NPS Form 10-900
(Rev. 8-86)

OMB No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service
NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK NOMINATION

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name: Louisiana Purchase Survey Marker

other names/site number: Louisiana Purchase Initial Point Site

Louisiana Purchase Historic State Park

2. Location

street & number: Junction of Lee, Phillips & Monroe counties, 13 m. NW of Marvell on St. Hwy 362 — [ ] not for publication

city, town: [ ] vicinity

state: Arkansas code: AR county: Lee,Phillips,Monroe code: 077,107,095 zip code: 72069

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property: Contributing	Noncontributing	
[ ] private	[ ] building(s)			buildings
[ ] public-local	[ ] district			sites
[x] public-State	[x] site	1		structures
[ ] public-Federal	[ ] structure			objects
	[ ] object			
		1		Total

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 1

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this [x] 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 forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property [x] meets [ ] does not meet the National Register criteria. [ ] See continuation sheet.

Cathryn A. Buford — September 16, 1991

Signature of certifying official — 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.

Signature of commenting or other official — Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

[ ] 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:)

Signature of the Keeper — Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

LANDSCAPE/unoccupied land

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

LANDSCAPE/State Park

7. Description

Architectural Classification (enter categories from instructions)

NO STYLE

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation N/A
walls N/A
roof N/A
other N/A

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

[X] See continuation sheet

SUMMARY

The Louisiana Purchase Marker is located within the Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism's Louisiana Purchase Historic State Park, located at the junction of Phillips, Lee, and Monroe counties in eastern Arkansas. The marker commemorates the "initial point" from which land surveys of Arkansas and the territory acquired through the Louisiana Purchase of 1803 were surveyed.

The marker is located within a 37.5 acre tract of headwater or high swamp that represents a fast-disappearing ecological setting in eastern Arkansas. This relatively rare type of swamp seldom floods deeply, yet rarely dries up. The unique plant and animal communities found in the swamp form an unusual and endangered environment in Arkansas. The swamp remains in virtually the same condition as it was in 1815, when such areas often posed hardships for early explorers, surveyors, and settlers. Intensive land-reclamation practices are increasingly causing these swamps to be drained and cleared for agricultural purposes.

A 950-foot boardwalk provides access to the granite monument in the swamp's interior. Four widened observation/rest areas allow visitors to view the swamp's botanical features and the monument which might otherwise be inaccessible since the area is inundated by water most of the year. Along the boardwalk are panels that further illustrate the natural features of the park, as well as the significance of the marker and the history of the Louisiana Purchase.

The granite marker itself is about six (6') feet in height and about four and a half (4'6") feet across at the base. The stone now stands in water almost up to the bottom of the inscription, which reads: "This stone marks the base established November 10, 1815, from which the lands of the Louisiana Purchase were surveyed by United States engineers. The first survey from this point was made to satisfy the claims of the soldiers of the War of 1812 with land bounties. Erected by the Arkansas Daughters of the American Revolution. Sponsored by the L'Anguille Chapter." The stone is surrounded by trees native to the swamp, including bald cypress, water tupelo, black willow, and persimmon.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

[X] nationally [ ] statewide [ ] locally

Applicable National Register Criteria [X] A [ ] B [ ] C [ ] D

National Historic Landmark Criteria: 1

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) [ ] A [ ] B [ ] C [ ] D [ ] E [ ] F [ ] G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)	Period of Significance	Significant Dates
EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	1803-1841	November 10, 1815
NHL THEME:		
X-Westward Expansion of the British Colonies and the United States, 1763-1898	November 10, 1815	November 10, 1815
A-British & U.S. Explorations of the West	Cultural Affiliation	
3-Scientific & Topographic Surveys	N/A	

Significant Person	Architect/Builder
N/A	N/A

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

[X] See continuation sheet

SUMMARY

The Louisiana Purchase Marker denotes the point from which the lands acquired through the Louisiana Purchase of 1803 were subsequently surveyed. The land surveys for all or parts of the states of Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma, Missouri, Kansas, Colorado, Nebraska, Iowa, Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, Wyoming, and Montana were measured from this point in the middle of an eastern Arkansas swamp. For more than 100 years the site lay forgotten in the marsh until it was re-discovered during a resurvey of the Phillips, Monroe, and Lee county lines in 1921. The L'Anguille Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution of Marianna, Arkansas erected a granite monument on the survey point on October 27, 1926. The site is currently managed by the Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism and the Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission as a rare example of an intact headwater swamp.

