

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Jennings Post Office is a one-and-a-half story brick neo-Federal style public building set on the edge of the Jennings central business district. It served as the city's post office from its construction in 1915 until 1976. The police jury then purchased the building, which was renovated in 1979 for use as the parish library headquarters. The interior has been resurfaced, but most of the building's significant features are intact.

The ground story is mainly devoted to a single large room. There is also a rear service wing and a garret space devoted to offices. The exterior is of Flemish bond brick, while the water table, keystones, impost blocks' architrave, and cornice are of limestone. The ground story is surmounted by a parapet and a large pitched roof with wide gable parapets. Each ground story opening is ensconced within a semicircular brick archway. The three central bays of the five-bay facade are ensconced within a slightly projecting pavilion. Each of the five openings on the facade is surmounted by a pedimented dormer. The three central arches on the facade are filled with glass and have open lunettes. Lunettes also embellish each of the end gables.

The only major changes in the building since construction have been the removal of postal counters and the installation of plywood paneling on the interior. These changes should not be regarded as detrimental to the architectural significance of the Old Post Office because it is mainly significant for the contribution the exterior makes to the Jennings' townscape.

Specific dates 1915
Builder/Architect James A. Wetmore, Acting Supervising Architect

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)
Criterion C

The Old Jennings Post Office is locally significant in the area of architecture because it is a landmark in the town of Jennings. It is not noteworthy for its size, monumentality, or elaborateness, but rather for its progressive design, its restraint, and its sophistication. The Jennings central business district is largely characterized by contractor built commercial structures with their standard builder-vernacular forms and details. By contrast, the post office is the work of a "high style" architect and features elegant and restrained neo-Federal articulation. It represents a type of styling which would have been unexpected in a small town in rural Louisiana as early as 1915. It should be noted that this was before the White Pines architectural monograph series gave the more correct and restrained approach to Colonial Revival architecture widespread popular appeal.

NB: Although James A. Wetmore is listed as the architect of record, the design was actually the work of Louis A. Simon. Although Wetmore was federal supervising architect from 1915 to 1933, he was a lawyer by training, and his design responsibilities were carried out by Simon, who was superintendent of the architectural section of the Office of the Supervising Architect.

Major Bibliographical References

Old Jennings Post Office Cornerstone

Craig, Lois and the Staff of the Federal Architecture Project. The Federal Presence: Architecture, Politics, and Symbols in United States Government Building.