UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

COUNTY:

Arkansas Pulaski

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The Absalom Fowler House was probably begun late in 1839 and completed sometime in 1840. Upon its completion Mr. Fowler named the house "Magnolia" and planted a double row of magnolia trees from the front steps to the street. Apparently Mr. Fowler was his own architect as was typical of this day and time, however, he had some unusual ideas about the kind of house that he wanted and the appearance he wanted to achieve. The house strongly resembles the classic designs of Thomas Jefferson.

The one story front portico is supported on fluted Ionic columns having a cornice of very well proportioned design including dentils. A balustrade rail tops the one story front portico having a sheaf design set between simple paneled square piers decorated with small moldings. The front entrance has a wide single door with sidelights and a fan-shaped transom. Directly above is an identical doorway opening onto the open area atop the portico. windows, having double hung six lights sash, flank the doorway on either side on both the first and Originally they had louvered shutters. second floors. The entablature that completely surrounds the house is of unusual design with small scaled modillion blocks and an unusual double row of dentils alternately spaced directly above one another to form a small checkerboard pattern. The east side of the house had originally a small porte cochere with a balustrade rail and columns matching exactly the front portico. The moderately low hipped roof was originally crowned with a balustrade railing which also matched both the front portico and the east porte cochere. The rear ell-shaped piazza had a double set of eight Ionic style columns, one set superimposed over the other to form a two story gallery. The main house has four chimneys, one on either end of the main center section of the house, the third at the end of the original ell going to the southeast and the fourth at the end of the extended ell on the south end of the build-The two story kitchen building located west of the main structure separated by a distance of not more than eight feet was probably originally only a one story kitchen. This structure has a hip roof with an entablature treatment that resembles the main house, however, it is executed in offset ribbons of brick

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7. Description

with only a simple wood cornice. The kitchen building is presently connected to the main house by a small enclosed passageway, obviously not original, however. The ell to the southeast of the main house was built in two sections, the first part at the same time as the main central part of the house, however, at some later date the ell was extended to twice its original length. The joint in the brickwork can be clearly seen as the coursing does not match perfectly, however, the cornice, gallery columns and entablature do match the original exactly.

Originally the house had six major rooms arranged in an ell shape with the entrance portico on the north, a porte cochere on the east and an ellshaped open piazza on the south and west sides of the ell. The very unusual front hall or gallery, as it might be called, stretches completely across the north front of the house. A beautifully proportioned spiral staircase is at the east end of this gallery that is approximately nine and onehalf feet wide. This stairway makes a full threequarter turn beginning at the bottom and ending at the second floor. A simple but finely proportioned balustrade runs the entire length and at the halfway point where the stairs no longer touch the outside curved wall a balustrade rail begins again to close in the outer side of the stairway, forming a balcony railing from the second floor. This stairway is built against a curved plaster wall which creates a blind window of the easternmost window on the north facade both on the first and second floors. The stair is open underneath and has twenty-one treads with twenty-two risers. The outer curved wall of the stair is decorated with a plaster relief design divided into twenty-five panels, each panel alternating four panels vertically in one section with the next section having three panels vertically. These panels are decorated with oval designs and garlands of flowers in a very delicate, small scale, classical pattern.

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7. Description

East and west downstairs parlors each open from the front gallery or hallway and have a single door with transom into them. The west parlor has two interior double hung sash windows between this interior gallery hall and the room itself. The east room has one window opening from the gallery into it. The two parlors downstairs both have their original fireplaces, however, the mantels appear to have been changed at a later date. The present mantels are marble Renaissance style with wood framed ornate overmantels with mirrors. As late as 1941 both parlors had handpainted ceilings with oval patterns of nymphs holding garlands of flowers, arranged around a large brass and crystal chandelier. This decoration was undoubtedly not original but probably dated from the 1870's. The two rooms in the original ell downstairs have had the partition removed between them. An extension onto the original ell of the house is as large again as the original ell was and contains one large room downstairs with paneled wainscoting and plate rail and fireplace with mantel and was intended as the dining room. This woodwork is in late Victorian style. Under this wing is a cellar containing the furnace as well as storage space. No basement exists under the original main house. The ell-shaped piazza has been closed in on both the first and second floors, however, the original fluted Ionic style columns are still in place.

