

(Oct. 1990)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service



756

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

HISTORIC NAME: Marconi Tower at Port Arthur College
OTHER NAME/SITE NUMBER: NA

2. LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER: 1500 Procter
CITY OR TOWN: Port Arthur VICINITY: N/A NOT FOR PUBLICATION: N/A
STATE: Texas CODE: TX COUNTY: Jefferson CODE: 245 ZIP CODE: 77640

3. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this (x nomination) (___ request for determination of eligibility) meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property (x meets) (___ does not meet) the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant (___ nationally) (___ statewide) (x locally). (___ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

6-23-2008

Signature of certifying official

Date

State Historic Preservation Officer, Texas Historical Commission
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

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):

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

8.5.08

5. CLASSIFICATION

OWNERSHIP OF PROPERTY: public-state

CATEGORY OF PROPERTY: structure

NUMBER OF RESOURCES WITHIN PROPERTY:	CONTRIBUTING	NONCONTRIBUTING
	0	0 BUILDINGS
	0	0 SITES
	1	0 STRUCTURES
	0	0 OBJECTS
	<u>1</u>	<u>0 TOTAL</u>

NUMBER OF CONTRIBUTING RESOURCES PREVIOUSLY LISTED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER: 0

NAME OF RELATED MULTIPLE PROPERTY LISTING:

6. FUNCTION OR USE

HISTORIC FUNCTIONS: INDUSTRY/ Communications Facility = radio tower

CURRENT FUNCTIONS: NOT IN USE

7. DESCRIPTION

ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION: NO STYLE

MATERIALS: FOUNDATION
WALLS
ROOF
OTHER METAL / steel

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION (see continuation sheets 7-5 through 7-6).

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Marconi Tower
Port Arthur, Jefferson County, Texas

Marconi Tower – Description¹

The 130-foot-tall Marconi Tower at Lamar State College-Port Arthur (formerly Port Arthur College) is a free-standing structure consisting of four legs approximately 20' apart at the base in the form of a square. The legs (4" x 4" x 5/16" angles) are canted inward and rise 129' where they join together to form a superstructure at the finial. The superstructure (18" square x 60" high) consists of two levels of 4" x 4" x 3/8" angle struts with a cap plate on the top strut assembly. There is 1" flat bar lattice work between the tower legs at the finial. The tower is located on the college grounds near the intersection of Lakeshore Dr. and Stilwell Blvd. in Port Arthur, Jefferson County, Texas. In 2001 the tower was restored under the guidance of the Texas Historical Commission.

Access to the tower site is provided by a single-lane, paved service road from Lakeshore Dr. to the southeast. There are paved parking areas within ten feet of the tower on the northeast and southeast sides. Walkways and the student pavilion enclose the site to the west and south. Available construction areas are restricted.

Stabilization to resist dead and live loads is provided by a system of horizontal struts (3" x 3" x 3/16" angle) and diagonal cross bracing (2-1/2" x 2 -1/2" x 1/8" angle). Opposite sides of the tower are not interconnected and the areas within the tower "box" are clear. All structural connections are bolted, riveted or a combination of both. Bolts are 5/8" or 3/4" diameter square-head with hex-head or square-head nuts. There are no welded connections. The tower legs are joined end-to-end by bolted and riveted splice plates. The horizontal struts and diagonal cross members are connected at each leg with a single bolt and nut. To allow a flush fit, the ends of the angle cross members are "folded". There is a single bolt and nut connection at the intersections of each set of diagonal members. Each tower leg at ground level is enclosed in a bolted saddle which is connected to two anchor bolts embedded in a 3' diameter concrete footing.

Access to the finial is provided by a ladder assembly which is bolted to several diagonal cross members and supported at the finial by hanger straps. The ladder stringers and rungs consist of 1-1/2" x 1-1/2" x 3/16" angle joined by rivets. The lower end of the ladder terminates about 18' above ground level. The original ladder was deteriorated to such a degree that it was replicated in 2001.

There is an 18" diameter "globe" and light fixture resting on a cap plate at the finial superstructure. Electrical conduit attached to a tower leg and the ladder provide power to the light fixture. Buried conduit provide 110 volt power to all-weather outlets at the base of each leg. The tower was used to support large "L" and "U" neon signs at approximately the 90' level. These signs were removed, and replaced with the letters "L" and "S" after an extensive restoration project in 2001.

When the structure was originally erected and painted, few protective coatings were available for metal which did not contain high levels of lead and other toxic metals. The low lead content found during paint analysis in the year 2000 indicates that the tower had been completely repainted over the years prior to restoration.

As a result of the aggressive, salt-laden atmospheric exposure and corrosion over the years, there were major structural concerns which significantly affected the tower's ability to withstand dead loads (existing weight) and live loads (wind).

¹ This description is based on the *Radio Tower Engineering Survey* by Don. S. Reichle & Associates for Lamar State College-Port Arthur, 2000. A copy of the report is on file with the Texas Historical Commission.

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Past attempts to paint the tower without sealing or providing for corrosion protection within the open bolted and riveted connections allowed a very aggressive corrosion cycle at certain areas. Corrosion on these relatively thin (3/16" and 1/8") angles was extensive, with approximately 50% of the struts and diagonals above the 70' level having holes and/or severe edge pitting. Prior to restoration, one of the struts near the finial had cracked, indicating eccentric loading — probably from years of high winds — and the resulting metal fatigue.

2001 Tower Restoration report by Randy Rekhle, Vice President, DSR & Associates, Inc.²

In January through April 2001, Water Tank Service Co. completed the restoration of the tower. Concern over constant rusting of the structure in the corrosive Gulf Coast environment led college officials to contact DSR & Associates, Inc. (a local Professional Engineering firm specializing in water tower rehabilitation). Initial field inspections found the tower to be in a very weakened structural condition. Corrosion had caused major damage to many structural members and critical connections. It was soon apparent that, in its present condition, any type of structural repair, cleaning and painting operations conducted with the tower standing in place could risk additional damage and possibly catastrophic failure. DSR designed a restoration/conservation project which required the structure to be completely dismantled, transported to off-site facilities for cleaning, additional inspection, structural repairs, galvanizing, cleaning, painting and then transporting back to the site for re-erection. All of which had to be done in strict accordance with the guidelines laid down by the Texas Historical Commission. Since the tower parts had apparently been hand-forged at the site in 1909, dimensions drastically varied. The tower is constructed of over 300 parts. A foolproof piece-marking system was devised. Sample coupons were taken for metallurgy analysis and testing ensure the original steel material could withstand the abrasive blasting, welding and galvanizing processes.

