

PH036201X

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

DATA SHEET

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED JUN 29 1976

DATE ENTERED OCT 14 1976

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Mutual Aid Union Building

AND/OR COMMON

Progressive Life Building

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

Second and Poplar Streets

___ NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Rogers

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

___ VICINITY OF

Third

STATE

Arkansas

CODE

05

COUNTY

Benton

CODE

007

3 CLASSIFICATION**CATEGORY**

___ DISTRICT

☒ BUILDING(S)

___ STRUCTURE

___ SITE

___ OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

___ PUBLIC

☒ PRIVATE

___ BOTH

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

___ IN PROCESS

___ BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS☒ OCCUPIED

___ UNOCCUPIED

___ WORK IN PROGRESS

ACCESSIBLE☒ YES: RESTRICTED

___ YES: UNRESTRICTED

___ NO

PRESENT USE

___ AGRICULTURE

___ MUSEUM

☒ COMMERCIAL

___ PARK

___ EDUCATIONAL

___ PRIVATE RESIDENCE

___ ENTERTAINMENT

___ RELIGIOUS

___ GOVERNMENT

___ SCIENTIFIC

___ INDUSTRIAL

___ TRANSPORTATION

___ MILITARY

___ OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Dennis Bowlin

STREET & NUMBER

Second and Poplar Streets

CITY, TOWN

Rogers

___ VICINITY OF

STATE

Arkansas

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTIONCOURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Clerk's Office

STREET & NUMBER

Benton County Courthouse

CITY, TOWN

Bentonville.

STATE

Arkansas

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

DATE

___ FEDERAL ___ STATE ___ COUNTY ___ LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

☒ EXCELLENT
☐ GOOD
☐ FAIR

☐ DETERIORATED
☐ RUINS
☐ UNEXPOSED

CHECK ONE

☒ UNALTERED
☐ ALTERED

CHECK ONE

☒ ORIGINAL SITE
☐ MOVED DATE _____

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Mutual Aid Union Building is a very well-preserved example of regionalized, Neo-Classical Revival Commercial Architecture. The architects, William E. Matthews and Albert O. Clarke of Rogers, were emulating structures designed by firms such as McKim, Mead, and White for the Pan-American Exhibit of 1901. The building, constructed circa 1913, can be grouped into the vast number of similar structures which were designed and constructed during the first 25 years of the twentieth century and which were later known as the American Renaissance.

The Mutual Aid Union Building consists of two floors and a half basement. The building's plan is rectangular, encompassing approximately 17,000 square feet. A 10-foot by 35-foot full height portico embellishes the east elevation.

The building is constructed of reddish-brown-brick masonry units laid in running bond with an average wall thickness of 17 inches. Masonry openings, with the exception of the pair of main entry doors and center windows opening onto the portico, are spanned by stone lintels. Fenestrations opening on to the portico are framed by raised brick mouldings, approximately 16 inches in width, which are also laid in running bond. Brick sill transitions and brick head shelves further decorate the mouldings.

A cast-stone water table outlines the entire perimeter of the structure just above the basement window heads, thus defining the main floor and portico floor levels. From this water table rise the cast-stone Roman pilasters symmetrically spaced along the north and south elevations. There are four pilasters to a side in addition to one at each of the four corners. Atop these pilasters, banding the building, is a simple cast-stone frieze and cornice. A brick parapet wall, capped with a cast-stone band and decorative column extensions, completes the building's height.

Four massive, Roman, cast-stone columns define the flat-roofed portico on the east elevation. The portico's roof is topped by a stepped brick parapet wall capped with cast stone. The parapet features decorative column extensions with domed caps of cast-stone and a central metal finial. The main entrance to the building is through this portico by a flight of tiered entry stairs.

The interior floor plan allows a great deal of open space with suites of offices along the south wall on both the first and second floors. A three-storey vault, one of the most unusual features of the building, is located near the center of the north wall. (Photograph of north elevation shows vault location). A second vault is located beneath the portico and is accessible from the basement.

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PAGE 1

The basement floor is essentially an open plan trisected longitudinally by two rows of encased-pipe columns. In the northeast corner a small office area is enclosed with a glass-above-panelling wall. The original men's and women's toilet facilities and cloakrooms are located on the west wall.

