

59-11-D105-61

NR

12-4-78

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICENATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

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

## 1 NAME

## HISTORIC

Bedford Brown Bethell House

## AND/OR COMMON

Bethell/Skarda House

## 2 LOCATION

## STREET &amp; NUMBER

188, Second and Curran St.

## CITY, TOWN

Des Arc

## VICINITY OF

## NOT FOR PUBLICATION

## CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Second

## STATE

Arkansas

## CODE

05

## COUNTY

Prairie

## CODE

117

## 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

Britt A. Skarda and Karen T. Skarda

## STREET &amp; NUMBER

P. O. Box 440

## CITY, TOWN

Des Arc

## VICINITY OF

## STATE

Arkansas

## 5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

County Clerk's Office

## STREET &amp; NUMBER

Prairie County Courthouse

## CITY, TOWN

Des Arc

## STATE

Arkansas

## 6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

## TITLE

## DATE

☐ FEDERAL ☐ STATE ☐ COUNTY ☐ LOCALDEPOSITORY 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 Bedford Brown Bethell House is an architecturally significant home built in the Colonial Revival style. This two and one-half story frame structure faces east, and it is built in a symmetrical design.

The east and south sides of the first floor are surrounded by a large veranda which includes 1,036 square feet of floor space. Ten Doric columns support the veranda roof, and two engaged Doric columns are located at each end of the veranda next to the house.

The front entrance of the home is quite intricate. The door contains a full-length panel of beveled glass, large sidelites and transom containing panels of beveled glass. The doorway has an entablature-type header which includes dentil work and other fine details of craftsmanship.

On either side of the front doorway are huge one-over-one double hung sashes. Most of the windows in the house are of this type. Window openings are numerous on all elevations of the structure. Second story windows are placed in a symmetrical position to those on the first level. For instance, two smaller windows are located above each of large windows on the front of the structure. A beautiful Palladian window, with leaded fan light, is located on the second story directly above the front entrance. A small decorative balustrade, which once surrounded this window, is now missing.

The house also has another formal entrance, though much less elaborate than the front doorway. It is entered through the south side of the house at the far end of the veranda.

The roof of the house is high-hipped and includes four dormers, one on each side of the basically square-shaped structure.

The front dormer (east) contains three one over one double hung sashes, and it is located directly above the Palladian window. This triple effect of the three-windowed dormer, Palladian window (three sections) and front door with sidelites, ties the different levels of the structure together and adds greatly to the symmetrical plan of the home.

The dormers which face south and west are each single windowed, and the dormer on the north side includes a window with a zig-zag pattern.

The east and south elevations of the house look basically the same as when the house was built with the exception of the balustrade already mentioned, and the fact that the screened-in porches at the southwest corner of the house have had glass windows added to replace screens and latticework which once covered the window openings. This was done in the 1950's.

West and north elevations also look basically the same as when the home was constructed with the exception that two bathrooms have been added on the first and second floors in the northwest corner of the structure. This was also done in the 1950's.

The foundation of the house was once surrounded at its base by latticework.

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Three of the four original chimneys have been removed from the roof of the house, but the large central chimney still remains at the peak of the roof.

The house is a tall structure (approximately 40 feet tall from ground to peak), standing on its original four city lots. The rear of the house is framed by several large pecan trees dating back to the period when the house was built.

Interior features of note in the house include spacious hallways, sliding doors, and staircases, with balustrades.

The house was originally heated with coal stoves which were vented through brick flues. These stoves are no longer in the home, but the original wood burning fireplace in the library remains. It was the only fireplace built in the home, and the mantel is constructed of quarter-sawn oak. The mantel is dated September 1, 1909.

Work throughout the house is pine. Woodwork in the front and back foyers, staircases, library, and dressingroom still maintains its original finish.

The floor plan of the house is the same as when it was built except that two baths have been added, and two porches have been enclosed.

Stained glass doors now occupy space in the front foyer where sliding pine doors once stood. The sliding doors were removed during the 1950's, and the stained glass doors (from an old hotel) were recently added.

In addition, closets have recently been added in two bedrooms, and the door at the home's south entrance was once the front door on an 1880's house that occupied the same block as the Bethell home.

Other than these changes, and the modernization of the kitchen, the house still appears much as it did originally. Original doors, transoms, hardware, etc., are still in use. Several of the brass light fixtures in the home are original to the house.

The Bethell home is of superior construction and exemplifies the fine craftsmanship that appeared in finer homes built during the period of its construction.

The foundation of the house is built of concrete or sandstone piers. Floor joists pre-date the construction of the house and once occupied space in another structure.

The siding on the house is beveled. Studs on all the exterior walls of the house are 6's and interior walls are 2 x 4's.

There is no plasterwork in the house. All interior walls are constructed of a solid layer

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of board. This solid layer of board was once covered with canvas and then with wallpaper. In recent years, sheetrock has been placed over this surface to provide a smoother area for wallpaper, paint, etc.

A variety of wood was used in the house, including pine, cypress, and gum. All floors, including the third floor, are constructed of first grade pine. The first floor is double floored, while those on the second and third levels are single.

# 8 SIGNIFICANCE

PI D

## 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"/> 1 99	<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 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 checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
	<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION			Preservation of past life styles & culture.

SPECIFIC DATES 1912-1913 BUILDER/ARCHITECT Builder-Keaty, Architect- R. P. Morrison (?)

### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Bedford Brown Bethell House in Des Arc, Arkansas stands as one of the most elegant old homes in the agricultural Grand Prairie region of Arkansas. Constructed 1912-1913, the Bethell House is architecturally significant to the small river town of Des Arc. It is a source of pride for the people of the small community.

