

# 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 National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any 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.

## 1. Name of Property

Historic name Jefferson Street Historic District  
Other names/site number N/A  
Name of related multiple property listing Historic Resources of Brownsville, Tennessee

## 2. Location

Street & Number: Roughly bounded by E. Main Street, S. Jackson Avenue, S. Washington Avenue and Margin Street  
City or town: Brownsville State: TN County: Haywood  
Not For Publication:  N/A Vicinity:  N/A Zip: 38012

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 forth 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 at the following level(s) of significance:  
 national  statewide  Local

Applicable National Register Criteria:  A  B  C  D

Claudia M. Stapp 2/9/16  
Signature of certifying official/Title: Date  
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer, Tennessee Historical Commission  
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  
  
Signature of Commenting Official: Date  
  
Title: State of Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

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**4. National Park Service Certification**

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register

other (explain: \_\_\_\_\_  
*John Kelly*  
 Signature of the Keeper

3-28-2016  
 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 the county)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
13	3	buildings
1	1	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
14	4	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

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**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

COMMERCE/Professional

COMMERCE/Grocery

COMMERCE/Restaurant

COMMERCE/Trade

SOCIAL/Pool Hall

RECREATION/Park

**Current Functions**

COMMERCE/Professional

SOCIAL/Meeting Hall

FUNERARY/Funeral Home

VACANT/Not in Use

COMMERCE/Specialty Store

RECREATION/Park

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**

OTHER: 20<sup>th</sup> Century One-Part Commercial Block buildings, 20<sup>th</sup> Century Two-Part Commercial Block Buildings

**Materials:**

Principal exterior materials of the property:

BRICK; CONCRETE; ASPHALT; GLASS; METAL;  
WOOD

**Narrative Description**

The Jefferson Street Commercial Historic District is located east of the downtown commercial area in Brownsville, Tennessee. Brownsville is located in West Tennessee and as the county seat is centrally located in Haywood County, approximately sixty miles east of Memphis, Tennessee. This area of Tennessee is known for its cotton heritage and was the base of Haywood County's agricultural economy in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The wealth of the county is reflected in the many notable homes and commercial districts of Brownsville.

The Jefferson Street Commercial Historic District emerged in the early 1900s as the center for the city's African-American community. While African Americans could shop in the white-owned businesses on the court square, they were often discriminated against. With the rise of the city's African-American middle-class, several businesses evolved along Jefferson Street. The majority of these buildings are One-Part and Two-Part Commercial Block buildings with modest detailing. The district contains eighteen (18) properties, one of which is a community park. Of the eighteen properties, four (4) - or twenty-two percent - are considered non-contributing resources, including a vacant lot which originally had a building that was razed. All other properties are considered contributing resources, or seventy-eight percent of the district. There are no outbuildings located within this commercial district.

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The Jefferson Street Commercial Historic District is bounded on the north by U.S. Highway 70. This is the primary transportation corridor through Brownsville and in the city limits the highway is also known as Main Street. This street passes through the center of Brownsville's downtown commercial district and further west goes through the National Register-listed College Hill Historic District. This highway, also known as the Memphis-Bristol Highway, was constructed between 1922 and 1926 and connected Brownsville directly to Jackson, Tennessee, approximately thirty miles east. Today this highway provides direct access from Brownsville to Interstate 40, completed in the mid-1960s as part of the national Dwight D. Eisenhower Interstate development. The Jefferson Street Commercial Historic District is bounded by S. Washington Avenue on the west, Margin Street on the south and N. Church Avenue on the east. The area lies just north of the city's main industrial area as well as the railroad tracks and is centered along E. Jefferson Street for which the district is named.

During the district's period of significance, businesses within the district catered to the African-American community and consisted of restaurants and pool halls, meeting spaces, barber shops, salons, and grocery stores. Jefferson Street and Jackson Avenue became the popular entertainment spot for teenage students due to its close proximity to Carver High School down the street. Eventually, desegregation opened up more opportunities for African Americans in Brownsville. However, while many businesses have come and gone within the district, a majority of the properties are still African American-owned, offering services to the local community as well as the city of Brownsville. Many buildings have undergone some alterations over time, but the properties still maintain the architectural character and historical integrity of a community developed by African Americans.

## INVENTORY

### **Jackson Avenue (South)**

#### **1. South Jackson Avenue, C.P. Boyd Park, ca. 1948 (Contributing Site)**

According to the Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps this was historically a "Negro Tent" from 1887 to 1896 and a frame dwelling from 1896 to 1944. The dwelling was razed in 1948 and the lot became a park. The property was donated by Dr. C.P. Boyd, founder of the Haywood County Civic and Welfare League and is maintained by the City of Brownsville. This property is a recreational park within the district with a wooden gazebo and park benches.

#### **2. 35 South Jackson Avenue, ca. 1935 (Contributing Building)**

One-Part Commercial Block which is one-story in height and of concrete block construction. The building has a shed metal roof, rectangular plan, and concrete block foundation. The façade (east elevation) has a bank of four windows; the inner two windows are single-light, fixed, and the outer windows are one-over-one wood-sash. They are covered with security metal grids. There is another one-over-one wood-sash window beside the entrance, which has a solid wood door and a metal security door. The north bay of the storefront has a bank of alternating single-light fixed windows and walk-up order windows, which have small, sliding, two-light portions. Across the façade is a full-width overhang.

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**3. 36(A) South Jackson Avenue, ca. 1920 (Non-Contributing Building)**

This is a Two-Part Commercial Block building, two stories in height. The building is of concrete block construction and has a flat metal roof and concrete foundation. Three window openings in the upper façade have been retro-fitted with six-over-six, double-hung vinyl-sash replacement windows and plywood infill borders. The storefront of the building has a single-light display window and three doors. One door is solid, and the other two are of six-panel design. The paneled doors have been retro-fitted into the original opening(s) of unknown dimensions.

**4. 36(B) South Jackson Avenue, ca. 1947 (Contributing Building)**

This Two-Part Commercial Block is two-stories in height and has a brick exterior. The building has a flat metal roof and concrete foundation. The upper façade has four, single-light fixed replacement windows. The storefront has two entrances, each with a single-light glass and metal door flanked by fixed display windows. A metal awning has been added across the entire storefront.

**5. 36 (C) South Jackson Avenue. Rawls Funeral Home, ca. 1985 (Non-Contributing Building)**

This one-story, brick building occupies the corner of Jackson Avenue and Jefferson Street and is slightly set back from Jackson Avenue. On the Jefferson Street elevation it has a gable-front roof of asphalt shingles and a solid metal door at the top of a short metal staircase. Above the door is a flat, metal awning. In the center of the façade is a Masonic emblem below the gable peak within a decorative brick inset. On the Jackson Avenue elevation and opposite side are three single-light and aluminum-frame windows.

**6. 37 South Jackson Avenue. (Non-Contributing Site)**

This property was occupied by a frame woodworking shop from 1929 through the 1940s. This property is now a parking lot.

**7. 39 (A) S Jackson Avenue, ca. 1977 (Non-Contributing Building)**

Two-Part Commercial Block building which is two-stories in height. It has a flat roof, concrete foundation, and exterior of stretcher bond brick. The upper façade has two window openings each with a two-part fixed metal-frame window. The storefront has single-light fixed windows and two glass and aluminum doors.

**8. 39 (B) S Jackson Avenue, ca. 1943 (Contributing Building)**

This is a Two-Part Commercial Block building which is two-stories in height. It has a flat roof, concrete foundation, and an exterior of six-course common bond brick. On the upper façade are six-over-six double-hung aluminum replacement windows. The storefront has a central entrance flanked by single-light fixed replacement display windows. The entrance has a replacement single-light glass and metal door. The transom opening above the door has been enclosed.

**Jefferson Street (East)**

**9. 14 East Jefferson Street, ca. 1900 (Contributing Building)**

Two-Part Commercial Block building which is two-stories in height. The building has a flat roof, brick foundation, and exterior of irregular course common bond brick. On the upper façade are two-over-two, double-hung, wood-sash windows. There is brick corbeling along the cornice at the roofline and circular attic vents below. The storefront has a central entrance with ca.1990 multi-light double doors

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flanked by a single-light, fixed window with transom and a solid wood door. A large transom over the entrance has been enclosed.

**10. 18 East Jefferson Street, ca. 1919 (Contributing Building)**

This is a One-Part Commercial Block building of brick construction with a flat roof and brick foundation. The storefront has display window openings which have been enclosed with ca. 1990 wood panels. The main entrance has an original single-light and wood door.

**11. 22 East Jefferson Street, ca. 1910 (Contributing Building)**

This is a One-Part Commercial Block building with two storefronts. It is one-story in height with a flat roof, brick exterior and brick foundation. Each storefront has a central, recessed entrance with original single-light glass and wood doors flanked by original single-light, fixed, display windows. Each storefront's original transom has been retrofitted with a window air-conditioning unit.

**12. 29 (A) East Jefferson Street, ca. 1964 (Contributing Building)**

Built ca. 1964, this is a one-story commercial building with a metal gable roof, a concrete block exterior and a continuous concrete block foundation. Exposed purlins are located in the eaves. The main façade (south) has an original, full-width frame and metal canopy. The main entrance has a ca. 1980, metal-panel replacement door flanked by pairs of original, three-light wood and glass windows.

**13. 29 (B) East Jefferson Street, ca. 1948 (Contributing Building)**

This is a one-story concrete block building with a flat roof and concrete block foundation. At the roofline is clay tile coping. The main façade (south elevation) has a central entrance with ca. 1980 six-panel metal double doors flanked by original window openings that have been covered with plywood.

**14. 33 East Jefferson Street. Winfield Lodge #52, ca. 1910 (Contributing Building)**

This is a One-Part Commercial Block building of brick construction and is one-story in height. The building has a flat roof with a stepped brick parapet and metal coping and a concrete-covered brick and concrete block foundation. At the roofline is a corbelled brick cornice, and below the cornice are four rectangular vents. On the façade (south elevation), the central bay entrance has been infilled with a ca. 1980 six-panel metal door and vinyl siding. The entrance is flanked by ca. 1940 retro-fitted single-light picture windows in wood frames. The window to the right of the central entrance infills a former pedestrian entrance, indicated by concrete steps in front of the building. Steps have been added atop the original ramp accessing the bay entrance. On the east elevation there are ghost prints of arched openings. At the rear of the building is a secondary entrance on the east elevation, located within a concrete-block infill addition. This entrance has a six-panel, metal door.

**15. 34 (A) East Jefferson Street, ca. 1908 (Contributing Building)**

This is a One-Part Commercial Block building of brick construction, one-story in height. It has a flat roof and brick foundation. The storefront has a central, recessed entrance with an original single-light glass and wood door flanked by original single-light, fixed, display windows. The storefront's original transom has been enclosed.

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**16. 34 (B) East Jefferson Street, ca. 1957 (Contributing Building)**

This is a small concrete block commercial building which is one-story in height. It has a flat roof, exterior of concrete block and concrete block foundation. The storefront has a ca. 1990 glass and wood door flanked by an original two-over-two horizontal-sash window.

**17. 34 (C) East Jefferson Street, ca. 1948 (Contributing Building)**

This is a one-story commercial building of concrete block construction with a brick veneer exterior on the main (north) elevation. It has a flat roof and concrete block foundation. The storefront has two entrances each with original wood-panel doors. The entrances are flanked by original two-over-two aluminum, horizontal-sash windows.

**Main Street (East)**

**18. 34 East Main Street, ca. 1906 (Contributing Building)**

This is a One-Part Commercial Block building which is one-story in height. It has a flat roof with a stepped parapet, brick foundation, and an exterior of irregular-course common bond brick. The storefront (north elevation) was altered ca. 1965 with paired aluminum, single-light, fixed display windows with transoms flanking a central entrance with a single-light glass and metal door. The upper façade has an original surface of ashlar-finish concrete block. On the Jackson Avenue elevation (east) are original arched entrances and window openings. These openings have double soldier-course arched lintel. The entrances on this elevation have retro-fitted ca. 1940 single-light, three-wood panel double doors. The window openings on this elevation have been covered.

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**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

**Areas of Significance**

- 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.

ETHNIC HERITAGE  
COMMERCE

**Period of Significance**

Ca. 1910-1970

**Significant Dates**

N/A

**Criteria Considerations N/A**

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

**Significant Person**

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

UNKNOWN

- A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.



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**STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:**

**Summary Paragraph**

The Jefferson Street Commercial Historic District is located east of the downtown commercial area in Brownsville, Tennessee. Brownsville is located in West Tennessee and, as the county seat, is centrally located in Haywood County approximately sixty miles east of Memphis, Tennessee. Due to the historic local commerce in large land cultivation for cotton, Haywood County had one of the largest ratios of slaves to owners in Tennessee. Following emancipation, many former slaves remained on the farms, working as sharecroppers or tenant farmers. African Americans are to this day the majority demographic in Brownsville at sixty percent of the population. The Jefferson Street Commercial Historic District developed in the early 1900s as a center for African-American commerce. Within this small district were many businesses such as insurance companies and grocery stores that catered to the city's African-American population. Also in the district was the local NAACP Chapter that was instrumental in furthering the rights of African Americans to vote. The district contains eighteen primary properties - sixteen buildings and two sites. Fourteen of the resources are contributing. The architecture of this district includes a combination of One-Part and Two-Part Commercial Block buildings in modest designs built during the period of significance, from ca. 1910 to 1970.

The Jefferson Street Commercial Historic District meets registration requirements set forth in the Multiple Property Documentation Form, "Historic Resources of Brownsville, Tennessee." It is nominated for listing in the National Register under Criterion A for Ethnic History and Commerce, with a period of significance extending from 1910 to 1970, applying Criterion Consideration G. The beginning date marks the rise of the African-American community in the Jefferson Street neighborhood; the end date coincides with the closing of the African-American Carver High School which marked the abolition of a segregated Haywood County school system and the building of a new integrated Haywood County High School. Though the district remained populated with Africa-American businesses after 1970, integration of the county educational system represented a hard-fought milestone of equality and a closing of a chapter for this community.

**Historical Overview:**

In 1785, Henry Rutherford, along with an entourage from North Carolina, conducted an excursion surveying West Tennessee and the Cumberland, Ohio, and Mississippi Rivers. The group came upon a small stream named Okeena by the Native Americans. Okeena was later named Forked Deer by the surveying party. Rutherford called this point "Key Corner."<sup>1</sup> The road leading from the west into Brownsville is also named Key Corner due to its origin from this designation.<sup>2</sup> At the time of Rutherford's land survey, the land was occupied by Native Americans. The surveyors found the soil was a mixture of clay and sand, ideal for the growth of cotton and grains. As a result of the treaty of 1818, the Chickasaw Indians sold their interest in the West Tennessee land. This treaty spurred interest from land speculators, especially those from North

<sup>1</sup> Brownsville-Haywood County Historical Society, *History of Haywood County Tennessee* (Marceline, MO: Walsworth Publishing, 1989), 234.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

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Carolina who moved to the Tennessee area by boat, wagon, and foot after the Panic of 1819, leading to the migration of many Carolinians to the agriculturally rich land of West Tennessee.<sup>3</sup>

Once part of Madison County until a Legislative Act in 1823, Haywood County was created and named after Judge John Haywood of North Carolina.<sup>4</sup> One of the first settlers in the Haywood County area was Colonel Richard Nixon. Nixon's father was granted 3,600 acres of land in Haywood County for his contribution in the Revolutionary War. Once Nixon inherited his father's land, he was later appointed a justice of the peace and built the first log cabin, which eventually was the county's first organized courtroom.<sup>5</sup> In 1825, a Legislative Act provided for a centrally located county seat at least fifty acres in size. Brownsville was chosen as the county seat and named after General Jacob Jennings Brown for his contribution in the War of 1812.<sup>6</sup> Thomas M. Johnson deeded the required fifty acres for a town at the cost of one dollar plus one lot. A town square was then created with 2 7/8 acres, and the town was one square mile with all the boundary streets named Margin, i.e. North Margin, South Margin, East Margin, and West Margin.<sup>7</sup> Brownsville was later incorporated as a city in 1826 and the development of the town and the influx of settlers soon began. By 1832, Brownsville had a population of 400. The only two forms of transportation into Brownsville at the time were by steamboat down the Hatchie and Forked Deer Rivers and roads from surrounding communities built and maintained by local landowners.<sup>8</sup> The railroad was connected to Brownsville in 1846, opening the city to new markets.

With adequate means to transport goods and agricultural crops, Haywood County quickly ranked third in Tennessee for cotton production during the mid-nineteenth century. Cotton brought great wealth to the residents of Haywood County and Brownsville. A majority of the wealthier residents in Brownsville were large landowners and cotton farmers. One of the city's most important businessmen from this period was Thomas Bond, who settled in Haywood County; having moved from North Carolina in 1826; he "built one of the greatest fortunes in Tennessee."<sup>9</sup> Bond owned and operated his own steamboat to carry supplies and his cotton products. Bond became the largest taxpayer in the county before and after the Civil War.<sup>10</sup> Cotton production was primarily operated by slave labor until the Civil War. Bond himself brought over 500 slaves with him to Haywood County in the 1820s.<sup>11</sup>

In the early 1800s, several African-American slaves were shipped to Haywood County via boat down the Hatchie River. By 1830 the population of Haywood County reached just over 5,000 residents, of whom 1,200 were slaves, representing thirty-four percent. Eventually, Haywood County had one of the largest

<sup>3</sup> USGenWeb Archives On-Line, "Historical Sketch of Haywood County," accessed May 1, 2013, <http://files.usgwarchives.net/tn/haywood/history/1872/westtenn/historic20nms.txt>.

<sup>4</sup> Tennessee Library and Archives website, THS Collection: "John Haywood (1762-1826) Papers (1768-1796)," accessed April 30, 2012. <http://www.tn.gov/tsla/history/manuscripts/findingaids/th448.pdf>.

<sup>5</sup> Bob Moses, Lynn Shaw, Walter Baird and Harrell Clement, *Haywood County, Tennessee* (Paducah, KY: Turner Publishing Company, 1998), 7.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Brownsville-Haywood County Historical Society, 237.

<sup>8</sup> USGenWeb Archives On-line, "A History of Haywood County."

<sup>9</sup> Emma Nunn, "Haywood County," Tennessee Encyclopedia of History and Culture On-Line, accessed April 30, 2013, <http://tennesseeencyclopedia.net/entry.php?rec=615>.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

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ratios of slaves to white owners in the state. By 1840 Haywood County's population more than doubled to 13,870 residents with more than 6,250 (45.39%) enslaved. During the 1850s, some 3,000 slaves escaped from Haywood County and sought refuge with members of the Chickasaw tribe farther west.<sup>12</sup> While many were never captured, those who were caught were returned to Haywood County. By 1860 Haywood County's population rose to 19,232, and 11,026 of that population, or 57.4%, were slaves.<sup>13</sup> The dispute over slavery and states' rights led to the secession of Tennessee and the beginning of the Civil War in 1861. While there was never any major fighting in the county, Brownsville was occupied at various times by both Union and Confederate troops.<sup>14</sup> The war disrupted commerce, but fortunately no major fires or other destructive acts occurred there during the war.

