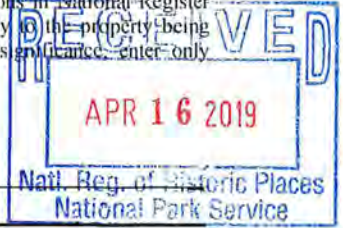


United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

4002

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.



### 1. Name of Property

Historic name: Empire Life Insurance Company of America Building

Other names/site number: Site #PU8796

Name of related multiple property listing: \_\_\_\_\_

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

### 2. Location

Street & number: 2801 West Roosevelt Road

City or town: Little Rock State: AR County: Pulaski

Not For Publication:  Vicinity:

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

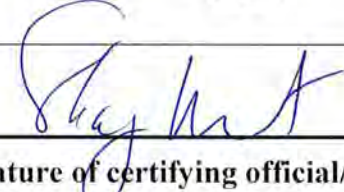
I hereby certify that this X nomination \_\_\_ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property X meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

\_\_\_ national \_\_\_ statewide X local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

X A \_\_\_ B X C \_\_\_ D

 _____ <b>Signature of certifying official/Title:</b> <u>Arkansas Historic Preservation Program</u> <b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b>	<u>4-3-19</u> _____ <b>Date</b>
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In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.	
_____ <b>Signature of commenting official:</b>	_____ <b>Date</b>
_____ <b>Title :</b>	_____ <b>State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</b>

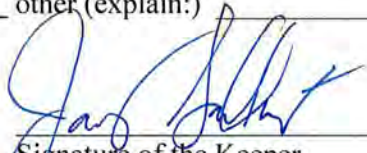
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**4. National Park Service Certification**

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain:)

  
Signature of the Keeper

5-30-2019

Date of Action

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

**Category of Property**

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

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**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

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

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register           

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**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE/TRADE/business

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

WORK IN PROGRESS

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## 7. Description

### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

MODERN MOVEMENT/International Style

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**Materials:** (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: METAL, CONCRETE, STONE, TAR

### Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

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### Summary Paragraph

Located at 2801 West Roosevelt Road on the south side of Little Rock, the Empire Life Insurance Company Building is a two-story building designed in the International style by the noted Little Rock firm of Wittenberg, Delony, and Davidson. The building was built in 1959-1960 on a large tract of land on the south side of Roosevelt Road, the route of U.S. 70 and former route of U.S. 67 through Little Rock. The building rests on a cast-concrete foundation, and the first floor is split into two parts by the building's driveway. The first floor also has mainly a north-south orientation. The western section is buried in the natural hillside while the eastern part is above ground and sided with fieldstone and plate-glass windows. The second floor spans the entire length of the building in mainly an east-west orientation and has bands of windows with aluminum panels above and below. The rest of the second story's walls are clad in cast-stone panels. The building is topped by a flat roof.

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### Narrative Description

The Empire Life Insurance Company of America Building is located at 2801 West Roosevelt Road on the south side of Little Rock. Roosevelt Road, which is still a major east-west artery on the south side of the city is the route of U.S. 70 and the former route of U.S. 67 through Little Rock. The Empire Life Insurance Company Building is a two-story building designed in the International style by the noted Little Rock firm of Wittenberg, Delony, and Davidson, and built in 1959-1960. Originally located on a nine-acre open tract of land on the south side of Roosevelt Road, the setting of the building was reflective of the large open campuses that were being



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designed for office buildings in the mid-twentieth century, most notably Connecticut General Life Insurance Company in Bloomfield, Connecticut.

The building rests on a cast-concrete foundation, and the first floor, which has mainly a north-south orientation, is split into two parts by the building's driveway, which accesses the building's parking lot behind the building. An enclosure for HVAC equipment is also located behind the building. The western section is buried in the natural hillside on the western part of the site while the eastern part is above ground and sided with fieldstone and plate-glass windows. The fieldstone siding mimics the retaining wall that runs along the western side of the driveway between the building and the street. The second floor, which has mainly an east-west orientation, spans the entire length of the building and has bands of windows with aluminum panels above and below. The rest of the second story's walls are clad in cast-stone panels. The building is topped by a flat roof.

### ***Front/Northeast Façade***

The front façade of the building faces Roosevelt Road and the first floor of the façade is split in two by the driveway that goes through the building to the rear parking lot. The western part of the first floor is mainly located below grade and the visible part is comprised of a blank concrete wall that is slightly recessed under the second floor.

The eastern portion of the first floor of the north façade is divided into two sections. Next to the driveway is a projecting section devoid of fenestration that is a solid fieldstone wall. To the east of the fieldstone section, the first floor, which is slightly recessed under the second floor, is enclosed with glass as a conference room. On the north side the conference room is fenestrated with four panels of plate-glass windows with a large pane on top and a small panel on the bottom. The second bay from the east has part of the small window removed in order to accommodate an air-conditioning unit.

The second floor of the front façade has two cast-stone panels at the east and west ends. In between are 26 panels with metal-framed plate-glass windows and metal panels above and below the windows. The window panels are separated by projecting metal bars. In addition, each third window panel has a pair of rectangular metal-framed awning windows at the bottom, although some of them have been removed to accommodate window air-conditioning units.

### ***Side/Southeast Façade***

The southeast façade is divided into three sections: two one-story sections flanking a middle two-story section. The northern one-story section has a blank fieldstone wall at the northern end and then three plate-glass windows to its south. The two northern windows are separated by a narrow fieldstone column.

To the south of the northern one-story portion of the building is the central two-story section. The first floor of the two-story section is the conference room, which is fenestrated by five panels of metal-framed plate-glass windows with a large pane on top and a small panel on the bottom. The second and fourth bays from the north have part of the small windows removed in order to accommodate air-conditioning units. To the south of the plate glass windows, is a

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metal-framed plate-glass door that provides access into the conference room. The second story of this portion of the building is devoid of fenestration and is covered by seven cast-stone panels.

The southern one-story section of the building is divided into two parts. The northern part is original to the building while the southern part is an addition constructed at an unknown date. The original portion of the one-story section is mainly devoid of fenestration and consists of a blank fieldstone wall, except for a metal-framed plate-glass door at the far northern end. The addition, which is also covered in fieldstone, has three stationary square windows evenly spaced near the north end and two square louvered vents set high in the wall near the south end of the wall.

### ***Rear/Southwest Façade***

The rear façade of the building, like the front façade, has the first floor of the façade split in two by the driveway that goes through the building to the rear parking lot. The western part of the first floor is mainly located below grade and the visible part is comprised of a blank concrete wall that is slightly recessed under the second floor.

The eastern portion of the first floor of the north façade is divided into two sections. Next to the driveway is a projecting section devoid of fenestration that is a solid concrete-block wall. To the east of the concrete block section, the first floor, which is slightly recessed under the second floor, is enclosed with glass as a conference room. On the south side the conference room is fenestrated with four panels of plate-glass windows with a large pane on top and a small panel on the bottom. The second bay from the west has part of the small window removed in order to accommodate an air-conditioning unit.

The second floor of the front façade has two cast-stone panels at the east and west ends. Proceeding east along the façade from the west end, there are three bays of windows, followed by four cast-stone panels, followed by twelve bays of windows, followed by four cast-stone panels, and finally followed by three bays of windows. The bays with windows have metal-framed plate-glass windows and metal panels above and below the windows. The window panels are separated by projecting metal bars. In addition, some of the window panels have a pair of rectangular metal-framed awning windows at the bottom, although some of them have been removed to accommodate window air-conditioning units. In addition, above four of the windows, the metal panels have rectangular louvered vents.

