

60-60-4100-33

NR LISTED 10/18/79

United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

For HCRS use only

National 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 Pulaski County Courthouse

and/or common

2. Location

street & number 405 West Markham _____ not for publication

city, town Little Rock _____ vicinity of congressional district Second

state Arkansas code 05 county Pulaski code 119

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Pulaski County

street & number 405 West Markham

city, town Little Rock _____ vicinity of state Arkansas 72201

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Pulaski County Courthouse

street & number 405 West Markham

city, town Little Rock _____ vicinity of state Arkansas 72201

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Arkansas Historic Preservation Survey has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1976 _____ federal state _____ county _____ local

depository for survey records Arkansas Historic Preservation Program

city, town Little Rock _____ vicinity of state Arkansas 72201

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 edifice that is now known as the Pulaski County Courthouse actually consists of two different structures--the "Old" Pulaski County Courthouse, designed by Max A. Orlopp in 1886 and constructed between 1887 and 1889, and the "New" Pulaski County Courthouse, designed by George R. Mann in 1912 and constructed between 1913 and 1914. Unlike the typical Arkansas county courthouse, the Pulaski County Courthouse is not set as a focal feature in a "courthouse" square. The building is sited in the hub of downtown Little Rock among an ensemble of public buildings which has grown up on the environs of the Old State House. In 1925 Pulaski County purchased the western portion of the block the Courthouse occupies. This site has been developed as a park and it vests the courthouse environment with a refreshing break in the urban scenery.

Although the two segments of the Courthouse are connected and they function as one, each has retained its own unique character and architectural integrity. Comparison of the "Old" and "New" Courthouses reveals the development of American architectural sensibilities from the late nineteenth-century eclecticism of Orlopp's Romanesque Revival conception to the early twentieth-century Neo-Classicism of Mann's Beaux Arts-inspired design.

The Old Courthouse presents Orlopp's robust interpretation of the historical forms of Romanesque architecture to fulfill the functional requirements of the courthouse. Like H.H. Richardson, Orlopp created a powerful and, at that time, modern structure using the round arches, the bold and richly textured walls, and the Norman-inspired towers of the Romanesque. These historical elements were subject to the architect's personal interpretation. Orlopp combined the massive medieval forms with delicate Classically derived details drawn from the vocabulary of the popular Queen Anne style.

The Old Courthouse is a two-story structure with basement. Its principal facades are the south and east elevations which face West 2nd Street and Spring Street respectively. Both offer access to the building through one-story pavillions whose round-arched entrances, defined by heavily rusticated voussoirs, clearly articulate their function. These openings hold double wooden doors with transom windows in the tympanum area of the arch.

The principal elevations together with the west facade of the Old Courthouse demonstrate how Orlopp's unique interpretation of the lessons of architectural history organized the active elevations into a comprehensive, yet exciting, composition. The building is characterized by the typically Romanesque asymmetrical and irregular massing of its bulky formal elements, and the rugged articulation of its walls with heavily rusticated granite from the Fourche Mountain quarry south of Little Rock. The Old Courthouse roofscape is equally active. It features a juxtaposition of the hipped roof of the high-ceilinged courtroom, the gable roofs of the corner turrets. The original roofs were composed of slate, but this material was replaced with a composition shingle covering in 1961. A lofty clocktower once rose above the still extant square tower base at the southeast corner of the building. Unfortunately, this distinguishing and symbolic element was demolished in 1961.

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The architect's sensitivity to detail is evident throughout the building exterior in the harmonious relationship he has created between Romanesque and Queen Anne decoration. The solid brickwork of both the round arches and the flattened arches of the window surrounds together with their articulated keystones and the stone bands that radiate from their spring lines convey the powerful Romanesque decoration. In contrast, the slender stone string courses, triangular pediments, prevalent egg-and-dart moulding, and the elaborate cornice reflect the essence of the Queen Anne style. The rich terra cotta work of the cornice and of the pediment embellishment is outstanding.

Much of the original character of the Old Courthouse interior remains, although many coats of paint have obscured its original rich color scheme and exposed glazed brick, spaces have been manipulated to suit contemporary needs, and insensitive installations of mechanical equipment intrude on some areas. Broad arches reminiscent of those on the Romanesque exterior span across the main hallways, while delicately carved Queen Anne details enrich the door frames, ceiling mouldings, and baseboards. Structural brick vaulting can also be seen throughout the interior. Two staircases with fine ornamental cast iron railings provide vertical circulation. At this time the Old Courthouse is undergoing both interior and exterior renovation to restore the decorative interior spaces and to protect the richly embellished exterior walls.

