

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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

RECEIVED
DATE ENTERED

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

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC Old Camden Post Office

AND/OR COMMON

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

133 Washington St., S.W.

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Camden

VICINITY OF

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT  
Fourth

STATE

Arkansas

CODE  
05

COUNTY  
Ouachita CODE  
103

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE	
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input checked="" 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	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER: storage

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

General Services Administration (At Present)

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

VICINITY OF

STATE

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Ouachita County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

Courthouse Square

CITY, TOWN

Camden

STATE

Arkansas

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

DATE

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

## 7 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

The Post Office in Camden, Arkansas, begun February 21, 1895 and completed March 31, 1896, originally housed the Post Office on the first floor and the U. S. Land Office on the second. The site for the \$39,014 building was purchased for \$4,137.

Two basic alterations have been made to this masonry, two-story building with full basement. A one-story masonry extension with basement, was added to the rear (south) in 1925, and in 1945 a one-story, wood-frame annex was attached to the west side extending around to the south end of the building. The latter has since been removed. The main building measures 32 feet by 56 feet, and the extension 28 feet by 53 feet, giving approximately 8,330 square feet.

Camden's Post Office contains some extraordinary masonry work. The red brick walls are laid simply in stretcher bond with thin mortar joints, but the surface is enriched by the molded brick in the water table, the continuous window sills on both the first and second stories, the denticulated string course between the two floors, and the gauged and molded brick around the semicircular arched openings.

At the entrance, seven steps rise to the stoop. Of particular importance on the three-bay facade is the central doorway with a denticulated molding in the gauged brick arch and the terra cotta keystone and label stops. The spring line of the arch is relatively low. Rectangular double doors are set within the semicircular opening, with the remaining space comprising the side lights and transom. Within the arched openings in the first floor end bays are semicircular transoms bridging two double-hung windows. In contrast to the arched windows, directly above and below are found flat arched windows with stone lintels. All second story windows have transoms, and on the front and rear where the windows are double, there are separate lintels above the windows and continuous lintels above the transoms. Directly above the central doorway is an oriel window which is sheathed in copper, one of the most outstanding features of the exterior.

The clay tile roof is pierced by two chimneys, one on the northwest and the other on the southeast, the latter having an added flue. The caps are simple projections, with a band of dentils at the lower edge, crowned with stone. The eyebrow windows on the north and south facades are very atypical of Arkansas buildings. Below the flared eaves of the hip roof is a wooden modillioned cornice.

The one-story rear extension, five bays across and two bays deep, has a flat gravel roof. The top of the parapet aligns with the second story continuous window sill, and a slightly projecting cornice of soldier bricks lines up with the string course of the main building. A soldier course also marks a water table on the extension.

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The interior features a small glassed-in vestibule within the foyer. Separating the foyer from the skylighted work space at the rear is a partition with fluted pilasters, unusual in that the corners are rounded, resting on high wainscoting in which the post office boxes were once arranged. The foyer floor is marble, while the remainder of the first floor is maple. At the east end of the foyer rise the U-shaped stairs leading to the second floor offices. Ceiling height in the basement is nine feet, the first floor sixteen feet and the second floor thirteen feet.

The Camden Post Office is exceptional because of its quality of craftsmanship, unusual architectural features, and style. Attributed to a Federal government architect, its Richardsonian Romanesque design is remarkably sophisticated, making it all the more outstanding in its relatively provincial setting. Not only is it unique to the city and county, it is significant to the state as well, for it is an early Federally designed building in a style unusual to Arkansas.

# 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input 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 2-21-1895 3-31-1896 BUILDER/ARCHITECT Asa Morgan - Builder

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Constructed under the supervision of Asa Morgan, the \$39,000 stone and pressed brick Camden Post Office and Land Grant Office was completed on March 31, 1896. The first floor of the building served as the city post office until 1962, and for a number of years the second floor quartered the U. S. Land Grant Office.

