 *The Federal Architect* writer stressed the distinctive difference. "In its place, under Mr. Simon's guiding hand, came more the subdued, more sentimental architecture of the Italian Renaissance and the Colonial."¹⁶ The design, finish, and appearance of the United States Post Office in Kings Mountain, reflects Mr. Simon's preference for the "Colonial." It and others in North Carolina and the nation, including the nearly identical post office erected in Lancaster, Erie County, New York, comprise a distinct, identifiable subset of federal post office buildings that are firmly fixed in time and the history of the United States.¹⁷

In the Kings Mountain post office, Louis A. Simon's preference for the American "Colonial" in the design of buildings to reflect the federal presence in American life and the landscape of the nation's towns and cities is joined by another distinguishing feature of his architectural philosophy. This was a quality recognized by his peers in the American Institute of Architects and cited in the application supporting his election as a fellow of the association in 1937. Ms. Lee quotes the pertinent passage in *Architects to the Nation*. "His contemporaries felt that his work was 'characterized by an effort toward simplicity and restraint and the attainment of pleasing results, by a studied consideration of mass and proportion, rather than by excess of elaboration or non-functional expression, such as characterized some of the early work of the Supervising Architect's office.'" ¹⁸ The United States Post Office in Kings Mountain embodies the distinguishing characteristics of the American interwar-period Colonial Revival style, namely the architectural forms, features, and detailing of the American colonial and early-national period, in the design of a small, sparsely-detailed, and elegantly-proportioned building. Its symmetrical façade and complementing elevations are realized in a simple, lean, and skillful combination of North Carolina-produced brick and Mt. Airy granite, Indiana limestone, and painted molded woodwork with arch-headed fenestration. The cupola and ornate weathervane that rests on the ridge of its hipped roof are characteristic features of both federal post offices and institutional buildings of the period. The classic symmetry and finish of the exterior is continued inside, where marble, molded plaster, and handsome oak woodwork are joined with distinctly modern terrazzo to produce an imposing program of interior decoration that also retains its integrity.

Endnotes

1. See West End Historic District, NR, 2010.
2. The most reliable published source on the history of White Plains and the early history of the city of Kings Mountain is *Since I Was Born*, the appealing memoir of Robert Lee Durham (1870-1948), the

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first-born grandchild of Dr. and Mrs. Tracy. His knowledge of events came from his mother and Tracy grandparents and was supplemented by conversations with kin and friends. His account of the naming of the town appears on pages 77-78. Robert Lee Durham's surviving papers are held at Duke University.

3. Durham, 90.
4. See "Post Office Has Served Area For 143 Years," *Kings Mountain Herald*, 7 October 1980.
5. Mr. Patterson is better known in the history of Kings Mountain as an original incorporator of the Home Building and Loan Association and his service as secretary-treasurer from 1923 to 1961.
6. The United States Post Office in Belmont was listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1995.
7. Cleveland County Deeds, K/247-248 and M/415-416. The 1875 purchase was a rectangular lot in the southeast corner of East Mountain Street and South Piedmont Avenue with frontages of 275 feet on East Mountain Street and 162.5 feet on South Piedmont Avenue. In 1877 the Carpenter brothers bought the parcel on the east side of their 1875 acquisition, a square tract measuring 275 feet on each side and extending east to Gaston Street.
8. Cleveland County Deeds, 4T/162.
9. Cleveland County Deeds, 4X/155-159. The acquisition of this property had long been assumed. On 26 January 1939 the *Kings Mountain Herald* published a short article under the heading "Two Homes Being Moved." Readers learned "Two homes belonging to Mrs. J. G. Hord, and situated on Piedmont Avenue near the site for the new \$70,000 post office, are being moved to make room for the building. The new post office, . . . will cover 32 1-2 feet of the Hord property, thus necessitating the removal farther down the street."
10. Some mistake appears to have been made in regard to the legal notice. The surviving pages from the *Herald* for 10 August 1939 on microfilm contain a long legal notice regarding the condemnation of the Hord property but no reference to the matter of plans for the new building.
11. The history of Mr. Gallimore's firm, which retained prominence into the 1950s, remains to be examined. His death notice in the *Greensboro Daily News/Record* on Sunday, 11 January 1981, does not mention his career as a general contractor, however, that of his wife, Ardith Gallimore, published in the *Greensboro News & Record* on Sunday, 11 September 2005, noted that she and her late husband "owned and operated L. B. Gallimore, Inc. for many years. . . ." The couple's handsome Georgian Revival-style residence at 203 West Greenway North in Greensboro's Sunset Hills development, said to date to the late 1930s, is pictured in *Greensboro: An Architectural Record* (1995). Biographical information on Mr. Gallimore was compiled by this author with the assistance of Alex Floyd and Arthur G. Erickson.
12. During the field recording and research phases preceding the drafting of this nomination, this author inquired about the existence of any contemporary records concerning the construction of the post office that might survive either in the files of the currently-operating United States Post Office or in the collection of the Kings Mountain Historical Museum. In both instances the response was negative except for the landscape plan and blueprints related to the 1963 mechanical upgrade held at the Kings Mountain Historical Museum. On Thursday, 18 December 2014, Adria L. Focht, director and curator of the Kings Mountain Historical Museum, discovered two collections of documents concerning the design and construction of the United States Post Office, and she immediately advised me of their existence. I reviewed the materials on Friday, 19 December, and on Tuesday, 23 December. The first collection found was in a file cabinet at the currently-operating United States Post Office. The second, larger, more important collection was found (concealed under a stack of textiles) at the Kings Mountain Historical Museum. The United States Post Office Archival Collection comprises three copies of the "Government Form of Invitation For Proposals" that was distributed to prospective bidders in 1939, a correspondence file containing original letters and copies of others written by and between Mr. Gallimore, Hubert P.

