

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.



historic name Tyronza Commercial Historic District

other names/site number Site # PO0078

2. Location

street & number S. Main Street bounded on the north by Old U.S. Highway 63 and on the south by Mullins Street ☐ not for publication

city or town Tyronza ☐ vicinity

state Arkansas code AR county Poinsett code 111 zip code 72386

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.)

Carrie Shacter
Signature of certifying official/Title

7/6/10
Date

Arkansas Historic Preservation Program
State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of 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:) _____

Joe J. [Signature]
Signature of the Keeper

7/29/2010
Date of Action

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(s)
☒ district
☐ site
☐ structure
☐ object

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
17	7	buildings
1 (park)	5 (vacant lots)	Sites
		structures
		objects
18	12	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)

COMMERCE/TRADE- Specialty Store; Financial
Institution; Department Store; Professional; Restaurant

GOVERNMENT- City Hall; Post Office

AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE- Granary; Silo;
Storage Site

LANDSCAPE- Public Common; City Park

SOCIAL- Meeting Hall

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE- Specialty Store; Professional;
Restaurant

GOVERNMENT- City Hall

AGRICULTURE/SUBSISTENCE- Granary; Silo; Storage
Site

RELIGION- Religious Facility

RECREATION & CULTURE- Museum

LANDSCAPE- City Park

7. Description**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE 19th AND Early 20th CENTURY REVIVALS-
Classical RevivalOTHER- Late 19th Century Vernacular Commercial;
20th Century Vernacular Commercial

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Brick; Concrete

walls Brick; Stucco; Cast Concrete; Metal; Synthetics

Roof Asphalt; Metal

other

Narrative Description

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

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SUMMARY

The Tyronza Commercial Historic District is located in the historic commercial center of Tyronza, Arkansas, in Poinsett County. Tyronza sits in the southeast corner of the county, in the northeast corner of Arkansas in what is known as the "Sunken Lands." The district contains 25 resources of which 18 (72%) retain integrity and contribute to the district's period of significance while 7 (28%) do not contribute due to lack of integrity or failure to contribute to the district's period of significance, 1916 to 1959. The majority of the buildings in the district are brick, twentieth-century commercial buildings, some of which display modest stylistic elements of early twentieth-century vernacular design. The buildings in the Tyronza Commercial Historic District substantiate the history and development of Tyronza as a commercial and agricultural center.

ELABORATION

Tyronza, Arkansas, is located in the northeast part of the state in Poinsett County. The St. Francis River travels north to south in the eastern portion of the county and the L'Anguille River begins at the county's northern boundary and runs south through the center of the county. Crowley's Ridge, a highland anomaly that begins in southeast Missouri and terminates near Helena (Phillips County) runs through the center of Poinsett County. On the eastern side of the ridge is the rich, alluvial land of the Delta. Abundant rainfall each spring over the low-lying land resulted in annual flooding. Stagnant pools of water harbored mosquitoes resulting in frequent outbreaks of malaria. Only a few roads existed in Poinsett County in the mid nineteenth-century and they were often under water or too muddy to traverse. A visitor to the Delta region of Arkansas during the Civil War reported that the region was a "vile" place where "even the snakes have chills."

Tyronza sits atop a low-lying sandy ridge, ten to fifteen higher than the surrounding land at 225 feet above sea level. An extensive gravel bed, approximately one mile wide and three miles long forms the base of this ridge. The land that would eventually become northeastern Arkansas was covered with thick forests and swamps. The New Madrid earthquakes of 1811 changed the landscape throughout the Mississippi Alluvial Plain and some land dropped below sea level. Most of the area referred to as "The Sunken Lands" was considered uninhabitable after the earthquakes. Although Poinsett County had been established in 1838, it was one of the last counties to be settled due to the swampy lands in its eastern side.

In 1883, the Kansas City, Fort Scott and Gulf Railway chose the gravel-based rise of land in the southeast part of Poinsett County to construct a raised bed for the tracks and a small wood depot. Although there was a small general store in the vicinity, there was no town at the site and the depot was given the name Tyronza Station, after the nearby Tyronza River. Primarily a lumber town, Tyronza was a small stop on the railroad with only a few wooden buildings and the depot. Most of the buildings were constructed on stilts to keep them dry from flooding. Main Street was created to run perpendicular to the railroad tracks.

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The 25 resources comprising the Tyronza Commercial Historic District are located on or near S. Main Street from the railroad tracks, south approximately three blocks. The resources in the district include 24 commercial buildings and one public park.

As the forests were cleared and the timber industry collapsed around 1910, the richness of the bottomland soil was found to be ideal for growing cotton. Despite annual flooding, the agricultural economy of the region flourished and Tyronza became a commercial center for the local cotton economy. Brick buildings were constructed to replace the early wooden commercial structures in the 1910s. The only extant building of this era is the Bank of Tyronza building at 117 S. Main. The city was not incorporated until 1926 and this significant decade of growth in Tyronza is represented by 15 buildings in the district. The Tyronza Commercial Historic District also contains four buildings constructed in the 1940s, two in the 1960s, and three after 1970. There is also a small city park located in the district.

The development of Tyronza's commercial district along S. Main Street began near the railroad tracks and Old Highway 63 with construction of a railroad depot. From this point the development spread south along Main Street as the town grew. No Sanborn Fire Insurance maps of Tyronza are known to have been made, although there are a number of historic photographs which document the commercial district. A number of the open spaces in the district were never developed, as buildings were scattered along S. Main Street. A significant open space in the Tyronza Historic District is located between 146 and 164 S. Main Street. This lot contained an artesian well that provided drinking water for the community and was a center of social activity when farm families came to Tyronza for shopping, business, and leisure activities. Other open spaces in south end of the district were likewise never developed. However, there are vacant lots adjacent to the Bank of Tyronza and north of the Tyronza City Hall at 143 S. Main where buildings once stood.

1910s

The oldest extant building in the Tyronza Commercial Historic District is the Bank of Tyronza building at 117 S. Main Street, less than one block from the railroad line and near the depot. This one-story brick building was constructed c.1916. Despite its restrained elegant appearance on the exterior with a wood and plate-glass storefront with decorative transom windows, the Bank of Tyronza building had only a dirt floor. The south elevation of the building abutted a large two-story brick general store that has been razed. This exposed elevation is now a local icon featuring a mural depicting early farming in the region and the name "Southern Tenant Farmers Museum." Historic photographs of this building and the adjacent two-story building indicate that there were concrete sidewalks, but S. Main Street was not paved in 1916.

1920s

Although there had been an established community with a post office in Tyronza since the construction of the railroad line through the area in 1883, the town was not incorporated until May 1926. By the 1920s Tyronza was a commercial center for the local cotton economy and there was much change to Tyronza during these

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prosperous years. The *Marked Tree Tribune* on April 24, 1925, reported a "building boom" in Tyronza with four new "bricks" nearing completion. These four one-story, brick buildings, known as the "Grossman Block," are located at 147-155 S. Main Street. The two buildings on the north end of the block are faced in a tan color brick, while the two on the southern end have a browner color brick. However, all four buildings are identical on their upper brick walls in brick pattern and parapet design. Bands of soldier bricks run across the top of the storefronts and below a cast-concrete belt forming a cornice. The stepped parapets of the buildings feature cast concrete coping. Small square cast-concrete wall anchors below the buildings' cornice suspend a flat wood awning across the fronts of the buildings. Storefronts of the Grossman Buildings contain aluminum-frame plate-glass windows and doors. Transom windows are covered on the three buildings to the north, while the Grossman Building at 155 S. Main has glass block in the transom opening.

Buildings at 138, 140, and 142 S. Main were constructed in the mid 1920s. A small frame building under the current exterior wood-frame facade was the long-time office of the city's physician, Dr. L H. McDaniel. Adjacent on the south is a one-story brick-faced building, featuring rows of soldier brick, and sets of two soldier brick squares in a lighter color of brick than the wall. The City Drug Store building at 142 S. Main is a small one-story brick building that also utilizes two brick colors in patterns as decoration.

The building at 146 S. Main Street was constructed c.1925 and contained the Jo Hong Grocery Store. The building is completely wrapped in vinyl siding and bears no resemblance to its original appearance. The vacant lot to the south of this building has always been vacant. It was the location of an artesian well that provided drinking water for many sharecropping families and provided water for the city until the construction of a water tower by the Public Works Administration in 1935 (Tyronza Water Tower, Listed in the National Register of Historic Places 09-20-07) just east of the boundary of the district.

