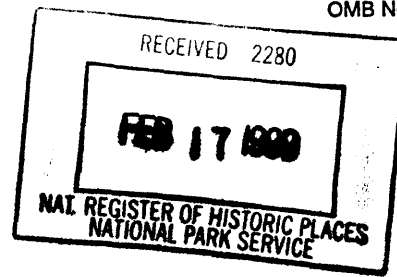


United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form



361

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 Union City Armory  
other names/site number The Old Armory, The Sweatshop

2. Location

street & number 415 West Main Street  not for publication N/A  
city or town Union City  vicinity N/A  
state Tennessee code TN county Obion code 131 zip code 38261

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.)

Herbert L. Hays 2/10/99  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date  
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer, Tennessee Historical Commission  
State or Federal agency and bureau

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

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date  
\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

- I hereby certify that the property is:  
 entered in the National Register.  
 See continuation sheet
- determined eligible for the National Register.  
 See continuation sheet
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_

Olson H. Beall 3/18/99  
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

Union City Armory  
Name of Property

Obion County, TN  
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	
1	0

buildings  
sites  
structures  
objects  
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**

Historic & Architectural Resources of Union City, TN

0

**6. Function or Use**

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

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

DEFENSE: armory

RECREATION AND CULTURE: dance studio

SOCIAL: Meeting Hall

RECREATION AND CULTURE: gymnasium

RECREATION AND CULTURE: gymnasium

**7. Description**

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

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

OTHER: WPA Modern

foundation CONCRETE

walls BRICK, CONCRETE

roof ASPHALT

other METAL, WOOD, GLASS

**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.

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

MILITARY  
 ENTERTAINMENT AND RECREATION  
 ARCHITECTURE

**Period of Significance**

1941 - 1945

**Significant Dates**

1941

**Significant Person**

(complete if Criterion B is marked)

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

Marr and Holman Architects: Holman, Joseph, architect

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

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

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

**Bibliography**

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

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):** 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:

MTSU Center for Historic Preservation

Union City Armory  
Name of Property

Obion County, TN  
County and State

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of Property Less than one acre

UTM References  
(place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

Union City, TN 427 NE

1 16 315280 4033000  
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 Kate Carothers and Carroll Van West  
organization MTSU Center for Historic Preservation date May 1998  
street & number Box 80 MTSU telephone 615 898-2947  
city or town Murfreesboro state TN zip code 37132

**Additional Documentation**

submit the following items with the completed form:

**Continuation Sheets**

**Maps**

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

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

**Photographs**

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

**Additional items**

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

**Property Owner**

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

name Mr. And Mrs. Jere Doss  
street & number 932 High Street telephone 901 885-0959  
city or town Union City state TN zip code 38261

**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

Union City Armory  
Obion County, TN

## 7. DESCRIPTION

The Union City Armory, built in 1941 by the Works Progress Administration (WPA), is at 415 West Main Street. An example of WPA Modern style, the armory is a brick building consisting of three sections: the front was for administrative purposes, the middle area served as the drill hall, and the rear area served as the kitchen/living quarters for the company that was stationed there. The Armory building has a rectangular plan, measuring sixty-five by 150 feet, with the large drill hall measuring sixty-five by ninety-five feet. The total area of the armory is 10,810 square feet. Completed at a cost of \$30,000, the armory served as the Union City headquarters for Company K, 117th Infantry of the Tennessee National Guard. Today the Union City Armory is privately owned and is used as a dance studio and health club.

The building sits on a concrete slab foundation, and is largely a one-story building, with the drill hall rising one-and-one-half stories above the front and rear sections. The Armory is a little above street level, and has two concrete steps leading up to the replacement, wooden double doors (circa 1980) on the front (south) facade. The south facade has seven bays, and is largely unadorned. The most significant stylistic detail is the projecting Art Deco-influenced entrance. This entrance consists of two fluted columns flanking a smooth concrete surface, with a concrete keystone centered over the doorway. A fabric canopy (circa 1980) extends past the entrance steps. Flanking the entrance is a set of three windows, all with concrete sills. The windows are original four-paned, fixed one-sash windows, framed by a striped fabric canopy added circa 1980. Extending approximately six feet from the east and west ends of the south facade is a brick wall, behind which are the restrooms of the facility. Extending above the entrance and administrative section is the vaulted wall of the drill hall. A thin concrete cornice runs along the top of the building and the roof is covered with asphalt-saturated rolled roofing.