### ***Side/Northwest Façade***

The southwest façade is divided into three sections: two one-story sections flanking a middle two-story section. The northern one-story section has a blank fieldstone wall that faces the driveway.

To the south of the northern one-story portion of the building is the central two-story section. The first floor of the two-story section, which faces the driveway in the middle of the building, is the main entrance into the building's main lobby. The entrance into the lobby is adjacent to the fieldstone wall, and consists of a pair of plate-glass doors with a plate-glass transom above them.

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To the right of the entrance is a large plate-glass window. To the south of the plate-glass window is a single metal-framed plate-glass door that leads into a secondary stairway.

The second story of this portion of the building is located at the far west end of the building. It consists of a central recessed entrance with a metal-framed plate-glass door with plate-glass sidelight to the south and a plate-glass transom above it. The entrance is approached by a floating metal stairway with metal railings and concrete treads. The stairway has been covered by a wooden wheelchair ramp that approaches the entrance from the south. The recessed entrance is flanked on each side by three cast-stone panels.

The southern one-story section of the building is divided into two parts. The northern part is original to the building while the southern part is an addition constructed at an unknown date. The original portion of the one-story section is devoid of fenestration and consists of a blank fieldstone wall. The northwest façade of the addition, which is covered in concrete block, beginning at the north end, has a stationary square window covered with a sheet of metal. The window is followed by a metal door with a square window in the top half. To the south of the door are two more square stationary windows followed by another metal door with a square window in the top half. Both of these doors have metal awnings sheltering them. To the south of the entrance is another entrance with a solid metal door.

### ***Interior***

The first floor of the building's interior is bisected by the driveway that goes through the building. The western part of the first floor houses the mechanical and utilitarian spaces of the building, and it is built into the hillside. The interior of the first floor has the public spaces of the building. The western half is dominated by a two-story open lobby with suspended staircase and hanging spherical light fixtures. The staircase has terrazzo treads, a metal frame and wood rails and panels. A large planter is located under the staircase. The lobby has a reception area with stone and wood walls and an open waiting area. The east end of the building has the glass-enclosed conference room, while the southern wing has restrooms, offices, and a large kitchen/dining room area in the addition that used to be a garage area.

The second floor of the building has the offices and more private areas of the building. The east end of the building has an open area that was originally an open work area, and then used as a lounge during the building's most recent time as a rehab facility. The western part of the second floor has a central hallway with offices and restrooms on either side. The offices were used as bedrooms during the time that it was a rehab facility.

### ***Air Conditioning Enclosure***

Near the southwest corner of the building is a rectangular air-conditioning enclosure. The enclosure is built on a cast-concrete foundation and features steel beams at each corner. The walls of the enclosure are built out of decorative concrete blocks that feature a four-pointed star pattern with an open circle in the middle of the star.

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***Integrity***

Since the Empire Life Insurance Company Building was built in 1959-1960, there have been some changes to the building and site. On the exterior of the building, an addition was added to the end of the south wing at an unknown date, but it does use similar materials and is a small-scale addition when compared to the rest of the building. Also, shortly after the building was built, the open area at the east end of the building was enclosed with plate glass in order to accommodate a conference room. Although enclosed, the fact that glass was used helps it to keep the open appearance that it had originally. Finally, the west end of the building has also had a wheelchair ramp installed, but it was installed over the original stairs and is easily removable.

The interior of the building has also had some modifications, but the original layout and functions of the various areas of the building are easily discernible. On the first floor, the major interior modification is the creation of the dining and kitchen area in the southern addition for the rehab center where a garage space was originally housed. Although this space was modified it was not original to the building. On the second floor, the plan was modified at some point in time to create more offices on the south side of the central hallway from a larger open work space. However, the second floor is a secondary space in the building, and even though more offices were created, the second floor still reads as office space, which is what it was originally.

The largest modification to the building has been changes to the site of the building. When the building was built in 1959-1960, it sat on nine acres of open space, creating the feel of a corporate campus, which was gaining in popularity at the period. However, in 2006 a building was built to the west of the Empire Life Insurance Company of America Building for use by the rehab facility. An additional driveway and parking were also constructed on the site. As a result, the setting has lost some of its openness to the east, although the openness of the site does remain on the other three sides.

The neighborhood around the building still reflects the neighborhood as it existed in 1960. The industrial building to the west and south was the Westinghouse Electric Corporation Large Lamp Plant in 1950, the last year that Sanborn maps were done for Little Rock and was already in place (although since expanded) when the building was built. Roselawn Cemetery to the north was also in place in 1960 as was the office building and Pulaski County Jail to the west.

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**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

A. Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.

B. Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.

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C. Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.

D. Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations**

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

A. Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes

B. Removed from its original location

C. A birthplace or grave

D. A cemetery

E. A reconstructed building, object, or structure

F. A commemorative property

G. Less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ARCHITECTURE

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**Period of Significance**

1959-1960

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**Significant Dates**

1959-1960

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\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

Wittenberg, Delony, and Davidson, Architects  
N. P. Alessi, Inc., Builder

**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The Empire Life Insurance Company of America Building, located at 2801 West Roosevelt Road on the south side of Little Rock, Pulaski County, Arkansas, is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under **Criterion C** with **local significance** for its importance as a good commercial example of the International style of architecture. Built in 1959-1960, and designed by the noted Arkansas firm of Wittenberg, Delony and Davidson, the Empire Life Insurance Company of America Building, with its large open tract of land, represented a good example of the corporate office park that was becoming more popular during the 1950s and 1960s. The design of the building was also notable at the time of its construction, and it was given an Honor Award in Architecture by the Gulf States Region of the American Institute of Architects in November 1961. The building is an excellent example of the International style because of its flat roof without a ledge, metal windows set flush with the outer wall, smooth wall surfaces with no decorative detailing at the doors and windows, and its asymmetrical façade.

**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

**HISTORY OF THE PROPERTY**

Settlement in the Little Rock area began shortly after the turn of the nineteenth century. Although surveying land and offering it for sale did not begin until 1815, a few settlers were in the area prior to then. Edmund Hogan, for example, who was originally from Georgia and came to Arkansas via Missouri, was living on the north bank of the Arkansas River opposite Little Rock where he operated a ferry by 1812. Another distinguished early settler was Wright Daniel who settled at the base of Big Rock Mountain prior to 1814 and opened a gristmill in 1815. When the Arkansas Territory was created in 1819, the state's first capital was at Arkansas Post.



