

# Memorandum

To: William Crouch, City of Beverly Hills

Date: 10/03/2012

From: Jan Ostashay, Principal OAC

Re: LANDMARK ASSESSMENT CONFIRMATION REVIEW: U.S. Post Office, Beverly Hills Main Post Office, 469 North Crescent Drive (470 North Canon Drive), Beverly Hills, CA

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## Overview

At the request of the City of Beverly Hills Community Development Department, Planning Division, Ostashay & Associates Consulting has conducted an assessment review to confirm local landmark eligibility for the property located at 469 North Crescent Drive (470 North Canon Drive). This property, referred to as the U.S. Post Office, Beverly Hills Main Post Office, is currently listed on the National Register of Historic Places (see Attachment A).

The City's Historic Preservation Ordinance (Title 10, Chapter 3, Article 32; Beverly Hills Municipal Code 10-3-32) states that a property may be designated as a Landmark if it satisfies the following three criteria:

**A. The Property meets at least two of the following criteria:**

1. Is identified with important events in the main currents of national, state, or local history, or directly exemplifies or manifests significant contributions to the broad social, political, cultural, economic, recreational, or architectural history of the Nation, State, City, or community;
2. Is directly associated with the lives of Significant Persons important to national, state, City or local history;
3. Embodies the distinctive characteristics of a style, type, period, or method of construction;
4. Represents a notable work of a person included on the City's List of Master Architects or possesses high artistic or aesthetic value;
5. Has yielded or has the potential to yield, information important in the prehistory or history of the Nation, State, City, or community;
6. Is listed or has been formally determined eligible by the National Park Service for listing on the National Register of Historic Places, or is listed or has been determined eligible by the State Historical Resources Commission for listing on the California Register of Historical Resources.

**B. The property retains integrity from its Period of Significance.**

The proposed landmark retains integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, and association. Integrity shall be judged with reference to the particular criteria specified in subsection 10-3-3212 (A) of this section. A proposed Landmark's deferred maintenance, dilapidated condition, or illegal alterations shall not, on their own, be construed to equate to a loss of Integrity.

**C. The Property Has Historic Value.**

The proposed Landmark is of significant architectural value to the community, beyond its simple market value, and its designation as a Landmark is reasonable, appropriate, and necessary to promote, protect, and further the goals and purpose of this Article.

As part of the landmark assessment confirmation review, a brief context of information regarding the property has been provided followed by the application and evaluation of local significance for local designation consideration.

**Background Information**

**US POST OFFICE, BEVERLY HILLS MAIN POST OFFICE**

Address: 469 North Crescent Drive (470 North Canon Drive)

APN: 4343-009-902

National Register Info: 85000126; Listed: 1985

Significance: Architecture

Period of Significance: 1932-1934

Architect: Ralph C. Flewelling; Allison & Allison, consulting architects

The site for the new post office was a parcel of land that had been purchased from the Pacific Electric Railway Company by the City of Beverly Hills as part of the master plan for the new civic center in 1930. The architect, Ralph C. Flewelling chose the Italian Renaissance Revival style for the building to complement City Hall, which had already been designed and was under construction directly across the street to the east. The building is composed of a series of one and two-story masses mostly capped with gable roofs fit with red clay tiles. The exterior wall surfaces are clad in slip covered Roman brick trimmed with natural colored terra cotta quoins. The coursework of the masonry is accented by indentations corresponding to the quoins. The building's north elevation fronting Santa Monica Boulevard was designed as the ceremonial entrance to the post office. This structure is an excellent example of the work of a prominent local architect, Ralph C. Flewelling, and is an unusually lavishly ornamented 1930s-era post office. Though Flewelling was not known for his use of Renaissance Revival styles, the Beverly Hills Post Office is a sophisticated and graceful Renaissance inspired building.