After the Civil War, the Federal Government placed offices for the newly assembled Freedmen's Bureau throughout the South to aid African Americans in finding employment and encourage whites and blacks to work together after the abolishment of slavery.<sup>15</sup> With the assistance and guidance of the Freedmen's Bureau, many freed slaves were able to stay and work on the farms as sharecroppers or tenant farmers under an employer/employee arrangement rather than a master/slave arrangement.<sup>16</sup> Sharecropping became the most common occupation among African Americans in Haywood County following the Civil War. Sharecropping allowed African Americans to work a portion of the land, and landowners took a portion of the profit from the harvest at the end of the year. Among African Americans, literacy was common, and they were often cheated out of profits rightfully theirs.<sup>17</sup> Few freed slaves remained in Brownsville's city limits; the majority moved throughout rural areas of Haywood County to seek opportunities in agricultural production. African Americans soon began purchasing land or renting farm plots. Farming and land ownership became vital to the African-American community, as it was their primary means of income as well as providing a means to feed their families. Frank Evans and Cato Walker were the earliest known African-American landowners in Brownsville in 1872. By 1870 Haywood County's population rose to 25,094, 13,832 or 55.12% of whom were freed slaves. African Americans eventually became the largest demographic percentage of landowners in Haywood County at 64%.<sup>18</sup>

Throughout slavery and the Reconstruction period, many African Americans sought access to intellectual and educational opportunities. A notable leader in the education of African Americans of Haywood County was Reverend Hardin Smith. Smith was one of many enslaved sons fathered by his white owner, Abner Smith, in Hanover County, Virginia.<sup>19</sup> General William H. Loving bought Hardin at a young age and brought him to Haywood County in 1840. Hardin had a light complexion from his father, and General Loving's wife began teaching him to read and write. At sixteen, Smith was given permission to preach at night services for a slave congregation in Nutbush at the Woodland Baptist Church, which was white-owned

<sup>12</sup> Sharon, Norris, *Black America Series: Haywood County, TN* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2000), 7.

<sup>13</sup> "Telling the Haywood County Story," Exhibit, The Dunbar-Carver Museum., February 26, 2014.

<sup>14</sup> The Brownsville-Haywood County Bicentennial Book Committee, *Heart of the Tennessee Delta* (N.P.: Dixie Printing Company, 1996), 3.

<sup>15</sup> Nunn.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Carrie Parker, Interview with Rebecca Hightower, Dunbar-Carver Museum, February 26, 2014.

<sup>18</sup> "Telling the Haywood County Story" Exhibit.

<sup>19</sup> Nunn.

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at the time.<sup>20</sup> Smith also began teaching his congregations to read and write and went on to establish several other churches in small communities throughout Haywood County.

The post-Civil War Reconstruction period in Brownsville was one filled with a racial divide between white and black, as African Americans resented the conditions in which they lived and how they were treated. This divide was only intensified when the Tennessee Legislature and other states passed the “Jim Crow Laws” in 1876, bringing an end to the formal Reconstruction period in 1877. Jim Crow laws were considered any law or ordinance put in place to support racial segregation.<sup>21</sup> Most whites felt superior to African Americans, and the Jim Crow Laws permitted racism or racist acts towards African Americans, including the separation of whites and blacks in public education and public transportation.<sup>22</sup> These laws eventually extended to all public places, including restaurants, theaters, cemeteries, parks, and other establishments. As a result, African Americans began establishing their own churches and schools throughout Brownsville. A map of Haywood County dated 1877 illustrates one of the first “Colored” churches on W. College Street. This church was the First Baptist Church of Brownsville and was founded by Reverend Martin Winfield.<sup>23</sup>

Establishing a school became a major focus of the African-American community. The Freedman School for Blacks, or the Normal School for Coloreds, as it was originally called, was established as part of the Freedman Bureau in 1866. Reverend Hardin Smith, Maltimore Bond, Charles Somerville, Thomas Claiborne, Frank Peeples, and Samuel Williams raised funds to build the first African-American school building on E. Jefferson Street in Brownsville, as it was centrally located within the county.<sup>24</sup> A wooden school was erected in 1866 and was two stories in height with six classrooms. Reverend Martin Winfield convinced John R. Gloster to come to Brownsville and assume the role as the school’s first principal. Gloster, along with his wife, had been educated at Roger Williams University in Nashville, Tennessee. The Normal School for Coloreds, which became known as the Dunbar School in 1880, offered high school training. George Currie took over as temporary principal when Gloster left Brownsville in 1915.<sup>25</sup> This school quickly became the focal point of the African-American community, and residences and commercial buildings were built along E. Jefferson Street, with construction continuing into the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

African-American residential development in Brownsville was limited until the 1910s. Following the passage of the Jim Crow Laws in 1877, racial tensions in Brownsville and Haywood County rose dramatically causing a number of African Americans to move to other states to escape the severity of discrimination. A majority of the county’s African Americans continued farming as their occupation, and only a small community lived in the Brownsville city limits. By the 1910s, educated African Americans settled in Brownsville taking up occupations such as teachers, preachers, and doctors. These professions created a middle-class economy in the African-American community, and many began building modest homes. The implementation of the Jim Crow Laws created a segregated society pushing African Americans to build a community for themselves, removed from Brownsville’s white society already concentrated

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Encyclopedia Britannica, “Jim Crow Laws,” Encyclopedia On-Line, accessed February 28, 2014, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/303897/Jim-Crow-law>.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> “Telling the Haywood County Story,” Exhibit.

<sup>24</sup> Carrie Parker, Interview with Rebecca Hightower.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

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around the public square, as well as to the north and west of the square. As a result, the African-American community began to settle around the newly established Dunbar School on E. Jefferson Street and close to the railroad tracks where several factories were located.

The Dunbar School on E. Jefferson Street was destroyed by a fire in 1920. Local churches, such as the First Baptist Church of Brownsville, Holiness Church, and Farmer's Chapel CME, then assumed educational responsibilities, operating classes in their facilities.<sup>26</sup> During the rebuilding stages, Dunbar School's Professors F.E. Jeffries, Mack Sloan, and George Currie acted as temporary principals while classes were conducted at the local churches. The school was rebuilt using funds from the Rosenwald Foundation. Booker T. Washington and Julius Rosenwald collaborated to build schools for African-American children in the early 1900s. Rosenwald was part owner of the Sears-Roebuck Company and a philanthropist. Rosenwald's school funding program eventually built over 5,000 schools in fifteen Southern states between 1910 and 1932.<sup>27</sup> In 1922, the Dunbar School was rebuilt with assistance from Rosenwald school funds, reopened as the Haywood County Training School. It was decided at that time to move the school further west on E. Jefferson Street, closer to the railroad tracks and the local churches.<sup>28</sup> The school was rebuilt of brick and was two stories in height with six classrooms, a cafeteria, a gym, office space, and a library. The costs totaled \$23,000. Some \$1,600 of the total amount was paid for by the Rosenwald Fund, and the rest cobbled together from a collection of state and county funds and donations.<sup>29</sup>

The school's programs were offered to African-American children across Haywood County. Professor F.E. Jeffries became the first principal of the newly built school. Professor Jeffries was a professor at Dunbar School before it burned, and he remained principal of Haywood County Training School until 1936 when he took a position as the first African-American State Agricultural Extension Agent.<sup>30</sup> As an agricultural agent, Jeffries taught farming and cropping skills to African-American farmers throughout Haywood County. Professor Roy Bond replaced Professor Jeffries as Principal. In 1950, the school was named Dunbar-Haywood County Training-Carver High School or Carver High School, after George Washington Carver.<sup>31</sup> Principal Bond also built a home at 805 E. Jefferson Street, just east of the school, to remain close to the facilities. Over time, the school's student population rose to approximately 1,500.

In 1916, Booker T. Washington gave a speech in Brownsville's city square, encouraging self-improvement among the African-American community, which led to the establishment of social groups and businesses. In the 1920s and 1930s, racial tensions continued to promote segregation. The Jim Crow Laws legalized the refusal of services at white businesses to African-American citizens or forced the use separate entrances. The buildings on E. Jefferson Street and Jackson Avenue southeast of the public square became home to the segregated businesses serving the African-American community. According to the Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps of 1887, 1891, 1896, 1900, 1905, and 1910, several of these building lots were originally white-owned

<sup>26</sup> Carrie Parker, Interview with Rebecca Hightower.

<sup>27</sup> Tom Hanchett, "Rosenwald Schools," History South, Website, accessed February 7, 2014, <http://www.historysouth.org/rosenwaldhome.html>.

<sup>28</sup> Carrie Parker, Interview with Rebecca Hightower.

<sup>29</sup> "Telling the Haywood County Story," Exhibit.

<sup>30</sup> Brownsville-Haywood County Historical Society, 168.

<sup>31</sup> Carver Dunbar Alumni Website, "About Us: History," accessed February 6, 2014, [http://www.carverdunbaralumni.com/About\\_Us.html](http://www.carverdunbaralumni.com/About_Us.html).



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livery, storage, or office operations along E. Jefferson Street and dwellings located along S. Jackson Avenue. The Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps of 1929 and 1944 illustrate that several of these dwellings on S. Jackson Avenue and commercial buildings on the north side of E. Jefferson Street were razed, and new commercial buildings were constructed. During the 1920s the newly constructed commercial buildings housed African-American owned businesses such as restaurants, grocery stores, dry cleaners, pharmacies, barber and beauty shops, offices, and a funeral home. Businesses included Tom Wilson's café and jazz club in the basement of 34 E. Main Street and Rawls' Pool Hall on the first floor of 36 S. Jackson Avenue. Rawls Funeral Home was at 36 S. Jackson Avenue with the first floor used to house hearses and ambulances. Located behind Rawls Funeral Home was Kozy's Beauty Shoppe and Tea Room. The second floor housed the beauty school and living quarters, while the first floor was the Tea Room. Rawls' Dry Cleaners was at 18 E. Jefferson Street, and Sander's Grocery was at 33 E. Jefferson Street. Jackson Avenue quickly became a popular entertainment district in the community with restaurants, pool halls, and jazz clubs. The Ritz and Capitol Theaters located on Brownsville's downtown square were white-owned and operated movie theaters that restricted African Americans to the upper balconies and denied them concessions services. Between 1940 and 1960, the African-American entertainment district extended across E. Main Street, north on Jackson Avenue, to include a theater. The Gem Theater, located at 31 E. Main Street, was owned by African-American businessman Charles Allen Rawls.<sup>32</sup>

The African-American community in this area was primarily working class, consisting of industrial workers, farmhands, educators, and business owners; therefore, the commercial building within this district are generally One- and Two-Part commercial block buildings and modest in design. One-Part Commercial Block buildings are those that are one-story and have storefronts with upper facades. Most storefronts were originally designed to have entrances with single-light glass and wood doors, large display windows resting on bulkheads, and with transoms above for light and ventilation. The upper facades of the One-Part Commercial Block buildings could be simple in design or ornate with corbelled brick or some other type of inset decoration. The building at 33 E. Jefferson Street is an excellent example of a One-Part Commercial Block building.

Two-Part Commercial Block buildings are those that are two or more stories and have upper facades with window openings on each floor and some type of termination at the roofline. These buildings usually have multiple uses. The first floor is generally for public use, such as a business, while the upper floors are for private use such as apartments or offices.<sup>33</sup> The building at 14 E. Jefferson Street is an example of a Two-Part Commercial Block building. Windows in the early twentieth century were often wooden sashes and rectangular in design with plain or brick soldier course lintels. Similar to the One-Part Commercial Block building, the rooflines usually have decorative features such as corbelled brick or sheet metal cornices. Roofs on both One-Part and Two-Part buildings were either flat or sloping and hidden behind parapet walls.

In 1939, several prominent African Americans gathered to create the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) chapter of Haywood County. The NAACP established an office at 26 E. Jefferson Street in Brownsville, and this chapter continues to operate at the location today. The

<sup>32</sup> Carrie Parker, Interview with Rebecca Hightower.

<sup>33</sup> Richard Longstreth, *The Buildings of Main Street: A Guide to American Commercial Architecture* (Baltimore, MD: John D. Lucas Printing Company, 1987), 56.

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oldest buildings remaining in the district were built ca. 1910 to ca. 1930 and reflect common commercial building forms of the period. This commercial district continued to be a vital hub of the African-American community through the mid-twentieth century.

After World War II, African-American veterans took advantage of the opportunities provided by the GI Bill to buy houses, establish families in cities and towns, or even move from their hometown to seek higher education. Veterans returning to Brownsville resented the substandard conditions to which they were subjected and agitated for the equal voting rights. Though the fifteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution granted voting rights to freedmen in 1870, Southern states devised obstacles (i.e., literacy tests, poll taxes) to voting among African Americans. In Tennessee's larger cities, black citizens had access to the ballot. In Haywood County, however, the historically high ratio of slaves to white land owners resulted in a high post-Civil War ratio of black to white citizens. The fear of political change in what was a traditional southern society became a dividing force in places such as Brownsville.<sup>34</sup> Gaining the right to vote underscored the Civil Rights Movement and was a hard-fought struggle. Founding members of the NAACP chapter and those at the forefront of the voting movement for African Americans became targets to the white society that opposed African American equal rights.

Several founding members of the local chapter of the NAACP lived on E. Jefferson Street and operated Civil Rights meetings in their homes.<sup>35</sup> Ollie S. Bond, a World War II veteran and a founding member of the NAACP, was the target of violent acts intended to intimidate members of the NAACP chapter. Bond was beaten several times, his house was set on fire, and he and his family were eventually run out of town by police for his promotion of voting rights.<sup>36</sup> Elbert Williams, another founding member of the NAACP chapter, was murdered in 1940 for his advocating voting rights. Williams' death led to several leaders in the African-American community moving from Brownsville out of fear for their own safety. The murder of Elbert Williams led to the investigation by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) into the violence against African Americans. Williams' case drew national attention, resulting in visits from African-American leaders such as Thurgood Marshall.<sup>37</sup> With many members of the NAACP chapter, leaving Brownsville after Williams' murder, the chapter was disbanded in 1941.<sup>38</sup>

During the late 1950s and early 1960s, efforts to gain equal voting rights among the county's African Americans once again were initiated. The NAACP chapter was reinstated in 1961 to assist in these efforts. Many tenant farmers and sharecroppers in the county came to Brownsville to register to vote and these efforts were met with economic retaliation by white farmers. Several white landowners, either by choice or intimidation, forced African-American tenant farmers who had registered to vote off their lands. Nearly 400 African-American families were evicted and sought refuge in places such as "Tent City" in Fayette

<sup>34</sup> Jan Voogt, "The War in Vietnam: The View from a Southern Community," ( PhD dissertation, University of Leiden, 2005), 65.

<sup>35</sup> "Black History Month 2014 Supplement," *Brownsville States-Graphic*, February 27, 2014, 4.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid

<sup>37</sup> Carrie Parker, Interview with Rebecca Hightower.

<sup>38</sup> *Brownsville States-Graphic*, 10.

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County.<sup>39</sup> Tent City was on land donated by a black man, Shephard Towles, on which tents, provided by an anonymous white merchant, housed several families left homeless after being forced off farmlands. Federal aid came to those evicted when it was realized that these families were not receiving basic needs like proper nutrition.<sup>40</sup> Tent City gained national prominence because of the substandard living conditions and the level of hostility towards the African-American farmers of Haywood and Fayette Counties.

While many factories and businesses in Brownsville remained predominantly white-owned in the 1950s, one African American-owned business was the Rawls Funeral Home, established in 1933 by Charles Allen Rawls, an influential citizen and businessman. From this business grew the Rawls Mutual Benefit Burial Association, which was established to assist impoverished families throughout West Tennessee in burying their family members with dignity by paying a small monthly premium. From the Rawls Mutual Benefit Burial Association, came the Sons and Daughters of the Golden Circle, a fraternal order, later organized as the Golden Circle Life Insurance Company, an old-line, legal reserve, stock life insurance company, incorporated in 1958. Through the insurance company's Mortgage Loan Department, many families that were in danger of losing their homes or farms were able to secure loans in order to save them. Many churches throughout West Tennessee were able to construct new buildings because of loans made through the Golden Circle Life Insurance Company. Another enterprise of the Golden Circle Life Insurance Company was The Tribes of Judea, which offered life and health insurance to elderly citizens who were unable to secure insurance through the Golden Circle Life Insurance Company. The Golden Circle Life Insurance Company operated its headquarters at 39 South Jackson Avenue for fifty-one years and ranked seventeenth among the thirty-two African American-owned insurance companies in the United States in 1983. In 2001, the Golden Circle Insurance Agency was founded, phasing out the Golden Circle Life Insurance Company. The agency operates in the same building at 39 South Jackson Avenue and provides a full service of insurance protection and financial solutions for businesses, homes, and families. It is locally owned and managed by CEO Andrea Bond Johnson, granddaughter of Charles Allen Rawls.<sup>41</sup>

Due to the close proximity to Carver High School, one-half mile down the street give a direction, the Jefferson Street Commercial Historic District became a popular hangout for high school students after school. The building at 29 E. Jefferson Street operated as Gertrude's Café through the 1960s. High school students would stop in after school to play music and games, do homework, and socialize.<sup>42</sup> At 34 E. Main Street was the Tom Wilson Café, a local entertainment spot open in the 1920s through 1940 where patrons could come eat and enjoy music by jazz ensembles.<sup>43</sup> The business at 36 S. Jackson Avenue operated as Rawl's Pool Hall, which was established in 1943. On the second floor of this building were the offices of dentist, Dr. J. O. Clark.

In the 1950s, several commercial businesses changed operation and owners, but remained African American-owned and operated. Examples included: 18 E. Jefferson, which changed from Rawls Cleaners to the Army

<sup>39</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>40</sup> Voogt, 68.

<sup>41</sup> Sharon Norris, "Golden Circle Life Insurance Company," Tennessee Encyclopedia of History and Culture On-Line, accessed February 7, 2014, <http://tennesseeencyclopedia.net/entry.php?rec=552>.

<sup>42</sup> Norris, Sharon, *Black America Series: Haywood County, TN* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2000), 31.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 33.



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Surplus Store, owned by John Banks of the Railroad Salvage Store, and later changed to Barden's Refrigeration Services; 33 E. Jefferson Street, which changed from the Service Sundry Drug Store, which had a pharmacist, jeweler, and soda fountain, to Sanders Grocery Store and later changed to the Haywood County Supermarket. Today, 33. E. Jefferson Street, is the Masonic Lodge for Winfield #52. Professor F. E. Jeffries left Haywood Training High School in 1936 to become the first African-American agricultural extension agent for Haywood County and maintained an office at 36 S. Jackson Avenue until 1955 when he moved to a newly constructed office building at 34 E. Jefferson Street. Jeffries had his office at 34 E. Jefferson Street until he retired in 1965, at which time it became a beauty salon.

