

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

For NPS use only
received SEP 28 1982
date entered

1. Name

historic Owensboro Historic Commercial District

and/or common

2. Location

street & number Second Street between St. Ann and Lewis Streets not for publication

city, town Owensboro vicinity of ~~Congressional District~~

state Kentucky code county Daviess code

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	N/A in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	N/A being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name See continuation sheet.

street & number

city, town vicinity of state

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Daviess County Courthouse

street & number West Second Street

city, town Owensboro state Kentucky

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Survey of Historic Sites in Ky. has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1977 federal state county local

depository for survey records Kentucky Heritage Council

city, town Frankfort state Kentucky

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Owensboro Historic Commercial District occupies three blocks of Second Street in downtown Owensboro, Kentucky from Lewis Street on the east to St. Ann Street on the west and contains 43 structures. Of these, 31 (72%) are contributing elements to the historic streetscape and 12 (28%) are intrusions either because they are of recent design which is incompatible with the majority of historic structures or they have undergone serious or irreparable facade alterations. Two buildings which have sustained major modifications to their upper stories but which retain a significant degree of the original fabric underneath the more recent facade have been classified as contributing structures. They are 107 and 120 East Second Street (see photos 1&2). Storefront alterations have not been considered intrusions in determining the value of structures to the overall visual integrity of the district. The same standards have been applied to buildings constructed since 1930.

The majority of the contributing structures were built in the 1880s; most of the remaining contributing buildings were constructed during the next three decades. A few date from the 1930-1940 period. The oldest structure in the district is the Smith-Werner block (116-122 West Second) which dates from 1850 (see photos 3-5).

Most structures are two- or three-story brick buildings of load-bearing construction. Renaissance and Romanesque Revival qualities are evident, while the simpler Italianate features characteristic of period commercial structures, such as hood moulds and modillioned cornices, also appear.

Metal streetfronts remain with the best example being the exquisite Solomon Wile building at 105 East Second (see photos 6&7). Erected in 1881, the entire two-story, four-bay Renaissance Revival facade is cast iron. Round-headed windows with free-standing colonnettes between the bays and an elaborate cornice make this an architectural landmark within the district. Few commercial structures of this type in Kentucky can surpass the Solomon Wile building. Another impressive structure is the block of four pressed metal streetfronts at 116-122 West Second manufactured by the George L. Mesker firm of Evansville, Indiana (see photos 3-5). Paired pilasters are interspersed between the straight-headed windows, and the original store owners' names appeared in the cornice above each business. Today, the name Werner remains above No. 116 and Smith above No. 118. Other buildings, while lacking complete cast iron or pressed metal facades, display cast iron storefronts on the ground floor, such as the Mesker example at 112-114 West Second (see photo 8). Evidence of another metal storefront can be seen at 207-211 East Second (see photo 9). Several others undoubtedly lie hidden behind more recent street level treatments.

A key facade anchoring the southeast corner of the district is the Gunther building at 224 East Second, a three-story, six-bay brick

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates	Builder/Architect
1870-1930	Various

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Owensboro Historic Commercial District contains the major concentration of nineteenth and twentieth century commercial structures reflecting the city's development as a manufacturing, trade, and transportation center. Isolated examples of commercial architecture exist elsewhere, but the collection of buildings and the unbroken streetscape give distinction to this three-block section of Second Street.

Settlement of Owensboro began about 1800 along the south shore of the Ohio River at a spot called Yellow Banks because of the steep muddy river bank. The first recorded settler, William Smeathers, is believed to have built a cabin there in 1797-98. In 1816, the town was known as Rossborough, but in the following year the state legislature changed the name to Owensborough, later Owensboro, in memory of Kentucky Colonel Abraham Owen who died at the Battle of Tippecanoe.

Its location on the Ohio River offered Owensboro a promising future. River trade was established in the early decades of the nineteenth century, and by the 1840s steamboats began making regular landings at Owensboro. Many of the town's retail stores branched into the wholesale market, providing goods to inland towns as well as trading along the river.

