

United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

For HCRS use only

received

date entered

1. Name

historic Little Rock Central Fire Station

U.T.M. 15/566300/3845280

and/or common

2. Location

street & number 520 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not for publication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

- 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 Little Rock, City Hall

street & number 500 West Markham

city, town Little Rock

vicinity of

state

Arkansas 72201

Roll # 528:01-03  
528:08-12

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Pulaski County Courthouse

street & number 405 West Markham

city, town Little Rock

state

Arkansas 72201

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Ark. 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

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 Central Fire Station was constructed in 1913. Little Rock architect Charles Thompson, aided by associate architect Tom Harding, designed the building. The building is a fine example of the Neo-Classical civic architecture that, as a result of the Beaux Arts influence, flourished in this country during the first decades of the twentieth century.

The Beaux Arts-inspired fire station is a two-story structure with a basement. Its monumental front elevation, which faces south on Markham Street, is the most architecturally significant aspect of the building. **This facade features a giant Doric order set on square stone pedestals. Four fluted columns define five central bays. These hold floor-to-ceiling glass doors on the first floor. The doors provided fire vehicles with access to the apparatus room, which occupied most of the first floor. On the second floor, five flattened Roman-arched openings hold long, rectangular windows flanked by narrow glass panels. Individual panes of glass compose a transom above. Carved stone keystones articulate each of the brick arches. Originally, folding glass doors offered access to the semi-circular balconies. The balconies have delicate ornamental iron railings that distinguish the facade. The massive, brick, terminal bays of this elevation provide a distinctive contrast to the light, open quality communicated by the central area. They rest upon an exposed stone foundation that relates in material and scale to the pedestals of the order. The walls of these end bays are interrupted only by the penetration of a single doorway on each side of the building. heavy, but unembellished, stone moulding articulates these doors. Engaged columns also define the corners of the building and provide transition from the open order to the massive columns.**

The crowning feature of the principal facade contributes substantially to the formidable image of the fire station. A terra cotta architrave extends along the entire front facade of the building under an unembellished frieze of the same material which bears the inscription, "Little Rock Fire Department." The building is capped with a simple dentiled cornice. A stone parapet wall rises above the cornice and terminated in a bold, cast terra cotta version of the fire department emblem located at the center of the parapet.

The building's grand principal facade masks the pragmatic functionalism of the fire station, but the secondary elevations are more austere. **The prominently articulated south corners of the building turn to accentuate the secondary elevations. They project almost one foot forward from the east and west sides, and the stone foundation continues with them. The pressed-brick of the west elevation is interrupted only by utilitarian, double-hung, rectangular windows regularly placed on the first and second floors and on their stone sills. Windows on the east side of the building are not quite so regularly delineated. However, the east elevation features a projecting bay window supported on stone brackets and capped with a simple cornice articulating what once was the assistant chief's office. As a result of the topography of the site, which slopes in a northerly direction toward the Arkansas River, the undistinguished basement story is exposed on both the east and west. Here, garage-like doors provide access to the maintenance shop. Both the east and west walls terminate in a brick continuation of the parapet wall. Simple corbeling extends along the side walls at the level of the architrave, and a stone coping tops the parapet.**

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7

PAGE 1

An addition to the north side of the fire station constructed in 1952 virtually obscures all but the second floor of the rear elevation of the original building. The two-story addition, designed by architect K.E.N. Cole, Jr., is devoid of distinctive architectural character. The corners of the addition are brick. Large expanses of metal-framed windows, separated by corrugated-metal siding between the second and first floors, appear on all three of the addition's elevations. This appendage has an anonymous, industrial character but fortunately is sited in a way that presents only a low profile on the already undistinguished north (rear) facade. It is not visible from the Markham Street thoroughfare and does not intrude on the stately principal visage of the building.

The original plan of the building allocated space on the ground floor for fire-fighting apparatus, administrative offices, and the chief's office. Firemen's dormitories, locker room and showers, the kitchen, and a special apartment for the assistant chief were located on the second floor. The east side of the basement was a garage for the police department while the west side served as a store-room and repair shop for the fire department.

The fire station was originally fitted with brass hardware, brass "sliding poles," and marble stairs. Offices had tile flooring while poured concrete floors remained exposed throughout the rest of the building. Interior partitions were constructed of plate glass above marble wainscoting. The poles and some partitions have since been removed.

There have been few changes in the appearance of the principal facade of the fire station. In 1957, the folding glass balcony doors were replaced with the existing window arrangement to facilitate the installation of a central air conditioning system. The modern fire station doors that now enclose the apparatus room were added at that time.

Presently, the fire station provides the city with storage space and office facilities. The fire station's fine facade thus still masks the building's utilitarian function.

