

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

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NAT. REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

315

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: President's House

Other names/site number: Southern Arkansas University Welcome Center, Site #CO0511

Name of related multiple property listing:

N/A

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

2. Location

Street & number: South Side of East Farm Road east of Washington Street

City or town: Magnolia State: Arkansas County: Columbia

Not For Publication: Vicinity: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:

 A B X C D

Signature of certifying official>Title:

Date

Arkansas Historic Preservation Program

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official:

Date

Title :

State or Federal agency/bureau
or Tribal Government

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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): _____

Dore Colson W. Beall

Signature of the Keeper

5-28-13

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

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

Category of Property

(Check only one box.)

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

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Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing

Noncontributing

1

1

buildings

—

sites

[View Details](#)

structures

objects

— 1 —

— 1 —

Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register.

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE/TRADE/professional

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

MODERN MOVEMENT/Mid-Century Modern

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: Brick, Wood, Glass

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.)

Summary Paragraph

The SAU President's House is located on the north side of the SAU campus in Magnolia, Columbia County, Arkansas. The setting around the house is relatively flat, reflecting the terrain in much of Columbia County. Several large mature trees are located around the house. The house is a long, low house built in 1958 and designed by the Wittenberg, Delony and Davidson architecture firm of Little Rock. It is built in the Mid-Century Modern style, and also reflects the architecture of Frank Lloyd Wright of the period.

The President's House is constructed on a brick -- and likely concrete -- foundation. The walls are covered in brown brick and wood vertical board. The house's windows, at least on the front are small and set high in the wall, providing privacy from the driveway, while the back is extensively fenestrated by sliding glass doors. The house's roof is a flat, built-up tar roof.

Narrative Description

The SAU President's House is located on the north side of the SAU campus in Magnolia, Columbia County, Arkansas. Located away from the campus' main grouping of buildings, the house is located north and east of the university's athletic fields. The setting around the house is relatively flat, reflecting the terrain in much of Columbia County. Several large mature trees are

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located around the house, giving the house a wooded setting in an otherwise open location. The house is a long, low house built in 1958. As was popular at the time, it was designed in the Mid-Century-Modern style, and also exhibits the influence of Frank Lloyd Wright's architecture of the period. The President's House was designed by the Wittenberg, Delony and Davidson architecture firm of Little Rock, a firm that had been exclusively used by SAU since the construction of Cross and Nelson Halls in 1936 (NR-listed January 20, 2010).

The President's House has a modified cross-shaped plan with a front projection of a balcony and bathroom and a rear projection of a den. The house is constructed on a continuous brick -- and likely concrete -- foundation. The walls are covered in a mixture of brown brick and wood vertical board. The house's windows, at least on the front are small and set high in the wall, providing privacy from the driveway, while the back is extensively fenestrated by sliding glass doors, many opening onto a terrace in the rear of the house. The house's roof is a flat, built-up tar roof that extends into projecting eaves around much of the property.

Front/North Façade

The front façade of the house faces north and is approached by a circular driveway off of East Farm Road. A broad set of concrete steps, which are stamped with the date 1958, provides access to the house's central entrance, and the façade is centered by the house's central front projection. The bottom level of the projection originally housed the garage, which has been enclosed by brick with an entrance towards the right hand side with a pair of metal doors with single, square windows near the top. The upper level of the projection is dominated by an open balcony. The right side of the projection has a blank, vertical-board wall, while the left side is fenestrated by a recessed sliding glass door.

To the right of the central projection is the main entrance, which is sheltered by an extension of the roof that is supported by two square wood columns. The entrance has a pair of solid wood doors with a large rectangular transom window above it. To the right of the entrance is a brick wall with seven, one-over-one windows set high in the façade. Following the seven windows is a narrow vertical window piercing the façade, which is followed by the mass of the living room's brick chimney.

