NPS Form 10-900
(Rev. 8-86)

OMB No. 1024-0018

125-2670-0170

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Federal Building/United States Post Office
other names/site number Independence Museum

2. Location

street & number 123 N. 8th ☐ not for publication
city, town Independence ☐ vicinity
state Kansas code KS county Montgomery code 125 zip code 67301

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
		Contributing	Noncontributing
[X] private	[X] building(s)	1	____ buildings
[ ] public-local	[ ] district	____	____ sites
[ ] public-State	[ ] site	____	____ structures
[ ] public-Federal	[ ] structure	____	____ objects
	[ ] object	1	____ Total

Name of related multiple property listing: ____

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this [X] nomination [ ] request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property [X] meets [ ] does not meet the National Register criteria. [ ] See continuation sheet.

Ramon Powers — August 27, 1988

Signature of certifying official — Date

State Historic Preservation Office, Kansas State Historical Society

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property [ ] meets [ ] does not meet the National Register criteria. [ ] See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official — Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

[ ] entered in the National Register.
[ ] See continuation sheet.
[ ] determined eligible for the National Register. [ ] See continuation sheet.
[ ] determined not eligible for the National Register.
[ ] removed from the National Register.
[ ] other, (explain:) ____

Signature of the Keeper — Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)
Government; Post Office

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)
Recreation and Culture; Museum;
Art Gallery

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(enter categories from instructions)
Late 19th and 20th Century Revivals;
Classic Revival

Materials (enter categories from instructions)
foundation Limestone
walls Brick
roof Metal
other

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Federal Building/Independence Post Office (c. 1911-12, 1937) is located on the southwest corner of the intersection of Eighth Avenue and West Myrtle Street in Independence, Montgomery County, Kansas (pop. 10,598). This one-story hip-roofed, rectangular brick and stone Classical Revival structure stands on the west side of the town's central business district. The main seven-bay facade faces Eighth Avenue to the east; there is a rear three-bay addition on Myrtle Street to the west. The main block is approximately 92 feet long and 50 feet wide; the addition is 85 feet long and 44 feet wide. Designed by the staff of the Treasury Architect, this building was detailed in the classical tradition to express the prevailing concept that government buildings should be monumental and beautiful.

The horizontal symmetrical massing, classical detailing, and quality materials of this facade were intended to convey a sense of formality and permanence appropriate for a governmental building. The interior plan is related to the structure's primary function as a United States post office. A large open workroom occupied most of the original first floor. The public lobby and offices were arranged on three sides of this core. Entrances from the east and north opened into an ell-shaped lobby. Offices were located to the northwest and along the south wall. A rear entrance and recessed loading doors were located to the southwest. In the basement a boiler room and storage closets occupied a position corresponding to the first floor workroom. Offices were arranged around three sides. When the addition was constructed, the workroom was enlarged and more offices with a separate entrance were created in the basement.

The Federal Building has a steel and reinforced concrete frame with red brick veneer on the walls and smooth-cut limestone veneer on the basement foundation. Stone and brick used for the addition are similar, but not identical, to that of the original block. The foundation has a coved base and projecting water table. Walls are laid in header bond with a contrasting tan-colored mortar. Window openings have stone sills and flat brick arches with rough-cut stone keystones. There are brick panels ornamented with inset stone above and below the side bays in the main facade and each bay in the north and south facades of the main block. A molded stone belt course and projecting cornice with modillions ornament the eave. Above the cornice another belt course crowns the facade. The main block has a low hipped roof with standing seam metal roofing. The addition has a flat roof and parapet.

[X] See continuation sheet

There are five central bays in the main east facade with two end bays separated by raised brick piers. The central enframed entrance has an ornamental hood with end brackets. There is a modern metal door with head and sidelights. Stone steps with iron railings lead up to the entrance; the steps are flanked by two cast iron light poles. A dated cornerstone is set in the northeast corner of the building. Windows in the main block are paired 4/4 wooden double-hung sash with 2/2 transoms. There are six basement windows to the east covered with iron security grates and three stone-walled window wells. In the roof above the entrance, a hatch remains for access to the flag pole which originally stood high over the post office entrance. The present-day flagpole stands southwest of the main block. There are three bays in the original north facade. Stone steps lead to a central glazed wooden door with transom, but this entrance is closed. Beside this entrance there are two small wooden casement windows and iron light fixtures. The south facade of the original block has four bays. One has only a small 4-light casement window. There are four basement window wells. A brick interior chimney with recessed panels rises above the southwest corner of the building.

