

VLR-10/21/75 NRHP-12/23/75

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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RECEIVED  
DATE ENTERED 12/23/75

# NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY - NOMINATION

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

## NAME

HISTORIC  
United States Post Office and Courthouse  
AND/OR COMMON  
Rig Stone Gap Post Office (Preferred)

## LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER  
East side of Route 58; .1 mile southwest of intersection of Route 58/23 and Route 61G.

CITY, TOWN  
Big Stone Gap  
STATE  
Virginia  
VICINITY OF  
51  
COUNTY  
Wise  
CODE  
195  
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT  
Ninth (William C. Wampler)  
NOT FOR PUBLICATION

## CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC ACQUISITION	<input type="checkbox"/> ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER

## OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME  
United States Postal Service  
STREET & NUMBER  
Main Street  
CITY, TOWN  
Big Stone Gap  
VICINITY OF  
STATE  
virginia 24219

## LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.  
Wise County Courthouse  
STREET & NUMBER  
CITY, TOWN  
Wise  
STATE  
Virginia 24293

## REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE  
Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission Survey  
DATE  
1975  
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS  
Virginia Historic Landmarks Commission  
CITY, TOWN  
221 Governor Street, Richmond  
STATE  
Virginia 23219  
FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

# DESCRIPTION

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

## DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Situated on the main street of Big Stone Gap in Wise County, the United States Post Office and Courthouse is an imposing three-story, Second Renaissance Revival structure built after the model of a Florentine palace. The stone building is seven bays long and is set upon a low basement. The ground floor is rusticated with horizontal bands and with voussiors over its round-headed windows. A Tuscan portico consisting of four pairs of coupled, unfluted columns shields the three central entrance bays. There is a triglyph in the frieze over each of the columns, and a balustrade runs along the eaves.

A belt course sets off the ground floor from the upper floors which have a smooth stone facing accented by barely articulated quoins. Tabernacle window frames help to emphasize the importance of the second story. The smaller, third-floor windows have plain recessed surrounds and break through the architrave molding into the broad, plain frieze beneath the bracketed cornice.

This treatment of the facade is carried around the sides of the building. The rear is marked by a large, deeply projecting pavilion, the ground story of which is lit by alternating broad and narrow windows with the piers between them treated as Tuscan pilasters. Three large round-headed windows stretching the height of the second and third floors reveal the location of the large courtroom. A bracketed cornice supporting the deep eaves of the low hipped roof runs around the entire building, and there are three round-headed dormers on the front slope.

The first floor of the Big Stone Gap Post Office has been extensively renovated to accommodate modern post office facilities. However, several significant remnants of the original decoration survive. These include marble floors and wainscoting, a coffered ceiling, elaborate cast-iron radiators, a handsome bulletin board framed by a pediment supported on Tuscan pilasters, with a writing desk on brackets under it, and a lavishly executed elevator cage with the opening of its iron cage flanked by paneled pilasters surmounted by a full entablature with egg and dart and dentil moldings.

The plan and appointments of the upper floors are remarkably undisturbed. A hall runs the length of the second floor, with jury rooms and lavatories lining the front of the building, and the courtroom occupying most of the rear. Judges' chambers are to one side of the courtroom, with the stair and elevator well to the other. Throughout this and the third floor, most of the original furniture, brass hardware and light fixtures survive. The second-floor men's lavatory, for instance, is entirely intact with its original plumbing, heating and lighting fixtures, and its marble stalls and floors.

The most noteworthy feature of the Post Office is the courtroom. This large chamber is entered through three pairs of elaborate mahogany doors with massive tabernacle frames. The rear half of the room contains seating for spectators; this is set off from the participants' area by a handsome railing with turned balusters. The ceiling is coffered; there is elaborate plaster paneling and guilloche work on the walls, and each of the windows and doors is framed by a large arch. Just inside the railing, centered in the room, is the witness chair, set facing the judge's bench on a little platform raised three steps from the floor. To either side are the lawyers' tables. The judge's bench is centered on one end wall, and arranged in two tiers directly in front of the bench, facing the witness, are chairs for the jury. To the judge's left is the clerk's bench; to his right is another table and chairs. All of this oak furniture is of a style which suggests that it was designed and built especially for this room. The appointments include a small portable blackboard architecturally harmonious with its surroundings.

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CONTINUATION SHEET #1 ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 1

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DESCRIPTION

The third floor consists primarily of small offices and jury rooms, ranged on either side of a longitudinal hall.

