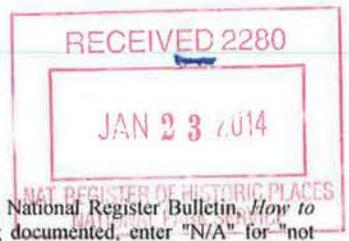


57



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 National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any 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.

1. Name of Property

Historic name Grand Guitar
Other names/site number NA
Name of related multiple property listing NA
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

2. Location

Street & Number: 3245 West State Street
City or town: Bristol **State:** Tennessee **County:** Sullivan
Not For Publication: NA **Vicinity:** NA **Zip code** 37620

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 at the following level(s) of significance:
 national statewide local

Applicable National Register Criteria: A B C D

E. Paul Miller January 17, 2014
Signature of certifying official/Title: **Date**
State Historic Preservation Officer, Tennessee Historical Commission
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria.
Signature of Commenting Official: **Date**
Title: **State of Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government**

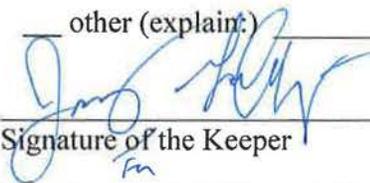
Grand Guitar
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4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain: _____)


 Signature of the Keeper

3-11-2014
 Date of Action

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
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register NA

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6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE / TRACE: specialty store

RECREATION / CULTURE: music facility

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

VACANT / NOT IN USE

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

OTHER: MIMETIC ARCHECTURE

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: Concrete, WOOD, METAL

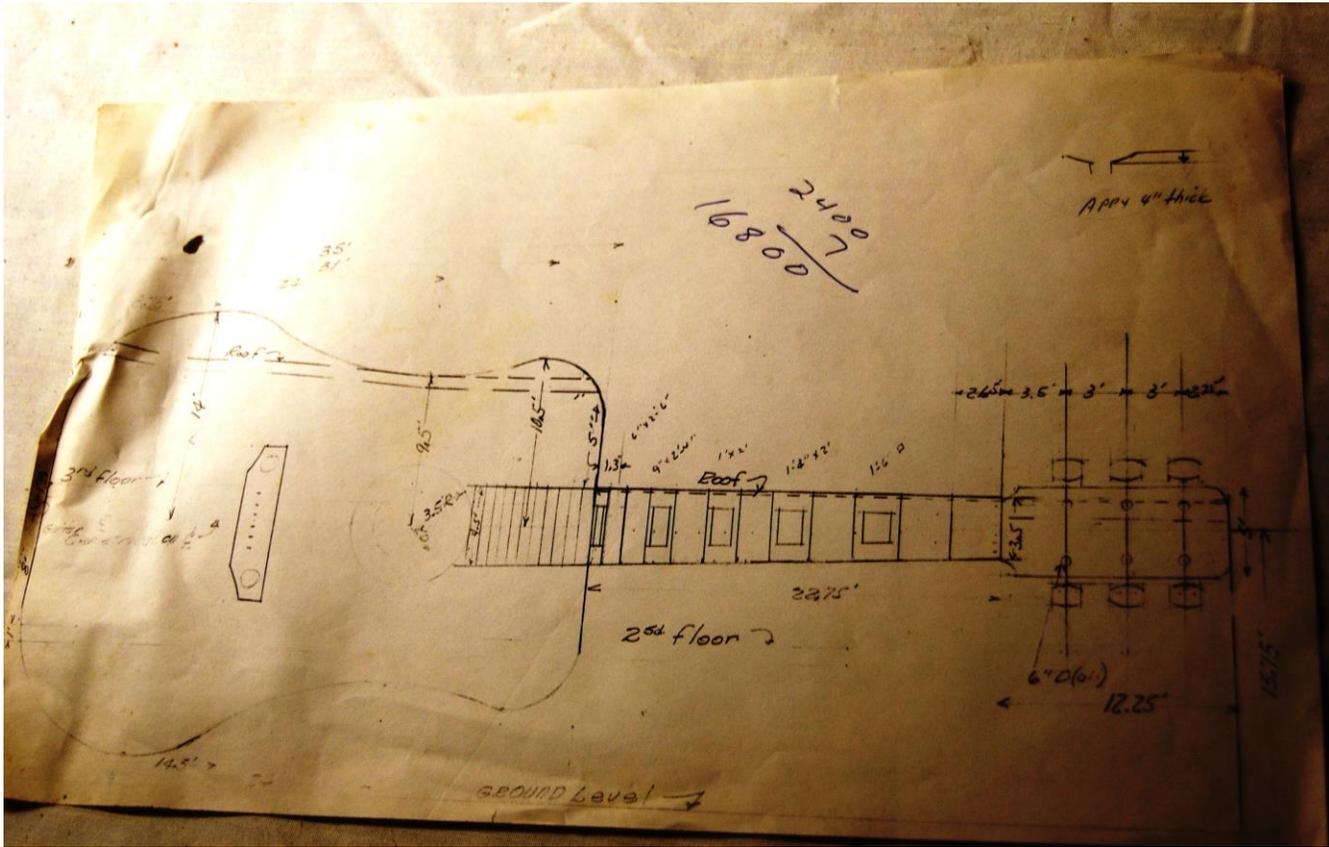
Narrative Description

The iconic Grand Guitar was constructed in 1982-83 as a museum, store, recording studio, and roadside attraction in Bristol, Tennessee. The two and three story, seventy-foot long replica of a Martin Dreadnought guitar is clad in metal over a wood frame and rests on a concrete block foundation. Located between I-81 and State Street, there is no landscaping on the site. Inside, the guitar is divided into museum space on the second floor, offices on the third floor, and a radio station/recording studio and receiving area on the first floor. Originally covered in wood siding, in the mid-1990s, the guitar was covered with metal sheeting. Few other changes have been made and the Grand Guitar retains its architectural integrity.

The State Street (south) façade reveals the face of a guitar with the neck on the east and body of the guitar at the west. "C.F. Martin & Co., est 1833" is written at the very east edge of the building, on the head stock of the guitar. The head of the building originally had six turning keys made of wood.

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Above: Joe Morrell's drawing for the Grand Guitar.
Below: Martin Dreadnought guitar from martinguitar.com.



