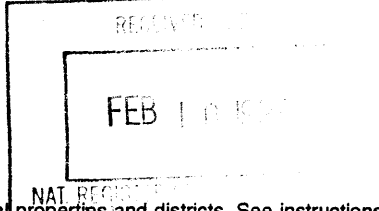


240

United States Department of the Interior Registration Form

This form is for use in nomination 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 Sevierville Post Office

other name/site number Sevier County Heritage Museum

2. Location

street & number 167 Bruce Street N/A not for publication

city or town Sevierville N/A vicinity

state Tennessee code TN county Sevier code 155 zip code 37862

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Herbert L. Hays 2/6/97
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 commenting official/Title Date

State or Federal Agency and Bureau Date

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):

Edson H. Beall 3/14/97
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

Name of Property

County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		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)

GOVERNMENT/post office

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

RECREATION AND CULTURE/museum

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Other: WPA Colonial Revival

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation concrete block

walls brick

roof metal

other marble

terrazzo

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Name of Property

County and State

8. Statement of Significance**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

N/A

- 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.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

POLITICS/GOVERNMENT

ETHNIC HERITAGE: African American

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1940 - 1947

Significant Dates

1940

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Louis A. Simon, Supervising Architect (WPA)

Neil Melick, Supervising Engineer (WPA)

J, F, & N McMahan Construction Company, Builder

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 on the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by HABS #
- recorded by HAER #

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

Sevierville Post Office

Sevier County, Tennessee

Name of Property

County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property approx. one-half acre

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

USGS Quad: Pigeon Forge, Tennessee (1970)

UTM grid with Zone, Easting, and Northing columns for rows 1, 2, 3, and 4. Includes a checkbox for '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

Form fields for name/title (Kimberley Murphy/Historic Preservation Planner), organization (East Tennessee Development District), date (December 1996), street & number (P.O. Box 19806), telephone (615-584-8553), city or town (Knoxville), state (TN), and zip code (37939).

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 the SHPO or FPO.)

Form fields for name/title (Sevier County/Larry Waters, County Executive), street & number (125 Court Avenue), telephone (423-435-6136), city or town (Sevierville), state (TN), and zip code (37862).

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 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 20503.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1

Sevierville Post Office, Sevier County, Tennessee

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

The Sevierville Post Office is a one story Colonial Revival style Federal building constructed by the Works Projects Administration (WPA) in 1940. The building is located two blocks east of the courthouse on the corner of Bruce Street and Park Road in Sevierville.

The former post office has a poured concrete foundation, brick walls laid up in five-course common bond, and a standing seam metal roof with a centered cupola of wood construction. There is a circa 1955 addition to the rear (south) elevation. The grounds are landscaped with nandina, magnolia, dogwood, and assorted hollies. The building has been home to the Sevier County Heritage Museum since 1995.

The primary (north) elevation has five symmetrical bays of four windows with a centered entry. Windows are 12/12 double hung with marble lintels and sills. The recessed arched entrance is surrounded by Ionic columns and an entablature. The double entry doors are original metal and glass. Above the doors is an arch and in the arch field is an applied concrete sculpture of an eagle with spread wings. There is a denticulated cornice below the roof eaves. The cupola is constructed of wood and has 6/6 double-hung windows and a hip roof with a ridge. There are brick quoins decorating the corner edges of the building.

Brick window wells are located along the front (north) and east side of the building. The well walls are capped with marble. The steps leading to the entry are also of marble. Wrought iron handrails are located on both sides and there are original Colonial Revival carriage-style lanterns on posts flanking the bottom steps. The window wells on the northeast corner of the building contain stairs to the basement.

The east elevation faces Park Road and has five bays, three of which are blind arches. The three middle window openings are covered with brick laid up in a latticework pattern. This may have been done when the addition was constructed circa 1955. These latticed openings are the same size as the actual windows, however, they appear to cover smaller windows. The rear section of the east wall, containing three bays, is recessed a few inches from the front of the building and the roof appears to be flat.