Like many Kentucky towns, Owensboro was just beginning to develop as a commercial center at the outbreak of the Civil War. The war brought a temporary halt to Owensboro's growth. Although the city was officially neutral, trade was cut off by a federal embargo on all Ohio River commerce.

Second, or Main Street as it is known locally, began to assume its present character in the post-war years. Most of the earlier nineteenth century buildings have been destroyed, many by fires that plagued the town until the establishment of a fire department in the 1890s. The majority of the extant structures date from the 1880s. The story of Solomon Wile is typical of Second Street's growth in the last decades of the nineteenth century. Wile was a German immigrant who started in business as a country peddler. He erected his first store with living quarters in the rear in 1865. When his business grew after the Civil War, he built a house on Fourth Avenue in the fashionable residential section and the structure at 105 East Second in 1881 for his clothing store.

Another German immigrant, Frank T. Gunther, opened a grocery in Owens-

9. Major Bibliographical References

Potter, Hugh O. History of Owensboro and Daviess County. Owensboro, Kentucky: Daviess County Historical Society, 1974.

Thacker, Glenda. "Owensboro's Main Street." Series of articles published (see Continuation sheet)

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property Approx. 8 acres

Quadrangle name Owensboro East

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UMT References

A	<u>1</u> <u>6</u>	<u>4</u> <u>9</u> <u>0</u> <u>4</u> <u>1</u> <u>0</u>	<u>4</u> <u>1</u> <u>8</u> <u>0</u> <u>6</u> <u>8</u> <u>0</u>	B	<u>1</u> <u>6</u>	<u>4</u> <u>9</u> <u>0</u> <u>4</u> <u>1</u> <u>5</u>	<u>4</u> <u>1</u> <u>8</u> <u>0</u> <u>5</u> <u>8</u> <u>0</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
C	<u>1</u> <u>6</u>	<u>4</u> <u>9</u> <u>0</u> <u>1</u> <u>1</u> <u>5</u>	<u>4</u> <u>1</u> <u>8</u> <u>0</u> <u>5</u> <u>6</u> <u>0</u>	D	<u>1</u> <u>6</u>	<u>4</u> <u>9</u> <u>0</u> <u>1</u> <u>1</u> <u>0</u>	<u>4</u> <u>1</u> <u>8</u> <u>0</u> <u>6</u> <u>7</u> <u>0</u>
E	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	F	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
G	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	H	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>

Verbal boundary description and justification

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Charlotte Worsham/Preservation Consultant

organization _____ date September 1982

street & number 14 Holyoke Street telephone _____

city or town Boston state Massachusetts

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature Mary Susan O'Neil

title State Historic Preservation Officer date Sept. 23, 1982

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Lisa M. Clelland date 1-12-83
Keeper of the National Register

Attest: Patrick Andrews date 1/10/83
Chief of Registration

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
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Owensboro Historic Commercial District

Continuation sheet Daviess County, Kentucky Item number 4

Page 1

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LIST OF OWNERS

219 E. 2nd	Ira Wood 219 E. 2nd, Owensboro
217 E. 2nd	Ira Wood 219 E. 2nd, Owensboro
215 E. 2nd	Bob Gipe 2000 Parrish Ave., Owensboro
211 E. 2nd	Mary Mitchell-Owensboro National Bank-Ron Shepherd 230 Frederica Street
211 E. 2nd	John Dickson 211 E. 2nd, Owensboro
209 E. 2nd	David Brodie, Attorney 227 St. Ann St., Owensboro
207 E. 2nd	Ira Wood 219 E. 2nd, Owensboro
203-205 E. 2nd	Turley Estate, Jane Turley Saylor 800 Ford Ave., Owensboro
210 E. 2nd	Don Jackson Estate Mrs. Jackson, 2000 Littlewood Owensboro
121 E. 2nd	Frank Hayden 121 E. 2nd, Owensboro
115-119 E.2nd	Louise Griffin Estate Owensboro National Bank Trust-Ron Shepherd, 230 Frederica St., Owensboro
113 E. 2nd	Earl Dawson 25 Stone Creek, Owensboro
111 E. 2nd	Adolf Baker 214 W. 9th Owensboro
109 E. 2nd	Floena Rhoades 2714 Fairview Dr., Owensboro

