NPS Form 10-900
(Oct. 1990)

OMB No. 10024-0018

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

NR 6/01/05

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Climber Motor Car Factory, Unit A

other names/site number Arkansas Aircraft Corporation; Command-Aire, Inc.; Site #PU8173

2. Location

street & number 1823 East 17th Street ☐ not for publication

city or town Little Rock ☐ vicinity

state Arkansas code AR county Pulaski code 119 zip code 72202

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this ☒ 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 for in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property ☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant
☐ nationally ☒ statewide ☐ locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Cathie Matthews 3/18/05

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

Arkansas Historic Preservation Program

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 certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

☐ 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:) _____

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- ☒ private
- ☐ public-local
- ☐ public-State
- ☐ public-Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

- ☒ building(s)
- ☐ district
- ☐ site
- ☐ structure
- ☐ object

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		sites
1		structures
		objects
2		Total

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

Arkansas Highway History and Architecture, 1910-1965

Number of Contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

INDUSTRY/PROCESSING/EXTRACTION/factory

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

INDUSTRY/PROCESSING/EXTRACTION/factory

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

OTHER/Plain Traditional

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETE
walls CONCRETE
WOOD
roof METAL
other

Narrative Description
(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria
(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- ☒ **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.

Criteria Considerations
(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- ☐ **A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- ☐ **B.** removed from its original location.
- ☐ **C.** birthplace or grave of a historical figure of outstanding importance.
- ☐ **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.

Levels of Significance (local, state, national)
Statewide

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)
Transportation
Industry

Period of Significance
1919-1955

Significant Dates
1919-1955

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked)

Cultural Affiliation (Complete if Criterion D is marked)

Architect/Builder

Narrative Statement of Significance
(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography
(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

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
- ☐ Other

Name of repository:

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Approximately 4 acres.

UTM References
(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
1	15	568753	3843395	3			
2				4			

☐ See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description
(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification
(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Ralph S. Wilcox, National Register & Survey Coordinator
organization Arkansas Historic Preservation Program date January 7, 2005
street & number 1500 Tower Building, 323 Center Street telephone (501) 324-9787
city or town Little Rock state AR zip code 72201

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

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name Bruce Winn
street & number 1823 East 17th Street telephone
city or town Little Rock state AR zip code 72202

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 listing. 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 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 20303.

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SUMMARY

Located southeast of downtown Little Rock in an area of heavy industrial development, the Climber Motor Car Factory, Unit A, is a large one-story frame building with a metal-sheathed monitor roof that rests on a continuous cast-concrete foundation. The walls of the building and the roof's monitor are fenestrated with large steel-framed casement windows, which provide abundant light to the building's interior. (Although some of the windows have been covered with corrugated siding, the windows remain underneath.) The bottom two feet of the walls are constructed of cast concrete, while the upper portions of the walls are frame with concrete pilasters between the windows. Large doors at the north and south ends of the building provide vehicle access to the building's interior.

ELABORATION

The Climber Motor Car Factory, Unit A, is located approximately two miles southeast of downtown Little Rock and just west of Little Rock National Airport. It is in a neighborhood of industrial development, and is surrounded by other industrial buildings from the early twentieth century. East 17th Street is located on the north side of the building and a railroad spur is located along the east side of the building.

The building rests on a continuous cast-concrete foundation, and the lower two feet of the building's walls are built out of concrete as well. The concrete walls and slotted doors prevented the building from flooding due to its location on low ground east of a small stream. The upper portions of the walls are frame with concrete pilasters between the windows to support the roof. The building's wood frame is cypress, and the windows that line the walls and monitor are steel-framed casement windows.

The monitor roof of the main portion of the building is sheathed in metal over two-inch tongue-and-groove cypress boards. The addition on the building's west side has a low-pitched gable roof sheathed in metal.

A metal water tower, built c.1936, is located behind the building.