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Parts of a guitar from about.com

Two tuning keys at the roof level of the building are missing but the others remain. West of this, the neck of the guitar-shaped building has the frets and fingerboard made of wood slats and designed to scale to mimic those of a Martin Dreadnought guitar. There are five wood framed, fixed windows of varying widths located between frets that serve as position markers. Most of the rope that mimics the strings of the guitar remains, in graduated sizes, to represent the different thicknesses or gauges used on a guitar. Some of the ropes are broken or are no longer tight. The neck and part of the body rest on a concrete block foundation, which also forms the first story of the building. Two windows and a single leaf entry door lead into the building from this ground level. Below the neck of the building is the original sign for the building with “Joe Morrell’s Grand Guitar” on it.

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The replication of the Martin guitar continues on what would be the body of the guitar, the third story part of the building. The neck and string pattern extends into the body, with the neck stopping at what would be the sound hole in a guitar. In the Grand Guitar building, the sound hole is a window in the second story museum area of the building. Below the window, the building has a painted area that mimics the pick guard of a guitar. West of this, the strings end at a facsimile of a guitar's saddle and bridge. Two of the wood bridge pins are missing, the wood saddle is extant, and the original wood siding shows through as the bridge.

The three story west elevation of the building is covered with metal, forming the rounded shape of a guitar. An iron security door on the second story is accessed from the ground by a wood stairway. There are no other openings on this level. On the east, the building is only two stories. This elevation is constructed of concrete block (first floor) and wood framing and metal sheeting (second floor).

Facing I-81, the north elevation is similar to the south façade. Although this elevation has no access, it was designed and built with the same detailing as the south façade, rather than as the back of a guitar. Overgrown with weeds, this elevation retains most of the original turning keys, strings, fingerboard, sound hole and fret board windows, saddle, and bridge features as are seen on the north façade. A sign denoting the Interstate exit number is located at the second story level.

Entry to the building is at the first story/ground level door into a receiving area. The first floor houses a working radio station booth, restroom, and originally had a gift shop area.

Carpet covered wood stairs with ornamental metal railings lead to the second story level, the main public part of the Grand Guitar. The sound hole window is on this level, as is the museum housing Morrell's rare and unusual string instruments. This floor is divided into several spaces, with the focal point being the museum. The museum is in the east part of the building behind plexi-glass walls. Rectangular fixed windows (fret board markers) line the museum room. Drywall, wood panels, acoustical tiles, and carpeting are seen throughout this level. HVAC ducts are exposed. A second floor restroom exists. Signs denoting Bristol as the birthplace of country music, the Joe Morrell Museum, and the opening of the Grand Guitar are extant.

The third level is office and storage space. The third level shows the frame of the building, with storage areas unfinished, as well as dry wall, pressed board, insulation, and dropped ceilings.

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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.)

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 old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1982-1983

Significant Dates

NA

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

NA

Cultural Affiliation

NA

Architect/Builder

Morrell, Joe

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph

The Grand Guitar, completed in 1983, is eligible for listing in the National Register under criterion C as a locally and regionally significant example of mimetic architecture. Designed by Bristol musician and entrepreneur Joe Morrell, the seventy-foot long replica of a Martin Dreadnought guitar was built as a museum, recording studio/radio station, and store. The building began drawing interest from travelers even before it opened for business. Although the exterior siding has been changed, the Grand Guitar still retains its character defining features including the saddle bridge, sound hole, pick guard, finger board, turning keys, and strings. The interior has not been altered and the building retains its architectural integrity. The Grand Guitar is not yet fifty years old but it has exceptional significance as mimetic architecture that represents the character of Bristol's association with country music. Located at the edge of the city, adjacent to an Interstate, and just off an Interstate exit, the building serves as the unofficial entry to Bristol, the official "Birthplace of Country Music".

Mimetic architecture, such as the Grand Guitar, is characterized by a building or structure that mimics something not usually seen as a building, like a giant coffee pot building or a hat-shaped building. Popular during the early automobile age and primarily seen in commercial buildings, mimetic architecture is also known as programmatic architecture because of the programmatic approach to this type of design. The goal of modern mimetic design is to lure the traveler from the highway into a community and into the particular building. This is especially true for the roadside giants like the Grand Guitar.

Narrative Statement of Significance

Joe Morrell

Tennessee native Joe Morrell (1934-2006) began playing music by age fifteen and when he was eighteen he worked for Curly King, playing with the Tennessee Hilltoppers on Bristol's WCYB radio's noontime broadcast called *Farm and Fun Time*. WCYB first aired programs in December 1946 on a clear channel station, broadcasting in Tennessee, Virginia, North Carolina, West Virginia, and Kentucky. Other bands playing on that radio station in 1946 included the Stanley Brothers and the Clinch Mountain Boys. Typically, the live music performances were about fifteen minutes long, with bluegrass, hymns, and country music played most often. *Farm and Fun Time's* greatest popularity was in the late 1940s and early 1950s.¹ It is considered an important radio show in the history of bluegrass music.²

During the 1950s, Morrell played steel guitar in various country and western bands. One of these was the Triple A Ranch Gang, which played in the northeast and in 1959 was playing out of Great Barrington, MA on WSBS.³ Wanting to return home, Morrell and his family returned to Bristol

¹ www.etsu.edu/cass/archives/collections/afinda/aid/a356.html, accessed 1/2/13

² <https://www.tnvacation.com/vendors/farm-fun-time-wcyb-radio-tv>, accessed 1/2/13

³ *Billboard*, October 5, 1959 at

<http://books.google.com/books?id=SwoEAAAAMBAJ&pg=PA40&lpg=PA40&dq=triple+a+ranch+gang&source=bl&ots=>

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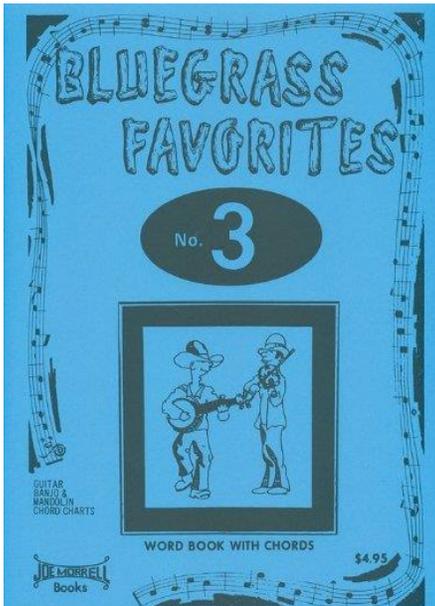
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where he opened up a food market/gas station with his brother Floyd. In 1960, Joe Morrell and his wife Edith opened Morrell Music in a rented store at 138 East State Street. According to Morrell:

The first month's rent was \$50 and it took \$20 to turn the lights on. Inventory was three Kay guitars, one amplifier and a handful of strings and accessories. I remember buying used 45s from the jukebox vending people for 10 cents and reselling them in my shop for 25 cents. We didn't take any money out of the business for two years. Besides selling musical instruments, I taught guitar lessons and installed a small recording studio, called Shadow Records.⁴

Shadow Records was a recording booth in the back of the store where people paid \$1.00 to record a song. Walls were covered in egg cartons and there was a recording machine that could produce one 45 rpm record at a time. A member of the National Association of Music Merchants and the Music Distributors Association, Morrell worked with Pepe (Toby) Peler to design the Pepi-Jo steel guitar in the 1970s.⁵ Peler was the steel guitar player for Bonnie Lou and Buster, who had a long running syndicated TV show, *The Jim Walter Jubilee starring Bonnie Lou and Buster*, sponsored by Jim Walter Homes. In 1990 Morrell bought WOPI (Watch Our Popularity Increase), which began in 1929 broadcasting drama, variety, news, and entertainment. For most of its early broadcast history the station aired country music, but after it formed a network with WKPT in the 1940s, the station broadcasted a variety of music. When Morrell acquired the station, it had had several owners, was in bankruptcy, and broadcast non-country music and entertainment. Morrell wanted to bring the station back to its roots. WOPI again joined the WKPT network system and began broadcasting country and bluegrass from the Grand Guitar.



WOPI continues to broadcast from the Grand Guitar on the weekends. WOPI is the oldest radio station from Roanoke, VA to Knoxville, TN. Morrell Music is still in business today and is currently operated by Joe's second and third generation family members: son, Curtis and grandson, Justin Morrell. Joe Morrell was involved in the music business throughout this life, knew many performers, and was knowledgeable about music. According to Jessica Turner of the Birthplace of Country Music Alliance, he was an "advocate for music and community".⁶

[WUNtR3MeYv&sig=8pOzMql8eJ5qiRDVaSaO0IBFXzl&hl=en&sa=X&ei=vbXIUNfSJuHm2AWNzYGACw&ved=0CDwQ6AEwAg#v=onepage&q=triple%20a%20ranch%20gang&f=false](http://www.wopi.com/About/GrandGuitar.aspx), accessed 1/12/13

⁴ "Grand Guitar...A Tennessee Landmark." Unpublished proposal for funding for the guitar by Anita Morrell. February 8, 2012.

⁵ Information from Anita Morrell.

⁶ Jessica Turner, Birthplace of Country Music Alliance, Bristol. Phone call with author, October 21, 2013.

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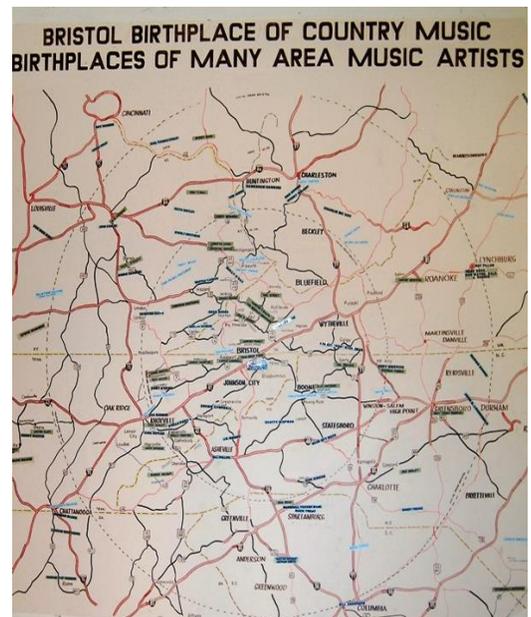
Grand Guitar

Reflecting Morrell's music and community advocacy, one of his more unusual accomplishments was the design and building of the Grand Guitar between State Street and I-81 just inside the city limits of Bristol, Tennessee. At seventy feet long and three stories tall, the replica of a Martin Dreadnought guitar is often called the world's largest guitar.⁷ Morrell wanted the building to be the gateway to Bristol, considered by many, including the US Congress in 1998, to be the "Birthplace of Country Music". Completed in 1983, the building originally housed a music museum and gift shop. Morrell had been collecting instruments for many years and exhibited the 200 items in his collection in the Grand Guitar. Admission was free. Newspapers throughout the world picked up an Associated Press story about the opening of the "world's only guitar shaped music museum".⁸ Tourists were taking photos with the guitar in the background as soon as the guitar shape was up.

The guitar took fifteen years of planning, eight months of construction, and \$100,000.00 to build. The plywood and concrete block building used nylon rope for the guitar strings and some windows were placed where the sound holes in a guitar would be; other windows are on the fret board. Morrell considered Martin guitars the best brand and had the C. F. Martin and Company's permission to use their logo on the guitar-shaped building. In a 1983 article Morrell stated, "I have a lot of crazy ideas....I've always thought, why would anyone stop at a square building that looked like every other building? I've never heard of anything close to this idea."⁹



Opening in May 1983, the Grand Guitar was in a prime spot to attract attention – across the Interstate from the Tennessee Visitors Center. In addition to the museum on the second floor, a small recording studio was located in the first floor, and offices were in the third floor. A map inside the building denoted the area's country music heritage. According to Morrell,



"Bristol will be in the middle of the map. I don't think people realize how many country musicians came from this area....I think even people from this area will be surprised at the overwhelming number of them."¹⁰

⁷ *Going Places* (AAA Auto club magazine), March-April 2011, np.

⁸ Tom Eblen (Associated Press) "Guitar-shaped museum is Tennessean's ode to C&W music." Undated article from Anita Morrell.

⁹ Kathleen Smith. "String Heaven: Joe Morrell Views Guitar as Gateway to Bristol." Undated article from Anita Morrell.

¹⁰ "Bristol's Music Museum opens this weekend." *Sullivan County News*. Blountville TN May 12, 1983.

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Months after the Grand Guitar opened, travelers continued to be drawn to the building from the road. Seeing people taking photos from the welcome center across the Interstate, Morrell stated: "You can look out every few minutes and see somebody doing that...It's better than any advertising we could buy."¹¹ In 1985, the Grand Guitar was photographed and seen in the "On Assignment" section of the *National Geographic* magazine.