The Bethell house is also a reminder of Des Arc's close kinship with the White River. Though it is now predominantly a farming community, the city was once a bustling river port. Steamboats and barges brought goods into the city, and large mercantile stores were extremely profitable businesses. The merchants of these businesses built large homes in this river town, and the Bethell house remains as one of the last of these structures.

Bedford Brown Bethell, the original owner of the Bethell house, was born August 23, 1846, in Tulip Ridge, Arkansas.<sup>1</sup> He was the son of Dr. William and Elizabeth Brown Bethell, originally from North Carolina. In the mid-1850's, the family moved to Des Arc, and this is where Bedford spent most of his life.<sup>2</sup>

During the last two years of the Civil War, Bedford Bethell served in Company G., Second Arkansas Cavalry.<sup>3</sup> After the war, he became a cub-pilot on the steamboat "Liberty #3," which traveled the White River.<sup>4</sup>

After serving in this capacity, Bethell went into the mercantile business with a brother-in-law, Cincinnati Walt.<sup>5</sup> The business proved to be very profitable, and in later years, came to be known as "B. B. Bethell and Sons."

The Bethells were very important in the area of commerce. Their business grew so rapidly that they expanded it, and during the early part of the century, they owned and operated mercantile stores in Conway, Searcy, Russellville, Monticello, and Paris, Arkansas.<sup>6</sup> The brick building which once housed B. B. Bethell and Sons in Des Arc, still stands on Main Street.

B. B. Bethell bought the property on which he built the Bethell house on May 2, 1912.<sup>7</sup> He died the following year on December 20, 1913.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, the Bethell House was built within this span of time. It has been said the B. B. Bethell only lived in the house a few months before his death.

Bethell's widow, Mary Agnes Walsh Bethell, continued to live in the home until her death in 1919.<sup>9</sup> After Mrs. Bethell died, the house fell heir to her eldest son, William.<sup>10</sup> His family lived in the house until 1953, when it was sold out of the family.<sup>11</sup> The house went through a number of owners, and it also served as a boarding house. In 1977, the house was bought by its present owners, and restoration work has been in progress since that time.<sup>12</sup>

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The Bethell house was built by a well-known local builder called Captain Keaty.<sup>13</sup> A few of Keaty's homes still stand in Des Arc, but the Bethell house is his most outstanding accomplishment.

It has been said that the Bethell house was designed by R. P. Morrison, who also designed the Prairie County Courthouse (located two and one-half blocks from the Bethell house). B. B. Bethell was supposedly so taken with the design of the courthouse, that he contracted Morrison to draw his house plans. This statement, however, is yet unsubstantiated due to lack of written records.

The Bethell house is architecturally significant for many reasons. As has already been mentioned, the Bethell house is one of the finest structures ever to be built in its area. It is also one of the most easily identifiable buildings in Des Arc, and it has retained its original appearance for the most part. The design of the structure is unsurpassed in its area, and features of the home include a huge veranda (1,036 square feet of floor space) sliding doors, double staircases, leaded glass, and handsome balustrades (one hundred fifty-eight spindles were used on staircases and handrails).

The Bethell house also stands as evidence of a past lifestyle and culture that is now gone forever. The structure has a rather romantic aura surrounding it because of its massive elegance and beauty. It was once the scene of many social events, including dances on the veranda. Many older people remember being entertained at the Bethell house. Now it stands as a monument to a past that can never be again.

<sup>1</sup>Family Bible of Dr. William and Elizabeth Bethell, January 12, 1852.

<sup>2</sup>Natalie Walt Childress, Interview, May 18, 1978.

<sup>3</sup>Ted R. Worley, "The Early History of Des Arc and Its People," White River Journal, March 22, 1956-March 28, 1957, part XLV.

<sup>4</sup>Henry Preston Bethell, Interview, May 5, 1978.

<sup>5</sup>Natalie Walt Childress, Interview, May 18, 1978.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

<sup>7</sup>Abstract of Title to Lots 9, 10, 11 and 12, Block 39, Watkins Survey to the town of Des Arc, E. B. Rogers & Co., Deed book 4, p. 382.

<sup>8</sup>Virginia Mohler Garde, The Early Bethells and Their Descendants, p. 202.

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<sup>9</sup>Ibid.

<sup>10</sup>Abstract of Title to Lots 9, 10, 11 and 12, E. B. Rogers and Co., Deed book 8, p. 362.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., Deed book 24, p. 143.

<sup>12</sup>Ibid., Deed book 34, p. 375.

<sup>13</sup>W. J. Caskey, Interview, May 18, 1978.

## 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

(See Footnotes.)

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY Less than one acre

QUADRANGLE NAME Des Arc East, Ark.

QUADRANGLE SCALE 1:24000

UTM REFERENCES

A 15 637450 3871120

B         

ZONE EASTING NORTHING

ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C         

D         

E         

F         

G         

H         

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Block 39, Lots 9, 10, 11 and 12, Watkins Survey of the Town of Des Arc

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
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STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
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## 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Mr. Britt A Skarda

June 3, 1978

ORGANIZATION

DATE

STREET & NUMBER

TELEPHONE

P. O. Box 440

501-256-4793

CITY OR TOWN

STATE

Des Arc

Arkansas

## 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL   

STATE   

LOCAL X

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 Butler* 9/29/78

TITLE

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

ATTEST:

