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

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

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

#### 1. Name 🖗

city, town

	24			
historic	Little Rock Main	Street Multiple Re	source Area	
and/or common	N/A		·	
2. Loca				
street & number	See individual sh	eets	Ň	∠A not for publication
city, town	Little Rock	N/A vicinity of		
state	Arkansas code	05 county	Pulaski	<b>code</b> 119
3. Clas	sification			
Category district building(s) structure site object	Ownership public private _X both Public Acquisition N/A in process being considered	Status X occupied X unoccupied work in progress Accessible X yes: restricted yes: unrestricted no	Present Use agriculture _X commercial educational entertainment government industrial military	museum park private residence religious scientific transportation other: fraterna
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street & number				
city, town		vicinity of	state	
5. Loca	ation of Lega	I Descriptio	on	
courthouse, regi	stry of deeds, etc. Pulask	i County Courthous	9	
street & number	Second and Spring	Streets		
city, town	Little Rock		state	Arkansas
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		cy		
	mbor 1081		tederal stat	e county v_loci
depository for su		ittle Rock Office ( Historic Preservat:	of Comprehensive Pl	e <u> </u>

# 7. Description

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Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

#### SUMMARY

The fifteen blocks in the Little Rock Main Street Multiple Resource Area represent the north-south spine of the city's commercial district from the late 19th to the mid-20th century. Little Rock's earliest permanent settlement took place at the north end of the multiple resource area in the 1820's. During the territorial period and through early statehood until after the Civil War, the town expanded laterally-east to west-along the riverbank and Markham Street, in recognition of the importance of the Arkansas River to trade and transportation. The arrival of the railroad signalled the start of a postwar boom which, from 1865 to 1900, increased the population of Little Rock from 4,000 people to nearly 40,000. The extension of the residential neighborhoods to the south, and then the west, encouraged commercial activity to move southward as well. Main Street soon became the primary commercial axis for the city, and the predominate building form two, three, and four-story structures with 50 to 100 foot street frontages - was well established by 1900. Within a block of Main Street, it was possible to find virtually every kind of commercial building, from banks to hotels to department stores to office skyscrapers to simple storefront shops. Institutional properties that served churches, fraternal organizations, and local government were also present. During Main Street's heyday, from 1890 to 1935, buildings were designed and constructed in a variety of architectural styles, including Romanesque Revival, Italinate, Classical Revival, Neo-Classical, Beaux Arts, Spanish Revival, and Art Deco or Moderne. Some of these structures are outstanding examples of their styles - an indication that architectural fashions were important to the owners and developers of downtown Little Rock. Declines in the agricultural economy during the late 1920's, followed by the Depression of the 1930's, eventually slowed and then stopped new construction. After World War II, the retail businesses on Main Street began to lose ground to new suburban shopping centers. Official efforts to physically improve the central business district caused the destruction of numerous properties in the 1960's and led to the creation of a pedestrian mall on Main Street in the 1970's. In the meantime, some building owners chose to "modernize" their properties through the application of false metal or masonry facades. Since the early 1980's, however, there have been significant efforts to stop, and reverse, the loss of architectural integrity on Main Street through sensitive rehabilitations of historic structures.

#### ELABORATION

#### Boundaries

Starting at the corner of Markham and Scott Streets, the boundary runs south one block to Second Street and turns west and goes to Main Street. At Main, the boundary turns south and runs to Third, where it turns east and goes back to Scott and turns south. The boundary runs north two blocks to Seventh, turns west and runs to Louisiana, where it runs north to Sixth. At Sixth, it turns west and proceeds to Center, where it turns north and travels one block to Capitol. The boundary then turns east and runs to the alley between Main and Louisiana; it goes up the alley to Fourth, travels west half a block, and turns up Louisiana. At Markham, the boundary turns east and travels to its origin at Markham and Scott Streets.