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# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1911-13 BUILDER/ARCHITECT James Knox Taylor, Supervising Architect, (succeeded by James A. Wetmore, 1912; Oscar Wenderoth, 1914)  
 STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE Flowman Construction Co., Builders

The United States Post Office and Courthouse at Big Stone Gap, a prominent feature of the town's central business district, is a fine example of the Second Renaissance Revival style of architecture, a style popular in the early twentieth century. Its size, its architectural excellence, and its lavish use of fine materials are all unusual for such a small town, especially in an area which was just emerging from a long period of isolation from the outside world. The building's importance is enhanced by the survival of a great quantity of early hardware, plumbing, heating and electric fixtures, and specially designed furniture.

When Big Stone Gap's Post Office building was planned, the town was barely twenty-five years old. It had had no railroad service until 1890, when the arrival of the first train, coupled with the anticipated growth of the coal industry, precipitated a great boom, followed by the bursting of the bubble. By 1908, the village's economy was beginning to recover, but Big Stone Gap was still a small settlement. In that year the Annual Report of the Supervising Architect (of the Federal government) first mentioned plans for the construction of a post office and courthouse, with \$15,000 set apart to acquire the site. The total cost of the project was limited to \$100,000 which was appropriated in two portions, in 1909 and 1911. In the latter year, the contract was let to the Flowman Construction Company. The Supervising Architect of the project was James Knox Taylor (1857-1929), who before entering government service had worked for the architect Cass Gilbert. Taylor resigned in 1912, and the Post Office was completed in 1913 under his successor Oscar Wenderoth, at a total cost of \$94,000.

Still in use as a Post Office and for federal agencies' offices, the building's courtroom is occupied only occasionally. The Postal Service is planning to demolish the building and build a new one outside the central business district, but there is citizen opposition to this scheme.

DTU



# BIG STONE GAP QUADRANGLE

VIRGINIA

7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC) 178-SE

SE/4 BIG STONE GAP 15' QUADRANGLE

4457 1 NW  
1 NORTON 187 NW

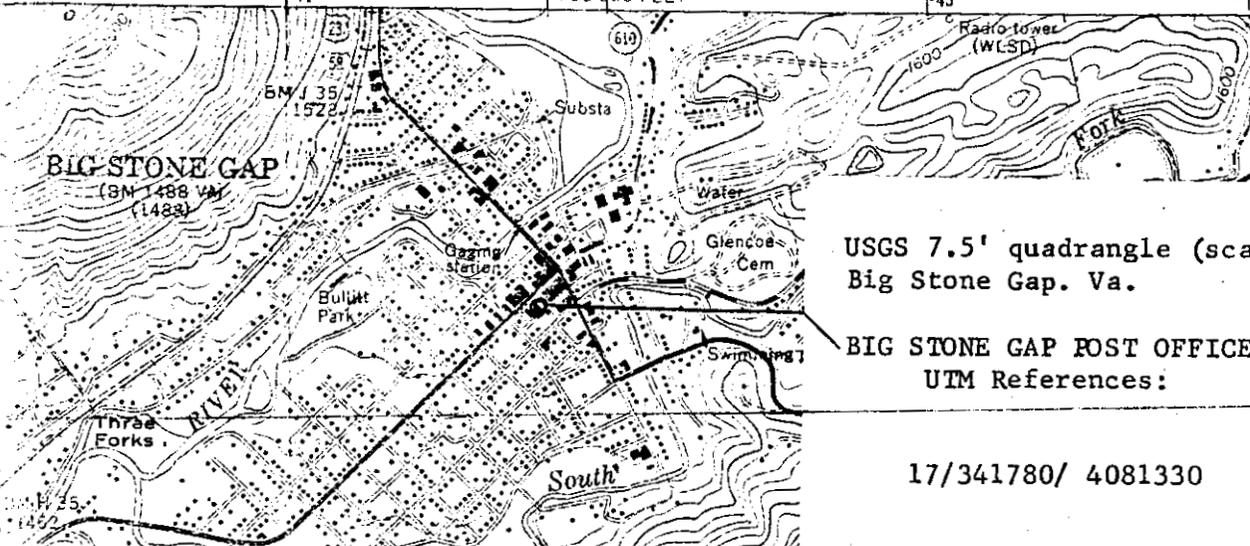
NORTON 14 MI.  
APPALACHIA 2.5 MI.

750 000 FEET

47°30'

82°45'

36°52'30"



USGS 7.5' quadrangle (scale:1:24000)  
Big Stone Gap, Va. 1957 (PR1969)

BIG STONE GAP POST OFFICE, WISE COUNTY  
UTM References:

17/341780/ 4081330