The available working areas at the site were greatly restricted by school facilities and other structures. To reduce the impact to student and school activities, the project was carefully planned to take place during the semester break. Heavy construction equipment phasing and staging was required during the dismantling and transporting of the tower.

Because of the issues faced with a restoration project such as this, the project had to be designed to provide an essentially "maintenance free" product with an indefinite lifetime. Since the tower design could not be altered, there was concern over the tower structural connections — originally lapped and riveted. Corrosion protection at these "inaccessible areas" could pose a future problem; therefore, each tower member was hot dip galvanized. For aesthetics, a Sherwin Williams coating system was selected. To provide adhesion to the freshly galvanized surfaces, each tower part was solvent washed and lightly brush blasted with a fine grade of abrasive. One coat of Macropoxy was applied followed by one coat of Acrolon High Solids Polyurethane.

The finished tower members were then carefully transported to the site and re-erected using nylon slings and chokers to prevent damage to the galvanized and painted surfaces. The original riveted fasteners were replaced with new galvanized bolts and nuts. Each bolt and nut was solvent washed prior to installation.

This unique restoration project was considered a complete success and the tower will continue to remain standing for generations past and present to appreciate.

² Reproduced from the restoration summary by Randy Reichle, Vice President, DSR & Associates, Inc, on file with the Texas Historical Commission.

8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

APPLICABLE NATIONAL REGISTER CRITERIA

- 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: N/A

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE: Education, Communications

PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANCE: 1909-1957

SIGNIFICANT DATES: 1909

SIGNIFICANT PERSON: N/A

CULTURAL AFFILIATION: N/A

ARCHITECT/BUILDER: unknown

NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE (see continuation sheets 8-7 through 8-13).

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHIC REFERENCES

BIBLIOGRAPHY (see continuation sheets 9-14 through 9-16).

PREVIOUS DOCUMENTATION ON FILE (NPS): N/A

- 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 (*Texas Historical Commission*)
- Other state agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other -- Specify Repository:

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Statement of Significance

The Marconi wireless telegraph tower at Lamar State College-Port Arthur was built in 1909 as key educational component of the new vocational school, then known as "Port Arthur College." The Marconi Wireless Telegraphy Company, headed by radio pioneer Guglielmo Marconi, donated the 50-foot tall antenna that was mounted on top of the steel tower, as well as the instruments needed to teach the wireless telegraphy to students at the school. Port Arthur College students greatly benefited from the tower's placement, gaining hands-on experience by sending and receiving messages to and from vessels on the high seas via the tower. Later used as radio broadcast tower, the structure served both the college and the Port Arthur community at large through 1978. Although the 130-foot tower no longer supports a broadcast antenna, the structure retains a good degree of integrity. As the oldest structure on campus, the tower serves as a reminder of the earliest days of the college, and is nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A, in the areas of Education and Communications, at the local level of significance. The period of significance 1909-1958.

Port Arthur is on State Highway 87, 17 miles southeast of Beaumont in southeast Jefferson County. In 1895, Kansas railroad promoter Arthur E. Stilwell and his financial backers established the city of Port Arthur on the western shore of Sabine Lake as the terminus of the Kansas City, Pittsburg and Gulf Railroad. In 1897 the Port Arthur Channel and Dock Co. began cutting a canal to reach deep water at Sabine Pass. With the completion of the canal in 1899, Port Arthur became a true port. By the fall of 1897, the population reached 860, and the city incorporated the following year. The railroad went into receivership in the spring of 1899, but the city's proximity to the Spindletop oilfield (first tapped in 1901), placed Port Arthur near the heart of the state's primary oil region. Major oil companies soon established facilities in Port Arthur, including Gulf and Texaco, which built refineries in 1901 and 1902, respectively. By 1914, the city had become the second largest oil-refining point in the nation, and the population exploded to 7,663 in 1910 and 50,902 by 1930.³

Establishment of Port Arthur College

Port Arthur College was built and endowed by John W. Gates in 1909 as a non-profit, non-sectarian, vocational school offering training in stenography secretarial work, accounting, and wireless telegraphy. In 1908, Garrett Hall was conducting a small business school on the upper floor of the Newton-Latimer building at Waco Avenue and Procter Street in downtown Port Arthur. Gates overheard Hall in the First National Bank, discussing the possibilities of a business school in Port Arthur and explaining what he could do if he had the proper facilities. Gates, of New York City, and one of the founders of Texaco, also saw the need for radio operators for ship-to-ship and ship-to-shore communications as well as for office workers. He stepped up and entered the conversation and the college soon became a reality.⁴ The City of Port Arthur donated eight acres out of the park site between Procter Street and Lakeshore Drive for Gates to build and operate the school. Included in that gift was \$60,000 for the right to erect a commercial school and dormitories. Gates' envisioned a high-grade commercial school that would complement local industries. Gates stipulated that Port Arthur

³ "PORT ARTHUR, TX." The Handbook of Texas Online. <<http://www.tsha.utexas.edu/handbook/online/articles/view/PP/hdp5.html>> [Accessed Wed. Mar. 4, 14:34:19 US/Central 2008].

⁴ Texas Historical Commission, official records, narrative for Port Arthur College— Lamar State College, Texas Historical Marker, February 2008, page 1.