It is believed that an oval-shaped opening existed in the ceiling of the front gallery with a railing surrounding it at the second floor level and two chandeliers suspended from the second story ceiling down through this opening to light both the first and second floors of the house. This upstairs gallery has now been divided into three rooms with the floor well closed up and a bathroom installed in the western end of this space with a partition between a center room that was created and a smaller area where the stairway still exists as it did originally.

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7. Description

A door separates this front gallery from the inner center hall on the second floor. However, it appears that a partition did not exist when the house was first built and originally formed a T-shaped hall on the second floor. A door in the south end of this center hall opens onto the upstairs ellshaped piazza. On the east wall of this center hall is a narrow staircase that goes to the attic, beginning at the south end of the center hall just inside the door to the piazza. At the top of this stair is another still more narrow staircase that leads to the flat upper portion of the roof that was originally surrounded by a balustrade railing. The two original large bedrooms upstairs still have their original wood mantels that match the basic design of the woodwork used throughout the original house. The two rooms in the original ell of the house upstairs have had the partition removed between them and is one large room presently. This room also has a wooden mantel with engaged fluted columns having Ionic capitals that match the columns of the rear piazza.

The present two story kitchen building located just west of the piazza contains three rooms on the first floor and one large room on the second floor. It is believed that the kitchen has always been on the first floor and that servants' quarters were later located on the second floor. However, other outbuildings, no longer existing, were probably the original servants' quarters because the kitchen apparently was a one story building when the house was first built.

This solid brick house is in basically sound condition. Because the alterations to the house are of a relatively minor nature, a restoration could be technically authentic as far as the main structure is concerned. And, because of the unusual, if not unique floor plan, and the interesting arrangement of stairs, galleries, piazzas,

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7. Description

and porticos, the Absalom Fowler House is one of the most architecturally significant structures existing in Arkansas today.



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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Absalom Fowler, the builder of "Magnolia," was an important figure in the early days of Arkansas. His life has been something of a mystery in the annals of the state because almost nothing is known of his early life. It is not even known with certainty when he first arrived in Little Rock, the city where he was to make his fortune.

It is known that Fowler was practicing law in the territory in 1829, for the Arkansas Gazette carried his professional card in its advertisements. It is tradition that Fowler had arrived at the small settlement of Little Rock a year or two earlier, having come on foot and having arrived penniless. In 1834 Fowler married Elvira Boswell of Batesville. There were no children.

By 1837, Absalom Fowler was prosperous enough to purchase a three acre tract of land from William Stevenson and several adjoining lots the following year. By this time Fowler had already served as delegate to the State Constitutional Convention of 1836 and as a Representative from Pulaski County in the Territorial General Assembly of 1835. He had also already run for Governor as a Whig but had been defeated by James S. Conway. The rising young lawyer was to serve two other terms in the legislature and to become the leader of the Whig party in Arkansas.

"Magnolia" was built between 1838 and 1840. Again, the records are uncertain.

It is certain that Elvira died in 1842. Only seven months later Absalom was remarried to Frances

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Arkansas Gazette, July 8, 1829; June 11, 1859; December 8, 1892; March 28, 1936.

Hallum, John. Biographical and Pictorial History of Arkansas. Albany: Weed, Parsons and Company, 1887.

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Continuation Sheet)

STATE	
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FOR NPS USE ON	LY
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(Number all entries)

8. Significance

Ann Lewis, a young lady nineteen years his junior. Again, there were no children.

After 1840 Fowler was less active in public life, although he once more served in the state legislature (1844). He seems to have spent most of his time in the small office which stood on the grounds of his home. He became less and less popular with his colleagues and perhaps more and more isolated from the mainstream of the young State's political and social life.

Absalom Fowler died June 4, 1859, after suffering a stroke while arguing a case in the Federal court.

Next to Absalom Fowler the most noted owner of "Magnolia" was Major John D. Adams. By 1852 Major Adams had established a steamboat line between Little Rock and Arkansas City and another between Memphis and New Orleans. As his shipping interest became more lucrative, he diverted profits for the purchase of cotton land and ultimately acquired six large cotton plantations.

