

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

AHP
AUG 14 1998
NR LISTED

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

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1. Name of Property

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Historic Name: Morrilton Post Office

Other Name/Site Number: CN0016

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2. Location

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Street & Number: 117 North Division Street

Not for Publication: NA

City/Town: Morrilton

Vicinity: NA

State: AR County: Conway Code: 029 Zip Code: 72110

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3. Classification

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Ownership of Property: Public-Federal

Category of Property: Building

Morrilton Post Office

Conway County, Arkansas

Name of Property

County and State

Number of Resources within Property:

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

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 0

Name of related multiple property listing: Arkansas Post Offices with Section Art

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4. State/Federal Agency Certification

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As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, 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.

Signature of certifying official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Cathryn A. Slater

3-2-98

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

Arkansas Historic Preservation Program

State or Federal agency and bureau

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5. National Park Service Certification

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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 Keeper

Date
of Action

Morrilton Post Office

Conway County, Arkansas

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6. Function or Use

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Historic: GOVERNMENT Sub: Post Office

Current : GOVERNMENT Sub: Post Office

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7. Description

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Architectural Classification:

Art Deco

Materials: foundation Concrete roof Asphalt
 walls Brick other _____

Describe present and historic physical appearance:

SUMMARY:

The Morrilton Post Office is a one-story, brick masonry structure on a continuous brick foundation designed in a simplified treatment of the Art Deco style of architecture. It features a flat roof with parapet and a small rear "T" from which a loading dock protrudes. The building is in good condition and retains a high degree of historic integrity.

ELABORATION:

The Morrilton Post Office is a one-story, brick masonry structure on a continuous brick foundation designed in a simplified treatment of the Art

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Deco style of architecture. It features a flat roof with parapet and a small rear "T" from which a loading dock protrudes. The entire building is encircled by a slightly protruding limestone cornice and a limestone water table immediately above the brick foundation. The building is in good condition and retains a high degree of historic integrity.

The front, or east, facade centers around twin aluminum doors between dual limestone pilasters. The door is topped by a plywood panel with metal letters attached reading 117 N. Division St./Morrilton, AR/72110. This is surmounted by a stylized eagle figure, with stars-and-stripes shield embossed. An opening containing a wide, central one-over-one, double-hung window set between two narrow one-over-one, double-hung windows tops the arrangement. Beyond the pilasters on both sides is another pair of very tall openings; these, too, feature a wide, one-over-one, double-hung window flanked by a pair of narrower one-over-one, double-hung windows. The outer edges of both of these window arrangements are again flanked by another pilaster; both of these are embossed with a stylized wheat sheaf. These pilasters are flanked by broad brick areas followed by fenestrated pilasters with six-over-six, double-hung windows. The windows are topped by concrete panels embossed with stylized decorations resembling a front view of the engine assembly and propeller of an airplane. A stoop extends in front of the doors; it features twin lamps on either side. Another brick band leads to and completes both ends of the front facade. The cornerstone reads as follows: HENRY MORGENTHAU JR./SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY/JAMES A. FARLEY/POSTMASTER GENERAL/LOUIS A. SIMON/SUPERVISING ARCHITECT/NEAL A. MELICK/SUPERVISING ENGINEER/1936.

Continuing around the north facade, heading from east to west, the building is fenestrated with five double-hung, six-over-six windows; the easternmost is set within a pilaster detail and topped by a panel with the stylized airplane design. The four western windows look over a sunken concrete area topped by a metal grate; this area allows fenestration of the basement area. The rear of the building was originally a "t," but the northern side was enclosed in 1974 to expand the loading dock area. The northwest end of the building features a roll-up door loading area.

The western facade consists mainly of the loading dock and the doors providing access to the dock area. These consist, from north to south, of two double, swinging doors followed by a single door. The remnants of the original "t" then cuts eastward and is fenestrated by a single double-hung, four-over-four window. The "t" terminates at the original one-and-one-half

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story brick chimney and the western facade features an additional double-hung, six-over-six window.

The southern facade, from west to east, is fenestrated with five, six-over-six, double-hung windows, the easternmost of which is set within a pilaster arrangement and topped by the airplane ornament. At the southernmost end, a set of stairs descends to provide access to the basement.

