

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NR LISTED

AUG 14 1998

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

AHPP

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1. Name of Property

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Historic Name: Nashville Post Office

Other Name/Site Number: H00041

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2. Location

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Street & Number: 220 N. Main Street

Not for Publication: NA

City/Town: Nashville

Vicinity: NA

State: AR County: Howard Code: 061 Zip Code: 71852

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3. Classification

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Ownership of Property: Public-Federal

Category of Property: Building

Number of Resources within Property:

Nashville Post Office
Name of Property

Howard County, Arkansas
County and State

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u> 1 </u>	<u> </u> buildings
<u> </u>	<u> </u> sites
<u> </u>	<u> </u> structures
<u> </u>	<u> </u> 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

Nashville Post Office
Name of Property

Howard County, Arkansas
County and State

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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 Nashville Post Office is a single-story, brick-masonry structure with a flat roof built on an essentially square plan and designed in a restrained interpretation of the Art Deco style of architecture which is chiefly manifest in its symmetrical massing and the stepped recessed fenestrations on the front facade. The building is surrounded by a simple projecting cornice at roof level and a string course just above the fenestrations. A small loading dock protrudes from the rear elevation.

ELABORATION:

The Nashville Post Office is a single-story, brick-masonry structure with a

flat roof built on an essentially square plan and designed in a restrained interpretation of the Art Deco style of architecture which is chiefly manifest in its symmetrical massing and the stepped recessed fenestrations on the front facade. The building is surrounded by a simple projecting cornice at roof level and a string course just above the fenestrations. A small loading dock protrudes from the rear elevation.

The front, or west, facade centers around a single-leaf, aluminum-frame door at the top of a small set of stairs flanked by simple metal railings. A single-pane window above it features adhesive letters spelling "220-N. MAIN." The door arrangement is flanked by brick pilasters, which in turn are flanked by a set of eight-over-eight, double-hung windows, which are flanked by another set of pilasters and another set of windows. All of the fenestrations are recessed and the pilasters recede to them in a stepped arrangement. Raised metal letters between the cornice and the string course read: UNITED STATE POST OFFICE/NASHVILLE ARKANSAS/71852. The cornerstone on the northwest corner of the structure reads: HENRY MORGENTHAU/SECRETARY OF THE TREASURY/JAMES A. FARLEY/POSTMASTER GENERAL/LOUIS A. SIMON/SUPERVISING ARCHITECT/NEAL A. MELICK/SUPERVISING ENGINEER/1937. A handicap-access ramp winds along the building's southwest corner, terminating at the stoop; it was added in 1995.

The south facade, from west to east, is fenestrated by an eight-over-eight, double-hung window; a small, two-over-two, double-hung window, a recessed brick panel; another small, two-over-two, double-hung window, and two additional eight-over-eight, double-hung windows. A small set of stairs below these eastern-most windows provides access to the door to the full basement.

The rear, or east, facade, from south to north, is fenestrated by a pair of eight-over-eight, double-hung windows preceding a loading dock arranged in a south-facing design. A single-leaf door opens onto the dock from the rear of the building, and the dock is covered with a flat shed roof. The blond-brick wall that forms the north side of the loading dock is fenestrated with a single window, beyond it stands the original brick chimney and another pair of eight-over-eight, double-hung windows. The dock was extended slightly in the late 1980s.

The north facade consists of four identical eight-over-eight, double-hung windows separated by areas of blank brick wall.

Nashville Post Office

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Significant interior details include much original floor and wainscoting tile, the postmaster's door, and a 1939 mural by John Tazewell Robertson titled "Peach Growing." The original wooden vestibule was removed in the 1960s, and a floor to ceiling aluminum and glass wall was installed at the south end of the lobby.