The circa 1955 addition is recessed one bay width from the east elevation and attached to the rear (south) wall of the historic structure. This addition functions primarily as a loading dock. The five-course common bond of the original building is replicated in the addition. The roof is flat and is not decorated with a cornice. The style of this addition is utilitarian and contains no decorative elements. There is a small parking lot adjacent to the addition, accessible from Park Road. The parking lot is screened by a large magnolia tree and other plantings and is not visible from Bruce Street. Neither of these additions overwhelms the historic section.

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 2

Sevierville Post Office, Sevier County, Tennessee

The south elevation is the back wall of the circa 1955 addition. Access is very limited by large bushes and trees. The building is sited very close to the northwest corner of the adjacent former Townsend Motor Company & John Sevier Service Station (1930), also constructed by the McMahans.

The west elevation runs the length of both sections, with five bays in the original section, and none in the circa 1955 addition. There is a marble belt course on the original structure which runs at the same level as the window well caps on the primary elevation. As in the east elevation, the rear two bays are recessed a few inches from the front section. The wall of the circa 1955 addition is flush with the original structure and laid up in the same five-course bond. The only opening in this section is a small vent near the roofline. The adjacent yard is nicely landscaped with flowering trees and lush grass.

The interior of the post office retains the original rectangular plan and nearly all of its original details. The entrance into the lobby is through a wood and glass vestibule with a door opening at each end. The original glass and wood doors from these openings are missing, but the museum is interested in finding appropriate replacements. The vestibule retains the original radiators and cast iron grates. Many of the WPA post offices in East Tennessee have these vestibules. The original work area of the post office is separated from the lobby by a wall with a service window and counter. At the east end is the former post-master's office, which is now used as the museum's administration office. The wainscoting is of marble and the floors are green terrazzo.

The windows and doors are framed in darkly-stained fluted wood surrounds with bull's eye corner blocks. The interior doors in the building are of solid wood in wood frames. One door leads to the original post-master's office at the east end of the lobby and is flanked by two original glass and wood frame display cases. The other original door leads from the lobby to the work area. There are two more glass and wood frame display cases on the west wall of the lobby. These display cases retain the original gold lettering, spelling out "BULLETINS." Original radiators remain below the windows in the lobby and the original decorative metal grates remain at ceiling height in the walls. The original metal mail boxes were removed when the post office was deeded to the county and have been replaced by the museum with commemorative glass blocks engraved with the names of museum supporters. No original fabric was removed when the glass blocks were put in place. Missing or damaged marble was replaced when the glass boxes were installed.

The original work area has been enlarged from its original size. The original size of the building can be seen only on the exterior and is evidenced by the change from the hipped roof to a flat roof. The entire work area is paneled with tongue-and-groove wainscoting around the perimeter of the room. The original vault remains on the east wall. The mail-sorting tables and bins, which were of temporary construction, have been replaced by museum exhibits. Original incandescent lights were removed by the Postal Service early in the building's history and replaced with metal "ice-tray" fluorescent lighting fixtures. The museum has retained the original hardwood floors and circa 1950 lighting fixtures.

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 3

Sevierville Post Office, Sevier County, Tennessee

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Constructed in 1940, the Sevierville Post Office is significant under criterion A in the area of government because it represents the impact of New Deal on the built landscape, and criterion C as an excellent example of a federal building constructed by the Works Progress Administration (WPA) during the Great Depression. The building was constructed by the J, F, and N McMahan Construction Company, a prominent and influential African-American construction firm in Sevierville and is also eligible for listing in the National Register under criterion C as a good representation of their work.

The WPA was established during Franklin Roosevelt's first administration to provide work relief to unemployed professionals. From the beginning, the concept of work relief rather than direct aid was an intrinsic part of the planning of the New Deal. Under the WPA, new federal buildings were constructed in cities and towns across America, a majority of them being post offices. In its final report of 1939, the Public Works Administration (PWA) characterized the local post office as the most typical and widely used of its building projects, representing one-eighth of all PWA construction projects. The PWA was created in 1933 to disburse funds for construction projects that would benefit the public.

