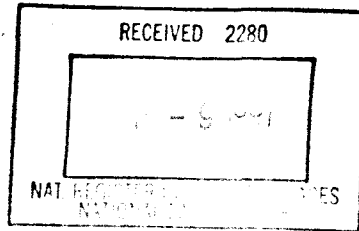


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service



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 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 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 Tupelo Homesteads

other names/site number Tupelo Quarters

2. Location

street & number County Road 665, County Road 657, Drive 647

city or town Tupelo not for publication
state Mississippi code MS county Lee vicinity
zip code 38801 code 081

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, 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 forth 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.)

Ronald M. Greenberg Date 4/1/91
Signature of certifying official

National Park Service
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 commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
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Signature of certifying official Date

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.)

Kenneth H. P. Paul Nov. 7, 1996
Signature of commenting or other official Date

Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer
State or Federal agency and bureau

4. 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): _____

Edson H. Beall 2.7.97

Signature of Keeper Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

- ___ private
- ___ public-local
- ___ public-State
- public-Federal

- ___ building(s)
- district
- ___ site
- ___ structure
- ___ object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed properties in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>53</u>	<u>1</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>3</u>	<u>2</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>56</u>	<u>3</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

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

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)
DOMESTIC/single dwelling
DOMESTIC/secondary structure
TRANSPORTATION/road-related

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)
DOMESTIC/single dwelling
DOMESTIC/secondary structure
TRANSPORTATION/road-related

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)
Colonial Revival

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)
foundation: brick
walls: weatherboard
brick
roof: asphalt
metal
other: wood
brick
asphalt

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

8. Statement of Significance

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

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

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

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or a grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance
(Enter categories from instructions)

Social History
Architecture
Community Planning and Development

Period of Significance
1933-1940

Significant Dates

1934
1936

Significant Person
(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Frank R. Kincannon
Walter R. Nelson

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

9. Major Bibliographical References

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

Previous documentation on file (NPS)

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository: National Park Service, Southeast Field Area

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property 124

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

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
A	16	343260	3799890	F	16	342750	3799780
B	16	343260	3799070	G	16	342820	3799870
C	16	342720	3799080	H	16	343060	3799660
D	16	342440	3799460	I	16	343080	3799900
E	16	342540	3799670				

See continuation sheet.

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

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

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Jennifer D. Brown, Historian

organization National Park Service, Southeast Field Area

date December 17, 1996

street & number Atlanta Federal Center, 1924 Building, 100 Alabama St., SW

telephone (404)562-3117

city or town Atlanta state GA zip code 30303

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage
or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

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

name National Park Service

street & number P.O. Box 37127 telephone _____

city or town Washington state DC zip code 20013-7127

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Tupelo Homesteads
name of property

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Lee County, MS
county and State

Section 7 Page 1

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

Between 1934 and 1936, the federal government built a 35-unit subsistence homestead community five miles north of Tupelo, Mississippi. Today, the Tupelo Homesteads serve as quarters for employees of Natchez Trace Parkway, a unit of the National Park Service. U. S. Highway 45 bisects the semirural community, which is characterized by modest, one-story frame houses on wooded lots averaging three acres each. Twenty of the original thirty-five houses and their associated outbuildings remain.

The Tupelo Homesteads were constructed in two phases. In 1934 the Division of Subsistence Homesteads (DSH), Department of the Interior, built Unit A on a 171-acre tract located on U.S. Highway 45. DSH architects designed an irregular loop road west of the highway and a secondary road extending north and west from the northeast portion of the loop to old U.S. Highway 45. Twenty-five homesteads were arranged around these two roads; each had a house, car shed, and pumphouse. The one-story weatherboard houses had brick pier foundations and minimal architectural detail. Massing, roof types, and porch configurations and details varied slightly, giving each building a unique design despite the similarity of materials, size, and scale employed. In the southwest corner of the property, the DSH built a lake and park for recreational use.

In 1936 the Resettlement Administration (RA), successor to the DSH, completed the Tupelo Homesteads with the construction of Unit B, ten additional homesteads on a new road parallel to the highway on its east side. These one-story houses were frame construction with side gable roofs; all but one had brick exteriors. As in Unit A, variations in massing, porch configuration, and architectural detail provided diversity within a largely homogeneous community.

The Tupelo Homesteads functioned as a subsistence colony. Residents worked part-time in local industrial plants and cultivated crops for home consumption in their spare time. As a result, small agricultural fields dotted the landscape, and family orchards were common. Livestock and poultry populated the community.

In 1940, the National Park Service (NPS) acquired the Tupelo Homesteads and began to transform the community into headquarters for the Natchez Trace Parkway. During the initial period of park development from 1942 to 1943, the NPS moved Quarters 31 to the interior of the main loop road and consolidated four of the houses in Unit A (Quarters 29, 30, 32, 33) to form a temporary administration building. This building served as park headquarters from 1942 until 1961, when the NPS built a new Visitor Center for the parkway.

Construction of the Natchez Trace Parkway through the northwest portion of the Tupelo Homesteads began in 1952 and was completed in 1961. The road construction necessitated the relocation of Quarters 35 to a site on the southeast side of the loop road in 1957. Around the same time, the National Park Service began a nation-wide initiative to improve employee housing. All but one of the homesteads fell short of the national standards, resulting in renovations to most of the buildings. The brick pier foundations were probably filled around this time. In 1966, the NPS relocated Quarters 34 onto the primary loop road.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Tupelo Homesteads
name of property

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Lee County, MS
county and State

Section 7 Page 2

Construction of the parkway led to changes in the community's road system in the 1950s and 1960s. The NPS eliminated the portion of the secondary road west of the new parkway and relocated the houses there onto the main loop. The NPS also altered the main loop, removing its southeastern portion and adding a connector near the center of the loop. A cul-de-sac was built at the new terminus on the southwest, near Quarters 11. Finally, the road in Unit B was altered slightly by the elimination of several driveways off of U.S. Highway 45 and the creation of a cul-de-sac at the road's north end.