The Louisiana Purchase Survey Marker is being nominated as a National Historic Landmark under NHL Criterion One (1) for its outstanding association with the Louisiana Purchase of 1803 and the subsequent surveys of the territory acquired by the government of the United States. The National Historic Landmark nomination of the Louisiana Purchase Survey Marker falls within the theme of *Exploration/Settlement.*

ELABORATION

> "Everything in life must have a beginning, and the public land survey of Arkansas is no exception. Over in Eastern Arkansas where Monroe, Lee and Phillips Counties all join at a common point, is located the point where all surveys have their beginning."
>
> Claud A. Rankin
> Arkansas State Land Commissioner
> 1943-1954

The Louisiana Purchase

The circumstances surrounding the Louisiana Purchase of 1803 and the establishment of a survey point in what would become the state of Arkansas involved a tangled web of Machiavellian diplomacy, brinkmanship, and intrigue between the fledgling United States, Napoleonic France, and imperial Spain. The French Republic's decision to sell the Louisiana Province, perhaps the greatest real estate transaction of all time, shaped the destiny of the new American nation, ended Napoleon's dreams of a French empire in North America, and confirmed Spain's fears as to the possibility of America's westward expansion.

Spain was the first of the European powers to claim the vast lands west of the Mississippi River, and in 1541 Hernando De Soto led the first European expedition into what is now Arkansas. The Spanish made no attempt to colonize the land they had claimed however, and the area lay largely forgotten by Europeans for almost a century and a half. In 1682, the French explorer Rene Robert Cavalier, Sieur de La Salle discovered the mouth of the Mississippi River in the Gulf of Mexico and claimed the region drained by the river in the name of King Louis XIV of France, calling it Louisiana in his honor. The French developed and colonized portions of the region, establishing such Gulf Coast cities as New Orleans, Biloxi, and Mobile, as well as the first permanent European settlement in Arkansas, Arkansas Post, in 1686. The Mississippi River developed as a major trading artery, funneling skins, pelts, bear oil and other frontier products from the continent's interior through New Orleans and eventually on to Europe.

The non-Indian population of Louisiana Province had grown to more than 8,000 by 1721, and tensions between the French colonies and those of her historic rival England were worsening as British traders began to infiltrate the Mississippi Valley. Both nations established military alliances with various Native American groups during the French and Indian War, the American manifestation of Europe's Seven Years' War. France was defeated in 1760, and in 1762 the French ceded New Orleans and the Louisiana Territory to Spain in return for services rendered against England during the war. Spain, concerned for the safety of her empire in Mexico and the Province of Texas in the face of the encroaching American frontier, began to exert more control over commerce on the Mississippi River. Despite these controls however, American economic activity in the Mississippi Valley increased and Spain's control over the Territory weakened.

In 1800, Napoleon Bonaparte, First Consul of the French Republic, successfully pressured King Charles IV of Spain into returning the Louisiana Territory to France. A provisional treaty providing for the transfer was signed between the two European powers in October of that year, explicitly stipulating that France would never sell the Territory or allow it to be acquired by any third party. Based on these assurances, Spain felt confident that the United States would not be allowed to gain possession of the Louisiana Territory and thereby threaten Spanish interests in Mexico and the Province of Texas.

President Thomas Jefferson learned of this secret treaty through diplomatic channels shortly after he took office in 1801. While the Spanish had proven to be fairly docile, non-aggressive neighbors, Jefferson had great reservations about the occupation of the Mississippi Valley by an ambitious and expansionist Napoleonic France with imperialistic tendencies. Ambassador Robert Livingston was dispatched to Paris in September, 1801 to inform Napoleon's government that the United States was unwilling to see Spain's North American colonies transferred to any

government other than that of the United States. This warning was ignored, and in 1802, as Napoleon was planning to send troops to occupy New Orleans, Jefferson sent Pierre du Pont de Nemours to Paris to inform the First Consul that if France were to annex the Louisiana Province the United States would form a military alliance with Great Britain. Jefferson's feelings on the issue were expressed further in a letter he wrote to Ambassador Livingston in April, 1802:

> "There is on the globe, one single spot, the possessor of which is our natural and habitual enemy...Every eye in the United States is now fixed on the affairs of the Louisiana...The day that France takes possession of the New Orleans fixes the sentence which is to restrain her forever within her low water mark, from that moment we must marry ourselves to the British fleet and nation."

