

The Museum

Changing Times

In 1967, after postal services moved to the new Santa Rosa Main Post Office on 2nd Street (1965), the building was sold to the County of Sonoma and was used as a data processing center for the school district. Following a major earthquake in 1969, the building found itself on the list of structures to be demolished as a part of the Santa Rosa Urban Renewal Agency's plan for a regional shopping center.

National Register of Historic Places

In April 1974, Santa Rosa architect, Dan Peterson, nominated the Old Post Office to the National Register of Historic Places, citing the integrity of the structure, its renowned architect, and stating that it "represented the pride the community had for its high quality craftsmanship by local people." On May 2, 1974, California State officials recommended the Old Post Office be placed in the National Register of Historic Places, saving it from demolition.

Museum on the Move

In 1979, a team led by Dan Peterson took on the impossible task of rolling the 1,700-ton building two blocks, from 5th to 7th Street, adopting the slogan, "They said it couldn't be done!" By raising the structure and using a bed of rails and a network of pulleys and cables, the building moved an average of 36 feet per day. 800 feet and 75 days later, the Old Post Office was successfully relocated to its new home on Seventh Street. After a remodel and expansion, the Sonoma County Museum officially opened its doors on **January 12, 1985**.



Santa Rosa Post Office and Federal Building, ca. 1910

About

Located in Downtown Santa Rosa, the Museum of Sonoma County welcomes visitors to experience regional history and contemporary art. The Seventh Street campus includes two buildings, multiple galleries, and a sculpture garden. With multiple changing exhibitions per year, there is always something new to experience at the Museum!

Hours

Tuesday-Sunday
11:00-5:00pm
Closed Mondays
Please visit website for holiday hours

Admission

\$10 General
\$7 Seniors, Students,
and Disabled
Members Free
Children 12 & Under Free

This self-guided tour is presented in celebration of the 110th anniversary of the Santa Rosa Post Office and Federal Building. Information provided by "Santa Rosa's Old Post Office and Federal Building" by Dan Peterson.

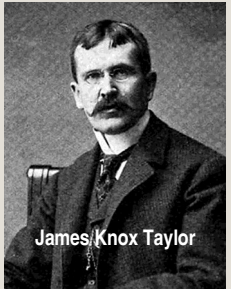


425 Seventh Street, Santa Rosa, CA 95401
www.museumsc.org | (707) 579-1500

The Old Post Office

James Knox Taylor: The National Architect

The Santa Rosa Post Office and Federal Building was designed by James Knox Taylor, Supervising Architect for the US Treasury Department. Taylor was known as "The National Architect," due to his efforts to improve Federal buildings across the country with designs that were compatible with the building's surrounding environment, rather than imposing a grand Federal-scale design.



James Knox Taylor

From Design to Reality (1906-1910)

Congress introduced a bill to construct the Post Office on March 9, 1906 and eventually passed the bill on June 28, 1906, following the devastating 1906 earthquake that hit Santa Rosa (April 18). The Post Office became part of the Santa Rosa rebuilding effort and was the city's first federal building. Constructed by the local Hoyt Bros. contracting firm of Santa Rosa, the building is a great example of Roman Renaissance Revival, with Spanish terra cotta tile roofing, a style that was popular in California at the time. The cost, when completed, was approximately \$60,000, or about 31 cents per cubic foot.



Historic 1910

Santa Rosa Post Office and Federal Building

Self-Guided Tour

The Old Post Office

Postal employees, including Postmaster H.L. Tripp, moved into their new post office on **March 9, 1910**. The actual move took place at night, after the distribution of the evening mail, as to not disrupt postal delivery. Tripp and about a dozen postal carriers served the city, which at the time had a population of less than 10,000. The postal workers were given use of the first floor, with the Registry Department to the right, and the Internal Revenue Offices upstairs to the left.

Santa Rosa Post Office and Federal Building

Main Floor

1 Portico

The front of the building features granite steps, leading up to the terrazzo floor. The four Indiana Bedford Limestone columns are topped with a composite style cap. The pendant light fixture and the iron light fixtures flanking the building were made to operate on both gas and electricity.