In 1954, the Supreme Court undermined the Jim Crow Laws with the Brown vs. Board of Education case, which declared that segregation in public schools was unconstitutional. The ruling created a domino effect, applying the ruling to segregation in other public facilities and overturning any future segregation-based legislation.<sup>44</sup> However, even with the removal of the Jim Crow Laws, the Civil Rights Movement continued through the 1960s, as segregation remained within Brownsville's society. Civil Rights activists, such as Eric Weinberger, came to Brownsville and gathered together citizens in the African-American community to stage marches in Brownsville's public square between 1960 and 1963.<sup>45</sup> Although African Americans did achieve the right to vote in 1963, the African-American community remembers enduring acts of retaliation. For example to deter voting, the courthouse would set out fans and blow black pepper in the direction of African Americans standing in line to vote.<sup>46</sup> Eventually the Civil Rights Act of 1964 declared that discrimination due to race, sex, age, religion, and national origin was illegal, leading to the eventual end of segregated facilities and businesses in Brownsville.

In 1965, the Haywood County Board of Education planned to integrate schools in accordance with the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and created the "Freedom of Choice Plan."<sup>47</sup> The Freedom of Choice Plan declared that students could choose which school they wanted to attend, and the Board of Education would assign students to a school. The school board also guaranteed that the assignment would not be based on race, color, national origin, or religion.<sup>48</sup> The Freedom of Choice plan met resistance and continued to create a division in the community. The plan was not enforced effectively. While some African-American students were assigned to Haywood County public schools, the ratio continued to be predominantly white, as there were more than 4,200 African-American pupils in the education system with only forty-four attending white public schools.<sup>49</sup> The Ku Klux Klan was also present in Brownsville at this time hosting rallies in front of the courthouse in Brownsville's public square and burning homes or crosses in front of homes of African Americans who openly supported the integration of the Haywood County schools and public facilities. The incidents of Ku Klux Klan actions were addressed in the 1967 court case of the Justice Department vs. Haywood County Board of Education. This court case was filed against the Board of Education in response to the ineffectiveness of the Freedom of Choice Plan, which created a dual school system and fostered

<sup>44</sup> Encyclopedia Britannica, "Jim Crow Law."

<sup>45</sup> Voogt, 71.

<sup>46</sup> Carrie Parker, interview with Denise Gallagher, Elma Ross Public Library, August 13, 2013.

<sup>47</sup> Voogt, 72.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 73.

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hostility in the community.<sup>50</sup> The courts ruled in favor of the Justice Department and put steps in place for the Board of Education to begin full integration.

The Carver High School facilities finally closed after the dual school system was officially shut down in 1970, and a new Haywood County High School was built for all students on the north side of Brownsville. After the Carver High School was closed, the building was used for alumni functions from 1970 to 2007. The Boys and Girls Club began using the gym, cafeteria, and office in 2003 as part of their Brownsville operation. In 2007, the unused classrooms were reopened as the Dunbar-Carver Museum to educate the public on African-American history and accomplishments in Haywood County.

With the closure of the school, several commercial businesses remained open into the 1990s. The Jefferson Street Commercial Historic District was home to local services for African Americans such as a Maggie's Beauty Shop located at 31 E. Jefferson Street, next to Gertrude's Café at 33 E. Jefferson Street, which was once Haywood County Supermarket, the community grocery store in the 1950s through the 1970s, and is now used as a Free Mason Meeting Hall. Today, while some buildings remain in operation, several have become vacant. A majority of the properties are still African American-owned businesses offering services to the local community as well as the city of Brownsville. Many buildings have undergone minor alterations over time, but the properties still maintain the architectural character and socio-historical integrity of an African American-built community.

The Jefferson Street Commercial Historic District was created by Brownsville's African-American business owners who took charge of their own economy in the midst of racial discrimination. The period of significance of the district extends from 1910 to 1970. This period of significance incorporates the story of the rise of the African-American middle class during the Civil Rights Movement of Brownsville. The district and the history of the businesses within continue to represent Brownsville's African-American heritage and the struggle for equality in Brownsville. The Dunbar-Carver Museum contains exhibits and historical information on the growth and development of the African-American community. The First Baptist Church of Brownsville is also an important landmark in the community. This section of the city continues to retain a unique identity and is a significant center for the city's African-American community.

For additional information, please reference the "Historic Resources of Brownsville, Tennessee" Multiple Property Document.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 74.

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## 9. Major Bibliographic References

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 Accessed May 1, 2013.  
<http://files.usgwarchives.net/tn/haywood/history/1872/westtenn/historic20nms.txt>

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<b>Previous documentation on file (NPS):</b>		<b>Primary location of additional data:</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	State Historic Preservation Office
<input type="checkbox"/>	previously listed in the National Register	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other State agency
<input type="checkbox"/>	previously determined eligible by the National Register	<input type="checkbox"/>	Federal agency
<input type="checkbox"/>	designated a National Historic Landmark	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Local government
<input type="checkbox"/>	recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #	<input type="checkbox"/>	University
<input type="checkbox"/>	recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other
<input type="checkbox"/>	recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey #	Name of repository:	
Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):			

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**10. Geographical Data**

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**Acreage of Property** 1.4 acres      **USGS Quadrangle** Brownsville 422 SE

**Latitude/Longitude Coordinates:**

1. Latitude: 35.592893      Longitude: -89.261338

**Verbal Boundary Description**

The Jefferson Street Commercial Historic District includes the blocks and parcels along East Jefferson Street beginning at South Washington Avenue to the west and terminating at South Church Avenue to the east, as well as, along South Jackson Avenue beginning at East Main Street (State Highway 70) to the north and terminating at Margin Street to the south.

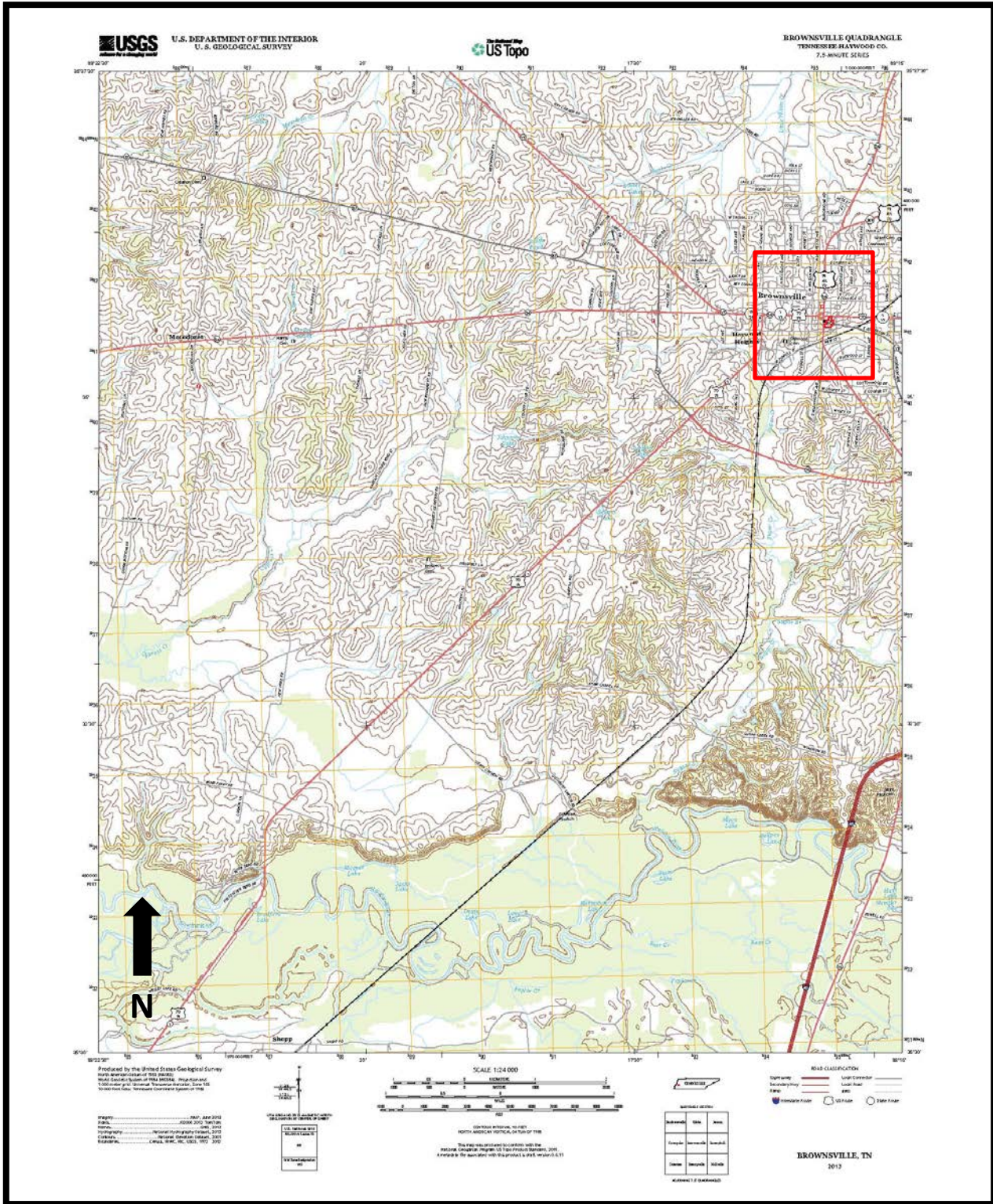
**Boundary Justification**

This nomination boundary is drawn to include all commercial properties historically associated with Brownsville's African-American community. This boundary included all properties either previously owned or still owned by African-American business owners that operated during the twentieth century in Brownsville. To the north of this boundary is East Main Street, which is comprised by commercial strip malls and several commercial buildings that are not associated with African-American businesses. To the south of this boundary is Margin Street which is composed of industrial warehouses and the railroad, also not associated with the African-American commercial businesses. To the east of this boundary is a mixture of newly constructed and older residential, commercial, and religious properties not associated with the African-American businesses of the early- and mid-twentieth-century. To the west of this boundary is the downtown commercial district and public square of Brownsville, which are not associated with African-American commerce in the city.



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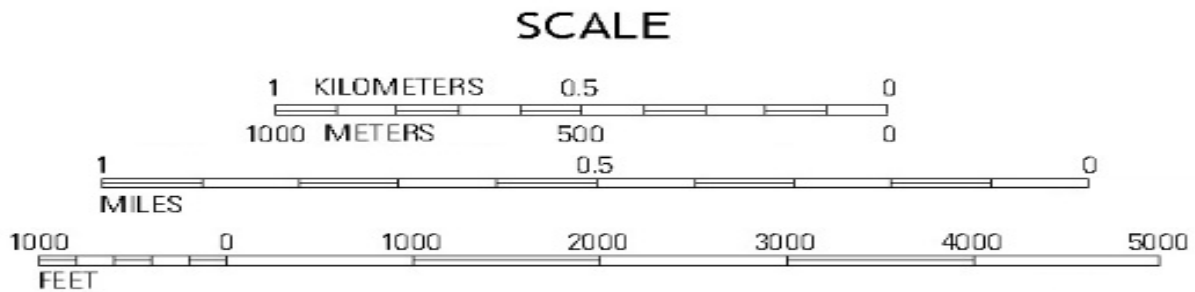
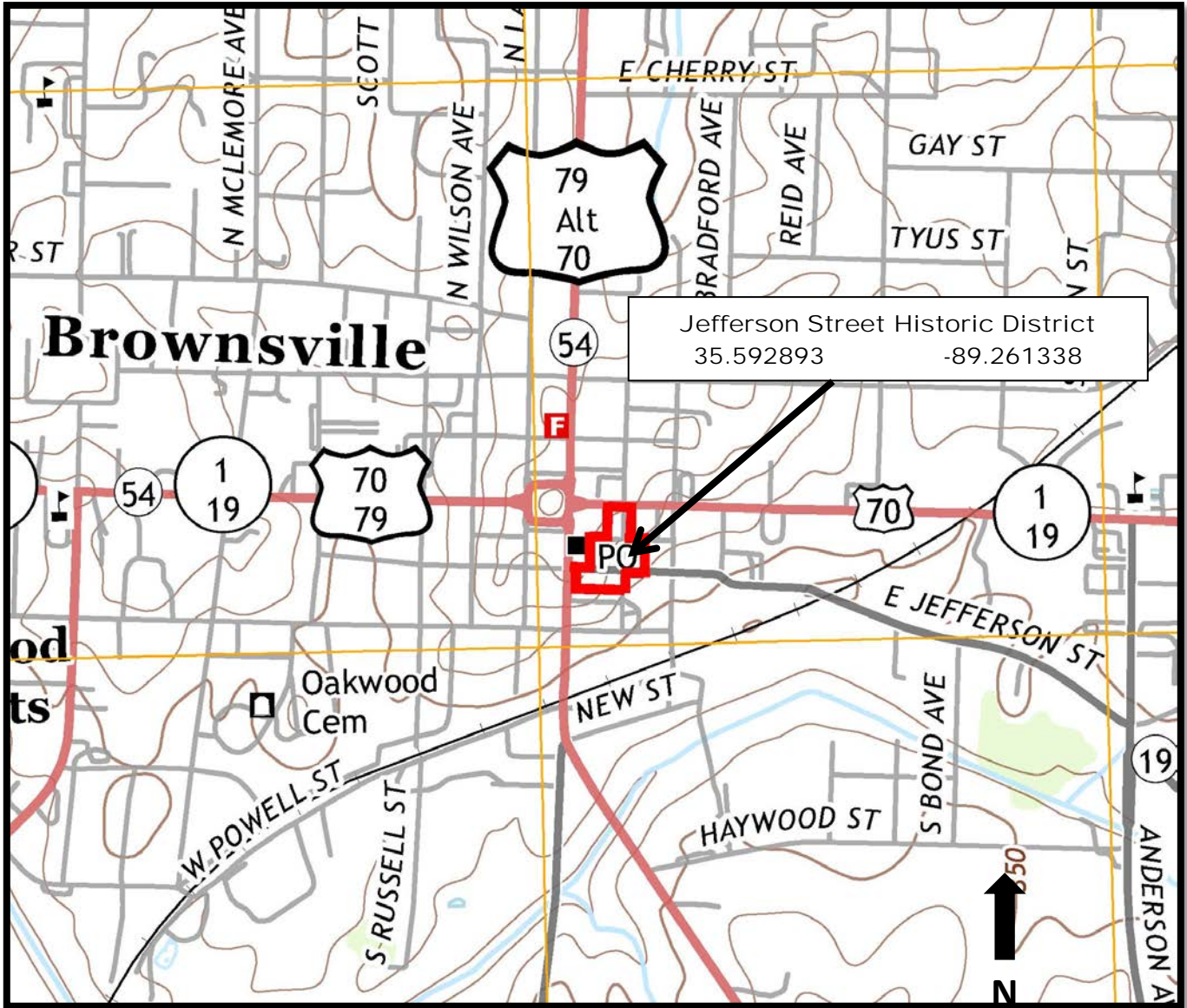
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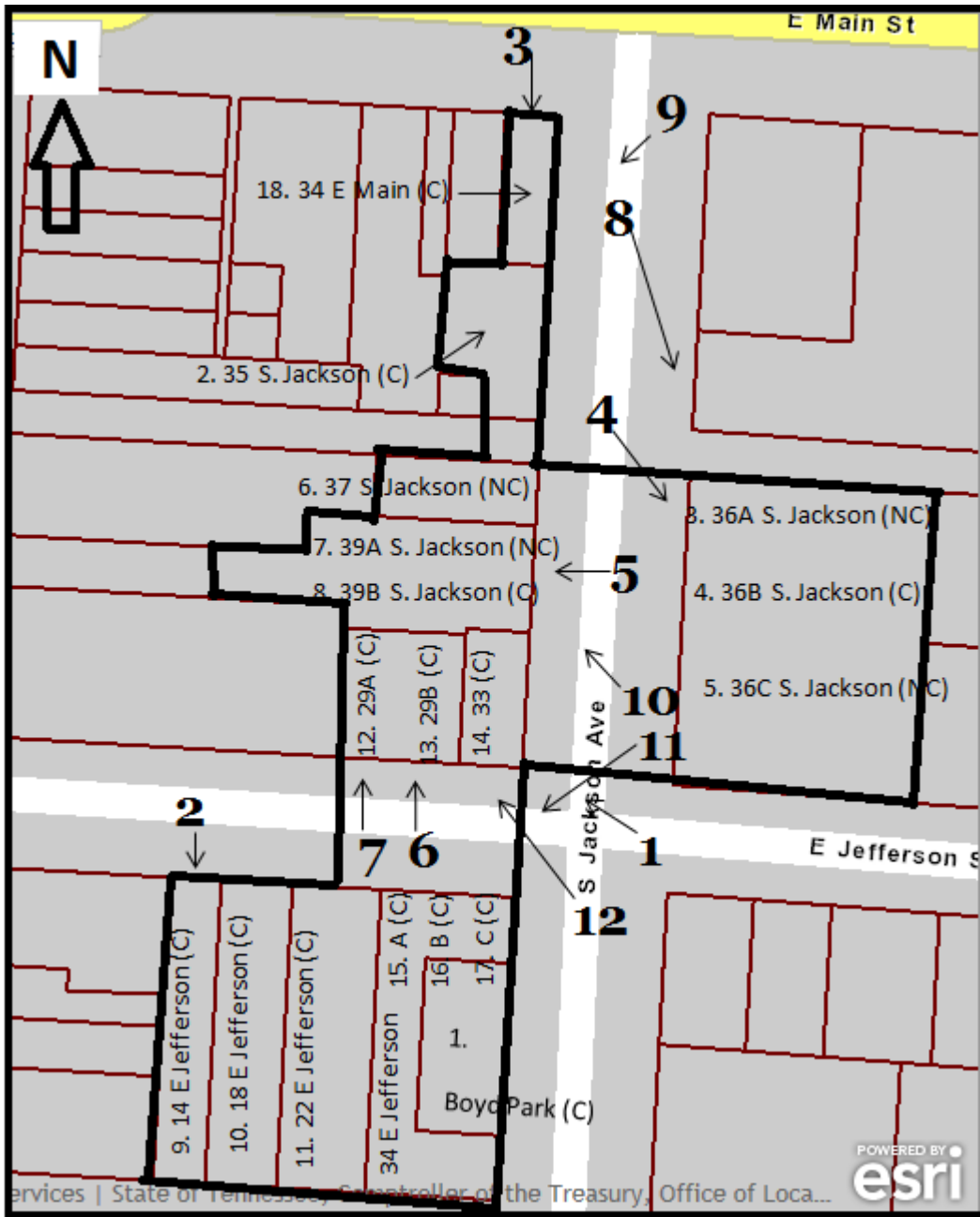


Enlarged area from the above USGS 7.5 Minute Topographic Quadrangle Map, Brownsville, Tennessee (2013) depicting the location and boundary of the Jefferson Street Historic District.

