

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Registration Form1960
OCT 13 1989NATIONAL
REGISTER

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Conway County Courthouse

other names/site number

2. Location

street & number

city, town Morrilton

state Arkansas

code AR

county Conway

code

AR 029

zip code 72110

☐ not for publication N/A☐ vicinity N/A

3. Classification

Ownership of Property

☐ private☒ public-local☐ public-State☐ public-Federal

Category of Property

☒ building(s)☐ district☐ site☐ structure☐ object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing

1

Noncontributing

buildings

sites

structures

objects

Total

Name of related multiple property listing:

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously

listed in the National Register N/A

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this ☒ nomination ☐ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property ☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. ☐ See continuation sheet.

Cathryn A. Byrd
Signature of certifying official10-9-89
Date

Arkansas Historic Preservation Program

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. ☐ See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

☒ entered in the National Register.☐ See continuation sheet.☐ determined eligible for the National Register. ☐ See continuation sheet.☐ determined not eligible for the National Register.☐ removed from the National Register.☐ other, (explain:)

entered in the

National Register

William Byrd

11/13/89

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Government/County Courthouse

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Government/County Courthouse

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Late 19th and 20th Century Revival/

Classical Revival

Modern Movement/Art Deco

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Stone/Granite

walls Brick

Terra Cotta

roof Asphalt

other _____

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection number 7 Page 1

Summary. The Conway County Courthouse is of brick, concrete and terra cotta construction, and designed in a late Classical revival style the flatness of which prefigures the Art Deco. It is of two-and-one-half storys in height with a raised basement and features a symmetrical, rectangular plan with the exception of a central projecting bay on the eastern or rear elevation.

Elaboration. The Conway County Courthouse, constructed 1929-30 and designed by Little Rock architect Frank W. Gibb, is a late Classical Revival design revealing both Gibb's typical preference for the classical Greek stylistic vocabulary (rather than Roman prototypes) and the rising influence of the Art Deco 'moderne.' The red brick, white concrete, and white terra cotta building is two-and-one-half storys in height with a raised basement and flat roof behind a parapet. The central hall and U-shaped stairwell divides the plan which is fundamentally rectangular except for the square projecting eastern (rear) bay.

The western or front facade is seven bays across and oriented around a central, low projecting porch and entrance. The two end bays on this elevation are of brick and feature two pilasters with terra cotta bases and capitals flanking the windows. The northern bay is completely lighted with aluminum awning windows, while the southern bay is fenestrated with two grouped pair of wood casement windows--of fifteen panes each with a seven-pane transom over each pair--on the second floor, and aluminum awning windows on the first floor. The crowning half-story is lighted with thirty-six pane fixed wood windows. The central five bays are recessed and separated by four sheer, three-quarter round, full-height columns which dominate the composition. These columns sit upon simply molded bases and feature the typically Greek quality of entasis--the subtle and gradual narrowing of the column toward the top--as they rise to their Doric capitals. Above, a concrete cornice atop a terra cotta frieze (blank except for the courthouse name) projects from the simple brick parapet, which itself is detailed only with blank terra cotta panels placed directly above the columns. The terra cotta coping--including the low central scrolls which support the flagpole--completes the elevation. The four bays flanking the entrance bay are each fenestrated with twenty-four pane fixed wood windows in the uppermost half story, two grouped pair of ten-by-ten wood casement windows with a four-pane transom over each pair on the second floor, and aluminum awning windows on the first floor. The entrance bay has an aluminum entrance door and aluminum awning windows above. The basement, which features a terra cotta water table, is also fenestrated with aluminum awning windows in all six bays flanking the central stairway, which descends through this level from the first floor entry. The only detail of note is the shallow bas-relief crest over the entrance and the concrete fluted lamp columns flanking the paved walk through the low brick porch.

The northern and southern elevations are virtually identical, differing only in window type. Each is three bays wide and features a brick basement wall relieved only by a pair

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**Section number 7 Page 2

of symmetrically placed window openings flanking a central entrance. The upper two-and-one-half storys are more ornate. The two end bays each feature a pair of brick pilasters with terra cotta bases and capitals flanking the central windows. The central bay is recessed (echoing the central recessed bay on the front of the building) and highlighted by two full-height white terra cotta pilasters set into the corners and flanking the central windows. The projecting white concrete cornice and white terra cotta frieze beneath is continued around these elevations from the front, as is the brick parapet with terra cotta coping. On the northern and southern elevations, however, this parapet features raised brick panels which respond to the brick pilasters directly beneath. All the window openings on the northern elevation are filled with aluminum awning windows; the entrance also features an aluminum entrance door. The southern elevation has seen all of its original wood windows replaced with aluminum awning windows with the exception of the second story and top half-story, which contain grouped pairs of ten-by-ten wood casement windows with a four-pane transom over each and twenty-four pane fixed wood windows, respectively.

