



COVER

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Multiple Property Documentation Form

This form is for use in documenting multiple property groups relating to one or several historic contexts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900-a). Type all entries.

**A. Name of Multiple Property Listing**

Historic and Architectural Resources of Hardy, Arkansas

**B. Associated Historic Contexts**

Historic and Architectural Resources of Hardy, Arkansas, 1880-1949

**C. Geographical Data**

Town of Hardy, Sharp County, Arkansas

See continuation sheet

**D. Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this documentation form meets the National Register documentation standards and sets forth requirements for the listing of related properties consistent with the National Register criteria. This submission meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60 and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Planning and Evaluation.

*Carlton A. Sater*

Signature of certifying official

10-30-98  
Date

Arkansas Historic Preservation Program

State or Federal agency and bureau

I, hereby, certify that this multiple property documentation form has been approved by the National Register as a basis for evaluating related properties for listing in the National Register.

*Edson H. Beall*

Signature of the Keeper of the National Register

12/17/98  
Date

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From its founding in the 1880s, Hardy, Arkansas, experienced a unique and varied history. Beginning as a campsite for the railroad construction crew, and growing into the commercial center for northern Sharp County, Hardy's development has been linked to America's expanding rail system. Hardy's appeal, however, is larger than the railroad. Located in the scenic Spring River valley, visitors found Hardy inviting for the recreational and fishing opportunities the small community offered. Soon Hardy was hosting tourists from Memphis, Tennessee, as well as surrounding counties. As the spa craze spread across the nation in the early twentieth century, Hardy was primed to take advantage of the widely held belief that fresh air and water, particularly mineral water, held medicinal qualities that could heal any number of maladies and afflictions. Successive generations of adults and youths have retreated to Hardy and its surrounding resort destinations for rest and recreation. Hardy's well-preserved downtown area continues to attract visitors as an example of a by-gone era.

When construction of the Kansas City, Fort Scott & Memphis Railroad (later known as the St. Louis and San Francisco or "Frisco") began descending the Spring River valley in the early 1880's, there was no settlement at the present site of Hardy, only a few scattered farms. Upon reaching the area of present-day Hardy, railroad officials originally preferred two other sites. One townsite, to be named Afton, was upriver at Humphrey's Ford, and the other was downriver at Sugar Creek, to be called Baker. Neither of the landowners at these sites were willing to sell their property at the railroad's price, however, and the new town was established on land owned by Walker Clayton. In 1883, local residents proposed the name "Forty Islands," after a nearby creek, for the new post office. Apparently, federal officials thought the name too long and selected the name "Hardy" instead. James A. Hardy, Jr. was a twenty-five year old subcontractor in charge of preparing the railroad bed for the Kansas City, Fort Scott & Memphis Railroad. According to sources, a likely factor in the decision was a strong supporting letter from the primary contractor, James Hardy's boss. It seems Hardy had saved his boss's life in a fracas with a group of rowdy railroad workers. The government did have a precedent for their decision since local mail had been delivered to the railroad worker's camp in care of Hardy during the railroad construction.

The first plat of Hardy was laid out in two areas of fifteen blocks each. Six of the blocks were divided into seven lots each, mostly fifty feet by one hundred feet in size. Other blocks and lots became larger, further from Main Street. The streets were fifty feet wide, and the alleys were fifteen feet wide. All streets were named at this time. The area of Hardy remained fixed for many years at a little more than 600 acres until annexation occurred in the 1960's. Population during the first ten years before incorporation never exceeded fifty people, but with the construction of the courthouse, the population jumped to five hundred people, which is approximately the current population though it has varied considerably at times during the intervening years.

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The town of Evening Shade had been the county seat of Sharp County since 1868 when the county was created. In response to complaints from residents of northern Sharp County that travel to Evening Shade over unbridged streams and long distances was difficult and often impossible, the state legislature divided the county into northern and southern districts. Hardy was designated as the seat of the northern district court in 1891 with the southern district court remaining at Evening Shade. This arrangement continued until 1968 when, after a series of referendums, the two district seats were abolished and a new county seat was established in Ash Flat.

