



PRELIMINARY INFORMATION FORM (PIF) for INDIVIDUAL PROPERTIES

DHR No. (to be completed by DHR staff) 164-5018

Purpose of Evaluation

Please use the following space to explain briefly why you are seeking an evaluation of this property.

Primarily, to formally recognize the post office's historical and architectural significance.

Are you interested in applying for State and/or Federal Rehabilitation Tax Credits? Yes No x

Are you interested in receiving more information about DHR's easement program? Yes No x

1. General Property Information

Property name: Appalachia Post Office

Property address: 534 W. Main Street

City or Town: Town of Appalachia

Zip code: 24216

Name of the Independent City or County where the property is located: Wise County

Category of Property (choose only one of the following):

Building x Site Structure Object

2. Physical Aspects

Acreage: 0.35

Setting (choose only one of the following):

Urban Suburban Town x Village Hamlet Rural

Briefly describe the property's overall setting, including any notable landscape features:

The post office is located on a 0.35-acre lot on the south side of West Main Street, near the western end of Appalachia's downtown business district. An active railroad line runs parallel to Main Street, behind the buildings along the south side of Main Street, and comes as close as 75 feet to the post office building.

3. Architectural Description

Architectural Style(s): Colonial Revival

If the property was designed by an architect, landscape architect, engineer, or other professional, please list here: Louis A. Simon, Supervising Architect

If the builder is known, please list here: Harry S. Braun, construction engineer for contractor L. B. Gallimore, Greensboro, NC

Date of construction (can be approximate): 1938

Narrative Description:

In the space below, briefly describe the general characteristics of the entire property, such as its current use (and historic use if different), as well as the primary building or structure on the property (such as a house, store, mill, factory, depot, bridge, etc.). Include the architectural style, materials and method(s) of construction, physical appearance and condition (exterior and interior), and any additions, remodelings, or other alterations.

1983 US Postal Service survey (DHR archives): This Colonial-styled one-story with partial basement building is basically a brick and concrete structure that has a hip copper coated roof extending along its front elevation and a rear built-up composition roof. Its windows are double-hung wooden sash with moulded brick jack arches and stone sills. The brick facade is patterned in American bond and the front stoop and its corresponding steps have a flagstone covering and twin wrought iron railings to either side. Cornices and most other trim on the exterior consist of painted wood. The original main entrance to the lobby has been completely modernized and replaced with an aluminum and glass facade. The interior of the building is basically comprised of plaster walls and ceilings, wood flooring; wainscoting or chair railing and other materials usually found in postal facilities of this age. The front lobby still retains a wooden and glass vestibule, terrazzo flooring, marble wainscoting and plaster walls and ceiling with cornice. The interior finishes of the basement are primarily of smooth, painted concrete. The building is centrally heated and air conditioned and illuminated, mostly, with fluorescent tube lighting fixtures. The building and its grounds have been fairly well maintained. No major deferred maintenance problems were observed during inspection.

1995 Appalachia Historic District PIF (DHR archives): Appalachia Main Post Office, 534 West Main Street, is a one-story, five-bay, hip-roofed building with five-course American-bond brick walls. Measuring fifty-six feet by sixty-one feet, it has twelve-over-eight, double-hung, wood-sash windows and a double-locked, standing-seam copper roof. The original main entrance on the northeast facade has been replaced with a modern aluminum and glass entrance. The interior retains its plaster walls and ceilings and its wood floor, wainscot, and chair rail. The front lobby retains a wood and glass vestibule, terrazzo floor, marble wainscot, and plaster walls and ceilings.

August 2017 DHR survey: The Appalachia Post Office is a Great-Depression Era building built by the federal government. See narrative below for current descriptive information. There are no outbuildings or secondary resources on the parcel.

4. Property's History and Significance

In the space below, briefly describe the history of the property, such as significant events, persons, and/or families associated with the property. Please list all sources of information used to research the history of the property. (It is not necessary to attach lengthy articles or family genealogies to this form.)

If the property is important for its architecture, engineering, landscape architecture, or other aspects of design, please include a brief explanation of this aspect.

