

**Walks through History**  
**Pine Bluff Commercial Historic District**  
**Begin at the Jefferson County Courthouse at Main & Barraque streets**  
**August 10, 2013**  
**By: Rachel Silva**



*Hotel Pines*



*500 Block of Main, west side*



*Saenger Theater*

## **Intro**

Hi, my name is Rachel Silva, and I work for the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program. Thank you for coming, and welcome to the “Walks through History” tour of the Pine Bluff Commercial Historic District. I’d like to thank the Pine Bluff Historic District Commission and the Pine Bluff/Jefferson County Historical Museum for co-sponsoring today’s tour, and I’d also like to recognize a few individuals for their help with the tour—

Robert Tucker, with the City of PB and the historic district commission;

Kristi Alexander, director of the PB/Jefferson County Historical Museum;

Rick Joslin with the *PB Commercial*;

Thom Brown, owner of Southeast Engravers on Barraque, who will provide bottled water at the end of the tour;

And George Makris, president of MK Distributors and CEO of Simmons First National Bank, for opening the Du Bocage House after our walking tour.

We’ll walk 6 blocks of Main Street as well as some side streets (4<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>) and return along Barraque. You will then have the option to caravan over to the Boone-Murphy House at 714 W. 4<sup>th</sup> and the Du Bocage House at 1115 W. 4<sup>th</sup>.

**\*\*This tour is worth 2 hours of continuing education credit from the American Institute of Architects. See me afterwards if you're interested.**

The Pine Bluff Commercial Historic District was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2008 and encompasses the historic commercial core of the city (roughly bounded by Hwy. 65B, Alabama, 10<sup>th</sup>, and Walnut). And we'll talk about several properties which are individually listed on the National Register as well.

**Jefferson County Courthouse**—The first brick building erected in Pine Bluff was the **1839-1840** courthouse, which was located on this site but faced north on Pullen Street. Just five years after its construction, this courthouse was reportedly in a “dilapidated condition.” In **1856** the court awarded a contract to George G. Keeler to construct a new, brick courthouse. Although portions of the building were completed by 1857, the project was not finished until 1860. In **1870** the courthouse was slightly remodeled with the addition of a portico at the front entrance and a redesign of the cupola. Twenty years later, in **1890**, local architect Edwin Cook remodeled the courthouse once again, adding water and sewer systems and steam heat. The building was given a Victorian-era makeover with a mansard roof topped by wrought-iron cresting, a larger cupola with a clock in it, and a delicate, wrought-iron balcony across the front facade. An “artificial stone” veneer of stucco made to look like cut blocks of stone was put over the original brick as well. The courthouse was remodeled once again in **1906** by Little Rock architects Frank W. Gibb and Theo Sanders, who slightly redesigned the clock tower, removed the wrought-iron balcony, added a Classically-inspired door surround with a triangular pediment supported by fluted, Ionic columns, and built an annex on the rear of the building for additional office space.

In late November **1908**, high water on the Arkansas River threatened to destroy downtown Pine Bluff. A new levee had been constructed opposite Pine Bluff to prevent the Arkansas River from changing its channel, which would have impacted river traffic. However, the levee forced the river's current onto the south bank. Local officials appealed to the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to breach the levee and save the city, but the appeal was denied. So a crew was assembled in secret and ferried across the river to the levee, where they exploded two

charges of dynamite about 9:40 p.m. on December 2, 1908, providing some relief for the south bank. When it was all said and done, the river bank caved to within 3 feet of the courthouse foundation, and just downstream from the courthouse, the river claimed a swath of town several blocks long and about 2 blocks wide. As a precautionary measure, the back portion of the 1906 courthouse annex was removed until the bank could be shored up and was later rebuilt.

Sadly, the courthouse was heavily damaged by fire on April 28, 1976. In 1977 Jefferson County residents voted to reconstruct the courthouse in its original location. The Pine Bluff architectural firm of Reed, Willis, and Burks designed the current building and retained the central portion of the 1856 courthouse facade. The new courthouse opened in the spring of 1980.

