

FINAL

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Cairo Skywatch Tower
other names/site number Delta Lima 3 Green Ground Observation Tower

2. Location

street & number County Road 850 North at County Road 100 West N/A not for publication
city or town Cairo vicinity
state Indiana code IN county Tippecanoe code 157 zip code 47906

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36CFR 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.)

Signature of certifying official/Title J. C. SA
Indiana Department of Natural Resources
State or Federal agency and bureau

Date 1-29-02

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title _____ Date _____
State or Federal agency and bureau _____

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:	Signature of the Keeper	Date of Action
<input type="checkbox"/> entered in the National Register. <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined eligible for the National Register <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined not eligible for the National Register	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> removed from the National Register	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> other, (explain:)	_____	_____

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

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

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- building
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
0	0	buildings
0	0	sites
1	0	structures
0	1	objects
1	1	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

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

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

DEFENSE:

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

VACANT

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

OTHER:

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation

walls

roof

other

WOOD: Log

WOOD

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.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or 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.

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

MILITARY

Period of Significance

1952-1954

Significant Dates

1952

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

O'Connor, Lawrence W. & Francis James Haan

9. Major Bibliographic References

Bibliography

(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:

Arnold Preservation Library

Cairo Skywatch Tower (see #0161)
Name of Property

Tippecanoe IN
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 1 acre

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	16	506460	4487560	3			
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
2				4			

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 John M. Harris (1976 nomination); Angela Bowen & Ben Ross
organization Wabash Valley Trust for Historic Preservation date 07-02-2001
street & number P.O. Box 1354 telephone 765/ 420-0268
city or town Lafayette state IN zip code 47902

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 SHPO or FPO.)

name Lawrence O'Connor
street & number 8451 North 100 West telephone
city or town West Lafayette state IN zip code 47906

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Cairo Skywatch Tower
Tippecanoe County, Indiana

Section number 7 Page 1

The Cairo Skywatch Tower is situated on a one-acre lot which forms the southeast corner of the junction of County Roads 100 West and 850 North. The tower is in the northeast corner of said lot approximately 245 feet east of the road junction and approximately 40 feet south of County Road 850 North (photo 1).

This lot is located on the outer edge of the community of Cairo, Indiana, an unplatted cluster of approximately a half dozen residences. Although unplatted, Cairo is shown on the official Indiana Highway Map. All surrounding lands are strictly agricultural in use. Located on the lot in question is a large residence, part of which also served as a grocery store and was the first official headquarters for the local chapter of the Civilian Ground Observer Corps before the construction of the tower. In addition, there are small out buildings, a garage and an unused chicken brooder house. Landscaping effectively separates and screens all of these buildings, located on the western half of the lot, from the tower, which is located on the eastern half of the lot.

On the site is the contributing structure (the tower), as well as a non-contributing object (a statue). The tower is a wooden structure which stands 40 feet high (photo 2). Four wooden power poles form the vertical corner posts with diagonal and horizontal 4x6s used for bracing. Steps once led from the ground up three flights to a 32' high and 12' square platform which held a 7' square, flat-roofed, glass-enclosed office. The exposed location of the tower resulted in a rapid deterioration once it was no longer in use. The office collapsed at some point and was rebuilt in 1976. The reconstruction also collapsed, and has been removed (photos 7 and 8). Around the office is a railed observation bridge or walkway (photo 6). A flagpole was attached to the southeastern corner of the platform. The bottom flight of steps was removed in the 1960s or 1970s for safety reasons. All the stairs have collapsed due to exposure and decay, although the original railings remain intact. The bottom flight of stairs ended in a concrete step which is still intact (photo 5). Traces of the original black paint remain on many parts of the structure. The tower has survived in relatively good condition considering its open structure and exposed location.

The main volunteers in the construction were Victor Tull, Donald Huffman, Leon Henpenius, Arnold Lumley, Albert Brewer, John Brose, Carl Hendrickson, and Carl Saathoff. An article in the *Indiana Rural News* in October of 1952, stated that "Farmers and others in the community, both skilled and unskilled in construction work, turned out by the score to help with the construction. The spirit of enterprise was well expressed by one of these workers, who said, 'If people all over the world would do something like this more often, then we wouldn't need Skywatch towers'."

