

54-06-1040-41

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

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

**1 NAME**

HISTORIC Battery C

AND/OR COMMON  
Graveyard Hill

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER  
Near Clark and York Streets

\_\_ NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Helena

\_\_ VICINITY OF

Fire

STATE

Arkansas

CODE  
05

COUNTY

Phillips

CODE

107

**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
- COMMERCIAL
- EDUCATIONAL
- ENTERTAINMENT
- GOVERNMENT
- INDUSTRIAL
- MILITARY
- MUSEUM
- PARK
- PRIVATE RESIDENCE
- RELIGIOUS
- SCIENTIFIC
- TRANSPORTATION
- OTHER

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME  
City of Helena (Thad Kelly, Mayor)

STREET & NUMBER  
City of Helena

CITY, TOWN

Helena

\_\_ VICINITY OF

STATE

Arkansas

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Clerk's Office

STREET & NUMBER  
Phillips County Courthouse

CITY, TOWN

Helena

STATE

Arkansas

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

DATE

\_\_ FEDERAL \_\_ STATE \_\_ COUNTY \_\_ LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

## 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED    DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

---

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

When constructed atop Graveyard Hill in 1863, Battery C consisted of earthen fortifications on the crest with a series of rifle pits along the western slope. Though the scene of some of the heaviest fighting during the Battle of Helena, the hilltop gives little evidence of its past use.

In 1930 a large portion of the east slope of Graveyard Hill was removed to build the Mississippi River levee at Helena. Though evidence of the earthen fortifications was visible for over 50 years, the natural elements have eroded from five to six feet of the crest of the hill. The grassy hilltop retains little evidence of its military history.

The hill now stands about one hundred feet high, considerably higher than the surrounding residential area. The ground cover consists of wild grasses, underbrush and some trees. The eastern edge overlooks the City of Helena, and in the distance, the Mississippi River.

The ten-acre site, including all of <sup>the site</sup> Battery C, has recently been donated to the City of Helena and will be developed as a park.

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

DD

## AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW

<input type="checkbox"/> HISTORIC	<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 type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input 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 July 4, 1863

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

On July 4, 1863, two of the most well-known battles of the Civil War were fought. While Union forces repelled the Confederates' northernmost advance at Gettysburg, Rebel troops at Vicksburg capitulated to Grant's army after a lengthy siege. The Confederate losses at both Gettysburg and Vicksburg foretold the eventual outcome of the war.

The coincidence of Union victories on Independence Day was made still more ironic by a third success in eastern Arkansas. The Battle of Helena was a futile attempt by Confederates to recapture the Mississippi River town of Helena from Federal occupying forces. Like their comrades in Mississippi and Pennsylvania, the Confederate forces in Arkansas also ended the day in defeat.

During the siege of Vicksburg, Grant's Union army was supplied via the Mississippi River. If the Confederates could have retaken a river stronghold above Vicksburg they would have been able to harrass Federal supply shipments to the besieged city. Hence, the primary objective of the attack on Helena was to relieve Vicksburg.

Union forces, commanded by Major General Benjamin Prentiss, had taken advantage of Helena's topography by building a series of fortifications on hills surrounding the city. Four hilltop batteries overlooked each of the roads leading into town.

Because of rumors that Confederate forces were on the march, the four batteries were strengthened in late June by the construction of a series of rifle entrenchments and abatis in front of each battery. Other defensive measures instituted in late June included the sounding of reveille at 2:30 a.m. to prevent being caught unaware, felling many trees to obstruct the principal roads leading into town, and stationing a Federal timber-clad, the "Tyler", along the Helena waterfront.

By July 3, the Rebels had moved to within five miles of Helena. That afternoon Confederate commander Lieutenant General Theophilus H. Holmes met with his subordinate officers to explain the order of battle. Simultaneous attacks were to be launched against each of the four batteries. Once these fortifications were captured, the city was to be occupied. With almost twice the number of Union defenders, the Confederates fully expected to retake Helena; however, their own errors along with the strong Federal fortifications, made victory unattainable.

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Because the roads leading into Helena had been barricaded with felled trees, the Confederates, unprepared for this obstructionist tactic, left their artillery behind. Another costly Confederate mistake was a misunderstanding among the subordinate generals as to the exact hour to begin the attack. Poor communications and poor timing hampered the Confederates throughout the morning.

