

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

RECEIVED

OCT 22 1992

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

NATIONAL
REGISTER

1. Name of Property

historic name: Polk County Courthouse

other name/site number: N/A

2. Location

street & number: Northeast corner of Church Avenue and DeQueen Street

not for publication: N/A

city/town: Mena

vicinity: N/A

state: AR county: Polk code: AR 113 zip code: 71953

3. Classification

Ownership of Property: Public-local

Category of Property: Building

Number of Resources within Property:

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>0</u> Total

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

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

=====

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

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As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this X nomination _____ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property X meets _____ does not meet the National Register Criteria. _____ See continuation sheet.

Cathryn A. Byford
Signature of certifying official

10-12-92
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

=====

5. National Park Service Certification

=====

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): _____

~~Entered in the~~
~~National Register~~

Thompson Lapsley 11/20/92

fr Signature of Keeper Date
of Action

=====

6. Function or Use

=====

Historic: GOVERNMENT

Sub: Courthouse

Current: GOVERNMENT

Sub: Courthouse

=====

7. Description

=====

Architectural Classification:

Art Deco

Other Description: N/A

Materials: foundation Brick roof Asphalt
walls Brick other N/A

Describe present and historic physical appearance. X See continuation sheet.

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8. Statement of Significance

=====

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties: Locally.

Applicable National Register Criteria: C

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions): N/A

Areas of Significance: ARCHITECTURE

Period(s) of Significance: 1939

Significant Dates: N/A

Significant Person(s): N/A

Cultural Affiliation: N/A

Architect/Builder: Haralson and Mott
Public Works Administration

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.
X See continuation sheet.

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National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 1

Summary

The Polk County Courthouse is a two-story, brick masonry courthouse building designed in a restrained version of the Art Deco style. The building is in a remarkable state of preservation, as only the entrances have suffered the replacement of the original doors with modern aluminum doors; otherwise the building is largely intact throughout. A large, modern building, constructed to the rear of the historic building, is connected to it only via an open, covered walkway; thus it is not included in the nomination. The historic structure is in very good condition.

Elaboration

The Polk County Courthouse is a two-story, brick masonry courthouse building designed in a restrained version of the Art Deco style. Its plan is symmetrical -- with the axis running through the center of the building between the eastern and western elevations -- and fundamentally rectangular, the only exceptions being the projecting central wall bays on the northern and southern elevations. A single brick chimney abuts the center of the northern or rear wall, and a shorter brick structure placed toward the western end shelters utility equipment. The flat, built-up/tar roof and its surrounding raised parapet is supported upon the brick walls and the continuous brick foundation.

The southern or front elevation is composed of the large, central, projecting wall bay with its raised parapet, and the lower, flanking wings to either side. The building is accessed via a low concrete stairway, flanked by brick stoops coped with concrete, that leads up to a double-leaf entrance set into a slightly-projecting, single-story concrete entrance molding. The aluminum entrance is of recent vintage, but the broad, massive entrance molding -- composed of two broad, flat pilasters supporting an equally tall entablature the cornice of which is decorated with a band of geometric detail and the outside corners of which are beveled toward the top -- is original to the structure. The center of this entablature is also ornamented with a round emblem containing the Great Seal of the State of Arkansas. The second-story above the entrance is fenestrated by a compound double-hung/fixed metal window. The four recessed window bays that flank the entrance bay are separated by flat brick pilasters, the front face of which is flush with the raised parapet above and that step back twice on both sides toward the window bay. The second story windows on each of these window bays are identical to that over the central entrance, while the first story windows are smaller, nine-pane windows that are stationary with the sole exception of the lower, central window, which is an awning window. The six pilasters rise to the raised parapet, which features a band of zig-zag detail directly above the pilasters,

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Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 2

a plain course of concrete coping at the top, and the letters "Polk County Courthouse" in the center. The lower wings to either side display no ornament, and consist of a slightly-recessed central window bay -- containing a tall, nine-pane stationary window on each floor, including the basement -- set between two blank wall surfaces.

The northern or rear elevation opposite is far simpler, though it actually contains more window openings (these light the various offices and anterooms that are concentrated toward the rear of the building). The central chimney and raised pilasters divide this facade into four principal window bays in the taller central section, with the two lower flanking bays making a total of six bays. The windows on this elevation tend to be either six-over-six movable sash windows or twelve-pane fixed windows, though the flanking wings are fenestrated with fixed nine-pane windows. Two symmetrically-placed, single-leaf entrances access this elevation at both ends of the projecting, central wall section.

