

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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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 El Dorado Commercial Historic District

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number Courthouse Square, buildings on portions of Main, Jefferson, Washington, Jackson, Cedar, & Locust Streets not for publication

city or town El Dorado vicinity

state Arkansas code AR county Union code 139 zip code 71731

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 for in 36 CFR 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.)

Catherine Matthews 5/8/03
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

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.)

Tina B. Norwood 5/14/03
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

4. National Park Service Certification

- I hereby certify that the 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:) _____

Gibson B. Beall
Signature of the Keeper

8/21/03
Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in count.)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal
- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Contributing	Noncontributing	
40	23	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
40	23	Total

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

Number of Contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 7

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

GOVERNMENT: Courthouse

GOVERNMENT: Post Office

COMMERCE: Department Store

COMMERCE: Financial Institution

COMMERCE: Business

SOCIAL: Meeting Hall

GOVERNMENT: Courthouse

GOVERNMENT: Post Office

COMMERCE: Department Store

COMMERCE: Financial Institution

COMMERCE: Business

SOCIAL: Meeting Hall

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

19th Century Vernacular Commercial

20th Century Vernacular Commercial

Classical Revival

Art Deco

foundation BRICK, CONCRETE

walls BRICK, STUCCO, CONCRETE, STONE

roof OTHER: tar built-up, asphalt

other

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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SUMMARY

The El Dorado Commercial Historic District consists of sixty-nine buildings and one monument situated on the principal streets and their arteries surrounding the four-story Classical Revival style Union County Courthouse. Of the total number of properties in the proposed historic district, forty, or 67% contribute to the historic significance of the district. Six buildings and a monument in the proposed district are individually listed on the National Register of Historic Places- Union County Courthouse and Confederate Monument, the Exchange Bank, Bank of Commerce, Masonic Hall, the Griffin Auto Company Building, and the Rialto Theater. Construction dates of the buildings in the district span the period from the late 19th century to the early 1950s. A majority (51%) of the buildings in the district were constructed in the 1920s, the period of El Dorado's most prolific growth. Only four buildings in the district are less than fifty years old.

ELABORATION

The El Dorado Commercial Historic District is composed of sixty-nine brick and masonry early 20th century buildings and one monument. Although seventeen of the buildings were constructed prior to 1920, the overwhelming appearance of the district derives from the thirty-six buildings constructed in the 1920s, the period during which El Dorado experienced a surge in population as a result of the discovery of oil nearby. The centerpiece of the district is the Union County Courthouse, constructed in 1927-28 (NR 06-30-83). The courthouse is a four-story Classical Revival style building of cut limestone block. Located on the southwest corner of the courthouse lawn, at the intersection of Main and Washington Streets, is the El Dorado Confederate Monument (NR 04-26-96). Although the Exchange Bank at 214 N. Washington is a nine-story building and the Murphy Building at 200 E. Jefferson is seven stories tall, the majority of the buildings are one and two story brick structures with simple ornamentation in corbelled masonry or cast concrete ornament. There are six buildings and one monument in the district previously listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Several of the commercial structures making up the district have been altered at storefront level, but most buildings retain their original appearance in the upper level. Extensive renovation efforts in much of the district have restored the appearance of the streetscape of El Dorado's downtown commercial district to near 1930 appearance, the year by which 76% of the buildings in district had been constructed.

Late 19th Century Buildings

The oldest building in the district is the Reeves Store at 116 N. Washington. Originally constructed in 1879, the building has been remodeled a number of times during the 103 year tenure of the Reeves Store. Its present brick façade is a conjectural renovation to its original appearance. The building at 117 E. Main Street was constructed c.1896, but its façade has also been reconstructed based on indications of its original appearance.

Early 20th Century Buildings: 1900 to 1920

Buildings at 111 and 115 E. Main are indicative of early twentieth-century commercial construction in El Dorado. These one-story brick buildings feature bands of brick corbelling in their parapets and are otherwise devoid of ornamentation. Similarly, buildings in the 100 blocks of E. Elm and N. Jefferson are brick vernacular versions of commercial construction in the first decades of the 1900s. The Bank of Commerce Building at 200 N. Washington was constructed in 1919. Its stylistic Neo-Classical details distinguish the building from the less ornate structures of this era.

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1920s

Thirty-six of the buildings and the one monument in the district were constructed in El Dorado's period of prolific growth, the 1920s. The significant number of buildings built in this decade reflects the historic character of the city's boom following the discovery of oil nearby in 1921. Constructed to serve an explosion of population, the buildings also represent and reflect various architectural styles contemporaneously popular nationwide. Venetian Gothic and Art Deco details characterize the Exchange Bank Building at 214 N. Washington. One of the best examples of the Art Deco style in Arkansas is the Masonic Building at 106/108 N. Washington. Classical Revival detailing denotes the Rialto Theater at 117 E. Cedar. Other buildings constructed in the 1920s are simple one and two-story brick structures, often with tapestry brick or tile decoration.

1930s-1940s

Construction commercial buildings dramatically slowed in the 1930s. The U.S. Post Office and Federal Building was constructed in 1931 and the corner of Jackson and Main Streets. The three-story brick and concrete building is Classical Revival in style and was constructed at a cost of \$383,000. Representative of the 1940s are two pockets of buildings on the 100 block of N. Jackson and the 300 block of E. Main Street. The buildings on E. Main Street feature storefronts covered in structural glass.

1950-1953

Construction of the Murphy Building at 200 N. Jefferson was begun in 1950 and completed in 1953. The six and ½ story building is an excellent example of commercial architecture in the post World War II era. A large room on the roof was constructed as a roof conference room and features walls of windows overlooking El Dorado's downtown.

After 1953

Only four structures in the El Dorado Commercial Historic District were constructed after 1953. The BancCorp South drive-through bank was built in the early 1960s. An annex to the Murphy Oil Building was constructed at 210 E. Elm in 1964. The two brick buildings known as Union Square at 220 E. Washington were constructed in the mid 1990s and the historic railroad car was located on the property at the time of the buildings' construction.

Non-Contributing Buildings

Twenty-three (23) buildings in the district are considered non-contributing. Of these four are not fifty years old. The remaining have had extensive alterations, disguising the buildings' ability to convey their historic appearance.

INTEGRITY

The buildings located in the El Dorado Commercial Historic District retain their integrity and sense of historic place, as they comprise the core of downtown El Dorado. The majority (67%) of the sixty-nine buildings and one monument retain many of their design characteristics, materials, and historic features, and convey the historic workmanship associated with each. In addition to the large number of buildings in the district which have been renovated and returned to near historic appearance in the last two decades of the twentieth century, an aggressive streetscape project has produced an ambience with benches, street art, plantings, lending a festive and inviting air to the streets surrounding the Union County Courthouse. The sense of time and place conveyed by the historic buildings in the El Dorado Commercial Historic District represent the rich and colorful history of the "City of Gold".