The landscape was further altered in the 1960s, when the dam broke on the man-made lake, obliterating all traces of that landscape feature. Additionally, the NPS demolished eleven of the homesteads between 1970 and 1993, leaving the total number at twenty. The park has also made minor additions and alterations to many of the houses. All additions are at the rear or side of the structure and employ size, scale, materials, and design compatible with the historic appearance. Porches on several buildings have been enclosed, and windows have been added or replaced in at least one house. These changes have not significantly altered the appearance or feeling generated by the individual houses or the community.

Today, the Tupelo Homesteads continue to serve as park housing. The community has retained its rural character; many of the residents continue to plant vegetable gardens, and new growth forest has filled the dormant agricultural fields. Most of the outbuildings associated with the remaining homesteads are still intact, and the roads and driveways have retained the essential character and appearance of the originals. Even where homesteads have been demolished, home sites and driveways remain as evidence of their existence.

Description of Contributing Properties

Tupelo Quarters 1

50.5' x 51' x 20' side-gabled, irregularly massed brick house has a central interior chimney and a pedimented, gable-front portico supported on paired wood posts. Rear ell is wood frame with weatherboard siding. Windows are 6/6 wood sash. (building; IDLCS 91354)

Tupelo Quarters 2

34.5' x 43.5' x 19.5', 3-bay, frame house has a side-gabled roof and a full-width, engaged shed-roof porch. House rests on continuous foundation and has weatherboard siding and 6/6 wood sash windows. Shed-roof rear extension is probably an enclosed porch. (building; IDLCS 91355)

Tupelo Quarters 3

50' x 33' x 20', one-story, side-gabled brick house has a central interior chimney and a central attached shed-roof porch with paired wood support posts. The entry has vertical board siding under a raised brick and concrete porch. (building; IDLCS 91356)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Tupelo Homesteads
name of property

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Lee County, MS
county and State

Section 7 Page 3

Tupelo Quarters 5

34.5' x 43.5' x 20', one-story, side-gabled brick house has both central interior and exterior end chimneys and a cutaway corner entry porch. Details include a boxed cornice, partial returns, arched porch frieze with square wood posts, and weatherboard gable ends. (building; IDLCS 91357)

Tupelo Quarters 6

49' x 57.6' x 18.5', one-story, side-gabled brick house has a central interior chimney and a pedimented portico with paired wood posts and vertical board cladding. Rear ell addition has weatherboard siding. (building; IDLCS 91358)

Tupelo Quarters 8

50' x 33' x 20', one-story, side-gabled brick house has a central interior chimney and a central, shed-roof porch with paired wood posts and vertical board cladding. Details include weatherboard gable ends, molded cornice, and triangular vents. (building; IDLCS 91359)

Tupelo Quarters 9

50' x 59' x 22', side-gabled brick house has a central interior chimney and a raised, pedimented portico with paired wood posts and partial returns. Weatherboard gable ends have triangular vents. Rear frame addition has porch and weatherboard siding. (building; IDLCS 91360)

Tupelo Quarters 10

44' x 30' x 19', one-story, side-gabled brick house has an engaged side porch on a gabled projection. Raised porch has square posts and an arched frieze board with two entries into house. The building has no obvious additions. (building; IDLCS 91361)

Tupelo Quarters 12

50' x 30' x 19', one-story, side-gabled frame house has a central interior chimney and a gable-on-hip portico. Main mass is rectangular with side ell and abbreviated shed-roof rear extension. The exterior has a unique flared weatherboard siding. (building; IDLCS 91362)

Tupelo Quarters 13

43.5' x 35' x 19.5', side-gabled wood frame cottage has a central interior chimney and a continuous brick foundation. Engaged porch adjacent to the front gable projection has wood posts and an arched frieze. Cornice is boxed with molded trim. (building; IDLCS 91363)

Tupelo Quarters 14

34.5' x 30' x 23', side-gabled wood frame cottage has a cutaway porch, decorative gable over porch, central interior chimney, and wide, beveled weatherboard siding. Cornice is boxed with molded trim and concave brackets. (building; IDLCS 91364)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Tupelo Homesteads
name of property

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Lee County, MS
county and State

Section 7 Page 4

Tupelo Quarters 15

48.5' x 30.5' x 19', side-gabled, frame cottage has a gable-on-hip porch, central interior chimney, and continuous brick foundation. Concrete porch has bracketed wood posts. Weatherboard siding is beveled with concave corner brackets. (building; IDLCS 91366)

Tupelo Quarters 17

43.5' x 34' x 18.5', side-gable-on-hip cottage has a hip-roofed front wing. House has central interior chimney and front-gable porch with plain wood posts and sawn brackets. This is the unaltered reverse twin of Quarters 35. (building; IDLCS 91369)

Tupelo Quarters 18

38' x 31' x 19', side-gabled cottage has a central interior chimney, decorative front gable, and a hip-roofed side extension. Original cutaway corner porch is enclosed. The house is clad in beveled weatherboard with concave corner brackets. (building; IDLCS 91371)

Tupelo Quarters 20

37' x 35' x 18.5', side-gable frame cottage has a front gable projection and an engaged porch. Front gable projection has a half-moon vent and triple window. Porch has square posts with arched frieze panels. The house has an interior brick chimney and boxed cornice. (building; IDLCS 91373)

Tupelo Quarters 22

43' x 35' x 18.5', side-gable frame cottage has a gabled front extension and a shed roof corner porch with square wood posts and arched frieze panels. House has a central brick chimney, half-moon gable vents, and beveled weatherboard. (building; IDLCS 91370)

Tupelo Quarters 25

49' x 30' x 19', side-gable-on-hip frame cottage has a hip-roof front projection and a front-gable porch. House has central, interior chimney, beveled weatherboard siding, bracketed porch posts, and a boxed cornice with molded trim. (building; IDLCS 91372)

