

**Walks through History
Downtown West Memphis
April 11, 2015
By: Rachel Silva**



800 block of E. Broadway, north side of street



Delta Ice

Intro

Hi, my name is Rachel Silva, and I work for the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program. Welcome to the “Walks through History” tour of downtown West Memphis! Today we’re not walking through history because the City of West Memphis has graciously provided us with bus transportation. I’d like to thank Main Street West Memphis for co-sponsoring the tour. And many thanks to those who helped me find information on the downtown buildings—Deborah Abernathy, Caroline Redfearn, Danny Craft, Alfred Saig, and Frank Martin.

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

Our tour will include three properties listed in the National Register of Historic Places—West Memphis City Hall (NR-listed 2010), West Memphis Commercial Historic District (consists of 700-900 blocks of E. Broadway; NR-listed 2008), and Wilson Power & Light Company Ice Plant (NR-listed 2010).

History of West Memphis

Benjamin Fooy (or Foy), one of the earliest recorded white settlers in the area near present-day West Memphis, was a native of Holland sent by the Spanish governor of Louisiana to establish a settlement on the Mississippi River. Fooy settled in Memphis, TN, in 1792, and moved in 1795 to the west side of the

Mississippi River. In 1797 the hamlet, designated “Fooy’s Point,” took the name Camp de la Esperanza or as translated, Field of Hope.¹ After the Louisiana Purchase of 1803, the settlement became part of the United States and was known as “Hopefield.” Benjamin Fooy was named as the region’s United States Magistrate. Fooy, noted for his honest character and extensive knowledge of the country, ran a clean and lawful town with a bright future until his death in 1823. After Fooy’s death, Hopefield became a haven for gamblers and thieves banned from Memphis.²

Crittenden County was established in 1825, eleven years before Arkansas became a state (1836). Named after Robert Crittenden, the first secretary of Arkansas Territory, the county had a population of 1,272 in 1830. In 1857 Hopefield became the eastern terminus for the Memphis and Little Rock Railroad, despite its rowdy reputation. But in 1861 the Civil War temporarily halted track construction just east of the St. Francis River.³

During the summer of 1862 Memphis fell into the hands of Union forces. Most Confederate soldiers were ferried across the river to Hopefield, Arkansas, and surrounding farms. Many of these soldiers were moved to other locations, but some remained to harass the Union forces at Memphis and disrupt river traffic. This became such a problem that on February 19, 1863, four companies of Federal forces burned Hopefield to the ground. The town of Hopefield was rebuilt after the war but never regained the prominence it once held in Crittenden County. In 1871 the Memphis and Little Rock Railroad was completed, aiding Hopefield’s economic recovery. Hopefield was eventually destroyed by floodwaters in 1912 when the Mississippi River changed course. Today, the supporting piers of the Interstate 40 bridge rest atop the old location of Hopefield.⁴

¹ This name came from the Spanish Fort Esperanza, which was built in 1795 on the west side of the Mississippi River. Grif Stockley, “Crittenden County,” *Encyclopedia of Arkansas History and Culture*, Internet, accessed 16 February 2010; available from <http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?search=1&entryID=762>.

² Smith, “West Memphis Commercial Historic District,” Section 8; Charlotte C. Wicks, “West Memphis,” *Encyclopedia of Arkansas History and Culture*, Internet, accessed 16 February 2010; available from <http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?search=1&entryID=871>.

³ Smith, “West Memphis Commercial Historic District,” Section 8.

⁴ Smith, “West Memphis Commercial Historic District,” Section 8; Wicks, “West Memphis,” *Encyclopedia of Arkansas History and Culture*; David O. Demuth, “The Burning of Hopefield,” *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 36, no. 2 (Summer 1977): 123-129.

In 1883 the Kansas City, Fort Scott & Memphis Railroad (which later became the St. Louis-San Francisco or “Frisco”) was completed through northeast Arkansas to the Mississippi River south of Hopefield. The railroad built a depot, roundhouse, and terminal yard. The tracks ended at a ferry landing where the *Charles Merriam*, a sidewheeler capable of moving ten railcars at a time, transported cars to the Memphis side of the river. A settlement known as Garvey grew near the ferry landing. By 1885 the village had more than 200 residents as well as a grain elevator, hotel, and two sawmills. General George H. Nettleton, chief executive officer of the Kansas City, Fort Scott & Memphis Railroad, changed the name of the settlement to West Memphis in order to bring a higher price for lumber. In 1892 the line completed a railroad bridge across the Mississippi River.

Floods and the construction of levees brought an end to the first West Memphis, which was built right on the river. The second West Memphis developed near the intersection of three major rail lines (St. Louis-San Francisco; Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific; Missouri Pacific) and timber industries at the south ends of present-day Eighth through Twelfth streets.