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However, it was not the best location since it often flooded and was far away from the majority of the territory's population. In 1820, a new centrally-located site for the capital was chosen on the south bank of the Arkansas River at the Little Rock.<sup>1</sup>

Initial settlement and development in Little Rock was focused on the river. The original plat of Little Rock consisted of 88 square blocks stretching south from the river to what is now Eleventh Street. By the 1860s, however, the city began to expand beyond the original plat, notably with the platting of the Woodruff's and Masonic additions on the city's east side, the Wright's Addition on the south side, and the Capitol Hill Addition on the west side. Apparently, building sites on the city's west side were popular. An announcement in the November 21, 1872, issue of the *Arkansas Gazette* stated that "This property consists of twenty-seven full and fractional blocks, overlooking the Cairo and Fulton railroad as it leaves the city. ... This is a fine property, and from its geographical position, will soon become a portion of the city. Upward of one hundred lots in the addition have already been disposed of, and are at this time being improved."<sup>2</sup>

Today, Roosevelt Road is the main east-west corridor on the south side of Little Rock, and it is the route of U.S. 70 through that part of the city. (It was also the route of U.S. 67 through Little Rock, until it was rerouted onto I-30.) However, in the early twentieth century, this was not the case. In 1913, which was the first year that Sanborn maps covered that area of the city, Roosevelt (or 28<sup>th</sup> Street, which is what it follows), did not exist to the west of the railroad line. The Sanborn map also indicated only a few items in the vicinity of the Empire Life Building site, including the Pulaski County Hospital in the immediate vicinity of the site and the Arkansas State Penitentiary to the west. Three brick manufacturing facilities were also located to the southwest and south of the site. Only one development, Gallagher's Addition, which was bounded by the 19<sup>th</sup> Street Pike, May Street, West 26<sup>th</sup> Street, and Johnson Street, existed in the vicinity.<sup>3</sup>

By 1939, however, Roosevelt had been constructed through the area, and additional streets had been laid out in the vicinity of the Empire Life Building site. In 1942, a new Pulaski County Hospital (now the Pulaski County Jail) was built to the west of the site, and other industrial buildings were also built in the vicinity. However, development remained sporadic, which allowed Empire Life Insurance Company of America to acquire a nine-acre site for their new headquarters building.<sup>4</sup> The nine-acre site on a major road allowed the company to develop a new headquarters that would be easy to get to and a landmark coming into the city from the southwest.

The Empire Life Insurance Company of America was founded in 1956 in Little Rock and initially had its offices in a house at 8<sup>th</sup> and Cross streets in Little Rock. Interestingly, the organization of the company brought about a lawsuit against the IRS from one of the stockholders. An article in the *Arkansas Gazette* on March 25, 1961, reported:

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<sup>1</sup>Roy, F. Hampton, Sr., and Charles Witsell, Jr., with Cheryl Griffith Nichols. *How We Lived: Little Rock as an American City*. Little Rock: August House, 1984, pp. 12-14.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 19, 104.

<sup>3</sup> Sanborn Fire Insurance Company Map for Little Rock, 1913.

<sup>4</sup> Sanborn Fire Insurance Company Map for Little Rock, 1939 and 1950.

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A test case was filed yesterday in federal District Court to determine whether the original 270 stockholders in the Empire Life Insurance Company of America owe some \$280,000 in taxes on the transaction whereby they acquired the stock.

Clifton F. McCool of Sheridan, a stockholder, filed the suit against the Internal Revenue Service, contending that the IRS had assessed erroneously \$4,351 in taxes against him.

Empire Life Insurance Company of America, with offices at 2801 West Roosevelt Road, was organized in 1956 by First Arkansas then exchanged their stock share-for-share for that of Empire Life and dissolved the parent corporation.

Attorney W. Dane Clay, who represents Empire, said the 270 stockholders contended the transaction was a tax-free reorganization, but that the IRS looked upon it as a capital gain of about \$1,400,000.

Clay said the rate of taxation for each stockholder would depend on his income tax bracket, but that the total taxes would run about \$280,000.

The key issue in the case, Clay said, is whether there was a sufficient continuity of business between the two corporations to qualify as a tax-free reorganization. First Arkansas was formed in early 1956 to organize life insurance companies, but stopped with Empire.

McCool alleged that the IRS had recognized a long-term capital gain of \$16,375 arising from an exchange of 3,275 shares of First Arkansas Investment Corporation stock with a basis of \$2 a share for 3,275 shares of Empire stock having a fair market value of \$12 a share.

McCool paid the \$4,351 taxes under protest so he could file the refund suit. The other stockholders won't have to pay their taxes unless McCool loses the test case. That's because the IRS has agreed to hold the collection in abeyance while the suit is pending, Clay said.<sup>5</sup>

Unfortunately, the outcome of the case was never reported in the newspaper.

By 1960, the company operated in Arkansas, Mississippi, Louisiana, Oklahoma, and New Mexico. It employed 22 people at the home office and had 175 people employed in the field. In addition to the employees, the company had an extensive board of directors. According to the *Arkansas Gazette*, the board included:

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<sup>5</sup> "Stockholder Files Suit In Tax Case." *Arkansas Gazette* 25 March 1961, p. 8B.

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Eugene Sloan, a Jonesboro lawyer, is board chairman; Joe M. Lavender, a Texarkana wholesaler, is a vice president. Dr. F. Walter Carruthers, orthopedic surgeon of Little Rock, is medical director and vice president.

Other members of the Board include: John Ed Chambers, president of the Danville State Bank; John K. Shamburger and Richard L. Pratt, Little Rock lawyers, general counsel; John E. Speer of Waldo, lumberman; William R. Pratt of Newport, real estate executive; Basil York of Hot Springs, retired furniture manufacturer; Austin T. Franks of Pine Bluff, chain store owner; J. Fred Walloch, Little Rock garage owner; Clyde C. Hudgens of Little Rock, builder and real estate executive; Clifton F. McCool, real estate executive and timber buyer; Edgar E. Bethell of Fort Smith; lawyer; Edwin W. Anthony of Bearden, tree farmer and lumberman; Odell O. Smith of Little Rock, president of the Teamsters Union, Local 878, and Kemp E. Whisenhunt of Blytheville, real estate man and farmer.

...  
Malcolm W. Gannaway Jr. is superintendent of the Agency Department. His assistant is Roy H. Pearrow Jr. Bob Sewell is agency training director.<sup>6</sup>

The construction of the new building in 1959-1960 was a result of the fact that the house at 8<sup>th</sup> and Cross streets was not suitable for the offices of an insurance company. As Earl C. Hudgens, president of Empire Life, indicated, "office workers spent a lot of time going up and down stairs, out to the garage, down to the basement and from office to office."<sup>7</sup>

Due to the challenges of using a house for the offices of an insurance company, Empire Life decided in 1959 to build a new headquarters building. A Building Committee was established comprised of Earl C. Hudgens, Eugene Sloan, Fred Walloch, Edwin Anthony and Kemp Whisenhunt. Also, in preparation for the construction of the building, the company had a "time and motion" study completed. As was reported in the *Arkansas Gazette*, "An average insurance company will put an application for a policy through 15 or 20 hands before issuing the policy, Hudgens said. Empire's new building will cut that to three handlings."<sup>8</sup>

The design for the Empire Life Building was Job #59039 for Wittenberg, Delony, and Davidson, and the firm issued for bids on August 8, 1959. Tom Gray was the architect at the firm in charge of the design. N. P. Alessi, Incorporated, was selected as the General Contractor for the construction of the building.<sup>9</sup> The building designed employed the International Style, a style that was popular for commercial office buildings during the period. It also put all of the main

<sup>6</sup> "Empire Life to Show Off Its New Headquarters." *Arkansas Gazette*. 30 September 1960, p. 7A.

<sup>7</sup> "Empire Life to Show Off Its New Headquarters." *Arkansas Gazette*. 30 September 1960, p. 7A.

<sup>8</sup> "Empire Life to Show Off Its New Headquarters." *Arkansas Gazette*. 30 September 1960, p. 7A.

