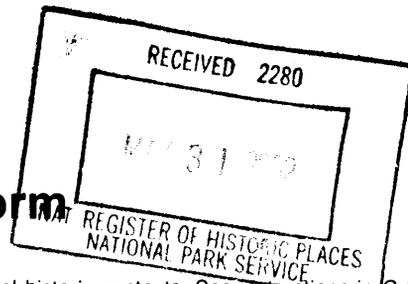


United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

645801



National Register of Historic Places  
Multiple Property Documentation Form

This form is for use in documenting multiple property groups relating to one or several historic contexts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900-a). Type all entries.

**A. Name of Multiple Property Listing**

Historic and Architectural Resources of New Blaine, Arkansas

**B. Associated Historic Contexts**

Historic and Architectural Resources of New Blaine, Arkansas 1920-1949

**C. Geographical Data**

Town of New Blaine, Logan County, Arkansas

See continuation sheet

**D. Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this documentation form meets the National Register documentation standards and sets forth requirements for the listing of related properties consistent with the National Register criteria. This submission meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60 and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Planning and Evaluation.

*Cecilia Matthews*

Signature of certifying official

5/13/02

Date

Arkansas Historic Preservation Program

State or Federal agency and bureau

I, hereby, certify that this multiple property documentation form has been approved by the National Register as a basis for evaluating related properties for listing in the National Register.

*Edson H. Beall*

Signature of the Keeper of the National Register

7.11.02

Date

---

**E. Statement of Historic Contexts**

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Discuss each historic context listed in Section B.

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**F. Associated Property Types**

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I. Name of Property Type \_\_\_\_\_

II. Description

III. Significance

IV. Registration Requirements

See continuation sheet

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See continuation sheet for additional property types

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**G. Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods**

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Discuss the methods used in developing the multiple property listing.

See continuation sheet

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**H. Major Bibliographical References**

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See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional documentation:

- State historic preservation office  
 Other State agency  
 Federal agency

- Local government  
 University  
 Other

Specify repository: \_\_\_\_\_

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**I. Form Prepared By**

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The community of New Blaine, once known simply as Blaine, has endured a restless history of transition that could be said to characterize the area today. The commercial core of this diminutive community in Logan County - which has also experienced its share of change - has moved twice and has been impacted three times by changes wrought by nature and man, in the main travel routes leading through its center since its late-nineteenth century beginnings. New Blaine is once again undergoing change, not in location but in the form of a regenerated interest in the preservation of its historic resources and commemoration of its founding members by area residents. Though the population has never been large compared to nearby towns such as Paris or Dardanelle, those who began New Blaine maintained thriving commercial areas and actively engaged in numerous social and religious organizations. The legacy of New Blaine is copiously chronicled in photographs, articles and local histories and is remembered vividly by those who descended from settlers of the earlier Blaine that continue to make their home in New Blaine and in towns and communities close by.

French and Spanish explorers entered the Arkansas River Valley of what was to become Logan County prior to 1800 searching for precious metals. Goodspeed's Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Western Arkansas also notes that a transient class of settlers was then present in the area that did not put down roots or make a mark of any note on the history of the county. Thus earliest documented permanent settlement in the area encompassing Blaine did not commence until the beginning of the nineteenth century. Some immigrants to the region of modern Logan County entered between 1811 and 1812 seeking to redeem New Madrid certificates for lands lost through damage caused by a series of earthquakes in the Mississippi River Valley. Others settled there on lands secured through grants from the federal government for service in the War of 1812.

Osage Indian populations in northwest Arkansas Territory engaged in war for several years in the early nineteenth century with the Cherokee who had usurped the traditional Osage hunting grounds in the course of an 1817 migration, making that area of the state dangerous and undesirable to white settlement. In 1824 the Osage relinquished their claim to the land and the Cherokee were moved farther west by 1828, facilitating speedier settlement in the future Logan County on inexpensive - or in the case of squatters to the still-wild region - free land. Many of these new settlers came from hilly areas in Kentucky, Tennessee, Alabama and North and South Carolina, terrain that was similar to the land south of the Arkansas River. A mountain range 25 miles south of the

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river, beyond which lay rocky, infertile land, attracted the majority of early settlement to the more fruitful river valley area until transportation networks began to mature and become more passable.

