

# ALABAMA REGISTER OF LANDMARKS AND HERITAGE NOMINATION FORM

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY - DATE ADDED: \_\_\_\_\_

## 1. NAME

Historic: Concrete Water Tank  
and/or Common: Concrete Water Tank

## 2. LOCATION

Street & Number: Intersection of Hand Avenue and West Third Street at County Jail Complex

City, Town: Bay Minette

---Vicinity of: \_\_\_\_\_

State: AL

County: Baldwin

Zip: 36507-

## 3. CLASSIFICATION

### Category

- District  
 Building(s)  
 Structure  
 Site  
 Object

### Ownership

- Public  
 Private  
 Both

### Public Acquisition

- In process  
 Being considered

### Status

- Occupied  
 Unoccupied  
 Work in progress

### Accessible

- Yes: restricted  
 Yes: unrestricted  
 No

### Present Use

- Agriculture  
 Commercial  
 Educational  
 Entertainment  
 Government  
 Industrial  
 Military

- Museum  
 Park  
 Private residence  
 Religious  
 Scientific  
 Transportation  
 Other: vacant

## 4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

Name: The Utilities Board of the City of Bay Minette

Telephone: (251) 580-1626

Street & Number: P. O. Box 1207

City or Town: Bay Minette

State: AL

Zip: 36507-

## 5. FLOOR PLAN & SITE PLAN

(Use space below to sketch floor plan and site plan or attach additional sheet.)

*Received  
Mar. 29, 2004*

## 6. DESCRIPTION

---

(See attached instructions for specific guidelines on completing the description.)

### CONDITION

Excellent     Deteriorated  
 Good         Ruins  
 Fair          Unexposed

### CHECK ONE

Unaltered  
 Altered

### CHECK ONE

Original Site  
 Moved    Date Moved

### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE.

The 130-foot high reinforced concrete tank constructed in 1915 is located on the north side of the Courthouse Square at the intersection of Hand Avenue and West Third Street in Bay Minette, Alabama. The 80,000-gallon tank is behind and between several buildings on a very small site. The site is described in Real Property Book 663, page 1517 in the records of the Judge of Probate of Baldwin County, Alabama as a circle with a diameter of 24.00 feet, the radius point of which lies North 22-31-15 West, 27.42 feet, thence South 67-30-00 West, 18.13 feet from the Southeast corner of Lot 3 of the aforesaid Block 4. The Warranty Deed also states that improvements that consist of an old water tank have historic and symbolic importance to the City of Bay Minette. This tank was removed from service in 1979.

The tank measures 31 feet in height and is supported on a tapered concrete column that is 8 feet in diameter at its connection to the flared column base that fans out.

Considering the possibility of shifting, permanent survey points were placed by Cowles, Murphy, Glover & Associates at three points around the tank on July 3, 2002 to establish reference points and to be used as bench marks for future monitoring every six months or after a significant storm or seismic event.

Exterior Description from report by Tank Industry Consultants dated July 18, 1997:

Construction: Concrete

Shaft Diameter: approximately 8 feet at bottom, approximately 6 feet at top

Shell Diameter: approximately 24 feet

Shell Height: approximately 31 feet

Roof type: None

Shell Ladder:

Number of Rungs 38

Distance from Ground to Lowest Rung: approximately 74 feet

Width: 14 - 1/8"

Side Rails: 2 - 1/2"x3/8", flat bar

Rung Size: 5/8: diameter

Spacing 12" on center

Toe Room: 5 - 1/2"

Brackets:

Construction: Bolted

Size: 1 - 1/2"x1/4", flat bar x 7 1/2" long

Spacing: Approximately 30 feet

Bolt Size: 7/16" diameter

Safe-Climbing Device: None

Safety Cage: None

Sign:

Color: Black

Locations: Southwest to Southeast side of shell

Capital letters:

Height: 6 foot tall letters

Letter Width: 4 foot

Lower Case Letters:

Height: 3 foot tall letters

Letter Width: 3 foot

Brush Stroke: 6 inch

## 7. SIGNIFICANCE

---

(See attached instructions for specific guidelines on completing the significance.)

