

NR listed 1/30/92

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

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

1. Name of Property

historic name Ebenezer Monumentother names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number 9th and Church Street☐ not for publication N/Acity, town Mena☐ vicinity N/Astate Arkansascode ARcounty Polkcode AR 113zip code 71953

3. Classification

Ownership of Property

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

Category of Property

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

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing

 11

Noncontributing

 buildings sites structures objects0 Total

Name of related multiple property listing:

N/ANumber of contributing resources previously
listed in the National Register N/A

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

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

Signature of certifying official

Arkansas Historic Preservation Program

State or Federal agency and bureau

Date

4-29-91In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. ☐ See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

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

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)
Recreation and Culture/Monument

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)
Recreation and Culture/Monument

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(enter categories from instructions)

Other: Rustic Fieldstone

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Concrete
walls Stone

roof Concrete
other Concrete Panels

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

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Summary

The Ebenezer Monument, constructed in 1936 and located in the rear parking lot of the First Baptist Church at 811 Port Arthur Street, is a square, stone and concrete masonry monument that narrows toward the top and contains a vault designed to hold a time capsule. It is designed in the Rustic masonry style found most frequently in Civilian Conservation Corps construction of the same period.

Elaboration

The Ebenezer Monument is a square, fieldstone and concrete commemorative structure that stands approximately twelve feet in height and five feet square around its base. The concrete base supports a fieldstone column that narrows toward its peak. Four concrete panels (three of which are engraved) face the column at its top, and a pyramidal concrete cap completes the structure. It is placed at a corner of the parking lot of the First Baptist Church, the church of the clergyman that led the fight to have Commonwealth College removed.

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Summary

Criterion A, statewide significance

The Ebenezer Monument is eligible under Criterion A with statewide significance as the structure and symbol most directly associated with the anti-Communist sentiment that swept the state after the decision by the administration of nearby Commonwealth College to focus its curriculum exclusively upon Marxism and Communism, and to advocate militant activism by its students and faculty within the growing southern labor movement. This sentiment spread to the state legislature and eventually resulted in sufficient pressure to force the relocation and eventual closure of the college.

Elaboration

The Ebenezer Monument was erected by the congregation of the First Baptist Church of Mena, Arkansas in 1936 as part of the local effort to expel nearby Commonwealth College, a school with militant socialist and unionist leanings. Led by its new minister, Rev. L. D. Summers, the specifically anti-Communist thrust of this effort was the culmination of several local and statewide initiatives to discredit the school and remove it from the state, including the creation of an investigative committee by the state legislature.

Commonwealth College traced its origins generally to the utopian movement of the late nineteenth century, and specifically to the Llano Cooperative Colony, a community based on utopian models that was founded in 1914 and located in Antelope Valley, California (approximately 65 miles north of Los Angeles). Founded by Job Harriman, a prominent socialist who had earlier been a legal associate of Clarence Darrow, the Llano community was a farming commune that sought total self-sufficiency and independence along with stressing radical social and economic reform along socialist lines. Llano experienced phenomenal growth in its early days, increasing to a total population of 800 within just three years. However, the dry summer of 1917 forced the Llano residents to seek an alternate source of water. Their subsequent discovery of a previously unknown earthquake fault in the area of a proposed reservoir cast serious doubt on the ability of the commune to continue to inhabit this site; clearly a new home would have to be found.

The membership of the commune eventually decided upon a 16,000-acre site in Vernon Parish, Louisiana, near Leesville. Named Newllano, the colony's settlement of the new site started inauspiciously, with general internal bickering and a vacuum of leadership (Harriman was usually absent) contributing to the dwindling of its population to sixty-five residents by the end

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of its first year. The ascendance of new leadership in the person of educator George Pickett and the recruitment of several money-making industries combined with an influx of new membership to render the community relatively prosperous through 1922.

The return of Harriman in 1922 soon resulted in a schism in the colony's direction, and differences over the apportionment of the colony's meager financial resources in particular began the bickering anew. The arrival thereafter of renown socialist Kate Richards O'Hare, who with her family also published the socialist periodical known as the *American Vanguard*, only added fuel to the fire. Though the competing camps within the colony vied for her allegiance, it was Kate O'Hare who first introduced the notion of establishing a resident labor college at Newllano. Her exposure to Ruskin College in Florida - the first labor college in the country - during the years 1916-17 fueled her interest in such an experiment and also introduced her to another educator, William Edward Zeuch, who would later become the first director of Commonwealth College.