The majority of overland antebellum transportation routes through the area were merely overgrown paths through the woods and despite sporadic efforts at improvement they remained substandard until the 1820s. The presence of Fort Smith military post at Belle Point led to the construction of a military road from Dardanelle to Fort Smith in 1835 when Lieutenant Jefferson Davis of the United States Army was charged with surveying a road for the removal of Indian populations. The route, part of which was incorporated into modern Arkansas Highway 22, brought travelers from the Arkansas River at Dardanelle west to Fort Smith and into Indian Territory. The road paralleled the Arkansas River for some distance and gave access to what would become Blaine in Shoal Creek Township, then located in Johnson County. No solid evidence for the formation date of Shoal Creek Township, which was annexed to Logan County in 1875, has been found; however, Geographic Site Location Reports for Arkansas note that there was a community of Shoal Creek within the township that had received a post office in 1839 so it is possible that the township of the same name can be traced at least to that year.

Steadily improving access in the form of revamped roads brought increased settlement and better communication with the outside world past the immediate area of the river. By the start of the Civil War this ease of entry also allowed soldiers from both sides to cross into the river valley at existing ferry crossings and traverse the county engaging in skirmishes and leading foraging expeditions. Later bushwhacker raids imposed great losses for settlers in the area as renegade soldiers depleted food stores and murdered indiscriminately. Frequent military action and violent raiding forays caused many river valley families to seek refuge at Fort Smith or leave the state entirely for Missouri, Texas and Illinois until the end of the war, which kept the county underdeveloped for the next four years. By 1865 returning families and soldiers who reclaimed their ruined farms began the general trend toward renewed settlement in the county. At the same time groups of settlers from Mississippi who had experienced the same level of loss during the war entered the county, boosting the population numbers.

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Boundary placement of the county containing New Blaine was as fluid as the core of the community. The county of Logan was organized in 1875, however it had been known since 1871 as Sarber County. A bill passed by the General Assembly allowed the formation of Sarber from fragments of Johnson, Yell, Franklin and Scott counties in order to retain the Johnson county seat in Clarksville. Republican Senator John Newton Sarber was persuaded by a group of Clarksville residents to introduce a bill at the 1871 session of the legislature for the formation of a new county bearing his name south of the river, however Sarber proposed it be named for Governor Powell Clayton. When the bill passed the name had been changed to Sarber through an oversight by Senator Torrens, chairman of the committee on counties. The newly formed county was instituted during the tempestuous Reconstruction era, during which many Arkansas residents were still fostering resentment for Republican efforts at civil rights for freedmen. Since Sarber was named for a prominent Republican politician many ex-Confederates smarting from assaults to their rights as citizens under the Reconstruction government rallied the recently Democratic controlled legislature for a name change. In 1874 an act was passed calling for the county to be named Logan in honor of Colonel James Logan, a Missouri farmer who had settled in Arkansas circa 1830.

The main cash crop for Logan County was cotton, so the majority of longtime residents and recent immigrants engaged in raising cotton and cattle. Since the area was heavily wooded, incoming farmers who cleared the land for subsistence or cotton farming became by necessity timbermen. Big and Little Shoal Creeks offered passage to the Arkansas River for floating logs to market from the northern section of the county. The post-war increase in new residents resulted in the formation of small communities branching from pioneer settlements. Naturally, the needs of expanding numbers led to the establishment of commerce centers within the county. By 1884 the community of Blaine on the Military Road had been established and had received a post office by the same name. Blaine contained the typical amenities of early Arkansas settlement centers such as a school, cotton gin, stores, a doctor's office and by 1889 a sawmill, all of which served farm families who were situated in outlying areas throughout the township. The weatherboard buildings of Blaine lay north and south of the Military Road on the west bank of Little Shoal Creek, which was spanned by a wooden bridge.

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The namesake of Blaine has been noted in oral history among New Blaine residents to be Senator James Gillespie Blaine of Maine. Blaine is connected to Arkansas through a convoluted set of circumstances surrounding the construction of the Little Rock to Fort Smith railway line in western Arkansas. Blaine, then Speaker of the House, was considered the Republican choice for President in 1876. Prior to the party convention he was accused by a Democratic House investigating committee with exerting improper influence in pushing through the passage of an 1869 bill to renew a land grant to the Little Rock and Fort Smith Railroad in Arkansas. Scandal involving profits made from his connection with the Arkansas line ensued but the investigation was dropped when he contracted a lengthy illness in 1876. After an unsuccessful second attempt to nominate Blaine to the presidency in 1880, he was finally nominated in 1884 and ran against Democratic candidate Grover Cleveland. After a lively campaign during which past scandals involving both candidates reappeared, Blaine lost to Cleveland. The connection to the Logan County community is made with the establishment of a post office on the military road by the name of Blaine in 1884 and the senator's bid for the presidency in that same year.