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College should always maintain highest collegiate standards in order to prepare young people for positions in the commercial-radio field. He had two fundamental ideas – high quality of work and no thought of profit.⁵

Gates presented his proposal to a special night meeting of the Port Arthur City Council January 5, 1909. He proposed to build a school and a hospital as a memorial to his mother and asked that the City donate the lands needed. Port Arthur City Council Ordinance 180, dated January 5, 1909, granted to J. W. Gates lands from the city's park system for the erection of a college for educational purposes.⁶ In speaking of the receipt of the gift of the park land by the City, for the College, Gates said: "The commercial college should more than make expenses from the start - and think what it will mean for Port Arthur – hundreds of bright young people coming here for a business education to get a start in the world. I think the Spanish Department in the school will be one of its principal attractions, as the opening of the Panama Canal and the consequent opening of Central American countries to American trade will bring a big demand for stenographers and clerks who are conversant with the Spanish and English languages."⁷

The Trust Agreement, also authorized by Ordinance 180, stipulated that John W. Gates should have the right and power to appoint and name the President and other executive heads during his lifetime, and at his death reverting to the governing board of trustees. On June 7, 1909, Gates appointed the original trustees, including himself: B.C. Pfeiffer (Mayor of Port Arthur,) J. S. Cullinan (President of the Texas Company, Houston,) W. L. Mellon (President of the Gulf Refining Company Pittsburg, Pa.,) H. A. Edson (President of the Kansas City Southern Railroad Company, Kansas City,) R. H. Dunn (Collector of Customs, Sabine District, Port Arthur,) R. B. Cousins (Superintendent of Public Instruction for Texas, Austin,) George M. Craig (President of the First National Bank, Port Arthur,) W. E. Hall (President of the Merchants National Bank, Port Arthur,) C. E. Dodge (Postmaster of Port Arthur,) Garnett R. Hall (Superintendent of Port Arthur College).⁸

The college buildings and grounds were located on the corner of Procter and Stilwell Blvd. Procter Street was the main street. The grounds extended back to Lakeshore Drive, providing many a student the unusual view of large ships passing by the windows of the school thorough the new canal from Port Arthur to Beaumont. The administration building was especially designed for the purpose of commercial education, two stories in height with a large basement for the steam plant and 14,080 square feet of floor space. The first buildings included a dormitory home for out-of-town students who were already migrating to the region with their families because of the availability of good jobs and the chance for better lives. The dormitory centered on a common reception room and hall with two wings. The dining room and kitchen were in a separate building between the two dormitory wings but connected also with the reception room and hall. The dormitory sleeping quarters accommodated 120 students.

By July 1909, contracts with faculty were underway. Mr. Geo. C. Shields, of Denver, Colorado, was hired as principal of the Spanish-English Department at \$1,000 per year, with a three-year contract. A contract had been sent to O. W. Negus of Marion, Indiana, to be Principal for the Telegraph Department, and that signed contracts had been received from Mr. J. M. Latham as Principal of the Commercial Department; and from Miss Annie L. Rogers as assistant in the Departments of

⁵ "Gates Donates New Building," Port Arthur News article, July 1, 1923, page one. Port Arthur Public Library.

⁶ City of Port Arthur Ordinance No 180, Port Arthur City Secretary Official records. Filed for record, Book 102, page 277, Deed Records, Jefferson County, Texas.

⁷ "Business College Owes Start to Gates Who Saw Need of Institution Here, Port Arthur College," Clipping, not dated, but about 1923, located in vertical files, Historical Collection, Port Arthur Public Library.

⁸ Trust agreement, CPA Ordinance No. 180.

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Shorthand and Typewriting. The Board also approved the purchase of 15,000 catalogs at a cost of \$1,175, the establishment of 200 free scholarships, and the installation of a wireless telegraph station with a 600-mile signal, allowing communication with New Orleans and Galveston.⁹ Classes began on Monday, October 4, 1909, with campus construction still underway. Thirty-five students began their classes immediately upon enrollment, and were quartered in the unfinished dormitory. The dining hall and kitchen were ready for use later that week.

In January 1911, the Port Arthur City Council approved the conveyance of the college property to the Board of Education of the Methodist Episcopal Church.¹⁰ Upon transfer, the name of the college was changed to Port Arthur Collegiate Institute.¹¹ At the time of the transfer, the facilities consisted of the building and equipment situated upon the original 3.4 acres, with an additional tract of city park land lying immediately across the Lake Shore Drive, for a total of twelve acres valued at approximately \$250,000. In addition to these buildings and equipment, Mr. Gates donated \$50,000 to be paid in five annual installments of \$10,000 each. To meet this gift the Board of Education of the Methodist Episcopal Church pledged itself to raise during the same period of five years \$50,000 for added buildings, equipment or endowment.

Academic and musical classes were added in September 1911 in addition to the ongoing commercial courses. After a year's operation under the name Port Arthur Collegiate Institute, the Gulf Conference elected a full board of trustees to conduct the affairs of the school. Hubert Phillips became the first president. On June 27, 1912, the trustees voted to take out a charter under the name of Port Arthur College and make the school a first-class college by fixing its standards and curriculum to those of other high-grade colleges throughout the country.¹² Classes included Gregg Shorthand, Typewriting, Bookkeeping, Commercial Law, Geology, Astronomy, Economics, Physics, and Chemistry.

The stated purposes of articles of incorporation drawn up in 1912 included the "maintenance and operation of an educational institution and to promote liberal education in the spirit and according to the ideals of Evangelical Christianity."¹³ New courses of study included Physiology, Oratory and Expression, Music, Piano, Voice, Harmony, History of Music, Chorus Singing, Telegraphy, Telegraph Engineering, and Railroad Station Work. Students could live single-sex dormitories for \$4.25 per week, which included board, room, light and heat, with two students to each room. Tuition for college courses was \$20 per semester; laboratory fees were extra. Special tuition and fee discounts were available for children of ministers, two or more students from the same family, or students preparing for the ministry.¹⁴

In 1915, the College leased to the trustees of the First Methodist Church a small tract of land at the corner of Stilwell and Lakeshore Drive for the purpose of erecting a church and an educational building. An arrangement between the church and college determined the building's use, with space allocated in the basement for a gymnasium, the main auditorium for lectures as well as church services, a lecture room for college classes and Sunday school, and space for piano and pipe

⁹ Minutes of the Regular Meeting of the Board of Trustees of Port Arthur College, July 6, 1909, pages one and two. Official records, Office of the President, Lamar State College – Port Arthur.

¹⁰ City of Port Arthur Ordinance 224, dated City of Port Arthur Ordinance 221, Office of the President. 16 January 1911. Jefferson County Clerk's office, File 51401, Volume 225, Pages 357-361, Filed for record, March 22, 1923, Recorded April 3, 1923.

¹¹ Lamar State College – Port Arthur 2006-2007 Catalog, page 1.

¹² Port Arthur College Catalogue 1911-1912, Announcements 1912-1913, page five and six, Office of the President, Lamar State College – Port Arthur, pages 5 and 6.

