

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

For NPS use only

received AUG - 9 1983  
date enteredNational Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination FormSee instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*

Type all entries—complete applicable sections

**1. Name**

historic Keesee House

and/or common Keesee-Sparks House

**2. Location**

street &amp; number 723 Arkansas Street N/A not for publication

city, town Helena N/A vicinity of congressional district First

state Arkansas code 05 county Phillips code 107

**3. Classification**

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

**4. Owner of Property**

name Karl and Barbara Sparks

street &amp; number 723 Arkansas Street

city, town Helena N/A vicinity of state Arkansas

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Phillips County Courthouse

street &amp; number Cherry Street

city, town Helena state Arkansas

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**title Helena Historic Resource Survey has this property been determined eligible? ☐ yes ☒ nodate 1979 ☐ federal ☐ state ☐ county ☐ local N/A

depository for survey records Phillips County Library

city, town Helena state Arkansas

## 7. Description

### Condition

☐ excellent  
☐ good  
☒ fair

☐ deteriorated  
☐ ruins  
☐ unexposed

### Check one

☐ unaltered  
☒ altered

### Check one

☒ original site  
☐ moved      date \_\_\_\_\_

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

#### SUMMARY

Representative of the changing architectural tastes at the turn-of-the-century, the Keesee-Sparks House has features of both the Queen Anne and Classical Revival Styles. Built in 1901 for Thomas Woodfin Keesee, this residence has an asymmetrical plan with classical details, symbolizing the architectural transition that occurred early in the twentieth century.

#### ELABORATION

Less ornamented and exuberant than most Queen Anne houses, the Keesee-Sparks House is a residence of transitional design, combining a Queen Anne plan with restrained classical detailing. Reflecting the resurgent popularity of classical forms and details, this two-and-a-half story residence, built in 1901, possesses such details as Ionic columns, appliques of garland swags and a Palladian window. The irregular plan of the weatherboard-sided house consists of a rectangular block with a hipped roof, three multi-sided bays with projecting gable ends and an octagonal corner tower, all of which are united by a simply detailed cornice. The house has four brick chimneys, only one of which has decorative corbeling. Each elevation has a gabled bay projection with a gable end covered with imbricated shingles. Elongated console brackets support the extending cornice beneath the gable end. With the exception of four fixed windows, all others are double-hung, the majority having one-over-one configurations. The front elevation (north) and east elevation are dominated by an L-shaped wrap-around porch with a dentilled cornice and sloped roof supported by Ionic columns. A rounded bay forms the northeast porch corner and extends to form a flat-roofed tower, the top of which is detailed with appliques of garland swags. One of the most striking features of the front elevation is a leaded glass Palladian window, to the right of the entrance, that is composed of an arched double-hung center window flanked by rectangular fixed windows. All three have a simply detailed surround and are separated by pilasters with stylized Ionic capitals. The glass for this and the leaded stairway window on the east elevation was imported from Italy especially for this house. The entrance is very simply detailed with a plain surround. A bay window on the second floor of the front is positioned above the Palladian window. An arched attic window in the gable end is sixteen-over-one double-hung with a keystone architrave moulding. A small fixed window with diamond panes and arched surround is located on the second floor above the front door. The hipped roof is pierced by a dormer with a pronounced cornice and segmental pediment. Both east and west side elevations have a three-sided bay projection with arched attic windows in the gable ends, as well as side entrances. The front porch extends across approximately two-thirds of the east elevation. A fixed window on the first floor and a fixed diamond-shaped window with diamond panes on the second floor are the only two fixed windows on this elevation.

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

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received

date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number 7

Page 1

Porches on each floor are located to the left of the east bay projection at the southeast corner of the house. The first floor porch is enclosed with lattice, whereas the one above is in the process of being restored to its original appearance of an open railed porch with an exposed back stair. The rear elevation consists of the two porches on the right, and a gabled wing with a kitchen on the first floor to the left.