The north facade of the addition to the west has three first floor bays with paired 4/4 wooden double-hung windows and paired 2/2 transoms. These windows are taller than those in the original block. There is a basement entrance well leading to a glazed wooden door with transom and three basement windows. In the west facade there are five first floor and two basement windows. The south facade of the addition has a recessed concrete loading dock with a flat wood awning. There are two paired metal loading doors and one 4/4 wooden double-hung window on this side. At the east end of the dock there is a 4-light wooden entrance door. Beside the dock there is a concrete stair well leading to the basement. This entrance at the southeast corner of the addition has paired 6-light paneled wooden doors.

In the mail ell-shaped lobby, there are five service bays to the east and two to the north. These have been filled with display cases. At the south end of the lobby two original windows and counters for the C.O.D. and registered mail office remain. Two of the building's outstanding interior features were the revolving entrance doors. While the circular vestibule remains in both locations, only the northern door has been restored. A basement stair entrance and a bathroom were located on either side of the northern entrance.

The postmaster's office, vault, and assistant postmaster's office were located along the north wall. There is a passage separating these rooms from the original workroom. The assistant's office had large fixed windows in its outer partition walls to oversee activity in the workroom. This room has

been converted into a kitchen. Both the original workroom and the extension were large open spaces; only the furniture has been removed. A modern low platform has been installed in the extension to the west. The addition workroom has a large overhead skylight. Along the south wall of the original block there was an office suite for C.O.D. and registered mail. To the south the addition had a mailing vestibule with an inner and outer set of paired metal swinging doors. A mezzanine above the south office suite and the vestibule provided a lookout gallery for postal inspectors along the north side. The carriers' restroom, mezzanine stair, and swing room were located to the south.

Generally, the lobby and offices on each side of the main block were not altered during the 1937 renovation. The wainscot, transoms, wood trim, plaster walls, cornices, and ceilings in the lobby remained. However, new terrazo floors with marble borders were laid in the lobby. The lobby was ornamented with fine materials. The wainscoting is white marble; the woodwork is dark stained oak. Above the service bays, the transoms are triple vertical sash. Plasterwork in the ceiling consists of a lower egg and dart molding with an inner cove molding outlining ceiling panels. There are four suspended translucent spherical light fixtures in the lobby.

The postmasters' offices have a tile floor and wood trim. There is a large vault in the east wall of the assistant postmaster's office. The terrazo floor continues from the lobby through the passage to the rear of the workroom extension. In the south office suite the wood trim is dark oak and the floors are carpeted. There is a vault in this room. The workroom has a wood floor and wooden v-groove wainscoting dating from the 1937 renovation. There are four rows of suspended light fixtures and two ceiling fans in the workroom. The skylight in the extension is comprised of 3/3 wooden casement windows.

To the south the stairs to the mezzanine and basement are concrete with metal railings. There is a ceramic tiled bathroom on the mezzanine. The swingroom has painted woodwork and carpeted floors. The basement has concrete floors with tile flooring, painted woodwork in the addition and dark stained woodwork in the original block. There are paneled and glazed oak interior doors to the various basement rooms. Many of the original lettered signs remain on the doors.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

☐ nationally ☐ statewide ☒ locally

Applicable National Register Criteria ☐ A ☐ B ☒ C ☐ D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)	Period of Significance	Significant Dates
Architecture	1911-1912	1911-1912; 1936

Cultural Affiliation: N/A

Significant Person: N/A

Architect/Builder: Walter D. Lovell, contractor

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The Federal Building (c. 1912, 1937), 123 N. Eighth, Independence, Kansas, is being nominated to the National Register under criterion C for its architectural significance as a classically detailed post office constructed during the tenure of Treasury Architect James Knox Taylor (1897-1912). The building served as the Independence post office from 1912 until 1963 when a modern facility was constructed at 116 E. Laurel. The Ladies Library and Art Association acquired the old Federal Building and it was officially opened as the Independence Museum May 6, 1964. The old Independence post office retains a high degree of exterior and interior integrity.