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National Park Service**

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Owensboro Historic Commercial District

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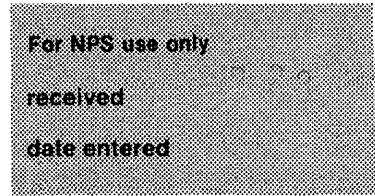
Page 2

LIST OF OWNERS (continued)

107-105 E. 2nd	Louise Griffin Estate Owensboro National Bank Trust-Ron Shepherd 230 Frederica St., Owensboro
101-103 E. 2nd	Martin Barbour 808-1 Frederica St., Owensboro
101 W. 2nd	Don Jackson Estate Mrs. Jackson, 2000 Littlewood Owensboro
105-107 W. 2nd	Hugh Havener 2350 1/2 Fariview Dr., Owensboro
109 W. 2nd	Helen Hazel 1029 Standish Pl., Owensboro
111 W. 2nd	Bamberger & Abshier Attorneys, 111 W. 2nd Owensboro
115 W. 2nd	Jack Ross & Leroy Walker 115 W. 2nd, Owensboro
117 W. 2nd	Jack Ross & Leroy Walker 115 W. 2nd, Owensboro
119 W. 2nd	Chamber of Commerce 119 W. 2nd, Owensboro
121 W. 2nd	Ford, Elred & Rich Route #6, Owensboro
123 W. 2nd	Dee Tarrant 2324 W. 4th, Owensboro
125 W. 2nd	Dr. Shelton Watkins' Estate 3811 Washington Square Louisville, Kentucky
222-224 E. 2nd	First Baptist Church 230 Lewis, Owensboro
214-220 E. 2nd	First Baptist Church 230 Lewis, Owensboro

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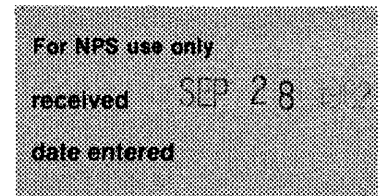
Page 3

LIST OF OWNERS (continued)

212 E. 2nd	Frank Pardon 233 Williamsburg Square Owensboro
210 E. 2nd	C.B. Ferrell 1817 Bonnie Castle Owensboro
206-208 E. 2nd	Endeavor Realty Co. 206 E. 2nd, Owensboro
200-204 E. 2nd	David Purdy Pleasure Point Rd. Owensboro
124 E.2nd	S.W. Andersons 124 E. 2nd, Owensboro
120 E. 2nd	Greg Roby 3818 Greenfield Lane Owensboro
114-118 E. 2nd	Martin Barbour 808-1 Frederica St., Owensboro
112 E. 2nd	Martin Barbour 808-1 Frederica St., Owensboro
108-110 E. 2nd	Martin Barbour 808-1 Frederica St., Owensboro
100-106 E. 2nd	Rugby Co., Inc. A.P. Theiss, 1001 Frederica St. Owensboro
100 W. 2nd	Oscar Grant 100 W. 2nd, Owensboro
102 W. 2nd	Willa Jean Jagoe 102 W. 2nd, Owensboro
104-106 W. 2nd	R.S. Hughes Estate Owensboro National Bank Ron Shepherd, 230 Frederica St. Owensboro

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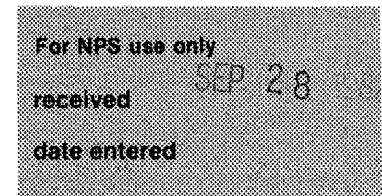
Page 4

LIST OF OWNERS (continued)