Morrell kept the Grand Guitar museum and shop open until his death in 2006. The building of the Grand Guitar is one manifestation of his appreciation for the music industry in East Tennessee. Although currently vacant, a non-profit organization is being formed. Morrell's papers and collection of historic instruments are being archived and catalogued at Virginia Intermont College in Bristol VA. In 2009, the Bristol Chamber of Commerce erected a twenty-foot guitar at their location in downtown Bristol, TN. Constructing this mimetic sign presents a strong case that the city still markets itself as the Birthplace of Country Music and it still favors a giant guitar as its symbol.

Mimetic architecture context

Mimetic or programmatic architecture is a much different type of mimicking or borrowing than is seen in other twentieth century styles such as Colonial Revival borrowing elements from ancient Greek and Roman architecture. Mimetic or programmatic design is not new and historic examples exist in designs such as a sign in the shape of a shoe over a shoe shop. Twentieth century mimetic architecture deals with the entire building or structure, while it mimics a function, such as a giant coffee pot shaped coffee shop, a wigwam shaped hotel, or a shoe store in the shape of a shoe. This can be referred to as "direct Programmatic architecture".¹² It succeeds, in part, because the relationship of building to function is easy to understand. A more indirect example of mimetic architecture is the 1932 Airplane Service Station (NR 3/18/04) in Powell, Tennessee. Designed by one of the owners, Elmer Nickle, here the relationship and symbolism is not so easy to understand, but an airplane uses gasoline just like an automobile does. Programmatic and mimetic are late twentieth century terms and the builders and designers of buildings architectural historians now categorize as such did not necessarily think in these terms. "Although the Nickle brothers owned several stations in the Knoxville area, this was their only airplane design. An airplane shaped service station would certainly have been conducive to gaining customer notice, but Elmer Nickle's primary reason for choosing the design was his love for airplanes."¹³ Mimetic architecture is considered to have been popularized in southern California beginning with the increased use of automobiles in the 1920s, but it spread throughout the country and continues to be built. The Grand Guitar, a music museum and recording studio, is an example of the direct programmatic architecture.

¹¹ "Guitar-shaped museum houses music mementos." Tom Eblen. *Fort Myers News-Press*. January 13, 1984. "Man builds his dream museum. *Lake Charles (LA) American Press*. AP article. July 26, 1983. These are just two of the papers that picked up the AP article.

¹² Jim Heiman. *California Crazy & Beyond: Roadside Vernacular Architecture* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2001), 19.

¹³ Martha Carver. "Draft of Historical and Architectural Survey for Improvements to Pleasant Ridge Road from State Route 62 (Western Avenue) to U.S. 25W (State Route 9, Clinton Highway), Knox County." May 15, 2001. Statement is from a 1993 interview with Mrs. Elmer Nickle by Carver and Claudette Stager.

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Twentieth century mimetic buildings should get the traveler off the road and into a community. In the 1984 book *The Colossus of Roads* there is a statement about the Jolly Green Giant statue in Blue Earth, MN that applies to the Grand Guitar and other programmatic or mimetic architecture.

From a local viewpoint, the freeway exchange, where a Dairy Queen, a County Kitchen, and three motels were in the works had nothing to offer Blue Earth, unless motorists could be induced to stop short at the feet of the big, green statue:

...if they don't stop in our town, they won't do us any good....He's high and he's interesting and the real proof will be if people stop in to see him.¹⁴

The statement above is similar to Morrell's quote asking why people would want to stop at a square building. Although these attractions may be built for different purposes – to advertise produce in the case of the Jolly Green Giant or to showcase a museum collection like the Grand Guitar – many large roadside attractions serve a dual purpose related to tourism, getting travelers off a main road and into secondary roads where local shops and hotels are located. These large structures or buildings are the bait, often placed at the entry to a community, like the Grand Guitar. There is nothing subtle about the buildings or their purpose, which is to get the driver off the highway and into the community to spend money. These buildings not only reflect the unique identity and help establish the identity of a community, they also sustain and promote the community's identity. The Grand Guitar does this for the city of Bristol.

Marketing a community or region's uniqueness with oversized local attractions is not a new idea. Before the twentieth century's automobile age, when railroad travel was the easiest way to travel, "colossi" were considered tourist destinations, but then the "bait" was often natural features, such as Niagara Falls or Mammoth Cave. Advertising might not have been as brash as during the automobile age, but these natural diversions also helped provide and sustain the identity of a community. They were more inspirational than later attractions like the Grand Guitar. What modern automobile travel does is change the traveler's focus, natural features are now secondary to the showier manmade attractions. The statement below holds true for the Grand Guitar as well as other large mimetic buildings.

Regardless of its particular purpose, the colossus is always a place in itself- a stopping place in time, where the everyday rules of reality are suspended and an idyllic dream commences. Grotesque scale demands a pause-for edification, for commerce, or for the fantastic fun of it.¹⁵

¹⁴ Karal Ann Marling. *The Colossus of Roads: Myth and Symbol along the American Highway* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 4. The book is a scholarly approach to roadside attractions, primarily in Minnesota, comparing them to large ancient statues like the Colossus of Rhodes or the Sphinx.

¹⁵ Marling, 101.

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Late twentieth century examples of mimetic architecture

As stated earlier, most mimetic architecture was built in the first part of the twentieth century. There are examples of late twentieth century mimetic designs that are good comparisons with the Grand Guitar. In 1976, the United Equipment Company in Turlock, California constructed a building that looks like a bulldozer. The company sells and rents heavy equipment. Longaberger Company, well-known for selling baskets, is headquartered in Ohio. It has three large basket-shaped buildings. According to *Roadside Giants*, Dave Longaberger said “If they can put a man on the moon,” he told doubtful bankers and disbelieving accountant, “they can certainly build a building that’s shaped like a basket.”¹⁶



The first basket was built in Dresden, Ohio in 1980 and the company headquarters was built in 1997 in Newark, Ohio. The “World’s Largest Apple Basket” was completed in 1999. Similar to the Grand Guitar, the construction of the Longaberger baskets needed a creative individual to think of the idea. Unlike Joe Morrell and Morrell Music, Longaberger is a large corporation.