<sup>9</sup> Toms, Mason. E-mail to the author. 17 August 2015, and Advertisements for companies involved with the completion of the Empire Life Building. *Arkansas Gazette*. 30 September 1960, p. 7A.

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offices on one floor, eliminating the use of stairs that had been problematic in the previous offices, and put the secondary support areas on the first floor.

The Empire Life Insurance Company of America Building was designed by the noted Little Rock architecture firm of Wittenberg, Delony, and Davidson and was designed in the International style. Wittenberg, Delony & Davidson was established in 1919 in downtown Little Rock by George Wittenberg and Lawson Delony under the name Wittenberg & Delony Architects. In their early years there was little capital to begin, so Wittenberg taught mechanical drawing part time and coached football for Little Rock High School while Delony took charge of the office.<sup>10</sup>

During this time they built residential homes mostly, until the new Little Rock High School project. This school (now known as Little Rock Central High School) was the most expensive high school built in the United States at the time, and bolstered Wittenberg & Delony's acclaim. This allowed them to become more competitive with the established firms.<sup>11</sup>

By the mid-1930s, Wittenberg & Delony employed eight people. Wittenberg focused on marketing and administration, Delony specialized in design, and newcomer Julian Davidson was in charge of producing working drawings. The firm was active during Franklin Delano Roosevelt's New Deal programs, and the firm worked diligently to acquire federal loans and grants for their clients from the federal agencies to build their projects. While most of their projects were residential, the firm was diversifying, taking on several college projects.<sup>12</sup>

When World War II began, most of the firm's employees had gone to war. With fewer employees and an increase in military work, those remaining were kept busy. Once the soldiers returned, Wittenberg & Delony decided to restructure their firm. Julian Davidson was made a full one-third partner and the firm became Wittenberg, Delony & Davidson.<sup>13</sup>

As architecture became more complex and involved in the 1950s, the firm decided to specialize in design, drafting, planning, interior design, landscaping, and construction administration. In 1959 the firm incorporated and is now known as Wittenberg, Delony & Davidson, Inc.<sup>14</sup>

During the 1960s the firm grew significantly in terms of numbers of projects. School projects were the majority, such as those in Southern Arkansas University, followed by residential, commercial, and college, but medical projects were making significant gains. The firm won significant design awards for the Empire Life Building, the Arkansas State Health Department building, and the Arkansas State Hospital. George Wittenberg retired during this time, and his son, Gordon, took the same role as his father and specialized in securing and procuring clients. Tom Gray was also added into the firm's integral design team.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> Information on Wittenberg, Delony & Davidson from: <http://www.wddarchitects.com/profile/history>.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

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In the 1970s WD&D, Inc. was awarded for their Regions Center Office building, Riceland Foods, University of Arkansas Student Union, and Gordon Wittenberg's residence. In 1976 Tom Gray became president of the firm and wanted to maximize individual talents, so that project managers would specialize in specific building types. WD&D, Inc.'s work in financial buildings was in high demand, and college, medical, planning, and interior design categories grew significantly.<sup>16</sup>

Tom Adams became the new president in 1987 and wanted to develop two new growth markets – corrections and hospitality. Need for more prison space and already established relationships within the government provided the firm with corrections projects. The firm also built hotels in Atlanta, Dallas, Destin, Chicago, Little Rock, and San Antonio. By now, the firm was becoming predominantly institutional and commercial.<sup>17</sup>

In 1991 the firm opened another office in Fayetteville, and in 1997 the Little Rock office was moved to the Regions Center. Throughout the 1990s the firm built hotels, themed restaurants, and even casinos. For example, WD&D built a St. Louis casino and the award winning Pour House Restaurant in the new River Market District. Ed Peek took over in health care design, and led projects for hospitals in Alabama, Arkansas, Louisiana, Missouri, and Texas. Medical, financial, and planning projects were the majority of the work the firm for the decade.<sup>18</sup>

The most recent projects for Wittenberg, Delony, & Davidson, Inc. have been the Little Rock Statehouse Convention Center expansion, multiple projects for Springdale School District, First Security Center, two Hot Springs Convention Center expansions, Arkansas Department of Correction's Malvern Medium Security Unit, and the renovation of the Excelsior Hotel.<sup>19</sup>

With the design of the Empire Life Insurance Company of America Building, Wittenberg, Delony, & Davidson was able to experiment with designing a small-scale simplified corporate campus, something that was new in Arkansas. The development of the corporate campus really began in the United States in the 1930s when the Bell Labs division of American Telephone & Telegraph started the process of planning for a new headquarters in Manhattan. However, the company got rid of the plan in 1939 because of the “high living costs” and “urban noise and dirt” of the city. In addition, employees complained about the trouble and costs associated with commuting into Manhattan. As a result, in 1944, Bell Labs moved to a 250-acre parklike campus in Summit New, Jersey. The campus had “unthreatening, modern structures amid landscaped countryside. Indoors, a cafeteria, solarium, and employee lounge [celebrated] modernist aesthetics with ‘butternut woodwork,’ recessed lighting, and unfussy, upholstered furniture. Modular construction [allowed] reconfiguration of laboratory spaces according to the needs of the moment.”<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> Green, Hardy. *The Company Town: The Industrial Edens and Satanic Mills That Shaped the American Economy*. New York: Basic Books, 2010, p. 189.

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Although Bell Labs was a real trendsetter in the establishment of an office park on large amounts of acreage, the concept would not really take off until the 1950s and 1960s. The development of highways, which meant increased deliveries by truck rather than train, and an increase in automobile commuting, really spurred on the trend. In addition to campuses that Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill completed for Connecticut General and Reynolds Metals, other trendsetters included IBM, who commissioned Eero Saarinen to design a campus in Yorktown Heights, New York, in 1957, and PepsiCo, who hired Arkansas-born architect Edward Durrell Stone to design a campus on a former polo club in Purchase, New York, in 1958.<sup>21</sup>

Even though the corporate campus increased in popularity throughout the latter half of the twentieth century, there was some criticism of the concept. As noted in Hardy Green's book *The Company Town: The Industrial Edens and Satanic Mills That Shaped the American Economy*, urban sociologist William H. Whyte

...concluded that corporate campuses were employee-unfriendly developments – isolated, accessible only via increasingly congested roadways, often both pharaonic and sprawling, with little functional use of vast open space and too few pathways for those who might simply like to take a walk. Some were fortresslike, as if intended to discourage visitors, he said. Most unforgivably, he found all of them inhospitable to the “unplanned, informal encounters” among people upon which both markets and spontaneous creativity depend. Ever hopeful, though, Whyte observed that the time-tested “idea of towns is gaining currency” as the campuses were found wanting. He seemed to forecast a return to sensible, small-community living and working.<sup>22</sup>

Although the development of the corporate campus in a park-like setting was most popular near large cities and metropolitan areas, the concept, albeit on a lesser scale, did come to mid-size cities, including Little Rock. The suburbs, which “were predictable, spacious, segregated, specialized, quiet, new, and easily traversed – a much more promising state of affairs to corporations bent on expansion” – were the place to be. The Empire Life Insurance Company of America Building was one of the first developments of its kind in Little Rock that took advantage of the wide open spaces away from the city center.<sup>23</sup>

The use of a nine-acre site for the relatively small footprint of the Empire Life Building allowed Wittenberg, Delony, & Davidson to explore the idea of a small-scale corporate campus, similar

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<sup>21</sup> Green, Hardy. *The Company Town: The Industrial Edens and Satanic Mills That Shaped the American Economy*. New York: Basic Books, 2010, pp. 189-190. Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill would also design a campus for IBM's corporate headquarters in Armonk, New York, shortly after the Yorktown campus was completed.

