

## MULTIPLE RESOURCES OF GREENVILLE

## BUTLER COUNTY, ALABAMA

Historic name: Post Office Historic District

Address: W. Commerce St. - 100-115; E. Commerce St. - 101

Acreage: 2.5

Verbal Boundary: See enclosed scaled map.

UTM:                   A-16/535/600-3521/460                   D-16/535/530-3521/360  
                           B-16/535/600-3521/420                   E-16/535/480-3521/360  
                           C-16/535/530-3521/410                   F-16/535/480-3521/460

Statement of Significance:Criterion A - Commerce/Communication/Entertainment

The Post Office Historic District is significant as the largest concentration of largely unaltered commercial buildings remaining in the West Commerce Street area. The district represents the limit of major development on West Commerce Street which was originally initiated by the introduction of rail service into the town during the late 1850's as well as the final major development on West Commerce Street. The district area began development during the early 1890's and continued through the late 1930's and contained the town's two major banks.

The 1930's post office was a major communication center for the small town of Greenville during that period. The Ritz theater (1936) was an important social and entertainment center, and it remains today as Greenville's only theater.

Criterion C - Architecture

The Post Office Historic District is significant for its collection of late 19th and early 20th century commercial architecture (c 1890-1936) and a 1932 WPA post office. These buildings represent one small group of Greenville's only surviving turn-of-the-century commercial and civic buildings. They exhibit, for the most part, very simple vernacular storefronts. There is, however, a good example of an Art Deco movie theater (1936), and a very fine Neoclassical bank (1923) and post office (1932).

Description:

The Post Office District is made up of six commercial storefronts, a fine Art Deco movie theater, a Neoclassical bank and U.S. Post Office. These buildings were constructed between c 1890 and 1936 and represent a very small concentration of Greenville's late 19th and early 20th century commercial strip which has managed to retain some degree of historic architectural fabric. The commercial buildings are all very simple one or two-story brick structures with varying degrees of modern alterations.

### Historical Summary:

Development in the commercial area at the intersection of West Commerce Street and Fort Dale Street began during the early 1890's. Prior to that time there had not been any commercial development on the corner and only two small commercial buildings along with a dwelling located on the south side of Commerce Street.

By 1893 a series of five contiguous brick commercial buildings had been constructed at the north side of the intersection. These buildings contained the post office, on the corner, a book and stationary shop, a millinery shop, a photo gallery and a grocery store occupying the other buildings. During the late 1890's the newly established Bank of Greenville occupied a building in the block, but the block remained basically unchanged. On the south side of Commerce Street the dwelling house was converted into the Ehlbert Hotel.

After the turn of the century the post office moved from the building on the corner and the First National Bank of Greenville occupied the vacated building. By 1909 two new brick buildings (#2 & #3) had been added to the west end of the five existing buildings and were occupied by a millinery shop, the Greenville Telephone Exchange and a photographic shop.

During the years immediately prior to World War I the commercial area underwent a series of renovations with the two buildings located between the banks receiving new store fronts with plate glass display windows. During the 1920's the Ehlbert Hotel was demolished and was replaced by a small service station. Also during the 1920's the Bank of Greenville and the First National Bank were renovated and expanded into the commercial buildings that were adjacent to each. The renovation of the First National Bank (#6) was designed by Okel & Cooper Architects of Montgomery and was undertaken by Hugger Brothers also of Montgomery and was completed in September 1923. The renovation of the Bank of Greenville (#5) was also designed by Okel & Cooper and was constructed by Hugger Brothers during 1926.

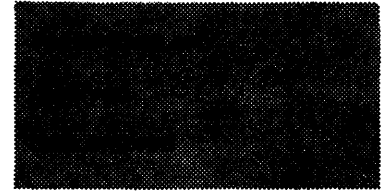
During the 1930's the district received its last major additions, the Federal Post Office (#7) on the Northeast corner of the intersection of Fort Dale and Commerce Streets and the Ritz Theater and associated commercial buildings (#8 & #11) on the south side of Commerce Street.

The Post Office building, designed by James Wetmore, was completed in 1932. A bill had been introduced to the U. S. House of Representatives in 1916 by Congressman A. A. Wiley specifying the appropriation of \$25,000 for the purchase of a suitable site for a federal building. The lot on which the Post Office now stands was purchased by the Federal Government in 1916 for \$5,000 from Antony and Isabella McKellar. The lot was occupied for several years by the "Red Cross Hut" and later by a community house until the work on the post office began in 1931.

The Ritz Theater was opened in 1936 and was constructed in the Art Deco style. The theater cost approximately \$40,000 and contained the latest sound equipment and seating facilities.

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**



Continuation sheet

MRN #25

Item number 7

Page 1

BUILDINGS WHICH CONTRIBUTE TO THE CHARACTER OF THE POST OFFICE DISTRICT

4. 100 W. Commerce St.: 1923; (First National Bank), Neoclassical, two story stone bank with later brick additions, flat roof, metal framed original windows, enantis stone Doric columns, pressed metal cornice w/ modilliams and dentils. Roll 11, Neg. 36.
5. 101 E. Commerce St.: 1932; (Post Office) Neoclassical, two story English bond brick, mansard style roof with cross gable dormers surrounded by parapet wall, arched windows separated by stone pilasters, stone scroll pediment w/ center carved eagle over entry. Roll 20, Neg. 3.
6. 103-105 W. Commerce St. (Ritz Theatre): 1936; Art Deco, one story stucco theater, stepped roofline w/ central tiered spire, original metal marquee and sign, original box office and recessed entry flanked on either side by market stalls, 103 has original windows and door, 105 has modern entry and windows. Roll 10, Neg. 27.

BUILDINGS WHICH CONDITIONALLY CONTRIBUTE TO THE CHARACTER OF THE POST OFFICE DISTRICT

1. 114 W. Commerce St.: c 1890; one story brick commercial, flat roof, modern display windows and recessed entry, corrugated metal covering over former transom, corbeled brick trim along roofline. Roll 11, Neg. 34.
2. 112 W. Commerce St.: c 1890; two story commercial brick, flat roof, modern first floor display windows and entry, corrugated metal over former transom, second floor 2/2 sash original, corbeled bride arches over windows and cornice. Roll 11, Neg. 35.
7. 107 W. Commerce St.: c 1900; one story brick commercial, flat roof, modern metal framed display windows and entry, aluminum canopy over entry, plywood panels covering former transom, corbeled cornice. Roll 10, Neg. 28.
8. 109 W. Commerce St.: c 1900; (Alabama Grill), one story brick commercial, flat roof, modern metal framed display windows and entry, aluminum canopy. Roll 10, Neg. 29.
9. 111 W. Commerce St.: c 1900; (Brooks Agency), one story brick, flat roof, modern metal framed display windows and recessed double entry, corrugated metal over former transoms, corbeled brick cornice. Roll 10, Neg. 30.

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**



Continuation sheet

MRN #25

Item number 7

Page 2

- 
10. 115 W. Commerce St.: c 1900; (Murphy Clothing Co.), one story brick commercial covered with plywood siding, flat roof, modern display windows and entry, fine pressed tin interior ceiling, aluminum canopy over entry. Roll 10, Neg. 31.

BUILDINGS WHICH DO NOT CONTRIBUTE TO THE CHARACTER OF THE POST OFFICE DISTRICT

3. 110 W. Commerce St.: c 1900; two story brick commercial, flat roof, modern brick infill on first floor w/ modern display windows and entry, second floor 1/1 sash is original w/ sandstone sills and lintels, corbeled brick cornice. Roll 11, Neg. 36.