Prominent interior features include the original wooden vestibule and most of the original wood, metal and marble work. The building features a mural, "Men at Rest" by Richard Sargent. The ceiling was lowered and the hard-wood floor covered with tile in the 1960s. Heating, air-conditioning and lighting in the building was completely modernized in 1964.

Despite the relatively minor alterations, the Morrilton Post Office retains a high degree of historic integrity. The building is in good condition and is scheduled for abandonment by the U.S. Postal Service. Civic leaders are seeking ways to retain the historic structure.

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8. Statement of Significance
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Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties: Statewide.

Applicable National Register Criteria: A

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): NA

Areas of Significance: Politics/Government

Period(s) of Significance: 1936-1939

Significant Dates: NA

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Significant Person(s): NA

Cultural Affiliation: NA

Architect/Builder: Louis A. Simon, supervising architect
A. Farnell Blair, contractor

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

SUMMARY

The Morrilton Post Office is associated with the historic context Arkansas Post Offices with Section Art as a U.S. Postal Service structure containing a mural financed through the U.S. Treasury Department's Section on Fine Arts. As such, it is eligible under Criterion A with statewide significance for its association with the Section's efforts to employ Depression-era artists and place art in post offices around the country.

ELABORATION

On January 16, 1936, the *Morrilton Democrat* reported that Morrilton was included in a group of seven new post offices to be built in Arkansas. "The Morrilton building will be a one story and basement at a maximum cost of \$68,000," the article said. "Each post office will provide work for an average of 25 men for 10 months."

Bids for the new building were due by May 12, 1936, and the specifications called for it to be 66 feet wide and 117.5 feet deep; the lobby was to be 14 x 52 feet and feature five service windows.

A. Farnell Blair of Petersburg, Va., won the contract with a low bid of \$52,157 and it was to be built within 250 days. Construction began on June 25, 1936, with Gray Brothers of Morrilton given the contract for the excavation work; H.A. Ivey was the resident superintendent for the Blair firm.

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The building was dedicated on December 29, 1936, and Congressman D.D. Terry was the featured speaker.

Five months before the Morrilton Post Office was completed, the Treasury Department's Section of Painting and Sculpture requested that \$590 be set aside to finance production of a mural for the new building. The request was approved by the Director of Procurement on May 29, 1936. For some reason, however, more than two years would pass before Section chief Ed Rowan asked permission to invite artist Richard Sargent of Cambria, Virginia, to submit designs for the Morrilton building "on the basis of the merit of [Sargent's] design ... in the Hagerstown, Maryland Competition."

On August 20, 1938, Section chief Ed Rowan wrote Sargent and invited him to submit designs for the job, which would pay a total of \$590. "It is suggested that you use subject matter which embodies some idea appropriate to the building or to the particular locale of Morrilton," Rowan wrote. "What we want most is simple and vital design." Sargent enthusiastically accepted the commission in an August 26, 1938, letter, offering to make a trip to Morrilton; Rowan replied that the artist would be wiser to receive suggestions on subject matter from the local postmaster since Sargent would already need to make a trip to Morrilton to install the mural after completion.

Sargent initially submitted two possible designs, one depicting a country fair and the other concerning the legend of Petit Jean, a beautiful French girl who disguised herself as a cabin boy to follow her fiancé to the New World. The girl, called Petit Jean by the crew, fell ill at what is now called Petit Jean Mountain outside Morrilton and her identity was discovered. She was carried up the mountain in hopes that the clearer air would aid her recovery, but she died and was buried at a point overlooking the Arkansas River. Of the two designs, the Section favored the country fair concept, but were concerned that it did not reflect life in Morrilton. "The importance of having the subject matter of the design one with which the people of Morrilton are thoroughly familiar is to be considered," Rowan wrote Sargent on October 1. "The caricature of the preliminary design is entirely amusing, but it would hardly be appropriate for the larger decoration as it is too insistent and there is the danger that the people of Morrilton might feel that the artist was poking fun at them."

Sargent, concluding "that my 'Country Fair' would hardly be appropriate for

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Morrilton," went back to the drawing board and submitted five additional sketches titled "The Whistle," "Arkansas Traveler," "Building the Little Rock and Fort Smith," "The Builders," and "Thirsting Men." The latter, ultimately titled "Men at Rest," was selected by the Section and a contract was executed on November 1, 1938.

