NPS Form 10-900
(Rev. 10-90)
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

OMB No. 1024-0018

RECEIVED 2280
NAT. REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

1. Name of Property

historic name: WROX Building
other names/site number: Hopson Building

2. Location

street & number: 257 Delta Avenue — not for publication ___

city or town: Clarksdale — vicinity ___
state: Mississippi code: MS county: Coahoma code:027 zip code: 38614

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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 ___ nationally _X_ statewide ___ locally. (___ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Kenneth H. P'Pool — JUNE 27, 2002
Signature of certifying official — Date

Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ____ meets ____ does not meet the National Register criteria. (___ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official — Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:
_✓_ entered in the National Register,
___ See continuation sheet.
____ determined eligible for the National Register
___ See continuation sheet.
____ determined not eligible for the National Register
____ removed from the National Register
____ other (explain): ____

Signature of the Keeper — Date of Action
for Edson H. Beall 8/9/02

5. Classification

Ownership of Property:
private

Number of Resources within Property:
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Category of Property:
building

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1		Total

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

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions:
INDUSTRY/ communications facility
COMMERCE/ specialty store

Current Functions:
COMMERCE/ specialty store
WORK IN PROGRESS

7. Description

Architectural Classification(s):
Late 19th and Early 20th Century American Movements: Commercial Style

Materials:

foundation:	OTHER: reinforced concrete
roof:	OTHER: composite, built-up with gravel ballast
walls:	BRICK (exterior skin),
	OTHER: reinforced concrete columns and beams on perimeter
other:	STONE (date plaque, coping, and decorative elements)

Narrative Description:

See Continuation Sheets

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

X 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.

Areas of Significance
ETHNIC HERITAGE: BLACK
PERFORMING ARTS

Period of Significance
1946-1954

Significant Dates
1946

Significant Person(s)

Cultural Affiliation(s)

Criteria Considerations:
Property is:

____ A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
____ B removed from its original location.
____ C a birthplace or a grave.
____ D a cemetery.
____ E a reconstructed building, object,or structure.
____ F a commemorative property.
____ G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Architect/Builder
unknown

Narrative Statement of Significance: See continuation sheets.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography See continuation sheet.

Previous documentation on file (NPS)
____preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
____ previously listed in the National Register
____ previously determined eligible by the National Register
____ designated a National Historic Landmark
____ recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey
_____
____ recorded by Historic American Engineering Record
_____

Primary Location of Additional Data
____ State Historic Preservation Office
____ Other State agency
____ Federal agency
____ Local government
____ University
_x_ Other
Name of repository:
Carnegie Public Library, Clarksdale, MS

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property: approximately 1/10 of an acre

UTM References:	Zone	Easting	Northing
	15	723470	3786950

___ See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description: See map and continuation sheet.

Boundary Justification: See continuation sheet.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Audra Leslie Brecher (author), Hector Abreu (editor)
organization: Savannah College of Art and Design date: August 2001
street & number: 103 East Jones Street Apt.4 telephone:(912) 231-8518
city or town: Savannah state: Georgia zip code:31401

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:
Continuation Sheets
Maps
A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.
Photographs
Representative black and white photographs of the property.
Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner(s)

name: Mr. Kinchen H. O'Keefe Jr.
street & number: P.O. Box 782 252 Delta Avenue telephone: (662) 624-6576
city or town: Clarksdale state:MS zip code: 38614

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. 470 *et seq.*).
Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the 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 Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

Narrative Description

The WROX building (Hopson Building) is a three-story early 20th century commercial style building in downtown Clarksdale, Mississippi. It is physically one of the most prominent buildings on this main commercial street. The building measures approximately 50 feet wide by 100 feet long, and has a total of 15,000 square feet. Structurally, the building is composed of a concrete slab foundation and reinforced concrete columns and beams both on the perimeter and interior of the building. The upper two floors have a full 2" thick pine sub-floor with a ¾" pine floor on top. The exterior materials consist of a reddish-brown textured brick punctuated by stone decorative features. The front façade, which faces Delta Avenue, is divided vertically into three divisions by brick pilasters. The upper two floors feature a row of three window sections each, with three individual windows for each section. The ground level also has three main sections of glazing and three doors, one of which leads to the upper two levels. Three industrial warehouse lights are centered above each of these awnings, as well as an additional three placed on the side of the building to light up the north alley.

