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# NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

## 1 NAME

HISTORIC  
"The Grand Tower Mining, Manufacturing and Transportation Company" Site

AND/OR COMMON  
Devil's Backbone Iron (coke) Furnaces

## 2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER  
Devil's Backbone Park, Grand Tower

CITY, TOWN  
Grand Tower, Illinois

STATE  
Illinois

VICINITY OF  
Jackson

CODE  
12

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT  
59

COUNTY  
JACKSON

CODE  
077

## 3 CLASSIFICATION

| CATEGORY                                 | OWNERSHIP                                   | STATUS   | PRESENT USE                            |  |
|--|---|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT        | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC  | <input type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED              | <input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE   | <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)     | <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED | <input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL    | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PARK   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE       | <input type="checkbox"/> BOTH               | <input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS      | <input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL   | <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SITE | <input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC ACQUISITION | <input type="checkbox"/> ACCESSIBLE            | <input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT | <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT          | <input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS         | <input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED       | <input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT    | <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC        |
|  | <input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED   | <input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED     | <input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL    | <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION    |
|  |   | <input type="checkbox"/> NO                    | <input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY      | <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:            |

## 4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME  
Grand Tower Park District

STREET & NUMBER  
RR 1

CITY, TOWN  
Grand Tower, Illinois

STATE

VICINITY OF

## 5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.  
Jackson County Court House

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN  
Murphysboro,

STATE  
Illinois

## 6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE  
Illinois Historic Landmark Survey

DATE  
1974

DEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS  
Illinois Dept. of Conservation

CITY, TOWN  
Springfield

STATE  
Illinois

FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

# DESCRIPTION

| CONDITION                          |  | CHECK ONE                                   | CHECK ONE   |
|------------------------------------|--|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED | <input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED          | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE |
| <input type="checkbox"/> GOOD      | <input type="checkbox"/> RUINS                   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED | <input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> FAIR      | <input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED               |   |   |

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

Originally the ovens are believed to have sat in the rear of a large open air wooden or perhaps plaster building that sat at the bottom of the Devil's Backbone ridge located in what is now the Grand Tower Park. The ovens may have been built directly into the backbone ridge as the building sat next to the ridge itself. This would mean that there was probably no back wall or a very light wall if one existed at all. Above this lower building, on top of the ridge, was another complex, the exact function of which is not known.. The upper complex was composed of one large building, a smoke stack, two smaller buildings, a lower level smoke stack (perhaps for the coke ovens) and what appears to be a loading silo. It is not inconceivable that coal and other raw materials were unloaded from rail-road cars at the top of this complex and poured down the silo to the lower complex, where it was processed.

In front of the lower complex was a yard used for storage and loading river boats as it faced the river.

It is believed that this complex was gradually destroyed by flood and eventually obliterated by an explosion.

The present condition of the ovens is quite deteriorated. One can still discern that they were ovens used in industry at one time but little else.

All the industrial activities of "The Grand Tower Mining, Manufacturing and Transportation Company" occurred within the 23 acres proposed for the National Register. The visible remains, the ovens mentioned above, occupy only about one of the 23 acres being proposed for the Register.

| PERIOD  | AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW        |   |   |  |
|---|---|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC          | <input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC         | <input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING     | <input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE | <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499            | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC | <input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION           | <input type="checkbox"/> LAW                    | <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE             |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599            | <input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE                    | <input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS              | <input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE             | <input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699            | <input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE                   | <input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION              | <input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY               | <input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799            | <input type="checkbox"/> ART                            | <input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING            | <input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC                  | <input type="checkbox"/> THEATER             |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899 | <input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE                       | <input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT | <input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY             | <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1900-                | <input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS                 | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY    | <input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT    | <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)     |
|   |   | <input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION              |   |  |

SPECIFIC DATES 1869

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

It has been determined that the furnaces in question were used strictly in the production of coke, a substance made from coal which is used in the smelting of iron. An iron blast furnace is believed to have been in existence approximately one mile south of the site of the coke furnaces. The coke produced in the subject furnaces was probably transported to the blast furnace where it was used in iron production. This theory is substantiated by extant bricks and foundations at this second site. The coke produced in the Devil's Backbone ovens is believed to have been transported to the blast furnace by rail. Further research of this second site is warranted, but it, as a site is not to be considered in this nomination.

