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

Little Rock

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

#### Name 1.

historic Historic Resources of Osceola, Arkansas

and/or common

city, town

#### Location 2.

street & numb	er the incorpor	ated limits of O	sceola, Arl	kansas	$\underline{\mathrm{N/A}}$ not for publication
city, town	Osceola	<u>N/A</u> vi	icinity of		
state Arka	ansas	code $05$	county	Mississippi	code 093
<b>3. Cla</b>	ssificatio	n			
structure siteN object	Ownership public private _X both N/APublic Acquisit in process .le being consid rces	ion Accessib	cupied in progress Ie	Present Use agriculture _X_commercial educational entertainment _X_government industrial military	museum park private residence religious scientific transportation other:
4. Ow	ner of Pro	operty			
name Multi	ple ownership				
street & numbe	er See continua	tion sheets			
city, town	Osceola	vi	icinity of	state	Arkansas
5. Loc	ation of I	.egal Des	criptic	on	
courthouse, re	gistry of deeds, etc.	Mississippi Cou	unty Courth	nouse	
street & numbe	er	Hale Avenue			
city, town		Osceola		state	Arkansas
6. Rep	presentat	ion in Exi	sting \$	Surveys	
titie Osceola	a Main Street Pro	oject Survey	has this pro	perty been determined	eligible? X_yes no
<b>date</b> 1986				federal _X s	tate county local
depository for	survey records A	rkansas Historic	Preservatio	n Program	
	T.i	ttle Rock		-	Arkansas

state

For NPS use only received JUL 6 1987 date entereAUG - 6 1987

# 7. Description

#### Condition

_X_ excellent		<u>_X</u> deteriorated
_X_good	¥v.	ruins
_X_ fair		unexposed

 $\begin{array}{c} \textbf{Check one} \\ \underline{X} \text{ unaltered} \\ \underline{X} \text{ altered} \end{array}$ 

Check one X original site moved date

#### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

#### SURVEY METHODOLOGY

Osceola was surveyed in the summer of 1986 by Carolyn Wallace, a local historian, and Linda Cornish Blank, Project Manager for Main Street Osceola. The survey was funded by a Certified Local Government grant administered by the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program. Historic structures within the downtown commercial district were identified and photographed at that time.

A follow up survey was conducted by Sandra Taylor Smith and Mary Thomas. On-site evaluations were conducted for all structures determined by the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program to meet the minimum National Register eligibility requirements of architectural and/or historic significance. On-site work on the properties included mapping, further photography, and interviews with local historians and property owners. Historic data has been gathered on the structures from primary and secondary sources.

Identified by the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program were fourteen buildings eligible for individual listing in this multiple resource nomination, including one historic district consisting of six buildings along the South side of the 200 block of Hale Avenue, and the Mississippi County Courthouse (listed in the National Register of Historic Places, 1978).

#### DESCRIPTION

Osceola is a rural community located in the rich farmland of the Mississippi River Delta in Northeastern Arkansas. Mississippi County's eastern boundary runs approximately 78 miles along the river. During the years following the formation of Arkansas Territory, there was a great inflow of population along the Mississippi River. A ridge of higher land, densely covered with hardwood forests, marked the topography of the Osceola area in the early nineteenth century. A mud bank furnished a safe landing for steamboats, making Osceola a practical place to operate wood yards to supply fuel for river traffic. Osceola was established as a river landing during the 1820–1830 period and incorporated in 1875. The area was primarily swampland; flooding was often severe.

Osceola's business district moved from its original site in 1898, re-establishing itself near railroad lines. The City's progressive newspaper, the Osceola Times, built its building (0015) in 1901, followed by the Borum Store (0039) and Fred Patterson's Building (0040) in 1902 and the Fred Patterson Store (0041) in 1904.

The economy of the area rose rapidly with river commerce. With the coming of the railroads and drainage of the swamplands, the area turned to agriculture. Osceola today retains its character as a rural farming community. The town, bordered on the east by the Mississippi River, is centered around a shaded Courthouse (0011, National Register, 1978) square, on wide tree-lined streets. Most commercial structures are one and two-story brick or stone vernacular commercial buildings with little high-style influence.