In 1912 Michigan native George T. Kendal and Memphian William L. Johnson platted the second West Memphis. At that time, the area consisted of canebrakes and swamps and was covered in virgin timber. While laying the town out into lots and blocks, a surveyor reportedly encountered a black bear at the present-day corner of Eighth and Broadway. The timber industry fueled the area’s progress in the early twentieth century. In 1904 Zack Bragg moved to West Memphis and opened the Bragg Sawmill. Bragg was able to ship his milled lumber and logs by river and rail. And in 1914 P.T. Bolz of St. Louis opened the Bolz Slack Barrel Cooperage Plant in West Memphis.⁵

However, disastrous floods in 1912, 1913, 1927, and 1937 delayed the city’s growth. It was not until the importance of the automobile--and its rapid rise as the major mode of transportation--that the growth of West Memphis began in earnest. The Harahan Bridge opened for rail traffic in 1916, and two narrow automobile lanes were added to the bridge the following year (1917). Originally

⁵ The town of Hulbert was annexed by West Memphis in 1955. Smith, “West Memphis Commercial Historic District,” Section 8; Stockley, “Crittenden County,” Encyclopedia of Arkansas History and Culture; Wicks, “West Memphis,” Encyclopedia of Arkansas History and Culture; West Memphis Chamber of Commerce, “History of West Memphis,” Internet; Sanborn Fire Insurance Company, “West Memphis, Arkansas,” maps (1930, 1938); Kara Mills, “Memphis and Arkansas Bridge, West Memphis, Arkansas,” National Register of Historic Places Registration Form. From the files of the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program (2001): Section 8.

called the Rock Island Bridge, the steel structure was renamed for Memphis businessman J. T. Harahan, who was killed in a 1912 train accident.⁶

West Memphis was officially incorporated in 1927 and continued to grow to become the largest city in Crittenden County. The availability of river and rail transportation transformed West Memphis into the manufacturing and distribution hub of the county. The city grew and developed at a record pace between 1930 and 1950 due to its location at the intersection of several major rail lines as well as its industrial base. The population of West Memphis increased from 895 people in 1930 to more than 9,000 in 1950. According to the 1938 Sanborn Fire Insurance map, West Memphis was home to four lumber companies, four cotton seed oil companies, three cotton gins, a cotton compress (one of the state's largest), feed mill, distillery, and ice plant.

Perhaps the town's most notable export from the mid-20th century was its original Blues music. At one time Sonny Boy Williamson, Howlin' Wolf, Mr. Lockwood, and B. B. King all called West Memphis home. Broadway Avenue/U.S. Highway 70 became the city's major commercial thoroughfare. Tourist courts, hotels, restaurants, and other amenities geared toward the traveler quickly sprang up along this traffic corridor. Most of the historic buildings we'll see today date from 1930 to the mid-1950s.⁷

Southeast corner of W. Broadway & Rhodes (where Sonic is now)

In 1949 Fred and Zell Jaynes built the 1,025-seat Joy Theatre on this corner. In 1953 it was leased by Malco and renamed the Avon Theatre. In the late 1940s and early 1950s some of the theatres in town (including this one) hosted live stage shows that had been banned in Memphis, causing some controversy (burlesque shows and prize fights).

Turn on Court Street--

Chamber of Commerce Building

⁶ Smith, "West Memphis Commercial Historic District," Section 8.

⁷ Smith, "West Memphis Commercial Historic District," Section 8; Stockley, "Crittenden County," Encyclopedia of Arkansas History and Culture; Sanborn Fire Insurance Company, "West Memphis," maps (1930, 1938, 1949); Terry Buckalew, "'Steady Rolling Man': Arkansas Bluesman Robert 'Junior' Lockwood," *Arkansas Historical Quarterly* 53, no. 1 (Spring 1994): 75-89; *The WPA Guide to 1930s Arkansas*, with an introduction by Elliott West (Lawrence, KS: University Press of Kansas, 1987): 222.

Organized in 1946, the West Memphis Chamber of Commerce was first located in a building at 216 E. Broadway (no longer extant). The current building at 108 W. Broadway was dedicated on June 29, 1962.

