

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM



792

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1. Name of Property

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Historic Name: William Ayers House

Other Name/Site Number: SB0635

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2. Location

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Street & Number: 820 North 12th Street

Not for Publication: N/A

City/Town Fort Smith

Vicinity: N/A

State: AR County: Sebastian Code: AR 131

Zip Code: 72901

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3. Classification

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Ownership of Property: private

Category of Property: building

Number of Resources within Property:

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

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

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

Ayers, William House
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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.

Calvin A. Sater
Signature of certifying official

6-2-99
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

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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):

Edson H. Beall
Signature of Keeper

7.8.99
Date
of Action

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6. Function or Use

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Historic: DOMESTIC

Sub: single dwelling

Current : DOMESTIC

Sub: single dwelling

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7. Description

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Architectural Classification:

Queen Anne
Stick/Eastlake

Materials: foundation Sandstone roof METAL
walls Weatherboard other Shingle
Limestone

Describe present and historic physical appearance:

Summary

Sited on a hill in a residential neighborhood, the William N. Ayers House was constructed in 1888. The elaborately ornamented two-and-one-half story house is located at 820 North 12th Street (previously known as Madison Street) three-and-one-half blocks southeast of the Bell Grove Historic District (NR listed 7-16-73). The distinctive patterns of decorative detailing such as incised verge boards, wood shingle siding, and robust porch spindles mark the residence as a combination of the Queen Anne and Eastlake styles. The roofline is embellished by a variety of dormers, porches, corbelled chimneys, and roof cresting. Also located on the property are a non-contributing well, a non-contributing carriage house and a contributing limestone walkway. Neither the board and batten carriage house nor the fieldstone well contributes to the nomination, because they do not exhibit the same degree of architectural distinction as the high-styled residence. The limestone walkway contributes to the nomination, because it dates to the construction of the house and is as an added indication of the original builder's attention to detail. The limestone walkway surrounds the house and branches in four directions to the property's edges. The largest of the stones is found on the front elevation and measures five-by-eight feet.

Elaboration

The William Ayers House is a two-and-one-half-story, frame residence designed in the Queen Anne style with Eastlake-inspired decorative details. The house rests on a continuous foundation that is constructed of ashlar-faced sandstone encompassing a full basement. The fenestration is composed mostly of one-over-one wood framed windows with rosette corner moldings; however, the prominent front façade is graced by brightly colored stained glass windows in the transoms and double doors of the first story. Similar stained glass is featured in a Palladian window in the attic story of a projecting gable. Typical of the Queen Anne style, the exterior incorporates a variety of projecting bays, porches, bands of patterned shingles, and beaded board. An abundance of Eastlake detailing including sunbursts, incised vergeboards with scrolled ends, wide eave overhangs and robust turned-spindle columns further contributes to the complex decorative detailing of the house.

The elaborate roofline also enhances the house's overall ornamentation and asymmetrical plan. The standing seam and flat seam metal roof is crested with three different varieties of rosettes and finial scrolls. Triangular eyebrow dormers, circular windows, and three massive chimneys grace the roofline. Perhaps the most fanciful detail is the chimney on the southern elevation that emerges from a false dormer. Dominating all these elements is a cupola-like roof projection that contains front and rear facing porches, and is flanked by ocular windows.

The front, or western façade is enlivened by several decorative features. A hipped-roofed front porch with metal roof is highlighted by a hooded gable-on-hip projection featuring incised verge boards, and a sun ray motif. Both the main body of the porch and its projection are supported by turned spindle posts ornamented with an assortment of jig-sawn post and balustrade trim. The porch shelters a thirteen-light stained glass double door and a stained glass transom above. Also shielded by the porch is a one-over-one window with a multi-light stained glass transom.

To the left of the porch is a formidable gable projection. The projection is fenestrated with a narrow ribbon of three windows capped by transoms on its first story, another narrow ribbon of windows on its stepped-back second story, and a stained glass Palladian window in the attic story of the gable end. The wall cladding of the gable projection is textured by carved sun ray panels on the first two stories, while fish scale shingles and beaded board enliven the upper second story and the gable end. The gable projection is hooded by an enormous eave overhang, and supported by carved brackets. A small triangular eyebrow dormer with Eastlake vergeboards punctuates the roofline beside the two-story gable projection. The front elevation is crowned by an unusual cupola-like roof projection.

The southwestern corner is clipped at a 45° angle and contains a two-story projection with a bay window on the first floor and a gabled porch on the second floor. The turned spindle posts match the front porch, but are more diminutive in size.