¹³ "A Short History of Port Arthur College," page 2, written August 28, 1953. Author unknown. The typed history, 7 pages, records of the Office of the President, Lamar State College-Port Arthur.

¹⁴ Port Arthur College Catalogue 1911 – 1912, pages 12-38. Office of the President.

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organ practice. The 1916 college bulletin announced that Mrs. John W. Gates, the widow of the college's founder, would give the city of Port Arthur a "magnificent new library building," to cost approximately \$100,000, to be used jointly by Port Arthur College, Port Arthur Schools, and the people of Port Arthur. Mrs. Gates also gave to the Methodist Episcopal Church \$2,000 donation towards a new pipe organ.¹⁵ In 1923, the college facilities and grounds were valued at \$300,000, and the college was fully accredited by the National Association of Accredited Commercial Schools.¹⁶

The Port Arthur College catalog for 1929, titled 'The Book of Business,' boasted that the school was "strategically located" and that "radio students need not leave Port Arthur to secure good positions... [and] actual experience in railroad work." The catalog also highlighted stringent entrance requirements ("We accept only high school graduates... your progress is not impeded by the presence of slow-minded students or mentally incompetents"), and location ("An ideal semi-tropical climate awaits you... a beautiful city of trees... the pleasure of ocean bathing").¹⁷

The Marconi Tower at Port Arthur College

In 1909, Port Arthur College applied part of its initial funding to the construction of a radio tower, and founder John W. Gates persuaded Nobel Prize winner Guglielmo Marconi, a pioneer in wireless technology, to donate equipment to start a telegraphy program at the college. Marconi (1874-1937) had filed his first English patent for wireless telegraphy in 1896, and continued to develop shortwave wireless communication through the early 20th century. With his cousin Jameson Davis, Marconi formed the Wireless Telegraph and Signal Company, Ltd. (renamed "Marconi's Wireless Telegraph Company" in 1900). After a successful demonstration of the usefulness of telegraphy in news reporting (covering the America's Cup yacht race in 1899), Marconi founded the American Marconi Company and the Marconi International Marine Communication Company, which established services for ships-to-land communication. In 1901, Marconi transmitted signals between Europe and North America. Over the next three decades, Marconi continued to make advances in telegraphy and radio, increasing range to distances covering half the globe, and improving the quality of broadcasts through advances in shortwave technology.¹⁸

Marconi's patented 50-foot tall antenna was mounted on top of the college's 130-foot tall steel tower.¹⁹ The Marconi Wireless Telegraphy Company also supplied the instruments needed to teach the wireless telegraphy, including different types of tuners, detectors, a 2-kilowatt transformer. Port Arthur College students gained hands-on experience sending and receiving messages to and from vessels on the high seas through the use of the 180-foot radio tower. The Marconi Company allowed Port Arthur College to advertise their program as a Marconi station, which added prestige to their college and gave increased credibility to the teaching staff. The college opened on October 4, 1909, with telegraphy classes in great demand. Over the next decades, the college's wireless telegraphy program evolved with the development

¹⁵ Port Arthur College brochure, Vol. 7, July 1916, No. 2. Reference files of the Museum of the Gulf Coast, 'Port Arthur College,' Curator's office.

¹⁶ Newspaper article, "Business College Owes Start to Gates....1923. Vertical files, Port Arthur Public Library.

¹⁷ Port Arthur College Catalog, 'The Book of Business,' 1929. Office of the President records.

¹⁸ "Guglielmo Marconi." *Encyclopædia Britannica*. 2008. Encyclopædia Britannica Online. 23 Jun. 2008

<<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/364287/Guglielmo-Marconi>>.

¹⁹ "Radio Tower Engineering Survey," by Engineer Don S. Reichle & Associates, Inc., November 2000. One page synopsis of the tower history, dated March 19, 2001, inserted directly behind title page by Lamar State College-Port Arthur.

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of new communications technology, from training radio operators for ships, to commercial radio, and finally, television. The tower is the only original structure standing on the campus, marked by an Official Texas Historical Marker in 1988.²⁰

The 130-foot tower was constructed as a freestanding structure consisting of four legs approximately 20 feet apart at the base in the form of a square. The tower initially supported a 50-foot telegraph antenna. On August 29, 1933, Port Arthur College purchased from Frank P. Jackson the first equipment for operating a radio station. It was moved from Brownsville, Texas, to Port Arthur where Mr. Jackson, who was a competent engineer, set up the equipment and put it on the air. Mr. Jackson had a license (number 393) to operate a station at Brownsville and by application to the FCC, this license was transferred to Port Arthur College. The Marconi tower served as one of two radio masts, the other being a guyed pipe mast built on another part of the campus.²¹

In October 1933, college trustees amended the college charter to permit the operation of a radio station and to include instruction in radio in the curriculum.²² Port Arthur City Council passed a resolution in January 1934 that endorsed the actions of the college to purchase radio station KWWG, formerly of Brownsville, Texas, and also approved the addition of a radio station and the radio curriculum to the offerings for students.²³ It was a thousand watt transmitter, licensed to operate on 500 watts and 1260 Kilocycles. Dedicated entirely to community service, the call letters of this new station (KPAC) stood for "*Kum to Port Arthur College.*" The radio station provided on-the-job training for students, and as the college continued to upgrade the equipment for the purpose of instruction, it became one of the best-equipped radio schools in the United States. The college built a new radio station in 1940 in a separate building on the campus, and in 1948 constructed a new transmitter building on property owned by the college, approximately five miles northeast of the college on State Highway 87 near the Rainbow Bridge. The radio aerial was blown down in the hurricane of July 27-28th, 1943. Wind gusts of 132 mph were recorded and oil derricks across Jefferson and Chambers County met their fate during the hurricane.²⁴

During World War II Port Arthur College trained approximately 1500 operators in communications for the Signal Corps of the United States Army. There was not room in the boys' dormitory for the soldiers, so they were housed with individual families. Lysbeth Hogan Wood remembers that her parents boarded soldiers, one a time, for three months each, while they were studying at the college.²⁵

In July 1952, a charter amendment provided for the Port Arthur College corporation to purchase, construct, maintain and operate AM, FM, and television broadcasting equipment and station on the campus.²⁶ The curriculum requirements for radio students at the time included Basic Electronics, Broadcast Course, Marine and Aircraft Course, Code and Typing;

²⁰ Alumni News, Spring 2007, Lamar State College-Port Arthur Alumni Association, page 7. Office of the President.