Blaine's commercial center thrived for several years and it remained a noteworthy business location for the township being situated as it was on a main thoroughfare. By the beginning of the twentieth century the first change for the little community was in the air as Arkansas slowly began to recover from the Civil War and the effects of the Panic of 1873. A result of this recovery was that more inroads to the state and to Logan County were created in the form of increased railroad miles. The Arkansas Central Railway, contracted to run from Fort Smith to Paris in 1897, experienced a rocky start and went into receivership in 1898 before the line was completed. It was not until 1900 that it finally reached Paris and in 1908 a charter was granted to the Paris-Subiaco Traction Company to build a rail connection six miles east from Paris to the Catholic abbey of the Order of St. Benedict in the future town site of Subiaco. After its completion one year later the Traction Company was reorganized as the Ft. Smith, Subiaco & Eastern Railroad. The first project of the fledgling company was to add seven rail miles northeast from the abbey to a new town site known as Scranton in order to gain access to the productive farming and coal mining operations in the area. The secretary of state gave his

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permission for the Ft. Smith, Subiaco & Eastern to finance a twenty-three mile extension of the line to Dardanelle, where it would connect with the Dardanelle, Ola & Southern, which in turn connected with the Rock Island at Ola. Upon completion the line would provide unbroken access from Fort Smith to Little Rock. However, the events of World War I wreaked havoc on Arkansas railroad financing and stalled the construction of the line by 1917. The Ft. Smith, Subiaco & Eastern was sold in 1918 and reorganized as the Ft. Smith, Subiaco & Rock Island. Work on the rail extension resumed from Dardanelle with a new charter in 1919 and the city launched the first locomotive to Fort Smith in 1920.

The line passed one half-mile north of Blaine and made a stop there at a small rock depot constructed in 1920 on the north bank of Silver Smith Branch. The depot was a harbinger of things to come at the future location of New Blaine. The city center of Blaine was concentrated in its original location until about 1922. The future seemed bright with the introduction of the railroad and a movement quickly began for the incorporation of a town called New Blaine. Railroad developers had a townsite surveyed north of the tracks and the depot in 1921 and Blaine retailers slowly began moving toward the tracks into new rock commercial buildings on lots that were originally part of the Richard Harrison estate. The move was not total, as Birkhead's cotton gin remained on the shore of Little Shoal Creek until the 1930s and the New Blaine School held classes in its original locale until consolidation closed it down in the 1960s. Blaine and New Blaine essentially coexisted until the new post office was established in 1923 with the name of New Blaine.

The new business center included a blacksmith, a doctor, a sawmill, cotton gin and grist mill, several mercantiles, a bank, garage, barber shop and a telephone office. All of the buildings in New Blaine were constructed of local rock by area stonemasons Aaron Moore, John Friga and Freeborn Lasater. The bulk of construction on Main Street, also known as Sellars Street, in the new town center began in 1922 and the masonry buildings were such a point of pride for the residents that two signs on the east and west ends of town were erected proclaiming "New Blaine, the only town in Arkansas built in native stone." The circa 1922 Farmer's State Bank building - now known as the History Museum - is the single Main Street commercial building that remains from the formative years of New Blaine. The cut-rock structure exhibits the typical rectangular floor plan of commercial buildings sharing a party wall, and historic photographs from circa 1922 show that the building shared representative architectural characteristics of the bulk of

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New Blaine's eight building retail center. Despite undergoing alterations to the front façade the basic arrangement of a central entry flanked by two display windows can still be ascertained.