The eastern and western elevations are identical. Each is five bays in length, with each bay containing a single fixed nine-pane window on each story except for the second bay from the front, which is blank on the first story only. The wall of the raised central section above is blank.

The significant exterior details are limited to the concrete entrance molding, the band of zig-zag detail on the raised parapet, and the concrete cornerstone, which features, in addition to the name of the county judge and the architects, the Masonic symbol of the compass and the square and the words "Laid by the Grand Lodge of Arkansas."

The interior retains most of its original detail, though it is likely that the interior was never ornate, as were few county courthouses of this era. The walls are plaster above two levels of brown and black panels held in place by a thin metal framework that is fastened to the wall. The stairways at either end of the central section are intact, retaining both their original treads and risers and the wood handrail atop a simple metal balustrade. The courtroom retains its original coffered ceiling, light fixtures and zig-zag decorative dado. The hallway area inside the front entrance also retains its original wood bulletin board frames, complete with stepped Art Deco detailing on the top.

Additional space for county business was obtained through the construction of a separate structure to the rear of the historic courthouse that is connected to it only by an open brick walkway. Therefore, the boundary of the nomination does not include this building.

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**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 1

Summary

Criterion C, local significance

The Polk County Courthouse, designed by the Ft. Smith architectural firm of Haralson and Mott in 1939, remains the best example of the Art Deco style of architecture in the city of Mena. It is thus eligible under Criterion C with local significance for the quality of its architectural design.

Elaboration

Polk County was formed November 30, 1844 from territory taken from Sevier County to the south. It was named for President James K. Polk, and for its first fifty years its county seat was located at Dallas, a small community to the south of the present-day county seat of Mena, which itself was named for the Vice-President Dallas. This site was actually more centrally-located than the site chosen for Mena, but the arrival of the Kansas City-Southern Railroad in 1896 and the subsequent growth of Mena as a community drew all of the civic, commercial and social activity away from that now-isolated town, and the county seat was officially moved in that year.

Any understanding of the history of the city of Mena must begin with the character and ambitions of the man who founded the railroad line that gave Mena its life and purpose: Arthur E. Stilwell. Stilwell was born October 21, 1859, at Rochester, New York. As a boy of tender years, he was the sickly sort. Many hours were spent with the political and business friends of his estimable grandfather Hamblin Stilwell, a noted business man and financier, whom Arthur adored. During one such session his grandfather asked him what he wanted to do when he grew up. Without any hesitation he said, "I am going west and building a railroad."

Stilwell envisioned a railroad that would be "straight as the crow flies" to connect Kansas City to the Gulf of Mexico. Farmers, ranchers, lumber and coal men were being exploited by the rates charged to ship goods by way of the east, ignoring the ports to the south, in order to get them to waters for European markets. With "his" railroad Stilwell could ship faster, cheaper and preserve the perishables that were often spoiled along the normal shipping channels. At the age of thirty Stilwell organized the Kansas City Suburban Belt Railroad and in 1889 started the Kansas City, Pittsburgh & Gulf (later named Kansas City Southern), stretching 789 miles to the sea, ending at his namesake, the city of Port Arthur, Texas.

A central division point was needed for the railway, and the town of Gentry in Benton county was chosen. Named for Richard Gentry, a chief engineer and large investor. The town was laid

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Continuation Sheet**Section number 8 Page 2

out and formed by the Arkansas Townsite Company, a Stilwell firm. George M. Craig became the agent for Gentry, and the town was advertised as a future division point on the KCP&G. The town did not boom, and it was decided to move across the state line into Indian Territory, where the first town was formed and named for Stilwell.

Many still did not consider Stilwell a successful developer - until he crossed back into Arkansas. Known for his "egoistic" habit of naming towns for himself, friends, and investors, he founded and named the town of Mena after Folmina Margaretha (Mena) Janssen De Goeijen, the wife of one of his principal investors (many think Mena was named for the queen of Holland, Queen Wilhelmina, but this is not true). The city park (Janssen Park) developed by the townsite company was named in honor of Mrs. De Goeijen's father, another large investor. Another park advertised as a free campsite for visitors was named Stilwell Park.

