

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

**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 Cross and Nelson Hall Historic District

other names/site number Boy's Dormitory and Girl's Dormitory/Student Services Building, Site #CO0427-CO0428

2. Location

street & number Southern Arkansas University Campus at 100 E. University not for publication

city or town Magnolia vicinity

state Arkansas code AR county Columbia code 027 zip code 71753

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:

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

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): _____

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	
2		buildings
		sites
	1	structures
		objects
2	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, 1933-1993

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

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

EDUCATION/education-related

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

EDUCATION/education-related
LANDSCAPE/object

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

OTHER/Plain-Traditional

OTHER/Modern

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Brick
walls Brick

roof Tar built-up
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)

Education

Social History

Period of Significance

1936

Significant Dates

1936

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked)

Cultural Affiliation (Complete if Criterion D is marked)

Architect/Builder

Public Works Administration, 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):

- 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:

Southern Arkansas University

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property Approximately 3 acres

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	<u>15</u>	<u>478026</u>	<u>3683513</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 Kathleen Swaim, Intern , and Ralph S. Wilcox, National Register & Survey Coordinator
organization Arkansas Historic Preservation Program date May 12, 2009
street & number 1500 Tower Building 323 Center Street telephone 501-324-9787
city or town Little Rock state AR zip code 72201

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 Southern Arkansas University under Dr. David Rankin, Chancellor
street & number 100 E. University telephone 870-235-4000
city or town Magnolia state AR zip code 71753

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.

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Summary

Located on the Southern Arkansas University campus in Magnolia, Arkansas, Cross Hall and Nelson Hall are fine examples of the success of the New Deal projects of the 1930s. Built at the same time in 1936 by the Public Works Administration, Cross Hall was designed as a boy's dormitory and Nelson Hall was a girl's dormitory. Both buildings have been moderately changed since their construction and it does alter the overall integrity of the buildings. Cross and Nelson Halls are both two-story, L-shaped, brick buildings that are Plain-Traditional with Colonial Revival and Collegiate Gothic influences. Both have a flat roof with a parapet made of tar built-up material. However, over time they functioned differently from each other.

Elaboration

Cross and Nelson Halls are located on the campus of Southern Arkansas University and were used as boy's and girl's dormitories respectively. Both were built at the same time in 1936 by the Public Works Administration. Cross and Nelson Halls are both two-story, L-shaped, brick buildings that are Plain-Traditional with Colonial Revival and Collegiate Gothic influences. Both have a flat roof with a parapet made of tar built-up material. However, over time they functioned differently from each other.

Cross Hall – Contributing

Cross Hall located on the corner of Center Drive and N. Washington Street of Southern Arkansas University is a two-story, brick building. It was built in 1936 as a boy's dormitory. Its flat, built-up tar roof and raised brick parapet are supported upon brick walls and a continuous brick foundation.

The southern or front entrance of Cross Hall, facing Center Drive, shows a one-bay, enclosed porch with a flat roof surmounted by a parapet. The front of the porch has window panes and the sides of the porch have entrance doorways.

Behind the porch is the two-story front façade with double-hung, one-over-one windows on both stories. The L-shape of the building makes the number of windows on each side of the porch asymmetrical with three windows on the eastern side and two on the western side.

Going west from the front façade begins the L where two double-hung, one-over-one windows are on the eastern side of the L. On the northern side of the L is an enclosed elevator which was added to the building circa 1995 that includes both stories. The western side of the L has one double-hung, one-over-one window and two, double-hung, two-over-two windows. It also has another double-hung, one-over-one window separated from the others by a set of one-story concrete stairs that lead to another entrance.

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The southern side of the building has three double-hung, two-over-two windows on the western side of a rear doorway with a shed roof/awning and five double-hung, two-over-two windows on the eastern side of the same doorway.

The eastern side of the building has two double-hung, one-over-one windows followed by a semi-open stairwell that has double-hung, one-over-one windows on the upper level but is open on the bottom level.

Cross Hall was originally built as a boy's dormitory but over the years it was modified into classrooms and professors' offices. All of the building materials are original except for the windows that were replaced in 1998 and an enclosed elevator added in 1995. It has remained substantially intact since its construction and is in good condition.

Nelson Hall – Contributing

Nelson Hall is located on the corner of East Lane Drive and Center Drive of Southern Arkansas University. It is a two-story, brick building designed in the Art Deco Style. It was built in 1936 as a girl's dormitory. Its flat, built-up tar roof and raised brick parapet are supported upon brick walls and a continuous brick foundation.

