

NR LISTED

AUG 14 1998

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

AHPP

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

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1. Name of Property

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Historic Name: Monticello Post Office

Other Name/Site Number: DR0018

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2. Location

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Street & Number: 211 West Gaines Street

Not for Publication: NA

City/Town: Monticello

Vicinity: NA

State: AR County: Drew Code: 043 Zip Code: 71665

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3. Classification

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Ownership of Property: Public-Federal

Category of Property: Building

Monticello Post Office
Name of Property

Drew County, Arkansas
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. Sloan

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

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6. Function or Use

Historic: GOVERNMENT Sub: Post Office

Current : GOVERNMENT Sub: Post Office

7. Description

Architectural Classification:

Art Deco

Materials: foundation Concrete roof Asphalt walls Brick other

Describe present and historic physical appearance:

SUMMARY:

The Monticello Post Office is a one-story, brick masonry government structure designed in a restrained interpretation of the Art Deco style of architecture and built in 1937. It features a full basement and a flat, built up asphalt roof with parapet. Despite a 1962 addition to the east facade of the structure, it still retains sufficient integrity for National Register recognition in the context of post offices with section art.

ELABORATION:

The Monticello Post Office is a one-story, brick masonry government structure designed in a restrained interpretation of the Art Deco style of architecture

and built in 1937. It features a full basement and a flat, built up asphalt roof with parapet. Despite a 1962 addition to the east facade of the structure, it still retains sufficient integrity for National Register recognition in the context of post offices with section art.

The front, or north, facade centers around a central cast-concrete section featuring three recessed areas. The central area contains a single-leaf, aluminum-framed door topped by a stationary four-pane window and flanked by a pair of cast concrete columns flush with the surrounding concrete wall. Each column features an aluminum medallion depicting the seal of the United States. These columns are flanked by recessed areas holding four-over-four double-hung windows, which in turn are flanked by cast-concrete columns. A stylized wheat sheaf is molded into the cast-concrete above each of the recessed areas; above that are the words UNITED STATES POST OFFICE/MONTICELLO ARKANSAS. A set of steps, with a handicap-access ramp running up their center, lead to the door. The steps are flanked by flat concrete balustrades ornamented by decorative lamp posts and simple metal railings. Blond brick facades extend on either side of these columns, and a single four-over-four, double-hung window fenestrates the center of these brick facades. The 1962 addition is recessed beside the east end of the north facade of the original structure; it, too, is fenestrated by a single, double-hung, four-over-four window.

The east facade is the east face of the 1962 workroom; it is an unfenestrated block brick expanse.

The south, or rear, facade, from east to west, is fenestrated three four-over-four, double-hung windows, a single-leaf door at the terminus of a ramp, a loading dock with an additional window, and twin swinging doors. The building then cuts sharply northward, the west-facing facade of the cut fenestrated by twin two-over-two double-hung windows. A small set of stairs rises below these windows; a door at the top of these stairs leads to the loading dock. There are stand-alone brick walls at either end of the loading dock; they support a flat shed roof. All of the above is part of the 1962 addition. At the foot of the stairs is the chimney of the original structure, which continues west and is fenestrated by a single four-over-four, double-hung window.

The west facade, from south to north, is fenestrated by three double-hung, four-over-four windows, a single leaf door at the top of a short flight of stairs, and three additional double-hung, four-over-four windows. An

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additional set of stairs below the southernmost two windows provides basement access.

Significant interior features include the original wooden vestibule, doors and windows, marble wainscoting and a three-piece terra cotta sculpture executed in 1941 by Berta Margoulies and titled "Tomato Sculpture."

As mentioned above, the building has sustained some alterations over the years, but retains sufficient integrity for National Register recognition for its associations with the Section art program. The U.S. Postal Service plans to abandon the facility at some point; its future is uncertain.

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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: 1937-1941

Significant Dates: 1937-1941

Significant Person(s): NA

Cultural Affiliation: NA

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Architect/Builder: Louis A. Simon, Supervising Architect
Linebarger & Fraser, Springdale, AR,
Contractor

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

SUMMARY:

The Monticello Post Office is associated with the historic context **Arkansas Post Offices with Section Art** as a U.S. Postal Service structure containing a sculpture 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 associations with the Section's efforts to employ Depression-era artists and place art in post offices around the country. Despite some alterations, the structure retains sufficient integrity for National Register listing within this context.

ELABORATION:

Construction began on the Monticello Post Office in early 1937, with the *Advance Monticellonian* reporting on January 28 that "work on the new post office began in earnest last Monday morning." The blond-brick structure "will be of the same material and color as the [adjacent] Municipal Building, and upon completion will add much to the latter," the article said.