Shortly after the construction of the building, the Camden Press proclaimed that Camden was probably the smallest town in the United States containing a federal government building. The claim was not substantiated, but it does raise an important question relating to the history of the structure. Why did the United States government in an era of low taxes and balanced budgets erect an expensive, Romanesque-style, federal building in the small town of Camden, Arkansas? Perhaps the answer lies in the prosperity which Camden seemed to possess. An account published shortly after the turn of the century describes Camden as a city with commercial significance far exceeding its population of around 5,000. An important port on the Ouachita River and served by two rail lines, Camden possessed the transportation outlets necessary for the annual export of 20,000 bales of cotton. Furthermore, the city was the hub of a burgeoning lumber industry that operated in the dense southern Arkansas forests, which surrounded the town. The same article also intimates that political pressure might have spurred the construction of the federal building. The local citizens actively petitioned Congressman Thomas C. McRae on behalf of the building and McRae, in turn, garnered a \$25,000 appropriation for construction purposes during the Harrison administration. Perhaps the citizens interest in building a substantial post office stemmed from the fact that the old post office was unsatisfactorily located in the rear of a Camden bank.

At its dedication the Old Camden Post Office was called the "finest building between Texarkana and Little Rock." Today it remains a rare and fine example of the endangered Richardsonian Romanesque style of architecture. The building is a bulky, two-story, three bay, masonry structure, supporting an equally heavy-looking, tile, hipped roof. Typical Romanesque features such as arched apertures, heavily accented exterior moldings, and an impressive oriel window, overlooking the entranceway ornament the structure. Short, thick brackets, resembling beams, are found beneath the roof overhang, and two eyebrow dormers grace the roof itself. In 1925 a one-story, brick addition was attached to the rear of the building, but time has mellowed any adverse impact which the addition

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had upon the structure. The highly ornamental interior of the building remains in fine condition with the only major loss being the postal windows which were once located on the building's first floor.

Nine postmasters were headquarterd in the Old Camden Post Office during its 62 years of use. In the early years of the building political patronage played a major role in filling the office of postmaster. Postmasters were appointed to four year terms and their tenure was invariably tied to specific Presidential administrations. However, J. C. Russell, an ardent Republican, served as postmaster through a total of 27 years of Republican administration. (The passage of the Ramseck-O'Mahoney Bill in 1939 placed the office of postmaster under the classified civil service. Earlier in the century, the appointment of postal clerks by the postmaster had also resulted in a patronage system and at least one case of nepotism is known to have occurred in Camden. Hugh Pickett, the first postmaster in the Old Camden Post Office, hired his son as a postal clerk. Will Pickett worked from 4:00 a.m. until he went to school at 9:00 a.m. for ten cents a day. Postal clerks were placed under the civil service during the Taft administration.) *eliminate per Mr. Morris*

The Old Camden Post Office is a rare and fine example of Richardsonian Romanesque architecture; it represents the rarity of a 19th century Federal building being located in a small town; and it is a rich reminder of local postal history.

## 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

"Group Seeks Ways to Save Old Post Office." The Camden News. July 2, 1976, p.1.  
 "Old Post Office Doomed for Parking Lot Project." The Camden News. June 30, 1976, p.5.  
 Sifford, Dora, compiler. "Ritchie Morgan Gets Postal Job." Camden Scrapbook,  
 Vol. VII. Ouachita County Library, Camden, Arkansas.  
 \_\_\_\_\_, "New Postmaster Takes Office," Feb. 15, 1940. Camden  
Scrapbook, Vol. VII. Ouachita County Library, Camden, Arkansas.

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than one acre

UTM REFERENCES

A	1,5	51,57,6,0	3,71,60,4,0	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

## 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Mike Shinn, Historian and Wilson Stiles, Architectural Historian

ORGANIZATION

Arkansas Historic Preservation Program

DATE

9-14-76

STREET & NUMBER

300 West Markham

TELEPHONE

501-371-1639

CITY OR TOWN

Little Rock

STATE

Arkansas

## 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE Anne Bartley

TITLE State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE 9-14-76

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

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Tufts, A. A., Compiler. "J. C. Russell Dies After Long Illness."  
Camden Scrapbook, Vol. V. Ouachita County Library, Camden,  
Arkansas.