²¹ "A Short History of Port Arthur College," President's office, page 3.

²² Charter amendment filed Secretary of State 30th day October 1933, W.W. Heiath, Secretary of State of Texas,

²³ Resolution M-68, City Secretary Official Records, City of Port Arthur.

²⁴ "Texas Hurricane History: Early 20th Century," National Weather Service Forecast Office, 28 November 2007, page 1.
www.srh.noaa.gov/lch/research/txerly20hut4.php.

²⁵ Mrs. Pat Wood (Lysbeth Hogan), personal recollection in an interview with Yvonne Sutherlin, October 9, 2007. Mrs. Wood resides at 3207 Walnut Creek Court, Bryan, Texas 77807-4852. Only ten years old at the time, she remembers the young men as being "very nice."

²⁶ Domestic Amendment No. 17-24751 (Port Arthur College, Port Arthur, Texas), changing the purpose of the corporation, July 22, 1952; filed Secretary of State, July 16 1952, Jack Ross, Secretary of the State of Texas.

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and Advanced Television Engineering. The curriculum requirements for television students included Physics, Fundamentals of Television, Radio Frequency Transmission and Reception in Television, Video, Camera Chains and Film Pickup, Equipment, Studio Lighting, TV Video, Switching and Studio Facilities, TV Sound, and TV Mathematics, plus a lab class that included hands-on operation of all phases of the operations for a TV station. Radio station KPAC used the tower until October 1957, when KPAC-TV(Channel 4) replaced the radio broadcasting station. KPAC-TV was owned jointly by the Jefferson Amusement Company and Port Arthur College, and was a member of the NBC Television Network. The television station was located in Port Arthur at 17th Street and Woodworth Boulevard.²⁷

In 1966, the college sold its interest in KPAC-TV and used the money to build the Madison Monroe Education Building. The dormitory and education buildings that had comprised Port Arthur College when it first opened in 1909 were torn down for the construction of this first new building. Radio stations KPAC and KPAC-FM were sold to Clear Channel Communications, Inc., in January 1978 and the tower no longer had a function in the teaching of radio. The Regents allowed the tower to stand as a reminder of the heritage and history of the early accomplishments of the college. The 1988 placement of an Official Texas Historical Marker commemorating the history of the tower demonstrated the college's understanding of the tower's place in the school's history. In addition to being a historic landmark, the tower today, situated as it is along the Sabine-Neches Waterway, appears on marine maps and is used as a visual sight for those navigating their vessels on Lake Sabine or the Waterway.

Although the 130-foot tower no longer supports a broadcast antenna, the structure retains a good degree of integrity. As the oldest structure on campus, as a property directly tied to the core curriculum of the college over a span of several decades, and as a key component in providing telegraph and radio broadcasting to the Port Arthur area, the tower is nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A, in the areas of Education and Communications, at the local level of significance.

Lamar State College-Port Arthur Today

In 1975, the 64th Texas Legislature authorized the merger of Port Arthur College with Lamar University and appropriated \$600,000 for creation of the Lamar University Center at Port Arthur. The enrollment at that time was 151 students. In 1983, Senate Bill 409 authorized Lamar University-Port Arthur to receive state funds to buy land and/or buildings. This authorization also allowed Lamar University-Port Arthur to levy a fixed student fee and to bond for construction for a campus student center. In 1991, Senate Bill 843 allowed Lamar University-Port Arthur to issue associate degrees in its own name. In 1995, the Texas Legislature dissolved the Lamar University System, and Lamar University-Port Arthur joined the Texas State University System. In 1999, the college changed its name to "Lamar State College-Port Arthur".²⁸

Lamar State College – Port Arthur is an open-access, comprehensive public two-year college offering general academic courses and quality instruction leading to Associate of Arts and Associate of Science degrees, and a variety of certificates. It is located on 50 acres of land between the 1000 and 1800 blocks of Procter Street and Lakeshore Drive in Port Arthur. The City has modern public schools, churches, shopping districts and recreation areas serving a community of over 70,000 people. The metropolitan area, known as the Golden Triangle, contains over 350,000 people. There are 27

²⁷ Catalog "Port Arthur College over 50 Years," 1960, Port Arthur Public Library Historical Collection.

²⁸ History of Texas Legislative acts related to Port Arthur College, Port Arthur College-Port Arthur provided by The Parker Law Firm 1315 Nueces Street, Austin, Texas 78701.

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Continuation Sheet

Section 8 Page 13

Marconi Tower
Port Arthur, Jefferson County, Texas

buildings on the campus. The College is fully accredited to award associate degrees by the Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. Fall enrollment for the Fall Semester, 2007, is over 3000. Total value of the campus today is \$50 million.

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Port Arthur, Jefferson County, Texas

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Marconi Tower
Port Arthur, Jefferson County, Texas

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10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF PROPERTY: less than one acre

UTM REFERENCES	<u>Zone</u>	<u>Easting</u>	<u>Northing</u>
1.	15	410544	3305798

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION: The nomination encompasses only the tower and the ground upon which it stands, an area approximately 25 feet wide and 25 feet deep. The tower is located in a grassy area near the northeast end of the Lamar State College-Port Arthur, surrounded by paved parking to the northeast and southeast, a covered walkway to the southwest, and a concrete sidewalk to the northwest.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION: The nomination boundary is drawn to include only the tower itself.