Front/North Façade

The north façade of the original portion of the building is dominated by the central roll-up garage door that provides vehicle access to the interior. The door is immediately flanked on each side by a twenty-five-paned, steel-framed window with a twenty-five-paned, steel-framed window above. (Originally, the garage door was shorter, and two twenty-five-paned, steel-framed windows were located above.) In the north end of the monitor are two twenty-six-paned, steel-framed windows, with the middle ten panes being operable.

To the left of the central monitor section of the building, the building is fenestrated by two sixty-paned, steel-framed windows with operable eight-paned panels on each end. To the right of the central portion of the building are two entrances flanked on each side by smaller four-paned windows, although the window to the right of the right entrance and the window to the left of the left entrance have been boarded up. In addition,

the right entrance has been boarded up. The entrances provided access to the original office portion of the building.

The north side of the 1936 addition does not have any fenestration, but does have a small entrance towards its eastern end.

Side/West Façade
Beginning at the north end of the west side of the building, the façade is fenestrated by six wood-framed, six-over-six windows, although the northernmost window has been boarded up. The windows provide light to the original office area of the building. The small windows are then followed by two sixty-paned, steel-framed windows with operable six-paned panels on each end. Proceeding south along the façade, there are two small projections and the northern projection is fenestrated by three windows while the southern projection is fenestrated by two windows. The entire length of the monitor's west side is fenestrated by operable, ten-paned, steel-framed windows.

The west façade of the 1936 addition does not have any fenestration.

Rear/South Façade
Like the north façade, the south façade of the original portion of the building is dominated by the central roll-up garage door that provides vehicle access to the interior. The door is immediately flanked on each side by a twenty-five-paned, steel-framed window covered with corrugated metal siding with a twenty-five-paned, steel-framed window above. The windows located directly above the door have been replaced by horizontal wood boards and the remains of a hoist project from the top center of the panel. In the north end of the monitor are two twenty-six-paned, steel-framed windows, with the middle ten panes being operable.

To the left and right of the central monitor section of the building, the building is fenestrated by two sixty-paned, steel-framed windows with operable eight-paned panels on each end. However, like the other lower level windows on this façade, they have been covered with corrugated metal siding.

The south side of the 1936 addition does not have any fenestration.

Side/East Façade
Beginning at the north end of the building, the east side of the façade is lined with sixty-paned, steel-framed windows. However, unlike the windows on the front façade that have operable eight-paned panels on each end, the windows on the east façade have operable six-paned panels on each end. A small projection with eight-paned windows is also located at the south end of the façade.

The entire length of the monitor's east side is fenestrated by operable, ten-paned, steel-framed windows.

Water Tower
In addition to the main building, the c.1936 water tower located to the south of the building also contributes to the nomination. The tower is supported by four sloping metal legs along with the water pipe that goes up to the center of the tower. The water storage portion has a circular bowl-shaped bottom and metal walls. A walkway circles the tower at the top of the bowl-shaped bottom. The tower is topped by a conical metal roof.

Interior
With the exception of the office spaces at the northwest corner, the interior of the original portion of the building is one large open space. Cypress poles are evenly-spaced along both sides of the roof's monitor to provide support, and the interior's framing is all exposed. Windows of the monitor, which are still uncovered, provide plentiful light to the building's interior, although the interior would have been lighter and airier originally with the lower level windows uncovered.

In contrast to the original building, the interior of the 1936 addition is much darker without the fenestration. The eastern part of the addition is open, allowing flexible use of the space, while the western part of the addition is divided into smaller office spaces.

Integrity
Overall, the Climber Motor Car Factory, Unit A, retains good integrity. Based on historic photographs of the building just after its completion, little has changed with the original building. The largest changes to the building have included the installation of the corrugated metal siding over the original windows for security reasons. However, the original windows are still in place, and can easily be uncovered again. Although a fairly large addition was constructed on the west side of the building, it was constructed in 1936, and illustrates the adaptation of the building to accommodate various industrial uses. The interior of the building is virtually unaltered, and really reflects the industrial character of the building with its open floor plan and copious windows. Finally, the neighborhood surrounding the building still reflects the industrial character of the area that was present when the building was built in 1919.

