

(Oct. 1990)

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form



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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 Oliver Springs Motor Company

other names/site number Oliver Springs Theater, Daughtery Motor Company, Abston Garage (preferred)

2. Location

street & number 505 Winter Gap Avenue

NA  not for publication

city or town Oliver Springs

NA  vicinity

state Tennessee

code TN

county Roane

code 145

zip code 37840

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.)

*E. Peter Nibbel 1.*

*1-22-09*

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

SHPO, 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): \_\_\_\_\_

*James Abbott*

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

*3/10/2009*

Abston Garage  
Name of Property

Roane County, Tennessee  
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		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1		Total

**Name of related multiple property listing**  
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

**Number of Contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

0

**6. Function or Use**

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

TRANSPORTATION

---

RECREATION AND CULTURE

---

COMMERCE/TRADE

---

DOMESTIC

---

RELIGION

---



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

WORK IN PROGRESS

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**7. Description**

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

OTHER: automobile-related building

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**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETE

---

walls BRICK

---

WOOD

---

roof ASPHALT

---

other WOOD, METAL

---

**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 NA**

(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 of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

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

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

- COMMERCE
- ENTERTAINMENT/RECREATION
- TRANSPORTATION
- ARCHITECTURE

**Period of Significance**

c. 1922-1959

**Significant Dates**

- c. 1922—construction of building as garage
- c. 1942-1944—converted to entertainment venue
- c. 1951—converted back to garage

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked)

NA

**Cultural Affiliation**

NA

**Architect/Builder**

Unknown

**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): NA**

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

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State Agency
- Federal Agency
- Local Government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

MTSU Center for Historic Preservation;  
Oliver Springs Historical Society

Abston Garage  
Name of Property

Roane County, Tennessee  
County and State

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** Less than 1 acre Windrock 129 SE

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	<u>16</u>	<u>739257</u>	<u>3992105</u>	3	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
2	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	4	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>

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 Elizabeth Moore (Fieldwork Coordinator), Katie Merzbacher and Paul Hoffman (Graduate Assistants)  
organization MTSU Center for Historic Preservation date November 11, 2008  
street & number MTSU Box 80 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 Oliver Springs Historical Society (contact: Julia Daniel, 116 Hopper Rd., Oliver Springs, TN 37840)  
street & number P.O. Box 329 telephone 865-789-0846  
city or town Oliver Springs state TN zip code 37840

**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

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Abston Garage  
Roane County, Tennessee

### 7. NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

The Abston Garage is a one-story, brick commercial garage built c. 1922. It faces north-northwest on Kingston Avenue, on a corner lot at the intersection of Winter Gap Road, in Oliver Springs, Tennessee. The garage is surrounded by mostly residential structures, and the Oliver Springs Depot sits only a block southwest on Winter Gap Road. Larger in size and scale than the surrounding structures, the garage occupies roughly the entire parcel of the corner lot.

The load-bearing masonry building is constructed of local brick, exhibits decorative brick detailing throughout the building, and measures roughly 100-feet by 50-feet. It sits on a poured concrete foundation, has structural brick pilasters spaced evenly on each elevation, and has a composite shingle, gable roof with deck concealed by brick parapets on all four sides of the building. The building functioned from its construction c. 1922 until c. 1942 as a commercial auto garage and business. It was then converted to a movie theater and performance venue during the World War II years. In 1951, the building once again became an auto service/supply business. Although reversible changes were made to the building as its function changed, it retains much of its original fabric. Additionally, the extant arrangement and features of the building reflect its various historical functions.

The north façade consists of the garage storefront. At the time of the documentary photographs, plywood had been placed over the storefront window to protect it from breakage during rehabilitation work. All of the windows remain in place and are visible from the interior and in earlier photographs (see photos below). One of the few changes to the exterior of the structure, the central portion of the storefront was enclosed in the 1940s and is now composed of a 20-light window with 10-light sidelights and a 15-light, two-panel wood door. Above the entrance is a metal I-beam lintel. It was once the main drive-in entrance into the garage, but the original double doors were replaced with the existing entrance when the building was converted into a theater c. 1942. To the west of this is an original arched door opening that contains an original, recessed 12-light, two-panel wood door and a semi-circular, four-light fanlight that leads into office space for the garage. The fanlight is surrounded by concrete voussoirs with a central keystone. Brick pilasters capped with simple concrete capitals flank the door and the edges of the façade. On either end of the façade is an original large multi-light storefront window surmounted by transoms and metal I-beam lintels. The eastern end contains a 52-light storefront window topped by two seven-light transom awning windows. The western end consists of a 30-light storefront window topped by two three-light transom awning windows. To the west of the western storefront is a second recessed entrance with an original six-light, two-panel wood door with a two-light wood awning transom. The transom has been boarded from the exterior, but the original glass remains and is visible on the interior. In the eastern wall of the setback is an eight-light wood window with a two-light awning transom. Above the central entrance is a stepped parapet with a corbelled cornice. The stepped parapet hides the gable roof with deck (see photo below). A portion of the parapet is no longer extant. In the parapet are two original six-light, wood casement windows with decorative concrete lintels and keystones.