When the new post office was opened for public inspection May 28, 1912, the newspaper report noted that postal receipts had increased from $12,320 in 1903 to $40,818 in 1911. The Independence facility was designated a second class post office in 1902 and a first class post office July 1, 1911. Independence had only 4,851 residents in 1900. By 1910 the population had doubled to 10,480. There were 11,920 residents in 1920. Growth stabilized during the 1920s; the community then was hard-hit by the Depression beginning in 1929. Construction of the post office in 1911 was a reaction to the gas and oil boom in southeast Kansas. When Henry W. Conrad was appointed postmaster January 1, 1904, "he was just in time to receive the brunt of the work from the oil business."

The original block of this building (1911) is architecturally significant because it represents the distinctive characteristics of a first class post office.

During the tenure of James Knox Taylor (1897-1912) as Supervising Architect of the Treasury, the Federal Government promoted the concept that government buildings should be monumental and beautiful, and should represent the ideals of democracy and high standards of architectural sophistication in their communities. Taylor preferred styles derived from classical or early American traditions, and believing that Federal

☒ See continuation sheet

buildings should be built to last emphasized the use of high quality construction materials.

During Taylor's administration, designs were not standardized so the Independence post office was individually designed by the staff of the Supervising Architect. The building is a good example of public monumental architecture in Kansas. The design features are distinctive to its use as a first class post office.

Construction of the Federal Building at the corner of Eighth and Myrtle represented an important step in the physical definition of the town's central business district. As the Tribune September 30, 1908 commented:

> Notice has been received that the government board for the selection of post office sites have accepted the Congregational church bid... The site is 130 feet north on Myrtle facing the Carl-Leon and 140 east on Eighth Street. It is nearer the center of population than any site offered, is within a block of Main Street and a block from Pennsylvania Avenue.

The proposed facility became the third building to house the Independence Post Office in the decade from 1902 through 1912. Earlier offices were located at 108 W. Myrtle (1900-05) and 123 E. Myrtle (1905-11). Four years after it was completed, the Federal Building was portrayed as one of the six landmark buildings in Independence. Others included the Booth Hotel, Prairie Oil and Gas Building, City Hall, and the Montgomery County Courthouse and high school.

Early in May, Congressman P.P. Campbell announced that plans for the new post office were being prepared and would be finished in June. He reported that the building would have a stone basement and brick walls:

> It will front 87 feet east on Eighth Street and 57 feet north on Myrtle Street. There will be entrances on each street to the lobby which extends along both fronts. The money order and registry division will be at the south end of the east lobby and the postmaster's office in the northwest corner. Ornamental screens will separate the different departments. There will be a large workroom, mailing vestibule, woman's toilet, etc. The lobby will be finished in oak, with marble wainscot, and ornamental plaster, and the floor of terrazo, with marble borders and cross stripes. The outside trimmings will be of terra cotta... The driveway will be in the rear and mail will be handled from a platform.

Later the Tribune February 1, 1911 commented on the proposed building in an argument that expressed the aspirations of this period in local history:

> In noting that the bids had been received for the construction of the Independence post office building, the dispatch stated that bids were received for "sandstone" and "limestone." The committee and public spirited citizens who contributed the cash to locate the site and other ought to have some influence with architect of the treasury, and inform him that Independence is not a "sandstone" town but "white limestone," selected brick, or concrete -- that it is a modern down-to-date town, and sandrock will not be acceptable. Let it be made known that official that the building must be of first class material and worth the price it costs.