The eastern or rear elevation is seven bays wide and ornamented only with the white concrete and terra cotta projecting cornice which continues around from the northern and southern elevations, but only so far as to cap the two brick pilasters which flank each of the two outer bays and rest atop the white concrete water table. The entire composition of the elevation is otherwise plain and symmetrical with the sole exception of the small window placed just to the south of the central window on the second floor. Only the water table and white terra cotta parapet coping relieve the plain red brick walls. Finally, all the windows on this elevation are aluminum and of either awning or sash configuration with the exception of the southern bay, which retains its original twenty-four pane fixed wood windows on the top half-story, its grouped pairs of ten-by-ten wood casement windows with a four-pane transom over each pair on the second floor, and basement windows of four-over-four wood sash.

The simple interior features plaster walls painted white and decorated only with stained wood casement windows, entries, and moldings.

The alterations have been almost exclusively limited to the replacement of exterior windows; otherwise, the building appears as it did in 1929.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

☐ nationally ☐ statewide ☒ locally

Applicable National Register Criteria ☐ A ☐ B ☒ C ☐ D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Period of Significance

1929-30

Significant Dates

1929-30

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Gibb, Frank W.

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

☒ See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

- "County Judge Moore Explains Necessity for Brokerage Fee," Morrilton Democrat, July 5, 1929, p. 1.
- "County Judge Moore Tells of Road Improvements Since January 1," Morrilton Democrat, November 22, 1929, p. 1.
- "County Officials in New Court House," Morrilton Democrat, February 28, 1930, p. 1.
- "Formal Opening of Courthouse Monday," Morrilton Democrat, March 11, 1930 p. 1.
- "New Conway County Courthouse Will Be Among Finest in the State," Morrilton Democrat, January 21, 1930, p. 1.
- "New Court House Opened Monday," Morrilton Democrat, March 11, 1930, p. 1.
- "New Court House Ready in March," Morrilton Democrat, January 3, 1930, p. 1.
- "New Courthouse Contract Given," Morrilton Democrat, July 16, 1929, p. 1.

☐ See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- ☐ State historic preservation office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other

Specify repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property Less than one

UTM References

A 1 5 5 2 3 3 6 5 3 8 8 9 6 6 0
Zone Easting Northing

C

B
Zone Easting Northing

D

☐ See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

Lots 7, 8, and 9 in Block 8, Original Town of Morrilton.

☐ See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

This boundary includes all the property historically associated with this resource.

☐ See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Kenneth Story, Architectural Historian

organization Arkansas Historic Preservation Program date October 4, 1989

street & number 225 E. Markham St., Suite 200 telephone 501-371-2763

city or town Little Rock state Arkansas zip code 72201

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 1

Summary. The Conway County Courthouse is being nominated under Criterion C with local significance. Its synthesis of the Greek, Roman and Italian Renaissance architectural vocabularies into a unified design qualifies this building as one of the most unusual conceptions of the Little Rock architect Frank W. Gibb, and the finest example of its kind in Morrilton.

Elaboration: The Conway County Courthouse, designed in 1929 by Little Rock architect Frank W. Gibb, stands as a monument to both the final years of one of Arkansas' best known architects (he died in November of 1932) and the loosening hold of the Classical Revival style on the imaginations of architects and patrons. The insistence upon the employment of Roman and Greek architectural detail for the ornamentation of an essentially rectangular Renaissance villa-type of structure while at the same time flattening that detail into the wall surface to create a more two-dimensional surface indicates a turning point for Gibb relative to his earlier work and a break in local architectural preferences with the heavier, more historically traditional Classical Revival which was popular in the first two decades of the twentieth century.