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Abston Garage  
Roane County, Tennessee



March 2008 photo of gable roof with deck

In front of the storefront façade is a poured concrete pad that once accommodated drive-up gas pumps, no longer extant. Original metal beams extend from the façade; these beams supported a full-front cantilevered wood canopy. At the time of the documentary photographs, the wood canopy that shelters the entrance had recently been taken down due to deterioration; however, it is visible in earlier photographs (see photos below). Current efforts to repair or replace the canopy based on its original appearance are in place. Along the western end of the concrete pad is a low concrete parapet wall that stretches from the façade north to a square brick column. The single brick column rests on a paneled concrete pier, has a concrete capital, and was added c. 1942 to support the cantilevered wood canopy as it began to sag. Two additional replacement wood posts were added c. 1942 to help support the central portion of the canopy. These posts were recently taken down with the canopy.



1934 photo



March 2008 photo, windows and canopy visible

The east elevation faces Winter Gap Road and is divided into five sections or bays, separated by brick pilasters. The northernmost section is a storefront that consists of a 20-light wood storefront window and a single five-panel, wood door. The storefront is original to the c. 1922 building, but the door was added c. 1942 to accommodate a snack bar located in this corner of the interior. At the time of the documentary photographs, this storefront window was also covered with plywood; it is visible in earlier photographs and on the interior (see below). Two four-light awning transoms stretch across the storefront with metal I-beam lintels. A brick column is at the northeast corner of the building, separating the façade storefront and the

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Roane County, Tennessee

east elevation storefront. The next two bays of this elevation each contain three nine-over-nine, double-hung wood windows with brick sills and lintels. The lintels are composed of soldier and rowlock bricks. A recent sign located in the pilaster separating these two bays reads, "Abston Garage 1922." Continuing south, the next section contains a large double-door service entrance of wood boards with a metal I-beam lintel. The entrance is flanked by small brick pilasters with concrete capitals. Above the double door is a wood sign that is no longer legible. Flanking the small pilasters on either side is a four-over-four, double-hung wood window. Windows are capped by concrete voussiors and keystones. The larger pilasters flanking the bay also have concrete capitals. Extended from these pilasters are metal beams that once supported a canopy that is no longer extant. Brick corbels stretch below the roofline in this section. The southernmost section of the east elevation consists of three six-over-six, double-hung wood windows with brick sills and lintels to match the ones already described. A painted wood sign in this bay reads, "R.M & P.H. Daugherty's New Used & Rebuilt Parts 1930's-70's." The "1930's" on the sign likely refers to the vintage of auto parts sold, as deed records state that the Daugherty's did not purchase the building until October 5, 1951. All windows and doors along this elevation are original to the c. 1922 structure. Two brick chimneys are visible along this wall. Tile coping runs along the parapet roofline and a brick water table composed of soldier and rowlock bricks stretch across the elevation.



March 2008 photo, storefront visible on east elevation

The south elevation faces the back alleyway and consists of a single central entrance flanked by three original, six-over-six, double-hung wood windows. Metal storm windows have been installed over the windows of this elevation. These windows have the same rowlock and soldier brick lintels seen on the east elevation. The door is a replacement wood door, but the wood surround and brick lintel are original. A transom above the door has been enclosed with plywood. Three original six-over-six, double-hung wood windows are located above the entrance in the stepped parapet. Brick pilasters divide the south elevation into three parts or bays.

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Abston Garage  
Roane County, Tennessee

On the west elevation, facing the side lot line, brick pilasters divide the elevation into five sections or bays. In southernmost section are three original window openings with brick sills. Two of the openings contain original six-over-six, double-hung wood windows, while the southernmost window has been boarded. The next two bays each contain two original six-over-six, double-hung wood windows with brick sills. The next bay contains three original window openings with brick sills that are located lower on the wall than the windows on the previous bays. These three windows are boarded on the exterior, but the top sash of one original six-over-six wood window is visible on the interior. The northernmost bay contains two original window openings with brick sills. These windows are also boarded on the exterior, but one replacement four-over-four, double-hung wood window is visible on the interior. Tile coping is present along the parapet roofline. Two chimneys are also visible on this elevation.

The interior of the building is mostly open space, originally to function as garage space. The front, or northern, end of the building is divided into three spaces, the central drive-in car entrance that is approximately 13-foot wide and a single room on either side, each measuring approximately 18-foot by 30-foot.

The central space has a poured concrete floor and leads from the central entrance into the service/sales area at the rear of the garage. The north wall of this space is the storefront and remnants of an original transom. The east and west walls of this central space are covered in original beaded board. Window and door openings were added to these walls as partition walls were installed in the 1950s and 1960s. Restoration efforts to return these walls to their original appearance are in place. Original heavy wood molding and baseboards line these walls. At the southern corner of the west wall is an engaged wood pilaster with a simple wood capital.

The northwest space was original office and auto accessory sales space. It later functioned as office and living space in the 1940s-1970s when the building served as a theater and performance venue and again as an auto supply and service building. Between 1951 and the 1970s, removable partition walls were added to this space to divide apartment and work space. The partition walls have recently been removed. The north wall is the storefront windows and recessed door. The east wall is covered in original beaded board. The west wall is structural brick in the upper portion and drywall in the lower portion. At the rear, or southern, end of this space are partition walls that were added in the 1940s to accommodate restrooms. The southern walls of the restrooms are beaded board. The floor is poured concrete and the ceiling is covered with beaded board.