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**BOUNDARY MAP and PHOTO KEY**



(0.1 mile)



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**11. Form Prepared By**

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Name Rebecca Hightower

Organization Thomason and Associates

Street & Number P.O. Box 121225 Date January 6, 2016

City or Town Nashville Telephone 615-385-4960

E-mail Thomason@bellsouth.net State TN Zip Code 37212

**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to map.
- **Photographs** (refer to Tennessee Historical Commission National Register *Photo Policy* for submittal of digital images and prints)
- **Additional items:** (additional supporting documentation including historic photographs, historic maps, etc. should be included on a Continuation Sheet following the photographic log and sketch maps)

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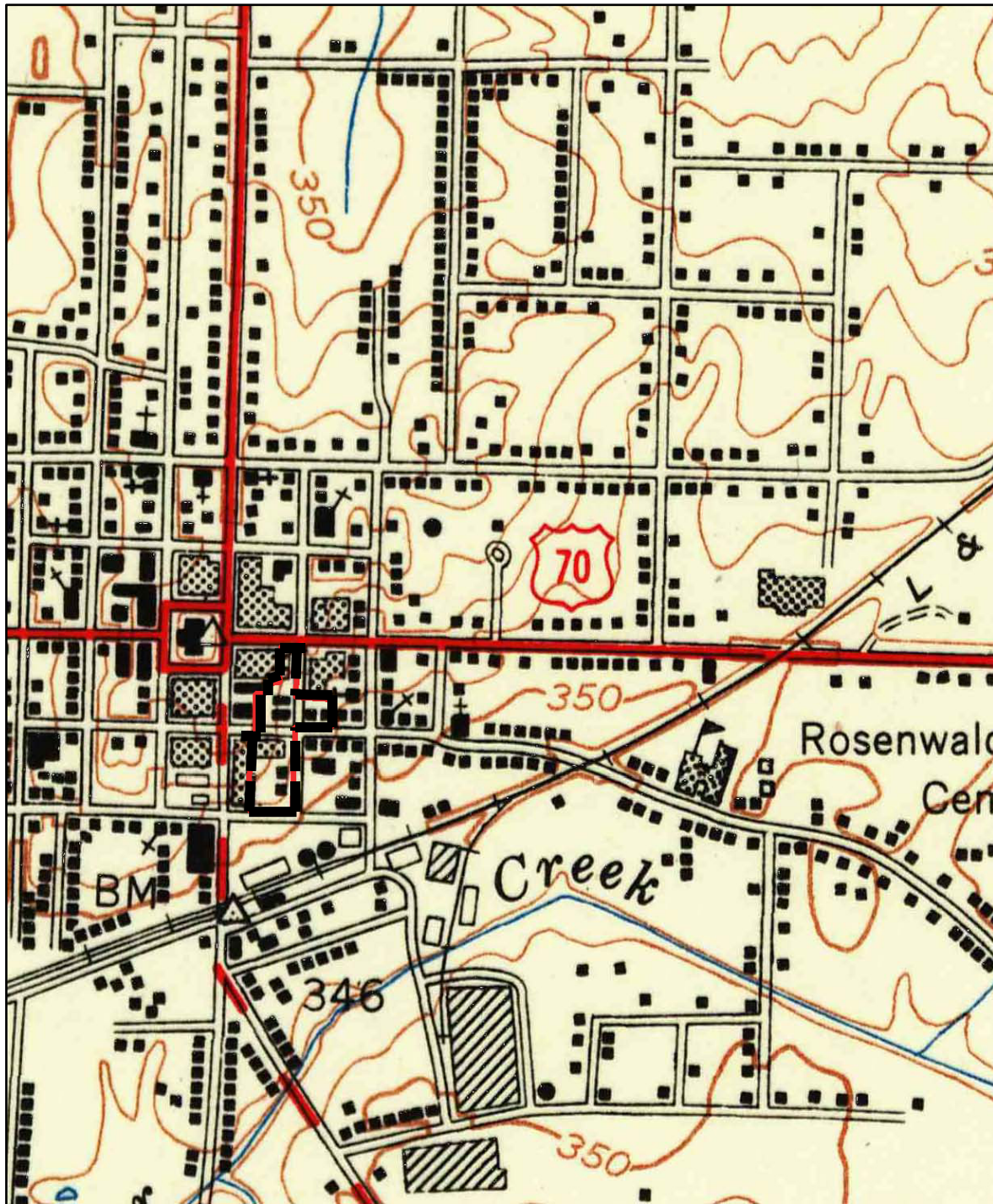
**Photo Log**

Name of Property: Jefferson Street Commercial Historic District  
City or Vicinity: Brownsville  
County: Haywood State: Tennessee  
Photographer: Rebecca Hightower  
Date Photographed: August 2013

- 1 of 12. Resource 14 - 33 East Jefferson Street, View Northwest
- 2 of 12. Resource 9 - 14 East Jefferson Street, View South
- 3 of 12. Resource 18 - 34 East Main Street, View South
- 4 of 12. Resources 3 and 4 - 36 (A) and (B), respectively, South Jackson Avenue, View Southeast.
- 5 of 12. Resources 7 and 8 - 39 (A) and 39 (B), respectively, South Jackson Avenue, View West.
- 6 of 12. Resource 13 - 29 (B) East Jefferson Street, View Northeast
- 7 of 12. Resource 12 - 29 (A) East Jefferson Street, View Northwest
- 8 of 12. Streetscape, 30-99 Block N. Jackson Street, View Southeast
- 9 of 12. Streetscape, 30-99 Block N. Jackson Street, View Southwest
- 10 of 12. Streetscape, 30-99 Block N. Jackson Street, View Northwest
- 11 of 12. Streetscape, 100 Block E. Jefferson Street, View Southwest
- 12 of 12. Streetscape, 100 Block E. Jefferson Street, View Northwest

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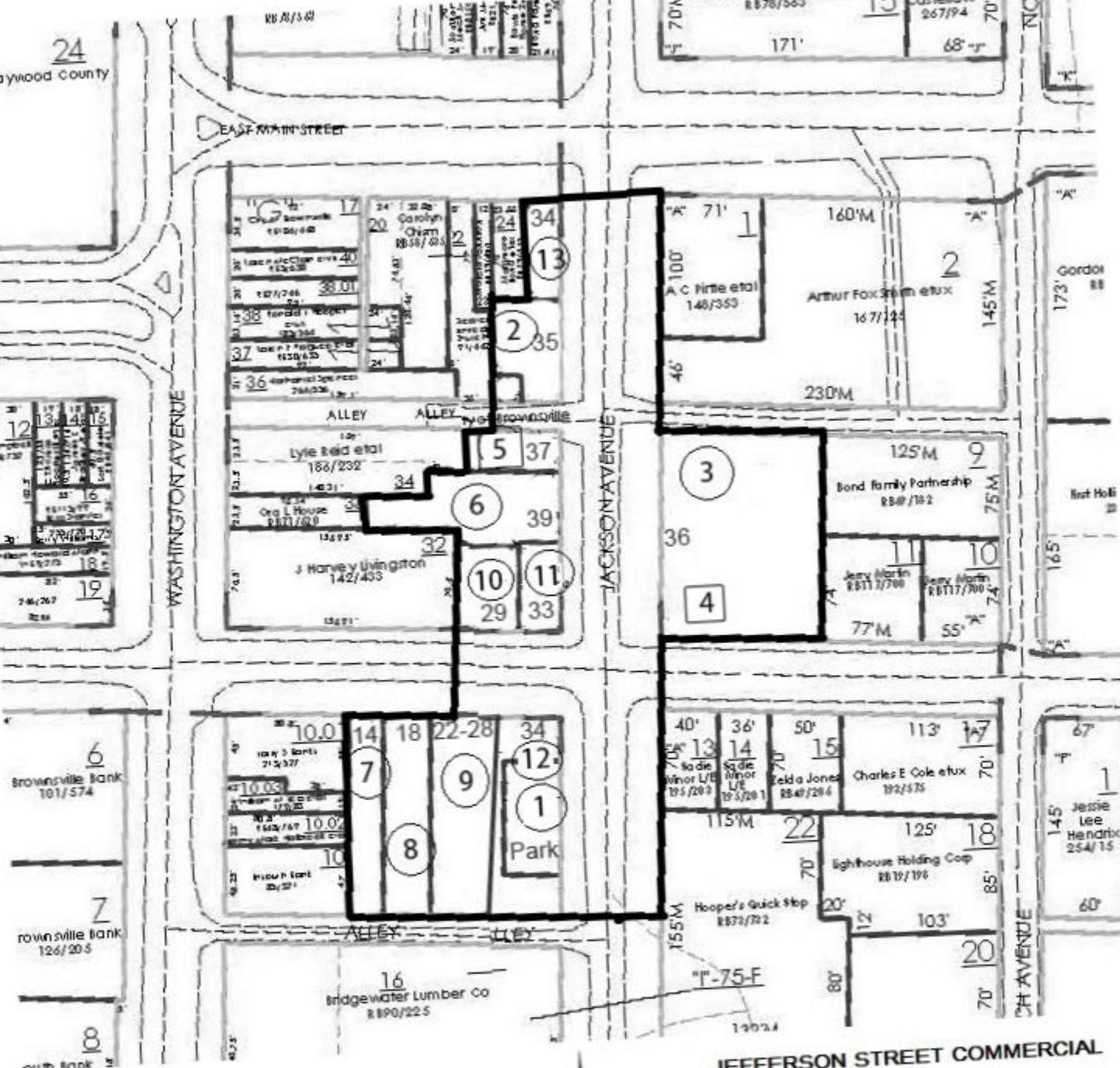
**USGS 7.5 Minute Topographic Quadrangle Map, Brownsville, Tennessee (1951).**

**Property Owner:**

(This information will not be submitted to the National Park Service, but will remain on file at the Tennessee Historical Commission)

<b>Resource #</b>	<b>Physical Address</b>	<b>Owner</b>	<b>Owner Address</b>	<b>C/NC</b>
1	S. Jackson Avenue - Park	City of Brownsville	111 N. Washington Ave, Brownsville, TN 38012	C
2	35 S. Jackson Avenue	Wanda Chism and Carolyn Reed	4583 Brownsville Hwy Denmark, TN 38391	C
3	36(A) S. Jackson Avenue	Rawls Funeral Home-William D Rawls Jr. & Donna Rawls Dancy & Cynthia Rawls Bond	Same as physical address	N/C
4	36(B) S. Jackson Avenue	Rawls Funeral Home-William D Rawls Jr. & Donna Rawls Dancy & Cynthia Rawls Bond	Same as physical address	C
5	36(C) S. Jackson Avenue	Rawls Funeral Home-William D Rawls Jr. & Donna Rawls Dancy & Cynthia Rawls Bond	Same as physical address	N/C
6	37 S. Jackson Avenue - Parking Lot	Ida Mae Coleman	309 S. Grand Avenue, Brownsville, TN 38012	NC
7	39 (A) S. Jackson Avenue	Maltimore and Cynthia Bond	1101 Cynthia Drive, Brownsville, TN 38012	N/C
8	39(B) S. Jackson Avenue	Malitmore and Cynthia Bond	1101 Cynthia Drive, Brownsville, TN 38012	C
9	14 E. Jefferson Street	Bobby Shaw	Same as physical address	C
10	18 E. Jefferson Street	Michael Saxon	5921 US Highway 70 E, Brownsville, TN 38012	C
11	22 E. Jefferson Street	John L Williams	1124 N. Lafayette Avenue, Brownsville, TN 38012	C
12	29 (A) E. Jefferson Street	Bond Family Partnership	1124 N. Lafayette Avenue, Brownsville, TN 38012 1151 Cynthia Drive Brownsville, TN 38012	C
13	29(B) E. Jefferson Street	Bond Family Partnership	1151 Cynthia Drive Brownsville, TN 38012	C
14	33 E. Jefferson St.	Winfield Lodge #52 Free and Accepted Masons	1478 E. Jefferson Street, Brownsville, TN 38012	C
15	34(A) E. Jefferson Street	Haywood County Civil and Welfare League Inc	PO Box 101, Brownsville, TN 38012	C
16	34(B) E. Jefferson Street	Haywood County Civil and Welfare League Inc	PO Box 101, Brownsville, TN 38012	C
17	34(C) E. Jefferson Street	Haywood County Civil and Welfare League Inc	PO Box 101, Brownsville, TN 38012	C
18	34 E. Main Street	William Howard Mann	95 Beech Grove Road, Brownsville, TN 38012	C



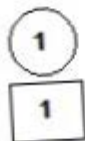


**LEGEND**

CONTRIBUTING PROPERTIES

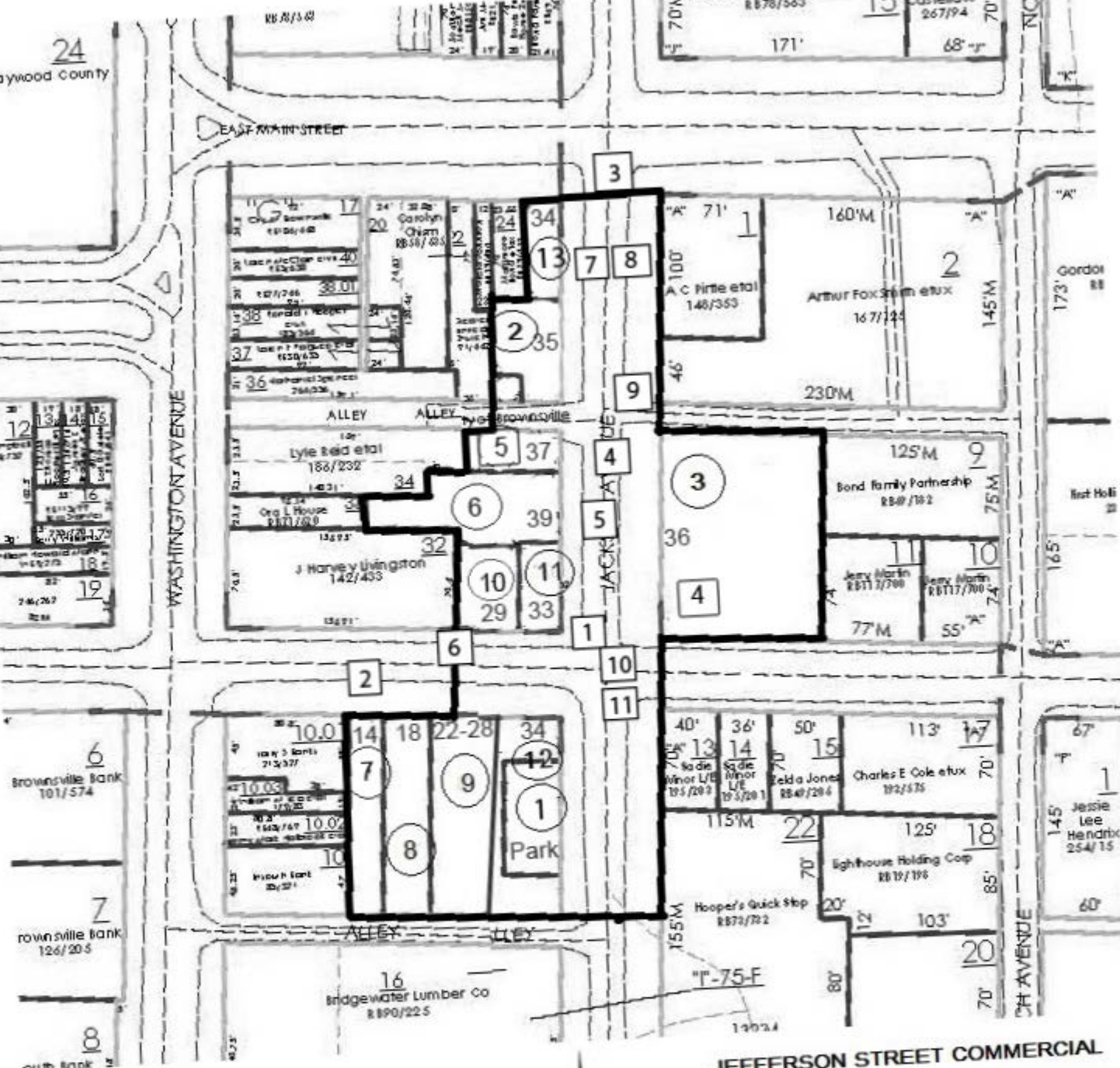
NON-CONTRIBUTING PROPERTIES

DISTRICT BOUNDARY



Feet  
Scale 1" = 100'

**JEFFERSON STREET COMMERCIAL HISTORIC DISTRICT**

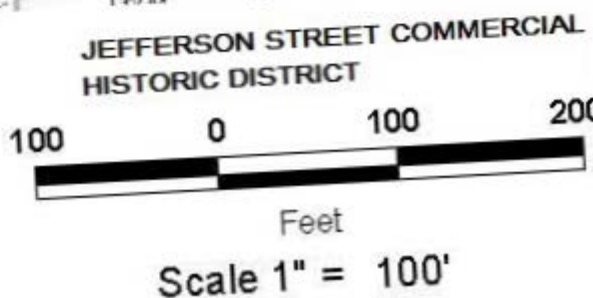
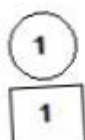


**LEGEND**

CONTRIBUTING PROPERTIES

NON-CONTRIBUTING PROPERTIES

DISTRICT BOUNDARY



**JEFFERSON STREET COMMERCIAL HISTORIC DISTRICT**





PUBLIC CRAFTED

WINFIELD LODGE  
#52

**PROFESSIONAL CAREER BARBER COLLEGE**

**BARBER COLLEGE  
NOW ENROLLING  
772-6553  
HAIRCUTS \$5**











PROGRESSIVE FIRE & LIFE INSURANCE CO.







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29

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Logo with a blue circle and white text







CONCERNED  
CITIZENS





FURNITURE  
APPLIANCES

HIVED LOG



National Register of Historic Places  
Memo to File

# Correspondence

The Correspondence consists of communications from (and possibly to) the nominating authority, notes from the staff of the National Register of Historic Places, and/or other material the National Register of Historic Places received associated with the property.

Correspondence may also include information from other sources, drafts of the nomination, letters of support or objection, memorandums, and ephemera which document the efforts to recognize the property.

&a20CUNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
&a30CNATIONAL PARK SERVICE

&a22CNATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
&a29CEVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: RESUBMISSION

PROPERTY NAME: Jefferson Street Historic District

MULTIPLE NAME: Brownsville, Tennessee MPS

STATE & COUNTY: TENNESSEE, Haywood

DATE RECEIVED: 2/19/16 &pW DATE OF PENDING LIST:  
DATE OF 16TH DAY: &pW DATE OF 45TH DAY: 4/05/16  
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 14001225

DETAILED EVALUATION:

ACCEPT  RETURN  REJECT 3.28.2016 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

*Return Comments Addressed*

*Needs Data Collection - Section 5 changes*

&a4L

RECOM./CRITERIA Accept A  
REVIEWER J. Lambert DISCIPLINE \_\_\_\_\_  
TELEPHONE \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/ see attached SLR Y/



**CERTIFIED LOCAL GOVERNMENT NATIONAL REGISTER REVIEW**

**CLG:** Brownsville  
**PROPERTY:** Jefferson Street Historic District  
**ADDRESS:** Roughly bounded by E. Main Street, S. Jackson Avenue, S. Washington Avenue and Margin Street

**HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION EVALUATION**

**NAME OF COMMISSION:** Brownville Historic Zoning Commission  
**DATE OF MEETING:** August 21, 2014  
**HOW WAS THE PUBLIC NOTIFIED OF THE MEETING?** Local media – newspaper & radio  
 **ELIGIBLE FOR THE NATIONAL REGISTER**  
 **NOT ELIGIBLE FOR THE NATIONAL REGISTER**

**REASONS FOR ELIGIBILITY OR NON-ELILGIBILITY:**

As set forth in the Multiple Property Document Form, "Historic Resources of Brownville, Tennessee," under National Register Criterion A for Ethnic Heritage and Commerce, this District is significant for its African American heritage and commerce and for the advancement of Civil Rights for African American citizens.