Faced with the threat of a French invasion and the occupation of New Orleans, Jefferson sent James Monroe as Ambassador Extraordinary to Paris with $2,000,000 and authorization to purchase the port of New Orleans and West Florida for $9,375,000. Ambassadors Monroe and Livingston were instructed to negotiate for a peaceful solution to the stand-off, but to leave immediately for London to negotiate a military alliance should Napoleon's government prove uncooperative. Given Napoleon's expansionist rhetoric and apparent designs on the European continent, and the strategic importance of New Orleans and the Louisiana Territory, the Jefferson Administration was not confident as to the outcome of the Paris talks.

In a move that surprised Monroe and Livingston, Napoleon's government made an unexpected all-or-nothing counter-offer to the American delegation; the French Republic would agree to sell not just New Orleans and West Florida, but the entire Louisiana Territory to the United States. The reasons for Napoleon's sudden change of heart have been debated by historians for years, but were likely based on a calculated understanding of international affairs and the current balance of power in Europe. Napoleon's designs on the European continent would certainly lead to hostilities with Great Britain, and he may have been hesitant to force an alliance between the United States and France's traditional rival. Jefferson had made it clear that anti-French feelings were so high on the American frontier that it might be politically impossible to prevent an American attack on New Orleans if it became known that French troops were on the way. Napoleon's occupation army garrisoned in Holland was blockaded by ice and the British fleet, and unrest in France's Caribbean colonies further complicated the logistics of moving the occupation force to New Orleans. Finally, Napoleon may have reasoned that it would be better to sell the Louisiana Territory for whatever price he could get, rather than lose it in a war with the United States and Great Britain.

Without the benefit of communications with President Jefferson, over the following 21 days Monroe and Livingston concluded treaty negotiations with French officials to purchase the entire Territory, eventually arriving at a final purchase price of $15,000,000 for a piece of real estate extending from the Gulf of Mexico north to Canada and from the Mississippi Basin west to the Rocky Mountains. The Louisiana Purchase treaty, finalized on April 30, 1803, added 830,000 square miles of uncharted wilderness to the territorial limits of the United States, and effectively doubled the nation's land area at a cost of less than three cents an acre. When informed of the treaty, Jefferson called it "a transaction replete with blessings to unborn millions of men." Despite their outrage at Napoleon's diplomatic betrayal, Spain officially ceded New Orleans back to France on November 30, 1803, and the French administered the colony until the arrival of the American occupying force the following month.

The Initial Point

The movement of settlers and the American frontier west of the Mississippi River increased in momentum after the War of 1812. The Act of May 6, 1812, provided for the survey and granting of military bounty lands and authorized the survey of not more than six million acres of public lands, fit for cultivation, not otherwise appropriated, and to which Indian titles had been extinguished. The land in the Louisiana Territory was to be between the St. Francis and the Arkansas Rivers; this area was later to become Arkansas County when the Missouri Territory was formed, then Arkansas Territory when Missouri became a state. In 1815, President James Madison ordered an official government survey of the Louisiana Purchase Territory to aid in the orderly distribution of land to veterans of the war. The U.S. Commissioner of Public Lands, in developing the parameters for the survey, noted that "I think it proper to direct that a standard meridian be drawn from the confluence of the Arkansas with the Mississippi."

The United States Land Office commissioned Prospect K. Robbins and Joseph C. Brown to initiate this survey by establishing an "initial point" in what is now eastern Arkansas from which other surveys would originate. Robbins and Brown left Washington for Pittsburgh in the fall of 1815, where they then embarked for Arkansas via the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers. Each of the surveyors had three other men in their parties, but it is uncertain whether they accompanied Brown and Robbins from Washington or were hired en route. Brown was put ashore at the mouth of the St. Francis River (present-day Phillips County), while Robbins continued on to the confluence of the Arkansas and the Mississippi (present-day Desha County).

To establish an initial point it was necessary to survey a permanent north and south line, or "meridian," and cross it with an east and west baseline, the junction representing the initial point. The northbound party initially consisted of Robbins and his two "helpers," Hirman Scott and

Alex Baldridge*. The first entry of Robbins' notebook, dated October 27, 1815, recorded the establishment of the meridian:

> "Set a post at the extremity of the point of land formed by the junction of the Arkansas and Mississippi Rivers at which point commenced the Fifth Principal Meridian."**

Robbins' party then proceeded north, through what is still some of the most inaccessible territory in Arkansas; even today, there are no towns between the mouth of the Arkansas and the small fishing village of Indian Bay, forty miles to the north along Robbins' approximate route.*** Thirty-six miles into the survey, the party emerged from the thickets, briars and lowlands they had been traveling through and onto the edge of a prairie northwest of present-day Marvell. Robbins noted the land appeared "level and well suited for farming." Surveying accelerated with the improved topography, and on November 10, Robbins party crossed Brown's baseline, 14 days and 55 miles from their starting point. Two sweet gum trees, eighteen inches in diameter, were designated as marker trees for the initial point established by the baseline and the meridian.

