

☐ This property is a National Historic Landmark.
NHL Properties are automatically listed in the National Register of Historic Places, however the documentation for the property is kept with the National Historic Landmarks collection.

☐ This property is an undocumented National Park Service Property.
Historic units in the National Park System are automatically listed, sometimes documentation for these properties was not created.

☐ This property has been removed from the National Register of Historic Places.
Documentation on removed properties is kept in a separate collection.

☐ The file on this property is missing
The documentation on this property is missing. The State Historic Preservation Office in the state that the property is located may have a version of the documentation.

☒ The file on this property is missing from the National Register of Historic Places
This documentation is a copy supplied by the State Historic Preservation Office.

☐ The photographs for this property are missing.
The photographs for this property are missing. The State Historic Preservation Office in the state that the property is located may have the negatives.

☐ This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places, but is also a National Historic Landmark
This documentation is for the National Register listing, there is separate documentation for the National Historic Landmark designation. The NHL documentation is kept with the NHL Collection.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

received

date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections**1. Name**

historic N/A

and or common Commercial Buildings of Aberdeen Thematic Group

2. Locationstreet & number 110-122 E. Commerce St.; 133 E. Commerce St.;
100-104 W. Commerce St. and 107 N. Meridian. N/A not for publication

city, town Aberdeen N/A vicinity of

state Mississippi code 28 county Monroe code 095

3. Classification

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

4. Owner of Property

name Multiple Owners

street & number N/A

city, town N/A vicinity of state

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Chancery Clerk Building

street & number 201 W. Commerce St.

city, town Aberdeen state MS 39730

6. Representation in Existing Surveystitle N/A has this property been determined eligible? ☐ yes ☒ nodate ☐ federal ☐ state ☐ county ☐ local

depository for survey records

city, town state

7. Description

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

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Commercial Buildings of Aberdeen Thematic Group consists of three parts:

1. A row of seven buildings at 110-122 E. Commerce Street,
2. An individual building at 133 E. Commerce Street, and
3. A cluster of three buildings at the northwest corner of Commerce and Meridian Streets (100-104 W. Commerce and 107 N. Meridian).

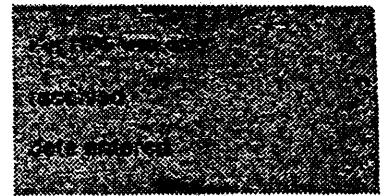
All of these properties are located within the central business district of Aberdeen, which extends today for about four blocks along Commerce Street and one block north and south of Commerce Street on Meridian Street.

The properties included within this group all date from between about 1885 and about 1918, a period of commercial growth and building activity in Aberdeen. Although the commercial area of the city contains other buildings which date from this period, the other surviving buildings have been so altered as to lose their architectural character and their capacity to represent visually the commercial life of Aberdeen during this period of development. No commercial buildings are believed to survive from the earlier period of growth during the late antebellum years. Thus the selected buildings are those which best embody the commercial activity of Aberdeen during its second major period of growth.

Methodology and Selection Criteria. The Aberdeen Commercial Buildings Thematic Group nomination is a part of the Aberdeen Multiple Resource Area nomination (q.v.), which was based on a city-wide survey of historic resources conducted by staff members of the Historic Preservation Division of the Mississippi Department of Archives and History. The survey was begun in 1984 and resumed and completed in 1986-1987. The commercial area of Aberdeen was surveyed and researched by Richard Cawthon, Chief Architectural Historian for the Department. Historical research on the city conducted by Susan Enzweiler, who compiled the rest of the MRA nomination, indicated that Aberdeen experienced two major periods of growth, the first from the 1840s through the 1850s and the second from about 1880 to about 1930. The survey of the commercial area and research using Sanborn Insurance Maps and early photographs indicated that the present-day commercial core of Aberdeen developed during the second period of growth, and that most of the buildings which were standing in the commercial core by 1930 had been built between about 1885 and about 1918. The buildings were then evaluated to assess the degree to which they retained integrity from that period. On that basis it was at first thought that an historic district could be delineated along both sides of the 100 block of East Commerce Street. Further work showed that such a district would contain too many noncontributing elements to be a valid district, so it was decided to nominate those properties which appeared to be eligible for the National Register

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

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



Continuation sheet Comm. Bldgs. of Aberdeen Thematic Group,
Aberdeen MRA, Monroe Co., MS Item number

7

Page 1

individually or in small clusters as a thematic group.

