

United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

# National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

For HCRS use only

received OCT 10 1979

date entered DEC 13 1979

## 1. Name

historic Janssen Park

and/or common

## 2. Location

street &amp; number

off AR 8

\_\_\_ not for publication

city, town

Mena

\_\_\_ vicinity of

congressional district

Third

state

Arkansas

code

05

county

Polk

code

113

## 3. Classification

### Category

\_\_\_ district

☒ building(s)☒ structure☒ site☒ object

### Ownership

☒ public

\_\_\_ private

\_\_\_ both

### Public Acquisition

\_\_\_ in process

\_\_\_ being considered

### Status

☒ occupied

\_\_\_ unoccupied

\_\_\_ work in progress

### Accessible

\_\_\_ yes: restricted

☒ yes: unrestricted

\_\_\_ no

### Present Use

\_\_\_ agriculture

\_\_\_ commercial

\_\_\_ educational

\_\_\_ entertainment

\_\_\_ government

\_\_\_ industrial

\_\_\_ military

☒ museum☒ park

\_\_\_ private residence

\_\_\_ religious

\_\_\_ scientific

\_\_\_ transportation

\_\_\_ other:

## 4. Owner of Property

name

City of Mena

street &amp; number

City Hall

city, town

Mena

\_\_\_ vicinity of

state

Arkansas 71953

## 5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc.

Polk County Courthouse

street &amp; number

city, town

Mena

state

Arkansas 71953

## 6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Arkansas Historic Preservation Program Survey

has this property been determined eligible? ☒ yes \_\_\_ no

date

1978

\_\_\_ federal

☒ state

\_\_\_ county

\_\_\_ local

depository for survey records

Arkansas Historic Preservation Program

city, town

Little Rock

state

Arkansas 72201

## 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

Mena is a west-central Arkansas town nestled in a wide valley between the high, sometimes rugged, mountains of the Ouachita range. It is an isolated town which owes its existence to the north-south railroad which swept through the valley in 1895-1896. When railroad surveyors reached the location in 1895, the one-story Shelton log cabin, already over 40 years old, was the only building in sight. On a knoll in the center of Janssen Park, in the middle of Mena, in a position typically reserved in Arkansas county seats for courthouses, the humble Shelton Cabin continues master of the valley. Locally, it has commonly been referred to as, "The Capitol of Polk County."

The Shelton Cabin is a one-room, rectangular structure with gabled roof. Deep, overhanging shed roofs protect the front and rear of the building. Two exceptionally-long logs not only function as part of the end walls, but also reach out to support the shed roofs. Each of the four walls is penetrated by an opening. There are two doors, one on the front elevation and one on the rear. There is a window at each end. There is an exterior brick end chimney at the northwest elevation. Exterior walls are hand-hewed logs and the joining is mortise. Chinking is concrete. The roof is finished in wooden shingles. Windows and doors are simple casement openings.

The building has been altered very little. Originally it had a mud and stick chimney. That was replaced with a brick chimney when brick manufacturing was introduced into the larger area in the 1870s. A federal Civil Works Administration project rebuilt the chimney in 1933, but used the old bricks. Flagstone porches and sidewalks extending from each door are later additions.

The park also features a water system, clock tower, fountain and deer pen. The spring that originally attracted Shelton to the site still flows from the northern quarter of the park. Its water is channeled into two shallow ponds divided by an arched stone and concrete bridge. The ponds and waterways are confined by native stone and cement walls. While the ponds have provided a home for ducks, swans and even alligators in the past, they are now inhabited only by large fish. The water system was developed in 1906-1907. The clocktower is a classically-derived stone and marble structure dating from 1920. The fountain, a boy and girl under an umbrella done in decorated cast iron, dates from 1905. The deer pen includes a small native stone caretaker house with gabled roof, a lean-to shelter and several deer. The pen dates back to about 1907.

The park has several commemorative items such as mounted cannon, and monuments dedicated to Polk County servicemen and to Lum and Abner, the radio comedians who were Mena natives. It also includes picnic tables and playground equipment.