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Advertisement from the *Arkansas Gazette* – November 20, 1919.

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Staff photograph of the Arkansas Aircraft Corporation – November 20, 1928.

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SUMMARY

Constructed in 1919 at 1823 East 17th Street, the Climber Motor Car Factory, Unit A, is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places with **statewide significance** under **Criterion A** for its associations with Arkansas automobile transportation and also for its associations with industrial development in the Little Rock area. The Climber Motor Car Factory, Unit A, is the only building completed of a proposed multi-building complex planned for the construction of the Climber automobile. Built between 1919 and 1924, the Climber was the only automobile built in Arkansas. After the Climber Corporation closed, the building continued to be used for industrial purposes housing, among other ventures, the factory of the Command-Aire airplane and Great Northern Paper, which used the facility for toilet paper manufacturing. Climber Motor Car Factory, Unit A, is being submitted to the National Register of Historic Places under the multiple property listing "Arkansas Highway and Transportation Era Architecture, 1910-1965" in conjunction with the historic context "Arkansas Highway History and Architecture, 1910-1965."

ELABORATION

Although Frenchman Nicholas Cugnot built a three-wheeled, steam-powered carriage for hauling cannons c.1767, it was not until the late nineteenth century that inventors in the United States began tinkering with automobile production. There is great debate about the "inventor" of the automobile in the United States, but credit is generally given to Frank and Charles Duryea, who founded the Duryea Motor Wagon Company in 1895. As their name implies, the vehicles that the Duryeas produced were little more than wagons with motors attached. However, the American auto industry was born.[1]

The automobile craze grew by leaps and bounds during the early twentieth century. In a 1907 issue of *The Outing Magazine*, it was reported that "...In 1906, the cost of the annual American output of automobiles was $65,000,000. There were 146 concerns in business, which represented a capitalization of probably $25,000,000 and were giving employment directly and indirectly to an army of men which reached well up into the hundreds of thousands."[2] Arkansas was in no way left behind by the explosive growth of the use of the automobile. Although it is not known when or where the first automobile appeared in Arkansas, it is known that the first automobiles appeared in Washington County around 1905, most notably when a Texan drove a two-cylinder Model F Buick into Fayetteville.[3] By 1913, there were 3,596 registered passenger vehicles in Arkansas.[4]

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[1] Walter J. Boyne. *Power Behind the Wheel: Creativity and the Evolution of the Automobile.* New York: Stewart, Tabori & Chang, 1988, pp. 31, 38-39.

[2] Wells, David T. "The Growth of the Automobile Industry in America," *The Outing* Magazine, 1907, reprinted in Oppel, Frank (ed.). *Motoring in America: The Early Years*. Secaucus, NJ: Castle Books, 1989, p. 83.

[3] *History of Washington County, Arkansas*. Springdale, AR: Shiloh Museum, 1989, p. 274.

[4] Arkansas State Highway and Transportation Department. *Historical Review: Arkansas State Highway Commission and Arkansas State Highway and Transportation Department, 1913-1992*. Little Rock: Arkansas State Highway and Transportation Department, 1992, p.19.

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Even though automobile production was growing year by year, the improvement of roads to accommodate the new vehicles was severely lagging behind across the nation, including Arkansas. Even after the passage of Act 302 in 1913, which established the State Highway Commission and the State Highway Department as an affiliate of the Department of State Lands, it was many years before anything resembling a good system of improved roads was in place.[5] As a result, automobile travel around the state was an arduous task at best in the early years.

In order to hopefully produce an automobile that could better cope with Arkansas's primitive road system, William Drake, Clarence Roth, and Davis Hopson incorporated the Climber Motor Corporation in early 1919. They envisioned building a car that could drive well on pavement as well as on unimproved roads; a car that had a rugged frame and a strong gearbox that could handle the mountainous terrain of the Ozark Mountains as well as the long, flat, straight stretches of road found in the Arkansas Delta.

