

Walks through History
De Queen Commercial Historic District
Begin in front of Sevier County Courthouse at 115 N. Third Street
November 10, 2012
By: Rachel Silva



Intro

Hi, my name is Rachel Silva, and I work for the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program, which is a state agency of the Department of Arkansas Heritage. Welcome to the Walks through History tour of the De Queen Commercial Historic District! I'd like to thank Mayor Billy Ray McKelvy and Fonda Hawthorne with the City of De Queen as well as Karen Mills with the Sevier County Museum for their help with the tour.

The De Queen Commercial Historic District was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in January 2012 for its association with the commercial development of De Queen.

Brief History of De Queen

Sevier County was created by Arkansas's Territorial Legislature on October 17, 1828, and was named in honor of Ambrose Hundley Sevier, speaker of the Arkansas territorial House of Representatives and one of the state's first two U.S. senators. When Sevier County was created, it was much larger than it is today. It originally included parts of present-day Little River, Miller, Howard, and Polk counties. The first permanent county seat (1831) was located in the southern part of present-day Sevier County about one mile east of the Cossatot River. The site was called Paraclifta, which was named for a Choctaw Indian chief who intervened to resolve a dispute between some Indians and white men over a horse. In 1867 Little River County was formed, and Paraclifta was no longer centrally located (it was too close to Little River County), so in 1869 the county seat was moved to Lockesburg.

In 1896 the Kansas City, Pittsburg & Gulf Railroad (which became the Kansas City Southern in 1900) came through Sevier County near a small mining settlement called Hurrah City, connecting southwest Arkansas to larger markets in the Midwest and along the Gulf Coast. Area residents quickly relocated to the land along the railroad, creating a tent city. Arthur Stilwell, the president of the railroad, founded and named the new town in honor of Jan DeGoeijen, a Dutch coffee merchant who rescued the KC, P & G from financial ruin and helped Stilwell complete the railroad. "De Queen" was Stilwell's Americanized version of DeGoeijen. Stilwell's Missouri-based Arkansas Townsite Company surveyed and platted the town and sold lots. De Queen incorporated in 1897 and prospered due to the area's vast timber resources. On October 1, 1899, a fire devastated downtown De Queen, destroying 54 businesses. Only a handful of buildings were spared, none of which exist today. A brickyard was opened south of downtown in order to rebuild De Queen with more fire-resistant materials. By the early 20th century, Dierks Lumber and Coal Company employed thousands of people in southwest Arkansas and southeast Oklahoma—in 1904 the company had 13 million feet of lumber in its De Queen yard.

In addition to the Kansas City Southern Railroad, De Queen was also served by two short-line railroads--the De Queen & Eastern and the Texas, Oklahoma & Eastern. The De Queen & Eastern was chartered in 1900 by the Dierks family and linked to the Kansas City Southern at De Queen and extended to Lockesburg. In 1910 the Dierks Company incorporated the Texas, Oklahoma & Eastern Railroad starting with eight miles of track at Valliant, Oklahoma. In 1921 the TO&E was connected to the De Queen & Eastern at De Queen. [KCS roundhouse and shops were northeast of downtown (roundhouse built 1909), and the De Queen & Eastern shops were south of Stilwell Avenue on the east side of Little Bear Creek (some buildings are still extant).]

In 1905 the Sevier County seat was moved from Lockesburg to De Queen, where it remains today.

Sevier County Courthouse—

The Sevier County Courthouse was built in 1930 to replace the 1906 courthouse on this site. The courthouse was designed in the Neoclassical style by the Texarkana architectural firm of Witt, Seibert & Halsey. Neoclassical characteristics include a symmetrical façade (before the additions), projecting cornice with a dentil course, pilasters with cast-stone capitals and bases, an arched entry with a decorative bracket or keystone centered above the door, decorative rosette appliques, and a rusticated brick first floor. Originally, the rear wing of the courthouse was the jail (before 1930 the jail was located on 2nd Street across from the modern-day city hall). A rear addition was built in 1974, and another addition was built on the north side of the courthouse in 1975.

About 1910 a bandstand was constructed near the northeast corner of the courthouse lawn. It was present on the 1923 Sanborn map but gone by 1940.

South side of courthouse square—

Wilkerson's Funeral Home—The A. L. Tribble House was located on this site by 1904. It remained a private residence until ca. 1940, when it is listed as an undertaker. When was the current Wilkerson's Building constructed? It is a good example of the Spanish Revival style with textured stucco walls, rounded arch openings, and a red tile roof.