The interior features fine quarter-sawn oak and mahogany woodwork and beautifully carved mantels and wainscoting. Pocket doors separate the rooms of the first floor. Fireplaces are classically detailed. Each has a tile face and two are topped with mirrored mantelpieces. A large entrance hall has paneled oak wainscoting, a window seat built into the bay window and a fireplace flanked by fluted columns with Corinthian capitals that support a cornice, beneath which a panel is detailed with foliated scroll applique. Located at the east end of the entrance hall is the open paneled stairway, the most outstanding feature of the house. The stairs rise to a landing, turn and curve to a second landing, at which point the balustrade curves gracefully outward. From the second landing, a short flight of stairs leads to the second floor. The stairs have a paneled face string and wall below, with a railing of turned balusters. Square newel posts are embellished with egg and dart detailing and dentilled cornice trim, ribboned laurels and garland appliques and fluted urn newel caps. The parlor, which is highlighted by the Palladian window, is located to the right of the entrance. This room has solid mahogany woodwork, and mantel, with pocket doors leading to the dining room. Paneled oak wainscoting and a fine mantel of quarter-sawn oak detail the dining room which is dominated by four large double-hung windows that form a bay. The original fireplaces remain in two of the four bedrooms upstairs, all of which still have their original ceiling fans. An upstairs bathroom has pressed tin wainscoting and its original fixtures.

## 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400–1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500–1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600–1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates      1901      Builder/Architect      Unknown

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Keessee House in Helena provides an example of the transitional period in architecture at the turn of the century. The house reflects elements of both the Queen Anne and Classical Revival styles by combining an asymmetrical Queen Anne plan with Classical Revival detailing. The house was built for Thomas Woodfin Keessee in 1901. Thomas was the son of John William Keessee, a prosperous farmer in Phillips County, and was raised on a plantation outside of town. When the young Keessee decided to build his own home on Arkansas Street, he joined a fashionable neighborhood which was considered the showplace of this riverport community. Keessee was engaged in farming and cotton buying, both of which were major businesses in this highly agricultural area of eastern Arkansas. By the beginning of the 20th Century Helena had recovered from the damaging effects of the Civil War and Reconstruction. The production, brokerage, and shipping of cotton was truly "big business." Thomas Woodfin Keessee and his family actively participated in these enterprises, and his home reflects the success one could achieve.



## 9. Major Bibliographical References

Abstract of Titles, Hornor-Morris Abstract Co., 711 Walnut, Helena, AR  
Historic Helena-West Helena, Arkansas, published by the Phillips County Chamber of  
Commerce, 1973.

Allen Keesee - family member.

Helena, the Ridge, the River, the Romance; by George deMan, 1978.

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property less than one

Quadrangle name Latour, Ark.-Miss.

Quadrangle scale 1:62,500

UTM References

A 15 721050 3822450  
Zone Easting Northing

B           
Zone Easting Northing

C         

D         

E         

F         

G         

H         

Verbal boundary description and justification

Lot 1, 2, West 6 ft. of 3; Blk. 17; New Helena.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state N/A code county code

state code county code

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Annette Talbot Beauchamp, edited by Arkansas Historic Preservation Program staff

organization Phillips Co. for Historic Preservation date August 4, 1983

street & number 804 Columbia telephone 338-7401

city or town Helena state Arkansas 72342

## 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

   national    state X local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title State Historic Preservation Officer

date 8-5-83

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Entered in the  
National Register

date 9/8/83

for Johnnie Byers  
Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Keesee House  
Phillips County  
ARKANSAS

Working No. AUG 9 1983  
Fed. Reg. Date: 2-7-84  
Date Due: 9/8/83 - 9/23/83  
Action: ☒ ACCEPT 9/8/83  
Entered in the RETURN  
~~National Register~~ REJECT  
Federal Agency: \_\_\_\_\_

- ☐ resubmission  
☐ nomination by person or local government  
☐ owner objection  
☐ appeal

Substantive Review: ☐ sample ☐ request ☐ appeal ☐ NR decision

Reviewer's comments:

Recom./Criteria \_\_\_\_\_  
Reviewer \_\_\_\_\_  
Discipline \_\_\_\_\_  
Date \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ see continuation sheet

Nomination returned for: \_\_\_\_\_ technical corrections cited below  
\_\_\_\_\_ substantive reasons discussed below

1. Name

2. Location

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
	Public Acquisition	Accessible	

4. Owner of Property

5. Location of Legal Description

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

Has this property been determined eligible? ☐ yes ☐ no

7. Description

Condition	Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed	

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

- ☐ summary paragraph  
☐ completeness  
☐ clarity  
☐ alterations/integrity  
☐ dates  
☐ boundary selection

