

NR LISTED

MAY 23 1997

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

AHPP

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

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1. Name of Property

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Historic Name: "Spirit of the American Doughboy" Monument

Other Name/Site Number: SB0482S

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2. Location

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Street & Number: Parking lot at 4901 Midland Avenue

Not for Publication: N/A

City/Town: Fort Smith

Vicinity: N/A

State: AR County: Sebastian Code: AR 131 Zip Code: 72904

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3. Classification

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Ownership of Property: Private

Category of Property: Object

Number of Resources within Property:

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

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

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

"Spirit of the American Doughboy" Monument
Name of Property

Sebastian County, Arkansas
County and State

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4. State/Federal Agency Certification
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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. Sator
Signature of certifying official

4-11-97
Date

Arkansas Historic Preservation Program
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property x meets _____ does not meet the National Register criteria. _____ See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

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5. National Park Service Certification
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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

"Spirit of the American Doughboy" Monument
Name of Property

Sebastian County, Arkansas
County and State

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6. Function or Use

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Historic: RECREATION AND CULTURE Sub: Monument

Current : RECREATION AND CULTURE Sub: Monument

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7. Description

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Architectural Classification:

N/A

Materials: foundation STONE roof N/A
walls METAL/copper other _____

Describe present and historic physical appearance:

Summary

The "Spirit of the American Doughboy" monument of Fort Smith faces west in the parking lot of the Ellig-Stoufer Post No. 31 of the American Legion in Fort Smith, Sebastian County. Designed by American sculptor Ernest Moore "Dick" Viquesney, it depicts a typical World War I "Doughboy" soldier dressed in battle gear. He is standing on a plot of battlefield that has barbed wire and two broken fence posts on the proper right and proper left sides. The figure is in mid-stride and is wearing a World War I battle helmet and a backpack. His proper right arm is raised above his head clasping a grenade in his proper right hand, while his proper left arm is at his side and it carrying a rifle horizontal to the ground. The base, made of fieldstone, is 52"x45"x45". The sculpture, made of bronze, stands 76"x40"x58".

Elaboration

The "Spirit of the American Doughboy" monument of Fort Smith is located in the parking lot of the Ellig-Stoufer Post No. 31 of the American Legion in Fort Smith, Sebastian County. Designed by American sculptor Ernest Moore "Dick" Viquesney, it depicts a typical World War I "Doughboy" soldier dressed in battle gear. He is standing on a plot of battlefield that has barbed wire and two broken fence posts on the proper right and proper left sides. The figure is in mid-stride and is wearing a World War I battle helmet and a

"Spirit of the American Doughboy" Monument
Name of Property

Sebastian County, Arkansas
County and State

backpack. His proper right arm is raised above his head clasping a grenade in his proper right hand, while his proper left arm is at his side and it carrying a rifle horizontal to the ground. The base, made of fieldstone, is 52"x45"x45". The sculpture, made of bronze, stands 76"x40"x58".

The front of the base contains a plaque which reads "DEDICATED TO THE MEMORY / OF OUR COMRADES / WHO ENTERED THE SERVICE / OF THEIR COUNTRY / FROM FORT SMITH, ARKANSAS / AND GAVE THEIR LIVES / IN THE WORLD WAR / VICTOR ELLIG POST NO. 31 / THE AMERICAN LEGION."

The bottom proper left of the statue is inscribed "'SPIRIT OF THE / AMERICAN DOUGHBOY' / COPYRIGHTED BY / E. M. VIQUESNEY, SCULPTOR / SPENCER, INDIANA."

The monument sits within a flower bed with a diameter of roughly 12 feet. The flower bed is bordered with large, rough rocks and includes a small, fieldstone platform which bears a spotlight trained on the monument.

There is metallic staining, dirt, and organic growth on the sculpture, and the mortar joints are cracked on the base. Overall, though, it is in good condition: a 1993 SOS! survey notes that the monument is well-maintained.

"Spirit of the American Doughboy" Monument
Name of Property

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County and State

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8. Statement of Significance
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Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties: Local.

