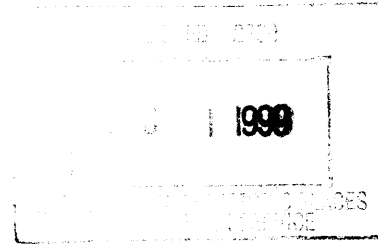


1621



**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 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 Rockwood Post Office

other names/site number NA

**2. Location**

street & number 311 Mill Street

NA  not for publication

city or town Rockwood

NA  vicinity

state Tennessee

code TN

county Roane

code 145

zip code 37854

**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 for 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.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

*John Brunson, FPD*

11-23-99

State or Federal agency and bureau

U.S. Postal Service

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

*Herbert L. Hoyer*

11/15/99

Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer, Tennessee Historical Commission

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

Date of Action

*Edson H. Beall*

12/30/99

Rockwood Post Office  
Name of Property

Roane County, Tennessee  
County and State

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply)

**Category of Property**  
(Check only one box)

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

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

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

Contributing

Noncontributing

1	_____	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.)

**Number of Contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

N/A

0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

GOVERNMENT: Post Office  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

GOVERNMENT: Post Office  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Colonial Revival  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

foundation CONCRETE  
walls BRICK  
\_\_\_\_\_  
roof METAL  
other WOOD; marble  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**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 N/A**

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

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** moved from its original location.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property
- G** less than 50 year 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.)

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE  
GOVERNMENT

**Period of Significance**

1937-1949

**Significant Dates**

1937

**Significant Person**

(complete if Criterion B is marked)

NA

**Cultural Affiliation**

NA

**Architect/Builder**

Blair, Algernon (builder); Good and Goodstein (addition architects); Simon, Louis (supervising architect)

**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): N/A**

- 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

Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

Rockwood Post Office  
Name of Property

Roane County, Tennessee  
County and State

## 10. Geographical Data

**Acreage of Property** approximately 1/2 acre

Rockwood 123 SW

### UTM References

(place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 16 708800 3971620  
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 Kimberley A. Murphy/Preservation Planner  
organization East Tennessee Development District date October 1998  
street & number PO Box 19806 telephone 865/584-8553  
city or town Knoxville state TN zip code 37939

### 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 Realty Management Branch, U.S.P.S.  
street & number 1407 Union Avenue telephone NA  
city or town Memphis state TN zip code 38166

**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 listing. 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 20303.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1

Rockwood Post Office  
Roane County, Tennessee

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## NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

The Rockwood Post Office is located at the western end of the central business district in Rockwood, Roane County, Tennessee. Rockwood (pop. 5,348) is located approximately forty-five miles west of Knoxville, on the eastern slope of the Cumberland Plateau in western Roane County.

The post office is a one story Colonial Revival style Federal building constructed by the Works Projects Administration (WPA) in 1937. The plans were prepared under the auspices of Louis Simon, the Supervising Architect of the USPO. Architects Good and Goodstein prepared plans for an addition for the Atlanta Office of the General Services Administration. Algernon Blair of Montgomery, Alabama, was the general contractor. Subcontractors included Atlantic Metal Products, Incorporated of New York; Johnson City Foundry and Machine Company of Johnson City, Tennessee; and Wilson, Weesner, Wilkinson Company of Knoxville, Tennessee.

The post office has a poured concrete foundation, brick walls laid in five-course common bond, and a standing seam metal roof. Windows are twelve-over-eight double-hung wood sash on marble lintels. There is a projecting water table of brick at the fifth brick course. A marble frieze is below the cornice. The metal letters on the frieze read "U. S. Post Office Rockwood, Tennessee." There is a 1968 addition to the west and north (rear) elevations. The grounds are landscaped with original Japanese Hollies.

The primary (southwest) elevation has five bays with a centered entrance. The entrance has paired square columns and pilasters, added in 1968. Paired double doors have Depression-era multi-light windows and brass hardware. There is a Colonial Revival style transom above the doors. Limestone steps lead to the entry. Wrought iron handrails and electric lanterns flank the entry steps. The marble cornerstone is located on the southwest corner of the primary elevation and reads:

Henry Morgenthau, Jr.  
Secretary of the Treasury  
James Farley  
Postmaster General  
Louis Simon  
Supervising Architect  
Neal A. Melick  
Supervising Engineer  
1937

The northwest elevation has a two-bay addition. One window on the original elevation has been converted to a glass and aluminum door and used as a handicapped-accessible entrance. The addition is in the same style as the original building, with two-course brick walls, marble lintels, wood windows, and a marble frieze. The addition is two bays wide and extends four bays across the back of the building.

