

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 for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of property

historic name United States Post Office

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 679 West King Street

city or town Boone

state North Carolina code NC county Watauga code 189 zip code 28607

N/A not for publication
N/A vicinity

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for reistering 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 meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide Locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Jeffrey J. Crows Acting SHPB 10/30/95
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State of Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is :
 entered in the National Register.
 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

United States Post Office, Boone
Name of Property

Watauga, NC
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

NA

Number of contributing resources previously listed

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Government; Post office

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

Government ; Post office

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Colonial Revival

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation stone

walls stone

roof copper

other wood

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

United States Post Office, Boone
Name of Property

Watauga, NC
County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.

B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.

C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.

D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.

B removed from its original location.

C a birthplace or grave.

D a cemetery

E a reconstructed building, object, or structure

F a commemorative property

G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Art

Politics/Government

Period of Significance

1938-1945

Significant Dates

1938

1940

Significant person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

NA

Cultural Affiliation

NA

Architect/Builder

See continuation sheet

Significance

(Explain the significance of the property in one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

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

Name of repository: US Post Office, Boone NC; Appalachian State University.

Boone, NC; Downtown Boone Development Association, Boone NC

United States Post Office, Boone

Watauga, NC

Name of Property

County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 0.703

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	<u>17</u>	<u>438340</u>	<u>4008340</u>	3	_____	_____	_____
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
2	_____	_____	_____	4	_____	_____	_____
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing

Verbal Bounday Description

(Describe the boundaires of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Kaye Reynolds Edmisten, Downtown Coordinator

organization Downtown Boone Development Association date August 17, 1995

street & number 736 West King Street-PO Box 362 telephone 704-262-4532

city or town Boone state NC zip code 28607

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name United States Postal Service

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National Park Service

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United States Post Office, Boone
Watauga County, NC

Narrative Description:

The United States Post Office in Boone, North Carolina, is a one story Colonial Revival-style building that dates from 1938. Located on a rectangular lot at 679 West King Street, the dressed stone building stands atop a landscaped, terraced, lawn planted with mature trees that overlooks the main business and institutional street of the Watauga County seat. The rear (north) section of the lot is given over to the service parking lot and is bounded by Queen Street; Linney Avenue marks the west boundary; and the eastern boundary is defined by a six-foot evergreen hedge. King and Queen streets run parallel to the upward grade of the topography that rises from a creek south of King Street to the summit of a mountain north of the town. The development to the east and west on King Street is composed of one-, two-, and three-story brick and stone commercial and institutional buildings, many of which date from the 1920s and 1930s. Within a few blocks south of King Street, across the creek, is the campus of Appalachian State University. North of the business district is a mixed residential and business area.

The Post Office is a New Deal-era project that is relatively unchanged from its original 1938 appearance. The steel-framed stone building rests on a raised stone foundation that is set into the slope of the site. The three-part plan is composed of a side-gabled main block, a slightly inset, flat-roofed service block, and a small, centrally placed, rear loading dock. The main block is five bays wide and two bays deep, and the service block is three bays deep. The twelve-by-twenty-four-foot loading dock is a raised wooden platform under a flat roof supported by stone piers.

The symmetrically composed main (south) elevation is reached by an impressive three-flight series of concrete steps that rise from the King Street pedestrian sidewalk. The granite stoop is flanked by Adam-inspired wrought-iron balusters and

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United States Post Office, Boone
Watauga County, NC
Narrative Description (continued)

bannisters that terminate in sweeps that encircle wrought iron luminaires. The main entry, the original doors of which were double-leaf wood and glass, is presently filled with modern plate glass doors. The Colonial Revival motif of the building is set by the entry that features Doric pilasters supporting a three-part entablature that surmounts a spider-web fanlight. The frieze of the entablature supports the words "Boone, North Carolina," while "United States Post Office" appears above the entry on the wooden fascia. Above the fascia is a dentilled cornice. The fascia and cornice define the side-gabled, copper-clad roof of the main block, and the parapeted flat roof of the service block. The gable ends of the main block are finished with wooden clapboard and lunettes. Mounted on the roof ridge above the entry is an octagonal lantern with paired Tuscan columns supporting an entablature adorned by a dentilled cornice. The louvered lantern walls are decorated with chevrons above the cornice and an arrow-shaped weathervane with "1938" crowns its copper dome.

