

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NAR 1-24-07

**National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form**

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 Keiser Waterworks

other names/site number _____

NPS Form 10-900 (Oct. 1990)

2. Location

street & number Northeast of the Water and E. Main Streets Intersection not for publication

city or town Keiser vicinity

state Arkansas code AR county Mississippi code 093 zip code 72351

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.)

Signature of certifying official/Title _____ 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 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:) _____
Signature of the Keeper _____ Date of Action _____

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 count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
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		buildings
		sites
1		structures
		objects
1		Total

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

"An Ambition to Be Preferred: New Deal Recovery Efforts and Architecture in Arkansas 1933-1943"

Number of Contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

INDUSTRY/PROCESSING/EXTRACTION/
waterworks/water tower

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

INDUSTRY/PROCESSING/EXTRACTION/waterworks/
water tower

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Masonry

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETE

walls METAL

roof METAL

other

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

(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 birthplace or grave of a historical figure of outstanding importance.
- 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.

Levels of Significance (local, state, national)

local

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

Engineering

Politics/Government

Period of Significance

1936-1956

Significant Dates

1936-1956

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked)

Cultural Affiliation (Complete if Criterion D is marked)

Architect/Builder

Unknown built with PWA funds

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):

- 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: _____

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Continuation Sheet

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Summary

The Keiser Waterworks is located northeast of the Water and East Main Streets intersection in Keiser, Arkansas. Keiser is a small community which is located south of Osceola in Mississippi County. Situated nearby farms and other resources of the agricultural community in Keiser, the water tower was built in 1936 with financial assistance from the Public Works Administration (PWA), created in President Roosevelt's New Deal.

Elaboration

The Keiser Waterworks stands several stories high, rising above the small community of Keiser, Arkansas. Built with funds from the PWA in 1936, the water tower is one of the few surviving structures from the Depression in Keiser. Its metal framed construction is an excellent example of building techniques and materials associated with the PWA construction the 1930s.

The Keiser Waterworks rests on four metal legs that are supported by concrete piers. There is a metal pipe at the center of the Waterworks base, which runs to the base of the water tank, carrying water to and from the ground. Metal crosspieces are inserted between the legs in order to provide extra support. There is a utility ladder which extends up one of the legs to the water tank.

The base of the water tank is shaped like a bowl which is pierced in the center by the metal pipe. There is a walkway which encircles the tank a few feet above its base. The walls of the tank are constructed in sheet metal. The roof of the water tank is conical and extends in width a few feet past the walls of the tank.

Integrity

The Keiser Waterworks retains its original fabric, and it is still in use today. It appears in the same setting as it would have when it was built in the 1930s.

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Summary

The Keiser Waterworks in Keiser, Arkansas is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places with **local significance** under **Criterion A** for its association with the PWA activities in Keiser during the 1930s. The Keiser Waterworks is also being nominated to the National Register of Historic places under **Criterion C** for its importance as one of the few surviving examples of the 1930s waterworks construction.

Elaboration

The land, which would later become the grounds for Mississippi County and the small town of Keiser, was inhabited by Native American Tribes late into the nineteenth century. Although there are accounts of friendly introductions between the early explorers and Native Americans, there were several reports around the time of the Louisiana Purchase where the Chickasaws, Delawares, Shawnees, and Cherokees attacked the boats coming off the river.¹

Presenting more difficulty to these settlers, the land was inhospitable. Sunken in the St. Francis River Valley Basin, the area was cut off from neighboring counties and often times flooded.² The county's location to the Mississippi River and tributaries, made the ground constantly saturated and difficult for farming; however, it had not always been as wet. Early accounts of De Soto's men praying for rain, lead historians to believe that the climate, soil, vegetation and topography of the land changed dramatically, after the earthquake of New Madrid in 1812.³

Nevertheless, it wasn't until the mid-half of the nineteenth century that white settlers took interest in the land. In 1833, Mississippi County formed out of a part of Crittenden County by an act of territorial legislation.⁴ The advent of the Steamboat attracted more settlers to the county as the steamboat depended heavily on cordwood that the county supplied.⁵ Although the swampy land deterred earlier settlers, its uncut timber was desired by many. The bottom lands of the Mississippi River had a diverse character of hardwoods such as Elm, Gum, Ash, Hickory, Walnut, Cypress, and Cottonwood, which was a popular demand.⁶ The Chicago Mill Lumber Company operated the area, moving lumber up the Mississippi River to Cairo, St. Louis, Louisville, and Cincinnati.⁷

¹ *Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Northeastern Arkansas*, Goodspeed Publishing Co. 1889, 450.

² *Ibid.*, 447

³ *Ibid.*, 448

⁴ *The Garden Spot of the Mississippi Valley* ed by J. A. Fox, 1902. Rpt. In *Mississippi County Arkansas Through the Years* (Osceola, AR: South Mississippi County Arkansas Historical Heritage Documentation, 1936) 5.

⁵ *Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Northeastern Arkansas*, 457.