Tupelo Quarters 31

63.5' x 39.5' x 18.5', side-gabled frame cottage has a front-gable projection with a triple window and half-moon vent. Concrete porch has shed roof, square wood posts, and arched frieze panels. This building was moved from its original location on a secondary road within the community to the main loop road. (building; IDLCS 91367)

Tupelo Quarters 34

71' x 36.5' x 19.5', side-gabled, frame house has hipped roof extensions and gabled central projection with a triple window. Front porch has engaged roof. Alterations include a carport on the east elevation and a rear addition on the east end. This building was moved from its original location on a secondary road within the community to the main loop road. (building; IDLCS 91365)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Tupelo Homesteads
name of property

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Lee County, MS
county and State

Section 7 Page 5

Tupelo Quarters 35

43' x 49' x 18.5', side-gable-on-hip frame cottage has a rear gabled ell. Main facade has hipped central projection and front-gable porch with wood posts. A large 9-light window has been added to area under porch; other windows on building are also altered. This building was moved from its original location on a secondary road within the community to the main loop road. (building; IDLCS 91368)

Tupelo Pumphouses, Type 1

Six 13' x 5.5' side-gabled, frame pumphouses built with cornerpost construction and clad in weatherboard. Buildings have two vertical board doors and a molded cornice with abbreviated returns. Some have coolie-hat lamp fixtures and a post for power lines. These pumphouses are located in Unit B, with Quarters 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, and 10. (buildings; IDLCS 91374)

Tupelo Pumphouses, Type 2

Eight 13' x 5.5' shed-roofed, frame pumphouses built with cornerpost construction and clad in weatherboard. Buildings have two vertical board doors and are set at the rear of the cleared homestead lots. Several buildings are abandoned and overgrown. These pumphouses are located in Unit A, with Quarters 13, 15, 18, 20, 22, 25, 34, and at the site of Quarters 21. (buildings; IDLCS 91375)

Tupelo Car Sheds, Type 1

Eight rectangular, side-gabled frame car sheds laid on a concrete slab with a drive-through bay, board and batten siding, louvered vents in the gabled ends, and fixed six-light windows. Some have 6/6 double-hung sash windows and interior partitions. These car sheds are located in Unit B, with Quarters 1, 2, 3, 5, 6, 8, 9, and 10. (buildings; IDLCS 91376)

Tupelo Car Sheds, Type 2

Eleven 13' x 24' x 12.4' front-gable frame car sheds laid on a concrete slab with a single open bay, mitered weatherboard siding, a canted cornice board, faux bird ports in the gable ends, and paired 6/6 double-hung sash windows, some of which are screened. These car sheds are located in Unit A, with Quarters 12, 13, 14, 15, 17, 18, 20, 22, 25, 31, and 35. (buildings; IDLCS 91377)

County Road 657 and Drive 647

Narrow, winding asphalt-paved roadways comprise remaining vestiges of loop road around which Unit A of Tupelo Homesteads was built. Roads lack curbing and gutters. Configuration altered and roads paved between 1950 and 1963. (structure; IDLCS 91449)

County Road 665

Narrow asphalt-paved roadway east of U.S. Highway 45 lacks curbing and gutters; road altered between 1950-1963 by creation of cul-de-sac at north end. Road also paved around this time. (structure; IDLCS 91450)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Tupelo Homesteads
name of property

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Lee County, MS
county and State

Section 7

Page 6

Description of Noncontributing Properties

Curatorial Storage Building

26' x 53', side-gable building with synthetic siding has shed-roof porch on front facade. Front has double doors and a triple window bank; east gable end has two paired windows. The building is ineligible for the National Register because it is less than fifty years old.

Water Tower and Utility Building

Steel water tower approximately 60' tall has five-leg base with cross arms supporting a metal drum. A 6' x 8' frame, gable-roof utility building built in 1966 sits west of the tower. Although the date of construction of the tower is uncertain, it does not appear on a 1940 map showing existing development at the site. As a result, it is considered ineligible for the National Register because it does not relate to the period or areas of significance for the district.

U.S. Highway 45

The highway is a two-lane, asphalt-paved road built around 1930. The road predates the construction of the Tupelo Homesteads and, although it runs through the community, it does not contribute to the significance of the historic district.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Tupelo Homesteads
name of property

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Lee County, MS
county and State

Section 8

Page 7

NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Tupelo Homesteads: The Development of a New Deal Community, 1933-1940

The Great Depression and the Agricultural South

When the stock market crashed on October 29, 1929, the boom years of the 1920s abruptly ended, to be replaced by the worst economic depression in United States history. Yet for the American farmer, the depression had begun at the end of World War I, when the return to a peacetime economy resulted in lowered demand and prices for agricultural products. Despite steady improvement throughout the decade, prices still had not returned to prewar levels by 1929.¹

Several factors combined during the 1920s to keep prices low and the farmer at an economic disadvantage. Reliance on single cash crops typified American agriculture; farmers were either unable or unwilling to diversify production. As a result, bumper crops often created glutted markets and depressed prices.² While mechanization made the farmer's job easier, it also contributed to the problem of overproduction. To make matters worse, the overseas markets upon which American farmers relied for dumping surplus commodities contracted after the war due to increased foreign competition. Stymied by market conditions beyond his control, the American farmer in the 1920s found himself in a financially precarious situation.³

Two distinct agricultures coexisted in the United States during the early twentieth century: the first consisted of large, mechanized commercial farms, while the other included millions of tenants, sharecroppers, and marginal farmers. The sharecropping system had emerged in the South after the Civil War, and the number of tenants and sharecroppers grew steadily in the years that followed, with sizeable increases during the boll weevil infestation of the early 1920s and during the Great Depression.⁴ Between 1880 and 1930, the number of Southern farmers working someone else's land rose from one-third to one-half, and tenancy grew at a rate of 40,000 new tenants a year.⁵ In 1930,

¹Paul E. Mertz, *New Deal Policy and Southern Rural Poverty* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State Univ. Press, 1978), 1-19.