Immediately to the left of the central projection is an open light well/greenhouse space that provides light to an interior stairwell. To the left of the light well is a brick wall that is fenestrated by thirteen single-pane, rectangular windows set high in the façade.

Side/East Façade

The east façade of the front projection is covered by wood vertical board and is devoid of fenestration. The east façade of the main body of the house, however, is fenestrated by four single-pane, rectangular windows set high in the façade, that provide light into one of the original bedrooms. To the left of the windows, the brick wall projects out to the edge of the roof and is then followed by a single-pane, floor-to-ceiling window.

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The east side of the house's rear projection is covered by wood vertical board on its northern half, and fenestrated by three one-over-one windows set high in the façade. The southern half of the east side of the house's rear projection is dominated by the brick mass of the den's chimney.

Rear/South Façade

Like the front façade, the rear façade of the house is divided in half by a central projection – in this case housing the residence's den. The east half of the projection is dominated by the brick mass of the den's chimney, while the west half of the projection is fenestrated by a pair of floor-to-ceiling windows.

The east half of the house contains the bedrooms and is fenestrated by three sets of sliding glass doors with a single floor-to-ceiling window to the right. The sets of doors and windows are separated by blank spaces of brick wall. A concrete sidewalk also spans this part of the façade under the roof's wide eave.

The west half of the house is dominated by the home's living and dining room spaces. Starting at the central projection, the wall is fenestrated by a single floor-to-ceiling window that is followed by four sets of tripartite sliding glass doors crowned by large tripartite transom windows. The four sets of doors and transoms are separated by narrow brick pilasters. The sets of doors, along with another set in the den, provide access to a large brick and concrete terrace that spans this half of the façade.

Side/West Façade

The west façade of the house's front projection is devoid of fenestration and forms the wall along the house's front porch. The wall is covered with brick at the bottom of the façade and wood vertical board in the upper part of the façade. Like the front projection's façade, the west façade of the main part of the house is devoid of fenestration. It consists of a blank brick wall, part of which is the living room's chimney, and also lacks the wide eave that is found around much of the house.

The northern half of the west façade of the house's rear projection is covered with wood vertical board while the southern half of the façade is dominated by a two-part sliding glass door crowned by a large two-part transom window.

Interior

The exterior design of the house very much reflects the building's interior spatial functions. The central part of the house, in the front, contains a stairwell and some of the more utilitarian parts of the house, specifically a bathroom. The rear central projection contains the house's den, and the kitchen is located in the center of the house.

The house's more public areas, the living room and dining room, are located in the west wing of the house, and are reflected by the large sliding glass doors and transom windows on the rear of the house that provide access to the rear terrace. This arrangement would have been an excellent arrangement for the house of a university president, and the amount of entertaining that would

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have been required. The high windows on the west wing in the front of the house provide light to the spaces while also providing privacy from the road.

The house's east wing, on the other hand, contains the bedrooms and more bathrooms. As in the west wing, the high windows on the east wing in the front of the house provide light to a hallway while also providing privacy from the road. The sliding doors on the rear of the house provide light and exterior access from the bedrooms and the rear projection also provides screening of the bedrooms from the living and dining room terrace.

Shed (Non-contributing)

To the southeast of the house is a rectangular frame shed. The shed, which was likely built c.1990, rests on a continuous concrete foundation. Its walls are covered in wood vertical board and are devoid of fenestration. A solid wood door at the south corner of the west façade provides access to the building. The north-facing shed roof is covered with asphalt shingles.

Integrity

Overall, the SAU President's House retains excellent integrity. With respect to the house, little has been changed with respect to the interior or the exterior of the house. The largest change was the enclosing of the garage on the lower level of the front façade. Although the property is no longer used as a residence, but rather as the offices of the SAU Foundation and as an SAU Welcome Center, the interior of the house required no modification for the change of use. In addition, the setting around the house today still reflects the setting at the time of its construction. Although changes have occurred on the SAU campus, the house is still removed from the main block of the campus' buildings. Today, the design and construction and setting of the SAU President's House very much reflect the time of its construction in 1958.

