**Form 10-300**

**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR**

**NATIONAL PARK SERVICE**

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES**

**INVENTORY – NOMINATION FORM**

(Type all entries – complete applicable sections)

1. **NAME**
   - COMMON: U.S.S. Cairo
   - AND/OR HISTORIC:

2. **LOCATION**
   - STREET AND NUMBER: Ingalls Ship Yard, P. O. Box 1267
   - CITY OR TOWN: Pascagoula
   - STATE: Mississippi
   - STATE CODE: 39567
   - COUNTY: Jackson
   - COUNTY CODE: 059

3. **CLASSIFICATION**
   - CATEGORY (Check One)
     - District
     - Site
     - Structure
     - X Object
   - OWNERSHIP
     - Public
     - Private
     - Both
   - PUBLIC ACQUISITION
     - In Process
     - Being Considered
   - PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)
     - Agricultural
     - Government
     - Transportation
     - Comments
     - Commercial
     - Industrial
     - Unoccupied
     - Preservation work in progress
     - Religious
     - Other (Specify)
     - Unrestricted
     - Scientific
     - Remains in storage

4. **OWNER OF PROPERTY**
   - OWNER'S NAME: Mississippi Agricultural and Industrial Board
   - STREET AND NUMBER: P. O. Box 849
   - CITY OR TOWN: Jackson
   - STATE: Mississippi
   - STATE CODE: 39205
   - CODE: 28

5. **LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**
   - COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC:
     - Mississippi Agricultural and Industrial Board
   - STREET AND NUMBER: P. O. Box 849
   - CITY OR TOWN: Jackson
   - STATE: Mississippi
   - STATE CODE: 39205
   - CODE: 28

6. **REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**
   - TITLE OF SURVEY:
   - DATE OF SURVEY:
   - DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORD:
     - Federal
     - State
     - County
     - Local
   - STREET AND NUMBER:
   - CITY OR TOWN:
   - STATE:
   - CODE:
Originally, the U.S.S. Cairo measured 175 feet in length, fifty-one feet in width, and fifteen feet in depth. The vessel had seven hull compartments, and its plate armor was two and one half inches thick. This armor (charcoal iron) was supported by white oak, with the thickness of the wood varying throughout the boat. It had five boilers, two engines fired by coal, and two chimneys (smokestacks) that were painted in colored bands for identification purposes. The exterior was painted black, while the interior was white washed.

At the present time, the structure of the Cairo is being stored at Ingalls Ship Yard, Pascagoula, Mississippi. However, due to a lack of space the vessel has been divided into two roughly equal sections. The boat is securely held together by the use of cranes, wires, and wooden props. The white oak timbers have undergone a water treatment for preservation purposes. The metal portions of the boat have been sprayed with a protective paint, and they are being stored in a warehouse at the ship yard.
The U.S.S. Cairo was built at Mound City, Illinois, in the fall of 1861 for the U.S. Army, and was commissioned January, 1862. It was one of seven ironclad boats contracted to James B. Eads, who believed that the first and most important step in restoring the Union was to gain control of the Lower Mississippi from the Confederacy. His plan called for the construction of a fleet of gunboats for the government. The U.S.S. Cairo, the lightest and fastest of the seven Eads ironclads, was one of the first ironclad warships to be built in the western hemisphere.

The U.S.S. Cairo had been active in the battle of Memphis and in the winter of 1862 participated in the campaign to take Vicksburg. On October 1, 1862, it was transferred from the army to the navy. Captain Henry Walke, who was commander of the Federal flotilla, was ordered to keep the Yazoo River clear of Southern forces. Captain Walke received news that the Confederates had a timber barricade about twenty-three miles above the mouth of the Yazoo. After investigating this report, it was discovered that the Confederates had laid a number of hidden mines (torpedoes) below the surface of the water. Captain Walke sent the Cairo, the Pittsburg and the Queen of the West to protect the Marmora and Signal while they destroyed the mines. While on this mission, the Cairo was struck by two Confederate mines on December 12, 1862, about sixteen miles north of Vicksburg. Thus the Cairo became the first victim of an electrically activated torpedo (mine) in naval history.