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** birthplace or grave of a historical figure of outstanding importance.
- 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.

Levels of Significance (local, state, national)

Local

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

COMMUNITY PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

COMMERCE

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1879-1953

Significant Dates

N/A

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation (Complete if Criterion D is marked)

N/A

Architect/Builder

George R. Mann & Howard Stern

Charles Watt, Kolben, Hunter & Boyd

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

9. Major Bibliographical 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:

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SUMMARY

El Dorado, Arkansas, lies in the south central area of the state, halfway between the Mississippi River and Texas. The city is encircled by far-reaching forests of pine and hardwoods, and is within sight of the Louisiana border. A quiet county seat for three-quarters of a century, El Dorado saw the prophecy of its name realized in 1921 when oil gushed from a well drilled a mile to the west of the city. Beginning in 1921, the town dramatically changed, becoming the "oil capital" of Arkansas. Although a town existed prior to the 1921 discovery of oil, a majority of the sixty-nine buildings and one object in the El Dorado Commercial Historic District reflect the intense growth of the area during the prosperity of the 1920s. The centerpiece of the historic district is the imposing four-story Union County Courthouse, constructed in 1928 surrounded by four thoroughfares lined with commercial buildings. The wealth of El Dorado's oil boom is reflected in these buildings, comprising portions of thirteen blocks in the core of the city's historic commercial and governmental center.

Elaboration

The El Dorado Commercial Historic District is comprised of sixty-nine buildings and one monument in the core of the city's downtown. Six properties in the district were previously listed on the National Register of Historic Places: Union County Courthouse (NR 6-30-83) and El Dorado Confederate Monument on its grounds (NR 04-26-96); the Masonic Temple at 106-108 North Washington (NR 04-12-01); the Exchange Bank Building at 200 N. Washington (NR 12-16-86); the Bank of Commerce Building at 214 N. Washington (NR 03-25-82); the Rialto Theater at 113 E. Cedar (NR 08-21-86); and the Griffin Auto Company Building at 117 E. Locust (NR 05-25-01). The district is strong in its historic presentation with forty-seven (47) or 67% of its properties contributing to the significance of the area.

Facing the 1928 Union County Courthouse, a four-story Classical Revival style structure situated on a full block in the center of downtown, the El Dorado Commercial Historic District includes sixty-nine buildings and one monument on portions of thirteen blocks surrounding and in the vicinity of the courthouse. Commercial buildings lining the streets around the courthouse are substantial brick structures, with the majority reflecting the period of El Dorado's most prolific growth following the discovery of oil nearby in 1921.

El Dorado, nicknamed the "oil capital of Arkansas" and the "City of Gold", is the largest urban area in south central Arkansas. Though its reputation and fame is linked to the discovery of vast petroleum resources in the area during the 1920s, the city's history began long before the first derrick was erected.

Most historical accounts of the land that became Union County, Arkansas, begin November 1541, when, according to local legends, famed Spanish explorer Hernando de Soto, accompanied by more than 500 men, marched into the area and established camp on a hill not far from what is now El Dorado. It was not until 1803 that the United States purchased Louisiana from the French, subsequently dividing it into two territories, Orleans and Louisiana. In 1812, the Louisiana Territory was reorganized as the Territory of Missouri of which what is now Arkansas was a part. The United States Congress named Arkansas a territory in 1819. In 1829, Union County was formed. The county's boundaries were vastly larger than the current ones, defined in 1852.

Although the bulk of the city's built environment derives from the period following discovery of oil in 1921, El Dorado had enjoyed a long, though modest history before that time. According to local folklore, El Dorado was founded around 1830 by Virginia-born Matthew F. Rainey whose wagon broke down in the area. Unable to travel any further, Rainey was forced to sell his goods on the spot. It is said that Rainey was so impressed by the local farmers' eagerness to buy that he sent for more goods and set up a store. Rainey was generally regarded as El Dorado's first citizen and the town's first businessman.

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Most historical accounts define 1843 as the year that El Dorado was formally established. In August of that year, a county election was held to choose three men to serve as commissioners responsible for the selection of a centrally located place as the county seat. Earlier, Camden, a town fifty miles north, had served as a county seat and court was held in a local home there. By October 1843, the commissioners recommended their favored choice for a new centrally located county seat. It was 160 acres of land owned by Matthew Rainey. He deeded the 160 acres of land to the county, retaining four acres on which his cabin stood. Rainey recognized that the development of the town would be advantageous to his business interests. For the county, this 160 acre site was located on the east-west trail between Arkansas Post and Texarkana and the north-south route between central Arkansas and Louisiana. Of equal importance was the site's proximity to a major regional transportation artery, the Ouachita River.

The commissioners were authorized not only to select a site, but to "lay off into town lots the county site selected and to construct the necessary public buildings". The men were also granted the right to sell some town lots to cover the expense of getting the town into habitable condition. The 1843 plat of El Dorado was laid out in a grid fashion. The original town of El Dorado consisted of forty-nine lots; of these twenty-four encircled the courthouse square in successively larger rings. In 1844, the first courthouse, for which the construction contract called for only a roof and four walls, was built at a cost of two hundred dollars.

The 160 acre town site seemed imposing in 1845, but El Dorado was a "bare suggestion of a village" with few substantial buildings. In response to a growing population in 1846, \$12,000 was allocated to build a new courthouse.

In the mid nineteenth century, El Dorado was essentially an agricultural community settled primarily by individuals who had migrated from Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi and the Carolinas, with an economic base in farming and to a lesser degree lumber operations. Popular crops included cotton, corn, sweet potatoes and peanuts. Timber, before the discovery of oil, was the county's most plentiful resource with forests of yellow pine, oak, gum and other hardwoods available.

During the 1850s, El Dorado was a "well-to-do town becoming the cultural as well as the business center of the county." The modest prosperity of the town was evidenced by construction of homes and organization of local churches. A private school had been established in 1845 and a local newspaper, the *El Dorado Union*, had been published as early as 1849. Although no battles were fought in El Dorado or Union County during the Civil War, records indicate 1500 men volunteered for the Confederate cause, two-thirds of which never returned. Like so much of the beleaguered post-Civil War South, El Dorado was besieged by carpetbaggers and jayhawkers. Some efforts were made by the government to allay the citizens' anxieties such as the establishment of a military camp on the northern edge of the town for federal soldiers relocating to the area. It was many years before normalcy returned to Union County and county government could rid itself of the carpetbag exploiters.

