

**Walks through History**  
**Rector CHD**  
**August 14, 2010**  
**By: Rachel Silva**



## **Intro**

Hi, my name is Rachel Silva, and I work for the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program. Welcome to the August Walks through History tour of the Rector Commercial Historic District! Before we get started, I'd like to thank some folks who helped me prepare for the tour—Jacinda Welch, Mayor Ron Kemp & his wife, Nancy, Steven Sigsby, Leland Blackshare, Byron Underwood, and Jasa Hollis. Also, the Rector Public Library on W. 4<sup>th</sup> Street has a very nice museum/archives room with a lot of information on the history of Rector (thanks to the efforts of long-time librarian Lillian Randleman). The library is open today until 1 p.m., and it's also open throughout the week.

The Rector CHD was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in June 2009 for its association with the commercial development of Rector, and for its collection of late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century commercial-style architecture. The district is roughly bounded by 3<sup>rd</sup> Street on the north, S. Stewart St. & the St. Louis & Southwestern RR tracks on the east, the RR tracks on the south, and S. Dodd St. on the west. The district contains 54 resources, and 57% of those contribute to the historic significance of the district.

Explain how to list a district on the NR...

Today, we'll talk about the buildings around the park, and then go north up one side of Main St. to the Methodist Church (go inside), and then come back down the

other side of Main (go inside at the Innovative Training Center for water) to end up back at the park.

### **Brief History of Rector**

Clay County was originally established on March 24, 1873, as Clayton County, named in honor of state senator John M. Clayton. However, county residents resented John Clayton and his older brother, Powell Clayton (who had been AR's Governor from 1868 to 1871), for their Republican policies during Reconstruction (they were both Yankees from Pennsylvania). At the residents' urging, the new General Assembly voted in 1875 to shorten the county's name to Clay County, in honor of Secretary of State Henry Clay.

In the 1830s a good number of pioneers began settling along Crowley's Ridge and near the Black and St. Francis Rivers. However, this area was prone to flooding because of its close proximity to the St. Francis and Mississippi Rivers and the presence of lowlands and swamps created by the New Madrid earthquakes of 1811 & 1812. More people settled in Clay County after the Civil War, buying up cheap land provided to the state under the federal government's 1850 Swamp Land Act (gave millions of acres of wetlands to the states to encourage drainage districts—Arkansas chose to sell its wetlands in large chunks instead of establishing a drainage district).

The Clay County seat was first established at Corning in 1873, but it was moved in 1877 to Boydsville. Residents of Corning and the western part of the county were unhappy about the move, so it was decided in 1888 that Clay County would have two judicial districts—one at Corning and one at Boydsville. The eastern district county seat was moved in 1891 to Piggott because of its location along the St. Louis Southwestern Railroad (Cotton Belt).

The area east of Crowley's Ridge developed slower than the rest of Clay County until the 1880s. Prior to the arrival of the railroad, the community of Scatterville, named for the scattered homesteads and stores that made up the settlement, was located about 2 miles northwest of present-day Rector. But when the St. Louis Southwestern RR extended its line from St. Francis to Rector in 1882, the area's settlement pattern completely changed. When the railroad first came through, the town of Rector was not yet platted. In late 1882, the Southwest Improvement Company bought 40 acres from Captain John Allen and another 40 from C. H. Wright along the new railroad. The company platted a town and named it Rector

after Henry Massey Rector, who served as Governor of Arkansas from 1860 to 1862.

When the first train arrived in Rector in 1882, a large crowd gathered, and the train was greeted by a 21-gun salute and a speech from atop a flatcar. During a period of resounding applause from the crowd, the train engineer blew the whistle. This whistle sent all of the horses, mules, steer, and oxen running for the forest. Only one yoke of oxen and a mustang pony remained tied to nearby trees when it was all over. Rector thrived as a railroad boom town and incorporated in 1887. Initially, Rector heavily relied on the timber industry, as the area was covered in virgin timber. There were stave mills, sawmills, handle and box factories, and other timber-related businesses. Cotton also played an important role in Rector's livelihood, with cotton gins producing hundreds of bales of cotton.

