

**Walks through History  
Wynne Commercial HD  
May 15, 2010  
By: Rachel Silva**



### **Intro**

Hi, my name is Rachel Silva, and I work for the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program. Welcome to the May Walks through History tour of the Wynne CHD. The district was listed on the National Register of HP in Dec. 2009 for its association with the commercial development of Wynne and its collection of late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century commercial-style architecture. The district is bounded by Front St. on the west, Pecan on the south, Wilson & Terry on the east, and Commercial on the north. I want to thank Bridget Hart for sending me so much great information on the history of Wynne and also Bridget, Carol Brown, Hope Mullins, Florence Halstead, and Mary Evelyn Lee for riding through downtown Wynne with me last week.

### **History of Wynne**

Cross County was one of two counties created by Arkansas's Confederate Legislature in November 1862 (the other was Woodruff) and was formed from parts of St. Francis, Poinsett, and Crittenden counties. Cross County was named after Colonel David C. Cross, who led the Fifth Arkansas Infantry Regiment during the Civil War. Col. Cross had a home in southern Poinsett County, which is

now northern Cross County. He returned home from the war in 1862 to lobby for the creation of a new county. Cross and his allies slipped past enemy Union troops and went to Little Rock, where they persuaded the legislature to establish Cross County. Wittsburg was designated the temporary county seat of Cross County, but it was not recognized as such because Union troops occupied the area. Pineville was chosen as the next county seat in 1863, and the first county clerk, Dr. Burley D. McClaren, lived there, so his house was used to conduct county business. In the spring of 1865, county commissioners selected Cleburne as the next county seat. Cleburne was named after Col. Cross's fallen commander, General Patrick R. Cleburne of Helena. Col. Cross donated land in the center of the town for the construction of a courthouse, and his home in Cleburne was used as the temporary courthouse (because Col. Cross had moved to Memphis by this time).

However, a courthouse was never constructed at Cleburne because the county seat was moved again in 1868 to Wittsburg, a thriving town on the banks of the St. Francis River in eastern Cross County. However, when the north-south Helena branch of the St. Louis, Iron Mountain & Southern Railroad was completed through the center of Cross County in 1882, Wittsburg declined as the railroad replaced the steamboat as the major form of transportation. Many people relocated to Vanndale, a community located on the railroad. Vanndale was named after a local merchant, John M. Vann. In 1884, the county seat was moved to Vanndale, and a courthouse was erected there in 1888 (the county's first). Meanwhile, it appeared as if the east-west Memphis (or Bald Knob) branch of the St. Louis, Iron Mountain & Southern Railroad would come through Wittsburg, possibly providing another shot in the arm for their town; however, a natural gap in Crowley's Ridge to the north of Wittsburg proved the most economical route for the railroad. The Memphis branch would eventually make its way through the small community of Wynne in 1886.

But Wynne can actually trace its history back to 1882 when the Helena branch of the railroad was completed. A train derailed almost due west of then-county seat Wittsburg, leaving behind a boxcar. The boxcar was turned upright, and the site was called "Wynne Station" in honor of Civil War veteran and prominent Forrest City banker Captain Jesse Watkins Wynne. However, the small community experienced rapid growth after 1886, when the Memphis and Helena branches of the St. Louis, Iron Mountain & Southern Railroad crossed at Wynne. Wynne was incorporated on May 28, 1888, and the county seat was moved in 1903 about six miles south from Vanndale to Wynne, where it remains today.

Wynne had a population of about 400 people when it was incorporated in 1888; however, by 1890, the population had more than doubled to 1,000. *The Goodspeed Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Eastern Arkansas* ranked it “among the first of Eastern Arkansas towns” in “commercial importance” in 1890. As early as 1897, commercial buildings lined Front Street. The town was situated primarily to the southeast of the railroad intersection in the early years. Wynne was home to large industries like the Kennedy-Murelock Stave Company and the Wynne Sawmill Company in addition to a host of commercial enterprises concentrated along Front Street between Levesque and Commercial Avenue. However, a fire in September 1897 destroyed over two-thirds of the downtown businesses, amounting to over \$200,000 in damages. The area was quickly rebuilt with more substantial brick structures, and the town continued to grow.