108 W. 2nd	Frank Hayden 121 E. 2nd, Owensboro
112-114 W. 2nd	Jerry Livingston 2302 Wintergreen Loop, North Owensboro
116 W. 2nd	Marion H. Gillim 1505 Griffith Ave., Owensboro
118 W. 2nd	Marion H. Gillim 1505 Griffith Ave., Owensboro
120 W. 2nd	Al Arnold 425 Wesleyan Pl., Owensboro
122 W. 2nd	Ruth Hagerman 3001 Frederica, Owensboro
124 W. 2nd	Ruth Bariess 206 Phillips Ct., Owensboro
126 W. 2nd	Francesca Gray 805 Locust, Owensboro

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Owensboro Historic Commercial District
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structure with reticulation on the bands of stone(see photos 11-13).

The three-story Romanesque Revival structure at 207-211 East Second was constructed in 1887 of brick and trimmed with stone. The facade is visually divided into three sections of three bays each, with the central section displaying a pedimented round arch containing the date stone (see photos 9-10). As mentioned, the colonnettes at 207 and 211 indicate the existence of a metal storefront.

101-103 East Second is a three-story, six-bay brick corner structure with Romanesque details. The facade has been painted yellow but the Allen Street elevation retains the original red brick with varying shaped hood moulds of alternating yellow and red brick(see photo 14).

On the northwest corner of Second and Allen at 101-103 West Second is a three-story brick structure with stone dressings. The three-sectioned facade consists of an oriel window flanked by two piers(see photos 15-16).

In addition to its Mesker storefront, the structure at 112-114 West Second displays a typical Italianate commercial facade with stock cast iron hood moulds and a modillioned cornice(see photo 8).

Romanesque details appear on 126 West Second. The three-story brick building is trimmed in stone. The 1888 date of construction is above the entrance in the angled corner facade(see photo 17).

As in countless other cities and towns, downtown Owensboro buildings were subjected to the trend of the last thirty years. In an attempt to replace the nineteenth century image of Second Street with a more modern appearance, the rich ornament and architectural detail have been covered or removed. The unfortunate occurrence of groupings of contiguous intrusions(see photos 18-19)makes these buildings more noticeable, yet several solid rows of significant contributing structures remain intact to offset the intrusions and lend the district its character. The concentration of older/historic buildings and the unbroken streetscape set this three-block district apart from the remainder of downtown Owensboro. Elsewhere in the immediate area, the streetscape is interrupted by gaps or parking lots and buildings which either by design, height, or setback from the street are clearly incompatible with the historic district. This district is the only such distinct grouping of historic structures within the commercial section of downtown Owensboro.

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Owensboro Historic Commercial District

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boro in 1856. The present structure on the southwest corner of Second and Lewis was erected in 1888 and was the third structure Gunther built for his retail and wholesale grocery business. The earlier buildings were destroyed by fire.

Two of the city's banks prospered in the eighties. The Owensboro Savings Bank constructed the building at 126 West Second in 1888, and the Bank of Commerce, established in 1887, was located in the structure at 101 West Second.

Owensboro turned to manufacturing in the post-Civil War years. The Delker Cycle Manufacturing Company opened on Second Street in 1890, and Sims and Ackerman, a beer bottling company, was located at 119 East Second.

An 1881 lithograph giving a bird's-eye view of Owensboro shows the commercial development existing along Second Street. The legend indicates that Owensboro had 19 tobacco warehouses, 4 mills, 2 livery stables, a furniture factory, a depot, an opera house, 14 churches, 5 hotels, 3 banks and 3 schools. The population at roughly 6000 had increased by 2500 over the 1870 census figure.

Today, most of the city's retail business has abandoned "Main Street" for the malls and shopping centers conveniently located to the suburbs. However, an effort is now underway to revitalize the district and capitalize upon the area's architectural significance. Because so little is left of Owensboro's historic commercial architecture the proposed historic district is of extreme importance both to the future economic development of the downtown and as tangible evidence of the city's development in its formative years.

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in TV Facts Owensboro, January-April 1982.

