

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
REGISTRATION FORM

662  
**RECEIVED**

MAY 2001

1. Name of Property

historic name Historic Downtown Sulphur Commercial District

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number West Muskogee Street from West 1<sup>st</sup> Street to West 5<sup>th</sup> Street, and two buildings on West 5<sup>th</sup>  
not for publication N/A city or town Sulphur vicinity N/A  
state Oklahoma code OK county Murray code 099 zip code 73086

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, 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  nationally  statewide  locally. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

  
Signature of certifying official

Date

4-26-01

Oklahoma Historical Society, SHPO  
State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register

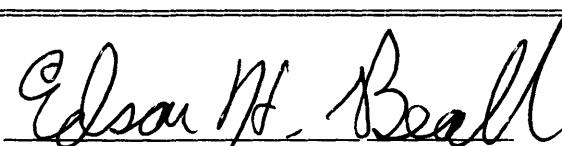
See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the  
National Register

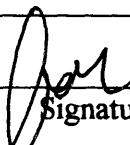
See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the  
National Register

removed from the National Register

 6/14/01

other (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

  
Signature of Keeper Date of Action

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5. Classification

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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

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u>25</u>	<u>12</u> buildings
	<u>      </u> sites
<u>2</u>	<u>      </u> structures
	<u>      </u> objects
<u>27</u>	<u>12</u> Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

Name of related multiple property listing (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)  
N/A

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#### 6. Function or Use

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Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: <u>COMMERCE/TRADE</u>	Sub: <u>Department Store</u>
<u>COMMERCE/TRADE</u>	<u>Financial Institution</u>
<u>COMMERCE/TRADE</u>	<u>Specialty Store</u>
<u>SOCIAL</u>	<u>Meeting Hall</u>
<u>GOVERNMENT</u>	<u>City Hall</u>
<u>DOMESTIC</u>	<u>Single Dwelling</u>
<u>RELIGION</u>	<u>Religious Facility</u>

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: <u>COMMERCE/TRADE</u>	Sub: <u>Department store</u>
<u>COMMERCE/TRADE</u>	<u>Office Building</u>
<u>COMMERCE/TRADE</u>	<u>Specialty Store</u>
<u>SOCIAL</u>	<u>Meeting Hall</u>
<u>RECREATION AND CULTURE</u>	<u>Museum</u>
<u>DOMESTIC</u>	<u>Single Dwelling</u>
<u>RELIGION</u>	<u>Religious Facility</u>

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#### 7. Description

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Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

LATE VICTORIAN: Italianate Commercial  
LATE 19<sup>TH</sup> AND 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY REVIVALS: Late Gothic Revival;  
Italian Renaissance; Mission/Spanish Colonial Revival; Classical Revival.  
LATE 19<sup>TH</sup> AND EARLY 20<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY AMERICAN MOVEMENTS:  
Commercial Style

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETE; STONE: Sandstone  
roof ASPHALT; CERAMIC TILE  
walls WOOD: Weatherboard  
          STONE: Sandstone  
          BRICK; STUCCO  
other \_\_\_\_\_

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

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

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

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE  
ARCHITECTURE

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Period of Significance 1905 - 1951

Significant Dates 

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Significant Person N/A

Cultural Affiliation N/A

Architect/Builder Jewell Hicks, Architect  
W.L. Scott, Builder

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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#### 9. Major Bibliographical References

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(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS)

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.  
 previously listed in the National Register  
 previously determined eligible by the National Register  
 designated a National Historic Landmark  
 recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_  
 recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

Primary Location of Additional Data

- State Historic Preservation Office  
 Other State agency  
 Federal agency  
 Local government  
 University  
 Other

Name of repository: Sulphur Main Street Office

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10. Geographical Data

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Acreage of Property 9 mol

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
1	<u>14</u>	<u>686310</u>	<u>3820180</u>	3	<u>14</u>	<u>686350</u>	<u>3820120</u>
2	<u>14</u>	<u>686360</u>	<u>3820170</u>	4	<u>14</u>	<u>686510</u>	<u>3820100</u>

X See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

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11. Form Prepared By

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name/title Cindy Bissett, Program Manager; edited by Jim Gabbert, Architectural Historian, OK/SHPO

organization Sulphur Main Street date 2-15-01

street & number 120 West Muskogee telephone (580)622-6246

city or town Sulphur state OK zip code 73086

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Additional Documentation

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Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form  
Historic Downtown Sulphur Commercial District  
Murray County, Oklahoma

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Property Owner

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(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name \_\_\_\_\_

street & number \_\_\_\_\_ telephone \_\_\_\_\_

city or town \_\_\_\_\_ state \_\_\_\_\_ zip code \_\_\_\_\_

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See Continuation Sheet: X

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Historic Sulphur Downtown  
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**Narrative Description**

**SUMMARY**

The city of Sulphur is located in South Central Oklahoma, at the north edge of the Arbuckle Mountains, approximately 15 miles east of Interstate 35. The southern boundary of the city is shared with Chickasaw National Recreation Area, formerly known as Platt National Park. Sulphur is divided in two by Rock Creek. West of the creek are residential areas, the county courthouse and the scattered remains of a commercial center known as West Sulphur. The Historic Downtown Sulphur Commercial District is located north of the park and east of Rock Creek on West Muskogee Street. This commercial center is one block north of the State Highway 7 and U.S. Highway 177 junction. To the north of the district is a mixed use area, including the Post Office and other businesses. To the east is a residential areas.