In his field notes, Brown described the beginning of his portion of the survey: "West on the Base Line, commencing at a post on the South bank of the St. Francis River at its mouth." Brown's survey party, which started west from the mouth of the St. Francis on the same day Robbins started north, included Nathan Meyer and Richard Lessoms as "chainmen" and Nathan Gilfin as "marker." One mile west of the Mississippi, Brown observed that the land "would be good if it were not subject to inundation." Fifteen miles into the expedition, the party emerged into country that "would be good for farming," but just four miles later they were again "back in briers and swamps and briers aplenty." On November 2, the party entered a cypress swamp:

> "The most of this mile very low and swampy**** with cypress and briers and thickety in abundance. Cannot say what is the bearing of this swamp or its width, it not being

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*Later, a John Baldridge joined the party as an "axeman" after the baseline had been bisected.

**Both Brown's and Robbins' survey notebooks are in the possession of the Arkansas State Land Commissioner in Little Rock.

***Robbins' party did pass a few miles to the west of the present day community of Snow Lake.

****Evidently 1815 was a dry year in eastern Arkansas; the area around the Louisiana Purchase Marker could now be simply called "swamp."

well defined."

At this point, Brown was more than 20 miles west of the Mississippi River, and very near the point at which Robbins would cross the baseline eight days later. The historical significance of the moment seems to have been lost on the surveyor however; "I rose before day, shot the North Star with my sextant, and started west," Brown wrote. Brown's party continued west, surveying as far as present-day Clarendon, then returned east along the baseline to meet Robbins' party, which had arrived at the line on November 10.

The initial point was established on November 10, 1815, when the Robbins party, after surveying for 55 miles, 60 chains and 50 links, crossed the baseline at a point 26 miles west of the Mississippi River. The point, 91 degrees 03 minutes 42 seconds west of Greenwich and Latitude 34 degrees 44 minutes north, was marked by blazing two witness trees. In his journal, Brown described the site as "low and contained cypress and briers and thickets in abundance." In late November, another U.S. surveyor, Charles Lockhart arrived at Brown and Robbins' camp at the initial point, along with two marksmen, Jacob Fryzar and Booker Davis. Lockhart's team began surveying eastward, establishing township and section lines throughout the region Brown's party had covered. Robbin's party remained at the initial point until December 6, then continued north along the Fifth Meridian until they reached the Missouri River on January 6. Brown's party broke camp on November 28, and eventually surveyed the baseline as far west as Baseline Road in present-day Little Rock.*****

The Louisiana Purchase Marker

The baseline was continued west in 1818, and was extended to the western border of Arkansas by 1841. The Fifth Meridian was continued north to provide an orientation for the survey of most of Arkansas, Missouri, Iowa, the Dakotas, and Minnesota. The initial point was lost and forgotten, buried in a headwater swamp in eastern Arkansas until rediscovered in 1921 by Tom Jacks and Eldridge P. Douglas of Helena, Arkansas. While resurveying the Phillips and Lee County line, the surveyors discovered the two large trees which had been blazed as witness trees during Brown and Robbins' 1815 survey. Jacks noted "[u]nder the law of probability there could be no two other trees on the bearing distance."

*****The following year, Brown was one of two deputies selected to survey the western boundary of the Arkansas Territory south to the Red River. Brown was reportedly murdered by Indians on this latter survey, but actually escaped and walked back to his base after the Indians had stolen his pack horses.

In commemoration of the significance of the initial point and of the United States' acquisition of the Louisiana Territory, the L'Anguille Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution of Marianna, Arkansas initiated a campaign to erect a granite marker on the site. Marianna businessmen, led by W. S. McClintock and W. H. Ford, were persuaded to buy the marker, and plans were made to dedicate the monument on November 10, 1925, the 110th anniversary of the original marking. Unfortunately, "terrific rains" rendered the local roads impassable and forced the cancellation of the ceremony; the dedication was subsequently rescheduled for October 27, 1926, the 111th anniversary of the beginning of the survey. The October 27, 1926 ceremony was attended by many visitors from Helena and Marianna, as well as such notable figures as Senator Joseph T. Robinson, Senator Thaddeus Caraway, and Mrs. Hattie Caraway (later the first woman elected to the U.S. Senate). The four property owners of the land surrounding the initial point presented Caraway with deeds to two acres of land each, placing the marker in the center of what would have been an eight-acre park. The senator put the deeds in his pocket after his speech, where they were promptly forgotten and apparently never seen again.