<sup>22</sup> Green, Hardy. *The Company Town: The Industrial Edens and Satanic Mills That Shaped the American Economy*. New York: Basic Books, 2010, p. 191.

<sup>23</sup> Mozingo, Louise. *Pastoral Capitalism: A History of Suburban Corporate Landscapes*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2011, p. 8.



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to the corporate campuses that Skidmore, Owings, and Merrill had done for Connecticut General Life Insurance in 1954-1957 (with later additions, NR-listed January 27, 2000) in Bloomfield, Connecticut, and Reynolds Metals in 1955-1958 (with later additions, NR-listed April 26, 2000) in Richmond, Virginia. Although not in the suburbs like some of the other well-known corporate campuses of the period, the Empire Life Building's site on Roosevelt was removed from downtown Little Rock, and it really represented a departure from previous corporate design in the city.

The setback of the Empire Life Building from Roosevelt Road and the fact that the parking was located behind the building, essentially hiding it from Roosevelt, emphasized the open nature of the site. In addition, as originally designed, with the open porch on the first floor at the east end overlooking the sloping site, it allowed the workers to take advantage of the site and interact with it. The bands of windows on the building, both on the upper floor and the lower floor allowed lots of natural light into the offices and also allowed views of the surrounding grounds from the offices and open work areas.

Construction of the Empire Life Building began in the latter half of 1959, and a report on the progress of the building's construction given in the 1960 annual report to stockholders stated:

In October of 1959 a Progress Report was mailed to each stockholder of Empire Life Insurance Company of America. It was announced at that time that construction of Empire's home office building had begun. Since then, despite bad weather and a national steel strike, a considerable amount of progress has been made, and at the time of this printing, it is estimated that the building is approximately fifty percent complete.

This modern and efficiently planned structure will contain in excess of 12,000 square feet of space. It will be fire proof, air conditioned, and geared with the idea in mind of Empire Life's increased production and expansion potential.

The architects are Wittenberg, Delony & Davidson, and the contractor for construction of the building is N. P. Alessi, Inc. Dorothy Ross Lawhon, A.I.D., is in charge of interior decorating.

We hope to be able to occupy the building, which is located at West Roosevelt Road and Woodrow in Little Rock, in July, or no later than some time in August. An announcement will be sent to each stockholder when this long awaited date is determined.

The value of Empire's Home Office building and property will be worth an estimated half million dollars, and will be a plant of which each stockholder and policyholder may be justly proud. The building will be completely paid for, and entirely debt-free on the day it opens! This is being done without penalizing or

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curtailing our regular investment program, and is but another example of Empire's stability and rapid progress.<sup>24</sup>

By the end of the summer in 1960, the construction of the building was finished, and the company announced an open house for October 1-2, 1960. An advertisement in the newspaper on September 30, 1960, touted some of the features of the building, saying:

A totally new concept in business design!  
The Home Office of Empire Life Insurance Company of America  
West Roosevelt at Woodrow

Here you'll find the combination of modern, colorful architecture with efficient business traffic control, all blending together in an important addition to the growing list of Little Rock's beautiful buildings. Perhaps you'll be most interested in the efficient method of business traffic so important to the insurance business; of perhaps the tasteful and relaxing furnishings, color, and décor; of the unusual but beautiful design and construction. Whatever your taste or interest, you'll find a visit to EMPIRE LIFE's Open House a rewarding one.<sup>25</sup>

Advertisements from Fagan Electric Company, Inc., and N. P. Alessi, Inc. expressed how proud and privileged they were to have worked on "this modern new building" while an advertisement for Dorothy Ross Lawhon Interiors said that "We are pleased to have done the interior design and decorating and to have furnished all the new furniture, draperies, carpeting and accessories for this handsome new building."

The construction and design of the building was noteworthy at the time, and was apparently widely publicized, especially in the insurance industry. The *Arkansas Gazette* reported:

Hudgens said several insurance trade magazines had expressed an interest in the new building. Some will have representatives at the open house. So will several other insurance companies, he said. One man is coming from Hawaii, he said.

The firm occupied the new building last Saturday. It has 12,200 square feet of floor space. Hudgens said the heating and air conditioning system was unique in Arkansas. If a person in one office is cold, she can turn on heat. If a person in the adjoining office is warm, she can get cool air out of the same system.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Empire Life Insurance Company of America. *Annual Report to Stockholders*. Little Rock: Empire Life Insurance Company of America, April 1960, p. 5. (In the Dorothy-Ross Lawhon papers at the Arkansas Studies Institute, Little Rock, Arkansas.)

<sup>25</sup> "Empire Life to Show Off Its New Headquarters." *Arkansas Gazette*. 30 September 1960, p. 7A.

<sup>26</sup> "Empire Life to Show Off Its New Headquarters." *Arkansas Gazette*. 30 September 1960, p. 7A.

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The design of the building was also selected for an AIA Honor Award in Architecture by the Gulf States Region of the American Institute of Architects, which was awarded in November 1961.<sup>27</sup>

Although the building was designed by Wittenberg, Delony, & Davidson, the interior design of the building was handled by Dorothy Ross Lawhon Interiors. Dorothy-Ross Lawhon was born in 1922, the only child of Judge and Mrs. Ross Luther Lawhon. Although she was born in San Antonio, Texas, “in the shadow of the Alamo,” her parents moved to Little Rock while she was an infant. Lawhon’s father felt that Arkansas was a “perfectly beautiful state with a great future” and he wanted to be involved. He ultimately was involved, serving seven terms as North Little Rock’s mayor.<sup>28</sup>

After graduating from North Little Rock High School and Little Rock Junior College, Lawhon studied at Lindenwood College in St. Charles, Missouri, where she majored in history, and also took two years of law school to satisfy her father. However, history was not what field she went into, finally choosing interior design, since she felt that it was “more lasting, more meaningful, and I can give more of myself through this field.”<sup>29</sup>

Lawhon eventually graduated from the New York School of Interior Design, and then her parents sent Dorothy-Ross to study in Florence, Italy, under Signora Alda de Flippe for two years. Lawhon’s first job when she returned to the United States was in San Antonio as the executive head of the interior design and decorating contract departments of Frost Brothers and Joske’s of Texas. At the same time she also became a member of the American Institute of American Designers, the American Society of International Designers, and the National Home Fashion League in New York.<sup>30</sup>

While in Texas, Lawhon was involved in some interesting and prominent projects. As she recalled in the early 1980s:

“I was furnished a plane and pilot to take me everywhere.”  
She was given the assignment of decorating the Eddie Childs residence which occupied an entire block in Midland, Tex. Childs asked her then to decorate his oil offices and a commission came for the La Quinta Golf and Yacht Club in Corpus Christi.