**SIGNATURE:** *Sharon Hayes*  
**TITLE:** Sharon Hayes, Certified Local Government Coordinator

*8-21-2014*  
**DATE:**

**THC STAFF EVALUATION**

**ELIGIBLE FOR THE NATIONAL REGISTER**  
 **NOT ELIGIBLE FOR THE NATIONAL REGISTER**

**REASONS FOR ELIGIBILITY OR NON-ELIGIBILITY:**

The Jefferson Street Commercial Historic District is located east of the downtown commercial area in Brownsville, Tennessee. Historically, Haywood County had one of the largest ratios of slaves to owners in Tennessee. Many of these slaves stayed and worked on the farms as sharecroppers or tenant farmers following the Civil War. African Americans are to this day the majority demographic in Brownsville at 60% of the population. This commercial district developed in the early 1900s as a center for African American commerce. Within this small district were many businesses such as insurance companies and grocery stores which catered to the city's African American population. Also in the district was the local NAACP Chapter which was instrumental in furthering the rights of African Americans to vote. The Jefferson Street Commercial Historic District meets registration requirements set forth in the Multiple Property Documentation Form, "Historic Resources of Brownville, Tennessee," Criterion A for Ethnic Heritage and Commerce.

**SIGNATURE:** *Christine Mathieson*  
**TITLE:** Historic Preservation Specialist-National Register

**DATE:** July 18, 2014

**PLEASE COMPLETE THIS FORM AND RETURN BEFORE:** September 15, 2014

**RETURN FORM TO:**

**CHRISTINE MATHIESON  
TENNESSEE HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
2941 LEBANON ROAD  
NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE 37214**



**CERTIFIED LOCAL GOVERNMENT NATIONAL REGISTER REVIEW**

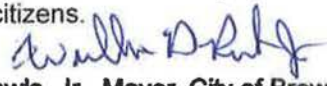
**CLG:** Brownsville  
**PROPERTY:** Jefferson Street Historic District  
**ADDRESS:** Roughly bounded by E. Main Street, S. Jackson Avenue, S. Washington Avenue and Margin Street

**HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION EVALUATION**

**NAME OF COMMISSION:** Brownville Historic Zoning Commission  
**DATE OF MEETING:** August 21, 2014  
**HOW WAS THE PUBLIC NOTIFIED OF THE MEETING?** Local media – newspaper & radio  
 **ELIGIBLE FOR THE NATIONAL REGISTER**  
 **NOT ELIGIBLE FOR THE NATIONAL REGISTER**

**REASONS FOR ELIGIBILITY OR NON-ELILGIBILITY:**

As set forth in the Multiple Property Document Form, "Historic Resources of Brownville, Tennessee," under National Register Criterion A for Ethnic Heritage and Commerce, this District is significant for its African American heritage and commerce and for the advancement of Civil Rights for African American citizens.

**SIGNATURE:**   
**TITLE:** William Rawls, Jr., Mayor, City of Brownville

**DATE:** 8/21/14

**THC STAFF EVALUATION**

**ELIGIBLE FOR THE NATIONAL REGISTER**  
 **NOT ELIGIBLE FOR THE NATIONAL REGISTER**

**REASONS FOR ELIGIBILITY OR NON-ELIGIBILITY:**

The Jefferson Street Commercial Historic District is located east of the downtown commercial area in Brownsville, Tennessee. Historically, Haywood County had one of the largest ratios of slaves to owners in Tennessee. Many of these slaves stayed and worked on the farms as sharecroppers or tenant farmers following the Civil War. African Americans are to this day the majority demographic in Brownsville at 60% of the population. This commercial district developed in the early 1900s as a center for African American commerce. Within this small district were many businesses such as insurance companies and grocery stores which catered to the city's African American population. Also in the district was the local NAACP Chapter which was instrumental in furthering the rights of African Americans to vote. The Jefferson Street Commercial Historic District meets registration requirements set forth in the Multiple Property Documentation Form, "Historic Resources of Brownsville, Tennessee," Criterion A for Ethnic Heritage and Commerce.

**SIGNATURE:**   
**TITLE:** Historic Preservation Specialist-National Register

**DATE:** July 18, 2014

**PLEASE COMPLETE THIS FORM AND RETURN BEFORE: September 15, 2014**

**RETURN FORM TO:**

**CHRISTINE MATHIESON  
TENNESSEE HISTORICAL COMMISSION  
2941 LEBANON ROAD  
NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE 37214**



**William (Bill) Rawls, Jr., Mayor**

**111 N. Washington Avenue · P.O. Box 449 · Brownsville, TN 38012 · 731-772-1212**

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September 12, 2014

Mr. Patrick McIntyre, Jr.  
Executive Director  
Tennessee Historical Commission  
2941 Lebanon Road  
Nashville, TN 37214

RE:           Application for the Jefferson Street Commercial District, Brownsville, TN  
              Application for the Dunbar-Carver Residential District, Brownsville, TN

Dear Mr. McIntyre:

On behalf of the Board of Mayor and Aldermen and the citizens of Brownsville, I want to express our complete support of the above referenced applications before the Tennessee Historical Commission. Our comprehensive plan for growth, "Brownsville On The Move," establishes as a major objective "to preserve and enhance the city's environment through the skillful application of advanced historic preservation." Approval of these applications could truly help us focus our efforts to expand our existing historic districts and establish new ones, as we fight to save our historically, architecturally, and culturally significant structures.

Thanks to past support from the THC, Brownsville has experienced a resurgence of commitment to preserving our past, while engaging our residents in our exciting present, and most promising future. We look forward to working with you as we move towards our mutual goals and objectives, and we thank you for your consideration of these applications.

Sincerely Yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "William (Bill) Rawls, Jr.", written in a cursive style.

Mayor

**VICE MAYOR: LEON KING · ALDERMEN: JOHN SIMMONS · CAROLYN FLAGG · THOMAS AVERYHEART**



**TENNESSEE HISTORICAL COMMISSION**  
STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE  
2941 LEBANON ROAD  
NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE 37214  
OFFICE: (615) 532-1550  
[www.tnhistoricalcommission.org](http://www.tnhistoricalcommission.org)  
E-mail: [Claudette.Stager@tn.gov](mailto:Claudette.Stager@tn.gov)  
(615) 532-1550, ext. 105  
<http://www.tn.gov/environment/history>



November 25, 2014

Carol Shull  
Keeper of the National Register  
National Park Service  
National Register Branch  
1201 Eye Street NW  
8<sup>th</sup> floor  
Washington, DC 20005

Dear Ms. Shull:

Enclosed please find the documentation to nominate *Jefferson Street Historic District* to the National Register of Historic Places. The enclosed disk contains the true and correct copy of the nomination for the *Jefferson Street Historic District* to the National Register of Historic Places.

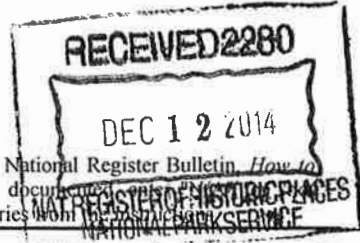
If you have any questions or if more information is needed, please contact Christine Mathieson at (615) 770-1086 or [Christine.Mathieson@tn.gov](mailto:Christine.Mathieson@tn.gov).

Sincerely,

Claudette Stager  
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

CS:cm

Enclosures(4)



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# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, check the box and enter "N/A" in the space provided. For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the list of categories and subcategories applicable.

## 1. Name of Property

Historic name Jefferson Street Historic District  
Other names/site number N/A  
Name of related multiple property listing Historic Resources of Brownsville, Tennessee

## 2. Location

Street & Number: Roughly bounded by E. Main Street, S. Jackson Avenue, S. Washington Avenue and Margin Street  
Brownsville  
TN  
Haywood  
City or town:  
State: County:  
Not For Publication:  N/A Vicinity:  N/A

## 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

REMOVED

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this X 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 forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property X meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:  
 national  statewide  Local

Applicable National Register Criteria:  A  B  C  D

*Clarence Spru* 12/5/14  
Signature of certifying official/Title: Date  
State Historic Preservation Officer, Tennessee Historical Commission  
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property \_\_\_ meets \_\_\_ does not meet the National Register criteria.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Commenting Official: Date  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Title: State of Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government



Jefferson Street Commercial Historic District

Haywood County,  
 Tennessee  
 County and State

Name of Property

**4. National Park Service Certification**

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper

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

Returned

**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the county)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
10	1	buildings
1	1	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
11	2	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

Jefferson Street Commercial Historic District

Haywood County,  
Tennessee  
County and State

Name of Property

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

COMMERCE/Professional

COMMERCE/Grocery

COMMERCE/Restaurant

COMMERCE/TRADE

SOCIAL/Pool Hall

RECREATION/Park

**Current Functions**

COMMERCE/Professional

SOCIAL/Meeting Hall

FUNERARY/Funeral Home

VACANT/NOT IN USE

COMMERCE/Specialty Store

RECREATION/Park

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**

OTHER: 20<sup>th</sup> Century One-Part Commercial Block buildings, 20<sup>th</sup> Century Two-Part Commercial Block Buildings

Returned

**Materials:**

Principal exterior materials of the property: BRICK /CONCRETE/ASPHALT

**Narrative Description**

The Jefferson Street Commercial Historic District is located east of the downtown commercial area in Brownsville, Tennessee. Brownsville is located in West Tennessee and as the county seat, is centrally located in Haywood County, approximately 60 miles east of Memphis, Tennessee. Brownsville is known as an agriculturally rich city with most of its crop cultivation consisting of cotton. Introduced in 1828, cotton quickly became the base of the economy for Haywood County.

The Jefferson Street Commercial Historic District emerged in the early 1900s as the center for the city's African American community. While African Americans could shop in the white-owned businesses on the court square, they were often discriminated against. With the rise of the city's African American middle-class, several businesses specifically for the black population evolved along Jefferson Street. The majority of these buildings are One-Part and Two-Part Commercial Block buildings with modest detailing. The district contains 13 properties, one of which is a community park. Of the other 12 properties, only two or 16.6% is considered to be a non-contributing resource as it is now a parking lot. All other properties are considered contributing resources at 84.6%. There are no outbuildings located within this commercial district.

Jefferson Street Commercial Historic District

Haywood County,  
Tennessee  
County and State

Name of Property

The primary transportation corridor through Brownsville is Highway 70 or E. Main Street, which passes through the center of Brownsville's downtown commercial district, as well as through the center of the College Hill Historic District. This highway is also known as the Memphis-Bristol Highway constructed between 1922 and 1926 which connected Brownsville directly to Jackson, Tennessee approximately 30 miles east. Today this highway provides direct access from Brownsville to Interstate 40 completed in the mid-1960s as part of the national Dwight D. Eisenhower interstate development. The Jefferson Street Commercial Historic District is bounded by State Highway 70 on the north. The district is also bounded by S. Washington Avenue on the west, Margin Street on the south and N. Church Avenue on the east. The area lies just north of the city's main industrial area as well as the railroad tracks and is centered along E. Jefferson Street for which the district is named.

Businesses within this district consisted of restaurants and pool halls, meeting spaces, barber shops, salons, and grocery stores. Jefferson Street and Jackson Avenue became the popular entertainment spot for teenage students due to its close proximity to Carver High School down the street. Eventually desegregation occurred opening up more opportunities for the African American community. However, while many businesses have come and gone within the district, a majority of the properties are still African American owned businesses offering services to the local community as well as the city of Brownsville. Many buildings have undergone minor alterations over time, but the properties still maintain the architectural character and historical integrity of an African American built community.

#### INDIVIDUAL PROPERTY DESCRIPTIONS

Properties in the inventory are organized alphabetically by street and numerically by address. The entries list the address, date of construction, district map number and whether the property is a contributing or non-contributing property.

#### KEY:

- C – Contributing
- NC – Non-Contributing
- Ca. - Circa

#### Inventory

##### Jackson Avenue (South)

1. South Jackson Avenue. C.P. Boyd Park. According to the Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps this was historically a "Negro Tent" from 1887 to 1896, a framed dwelling from 1896 to 1944. The dwelling was razed once 34 E. Jefferson St. was constructed in 1948 and the lot became a park. The property was donated by Dr. C.P. Boyd, founder of the Haywood County Civic and Welfare League and is maintained by the City of Brownsville. This property is a recreational park within the district with a wooden gazebo and park benches. (C)
2. 35 South Jackson Avenue. Ca. 1953. Modern. One-Part Commercial Block building, brick, one story, shed metal roof, rectangular plan, concrete block foundation. Casement display and walk-up order windows. Full width, oversize, overhang. (C)

Jefferson Street Commercial Historic District

Haywood County,  
Tennessee  
County and State

Name of Property

3. 36 South Jackson Avenue. Ca. 1920. Two-Part Commercial Block building, two stories, brick, flat metal roof, rectangular plan, brick foundation, six-over-six double-hung vinyl windows, two single-light display casement windows on the storefront. (C)
4. Rawls Funeral Home. Ca. 1985. One story, brick, office building, single light and aluminum frame windows. (NC)
5. 37 South Jackson Avenue. This property was formerly a wooden framed woodworking shop in 1929 through the 1940s. This property is now a parking lot. (NC)
6. 39 S Jackson Avenue. Ca. 1940. Two-Part Commercial Block building, brick, two story, flat roof, rectangular plan, brick foundation, one-over-one aluminum windows, two single-light display casement windows at the storefront. (C)

#### Jefferson Street (East)

7. 14 East Jefferson Street. Ca. 1910. Two-Part Commercial Block building, brick, two story, flat roof, rectangular plan, brick foundation, two-over-two double-hung wood sash windows, one-over-one casement, wooden, display windows at the storefront. Brick corbeling along the cornice at the roofline and circular attic vents. (C)
8. 18 East Jefferson Street. Ca. 1918. One Part-Commercial Block building, brick, one story, flat roof, rectangular plan, brick foundation. Storefront has been altered Ca. 1960 with wooden paneling and single-light casement windows. Original single-light and wood frame door. (C)
9. 22 East Jefferson Street. Ca. 1910. One-Part Commercial Block building, brick, one story, flat roof, rectangular plan, brick foundation, three storefronts. Storefronts have original single-light casement, display windows with recessed entry door. (C)
10. 29 East Jefferson Street. Two contributing properties: Ca. 1948 is a One-Part Commercial Block building, concrete block, one story, flat roof, rectangular plan, concrete block foundation, metal coping at the roofline. Two single-light casement windows flank the central bay entrance.

Second property was built Ca. 1964 is a one story, commercial building. It has a gabled roof with metal sheeting, concrete block exterior and a continuous concrete block foundation. There are exposed purlins in the eaves. The main (S) façade has an original, full width overhang with galvanized metal. The main entrance is a ca. 1980, metal panel replacement doors. The façade also has four, original, three-light wood and glass windows. The property sits vacant as of today. (C)

11. 33 East Jefferson Street. Ca. 1910. One-Part Commercial Block building, brick, one story, flat roof with a stepped brick parapet and metal coping, brick foundation, rectangular plan. The façade also has two original picture wood and glass windows. (C)



Jefferson Street Commercial Historic District

Haywood County,  
Tennessee  
County and State

---

Name of Property

- 
12. 34 East Jefferson Street. Ca. 1948. Modern. One-Part Commercial Block building, brick veneer, one story, flat roof, concrete block foundation, square plan, duplex. Two wood panel door entrances, each flanked by original two-over-two aluminum, awning windows. (C)

**Main Street (East)**

13. 34 East Main Street. Ca. 1906. One-Part Commercial Block building, brick, one story with basement, flat roof, brick foundation, rectangular plan, Storefront has been altered to Enframed Window Wall with aluminum, single-light display windows with transoms. (C)

Returned

Jefferson Street Commercial Historic District

Haywood County,  
 Tennessee  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 County and State

Name of Property

**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

**Areas of Significance**

- 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.

ETHNIC HERITAGE/Black  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 COMMERCE  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

Ca. 1910-1970  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

N/A  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**Criteria Considerations N/A**

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

**Significant Person**

N/A  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

Unknown  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

- A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

Jefferson Street Commercial Historic District

Haywood County,  
Tennessee  
County and State

Name of Property

**STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:**

**Summary Paragraph**

The Jefferson Street Commercial Historic District is located east of the downtown commercial area in Brownsville, Tennessee. Brownsville is located in West Tennessee and as the county seat, is centrally located in Haywood County, approximately 60 miles east of Memphis, Tennessee. A century old practice of large land cultivation for cotton brought along with it a high slave to owner ratio. Historically, Haywood County had one of the largest ratios of slaves to owners in Tennessee. Many of these slaves stayed and worked on the farms as sharecroppers or tenant farmers following the Civil War. African Americans are to this day the majority demographic in Brownsville at 60% of the population. This commercial district developed in the early 1900s as a center for African American commerce. Within this small district were many businesses such as insurance companies and grocery stores which catered to the city's African American population. Also in the district was the local NAACP Chapter which was instrumental in furthering the rights of African Americans to vote.

The Jefferson Street Commercial Historic District meets registration requirements set forth in the Multiple Property Documentation Form, "Historic Resources of Brownsville, Tennessee." It is nominated for listing in the National Register under Criterion A, for Ethnic History and Commerce, with a period of significance extending from 1910 to 1970. The district contains 12 primary properties and one site. Of the 13 properties, 11 (84.6%) are considered as contributing to the district. Only one property (15.4%) is considered a non-contributing resource as it is now a parking lot. The architecture of this district includes a combination of One-Part and Two-Part Commercial Block buildings in modest designs built during the period of significance.

**Historical Overview:**

In 1785, Henry Rutherford, along with an entourage from North Carolina, conducted an excursion surveying West Tennessee and the Cumberland, Ohio and Mississippi Rivers. They came upon a small stream named Okeena by the Native Americans. Okeena was later named Forked Deer by the surveying party. Rutherford called this point "Key Corner".<sup>1</sup> The road leading from the west into Brownsville is also named Key Corner due to its origin from this designation.<sup>2</sup> At the time of Rutherford's land survey, the land was occupied by Native Americans and the soil was a mixture of clay and sand, ideal for the growth of cotton and grains. As a result of the treaty of 1818, the Chickasaw Indians sold their interest in the West Tennessee land. This treaty spurred interest from land speculators, especially those from North Carolina who moved to the Tennessee area by boat, wagon, and foot after the Panic of 1819, leading to the migration of many Carolinians to the agriculturally rich land of West Tennessee.<sup>3</sup>

1 Brownsville-Haywood County Historical Society, History of Haywood County Tennessee (Marceline, MO: Walsworth Publishing, 1989), 234.