Almost all designs for Federal buildings located outside the District of Columbia originated within the PWA. Designs and plans were standardized and tended towards a simplified classical style or the Colonial Revival style. These styles were so dominant that they became symbolic of the Federal government itself. The standard plan included a public lobby separated from a large workroom. Some projects reserved one per cent of their budgets for public art with the result that many public buildings were decorated with paintings or sculptures. The post office in Rockwood, Roane County, for example, sports a terra cotta relief sculpture by New York artist Christian Heinrich. Other federal buildings in East Tennessee which were embellished are located in Jefferson City (1941), LaFollette (1939), Lenoir City (1940), and Sweetwater (date unknown). For reasons unknown, Sevierville's post office was never decorated in such a manner. America's entrance into World War II ended funding for many public works projects as monies were diverted for war preparations.

In any town requesting a new post office, postal receipts for the previous ten years were required to exceed \$10,000 annually. A site was selected by Federal officials in consultation with the local postmaster. Site studies were made and information was gathered and analyzed by a Public Buildings Administration "architectural group" which included a designer, and mechanical and structural engineers. The contract for the construction went to the lowest bidder. In Sevierville, J. F. and N. McMahan Construction was awarded the bid to construct a new post office in 1940.

J, F, and N McMahan Construction Company was an African-American firm responsible for many of the brick structures in Sevier County. The McMahans were also active in politics and education, and were respected by whites and African-Americans throughout the community. The firm, incorporated around the turn of the century, was named for James, Fred, and Newt McMahan, three brothers who were prominent builders and businessmen.

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 4

Sevierville Post Office, Sevier County, Tennessee

The McMahans were part of an African-American brick masonry tradition in Sevier County which dated to the early settlement period. At least 163 slaves were living "south of the French Broad River" in 1791, according to the first Federal census. By 1830, Sevier County had a population of 5,717, of which 382 (6.7%) were slaves. The state slave population in 1830 was 20.8 per cent, and in East Tennessee, the slave population was 9.1 per cent, so Sevier County reflected a below average number of slaves. In 1850, there were 403 slaves and 67 free African-Americans out of a county population of 6,920. By 1860 the county population swelled to 9,122, with 538 slaves and 64 free African-Americans (still, only 5.9%). One reason for the growth in population between 1850 and 1860 may have been the introduction of new crops like rice, tobacco, and cotton.¹

This new agricultural wealth increased the number and size of the farms and houses in the county. Slave labor accounted for most of the brick production, cabinetry, and furniture production in Sevier County. The most influential African-American tradesman in Sevier County after the Civil War was Isaac Dockery (1832 - 1910). Never enslaved, he worked as a merchant clerk for Henry M. Thomas in Sevierville and married one of Thomas' slaves, Charlotte "Lottie" Thomas (1838 - 1913). Their marriage produced eight sons and seven daughters. Dockery taught brick masonry to his sons, his sons-in-law, and even his daughters. His daughter Louisa married Paris Witt McMahan, who learned brick masonry from his father-in-law and passed it on to three of his sons - James, Fred, and Newt. They formed a construction company and were responsible for the construction of the following buildings in Sevier County, all constructed of brick:

Pleasant View School (1920)	Townsend Motor Company & John Sevier Service Station (1930)
Pigeon Forge Methodist Church (1921)	Rawlings Funeral Home (1937)
Murphy Collegiate Institute (1923)	Dwight Wade House (1940)
Murphy Collegiate Institute Girls' Dormitory (1925)	Sevierville Post Office (1940)
First Baptist Church of Sevierville (1926)	Cash Hardware (1941)
First Bank of Sevierville (192?)	Beech Springs School (1952)
Watson Motor Company building (1928)	

The Watson Motor Company building, Townsend Motor Company & John Sevier Service Station, the Dwight Wade House, and Cash Hardware are all located within one block of the Sevierville Post office.

Fred McMahan was recognized as the head of the company. After graduating from the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana with a Master's in Architectural Engineering, he established a small farm in Sevier County on Robert Henderson Road. McMahan donated a portion of this farm for the establishment of Pleasant View School. The McMahan Construction Company also donated the labor and materials needed for the construction of this Rosenwald School. The school is distinguished as the first brick school in Sevier County (Rosenwald schools were usually of frame construction), and the largest school for African-Americans in the county. Fred's

¹Robbie D. Jones, "African American Builders of Sevier County, Tennessee,"
Unpublished manuscript, 1996.