When the puffs of black smoke had cleared from the tracks after the first train pulled into Mena on August 19, 1896, Mena had many new residents. Soon thereafter the town site was laid out and many investors and KCP&G officials were honored by having streets named for them: Gillham, Martin, Hornbeck, and both Janssen and Stilwell parks. Zwolle Street was named for De Goeijen's birth city, Amsterdam for his home state. Other street names were Pollock, Vivian, Morrison, Herman, Mena, De Queen, Fleming, Clendenning, Armour, Campbell, St. John, Van Brunt, Swope, Meyer, Honert, Molema, Elsie, and De Ridder, which was named for the sister-in-law of Mena De Goeijen.

The growth of the timber industry in the neighboring Ouachita Mountains during the last quarter of the nineteenth century also benefitted Mena. The city's location on the railroad made it a commercial and shipping hub, and several mills and wood by-products industries located in Mena to take advantage of its strategic position relative to both the forest and the railroad. This period of prosperity continued well into the twentieth century, and many of these types of industries continue to operate today.

The Polk County Courthouse was constructed in 1939 according to the plans of the Fort Smith architects Haralson and Mott under the auspices of the Public Works Administration. The onset of the Great Depression in 1929 and the subsequent advent of such federal public works programs as the Works Progress Administration (WPA) brought a new courthouse to the Polk County seat of Mena in 1939. The WPA -- an organization that hired unemployed adult men and women to work on a variety of public projects throughout the nation -- was established by President Franklin Delano Roosevelt and his administration as part of the federal response to the dire economic circumstances brought upon the American people by the Great Depression. The

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Continuation Sheet**

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WPA was but one of many such public works organizations instituted by the Roosevelt Administration and managed under the aegis of the umbrella agency in charge of all such public works efforts, the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA); others included the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC), the short-lived Public Works and Civilian Works Administrations (PWA and CWA), and such regional projects as the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) and the Rural Colonization Projects in Arkansas established at such places as Dyess, Clover Bend and Plum Bayou.

With its symmetrical, static horizontality and minimal yet high-quality Art Deco detailing, the Polk County Courthouse remains the finest example of this style in the city of Mena, and is therefore eligible under Criterion C with local significance.

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9. Major Bibliographical References

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X See continuation sheet.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- ☐ preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- ☐ previously listed in the National Register
- ☐ previously determined eligible by the National Register
- ☐ designated a National Historic Landmark
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- ☐ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data:

☒ State historic preservation office

☐ Other state agency

☐ Federal agency

☐ Local government

☐ University

☐ Other -- Specify Repository: _____

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10. Geographical Data

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Acreage of Property: Less than one

UTM References: Zone Easting Northing Zone Easting Northing

A	<u>15</u>	<u>386360</u>	<u>3827700</u>	B	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
C	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	D	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>

 See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description: See continuation sheet.

Beginning at a point formed by the intersection of the eastern edge of DeQueen Street with a perpendicular line formed by the northern edge of Church Avenue, proceed easterly along said line for a distance of approximately 350 feet to its intersection with a perpendicular line running along the western edge of Mena Street; thence proceed northerly along said line for a distance of approximately 200 feet to its intersection with a perpendicular line running parallel with the northern elevation of the original building; thence proceed westerly along said line for a distance of approximately 350 feet to its intersection with a perpendicular line running along the eastern edge of DeQueen Street; thence proceed southerly along said line for a distance of approximately 200 feet to the point of beginning.

Boundary Justification: See continuation sheet.

Due to the construction of modern ancillary courthouse facilities located directly to the north of the historic courthouse building, this boundary includes all of the property historically associated with this resource that retains its integrity.

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National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 9 Page 1

Bibliography

McWilliam, Aileen, Lloyd Lane and Homer L. Johnston, *Talimena Scenic Drive Guide*, Ouachita National Forest, published by the Talimena Scenic Drive Interpretive Association in cooperation with the Forest Service, U.S.D.A., 1974.

Workers of the Writers' Program, *The WPA Guide to 1930's Arkansas*, with a new introduction by Elliott West; University Press of Kansas, Lawrence, Kansas; 1987 (original copyright 1941).