For the most part, the Historic Downtown Sulphur Commercial District is composed of one and two story commercial buildings that date from the first three decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Also within the district are governmental and community buildings, a pair of churches, and the home of one of Sulphur's more prominent citizens. A total of 39 resources are within the district boundaries, 27 of which are considered contributing.

**DESCRIPTION**

The Historic Downtown Sulphur Commercial District runs east/west on Muskogee Street. It is bordered on the east by 1<sup>st</sup> Street and by 5<sup>th</sup> Street on the west. The district includes the properties that face Muskogee Street between 1<sup>st</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Streets on the north side and all the way to 5<sup>th</sup> Street on the south side. Also included is a property that fronts on 5<sup>th</sup> Street. The west end of the district is characterized by public buildings. Here are the City Hall, the American Legion Memorial Building, and two churches. The balance of the district features one-two-and three-story commercial buildings that were built to serve the needs of Sulphur and the surrounding area.

Sulphur is the county seat of Murray County and, with a population of approximately 5,000, the largest city in a thirty-mile radius. It was historically served by two railroads. It has had a long and often tangled association with Platt National Park. Sulphur has not only served as a commercial center for the park and the surrounding agricultural lands, but it has also been a tourist destination in its own right. The town developed two commercial centers, one at the intersection of Broadway and Twelfth and on Muskogee Avenue. The smaller commercial center near the courthouse never grew as large or as prosperous as did Muskogee Avenue. As a result of the decline in business, the west Sulphur district declined in integrity as well. The Muskogee Avenue district was always the more prosperous and as a result has reflected its historic importance to the area to a greater degree.

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With properties that span the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, Historic Downtown Sulphur Commercial District represents the greatest concentration of and most successful commercial development in Sulphur. Its buildings as a whole retain a high degree of historic integrity, and integrity of location, design, feeling, materials, association and craftsmanship.

**CONTRIBUTING RESOURCES**

Muskogee Avenue - North Side

1. **108-114 W. Muskogee** (Photo #3&4) 1905. Originally used as the Pennsylvania Hotel on the upper floor and retail and office space on the ground floor, this 75' two story Commercial style building is of buff brick with a red brick parapet and decorative cornice. The second floor window openings are framed by projecting red bricks in quoin style pattern. The window glass is covered with screen. Upper floor windows on the east bay of the building are non-original. The west front features a non-original aluminum and brick front with wood canopy. The middle bay is of non-original aluminum displays with aggregate stone panels, recessed entry and flat metal canopy. The east bay storefront is non-original with a cast iron lintel and 7 wood transom windows.
2. **116-120 W. Muskogee** (Photo #4) Completed in 1906, this is a three story corner Classical Revival style bank building of tan colored brick with red brick fields. The parapet wall of tan and red brick has recessed sign plates. The second and third story windows have simple, tan brick hoods and are covered with metal siding. The southern façade is covered with a wooden canopy. The canted corner entry has plain cast stone columns with Corinthian capitals and broken pediment. The word Bank is featured above the entry. The west first floor façade has 5 window openings framed by cast stone porticos with simple engaged columns and entablature. The first floor windows are steel casement but most are covered with rough cedar. Two porticos have slightly recessed entries. The second and third story windows are intact, but covered with metal panels.
3. **200-210 W. Muskogee** (Photo #5) Hassen Building. 1918. Constructed as fire-proof building, the Hassen Block is a two-story Commercial style building of red brick with limestone highlights. It features a canted corner entry and multiple storefronts on both Muskogee Avenue and 2<sup>nd</sup> Street. The second floor features Chicago-style windows with leaded glass transoms; there are seven sets on the Muskogee facade and six on 2<sup>nd</sup> street. Each has a limestone string course above a soldier bond lintel. The string course has decorative, shouldered drips. Storefronts have suffered varying degrees of modification, but most retain their clerestory windows and flat awnings.
4. **212 W. Muskogee** (Photo #6) Carousel Theater, 1905, c. 1925. Originally constructed as a two-story commercial building, a renovation in the early 1920s turned it into a moving picture house. Stucco walls and a clay tile, bracketed pent roof were added to give it a Spanish Colonial Revival appearance. The entry was recessed and second floor windows downsized. It currently has a non-historic awning/marquee.

