

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

NRHP**OCT 08 2024****LISTED**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any 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 certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).

1. Name of Property

historic name WJDX Transmitter Building

other names/site number _____

Name of Multiple Property Listing _____

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

2. Location

street & number 5826 North State Street

☐ not for publication

city or town Jackson

☐ vicinity

state Mississippi

county Hinds

zip code 39216

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance: national statewide X local

Applicable National Register Criteria: X A B X C D

Katia Blount
Signature of certifying official Title: State Historic Preservation Officer

7.23.24
Date

Mississippi Department of Archives and History
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official

Date

Title

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

 entered in the National Register

 determined eligible for the National Register

 determined not eligible for the National Register

 removed from the National Register

 other (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

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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 the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
2		buildings
		site
		structure
		object
2		Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

INDUSTRY/PROCESSING/EXTRACTION/

Communications Facility=radio station

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

vacant

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Art Deco

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: brick

walls: brick

roof: TPO

other: limestone trim

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Narrative Description

Summary Paragraph (Briefly describe the current, general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

The WJDX Transmitter Building is a two-story brick Art Deco building designed to hold radio transmission equipment for WJDX on the first floor and an apartment for the resident engineer on the second floor. It is located at the back of a large grassy lot facing west on North State Street in Jackson, MS. A projecting entrance pavilion with a ziggurat-inspired roofline dominates the façade which is enhanced at the main entrance with a large bas relief panel of a pastoral scene depicting a sunset, or sunrise, behind a mountain range. The building retains its integrity of location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. Behind the transmitter building is the generator building which, while it is in poor condition, is also a contributing resource.

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable.)

Setting

The WJDX Transmitter Building faces west and occupies its original location at 5826 North State Street in Jackson, Mississippi. It sits on a large empty lot, on a rise, far back from the road, facing North State Street.

Exterior

The WJDX Transmitter Building is a two-story Art Deco building designed to hold radio transmission equipment for WJDX on the first floor and an apartment for the resident engineer on the second floor, with two bedrooms, bath, kitchen, and combination living room/dining room. Behind the transmitter building is a one-story, single room, stucco-clad brick structure that originally housed the generator for the radio equipment. The generator building is in poor condition having been exposed to the elements following the loss of its roof many years ago. It is a small stucco-over-brick rectangular building with its roof missing. There is a four-panel wood door on the west elevation and metal casement windows on the north and east elevations. While the building is in poor condition, it retains sufficient integrity to be rehabilitated and is a contributing building.

The transmitter building is constructed of exterior load bearing walls of red common brick with a veneer of yellow brick. In the late 1960s, a one-story concrete block studio building was constructed in front of the transmitter building. The transmitter building was painted white at this time to blend with the addition. This addition was recently removed to allow the original transmitter building to once again be seen with its original unpainted yellow brick. The transmitter building has a flat roof and a conventional foundation with a crawl space. Buttress-like three tiered, chamfered corners with decorative limestone trim accent the main block of the building.

The façade is dominated by a projecting entrance pavilion with a ziggurat inspired roofline. The main entrance is located in the projecting pavilion. The corners of the pavilion are not chamfered. Directly above the main entrance, a large bas relief panel of a pastoral scene depicting a sunset, or sunrise, in the background above a mountain range. The foreground contains three figures wearing toga-like attire, two on the left, one standing and one kneeling, with one on the right playing a pan flute. Above the panel, a large window opening, previously filled with decorative leaded glass windowpanes, now gone, is divided into three vertical single casement sashes by large limestone mullions. Above the window the pavilion is clad in stone continuing to the limestone-capped parapet. This stone clad area is divided into thirds like the window below by a continuation of the window mullions treated as fin-like projections. Near the top of the pavilion parapet, two corner blocks decorated with bas relief stylized acanthus leaves flank the fins. The top level of the pavilion is completely clad

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in limestone. Two multi-light, double-sash, casement windows with transoms are located on the side elevations of the pavilion near where the pavilion joins the main part of the building. Flanking the pavilion, on the façade of the main building, are two recessed panels of red brick, one stretcher wide.

The south elevation contains three equally-spaced double-sash, multi-light, steel casement windows with transoms on the first floor and two casement windows on the second floor; a smaller, single casement window with transom towards the façade and a single, double-sash multi-light, steel casement window with transoms and sidelights centered on the wall.

The rear, or east, elevation contains five openings on the first floor, going south to north, a door opening without a door but retaining the transom, double-sash, multi-light, steel casement window with transom, a door opening, and two more double-sash, multi-light, steel casement windows with transoms. The second floor contains five transom windows. The center window is a smaller single-sash, multi-light window with transom, the other four are double-sash, multi-light, casement windows with transoms equally spaced across the elevation.

The north elevation contains, in the eastern most bay of the first floor, a single, double-sash multi-light steel casement window with transom. To the west of this window is a large door opening with a wood louvered transom. Directly above the door opening on the second floor is a single, double-sash multi-light steel casement window with transoms and sidelights. The final opening on this elevation is a single sash, multi-light with transom steel casement window in the westernmost bay of the elevation. This window, located half-way up the wall, lights the staircase.

Interior-First Floor

The interior walls on both floors are constructed of hollow clay tiles stamped "Vulcan Tile." The floors on both levels are poured concrete supported by trussed steel beams. The floors were originally covered with asbestos tile.

The main entrance opens into the lobby/office area. To the left, or north, of the entrance, is a single, double-sash, multi-light, steel casement window with transom. To the east of the window is a door opening to the closet located underneath the staircase. The staircase descends through an arched opening into the lobby/office area. The staircase has a square iron newel post and a railing designed in an abstract Art Deco style. A single-leaf door, located at the foot of the stairs in the east wall, opens into the large first floor room. The south wall of the room has a large opening into the amplifier room. This large opening may have originally been smaller and contained a door. To the right, or west, of the opening is located a single, double-sash, multi-light, steel casement window with transom. Also on this wall, due to the loss of original plaster, can easily be seen the hollow clay tile construction of the interior walls adjacent to the common brick structure of the exterior load bearing walls.

The amplifier room occupies the entire south end of the first floor. Three single, double-sash, multi-light, steel casement windows with transoms are equally spaced along the southern wall. A door opening located in the east end of the room opens to the rear and provides access to the free-standing generator building. The north wall's west end is largely missing and provides access into the lobby/office area. The remainder of the north wall contains two door openings located near each end of the remaining wall. A rectangular cutout is located near the middle of the wall above the height of the doors.

