

MULTIPLE RESOURCES OF GREENVILLE

BUTLER COUNTY, ALABAMA

Historic name: East Commerce Street Historic District  
 Address: E. Commerce St. - 400-607; Conecuh St. - 101  
 Acreage: 4.5  
 Verbal Boundary: See enclosed scaled map.  
 UTM:  
 A-16/536/140-3521/500  
 B-16/536/180-3521/340  
 C-16/535/920-3521/350  
 D-16/535/920-3521/420  
 E-16/535/940-3521/500

Statement of Significance:

Criterion A - Government

The East Commerce Street Historic District is significant for its association with the Federal Works Progress Administration. The Greenville National Guard Armory was constructed in 1936 and was one of several Federally aided construction projects in Greenville during the 1930's. The armory cost \$28,464 to build of which the Federal Government paid \$24,995. The building is a typical example of one unit armories that were constructed by the W.P.A. throughout Alabama during the mid 1930's.

Criterion A - Politics and Government

The East Commerce Street Historic District is significant as the location of the Butler County seat since 1822. Four courthouses have served Butler County since Greenville was chosen as county seat in May 1822 and all four of these buildings have been located on the same site. The present courthouse (#13) was designed by Montgomery architect B. B. Smith and was constructed in 1903.

Criterion C - Architecture

The East Commerce Street District is significant for its collection of some of Greenville's oldest surviving commercial and civic architecture (c 1880-1936). The commercial buildings are primarily vernacular, but also included are a few good Victorian storefronts. Capps Drugstore is the most outstanding commercial building with Romanesque Revival features. The district also includes a fine Spanish Revival Catholic Church (1904). The Butler County Courthouse (1903) is a very good example of a late Victorian, eclectic, polychrome brick structure designed by a prominent Montgomery architect, B. B. Smith. The armory is a 1936 WPA building.

Description:

The East Commerce Street District is located at the intersection of Commerce and Conecuh Streets. The Butler County Court House is situated in the center of the intersection facing west. In addition to the courthouse, the district includes a Spanish Revival Catholic church, an armory constructed during the WPA era, ten one and two-story commercial storefronts (c 1890-c 1930) and a warehouse. The storefronts are all located

8/1/18

in a three block area on the north side of Commerce St. These commercial structures are in varying degrees of historic preservation and range in style from the simplest vernacular to late eclectic Victorian styles.

### Historical Summary:

The East Commerce Street Historic District has historically been the location for a section of Greenville's commercial area. The early commercial development of the town was located primarily around the site of the Butler County Courthouse the location of which has remained the same since 1822. Four courthouses have been located on the site of the present courthouse building which dates from 1903. At the turn of the century the 1872 brick courthouse was deemed inadequate to house the offices of Butler County government. This building was demolished and replaced by the present courthouse (#13) with its distinctive clock tower. The present courthouse was designed by Montgomery architect B. B. Smith and was constructed in 1903 at a cost of \$60,000.

The earliest buildings that remain in the district date from the 1880's and include the Harris Building (#3) located at the corner of Commerce Street and North Hickory Street, built for James Harris and later occupied by the Beeland Brothers Mercantile Company; the Lee Long Building (#4) and inventory number 6 on the corner of Commerce Street and North Chestnut Street.

The next major development in the district was the A. G. Stewart Building (#11) on the corner of Commerce Street and the courthouse square, constructed around 1906.

During the early 1920's a vacant two story building along with a storage shed, adjacent to the Wilkinson Warehouse, and facing out on the courthouse square were removed. These buildings were replaced by a one story brick garage and automobile showroom now occupied by Watson Furniture (#12).

During June 1924 the Pryor Store located in the Lee Long Building (#4) was renovated for use by the Alabama Power Company as an office. A new store front was added and the awnings and porch were torn away as well as the interior rebuilt. Part of the building was used for a display area, with another section used for storage. Lee Long's office was located in the shop next door to the Power Company office.

The two buildings adjacent to the A. G. Stewart Building, the Thagard Building (#9) on the corner of Commerce Street and North Chestnut, the Whiddon Building (#10) immediately adjacent to the Stewart Building and the Beeland Warehouse (#12) were all constructed to replace the buildings of the same names that were destroyed by a disastrous fire during the summer of 1927. These buildings were completed in January 1928.

The other major development during the 1920's was the construction of the Beeland Brothers Mercantile Company Building (#2) during 1924. Beeland Brothers Mercantile Company had been established in September 1883 with W. J. Beeland as President, R. A. Beeland, Treasurer and L. J. Beeland as secretary. Prior to the construction of its new building the company was located immediately across Hickory Street in the Harris Building (#3). The new building was constructed facing Commerce Street, the side facing North Hickory and the rear towards Cedar Street. The building was designed by Okel and Cooper Architects of Montgomery and was constructed by Hugger Brothers of Montgomery. The building was heavily damaged when near completion by a fire on September 20, 1924 but double work shifts had replaced the damage by November 1924. The original facade was cherry red brick, faced with a white cornice and highly polished wooden windows. In June 1928 a large addition was constructed to the rear of the building and increased its total floor space to 24,150 feet.