The southwest corner of the main elevation is marked with a cornerstone inscribed as follows:

Henry Morgenthau Jr
Secretary of the Treasury
James A Farley
Postmaster General
Louis A Simon
Supervising Architect
Neal A Melick
Supervising Engineer
1938

The window openings throughout the building are filled with double-hung wooden sash set within wooden surrounds with molded wooden sills and architraves. On either side of the main entry are two regularly-spaced window openings filled with twelve-over-twelve wooden sash, and the east and west elevations contain matching ones. The western elevation of the service block is opened with three standard twelve-over-twelve sash, while the east elevation contains a central

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United States Post Office, Boone
Watauga County, NC
Narrative Description (continued)

twelve-over-twelve flanked by smaller eight-over-eight windows. The fenestration of the rear (north) elevation is irregular, but matches that of the other elevations in its details. The rear service door is sheltered under the loading dock, and metal-railed concrete steps lead to the basement from the east corner. In addition to the door and window openings, the rear elevation contains a square stone chimney that rises above the flat roof of the service block and is capped by a flat-cut stone on small piers. The north plane of the front gable roof contains a dormer with a bank of hopper windows. The raised foundation is opened with granite-silled ventilators filled with iron grillwork. The loading dock is accessed by a paved drive along the east side of the building between King and Queen streets.

The interior of the lobby is gained through a wood and glass airlock. The main block is divided into a postmaster's office behind an interior east wall with a centrally-placed door, and the rear, or north, wall of the lobby is largely given over to the service counter that stops short of the west wall. The walls of the L-shaped lobby are twelve feet high and terminate at the ceiling with a simple crown molding and fascia. The brass ceiling fixtures appear to be original and are adorned with stars. Wainscoting on the walls is Tennessee Tavernelle Clair marble with a dark cedar marble base: details that were called for in the original specifications for the building. The floor is terrazzo marble chips composed of Champlain Red and dark Tennessee marble to match the base of the wainscot. The walls above the wainscot are finished with plaster.

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United States Post Office, Boone
Watauga County, NC
Narrative Description (continued)

Mounted over the doorway cornice of the postmaster's office is an eleven-foot-wide by four-foot-tall oil on canvas mural painted by Alan Tompkins and installed in the post office in 1940. The painting features a young Daniel Boone and two companions on a hunting trip in frontier-era Watauga County. Other original features in the lobby include the bank of frosted glass service windows with gilt lettering announcing such services as "REGISTRY-C.O.D." and "U.S. SAVINGS BONDS" above the service counter; wood-framed bulletin boards flanking the postmaster's door; and postal patron service tables. In the ell created by the service counter is a bank of post office boxes and drawers. Although key locks have replaced the lock cylinders, the wood, glass, and brass of the boxes and drawers appear to be original. The service block is largely given over to the mail room floor that appears relatively unchanged from the 1930s and 1940s. The post office safe marked with the seal of the United States stands in the southeast corner, and an iron pull-rod extends from the work area to the bank of hopper windows that can be opened for ventilation. The basement of the service area contains offices and conference rooms and is reached by stairs in the east corner of the mail room floor. The interior of the service block is finished with plaster walls, wood-paneled doors, and wooden door and window surrounds. The only change to the interior of the service block, aside from the installation of modern computer terminals and scales, is the temporary partition across the rear that separates the office space for a community group that rents that portion of the building.

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United States Post Office, Boone
Watauga County, NC

Statement of Significance

Erected in 1938, the United States Post Office at 679 West King Street in the Watauga County seat of Boone is a handsome, dressed stone, Colonial Revival-style reminder of the impact the federal New Deal-era building program had on small communities throughout the state. Sited on a prominent terraced lot overlooking the commercial main street of the town, the Boone example is a member of an extended family of postal facilities in towns across the state that were constructed to the designs of the Office of the Supervising Architect of the Treasury under the leadership of architect Louis A. Simon (1867-1958). Like several other examples, the U.S. Post Office in Boone displays a mural supplied by an artist chosen through competition sponsored by the Section of Fine Arts in the Department of the Treasury. Created by artist Alan Tompkins of Stratford, Connecticut, the Boone mural is the only one of the forty-three North Carolina New Deal post office artworks located in the northwest section of the state. The post office construction project was initiated by Congressman Robert L. Doughton who represented Watauga County in the United States Congress for forty-two years, beginning in 1911. It joined a series of important 1930s and 1940s public construction projects in the county and the region that include the Blue Ridge Parkway, the Watauga County Hospital, Appalachian High School, and significant buildings on the campus of Appalachian State Teacher's College (now Appalachian State University.) The United States Post Office in Boone meets Criterion C for local significance in the history of art and architecture, and Criterion A for significance in politics and government. It has been a source of civic pride for the Boone community throughout its fifty-six year history; when a new county-wide postal facility was located on Highway 321 in the 1970's, Boone merchants and civic leaders lobbied Congressman James Broyhill to keep the 1938 Boone facility open. The handsome stone building serves as a focal point in the current Boone Main Street project and is one of a diminishing number of New Deal post offices to remain in service.