The most significant event in latter years of the nineteenth century was the arrival of the railroad in 1891. Until the rail lines reached El Dorado, most goods were shipped by steamboat to the Ouachita River, and hauled to El Dorado by wagon. The railroad suddenly made the large marketplaces of Memphis, St. Louis and New Orleans easily accessible.

El Dorado's business district, at the beginning of the twentieth century, consisted of a number of general stores which catered to area farmers, offering agricultural products as well as staple and fancy groceries. The oldest extant building in the district is the Reeves Building at 116 N. Washington. The building, although remodeled a number of times, was constructed in 1879 and served the community as a general goods store, later a department store, and was owned and operated by members of the Reeves family until 1982.

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As described in a publication entitled "El Dorado and Her Advantages", in the early years of the twentieth century, the town was a bustling commercial center with a sound moral character. The publication stated, "There are no saloons to entice the young man from his studies, no dancing halls to divert the minds of young ladies from their work, no gambling dens to corrupt the morals of the boys. The moral and religious tone of the town is healthy....we have a good town full of good people, good churches, good business advantages, and a good school." Another record of El Dorado by resident Violet McRae Giller in 1910 reported, "El Dorado was a very young town, with its small population in the process of accepting running water, electricity and sidewalks; yet there was an aristocratic vein running through its citizenry (with) the accent of Eastern schooling and the habit of intellectual and artistic pursuits."

Cultural life in early twentieth century El Dorado, Arkansas, was active with ladies' organizations such as the "Self-Culture Club" and "Musical Coterie of El Dorado". El Dorado in the early years of the twentieth century enjoyed many benefits attributable to its considerable number of wealthy citizens, whose wealth was amassed before the oil boom of the 1920s. Among these benefits were an arts center, library, auditorium and health care facilities. Many of the prosperous citizens constructed substantial homes which displayed their stature in the community. A few of these early homes still stand close to the downtown commercial district such as the Rainey-Newton House at 510 Jackson Street (NR 11-06-74).

Although the arrival of the railroad in 1891 signified the greatest growth of the city to date, it was the discovery of oil at the Busey Well on January 10, 1921, that caused startling and immediate change in the peaceful town of El Dorado. There had been oil-related activity in the area as early as 1914 when the first oil leases in Union County were sold for ten cents an acre. Most of the early oil production efforts were costly and unproductive.

The Busey Well, credited with securing El Dorado's place of prominence in American oil production was located two miles west of town. The well was financed by Dr. Samuel T. Busey and a consortium of local investors. A physician turned geologist, Busey and his wife arrived in El Dorado in late 1920, purchased a local hotel and made an agreement to resume drilling in an exploratory well that had been abandoned. Dr. Busey was convinced there was oil in the well. On Monday, January 10, 1921, when the well had been drilled to 2,233 feet, a small crowd of eager spectators gathered at the rig. Drilling had ceased and bailing operations had begun to try to bring in the well. In the late afternoon, as the bailer was being lifted from its sixth trip into the deep hole, a rumble from deep in the well was heard. The crowd and drilling crew moved back as the rumbling grew in intensity, shaking the derrick and the ground around it. Suddenly with a deafening roar, "a thick black column" of gas and oil and water shot out of the well drenching the crowd of spectators. The wind caught the spray of oil and water and spread it over the countryside to the town of El Dorado where clothes on Monday's wash lines dripped with oil. The black column of oil gushing through the derrick on the hill southwest of town was viewed by many citizens in El Dorado. The next morning unscheduled trains began to arrive in El Dorado carrying passengers who hurried off and disappeared into the town to seek their fortune. The *Arkansas Gazette* announced that five special trains would begin to run daily from Little Rock to El Dorado. Twenty-two trains a day were soon running in and out of El Dorado. The state legislature, meeting in regular session at Little Rock, announced plans for a special legislative railway excursion to the new oil well. Within six days of the discovery of oil at the Busey Well, an air service was established between El Dorado and Shreveport, Louisiana.

The petroleum industry was still fledgling and there was little technical sophistication so that significant amounts of oil and gas were lost. The El Dorado oil boom, which was to inalterably change the city's future, began within forty-eight hours after the Busey well blew in. As described in one account, "...the streets...of the town were thronged with a seething mass of conglomerate humanity...diamonds and costly furs rubbed elbows with oil-spotted khaki..." The town was inundated with people who hurried to south Arkansas to find their fortune. El Dorado, Arkansas, became the destination of oil promoters, lease hounds, swindlers, beggars, prostitutes, experienced oil workers, and young men and women looking for a life off the farm. The rush of population overwhelmed El Dorado. Hotels in the town were taxed beyond capacity. The newly formed Chamber of Commerce appealed to citizens to provide lodging for the vast influx of people. Barber chairs for sleeping were rented for \$2 a night and in desperation

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some people took over the Presbyterian Cemetery as a place to sleep. Tents and shacks sprang up overnight throughout town. Fires ravaged the city of several occasions and crime ran rampant. El Dorado's civic and political leaders were at a loss as to how to handle the situation at first, but eventually dealt with most of the problems that confronted them. They were aided in their efforts by the massive influx of capital drawn by the oil. In the span of just four years, El Dorado went from a town where chaos reigned and only four roads were paved to a cosmopolitan city filled with sprawling homes, a thriving business community, modern conveniences (including indoor plumbing and electricity in most homes and businesses), and an active social calendar, which included everything from opera to an amusement park.

At the end of the summer in 1921 more than 275 wells had been completed within a fifteen mile radius of the city. Rapid population growth from less than three thousand to over 15,000 occurred in less than two years. In 1923 El Dorado boasted of 63 restaurants, 23 doctors, 32 hotels, 48 law firms, 59 oil companies, 13 independent oil investors, 13 oil operators and 22 oil production companies. Also listed in the 1923 City Directory were 84 groceries and countless boarding houses. By 1925 the population of El Dorado was recorded at over 30,000.

The excessive growth rapidly necessitated the development of an improved street system and central business district with an organized municipal administration and facilities. As the initial frenzy of the 1921 oil boom settled, the buildings in the business district surrounding the Union County Courthouse began to be rebuilt, many due to fire. Commercial construction extended away from the square along Washington, Elm, Main and Jefferson Streets. Union County's first skyscraper was the eight story Exchange Building at 214 N. Washington, constructed in 1927. A new Union County courthouse was constructed in 1927-28, in part, to accommodate the large volume of deed and title transactions related to the oil boom. Although not located in the historic district boundaries, a new Art Deco style Municipal Building was constructed in 1927 at 204 N. West Avenue (NR 06-30-83). A three story United States Post Office and Federal building south of the courthouse square was constructed in 1931. Site selection of the city hall, county courthouse and the federal building was encouraged by a prominent citizen Joe K. Mahony who had an urban design vision for El Dorado. He wanted these buildings constructed along an axis to underscore their interrelated functions. Although rarely noticed today, Mr. Mahony's axial placement of these three important public buildings was realized.