Though it has suffered some relatively minor alterations over the year, the Nashville Post Office remains remarkably intact and is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places within the historic context **Arkansas Post Offices with Section Art.**

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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: 1937-1939

Significant Dates: 1937-1939

Significant Person(s): NA

Cultural Affiliation: NA

Architect/Builder: Louis A. Simon, Supervising Architect
Algernon Blair of Montgomery, AL, Builder

Nashville Post Office

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

SUMMARY:

The Nashville 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 June 26, 1936, *The Nashville News* reported that the Howard County seat was selected as the site of a new United States Post Office facility under a \$60 million federal emergency construction program. Site proposals were requested four days later and on September 18 the *News* reported that the J.R. Hill lots on North Main Street were tentatively selected at a purchase price of \$10,000. The proposal was formally accepted in October, the local paper said, but it was not until June 8, 1937, that the deal was closed. The Algernon Blair construction company of Montgomery, Alabama, was the winning contractor with a bid of \$40,793, and the *News* reported on July 30 that construction was about to begin, with completion expected by January 1, 1938. "All local labor will be used, as far as possible, and materials will be bought locally," the paper reported, which doubtless was good news for Depression-strapped Howard County.

On New Year's Eve, 1937, the newspaper quoted Postmaster Roy Milwee as predicting the new facility would open "within the next few days," but it was not until January 11 that the *News* reported the building's grand opening. "The Nashville post office has one of the most efficient forces to be found in the postal service, and with the splendid new equipment and the conveniences provided in the new structure, will be able to more nearly serve the public perfectly than heretofore," the paper reported with hometown aplomb.

Included in the original specifications for the Nashville Post Office was a \$660 line item for a mural for the new building. In August 1938, Edward B. Rowan, superintendent of the U.S. Treasury Department's Section of Painting

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and Sculpture invited John Tazewell Robertson of Millington, New Jersey, to submit designs for the project. Robertson enthusiastically responded on August 26, adding that he had conducted research on Arkansas "folk lore and romantic legend and I should very much like to do something in this vein rather than the conventional depiction of post office routine or historical battle." Adding that "the other alternative of eulogizing local industry or agriculture is in my opinion too often done also," the artist proposed using the legend of "The Arkansas Traveler" as the basis for his mural. "I feel it is rich in graphic possibilities and that it is a vital part of the local and national heritage left to us," he wrote.

Rowan wrote Postmaster Milwee on September 2 that Robertson was hired for the mural project, and the artist apparently wrote him soon after, resulting in a change of subject matter for the mural. In an October 7 letter to Rowan (written on the letterhead of the Art Students League of New York, of which Robertson was secretary), the artist wrote that Milwee "finally replied that he felt the people of Nashville would much prefer something to do with the Peach Industry (which it seems is the most important business in that section)," thus ending Robertson's intent on using "The Arkansas Traveler" as his mural subject. Rowan praised Robertson for consulting with Nashville, writing on October 12 that "it was excellent of you to have procured the reaction of the Postmaster to the subject matter at this stage and I would think that the peach industry would offer you fine opportunities for a good decoration." The formal contract was prepared on November 15, 1938.

On November 7, Robertson submitted a preliminary sketch of the Nashville mural, writing that "I have been most fortunate in getting basic information about peach growing...from the New York Public Library, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and last but not least I was able to find a fairly extensive Peach Orchard near Bernardsville, New Jersey where they were most cooperative in showing me about and in answering my numerous queries." Rowan replied on November 19 that the sketch was approved, but suggested several alterations, such as moving a kneeling figure who was "materially" cut by the postmaster's door. Robertson, in a November 25 letter, agreed, writing that "as soon as I had sent off the preliminary sketch to you I became painfully aware from my other sketches that the door cutting into the kneeling figure was bad.....and not at all necessary." In making the corrections for his color sketch, Robertson also noted that Postmaster Milwee requested that the artist incorporate an image of the late Bert Johnson, "who it seems was the father of the peach industry in Arkansas," into the mural. "He has furnished me with photographs (not very good ones.....too much retouched) but I shall

endeavor to oblige him."