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5. **214-216 West Muskogee** (Photo#7) This two-story Commercial Italianate building is constructed of red brick. It is divided into two storefronts separated by a central bay with an entrance to the second floor. The two outside bays each feature three 1/1 windows with segmental arch, corbelled brick lintels. The central bay features a paired window set under one lintel on the second floor and a round arch entry with sidelights on the first floor. The 214 storefront is virtually unaltered and has a clear transom and a flat awning. The 216 storefront has black carerra glass surrounding the recessed storefront.
6. **218-220 W. Muskogee** (Photo #8) Originally built in 1906 as a hardware store, this two story red brick Commercial Italianate style building was an anchor of the commercial downtown until the mid 1970's. It was altered in the 60's with mansard style awnings that covered original windows, but it received a rehabilitation in 1996 to bring it back to its original appearance. It features a decorative brick cornice, a decorative corbelled brick cornice with a belt of coarse buff brick. First floor store front has cast iron columns supporting cast iron lintels. The front is wood with wood and glass doors. The windows feature large panes topped with a horizontal row of smaller panes and transom windows above. The upper floor windows are one over one wood with arched shaped openings and decorative buff brick hoods. There is a flat wood canopy supported with hanger rods across the entire front. An iron lintel at the west end corner has "Sulphur, IT" embossed on it. The secondary façade first floor is of randomly laid, rough cut stone. The wood doors and windows have arched openings. An arched crawl space opening has brick lintels.
7. **308 W. Muskogee** (Photo #10) C. 1923. One story, Commercial style building with a 12 ½ foot front. Façade is of common red brick in a decorative basket weave pattern. The canopy is of metal and suspended with hanger rods.
8. **310 W. Muskogee** (Photo #10) C. 1923. One story, three bay, Commercial style building constructed of red brick. It features four pilasters that define the bays; these are carried up through the corbel table. Each storefront has had some modification, most notably to the displays and entries. All feature clerestory windows that are covered with wood and flat awnings.
9. **312 W. Muskogee** (Photo #11) C. 1923. Commercial style building of variegated, raked, red and rust brick. There is a cast stone cap and four diamond-shaped, cast stone canopy hangers. There is a non-original wooden awning. The storefront has boarded windows and double wooden doors. Two columns have decorative concrete caps and
10. **404 W. Muskogee** (Photo #14) City Hall, 1916. Two story building in Classical Revival style. The façade is red brick and stucco. It is topped with a simple cast stone cap stone. Upper floor windows are non-original, single hung aluminum. It features a cast stone cornice and four pairs of symmetrically arranged, cast stone columns on the second floor. Cast stone name plate saying City Hall is centered on the parapet wall. The first floor is painted stucco with center door. One non-original window and non-original garage door.

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Muskogee Avenue - South Side

11. **105 W. Muskogee** (Photo #15) BFE Building. A ca. 1923 one story, variegated, raked, red and rust brick Commercial style building with a concrete cast stone cap and flat wooden canopy on four hanger rods. The simple stone name plate has the initials B.F.E. The wooden storefront has a slightly off center door and eight wood transoms with wire glass.
12. **109 W. Muskogee** (Photo #15) Frier Building. Commercial style one story building built ca. 1923 of raked red brick. The parapet wall has simple concrete ornamentation. There are five sign panels and a glazed terra cotta capstone. The two storefronts each have 14 wood transom windows with ribbed glass, two of which are operable. Each has a pair of wood multi-light doors. The store front windows are copper framed. The bulkheads are plain limestone with column bases. The center sign plate is of carved stone enscripted "Frier."
13. **111 W. Muskogee** (Photo #16) Powell Building. A one-story, 25' Commercial style building (ca. 1923) of raked red brick and glazed terra cotta cap. Front façade features simple limestone decorative elements with a center nameplate reading "Powell". There is a flat, non-original metal canopy and non-original aluminum and brick store front. The transom windows are intact, but covered with metal siding.
14. **115 W. Muskogee** (Photo #17) A one story, ca. 1923 Commercial style building in variegated brown brick. Each side has 13 wood transom windows, one of which is operable. The flat metal canopy is hung with iron rods. The storefront is of non-original aluminum and brick.
15. **215 W. Muskogee** (Photo #21) Built in 1905, this is a 25' Commercial style building of painted brick. The recessed entry has glass doors. The entire storefront is surrounded by ruby colored carrera glass. There are nine wooden transom windows. A modernization in the 1970's covered the front façade in stucco. A rehabilitation in 2000 removed the stucco to reveal the original brick façade.
16. **217 W. Muskogee** (Photo #21) Also a 1905, 25' Commercial style building is of red brick. There is a concrete cap, sign panel and decorative cast stone corners. The recessed entry has fifteen wooden transom windows. A modernization in the 1970's covered the front façade in stucco. A rehabilitation in 2000 removed the stucco to reveal the original brick façade.
17. **317 W. Muskogee** (Photo #23) A 1923 Commercial style building of splattered brown variegated brick. There are four iron canopy hooks near the top. The store front is of original wood with a pair of original wood and glass doors. All but two of the original transom windows have ribbed glass. The metal nameplate above the transoms reads "J.O Sheet Metal Works."