After about 1910, the old-growth forests were cleared, and the land was sold off in 40-acre tracts for farming. Cotton soon became the number one farm crop in Rector and the leading export from Clay County. Cotton prices increased throughout the 1910s, but boll weevil infestations in the early 1920s and the devastation of the MS River Flood of 1927 crippled the cotton economy. The final blow came with the Stock Market Crash of 1929 and severe drought in the 1930s, ushering in the Great Depression. Although Clay County has experienced a decline in population since the 1940s, Rector has managed to maintain its 1930s population and now has a primarily agricultural economy dominated by rice, wheat, and cotton.

### **Rector Downtown Central Park**

Around the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, this area was a muddy lot where people could leave their horses and wagons while they shopped in downtown Rector. It eventually became an eyesore and was called "one of the largest mudholes in this vicinity." So in 1913, the Rector Woman's Club spearheaded the effort to turn this triangular piece of land into a city park. The Woman's Club planted grass, trees, and flowers and had a wooden bandstand constructed. The original wooden bandstand was torn down in 1929 and the current brick bandstand/gazebo was constructed to replace it. It was built by Louis Bert (L. B.) Sigsby at a cost of almost \$900. The small restroom building was also constructed at that time. The bandstand/gazebo was designed in the Craftsman style with exposed rafter tails and large, square brick columns. The park itself, the bandstand, and the restroom building are each counted as contributing resources in the district.

The light poles in the park are actually old street lights from Rector's Main Street. At some point, the light poles were removed, and locals took them for use in their own yards. People have gradually given them back to the city for use in the park.

### **St. Louis Southwestern RR Depot**

Used to sit where the engine is now, but took up the entire space between the two light poles on either side of the engine. [The engine was used as a switch engine at ARI (American Railcar Industries—builds tank railcars) in Marmaduke.] In the very early days, there were actually two separate railroad depots in Rector—the 1908 Sanborn map shows a passenger depot just to the north of the tracks and a freight depot with cotton platforms just to the south of the tracks. But by about 1910, a new depot was constructed on the north side of the tracks with both passenger and freight sections. Just to the south of the depot was a water tank for steam locomotives (might still be able to see a slight remnant of the foundation behind the filling station). Life in Rector revolved around the railroad, and everything came through the depot. So this was a very busy place. During WWII, 45 to 50 trains came through the Cotton Belt per day. By the late 1950s, two passenger trains per day came through Rector. Passenger service stopped in the early 1960s, and the Rector depot closed in 1973. After that time, the freight section (south end) of the depot was moved across the tracks to the corner of 7<sup>th</sup> & Phillips streets. It was used as part of a feed store, and is currently empty??

### **Frets Filling Station**

This was Jack Frets's (pronounced "Fritz") filling station. According to Sanborn maps, it was built sometime between 1928 and 1937, but probably closer to 1930 based on its Craftsman & Art Moderne influences (columns are Craftsman & east bay's rounded corner is Art Moderne).

### **Paving of streets & cement water trough @ Main & 5<sup>th</sup>**

On October 14, 1926, the first streets were paved in Rector. They were also the first to be paved in Clay County. Sometime before the streets were paved in 1926, there was a round, cement water trough in the middle of the intersection of Main & 5<sup>th</sup> streets.

### **W. 5<sup>th</sup> St. Buildings**

109 & 109A W. 5<sup>th</sup>: These buildings were constructed in 1924 to house Elsass Creamery. Brothers Alfred, Lawrence “Butch,” and Gene Elsass operated the creamery and dairy business. The Elsass brothers initially had their own Holstein dairy farm west of town before opening this creamery in 1924. The company sold and delivered milk in pint and quart glass bottles and provided ½ pint bottles of milk to the local school lunchroom. The also produced ice cream and butter, selling as much as 2,000 pounds of butter a week. Elsass Creamery bought and sold eggs, too. The business operated in this location until 1965 when Alfred Elsass’s health began to decline. Notice the round iron columns on the building’s storefront—these may be Mesker components. We’ll discuss Mesker in a few minutes...