According to census records, the population of El Dorado stabilized at 16,000 in 1930 from a recorded high of 30,000 in 1925. El Dorado's economy faltered only briefly during the Great Depression of the 1930s and many men moved on to east Texas where oil had been discovered. Unlike much of the nation, El Dorado's economy was largely stable through the 1930s with a number of industries such as oil refineries, gasoline plants, cottons gins, bottling works and others remaining open for business during the national economic crises.

The 1940s were marked by industrial growth in El Dorado, notably the expansion of both the Root Petroleum and the Lion Oil Company refineries. Construction of headquarters for the Murphy Oil began in 1950 and an annex to the building constructed in 1964.

The economic base of El Dorado still relies on oil and timber and poultry production and chemical plants have added to the area's economic stability. The city's boundaries continue to expand. The downtown business district has experienced a massive renaissance with numerous restorations and renovations of the historic buildings. Occupancy rates in El Dorado's commercial core are high and the downtown remains an active center of government and commerce.

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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The historic commercial district in downtown El Dorado remains an intact ensemble of early twentieth century commercial buildings. Architectural styles such as Classical Revival and Art Deco highlight this collection of vernacular commercial buildings. The El Dorado Commercial Historic District is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under **Criterion A** for its representation of the rapid growth and development of the city's downtown in the 1920s as a result of the discovery of oil nearby, and under **Criterion C** because of the significant linkage of historic resources that embody distinctive characteristics of particular architectural styles and periods of construction.

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UTMS

	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	15	531373270	3674384 530
2	15	53129670	3674755 975
3	15	53152400	3674755 975
4	15	531683 95	3674679 900
5	15	531692 90	3674532 730
6	15	531524 420	6374440 3674535

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The boundaries of the El Dorado Commercial Historic District begin at the intersection of N. Cleveland and Oak Streets where it runs east along the center line of Oak Street to the intersection with N. Washington Street. At N. Washington and Oak Streets, the boundary runs south on N. Washington ½ block to the alley north of the 100 block of Elm Street (block 2) and runs east along the alley to its intersection with N. Jefferson Street. At this juncture, the boundary runs north on N. Jefferson Street to its intersection with Elm Street. At N. Jefferson and Elm Streets, the boundary runs east to its intersection with Hill Street where it turns and runs south along Hill to its intersection with E. Main Street. At Hill and E. Main Street, the boundary turns and runs east along E. Main Street to its intersection with N. Jackson Street where it runs north along N. Jackson Street to the intersection with Elm Street. Here the boundary runs east along Elm Street to the rear (east) property lines of buildings in the 100 block of N. Jackson Street. The boundary runs south along these rear property lines, across E. Main Street then continues south to its intersection with Cedar Street. At Cedar Street the boundary turns and runs west along the center line of Cedar Street to its intersection with Hill. At Hill and Cedar Streets, the boundary turns and runs south on Hill Street to the rear property line of the building located at 117 E. Locust. At this point the boundary turns and runs west to its intersection with S. Jefferson Street. At S. Jefferson Street, the boundary turns and runs north along the center line of S. Jefferson Street to its intersection with Locust Street. At Locust and S. Jefferson Streets, the boundary turns and runs west along Locust Street to its intersection with S. Washington Street. At this point the boundary turns and runs north along S. Washington Street to its intersection with Main Street where it turns and runs one block west along W. Main Street to Cleveland Street where it turns and runs due north along the center line of Cleveland Street to the point of beginning at Cleveland and Oak Streets.

LEGAL BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The El Dorado Commercial Historic District encompasses Block 1, the south ½ of Block 2, Block 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 15, 18, 19, 20, 22, 23, 40 of the Original City of El Dorado.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY El Dorado Commercial Historic District
NAME:

MULTIPLE
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: ARKANSAS, Union

DATE RECEIVED: 7/08/03 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 7/23/03
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 8/08/03 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 8/22/03
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 03000773

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 8/21/03 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

Entered in the
National Register

RECOM./CRITERIA _____

REVIEWER _____ DISCIPLINE _____

TELEPHONE _____ DATE _____

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



1. Union County Courthouse
EL Dorado Commercial Historic District
2. EL Dorado, Union City.
3. photo By Sandra Taylor Smith
4. 42303
5. NEGATIVE AT AHOOP
6. view Looking NE northEAST
7. photo # 1



1. 117, 115, 111, 105, 103, 101 E. MAIN ST.
EL DORADO Commercial Historic District
2. EL DORADO, Union City,
3. Photo By Sandra Taylor Smith
4. 4-23-03
5. negative At AHPP
6. View looking west
7. Photo # 2



1. 101, 103, 105, 111 E. MAIN St.
EL Dorado Commercial Historic District
2. EL Dorado, Union Cty.
3. photo By Sandra Taylor Smith
4. 42303
5. NEGATIVE AT AHPP
6. view looking east
7. photo #3



1. 305, 307-09, 311, 313-15 E. MAIN
EL Dorado Commercial Historic District
2. EL Dorado, Union Cty.
3. photo by Sandra Taylor Smith
4. 423-03
5. negative at AMOP
6. view looking Southeast
7. photo #4



MASONIC TEMPLE

FIRST FINANCIAL

1. 104, 106-08, 116 N. Washington
EL DORADO Commercial Historic District
2. EL DORADO, Union City.
3. photo by Sandra Taylor Smith
4. 423-03
5. negative at AHOP
6. view Looking northwest
7. photo # 5



Jefferson St BOOKS

STOP
4-WAY

Welcome to
177
Historic
Vermont
Vermont
Vermont

THREE
HOUR
PARKING

1. 119, 115, 113, 111 N. Jefferson
EL Dorado Commercial Historic District
2. EL Dorado, Union City.
3. photo by Sandra Taylor Smith
4. 42303
5. negative at AHPD
6. view looking southeast
7. photo # 6



1. 101, 103, 105, 111, 115, 117 E. MAIN
EL DORADO Commercial Historic District
2. EL DORADO, Union City.
3. photo by Sandra Taylor Smith
4. 42303
5. NEGATIVE AT AHPP
6. view Looking Southeast
7. photo # 7



STOP

JEWELERS

JEWELERS

1. Murphy Oil Building - 200 N. Jefferson
EL Dorado Commercial Historic District
2. EL Dorado, Union City.
3. photo by Sandra Taylor Smith
4. 4-23-03
5. negative at AHP
6. view looking northeast
7. photo #8



FIRST FINANCIAL

E
E
E
E

LAF
R
PH

Welcome to
The University of
Alabama at
Tuscaloosa

U.S. MAIL
U.S. POSTAGE

1. 200, 202-04, 208, 214 N. Washington
EL Dorado Commercial Historic District
2. EL Dorado, Union City.
3. photo By Sandra Taylor Smith
4. 4-23-03
5. NEGATIVE AT AHPP
6. View Looking north
7. photo # 9