DATE

CHIEF OF REGISTRATION

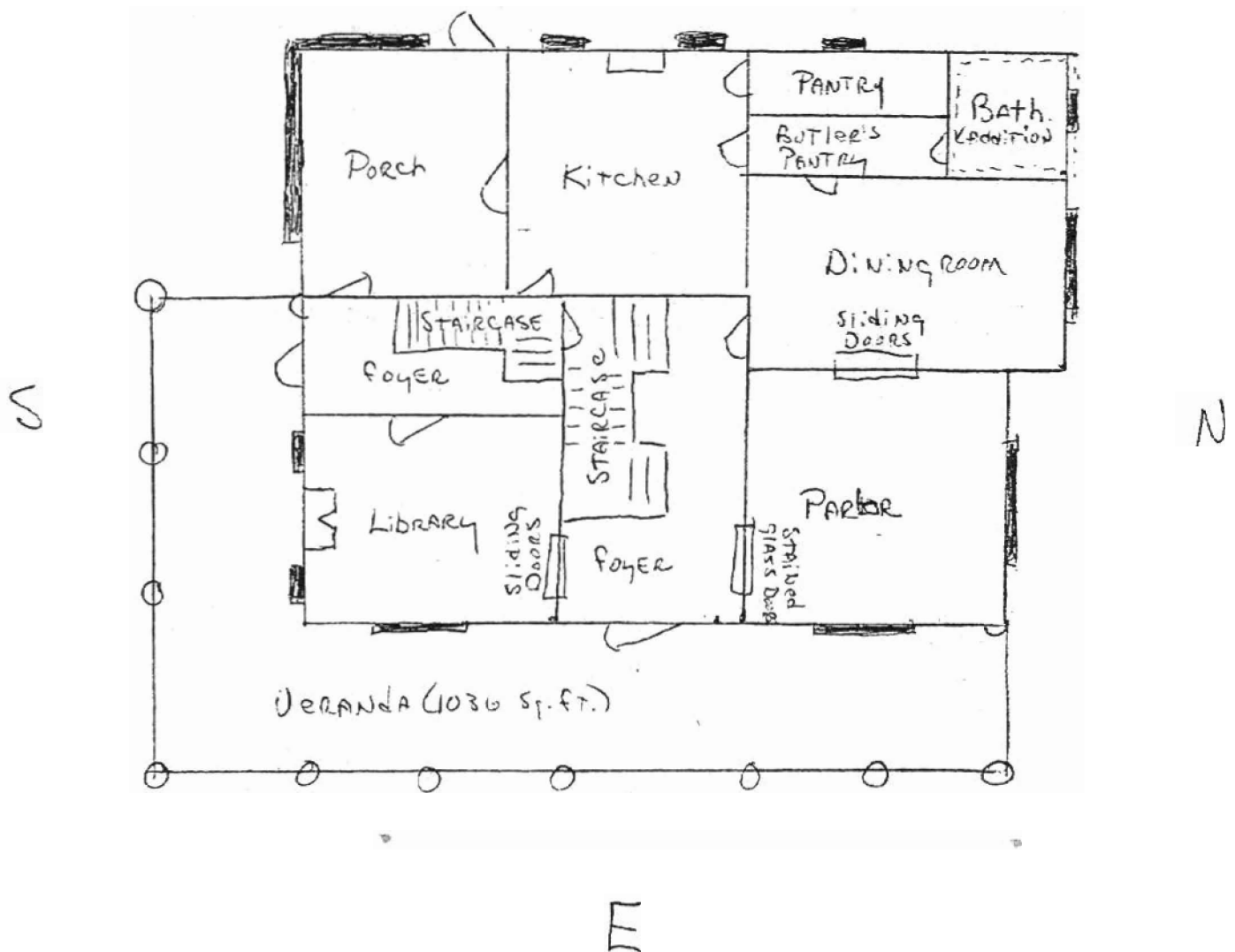


# Rough Sketch of 1st floor plan

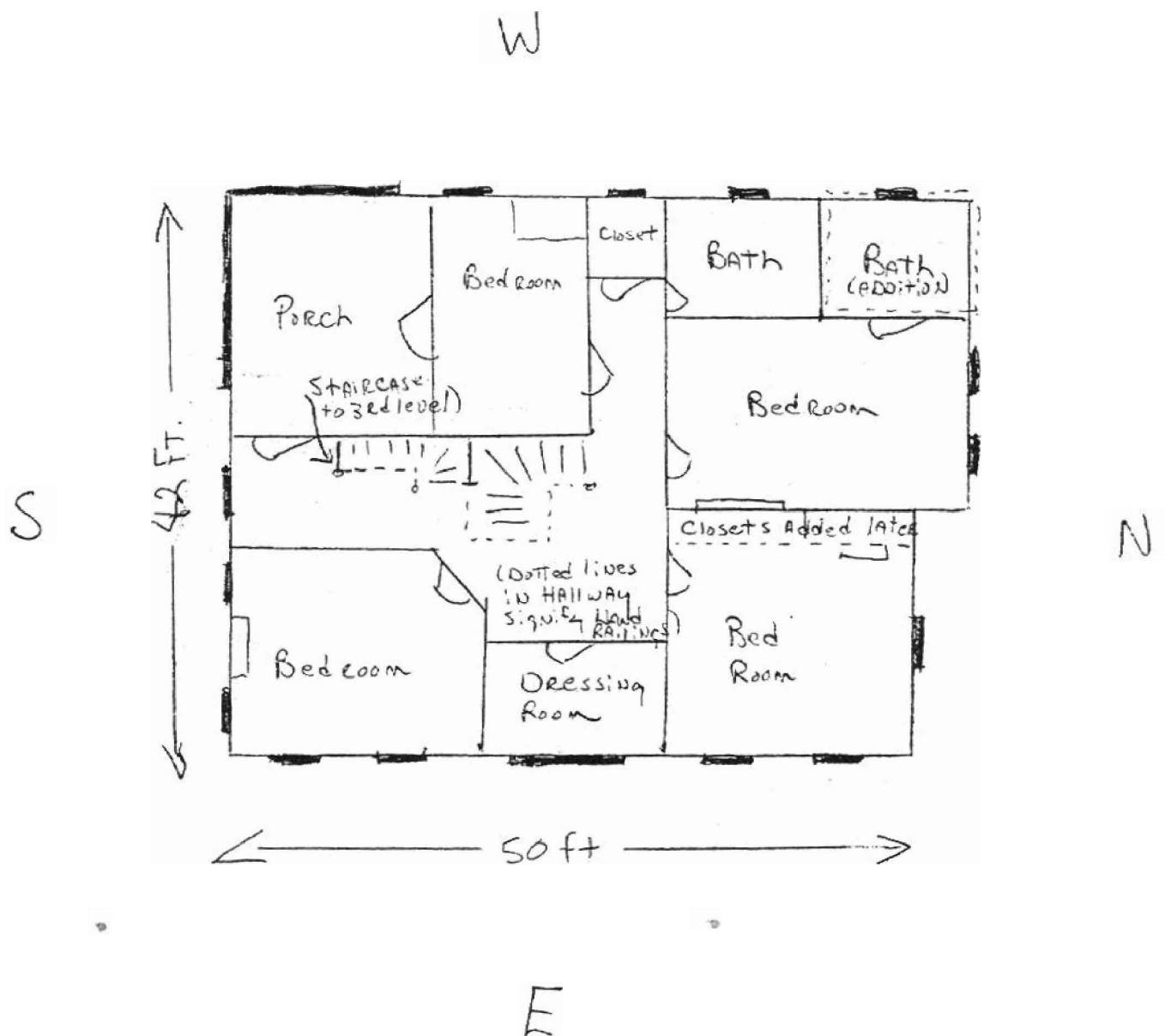
Sq. Footage

Porch or VERANDA - 1036  
 1st Floor - 2100  
 2nd Floor - 2100  
 3rd floor - 1500  
 TOTAL Sq. Footage - 6736