The northeast elevation is a 1968 loading dock with a raised concrete pad and an overhanging roof. There are three bays of double metals doors and one bay with a single metal door. A single garage-style door is cut into the western wall of the loading dock.

The southeast elevation is comprised of a six-bay original section and the 1968 loading dock addition. There is a square chimney in the corner of the ell. Two small four-over-four wood windows with marble sills are located in what was originally a small projecting room. Concrete steps with metal treads lead to a basement entrance with wood and glass double doors.

**United States Department of the Interior**  
**National Park Service**

# **National Register of Historic Places**

## **Continuation Sheet**

Section number   7   Page   2  

Rockwood Post Office  
Roane County, Tennessee

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Landscaping consists of two good-sized holly trees planted on either side of the entrance and appears to be the original plantings. There is a small grassy lawn in front of the building. A driveway borders the east edge of the property and leads to a large parking area in the rear. There is a wood flagpole on a round concrete base at the southwest corner of the property. This is not the original location of the flagpole, according to construction drawings found on site.

The interior of the post office retains the original rectangular plan and nearly all of its original details. The entrance into the lobby is through a wood and glass vestibule with a door at each end. The vestibule retains the original radiators and cast iron grates. Nearly all of the Depression-era post offices in East Tennessee retain these vestibules. The original work area of the post office is separated from the lobby by a wall with a service window and counter.

At the southeast end of the lobby is the postmaster's office. There is a terra cotta relief sculpture of three deer above the door. The sculpture depicts a family of deer, with the doe at the center, looking over her back towards a resting buck. A fawn is nudging its mother's neck.

The windows and doors are framed in darkly stained wood surrounds with bull's-eye corner blocks. The interior doors in the building are of solid wood in wood frames. One door leads to the postmaster's office at the southeast end of the lobby and is flanked by two original glass and wood frame display cases. The other original door leads from the lobby to the work area. There are two more glass and wood frame display cases on the west wall of the lobby. These display cases retain the original gold lettering, spelling out: "BULLETINS."

The walls are plaster and there is crown molding at the ceiling. There is tan marble wainscoting with brown baseboards throughout the lobby area. The floor is of pinkish-tan and off-white terrazzo in a checkerboard design. Original metal mailboxes are located at the western end of the lobby. Original radiators remain below the windows in the lobby.

The original work area was enlarged to its present size in 1968. The work area is used to sort and distribute incoming and outgoing mail.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