The young designer took on Fort Clark Ranch, the largest dude ranch in the world. The commission for its first restoration and interior design came from Root-Brown Construction Co. for the Bracketville, Tex., facility, and Dorothy-Ross found herself buying leather draperies, [and] flying to Mexico to order rugs.<sup>31</sup>

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<sup>27</sup> Honor Award Certificate for the “Home Office-Empire Life Insurance Com, Little Rock, Arkansas November 1961. From the files of Wittenberg, Delony, and Davidson.

<sup>28</sup> Woods, Betty. “Good Design Result of Long-Range Planning.” *Arkansas Democrat*. 12 July 1981, 1C.

<sup>29</sup> Woods, Betty. “Good Design Result of Long-Range Planning.” *Arkansas Democrat*. 12 July 1981, 1C-2C.

<sup>30</sup> Woods, Betty. “Good Design Result of Long-Range Planning.” *Arkansas Democrat*. 12 July 1981, 2C.

<sup>31</sup> Woods, Betty. “Good Design Result of Long-Range Planning.” *Arkansas Democrat*. 12 July 1981, 2C.

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After marrying Edwin Ruthven Dyer II, and the birth of her only child, son Ross Luther Lawhon-Dyer, Dorothy-Ross returned to Little Rock for several years, before pursuing her career again, this time in New York. In New York, Lawhon was executive head of the interior design and contract department for W.A. Hathaway, the largest home furnishings business in New York. While working at W.A. Hathaway, Lawhon was chosen as one of the ten leading interior designers in New York and was featured in articles in the *New York World Telegram and Sun*. Her time in New York also involved her in a wide variety of projects, including the Scarsdale Golf Club in Hartsdale, New York, and a home in Saudi Arabia.<sup>32</sup>

In 1957, Lawhon's son was to start his formal education and Dorothy-Ross decided that she wanted to come home and be with "my best friends, my parents." As a result, Dorothy-Ross Lawhon Interiors, Inc., was founded. Again, the projects that Lawhon undertook in Arkansas were diverse, including colleges and banks, offices and residences, hospitals and country clubs. Among the offices that Lawhon did the interior design for was the Empire Life Insurance Company of America Building.<sup>33</sup>

Empire Life Insurance Company of America remained in the building on West Roosevelt Road only until 1967. Why Empire Life occupied the building for a short time is unknown, but it may be a result of the fact that "Empire Life Insurance Company of America, Little Rock, Arkansas, merged into Empire Life Insurance Company of American, Birmingham, Alabama, effective June 30, 1965."<sup>34</sup> In 1968, the building was vacant and Empire Life had moved to the second floor of the building at 319 West 2<sup>nd</sup> Street in downtown Little Rock, a much smaller space than the building on Roosevelt Road, suggesting some consolidation and downsizing as a result of the merger. In 1969, the building became home to the University of Arkansas Graduate School of Social Work. They occupied the building solely until 1972 when city directories indicate that they were sharing the building with MFA Insurance Companies. In 1973, MFA Insurance Companies became the sole occupant of the building and they remained in the building up through 1981. Beginning in 1982, Shelter Insurance Company occupied the building until 1988. After being vacant in 1989, the building became the home of Serenity Park, a substance abuse center, and they remained in the building until c.2015.<sup>35</sup>

When Serenity House took over the building, they built a new building to the east in 2006. Although the new building is very different stylistically from the Empire Life Insurance Company of America Building, it did keep the slightly skewed orientation of the original building. It also played on the two separate axes of the original building, although the north-south axis is the dominant one in the new building, instead of the east-west axis of the Empire Life Building.

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<sup>32</sup> Woods, Betty. "Good Design Result of Long-Range Planning." *Arkansas Democrat*. 12 July 1981, 2C.

<sup>33</sup> Woods, Betty. "Good Design Result of Long-Range Planning." *Arkansas Democrat*. 12 July 1981, 2C.

<sup>34</sup> *State of Arkansas State Insurance Department Report for Period January 1, 1965, to December 31, 1965, Inclusive*. Little Rock: Unknown Publisher, 1965, p. 13.

<sup>35</sup> City Directories for Little Rock, 1961-1990.

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The Empire Life Insurance Company of America Building is an excellent example of the International Style by Wittenberg, Delony, & Davidson. Only slightly altered since the time of its construction, the building still exhibits the characteristics of the International Style, including flat roof without a ledge, metal windows set flush with the outer wall, smooth wall surfaces with no decorative detailing at the doors and windows, and an asymmetrical façade. Although the building is currently vacant, it is hoped that a new use for the building will be found in the near future.

### **SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PROPERTY**

When the Empire Life Insurance Company of America Building was finished in 1960, it represented, with its large open tract of land, a good example of the corporate office park that was becoming more popular during the 1950s and 1960s. The design of the building was also notable at the time of its construction, and it was given an Honor Award in Architecture by the Gulf States Region of the American Institute of Architects in November 1961. The building is an excellent example of the International style because of its flat roof without a ledge, metal windows set flush with the outer wall, smooth wall surfaces with no decorative detailing at the doors and windows, and its asymmetrical façade.

As Virginia and Lee McAlester wrote in their book *A Field Guide to American Houses*, “Functionalism, emphasizing how a building served its inhabitants, was of prime importance; traditional elements...that were merely decorative, rather than functional, were to be discarded.” Although this was written with regards to residential architecture, it is still applicable in the case of the Empire Life Building. The design of the building emphasized the building’s various functions. The office areas of the building were delineated by the rows of windows, an integral feature in office design, and an important design element in the International style. The public areas of the building, on the other hand, are grouped on the lower floor and emphasized by the fieldstone cladding, rather than the cast stone panels.<sup>36</sup>

The regular horizontal bands used in the building’s design, including the bands of windows and cast-stone panels, are also hallmarks of the International style. In addition, the lack of applied ornamentation in the building’s design is also one of the characteristics of the style. As Hitchcock and Johnson wrote:

Absence of ornament serves as much as regular horizontality to differentiate superficially the current style from the styles of the past and from the various manners of the last century and a half. Applied ornament may not have been significant or important in the architecture of the past, but it certainly existed. It is easier to defend the claim that the finest buildings built since 1800 were those least ornamented. The failure of revivalism probably lay quite as much in the inability to recreate the conditions of craftsmanship which once made applied ornament aesthetically

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<sup>36</sup> McAlester, Virginia, and Lee McAlester. *A Field Guide to American Houses*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1994, p. 470.

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valid, as in the impossibility of adapting the spirit of old styles to new methods of construction.<sup>37</sup>

The Empire Life Insurance Company of America Building represents an outstanding example of an International-style building in Little Rock. The International style has become one of the most influential styles since World War II, especially with respect to the design of office buildings. As it says in the book *The International Style*, “The principles of the style that appeared already plainly by 1922 in the projects and the executed buildings of the leaders, still control today an ever increasing group of architects throughout the world.” As an outstanding and award-winning example of the International style in Arkansas, the Empire Life Insurance Company of America Building is being nominated to the National Register with **local significance** under **Criterion C**.

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<sup>37</sup> Hitchcock, Henry Russell, and Philip Johnson. *The International Style*. p. 81.



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## 9. Major Bibliographical References

### Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

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<http://www.wddarchitects.com/profile/history>.

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Woods, Betty. "Good Design Result of Long-Range Planning." *Arkansas Democrat*. 12 July 1981, 1C-2C.