N



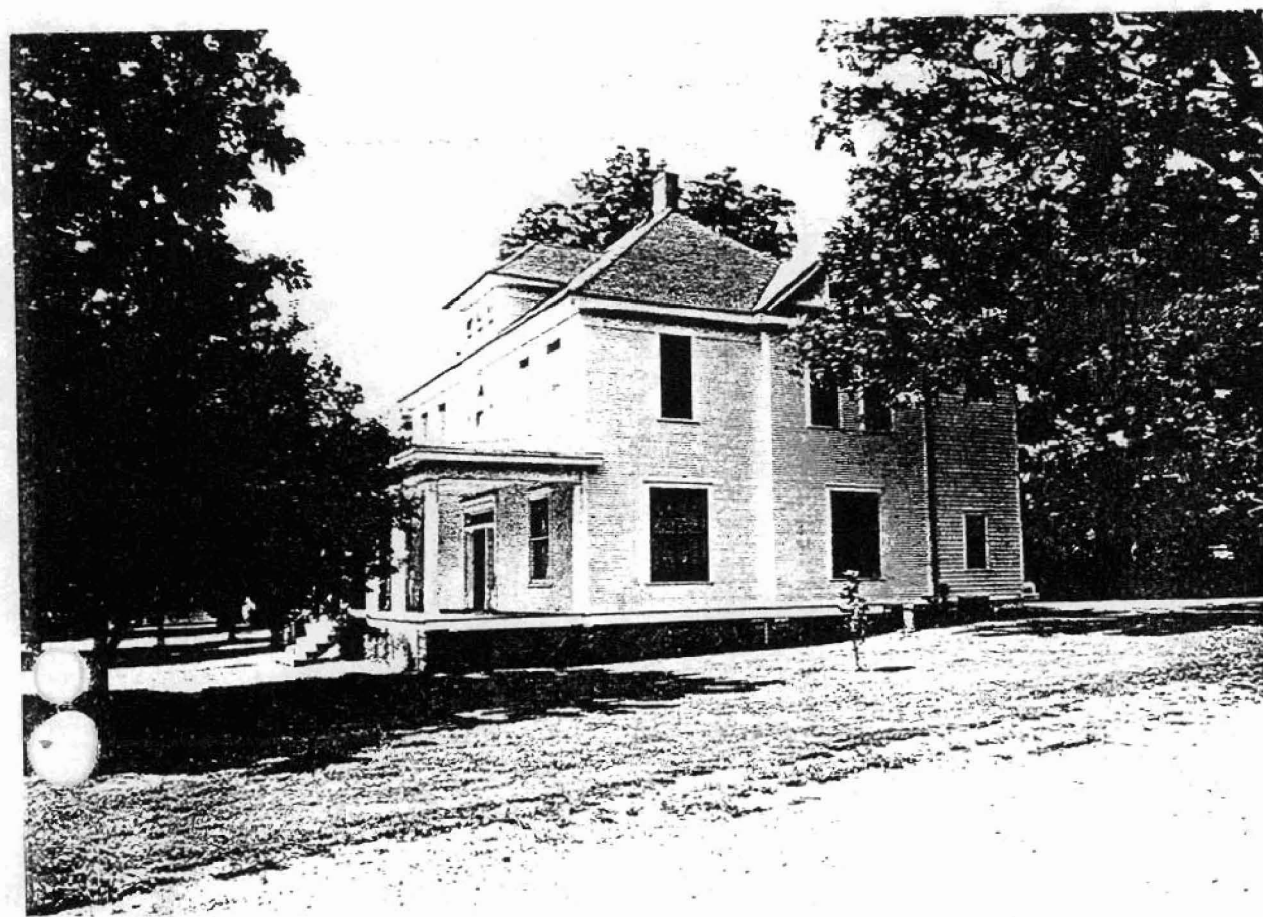
# Rough Sketch of 2nd Floor Plan





1. Bedford Brown Bethell House
2. Des Arc, Arkansas
3. June, 1978
4. Sandra Taylor Smith
5. Arkansas Historic Preservation Prog.
6. viewed from the east
7. photo # 1