Another example of a building that uses mimetic design is the former Chiat/Day Building in Venice, California. Erected between 1985 and 1991, it was designed by nationally-known architect Frank Gehry. The multi-part building is fronted by giant binoculars that are used as conference rooms. Claes Oldenburg and Coosje van Bruggen assisted in the design. This is unlike the Grand Guitar since well-known architects and artists designed the building.



McDonald’s had its giant arches, root beer chains built stores in the shapes of barrels, and oranges were sold from orange domed buildings, but two late twentieth century chains are similar to the Grand Guitar in that they have buildings that represent the products they sell. Twistee Treat Ice Cream erected buildings in the shape of ice cream cones beginning in 1983. The company no longer exists but many of the buildings still stand. Closer to the Grand Guitar and Bristol, Pal’s Sudden Service (now known as Pal’s) was started in 1952 in Kingsport, TN by Fred “Pal” Barger, but it was not until 1985 that the company started building the stair-stepped building topped with giant hamburgers, hot dogs, drinks, and fries. Pal’s buildings are still being constructed today in northeast Tennessee and southern Virginia. *Roadside Giants’* comment on Pal’s is appropriate to other late twentieth century programmatic design.

¹⁶ Brian and Sarah Butko. *Roadside Giants*. (Mechanicsburg, PA: Stackpole Books, 2005), 68.

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The restaurant would break the boundaries of design and signage – or at least bend them the way Programatic (sic) buildings had done before. This was not being done so much by the 1980s. In fact, Pal’s Sudden Service outlets debuted in an era when such displays had become the bane of planning commissions and town beautification programs. Rooftop food may not be considered tasteful by some officials, but Pal forged ahead. His reason? “People love to be entertained”.¹⁷



Entertaining people was also part of Morrell’s design for the guitar. These buildings and the Grand Guitar are good examples of mimetic design, a form of architecture not frequently built today.

Few unaltered mimetic buildings still exist in Tennessee. The aforementioned Airplane Service Station is one of the best known, along with the Grand Guitar. Memphis had a large shoe-shaped building and a milk bottle water tower on a dairy, but both have been demolished, as has another airplane gas station in Paris, TN. The 1938 Botel in Savannah, TN, a hotel at the water’s edge built from an old houseboat and barge, has been drastically altered in recent years. A very recent example of a building that is partially mimetic is Nashville’s Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum. Opened in 2001 and designed by the Nashville architectural firm of Tuck Hinton, the museum has windows where piano keys on a keyboard would be, CD and record images embedded in the design, and a miniature WSM radio tower (original in Williamson County TN, NR 3/15/11). From the air, the museum looks like a bass clef.

The Grand Guitar is significant as an example of late twentieth century mimetic architecture that epitomizes the music history of Bristol, the Birthplace of Country Music. Architecturally unique, the seventy-foot long Martin Dreadnought guitar-shaped building, was constructed in great detail such as a window placed where a sound hole would be and strings and turning keys placed where they would be on the Martin guitar. The building has undergone changes that do not impact its character defining features and it retains its architectural integrity. Bristol is called the Birthplace of Country Music because of Ralph Peer, a pioneer in the industry, who recorded artists in 1927 in Bristol. However, country music recordings had occurred in New York in 1922 and Atlanta in 1923,

¹⁷ Brian and Sarah Butko, 44.

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as well as in other Tennessee cities.¹⁸ Whether or not Bristol is really the birthplace of country music, it is certainly the location that sparked the commercialization and popularization of country music, with the likes of the Carter family, Jimmie Rodgers, and Tennessee Ernie Ford.¹⁹ The Grand Guitar is a larger than life-size announcement that the city merits the title as the country music's birthplace.

¹⁸ Email from John Rumble, Country Music Hall of Fame, May 21, 2013.

¹⁹ Jessica Turner, Birthplace of Country Music Alliance, Bristol. Phone call with author, October 21, 2013.

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- Kingsbury, Paul, Michael McCall, and John W. Rumble (eds.). *The Encyclopedia of Country Music*, 2nd ed. NY: Oxford University Press, 2012.
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Grand Guitar

Sullivan County, Tennessee

Name of Property

County and State

Patrick, Kevin J. "Seeing the Scenic Upland South: Mother Nature and the Morphology of Tourist Landscapes." In *Looking Beyond the Highway: Dixie Roads and Culture*, edited by Claudette Stager and Martha Carver. Knoxville TN: University of Tennessee Press, 2006.

Tennessee Vacation. <https://www.tnvacation.com/vendors/farm-fun-time-wcyb-radio-tv>. Accessed 1/2/13.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):		Primary location of additional data:	
preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested)	x	State Historic Preservation Office	
previously listed in the National Register		Other State agency	
previously determined eligible by the National Register		Federal agency	
designated a National Historic Landmark		Local government	
recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #		University	
recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #		Other	
recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey #		Name of repository:	
Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):			

Grand Guitar

Sullivan County, Tennessee

Name of Property

County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property .4 acres **USGS Quadrangle** 206 SW Bristol TN-VA

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84:

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. **Latitude:** 36.5880951676185

Longitude: -82.240188602116

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary is parcel 019 180.00 on the Sullivan County tax map.

Boundary Justification

The boundary of the Grand Guitar contains all the property historically and currently associated with the building.

Grand Guitar
Name of Property

Sullivan County, Tennessee
County and State



98'

Grand Guitar
Name of Property

Sullivan County, Tennessee
County and State



Grand Guitar
Name of Property

Sullivan County, Tennessee
County and State



USGS Map 206 SW Bristol TN-VA

Grand Guitar Sullivan County, Tennessee
Name of Property County and State

11. Form Prepared By

Name Claudette Stager, with assistance from Anita Morrell
Organization Tennessee Historical Commission
Street & Number 2941 Lebanon Road Date October 2013
City or Town Nashville Telephone 615/532-1550
E-mail Claudette.stager@tn.gov State TN Zip Code 37214

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to map.
- **Photographs** (refer to Tennessee Historical Commission National Register *Photo Policy* for submittal of digital images and prints)
- **Additional items:** (additional supporting documentation including historic photographs, historic maps, etc. should be included on a Continuation Sheet following the photographic log and sketch maps)

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.460 et seq.).
Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 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 Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

Grand Guitar

Sullivan County, Tennessee

Name of Property

County and State

Photo Log

Name of Property: Grand Guitar
City or Vicinity: Bristol
County: Sullivan
State: Tennessee
Photographer: Tennessee Historical Commission
Date Photographed: December 2012