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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 # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other
- Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

**Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):** PU8796

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**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreeage of Property:** Approximately 3 acres

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

**Latitude/Longitude Coordinates**

Datum if other than WGS84: \_\_\_\_\_

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1. Latitude: 34.724880 Longitude: -92.305793

2. Latitude: Longitude:

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3. Latitude: \_\_\_\_\_ Longitude: \_\_\_\_\_

4. Latitude: \_\_\_\_\_ Longitude: \_\_\_\_\_

**Or**

**UTM References**

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or  NAD 1983

1. Zone: 15 Easting: 563549 Northing: 3842757

2. Zone: Easting: Northing:

3. Zone: Easting: Northing:

4. Zone: Easting : Northing:

**Verbal Boundary Description** (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

Beginning at the southeast corner of West Roosevelt Road and South Woodrow Street, proceed southerly along the east side of South Woodrow Street for 450 feet to the driveway at UTM point 15/563503/3842669, thence proceed easterly along the north side of the driveway for 275 feet to UTM point 15/563585/3842666, thence proceed northerly perpendicular to the driveway for 450 feet to the south edge of West Roosevelt Road, thence proceed westerly along the south edge of West Roosevelt Road for 290 feet to the point of beginning.

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary includes all of the land historically associated with the property that retains integrity

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**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title: Ralph S. Wilcox, National Register & Survey Coordinator  
organization: Arkansas Historic Preservation Program  
street & number: 323 Center Street, Suite 1500  
city or town: Little Rock state: AR zip code: 72201  
e-mail: ralph@arkansasheritage.org  
telephone: (501) 324-9787  
date: December 23, 2015

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### **Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

### **Photographs**

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

### **Photo Log**

Name of Property: Empire Life Insurance Company of America Building

City or Vicinity: Little Rock

County: Pulaski

State: Arkansas

Photographer: Mason Toms & Ralph S. Wilcox

Date Photographed: January 6, 2016

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

1 of 18. Northeast façade of the building, looking southwest.

2 of 18. Northeast and southeast façades of the building, looking southwest.

3 of 18. Southeast façade of the building, looking northwest.

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- 4 of 18 . Southeast and southwest façades of the building, looking northwest.
- 5 of 18 . Southwest façade of the building, looking northeast.
- 6 of 18 . Southwest and northwest façades of the building, looking east.
- 7 of 18 . Southwest and northwest façades of the building, looking northeast.
- 8 of 18 . Northwest façade of the building, looking east.
- 9 of 18 . Northeast façade of the building, looking southeast.
- 10 of 18 . Main entrance of the building, looking southeast.
- 11 of 18 . First floor conference room of the building, looking northeast.
- 12 of 18 . View into the south addition to the building, looking southwest.
- 13 of 18 . Staircase in the main lobby of the building, looking southeast.
- 14 of 18 . Second floor open work area at the top of the main staircase, looking southwest.
- 15 of 18 . Main hallway on the second floor, looking northwest.
- 16 of 18 . Women's restroom on the second floor of the building, looking southwest.
- 17 of 18 . Men's restroom on the second floor of the building, looking northeast.
- 18 of 18 . Staircase in the main lobby of the building, looking northeast.

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Empire Life Insurance Company of America Building, Northeast Façade, looking southwest  
c.1960

Empire Life Insurance Company of America Building  
Name of Property

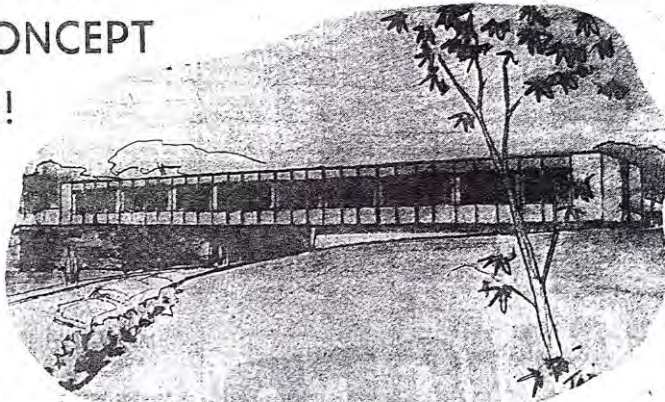
Pulaski County, Arkansas  
County and State

**A TOTALLY NEW CONCEPT  
IN BUSINESS DESIGN!**

*The HOME OFFICE of*

**EMPIRE LIFE**  
INSURANCE COMPANY  
OF AMERICA

West Roosevelt at Woodrow



**OFFICERS:**  
EARL C. HUDGENS  
*President*  
LOUIS H. STRICKLAND  
*Secretary-Treasurer*  
JOE M. LAVENDER  
*Vice-President*  
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**A Cordial Invitation . . .**  
Is extended to our policyholders, stockholders, business acquaintances, and fellow members of the insurance industry—

**. . . To Be Our Guest at**

**OPEN HOUSE**  
SATURDAY, October 1    SUNDAY, October 2  
Hours: 1:00 P. M. to 5:00 P. M. BOTH DAYS



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*President*

Here you'll find the combination of modern, colorful architecture with efficient business traffic control, all blending together in an important addition to the growing list of Little Rock's beautiful buildings. Perhaps you'll be most interested in the efficient method of business traffic so important to the insurance business; or perhaps the tasteful and relaxing furnishings, color, and decor; or the unusual but beautiful design and construction. Whatever your taste or interest, you'll find a visit to EMPIRE LIFE'S Open House a rewarding one.

Advertisement for the new Empire Life Insurance Company of America Building, 1960 –  
*Arkansas Gazette*, 30 September 1960, p. 7A.