Morrilton had been the county seat of Conway County since 1883, an honor bestowed upon it through its good fortune of having the Little Rock & Fort Smith Railroad lay its tracks through the town in 1875. On January 2, 1927, the old courthouse burned and so provided the impetus for the design and planning of a replacement on the same site. However, the first attempts at letting contracts for the new building caused enough local consternation that the entire matter ended up in court and became a campaign issue in the election for county judge the next year. The source of the conflict is not clear from contemporaneous newspaper accounts, but Judge T.J. Moore was elected in 1928 largely through his condemnation of the earlier contracts and how they were drafted. In that same election an amendment was adopted to the constitution granting counties the privilege of voting a special tax for the purpose of erecting both courthouses and jails, and the new Conway County Courthouse was authorized under that act.

By July of 1929 Frank W. Gibb of Little Rock had been hired to design the new courthouse for a total fee of \$1,800. By the following week, the Hot Springs contractor John P. Jones had been awarded the contract for the construction of the edifice. The winning bid was for a total of \$97,000, which included the purchase of the brick, terra cotta trim and Batesville stone with which the building was to be built. And as was common at the time, the contractor promised to buy as many of the materials as possible from local Morrilton vendors.

Of special interest is the fact that the supervisor of construction on behalf of the county was Sam Davies, the same Sam Davies who was so instrumental in the development of Petit Jean Mountain nearby into one of Arkansas' first state parks and who also supervised the considerable Civilian Conservation Corps work which occurred there in connection with that development.

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 **Page** 2

Work proceeded ahead of schedule: the original completion date of early April was moved back to March as the construction progressed and the courthouse was officially opened on March 10, 1930, amid fanfare, speeches, and over 5,000 visitors.

The Conway County Courthouse is the best and possibly the only local example of what can only be termed a transitional interpretation of the Classical Revival style which had swept the nation in the early twentieth century. The heavy, three-dimensional detail drawn directly from Classical precedents and organized into a formal and dramatic presentation had somehow lost its enthusiasm by 1929, and even in a design from an architect who was so obviously fond of that heavy Classical Revival in his earlier work (e.g., the Greek temple form of his own home on Arch Street in Little Rock and the massive Georgian Colonial Revival aesthetics he employed in the design for the Arkansas Building in the Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis, both designed c. 1904). The Doric columns are now attached and thus only half-round, the pilaster capitals are simple and restrained, and none of the detail projects significantly to interrupt the flatness of the wall plane. This may be the only design by Gibb to show clearly the growing influence of the Art Deco aesthetic on the Classical vocabulary which would later become so popular around Arkansas and the rest of the nation, and particularly in the design of public buildings.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY NAME: Conway County Courthouse

MULTIPLE
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: ARKANSAS, Conway

DATE RECEIVED: 10/13/89 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 10/25/89
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 11/10/89 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 11/27/89
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 89001960

NOMINATOR: STATE

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

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

COMMENT WAIVER: N

☒ ACCEPT ☐ RETURN ☐ REJECT 11/13/89 DATE

Entered in the
National Register

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

RECOM./CRITERIA _____
REVIEWER _____
DISCIPLINE _____
DATE _____

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

CLASSIFICATION

☐ count ☐ resource type

STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

FUNCTION

☐ historic ☐ current

DESCRIPTION

☐ architectural classification
☐ materials
☐ descriptive text

SIGNIFICANCE

Period Areas of Significance--Check and justify below

Specific dates Builder/Architect
Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

☐ summary paragraph
☐ completeness
☐ clarity
☐ applicable criteria
☐ justification of areas checked
☐ relating significance to the resource
☐ context
☐ relationship of integrity to significance
☐ justification of exception
☐ other

BIBLIOGRAPHY

GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

☐ acreage ☐ verbal boundary description
☐ UTMs ☐ boundary justification

ACCOMPANYING DOCUMENTATION/PRESENTATION

☐ sketch maps ☐ USGS maps ☐ photographs ☐ presentation

OTHER COMMENTS

Questions concerning this nomination may be directed to

Signed _____ Phone _____

Date _____



CONWAY COUNTY COURTHOUSE
MORRISTON, ARKANSAS
PHOTOGRAPHED BY K. STORY
APRIL, 1989

NEGATIVES ON FILE AT AHPP
VIEW FROM WEST; ENTRANCE DETAIL



CONWAY COUNTY COURTHOUSE
MORRILTON, ARKANSAS

PHOTOGRAPHED BY K. STORY
APRIL, 1989

NEGATIVES ON FILE AT AHPP
VIEW FROM EAST



CONWAY COUNTY COURTHOUSE
MORRISTON, ARKANSAS
PHOTOGRAPHED BY K. STORY
APRIL, 1989
NEGATIVES ON FILE AT AHPP
VIEW FROM WEST