West Memphis City Hall

The city's rapid population increase in the 1930s created a demand for better municipal services and led to the construction of a city administration building, which would house the city hall, fire station, and city jail. Prior to 1938, the city council meetings were held in various local businesses, and fire protection was weak at best. In 1930 West Memphis still relied on Memphis for its fire protection, and by 1938 there was one fire truck in West Memphis with a part-time crew.⁸

The West Memphis City Hall was built during the Great Depression, when President Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal programs were distributing mass amounts of federal aid to put people to work on projects that would benefit the general public and stimulate the local economy. The June 1933 National Industrial Recovery Act (NIRA) established the Federal Emergency Administration of Public Works or the Public Works Administration (PWA).⁹

The PWA initially approved a \$16,500 loan and a \$13,500 grant for the West Memphis City Hall project and later approved another \$14,000 grant. A city ordinance was passed to issue bonds for the remaining construction costs. R. D. Eberdt was the architect and engineer for the project. Construction began on July 29, 1938, with a crew of fifty people. The city hall was completed on June 13, 1939, and officially opened on July 18, 1939. The city jail was ready for occupation in August, and the first city council meeting was held in the building on September 3, 1939.¹⁰

⁸ Information submitted by Deborah Griggs, Executive Director, Main Street West Memphis; in the files of the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program (2005); Sanborn Fire Insurance Company, "West Memphis," maps (1930, 1938).

⁹ Holly Hope, "'An Ambition to be Preferred': New Deal Recovery Efforts in Arkansas, 1933-1943." From the files of the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program (2006): 23-24; Franklin D. Roosevelt American Heritage Center Museum, "New Deal Achievements," Internet; available from http://www.fdrheritage.org/new_deal.htm. Accessed 12 November 2008; Silva, "Joseph Taylor Robinson Memorial Auditorium," 130-133.

¹⁰ Information submitted by Deborah Griggs, Executive Director, Main Street West Memphis; in the files of the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program (2005).

In 1954-1955 a courtroom addition was constructed to the west of the original city hall building. A jail annex was built in 1960-1961 behind the courtroom addition. In 1975 a new city hall was built at 205 S. Redding. The old West Memphis City Hall is now known as the O. I. Bollinger Building, named in honor of a 33-year city council member, and houses municipal court and a police dispatch station.¹¹ The building has been painted, which hides the original red brick and cast-concrete details.

Broadway—U.S. Highway 70 or Broadway started off about 1917 as a 2-lane dirt road. It was graveled in 1918-1919 and paved in 1926. Because Hwy. 70 stretched from North Carolina to California, it was called the “Broadway of America.” U.S. Hwy. 61 or Missouri St. was also cleared in 1917. It was graveled in 1921 and paved in 1922. Both roads have gradually gone from 2 to 4-lane (eastern end of Broadway went to 4-lane in 1946) and then to 5-lane. In 1936 West Memphis adopted the street names “Broadway” and “Missouri.” Missouri Street serves as the dividing line between west and east Broadway. West Broadway was sparsely developed before 1950. In fact, a man named James Thomas was living in a houseboat moored in a drainage ditch on the north side of Broadway just west of Missouri Street as late as 1919. Sanborn maps from 1949 only show West Broadway as far as Redding.

We’ll talk about the south side of Broadway as we go east, and when we turn around at 14th Street to head back west, we’ll talk about the north side of Broadway.

100 block of W. Broadway (south side of street; now AutoZone)

By the mid-1930s, there was a Texaco filling station at the southwest corner of Broadway and Missouri (or S. Woods) with an 8-unit tourist court/motor court behind it (would be behind AutoZone). It was owned by R. G. Hobbs and called Camp Delight and later, the West Memphis Tourist Court—no longer there. The filling station was demolished about 7 or 8 years ago.

East Broadway

¹¹ Information submitted by Deborah Griggs, Executive Director, Main Street West Memphis; in the files of the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program (2005).

South side of 100 block going east:

The Broadway Building was built about 1940 and replaced an earlier building on this site. About 1950, it housed Ken's Furniture Center (west storefront; right) and the post office (east storefront; left). There was a historic building with multiple storefronts on the west side of the Broadway Building going all the way back to the corner of Broadway & Missouri, but it has been demolished (now the Shell station).

This building (no longer extant; now the Shell Station) was constructed in the early 1930s. A photo taken in the mid-1930s showed a wholesale beer distributorship in the easternmost (left) storefront. The sign on the front advertised Goldcrest 51 Beer, which was the flagship brand of Memphis's Tennessee Brewing Company from 1906 until it closed in 1954. [I just read that some investors have started the Goldcrest Brewing Company in Memphis and have the original recipe for Goldcrest 51. They are going to start making it again. Supposed to be selling it this spring.] The western storefront housed Wright's Meat Market in the mid-20th century.

Many people remember the Wonder City Restaurant. The Wonder City Café opened in 1937 and was located in an earlier building on the site of the Broadway Building. The café was operated by John Carr. After the Broadway Building was constructed about 1940, the Wonder City Café moved into the easternmost storefront (now Accent Flowers). I found an old postcard with an interior photo of the café and the text, "Wonder City Café, West Memphis, Ark. The Gateway to the Wonder State. Serving the Finest Foods in the Land. Established 1937. Private Dining Rooms for Parties." By 1949 the Wonder City occupied the eastern side of the building that is no longer extant (Shell station site), and the name had been changed to the Wonder City Restaurant.