The first or main floor consists of a large grand foyer and a spacious open corridor dividing the seven private offices on the south from the large open common office and walk-in vault on the north. Structural beams, columns and pilasters are encased in darkly strained hardwood.

The second floor is again largely open. Exceptions are the lunchroom, kitchen, and private dining room along the south wall and the employee restrooms in the northwest.

Access from the basement to the first floor is via a narrow stairway along the north wall. The primary entry to the second floor is a wide central stairway near the west wall. This handsome stairway is of hardwood with a deep reddish stain. Two-inch-square balusters support a contoured handrail along the stair steps and around the upper stairwell. The railings terminate in panelled newel posts.

First-and-second-storey floors are of well-preserved hardwood, with the basement floor of cast stone. Except for room partitions, interior walls are plastered throughout the building. Interior doors are five-panelled, and many have operable glazed transoms. All doors, windows and interior openings are simply framed in stained hardwood, as are the single-lite, double-hung sash windows.

Several features give the building an unusually interesting interior. Among these features are the second-storey light fixtures, a ceiling-fan/light combination with opaque glass globes. Another aspect of note are the functional brick fireplaces with soldier-course detailing under mantles; however, their heating capacity has been augmented by steam radiators.

This significant commercial structure has remained basically unchanged since its construction. Resting on its original corner lot in the Rogers business district, the Mutual Aid Union Building is still in excellent condition

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 0.1913

BUILDER/ARCHITECT Matthews and Clarke

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Mutual Aid Union Building in Rogers is one of northwest Arkansas' finest commercial structures of historic-architectural significance. Constructed in 1914, this two-storey brick building originally housed a local insurance company but has in more recent years been used by other business interests. Its importance to the Rogers business community has remained constant.

The Mutual Aid Union Building represents an important aspect of the state's economic life. Though one insurance company operated in Arkansas before the Civil War (New York Life Insurance Company), it was not until the late nineteenth century that numerous insurance companies were formed and operated within the state.

The Mutual Aid Union was established in 1907 as a mutual assessment organization. Policies were written in "circles" with each member paying dues according to his age. At the death of a member, his family received a payment from circle funds. Each circle had 1,000 policy-holding members, and by 1910 the Mutual Aid Union is reported to have had six circles. Though this very old concept of life insurance was once quite popular, it proved impractical and is no longer used by insurance companies.

R. H. Whitlow, a native of Corinth, Mississippi, who moved to Arkansas in 1905, organized the Mutual Aid Union in 1907. Operating from a rented house and using a cigar box for a vault, Whitlow very quickly turned his idea of a cooperative insurance union into a successful business venture.

About 1910 two other businessmen, J. Wythe Walker and John E. Felkner, joined the company. Walker was from a prominent Fayetteville family and had practiced law there since 1888. Felker was associated with the Bank of Rogers.

In 1914 when the company's permanent building was constructed, Walker was serving as president with Whitlow as secretary and Felker as treasurer. This managerial trio lasted until about 1927 when Whitlow, the founder, resigned from the company and sold his interest to his partners. The company was then reorganized as Progressive Life, which continued in operation until 1966.

The building constructed by Whitlow and his associates was a significant contribution to the Rogers community. Of red brick construction the building features a two-storey portico across the facade. The interior, with its

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Arkansas Insurance Department Records, University Tower Building,
Little Rock, Arkansas. Mutual Aid Union and Progressive Life
Insurance files.

Arkansas State Gazetteer and Business Directory, 1906-1907, Vol. X
and 1913-1914, Vol. XIV. Detroit, R. L. Polk and Company.

Fleming, Frances Whitlow. Letter concerning Progressive Life Building,
March 30, 1975. On file with Arkansas Historic Preservation Program.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than 1 acre

UTM REFERENCES

A 15 399680 4021080
ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C
ZONE EASTING NORTHING

B
ZONE EASTING NORTHING

D
ZONE EASTING NORTHING

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
-------	------	--------	------

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
-------	------	--------	------

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Dan Chapel, Architect and Dianna Kirk, historian

ORGANIZATION

DATE

Arkansas Historic Preservation Program

6-8-76

STREET & NUMBER

TELEPHONE

300 West Markham

501-371-1639

CITY OR TOWN

STATE

Little Rock,

Arkansas

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL ☐

STATE ☐

LOCAL ☒

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

TITLE

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

Acting

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

DATE

ATTEST:

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
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spacious offices and work areas, was especially plush by 1914 standards. Floors and woodwork are of stained hardwood and remain in beautiful condition. The three-storey vault with its intricate lock-mechanism is an especially interesting feature.