The Great Depression-era Appalachia Post Office, constructed on West Main Street in 1938, remains in use as the town's only post office. Because of its rarity and integrity (detailed below) it is recommended eligible at the local level of significance under Criterion A in the area of Politics/Government and Criterion C in the area of Architecture. The recommended period of significance spans from 1938 to 1967, using the 50-year cutoff.

It is the only extant post office of its kind in Wise County, which includes the larger towns of Wise and Big Stone Gap, and the City of Norton; and is one of ten in the DHR Western Region known to have had hand-painted murals in the lobby. The condition of the others is unknown, but the Appalachia example is in excellent condition.

Original photos of the building being constructed in January 1938 are stamped on the reverse: "Contractor: L. B. Gallimore, Greensboro N.C." and signed by construction engineer Harry S. Braun. Several construction-period and immediate post-construction photos are posted in an original display case mounted on the front wall of the lobby, and additional photos and documents remain on-site including as-built plan-view drawings rendered by "Cheatham" in June 1938 for the Treasury Department Procurement Division. Another interesting document is a 1960 receipt from a firearms dealer in North Carolina for a .38-caliber revolver that would serve as security for the post office's front-desk. Courtesy of the postmaster, Amanda Williams, several of the photos and documents were photographed with a digital camera by the surveyor and copied to the DHR archives/images.

The building retains an extraordinarily high level of historic integrity on the exterior and interior with the single notable exception of the principal entry. Construction-era photos show the original Colonial Revival-style wooden frontispiece--with full entablature, squared pilasters, lighted transom with fan-shaped tracery, and glazed folding doors--which has been replaced with a modern glazed aluminum curtain wall. A 1960 photo shows the original entry unmodified. Less significantly, an original rear-facing shed dormer that was never visible from the front of the building has been removed for security reasons; yet the original standing-seam metal roof remains in good condition. The almost square massing of the building is unchanged, and the mailing platform (loading dock) extension on the east side of the building is original to the 1938 construction. Even the original large wooden windows, with 12-over-six sash, are well-preserved. Each window opening is fitted with an interior storm window to enhance thermal efficiency.

The building interior is unusually well-preserved, including the spacious lobby with its tall ceiling and colorful oil-on-canvas mural painted and signed by Lucile Blanch in 1939, depicting a small town surrounded by wooded hills, emblematic of the Town of Appalachia. This mural is noted on a Wikipedia webpage dedicated to Blanch's life and work, which notes that "The murals were funded as a part of the cost of the construction of new post offices, with 1% of the cost set aside for artistic enhancements;" and "Blanch was one of the few artists who actually painted WPA murals in the same town for which the work was commissioned and accepted input from local residents prior to the painting process." However, author Patricia Raynor notes in her 1997 article, "New Deal Post Office Murals" that "Most of the Post Office works of art were funded through commissions under the Treasury Department's Section of Painting and Sculpture (later known as The Section of Fine Arts) and not the WPA...Often mistaken for WPA art, post office murals were actually executed by artists working for the Section of Fine Arts. Commonly known as "the Section," it was established in 1934 and administered by the Procurement Division of the Treasury Department. Headed by Edward Bruce, a former lawyer, businessman, and artist, the Section's main function was to select art of high quality to decorate public buildings if the funding was available. By providing decoration in public buildings, the art was made accessible to all people."

The Appalachia Post Office's L-shaped lobby also retains its original marble wainscot, terrazzo floor, wood and glass entry vestibule, long wooden customer service counter with three bays protected by sliding brass security gates, ornate brass mail boxes, two wooden two-panel office doors and surrounds, four wrought-iron grills at the clerestory level, several wall-mounted bulletin display cases, and even three tall wooden tables for customer use. All of these features appear in 1938-1939 photos.

As indicated by the 1938 drawings, the interior floorplan remains unmodified today. The postmaster's office is at the west end of the lobby. The large workroom, largely screened off from the public behind the service counter, remains undivided with a tall ceiling, and the original steel ceiling fans remain operable. Situated along the west side of the work room are several adjoining small rooms identified on the drawings, from north to south, as a vault, toilet, swing room, janitor's toilet, and women's toilet. The workroom walls are treated with tall vertical board wainscoting with plaster above. The maple wood floor appears to be very old, if not original.