The northern or front entrance of Nelson Hall, facing Center Drive, shows a one-bay porch with a flat roof surmounted by a parapet. Behind the porch is the two-story front façade with double-hung, one-over-one windows on both stories. The L-shape of the building makes the number of windows on each side of the porch asymmetrical with three windows on the eastern side of the façade and five windows on the western side.

Going east toward the L of the building is the western side of the L which has three double-hung, two-over-two windows. On the northern side of the L is a semi-open stairwell that was added circa 1998 along with a double-hung, two-over-two window next to it. The eastern side of the L has four double-hung, two-over-two windows that end at a ramp that goes toward another entrance to the building and the addition that juts off of the south side of the building.

The addition, which was constructed circa 1998, was used as a nurse's station along with a campus health clinic. It is of the same construction and design of Nelson Hall, except it is one-story, with a brick foundation and walls; also the roofing is the same with a flat, built-up tar roof and raised brick parapet. The eastern side of the addition has three double-hung, two-over-two windows. As the building turns toward the west, the building has one double-hung, one-over-one window and in the corner of the addition is a porch with a flat, built-up tar roof and raised brick parapet that is accessible by the stairs on the southern side of the porch.

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that has a double-hung, two-over-two window right above it. The southern side of the addition has one double-hung, two-over-two window. The western side of the addition has three double-hung, two-over-two windows just as the eastern side does.

This side is attached to the original building on the southern side which has three windows on the eastern side of an enclosed elevator while eight double-hung windows follow on the western side of the elevator. The western side of the building has two double-hung windows.

Nelson Hall was originally built in 1936 as a girl's dormitory at the same time as Cross Hall, the boy's dormitory. As years went by, the building took on different uses such as an athletic dormitory with an athletic cafeteria on the first floor of the ell. Later it served as a women's honors dormitory from circa 1980 to 1995. Since that time, it has served as a student services building including the admissions office. It has remained substantially intact since its construction and is in good condition.

Bell Tower/Water Tower – Non-Contributing

The Bell Tower/Water Tower is a 187-foot tall Cor-ten steel structure constructed in 1976. Near the top is a peal of 14 cast bronze bells. The tower provides a prominent architectural landmark to identify the Southern Arkansas University campus and a 50,000 gallon water supply for surrounding facilities.

Integrity

Cross Hall and Nelson Hall, Southern Arkansas University, Columbia County maintains a high amount of integrity of design, workmanship, and materials. Cross Hall has maintained its original form and only minor additions such as the semi-open stairwell and the enclosed elevator. Nelson Hall has maintained its original form except for the addition on the southeast corner of the building and the enclosed elevator. Otherwise, the buildings have retained excellent integrity over time. Cross Hall and Nelson Hall also retain integrity of association with the work projects undertaken in Arkansas by the Public Works Administration, a relief program established during the depression by President Franklin D. Roosevelt, under the National Industrial Recovery Act (NIRA).

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Summary

The Cross and Nelson Hall Historic District, located on the campus of Southern Arkansas University, Magnolia, Columbia County, is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under **Criterion A** for its association with the Public Works Administration's work in Columbia County, a social works project of the 1930s. Cross and Nelson Halls were one of two PWA-built projects in Magnolia, and the most intact remaining project constructed by the PWA. As a result, the buildings best exemplify the PWA's work in Magnolia during the 1930s. It is also being nominated under the multiple property listing "An Ambition to be Preferred: New Deal Recovery Efforts and Architecture in Arkansas, 1933-1943."

Elaboration

The Southern Arkansas University is located in Magnolia, Columbia County. Early white settlers began arriving in significant numbers to the area only after Arkansas achieved statehood in 1836, forming small communities including Spotsville, Atlanta, Calhoun, and Lamartine. Columbia County, named after the female personification of America, is typified geographically by low, rolling hills and is heavily forested. Columbia County was created from portions of Lafayette, Hempstead, Ouachita, and Union counties in 1852. The county seat, Magnolia, was incorporated in 1855. The early residents depended on an agricultural economy with cotton, and to a lesser extent corn, as a cash crop. Relative isolation and transportation difficulties have long been a problem for Columbia County. Columbia is the only one of Arkansas's seventy-five counties not situated on a river. The county's creeks and bayous were more of an impediment than an aid to early travelers because they were too narrow and shallow to support water traffic. Only the arrival of railroads made it possible for citizens of Columbia County to enjoy a dependable, year-round transportation option. Natural resources have been the mainstay of the Columbia County economy, from cotton in the nineteenth century; timber, oil, and gas in the mid-twentieth century; and later bromine. The county's fortunes have also been closely tied to the evolution of Southern Arkansas University (SAU) in the town of Magnolia.¹

The town of Magnolia has a population of roughly 11,500 and is steeped in a strong agricultural-based tradition that is reflected in local business. Besides agriculture, industrial, timber, and oil-producing ventures are also prominent in the town and its culture. Magnolia grew steadily after World War II, with the city's population more than doubling between 1940 and 1960. Housing construction filled in the two miles between downtown Magnolia and the SAU campus to the north. This period also witnessed the construction of Magnolia's two tallest buildings, the five-story McAlester Building and the five-story Magnolia Inn. The

¹ McNeill, Mike, "Columbia County," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas History and Culture* available online at <http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/> accessed 4 June 2009.