**Parking lot to west of courthouse**—There was originally a “court square” with W. Court Street and E. Court Street running north-south right next to the courthouse. Then a half-block of commercial properties on either side of the courthouse before you hit N. Pine or N. State. The parking lot to the west of the courthouse (and part of the new courthouse itself) was the site of the 3-story Hotel Trulock, which opened in 1887 and was the finest hotel in Pine Bluff until the Hotel Pines was completed in 1913. In 1906 it was renamed the Jefferson Hotel. The hotel was demolished in the mid-1960s by developers who intended to build a new motel on the site. Their plans never materialized, and after the 1976 courthouse fire, the county purchased the property.

**Dexter Harding House**—built in 1850 by Dexter Harding, who settled on 160 acres southeast of downtown Pine Bluff and built the town’s first sawmill. His home was originally located southeast of the Pine Bluff Civic Center at 1109 Texas Street. When it was constructed, the Harding House was situated on Harding Lake (the only thing that remains today is Harding Drain), and sawdust accumulated in the lake forming a sawdust bridge. Early settlers had to cross the sawdust bridge to reach northern Pine Bluff and were terrified of the bridge at night when the snakes and alligators ventured out. Blanche Edgar, the last Harding heir to live on the property, died in the late 1960s, and the original 3-room portion of the house

was dismantled and stored. The Urban Renewal Agency bought the property and built the PB Convention Center and PB Civic Center. Because it is the oldest house in Pine Bluff, the Harding House was reconstructed on a county-owned lot and opened in 1985 as the Dexter Harding Tourist Information Center.

**100 block W. Barraque**—entire block of 2-story, Italianate-style commercial buildings until at least the late 1960s. Barraque Street named after early settler Antoine Barraque.

### **West side of Main Street, going south from courthouse**

100 block

Merchants & Planters Bank (NR-listed 1978)

The Merchants and Planters Bank was organized on December 1, 1876, to acquire the assets of an earlier banking firm called Smart, Hudson & Company. In 1891 the bank constructed a new building on this corner, but on January 24, 1892, a fire destroyed the building along with the entire northern half of the block bounded by Main, Barraque, Pine, and 2<sup>nd</sup> streets, except for Dewoody's Drug Store, which was protected by a firewall. Bank officials immediately hired Little Rock architect Thomas Harding to design a new building. Harding's Romanesque-style design featured a corner turret, beveled corner entrance with granite arches (granite was quarried at Fourche Mountain in Pulaski County), and arched window openings. When the bank opened on October 31, 1892, it was considered "one of the handsomest bank buildings in the South." Professional offices (attorneys and physicians) were located upstairs. Merchants & Planters closed in November 1930 due to the Great Depression. The Hood family has owned the building for many years and used it as office space for an insurance and real estate business ("Hood Co." now appears on the panel that used to read "Bank"). After the courthouse burned in 1976, the Hood Building was threatened with demolition to create a green space near the reconstructed courthouse. Thankfully, the building is still standing and is occupied.

108 Main—built ca. 1892. Italianate-style influence with a pressed metal cornice with brackets. Retains cast-iron storefront columns.

1908—Mizell Company, cigars

1913—Elijah H. Duckett, watchmaker & Louis Marcus, shoemaker

1927—Carl Westall, cleaning & pressing

Vacant lot—was 2-story building that housed Walker Drug and later B. Gottlieb, jeweler and Joseph Gottlieb, barber and pool hall

### Alley

Vacant lot—was 3-story building that housed the New Orpheo Theatre (first floor) and the New Orpheo Hotel (2<sup>nd</sup> & 3<sup>rd</sup> floors). By the late 1920s, it was J. C. Penney with professional offices upstairs.

122-124? Main—Historic building with newer façade. Was R. H. Stearns & Company, jewelers, from at least 1901 until 1913.

126-128 Main (just a late 1970s brick façade)—site of a 2-story building that housed the Isaac Dreyfus Department Store. After the courthouse burned, some recycled brick street pavers from the north end of Main were used to construct this arched façade (dates from late 1970s).

130-132 Main (at NW corner Main & 2<sup>nd</sup>)—Bank of Pine Bluff Building. Was originally 3 stories tall. Retains its original Ionic columns at the storefront level.