The south façade is fenestrated by five double-hung one-over-one windows on the first floor. The second story contains a sleeping porch. The attic is lit by a triangular eyebrow window. Beside the window an elaborate patterned masonry chimney emerges from a dormer.

The eastern or the rear elevation has one-over-one windows on each floor including the attic. In the center of the elevation is a one story recessed porch leading to French doors. The porch is supported by two turned spindle posts. To the right of the porch is a 1920s addition, a two-story sun porch enclosed by a ribbon of five, eight-light windows.

The north façade is divided by a projecting bay capped by a gable-on-hip roof with decorated verge boards. The first floor of the bay is beveled and fenestrated by three double-hung one-over-one windows. Below each window is a carved sun ray panel and above each is a stained glass transom. To the left of the bay projection is the rest of the previously mentioned two-story sun porch. To the right of the tower is a single one-over-one window on each floor, again with the sun ray motif and stained glass transom.

Several exterior alterations to the house are being reversed by the current owners. The restoration includes removing artificial siding installed in the 1950s or 1960s, repointing the chimneys, and removing the composition shingles that covered the original metal. Neglect of the residence in the last decades resulted in the deterioration of many decorative elements. Many of these pieces are stored in the carriage house awaiting restoration.

The interior of the house was divided into apartments in the 1950s, but is being restored to a single family residence. The interior retains a remarkable amount of its original detailing, including an ornate staircase balustrade, paneled doors with original hardware, and twenty iron ventilation grates. A striped wainscoting, found on the staircase and in the parlor is created by alternating pieces of pine and walnut. The highlight of the interior is the three slate mantelpieces, two of which are embellished by hand painted landscape scenes and Eastlake-inspired floral designs. The plaster inside the house had deteriorated to such an extent that restoration was not economically feasible. To eliminate the flattened look one gets when installing drywall over plaster, the present owners opted to completely remove the plaster. Features such as window and door moldings, beaded board wainscoting, and the cast-iron ventilation grates were numbered, and then keyed to a map of the interior, before they are removed.

Ayers, William House
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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: C

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): N/A

Areas of Significance: Architecture

Period(s) of Significance: 1888

Significant Dates: 1888

Significant Person(s): N/A

Cultural Affiliation: N/A

Architect/Builder: Unknown

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

Summary

The William Ayers House is being nominated to the National Register under Criterion C with local significance as an exuberant example of the Queen Anne style of architecture. Constructed in 1888 by an unknown architect, much of its fanciful ornamentation is heavily influenced by Eastlake-inspired designs. The house stands out in its immediate neighborhood as the only extant two-and-one-half story Queen Anne-styled house. Moreover, the William Ayers House compares favorably with the houses listed as contributing within the Bell Grove Historic District (NR listed 7-16-73), because of its locally unique high-styled Eastlake exterior ornamentation.

Historical Background

The first European settlement in the vicinity of what is now known as Fort Smith, Arkansas dates from October or November of 1817 with the establishment of the federal military post, initially named Fort Belle Point (there had been disorganized and sporadic European settlement in the area previous to this time, but no organized communities resulted). The junction of the Poteau and Arkansas Rivers, selected by Major Stephen H. Long, a topographical engineer, offered significant strategic advantages over other sites in the vicinity, not the least of which was its underlying layer of stratified sandstone, providing a solid foundation for the construction of a fort and other buildings.

The original purpose of the fort was the protection of the western border of the United States territories against attacks from the Native American residents of the newly-created Indian Territory, located in what is now Oklahoma; however, after the forced migrations of the Creek and Cherokee Indians from their ancestral homelands east of the Mississippi River that occurred during the first few decades of the nineteenth century, the fort's primary directive shifted to keeping the peace between the newer Indian tribes and such older tribes as the Osage, the Choctaw and the Quapaw that had lived in this area for some time. The resulting hostilities between neighboring tribes was of sufficient magnitude to prompt the War Department to convert what had been a temporary fort facility into a permanent facility in 1825, after the signing of the Choctaw treaty. The actual purchase of the land for the new fort and the actual construction thereof did not occur until 1838.

The instability of the Indian situation discouraged any organized attempts at the establishment of an associated community adjacent to the fort for some time, particularly while it was a temporary facility with military personnel subject to ordered withdrawal at any time. Thus it is not surprising that the platting of the adjacent city of Fort Smith and the selling of lots for new construction did not begin until this fort was officially made permanent, thereby insuring relative security of new settlers in the town.

