

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

=====

1. Name of Property

=====

historic name: Herman Davis Memorial

other name/site number: N/A

=====

2. Location

=====

street & number: Northeast corner of intersection of Baltimore Ave. and
State Highway 18

not for publication: N/A

city/town: Manila

vicinity: N/A

state: AR county: Mississippi code: AR 093 zip code: 72442

=====

3. Classification

=====

Ownership of Property: Public-state

Category of Property: Site

Number of Resources within Property:

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u> </u>	buildings
<u>1</u>	<u> </u>	sites
<u>2</u>	<u> </u>	structures
	<u>0</u>	objects
	<u>0</u>	Total

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

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

=====

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

=====

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this X 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 X meets _____ does not meet the National Register Criteria. _____ See continuation sheet.

Cathryn A. Sater _____ 2-22-95
Signature of certifying official 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.

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 Keeper Date
of Action

=====

6. Function or Use

=====

Historic: FUNERARY Sub: Graves/burials

Current: FUNERARY Sub: Graves/burials

=====

7. Description

=====

Architectural Classification:

Neoclassical

Other Description: N/A

Materials: foundation STONE/Granite roof N/A
 walls Granite sculpture other _____

Describe present and historic physical appearance. X See continuation sheet.

=====

8. Statement of Significance

=====

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

Applicable National Register Criteria: B

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): C

Areas of Significance: MILITARY

Period(s) of Significance: 1918-1919

Significant Dates: 1918

Significant Person(s): Davis, Herman

Cultural Affiliation: N/A

Architect/Builder: McHaney, John C., Jr.

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.
X See continuation sheet.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1

Summary

The Herman Davis Memorial is a small park of less than one acre located at the intersection of Baltimore Avenue and Highway 18 at Manila in Mississippi County. It features a monument consisting of a tall granite obelisk and a life-sized granite carving of Davis; the late soldier's remains are buried to the rear of the monument, which is flanked by two flag poles bearing the U.S. and Arkansas flags. Most of the park is open and grassy, and a concrete walk leads to the monument. The Herman Davis Memorial is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion B with statewide significance as the last extant historic resource associated with Davis, Arkansas's greatest hero of World War I, and the posthumous effort to recognize his actions.

Elaboration

The Herman Davis Memorial is a small park of less than one acre located at the intersection of Baltimore Avenue and Highway 18 at Manila in Mississippi County. It features a monument consisting of a 25-foot-tall granite obelisk and a life-sized granite carving of Davis; the late soldier's remains are buried to the rear of the monument, which is flanked by two flag poles bearing the U.S. and Arkansas flags. A bronze plaque attached to the base of the statue of Davis reads: Herman Davis/Pvt. Co. I 113th Inf./Sharpshooter and Company Runner/Enlisted March 14, 1918; Honorably Discharged May 29, 1919/Cited for bravery for extraordinary heroism in action/and decorated with/U.S. Distinguished Service Cross Oct. 10 1918/French Croix de Guerre with Palm Apr. 19th 1919/Gilt Star for the Croix de Guerre Apr. 23rd 1919/French Medal Militaire May 10th 1919/"A most courageous runner who singlehandedly attacked a machine gun nest which/was preventing the advance of his platoon and killed four gunners."/"The smallest but bravest and best liked man in my company."/His captain.

Engraved on the back of the obelisk and facing Davis' grave is the following inscription:
ERECTED BY THE PEOPLE OF MISSISSIPPI COUNTY/IN GRATEFUL MEMORY OF
THEIR HERO/HERMAN DAVIS/BORN JANUARY 3, 1888 DIED JANUARY 5, 1923/HE
GAVE HIS LIFE UPON THE ALTAR OF HIS COUNTRY

The surrounding park is open and grassy, and a concrete walk leads to the monument.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 1

Summary

Criterion B, statewide significance

The Herman Davis Memorial at Manila in Mississippi County is a small park of approximately one acre featuring a 25-foot granite shaft with a granite likeness of World War I hero Herman Davis attached and Davis' grave. It is the only extant resource associated with Davis and the movement to honor his heroism and is thus eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion B (Criterion Exception C) with statewide significance.

Elaboration

Herman Davis was born January 2, 1888, near Big Lake Island (now Manila) in Mississippi County to Jeff Davis and Mary Ann Davis. The family lived near Big Lake and operated a small store; in addition, they did some small-scale farming, fishing, and hunting to supplement their meager income.