About 1960 Bill Abernathy purchased the Wonder City Restaurant. It later became the Wonder City Cafeteria. A fire in the early 1970s damaged the Wonder City and the storefronts to the west. The building was later demolished, and the site is now a Shell station.

You can still see the old Wonder City sign in front of the Broadway Building—it has been moved down the sidewalk from its original location in front of the restaurant.

200 block:

Park area to west of Regions Bank--Johnson's Auto Company, a Ford dealership owned by J. C. Johnson, was located at the southeast corner of First & Broadway. It opened in 1924 and was the first auto dealership in West Memphis. It had a filling station out front. According to the 1938 Sanborn map, the post office and the city's first fire truck were housed in part of the Johnson Ford Building. The building was demolished in 1979.

The lot just east of the Ford dealership was used for auto sales (it was a place to park vehicles for sale).

Current Regions Bank parking lot—site of a large building that housed the West Memphis Laundry-Cleaners, run by the Bledsoe family. No longer extant.

231 E. Broadway—Regions Bank/Main Street West Memphis—Built about 1941 and always had the 2-story portion with 1-story portion to east. KWEM (later KWAM) Radio was housed in the west side of this building, and the east side was Merchants & Planters Bank (opened in 1941) and later, First National Bank (1963) and now, Regions Bank. KWEM Radio started in 1946 in West Memphis and went on air for the first time on February 23, 1947. In 1960 the station was sold and became KWAM Radio.

In 1948 Chester Arthur Burnett, better known as "Howlin' Wolf," moved to West Memphis and worked in a local factory. But he was really drawn here by the city's blues clubs—he played the clubs at night and had his own show here at KWEM Radio. His radio show caught the attention of record producer Sam Phillips in Memphis, and Howlin' Wolf soon signed with Chess Records. He moved to Chicago in 1952 and went on to perform throughout the U.S. and Europe. He died in 1976 and in 1980 was inducted into the Blues Foundation Hall of Fame and in 1991 the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame.

Local merchant and musician Danny Craft also has a connection to KWEM Radio. His father, also named Danny Craft, had a radio show on KWEM with his band, Delta Dan and the Swamp Riders, during the same time period that Howlin' Wolf was there. The elder Danny Craft later played in a band called Danny Craft and the Craftsmen (the music trail sign is wrong—his KWEM show was with the Swamp Riders).

300 block:

301 E. Broadway—Jackson, Howell & Associates—Built about 1933 as a building with 2 storefronts (301-303 E. Broadway). In 1933 this building housed the first location of West Memphis Federal Savings & Loan (301) and United Insurance Company (303). By the mid-20th century, this building housed The Toggery Men's Store, run by the Bledsoe family.

305-307 E. Broadway--Mr. B's Store for Men & Kids-R-Us—Photos from about 1930 show two buildings about where the Carrera glass building is now—the one on the right (west) was an earlier location of the West Memphis Cleaners, and the one on the left (east) was a grocery store. There was an open parking area to the east of the grocery, and then to the east of that, there was a house with rooms for rent. By 1949, those two buildings were connected and a new Carrera glass storefront added. In the mid-20th century, these storefronts housed a dress shop and toy store.

Advance Auto Parts--The whole eastern side of this block contained historic buildings until 1987, when they were destroyed by a tornado. Historically, there was an open lot for used car sales, and the next building to the east was McCaa Chevrolet. The remainder of the block (going east to 4th Street) contained the 2-story Bragg Building (built 1929) and 2-story Broadway Building (built 1933) as well as three one-story buildings. The Bragg Building housed a drug store on the first floor (maybe Arnett's Drug?) and doctor's and attorney's offices upstairs. Other businesses in this row included a meat market, furniture store, barber shop, cab company, dry goods store, and cotton factor (sold cotton for planters and in return, received a commission on the sales).

The south side of this block (behind Advance Auto Parts) had several large industries, including the Walin, Dickey & Rich Lumber Company, the Mid-South Oil Company, and the West Memphis Lumber & Supply Company.

400 block:

By 1938, there was an agricultural implement business on the southeast corner of Broadway & 4th Street, which later became Thomas Plymouth. And there were a couple stores scattered throughout the rest of the block, one of which housed a

Mexican restaurant. None of these historic buildings exist today. The Southern Pipe & Supply Company building at 401 E. Broadway was built about 2012.

500 block:

The brick building at the southeast corner of 5th and E. Broadway was built about 1923 as part of the Federal Compress & Warehouse Company, which opened in 1923 on the east side of the tracks in the 600 block. The 1930 Sanborn map shows this as a flour and feed warehouse, it is listed as vacant in 1938, and then in 1949 it was a seed warehouse and seed cleaning operation. This building also served as the freight depot.