The commercial area of Osceola is composed of only a few blocks of buildings. Much of this area has retained its historic character and there are several renovation projects underway or planned. The historic district in this multiple resource nomination is comprised of six brick buildings ranging in date of construction from the 1902 Borum (0039) and Patterson (0040)

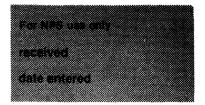
# National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

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Continuation sheet	lt	em number 4	Page 2	
SURVEY CODE	PROPERTY NAME ADDRESS	CONSTRUCTION DATE	PROPERTY OWNER ADDRESS	
0009	City Hall 316 W. Hale Osceola, AR	1936	City of Osceola 316 W. Hale Osceola, AR	
0011	Mississippi County Courthouse (NR 12-13-78) Hale Avenue Osceola, AR	1912	Mississippi County, AR Courthouse Osceòla, AR	
0015	Osceola Times Building 112 N. Poplar Osceola, AR	1901	Parks Newspaper 112 N. Poplar Osceola, AR	
0022	Bank of Osceola 207 E. Hale Osceola, AR	1909	Kenneth Sulcer 311 W. Quinn Osceola, AR Drainåge District #9 ATTN: Clay Haynes P. O. Box 122 Osceola, AR 72370	
0025	Old Bell Tellephone Bldg. 100 Block, Ash Street Osceola, AR	1911	Episcopal Diocese of Arkansas P. O. Box 6120 Little Rock, AR 72216	
0028	Planters Bank Building 200 E. Hale Osceola, AR	c. 1920	Planters Bank 200 E. Hale Osceola, AR	
0039	Borum Building 201 W. Hale Osceola, AR	1902	Dr. Eldon Fairley 710 W. Keiser Osceola, AR	
0040	Patterson Building 200 Block, Hale Ave. Osceola, AR	1902	Henry Patterson 319 N. Maple Osceola, AR	

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Continuation sheet		Item number 4	
SURVEY CODE	PROPERTY NAME ADDRESS	CONSTRUCTION DATE	PROPERTY OWNER ADDRESS
0041	Fred Patterson Store 200 Block, Hale Ave. Osceola, AR	1904	Henry Patterson 319 N. Maple Osceola, AR
0042	Hubbard and Hoke 213 W. Hale Osceola, AR	1917	Robbins Brothers 800 W. Keiser Street Osceola, AR
0043	Coston Building 217 W. Hale Osceola, AR	1915	Ronnie Sarrells 307 E. Semmes Osceola, AR
0044	Raines Play House 216 W. Hale Osceola, AR	1915	Reggie Collom 119 East Drive Osceola, AR
0046	Florida Brothers Bldg. 319 W. Hale Osceola, AR	1936	First National Bank 303 W. Hale Osceola, AR
0050	Mississippi County Jail 300 S. Poplar Osceola, AR	1926	Mississippi County, AR Courthouse Osceola, AR

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#### Continuation sheet

Item number 7

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buildings to the 1917 Hubbard and Hoke building (0042). These buildings, all of which are contributing, are located along the south side of Hale Avenue across from the County Courthouse (0011, National Register, (1978). The district includes four one-story buildings and two two-story structures. Individual properties included in this nomination include the Osceola Times building (0015), built in 1901, and the Old Bell Telephone building (0025), built in 1911. These are both two-story brick vernacular commercial structures with little decoration, functional in design. The Bank of Osceola (0022), built in 1909, presents a unique facade on the streetscape with its large arched windows, decorative brickwork, and dentiled cornice. The Planters Bank (0028), built in the early part of the 1920's, is one of the highlights of the downtown. With its Neo-Classical influence, it features a finelydetailed wrap-around cornice with pilasters and large arched windows. In contrast to the formal elegance of Planters Bank is the three-story brick Mississippi County Jail (0050), constructed in 1926. This functional public structure features very little decorative interest, but presents a solid and sturdy appearance befitting its usage. Construction in 1936 of a new post office (City Hall 0009) with a simple yet formal appearance, and the Florida Brothers building (0046) with its Art Deco design influence represented renewed city growth after the Depression years.

Today the Hale Avenue area remains a principal shopping and business district of Osceola; the fabric of a viable and contiguous downtown is still present. Largely due to efforts of the Main Street Osceola Project, the town's merchants are aware of their historic resources and are continuing in the tradition of the Osceola Businessmen's Club by taking pride in their city's appearance and accomplishments. The resources included in this multiple resource nomination are representative of the historic, rural character of the town of Osceola.