James T. Beeland and Company moved from the west Commerce section into the vacant Harris building on November 15, 1924.

The last major construction project in the district was the Greenville National Guard Armory (#14). The armory was constructed in 1936 on a lot donated by Butler

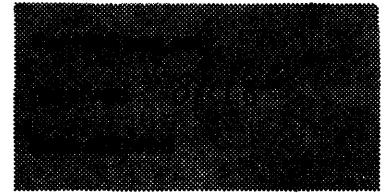
8/1/86

County. The building was a typical single unit armory constructed throughout the state for motorized units during the period. The brick Works Progress Administration building cost \$28,464 of which the Federal Government furnished \$24,995. The armory was constructed for Battery "A" of the 117th Field Artillery Regiment of the Alabama National Guard. The building remains basically unchanged with the exception of a larger wooden portico added to the front.

8/1/86

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form



Continuation sheet MRN #22

Item number 7

Page 1

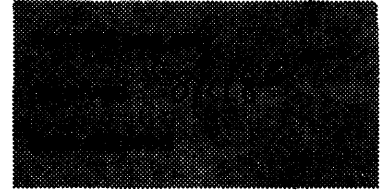
BUILDINGS WHICH CONTRIBUTE TO THE CHARACTER OF THE EAST COMMERCE STREET DISTRICT

1. 400 E. Commerce St. (St. Elizabeth Catholic Church): 1904; Spanish Revival, one story stucco, gable roof, three story front bell tower w/ pyramidal roof, arched stained glass windows, buttresses. Roll 20, Neg. 0.
6. 509-509½ E. Commerce St.: c 1900; two story brick commercial, flat roof, first floor recessed entry original but flanking display windows are modern, original transom, second floor windows hidden behind plywood panels. Roll 10, Neg. 10.
8. 513-515 E. Commerce St. (Greenville Hardware): c 1890; two story brick commercial, flat roof, first floor has original cast iron fluted columns between display windows and entries, modern metal canopy over entry, second floor windows hidden behind plywood panels, metal cornice recently removed. Roll 10, Neg. 8.
10. 603 E. Commerce St.: 1928; two story brick commercial, flat roof, first floor display windows and entry are modern, transoms are original as are 1/1 second floor sash, corbeled brick cornice. Roll 10, Neg. 6.
11. 605-607 E. Commerce St. (Capps Drugstore): c 1906; two story brick commercial, flat roof w/ center parapet, corbeled brick cornice, first floor has modern metal framed display windows and entries, former transom covered w/ metal panels, second floor has original arched 1/1 windows. Roll 10, Neg. 5.
12. 611 E. Commerce St. (Watson's Furnishing and Warehouse): c 1920; one story brick commercial, flat roof w/ tile capped parapet, three bay facade w/ original display windows and entry, small paned transom over each window bay section. Roll 10, Neg. 24.
13. P. O. Box 756, 700 Court Sq. (Courthouse): 1903; two story brick w/ recent one story modern marble front, hipped roof w/ cross gable extentions, center front clock tower topped w/ small dome, stone beltcourses and window lintels, designed by architect B. B. Smith. Roll 4, Neg. 29, 30 and 31.
14. 101 Conecuh St. (Armory): 1936; one story brick, gable roof, metal framed windows, gabled full height tetrahearon portico. Roll 20, Neg. 1.

8/1/86

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**



Continuation sheet

MRN #22

Item number 7

Page 2

BUILDINGS WHICH CONDITIONALLY CONTRIBUTE TO THE CHARACTER OF THE EAST COMMERCE STREET DISTRICT

2. 4? E. Commerce St. (Fortex Building): 1924; two story brick commercial, flat roof, denticulated cornice across top of facade, first floor windows and entry openings sealed w/ brick infill. Roll 10, Neg. 15.
7. 511 E. Commerce St.: c 1900; one story brick commercial, modern plate glass entry and display windows, aluminum canopy, metal covering over former transom. Roll 10, Neg. 9.

BUILDINGS WHICH DO NOT CONTRIBUTE TO THE CHARACTER OF THE EAST COMMERCE STREET DISTRICT

3. 501-503 E. Commerce St.: c 1880; one story brick commercial, flat roof, original recessed double entry, transoms hidden behind plywood and glass panels, one half of facade painted, display windows on 501 original, modern display windows on 503. Roll 10, Neg. 13 and 14.
4. 505-505½ East Commerce St.: c 1890; two story brick commercial, flat roof, modern brick veneered first floor, second floor original brick w/ 2/2 windows and corbeled brick cornice. Roll 10, Neg. 12.
5. 507 E. Commerce St.: c 1900; two story commercial, brick veneered, first floor entry doors original, second floors 2/2 windows original. Roll 10, Neg. 11.
9. 601 E. Commerce St.: 1928; two story commercial, flat roof, modern brick first floor infill with modern entry and windows, second floor window openings partially enclosed w/modern sash. Roll 10, Neg. 7.