The east elevation of the armory has a fourteen-bay facade, consisting of windows of varying heights and sizes. Along the south end of the elevation (the administration section) are two six-over-three double-hung sash windows with concrete sills. An air-conditioning unit sits beneath the far north window. On the extended part of the administrative section, flush with the drill hall, is a centered one-over-one horizontal sliding window with concrete sill. Along the drill hall section are six original, symmetrically placed vertical rectangular thirty-light casement windows with concrete sills. The north section of the east elevation has five symmetrically placed windows of various sizes, all with concrete sills. The first window of this area has a square sixty-three-light casement window. The second window is a narrow, square twenty-light casement window, while the third window is a horizontally placed thirty-six-light casement window. The fourth window is a narrow, square twenty-light casement window. The fifth window is a square sixty-three-light casement window. A thin concrete cornice line defines the east elevation as well.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 2

Union City Armory  
Obion County, TN

The rear, or north, elevation of the building consists of the rear of the drill hall (six feet on the east, four feet on the west) and the one-story kitchen section. On the southeast side of the drill hall is an original set of narrow wooden double doors centered in the wall. Also visible on the elevation is where two original bays have been filled in with concrete block. A smaller square section, possible once a window opening, has been covered with bricks. Two air-conditioning units, added circa 1980, are located to the east of the off-centered tall chimney stack. Two symmetrically placed, square sixty-three-light casement windows with concrete sills are to the west of the chimney stack. The rear roofline of the north elevation is approximately one foot shorter than the sides. The far northwest section of the drill hall is unadorned brick.

The west elevation of the armory has six bays. A garage door opening on the north end of the elevation was bricked in circa 1946. Three vertical, rectangular, thirty-light casement windows are symmetrically placed, and are directly across from similar windows on the east side of the building. The administrative section of the west elevation has two six-over-three double-hung sash windows with concrete sills, placed closer to the southwest corner of the building, and matching up exactly with the two windows on the east elevation.

The interior of the armory maintains a high degree of interior integrity. The administrative section of the building has experienced the most changes, as former offices have been renovated into offices for private business. To the west of the foyer are two original office spaces, which still serve as offices for the private business. The concrete floor was covered with carpet circa 1980 while the plaster walls were covered with wooden paneling and wallpaper in 1988. The original plaster ceiling was replaced with acoustic tile, circa 1988, with a fluorescent light fixture located in the larger, westernmost office. Centered along the northeast corner of the easternmost office is an original wooden door that leads to the hallway that connects to the west side restroom.

An original office space, east of the foyer, has been renovated into a dressing room for a private business. A wood partition, added circa 1988, divides the room into two sections. The original plaster walls of the room were painted and wallpapered in 1988. The original concrete floor was carpeted circa 1980. The original plaster ceiling was covered with dropped acoustic tile in 1988, leaving in place a fluorescent light fixture. Centered along the northwest corner of the room is an original wooden door that leads to the hallway that connects to the eastside restroom.

The original hallways that connect the facility's restrooms to the foyer had paneling and wallpaper placed over the original plaster walls circa 1988 while the concrete floors were covered in linoleum circa 1988. The wooden doors of the restrooms are both original. In each of these restrooms are small showers, toilets, and sinks, all original fixtures. A horizontal sliding window is in each restroom.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 3

Union City Armory  
Obion County, TN

In the foyer that connects the entrance to the doors leading into the drill hall, linoleum flooring added circa 1980 covers the original concrete flooring. Along the original plaster walls of the foyer were covered with wooden paneled wainscoting, which ends approximately halfway up the wall, and wallpaper from the wainscoting to the ceiling, circa 1988. A dropped acoustic tile ceiling added circa 1988 covered the original plaster ceiling. Two modern fluorescent light fixtures, also added circa 1988, were added on the east and west of the foyer circa 1988. A water fountain was centered in the east wall in 1978. The foyer also contains original wooden doors on both the east and west walls, which provide access to the interior offices of the building. At the end of the foyer, on the south wall of the drill hall are paired original wooden double doors that provide direct access to the drill hall section of the armory.