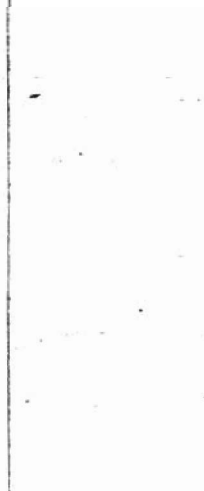
1. Bedford Brown Bethell House
2. Des Arc, Arkansas
3. June, 1978
4. Sandra Taylor Smith
5. Arkansas Historic Preservation Prog.
6. viewed from the southeast
7. photo # 2



1. Bedford Brown Bethell House
2. Des Arc, Arkansas
3. June, 1978
4. Sandra Taylor Smith
5. Arkansas Historic Preservation Prog.
6. viewed from the south
7. photo # 3



1. Bedford Brown Bethell House
2. Des Arc, Arkansas
3. June, 1978
4. Sandra Taylor Smith
5. Arkansas Historic Preservation Prog.
6. viewed from the north
7. photo # 4



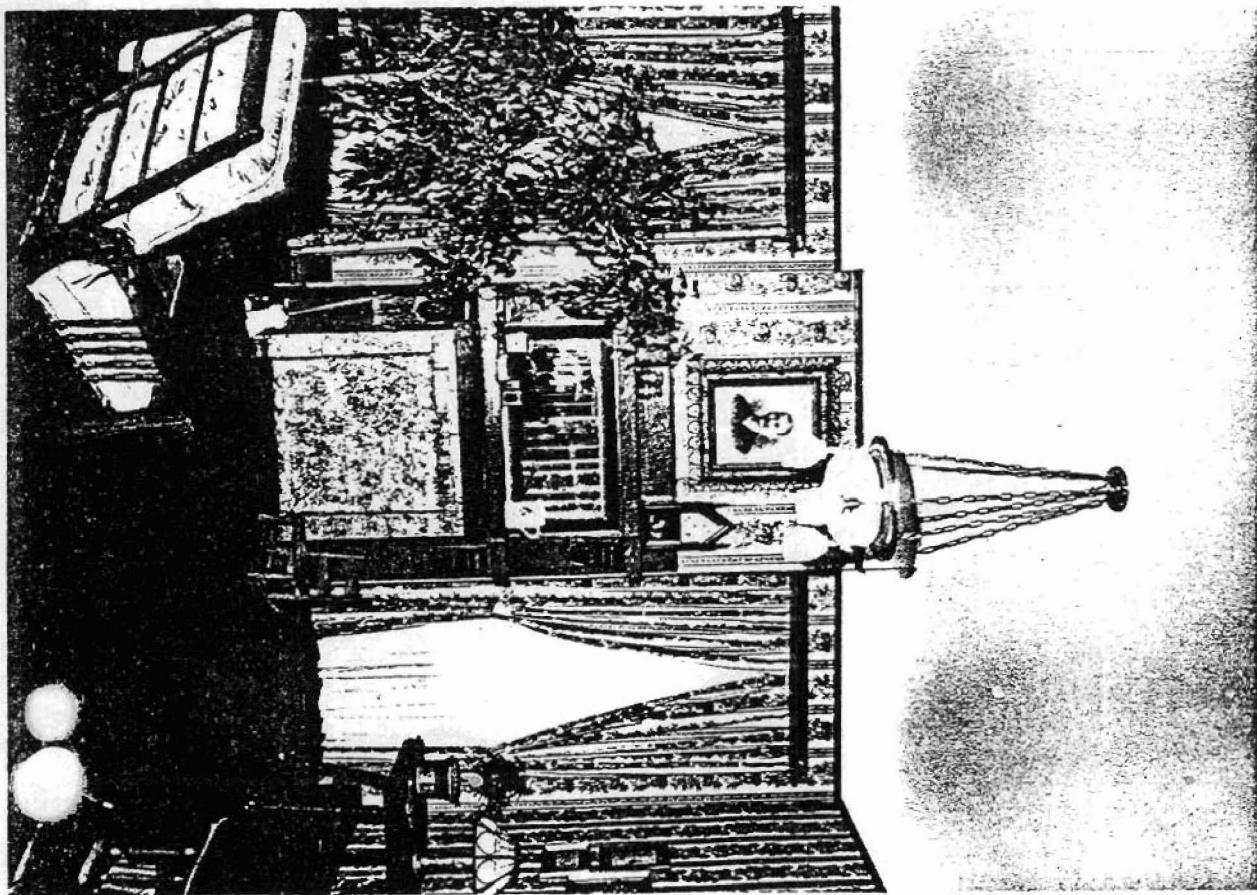
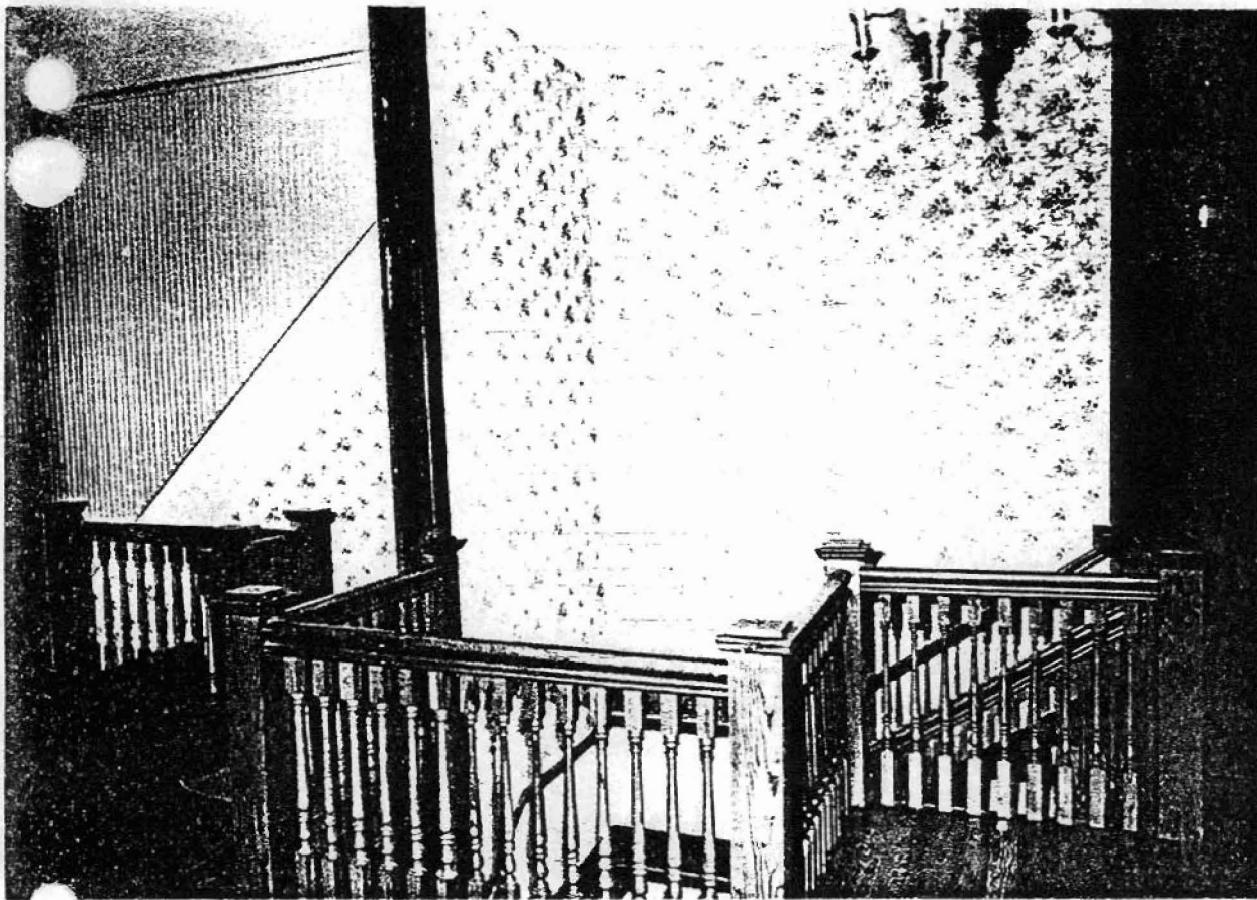