The two-story brick building at 164 S. Main was constructed c.1926. It features no decorative detail in its simple design, but is the only remaining of the few two-story brick buildings constructed in Tyronza. A metal hyphen connects the building to a new, one-story metal building on its south elevation.

The Howard Young Building at 178 S. Main on the southern end of the Tyronza Commercial Historic District is a one-story brick building with cast-concrete belt course and parapet coping that was built in 1922. Adjacent on the south is the Tyronza Supply Company Building, constructed c.1929. Built as a service station and garage, the building sits back from the street. The front of the building contains a wood overhead door and a single wood and glass door, flanked by large hopper windows with cast-concrete sills. The center of the front (west) elevation of the building is denoted by a cast-concrete nameplate which rises above the roof parapet reading "Tyronza Supply Co." with Art Deco style fan-shaped cast-concrete insets in its rounded ends. A band of cast-concrete dentiling runs along the top of the parapet under the center nameplate and half way across the wall on either side.

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A small one and one-half story brick building is located behind the Grossman Buildings on a one-block long alley named Beasley Street. It is thought to have been built in the late 1920s. Now abandoned, it appears to have been a utilitarian building with minimal apertures, which are all now bricked.

One of the three buildings that comprise the Southern Tenant Farmers Museum at the corner of S. Main Street and Old Highway 63 is the H.L. Mitchell Building at 115 S. Main. This one-story brick building, constructed in 1927, features two plate glass storefronts. The third building in the STFU Museum property is the Clay East Lion Gas Station at 113 S. Main situated at an angle at the corner facing both S. Main Street and Highway 63. This building was constructed in 1927 and features a front service bay with hipped roof and extended rafter tails supported by large square brick columns.

In 1928 the First United Methodist Church of Tyronza completed construction of a new brick building west of their original wood church building on the southwest corner of S. Main and Church Streets. The original church building was demolished and the land given to the city for use as a park in 1928. It is a triangular-shaped piece of land with a flagpole and cast concrete base with monuments at its corner, facing S. Main Street. Four sets of wood bleachers are located on the west end of the park. A few trees line the park's perimeter, but for the most part it is open green space.

1940s

In the late 1940s a building was constructed a half block west of S. Main Street at 114 Junction Street as the Tyronza City Hall. The building has been remodeled with a brick veneer on its front. It is currently used by the Tyronza Police Department. A modern one-story brick grocery store building was constructed at 191 S. Main Street in c.1949. This building contains bands of glass block windows in the upper portions of the front walls. An aluminum-framed system of plate glass windows and two doors is located on the north end of the front.

The building at 143 S. Main Street was constructed c.1948 with concrete block walls. It has been remodeled with a new brick veneer front.

A small, irregular-shaped concrete block building was constructed across the street from the Bank of Tyronza and near the former railroad depot in the late 1940s. It was constructed as an office for a sawmill. Now a grain producing company, there are seven round metal grain elevators located behind the small building.

1960s

A new Federal Post Office was constructed at 163 S. Main Street in 1961. The one-story concrete block building with flat roof features a recessed half of the front with an aluminum-framed glass entry door and a

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large twelve-pane aluminum stationary window. The front of the building is faced in buff-colored brick while the other exterior walls are concrete block.

A large metal building with brick veneer front and gable roof was constructed c.1965 at 134 S. Main Street. Although much newer than the surrounding buildings, it blends into the historic streetscape.

1970 to Present

A metal car wash on Beasley Street behind the Grossman Block, and two mobile buildings that were once used for commercial purposes are all abandoned, but remain located in the district.

Throughout the years, S. Main Street has been the center of commerce in the small rural city of Tyronza. The 1950s were a time of great change in Tyronza and the surrounding area. Farmers were encouraged to mechanize and to use fertilizers and pesticides for larger yield. There was little work for laborers and many of the businesses that catered to the sharecroppers closed their doors. A new highway was constructed, bypassing Tyronza. In the 1970s and 1980s outlying areas began to be subdivided and developed into residential neighborhoods for commuters who drove the roughly thirty miles to Jonesboro or Memphis. Although in 2009 the population of Tyronza is at an all time high of over 900 and the city encompasses 1.57 square miles, there is virtually no commercial center, and schools have been closed. The once thriving small downtown of Tyronza is a shell of its former self. The beginning of the revival of Tyronza's downtown began in 2006 when Arkansas State University purchased the former Bank of Tyronza building, the H.L. Mitchell Building and the Clay East Lion Gas Station at the corner of S. Main and Old Highway 63. These buildings have been restored to appear much as they did in the 1920s on the exterior while hosting a museum interpreting the history of the area and the Southern Tenant Farmers Union.

INTEGRITY

The Tyronza Commercial Historic District is a group of resources that maintain the integrity needed to convey their architectural heritage and historic significance. These properties possess integrity of location and setting as they still possess their original setbacks and configurations. The buildings, which contribute to the district's significance, are still true to their original design displaying the historic materials used in their construction as well as the attention to detail that validates the workmanship displayed when built. The buildings serve as a reminder of how Tyronza has evolved from a small railroad town to a bedroom community. Though the streetscape has changed in appearance since it first began to develop as a commercial venue in 1883 with the construction of a railroad line and depot, the extant buildings still convey a strong sense of the city's history.

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)

National

Local

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

Social History

Commerce

Period of Significance

1916-1959

Significant Dates

1934- Date Southern Tenant Farmers Union established

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked)**Cultural Affiliation** (Complete if Criterion D is marked)

N/A

Architect/Builder**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:

Southern Tenant Farmers Museum, Tyronza, AR

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SUMMARY

The Tyronza Commercial Historic District is located in Tyronza, Arkansas, in Poinsett County. The history of Tyronza dates back to 1883 when the Kansas City, Fort Scott and Gulf Railway constructed a rail line and a depot known as Tyronza Station. Twenty-five resources comprise the Tyronza Commercial Historic District; 18 contributing resources and 7 non-contributing resources. The district is being nominated for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places, with **local significance**, under **Criterion A** with a period of significance spanning 1916 to 1959, for its associations with the commercial development of Tyronza. Two buildings in the district, the H.L. Mitchell Building at 115 S. Main and the Clay East Lion Gas Station at 113 S. Main, which now are part of the Southern Tenant Farmers Museum, are also being nominated with **national significance**, under **Criterion A** for their associations with the nationally-known Southern Tenant Farmers Union. This organization, founded in 1934, leaves a legacy in its pre-Civil Rights era example of the effectiveness of racial integration and non-violent activities to achieve common goals.

ELABORATION

Tyronza, Arkansas, lies in the southeastern corner of Poinsett County, within the Mississippi Embayment, a geological depression over 200 miles wide created by the ancient flow of the Mississippi and the Ohio rivers. This vast river valley is divided by a ridge known as Crowley's Ridge, an anomaly that exhibits terrain, soil, and vegetation completely different from what is found on the flood washed lowlands on either side. The western Lowlands stretch from the ridge to the Ozark Highlands and are drained by the White River. The eastern Lowlands reach to the Mississippi River and are drained by the St. Francis River.¹ This seemingly flat, level stretch of fertile land is filled with bayous, swamps, lakes, basins, prairies, and ridges. The early hunters and gatherers of North America found the region abundant with fish, game, and fruit and nut trees. When these nomadic people began developing permanent settlements, they built on sites that would stand above the typical annual flood. The city of Tyronza sits atop such a site, a low sandy ridge laying on an extensive gravel bed in the loop of the Tyronza River, which empties into the St. Francis River.

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Native Americans, who settled on the present-day Tyronza locale, farmed the rich Lowlands and built earthen mounds to protect their homes and important buildings from the floods. The Smithsonian's Bureau of Ethnology Mound Survey of 1884 documented seven man-made mounds on the Tyronza ridge and forty-nine mounds in immediate vicinity. Today there are visible remains of only three mounds within the town.² On June 18, 1542, atop of a mound that is believed to be just below the confluence of the Tyronza and the St. Francis rivers, ten miles southwest from the present day Tyronza, Hernando De Soto oversaw the raising of a large Cross and participated in a grand Catholic mass witnessed by thousands.³ Native population in the region declined over the decades following the De Soto Expedition encounter. But with the abundance of fish, fowl, and game, including herds of deer and buffalo, the region remained a prized hunting ground claimed by several Native American tribes, including, the Delaware, Shawnee, Miami, Cherokee, and Chickasaw.⁴

By the early 1800s white hunters and trappers entered the region, setting up only temporary camps and moving on when the game was depleted. The area became even more inhospitable on December 16, 1811, when a long series of earthquakes began to shake northeast Arkansas along the New Madrid fault line. Over 200 earthquakes were recorded over the next three months, changing the course of the Mississippi River and altering the landscape. A large area in the eastern part of the present Poinsett County dropped below sea level and became known as the "sunken lands."⁵ The epicenter of the first quake was less than ten miles from present-day Tyronza.⁶

During the War of 1812, to increase the size of the army, the federal government issued certificates for tracts of land west of the Mississippi River in exchange for military service. But due to the earthquakes and the resulting increased flooding, the Sunken Lands, as with most of the land in northeast Arkansas, were considered uninhabitable.