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United States Post Office, Boone
Watauga County, NC

Historical Background and Politics/Government Context

On the twentieth of July 1823, Jordan Councilll opened a post office in his store which was located a few hundred yards from the site of a hunting cabin used by the pioneer Daniel Boone on his frequent trips westward. Councilll served as the first Postmaster of the rapidly growing community of Boone and continued in that position with only a one-year interruption until 1866. In 1850, the name of the post office, and the rapidly growing settlement, changed from Councilll's Store to Boone in honor of Daniel Boone. In 1872, the General Assembly of North Carolina granted the settlement of Boone its charter incorporating it into the town of Boone.¹

Business at the Post Office in Boone expanded dramatically in the first three decades of the century. For the four quarters that ended 31 March 1915, net receipts were \$2,109. In the next decade, this figure more than quadrupled. Receipts for the calendar year 1925 equaled \$9,314, and set another record at \$14,955 in 1936.² This rapid growth prompted Congress to appropriate money for the construction of a new post office in Boone on August 26, 1937. Robert L. Doughton, who represented Watauga County in the United States House of Representatives, was a native of neighboring Alleghany County and closely allied to the Democratic party leadership of Boone. "Farmer Bob," as Doughton was affectionately referred to by the largely rural population of Watauga County, proudly took credit for the appropriation which led to the building of the new post office in Boone.³ A member of the House since 1911, he eventually served for forty-two years. As Chairman of the House Ways and Means Committee for eighteen years (1933-1947 and 1949-1953), Congressman Doughton was instrumental in acquiring several federal public works projects for the Boone area.⁴

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United States Post Office, Boone
Watauga County, NC

Historical Background and Politics/Government Context (continued)

Business leaders in Boone preferred a site for the new post office which was owned by Mrs. Emma Councilll, the widow of J.D. "Crack" Councilll. The Councilll family had been prominent in the history of the town since the days when Jordan Councilll operated the town's first post office. J.D. Councilll had operated a blacksmith shop on the east portion of the property along the front to Depot Street. Congressman Doughton had told some of the business leaders in Boone that the government was in the process of building some post offices in strategic small towns and that Boone was a possible site for one of the post office buildings. He had warned them that if any controversy arose as to the site that numerous other towns were on the waiting list for new post offices. When a notice appeared in the local paper that Boone had been selected for a new post office if a suitable site could be located, Wade Edward Brown, a young attorney practicing law on King Street, went to his office, wrote out a short petition to the effect that the J.D. Councilll Property was the best location and asked that it be selected as the site for the new post office. He spent the entire day seeing members of the business community and asking for their support of his petition. According to Mr. Brown, who went on to become mayor of Boone and a representative to both the North Carolina House of Representatives and the North Carolina State Senate, "...the response was enthusiastic and virtually unanimous."⁵ The petition was mailed immediately to Congressman Doughton, resulting in the selection of the J.D. Councilll property as the site for the new post office. Customary practice in securing land for public use in the 1930s in Boone involved the filing of a so-called "friendly condemnation" order with the courts. Mr. Brown served as attorney for the Councilll family in the action "United States of America versus Certain Lands in the City of Boone, County of Watauga, State of North Carolina, Emma Councilll, Widow, Virginia Councilll DeVault and

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United States Post Office, Boone
Watauga County, NC

Historical Background and Politics/Government Context (continued)

husband R.H. DeVault, Mary Councilll Hollifield and husband D.S. Hollifield, Alice Councilll Robbins, Frank Councilll and Tom Councilll" which was decided by Judge Johnson J. Hayes, of the District Court of the United States for the Middle District of North Carolina on November 18, 1938. The Councilll family received the sum of seven thousand dollars for the property.⁶

Correspondence between Boone Postmaster Wiley G. Hartzog and the Post Office Department reveal that construction on the building proceeded smoothly. Photographs of various stages of the construction were routinely sent to Washington for federal approval by the construction engineer, Wolf Mueller. The January 11, 1939, photograph shows lumber and machinery on the site with the January 31, 1939 photograph showing a foundation in place. The February progress photographs reveal walls taking shape, and by July 1, 1939, the construction photograph indicated that the exterior of the building was complete.⁷ Watauga County native Willard Watson, who later achieved fame for his handmade wooden toys on display in the Smithsonian, was one of the workers who helped with road work around the building site.⁸

When the building was nearing completion, Congressman Doughton sent word to Boone from his office that Postmaster General James A. Farley had agreed to attend and take part in the dedication ceremonies. After some delays, the dedication date was set for April 10, 1940. Postmaster Wiley G. Hartzog was named general chairman of the committee

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United States Post Office, Boone
Watauga County, NC

Historical Background and Politics/Government Context (continued)

that prepared for Farley's arrival and the dedication ceremonies. Interest in the Postmaster General's appearance was great since Farley had announced his candidacy for the Democratic nomination for President. Although Farley had been appointed by Franklin D. Roosevelt, he had chosen to challenge the incumbent President because he believed that another term in office for Roosevelt endangered the constitutional process. Since Farley's appearance marked the first time that a Presidential candidate had visited Boone, the dedication committee for the new post office building sent invitations to many prominent people and government officials in North Carolina.⁹

