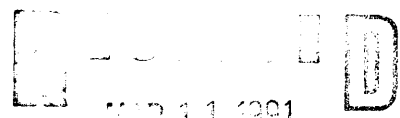


436

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service



National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

NATIONAL
REGISTER

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 ELLIS SERVICE STATION GARAGE

other names/site number Ellis Garage

2. Location

street & number 2000 OLD MURFREESBORO ROAD

N/A not for publication

city, town NASHVILLE

N/A vicinity

state TN

code TN

county DAVIDSON

code 037

zip code 37217

3. Classification

Ownership of Property

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

Category of Property

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

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> buildings
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> sites
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> structures
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing:

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

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.

Herbert L. Hayer
Signature of certifying official Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer
Tennessee Historical Commission

3/4/91
Date

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:)

Ang Federman
Signature of the Keeper

4/15/91
Date of Action

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

TRANSPORTATION; Road-related

COMMERCE; Business

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

TRANSPORTATION; Road-related

COMMERCE; Business

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

OTHER; Vernacular

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETE

walls BRICK; WOOD; GLASS

roof ASPHALT;

other WOOD

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Ellis Service Station Garage is located in the community of Una in Davidson County, Tennessee. The Ellis Garage Service Station is situated on the corner of Old Murfreesboro Road and Smith Springs Road. It is the oldest such station still in operation between Murfreesboro and Nashville. Una is a small community which at one time was seven miles from the Nashville City limits. Now Una is within the city limits and is hardly distinguishable as a separate community from Nashville.

In the early 1920s T. Hubert and Maude Ellis operated a garage and service station across from the present Ellis Garage. In 1929 the Ellises established their business at its present location at 2000 Old Nashville Road. During the early 1930s, despite the Great Depression, the Ellis Service Station Garage enjoyed brisk business. Customers came from several sources. Citizens of Una took their automobiles to Mr. Ellis for all types of repair service and they purchased gasoline from the Ellis Service Station Garage. Travellers from Lavergne, Smyrna, Murfreesboro, McMinnville, Woodbury, and Shelbyville en route to and from Nashville purchased gasoline from the Ellis Garage. Tourists from the North patronized the Ellis Garage en route to and from Florida and other southern vacation destinations. It was not uncommon for Mr. Ellis to answer the distress call of motorists whose automobiles had broken down in the area. With his tow truck Ellis was able to bring cars to his establishment and repair them.

The Ellis Service Station Garage, excluding the canopy and the bathroom addition onto the rear of the building, measures 35 feet on the northwest and southeast sides and 40 feet 2 inches on the northeast and southwest sides. The Ellis Garage is an unadorned one-story brick structure with a concrete slab foundation. The utilitarian nature of the

 See continuation sheet

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 2

Ellis Service Station Garage

business lends itself to its plain, yet functional architecture. The building has a flat asphalt roof which slopes slightly towards the southeast side of the building. On the northeast and southwest sides of the building the brick walls of the building are higher than the roofline and these side walls are stepped from the front or northwest side of the building towards the southeast side of the building.

The wooden canopy with a gable roof and green asphalt shingles dominates the facade of the Ellis Service Station Garage. The ceiling of the canopy is the original beaded wood. The canopy is fronted by two piers constructed in a pattern of contrasting brick. This brick design is a form that was used in Gulf service stations in the early and mid twentieth century. Piers identical to the ones fronting the Ellis Garage are featured in Carole Rifkind's discussion of twentieth century utilitarian architecture in A Field Guide to American Architecture (New York: Bonanza Books, 1980). Below each pier there is an oval concrete island on which the gas pumps sit. The vernacular craftsman style of the canopy on the Ellis Garage is a predominate architectural feature among garage and service stations of the period.

The front or northwest facade of the Ellis Service Station Garage features a double sliding wooden door and a large multi-light window with wooden surround. The door is large enough for an automobile to pass through into the service bay of the garage. The window on this facade is one of two windows for the office of the Ellis garage.