300 block of Stilwell Ave. going west to east—

Ray's Car Wash (built 1990s?)—site of the ca. 1900 De Queen Hotel, which was a 2-story, wood-frame building with a 2-story, wrap-around porch. The hotel was run by Mrs. E. A. Craig and had a good restaurant on the first floor. By 1940 two gas pumps were located at the corner of the building and served as a small filling station. The hotel was later called the Barr Hotel. When was this building demolished?

315 Stilwell—built in 1931 as the De Queen Fire Station. Originally housed the fire station and city hall. Has yellow brick façade with red brick accents, a raised parapet, and large arched openings on the front façade.

Bill's Dollar Store—built on site of smaller, one-story historic building. This building housed City Food Market in the 1960s, and the rock veneer was not on the building at that time.

309 Stilwell—built ca. 1920. Altered façade with paint and stucco. Housed an undertaker by 1940.

305 Stilwell—built ca. 1918. Was an implement warehouse in 1923. By 1927 it housed the post office, which remained there until the new post office was built in 1940-1941.

301-313 Stilwell (Thomas Building)—built ca. 1920, but after the building at 305 Stilwell (because the east wall of 305 Stilwell has painted advertisements on it, indicating that the wall was exposed; ads for Coca-Cola and the Overland Service

Station). In the 1920s, this was Robinson's The Woman's Store & Dry Goods, run by Mr. and Mrs. C. E. Robinson. A dentist office (and other professional offices) was upstairs. The building later housed Southwestern Gas & Electric Company (later SWEPCO), which explains the metal box reading "envelopes" and the metal payment slot reading "put payments here" on the building's front façade.

Point out some buildings in the 200 block of Stilwell—

Southwest Arkansas Furniture—current building constructed in 1970 on the site of the ca. 1910 2-story Elk Hotel. Southwest Arkansas Furniture (started off with a store in Nashville, AR) opened a store in De Queen in 1956 on the east side of the square. The business was run by Nathan G. Coulter and his son, Don Coulter, until 1993 when it was sold to Ray Blakely.

SW corner 2nd & Stilwell—early 20th century site of Haynes Hotel. Current building constructed about 1920 as an auto garage and filling station. Was this Hayes-Lamb Motor Company (sold Dodge)? Or another one?

SE corner 2nd & Stilwell—ca. 1935 English Revival-style filling station. Which one was this? By 1940, there were filling stations on all four corners at 2nd & Stilwell.

210-212 Stilwell—built ca. 1920 as an auto garage with a 35-car capacity. Home to George Motor Company (sold Chevrolet).

East side of courthouse square—

100 block of 3rd Street going south to north—

Vacant lot at the NE corner of 3rd & Stilwell—site of the 2-story Tobin Building and a 1-story building to the north. The Tobin Building was built in 1900 and housed the John L. Tobin Hardware Store, which sold hardware, furniture, and dry goods. In 1941 it was advertised as the oldest hardware store in southwest Arkansas (1898 to 1941, at least). In 1908 a telephone exchange was located in the upper

story of the building, and by 1923 the post office occupied the southern half of the first floor in the Tobin Building. These buildings were demolished about 10 years ago.

108 3rd—built ca. 1900 and housed Morgan Drug, run by Dr. Rufus Morgan (later called Model Drug?). Dr. Morgan built this building to replace his earlier building, which was destroyed in the 1899 fire. Has a mortar and pestle emblem in the parapet. Still retains its original cast-iron storefront columns, manufactured by the Twin City Foundry in Texarkana (many buildings in De Queen still have these) as well as the original cast-iron threshold (or kick-plate).

112 3rd—built ca. 1900. Was originally one building with two storefronts and looked very similar to the building at 108 3rd (Morgan Drug). This building had the same recessed diamonds on the upper façade but lacked the raised parapet. The façade has been re-bricked. In its early years, the building housed a racket store, hardware store, dry goods, drug store, and restaurant. In the 1950s, this was Southwest Arkansas Furniture.

114 3rd—built ca. 1900 but façade has been altered considerably (originally had simple brick corbelling at the cornice). Housed a billiard room and bowling alley in its early history. In the 1940s, this was Palace Drug, and the pharmacist was Mr. Schull. It later became Palace Men's Store.

116 3rd (Stage)—built ca. 1900. Façade has been altered with stucco. Housed clothing, grocery, hardware, furniture, pool hall, and a tailor in its early years. Hayes Hardware started out here in the early 20th century before moving to its location on the north side of the courthouse square in 1908. This building was later Waltrip's Dry Goods and then the Ben Franklin 5 & 10.

