

Commonwealth Post Office

202 E. Commonwealth Avenue

1939

Spanish Colonial Revival

**Status: Local Landmark;
Listed on the National Register**



Approved for construction in 1937, during the years of the Great Depression, the Commonwealth Post Office building was designed by architects employed by the U. S. Treasury Department, instead of being commissioned to a private architect which had been the norm. This new approach helped to keep costs down and to create more standardized plans for the smaller post offices across the country. This also provided for faster construction, with the normal time being ten months or less.

The building's simple, rectangular shape is a mix of Colonial Revival and Spanish Colonial Revival styles. Traits of the Colonial Revival are seen in the front façade's symmetrical design, with three identical windows placed on each side of the centrally-located raised main entry with arched opening; the smooth stucco walls and red tiled gable roof with a modest overhang portray the Spanish Revival style. Used by the U. S. government throughout the country for post office buildings in the 1930s, this type of design had little ornamentation or embellishment and became known as "starved classicism" by architectural critics.



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Construction of the building began in early 1939, with George Goedhart, a San Diego resident who specialized in federal building construction, as the contractor. Taking only seven months' time for completion, and the post office opened for business in November, 1939. The Commonwealth post office served as Fullerton's main post office until 1962, when a larger building was leased at 1350 E. Chapman Avenue. The Commonwealth post office is now the smallest of the Fullerton's four post offices, and it remains the only federal building ever constructed in the city.



Paul Julian painted the oil-on-canvas mural "Orange Pickers" on the west interior wall of the lobby in 1942. Although the mural is often identified as a product of the WPA, the commission actually came from the Treasury Department Section of the Fine Arts. Julian had already completed murals in other towns, and the Fullerton mural was his last federal commission. At the same time that he was painting the post office mural, Julian was also employed by Warner Bros. Pictures as a background artist for Merrie Melodies and Looney Tune cartoons. Julian would go on to become a seminal figure in the animation field.