The company involved and to whom the ovens belonged was called "The Grand Tower Mining, Manufacturing and Transportation Company". It began as a subsidiary of the Mount Carbon Coal Company of Murphysboro, Illinois. The Grand Tower company out-grew the Mount Carbon company warranting a name change consolidating both companies under the name Grand Tower Mining, Manufacturing and Transportation Company. This change was done by an act of the General Assembly of the State of Illinois on April 9, 1869. This law is listed in the Illinois State Archives as an enrolled law, 1869, box 295, #11555.

As sited in the historical sketches of Jackson County, (E. Newsome ed., 1894, Carbondale, Illinois) the company was an extension of the Mount Carbon Coal Company (chartered 1850). The Mount Carbon Company pushed a rail road from Murphysboro, Illinois to Grand Tower, Illinois. They built a foundry, machine shop, two iron furnaces and smaller production furnaces. (coke). They changed their name in 1869. The company at this time was owned by a man named Henry Fitzhugh.

Between 1869 and 1874, the company was beset by many internal problems. At one point in this period (no dates available) there was a severe coal miners strike which paralyzed the company. Also in this period there was a question of propriety in the money management of the company. This led to a \$200,000.00 lawsuit which the company lost. It was then decided by the court that the company be turned over to trusteeship.

After the company went into trusteeship in 1874, external problems began to plague the company; as also in 1874 their engineers office in Grand Tower burned with most of their plats and drawings. Again in 1874 a financial panic developed causing many of the miners to leave for new employment. In 1876 there was a flood of the Mississippi River and nearby Big Muddy River. Water from this flood backed-up into two of the company's ovens causing one to collapse.

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NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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In 1890 the company revived for a short while after which point little is known about it except that the ovens were abandoned in 1892. There is no record of the company after this point.

These ovens are significant in that they are the last remaining relics of an industry that at one time was very large, even by modern standards. The company and its industry caused Grand Tower, Illinois to be called the "Pittsburg of the West" in the 1860's and 1870's. The iron manufactured by this company was of such high quality that it won several awards including first prize at the World's Fair of 1876 in Berlin, Germany.

The Devil's Backbone ovens should be preserved and protected as they are the only real tangible link with the Grand Tower Mining, Manufacturing and Transportation Company which is a very big part of the history and heritage of this area of southern Illinois.

# MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Newsome, E. ed., Historical Sketches of Jackson County, Carbondale, Illinois 1894.

## GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 23

QUADRANGLE NAME \_\_\_\_\_

QUADRANGLE SCALE \_\_\_\_\_

UTM REFERENCES

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### VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

All that part of the N.E. of S.E. of Sec 23, Township 10, range 4, W. of the Third principal meridian lying E. of the Mississippi River.  
(See Attached Sheet)

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

| STATE | CODE | COUNTY | CODE |
|-------|------|--------|------|
| None  |      |        |      |

|       |      |        |      |
|-------|------|--------|------|
| STATE | CODE | COUNTY | CODE |
| None  |      |        |      |

## FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Cynthia E. Conrad Research and Grants

3/17/78

ORGANIZATION

City of Grand Tower

DATE

STREET & NUMBER

565-2014  
TELEPHONE

CITY OR TOWN

Grand Tower

STATE

Illinois

## STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation 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.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

TITLE

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER.

DATE

ATTEST:

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

CHIEF OF REGISTRATION

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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That portion of the West half of the S.W. of Section 24, township 10, range 4, lying S. and W. of the Illinois Central Gulf Rail Road Spur.

A triangular shaped parcel that is part of that is part of the N.E. corner of the N.W. N.W. of Section 25 lying east of the Mississippi River.

"GRAND TOWER MINING,  
MANUFACTURING & TRANSP.  
COMPANY"  
SITE

[NOT TO SCALE]

