

**Walks through History  
Downtown Newport  
Begin at the First United Methodist Church,  
217 Laurel Street, Newport  
March 12, 2016  
By Rachel Silva**



## **Intro**

Good morning, my name is Rachel Silva, and I work for the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program. Thank you for coming, and welcome to the “Walks through History” tour of Downtown Newport. Before we get started, I’d like to thank the Jackson County Historical Society for co-sponsoring the tour, and I’d especially like to recognize Charlotte Plegge, Phil McDonald, Betsy Watson, Thompson Murray, Mary Hohn, Phyllis Holmes, Pam Decker, Julie Allen, and Mayor David Stewart for their help with the tour.

This tour is worth 2 hours of HSW continuing education credit through the American Institute of Architects. Please see me after the tour if you’re interested.

Newport is home to 10 properties listed in the National Register of Historic Places. We will see five of those today on our walking tour, as well as several other important buildings and sites. We will go inside five buildings during the tour—First United Methodist Church, St. Paul’s Episcopal Church, First Presbyterian Church, First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), and the old Iron Mountain (later Missouri Pacific) Railroad Depot.

## **Brief History of Newport**

Jackson County was created on November 5, 1829, by Arkansas's Territorial Legislature from part of Independence County. The new county was named in honor of Andrew Jackson, who was then president of the United States (1829-1837). Located along a bend in the White River, Newport developed as an important river crossing but was not a population center until the dawn of the railroad era. The settlement grew after 1873, when the Cairo & Fulton Railroad was completed through Newport. Newport incorporated as a town in 1875. In 1891 the residents of Jackson County voted to move the county seat from Jacksonport to Newport, making Newport the county's fifth seat of government after Litchfield, Elizabeth, Augusta (now the Woodruff County seat), and Jacksonport.

Historically, Newport's economy relied on the timber, cotton, and freshwater pearl/mussel shell industries. The timber industry was huge in Jackson County, as vast stands of virgin hardwood timber were cleared out of the river bottoms. In fact, the original town of Newport was laid out along the railroad tracks, and streets running northwest to southeast (perpendicular to the tracks) were named after types of trees, including Plum, Beech, Laurel, Hazel, Walnut, Elm, Pine, and Ash. Streets running northeast to southwest (parallel to the tracks) were numbered.

In the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, the area northwest of the railroad tracks along the White River was occupied by numerous lumber mills, stave mills, cotton compresses, cotton oil mills, and button factories (that processed the freshwater mussel shells). By 1920, Jackson County was one of the 20 wealthiest counties in the United States. Newport continued to prosper in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. During World War II, the Newport Army Airfield was built northeast of downtown and served as a training facility from 1942 to 1946. The site was later leased to the city and became the Newport Industrial Park, helping to diversify the county's economy. In the 1940s and '50s, honky-tonks and clubs opened near Newport

along Hwy. 67 and hosted rockabilly musicians, many of whom recorded at Sun Records in Memphis.

Beginning in the 1960s, Newport expanded to the east. The Village Mall shopping center opened in 1972, drawing business away from downtown merchants. This phenomenon continued, contributing to the decline of the city's historic commercial core. In the past 20 years, downtown Newport lost a lot of its historic fabric, but there are still buildings worthy of preservation. And we'll talk about them today.

### **Individual Properties:**

First United Methodist Church, 217 Laurel (Rev. Thompson Murray and Charlotte Plegge)—

The congregation of the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, was organized in 1874 at Newport. A wood-frame church was built in 1878 near the southeast corner of 2<sup>nd</sup> and Laurel. The second church, which was made out of brick, was built in 1896 on the same site as the original building. The second church was destroyed by fire on August 28, 1909. The cornerstone for the third and current church was laid in 1910 at the southwest corner of 3<sup>rd</sup> and Laurel. The building was dedicated on April 28, 1912, and cost about \$20,000 (equal to almost \$500,000 today). The Neoclassical-style church was designed by Little Rock architect and Newport native George M. Bonnell and featured a symmetrical façade, triangular pediment supported by four Doric columns, dentil molding at the cornice, and a large, iron-clad dome centered on the sanctuary roof.