The architectural technique of New Blaine's stonemasons can also be seen in the circa 1923 cut-stone Methodist Episcopal Church South on Cravens Street. Though the church has been used for other purposes and has been vacant for some time it has not sustained any exterior alterations and still displays angled entries accessed through stone arches as well as original windows and a metal pyramid roof. The promise held by the post-1920 location of New Blaine was expressed in the circa 1922 Old Main Street Stone Bridge over Silver Smith Branch. The original bridge was wooden but the increased traffic of customers and railway travelers over the branch made the construction of a stronger stone bridge necessary. The bridge consists of a simple arch beneath a span of dirt roadway, similar to many CCC constructed culverts found in Arkansas state parks throughout Arkansas. A later contribution to the business section of New Blaine was the 1935 Lasater Service Station, also of cut-stone. The small service station situated south of the bank building on the original section of Highway 22, is constructed in the English Revival style with a prominent gabled entry similar to many larger gas stations built throughout the state during that era.

The fundamental character of New Blaine as a small farming community did not undergo drastic change with the introduction of the railroad. It did provide transportation for those men who went to work in the coal mines to the west and more ready market access for the local retailers, but most residents continued to engage in farming and living outside of the small commercial area. Further improvements in access to the county were on the way and would mean yet another change for New Blaine. The military roads that had provided passage to the west through Logan County were the next area of the state's transportation network to receive attention during the early twentieth century.

By 1917 the state began to designate highways with a numbering system and aggressively pursue road improvement. Increasing automobile ownership made road enhancement programs a priority. Though the Martineau-Parnell road program was rife with corruption and on a fast track to disaster, state highway mileage increased substantially under the tenures of Governor John E. Martineau (1926) and subsequent

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governor, Harvey Parnell (1928). The new State Highway 22 was lauded in 1929 as the gateway for development in the western section of the state as it would open up the previously hard-to-reach area isolated by geographic obstacles. The new highway was to largely follow the route of the 1835 military road, which had been designated the Jefferson Davis highway in 1923 and was the first state highway to be completely paved end-to-end. The modern road, which brushed the southeastern edge of New Blaine, was completed in 1930. With the new highway offering quicker and more comfortable travel those buildings (except for the sawmill that had been relocated and the functioning New Blaine School, NR listed 08/18/92) remaining at the site of Old Blaine on the Military Road were abandoned and by the mid-1930s they had fallen to the flames of an arsonist.

Despite an enthusiastic beginning and the promising outlook of improved access, New Blaine was no match for the forces of nature and the effects of the Depression. Formal incorporation of the community into a town was forestalled by the floods of 1927, which washed out railroad tracks and highway bridges, detrimentally impacting a local economy, already weakened by dropping cotton prices. When the Depression hit and the drought of 1930 reduced the cotton harvest - a mainstay of the New Blaine economy - statewide farm income fell by 62 percent. Production at the coal mines declined and the appearance of the automobile caused a downturn in profits for the Ft. Smith, Subiaco & Rock Island. Larger lines to the north and south that offered direct routes and lower rates diverted business from the smaller shortline resulting in the elimination of thirty-eight miles of track between Ola and Scranton. The population was reduced once again as farm families, retailers, railroad workers and miners uprooted to search for more lucrative circumstances. New Blaine was not able to rebound and its juxtaposition to larger city centers like Russellville, Paris and Dardanelle that offered better job and education opportunities eventually pulled younger people from the area, and they tended to remain in the larger towns. Some of the elderly population in New Blaine eventually became incapacitated and they too had to move to areas that offered nursing homes and hospitals, further reducing the number of permanent residents. By 1945 many of the remaining businesses on Main Street had closed or moved to the new highway in the second of New Blaine's two small scale diasporas influenced by changing transportation patterns.

The land encompassing the city center was purchased in the 1950s and the new owner destroyed all of the commercial buildings except for the Farmer's State Bank and the

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Lasater Service Station. A home was built by the new owner south of the town well, but it was later destroyed by fire and it was not rebuilt. Lake Dardanelle was built in 1962, taking a handful of New Blaine area homes with it. In 1966 the section of Highway 22 that skirted New Blaine's business section was shifted to the southeast in order to cut out a curve and eliminate the need for building a new bridge over Little Shoal Creek. This relocation of the highway effectively cut New Blaine off the main route. Shoal Bay Recreation Area on the lake was constructed around 1972 on State Highway 197, placing New Blaine at the entry to a popular hiking and camping area. A few vacation homes and some year-round homes were built. However it was not enough to provide a marked renaissance for New Blaine's residential and commercial opportunities. With the construction of Interstate 40 north of New Blaine, it became one of many small stops on Highway 22 that were bypassed by speedier freeway travel offering convenient exit ramps to larger towns and quick in-and-out access to chain stores and "quickie marts."