Of the four Union batteries constructed for the defense of Helena, two have completely disappeared, one has been greatly altered, and one remains intact. (The latter, Battery D, is the southernmost fortification, and was added to the National Register in 1974.) The altered earthen fortress, Battery C, has been reduced in size, but remains an open hillside with trees and shrubbery. Its special significance lies in the fact that it was the only Union battery to be captured during the Confederate assault on Helena.

Like the other batteries, Battery C consisted of earthen fortifications on a hilltop overlooking one of the roads leading into Helena. Rifle entrenchments were constructed along the western slopes of each hillside, with a timber abatis below the rifle pits. Located on Graveyard Hill, Battery C overlooked the Lower St. Francis Road as it approached Helena from the west. Defending Battery C was the 33rd Missouri Infantry under the direction of Brigadier General Frederick Salomon and Major General Benjamin M. Prentiss.

Just after midnight on July 4, 1863, the Confederate march on Helena commenced. By daybreak three of the Rebel units were in position and poised for attack; however, the fourth column, commanded by General Sterling Price, had halted about a mile and a half from Helena and waited until daylight to resume their march. The left and right Union flanks were attacked at daylight, but Battery C, the center of the Union line, was left free to support the other batteries in the early part of the battle. About an hour after the battle commenced, Price's men, split into two brigades led by Generals McRae and Parsons, finally joined the attack with their belated assault on Battery C.

The Confederate storm overwhelmed the Union defense and Battery C was taken; however, the retreating Federals found time to spike and render useless the important guns. The Confederate commanders ordered their artillery, left behind due to the obstructed roads, to be brought to Battery C immediately. However, before the guns reached the front, both the battery and the battle were lost.

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When the Confederates carried Graveyard Hill, Union General Prentiss ordered the guns of the three other batteries and of the gunboat Tyler to be focused on Battery C. A new Union defense line was formed by General Salomon about 250 yards east of the crest of Graveyard Hill.

Under heavy fire the Confederate commanders gave several conflicting orders. Some of the troops were sent to assist the Confederate attack on nearby Battery D, others rushed down the east slope to continue the attack to Fort Curtis, the Union garrison, and a third group fought to hold the captured works atop Graveyard Hill. The attack on Fort Curtis was a complete failure, and the reinforcement of the troops attacking Battery D was insufficient to assure their success. At 10:30 a.m. General Holmes ordered a general withdrawal of the Confederate forces.

In his official report General Prentiss described the Confederate capture of Battery C as follows:

For four hours the battle raged furiously, the enemy gaining little, if any, advantage. Now, however, the attack in front became more furious; the enemy covered every hill-top, swarmed in every ravine, but seemed to be massing his force more particularly against Battery C... Twice they were repulsed, but the third time, exhibiting a courage and desperation rarely equaled, they succeeded in driving my small force at the point of the bayonet and capturing the battery.<sup>1</sup>

However, within a short time the Union barrage forced the Confederates to retreat, and Battery C was retaken by the Federals. General Prentiss closed his report of the battle by writing, "I am happy to say that the attempt to haul down the Stars and Stripes, on the Fourth of July, was an ignominious failure."<sup>2</sup>

As an important Civil War battle site in Arkansas, Battery C marked the only Confederate success during the Battle of Helena. Yet its final fate on July 4, 1863, exemplified the fate of the Confederacy and the future of the Union.

Though somewhat altered when a portion of its eastern slope was removed to help build the Mississippi River levee in the 1930's, the site of Battery C is still located on an undeveloped Helena hilltop whose base has changed little. The entire site has recently been donated to the City of Helena and will be developed as a park. Located near Battery D with its earthen fortifications still evident, the Battery C site is a constant reminder of the city's military past.

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Footnotes:

1. The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies. (Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1880-1901), Series I, Vol. XXII, p. 388.

2. The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies. (Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1880-1901), Series I, Vol. XXII, p. 389.

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PAGE 1

Scott, Robert N., ed. A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies. Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1888.

The War of the Rebellion: A Compilation of the Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies, Series I, Vol. XXII. Washington, D. C.: Government Printing Office, 1880-1901.

## 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- Bearss, Edwin C. "The Battle of Helena, July 4, 1863." Arkansas Historical Quarterly, XX (Autumn, 1961), 259-297.
- Evans, Clement A., ed. Confederate Military History, Vol. X. Atlanta: Confederate Publishing Company, 1899.
- Crisler, E. T., Jr. The Battle of Helena. Helena, Arkansas: Helena Centennial Association, 1963.