The pre-Civil War history of the city of Fort Smith was largely that of its role as a major embarkation point for traders, settlers and other adventurers heading west to such destinations as Santa Fe in the Mexican territory to California, and to other forts further west. The downtown growth along Garrison Avenue, the principal commercial thoroughfare, largely reflected this activity, as it abounded with general mercantile stores, livery stables, and other such retail enterprises. During this period Fort Smith witnessed the establishment of its first newspaper, the *Herald*.

It was not until after the Civil War that such institutions as public schools, churches, and dependable postal service arrived in the city of Fort Smith (the fact that the federal government officially closed the fort as an active military garrison in 1871 attests to the city's firm state of security by this time). Though the city has always been served by the Arkansas River, and later by several stage lines that connected Fort Smith with other cities in the midwest and southwest, the city grew dramatically with the arrival first of the Little Rock-Fort Smith Railroad in 1876, and then with the arrival of the St. Louis and San Francisco Railroad in 1883. This trend was only increased by the discovery in 1901 of natural gas fields to the east of Fort Smith, thereby providing a source of dependable and cheap fuel that made the establishment of industrial enterprises feasible. Smelters, glass factories, furniture factories, steel and iron works, and reputedly the largest sorghum factory in the world all located in Fort Smith as a result. The city also became a major agricultural trade center, serving as the transportation hub for the wide variety of produce grown throughout the length of the surrounding Arkansas River valley.

Mr. William Ayers and his wife, Sarah, traveled from Ohio to live in several different areas before finally arriving in Fort Smith. Mr. Ayers had been employed as a clerk in a hardware store and after coming to Fort Smith opened a general store, which he later sold to open a bank. His partner at the time ran off with all of the funds causing the bank to fail.

He and his family lived in Fort Smith during a time of lawlessness, where men and women used this Indian Territory as a sanctuary for raiding banks, trains, and businesses. Nevertheless, Ayers decided this was where he wanted to live out his life. In 1870 he bought the lots where his home would eventually be built in 1888-89.

In 1876 he opened a hardware business, later selling his interest to his sons, bought stocks in an Iron company, a foundry, and a machine shop. In 1894 Mr. Ayers was president and treasurer of Ketchum Iron Company. He remained an active business man for many years until failing health forced him to retire. William Ayers died September 2, 1914 leaving the house to his family who remained there until the early 1950s.

The current owners, Scott and Velvet Graham are in the process of restoring the house to its original condition.

The William Ayers House is an elaborately ornamented two-and-one-half story Queen Anne/Eastlake house located at 820 North 12th Street (previously known at Madison Street). This house has distinctive patterns of decorative detailing such as decorated verge boards and spindlework porch posts. The roofline is embellished by a variety of dormers, porches, corbelled chimneys, and roof cresting. The result of these details is a residence that is an exuberant and picturesque example of the Queen Anne

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style. For these reasons the residence is being nominated to the **National Register under Criterion C.**

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9. Major Bibliographical References

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Patton, Fred. *History of Fort Smith, Arkansas 1817-1992*. Little Rock: Heritage Press, 1992.

Faulk, Odie and Billy Jones. *Fort Smith: an Illustrated History*. Fort Smith Old Fort Museum, 1983.

Mapes, Ruth. *Old Fort Smith: Cultural Center on the Southwestern Frontier*. Little Rock Pioneer Press, 1965.

Stanley, Mack and Bess Stanley, *Fort Smith well remembered*. S.l.: s.n., 1980.

Real Estate Assessment Record of Sebastian County, Arkansas, Book 535 p 911.

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:

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10. Geographical Data
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Acreage of Property: less than one acre

UTM References: Zone Easting Northing Zone Easting Northing

A	<u>15</u>	<u>371690</u>	<u>3918000</u>	B	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
C	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	D	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>

Verbal Boundary Description:

Lots number four, five and six (4, 5, and 6) measuring each 50 feet front on Madison Street and extending back 140 feet to an alley.

Boundary Justification:

This boundary contains all the historically significant property associated with the William Ayers House.