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Illman, the construction engineer chiefly responsible for inspection of the building, and other officials, dated between 16 November 1939 and 27 June 1940, together with three copies of blueprints of the 1963 mechanical upgrade by Wilber, Kendrick, Workman & Warren, a file regarding repairs and painting, a small group of materials relating to the current post office, and a street map of Kings Mountain. The Kings Mountain Historical Museum Archival Collection, which was not accessioned as a part of the museum collections, comprises chiefly two correspondence files and two groups of blueprints, together with a copy of the "Invitation and Bid Form" for the 1941 planting project. One correspondence file, labeled "Samples," contains copies of letters written by and between Mr. Gallimore and federal officials concerning the submission and approval of materials, including the face brick, granite, limestone, roofing tiles, marble, and terrazzo, etc. dating between 4 November 1939 and 18 June 1940. The second file of correspondence is labeled "Modifications & Changes" and contains both original letters and copies of others chiefly by and between Mr. Gallimore and Walter C. Rankin, a federal official, dating between 9 December 1939 and 24 May 1940. The larger of the two groups of drawings comprise twenty-eight identified sheets, some represented by second copies, of shop drawings for features and fittings prepared by sub-contractors, manufacturers, or suppliers, which were submitted by Mr. Gallimore to the Federal Works Agency for approval. Each of them has a pre-printed label affixed to it with "L. B. Gallimore, General Contractor, Greensboro, N.C." in ink and "Shop Drawing No." followed by a blank for the individual sheet number and another for the project which are typewritten. The twenty-eight sheets bear shop drawing numbers 1-3, 8-13, 15-22, and 24-34, and all have the approval stamp of the Federal Works Agency on the front or back of each sheet. The drawings were produced by the Carolina Granite Company of Greensboro, NC, the Virginia Steel Company of Richmond, Virginia, Carolina Steel & Iron Company of Greensboro, NC, Soule Steel and Iron Company of Charlotte, NC, Michael Flynn Manufacturing Company of Philadelphia, PA, Atlantic Marble & Tile Company of Charlotte, NC, Newman Brothers, Incorporated, for Soule Steel and Iron Company, J. D. Sargent Granite Company of Mt. Airy, NC, Coleman Fireproof Door Company of Chicago, Illinois, the Logan Company of Louisville, Kentucky, and Dixie Roofing Company of Greensboro, NC. The second group of blueprints comprise ten individual sheets that were prepared by the Office of the Supervising Architect for details and fittings of the building including the front entrance, vestibule, lettering, and lockboxes. In addition there is a single sheet for the paired front doors of the post office and a set of six sheets (in duplicate) prepared by the Coleman Fireproof Door Company of Chicago. Neither collection of archival materials held a set of the blue prints for the building with plans, elevations, etc.