### PERIOD

- Prehistoric
- 1400-1499
- 1500-1599
- 1600-1699
- 1700-1799
- 1800-1899
- 1900-

### AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE-CHECK AND EXPLAIN BELOW

- |                                                  |                                                 |                                                 |                                                    |
|--------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric  | <input type="checkbox"/> community planning     | <input type="checkbox"/> industry               | <input type="checkbox"/> religion                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic     | <input type="checkbox"/> conservation           | <input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> scientific                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> agriculture             | <input type="checkbox"/> education              | <input type="checkbox"/> law                    | <input type="checkbox"/> sculpture                 |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> engineering            | <input type="checkbox"/> literature             | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> social history |
| <input type="checkbox"/> art                     | <input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement | <input type="checkbox"/> military               | <input type="checkbox"/> theater                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> commerce                | <input type="checkbox"/> funerary art           | <input type="checkbox"/> music                  | <input type="checkbox"/> other                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> communications          | <input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian           | <input type="checkbox"/> politics/government    |                                                    |

SPECIFIC DATES: 1915

BUILDER/ARCHITECT: Steel Construction

### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

At the time of contracting and construction of the tower, the Town of Bay Minette, Alabama officials were W. D. Stapleton, Mayor, A. B. Bryars, H. H. Mixon, Dr. J. M. Smith, Jos. Femeinar, and H. R. Kirby, Councilmen., J. M. Franklin, Town Clerk, and Wm. S. Anderson, Attorney.

Engineer for the concrete tank was Edgar B. Kay of Tuscaloosa, Alabama.

The concrete water tank construction was awarded to The Steel Construction Company, 606 Chamber Commerce, Birmingham, Alabama on December 15, 1914. Instructions to bidders required furnishing and erecting complete, including foundations, riser pipe, and expansion joint, one tower 80 feet above foundations and tank of 75,000 U.S. Gallon capacity. The price quoted for the project was \$3,000.00.

The tank, constructed in 1915 was the first of three such towers constructed worldwide. The only other remaining tank is located in Northport, Alabama.

## **8. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES**

---

Files from the Utilities Board of the City of Bay Minette Business Office, 1914 - 2002  
Files from the City of Bay Minette Public Library, 1914 - 2002  
Files from the University of South Alabama Archives, 1914- 2002

## **9. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

---

Acreage of nominated property: diameter of 24 feet

Quadrangle name: \_\_\_\_\_

Enclose map showing location of property. (city or county map, state highway department map, or USGS map)

## **10. FORM PREPARED BY**

---

Name/title: Karan D. Lewis, Finance Director

Organization: Utilities Board of the City of Bay Minette

Date: March 26, 2004

Street & Number: P. O. Box 1207

Telephone: (251) 580-1626

City or Town: Bay Minette

State: AL Zip: 36507-

**11. PLEASE SUBMIT COLOR SLIDES OF THE PROPERTY WITH THIS FORM:**

Color slides are essential to the review process.

**12. PLEASE RETURN NOMINATION FORM AND DOCUMENTATION TO:**

**ALABAMA REGISTER COORDINATOR  
ALABAMA HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
468 SOUTH PERRY STREET  
MONTGOMERY, AL 36130-0900**

## **Questions from the Alabama Historical Commission**

### **Was this water for residential or commercial use?**

The stored water was for both residential and commercial use.

### **How did the construction of the tower affect the city of Bay Minette?**

This was the first water tower built in the town. The population of Bay Minette according to the 1910 Official and Statistical Register was 2,336 and in 1920 the population had grown to 2,693.

Alabama Manufacturing Company erected a warehouse and construction room. A restaurant was opened in a vacant furniture store. The Furniture Company relocated to another area of town.

This was a progressive era and the town was growing.

### **Was this a period of growth for Bay Minette?**

**Was the water tower project initiated by citizens, the business community, or a governmental authority? If a governmental entity, please specify. How much did it cost to build the water tower?**

The early 1900's was a time of growth for Bay Minette and the surrounding areas. Bay Minette, the third county seat, was selected by the legislature on February 5, 1901 and has remained the seat of government for Baldwin County.