Because of its location and function, the structure played an important community planning role in the development and formation of the city's civic center. Construction of the post office began in earnest in 1932 with the corner stone being laid on November 15, 1933. The building facility opened to fanfare on April 28, 1934 with an elaborate dedication ceremony and celebration. The post office served as the hub for postal operations in the City until 1960 when the letter carrier operation was moved to an annex located at 325 North Maple Drive. After the move, the post office retained service of retail sales and post office boxes. At that time, the building underwent a major renovation, which included excavation to enlarge the basement, the infilling of skylights, and some interior modifications to the second floor.

The Crescent Drive post office continued to serve citizens until 1990 when construction of a new postal facility named the Beverly Hills Main Post Office at the site of the old Maple Drive annex was completed. Upon completion, almost all postal services moved to the new location and the Crescent Drive post office was declared excess by the U.S. Postal Service. When the structure was made available to various government agencies, the City of Beverly Hills purchased the property. The City then awarded the Beverly Hills Cultural Center Foundation (now known as the Wallis Annenberg Center for the Performing Arts), a long-term lease for the entire parcel, with the provision that the historic post office be rehabilitated and adaptively used to create a new cultural center for the performing arts. The post office building was officially closed in March 1999, and all remaining post office boxes were moved to the Beverly Hills Main Post Office on Maple Drive. Today, the original Beverly Hills main post office is undergoing in-kind restoration work with a new compatible performing arts theatre structure being constructed to the east of the historic building adjacent to Crescent Drive.

### Local Significance Findings

Pursuant to the City of Beverly Hills Historic Preservation Ordinance (Title 10, Chapter 3, Article 32; BHMC 10-3-32), this property satisfies the necessary requirements for local landmark designation. Beverly Hills Post Office is eligible under “significance” criterion A.1, for its pivotal role in community planning. The subject building was built in conjunction with the Beverly Hills City Hall, next door. Together, these buildings constitute the early formation of the City’s civic center and provided context for the urban design of the City. The property also meets the “significance” criterion A.3, because it is an important extant example of post office architecture, especially for its idiosyncratic details of the Italian Renaissance Revival applied to a classic box shape structure. It is also recognized as an outstanding example of Renaissance Revival architecture. In addition, the property is eligible for local landmark listing under “significance” criteria A.4 as well since it was designed by master architect Ralph C. Flewelling with consulting master architects Allison & Allison. And finally, this property satisfies “significance” criteria A.6, as it has been formally listed on the National Register of Historic Places. As required, the original Beverly Hills Main Post Office building retains the historical integrity of location, materials, design, workmanship, setting, association, and feeling from its period of significance (1932-1934), and, as evident, possesses exceptional significant architectural value to the community.



Figure 1, Source: Los Angeles Public Library

**ATTACHMENT A**  
**National Register Form**

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR FEDERAL PROPERTIES

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED NOV 27 1984

DATE ENTERED JAN 11 1985

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

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

U.S. Post Office

AND/OR COMMON

Beverly Hills Main Post Office

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

469 North Crescent Drive

NA NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Beverly Hills

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

23

NA VICINITY OF

STATE

California

CODE

06

COUNTY

Los Angeles

CODE

037

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

**CATEGORY**

DISTRICT

BUILDING(S)

STRUCTURE

SITE

OBJECT

Thematic  
Group

**OWNERSHIP**

PUBLIC

PRIVATE

BOTH

NA PUBLIC ACQUISITION

IN PROCESS

BEING CONSIDERED

**STATUS**

OCCUPIED

UNOCCUPIED

WORK IN PROGRESS

ACCESSIBLE

YES: RESTRICTED

YES: UNRESTRICTED

NO

**PRESENT USE**

AGRICULTURE

COMMERCIAL

EDUCATIONAL

ENTERTAINMENT

GOVERNMENT

INDUSTRIAL

MILITARY

MUSEUM

PARK

PRIVATE RESIDENCE

RELIGIOUS

SCIENTIFIC

TRANSPORTATION

OTHER:

**4 AGENCY**

REGIONAL HEADQUARTERS: (If applicable)

U.S. Postal Service, Western Regional Office

STREET & NUMBER

850 Cherry Avenue

CITY, TOWN

San Bruno

NA VICINITY OF

STATE

California

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Los Angeles County Recorder

STREET & NUMBER

277 North Broadway

CITY, TOWN

Los Angeles,

STATE

California

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

A Guide to Architecture in Los Angeles and Southern California,  
(published by Peregrine Smith, Inc., Salt Lake City).