The northeast space was the original auto showroom. In the 1940s, it was converted into a snack bar for the theater and bus station. In 1951 the building was converted back to an auto service and supply business, but this area remained in use as a snack bar. The north, or front, wall is the large storefront window. The front end of the east wall is the storefront window and entrance. The southern portion of the east wall in this section of the building is covered with original beaded board. The west wall is also covered with original beaded board. The southern end of this space is currently open to the rear portion of the building. Although some changes have been made, this end was likely open to allow cars to enter the show space. The floor is poured concrete and part of the ceiling is covered with original beaded board.

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Roane County, Tennessee

The remainder of the interior, to the rear of these three spaces, is an open area measuring approximately 50-feet by 70-feet. The space originally functioned as auto sales/service/repair space; the building today maintains that historic appearance (see photo below). A limited number of sales car could be stocked at the northern end of this space, while repair and service activities took place at the rear, or southern, end of the space. The large open area provided an ideal space for the conversion of the building into a movie theater c. 1942. Movies were shown on a screen at the north end of this space. This section of the interior has also served as a large performance area and general meeting space. The east, south, and west walls are exposed structural brick. A secondary service entrance is located at the center of the east wall. The floor is poured concrete. The concrete was originally level throughout the building, but a sloped floor was installed c. 1942 to accommodate the conversion of the space to a movie theater. Shades, no longer extant, over the windows blocked light during the showing of films. Coal stoves were once located along the east and west walls of this portion of the building. Although these stoves are no longer extant, the openings remain and are capped in several places. The ceiling was originally open to the roof system, but an open attic was added c. 1942 for storage and to accommodate a projector room. The projector room is extant near the center of the attic. The open attic space is accessed via wood stairs along the north wall, behind the northwest room. In 1951, the building was converted back to an auto service/sales business. Seats were removed from the large open area and the screen was taken out of the north end of this section. Few additional changes were necessary.



Interior of building, c. 1930

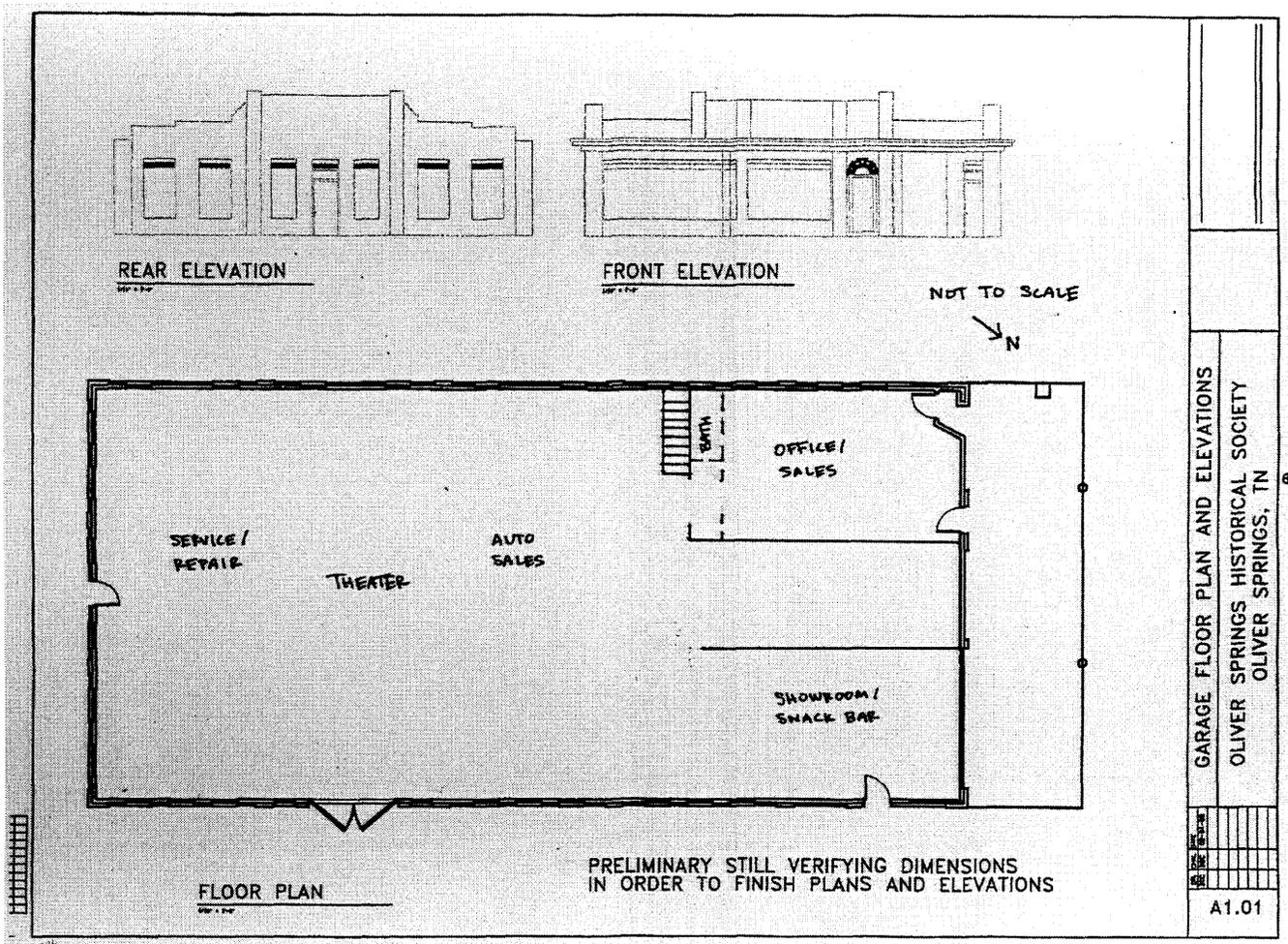
Although the function of the building has changed throughout its history, much of the original fabric remains in place. Most of the changes during the middle of the twentieth century were reversible. The building maintains integrity of materials and design, and reflects its various functions on both the exterior and interior.