⁶ *The Garden Spot of the Mississippi Valley*, 11.

⁷ *Ibid.*

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By the late 1800's, the initiative to reclaim the swamp land of the Mississippi County took full force. The inhospitality of the land, which was inundated annually, and its separation from other counties made it a perfect hiding place for outlaws and wildlife.⁸ Although armed settlers had made earlier efforts to reclaim the land for hunting and fishing, the most effective efforts were made by the government. In 1879, Congress created the Mississippi River Commission to control flooding in the area.⁹ Levee work began in 1882 to prevent complete saturation of the land.¹⁰ This was the first step towards reconstruction of this land and it resulted in the clearance of outlaws and unwanted wildlife from the swamps.

Around the same time, a pioneer, Fred Keiser, had purchased a lumber mill in Osceola. While he was exploring, he came upon a wooded area south of Osceola. Keiser established and operated a tram to bring wood from this area to his mill in Osceola. This began the formation of a small village in the woods named after its founder, Keiser.¹¹

In 1890, plans for the first drainage district, the St. River Valley Basin began, and were carried out in 1902.¹² After heavy debates over opposition to the government's intervention in property, in 1905, a law was created to establish drainage districts throughout the entire county. And from 1907-1908, the law was enacted. Despite, these efforts, forty thousand dollars of property damage occurred in the years between 1902 and 1912.¹³ It would be another five years before Congress passed the First Flood control Act authorizing expenditure for the Mississippi River Commission and another twenty before the overall income increased. Nevertheless, the flood prevention in the early twentieth century enabled agricultural production.

Shortly after these districts were established, the completion of a railroad line from the logging town of Wilson to the existing east-west line of Jonesboro and the Eastern Railroad to the north of Keiser yielded more growth in the community.¹⁴ By this time, the economic focus of the community was changing from timber to cotton. Raising rain grown cotton, a significant crop for Mississippi County, as it was grown there more than anywhere in the world, Keiser was rapidly forming into a strong agricultural community for Mississippi County and often times had the best records for alfalfa and corn in addition to the cotton.¹⁵

⁸ Ibid.,10.

⁹ Mabel F. Edrington, *History of Mississippi County, Arkansas* (Ocala, FL: Ocala Star Banner, 1962),63.

¹⁰ Ibid.,64.

¹¹ Ibid.,118.

¹² Ibid., 64.

¹³ Ibid.,75.

¹⁴ Information found in the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program files.

¹⁵ Edrington, *History of Mississippi County, Arkansas*, 91.

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Despite the county's high levels of water resources a national concern on the conservation of water initiated the waterworks construction statewide. In 1935 at the State Planning Board Meeting, the responsibility of planning and conserving the state's water resources was delegated to the Public Works Administration (PWA). The PWA, a federal agency established as part of President Roosevelt's New Deal to provide jobs and increase welfare in the state, completed an intensive survey and listed and inventory of necessary water projects for the state.¹⁶

In 1936, one year after the State Planning Board meeting, construction of the Keiser Waterworks began, and was finished in December of that same year. The PWA aided in funding for the project authorizing a \$13,000 loan and a granting \$10, 636 to Keiser.¹⁷

In 1945, Mississippi County received a notable reputation for having 48,000 acres of crop land which was more than any other county in the Country in that year.¹⁸ By that time the planning of drainage soil improvement, fertility programs, development and use of electricity, water facilities, and expanded roads in Mississippi County was a vast improvement.

Statement of Significance

The Keiser Waterworks is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places with **local significance** under **Criterion A** for its association with PWA activities in the 1930s. It is also being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under **Criterion C** as it is one of the few surviving examples of 1930s waterworks construction.

¹⁶State of Arkansas Planning Board 1935 Report in the files of the Richard C Butler Center for Arkansas Studies.

¹⁷Information on PWA funding found in the files of the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program.

¹⁸Edrington, *History of Mississippi County, Arkansas*, 92.

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Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Northeastern Arkansas. Chicago:
Goodspeed Publishing Co., 1889.

Edrington, Mabel F. *History of Mississippi County, Arkansas*. Ocala, FL: Ocala Star
Banner, 1962.

Information on PWA found in the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program files.

State of Arkansas Planning Board 1935 Report in the files of the Richard C Butler Center
for Arkansas Studies.

The Garden Spot of the Mississippi Valley. Ed by J.A. Fox. Rpt. In *Mississippi County
Through the Years*. Osceola, AR: Southern Mississippi County Arkansas Historical Heritage
Documentation, 1936.

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Verbal Boundary Description

From the northeast corner of the Water and East Main Street intersection, proceed one hundred meters easterly, parallel to East Main Street, and fifty meters northerly, to the initial point; thence proceed northeasterly one hundred meters; thence proceed northwesterly one hundred meters; thence proceed south westerly one hundred meters; and thence proceed southeasterly one hundred meters returning to the initial point.

Boundary Justification

This boundary includes all of the land historically associated with the Keiser Waterworks