

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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 *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an 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 entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Hartford Commercial Historic District

other names/site number SB0942-SB0948, SB0950-SB0953, SB0977-SB0979

2. Location

street & number Buildings on the east side of Broadway Street from 12 N. Broadway to 106 S. Broadway ☐ not for publication

city or town Hartford ☐ vicinity

state Arkansas code AR county Sebastian code 131 zip code 72938

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 for 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
☐ nationally ☐ statewide ☒ locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Charles M. Hatcher
Signature of certifying official/Title

5/29/09
Date

Arkansas Historic Preservation Program

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property ☐ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. (☐ See Continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

☐ entered in the National Register.

☐ See continuation sheet

☐ determined eligible for the
National Register.

☐ See continuation sheet

☐ determined not eligible for the
National Register.

☐ removed from the National
Register.

☐ other, (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

Hartford Commercial Historic District
Name of Property

Sebastian County, Arkansas
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- ☒ private
☒ public-local
☐ public-State
☐ public-Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

- ☐ building(s)
☒ district
☐ site
☐ structure
☐ object

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
9	3	buildings
	2	sites
		structures
		objects
9	5	Total

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

N/A

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

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE/Department Store
COMMERCE/TRADE/Financial Institution
COMMERCE/TRADE/Specialty Store
COMMERCE/TRADE/Business
HEALTH CARE/Medical Business/Office
RECREATION AND CULTURE/Theater
SOCIAL/Meeting Hall
GOVERNMENT/Fire Station
GOVERNMENT/Post Office

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE/Warehouse
VACANT/NOT IN USE
EDUCATION/Library
COMMERCE/TRADE/Business
GOVERNMENT/Correctional Facility
GOVERNMENT/City Hall
RECREATION AND CULTURE/Museum
GOVERNMENT/Fire Station

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE 19TH AND EARLY 20TH CENTURY AMERICAN
MOVEMENTS/Commercial Style

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation STONE, CONCRETE, BRICK
walls BRICK, CONCRETE, STUCCO, WOOD
roof TAR, METAL, ASPHALT
other _____

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance**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:

☐ **A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.

☐ **B.** removed from its original location.

☐ **C.** birthplace or grave of a historical figure of outstanding importance.

☐ **D** a cemetery.

☐ **E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.

☐ **F** a commemorative property

☐ **G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Levels of Significance (local, state, national)

Local

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

Commerce

Community Planning and Development

Period of Significance

1907-1959

Significant Dates

1907-1959

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked)**Cultural Affiliation** (Complete if Criterion D is marked)**Architect/Builder****Narrative Statement of Significance**

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References**Bibliography**

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

☐ 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 # _____

Primary location of additional data:

☒ State Historic Preservation Office

☐ Other State Agency

☐ Federal Agency

☐ Local Government

☐ University

☐ Other

Name of repository: _____

Hartford Commercial Historic District
Name of Property

Sebastian County, Arkansas
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Less than one

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 15 373999 3876408
Zone Easting Northing
2 _____

3 _____
Zone Easting Northing

4 _____

☐ See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Rachel Silva, Preservation Outreach Coordinator
organization Arkansas Historic Preservation Program date January 28, 2009
street & number 1500 Tower Building, 323 Center Street telephone (501) 324-9788
city or town Little Rock state AR zip code 72201

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

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.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name _____
street & number _____ telephone _____
city or town _____ state _____ zip code _____

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listing. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*)

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P. O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reduction Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20303.

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Summary

The Hartford Commercial Historic District contains the only remaining historic commercial buildings in the once-booming south Sebastian County coal town. The district consists of a row of buildings on the east side of Broadway Street, which long served as Hartford's commercial corridor. The buildings in the district are predominantly one story in height, and the vast majority of them are brick. There is one stucco building in the district. The buildings are rectangular in plan, rest on continuous foundations, and have flat roofs with parapets.

The buildings reflect the early twentieth century standard commercial style, with the upper façades of many buildings featuring decorative brickwork and corbelling at the cornice. One of the two most notable buildings in the district features a peaked parapet and decorative brick panels, while the other building exhibits Colonial Revival details with its limestone pilasters and arched window and door openings with keystones.

Hartford enjoyed its most prosperous years of development between 1880 and 1920 due to the discovery of coal in the area and the arrival of the railroad. Even though Hartford was at one time considered the "boomiest town in Arkansas" with a population somewhere between 3,000 and 5,000 by 1913, its growth was short-lived.¹ When oil began to replace coal as a major fuel in the 1920s, coal production decreased and Hartford returned to its quiet small town character. The buildings in the district remain as evidence of Hartford's heyday. The Hartford Commercial Historic District is comprised of 14 resources. Out of this total, there are 9 contributing properties (64.3%) and 5 non-contributing properties (35.7%).

Elaboration

The Hartford Commercial Historic District contains the only remaining historic commercial buildings in the once-booming south Sebastian County coal town. The district consists of a row of buildings on the east side of Broadway Street, which long served as Hartford's commercial corridor. Broadway Street ran perpendicular to the Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific Railroad, and the railroad depot was located just to the southwest of the intersection of Broadway and Gwynn streets (Gwynn St. ran parallel to the railroad tracks). The businesses along Broadway Street were within close walking distance for passengers arriving at the depot in Hartford. Although the railroad no longer comes through Hartford, Gwynn Street still runs perpendicular to Broadway Street along the former rail route, maintaining the historic street layout.

In Hartford's early days, businesses were concentrated along Oak Street, which is located one block west of Broadway Street. However, sometime between 1908 and 1913, most of the commercial buildings along Oak Street were destroyed by fire. This 3-block strip along Oak Street was subsequently known as "Smokey

¹ Some population figures included the coal company camps, while others did not.

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Row," and new commercial construction shifted one block east to Broadway Street. A fire claimed a 3-block stretch of wooden commercial buildings along Broadway Street in 1907, but brick buildings were quickly constructed to replace them. The majority of the buildings in the district boundary were constructed between 1907 and 1913.

The one-part commercial block form, which is characterized by a simple box with a decorative façade, became popular in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As towns developed, speculators built relatively inexpensive buildings with minimal detailing. These one-part commercial blocks usually housed retail stores, enabling their owners to generate a profit, which could be used to invest in a more substantial building. The one-part commercial block typically had a large glass storefront area topped with a corbelled cornice or decorative parapet. It was also common to find a row of similar one-part commercial blocks in a town, and this is the case in Hartford.

Seven of the nine contributing properties in the Hartford Commercial Historic District are one-part commercial blocks. Five of those seven buildings are very similar in appearance with a storefront area crowned by simple brick corbelling at the cornice and a parapet. The remaining two one-part commercial blocks are more distinctive in appearance and serve as the visual anchors for the district. The H.A. Building features a peaked parapet, brick corbelling, and decorative brick panels. The First National Bank Building exhibits Colonial Revival characteristics like a clipped corner entry flanked by limestone pilasters, arched window and door openings with keystones, and a limestone stringcourse.

The district contains one two-story building at 12 North Broadway Street. This building has little ornamentation with smooth stucco walls and a modest tile-capped parapet. Finally, the Hartford Fire Department represents the only mid-twentieth century commercial building within the district boundary. It is a simple brick commercial building with a flat roof and two large metal doors to accommodate fire trucks.