105 W. 5<sup>th</sup>: This slab was occupied by the East Arkansas Lumber Company Building until recently. The East Arkansas Lumber Company started as the Brown Lumber Company in 1905 with a building at the NE corner of E. 4<sup>th</sup> & Stewart streets. Brown Lumber Co. was acquired by East Arkansas Lumber Co. in 1911 and moved to a large building on the east side of Stewart between 3<sup>rd</sup> & 4<sup>th</sup> streets. Sometime in the mid-1920s, the business moved to a building on this site. The company had one of the largest lumber yards in the area. It was headquartered in Paragould and had branch locations throughout NE Arkansas and SE Missouri. By the 1950s, it was called Brewer Lumber Company, and a small portion of the building was occupied by Ralph Pruett’s barber shop.

### **Front St. Buildings & Mesker Storefronts**

409 S. Stewart (City Hall): This was the site of a two-story, brick hotel. Woody’s Hotel occupied the current city hall site and extended to the east about half way through the parking lot. It was built in 1893 by John S. Simpson and was one of the first brick buildings in Rector. The hotel’s second story balcony was added later. It had a yard to the east for the guests’ enjoyment. By 1937 it was called the Rector Hotel. The city purchased the building in 1955 and actually used it for city hall. The hotel building was torn down in August 1974 to make way for the current structure.

Interesting to note that there was a tavern or saloon on E. Front St. in Rector’s early days. When the town incorporated in 1887, whiskey was voted out by local option, and the saloons moved south across the tracks, and eventually across the county line.

Mesker Storefronts: From the late 1880s into the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, pre-manufactured building components became popular across the U.S. Buyers could order parts from a catalogue and receive their goods by train. The prefabricated building parts were especially popular in small towns, where it might be difficult to find an architect. There were several companies in the Midwest manufacturing these cast iron building components, but the two largest manufacturers were Mesker Brothers Iron Works of St. Louis and the George L. Mesker Co. of Evansville, Indiana. The companies were owned by brothers and competed against each other. Whenever a building is called a “Mesker,” it means that the building features some ornamental metal component made by one of the Mesker companies. Mesker components typically have a nameplate at the base of a storefront column. The Illinois Historic Preservation Agency has a project called “Got Mesker” that identifies and documents Mesker buildings across the country, and there are 5 buildings in the Rector CHD that have been identified as Meskers, with several others that might be as well (they’ve just been altered or partially covered).

117 E. Front: With that said, 117 E. Front is a Mesker building, featuring a decorative metal cornice and storefront. This building is the oldest surviving building in the district, with a construction date of 1892. This was the post office in 1908—the post office moved next door shortly thereafter. This building later served as a grocery store, vulcanizing shop, and a restaurant. In the 1950s it was Lashley’s Cleaners, and Mr. Upton had a small cubby-hole law office inside the cleaners.

115 E. Front: This is also a mid-1890s building, but it’s likely that some type of decorative element was removed from the building’s cornice and the tile-capped parapet added at a later date (1920s-1950s). This building has housed a meat market & barber shop, an auto garage in the 1920s, and a movie theater in the 1930s. The post office was in the western part of this building from the early years of the 20<sup>th</sup> century until the mid-1950s, when it moved back to the Harper Building at 117 E. Front. In 1958 the post office moved to 309 Main, and in 1971 the current post office facility opened at the corner of 3<sup>rd</sup> & Stewart. This building also housed a propane company in the 1950s.

113 E. Front: This is another Mesker with a cast iron storefront and brick corbelling at the cornice. It was built about 1895. This was a restaurant, grocery, drug store, and in the late 1950s, it was Tidwell’s Grocery (after the 1957 fire...more on that next). The front door has been changed—the oblique walls used to be the entrance doors.