At her invitation, Zeuch came to Newllano in 1923 and promptly worked with O'Hare to arrange for the donation of forty acres of land by the colony for the establishment of a college. At that point the leadership of the colony was firmly behind the notion of a resident labor college and pledged their total assistance; yet it was understood that though the colony and the college would "run on the same tracks," they would be administered independently. Zeuch and O'Hare moved quickly to organize an administration, raise funds, and solicit applications from interested students so that the school could open by September of that year. Strong initial student interest resulted in an abundance of qualified applications. Enrollment was limited to a total of fifty.

From the beginning, the labor orientation of Commonwealth College - as it was soon named - was clear. As stated by William H. Cobb, "Like the colony, Commonwealth sought to work for equal economic, social, and political opportunities for those in the laboring classes; specifically it sought to train leaders for the labor movement." The curriculum also incorporated a number of progressive educational concepts that were radical for their day. A combination of farm work and classes divided the students' day, with the morning reserved for classes and the afternoons for manual labor in the fields (similar to the present-day "co-op" programs employed by many colleges and universities). Coursework was not "graded" in the formal sense, and students received lengthy, written evaluations instead. Finally, Commonwealth rejected the notion of a college education as terminating in a degree of some sort. Rather, the students themselves determined the length of their stay and were free to depart from the college as soon as they felt themselves prepared for their work in the labor movement. Yet it should be noted that the academic emphasis at this point was clearly on preparation for such work, not active

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involvement as part of one's education.

The discord between the proponents of the school and the prevailing colony administration surfaced during the first months of 1924. Simultaneous attempts by both groups to raise funds from a common source precipitated the initial conflict, as the colony administration clearly saw the school as an attractive yet unnecessary subsidiary of the colony itself, not an independent competitor for limited grants. Underlying differences in overall philosophy regarding the operation of the colony in general only widened the rift between the two camps, with the end result being the decision by the school's backers to sever their connections with Newllano completely and relocate the school to a new site.

After one unsuccessful search in the South-central United States for an appropriate site, a site was selected in Polk County, Arkansas near the small community of Ink, located approximately eight miles to the northeast of Mena, the county seat. The selection committee drafted the initial arrangements to purchase the 1,200-acre site, and returned to Newllano promising that the college would soon follow.

The almost continuous problems that had beset the Newllano colony since its inception seemed to follow the splinter group that settled near Ink. Not all of the followers of the Ink faction could afford to relocate immediately; therefore it was decided that those that could would move immediately and those that could not would be left behind to come after as soon as their means permitted. The latter group included most of the members that were directly associated with the fledgling college. Conflict arose when the first Ink colonists, in order to finance their community, applied to the same funding source to which the college had also applied simultaneously, which constituted a violation of the agreement the Ink colonists had executed with Commonwealth that neither group would trespass upon the other's funding source until the two united. The usual accusations of dishonesty and incompetence flew back and forth between Zeuch, representing the college, and Harriman, representing the Ink colony. Ultimately, in December of 1924, after a series of confrontations and meetings that took place over several months, Zeuch and Commonwealth College agreed to split with the Ink colony, though they remained committed to relocate to Mena from Newllano, where their presence had become unwelcome to an almost violent extreme.

Just before New Year's Day, 1925, Commonwealth College, with its tiny administration and student body, first moved to several buildings in downtown Mena. In its advertisements in the *Weekly Star* for a permanent site the college stressed its exclusively educational purpose and its complete independence from the colony at Ink. Yet it was during their brief stay in Mena that

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the Commoners, as they called themselves, first began to aggravate the local residents. One Commoner was arrested on charges of unlawful cohabitation with a woman to whom he claimed to be married - a marriage the legality of which was challenged by the woman's father. Though the male student was later exonerated, the adverse publicity had begun. This situation was only exacerbated by the decision of many students, male and female, to wear knickers around town. Such apparel was considered especially scandalous for women, and the attempts of the college administration to control the students' attire met with resistance that was initially united, followed by sporadic yet nevertheless vocal opposition. Such persistent controversy did nothing to heighten the college's public image.

By the spring of 1925 representatives of the college discovered a pastoral site approximately ten miles northwest of Mena in the Mill Creek valley. The college finalized the purchase of the property by April and rapidly moved its possessions and all of its people onto the site, even successfully planting some of the land in time to take advantage of the growing season.