Hardy's courthouse was completed in 1894, the same year the town was incorporated. The building was constructed of quarried stone on the first two floors and the top floor was framed in pine lumber. The stone was quarried at Williams Creek (now Brown's Creek), near Ravenden, and hauled to Hardy over the new rail line. Ox team shipped the lumber from Melbourne, some forty miles away. In addition to housing the normal functions of the county district government, the structure also served as a public meeting house. Residents even held Saturday night movies in the courthouse during the twenties and early thirties. A few years after the courthouse's completion, a single-room jailhouse was added adjacent to its southeast corner. In 1969, the courthouse passed into private ownership and has been converted into a shop. Abandoned county documents, including WPA and ERA records dating from the 1930's, found in the structure were donated to the Arkansas State University Museum in Jonesboro, Arkansas. A sudden fire destroyed the courthouse in 1974. The remaining structure was remodeled into a shopping complex.

Although there was a gristmill and a cotton gin located on Rock Creek on the south side of Spring River as early as 1875, the first substantial businesses in Hardy were built in the 1890s and early 1900s. Most of early businessmen moved to Hardy from other parts of Sharp County because of the economic advantage afforded by the newly built railroad. Hardy soon became the principal distribution point for produce and lumber products in northern Sharp County. By 1920, Hardy supported various local businesses: three hotels, half a dozen grocery stores, several general mercantile stores, a private telephone company, a Ford dealership, two cafes, one bank, two drug stores, two blacksmith shops, two livery stables, one jewelry store, an ice plant, a feed store, a cotton gin, a livestock barn, the courthouse, and a few other businesses. Like most railroad towns, Hardy's Main Street runs parallel to the railway. It sits just one block north of the Spring River. In the 1920's, local businesses fronted Main Street for nearly two blocks without interruption. More than the business district; Main Street was also Hardy's cultural center where residents gathered to hear itinerant entertainers and political candidates. Located on the corner of Main and Spring Streets, the town water pump was a center of activity for fifty years before Hardy acquired a municipal water system.

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Hardy's downtown commercial district was designated as a Historic District and listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1995. The district, spanning the north bank of the Spring River from the railroad line to Main Street, is locally significant as the best example in Sharp County of a commercial district that served a small but active resort community during the heyday of the spa community era. The Hardy Downtown Historic District is composed of a total of forty-three buildings, twenty-four of which are considered contributing. The intact historic fabric of downtown Hardy includes party-wall storefront buildings, separate commercial structures of various types and vintages, and a small number of significant residential buildings that are included because of their role in the unique character of Hardy's historic commercial district. The historic buildings range from one to three stories in height. The vast majority of the buildings are of masonry construction, with brick and native stone being the materials of choice. A few wood-frame buildings survive; as do some historic formed concrete block structures.

Coinciding with the commercial growth of the town was the development of Hardy as a resort town by capitalizing on the recreational and fishing opportunities provided by the scenic Spring River valley. In 1912, Dr. George Buford erected a resort of ten "wigwam" cottages on Wahpeton Hill, 165 feet above and across the river from Hardy. Meaning "Home Among the Leaves" in the Native American tongue, the fields along the river below Wahpeton Hill are believed to be the site of the Native American Olympic games, where even warring tribes gathered to smoke the peace pipe and join in games of skill. Dr. Buford, a Memphis physician, and his wife fell in love with Hardy and the Spring River valley when they came through on the rail line in 1908. They returned the following year with their family to develop Wahpeton for tourists. This resort burned in 1920 and was replaced in 1933 by an Inn of native stone: the floors of the lobby, living room, and the outside terraces were made of flagstone. All the furniture except the beds was constructed of native oak. Wahpeton Inn consisted of 40 guestrooms, dining room, coffee shop, bowling alley, shuffleboard court, and a dance floor in an outdoor pavilion. A live orchestra from Batesville entertained guests of the Inn as they dined. In 1939, the Wahpeton Inn was gutted by fire, leaving only the stone walls remaining. It was never rebuilt.

During the 1920s, Hardy benefited from the development of four children's summer vacation camps. Kamp Kiwani (Girl Scouts), Kia Kima (Boy Scouts), Camp Miramichee (Y.W.C.A.), and St. Mary's in the Woods (for orphans and underprivileged children). Aimed at giving children relief from summer's heat and humidity, these camps offered a natural setting to successive generations of youths from Memphis and surrounding counties.