Cross County (and much of the Arkansas Delta, for that matter) was once covered by vast forests of hardwood timber. Sawmills, stave mills, and associated timber industries operated near the junction of the rail lines at Wynne in order to easily ship their goods. However, “cut out and get out” practices quickly depleted the Delta forests, clearing much of the land for farming. In addition to timberlands, much of the county was situated on fertile soil ideal for growing a variety of crops. The lowlands were predominantly planted in cotton in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and as many as three cotton gins were located in the city limits of Wynne from 1903 to 1908. Two gins continued to operate inside the city limits until at least 1951, and Wynne was also home to a large cotton compress and warehouse during those years. Gibbs-Harris Rice Dryer, Inc., the first rice dryer in Wynne, was constructed between 1945 and 1951, indicating a shift to rice farming.

The Missouri Pacific Railroad stopped passenger service through Wynne in 1965, signaling the end of the railroad era and the final push toward the automobile age. The 1910 Missouri Pacific Passenger Depot was demolished in 1993. Although many businesses are now located along Highways 1 and 64, these historic commercial buildings serve as a reminder of a time when the railroad served as the center of commerce. It is also interesting to note that the initial development of Wynne coincided with a large migration of Jews from Eastern Europe, and many of the city’s downtown merchants were Jewish.

**The Mo-Pac Depot (demolished in 1993) was located just to the north of the tracks (in NE quadrant of the T). See concrete steps by tracks. From at least 1897 until about 1910, there was an earlier Iron Mountain Depot located in the SE corner of the tracks (just north of us).**

### **Park @ SE corner of Front & Commercial (w/ caboose)**

There was a hotel on this site beginning as early as 1897 (first Sanborn map). This makes perfect sense b/c it would have been very close to the passenger depot. Many of you remember this as the Wynne Hotel, which was actually built about 1935 and burned in the late 1970s or early 1980s.

Before the Wynne Hotel building was constructed, there was a 3-story building with a mansard roof on the site. It was labeled as the Cosmopolitan Hotel in 1897 and the Warfield Hotel in 1903 (there was a Wynne Hotel during this time period, but it was located about where the Ben Franklin Store was on Merriman). In 1908, the 3-story building located here became the Van Noy Hotel Annex, with a barber shop, restaurant, and dry goods store on the first floor and hotel rooms on the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> levels. Also at this time, another 3-story building was constructed just to the north of Commercial but south of the RR tracks, and it connected to the Van Noy Hotel Annex by an iron-clad passage on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor. This was labeled the Van Noy Hotel and had a lunch room. This building configuration remained in place until about 1935.

A promotional booklet published in 1939 called *A Message to the Homeseeker* described the Wynne Hotel as being on Front St. opposite the depot and ranking among the best in eastern AR. Said it was a 2-story stucco building with 34 guest rooms. It was “an old established, but modern hotel” indicating that the business had been established long ago, but the building was new...and the Sanborn map shows a different building configuration...went from 3-story mansard roof building to 2-story with flat roof and took up the entire ½ block from Commercial to the alley. According to the 1939 booklet, the Wynne Hotel had hot and cold running water, steam heat, and private or connecting baths. It was operated by G. S. Davis. The hotel rooms were on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor and various businesses occupied the 1<sup>st</sup> floor storefronts, like a restaurant and 2 barber shops (one facing Front St. & the other facing Commercial behind the hotel).

### **208 N. Front...Union St. is the division N & S, and the RR tracks are the division E & W for addresses in Wynne.**

Built about 1908 and was a lunch counter and restaurant for many years. Exhibits some restrained Italianate influence with the brick hood molding over the 2<sup>nd</sup> story windows.