In 1949 the sanctuary was significantly remodeled. The orientation of the pulpit, chancel, and organ was changed from the southwest corner to the back wall. The pews are angled because they were originally built to face the corner in semi-circular rows. The dome was also removed during the 1949 remodel. I've been told that the dome was disassembled and the pieces stored in the crawlspace under the church.

The fellowship hall was completed in 1948 and was remodeled in 2005. The Methodist parsonage used to be just west of the sanctuary. In 1963-64 the education building was constructed on the former parsonage site. The education building was designed by well-known Little Rock architect and watercolorist Bruce R. Anderson, who interestingly, was also born at Newport. [Anderson and H. Ray Burks designed War Memorial Stadium (LR), and Anderson did many buildings at UCA, Harding University, and OBU.]

### **Laurel Street, going toward Second—**

Methodist Church parking lot at southeast corner Laurel & 2<sup>nd</sup>—

This corner was the site of the first (1878) and second (1896) Methodist churches. About 1915 a large building was constructed on this site and housed an auto garage with a 50-car capacity. It later housed the office of the *Newport Independent* as well as Gregory Equipment (sold International Harvester and later became Gregory-Beaumont and McDonald-Beaumont).

New Post Office at northwest corner Laurel & 2<sup>nd</sup>—

About 1905, a two-story Elks Club was built at the northwest corner of Laurel & 2<sup>nd</sup>. In 1922 the building became the Newport Sanitarium and was later called the Newport Hospital and Clinic. Although the building was damaged by a gas explosion in the late 1960s, it continued to serve as a hospital until 1982, when a new hospital was completed at 2000 McLain Street. The old hospital building was later destroyed by fire.

The Home Ice Company was located at the southwest corner of 2<sup>nd</sup> and Beech behind the old hospital. When Phil McDonald was a boy, the ice company still delivered ice in a horse-drawn wagon. He used to roller skate behind the wagon, holding on to the back of it. He and his friends ate the small shreds of ice.

The portion of the block along Front Street (from Beech to Laurel) was full of commercial buildings facing Front. The new post office was completed in 2001.

Southwest corner of Laurel & 2<sup>nd</sup> (Professional Building across from the new post office)—

Two buildings were on this site. The building closest to the corner of 2<sup>nd</sup> & Laurel was Hutson Motors (Ford dealership), and the building closest to the alley was a warehouse for the Wolff-Goldman Mercantile Company. The Wolff-Goldman building later became Thaxton's New Furniture Store, which also sold coffins. Ottie Dillinger built coffins for Thaxton's. Thaxton's Furniture later expanded into the old Hutson Ford Dealership, and Ottie Dillinger continued to run their undertaking business, which he eventually took over and opened Dillinger Funeral Home on the site.

#### **Front Street from Laurel to Hazel (300 block)—**

300-302 Front (yellow with white awning)—

1906-07 Newport City Directory: Bailey Mercantile; physician Elbert L. Watson upstairs.

Mid-20<sup>th</sup> century—Hurley Grocery and later, Firestone Store

Vacant lot at 304 Front—

1906-07: W. A. Joyce, druggist.

Mid-20<sup>th</sup> century—Lindsey's Tire and Supply

306 Front (Earl Building, 1910; Brick Terrace Gardens)—

The Earl Building was constructed in 1910 by prominent Newport businessman Napoleon Bonaparte Wishon. It was named in honor of Wishon's only son, Earl, who later died in the flu epidemic of 1918. It is a good example of early 20<sup>th</sup> century commercial-style architecture with cast-stone lintels and sills on the second story windows and brick corbelling at the cornice.

1906-07 (previous building on site): Charles Meyer, dry goods/clothing and Bailey Bros. Saloon; upstairs—H. E. Dowell, dentist; Alfred Kellett, Henry O. Walker, Crawford West, doctors.

In 1919 this building housed a dry goods store and hospital upstairs, so some of these occupants may have moved into the 1910 Earl Building after its completion. In more recent memory, this was Stewart Bros. Hardware.

308 Front (Bridget's Café)—

This used to be a two-story building. You can see part of the second story windows.

This address is not listed in the 1906-07 directory.

In more recent memory, it was Wilma's Fabric Store, which later moved down the block and became Tillie's Fabric Store. After Wilma's moved out of this building, it became OTASCO (Oklahoma Tire & Supply Company). It was the Depot Diner before it became Bridget's Café.

310 Front (white)—

Not listed in 1906-07 directory.