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

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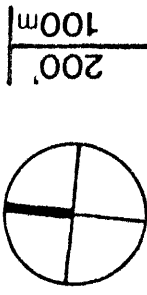
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Continuation sheet Owensboro Historic Commercial District 10
Daviness County, Kentucky Item number

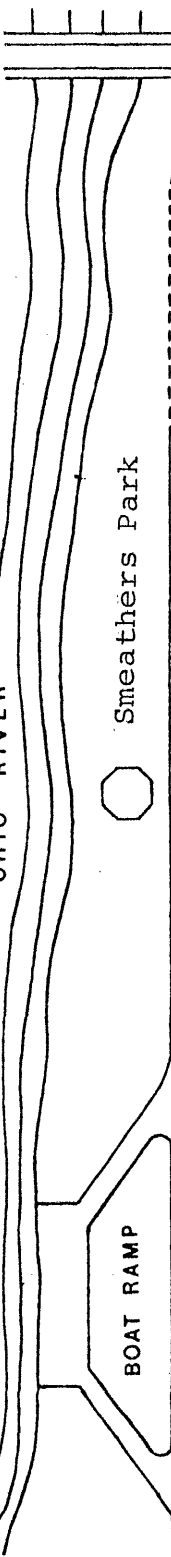
Page 1

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

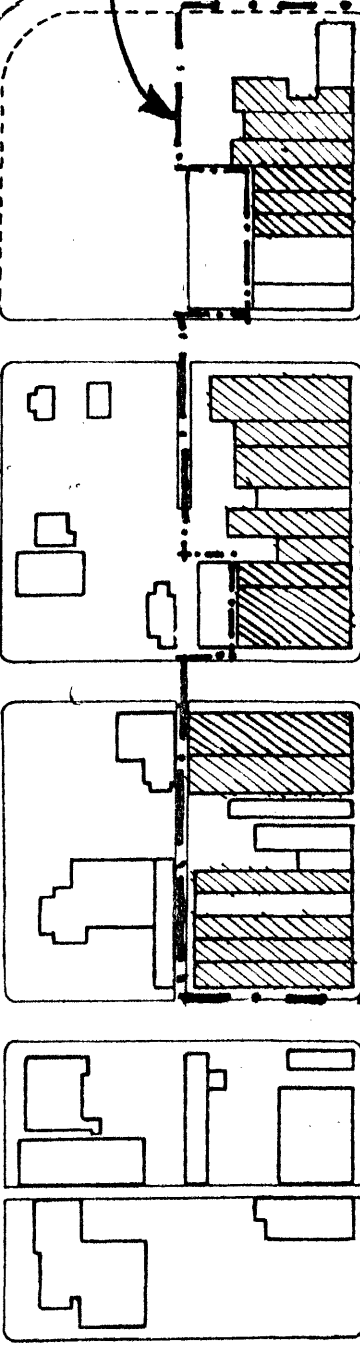
The boundaries of the Owensboro Historic District are as follows:
beginning at the intersection of the rear property line of 219 E. 2nd
and the west side of Lewis, south along the west side of Lewis, crossing
Second, and continuing to the rear property line of 224 E. 2nd; west
following the rear property lines of the structures fronting on the
south side of 2nd between Lewis and St. Ann (224 E. 2nd - 126 W. 2nd),
crossing Daviess and Allen streets, to the east side of St. Ann;
north along the east side of St. Ann, crossing 2nd, to the rear property
line of 125 W. 2nd; east along the rear property lines of the structures
fronting on the north side of 2nd between St. Ann and Lewis (125 W. 2nd -
219 E. 2nd), crossing Allen and Daviess streets, and continuing to the
beginning.