### **206 N. Front**

Built about 1905. Housed Bertini's Grocery shortly after it was completed. Then served as a restaurant, pool hall, moving pictures, and another pool hall by the 1950s. From at least 1913 to 1951, the second floor was used as a Lodge Hall of some sort.

### **204 N. Front**

Built about 1908. Was a pool hall, grocery store, dry goods store, restaurant, and in recent memory, either a barber shop or a pool hall. You can still see the ghost sign reading "Palace Saloon" on the upper façade...from the building's early days as a pool hall/saloon?

### **202 N. Front**

Built about 1908. Before this building was constructed, there was a saloon on this site. By 1908, this building housed a drug store. It was Stott's Drug Store and then Burnett Drugs by the 1940s. It had a soda fountain, which the owners immediately removed during integration. The first integrated high school class in Wynne was the Class of 1966.

### **Vacant lot at SE corner of Front & Merriman (Merriman named after Mr. B. B. Merryman, who opened the first store in Wynne in 1883)**

This was the site of two 2-story buildings that burned in the mid-1990s. They were both constructed about 1900. The northernmost building had two storefronts and housed separate businesses. It originally had a brick façade with a raised parapet and brick corbelling at the cornice, but it was probably remodeled sometime in the 1920s to reflect the more popular Craftsman style of architecture during that time. The building was stuccoed, the roofline was altered with a mansard awning and triangular knee braces, and rows of ribbon windows were added to the 2<sup>nd</sup> story.

The northernmost storefront was home to Katz Grocery in the 1920s, but by the 1930s, it was Standley's Ladies Wear, and the southern storefront was Leamon's Shoe Store. By the early 1940s, Katz Grocery had moved back into the Leamon's side of the building. Standley's expanded into the entire building by 1947. The entire building was the Good Shepherd Center when it burned in the 1990s.

The other 2-story building that is now gone housed a drug store from at least 1903 until 1992. First, it was Dr. Longest's Drug Store. Dr. Longest made his own medicines and prescriptions and also sold school books. He was known for being very straight-laced. Then in 1946 after he found out he had cancer, Dr. Longest offered to sell his business and building to Sam and Lucile McGuire because Sam had gotten his pharmacist training while serving in the Navy during WWII. Dr. Longest died 6 months after the McGuires accepted his offer. The McGuires set up a plan where they could pay rent with part of it going toward the principal every month, and that is how they were able to afford the business and the building. Sam McGuire set up one of the first TVs in Wynne at his drug store. The McGuires ran the drug store until Sam died in 1992. The former McGuire Drug Store building was also heavily damaged by fire in the mid-1990s and demolished at the same time as the Standley's building next door. Lucile Kernodle McGuire is still living in Wynne.

### **114 N. Front**

This building and the one just to the south of it are both owned by Sam McGuire, Jr. of Little Rock. A former building on this site housed a confectionary and restaurant. This building was constructed about 1915 as a meat market. By the 1940s it was the Wynne Toggery. When the Toggery went out of business, Jimmy Moore bought it and opened Vic's Dollar Store in the late 1960s. Then it became a washateria (self-service laundry).

### **112 N. Front**

Built about 1905. Served as a bakery and grocery for many years. It was Mitchell's Grocery in the 1940s. Bledsoe's Men's Store occupied this building (or the one to the north, or both) in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Notice typical early 20<sup>th</sup> century commercial style architecture on buildings—recessed brick panels and corbelling at the cornice.

### **110 N. Front**

This building is NC to the district b/c of the panel over the 2<sup>nd</sup> story façade. There were 3 windows in the upper façade originally. However, the building was constructed about 1905 as a grocery store. By the 1940s, it was Baddour's Ready-to-Wear, which was owned by a Syrian family in Wynne.