The Watauga Democrat, the local newspaper for Boone, estimated the crowd at the dedication ceremony at which Postmaster General Farley spoke at three thousand people, a sizable crowd for Boone since the dedication program for the event estimated the total Boone population as around 2,500. Farley said of the new post office that its "simple elegance and design will stand as a constant reminder of the power and dignity of the government of the United States," dedicating the building to "the use of all the people, rich or poor, strong or weak, Democrat or Republican."¹⁰

In October, 1940, an oil-on-canvas mural executed by Connecticut artist Alan Tompkins was installed on the east wall of the post office lobby. Tompkins had been chosen through a competition sponsored by the Section of Fine Arts to provide a mural for the newly completed building. His mural depicted the legendary frontiersman, Daniel Boone, in a painting that Tompkins produced after spending two days in Boone surveying the scenery and consulting with local townspeople.

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United States Post Office, Boone
Watauga County, NC

Historical Background and Politics/Government Context (continued)

Although the Boone Post Office was not the first publicly-built structure in Boone, it generated more interest and pride than other buildings constructed with federal assistance. Following the passage of the Emergency Construction of Public Buildings Act by Congress in August of 1937, communities such as Boone were eligible for federal assistance in building badly needed public buildings. Blanford Barnard Dougherty, co-founder and President of what was then Appalachian State Teachers College, was adept at obtaining public funding for building projects on the campus. Among the projects completed from 1937 through 1938 were the Watauga County Hospital, now Founders Hall in 1936; Appalachian High School, now Chapell Wilson Hall in 1937; and Smith-Wright Hall in 1939. Two other WPA structures built in 1938 are a two-story stone building on North Water Street which currently houses county offices and the Watauga County Public Library and the Watauga Handicrafts cabin on the Blowing Rock Road which is now a clothing outlet store. Both of these two buildings have been substantially altered over the years and neither has the integrity and impressive presence of the Colonial Revival style as evidenced in the Boone Post Office.

Postal revenues for the Boone Post Office continued to grow in the next three decades as a reflection of the rapid population growth in Watauga County. A 1957 headline in *The Watauga Democrat* announced that over 16,000 pieces of mail were handled daily at the facility. By 1962, Postmaster Ralph Beshears, Sr., would announce that "Our volume of mail has more than doubled in the last ten years." in a feature article in the local paper which stated that the population served by the post office was 13,000. Five years later, a December 14, 1967 photograph of the interior of the post office had a caption stating that the office would handle about one half a million pieces of mail in the month of December alone.¹¹ By the 1970s a new postal facility was being planned. Downtown merchants and civic leaders lobbied Congressman James Broyhill to keep the King Street Post Office open, not just as a postal facility but also as a valuable

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United States Post Office, Boone
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Historical Background and Politics/Government Context (continued)

cultural resource for the community with its unique example of New Deal Post Office art. The stately stone building serves as a focal point in a rapidly growing tourist and university community where historic buildings and the cultural roots they represent have often been destroyed to allow for new construction. The continued preservation of the United States Post Office building in downtown Boone is vital to the preservation of the history of the Town of Boone.

Architectural Context

The United States Post Office in Boone is a member of an extended family of New Deal-era post office projects in the state that bear the stamp of architect Louis Simon (1867-1958). Simon, a graduate of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, joined the Office of the Supervising Architect of the Treasury in 1896, became head of the architectural division in 1905, and was named supervising architect in 1934.¹² Established in the 1850s to oversee the design of federal buildings, the Office exerted a profound influence over the quality of design displayed in postal facilities throughout the country. In North Carolina, the identified New Deal post offices display the Classical Revival- and Colonial Revival-style motifs that were preferred by Simon's predecessor, James Knox Taylor who believed that federal buildings should represent democratic ideals.¹³ Both the Classical and Colonial revival styles gained currency during the later years of the nineteenth century, and by the early twentieth century, had seized the popular imagination as the architectural representations of the principles on which the country was founded.

The former United States Post Office (NR 1995) in Mount Olive, Wayne County, was built in the Classical Revival-style in 1931 under the supervision of the then acting Supervising Architect James A. Wetmore. It is a one-story brick building with a formal, recessed, colonnaded entry pavilion.¹⁴ The former Post Office in Belmont in Gaston County, together with

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United States Post Office, Boone
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Architectural Context (continued)

its replica in Wallace in Duplin County are one-story brick facilities designed by Simon and rendered in the Colonial Revival style with symmetrical facades; double-leaf entry doors surmounted by transoms with brass eagles and thirteen brass stars representing the original states; and flanked by sidelights with angular muntins. ¹⁵