CONWAY COUNTY COURTHOUSE
MORRISTON, ARKANSAS
PHOTOGRAPHED BY K. STORY
APRIL, 1989
NEGATIVES ON FILE AT AHPP
VIEW FROM NORTHEAST



CONWAY COUNTY COURTHOUSE

MORRILTON, ARKANSAS

PHOTOGRAPHED BY K. STORY

APRIL, 1989

NEGATIVES ON FILE AT AHPP

VIEW FROM NORTHWEST



CONWAY COUNTY COURTHOUSE
MORRISTON, ARKANSAS
PHOTOGRAPHED BY K. STORY
APRIL, 1989
NEGATIVES ON FILE AT AHPP
VIEW FROM WEST; COLUMN DETAIL



CONWAY COUNTY COURTHOUSE
MORRISTON, ARKANSAS
PHOTOGRAPHED BY K. STORY
APRIL, 1989
NEGATIVES ON FILE AT AHPP
VIEW FROM EAST



CORWAY COUNTY COURTHOUSE
MORRISTON, ARKANSAS
PHOTOGRAPHED BY K. STORY
APRIL, 1989
NEGATIVES ON FILE AT AHPP
VIEW FROM SOUTHWEST



CONWAY COUNTY COURTHOUSE
MORRISTON, ARKANSAS
PHOTOGRAPHED BY K. STORY
APRIL, 1989
NEGATIVES ON FIVE AT AHPP
VIEW FROM SOUTHEAST



CONWAY COUNTY COURTHOUSE
MORRISTON, ARKANSAS
PHOTOGRAPHED BY K. STORY
APRIL, 1989
NEGATIVES ON FILE AT AHPP
VIEW FROM SOUTH