**\*\*Keep in mind that in the 1930s and 40s all the businesses facing west had drop down canvas awnings with dowel rods in the hem to block the afternoon sun. Our own Bridget Hart was frequently hit in the forehead by these dowel rods when she was a child.**

Also, downtown Wynne was so busy on Saturdays in the 1940s and 50s that popcorn stands were located in alleyways like this one, and they would sell popcorn to kids and hungry shoppers.

### **108 N. Front**

Built about 1903 as a dry goods store. Later sold clothes and shoes as well.

### **106 N. Front**

Built about 1919 as a drug store. May have been Curd's Grocery in the 1940s-50s.

### **104 N. Front**

Built about 1908 as a confectionary. Later served as a meat market and a variety store. Phillip Proctor's Grocery was established here in 1914 and remained until at least the 1940s. It was one of 4 Proctor groceries in downtown Wynne during that time. There were 4 Proctor brothers—Phillip, John, C. A., and Dan. All of the stores were called Proctor Grocery, except for Dan's, which was National Cash Grocers.

### **102 N. Front (Cross County Bank)**

The Cross County Bank building is the oldest resource in the historic district with a construction date of 1891. It exhibits some Romanesque Revival characteristics like the rounded arch openings above the windows and front door. The bank had a capital stock of \$30,000 in 1891. It was originally a brick buildings and was later covered with stucco (maybe 1920s?) The Cross Co. Bank was located here until 1948-49 when they constructed a new building at the northeast corner of Wilson & Merriman (now Esther Witcher's office). In the early 1950s the old bank building housed a beauty school, and about that same time, there was a liquor store in the rear storefront that faces Union Ave.

### **102-104 S. Front**

Originally constructed about 1900. It was a grocery and meat market in 1903, a general store and furniture store by 1908, and by 1913 it was a hardware and crockery. The building was damaged by fire around 1913, but the interior firewall was removed and it remained a hardware and crockery for several years after that. In the 1940s, this was Dail Furniture & Home Goods. Sometime in the late '40s, the first Kroger store in Wynne was located in this building. This tile veneer was on the building in the 1940s, but there used to be 2 louvered vents in the upper façade.

### **106 S. Front**

Built about 1935. Was Drew Head's Shoe Shop (cobbler). He would make you a pair of leather sandals for \$1.50.

### **108 S. Front**

Built about 1910 as a bakery and grocery store. This was the Rodgers Theater in the 1940s, but the theater here was short-lived. The Imperial Theater on Merriman was the main theater in town. By the late '40s, this building was used as furniture storage.

### **Prefab Metal Bldg.**

The 2-story Tennessee Hotel was located on the site of this prefabricated metal building by 1897. It was renamed the U.S. Hotel by 1919. Sometime in the late 1920s or early 1930s, the hotel was demolished and a large 1-story brick building was constructed here. It served as a furniture store. The 1-story brick building was demolished sometime in 2008 and the prefab metal building was probably put up shortly thereafter.

### **Vacant lot at NE corner of Front & Levesque**

This was the site of a 2-story brick building built about 1905. It served as a general store and furniture store before becoming the City Hall, jail, and fire department by the 1940s. The second floor of the building was a Masonic Hall. The City Hall moved out of the building by the early 1950s. This building was demolished within the last 2 years...probably at the same time as the 1-story building just to the north.

## **Vacant lot at SE corner of Front & Levesque**

A large wholesale grocery building was constructed here about 1900, but it was gone by the early 1930s. This lot has been vacant since that time and was used as an elementary playground for children attending school in the building at 111 Levesque (just to east with Carter's sign). Bridget Hart attended kindergarten there in the mid-1930s.

## **206 S. Front (white painted brick)**

Built about 1905. Was a repair shop, general store, grocery wareroom for the large grocery warehouse to the north, furniture store, and by the 1950s a Laundromat.

## **208 S. Front (ghost sign)**

Also built about 1905. Served as a blacksmith shop, feed storage, bakery, and by the 1940s or early 1950s, it was the Automotive Parts Company. See ghost sign: "Automotive Parts Co. Wholesale Parts for Cars, Trucks, Tractors, etc. pho. 478." The "478" phone number predates 1962. On a cloudy day, you can also see a ghost sign reading "R. C. Cola Bottling Plant."