In the same issue, the Tribune reported that there were elevent bidders for the project. Three contractors from Independence dropped out of the competition. The contract was awarded to Walter D. Lovell from Minneapolis, Minnesota. Lovell's bid totaled $54,300 for a structure with a limestone basement. One month later, the Tribune published a drawing captioned "United States Government building soon to be erected at Independence." This illustration depicted a classically styled building with a low roof and balustrade which differed only slightly from the post office actually built.

The Federal Building was completed and opened for public inspection May 29, 1912. A souvenir pamphlet was published for the event. According to excerpts in the Reporter, the entire appropriation for the property was $75,000. Congressman, Campbell and Senator Curtis were praised for their help in securing the building funds. Vendor of the site was state senator J.F. Overfield. Superintendents of construction for contractor Lovell were C.E. Morell and R.W. Barr. Federal inspector was Horton Smith. H.W. Conrad was the postmaster and Will Hamilton was his assistant at this time.

By 1930 plans were considered to enlarge the Independence Federal Building. This may have been a response to the deepening economic crisis and widespread unemployment. The town's population had only increased from 11,920 to 12,782 residents in the decade since 1920. The addition must not have been urgently needed because six years passed before it was constructed. The Tribune October 12, 1932 reported:

> Some two years ago or over, the postal department made an inspection of the local post office building with intention of building an additional room for use of postal inspectors. On examination it was found that it would be more satisfactory to build out 20 feet on the west side, thereby enlarging the work room, which was crowded, and build four office rooms

> above the new part. This would give office space for Income Tax Collector, Post Office Inspector, army officer to care for enlistments, and one extra room when needed."

Plans were approved in 1932, but bids were not submitted until October 21, 1936. Wyatt C. Hedrick designed the addition. The Thomas Dawson Company of Kansas City was awarded the contract. The Tribune November 11, 1936 stated:

> The cost of the improvements amount to $84,116 and contract calls for completion within 300 contract days. The business of the office will be handled in the same location and the public will receive good service as usual, while the work is in progress.

When the addition was nearly completed, comments by the construction superintendent Martin Peterson emphasized the facts concerning employment. From November 2, 1936 to July 15, 1937, a total of 1,062 men were employed. The labor payroll amounted to approximately $22,000. Peterson said that 99 percent of the laborers employed were local men of which ten percent were Negroes. The project was finished in August, 1937.

The Independence Federal Building served the community for 51 years from 1912 until 1963. The Federal Building is architecturally significant as an example of a classically styled first class post office in Kansas. The original block was designed by the staff of Treasury Architect James Knox Taylor. The old Independence post office retains an excellent degree of architectural integrity.

This nomination was prepared under a Survey and Planning grant from the Kansas State Historical Society to the City of Indedpence.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Architectural drawings: Independence Federal Building (1911, 1936). Collections: Independence Museum.

Grosvenor, Beth. "How to Apply National Register Criteria to Post Offices," National Register of Historic Places Bulletin #13 (Washington, D.C: U.S. Department of Interior, National Park Service, Fall, 1984).

Independence Daily Reporter 5-29-1912; "Oil and Gas Magazine" (1905)

South Kansas Tribune
9-30-1908, 5-04-1910, 2-01-1911, 2-01, 1911, 10-12-1932, 11-04-1936, 06-16-1937, 07-28-1937

☐ See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS):
- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:
- ☒ State historic preservation office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other

Specify repository: Kansas State Historical Society

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property: Less than 1 acre

UTM References

	Zone	Easting	Northing
A	15	259810	4123110
B			
C			
D			

☐ See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description: The nominated property stands on a rectangular tract (approximately 18,200 square feet) comprised of Lots 1, 2, and the east ten feet of Lot 3, Block 41 in Independence, Kansas. The tract is bounded to the east by Eighth Avenue, to the north by West Myrtle Street, and to the west and south by adjacent property lines. The nominated property is located in the central business district of Independence, Kansas