At the beginning of the Civil War, John Adams disposed of his river boats and enlisted in the Confederate cause. Although he served throughout the war and attained the rank of major, this conflict proved as disastrous to him personally, as it had to the Southern cause. His long absence from his business interests and his heavy investment in Confederate bonds left him in a precarious financial position. He immediately set to work rebuilding his river boat business and succeeded to an even greater degree than he had before the war.

By 1875 Major Adams had regained sufficient affluence to purchase the Fowler Home. A Mason and prominent Episcopalian, Major Adams served his state as president of the World's Fair Commission from the State of Arkansas. He also served Arkansas as Commissioner of Agriculture, Mines, and Manufacturers.

RECEIVED
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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

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8. Significance Continued:

The next owner of the Fowler House was the Gracie family who lived in it until 1923 when John M. Gracie sold it to the Roman Catholic Diocese of Little Rock.

The property was assigned to St. Andrew's Parrish and served as St. Andrew's Catholic School from 1923 until 1961. From 1961 to the present time the Absolom Fowler House has served the St. Andrew's Parrish as the St. Andrew's Day Care Center and residence for the two Nuns who operate it.



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

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- 9. Major Bibliographical References
- Pulaski County Probate Court. The Inventory of the Estate of Absalom Fowler.
- Ross, Margaret. "Absalom Fowler and His Home,"

 The Pulaski County Historical Review, Vol. V,

 No. 2, (June 1957).
- Ross, Margaret. Arkansas Gazette The Early Years
 1819 1866. Little Rock: Arkansas Gazette
 Foundation, 1969.



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CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT:

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3. Classification.	
4. Owner of Property.	
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b. Acreage	
1. Form Prepared By.	
2. Certification.	
Photographic Coverage.	
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Other.	

Thank you for your attention to the above items checked.

SIGNED:

r clarification of the information indicated below.
Name.
Location.
Classification.
Owner of Property.
Location of Legal Description.
Representation in Existing Surveys.
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Statement of Significance.
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ARKANSAS HISTORIC PRESERVATION PROGRAM

1023 WEST THIRD STREET

LITTLE ROCK, ARKANSAS 72201

501 374-0375



April 11, 1973

Mr. Jerry L. Rogers Chief of Registration National Register National Park Service Washington, D. C. 20240

Dear Mr. Rogers:

I am with this letter returning to you the Absolom Fowler House Nomination with the additional information you requested. In addition, I have enclosed an original USGS Map showing the location of the Fowler House and deleted the xerox map previously sent.

Sincerely,

Gene Richardson

Gene Richardson Arkansas Historic Preservation Program

Enclosures

FER: lka



ARKANSAS HISTORIC PRESERVATION PROGRAM

1023 WEST THIRD STREET

LITTLE ROCK, ARKANSAS 72201

501 374-0375



April 23, 1973

Mr. Jerry Rogers, Chief
Registration Branch
National Register of Historic Places
Department of the Interior
National Park Service
18th & C, N.W.
Washington, D. C. 20240



Dear Mr. Rogers:

I am returning the Absalom Fowler House nomination which you sent to this office for a longitude correction. I have re-checked this personally and I am incuned to believe that your computations are wrong, rather than ours. I have re-checked the longitude by several different methods and the only possible difference could be that it might read 92 15' 48.9" rather than 92 15' 48.8". This difference would be dependent upon whether you read the inside edge or the outside edge of the right hand longitude line.

If the pencil marks on the map are yours, I can see where you would believe there is an error, altho I do not see how you arrived at the measurement. As I stated as early as 1969, this is, at best, a very imprecise way of locating a property. Measurements marked with a dull pencil can cause a location error of 100 or more feet. We try to use pin points to mark measurement locations but feel that even this is imprecise. I think that you will agree with me that the pencil marks are a little broad.

This is not an attempt to shift the blame for the error. It would have been far simpler to have made a necessary correction. Unfortunately, I think this would have resulted in a serious error.

If, after re-checking this at your end, you still feel that an error has been made by this office I would appreciate a telephone call.