### 200 block

Vacant lot at SW corner Main & 2<sup>nd</sup> (200-202 Main)—was a 2-story building that housed Kastor & Bluthenthal men's clothing. By the late 1920s, the business was Adolph Bluthenthal, clothing.

204-206 Main—was originally a 2-story building (second story taken off sometime between 1920 and 1950). Early 20<sup>th</sup> century—housed J. B. Simon & Company clothing. About 1913, it became the Best Theater (motion pictures), which remained there until at least the late 1920s. [200-206 Main buildings were constructed ca. 1888 and were called the Simmons Block early on.]

208 Main—heavily altered façade. From at least 1901 to 1927—housed Katzenstein Shoe Company.

210 Main—housed Bedell's Pharmacy from ca. 1900 until at least 1913. By 1927 it was Conery's Drug.

212 Main—Nice 1920s buff brick façade with cast-stone detailing and a shaped parapet added to a ca. 1888 building. You can see the older red brick through cracks in the stucco along the alley. Also see the Family Shoe Store sign painted on the alley side. This was Arnold Bros. Jewelry and later Ed Barefield's Jewelry. In the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, Family Shoe Store, owned by the Arnold family, was located here.

### Alley

218 Main—built ca. 1890 to serve as the Hammett Grocer Company wholesale grocers. The building was connected to a large grocery and cotton warehouse that fronted on 3<sup>rd</sup> and Pine. By 1896 it was Fox Bros. Hardware, and about 1910 it became Henry Marx, fine men's clothing, before Marx was located at 500 Main (Marx was here until at least 1927).

220-222 Main—originally two separate storefronts, and they were both 2 stories in height. 220 (on right) was Sivess-Walton Co., dry goods and millinery, until about 1910, when it became Goldberg's Selz Royal Blue Shoe Store and Adanell Millinery Company. 222 (on left) was Brashear Drug Co. By 1920, the buildings were combined into one storefront, which housed Levine's Quality Shoes & Clothing.

224 Main—At the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, there were three businesses between here and the corner—The Hub (men’s wear), W. S. Beard & Co. (shoes), and The Globe (dry goods and clothing). By 1908, it was H. C. Bluthenthal clothing, Leverenz-Trulock Shoe Co., and Wolf Nichols Dry Goods Co./Bon Ton Millinery Parlor. In 1927 the Doc’s Pawn Shop building was F. W. Woolworth Company and the vacant lot at the NW corner of Main & 3<sup>rd</sup> was Froug (Froog) Department Store (you can still see the tile, which says “Froug” in a couple places). The corner building was later occupied by Exchange Furniture.

300 block

Former rail corridor along 3rd—St. Louis Southwestern Railroad (Cotton Belt)  
 In 1883 the Texas & St. Louis Railroad was completed through Arkansas, cutting diagonally across the state from Texarkana to St. Francis (northeast of Piggott in Clay County). The purpose of the railroad was to connect St. Louis with the cotton fields of the southwest, thus the nickname “Cotton Belt.” In 1884 the railroad was reorganized as the St. Louis, Arkansas & Texas, which was again reorganized in 1891 as the St. Louis Southwestern. About 1895 the St. Louis Southwestern built a new passenger & freight depot at the southeast corner of 3<sup>rd</sup> & Alabama streets (no longer extant). St. L SW later built a separate freight depot at the SE corner of 3<sup>rd</sup> and State as well. The Cotton Belt Railroad shops, including a roundhouse and car-making facility, were located east of downtown. The roundhouse was dismantled in the 1970s, and the shops closed in the 1990s. But the Arkansas Railroad Museum is housed in what was once the locomotive fabrication building.

300 Main—built ca. 1895. Nice commercial building with brick corbelling at the cornice, decorative recessed panels, and cast-iron storefront columns. Early 20<sup>th</sup> century—housed S. A. Nichols, novelties, and the Morris Packing Company (meats).