DATE

1977

FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

C/o Dr. David Gebhard, Department of Art History

CITY, TOWN

University of California  
Santa Barbara

STATE

California

## 7 DESCRIPTION

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

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

The Beverly Hills Main Post Office is a textbook example of the Renaissance Revival style. The front elevation is marked by alternately arched and triangle-pedimented windows, and a rusticated terracotta beltcourse and quoining. The lobby is finished with marble veneer, and has a verde marble floor. Several Treasury Section of Fine Arts murals are placed in the public lobby.

### LOCAL CONTEXT

Beverly Hills is an incorporated city of 32,000 located in the western portion of Los Angeles County. Famous worldwide as a wealthy residential enclave within the Los Angeles metropolis, the city was founded by the Rodeo Land and Water Company as "City for the Swell" and incorporated in 1914.

Will Rogers, in a 1930 letter to Secretary of the Treasury Andrew Mellon, asked for a new Beverly Hills post office, as "...we are getting a lot of mail out here now, and they are handling it in a tent". Whatever real impact his request had, he is locally credited with winning the new facility from Washington, D.C.

Directly east of the post office site is the Beverly Hills City Hall- a classic Spanish Renaissance structure built in 1932 and designed by William J. Gage in a magnificent style not typical of those Depression-era days.

No known archaeological resources exist within or adjacent to the subject property. Sub-surface investigation or additional research does not appear justified.

Information concerning use of the subject site prior to the post office was not available.

### PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

This building is an outstanding example of Renaissance Revival (1840-1890), although constructed in 1933. The main elevation includes a partial second story containing functional support areas and lobby clerestory. A single-story workroom wing is perpendicular to this main element. There is a large basement below the workroom wing.

Constructed of poured concrete with Roman brick and terracotta facing, the building is finished throughout in marble veneer and plaster. The public lobby is floored with black and verde gree marble. Lobby walls are beige marble veneer capped by an ornamental plaster cornice. A full vaulted ceiling crowns the public lobby area. The post-master's office is panelled in walnut.

Special features of the exterior include:

- o Rusticated terracotta quoins and beltcourse;
- o Architrave trimmed entries and windows with pedimented and segmental frontispieces; and
- o Multilight window sashes.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

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CONTINUATION SHEET Beverly Hills MPO ITEM NUMBER 7, 8 PAGE one

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Item #7

° Smaller, square windows of the upper story.

ALTERATIONS

The exterior service courtyard was renovated in the late 1960s. Additional land between Burton Way and the original site has been converted to a public parking area for postal customer convenience.

Item #8

the same point in time, and in compatible architectural styles. Their relative locations and landscaping create a Civic Center, and sense of place for the entire downtown area.

ART

The murals in the lobby of the Beverly Hills Main Post Office are not individually significant as art. They are important, however, as examples of the style and accepted iconology of murals produced for post offices in California in general. Too, the murals derive most of their meaning from their Southern California context, and would suffer if moved from their original location.

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD		AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW					
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input checked="" 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 checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)			
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION					

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SPECIFIC DATES	See below.	BUILDER/ARCHITECT	Ralph C. Flewelling; Allison and Allison, Consulting Architects
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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE (Site acquired April, 1932; occupied April, 1934.)