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## Survey Methodology

This nomination is based on a survey conducted by the City of Little Rock's Office of Comprehensive Planning, in cooperation with the Quapaw Quarter Association, during the summer of 1984. A total of 21 blocks were surveyed, an area which embraced 114 structures, of which 75 were constructed prior to 1935. Based on the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program's standard review process, which evaluated the surveyed properties on their architectural merit and relationship to the development of the Main Street business district, the staff recommended the inclusion of 12 properties in the Main Street Multiple Resource Area Nomination to the National Register of Historic Places. This nomination does not include archeological sites, public monuments, or parkland, nor does it include six other properties located within the Multiple Resource Area which have been recommended for nomination via amendments to the Charles L. Thompson Thematic Nomination (listed on the National Register 12/22/82). Five structures within the nominated area have previously been listed individually on the National Register. Owners of four of these 12 Multiple Resource Area nominated properties have removed their buildings from consideration at this time. These properties are the State Bank Building, 500 Main Street, designed by George Mann, 1909; the Donaghey Building, 701 Main Street, designed by Hunter McDonnell, 1925; the Back Building, 505 Main Street, designed by Mann & Stern, 1925; and the Y.M.C.A. Building, 123 E. Capitol, designed by Theodore Sanders, 1906.

## Description of Physical Growth

The basic organization of the district is derived from the street system plotted as a grid in the original 1822 survey of Little Rock. For the first several decades of the town's existence, commercial activity was concentrated along the riverfront on Markham Street. Orientation to the river became less essential by the 1870's, when railroads supplanted riverboats as the primary means of commerce. The influx of northern capital, as well as the arrival of the railroad, made possible a tremendous building boom during the late 19th century. The business district grew rapidly southward from Markham along Main Street. By 1880 the density and scale of the business district dramatically increased, replacing most of the streetscape of the pre-Civil War period.

Typically, a late 19th century commercial building was two to three stories in height and constructed of brick with interior iron columns. Plate glass for storefront display windows, pressed tin ceilings, and exterior decorative details were available to builders through mail-order catalogues. Various Victorian styles were copied, but the most common were Italianate and Romanesque, characterized by ornamental window surrounds, prominent brackets, round or segmental arches, and dentiled cornices. A few of these structures, such as the Capital Hotel (1872) and the Fulk and Taylor Building (c. 1900), remain prominent today, as does the Gothic Revival St. Andrews Cathedral (1878).

By the close of the 19th century, the commercial district extended from Markham to Tenth Street. Later development on Main Street occurred largely within these boundaries, either through demolition or extensive remodeling of existing buildings. Continuation sheet

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

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The years between 1900 and 1930 were a peak period for the development of the downtown business district. The most dramatic architectural innovation of this era was the high-rise office building, made possible by the development of elevators, steel and concrete skeletal construction, and new techniques in fire-proofing. Within the Main Street MRA, the eleven story State Bank Building (1909) and the seven story Gus Blass Department Store (1912) were two of Little Rock's earliest skyscrapers. Later high-rise structures included the Beal-Burrow Dry Goods Company (1920), the Donaghey Building (1925), the Lafayette Hotel (1925), and the Wallace Building (1928- 101 S. Main Street, not included in nomination).

Item number 7

Victorian eclecticism gave way at the turn of the century to more formal Classical Revival styles. Professional architects like Charles Thompson and George Mann made local interpretations of these nationally popular styles. A number of very fine Colonial Revival, Beaux Arts, and Neo-Classical buildings illustrate the architectural sophistication of the era. Representative of these styles are the George Mann Building (1906, Mann), Arkansas Gazette Building (1908, Stern), the Rose Building (new facade, 1916), the Exchange Bank Building (1921, Sanders & Ginocchio), the Federal Reserve Bank (1925, Thompson and Harding), and the Back Brothers Department Store (1925, Mann & Stern). Even otherwise modest buildings sometimes sported a few classical details such as columns, pilasters, pediments, quoins, and balustraded cornices. (NOTE: The Galloway and Kempner Buildings are not being nominated at this time due to false facades).

In addition to the classical styles, other forms of architecture with historical antecedents appeared on or near Main Street. The First Presbyterian Church (1921, Almand) was an academically accurate, local interpretation of the Gothic Revival style. The Moore Building (1928, Thompson, Sanders & Ginocchio) was one of the very few Spanish Revival structures ever erected in downtown Little Rock.

