

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the Instructions. Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).

## 1. Name of Property

historic name Monticello Commercial Historic District

other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

## 2. Location

street & number Bounded roughly by Trotter Ave., Edwards St., Railroad Ave. and Chester  NA not for publication  
St.

city or town Monticello  NA vicinity

state Arkansas code AR county Drew code 043 zip code 71655

## 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

national  statewide  local

*Corrie Matthews*  
Signature of certifying official

7/15/11  
Date

Title \_\_\_\_\_ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government \_\_\_\_\_

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of commenting official \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Title \_\_\_\_\_ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government \_\_\_\_\_

#### 4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register

determined eligible for the National Register

determined not eligible for the National Register

removed from the National Register

other (explain:)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of the Keeper

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date of Action

#### 5. Classification

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- |                                     |                  |
|-------------------------------------|------------------|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | private          |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | public - Local   |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | public - State   |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | public - Federal |

**Category of Property**  
(Check only one box)

- |                                     |             |
|-------------------------------------|-------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | building(s) |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | district    |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | site        |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | structure   |
| <input type="checkbox"/>            | object      |

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
22	12	buildings
		district
1		site
		structure
		object
23	1	<b>Total</b>

**Name of related multiple property listing**  
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

\_\_\_\_\_  
NA

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

\_\_\_\_\_  
4

#### 6. Function or Use

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE: department store, specialty store, restaurant, warehouse

GOVERNMENT: post office, city hall

DOMESTIC: hotel

RECREATION AND CULTURE: theater

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE: department store, specialty store, professional

GOVERNMENT: city hall

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## 7. Description

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### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Italianate, Moderne, No Style

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### Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation: Brick, concrete

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walls: Brick, stucco

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roof: Other: built-up tar

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other:

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## Narrative Description

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(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

### Summary Paragraph:

Monticello, located in southeastern Arkansas, is the seat of Drew County. The boundaries of the proposed downtown commercial district encompass 39 buildings, with contributing elements ranging in date from circa 1890 through the 1950s. With two exceptions, buildings historically were commerce-related. The exceptions are the U. S. Post Office and the Monticello Municipal Building. The district has a 31% non-contributing rate. The principal integrity issue is the loss over the years of some of downtown's commercial building stock. Nonetheless, a sufficient number of buildings survive (many major) to enable downtown Monticello to convey its historic role as a center of commerce for the town and surrounding rural areas.

### Overview:

Monticello was platted in 1851 with a standard grid focused on a central courthouse square. The courthouse remained on the square until 1932 when it was demolished and a new building was constructed some two blocks to the south (outside the nominated area). (The old square is fairly small and county officials needed more land for a larger courthouse.) Since the relocation, the old courthouse square has been known simply as town square, or "the square." Today it is an open landscaped grassy area. The square is being counted as a contributing site because it was an open public space in the heart of downtown for almost three decades in the historic period for this nomination.

Monticello's first railroad arrived in the 1880s, running in an east-west direction one block south of the square (along the southern edge of the nominated district). In 1913, a second line, the Drew, Ashley and Northern, arrived. Its tracks ran in a north-south direction several blocks to the east of the square.

As alluded to above, the nominated district is a portion of what was historically downtown Monticello. (Please refer to attached sketch map.) During the historic period, party wall commercial buildings faced the courthouse square on all four sides and continued one block north and one block south of the square along Main Street. There were also two to three blocks of commercial buildings along E. Gaines (east of the square), but they did not have a solid party wall character.

The north and west sides of the courthouse square have been redeveloped (each with a large modern building) and are not being included in the nominated district. Other missing components of the historic downtown are a row of party wall buildings on the west side of North Main, between E. McCloy and E. Trotter, and some of the buildings (one-third to one-half) along East Gaines.

The Monticello Commercial District is a discrete and distinctive whole in contrast to the parking lot and big box retail landscape that characterizes other commercial sectors of the town. It is cohesive in terms of scale, massing, setback, fenestration pattern, and building materials. Building facades are chiefly of brick. The scale is mixed one and two story. The only tall building, within the context of Monticello, is the five story Ridgeway Hotel.

#### Breakdown by Period:

Buildings were dated using Sanborn Fire Insurance Co. Maps where possible (i.e., where the evidence was conclusive). The maps are dated 1886, 1891, 1897, 1903, 1908, 1912, 1920, and 1938. A building-by-building inventory is below.

<b>c.1890 - 1912</b>	<b>8 buildings</b>	<b>20%</b>
<b>1913 - 1920</b>	<b>1 building</b>	<b>3%</b>
<b>1921 - 1938</b>	<b>12 buildings</b>	<b>31%</b>
<b>1939 - 1961</b>	<b>6 buildings</b>	<b>15%</b>
<b>Non-contributing</b>	<b>12 buildings</b>	<b>31%</b>

#### Architectural Character:

Monticello's earliest commercial buildings would have been wooden. Some of these are shown in early photos. None survive today. While there is no documentation on early fires in the downtown, they must have occurred. Typically, as fires did their damage, towns passed ordinances outlawing the construction of wooden buildings.

Two fires within more recent times had a notable effect on the blocks facing the town square. On December 12, 1963, a fire on the east side of the square heavily damaged one building and destroyed two. (This clearly is a factor in the high non-contributing rate on this side of the square.) The next month, on January 23, 1964, fire destroyed five of the seven two-story Italianate commercial buildings on the south side of the square. (They were soon replaced with a wide one story brick-faced building.)

Despite these two fires and other factors, the nominated district retains a notable collection of buildings from the c.1890 to 1912 period (the earliest period of extant buildings) - a total of 8, or 20%. All have a major presence in the district, due to scale and an abundance of details. Some are builder Italianate (segmental head windows, bracketed cornices); some feature copious, intricate decorative brickwork. Particularly noteworthy buildings from this early period are the H. M. Wilson Building at 200 E. Gaines (see #7 below), 110-118 North Main (#25, see below), and 103 W. Gaines (#31, see below).

The largest number of buildings in the district are from the 1920s and '30s. Most are builder vernacular; they may have a detail here and there but cannot be "pushed" into a stylistic category. Notable contributing buildings in the 1921-1938 category, within the context of Monticello, include a small Art Moderne building at 103 North Main (#29); the Art Deco Post Office (National Register, #36 below); and the Ridgeway Hotel, a five story building with restrained Mediterranean Revival styling (1930, listed on National Register as part of the Ridgeway Hotel Historic District, #5 below).

The six buildings in the 1939 to 1961 category are all from the 1950s. The most interesting of these is 104-106 N. Main (#27). The wire mesh slipcover on this older building, with its crisp geometry, is downtown's only strong mid-century modern statement.

Finally, from an historical standpoint, there are two railroad-related storage buildings in the district (#s 1 & 2 below).

#### Non-Contributing Buildings:

All but one of the district's 12 non-contributing elements are altered historic buildings. They generally conform to the district's scale, building materials, fenestration pattern, and massing along the street. The one building that does not conform from a building material standpoint is #14, which was fitted with a metal slipcover (1960s or '70s).

The sole less than 50 year old non-contributing building is a mid-1960s wide one story building built after a disastrous fire in January 1964, as noted above.

#### Assessment of Integrity:

Downtown Monticello has admittedly suffered various losses, as described earlier, the most notable being along the sides of the public square. But even with the loss of historic buildings and alterations to contributing buildings, downtown Monticello would still be recognizable to someone from the historic period, which is a litmus test for National Register candidates being nominated under Criterion A. A goodly number of buildings that existed at the close of the historic period still exist today with sufficient integrity. Most importantly, many of the district's major buildings survive (major in terms of scale, amount of detail and use). These buildings would have made a much greater visual impression during the historic period than, for example, a plain one story building with a small footprint. Major surviving contributing buildings include the five story Ridgeway Hotel (#5); the two-story H. M. Wilson Building (#7), with its wealth of detail; the two surviving Italiante two story buildings on the east side of the square (#s 21 and 22); the building at 110-118 North Main (#25), with its large footprint and what is downtown's most intricate, most pronounced brickwork; the Italiante two story building on the south side of the square (#31), which has an intensively worked upper façade; and the Art Deco U. S. Post Office (#36).

#### Inventory:

1. No address (north side of railroad line between N. Edwards and N. Gabbert). Contributing Element. Circa 1950. Small railroad related warehouse facility, single story with gable end roof and corrugated metal siding on metal frame, window-less with single access doorway front and rear.
2. No address (north side of railroad line at N. Edwards). Contributing Element. Not on 1920 Sanborn map; appears on 1938 map as "grocery warehouse." Circa 1930. Railroad-related facility, single story with gable end roof and corrugated-metal siding on metal frame, window-less with three access doorways. West end features two-stage stepped gable parapet in corrugated metal.
3. 306 E. Gaines. Contributing Element. Not on 1920 Sanborn map, appears on 1938 map. Circa 1930. Standard early 20<sup>th</sup> century small brick commercial building featuring plate-glass shopfront with central entrance and associated large side window. Parapet roof front; characteristic side parapet steps down in stages toward the rear mirroring the gradual backward slope of the flat roof.
4. 300 E. Gaines. Contributing Element. Not on 1920 Sanborn map, appears on 1938 map as "wholesale grocery." Circa 1930. Standard early 20<sup>th</sup> century brick commercial double building featuring two plate-glass shopfronts and a high parapet roof in front over two large panels set above the transoms. Characteristic side parapets step down in stages mirroring the gradual backward slope of the flat roof.

5. 206 E. Gaines. Ridgeway Hotel (National Register). Contributing Element. 1930. This five-story brick hotel, featuring hesitant touches of the Mediterranean Revival style, is a major architectural and historical landmark in downtown Monticello. The building's tan variegated textured brick conveys the feel of Mediterranean mottled honey-colored stonework. The first story, which contains the hotel's public rooms, is taller than the other stories and protrudes forward of the main building mass. Capped and set off by a pronounced cast-stone cornice, it features blind arches with tile lozenges and an open arch main entrance ornamented with gold and blue tiles in a checkerboard pattern. The hotel room tower (the top four stories) features recessed brick panels that connect the double window sets vertically on each story. At the top of the fifth floor is a frieze-like element (without cornice) containing pronounced brick diapering. The building is currently being renovated. The historic windows have been replaced with new windows with snap-in glazing bars. A new stair tower is currently under construction on each side elevation.
6. 202 E. Gaines, Contributing Element. Listed on National Register as part of Ridgeway Hotel Historic District. 1930. Built at the same time as the adjacent Ridgeway Hotel, this single story building shares the hotel's variegated tan (Mediterranean-looking) mottled brickwork. It also shares the hotel first story's cast-stone cornice. The building's only public façade (facing Gaines Ave.) presents a row of five transomed plate-glass windows and no entrance door. Although it "reads" architecturally as part of the Ridgeway Hotel, National Register documentation lists it as a separate building. Interior and rear elevation currently under renovation as part of Ridgeway Hotel project.
7. 200 E. Gaines, H. M. Wilson Building, 1912 (per date in parapet). Listed on National Register as part of Ridgeway Hotel Historic District. Contributing Element. This two and a half story Italianate commercial building is a major architectural landmark in the downtown. Originally built for H. M. Wilson & Co. (groceries & dry goods), and labeled as such on 1920 Sanborn map. The building's prominent corner location registers in a generous corner entrance (with a single cast-iron column supporting the upper facade masonry) and in the fine architectural treatment accorded the four-bay facade facing Gaines Ave. and the first two bays of the side elevation (facing Bailey St.). The first story of the composition is taken up by a multi-pane plate-glass commercial shopfront. The second story features finely mortared brick veneer and block lintels over the windows. Block lintels also mark the low knee-wall windows that light the attic half story. The building culminates in a rich modillion cornice with rosette sculptural work in the architrave. This is surmounted by a paneled parapet with prominent spherical elements set against the sky view. The roofline features an Italian Renaissance archivolt (facing the side elevation) with the builder's initials and the date. It, too, is surmounted by a spherical element, in this case accented with scroll volutes.
8. 101 N. Bailey. Contributing Element. Not on 1920 Sanborn map; first appears on 1938 map. Circa 1925. Single story brick commercial building featuring two full-width commercial shopfronts and an additional half-width shopfront on the north side. Façade features brick panels, ventilators, and a moderately pronounced brick cornice. Metal awning is old but perhaps not original. Rear concrete block addition.
9. 103 and 107 N. Bailey. Non-contributing Element. Notably altered circa 1925 single story brick commercial double building with façade ventilators and a modest brick cornice. Shopfronts filled in with stud walls featuring picture windows; modern cloth awning on one storefront. Deemed non-contributing because slightly more than half of the façade is altered in an unsympathetic manner.
10. 114 E. Gaines. Contributing Element. Not on 1920 Sanborn map; first appears on 1938 map. Circa 1930. Single story, wide brick (variegated tan) commercial building housing two stores historically. Frieze at parapet level features modest Modernistic design. Characteristic parapet steps down in stages toward the rear to mirror the backward slope of the flat roof. Transom windows on shopfront to left are covered. Shopfront to right features modern shed roof with standing-seam metal sheathing.

11. 110 E. Gaines, Contributing Element. Not on 1908 Sanborn map; appears on 1912 map. Circa 1910. Single story early 20<sup>th</sup> century commercial building composed of smooth and rock-face cast-concrete blocks. Façade features panels over the shopfront, ventilators and an almost full entablature. Characteristic side parapet steps down in stages to mirror the backward slope of the flat roof. Shopfront entrance altered; currently fitted with modern shed roof standing-seam metal awning.
12. 109 - 119 E. Gaines. Non-contributing element. Notably altered single story brick early 20<sup>th</sup> century commercial building with what were originally five unequal size shopfronts. The lower two-thirds of the façade has been altered in an unsympathetic manner - hence the non-contributing status.
13. 113 E. McCloy. Non-contributing Element. Seriously altered one story early twentieth century brick commercial building. Original flat roof now covered by a low-pitch gable end roof. Roof's gables and side sheathed in synthetic clapboards. New shed awning across shopfront.
14. 314 N. Main. Non-contributing Element. Seriously altered single story brick historic commercial building. Fitted circa 1970 with metal slip-covered front, new fixed awning.
15. 310 - 312 N. Main. Contributing Element. Circa 1915. Not on 1912 Sanborn Map; appears first on 1920 map. Single story early 20<sup>th</sup> century brick commercial double building. Pronounced upper façade features panels with Flemish bond effect and decorative iron ventilators. Building culminates in a relatively prominent brick cornice. Transoms covered and fixed awning is recent.
16. 306 N. Main. Non-contributing Element. Seriously altered c.1940 single story painted brick commercial building. Upper façade features brick fluting panels - a hesitant touch of the Modernistic influence. Façade dominated by fairly recent pronounced "Colonial" Style columnar portico.
17. 300 - 304 N. Main. Contributing Element. Circa 1900. Not on 1897 Sanborn Map, appears first on 1903 map. Wide single story brick commercial building providing for three stores. Noteworthy brickwork on the upper façade, including unusual 45 degree angle panels that create lozenge-like effects, segmentally arched ventilators, and pronounced corbel tabling at the cornice line. Side elevation features octagonal windows (probably more recent). Characteristic side parapet steps down in stages toward the rear to mirror the backward slope of the flat roof. Transoms covered; shopfronts variously altered; new quarter-round cloth awnings on some shopfronts.
18. 206A N. Main. Non-contributing Element. Seriously altered historic building. Originally a two story Italianate commercial building -- façade is largely of recent vintage --synthetic stucco, modern snap-in muntin windows and new window surrounds. Shopfront is circa 1950. Prominent, fairly recent shed roof(resting on salvaged cast-iron columns) spans entire block at shopfront level.
19. 206B N. Main. Non-contributing Element. Seriously altered historic commercial building. Narrow two-story brick commercial building with modern synthetic stucco paneled upper façade; lower façade dominated by prominent modern shed roof fixed awning resting on salvaged cast-iron columns.
20. 206C N. Main. Non-contributing Element. Seriously altered historic commercial building with fairly recent upper façade featuring false windows, a panel and a cornice - all formed of synthetic stucco. Lower façade dominated by prominent shed roof fixed awning resting on salvaged cast-iron columns.
21. 204 N. Main. Contributing Element. Circa 1900. One of two remaining contributing Italianate commercial buildings on the east side of the old courthouse square. Two-story building with an upper façade featuring four prominent windows with decorative brick segmentally arched caps, a large panel surmounted by a cornice formed of bricks laid with the corners outward, and a second richly formed crowning cornice with brackets, modillions and lozenges.

Strongly detailed upper façade visually dominates the lower façade with its modern shed roof fixed awning resting on salvaged cast-iron columns.

22. 202 N. Main. Contributing element. Circa 1900. One of two remaining contributing Italianate commercial buildings on the east side of the old courthouse square. Two-story building with an upper façade featuring four prominent windows with decorative brick segmentally arched caps, a large panel surmounted by a cornice formed of bricks laid with the corners outward, and a second richly formed crowning cornice with brackets, modillions and lozenges. Strongly detailed upper façade visually dominates the lower façade with its modern shed roof fixed awning resting on salvaged cast-iron columns.
23. 200A N. Main. Non-contributing Element. Seriously altered two story historic commercial building. Upper façade features false windows, panels and ventilator panels -- all formed of synthetic stucco. Lower façade defined by modern shed roof awning resting on salvaged cast-iron columns.
24. 200B N. Main. Non-contributing element. Seriously altered historic commercial building. Single story commercial building with a two-story Italianate-looking false front facing North Main. Lower façade fitted with modern shed roof fixed awning resting on salvaged cast-iron columns.
25. 110 - 118 N. Main. Contributing Element. Circa 1900. Distinguished wide one story brick commercial building that provides for four stores, as registered in the upper facade. Strongly detailed upper façade features upward thrusting piers, central raised tablets, pronounced corbel tabling, panels, and vents with segmentally arched tops. Shopfronts variously altered; new cloth awnings on some shopfronts.
26. 108 N. Main. Contributing Element. Single story early 20<sup>th</sup> century brick commercial building. Upper façade features a cornice formed of bricks laid with the corners outward. Lower façade features modern shed roof fixed awning and some board and batten siding.
27. 104 - 106 N. Main. Contributing Element. Older single story brick commercial building fitted with new façade c.1955. Present façade features strong wire mesh stretched and held in place by a system of rectilinear ribs and cross members, creating a dynamic repeating rhythm. Prominent flat fixed awning. Design shows strong influence of late International Style.
28. 100 - 102 N. Main. Contributing Element. Circa 1930. Not on 1920 Sanborn Map, appears on 1938 map. Single story standard early 20<sup>th</sup> century brick commercial building with three shopfronts. Upper façade's three ventilators are outlined to produce an Art Moderne effect; corners similarly treated. Characteristic side parapet steps down in stages to mirror the backward slope of the flat roof.
29. 103 N. Main, Contributing Element. Circa 1930. Single story light-colored brick small professional building. A significant example of Art Moderne influence in downtown Monricello, the building features horizontal lines, a dynamic curving corner with a window band that follows the curve, streamlined metal ventilator covers, and a flat half-circle fixed awning over one of the façade's two entrances. Red brick addition towards the rear has been painted to match the finer façade brick.
30. 107 N. Main. Ledingger Building. Contributing Element. 1952 (documented date - upper façade tablet). Single story brick commercial building with a massive unadorned upper façade; flat fixed awning.
31. 103 W. Gaines. Contributing Element. Circa 1890. Appears on 1891 Sanborn Map. Two-story brick commercial building -- one of only two of the original seven two-story Italianate buildings on the south side of the old courthouse square. Upper façade features three two-over-two windows, with decorative brick segmental arch tops, set within a large recessed panel. Above and below the recessed area are bands of decorative bricks formed with the corners facing outward. A crowning cornice features large modillions, dentils and half sunbursts. Characteristic

side parapets step down in stages to mirror the backward slope of the flat roof. Corner entrance configuration original, but present shopfront is c. 1960. Rear of building is partially collapsed.

32. 105-111 West Gaines. Non-contributing element. Circa 1965. Wide building (providing for 5 stores). This plain, single-story brick commercial building was constructed after a January 1964 fire destroyed five two-story Italianate commercial buildings in this footprint.
33. 113 W. Gaines. Contributing Element. Circa 1890. Appears on 1891 Sanborn Map. Two story brick commercial building (since stuccoed over) -- one of only two of the original seven Italianate buildings on the south side of the old courthouse square. Façade retains richly formed cornice with large modillions, brackets and half sunbursts (matching #31). The original Italianate façade windows were replaced with multi-pane industrial type windows circa 1930. Stucco was presumably applied at this time. The shopfront is fairly recent, although some elements of the original cast-iron shopfront survive. Side elevations retain original segmental arch windows on the upper story. Characteristic side parapets step down in stages to mirror the backward slope of the flat roof. Shopfront transom covered. Building is being counted as contributing because stucco and upper façade window replacement were in place for some 30 years in the historic period for this nomination.
34. 102 N. Church. Contributing Element. Circa 1950. Small single story brick commercial building. Modern shed awning detracts slightly from mid-century modern character but is easily reversible.
35. 204 W. Gaines, Monticello Municipal Building. Non-contributing Element. (Determined by staff of Arkansas Historic Preservation Program to be non-contributing because of additions - see following description.) 934 and circa 1935. The municipal complex comprises two Modernistic Style buildings that were linked by an addition in 1968. They will be treated as one building. The municipal building (1934, H. Ray Burks, architect) is a single story structure of light color brick and cast stone. The façade features advancing and receding wall planes, copious florid stylized plant forms in bas relief, stylized eagles in panels, and fluted pilaster strips. To the rear is a two-story, light-color brick fire station built circa 1935, with bas relief repeating geometrical strips over the fire engine doors and a central bas relief panel at the parapet depicting fire-fighting equipment in dynamic use. The two buildings were linked in 1968 via a large brick, single story, rear addition to the municipal building. In 1978 the municipal building was extended to the east with a single-story Art Moderne-looking brick addition with a curving band of corner windows. Modern rear-to addition to the firehouse in the rear.
36. 211 W. Gaines, U. S. Post Office (National Register). Contributing Element. 1937; Louis A. Simon, architect. Single story variegated brick and cast-stone building in the Modernistic Style. Cast-stone central façade features cornice strips over the openings and stylized anthemion panels. Sympathetic 1962 recessed addition of matching brick at the east side.
37. 111 N. Chester. Contributing Element. Circa 1935. Brick single story small professional office building. Symmetrically articulated, its chevrons and herringbone façade brickwork at the entrance suggest Modernistic influence. The hood over the entrance suggests the French Baroque.
38. 103 N. Chester. Contributing Element. Circa 1955. Single story concrete block low-key commercial building with brick veneer façade.
39. Drew Theater (no address). Contributing Element. Circa 1955. Low-key brick linear auditorium with prominent front panel and a marquee displaying Modernistic inspired designs.

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## 8. Statement of Significance

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### Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

### Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply)

Property is:

- |                          |   |  |
|--------------------------|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | A | owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | B | removed from its original location.                              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | C | a birthplace or grave.   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | D | a cemetery.  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | E | a reconstructed building, object, or structure.                  |

- |   |     |  |
|---|-----|--|
|   | F   | a commemorative property.  |
|   | G   | less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years. |
| X | N/A | Criteria Considerations not applicable                                     |

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

commerce

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**Period of Significance**

Circa 1890 - 1961

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**Significant Dates**

NA

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**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above)

NA

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**Cultural Affiliation**

NA

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**Architect/Builder**

Louis A. Simon, Architect (Post Office)

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H. Ray Burks, Architect (Municipal Building)

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**Period of Significance (justification) See below.**

**Criteria Consideratons (explanation, if necessary) NA**

**Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph** (provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria)

The Monticello Commercial Historic District is locally significant under Criterion A as the focus of commercial activity for the town and large surrounding rural area. The period of significance spans from c.1890, the date of the earliest commercial buildings, to 1961, the latter to follow the present Register fifty year cutoff. Downtown Monticello continued to be the center of commerce for the area until the 1970s when big box retail arrived.

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**Narrative Statement of Significance** (provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance)

Historical Background:

Drew County, established in 1846, occupies 836 square miles of rich agricultural land in southeastern Arkansas. It was named for Thomas S. Drew, the third governor of Arkansas. Very early seats of justice were in the house of Alexander M. Rawles and then in the small settlement of Rough and Ready Hill, near the present town of Monticello. The population of the county in 1850 was 3,276 (915 of which were enslaved people).

The town of Monticello traces its origins to 1849, when Fountain C. Austin and his wife Polly donated 83.02 acres to the county for the purpose of establishing a new county seat. An initial survey was done in the summer of 1849 and a second one on March 4, 1851. County commissioners sold the lots to individuals and a contract was soon let for a courthouse. The courthouse location (today's town square) is labeled on the 1851 plat "public square." Monticello was incorporated in late 1852. Historians generally agree that it was named in honor of Thomas Jefferson, since many of the early settlers were descended from Virginia families.

Monticello's growth might best be described as slow and steady. There were no decades during the historic period of explosive population increase. Population figures are shown below:

1880	891
1890	1,285
1900	1,579
1910	2,274
1920	2,378
1930	3,076
1940	3,650
1950	4,501
1960	4,412

Of great importance to the local economy was the arrival of the railroad in the 1880s, in this case the St. Louis, Mississippi River and Fort Smith, Arkansas (later the St. Louis, Iron Mountain and Southern, and then Missouri-Pacific). A second railroad, the Drew, Ashley and Northern, arrived in 1913. The latter was a small trunk line connecting Monticello to Crossett, Arkansas, where it then connected with the Rock Island, a main line. According to a 1930 publication, "These two large systems [the St. Louis, Iron Mountain and Southern and the Rock Island] give direct connections to practically all parts of the Midwest."

In 1903, the small community became the home of the Fourth District State Agricultural School. The school evolved into Arkansas A & M College and now is the University of Arkansas at Monticello. The campus, which retains some early twentieth century buildings, is located three miles south of downtown.

Agriculture historically was the economic foundation of Drew County, with lumber playing an important but secondary role. The principal money crops during the historic period were cotton and various fruits and vegetables. Tomatoes were a particularly important crop. Rebecca DeArmond, in *Old Times Not Forgotten: A History of Drew County*, credits Henry Holland with introducing the crop to the area in 1917. In that year Holland returned from Jacksonville, Texas, where he had learned from farmers how to grow tomatoes as a cash crop. He then planted the first commercial crop in the county. A 1940 booster publication bills Monticello "The Tomato Capitol" of Arkansas, noting that the town is "known far and wide" as such because the area "produces the finest tomatoes grown in the state, which are shipped over a wide radius of territory and command the highest price per season . . . . During the shipping season the packing sheds are a scene of much activity and employ a large number of people." Booster publications weren't the only ones recognizing the importance of the local tomato crop. The U.S. Post Office (1937) has period sculptures (interior) on the subject. And in that same decade the town started its annual Tomato Festival.

The various crops were shipped from downtown Monticello via refrigerated cars to places such as Kansas City, St. Louis and Chicago. A typical scene is captured in an extant old photo showing wagon loads of cabbage arriving for shipment.

In addition to the growing of crops, there were various agricultural related industries. Many of these involved cotton. Sanborn Fire Insurance maps and other sources document the following cotton-related concerns in Monticello: Southern Cotton Compress, Monticello Cotton Mills, and Drew Cotton Seed Oil Mill. The 1931 map also shows a number of cotton seed oil tanks clustered together, with no reference to the name of the concern. The Drew Cotton Seed plant appears on Sanborn maps as early as 1903. By 1931, it was a quite large concern, featuring a cotton gin, ice plant, cotton seed oil mill and a canning factory that canned tomatoes and tomato juice at the end of the season as well as green beans. Monticello Cotton Mills produced a coarse grade of cotton cloth used for grain and cotton sacks, tents, etc.

The largest lumber concern in the immediate area was in Wilmar, some eight miles to the west of Monticello. Gates Lumber Company established itself there in 1889, creating a lumber company town. In a familiar pattern, the timber was exhausted by the mid-1920s. The plant was sold to Crossett Lumber Company in 1924 and continued to operate, but at a much reduced scale. Sanborn maps show small sawmills located in Monticello – for example, one on the 1908 map, one on the 1920 map, etc. A large stave mill is shown on the 1920, 1931, and 1938 maps.

#### Downtown Monticello as Center of Commerce:

The Monticello Commercial Historic District is locally significant under Criterion A because of its role as the center of commercial activity for Monticello and the surrounding rural areas of Drew County. During the period of significance for this nomination, the county population ranged from a high of about 22,000 (in 1910) to a low of 15,213 in 1960.

Proprietors and shopkeepers dispensed a wide variety of goods and services from the buildings within the district boundaries – providing everything the rural householder might need. To the small farmer or sawmill worker and their families, it would have been an occasion to come to the “big town” of Monticello with its fine historic buildings. Even into the 1950s, across rural America, going to “town” was a much anticipated, sometimes day-long event, often on a Saturday.

Southeast Arkansas was (and is) decidedly rural. For example, in 1930, eighty percent of Arkansans lived on farms or in villages. Monticello was (and is) the only town of any size in Drew County. It is situated roughly in the center of the 836 square mile county. The only larger town in southeast Arkansas, Pine Bluff (population of 21,290 in 1940), is 50 miles to the north. With a population roughly equal to that of all Drew County, Pine Bluff truly would have been “big city” shopping.

During the historic period Monticello would have been the shopping “mecca” for its citizens and rural householders. Sanborn maps and other sources show that the bustling county seat offered about anything a person needed or wanted. The extant buildings downtown (those within the district) represent a good cross section of commerce. The ubiquitous general mercantile, represented by various extant buildings, carried everything from clothing, to furniture, to patent medicines, to buggy harnesses. By the 1920s general mercantile stores were sometimes being called department stores or variety stores. Particularly important general mercantile buildings in downtown Monticello are the 1912 H. M. Wilson Building (#7) and the c.1890 building at 110-118 North Main (#25). The corner portion of the latter is shown in a 1951 photo as housing the Popular Price Store. (The name is emblazoned on the side elevation.)

And, of course, there were various specialty retail businesses in any downtown. Drugstores are represented in downtown Monticello in at least three extant buildings. Other known specialty retail businesses represented by contributing buildings include #17, which housed in addition to a general store, a grocery, confectionery and meat market. Building #25, on the 1920 Sanborn map, housed a millinery and clothing store as well as a dry goods store and drugstore. (It has room for four stores.) Building #33 sold hardware and stoves in 1891, furniture in 1903 and 1908, and hardware and china in 1912.

People came to Monticello for more than shopping. Various services were provided from contributing buildings in the district. Regrettably, no historic building survives to represent the important role of banks in the rural economy. But buildings do survive to represent eateries (3), a dry cleaners, a theater, and an undertaker. (Building #33 is marked “furniture and undertaking” on the 1903 and 1908 Sanborn maps.) And out-of-towners could spend the night at the five-story Ridgeway Hotel (1930), which must have been quite grand within the context of 1930s rural Arkansas. Drummers were also frequent guests as they plied their wares to shopkeepers.

Wholesale businesses and warehousing are represented in Building #2, a grocery warehouse; Building #4, which housed a wholesale grocery; and building #28, a flour and feed warehouse at one time.

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**Developmental history/additional historic context information (if appropriate)**

See above.

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**9. Major Bibliographical References**

**Bibliography** (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form)

- A Message to the Homeseeker: Monticello, McGehee, Warren, Eurdora, Lake Village and Dumas, Arkansas.* 1940.
- Advance Monticellonian. Images: A Pictorial History of Drew County.* Marceline, MO: D-Books Publishing Co., 1997.
- Curry, Corliss Colby. "A History of the Timber Industry in Ashley, Bradley and Drew Counties." M. A. thesis, University of Arkansas, 1953.
- DeArmond, Rebecca. *Old Times Not Forgotten: A History of Drew County.* Little Rock, Arkansas: Rose Publishing Co., 1980.
- Drew County Historical Journal. "Disastrous Fires! And Monticello's Fire Department." 2001.
- Jackson, Charles and James, Bill. *Streets of Monticello.* Monticello, Arkansas: James Quick Print, 1990.
- Sanborn Fire Insurance Company Maps, 1886, 1891, 1897, 1903, 1908, 1912, 1920, 1938.
- The Monticello Ridge: "The Golden Gate to the Wonder State," Drew County, Arkansas,* 1930.

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):** NA

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been Requested)
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_
- Not applicable - no previous documentation on file

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other
- Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

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**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** Approximately 13 acres  
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage)

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

1	<u>15</u>	<u>612000</u>	<u>3721260</u>	3	<u>15</u>	<u>612420</u>	<u>3721060</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
2	<u>15</u>	<u>612420</u>	<u>3721260</u>	4	<u>15</u>	<u>612000</u>	<u>3721080</u>
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing

**Verbal Boundary Description** (describe the boundaries of the property)

The boundary is shown as a broken line on the attached district map.

**Boundary Justification** (explain why the boundaries were selected)

Boundaries were chosen to encompass the concentration of historic commercial buildings in downtown Monticello that retain sufficient integrity.

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**11. Form Prepared By**

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name/title Donna Fricker, Historic Preservation Consultant, Edited by Ralph S. Wilcox, National Register & Survey Coordinator

organization Arkansas Historic Preservation Program date February 2011

street & number 1500 Tower Building, 323 Center Street telephone (501) 324-9787

city or town Little Rock state AR zip code 72201

e-mail \_\_\_\_\_

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**Additional Documentation**

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Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.  
A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

PHOTO LOG

Monticello Commercial Historic District  
Monticello  
Drew County, Arkansas  
Donna Fricker  
January 2011  
Arkansas SHPO  
Total of 16 photos

Photo #1  
Showing Building #2, camera facing southeast

Photo #2  
Showing Buildings 5-7, camera facing southwest

Photo #3  
Showing Buildings 8-9, camera facing northwest

Photo #4  
Showing Buildings 5-7, camera facing southeast

Photo #5  
Showing Building 29, camera facing west/northwest

Photo #6  
Showing Buildings 26-28, camera facing south/southeast

Photo #7  
Showing Buildings 18-25 (#25 in foreground), camera facing north/northeast

Photo #8  
Showing Buildings 18-24 (#24 in foreground), camera facing north/northeast

Photo #9  
Showing Buildings 25-28, camera facing southeast

Photo #10  
Showing Buildings 31-33, camera facing southwest

Photo #11  
Showing Buildings 20-22, camera facing northeast

Photo #12  
Showing public square and Buildings 21-25, camera facing southeast

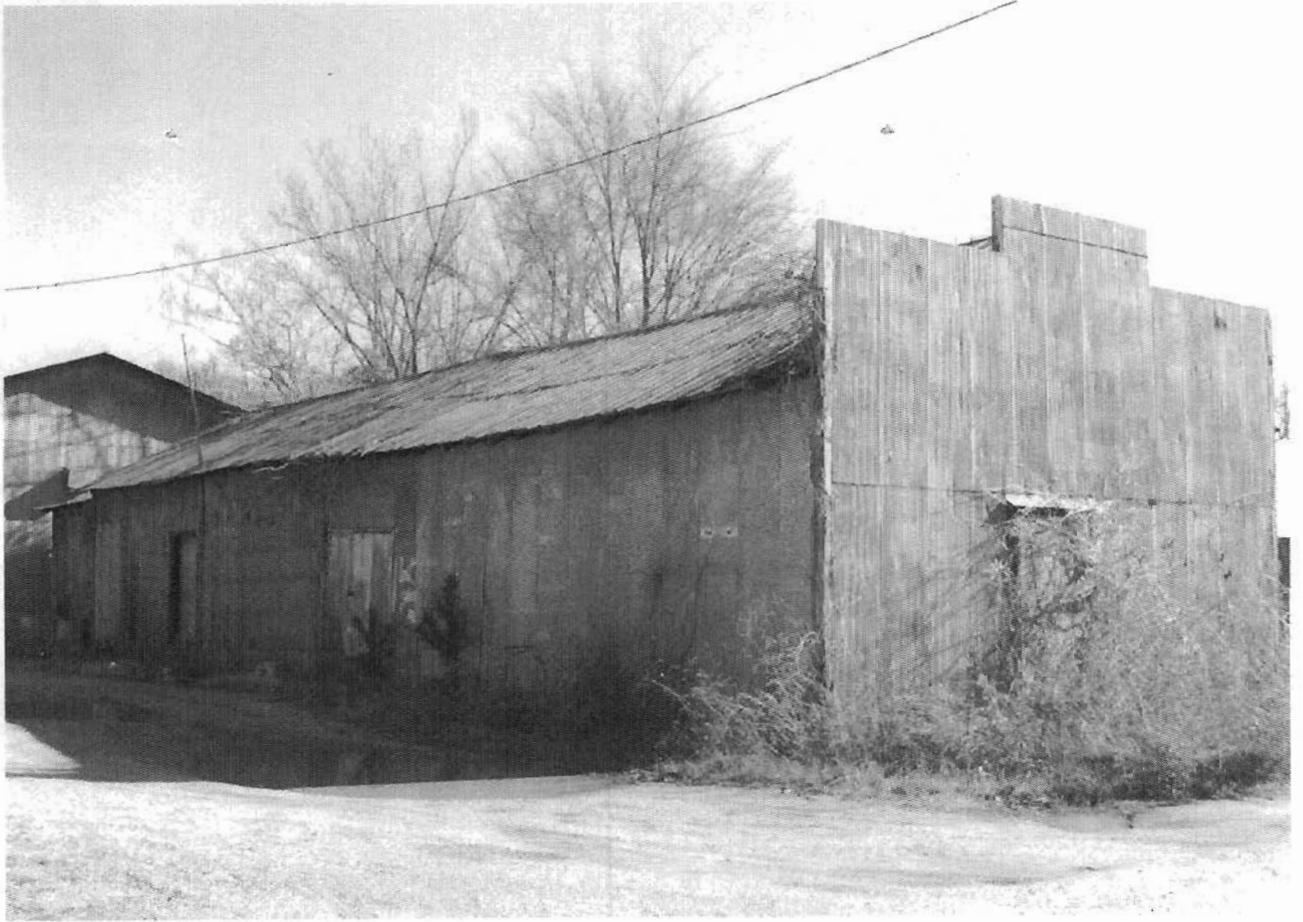
Photo #13  
Showing Buildings 14-17 (#17 in foreground), camera facing north/northeast

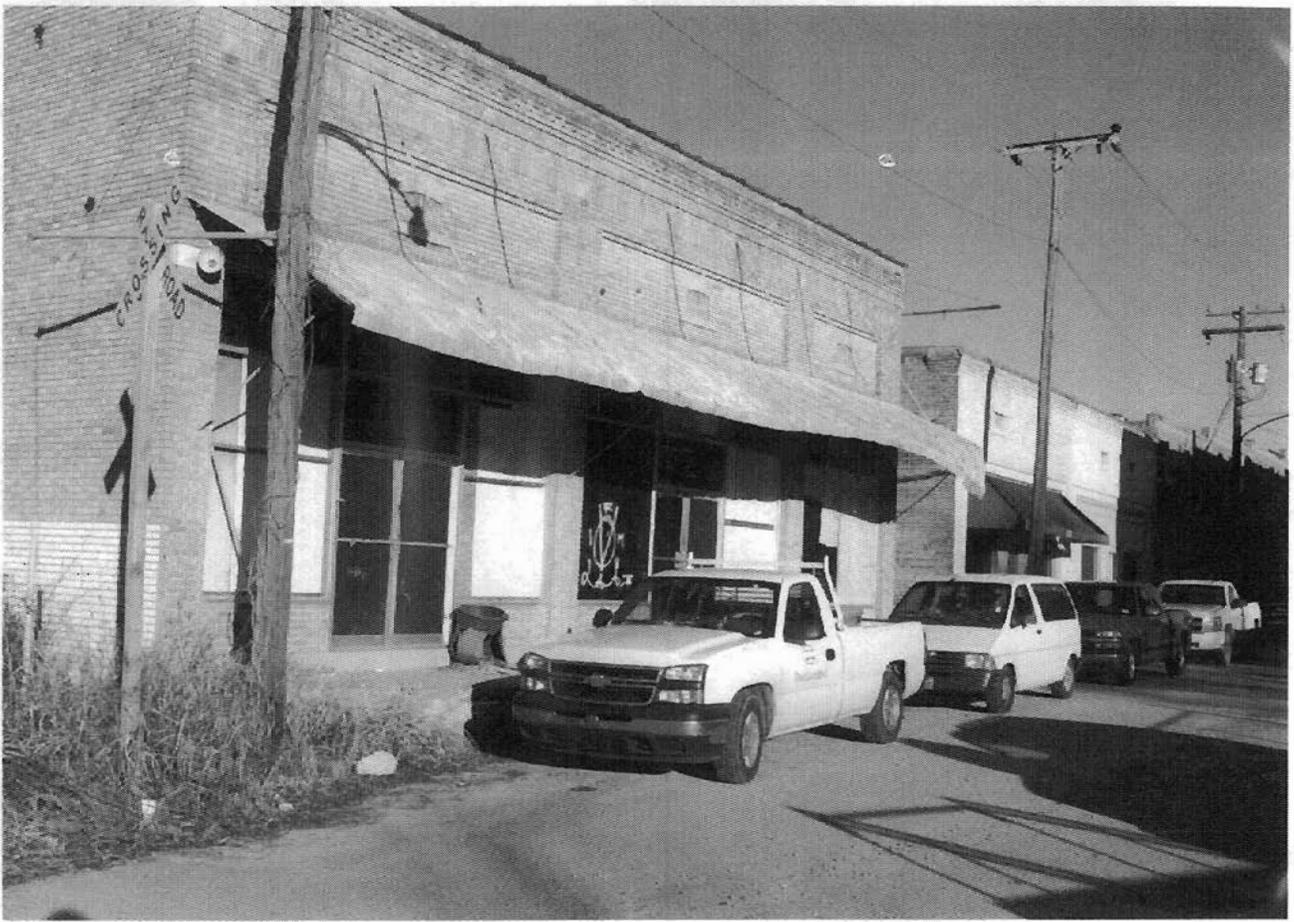
Photo #14  
Showing Building #14, camera facing northeast

Photo #15  
Showing Buildings 35-36, camera facing southwest

Photo #16  
Showing Buildings 37-39, camera facing south/southwest





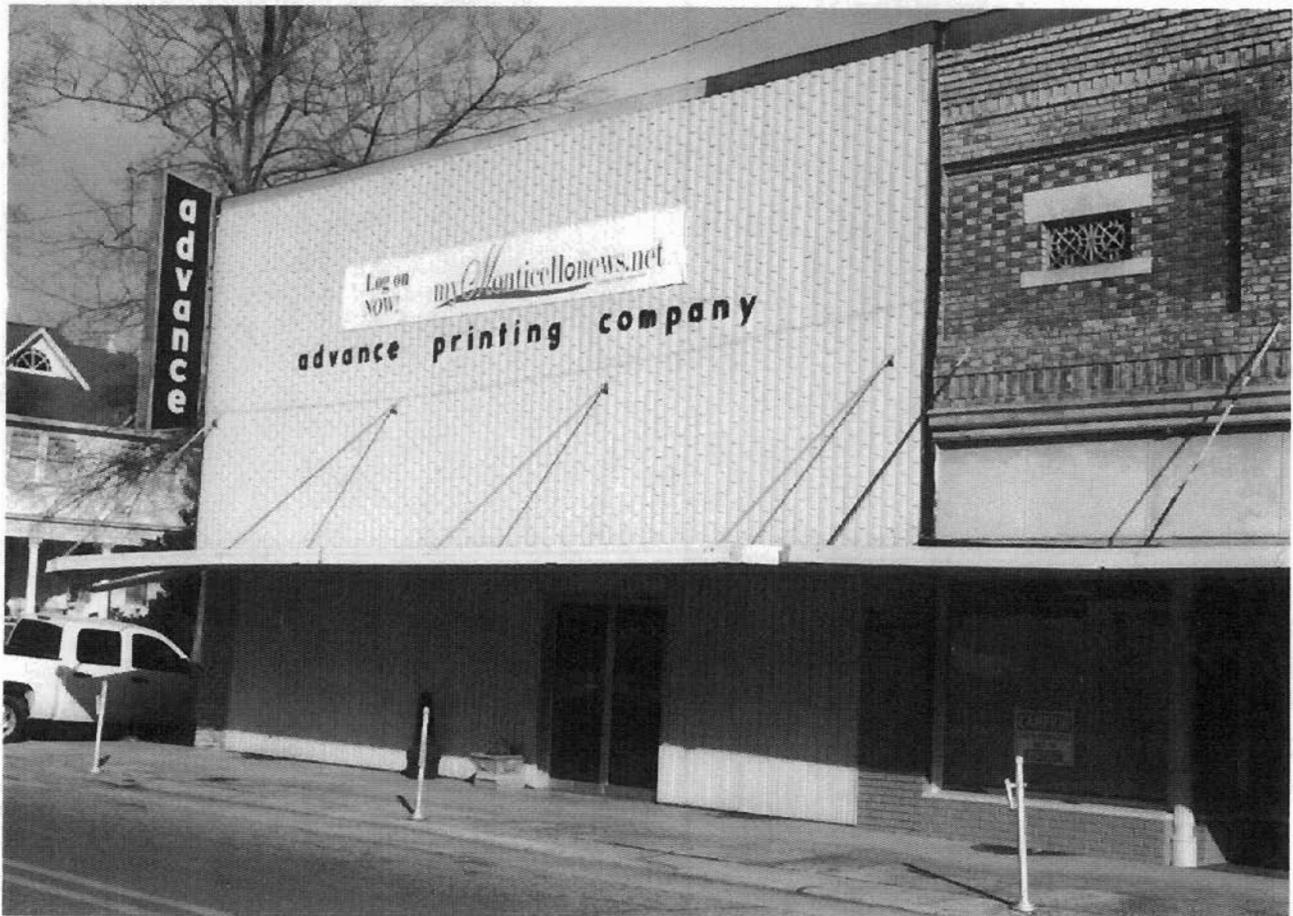


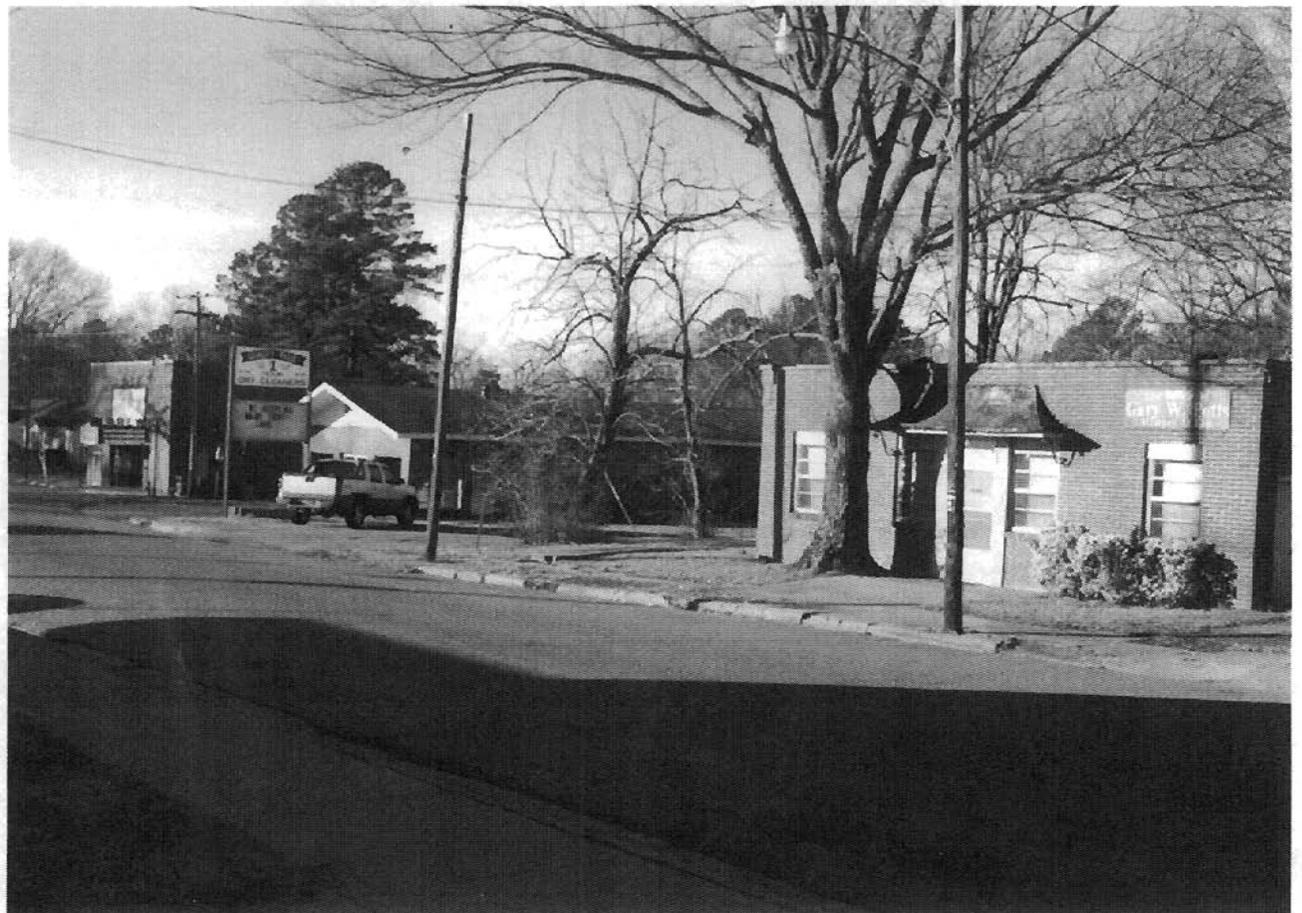


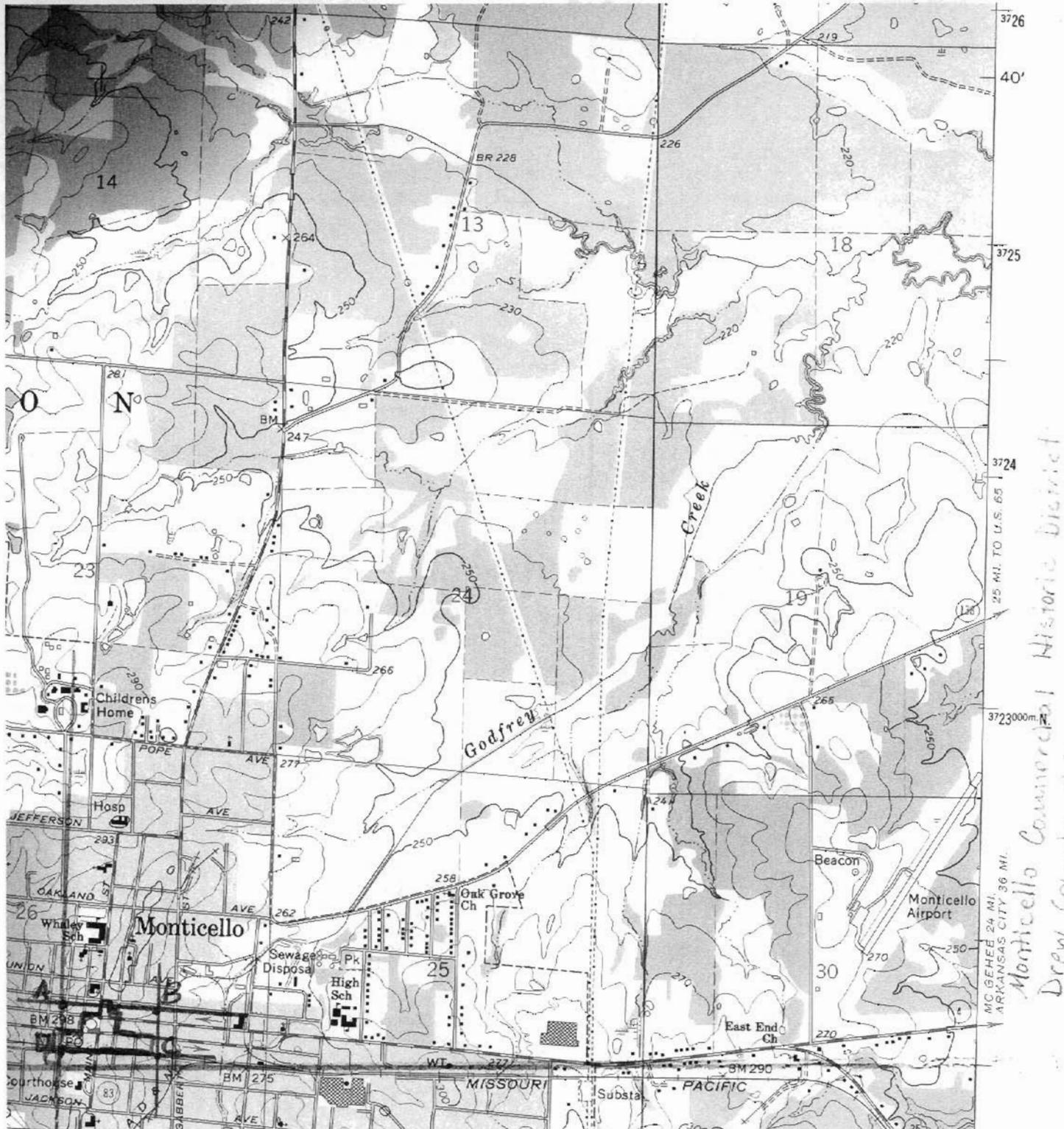












3726  
40'  
3725  
3724  
25 MI. TO U.S. 65  
3723000m N  
MC GEHEE 24 MI.  
ARKANSAS CITY 36 MI.  
33° 37' 30"  
91° 45'

Monticello Commercial Historic District  
Drew County, AR.

A: 15/612420/3721260  
B: 15/612420/3721260  
C: 15/612420/3721060  
D: 612000/3721080

5 MI. 47'30" COLLEGE HEIGHTS 2.5 MI. 613 614000m E  
● INTERIOR—GEOLOGICAL SURVEY WASHINGTON D C—1967  
R. 7 W. R. 6 W. COLLINS 15 MI. DERMOTT 22 MI. 612

ROAD CLASSIFICATION  
Medium-duty ——— Light-duty - - - - -  
Unimproved dirt - - - - -  
○ State Route



MONTICELLO NORTH, ARK.  
N3337.5—W9145/7.5

1966

AMS 7651 III NE—SERIES V884

1242

**Monticello Commercial  
Historic District**

Drew County, Arkansas

- Legend:
-  Contributing
  -  Non-contributing
- Boundary: - - - - -

Scale 1" = 140'

IL = Individually listed