## 8. Significance

Period \_\_\_\_\_ Areas of Significance—Check and justify below

Specific dates \_\_\_\_\_

Builder/Architect \_\_\_\_\_

Statement of Significance (*in one paragraph*)

- ☐ summary paragraph
- ☐ completeness
- ☐ clarity
- ☐ applicable criteria
- ☐ justification of areas checked
- ☐ relating significance to the resource
- ☐ context
- ☐ relationship of integrity to significance
- ☐ justification of exception
- ☐ other

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property \_\_\_\_\_

Quadrangle name \_\_\_\_\_

UTM References \_\_\_\_\_

Verbal boundary description and justification

## 11. Form Prepared By

## 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

\_\_\_\_\_ national \_\_\_\_\_ state \_\_\_\_\_ local

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title \_\_\_\_\_

date \_\_\_\_\_

## 13. Other

- ☐ Maps
- ☐ Photographs
- ☐ Other

Questions concerning this nomination may be directed to \_\_\_\_\_

Signed \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_ Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

*Comments for any item may be continued on an attached sheet*





Keesee House  
Helena, Arkansas  
J. Carfagno & A. Jones, photographers  
November, 1982  
Negative on file at AHPP  
Viewed from the Northwest





Keesee House  
Helena, Arkansas  
J. Carfagno & A. Jones, photographers  
November, 1982  
Negative on file at AHPP  
Viewed from the Northeast



Keesee House  
Helena, Arkansas  
J. Carfagno & A. Jones, photographers  
November, 1982  
Negative on file at AHPP  
Window detail





Keesee House  
Helena, Arkansas  
J. Carfagno & A. Jones, photographers  
November, 1982  
Negative on file at AHPP  
Entry





Keesee House  
Helena, Arkansas  
J. Carfagno & A. Jones, photographers  
November, 1982  
Negative on file at AHPP  
Viewed from the Southeast



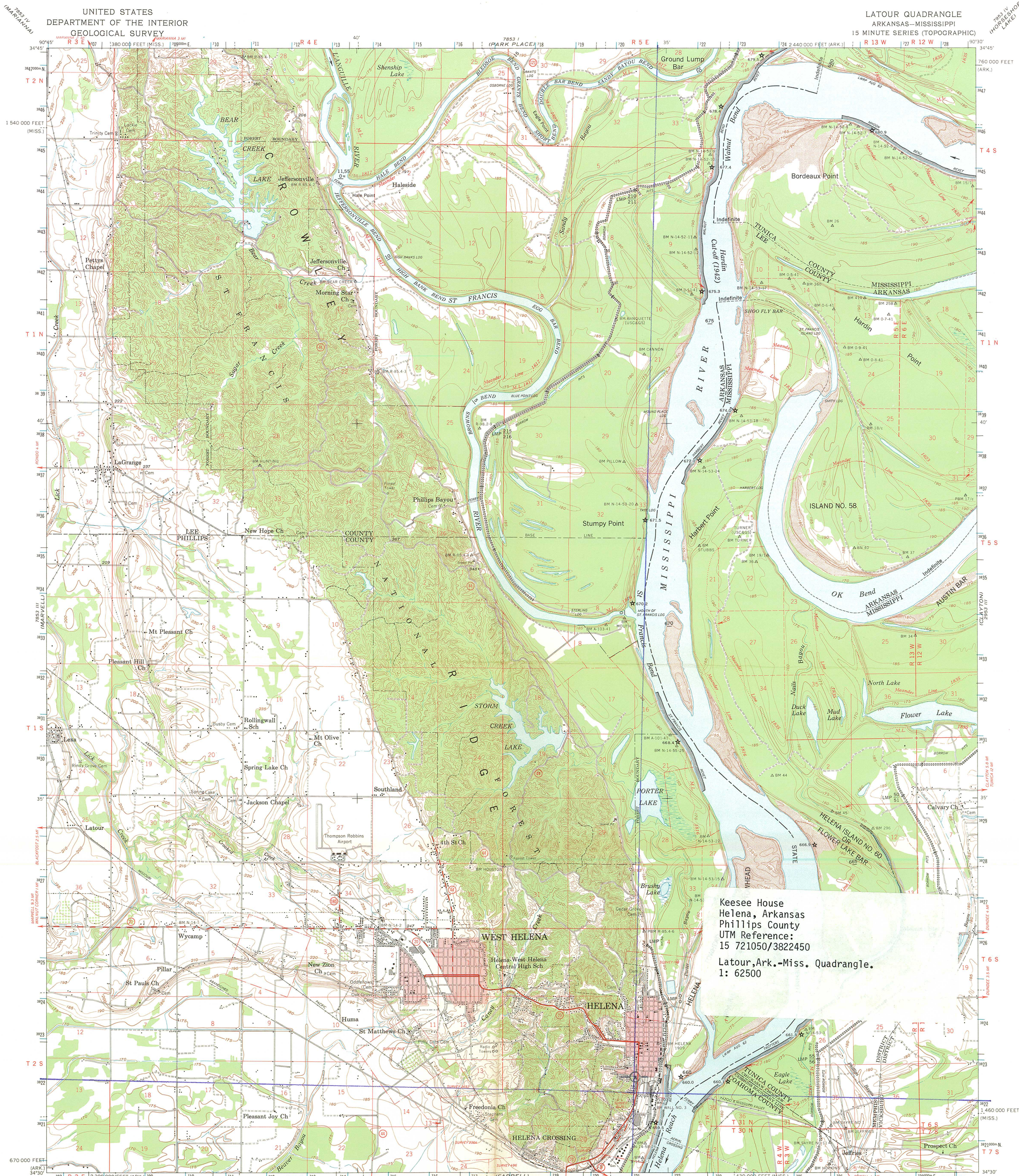
Keesee House  
Helena, Arkansas  
J. Carfagno & A. Jones, photographers  
November, 1982  
Negative on file at AHPP  
Stairway detail