## 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 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

**Specific dates** 1851, 1896, 1906      **Builder/Architect** William Shelton

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Shelton Cabin is located in the center of Janssen Park, which forms Mena's town square. Documentary evidence and local tradition substantiates that the cabin was built in 1851 by William Shelton, a squatter and one of the first men to settle with his family in the wilds of the western Arkansas Ouachitas. (Among the pioneer inhabitants of the cabin was Thomas Mills, Polk County judge, who lived there with his family in the 1860s.) The location of the cabin and park is fitting, for it has played a central and significant role in the development of this isolated railroad town. It is the only visible link to the pre-townsite past. And it has served basic functions in the life of Mena. While the railroad was under construction in 1895–1896, the cabin served as office space for surveyors, railroad engineers and townsite promoters. When the town was platted, the cabin, spring, and four surrounding square blocks were set aside for a park. Thus, the town was planned around the cabin and park. The spot was at first neglected as immigrants into Mena concentrated on the more pressing demands of town building. For a while it was left to the homeless and referred to locally as "The Hell Hole." In 1906 and 1907, however, an energetic Catholic minister led a movement to transform the spot into a famous park. It was a significant progression which dramatically marked Mena's transition from tent town to settled community. The park became a proud showplace in a largely untamed wilderness. Its brilliant flower gardens, zoo and twin ponds alive with fish, birds and even some small alligators, were featured on picture postcards of the 1910s and 1920s. The park has always been the gathering place for reunions, fairs and annual "founders' day" celebrations. The cabin and park has also been a significant focus of political activities. William Jennings Bryan, Huey P. Long and other national and local political figures spoke to voters from the steps of the cabin. And for four decades, from the World War I era until after World War II, the cabin served as Mena's city hall.

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

Arkansas Democrat, July 23, 1961  
Arkansas Gazette, March 27, 1956 and August 8, 1965  
Mena Star, August 27, 1936, February 12, 1964 and August 19, 1971  
Interview with Mrs. Christa Parsons, Mena

## 10. Geographical Data

UTM NOT VERIFIED

Acreage of nominated property Eleven acres

Quadrangle name Mena, Arkansas

Quadrangle scale 1:24 000

### UMT References

A 115 3816 31210 38 217 4810  
Zone Easting Northing

B 115 3816 41410 38 217 31110  
Zone Easting Northing

C 115 3816 21610 38 217 11810

D 115 3816 11210 38 217 31610

E                  

F                  

G                  

H                  

Verbal boundary description and justification Consists of four square blocks in the center of Mena. Bounded on the north by Port Arthur Avenue, on the east by Seventh Street, on the south by Janssen Avenue and on the west by Ninth Street.

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

state	code	county	code
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state	code	county	code
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## 11. Form Prepared By

Paul Autry, Mayor of Mena  
name/title Robert Besom, historian

organization Ark. Historic Preservation Program date September 26, 1979

street & number Suite 500, Continental Building telephone 501-371-2763

city or town Little Rock state Arkansas 72201

## 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 Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

*Joan Williams Baediche*

title State Historic Preservation Officer

date September 28, 1979

For HCRS use only

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

*Sally G. O'Connell*  
Keeper of the National Register *Acty. Chief of Regis*

date 12/13/79

Attest: *Kristin O'Connell*  
Chief of Registration

date 12/16/79



Property

Janssen Park

79000448

State

AR (Polk)

Working Number 10-10-79 2426

## TECHNICAL

Photos

Maps

7  
1

CONTROL

HISTORIAN

This park is the focal point of community identity in this small Arkansas town. It contains a log cabin that was the first structure on the site and later served the town in a variety of ways, including as a church and as the town hall. Park also incorporates a spring that attracted first settlers to site, and ornamental sculptures and various commemorative monuments.