The articles of incorporation filed with the Secretary of State's office and with the Pulaski County Clerk gave the corporation very broad powers. For example, "it could buy, own, use, and improve real estate, and sell convey, and dispose the same. It could build, assemble, construct, manufacture, repair, sell, and deal in automobiles, trucks, tractors, motorcycles, airplanes, and any other machinery, implements, and vehicles deemed advisable together 'with all parts and accessories thereof.'"[6] The company's first board of directors consisted of Drake as president, Roth as vice-president, and Hopson as secretary-treasurer. (A reorganization in October 1919 promoted Henry Buhler, who was general sales manager, to president. Also, Lloyd Judd became treasurer and Richard Fletcher became secretary and plant manager. Clarence Roth was retained as vice-president, and Drake and Hopson both left the company.)[7]

At the same time that the company was being incorporated, it was also necessary to find a site for the location of the factory. A 20.46-acre site, which was located on the very eastern edge of Little Rock at the time, was purchased for $20,460 from the Industrial Land Company of Little Rock. The deed was filed on January 18, 1919, and stipulated that the down payment for the property was $2,000 with the balance to be paid in three annual installments. A total of $8,460 was due on January 1, 1920, a payment of $5,000 was due on January 1, 1921, and the remaining $5,000 would be due on January 1, 1922. The site was ideal since it was far away from the city's residential areas and was already served by spur tracks of the Rock Island and Missouri Pacific railroads.[8]

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[5] Arkansas State Highway and Transportation Department, p. 20.
[6] Ed Faulkner. "The Climber: A Chapter in Arkansas Automotive History," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly*, Volume 29, Autumn 1970, p. 216.
[7] *Ibid.*
[8] *Ibid.*

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Construction of the factory actually began on January 9, 1919, before the deed was filed. What was planned to be the Truck Department was the first building built. (Although several other buildings were planned, they were never constructed.) At the same time, raising money for production, finding skilled labor, and obtaining parts and materials became a top priority of the company's board of directors. Finding skilled labor took members of the board to other parts of the country, and they did succeed in bringing people to Little Rock to work in the factory. Probably the most important person coaxed to the company was George Schoeneck, a Detroit automotive engineer, who came to Little Rock in 1918 or 1919 as chief engineer for the corporation.[9]

As chief engineer, Schoeneck's main responsibility was to get the materials and parts that would be needed to build the Climber, and get them in time to hopefully begin production in early 1919. (In fact, Schoeneck's contract called for the production of fifty four-cylinder "Simplex," or touring-class, cars.) To fulfill his contractual obligations, Schoeneck traveled to the North and East in early 1919, and purchased all of the equipment, parts, and materials that would be needed to build the cars and shipped them to Little Rock. In addition, Ernest Taylor, who began as first chief electrician and was later promoted to plant superintendent, was hired by the corporation to help Schoeneck.[10]

Although Schoeneck felt he had enough materials, equipment, and parts, apparently he was wrong, and Climber production got off to a rocky start, at best. The factory was constantly dealing with a shortage of parts, and since Schoeneck was not able to get finished parts elsewhere, he had to resort to designing and making his own parts. By the time that the company was reorganized and President Drake retired in October 1919, he reported that, "The Climber Motor Corporation is turning out automobiles at the amazing rate of two a day and by the end of this month production will be up to five autos a day." However, it was not until early 1920 that all of the production problems were overcome.[11]

However, it was not only a chronic shortage of parts that the company had to deal with – there was also a chronic shortage of money. Initially, the company was capitalized at $1,000,000 with stock being sold to the public for $10 a share in early 1919. Buhler, who initially offered the stock, stressed the "cooperative profit-sharing" of the company and that the stock would be owned by "all classes of people." Stockholders who owned ten or more shares of the company were also offered a 17% discount on the price of a new car or truck. Although the initial stock offering did bring in enough money to allow production on a limited scale, it was not long until financial problems developed. After the company's reorganization, Buhler started an intensive advertising campaign to promote the Climber and boost stock sales.[12]

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[9] *Ibid*, p. 217.
[10] *Ibid.*
[11] *Ibid*, pp. 217-218.
[12] *Ibid*, p. 223.