1. Bedford Brown Bethell House
2. Des Arc, Arkansas
3. June, 1978
4. Sandra Taylor Smith
5. Arkansas Historic Preservation Prog.
6. viewed from the northwest
7. photo # 5

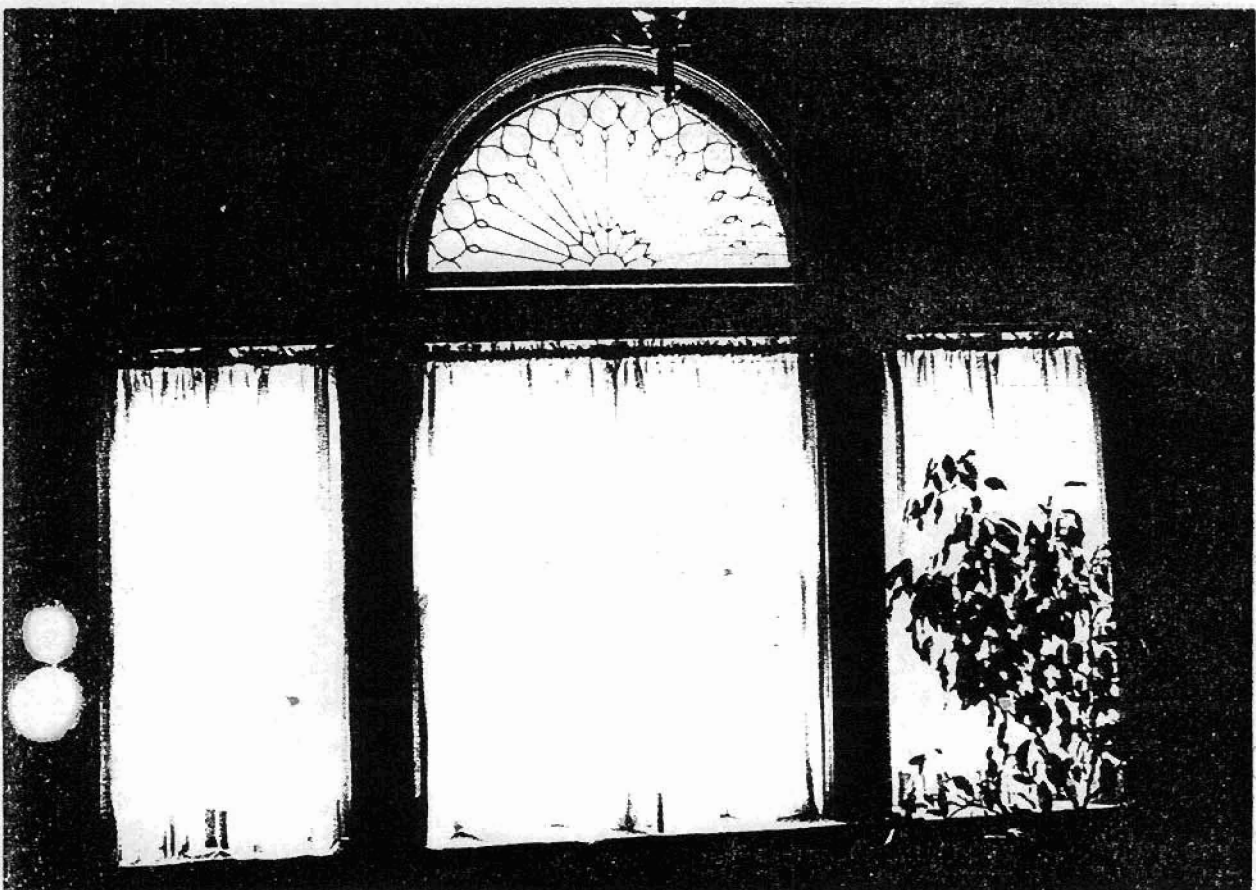
1. Bedford Brown Bethell House
2. Des Arc, Arkansas
3. June, 1978
4. Sandra Taylor Smith
5. Arkansas Historic Preservation Prog.
6. central hall stairway
7. photo # 6