The spirit of optimism that prevailed during the 1920's was the result of widespread economic prosperity. Competitive merchants fostered the use of new, more modern architectural designs. "Pure" examples of Art Deco and Art Moderne were rare, but a few progressive businessmen incorporated elements of these styles into their buildings. The Worthen Bank Building (1928, Mann, Wanger & King) was such a structure. Sometimes the new architectural aesthetic demanded the near absence of ornamentation. The Democrat Printing and Lithograph Company Building (1924, Sanders & Ginocchio) was one product of the well-worn "form follows function" creed.

By the end of the 1920's commercial activity had expanded several blocks east and west from the Main Street axis. For the moment it would grow no further, as the Great Depression and then World War II stifled the need to build new structures. Instead storefront renovations utilizing marble, ornamental glass tile, and stainless steel were popular. New construction projects such as the handsome Art Decostyle M.M. Cohn Building (1940, Sanders & Ginocchio), the Georgian Revival Y.W.C.A. (1941), and the modest Sears & Roebuck Department Store (1938) were exceptions to the quiet on Main Street.

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Although the central business district changed little during the 1930's and 1940's, outlying residential and commercial areas grew in response to the new mobility made possible by the automobile. By the 1950's, suburban shopping centers had begun to compete with Main Street for retail business. Traffic congestion and parking problems contributed to the decline in downtown's retail trade.

In an effort to compete with suburbia's new fashions, downtown merchants masked aging buildings behind new metal or masonry facades. As a drastic measure to reverse the decline of downtown, Urban Renewal planners launched, in the early 1960's, a program of demolition occurred along Main Street from Third to Eighth Streets, large tracts in the northern and southern portions of the multiple resource area were cleared, and some remain undeveloped today. A side effect of the Urban Renewal program was that the general upheaval in the area encouraged shoppers to take their retail trade elsewhere, thus leading to further economic decline on Main Street.

In another effort to revitalize Main Street, the Metrocentre Mall was developed during the late 1970's. Main Street was closed to vehicular traffic between Third and Seventh Streets, and landscaped open-space, filled with street furniture, kiosks, and new lighting systems, was created in the former right-of-way. Although the Mall itself failed to slow the decline, its sponsor - the Metrocentre Improvement District Commission - provided still another, more powerful stimulus for improvement. Through the issurance of tax-free bonds to finance private construction and rehabilitation projects, Metrocentre encouraged reinvestment on Main Street and elsewhere downtown. Coupled with the growing interest in (and incentives for) historic preservation, numerous older buildings became the focus of reuse projects. These included the Capital and Lafayette Hotels, the Rose Building, the Federal Reserve and Exchange Bank Buildings, the George Mann Building, the Y.M.C.A. Building, the Healey-Roth Building, the Y.W.C.A. Building, and the Gus Blass Department Store Building.

Today, virtually every unrehabilitated building on Main Street which is more than 40 years old is the focus of a reuse plan. The dramatic removal of false facades on several significant properties has encouraged others to consider similar action. In increments the architectural integrity of Main Street is clearly being strengthened. Continued progress should permit the preservation of a considerable portion of Little Rock's late 19th and early 20th century commercial heritage.

# 8. Significance

Specific dates See Individual Sheets Suilder/Architect See Individual Sheets

#### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

#### SUMMARY

The Main Street Multiple Resource Area encompasses the commercial core of Little Rock's historic downtown area. This mercantile neighborhood was among the first in the state to acquire "modern" conveniences and improvements such as paved streets, public lighting, piped gas and water, and fire protection. These amenities and services contributed in making Main Street the premier trade center for Arkansas from the 1890's to the mid-20th Century. On, or near, Main Street were located the state's largest department stores, biggest banks, first skyscrapers, most widely read newspapers, most important fraternal and social organizations, and most elaborate churches. Densely built blocks of commercial structures still line Main Street, providing a visual record of this significant period in the economic history of the city and state. The designers for many of these buildings were the most prominent and prolific professional architects of their age, including men such as Thomas Harding, Sr., Charles Thompson, George Mann, Theodore Sanders, Frank Ginocchio, and John Parks Almand. They ably interpreted national style trends such as the Gothic Revival, Classical Revival, Sullivanesque, Prairie, and Art Moderne to give Little Rock a Main Street which was always in fashion. Although the Great Depression and the post-war migration to the suburbs has diminished Main Street's retail trade, it remains an important center for commerce and communications.