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From the amplifier room the large first floor room is accessed via these two doorways as well as the door from the lobby/office. The east wall of this room contains three single, double-sash multi-light steel casement windows with transoms and a single door opening arranged as follows, going south to north, W, D, W, W. The door opening opens to the free-standing generator building located behind the transmitter building. The north wall of this room contains a single, double-sash multi-light steel casement window with transom in the east bay and a large door opening with a wooden louvered transom to the west.

Interior-Second Floor

Access to the second floor is from the lobby/office area is by a winder staircase. The lower flight of the stairs is enclosed within the walls while the upper flight is open to the ceiling. An abstract Art Deco stair railing of the same design and material as the railing and newel at the base of the stairs is located along the upper flight and across the stairwell where it was tied into the wall. This wall, part of the north bedroom, has been demolished.

The stairs open into a large second floor landing that appears to have been originally designed to be a combination living/dining room for the apartment housing the engineer and his family. This room is lit by the large window on the west wall, or façade, that originally contained a leaded glass window. A doorway on the south wall opens into the original kitchen. The east wall contains the doorways into the north and south bedrooms. Between these doors is a large closet with built-in shelves. This room retains some of the original Art Deco wood crown molding and door trim. Evidence of the original baseboards is also visible in this room. The kitchen is entered by the doorway in its north wall from the living/dining room and contains a single-sash, multi-light, steel, casement window with transom in the southern wall. The original sink is still located in this room.

The south bedroom, entered from a doorway in its west wall leading into the living/dining room, contains a single large double-sash, multi-light, steel casement window with transom and sidelights in the southern wall. Two double-sash, multi-light, steel casement windows with transoms are located in the east wall. The north wall contains a door opening to a closet near the west wall of the room and a doorway into the shared bathroom towards the east wall.

The bathroom is located between the north and south bedroom and contains the original cast-iron tub located along the east wall below a single-sash, multi-light, steel casement window with transom. The remains of the original medicine cabinet are located in the southern wall. The original porcelain floor tile survives on the bathroom floor.

The north bedroom occupies the northeast corner of the second floor. The east wall contains two, double-sash, multi-light, steel casement windows with transoms. The north wall contains a single, double-sash, multi-light, steel casement window with transoms and sidelights. The west wall has been removed. The southern wall contains a door opening to a closet near the west wall of the room and a doorway into the shared bathroom towards the east wall.

Integrity

The WJDX Transmitter Building, located at 5826 North State Street, Jackson, Hinds County, Mississippi retains sufficient integrity to convey its historic significance.

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While the building has suffered loss of and damage to its finishes, particularly to the interior due to vandalism, it retains a surprisingly high degree of integrity. All of the missing elements can be replicated from those that survive. Structurally it is in very good condition due to the high quality of the original materials and the skill used to construct it. Furthermore, the setting has retained a high degree of integrity especially since the front addition has been removed, opening the vista to the transmitter building from North State Street, U.S. Highway 51, much as it was historically.

Two antenna towers were constructed on the property before the transmitter building went on the air in 1929. The antennas were 200-foot steel towers, and were roughly 500 feet apart. These antenna towers remained on the grounds of the transmitter building, but by early 1999, the towers had been removed.¹

Location and Setting: The WJDX Transmitter Building occupies its original location and faces west towards North State Street, the historic route of U.S. Highway 51. The building is set far back from the road which is consistent with its historic setting. It is also clearly visible from the highway. Therefore, the building retains integrity of location and setting.

Design: The 1929 transmitter building has undergone some loss of interior finishes. However, it retains its historic massing, scale, character, and exterior details and is an excellent example of Art Deco architecture dating from the late 1920s, the height of popularity of this style in Mississippi. Therefore, it retains integrity of design.

Materials: The transmitter building retains its original load bearing brick exterior walls and most of its interior hollow clay tile walls. Most of the original floor plan is intact as well. Some of the original plaster remains as does most interior trim. Most of the original steel casement window frames remain even though most the glass is broken. The architectural details on the exterior remain including a large decorative bas relief limestone panel, located over the front entrance. Therefore, the transmitter building retains sufficient integrity of materials to convey its historic character and significance.

Workmanship: As workmanship is the physical evidence of the crafts of a particular culture of people during any given period of history, and it is the evidence of a craftsman's labor or skill in constructing a building, then the physical skill is evident in materials such as masonry, doors, and millwork, which remain, are intact, and do not need replacing. Therefore, the building retains its integrity of workmanship.

Feeling: The transmitter building has the character of an early 20th century Art Deco building. It also retains the feeling of a radio transmitter building as it is very easy to see and appreciate the spaces, which historically housed the radio equipment on the first floor. The second floor, which served as an apartment for the resident engineer and his family, has a different feeling than the industrial/commercial character of the first floor. The setting has remained remarkably the same as it was nearly 100 years ago, with the transmitter building set far back from the road on a rise facing toward the west. Therefore, the transmitter building retains integrity of feeling.

Association: The transmitter building retains many of the significant materials and design elements that were part of its original construction as well as its relationship to its historic setting. Therefore, the transmitter building retains integrity of association.

¹ "Lamar Tower Plan Changed to Suit Spire," *Daily Clarion Ledger*, December 1, 1929, page 1; "WJDX building steeped in history," *Northside Sun*, April 29, 1999, page A1 and 12A.

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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.

☐

G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Communications

Architecture

Period of Significance

1929-1952

Significant Dates

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation (if applicable)

Architect/Builder

N.W. Overstreet, architect

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 a birthplace or grave.
- ☐ D a cemetery.
- ☐ E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- ☐ F a commemorative property.

Statement of Significance

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations).

The WJDX Transmitter Building is significant at the statewide level under Criterion A- Communications, as the earliest remaining example of a radio transmitter building in Mississippi and the first radio station to install an air-cooled 5,000-watt transmitter and the first to be affiliated with a network, in this case with NBC. The building is also locally significant under Criterion C-Architecture, as a fine example of an Art Deco commercial building in Jackson, MS. The period of significance is 1929, when the building was constructed, to 1952, when the transmitter was sold to WRBC.

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Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least one paragraph for each area of significance.)

History of Jackson, Mississippi

The first European settlement in the area that is now Jackson, Mississippi, was first settled in the late 18th century by Louis LeFleur, a French-Canadian trader. During the late 18th and early 19th centuries, the surrounding area was traversed by the Natchez Trace, a major trading route for Native Americans and later American settlers. In 1821, the Mississippi General Assembly commissioned Thomas Hinds (for whom Hinds County is named), James Patton, and William Lattimore to survey the central part of the state to identify a more central location for the state's capital, which at that time was in Natchez. Having identified the area of Jackson as suitable and bountiful in resources, a legislative act was passed in late 1821, which authorized the location to be the permanent seat of state government.