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Unfortunately, the stock campaign did not bring the results that were hoped for. As a result, Buhler turned to the Chicago firm of Mintie, Myer, and Burns, Incorporated, a company that specialized in high-pressure selling of stocks and bonds, for help in selling the stock. Buhler was told that in order to be able to turn over $10 to the Climber Corporation, the stock would have to be offered at $17.50 a share in order to cover Mintie's costs, a price well above the legal limit of $12.50. However, since Buhler was desperate to finance production, he caved in and cosigned $300,000 worth of Climber stock to them, agreeing to sell it at $17.50 a share. But since the country was in the grips of the 1921 financial recession, the Mintie firm either did not push sales of the stock or was unable to sell it. The continuing insurmountable financial problems would soon bring the Climber Corporation's end.[13]

In February 1924 the bankruptcy action of *Williams Owens, Treasurer et. al. v. The Climber Motor Corporation et. al.* was heard in the Pulaski County Chancery Court. It was declared that the company was bankrupt, and the company was put under the control of a receiver who was ordered to sell all of the company's assets to help pay off the creditors. On March 17, 1924, the receiver, X. O. Pindall, sold all of the Climber holdings, and the company was no more.[14] Total production for the Climber Corporation was approximately 200 cars (100 each of the Climber Four and Climber Six) and approximately 75-100 trucks.[15]

Although the company was constantly plagued by a lack of funds, and also a lack of parts in its early days, the cars and trucks that the company produced were good vehicles. The company produced two car models, the Climber Four and Climber Six, and at least two truck models, a one-ton and two-ton version. The Four, which was called the Climber "Four-Forty" in advertisements because of its four-cylinder, forty-horsepower Spillman engine, was a five-passenger touring car with collapsible top and side curtains. The bodies were built of twenty-gauge rolled steel mounted over a wooden frame, and initially came in three color patterns: 1) dark maroon body, black hood, and cream wheels; 2) black body, dark green hood, and red wheels; and 3) battleship-gray body, black hood, and white wheels. Later models came in solid colors, either brown, black, or Brewster green. Upholstering and seat covers were Wilson and Company's shrunk split leather, and each car came with a set of tools that included a pump, a jack, a set of tire tools, a set of six wrenches, a pair of pliers, a screwdriver, and a tool bag.[16]

The Climber was also a durable automobile that was able to handle the rough roads of Arkansas at the time, a goal that the company's officials had. In order to publicize the car's abilities, an endurance test was conducted in the winter of 1919-1920 under the supervision of William B. Owen, state highway commissioner. After the car's engine was started in Little Rock, it was kept running constantly as the car

[13] *Ibid*, pp. 223-224.
[14] *Ibid*, p. 224.
[15] *Ibid*, p. 222.
[16] *Ibid*, pp. 218-219.

traveled through 20,239 miles of "winter mud and rain over nearly impassable roads of the South." The test ended on the grounds of the State Capitol when Governor Charles H. Brough disconnected the car's carburetor, shutting off the engine.[17] The toughness of the Climber was illustrated in another test when the car was driven up the steps of the State Capitol.[18]