The first permanent residents in the area were Charles and Rebekah Shaver, who settled on Sugar Creek in 1824. Records indicate the Shaver family traveled in two wagons from Missouri along Crowley's Ridge over an old Native American trail. In addition to his wife, two sons, a daughter, and a son-in-law, Charles also brought along several slaves. On February 27, 1838, Arkansas Governor James S. Conway established a large area of northeastern Arkansas including the Shaver homestead as Poinsett County.⁷ It was named in honor of the horticulturist who

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introduced the poinsettia flower to the United States, Joel Robert Poinsett. Mr. Poinsett was also a noted statesman and scientist who served as the Secretary of War under President Martin Van Buren.

Even though Poinsett County was originally much larger than its current size, when it was established, it had not one town, only widely scattered homesteads. William Harris was appointed county judge and his home on Crowley's Ridge became the first county seat. The seat of county government was moved in 1839 to the newly constructed courthouse in the new town of Bolivar, located on Crowley's Ridge. Bolivar prospered as the county seat growing into a respectable town with doctors and lawyers, hotels, general stores, saloons and even a horseracing track.⁸

In 1850 the federal government enacted the Swamp Land Act. Under this provision sixty-four million acres of wetlands were given to the states involved to encourage local development of drainage districts. Arkansas received eight million acres of which over two hundred thousand areas were in Poinsett County. Each state handled the land grant differently. Arkansas chose to sell the land, for the most part in large chunks, to businessmen and speculators.⁹ This action set the stage for the eventual development of northeastern Arkansas's unique sharecropper economy.

Within a few years a new town, near the center of the county, was being planned with the intent of it becoming the seat of government for Poinsett County. Benjamin Harris, son of the first county judge, donated the land for a new courthouse. Harrisburg was named in his honor, and after a close election, Harrisburg became the county seat in 1856. Two counties were later created with land taken from Poinsett County, Craighead County in 1858 and Cross County in 1862.¹⁰ By the time the Civil War started a much smaller Poinsett County had few residents and almost no slaves. Poinsett County voted against most of the other counties of Arkansas in the state's proposal to secede from the Union at the onset of the Civil War.

At the end of the war speculators bought large tracts of timber-rich swamp land and began to harvest the stands of old growth, hardwood forests. Napoleon B. Martis, a speculator and a surveyor for the federal government purchased thousands of acres in the northeast Arkansas swampland that included the site of present day Tyronza. In 1876, Duncan and Martha Stalker purchased eighty acres from Mr. Martis. Duncan Stocker (recorded as Stalker in local records) was a timber man from Canada and the third husband of Martha who was born in Arkansas

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Territory two months before it became a state in 1836.¹¹ Sometime before 1880, the Stalkers built their family home on a flat-topped mound. At a height of twelve feet and diameter of 120 feet, it was the largest of the remaining Mississippian period mounds on their property.¹²

Most of the Stalker land was above the seasonal flood level, so timber could be harvested year round. There were no reliable roads in Poinsett County in the 1880s and so Stalker, like other timber men, hauled one log at a time to a nearby creek or river, and floated them to one of the many sawmills popping up all over the region. When the land was passable, large, heavy-duty wagons were used to haul the timber. Because the average size the first trees harvested from the 6,000 square miles of forest were so large, five to six feet in diameter, only part of one tree could be transported at a time. This was hard, difficult, and dangerous work in the mosquito and snake infested swampy Sunken Land region.

Martha Stalker's third husband died after four years of working their land and she deeded the family land to her twenty-one year old son but remained in her home on the mound. By the mid 1880s there were 160 residents spread across the area called the Little River Township.¹³ William Beasley, one of the residents who had moved into the area that is now Tyronza, built a general store to alleviate the three-day canoe trip to the closest supply store. But outside of the Sunken Lands, America was rapidly expanding with a growing need for lumber, railroad ties and bridge trusses. To get the local timber to a national market Poinsett Country needed a railroad.

In the 1880s the St. Louis, Iron Mountain, and Southern Railroad laid track along western side of Crowley's Ridge, while the St. Louis and Southern Railroad made its way across the western corner of Poinsett County. The Kansas City, Fort Scott, and Gulf Railroad planned a route to the Gulf of Mexico through Memphis and it was to run across the center of the Stalker farm in Poinsett County.¹⁴ The railroad had initially planned to build a depot at the established towns of Marked Tree, three miles north and Deckerville, four miles to the south of the present location of Tyronza, but it was determined that the easiest way to construct a raised bed through the swampy land was to utilize the natural gravel in a long curved bed on the Stalker property near the Tyronza River. Construction of the rail line began in the Tyronza area in 1883 bringing in construction workers and new jobs for the small local population. There was no town, so the railroad company named the depot "Tyronza Station" after the nearby river.¹⁵

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William Beasley applied for a postal permit in 1883 to be located in the small general store he had built near the proposed rail line. The US Post Office rejected the name Beasley as the name of the new post office. Perkins (the last name of one of Martha Stalker's son-in-laws) was presented and accepted. The Tyronza depot stood only a few hundred feet from the Perkins Post Office in the back of Beasley's store. After a few years Beasley applied to the Postal Service to have the name changed. In April 1888, Tyronza became the name of the post office, as well as the railroad depot and the growing town.¹⁶ The Stalker family began selling off their land to businessmen interested becoming a part of the timber boom that the new railroad had made possible.

Oliver Davis came to Tyronza around 1885 and built a sawmill adjacent to the depot.¹⁷ Many in the labor force that had come to the area to build the railroad remained to become loggers with the hope of better pay and long-term employment. Most of the prime timberland was in large tracts owned by a few individuals and large timber companies like the Chapmen and Dewey Company, which controlled over 100,000 acres. Logging camps, run much like the railroad camps before them, began to appear near the rail line in Poinsett County.

Tyronza's Main Street was laid out perpendicular to the railroad tracks between the depot and the Beasley Store/Post Office. Louis Ritter from Iowa and John Emrich from Tennessee opened a large general store on Main Street near the depot around 1887. The Stalker family donated two acres on Main Street for a building that would serve as a church for all the denominations in town. Across Main Street from the church, a large school was constructed. The regional newspaper *The Modern News* printed in Harrisburg, the largest town in Poinsett County, reported in the June 14, 1895, edition that Tyronza "is one of the most refined towns in the county."¹⁸

Massive tree harvesting was the first step in transforming the thick, old growth forest into rich farmland. The large stumps left behind were burned along with the lesser trees and stands of cane. Once land had been cleared farming begun, usually planting corn in the first year and cotton the second year. The vast tracts of land owned by the timber companies were sold or rented in forty acres tracts as they were cleared.

By 1910 Tyronza had a population estimated at 250, with slightly less than half of the residents from outside the state of Arkansas. It had a doctor, an attorney, a photographer, one restaurant, a blacksmith, a gunsmith, a locksmith, and a sewing machine salesman.¹⁹ Former timber

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businessman Oliver Davis sold his sawmill and went into farming. John Emrich and Louis Ritter's general store had grown into Tyronza General Supply. In 1916 Emrich built Tyronza's first bank at 117 S. Main near the intersection of the railroad track and Main Street.

Fueling Tyronza's growth in population in the early years of the twentieth century was the gradual transition from a logging to an agriculture-based economy. In 1911, businessmen Ritter and Emrich partnered once again to build a \$10,000 cotton gin.²⁰ A year later Dewey's Mill with two large sawmills outside of Tyronza closed down due to lack of available good timber. Although farming was the new economy in the Sunken Lands, it had its own unique pitfalls for a hard working family with dreams of a comfortable future. The 1910 census of Tyronza Township showed that of the 272 men farming only seventeen owned their land. In the larger Poinsett County area sixty-seven percent of the farmers were tenants.²¹ New tenant farmers, drawn by the dark rich soil, but unfamiliar with the unique environment of the region easily fell into a disastrous cycle of borrowing from a merchant or businessman the money to buy seeds to plant a new crop after the last year's failure. Two or three bad years of crops and subsequent foreclosure on crop liens put families out of their homes. Although most owner-tenant arrangements allowed the farmer to stay on the land with the hopes of working off his debt, few ever did. These agreements were most often heavily slanted in the creditors favor.