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 10 acres

UTM REFERENCES

A	1, 5	7, 2, 0, 8, 2, 5	3, 8, 2, 2, 7, 7, 5	B						
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING			
C				D						

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

Dianna Kirk, Historian

ORGANIZATION

Arkansas Historic Preservation Program

DATE

3-9-76

STREET & NUMBER

300 West Markham

TELEPHONE

501-371-1639

CITY OR TOWN

Little Rock

STATE

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 Anne Bartley

TITLE

State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE

3-9-76

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER



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

**1** NAME

HISTORIC  
Battery C  
AND/OR COMMON

**2** LOCATION

CITY, TOWN	___ VICINITY OF	COUNTY	STATE
Helena		Phillips	Arkansas

**3** PHOTO REFERENCE

PHOTO CREDIT Thomas E. Tappan      DATE OF PHOTO 1976  
NEGATIVE FILED AT Arkansas Historic Preservation Program

**4** IDENTIFICATION

DESCRIBE VIEW, DIRECTION, ETC. IF DISTRICT, GIVE BUILDING NAME & STREET  
Battery C hilltop, viewed from south

PHOTO NO.  
1





# ARKANSAS HISTORIC PRESERVATION PROGRAM



Suite 500, Continental Building, Main and Markham  
Little Rock, Arkansas 72201 Telephone: (501) 371-2763

August 4, 1977

AUG 10 1977

The Honorable Thad Kelly  
Mayor of Helena  
Helena, AR 72342

Re: Battery C  
Helena, Phillips County

Dear Mayor Kelly:

The staff of the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program is preparing a National Register nomination for Battery C which will be presented to the Arkansas State Review Committee at their September meeting. If approved, the nomination will be submitted to the National Register office in Washington for final consideration.

The National Register of Historic Places is a listing of historic sites, buildings, objects and districts from all across the country that are worthy of preservation.

Entry in the National Register is an honor which places no obligation on a private owner. It does, however, provide protection through comment by the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation from federally financed, assisted or licensed projects that might affect a National Register property.

On October 4, 1976, the President signed a Tax Reform Act of which Section 2124 refers to tax incentives for historic properties. Enclosed you will find an information sheet on that tax act.

If you have any questions concerning the program or this property's nomination, please contact Dianna Kirk of our staff.

Enclosed are two copies of this letter. Please complete the form below, sign and return the original to our office. The copy is for your files. We would appreciate receiving any comments you might have concerning the nomination of this property. If we do not hear from you within 30 days, your approval will be assumed.

Sincerely,

*Barbara Woodard*

Barbara Woodard, Deputy Director  
Arkansas Historic Preservation Program

I approve of the nomination of the above property  
to the National Register of Historic Places.

  X                
Yes              No

Comments: *The citizens of the area consider the Battle of Helena important to the history of this country. We are fortunate that Battery C has not been destroyed by construction from the original terrain for over 100 years.*

8-9-77  
Date

*Thad Kelly*  
Signature  
Thad Kelly, Mayor



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STATE

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PHOTO CREDIT

Thomas E. Tappan

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NEGATIVE FILED AT Arkansas Historic Preservation Program

**4 IDENTIFICATION**

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

PHOTO NO.

View from top of Battery C, looking northeast across the city.

2

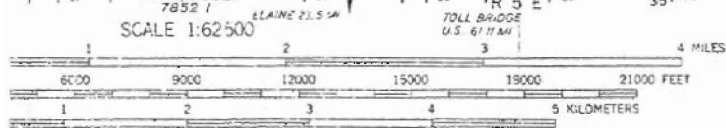






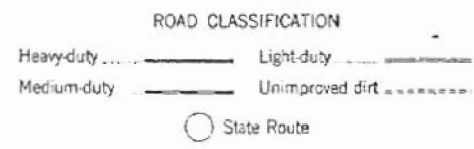
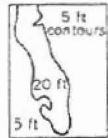


34° 31' 10"  
90° 35' 49.3"



CONTOUR INTERVAL 5 AND 20 FEET  
DATUM IS MEAN SEA LEVEL

COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS  
FEDERAL SURVEY, DENVER, COLORADO 80225, OR WASHINGTON, D. C. 20242.  
NATIONAL LAND AND CONSERVATION COMMISSION, LITTLE ROCK, ARKANSAS,  
MISSISSIPPI RIVER COMMISSION, VICKSBURG, MISSISSIPPI  
FOR A LIST OF TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST



LATOUR, ARK.—MISS  
N3430—W9030/15

1961

AMS 7853 II—SE