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.
- 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.

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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

Period of Significance

1957-1959

Significant Dates

1957-1959

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Significant Person
(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Wittenberg, Delony & Davidson, Architects

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 former Southern Arkansas University President's House, located on the campus of Southern Arkansas University, in Magnolia, Columbia County, Arkansas, is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under **Criterion C with local significance** for its importance as a good residential example of the Mid-Century Modern style of architecture. Built in 1958, and designed by the noted Arkansas firm of Wittenberg, Delony and Davidson, the President's House represented a departure from the Colonial Revival style that had been used for most other of the university's buildings at the time. Referred to as the Contemporary style in McAlester's *A Field Guide to American Houses* the President's House exhibits many of the characteristics of the style, including wide overhangs, a flat roof, contrasting wall materials and textures, and unusual window shapes and placements.

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

HISTORY OF THE PROPERTY

Columbia County was settled in the early nineteenth century by European immigrant yeoman farmers and other migrants from surrounding Southern states in search of better land to grow cotton on. However, early white settlers did not begin to come in significant numbers until Arkansas achieved statehood in 1836. The settlers initially formed small communities such as Spotsville, Atlanta, Calhoun, and Lamartine. The population of the area continued to grow

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throughout the early nineteenth century, and by 1850 there was a large enough population to form a new county. In 1852 Columbia County was created out of sections of Lafayette, Union, Ouachita, and Hempstead counties.¹ The county was named after the female personification of America, Columbia.² The city of Magnolia was founded in 1855 to act as the county seat. By the 1860s there were a handful of prosperous plantation families, but the majority of the citizens of Columbia County were family farmers.³

The city of Magnolia lies one mile east of the geographical center of the Columbia County and is located in the bottoms of Big Creek. Two men, J.J. Thomas and John L. McCarty, deeded the land where Magnolia was founded on June 21, 1853, and a temporary courthouse was soon built. "Colonel M. G. Kelso surveyed and laid out the city, modeling it after the town of Oxford, Mississippi, which he had previously surveyed. Magnolia was incorporated in 1855 with Hiram Slay as the mayor. The next year, the log courthouse was replaced by a larger frame structure."⁴

By the late 1850s Magnolia received its first newspaper, the *Clarion*, which was soon followed by the *Flower* and the *Vindicator*. Not long afterward Magnolia, like much of Arkansas, was dealing with the Civil War, and approximately 1,000 men signed up to fight for the Confederacy. About a third of them died in the war. However, it was during the Reconstruction period that Magnolia really started to grow. With the addition of the railroad, both cotton and lumber were exported from the city, and banks were soon established to oversee the cotton trade. In 1899 Magnolia's city phone service was established, and the railroads extended to connect with Louisiana. Over time the cotton prices became low, so farmers began to diversify by growing fruits and grapes.⁵

Although the Civil War did affect the Magnolia area, the effects were less severe than in other parts of the state. There was minor trade disruption of civilian trade, but nothing severe. After the war, the county underwent agricultural changes in the tenant/sharecropper system. By 1880 the population grew to 14,090 and there became more emphasis on cotton as a cash crop. Also during this time was the building of the St. Louis, Arkansas, and Texas Railway which brought change to northern Columbia County.⁶ This was especially significant in Columbia County due to the lack of any reliable waterways for transport.⁷ The railroads ensured a cheap and reliable method of selling and transporting cotton, and also bolstered the lumber trade in that region of Arkansas. Before the railroad, it was simply not cost effective to cut and sell lumber. Now there

¹ Overview: *History of Western Columbia County*. Unknown publisher, c.1983. Pages 1-2.

² Swaim, Kathleen, and Ralph S. Wilcox. "Cross and Nelson Halls Historic District, Magnolia, Columbia County, Arkansas." National Register of Historic Places Registration Form. From the files of the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program, 2009.