One of the worst years for crop failures was in 1913 when the Mississippi River crested at forty-three feet above flood stage. In Tyronza the only thing above water was the raised railroad line and the mound on which the Stalker house stood. Homes, businesses, and equipment were lost to the flood in 1913.²² A tenant farmer for the most part kept their farm equipment after their land was foreclosed on and therefore would receive a higher percentage (70%) of the price for the crop they produced. But when they lost their equipment to bad debt or floods, farmers were forced to rent plows and mules needed to work the land they had once owned. At that point the tenant farmer became just another in the swelling ranks of sharecroppers that received only 50% of the price of their crop. Following the flood of 1913, the price of cotton steadily increased as the cost of labor to the large landowners to produce it continued to drop.

Tyronza continued to prosper while successfully transiting from one crop boom to the next. In 1917 cotton prices reached the highest point in over fifty years. Tyronza flourished and began a period of growth that lasted through the 1920s. A two-story brick school (razed) was completed in 1916. Streets were still unpaved, but there were concrete sidewalks. Electricity came to town

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in 1918. Tyronza businessmen joined forces with Marked Tree to build a section of road that would tie into the Ozark Trail. The Ozark Trail was the concept of William H. "Coin" Harvey, a real estate developer in northwest Arkansas. Coin envisioned a uniform paved roadway between St. Louis to Tucumcari, New Mexico, with several spurs.²³ One of those spurs would extend from Springfield, Missouri to Memphis, running through Tyronza. Coin died before his ideal was completed, but on their own, the business and citizens of Tyronza and Marked Tree completed a concrete roadway that ran along side of the railroad and entered Tyronza then turned to run down Main Street as it still does today.

As more sharecroppers in the Mississippi Delta region of Arkansas slipped further into poverty, the division between large landowners and businessmen and farmers in rural agricultural towns like Tyronza became more volatile. On September 30, 1919, tension between the landowners and tenant farmers erupted when a group of black sharecroppers met in a church in the town of Elaine in Phillips County to organize a farmer's union.²⁴ County deputy sheriffs raided the meeting and shots were fired. An armed and angry mob gathered. Women and children were sent out of town. The Governor and a contingent of U.S. Army arrived within a day and put an end to the unrest, by deadly means, according to some accounts.

Through the up and downs of the 1920s Tyronza realized an ongoing boom. In 1921, the first boll weevil infestation seen in the county caused a subsequent 14.3 percent increase in the number sharecroppers. Wealthy landowners were able to benefit from the failed crops by acquiring more valuable farmland for pennies on the dollar. In 1925 four new brick buildings were constructed in Tyronza in the Grossman Block. Two cotton gins operated 24 hours a day. On May 17, 1926, the City of Tyronza was incorporated.²⁵ However, by the end of 1926 cotton prices had fallen to a record low. The next winter brought heavy rains. Vast flooding in the spring of 1927 washed away homes, crops, and hopes for the many more, small farm families.

With hardly time to recover from the floods of 1927, the region was pulled into national crises when the New York Stock Exchange crashed on October 29, 1929. A severe drought in 1930 resulted in it being called "the year of no cotton." On November 19, 1930, John Emrich's Bank of Tyronza closed its doors.²⁶ Mr. Emrich used his own accumulated wealth to pay back all of the bank's customers who had lost money within a year and half. Small farms were lost to back taxes and by the early 1930s, 80 percent of the land farmed in the Delta was done so by sharecroppers and tenant farmers.

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The region experienced another drought in 1931, the worst on record for Arkansas.²⁷ The administration of Herbert Hoover believed that the crisis was a state issue. The state of Arkansas had its own financial problems and had little to offer in assistance to farmers facing starvation. The American Red Cross, instead of food, handed out garden seeds to 123,000 families in Arkansas.²⁸ In some parts of the state, the only vegetables to sprout in the cracked, parched soil were turnips. Forced to survive on turnips, sharecroppers in England, Arkansas, rioted and demanded food from the town's merchants.

Tyronza residents, Harry Leland Mitchell and Alvin Nunally applied for and received a charter in 1931 to organize a chapter of the Socialist Party.²⁹ The Tyronza Socialist Party was the first in the state and one of the first in the South. Nunally was a local tenant farmer and Mitchell had come from Tennessee to be a farmer. He soon realized the enslaving nature of the tenant farming system. His father operated a barbershop in town at 111 Main Street. Instead of sharecropping, Harry Mitchell chose to set up a dry cleaning business in the back of his father's shop.³⁰ Around 1927 Henry Clay East opened a gas station at 113 S. Main, next to H.L. Mitchell's Tyronza Cleaners at 115 S. Main. East was from an established family in Tyronza, and owned a meat market and grocery store. East was drawn to Mitchell's socialist beliefs and was one of the first new members of the Tyronza Socialist Party.

In the dire and depressed times of the early 1930s, H. L. Mitchell and Clay East organized political rallies and held regular scheduled meeting of the Socialist Party at the Odd Fellows Lodge in Tyronza. In a town with a population of less than 600 there were often as many as 150 attending these meetings. The Arkansas Socialist Party Convention was held in a big tent on the ball field in Tyronza with Norman Thomas, candidate for President of the United States in 1932 as the featured speaker.³¹ Local residents began to refer to the corner of Main Street and Highway 63 where East and Mitchell had their businesses as "Red Square." The growing resentment and hatred between the tenant and sharecroppers farmers and the landlords continued to escalate.

The election of President Franklin Roosevelt in 1932 brought hope for the suffering counties in the Mississippi River Delta. New and progressive relief programs began within weeks of Roosevelt's inauguration. The Agricultural Adjustment Administration, or AAA, evoked a major institutional change to the farming process. The plan required all farmers to plow under every

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third row of their crop in order to increase the price by decreasing the supply. The farmers were compensated with a check from the federal government. The AAA program worked well in most of the country, but for the landless farmers of the Delta it was devastating.

The compensation checks from the government were sent to the landowners who were expected to pass the money along to the farm families, though that rarely happened. The tenant farmers lost a third of their harvest while wealthy landowners schemed ways to keep the thousands of dollars in compensation that they received. When the landowners did pay relief money to the tenant farmers, it often came with a requirement for additional labor. Tyronza businessmen Mitchell and East were aware of these injustices and with the help of other local businessmen not involved in the farming system, organized the Tyronza Unemployment League to assist those in need.³²

When Hiram Norcross, one of Tyronza's large landowners, threw twenty-three families of sharecroppers and their belongings out of their homes and onto the side of the road, Mitchell and East started an effort to expose the trouble with the relief program and to convince the AAA officials to enact badly-needed changes. They joined with a Memphis physiology professor and Norman Thomas, a former presidential candidate, to publish a pamphlet, *The Plight of the Share-Cropper*.³³ The pamphlet convinced a few, but not enough to bring change. The farming system in the Delta had always held power over the workers through the system of mounting debt. Thomas, Mitchell, and East decided that the best plan would be to form a union of tenants and sharecroppers, not to directly take on the bankers, businessmen, and merchants who owned the land, but to lobby and pressure the government and the Agricultural Adjustment Administration for changes.

To secure the sharecroppers' rightful portion of the AAA payments, the Southern Tenant Farmers Union, (STFU), was established just outside of Tyronza on July 18, 1934, in a small schoolhouse by eighteen men, seven black and eleven white. An interracial slate of officers was elected.³⁴ Mitchell and East were asked to help organize the union. They knew that to be effective, the Southern Tenant Farmers Union had to include farmers of all races, men, and women, and even sympathetic merchants. It was directed that all future STFU branches have an integrated board of officials. A stance of non-violent resistance was adopted by the union. The first project of the Tyronza chapter of the STFU was to assist two-dozen of its members in filing a lawsuit against Hiram Norcross.³⁵ The lawsuit accused Norcross, a large landowner, of cheating and evicting

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tenants. The AAA program had grown to the point that farmers were paid not to plant entire fields.

The Arkansas Supreme Court found in favor of Norcross. The case was appealed to the United States Supreme Court who also ruled that Hiram Norcross had done nothing illegal. Other Delta landowners like Hiram Norcross took this opportunity to evict tenants without warning or appeal. Not only around Tyronza, but throughout the Delta, families suddenly found themselves on the side of the road with their meager belongings.