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18. **321 W. Muskogee** (Photo #24) This red brick building, ca. 1923, with a stucco façade is in the Mission Revival style. It has a gabled roof. There is a lancet-shaped louver above the entry.
19. **323 W. Muskogee** (Photo #24) This Commercial style, ca. 1923 building of variegated brick features a concrete cap and deteriorated sign plate. The store front is non-original wood and aluminum and non-original garage door. The lintels are poured concrete.
20. **329 W. Muskogee** (Photo #25) 1924. This two-story Renaissance Revival style house has had no major renovations done. It presents a symmetrical facade and wide-eaved hip roof with ridge covered in Spanish-style metal tile. It is constructed of buff-colored brick with red brick ornament around the first floor windows. It has a full front porch, double height, of painted brick and cast stone piers and wooden columns that wraps around both front corners. The second-floor porch is covered only in the center by an extension of the hip roof. This level has wooden railings. The first floor porch railing is painted brick. The porch roof is supported by full-height wooden Moorish-style columns. The first floor façade has a centered door flanked by sidelights and two double windows. The second floor has four evenly spaced single
21. **329 W. Muskogee** (Photo #26) 1924. Two story garage apartment servicing the main house. Constructed of brick laid in a running bond, the building exhibits no distinctive style. There are two sliding garage doors on the western (front) facade and a modified Halifax roof with brackets and stamped metal Spanish tiles. There are two 1/1 windows on the front and the entry is on the north side.
22. **401 W. Muskogee** (Photo #27) First Christian Church, 1923. This Gothic Revival style church is constructed of buff-colored, raked brick. The first story has a projecting pavilion with large arch-shaped fields of cast stone and three lancet windows of stained glass. The front door features a lancet arch with a cast stone surround. The roof is cross gabled and covered in red, terra cotta tile. The secondary facade features a projecting, secondary entry pavilion, simple buttresses and four lancet windows with clear glass.

Fifth Street

23. **917 5<sup>th</sup>** (Photo #28) Presbyterian Church, 1924. Built in the Gothic revival style with red, raked brick and featuring a projecting, central, two-story bell tower. The tower is flanked by simple 1/1 wood windows with transoms. Entry is in to the base of the tower. A cast stone trimmed, gothic arch, louvered opening is centered in the tower. The west side wall features two sets of triple windows and two single windows, symmetrically placed. There is a stone cornerstone. A small rear addition was constructed in 1954.

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24. **914 5<sup>th</sup>** (Photo #29) Memorial Hall, a Commercial style building built by the City of Sulphur in 1922. Designed by Jewell Hicks. It has a barrel vault roof and a concrete foundation. The walls are variegated brick laid in a running bond. There is a simple, stucco cornice and bands of windows on each side. The windows are 12 light steel casements. A cornerstone is located at the NE corner.

West Vinita Avenue

25. **Corner of W. Vinita and 3<sup>rd</sup> Street** (Photo #1 & 2) Lumber Yard Office. Built in 1905 and added to over the years, this simple gable-front building is constructed in the Craftsman tradition, with wide eaves, exposed rafter tails, and knee braces. The entry is centered in the front. Originally weatherboard-sided, the 3<sup>rd</sup> Street side has been clad in pressed metal since the 1920s. This siding is stamped in a brick pattern. A wood and corrugated shed was added to the rear in the 1940s.
26. **Corner of W. Vinita and 3<sup>rd</sup> Street** (Photo #1 & 2) Lumber Yard Storage Shed, c. 1910. A two-story, wooden structure, open on all sides, with a simple, flared, hip roof covered in standing seam metal. The second floor has a catwalk around all four sides.
27. **Corner of W. Vinita and 3<sup>rd</sup> Street** (Photo #2) Lumber Yard Storage Shed, c. 1930. This long building is on the east side of the yard. Constructed in three phases, the earliest (c. 1910) section is the southernmost. Board and batten siding with a gabled roof, this was a paint storage shed. Later, a central section was added filling in the area between the paint shed and a simple, open storage shed to the north. This appears to date to c. 1930.

NONCONTRIBUTING RESOURCES

- NC1. **100 W. Muskogee**, (Photo #3) Contemporary style, 1963, N/C due to age/alterations.
- NC2. **300 W. Muskogee**, (Photo #9) 1924 Commercial style. Remodeled c. 1963, N/C due to age/alterations.
- NC3. **316-318 W. Muskogee**, (Photo #11 & 12) Remodeled c. 1963, sheathed in metal. N/C due to age/alterations.
- NC4. **320-322 W. Muskogee**, (Photo #12) C. 1915 Commercial style. Remodeled c. 1963, N/C due to age/alterations.
- NC5. **400 W. Muskogee**, (Photo #13) C. 1970; N/C due to age.

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- NC6. **117-119 W. Muskogee**, (Photo #18) One story, red brick, Commercial Style, c. 1923; N/C due to alterations
- NC7. **201-205 W. Muskogee**, (Photo #19) Originally two stories, a 1973 fire and subsequent remodeling has reduced it to one story. N/C due to alterations.
- NC8. **207-209 W. Muskogee**, (Photo #19) Remodeling after 1973 fire has drastically altered this building. N/C due to alterations.
- NC9. **213 W. Muskogee**, (Photo #20) Built c. 1905. New storefront, large wooden shake awning; N/C due to alterations.
- NC10. **219-21 W. Muskogee**, (Photo #22) Built c. 1905, extensively altered in 1960s with stucco and new storefront; N/C due to alterations.
- NC11. **309 W. Muskogee**, (Photo #23) C. 1955; N/C due to age.
- NC12. **311 W. Muskogee**, (Photo #23) C. 1955; N/C due to age and alterations.

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The Historic Downtown Sulphur Commercial District comprises the heart of sustained commercial development in the city of Sulphur. Moved twice to accommodate the new Platt National Park, the town of Sulphur has long had a close tie with the springs and creeks that made this area attractive to the Chickasaw Indians and white settlers. Centered on Muskogee Avenue, the Historic Downtown Sulphur Commercial District contains the buildings that best represent the development of the city of Sulphur in its final location. As such, with its high degree of historic integrity, the district is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A. It is also eligible under Criterion C for its collection of pre-and post-statehood era commercial and civic buildings that display the variety of styles and building trends of the day.