The drill hall retains its original maple hardwood floor. According to the *Union City Daily Messenger* of January 31, 1941, "the floor consists of a cinder base with a four inch concrete course, a tar surface over the concrete, a sub-wooden flooring resting on two by twos and then the maple surface. The floor was built to withstand heavy loads and the pounding feet of drilling soldiers. White stripes in the form of a tennis court have been painted onto the floor, but otherwise it has not been altered. The walls of the drill hall are red brick, but have been painted blue and yellow beneath the original windows. On the east wall are six original windows; on the west wall are three original windows. At the north corner of the west wall was once a garage door, but this was bricked in on the outside and then covered with plaster on the inside circa 1946. Along the east wall, a large mirror for the use of the dancers was fixed underneath the middle two windows circa 1988. According to the earlier cited newspaper article, the barrel-vaulted roof of the drill hall is supported by the original steel truss and purlin system. Twenty original light fixtures are suspended from the steel beams, as are four original ceiling fans. In each corner of the room, suspended from the original, exposed wooden rafters are four original heating units. Modern heating units have been added in both the southwest and northeast corners of the drill hall, circa 1980.

On the north wall of the drill hall, four original doorways lead into the original ammunition vault, the kitchen and living areas, and the exterior of the building. These four doorways are a useful way to organize a description of these rear rooms. The far west door is for the original ammunition vault, which is now used for storage. The original steel door is surrounded by a steel framed doorway, and the interior has steel-reinforced walls except for the walls around the outside of the vault door, which are plaster walls. This approximately six-by-eight-foot room has carpet on the original concrete floors, added circa 1980.

The second door of the north wall provides access to a living area, or bunkroom, for soldiers stationed in the armory overnight or for any extended period of time. This is now the exercise/weight room of the facility. The walls in this room are concrete blocks that have been painted white. The original concrete floor was carpeted circa 1988. A dropped, acoustic tile

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 4

Union City Armory  
Obion County, TN

ceiling, with two paired sets of fluorescent lights, added circa 1988 has covered the original plaster ceiling. There also are two smaller circular metal lights that are original to 1941. A heating duct is located in the new dropped ceiling.

On the east wall of the large exercise/weight room is a doorway, added circa 1980, that provides access to a second weight room. The original function of this room is unknown. The walls are concrete block, painted white, and the original concrete floor was carpeted circa 1988. Also circa 1988, the original plaster ceiling was covered with a dropped, acoustic tile ceiling that has two fluorescent light fixtures. In the southeast corner of the room, a wooden partition was added circa 1988 behind which was once a tanning bed. This space is now empty. On the north wall of this room is an original door that leads into the original furnace room, which is connected to the east by an opening to the original kitchen. On its south wall of this second exercise/weight room, however, is an original door opening into the drill hall.

This third door on the drill hall's north wall originally provided access to the showers and restrooms. This area still is still largely intact and contains original metal and porcelain fixtures from 1941. There are three showers and three toilets. The floor is concrete, with some linoleum and tile covering around the showers and restroom stalls. The dropped acoustic tile ceiling was added circa 1980, but the room has its original metal light fixtures. One restroom stall was removed circa 1980.

The furnace room contains the original metal Spencer furnace and heating unit. The walls are gray concrete block and brick and the floor is concrete. A gray concrete block partition on the east side separates the furnace room from the kitchen. The kitchen no longer has appliances and is used for storage. The appliances were removed at an unknown date prior to 1978. Originally, a window was located on the south wall of the kitchen, but it has been closed up.

The fourth door on the north wall of the drill hall is an exterior access door.

Despite its commercial use over the last twenty years, the Union City Armory retains the exterior and interior characteristics of its original function as an armory and administrative center for the local National Guard unit. It stands as a reminder of the impact of the New Deal and World War II preparations on the public architecture and buildings of a small Tennessee county seat. The armory is a good representative example of style used by the Works Progress Administration in designs for public buildings in small towns across the United States, that has become known as WPA Modern. It is a carbon copy of the other armories in Tennessee. It was an individual brick building designed by a different architect (Holman), with a local connection, which employed a different design than the Keeble and Warfield designs in other towns.

The architectural style of the Union City Armory is a blend of classicism and muted Art Deco



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

# **National Register of Historic Places**

## **Continuation Sheet**

Section number   7   Page   5  

Union City Armory  
Obion County, TN

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elements, which makes it a good representative example of what is frequently categorized as "WPA Modern" style. The style represents a blending of old and modern elements and is characteristic of many other New Deal projects in Union City, such as Central School and the Obion County Courthouse. The more modern Art Deco-influenced concrete entrance highlights the traditional unadorned brick facade of the armory.