The businesses of Delta Avenue are largely retail, including several gift shops and apparel stores. Delta Avenue is a two-way street with metered, oblique parking on both sides The Hopson Building occupies the second lot north on the west side of the Delta Avenue block bounded by Third Street on the south and Second Street on the north. A white stucco-faced brick building is directly adjacent to the Hopson Building's south, while a space of about 10 feet separates it from the two-and-a-half-story yellow stucco-faced building to its north.

The shape of the plan is rectangular. The space on the first floor is divided by a partition into two main retail spaces, both approximately 1,800 square feet. The remaining space is utilized by restrooms, a storage area, and a stairwell to the second floor, which is located centrally at the very rear of the building. The present owner of the building has renovated the interior with carpeting on the floor, a new electrical system in the walls, and heating and air conditioning systems in the ceiling. The second floor may also be accessed from the exterior via the southern-most door on the façade. The stairwell leads up to the second floor hall, and to the front section of the second floor, which consists of approximately 2,000 square feet. An assemblage of partitions and rooms in this front section define the old studio of the WROX radio station. This area has been unaltered since the radio station occupied it. The rear section of the second floor is approximately 3,000 square feet, part of which is a restroom and the continuation of the stairwell at the rear. The front section of the third floor is approximately 2,000 square feet, which includes the front stairwell, a hall, and a restroom. At present this space is being used as a dance studio. This studio itself consists of 1,600 square feet. The rear section of the third floor is approximately 3,000 square feet, part of which is a restroom and the continuation of the stairwell at the rear. At present this area is vacant

The WROX building has a composite roof with gravel ballast. The exterior façade features crenellation with stone coping on the parapet wall. Each of the three vertical divisions separated by the brick pilasters has two crenels placed in proximity to its adjoining pilaster. The middle division is a variation, as the wall between the crenels is slightly gabled. Underneath the gabled section is a pentagon-shaped stone plaque which echoes the gabled shape above it; it reads, "Hopson 1920." It is punctuated on four corners by small squares of stone set into the brick. These small squares are a repeated element used throughout the façade, always placed in groups of four, suggesting the perimeter of a rectangle. On the third floor, flanking the plaque, the squares are arranged within the vertical boundaries suggested by the crenels. On the first and second floors however, the squares are arranged over each section of glazing, and they align themselves vertically with the perimeter of the glazing, forming a wider rectangle than on the third floor. The third floor exterior also features another decorative variation: three stone keystone-like elements accent a foot high band of vertically placed bricks above each of the three sections of glazing. Stone elements also appear towards the top of each of the brick pilasters. Starting from the top of each pilaster, a four foot long narrow strip of centered stone creates a vertical line, then about a foot down two small rectangles of stone appear side by side, then another narrow vertical foot-long strip of stone almost immediately follows.

The windows at present on the third floor are modern fixed sash windows with metal casing, while the owner has not yet replaced the windows on the second floor. An early photograph shows what were probably single-hung sash wooden windows with a three over three glazing pattern. Windows also punctuate the sides of the building on the second and third floors. At some point, the windows on the first level on the sides were bricked in.

Another decorative feature is the brick itself used on the façade. It is a textured brick that has a series of incised vertical lines, creating a raked appearance. Several different types of coursing serve to express various masses on the façade. For the most part, the three bays have running masonry, while the four piers which frame and divide them have two headers on both sides and a single stretcher and a single header between these headers. Also, bricks form a diamond-shaped motif in six places, above each section of glazing on the first and second floors.

Statement of Significance

As the site of the WROX radio station during the years 1946-1954, the WROX building (Hopson Building) played an integral part in the history of the development, dissemination, and flowering of the blues and other African-American based and popular music. Early Wright, widely regarded as the first African American deejay in Mississippi, played host to many of blues' and gospel's great luminaries on his radio program. Radio in general had a profound and far-reaching influence during the 1940s and 1950s, and it often was the primary source of information and entertainment for most people. WROX specifically provided these things: a radio census conducted in the 1940's revealed that 66,530 families who owned radios were within WROX's coverage area.