The criteria used to select the nominated properties were:

- a) Built or standing between 1885 and 1918.
- b) Used for commercial activity during that period.
- c) Retaining a moderate to high degree of integrity of architectural character from that period, determined on the basis of documentary or photographic evidence if available.

Using those criteria, one row of seven buildings, one cluster of three buildings, and one individual building were selected for nomination.

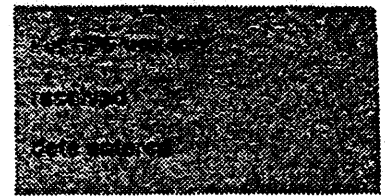
Several other commercial buildings appear to retain a relatively high degree of integrity from that period and could possibly be nominated in the future if documentary or photographic evidence can be found to substantiate their age and architectural character. These include a two-story brick building with Romanesque detailing in the upper facade, located at 107 E. Commerce, and a two-story building with a metal and glass facade, located at 119 E. Commerce.

Architectural character of the selected properties.

The eleven buildings in this group are all of masonry construction, ten of brick and one with brick side and rear walls but a facade of cast concrete blocks. All are one lot wide (about 25 feet) except for the Navarro Law Office (102-104 W. Commerce) which is two lots wide. Eight are two-story buildings and three are one-story. The three one-story buildings, all in the E. Commerce Street district, were built about 1893 as parts of a four-building row. The two-story building at 118 E. Commerce replaced one of the four about 1908.

The architectural character of these buildings is largely the small-town commercial vernacular of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries with some Commercial Italianate and Commercial Romanesque influences evident. Pressed metal cornices were once widespread within the Aberdeen commercial area, but only two remain in place -- one at 133 E. Commerce and the other at 107 N. Meridian (in the cluster at the northwest corner of Commerce and Meridian Streets).

Descriptions of the individual properties are included in the separate nomination forms (q.v.).

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination FormComm. Bldgs. of Aberdeen Thematic Group,
Continuation sheet Aberdeen MRA, Monroe Co., MS Item number

8

Page 1

Courthouse, the main public building in the business district for many years, and still one of the two major landmarks of the area, was built at 201 West Commerce, just west of the buildings in this group, from 1885 to 1887. The congruence of architectural development and documentation about that date thus makes it a good starting point. The date 1918 was selected as the end of the period of significance because (1) again, a Sanborn Insurance Map was done in this year, providing good documentation of the architectural composition of the commercial area as of that date, and (2) comparison of the 1918 and 1925 Sanborn Maps shows that no new construction took place in the commercial area between those years.

The period of 1885 to 1918 was the time in which the commercial core of Aberdeen completed its conversion from wood to brick construction, resulting in the majority of the present buildings. These buildings serve as a testimony to the economic activity and prosperity of Aberdeen during those years. Much of this prosperity was due to cotton production, which continued to be the mainstay of Mississippi's economy during these years, and thrived until the boll weevil infestations of 1916 and several years afterwards, which ruined much of the state's cotton crop and disrupted the cotton-based agricultural economy. The Sanborn Insurance Maps of 1885, 1890, 1894, 1899, 1905, 1918, and 1925 show that several cotton brokers had offices and sample rooms in Aberdeen's commercial district, as well as numerous cotton sheds and yards in nearby blocks, although most of the commercial buildings on Commerce Street housed dry goods stores and other retail businesses.

The buildings which constitute the Aberdeen Commercial Buildings Thematic Group are the properties which best express the commercial activity of Aberdeen during the period of prosperity from the 1880s until the 1910s, and illustrate the architectural forms in which such commercial activity was characteristically housed in a prosperous Mississippi agricultural trade center at the turn of the century.