Rio Vista, located on the lower bluffs further upriver, was established as a summer resort in the early 1930s. A colony of summer cottages and rental cabins, Rio Vista overlooks one of the most beautiful views of the Spring River valley. It extends upstream from the new bridge to the confluence of the South Fork and Spring Rivers.

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Although these resorts attracted a number of people from surrounding towns and counties, the majority of the “summer people” hailed from Memphis, Tennessee. The “Frisco” railroad heavily advertised excursions to Hardy for rest and relaxation and promoted the ease of accessibility to Hardy provided by a direct rail line to and from Memphis. Local residents recalled that the arrival of the 2:53 afternoon train from Memphis was always a big occasion. The railroad depot located along Front Street, just north of the Spring River, became a bustling hub of activity. The depot was an institution in itself. Excitement entered Hardy with the coming and going of the trains. Friends, relatives, businessmen, and tourists all came by way of the train. Hardy residents regret the loss of the depot that was razed after rail service dwindled in the 1970’s.

A convenience and a blessing for the tourism trade, the Spring River has also wrought destruction upon the town of Hardy. In 1915, flood brought all manner of debris down the Spring River – trees, equipment and animals- demolishing two sections of the then twenty-four year old bridge. Local business was brought to a halt. Again in 1982, the raging Spring River flooded to the roof the town grocery store. The most recent devastation prompted most of the downtown businesses to move to a highland area.

Like other towns in Arkansas, Hardy’s growth stagnated during the Depression, although, with the assistance of Works Progress Administration, some improvements were made to the town’s infrastructure. A CCC camp was established three miles to the south. In addition to modernizing Hardy, the men enlivened the town on Saturday nights and several of the men married local girls. In 1934, a city water system was installed. A sewer system was added a little later, and livestock was no longer permitted in town. Also, many of the streets were paved during this period.

The large rock homes found throughout the town are one of Hardy’s distinguishing characteristics. Most of these homes were built between the late 1920s and the early 1940s as affluent town citizens replaced their earlier wood-frame houses. Three types of rock were utilized: native fieldstone, cut sandstone, and granite quarried in Batesville, Arkansas. Frequently these homes display distinguishing grapevine or beaded mortaring.

Hardy remained relatively unchanged through World War II and into the early 1950s when the expanding highway system exposed the area to people from neighboring states. Retirement communities were developed nearby, most notably Cherokee Village. Dedicated in 1955, Cherokee Village is located on the South Fork of the Spring River where three lakes have been created for the recreational use of villagers. The dream of John A. Cooper, Sr., grew into a Suburban Improvement District by 1975. Cherokee Village represents millions of dollars of investments from property owners retiring to the Spring River Valley.

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During the 1970s and especially after the flood of 1982, Hardy businesses began moving away from the town's historic center. Downtown Hardy retains its historic setting and has become a popular location for antique stores, craft shops, and gift nooks. Unique shopping opportunities, the historic setting, and the scenic riverfront have kept downtown Hardy an attractive tourist destination to the present.

In the summer of 1992, in an effort to preserve a part of Hardy's rapidly vanishing heritage, Kenneth King, local businessman, commissioned artists, Ernie Patton and Kermit Kroll, to paint a panorama of five long-gone landmarks on an outside brick wall. Some of the five scenes depicted are the Frisco Railroad Depot, an old gas station, and the Old Iron Bridge spanning the Spring River until the flood of 1982. The Mural stands approximately 80 feet long and 23 feet high.

The historic significance of Hardy's varied history is readily evident. Aptly named after a memorable railroad subcontractor, the railroad's legacy is still visible in downtown Hardy. The railroad ensured the town's early prosperity and the direct line between Memphis and Hardy shaped the community as a tourist destination. Laid out by the Railroad Company, Hardy was a booming trade center while the railroad dominated and acted as a county seat until road transportation was improved sufficiently to facilitate long distance travel. The hardships of the Depression left their mark on Hardy as CCC workers overhauled the town's infrastructure. Nestled in the scenic Spring River valley, Hardy continues to attract visitors to its historic downtown commercial district, varied resort locations, and retirement havens.