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improvement of highways in the 1950s and 1960s led to the decline of Columbia County's smaller communities as business centers, with more retailers concentrating in Magnolia, the county seat.²

Southern Arkansas University, or SAU, is located in Magnolia, Columbia County, Arkansas, roughly 50 miles southeast of Texarkana, at the junction of Arkansas Highway 19 and U.S. Highway 82. Southern Arkansas University was established April 1, 1909, through Act 100 of the Arkansas Legislature as signed by Governor George W. Donaghey. Act 100 created four agricultural school districts in order to educate future farmers in Arkansas. However, the name of the school was the Third District Agricultural School and went through several name changes until Southern Arkansas University was declared the present name. The other three institutions were First District Agricultural School (now Arkansas State University) in Jonesboro, Craighead County; Second District Agricultural School (now Arkansas Tech University) in Russellville, Pope County; and Fourth District Agricultural School (now University of Arkansas at Monticello) in Monticello, Drew County. According to Act 100, "within each of the foregoing districts there shall be established an industrial school to be known as 'The State Agricultural School' of its respective district and in which shall be taught agriculture, horticulture and the art of textile manufacturing."³ August 24, 1910, marked the laying of the cornerstone for the school.

Third District Agricultural School allowed for students to gain a high school diploma as a four year program. Therefore no one under the age of 15 was allowed to attend. Tuition at this time was free due to the sustainability of farmland and livestock, which were to be the tasks of the students, and government funding helped keep the school running. The first term started on January 11, 1911. Curriculum consisted of agriculture and home economics while English, history, science, and math provided the minimal requirement for a high school diploma.

In the mid-1920s, the Third District Agricultural School was elevated to junior college status. It was officially called State Agricultural and Mechanical College, Third District, but everyone knew it as Magnolia A&M. The agriculture and home economics curriculum remained but the school increasingly emphasized the Two-year Associate of Arts Degree it offered. This degree was for students who planned on going to a four-year institution.

The economic downturn of the 1930s did not hinder the enrollment of several hundred students to Magnolia A&M. Costs were low in order to be the least expensive school in the state. President Franklin D.

² McNeill, Mike. "Columbia County" *Encyclopedia of Arkansas History and Culture* available online at <http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/> accessed 4 June 2009.

³ Southern Arkansas University. "Centennial Celebration: Act 100 of 1909." Southern Arkansas University available online at <http://www.sau100.net/act100/> accessed May 27, 2009.

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Roosevelt's New Deal Program provided funding which expanded the physical plant and the graduating classes donated memorial constructions such as the Greek Amphitheatre (NR listed 6/1/05).

Early in Roosevelt's presidency, he started the National Industrial Recovery Act (NIRA) which circumvented the effects of business closures during the 1930s. The Federal Emergency Administration of Public Works, or Public Works Administration (PWA), was included in the Act and created on June 16, 1933. The theory behind the formation of the PWA was that the government would benefit from boosts in federal construction during depressive periods.⁴ Projects through the NIRA had to meet eligibility requirements in order to be fulfilled. These requirements as detailed by the NIRA were "any projects of the character heretofore constructed or carried on either directly by public authority or with public aid to serve the interests of the general public." The buildings of Cross Hall and Nelson Hall definitely fell into the category of necessary for use by the public, as in students.

"Non-federal PWA building types in Arkansas that were constructed or enhanced before 1942 using Public Works Administration funds included numerous schools, associated educational facilities, university buildings and dormitories that came to a total of \$5,441,408 in loans and grants."⁵ Funding for Cross and Nelson Halls came from Federal grants and loans totaling \$140,000 allotted September 25, 1935. The actual contract amount for the buildings was \$129,133 priced on December 12, 1935. However, construction did not begin until March 13, 1936, and was finished November 21, 1936.