1. Bedford Brown Bethell House
2. Des Arc, Arkansas
3. June, 1978
4. Sandra Taylor Smith
5. Arkansas Historic Preservation Prog.
6. central stairway on second floor
7. photo # 7

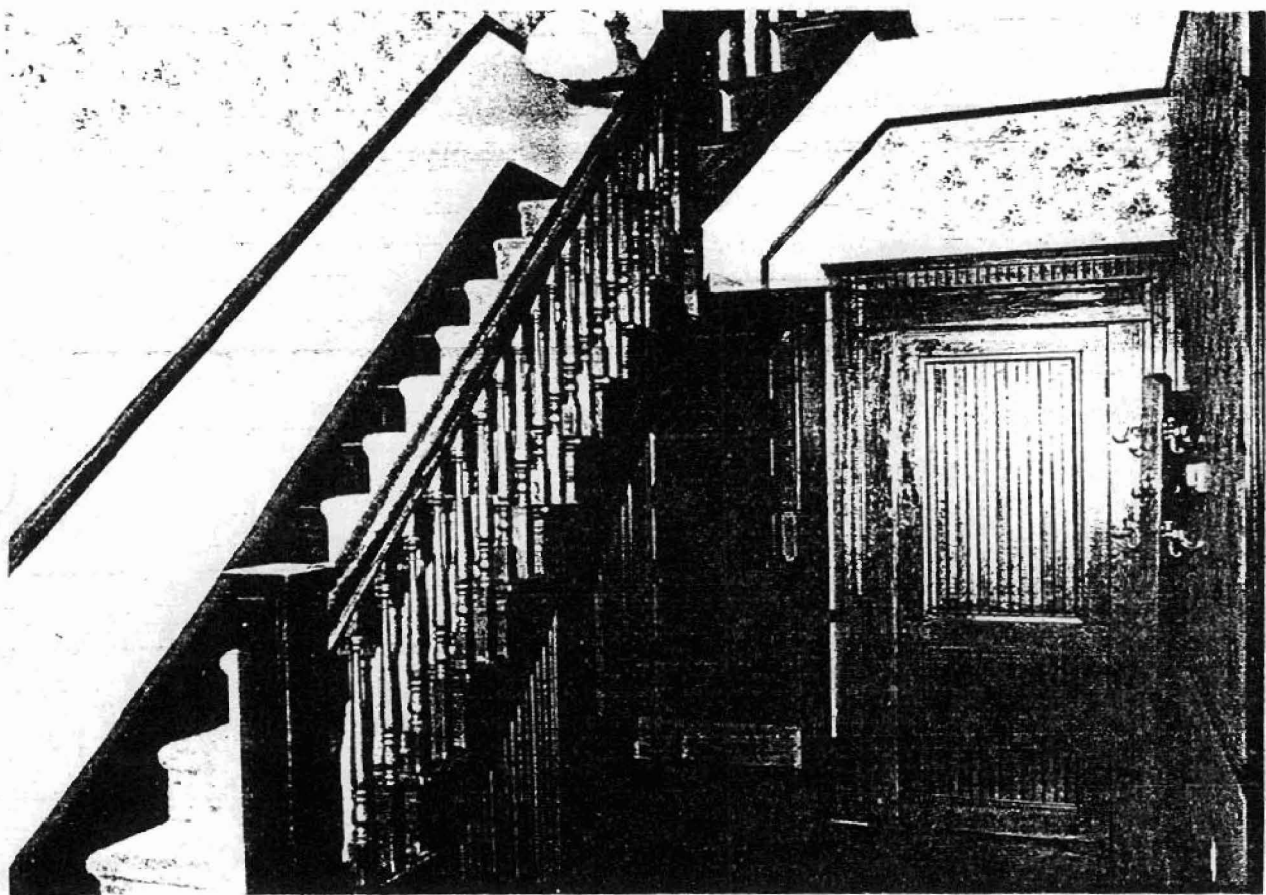
1. Bedford Brown Bethell House
2. Des Arc, Arkansas
3. June, 1978
4. Sandra Taylor Smith
5. Arkansas Historic Preservation Prog.
6. mantel in front parlor
7. photo # 8



1. Bedford Brown Bethell House
2. Des Arc, Arkansas
3. June, 1978
4. Sandra Taylor Smith
5. Arkansas Historic Preservation Prog.
6. original doors in central hall
7. photo # 9