The Boone Post Office, also a Simon building and the only one of the four facilities mentioned that remains in service, is a Colonial Revival design rendered in dressed stone with a symmetrical elevation composed of hallmark Colonial Revival-style elements. All four buildings occupy prominent sites in their respective communities. They also share a plan that is composed of a main or formal block in which the public conducted postal business and the postmaster administered the facility; a service block in which the mechanics of postal service were carried out; and a central, projecting, rear loading dock from which mail was received and dispersed. The Mount Olive, Wallace, and Belmont buildings share commonalities of materials and siting: the brick elevations were probably chosen to reflect other Classical and Colonial Revival-style buildings in the area, while the placement of the buildings on small urban lots provided small, clipped formal lawns and plantings. Design concessions to the rustic mountain atmosphere of the Boone Post Office are reflected in the choice of the dressed stone elevations crafted by well-known local stonemasons Earl and Clarence Lyons that recall the landscape architecture structures of the nearby Blue Ridge Parkway, another New Deal-era design project. Concessions to the rugged mountain terrain are found in the grand, terraced setting of the building that ascends above the main business street and affords the building the most prominent public site in the county seat.

In all, the Boone Post Office is an excellent example of the pre-World War II public standard of architectural design and construction excellence expressed in small-town post offices across the state. Although the design and plan for the

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United States Post Office, Boone
Watauga County, NC

Architectural Context (continued)

building contain standard elements reflected in other examples, it departs from similar post offices and reflects its locale with its impressive siting and stone exterior elevations.

Art Context

One of the most unique aspects of the Boone Post Office is the oil on canvas mural "Young Daniel Boone on a hunting expedition in Watauga Country." Of the forty-three New Deal Post Office artworks created for North Carolina, the Boone Post Office has the only surviving mural in the northwestern mountains of the state. In June of 1939 the *Bulletin* of the Section of Fine Arts, Treasury Department, announced a competition for one mural painting of the public lobby of a post office in each of the forty-eight states. The newly constructed Boone Post Office was chosen to receive one of the murals. In the specifications for the project the *Bulletin* specifies a mural to be eleven feet eight inches wide by four feet six inches high. The commission of \$740, or roughly one percent of the building's total cost, was allotted for paying the artist whose design was selected.¹⁶

The winning sketch for the Boone Post Office was submitted by Alan Tompkins, an artist from Stratford, Connecticut. His preliminary drawing of two tobacco farmers working in a field was displayed in the Corcoran Art Gallery in Washington, D.C. The December 4, 1939 issue of *Life* magazine showed the winning scenes for all forty-eight post offices, including Tompkins' sketch of tobacco farmers.¹⁷ The reaction of Boone residents to the proposed mural was swift and negative.

An editorial in *The Watauga Democrat* attacked the design as an artistic monstrosity. The sketch was described as a "so-called painting which portrays a couple of hungry-looking tobacco growers in a 'low-land' field...and, so far as artistic

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United States Post Office, Boone
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Art Context (continued)

imagination goes, the thing stinks." ¹⁸ The editorial echoed the sentiments of Boone Postmaster Wiley Hartzog who had written to the Section of Fine Arts expressing his concern about the community reaction to the painting. The consensus of the townspeople was that a scene of a tobacco field was not appropriate for their mountain area. ¹⁹ The *Watauga Democrat* editorial suggested that the people of the community would have preferred "a few reminders of this beautiful mountain country, with a slight flavor of the well known Daniel Boone tradition." ²⁰

Upon learning of the reaction of the Boone community, Edward B. Rowan, Assistant Chief of the Section of Fine Arts, wrote to Postmaster Hartzog assuring him that the artist had been instructed to study his subject and create a more appropriate drawing. Tompkins made arrangements to travel to Boone to research a more acceptable design for the community. He wrote to Postmaster Hartzog claiming that "It will be a pleasure to paint for a community so vitally interested in problems of art." ²¹

Tompkins spent two days in Boone consulting with critics of his earlier sketch and surveying the mountain scenery. He made plans for a new design featuring the legendary frontier explorer Daniel Boone whose hunting cabin had stood a short distance from the newly constructed post office building. The revised sketch for the mural portrayed Daniel Boone and two companions with pack horses and supplies on a hunting trip in the mountains. The figure of Boone is the central figure in the mural. Tompkins portrays Boone wearing a broad-brimmed hat rather than the legendary coonskin cap. In a letter to Postmaster Hartzog, the artist described his painting of Boone as follows:

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United States Post Office, Boone
Watauga County, NC

Art Context (continued)

I have shown Daniel as he is described in historical accounts as of stocky build and with blond curly hair. (History also tells us that he hated the coonskin cap in which he is so often depicted, and never wore one.) In his face I have tried to show not the rash adventurer, which he most certainly was not, but the quiet man of vision and patience, who loved the forests and the dangers they held, and whose characteristics of coolness of judgement, courage and leadership, are those I like to associate with the pioneer spirit in particular, and with the progressive spirit everywhere.²²

Postmaster Hartzog's correspondence reveals that the mural was installed to the satisfaction of the community in October of 1940. In a letter to Edward Rowan, the Assistant Chief Section of Fine Arts, Hartzog reported that the mural "...is highly complimented by every one," including an artist at Appalachian State Teachers College.²³

Notes

¹ "Postoffice Was Founded in 1823," *The Watauga Democrat*, 7 July 1938,²; Daniel J. Whitener, *History of Watauga County, North Carolina, 1849-1949*, privately printed, 1949, 36; and "Boone's History Interesting as An Example of Growth Along Business and Cultural Lines," *The Watauga Democrat*, 7 July, 1938, 1.