## 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/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 1913

Builder/Architect Charles Thompson, Tom Harding

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

With its back to the Arkansas River and its monumental front elevation adorning the busy Markham Street thoroughfare, the Central Fire Station marks the western edge of Little Rock's traditional governmental center. For 64 years, between 1913 and 1977, the building served as headquarters for the Little Rock Fire Department. It housed the equipment and men of various aerial and chemical truck companies and provided space for all of the central communications network and general administration offices of the Fire Department. Given the vast changes that took place in the technology of fire-fighting equipment, it is remarkable that the building accommodated the department for so long. But the enduring significance of the building lies in its architectural style, especially the striking Beaux Arts-inspired Neo-Classical facade. The fire station was designed to complement the elegant City Hall building next door by two of Little Rock's busiest and most respected architects, Charles Thompson and Tom Harding. With great Doric columns separated by two stories of multi-pane glass, distinctive second-story ornamental balconies, and crown, featuring the bold Fire Department emblem, the station is eye-catching and memorable. It is probable that the building was the inspiration for a subsequent series of pleasant substations in the city. Several of Little Rock's fire stations are architecturally attractive and designed to blend into their respective neighborhoods.

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

The Arkansas Gazette. April 21, 1913.  
 The Arkansas Democrat. 1913 Issues.  
 Interviews with Jack Davis, Little Rock Fire Chief, and Melvin White, Director,  
 Little Rock General Services Department, September, 1979.

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property Less than one acre.

Quadrangle name Little Rock

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

### UMT References

A 

1	5
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5	6	6	3	0	0
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3	8	4	5	2	8	0
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B 

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### Verbal boundary description and justification

West half of Block 121, Original City. Bounded by North Arch Street on the west,  
 La Harpe Boulevard on the north, City Hall on the east, and West Markham on the south.

### List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

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 501-371-2763

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

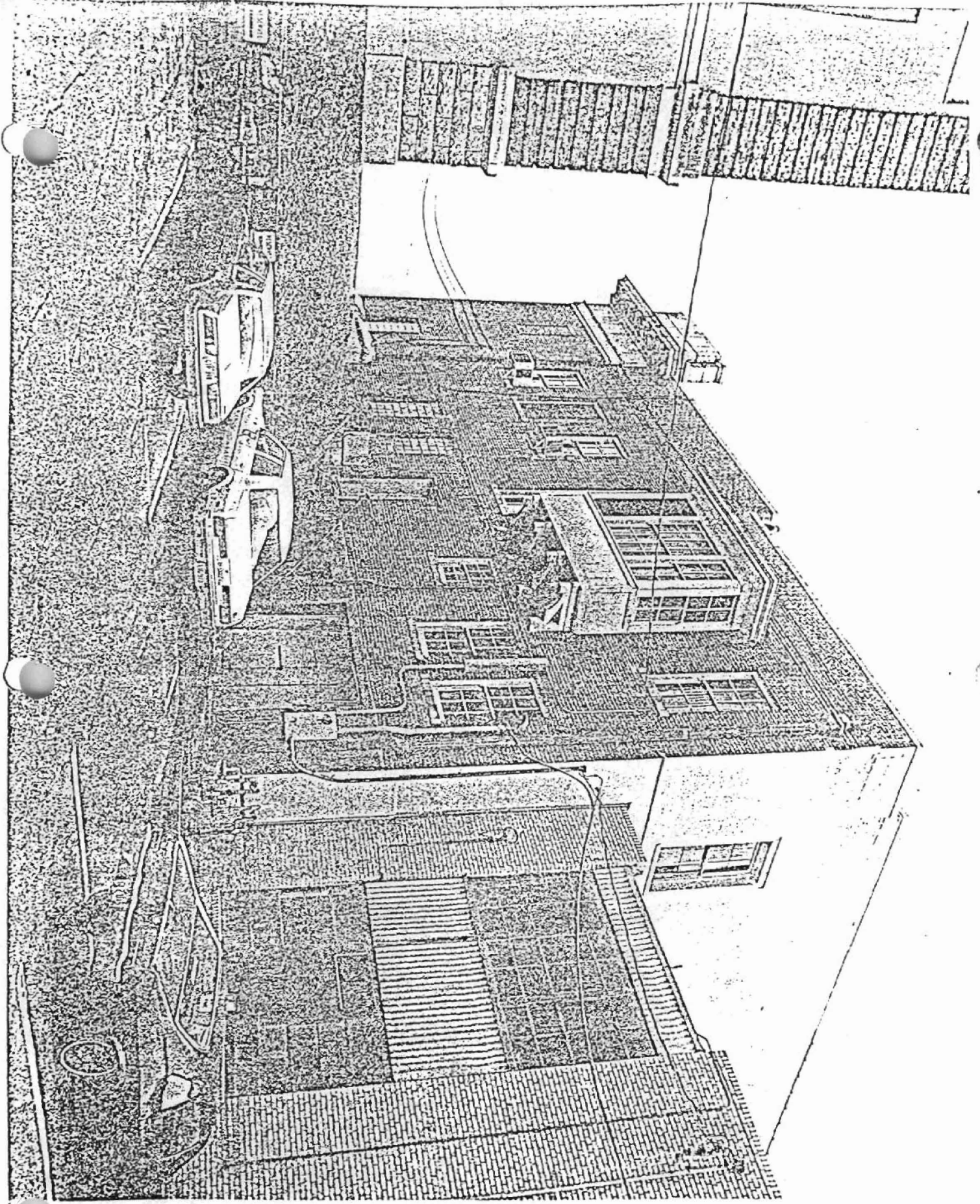
date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

