



United States Post Office - Richland County History Room photos.

United States Post Office, 213 North Central Avenue, 1935.

Built in a simplified Georgian Revival interpretation typical of the late historic era, this symmetrically designed post office exhibits plain brick surfaces ornamented by brick quoins, brick lintels with articulated keystones, dentil trim along the eaves and a front piece in a Classical design. White stone accents contrast with the red brick surfaces. Georgian Revival architecture relies on a simple 1 – 2 story box, using strict symmetry arrangements. The front door is centered, often topped with an elaborate crown supported by pilasters. This is the first post office building ever constructed in the city.



Richland County Bank building

There were other buildings used as a post office, but they were not originally designed as such. The Richland County Bank building located at 195 West Court Street is a primary example of this. The State Bank, which went into receivership in 1928, was proposed to be the Richland Center post office, but became the new home of the Farmers and Merchants Bank when it was determined it was not able to meet the specifications of a post office. This led to the construction of the United States Post Office on Central Avenue instead.

The south wall of the lobby is decorated by a mural painted as a WPA project in 1937 by artist, Richard Brooks, entitled “Decorative Interpretation of Unification of America through the Post.” The mural is an oil on canvas painting that is in excellent condition. The Works Progress Administration (W.P.A.) was created in 1935 to provide some measure of relief to those suffering the effects of the Great Depression. The Federal Art Project was one of the divisions created under Federal Project One. Known as “Federal One” for short, this entity sought to extend the relief of the New Deal to artists, actors, writers, and musicians.

Most of the Post Office works of art in Wisconsin were funded through the Treasury’s Department Section of Painting and Sculpture. “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

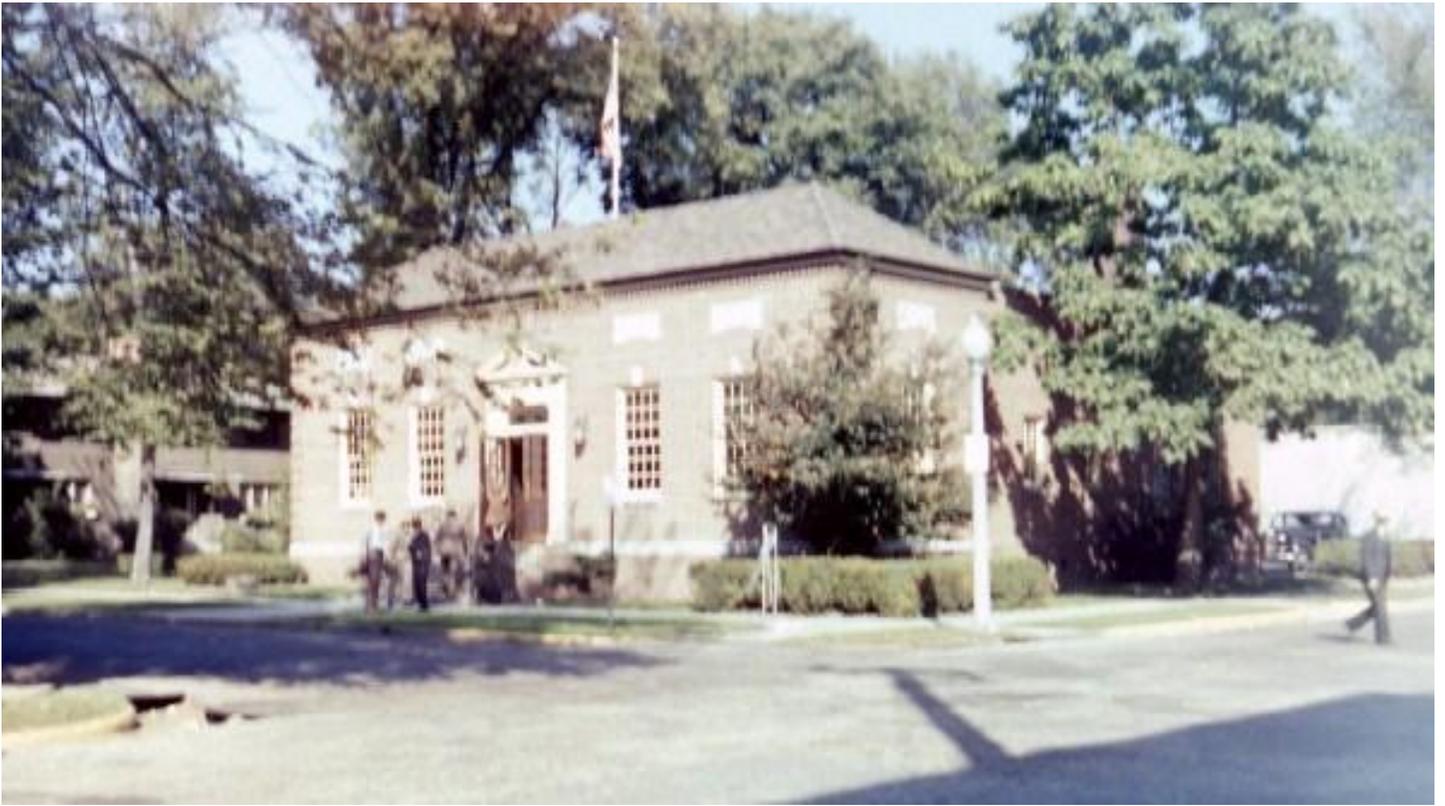
and administered by the Procurement Division of the Treasury Department.” From “Articles EnRoute: Off The Wall: New Deal Post Office Murals” by Patricia Raynor.



"Decorative Interpretation of Unification of America through the Post," Richard Brooks - 1937.

This mural expresses the nation building philosophy of the “service first” postal advocates. Proponents of this idea argue that effective mail service to every corner of the country is so crucial to the economic, social and intellectual development of the nation that, if necessary, it ought to be supplied at a deficit. Rural Free Delivery (RFD) is a primary example of this idea. Even though farmers across the United States were enthusiastic about RFD, many politicians thought it would bankrupt the postal system. Then, as now, the debate continues.





Richland Center Post Office – circa 1940 – Richland County History Room photo.