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11. Form Prepared By

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Name/Title: Kenneth Story, Architectural Historian

Organization: Arkansas Historic Preservation Program Date: October 12, 1992

Street & Number: 323 Center Street, 15th Floor 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 Polk County Courthouse
NAME:

MULTIPLE
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: ARKANSAS, Polk

DATE RECEIVED: 10/22/92 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 11/03/92
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 11/19/92 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 12/06/92
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 92001618

NOMINATOR: STATE

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 11/20/92 DATE

Entered in the
National Register

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

RECOM./CRITERIA _____
REVIEWER _____
DISCIPLINE _____
DATE _____

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

CLASSIFICATION

___count ___resource type

STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

FUNCTION

___historic ___current

DESCRIPTION

___architectural classification
___materials
___descriptive text

SIGNIFICANCE

Period Areas of Significance--Check and justify below

Specific dates Builder/Architect
Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

___summary paragraph
___completeness
___clarity
___applicable criteria
___justification of areas checked
___relating significance to the resource
___context
___relationship of integrity to significance
___justification of exception
___other

BIBLIOGRAPHY

GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

___acreage ___verbal boundary description
___UTMs ___boundary justification

ACCOMPANYING DOCUMENTATION/PRESENTATION

___sketch maps ___USGS maps ___photographs ___presentation

OTHER COMMENTS

Questions concerning this nomination may be directed to

_____ Phone _____

Signed _____ Date _____



POLK Co. COURTHOUSE
MENA, POLK Co., ARKANSAS
PHOTOGRAPHED BY T. FERGUSON
AUGUST, 1992
NEGATIVE ON FILE AT AHPP
VIEW FROM SOUTHWEST