On the northern end of the northeast side of the building there is a window with 12 lights and wooden surround. This is the other window for the office. Also on this side of the building there is a sliding wooden door identical to the one on the front facade of the building. Automobiles were brought into the rear of the service area through this door.

The rear facade of the building features a centered window with 12 lights. The bathroom addition, which was added circa 1930, is on the southern end of this facade. This addition has a window which faces east.

The southwest facade of the building features two windows with wooden surround and 12 lights each. This facade also features an original metal rectangular sign which

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 3 Ellis Service Station Garage

says, "Ellis Garage."

The interior of the Ellis Service Station Garage retains its historical integrity as a functioning automobile service station. The ceiling features exposed rafters. The interior is open, except for the office in the northern corner of the garage. Automotive equipment and tools, including the trussing system for lifting cars, are contained in the service area. Various auto parts, like hoses and belts, hang on hooks along the walls of the interior. An historical sense of time and place has been retained with this setting.

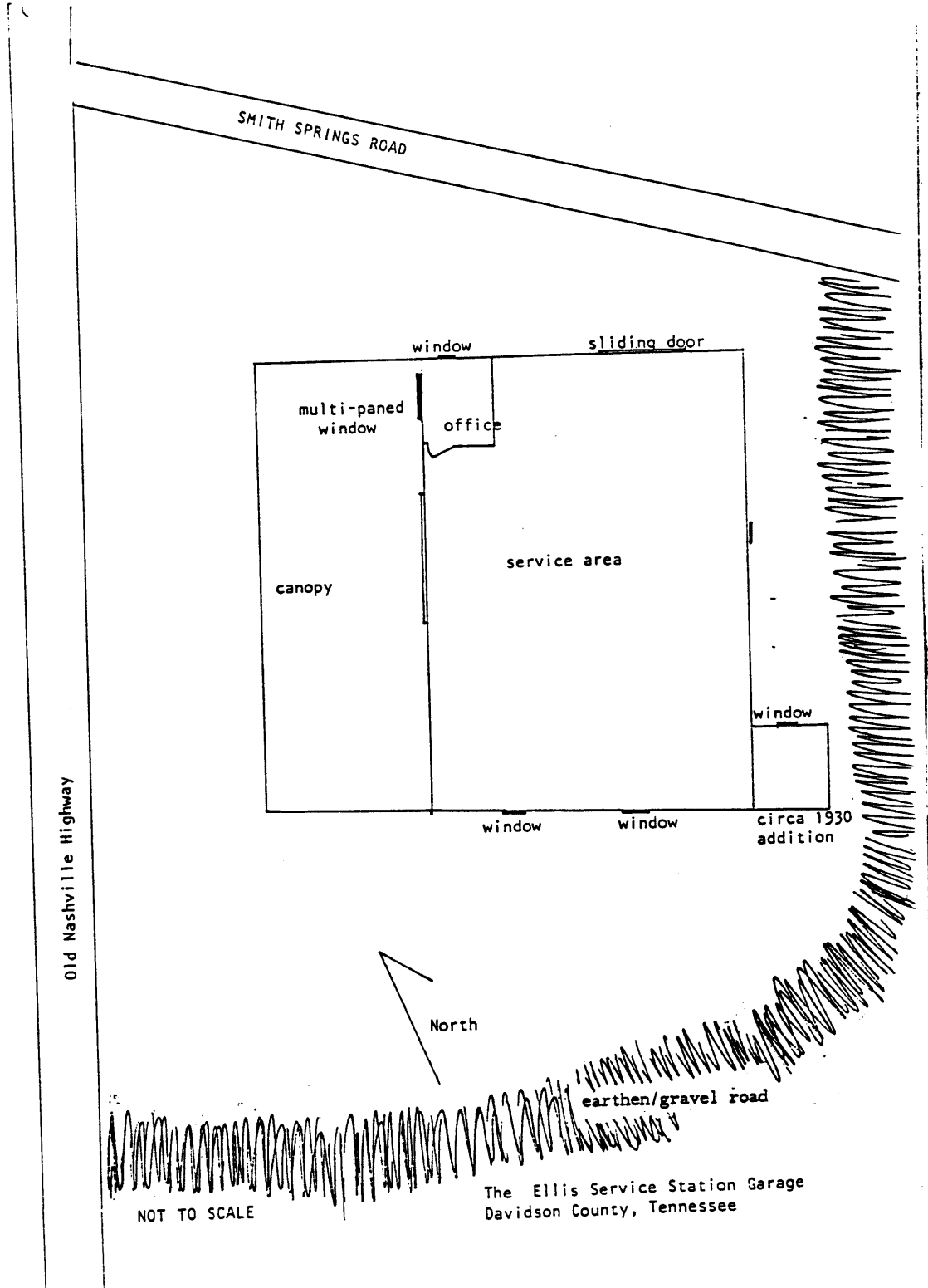
Like the service area, the office retains its historical integrity. A stove used for heat remains in the office and still functions in its original capacity. The office is small, but its main role was as a place to keep the till and for the attendant to stay when there was no work to be done. Most service stations from the period were comprised of only such an office and the gasoline pumps. The integration of both a service station and garage was not common until well into the 1930s. A circa 1930 station which sold only gasoline can still be seen in Laverge on the Old Nashville Highway. This service station is no longer in operation and is structurally in poor condition. When it was in operation this service station had no garage facility and only an office and the gas pumps.