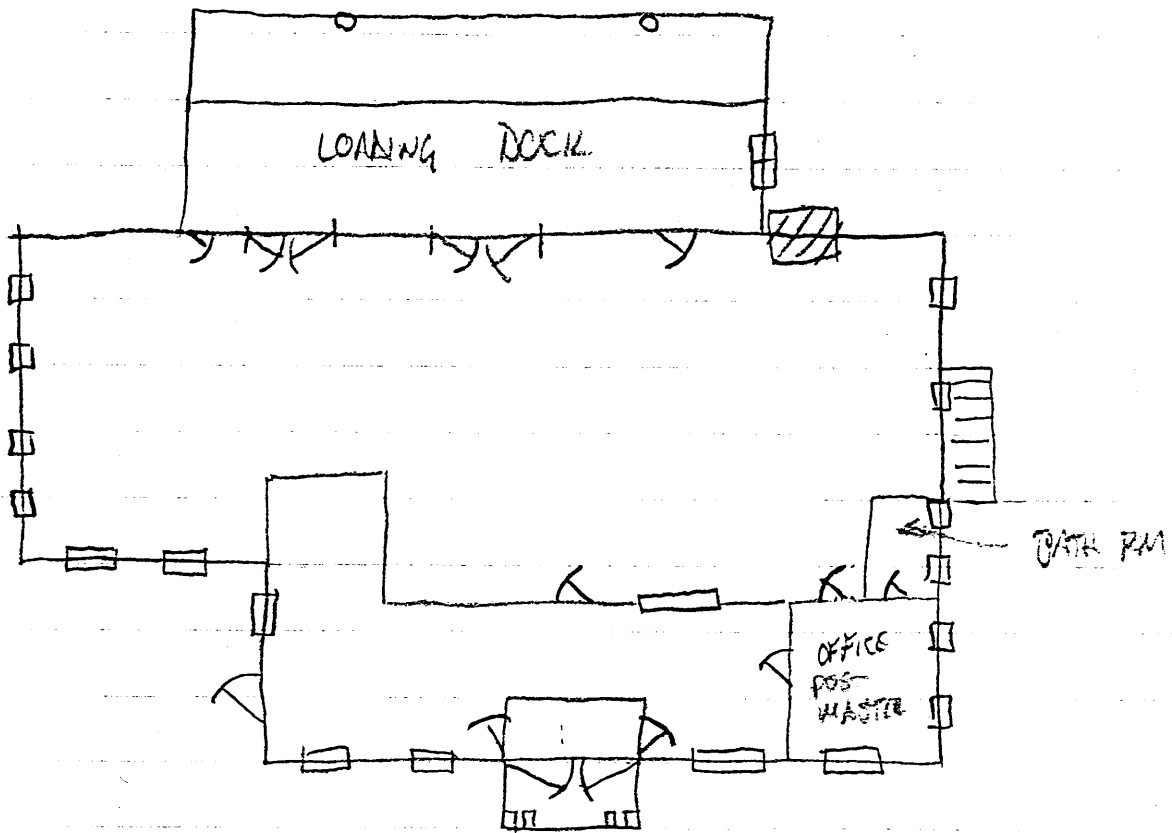
# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 3

Rockwood Post Office  
Roane County, Tennessee

SKETCH PLAN

NOT TO SCALE



**United States Department of the Interior**  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places

## Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 4

Rockwood Post Office  
Roane County, Tennessee

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### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Constructed in 1937, the Rockwood Post Office is significant under criteria A and C in the areas of government and architecture because it represents the impact of the New Deal on the built landscape and is an excellent example of a Federal building constructed by the Works Progress Administration (WPA) during the Great Depression. The building retains a high degree of integrity and is especially notable for the terra cotta relief in the lobby.

The post offices constructed under the New Deal programs of the 1930s are significant for the volume of buildings constructed, more than during any other decade in post office history. The primary and most significant goal behind all of this construction was to create an efficient program that would provide economic recovery. These "programs of the depression era emphasized efficiency, speed (sic) construction, stimulation of the economy, and the alleviation of unemployment. . . The numerous public buildings . . . were tangible evidence of the Government's new activist role." (1)

#### Rockwood

Rockwood is a mining town founded in Roane County, Tennessee, by the Roane Iron Company in 1868. It was established to take advantage of the natural iron deposits in Walden's Ridge, a section of the Cumberland Plateau running southwest from Roane County to Chattanooga. It was typical of other industrial towns of the post-Civil War New South in that it was owned and operated by a paternalistic and controlling business concern. However, Roane Iron Company did not have the stereotypical exploitative reputation shared by other mining companies in Appalachia and the company's relationship with the town has been characterized as uncommonly benevolent. Beginning in the 1880s, unrestricted commercial ventures were permitted to operate and by the 1920s, the town reached such a level of independence from its parent company that the Roane Iron Company was openly criticized by the citizenry and by the local press. The town was incorporated in 1895 and the economy boomed as men formerly associated with the Roane Iron Company became competing merchants, independent contractors, and local captains of industry. The diversification of the town's economy provided for its survival through several economic depressions and the failure of the mines in the 1920s.

The 1920s brought social conservatism and vigorous civic improvement to the town of Rockwood. The aldermanic system of government was replaced with a city commission in 1921. The new system immediately began to overhaul the city: twelve miles of sewers were constructed, new lighting was placed along Rockwood Avenue, and five miles of city streets were paved, in addition to twelve miles of state road that was paved between Kingston and Rockwood. Where the Roane Iron Company had sponsored social and educational organizations early in the town's history, newly formed organizations like the Civitan Club took on the responsibility of improving educational facilities. The Business and Professional Women's Club began sponsoring the public library in 1922. (2)

The widespread unemployment that accompanied the Great Depression put an end to nearly all of Rockwood's civic improvements. A municipal golf course was constructed by the city and funded in part by the Works Progress Administration. This proved to be the most notable monetary outlay in Rockwood during the 1930s. The new post office was not constructed until 1937 and was the only public building constructed in Rockwood during the 1930s.