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Abston Garage  
Roane County, Tennessee

## 8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Abston Garage, originally built as a commercial garage c. 1922 by Thomas Franklin (T.F.) Abston, is a familiar landmark in the community Oliver Springs, Roane County, Tennessee (2008 population approx. 3,300). It occupies a prominent location in town, on the opposite side of the railroad tracks from Main Street. It is located on Kingston Avenue, the old State Highway 61, once a major thoroughfare from Clinton to Harriman that passes through Oliver Springs. The building is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A for its local significance in Commerce, Transportation, and Entertainment/Recreation. Since its construction, the Abston Garage has served as a commercial garage to sell and service cars and auto parts, and as a bus stop both for a Greyhound and a local bus line. Capitalizing on the proliferation of the automobile in the 1910s and 1920s, it represents early trends in combined automobile dealerships and service centers. In addition to commerce and transportation, the Abston Garage also met several entertainment and social needs of citizens. Particularly important during the World War II years as a local venue for popular recreational activities, the building served as a performance venue, movie theater, bowling alley, church meeting place, and snack bar. It was important as a community center. The Abston Garage is also being nominated under Criterion C for Architecture as an intact example of an early automobile-related building. The building retains the characteristic showcase windows and interior spacing that are character defining features of the form. The period of significance ranges from its construction c. 1922 until 1959.

## HISTORICAL NARRATIVE

T. F. Abston moved to Oliver Springs in the early twentieth century, after having lived in several other small Tennessee towns including Windrock in Anderson County and Rockwood in Roane County where he had previously earned his living as an electrician and mechanic. Upon moving to Oliver Springs in the early twentieth century, Abston built and operated a coal fired power plant in town. An entrepreneur, Abston responded to the increasing prominence of the automobile as a primary means of transportation over the railroad by constructing a small automobile garage near the location of the extant building c. 1915.

Automobile garages were rapidly becoming common features of the roadside landscape during this period. First developed in the 1890s, the technique of mass production promoted by Henry Ford in the early 1900s brought about the proliferation of the automobile as a way of life by 1920. In Tennessee, the number of registered automobiles increased from 40 in 1900, to approximately 15,000 in 1913, and 102,000 in 1920.<sup>1</sup> With the increased use of the automobile, private individuals as well as governments recognized the need for supporting facilities and infrastructure. The need for better roads and the success of the Good Roads Movement in the 1890s and 1900s encouraged the establishment of the Tennessee State Highway Department in 1915. At the same time, Federal road projects including the Dixie Highway and the Memphis-to-Bristol Highway were taking top priority.<sup>2</sup> Construction of smaller state and local roads began to appear across the country, many of them following the existing railroad routes.

<sup>1</sup> Martha Carver, *Tennessee's Survey Report for Historic Highway Bridges* (Nashville: Ambrose Printing Company, 2008), 55.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, 96-97.

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Abston Garage  
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Not only were better roads a necessary response to the rise in automobile use, but also support facilities such as commercial garages, dealerships, accessory shops, and repair and service stations were needed to support motor vehicles traveling along these roadways. These facilities often responded to the somewhat romantic view of the automobile at the time and were seen as much more than a practical and utilitarian facility. They were meant to appear "modern, progressive, and financially sound" and took on the form and style of commercial buildings of the early twentieth century meant to draw customers in with large storefronts for display and sales, and a rear repair shop hidden behind attractive façades and elevations. These facilities provoked excitement within the community and became well-recognized landmarks to the modern era.<sup>3</sup>

Oliver Springs, like many towns across the state and country, followed similar patterns of development in the 1910s and 1920s. Early in the town's history, transportation had been a driving force in the development of the community of Oliver Springs since the early 1800s, when the Poplar Creek Mining and Manufacturing Company platted the town. The town was incorporated in 1903, its success due largely to its role as a railroad and transportation center for both the mining industry as well as passenger traffic. From the late nineteenth century until the mid twentieth century, the Southern Railway maintained a passenger and freight depot at Oliver Springs. The Cincinnati Southern Railway completed the first lines in Roane County in 1879, and the Oliver Springs depot was constructed in 1896. The depot served to bring passengers to Oliver Springs to take advantage of the famous mineral springs that drove the local economy until 1905. The depot also transported coal from nearby Windrock Mountain, where the mines were the county's largest employers from 1904 until World War II.<sup>4</sup>