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 5

Sevierville Post Office, Sevier County, Tennessee

wife, Mary McMahan taught at the school from 1922 until her retirement in 1960. She was the first woman in Sevier County to earn a Master's degree.

Fred McMahan also constructed a small house on Joy Street in Sevierville which was commissioned by Dwight Wade. The house was inspired by a design the Wades had seen on their honeymoon to the 1939 World's Fair in New York. The "Town of Tomorrow" exhibit featured futuristic homes whose plans were available for purchase. Wade ordered a set of blueprints from architect Verna Cook-Salimonsky and commissioned Fred McMahan to construct the house which still stands today.

The Sevierville Post Office was constructed in 1940, shortly after the Wade House. The building stands as a testament to the fine workmanship of the McMahan Construction Company. The use of marble to trim the building is prolific. The marble itself has a pale pinkish hue and may have come from nearby Blount County, which is known for its pink marble. The decorative fluting in the widow surrounds is another distinctive characteristic of this post office. The interior retains the original terrazzo floors, marble wainscoting, wood trim, doors, and perhaps its most defining feature, the entry vestibule.

The Postal Service sold the building to Sevier County for \$75,000.00 on 1989 when a new facility was constructed, and placed an historic preservation covenant on the property requiring review and approval by the State Historic Preservation Officer for any future actions taken concerning the property.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 6

Sevierville Post Office, Sevier County, Tennessee

BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Bloxom, Marguerite P., comp. *Pickaxe and Pencil: References for the Study of the WPA*. Washington, DC: Library of Congress, 1982.

History of Post Office Construction, 1900 - 1940. Washington, DC: U.S. Postal Service, 1982.

Hull, Howard. *Tennessee Post Office Murals*. Johnson City, TN: The Overmountain Press, 1996.

Jester, Thomas C., ed. *Twentieth-Century Building Materials: History and Conservation*. New York: McGraw-Hill Companies, 1995.

Jones, Robbie D. "African American Builders of Sevier County, Tennessee." Unpublished manuscript, 1996.

Much of the information on African-Americans in Sevier County, specifically the McMahan family, was derived from this unpublished manuscript. Mr. Jones has done extensive research on the history of Sevier County and will publish a book on the subject in spring 1997.

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The Mountain Press. February 18, 1996.

Sims, David Lee. *In the Forks of the Little Pigeon River, A History of Sevierville's Business and Residential Districts*. Sevierville, TN: Nandel Publishing Company, 1988.

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 10 Page 7

Sevierville Post Office, Sevier County, Tennessee

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary is shown as the shaded property on the accompanying tax map of Sevierville.

Boundary Justification

The boundary is the legal boundary of the post office as described in the Sevier County Courthouse, Sevierville.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 10 Page 8

Sevierville Post Office, Sevier County, Tennessee



SEVIERVILLE POST OFFICE



SCALE: 1" = ± 250'