#### Algernon Blair

The contract for the construction of the Rockwood Post Office went to the lowest bidder, Algernon Blair of Montgomery, Alabama, whose project cost was listed as \$51,674.36. Ground was broken for the building in August 1937. Construction of the post office was completed in January 1938.



**United States Department of the Interior**  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places

## Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 5 Rockwood Post Office  
Roane County, Tennessee

Algernon Blair was born in Brooklyn, New York, in 1873 and raised in Macon, Georgia. He was a nationally known contractor at the time of his death in 1952 in Montgomery, Alabama. Blair served as director of the first National Bank of Montgomery, director of the Alabama Power Company, and president, district governor and national director of Rotary International. He was a senior warden of the Church of the Ascension in Montgomery for many years. He also served as Chairman of the Alabama Relief Administration from 1933 to 1938. Blair was awarded his first construction contract in 1897 for the construction of the Screven County Courthouse, Sylvan, Georgia.

Blair's first contract with the Treasury Department was for the construction of a post office in Dalton, Georgia, in 1908. Working almost exclusively on Treasury Department contracts between 1914 and 1917, Blair constructed twenty post offices throughout the South. He also secured contracts with the Veterans Administration, various universities, and the War Department in the 1920s and 1930s. He constructed post offices, churches and contributed significantly to construction activities at Maxwell Field in Montgomery. During World War II, Blair secured contracts to construct defense housing and assorted facilities at Elgin Air Force Base in Valparaiso, Florida, while he continued to work steadily on war-related projects in Alabama and Mississippi. (3) His construction projects in Tennessee include:

Pulaski	Post Office	1914
Winchester	Post Office	1915
Humbolt	Post Office	1916
Covington	Post Office	1916
Maryville	Post Office	1917
Nashville	Packing Plant	1920
Memphis	Post Office & Substation	1924
Franklin	Post Office	1925
Athens	Post Office	1927
Columbia	Post Office	1930
Memphis	Veterans Hospital	1931
Lewisburg	Post Office	1935
Clarksville	Post Office	1935
Maryville	Sylvan Park School	1936
Milan	Post Office	1936
Johnson City	Post Office	1937
<b>Rockwood</b>	<b>Post Office</b>	<b>1938</b>
Dayton	Post Office	1938
Ripley	Post Office	1938
Nashville	Post Office	1938
Jackson	Defense Housing Projects -	
	(200 Prefabricated Demountable Housing Units)	1941
Humboldt-Milan	100 Prefabricated Demountable	
	Housing Units	1941
Paris	War Housing Project	1943
Murfreesboro	54 Trailer Units	1946

These projects represent only a small fraction of the 613 projects Blair was awarded between 1897 and 1952. (4)

**United States Department of the Interior**  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 6

Rockwood Post Office  
Roane County, Tennessee

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## The US Postal Service

The Public Buildings Act of 1926, known as the Keyes-Elliot Act, was the enabling legislation that stipulated the site selection process for the construction of public buildings. The act resulted in a nation-wide survey conducted to assess the need for postal facilities. The survey report was submitted by the Secretary of the Treasury to the House Committee on Public Buildings in 1927. The survey identified 2,311 towns and cities with annual postal receipts exceeding \$10,000 that were without federal buildings; 799 of those had postal receipts exceeding \$20,000. The estimated cost of erecting buildings in these cities was \$170,420,000. (5) The Public Buildings Act emphasized efficiency of construction and encouraged the standardization of plans for small buildings.

Full implementation of the Public Buildings Act was delayed by the stock market crash of 1929. The program was expanded under the New Deal in the 1930s and the number of post offices constructed during that decade was more than three times the number constructed during the previous fifty years. (6) In 1930, Congress amended the 1926 Act and authorized the Secretary of the Treasury to employ outside professionals to design and construct the buildings. "The legislation marked the beginning of the trend in public works projects that came in direct response to the depression. It served as the precedent for subsequent policies and acts that would attempt to relieve unemployment in the (architectural) profession." (7)

With a renewal goal to construct as many buildings as quickly as possible, a standard design helped minimize the number of individual drawings needed for construction. Nevertheless, new bureaucracies created regularly by New Deal legislation complicated construction of public buildings. The National Industrial Recovery Act created the Public Works Administration (PWA), which was authorized to disburse funds for all construction projects (Federal, as well as non-Federal). By 1939, when the PWA was discontinued, post office construction accounted for nearly one-eighth of the 3,174 PWA construction projects. The construction of post offices, funded through different New Deal programs, was under the auspices of the Treasury Department until 1935, when the Work Progress Administration (WPA) was established.

