

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

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 Corydon Wassell House

other names/site number (PU9935)

2. Location

street & number 2005 South Scott Street

not for publication

city or town Little Rock

vicinity

state Arkansas

code

AR

County Pulaski

code

119

zip code

72206

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.)

Cathryn J. Slater  
Signature of certifying official/Title

4-17-00  
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:) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Corydon Wassell House  
Name of Property

Pulaski County, Arkansas  
County and State

**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
		structures
		objects
1	0	Total

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

N/A

**Number of Contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

N/A

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Domestic/single dwelling

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Domestic/single dwelling

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Queen Anne

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation BRICK

walls Weatherboard

roof ASPHALT

other

**Narrative Description**

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

See Continuation Sheet.

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.)

- Criteria A, B (checked), C, D with descriptions of property significance.

Criteria Considerations

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

Property is:

- Criteria A through G for property characteristics.

Levels of Significance (local, state, national)

state

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

HEALTH/MEDICINE

Period of Significance

July 4, 1884

Significant Dates

1882

July 4, 1884

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked)

Wassell, Corydon

Cultural Affiliation (Complete if Criterion D is marked)

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

See Continuation Sheet.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

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

See Continuation Sheet.

Corydon Wassell House

Name of Property

Pulaski County, Arkansas

County and State

**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:

Arkansas History Commission

**10. Geographical Data**

Acree of Property Less than one acre

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

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2	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	4	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>	<u>          </u>

See continuation sheet

**Verbal Boundary Description**

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

Lots 2 & 3, Block 417, Duvall's Addition to the City of Little Rock.

**Boundary Justification**

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

This boundary includes all of the property historically associated with this resource that retains its integrity.

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Keith Caviness/property owner

organization \_\_\_\_\_ date 3/28/00

street & number 2005 S. Scott Street telephone (501) 374-6857

city or town Little Rock State Arkansas zip code 72206

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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### Summary

The Corydon Wassell House is a one-and-one-half story wood framed Victorian cottage. The 1882 house is located at 2005 South Scott Street, outside both the Governor's Mansion and MacArthur Park Historic Districts. Victorian cottages of the same caliber are common in both of these districts; therefore, the Corydon Wassell House cannot be nominated on architectural merit alone. However, the house does retain the majority of its architectural integrity, and has gained significance by association with Dr. Corydon Wassell, who was a missionary, conducted significant medical research and was a highly decorated American War Hero. The main exterior alteration is the addition of an enclosed sleeping porch on the eastern elevation, c. 1920. There are no extant historic outbuildings located on the property.

### Elaboration

The Wassell House is a one and one-half story residence constructed in 1882 as a Queen Anne/Eastlake cottage. The house has a brick foundation with weatherboard clad walls. The house is currently painted gray with dark gray and white trim. The hipped roof features gabled bay projections and a widow's walk. A shed roof covers two porches and a second story sleeping porch. The major portion of the roof is covered with composition asphalt shingles. The widow's walk and the front porch are covered with modified rubber roll roofing. Currently, both the back porch and sleeping porch are covered with asphalt roll roofing. Originally, there were three chimneys, but one original brick chimney was removed from the rooftop and now extends only into the attic. Chimney caps cover the remaining two chimneys. The widow's walk originally featured iron railing, but it was removed at some point and has not been replaced.

The front, or western, elevation features a Palladian window in the gable end. There is plain-boxed cornice across this gable end. The front also features three bay windows. These windows are double-hung and the casing design features an entablature, wood trim and sill. Other architectural or structural details include bracket and pendant under the eaves at chamfered northwest corner of the house and over left and right bay located on the front right façade. A three-quarters porch with posts, balustrade and lattice covering underneath, complete the front elevation.

The northern elevation also features a Palladian window in the gable end and simple boxed cornice. This elevation has three bay windows of the same type and with the same architectural details as those on the western elevation. This home was constructed front to back coming off of a hill on the front or western elevation. The north elevation contains a raised basement. From the north side, the house rises off of the hill with the main living story of the house supported by raised continuous brick foundation. This basement level has an entry door for an under the house workshop as well as an entry door to what was originally living quarters for the household help.

The eastern elevation consists of a second story porch and enclosed sleeping porch. Wooden posts support these porches and a stairway leads to the open half porch or gallery. A shed roof covers both porches. The eastern elevation also has a gabled roof projections with a Palladian window and a boxed cornice across the gable end. There are two entry doors off the half porch which lead to the main living area. A single entry door provides access to the lower living area.

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The southern elevation has no significant architectural features or entryways. This elevation consists of the double hung windows and weatherboard siding with which the remainder of the house is also clad.