According to Whitlow's daughter, Mrs. Frances Whitlow Fleming, the building also served more than just commercial functions. Its spacious facilities were often used for social and civic events, thus making the building of even greater importance to the Rogers community.

Significant as a representative of Arkansas's economic history, the Mutual Aid Union Building is also an exceptional example of the state's early twentieth-century commercial architecture.

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Herndon, Dallas T. Centennial History of Arkansas, Vol. II. Chicago:
S. J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1922.

Property Mutual Aid Union Building

Benton Co.
76000385

State Arkansas Working Number 6.29.76.3684

TECHNICAL

Photos 3
Maps 1

CONTROL

OK pl
7.1.76

HISTORIAN

Accept
E. Smith
7-23-76

ARCHITECTURAL HISTORIAN

Accept
M. Hurry
8-24-76

ARCHEOLOGIST

OTHER

HAER

Inventory _____
Review _____

REVIEW UNIT CHIEF

Accept
W. R. Luce
10/6/76

BRANCH CHIEF

Hurry
10.7.76

KEEPER

[Signature]

National Register Write-up _____ Send-back _____
Federal Register Entry 12-7-76 Re-submit _____

Entered OCT 14 1976

INT:2106-74



1
east facade + north side elevation

absence of side windows where inner vault is located

Mutual Aid Union Building
Rogers, Benton Co., Arkansas

PROPERTY OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

10.14.76

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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HISTORIC

Mutual Aid Union Building

AND/OR COMMON

Progressive Life Building

2 LOCATION

CITY, TOWN

Rogers

____ VICINITY OF

COUNTY

Benton

STATE

Arkansas

3 PHOTO REFERENCE

PHOTO CREDIT

Dianna Kirk

DATE OF PHOTO 1976

NEGATIVE FILED AT

Arkansas Historic Preservation Program

4 IDENTIFICATION

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

PHOTO NO.

East and north elevations, viewed from the northeast

1



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DATE OF PHOTO 1976

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

East elevation, viewed from the southeast

PHOTO NO.

2



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AND/OR COMMON

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2 LOCATION

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Rogers

____ VICINITY OF

COUNTY

Benton

STATE

Arkansas

3 PHOTO REFERENCE

PHOTO CREDIT

Dianna Kirk

DATE OF PHOTO 1976

NEGATIVE FILED AT Arkansas Historic Preservation Program

4 IDENTIFICATION

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

South elevation, viewed from the southeast

PHOTO NO.