120 3rd—built ca. 1900 and historic façade is obscured by board-and-batten veneer. Housed Thompson & Huskins Drug Store and later Huskins Drug.

122 3rd (De Queen Abstract Company)—built ca. 1900 and looked like the bank building on the corner to the north, but original brick façade has been covered with concrete veneer. Was historically Garrison & Stewart's Abstract Company, and has been De Queen Abstract Company since at least 1947.

South side of 200 block of De Queen Avenue going west to east—

Bank of De Queen (221 De Queen Ave.)—built ca. 1900. Good example of early 20th century commercial style with brick corbelling and a chamfered entrance with Classical Revival details like the arched window and door openings and keystones. The storefronts facing De Queen housed various offices and a barber shop.

Cross streets to stand on the northeast corner of De Queen Ave. & 3rd Street.

219 De Queen (behind Bank of De Queen)—built ca. 1900. Nice brick detailing at cornice and above second story windows. Housed a jewelry store and a barber in the early years. Notice the "DeQueen Bee" ghost sign painted above the second story windows. The newspaper was evidently located here before it moved to its current location (maybe for a short time between the 1899 fire and the construction of the current building ca. 1905).

217 De Queen—built ca. 1900. Back of building is fieldstone, but the front has a concrete aggregate veneer. This building has housed many things over the years, including a drug store, bank, restaurant, and a dry cleaning and pressing shop. It was First Federal Bank in the recent past, and the night deposit box is still visible on the front façade.

215 De Queen—built ca. 1900 and originally had 2 storefronts. Was historically the De Queen Pool Hall and Saloon. Later housed a barber shop and cigar store. In recent memory, it was Thomas Jewelry and the Andrew Jackson Shoe Shop (later Clark Shoe Shop).

211 De Queen (photography studio)—built ca. 1905. In 1908 there were four saloons from here to 2nd Street, and this building housed one of them. It was later the Palace Grocery Store and Newberry Grocery. Before the building was repainted in 2011, you could read a faint sign above the transom windows that said “Groceries.” This building has its original cast-iron storefront columns, which were manufactured by Twin City Foundry in Texarkana.

209 De Queen—built ca. 1905. Housed a saloon and a pool hall. Rehabbed in 2011 as well. Also has cast-iron storefront columns. Housed Mullins Department Store.

Enclosed alley—there was a narrow building here that housed Gillespie’s Auto Supply and later a music store. The historic building is no longer extant, and the current enclosed walkway is new.

205 De Queen (Harris Drug Store since 1963)—built ca. 1905. Originally a brick building with three storefronts that spanned the space between the two-story building and 209 De Queen. This building has been altered with the application of stucco. It housed a bakery and a meat market in the 1910s and was later Phillips 5 & 10.

201-203 De Queen (Lofton Family Clinic and Wellness Center)—built ca. 1915. Housed Chambers & Mullins Grocery and Dry Goods, run by H. G. Chambers and Charles G. Mullins. Later Heasley Brothers Grocery. Lower part of façade has been altered and upper story windows are covered with sheet metal, but it still retains most of its original exterior materials.

South side of 100 block of De Queen Ave. going west to east—

Vacant lot at SE corner De Queen & 2nd—site of a 2-story building constructed about 1920 that housed First State Bank and Dr. Kitchens’ Hospital (later a Western Union office here, too). You can still see part of the rusticated brick pilaster and a piece of terra cotta brick detailing attached to the other building. By 1940, one storefront was a hatchery. The building burned in the 1980s.

2-story red brick in middle of block—I think this and the one-story building to the west of it were constructed about 1940 to house a bottling works and warehouse.

Walk down across from the southeast corner of De Queen and 1st streets—the 2-story red brick building dates from about 1920 and was a rooming house, catering to train passengers. De Queen’s Kansas City Southern Depot was built about 1910 and was located in between Port Arthur and the KCS railroad tracks and spanned almost the entire block between De Queen and Stilwell avenues. Several other small hotels were located in this block, including the Acme Hotel, Arlington Hotel, Commercial Hotel, Nickolson Hotel, Luton Hotel (later Hayes Hotel and Hotel Dee Swift). The KCS offered passenger service until November 3, 1969. The KCS Depot was damaged by fire in the late 1970s or early 1980s and was demolished.