111 E. Front: Built about 1897. Features some elaborate brick corbelling at the cornice and has arch-topped second story windows. There were restaurants in this building beginning about 1905. Carl Pruett and Earl Keller both operated restaurants here, and in 1957, it became Thompson's Variety Store. Thompson's Variety Store first opened in Rector in 1925. It was run by W. M. Thompson and after his death, it was run by his daughter, Melba, and her husband, Tommy Arnold. The store occupied several different storefronts along Main Street before moving into the storefront just south of the Bank of Rector in 1956 (where the drive-thru window is now). Tragically, a fire on April 20, 1957, destroyed the old Joseph Wolf Dry Goods Building on Main, which at that time housed Thompson Variety Store, Pruett's Men's Store, and Tidwell Grocery. The businesses lost everything in the fire (this is the large open space to the south of the Bank of Rector). After the fire, Thompson Variety Store moved to this building, and owners Melba and Tommy Arnold lived upstairs.

105 E. Front: This is one of those "maybe Meskers" that has cast iron components, but no identifying nameplate. Constructed circa 1897, this building has historically been occupied by barber shops. In the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, the right storefront was Joe Gates's Café, and the left storefront was the White Way Barber Shop, owned by Floyd Winn. In addition to Mr. Winn, the barbers were Frank Cooper and Bryan McCrady. The shop was later purchased by Ralph Pruett, who had a barber shop on W. 5<sup>th</sup> St.

#### **400 Block of Main St. (West side)**

422 Main: Most of the buildings left on the west side of the 400 block were built in the 1890s (beginning at this corner and going up to the 2-story building at 410 Main). Unfortunately, these three buildings have been significantly altered with aluminum slipcovers. 422 Main was a grocery store for many years before a brief stint as an undertaker in the 1930s. Then it was a cold storage locker, where people would rent out a space to keep their frozen food before in-home refrigerators. Then it was Clayton Insurance Agency, owned by Fred "Jack" Clayton.

418-420 Main: This was 2 historic buildings combined into one larger building. It housed a drug store, barber shop, and grocery. Then it was Western Auto, owned by Paul Crews.

416 Main: Although the building has been significantly altered, this is a Mesker, with a cast iron storefront and its original recessed entry and transom windows.

This building was actually a 2-story building with beautiful, elaborate cast iron components on its cornice and around the second story windows. It has since been shortened and covered with aluminum siding. It was a dry good store, and then a restaurant with rooms for rent upstairs. In recent memory, it was the Busy Bee Restaurant, owned by Pete and Inez Dowdy.

Fence: This was a one-story building that housed a restaurant and later a dry goods store. In the 1950s, it was John Gordon's pool hall and had a small cubby-hole inside for Jess Edwards's barber shop. Within the last 10 years, the building collapsed.

412 Main: This is the Sid Unterberger Building. You used to be able to read the word "Unterberger" in the painted area above the second story windows. S. Unterberger & Co. was one of the most successful mercantile businesses in Clay County in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. The general merchandise store operated out of this storefront and carried virtually everything, including dry goods, ladies and men's clothing, hardware, harness & saddlery, and farm supplies. Thompson's Variety Store was located here until 1956 when it moved north to the building south of the bank (that burned in 1957).

410 Main: This storefront was occupied by Phillips Drug Store for many years. Before Phillips, it was Heffer's Drug Store. Also note that 410 and 412 Main have round, cast iron columns that could be Mesker.

408 Main: This small, one-story building was constructed in the late 1950s or early 1960s after the 1957 fire destroyed the Joseph Wolf Building that occupied the space between 410 Main and the Bank of Rector on the corner. It was constructed by Jim Miles to serve as his barber shop.

Site of former Joseph Wolf Building: This was the site of a large building originally occupied by the Joseph Wolf Company, which was the largest department store in Rector. They sold clothes, groceries, hardware, wagons, buggies, etc. and had about 20 employees. Joseph Wolf Co. went out of business in 1940, and then this became Bearden's Department Store, owned by Ollie and Ruby Bearden. Bearden's occupied the building until the early 1950s, when it was divided up into 3 separate storefronts. At the time of the fire on April 20, 1957, the three businesses located here were Tidwell's Grocery & Market, Thompson's Variety Store, and Pruett & Son Dry Goods Store. The fire was started accidentally when employees burned their cardboard trash behind the building in



the alley, as was customary to do in those days. The fire nearly destroyed the Bank of Rector next door.