#### BACKGROUND

The history of Sulphur is deeply intertwined with its geographical location in the Arbuckle Mountains, with the Chickasaw and Choctaw Nations and with the National Park Service. The city had its roots in 1891, when white settlers began to construct permanent dwellings and businesses to take advantage of the various springs that were found in the area. Because these springs were located in the Chickasaw Nation, the settlers had no claim to the land. The Chickasaws requested that the federal government step in to protect the area. In 1902, the Chickasaw and Choctaw Nations ceded 640 acres of land, the section that contained the bulk of the springs, creeks, and natural features, to the federal government. The creation of this preserve, to be called Platt National Park, meant that the city of Sulphur (or Sulphur Springs) had to move.

Buildings were either disassembled, razed, or moved to a new site, just on the border of the park. What was known as Sulphur I had almost disappeared. Sulphur II would soon follow. It was discovered that the new city was contaminating the springs with its drainage. The Department of the Interior, on the advice of its chemists and geologists, decided to increase the boundaries of the park to include much of the local watershed. The increase in acreage to 846 meant that Sulphur II had to go.

The third location of Sulphur is its final location. The city is situated on the north edge of the park, now called Chickasaw National Recreation Area. Even though it is not located directly adjacent to the springs and streams that make up the heart of the park, the city has long served the needs of visitors and workers in the park, as well as being a commercial and cultural center for the agricultural lands to the north and east.

The city became popular as a tourist destination because of its natural setting in the foothills of the Arbuckles and for the interesting natural features such as Panther Falls, Little Niagara, and Lost Falls. Its popularity as a health resort was due to the alleged healing elements of the natural springs and the mud baths. Sulphur was served by two rail lines, the Frisco and the Santa Fe, that unloaded as many as three trainloads a day of passengers coming to take the medicinal baths or to drink the water from the many artesian wells. Newspaper stories and advertisements were filled with testimonials concerning the healing qualities of the waters.

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Sulphur began to take on the air of a big city, boasting 50 two-story brick and stone buildings and housing as many as thirteen hotels, numerous restaurants, and entertainment venues for sports and entertainment. Many of the city's best hotels were built in this first decade of Sulphur III, including the luxurious five-story Artesian Hotel, described as the "citadel of gentility." Sulphur's population was over 4,000, increasing many times over during the summer months. Local boosters predicted in 1906 that the population would increase to 15,000 or higher by 1912. They were wrong. Sulphur's population leveled off at 5,000 and has remained at that level since.

Sulphur was more than just a service city for Platt National Park. It served as a regional trade center and supported some of its own industries. Its geography dictated some of its more important industries. Mining and quarrying were two of the activities taking place in the Arbuckles, and, like many Oklahoma towns, petroleum exploration and development were important to the town. Agriculturally, the lands to the north and east of Sulphur were rich. The growing season averages 218 days, and the area lends itself well to fruits. There are a number of orchards in the area, as well as dairy farms, small ranches, and cultivated fields.

The end of World War I and the prosperity of the 1920s brought a building boom to Sulphur. Many of the first generation commercial buildings were replaced. More streets were paved and the infrastructure of the town upgraded. The automobile became more popular, and dealers and service shops were added to the mix of businesses. Business was good in Sulphur; the park remained a popular destination for visitors, and the town thrived. The first hint of things to come, though, was heralded by some poor agricultural years in the later years of the '20s. By the end of the decade, the collapse of agriculture led to the eventual collapse of the nation's economy. The Great Depression was on.

Sulphur suffered as many Oklahoma towns and cities did. Work was scarce and the agricultural economy was a bust. Sulphur was not in the Dust Bowl, but the image of Okies packing up and heading west was not an uncommon sight even here. In 1933, soon after his inauguration, Franklin Roosevelt instituted his promised "New Deal" for the American people. He instituted a number of programs designed to help both the economy in general and the citizens in particular. These were often called the "alphabet soup" agencies because of the use of acronyms to identify them. Along with the National Recovery Act (NRA) and the Agricultural Adjustment Act (AAA) came a couple of programs that had direct effects on Sulphur. First was the creation of the Civilian Conservation Corps, the CCC. Designed to put young men to work in conservation projects, the CCC was established in March of 1933. One of the first companies of CCC workers was moved in to Platt National Park. Here they transformed the park, building shelter houses and other amenities and planting millions of trees. The second program grew out of the temporary Emergency Conservation Work (ECW) and Federal Emergency Recovery Agency (FERA). The Works Progress Administration (WPA) was established in 1935. Designed to put men to work in public works projects, the WPA had a noticeable impact on Sulphur. The national Guard Armory and the high school's stadium were two of the more prominent projects.

While local men were put on relief, and even as the park was undergoing a transformation, Sulphur still attracted thousands of visitors during the summer months. Even so, the general economic environment meant that the city

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would plateau in growth and prosperity. The decade of the 1940s brought a continuation of business in the city. Tourists still flocked to the park and the city still serviced the needs of the surrounding area, but there was little new growth. Eventually, in later decades, the railroad stopped passenger service and the park began to attract more automobile-oriented day visitors. The hotels and restaurants suffered, as did the other commercial enterprises.