After Davis' father died when he was in the fourth grade, he became a guide for sportsmen from nearby Blytheville. He also became an expert hunter, reportedly killing as many as 400 ducks a day on Big Lake for shipment to northern markets. His expertise as a marksman, learned from a lifetime on Big Lake, would serve him well when he was called to duty in World War I.

Davis was inducted into the army on March 4, 1918, and sent to Camp Pike near Little Rock for his 90-day military training. He was assigned to Company I, 113th Infantry, 29th Division and sailed to France on June 15, 1918.

Davis served in the Centor sector of Haute-Alsace from July 25 to September 22, 1918, and in the Meuse-Argonne offensive of October 1918.

On October 10, 1918, Davis, serving as a runner, was advancing through some woods around Molleville Farm near Verdun with his company's assault platoon when the Americans came under machine gun fire. As the rest of the company moved into position to flank the gun, Davis crawled forward on his own to a position about 50 yards from the machine gun nest, which was located atop a strategic hill top. "One at a time, he picked off the four Germans as casually and

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 2

as accurately as he had picked off ducks on Big Lake."¹

An officer from another company observed Davis' attack on the machine gun and its crew and sent word of the private's one-man assault to Paris and Washington, recommending him for recognition of his valor.

That recognition came in 1919 when Davis was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross from the U.S. and the Croix de Guerre with Palm and the Medaille Militaire from the government of France. He was later awarded a gilt star for his Croix de Guerre for his actions near Molleville Farm.

Honorably discharged from the army on May 29, 1919, Davis returned to farming, fishing, and hunting at Big Lake. The reticent hero made no mention of his activities in the Great War and his neighbors know nothing of his many awards.

This changed when Gen. John J. "Black Jack" Pershing issued his list of the "100 Greatest Heroes of the World War." Fourth on the list was Private Herman J. Davis of Manila, Arkansas. Friends and neighbors, who knew nothing of Davis' exploits, urged him to show them his medals. When he reluctantly complied, he removed them from his old fishing tackle box, where they rested amid his fishing lures.

Davis was embarrassed by his celebrity, and wore his medals in public only once, when his mother urged him to do so at Christmas. His wife would occasionally wear them at public functions. His colleagues at the Dud Cason Post No. 24 of the American Legion also liked to show of their heroic companion, but Davis usually refused to make speeches or to be displayed. On one occasion he was induced to go to the rostrum, but after witnessing his obvious discomfort, "his friends never again subjected him to such an unpleasant experience."

The former private had inhaled poison gas during his time in the trenches, and it swiftly took

* While Davis was widely honored for his actions near Verdun, other experiences in No Man's Land were equally exciting. Of two known to have been recounted by Davis, one involved him stumbling upon a German dugout after being separated from his comrades. He picked them off as the alarmed Germans emerged from the dugout, killing 11 in all.

In a separate incident, Davis was in a front-line trench with other American soldiers observing enemy soldiers about 1,000 yards away. When his fellow soldiers told him the Germans were out of range, Davis said "Why that's just good shootin' distance" and proceeded to slay five of them before the remainder took cover -- testament again to his skills as a hunter.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 3

a toll on his health. By autumn of 1922, he was suffering an advanced case of pulmonary tuberculosis. The proud and independent woodsman was soon incapable of working and, on December 9, he was admitted to United States Hospital No. 88 in Memphis. He died there January 5, 1923, two days after his 35th birthday. He was buried January 8 in a small church cemetery in Manila.

Following Davis' death, he was the subject of a speech to the U.S. Senate by Senator T.H. Caraway of Arkansas, who complained that the late hero had never received compensation from the government and had been denied a caretaker's position at the Big Lake federal wildlife refuge because he could not meet Civil Service requirements. The state General Assembly also marked the former private's death, unanimously passing House Concurrent Resolution No. 3, proclaiming Davis "to be Arkansas's most distinguished son in action in World War I."

In early 1923, East Arkansas veterans decided that it was time that Davis' war-time heroics were appropriately noted. The Julius Benham, Jr., Post No. 5 of the American Legion, based in Marianna, AR, sponsored the Herman Davis Memorial Association. This initial group was assisted by the state American Legion organization, other Legion posts, and the Lions, Rotary, Kiwanis and Elks Clubs of Arkansas.

"The object of the association is to suitably mark and maintain the grave of Herman Davis near Manila, Mississippi County, Arkansas, and for the purpose of commemorating the distinguished service of this hero by the erection of memorials within the state of Arkansas, and for the further purpose of establishing one or more scholarships in the University of Arkansas, thereby doing something that will be of untold advantage to the young people of our state," a May 1923 article in *The Arkansas Legionnaire* explained.

The Herman Davis memorial movement received two major boosts in the fall of 1923. General Pershing wrote the Association, saying "I sincerely hope that the Herman Davis Memorial Association is meeting with the complete success it deserves in its efforts to perpetuate the memory of this gallant soldier of Arkansas." Perhaps coincidentally, Governor Thomas McRae declared September 24-29 "Herman Davis Week."

By November 1923, more than 1,000 Arkansans from across the state were participating "in the distribution of educational publicity and solicitation of funds," the *Legionnaire* reported. By late October in 1924, the granite shaft for the memorial was on its way to Mississippi County from Vermont. John C. McHaney, Jr., received the contract to erect the shaft on what was by then designated the Herman Davis Memorial Highway.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 4

A marble likeness of Davis was ordered from carvers in Carrara, Italy, but it was never delivered. Unveiling of the 25-foot-tall granite shaft from the quarries of Milne, Gray & Varnum in Rutland, Vermont, was set for May 31, 1925, and a newspaper article noted, somewhat peevishly, that "tentative plans for the unveiling are being held somewhat in abeyance by the possibility that the Carrara marble statue of the hero may yet arrive from Italy after nearly a year's delay. The importer has several times assured Contractor John C. McHaney, Jr., that the statue had been shipped, naming the vessel, but the statue did not arrive."

It was dedicated that memorial day, though it cannot be determined whether the marble statue was attached at that point. Davis' remains were also moved from the small Manila graveyard where they were marked only by a small wooden cross and a pair of "faded, torn American flags" to be reinterred in a plot at the rear of the imposing new monument.

The initial enthusiasm for the project apparently waned, and by mid-1925 plans for a scholarship and a second memorial at the state War Memorial Building in Little Rock were abandoned. A May, 1925, article in the *Legionnaire* reported that "the statewide campaign has largely been a failure, except in this [Mississippi] county, where the bulk of the money was raised. It was decided to go ahead with erecting the monument at the home of the hero, and to take up the other work of the association when conditions are more propitious."

In 1953, the Herman Davis Memorial was designated as a state park by the Arkansas General Assembly; the Department of Parks and Tourism has been responsible for its upkeep since that time. It remains a picturesque monument to a war hero who has largely been forgotten by most Arkansans.

In 1967, the original marble statue was destroyed by vandals; it has since been replaced with an exact duplicate executed in Barre granite identical to the 1924 obelisk that looms behind it (yet it is important to note that the large, impressive obelisk upon which this statue stands is completely unaltered).

Herman Davis rose from poverty and obscurity in remote northeast Arkansas to become the state's greatest hero of World War I, winning honors from both the U.S. and France. The Herman Davis Memorial, containing the late hero's grave, remains the sole historic resource associated with Davis and the movement after his death to recognize the hero who shunned such recognition during life; it is thus eligible for listing on the National Register under Criterion B with statewide significance.

=====

9. Major Bibliographical References

=====

X See continuation sheet.

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:

- X State historic preservation office
- Other state agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other -- Specify Repository: _____

=====

10. Geographical Data

=====

Acreeage of Property: Less than one

UTM References:	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
A	<u>15</u>	<u>755880</u>	<u>3973370</u>	B	<u>15</u>	_____
C	<u>15</u>	_____	_____	D	<u>15</u>	_____

___ See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description: ___ See continuation sheet.

Beginning at a point formed by the intersection of the northern edge of State Hwy. 18 with the eastern edge of Baltimore Ave., proceed northerly along the latter line for a distance of approximately 200 feet to its intersection with a perpendicular line running parallel with the northern edge of State Hwy. 18; thence proceed easterly along said line for a distance of approximately 200 feet to its intersection with a perpendicular line running parallel with the eastern edge of Baltimore Ave.; thence proceed southerly along said line for a distance of approximately 200 feet to its intersection with the northern edge of State Hwy. 18; thence proceed westerly to the point of beginning.

Boundary Justification: ___ See continuation sheet.

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

=====

11. Form Prepared By

=====

Name/Title: Mark Christ, Public Information Officer/AHPP Staff

Organization: Arkansas Historic Preservation Program Date: 02/16/95

Street & Number: 323 Center Street, Suite 1500 Telephone: (501) 324-9880

City or Town: Little Rock State: AR Zip: 72201

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 9 Page 1

Bibliography

The Arkansas Legionnaire, May 26, 1923, Vol. II, No. 23, Page 1, "Arkansas to Honor Memory of Herman Davis, one of the Greatest World War Heroes," *The Arkansas Legionnaire*, September 22, 1923, Vol. II, No. 4, Page 1, "Herman Davis Drive Lauded by Pershing."

The Arkansas Legionnaire, November 10, 1923, Vol. II, No. 47, Page 1, "Statewide Campaign Shows State Has Not Forgotten Its Great Hero."

The Arkansas Legionnaire, October 18, 1923, Vol. III, No. 44, Page 1, "Herman Davis Shaft is On Way."

The Arkansas Legionnaire, May 16, 1925, Vol. IV, No. 22, Page 1, "Herman Davis Shaft Will Be Unveiled Soon."

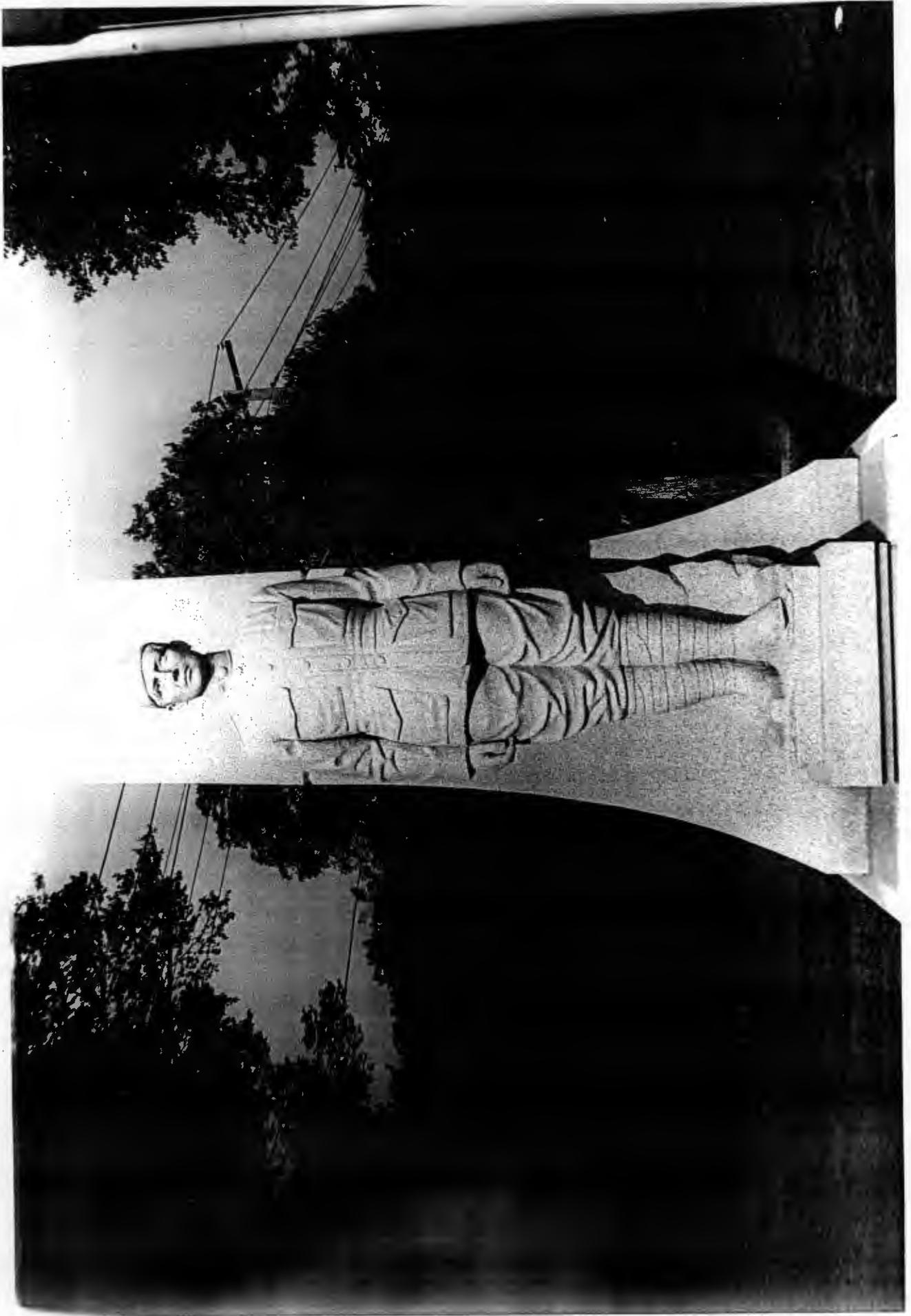
The Arkansas Legionnaire, May 16, 1925, Vol. IV, No. 22, Page 5, "Beautiful Monument to Arkansas Greatest Hero to be Unveiled Soon."

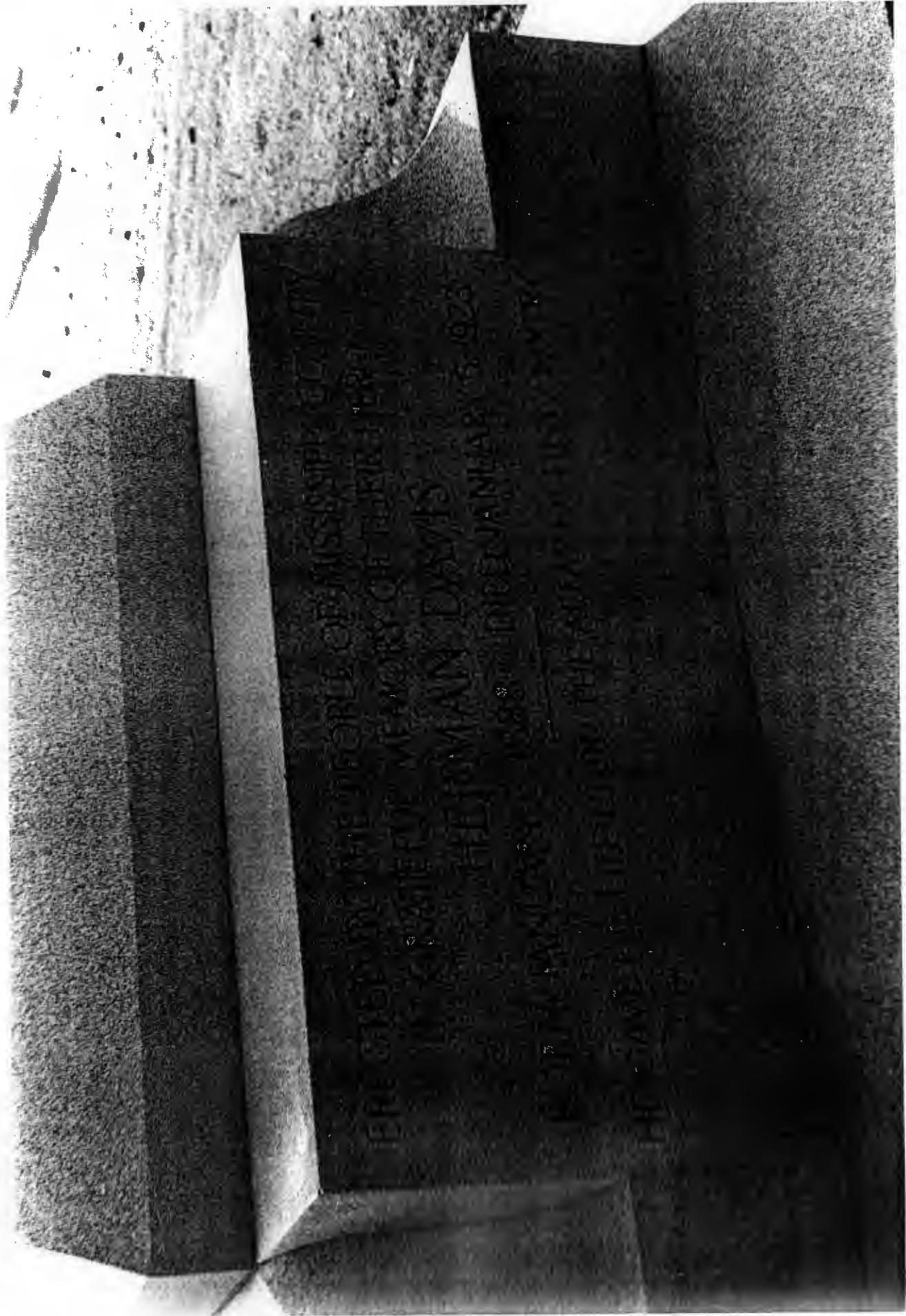
Courier News, Sunday, November 10, 1985, Page 3, "Arkansan Listed Among Top 100 Heroes."

"The Life of Herman Davis," undated newspaper article from unknown newspaper supplied from the files of the Northeast Arkansas Town Crier.

Acts of Arkansas, pp 1050-51.

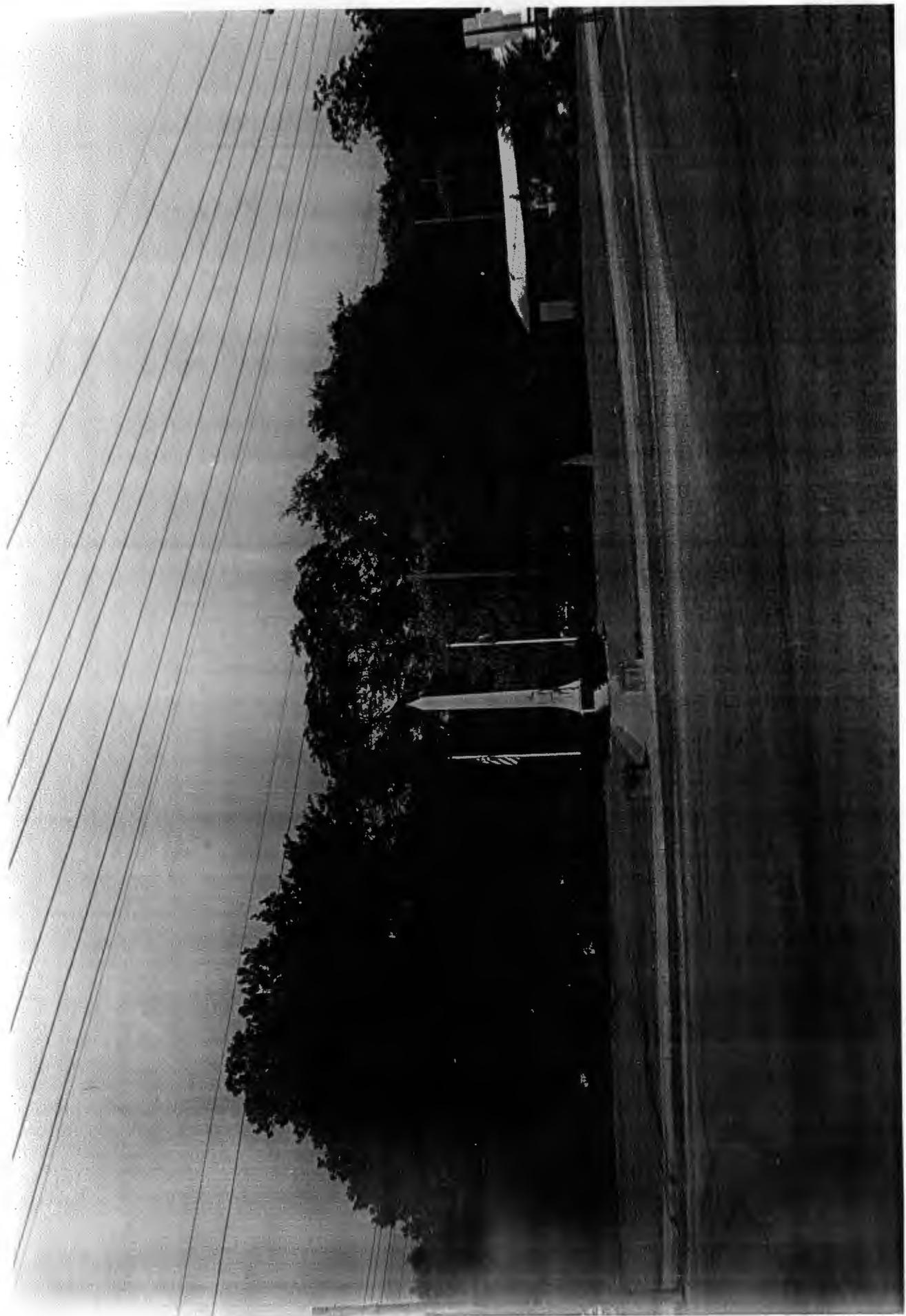
Ross, Margaret Smith, "Herman Davis: Forgotten Hero," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly*, Vol. XIV, Spring 1955, pp 51-60.





THE PEOPLE OF MISSISSIPPI COUNTY
HEIRMAN DAVIS
DECEMBER 18, 1828

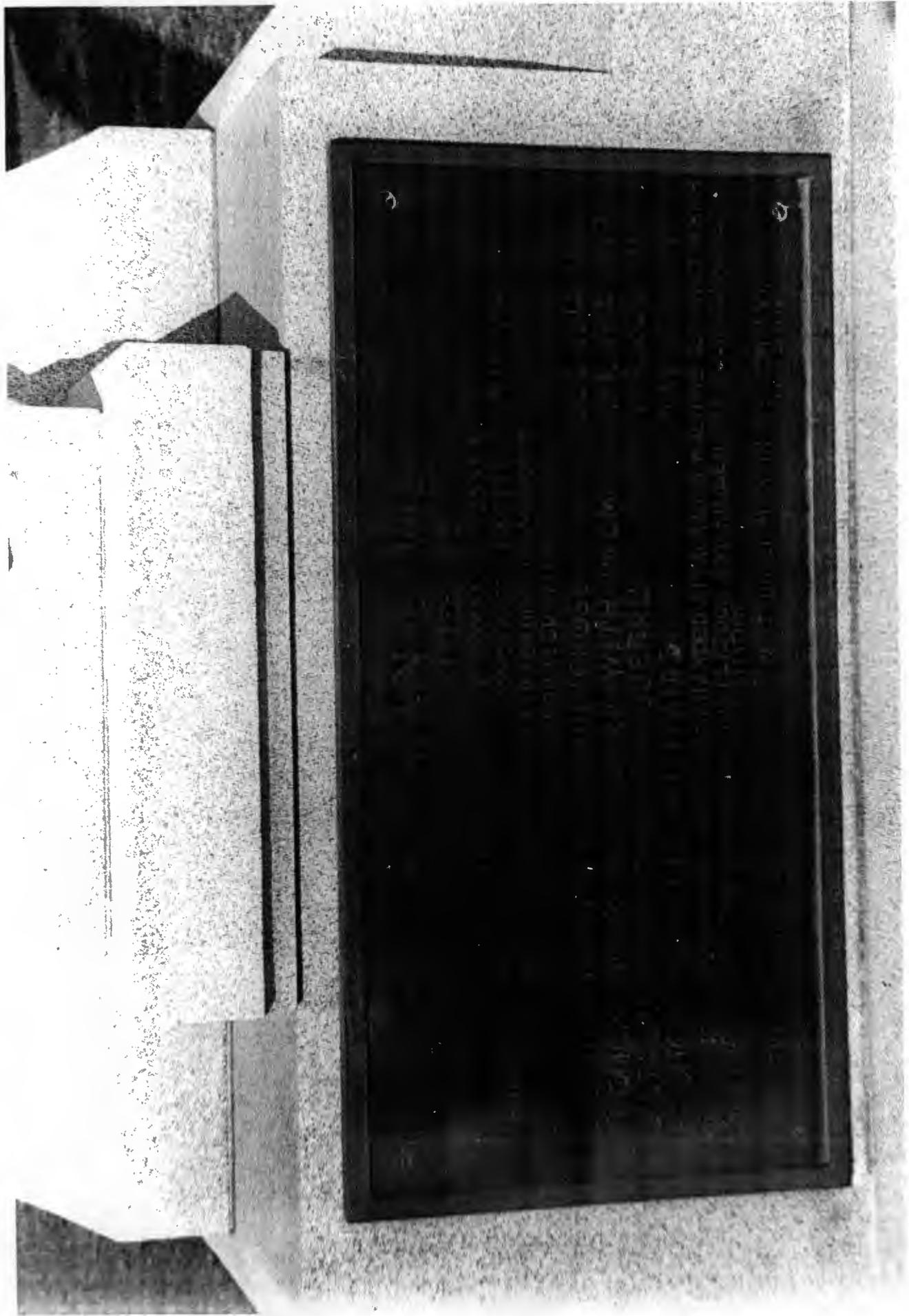




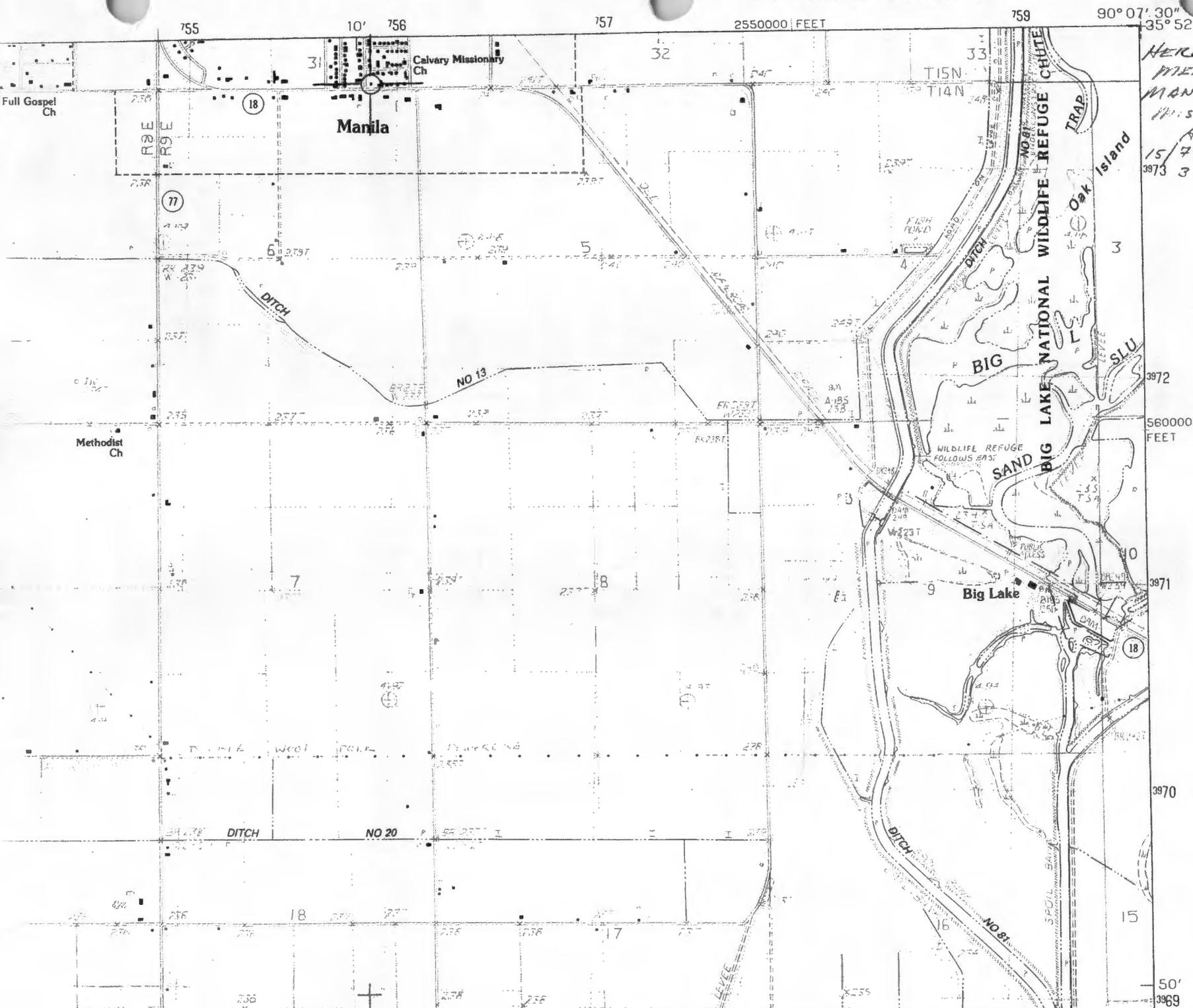








ARKANSAS-MISSISSIPPI CO.
7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)



HERMAN DAVIS
MEMORIAL PARK
MANILA,
MISSISSIPPI CO.,
AR
15/755880/
3973 3973370

50'
3969