²Roger Biles, *The South and the New Deal* (Lexington, KY: Univ. Press of Kentucky, 1994), 37.

³David E. Hamilton, *From New Day to New Deal: American Farm Policy from Hoover to Roosevelt, 1928-1933* (Chapel Hill, NC: Univ. of North Carolina Press, 1991), 24.

⁴*Ibid.*, 9; James C. Cobb and Michael V. Namorato, introduction to *The New Deal and the South* (Jackson, MS: Univ. Press of Mississippi, 1984), 7.

⁵Donald Holley, *Uncle Sam's Farmers: The New Deal Communities in the Lower Mississippi Valley* (Urbana, IL: Univ. of Illinois Press, 1975), 7.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Tupelo Homesteads
name of property

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Lee County, MS
county and State

Section 8 Page 8

the 8.5 million tenants and sharecroppers in the South formed the nation's poorest group; approximately 60 percent of this group was white, and the other 40 percent, black.⁶

Agriculture and the New Deal

After winning the presidential election of 1932, Franklin D. Roosevelt faced the daunting task of finding solutions to the nation's severe economic problems. The crisis in American agriculture needed immediate attention; yet the distinct differences between large commercial farming and the small farmer presented serious challenges for policymakers, because programs that helped one group often hurt the other.

The Agricultural Adjustment Act (AAA) was the first New Deal legislation to deal with the problems of the American farmer. The AAA attempted to reduce overproduction by paying farmers not to plant cash crops on a portion of their land. Because the government subsidy was paid by the acre, individuals with large landholdings benefitted most from the program. Small farmers seldom received any government benefits, and tenants and sharecroppers often received no money at all. In 1938, nearly half of farmers in the South received less than forty dollars in benefit payments from the government.⁷

More important, the reduction in acreage under cultivation combined with New Deal credit programs that encouraged mechanization meant fewer families were needed to work the land. As a result, increasing numbers of sharecroppers and tenants were forced to become seasonal or day laborers on farms or to seek urban employment. Between 1930 and 1940, the number of sharecroppers and other tenants decreased by nearly 300,000.⁸

New Deal policymakers developed two programs to deal with the problems of the small farmer and tenant. The first, rural rehabilitation, assisted farm families in becoming self-supporting through government loans for the purchase of seed, fertilizer, and equipment. By aiding farmers in obtaining supplies necessary for farm operation, the rural rehabilitation program helped families remain on the land and support themselves.⁹

Resettlement, on the other hand, aimed to relocate families into small farming communities financed and built by the government. The resettlement idea grew out of the back-to-the-land movement of the early twentieth century, which had its roots in the philosophy of Thomas Jefferson. Jefferson believed land ownership necessary to the success of democracy and envisioned the United States as a nation of small, independent farmers. This Jeffersonian ideal steered the course of American land legislation throughout the nineteenth century: the Land Act of 1820, the Preemption Act of 1841, and the Homestead

⁶Mertz, 5.

⁷William J. Cooper, Jr., and Thomas E. Terrill, *The American South: A History* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1991), 669-71.

⁸Ibid., 670-1.

⁹Holley, 25.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Tupelo Homesteads
name of property

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Lee County, MS
county and State

Section 8 Page 9

Act of 1863 all demonstrated congressional commitment to the ideal of the independent American farmer.¹⁰

As the nation grew increasingly urban and industrial in the late nineteenth century, many Americans reflected on the agricultural past with longing and regret. The back-to-the-land movement became a popular crusade prior to World War I, and subsistence colonies began appearing around the nation with increasing frequency. The founders and residents of these colonies attempted to recreate a simple subsistence lifestyle, often emphasizing cooperation among residents. Both public and private organizations funded the various colonization schemes, and at least one attempt was made to secure congressional funding every year between 1915 and 1922.¹¹

The emergence of the Southern Agrarians at Vanderbilt University in the 1920s reinforced the ideal of a nation of independent farmers. John Crowe Ransom, Robert Penn Warren, and Allen Tate were among the Vanderbilt scholars who spoke out against industrialization and the destruction of the small family farm. Along with influential groups like the Catholic Rural Life Conference, the Agrarians advocated a redistribution of land and a return to subsistence farming. Invoking the Jeffersonian ideal, the agrarians argued that control of the means of production was essential to the independence and political freedom of the individual.¹² The advent of the Great Depression only strengthened the back-to-the-land movement:

After 1929, as the depression deepened and hopes of quick recovery faded, the agrarians apparently were vindicated, for prosperity had certainly been fickle. As industry failed, men, driven by necessity, turned back to the farm, for subsistence and not for money. The exact size of the back-to-the-land movement from 1930 to 1934 can only be estimated . . .¹³

President Roosevelt adhered to the philosophy behind the back-to-the-land movement, as did many of his advisers. With Roosevelt's support, Senator John H. Bankhead of Alabama introduced two subsistence homestead bills into Congress early in 1933. After the second bill died in committee, Bankhead attached a subsistence homesteads section to the National Industrial Recovery Act (NIRA). The amendment provided a \$25 million appropriation for the relocation of overcrowded urban populations into rural subsistence homestead communities. The

¹⁰Ibid., 21.

¹¹Paul K. Conkin, *Tomorrow a New World: The New Deal Community Program* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell Univ. Press, 1959), 15-21.

¹²Ibid., 23-5.