The building has a full basement, accessed by a stair in the southwest corner of the building, with several partitioned rooms identified as the fuel room, boiler room, and storage rooms. [August, 2017]

Existing information on file in DHR archives

US Postal Service survey, 1983: Appalachia is a small mountainous town which owes its existence to the railroads and its centralization within the coal producing counties of Southwest Virginia. It is basically a blue collar type of community which offers few amenities and cultural advantages. Competition from the nearby larger towns of Norton and Big Stone Gap, as well as recently built shopping centers have had a profound effect on the downtown merchants of Appalachia. These adverse conditions are rather apparent by the lack of new growth and deteriorating nature of the existing structures. Most of these buildings are either one or two story structures which have been built subsequent to the turn-of-the-century.

"Appalachia Historic District" Preliminary Information Form, 1995: Designed in 1937 and constructed in 1938 in the Colonial Revival style, a 1983 U.S. Postal Service Report lists Louis A. Simon as the Supervising Architect from the U.S. Treasury Department. The building is owned and maintained by the U.S. Postal Service.

Acknowledgements

Sincere thanks to: Gary Bush, a resident of the Appalachia community, for bringing the post office to the attention of DHR, as well as obtaining permission and signatures from the US Postal Service for an official National Register evaluation of the building to move forward at this time; and to Postmaster Amanda Williams of the Appalachia Post Office for providing access to the post office interior and to old records and photographs on file at the post office [August 2017 DHR survey] and for her support of the evaluation.

Additional sources [August, 2017]

- 1) Patricia Raynor, "New Deal Post Office Murals," *Articles from EnRoute : Off The Wall*. National Postal Museum, 1997.
- 2) New Deal WPA Art in Virginia – a list of post offices with New Deal era murals:
<http://www.wpamurals.com/virginia.htm>
- 3) Lucile Blanch Wikipedia page: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lucile_Blanch

5. Property Ownership (Check as many categories as apply):

Private: _____ Public\Local _____ Public\State _____ Public\Federal x

Current Legal Owner(s) of the Property (If the property has more than one owner, please list each below or on an additional sheet.)

name/title: Bill Stephenson
organization: United States Postal Service
street & number: 1002 Lee St. E.
city or town: Charleston state: WV zip code: 25350
e-mail: billy.m.stephenson@usps.gov telephone: 319-504-1928

Legal Owner's Signature: SEE ATTACHED Date: _____

•• Signature required for processing all applications. ••

In the event of corporate ownership you must provide the name and title of the appropriate contact person.

Contact person: Amanda Williams, Postmaster, Appalachia Post Office
Daytime Telephone: 276-565-0340

Applicant Information (Individual completing form if other than legal owner of property)

name/title: Mike Pulice, Architectural Historian
organization: Virginia Dept. of Historic Resources, Western Regional Office
street & number: 962 Kime Ln
city or town: Salem state: VA zip code: 24153
e-mail: michael.pulice@dhr.virginia.gov telephone: 540-387-5443

6. Notification

In some circumstances, it may be necessary for DHR to confer with or notify local officials of proposed listings of properties within their jurisdiction. In the following space, please provide the contact information for the local County Administrator or City Manager.

name/title: Fred Luntsford, Town Manager
locality: Appalachia
street & number: PO Box 112
city or town: Appalachia state: VA zip code: 24216
telephone: 276-565-3910

New Deal WPA Art In Virginia



- AL AK AZ AR
- CA CO CT DE
- DC FL GA HI
- ID IA IL IN
- KS KY LA ME
- MD MA MI MS
- MN MO MT NE
- NV NH NJ NM
- NY NC ND OH
- OK OR PA RI
- SC SD TN TX
- UT VT VA WA
- WI WV WY PR

Post Office Artwork in Virginia - Most of the Post Office works of art were funded through commissions under the Treasury Department's Section of Painting and Sculpture (later known as The Section of Fine Arts) and not the WPA.

"Often mistaken for WPA art, post office murals were actually executed by artists working for the Section of Fine Arts. Commonly known as "the Section," it was established in 1934 and administered by the Procurement Division of the Treasury Department. Headed by Edward Bruce, a former lawyer, businessman, and artist, the Section's main function was to select art of high quality to decorate public buildings if the funding was available. By providing decoration in public buildings, the art was made accessible to all people." *from "Articles from EnRoute : Off The Wall: New Deal Post Office Murals" by Patricia Raynor*

Unless indicated, works of art are located in the US Post Office building.