The rulings did not stop the growth of the Southern Tenant Farmers Union, but it did embolden and in some minds, validated the decades of repressive actions. Beatings and threats of death increased. Mitchell and East worked out of the back of their businesses on Tyronza's S. Main Street directing the local projects, while expanding the STFU into other regions of the Delta. Their actions, the Norcross lawsuit, and words like "Red Square" attracted national attention. National media swarmed into Tyronza, residents were proud to show off their small but prosperous town with all of its brick business buildings schools and churches. But when the media focused on the great injustices in the larger farming community, the people of Tyronza turned resentful.³⁶ On a trip through Poinsett and Mississippi counties in northeastern Arkansas in 1938, a Washington newspaper reporter summed up the complex commerce of the agricultural Delta in one sentence, "Everywhere in this South, the poorest men are on the richest land."

Town residents boycotted Mitchell and East's businesses even as the Southern Tenant Farmers Union continued to attract more members and gain more national attention. Local citizens organized groups of nightriders who would ride about the county terrorizing the poor, much like Klu Klux Klan raids, except that the nightriders attacked and in some cases killed both black and white sharecropper families.³⁷ Mitchell and East continued to travel the dusty back-roads of the Delta at night carrying loads of sharecroppers to union meetings in black churches and schoolhouses. Within days the church or schoolhouse would be padlocked or filled in with bales of hay.³⁸ They pushed into surrounding counties, steadily increasing the union membership. But eventually both Mitchell and East were forced out of Tyronza. East went on to operate a gas station in Bartlett, Arkansas. H. L. Mitchell moved to Memphis where he continued to lead the Southern Tenant Farmers Union.

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From its Memphis headquarters, STFU organized a peaceful cotton picker's strike in 1935 that resulted in an increase in pay to the pickers per pound of cotton. STFU membership spread into neighboring states of Mississippi, Tennessee, Texas, Louisiana, and Oklahoma. In 1936 a larger strike was mobilized. The landowners reacted with more evictions and increased violence, mostly in Arkansas. Union meetings were broken-up, picket lines were attacked, and a female social worker from Little Rock and a Memphis pastor were flogged. A local Union president was attacked in a courthouse and almost lynched. Ministers with the Federal Council of Churches, as well as other pastors from out of state who had come to investigate the violence, were jailed and interrogated. The news series "The March of Time" produced a two-reel movie that was shown throughout the United States. *The New York Times* as well as other national newspapers ran articles about the Southern Tenant Farmers Union and its struggles for the rights of tenant farmers and sharecroppers.³⁹

The strike failed, but the organization maintained its core values of non-violence and inclusion. Odis L. Sweeden, a mixed-blood Cherokee farmer, became the leader of the Southern Tenant Farmers Union in Oklahoma which had over 7,500 members. With the support and advice of the STFU headquarters, state branches of the Union waged a legal battle with the banks and insurance companies over equal and fair redistribution of the rich government land in eastern Oklahoma.⁴⁰

President Franklin D. Roosevelt established a commission on farm tenancy to study and develop a report on the issues labor-rights brought to light by the expanding efforts and influence of the Southern Tenant Farmers Union. The president appointed an officer of the STFU to serve on this important commission.⁴¹ The report led to resettlement and rehabilitation of low income farm families and laid the foundation for the Farm Security Administration (FSA).

During the years the sharecroppers fought the landowners and the federal government simultaneously, the townspeople of Tyronza went on with life. During the height of the sharecropper problems, the local doctor, L. H. McDaniel, whose office was located on S. Main Street, organized a baseball team for the town's young men.⁴² The games were so popular that the merchants and businessmen of Tyronza paid for the construction of a new baseball park to house the team. An American Legion Post was established during the years of turmoil between farmers and landowners and set a national record of 84 charter members.

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The growth of Tyronza stagnated after the 1930s with a population of 573 that varied less than 85 people over the next forty years regardless of what was happening in the outside world. Major flooding came again to the area in 1937, displacing over 17,000 residents of Poinsett County.⁴³

Also in 1937, the abuses of the sharecropping system came to national attention once again, this time in Southeast Missouri. Hundreds of farm families were evicted by the large landowners who were being paid by the government not to plant cotton. The families, black and white, without any other option began to camp along Missouri highways.

As secretary of the Southern Tenant Farmers Union, H.L. Mitchell, once chased out of Tyronza, was asked in 1937 to come to Washington D.C. to speak to Eleanor Roosevelt on behalf of the homeless farm families. As the result of the meeting, Mrs. Roosevelt asked the President to activate the Missouri National Guard, and in her newspaper column she called on the public to provide food and shelter for those displaced families. Within weeks, a delegation from the STFU was instrumental in getting the Farm Security Administration (FSA) to begin construction on the Delmo Labor Homes project that provided homes for 600 farm families who had previously been living on the roadsides of Missouri.⁴⁴

When World War II began, farm workers in the Sunken Lands were either drafted or enlisted in the military as a way out of their impoverished existence. Tyronza remained roughly the same size; the land owners maintained their fields by using prisoners-of-war as day laborers from a German P.O.W. camp, located in nearby Marked Tree or by using Mexicans brought in under the government plan called the "Bracero Program."⁴⁵

Before 1941, the Southern Tenant Farmers Union had begun to lose membership, but throughout the war, it continued to work for the unemployed and displaced farm workers. In cooperation with the War Manpower Commission and the FSA, the STFU recruited unemployed cotton pickers to harvest much needed cotton for the war effort in addition to fruits and vegetables in Texas, Arizona, California, and Florida.⁴⁶ The STFU also secured over 2,000 seasonal (two to three months) jobs for southern migrant workers in New Jersey and other eastern states.

On the strength of their success during WWII in organizing and implementing their migrant farmer worker programs, the Southern Tenant Farmers Union was asked to become an associate

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union with the American Federation of Labor (AFL). The AFL, the largest labor union at the time would later join with other unions to form the AFL-CIO.

After the war, returning soldiers went on to college under the G.I. Bill or on to good paying jobs in urban areas. Tyronza landowners began to rely on machination to replace the loss in the labor force. Many turned their cotton fields into grazing pastures for livestock. With the vast majority of farm laborers in the Arkansas Delta leaving the farms, the Southern Tenant Farmers Union, that small union of blacks and whites begun in Tyronza that rose to national prominence did not fade away or become irrelevant.

The Southern Tenant Farmers Union changed its name to the National Farm Labor Union and in 1946, turned its organizational skill toward the under-paid farm workers in California.⁴⁷ Large corporate landowners were using Mexican Nationals legally imported under contracts to keep salaries and working conditions unacceptably poor. Over the next three years, the new National Farm Labor Union organized three strikes, the largest affecting 40,000 cotton pickers in California.⁴⁸ Organized labor won in most cases against the employment of contract Mexican labor, all of the gains were soon lost when the landowners began bringing in "illegal" Mexican farm workers.

The leadership of the National Farm Labor Union proposed that President Harry Truman appoint a presidential commission to study the farm labor problem and offer a solution. The commission report was presented in 1951, but soon forgotten in the presidential campaign of 1952 and the election of Dwight D. Eisenhower.

The Arkansas Highway Department opened a bypass in 1950 around Tyronza and the concrete roadway the town had helped finance in the 1920s. The railroad ceased running passenger service to Tyronza and the depot was demolished in 1960. The town continued to decline and by 1970, with only 510 residents, the population was the lowest it had been since its incorporation in 1926.⁴⁹ In this period Southern cities were experiencing white flight with the changes brought about by the Civil Rights movement.

As Tyronza declined, the labor movement it had spawned continued to the forefront of the movement. In 1952 the National Farm Labor Union organized an inventive combination of a local union and cooperative to market the product of 3,000 small strawberry farmers in

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Louisiana. The strawberry farmers union was a success, but was also the first organization to be prosecuted under the new Sherman Anti-Trust laws established in the Eisenhower administration.⁵⁰

In the 1970s a local landowner and lifelong resident, George Beley, whose father had settled in Tyronza in the 1920s to buy cotton, converted a portion of the family farm on the southern edge of town into a subdivision, attracting families who could commute less than 30 miles to work in Memphis or Jonesboro. By 1980 Tyronza was growing and the population was at an all time high of 777 residents. The newly found use of the Sunken Lands has led to a slow, but steady increase in population to over 1,000. However, the new developments in Tyronza are on the edge of the town, away from its historic downtown.