CONWAY COUNTY COURTHOUSE

MORRISTON, ARKANSAS

PHOTOGRAPHED BY K. STORY

APRIL, 1988

NEGATIVES ON FILE AT AHPP

INTERIOR STAIRWELL - SECURITY WINDOW



CONWAY COUNTY COURTHOUSE

MORRILTON, ARKANSAS

PHOTOGRAPHED BY K. STORY

APRIL, 1989

NEGATIVES ON FILE AT AHPP

INTERIOR; WINDOW/LOBBY DETAIL



ity

All Brands
50¢

CONWAY COUNTY COURTHOUSE

MORRISTON, ARKANSAS

PHOTOGRAPHED BY K. STORY

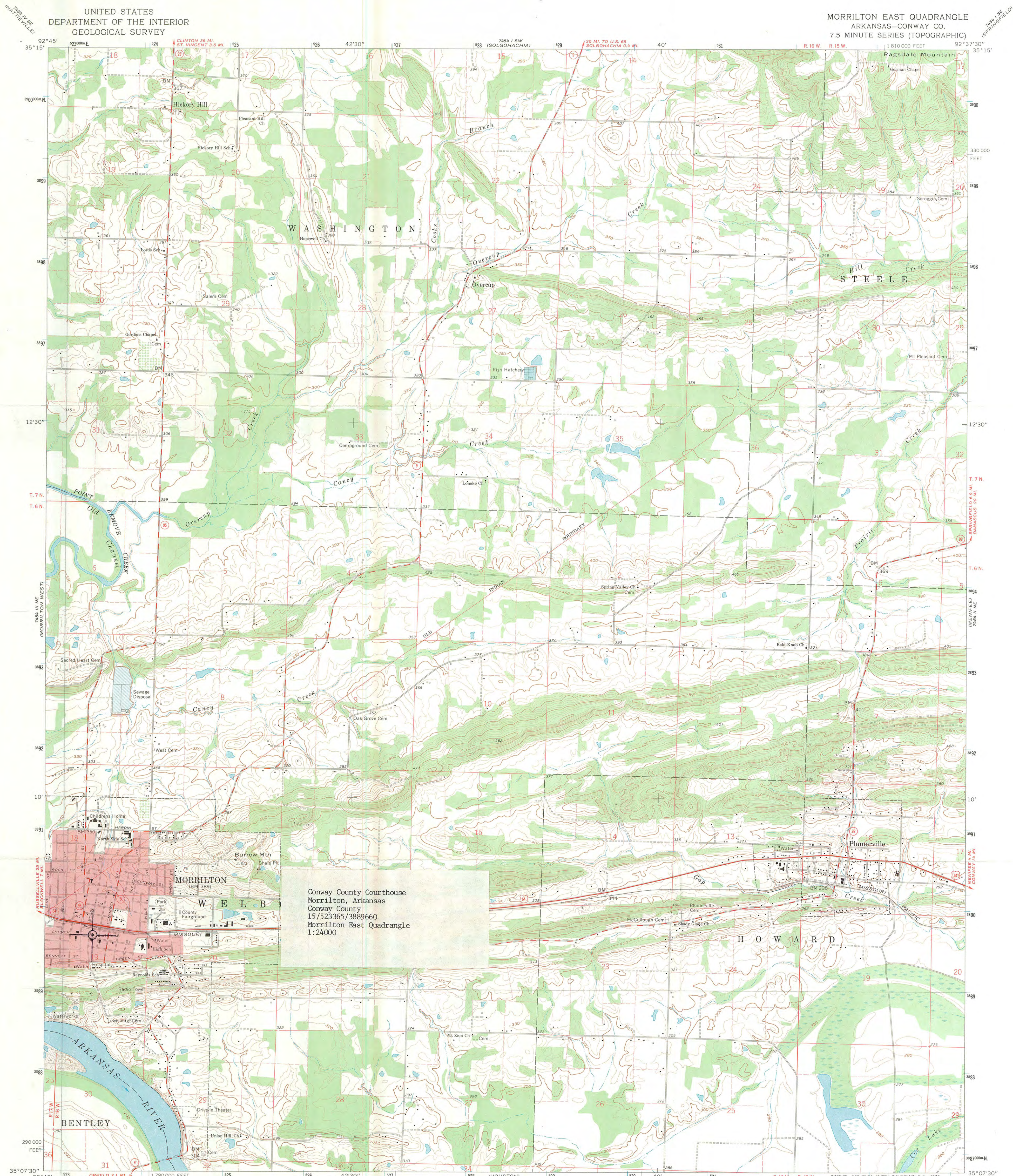
APRIL, 1989

NEGATIVES ON FILE AT AHPP

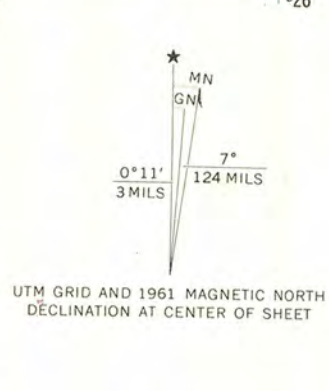
INTERIOR; SAFE DOOR DETAIL

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

MORRILTON EAST QUADRANGLE
ARKANSAS—CONWAY CO.
7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)



Maped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey
Control by USGS, USC&GS, and USCE
Topography by photogrammetric methods from aerial
photographs taken 1958. Field checked 1961
Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum
10,000-foot grid based on Arkansas coordinate system, north zone
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks,
zone 15, shown in blue
Red tint indicates area in which only landmark buildings are shown
Fine red dashed lines indicate selected fence and field lines where
generally visible on aerial photographs. This information is unchecked



THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
FOR SALE BY U. S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, DENVER, COLORADO 80225, OR WASHINGTON, D. C. 20242
AND BY THE ARKANSAS GEOLOGICAL COMMISSION, LITTLE ROCK, ARKANSAS 72201
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

ROAD CLASSIFICATION

Heavy-duty	Light-duty
Medium-duty	Unimproved dirt

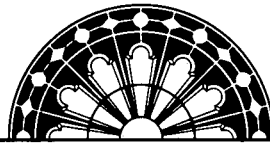
U.S. Route State Route

QUADRANGLE LOCATION

MORRILTON EAST, ARK.
N3507.5—W9237.5/7.5

1961

AMS 7454 II NW-SERIES Y884



ARKANSAS
HISTORIC
PRESERVATION
PROGRAM

OCT 13 1989

NATIONAL
REGISTER

October 10, 1989

Carol D. Shull
Chief of Registration
United States Department of the Interior
National Register of Historic Places
National Park Service
1100 "L" Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20240

RE: Conway County Courthouse
Morrlilton - Conway County, Arkansas

Dear Carol:

We are enclosing for your review the nomination for the Conway County Courthouse. The Arkansas Historic Preservation Program has complied with all applicable nominating procedures and notification requirements in the nomination process.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter.

Sincerely,

Cathy Buford
State Historic Preservation Officer

CB/KS/lss

Enclosures