Downtown Sulphur continues to provide needed services to the community, park visitors, and the surrounding area, just not on the scale it once did. The stagnation of business in the later years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century helped to preserve the character of the historic downtown; few buildings were lost unless due to fire or accident. Many businesses have moved out to the highway, servicing the car culture, but the Historic Downtown Sulphur Commercial District continues to be the core of a viable business community and the buildings that comprise the district represent the era of Sulphur's greatest prominence.

#### COMMERCIAL SIGNIFICANCE

Lying to the north of the nation's fourth National Park, the Historic Downtown Sulphur Commercial District is the heart of Sulphur's commercial endeavors. It represents the city's early development as a trade center and as a service center for Platt National Park. Two railway lines, the Frisco and the Santa Fe, arrived daily into Sulphur, bringing carloads of passengers coming for the scenic area, the medicinal waters, and the recreational amenities. By the 1920s, it was not unusual to have the population of Sulphur triple during the summer, with thousands of swimmers choking the pools, baths, and creeks. The downtown area was busy with service and retail businesses, hotels, and rooming houses.

The retail merchants of the district, catering to the clientele of the fine hotels, were known to travel as far as New York City for merchandise that would appeal to the caliber of tourists who stayed there. Other businesses had a dual clientele, locals and visitors alike. Drug stores, groceries, restaurants, hardware stores, and furniture stores occupied the storefronts. Barbers, cobblers, tailors, and other service-oriented businesses occupied the buildings, and offices for doctors, dentists, and other professionals occupied the upper floors of many. Pool halls and a moving picture theater catered to the entertainment needs of locals and tourists.

Typical of the district's many buildings, 110 West Muskogee was home to a retail operation, a clothier, on the first floor; the upper floors served as the Pennsylvania Hotel. The Schwake Bakery, opened by German immigrants in 1924, is located at 214 West Muskogee. The bakery has served Sulphur and the surrounding area for almost eighty years, even delivering bread to the CCC camp at the park during the 1930s. The Hassen Building was home to the Sulphur Dry Goods store for many years and the upper floor housed professional offices.

The Historic Sulphur Downtown Commercial District was the center for commercial activity in Sulphur and the surrounding area for the better part of the century. From the time the third and final version of the city was established

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until 1951, the cut-off date for the National Register of Historic Places, the district was the heart of trade and commerce in Murray County. As such, it is eligible for the National Register under Criterion A.

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

The collection of buildings that comprise the Historic Downtown Sulphur Commercial District are representative of the types and styles of commercial and ecclesiastical buildings of the first three decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. During the 1910s and 1920s, commercial architecture in the United States began to diverge from its domestic counterpart. Unlike the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when domestic styles almost always had their commercial versions, the 20<sup>th</sup> century began to see architectural styles that were wholly domestic or wholly commercial. One of these styles, aptly tagged with the name "Commercial Style," became the most widely used variation. In Oklahoma, there are often two subtypes of the style expressed – the "Plains Commercial" style and the "Territorial Commercial" style. Both of these show the hallmarks of the Commercial style – simple facades with the emphasis on fenestration, large displays, flat roofs with simple parapets and cornices. The Territorial version is apt to have more embellishment, a holdover from the more exuberant Victorian styles. The Plains Commercial style is more simplified, more streamlined. The usual materials are brick and stone. Most of the single story buildings in the district are of this style, while the Hassen building is the purest example, showing the influences of the Chicago School in its second floor windows.

The City Hall, built in 1916, shows elements of the Classical Revival. Paired stone pilasters define the window bays. The Classical Revival was a common style in public buildings during the first decades of the century. Banks, libraries, schools, and governmental offices were often designed in this manner. Some were simple buildings with only a few flourishes of classical motifs to add interest to otherwise functional facades. Others were more academic, keeping the classical orders and design philosophies intact. Sulphur boasts only the City Hall, an example of the more stylized, simplified variety of the style.

The churches located in the district both are designed in the Late gothic Revival style. This style has long been popular in ecclesiastical architecture, far outlasting its use in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century in domestic architecture. Characterized by gothic, lancet, or ogee arched fenestration, crenellated or peaked parapets, and buttressed walls. The First Christian Church, constructed in 1923, is a more pure example of the style. The church has cruciform plan and uses stone and brick on the exterior. The 1924 Presbyterian Church has a simpler plan and features a central tower on the gable end. The tower has both round and gothic arched openings.

The single example of domestic architecture in the district is a unique version of an Italian Renaissance Revival style house. Built in 1924, it has the standard Renaissance Revival design elements – tile roof with wide, bracketed eaves, a symmetrical facade, contrasting masonry, and classical elements shown in the porch columns. The unique element is the strange, arcaded, two-story porch with its vaguely Moorish arches.

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The Mission/Spanish Colonial Revival styles were popular in Oklahoma in the 1910s and 1920s in both commercial and domestic architecture. White stucco walls and terra cotta tile and ornament characterize these styles. The Historic Downtown Sulphur Commercial District has a theater designed in the Mission Revival style and a simple Spanish Colonial commercial building.