An article appeared in the *Clarksdale Daily Register* on April 2, 1920 announcing that H.H. Hopson had "awarded a contract for the erection of a three-story building," the downstairs of which would be occupied by the Standard Automobile Company as a showroom. The upper floors were to be used for office space. By the late 1920s the Newburger Cotton Company shared the building with Standard. By the mid-1930s it became the showroom for "New Dixie Chevrolet."

In 1944, at 6:00 am on Monday June 5th WROX AM 1450 began broadcasting from 321 Delta Avenue with 250 watts of power. WROX stayed there briefly, relocating to 257 Delta Avenue by 1946 according to the Clarksdale city directory. Robin Weaver was the original owner, but he sold it to Birney Imes, Jr., owner of WCBI-Columbus and WELO Tupelo. WROX was at first a part of the NBC Blue Network, but later joined the Mutual Network, making WROX the third station in the Mid-South Network.

During much of the 1940s, WROX broadcast the program "Sonny Boy's Corn Meal and King Biscuit's Show," an influential live blues show which came out of Station KFFA in Helena, Arkansas, featuring the elder Sonny Boy Williamson, one of the finest blues harmonica players. He was accompanied by Joe Willie Wilkins on guitar, Dud Low on piano, and James Peck Curtis on drums. The show reached tens of thousands of people in the Arkansas and Mississippi Delta region.

Early Wright, "The Soul Man," is believed to have become the first black deejay in Mississippi, indeed in the entire South, when he joined WROX in 1947. Wright was at least in part responsible for fostering the career of Ike Turner in the early 1950s. Turner hosted a weekly R&B show from the WROX building and played live with his band Kings of Rhythm. Wright continued broadcasting from WROX for 52 years, interviewing such musical luminaries as B.B. King, Charlie Pride, Muddy Waters, Tina Turner, Bobby Rush, Sonny Boy Williamson, Robert Nighthawk, Rufus Thomas, Elvis Presley, Little Milton, and Pinetop Perkins. Early Wright also had great interest in gospel music, and the Reverend Gatemouth Moore, the Sons of Wonder, Sam Cooke, Reverend Willie Morganfield, and Reverend C. L. Franklin are just a few of the gospel musicians who were a part of his program

Bibliography

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Book 677, Page 340, May 25, 1993.
Book 525, Page 314, August 31, 1981.
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Book 258, Page 293, June 10, 1955.
Book 204, Page 527, July 7, 1950.
Book 154, Page 330, July 3, 1945
Book 11, Page 43, March 7, 1903

Maps

Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps. Department of Archives and History. Jackson, Mississippi. February 1897, August 1909, March 1918, May 1923, June 1929.

Coahoma County Tax Map. Coahoma County Courthouse, Clarksdale.

Articles

"The Mississippi Delta's Chaucer." Peter Applebome. The International Herald Tribune. June 29, 1989.

"Deejay Early Wright, Mississippi's Soul Man." Patrick Goldstein. The Washington Post.

"The Night Time is the Wright Time." Andy McWilliams. Living Blues Magazine. September/October 1988.

"A Home of the Blues, Singing a New Tune." Neil Strauss. The New York Times. October 29, 1999.

"WROX on the Air June 5th." Newspaper advertisement. The Clarksdale Press Register. June 3, 1944.

"DJ of the Delta." Alsa Patureau. Atlanta Journal Constitution. June 4, 1989.

"'Soul Man' Commended." The Clarksdale Press Register. December 20, 1999.

"WROX Pioneer in Radio Field." The Clarksdale Press Register. October 23-24, 1982.

Books

Oliver, Paul. The Story of the Blues. Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1969, 1997.

Palmer, Robert. Deep Blues. New York: The Viking Press, 1981.

Weeks, Linton. Clarksdale and Coahoma County: A History. Brandon, Mississippi: Quail Ridge Press, Inc., 1982.

Section 10

Geographical Data

Verbal Boundary Description: Lot Two (2), Block "C," Clarksdale, Mississippi, as designated on the map or plat of said city on file in the office of the Clerk of the Chancery Court of Coahoma County, Mississippi.

Boundary Justification: The nominated property includes the entire physical boundary of the structure and the lot it occupies.