South façade, facing north
1 of 22

South façade detail of fingerboard and turning keys, facing northeast
2 of 22

South façade detail of pick guard, sound hole (window), and saddle bridge, facing north
3 of 22

West elevation, facing east
4 of 22

West and north elevations, facing southeast
5 of 22

North elevation detail of pick guard, sound hole (window), and saddle bridge, facing southeast
6 of 22

North elevation, facing southeast
7 of 22

North elevation, facing southwest
8 of 22

North elevation detail of fingerboard and turning keys, facing south
9 of 22

East elevation, facing southwest
10 of 22

First floor broadcast/recording area, facing northwest
11 of 22

First floor, facing west
12 of 22

Grand Guitar

Sullivan County, Tennessee

Name of Property

County and State

Second floor, facing north
13 of 22

Second floor museum area, facing east
14 of 22

Second floor birthplace of country music sign, facing south
15 of 22

Second floor sound hole (window), facing south
16 of 22

Second floor museum area, facing southeast
17 of 22

Second floor museum area, facing east
18 of 22

Second floor, facing southeast
19 of 22

Third floor, facing west
20 of 22

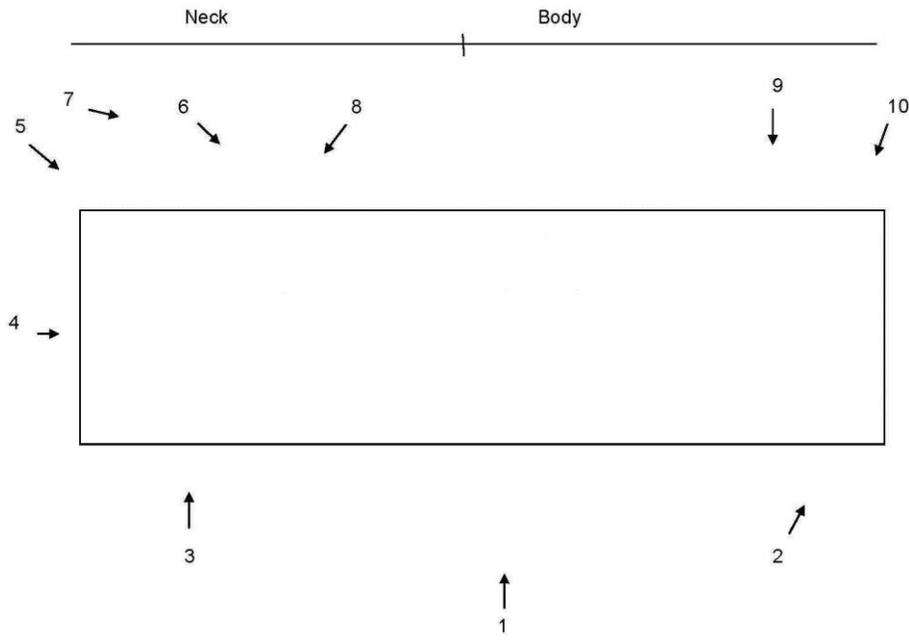
Third floor, facing southwest
21 of 22

Third floor, facing southeast
22 of 22

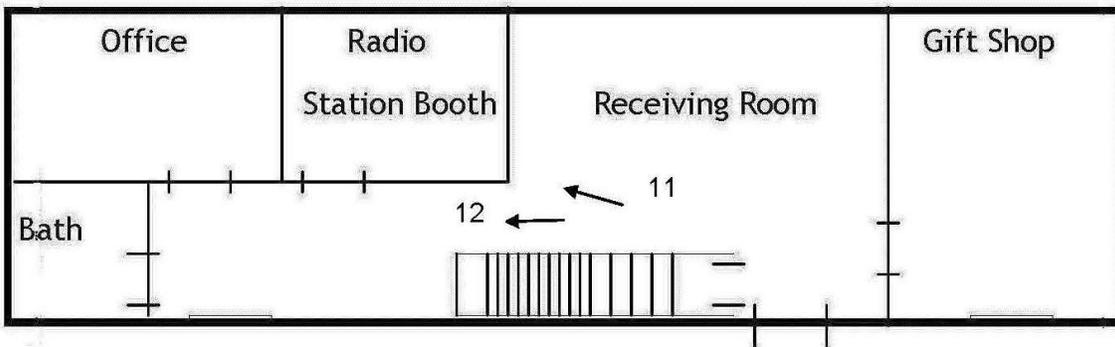
Grand Guitar
Name of Property

Sullivan County, Tennessee
County and State

Photo key



Exterior

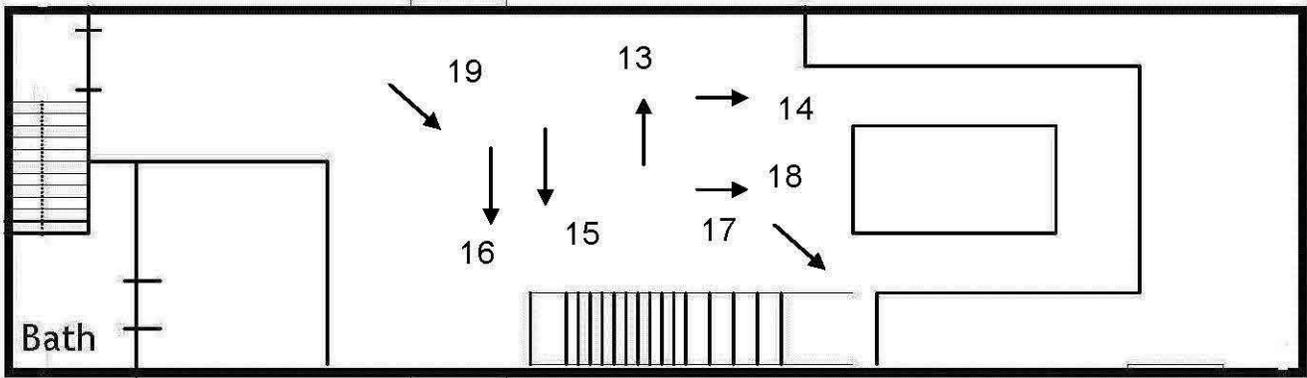


Grand Guitar

First Floor

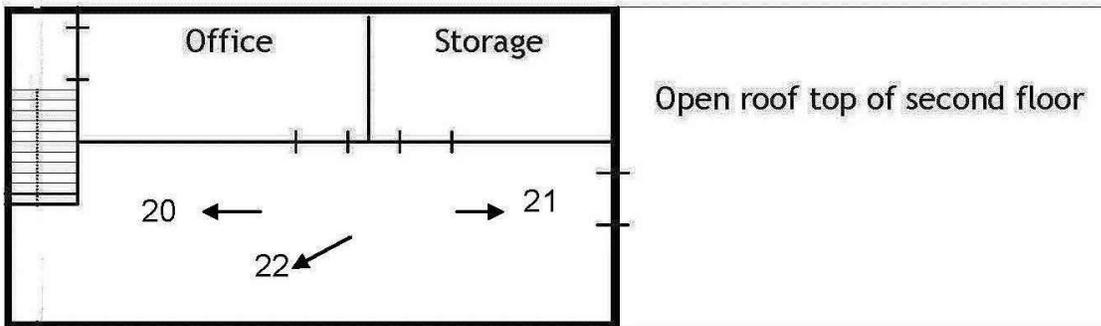
Grand Guitar
Name of Property

Sullivan County, Tennessee
County and State



Grand Guitar

Second Floor



Grand Guitar