Location	Artist	Title	Date	Medium
Alta Vista	Herman Maril	"The Growing Community"	1940	oil on canvas
Appalachia	Lucile Blanch	"Appalachia"	1940	oil on canvas
Arlington *	Auriel Bessemer	"Historical and Industrial Scenes – Sketches of Virginia"	1940	7 panels – mural (restored – see article below)
Bassett	Walter Carnelli	"Manufacture of Furniture"	1939	fresco
Berryville	Edwin S. Lewis	"Clark County Products, 1939"	1940	mural
Bluefield	Richard Kenah	"Coal Mining"	1942	tempera
Chatham	Carson Davenport	"Harvest Season in Southern Virginia"	1938	oil on canvas
Christianburg	John W. de Groot	"Great Road"	1939	oil on canvas
Covington	Lenore Thomas	"Rural Life"	1939	three glazed terra-cotta reliefs
Emporia	Andree Ruellan	"Country Saw Mill"	1941	oil on canvas
Harrisonburg	William H.	"Country Fair, Trading Courthouse,	1943	4 panels –

	Calfee	Square”		mural
Hopewell	Edmund Archer	“Captain Francis Eppes Making Friends with the Appomatox Indians”	1939	oil on canvas
Luray	Sheffield Kagy	“Luray – 1840”	1939	oil on canvas
Marion	Daniel Olney	“The Letter”	1937	plaster
Newport News Post Office and Courthouse	Mary B. Fowler	“Early Industries” and “Captain Newport Brings News and Aid to the Starving Colonists”	1943	unglazed terra-cotta
Orange	Arnold Friedman	“Upland Pastures”	1937	oil on canvas
Petersburg	William H. Calfee	“Agricultural Scenes in Virginia”	1937	oil on canvas
Petersburg	Edwin S. Lewis	“Riding to Hounds”	1937	mural
Phoebus	William H. Calfee	“Chesapeake Fisherman”	1941	fresco
Radford	Alexander B. Clayton	“The Return of Mary Draper Ingles”	1942	oil on canvas
Richmond, Parcel Post (to be relocated in the Federal Office Building, Richmond)	Paul Cadmus	“Pocahontas Rescuing Captain John Smith,” “Sir Walter Raleigh,” and “William Byrd”	1939	mural
Richmond, Parcel Post (to be relocated in the Federal Office Building, Richmond)	Jared French	“Stuart’s Raiders at the Swollen Ford,” “Jeb Stuart,” and “John Pelham”	1939	mural
Rockymount	Roy Hilton	“Life in Rockymount”	1938	3 panels – mural
Smithfield	William Abbott Cheever	“Captain John Smith Trading with the Indians”	1941	oil on canvas
Staunton	Florence Bessom	“The First Reaper”	1940	terra-cotta relief
Strasburg	Sarah Blakeslee	“Apple Orchard”	1938	mural
Stuart	John E. Costigan	“Receiving the Mail on the Farm”	1942	oil on canvas
Tazewell	William H. Calfee	“Sheep – Mother and Child – Cow” and “Mining”	1940	oil on canvas
Virginia Beach	John H.R. Pickett	“Old Dominion Conversation Piece”	1939	oil on canvas

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*Arlington County’s Public Art Program Announces Historic Murals Return Home – Arlington, Virginia

Auriel Bessemer's seven New Deal-era murals, Agricultural and Industrial Scenes – Sketches of Virginia, have been reinstalled in their original home at the historic Joseph L. Fisher Post Office in Clarendon. This post office has served as the murals' permanent home since the paintings were completed in 1940. The murals were commissioned by the Treasury Department's Section of Fine Art in order to beautify Arlington's first federal building. Local artist, Auriel Bessemer, was paid \$800 to paint images emblematic of national ideals and local history. By showing familiar, local destinations, such as Great Falls and Roosevelt Island, Bessemer contributed to a sense of local pride. During the recent renovation of this post office, the murals were conserved and the United States Postal Service loaned the murals to Arlington County for an 18-month exhibition at Arlington's Central Library.