19

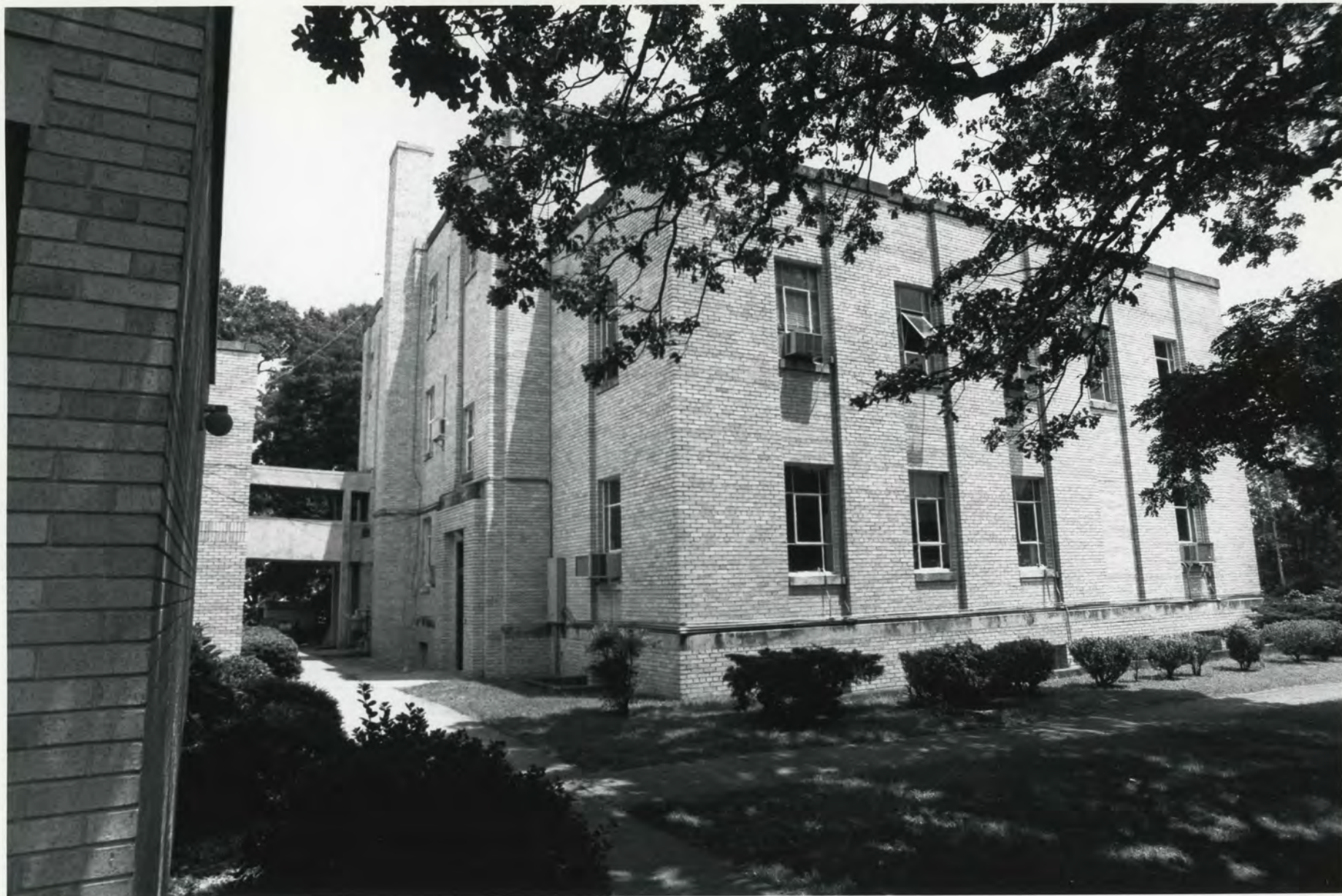


39

LAID BY THE GRAND LODGE
OF ARKANSAS

WILL ALEXANDER
COUNTY JUDGE

POLK Co. COURTHOUSE
MENA, POLK Co., ARKANSAS
PHOTOGRAPHED BY T. FERGUSON
AUGUST, 1992
NEGATIVE ON FILE AT AHPP
VIEW ~~FROM~~ OF CORNERSTONE



POLK Co. COURTHOUSE
MENA, POLK Co., ARKANSAS
PHOTOGRAPHED BY, T. FERGUSON
AUGUST, 1992
NEGATIVE ON FILE AT ANPP
VIEW FROM WEST



POLK Co. COURTHOUSE

MENA, POLK Co., ARKANSAS

PHOTOGRAPHED BY T. FERGUSON

AUGUST, 1992

NEGATIVE ON FILE AT AHPP

VIEW FROM NORTH



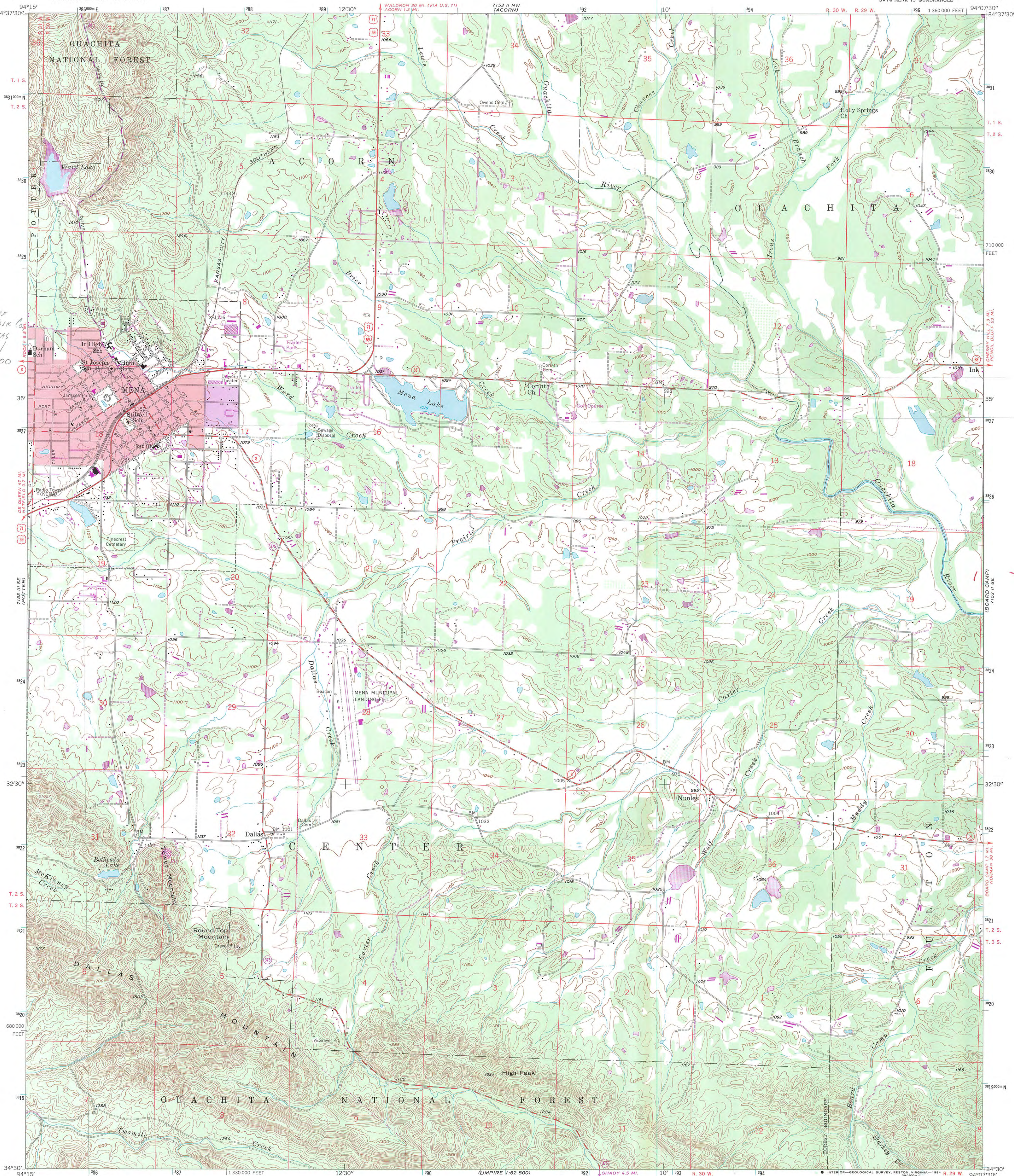
POLK CO. COURTHOUSE
MENA, POLK CO., ARKANSAS
PHOTOGRAPHED BY T. FERGUSON
AUGUST, 1992
NEGATIVE ON FILE AT ANPP
VIEW FROM NORTHEAST