Very truly yours, Tuch E. Portu

Jack E. Porter, Administrator Historic Preservation Program

Enclosures

JEP:1ka

ARKANSAS HISTORIC PRESERVATION PROGRAM

1028 WESE THIRD STREET LITTLE ROCK ARKANSAS 72201 . 501 874-0375



"THE OLD STATE HOUSE" 300 WEST MARKHAM

LITTLE ROCK, ARKANSAS 7.2201 TELEPHONE - 501 371-1639

July 2, 1975

Ms. Sally Oldham National Register Publications National Park Service Department of the Interior Washington, D.C. 20240

Dear Ms. Oldham:

Enclosed are the photos you requested of the Absolom Fowler House in Pulaski County, Arkansas. After using these photos in the preparation of your publication, please have them added to the permanent file on the Absolom Fowler House.

Please contact me if we may be of any further assistance.

Sincerely,

Dianna Kirk, Historian

Deanna Kirk

DK:cal



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		UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF	INTERIOR -	STATE		
		MATIONAL PARK SERV		Arkansas		
		NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORI	CPLACES	COUNTY		
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NPS			UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE PRIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE	STATE Arkansas				
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RECREATION AND TRAVEL DIVISION

PRESS INFORMATION . . .

FROM:

DATE:

STATE PARKS, RECREATION AND TRAVEL COMMISSION . 149 STATE CAPITOL, LITTLE ROCK



Absalom towler House Pulaski

> Form No. 10-301a (Pev. 10-7)

> > UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES PROPERTY PHOTOGRAPH FORM

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS
TYPE ALL ENTRIES ENCLOSE WITH PHOTOGRAPH

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Absalom Fowler House

AND/OR COMMON

Magnolia

2 LOCATION

CITY, TOWN

Little Rock

_VICINITY OF

COUNTY Pulaski

STATE Arkansas

3 PHOTO REFERENCE

PHOTO CREDIT

Dianna Kirk

DATE OF PHOTO

1975

NEGATIVE FILED AT Arkansas Historic Preservation Program

4 IDENTIFICATION

DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC. IF DISTRICT, GIVE BUILDING NAME & STREET

PHOTO NO.

Facade, viewed from the north.



Absalom Fewler House Rulaski County, Arkansas 2. Jacai

Form No. 10-301a (Pev. 10-7+)

> UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES PROPERTY PHOTOGRAPH FORM

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SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS TYPE ALL ENTRIES ENCLOSE WITH PHOTOGRAPH

NAME

HISTORIC

Absalom Fowler House

AND/OR COMMON

Magnolia

2 LOCATION

CITY, TOWN

Little Rock

_VICINITY OF

COUNTY Pulaski

STATE Arkansas

PHOTO REFERENCE

PHOTO CREDIT

Dianna Kirk

DATE OF PHOTO

DATE ENTERED

1975

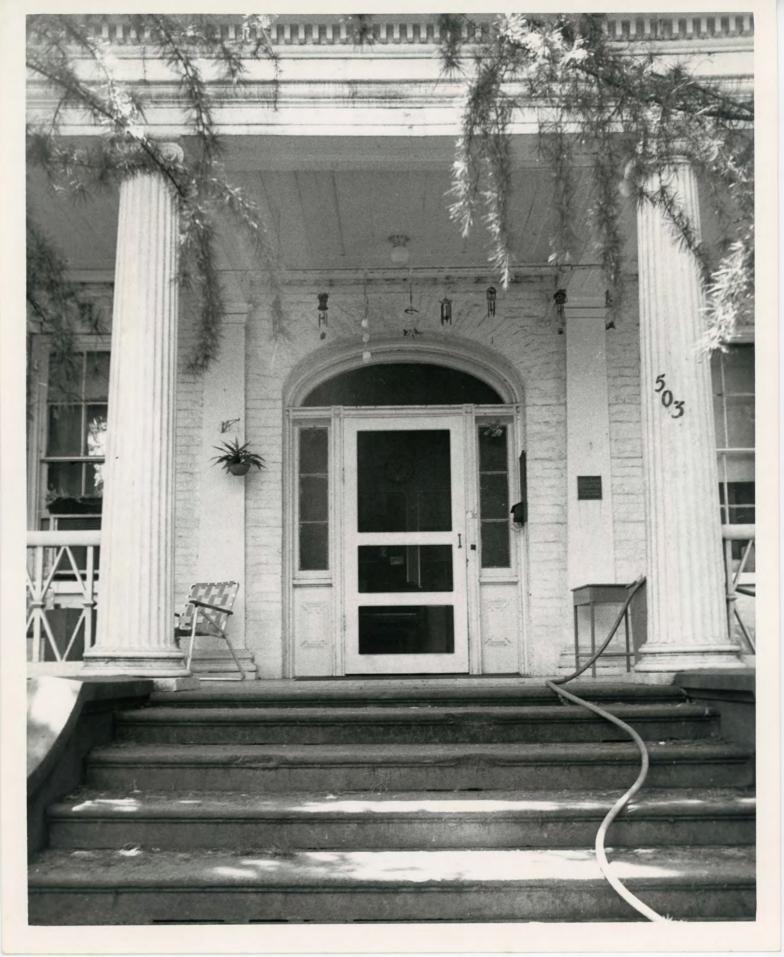
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IDENTIFICATION

DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC. IF DISTRICT, GIVE BUILDING NAME & STREET

PHOTO NO.

Facade and west elevation, viewed from the northwest.



Absolom Fowler House Pulaski County Ahkansas Form No. (Pev. 10-

Form No. 10-301a (Pev. 10-7+)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT (HE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES PROPERTY PHOTOGRAPH FORM

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SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO	COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS
TYPE ALL ENTRIES	ENCLOSE WITH PHOTOGRAPH

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Absalom Fowler House

AND/OR COMMON

Magnolia

2 LOCATION

CITY, TOWN

Little Rock

___VICINITY OF

COUNTY Pulaski

STATE Arkansas

3 PHOTO REFERENCE

PHOTO CREDIT

Dianna Kirk

DATE OF PHOTO

1975

NEGATIVE FILED AT

Arkansas Historic Preservation Program

4 IDENTIFICATION

DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC. IF DISTRICT, GIVE BUILDING NAME & STREET

PHOTO NO.

Entry detail, facade.



Absolon Sowler House Pulaski County, Arkansas

Form No. 10-301a

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTELIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES PROPERTY PHOTOGRAPH FORM

FOR NPS USE ONLY RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS TYPE ALL ENTRIES ENCLOSE WITH PHOTOGRAPH

NAME

HISTORIC

Absalom Fowler House

AND/OR COMMON

Magnolia

LOCATION

CITY, TOWN

Little Rock

__VICINITY OF

COUNTY Pulaski

STATE Arkansas

PHOTO REFERENCE

PHOTO CREDIT

Dianna Kirk

DATE OF PHOTO

1975

NEGATIVE FILED AT Arkansas Historic Preservation Program

IDENTIFICATION

DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC. IF DISTRICT, GIVE BUILDING NAME & STREET

PHOTO NO.

East elevation and facade, viewed from the northeast



Absolom Sowler House Pulaski County, Arkansas

(Pev. 10-7+)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES PROPERTY PHOTOGRAPH FORM

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NAME HISTORIC

Absalom Fowler House

AND/OR COMMON

Magnolia

LOCATION

CITY, TOWN Little Rock VICINITY OF

COUNTY

STATE

Pulaski Arkansas

PHOTO REFERENCE

PHOTO CREDIT

Dianna Kirk

DATE OF PHOTO

1975

NEGATIVE FILED AT Arkansas Historic Preservation Program

IDENTIFICATION

DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC. IF DISTRICT, GIVE BUILDING NAME & STREET

PHOTO NO.

East elevation, viewed from the south east.



Absalom Sowler House Pulaski County, Arkansas

> Form No. 10-301a (Pev. 10-7)

> > UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTE OR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES PROPERTY PHOTOGRAPH FORM

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS
TYPE ALL ENTRIES ENCLOSE WITH PHOTOGRAPH

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Absalom Fowler House

AND/OR COMMON

Magnolia

2 LOCATION

CITY, TOWN

Little Rock

__VICINITY OF

COUNTY Pulaski

STATE Arkansas

3 PHOTO REFERENCE

PHOTO CREDIT

Dianna Kirk

DATE OF PHOTO

1975

NEGATIVE FILED AT

Arkansas Historic Preservation Program

4 IDENTIFICATION

DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC. IF DISTRICT, GIVE BUILDING NAME & STREET

PHOTO NO.