Third Floor

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Grand Guitar
Name of Property
Sullivan County Tennessee
County and State
NA
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number NA Page 27



Representation of the three stories of the Grand Guitar

THIRD STORY

SECOND STORY

FIRST STORY



Joe Morrell at the Grand Guitar soon after it opened.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

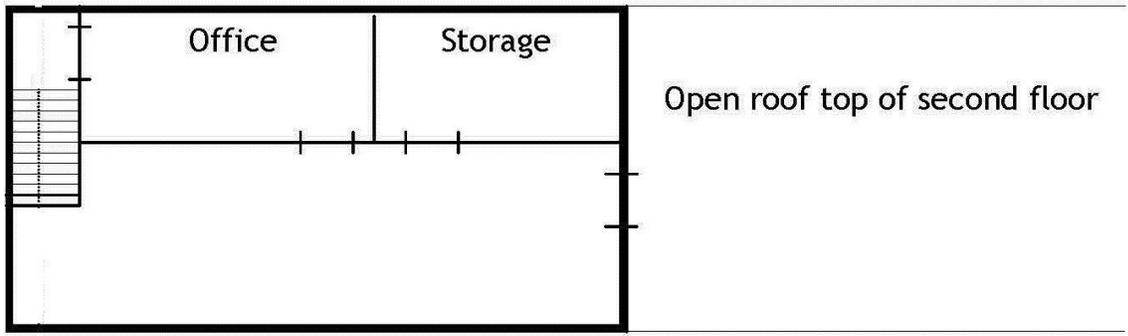
Grand Guitar

Name of Property
Sullivan County Tennessee

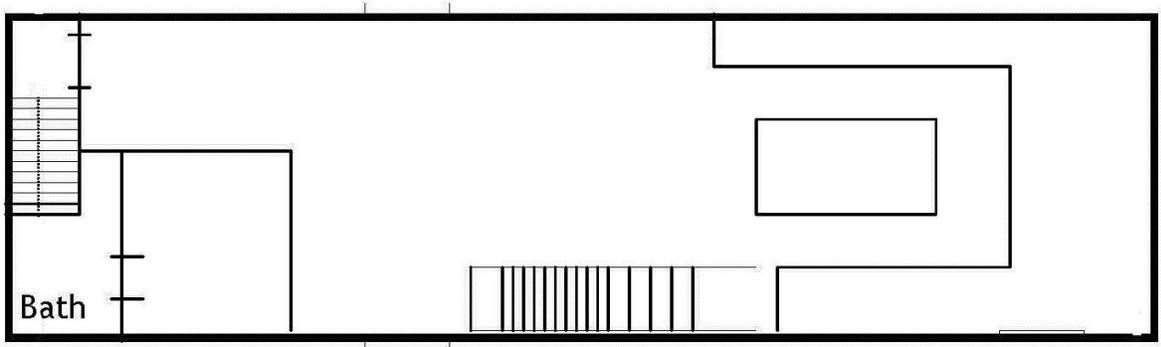
County and State
NA

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number NA Page 28



Grand Guitar Third Floor



Grand Guitar Second Floor

Plans, not to scale

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

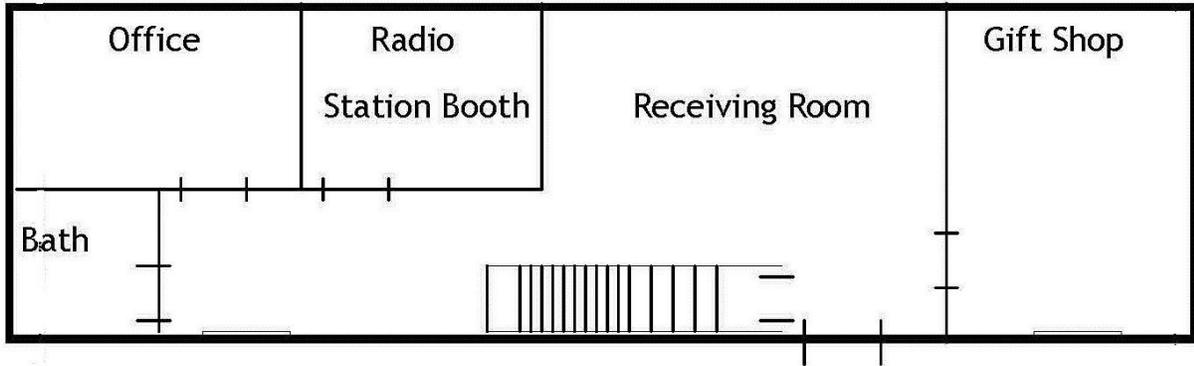
Grand Guitar

Name of Property
Sullivan County Tennessee

County and State
NA

Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number NA Page 29



Grand Guitar

First Floor

Plans, not to scale

Property Owner:

(This information will not be submitted to the National Park Service, but will remain on file at the Tennessee Historical Commission)

Name Anita Morrell, Trustee

Street & Number 162 Fairfield Drive Telephone _____

City or Town Bristol State TN 37620



Joe Morrell **GRAND GUITAR**
Gift Shop

Martin Co.
1833



STAR

McMurry Co.
EST. 1880



Joe M

Gift









OPEN

GRAND GUITAR
WORLDS ONLY GUITAR SHAPED MUSIC MUSEUM

Exit 74-A



OPEN



Martin & Co.
EST. 1833

GRAND O

WORLDS ONLY GUITAR SH

Exit 74-









STOL
MUSIC

BLUEGRASS

REAL COUNTRY MUSIC
1490AM

Various small posters and notices on the left wall.