#### ELABORATION

#### Historical Significance

Little Rock was first settled in the 1820's, beginning at a site near the north end of the Main Street Multiple Resource Area. Although no buildings remain from the territorial and early statehood period within the multiple resource area, properties such as the Arkansas Territorial Restoration, the Old State House Museum, and the Chester Ashley archeological site, which are just outside its boundaries, are visible evidence of the city's early history.

Hiram Whittington, a young printer from Boston, who described Little Rock in 1826, wrote that Little Rock was a town containing "60 Buildings - 6 brick, 8 frame, the rest log cabins. The best brick building is the one occupied by the paper and is as good as a one as you will see in Boston." The newspaper mentioned in Whittington's letter is the <u>Arkansas Gazette</u>, the first newpaper in Arkansas and the oldest west of the Mississippi, and it continues to do business in a National Register property within the boundaries of this Multiple Resource Area Nomination.

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

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# National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form



Continuation sheetItem number8Page 2In 1840, there were fewer than 2,000 inhabitants in Little Rock; by 1860, the number<br/>had only grown to 3,727. In the latter year Main Street was described by one citizen<br/>as being a "dusty thoroughfare flanked by one and two-story, frame buildings-- a mere<br/>tributary to the more important Markham Street on the river." Markham Street, running<br/>parallel to the banks of the Arkansas River, was lined with closely packed blocks of<br/>business structures, located there to take advantage of the river-borne commerce.<br/>Meanwhile, on Main Street, establishments did not extend beyond Third Street, after<br/>which point Main took on the characteristics of a tree-lined country road.

Follwoing the Civil War Main Street began to supplant Markham as the commercial and financial axis of the city. In 1867 the City Market House was moved from a location close to the river to a site on Fifth Street between Main and Louisiana. Several years after that the Arkansas River ceased to be a major factor in Little Rock's growth as a result of the railroad's arrival. Now connected by rails to the rest of the nation, the sparsely-developed Main Street offered the businessman a new world of opportunities. The railroad gave Little Rock its first dependable, speedy form of transportation (the river was notorious for its snags and shallows). Moreover, it provided a link to northern capital markets; this outside investment fueled an economic boom for the city which lasted nearly half a century.

With the railroad, the economy of Little Rock became closely tied to that of the diverse outlying regions of Arkansas. Consequently the financial and business sub-structure of the city became tied to Little Rock's growth as a major distribution and retail center for the state. For Little Rock, warehouses, department stores, and office buildings became as important for its historic growth as the foundry, factory, or harbor were to other cities.

The growth of downtown Little Rock during the late 19th century was phenomenal. Charles Squier, in a <u>City Directory</u> published in 1872, told about an early version of urban renewal: "The dilapidated structure of the original settler is fast giving way to spacious and lofty blocks of brick." In the 25 years following the Civil War, over 200 brick buildings were constructed in downtown. During the last decades of the 1800's, Main street added street lights, piped gas and water, electricity, telephone service, and paved streets and sidewalks to its amenities. The improvement of fire protection services was especially important, since it reduced the need to periodically rebuild the streetscapes.

Although little of the appearance and atmosphere of Little Rock's 19th century downtown remains intact today, two significant features are still visible. One, the street plan, originally established in the 1820's and reinforced by the public improvements of the 1880's, has not been altered in any way. Two, the tightly-packed arrangement, if not the stylistic appearance of the business structures lining Main Street, remains largely intact.

The peek period for Main Street was during the years from 1890 to 1935 when the commercial, financial, entertainment, civic, and social centers of the city's life were located along its blocks. The new buildings of this time period were larger than those of Victorian Little Rock, and they were in new styles, ranging from

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

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As a center of the state's largest commercial and retail district Main Street was universally regarded as the most significant thoroughfare in Arkansas during the early 20th century. It naturally attracted the largest or most important of the state's institutions. Both state-wide newspapers were headquartered on or next to Main Street. Several of Arkansas' largest banks built fine edifices on the street during this period. The block-long Albert Pike Memorial Temple, one of the city's most impressive buildings; headquartered the state's Masonic Order. The biggest department stores, including Blass, M.M. Cohn, and Back Brothers, had spacious stores on Main Street. For those visiting the city, several of the state's largest hotels, including the Lafayette, were strategically located within one or two blocks of Main Street.