☐ See continuation sheet

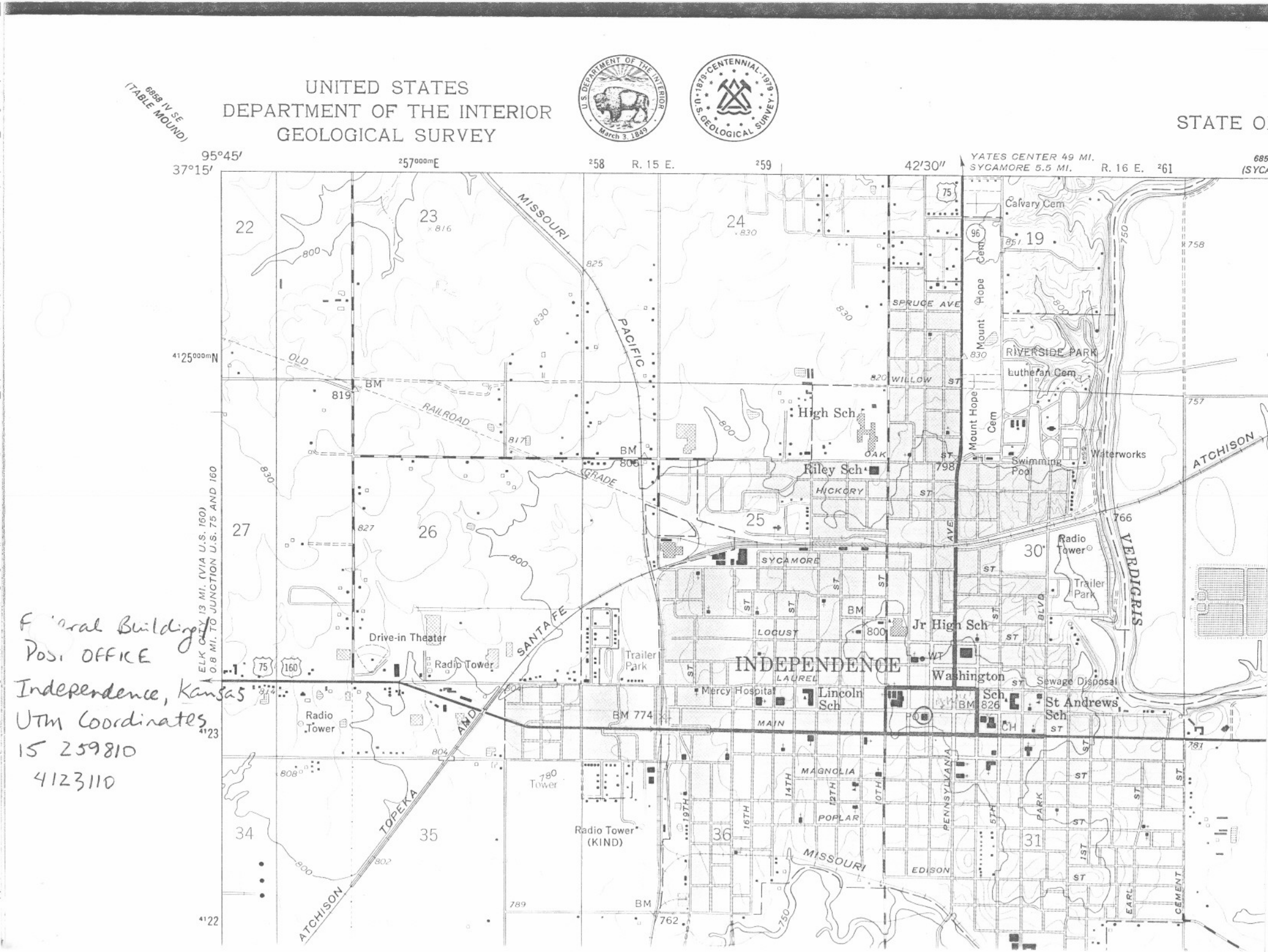
Boundary Justification

The boundary includes 130' by 140' tract containing the old Federal Building. This is the area historically associated with the building.

☐ See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Dale Nimz
organization: Independence Main Street Project
date: May 27, 1988
street & number: P.O. Box 611
telephone: (316) 331-2300
city or town: Independence
state: Kansas
zip code: 67301



Federal Building
Post Office
Independence, Kansas
UTM Coordinates
15 259810
4123110