The New Courthouse, once referred to as "the annex," is connected to the northeast corner of the Old Courthouse by way of a subtly designed passage. **Its rigid** monumentality offsets the powerful picturesqueness of its Romanesque Revival predecessor.

The Beaux Arts-influenced training that George Mann received at M.I.T. is evident in his masterful use of Classical design elements and his rational understanding of conceptual planning that distinguish the New Courthouse. It is a symmetrical, four-story structure. The articulation of the building's facades is quite regular in its Classical proportions and details, and the secondary east and west facades differ little from the principal north elevation which is oriented toward Markham Street.

The principal elevation of the New Courthouse embraces those elements of the Beaux Arts style that rendered it so suitable an esthetic for public buildings. The seven-bayed front of the building presents an essentially solid and monumental wall to the street. **The first floor elevation is constructed of heavily rusticated** stone which provides the building with a visually formidable foundation. Roman-arched openings in the three central bays of the first floor form the main entrance to the courthouse. The voussoirs of these arches, and those of the four similarly

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delineated windows that appear in the remaining bays, are distinctly articulated and keystones are embellished with sculptured, cherubic heads. Heavy ornamental iron and glass doors further enrich the facade. The entrance of the building is raised several feet above grade and is reached by way of a broad range of steps. This configuration is conceptually reminiscent of Classical temple construction and, perhaps, Mann had the notion of creating a "temple of government" in mind when he designed this feature of the Courthouse.

In elevation, a simple balustrade separates the first floor from the upper stories of the New Courthouse. The delineation of the second and third floor walls of the north and east facades is virtually identical. Like the principal facade, the east side of the building is composed of seven bays. Both of these elevations are distinguished by the stately row of engaged Ionic columns that articulate the five gently recessed central bays. Each bay contains prominent rectangular windows. Those on the second floor have triangular pediments supported on brackets, and the third floor windows are unembellished. The corner bays definitively terminate these elevations by virtue of their solid, rusticated stone walls juxtaposed against the open colonnade and the smooth wall behind it. Again, the third floor windows bear no decoration, but the second floor windows are articulated with segmental pediments. The west elevation of the courthouse echoes the delineation of the principal facades, but it is devoid of Classical columns and pediments. This side of the building is quite as monumental as the others.

Classical elements provide a forceful means of terminating the elevations. The Courthouse is capped by a dentiled cornice. Although the articulation of the roof-scape appears, from street level, to be flat, the building is enclosed by a hipped roof that surrounds the dome structure. The balustrade that encircles the perimeter of the roof conceals its true form.

The essence of a Beaux Arts design is found in the architect's conceptual approach to the treatment and experience of space--the parti, and the New Courthouse is no exception. In this case, Mann developed a great dome which penetrates three floors of the building. It is clearly the pivotal element of the courthouse scheme and all other spaces are designed to focus attention on this conceptually unifying dome. The individual elements of the almost symmetrical plan, which includes courtrooms, judges chambers, offices, and a multitude of other support spaces, are subordinate to the parti. Both vertical and horizontal circulation are oriented around the dome, and the building's entrances are on axis with its rotunda.

The skylighted dome and its rotunda are embellished with extraordinarily rich decorative elements that are well suited to its premier position in the courthouse plan. The opalescent stained glass interior of the steel-ribbed dome is

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reminiscent of earlier Art Nouveau glass. The dome is supported at four spring points, and these are richly articulated. At each of these corners marble columns with gilded Corinthian capitals support full entablatures which function as pedestals for allegorical sculpture. The gilded plaster decoration of their friezes, especially the griffins and the sinuous foliated forms, is noteworthy. Ionic columns, walls and balconies of marble set off this lavish decorative scheme.

The primary interior spaces of the New Courthouse remain virtually unchanged, save the intrusion of pipes and ductwork of modernized mechanical systems installed in 1955. Consequently, the fine craftsmanship of the building's original marble and wood is apparent. Spacious hallways are enriched with high marble wainscoting, Classically detailed plaster mouldings, and marble pilasters of the Ionic order. Coffered ceilings in the public spaces and the barrel vaults that span the stair wells are also articulated with Classical plaster decoration, including dentils, egg-and-dart patterns, and floral rosette-like forms.