The city was named for Andrew Jackson, who would become the nation's seventh president, in recognition of his victory in the War of 1812 in the Battle of New Orleans. Jackson was laid out in 1822 by Peter A. Van Dorn and the town plan was inspired by the country's third president, Thomas Jefferson. Van Dorn's plan called for a checkerboard grid with blocks alternating with parks and other open spaces, but all but one of those open squares have been developed. The one remaining undeveloped square is Smith Park.

In 1840, the railroad arrived in Jackson, linking the city to Vicksburg (depot located on South State Street). The following year, the Jackson to Canton line was chartered and in 1858, a rail line was completed from Jackson to New Orleans (depot located on West Capitol Street at present day Mill Street). Due in part to the existence of the rail lines Jackson became a strategic manufacturing center for the Confederacy during the Civil War, but was captured in 1863 by the Union Army under the command of William Tecumseh Sherman. The capital city suffered great damage from fires set by both sides, thereafter giving Jackson the nickname- Chimneyville.

However, the damage was far from total as many structures, particularly in the downtown area, survived the war. The Mississippi State Capitol, the governor's mansion, city hall and parts of the state penitentiary survived the war, as did four of the six churches that dotted the skyline in 1860. The Baptist, Methodist, Presbyterian, and Christian churches all survived the Civil War, but the Catholic and Episcopal churches were lost. An 1869 panoramic photograph that was taken from the top of the capitol by local photographer and businessman, Elias Von Seuter, shows that most of the downtown area had in fact survived or been substantially rebuilt. One of the buildings that shows up clearly in the 1869 panorama is Spengler's Corner. This two-story brick hipped roof commercial building was in fact built in 1866 and stood on the site of two smaller one-story wood frame commercial buildings, circa 1840 and 1863, all of which were known as Spengler's Corner. Lining State Street, south of its intersection with Capitol Street, were many mid-19th century commercial buildings. South State Street at the time was the major commercial corridor of Jackson primarily because the Alabama and Vicksburg Railroad depot was located three blocks south of the State Capitol. The commercial development of State Street only continued north of its intersection with Capitol Street for a block to Amite Street. North of this street, State Street was primarily residential in nature.

Recovery after the war did not begin in earnest until the early 20th century. In 1900, less than 8,000 people inhabited the City of Jackson. That number grew to 22,817 by 1920 and to 48,282 in 1930, spurred by the discovery of natural gas nearby in 1929, and to 62,107 in 1940, after the 1939 discovery of oil in Yazoo County. Jackson experienced a tremendous jump in population after World War II, increasing from 144,422 in 1950 to 144,422 in 1960. This increase in residents represented not only increased density within the downtown

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area, but also marked the beginning of the creation of new automobile centered neighborhoods to the west and north of downtown.

Criterion A- Communications

The WJDX Transmitter Building is significant at the statewide level in the area of Communications as the first radio station in Mississippi to be affiliated with a network, NBC, and it was the first station in the state to install an air-cooled 5000-watt transmitter. The building is also the only extant transmitter building in Mississippi to represent the early period of radio in the 1920s-1930s.

History of Radio

On November 2, 1920, Station KDKA in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, transmitted the first commercial radio broadcast in the United States. Its first broadcast consisted of live returns of the presidential election between Warren Harding and James Cox. The medium of radio had been in development for one hundred years prior to this first broadcast. In 1802, Gian Domenico Romagnosi proposed the relationship between electric current and magnetism, but his reports were largely ignored.² Hans Christian Oersted conducted an experiment that demonstrated the relationship between electricity and magnetism in 1820.³ His work influenced Andre-Marie Ampere's theory of electromagnetism. The British physicist Michael Faraday had discovered the existence of electromagnetic fields in 1845. He developed the theory that a current flowing in one wire could induce a current in another wire that was not physically connected to the first. Although Faraday was the first to publish his results, the American Scientist Joseph Henry had been working with electromagnetism. Henry had invented a forerunner to the electric doorbell, in particular a bell that could be rung at a distance via an electric wire.⁴ James Clerk Maxwell, the Scottish physicist, discovered that a varying magnetic field would induce a varying electric field and vice-versa and he published his work in 1873. In 1866, Dr. Mahlon Loomis described a system of signaling by radio and received a patent for a wireless telegraph in July 1872.⁵ He may, however, have exaggerated his achievements to sustain interest in a system that he believed would eventually work.⁶

David Edward Hughes, in 1879, was the first to claim to have transmitted and received radio waves. He demonstrated his discovery to the Royal Society in 1880 but other scientists convinced him that it was induction not transmission and he abandoned his findings.⁷ The first radio detector was developed by Italian Termistocle Clazecchi-Onesti in 1884. This device was approved upon by Frenchman Edouard Branly in 1890. In 1885, Thomas Edison took out a patent on a system of radio community between ships. It was not based on the transmission and reception of electromagnetic waves and he later sold it to Marconi. In 1888, German physicist Heinrich Hertz made the discovery of radio waves, a type of electromagnetic radiation with wavelengths too long for our eyes to see. He demonstrated the transmission and reception of the electromagnetic waves predicted by Maxwell and therefore was the first person to intentionally transmit and receive radio.⁸ Hertz created a transmitting oscillator that solved two problems. The first was timing Maxwell's waves and the second was that he found out how to make the electric and magnetic fields detach themselves from wires and go

² Bathgate, Gordon, Radio Broadcasting- A History of the Airwaves. (Philadelphia, Pen and Sword History Publishers, 2020), pg. 9.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid, pg. 10.

⁵ Ibid, pg. 11.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Ibid, pg. 12.

⁸ Ibid.