Almost all designs for Federal buildings located outside the District of Columbia originated within the PWA. Designs and plans were standardized and tended towards a simplified classical style or the Colonial Revival style. These styles were so dominant that they became symbolic of the Federal government itself. The standard plan included a public lobby separated from a large workroom.

In any town requesting a new post office, postal receipts for the previous ten years were required to exceed \$10,000 annually. Federal officials in consultation with the local postmaster selected a site. Site studies were made and information was gathered and analyzed by a Public Buildings Administration "architectural group" which included a designer, and mechanical and structural engineers.

Government reorganization in 1939 removed Federal architecture design from the Treasury Department and created the Public Buildings Administration as part of the Federal Works Agency. Post office construction appears to have been unaffected by the reorganization and in Fiscal Year 1940, over 200 small post offices buildings were constructed. By 1942, the United States was engaged in World War II and most of the New Deal programs came to an end as funds were diverted to defense projects.

## Post Office Art and Murals

Some projects reserved one per cent of their budgets for public art with the result that many public buildings were decorated with paintings or sculptures. The Public Works of Art Project (PWAP) was founded in 1933 and was the first New Deal effort to provide relief work for unemployed artists. Between 1933 and 1934, the U. S. government engaged in a nationwide program to decorate federal buildings with American art in the form of murals, mostly in post offices. The PWAP was replaced in 1934 by the Section of Painting and Sculpture in the Procurement Division of the Treasury, which in turn evolved into the Treasure Section of Fine Arts in 1938. (8)

**United States Department of the Interior**  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places**  
**Continuation Sheet**

Section number     8     Page     7    

Rockwood Post Office  
Roane County, Tennessee

Post office decorations did not proliferate in the South until late 1937. From 1937 until the end of the program in 1942, nearly three hundred works of art were created to embellish post office walls in the South, representing nearly one quarter of the output of the whole program in its nine years of existence. (9) Federal post offices in central East Tennessee which were embellished are located in Clinton (1940), Jefferson City (1941), LaFollette (1939), Lenoir City (1940), Newport (1940), Rockwood (1939), and Sweetwater (date unknown). America's entrance into World War II ended funding for many public works projects as moneys were diverted for war preparations.

The post office in Rockwood sports a terra cotta relief sculpture by New York artist Christian Heinrich, the only ceramic post office decoration in the state. Entitled *Wild Life*, the high relief sculpture was cast in a piece mold by the Freigang Ceramic Works of Long Island. The seven by three-foot panel weighs approximately three hundred pounds and depicts a family of three deer. The artist was born in Germany in 1893 and educated at the Darmstadt Art School (1906-1909), the Academy of Art in Munich (1910-1913), and was a pupil of Professor Fritz Behn in Munich from 1913 to 1913. After working in Germany for a number of years, he came to New York in 1931. (10)

The relief sculpture in Rockwood is one of twelve terra cotta post office sculptures in the South. Other relief sculptures are of wood, limestone, plaster, mahogany, and cast stone. (11) Two stunning reliefs sculptured in teak wood hang in the Greeneville, Tennessee, post office and are now estimated to be worth one million dollars. Across the country, however, the painted mural was by far the most common embellishment. Other terra cotta relief sculptures in Southern post offices are: (12)

Alexander City, Alabama	Frank Epping	1941
Monticello, Arkansas	Berta Margoulies	1941
Cochran, Georgia	Ilse Erythrope	1940
Lyons, Georgia	Abino Manca	1942
Jenkins, Kentucky	F. Jean Thalinger	1943
Williamstown, Kentucky	Romuald Kraus	1942
Leesville, Louisiana	Duncan Ferguson	1939
Canton, North Carolina	Sam Bell	1941
Covington, Virginia	Lenore Thomas	1939
Newport News PO & C.H.	Mary B. Fowler	1943
Staunton, Virginia	Florence Bessom	1940