Applicable National Register Criteria: A

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): B, F

Areas of Significance: SOCIAL HISTORY

Period(s) of Significance: 1930

Significant Dates: July 4, 1930

Significant Person(s): N/A

Cultural Affiliation: N/A

Architect/Builder: Ernest Moore "Dick" Viquesney, sculptor

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

Summary

The "Spirit of the American Doughboy" statue at Fort Smith in Sebastian County is the single extant historic resource most closely associated with the Victor Ellig Post No. 31 of the American Legion and its members' efforts to reflect their perceptions of the noble character of the area's World War I soldiers and their cause. As such it is eligible for National Register recognition under Criterion A with local significance, also meeting the eligibility requirements of Criterion Consideration F: Commemorative Properties. Though originally located in Tilles Park in central Fort Smith, the sculpture was removed from the park after suffering recurring vandalism. Its current location at the Ellig-Stoufer Post No. 31 retains its historic association with the post's activities; it thus fulfills the requirements of Criterion Consideration B: Moved Properties.

Historical Background

The American Legion was founded in France during the relatively quiet and uneventful days that followed the signing of the armistice that ended World War I. American enlisted men from all three of the principal branches of the service then in existence -- the Army, Navy and Marine Corps -- were billeted in various locations for the purpose of maintaining a military presence while the negotiators worked out the details of the treaty that would outline the political future of much of Europe for the next decade. These servicemen found life during the occupation uneventful and boring, and this only compounded the frustration felt by many at not being allowed to return home to family and friends. A small group of officers -- and especially Lt. Col. Theodore Roosevelt, Jr. and Lt. Col. George A. White -- met to discuss the possibility of establishing a veterans' organization that would include all branches of the military and would serve the immediate purpose of providing an outlet for some of the energy and frustration felt by the occupation forces, but which would also set as its larger goal the establishment of a nationwide veteran's organization that would provide its members with both a social organization and a vehicle for voicing their collective concerns about such issues as national defense, subversive activity, radical thought, domestic social programs and veterans' affairs.

Successive meetings over the course of the next several months in both Europe and America further defined the Legion's mandate and purpose. However, it was the shooting of four Legionnaires during an Armistice Day parade in the lumber town of Centralia, Washington, in 1919 by socialist IWW organizers and the subsequent coverage of the trial that followed -- in which the Legionnaires were portrayed as the aggressors -- that both galvanized and tempered the Legionnaire spirit. Both the public and the Legion press recognized the dangers of extremism by any party while admitting the need for responsible vigilance against any activity that threatened the democratic form of government. The American Legion began to grow steadily thereafter through an organization that elected officers on the national, state and local levels and provided a voice for its members regarding a variety of national concerns. During the Depression the American Legion distinguished itself in particular through the expansion of local programs targeted at youth. Of particular note were the founding of American Legion Junior Baseball, the American Legion Oratorical Contest and Boys' State.

The Fort Smith American Legion post was named after Victor Ellig, the first Fort Smith soldier to die in the war. He was shot through the heart by a German sniper while advancing on an enemy position on July 22, 1918. The Arkansas Legionnaire called the Ellig post "a model organization" and "enthusiastic." For several years it was always among the leaders in the Legion's perennial state membership drives, being ranked as the state's largest at least twice, in 1923 and 1926.

The Ellig Post was always heavily involved with creating and promoting parks and playgrounds in Fort Smith. In 1928, Post No. 31 Commander Henry Armstrong was named permanent chairman of the city's parks and playgrounds commission. A committee was formed then, "investigating the immediate needs of Lewis

Tilles children's park."¹

It was at about this time that the post began a drive to install a World War I memorial at Tilles Park. That effort came near fruition in April of 1930, when the Arkansas Legionnaire announced that an "announcement has been made that with the city park board paying \$500 of the \$1,000 necessary, a lifesize bronze statue of a Doughboy will be erected at the entrance to the Lewis Tilles Children's park, Grand avenue, as a memorial to the men who served in the World War."² The statue had already been ordered, and dedication was planned that summer.

Appropriately, the dedication was scheduled for July 4, 1930. More than 2,000 people gathered at Tilles Park that evening for a ceremony that "including the unveiling and dedication of 'The Spirit of the American Doughboy,' the first night tennis match ever held in the city, and a band concert."³ Mr. and Mrs. O.C. Ellig, Victor Ellig's parents, and several Gold Star mothers were in attendance. Dr. W.R. Brooksher, who led the committee that since 1928 had worked to acquire a World War I memorial, presented the statue to Victor Ellig Post No. 31 Commander John Coley, who in turn presented it to Henry Armstrong of the parks and playgrounds commission. Armstrong then formally presented the monument to Mayor Fagan Bourland. The statue was unveiled by "two little misses," Jo Ann Carroll and Nancy Mae Connor, and the ceremony ended with the singing of "America."