Although passenger traffic on trains running through Oliver Springs between Harriman and Knoxville did not end until 1968, the automobile in the 1910s and 1920s began to replace the train as the primary mean of transportation. Road construction and improvements made Kingston Avenue, or State Highway 61, in Oliver Springs a portion of the main automobile route for people traveling between Knoxville, Clinton, Oliver Springs, Harriman, and Kingston. As this automobile route developed and traffic increased, the need for auto-related facilities arose. In Oliver Springs, T.F. Abston decided to capitalize on this need and constructed his small garage in 1915. Between 1915 and 1920, his small business saw great success and Abston recognized the potential for a larger business venture based on automobile sales and service.

In 1922, Abston and his business partner Johnny Cox constructed the Abston Garage, then known as the Oliver Springs Motor Company, to be a combined automobile dealership, service and repair garage, and accessories shop. This combination of functions into a single commercial garage was typical of early automobile support facilities.<sup>5</sup> Manuals produced in the 1910s and 1920s assisted potential commercial garage operators in the construction and arrangement of these types of facilities. Of particular note, the *Dyke's Automobile and Gasoline Engine Encyclopedia*, published in 1916 by Andrew Lee Dyke, provided

<sup>3</sup> John A. Jakle and Keith A. Sculle, *Motoring: The Highway Experience in America* (Athens: The University of Georgia Press, 2008), 86-87.

<sup>4</sup> Bruce R. Schulman, *Oliver Springs Historical Society Quarterly Bulletin*, located online at <http://oshistorical.com/depot.htm>.

<sup>5</sup> Jakle, *Motoring*, 86.

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Abston Garage  
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guidance to Abston as he planned for the new garage.<sup>6</sup> The Abston Garage most closely resembles that of a 60-foot by 100-foot 15-car garage with the description, "a one story building for a garage, salesroom, accessory store and shop... The entrance to the garage is exposed so that light can be obtained from two sides into showroom. Thus you have practically all the advantages of being on a corner. There is a small accessory store divided off from the showroom... a stockroom, private and general offices, rooms for men and women, garage space for fifteen cars... a shop big enough for five or more cars..."<sup>7</sup> The Abston Garage is not quite as large as the one Dyke described, but the general layout and function of the building follows the manual closely.

598

## DYKE'S INSTRUCTION NUMBER FORTY-FIVE.

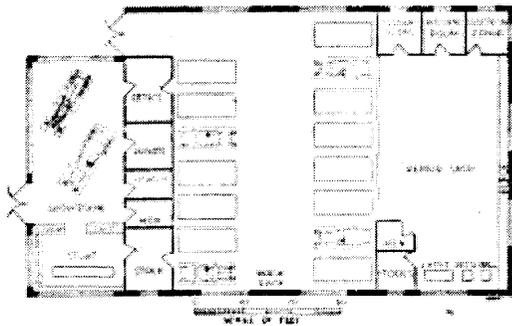


Fig. 1.—Plan view. The cars in front, near the shop doors should be the ones which are away from the garage the most.

The entrance to the garage is exposed so that light can be obtained from two sides into showroom. Thus, you have practically all the advantages of being on a corner.

There is a small accessory store divided off from the showroom by showcases and an arch, a stock room, private and general offices, rooms for men and women, garage space for fifteen cars, washrack, a shop big enough for five or more cars, and equipped with vulcanizing, welding and electrical rooms.

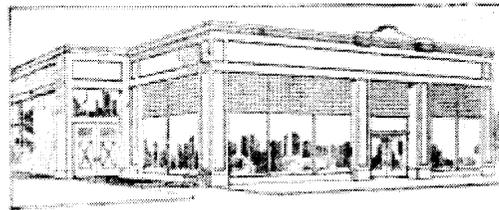


Fig. 2.—Front view. Note the drive way to garage, gives the show room a corner appearance and light.

### A 60x100 Garage Building.

Figs. 1 and 2: A one story building for a garage, salesroom, accessory store and shop—The scale drawing is shown in illustration to the left. The size of the lot is 60x100 feet. The building is erected so that another story can be added.

From *Dyke's Automobile and Gasoline Engine Encyclopedia*, 1920 edition, accessed 11/20/08  
<http://books.google.com/books>

T. F. Abston also utilized some of his own electrical and mechanical skills in the construction of the building. Beginning in the 1910s, Abston owned and operated a coal fired power plant that supplied power to residents of Oliver Springs. The cost was \$0.25 per month for one electric bulb. Abston's early electric company played an instrumental role in bringing power to many of the town's buildings and Abston used these electric innovations as well as plumbing innovations in the construction of his commercial garage. Instead of relying on an individual well for water, Abston was innovative and used his expertise to install a water faucet, no longer extant, in the corner of the building that enabled him to pipe running water into the

<sup>6</sup> Caroline Abston Kelly, granddaughter of T.F. Abston, provided photocopies of sections of *Dyke's Automobile and Gasoline Engine Encyclopedia*, that Abston used in planning the garage.