Robertson submitted a color sketch in December, and Rowan replied on January 6, 1939 with suggestions that some of the figures be moved and more color be incorporated into the mural, noting that "there is the danger of a design low in key becoming a hole in the wall." Robertson wrote on January 10 that Rowan's suggestions "will make for a decided improvement in the mural." The Section approved his first payment of \$200 on January 24, 1939.

On May 19, Robertson submitted a photograph of a full-sized cartoon of the Nashville mural. His explanation of the delay in the project is illustrative of the hectic life of an artist in the Great Depression: "I had expected to have this finished long before this but some months ago I lost my W.P.A. job on the Board of Education illustrations project (not being a Union member) and have been obliged in the meantime to scramble around with some free lance work. My immediate needs are taken care of and I will be right on this until completion now. I have my canvas stretched and ready for work." His second payment of \$200 was approved on June 2.

The artist requested a four-week extension on June 5, explaining that he wanted to give the mural adequate time to dry before delivering it to Arkansas. The Section approved the extension on June 10.

Coincidentally, Robertson ran into artist Ludwig Mactarian in New York in late June and learned that Mactarian was completing a mural for the Dardanelle Post Office. Ever mindful of finances, Robertson wrote Rowan on June 30 that he and Mactarian "discussed the angle of going down together to make installation on the two jobs which would eliminate the necessity of employing unskilled labor to assist" as well as offering them an opportunity to visit other post offices along the way with an eye on submitting designs for the Section's upcoming 48 States Competition.

The mural was installed in late July, and the journey was a good one for Robertson. "At last it's up," he wrote Rowan on July 26. "We arrived here two days ago and everyone has been perfectly marvelous to us from the Postmaster on down. Our experience here and the reaction of the people to the work has compensated more than anything for the work I have done on this." Robertson was still worried about money, asking Rowan to "relay the information that the job is installed to the accounting department because we're going to be pretty flat when we reach Millington in a week."

Robertson's mural was well received in Nashville. An undated clipping from the *News* found it "most appropriate and fitting by the artist that a portrait of the late Bert Johnson was incorporated into the design as a memorial to the man who was instrumental in the development of this section as a peach country. The kneeling figure planting the peach stock is a portrait of Mr. Johnson developed from a photograph taken the day of Mr. Johnson's death" in an automobile accident.

In addition to the mural, Robertson provided guidance on its care and revealed a folk secret in his directions to the Nashville postmaster. "Some years ago I was advised from some source that the best method for cleaning oil painting was to slice a raw potato and rub lightly the surface of the painting with this raw potato until clean ... then sponge off with a series of moist rags," he wrote in his cleaning instructions. "I have used this method for years with some success. It sounds like medieval witchcraft but it has always worked so satisfactorily for me that I use nothing else."