North side of 100 block of De Queen Ave. going east to west—

Cultural Awareness Center— the former site of the DeHorse Hotel, which influenced Arthur Stilwell to bring the railroad through present-day De Queen. The DeHorse Hotel started out in George McClendon’s 1818 farmhouse. Mrs. McClendon gave food and shelter to families that settled near the railroad tracks in the tent city before this became De Queen. The McClendons later decided to go into business as a hotel. They built a larger hotel near present-day 2nd & De Queen, which was then run by a Mrs. Wright. Dr. C. J. Holloway had an office in the DeHorse Hotel. The hotel burned in the fire of 1899.

J. E. Hendricks Grocery—built ca. 1925. Hendricks Grocery also sold bulk flour and feed and had rooms for rent upstairs. See the ghost signs reading “J. E. Hendricks” and “Rooms.” There were three businesses east of Ennis Plumbing (old Hendricks Grocery)—Mac’s Barber Shop, De Queen Recreation Center, and Doris’s Hair Fashions. These burned February 1991.

North side of 200 block of De Queen Ave. going east to west—

Shur-copi buildings—constructed about 1915. Recessed brick panels and brick dentil molding at the cornice. Both storefronts still retain their original cast-iron columns from Twin City Foundry & Manufacturing in Texarkana. Housed a variety of things, including an undertaker, bus depot, tavern, grocery, Gary's Fabric, and Knight's Dry Goods.

Red brick building with red sheet metal—built about 1920 as a car dealership (was this the Lamb Dodge dealership?).

Red sheet metal—site of the Sevier Theater. The Grand Theater opened in 1917 and showed the first "talkies" (or talking pictures) in De Queen in 1930. The Grand became the Queen Theater in 1939. Fire damage to the Queen Theater caused owner K. Lee Williams to build a new theater, designed to be the biggest and the best—the Sevier Theater. The Art Deco-style Sevier was built on a previously vacant lot in the 200 block of De Queen Ave. in 1945-1946. It could seat 450 people, and it had air conditioning, carpeted aisles, and new projection equipment. After the Sevier opened, the Grand was used to show westerns. The Sevier Theater burned in the 1980s.

White stucco building—built about 1905 and housed a general store. Has been altered with stucco. In the mid-20th century, this was Rephan's Department Store.

Iglesia El Centro Cristiano—built about 1905 and has very nice brick detailing and original cast-iron storefront columns. Housed dry goods, general store, and a tin shop. In the 1960s, this was Brookes Hardware.

My Best Friend's Closet—built about 1920 and housed the Grand Theater until the 1960s. Was later Waltrip's Dry Goods.

Don's E-Z Pay—two brick buildings constructed ca. 1900. The corner building housed Brookes Drug from the 1950s to the 1980s (prior to this location, Brookes Drug was at 211 De Queen Avenue). Bishop Brookes, Sr., was born in 1883 and graduated from the University of Texas in 1909 as a pharmacist. His brother, F. M.

Brookes, came to De Queen from Horatio in 1902 and purchased the City Drug Store. Upon graduation, Bishop Brookes purchased City Drug from his brother. The name was changed to Brookes Drug in 1923. Bishop Brookes died in 1943, and the drug store was later operated by his son, Bishop Brookes, Jr. His other son, Allen Word Brookes ran Brookes Hardware in De Queen. The eastern portion of Don's E-Z Pay was a pool hall and saloon.

North side of the courthouse square—

300 block of De Queen going east to west—

First National Bank of De Queen (300 De Queen)—First National Bank started out as Citizen's Bank. The wood-frame Citizen's Bank was destroyed in the 1899 fire, and a new 1-story brick building was constructed in 1899-1900 to replace it. Supposedly, the first brick ever laid in De Queen was put in the wall of Citizen's Bank on November 27, 1899, at 1:00 p.m. It became First National Bank in 1901. The bank remodeled by adding a second story to the building about 1910, and by 1914 a telephone exchange was located on the upper level (which remained there until at least the 1950s). First National Bank was the only bank in De Queen to survive the Great Depression. About 1955 the bank building was once again remodeled with stucco and Art Deco-style details. Notice the "First National Bank" in the panel above the door.

304 De Queen—built ca. 1900. Brick corbelling, recessed panels with decorative vents, cast-iron storefront columns. Housed Greenwald's dry goods and grocery store. By 1947 housed Purden's?

306 De Queen—built ca. 1900. Same styling as 304. In the early 20th century, this was a saddlery store called Burson the Buggy Man. By 1947 housed Lewis Grocery?