<sup>7</sup> Andrew Lee Dyke, *Dyke's Automobile and Gasoline Engine Encyclopedia* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan, 1916), 598.



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The building was owned and operated as a commercial garage by the Abston family from c. 1922 until c. 1942 when it was sold to M.D. Williams, in part to settle the Abston estate after the death of Mrs. Thomas Franklin Abston.

Purchased by Williams in 1942, the second phase of significance for the Abston Garage began with the development and growth of Oak Ridge in Anderson County. This nearby population boom contributed an influx of people into many of the smaller nearby communities, including Oliver Springs, which sits at the intersection of Anderson, Morgan, and Roane counties. In 1940, prior to the development of Oak Ridge, Anderson County had a population of 26,504. With the creation of the Clinton Engineer Works and the subsequent construction of Oak Ridge, the population of Anderson County reached 100,000 in 1945, decreasing to 59,407 by 1950. According to U.S. Census data, Roane County's population increased from 27,795 in 1940 to 31,665 in 1950, and the population of Oliver Springs increased from 855 to 1,089 in that same period.

Although most Manhattan Project scientists and workers resided within the boundaries of Oak Ridge, nearby towns felt the effects of the population growth during the height of the war years. The project site required thousands of construction workers to build the plants and city. Not directly involved with the operation of the site, its purpose was kept secret from many of the construction workers. Such workers resided in the small towns surrounding Oak Ridge. This included Oliver Springs, which was only approximately six miles northwest of Oak Ridge and served as one of the gates into the project site via Tennessee Highway 62.<sup>12</sup> These nearby towns also supplied material to the Oak Ridge site. Oliver Springs was particularly important in supplying cement to Oak Ridge; in addition, the town served as a gateway for materials being shipped to the Oak Ridge site from other locations.<sup>13</sup>

In order to accommodate construction workers traveling daily to and from Oak Ridge, Verldon Edward Coker established the Coker Bus Line in the early 1940s. According to a bus ticket from the 1940s, the line connected Oak Ridge to stations at Oliver Springs, Oakdale Jct., Coalfield, Petros Jct., Wartburg, Lancing Rd., Sunbright, and Glenmary, all in nearby Tennessee counties. The Abston Garage served as the station for Oliver Springs. Running from the early 1940s until the end of World War II, the Coker Bus Line and the Oliver Springs Station, which was in the Abston Garage, played a significant role in connecting Oliver Springs to Oak Ridge.<sup>14</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Charles W. Johnson and Charles O. Jackson, *City Behind A Fence: Oak Ridge, Tennessee, 1942-1946* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1981), 45-47, 27.

<sup>13</sup> Carolyn Abston Kelly, oral interview by Katie Merzbacher, 24 March 2008..

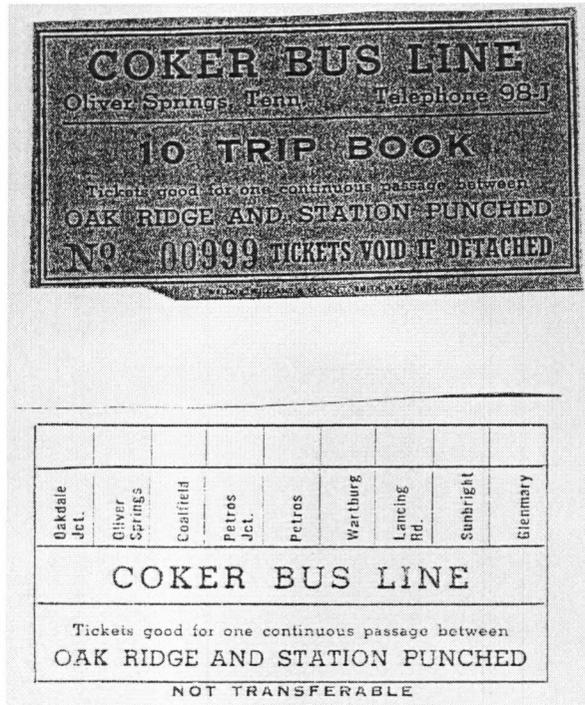
<sup>14</sup> "Verldon Edward Coker," Obit., *The Oak Ridger*, 1 Mar 2004.

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1940s Coker Bus Line Ticket

Also in regard to transportation, the building gained importance as the town's principal Greyhound bus stop on the route from Kingston to Knoxville. Located on Kingston Avenue, the Greyhound bus stop at the Abston Garage connected local residents to Harriman, then Kingston, where they could travel to Knoxville. The garage remained important in this capacity until the construction of Interstate-40 in the 1960s. Little information has been found regarding the operation of the Greyhound Bus Line through Oliver Springs, but a 2007 letter from Nannie L. Hopper recalls her trip from Jefferson City, Tennessee, to Oliver Springs on the Greyhound bus in 1943.<sup>15</sup>

This community growth during the World War II years also contributed to an increased need for entertainment venues, on which M.D. Williams capitalized when he purchased the garage in early 1942. He recognized the need for entertainment and recreation and quickly converted the garage to a movie theater that had fully equipped projectors with sound effects. Along with the wartime population boom, the increasing popularity of movies in the 1940s and the desire for entertainment during war time precipitated the establishment of entertainment venues across the country. Thus, the movie theater in Oliver Springs became a major local attraction during the World War II years.<sup>16</sup> Movies were shown in the rear portion of the building, with the screen located at the north end of the large open space. At this time, the front central garage entrance was replaced with the existing storefront and single door entrance. Williams added a

<sup>15</sup> Nannie L. Hopper, Letter of Memory to the Oliver Springs Historical Society, 2007.