ARCHITECTURAL HISTORIAN

Accept  
O'Connell  
12/6/79

ARCHEOLOGIST

OTHER

HAER

Inventory \_\_\_\_\_

Review \_\_\_\_\_

REVIEW UNIT CHIEF

BRANCH CHIEF

KEEPER

National Register Write-up

Send-back

Entered DEC 13 1979

Federal Register Entry

Re-submit





JANSSEN PARK  
Mena, Arkansas  
Bob Dunn

1979

AHPP

Cabin viewed from north  
#1

*Polk County*

OCT 10 1979

DEC 13 1979





JANSSEN PARK

Mena, Arkansas

Bob Dunn

1979

AHPP

Front elevation of cabin

#2

OCT 10 1979

*Polk County*

DEC 13 1979







JANSSEN PARK  
Mena, Arkansas  
Bob Dunn

1979  
AHPP

OCT 10 1979

*Polk County*

Southwest elevation of cabin with  
clocktower and fountain in foreground  
#3

DEC 13 1979





THIS REMEMBERS PURCHASE BY CALHOUN, THOUGH BY THE PEOPLES  
ORDER OF POLICE COUNTY AND SHAWO THEIR LANDS AND SHAWO  
SHOWING COURAGE FOR NEW COUNTRY  
FOR TACK AND BATTLES AND FOR THOSE WHO DID NOT  
"HIS LANDS AND HIS EXCELLENT PEOPLE"