The interior of the house is largely unaltered from its original construction. Of course, certain twentieth century amenities such as electricity, indoor plumbing, and central heat and air have been added. The interior retains its original wood slat and plaster walls as well as the original oak hardwood floors. All ceilings in the main living area are thirteen feet high. The oversize doors to each room have the original decorative hinges and some retain their white porcelain doorknobs. Transoms are in place above each door. The main entryway to the home features a huge dogtrot or breezeway. This breezeway extends the full length of the house and has one arch with decorative plaster molding. Decorative wood molding lines the entire area along the tops of the doors and two original light fixtures remain.

The first room on the southwest corner of the house is presently the living room. The original coal-burning fireplace remains as well as a mantel. This room also has three bay windows. Across the breezeway on the northwest corner is what was originally the parlor, but currently is a bedroom. This room has a huge set of pocket doors, three bay windows and a very old gas burning stove. It is unknown if this was originally a coal-burning fireplace, but there is a chimney and an oak mantel decorated with original English tile. A middle room on the south side of the house now serves as a bedroom. Across from this room on the north side is the original dining room, which now is a bedroom. Decorative wood molding adorns the upper wall and the original light fixture remains.

The southeast corner of the house is the present kitchen. Originally the cooking and cleaning were done in the lower level of the house and at some undetermined date this room was converted to the kitchen. A unique half-door, half-window on the eastern side of the room leads to the enclosed sleeping porch. Across from the kitchen on the northeast corner is the main bathroom. This room was originally part of the hallway and has a door and stairs leading to a large attic.

In the breezeway, between the two bedrooms on the north side of the house is a door that provides entry to the downstairs living quarters. This was originally the servants quarters. A stairwell, which was modified at some unknown date to decrease the angle of ascent and descent, leads to this area. This area currently has a living room, bedroom, full bath, laundry/utility room, hallway, and three large walk-in closets. Although repainted and wallpapered, the entire interior is largely unaltered from its original state. Many of the original light fixtures, switch plates, and the original door and window hardware still remain.

There are no extant outbuildings.

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### Summary

The Wassell House is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion B with statewide significance. The house is the only extant building associated with Dr. Corydon M. Wassell in the state of Arkansas. Dr. Wassell was a member of a prominent early Little Rock family who became a missionary, a medical doctor who conducted significant research and writing, and a highly decorated American War Hero. Dr. Wassell received the highest honors his nation could bestow and his exploits became the subject of both a novel and a feature length movie.

### Elaboration

"I've wandered east, I've wandered west  
Through many a weary way;  
But never, never can forget  
The love o' life's young day."

Thus wrote the poet and thus spoke Dr. Corydon McAlmont Wassell, one of the popular personalities of World War II.

Corydon Wassell was born on July 4, 1884, at Little Rock, Arkansas. The Wassell family came originally from Kidderminster, England. Young Cory enjoyed a mixed education and a wandering youth; he did not decide on a profession till he was twenty-two. Then he studied at Johns Hopkins, after which he graduated from the University of Arkansas in 1909 and began practicing in the small Arkansas town of Tillar.

For the next five years he faced the usual struggles, problems, and hardships of a young doctor. However, during this time, two things he did are worth special mention: he organized a sort of group-medicine scheme for Negro workers, and he married a village schoolteacher.

In 1913 the President of Suchow University came to Tillar and spoke in the Episcopal Church about the needs of China. With the support of his wife, they both left Arkansas as prospective missionaries a few months later to make a new home at Wuchang, on the Yangtze River. Here the doctor studied Chinese, worked in the hospital at Boone University, and raised a family.

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Except for a short furlough in 1919 (during which his fourth child, a son, was born at Little Rock), Dr. Wassell spent twelve years in China. Four of them were European War years – all of them were Chinese war years. He did a great many things during this time. He diagnosed, treated, and operated at hospitals; he took a course in neurology at Peking Medical College and studied parasitology at Hunan Yale. Wassell also published articles on encephalitis in medical journals and examined thousands of snails in a search for the carrier of amoebic dysentery. He taught Chinese students, both in Chinese and in English. He became known for his diplomacy because he mixed well with American and English residents, and had no trouble in avoiding religious friction with Buddhists and Catholics.

After he resigned from the society and took on the triple tasks of port doctor at Kukiang, consultant in a Catholic hospital, and a private practice. There were changes too in his personal life, for his wife had died, and he married again – an American missionary-nurse (his present wife). During that time he was intermittently mixed up with war and revolution as well as with disease and pestilence, so that he served with equal readiness a Chinese army at the front and a British Consulate. (And – significantly for what happened later – he joined the U.S. Naval Reserve.)