After the surrender of Vicksburg, Rear Admiral David Porter made several attempts to raise the Cairo but was unsuccessful in locating the vessel. In 1880 J. H. Bofinger of Saint Louis, Missouri, was contracted by the Treasury Department to salvage the Cairo; however, this work was never undertaken.

Since the Yazoo River is one of the muddiest rivers in the country, the Cairo was hidden and submerged in about twenty feet of water for almost a hundred years. There had been many rumors that the boat had exploded, or had already been raised. However, on November 12, 1956, the Cairo was located by Edwin C. Bearss, historian, Vicksburg National Military Park, National Park Service, and Warren Grabau, geologist, Waterways Experiment Station, Vicksburg. Plans were made for the boat's raising which took almost three years. The vessel, raised in sections, was severely damaged during the salvage operations.
9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES


Subject file, The U.S.S. Cairo. Collections of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

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</table>

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: Approximately one-fourth acre.

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE: Clinton I. Bagley, Junior Historian

ORGANIZATION: Mississippi Department of Archives and History

STREET AND NUMBER: 120 North State Street, P. O. Box 571

CITY OR TOWN: Jackson

STATE: Mississippi 30205

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

<table>
<thead>
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<th>National</th>
<th>State</th>
<th>Local</th>
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I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

CHIEF, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Date 12/11/70

ATTEST:

Date SEP 2 1971
8. The Cairo's pilothouse and one of its cannons were salvaged on September 14, 1960, by Ken Parks and James Hart, who helped to spearhead public interest in the project. Other valuable artifacts were recovered during the various phases of salvage, including guns, the ship's bell, and assorted sailors' personal gear such as combs, toothbrushes and family photographs. These artifacts have been preserved by the National Park Service at the Vicksburg Military Park.

At present, the basic structure of the ship is in storage at Ingalls Ship Yard, Pascagoula, Mississippi. Title to the Cairo is held by the Mississippi Agricultural and Industrial Board, which has sought cooperation from the National Park Service in securing the restoration of the boat.

Legislation which gives the Department of the Interior the authority to restore and exhibit the Cairo has been introduced in the 91st Congress by the Mississippi delegation.
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number _____  Page _____

USS CAIRO  Jackson County to Warren County, MISSISSIPPI

ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION
(NEW LOCATION)

Keeper [Signature] 12/30/69
### 1. Name
- **Common:** U.S.S. Cairo
- **Land/Historic:**

### 2. Location
- **Street and Number:** Ingalls Ship Yard
- **City or Town:** Pascagoula
- **State:** Mississippi
- **Code:** 39567
- **County:** Jackson
- **Code:** 28

### 3. Photo Reference
- **Photo Credit:** Library of Congress, Division of Prints and Photographs
- **Date of Photo:** ca. 1861
- **Negative Filed At:** Library of Congress, Washington D.C.

### 4. Identification
- **Describe View, Direction, etc.:**

  This is the only known photograph of the U.S.S. Cairo taken prior to her sinking in the Yazoo River.
STATE: Mississippi
COUNTY: Jackson

ENTRY NUMBER: 71-928-0008
DATE: 9/3/1966

Common: U.S.S. Cairo

LOCATION

Street and Number: Ingalls Ship Yard
City or Town: Pascagoula
State: Mississippi

PHOTO REFERENCE

Photo Credit: Joe Moore
Date of Photo: 1966

Negative Filed At:
Mississippi Agricultural and Industrial Board, Jackson, Mississippi

IDENTIFICATION

Describe View, Direction, etc.

This is the stern of the U.S.S. Cairo, facing Northeast.
# United States Department of the Interior

**National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places**

**Property Photograph Form**

(Type all entries - attach to or enclose with photograph)

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## Name

**Common:** U.S.S. Cairo

## Location

**Street and Number:** Ingalls Ship Yard

**City or Town:** Pascagoula

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<td>Jackson</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

## Photo Reference

**Photo Credit:** Joe Moore

**Date of Photo:** 1966

**Negative Filed At:** Mississippi Agricultural and Industrial Board, Jackson, Miss.

## Identification

**Describe View, Direction, Etc.:**

The bow is in the lower left of the photo, and the stern in the upper right, from the Southeast.