<sup>16</sup> Snyder Roberts, *Oliver Springs: Old Timers and Days Back When, Fifty to Seventy-Five Years Ago* (N.P.: the author, 1979), p.56.

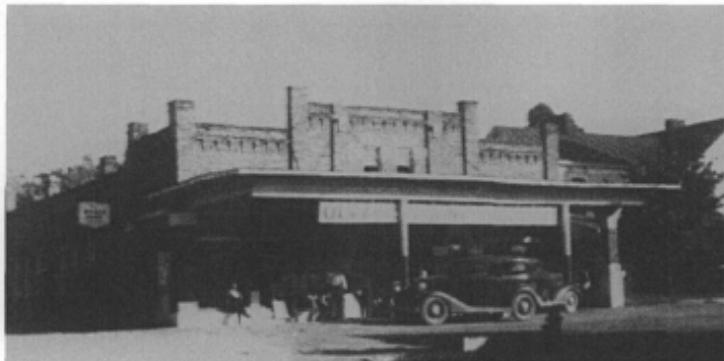
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sloped, poured concrete floor so that seats in the rear were higher than those in the front. The theater seats were movable chairs and were taken out of the building after the theater closed. Williams also opened a snack bar in the northeast corner room, where the auto showroom was previously located to cater to theater-goers and bus travelers, as well as the general population of Oliver Springs. The theater was "well attended, and profitable during the period of W.W. II."<sup>17</sup> Williams operated the Oliver Springs Theater in this building until he was able to erect a modern theater at the corner of Spring and Main streets c. 1950.<sup>18</sup>



1940s photo of Oliver Springs Theater

The Abston Garage also served as a live entertainment venue that drew popular acts during this time. Of particular note, the Carter Family appeared at the Abston Garage numerous times during the 1940s. They were invited by Williams and the Miles Family, a local group of singers, who opened for and introduced the Carter Family. The Carter Family returned to the theater later in the 1940s.<sup>19</sup> The group was instrumental in the shaping of country music and, among other awards and honors, has been inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame, the International Bluegrass Music Hall of Honor, and the Grammy Hall of Fame.

Another entertainment venture for Williams, he added a single-lane bowling alley to the building during this time. Little information is known about its operation as a bowling alley, but it is fondly remembered as a brief phase by several community members. Also during the 1940s, the Abston Garage was also utilized as a temporary place of worship for the Oliver Springs Church of Christ until the congregation's permanent building was completed.<sup>20</sup>

<sup>17</sup> Ibid, 56.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, 56- 57.

<sup>19</sup> Cleopatra Brown, Letter of Memory to the Oliver Springs Historical Society, 2007.

<sup>20</sup> Simpson, "Aging Abston Garage may have shining future ahead."

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Serving a variety of transportation, social, and recreational functions during the World War II years, the building became a well-recognized landmark within the community. It responded to the increase in population and the need for entertainment venues during the World War II years as facilities such as movie theaters began appearing across the country.

M.D. Williams owned the Abston Garage for approximately a decade before he sold it to Ralph M. Daugherty in 1951. Daugherty adapted the building to again utilize it as a garage, and operated it as such until the 1970s. The garage, the Daugherty Motor Company, functioned as a repair and service shop and a used car, auto parts, and accessories sales center. Following World War II, car dealerships were mostly relocated to strips at the edge of town, replacing downtown commercial garages such as the one that had operated from the Abston Garage in the 1920s and 1930s.<sup>21</sup> However, service centers and parts stores remained necessary elements of the automobile landscape of cities and towns. The Daugherty's responded to this need by returning the Abston Garage to an automobile-oriented facility in 1951. As advertised in 1975, it bought and sold used cars; sold new and used parts; specialized in auto air conditioning service and repair; and dealt with paint and body repair, transmissions, break service, and radiator repair.<sup>22</sup> Daugherty also operated a wrecker service out of the building.

While focusing primarily on automobile service and parts, Daugherty also reopened the snack bar to be supervised by his wife, Pauline. The snack bar in the northeast room remained a popular gathering place for the community through the 1970s. In addition to its use as a garage and snack bar, the Daugherty's added partition walls and temporarily lived in a section of the building. The non-structural changes were primarily made in the northwest corner room where the original office was located. In this space, Daugherty added several removable partition walls and put openings in the east wall of the northwest room. Daugherty removed the theater seats and screen from the rear section, leaving an open auto service space in the rear portion of the building. Few structural changes were necessary to convert the building into the garage.

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<sup>21</sup> Jakle, *Motoring*, 90.

<sup>22</sup> Daugherty Motor Company Advertisement, *Oak Ridge Citizen*, Aug 19, 1975.