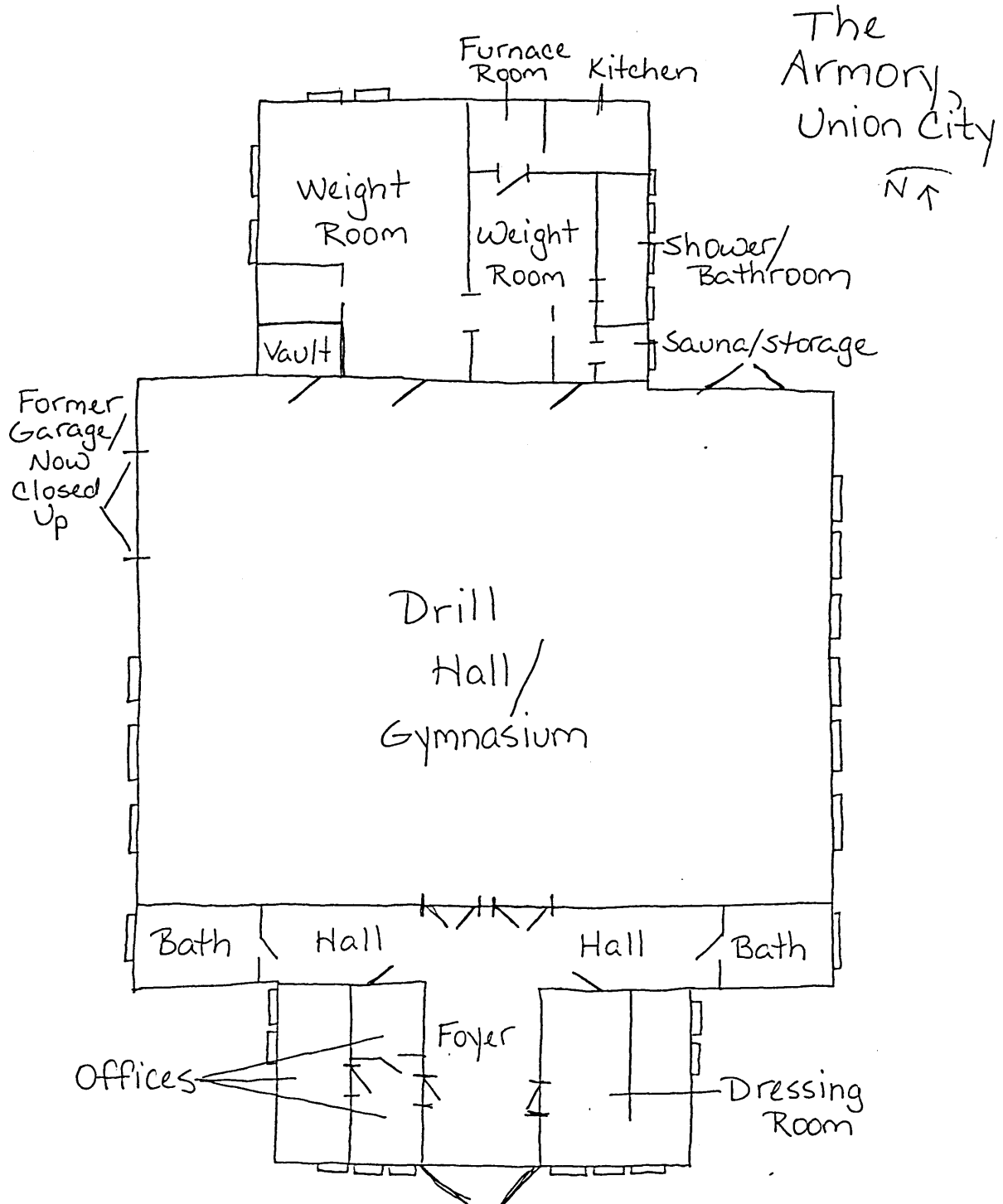
The armory is the only identified WPA building extant in Union City. Due to the political power of a local congressman, Robert A. Everett, the Public Works Administration exerted a larger impact on the local built environment. During the World War II era, the building served both as a military facility and as a large community center. Community events included war bond drives, dances, and social events. It also is a good representative example of WPA Modern style in Union City. The Union City Armory thus meets the registration requirements for public buildings in the Multiple Property Nomination Form for the Historic and Architectural Resources of Union City and is eligible under Criteria A and C for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 6

Union City Armory  
Obion County, TN



Not to Scale

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 7

Union City Armory  
Obion County, TN

## 8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Union City Armory, located in Union City, The seat of Obion County, Tennessee, is eligible for the national Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its local association with the military during World War II, and its association with the Federal Works Progress Administration (WPA). The WPA was implemented during the New Deal reform period of the 1930s and 1940s. The Armory was also a popular gathering place for the people of Obion County. It is also eligible under Criterion C as an example of WPA Modern architecture in Union City.