3



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HISTORIC

Mutual Aid Union Building

AND/OR COMMON

Progressive Life Building

2 LOCATION

CITY, TOWN

Rogers

____ VICINITY OF

COUNTY

Benton

STATE

Arkansas

3 PHOTO REFERENCE

PHOTO CREDIT

Dianna Kirk

DATE OF PHOTO 1976

NEGATIVE FILED AT Arkansas Historic Preservation Program

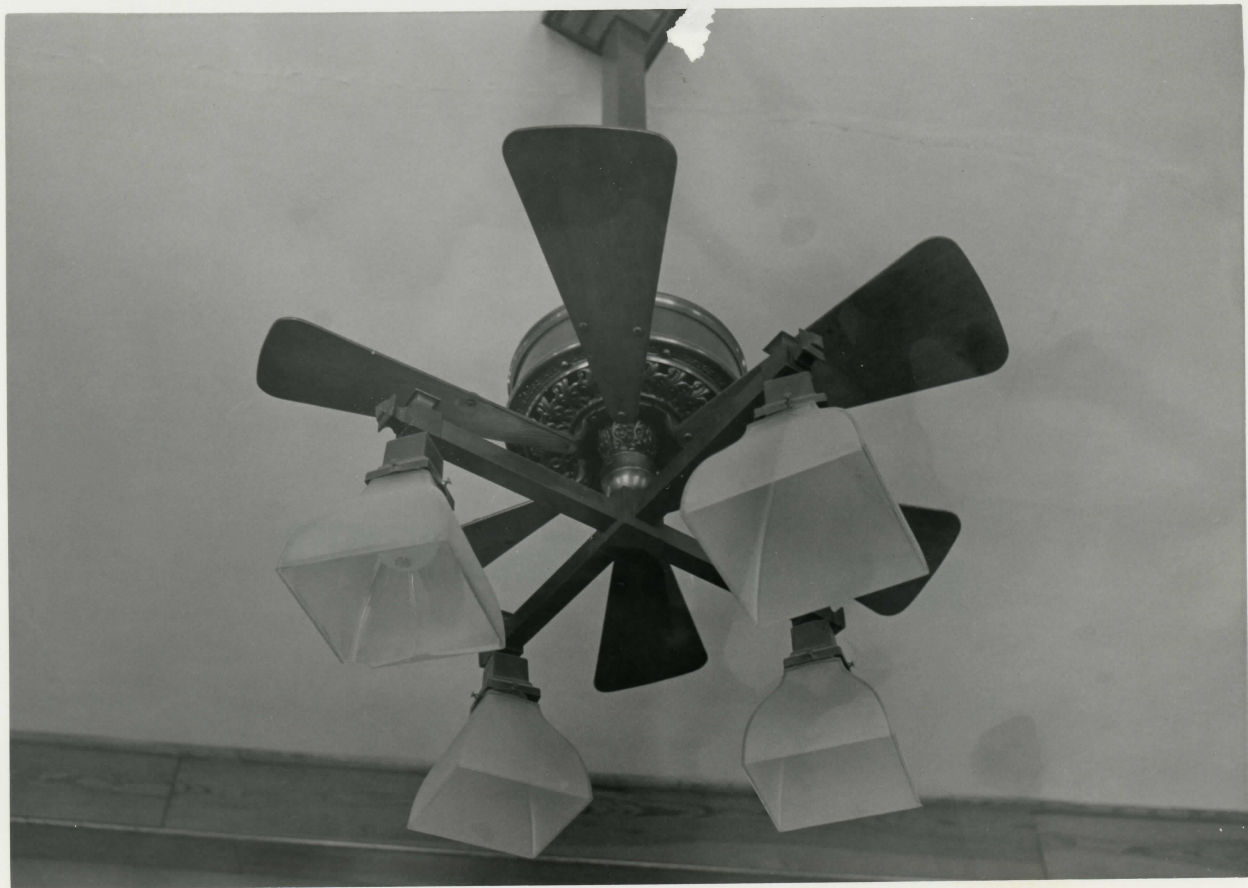
4 IDENTIFICATION

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

Interior, viewed from west central stairway

PHOTO NO.

4



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
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Progressive Life Building

2 LOCATION

CITY, TOWN

Rogers

____ VICINITY OF

COUNTY

Benton

STATE

Arkansas

3 PHOTO REFERENCE

PHOTO CREDIT

Dianna Kirk

DATE OF PHOTO 1976

NEGATIVE FILED AT

Arkansas Historic Preservation Program

4 IDENTIFICATION

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

Detail of second storey light/fan fixture

PHOTO NO.

5

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
PROPERTY MAP FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- ENCLOSE WITH MAP