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME/TITLE: Ms. Yvonne Sutherlin, with National Register Coordinator Gregory Smith

ORGANIZATION: Lamar State College-Port Arthur

DATE: March 4, 2008

STREET & NUMBER: 1500 Procter

TELEPHONE: (409) 984-6100

CITY OR TOWN: Port Arthur

STATE: Texas

ZIP CODE: 77640

ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION

CONTINUATION SHEETS

MAPS

PHOTOGRAPHS (see continuation sheet Photo-21)

ADDITIONAL ITEMS (see continuation sheets Figure-17 through Figure-20)

PROPERTY OWNER

NAME: Lamar State College-Port Arthur (ATTN: Sam Monroe, President)

STREET & NUMBER: 1500 Procter

TELEPHONE: (409) 984-6100

CITY OR TOWN: Port Arthur

STATE: Texas

ZIP CODE: 77640

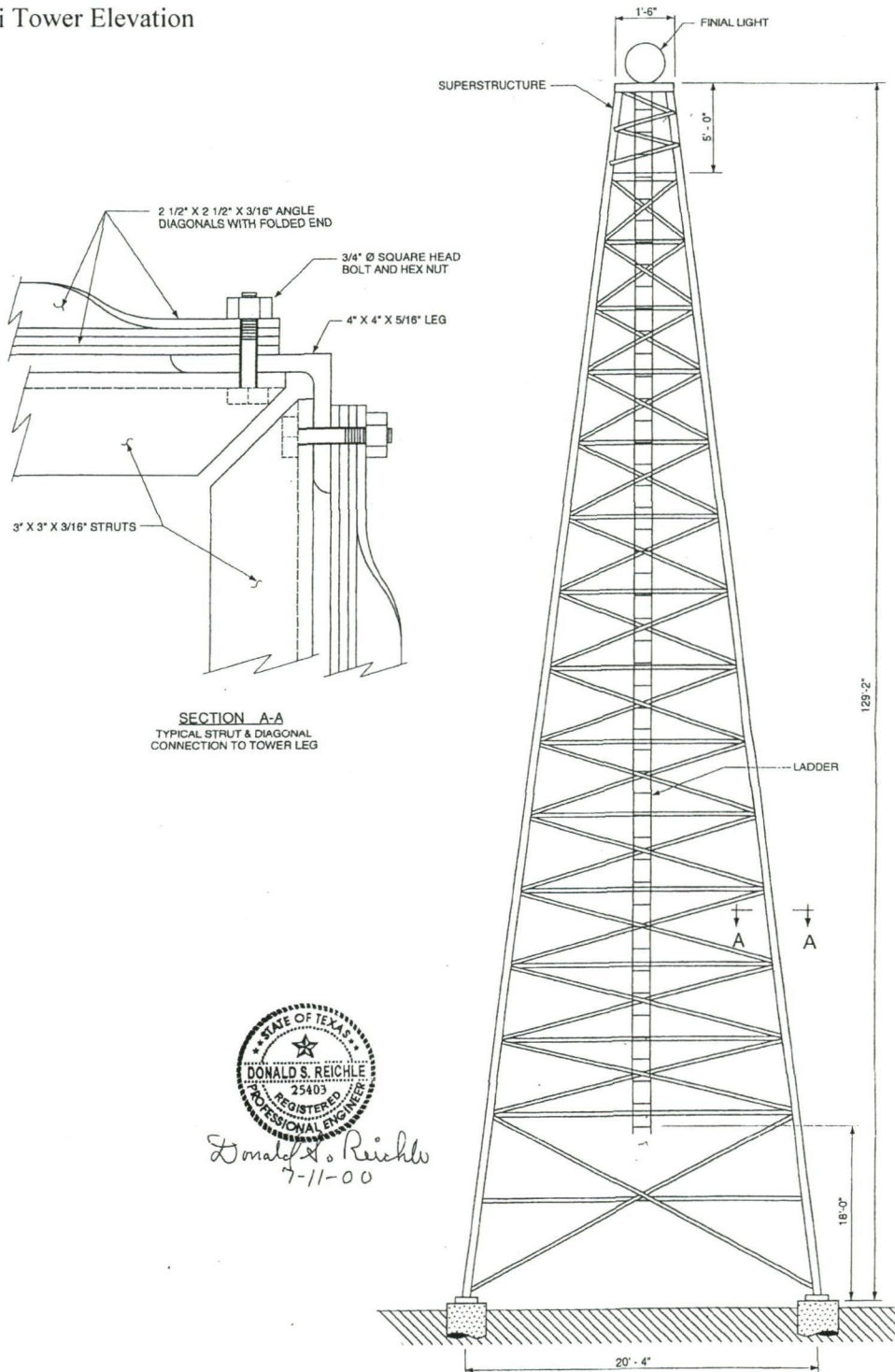
United States Department of the Interior
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Continuation Sheet

Section Figure Page 17

Marconi Tower
Port Arthur, Jefferson County, Texas

Marconi Tower Elevation



SECTION A-A
TYPICAL STRUT & DIAGONAL
CONNECTION TO TOWER LEG



Donald S. Reichle
7-11-00

RADIO TOWER
General Dimensions

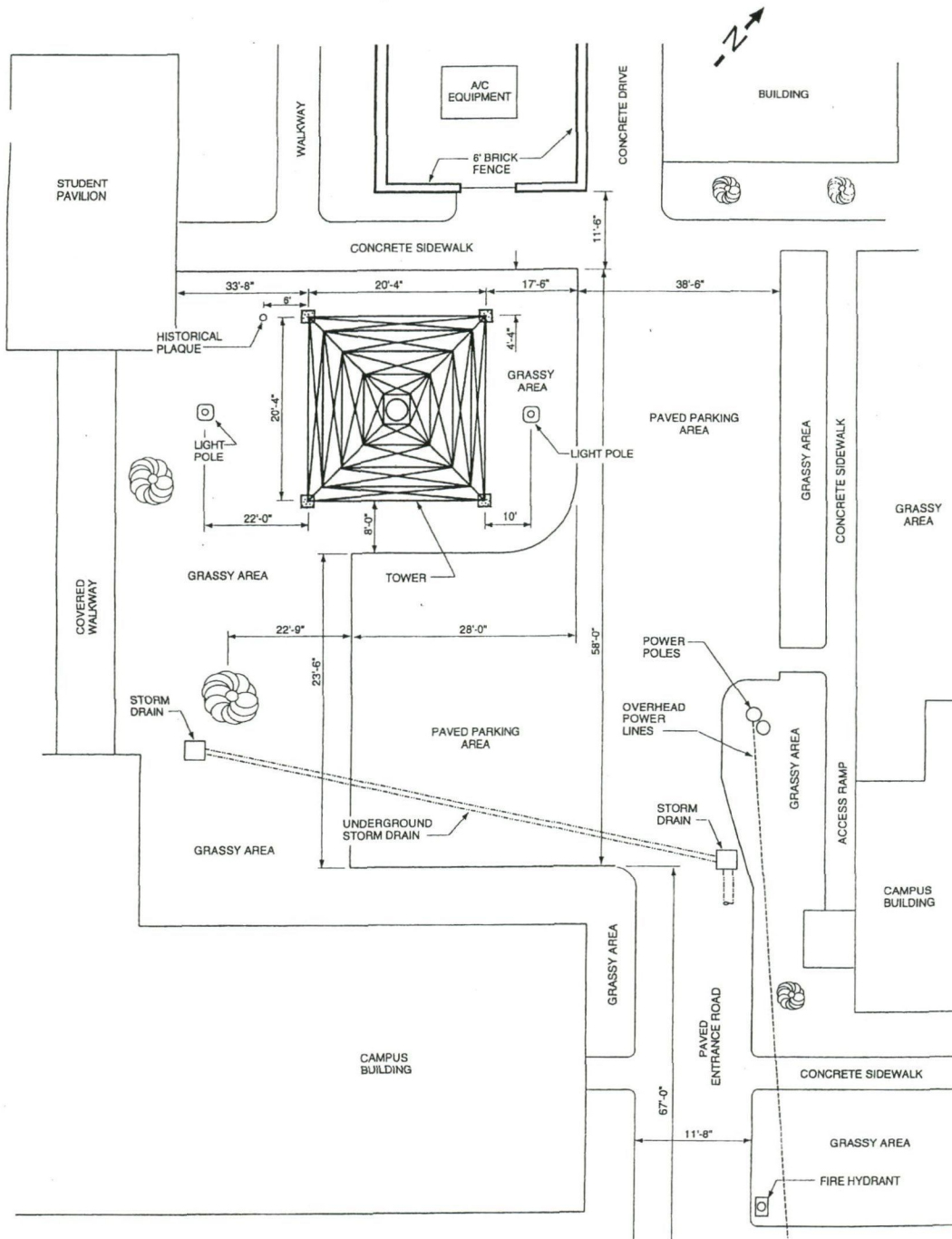
United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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Section Figure Page 18