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11. Form Prepared By
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Name/Title: Amy Bennett/Survey Historian, Gerri Spires/AHPP Intern

Organization: Arkansas Historic Preservation Program Date: 4/27/99

Street & Number: 1500 Tower Bldg., 323 Center St. 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
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY Ayers, William, House
NAME:

MULTIPLE
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: ARKANSAS, Sebastian

DATE RECEIVED: 6/10/99 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 6/22/99
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 7/08/99 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 7/25/99
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 99000792

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

☒ ACCEPT ☐ RETURN ☐ REJECT 7.8.99 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

entered in the
National Register

RECOM./CRITERIA _____

REVIEWER _____ DISCIPLINE _____

TELEPHONE _____ DATE _____

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N



William Ayers House

Sebastian Co., AR

Amy Bennett

April, 1999

AHPP

West and south elevations, looking
northeast



William Ayers House

Sebastian Co., AR

Amy Bennett

April, 1999

AHPP

Southelevation looking north





William Ayers House

Sebastian Co., AR

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April, 1999

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View looking south, north elevation



William Ayers House

Sebastian Co., AR

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East and north elevations

looking southwest





William Ayers House

Sebastian Co., AR

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Interior detail of mantle





William Ayers House

Sebastian Co., AR

Amy Bennett

April, 1999

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Interior detail of balustrade
and wainscoting





William Ayers House

Sebastian Co., AR

Amy Bennett

April 1, 1999

AHPP

View looking east, well and carriage house





William Ayers House

Sebastian Co., AR

Amy Bennett

April, 1999

AHPP

East elevation detail of entrance
to basement, looking northwest





William Ayers House

Sebastian Co., AR

Amy Bennett

April 1, 1999

AHPP

Detail of attic porch on east elevation
looking north.