More recently, it was Charley's Army Navy Store.

312-314 Front (Best Building)—

1906-07 directory:

312: W. E. Bevens Drug Store (physicians Henry Owen & Henry M. Owen in back of drug store) and Richmond Wallace, jeweler

314: William Mosby, jeweler

Upstairs: physicians John M. Jones and Oscar E. Jones

Mid-20<sup>th</sup> century—

312: Bevens Drug; later, Shannon-Ritter Drug

314: Southern Auto; later, shoe store and Tillie's Fabric

Upstairs: doctors' offices and photographer

320 Front (Merchants & Planters Bank Solutions Center)—

This used to be two big historic buildings (316-318 Front and 320-322 Front).

The building on the left at 316-318 Front was built in 1891 and housed the hardware department of the Wolff-Goldman Mercantile Company.

The building at 320-322 Front was designed by Little Rock architect Charles L. Thompson in 1909 and served as the dry goods and clothing side of Wolff-Goldman.

Mid-20<sup>th</sup> century—

316-318: J. C. Penney; later, Van-Atkins Department Store.

320-322: Ben Franklin 5 & 10. This location was operated by Sam Walton from 1945 to 1950, when he moved to Bentonville and opened Walton's 5 & 10 and later, Wal-Mart.

### **Front Street from Hazel to Walnut (400 block)—**

Stone wall and fountain—

The Wishon Building occupied this corner until about 2009, when it was demolished. The two-story Wishon Building was constructed ca. 1883 by N. B. Wishon and housed a variety of businesses downstairs and professional offices upstairs. Most people remember it as the Sterling Store. The stone used to make the low rock walls came from the 1906 Jackson County Jail, which sat next to the courthouse and was demolished in 2007. In 2014 the Wishon Building's old cistern was converted into a fountain.

The remainder of the block, except for the Watson Building at 420-422 Front, was demolished beginning in May 2015 to make way for an amphitheater and park.

Just for fun, I thought some of you would like to know which businesses occupied this block in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, ca. 1950.

400-406 Front (2-story): Wishon Building—Sterling Store (400-404) & Spencer's Exclusive Ladies' Ready-to-wear

408 Front (1-story): Wright's Hardware (Frank Wright)

410 Front (1-story): Salenfriend's (clothing)

412 Front (2-story): Hall and Monday Shoe Store

414 Front (1-story): Busy Department Store

416 Front (1-story): P. K. Holmes Men's Store

418 Front (1-story): Star Clothing (Fine Men's Store)

420-422 Front (2-story): Watson Building—The Famous Cash Store (420) & Headlee's Drug (later, Brown's Drug) at 422.

### **Walk southeast on Hazel Street toward 2<sup>nd</sup>**

#### **Hazel Street (100 block):**

Northeast side of street (currently Merchants & Planters Bank)—

The area now occupied by the new Merchants & Planters Bank Building and parking lot was the site of the first Hazel Hotel. There was a Hazel Hotel on this site by the early 1890s, but it burned before 1900 and was rebuilt as the New Hazel Hotel. By 1919, it was called the Claridge Hotel. The Hazel Hotel had moved all of its operations to the 3-story Hazel Hotel annex, located caddy-corner across the intersection of 2<sup>nd</sup> & Hazel (current site of Chamber of Commerce).

The New Hazel Hotel Building/Claridge Hotel may have been destroyed during the **1926 Fire**, which started in a downtown lumber yard on March 1, 1926. Because there was a strong wind, the fire destroyed a 30-block area and burned for a week.

By 1940, the northwest corner of 2<sup>nd</sup> & Hazel was occupied by Milliken Motors (Dodge dealership) and later, Merchants & Planters Bank (they had a ca. 1960s building on the site before the current building).

The area that is now the M & P Bank parking lot was occupied by commercial buildings that housed Hinkle-McDonald Insurance and the White River Production Credit Association (farm financing).

Southwest side of street (gravel lot and old filling station)—

The 1897 Jackson County Bank Building ("Savings" was dropped from the name in 1893) was located right next to the alley behind the Wishon Building. In 1903 the bank obtained a national charter and became the First National Bank of Newport. First National remained in this building until 1946, when it moved to 500-502



Front Street. The old bank building on Hazel later housed the office of Dr. Troy Gray, dentist. The building was demolished sometime after 1996.

