

Listed  
6/14/90

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

### 1. Name of Property

historic name Howard County Courthouse  
other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

### 2. Location

street & number Main Street  not for publication N/A  
city, town Nashville  vicinity N/A  
state Arkansas code AR county Howard code 061 zip code 71852

### 3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public-local	district	<u>  1  </u>	<u>      </u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u>      </u>	<u>      </u> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	structure	<u>      </u>	<u>      </u> structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>      </u>	<u>      </u> objects
		<u>  1  </u>	<u>  0  </u> Total

is part of related multiple property listing:  
N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

### 4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this 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  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  See continuation sheet.

Signature of certifying official

Date

Arkansas Historic Preservation Program

State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

### 5. National Park Service Certification

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 the Keeper

Date of Action

**6. Function or Use**

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

GOVERNMENT/ Courthouse  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

GOVERNMENT/ Courthouse  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**7. Description**

Architectural Classification  
(enter categories from instructions)

MODERN MOVEMENT/ Art Moderne  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete  
walls Brick  
Marble  
roof Asphalt  
other Ceramic tile  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

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**Summary**

The Howard County Courthouse is a two story public building with load-bearing brick walls designed in the later, Art Moderne incarnation of the Art Deco. It features an essentially 'H'-shaped plan, with the court room occupying almost the entire second story of the central block.

**Elaboration**

The Howard County Courthouse is a two story county courthouse building with load-bearing brick walls designed in the architectural style known as Art Moderne. It features a symmetrical, 'H'-shaped plan - the axis of which runs east and west - formed by the taller, central block that is augmented by two slightly lower blocks placed at the eastern or front corners and a long office block that runs along the western or rear elevation and that projects from both the northern and southern elevations. A single brick chimney is attached to the western wall at the southern end. All roofs are flat behind a brick parapet and covered with a built-up tar system. The walls are buff brick with black marble around the entrances and all is supported by a continuous cast concrete foundation.

The eastern or front elevation is symmetrically organized around the monumental black marble entrance with its double-leaf door and transom. The fixed aluminum windows above and to the side of the entrance light the front of the courtroom and the offices on the first floor; they are set into concrete panels incised with thin geometric details. The identical windows in the flanking corner blocks light jury rooms and other offices behind and are also set into decorated concrete panels. The black marble entrance is inscribed with the courthouse name above the door and supports a central, integral flagpole.

The northern and southern elevations are virtually identical. The recessed, central block is highlighted by the central, black marble entry which is flanked by a single window bay to each side. The projecting eastern and western bays are fenestrated with three and two window bays, respectively. The eastern and western elevations of these projecting bays are each lighted with two window bays. The western or rear elevation is symmetrically organized, with two entrances being separated by four central windows and flanked by two window bays to the outside. The windows on these three elevations largely retain their original eight-pane double metal casement windows.

Other exterior decoration of note includes the band of shallow, geometric detail around the cornice of the main block and several of the original electric lighting fixtures.

The interior is virtually unaltered. The halls and stairwells throughout the building are

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dominated by fields of original tile, all of the various colors of which fall within a rich, earth-tone palette. The tile covers the floors and extends up the walls to create a high dado in the hallways and the stairwells. The courtroom retains all of its original stylized Art Moderne detail, including carved decorations above the doorways, original wood panel doors and stylized geometric decoration of the applied wood pilasters which run along the walls. The judge's desk, the recorder's table and the jury box are all original, down to the same jurors' chairs that were installed in 1939. Other noteworthy details include the original metal venetian blinds and original linoleum in several of the surrounding offices, and several original light fixtures throughout.

The only alterations of note have been the replacement of the original casement windows in the eastern elevation with fixed aluminum windows and the addition of a large HVAC system in the upper hallway at the rear of the courtroom.

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**Summary**

Criterion C, local significance

The Howard County Courthouse, constructed in 1939 and partially funded by the Public Works Administration (PWA), is architecturally significant as the finest example in Nashville of the later Art Deco style, popularly known as Art Moderne. It is also significant as one of the most handsomely appointed public buildings built in the state of Arkansas during the Great Depression.