Commonwealth College adhered to Zeuch's goal of quiet, assiduous preparation for leadership of the labor classes for a full five years, thus remaining close to the isolationist, utopian ideals that gave birth to its parent colony. Zeuch functioned as the college's first director, and in that capacity shaped its early curriculum. Commonwealth offered a broad selection of courses, largely political, sociological and economic in nature, but representative of many of the various and frequently conflicting viewpoints within these disciplines. Zeuch strongly believed that a free-thinking, well-rounded student would make a far better organizer and leader than a student that had heard but one point of view. By all accounts, Commonwealth operated in relative peace during this period, and managed to remain on rather good terms with the townspeople of Mena.

The onset of the Great Depression and the dire circumstances it visited upon a large percentage of the American population - and the working class in particular - precipitated a more activist shift in the attitude of the college as a whole. The departure of Zeuch as Director (alternately reported as a "resignation" and an "expulsion") in June of 1931 insured a more militant stance for the college, as his replacement, Lucien Koch (an Oregon native and former Commonwealth College student who had just received his Masters degree in Economics from the University of Wisconsin) strongly believed in the importance of activism and in its primary role in any truly labor-oriented education. As Koch himself said "Commonwealth is not an institution, it is a movement." The college was directly involved in the formation of the Arkansas Socialist Party soon after Koch's appointment as director of Commonwealth. The Commoners' efforts to come to the aid of the working man carried them throughout the south and midwest, and included attempts to organize coal miners in Harlan, Kentucky, Franklin County, Illinois, and both Jenny

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Lind and Paris, Arkansas; they also journeyed to Sioux City, Iowa to investigate a farmers' strike there, and later worked in support of one of its instigating labor organizations, the National Farmer's Holiday Association, for which the school later founded the state's first local at Old Potter the next year. From 1934 until 1939, Koch and the Commoners worked assiduously with the Southern Farmers Tenant Union (STFU), particularly in aiding their efforts to organize cotton farmers in northeast Arkansas (it should be noted that the Commoners also promoted radical art, drama and literature in service to labor-oriented themes, though these efforts never rose above the level of unionist and socialist propaganda).

Their association with the STFU in northeast Arkansas and the rancor their vocal, activist stance elicited among local planters, and even among some STFU organizers, prompted the Arkansas House of Representatives to adopt a resolution on February 13, 1935 calling for an official bicameral investigation into the alleged Communist activities of the school and any illegal, seditious activities. The explicit concern with Communism as a threat to national security arose from both a growing fear that it would appeal to the state's largely illiterate and undereducated black population (hence the quick response to the Commoners' activities in eastern Arkansas, which had contained a large black community since before the Civil War) and an increasing awareness of the wholesale abuses occurring under Stalin in the Soviet Union. The investigative committee consisted of Representative Marcus Miller of Polk County (who had drafted the resolution), another representative and two senators. Their investigation, which consisted of a visit to the college in Mena, a day of testimony taken at the Polk County Courthouse, and another day of testimony taken at the Marion Hotel in Little Rock, resulted in a report that, although critical of the "free love" being practiced at the school and the overtly militant Communists among the student body, could find nothing explicitly illegal in any of these activities. Meanwhile, and thereafter, both houses of the legislature considered and eventually defeated a series of drastic bills aimed at outlawing a whole host of "seditious" activities; some of these bills were explicitly or implicitly aimed at Commonwealth College, while others sought wider impact on restricting union activities generally. The ultimate result of all this legislative activity was a great deal of legislative posturing and saber-rattling - much of which received national media attention - but no restrictions of any kind on the radical policies and militant activism for which Commonwealth College had now become notorious. Koch and the Commoners perceived this as an unqualified vindication of the legitimacy of their mission, and for the duration of the summer of 1935, Commonwealth experienced a revival of its popularity (it was during this period that Orval Faubus, a school teacher from Combs, Arkansas and later Governor of Arkansas, 1955-67, first enrolled at Commonwealth; he stayed but a few months, and later claimed that he never enrolled in classes).

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Commonwealth's propagandizing only increased after the replacement of Koch with another militant socialist, Richard Babb Whitten, in September, 1935. More importantly, Whitten's appointment as director of the college brought a decisive incorporation of Communism into the school's curriculum at the exclusion of all other political and ideological viewpoints. This, combined with the deliberate focusing of the school's labor activities on farm labor issues again raised the issue of converting blacks to Communism, and hence the fear among many whites of the "dangers" inherent therein. Surely many whites also felt frustrated over the legislature's inability to take any effective steps to curtail or outlaw the "seditious and immoral" activities taught and practiced at Commonwealth. By 1936, local Mena residents took matters into their own hands in a fashion that was both vocal and influential. The Rev. Luther D. Summers, who had just been appointed as pastor of the First Baptist Church of Mena, used the pulpit as a forum to portray Commonwealth as "a hotbed of atheists, free-lovers, Communists and Negrophiles." His eloquence and charisma were infectious, and he employed his oratorical skills to foment intolerance and outrage among the local Polk County residents as never before. An article in Bernarr McFadden's *Liberty* magazine entitled "Rah Rah Russia" fanned the anti-Commonwealth sentiment to national heights with its reiteration of Summers' charges, charges that included characterizing the attitude of Commonwealth as "nigger-lover."