The Arkansas General Assembly passed legislation in 1961 designating the area a state park, but no funds were appropriated for acquisition or development until the 1970s. The Louisiana Purchase Survey Marker was listed on the National Register of Historic Places on February 23, 1972. In 1977, the Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission, in recognition of the swamp's special natural qualities, added it to the Registry of Natural Areas and supplied funds for purchasing the 37.5 acre park. The Arkansas Department of Parks and Tourism, in turn, granted the Arkansas Natural Heritage Commission a conservation easement to provide for additional legal protections for the natural and historical features of the site. The park and the marker are fully accessible by way of a 950- foot-long boardwalk into the interior of the swamp.

The monument's surroundings are virtually identitical to those of 1815, within an ecologically rare headwater swamp, a fast-disappearing resource in eastern Arkansas due to extensive draining and land reclamation for agricultural purposes. A variety of native trees and shrubs, including bald cypress, water tupelo, black willow, and persimmon stand around the monument in about one foot of water.

The Louisiana Purchase Marker is an approximately six-foot-tall granite marker erected on October 27, 1926. It now stands in approximately one foot of water, almost up to the bottom of the inscription, which reads:

> "This stone marks the base established November 10, 1815, from which the lands of the Louisiana Purchase were surveyed by United States engineers. The first survey from this point was made to satisfy the claims of the soldiers of the War of 1812 with land

bounties. Erected by the Arkansas Daughters of the American Revolution. Sponsored by the L'Anguille Chapter."

Senator Caraway's remarks during the dedication of the marker recognized the enormous significance of the Lousiana Purchase Marker commemorating the establishment of the initial point: "Since then the surveying lines have been carried on throughout all the Louisiana Purchase, but here is the most interesting historical and geographical spot on this side of the Father of Waters...This stone monument commemorates not only the starting point of the Louisiana Purchase survey, but it will stand through the ages as the biggest bargain in real estate on record."

9. Major Bibliographical References

[x] See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- [ ] preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- [x] 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
- [x] Other State agency
- [ ] Federal agency
- [ ] Local government
- [ ] University
- [ ] Other

Specify repository: Arkansas Department of Parks & Tourism

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property Less than one

UTM References

	Zone	Easting	Northing
A	15	678540	385280
B			
C			
D			

[ ] See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

[x] See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

[x] See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title William D. Baker, Preservation Planner

organization Arkansas Historic Preservation Program date September 16, 1991

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★U.S.GPO:1988-0-223-918

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"Arkansas's Historic Role in the Louisiana Purchase." Arkansas Gazette, 6 September, 1970, p. 4D.

"Base Point for Louisiana Purchase Surveys Located in Phillips County." Arkansas Democrat, 31 March, 1959, p. 26.

Dhonau, R. W., ed. A Survey of Historic Markers in Arkansas. Little Rock, Arkansas: Arkansas Society of the Sons of the American Revolution, 1986.

Jefferson, Thomas, and Dunbar, William. Documents Relating to the Louisiana Purchase. Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, & Co., 1904.

Fleming, John. The Louisiana Purchase from wilderness to empire. John Fleming, 1972.

Hermann, Binger. The Louisiana Purchase and our title west of the Rocky Mountains. Washington: Government Printing Office, 1900.

Howard, James Q. History of the Louisiana Purchase. Chicago: Callaghan Publishing Co., 1904.

Logan, Robert R. "Notes on the First Land Surveys in Arkansas." Arkansas Historical Quarterly Volume XIX, Number 3 (Autumn 1960): pp. 260-270.

"Marker is Placed on Historic Spot: Designated Starting Point of Survey of All Land West of the Mississippi." Arkansas Gazette, 28 October, 1926, p. 3.

Osceola Times, 22 October, 1970.

Beginning at a point on the east side of the Louisiana Purchase Marker, located 450 feet from the end of State Highway 362; thence proceed southerly to the southeast corner of the monument, westerly to the southwest corner of the monument, northerly to the northwest corner of the monument, easterly to the northeast corner of the monument, then southerly to the point of beginning. This boundary includes all the property historically associated with this resource.