Two years later, Monticello Postmaster Guy Stephenson requested in a November 3, 1939, letter to the Federal Building Administration Department of Fine Arts "consideration by your Bureau of having a 'MURAL' painted on the Walls of our New Post Office Building which was completed here two years ago, and in which the citizens of Monticello and Drew County take much pride and interest.

"This informal request is made with the presumption that such 'Pictures' are being placed in Federal Buildings over the country, and with the knowledge that such have already been placed on the Lobby Walls of several Post Office Buildings in Arkansas," Stephenson wrote. The postmaster's request was a departure from the normal process by which Section art was acquired in the state; in virtually every other case such art was written into the initial building specifications and the Section took the lead in seeing that murals or sculptures were placed in the structures.

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A week later, Stephenson's request was followed by one from Representative W.F. Norrell, Arkansas's Fourth District congressman and a Monticello native. "It is my understanding that your Administration is in charge of this work and I am extremely interested in obtaining such a painting for Monticello," Norrell wrote. "Monticello has a new Post Office building and a Mural would be very attractive in this building. Monticello, long a center of culture and home of the Arkansas A. and M. College would appreciate the value of such a contribution to this community."

The Section quickly discovered that \$881 remained from the Monticello Post Office construction budget and requested that \$750 be set aside for art for the building. On December 6, 1939, the office of the Commissioner of Public Buildings notified Norrell that the \$750 was authorized for "the decoration in question."

Inslee A. Hopper, consultant to Section Chief Ed Rowan, wrote New York artist Berta Margoulies on March 11, 1940, inviting her to submit designs for a sculpture for the Monticello building. Margoulies, a Polish-born sculptor trained at the Academie Julian, Ecol des Beaux-Arts in Paris, accepted the commission a week later, calling it "a nice surprise."

Postmaster Stephenson remained an active participant in the project, writing the Section on April 12 that "it is desired that you inform me with further reference to this decoration, if I am to take any action in regard to the matter, or to know if this decoration will or should have any reference to local history or some eventful illustration connected with this section. ... In case local citizens including myself are to have an opportunity to make suggestions as to what particular decoration may be used, we would like to know about this in time to avoid a selection (sic) that might have an objectional setting."

Though materials in the National Archives pertaining to the Monticello Post Office art are sketchy regarding the matter, there appears to have been some conflict between Margoulies and the people of Monticello. There is a four-month space in the National Archives documents pertaining to the Monticello art between Hopper's April 16 forwarding of Stephenson's request and the next letter in the file, a terse August 6 note from Hopper saying: "We received an inquiry today if it would be possible to cancel the funds for sculpture on the Monticello, Arkansas project. I have postponed this pending word from you on how soon you can undertake the work and complete it." Margoulies replied on August 9 that she planned delivery of sketches for the proposed sculpture

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on September 15 and installation of the work in December or January, but added that "personally, I should not much mind 'trading' the Monticello assignment for another not less remunerative, should this be a possibility advantageous to the section." She included with the letter "a rather interesting collection of local suggestions and sketches assembled and forwarded by the postmaster."

Hopper, responding on August 16, noted that the local suggestions "certainly make up a fairly inclusive history of Monticello" and suggested that Margoulies "explain to the Postmaster the limitations of sculptural relief vs a panoramic mural." A "trade" of projects was not possible, Hopper added, "and I hope you are satisfied to continue the project."

If there was tension between Monticello locals and the New York artist, a happy medium apparently was reached with her choice of subject matter. In a September 14 letter accompanying her sketches of the proposed sculpture, Margoulies wrote that "since Monticello is known as the 'Tomato Capital of Arkansas' and the community apparently takes great pride in its ranking industry, I have chosen tomato culture as the subject matter." The three-panel sculpture, to be executed in terra cotta, included a 4'3" wide by 2'4" high center panel and two flanking panels measuring 2'3" wide by 2'6" high.

A December 7, 1940, letter from the artist reveals some of the complications inherent in creating large, wall-mounted sculptures (each of the pieces in "Tomato Sculpture" weighs some 220 pounds). In submitting photographs of the central piece, Margoulies notes that the sculpture is cut in half, "necessary for firing such a large terra cotta." However, the cut is located in an "overlapping of forms, and will not be noticeable at all when the relief is fitted into the wall, both because the two parts will come closer together when placed and because retouching will be done if at all necessary."