400 Main: In the first part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, this site was occupied by a 2-story brick building known as the Cox Building. The First National Bank constructed this building about 1927, and it is one of the only Classical Revival style buildings in the district with a triangular pediment supported by large columns. The Bank of Rector was chartered in 1899 and was located at 409 S. Main (NE corner of Main & Front). But a fire at the bank prompted the construction of the current white glazed brick building at 409 Main in 1915. The Bank of Rector remained there until 1944, when the First National Bank went under. Then the Bank of Rector relocated to this building at 400 Main.

### **Go down E. 4<sup>th</sup> & point out hitching ring, Bucy mule barn**

111 E. 4<sup>th</sup>: Notice the hitching ring in the sidewalk. I am not sure about the dates of occupancy for these grocery stores, but this is the best sense I could make of it...This was the last location of Alstadt Grocery (1957-1970). Alstadt Grocery was operated by W. V. Alstadt and his son, Melvyn, until 1970. A little confusing, but...the building at 324 Main (where the Innovative Training Center is now) was owned by G. H. "Cap" Hardin, who operated a mercantile and grocery business there. Then Alstadt Grocery occupied the Hardin building at 324 Main. Alstadt stayed in the Hardin building until 1957, when Dortch's Supermarket, run by Vernon Dortch, moved into the Hardin Building and Alstadt came here to 111 E. 4<sup>th</sup>. Dortch later moved to a building on the site of the current Rector Public Library at 121 W. 4<sup>th</sup>.

116 E. 4<sup>th</sup>: Brothers Guy and Lloyd Bucy built this barn in 1925 to house their stock business. Rector was well-known for Bucy's Mule Barn. The business operated like so...the brothers would travel to Kansas City to purchase bronc horses and unbroken mules from Oklahoma and South Dakota. They returned to Rector, where they sold the young mules to locals on the Ridge who knew how to break them. Then the Bucy brothers would buy the mules back from them once they were older, and sell those 3-year-old mules to a different clientele. Once the mules reached the age of 9 years, the Bucys bought them back again. Once a mule reaches the age of 9, it is considered to be a "smooth-mouth mule," meaning it can easily be harnessed and pull a plow. These "smooth-mouth mules" were then sold at the Memphis Sale Barn. The Bucy brothers also sold train cars full of mules to the Army during World War I and shipped them out of Rector.

201 E. 4<sup>th</sup>: Bucy Implement Store. Sold Allis Chalmer tractors there.

204 E. 4<sup>th</sup>: Gus Spicer's Service Station.

### **300 Block of Main St. (West side)**

324 Main: I told you that this was the location of Hardin's mercantile & grocery before housing Alstadt Grocery and Dortch's Supermarket. Tom Barber was the last person to have a grocery store here, and then it burned. Dollar General built the current building, and after it went out, the city bought the property to make it the Northeast Arkansas Innovative Training Center.

320 Main: 2-story building dates to about 1900. It housed a restaurant and a racket store for many years. In recent memory, the upper story was the city band's practice room (Everett King was the band director). In the 1950s, Bill Holcomb had a restaurant in the left storefront. There also may have been a dance hall/skating rink upstairs in this building. Also has some iron components on storefront.

316 Main: Built about 1905. In 1915 it housed a motion picture theatre, but it was gone by the next map in 1928. In more recent memory, in the late 1950s and 1960s, the left door went to Jack Clayton's Insurance Agency (same man who had other one on Main). The door to the right went to Webb's Insurance Agency in the 1970s.

314 Main: Dr. Jernigan (dentist) and Dr. Blackwood (medical doctor) had their clinic in this building. You can still see the spot in the floor where the dental chair sat.