Fort Smith's Doughboy monument is not unique; it is part of a nationwide series of Doughboy sculptures designed by artist E. M. "Dick" Viquesney. Although the full number is uncertain, 136 Viquesney Doughboys in 35 different states have been identified as of 1991, and some experts consider it one of the most-seen pieces of outdoor statuary in the nation.⁴ Viquesney, who lived from 1876 to 1946, devoted two years to perfecting what was to become his trademark; during this time he interviewed scores of World War I veterans, studied hundreds of photographs, and used two soldiers as live models. The finished product, completed in 1920, was a statue described by the Helena World as "the only true representation of the real Doughboy and his indomitable spirit."⁵ Viquesney's Doughboy monument, which was named the official World War I National Memorial, became extremely popular and was erected by towns across America until the late 1930s.

¹ American Legionnaire. "Legion Leader is Named Head of Fort Smith Park Board." July 14, 1928. p. 2, col. 3.

² Arkansas Legionnaire. "Fort Smith Has Big City Program." March 1, 1930. p. 1, col. 5.

³ Fort Smith Times Record. "War Memorial Given To City By Local Post." July 5, 1930. p. 1, col. 1.

⁴ T. Perry Wesley. The Chamber Monthly: Special Doughboy Statue Edition. Spencer, Indiana. February 1991, pp. 1-7.

⁵ Helena World. July 10, 1927, p. 1.

The Fort Smith monument remained in Tilles Park for half a century, but was warehoused by the city after frequent vandalism, including the destruction of the figure's rifle. It was restored and placed in front of the Legion building around 1989-90.

According to American Legion member Cecil Costner, Post No. 31 shared a building on the site of the post's present structure until that building was destroyed by fire several years ago. The "Spirit of the American Doughboy" statue, then, is the single extant historic resource associated with the early activities of the post.

Historical Significance

The "Spirit of the American Doughboy" statue at Fort Smith in Sebastian County is the single extant historic resource most closely associated with the Victor Ellig Post No. 31 of the American Legion and its members' efforts to reflect their perceptions of the noble character of the area's World War I soldiers and their cause. As such, it is eligible for National Register recognition under Criterion A with local significance, also meeting the eligibility requirements of Criterion Consideration F: Commemorative Properties. Though originally located in Tilles Park in central Fort Smith, the sculpture was removed from the park after suffering recurrent vandalism. Its current location at the Ellig-Stoufer Post No. 31 retains the monument's historic association with the post's activities; it thus fulfills the requirements of Criterion Consideration B: Moved Properties.

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9. Major Bibliographical References
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September 9, 1996, interview with Cecil Costner, American Legion member
Arkansas Legionnaire. April 24, 1922, p. 2; May 30, 1922, p. 1; July 14, 1928, p. 2; March 1, 1930, p. 1.
Fort Smith Times Record. July 4, 1930, p. 1; July 5, 1930, p. 1.
Helena World, July 10, 1927, p. 1.
Wesley, T. Perry. *The Chamber Monthly: Special Doughboy Statue Edition*. Spencer, Indiana. February 1991, pp. 1-7.

"Spirit of the American Doughboy" Monument
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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 -- Specify Repository: _____

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10. Geographical Data
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Acreage of Property: Less than one

UTM References: Zone Easting Northing Zone Easting Northing

A	<u>15</u>	<u>375130</u>	<u>3920890</u>	B	___	___	___
C	___	___	___	D	___	___	___

Verbal Boundary Description:

The monument boundary is formed by a circle with a radius of 25 feet from the center of the monument.

Boundary Justification:

This boundary includes the historic monument, which retains its integrity, and some surrounding property, including the flower bed and spotlight platform, that is currently associated with this resource.

"Spirit of the American Doughboy" Monument
Name of Property

Sebastian County, Arkansas
County and State

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11. Form Prepared By
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Name/Title: Mark Christ, Communications/Development Director

Organization: Arkansas Historic Preservation Program Date: 3-11-97

Street & Number: 1500 Tower Bldg., 323 Center St. Telephone: (501) 324-9880

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