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free as Maxwell's waves. These waves became known as "Hertzian Waves" and Hertz detected them across the length of his laboratory. This resonator was the world's first wireless receiver.⁹ Nikola Tesla was a Serbian-American inventor who began research into radio in 1891. Tesla improved on other's work and invented the Tesla coil which had primary and secondary circuits both synchronized to vibrate together in harmony. Modifications that he made meant that his transmitter could have signaled across the Atlantic, if he had thought of doing so.¹⁰

Others scientists who experimented with radio and added their own improvements were Roberto Landell de Moura, Jagadish Chandra Bose, Oliver Lodge (made it possible to tune into a desired frequency), Alexander Stepanovich Popov (the first to incorporate an antenna), and Karl Ferdinand Braun (closed tuned circuit refinement and the invention of the crystal diode rectifier.)¹¹

Perhaps the true father of radio is Guglielmo Marconi who was fascinated by Heinrich Hertz's discovery of radio waves and realized that if the radio waves could be sent long distances that there would be a commercial purpose. In 1897, Marconi established the Wireless Telegraph and Signal Company at Chelmsford and the world's first radio factory was opened there, employing fifty people. In November 1897, he set up the first permanent radio installation at Aluminum Bay on the Isle of Wight. *The Daily Express* was the first newspaper to obtain news by wireless telegraphy in August 1898 using Marconi's radio. He sent the first telegraph message across the English Channel on March 27, 1899. In 1900, Marconi received a patent for the Tuned Syntonic Telegraphy, which were tuned circuits for wireless transmission so that a wireless could be tuned to a particular frequency.¹² In that same year, Marconi successfully transmitted signals to ships at distances of over 200 miles. He continued to push for further distances and on December 12, 1901, using a receiving aerial of wire held aloft by six kites, he heard the letter S in Morse code. Quickly the new device was added to a large number of ships, including the RMS Titanic.¹³ Marconi shared the 1909 Nobel Prize in Physics with the German physicist Karl Ferdinand Braun, the inventor of the cathode ray tube. Marconi's expertise and inventions were used during the First World War with British wireless operators using them to intercept German radio signals.

The radio years of 1900-1920 were known more for the rival voice transmission technologies than for broadcasting. However, in February 1907, Lee de Forest formed the de Forest Radio Telephone Company and in February broadcast gramophone records from the top floor of the Parker Building in New York. By 1910, he was transmitting operas to New Yorkers through receivers placed in different parts of New York. In November 1916, he transmitted the first presidential election report by radio from his station in the Bronx.¹⁴ Others who were early "broadcasters" included Charles Herrold who made the first radio broadcast from his radio school in 1912 in San Francisco, continuing broadcasts until 1917.¹⁵ In October 1915, the American Telephone and Telegraph Company, working with the Western Electric Company, successfully broadcast speech and music from Arlington, Virginia, to the Eiffel Tower in Paris, a distance of 5650 km.¹⁶ Further inventions that made transmissions easier and spread farther and the development of receivers for the general public were rapid following World War II and ultimately led to the establishment of radio stations such as Jackson's WJDX.

⁹ Ibid, pg. 13.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid, pg.16.

¹² Ibid, pg.19.

¹³ Ibid, pg. 21.

¹⁴ Ibid, pg. 35.

¹⁵ Ibid, pg. 41.

¹⁶ Ibid, pg. 35.

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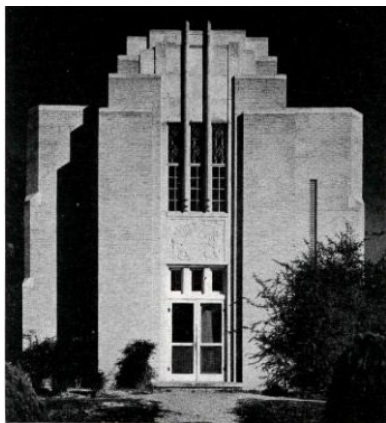
County and State

History of WJDX

The first federally-licensed radio station in the United States went on the air in Pennsylvania in 1920, with other stations opening quickly across the country. Three years later, Mississippi was the only state without a radio station. That was remedied in the following year when, according to the U. S. Department of Commerce, there were four in the state: Coldwater, Oxford, Hattiesburg and Pascagoula. These were very small stations operating at ten watts of power, enough to cover a small town. As often happens in the early years of an industry, the radio business was chaotic. In response to this chaos, the Federal Radio Act of 1927 was enacted to regulate the young industry.¹⁷

By December 1929, the number of radio stations in Mississippi had increased to six with stations in Gulfport, Utica, Meridian, Greenville, Hattiesburg, and the sixth that went on the air in December of that year, WJDX in Jackson.¹⁸ The proposed power of the new Jackson station, which was dedicated on December 1, 1929 as an affiliate of NBC, was 1,000 watts, or 100 times the power of most of the state's earlier stations. This wattage was estimated to cost \$35,000, the transmitter building with its accompanying ten acres of land, was estimated to cost \$10,000, while the studio equipment was an additional \$5,000.¹⁹ The radio's studios were located in the Lamar Life Building, located at 317 E. Capitol Street in Jackson, MS. The studios were connected to the transmitter site by telephone lines.

By 1942, there were twelve radio stations in Mississippi, expanding to forty-eight by 1952, 180 in 1960, and 250 by 2012.²⁰ Of the 546 radio stations operating in the United States in 1929, 52 received



WJDX Transmitter Building. Modern structure houses modern equipment.

Transmitter building as it appeared in 1937.

programming from the National Broadcasting Corporation (NBC), including WJDX.²¹ In fact, WJDX was the first radio station in Mississippi to be affiliated with a network.²² By 1930, much of the programming on radio across the nation was provided by three networks; CBS, NBC's red network, and NBC's blue network, later to become ABC.²³

WJDX was a success from the beginning. In 1934, the station's wattage was increased to 2,500 and then in 1937 to 5,000.²⁴ The dedication of the



Lamar Life Building Tower surmounts Studios of WJDX.

Location of WJDX Studios, photo taken in 1937.

¹⁷ <https://mississippiencyclopedia.org/entries/radio/>

¹⁸ "Parker Heads Qualified Staff of Seven People Running Station WJDX," *Daily Clarion-Ledger* (Jackson, MS), December 1, 1929, Page 1.

¹⁹ "WJDX's Abandoned Station to be Restored as Radio Museum," *The Northside Sun* (Jackson, MS), August 22, 1985, page 10A.

²⁰ <https://mississippiencyclopedia.org/entries/radio/>

²¹ "WJDX's Abandoned Station to be Restored as Radio Museum," *The Northside Sun* (Jackson, MS), August 22, 1985, page 10A.

²² "WJDX Installs First Air-cooled Transmitter – Mississippi Station Maintains Reputation for Progress", *Broadcast News*, December 1937, page 12.

²³ <https://mississippiencyclopedia.org/entries/radio/>

²⁴ "WJDX Installs First Air-cooled Transmitter – Mississippi Station Maintains Reputation for Progress", *Broadcast News*, December 1937, page 12.