The building at 16 South Broadway Street (SB0946) is a one-story brick commercial building with a flat roof and a parapet. The upper portion of the building's façade features corbelling and dentils at the cornice as well as two decorative metal vents. The storefront windows have been replaced, but the window openings are still the same. The building retains its original cast iron pilasters on either side of the front door. This building was probably one of the first to be constructed after the 1907 fire that destroyed a 3-block span of wooden buildings on Broadway Street. It appears on the 1908 Sanborn map as a hardware store, but it housed a furniture store by 1913. By 1922, it was home to a general store.

The Parkbilt Homes, Inc., Building at 18-20 South Broadway Street (SB0947) is a one-story brick building with two storefronts. This newly renovated building features brick corbelling and dentils at the cornice and has three decorative vents situated above the storefront. The storefront has been altered with new plate glass windows, but the original openings have been retained. Although ceramic tile has been added to the lower

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storefront wall and the original doors have been replaced, the building still features two recessed entries and its original cast iron pilasters. The Parkbilt Building was constructed soon after the 1907 fire; it appears on the 1908 Sanborn map as a barber shop and clothing store. The clothing store became a grocery and feed store by 1913, and both parts were stores by 1922. In later years, the building housed Quaker Drug Store, Weir's Drug Store, Witt's Grocery, Wooten's Grocery, the Hartford Trading Center, and a barber shop before being renovated by Parkbilt.

As Hartford increased in population due to the success of area coal mines, the block of South Broadway Street between Main Street and Gwynn Street filled up with commercial buildings. The Hartford Police Department (SB0943) represents yet another example of the one-part commercial block form. This one-story brick building features a slightly different pattern of corbelling and dentils at the cornice. It retains its original cast iron pilasters on either side of the front door. However, the building's storefront has been altered. Small windows are situated on either side of the front door, but the remaining storefront space has been closed with concrete blocks. This building was constructed around 1910, and it housed a drug store until at least 1922. A Senior Citizen Center later occupied the building until 1977. It was subsequently the location of Head Start and Hartford City Hall before becoming the Police Department in 2003.

Hartford City Hall (SB0944) is a one-story brick building with corbelling at the cornice and two arched windows on its upper façade. The storefront has been modified with concrete block and a new window and door; however, a significant portion of the original brick façade remains above the storefront. This building was constructed around 1910 and housed the first live theater in Hartford. It was a motion picture theater from at least 1913 until 1922. According to Sanborn maps, a reinforced concrete addition was constructed on the rear of the building sometime between 1913 and 1922. The building later housed a furniture store until the Emerson Theater opened on March 5, 1948. There was a fire in the building, and it reopened as a shop and restaurant. It has housed Hartford City Hall offices since the late 1970s.

The Hartford Post Office (SB0953) is a one-story brick building with corbelling at the cornice and a large multi-paned transom. The building also retains the upper portion of its original cast iron pilasters. The storefront was altered in 1958; a sandstone veneer replaced the plate glass, and an aluminum door and two aluminum double-hung windows now fenestrate the building's lower portion. This building was constructed immediately after the 1907 fire on Broadway Street, and it is the only building left from a cluster of commercial buildings first constructed on this end of the street.² The Hartford Post Office Building housed a grocery store from at least 1908 until 1913. It was a general store by 1922. The building was later home to a store and beauty shop, but it has most recently served as a post office.

² The adjacent building at 104 South Broadway Street (Hartford American Legion Hut; SB0951) was probably constructed at the same time, but it is non-contributing to the district because its entire front façade has been removed and replaced with concrete block.

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Serving as one of the anchors in the district, the H.A. Building is a one-part commercial block with two storefronts. The building boasts distinctive features like a peaked parapet with the letters "H" and "A" on each peak, brick corbelling, and decorative white brick panels centered on the upper façade. The storefronts have new plate glass windows, and the southernmost storefront's transom windows have been covered with weatherboard. This building was constructed in 1913 by W.J. Hamilton and a Mr. Adair, thus explaining the "H" and "A" on the parapet. The building's northern storefront originally housed the W.J. Hamilton Dry Goods and Shoe Store, while the southern storefront was occupied by the Adair Drug Store. The northern portion ("H" part) was donated to the City of Hartford for a museum in 1975. It was closed for several years before reopening in 2003. The southern storefront ("A" part) later housed J.C. White Grocery and Michael's Grocery before being used for religious meetings. It is now vacant.

The other visual anchor in the Hartford Commercial Historic District is the First National Bank Building at 10 North Broadway Street (SB0977). The Bank Building was designed in the early twentieth century standard commercial style with Colonial Revival details. This one-story brick building was constructed on the northeast corner of Broadway and Main Streets, which was a prime location in downtown Hartford. The city's bandstand was located in an empty lot just to the north of the Bank Building by 1913, and another bandstand was constructed in the middle of the intersection of Broadway and Main streets by 1922. Area residents came en masse to the downtown area every Saturday to do their shopping and hear the music at the bandstand. The Bank Building was constructed around 1910 and served as a bank until at least 1922. It later housed Couch Motor Company, and a beauty parlor was located in the rear of the building. The building has a clipped corner entry bounded by limestone pilasters. Five large arched windows with limestone sills and keystones fenestrate the entire building. The front door opening is also arched and crowned by a keystone. The building features limestone coping at the roofline, brick corbelling, and a limestone stringcourse. A rectangular brick panel is centered above the stringcourse on the clipped entry corner.

The only two-story building in the district boundary is located at 12 North Broadway Street (SB0978). This building was constructed circa 1915 in the early twentieth century standard commercial style. It features smooth stucco walls and a modest tile-capped parapet. Four windows are centered across the building's upper façade, but they have been replaced with aluminum windows. The storefront has been modified with synthetic siding covering the transom windows. This building was listed as a general store on the 1922 Sanborn map, but it has had multiple functions throughout its history. The building's upper story served as a meeting place for the Improved Order of Red Men and later the International Order of Odd Fellows and Masonic Lodge No. 609. It has also served as a dance hall, bowling alley, restaurant, and grocery and feed store.

The Hartford Fire Department (SB0950) is the only mid-twentieth century commercial building within the district boundary. This one-story brick building was constructed circa 1960 and has a flat roof. The front façade is fenestrated by two large metal doors to accommodate the fire trucks, and a third metal door is

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situated just to the south of the larger two doors and serves as the entrance to the firemen's quarters. The words "Hartford Fire Dept." are centered above the two large metal doors. The Hartford Fire Department was constructed on the site of a building with three storefronts that was built after the 1907 fire on Broadway Street. This building housed a meat market, grocery store, and harness and feed store in 1908. By 1913, it housed a printing shop, dry goods and shoe store, and pressing shop. In 1922, all three storefronts served as general stores.

The Hartford Commercial Historic District contains five non-contributing resources—there are three non-contributing buildings and two non-contributing sites within the district boundary. The three non-contributing buildings are one-part commercial blocks that originally featured plate glass storefronts crowned by brick parapets with simple corbelling. However, they have been severely altered. On the bright side, the Hartford Library (SB0942) could feasibly be a contributing property in the district if the synthetic siding was removed from the storefront and replaced with plate glass. The Hartford Library is a one-story brick building with simple brick corbelling and dentils at the cornice. The building still has its recessed central entry and original cast iron pilasters. It is non-contributing to the district because the storefront windows have been completely covered with synthetic siding. The building was constructed about 1907 and housed a drug store in 1908, a meat market in 1913, and a bank in 1922. The building later housed a jail, dry goods store, the local health department, and a fire station before becoming the Hartford Public Library.