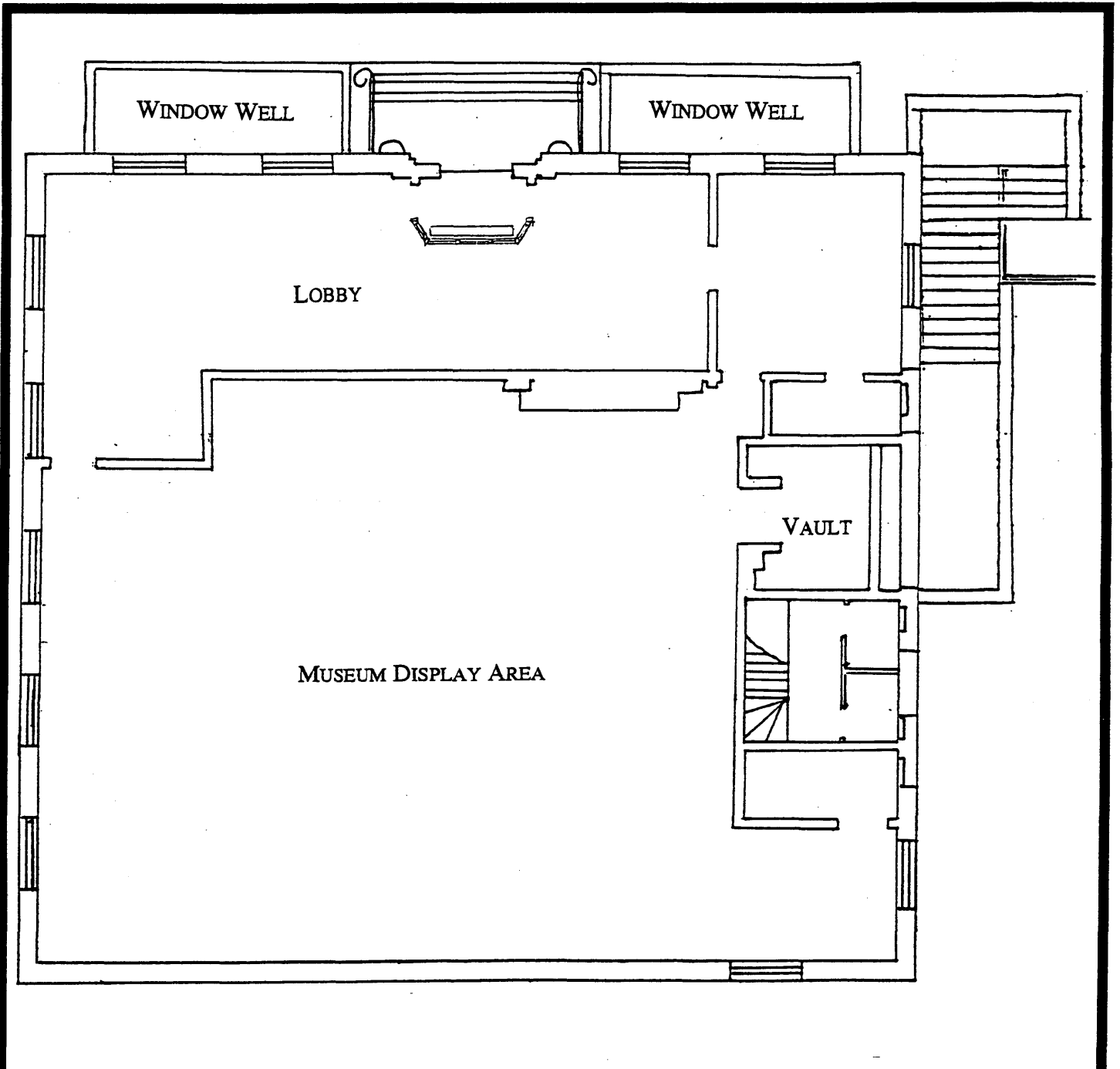
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 10 Page 9

Sevierville Post Office, Sevier County, Tennessee

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION



SEVIERVILLE POST OFFICE



SCALE: 1/8" = 1'-0"

PLAN SHOWS ORIGINAL SECTION ONLY. CIRCA 1965 ADDITION IS NOT SHOWN

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number Photos Page 10

Sevierville Post Office, Sevier County, Tennessee

Photographer: Kimberley A. Murphy
Negatives: Tennessee Historical Commission
 2941 Lebanon Road
 Nashville, TN 37243-0442

#	Subject	Date	View
1 of 15	View of entire city block, showing primary elevation	09/26/96	Southwest
2 of 15	Primary (north) elevation	09/26/96	Southwest
3 of 15	Primary (north) entrance	09/26/96	Southwest
4 of 15	Window wells on primary elevation	09/26/96	West
5 of 15	First addition on east elevation	09/26/96	Northwest
6 of 15	East elevation, showing brick latticework and window	09/26/96	Northwest
7 of 15	Circa 1965 rear addition	09/26/96	West
8 of 15	West elevation from front of building	09/26/96	Southeast
9 of 15	Entry vestibule in lobby	09/26/96	Southwest
10 of 15	Lobby	09/26/96	East
11 of 15	Lobby	09/26/96	Northeast
12 of 15	Northeast corner of lobby	09/26/96	Northeast
13 of 15	Museum display area - former work room, north wall	09/26/96	Northeast
14 of 15	Museum display area, northeast corner, with vault	09/26/96	Northeast
15 of 15	Museum display area, south (back) wall	09/26/96	Southwest