

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

FEB 26 1993

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

NATIONAL
REGISTER

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Sparta Electric Building

other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number South Main Street N/A not for publication

city or town Sparta N/A vicinity

state Tennessee code TN county White code 185 zip code 38583

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Herbert L. Hays 2/22/93
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer, Tennessee Historical Commission
State of Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the 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

~~Entered in the~~
~~National Register~~

Date of Action

Alcides Reyes

3/25/93

Sparta Electric Building
Name of Property

White Co., TN
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)
Pre-TVA Hydro-Electric Power Development
In Tennessee, 1901-1933.

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

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE: business

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

VACANT/NOT IN USE

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

NO STYLE

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation STONE
walls CRAB ORCHARD STONE

roof PRESSED TIN
other WOOD

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

N/A

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

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 # _____

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Commerce

Period of Significance

Circa 1917-1933

Significant Dates

N/A

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

Center for Historic Preservation
P.O. Box 80, MTSU
Murfreesboro, Tennessee 37132

Sparta Electric Company Building
Name of Property

White County, Tennessee
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property Less than one acre

Sparta, Tennessee Quadrangle
332 NW

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1

1	6	6	3	8	4	6	0	3	9	7	6	3	8	0
Zone			Easting					Northing						

2

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

3

Zone			Easting					Northing						

4

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

 See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Leslie Sharp and Gail Reed

organization Center for Historic Preservation date September 30, 1992

street & number M. T. S. U. Box 80 telephone (615) 898-2947

city or town Murfreesboro state TN zip code 37132

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name City of Sparta, Margaret Pearson, Mayor

street & number East Bockman Way telephone _____

city or town Sparta state TN zip code 38583

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

United States Department of the Interior
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National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Sparta Electric Building
White Co., TN

Section number 7 Page 1

Architectural Description

Located in Sparta/White County, Tennessee, the Sparta Electric building, constructed circa 1917, is an example of functional architecture with no definable architectural style. This building faces north on South Main Street in the heart of an early twentieth century residential area several blocks from downtown Sparta.

The rectangular 16' x 23'10'' building rests on a stone foundation which is not apparent from the front of the building but forms a basement in the rear of the building. The building is of Crab Orchard stone. The gable front roof is steeply pitched and is covered with pressed tin.

The north facade has centrally located double-leaf wood paneled doors that once had single lights but now are boarded up with plywood. On each side of the center doorway is one window now boarded up. From one side it is apparent that the windows were double hung. The gable front has a pressed tin covering and a rectangular louvered vent. There are holes underneath the gable in the stone where electrical wires entered and exited the building.

The west facade has no window or door openings. A wooden rail is under the roofline and it is where the electrical wires were connected to the building and the insulators were located.

The south facade of the building has a double hung window opening that is half boarded up. There is another window opening in the foundation section of the building which leads into the basement or cellar.

The east facade of the building is identical to the west facade with no window or door openings and the wooden rail for the insulators.

The building is presently being used for storage. The interior, however, remains intact. There are hard wood floors and built-in wood shelves stacked four high. The shelves are actually cubbyholes used by the electric company for their paper work. The ceiling is wood plank and the walls are covered in plaster. There is a single light fixture hanging down from the center of the ceiling.

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Sparta Electric Building
White Co., TN

Besides the missing glass from the windows and doors, the building retains its historic character. It is an unadorned building which was built for commercial purposes and met the needs of the Tennessee Electric Power Company for a switching station.

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Section number 8 Page 3

Sparta Electric Building
White Co., TN

Statement of Significance

The Sparta Electric Building is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places for its association with the development of hydroelectric power before the establishment of the Tennessee Valley Authority in the city of Sparta, Tennessee. The building is a significant example of the local office/distribution centers that were developed in small towns during the early twentieth century. It is a significant intact property associated with the "Pre-TVA Hydro-Electric Power Development in Tennessee, 1901-1933" historic context statement developed by the Tennessee Historical Commission. The Sparta Electric Building is significant under Criterion A for commerce, as it represents a change in the business of trading, services, and commodities, and the gradual introduction of electricity into everyday human existence during the early twentieth century in Tennessee.

The Tennessee Railway, Light and Power Company was formed in 1912 by banking houses in Chicago, Philadelphia and New York. The company was chartered in Maine with \$50,000,000 preferred stock and \$20,000,000 common stock. The power generating plants were operated by the subsidiary, Tennessee Electric Power Company (TEPCO), financed by \$50,000,000 in fifty-year, five percent mortgage bonds. This reorganization gave TEPCO the hydroelectric property of the Eastern Tennessee Power Company and the assets of the Great Falls Power Company, consisting largely of a power site at Rock Island. Consolidation proceeded with acquisition by TEPCO of other small plants serving various towns. According to the study by historian William A. Doran, in July 1912 TEPCO purchased the Sparta hydroelectric plant of the Anderson-Tubb Power Company, which had been initially established in 1902.