³ Overview: *History of Western Columbia County*. Unknown publisher, c.1983. Page 2.

⁴ Lancaster, Guy. "Magnolia (Columbia County)." Encyclopedia of Arkansas. Available at <http://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?search=1&entryID=855>

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ Overview: *History of Western Columbia County*. Unknown publisher, c.1983. Page 3.

⁷ Swaim, Kathleen, and Ralph S. Wilcox. "Cross and Nelson Halls Historic District, Magnolia, Columbia County, Arkansas." National Register of Historic Places Registration Form. From the files of the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program, 2009.

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was a lumber boom and seven mills were built along the railroads in Columbia County alone.
This led to a population boom in the county, and by 1910 there were 23,820 residents.⁸

As timber was cut throughout Columbia County, the newly logged areas became available as farmland, and people were eager to take the opportunity. With the railroads, cotton and corn were grown more than ever, and subsistence farming was fading as cash-crop farms increased the amount grown, hoping for enough money to pay their debts.⁹

Since agriculture was such an important part of life in the state, the Arkansas legislature passed a bill in 1909 that established four agricultural schools, and Magnolia was one of the cities chosen by the state. The school was built in 1911 and had 75 students its first year. The Third District School, as it was called, allowed students to gain a high school diploma as a four year program. Tuition at this time was free due to the sustainability of farmland and livestock, which were to be the tasks of the students, and government funding helped keep the school running. Curriculum consisted of agriculture and home economics with English, history, science, and math provided the minimal requirement for a high school diploma.¹⁰

The first school in Columbia County was a "subscription white school near Calhoun, about 1850-51." This was created to "keep the boys out of mischief." No colored schools appeared until after the Civil War. In the northern part of Columbia County, before the Civil War, was a white school "of some value" called Columbia Institute. In the 1870s a Columbia Female Institute "flourished instead of the public schools." "Those who cared for special education were sent off to Eastern institutions. The public school idea grew slowly..." In the 1870s and up to 1890, the Magnolia Female College, and Buckner, Waldo and McNeil High Schools all [were] private institutions. By 1890 there were "47 districts, in which are 18 frame and log schools... for which are employed 72 teachers, 42 being white and 30 colored."¹¹ "The Southwestern Academy, a private preparatory school, was established in 1894, but it closed in the early twentieth century, and its building was used by the Magnolia Grammar School until it burned. Magnolia High School was built in 1917. Later additions to the campus were constructed by the WPA."¹²

In the mid-1920s, the Third District School was elevated to junior college status. It was officially called State Agricultural and Mechanical College, Third District, but everyone knew it as Magnolia A&M, and would continue to know it as such after the name was changed again in 1951 to Southern State College. The agriculture and home economics curriculum remained but

⁸ *Overview: History of Western Columbia County*. Unknown publisher, c.1983. Page 4.

⁹ *Overview: History of Western Columbia County*. Unknown publisher, c.1983. Page 5.

¹⁰ Swaim, Kathleen, and Ralph S. Wilcox. "Cross and Nelson Halls Historic District, Magnolia, Columbia County, Arkansas." National Register of Historic Places Registration Form. From the files of the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program, 2009.

¹¹ Goodspeed. *Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Southern Arkansas: Clark, Miller, Sevier, Howard, Pike, Lafayette, Hempstead, Columbia, Little River, Nevada, Cleveland, Ouachita, Dallas, Bradley, Calhoun, Union, Ashley, Drew, Lincoln, Desha and Chicot Counties*. St. Louis: The Goodspeed Publishing Co., 1890, p. 461.