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Continuation sheet	Item number 7 & 8	Deat
	Item number 7 & 8	Page 1
	DISTRICT STRUCTURES - ALL CONTRIBUTING	
0039	Borum Building 201 W. Hale Ave.	1902
0040	Patterson Building 200 block, Hale Ave.	1902
0041	Fred Patterson Store 200 block, Hale Ave.	1904
0042	Hubbard and Hoke 213 W. Hale Ave.	1917
0043	Coston Building 217 W. Hale Ave.	1915
0044	Raines Play House 216 W. Hale	1915
	MULTIPLE RESOURCE STRUCTURES	
0009	City Hall 316 W. Hale	1936
0011	Mississippi Co. Courthouse	1912 (NR 12-13-78)
0015	Osceola Times 112 N. Poplar	1901
0022	Bank of Osceola 207 E. Hale Ave.	1909
0025	Old Bell Telephone 100 block, Ash St.	1911
0028	Planters Bank Bldg. 200 E. Hale Ave.	c. 1920
0046	Florida Brothers 319 W. Hale Ave.	1936
0050	Mississippi Co. Jail 300 S. Poplar	1926

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# 8. Significance



Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

#### SUMMARY

Osceola is an early settlement in northeastern Arkansas' Mississippi County. Located on a low, heavily wooded ridge on the western bank of the Mississippi River, Osceola was ideally situated as a steamboat landing. As commerce on the river declined, to be replaced by rail lines, Osceola re-established itself west of the original townsite, nearer the railroad. In an effort to reclaim rich farmland from severe overflow, the town's leaders championed the organization of Drainage Districts in Arkansas in the early twentieth century. These men prepared a workable system of drainage laws, and persuaded the Arkansas Legislature to enact them, subsequently creating a Drainage District in Mississippi County.

The buildings which comprise this multiple resource nomination represent the commercial structures within the downtown Osceola area with the greatest degree of architectural integrity. While most are typical of early twentieth-century vernacular commercial design, such as the Patterson buildings (0040 and 0041) and the Hubbard and Hoke Building (0042), there are included in the nomination structures with traces of high-style influence indicative of their period of significance. Most notable are the elaborate detailing of the Bank of Osceola Building (0022), the Neo-Classical elements of the Planters Bank Building (0028), and the Art Deco styling of the Florida Brothers Building (0046).

Osceola's history is marked by strong, progressive leaders, active merchants' associations, and a strong sense of community pride. The town's commercial area retains its character as a rural farming community with the cosmopolitan flavor of a river town. The Osceola Merchants Association continues to demonstrate its interest in protecting the community's historic resources. All properties included in this multiple resource nomination contribute greatly to the built environment of Osceola's commercial district and all represent the rural character of this Arkansas town.

#### ELABORATION

In 1875, when the town of Osceola was incorporated, the small Mississippi River community consisted of one hotel, four saloons, two grocery stores, and residences built along a main street. River trade continued to thrive and the town grew steadily until the 1890's when the Frisco line was built west of town. The railroad and the building of improved roadways marked a decline in river commerce, and the end of an era for Osceola.

Captain Samuel Spenser Semmes, a prominent attorney and former county judge, built his home near the railroad line and encouraged other townfolk to move their homes and businesses closer to the railroad. A townsite company was formed and lots were sold. The Osceola Times, always at the forefront of City development and progress, was housed in its new building (0015) located on the east side of what would become the Courthouse square. In 1902 Osceola had little more than 1000 citizens. The City had a municipally-owned electric power plant and 28 street lights. Promotional literature on the City billed Osceola as "8 hours from St. Louis