Now that the post office is renovated and open for business (as of March 26, 2007), the murals have been returned to their permanent home. The exhibition at the Central Library was coordinated by Arlington's Cultural Affairs Division's Public Art Program and funding was provided by The Keating Partners. The Historical Affairs and Landmark Review Board (HALRB) worked to ensure that the murals were restored as part of The Keating Partners's Phoenix development project. For more information and/or high-resolution images, please contact: Caroline Danforth, Public Art Associate Curator, Arlington County, Department of Parks, Recreation, and Cultural Resources, Cultural Affairs Division, Public Art Program, cdanforth@arlingtonva.us - *information courtesy of Caroline Danforth*

http://www.postalmuseum.si.edu/resources/6a2q_postalmurals.html

National Postal Museum

[Articles from *EnRoute* : Off The Wall](#)

Off The Wall

New Deal Post Office Murals
by Patricia Raynor

Volume 6, Issue 4
October–December 1997

Throughout the United States—on post office walls large and small—are scenes reflecting America's history and way of life. Post offices built in the 1930s during Roosevelt's New Deal were decorated with enduring images of the "American scene."

In the 1930s, as America continued to struggle with the effects of the depression, the federal government searched for solutions to provide work for all Americans, including artists. During this time government-created agencies supported the arts in unprecedented ways. As Harry Hopkins, Roosevelt's relief administrator said in response to criticism of federal support for the arts, "[artists] have got to eat just like other people."

Often mistaken for WPA art, post office murals were actually executed by artists working for the Section of Fine Arts. Commonly known as "the Section," it was established in 1934 and administered by the Procurement Division of the Treasury Department. Headed by Edward Bruce, a former lawyer, businessman, and artist, the Section's main function was to select art of high quality to decorate public buildings—if the funding was available. By providing decoration in public buildings, the art was made accessible to all people. Post offices were located in virtually every community and available for viewing by all postal patrons—which made post office murals a truly democratic art form. Artists working for the Section were not chosen on the basis of need, but through anonymous competitions where the national jurors were often other artists. Although considered open competitions, restrictions were often attached to entries. For smaller competitions, the jury might consist of the postmaster, a member of the architectural firm, and a prominent citizen. Artists were also awarded commissions based on designs submitted for previous Section competitions. They were often paid for completing a work in a specific post office or federal building. One percent of the building construction funds was to be set aside for "embellishment" of the federal building, and artists were supposed to be paid from these funds.

Mural artists were provided with guidelines and themes for executing their mural studies. Scenes of local interest and events were deemed to be the most suitable. Artists invited to submit design sketches for a particular post office were strongly urged to visit the site. However, this was not possible for every artist. Distance, expense, or family commitment prevented many artists from actually traveling to the community.

Once awarded a commission, the mural artist engaged in an often lengthy negotiation between the Post Office Department, the town, and the Section before finally getting the finished mural on the wall. Many local communities deemed the approved designs unacceptable due to theme, content, method of expression or design elements. Artists were constantly reminded that the communities were their patron and they went to great lengths to satisfy the desires of everyone involved in the project in order to save their commissions.

Genre themes were the most popular subject matter for post office murals. Americans shown at work or at leisure, grace the walls of the new deal post offices. Although the mural program was inspired by a Mexican mural tradition strongly affected by social change, the hard realities of American life are not illustrated on post office walls. Scenes of industrial America, for instance, avoid tragic portrayals of industrial accidents. Social realism painting, though popular at the time, was discouraged. Therefore, the very real scenes of jobless Americans standing in bread lines are not to be found on post office walls.

But, if the tragic was to be avoided, the heroic was to be celebrated and embraced. Historical events and daring and courageous acts were popular themes. One unusual depiction of a local hero is featured on the wall of the West Palm Beach post office. The Legend of James Edward Hamilton, Florida's barefoot mail carrier, is told on six narrative panels. The artist, Stevan Dohanos, rendered the story of the brave and enduring postman who delivers the mail against all odds. In fact, on October 1, 1887, Hamilton lost his life while on his postal route.