The Treasury Section of Fine Arts, created in October 1938 and known as "The Section", was responsible for administering the murals project. The Section was distinguished from the WPA's Federal Art Project because employment was based on merit, rather than neediness of the artist. Although the Section had as its goal the employment of local artists, few Southern artists were actually commissioned to paint murals in the South. Applicant pools were often small and The Section often resorted to appointing an artist on the bias of "competent work for the section." (13)

Artists were chosen through several levels of competition. To qualify for a regional competition, an artist had to live there or had to have grown up there. Because few Southern artists applied within the region, artists were often chosen from artists' colonies in New York, New England, or from Southwestern concentrations like Taos, New Mexico. Once an artist was selected, he or she was encouraged to visit the locale when possible. A site visit was difficult for unemployed artists and inconvenient for those who were working, usually in academia. An encyclopedia at the local library, therefore, provided to the artist background information on the locale. (14)

Post Office murals had to appeal to everyone, so both classical and modern styles were unacceptable. "To be appropriate for post office walls. . . good section art had to be so innocuous that it offended no one, so realistic that every post office patron could identify with its figures, so general that murals painted for one post office could be installed in another." (15)

**United States Department of the Interior**  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places

## Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 8 Rockwood Post Office  
Roane County, Tennessee

Some postmasters outright rejected the murals once they were painted and refused to install them. Postmaster Henry Bogan of Franklin, Kentucky, refused to allow the installation of artist Carl Hall's mural depicting a family harvesting tobacco. The painting showed a barn suitable for curing burley tobacco---a type grown in North Carolina, not Kentucky. The growing and curing of tobacco provides an important cultural identity to different areas of the South and Hall's mural represented the utter lack of understanding (and some would say a lack respect) most outsiders had for Southerners and Southern ways.

The Clinton, Tennessee, mural by Horace Day (1940), is a good example of a painting suitable to its locale: against the background of the rolling Cumberland mountains, it incorporates the steeple of the old Anderson County Courthouse, the Magnet Hosiery Mills, and the steel truss bridge over the Clinch River. A farmer riding atop a load of hay greets two industrial workers, possibly miners, returning home at the end of the day. The artist obviously saw Clinton as a "progressive town (and) . . . tried to express the well being of this community set as it is in a valley as lovely as any in the country." (16) Christian Heinrich probably did not visit Rockwood before sculpting his *Wild Life*. Wild life is abundant in Roane County and the subject of the deer at rest seems to be innocuous enough and surely could not have stirred up the kind of controversy created by Hall's mural in Franklin, Kentucky.

As unusual feature of *Wild Life* is that its bottom edge conforms to the door frame of the postmaster's office. Most murals were painted off site and were cut to fit around the doors upon installation. Another intrusion seen by the artists was the projecting vestibule in the lobby of most post offices. While the vestibule served to protect the postal workers and the mail from outside drafts, the artists saw them as intrusions that interfered with the public's ability to appropriately view the murals. (17)

With few exceptions, Depression-era post offices conformed to standardized plans with simplified classical or colonial stylistic influences. Minor changes were allowed with the result that Blair's Rockwood contract allowed for the use of "marble for cornice in lieu of wood and marble for copings, cornerstone and sills in lieu of limestone." (18) These changes may have been facilitated by the local abundance of marble in East Tennessee. The exterior of the Rockwood post office is not unique in design, or in materials. It is significant, however, as an excellent example of the Federal presence established by the New Deal in small towns across America.

The following Tennessee communities are listed as having post office murals: (19)

COMMUNITY	ARTIST	DATE	COMMENTS
Bolivar*	Carl Nyquist	1941	
Camden*	John H. Fyfe	1938	
Chattanooga PO & C.H.*	Hilton Leech	1937	
Chattanooga "New" P.O	Leopold Scholz	1938	Sculpture
Clarksville	F. Luis Mora	1938	Destroyed
Clinton*	Horace Day	1940	Removed 1989
Columbia (Courthouse)*	Signey Waugh	1941	Sculpture
Columbia PO	Henry Billings	1942	
Crossville*	Marion Greenwood	1940	
Dayton*#	Berthram Hartman	1939	
Decherd	Enea Biafora	1940	
Dickson	Edwin Boyd Johnson	1939	
Dresden*	Minetta Good	1938	
Gleason	Anne Poor	1942	
Greeneville PO & C.H.*	William Zorach	1940	Two wood reliefs
Jefferson City	Charles Child	1941	
Johnson City#	Wendell Jones	1940	Missing