The Section approved her first payment of \$150 on December 9, 1940, but the check apparently was delayed, as Margoulies wrote Hopper on December 17 that "I cannot proceed with the firing until I receive some payment on the job. I am already obligated considerably and cannot even begin to plan such a costly trip as one to Arkansas to install the work until I have received some funds." The check apparently cleared soon after, and Margoulies wrote Hopper from Monticello on December 24 that she was ready to install the sculpture. Postmaster Stephenson confirmed installation in a December 31 letter, noting that it took five days to hang the three-piece work and that he was "pleased to state that so far as I can see or understand the project is completed in

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good condition and fully complies with the photographic outlines and specifications." Margoulies' second payment of \$250 was approved on December 31.

Margoulies mailed in a photograph of the installed sculpture -- "taken by the town's best photographer - (\$5's worth)" -- on January 7, and her final payment of \$350 was approved January 18. She later submitted a listing of "costs attendant to execution of terra cotta sculpture reliefs for U.S. Postoffice at Monticello, Arkansas" totaling \$305.56 and ranging from 90 cents for studio supplies to \$25 for rental of a station wagon to transport the sculpture to the Drew County town. There is no record of any reimbursement for those costs.

A final pair of letters in the National Archive files signal the end of the Section Art program. Margoulies wrote Hopper on June 18 noting that "I haven't been getting routine literature from the Section. Didn't get the last bulletin announcing ... sculpture competitions. How come? I'd hate to have a nice letter telling me of a commission go astray for instance." Hopper's June 17 reply concluded: "Unfortunately jobs are fewer rather than more and the prospect [is] not very encouraging."

The Monticello Post Office is associated with the historic context Arkansas Post Offices with Section Art as a U.S. Postal Service structure containing a sculpture 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 associations with the Section's efforts to employ Depression-era artists and place art in post offices around the country. Despite some alterations, the structure retains sufficient integrity for National Register listing within this context.

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9. Major Bibliographical References
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Advance Monticellonian, January 28, 1937.

Falk, Peter Hastings, ed. *Who Was Who in American Art* Madison, CT: Soundview Press, 1985. P. 394

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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 -- Specify Repository: _____

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10. Geographical Data

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Acreege of Property: Less than one

UTM References: Zone Easting Northing Zone Easting Northing

A 15 612040 3721520 B _____

C _____ D _____

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Verbal Boundary Description:

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

Boundary Justification:

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

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11. Form Prepared By

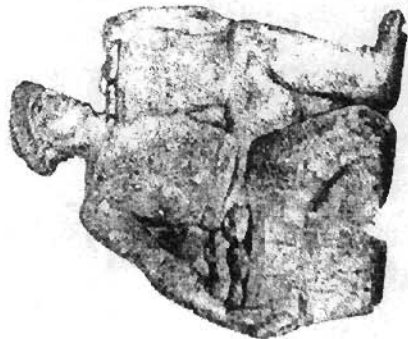
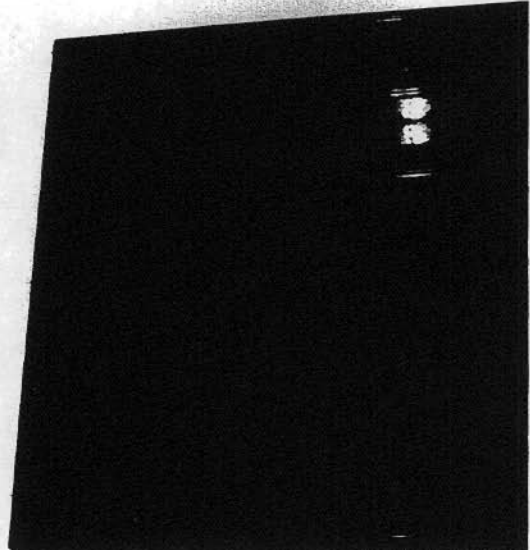
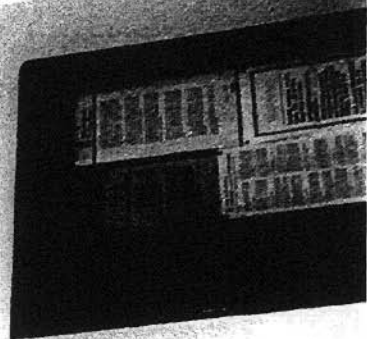
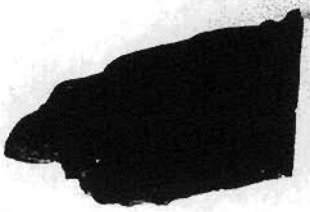
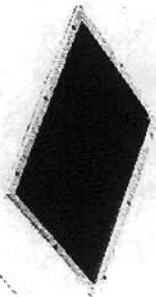
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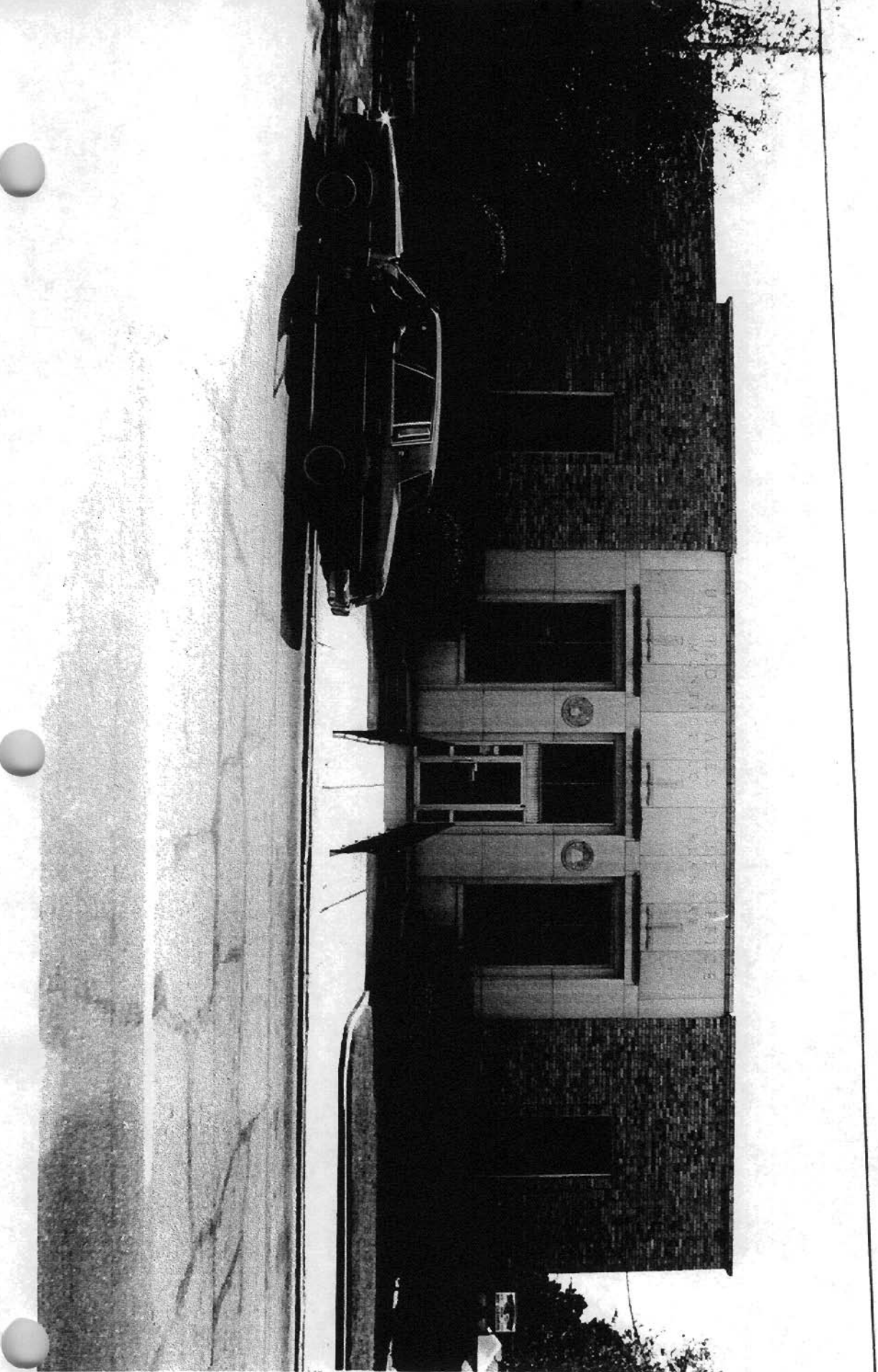
Name/Title: Mark Christ/Community Outreach Director

Organization: Arkansas Historic Preservation Program Date: 1-20-98

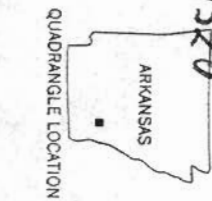
Street & Number: 1500 Tower Bldg., 323 Center St. Telephone: (501) 324-9880