Historically, the Ellis Service Station Garage occupied a prominent place along U.S. 41. It still remains close to the Old Nashville Highway and it is isolated from surrounding buildings and landscape features by an earthen driveway on the southern side of the building and by Smith Springs Road on the northeastern side of the building.

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NOT TO SCALE

The Ellis Service Station Garage
Davidson County, Tennessee

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)

TRANSPORTATION

COMMERCE

ARCHITECTURE

Significant Person

N/A

Period of Significance

1929-1941

Significant Dates

1929

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Luther Creech

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

The Ellis Service Station Garage, located in the Una community of southeastern Davidson County, is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A as a significant surviving roadside artifact associated with the transportation development of the Dixie Highway, U. S. 41, locally known as the Murfreesboro Road, during the late 1920s and as a significant roadside artifact associated with the development of the commercial tourist trade in the Una community of southeastern Davidson County. It is also eligible under Criterion C as a significant surviving example of a vernacular adaption of a gas station form known as the "house with bays," a building type defined by historical geographer John Jakle in his 1975 study of gasoline stations. Jakle's article, "The American Gasoline Station, 1920 to 1970," created a typology for gasoline station identification and analysis that has been generally accepted by geographers, historians, and preservationists ever since.

The gas station is part of the built environment we call "roadside architecture." This built environment first appeared in the early 1900s and included such other components as diners, tourist cabins, bus stations, automobile showrooms, and drive-ins. The gas station, however, is the most important artifact of the emerging automobile culture. Historian Daniel Vieyra, in his "Fill 'Er Up!": An Architectural History of America's Gas Stations" (1979), identifies the gas station as "the first structure built in response to the automobile"; indeed, it was "the nucleus of the drive-in culture." (pp. xiii, 9) Thomas J. Schlereth, in a later study of U. S. Highway 40, noted that gas stations typically set the stylistic trends and building forms we associate with development of the highway corridor. Another

See continuation sheet

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historian, Bruce Lohof, perhaps best sums up the architectural and historical significance of the gas station in his essay, "The Service Station in America": "The vernacular tradition is by design seldom aesthetically pure, by intention never unique, and by custom beneath the level of cultural scrutiny. Yet its members are all around us in the form of franchised eateries, tract houses, and service stations. The service station, surely the most symbolic of the membership, is also the most instructive. It speaks, obviously, of the intrinsic economy, simplicity, and flexibility of the tradition. But the important lessons, as always, are social and historical. The service station, in this higher sense, is an index of its culture. Its evolution and growth . . . is a lecture on the growth of mechanization and mobility" in twentieth century America. (p. 13)