2 Ibid.

3 USGenWeb Archives online, Historical Sketch of Haywood County, May 1, 2013,

Jefferson Street Commercial Historic District

Haywood County,  
Tennessee  
County and State

Name of Property

Once part of Madison County until a Legislative Act in 1823, Haywood County was created and named after Judge John Haywood of North Carolina.<sup>4</sup> One of the first settlers in the Haywood County area was Colonel Richard Nixon. Nixon's father was granted 3,600 acres of land in Haywood County for his contribution in the Revolutionary War. Once Nixon inherited his father's land, he was later appointed a justice of the peace and built the first log cabin which eventually was the county's first organized courtroom.<sup>5</sup> In 1825, a Legislative Act provided that a county seat would be established to be as centrally located as possible and at least 50 acres in size. Brownsville was chosen as this county seat and named after General Jacob Jennings Brown for his contribution in the War of 1812.<sup>6</sup> Thomas M. Johnson deeded the required 50 acres to the city for the cost of one dollar plus one lot. A town square was then created with 2 and 7/8 of an acre and the town was one square mile with all the boundary streets named Margin, i.e. North Margin, South Margin, East Margin, and West Margin.<sup>7</sup> Brownsville was later incorporated as a city in 1826 and the development of the town and the influx of settlers soon began. By 1832, Brownsville had a population of 400. The only two forms of transportation at the time were by steamboat down the Hatchie and Forked Deer Rivers and roads to surrounding communities built and maintained by local landowners.<sup>8</sup> The railroad was not connected to Brownsville until 1846.

With adequate means to transport goods and agricultural crops and cultivation of its rich soil, Haywood County quickly ranked third in Tennessee for cotton production during the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. Cotton brought great wealth to the residents of Haywood County and Brownsville. A majority of the wealthier residents in Brownsville were large landowners and cotton farmers. One of the city's most important businessmen from this period was Thomas Bond, who settled in Haywood County; having moved from North Carolina in 1826; he "built one of the greatest fortunes in Tennessee."<sup>9</sup> Bond owned and operated his own steamboat to carry supplies and his cotton products. Bond became the largest taxpayer in the county before and after the Civil War.<sup>10</sup> Cotton production was primarily operated by slave labor until the Civil War. Bond himself brought over 500 slaves with him to Haywood County in the 1820s.<sup>11</sup>

In the early 1800s, several African American slaves were shipped to Haywood County via boat down the Hatchie River. By 1830 the population of Haywood County reached just over 5,000 residents, of whom 1,200 were slaves, representing 34%. Eventually, Haywood County had one of the largest ratios of slaves to

<http://files.usgarchives.net/tn/haywood/history/1872/westtenn/historic20nms.txt>

4 Tennessee Library and Archives website. THS Collection: "John Haywood (1762-1826) Papers (1768-1796)", April 30, 2012. <http://www.tn.gov/tsla/history/manuscripts/findingaids/th448.pdf>

5 Bob Moses, Lynn Shaw, Walter Baird and Harrell Clement, Haywood County, Tennessee (Paducah, KY: Turner Publishing Company, 1998), 7.

6 Ibid.

7 Brownsville-Haywood County Historical Society, History of Haywood County Tennessee (Marceline, MO: Walsworth Publishing, 1989), 237.

8 USGenWeb Archives online, A History of Haywood County, April 30, 2013, <http://files.usgarchives.net/tn/haywood/history/history.txt>

9 Emma Nunn, Haywood County, Tennessee Encyclopedia of History and Culture online, April 30, 2013. <http://tennesseeencyclopedia.net/entry.php?rec=615>

10 Ibid.

11 Ibid.



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white owners in the state. By 1840 Haywood County's population more than doubled to 13,870 residents with more than 6,250 (45.39%) enslaved. During the 1850s, some 3,000 slaves escaped from Haywood County and sought refuge with members of the Chickasaw tribe farther west.<sup>12</sup> While many were never captured, those who were caught were returned to Haywood County. By 1860 Haywood County's population rose to 19,232 and 11,026 of that population, or 57.4%, were slaves.<sup>13</sup> The dispute over slavery and states' rights led to the secession of Tennessee and the beginning of the Civil War in 1861. While there was never any major fighting in the county, Brownsville was occupied at various times by both Union and Confederate troops.<sup>14</sup> The war disrupted commerce, but fortunately no major fires or other destructive acts occurred during the war.

After the Civil War, the federal government placed offices for the newly assembled Freedmen's Bureau throughout the South, to aid African Americans in finding employment, and encourage whites and blacks to work together after the abolishment of slavery.<sup>15</sup> With the assistance and guidance of the Freedmen's Bureau, many freed slaves were able to stay and work on the farms as sharecroppers or tenant farmers under an employer/employee arrangement rather than a master/slave arrangement.<sup>16</sup> Sharecropping became the most common occupation within the African American community in Haywood County following the Civil War. Sharecropping was the process in which a landowner would allow African Americans to work a portion of the land and landowners would take a portion of the profit from the harvest at the end of the year. Illiteracy was a common problem for African Americans and they were often cheated out of larger profit portions of what was rightfully theirs.<sup>17</sup> Few freed slaves remained in Brownsville's city limits; the majority moved throughout rural areas of Haywood County to seek opportunities in agricultural production. African Americans soon began purchasing land or renting farm plots. Farming and land ownership became vital to the African American community as it was their primary means of income as well as providing a means to feed their families. Frank Evans and Cato Walker were the earliest known African American landowners in Brownsville in 1872. By 1870 Haywood County's population rose to 25,094, 13,832 or 55.12% of whom were freed slaves. African Americans eventually became the largest demographic percentage of landowners in Haywood County at 64%.<sup>18</sup>

Throughout slavery and the Reconstruction period, many African Americans sought access to intellectual and educational opportunities. A notable leader in the education of African Americans of Haywood County was Reverend Hardin Smith. Smith was one of many enslaved sons fathered by his white owner, Abner Smith, in Hanover County, Virginia.<sup>19</sup> General William H. Loving bought Hardin at a young age and brought

12 Norris, Sharon, Black America Series: Haywood County, TN (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2000.) 7.

13 "Telling the Haywood County Story" The Dunbar-Carver Museum. February 26, 2014.

14 The Brownsville-Haywood County Bicentennial Book Committee, Heart of the Tennessee Delta (Dixie Printing Company, 1996), 3.

15 Emma Nunn, Haywood County, Tennessee Encyclopedia of History and Culture online, April 30, 2013  
<http://tennesseencyclopedia.net/entry.php?rec=615>

16 Ibid.

17 Carrie Parker, interview by Rebecca Hightower, Dunbar-Carver Museum, February 26, 2014.

18 "Telling the Haywood County Story" The Dunbar-Carver Museum. February 26, 2014.

19 Emma Nunn, Haywood County, Tennessee Encyclopedia of History and Culture online, April 30, 2013  
<http://tennesseencyclopedia.net/entry.php?rec=615>

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him to Haywood County in 1840. Hardin had a light complexion from his father and General Loving's wife began teaching him to read and write. At sixteen, Smith was given permission to preach to a slave congregation at night at the Woodland Baptist Church in Nutbush; which was white-owned at the time.<sup>20</sup> Smith also began teaching his congregations to read and write and went on to establish several other churches in small communities throughout Haywood County.

The post-Civil War Reconstruction period in Brownsville was one filled with a racial divide between white and black as African Americans resented the conditions in which they lived and how they were treated. This divide was only intensified when the Tennessee Legislature and other states passed the "Jim Crow Laws" in 1876 bringing an end to the formal Reconstruction period in 1877. Jim Crow laws were considered any law or ordinance put in place to support racial segregation.<sup>21</sup> Most whites felt superior to African Americans and the Jim Crow Laws made racism or racist acts towards African Americans legal, including the separation of whites and blacks through public education and public transportation.<sup>22</sup> These laws eventually extended to all public places, including restaurants, theaters, cemeteries, parks, and other establishments. As a result, African Americans began establishing their own churches and schools throughout Brownsville. A map of Haywood County dated 1877 illustrates one of the first "Colored" churches on W. College Street. This church was the First Baptist Church of Brownsville and was founded by Reverend Martin Winfield.<sup>23</sup>

Establishing a school became a major focus of the African American community. The Freedman School for Blacks, or the Normal School for Coloreds, as it was originally called, was established as part of the Freedman Bureau in 1866. Reverend Hardin Smith, Manimore Bond, Charles Somerville, Thomas Claiborne, Frank Peeples, and Samuel Williams raised funds to build the first African American school building on E. Jefferson Street in Brownsville, as it was centrally located within the county.<sup>24</sup> A wooden school was erected in 1866 and was two-stories in height with 6 classrooms. Reverend Martin Winfield convinced John R. Gloster to come to Brownsville and be the school's first principal. Gloster, along with his wife, had been educated at Roger Williams University in Nashville, Tennessee. The Normal School for Coloreds, which became known as the Dunbar School in 1880 offered high school training. George Currie took over as temporary principal when Gloster left Brownsville in 1915.<sup>25</sup> This school quickly became the focal point of the African American community and residences and commercial buildings began being built along E. Jefferson Street, with construction continuing into the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

African American residential development in Brownsville was limited until the 1910s. Following the passage of the Jim Crow Laws in 1877, racial tensions in Brownsville and Haywood County rose dramatically, causing a number of African Americans to move to other states to escape the severity of discrimination. A majority of the county's African Americans continued farming as their occupation and only a small community lived in the Brownsville city limits. By the 1910s educated African Americans settled in

20 Ibid.

21 Encyclopedia Britannica, Jim Crow Laws. Encyclopedia online. Accessed February 28, 2014.  
<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/303897/Jim-Crow-law>

22 Ibid.

23 "Telling the Haywood County Story" The Dunbar-Carver Museum, February 26, 2014.

24 Carrie Parker, interview by Rebecca Hightower, Dunbar-Carver Museum, February 26, 2014.

25 Ibid.

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Brownsville taking up occupations such as teachers, preachers, and doctors. These professions created a middle-class economy in the African American community and many began building modest homes. The implementation of the Jim Crow Laws created a segregated society pushing African Americans to build a community for themselves, removed from Brownsville's white society already concentrated around the public square as well as to the north and west of the square. As a result, the African American community began to settle around the newly established Dunbar School on E. Jefferson Street and close to the railroad tracks where several factories were located.

The Dunbar School on E. Jefferson Street was destroyed by a fire in 1920. Local churches, such as the First Baptist Church of Brownsville, Holiness Church, and Farmer's Chapel CME took over responsibility and continued to operate classes in their facilities.<sup>26</sup> During the rebuilding stages, professors at Dunbar School, Professor F.E. Jeffries, Mack Sloan, and George Currie acted as temporary principals while classes were conducted at the local churches. The school was rebuilt using funds from the Rosenwald Foundation. Booker T. Washington and Julius Rosenwald collaborated to build schools for African American children in the early 1900s. Rosenwald was part owner of the Sears-Roebuck Company and a philanthropist. Rosenwald's school funding program eventually built over 5,000 schools between 1910 and 1935.<sup>27</sup> In 1922, the Dunbar School was rebuilt with assistance from Rosenwald school funds, reopened as the Haywood County Training School. It was decided at that time to move the school further west on E. Jefferson Street closer to the railroad tracks and the local churches.<sup>28</sup> The school was rebuilt of brick, two-stories in height with six classrooms, a cafeteria, a gym, office space and a library costing \$23,000. Some \$1,600 of the total amount was paid for by the Rosenwald Fund and the rest cobbled together from a collection of state and county funds and donations.<sup>29</sup>

The school's programs were offered to African American children across Haywood County. Professor F.E. Jeffries became the first principal of the newly built school. Professor Jeffries was a professor at Dunbar School before it burned and he remained principal of Haywood County Training School until 1936 when he took a position as the first African American State Agricultural Extension Agent.<sup>30</sup> As an agricultural agent, Jeffries taught farming and cropping skills to African American farmers throughout Haywood County. Professor Roy Bond replaced Professor Jeffries as Principal. In 1950, the school was named Dunbar-Haywood County Training-Carver High School or Carver High School after George Washington Carver.<sup>31</sup> Principal Bond also built at home at 805 E. Jefferson Street, just east of the school to remain close to the facilities. Over time the school's student population rose to approximately 1,500.

In 1916 Booker T. Washington gave a speech in Brownsville's city square, encouraging self-improvement among the African American community which led to the establishment of social groups and businesses. In

26 Carrie Parker, interview by Rebecca Hightower, Dunbar-Carver Museum, February 26, 2014.

27 Tom Hanchett. Rosenwald Schools. History South website. February 7, 2014 <http://www.historysouth.org/rosenwaldhome.html>

28 Carrie Parker, interview by Rebecca Hightower, Dunbar-Carver Museum, February 26, 2014

29 "Telling the Haywood County Story" The Dunbar-Carver Museum. February 26, 2014

30 Brownsville-Haywood County Historical Society, 168.

31 Carver Dunbar Alumni website. About Us: History. Accessed February 6, 2014

[http://www.carverdunbaralumni.com/About\\_Us.html](http://www.carverdunbaralumni.com/About_Us.html)

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the 1920s and 1930s, racial tensions continued to promote segregation. The Jim Crow Laws made it legal for white businesses to refuse service to African American citizens and if they did not refuse them, to serve them last or force them to use separate entrances. The buildings on E. Jefferson Street and Jackson Avenue southeast of the public square became home to the segregated businesses serving the African American community. According to the Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps of 1887, 1891, 1896, 1900, 1905, and 1910 several of these building lots were originally white-owned livery, storage or office operations along E. Jefferson Street and dwellings located along S. Jackson Avenue. The Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps of 1929 and 1944 illustrate that several of these dwellings on S. Jackson Avenue and commercial buildings on the north side of E. Jefferson Street were razed and new commercial buildings were constructed. During the 1920s the newly constructed commercial buildings housed African American owned businesses such as restaurants, grocery stores, dry cleaners, pharmacies, barber and beauty shops, offices and a funeral home. Businesses included Tom Wilson's café and jazz club in the basement of 34 E. Main Street, Rawls' Pool Hall on the first floor of 36 S. Jackson Avenue. Rawls Funeral Home was at 36 S. Jackson Avenue with the first floor used to house hearses and ambulances. Located behind Rawls Funeral Home was Kozy's Beauty Shoppe and Tea Room. The second floor housed the beauty school and living quarters, while the first floor was the Tea Room. Rawls' Dry Cleaners was at 18 E. Jefferson Street, and Sander's Grocery at 33 E. Jefferson Street. Jackson Avenue quickly became a popular entertainment district in the community with restaurants, pool halls and jazz clubs. The Ritz and Capitol Theaters located on Brownsville's downtown square were white owned and operated movie theaters and restricted African Americans to the upper balconies and they were not allowed to use the concessions. Between 1940 and 1960, the African American entertainment district extended across E. Main Street, north on Jackson Avenue to include a theater. The Gem Theater, located at 31 E. Main Street, was owned by African American businessman Charles Allen Rawls.<sup>32</sup>

The African American community in this area was primarily working class, consisting of industrial workers, farmhands, educators, and business owners; therefore, the commercial building within this district are generally One- and Two-Part commercial block buildings and modest in design. One-Part Commercial Block buildings are those which are one-story and have storefronts with upper facades. Most storefronts were originally designed to have entrances with single-light glass and wood doors, large display windows resting on bulkheads and with transoms above for light and ventilation. The upper facades of the One-Part Commercial Block buildings could be simple in design or ornate with corbelled brick or some other type of inset decoration. The building at 33 E. Jefferson Street is an excellent example of a One-Part Commercial Block building.

Two-Part Commercial Block buildings are those which are two-stories or more and have upper facades with window openings on each floor and some type of termination at the roofline. These buildings usually have multiple uses. The first floor is generally for public use, such as a business, while the upper floors are for private use such as apartments or offices.<sup>33</sup> The building at 14 E. Jefferson Street is an example of a Two-Part Commercial Block building. Windows in the early 20th century were often wooden sashes and

32 Carrie Parker, interview by Rebecca Hightower, Dunbar-Carver Museum, February 26, 2014

33 Richard Longstreth, *The Buildings of Main Street: A Guide to American Commercial Architecture*, (Baltimore, MD: John D. Lucas Printing Company, 1987), 56.



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rectangular in design with plain or brick soldier course lintels. Similar to the One-Part commercial block building, the rooflines usually have decorative features such as corbelled brick or sheet metal cornices. Roofs on both One-Part and Two-Part buildings were either flat or sloping and hidden behind parapet walls.

In 1939, several prominent African Americans gathered to create the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) chapter of Haywood County. The NAACP established an office at 26 E. Jefferson Street in Brownsville and this chapter continues to operate at the location today. The oldest buildings remaining in the district were built ca. 1910 to ca. 1930 and reflect common commercial building forms of the period. This commercial district continued to be a vital hub of the African American community through the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century.

After World War II, African American veterans took advantage of the opportunities provided by the GI Bill to buy houses, establish families in cities and towns or even move from their hometown to seek higher education. Veterans returning to Brownsville resented the substandard conditions to which they were subjected and agitated for the right to vote. With a large ratio of African Americans to whites, the fear of political change in what was a traditional southern society became a dividing force.<sup>34</sup> This fear of change began a violent period in the Civil Rights Movement. Founding members of the NAACP chapter and those at the forefront of the voting movement for African Americans became targets to the white society that opposed African American equal rights.

Several founding members of the local chapter of the NAACP lived on E. Jefferson Street and operated Civil Rights activist meetings in their homes.<sup>35</sup> Ollie S. Bond, a World War II veteran and a founding member of the NAACP, was the target of violent acts intended to intimidate members of the NAACP chapter. Bond was beaten several times, his house was set on fire, and he and his family were eventually run out of town by police for his promotion of voting rights.<sup>36</sup> Elbert Williams, another founding member of the NAACP chapter, was murdered in 1940 for his advocating voting rights. Williams' death led to several leaders in the African American community moving from Brownsville out of fear for their own safety. The murder of Elbert Williams led to the investigation into the violence against African Americans by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI). Williams' case drew national attention resulting in visits from African American leaders such as Thurgood Marshall.<sup>37</sup> With many members of the NAACP chapter, leaving Brownsville after Williams' murder, the chapter was disbanded in 1941.<sup>38</sup>

During the late 1950s and early 1960s, efforts to gain voting rights among the county's African Americans once again were initiated. The NAACP chapter was reinstated in 1961 to assist in these efforts. Many tenant farmers and sharecroppers in the county came to Brownsville to register to vote and these efforts were met with economic retaliation by white farmers. Several white landowners, either by choice or intimidation to do so, forced African American tenant farmers who had registered to vote off their lands. Nearly 400 African

34 Jan Voogt, "The War in Vietnam: The View from a Southern Community" (PhD diss., University of Leiden, 2005), 65.

35 Brownsville States-Graphic, "Black History Month 2014 supplement." February 27, 2014, 4.

36 Ibid.

37 Carrie Parker, interview by Rebecca Hightower, Dunbar-Carver Museum, February 26, 2014

38 Brownsville States-Graphic, "Black History Month 2014 supplement." February 27, 2014, 10.

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American families were evicted and sought refuge in places such as “Tent City” in Fayette County.<sup>39</sup> Tent City was on land donated by a black man, Shephard Towles, on which tents, provided by an anonymous white merchant, housed several families left homeless after being forced off farmlands. Federal aid came to those evicted when it was realized that these families were not receiving basic needs like proper nutrition.<sup>40</sup> Tent City gained national prominence because of the substandard living conditions and the level of hostility towards the African American farmers of Haywood and Fayette Counties.