Since at least the mid-1980s, this has been Looking Good men and boys’ store. At that time, 302 Main (immediately to the south) was occupied by a competing men and boys’ store called Looking Better. ☺

302 Main—built ca. 1895. Early 20<sup>th</sup> century—Thalheimer (Tallheimer) & Co., meats, and a small portion of the storefront was occupied by Peter Mustachia, shoemaker.

1980s--Looking Better.

304 Main—Early 20<sup>th</sup> century (at least 1901 to 1913)—was Jacob Mosby’s liquor store/saloon with Peter Goodloe’s eating house in the rear. Both were listed as “colored” establishments in the Pine Bluff City Directories. “Butlers” in the tile from when the building housed Butlers Shoe Store.

306 Main—at least 1908 to 1913—John B. Hill, barber; William M. Lovett, clothes cleaner; and Ben Sylvester, shoemaker. Listed in directory as “colored.”

310 Main—1908-William Gregory, eating house, and Mack Haney, saloon. Listed as “colored.”

312 Main—1908-Marx-Baer Grocery Co. 1913-Bram & Co., dry goods  
I could vaguely make out the words “Belts Hats Jewelry Bags” on the front of 312 just above the storefront.

314 Main—1908-Freeman-Patillo Grocery Co. (colored) 1913-Leverenz Shoe Co. Painted sign on alley side of building says, “Formerly Capital.”

Alley

316-320 Main—built ca. 1930. Great Art Deco commercial building with vertical emphasis provided by brick pilasters. In mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, this building housed Newberry’s lunch counter, and sit-ins were held here during the Civil Rights Movement.

As we walk on the east sidewalk, notice the old rock street curbing and the AP & L meter covers.



322 Main—Nice 20<sup>th</sup> century commercial building with shaped parapet and geometric designs on façade. Was home to Wilson Bros. Drug Store (colored) and Lewis E. Duncan, physician, before becoming the William E. Murray Department Store (by 1913). In 1920s, was Jack Fines?? Late 1950s-60s—Lea’s Men’s Store.

324 Main—1908 to 1913-Pine Bluff Fruit Co.; 1927-Palais Royal?? Later Kenney Shoe Store.

326-328 Main—Early 20<sup>th</sup> century-W. E. Mullikin’s Dry Goods. By the late 1920s, it was S. H. Kress & Co. Department Store. Kress remained there until at least the 1980s. At some point, the building was damaged by fire and was remodeled in the Art Moderne style with horizontal panels of glass block and an awning that wraps around to the 4<sup>th</sup> Street elevation.

### **East on 4<sup>th</sup> Street**

Walking past the side elevation of the Senyard Building (NE corner 4<sup>th</sup> & Main)—built ca. 1910. Housed a variety of retail on the first floor and professional offices/lodge hall on the upper floors. You can still see some things painted on the upper story windows like “Lawyer,” “Attorney at Law,” “Photography by Grice,” and “Howard Insurance” (Howard Insurance is on the front facade). More on this later...

Spharler’s Jewelry and Watch Repair—Mr. Spharler died recently. There used to be a cool clock sign out front.

### **Masonic Temple (NR-listed 1978)**

When it was completed, the Masonic Lodge on the corner of Fourth and State streets was the tallest building in Pine Bluff. The structure was built in stages during 1902, 1903, and 1904 by the Sovereign Grand Lodge of Free and Accepted Masons of the State of Arkansas, the state's black Masonic order. The building was designed by Little Rock architects Frank Gibb and Theo Sanders in the

Romanesque Revival style with arched window openings on the top floor and rusticated stone columns at the storefront. In the early morning hours of May 25, 1954, a fire damaged the top two floors of the building. The losses were covered by insurance, and the building was restored except for a dormer on the roof. The work was completed in 1955, and a second cornerstone was installed on the northeast corner of the building above the original stone. The first floor housed a variety of retail, and the second floor was used as office space for the Grand Lodge as well as doctors, dentists, and other professionals. The third and fourth floors were the lodge rooms/lodge hall.