The Ellis Service Station Garage, located in the Una community of Davidson County, is a significant representative example of a vernacular gas station of the late 1920s. T. H. Ellis built the garage as an integral component of the newly established U.S. Highway 41, a major north-south corridor connecting Chicago and Florida, in 1929. A year earlier construction workers had finished paving the Murfreesboro to Nashville road in concrete, with two ten feet wide traffic lanes and six feet wide shoulders. Ellis could expect plenty of traffic at his new business because already by the time of the garage's construction the new U.S. routes carried substantial numbers of freight haulers and tourists. Local traffic between Murfreesboro and Nashville had also been stimulated by the presence of the new road. The location of the garage in the small community of Una might seem to be an odd choice, because 60 years ago this now-bustling and booming suburban area of Davidson County was largely rural and isolated from the mainstream of Nashville commerce. But constructing highway garages at such rural places was common at the time since the business depended on the roadside traffic not local patronage. As Daniel Vieyra explains, the "highway construction boom of the 1920s laid roads through once isolated areas in order to connect neighboring towns. Since gasoline distribution was no longer tied to the

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local. . . bulk plant, stations could locate anywhere that business existed. As travel increased, gasoline stations punctuated long stretches of the open road." (Durbin, master thesis, 17)

The Ellis Service Station Garage was one such gasoline station; today it is the only surviving and still operating physical link to this earlier period of highway transportation history on the surviving sections of the original U.S. 41 between Una and Murfreesboro. Ellis and his family operated the business and sold Gulf Oil products. The garage services were very important as well, with all members of the family taking their turn driving their wrecker out to free stranded drivers or to provide a tankful of gasoline. The station was really the Una community's only commercial link to the ever increasing numbers of tourists traveling the highway. In providing the garage and gasoline services, the Ellis Service Station Garage played a significant role in the functioning of the increasingly important Murfreesboro-Nashville link of U. S. Highway 41 corridor, especially in the era of 1929 to 1941 when family businesses could still compete in the service station industry.

Demand for the garage's services from interstate travellers decreased from 1942 to 1945 due to the gasoline rationing of World War II. During this bleak period for service station owners across the nation, garage services to local residents became more important parts of the business. The Ellis garage experienced this same trend. Yet, with peace in 1945 soon came the lifting of gasoline rationing and overall prosperity in the economy. The Ellis Service Station Garage enjoyed its busiest years between 1949, when the Gulf Oil Company presented an award to Ellis "for outstanding service to the American motorist," and 1960, when a new four-lane divided highway between Nashville and Murfreesboro was completed. This new highway bypassed the Una community and the Ellis business. The Ellis Service Station Garage has increasingly relied on local patronage ever since; no longer was it an important component of a major highway corridor.

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The architectural significance of the Ellis Service Station Garage lies in that it is an interesting hybrid example of two gas station forms which John Jakle has described as a "house with canopy" and "house with bays." This building type combines a permanent building where storage areas and offices (the "house") and a garage (the "bays") would be located with a decorative canopy covering the driveway to the service station so both the customer and the station operator would be protected with rainy weather. The most distinguished element of the building is the Craftsman-style influenced canopy, clearly a vernacular adaption of the contrasting brick design commonly found in Gulf Oil service stations of the 1920s. (For example, see the attached drawing of a 1925 Gulf Oil Company Service Station from Gainesville, Florida, which was reproduced in Carole Rifkind's A Field Guide to American Architecture (New York, 1980), p. 302.) That element, together with the building's red brick exterior, made the Ellis garage an eye-catching component of the roadside architecture of U.S. 41.