The Hartford American Legion Hut (SB0951) was constructed about 1907 and housed a dry goods store and millinery in 1908. However, by 1913, it served as a grocery store, and it was a general store in 1922. Presumably, this building looked similar to the other one-story brick buildings in the district boundary, featuring a large storefront and simple corbelling at the cornice. This building is a non-contributing resource in the district because the entire front façade and parapet was removed and concrete blocks were cemented into the storefront. The building at 100 South Broadway Street (SB0952) was built about 1910 and served as a bakery until at least 1922; however, its front façade and roof are partially collapsed. Its front façade is completely obscured by plywood sheets.

Two non-contributing buildings in the district, the Hartford Music Company at 12 South Broadway Street (SB0948) and the Saloon at 14 South Broadway Street (SB0945), were destroyed by fire on November 24, 2008. The vacant lots where these buildings once stood are included in the district boundary as non-contributing sites. The Hartford Music Company Building was constructed around 1907 as a furniture and hardware store, and in 1913 and 1922 it was a general store. The Hartford Music Company moved into the building after 1922. The one-story brick building was deemed non-contributing even before the fire because its cornice had been covered with aluminum and the storefront wall was substantially recessed. Regardless, this building was significant to Hartford because it housed the Hartford Music Company, which was founded in 1918 by Eugene Monroe Bartlett. The Hartford Music Company published gospel song books written in the shape-note style. Bartlett wrote most of his own songs, but popular hymns were occasionally added. His

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most well-known hymn was "Victory in Jesus." About 1921, Bartlett formed the Hartford Music Institute to teach voice, piano, harmony, and stringed instruments as well. The company was eventually sold to Albert E. Brumley in 1948 and relocated to Powell, Missouri. Brumley is well-known for writing the popular gospel "I'll Fly Away."

The Saloon Building was built soon after the 1907 fire on Broadway Street, and it appeared as a dry goods store on the 1908 Sanborn map. It housed a grocery and feed store in 1913 and a general store in 1922. By 1987 it housed a drug store. The Saloon was originally a one-story brick building, but sometime after 1987, the upper façade was completely covered with board-and-batten siding, and a porch with a simple wooden balustrade was constructed above the storefront. For these reasons, the building was considered non-contributing to the district before it was destroyed by fire.

Integrity

The Hartford Commercial Historic District retains good integrity and reflects the town's major period of commercial growth due to the coal mining industry and the arrival of the railroad. Coal mines continued to operate in Sebastian County into the twenty-first century, albeit on a much smaller scale. The 2000 census lists the population of Hartford as 772, so it is evident that the decline of the coal industry resulted in a substantial loss of population in the city. However, the population of Hartford probably never rose above 4,000 (its estimated peak around 1915), so it always maintained its small town character. The buildings within the Hartford Commercial Historic District represent the most intact concentration of commercial-style buildings in the city. The Hartford Fire Department, which is the district's only mid-twentieth century resource, indicates the town's continued commitment to its historic commercial core. In addition, property owners have recently restored the Parkbilt Homes, Inc., Building at 18-20 South Broadway Street, exhibiting a renewed interest in downtown Hartford. Broadway Street continues to be the hub of activity in Hartford with the city hall building, local public library, fire department, and other offices located there. The district reflects Hartford's early growth and development, and it also contains several examples of the one-part commercial block form. This form was typically used in budding towns because it was inexpensive and could be built quickly; therefore, the owners could start turning a profit in less time. Although the buildings' storefronts have been altered over the years, the upper façade of many buildings have architecturally significant details.

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<u>Resource #</u>	<u>Address</u>	<u>Current Occupant/Historic Occupant</u>	<u>Map ID #</u>	<u>C or NC</u>
SB0978	12 N. Broadway St.	Warehouse/Grocery & Feed Store	1	C
SB0977	10 N. Broadway St.	Unoccupied/First National Bank	2	C
SB0948	12 S. Broadway St.	Vacant lot/Hartford Music Company	3	NC
SB0945	14 S. Broadway St.	Vacant lot/Dry Goods Store	4	NC
SB0946	16 S. Broadway St.	Unoccupied/Hardware Store	5	C
SB0947	18-20 S. Broadway St.	Parkbilt Homes, Inc./Clothing Store & Barber Shop	6	C
SB0942	22 S. Broadway St.	Hartford Library/Drug Store	7	NC
SB0943	24 S. Broadway St.	Hartford Police Department/Drug Store	8	C
SB0944	26 S. Broadway St.	Hartford City Hall/Movie theater	9	C
SB0979	28-30 S. Broadway St.	W.J. Hamilton Memorial Museum/Dry Goods & Shoe Store	10	C

Chart Reference: C—Contributing NC—Non-contributing

Hartford Commercial Historic District

Name of Property

Sebastian County, Arkansas

County and State

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SB0952	100 S. Broadway St.	Ruin/General Retail Store	11	NC
SB0953	102 S. Broadway St.	Unoccupied/Hartford Post Office	12	C
SB0951	104 S. Broadway St.	Unoccupied/Hartford American Legion Hut	13	NC
SB0950	106 S. Broadway St.	Hartford Fire Department	14	C

Chart Reference: C—Contributing NC—Non-contributing

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Summary

The Hartford Commercial Historic District is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places with **local significance** under **Criterion A** for its association with the growth and development of Hartford. Hartford began as a small village in a valley between the Sugar Loaf and Poteau Mountains and became a boom town almost overnight. When large-scale commercial coal mining became a reality with the arrival of the railroad in south Sebastian County, people moved en masse to small villages like Hartford, Huntington, Midland, Excelsior, and Hackett to find work in the mines and make a quick profit. Hartford was the second largest city in Sebastian County during the height of the coal boom, with an estimated population of 4,000. The buildings in the district boundary were constructed in response to the rapid growth of the town and housed important frontier amenities like grocery stores, banks, drug stores, and clothing stores. This district represents the best concentration of historic commercial buildings in Hartford and provides a context for the development of coal boom towns throughout south Sebastian County.

Elaboration

Sebastian County was formed in 1851 from parts of Crawford, Scott, and Polk counties.³ The county was named in honor of William K. Sebastian, a respected senator from Helena, Arkansas. Hartford is located in the southwestern part of Sebastian County about 3 ½ miles east of the Arkansas-Oklahoma border. Situated in the Upper Sugar Loaf Valley between the Sugar Loaf and Poteau Mountains, Hartford began as a small village near the West Creek crossing. The Hart family lived near the creek crossing, and people referred to this place as "Hart's ford." Most of the land in the area was homesteaded around 1858, and in 1868, Dr. J.D. Williams established the town of Hartford at this site. Joseph B. Forrester became Hartford's first postmaster in 1874. The 1887 *Atlas of Sebastian County, Arkansas* listed one Hartford business in its directory: "Williams, J.D. & Son, Hartford...Dealers in Drugs, Medicines, Paints, Oils and Dye Stuffs; a full line of Patent Medicines and Family Groceries; also Gents' Furnishing Goods."⁴ According to *The Goodspeed Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Northwestern Arkansas*, by 1889 the town had "four blacksmith shops, one boot and shoe shop. There is also a grist-mill and cotton-gin...a union church edifice used respectively by the Methodists, Baptists and Cumberland Presbyterians, and a public school-house...The population of the village is between 200 and 300."⁵

³ There was a ten-year period in which Sebastian County's southern boundary fluctuated.