Rear (south) elevation, viewed from the south.



Absolom Lewler House Pulaski County, Arkansas

Form No. 10-301a (Pev. 10-7 +)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INVERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES PROPERTY PHOTOGRAPH FORM

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Magnolia

Little Rock

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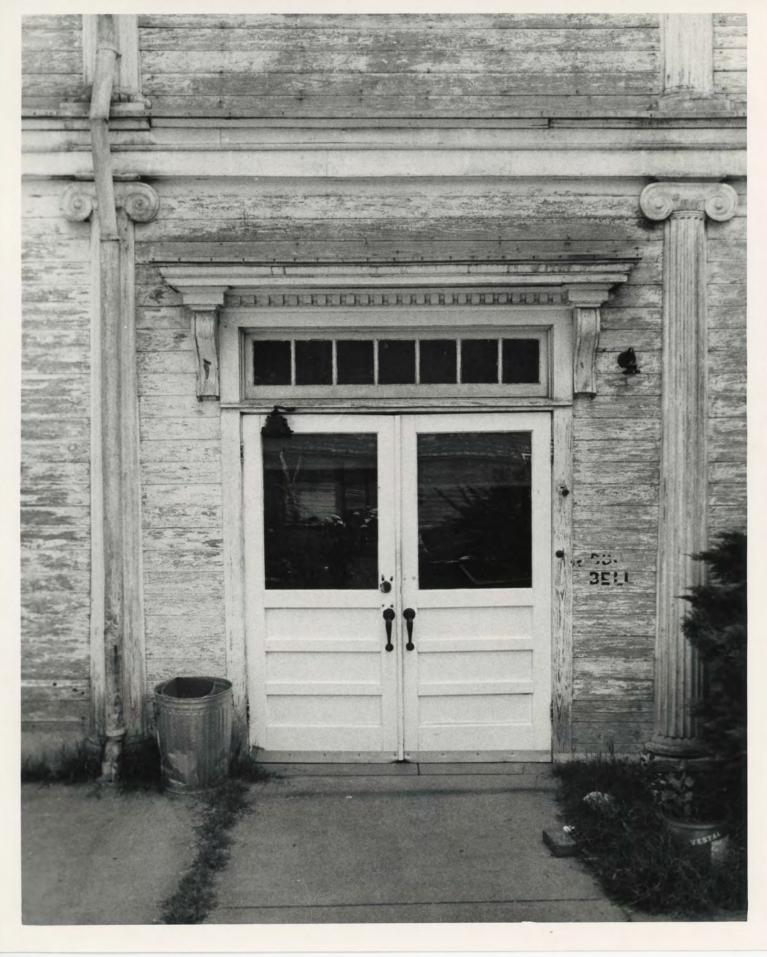
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PHOTO NO.

South and west elevations of ell, viewed from the southwest.



Absolon Fowler House

Form No. 10-301a (Pev. 10-7%)

> UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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Absalom Fowler House

AND/OR COMMON

Magnolia

LOCATION

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Pulaski

Arkansas

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PHOTO CREDIT

Dianna Kirk

DATE OF PHOTO

1975

NEGATIVE FILED AT Arkansas Historic Preservation Program

IDENTIFICATION

DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC. IF DISTRICT, GIVE BUILDING NAME & STREET

PHOTO NO.

Entry detail, west elevation ell extension.

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

PROPERTY MAP FORM

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AND/OR HISTORIC: Magnolia				
LOCATION				
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Location

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Helena

Phillips County

Tappan (James C.) House

Helena

Phillips County

Fowler (Absalom) House

Little Rock Pulaski County

Moore-Hornor House

Helena

Phillips County

Also Notified

Hon. John L. McClellan

Hon. J. W. Fulbright

Hon. Bill Alexander

Hon. William D. Mille

Director, Southwest Region

State Historic Preservation Officer Mr. William B. Henderson, Director Arkansas Department of Parks & Tourism

State Capitol, Room 149 Little Rock, Arkansas 72201

PHR MMott 6/7/73