13. Antoinette J. Lee, *Architects to the Nation: The Rise and Decline of the Supervising Architects's Office* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 272-274. Hereinafter cited as Lee.
14. Quoted in Lee, 280. The article was published in volume 12 (April-June 1942) of *The Federal Architect*.
15. Lee, 260-261.
16. Quoted in Lee, 261.
17. The United States Post Office in Lancaster, Erie County, New York, located at 5064 Broadway, was nominated to the National Register as part of a thematic nomination, "United States Post Offices in New York State--1858 to 1943--Thematic Resources," in 1988 and listed in the National Register on 11 May 1989.
18. Lee, 260.

9. Major Bibliographical References

United States Post Office
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"Postal Official Accompanies Con. Bulwinkle Here," 4 May 1939.
"Bids For Post Office To Be Opened Sept. 6th," and "Notice,"
10 August 1939,
"Here and There..," 17 August 1939,
"Bids For New Post Office Opened," 14 September 1939,
"Work On New Post Office Started Monday," 9 November 1939,
"New Post Office About Half Completed," 29 February 1940,
"Here and There..," 4 April 1940,
"Blakely Recommended For Permanent Postmaster," 2 May 1940,
"By George," 16 May 1940,

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“Blakely Named Postmaster,” 12 May 1940,
“New Post Office Is Nearing Completion,” and “\$730 Alloted For
Post Office Picture,” 13 June 1940,
“Post Office Dedication Postponed,” 20 June 1940,
“Service In New Post Office Begins Monday,” 27 June 1940,
“Here and There..,” 4 July 1940,
“Post Office Grounds To Be Beautified,” 27 March 1941,
“Mural Now On Wall Of Post Office,” 19 June 1941,
“Here’s Kings Mountain Post Office Historical Mural,”
26 June 1941,
“Postmaster Blakely Resigning Position Effective January 15,”
13 January 1955,
“Postoffice Change,” 20 January 1955,
“Post Office Has Served Area For 143 Years,” and “Charles
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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 # _____
 recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

State Historic Preservation Office
 Other State agency
 Federal agency
 Local government
 University
 Other
Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): CL0295

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Less than one acre
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

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| | Zone | Easting | Northing | | Zone | Easting | Northing |

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The property included in this nomination is parcel number 6965 as shown on the enclosed print of a Cleveland County Tax Map. It comprises approximately 0.468 acres. The map is at a one inch equals approximately forty-five feet.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary, outlined in a bold dashed line on the above-noted map, is drawn to include the site and setting of the post office building and comprises the two adjoining parcels acquired in 1939 by the United States of America as the site of the post office. These same two adjoining parcels were sold by the United States Postal Service to the City of Kings Mountain, the present owner, by deed dated 31 August 1990.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Davyd Foard Hood
organization _____ date 29 May 2014
street & number Isinglass, 6907 Old Shelby Road telephone 704/462-1847
city or town Vale state NC zip code 28168
e-mail _____

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Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs:

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

Schedule of Photographs

The following information applies to all of the photographs included in this nomination.

Name of property: United States Post Office
Location: Kings Mountain, Cleveland County, North Carolina
Name of photographer: Davyd Foard Hood
Date of photographs: 14-15 June 2013
Location of original negatives: Division of Archives and History
109 East Jones Street
Raleigh, NC 27601

Photographs

1. Overall view of the United States Post Office, looking southeast.
2. Entrance frontispiece on the north façade, looking south.
3. Window detail, east window on façade, looking south.
4. West elevation of the post office, looking east/southeast with flagpole on left.
5. Overall view of west and south elevations, looking northeast.
6. Overall view of south and east elevations, looking north/northwest.
7. Concrete well on east elevation providing access to basement, looking north.
8. View in lobby, looking west to door into postmaster's office.
9. View in lobby, looking east.
10. View in lobby, looking southeast and showing bay where the service counter was removed for access to workroom/exhibition area.
11. East ell extension of lobby, looking south, with bays on right (west) and center (south) where mail boxes were originally located.
12. West elevation of the workroom, looking west, with door to safe on right and east elevation of enclosed staff room on left.
13. View in workroom, looking northeast onto wall where mail boxes were originally located.
14. Paired service doors in south wall of workroom that open into vestibule and provide access to the rear loading platform, looking south.

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15. Paired metal doors into boiler room on east side of basement passage, looking east, with metal grillwork door on left in opening into large north storage room.
16. Vehicle storage, looking southeast.

Property Owner:

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name The City of Kings Mountain, the Honorable Edgar O. Murphrey, Jr., Mayor

street & number Post Office Box 429 telephone 704/734-0333

city or town Kings Mountain state NC zip code 28068

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.