¹³Ibid., 27.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Tupelo Homesteads
name of property

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Lee County, MS
county and State

Section 8 Page 10

NIRA became law on July 13, 1933, providing essential funding for a federal subsistence homestead program.¹⁴

The Division of Subsistence Homesteads

Harold Ickes created the Division of Subsistence Homesteads (DSH) within the Department of the Interior in August 1933. Ickes chose Milburn L. Wilson, an agricultural economist, to head the new division. Wilson hoped the homestead communities would demonstrate an alternative lifestyle for Americans disillusioned by urbanization and industrialization. He believed that federally sponsored subsistence colonies could serve as object lessons in the union of agriculture and decentralized industry. The new way of life thus created, Wilson reasoned, would afford families more security and provide them with the opportunity for constructive use of leisure time.¹⁵

Wilson and his assistants immediately set out to define the purpose and administrative structure of the subsistence homestead program. They officially defined a subsistence homestead:

*A subsistence homestead denotes a house and out buildings located upon a plot of land on which can be grown a large portion of the foodstuffs required by the homestead family. It signifies production for home consumption and not for commercial sale. In that it provides for subsistence alone, it carries with it the corollary that cash income must be drawn from some outside source. The central motive of the subsistence homestead program, therefore, is to demonstrate the economic value of a livelihood which combines part-time wage work and part-time gardening or farming.*¹⁶

The DSH planned three types of communities: industrial-type homesteads to provide part-time industrial employment; agricultural colonies to relocate farmers living on submarginal land; and stranded worker communities to revitalize areas with sizeable unemployed populations. A fourth type of colony, the garden community for urban industrial workers, was considered but never developed by the DSH.¹⁷

The industrial-type homesteads were the most common and least controversial communities built by the DSH. Between 1933 and 1937, the DSH and its successor, the Resettlement Administration (RA), built twenty-three industrial communities across the United States, more than half of which were located in the South. Built on the outskirts of cities or small towns, the industrial-type homesteads

¹⁴Ibid., 86-9.

¹⁵Ibid., 93-7.

¹⁶U.S. Department of the Interior, Division of Subsistence Homesteads, *Bulletin I* (Washington, 1934), 4, quoted in Conkin, 110-1.

¹⁷Conkin, 98, 104-5.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Tupelo Homesteads
name of property

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Lee County, MS
county and State

Section 8 Page 11

contained from twenty-five to 100 houses, each with one to five acres of land. The lots were planted with an orchard and vegetable garden and supported poultry, a pig, and often a cow. Homesteaders found seasonal employment in nearby factories, while producing most of the food needed for home consumption on their own land.¹⁸

The development of each community followed a basic pattern. Cities and towns interested in sponsoring a subsistence homestead community submitted proposals to the DSH. The DSH evaluated the proposals based on the amount of local support for the project, particularly from state colleges, agricultural experiment stations, and the extension service. Once a host town was chosen, local sponsors assisted in the selection of an appropriate site. The Federal Subsistence Homestead Corporation (FSHC), a nonprofit organization established by the DSH, then incorporated a local group to develop and administer the community. The local corporation received its funding from the FSHC, which, as primary stockholder, controlled local policy. The corporate device permitted the local organization to buy and sell real and personal property, as well as to contract for services and products. Local corporations also ensured the involvement and support of citizens affected by the new communities.¹⁹

Development of the Tupelo Homesteads

On December 15, 1933, the DSH announced plans for a twenty-five-unit, industrial-type homestead community in Tupelo, Mississippi.²⁰ Tupelo was the smallest of the five towns in the state to be chosen for a project, with a population of 6,361 in 1930; yet it was also "perhaps Mississippi's best example of the 'New South.'"²¹ In October 1933, Tupelo had become the nation's first city to contract for Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) power. The presence of the TVA guaranteed inexpensive electrical power and virtually ensured the future growth of industry. In 1937, Tupelo had three garment factories, a cotton mill, an oil mill, a fertilizer plant, and a milk plant, which together employed some 2,000 workers.²²

Once the DSH selected Tupelo as a site for a homestead community, the FSHC established a local corporation, Tupelo Homesteads of Mississippi, Inc., to administer the project. The first Board of Directors included local citizens R. V. Road, V. S. Whitesides, J. H. Ledyard, L. A. Olson, Mrs. T. F. Elkin, J. E.

¹⁸Ibid., 105-11; Holley, 53.

¹⁹Conkin, 105-6.

²⁰Department of Agriculture, Resettlement Administration, Management Division, file D0661914-L14, RG 79, "Summary and Justification: Tupelo Homesteads, Mississippi, SH-MS-6," 18 Feb. 1937, National Archives Branch Depository, Atlanta, Ga., 1.

²¹Holley, 53-4.

²²Department of Agriculture, "Summary and Justification," 1.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Tupelo Homesteads
name of property

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Lee County, MS
county and State

Section 8 Page 12

Redus, L. T. Wesson, J. M. Thomas, Jr., and the mayor of Tupelo, J. P. Nanney.²³ Several months later, the corporation purchased a 171-acre tract five miles north of Tupelo on newly constructed U. S. Highway 45.²⁴ They also contracted with local architect Frank R. Kincannon to work with DSH architect Walter R. Nelson of Memphis on the design of the community.²⁵

Kincannon and Nelson organized the homesteads around an irregular loop road west of the highway. Each homestead had its own drive off of the loop. A natural ravine in the southeast corner of the property was dammed to create a lake for community use, and a park was planned along the lakeshore. The DSH also intended to build a second park in the area between the highway and the homesteaders' property lines.²⁶

In July 1934, Tupelo Homesteads of Mississippi contracted with the Tupelo Lumber Company to build twenty-five homesteads for \$50,600. The agreement included construction of the houses, septic tank units, and outbuildings. Construction began August 7, 1934, and ended October 25 of that year.²⁷ The first homesteaders moved into their new houses in mid-November, days before President and Mrs. Roosevelt visited the community and toured one of the dwellings.²⁸

Like most houses built by the DSH, the Tupelo dwellings had between three and five rooms and possessed the modern conveniences of running water, electricity, and telephone service. No two designs were alike,²⁹ although all were frame construction covered with clapboard siding on monolithic concrete pier foundations. The community consisted of nine three-room houses and eight each

²³I. R. Bradshaw to J. P. Nanney, 20 January 1934, file D0661914-L14, RG 79, National Archives Branch Depository, Atlanta, GA.

²⁴C. T. Ames, "Tupelo Homesteads of Mississippi, Inc.," 7 April 1934, file D0661914-L14, RG 79, National Archives Branch Depository, Atlanta, Ga., 1.