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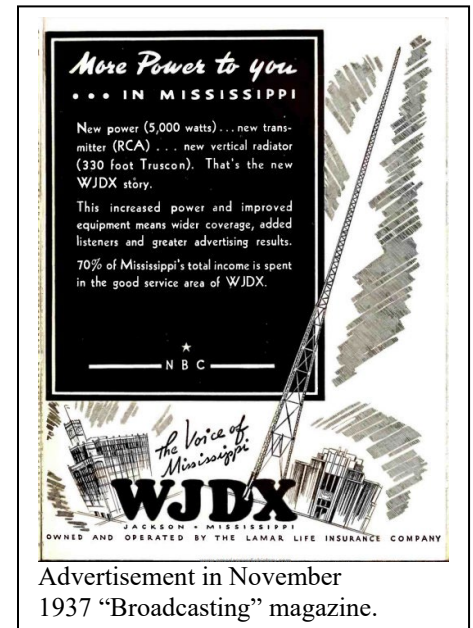
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increase of wattage to 5,000 was made on the eighth anniversary of the founding of the station, December 1, 1937, with “the Voice of Mississippi,” Governor Hugh White, and President P. K. Lutken of the Lamar Life Insurance Company, station owner, participating in the broadcast dedication. The increased wattage along with improved air-cooled equipment installed in the transmitter building, provided a much wider audience for WJDX. In fact, at the time it was stated that “70% of Mississippi’s total income is spent in the good service area of WJDX.”²⁵



In addition to the national programming provided by NBC, many local artists hosted their own programs. The local programs usually originated from the radio station’s studios, located in the Lamar Life building in downtown Jackson. One of the early local favorites was Miss Ruth Hill, a talented singer, whose exposure on WJDX lead to a call from Hollywood, which ended in her moving to the city where she sang for Delores Costello in movies.²⁶ Local

programming proved to be so popular that one night after the station had signed off for the night, so many calls were received from the listening public asking for the entertainment to continue that the station went back on the air for an additional thirty minutes.²⁷



Early programming was varied and included programs such as: “David Lawrence on The Nation’s Business,” “Talks of the World,” “The Eternal Question” (love stories), Universal Safety Talks, The Salon Singers, National Grand Opera (sponsored by the Emporium, a department store in Jackson), Slumber Music, Radio Victor Hour, the Stromberg-Carlson Program, Enne Jettie’s Energetic Melodies (sponsored by Dunn and McCarty Shoe Company), and the National Farm and Home Hour (a 30-minute network program relayed live from New York). A prominent sponsor was Jitney Jungle whose slogan was “save a nickel on a quarter.”²⁸ The Rose Bowl was broadcast over WJDX on January 1, 1930 and beginning in 1941, football games were broadcast from Mississippi State.²⁹

In 1952, WJDX negotiated a “frequency swap” with station WRBC, a relatively new station that had only been transmitting for five years. WRBC owned a 5000-watt transmitter that broadcast on a clear channel of 620 kc, which would improve the coverage of WJDX. The station bought WRBC’s transmitter for \$250,000 and then sold their old transmitter to them for \$100,000. With this sale, the Root family had to move to the new transmitter site in Rankin County. Station WRBC gave up its license in 1981 and the call sign was given to a station at Bates College in Lewiston, Maine. WJDX was operating from WLBT (television station) on Jefferson Road in Jackson, MS, in 1968 when it changed its formatting to rock and roll, becoming the first rock station in the

²⁵ Broadcasting, Vol. 13, No. 9, (Washington, D.C.), advertisement, November 1, 1937, pg. 25.

²⁶ “WJDX’s Abandoned Station to be Restored as Radio Museum,” *The Northside Sun* (Jackson, MS), August 22, 1985, page 10A..

²⁷ Ibid

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

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area. In 1973, WJDX moved to new studios on Jefferson Road in Jackson and changed its name to WZZQ. In 1981, the programming changed to country music and the station was renamed MISS 103, which continues to exist today (2024).

The radio station provided training for several of Mississippi's early radio personalities as well as those involved behind the scenes. For example, Armand Gilbert Coulet, a violinist and the director of what would later become the Jackson Symphony, was the musical director for the station, conducting the staff orchestra. He was also the station's announcer. Another famous Mississippian, author Eudora Welty, got her first paid job working part-time as a publicist for the station. Ms. Welty's father, C.W. Welty, was vice president of the Lamar Life Insurance Company, which started the radio station. Mr. Welty signed the Federal Radio Communication Application for the station.³⁰

The Lamar Life Insurance company, the original owner of WJDX, was established in 1906. It was the first insurance company in Mississippi and remained its only one for over twenty years. The company was named in honor of Lucius Quintus Cincinnatus Lamar, an attorney, and an early professor at the University of Mississippi. He also served in both houses of Congress, was Secretary of the Interior, and a Supreme Court Justice.³¹

Criterion C-Architecture

The WJDX Transmitter Building is locally significant in the area of Architecture as a good example of the Art Deco style in Jackson and Hinds County. Art Deco was a popular international design movement that grew out of the 1925 International Exposition of Modern Industrial and Decorative Art held in Paris from April to October of that year. The exposition was a specialized exhibition designed by the French government to highlight the new modern style of architecture, interior decoration, furniture, glass, jewelry and other decorative arts in Europe and throughout the world. Many ideas of the international avant-garde in the fields of architecture and applied arts were presented for the first time at the exposition. There were 15,000 exhibitors from twenty different countries, and it was visited by sixteen million people during its seven-month run. The modern style seen at the exposition later became known as Art Deco after the name of the exposition.

The idea for an exhibition entirely devoted the decorative arts originally came from the Society of Decorative Artists which was founded in 1901. Decorative artists had been allowed to participate in previous Paris Salons, but they were treated as secondary to the painters. Consequently, the decorative artists wanted an exhibition where their discipline was given priority and through the Society of Decorative Artists they lobbied the French Chamber of Deputies to establish an event that was scheduled to occur in 1915 but was postponed because of World War I. After the war ended in 1918, the plans were revived and the exposition was scheduled for 1922. However, the exposition was again postponed because of a shortage of construction materials and did not occur until 1925. From its inception, it was made clear that the exposition was intended to be a celebration of modernism with no historical styles. It was open to all artists and manufacturers as long as their designs and products were modern in design. While many nations had pavilions at the exposition to showcase their modern art and design, the United States did not. However, hundreds of American designers, artists, journalists, and department store buyers attended the exposition.³²

Art Deco buildings in Mississippi fall into two basic types: the "decorative" form, more directly inspired by the exposition, and the "simplified or stripped classical mode," which would not have been included at the

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ "Good history of Lamar Life Insurance, as it Prepares to Change its Name," *Clarion-Ledger* (Jackson, MS), June 20, 1999.