By 1914, TEPCO was reported as owning the power plants in several other towns in the Nashville Banner of August 21 and 24, 1914. The company's economic power was clearly apparent. A report that year from the office of the state geologist observed that TEPCO:

is the first great power company to become domiciled in the State. In view of the history of centralization of power development in other states, and particularly in view of the

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Sparta Electric Building
White Co., TN

connections of the men who have formed the Tennessee Power Company, it is difficult to avoid the supposition that this wealthy corporation proposes to dominate the power situation in this section of the South. The report of the U.S. Commissioner of Corporations, shows that the owners of this company are the owners also of a large number of water power developments and of numerous public service corporations (to the number of not less than 43) in various parts of the country. Not only this, but through their common memberships in the directorates of certain other corporations, the Tennessee Power Company is allied to the General Electric company itself. And if it be true, as many believe, that a power trust is already in existence or is in process of formation then, unless it be checked very soon, Tennessee is not likely to escape its dominance." (The Water Powers of Tennessee, 73).

These local properties, like the earlier Sparta system, were to serve primarily as distribution systems, for the Tennessee Power's major activity lay in the building of the large central generating plants. The Electric Building in Sparta was used as just such a distribution center, probably by 1917.

The production of hydroelectric power has been an integral part of the development of White County, Tennessee since the establishment of Rock Island as a hydroelectric source in 1898 when the Great Falls Power company was organized and incorporated. Hydroelectric power came to Sparta in 1900. Joined by other stock holders and leaders, the corporation further organized the Tennessee Electric Power Company on April 24, 1912. It was at this time that it took over the Great Falls Power Company property located on the White County side of the Great Falls of the Caney Fork River. The Great Falls Hydroelectric Station at Rock Island is listed in the National Register (NR 7/5/90). After 1912, there was a power plant constructed at a point below Sparta known as the Old Factory Site. This property, the Sparta Hydroelectric Station, has already been listed in the National Register (NR 4/20/90). In 1914, state geologists reported: "the Great Falls power site and reservoir at the junction of the Caney Fork and Collins Rivers, near Rock Island, Tennessee, is capable of development of 80,000 horse power, and [it is] said to be the most desirable water power site in Tennessee." (The Water Powers of Tennessee, 72).

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Sparta Electric Building
White Co., TN

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TEPCO continually expanded their power facilities. In 1915, they began work on a 40 foot high dam to meet increased demand from nearby cities like Sparta and McMinnville. Sometime in the next six years, the company also established an office and local distribution center in the Crab Orchard stone building on South Main Street for nearby businesses and residences. The Lee Lumber Company initially owned the building--for what purpose is not known--and then leased it to the electric company.

In 1912, TEPCO had purchased the local Anderson and Tubb Power Company; probably by 1917, the company acquired the South Main property for its local office. The 1921 Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps for Sparta confirm that the building was used as a power distribution center and office by that date. The 1910s had been a key decade of growth for the city of Sparta and local lumber industries particularly benefited from increased demand for their products during World War I. Although records confirming the exact date cannot be located, our professional judgment is that the power office was put in operation sometime between 1917 and 1921, with the most likely time being circa 1917 since that date coincided with the expansion and improvement of facilities at the dam and the purchase of the local power company by TEPCO. It also coincided with the improvement of other commercial facilities in the town, most notably the Nashville, Chattanooga, and St. Louis Railroad's construction of a new depot. (National Register, December 7, 1992).

In 1923, TEPCO raised the dam again after a flood had washed it out and installed a 20,107 horse power generator, increased the old generator to 15,416 horse power, built a new brick power house, and cleared the reservoir. This output project was completed in April, 1925. In 1923 Sparta received an 11,000 volt line and in 1927, it received a 44,000 volt line. Despite these changes, the South Main property remained the office and distribution center for Sparta and it remained so until the arrival of rural electric cooperatives and the TVA changed forever the distribution of electric power in the mid-1930s.

The Sparta Electric Building is eligible for the National Register under Criterion A for its association with the pre-TVA Hydro-Electric Power Development in Tennessee from 1901-1933. The previous National Register nomination of the

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Sparta Electric Building
White Co., TN

Sparta Hydroelectric Station (NR 4/20/90) dealt with a hydroelectric engineering project. This small building of Crab Orchard stone, however, documents another important property type--the local office and distribution center--associated with the impact of electric power on small towns throughout Tennessee. It is a significant and integral component of a power distribution system associated with a historically significant hydroelectric complex.

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Sparta Electric Building
White County, Tennessee

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Bibliography

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Section number 10 Page 8

Sparta Electric Building
White County, Tennessee

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundaries of the Sparta Electric Company Office are shown as lot 59 on the accompanying White County Tax Map of Sparta, Tennessee. The legal property lines define the south, west, and east boundaries while South Main Street defines the north boundary.