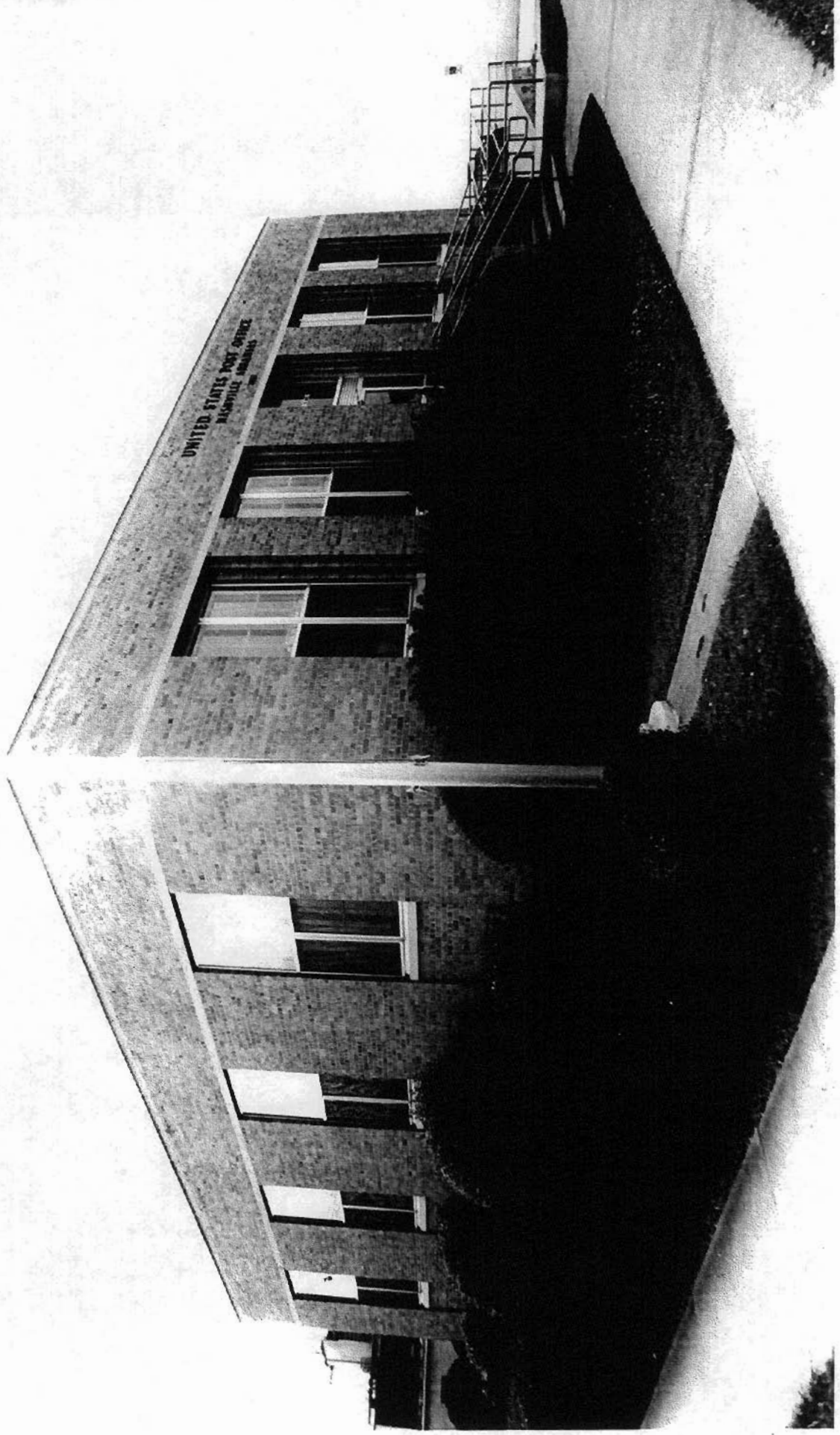
The Section approved Robertson's final payment of \$260 on August 17, 1939. His mural "Peach Growing" remains the focal point of the Nashville Post Office, a reminder of a time when the U.S. Treasury Department spread art across the United States and a tribute to Howard County's peach industry and its "father," Bert Johnson.

The Nashville 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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The Nashville News, June 26, June 30, July 14, September 16, October 13, 1936; June 8, July 13, July 30, December 31, 1937; January 11, 1937

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



UNITED STATES POST OFFICE
NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE



Nashville Post Office
Name of Property

Howard County, Arkansas
County and State

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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Acreage of Property: Less than one

UTM References: Zone Easting Northing Zone Easting Northing
A 15 421800 3756220 B _____
C _____ D _____

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Verbal Boundary Description:

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

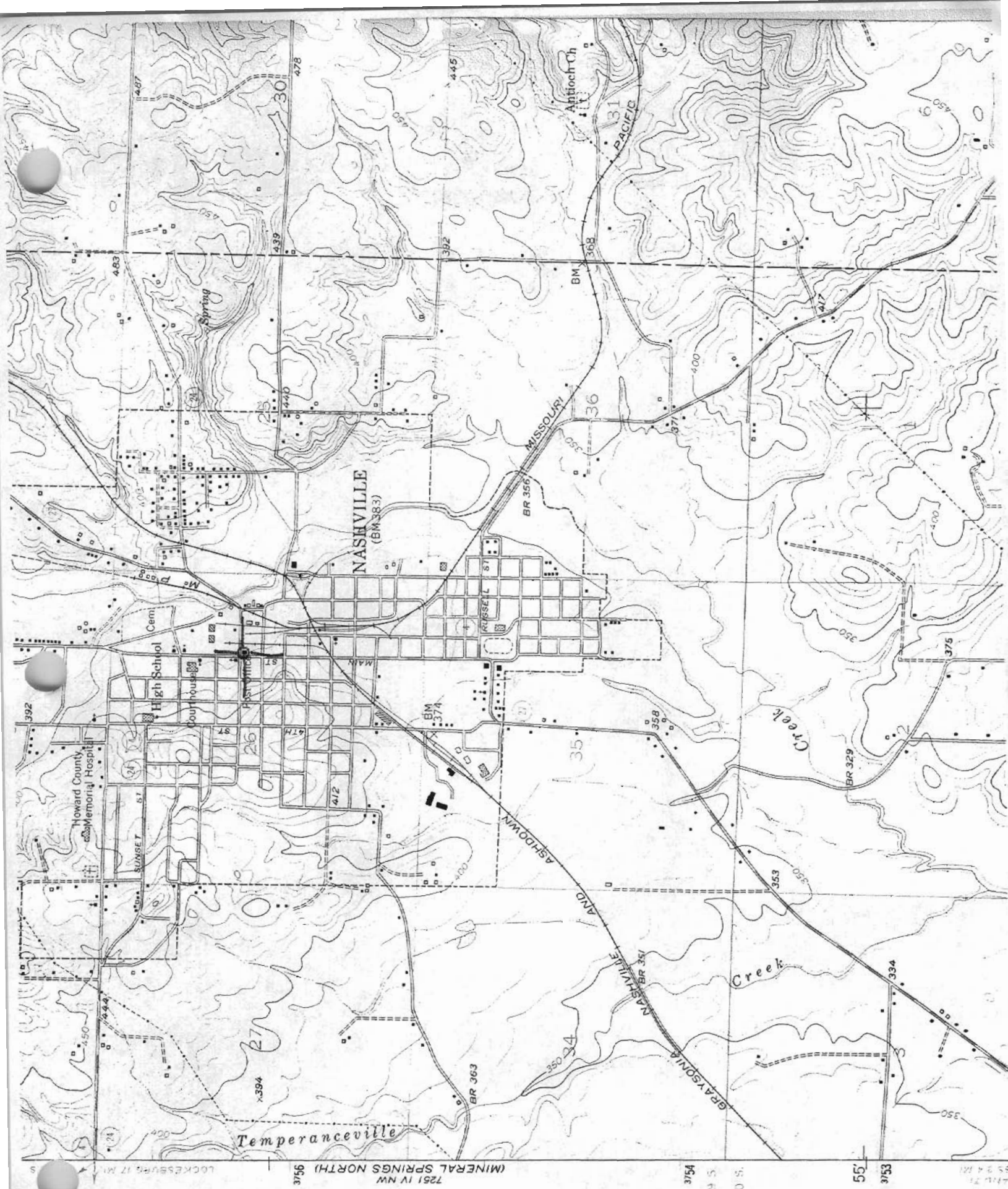
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11. Form Prepared By
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Name/Title: Mark Christ/Community Outreach Director

Organization: Arkansas Historic Preservation Program Date: January 27, 1998

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

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



Nashville Post Office
Nashville, Howard County, Arkansas

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