The Union City Armory was completed on January 31, 1941, at a total cost of \$30,000 to the state County and Union City. The *Union City Daily Messenger* of January 31, 1941 reported that

Between eight and nine o'clock in the evening of January 31, a dedicatory program will be presented by Governor Prentice Cooper, state Legion Commander Bascom F. Jones, Adjunct General T. A. Frazier and architect Joe Holman being among those to speak. Governor Prentice Cooper gave an address, and Judge J. A. Henley of the Obion County Court accepted the structure on the part of the city and county. Following the address, a dance was held in the new armory.

The Union City Armory was the home of Company K of the National Guard of Tennessee, 117<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment.

Company K was federally recognized on May 1, 1938; inducted into federal service September 18, 1940, and inactivated November 17, 1945, after distinguished service in World War II in Normandy, Northern France, Ardennes-Alsace, Rhineland and Central Europe. . . Company K won several military honors for their service during the war, including the Distinguished Unit Streamer, Streamer in the colors of the French Croix de Guerre, with Silver Star and citations in the order of the Day of the Belgian Army for action in Belgium, Ardennes and at Meuse River.<sup>1</sup>

Members of Company K were largely from Obion County and surrounding West Tennessee counties. The Union City Armory served as the home base for Company K throughout its service in World War II.

The National Guard, essentially a state-based entity, is a secondary reserve component to the Army, Navy, Air Force, etc.

The National Guard consists of two components: The Army National Guard and the

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<sup>1</sup> Jaycees Program, 1954.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 8

Union City Armory  
Obion County, TN

Air National Guard, both of which are state-based and state-run entities, although they are, ultimately, accountable to the Department of Defense's Department of the Army and the Department of the Air Force respectively. Companies, the basic building block of the militia, originally were locally-based units with strong, hometown ties. The men that formed these companies were often neighbors, and consequently, individual companies had unique loyal or regional character and strong, community-based loyalties.<sup>2</sup>

The National Guard is a volunteer organization, and members frequently have a primary occupation besides involvement in the military. The guardsmen are led by an Adjunct General, usually appointed by the governor. Although the National Guard is mainly an auxiliary to the country's centralized Armed forces, during wars or national emergencies they are called directly into federal service, as was the case with Union City's Company K.

Besides its military function, the Armory also served a social function for the citizens of Union City. In his book on Obion County, E. H. Marshall notes that the Armory "had on auditorium measuring 65 by 95 feet, to be used for public assembly on occasions."<sup>3</sup> In addition, the Obion County president's Birthday Ball, an annual event, was held in the drill hall/auditorium in 1941 and was often held there in the following years. School groups held their annual rallies in the Armory.

Members of the Home Economic clubs and Future Farmers of America organizations from all schools in Obion County held their annual rally on Saturday, March 8, at the Armory with some 350 boys and girls and their home economics and vocational agriculture instructors. The meeting lasted all day and featured talks by county leaders, including County Superintendent Milton Hamilton. After lunch, the boys and girls provided the entertainment through skits, singing, and musical performances. After this, a recreational period was held.<sup>4</sup>

In addition to dances and school events, military-related social events were held at the Armory. In the fall of 1942, a very large crowd was present for a war bond drive. "In the feature event, Robert A. 'Fats' Everett, later to be U. S. Representative, auctioned off his clothing one piece at a time (he made it down to his underwear)."<sup>5</sup>

At one time, there may have been nearly a thousand historic armories in America; today only a few hundred survive. The majority of armories are found in the Northeast and the Midwest,

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<sup>2</sup> Todd, page 7.

<sup>3</sup> Marshall, page 233.

<sup>4</sup> Union City Daily Messenger. March 10, 1914.