The architectural integrity of the courtrooms, located on the second, third, and fourth floors, has been respected over the years and their original character remains untouched. Here, too, ornate plaster-work in various Classical motifs decorates the ceilings and cornices. Carved wood panels, many of which have been refinished and have a golden, oak-like appearance, enrich the walls.

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 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 checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates 1887-1889, 1913-1914 **Builder/Architect** Max A. Orlopp, Jr. and George R. Mann

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Pulaski County Courthouse consists of two connected buildings. The older building has been in use by the county since its construction was completed in 1889. The newer building was completed in 1914, and they have, collectively, served as the seat of county government since that time. The buildings are related in several ways: each was designed by an important architect; each was constructed largely of Arkansas materials; and each is a significant representative of its architectural style. In 1886, Max A Orlopp, Jr. was awarded the contract to design the older building, the county's first permanent courthouse, soon after completing his architectural apprenticeship. An article in the Arkansas Gazette, published after the cornerstone for the older building was laid in 1887, said the building was "designed to be the most imposing structure of the kind in the state." Critics today agree that it did indeed become the major courthouse example of the Romanesque Revival style in Arkansas. George R. Mann, thought today to have been one of Arkansas' most accomplished architects, designed the "new" courthouse building. Mann studied under William R. Ware at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, graduating in one of its earliest architecture classes in 1876. Not a native Arkansan, Mann came to Little Rock in 1900 with his plans for a new state capitol. His plans were accepted and he settled in Little Rock, going on to design many of Arkansas' finest buildings. Mann was commissioned in 1912 to design the new County Courthouse. His execution of this building demonstrates that Mann thoroughly mastered the Classical and monumental Beaux Arts style. The building has been altered very little after 65 years, and consequently retains most of its original brilliance. It is now considered one of Arkansas' premier buildings.

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Statement on National Significance

The 1913-1914 Pulaski County Courthouse and its architect, George R. Mann, have a significance that transcends the borders of Arkansas. The quantity, quality, and wide geographical spread of George Mann's work is remarkable. Thanks to a 12-page, unpublished autobiography he wrote in 1932, we know a good deal about his life and work. Mann spent two years as a draftsman, studied design at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and had short work experiences in New York (with McKim, Meade, and White), Goshen, Indiana, and Minneapolis before settling down in Missouri in 1879. From offices at different times in St. Joseph and then St. Louis, Mann made a measurable impact on the built environment of the state and, increasingly, from 1880-1900, he attracted commissions in other states as well. Mann "planned and erected nearly all the large buildings in the business section" of prosperous St. Joseph, according to a short biographical sketch in James Cox's Old and New St. Louis (St. Louis, 1894). He designed many public buildings, including the St. Louis City Hall, and several county courthouses, including one for each of the northwest counties of Missouri. He also designed many warehouses and train depots. Mann traveled to, and eventually settled in, Little Rock in 1900 to offer plans for the new state capitol. In the first one-third of the twentieth century he continued his prolific production of designs for structures in Arkansas and neighboring states. In Arkansas alone, no less than nine of his surviving buildings have been recognized for their significance by inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places. The Pulaski County Courthouse, a successful and remarkably well-preserved Beaux Arts building, is one of Mann's best efforts.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Arkansas Democrat, April 23, 1959.

Arkansas Gazette, August 11, 1887, August 14, 1887, February 23, 1912,
September 28, 1952, July 28, 1957, January 11, 1959.

Interview with Charles Witsell, Jr., architect, September, 1979.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 1.5 Acres

Quadrangle name Little Rock

Quadrangle scale 1:24:00

UMT References

A

1	5	5	6	6	3	0	0	3	8	4	5	2	8	0
Zone	Easting				Northing									

B

Zone	Easting				Northing									

C

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

D

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E

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G

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H

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Verbal boundary description and justification Block 101, Original City.

Bounded on the west by Broadway, on the north by Markham, on the east by Spring,
and on the south by West 2d Avenue.