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Mutual Aid Union Building

AND/OR COMMON

Progressive Life Building

2 LOCATION

CITY, TOWN

Rogers

___ VICINITY OF

COUNTY

Benton

STATE

Arkansas

3 MAP REFERENCE

SOURCE U S G S, Rogers Quadrangle

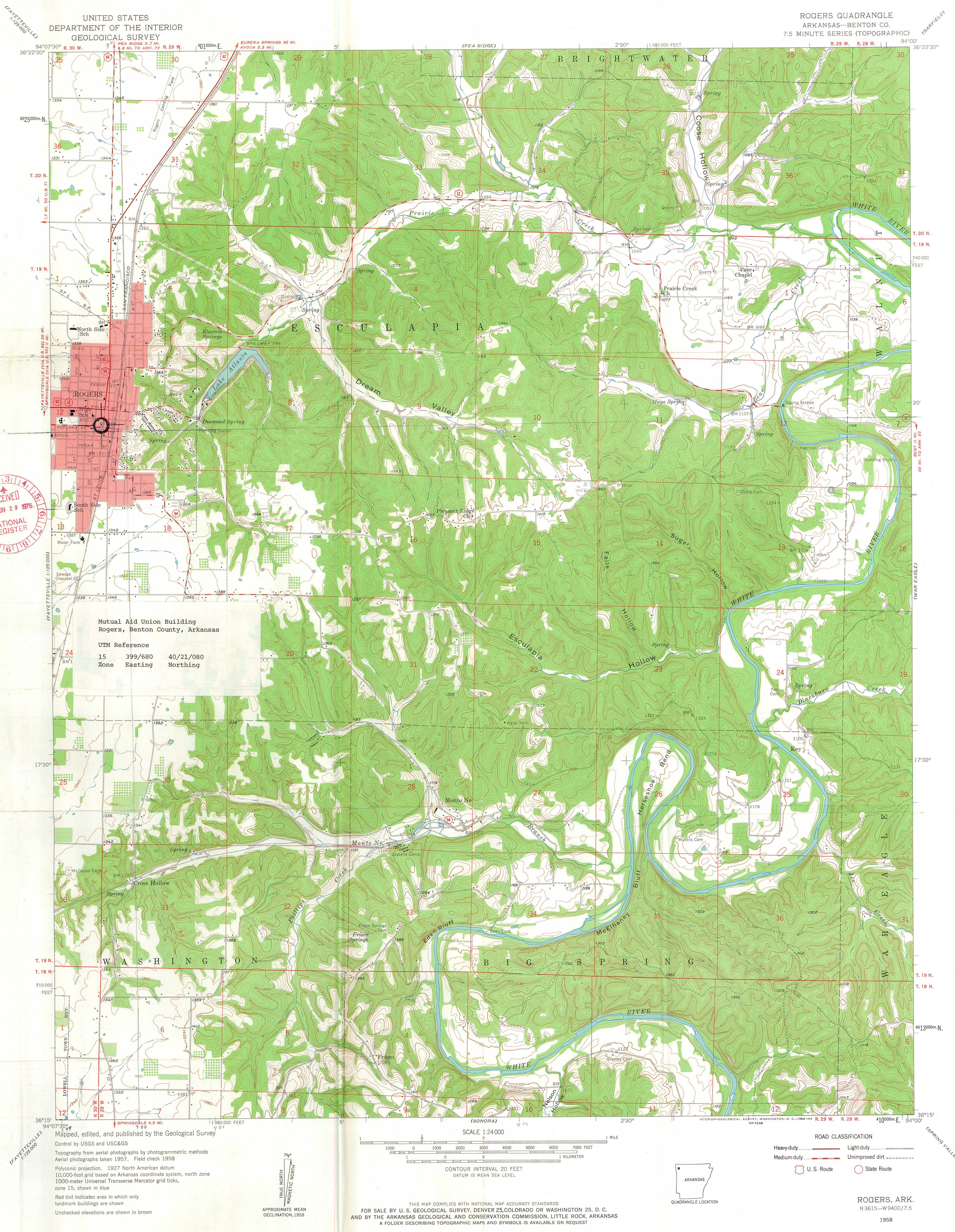
SCALE 1:24,000

DATE 1958

4 REQUIREMENTS

TO BE INCLUDED ON ALL MAPS

1. PROPERTY BOUNDARIES
2. NORTH ARROW
3. UTM REFERENCES



UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

ROGERS QUADRANGLE
ARKANSAS-BENTON CO.
7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)

Mutual Aid Union Building
Rogers, Benton County, Arkansas

UTM Reference
15 399/680 40/21/080
Zone Easting Northing

ROAD CLASSIFICATION

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

ROGERS, ARK.
N 3615-W 9400/7.5

1958

ENTRIES IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

STATE ARKANSAS

Date Entered OCT 14 1976

<u>Name</u>	<u>Location</u>
Allen, W. H., House	Spotville vicinity Columbia County
Mutual Aid Union Building	Rogers Benton County
Monroe County Courthouse	Clarendon Monroe County

Also Notified

Hon. John L. McClellan
Hon. Dale Bumpers
Hon. Ray Thornton
Hon. John P. Hammerschmidt
Hon. Bill Alexander
Regional Director, Southwest
Region

State Historic Preservation Officer
Ms. Anne Bartley
Acting Director
Department of Natural and
Cultural Heritage
The Old State House
300 West Markham
Little Rock, Arkansas 72201

880 MMott/row 10/21/76

NR Data Sheet

DATE: 7-23-76
Reviewer INITIALS: EDS

NR

DOE OCT 14 1976

NAME AS IT APPEARS IN FEDERAL REGISTER: Mutual Aid Union Building

OTHER NAMES: Progressive Life Building - SEC.