1. Bedford Brown Bethell House
2. Des Arc, Arkansas
3. June, 1978
4. Sandra Taylor Smith
5. Arkansas Historic Preservation Prog.
6. Palladian window on 2nd storey from interior
7. photo # 10



1. Bedford Brown Bethell House
2. Des Arc, Arkansas
3. June, 1978
4. Sandra Taylor Smith
5. Arkansas Historic Preservation Prog.
6. side stairway
7. photo # 11



UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

7654 II SE  
(JASMINE)

91° 30' 35" 00' E  
1:37,000

638

639 R. 5 W. R. 4 W.

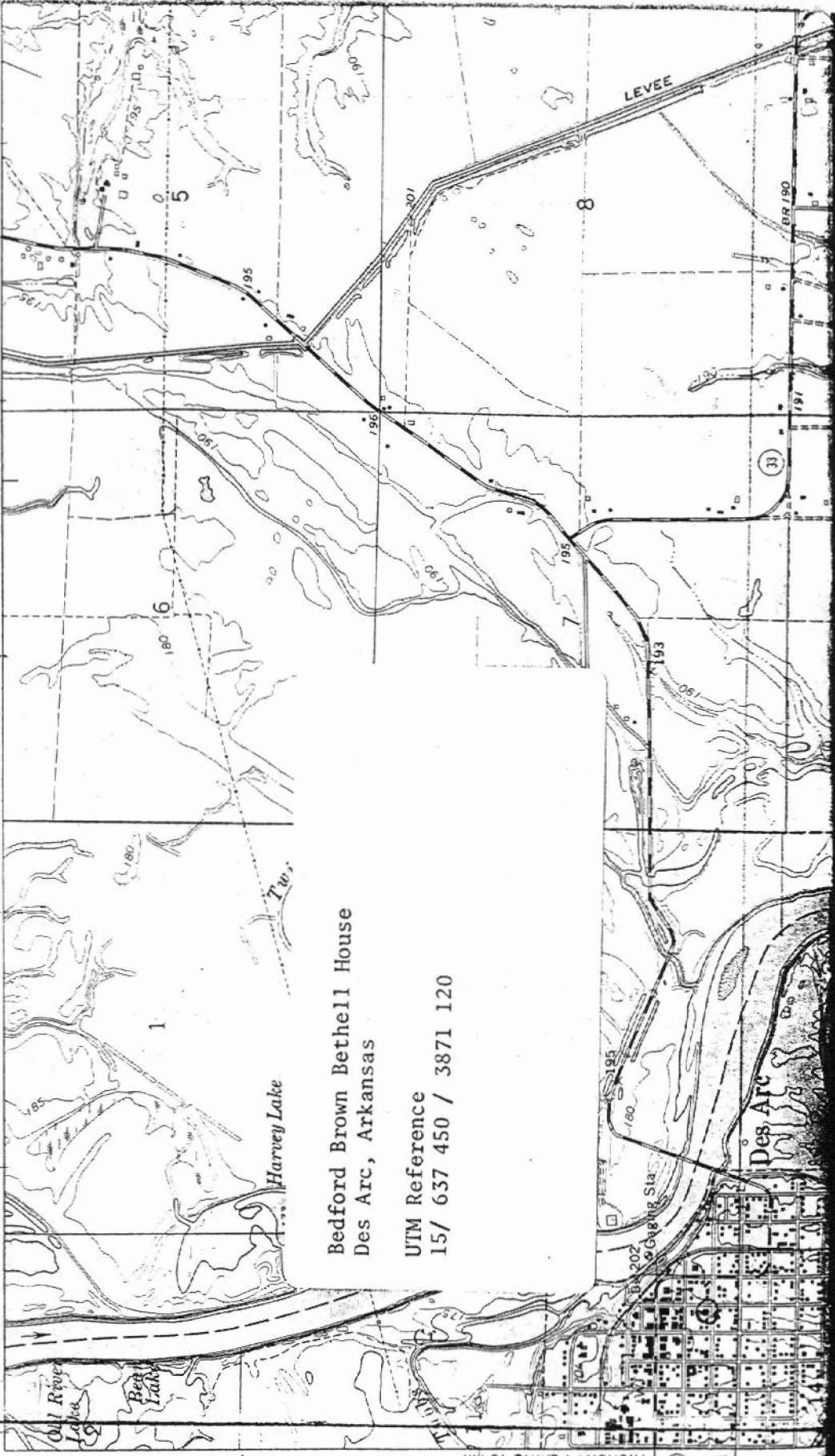
640

641

COTTON PLANT (VIA ARK. 38) 11 MI.  
5 MI. TO JUNC. ARK. 33 & 38

27' 30" 141

775 (GREG)



Bedford Brown Bethell House  
Des Arc, Arkansas

UTM Reference  
15/ 637 450 / 3871 120

3871  
CABOT 30 MI.  
HICKORY PLAINS 13 MI.

3873000m N.



## ARKANSAS HISTORIC PRESERVATION PROGRAM

Suite 500, Continental Building · Markham and Main · Little Rock, Arkansas 72201

Phone: (501) 371-2763

August 10, 1978

SEP 11 1978

Mr. Britt A. Skarda  
P. O. Box 440  
Des Arc, AR 72040

Re: Bedford Brown Bethell House  
Des Arc, Prairie County

Dear Mr. Skarda:

The staff of the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program is preparing a National Register nomination for the above captioned property which will be presented to the Arkansas State Review Committee at their September 12 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 Mike Shinn 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. ☒ Yes ☐ No

Comments: *Would you please mail me a copy of the completed nomination form as soon as it is completed. Thank you.*

*8-12-78*

Date

*Britt A. Skarda*

Signature