Arkansas State University in Jonesboro purchased and restored the Bank of Tyronza building and the adjacent H.L. Mitchell store and Clay East Gas Station and established the Southern Tenant Farmers Museum. The STFU museum documents the history of Tyronza and the farming history of the area.⁵¹ The business buildings of H. L. Mitchell at 115 S. Main and the Clay East Gas Station at 113 S. Main, appear much as they looked in the 1930s when citizens all across America knew this corner as "Red Square."

What had begun as a simple effort to help fellow citizens in need grew into a movement that spread its influence across the country with an enrollment of over 40,000 members. The way in which the Southern Tenant Farmers Union was non-racially structured, how they recruited new members and worked within the political arena to effect change, and their strategy of non-violence resistance, served as a model for farm workers, labor, grassroots organizations for decades, such as the United Farm Workers (UFW), the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and Martin Luther King Jr.'s "Poor People Campaign."⁵²

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Tyronza Commercial Historic District is being nominated for inclusion in the National Register of Historic Places under **Criterion A** with **local significance** for the events that have

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occurred within the town, specifically S. Main Street, that contribute to a better understanding of the complex nature of the area's commerce ranging from dense timberland to agriculture and its social resonance in the 1930s. Two buildings in the district, the H. L. Mitchell Building, and the Clay East Gas Station, are being nominated with **national significance**, under **Criterion A** for their direct association with the formation of the Southern Tenant Farmers Union. Established in 1934 under the leadership of Tyronza businessmen, H. L. Mitchell and Clay East, the Southern Tenant Farmers Union joined races and gender together to demand fair compensation for farm labor and were originally headquartered in the H. L. Mitchell and Clay East buildings. The organization spread to surrounding counties and to surrounding states and although not in existence by the 1960s, the Southern Tenant Farmers Union provided a lasting legacy of integrated, non-violent protests that would be carried on into the labor and Civil Rights movements of the mid-twentieth century.

¹. Willard B. Gatewood, "The Arkansas Delta: Deepest of the Deep South," in *Arkansas Delta: Land of Paradox*, eds. Jeannie M. Wayne and Willard B. Gatewood (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1993), 3.

². Cyrus Thomas, *Report on the Mound Explorations of the Bureau of Ethnology*, (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1985), 203, 138.

³. Lawrence A. Clayton, Vernon James Knight Jr., Edward C. Moore eds., *De Soto Chronicles: The Expedition of Hernando DeSoto to North America in 1539-1543* (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 1993), 239.

⁴. Harry Lee Williams, "History of Craighead County", *Encyclopedia of Arkansas History and Culture*.

⁵. "Poinsett County", *Encyclopedia of Arkansas History and Culture*.

⁶. Jake Page and Charles Officer, *The Big One: The Earthquake that Rocked Early America and Helped Create a Science*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2004), 5.

⁷. Poinsett County Historical Society, *Poinsett County, Arkansas: History and Families*, (Paducah, KY: Turner Publishing Company, 1998), 32.

⁸. *Ibid*, 32.

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⁹ . Jennie M. Whayne, *A New Plantation South: Land, Labor, and Federal Favor in Twentieth-Century Arkansas*, (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1996), 147.

¹⁰ . Poinsett County Historical Society, 36.

¹² . Ibid, 9.

¹³ . Ibid, 9.

¹⁴ . "Poinsett County," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas History and Culture*.

¹⁵ . "Tyronza (Poinsett County)," *Encyclopedia of Arkansas History and Culture*.

¹⁶ . Grisham, 13.

¹⁷ . Gerald T. Hanson and Carl Moneyhon, *Historical Atlas of Arkansas*, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1981), 15.

¹⁸ . Poinsett County Historical Society, 37.

¹⁹ . Grisham, 17.

²⁰ . *Marked Tree Tribune*, (Marked Tree, Arkansas, July 25, 1911).

²¹ . Hanson, 124.

²² . Grisham, 20.

²³ . Nan M. Lawler. "The Ozark Trails Association," (Master's Thesis, University of Arkansas, 1991), 11.

²⁴ . Grif Stockley, *Blood in their Eyes: The Elaine Race Massacre of 1919*, (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 2001), 13.

²⁵ . "Tyronza, (Poinsett County)", 2.

²⁶ . *Marked Tree Tribune*, (Marked Tree, Arkansas, November 21, 1930).

²⁷ . Grisham, 35.

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²⁸ . Ibid, 35.

²⁹ . Ibid, 38.

³⁰ . H. L. Mitchell. *Mean Things Happening in This Land: The Life and Times Of H. L. Mitchell, Cofounder of the Southern Tenant Farmers' Union*, (Montclair N.J.: Allanheld, Osmun, and Co., 1979).

³¹ . Alex Lichtenstein. *The Southern Tenant Farmers' Union: A Movement for Social Emancipation*, Introduction: Howard Kester, *Revolt Among the Sharecroppers*, (New York: Covici, Feiede, 1936), 25.

³² . Donald Grubbs, *Cry From the Cotton: The Southern Tenant Farmers' Union and the New Deal*, (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1971), 28.

³³ . Grisham, 41.

³⁴ . Howard Kester, *Revolt Among the Sharecroppers*, (New York: Covici, Feiede, 1936), 55.

³⁵ . Ibid, 63.

³⁶ . Grisham, 42.

³⁷ . Ibid, 42.

³⁸ . Kester, 65.

³⁹ . H. L. Mitchell. *The Disinherited: A Brief History of the Agriculture Workers Union (1934-1959)* , 2.

⁴⁰ . *Southern Tenant Farmers' Union* (digital.library.okstate.edu/encyclopedia), 1.

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Tyronza Commercial Historic District
Name of Property

Poinsett County, Arkansas
County and State

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Tyronza Commercial Historic District
Name of Property

Poinsett County, Arkansas
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 8.03 acres

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 Zone Easting Northing
2

3 Zone Easting Northing
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 Sandra Taylor Smith, Historic Preservation Consultant, Edited by Ralph S. Wilcox, NR & Survey Coordinator
organization Arkansas Historic Preservation Program Date September 15, 2009
street & number 1500 Tower Building, 323 Center Street Telephone (501) 324-9787
city or town Little Rock state Arkansas zip code 72201

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 Multiple Property Owners- Public and Private
street & number telephone
city or town state zip code

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 listing. 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 Reduction Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20303.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 10 Page 1

UTM References

1)	15	739597	3930796
	Zone	Easting	Northing
2)	15	739668	3939750
	Zone	Easting	Northing
3)	15	739668	3930511
	Zone	Easting	Northing
4)	15	739058	3930511
	Zone	Easting	Northing
5)	15	739558	3930746
	Zone	Easting	Northing

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The boundary of the Tyronza Commercial Historic District begins at a point at the northeast property line of the grain storage silos at 124 S. Main Street. The boundary runs due south from this point along the rear (east) property lines of buildings to its intersection with Mullins Street. At Mullins Street, the boundary turns and runs west across S. Main Street to the rear (southwest) property line of the structure located at 197 B S. Main Street. At this point the boundary turns to run north along the rear property line of the building at 191 S. Main and rear property line of the Tyronza City Park to its intersection with Church Street. The boundary continues to run due north, crossing Church Street, then Beasley Street. The western boundary line of the district continues to run due north, crossing Junction Street and Chickasaw Street. The boundary then turns to run northeast across the rear property line of the Southern Tenant Farmers Museum buildings 117 S. Main to its intersection with Old Highway 63. At Highway 63, the boundary turns to run southeast to the point of origin.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The boundary encompasses the most intact, historic, and contiguous resources associated the commercial area of Tyronza. This area contains the blocks south of the railroad line in which the town originated and grew as an agrarian based community. The four blocks of S. Main Street in the district contain the town's earliest extant commercial resources. Property south of the district boundary does not contain resources associated with the historic commercial portion of the town. The district contains resources directly associated with the commercial, governmental and political history of Tyronza.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY Tyronza Commercial Historic District
NAME:

MULTIPLE
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: ARKANSAS, Poinsett

DATE RECEIVED: 10/02/09 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 10/16/09
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 10/31/09 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 11/15/09
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 09000896

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: Y

COMMENT WAIVER: N

☐ ACCEPT ☒ RETURN ☐ REJECT 11/12/2009 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

See Attached Comments

RECOM./CRITERIA

Returns - Joe [Signature]

REVIEWER

DISCIPLINE

TELEPHONE

DATE

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

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



United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

1849 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20240

IN REPLY REFER TO:

The United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Evaluation/Return Sheet

Property Name: Tyronza Commercial Historic District, Poinsett County,
AR

Reference Number: 09000896

Reason for Return

This nomination is being returned for substantive and technical revision.