**Elaboration**

Howard County was created on April 17, 1873 from parts of Hempstead, Pike, Polk and Sevier counties. It was named for James Howard, the state senator for the area at that time. The original county seat was at Centre Point (approximately 15 miles to the north) until the completion of the railroad in 1884 between Hope and Nashville; thereafter the focus of county activities gradually shifted, and the county seat was moved to Nashville by 1905.

The Howard County Courthouse was constructed in 1939, partially as a Public Works Administration (PWA) project. The PWA was one of the lesser-known federal assistance agencies which, like the Works Projects Administration (WPA), undertook public construction projects, but much less often and only with financing from emergency appropriations. By the late 1930's and early 1940's, the number of PWA projects nationally had begun to dwindle as did the number of people it employed.

The relative infrequency with which PWA jobs were awarded and the fact that local labor and designers were generally hired to work on such jobs discouraged the stylistic uniformity which characterized the contemporaneous work of the WPA and the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) and resulted in some surprisingly distinctive construction. The Howard County Courthouse is an example of this trend. Designed by the Little Rock architectural firm of Erhart & Eichenbaum and built by the Fayetteville contractor E. V. Bird, the exterior of the building is similar to other Art Deco county courthouses in Arkansas of the period with the noteworthy exception of the green/black marble which frames the principal entrances and separates the second story windows from the first on the front elevation. Marble was and always has been an expensive finish material, and so it is unusual to find it on the exterior of a PWA-financed public building in Nashville, Arkansas during the Great Depression. However, when the lack of uniformity common to PWA projects is considered with the fact that the citizens of Howard County had to contribute the balance of the budget for the project (\$66,000 of the total budget of \$120,000) and therefore had a greater voice in the aesthetic decisions regarding their new courthouse, this contradiction is less baffling.

The use of expensive materials was not confined to the exterior. The vast fields of ceramic

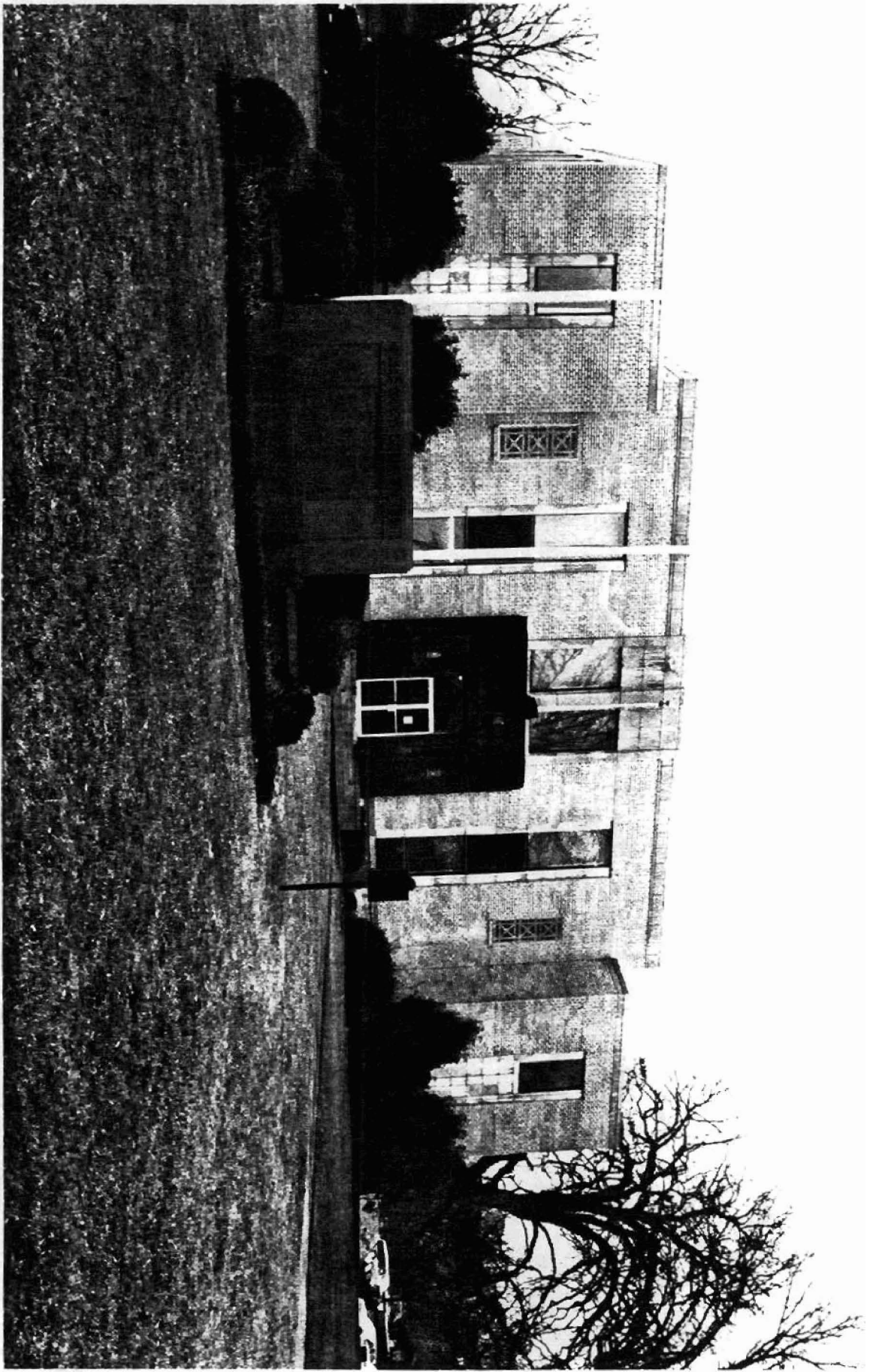
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tile which lend the interior hallways and stairwells their rich, golden hue literally cover the floors and part of the walls throughout the first story. Furthermore, the courtroom itself presents an abundance of handsome carved woodwork and elegant wood furniture typical of the period. Clearly, the architects and the people of Howard County were making a statement of civic pride in spite of the pressing economic conditions prevalent throughout the nation via the relatively lavish outfitting of their new courthouse. As such, the Howard County Courthouse survives as an architecturally remarkable example of publicly-financed construction during the Depression in Arkansas.