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 9 Rockwood Post Office  
Roane County, Tennessee

LaFollette	Dahlov Ipcar	1939	
Lenoir City	David Stone Martin	1940	
Lewisburg*#	John H. R. Pickett	1938	
Lexington*	Grace Greenwood	1940	
Livingston*	Margaret C. Chisholm	1940	
McKenzie	Karl Obertuffer	1938	
Manchester*	Minna Citron	1942	
Mt. Pleasant	Eugene Higgins	1942	
Nashville*	Belle Kinney	1940	Sculpture missing In DAR museum
Newport*	Minna Citron	1940	
Ripley*#	Marguerite Zorach	1940	
<b>Rockwood#</b>	<b>Christian Heinrich</b>	<b>1939</b>	<b>Terra cotta relief</b>
Sweetwater	Thelma Martin n.d.		

\* designates county seat; # designates buildings constructed by Algernon Blair

## Endnotes

- 1 USPS, 24.
- 2 William Howard Moore, *Company Town: A History of Rockwood and the Roane Iron Company* (Kingston, TN: Roane County Heritage Commission, n.d.), 65.
- 3 Algernon Blair File, Alabama Historical Commission, Montgomery, Alabama.
- 4 "Construction Contracts, Algernon Blair, Montgomery, Alabama." Type written list, n.d., Algernon Blair File, Alabama Historical Commission, Montgomery, Alabama.
- 5 United States Postal Service, *History of Post Office Construction, 1900-1940*, (Washington, DC, 1982), 13.
- 6 *Ibid.*, 14.
- 7 *Ibid.*, 15.
- 8 *Ibid.*, 21.
- 9 Sue Birdwell Beckham, *Depression Post Office Murals and Southern Culture, A Gentle Reconstruction* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University, 1989), 3.
- 10 Howard Hull, *Tennessee Post Office Murals* (Johnson City, TN: The Overmountain Press, 1996), 128.
- 11 Beckham, 314.
- 12 Beckham, 314.
- 13 *Ibid.*, 10
- 14 *Ibid.*, 11.
- 15 *Ibid.*, 13.
- 16 Clinton Courier, June 5, 1040. Quoted in Hull, 28. The mural was removed from the post office in 1989.
- 17 Beckham, 72.
- 18 Procurement Division of the Treasury Department, Contract for Construction No. T1pb-2478, to Algernon Blair for the Rockwood, TN Post Office, 2.
- 19 Beckham, 325.

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- "Specification for Planting at the United States Post Office, Rockwood, Tennessee." Washington, DC: Procurement Division, Public Buildings Branch, June 23, 1937.
- Specifications and Bidding Forms. US Post Office, Rockwood Avenue, Rockwood, Tennessee. Project No. DC4-78015-410060. Volume I of II Specifications, Sections I through 51. Bid opening date February 9, 1968.

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## VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The boundary is shown on the accompanying tax map of Rockwood. The property is located at the corner of Wilder and Rockwood streets.

## BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The boundary is the legal boundary of the post office as described in the Roane County Courthouse, Kingston.