The district is nominated at the national level of significance based on its association with the creation and development of the Southern Tenant Farmers Union and for its commercial importance.

There are a number of questions raised in reviewing this nomination having to do with the level of significance and the integrity of the district. While a case could be made for the importance of the Southern Tenant Farmers Union as a national organization, and the buildings belonging to Mitchell and East as the significant place associated with it, I do not believe that such a distinction can be applied to the district as a whole. The nomination claims commercial significance for the district, but it is unclear as to the level of significance. Commercially, the district probably had only a local impact; the nomination should reflect that. It is appropriate to check multiple boxes for the level of significance, assigning in the narrative the appropriate level of significance to the appropriate area of significance. That being said, there are also questions about the integrity of the district.

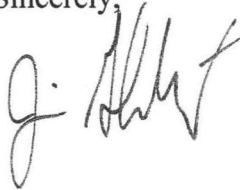
There are large holes in the streetscape. The description does not address whether the town developed in a haphazard way, as the current situation appears, or whether there was once cohesive development that has since been changed. A review of Sanborn maps, if available, would go a long way in tracking the development of the area and explaining

how that development is reflected in the extant streetscape. If there were buildings lining the streets in an unbroken line from the railroad to Mullins Street, it is important to note that. If not, it is important to note that, as well. If a number of buildings have been demolished, it is important to know when and how many and then it is important to assess the impact of these demolitions on the integrity of the district.

The building labeled 117 South main Street, the home to the STFU museum, was historically three separate buildings, each with its own function. They should be noted on the map and counted as such in the nomination. The two buildings owned by Mitchell and East are associated with the STFU. It might be more appropriate to nominate these two buildings on their own, if your desire is to claim national significance. It is from here that the Union was run (it would be interesting and helpful to know if the school 'outside Tyronza' where the union was first organized is still extant). Tying national significance to the district as a whole will be a more daunting task.

We appreciate the opportunity to review this nomination and hope that you find these comments useful. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions. I can be reached at (202) 354-2275 or email at <James_Gabbert@nps.gov>.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'J. Gabbert', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Jim Gabbert, Historian
National Register of Historic Places
11/12/2009

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: RESUBMISSION

PROPERTY Tyronza Commercial Historic District
NAME:

MULTIPLE
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: ARKANSAS, Poinsett

DATE RECEIVED: 7/15/10 DATE OF PENDING LIST:
DATE OF 16TH DAY: DATE OF 45TH DAY: 8/29/10
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 09000896

DETAILED EVALUATION:

☒ ACCEPT ☐ RETURN ☐ REJECT 8/29/2010 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

The district is significant locally in Commerce; nationally under Social History as the location of the birthplace of the Southern Tenant Farmers Union, an organization progressive in nature that worked to regain the rights of landless farmers. Two buildings in the district served as the birthplace and Headquarters for the Union.

The resubmitted nomination addressed the earlier Return Comments

RECOM./CRITERIA Accept Crit A

REVIEWER J. Gubbert DISCIPLINE _____

TELEPHONE _____ DATE _____

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/☒ see attached SLR Y/☒



1. 110 S. MAIN ST.; Mitchell Chambers, CLAY, EAST GAS STATION,
- TYNAMHA Commercial Historic District
2. Poinsett Cty., AR
3. photo by Sandra Taylor Smith
4. 01-07-09
5. NEGATIVE AT AHPP
6. view looking north west
- n. photo # 1



1. 117 S. MAIN STREET, Southern Tenant Farmers Museum
TYRONZA Commercial Historic District

2. POINSETT Cty., AR

3. photo by Sandra Taylor Smith

4. 01-07-89

5. NEGATIVE AT AHP

6. View looking northwest

7. photo #2



1. 134, 138, 140, 142, 146 S. MAIN STREET
TYRONZA Commercial Historic District
2. POINSETT CT., AR
3. photo By Sandra Taylor Smith
4. 01-07-09
5. NEGATIVE AT AHPP
6. view looking South East
7. photo #3



1. left - 147-155 S. MAIN; Right 134-146 S. MAIN STREET
Tyronza Commercial Historic District

2. Pomsett Ch., AR

3. Photo By Sandra Taylor Smith

4. 01-01-09

5. NEGATIVE AT AHPD

6. View looking north

7. photo #4



1. 163, 155, 153, 147B, 147 S. MAIN STREET
TYRONZA Commercial Historic District
2. Poinsett Co., AR
3. Photo By Sandra Taylor Smith
4. 01-07-89
5. NEGATIVE AT AHPP
6. View looking northwest
7. photo #5



1. 164 S. MAIN STREET
TYRONZA Commercial Historic District
2. Poinsett Co, AR
3. photo by Sandra Taylor Smith
4. 01-07-89
5. NEGATIVE AT AHPP
6. View looking South East
7. photo # 6



1. 143 S. MAIN STREET
TYRONZA Commercial Historic District
2. Poinsett Co., AR
3. photo by Sandra Taylor Smith
4. 01-07-09
5. NEGATIVE AT AHPP
6. View looking northeast
7. photo #7



1. 178 & 184 S. MAIN STREET
Tyronza Commercial Historic District
2. POINSETT CT., AR
3. Photo By Sandra Taylor Smith
4. 01-07-09
5. NEGATIVE AT AHPP
6. View looking north EAST
7. photo #8



1. 164, 178, 184 S. MAIN STREET
TYRONZA Commercial Historic District
2. Poinsett Co., AR
3. Photo By Sandra Taylor Smith
4. 01-07-09
5. NEGATIVE AT AHPP
6. View looking NORTHEAST
7. photo #9