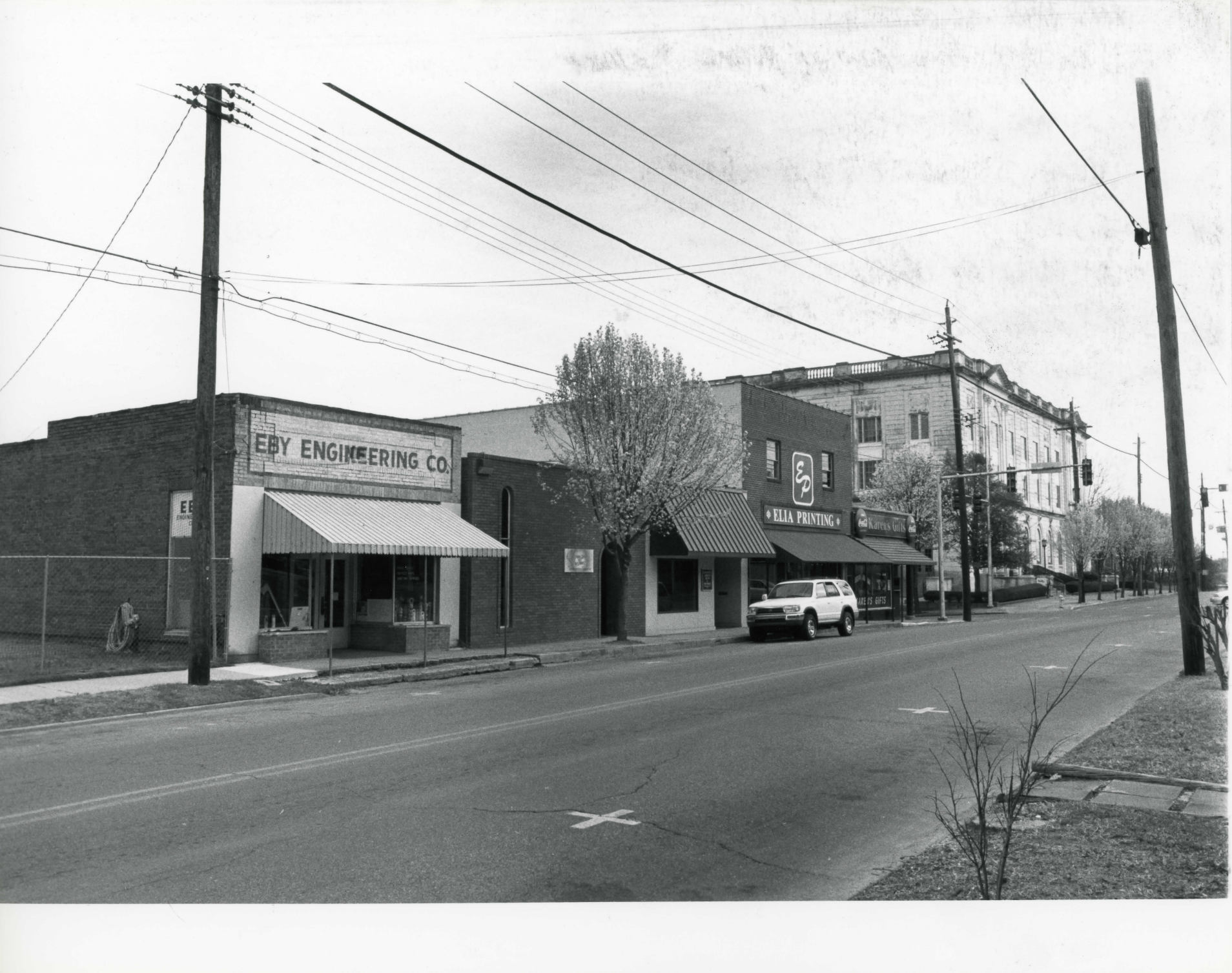
FRIBBY
ic
NO

FURNITURE CO.

GLITTER 'N' TRINKETS
Home Decor, Jewelry & More

S Cleveland

1. 114, 112 W. MAIN
EL Dorado Commercial Historic District
2. EL Dorado, Union City.
3. Photo By Sandra Taylor Smith
4. 4-23-03
5. NEGATIVE AT AHPP
6. View Looking north EAST
7. photo # 10



EBY ENGINEERING CO.

EE
ENGINEERING
CO.

ELIA PRINTING

WE DO GIFTS

1. 109, 107, 105, 103, 101 N Jackson
EL DORADO Commercial Historic District
2. EL DORADO, Union Cty.
3. photo by Sacha Taylor Smith
4. 423-03
5. negative at AHDP
6. view looking southeast
7. photo # 11



The Mast

HILL'S

Coca-Cola

68847 900

LIVE ENTERTAINMENT

1. 201, 203, 205, 207, 209, 211 Cedar St.
EL DORADO Commercial Historic District
2. EL DORADO, Union Ch.
3. Photo By Sandra Taylor Smith
4. 423-03
5. NEGATIVE AT A110P
6. View Looking Southeast
7. Photo # 12



1. 107, 113 Cedar St.
EL Dorado Commercial Historic District
2. EL Dorado, Union City.
3. photo by Sandra Taylor Smith
4. 423-03
5. Negative at AHP
6. View Looking Southeast
7. photo # 13



1. 215 S. Washington
EL Dorado Commercial Historic District
2. EL Dorado, Union Co.
3. photo by Sandra Taylor Smith
4. 423-03
5. negative at AHPP
6. view looking north east
7. photo # 14



1. 117 Locust - Griffin Auto Bldg.
EL Dorado Commercial Historic District
2. EL Dorado, Union City
3. photo by Sandra Taylor Smith
4. 423-03
5. negative at AHPP
6. view Looking Southeast
7. photo #15