It was at this time, and as an overt effort to focus and heighten local public opposition to Commonwealth College, that the First Baptist Church organized the effort to erect the Ebenezer Monument (the name coming from a Biblical passage from the first book of Samuel in which the Lord so-named a stone for its symbolism of deliverance from the enemy). The monument featured an inscribed panel near the top of each of its four sides. One panel reads 'Ebenezer of First Baptist Church/"Hitherto Hath The Lord Helped Us" - I Samuel 7:12/Sunday, June 14, 1936;' the second reads 'Arkansas's First Centennial/"Have Faith in God" - Mark 11:22/1836 to 1936/Mena, Polk County, Arkansas;' the third reads 'This monument contains the names and a short history of many of the citizens of Mena, Polk County, Arkansas and the United States;' and the last panel, placed slightly lower, says 'Vault/This Vault to be opened June 14, 1986, and other names then living added to list of names now in vault and put back into vault for another fifty years.' A newspaper article in the *Mena Weekly Star*, published four days later, noted that the two-and-one-half hour dedication ceremony was attended by "several hundred people" and that it featured several speeches and an assortment of inspirational and patriotic music. Specifically mentioned were the songs "Onward Christian Soldiers" and "America." And though the specific content of the speeches has not survived, the fact that Rev. Summer's church decided to erect a monument with overtly patriotic overtones cannot be truly understood outside the context of his contemporaneous speeches from the pulpit against Commonwealth College and its communist leanings. When so considered, the Ebenezer Monument owes its existence to the

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power and cohesiveness of this anti-Communist sentiment locally, and to the success of Rev. Summers attempts to galvanize this public opinion.

This publicity partially inspired another unsuccessful attempt in 1937 by the state legislature to control the school's attitude through the passage of a law rendering the teaching of Communism and Communist doctrine illegal. Increased relations between Commonwealth and the STFU in 1936 and 1937 resulted in attempts by the latter organization to moderate the militant stance of the school in favor of a non-sectarian approach with education of future labor leaders being the primary goal of the institution - quite similar to the original mission of the school as envisioned by Zeuch in the early 1920's. Nevertheless, the radical and militant character of the school remained, largely due to the lack of significant personnel changes at any level, a situation that ultimately led to the estrangement of the school from the labor movement generally and the STFU in particular. The school finally folded in 1940 amidst a barrage of legal actions brought against it to collect debts and fines. All of the buildings constructed by the school on the site have long since been removed, and the site is currently used as pastureland for a horse farm.

The Ebenezer Monument remains virtually intact, the only disturbance to the monument having been the removal of the time capsule encased within the stone and concrete when it was constructed (the contents were explicitly intended to be removed fifty years from the date of construction; hence the Mena residents opened the monument in 1986 and deposited a new time capsule at that time, also to be opened fifty years hence). It thus retains its direct associations with Rev. Summers and his successful efforts in the late 1930's to galvanize local opposition to Commonwealth College and its distinctly Communist ideology. As it is also the single historic resource within the state most directly associated with anti-Communist activity during this period in Arkansas, it is being nominated under Criterion A with statewide significance.

8. Statement of Significance

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

☐ nationally ☒ statewide ☐ locally

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

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

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Politics/Government

Period of Significance

1936

Significant Dates

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

N/A

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

☒ See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

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 # _____

☒ See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:

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

Specify repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property Less than one

UTM References

A

1	5	3	8	6	1	1	0	3	8	2	7	4	6	0
Zone			Easting					Northing						

C

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

B

Zone			Easting					Northing						

D

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

☐ See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description Beginning at the northern corner of the monument's foundation (located ten feet south of the southern edge of Church Street and sixteen feet east of the eastern edge of 9th Street), proceed southwesterly to the monument's western corner; thence southeasterly to the monument's southern corner, thence northeasterly to the monument's eastern corner, thence northwesterly to the monument's northern corner and the point of beginning.