This building is an excellent example of the work of a prominent local architect, Ralph C. Flewelling, and is an unusually lavishly ornamented 1930s-era post office. Though Flewelling was not known for his use of Renaissance Revival styles, the Beverly Hills Post Office is a sophisticated and graceful Renaissance building. The structure also plays an important urban design role in the city's civic center.

## ARCHITECTURE

Flewelling was a locally prominent and prolific architect. Allison and Allison was a prominent Los Angeles architectural office from the late teens through the 1930s. They specialized in school architecture, and much of Ralph C. Flewelling's early work with the firm was involved with schools and universities. He designed UCLA's Women's Gymnasium in 1932, and USC's Art and Architecture Building in 1931. Most of these early designs were in the Northern Italian Romanesque style, although the architect later designed International Style and Renaissance Revival buildings with equal ease. He later formed his own office in Los Angeles: "Ralph C. Flewelling and Associates, Architects".

The Renaissance Revival styling of this building is important in the context of the architect's work: it is the only known example of Renaissance Revival he designed.

As per National Register Criterion C, the structure contains high artistic values as a successful interpretation of early Italian Renaissance forms and detailing. Considering the limitations imposed by post office operational requirements, the overall volumetric massing is exceptionally elegant.

The building is an important example of the post office as a type; especially in its idiosyncratic use of the Renaissance Revival applied to a classic box. Federal design tended toward conservatism and this tendency is expressed in this building. Finally, this building is significant as an example of the second type of post office considered in this report, as described in the cover document.

## COMMUNITY PLANNING

The Beverly Hills Main Post Office takes on significance in the urban design of the city when considered in relation to the Beverly Hills City Hall directly across the street to the east of the post office. The two buildings were constructed essentially at



## 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Allison and Allison, "U.S. Post Office Buildings", Architectural Record, Vol. 72, Sept. 1932; Morros, Irving F., "Recent Architecture of Allison and Allison", Architect and Engineer, Vol. 191, Dec. 1952; "Office of Ralph C. Flewelling and Associates, Architects", Pencil Points, Vol. 28, Aug. 1947; Hamlin, T.F., "Prize-Winning Buildings of 1931", Architectural Record, Vol. 71, Jan. 1932.

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 1.5

UTM REFERENCES

A 

1	1
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3	7	0	6	1	0
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3	7	7	0	8	4	0
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ZONE EASTING NORTHING

B 

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ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C 

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D 

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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The site is located on a portion of the Rancho Rodeo de Las Aquas, portion of Block D, portion of Lot A; Los Angeles County Assessor Map Book 4343, page 9, parcel 902. The triangular site has a frontage of approximately 312' along Santa Monica Boulevard, 220' along Crescent Drive, and 385' along the southern property line.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
NA	NA	NA	NA
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
NA	NA	NA	NA

## 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Doug Robertson, Planner

ORGANIZATION

Beland/Associates, Inc.

DATE

April 27, 1984

STREET & NUMBER

16 S. Oakland Avenue, Suite 204

TELEPHONE

(818) 796-8093

CITY OR TOWN

Pasadena

STATE

California

## 12 CERTIFICATION OF NOMINATION

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER RECOMMENDATION

YES \_\_\_ NO \_\_\_ NONE \_\_\_

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

In compliance with Executive Order 11593, I hereby nominate this property to the National Register, certifying that the State Historic Preservation Officer has been allowed 90 days in which to present the nomination to the State Review Board and to evaluate its significance. The evaluated level of significance is \_\_\_ National \_\_\_ State \_\_\_ Local.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

TITLE

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION  
ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