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F. Associated Property Types

I. Name of Property Type: Residential and commercial structures of Hardy, Arkansas

II. Description: All of the residential and commercial structures in this nomination were built between 1880 and 1949. Most are of stone construction and reflect the local building traditions that emphasize the use of locally available materials, particularly fieldstone. Stylistically, they include vernacular interpretations of such nationally popular styles as the Tudor Revival and Craftsman styles, though many are best classified as Plain Traditional in styling.

III. Significance: The significance of the commercial and residential structures included in this nomination derives chiefly from their importance as manifestations of the building traditions that prevailed in Hardy as it grew from the campsite for a railroad work crew to become the county seat of Sharp County and eventually a thriving resort community. The construction ethic represented shows a tradition of using locally available building materials, including the fieldstone that is so abundant in Hardy's portion of the Ozark Mountains, in constructing both residential and commercial buildings.

IV. Registration Requirements:

Historic and architectural resources of Hardy, Arkansas, must meet three basic requirements to be included in this multiple-property listing:

- 1) The buildings must still stand in their original locations
- 2) The buildings must still retain sufficient physical integrity to remain recognizable as reflections of the period in which they were built; subsequent alterations must not overwhelm the buildings' original design.
- 3) The buildings should reflect the building traditions of Hardy's construction craftsmen, a connection to the town's historic development, or both.

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**G. Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods**

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Discuss the methods used in developing the multiple property listing.

See continuation sheet

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**H. Major Bibliographical References**

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See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional documentation:

- State historic preservation office  
 Other State agency  
 Federal agency

- Local government  
 University  
 Other

Specify repository: \_\_\_\_\_

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**I. Form Prepared By**

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G. Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods:

In early 1997, Dr. Audrey Thompson, a Sharp County historian and then program manager of Main Street Hardy, began gathering information on the many rock-constructed buildings found throughout Hardy, Arkansas, with a goal of listing them on the National Register. It was felt that these properties were in danger of insensitive rehabilitation, deterioration, or abandonment and it was hoped that National Register recognition would increase the understanding and appreciation of these buildings. The AHPP and local preservationists could then encourage their continued preservation, protection, use, and adaptive re-use.

The project involved significant interaction and cooperation between local preservationists and the AHPP staff. Dr. Thompson prepared initial photographic and historic information on each of the buildings submitted, which then was reviewed by the National Register of Historic Places staff to determine which were eligible for National Register recognition. The National Register and Survey staff then traveled to Hardy to complete architectural resources form and photo documentation of the eligible structures, and worked with Dr. Thompson to complete the final nomination forms. This project is envisioned as a continuing collaboration between the AHPP, Dr. Thompson, Main Street Hardy and other Sharp County historians. Other Hardy resources will be amended to the context as they are identified and nominations are prepared.

The initial submissions under this context includes eleven buildings that were considered eligible for inclusion in the context, since they had not been moved, and retained sufficient integrity to reflect both the period in which they were built and the town's historic building traditions, as determined by the professional historians and architectural historians of the AHPP's Survey and National Register staffs. Integrity requirements were based on knowledge of existing properties and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards of Eligibility to the National Register of Historic Places. For each recorded property, locations were noted on USGS topographical and city maps; photographs, both black and white prints and color slides, were taken of exterior elevations and significant interior details. Computerized inventory forms, complete with plan view drawings, were completed; and research, utilizing primary, secondary and oral history sources, was conducted. Any information on research, events or issues not adequately covered in this study should be directed to the AHPP's special projects historian.

These properties represent significant physical reminders of the development of a colorful community nestled along the Spring River in Arkansas's Ozark Mountains, as well as the building traditions manifested through the use of locally available materials, particularly stone. By publicly recognizing the importance of these resources to the understanding and appreciation of Arkansas history through this project and the accompanying media campaign, the AHPP hopes to encourage the preservation, protection, continued use, and adaptive reuse of these properties.

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H. Major Bibliographical References

“A Short History of Hardy, Arkansas.” *The Jonesboro Sun*. July 7, 1995.

“A Weekend at Hardy is Good for What Ails You. Road Leads 158 Miles from Memphis into the Welcoming Arms of the Ozarks.” August 23, 1926. Arkansas State History Commission. Sharp County. Place File. WPA Writer’s Project.

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