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National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Cairo Skywatch Tower
Tippecanoe County, Indiana

Section number 8 Page 2

The Cairo Skywatch Tower meets Criterion A in the area of military for its importance as a Cold War Resource. It is significant in that it not only was the first rural skywatch tower officially commissioned in the United States as part of the U.S. Air Force's Civilian Ground Observation Corps program, it functioned as part of a large military communication network designed to spot, identify and report low-flying aircraft to the Air Force air filter center in South Bend. In the event of actual or possible enemy air attack the air filter center could dispatch interceptor planes and sound air raid warnings in possible target areas. Nine other posts were established in Tippecanoe County at such places as Crane Station, Romney, West Point, and Lafayette. Although observation towers were built at some of these, the Cairo Skywatch Tower is the only one still standing in the county and is thought to be the only one standing in the state.

In the early 1950s, the United States was involved in the Korean War and, as yet, had not developed its present national radar screen. In areas where radar surveillance did exist, it was relatively easy for planes to fly low enough to avoid detection. The possibility of an enemy air attack on this country was not only conceivable but during those nervous years was considered to be a very real threat. The Civilian Ground Observation Corps, and its network of observation posts strategically located throughout the United States, was developed as a means of combating that threat.

The history of the Cairo Skywatch post is a study of volunteerism and American patriotism in action. Lawrence W. O'Connor, the owner of the property, was commissioned by the Governor of Indiana in 1950 to organize a group of volunteers. This being a rural area, he carried the request to the local Pleasant Grove Grange, whose members immediately pledged their active support. A desk and phone, located in the rear of O'Connor's grocery store, the only business in Cairo at the time, served as headquarters for the new group. The yard outside served as the observation post. It soon became apparent that the observer's effectiveness was limited by the nature and location of this facility. It was determined to build a tower that would provide an unobstructed view of the local skies in all directions and furnished with the tools necessary for their chosen task: a telephone, desk and chair for reports, aircraft silhouette charts, and an accurate electric clock.

Francis James Haan, a local farmer, and O'Connor, a draftsman, drew up the plans for the tower. Later, these plans were requested by the Air Force and used in the construction of other towers throughout the Midwest. The Tipmont REMC, the local electric company, supplied the four corner vertical posts and set them in place. Merchants in nearby Lafayette and Battle Ground donated lumber, paint, glass and hardware. Farmers and others in the community, both skilled and unskilled in construction work, turned out to help with the construction. Among those who built the structure were Victor Tull, Donald Huffman, Leon Henpenius, Arnold Lumley, Albert Brewer, John Brose, Carl Hendrickson, Carl Saathoff, Robert Plant, James Haan, Richard Scherer, Richard Holwerda, Larry O'Connor, John Sanbloom, Carl Batta, Carl Minnear, Andrew Brown, and Chester and Casper Shaw.

The new tower was manned by 90 to 120 (the high point being in late 1952) men, women, and children who stood watch on two-hour shifts, 24 hours a day, just as they had done before the tower was built. The outstanding performance by the observers of the Cairo Ground Observers Post caused it to be chosen by the United States Air Force to serve as an example for the rest of the nation to follow. Pointing out that members of the Cairo post had "given the civilian defense a tangible start on a program that may become one of the most vital factors in the defense of our homes,

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Cairo Skywatch Tower
Tippecanoe County, Indiana

Section number 8 Page 3

of our homes, of our factories, our churches, our schools and our business establishments”, the tower was officially commissioned by the U.S.A.F. in ceremonies held August 16, 1952, the first such post in the nation to be so recognized.

The ceremonies were attended by several officials, including then-Lieutenant-Governor John Watkins; State Representative Joseph A. Andrew; well-known Congressman Charles Halleck; Lafayette Police Captain and county deputy civil defense director Glenn Rogers; Lieutenant Colonel James P. Emmett, commander of the Indiana Ground Observer Corps; Captain H. C. Beckwith, operations officer of the South Bend Skywatch filter center. The first watch was posted as jets and Civil Air patrol planes flew over, and all volunteers were presented with official pins. Halleck has been quoted as saying “you who stand and watch also serve the country.”