115-119 Hazel—A one-story brick building was located between the bank and the old filling station at the corner. It housed the Eva Graham Shop (Ladies' clothing) and the Beauty Lounge, and the whole building later became Van Dyke's Furniture.

123 Hazel (restaurant/filling station)—

This corner was the site of the two-story, Second Empire-style Newport Opera House, which was built in 1891 at the cost of \$15,000 and had a seating capacity of 530 plus two private boxes. The opera house was designed and built by local architect George H. Johnston. It was destroyed by fire in 1921.

The current building was constructed ca. 1925 for Midland Services and was designed by the Little Rock architectural firm of Sanders & Ginocchio. It housed the Midway Sandwich Shop in the small front portion at the corner and had an open drive-thru in the middle going from Hazel to Second Street. The back portion was a filling station and car wash.

## **Cross Second**

### **Hazel Street (200 block):**

Old Post Office (202 Hazel)—

The Colonial Revival-style U.S. Post Office was designed in 1914 by Oscar Wenderoth, supervising architect for the U.S. Treasury Department. The building was completed in 1915. It served as a post office until the completion of the current post office in 2001. The building is now privately owned.

Newport Area Chamber of Commerce (201 Hazel)—

The Hazel Hotel on this corner was destroyed by fire in the early 1960s. It was replaced by this building, which was constructed in 1966 to serve as a new location for the First National Bank of Newport, previously at 500-502 Front

Street. The bank was designed by Little Rock architect Edward F. Brueggeman and is an excellent example of Mid-century Modern architecture in Newport. More specifically, the building may be characterized as New Formalist, which is a modernist interpretation of Classical architecture. First National Bank later became First State Bank of Newport and later, Union Planters Bank. The building now houses the Chamber of Commerce and the Rock-n-roll Highway Museum.

Vacant lot next to old post office—

Site of the 2-story Brosh Building, which housed the telephone exchange.

Parking lot southeast of old First National Bank Building (site of Dr. Gray's Hospital)—

This is the site of Dr. Gray's Hospital, which was built in 1939 by Dr. C. R. Gray. In the mid-to-late 1950s, Dr. Gray's Hospital was acquired by Harris Hospital (located across Hazel Street) and became the Harris Hospital Annex. Many babies were born at the Harris Hospital Annex.

There was a Mobil service station called Bob and Tom's next door to the Harris Hospital Annex along Third Street.

Old Harris Hospital at 3<sup>rd</sup> & Hazel (now the Jackson County Department of Human Services)—

The Harris Hospital was built in 1947. It was founded by Drs. M. L. and Haymond Harris. In the 1950s, Harris Hospital acquired Dr. Gray's Hospital across the street and turned it into the Harris Hospital Annex. Harris Hospital continued to operate in these buildings until 1965, when a new hospital was completed at 1205 McLain.

## **Cross Third Street**

### **Third & Hazel—**

Corner of 3<sup>rd</sup> & Hazel (across Hazel from the Episcopal Church)—This was the site of the First Baptist Church before 1946, when it moved to its current location. By

the early 1950s, this corner was occupied by Buffington Motors (Pontiac-Cadillac dealership).

St. Paul's Episcopal Church (Phil McDonald and Betsy Watson)—

The congregation of St. Paul's Episcopal Church was organized in 1879 at Newport. A wood-frame church was constructed in 1881 on the present site of the Parish House. Rev. George B. Norton became rector in 1902, and there was immediately a movement to erect a new church. Kansas City architect Arthur H. James was hired to design the second church, which was constructed with Arkansas limestone in the Gothic Revival style. Ground was broken for the new church on August 16, 1904, and the cornerstone was laid on September 21 of that year. The first service was held in the sanctuary on Easter Sunday, 1905.

The Jackson County Library traces its origin to the undercroft of St. Paul's Episcopal Church, where it was started in 1930 at the urging of Mildred Wilmans Dorsey. The library outgrew the space in 1939 and moved to a room in the courthouse. More on that later.

The church was damaged by fire on August 25, 1952, and was repaired.

The old rectory was located in the current garden area. The door at the back of the sanctuary led to a covered walkway to the rectory. The Parish House was built in 1950. When Third Street (Hwy. 67) was widened in 1968, the church steps were reoriented to face the garden area instead of Third Street.