While the boards of Jonesboro and Monticello A&M quickly decided to become four-year colleges, Magnolia A&M waited until 1950 to evolve into a four-year institution. The Arkansas legislature made it so and renamed the school Southern State College (SSC) through Act 11 of 1951. During SSC's twenty-five year history, President Dr. Dolph Camp, a Third District Agricultural School graduate, greatly expanded the campus. He hired new faculty, constructed a new library, a music building, a president's home, and completed two new dormitories.⁶ When Dr. Camp left in 1959, Imon E. Bruce took over the further expansions of the college. Bruce handled an enrollment boost due to the baby-boomers and he also carried out a construction program that produced fourteen major buildings over sixteen years. More than fifty student clubs were formed, ten varsity sports for men and women were started, and Greek fraternities and sororities were established. Racial integration in the mid-1960s was mostly uneventful but marred by an administration conflict in which the sponsor of the Students United for Rights and Equality, Professor Donald C. Baldrige,

Cross and Nelson Hall Historic District

Columbia County, Arkansas

⁴ Hope, Holly. "An Ambition to be Preferred: New Deal Recovery Efforts and Architecture in Arkansas, 1933-1943." Little Rock: Arkansas Historic Preservation Program, 2006, p. 21.

⁵ Ibid, p. 24.

⁶ Willis, James F. "Southern Arkansas University (SAU)." Encyclopedia of Arkansas. Available at <http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?search=1&entryID=4140> accessed May 27, 2009.

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was fired. His firing led to censure by the American Association of University Professors for more than twenty years.⁷

July 9, 1976, marked the date when Southern State College got elevated to university status through the state board of higher education. The school also got another name change to Southern Arkansas University, which is its present name. The university went through more changes since its name change such as being led by three presidents. The university's growth included a multi-campus system with over 5,000 students with the addition of two community colleges in El Dorado (Union County) and Camden (Ouachita County).⁸ SAU developed a master's program in different disciplines such as counseling, computer science agriculture, and public administration. An endowment fund started in 1963 grew from a few thousand dollars to \$20 million to fund over 600 scholarships annually. The university will be celebrating its centennial year in 2009.

The Bell Tower/Water Tower is a 187-foot tall Cor-ten steel structure constructed in 1976. Near the top is a peal of 14 cast bronze bells. The tower provides a prominent architectural landmark to identify the Southern Arkansas University campus and a 50,000 gallon water supply for surrounding facilities. The water tower itself was awarded "Steel Tank of the Year" by the Steel Plater Fabricator's Association in 1976 and has been featured in Southern Living Magazine. In 1988, a tradition was established when the Water Tower was decorated into a 187-foot illuminated holiday candle.⁹

Cross Hall and Nelson Hall are the most well preserved examples of Public Works Administration buildings left in Magnolia. The only other building in Magnolia that was constructed by the PWA is the city hospital. The Magnolia Hospital is located at 101 Hospital Drive. The hospital was constructed in 1939 but has had several additions since that time.¹⁰ While Cross Hall and Nelson Hall have both undergone their own modifications, the hospital has had even more extensive work done it. As result, Cross Hall and Nelson Hall are still the best examples of PWA buildings in Magnolia.

Statement of Significance

The Cross and Nelson Hall Historic District, located on the campus of Southern Arkansas University, Magnolia, Columbia County, is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under **Criterion A** for its association with the Public Works Administration's work in Columbia County, a social works project of the 1930s. Cross and Nelson Halls were one of two PWA-built projects in Magnolia, and the most

Cross and Nelson Hall Historic District

Columbia County, Arkansas

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ "Bell Tower/Water Tower" *Southern Arkansas University Campus Map* located at <http://www.saumag.edu/> accessed 10 June 2009.

¹⁰ Wilcox, Ralph. "City Hospital - Arkansas Architectural Resources Form." In the files of the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program, 2006.

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intact remaining project constructed by the PWA. As a result, the buildings best exemplify the PWA's work in Magnolia during the 1930s. It is also being nominated under the multiple property listing "An Ambition to be Preferred: New Deal Recovery Efforts and Architecture in Arkansas, 1933-1943."

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Willis, James F. *The Farmers' Schools of 1909: The Origins of Arkansas's Four Regional Universities*. *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* (2006): 225-249.

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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

From the Washington Street and Center Drive intersection, proceed east along Center Drive for 115 feet to the point of beginning. From the point of beginning, proceed easterly along Center Drive for 640 feet, thence proceed southerly perpendicular to Center Drive for 185 feet to the sidewalk, thence proceed westerly along the sidewalk for 250 feet to the sidewalk at the end of the building, thence proceed northerly for 125 feet along the sidewalk, thence proceed westerly perpendicular to the sidewalk for 150 feet to the next sidewalk, thence proceed southerly along the sidewalk for 85 feet, thence proceed westerly perpendicular to the sidewalk for 245 feet to the next sidewalk, thence proceed northerly along the sidewalk for 140 feet to the point of beginning.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

This boundary includes Southern Arkansas University Cross Hall and Nelson Hall and their immediate surroundings.