<sup>5</sup> Forrester, page 65.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 9

Union City Armory  
Obion County, TN

especially the larger and grander of these, such as the Seventh Regiment Armory on park Avenue in New York City. Early armories, which were built in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, were often very large and imposing structures with castellated towers, turrets, crenellated parapets and a forbidding look about them. The earliest armories were built to resemble castles and fortresses.

These armories were meant to be literal fortresses, designed to defend respectable, upper-and middle-class Americans from the "unruly mob", i.e. the lower-class throngs of laborers and immigrants (many of whom were professed Socialists and Anarchist) who seemed to indicate that America was on the brink of class warfare. . . . Many of New York State's seventy-plus armories date from the late nineteenth century and are elaborately rendered in flamboyant, Victorian period interpretations of medieval Gothic military architecture.<sup>6</sup>

The interior of these early armories was often just as lavish as the exterior. Many of the larger armories contained trophy rooms, band rooms, libraries, swimming pools, and bowling alleys in addition to living quarters and the drill hall. "The Seventh Regiment Armory in New York City had its interior designed by Louis Comfort Tiffany."<sup>7</sup>

After the previous wave of armory building ended roughly in 1920, the next wave began in the mid-1930s. "These new armories were an outgrowth not of fears of class warfare, but of the Roosevelt administration's efforts to cope with the Great Depression by providing relief for the unemployed and stimulating the private sector."<sup>8</sup> The National Guard requested that the government earmark eight million dollars for construction of new armories, but this request was turned down. "Later on the Works Progress Administration (WPA) and the Public Works Administration (PWA) were prevailed upon to include armories in the types of public buildings eligible for federal grants"<sup>9</sup> The majority of armories built by the WPA and the PWA were small one company facilities that cost between \$20,000 and \$40,000; the majority of these were built in the South and the Southwest. Neither the WPA or the PWA were involved in the design of armories, leaving it up to the community to decide; a great deal of architectural variation was the result. The majority of the small one-company armories built by these organizations were characterized by simplicity of structure and limited ornamentation, which reflected, among other things, the administration's determination to stay within a budget, and reflected the architect's increasing use of concrete.

"Besides their military function, historically, most armories were designed to be community

<sup>6</sup> Todd, pages 7, 10.

<sup>7</sup> Todd, page 10.

<sup>8</sup> Fogelson, page 197.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid., page 196.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 10

Union City Armory  
Obion County, TN

centers as well as military facilities."<sup>10</sup> While the Embry-Riddle Field was in operation during World War II, dances were held at the Armory. After the Armory was de-accessioned by the National Guard in 1946, the building was still used for community events. Local historian R. C. Forrester noted that wrestling matches were held in the building, and the Obion County Fair also took place there in subsequent years.

Calling on Congress to set aside a portion of the relief funds for new armories, National Guard leaders emphasized that the armories would not only house the troops, but also serve as community centers. This position was adopted by the WPA, which based its armory construction program on the assumption that the buildings would be used approximately 75% as a community center and 25% for military purposes.<sup>11</sup>

"When Prentice Cooper became governor in 1939, the State of Tennessee owned only one armory, and Governor Cooper launched a \$1.5 million armory construction program with the intention to build twenty-one armories."<sup>12</sup> Local and WPA funds matched the state funds. Besides the armory at Union City, armories at Kingsport, Memphis, Murfreesboro, and Knoxville were constructed between 1939 and 1941 using state, local and WPA funds. The constructions of the Union City Armory reflects the transition from the New Deal public aid programs intended to provide relief through government subsidized jobs into defense-related construction programs of the early 1940s when the government was still publicly espousing a non-intervention policy but quietly initiating defense measures.

The Armory was a distinct building type, different from other public building in that it included three notable features. In terms of function, the armory served not only as a military facility but also as a clubhouse for the guardsmen and as a civic monument designed to convey power, pride, and patriotism.<sup>13</sup>

In its form and plan, the armory consists of an administration building with an attached drill hall at ground level. The last element was the design of the building, the armories (earlier than late nineteenth century ones) were designed to resemble fortresses. The armory then is a unique building type, designed for a specific use and function. In many ways, the armories of the New Deal era were utilitarian structures, built to serve a specific purpose. Communities may have had some say in the design of the buildings, but many of the armories were built according to the local materials and resources available.

<sup>10</sup> Todd, page 6.

<sup>11</sup> Fogelson, page 211.

<sup>12</sup> Carver and Kline, page 15.