310 Main: There were two buildings on the current site of Underwood Furniture. The building to the south (left) was one-story and home to Edward C. Calvin's Furniture (opened in 1941). The building on the north (right) was 2-story and home to Irby Funeral Home. In 1953, Mr. Calvin wanted to dig out and pour a new slab to add extra height to his building, but while he was in the process of doing this work, the front wall collapsed out into the street. It also damaged the building next door, so Calvin was forced to purchase Irby Funeral Home. He completely rebuilt the current building in 1953 with green tile brick and operated his furniture store there. Irby Funeral Home moved across the street. Byron Underwood acquired the furniture store and operated it for many years before turning it over to his son. Back in the 1950s, Underwood's Furniture had what

they called “gin whistle terms,” where companies would ship cook stoves to the furniture store in the summer months at their convenience, and Underwood would store them upstairs. Then local customers put their orders in during the summer months and picked up the stove in October after they’d harvested the cotton crop. They didn’t owe anything on the stove until November.

308 Main: This building has a virtually unaltered Mesker storefront. This building was constructed about 1895 and housed a doctor’s office and a dry goods and shoe store before 1929 when it became the location of the first Kroger store in Arkansas. Kroger remained here until 1939 and then moved down next to Phillips Drug Store. After the Kroger moved out of this building, there was a butane gas place here.

306 Main: This is also a great intact example of a Mesker storefront. The building dates from the mid-1890s and housed a saddle shop and undertaker before becoming the offices of the Clay County Democrat newspaper.

304 Main: Also has some cast-iron elements on its storefront, but not a documented Mesker. Built about 1910 and housed a printing and cobbler shop. Later this was Rust Shoe Store and the Rust Shoe Store Annex, both operated by Clarence Rust. ArkMo Power Company had an office in this building for awhile before moving to a storefront south of Underwood Furniture.

300 Main: Has cast-iron columns. Built about 1910. This building housed Mitchell Funeral Home on the first floor and the second floor has been used as a Masonic Hall since the building’s construction. It is currently home to the Dannelly Lodge of Free & Accepted Masons.

### **U-turn and Methodist Church Parking Lot**

Young people in Rector used to do an illegal U-turn at the corner of Main & 3<sup>rd</sup> and again down at the corner of Main & 5<sup>th</sup> to cruise the strip. The Ford Theatre (which we’ll discuss in a little bit) had mirrors on its front doors, so you could see yourself driving by...

About 1910, a livery stable was constructed in the current parking lot of the Rector Methodist Church. Doyle and Shirley Bradshire bought and sold livestock there. Then Charley Hardcastle had a Chevrolet dealership there, and the building was last used as the Rector Feed Store. The Feed Store building was demolished about 25 years ago (~1985). Another building was also on the lot and housed the public

library—it was torn down about 15 years ago (~ 1995). There was also a tailor shop in between the feed store and library buildings.

### **Rector Methodist Church**

115 W. 3<sup>rd</sup>: The sanctuary of the First Methodist Church of Rector was completed in 1916. It is an outstanding example of the Classical Revival style in Rector with its symmetrical façade, rounded arch windows with keystones, and onion-shaped dome. The interior still has the original pews, woodwork, and stained glass windows. Several years after the sanctuary was completed, the parishioners decided to build a basement—they went into the crawl space and dug it out by hand with buckets. The first classroom addition was completed in 1960, and the second addition, called Wesley Hall, was done in 2007. Thank Brother Mace for allowing us to tour the church and take a break from the heat!!

White house at NW corner of 3<sup>rd</sup> & Dodd: Tom Ford, who operated the Ford Theatre in Rector, lived in this house. Probably dates to about 1900.

### **300 Block of Main St. (East side)**

301 Main: Irby Funeral Home—moved across the street to this location in the early 1950s, but the lobby portion of this building appears to be from the 1970s.

Slab: John Q. Utley had a livery stable here, and after he died, the commercial buildings were constructed on this portion of the block (1920s). This slab was then occupied by the other half of 309 Main—it was exactly the same in appearance. The building was probably built about 1927. Starting on the northern end of the building, there was Joe Phillips's Photography Studio (later Donaldson's Flower Shop in this space), and the remaining part of this half was occupied by the post office from 1958 to 1971 (and after the post office moved out, Bill Milburn's pool hall took its place), and the last part of this slab was Ina Gabler's Dress Shop and later the furniture store she opened.