²"Postoffice Was Founded in 1823, " 2.

³ "Farley and Doughton Are Heard At Post Office Dedication Today," *The Watauga Democrat*, 11 April 1940, 1.

⁴ Marse Grant, "Retirement at 91 Hard Work, Says Energetic Bob Doughton," *The Charlotte Observer*, 19 September 1954, 20-D.

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United States Post Office, Boone
Watauga County, NC

Notes (continued)

⁵ "New Postoffice to Be Built on Council Site," *The Watauga Democrat*, 27 January, 1938, 1; "Work on Federal Building Rushed," *The Watauga Democrat*, 25 May, 1939, 1; and notes from personal interview with Wade Edward Brown on March 22, 1995.

⁶ Register of Deeds, Watauga County, Book 40, photocopy of entry for December 13, 1938.

⁷ Dated construction photographs taken by Wolf Mueller, Photocopies from Postmaster Papers, Downtown Boone Development Association Building Files, Boone NC.

⁸ Undated photograph of construction crew at post office site, Photocopy from Postmaster Papers, Downtown Boone Development Association Building Files, Boone NC.

⁹ "Postoffice Is Completed; Will Be Occupied Soon," *The Watauga Democrat*, 20 July, 1939, 1; "James A. Farley to Visit Boone April 10 as New Postoffice Is Dedicated," *The Watauga Democrat*, 14 March, 1940, 1; "Plans Going Forward for Visit of James A. Farley," *The Watauga Democrat*, 21 March, 1940, 1; and "James A. Farley to Get Hearty Welcome in City," *The Watauga Democrat*, 28 March, 1940, 1.

¹⁰ "Farley and Doughton Are Heard at Post Office Dedication Today," *The Watauga Democrat*, 10 April, 1940, 1,4.

¹¹ "16,00 Pieces Mail Handled EveryDay At Boone Postoffice," photocopy of article from *The Watauga Democrat*, 1957; " Mailmen Hard Pushed To Serve 13,000 Patrons in Watauga Area," photocopy of article from *The Watauga Democrat*, 20 December, 1962; "Post Office Rush," photocopy of picture from *The Watauga Democrat*, 14 December, 1967 taken from personal collection of Nell C. Linney.

¹² William Huffman, National Register nomination for (former) United States Post Office, Belmont, North Carolina; and National Register nomination for the Wallace Commercial Historic District, Wallace, North Carolina. Copies of both on file in the North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office, Raleigh, North Carolina.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Black and Black. National Register nomination for (former) United States Post Office, Mount Olive, North Carolina. Copy on file in the North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office, Raleigh, North Carolina.

¹⁵ William Huffman, National Register nomination for (former) United States Post Office, Belmont, North Carolina; and National Register nomination for the Wallace Commercial Historic District, Wallace, North Carolina. Copies of both on file in the North Carolina State Historic Preservation Office, Raleigh, North Carolina.

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Watauga County, NC

Notes (continued)

¹⁶ Section of Fine Arts, Department of Treasury, Procurement Division, Public Buildings Branch, *Bulletin* (June 1939), 1, 21, Washington D.C.

¹⁷ "Speaking of Pictures...This Is Mural America for Rural Americans," *Life*, 4 December, 1939, 12-15.

¹⁸ "Artistic Monstrosity," *The Watauga Democrat*, 26 October, 1939, 2.

¹⁹ Wiley G. Hartzog, Boone NC to Edward B. Rowan, Washington D.C., 26 October, 1939, Photocopy of Typewritten Letter, Postmaster Papers, Downtown Boone Development Association, Boone NC; Edward B. Rowan, Washington D.C., to Wiley G. Hartzog, Boone NC, 13 November, 1939, Photocopy of Typewritten Letter, Postmaster Papers, Downtown Boone Development Association Building Files, Boone NC.

²⁰ "Artist to Submit New Mural Design for Boone Office," *The Watauga Democrat*, 26 September, 1940, 1.

²¹ Alan Tompkins, Stratford CN, to Wiley G. Hartzog, Boone NC, 14 November, 1939, Photocopy of Typewritten Letter, Postmaster Papers, Downtown Boone Development Association Building Files, Boone NC.

²² Alan Tompkins, Straford CN, to Wiley G. Hartzog, Boone NC, 20 June, 1940, Photocopy of Typewritten Letter, Postmaster Papers, Downtown Boone Development Association Building Files, Boone NC.

²³ Wiley G. Hartzog, Boone NC, to Edward Rowan, Washington D.C., 7 October, 1940, Photocopy of Typewritten Letter, Downtown Boone Development Association Building Files, Boone NC.