**\*\*Frame & concrete block buildings on west side of RR tracks were Ark-Mo Lumber Co. and then Wynne Lumber Co.**

## **210-216 S. Front**

Built as one building about 1935. Was Westmoreland Heating & Air in the 1950s.

## **218 S. Front**

Built about 1900 as grocery store on 1<sup>st</sup> floor and opera hall on 2<sup>nd</sup> floor. Then about 1908, there was a hardware store on the 1<sup>st</sup> floor and a tin shop on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor. From about 1919 until at least the 1940s it was Wilks' Handy Store, which was a grocery store with delivery. The store was managed by Mrs. J. J. Wilks and guaranteed "honest merchandise at honest prices." Ghost sign says "Opera House" and possibly "Wilks' Store." Notice the arched window openings on the second floor and the cast iron pillars on the storefront—this was a more high-style commercial building in Wynne.

### **302-304 S. Front**

Constructed about 1915 along with the building at 306-308 S. Front as a garage. In 1937 this half (302-304) became the Wynne Implement Company, owned by W. C. Daniel, Jr., and W. C. “Bill” Daniel, III. They sold John Deere farm implements and the celebrated “SuperFex” refrigerators (oil-burning refrigerator).

### **306-308 S. Front**

Constructed about 1915 with building to north and used as auto garage. In the 1940s or 50s this was Purina Feed, and the front façade was painted in red and white checks. Now Wynne Feed Store.

**Go East on Canal Ave. (originally named Walnut; changed to Canal after 1951)**

**South side of Canal—Elton Carter Automotive (concrete block building) was a blacksmith shop.**

### **NW corner of Canal & Wilson—Russell Clemons’s Tin Shop**

Russell Clemons came to Wynne in the early 1920s and started his tin shop in 1922. It was in a long, one-room brick building near this corner. The tin shop made custom tin or copper pieces used in building construction and repair work, such as skylights, cornices, cresting, drain pipe, and guttering. They also did heating and air conditioning by the late 1930s. By 1939, the tin shop moved around the corner to the last brick building on S. Front St. before the creek bridge (this building is now gone). In the mid-1940s, Russell and his brother, Thurman, opened Clemons Brothers Sheet Metal Works in a building just to the southwest of the rice dryers. Then in the late 1940s, they built a new shop at 301 Cogbill where the Tri-County Baptist Association is now (either a different building or heavily altered to current appearance). Tin Shop closed in the early 1950s, and Russell Clemons died in 1955. His only child, Rev. James Clemons, lives in Maryland.

This was later the site of Vincent Moore Plumbing.

**Go north on Wilson St.—originally named 2<sup>nd</sup> St., but between 1913 and 1919, it was renamed Woodrow St. after President Woodrow Wilson (1913-1921). Sometime around 1950, the name was changed again to Wilson St.**

### **SW corner of Wilson & Levesque—rubble pile**

Site of former building constructed about 1935 as an auto repair shop and filling station with glass gas pumps on the Levesque side. By 1939 it was the Rolfe Implement Company, owned by Elliott A. and F. D. Rolfe. They sold the J. L. Case line of farm implements and also maintained a service department (kept the gas pumps in service). Recently demolished.

### **Concrete pad at SE corner of Wilson & Levesque**

This was the site of Burt's Grocery, which was built between 1945 and 1951 as a neighborhood grocery store. Beyond this to the east was residential.

### **116 E. Levesque (NW corner of Wilson & Levesque)**

Built about 1915 and housed an undertaker business. Later Blessings's Liquor Store.

### **Parking lot at NE corner of Wilson & Levesque**

There used to be 3 buildings in this parking lot. Two houses built about 1900 were located on the south end of the parking lot facing Levesque. They were still here on the 1951 Sanborn map. The other building was located on the northern end of the parking lot and was built about 1915 as the Hotel Wilson. It was a 2-story wood-frame building with a double-decker front porch. In the 1940s it was a bar with rooms for rent on the 2<sup>nd</sup> story—likely for railroad workers.