**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 460 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.





|-----605 feet-----|

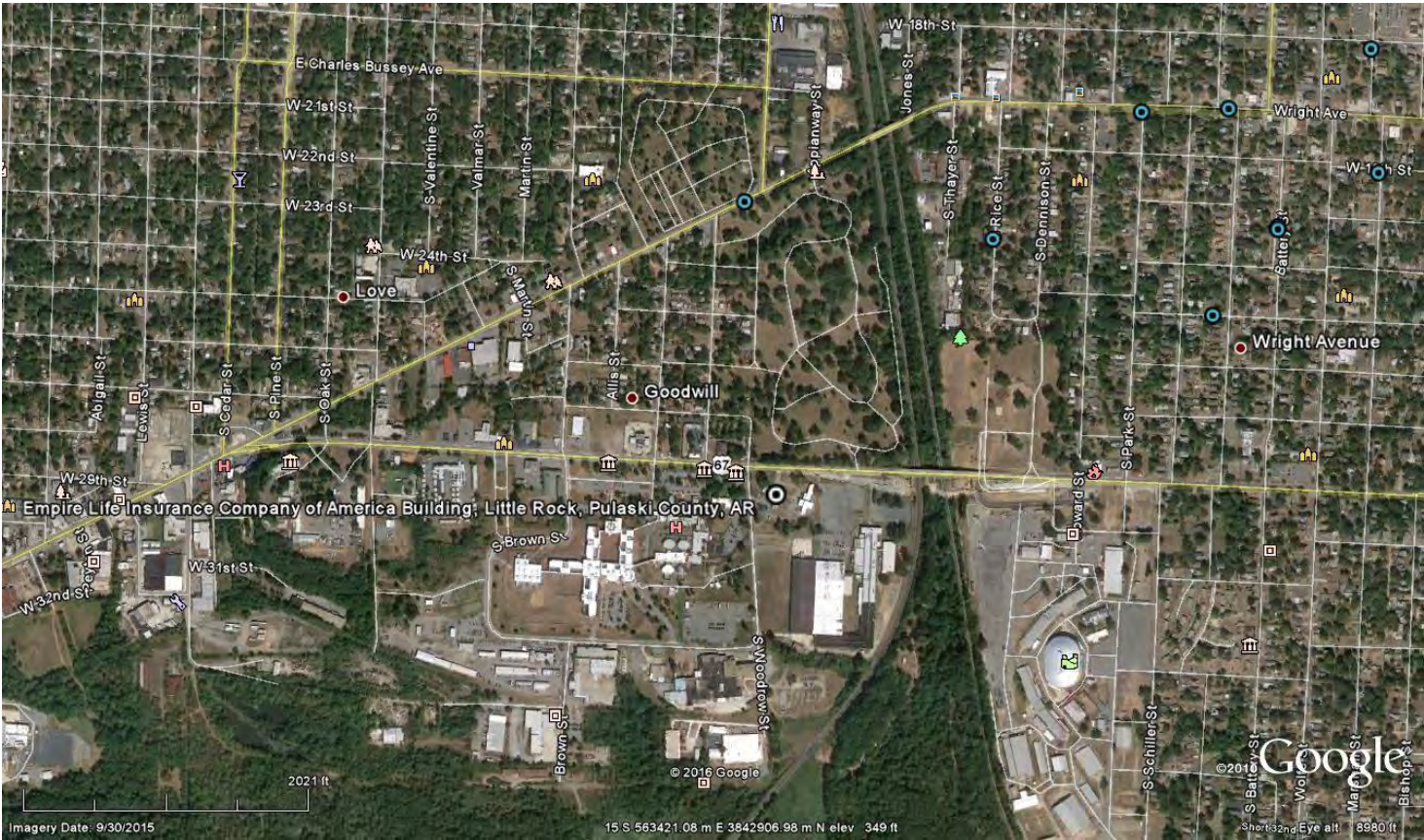
Empire Life Insurance Company of America Building  
Little Rock, Pulaski County, Arkansas

15 563549E 3842757N



North





|-----2021 feet-----|

Empire Life Insurance Company of America Building  
Little Rock, Pulaski County, Arkansas

15 563549E 3842757N



North



















































GUESTS MAY NOT ENTER UPSTAIRS WITHOUT CHECKING IN AT FRONT DESK

- ### 12 Steps
1. We admitted we were powerless over alcohol that our lives had become unmanageable
  2. Came to believe that a power greater than ourselves could restore us to sanity
  3. Made a decision to turn our will and our lives over to the care of god as we understood him
  4. Made a searching and fearless moral inventory of ourselves
  5. Admitted to god, to ourselves, and to another human being the exact nature of our wrongs
  6. Were entirely ready to have god remove all these defects of character
  7. Humbly asked him to remove our shortcomings
  8. Made a list of all persons we harmed, and became willing to make amends to them all
  9. Made direct amends to such persons wherever possible, except where to do so would injure them or others
  10. Continued to take personal inventory and admitted it when we were wrong
  11. Sought through prayer and meditation to improve our conscious contact with god as we understood him, prayer only for knowledge of his will for us and the power to carry that out
  12. Having had a spiritual awakening as the result of these steps, we tried to carry this message to alcoholics, and to practice these principles in all our affairs.







EXIT

EXIT

The Twelve Steps



















UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Requested Action: Nomination

Property Name: Empire Life Insurance Company of America Building

Multiple Name: \_\_\_\_\_

State & County: ARKANSAS, Pulaski

Date Received: 4/16/2019      Date of Pending List: 5/2/2019      Date of 16th Day: 5/17/2019      Date of 45th Day: 5/31/2019      Date of Weekly List: \_\_\_\_\_

Reference number: SG100004002

Nominator: Other Agency, SHPO

Reason For Review:

- |                                       |  |   |
|---------------------------------------|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Appeal       | <input type="checkbox"/> PDIL            | <input type="checkbox"/> Text/Data Issue    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> SHPO Request | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape       | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Photo   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Waiver       | <input type="checkbox"/> National        | <input type="checkbox"/> Map/Boundary       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Resubmission | <input type="checkbox"/> Mobile Resource | <input type="checkbox"/> Period             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other        | <input type="checkbox"/> TCP             | <input type="checkbox"/> Less than 50 years |
|                                       | <input type="checkbox"/> CLG             |   |

Accept       Return       Reject      5/30/2019 Date

Abstract/Summary Comments: Low-rise, hugging the earth, Modernist building designed by a prominent local firm. The use of "international style" elements - steel frame, curtain walls, but in response to the natural environment (hillside), use of natural materials, and innovative HVAC worked together to earn a regional AIA award for the building

Recommendation/ Criteria: Accept / C

Reviewer Jim Gabbert      Discipline Historian

Telephone (202)354-2275      Date \_\_\_\_\_

DOCUMENTATION:    see attached comments : No    see attached SLR : No

If a nomination is returned to the nomination authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the National Park Service.



DEPARTMENT OF PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

723 West Markham Street  
Little Rock, Arkansas 72201-1334  
Phone: (501) 371-4790 Fax: (501) 399-3435  
www.littlerock.gov

**CERTIFIED LOCAL GOVERNMENT NATIONAL REGISTER NOMINATION REVIEW**

**Name and Address of property:**

Empire Life Insurance Company of America Building, 2801 W Roosevelt Road, Little Rock, AR 72201

**Name of Owner**

Serenity park

**Project Sponsor:**

Ralph Wilcox, Arkansas Historic Preservation Program

**CLG Name:**

City of Little Rock, Arkansas

**Date of Public Hearing by CLG:**

March 11, 2019

**Applicable Criteria:**

Criterion A (Historic Events)

Criterion B (Important Person)

Criterion C (Architecture)

Criterion D (Archaeological)

The Little Rock Historic District Commission hereby recommends the above stated property for nomination

Attest:

Chair:

Secretary/Staff

Date

Date



THE DEPARTMENT OF ARKANSAS  
**HERITAGE**

Asa Hutchinson  
*Governor*

Stacy Hurst  
*Director*



April 3, 2019

Joy Beasley, Keeper and Chief  
National Register and National Historic Landmark Programs  
National Register of Historic Places  
1849 C Street, NW  
Mail Stop 7228  
Washington D.C. 20240

RE: Empire Life Insurance Company of America Building – Little Rock, Pulaski County, Arkansas

Dear Ms. Beasley:

We are enclosing for your review the above-referenced nomination. The enclosed disk contains the true and correct copy of the nomination for the Empire Life Insurance Company of America Building to the National Register of Historic Places. The Arkansas Historic Preservation Program has complied with all applicable nominating procedures and notification requirements in the nomination process.

If you need further information, please call Ralph S. Wilcox of my staff at (501) 324-9787. Thank you for your cooperation in this matter.

Sincerely,

Stacy Hurst  
State Historic Preservation Officer

SH:rsw

Enclosure

Arkansas Arts Council

Arkansas Historic  
Preservation Program

Arkansas Natural  
Heritage Commission

Arkansas State Archives

Delta Cultural Center

Historic Arkansas Museum

Mosaic Templars  
Cultural Center

Old State House Museum



ARKANSAS HISTORIC  
PRESERVATION PROGRAM



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