While many factories and businesses in Brownsville remained predominantly white-owned in the 1950s, one African American-owned business was the Rawls Funeral Home, established in 1933 by Charles Allen Rawls, an influential citizen and businessman. From this business grew the Rawls Mutual Benefit Burial Association, which was established to assist impoverished families throughout West Tennessee in burying their family members with dignity by paying a small monthly premium. From the Rawls Mutual Benefit Burial Association, came the Sons and Daughters of the Golden Circle, a fraternal order, later organized as the Golden Circle Life Insurance Company, an old-line, legal reserve, stock life insurance company, incorporated in 1958. Through the insurance company’s Mortgage Loan Department, many families that were in danger of losing their homes or farms were able to secure loans in order to save them. Many churches throughout West Tennessee were able to construct new buildings because of loans made through the Golden Circle Life Insurance Company. Another enterprise of the Golden Circle Life Insurance Company was The Tribes of Judea, which offered life and health insurance to elderly citizens that were unable to secure insurance through the Golden Circle Life Insurance Company. The Golden Circle Life Insurance Company operated its headquarters at 39 South Jackson Avenue for 51 years and ranked 17th among the 32 African American owned insurance companies in the United States in 1983. In 2001, the Golden Circle Insurance Agency was founded, phasing out the Golden Circle Life Insurance Company. The agency operates in the same building at 39 South Jackson Avenue and provides a full service of insurance protection and financial solutions for businesses, homes, and families. It is locally owned and managed by CEO Andrea Bond Johnson, granddaughter of Charles Allen Rawls.<sup>41</sup>

Due to the close proximity to Carver High School a half mile down the street, the Jefferson Street Commercial Historic District became a popular hangout for high school students after school. The building at 29 E. Jefferson Street operated as Gertrude’s Café through the 1960s. High school students would stop in after school to play music and games, do homework, and socialize.<sup>42</sup> At 34 E. Main Street was the Tom Wilson Café, a local entertainment spot open in the 1920s through 1940 where patrons could come eat and enjoy music by jazz ensembles.<sup>43</sup> The business at 36 S. Jackson Avenue operated as Rawl’s Pool Hall, which was established in 1943. On the second floor of this building were the offices of dentist, Dr. J.O. Clark.

In the 1950s, several commercial businesses changed operation and owners, but remained African American owned and operated. Examples included: 18 E. Jefferson changed from Rawls Cleaners to the Army Surplus

39 Ibid, 5.

40 Jan Voogt, “The War in Vietnam: The View from a Southern Community” (PhD diss., University of Leiden, 2005), 68.

41 Ibid.

42 Norris, Sharon, Black America Series: Haywood County, TN (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2000), 31.

43 Ibid, 33.

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Store, owned by John Banks of the Railroad Salvage Store, and later changed to Barden's Refrigeration Services; 33 E. Jefferson Street, which changed from the Service Sundry Drug Store, which had a pharmacist, jeweler, and soda fountain, to Sanders Grocery Store and later changed to the Haywood County Supermarket. Today, 33. E. Jefferson Street, is the Masonic Lodge for Winfield #32. Professor F.E. Jeffries left Haywood Training High School in 1936 to become the first African American agricultural extension agent for Haywood County, he maintained an office at 36 S. Jackson Avenue until 1955 when he moved to a newly constructed office building at 34 E. Jefferson Street. Jeffries had his office at 34 E. Jefferson Street until he retired in 1965, at which time it became a beauty salon.

In 1954, the Supreme Court undermined the Jim Crow Laws with the Brown vs. Board of Education case which declared that segregation in public schools was unconstitutional. The ruling created a domino effect, applying the ruling to segregation in other public facilities, and overturning any future segregation-based legislation.<sup>44</sup> However, even with the removal of the Jim Crow Laws, the Civil Rights Movement continued through the 1960s and segregation remained within Brownsville's society. Civil Rights activists, such as Eric Weinberger, came to Brownsville and gathered together citizens in the African American community to stage marches in Brownsville's public square between 1960 and 1963.<sup>45</sup> Although African Americans did achieve the right to vote in 1963, the African American community remembers enduring acts of retaliation. For example to deter voting, the courthouse would set out fans and blow black pepper in the direction of African Americans standing in line to vote.<sup>46</sup> Eventually the Civil Rights Act of 1964 declared that discrimination due to race, sex, age, religion, and national origin illegal, leading to the eventual end of segregated facilities and businesses in Brownsville.

In 1965 the Haywood County Board of Education planned to integrate schools in accordance with the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and created the "Freedom of Choice Plan".<sup>47</sup> The Freedom of Choice Plan declared that students could choose which school they wanted to attend and the Board of Education would assign students to a school. The school board also guaranteed that the assignment would not be based on race, color, national origin, or religion.<sup>48</sup> The Freedom of Choice plan met resistance and continued to create a division in the community. The plan was not enforced effectively. While some African American students were assigned to Haywood County public schools, the ratio continued to be predominantly white as there were more than 4,200 African American pupils in the education system with only 44 attending white public schools.<sup>49</sup> The Ku Klux Klan was also present in Brownsville at this time hosting rallies in front of the courthouse in Brownsville's public square and burning homes or crosses in front of homes of African Americans who openly supported the integration of the Haywood County schools and public facilities. The incidents of Ku Klux Klan actions were addressed in the 1967 court case of the Justice Department vs. Haywood County Board of Education. This court case was filed against the Board of Education in response to the

44 Encyclopedia Britannica, Jim Crow Law. Encyclopedia Britannica online. Accessed February 28, 2014.

<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/303897/Jim-Crow-law>

45 Jan Voogt, "The War in Vietnam: The View from a Southern Community" (PhD diss., University of Leiden, 2005), 71.

46 Carrie Parker, interview by Denise Gallagher, Elma Ross Public Library, August 13, 2013

47 Jan Voogt, "The War in Vietnam: The View from a Southern Community" (PhD diss., University of Leiden, 2005), 72.

48 Ibid.

49 Ibid, 73.

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ineffectiveness of the Freedom of Choice Plan, which created a dual school system and fostered hostility in the community.<sup>50</sup> The courts ruled in favor of the Justice Department and put steps in place for the Board of Education to begin full integration.

The Carver High School facilities finally closed after the dual school system was officially shut down in 1970 and a new Haywood County High School was built for all students on the north side of Brownsville. The Carver High School facilities were closed and from 1970 to 2007, during which time the building was used for alumni functions. The Boys and Girls Club began using the gym, cafeteria, and office in 2003 as part of their Brownsville operation. In 2007 the unused classrooms were reopened as the Dunbar-Carver Museum to educate the public on African American history and accomplishments in Haywood County.

With the closure of the school, several commercial businesses remained open into the 1990s. The Jefferson Street Commercial Historic District was home to local services for African Americans such as a Maggie's Beauty Shop located at 31 E. Jefferson Street, next to Gertrude's Café at 33 E. Jefferson Street, which was once Haywood County Supermarket, the community grocery store in the 1950s through the 1970s, and is now used as a Free Mason Meeting Hall. Today, while some buildings remain in operation, several have become vacant. A majority of the properties are still African American-owned businesses offering services to the local community as well as the city of Brownsville. Many buildings have undergone minor alterations over time, but the properties still maintain the architectural character and socio-historical integrity of an African American built community.

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The Jefferson Street Commercial Historic District was created by Brownsville's African American business owners who took charge of their own economy in the midst of racial discrimination. The period of significance of the district extends from 1910 to 1970. This period of significance incorporates the story of the rise of the African American middle class during the Civil Rights Movement of Brownsville. The district, and the history of the businesses within, continues to represent Brownsville's African American heritage and the struggle for equality in Brownsville. The Dunbar-Carver Museum contains exhibits and historical information on the growth and development of the African American community. The First Baptist Church of Brownsville is also an important landmark in the community. This section of the city continues to retain a unique identity and is a significant center for the city's African American community.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid, 74.



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Previous documentation on file (NPS):		Primary location of additional data:	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested)	X	State Historic Preservation Office	
<input type="checkbox"/> previously listed in the National Register		Other State agency	
<input type="checkbox"/> previously determined eligible by the National Register		Federal agency	
<input type="checkbox"/> designated a National Historic Landmark		Local government	
<input type="checkbox"/> recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #		University	
<input type="checkbox"/> recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #		Other	
<input type="checkbox"/> recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey #		Name of repository:	
Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):			

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**10. Geographical Data**

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**Acreage of Property** 1.4 Acres **USGS Quadrangle** 422 SE

**Latitude/Longitude Coordinates:**

- |                         |                        |
|-------------------------|------------------------|
| 1. Latitude: 35.593678° | Longitude: -89.261851° |
| 2. Latitude: 35.593674° | Longitude: -89.260576° |
| 3. Latitude: 35.592245° | Longitude: -89.261846° |
| 4. Latitude: 35.592246° | Longitude: -89.260573° |

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**Verbal Boundary Description**

The Jefferson Street Commercial Historic District is illustrated on the accompany maps. The district is approximately bounded by E. Main Street on the north (State Highway 70), S. Washington Avenue on the west, Margin Street on the south and N. Church Avenue on the east.

**Boundary Justification**

This nomination boundary is drawn to include all commercial properties historically associated with Brownsville's African American community. This area includes the blocks and parcels along E. Jefferson Street beginning at S. Washington Avenue to the west and terminating at S. Church Avenue to the east, as well as, along S. Jackson Avenue beginning at E. Main Street to the north and terminating at Margin Street to the south. This boundary included all properties either previously owned or still owned by African American business owners that operated during the 20<sup>th</sup> century in Brownsville. To the north of this boundary is E. Main Street which is comprised of commercial strip malls and several commercial buildings, which were not associated with African American businesses. To the south of this boundary is Margin Street which is comprised of industrial warehouses and the railroad, not associated with the African American commercial businesses. To the east of this boundary is a mixture of newly constructed and older residential, commercial, and religious properties, not associated with the African American businesses of the early and mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. To the west of this boundary is the downtown commercial district and public square of Brownsville which are not associated with African American commerce in the city.

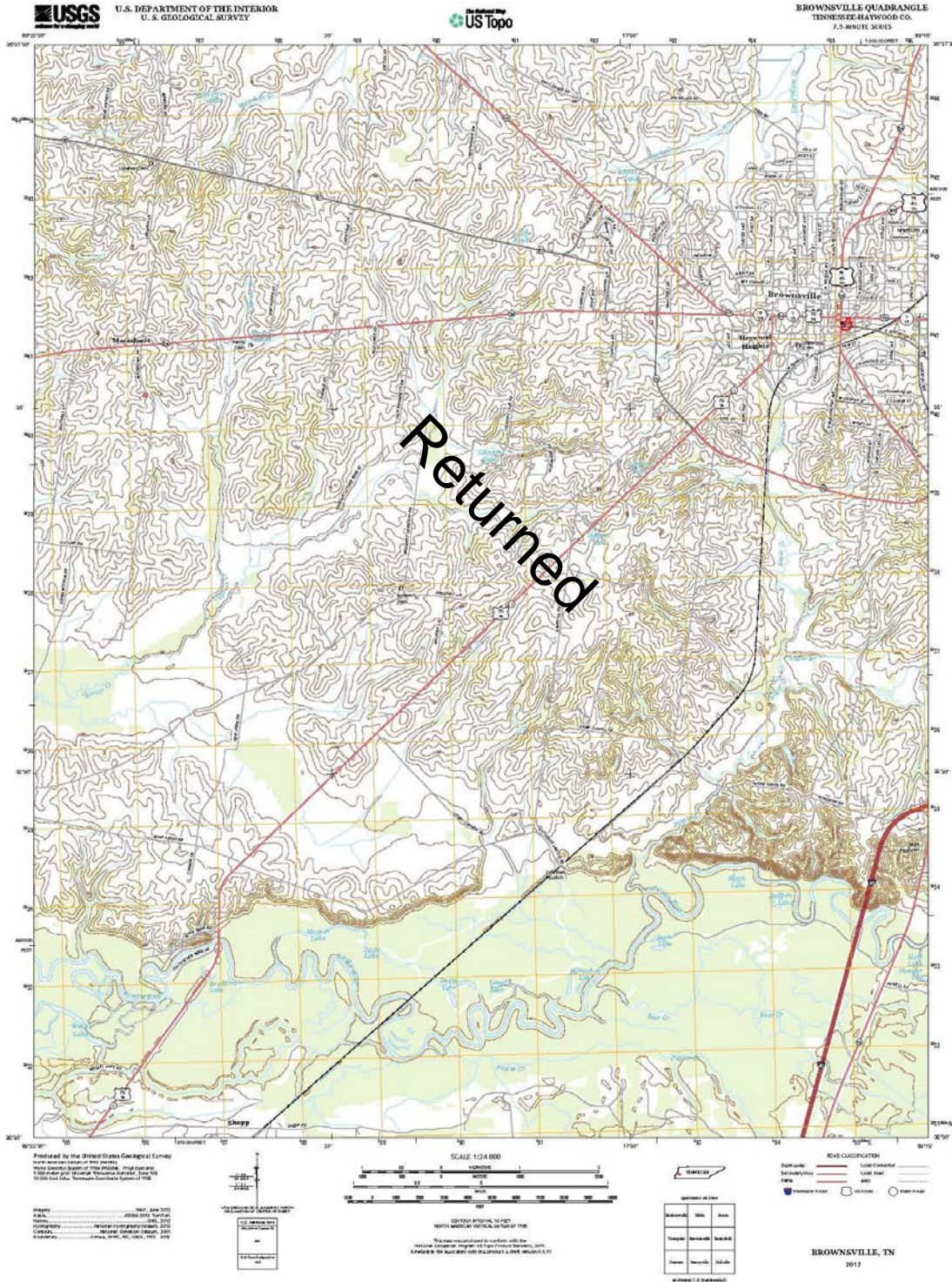


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Name of Property

USGS 7.5 Minute Topographic Quadrangle Map, Brownsville, Tennessee 2013



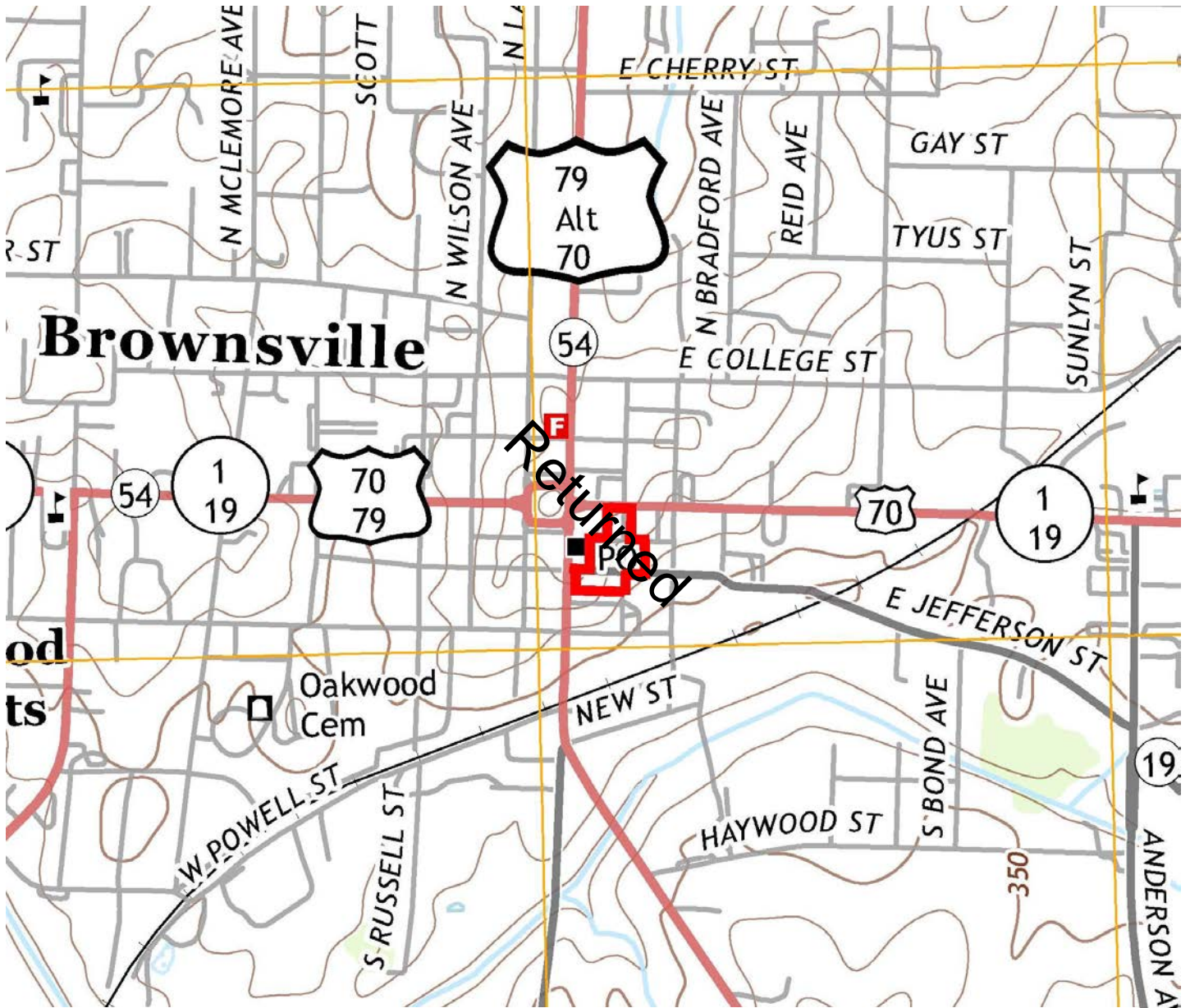


Jefferson Street Commercial Historic District

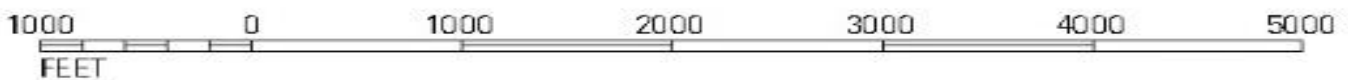
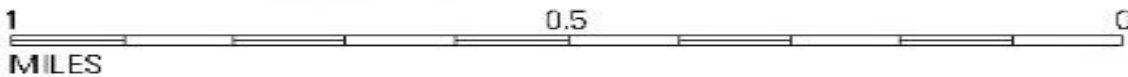
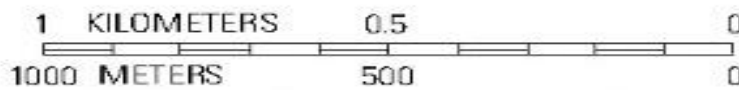
Haywood County,  
Tennessee  
County and State