Sargent submitted a color sketch of his proposed design on November 13, which Rowan accepted, urging the artist to "please make every attempt to retain in the finished work the subtle charm of color harmony and fine arrangement and approach that is indicated in this sketch." The artist submitted photos of the full-sized cartoon for the mural on December 13, and Rowan again expressed concern for the sensibilities of Morrilton's residents, writing that "you have made the center figure so obviously obese we fear the people of Arkansas might have the feeling that you are poking fun at them. I think it would be well for you to restudy this figure with the idea of reducing it somewhat in mass." Sargent's first payment of \$200 was approved on December 27, 1938; the second, for \$150, was processed on January 7, 1939.

On January 10, 1939, Sargent submitted a "word account" of his mural, its name now officially changed from "Thirsting Men" to "Men at Rest": "'Men at rest' is my conception of a scene that is familiar to anyone who has worked in the sun and a scene which I believe will strike a sympathetic note in the heart of any one who has ever done a good day's work. It is a picture of three stout men whose existence depends almost entirely upon the good earth so I have presented them in the presence of the sun and the fields and all those things that are so important in their lives. The incident is simple and refreshing." The artist added that he did not "have any great lesson to teach neither do I have any thought of the ever present class struggle. I only want to make a big decoration which people will enjoy looking at."

The mural was installed by April of 1939, and according to the *Morrilton Headlight* was well accepted. However, the newspaper editor noted that those local residents which whom he talked "could not ... refrain from voicing their disappointment that the Treasury Department rejected the sketch of Petit Jean Mountain or some other scene that would have been representative of Conway County." Sargent and his wife -- "two amiable young persons"-- attended the dedication of the mural, the editor noted, and "were favorably impressed with the city of Morrilton and seemed especially desirous of having the painting meet with general approval of its inhabitants."

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Two problems arose after the mural was installed. First, it was discovered that the post office's lighting fixtures hung too low and obscured the mural. The building custodian received a four-dollar contract to shorten the light rods and improve the setting for the artwork. Sargent was also taken to task for leaving a ragged border on the wall surrounding the mural; the artist hired a local sign painter, a Mr. Dow, to repair and repaint the wall.

Sargent received his final payment of \$240 in April, 1939.

The Morrilton Post Office is associated with the historic context Arkansas Post Offices with Section Art as a U.S. Postal Service structure containing a mural financed through the U.S. Treasury Department's Section on Fine Arts. As such, it is eligible under Criterion A with statewide significance for its association with the Section's efforts to employ Depression-era artists and place art in post offices around the country.

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9. Major Bibliographical References
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Morrilton Democrat, Jan. 16, 1936; April 16, 1936; April 23, 1936; June 4, 1936; June 25, 1936; Dec. 17, 1936; Dec. 31, 1936.

U.S. Postal Service Report on Morrilton Post Office, Jan. 30, 1981.

U.S. Treasury Department's Section on Fine Arts papers, National Archives

Arkansas Society of the Sons of the American Revolution, A Survey of Historic Markers in Arkansas (Little Rock: J&B Quality Book Bindery, 1986).

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 # _____

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Primary Location of Additional Data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other state agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other -- Specify Repository: _____

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10. Geographical Data

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Acreage of Property: Less than one

UTM References: Zone Easting Northing Zone Easting Northing

A 15 523220 389940 B _____

C _____ D _____

Verbal Boundary Description:

Beginning at a point formed by the intersection of the western edge of North Division Street with a perpendicular line running parallel with the building's southern elevation and located approximately 50 feet to the south thereof, proceed westerly along said line for approximately 200 feet; thence proceed northerly along a perpendicular line for approximately 200 feet; thence proceed easterly along a perpendicular line for approximately 200 feet to its intersection with the western edge of North Division Street; thence proceed southerly along said edge to the point of beginning.

Boundary Justification:

This boundary contains all the property historically associated with this resource that retains its integrity.