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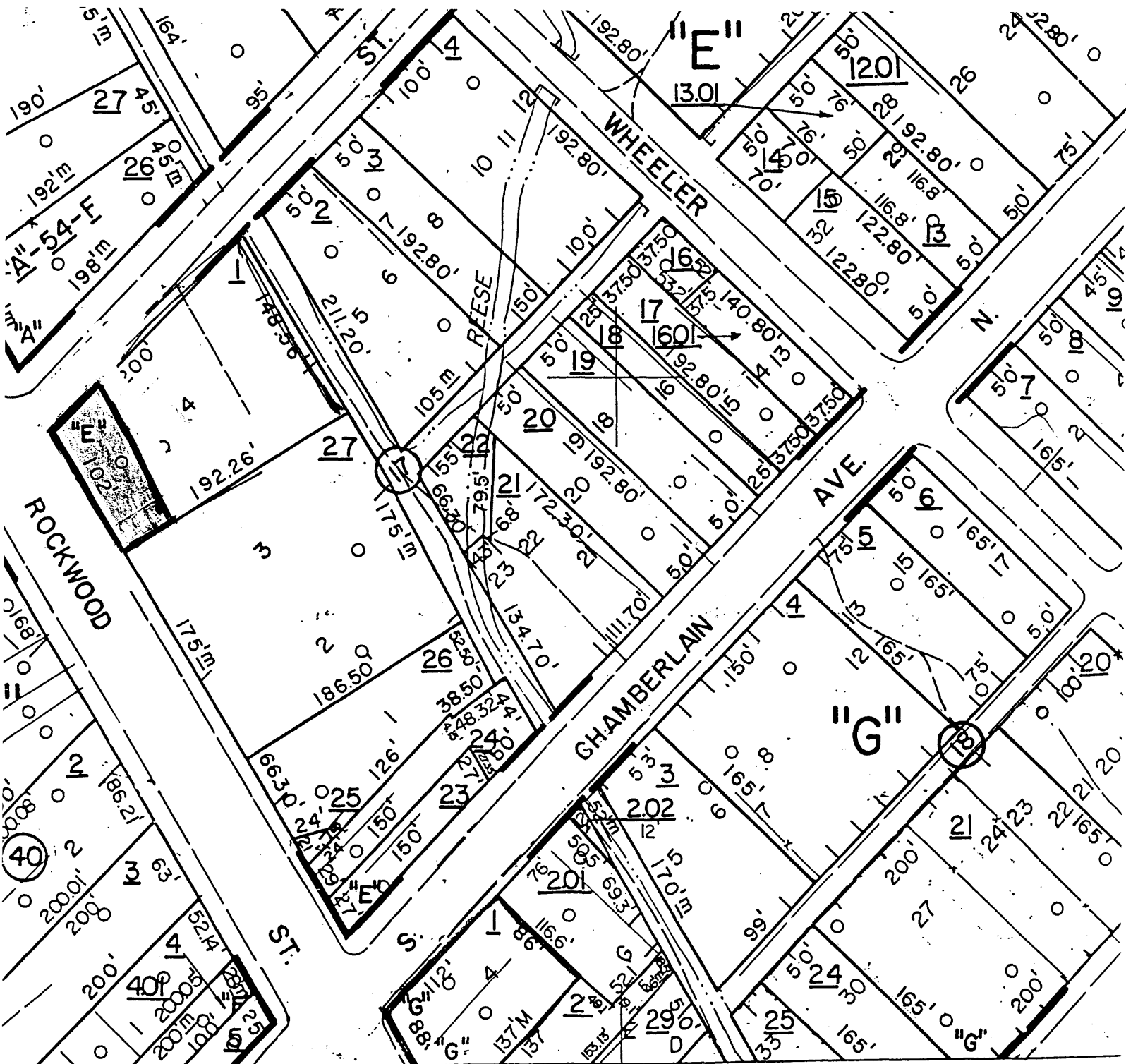
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TAX MAP

1"=100'





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**PHOTOGRAPHS**

Rockwood Post Office  
Rockwood, Roane County, TN  
Photographs By: Steve Rogers  
Tennessee Historical Commission  
2941 Lebanon Road  
Nashville, TN

Date: April 1999

Negatives: Tennessee Historical Commission

SW facade, facing NE  
#1 of 18

SW facade, facing NE  
#2 of 18

SW facade and SE elevation, facing N  
#3 of 18

SE elevation, facing north  
# 4 of 18

NE and SE elevations, facing W  
# 5 of 18

NE elevation, facing SE  
#6 of 18

NW elevation and SW facade, facing E  
#7 of 18

View of lobby, facing SE  
#8 of 18

View of lobby door, facing NW  
#9 of 18

View of mail boxes, facing E  
#10 of 18

View of mailboxes, facing N  
#11 of 18

View of door to postmaster's office and relief on wall, facing SE  
#12 of 18

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View of postmaster's office, facing NW  
#13 of 18

View of postmaster's office, facing SE  
#14 of 18

View of mail room, facing N  
#15 of 18

View of mail room, facing S  
#16 of 18

View of mail room, facing W  
#17 of 18

View of mail room, facing NE  
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