#### Union Station (NR-listed 1978)

Union Station was built in 1906 to serve both the Cotton Belt and St. Louis, Iron Mountain & Southern railroad lines (Iron Mountain became Missouri Pacific in 1917 and is now Union Pacific). The depot housed a ticket office, baggage room, waiting rooms, and the far eastern end of the building was the Wells Fargo Railway Express office. A long car shed extended from the depot almost to Main Street in order to protect patrons from the sun and rain. The depot currently houses the Pine Bluff/Jefferson County Historical Museum. [The depot's construction ended a 26-year argument between the City of PB, the Cotton Belt, and the Iron Mountain. We already talked about the Cotton Belt line and depot on 3<sup>rd</sup> Street. The Little Rock, Mississippi River & Texas Railroad was finally extended from Pine Bluff to Little Rock about 1880, but that process was controversial, as several property owners along W. 4<sup>th</sup> Street opposed using that street as a right-of-way for the railroad. Then the LR, Miss. River & Texas built a wood-frame depot near 4<sup>th</sup> & State streets, but it was soon considered an eyesore. The city wanted a new depot. Meanwhile, the LR, Miss. River & Texas was acquired by the Iron Mountain Railroad. Then it was difficult to get the railroad lines to agree to share a depot. Only after a fire broke out at the old depot and the city filed a lawsuit against the Iron Mountain Railroad did things start moving.]

**Cross tracks & go west on 4<sup>th</sup> back to Main**

SW corner 4<sup>th</sup> & State—buff brick buildings constructed ca. 1935. Corner building housed a restaurant. Has cool zipper brick. Next building to west has nice Art Deco detailing and probably housed some type of automobile-related business. Next building was constructed much earlier, probably late 19<sup>th</sup> century, and housed the office for Armour & Company Wholesale Meats, which was located on the site of the buff brick buildings. Has its pressed metal façade and cornice. In the 1960s, this building housed Matthews Hardware, and a newsstand was located nearby.

## **Main Street**

400 block

400 Main—had several smaller storefronts originally; was remodeled in mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. The corner storefront was built in 1894 to serve as the post office and was later McCain Grocery Company. By the late 1920s, it was the Eagle Store (may have sold boy scout uniforms). By the 1950s, this building was Woolworth's (cafeteria/lunch counter).

408-410-412 Main—In 1920s, it was several stores, including the Southern Tailoring Co., Acme Food Shop, Burton's Sandwich Shop, and the Ballard Drug Store. Was later Baim's Department Store.

Alley

Point out old AL & P meter covers (from Arkansas Light & Power, which predated Arkansas Power & Light) as well as USA WPA sidewalks. Also, "George M. Dilley & Son Founders, Pine Bluff, Ark. 1890" stamped on cast-iron columns at 423-425 Main (Frederick Dilley lived in PB and operated a foundry named after his father, George M. Dilley, who started a foundry business in 1873 in Palestine, TX, and later expanded).

Hotel Pines (NR-listed 1979)

In July 1910 a group of prominent Pine Bluff citizens organized the Pine Bluff Hotel Company to build a large hotel south of the Iron Mountain Railroad tracks. Early commercial development was concentrated near the Arkansas River along Barraque and later, along the rail corridors. The north end of Main Street was a thriving business district, while the area south of the tracks was sparsely developed. This group of investors believed that a luxury hotel south of the tracks would spur additional growth and increase their property value, and they were right. Little Rock architect George R. Mann, who is most well-known for his design of the Arkansas State Capitol building, was hired to design the hotel. Well-known decorator, Paul M. Heerwagen, of Fayetteville was hired to design the hotel interior. The Hotel Pines was constructed at the cost of \$350,000 and officially opened on November 6, 1913 (approaching its centennial). While many prominent citizens were stockholders in the venture, the largest stockholder was the Cotton Belt Bank & Trust Co., which bought 300 shares of stock. From 1913 until 1933, the offices of the bank were located on the first floor of the Hotel Pines. Like most hotels during this time period, the Hotel Pines had a wide variety of retail on its first floor and hotel rooms on the upper floors.

In the late 1920s, the following businesses occupied the first floor storefronts of the Pines: Hotel Pines Coffee Room; A. G. Kahn, jeweler; Pines Barber Shop; Hotel Pines Cigar Stand; Pines Drug Store; Cotton Belt Bank & Trust Co.; Pine Bluff Chamber of Commerce; and the Southeast Arkansas Development Association.