Marconi Tower
Port Arthur, Jefferson County, Texas

Site Plan, no scale



United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section Figure Page 19

Marconi Tower
Port Arthur, Jefferson County, Texas

Marconi Tower behind Administration Building, 1939



United States Department of the Interior
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Section Figure Page 20

Marconi Tower
Port Arthur, Jefferson County, Texas

Marconi Tower, as published in the Lamar State College–Port Arthur 2006-2007 Catalog, Volume 30



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Continuation Sheet

Section Photo Page 21

Marconi Tower
Port Arthur, Jefferson County, Texas

Marconi Tower at Port Arthur College
Port Arthur, Jefferson County, Texas

Photo 1 of 1
Photographed by Tom Neal
Camera facing east
May 2008

Printed by Texas Historical Commission staff on HP Premium Plus photo paper with HP Vivera ink

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY NAME: Marconi Tower at Port Arthur College

MULTIPLE NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: TEXAS, Jefferson

DATE RECEIVED: 6/25/08 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 7/14/08
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 7/29/08 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 8/08/08
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 08000756

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT RETURN REJECT 8-5-08 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

Entered in
The National Register
of
Historic Places

REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N
RECOM./CRITERIA _____

REVIEWER _____ DISCIPLINE _____

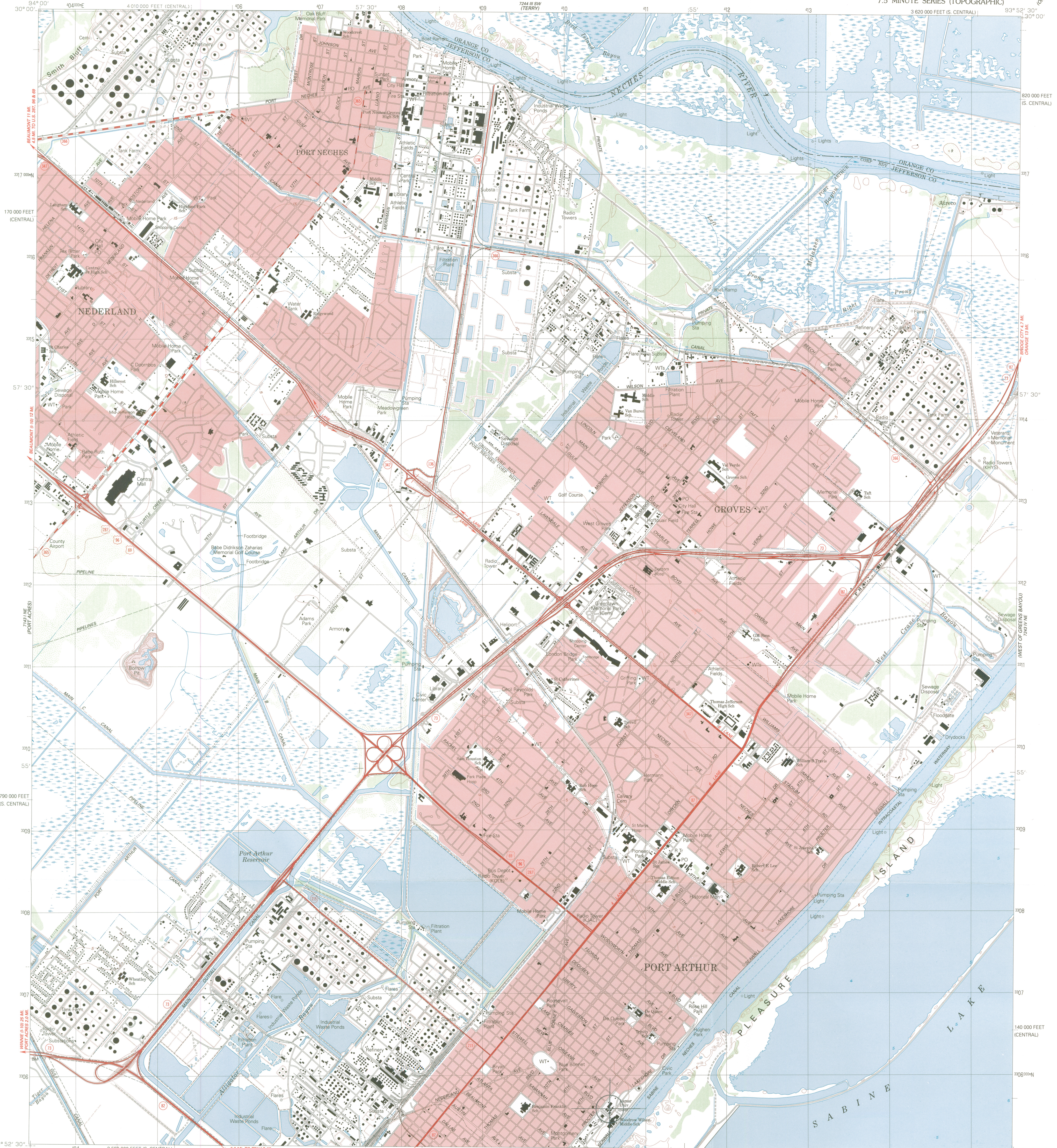
TELEPHONE _____ DATE _____

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.