The specific significance of the nominated properties is discussed on the individual nomination forms.

8. Significance

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

Specific dates CA.1885 - CA. 1918 **Builder/Architect** N/A

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The properties which constitute the Aberdeen Commercial Buildings Thematic Group are locally significant under Criterion A in the area of commerce in that they represent the commercial activity of the city of Aberdeen during its second period of prosperity, from about 1880 to about 1930, and also under criterion C for their architectural character, as the most intact and most representative examples of late nineteenth and early twentieth century commercial architecture still extant in the community.

The two blocks of Commerce Street on either side of its intersection with Meridian Street have been the center of commercial activity in Aberdeen since the 1850s and perhaps earlier. In the earliest years after the founding of the city in 1836 a commercial district developed on the banks of the Tombigbee River several blocks east of the present business district, but because that area was subject to frequent flooding, the center of commercial activity eventually moved to its present location, which is on higher and drier ground, leaving only a few warehouses at the water's edge. All of the riverfront commercial buildings have since disappeared.

By the time of the Civil War, Aberdeen had become a major cotton buying center for the fertile Black Prairie region of Mississippi, and was the commercial and governmental center of Monroe County. Numerous commercial buildings lined Commerce Street housing a variety of businesses. None of these antebellum buildings has survived, however. Most were probably lost to fires. In 1869 a major fire destroyed virtually all the commercial buildings on the south side of Commerce Street (G. S. Bryan, article in the Aberdeen Examiner, February 5, 1948) and other fires have caused extensive destruction as well.

Although the second period of prosperity in Aberdeen lasted from about 1880 to about 1930 (see Aberdeen MRA cover nomination), the period of significance for this group of commercial buildings is a shorter span of years, from 1885 to 1918. The date 1885 was selected as the beginning date for the period of significance for several reasons: (1) it is the date of the earliest Sanborn Insurance Map of Aberdeen, providing the earliest comprehensive documentation for the area; (2) because of the Sanborn map, it is the earliest date which can be confirmed for many of the buildings in the commercial area; although some may be older, the oldest are known to have been standing at least by 1885; (3) many of the buildings in the commercial area were built within the decade after 1885, including four buildings among the nominated group; (4) the Temple Opera House, which was the main landmark building in the area until its destruction by fire in 1940, was built in 1884, and the Old Post Office and Federal

9. Major Bibliographical References

(SEE CONTINUATION SHEET)

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property N/A

Quadrangle name Aberdeen, MS

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References (SEE INDIVIDUAL NOMINATIONS)

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Zone Easting Northing

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Verbal boundary description and justification

(SEE INDIVIDUAL NOMINATIONS)

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

state N/A code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Richard J. Cawthon - Chief Architectural Historian

organization Miss. Dept. of Archives and History

date September 1987

street & number P. O. Box 571

telephone (601) 354-7326

city or town Jackson

state MS 39205

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

☐ national ☐ state ☒ local

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

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

Kenneth H. P. Poul

title Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer

date January 6, 1988

For NPS use only

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

date

Keeper of the National Register

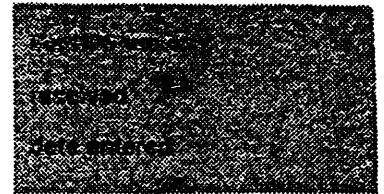
Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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

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



Continuation sheet Commercial Bldgs. of Aberdeen Thematic Group,
Aberdeen MRA, Monroe Co., MS Item number

9

Page 1

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Crawford, Sam W. "Big Fires in Aberdeen." Draft of article prepared for The Aberdeen Examiner, 1987.

Deed Books, Monroe County Chancery Clerk's Office, Aberdeen.

Photograph collection, Evans Memorial Library, Aberdeen.

Rodabaugh, John. Scrapbook of local history articles from The Aberdeen Examiner, located at Evans Memorial Library, Aberdeen.

Sanborn Insurance Maps of Aberdeen, Mississippi (1885, 1890, 1894, 1899, 1905, 1910, 1918, and 1925), Microfilm at the Mississippi Department of Archives and History, Jackson, Mississippi.