Cross the St. Louis-San Francisco Railroad tracks (known as “Fricso”)—now the Burlington Northern Santa Fe route.

600 block:

A small passenger depot was located just to the east side of the tracks; it was later used as a freight depot. It was demolished a few years ago (as of 2011).

The Federal Compress & Warehouse Company opened in 1923 on the south side of the 600 block of E. Broadway. When it opened, the Federal Compress & Warehouse Company was Arkansas’s largest cotton compress with a capacity of 165,000 bales. The company had its own water and electrical plants. In fact, because the company had its own well and storage tank, the Federal Compress & Warehouse Co. provided the city’s first water mains along E. Broadway as a public service. The company survived at least 2 major fires—one in 1939 and another in 1972. In the 1960s it was purchased by Southwestern, Inc., and most of the buildings were demolished in 1980. However, you can still see some of the original warehouse if you look closely at the flea market building.

The water tower dates from about 1923 when the Federal Cotton Compress was built.

Cosgrove Insurance looks like it was built about 1955.

Masner Furniture—This site was occupied by more of the Federal Cotton Compress buildings.

Nix Insurance & Kay Rent-to-Own—This area was sparsely developed but contained buildings associated with the cotton compress and some housing, possibly for compress employees.

West Memphis Commercial Historic District (700-900 blocks of E. Broadway retain the greatest historic integrity)

Unique features about these 3 blocks—several buildings have rounded corners and beveled corner entrances. Many buildings feature minimal Art Deco detailing in cast-concrete cornices on their storefronts. And there are small separations between buildings; sometimes a wall is built to connect two separate buildings on the sidewalk façade. That is not typical—early-to-mid-20th century commercial buildings were usually built right next to each other.

700 block:

701-703 E. Broadway—built about 1949. 701 storefront housed Aviotti's Grocery, run by Pete Aviotti and his son, Johnny. Louis Bambouchi later bought the store and had his butcher shop there until 2004. 703 storefront was Mike's Army Surplus, operated by Mike and Sadie Levitch.

705 E. Broadway—built ca. 1940. Paradise Gardens; sold cemetery plots to African-Americans (maybe out in the Edmonston or Proctor communities, southwest of West Memphis?).

707-709 E. Broadway—built ca. 1935. 707 storefront (Coleman Insurance) was Dr. Ralph Hamilton's medical practice. He was a general practitioner. 709 storefront was Ellis Drug Co. (drug store).

711 E. Broadway—Tom Payne Building. Built in 1935. Weisburd Dry Goods, run by Gerald Weisburd.

717 E. Broadway—built ca. 1945. Was originally 3 separate storefronts. Later housed the Max Levy Clothing Store.

721 E. Broadway—built ca. 1949. Housed Baddour’s Ready-to-Wear, which was a regional chain operated by a Lebanese family.

South 8th Street—Beginning in the late 1930s and going through the early 1960s, South 8th Street was called “Little Chicago” and “Beale Street West” because of its numerous night clubs, restaurants, and hotels for black musicians and patrons. On weekends it was so crowded that you couldn’t drive down the first few blocks of S. 8th, and cars were parked along E. Broadway for several blocks in either direction. There was a 9 p.m. curfew (or noise ordinance) in Memphis during part of this time, so musicians would come over here to play late at night. The West Memphis police chief was paid to look the other way...there were often illegal activities going on in the beer joints like gambling and prostitution. The “bag man” collected fees from juke joints to pay off city officials (allowed the joints to keep their doors open).

Some of the 8th Street businesses were: Andrew and Louise Bass’s Be-Bop Hall, Lois Knight’s Little Brown Jug, Pimpmy Jones’s Pool Hall, the Silver Moon Café, Samuel “Tub” Irvin’s Brown Derby and Tub’s Place, Jack Butler’s Busy Bee, Bubba Wright’s Doll House, Miss Sweet’s Café, the Dinette Lounge, the Blue Goose, and the Cozy Kitchen.

B. B. King began his career performing at The Square Deal Café (sometimes called Miss Annie’s Place because it was run by Annie Jordan), which was located in the 200 block of South 16th Street in West Memphis.

800 block:

801 E. Broadway—built ca. 1938. Was a grocery store.

805 E. Broadway—built ca. 1930.

807 E. Broadway—built ca. 1958. Beauty shop built between two older commercial buildings.

809 E. Broadway—built ca. 1955. This was Baddour’s Bargain Center, run by R. D. Smithers.

815 E. Broadway (Wong's Grocery & Deli)—built ca. 1935.

823 E. Broadway—built ca. 1950. Carl McCullough's TV shop.

900 block:

901-903 E. Broadway (now Extreme Cutz & City Food Market)—built ca. 1940. The smaller storefront at 901 was one-story and housed a restaurant. The larger storefront at 903 was a movie theater. It was the Harlem Theatre, which was built by Jack Rhodes and was exclusively for black patrons. The theater was purchased by Frank Ciancola and Stanley Fields in 1957, and they operated it for 10 years.