According to the Fairhope Courier in 1915, "many northern home seekers arrived here last Wednesday and some are purchasing land to locate on. Five new farm dwellings are reported in progress southeast of Bay Minette and six new ones to the north. This indicates better than anything that new home seekers are coming in."

During the same period bonds were issued for electric lights, waterworks, and sewerage. Work began in January 1915. Water and

sewer mains were laid along with the erection of the water tower and tank.

The Town of Bay Minette initiated the water tower project. According to documents found in the files, the cost for furnishing and erecting complete, including foundations, riser pipe, and expansion joint, one tower 80 feet above foundations and tank of 75,000 U. S. Gallon capacity was \$3,000.00. (from Proposal dated December 15, 1914)

The engineer of record was Edgar B Kay of Tuscaloosa, Alabama. Mr. Kay was the first Dean of Engineering at the University of Alabama. He held this position from 1907 to his resignation in 1912. He was a native of Pennsylvania and received a BSCE degree from Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in 1883 (Rensselaer is noted as the first private institution having a significant and lasting civil engineering degree program).

During the period from 1912-1918 Mr. Kay did consulting work. In 1918 he was the Chief of the Hydraulic and Sanitary Section of the Quartermaster-General's Office of the U.S. Army. He invented the U S Standard Incinerator.

The Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering at the University of Alabama awards a scholarship named for Edgar B. Kay to the outstanding civil engineering junior annually.

**What state or federal agency regulated the construction and function of water towers at the time this one was built?**

The State Health Department was the regulating agency from 1907 to the early 40s.

**Did the local government have guidelines to follow in the construction and use of the water tower?**

We have not been able to locate any specific guidelines. Since this was a time of growth and people were concerned with containing the spread of many contagious diseases there should have been some type of general guidelines concerning water and waste.



**Why and how was the Steel Construction Company chosen for the project?**

Sealed bids were received by the Mayor and Councilmen of the Town of Bay Minette, Baldwin County, Alabama, until 8:15 P.M., December 15, 1914, at the Town Hall, in Bay Minette, Alabama for furnishing materials, machinery and constructing a complete water works system for said town, in accordance with plans and specifications therefore on file in the office of the Mayor. The bid was awarded to The Steel Construction Company, 606 Chamber Commerce, Birmingham, Alabama.

**Did the Steel Construction Company build other water towers, concrete or steel in Alabama, southeastern U.S., nationally?**

**Was this the first or last built in Alabama by this company?**

**Was this the first water tower anywhere constructed by this company? Of this design? Concrete?**

**Is the tower in Northport mentioned in the nomination associated with the same engineer and/or company? Is it concrete? Does it have a similar design as this one? Is it still standing? Was it built before or after the tower in Bay Minette? What are other similarities and differences between the two? Engineer/Company?**

Recent pictures show that the tank design is similar to the one in Bay Minette. The Northport tank appears to be a shorter version. The water tower is concrete and is still standing. The citizens of Northport are currently working to save the tower.

**How was the water tower's design chosen? How does the water tower design relate to its function? Is there anything unique about the design that distinguishes it from other concrete water towers? Why was this site chosen to construct the water tower?**

The site was chosen for the close proximity to the town and its residences. The original jail constructed around 1915 was on the same

block. The jail was demolished in 1999 and replaced with a more modern facility. The courthouse, located in the center of town, was one block away from the site. Circuit Court proceedings and other government functions drew people from all over Baldwin and the surrounding Counties to the area.

### **Why was the tower's operation discontinued in 1979?**

The tower's operation was discontinued in 1979 when the tank was damaged by lightning during Hurricane Frederic.

### **Who owns and maintains the tower?**

The Utilities Board of the City of Bay Minette owns and maintains the tower.

### **Why was the tower repainted in 1998? Did any other changes to the tower take place when it was repainted?**

In the 1980's, a structural engineer was hired to assess the stability of the tank. The recommendation was to repair a "break in the top" of the tank or to tear it down. The top, or roof, of the structure was removed, exposing the tank to the weather. In 1997, the County Commission conducted an extensive study of the tank, by contracting with an engineering firm from Indianapolis, Tank Industry Consultants, 7740 West New York Street, Indianapolis, Indiana, to determine the structure's integrity. That firm reported that the tank either needed further renovations or should be taken down. The next year, the tank was repaired.