In 1927 confusion, reaching a climax, drove him home – back to Little Rock, where he once again pursued a private practice and earned just enough in the first six months to pay his office rent. Soon, however, a county job fell to him, and this was much better – that of organizing and officering a public-health system in the schools. But once again the doctor found himself a pioneer. This time, in addition to the Negro, there was the Catholic, and the man of any race or religion who couldn't afford a two-dollar fee for immunization against a diphtheria epidemic. Dr. Wassell championed them all – not as a crusader, but as a public-health official who very simply believed it was his duty to safeguard public health.

Then came the Depression, when dollars were even scarcer and diseases even more plentiful. Malaria spread in parts of Arkansas, and on account of his Chinese experience Dr. Wassell was given the job of fighting it in local CCC camps.

In 1936, at the age of fifty-two, he resumed regular commissioned duty in the Navy, and 1940 (the CCC era ended) saw him at Key West, serving on a submarine inspection board. In September 1941 he was ordered to Cavite, and was to have sailed from San Francisco on the morning of December 7. That sailing was delayed, and that destination changed. It had to be Java instead – and at the end of January.

On February 4 the cruisers *Houston* and *Marblehead* were in action off the Java coast. Badly battered by much heavier Japanese force, they yet managed to limp into port, and Dr. Wassell, who had just arrived on the island, was among those detailed to take care of many wounded men.

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“Dr. Wassell,” said the President in a broadcast speech to the nation on the twenty-eighth of April, 1942, “remained with these men, knowing that he would be captured by the enemy. But he decided to make a desperate attempt to get the men out of Java. He asked each of them if he wished to take the chance and every one agreed. He first had to get the twelve men to the seacoast. The men were suffering severely but Dr. Wassell kept them alive by his skill and inspired them by his own courage. As the official report said, Dr. Wassell was ‘almost like a Christ-like shepherd devoted to his flock.’”

Cecil B. DeMille, movie director and producer sat behind his desk listening to the broadcast and immediately after its conclusion he called the head of Paramount studios. DeMille was stuck by the story of Dr. Wassell and wanted it to be his next picture. He called the Secretary of the Navy to enlist the services of Dr. Wassell and pledged part of the proceeds to Navy Relief.

“The most trying period in my life,” said Dr. Wassell, “was the 31 months I spent with Cecil B. DeMille. The picture when we finally got through with it was at least 98 percent accurate. Even the love interest was true. I married Madeline. Only the time of the wedding was changed.” The picture, which was one of the most aspiring cinemas of the war, was shown in many foreign countries with the language of each country dubbed in. And the book, which James Hilton wrote, was translated in seven or eight foreign languages.

Little Rock put on a three-day celebration for the premiere showing. High ranking naval officials and Paramount studio representatives, Cecil B. DeMille among them, were there for the activities. At the premiere showing in Washington D.C., only standing room was left in Constitutional Hall. In New York, at the Rivoli, the picture was a smash hit, topping the opening day receipts of “For Whom the Bell Tolls.” And in Hollywood the picture drew a notable representation of the Hollywood gentry. And everywhere the ceremonies blended with the support of the feature.

The Arkansas Gazette reported:

“Mrs. Albert Wassell, of 2005 Scott Street, 86-year old mother of Little Rock’s Comdr. Corydon M. Wassell, saw a private showing yesterday afternoon of Cecil B. DeMille’s new technicolor production “The Story of Dr. Wassell” starring Gary Cooper in the role that her son played in real life. The world premiere of the picture will be held at the Capitol and Arkansas theaters’ on the night of April 26. It was arranged for Mrs. Wassell to be hostess to a few members of the family at the screening in the Robb and Rowley preview room in the Pulaski Theater building.”

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Dr. Wassell's services were in great demand after this. The famed Dr. Wassell traveled all over the country making thrilling and stirring addresses. He spoke in every state in the nation except two or three New England states. He did not spare his home state and made numerous appearances at manufacturing plants involved in the war effort. Dr. Wassell said that he had visited more than 700 war plants and government installations and had shaken hands with more than 1,000,000 war workers. He also gave of his time at the state's medical school as well as various hospitals and churches in the state. A byline in the Arkansas Gazette read "Dr. Wassell Given Little Rest Here." The story read:

"Lt. Comdr. Corydon McAlmont Wassell may be a hero to the nation, but to his mother, Mrs. Albert Wassell, 2005 Scott Street, he is just a boy returning home from the wars after a long absence. "He did just what we would have expected him to do under the circumstances," she told a Gazette reporter at her home yesterday afternoon as she gently patted the hand of one of the nation's greatest heroes of the present World War. "I certainly wouldn't have expected him or any other officer of our navy to leave his men in the jungle so he could save himself. He isn't that type of a man."