²⁵V. S. Whitesides to I. R. Bradshaw, 6 March 1934, file D0661914-L14, RG 79, National Archives Branch Depository, Atlanta, Ga.

²⁶Ames, 1.

²⁷Department of Agriculture, "Summary and Justification," 1.

²⁸"Housewife 'All Atwitter' Till First Lady Called--She Relaxed Under Visitor's Charm," *Tupelo Journal*, 21 Nov. 1934.

²⁹Ames, 1-2.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Tupelo Homesteads
name of property

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Lee County, MS
county and State

Section 8

Page 13

of the four- and five-room varieties.³⁰ The building lots averaged 3.2 acres and included outbuildings for storage and housing livestock.³¹

While the Tupelo Lumber Company built the houses and other structures, project manager C. T. Ames and his assistants set about planting orchards for the homesteads. In April 1934, Ames reported that:

We are now setting out the beginning of a fine small orchard for each Homestead consisting of Peaches, Pears, Apples, and Plums. In the fall it is intended to add a few pecan trees, figs, grapes, berries, and strawberry plants...³²

The intention of the Division of Subsistence Homesteads was not only to provide quality housing and good agricultural land at a reasonable price to low-income families, but also to assist them in becoming self-supporting. Thus, in addition to planting fruit orchards, the DSH also provided the homesteaders with a milk cow, twenty-five chickens, and two shoats. Seed, fertilizer, and essential farming equipment, such as a hand plow, hatchet, rake, and hoe, were provided as well.³³ Finally, a variety of professionals from the DSH, the county extension service, and the state agricultural college offered supervision in gardening, canning, and preserving foodstuffs.³⁴

The DSH built community facilities in some of its projects, although such buildings were not necessary at Tupelo because of the proximity of the town and its amenities. Children living in the homesteads attended school in town, and residents found other social and economic reasons for maintaining close ties with the larger community.³⁵

By March 1935, the first phase of the Tupelo Homesteads was almost complete. The final approved budget for the project was \$80,000.³⁶ According to figures compiled by the Resettlement Administration, which took over the project in 1935, the DSH spent \$74,737.22 developing the Tupelo Homesteads. The cost for construction of the twenty-five houses and outbuildings was just over

³⁰Department of Interior, Division of Subsistence Homesteads, "Schedules Fifteen (XV) and Sixteen (XVI), Revised Budget of Project at Tupelo, Mississippi," file D0661914-L14, RG 79, National Archives Branch Depository, Atlanta, Ga., 2-3.

³¹Department of Agriculture, "Summary and Justification," 1.

³²Ames, 2.

³³Department of Interior, "Schedules Fifteen (XV) and Sixteen (XVI)," 4, 7.

³⁴Ames, 2.

³⁵Ibid., 1-2.

³⁶J. B. Lawson to C. B. Parker, 27 March 1935, file D0661914-L14, RG 79, National Archives Branch Depository, Atlanta, Ga.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Tupelo Homesteads
name of property

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Lee County, MS
county and State

Section 8 Page 14

\$56,000; the remainder of the expenditures covered the cost of land, utilities, roads, and administration.³⁷

Resettlement Administration

In April 1935, President Roosevelt combined the Division of Subsistence Homesteads, the Rural Rehabilitation Division of the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA), the FERA Land Program, and the Land Policy Section of the Agricultural Adjustment Administration into a single administrative unit of the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Roosevelt chose Rexford G. Tugwell, a member of Roosevelt's brain trust and the Undersecretary of Agriculture, to head the new Resettlement Administration.³⁸ The RA, like its predecessors, sought to aid the small American farmer through a combination of rehabilitation and resettlement policies.

The Resettlement Administration inherited nearly one hundred communities from the DSH and FERA, most of which were in some stage of the construction or planning process.³⁹ In June 1935, the RA received an appropriation of \$7 million for the completion of thirty-three of the DSH communities. The Tupelo Homesteads were completed in November according to the original plans; by the end of 1935, eighteen projects had been finished nationally.⁴⁰

In April 1936, a tornado struck downtown Tupelo five miles away, killing more than 200 people, injuring over a thousand others, and destroying a great deal of property. The same month, the RA began construction on phase two of the Tupelo Homesteads, ten new brick houses across the highway from the existing community. The additional homesteads, completed in August, brought the total at Tupelo to thirty-five, making it the largest project in Mississippi.⁴¹ By the end of the year, approximately 120 people lived in the community, occupying thirty-three of the homesteads.⁴²

The RA, like the DSH before it, supervised the selection of residents for the projects. Social workers reviewed applications, and factors like age,

³⁷Department of Agriculture, Resettlement Administration, "Project Budget, SH-MS-6," file D0661914-L14, RG 79, National Archives Branch Depository, Atlanta, Ga.

³⁸Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *The Coming of the New Deal*, vol. 2 of *The Age of Roosevelt* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1959), 368.

³⁹*Ibid.*, 370.

⁴⁰Conkin, 161-2.

⁴¹The DSH planned industrial projects in Mississippi at McComb, Laurel, Tupelo, Meridian, and Hattiesburg; it also planned an agricultural community near Richton. The RA completed all of these projects except for the industrial community at Laurel. Holley, 29.