907 E. Broadway—built ca. 1942.

The large space to the east of 907 was historically unoccupied or used for junk cars.

923 E. Broadway (West Memphis Inn)—built ca. 1940. By 1938 there was a restaurant and filling station here, and the Cash Lumber Company was located back where the current motor court is now. The current buildings were constructed about 1940 as the Bil-Roy Café, Hotel, and Cottages. The main building had a restaurant on the first floor, a Mobil filling station out front, and hotel rooms on the second floor. There was a 26-unit motor court laid out in a U-shape to the south of the main building. A postcard from 1943 advertised the Bil-Roy, saying it offered steam heat, a service station out front with 3 pumps, a private bath in each room, delicious food served 24 hours a day, and plenty of parking space. This is now the West Memphis Inn.

End of CHD

1000 block:

SE corner of 10th & Broadway—in 1938 there was a filling station here, and in 1949 there was a trailer court here with a central office building. Place to park trailers.

Next buildings were built after 1949. Not sure about historic uses.

1100 block:

SE corner of 11th & Broadway (Save A Buck)—built ca. 1945. This was a hardware store.

Small blue and white building—built ca. 1945. Was a fish and meat market.

Remaining buildings not historic...

Site to the east of the Home Away from Home building at 1117 E. Broadway, there was a large 1-story building with at least 2 storefronts. Craft's Record Store was located in one side at 1119 E. Broadway until the late 1970s when a fire in the dress shop next door spread to their storefront, destroying the entire building. The Crafts had a recording studio in the back of the building at 1119 E. Broadway with a music store and insurance business up front.

1200 block:

By 1938 there was a 2-story building on the SE corner of 12th & Broadway. It housed a filling station on the first floor and living quarters on the second.

Current buildings on corner built ca. 1955?

St. Bernard Dry Cleaners—built ca. 1945. Has clothes hanger sign out front. Building may have newer brick façade. Formerly housed a fancy ladies' dress shop.

1223 E. Broadway (Deep South)—built ca. 1945. Housed a furniture store in the late 1940s.

1300 block:

Car lot building was built after 1949. On the 1949 Sanborn map, there is nothing on this entire block until you get to the southwest corner of 14th & Broadway, where there was a filling station (no longer extant).

Bus can turn around in the lot just before 14th Street (south side of Broadway) and head back west to discuss the north side of Broadway. Point out Williams Bar-B-Q at 106 S. 14th. Award-winning bar-b-q that has been around for more than 50 years.

1300 block of E. Broadway (north side, going west):

NW corner of 14th & Broadway (blue and white service station)—this building was here by 1938 and served as a dwelling and filling station.

There were a couple commercial buildings in this block and another filling station on the NE corner of 13th & Broadway (no longer extant).

1200 block:

NW corner of 13th & Broadway—may date from 1940s but not sure.

1216 E. Broadway—built ca. 1945. Had retail on the first floor and a hotel on the second. The Craft's record store (Danny Craft) moved into this building in 1965 and the upstairs rooms were still used for lodging at that time. Craft's later moved to 1119 E. Broadway (no longer extant) and later to their current home at 406 E. Broadway.

Other 2 buildings in block were built ca. 1955.

1204 E. Broadway was Jeff's Grocery & Meats.

1100 block:

1120 E. Broadway—built ca. 1945. Notice the scallop detail at the cornice. In 1949 this was a furniture store.

1116 E. Broadway (Glass Shop)—new construction.

2-story Martin Buildings—built ca. 1940. Housed restaurant and retail on the first levels and residential space on the second floor. The 1-story building in the middle (Highway of Holiness) was built much later.

1000 block:

1016-1018 E. Broadway—built ca. 1947. Was the office for a car sales business.

1014 E. Broadway (The Good Lyfe)—built ca. 1955.

1006-1008 E. Broadway (The Storeroom)—built ca. 1945 but has newer front façade.

Back into NR-listed CHD--

900 block:

920 E. Broadway (Ann Chapman's Outdoor Warehouse)—built ca. 1950. Has curved corner. Art Moderne.

916-918 E. Broadway—built ca. 1942. Notice the nice scalloped detailing at the cornice.

904 E. Broadway—built in 1961; see plaque on facade. Nice detailing at cornice.

900-902 E. Broadway—built ca. 1935.

800 block:

822 E. Broadway—built ca. 1935.

818 E. Broadway (Edge)—built ca. 1945. Housed Rowton's wholesale candy business by 1949.

810-812 E. Broadway—built ca. 1950.