In most cases, both the "house with bays" and the "house with canopy" forms were wooden frame buildings. That the Ellis family built their new garage out of brick indicates both the family's commitment to the business and their wish to distinguish their garage as being a grade above other similar businesses along U. S. 41. Indeed, the decision to construct the building in brick is probably why this one garage/ service station from 1929 has survived while no many others have disappeared.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Durbin, Jeffrey L. "Survey Techniques for Roadside Architecture: The Gas Station, Murfreesboro, Tennessee, as a Case Study." M.A. Thesis, Middle Tennessee State University, 1989.

Durbin, Jeffrey L. "Survey Techniques for Roadside Architecture: The Gas Station Murfreesboro, Tennessee, as a Case Study." Paper Presented to the Annual Meeting of the Society of Commercial Archeology, Pittsburgh, 1990.

Lohof, Bruce. "The Service Station in America: The Evolution of a Vernacular Form." Industrial Archaeology, 11(Spring 1974), 1-13.

Jakle, John. "The American Gasoline Station, 1920 to 1970." Journal of American Culture, 3(Fall 1978), 520-542.

Vieyra, Daniel. "Fill 'Er Up!": An Architectural History of America's Gas Stations. New York: Macmillan, 1979.

See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS): NA

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: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of property approximately .5 acre

UTM References

A 16 531170 3994580
Zone Easting Northing

B
Zone Easting Northing

C

D

See continuation sheet

Antioch 311 SW

Verbal Boundary Description

The Ellis Service Station Garage is bounded on the north by Smith Springs Road, on the west by Old Nashville Highway and on the South and East by a gravel drive which lies on the southern and eastern sides of the building.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary contains all of the historic property currently associated with the Ellis Service Station Garage and is the historic boundary for the property.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title C.V. West and Jennifer Martin, from draft by Mabel Ellis, property owner

organization Center for Historic Preservation

date 2/1/91

street & number Box 80, MTSU

telephone 615-898-2947

city or town Murfreesboro

state TN

zip code 37132

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National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