1:2400



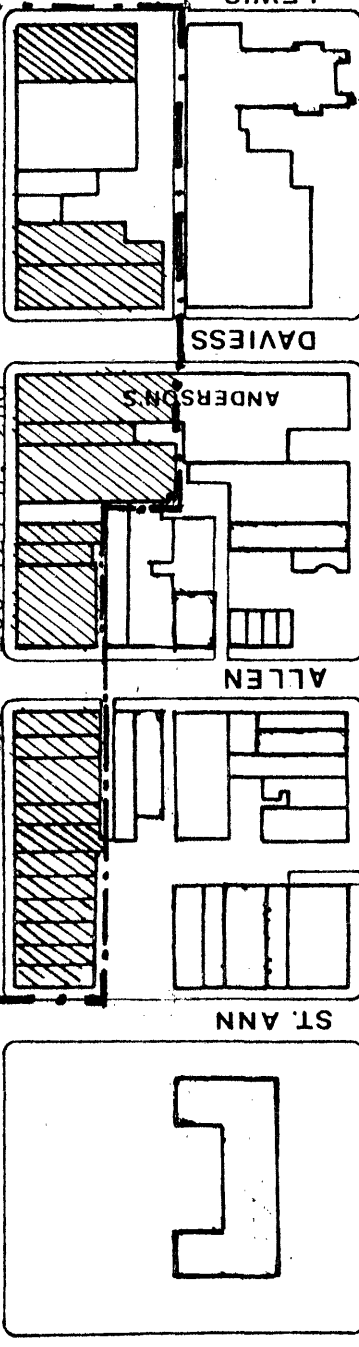
FIRST



200-224 E. 2nd

100-124 E. 2nd

100-126 W. 2nd



FREDERICA

LEWIS

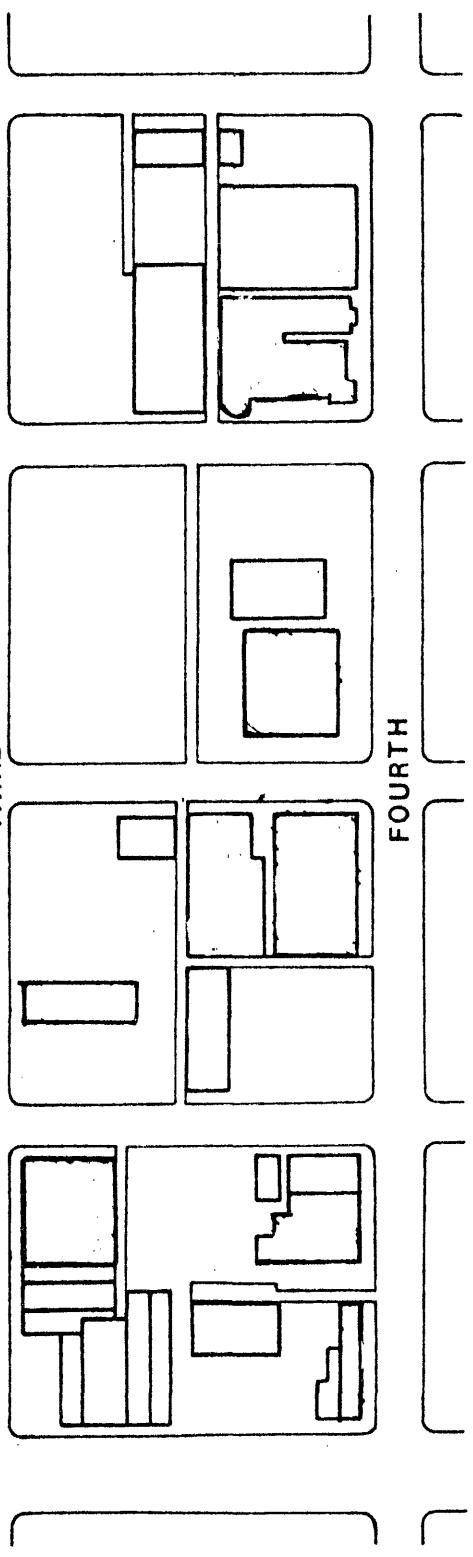
DAVISS

ANDERSON'S

ALLEN

ST. ANN

THIRD



FOURTH

District Boundary

Contributing

Intrusion