³² https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/International_Exhibition_of_Modern_Decorative_and_Industrial_Arts

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exhibition. Interestingly, most Art Deco buildings in Mississippi fall into the latter category. The “decorative” form makes heavy use of abstract decoration. Even though the origins of the style were entirely modern and without historical precedent, some of the decoration found on Art Deco buildings was inspired by ancient architecture such as the use of the ziggurat form particularly at door and window openings or in tower forms incorporated into the structure. Other Art Deco decoration was based on abstract geometric shapes such as chevrons and zigzags. Still other Art Deco ornament was inspired by nature incorporating abstract depictions of leaves, flowers, and ferns. Many of these elements were cast in brightly hued terra cotta incorporating colors such as yellow, red, blue, green, and even orange. It was a very colorful, decorative architecture that truly delighted in ornament just for ornament’s sake. Cast stone, or concrete, was also used to decorate the surfaces of Art Deco buildings. While this material was often made into the abstract forms already discussed, it was also used to produce more realistic sculptural groups such as the panel above the entry on the WJDX transmitter building.

Mississippi’s three Art Deco skyscrapers, all built between 1929 and 1930, are the state’s best examples of this style. These are the Threefoot Building in Meridian; the Plaza Building, located on Congress Street between Capitol and Amite streets in Jackson; and the Tower Building, also known as the Standard Life Building, located on the northwest corner of Roach and Pearl streets in Jackson. The Tower Building and the Threefoot Building incorporate the abstract, colorful terra cotta decorations associated with the “decorative” form of the style while the Plaza Buildings decoration is largely monochrome cast stone ornament. This ornament includes some elements inspired by ancient architecture, the ziggurat shape at the entrance, but also includes abstract floral elements in cast stone. The Plaza Building was designed by N. W. Overstreet and his use of cast stone and yellow brick here is reminiscent of his design for the transmitter building. The Bank of Morton, Scott County, built in 1929 and also designed by Overstreet, is a small-scale Art Deco commercial building. It also shares some design characteristics of the Plaza Building as well as the transmitter building. The J.Z. George School, also designed by Overstreet around this time, employs yellow brick and cast stone decoration as well.

The other type of the Art Deco style is the “simplified, or stripped, classical mode.” Unlike the decorative form, this type uses monochromatic stone or brick and is built in a shape reminiscent of classical temples. Two of the best Mississippi examples of this style are the War Memorial Building in Jackson (circa 1940), and the Meridian Post Office (late 1930s).³³ The Hinds County Courthouse in Jackson (1930) is another good example of the simplified classical type. Other courthouses in Mississippi were built in this style, but were smaller and simpler, such as the Leake County Courthouse and the Wayne County Courthouse. Several schools were designed in the style all by N. W. Overstreet and include the J.Z. George Elementary School, Jackson, Hinds County (1929), the Binford Building at Duck Hill School in Montgomery County (1930); the (Old) Pearl Consolidated School (Pearl City Hall) in Pearl, Rankin County(1930), and the Horn Lake High School Building in Horn Lake, DeSoto County (1930). Bailey Fr. High School, designed by Overstreet and Hays Town and constructed in 1936-1937, is Art Deco on the exterior with an Art Modern interior. The central tower at Bailey is its most striking exterior element and is somewhat reminiscent of the transmitter building. Overstreet’s interpretation of the Art Deco style tended to be formal and symmetrical, without the more elaborate abstract multi-colored terra cotta elements often seen on Art Deco buildings. He did, however, employ the ziggurat form as is seen at the roof line in the transmitter building, at the entrance of the Bank of Morton and the Plaza Building, or as a window embellishment as is seen in the Bank or Morton and George School.

The Art Deco style in Mississippi arrived just before the Great Depression and was employed here until about 1940. Art Deco buildings were expensive due to the extensive surface decoration in terra cotta and cast stone

³³ <https://www.mshistorynow.mdah.ms.gov/issue/architecture-in-mississippi-during-the-20th-century>

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making the style, as a rule, less popular in rural areas and small towns. Because Mississippi was largely a rural state with small towns usually without the capital to spend on large, elaborate, and expensive buildings, therefore the majority of Art Deco buildings in Mississippi are located in Jackson and Meridian, the two largest cities in the state at the time.

Noah Webster Overstreet

The WJDX Transmitter Building was designed by Noah Webster Overstreet, a well-known and accomplished architect who grew up on the small community of Eastibouchie, twelve miles north of Hattiesburg, Mississippi. In the fall of 1904, Overstreet enrolled in classes at Mississippi A and M (Mississippi State University), where he was influenced by the number of new buildings that were erected on the campus, many of which were designed by Reuben Harrison Hunt, an architect whose primary office was in Chattanooga, Tennessee. Overstreet spent a summer working in Hunt's office where he would have benefitted from the architect's encouragement and openness to new ideas. He received a Bachelor of Science degree in mechanical engineering in 1908 and continued his education at the University of Illinois. Upon graduation in 1910, he stayed in Champaign–Urbana to work in the engineering firm of Joseph W. Royer.³⁴

In January 1912, Overstreet returned to Jackson, Mississippi and established the firm Overstreet & Spencer with Raymond B. Spencer, and continued in their partnership until 1915, when he began practicing independently. His return to his home state coincided with a period of rapid economic development that afforded him excellent opportunities to use his architectural skills, and he soon assumed a position of leadership within the architectural community. His office became Mississippi's largest in the 1920s as he gained major public commissions around the state, the largest being the new state hospital campus at Whitfield from 1926 through 1935. In 1931, Overstreet established a partnership with A. Hays Town as Overstreet & Town, which lasted until 1939. This firm was responsible for many of Mississippi's depression-era public works projects. Several of these, including Bailey Junior High School in Jackson (1936), Columbia High School (1937), and Bowmar Elementary and Cherry Street schools in Vicksburg (1939) received national attention in architectural journals for their modernist design and use of concrete. Overstreet joined forces with Joseph T. Ware, Jr. and John M. Ware in 1955.³⁵

The Mississippi Department of Archives and History has identified more than 650 buildings across Mississippi, which included schools, churches, hospitals, businesses, and courthouses. He retired from practice in 1968 and at the end of his career, twenty-four of the then forty-two architects working in Jackson had been employed in his office at some time. Overstreet became a Fellow of the American Institute of Architects in 1952, nominated for his "notable and outstanding contribution to the advancement of the profession of architecture by his excellent designs as well as the educational service rendered by him to younger men."³⁶ The WJDX Transmitter Building is an important work of Overstreet's career.