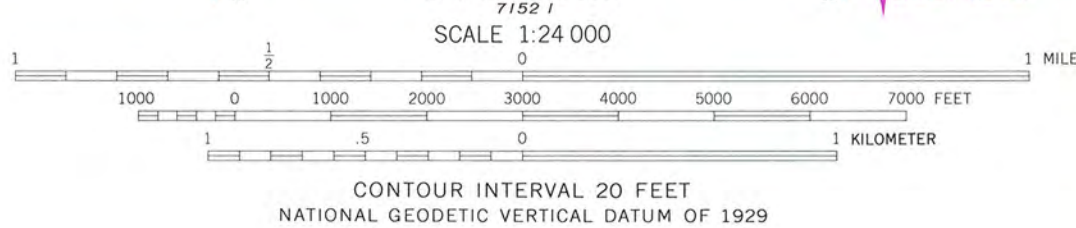
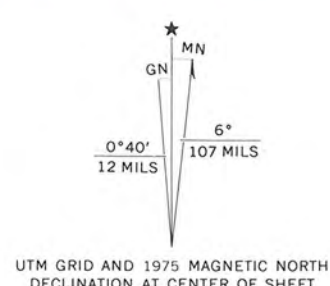
POLK Co. COURTHOUSE
MENA, POLK Co., ARKANSAS
PHOTOGRAPHED BY T. FERGUSON
AUGUST, 1992
NEGATIVE ON FILE AT AHPP
VIEW FROM EAST

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

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

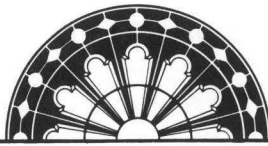


Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey
Control by USGS and USC&GS
Topography from aerial photographs by multiplex methods
Aerial photographs taken 1955. Field check 1958
Polyconic projection. 1927 North American Datum
10,000-foot grid based on Arkansas coordinate system, south zone
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks,
zone 15, shown in blue
To place on the predicted North American Datum 1983,
move the projection lines 7 meters south and
18 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
Red tint indicates areas in which only landmark buildings are shown
Unchecked elevations are shown in brown



ROAD CLASSIFICATION
Heavy-duty ——— Light-duty ———
Medium-duty ——— Unimproved dirt =====
U.S. Route State Route

MENA, ARK.
SW 1/4 MENA 15' QUADRANGLE
N 3430—W 9407.5/7.5
1958
PHOTOREVISED 1975
AMS 7153 II SW—SERIES V884



ARKANSAS
HISTORIC
PRESERVATION
PROGRAM

RECEIVED
OCT 22 1992
NATIONAL
REGISTER

October 13, 1992

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

RE: Polk County Courthouse
Mena, Polk County

Dear Carol:

We are enclosing for your review the nomination of the above referenced property. The Arkansas Historic Preservation Program has complied with all applicable nominating procedures and notification requirements in the nomination process.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter.

Sincerely,

Cathy Buford
State Historic Preservation Officer

CB:kg

Enclosures