Keesee House  
Helena, Arkansas  
J. Carfagno & A. Jones, photographers  
November, 1982  
Negative on file at AHPP  
Mantel





Keesee House  
Helena, Arkansas  
Phillips County  
UTM Reference:  
15 721050/3822450  
Latour, Ark.-Miss. Quadrangle.  
1: 62500

Maped and edited by the Mississippi River Commission  
Published by the Geological Survey  
Control by USGS, USC&GS, and USCE

Topography by photogrammetric methods from aerial  
photographs taken 1960, and planimetric surveys 1930-1949  
and 1961. Field checked 1961

Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum  
10,000-foot grids based on Arkansas coordinate system, south  
zone, and Mississippi coordinate system, west zone  
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks,  
zone 15, shown in blue

Red tint indicates area in which only landmark buildings are shown

UTM GRID AND 1961 MAGNETIC NORTH  
DECLINATION AT CENTER OF SHEET

CONTOUR INTERVAL 5 AND 20 FEET  
DATUM IS MEAN SEA LEVEL

SCALE 1:62,500

FOR SALE BY U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, DENVER, COLORADO 80225, OR WASHINGTON, D.C. 20242,  
ARKANSAS GEOLOGICAL AND CONSERVATION COMMISSION, LITTLE ROCK, ARKANSAS,  
AND MISSISSIPPI RIVER COMMISSION, VICKSBURG, MISSISSIPPI  
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

ROAD CLASSIFICATION

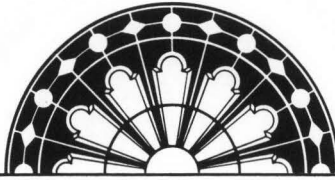
- Heavy-duty
- Medium-duty
- Light-duty
- Unimproved dirt
- State Route

QUADRANGLE LOCATION

LATOUR, ARK.-MISS.  
N3430-W9030/15

1961  
AMS 7853 II-SERIES V784





ARKANSAS  
HISTORIC  
PRESERVATION  
PROGRAM

August 3, 1983

Carol D. Shull  
Chief of Registration  
United States Department of the Interior  
National Register of Historic Places  
National Park Service  
1100 "L" Street, N. W.  
Washington, D. C. 20240

Re: Keesee House  
723 Arkansas Street  
Helena, AR  
Phillips County

Dear Carol:

We are enclosing for your review the nomination for the Keesee House in Helena. The Arkansas Historic Preservation Program has complied with all applicable nominating procedures and notification requirements in the nomination process.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter.

Sincerely,

Wilson Stiles  
State Historic Preservation Officer

WS/AJ/ss

Enclosure/s

AUG - 9 1983