³⁴ Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Mississippi Historic Resources Inventory Database.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Ibid.

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Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

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<https://www.mshistorynow.mdah.ms.gov/issue/architecuture-in-mississippi-during-the20th-century>
accessed February 20, 2024.

Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Mississippi Historic Resources Inventory Database

The Northside Sun (Jackson, MS). "WJDX's Abandoned Station to be Restored as Radio Museum," August 22, 1985, page 10A.

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	#
☐	recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey	#

Primary location of additional data:

☒	State Historic Preservation Office
☐	Other State Agency
☐	Federal Agency
☐	Local Government

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University

Other

Name of repository:

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): 049-JAC-4704

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 3.67

(Do not include previously listed resource acreage; enter "Less than one" if the acreage is .99 or less)

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84:

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

1 32.383736

Latitude

Longitude

3

Latitude

Longitude

2 -90.157378

Latitude

Longitude

4

Latitude

Longitude

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The property is PPIN 723-15 in Hinds County, Mississippi.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundaries follow property lines of the parcel of land upon which the nominated resource is located.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Nancy Bell

date March 10, 2024

organization Vicksburg Foundation for Historic Preservation

telephone 601.636.5010

street & number 1107 Washington Street

email vburgfoundation@aol.com

city or town Vicksburg

state MS

zip code 39183

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

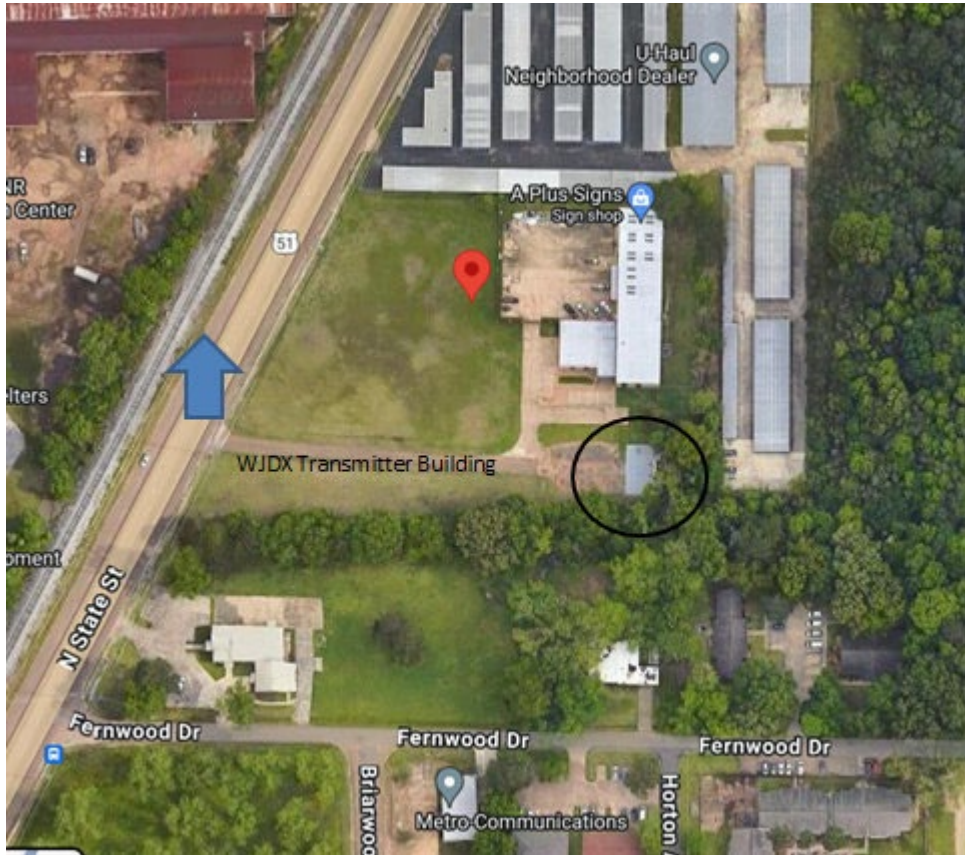
- GIS Location Map (Google Earth or BING)

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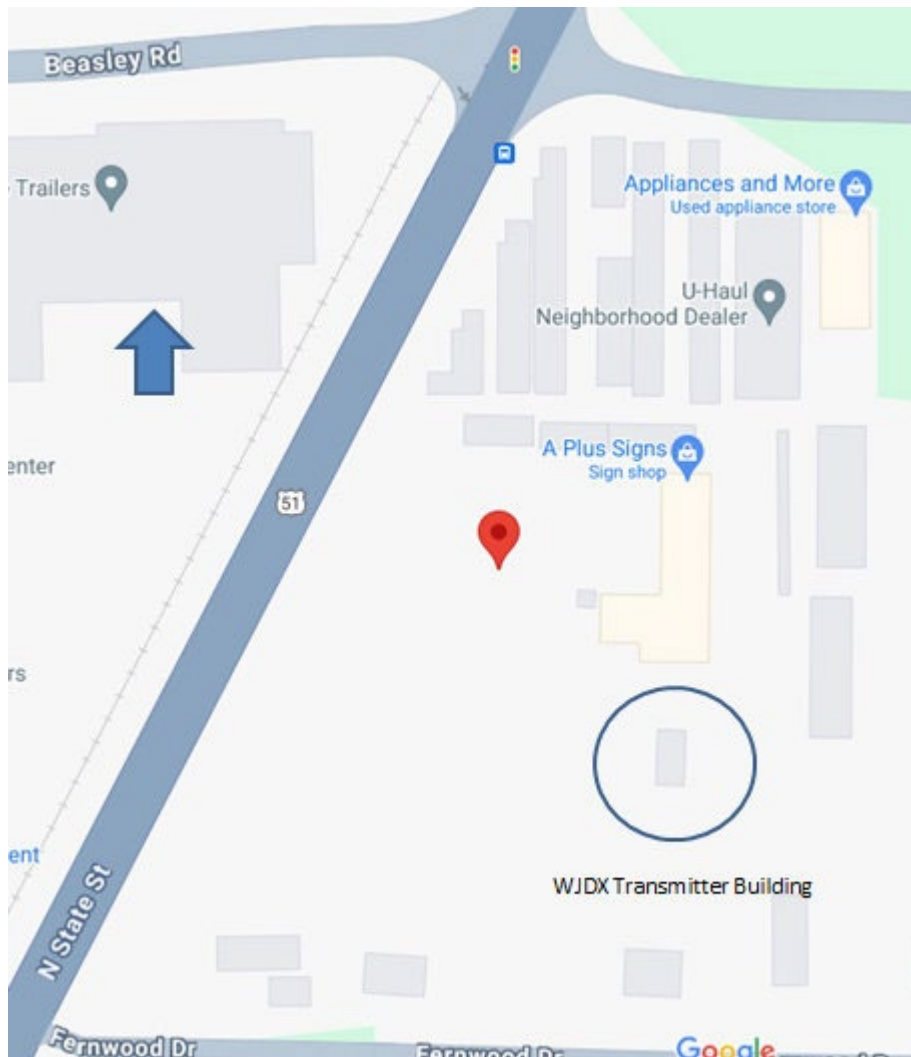
-
- Local Location Map