Fay Williams of the Arkansas Democrat Sunday Magazine reported 27 July 1952 that: "Dr. Wassell has been around a bit; he has won worldwide acclaim, and now he and Mrs. Wassell are living in the old home where he was born at 2005 Scott Street in Little Rock. During the war Little Rock was placed high on the map as being the birthplace of Gen. Douglas MacArthur and Gen. Brehon Somerville. And then a modest missionary doctor with homespun philosophy and a great human spirit also got into the picture, both literally and figuratively. It is a story that deserves to be retold."

Dr. Wassell died May 12, 1958. The following obituary appeared in the Arkansas Gazette. "Dr. Corydon McAlmont Wassell, 74, the modest medical missionary whose heroic conduct in Java during World War II resulted in a novel and a motion picture "The Story of Dr. Wassell," died in Little Rock today in the Rivercliff Apartments after having been ill for some time. Throughout his life, Dr. Wassell had pioneered in medicine as his family had in territorial and early statehood days of Arkansas. He was born July 4, 1884, at 2005 Scott, the son of Albert Wassell and Leona McAlmont. His grandfather, Dr. Corydon McAlmont, for whom he was named, had been a physician in Little Rock and it was for his family that both McAlmont street and McAlmont station were named.

His great grandfather, John Wassell, was appointed mayor of Little Rock in 1868 as acceptable to both Confederates and Federals at the end of the War between the States. It was also John Wassell, a native of England, who finished the interior of the Old State House. Dr. Wassell was graduated from the University of Arkansas School of Medicine in 1909. He practiced medicine in Tillar, then became a medical missionary to China where he lived from 1914 to 1927.

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He served as health officer for Prairie and Pulaski counties and the Little Rock public schools. Then he conducted research at St. Charles on malarial control for the federal government.

With the outbreak of World War II, he was stationed with the U.S. Navy at Key West, Fla., and was ordered to the Far East. It was in Java that he evacuated 12 badly wounded men under Japanese gunfire, refusing to leave them to certain capture. The evacuation lasted for 50 miles under constant fire. It was this deed on March 1, 1942, that brought him, on March 23, 1942, the Navy Cross "for extraordinary devotion to duty while in eminent contact with enemy forces and under attack from enemy aircraft, caring for and evacuating the wounded of the U.S. Navy under your charge in Java, N.E.I."

The novelist, James Hilton wrote the "Story of Dr. Wassell" which was produced as a motion picture by Cecil B. DeMille. And it was one on the top 10 films the year of its release.

Far from withdrawing from active life, Dr. Wassell then did missionary work for the Episcopal church on Molokai in the Hawaiian islands. Later he lived in Florida but had lived in Little Rock since 1956.

Dr. Wassell was a lifetime member of the American Medical Association and the Lions Club.

Survivors include his widow, Mrs. Madeline Day Wassell; his sister, Mrs. C.S. Woodward, 2005 Scott; a daughter, Mrs. Leland Seeton, Durham, Conn.; two sons, Lt. James W. Wassell, U.S. Naval Academy Annapolis Md., and Dr. John R. Wassell, Little Rock, and seven grandchildren. Burial will be in Arlington Cemetery with funeral services in Little Rock to be announced by Healey & Roth."

Finally, on October 22, 1999 the Arkansas Times in their *25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Issue*, named Dr. Wassell to its list of 100 notable Arkansawyers.

### Significance

The Corydon Wassell House is significant under criterion B as the best and only extant building in Arkansas associated with Dr. Corydon M. Wassell. The 1882 house is located at 2005 South Scott Street, outside both the Governor's Mansion and MacArthur Park Historic Districts. Victorian cottages of the same caliber are common in both of these districts; therefore, the Corydon Wassell House cannot be nominated on architectural merit alone. However, the house does retain the majority of its architectural integrity, and has gained significance by association with Dr. Corydon. Wassell, who was a missionary, conducted significant medical research and was a highly decorated American War Hero.

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### Bibliography

Conversation with Mrs. Betty Wassell, widow of Dr. John R. Wassell, Little Rock, AR.

Conversation with Wassell Turner, retired architect, Little Rock, AR.

Conversation with Larry Ahart, Historian/Old Statehouse, Little Rock, AR.

Sunday Magazine, Arkansas Democrat, July 27, 1952.

Arkansas Gazette, 12/19/38.

Arkansas Times, 10/22/99.