¹² McNeill, Mike. "Columbia County." Encyclopedia of Arkansas. Available at <http://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?entryID=758>

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the school increasingly emphasized the two-year Associate of Arts degree it offered. This degree was for students who planned on going to a four-year institution.¹³

A year after neighboring Union County had struck oil, Columbia County struck oil on June 8, 1922. Between the oil industry and the textile mills that arrived in 1927, Magnolia was insulated somewhat from the Great Depression in the 1930s. The city opened a library on June 1, 1929, and later that year a new jail was built to replace the 1890s jailhouse. During the Depression, the Public Works Administration built the city hospital in 1939.¹⁴

The economic downturn of the 1930s did not hinder the enrollment of several hundred students to Magnolia A&M. Costs were low in order to be the least expensive school in the state. President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal Program provided funding that expanded the physical plant and the graduating classes donated memorial constructions such as the Greek Amphitheatre (NR listed 06/01/05).¹⁵ On July 9, 1976, the school was renamed Southern Arkansas University.¹⁶

As the University continued to grow throughout the 1900s, new buildings were needed to meet the needs of the school's growing enrollment and programs, especially during the late 1940s and 1950s. In response to this, the University built a number of new buildings, especially under the leadership of Dr. Dolph Camp, who assumed the duties of President on September 1, 1950.¹⁷

One of Camp's priorities as president was to upgrade and expand the campus' physical plant, which he did through bonds. In March 1956, Camp "obtained board approval...to issue more bonds to finance construction of a fine arts building and a president's home."¹⁸ The President's House was financed through a bond issue of \$413,700 with a pledge of adequate student activity fees.¹⁹ Camp's influence on the SAU campus was substantial. As Skelton wrote, "During the last four years of Camp's presidency, the fine arts building...was completed, and although not ready in time for Camp's own residence, a new home for the president was started." Cap tendered a resignation on February 16, 1959, and it was accepted February 2, 1959.²⁰

The new President's House was designed by the noted Little Rock architecture firm of Wittenberg, Delony, and Davidson and was designed in a contemporary Mid-Century Modern 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

13 *Ibid.*

14 *Ibid.*

15 *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Willis, James F. "Southern Arkansas University (SAU)." Encyclopedia of Arkansas. Available at <http://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?entryID=4140>

¹⁷ Skelton, Phillip Daniel. "A History of Southern Arkansas University from 1909 to 1976." Doctoral Dissertation. The University of Mississippi, May 1979, p. 109.

¹⁸ Willis, James. *Southern Arkansas University: The Mulerider School's Centennial History, 1909-2009*. Magnolia, AR: SAU Foundation and Xlibris Corporation, 2009, p. 213.

¹⁹ Information on the President's House in the files of the SAU Foundation.

²⁰ Skelton, Phillip Daniel. "A History of Southern Arkansas University from 1909 to 1976." Doctoral Dissertation. The University of Mississippi, May 1979, p. 126.

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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.²¹

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.²²

By the mid-1930s, Wittenberg & Delony employed eight people. Wittenberg focused on marketing and administration, while 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.²³

It was also during the 1930s that Wittenberg, Delony, and Davidson began their relationship with Southern Arkansas University. The firm designed Cross and Nelson Halls for the university during the 1930s, and the firm "would plan every additional campus building for the next fifty years."²⁴

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.²⁵

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.²⁶

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.²⁷

²¹ Information on Wittenberg, Delony & Davidson from: <http://www.wddarchitects.com/profile/history>

²² *Ibid.*

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ Willis, James. *Southern Arkansas University: The Mulerider School's Centennial History, 1909-2009*. Magnolia, AR: SAU Foundation and Xlibris Corporation, 2009, p. 136.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁷ *Ibid.*

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In the 1970s Wittenberg, Delony and Davidson, 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. Wittenberg, Delony & Davidson, Inc.'s, work in financial buildings was in high demand, and college, medical, planning, and interior design categories grew significantly.²⁸

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.²⁹

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. The firm also 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.³⁰

The most recent projects for Wittenberg, Delony & Davidson, Inc. have been the Little Rock Statehouse Convention Center expansion, multiple projects for the 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 (now Peabody) Hotel in Little Rock.³¹