Multiple framed photographs and certificates on the wood-paneled wall.

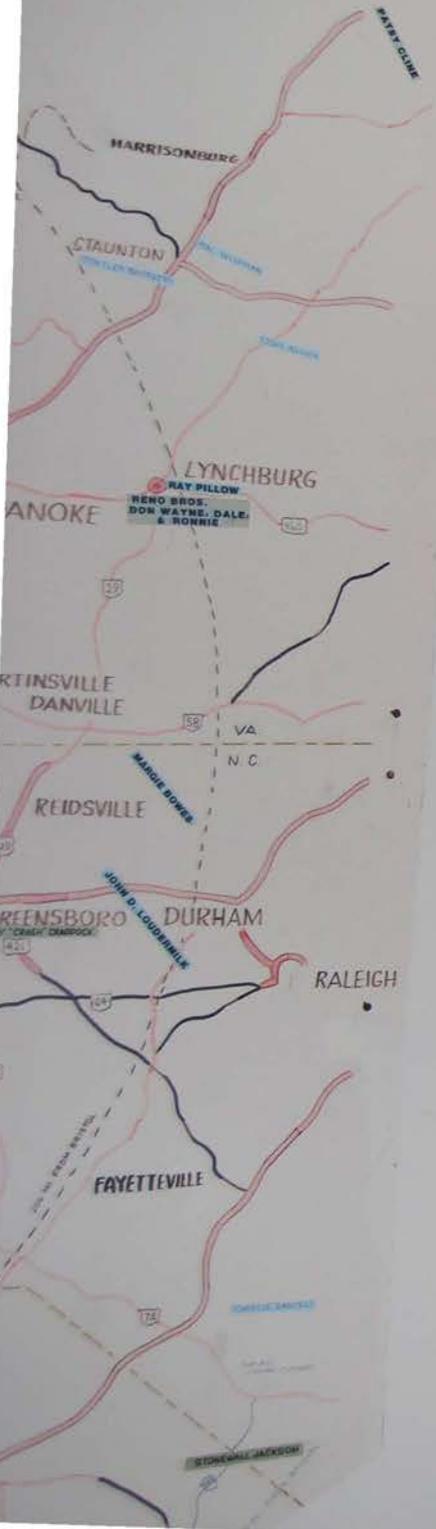


The Joe Marrell

MU



ISTS







The Joe Morrell

MUSIC COLLECTION

SMITH BIRTHPLACE OF COUNTRY MUSIC
BIRTHPLACES OF MANY AREA MUSIC ARTISTS



W
C
A
M









UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY Grand Guitar
NAME:

MULTIPLE
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: TENNESSEE, Sullivan

DATE RECEIVED: 1/23/14 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 2/24/14
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 3/11/14 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 3/11/14
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 14000057

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: Y
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT RETURN REJECT 3-11-2014 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

Excellent example of mimetic Architecture. One of
The last of its kind built, It is an archetypical
Example

RECOM./CRITERIA Accept C

REVIEWER J. Gabbit DISCIPLINE _____

TELEPHONE _____ DATE _____

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/~~N~~ see attached SLR Y/~~N~~

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.



TENNESSEE HISTORICAL COMMISSION
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENT AND CONSERVATION
2941 LEBANON ROAD
NASHVILLE, TN 37243-0442
(615) 532-1550



January 17, 2014

Carol Shull
Keeper of the National Register
National Park Service
National Register Branch
1201 Eye Street NW
8th floor
Washington, DC 20005

Dear Ms. Shull:

Enclosed please find documentation to nominate the *Grand Guitar* to the National Register of Historic Places. The enclosed disk contains the true and correct copy of the nomination for the *Grand Guitar* to the National Register of Historic Places.

If you have any questions or if more information is needed, contact Claudette Stager at 615/532-1550, extension 105 or Claudette.stager@tn.gov.

Sincerely,

E. Patrick McIntyre, Jr.
State Historic Preservation Officer

EPM:cs

Enclosures

Re: GG and meeting with TN State Review Board

Jessica Turner [jturner@birthplaceofcountrymusic.org]

Sent: Thursday, January 16, 2014 8:59 AM

To: Claudette Stager

Cc: Anita Morrell [anitamorrell@aol.com]; ehill@hvac-inc.com; nvollmer@burkcpa.com; sarah@birthplaceofcountrymusic.org

Dear Anita and Claudette,

Best wishes today and good luck at the proposal meeting. On behalf of the Birthplace of Country Music, I wholeheartedly support this proposal to list the Grand Guitar on the National Register of Historic Places. This building and Joe Morrell's Legacy are important to Bristol's history and music heritage. We look forward to working on renovations and programs related to Joe Morrell in the future.

All my best,

Jessica Turner
Birthplace of Country Music

Fwd: Joe Morrell's Grand Guitar

Jessica Turner [jturner@birthplaceofcountrymusic.org]

Sent: Thursday, January 16, 2014 9:48 AM

To: Anita Morrell [anitamorrell@aol.com]; Anita Morrell [anitamorrell@realtyexecutives.com]; Claudette Stager

Jessica

Begin forwarded message:

From: Roy Andrade <royandrade@gmail.com>

Date: January 16, 2014 10:27:50 AM EST

To: Jessica Turner <jturner@birthplaceofcountrymusic.org>

Subject: Joe Morrell's Grand Guitar

Hi Jessica, I apologize for the delay in getting this to you.

As the chair of the Endowed Scholarship Committee for Bluegrass, Old Time, and Country Music Studies at ETSU, I am happy to hear about and to endorse the idea of Joe Morrell's Grand Guitar being recognized on the National Register of Historic Places. The Morrell scholarship at ETSU provides much needed funding for our most deserving and needing students, and we are continually grateful for the support.

The Grand Guitar is an important (and quirky, as you say) symbol of the music of our region and it is a sad thought to think that it would no endure.

Im happy to help in any way I can to help this initiative.

Thanks,
Roy

Roy Andrade
Chair, Endowed Scholarship Committee
Bluegrass, Old Time, and Country Music Studies
East Tennessee State University
PO Box 70742
Johnson City, TN 37604
423-943-2698