By the 1970s interest began to generate among a group of current and former residents of New Blaine in preserving the community's physical historic resources and documenting the memories of those who lived there. The few remaining historic buildings from New Blaine's more active period were purchased and restored for use as tour homes, a store, restaurant and museum. Though some of the buildings were relocated to protect them from deterioration and vandalism, each are pertinent to the thread of history that connects them to Blaine and New Blaine as outstanding examples of late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century farmhouses, "city houses" and commercial buildings.

Despite numerous setbacks and shifting boundaries, vestiges of Blaine and New Blaine's past survive to offer glimpses of life in a small nineteenth and twentieth century farming community. The area was all but abandoned by residents seeking simply to survive or to take advantage of rapidly modernizing lifestyles opened to them by new transportation routes. However, many ancestors of original settlers remain in the area, maintaining a rich oral history and a store of memories that keep New Blaine from vaporizing into the past. Though they are scattered on both sides of Highway 22 and the abandoned railroad grade, each historic resource reveals the trail of Blaine and New Blaine's shifting histories.

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**F. Associated Property Types**

- I.** Name of Property Type: Residential buildings, commercial buildings and bridges of New Blaine, Arkansas
- II.** Description: All of the structures in this nomination were built between 1920 and 1940. Most are of stone construction and reflect the local building traditions that emphasize the use of locally available materials in the form of fieldstone and cut stone. Stylistically, they include vernacular interpretations of nationally popular styles as English Revival and Craftsman styles, though many are best described as simply vernacular.
- III.** Significance: The significance of the properties included in this nomination derives from not only their architectural significance as excellent specimens of construction techniques employed by local craftsmen, but also for their role in the development of the town of New Blaine. The structures included in the nomination convey the transformation of a sparsely populated area into a small bustling community created by the arrival of the railroad in the area. The nomination includes the best examples of remaining resource that best represent the town's development and the craftsmanship of local builders.

**IV. Registration Requirements:**

Historic and architectural resources of New Blaine, Arkansas, must meet three basic requirements to be included in this multiple-property listing:

- 1) The resource must still stand in its original location
- 2) The resource must still retain sufficient physical integrity to remain recognizable as a reflection of the period in which it was built; subsequent alterations must not overwhelm the resource's original design.
- 3) The resource should reflect the building traditions of New Blaine's construction craftsmen, a connection to the town's historic development, or both.

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**G. Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods**

In the summer of 2001, Mary Gehring, a New Blaine business owner and local historian, contacted the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program to inquire about possibly getting some local properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Although Ms. Gehring is not a native of the local area, she has been deeply involved in local history and historic preservation since moving to New Blaine from California in the 1970s. When she arrived in New Blaine she saw that many of the town's historic buildings were in disrepair or had been insensitively altered. She purchased many of the buildings and returned them to their original glory. It was hoped that National Register recognition would increase the understanding and appreciation of these buildings. The AHPP and local preservationists could then encourage their continued preservation and protection.

The project involved significant interaction and cooperation between local citizens and AHPP staff. Mary Gehring prepared initial photographic and historic information on each of the buildings submitted, which then was reviewed by the national Register of Historic Places staff to determine which were eligible for National Register recognition. The National Register and Survey staff then traveled to New Blaine to complete architectural resources forms and photo documentation of eligible structures, and worked with Ms. Gehring to complete the final nomination forms. This project is envisioned as a continuing project with other New Blaine resources to amended to the context as nominations are prepared.

The initial nomination includes two buildings and one bridge that were considered eligible for inclusion in the context, since they had not been moved, and retained sufficient integrity to reflect the period in which they were built and the town's historic building traditions, as determined by the professional historians and architectural historians of the AHPP's Survey and National Register staffs. Integrity requirements were based on knowledge of existing properties and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards of Eligibility to the National Register of Historic Places. For each resorded property, locations were noted on USGS topographical maps; photographs, both black and white prints and color slides, were of exterior elevations. Computerized inventory forms, complete with plan view drawings, were completed; and research, utilizing primary, secondary and oral history sources, was conducted.

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These properties represent significant physical reminders of the development of the small railroad community nestled along Shoal Creek in the Arkansas River Valley, as well as the building traditions manifested through the use of locally available materials, particularly stone. By publicly recognizing the importance of these resources, the AHPP hopes to encourage the preservation of these properties and to also increase awareness of the town's rich history.

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