LOCATION:

STREET & NUMBER 2nd and Poplar Sts.

CITY/TOWN Rogers

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT 3rd

STATE Arkansas 05

VICINITY OF

COUNTY code

Benton 007

OWNER OF PROPERTY: (Circle) PRIVATE STATE LOCAL GOV'T MUNICIPAL COUNTY OTHER

ADMINISTRATOR (underline)

FEDERAL (AGENCY NAME):

NPS REGION: (CIRCLE) N. ATLANTIC MID ATLANTIC SOUTHEAST MIDWEST

SOUTHWEST ROCKY MOUNTAIN WEST PACIFIC NORTHWEST

FEATURES:

INTERIOR EXTERIOR ENVIRONS
Substantially intact-1 Substantially intact-2 Substantially intact-3
unknown - 4 unknown - 5 unknown - 6
not applicable - 7 not applicable - 8 Not applicable-9

CONDITION - EXCELLENT
GOOD
FAIR

- Interior, exterior, environs not intact-0

DETERIORATED
RUINS
UNEXPOSED
Unexcavated

UNALTERED
ALTERED
Reconstructed
Excavated

ORIGINAL SITE
MOVED
Unknown

ACCESS - Yes-restricted Yes-unrestricted No access Unknown

historic district? YES NO

WITHIN NATIONAL REGISTER HISTORIC DISTRICT? YES NO
IF YES, NAME:

WITHIN NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK? YES NO
IF YES, NAME:

ADAPTIVE USE: YES NO Saved? YES NO

FUNCTION(S): (use vocabulary words)

then- Commercial Building

now- Commercial Building

SIGNIFICANCE:

ARCHAEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC

ARCHAEOLOGY-HISTORIC

AGRICULTURE

ARCHITECTURE

ART

COMMERCE

COMMUNICATIONS

CONSERVATION

ECONOMICS

EDUCATION

ENGINEERING

EXPLORATION

INDUSTRY

INVENTION

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE

LAW/Gov't/politics

LITERATURE

MILITARY

MUSIC

PHILOSOPHY

POLITICS/GOVERNMENT

RELIGION

SCIENCE

SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN

TRANSPORTATION

OTHER (SPECIFY)

entertainment

health

recreation

settlement

socio/cultural

urban & commun planning

Claims

"first" YES NO

"oldest" YES NO

"only" YES NO

ARCHITECTURAL STYLE: ②

William E. Matthews

Albert G. Clarke

architect/m.builder: Matthews and Clarke of Rogers, Arkansas

engineer:

landscape/garden designer:

artist/artisan:

interior decorator:

builder/contractor:

ETHNIC GROUP:

NAMES:

(label role

&

appropriate date)

personal

R. H. Whitlow organized the Mutual Aid Union in 1907.

events

institutional

The development of insurance companies in Arkansas during late 19th and early 20 centuries.

DATES:

DATE OF CONSTRUCTION (Specific date or 1/4 of century): 1914c. 1913

DATE(S) OF "MAJOR" ALTERATIONS:

HISTORICALLY SIGNIFICANT DATE(S): 1907-1966

SOURCE:

(OF NOMINATION)

PRIVATE

STATE

LOCAL GOV'T

MUNICIPAL

COUNTY

OTHER

FEDERAL AGENCY:

ACREAGE:

(to nearest tenth of an acre) 0.1 - .9

COMMENTS: (include architectural information here)

2 story with half basement, rectangular shaped brick building with flat roof, raised parapet, and large portico over front entrance.

Brick, cast stone trim; 2 stories over basement, rectangular, flat roof with pediment, front 2-story

tetrastyle portico; engaged pilasters. Neo-Classical Revival elements. One of the

area's best commercial buildings; built to accommodate the Mutual Aid Union, one of the

SIGNIFICANCE: (maximum two sentences)

the earliest insurance companies to settle in Arkansas.

The Mutual Aid Union Building is significant because it represents an important period (late 19th and early 20th centuries) in the development of insurance companies in Arkansas. It is also significant as an exceptional example of the state's early twentieth-century commercial architecture.