

LOCAL HISTORIC LANDMARK PROGRAM

Forsyth County Historic Resources Commission

Main Post Office Building

Local Historic Landmark #69

101 W. Fifth St., Winston-Salem

Construction Date: c. 1915

Landmark Designation Date: 02/19/1987

The Main Post Office Building is a monument to the early 20th century efforts of the federal government to signify its presence at the local level by the construction of large-scale public buildings in relatively sophisticated architectural styles. The downtown Winston-Salem structure is the finest existing example of the Beaux Arts, Classical Revival style of architecture in Winston-Salem.

In 1792, the area's first post office was located in Salem, which was established in the 18th century as the central town of the Moravians. Forsyth County was formed in 1849, and its county seat was established at Winston, which first received a post office in 1851. In 1899, 14 years prior to the official consolidation of Winston and Salem in 1913, the United States Post Office Department merged the post offices of the two towns into one, and it was known as the Winston-Salem Post Office.

Shortly after the turn of the 20th-century, local civic leaders began to press the federal government to construct a building that would be used by the Post Office and other



federal departments. As a result, Congress appropriated funds to acquire land in Winston in order to build a post office. Construction did not actually begin for several years; the original building was not completed until 1907. The resulting structure was a two-story, brick building designed in the Georgian/Colonial Revival style, which stood on the corner of W. Fifth and N. Liberty Streets. Plans for the building were drawn up in the Office of the Supervising Architect of the Treasury Department, a position held by James Knox Taylor.



Winston's post office, located on the corner of West Fifth and North Liberty Streets, c. 1906

Courtesy of Forsyth County Public Library
Photograph Collection

Almost immediately, a demand for increased space created the need for a larger building, and it was enlarged in 1914-1915 under the direction of Oscar Wenderoth, who replaced Taylor as Supervising Architect in 1913. The renovated building, which opened to great fanfare in July 1915, was a substantial, rectangular, limestone-faced, two-story and basement structure designed in the Beaux Arts classical style. It was a U-shaped building whose front façade was elongated to extend the entire block between N. Trade and N. Liberty Streets. During this major renovation, the original 1906 structure, which was brick, was demolished except for the walls and the N. Liberty Street steps, which remained. Other distinctive exterior features constructed during the second phase of construction include a front façade containing a row of ten colossal limestone Corinthian columns, round-arched,

first-story windows, a full classical cornice, and a balustraded parapet around three sides of the building.

The final phase of work on the building occurred in 1937-1938 and was designed by the local prolific architectural firm of Northup and O'Brien. This construction consisted of a large addition to the rear of the structure, which was executed in a manner so as to match that of the c. 1915 building.

In 1991, a new main postal processing facility was constructed in Winston-Salem on N. Patterson Avenue to replace the downtown facility.

Today the Main Post Office Building hosts a variety of uses, including office and retail space, and serves as a venue for functions and special events.



Post Office Building on West Fifth Street, 1918
Courtesy of Forsyth County Public Library Photograph Collection

WANT TO KNOW MORE?

Downtown North National Register Historic District
<http://www.hpo.ncdcr.gov/nr/FY2685.pdf>

[http://dc.lib.unc.edu/cdm4/item_viewer.php?
CISOROOT=/nc_post&CISOPTR=6760&
CISOBX=1&REC=20](http://dc.lib.unc.edu/cdm4/item_viewer.php?CISOROOT=/nc_post&CISOPTR=6760&CISOBX=1&REC=20)

[http://livedesignonline.com/theatre/
theatre_public_art_0109/](http://livedesignonline.com/theatre/theatre_public_art_0109/)



This information is also available
at the Forsyth County
Historic Resources Commission's web site:
<http://www.ForsythCountyHRC.org>