Although the lack of parts and lack of capital greatly plagued the Climber Corporation's ability to produce the cars, the car's expensive price ($2,250 for a Climber Six) did not help its sales, especially in Arkansas, which was not a wealthy state.[19] (By comparison, a Ford Model T cost $355 in 1920, and an astonishing $290 in 1926.[20]) As a result, in 1922, there were only 96 Climber passenger cars and eight Climber trucks licensed in Arkansas, while there were 43,772 licensed Ford passenger cars and 5,205 licensed Ford trucks.[21] In 1923, the number of Climber cars licensed in Arkansas dropped to 94 and dropped again to 91 in 1924. The number of Climber trucks licensed in Arkansas remained at eight in 1923, but dropped to six in 1924. (At the same time, the number of Fords exploded, reaching 65,914 licensed cars in Arkansas in 1923 and 85,529 cars in 1924. Ford trucks also grew tremendously with 8,167 trucks licensed in 1923 and 13,347 licensed in Arkansas in 1924.[22])

After the Climber Motor Corporation vacated the building, it was taken over in 1926 by the Arkansas Aircraft Company, which was founded that year. R. B. Snowden, Jr., was the president of the company while John Carroll Cone was in charge of sales.[23] However, in 1927, Albert Voellmecke, a graduate of the University of Braunschweigaud in Germany and an employee of the Heinkel firm, was sent to America to be the company's chief designer.[24]

The former Climber Motor Car Factory, Unit A, was perfect for the needs of the company. The large open interior space was ideal for airplane construction. Additionally, the large amount of land allowed the company to construct runways for their planes, which became known as Command-Aire Field. The company

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[17] *Ibid*, p. 219.
[18] Information on the Climber from The Museum of Automobiles, Morrilton, Arkansas, location of the last two surviving Climbers. Found at: http://www.museumofautos.com/climber_automobile.htm.
[19] *Ibid.*
[20] "Assembly Line Production and the Model T." Found at: www.automobileindia.com/timeline/time2.html.
[21] *Fifth Biennial Report of the Department of State Lands, Highways and Improvements*. Little Rock: H.G. Pugh & Co., c.1922, pp. 115, 117-118.
[22] *Sixth Biennial Report of the Department of State Lands, Highways and Improvements*. Conway, AR: Conway Printing Co., c.1924, pp. 197-198 and 202-203.
[23] Information on Command-Aire in the Jay Miller Aviation History Collection of the Aerospace Branch Library, Aerospace Education Center, Little Rock, AR.
[24] Bud Davisson. "Forgotten Success," *Air Progress*. October 1984, p. 73. Found in the information on Command-Aire in the Jay Miller Aviation History Collection of the Aerospace Branch Library, Aerospace Education Center, Little Rock, AR.

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had two runways at the facility, an 1,800-foot long, 150-foot wide runway running north-south between 17th and 21st streets, and a 1,600-foot long, 150-foot wide runway running northwest-southeast south of the factory.[25] Unfortunately, the runways are no longer extant.

The Arkansas Aircraft Corporation initially manufactured a version of the German Heinkel HD-40. However, after improving the design, the company was reorganized and became Command-Aire. Sales of their planes were targeted at trainers and private owners, and the Command-Aire Corporation was one of the nation's leading aircraft manufacturers.[26] Two of their most popular models were the 3C3, which had a range of 440 miles, a cruising speed of 85 mph, and a price of $3,350, and the 5C3, which had a range of 500 miles, a cruising speed of 123 mph, and a price of $6,325. Command-Aire planes featured a fuselage and tail of welded steel tubing, wood-frame wings, fabric covering, and rubber cord shock absorbers. To keep costs low, early models eliminated brakes and tail wheels. Command-Aire sold over 300 planes before the onslaught of the Depression hurt their sales. Unfortunately, the company was never able to recover, and they closed by early 1931.[27]

Although the company only remained in the building until 1931, the planes built by the company were well-known, especially after the All-America Flying Derby. The 5,541-mile race, which began on July 21, 1930, in Detroit and ended 11 days later, featured overnight control stops in Buffalo, New York, Cincinnati, Little Rock, Houston, San Angelo (Texas), Douglas (Arizona), Los Angeles, Ogden (Utah), Lincoln, and Chicago, before returning to Detroit. The purpose of the race was to demonstrate the feasibility of long-distance flight by light airplanes, and it was won by Lee Gehlbach piloting a specially-built Command-Aire named the "Little Rocket," which flew at an average aped of 127.11 mph. His prize for winning the race was $15,000, a tremendous amount of money during the Depression.[28] Command-Aire planes were also well-known for the fact that they were one of only three designs to pass the 1929 Guggenheim Safety Trial, in which all existing aircraft designs were test flown and judged for safety.[29]