⁴²Conkin, 115-120; Department of Agriculture, "Summary and Justification," 1.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Tupelo Homesteads
name of property

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Lee County, MS
county and State

Section 8 Page 15

health, size of family, income level, character, and employment opportunities affected the selection process. Families chosen to live on the homesteads averaged five members, with the husband and wife both in their mid-thirties.⁴³ Most of the heads of households living in the Tupelo community in the early years were local textile workers. The average income of those residing in the original twenty-five homesteads, or Unit A, was \$1,332, while the average in the later development, Unit B, was \$1,980.⁴⁴ By 1938, however, many of the families living in the homesteads were employed by the TVA rather than local industry and were not Tupelo natives.⁴⁵

The RA assisted selected families to move into their new homes and provided expert supervision on-site by a project manager, farm manager, and home supervisor. These professionals offered advice to residents on farming and housekeeping. They also directed the creation of household budgets to govern expenditures by the homesteaders.⁴⁶

In accordance with the original plans of the Division of Subsistence Homesteads, the RA organized the families in each community into a local homestead association when each project reached capacity. Once organized, the homestead association provided each family, after a trial period of one year, the opportunity to enter into a long-term purchase agreement. Those who were not interested in purchasing their homes might continue to rent them instead.⁴⁷

In May 1937, RA officials formed the Tupelo Homestead Association to purchase the project for \$110,000. The homesteaders rejected the purchase price, however, partly due to changes in local real estate values in the wake of the 1936 tornado and the building boom that followed. After twice reappraising the property, the RA approved a purchase price of \$73,182, less than half of the \$149,290 spent by the government to build the community. Nevertheless, most Tupelo homesteaders remained hesitant to purchase their homes, preferring to rent from the association.⁴⁸

Farm Security Administration

While the RA and the Tupelo Homestead Association haggled over the purchase price of the property, changes in Washington led to a second change in administration. The passage of the Bankhead-Jones Farm Tenant Act in 1937 resulted in the creation of the Farm Security Administration (FSA), which assimilated the programs of the RA. The act authorized the FSA to expand rehabilitation programs, providing \$10 million in the first year and \$50 million thereafter for

⁴³Conkin, 186-8.

⁴⁴Department of Agriculture, "Summary and Justification," 1.

⁴⁵Holley, 120.

⁴⁶Conkin, 189-90.

⁴⁷Holley, 116.

⁴⁸Ibid., 119-120.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Tupelo Homesteads
name of property

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Lee County, MS
county and State

Section 8 Page 16

tenant purchase loans; however, it also restricted the FSA to completing and administering the resettlement communities.⁴⁹

In Tupelo, the homestead association agreed on October 1, 1938, to purchase the community for \$73,182. Yet nearly one year later the Tupelo Homestead Association had not commenced operations because no funds were available to pay the government in fulfillment of the contract.⁵⁰ As a result of the difficulty in selling the homesteads to residents, the FSA in October 1940 agreed to transfer the Tupelo Homesteads to the National Park Service for use as part of the Natchez Trace Parkway. At that time, only two of the homesteads had been purchased by their occupants.⁵¹

National Park Service

A number of community residents continued to lease their homes after 1940 under special use permits issued by the National Park Service. The last of these agreements expired in June 1950. After that time, the Tupelo Homesteads became housing for NPS employees stationed at Natchez Trace Parkway. The community remains in use as park quarters at present, although a number of buildings have been removed since the NPS acquired the property.

Significance

The Tupelo Homesteads are significant on the state level under National Register Criteria A and C. The community represents the culmination of the back-to-the-land movement of the early twentieth century in the subsistence homesteads program of the New Deal. The program was an attempt by the federal government to deal with the problems of small farmers and urban industrial workers during the Great Depression through the provision of inexpensive housing in subsistence communities. It was also part of a much broader federal effort to alleviate the effects of the Depression and revitalize the American economy. Although the community programs of the New Deal produced mixed results, they were indicative of a federal commitment to the creation of a self-sufficient working class.

The Division of Subsistence Homesteads and its successor, the Resettlement Administration, built only twenty-three industrial-type subsistence homestead communities in the nation. Four of the communities were built in Mississippi, and the Tupelo Homesteads, with thirty-five units, was the largest project in the state. It is also one of only two homestead communities known to remain fairly intact in Mississippi today.⁵² Although the Tupelo Homesteads community

⁴⁹Biles, 49.

⁵⁰A. T. McCurdie to E. F. Owen, 8 July 1939, file D0661914-L14, RG 79, National Archives Branch Depository, Atlanta, Ga.

⁵¹Holley, 120.

⁵²Although attempts to locate other homestead communities in Mississippi were limited to telephone interviews, it appears fairly certain that only one

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Tupelo Homesteads
name of property

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Lee County, MS
county and State

Section 8

Page 17

has been modified since the National Park Service acquired the property in 1940, it remains important as a representative example of the industrial-type homestead communities built by the DSH and the RA between 1933 and 1937.

The architecture of the Tupelo Homesteads is modest in size, scale, and design, in keeping with the intent of the designers to provide inexpensive housing for low-income workers. The DSH and the RA typically built frame houses with three to five rooms each, employing locally available materials and vernacular designs. Outbuildings also were designed in styles reflecting local vernacular traditions. The houses and outbuildings at Tupelo demonstrate these trends in DSH planning and construction.

The buildings at Tupelo also represent the transitional nature of Depression-era residential architecture. The designs echo the Cape Cod style popularly used for small houses during the 1920s, although the building forms depart from the traditional by extending outward into the landscape. The roof pitch also is lower than that found on earlier houses; yet the use of architectural detail like beaded weatherboard refers back to older building traditions. As a result of these transitional features, the Tupelo Homesteads anticipate trends in war industry housing of the 1940s, which in turn had an important impact on the proliferation of suburban tract housing after World War II.

Integrity

The Tupelo Homesteads are a representative example of the subsistence homestead communities built around the nation during the mid-1930s by the Division of Subsistence Homesteads and other federal agencies. As a result, they are significant on the state level and comprise a historic district with integrity of location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. The houses, outbuildings, and road system in the community contribute to the significance of the Tupelo Homesteads district.