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## Bibliography

*The Nashville News*, Nashville, Arkansas, October 21, 1938.

\_\_\_\_\_, November 11, 1938.

\_\_\_\_\_, December 16, 1938.

\_\_\_\_\_, December 30, 1938.

\_\_\_\_\_, September 26, 1939.

\_\_\_\_\_, September 29, 1939.

*Report on Progress of The WPA Program*, June 30, 1941, pp. 83-88.



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### Verbal Boundary Description

Beginning at a point formed by the intersection of the western edge of North Main Street with the southern edge of Bishop Street, proceed westerly along Bishop Street to a point formed by its intersection with a perpendicular line running along the western or rear elevation of the Courthouse; thence proceed southerly along said line to a point formed by its intersection with a perpendicular line running along the southern elevation of the Courthouse; thence proceed easterly along said line to a point formed by its intersection with the western edge of North Main Street; thence proceed northerly along North Main Street to the point of beginning, comprising in all less than one acre.

**8. Statement of Significance**

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally     statewide     locally

Applicable National Register Criteria     A     B     C     D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions)     A     B     C     D     E     F     G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1939

Significant Dates

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Bullder

Public Works Administration

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

See continuation sheet

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

**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 # \_\_\_\_\_

See continuation sheet

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository: \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Geographical Data**

Acres of property Less than one

**UTM References**

A 15 421680 3756500  
 Zone Easting Northing

C \_\_\_\_\_

B \_\_\_\_\_  
 Zone Easting Northing

D \_\_\_\_\_

See continuation sheet

**Verbal Boundary Description**

See continuation sheet

**Boundary Justification**

This boundary includes all the property historically associated with this resource.

See continuation sheet

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Kenneth Story, Architectural Historian

organization Arkansas Historic Preservation Program date 4 May, 1990

street & number 225 E Markham, Suite 300 telephone (501) 371-2763

city or town Little Rock state Arkansas zip code 72201

Howard County Courthouse  
Nashville, Arkansas  
Howard County  
15/421680/3756500  
Nashville Quadrangle  
1:24000