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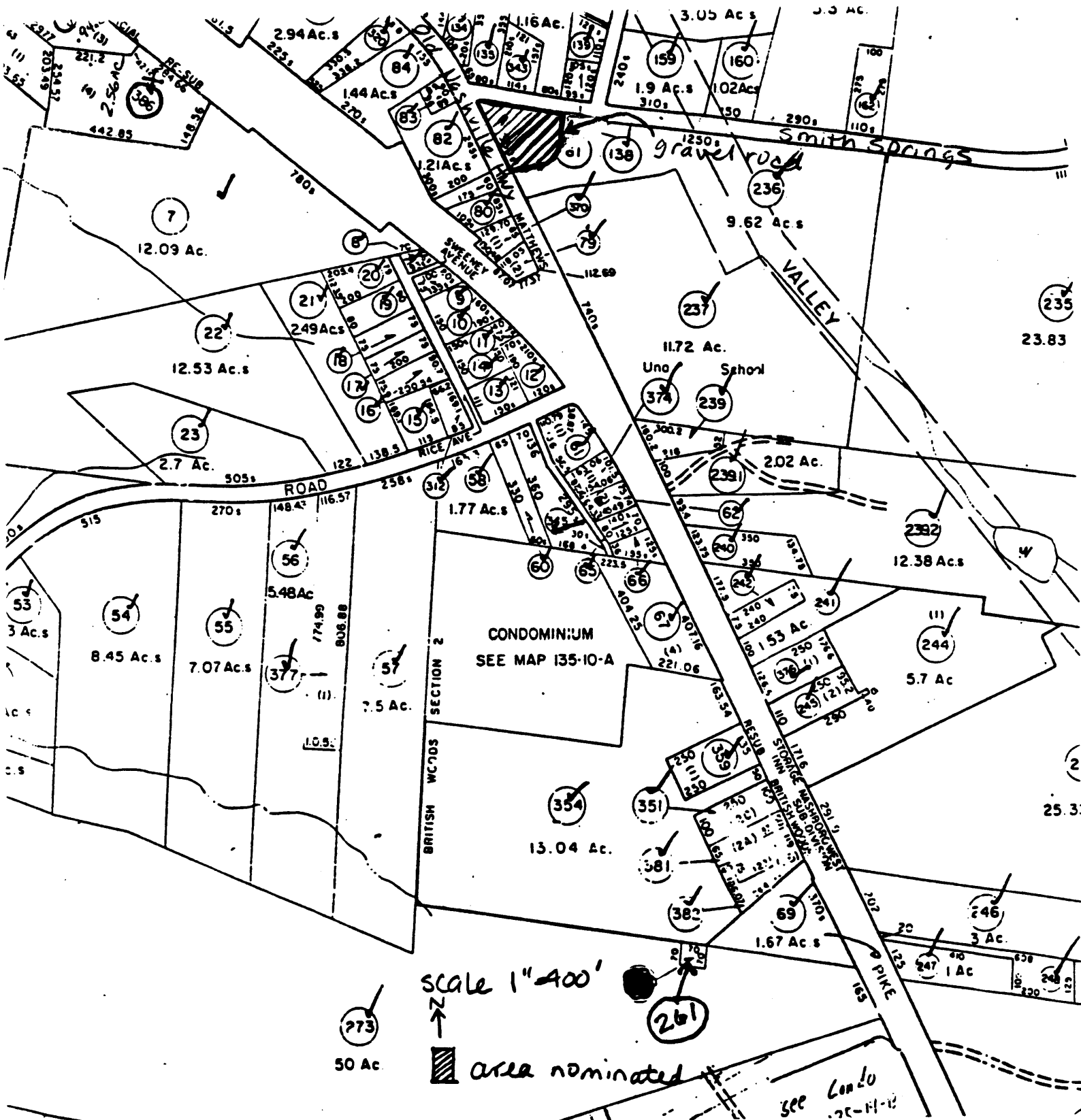
Ellis Service Station Garage

The tax map for this nomination has the scale 1" = 400'. This scale tax map is prepared by the Tennessee State Board of Equalization for rural areas. In the past, the Tennessee Historical Commission has used this scale map for nominations and has found that the 1" = 400' adequately meets our office needs. The Tennessee Historical Commission does not have the facilities to prepare maps to the scale preferred by the National Park Service. To supplement this map, the nomination includes a detailed verbal boundary description.

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Section number Photos Page 1 Ellis Service Station Garage

ELLIS SERVICE STATION GARAGE
2000 Old Murfreesboro Road
Nashville, TN 37217

Please note: The correct name and number for the property is written in pencil on the back of the photos.