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

See Continuation Sheet

E	10. Geo	ograp	hical Data	See Indiv	vidual Data Sheet	S
Zone   Easting   Northing     Zone   Easting   Northing     C   1.1.6   [2]3,1]3,0,0]   [3,9]5,14]7,9,0]     F   F   F   F     G   F   F   F     G   F   F   F     G   F   F   F     G   F   F   F     G   F   F   F     G   F   F   F     G   F   F   F     G   F   F   F     G   F   F   F     G   F   F   F     G   F   F   F     G   F   F   F     G   F   F   F     G   F   F   F     G   F   F   F     G   F   F   F     G   F   F   F     G   F   F   F     Code   County   F	Quadrangle name	Osceola	, AR-TN		Quadrang	le scale
F   F   F   F     G   F   F   F     G   F   F   F     G   F   F   F     G   F   F   F     G   F   F   F     G   F   F   F     G   F   F   F     G   F   F   F     G   F   F   F     G   F   F   F     See Individual Data Sheets   Deplar St. on the East and approximately 50' E. of Walnut on the West     List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries   State     State   N/A   code   county   code     State   N/A   code   county   code     Its and a task of county   code   code   code   code     Its and and approximately 50' E. of Walnut on the West   code   county   code     Its and an apport of the All state And approximately 50' E. of Walnut on the State And approximately 50' E. of Walnut on the State And approximately 50' E. of Walnut on the State And approximately 50' E. of Walnut on the State And approximate	والمراجعين المحمد		3 9 5 4 8 4 0 Northing			3 19 5 14 8 14 10 Northing
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state   N/A   code   county   code     11. Form Prepared By     name/title   Sandra Taylor Smith and Mary D. Thomasconsultants for:     organization   City of Osceola, Main Street Project   date   August 30, 1986     street & number   304 W. Hale Avenue   telephone   (501) 563-5617     city or town   Osceola   state   Arkansas     12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification     The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:	List all states a	nd countie	s for properties over	lapping state or	county boundaries	1
11. Form Prepared By     name/title   Sandra Taylor Smith and Mary D. Thomasconsultants for:     organization   City of Osceola, Main Street Project   date   August 30, 1986     street & number   304 W. Hale Avenue   telephone   (501)   563-5617     city or town   Osceola   state   Arkansas     12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification     The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:	state N/A		code	county		code
name/title   Sandra Taylor Smith and Mary D. Thomasconsultants for:     organization   City of Osceola, Main Street Project   date   August 30, 1986     street & number   304 W. Hale Avenue   telephone   (501) 563-5617     city or town   Osceola   state   Arkansas <b>12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification</b> The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:	state N/A		code	county		code
The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:	street & number city or town	304 W. H Osceola	ale Avenue		telephone (501) state Arkansa	563-5617 as
665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.     State Historic Preservation Officer signature   WMM   MML     httle State Historic Preservation Officer   date   G-10-87     For NPS use only   I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register   date     Mutuation   Mutuation   date     Mutuation   Mutuation   date     Attest:   date   date		nificance of	this property within the	state is:		
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and 15 hours from Chicago". There were only a few brick buildings in the town at the turn of the century. Among them were the fashionable Borum Store (0039), built by Mr. and Mrs. James D. Borum, the Patterson Building (0040), joined in 1904 by the Fred Patterson Store (0041).

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By 1901 a building boom was beginning on Hale Avenue. The Bank of Osceola, organized in 1891, built a large building (0022) in 1909 to house not only the Bank, but several other businesses, including two attorneys, a real estate office, a grocer, and a cotton brokerage firm. In 1912, the Mississippi County Courthouse (0011, National Register 1978) was built on land painstakingly drained and filled to support the weight of the massive structure, and donated by Judge W. J. Driver.

City services continued to develop. A water plant was organized in 1911, using a gasoline pump to pump water to a high tower, and gravity for final distribution to homes and businesses. The substantial two-story Bell Telephone Company Building (0025) was built in 1911 by R. C. Rose, as his business began to feel its first real growing pains in the small community.

The forward-thinking businessmen of the downtown area began talking about paving streets in 1911. By 1915, Osceola had fifteen miles of cement sidewalks, a \$100,000 light and power plant owned by the City, and a sewage system. The first paved street, Hale Avenue, was finally completed in 1917. The City prospered. Raines Play House (0044) was built in 1914 to house the town's post office, and J. T. Coston, the City's most prominent lawyer and an early proponent of the area's massive drainage project, built the Coston Building (0043) that same year to house his offices. In 1917, the Bryan and Hook (later Hubbard and Hoke, 0042) Dry Goods Store, widely acclaimed as one of the most up-to-date stores of its kind in Arkansas, was built on the south side of Hale Avenue, completing the district directly across from the Courthouse (0011, National Register 1978). By 1918 Osceola's population had grown to 3000.

A road improvement district was formed in the late teens to facilitate construction of roads from Osceola to points west in the county and primarily to build a "good" road to Little This project was heralded as one of the greatest advancements in the county's history. Rock. The Osceola Times reported "new roads will give land owners access to the markets at all seasons of the year. . . we expect the population to double in the next ten years as a result of the link a new series of roads would give farming community."