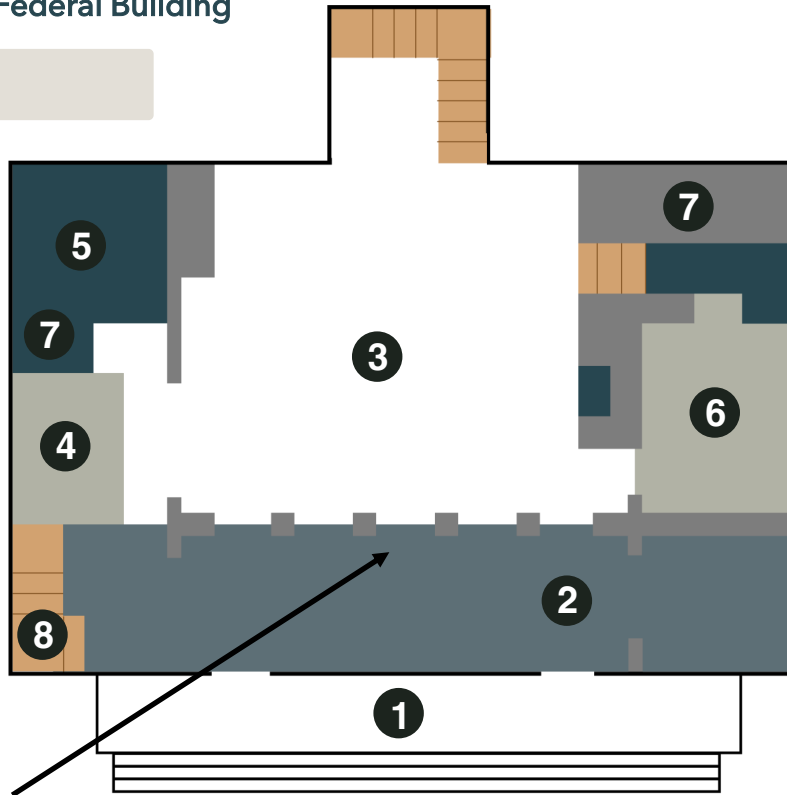
2 Lobby

The first floor was used by the postal workers. The public lobby extended into the gift shop. The floors are terrazzo with marble dividers and borders. In the doorways between the lobby and main gallery area (the workroom), were the counters. **Can you see/feel the depression in the floor in the middle doorway, where customers would frequently stand?**

The chandeliers are not original to the post office; they are from the now demolished Poulsen Building, which once neighbored the post office on A St. While the black radiators along the wall are no longer functioning, the building did have an automatic oil burning plant to operate a hot water heating apparatus, the first system of its type in California! This system was made public in the Bay Area at the 1915 Exposition in San Francisco. The system provided instant hot water in the lavatories and showers. The lobby is ornamented with plaster friezes, pilasters, and ceiling molds. **Can you spot the egg and dart details and dentils in the frieze?**



Scan QR Code to see a photo of the counter area, seen from the workroom, ca. 1940s.



3 Workroom

The workroom occupied the center portion of the first floor and was two-stories high (same as the lobby) as the mezzanine was not added until the 1980s remodel.

4 Assistant Postmaster and Superintendent of Mail's Private Office

5 Postmaster's Private Office and Toilet Room

The Postmaster's office (now a kitchen), featured a private toilet room, vault, and a ladder to access the secret viewing corridor in the attic (see 9 for more). *No public access.*

6 Money Order and Registry Department

See label near vault for more information.

7 Toilet Room

All of the original toilet rooms have terrazzo floors and marble wainscoting.

Second Floor

8 Staircase

The main stair is an open-well boxed stringer with a "U" shaped plan. The newel post, railing, and turned baluster members are oak, stained and varnished. The bottom treads are curved in a bullnose fashion. The office at the top of the stairs was added in 1927.

9 Secret Viewing Corridors and Attic

At the top of the stairs is a door to the boardwalk and the secret viewing corridors in the attic. A series of shafts and ladders allowed the Postmaster or Postal Inspector to perform routine inspections without being seen. See label at top of staircase for more information. The attic also features a steep staircase to the roof of the building, allowing access to the flagpole that was installed on the ridge. *No public access.*



Scan QR Code to see a photo of the catwalk

10 Internal Revenue Service Offices

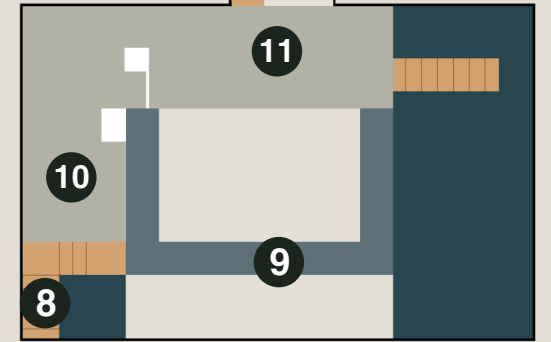
The west offices were for the Deputy Collector of the IRS. Along the west wall was a toilet room. From outside, you can see a small window between the two larger windows (image below). This is where the toilet room was. It was covered to allow for more wall space. See label near vault for more information.



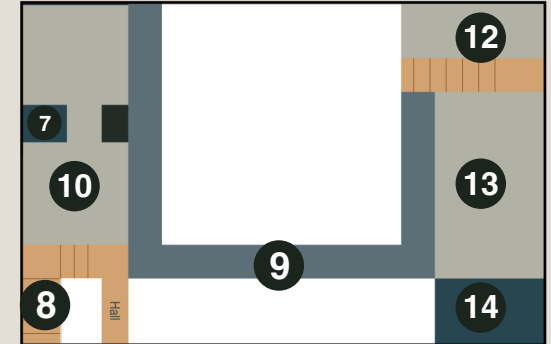
11 Mezzanine

The mezzanine, back staircase, and elevator were added in the 1980s, when the building was renovated for the museum. When facing the elevator, you'll notice the top of the large window to the right, that extends from the first floor. The symmetrical window on the left is missing. This window was covered in the early 2000s. The wall and metal supports can be seen from outside.

Second Floor, Present Day



Second Floor, 1910



12 Store Room

Storage area. The entire east side of the second floor is now office space for museum staff (No public access).

13 Swing Room

Lounge area for postal workers, connected by a staircase from the downstairs workroom. This area was also visible from the secret viewing corridors.

14 Toilet Room with Showers

Postal workers enjoyed instant hot water in the lavatories and showers, thanks to the hot water heating apparatus, powered by an automatic oil burning plant.

We hope you enjoyed the tour!
Questions? Visitor Services is happy to help.