806-808 E. Broadway (Phillips Building)—built ca. 1935. Unique cut-out lettering on top of the parapet reading "Phillips." Housed retail on the first floor and hotel rooms on the second floor. In 1938 there was a wholesale liquor distributorship in the eastern first floor storefront.

802 E. Broadway (City Gear)—built ca. 1955. Has new front façade and awning. This used to be the Wellworth 5 & 10 store.

700 block:

722 E. Broadway—built ca. 1940. Parrish’s Accounting Service in the 1970s.

718 E. Broadway (Crittenden Care Services)—built ca. 1935. R. H. Ray’s Hardware & Electric Store.

716 E. Broadway (Little Building)—built in 1932. Dan Little’s Little Peabody. Had retail on the first floor and boarding rooms on the second. It was later the Long Hotel and then Fred Crabtree’s bookstore.

712-714 E. Broadway—built ca. 1945. Was a Western Auto store.

710 E. Broadway (Saig Men’s Store)—built ca. 1948. Many of you know Alfred Saig, who runs Saig Clothing. Alfred Saig’s father, Sam, emigrated from Lebanon to Earle, Arkansas, and made a living as a peddler in the country. He later opened a small store. Then in 1955 Sam Saig and his two sons, George and Alfred, opened the Sam Saig & Sons Men’s Clothing Store in a building at 700 E. Broadway (NE corner of 7th & Broadway). When the highway department put in a turning lane at 7th Street in 1999, the building at 700 E. Broadway was demolished. Saig Clothing moved into their other building at 710 E. Broadway in December 1998. They had owned 710 since the 1960s and rented it out to various businesses, including an insurance firm, antique store, etc. George Saig was an original investor in Memphis’s Overton Square.

End of CHD

600 block:

West Memphis Police Department—This building was constructed in 1952 (or 1958?) to house the Bank of West Memphis. It was remodeled in 2000 to accommodate the West Memphis Police Department.

Behind the police department on N. 7th—West Memphis Fire Station No. 1, built in 1966.

Fred's—new façade on ca. 1955 building.

500 block:

2-story red brick building at NW corner of 5th & Broadway—built late 1950s or early 1960s.

Vacant lots

2-story buff brick building at 500 E. Broadway—built in 1953 to house West Memphis Federal Savings & Loan. Has interesting Art Moderne-inspired cast-concrete detailing.

Cross the RR tracks.

400 block:

Before any of these commercial buildings were built in the 400 block of E. Broadway, Miles L. Thompson's cotton gin was located here. Memphian Miles Lane Thompson bought 80 acres north of E. Broadway in 1918 and platted several additions to the city of West Memphis. In 1920 he built a cotton gin here on the west side of the tracks. The gin was operated by James Franklin Graham (Graham Street). Thompson later built a wood-frame store to the west of the gin, but it burned, so in 1929 he built the 2-story brick M. L. Thompson building at 406 E. Broadway for his store.

Red Barn Sports Center Building—built ca. 1965 and was the Red Barn Hamburger Restaurant. First fast food hamburger in West Memphis.

412 E. Broadway (Grangers Custom Cabinets)—built ca. 1945 and housed a restaurant.

410 E. Broadway (Pets, Plants & Ponds)—built ca. 1940. Has decorative parapet. In the 1940s, 410 and 408 housed the bus station.

408 E. Broadway—built ca. 1930. Decorative parapet with cast-concrete detail.

406 E. Broadway—M. L. Thompson Building. Built 1929. Cast-concrete detailing around parapet. After housing Thompson's store, it became a furniture store with living quarters upstairs. From about 1965 to the mid-1980s the city bus station was in this building. Now it is Craft's Insurance and Music Store—Craft's record store opened in 1963 and they started selling insurance about 1975. They still sell music equipment and CDs as well as insurance.

400 E. Broadway (King T)—built ca. 1930. Notice the finials at the corners of the parapet. The 1949 Sanborn shows a narrow 1-story building just to the east of this one, but it is no longer extant. 400 E. Broadway housed Parker's Café (still see "Parker's" in leaded glass transom under awning) and later, the first Kroger in West Memphis. Much later, Danny and Donnie Craft had a video store here before moving over to 406 E. Broadway.

300 block:

Vacant lots—there were several buildings on this block historically, most of which housed auto-related businesses.

Northwest corner of Graham and Broadway—In the 1930s, this was the site of Zack Bragg Chrysler-Plymouth Sales & Service. It was later a Cadillac dealership.