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United States Post Office, Boone
Watauga County, NC

Architect/Builder

Simon, Louis, architect

Lyons, Earl and Clarence, stone masons

Pattner, Henry, contractor

Tomkins, Alan, artist

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United States Post Office, Boone
Watauga County, NC

Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated property includes all of parcel number 2460 on Watauga County Tax Map 2900-08.

Verbal Boundary Justification

The nominated property includes the entire parcel historically associated with the United States Post Office at 679 West King Street, Boone, North Carolina.

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National Park Service**

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Additional Documentation, Page 21

Photographs

United States Post Office Boone, North Carolina: Schedule of Photographs

The following information applies to all of the photographs included in this nomination.

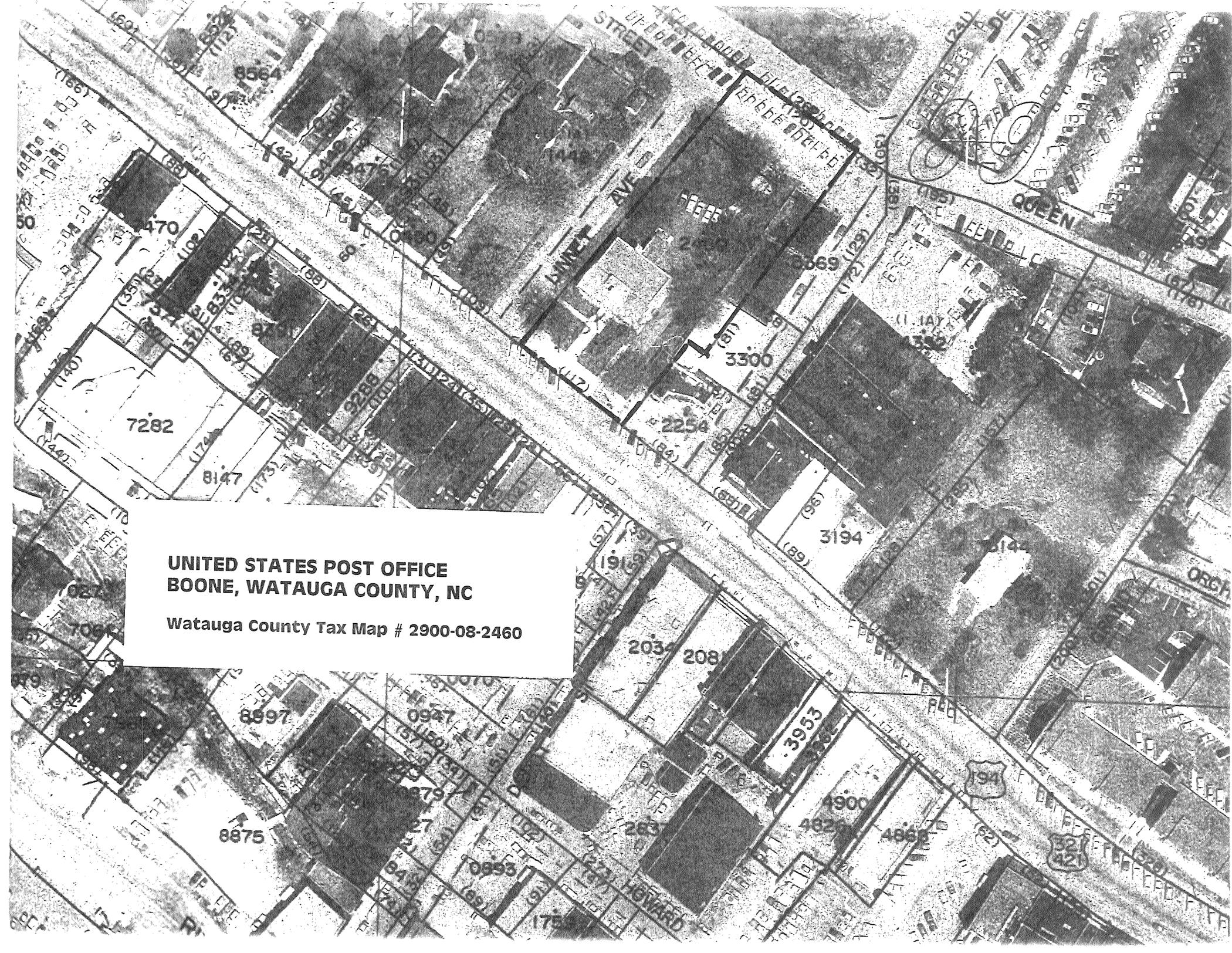
Name of Property:

United States Post Office
679 West King Street
Boone
Watauga County
North Carolina

Location of Original Negatives:

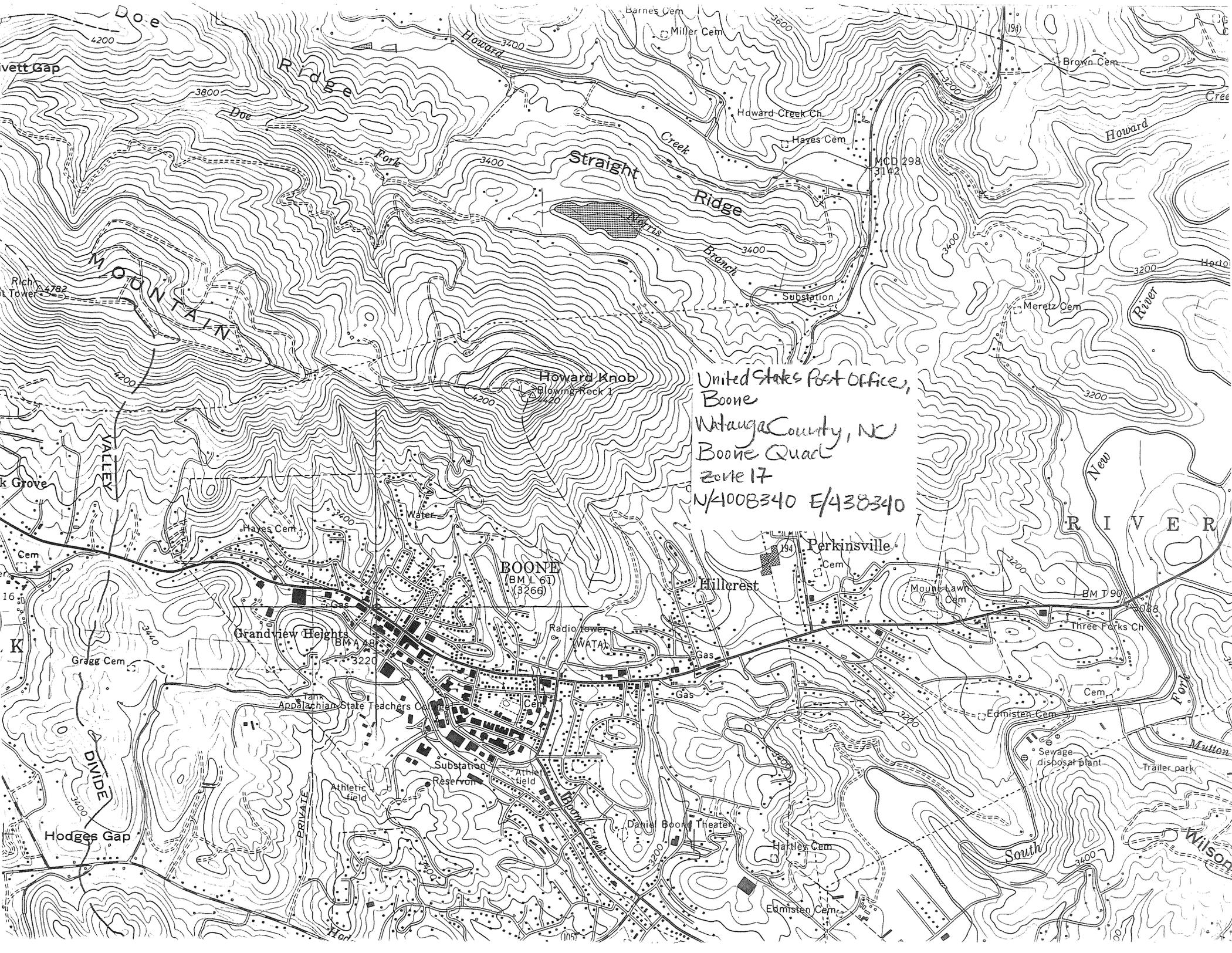
Downtown Boone Development Association
736 West King Street
Post Office Box 362
Boone, NC 28607

1. United States Post Office Boone: overall view, looking north; photographer George Flowers; September 1995;
2. United States Post Office Boone: overall view, looking north: photographer George Flowers; September 1995
3. United States Post Office Boone: eastern elevation: photographer Kaye Edmisten; August 1995
4. United States Post Office Boone: western elevation: photographer Kaye Edmisten; August 1995
5. United States Post Office Boone: overall view, looking south: photographer Kaye Edmisten, August 1995.
6. United States Post Office Boone: southwest elevation; photographer Kaye Edmisten, August 1995
7. United States Post Office Boone: interior facing north; detail of mural; photographer Amy Cooke; August 1995



**UNITED STATES POST OFFICE
BOONE, WATAUGA COUNTY, NC**

Watauga County Tax Map # 2900-08-2460



United States Post Office,
Boone
Watauga County, NC
Boone Quad
zone 17
N/1008340 E/438340

BOONE
(BM L 61)
(3266)

Perkinsville

Hillcrest

Grandview Heights

Hodges Gap

South

Wilson