Name of Property

USGS 7.5 Minute Topographic Quadrangle Map, Brownsville, Tennessee (2013)



SCALE



Jefferson Street Commercial Historic District

Haywood County,  
Tennessee  
County and State

Name of Property

**11. Form Prepared By**

Name Rebecca Hightower

Organization Thomason and Associates

Street & Number P.O. Box 121225

Date May 5, 2014

City or Town Nashville

Telephone 615-385-4960

E-mail Thomason@bellsouth.net

State TN

Zip Code 37212

Returned

Jefferson Street Commercial Historic District

Haywood County,  
Tennessee  
County and State

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Name of Property

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**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to map.
- **Photographs** (refer to Tennessee Historical Commission National Register *Photo Policy* for submittal of digital images and prints)
- **Additional items:** (additional supporting documentation including historic photographs, historic maps, etc. should be included on a Continuation Sheet following the photographic log and sketch maps)

Returned

Jefferson Street Commercial Historic District

Haywood County,  
Tennessee  
County and State

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Name of Property

**Photo Log**

Name of Property: Jefferson Street Commercial Historic District

City or Vicinity: Brownsville

County: Haywood

State: Tennessee

Photographer: Rebecca Hightower

Date Photographed: August 2013

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera:

- 1 of 12. 33 East Jefferson Street, View Northwest
- 2 of 12. 14 East Jefferson Street, View South
- 3 of 12. 34 East Main Street, View South
- 4 of 12. 36 South Jackson Avenue, View Southeast
- 5 of 12. 39 South Jackson Avenue, View West
- 6 of 12. 31 East Jefferson Street, View Northeast
- 7 of 12. 29 East Jefferson Street, View Northwest
- 8 of 12. Streetscape, 30-99 Block N. Jackson Street, View Southeast
- 9 of 12. Streetscape, 30-99 Block N. Jackson Street, View Southwest
- 10 of 12. Streetscape, 30-99 Block N. Jackson Street, View Northwest
- 11 of 12. Streetscape, 100 Block E. Jefferson Street, View Southwest
- 12 of 12. Streetscape, 100 Block E. Jefferson Street, View Northwest

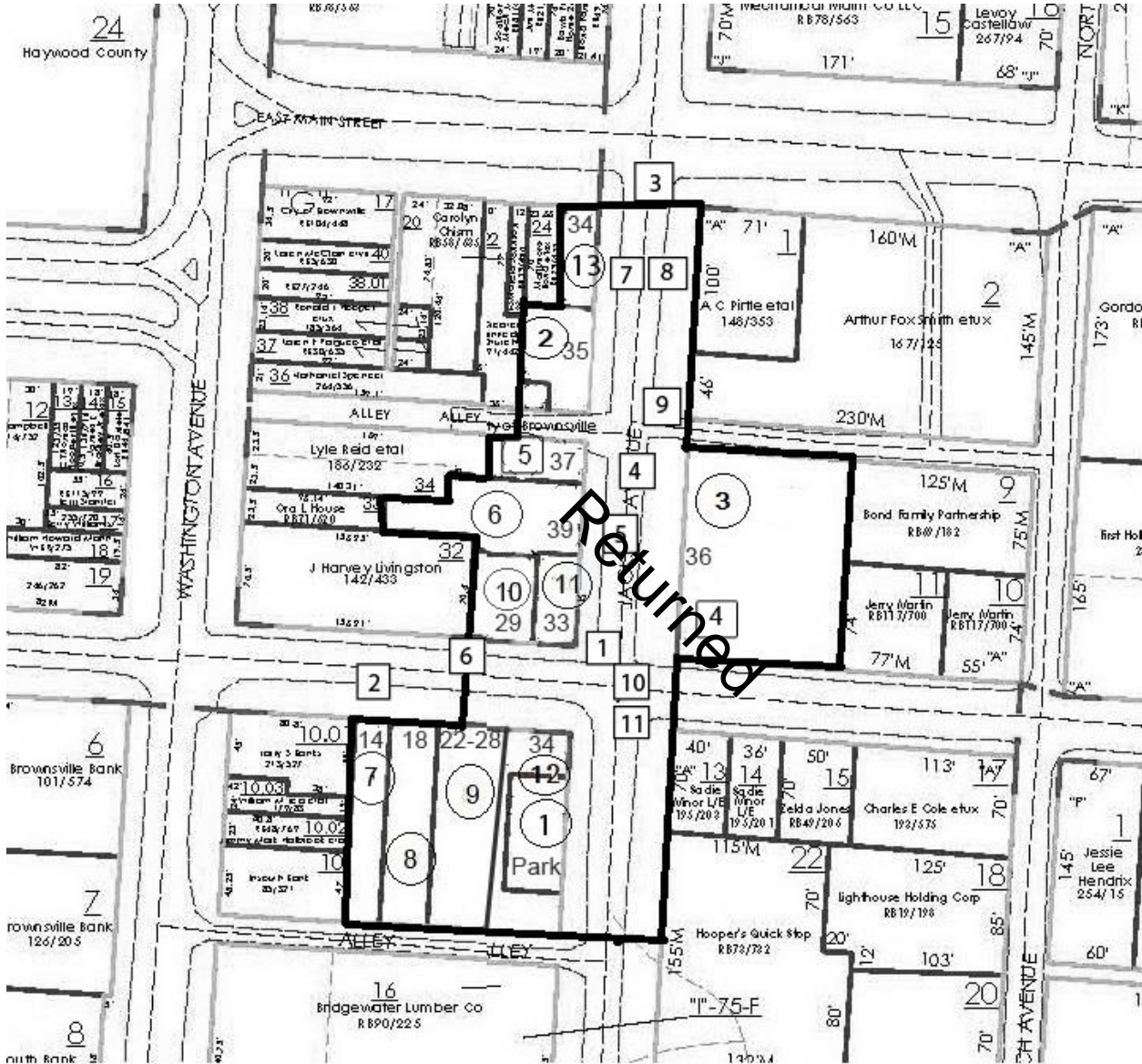


Jefferson Street Commercial Historic District

Haywood County,  
 Tennessee  
 County and State

Name of Property

Photo Key Map (see larger map enclosed)



**LEGEND**

CONTRIBUTING PROPERTIES



NON-CONTRIBUTING PROPERTIES



DISTRICT BOUNDARY



**JEFFERSON STREET COMMERCIAL  
 HISTORIC DISTRICT**



Feet

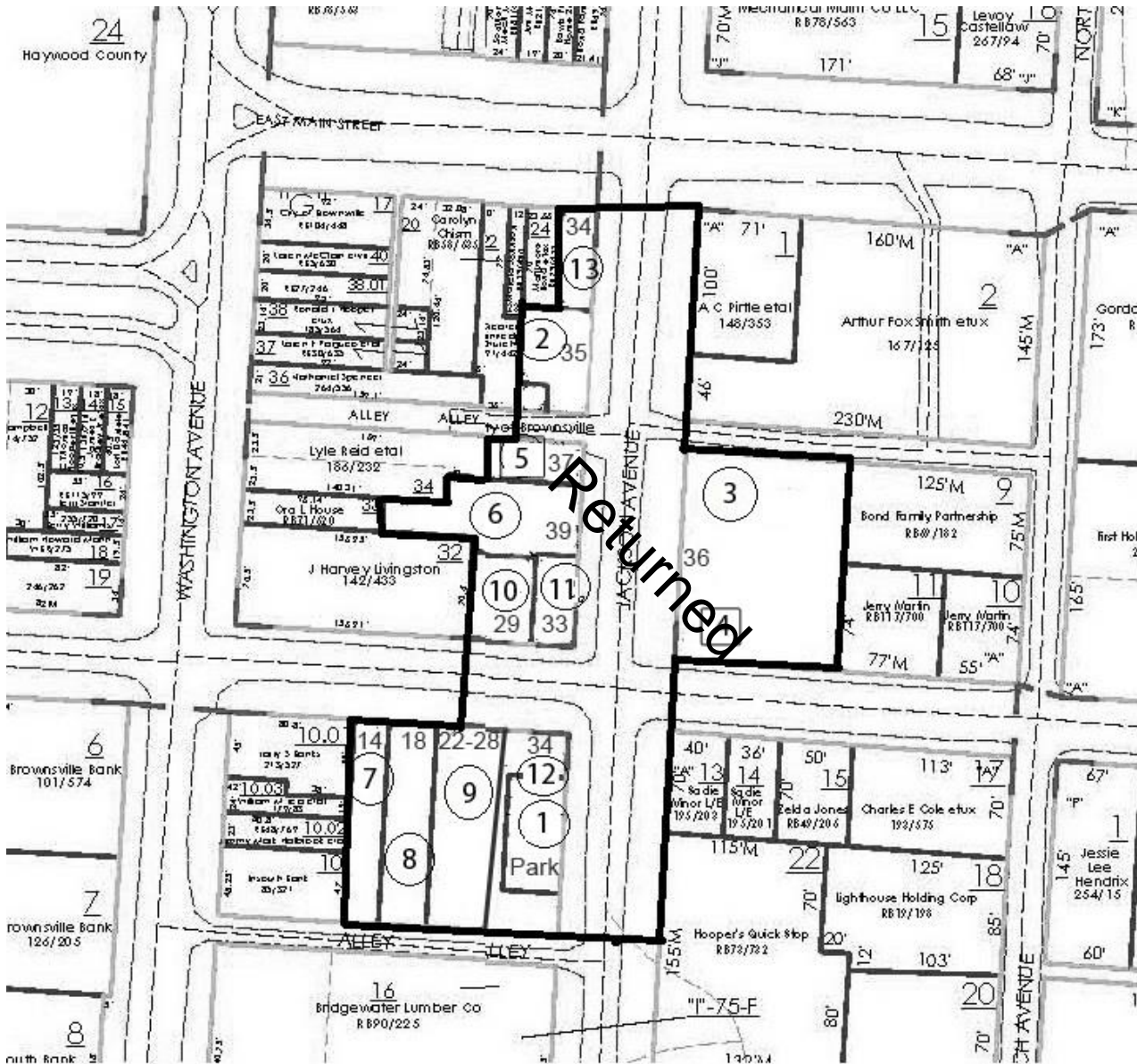
Scale 1" = 100'

Jefferson Street Commercial Historic District

Haywood County,  
 Tennessee  
 County and State

Name of Property

**District Property Tax Map (see larger map enclosed)**



**LEGEND**

CONTRIBUTING PROPERTIES



NON-CONTRIBUTING PROPERTIES



DISTRICT BOUNDARY



**JEFFERSON STREET COMMERCIAL  
 HISTORIC DISTRICT**



Feet

Scale 1" = 100'



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Jefferson Street Historic District
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Name of Property
Haywood County, Tennessee
-----
County and State
Historic and Architectural Resources of Forest Hills, Tennessee
Name of multiple listing (if applicable)

Section number Figures Page 29

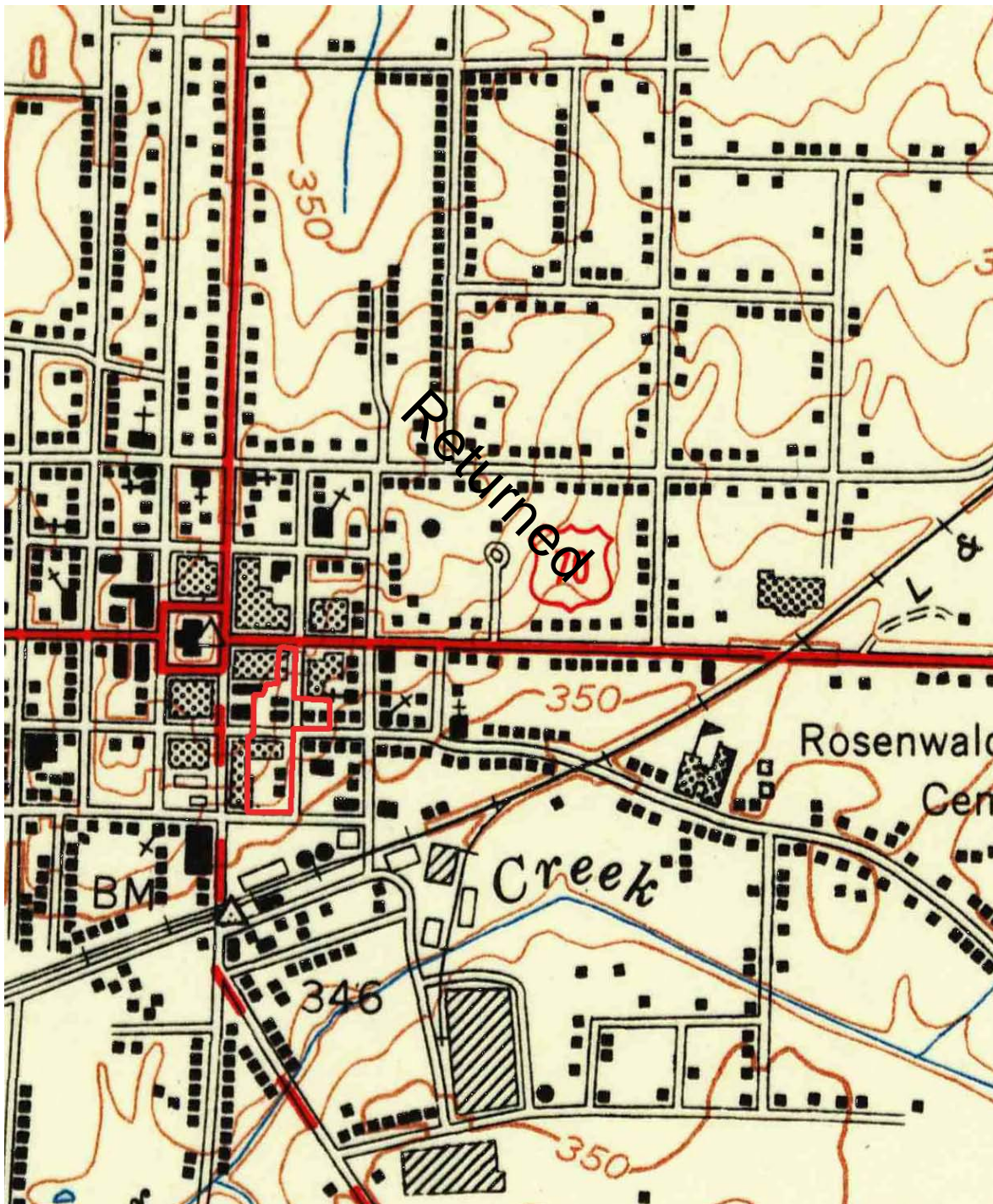


Figure 1: USGS 7.5 Minute Topographic Quadrangle Map, Brownsville, Tennessee (1951)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY NAME: Jefferson Street Historic District

MULTIPLE NAME: Brownsville, Tennessee MPS

STATE & COUNTY: TENNESSEE, Haywood

DATE RECEIVED: 12/12/14      DATE OF PENDING LIST: 1/21/15  
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 2/05/15      DATE OF 45TH DAY: 1/27/15  
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 14001225

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N    DATA PROBLEM: N    LANDSCAPE: N    LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N  
OTHER: N    PDIL: N    PERIOD: N    PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N  
REQUEST: N    SAMPLE: N    SLR DRAFT: N    NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT     RETURN     REJECT    1.27.2015 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

*See comments*

RECOM./CRITERIA *Return*  
REVIEWER *[Signature]*      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, DC 20240

## The United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

### National Register of Historic Places Evaluation/Return Sheet

Property Name: Jefferson Street Commercial Historic District, Haywood County, TN

Reference Number: 14001225

#### Reason for Return

This nomination is being returned for technical revision.

There are inconsistencies between the map, photographs, and the inventory, and descriptions of many of the resources are insufficient.

The photo key map does not provide directions for the photographs, and at least one of the photographs (#7) depicts a building different from what the map indicates.

The descriptions of buildings do not always match what is seen in the photographs or from examining the buildings using Google. For example, resource #3 is described as a two story brick building when it is obviously concrete block (the same stands for #13, which had distinctive concrete block on the facade and common brick on the side wall). Resource #4 is described simply as a "one story, brick, office building" when it appears that there are two, joined buildings - a two story, brick building facing Jackson Street, and a one story gabled building set back slightly from Jackson Street and entries on both Jackson and Jefferson streets. Is this considered a single building?

Resource #6 has the appearance of two buildings due to the new brick facade on the northern part. Is this a single building or is it two? The description notes that it has "two single light display casement windows at the storefront." The southern portion of the building does have a central door flanked by two fixed display (not casement) windows, but the northern portion has two more entries and two more sets of windows. If this is a single building, the description does not match the building. If it is two buildings, they both need to be accounted for, described, and evaluated.

Resource #10 is lumped into one address. The eastern-most building, which is addressed as 31 Jefferson as seen via Google, is described as having casement windows. Are they really? The windows appear boarded up (and, by the way, the coping is not metal, it is clay tile). In fact, many of the building descriptions include "casement" windows that appear to be six pane display windows,



Property Name: Jefferson Street Commercial Historic District, Haywood County,  
TN  
Reference Number: 14001225

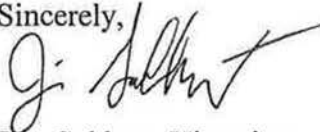
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Why is the small building between resource #9 and resource #12 not accounted for? It is a narrow, concrete block, single story building with a single door and a single 2/2, horizontal muntin window.

Please double check descriptions, resource numbering, and the photo key map.

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](mailto:James_Gabbert@nps.gov)>.

Sincerely,



Jim Gabbert, Historian  
National Register of Historic Places  
1-28-2015



**TENNESSEE HISTORICAL COMMISSION**  
STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE  
2941 LEBANON ROAD  
NASHVILLE, TENNESSEE 37243-0442  
OFFICE: (615) 532-1550  
E-mail: [Claudette.Stager@tn.gov](mailto:Claudette.Stager@tn.gov)  
(615) 770-1089  
[www.tnhistoricalcommission.org](http://www.tnhistoricalcommission.org)



February 9, 2016

J. Paul Loether  
Deputy Keeper and Chief,  
National Register and National Historic Landmark Programs  
National Register of Historic Places  
1201 Eye Street NW, 8<sup>th</sup> floor  
Washington, DC 20005

Dear Mr. Loether:

Enclosed please find the resubmittal of documentation to nominate the *Jefferson Street Historic District* to the National Register of Historic Places. The enclosed disk contains the true and correct copy of the nomination for the listing of the *Jefferson Street Historic District* to the National Register of Historic Places. Certified Local Government (CLG) notifications were sent out to the CLG Coordinator and the Mayor. Both parties returned their forms and are included in the correspondence file.

If you have any questions or if more information is needed, contact Caroline Eller at 615/770-1086 or [Caroline.Eller@tn.gov](mailto:Caroline.Eller@tn.gov).

Sincerely,

Claudette Stager  
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

CS:pn  
Enclosures(4)