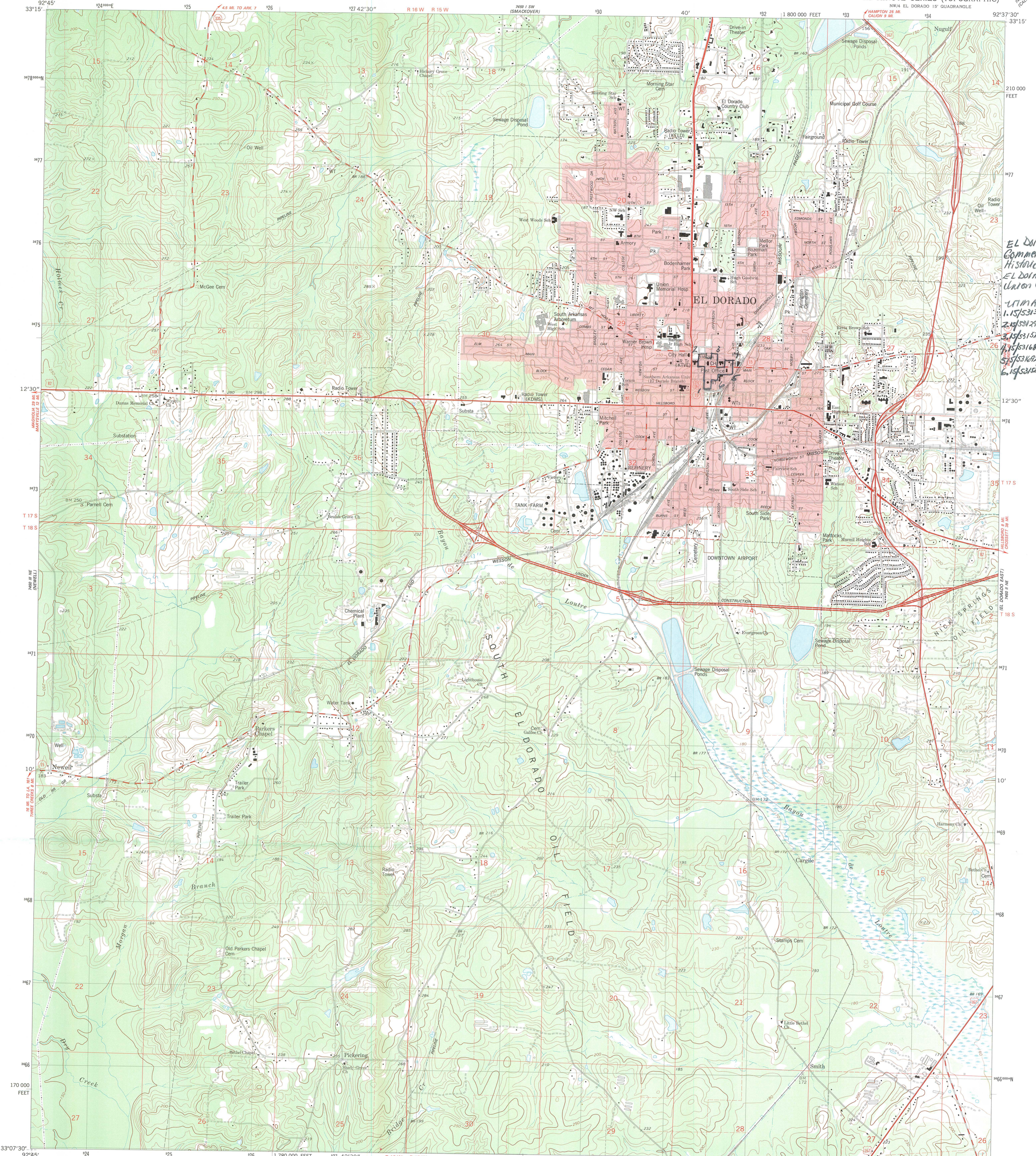
WILSON
KITCHEN SUPPLY

S Hill
E Locust

WILSON

WILSON

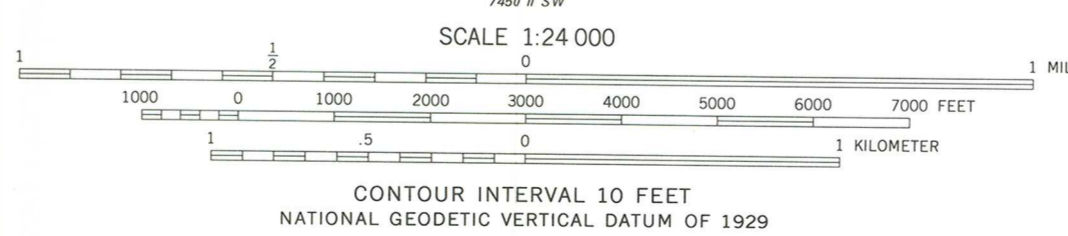
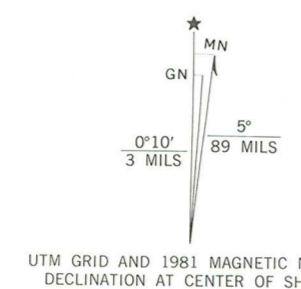
1. 216, 218 S. Hill St.
EL Dorado Commercial Historic District
2. EL Dorado, Union Cty.
3. Photo By Sandra Taylor Smith
4. 423-03
5. Negative At AHPP
6. view Looking north west
7. Photo # 16



*EL DORADO
Commercial
Historic District
EL DORADO,
Union City, AR*

*UTM Reference:
11SJS312735049384
21SJS312735049384
31SJS312735049384
41SJS312735049384
51SJS312735049384
61SJS312735049384*

Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey
Control by USGS and NOS/NOAA
Topography by photogrammetric methods from aerial photographs
taken 1976. Field checked 1978. Map edited 1981
Projection and 10,000-foot grid ticks: Arkansas coordinate
system, south zone (Lambert conformal conic)
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid, zone 15
1927 North American Datum
To place on the predicted North American Datum 1983
move the projection lines 11 meters south and
15 meters east as shown by dashed corner ticks
Red tint indicates areas in which only landmark buildings are shown
Fine red dashed lines indicate selected fence and field lines where
generally visible on aerial photographs. This information is unchecked