The district contains twenty of the original thirty-five houses and most of the associated outbuildings. The houses are located on lots averaging about three acres each. The only nonhistoric construction within the community is a curatorial storage building located on a former house site and designed to be compatible with the houses in size, scale, materials, and design. Although the agricultural fields present in the 1930s have since become overgrown with trees and other vegetation, open space in the community has been retained. Mature trees and other plantings in the yards of the homesteads reflect the historic appearance of the community. All of these factors combine to create a setting with a significant degree of historic integrity.

other community remains intact. George Rummel, city planner in Hattiesburg and formerly in McComb, did not have knowledge of a homestead community remaining in either town. Fonda Rush, a preservation professional in Meridian, located site plans for the Magnolia Homestead Gardens in county records. A survey of the site by Ms. Rush found that eighteen of the original twenty-five houses remain. The community is located east of Meridian in Russell, Mississippi. George Rummell, telephone conversation with author, March 1996; Fonda Rush, telephone conversations with author, March and April 1996.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Tupelo Homesteads
name of property

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Lee County, MS
county and State

Section 8

Page 18

Maintenance of the historic setting contributes substantially to the integrity of feeling and association in the community. The large lots and lack of infill construction communicate the rural feeling and agricultural associations that the community originally possessed. Furthermore, the modest houses of brick and wood reveal the intent of the builders to provide inexpensive, functional housing in a community setting. As a result, the integrity of feeling and association remains high in the community.

The Tupelo Homesteads also have integrity of materials and workmanship. The original materials employed on the buildings, weatherboard and brick, remain intact throughout the community. Additions to the historic structures have employed similar materials and are compatible with the existing fabric. Workmanship, while not of great importance to the integrity of the community, is largely unaltered from its original form.

Finally, the community's integrity of design has been impaired by alterations to the road system and by the demolition and relocation of some structures. The National Park Service has razed fifteen of the homesteads since acquiring the property in 1940 and has moved three other houses from their original sites. These changes detract from the integrity of the community's design. Changes to the road system, which involved the removal of several sections of roadway, have also altered the original layout of the community and diminished its integrity.

Despite alterations that have damaged the integrity of the community, individual structures within the Tupelo Homesteads district retain a high degree of integrity. Many of the houses have additions and minor alterations; however, all changes are compatible with the historic fabric in size, scale, and materials. The outbuildings have changed little in the more than fifty years since their construction. The road system within the community also contributes to the Tupelo Homesteads district; the narrow, simple character of the roadways, which lack curbing and gutters, has been retained, despite occasional resurfacing and alterations to the traffic pattern. U.S. Highway 45, which separates Units A and B, does not contribute to the significance of the district because it predates construction of the community.

Despite the loss of integrity associated with the removal of houses and alteration of roads, the Tupelo Homesteads continue to communicate their original intent and purpose. The concentration of homesteads around the main loop road in Unit A and parallel to the highway in Unit B demonstrates the cohesiveness and sense of community intended by the designers. Further, the retention of a large number of houses with no significant additions or alterations testifies to the integrity of the remaining portions of the community. Thus, despite a diminished integrity of design, the Tupelo Homesteads retain integrity of location, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

The Tupelo Homesteads contain three structures moved from their original locations. While the National Register does not generally permit inclusion of moved buildings, it will accept relocated structures that are integral parts of districts eligible for the register. The three moved buildings were relocated within the community and thus remain in the same physical setting as they had in their original locations. One of the buildings, number 35, was placed on or near the site of an earlier house that had been removed. The other two build-

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Tupelo Homesteads
name of property

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Lee County, MS
county and State

Section 8 Page 19

ings are not on original house sites but are located within the community on the primary loop road. These homesteads are integral to the district and particularly important due to the loss of almost half of the original homesteads since 1940.

Contributing Properties:

Tupelo Quarters No. 1, car shed, pumphouse
Tupelo Quarters No. 2, car shed, pumphouse
Tupelo Quarters No. 3, car shed, pumphouse
Tupelo Quarters No. 5, car shed, pumphouse
Tupelo Quarters No. 6, car shed, pumphouse
Tupelo Quarters No. 8, car shed
Tupelo Quarters No. 9, car shed
Tupelo Quarters No. 10, car shed, pumphouse
Tupelo Quarters No. 12, car shed
Tupelo Quarters No. 13, car shed, pumphouse
Tupelo Quarters No. 14, car shed
Tupelo Quarters No. 15, car shed, pumphouse
Tupelo Quarters No. 17, car shed
Tupelo Quarters No. 18, car shed, pumphouse
Tupelo Quarters No. 20, car shed, pumphouse
Pumphouse at site of Tupelo Quarters No. 21
Tupelo Quarters No. 22, car shed, pumphouse
Tupelo Quarters No. 25, car shed, pumphouse
Tupelo Quarters No. 31, car shed
Tupelo Quarters No. 34, pumphouse
Tupelo Quarters No. 35, car shed
County Road 665
County Road 657
Drive 647

Noncontributing Properties:

Curatorial storage building
Water tower and utility building
U.S. Highway 45

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Tupelo Homesteads
name of property

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Lee County, MS
county and State

Section 9 Page 20

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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Tupelo Homesteads
name of property

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Lee County, MS
county and State

Section 10 Page 21

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary of the Tupelo Homesteads district is shown on the accompanying map.

Boundary Justification

The proposed boundary encompasses much of the 171-acre tract that historically composed the Tupelo Homesteads community, including the site of Homestead Lake; however, on its northern boundary it deviates in order to omit the administration building built in 1961, the utility court, and other non-contributing park development features.

Photographs

Natchez Trace Parkway
Lee County, Mississippi
Photos: Maureen Carroll and Stephen Moffson
Location of Negatives: NPS, SEFA
September 1993

1. Quarters No. 6, view from E
2. Quarters No. 8, view from NW
3. Quarters No. 12, view from SW
4. Quarters No. 13, view from N
5. Quarters No. 22, view from W
6. Quarters No. 15, view from N
7. Car Shed (Type 1) at Quarters No. 1, view from S
8. Pumphouse (Type 1) at Quarters No. 3, view from SW
9. Car Shed (Type 2) at Quarters No. 17, view from N
10. Pumphouse (Type 2) at Quarters No. 22, view from N
11. County Road 657 at Quarters No. 20, view from N

Tupelo Homesteads National Register District

Key:

Proposed district boundary: 

Existing homestead: 