The Historic Downtown Sulphur Commercial District retains Murray County's best collection of commercial buildings reflecting the architectural styles popular during the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. While time has brought changes to the district – fires have destroyed or altered some buildings and “modernization” has changed the character of others, it still retains a sense of its own past and its own development. The district reflects the popular trends in architecture as applied to a commercial center and taken as a whole remains a visually cohesive unit. As such, it is eligible for inclusion in the National Register under Criterion C, for its architectural significance to Murray County and the surrounding area.

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*Sulphur Times Democrat.* Various dates, 1921-1924.

Sulphur Abstract and Title

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UTM References

5. E 686500 N 3820100
6. E 686020 N 3820060
7. E 686130 N 3820130
8. E 686300 N 3820120

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Starting Point: at centerline of Muskogee Avenue at the West R.O.W. line of West 1<sup>st</sup> Street. Proceed 100' north, thence 145' west across alley, turn north 25', then west 225', then north 15', then west 145' to alley. Follow alley north to Vinitia Street, then west to W. 3<sup>rd</sup> Street, then south to the alley. Turn west 550' feet to the property line west of City Hall, then south to Muskogee Avenue. Turn west down centerline to a point 180 feet west of 5<sup>th</sup> street. Turn south 160', east 120', then north 40' to a point opposite the alley south of Muskogee Avenue. Turn east along this alley to the alley between west 3<sup>rd</sup> and West 2<sup>nd</sup> streets. Turn north to the line between lots 2 and 3 in Block 176, thence east to West 1st Street, thence north to point of beginning.

4 5

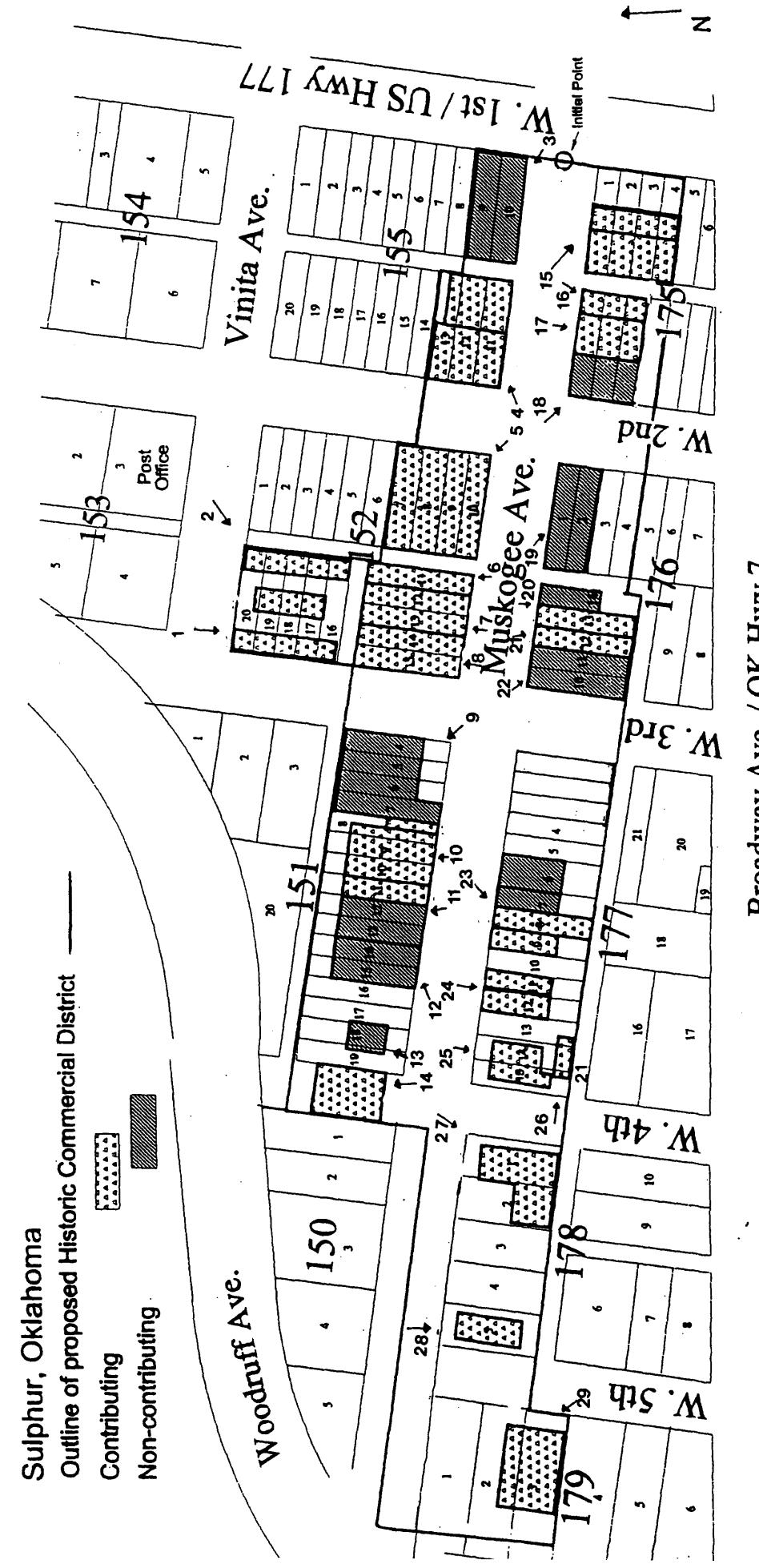
BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

These boundaries include the lots and blocks that historically made up the core of the commercial district of the city of Sulphur. Gerrymandering was necessary to adhere to legal lot lines of buildings and to exclude a concentration of non-contributing resources on West Muskogee near 5<sup>th</sup> Street. Loss of integrity in buildings on neighboring streets creates a distinctive visual boundary for the Historic Downtown Sulphur Commercial District and these boundaries encompass that area.