Boundary Justification

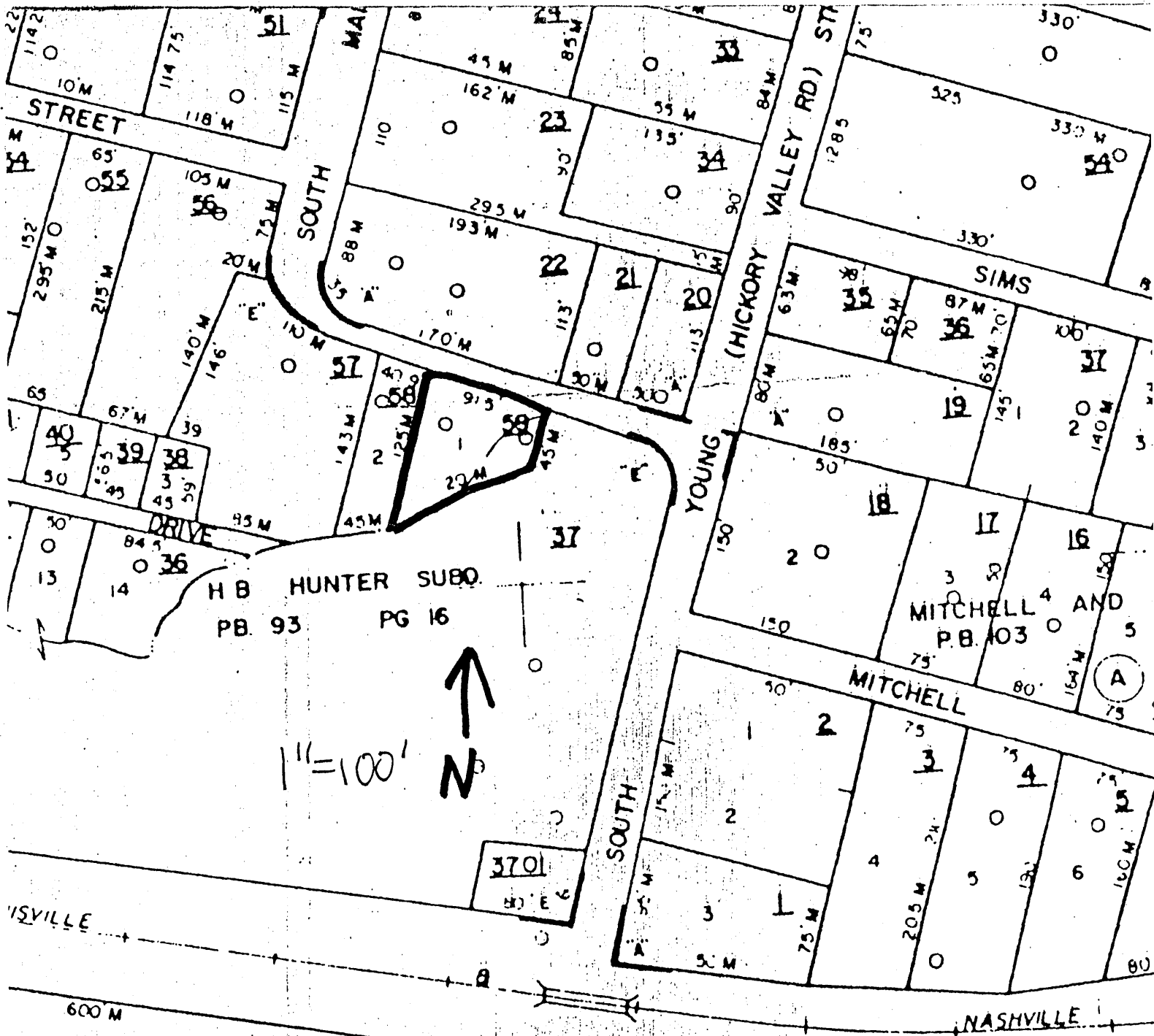
The boundaries of the Sparta Electric Company Office include the office and all historic property located within the historic legal property lines.

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Sparta Electric Building
White County, Tennessee



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Section number Photos Page 10

Sparta Electric Building
White County, Tennessee

Black and White Photographs

Sparta Electric Building
South Main Street
Sparta, White County, Tennessee
Photographs by: Dr. C. Van West
Date: May, 1992
Negatives: Center for Historic Preservation
Middle Tennessee State University
Box 80
Murfreesboro, Tennessee 37132

- #1 of 8
Front north facade of building
- #2 of 8
Gable front on north of building.
- #3 of 8
East elevation of building
- #4 of 8
Upper east facade and pressed tin roof
- #5 of 8
South elevation of building
- #6 of 8
West elevation of building
- #7 of 8
Northwest facade of building
- #8 of 8
Interior of building, facing south