☐ See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

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

☐ See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

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organization Arkansas Historic Preservation Program date 4/10/91

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city or town Little Rock state Arkansas zip code 72201

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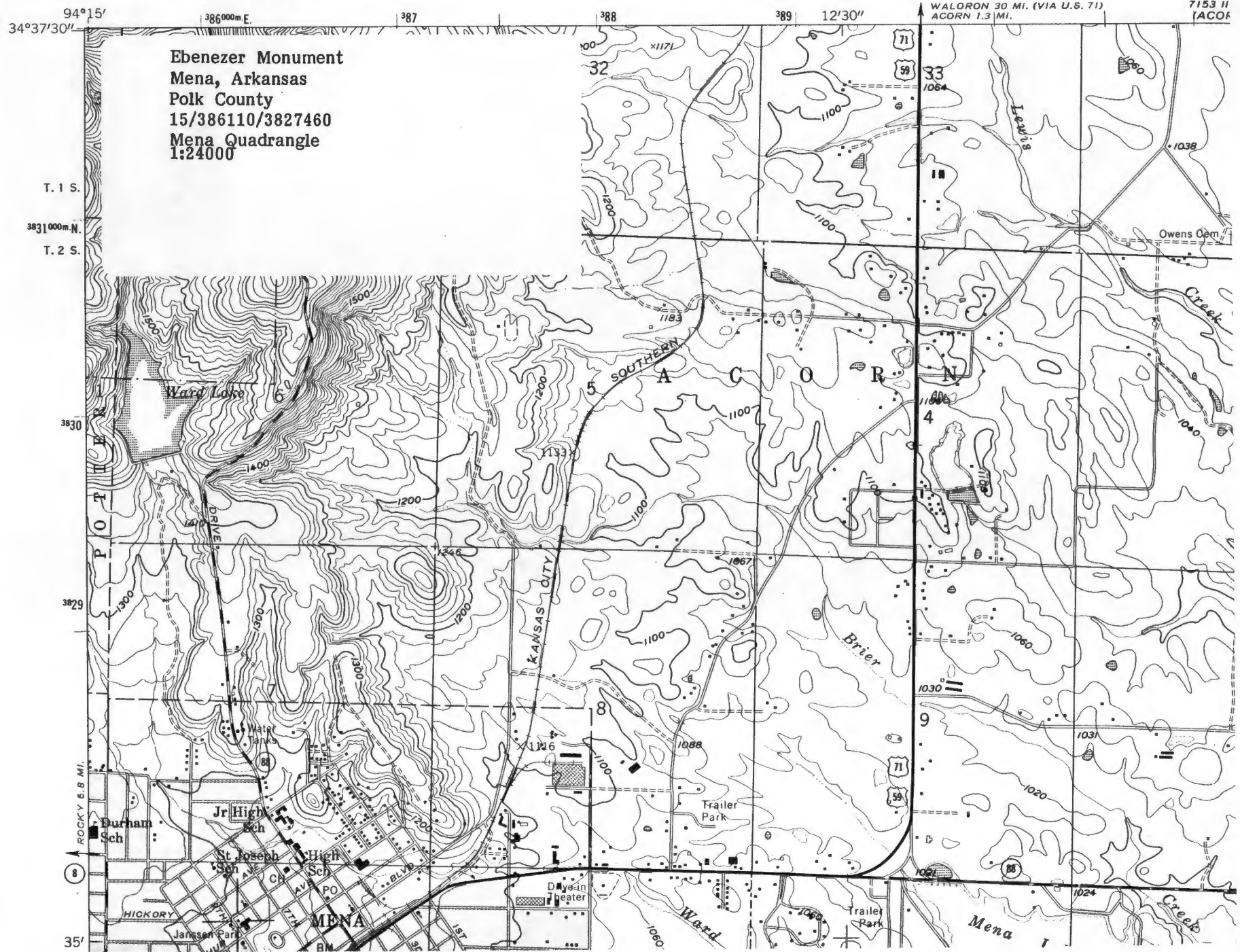
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33 (LINE MOUNTAIN)

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY





WILSON MOUNTAIN
MOA, ARIZONA
FOOTPRINTED BY P. J. JOURNAL
JANUARY, 1991
NEGATIVE ON FILE AT APP
VIEW FROM SOUTHEAST



LETTER MOUNT
MESA, ARKANSAS
PHOTOGRAPHED BY D ZOLLNER
JANUARY, 1891
NEGATIVE ON FILE AT ANPP
VIEW FROM NORTHWEST



WETZER MONUMENT
MEXICO, KANSAS

RECORDED BY - ZOLLNER
JANUARY 1991

NEGATIVE ON FILE AT AHPP
PLAQUE DETAIL