Photographs by Grannis Photographers
Hillsboro Road
Nashville, TN

Date: July/August 1990

Negatives: Tennessee Historical Commission
Nashville, TN

Front facade, facing east
#1 of 11

Front facade, facing east
#2 of 11

North facade, facing south
#3 of 11

South facade, facing north
#4 of 11

Rear facade, facing west
#5 of 11

Garage interior, facing south
#6 of 11

Garage interior, facing east
#7 of 11

Garage interior, facing north
#8 of 11

Detail of office interior
#9 of 11

Detail of office interior
#10 of 11

Detail of office interior
#11 of 11

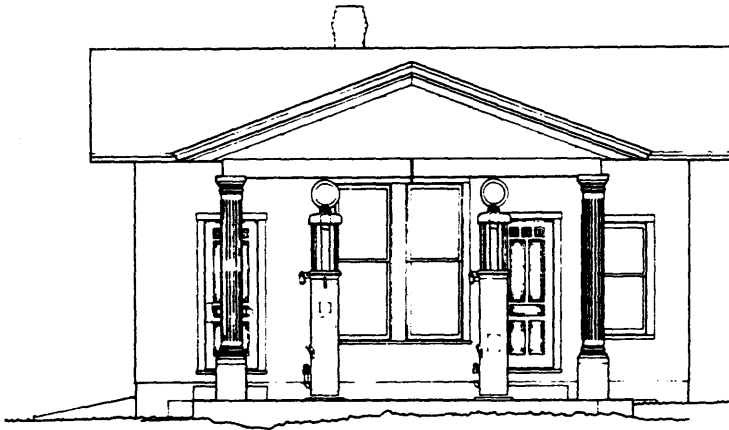


*A Field Guide to
American Architecture*

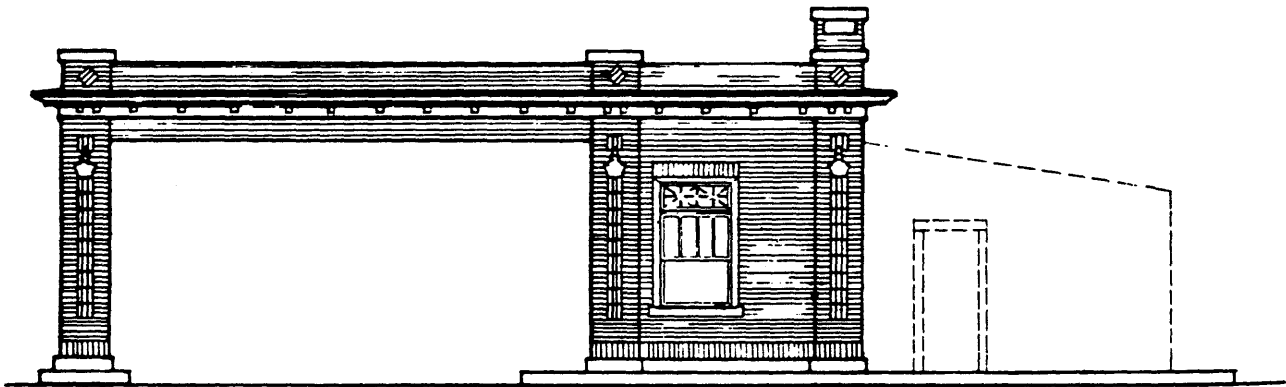
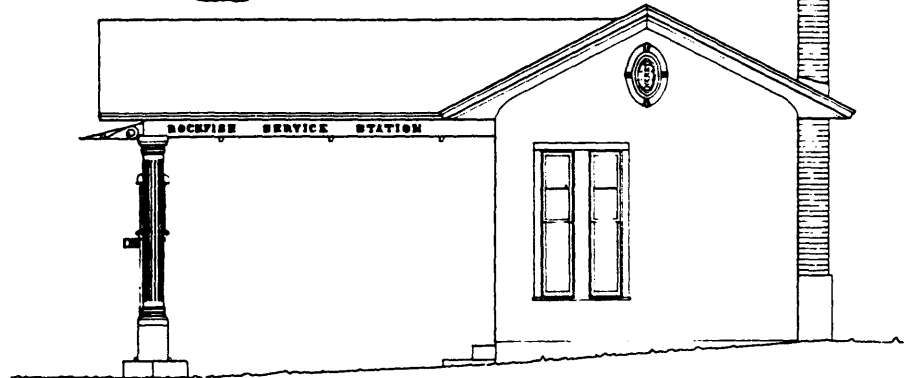
*by
Carole Rifkind*

BONANZA BOOKS
NEW YORK

1980



433, 434 Rockfish Service Station. Augusta County, Virginia. C.1925-1930. Representative of advanced service-station design in the decade that inaugurated the Automobile Age. Instead of purchasing cans of gasoline or pulling up to a curbside dispenser, the owner drove the car off the road and under the canopy where gas was pumped. At this time, service stations vied for new customers, offering an ever-wider range of services.



435, 436 Gulf Oil Company Service Station. Gainesville, Florida. 1925. Renaissance design.