### **Walk along Third Street to parking lot across from library/courthouse**

Jackson County Library—

I already told you that the library began in 1930 in the undercroft of St. Paul's Episcopal Church. The library outgrew this space and in 1939 moved to a room in the courthouse. The current library building was completed in 1950, but it has been expanded and remodeled several times, most recently in 1990.

Site of Jackson County Jail (between library and courthouse, facing Third Street)—  
The two-story Romanesque Revival-style Jackson County Jail was built in 1906 using rough-cut stone (you saw some of the stone on the site of the Wishon Building at Front & Hazel). The building included living quarters for the sheriff on the first floor. The jail was demolished in 2007.

Jackson County Courthouse (National Register-listed 11/18/1976; County Judge Jeff Phillips)—

After the residents of Jackson County voted to move the county seat from Jacksonport to Newport (1891), Lazar Hirsch was appointed commissioner of public buildings and tasked with making plans for a new courthouse at Newport. Hirsch modeled the design for the new Jackson County Courthouse after the Ouachita County Courthouse at Camden, which had been completed a few years earlier. Little Rock architect Thomas Harding, Sr., who designed the Ouachita County Courthouse, reviewed the plans for the Jackson County Courthouse as well. Hirsch was probably also assisted by local architect George H. Johnston, who designed and built the Newport Opera House.

The cornerstone for the courthouse was laid on May 28, 1892. County offices and records were moved from Jacksonport to Newport in December 1892. The courthouse was built at the cost of \$44,196. The central tower on the front façade was damaged during a windstorm in 1902, and Little Rock architect Charles L. Thompson was hired to repair and remodel the courthouse and tower. The courthouse is Romanesque Revival in style with multiple towers of different height and shape, as well as the arched opening at the Third Street entrance, which is supported by squat columns with cushion capitals. A statue of “Lady Justice” stands atop the central tower.

In 1939 the Federal Emergency Administration of Public Works provided funding for an addition to the Jackson County Courthouse. The Little Rock architectural firm of McAninch and Anderson was hired for the job, which included a new entrance on the building’s southwest (Main Street) side and a 3-story addition on the rear (enlarged courtroom and added offices downstairs).

The Jackson County Courthouse has benefited from several of the AHPP's County Courthouse Restoration Grants; the most recent one was awarded in 2011 (new roof).

522 Third (modern building across from courthouse)—

This was built to house the Newport Federal Savings & Loan Association, probably in the mid-to-late 1950s.

### **Walk down alley between Walnut & Main toward First Presbyterian Church.**

#### **4<sup>th</sup> & Main:**

First Presbyterian Church (National Register-listed 12/22/1982; Mary Hohn and Phyllis Holmes)—

The congregation of the First Presbyterian Church was organized on January 29, 1882, at Newport. A wood-frame church was constructed in 1892 at the northwest corner of 4<sup>th</sup> and Main streets. The wood church served its purpose until 1923, when it was demolished to make way for the present brick structure, which was designed by Little Rock architects Theo Sanders and Frank Ginocchio, who later worked with Charles Thompson.

While the church's primary façade is Classically inspired, featuring an arch above the front entrance supported by engaged Tuscan columns, other elements of the building are distinctly Craftsman, like the exposed rafter tails (somewhat hidden by gutters), decorative brackets in the front gable end, and the stucco panels between the windows in the rear education wing.

The congregation struggled to pay the mortgage on the new church, especially during the Great Depression. The building was finally paid off on October 1, 1943, and was officially dedicated (20 years after it was built).

The Presbyterian Church received a Historic Preservation Restoration Grant from the AHPP in 2007 to install protective storm windows over the stained-glass.

### **Walk back to Third & Walnut and cross Third at the stoplight.**

### **Walnut Street, going toward Second:**

First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), 3<sup>rd</sup> & Walnut (Pam Decker)—

The congregation of the First Christian Church was organized in 1889 at Newport. A wood-frame church was built in 1890 at the corner of Third and Walnut, but it was destroyed by a fire that started in the Creighton Hotel, northwest of the church. The second church on this site was completed in 1908 and was made of stone. But even the stone church was destroyed by fire on October 19, 1914, as the result of another fire at the New Creighton Hotel next door.