The 24-hour watch was maintained until November 1953. A newspaper article from October 12, 1953, states that “an attempt is being made to re-activate the Cairo Air Force ground observation post in view of recent warnings about possible ‘A’ and ‘H’ bomb attacks on this country.” After that the tower was manned only intermittently through mid-1954. Eventually, the Civilian Ground Observation Corps was disbanded in 1959.

The tower was restored during August and September of 1976. This consisted of the replacement of some steps, roof repairs, and the replacement of window glass. A limestone statue of a man, woman, and child embracing and gazing at the sky was ordered at this time (photo 4). This statue was carved by John O’Brien and Jim Salledede of the Indiana Limestone Co., of Bedford. Apparently, the funds were not raised to purchase the statue, which bears the date of 1976, and it was not paid for and placed until 1980. This became known as the Ground Observer Monument. A historic marker relating the history of the tower and its significance was erected next to the monument in 1995 by the Indiana Historical Bureau (photo 4).

The Cairo Skywatch tower was originally nominated to the National Register by John M. Harris, then executive director of the Tippecanoe County Historical Association, in an application dated 1976. It was considered to be too recent to be of any historical significance at that time, and for that reason the application was sent back. This property meets Criteria Consideration G for the following reasons. Today the significance of the Korean War period, as well as the entire Cold War, is recognized as an important part of our history. The tower is an example of an extremely rare structure significant in this period. It was the first tower of its kind to be built and commissioned by the U.S.A.F. prototype for other similar towers which were built during the early 1950s, and was given national recognition at the time it was built. The tower, like many others, was used for such a short period, that it is unusual that it has survived until the present day. It was the first skywatch tower of its kind, and is the only one in Tippecanoe County remaining, and the only known tower based upon our information in the state.

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National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section 9 & 10 Page 4 Cairo Skywatch Tower
name of property
Tippecanoe County, Indiana
county and State

Bibliography

- Formal Commissioning of Cairo Observation Tower into the service of The Ground Observer Corps of the United States Air Force (program). Cairo: August 16, 1952.
- Kriebel, Robert. 150 Years of Lafayette Newspapers. Lafayette: Tippecanoe County Historical Association, 1981.
- Indiana Rural News. October, 1952 Edition. "Cairo Goes Into Action"
- Indianapolis Star. August 1, 1976. "Plane Watchers of Korean War Era To Be Cited"
- Lafayette Journal and Courier. August 14, 1952. "County's Cairo in Nation's Eye"
- Lafayette Journal and Courier. August 15, 1952. "Cairo Program Sunday On 'Rain or Shine' Basis"
- Lafayette Journal and Courier. October 12, 1953. "Cairo Observer Meeting Planned"
- Lafayette Journal and Courier. November 15, 1976. "200 see Skywatch tower ceremonies"
- Lafayette Journal and Courier. January 21, 1978. "Smudge on All"
- Lafayette Journal and Courier. June 1, 1992. "Skywatchers"
- Tippecanoe County Interim Report: Indiana Historic Sites and Structure Inventory. Historic Landmarks Foundation of Indiana, May, 1990.

Verbal Boundary Description

The legal description of the property is a part of the West Half of the Northwest Quarter of Section (7), Township Twenty-four (24) North, Range Four (4) West, Tippecanoe Township, Tippecanoe County, Indiana. The boundary extends 500 feet west along the north property line from the northeast corner of the property and 500 feet south along the east property line from the northeast corner, the south and west boundaries run parallel to these and intersect at a right angle.

Verbal Boundary Justification

The nominated property includes the entire parcel historically associated with the tower. The house/store building is of a different period and due to alterations it no longer retains its historic appearance.

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
CONTINUATION SHEET

Section Photographs Page 5 Cairo Skywatch Tower
name of property
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Photo Captions

Photo #	Description	Direction
1	County Road 850 North showing tower setback and general area.	Facing west
2	Showing tower, statue, and flagpole.	Facing southwest
3	Showing tower, flagpole, and general area around tower.	Facing southeast
4	Statue and Marker	Facing south
5	Detail of cement step at base of where the bottom flight of stairs ended.	Facing south
6	View of Deck from below, showing original stair opening and general structure of tower.	Facing directly up
7	Detail of collapsed stairs showing intact stringers and railings.	Facing south
8	Observation deck and railing.	Facing southwest
9	Historic Photograph of tower construction	Facing south