<sup>13</sup> Todd, page 10

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 11

Union City Armory  
Obion County, TN

The Union City Armory is significant for its architectural style under Criterion C. The armory is an example of the WPA modern style often used in New Deal building projects. The muted influence of Art Deco style is seen on the entrance of the Armory, which is an otherwise purely functional WPA Modern building. The Obion County Courthouse and Central School were also New Deal projects, but PWA completed them. The Armory is the only example of a WPA building in Union City.

The Works Progress Administration (WPA) grew out of the earlier Civil Works Administration and the Federal Emergency Relief Administration. Established by Congress in 1935 as part of Roosevelt's second Hundred Days of Reform, the Works Progress Administration eschewed the PWA's tradition of choosing only well-defined projects. The WPA took on almost any public program that would put unemployed Americans to work. Its projects included community gardens to provide food for rural people, schools, courthouses, armories, post offices, fields, gymnasiums, parks, and outdoor theaters.<sup>14</sup>

The Nashville-based firm of Marr and Holman designed the Union City Armory, with Joseph Holman being the primary architect. Unlike many of the other Tennessee armories, which were built of stone (Murfreesboro, Cookeville) and designed by the firm of Warfield and Keeble, the Union City Armory represents a break away from the traditional model employed in other parts of the state. The Union City Armory was not a carbon copy of the other armories in Tennessee. It was an individual brick building designed by a different architect (Holman), with a local connection, who employed a different design than the Warfield and Keeble designs in other towns.

The architectural style of the Union City Armory is a blend of classicism and muted Art Deco elements, which makes it a good representative example of what is frequently categorized as "WPA Modern" style. The style represents a blending of old and modern elements and is characteristic of many other New Deal projects in Union City, such as Central School and the Obion County Courthouse. The more modern Art Deco-influenced concrete entrance highlights the traditional unadorned brick façade of the armory.

The armory is the only identified WPA building extant in Union City. Due to the political power of a local congressman, Robert A. Everett, the Public Works Administration exerted a larger impact on the local built environment. During the World War II era, the building functioned both as a military facility and as a large community center for war bond drives, community dances, and social events. The Union City Armory thus meets the registration requirements for public

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<sup>14</sup> West, page 211

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

# **National Register of Historic Places**

## **Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 12

Union City Armory  
Obion County, TN

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buildings in the Multiple Property Documentation Form for the "Historic and Architectural Resources of Union City" under criteria A and C for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number   9   Page   13  

Union City Armory  
Obion County, TN

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United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 10 Page 14

Union City Armory  
Obion County, TN

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## 10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

### Verbal Boundary Description

The nominated property includes all property located at 415 West main Street in Union City, TN. The nominated property is listed as parcel 13 on the Obion County Tax Map K-48-C.

### Boundary Justification

The boundaries described above include all the historical and present property associated with the Union City Armory.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 10 Page 15

Union City Armory  
Obion County, TN



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number \_\_\_\_\_ Photos \_\_\_\_\_ Page 16

Union City Armory  
Obion County, TN

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## PHOTOGRAPHS

Union City Armory  
415 West Main Street  
Union City, Obion County, TN

Photos by Carroll Van West  
MTSU Center for Historic Preservation  
PO Box 80  
Murfreesboro, TN 37132

Negatives: Tennessee Historical Commission  
2941 Lebanon Road  
Nashville, TN 37243

Union City Armory, south facade, facing north  
1 of 20

Southeast elevation, facing west  
2 of 20

East elevation, facing northwest  
3 of 20

East elevation, facing northeast  
4 of 20

East elevation, facing north  
5 of 20

Northeast elevation, facing southwest  
6 of 20

Northwest elevation, facing southeast  
7 of 20

West elevation, facing north  
8 of 20

Southwest elevation, facing northeast  
9 of 20

Interior foyer, facing north

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number    Photos    Page    17

Union City Armory  
Obion County, TN

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10 of 20

Interior foyer, east section

11 of 20

Interior hallway, facing west

12 of 20

Interior drill hall, facing northwest

13 of 20

Interior drill hall facing southwest

14 of 20

Interior drill hall, detail of roof

15 of 20

Interior drill hall, facing south

16 of 20

Interior of vault, facing north

17 of 20

Interior of western weight room, facing north

18 of 20

Interior of shower room - bathroom, facing east

19 of 20

Detail of furnace, facing north

20 of 20