The third and current church was designed by Pine Bluff architect Mitchell Selligman, who designed several buildings in Pine Bluff as well as the Poinsett County Courthouse at Harrisburg and the Mississippi County Courthouse at Blytheville. The Central Christian Church, as it was then called, was dedicated on December 12, 1915. The building is done in a modified Gothic Revival style with two towers of different height at the front entrance. The most noticeable departure from the Gothic style is the absence of pointed arch windows and other openings (everything is square).

In 1919 the church bought a 15-foot strip of land immediately to the west, where the hotels had been, to protect the new structure from its neighbors. ☺

Interestingly, the church used to have balcony seating, but this area was closed off and the drop ceiling installed in the 1970s. You can also see where the overflow seating was located. The baptismal pool is still under the floor below the communion table.

216 Walnut (northwest of Christian Church)—

Built after 1940 and housed the offices of Arkansas Power & Light (AP&L).

Yellow & sandstone building (208 Walnut?)—

Historically, this site was a vacant lot used for the Farmer's Market (1940s-50s). This building was constructed for the Turner family. The northwest (left) side of the building housed Turner's Grill, and the southeast (right) side was the bus station. The door to the colored waiting room was around the southeast side of the building. Black patrons had separate access to the ticket counter and grill. The

building later housed the Eva Graham Shop and Nate Penix Shoes, both owned by Nate and Ann Houpt Penix.

Vacant lot between 202 and 208 Walnut—

This is the site of the 2-story Watson Building, which housed the Ideal Laundry Company in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, followed by Schratz Laundry & Cleaners. The building had an exterior staircase on the northwest side that led to the upstairs, where railroad men rented rooms. Schratz closed in the 1960s, and the building later housed an Italian restaurant called Spaghetti Warehouse.

Watson Law Firm (209 Walnut)—

Built in 1948 to house the law firm of Pickens and Pickens (F. M. Pickens and Fred M. Pickens, Jr.). The building was originally buff brick. It has been altered with a rear addition, new façade, and painted brick.

\*\*\*\*Tim and Betsy Watson's new book, *Images of America: Newport and Jackson County*, is available for sale here if anyone is interested (\$22).

202 Walnut (white Art Deco building)—

Built ca. 1950 by Dr. Joseph M. Williams, a local dentist. His office was at the corner (left side). The other side (right) was the Arkansas Louisiana Gas Company (ArkLa) office. The Second Street entrance led to the office of Dr. J. D. Collier, optometrist.

Ornamental concrete block building behind this one on Second Street—

Built ca. 1945. Grimes Boarding House. Ornamental concrete block with rock-face panel.

### **Corner of 2<sup>nd</sup> & Walnut, going toward Front**

Old Newport City Hall (2<sup>nd</sup> & Walnut)—

In 1891 a two-story, hipped roof building with a central tower and a one-story rear wing was completed to serve as a town hall, hose house (fire department), and city jail. The first floor of the main building was occupied by the fire

department, and the municipal courtroom and mayor's office were upstairs. The 8-cell city jail was located in the one-story wing at the rear.

The municipal building was remodeled and enlarged in 1956-57 (Bruce R. Anderson, architect). The most significant changes were the application of buff brick and the change in the building's roofline from hipped to flat. The jail was moved to the rear portion of the second floor above the fire department. Notice the neon sign above the Second Street entrance to the Police Department. Fire trucks are still inside the engine bays today. In the early 1990s, city offices moved to the current City Hall at 3<sup>rd</sup> and Elm.

The city clerk's office was located just northwest of the city hall's main door (between city hall and 120 Walnut).

116-118-120 Walnut (old Brosh-Long Jewelers Building)—

120 Walnut storefront: In the early-to-mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, this was the site of the Capitol Theater.

The Strand Theater was located on the vacant lot just southeast of the alley in this block.

Two businesses were located in buildings between the Capitol and Strand—Brosh-Long Jewelry Store and Freeman's Office Supplies.

The current building at 116-118-120 Walnut was built ca. 1964 by the Brosh family to replace buildings destroyed by fire. Brosh-Long Jewelers was started in 1944 at Newport by Charles Brosh and Phillip Long. The business continues as Romance Diamond Company in Fayetteville, run by Patrick Brosh.