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Interior of Snack Bar, 1950s

Daugherty operated the garage and snack bar through the 1970s. After his death, Pauline Daugherty owned the Abston Garage until it was purchased in 2007 for the Oliver Springs Historical Society. Between c. 1980 until 2007, the building was primarily utilized as storage space.

Significance in Architecture

The Abston Garage is an early example of a commercial garage in a small town. Its form is typical of its function—aside from a front office area, the interior is mostly open space accessed by a central drive-in opening. Windows stretch the length of the façade, providing natural light to the interior of the structure. First known as the Oliver Springs Motor Company, the building was constructed with bricks from a local manufacturer, the now defunct Oliver Springs Brick Plant.<sup>23</sup> The extant Oliver Springs Banking Company Building (NR 4/14/1992) is also constructed of bricks from the local plant.

The building reflects common trends in automobile-oriented facilities of the early twentieth century. Commercial garages such as this were not only utilitarian, they were meant to draw customers based on the modern and progressive nature of the building. The façade of the Abston Garage took on the form and styling of typical early twentieth century commercial buildings consisting of a prominent storefront with a decorative stepped parapet with a corbelled cornice. The automobile showroom occupied a prominent location at the corner of the building and lot line. The storefront windows on both the north façade and east elevation drew attention to the product for sale. Although the central drive-in entrance was replaced c. 1942 with a storefront and single door entrance, the commercial character of the exterior remains intact.

<sup>23</sup> Cindy Simpson, "Aging Abston garage may have shining future ahead," Roane County News, 7 November 2007, p.5.

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On the interior, the Abston Garage again reflects a typical early twentieth century commercial garage in its arrangement. T.F. Abston, the original owner, looked to manuals such as *Dyke's Automobile and Gasoline Engine Encyclopedia*, published in 1916 by Andrew Lee Dyke. This manual set forth the proper arrangement of commercial garages, describing the layout of buildings to fit a particular lot size. The Abston Garage follows the plan for a one story garage, office, salesroom, and accessory store and shop. The office and sales area, as in typical commercial buildings of the time, exhibits decorative detailing meant to attract customers and present an image of a financially sound business. Features such as beaded board walls and decorative, although minimal, wood molding and baseboards in the front office and sales areas represent the commercial attractiveness of the building. Although alterations have been made as partitions were added to the interior in the 1950s, much of the original fabric remains in place and the original arrangement is clearly evident.

The building is currently undergoing restoration. This includes removing the temporary partition walls on the interior and returning the floor plan to its original arrangement of a central drive-in with flanking rooms at the front and a rear open area. Renovations are revealing the original beaded board wall covering and decorative molding in the front section of the interior. In addition, efforts are being made to stabilize and repair sagging roof trusses, the west exterior wall, and roofing fabric. The Oliver Springs Historical Society plans to use the building as a community center, hosting community events and installing exhibits and displays on Oliver Springs's history.

Throughout its nearly one hundred-year history, the Abston Garage has served the community of Oliver Springs in a variety of capacities. Whether as a garage, snack bar, bus stop, movie theater, or place of worship, the Abston Garage was an active part of the community of Oliver Springs that illustrates the importance of commercial garages to the automobile landscape in the twentieth century and the significance of entertainment and recreation during the World War II years.<sup>24</sup> On the exterior and interior, the majority of the existing materials are original to the building as most changes have been non-structural and are removable. The building maintains a high degree of integrity of material, design, location, workmanship, and association.

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<sup>24</sup> All information not otherwise cited in this narrative is the product of an interview conducted by the author with Carolyn Abston Kelly in Oliver Springs on March 24, 2008.

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## 10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

### Verbal Boundary Description and Justification

The nominated property is comprised of a parcel measuring less than one-acre, as shown on the accompanying Roane County Tax Map as parcel 073001E D 00900. The nominated boundaries are representative of all the historic and current property associated with the Abston Garage.

0  20 ft north 



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### PHOTOGRAPHS

Photographs by: Elizabeth Moore  
MTSU Center for Historic Preservation  
Date: 28 October 2008  
Digital Files: Tennessee Historical Commission  
Nashville, Tennessee

- 1 of 16 North façade, photographer facing south-southeast
- 2 of 16 North façade and east elevation, photographer facing south
- 3 of 16 East elevation, photographer facing west
- 4 of 16 East elevation, photographer facing west-southwest
- 5 of 16 South elevation, photographer facing west-northwest
- 6 of 16 West elevation, photographer facing north
- 7 of 16 West elevation and north façade, photographer facing south-southeast
- 8 of 16 Interior, photographer facing north-northwest toward front rooms
- 9 of 16 Interior, Detail of west wall of Drive-in area, photographer facing west
- 10 of 16 Interior, Office/Sales room, photographer facing north-northwest
- 11 of 16 Interior, Showroom/Snack Bar, photographer facing north-northwest
- 12 of 16 Interior, Showroom/Snack Bar storefront, photographer facing east-northeast
- 13 of 16 Interior, Sales/Service/Repair/Theater space, photographer facing south-southeast
- 14 of 16 Interior, Sales/Service/Repair/Theater space, photographer facing west-southwest
- 15 of 16 Interior, Detail of Coal Stove with cap on west wall, photographer facing west
- 16 of 16 Interior, Attic, photographer facing north-northwest