ROAD CLASSIFICATION

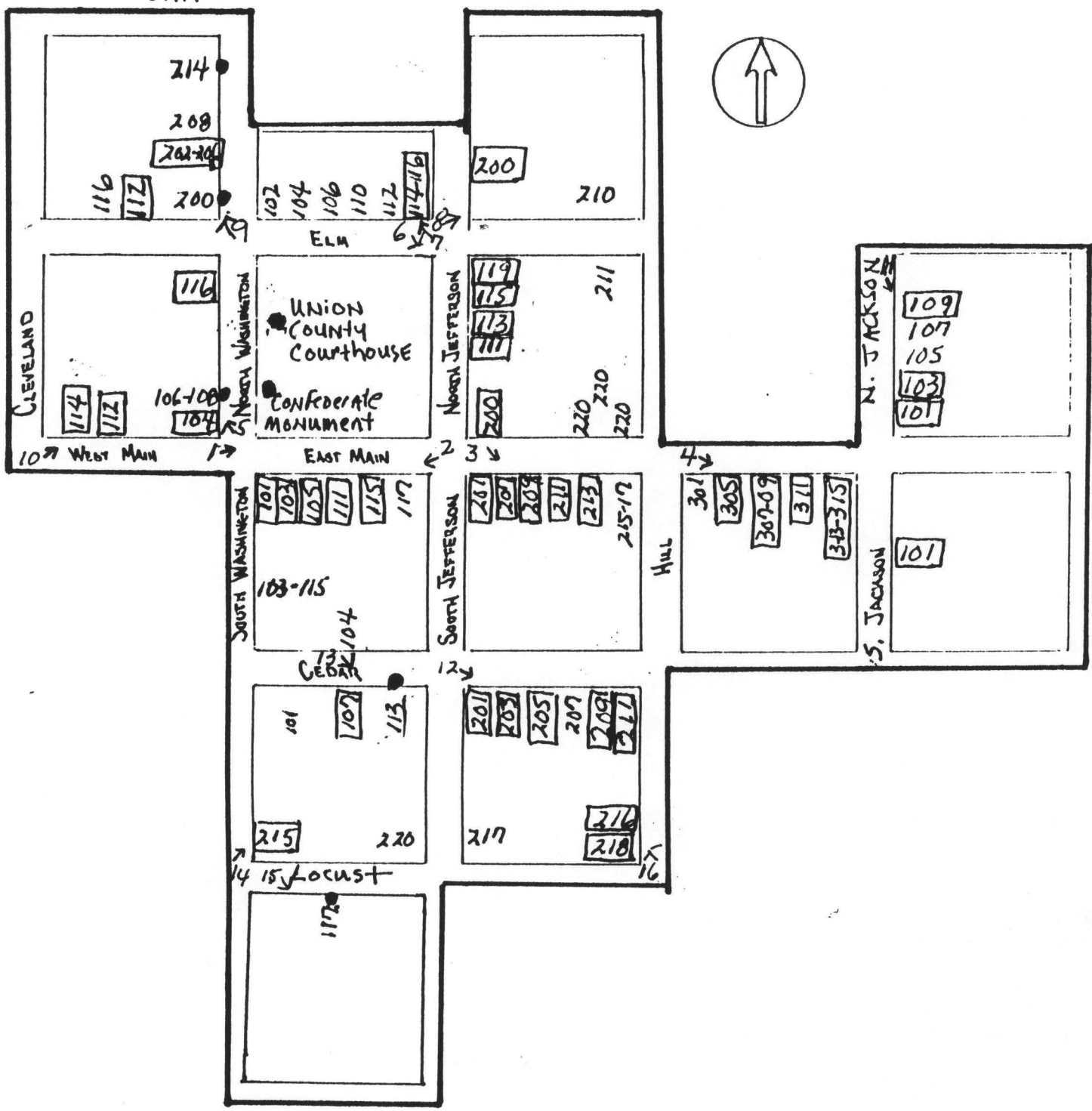
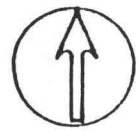
Primary highway, hard surface	Light-duty road, hard or improved surface
Secondary highway, hard surface	Unimproved road
Interstate Route	U. S. Route
	State Route



THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
FOR SALE BY U. S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, DENVER, COLORADO 80225, OR RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092
AND ARKANSAS GEOLOGICAL COMMISSION, LITTLE ROCK, ARKANSAS 72204
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

EL DORADO WEST, ARK.
NW/4 EL DORADO 15' QUADRANGLE
33092-B6-TF-024

OAK



El Dorado Commercial Historic District
 El Dorado, Union County, Arkansas

NR Listed ●
 Contributing □



The Department of Arkansas Heritage

Mike Huckabee, Governor
Cathie Matthews, Director

Arkansas Arts Council

▪

Arkansas Natural Heritage
Commission

▪

Historic Arkansas Museum

▪

Delta Cultural Center

▪

Old State House Museum



Arkansas Historic Preservation Program

1500 Tower Building
323 Center Street

Little Rock, AR 72201

(501)324-9880

fax: (501)324-9184

tdd: (501)324-9811

e-mail:

info@arkansaspreservation.org

website:

www.arkansaspreservation.org

8 May 2003

John S. Sorenson, FPO
U.S. Postal Service, Room 4320
Customer Service Facilities
475 L'Enfant Plaza
Washington, DC 20260-6235

RE: El Dorado Commercial Historic District – El Dorado, Union County

Dear Mr. Sorenson:

We are enclosing for your review the nomination of the above-referenced property. The Arkansas Historic Preservation Program has complied with all applicable nominating procedures and notification requirements in the nomination process.

If you approve of the nomination, please sign the cover sheet and forward the nomination to Ms. Carol Shull, Chief of Registration, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, National Register of Historic Places, National Park Service, 8th Floor, 1201 Eye Street NW, Washington, DC 20005, to the attention of Mr. Dan Vivian (202-354-2252).

Thank you for your consideration in this matter.

Sincerely,

Cathie Matthews,
State Historic Preservation Officer

CM:wp

Enclosures

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July 1, 2003

Cathie Mathews
State Historic Preservation Officer
The Department of Arkansas Heritage
1500 Tower Building
323 Center Street
Little Rock, AR 72201

RE: El Dorado Commercial Historic District

Dear Ms. Mathews;

I truly regret my delay in responding to you. Hopefully, my voice mail told you I have been on extensive business travel. I have always supported nominations and as you can see I signed this one on May 14, 2003. Whenever I receive nomination notices or application packages, I look to see what information I have on the applicable postal facility. In this case, I found information that conflicted with some of the information provided by your consultant and wanted to provide you with the information we have in our national postal database.

Our database shows that the land for the El Dorado Post Office (101 S. Jackson Avenue), was purchased in April 1922 for \$95,954. The building construction was completed in November 1931 for a cost of \$1,028,791 (I would be interested in knowing where the \$383,000.00 cost came from that's listed on Section 7 page 2). The facility contains three elevators, as well as look out galleries for the postal Inspection Service. This facility would have been managed by General Services Administration (GSA) until the creation of the US Postal Service (USPS) in 1971. In 1972, GSA transferred titled to the USPS of all properties in which the USPS occupied 55% or more of the interior space. Our database states that there is mixed tenancy, which means we do, or have, outleased some of the space. This facility is listed as a postal Station, which means that the El Dorado Post Office Officer-in-Charge reports to a postmaster in the larger township or city.

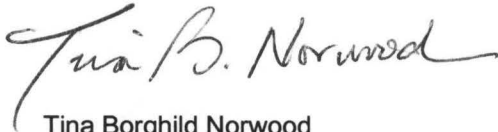
Compared to applications I have received in the past, I found this one more difficult to read, especially in reference to the postal facility. The confederate monument is not listed as a structure or object (No. 5), though the text states it is listed on the National Register. The reference to the "US Post Office and Federal Building," (Section 7, page 2) lead me to question if the postal operations were located in the Courthouse. I would be interested to know where the researcher obtained the information that the post office is also named the Federal Building. If true, it would mean that the courts were to be originally located in this facility (consistent in the fact that postal land was already purchased when the court house was built in 1928). It would appear that sometime between 1922 and 1928 a decision was made to provide a dedicated building for the judges, but the name may not have been changed in some documents.