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



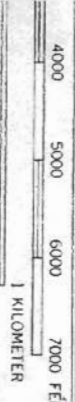


MAP ACCURACY ST
OLORADO 80225, C
ASHINGTON, D. C. 20242
SIGN IITTI E DNUV ADVANICAC 70001



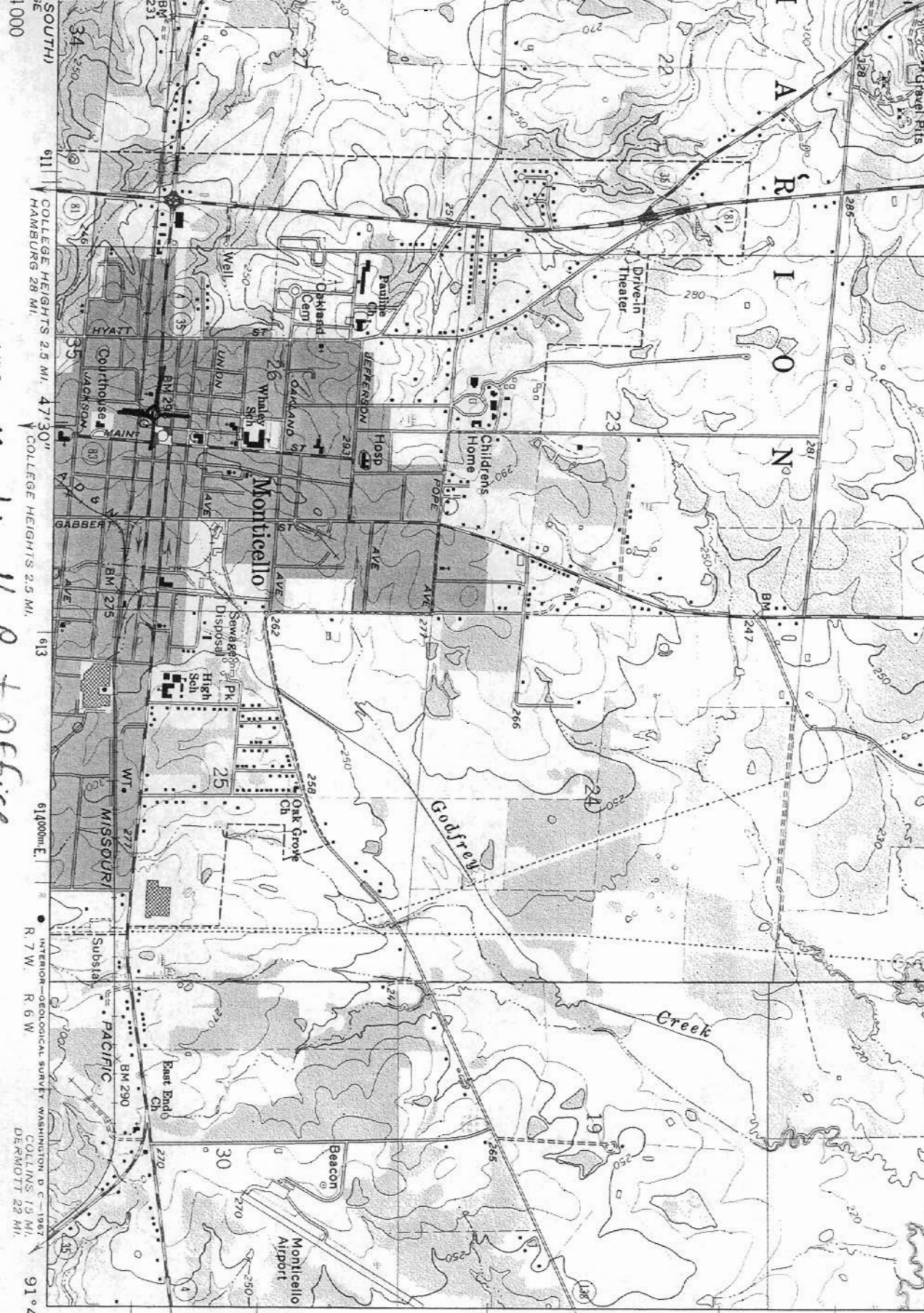
MONTICELLO NORTH, ARK.
N3337.5—W9145/7.5

AL 10 FEET
SEA LEVEL



Monticello Post Office
Monticello, Drew Co., Arkansas
15612040/3221520

ROAD CLASSIFICATION
Unimproved dirt
State Route



(COMINTO)
7591 11 3W