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 Ethel Goodstein, Architectural Historian, Robert Besom, Historian

organization Arkansas Historic Preservation Program date September 20, 1979

street & number Suite 500, Continental Building telephone 371-2763

city or town Little Rock state Arkansas 72201

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 Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature _____

title State Historic Preservation Officer date September 21, 1979

For HCRS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date _____

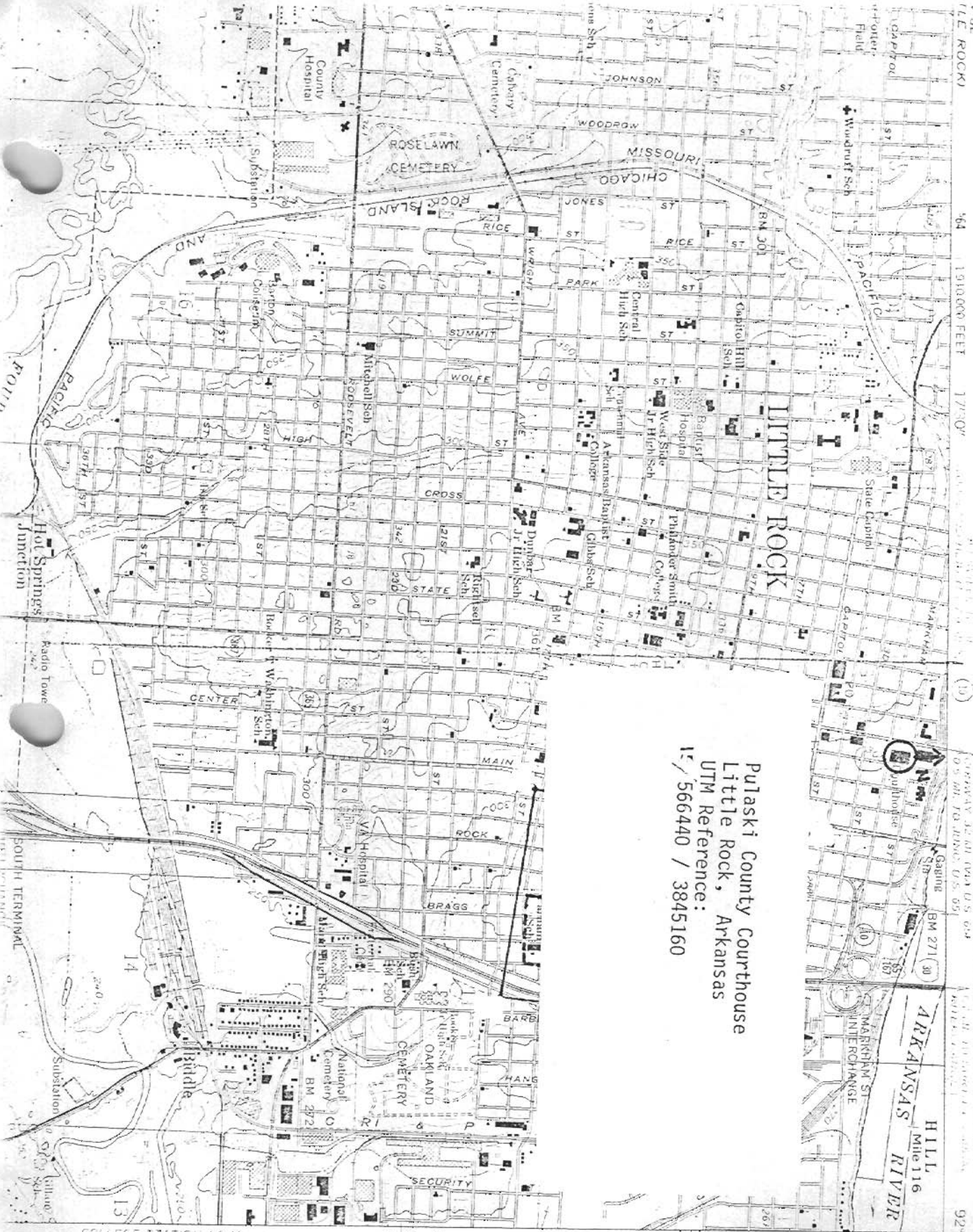
Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date _____

Chief of Registration

AREA PLANNING
PULASKI COUNTY



Pulaski County Courthouse
Little Rock, Arkansas
UTM Reference:
15 / 566440 / 3845160

LITTLE ROCK QUADRANGLE
ARKANSAS
7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)
NE/4 ALEXANDER 15' QUADRANGLE

1:50,000 FEET
17°09'
92°15'
34°45'

COLLEGE STATION: 1.9 MI

3843
750 000
FEET

2551 SW
MCALMONT