After Command-Aire left the building, it was taken over by Great Northern Paper for the manufacture of toilet paper. In order to accommodate their factory, Great Northern made a few changes to the building. In 1936, an addition was added to the west side of the building that contained additional storage and office space. Also, at approximately the same time, in order to provide additional water pressure and fire

[25] Information on Command-Aire in the Jay Miller Aviation History Collection of the Aerospace Branch Library, Aerospace Education Center, Little Rock, AR.
[26] *Ibid.*
[27] Peter M. Boyers. "The Command-Aire," *The AOPA Pilot.* February 1977, p. 64. Found in the information on Command-Aire in the Jay Miller Aviation History Collection of the Aerospace Branch Library, Aerospace Education Center, Little Rock, AR.
[28] "The Longest Air Race Ever," found at http://www.aerofiles.com/derby-1930.html.
[29] Information on Command-Aire in the Jay Miller Aviation History Collection of the Aerospace Branch Library, Aerospace Education Center, Little Rock, AR.

protection, a metal water tower was constructed to the rear of the building and sprinklers were installed inside the building. The system was also tied into the city water system via an 8-inch water main.[30]

After Great Northern stopped using the building, it remained an industrial facility and is still used for industrial purposes today. The building is currently occupied by Creative Engineering/Micro Grinding, a manufacturer of fine and ultra-fine grinding systems. Creative Engineering/Micro Grinding has also modified the building, beginning c.2000, by installing corrugated metal sheeting over the lower-level windows on the south and east sides for security reasons. Although the siding has been installed, the original windows remain underneath.[31]

The Climber Motor Car Factory, Unit A, remains today as an important part of Arkansas's transportation and industrial heritage. As the lone building constructed for Arkansas's only automobile factory, it is an important reminder of the automobile's role in Arkansas's transportation development. In addition, as the factory for the Command-Aire Corporation and a variety of other industries since the Climber company closed in 1924, it is an important part of Little Rock's and Arkansas's industrial past.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Constructed in 1919 at 1823 East 17th Street, the Climber Motor Car Factory, Unit A, is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places with **statewide significance** under **Criterion A** for its associations with Arkansas automobile transportation and also for its associations with industrial development in the Little Rock area. The Climber Motor Car Factory, Unit A, is the only building completed of a proposed multi-building complex planned for the construction of the Climber automobile. Built between 1919 and 1924, the Climber was the only automobile built in Arkansas. After the Climber Corporation closed, the building continued to be used for industrial purposes housing, among other ventures, the factory of the Command-Aire airplane and Great Northern Paper, which used the facility for toilet paper manufacturing. Climber Motor Car Factory, Unit A, is being submitted to the National Register of Historic Places under the multiple property listing "Arkansas Highway and Transportation Era Architecture, 1910-1965" in conjunction with the historic context "Arkansas Highway History and Architecture, 1910-1965."

[30] Bruce Winn. Telephone conversation with the author. 14 December 2004.
[31] *Ibid.*

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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Beginning at the southeast corner of East 17th Street and Fletcher Street, proceed easterly along the south side of East 17th Street for 390 feet, thence proceed southerly 435 feet, thence proceed westerly 390 feet to the east side of Fletcher Street, thence proceed northerly 435 feet along the east side of Fletcher Street to the point of beginning.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The boundary includes all of the land historically associated with the Climber Motor Car Factory, Unit A, that retains integrity.