The prosperity did not last forever. The state's agriculturally-based economy began to suffer in the mid-1920's and, when the Great Depression struck the nation in the 1930's, the construction boom on Main Street ended. Numerous banks failed and seemingly healthy businesses were forced to close. Main Street was still the center of commerce, but the noise and excitement associated with it were much reduced until after World War II.

After the war, Main Street never regained its full measure of importance. In the 1950's suburban development took much of the retail trade from downtown. During the 1960's and 1970's the major banks began relocating off of Main Street and onto Capitol Avenue between Main and the State Capitol complex. In the 1980's new investments in Main Street properties began to rise again, primarily in rehabilitation projects that created office space.

#### Architectural Significance

The architecturally significant properties in the Little Rock Main Street Multiple Resource Area can be generally divided into four groups: first are those buildings which are representative of late 19th century Victorian styles. Second are the early high-rise (seven stories or more) structures. Third, and perhaps most numerous, are the properties whose appearance drew heavily upon the Classical Revival styles popular in the early 20th century. Fourth are those buildings constructed in "modern" styles, including Art Deco.

The Capital Hotel, the Fulk Building, the Taylor Building, and St. Andrew's Cathedral are the area's most visible remnants of Victorian Little Rock. The Capital Hotel (NR 1974) features the state's largest and most impressive cast iron facade, recently restored to its original elegance. The Fulk and Taylor Buildings are representative of the Romanesque brickwork which characterized so many Main Street structures at the end of the 19th century. St. Andrew's Cathedral, the city's oldest continuouslyopen place of worship, is a fine marriage of the Gothic Revival style with local

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building materials; in this case granite from nearby Fourche Mountain. This building was designed by Thomas Harding, Sr., the first professional architect to have enjoyed a long and prosperous practice in Little Rock.

Although Little Rock's first high-rise building was not constructed on Main Street, the second-- the State Bank Building-- was, in 1909. Its architect-- indeed, the designer for nearly all of Little Rock's early skyscrapers-- was George R. Mann. Mann, an architect of great skill whose commissions included several state capitol buildings, relied on the high-rise composition made popular by Chicago architect Louis Sullivan. The State Bank Building, like the Gus Blass Department Store designed by Mann, was divided into three parts: a base of several stories, heavily detailed in terra cotta; a shft, which was more plainly finished in brick and which relied on its fenestration for visual relief; and a cap or crown, featuring a prominent cornice and other decorative features. This same general design can be found in Main Street's other high-rises: Charles Thompson and Thomas Harding's Beal-Burrow Dry Goods Building, the Lafayette Hotel (NR 1982) by St. Louis architect George Barnett, and the Donaghey Building by New York designer Hunter McDonnell. Interestingly, Mann's Wallace Building (1928, not nominated) does not adhere to the Sullivanesque plan; instead it is a modest example of Art Deco high-rise.

The Classical Revival buildings in the Multiple Resource Area, including structures more precisely termed Colonial Revival, Beaux Arts, and Neo-Classical, are among some of the finest examples of their style in the state. Mann is responsible for several of these designs, including his own office building (NR 1983),the Arkansas Gazette Building (NR 1976), the Kempner Building (covered by a false facade, not nominated), the Albert Pike Memorial Temple, and the Back Brothers Department Store.

Charles Thompson and his associates, which over time included Thomas Harding, Jr., Theodore Sanders, and Frank Ginocchio, were also prominent and prolific classicalstyle architects. The Exchange Bank Building was perhaps their finest commission. Its complex exterior features elaborate detailing in both granite and limestone. Other fine Classical Revival structures by these architects include the Galloway Building (covered with a false facade, not nominated), the Hall Building, the Healey-Roth Mortuary (NR 1982) and the Federal Reserve Bank.

In addition to the classical mode several other styles saw revivals during the early 20th century. Prominent examples of these buildings are the Gothic Revival First Presbyterian Church by John Parks Almand, the Spanish Revival Moore Building by the Thompson firm, and the Georgian Revival Y.W.C.A. Building (not nominated).