309 Main: The part of 309 Main that is still standing was home to McNiel Auto and Home Supply, which was operated by Cecil McNiel and Fonzy Mays (they were married to sisters). You can barely make out "McNiel" in the ghost sign.

317 Main: This was Richard Gordon's Café and later Johnny and Margaret Hoover's restaurant. Now burned.

319 Main: The door to the left led to Jess Edwards's barber shop, which he moved down here from his other location in the 400 block of Main Street. The door to the right led to Gordon's pool hall in the 1950s.

331 Main: Left side was originally constructed about 1915. The northern part with the open garage bay was the location of the Ford Theatre. Tom Ford opened the theatre in Rector in 1936. For 25 cents, you could see a movie and get popcorn and a soda. The theatre originally had about 485 seats, but after Ford widened the aisles, it had 315 seats. The Ford Theatre closed in 1966 chiefly due to its new competitor, television. The Rector Jaycees kept the theatre open until 1968, but then they were forced to close as well. Tom Ford died in April 1968, and the theatre building was torn down in 1979. The Napa Auto Parts building you see today (the left side) is completely new construction.

Right side of Napa—this portion of Napa is older—built about 1905. It was the McNeil-Darnell & Co. General Merchandise Store, and the McNeil Opera House was upstairs. By 1914, O. L. Dalton had a hardware store here, and the opera house was still upstairs.

### **Go into Innovative Training Center for water**

#### **Look down W. 4<sup>th</sup> St.**

107 W. 4<sup>th</sup>: Sigsby Insurance used to be Dr. Clopton's office.

121 W. 4<sup>th</sup>: Now the Rector Public Library. Before this was here, there was a skating rink on the site of the library building. Then after that was gone, Thompson's Plymouth Dodge Dealership was built on this parking lot, and then Vernon Dortch built a grocery store here.

120 W. 4<sup>th</sup>: In the late 1930s, there was a telephone exchange in this house.

110 W. 4<sup>th</sup>: Cap Hardin owned this building and used it as a warehouse for his produce and hardware. It was probably built about 1910 and is relatively intact.

114 W. 4<sup>th</sup>: This and the next two buildings were constructed about 1910. This was a barber in 1915.

116 W. 4<sup>th</sup>: This was a telephone office.

118 W. 4<sup>th</sup>: This was a doctor's office—Dr. Futrell and Dr. Bucy (dentist). Dr. Byron Futrell was a very well respected man in Rector. Everyone liked him as he was a genuinely good person. Byron Futrell played football with Senator J. William Fulbright at the U of A, and his father was Arkansas Governor J. Marion Futrell (Gov. from 1933-1937).

#### **400 Block of Main St. (East side)**

401 Main: Built about 1910. This was a grocery and drug store in its early years, and then it was Schraft's Dime Store (Variety Store). It was purchased by Neva Chapel, who had a restaurant here. She wouldn't let Leland Blackshare turn up the jukebox when he was a youngster. Now it's owned by Keith Hill, who also owns the drug store next door.

403 Main: Downtown Drug Store was Emmett Purcell's Drug Store. W. H. Robertson's Business College was upstairs in this building in the 1910s. Although the college was founded in 1901, it was in a different location.

#### **White Glazed Brick Buildings**

The Bank of Rector, chartered in 1899, was located on the corner at 409 Main. After a fire at the bank building, architect E. M. Weems, was hired in 1915 to design a new bank building. His decision to use white glazed brick influenced adjacent business owners, Luther and Claude King, to use white glazed brick on their buildings as well.

405 Main: Alhf's (pronounced "Alf's") Bakery.

407 Main: Lonnie Purcell's Dry Goods Store & Department Store. Then the Wagner's ran it for awhile. It burned in the 1980s.

409 Main: This was the Bank of Rector. After the bank moved across the street to 400 Main (1944), this building housed Sigsby Insurance and a jeweler by the name of Davis had an office here as well.

#### **End at Park**