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11. Form Prepared By

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Morrilton Post Office

Conway County, Arkansas

Name of Property

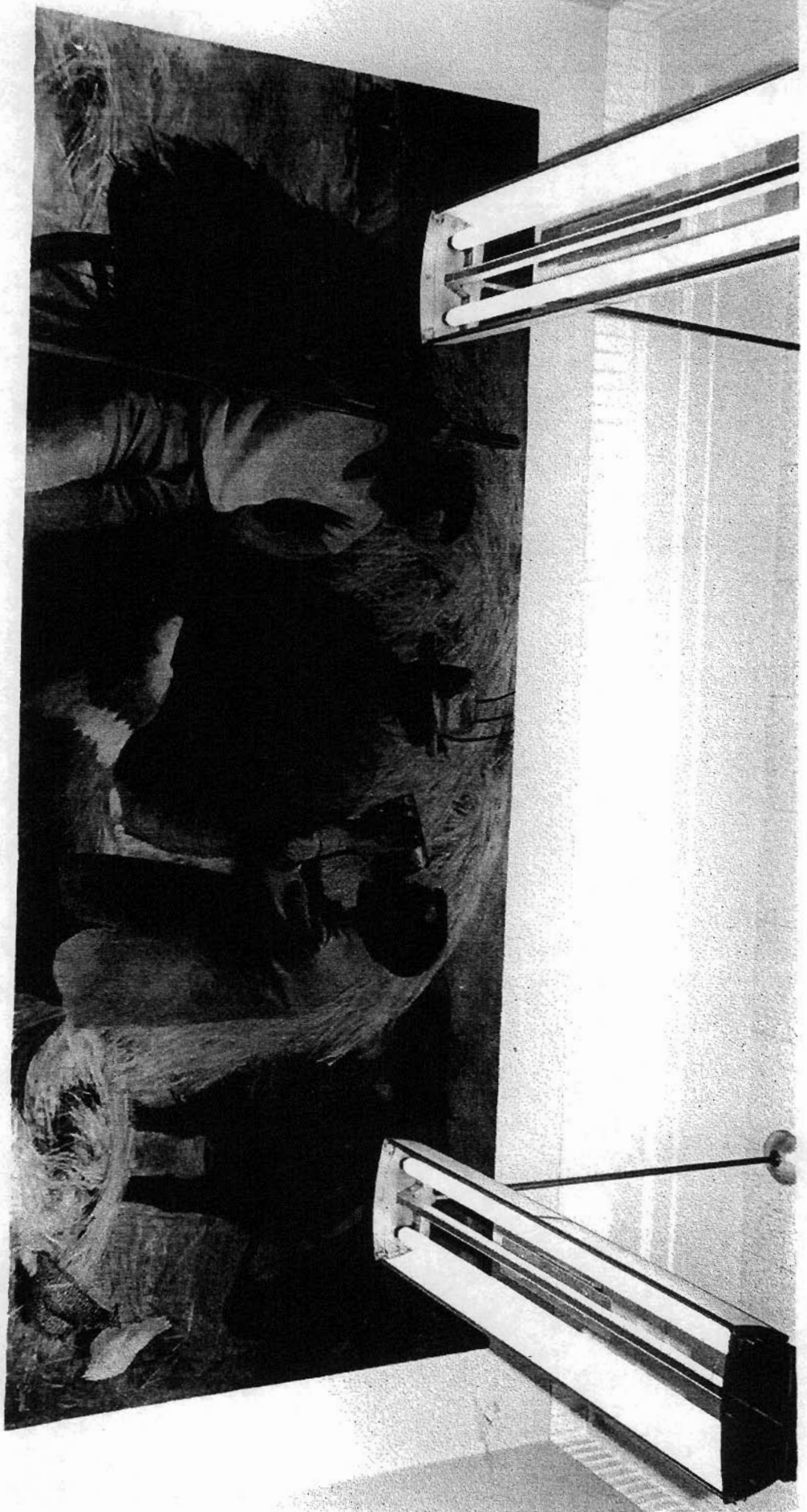
County and State

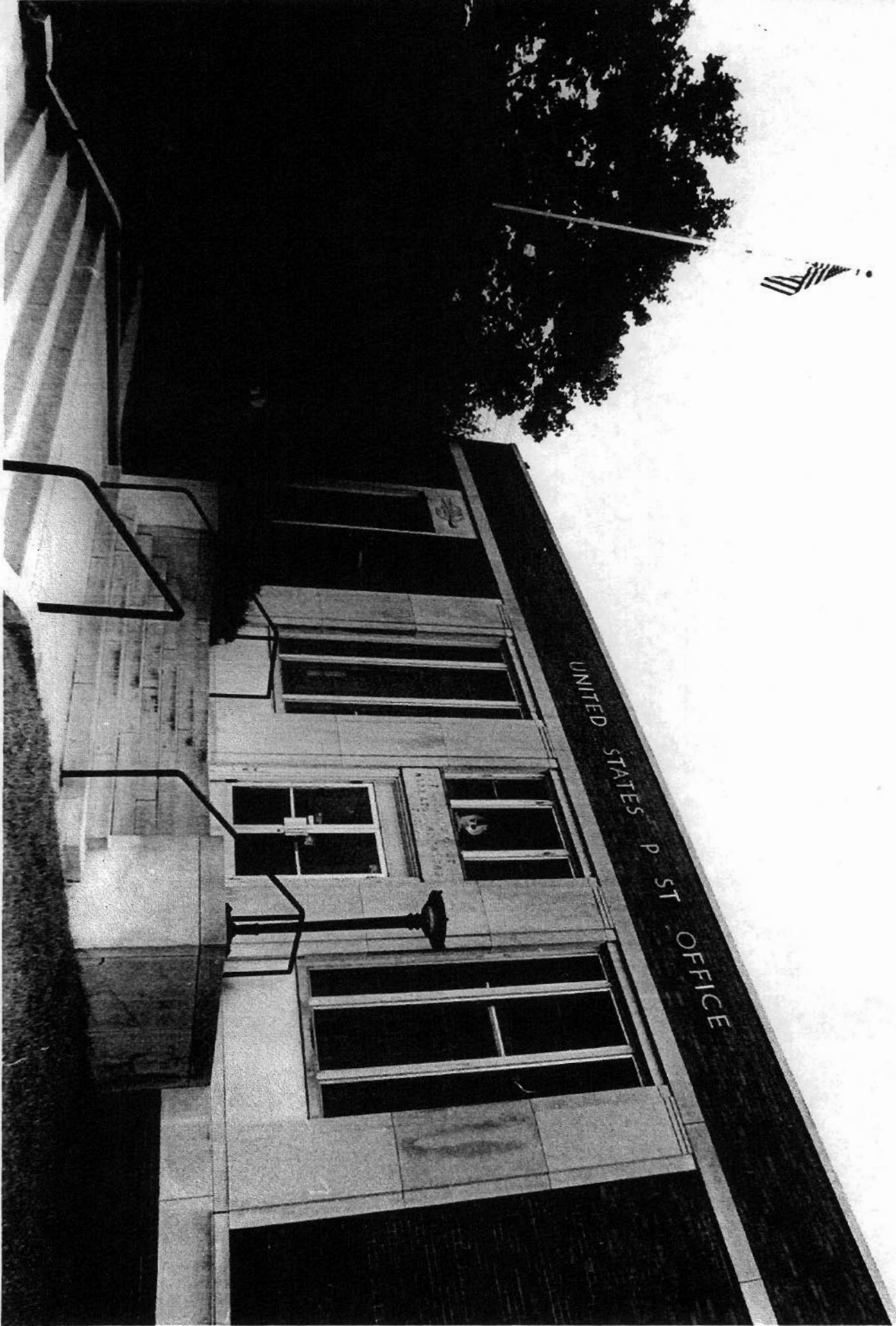
Name/Title: Mark Christ/Communications and Development Director