Blytheville, the only other sizable town in the county, was beginning to vie for business in the area and in 1915 ran ads offering free round trip train fare if Osceolans would come to Blytheville to shop. Merchants in Osceola stepped up their advertising policies and improved their businesses to avoid losing customers. The economy in Mississippi County was healthy in the first decades of the twentieth century and Osceolans considered themselves in an era of prosperity.

The first movie theater opened with great fanfare, businesses flourished and crops were plentiful. The Osceola Times and city officials continued to promote civic pride. In 1916 Osceola began their first baseball team, tent Chautauquas came through town, and the automobile became a common sight on the streets of the town.

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The early 1920's saw the continued surge of progress and building in the town with construction of an elaborate new building for Citizen's Bank (later Planters Bank, 0028). In 1924, a St. Louis Investment Banking Firm rated Mississippi County highest on their list of the most promising places to live. In 1926, a new three-story brick jail (0050) was constructed in Osceola.

By the late 1920's prosperous economic conditions began to deteriorate as a series of disastrous floods plagued the county. The most destructive of these were the 1927 floods, effecting much of the state. Thousands of acres of crops were destroyed. Hardest hit by the 1927 flood was Eastern Arkansas where citizens sought refuge from the water on the upper floors of buildings. The Mississippi County Jail (0050) in Osceola housed a number of people on its third floor during this flood. Years of severe drought followed, and by 1929 the crash of the stock market only compounded the desperate economic conditions already existing in Mississippi County. Small community banks in the county had begun to fail as early as 1923. One of Osceola's two banks, Citizen's Bank, closed its doors in 1928, reopened under a new name and failed again two years later. Economic progress in Osceola came to a standstill.

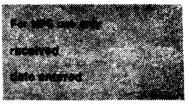
As the Roosevelt administration began implementing programs to combat the effects of the greatest economic depression in the country's history, Osceola began to feel some relief. The Works Progress Administration constructed a new post office for Osceola (0009) in 1936. The formal dedication of this building was cause for celebration in the community because it signified a step toward economic stability.

During the years of the Great Depression, three brothers who had moved to Mississippi County in 1915 and built a large real estate and banking business, loaned millions of dollars to farmers in the area. In 1936 the Florida brothers built a large Art Deco marble building to house their investment banking company downtown. At the same time one of the brothers built a small building directly across the street from the new post office (later City Hall 0009) reflecting the modernistic styling of the large bank. The Florida Brothers Building (0046) was constructed to house Thomas P. Florida's real estate business and is important architecturally and historically to Osceola.

In 1937 the worst flood in the history of the town drove thousands of people from their homes and businesses. Farmlands and crops were ruined. This severe flood prompted the government to assist in construction of the St. Francis levee and similar levees along the Mississippi River. Today Osceola utilizes the river as a port terminal for both import and export of agricultural products and supplies. The city has begun to shift its financial base from agriculture to industrial development. However, two large factories built on the edge of the city have ceased operation. Mississippi County now has one of the highest unemployment rates in the state.

Although Osceola has continued to expand west toward a major interstate highway, the historic downtown business district remains the center of commerce in the county seat. Today business is stable in the district and new businesses are opening. As a Main Street Arkansas project, improvement projects are underway, including landscaping, new lighting, and public seating in the courthouse square. Buildings have been painted and repaired and a sense of pride is evident in the association of downtown merchants. Osceola is aware of its historic resources and is working to preserve them.

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### MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

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### National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number \_\_\_\_\_ Page \_\_\_\_\_ Multiple Resource Area Thematic Group Name Osceola MRA State Mississippi County, ARKANSAS theory is 🖮 Nomination/Type of Review Date/Signature Cover Keeper/ **heters**t to **the** Keeper 1. Bank of Osceola Istical. Activer Attest Betorad in the Keeper/ City Hall 2. Har Baut Plan Attest Florida Brothers Building matered in the forkeeper 3. National Register Attest 4. Hale Avenue Historic District ans Keeper ( National Register Attest Entered in the National Register & Keeper Allow 5. Mississippi County Jail Attest Old Bell Telephone Building Service im Keeper 6. Selving Brandsto Attest • ... . tradistor frkeeper Submar Pip and 7. Osceola Times Building Attest along manistrim to 1 List while Keeper 8. Planters Bank Building a is an in the same Attest 9. Keeper Attest 10. Keeper

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