⁴ E. L. Hayes, *Atlas of Sebastian County, Arkansas* (Fort Smith: E. L. Hayes & Company, 1887): 50.

⁵ "Sebastian County [Abstract]," from the Encyclopedia of Arkansas History and Culture. Internet; accessed 11 February 2009; available from <http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?search=1&entryID=3900>; Norma Lockhart Michael, "Hartford—Past and Future," *The Key* 10, no. 1 (Spring 1975): 23-25; Jerry H. Moore and Lonnie C. Roach, *No Smoke, No Soot, No Clinkers: A History of the Coal Industry in South Sebastian County, Arkansas* (Privately published by Frank Boyd, 1974): 5, 10; *The Goodspeed Biographical and Historical Memoirs of Northwestern Arkansas* (Chicago: The Goodspeed Publishing Company, 1889): 776.

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After the Civil War, residents from other southern states migrated to the Upper Sugar Loaf Valley to homestead the land. Wylie P. Gwynn and his wife, Hannah, left Alabama and homesteaded a section of land about 1 ½ miles northeast of the town of Hartford in 1868. They built one of the first log homes in the community that would later be known as Gwynn. Although Arkansas's first state geologist, Dr. David Dale Owen, described the extensive coal deposits of south Sebastian County in his survey of the state's geological resources in the 1850s, coal mining in Arkansas was conducted on a relatively small scale until 1880.⁶ Until the arrival of railroads made the shipment of large quantities of coal a reality in the late 1880s, most coal was used near its original location to provide heat. With the knowledge that the Hartshorne Seam ran through the western portion of the Arkansas River Valley, W.P. Gwynn started the first coal mine in the Hartford area on his homestead. He provided coal locally for domestic and business use. Recognizing the potential for the coal mining industry in the area, the Choctaw-Memphis Railroad Company bought a right-of-way through the Gwynn community for \$60 in the late 1880s.⁷

Because the railroad bypassed the original town of Hartford, located just to the southwest of Gwynn, the residents of Hartford decided to move their town 1 ½ miles northeast to the Gwynn community site. Hartford's original town site became known as Old Town or West Hartford, and the Gwynn community became known as New Town or New Hartford. New Hartford prospered as coal mines were constructed and the Choctaw, Oklahoma & Gulf Railway Company (later purchased by the Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific Railroad) completed its line through the town in 1899. The Choctaw line ran from Wister Junction, Indian Territory, to Memphis, Tennessee, opening the coal mines to larger markets in the United States. The town of Hartford was incorporated on February 28, 1900, on the same site as the former Gwynn community and New Hartford. By 1906 the Midland Valley Railway connected with the Chicago, Rock Island & Pacific Railroad at Hartford, offering faster connections to markets in Tulsa and Kansas City.⁸ Both railroads offered inexpensive transportation in relation to shipping volume, and both encouraged the growth of the mining industry in Hartford.⁹

⁶ The first documented coal mine in Arkansas was operating in Spadra (Johnson County) in 1848. However, this coal had to be shipped on barges down the Arkansas River, which made large shipments difficult and risky. It was not until 1873 when the Little Rock and Fort Smith Railroad extended its line through Johnson County that coal could be marketed on a larger scale. Railroad lines did not reach some parts of the state until the late 1890s-early 1900s.

⁷ Alberta Cardin, "They Came to Hartford," *The Key* 2, no. 1 (Spring 1967): 22-23; *Goodspeed*, 679-684; John G. Ragsdale, "Coal Mining," from the Encyclopedia of Arkansas History and Culture. Internet; accessed 9 February 2009; available from <http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?search=1&entryID=352>; Michael, "Hartford—Past and Future," 23-25; Mary L. Couch, "They Came and Left But We Stayed," *The Key* 17, no. 1 (Summer 1982): 9-11; Hayes, *Atlas*, 15, 49.

⁸ J.F. Holden, "Story of an Adventure in Railroad Building," *Chronicles of Oklahoma* XI, no. I (1933): 637-66 [journal on-line]; available through the Oklahoma State University Electronic Publishing Center at <http://digital.library.okstate.edu/chronicles/bookshelf.html>; accessed 16 July 2007.

⁹ Cardin, "They Came to Hartford," 22-23; Couch, "They Came and Left But We Stayed," 9-11; Michael, "Hartford—Past and Future," 23-25; Moore and Roach, *No Smoke*, 10; Lillian L. Gibson, "Jones Memorial United Methodist Church, Hartford, Arkansas," *The Key* 17, no. 2 (Fall 1982): 22-23; Van Zbinden, "Hartford Water Tower, Sebastian County, Arkansas," National

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The 1903 *Atlas of Sebastian County, Arkansas*, proudly proclaimed, "Sebastian County, Arkansas is truly the mineral Klondike of the South. 950,000 tons of semi-anthracite coal was mined in 1901 and \$700,000 was paid out for labor in the mines of the county. Government tests show Sebastian County coal to be the best known."¹⁰ Low-volatile bituminous and semi-anthracite coal, which are higher grade types of coal, are present in significant amounts in west-central Arkansas. Coal fields are located in the Arkansas River Valley in an area about thirty-three miles wide and sixty miles long, which stretches from the western border of the state to Russellville (Pope County). During the heyday of the coal mining industry in Sebastian County, which was from about 1880 until 1920, Arkansas coal was primarily used to produce steam to power electric generators and steam locomotives. Arkansas coal is desirable because it produces little smoke when it burns and has a lower sulfur content than many other coals mined in the United States. In addition, Arkansas coal has a high carbon content, which makes it burn at a high temperature, increasing its efficiency. Finally, Arkansas coal is less likely to coke than other varieties, making it ideal for use in steam locomotives, boilers, and power plants.¹¹

By May 1908, there were eleven coal mines operating within a seven mile radius of Hartford. Three of these mines—the McKinney Bros. Coal Co. Mine No. 6, the Bolen-McDaniel Coal Co. Mine No. 1, and the Central Coal and Coke Co. Shaft No. 1—were inside the Hartford city limits.¹² The number of mines in the area increased to fourteen by October 1913, and there were sixteen mining companies headquartered in Hartford by 1922.¹³ The success of the coal industry resulted in rapid population growth. The United States Census of 1900 listed the population of Hartford at 460. By 1910, the population grew dramatically to 1,780 and reached its peak in 1920 at 2,067.¹⁴ Although the U.S. Census reported Hartford's peak population to be 2,067 in 1920, local historians agree that the town's population grew to nearly 4,000 people between 1910 and 1920.¹⁵ At one point in time, Hartford was a "tent town," with at least one tent serving as a hotel, in

Register of Historic Places Registration Form. From the files of the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program (2007): Section 8, Page 2.

¹⁰ Couch, "They Came and Left But We Stayed," 9.

¹¹ Ragsdale, "Coal Mining," from the Encyclopedia of Arkansas History and Culture; Arkansas Geological Survey, "Coal," Internet; accessed 11 February 2009; available from http://www.geology.ar.gov/fossil_fuels/Coal.htm.

Coking is the process by which coal is baked at a high temperature in order to burn off impurities, leaving a solid porous material primarily composed of carbon. This material or "coke" burns at a hotter temperature than coal, contains less sulfur, and produces less smoke. Coke is generally more desirable than coal, so one would assume that it would be a good thing for coal to coke easily. However, it was just the opposite in cases where people burned coal. If the coal had not been coked already, easily coking coal would leave behind a slag material containing coal tar that was very difficult to remove and carcinogenic in large concentrations.

¹² Sanborn Map Company, "Hartford, Sebastian County, Arkansas," (New York, May 1908).

¹³ Sanborn Map Company, "Hartford, Sebastian County, Arkansas," (New York, October 1913); Dallas T. Herndon, ed., *Centennial History of Arkansas Volume I* (Little Rock: S.J. Clarke Publishing Company, 1922): 897.

¹⁴ U.S. Census Bureau, *Twelfth Census of the United States, Volume I, Population, Part I* (Washington: GPO, 1901); Moore and Roach, *No Smoke*, 15; U.S. Census Bureau, *Thirteenth Census of the United States, Volume II, Population* (Washington: GPO, 1913); Zbinden, "Hartford Water Tower," Section 8, Page 2.

¹⁵ Sebastian County Government, *150 Years of Sebastian County* (Fort Smith: privately published, 2001): 13.

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order to accommodate the burgeoning population. Many of the area's newcomers were European immigrants attracted by the availability of work in the coal mines. The area south of the railroad (Gwynn Street) in Hartford was known as "Little Italy" because of the high concentration of Italian immigrants living there. Hartford's rapid population growth also hampered the town's ability to maintain a reliable water supply. Residents relied on wells and cisterns, and it was often difficult to keep up with the demand for water.¹⁶

As Hartford continued to grow, a business district developed along Oak Street. There were "blacksmith shops, [a] photo studio, bakery, groceries, restaurants, saloons, and a tin shop where a man made galvanized water tanks for homes and businesses."¹⁷ Since there was no city-wide water distribution system, most people used these tanks to transport and store water. Tragically, a fire destroyed the business district along Oak Street, despite the residents' best efforts to extinguish the flames. Oak Street became known as "Smokey Row" after the devastating fire, and businesses were rebuilt one block east of Oak Street on Broadway Street. Wood frame buildings were quickly constructed along Broadway Street, but in 1907, another fire claimed a three-block stretch of commercial buildings along the east side of Broadway. These buildings were rebuilt with brick, and several of them appear on the May 1908 Sanborn map, indicating a hasty building campaign. J.A. McConnell built the Grand View Hotel at the northwest corner of Broadway and Gwynn Streets, and M.M. Smith built a general store specializing in undertaking supplies on Broadway Street. There were numerous saloons in Hartford, and "Smokey Row" was "as wicked or more wicked than First and Second Street in Fort Smith, if that was possible."¹⁸ By 1908, Hartford had two hotels, two livery stables, a cotton gin, four churches, a school, and retail establishments of all sorts. The entire east side of Broadway Street had been rebuilt by 1913, and the street became the focus of all commercial activity in Hartford.¹⁹

During Hartford's biggest coal boom years between 1910 and 1920, there were two movie theaters on Broadway Street. Long-time Hartford resident Mary Couch noted, "A person could go to one show for a nickel, come out and go across the street and see another show for a nickel."²⁰ Both sides of Broadway Street between Main and Gwynn Streets were filled with businesses, including restaurants, hotels, a pool hall and bowling alley, groceries, drug stores, dry goods and shoe stores, barber shops, and meat markets.²¹ Hartford was the second largest city in Sebastian County during the height of the coal boom, with an estimated population of 4,000. Mrs. Henry West, a salesperson at one of the general stores on Broadway Street, recalled that her store sold 300 pairs of shoes on one Saturday. Hartford residents and workers living

¹⁶ Mary L. Couch, "Days When Coal Was King," *The Key* 15, no. 1 (Summer 1980): 3-7.

¹⁷ Couch, "They Came and Left But We Stayed," 9.

¹⁸ Cardin, "They Came to Hartford," 23.

¹⁹ Cardin, "They Came to Hartford," 22-23; Couch, "Days When Coal Was King," 3-7; Michael, "Hartford—Past and Future," 23-25; Couch, "They Came and Left But We Stayed," 9-11; Sanborn Map Company, "Hartford," (1908, 1913).

²⁰ Couch, "Days When Coal Was King," 5.

²¹ Sanborn Map Company, "Hartford," (1913).

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in the mine camps congregated on Broadway Street every Saturday to shop, socialize, and enjoy some good entertainment.²²

The Midland Valley Railroad was the best form of transportation during the boom years since there were no paved roads in south Sebastian County. Of course, the Midland Valley primarily existed to transport coal shipments, but it also delivered merchandise, mail, and people. A train called the "Polly" provided mail and passenger service. It hauled a mixture of freight and passengers Monday through Saturday, but it was strictly reserved for passenger service on Sunday. Miners often rode the "Polly" to Fort Smith to visit the city's saloons and brothels, while other residents journeyed to Fort Smith to purchase items not available in the south Sebastian County stores. The "Polly" began its route in the morning at Hartford, and it traveled to Midland; Excelsior; Greenwood; back to Excelsior; Hackett; Rock Island, Oklahoma; and Fort Smith. The train returned along the same route.²³

Hartford has a long tradition of making music, and Broadway Street became the main music venue by 1913. Most towns had a brass band in the early twentieth century, and after the coal mining industry began to attract new residents, it was not long before a band was organized in Hartford. Miley C. Steele first came to Hartford from his home in Missouri in 1903 to work on the roadbed for the Midland Valley Railroad. He and his sister moved to Hartford in 1908, and Miley worked in the McKinney Mine. Miley's brother, David Steele, came to Hartford from Brinkley, Arkansas, in 1903 as the first permanent agent for the Midland Valley Railroad. The Steele brothers were musicians and led bands in their respective towns before moving to Hartford. Miley and David helped organize a brass band in Hartford, and most of the band members worked for the Central Coal and Coke Company, so it was called "The Four C Band." A bandstand was constructed on an empty lot just to the north of the First National Bank Building at the northeast corner of Broadway and Main Streets by 1913. A larger concrete bandstand was built in the center of the intersection of Broadway and Main Streets by 1922. The band played a concert on Broadway Street every Saturday night, and it also played for special occasions and holidays. In 1921 Miley Steele started an orchestra for high school girls in Hartford, and in 1923, he organized Arkansas's first Boy Scout Band in Hartford.²⁴

Further adding to Hartford's musical heritage, Eugene Monroe Bartlett and David Moore established the Hartford Music Company in 1918. Bartlett wanted to publish gospel music; in particular, he wanted to teach people how to read shape notes, which would allow them to read music and sing with or without an instrument. Bartlett's songbooks were published semiannually in Atlanta, Georgia, but he sold only 15,000 copies in his first year. In 1921 Bartlett started the Hartford Musical Institute in Hartford. The Institute was held twice a year and offered instruction in rudiments, versification, harmony, sight reading, ear training,

²² Cardin, "They Came to Hartford," 22-23; Michael, "Hartford—Past and Future," 23-25.

²³ John Lefebvre Des Champs, "The Midland Valley Railroad in South Sebastian County," *The Key* 15, no. 1 (Summer 1980): 1-2.

²⁴ Sanborn Map Company, "Hartford," (1913, 1922); Couch, "Days When Coal Was King," 5; Couch, "They Came and Left But We Stayed," 10-11.

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piano, stringed instruments, and piano tuning. Seventy-five people attended the first year, but the class grew to nearly 400 in 1932. The Hartford Music Company purchased the printing equipment from Mrs. Maude Johnson, the editor and publisher of *The Hartford Observer*, and began printing its own songbooks in Hartford. The songbooks contained songs written by Bartlett as well as other popular hymns. Bartlett's most well-known composition was "Victory in Jesus." By 1931, the company was printing and shipping more than 100,000 songbooks a year to thirty-five states and two foreign countries. Two 80,000-pound carloads of paper were used for each printing, making the Hartford Music Company one of the state's largest publishing companies at that time. The Hartford Music Company was headquartered in the one-story brick building at the southeast corner of Broadway and Main Streets in Hartford. This building was destroyed by fire in November 2008, but the empty lot is still a non-contributing resource within the Hartford Commercial Historic District boundary. Bartlett retired in 1931, and the business was run by John Alexander McClung. By 1938, the company had several branches in Texas and Missouri. The Hartford Music Company was purchased by Albert E. Brumley (author of popular hymns "I'll Meet You in the Morning" and "I'll Fly Away") in 1948 and moved to Powell, Missouri, where it continues today as Brumley Music Company.²⁵

In the early 1920s, the discovery of oil and gas fields in the United States resulted in the decline of the coal mining industry. Coal mining in the Hartford area greatly diminished as demand was reduced and markets were lost. Making matters even worse, Arkansas coal mined from higher, thicker veins turned out to be too soft to ship long distances without crumbling into small pieces, which was undesirable. The residents of Hartford relied almost entirely on the coal industry for their livelihood. Coal mining was seasonal, with demand being the greatest during the winter months, but the miners lacked sufficient time to farm on a large scale. Therefore, when the coal industry declined, Hartford lost much of its population. The population of Hartford began to decline in the late 1920s, and by 1930, the United States Census listed the town's population as 1,210. The population of Hartford dropped as low as 531 in 1960, and the town has not experienced much of a recovery. The population of Hartford in 2000 was 772. Like many small towns reliant on a single industry, the loss of that economic engine often results in a rapid exodus. Just as quickly as Hartford became the "boomiest town in Arkansas" in the early twentieth century, it became a ghost town almost overnight.²⁶

Although Hartford is no longer the bustling town that it was during the coal boom years, Broadway Street is still the commercial core of the town. Before it burned recently, the Hartford Music Company Building housed the Just a Rose Café, which was a popular eatery and gathering place for local residents. The Hartford Public Library, City Hall, Police Department, and Fire Department are all located on Broadway

²⁵ Couch, "They Came and Left But We Stayed," 11; Mary L. Couch, "Music From the Hills and Valley," *The Key* 11, no. 1 (Spring 1976): 4-5; T.J. McClung Gibson and John R. Way, "Hartford Music Company and Hartford Music Institute," from the Encyclopedia of Arkansas History and Culture. Internet; accessed 24 January 2009; available from <http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?search=1&entryID=2661>.

²⁶ Ragsdale, "Coal Mining," from the Encyclopedia of Arkansas History and Culture; Cardin, "They Came to Hartford," 23; Moore and Roach, *No Smoke*, 15-17.

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Street as well. The H.A. Building now houses a local history museum, and the building at 18-20 S. Broadway St. was recently rehabilitated to serve as office space for Parkbilt Homes, Inc. Unoccupied buildings like the First National Bank Building and the Hartford Post Office have great potential. The bulk of the buildings within the district boundary were constructed by 1913 in response to Hartford's economic boom. Although the Hartford Fire Department was not constructed until about 1960, it represents a substantial investment in historic downtown Hartford and shows the community's continued will to survive, despite the decline of the coal industry in south Sebastian County. Furthermore, the building's design and scale are compatible with the rest of the district. The buildings in the Hartford Commercial Historic District represent the commercial growth of the town in response to the success of the coal industry in the early twentieth century as well as its refusal to disappear.

Statement of Significance

The Hartford Commercial Historic District is being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places with **local significance** under **Criterion A** for its association with the growth and development of Hartford. Hartford began as a small village in a valley between the Sugar Loaf and Poteau Mountains and became a boom town almost overnight. When large-scale commercial coal mining became a reality with the arrival of the railroad in south Sebastian County, people moved en masse to small villages like Hartford, Huntington, Midland, Excelsior, and Hackett to find work in the mines and make a quick profit. Hartford was the second largest city in Sebastian County during the height of the coal boom, with an estimated population of 4,000. The buildings in the district boundary were constructed in response to the rapid growth of the town and housed important frontier amenities like grocery stores, banks, drug stores, and clothing stores. This district represents the best concentration of historic commercial buildings in Hartford and provides a context for the development of coal boom towns throughout south Sebastian County.

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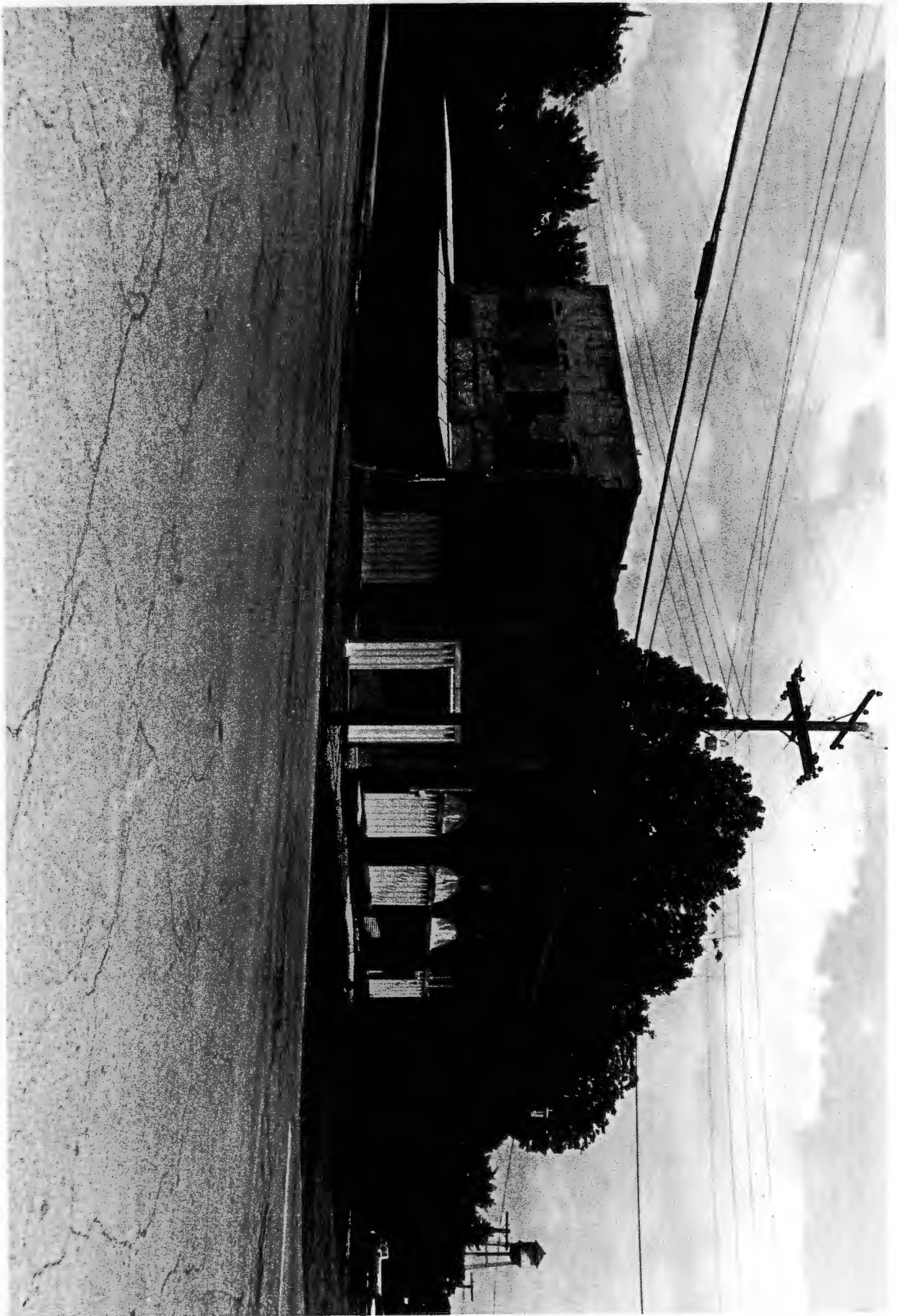
Verbal Boundary Description

From UTM coordinate 15/373977/3876498, proceed easterly for approximately 170 feet to UTM coordinate 15/374030/3876497. From this point, proceed southerly for 140 feet perpendicular to the previous path until reaching UTM coordinate 15/374028/3876455, thence proceed easterly for about 43 feet until reaching UTM coordinate 15/374040/3876454. At this point, proceed southerly for approximately 468 feet to UTM coordinate 15/374035/3876310. From here, proceed westerly for 214 feet to UTM coordinate 15/373969/3876312. Then proceed north about 609 feet to the point of beginning.

Boundary Justification

This boundary was drawn to include the properties in the Hartford Commercial Historic District that maintain the highest level of historic integrity and the strongest association with the commercial growth of Hartford.

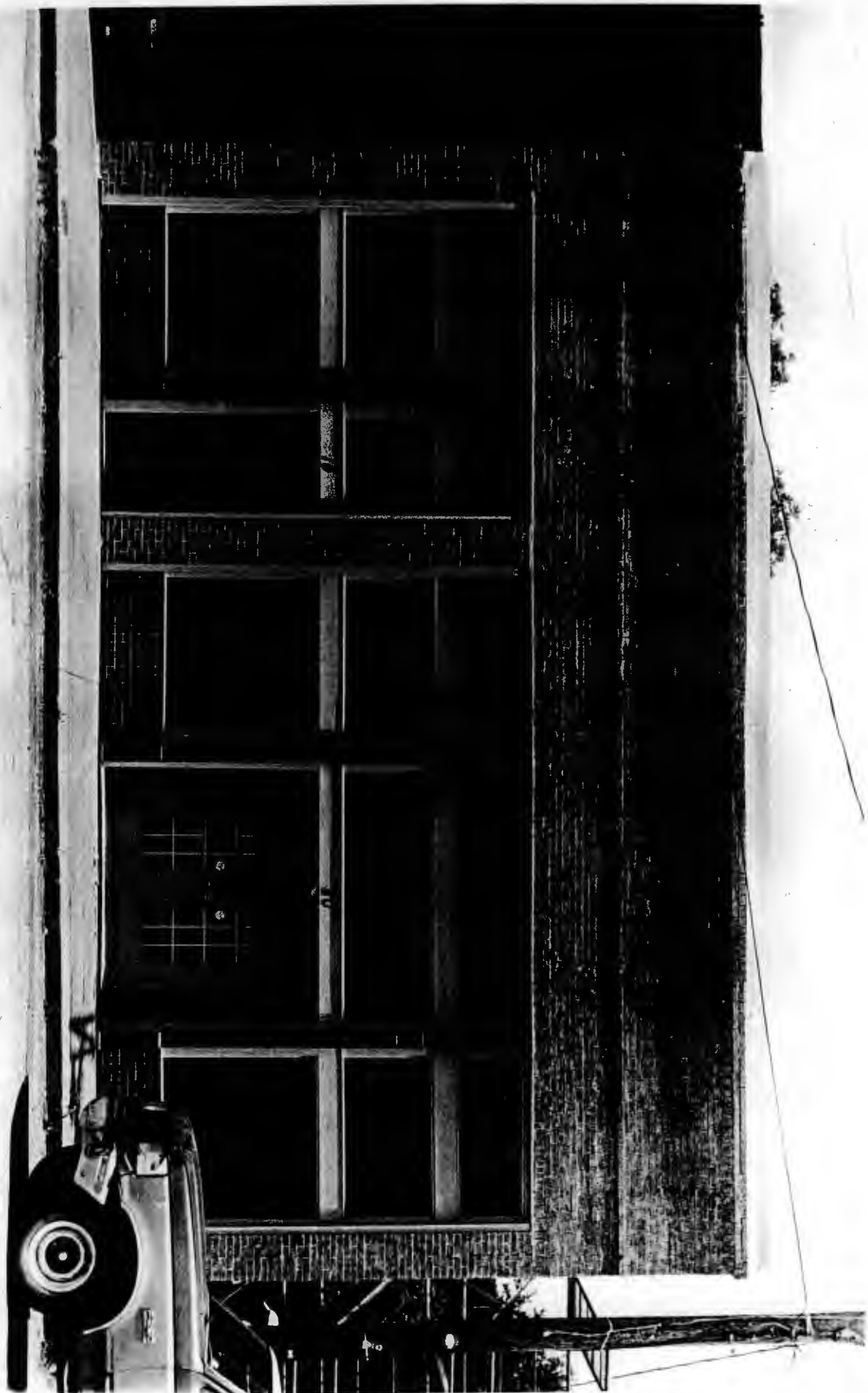






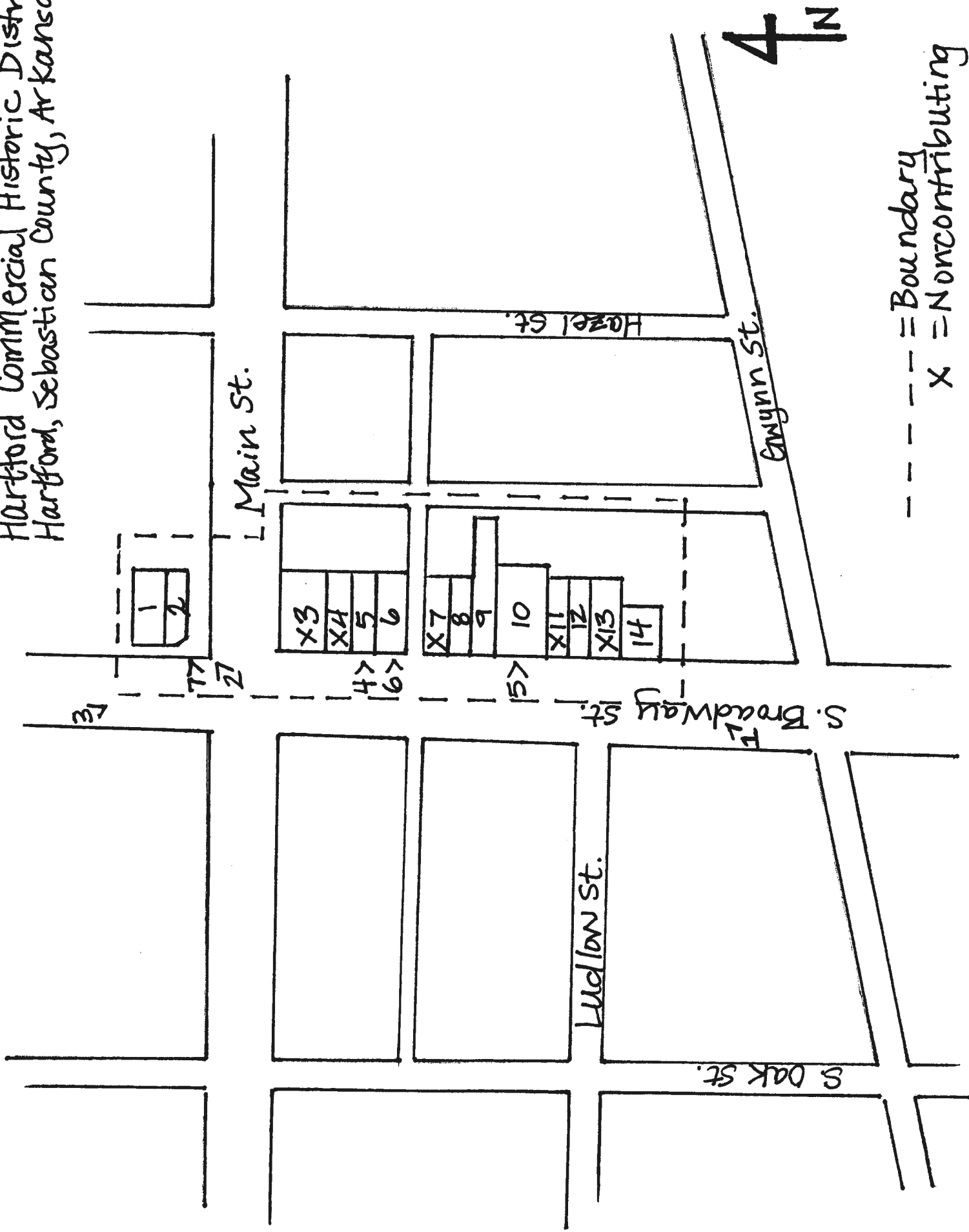


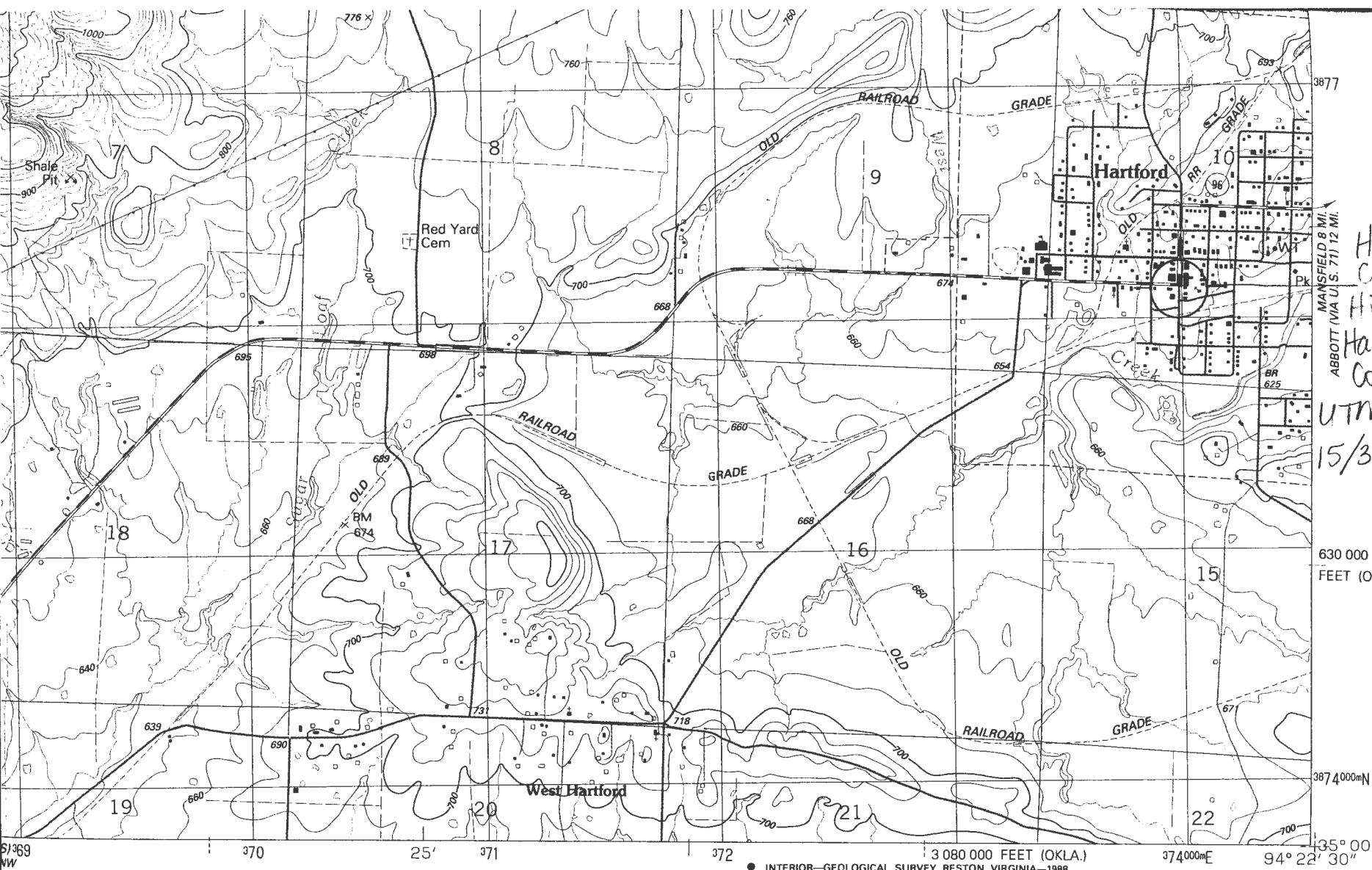




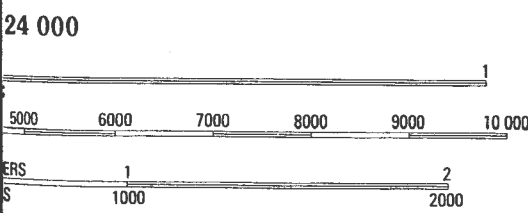


Hartford Commercial Historic District Hartford, Sebastian County, Arkansas





Hartford
Commercial
Historic District
Hartford, Sebastian
County, Arkansas
UTM Reference:
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TICAL DATUM OF 1929

AL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
COLORADO 80225, OR RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092
N. LITTLE ROCK, ARKANSAS 72204
VEY, NORMAN, OKLAHOMA 73069



● INTERIOR—GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, RESTON, VIRGINIA—1988

ROAD CLASSIFICATION

- Primary highway,
hard surface
- Secondary highway,
hard surface
- Light-duty road, hard or
improved surface
- Unimproved road
- Interstate Route ○ U. S. Route ○ State Route

HARTFORD, ARK.—OKLA.
SW/4 GREENWOOD 15' QUADRANGLE
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1987

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