The use of the Mid-Century Modern style for the President's House was not an unusual choice, since it was a style that was gaining popularity for modern buildings after World War II. The AIA reported in the early 1960s that a shift was occurring where people were starting to embrace modern architecture, especially for business buildings, but still even to a certain degree for homes. The book *Mid-Century Architecture in America* states:

No sooner has America embraced the new architecture than it has blossomed out into richness and inventiveness that must, in retrospect, astound even its most daring prophets. Its stark, bare, and square austerity, largely a gesture of protest against over-decorative eclecticism, has given way to a less self-conscious expression.

Taking up the fundamental tenets of the earlier "modern," a new modified modern with three basic characteristics has developed. These characteristics are:

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Ibid.*

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First, a totally new emphasis on the interior spaces of a building in terms of their usefulness, comfort, and beauty and their inter-relationship. In the past, rooms within a building were rigid compartments. Interior spaces are more flexible and sometimes can be divided at will. They open and flow into one another in a dynamic rather than static relationship.

Second, there is a new indoor-outdoor relationship. The use (some complain the overuse) of glass has made it possible to bring nature's plants and greenery into the building, and extend the building out into nature. Planted plazas, interior courts, and terraces have brought nature even into our urban working environment.

Third, our buildings appear lighter, often buoyant. Skyscrapers soar effortlessly into the air. Other buildings rest lightly on the ground as though to disturb it as little as possible. Event where they hug the earth and adapt to its contours, they avoid being massive and ponderous.³²

The President's House reflects these characteristics of the style, especially the usefulness and inter-relationship of the interior spaces and the indoor-outdoor relationship, which is best manifested in the large sliding glass doors that span much of the rear of the house, allowing easy access to the terrace. Furthermore, *Mid-Century Architecture in America* states that all of the AIA award-winning houses "...share an emphatic withdrawal from the bustle of the street and from ostentation as well." "If one word were to summarize the aspiration of American architecture at mid-century, that word would be 'liveability.'"³³

The President's House also perfectly illustrates the description of the style in McAlester and McAlester's *A Field Guide to American Houses*, which they call "contemporary." They describe the style by saying:

This style was the favorite for architect-designed houses built during the period from about 1950 to 1970. It occurs in two distinctive subtypes based on roof shapes: flat or gabled. The flat-roofed subtype is a derivation of the earlier International Style and houses of this subtype are sometimes referred to as American International. They resemble the International in having flat roofs and no decorative detailing, but lack the stark white stucco wall surfaces, which are usually replaced by various combinations of wood, brick, or stone. Landscaping and integration into the landscape are also stressed, unlike the pristine white International house that was meant to be set upon the landscape as a piece of sculpture.³⁴

³² Von Eckardt, Wolf. *Mid-Century Architecture in America*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1961. pp. 21-22.

³³ Von Eckardt, Wolf. *Mid-Century Architecture in America*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1961. p. 22.

³⁴ McAlester, Virginia & Lee. *A Field Guide to American Houses*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc, 1984, p. 482.

President's House
Name of Property

Columbia County, Arkansas
County and State

The President's House was built in 1957-1959 at a total cost of \$73,138.60. The contractor for the property, interestingly enough, was the College Operation and Maintenance Department. The design of the house was geared towards entertaining, which would have been an important role of the university's president. The large open reception area at the house's western end with large sliding doors leading out to the rear terrace was ideal for university functions. The kitchen and dining room area in the center, along with the stairs, provided separation of the public area from the house's bedrooms, which occupy the eastern end of the house.³⁵

Although the setting of the house in a grove of trees on the far north side of the campus was a nice setting, it was not the location that had been originally chosen for the house. James Willis, in his book *Southern Arkansas University: The Mulerider School's Centennial History, 1909-2009*, wrote:

Initially, plans called for the residence to be located east of the Greek Theater on the site of the Clubhouse that would be moved. Due to financial constraints, the board later left the location up to Dr. Camp and Lake Greene, physical plant director, who chose a spot northeast of Mulerider Stadium. Inadequate funding probably caused the men to decide upon a modest ranch-style home. Unfortunately, its size did not permit as an official residence, future presidents to comfortably host large receptions of the kind expected of college leaders.³⁶

The size of the house ultimately led the university to seek another building for the President's House. Once this house stopped being used in the summer of 2001, it became the offices of the SAU Foundation during the 2002-2003 fiscal year, a role that it continues to serve today.³⁷

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE PROPERTY

The design of the President's House is an excellent representation of the shift in residential design that was occurring across the country after World War II. The decorative pre-war revival styles, which were all the rage, were being pushed to the side by more functional and livable residential designs. Although some people after World War II still believed "that only shrunken colonial, Cape Cod ranches, or Cinderella homes properly represent the American way of life...a trend [had] now begun working the other way. ...[It was] slowly becoming apparent to people that architects working with builders can give them better, more thoughtful design for their money."³⁸

This post-World-War-II architecture moved away from an "over-decorative eclecticism to a less self-conscious expression." Expression, rather, was manifest through window placement and

³⁵ Information on the President's House in the files of the SAU Foundation.

³⁶ Willis, James. *Southern Arkansas University: The Mulerider School's Centennial History, 1909-2009*. Magnolia, AR: SAU Foundation & Xlibris Corp., 2009, p. 214.

³⁷ Bismark, Jeanie. E-mail to the author. 13 November 2012.

³⁸ Von Eckardt, Wolf. *Mid-Century Architecture in America*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1961. p. 21.

President's House

Columbia County, Arkansas
County and State

Name of Property

design, placement of the home in the landscape, and also through interior space arrangement. Also, the Mid-Century Modern style greatly espoused the relationship between the indoors and the outdoors (which was partly expressed through the window placement and design).

The style and its design also put more emphasis on privacy. Privacy played a role in the design, both on the exterior – large amounts of glass more often appeared on the rear of the property, making it private from the street – as well as on the interior. “The interior, too, emphasizes privacy for the members of the family from each other. The children’s right to their noisy pursuits is recognized along with that of the parents *not* to hear Huckleberry Hound’s televised antics.”³⁹

The President’s House clearly reflects the design trends that were impacting residential architecture in the Mid-Century Modern style after World War II. The house lacks the applied ornamentation that was so often used prior to World War II, and uses window placement and a variety of materials to give visual interest and ornamentation. As McAlester and McAlester point our with respect to the style, the President’s House “resemble[s] the International in having [a] flat roof and no decorative detailing. Furthermore, it “lack[s] the stark white stucco wall surfaces, which are usually replaced by various combinations of wood, brick, or stone.”⁴⁰

The design of the President’s House also reflects the increased relationship between the indoors and outdoors, as well as the issue of privacy in house design. The design of the President’s House, with its sliding glass doors opening onto the rear terrace, and large windows along the rear façade, encouraged residents and visitors to interact with the house’s surroundings. The placement of the large windows on the rear, as well as the use of small windows, mainly placed high on the façade, on the front, also emphasized privacy for the house’s occupants from the street.

Since the President’s House is an excellent example of the Mid-Century Modern style designed by the noted Arkansas architecture firm of Wittenberg, Delony and Davidson, it is being nominated to the National Register with **local significance** under **Criterion C**.

³⁹ Von Eckardt, Wolf. *Mid-Century Architecture in America*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1961. p. 22.

⁴⁰ McAlester, Virginia & Lee. *A Field Guide to American Houses*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc, 1984, p. 482.

President's House
Name of Property

Columbia County, Arkansas
County and State

9. Major Bibliographical References

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

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Willis, James F. "Southern Arkansas University (SAU)." Encyclopedia of Arkansas. Available at <http://encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?entryID=4140>.