JANSSEN PARK  
Mena, Arkansas

OCT 10 1979

Bob Dunn

1979

AHPP

Looking southeast and showing  
various commemorative items

#4

*Polk County*

DEC 13 1979







JANSSEN PARK  
Mena, Arkansas

Bob Dunn

1979

AHPP

Deer pen and caretaker house  
viewed from west

#5

*Polk County*

OCT 10 1979

DEC 13 1979







JANSSEN PARK  
Mena, Arkansas  
Bob Dunn

1979  
AHPP

Twin ponds viewed from east  
#6

OCT 10 1979

*Polk County*

DEC 13 1979







JANSSEN PARK  
Mena, Arkansas  
Bob Dunn

1979  
AHPP

Spring viewed from south  
#7

OCT 10 1979

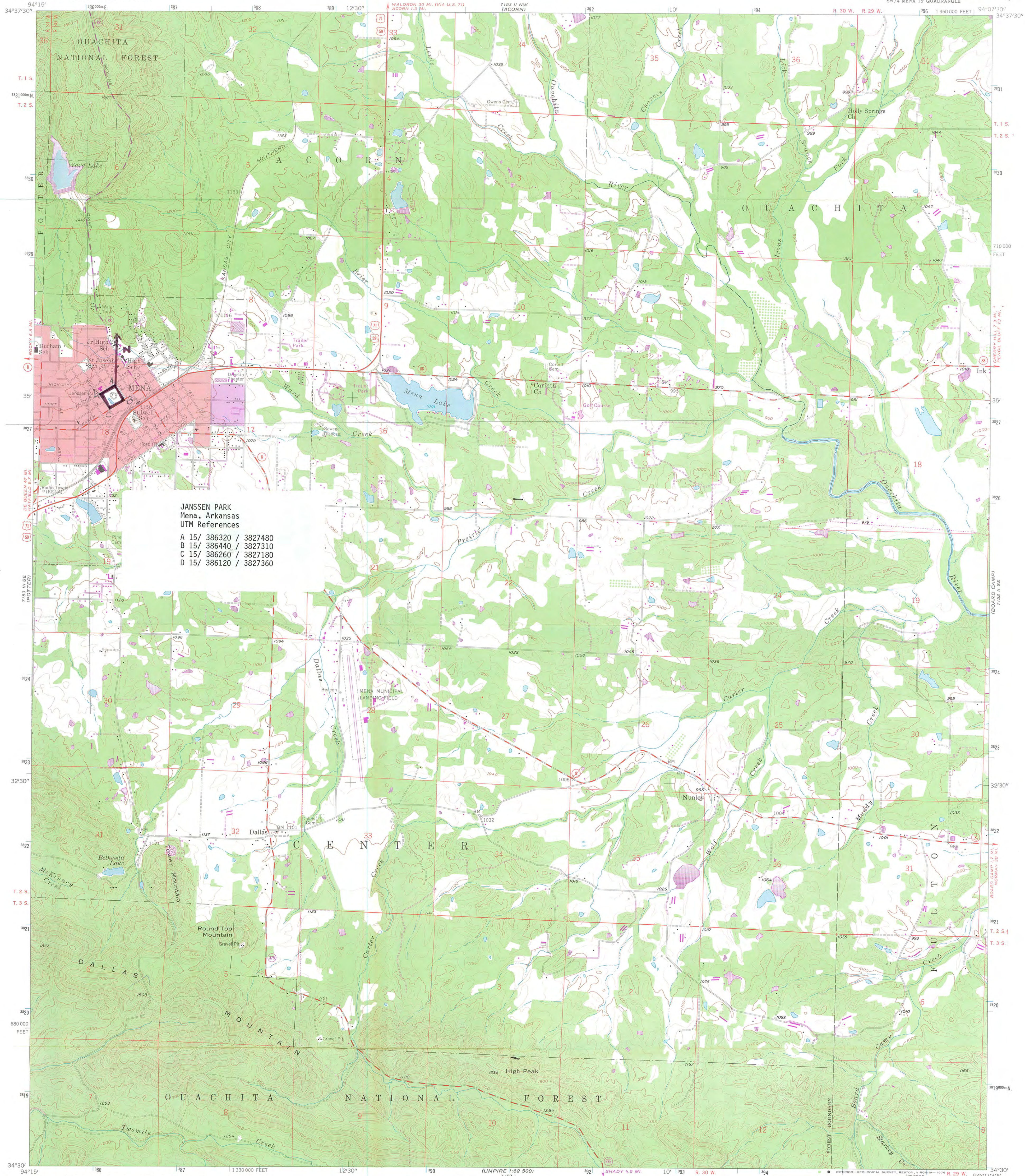
*Polk County*

DEC 13 1979



UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

MENA QUADRANGLE  
ARKANSAS—POLK CO.  
7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)  
SW 1/4 MENA 15' QUADRANGLE



JANSSEN PARK  
Mena, Arkansas  
UTM References

A 15/ 386320 / 3827480  
B 15/ 386440 / 3827310  
C 15/ 386260 / 3827180  
D 15/ 386120 / 3827360

Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey

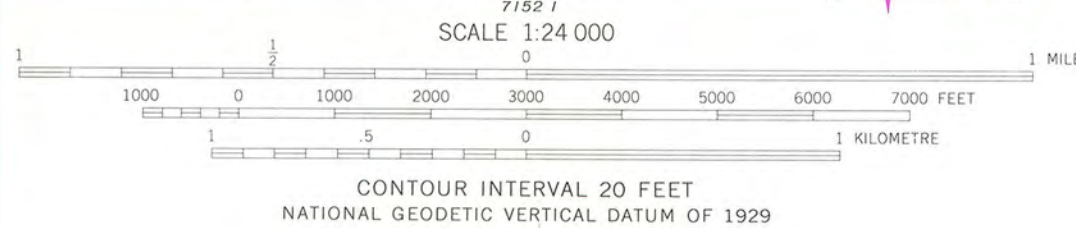
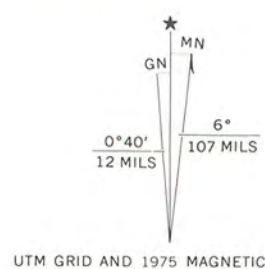
Control by USGS and USC&GS

Topography from aerial photographs by multiplex methods  
Aerial photographs taken 1955. Field check 1958

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

Red tint indicates area in which only  
landmark buildings are shown

Unchecked elevations are shown in brown



QUADRANGLE LOCATION

Revisions shown in purple compiled from aerial photographs taken 1975. This information not field checked  
Purple tint indicates extensions of urban areas

ROAD CLASSIFICATION

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

MENA, ARK.  
SW 1/4 MENA 15' QUADRANGLE  
N 3430—W 9407.5/7.5

1958  
PHOTOREVISED 1975  
AMS 7153 II SW—SERIES V884

OCT 10 1979  
NATIONAL REGISTER



ENTRIES IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

STATE ARKANSAS

DEC 13 1979

Date Entered

Name

Location

Atkinson-Williams Warehouse

Fort Smith  
Sebastian County

Janssen Park

Mena  
Polk County

Also Notified

Honorable David H. Pryor

Honorable Dale Bumpers

Honorable John P. Hammerschmidt

State Historic Preservation Officer

Ms. Joan Baldrige

Director, Arkansas Historic Preservation  
Program

Suite 500, Continental Building

Markham and Main Streets

Little Rock, Arkansas 72201

NR

Byers/bjr

12/19/79