The complete exterior was enclosed with a scaffolding system erected and dismantled by Cowboy Scaffolding, Inc. of Mobile, Alabama. The cracks in the exterior concrete were repaired by routing out the crack to a minimum depth of ¼ inch and then filling with a flexible patching compound. To correct the exterior spalling problems the area was cleaned back to a solid base and a concrete-based patching material was placed in the deteriorated areas and shaped to the original contour of the concrete. Upon completion of the repairs the exterior was cleaned by high water pressure washing. The exterior was then painted with two coats of white paint. The existing ladder was removed. Signage was painted on the shell wall.

**Who initiated the modern work on the tower?**

The modern work on the tower was a joint venture between the Utilities Board of the City of Bay Minette, The City of Bay Minette, and the Baldwin County Commission.

**How much did it cost? How was it paid for? What company did the work?**

The repair, cleaning, and painting of the tank in 1998 cost \$49,950.00. Funds for the maintenance of water tanks were used to pay for this service. Tank Pro, Inc. of Northport, Alabama performed the work.

**Has the tower sustained any structural damage from natural occurrences such as storms since it was built in 1915? If so, please provide a date and details of damage.**

The tank top had a hole punched into it when lightning struck during Hurricane Fredrick in 1979. The tank was open and exposed to the elements at that time.

**When the tower was removed from service in 1979, was another one built? If yes, make comparison to this tower in design, cost, eight, geographical location, etc. If no, please provide reasons for why this was not done.**

The Utilities Board of the City of Bay Minette had 2 tanks in service, in other areas of town, when tank number one was removed from service in 1979.

**Claim that this tower was the first of three such towers built worldwide. Please justify this argument. Was this the first of three built by this company? Of this design? Is this the tallest structure in Bay Minette?**

The plaque attached to the tower states "The first of its kind ever built, June 1915, patent applied for".

At the time of construction the 130 foot high tower was the tallest structure in Bay Minette and remains so today.

The Heritage of Baldwin County  
Publisher: Heritage Publishing Consultants Inc.  
First Edition 2001

History of Alabama and Dictionary of Alabama Biography  
Thomas McAdory Owen, LL.D.  
Publisher: The S.J. Clarke Publishing Company  
1921

Olson Engineering Report on Nondestructive testing Investigation 1915  
Concrete Water Tower, June 19, 2001  
Cowles, Murphy, Glover & Associates, LLP(CMG) Report on Concrete  
Water Storage Tank

Bay Minette The County Seat of Baldwin County ALA. And its Vicinity  
compliments of the Bay Minette Land Company MCMVIII

University of South Alabama Archives, USA Springhill, Room 9722,  
Mobile, Alabama 36688

A History of Baldwin County, Kay Nuzum

The Baldwin Times  
The Fairhope Courier  
Rickie Braner, Alabama Department of Archives and History  
Flora Gay, City of Northport  
Mike Shawl, Northport Utilities Board  
Harry Still, Jr., Utilities Board of the City of Bay Minette  
Mrs. John Hastie, Stockton  
Charlotte Cabaniss, Bay Minette Public Library  
Aubrey White, Alabama Department of Environmental Management

University of Alabama, Development Office, Karen Baldwin

**Concrete Water Tank  
Bay Minette, Alabama**

<b>Order</b>	<b>Slide</b>	<b>Description</b>
1	16	From roof top of Bill's Dollar Store (located at 220 Courthouse Square) looking North-moving from West to East
2	13	From roof top of Bill's Dollar Store (located at 220 Courthouse Square) looking North-moving from West to East
3	15	From roof top of Bill's Dollar Store (located at 220 Courthouse Square) looking North-moving from West to East
4	14	From roof top of Bill's Dollar Store (located at 220 Courthouse Square) looking North-moving from West to East
5	1-8	Construction of tank - made from copies of newspaper articles
6	9-12	Additional pictures