In Band Concert, by Marion Gilmore, the mural artist portrayed an idealized view of small town America. Gilmore, one of only a few female mural artists who worked for the Section, shows the residents of Corning, Iowa gathered about to listen to an evening band concert in their town square. The original design, which won the commission, drew inspiration from typical Iowa town squares. It was not, however, an accurate depiction of the square in Corning where the mural was to be installed. Her study added an obelisk and a cannon where none existed in Corning. The Section encouraged Gilmore to change her design to more accurately reflect the Corning town square. Her finished mural eliminated the offending additions. The Study for Band Concert indicates the mural's eventual placement. Most small town post office murals were constructed around the postmaster's door. And, this is where Gilmore's finished mural was eventually hung.

Many post office murals have vanished over the years. Others are in need of repair. Fortunately, there has been a renewed local interest in the depression era murals. These murals provide local communities with a colorful record of their heritage and give us all a glimpse of the American public's taste during a fascinating time in our nation's history.

Lucile Blanch

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Lucile E. Blanch, née *Lundquist*, (aka Lucille Blanch, Lucile Lunquist Blanch, Lucile Lundquist-Blanch, and Lucille Lundquist-Blanch) ^[1] (December 31, 1895 – October 31, 1981), was an American painter and Guggenheim Fellow.^[2]

Contents

- 1 Biography
- 2 Murals
- 3 Style
- 4 Gallery
- 5 References

Biography

Lucile Blanch was born in 1895 in Hawley, Minnesota to Charles E. and May E. Lundquist. During World War I, she studied at the Minneapolis School of Art with her future husband Arnold Blanch, and other notable artists like Harry Gottlieb and Adolf Dehn. After 1918, she won a scholarship to study under Boardman Robinson, as part of the Art Students League of New York.^[3] She also studied with artists like Kenneth Hayes Miller, Frank Vincent DuMond and Frederick R. Gruger.

While in New York, she married her husband, Arnold Blanch, and they traveled to France to continue their art studies.^[3] They later moved to Woodstock, New York where they helped build the Woodstock Art colony. They divorced in 1935.^[4] She was friends with Eugenie Gershoy, who sculpted her at work.^[5]

She received the Guggenheim Fellowship in 1933,^[6] and from that point on her art was collected and was shown in a number of important galleries, notably the Whitney Museum.^{[7][8]} She died in 1981 in Kingston, New York.

Murals

Murals were produced from 1934 to 1943 in the United States through the Section of Painting and Sculpture, later called the Section of Fine Arts, of the Treasury Department. The murals were intended to boost the morale of the American people suffering from the effects of the Depression by depicting uplifting subjects the people knew and loved. Murals were commissioned through competitions open to all artists in the United States.^[9] Almost 850 artists were commissioned to paint 1371 murals, most of which were installed in post offices.^[10] 162 of the artists were women. The murals were funded as a part of the cost of the construction of new post offices, with 1% of the cost set aside for artistic enhancements.^[10]

In 1938 Lucile Blanch painted an oil on canvas WPA commissioned mural titled "*Osceola Holding Informal Court with His Chiefs*" in the United States post office in Fort Pierce, Florida. The mural is on display at Fort Pierce City Hall.^[11] In the town of Appalachia, Virginia, she painted the mural *Appalachia*, also oil on canvas in 1940.^[12] The tempera mural, *Rural Mississippi-from Early Days to Present* was completed in 1941 for the Tylertown, Mississippi post office. In addition, she painted murals in the post offices of Flemingsburg, Kentucky and Sparta, Georgia.^[13] The Flemingsburg mural was completed in 1943 as an oil on canvas, titled *Crossing to the Battle of Blue Licks*,^[14] while the Sparta post office project

Lucile Blanch



Blanch in 1930

Born	Lucile E. Lundquist December 31, 1895 Hawley, Minnesota, U.S.
Died	October 31, 1981 (aged 85) Kingston, New York, U.S.
Education	Minneapolis School of Art
Known for	Painting

consisted of three panels. The oils on canvas depicted an antebellum plantation house, the granite quarry near Sparta and the third showed local Hancock County scenery.^[15] Blanch was one of the few artists who actually painted WPA murals in the same town for which the work was commissioned and accepted input from local residents prior to the painting process.

Style

Blanch began her career focusing on realists subjects, however, increasingly she became an abstractionist.^[8]

Gallery



Blanch in her studio,
1940

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