William Ayers House

Sebastian Co., AR

Amy Bennett

April, 1999

AHPP

Detail of false dormer chimney on South elevation
looking north west



William Ayers House

Sebastian Co., AR

Amy Bennett

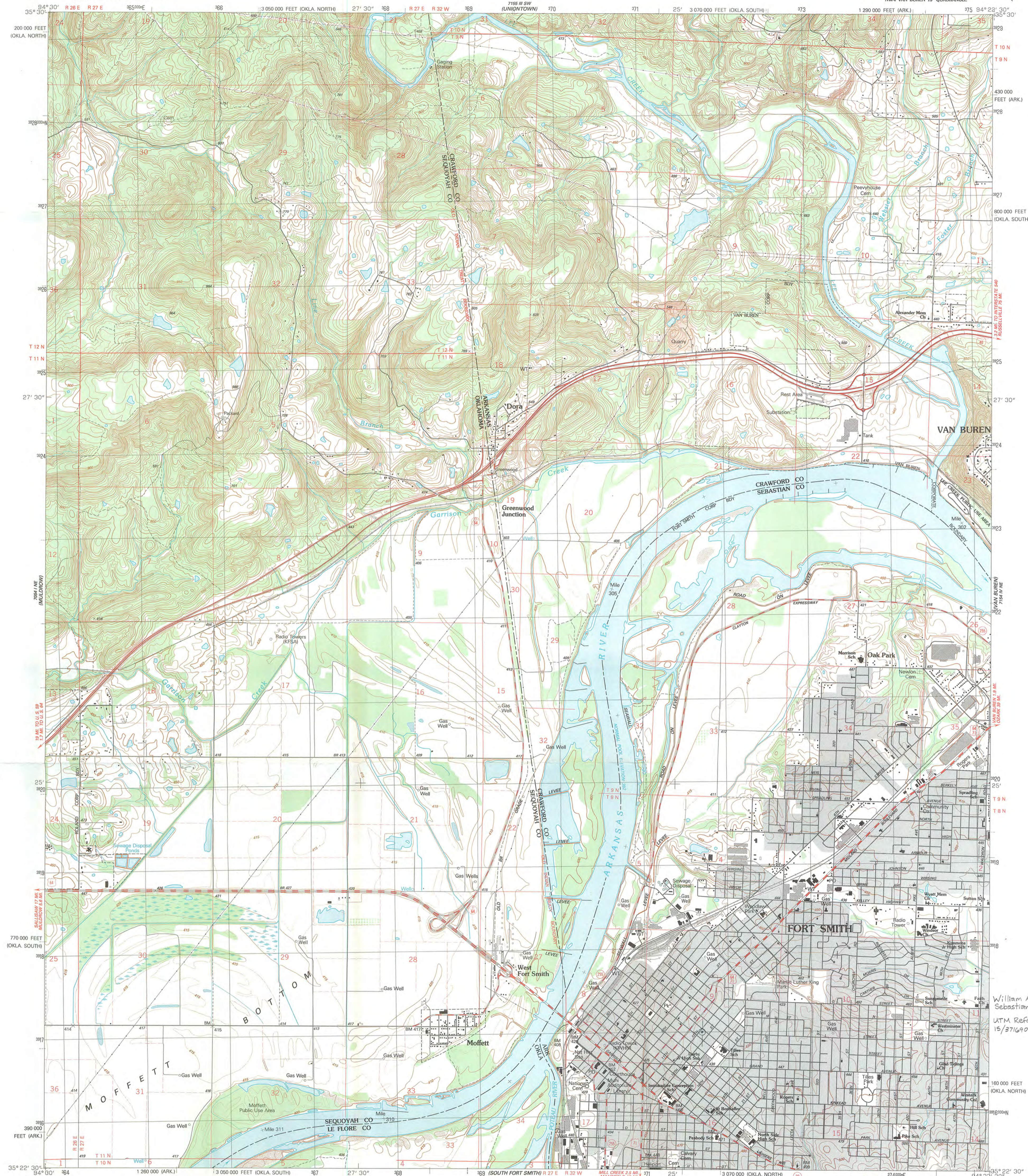
April, 1999

AHPP

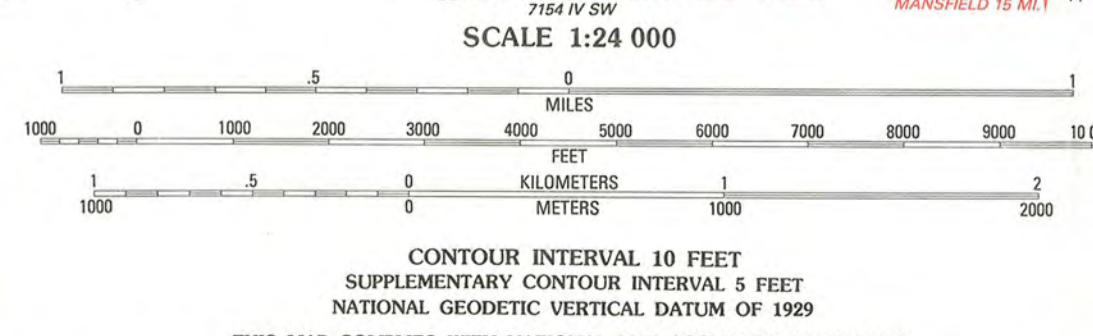
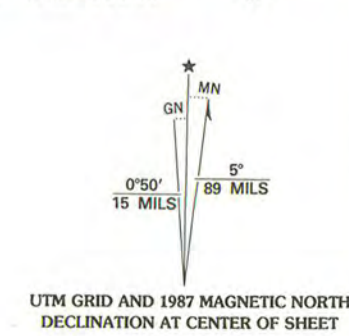
Detail of roof detailing looking north from
attic story of west elevation

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

FORT SMITH QUADRANGLE
ARKANSAS-OKLAHOMA
7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)
NW 4 VAN BUREN 15' QUADRANGLE



Produced by the United States Geological Survey
Control by USGS and NOS/NOAA
Topography by photogrammetric methods from aerial photographs
taken 1983. Field checked 1985. Map edited 1987
Supersedes Army Map Service map dated 1947
Projection and 10,000-foot grid ticks: Arkansas coordinate
system, north zone, and Oklahoma coordinate system, north
and south zones (Lambert conformal conic)
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid, zone 15
1927 North American Datum
To place on the predicted North American Datum 1983,
move the projection lines 6 meters south and
19 meters east as shown by dashed corner ticks
There may be private inholdings within the boundaries of
the National or State reservations shown on this map
Gray tint indicates areas in which only landmark buildings are shown
Fine red dashed lines indicate selected fence and field lines where
generally visible on aerial photographs. This information is unchecked



ROAD CLASSIFICATION
Primary highway, hard surface Light-duty road, hard or improved surface
Secondary highway, hard surface Unimproved road
Interstate Route U. S. Route State Route
FORT SMITH, ARK.-OKLA.
NW 4 VAN BUREN 15' QUADRANGLE
35094-D4-TF-024
1987
DMA 7154 IV NW-SERIES V884

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
FOR SALE BY U. S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, DENVER, COLORADO 80225, OR RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092
ARKANSAS GEOLOGICAL COMMISSION, LITTLE ROCK, ARKANSAS 72201
AND OKLAHOMA GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, NORMAN, OKLAHOMA 73069
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

William Ayers House
Sebastian County, AR
UTM Reference:
15/371690/3918000