Dr. Corydon M. Wassell, Scrapbook 1942-1958, Arkansas History Commission.

Structure Survey Information, Capital Zoning District Commission.

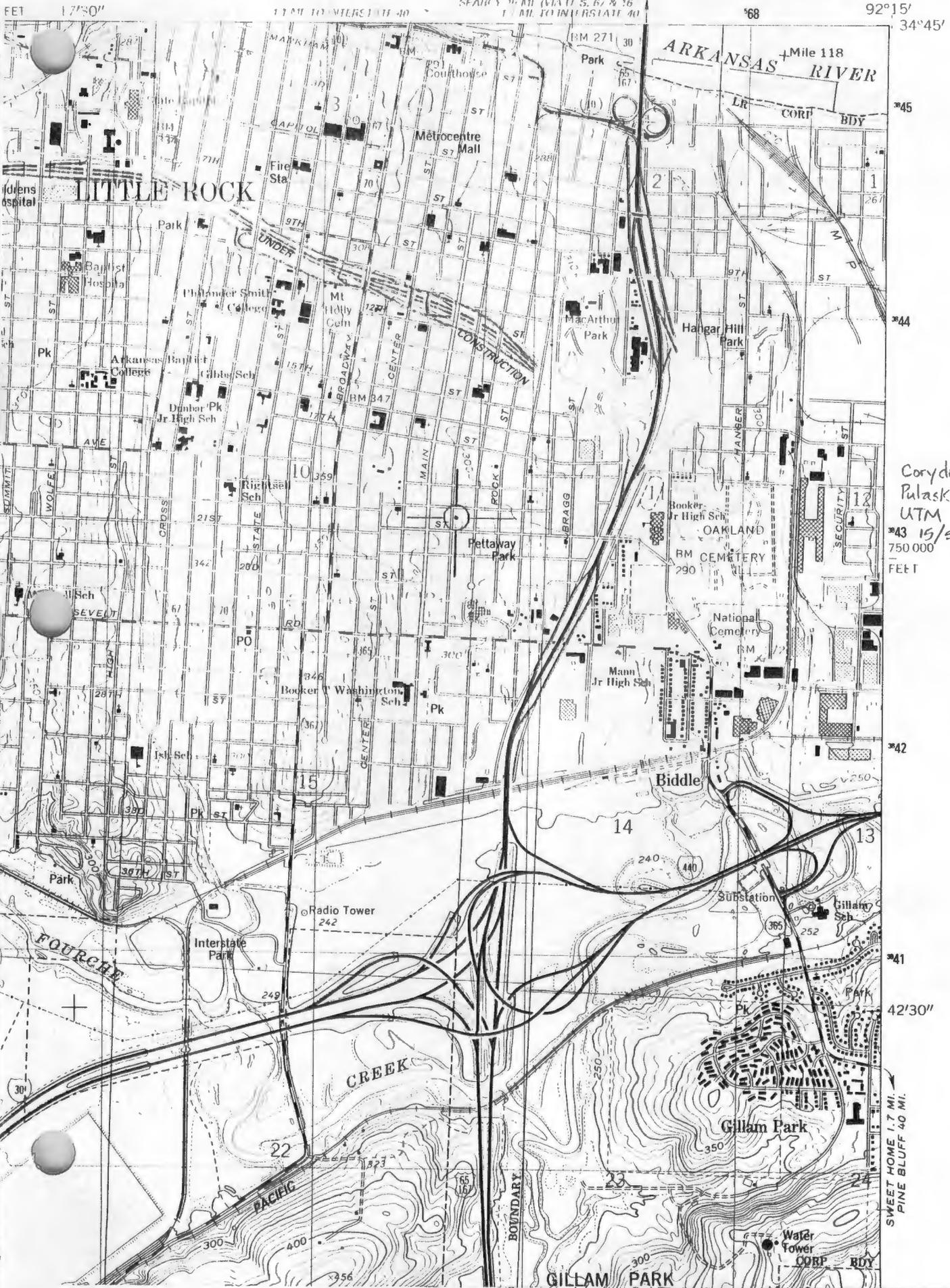
Architectural-Historic Inventory Card, Quapaw Quarter Association.

"The Story of Dr. Wassell," Paramount Pictures.

"The Story of Dr. Wassell," James Hilton, Little Brown & Co.

LITTLE ROCK QUADRANGLE  
 ARKANSAS  
 7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)

7553 1 SW  
 (MC ALMONT)



Corydon Wessel Ho  
 Pulaski Co, Arkans  
 UTM reference  
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 750 000  
 FEET

SWEET HOME 1.7 MI.  
 PINE BLUFF 40 MI.