### **Lot behind Steinberg's Grocery (west side of Wilson between Union & Levesque)**

The lot behind Steinberg's was used by people who came in from the country on Saturdays to shop in downtown Wynne. They would park their wagons or horses in this lot and then walk around to do their business.

### **Walk up to Steinberg Memorial Park & look back at SE corner of Wilson & Union.**

### **100 S. Wilson (SE corner of Wilson & Union)**

Built about 1940 as 3 storefronts facing Union. It was Usery Furniture Company and then Surginer's Furniture before it was purchased by Walter Gardner. Notice the upside down GE sign (has been like that for many years). ☺

### **102 S. Wilson (just to south)**

Built between 1945 and 1951. Was a Western Auto Store.

### **Buildings on Union:**

#### **113-115 Union**

Steinberg's Grocery & Dry Goods. Jewish immigrant Hyman Steinberg came to Wynne in 1920 and established his grocery & dry goods company. Steinberg worked closely with area farmers to provide equipment and market their crops. He helped found the Merchants & Farmers Gin Company as well. His 3 sons, Morris, Izzy, and Arthur, also worked in the family business. This building was constructed in 1935 to replace their earlier building. Steinberg's had 2 salesrooms—one for dry goods, clothing, and shoes, and another for groceries, flour, and feed.

#### *Steinberg Memorial Park:*

Hyman Steinberg's sons donated land to the City of Wynne in 1978 for the creation of Steinberg Memorial Park, named in honor of their father.

#### **109-111 Union**

Built about 1935. Graham Hardware was established in 1917 and is one of the oldest family-owned and operated businesses in Wynne. Graham Hardware originally occupied only the eastern storefront, and Collins Department Store was located in the west side. Then Graham expanded into the entire building. The façade on this building was probably added in the 1950s or '60s.

#### *Russell Clemons's Workbench:*

While working with Rev. James Clemons on his Tin Shop story for the CCHS newsletter, Bridget Hart remembered seeing a workbench with a long piece of railroad track mounted on the top like the one he described as being in his father's tin shop. It was in the back of Graham Hardware, so she took some pictures of the

rail and sent them to Mr. Clemons. He immediately recognized both the rail and the workbench on which the rail was mounted! Not only did he recognize the rail and table, but also the two metal crimpers and the large vice grip that still sit there, and which are still being used! The part of the rail that protrudes from the end of the workbench had been painted red so that a little child (James Clemons) wouldn't bang his head on it.

### **Buildings demolished in 1978 to make way for Steinberg Memorial Park...**

There were originally 5 buildings facing Union, all built about 1905. By 1945, two of those individual buildings opened up an interior wall to become one big building, reducing the number of actual buildings to 4.

In 1908, there were two general stores, barber, restaurant, and the City Hotel. The name of the City Hotel was changed to the Negro Hotel by 1913.

Later, there was a Chinese store located on the western end of the block (now parking lot), and the owner's son, named E. Tinbu?, turned out to be a brilliant scientist and engineer. John Proctor's Grocery was in the middle of the block in the large building w/ 2 storefronts. It later became Hooper's Furniture (by 1951). The 3<sup>rd</sup> building from the west was a dry cleaner's in 1945, and Ross Marzano Jewelry was on the eastern end of the block where the plaque is now.

### **102 N. Wilson (NE corner of Union & Wilson)**

Built about 1910. Before it was constructed, there was a stable on this corner. This was C. A. Proctor's Grocery, and later, the northernmost storefront facing Wilson was John Surginer's Records & TVs.

### **117 E. Merriman (Wynne Water Utilities)**

Built about 1935 in the Art Deco style. This building housed Stupie's Liquor Store (real name Saripkin—Jewish family)...in rear only??? The building housed Reagler's (Rigler's) 5 & 10 cent store in the 1930s & '40s.

\*\*The Wynne Hotel was located on this block facing north toward Merriman until about 1905, when most of these buildings were constructed (except Wynne Water Utilities building).

## **119 Merriman**

This was Bornstein's Dry Goods store. It had been a grocery for a long time.

## **111-113 Merriman**

Mac Brown Shoe Store in 1940s. Later Mode-a-day Ladies Wear. Carl Crain's dentist office was upstairs, and later it was Dr. Jackson's optometrist office.

**\*\*Interesting note: There are 2 buildings missing from this block!! A 2-story building was west of 113 Merriman—still see the remains of the red brick at the top of the building where it connected. This was home to the Ben Franklin Store. The other building was 1-story and just west of the Ben Franklin Store. It was The Hub Men's Wear. Both of these buildings were either severely damaged or burned when the old Standley's building & McGuire Drug Store burned in the 1990s. These were presumably demolished all at once.**

**North side of Merriman...starting from corner of Wilson & Merriman.**

## **116 E. Merriman**

Built about 1905. This building has housed a drug store for the majority of its life, and there was a drug store here even before this building was constructed. It started out as Hamilton's Drug Store, then Stutts Drug Co. beginning in 1935. Stutts Drug was founded by Arthur L. Stutts in '35, but he died soon after that, so his wife ran the business. It had a soda fountain. Later it was Holiman Drug, and then Joe Manning's Drug Store.

## **114 E. Merriman**

Built about 1890. Was John Konrad Hermann's Butcher Shop during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, and the family lived above the shop. There was a small stockyard and area to butcher cattle out behind the shop as well as a smokehouse. In 1914 Hermann leased his building to R. J. Buchanan, a barber. J. K. Hermann died in 1916 (he was Bridget Hart's great-grandfather).

## **110-112 E. Merriman**

Built about 1900. One building w/ 2 storefronts. Was initially a grocery, dry goods store, and hardware store. Then the western storefront became a

confectionary and tobacco shop by 1913. It was called The Candy Shop by the 1930s or early '40s. Then in the mid-1940s the west side became the “We Three” Restaurant, which was run by 3 teachers from Wynne—Velma Mahoney, Yvonne Charlesworth, and Bobbie Smith. In 1947 a Firestone store went into the eastern storefront. In the mid-to-late 1950s, Herb Houser had a TV & Hardware store there...maybe called Houser’s Electric?

### **108 E. Merriman**

This small white stuccoed building was originally red brick, as you can see through the crumbling stucco. It was built about 1915 and served as a barber shop. Interesting story about this barber shop...during one January in the 1960s, Florence Halstead went into this barber shop to get warm and wait for her husband, Fred Halstead, to finish his hair cut. The barber was very friendly and even invited the Halsteads to have lunch at his home (the barber didn’t know they were scouting out a location for their copper tube plant). The barber’s kindness turned out to be the deciding factor in locating the huge copper tube plant, Halstead Industries, Inc., in Wynne (bought by Mueller Industries in 1998).

**Stop and look down north end of Wilson (N of Merriman)...starting on the west...**

### **211 N. Wilson**

The buildings on the west side of this block were built as 2-story buildings about 1930; the building on the north originally looked almost like the Davis Furniture building, but has partially collapsed. The first one, with board-and-batten on the front, was National Cash Grocers in the 1930s and '40s. It was owned by Dan Proctor, and although it’s name said “national,” it was not a national chain—he just wanted to stand out from his brothers. It had been a short-lived movie theater before the grocery store went in, so there was a balcony. The balcony was used to store large items, and there were frozen food lockers in the back. People would rent out freezer lockers here before the advent of home refrigerators.

### **215 N. Wilson**

Davis Furniture Store and later Otasco (Oklahoma Tire & Supply Company).

## **217 N. Wilson**

Housed the popular Soda Grill restaurant in the 1940s, before it moved across the street. This building was later home to Ellis Appliances.

## **East side of Wilson...**

### **212-214 N. Wilson (City Liquor)**

One building w/ 2 storefronts, built about 1935 to replace 2-story building on this site. South side was Liberty Cash Grocers in the 1940s & the Soda Grill moved into the north (red) side about 1950.

### **216 & 218 N. Wilson**

The gray and white stucco buildings were built about 1910. The northernmost (white) building was a post office in the 1910s before becoming the *Wynne Progress* newspaper office. Both of these buildings were owned by Dave Block.

### **NE corner of Wilson & Merriman...start w/ Esther Witcher's office**

**\*\*The Baker Hotel was on this block from at least 1897 to 1910. Then disappeared.**

### **200 E. Merriman**

In 1919 there was an Air Dome on this corner. Air Domes were open air movie theaters surrounded by a tall fence...it was like a drive-in, but you walked in and sat down instead. The Air Dome was gone by the 1945 Sanborn map. In 1947 this was a vacant lot. See photos. Then the Cross County Bank built this building here in 1948-49 and moved the bank from Front St. to this location on Merriman.

### **Buff Brick bldg. to east (204 E. Merriman)**

Constructed between 1945 and 1951. Between 1960 and 1965, it was the Joy Shop, which sold women's and children's wear.

### **206 E. Merriman**

This was built about 1930 and housed Hamrick Brothers Hardware. D. M. and A. C. Hamrick started their hardware business in Wynne in 1916, but were in a different location at first.

### **210 E. Merriman**

Built about 1900 to house the Bank of Wynne. Later became 1<sup>st</sup> National Bank. Walter Killough's law office was on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor. This building was continuously used as a bank until at least 1951. Now it's Shaver & Shaver's law office.

**Parking lot to east of bank building. A large 2-story house occupied this lot from at least 1897 until 1951. It was labeled the Spark's Hotel in 1897 and later became a dwelling. Supposedly early Wynne resident & businessman Isaac Block's house that was moved here from Wittsburg. When it was a residence, it belonged to Ms. Myer (a descendant of Block?).**

**South side of Merriman...start w/ Roman brick building**

### **211 E. Merriman**

This Roman brick building was constructed about 1960. This half of the block had been vacant up until that time. The Sterling 5 & 10 store was located in the eastern half of the building, and Van Adkins's Department Store, initially managed by Virgil Merrill of Forrest City, was located in the western half. Then about 1965 Van Adkins took over the entire building after Sterling went out of business.

### **205 E. Merriman**

Woncomb Building? Constructed in 1949. Has been remodeled with a new drivit façade. Was home to Jethro Harrel's appliance company, maybe called Murray Tire & Electric.

### **203 E. Merriman**

Built about 1910. Was Myers Mercantile and then became Myers Department Store. James Robertson's law office was upstairs in the 1950s.

**Back to Merriman & Terry to point out a few more things if there is time...**

### **Jim Luker's office on Terry**

There was a livery stable there in the early 1900s. This building was built about 1915 as an auto garage and later used as an implement company. It was Falls Equipment Co. in the 1930s and '40s. In 1946 it was the office of the *Star Progress* newspaper before becoming the office for the *Wynne Progress*.

### **NE corner of Merriman & Terry**

City Service Gas Station built about 1930 on this corner. Now gone.

### **Where drive-in bank is now...site of Imperial Theater**

Merryman Theater in this location as early as 1908. New theater building constructed on same site about 1930. It housed the Imperial Theater in the 1930s and '40s. Now gone...

There was also a little dress shop just to the east of the Imperial...also gone.

### **South side of Merriman where dental office & bank are now...**

Used to be Methodist church, then the Women's Progressive Club, and then the Baptist church...churches both demolished about 1969, the same year as the courthouse. See photos.

Teaches us an important lesson about historic preservation...or at least reminds us that once something is gone, it's gone forever...often along with its history.