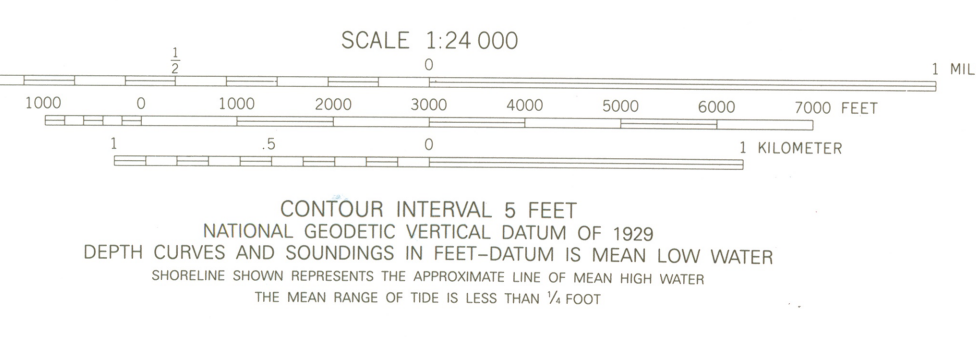


MARCONI TOWER
PORT ARTHUR
JEFFERSON CO., TEXAS
PHOTO 1 of 1



Produced by the United States Geological Survey
Control by USGS and NOS/NOAA
Compiled by Defense Mapping Agency from aerial photographs
taken 1942. Revised from aerial photographs taken 1987 and other
sources. Field checked 1989. Map edited 1993
Hydrography compiled from NOS/NOAA Chart 11342 (1992)
1927 North American Datum (NAD 27). Projection:
Texas Coordinate System, south central zone (Lambert Conformal Conic)
10,000-foot ticks. Texas Coordinate System, south central and
central zones. 1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid, zone 15
North American Datum of 1983 (NAD 83) is shown by dashed
corner ticks. The values of the shift between NAD 27 and NAD 83
for 7.5 minute intersections is given in USGS Bulletin 1875
Red tint indicates areas in which only landmark buildings are shown

MARCONI TOWER
PORT ARTHUR,
JEFFERSON CO.
TEXAS
ZONE 15
410544E
3305798N



ROAD CLASSIFICATION

Primary highway, hard surface	Light-duty road, hard or improved surface
Secondary highway, hard surface	Unimproved road
Interstate Route	U. S. Route
	State Route

COMPLIES WITH U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY STANDARDS FOR SPATIAL ACCURACY-CLASS 3
FOR SALE BY U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY
DENVER, COLORADO 80225, OR RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST



TEXAS HISTORICAL COMMISSION

Rick Perry • *Governor*

John L. Nau, III • *Chairman*

F. Lawrence Oaks • *Executive Director*

The State Agency for Historic Preservation



TO: Linda McClelland
National Register of Historic Places

FROM: Gregory W. Smith, National Register Coordinator
Texas Historical Commission

RE: Marconi Tower at Port Arthur College, Port Arthur, Jefferson County, Texas

DATE: June 23, 2008

- The following materials are submitted regarding the Marconi Tower:

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	National Register of Historic Places form
<input type="checkbox"/>	Resubmitted nomination
<input type="checkbox"/>	Multiple Property nomination form
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Photographs
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	USGS map
<input type="checkbox"/>	Correspondence
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Other: CD-R with digital photograph file

COMMENTS:

SHPO requests substantive review

The enclosed owner objections (do) (do not) constitute a majority of property owners

Other:



"Leslie Barras"
<lebarras@usa.com>
Sent by:
lebarras@gmail.com

To: nr_info@nps.gov
cc: "Greg Smith" <Greg.Smith@thc.state.tx.us>
Subject: Marconi Tower Nomination; 08000756

07/28/2008 09:33 PM
EST

Dear Madam/Sir:

Attached is a letter of support for the National Register listing of the Marconi Tower, 08000756, Port Arthur, Texas, that was publicly noticed for comment in the July 14, 2008 Federal Register.

Please ensure that this communication and attachment are included in the administrative record for this proposed action and please apprise me of the final action on this matter.

Thank you,

Leslie Barras

c: Mr. Gregory Smith, Texas Historical Commission, National Register Coordinator



Marconi Tower-08000756.pdf

SENT VIA EMAIL

July 28, 2008

National Register of Historic Places
National Park Service
1201 Eye St., N.W., 8th floor
Washington, D.C. 20005

RE: Marconi Tower at Port Arthur College, 1500 Proctor, Port Arthur, TX
08000756

Dear Madam/Sir:

I am writing to support the National Register nomination of the Marconi Tower, 1500 Proctor, Port Arthur, Jefferson County, Texas that was publicly noticed for comment at *73 Federal Register* 40373-74, July 14, 2008.

Though I no longer live in Texas, I am a native of Port Arthur who professionally works in the field of historic preservation. I have recently viewed the tower as I am currently visiting the area. I have also reviewed the National Register nomination and agree with the assessment of significance under criterion A for associations with local education and communication. This marvelous structure, which celebrates its centennial next year, was thankfully and fortuitously restored before Hurricane Rita directly struck the area in 2005. Hopefully, National Register listing will ensure the continued maintenance of this tower and its unique and very visible contribution to local history.

Sincerely,



Leslie Barras

Leslie Elizabeth Barras
2337 Frankfort Ave., #350
Louisville, KY 40206
lebarras@usa.com

c: Mr. Greg Smith, National Register Coordinator, Texas Historical Commission
Ms. Yvonne Sutherlin, Port Arthur Historical Society