Missouri Pacific Railroad Depot (National Register-listed 6/11/1992)—

The depot was built ca. 1905 by the St. Louis, Iron Mountain & Southern Railroad. In 1917 the line was acquired by Missouri Pacific. The depot was probably remodeled slightly at this time.

The Missouri Pacific Roundhouse and turntable was located just across the tracks from the depot. A separate freight depot was located just northeast of the passenger depot (near the foot of Laurel Street; no longer there).

The two-story Van Noy Eating House and Interstate Hotel was built ca. 1905 just southwest of the passenger depot. It was a popular gathering place in Newport.



Social clubs held meetings there, people ate Sunday dinner there, and it was the only restaurant in Newport that stayed open all night. From 1948 to 1960, the restaurant was managed by Cecil and Ann Bradley. The building was demolished in 1962.

The American Railway Express Company Building was built in 1924 just southwest of the Van Noy Eating House. No longer there.

The City of Newport now owns the depot, which was restored in 1998 to serve as an event venue.

### **Front Street (500 block), going from Walnut to Main—**

Arkansas Bank and Trust Company, 500-502 Front (National Register-listed 10/16/1986)—

This Neoclassical-style building was designed in 1916 by the Little Rock architectural firm of George R. Mann and Eugene John Stern to house the Arkansas Bank and Trust Company. Details on the building include its projecting cornice with dentil course, eagle with spread wings in the center of the parapet, fluted, engaged columns with Corinthian capitals, and rosettes.

Arkansas Bank & Trust went into receivership in 1930. First National Bank of Newport occupied this building from 1946 to 1966, when the bank moved into its new building at 2<sup>nd</sup> and Hazel. There was a fabric store here from 1967 to 1975, when the building was purchased by the John Minor Insurance and Real Estate Company, which continues to occupy the building.

Historically, doors on the Walnut Street side of the building provided access to other businesses, including White Abstract and Newport Federal Savings & Loan.

504 Front (God's House of Prayer)—

This was a commercial building with three storefronts. You can still see some of the decorative brown brick pilasters with cast-stone capitals. In the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, the two left storefronts housed the Sherwin-Williams Paint Store. Hafner's Furniture was in the portion to the far right. J. C. Penney later occupied all three storefronts.

Rest of this block—

Other businesses in the block included Frank Leach Funeral Home (514 Front); McHaney's Glass, Paint & Wallpaper; and Grimes Drug Store.

### **Walk to Main Street and turn to see the Newport Bridge.**

Newport Bridge (National Register-listed 4/9/1990)—

Built in 1929-1930, this was the first highway bridge across the White River at Newport. The double-cantilevered, steel-truss bridge is one of two remaining bridges of this type in Arkansas. It, along with the bridges at Augusta and Clarendon, was designed by well-known bridge engineer Ira G. Hedrick. The bridge at Augusta was torn down in 2001.

The bridges were three of nine crossings the state built in the early 1930s through a bond issue financed with tolls. With a low bid of \$218,662, Missouri Valley Bridge and Iron Co. of Leavenworth, Kansas, was awarded the contract on May 15, 1929, to build the Newport Bridge.

When the bridge was completed in September 1930, a large celebration marked the occasion with 7,500 in attendance. At the time, the bridge was on U.S. Highway 67, then the main route between Little Rock and St. Louis. A total of 220 vehicles crossed the bridge on Sept. 18, the first official day of its operation. For a car, the toll was 50 cents. Trucks were charged between 50 cents and \$1. Livestock was charged at the rate of 5 cents a head. Pedestrians crossed at no charge.

The bridge was painted blue in the 1970s, and has been known as the Blue Bridge ever since.

### **Main Street:**

Apartment house at northeast corner 2<sup>nd</sup> & Main—

Built ca. 1945. Two-story, Colonial Revival-style apartment house.

First Baptist Church (2<sup>nd</sup> & Main)—

The congregation of the First Baptist Church was organized on October 9, 1892, at Newport. A Sunday School Building was constructed in 1901 at the northeast corner of 3<sup>rd</sup> & Hazel (across Hazel from the Episcopal Church). Services were held in the Sunday School Building until a sanctuary could be built. The sanctuary was completed on that site in 1915.

The present sanctuary was built in 1946 and features an ornate bell tower and pointed arch windows. An education building (the one facing Third?) was completed in 1970.

**Take Second Street back to First UMC parking lot.**