Organization: Arkansas Historic Preservation Program Date: November 13, 1997

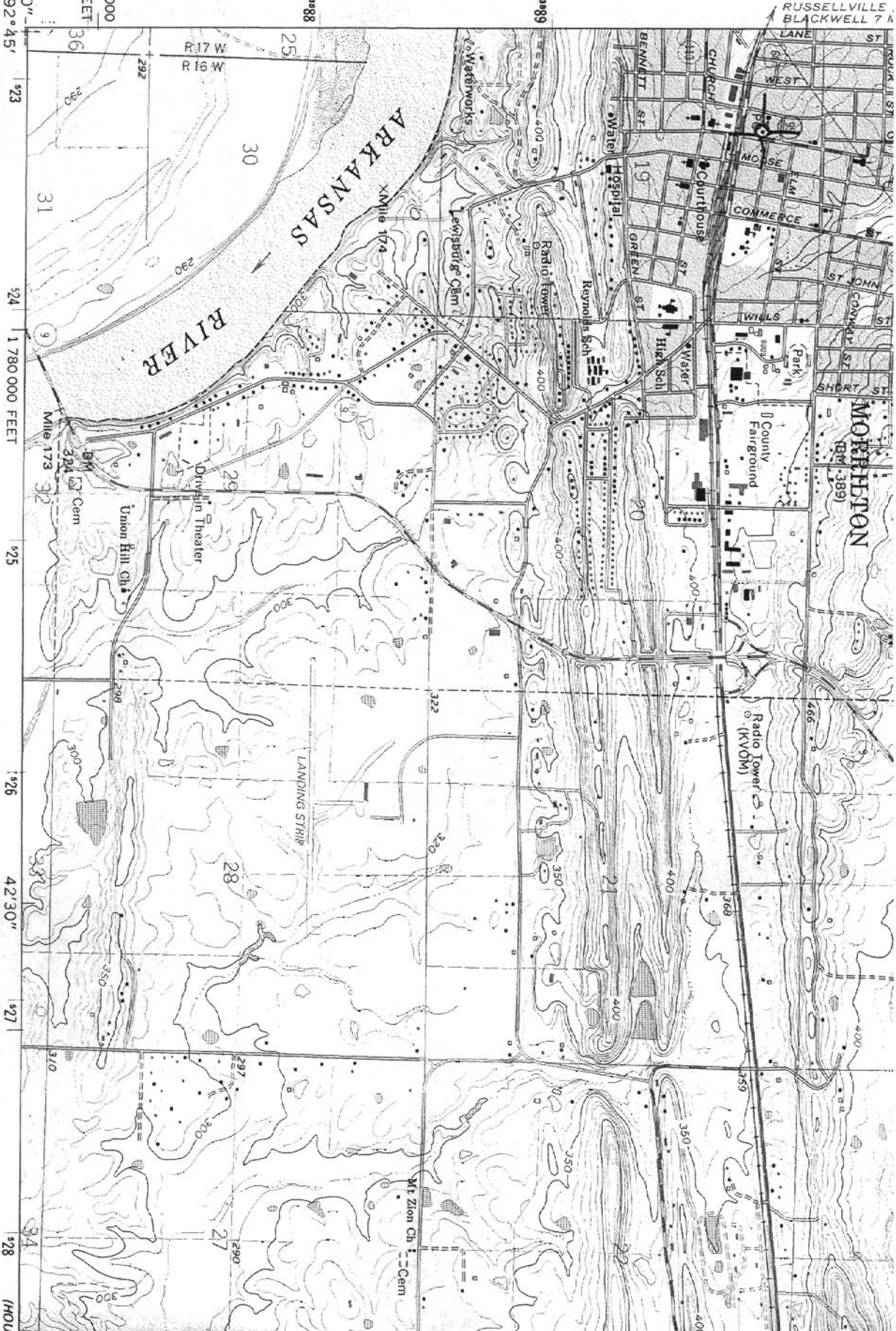
Street & Number: 1500 Tower Bldg., 323 Center St. Telephone: (501) 324-9880

City or Town: Little Rock State: AR ZIP: 72201



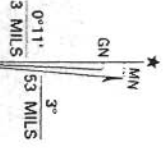


Morrilton Post Office
 Morrilton, Conway Co, Arkansas
 15/523220/3889940

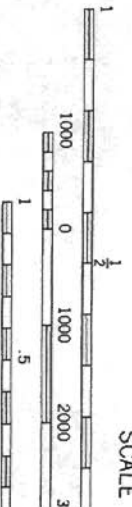


(PERRYVILLE)
 7464 III SE

Produced by the United States Geological Survey
 Compiled by photogrammetric methods from imagery dated 1958
 Field checked 1961
 North American Datum of 1927 (NAD 27). Projection and
 10 000-foot ticks: Arkansas coordinate system, north zone
 (Lambert conformal conic)
 Blue 1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator ticks, zone 15
 North American Datum of 1983 (NAD 83) is shown by dashed
 corner ticks. The values of the shift between NAD 27 and NAD 83
 for 7.5-minute intersections are obtainable from National Geodetic
 Survey NADCON software



UTM GRID AND 1995 MAGNETIC NORTH
 DECLINATION AT CENTER OF SHEET



CONTOUR INT
 NATIONAL GEODETIC VE

SCALE

7464 (HOU)

THIS MAP APPLIES WITH NATI
 ONAL SURVEY, DENVE
 AND ARKANSAS GEOLOGICAL COMMI