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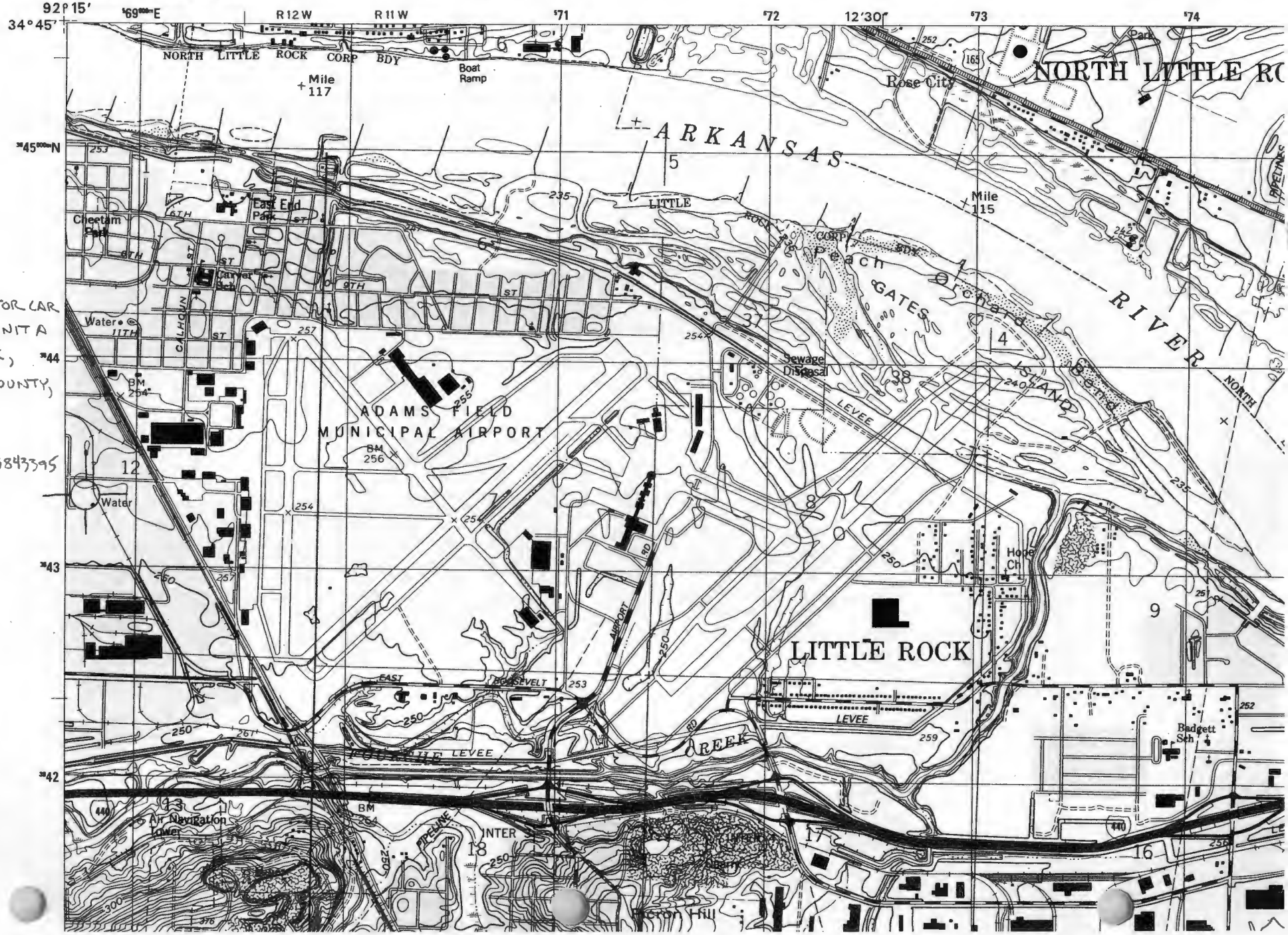

CLIMBER MOTOR CAR FACTORY, UNIT A
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