Several significant buildings in the Main Street Multiple Resource Area were designed in the "modern" vocabulary of 20th century architecture. The Worthen Bank Building, designed by Mann's firm in 1928, is classical in composition but is clearly ornamented in Art Deco or Moderne fashion. Aside from its ornate entrance portals, the Democrat Printing and Litho Company building by Sanders and Ginocchio is spartan and reflects the trend toward form following function. The M.M.Cohn building (c.1940, not nominated) also by Sanders and Ginocchio, is one of the last Little Rock structures to be clearly Art Deco in design.

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Continuation sheet	Item number	8

PROPERTY LIST FOR LITTLE ROCK MAIN STREET MULTIPLE RESOURCE AREA

SURVEY #	NAME/ADDRESS
LR0019	Rose Building, 307 Main Street
LR0022	Fulk Building, 1900, 300 Main Street
LR0023	Taylor Building, c. 1900, 304 Main Street
LR0026	Gus Blass Department Store, 1912, 324 Main Street
LR0031	Worthen Bank Building, 1928, 401 Main Street
LR0069	St. Andrew's Cathedral, 1878, 617 Louisiana Street
LR0070	Albert Pike Memorial Temple, 1924, 720 Scott Street
LR0079	First Presbyterian Church, 1921, 123 East 8th Street

Continuation sheet

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PROPERTY OWNER LIST FOR MAIN STREET MULTIPLE RESOURCE AREA

SURVEY #	PROPERTY/ADDRESS	OWNER
LR0022	Fulk Building 300 Main Street	Mr. & Mrs. Joseph Kaufman 300 Main Street Little Rock, Arkansas 72201
LR0023	Taylor Building 304 Main Street	Charles M. Taylor, Jr. 3 Pleasant Valley Farm Road Little Rock, AR 72212
LR0026	Gus Blass Department Store 324 Main Street	Rockworth Associates 324 Main Street Little Rock, Arkansas 72201
LR0031	Worthen Bank Building 401 Main Street	KATV P. O. Box 77 Little Rock, Arkansas 72203
LR0069	St. Andrew's Cathedral 617 Louisiana Street	Bishop Andrew J. McDonald P. O. Box 7239 Little Rock, Arkansas 72217
LR0070	Albert Pike Memorial Temple 700-24 Scott Street	Scottish Rite Bodies 720 Scott Street Little Rock, Arkansas 72201
LR0079	First Presbyterian Church 123 East 8th Street	First Presbyterian Church 123 East 8th Street Little Rock, Arkansas 72201

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	Multiple Resource Area Thematic Group	dnr-11
Name <u>Little Rock Main Stre</u> State <u>Pulaski County, AR</u> I	CANSAS	1/22/87 15
Nomination/Type of Review	Cor	Date/Signature ///3/87
<ol> <li>Albert Pike Memorial Temple</li> </ol>	Abtractive Review for Keepe	er William B. Bushow
	Attest	t Druce J. Nobley Q 3/3/8
2. Rose Building	forKeepe	er William B. Buchay
	Attes	
3. Fulk Building	forkeepe	er William B. Bush
	Attes	
4. Gus Blass Department Store	Rubation David For Keepe	er William B. Duly
SLOTE	Attes	t Bruce g. Mother on 4/13/80
5. Taylor Building	Keepe	er Wilfiam B. Brech
	U Attes	
6. St. Andrews Catholic Cathedral	Keepe	er William B. Bushon
Cathedrar	Attes	t Bruce J. Nobe Q. 11/13/34
$\sqrt[3]{7.}$ First Presbyterian Church	Substantive Heview Inkeepe	er William B. Bush
-	Attest	t Bruce g 1/ 13 28 pr. 11/13/26
8. Worthen Bank Building	Keepe	er William B. Busing
	Attes	t Bruce g. Noble p. 11/148
9. Donaghey Building	Substantive Perton Keepe	er
	CALES ON SCHONATES	t
10. State Bank Building	Keepe	er
	Attes	t

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Multiple Resource Area Thematic Group

State Pulaski County, ARKANSAS	
Nomination/Type of Review	Determined Date/Signature
1. Back Brothers Department Store	Substantive Review Keeper Deth Groveno 8/17/
Store	Attest
2.	Keeper
	Attest
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	Attest
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