Also, a list of the photographs indicating what facilities are shown in each (by name/owner and street address) is very helpful when provided in the text. The application currently provides a vicinity map indicating the photograph directions and numbers, but the numbers are not marked on the photographs. The vicinity map and photographs only provide street numbers, not building name/description. Since I could not find the street address of the post office in the application, I had to first look up the address in our database and then pane through the photographs to identify the post office (last building in one of the photographs). I have enclosed a CD with a scanned photograph of the post office taken in 1938 that may be of interest.

These are really minor details in the application. Since I do not wish to further delay the submittal of this application, I leave it to you to decide on whether to revise the text or not. Alternatively, please consider including this letter in your application so that this new information is included.

I appreciate your time and attention to these details and questions. Please let me know if you have any questions or need additional information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Tina B. Norwood". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name.

Tina Borghild Norwood
Postal Preservation
Facilities Headquarters

cc: Kathy Bjurman, Facilities Historic Preservation Coordinator, Dallas FSO



The Department of Arkansas Heritage

Mike Huckabee, Governor
Cathie Matthews, Director

Arkansas Arts Council

Arkansas Natural Heritage
Commission

Historic Arkansas Museum

Delta Cultural Center

Old State House Museum



Arkansas Historic Preservation Program

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tdd: (501)324-9811

e-mail:

info@arkansaspreservation.org

website:

www.arkansaspreservation.org

3 July 2003

Carol D. Shull
Chief of Registration
United States Department of the Interior
National Register of Historic Places
National Park Service
8th Floor
1201 Eye Street, NW
Washington, DC 20005

RE: El Dorado Commercial Historic District

Dear Carol:

We are enclosing for your review the nomination of the above-referenced property. The Arkansas Historic Preservation Program has complied with all applicable nominating procedures and notification requirements in the nomination process.

In regard to Federal Preservation Officer Tina Norwood's letter dated 1 July 2003, we are preparing a response and will forward a copy for your records.

Thank you for your consideration in this matter.

Sincerely,

Cathie Matthews,
State Historic Preservation Officer

CM:wp

Enclosures

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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 5 Page 1

The revised resource count for the El Dorado Commercial Historic District is as follows.

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>37</u>	<u>24</u>	buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
<u>37</u>	<u>24</u>	Total

In addition, the following buildings within the district are individually listed and are not included in the C/NC counts above:

Union County Courthouse on Union Square – Listed on June 30, 1983.

El Dorado Confederate Monument on the Union County Courthouse grounds – Listed on April 26, 1996.

Masonic Temple at 106-108 North Washington – Listed on April 12, 2001.

Exchange Bank Building at 200 N. Washington – Listed on December 16, 1986.

Bank of Commerce Building at 214 N. Washington – Listed on March 25, 1982.

Rialto Theater at 113 E. Cedar – Listed on August 21, 1986.

Griffin Auto Company Building at 117 E. Locust – Listed on May 25, 2001.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1

The purpose of this additional documentation is to update the resource counts of the nomination and to change the Contributing/Non-Contributing status of three buildings in the district.

- 1) *Davis-James Building* (202 N. Washington, Site #UN0037) – Since the original nomination was completed and approved, additional information has been submitted that indicates that the Davis-James Building was completely renovated in the 1980s. The façade was also completely changed at the same time. Due to the recent date of the current façade, the Davis-James Building should be considered non-contributing.
- 2) *B. W. Reeves & Company Building* (116 N. Washington, Site #UN0005) – As with the Davis-James Building, since the original nomination was completed and approved, additional information has been submitted that indicates that the façade of the B. W. Reeves & Company Building was redone after 1984 and before 2002. Due to the recent date of the current façade, the B. W. Reeves & Company Building should be considered non-contributing.
- 3) *Empire Building* (102 E. Elm, Site #UN0008) – In the original nomination for the El Dorado Commercial Historic District, the Empire Building was considered to be a non-contributing resource. At the time, a front façade of stucco, stone veneer, and tile, which had been added in the late 1960s, obscured the original architectural detail of the building. Since the time that the nomination was completed and approved, the late 1960s façade was removed through a Slipcover Removal Grant through Main Street Arkansas, exposing the original brick façade and wood-frame windows. As a result, the Empire Building should be considered contributing.
- 4) *Warren Building #1* (218 S. Hill, Site #UN0054) and *Warren Building #2* (216 S. Hill, Site #UN0055) – Both of these buildings were demolished in September 2007.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTATION

PROPERTY NAME: El Dorado Commercial Historic District

MULTIPLE NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: ARKANSAS, Union

DATE RECEIVED: 4/09/08 DATE OF PENDING LIST:
DATE OF 16TH DAY: DATE OF 45TH DAY: 5/23/08
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 03000773

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 _____DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

additional Documentation Accepted

RECOM./CRITERIA *Accept*

REVIEWER *Elson Beall*

DISCIPLINE *History*

TELEPHONE _____

DATE *5.20.08*

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.



EMPIRE BUILDING

UNION COUNTY, AR

RALPH S. WILCOX

SEPTEMBER 2007

ARKANSAS HISTORIC PRESERVATION PROGRAM, LITTLE ROCK, AR
SOUTH AND WEST FACADES, LOOKING NORTHEAST



The Department of
**Arkansas
Heritage**

Mike Beebe
Governor

Cathie Matthews
Director

Arkansas Arts Council

*

Arkansas Natural Heritage
Commission

*

Delta Cultural Center

*

Historic Arkansas Museum

*

Mosaic Templars
Cultural Center

*

Old State House Museum



Arkansas Historic
Preservation Program

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fax: (501) 324-9184
tdd: (501) 324-9811

e-mail:

info@arkansaspreservation.org

website:

www.arkansaspreservation.org

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March 14, 2008

Dr. Janet Matthews
Chief of Registration
United States Department of the Interior
National Register of Historic Places
National Park Service
8th Floor
1201 Eye Street, NW
Washington, DC 20005



RE: El Dorado Commercial Historic District Additional
Documentation – El Dorado, Union County, Arkansas

Dear Dr. Matthews:

We are enclosing for your review the above-referenced nomination. The Arkansas Historic Preservation Program has complied with all applicable nominating procedures and notification requirements in the nomination process.

If you need further information, please call Ralph S. Wilcox of my staff at (501) 324-9787. Thank you for your cooperation in this matter.

Sincerely,

Cathie Matthews
State Historic Preservation Officer

CM:rsw

Enclosure