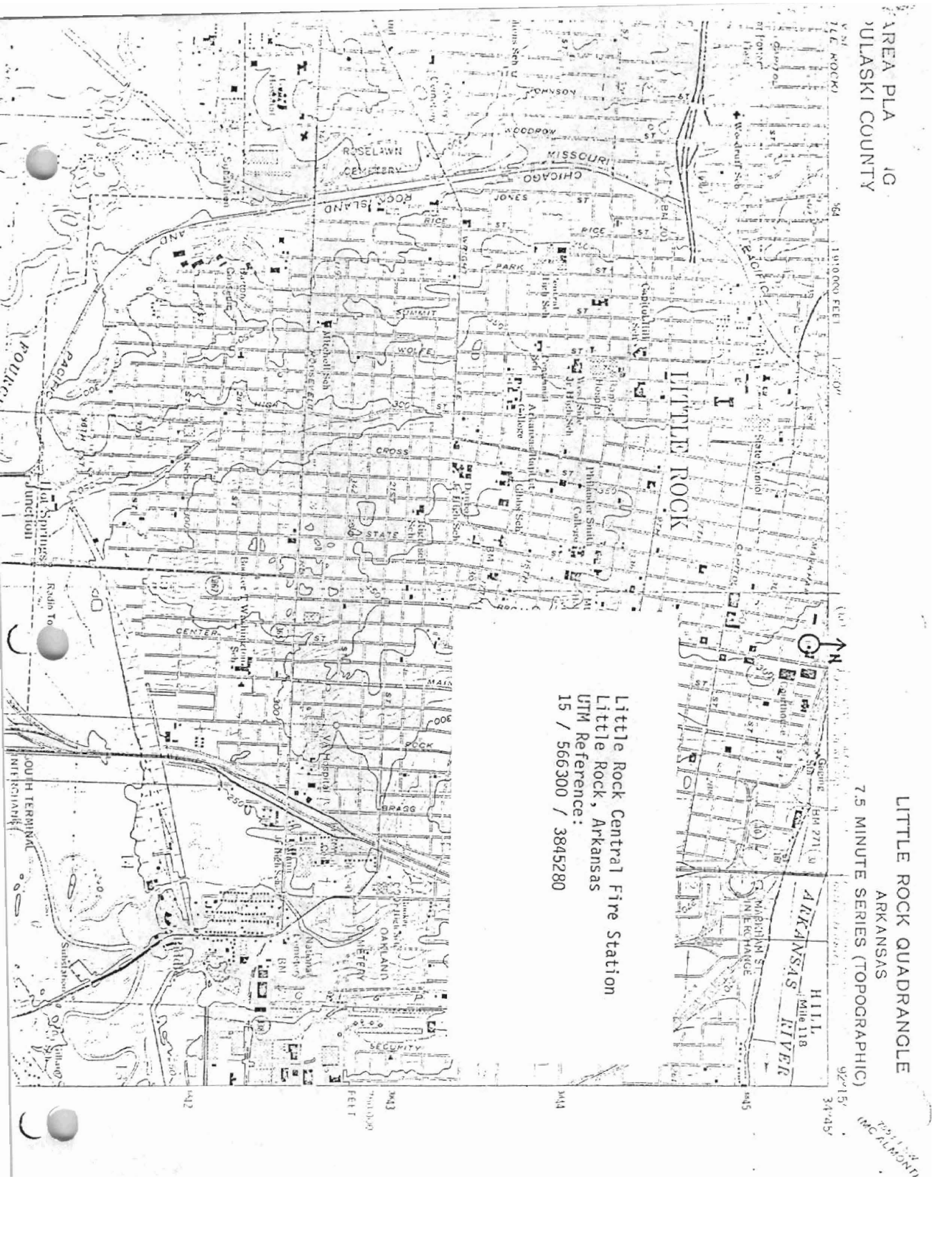
date

Chief of Registration





AREA PLAIN  
ULASKI COUNTY



LITTLE ROCK QUADRANGLE  
ARKANSAS

7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)

Little Rock Central Fire Station  
Little Rock, Arkansas  
UTM Reference:  
15 / 566300 / 3845280

721 100  
MC ALMOND