308 De Queen (barber shop)—built ca. 1900. Has decorative pressed metal façade, which looks like it could have been produced by the Mesker Bros. Iron

Works. Talk about Mesker. Building still has two cast-concrete steps with the names of original businesses at the entrance—"Post Office" and "Towson and McKeon Real Estate."

310 De Queen—built ca. 1915. Has nice brick detailing with herringbone and basket bond patterns. Housed a drug store for many years. Which one?

312 De Queen—built ca. 1900 as a continuation of the arched parapet design seen at 314 De Queen, but it has been altered with a new brick façade and a hipped roof. Sanborn maps show this to have been a hardware and furniture store in the early 20th century and an auto repair and sales store by 1923. By 1940 it was a dry cleaning business. May have been McKeever Radio Shop in the late 40s. Locals say this was City Drug Store, but I'm not sure if it was here or in the building at 310 De Queen.

314 De Queen (Hayes Hardware Store; NR-listed 12/3/1980)—built in 1900 and is a good example of early 20th century commercial-style architecture with rounded arch parapets, recessed panels, ocular vents, transom windows, and cast-iron columns and threshold (from Twin City Foundry in Texarkana). This building was constructed by the Dierks Lumber Company to house the Big Store Commissary, where employees could spend company scrip. By 1908 it housed Hayes Hardware, which occupied the building until the 1980s.

318 De Queen—built ca. 1910. Housed a harness and implement store, and by 1923 it had a Lodge Hall upstairs. By 1940 this was the Gem Theater.

322 De Queen—built in 1920 (building's parapet used to read "Seibert 1920"). By the 1940s, it housed Craig Dollarhide (professional office?) and Edward's 5 & 10. It was later the Firestone Store, run by Craig and Donaldson. The draft office was also located upstairs in this building (was this during WWII or Vietnam?).

324 De Queen—built ca. 1920 and has a similar appearance to 322. In the 1940s, it was George B. Stiers & Son, Farms, Ranches and City Property for Sale (real estate). Later the Hitchin' Post Restaurant. Apartments were located upstairs.

De Queen Bee Building—[Although local historians have said this building was constructed in 1901 and a second story added in 1908 for an opera house, I disagree because it does not appear on the 1904 Sanborn map at all. It first appears in 1908 as a 2-story building. The De Queen Bee may have indeed built a 1-story building in 1901, but it wasn't on this site.] Built in 1905 to house the De Queen Bee newspaper and an opera house upstairs. The De Queen Bee was established in 1897. Walter Boyd brought his printing supplies from Horatio to the new town of De Queen and set up shop with J. W. Bishop. They sold the paper to Cannon & Graves shortly before the 1899 fire. The opera house showed plays and silent movies at first. By 1914 it is labeled as “motion pictures” upstairs instead of opera house. And in 1923 and 1940, the Sanborn map labels the space as an auditorium. In 1936 the Sweet Home Masonic Lodge leased the top floor of the De Queen Bee Building for use as a lodge hall. 1952 photos show the building's original brick façade, so it was stuccoed sometime after that.

West side of courthouse square—

Although there have been a few small (likely wood-frame) buildings on the west side of the square over the years, nothing stuck around for too long. A 1952 photograph shows nothing on this side of the square except the post office.

De Queen Post Office—built in 1940-1941. It was designed by Louis A. Simon, supervising architect for the U.S. Treasury Department. The building originally had a flat roof, but other than the alteration of the roof (in the 1990s), it is very much the same as it was originally. It is buff brick with cast-stone details and features decorative iron grillework above the front entrance with an eagle emblem. The post office also contains a Section Art mural depicting native wildlife. Post office murals were done throughout the country by the U.S. Treasury Department's Section on Fine Arts, which put artists to work during the Depression and

afterward. The De Queen Post Office mural was done in 1943 by Polish-born artist Henry Simon (1901-1995) and titled "Wildlife Conservation in Arkansas."

Simon was commissioned \$750 to create the mural. His initial sketch comprised a logging scene, however, this design was discarded when the town expressed concern that Simon was focusing on only one of the area's many industries. Instead of attempting to incorporate all of the local industries, Simon chose to compose a scene depicting the local wildlife and wildlife conservation.

In the foreground of the mural are quail, wild turkey, squirrel, raccoon, blue heron, and deer. In the center are two men restocking a local stream with fish. In the back, left of center, stands a solitary stag. The lumbering industry is addressed via the logs dotting the far banks of the river and the fire lookout in the extreme background.

Thank you for coming! Questions?