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President's House
Name of Property

Columbia County, Arkansas
County and State

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: Southern Arkansas University, Magnolia, Arkansas

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): CO0511

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Approximately 7 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: 33.295965 | Longitude: -93.233049 |
| 2. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 3. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 4. Latitude: | Longitude: |

Or
UTM References

President's House

Columbia County, Arkansas
County and State

Name of Property

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or NAD 1983

2. Zone: Easting: Northing:

3. Zone: Easting: Northing:

4. Zone: Easting : Northing:

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

Beginning at UTM point 15/478163/3684214 at the southeast corner of East Farm Road and an unnamed access road, proceed easterly along the south side of East Farm Road for 700 feet to UTM point 15/478374/3684210, thence proceed southerly perpendicular to East Farm Road for 480 feet to UTM point 15/478374/3684064, thence proceed westerly parallel to East Farm Road for 500 feet to the east side of the unnamed access road at UTM point 15/478220/3684066, thence proceed northwesterly along the east side of the unnamed access road for 525 feet to the point of beginning.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary contains the SAU President's House and its immediate wooded setting.

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: Arkansas zip code: 72201

e-mail: ralph@arkansasheritage.org

telephone: (501) 324-9787

date: January 7, 2013

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

President's House
Name of Property

Columbia County, Arkansas
County and State

- **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: President's House

City or Vicinity: Magnolia

County: Columbia

State: Arkansas

Photographer: Ralph S. Wilcox

Date Photographed: June 18, 2012

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

President's House
Name of Property

Columbia County, Arkansas
County and State

1 of 9. North façade, looking southeast.

2 of 9. West façade, looking east.

3 of 9. South façade, looking northeast.

4 of 9. South façade of bedroom wing, looking northwest.

5 of 9. East façade, looking west.

6 of 9. View of the shed, looking southwest.

7 of 9. View of the dining room, looking northwest.

8 of 9. View of the stairway, looking northeast.

9 of 9. View of the bedroom hallway, looking west.

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.



President's House
Magnolia, Columbia County, AR
33.295965, -93.233049

|-----461'-----|

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North



WELCOME
CENTER

ALUMNI
DEVELOPMENT













SOUTHERN ARKANSAS UNIVERSITY FOUNDATION

The Southern Arkansas University Foundation
is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization working
to establish and maintain funds and resources
on behalf of Southern Arkansas University
and its students in fields of higher learning,
scientific research, and professional development.

www.SAUFoundation.org



STAIR

ROB HALL

THE STORAGE



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY NAME: President's House

MULTIPLE NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: ARKANSAS, Columbia

DATE RECEIVED: 4/12/13 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 5/06/13
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 5/21/13 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 5/29/13
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 13000315

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 5-28-13 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

Entered in
The National Register
of
Historic Places

RECOM./CRITERIA _____

REVIEWER _____ DISCIPLINE _____

TELEPHONE _____ DATE _____

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

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.



THE DEPARTMENT OF ARKANSAS
HERITAGE

RECEIVED 2280

APR 12 2013

NAT. REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

April 3, 2013

Mike Beebe
Governor

Martha Miller
Director

Arkansas Arts Council

*
Arkansas Natural Heritage
Commission

Delta Cultural Center

Historic Arkansas Museum

*
Mosaic Templars
Cultural Center

Old State House Museum



Arkansas Historic
Preservation Program



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Ms. Carol Shull
Chief of Registration
United States Department of the Interior
National Register of Historic Places
National Park Service
8th Floor
1201 Eye Street, NW
Washington, DC 20005

RE: President's House – Magnolia, Columbia County, Arkansas

Dear Carol:

We are enclosing for your review the above-referenced nomination. 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,

Martha Miller
State Historic Preservation Officer

MM:rsw

Enclosure