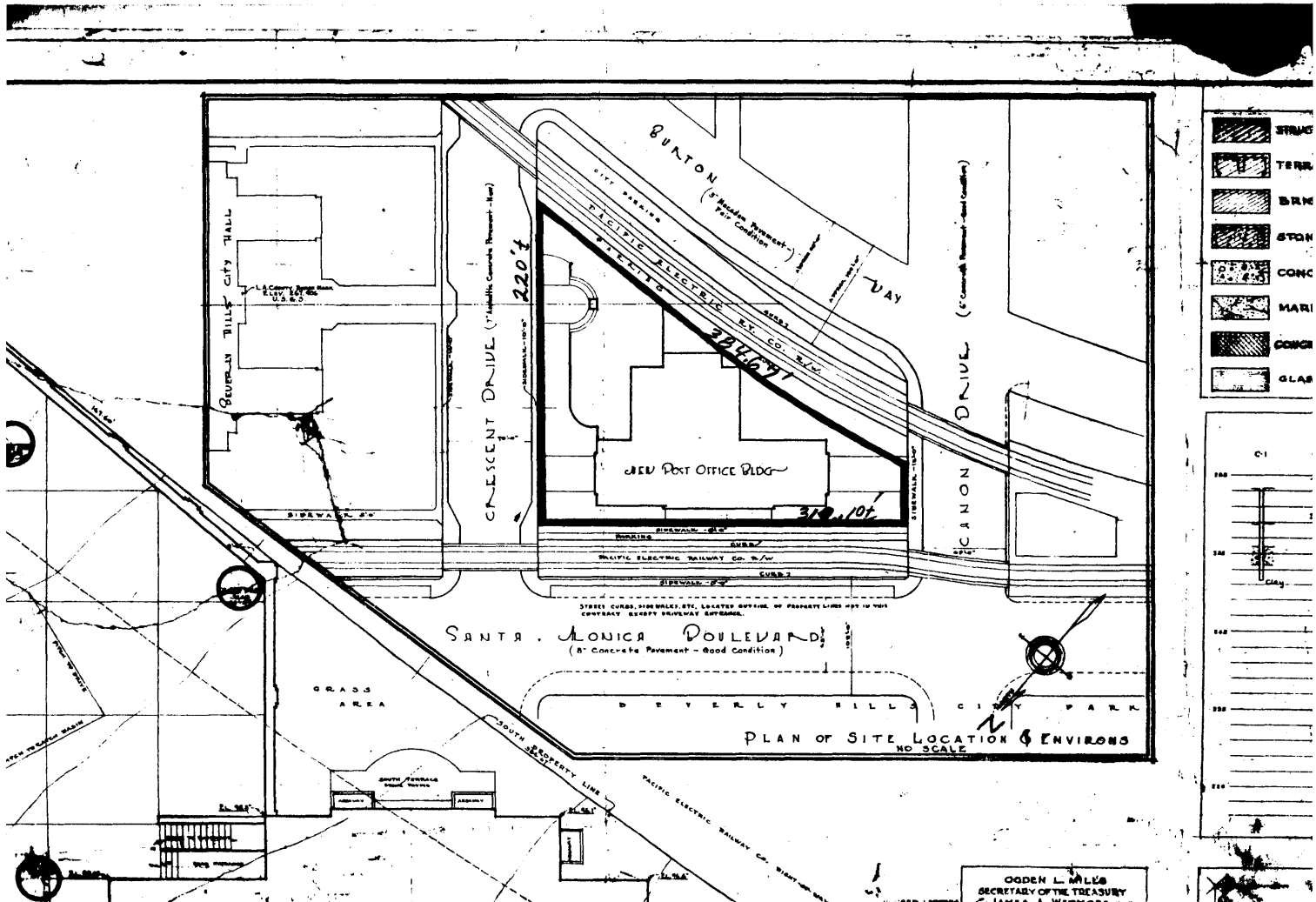
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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

CONTINUATION SHEET Beverly Hills ITEM NUMBER 10 PAGE two

Note: Post office site outlined in red.

Source: United States Postal Service, "Approach Plan" 1933,  
Beverly Hills Post Office, 469 N. Crescent Drive,  
Beverly Hills, Calif. 90213.



ODDIE L. MILLS  
SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY