

Listed
6/14/90

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 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 "Arkansas II" Riverboat

other names/site number

2. Location

street & number South End of Locust Street

not for publication N/A

city, town North Little Rock

vicinity N/A

state Arkansas

code AR

county Pulaski

code 119

zip code 72114

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	Noncontributing
_____	_____ buildings
_____	_____ sites
1	_____ structures
_____	_____ objects
1	0 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 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

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 the Keeper

Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

TRANSPORTATION/ Water-Related/ Boat

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

VACANT/ Not in Use

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(enter categories from instructions)

OTHER: Steel-Hulled Stern-Wheeler

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation N/A

walls N/A

roof N/A

other Steel

Wood

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1

Summary

The Arkansas II is a steel-hulled stern-wheeler with a welded steel cabin on the first deck and a wood frame cabin on the second deck. A wood frame pilot house rises above the second deck toward the front of the boat. The stern paddle wheel is constructed of steel framing and wooden buckets. It was designed for the Army Corps of Engineers as an inland waterway, navigational maintenance vessel and was originally powered by steam engines.

Elaboration

The Arkansas II is a steel-hulled sternwheeler, two decks in height, with a pilot house located toward the front of the boat which rises above the level of the second deck. The steel hull is of the flat bottom type with a raked bow and measures 177 feet, 1 inch in length, 38 feet, 7 inches in breadth (beam) and six feet in depth amidships. The first deck machinery housing cabin is fabricated from 1/4 inch welded steel and measures 126 feet in length, 28 feet, 5 inches in width and 10 feet, 4 inches in height. The second deck cabin is of wood frame construction and measures 111 feet in length, 28 feet, 5 inches in width and 8 feet in height with a narrow, central raised deck which runs the length of the boat and rises 2 feet above the roof of the second deck. The stern paddle wheel is fabricated of steel framing and wooden buckets, and measures 22 feet in length and 16 feet in diameter. The Arkansas II has a hold with a depth of six feet and a draft of 3.5 feet.

The exterior of the boat is largely undecorated and is fenestrated only the same simple, rectangular window openings with which it was outfitted originally. The greater number of windows on the second deck than on the first is explained by the fact that the second deck served as quarters for the crew, while the first deck housed only machinery. An exterior covered walkway extends around all four sides of both decks, allowing sheltered access to the machinery and steam engines (long since removed) and the living quarters (also largely removed). The open bow with its concrete deck - which extends fifty feet beyond the front of the cabin area - was designed to support cranes and other snag removal equipment. The only other alterations of note include the addition of the double stairway on the front of the cabin area and the removal of the central smokestack originally located just behind the pilot house.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 1

Summary

Criterion C, local significance

The Arkansas II was constructed 1939-40. Though its steel hull was built by the Bethlehem Steel Company of Leetsdale, Pennsylvania, the installation of the propulsion equipment and all other machinery, and the fabrication of the superstructure was performed by the Memphis (Ensley Bottoms) shipyards of the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers; as such, the Arkansas II was the last steam-powered sternwheeler constructed by the Corps' Memphis District Engineer fleet, and reputedly the last sternwheeler built by the Corps of Engineers throughout the nation.

Elaboration

For all of the romance and myth it acquired, the heyday of the steamboat on the inland waterways of the United States was remarkably brief. Though it was introduced in 1811 and continued to operate until around the turn of the century, the production and use of steamboats flourished for only about thirty years, from 1840 to 1870. Of course, these were the grand riverboats of which such writers as Mark Twain spoke so lovingly, carrying colorful characters of all sorts up and down the grand river valleys of America, between such storied ports as Cincinnati, St. Louis, Memphis, Natchez and New Orleans. Paradoxically, the advent of such far less glamorous steam-powered craft as snag boats for the purpose of maintaining navigational channels and charting the rivers' shifting courses did not occur until after the success of the railroads precipitated the decline in the fortunes of the steamboat industry. It was in 1874 that the federal government first decided upon a program of navigational improvements to make the rivers safe for steamboats, when Congress authorized the erection of beacon lights, day boards and buoys on the western rivers as aids to navigation. The decade thereafter saw the introduction of a system of channel improvements, including dikes and wing dams, which helped to keep the rivers within their bounds and provided deeper, snag-free channels. It was during this period, in 1879, that Congress also established the Mississippi River Commission, the principal purpose of which was to coordinate all flood control and levee construction throughout the Mississippi River valley. The commission consisted of seven Presidentially-appointed members, three of which were from the Corps of Engineers.

Nevertheless, the popularity of steamboats continued to decline during the end of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth, even in spite of the fact that the coal industry had become cognizant of the fact that it was far cheaper to ship coal via barges towed by steam-powered boats than by rail cars. River commerce continued to languish until 1918, when the railroads were unable to meet the overwhelming demand for transportation brought about by World War I. At the suggestion of a group of western industrialists, the federal government authorized the Federal Barge Line, which operated under the War Department and consisted initially of five towboats and twenty-five barges - most of which were supplied from the Corps of Engineers. This small enterprise proceeded to prove what

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 2

some had long maintained: that bulk freight could be moved more economically by water than by rail. Thereafter the rivers were literally back in business again and river commerce continued to grow until it far surpassed, in volume, the best years of the steamboats. It soon became evident during this period of renewed commercial vitality and increasing coordination of river control and navigation by the federal government that vessels would be required to clear the rivers and maintain the various navigational aids. The ever-conservative nature of public agencies and the demand upon them to economize resulted in the Corps' recycling and salvage of older vessels, which only perpetuated their use of steam power long after commercial towboats had converted to diesel.

The Arkansas II was constructed 1939-40 and replaced the Arkansas I, another steam-powered sternwheeler which had been constructed 40 years earlier for the same purpose. Its steel hull was built by the Bethlehem Steel Company of Leetsdale, Pennsylvania, near Pittsburgh, and then floated down the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers to Memphis. The fabrication of the superstructure and the installation of the propulsion equipment, and all other machinery was performed by the Memphis (Ensley Bottoms) shipyards of the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers according to their own plans and specifications. The installation of the machinery was supervised by Leroy Wilkerson, chief engineer of the United States Dredge Fleet. All the machinery was salvaged from the U.S.S. Chas. D. Harris, another old Navy steamboat, and the engines were fueled with oil. The total cost of construction was \$210,000. Captain Ray E. Allen was the first master of the Arkansas II, David Blankenship was the first pilot and Paul B. Hudson was chief engineer.

The simple, unornamented design of the Arkansas II is reflective of its function. Like its predecessor, the Arkansas II performed almost exclusively as a navigational maintenance vessel, frequently referred to as a "snag boat." As a patrol boat for the Corps of Engineers, the Arkansas II worked the Mississippi, Arkansas and White Rivers reading channel depths and marking the channels with buoys and lights. A crane apparatus was installed near the bow of the boat and used to remove fallen trees and other debris from the shipping channels. The Arkansas II served as the principal navigational maintenance boat for the Corps on these waterways during its twenty-six years of service and was a familiar sight among those who travelled these rivers.

Maintenance boats such as the Arkansas II were designed to be inhabited by a crew for relatively long periods of time while the boat was away from its home port. A newspaper article from June of 1940 indicates that the new Arkansas II was scheduled to tie up at Pine Bluff occasionally, but that it would work its assigned waterways continuously for most of the summer, only returning to Memphis in the event that its services were required there. The upper deck was outfitted with officers' quarters, a dining hall, a cookhouse and quarters for the general crew, and was heated throughout with steam.

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 3

After it was retired from active service by the Corps in 1966, the Arkansas II was purchased first by the Iowa Power Company, then by River Excursions of Stillwater, Minnesota, and lastly by River Restaurants International of Memphis, Tennessee for use as a floating restaurant. It was only upon its return to Memphis that the original steam engines were removed. Though extensive interior modifications were required for adaptation as a recreational vessel and a restaurant, the exterior remains largely as it appeared when it was constructed, and it is the intent of the current owners to restore the entire exterior to its original appearance.

The Arkansas II was the last steam-powered sternwheeler constructed by the Corps' Memphis District Engineer fleet, and reputedly the last sternwheeler built by the Corps of Engineers throughout the nation. It survives as an intact example of the functional workboats designed and constructed by the Corps of Engineers for the purpose of maintaining the navigable inland waterways before such duties were taken over by the United States Coast Guard.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 9 Page 1

Bibliography

Brown, Charles A., "A Hard Working Girl, Arkansas II, Is in Uncle Sam's 'Beauty Parlor'", *Memphis Press-Scimitar*, January 11, 1963.

Crump, Irving, *Our Army Engineers*, (New York, 1954), pp. 173-174.

Curtis, Joe, "New Vessel Will Slip From Moorings Here", *The Commercial Record*, June 5, 1940.

Donovan, Frank, *River Boats of America*, (New York, 1966), pp. 268-275.

"Local Paddlewheeler May Be for Sale", *Memphis Press-Scimitar*, February 2, 1966.

Manley, Brent, "City's Terms Anchor 'Arkansas II'", *Memphis Press-Scimitar*, March 22, 1980.

"Restaurant Floats In", *Memphis Press-Scimitar*, October 30, 1979.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 10 Page 1

Verbal Boundary Description

The Arkansas II Riverboat is moored just off the northern shore of the Arkansas River, to the east of the Interstate 30 bridge at the southern end of Locust Street in North Little Rock. Beginning at the northwestern corner of the boat, the boundary proceeds southerly along the western or front elevation of the boat to the point formed by the intersection of said line with a perpendicular line running along the southern elevation of the boat; thence proceed easterly along said line to a point formed by its intersection with a perpendicular line running along the eastern or stern elevation of the boat; thence proceed northerly along said line to the point formed by its intersection with a perpendicular line running along the northern elevation of the boat; thence proceed westerly along said line to the point of beginning.

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)

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1939-1940

Significant Dates

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Corps of Engineers

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 15 | 567610 | 3845510
Zone Easting Northing

C | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

B | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
Zone Easting Northing

D | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

See continuation sheet

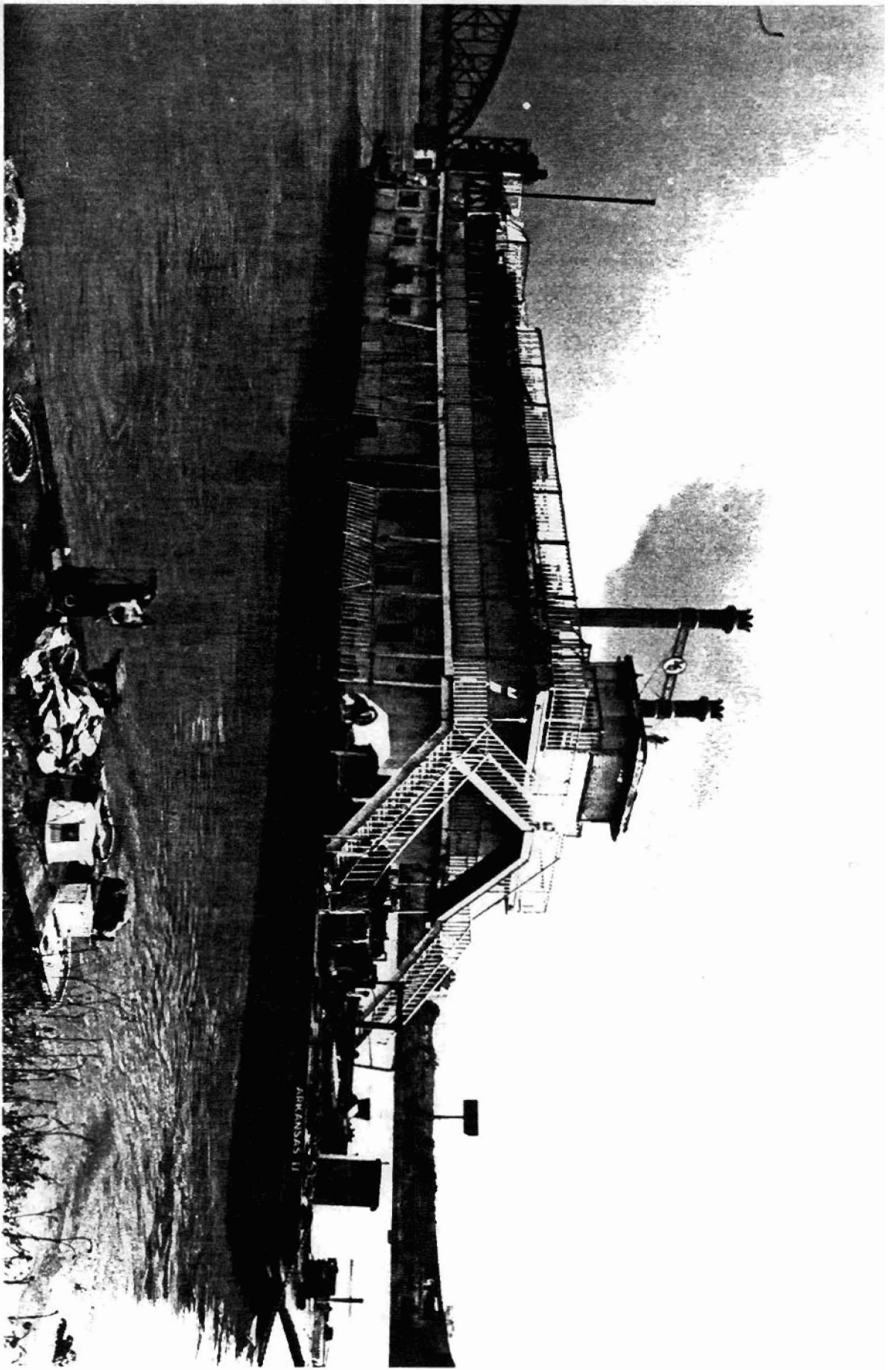
Boundary Justification

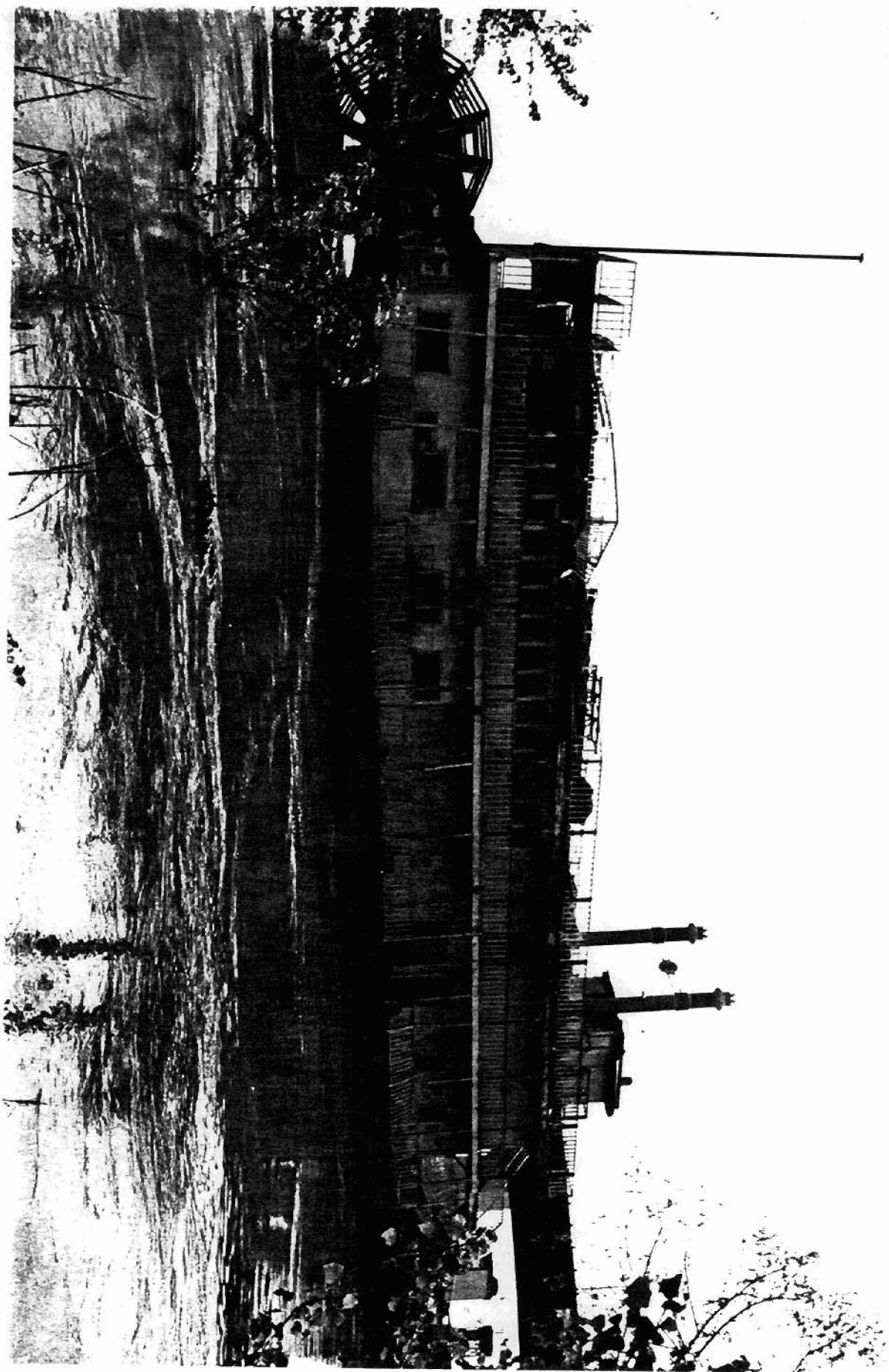
This boundary includes all the property historically associated with this resource.

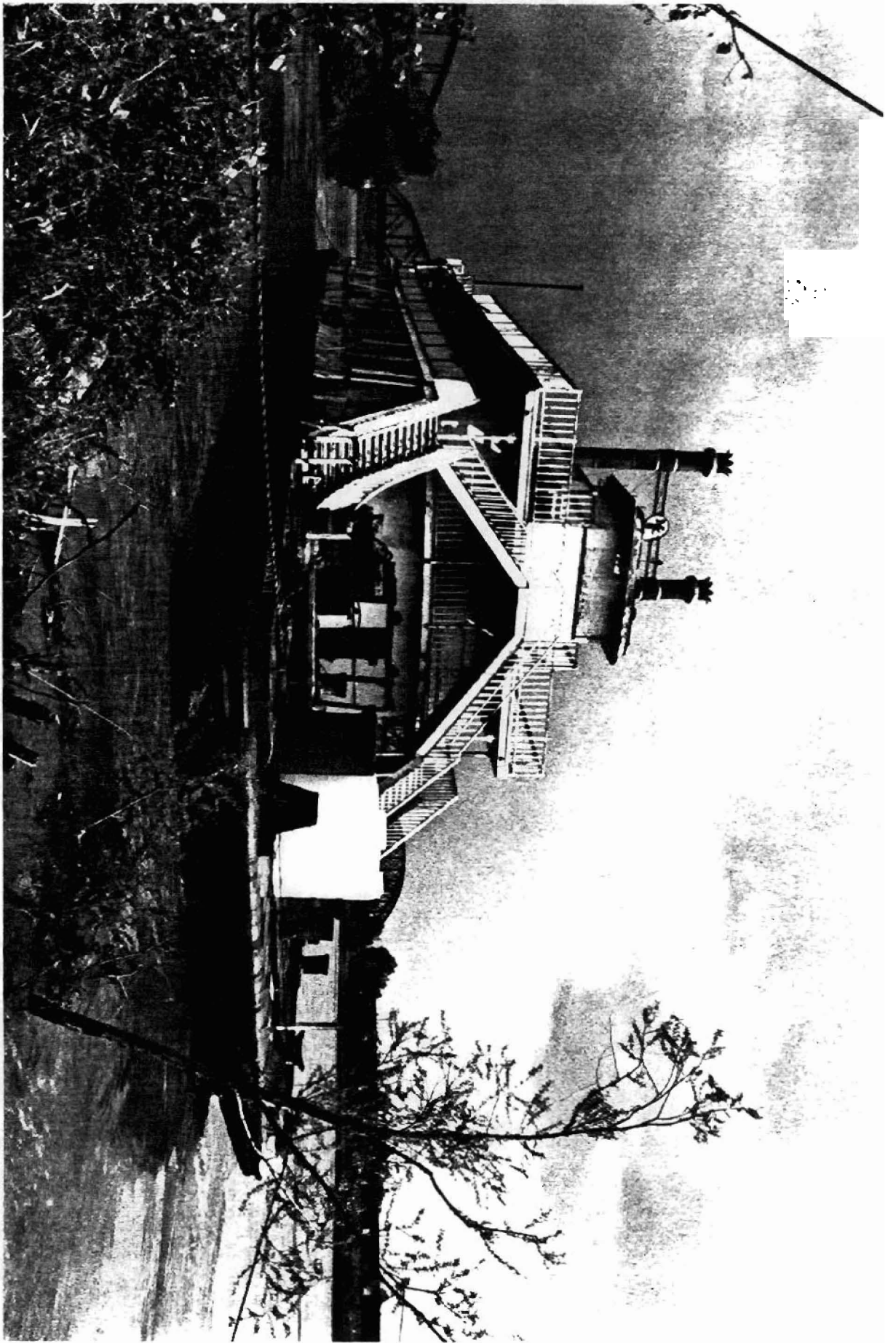
See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

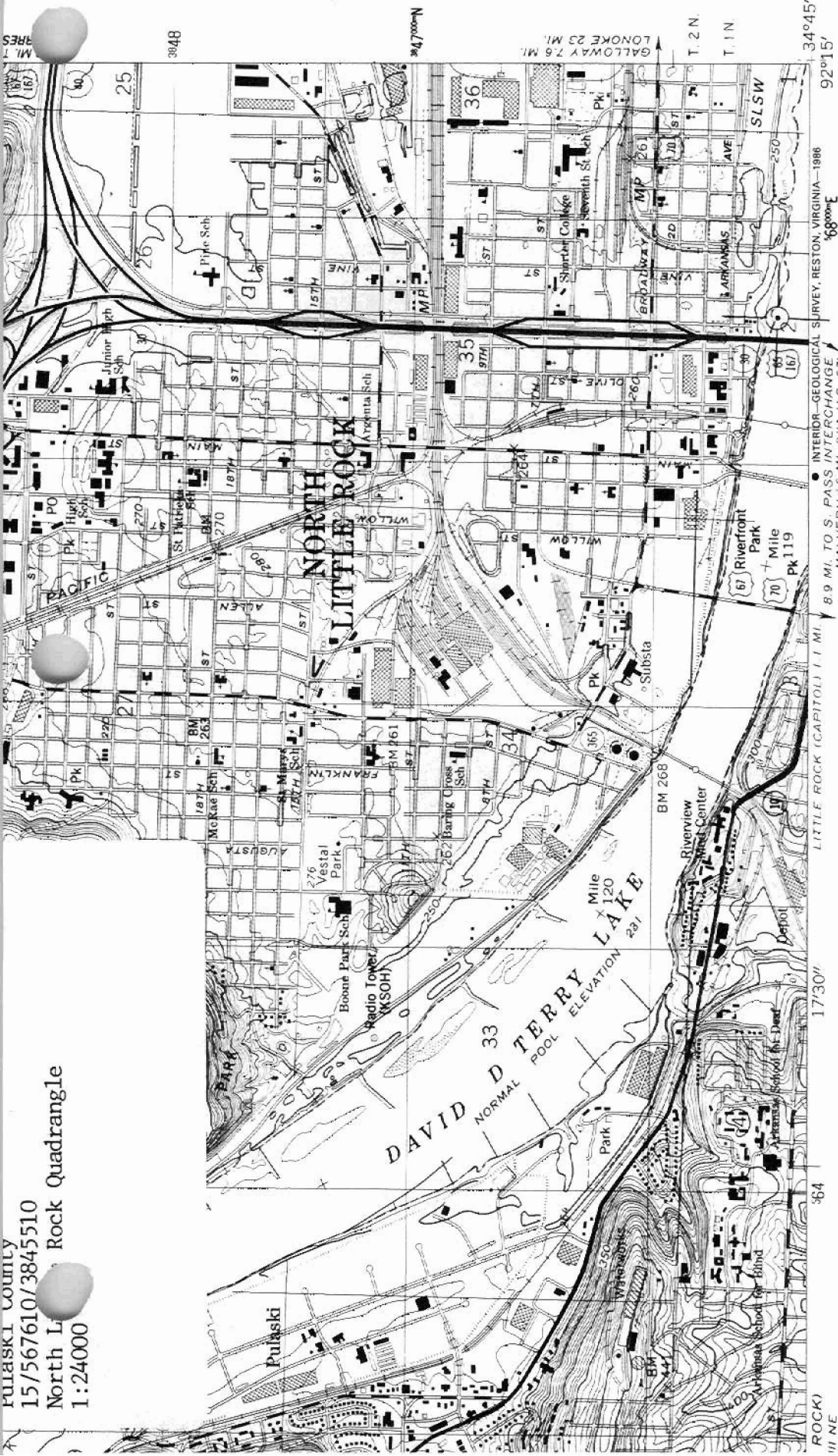
name/title Kenneth Story, Architectural Historian
organization Arkansas Historic Preservation Program date May 4, 1990
street & number 225 E Markham, Suite 300 telephone (501) 371-2763
city or town Little Rock state Arkansas zip code 72201







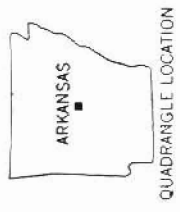
Pulaski County
 15/567610/3845510
 North Little Rock Quadrangle
 1:24000



(SWEET HOME)
 7553 II NW

ROAD CLASSIFICATION

- Heavy-duty —————
- Medium-duty —————
- Light-duty —————
- Unimproved dirt —————
- Interstate Route
- U. S. Route
- State Route



VERTICAL DATUM OF 1929

NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
 COLORADO 80225, OR RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092
 NORTH LITTLE ROCK, ARKANSAS 72204
 AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

NORTH LITTLE ROCK, ARK.
 34092-G3-TF-024

1986
 DMA 7553 IV SE-SERIES V884