HISTORIC DOWNTOWN SULPHUR COMMERCIAL DISTRICT

Photo Key

Sulphur, Oklahoma  
Outline of proposed Historic Commercial District  
Contributing      Non-contributing

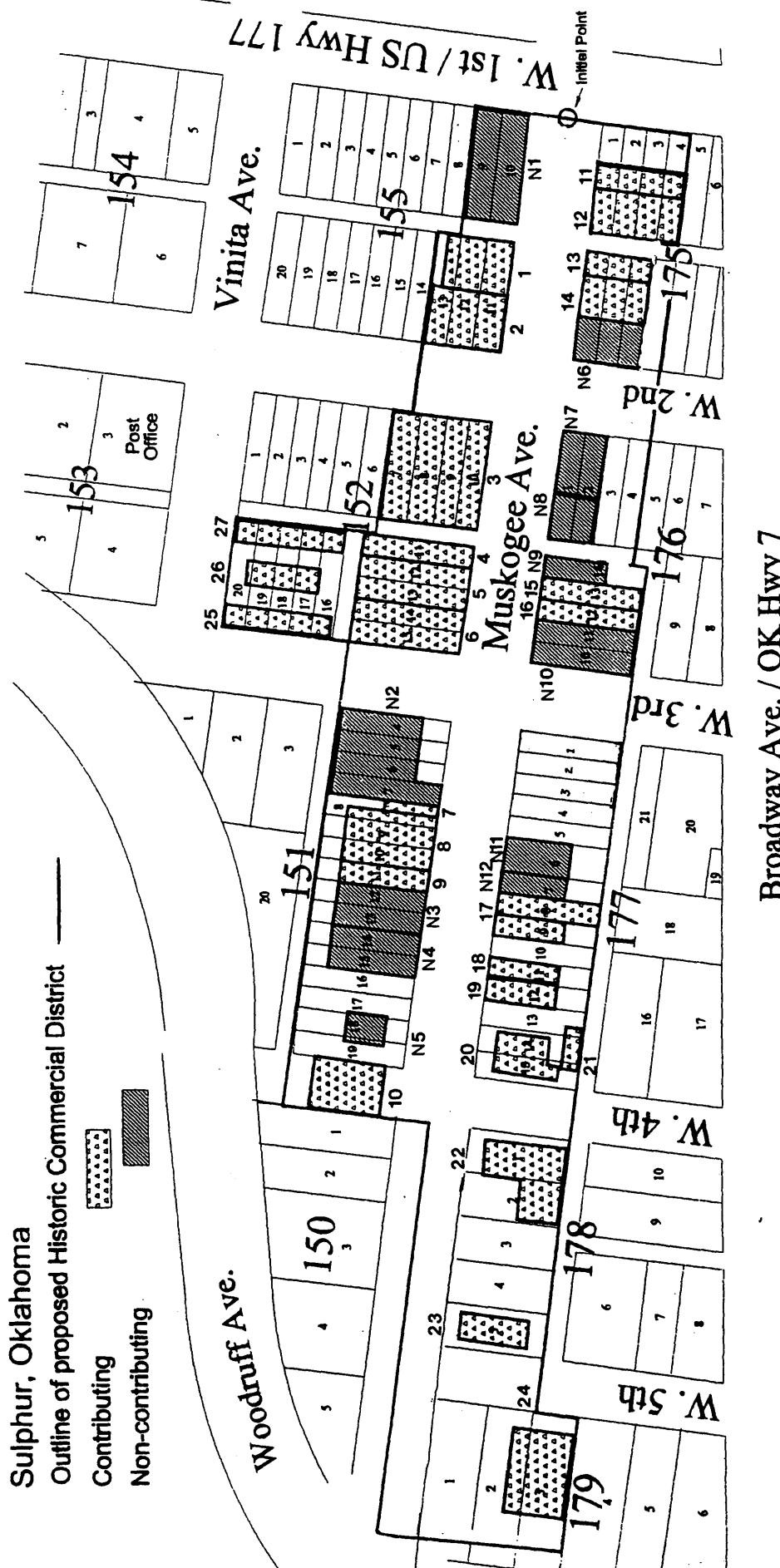


Broadway Ave. / OK Hwy 7

Travertine District. CNRA

HISTORIC DOWNTOWN SULPHUR COMMERCIAL DISTRICT

Sulphur, Oklahoma  
Outline of proposed Historic Commercial District  
Contributing      Non-contributing



Broadway Ave. / OK Hwy 7

Travertine District. CNRA