304 E. Broadway—built ca. 1940. This was Chalmers Buick and later, Sears.

200 block:

Lot just to west of 304 E. Broadway—toward the back of the lot—this was the site of West Memphis's first "downtown" hotel, the Hotel Crittenden. Memphian J. H. Horton built the hotel about 1925. It was later called the West Memphis Inn, and then in 1934 it was purchased by L. E. Turner and called the Turner Hotel. The hotel was demolished in 1941 by Ben F. Wever to make room for his Buck's Café and Wever-Riehl Motor Co. buildings. I think these were the buildings that later housed Watkins Café and Ben Franklin (no longer extant).

Interestingly, J. H. "Spec" Horton also built the Plantation Inn supper club in 1935 in the 3600 block of E. Broadway just west of Pancho's. The Plantation Inn was a

popular supper club for whites, mostly from Memphis, and offered gambling on the second floor. It was demolished in September 1965.

Vacant lots between 304 E. Broadway and 220 E. Broadway—By the early 1950s, there was a 2-story building just west of Chalmers Buick/Sears that housed Watkins Café. Watkins Café served steaks, seafood, salads, and sandwiches. The restaurant was open from 5:30 a.m. until 10 p.m. The building burned in December 1970. You can still see the terrazzo floor from Watkins Café. [There was also a location of Watkin's Café at Forrest City.]

Next to west was a one-story building which housed the Ben Franklin 5 & 10 store.

220 E. Broadway (Star Tax Service; 2-story)—built ca. 1942. Not sure what was here.

214-216-218 E. Broadway—built on the site of a 1936 building which housed the Chamber of Commerce in its eastern storefront and the Broadway Liquor Store/Romine's Liquor in the western storefront.

Centered in the middle of the space now occupied by a vacant lot and the gable-roof building at 204 E. Broadway—The Coffee Cup Restaurant. The Coffee Cup advertised its country cured ham, southern fried chicken, and steaks. In 1958 Elvis Presley ate his first breakfast after joining the U.S. Army at the Coffee Cup. The building was demolished in 1965 to make way for a new restaurant, which later became a night club.

Wilson Power & Light Company Ice Plant--built about 1930. Later sold to Arkansas Power & Light. AP&L operated 17 ice houses in Arkansas until getting out of the business in 1945. This ice plant was then sold to private owners Roy Morley and Vance Thompson, and the business remained successful because of its prominent location on Hwy. 70. Renamed Delta Ice Company, Thompson and Morley, and later Morley's son, operated the ice house, which made 300-pound blocks in floor-recessed vats. The large blocks were then cut into 25-50 pound blocks and sold commercially and to individuals.

The ice house continues to be used for the production of ice, although the process has been modernized under new ownership. In 1982 the Delta Ice Company switched to city water instead of using the natural spring well on site. The company also modernized the ice equipment to make ice cubes instead of large blocks. The company is locally owned and operated by Jerry and Kelli Burns, who continue to distribute ice to the greater Memphis area. The Wilson Power & Light Company Ice Plant is one of the last, if not THE last, historic ice plant in Arkansas still in operation.

Green awning building—built ca. 1928 but has been altered with metal awning. The eastern storefront was home to the city's first bank, the Bank of West Memphis, which opened here at 114 E. Broadway in July 1928. The next storefront at 112 E. Broadway was Spott's Drug Store, owned by J. O. Spotts. It had a soda fountain and was a popular hangout. The next two storefronts housed various retail. By the mid-20th century, Spott's Drug Store took up the entire building.

Old filling station at northeast corner Broadway & Missouri (Check Cashers & Tobacco 2 Go)--constructed about 1940 as an Esso station.

Quickly look up Missouri to north...

Northwest corner of Broadway & Missouri (now Steele-Guiltner Tire Pros)—location of Sally's Café and White's Texaco filling station and trailer park in the mid-20th century. The Crittenden Theatre was located to the north of White's Texaco.

The Crittenden Theatre was located in the 100 block of N. Missouri (104 N. Missouri). It was built in 1938 and was one of the finest theatres in the area. Ushers wore tuxedos. It was a whites-only theatre. The theatre hosted a weekly Bank Night, where people could win cash prizes. It was also the meeting place for the Roy Rogers fan club. From 1957 to 1959, the Crittenden Bowling Lanes were in the old theatre. The building is no longer extant.

Cross Broadway—back to West Broadway...

The entire area north of W. Broadway across from the old City Hall was occupied by the West Memphis Gin & Supply Company. The gin operated into the 1970s.

Conclusion—

Construction on I-40 and I-55 began in 1950, and a small section of interstate from the MS River levee to Missouri Street was opened in June 1951. By December 1963, I-55 was opened all the way north to Blytheville. As motorists began using the new interstate highways, commercial and residential development shifted toward the interstate. Businesses along Hwy. 70/Broadway suffered as big box retailers constructed new stores several blocks to the north. But Broadway remains a major thoroughfare in West Memphis, and it has lots of potential.