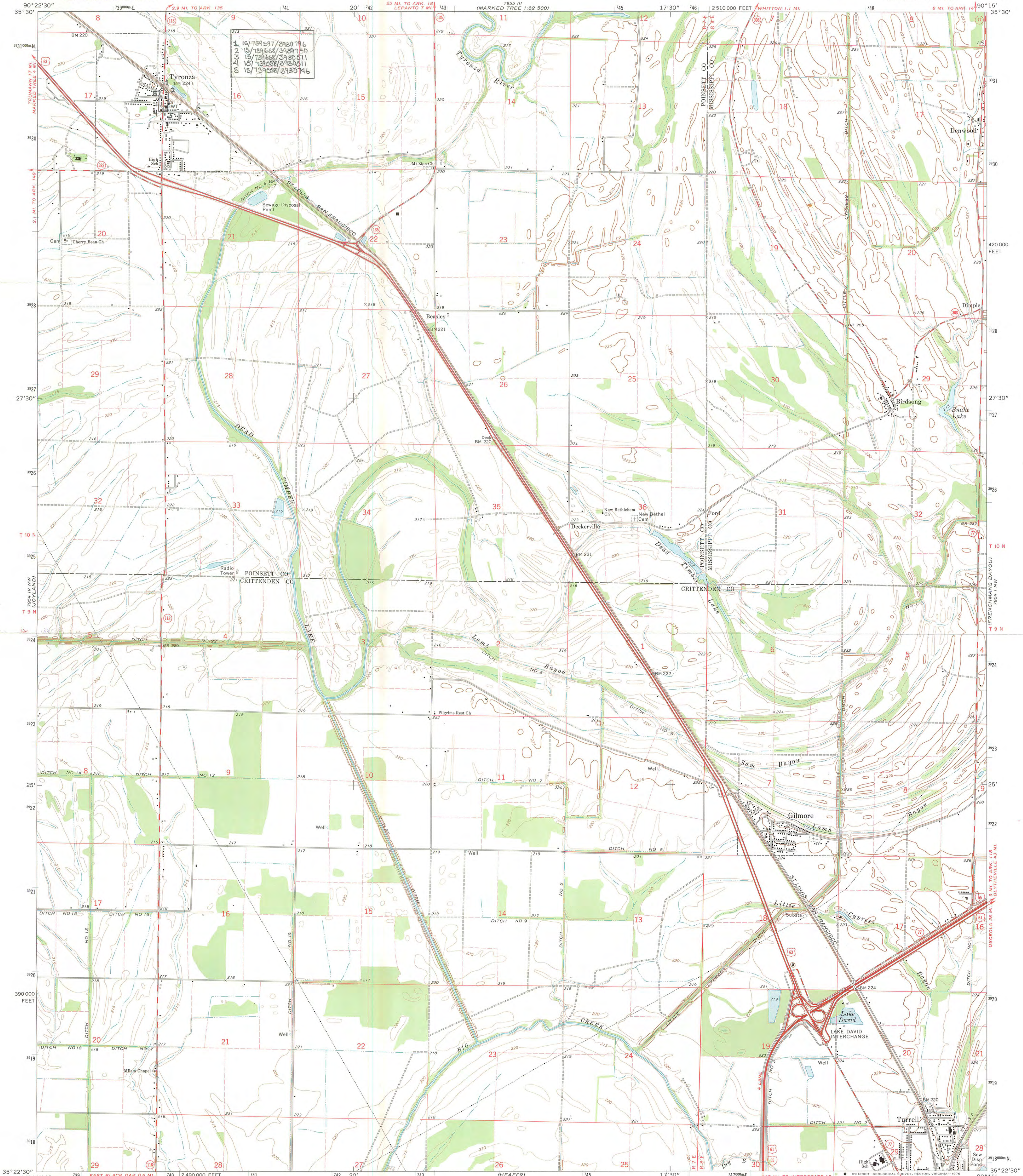


1. 191 S. MAIN STREET
TYRONZA Commercial Historic District
2. Poinsett Cty., AR
3. Photo By Sandra Taylor Smith
4. 8107-09
5. NEGATIVE AT AHPP
6. View looking north west
7. photo #10

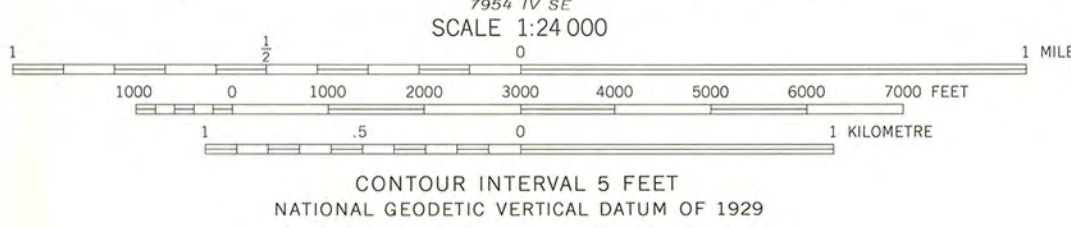
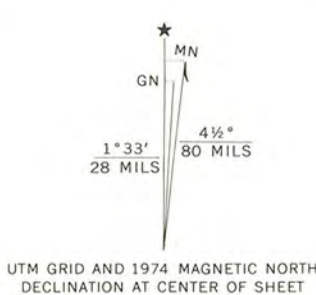
UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

Tyrone Commercial Historic District
Tyrone, Poinsett Co., AR

TYRONZA QUADRANGLE
ARKANSAS
7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)
NE 1/4 EARLE 15' QUADRANGLE



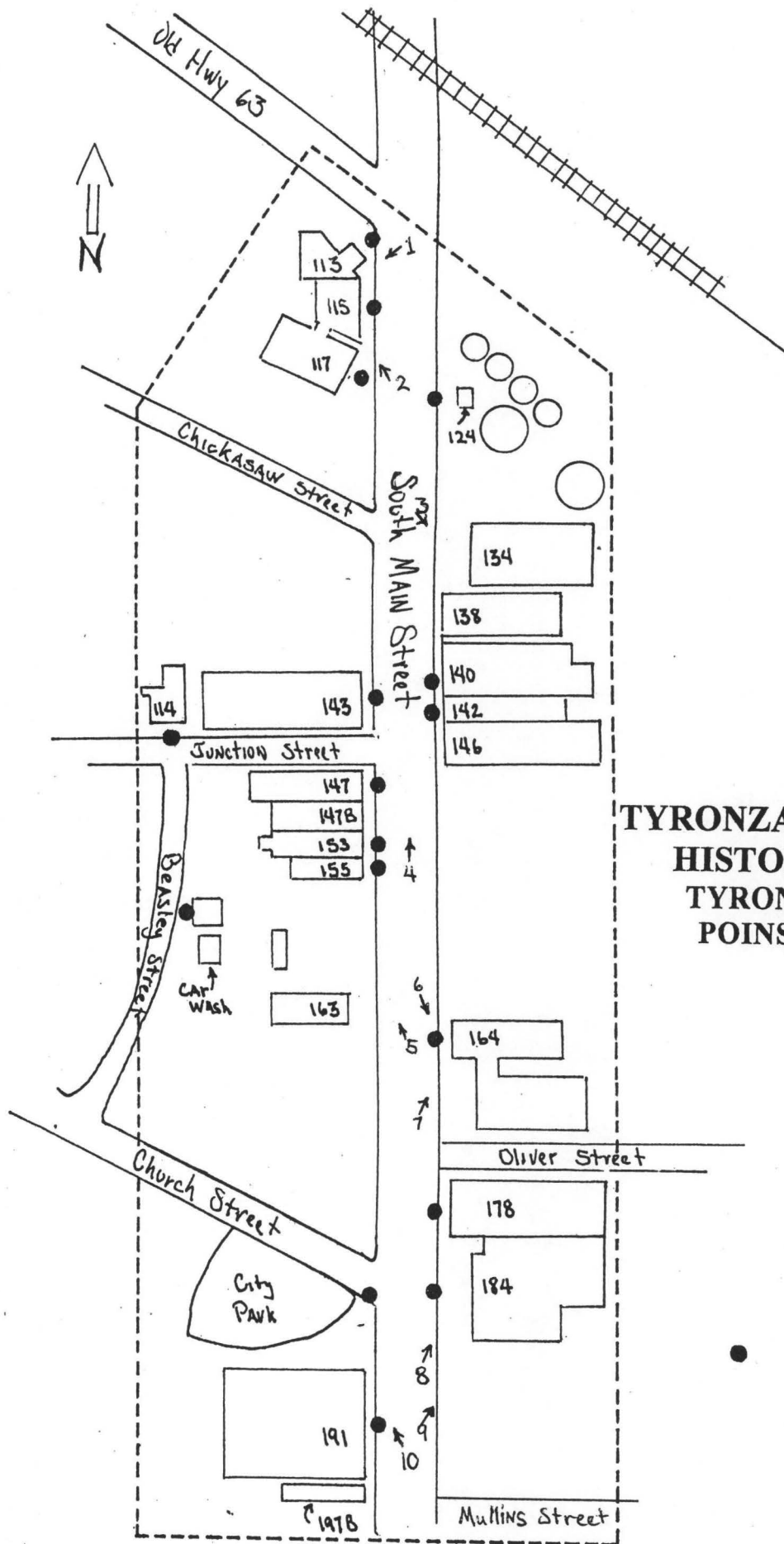
Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey
Control by USGS and NOS/NOAA
Topography by photogrammetric methods from aerial
photographs taken 1973. Field checked 1974
Projection and 10,000-foot grid ticks: Arkansas coordinate
system, north zone (Lambert conformal conic)
1000-metre Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks,
zone 15, shown in blue. 1927 North American datum
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
Secondary highway, hard surface
Unimproved road
Interstate Route
U. S. Route
State Route
Light-duty road, hard or improved surface
Unimproved road

TYRONZA, ARK.
NE 1/4 EARLE 15' QUADRANGLE
N 3522.5-W 9015.7/5
1974
AMS 7954 IV NE--SERIES V884

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



**TYRONZA COMMERCIAL
HISTORIC DISTRICT
TYRONZA, ARKANSAS
POINSETT COUNTY**

● Contributing



**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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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.com

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April 1, 2009

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: Tyronza Commercial Historic District – Tyronza, Poinsett
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



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

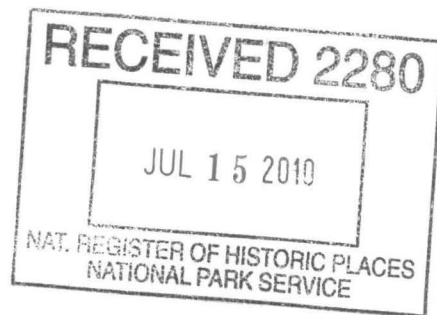
e-mail:

info@arkansaspreservation.org

website:

www.arkansaspreservation.com

An Equal Opportunity Employer



July 6, 2010

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: Tyronza Commercial Historic District – Tyronza, Poinsett
County, Arkansas

Dear Dr. Matthews:

We are enclosing for your review the **revised** 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