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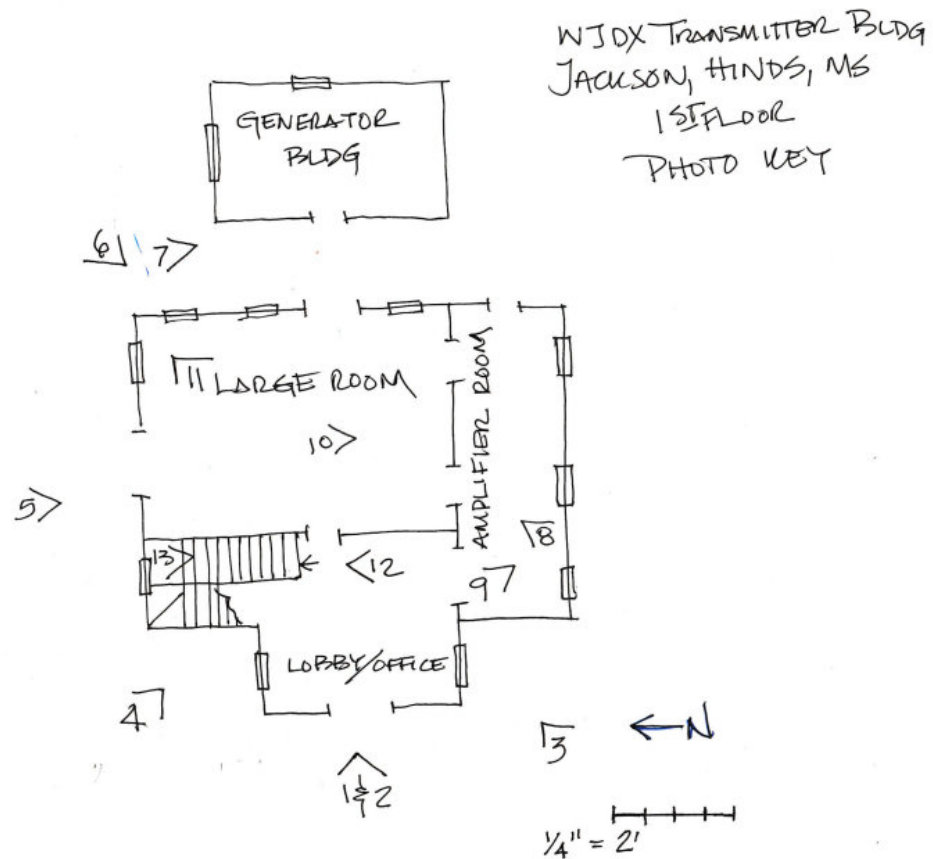
-
- **Site Plan**
- **Floor Plans (As Applicable)**
See photo key below.
- **Photo Location Map** (Key all photographs to this map and insert immediately after the photo log and before the list of figures)

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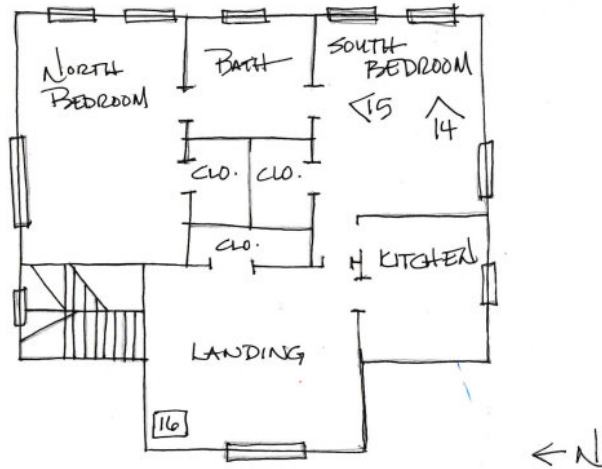
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WJDX TRANSMITTER BLDG
JACKSON, HINDS, MS
2ND FLOOR
PHOTO KEY



-
- See above.

WJDX Transmitter Building
Name of Property

Hinds County, Mississippi
County and State

Photographs:

Submit clear and descriptive photographs under separate cover. The size of each image must be 3000x2000 pixels, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and does not need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property: WJDX Transmitter Building
City or Vicinity: Jackson, MS
County: Hinds **State:** MS
Photographer: Vicksburg Foundation for Historic Preservation
Date Photographed: November 2023

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

Photo 1 of 16	Façade (west), view to east
Photo 2 of 16	Close-up of ornamentation on the façade, view to east
Photo 3 of 16	Southwest corner of projecting entrance, view to northeast
Photo 4 of 16	Northwest corner of projecting entrance, view to southeast
Photo 5 of 16	North elevation, view to south
Photo 6 of 16	Rear (east) elevation, view to southwest
Photo 7 of 16	Generator Building, northwest corner to southeast corner
Photo 8 of 16	First floor, amplifier room, view to east
Photo 9 of 16	First floor, amplifier room, view to southeast
Photo 10 of 16	First floor, large room, view to south
Photo 11 of 16	First floor, large room, view to northeast
Photo 12 of 16	First floor, stairs to the second floor, view to north
Photo 13 of 16	Second floor, stairs, look down to the first floor
Photo 14 of 16	Second floor, south bedroom, view to east
Photo 15 of 16	Second floor, south bedroom, view into closet and bathroom, view to north
Photo 16 of 16	Second floor, landing ceiling

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 listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 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 Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.