Interestingly, when the Cotton Belt Bank closed in 1933, the National Bank of Commerce moved into its spot at the corner of 5<sup>th</sup> & Main in the spring of 1934. In March 1953 the National Bank of Commerce opened its first drive-in window along W. 5<sup>th</sup>. It was the first facility of its kind in the state, and the design was unique in that the drive-thru booth rose out of a hole in the sidewalk from the hotel basement every day and was lowered to the basement at the close of business. The roof of the booth served as the sidewalk when the drive-thru was closed and lowered. And the bank paid the city for the parking spaces needed to operate the window. You can still see the metal roof of the booth in the sidewalk along 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue.

The Hotel Pines closed in 1970 after passenger rail service was discontinued through Pine Bluff. I think Gordon's Jewelry was the last tenant in the Hotel Pines (1980s).

500 block

As we cross 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue, look to the west and see Bank of America. The building was designed by the local architectural firm of Reed & Willis for the National Bank of Commerce in 1958 and featured a very groovy mid-century modern design with smooth panels of brick, a glass curtain wall, and angular aluminum panels in white and blue. The original façade has been altered, but the back of the bank wraps around on Main Street, and we'll see it in a minute. It still looks pretty original from that side, and you can also see the aluminum panels on the south elevation of the Cohen's Fashion building.

500-502 Main—built in 1914. Designed by well-known Little Rock architect Charles L. Thompson and features elements of the Craftsman style with large brackets under the cornice, tapestry brick, and second story windows with Craftsman-style pane arrangement. The 5<sup>th</sup> Avenue entrance to the upstairs is crowned by a pediment and says, "Bridges." In 1927 500 (right) was occupied by the McLendon-Saunders Dry Goods Co., and the 502 side (left) was the Bonnette Shoppe. In the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, the corner storefront was Conery Rexall Drug and later became Henry Marx fine men's clothing (also did tuxedo rental and sold Florsheim (floor-shem) shoes).

504-506 Main—built ca. 1925 and features a Craftsman-style awning. In recent memory, was Cohen's Fashion, an upscale women's clothing store.

Back of Bank of America (built for National Bank of Commerce)—see angular aluminum panels, water garden, smooth marble panels on back of bank building.

Chamber of Commerce site—was a large 2-story commercial building with 6 storefronts that had been built about 1910. In 1927 the following tenants occupied that building:

512-Reno Book & Stationery Co.; Ernest F. Phillips typewriter company

514-Kahn & Kahn Music with KKK Hall upstairs

516-Best Barber Shop

518-OK Ice Cream & Candy Company with the office for AP & L superintendent of street railways upstairs (by 1950 OK Ice Cream was located at NE corner of Main & 8<sup>th</sup>)

520-Franey Bros. paints

522-Central Pharmacy

By the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century (at least by 1950), the northern portion of this building was the Malco Theater.

600 block

620-622 Main—Sahara Temple (Shriners), built 1912. Renaissance Revival or Beaux Arts style design with elaborate terra cotta detail and arches. The first floor had two commercial storefronts for lease, and the Shriners used the upper two floors as the lodge hall and dance/banquet hall. In 1927, the bottom storefronts were (620) Piggly Wiggly No. 65 and (622) Cox Stores Co., grocers.

### **W. 6<sup>th</sup> Avenue, going west**

ArkLa Gas Company Building (NR-listed 2001)

Designed in 1949 by the local architectural firm of Selligman and Reed, the Arkansas Louisiana Gas Company Building is the best example of the Art Moderne style in downtown Pine Bluff. The building features Carrera glass panels, glass block, large panels of plate glass, and two distinctive acrylic blue flames on top.

Mid-C Modern at NE corner W. 6<sup>th</sup> & Pine—First South Savings & Loan

AP & L Building—built in 1951 to house the offices of Arkansas Power & Light Company, which was the primary electrical utility company for Arkansas from 1913 until 1989 and exists today as Entergy. Great example of Art Deco style with vertical emphasis provided by stone-capped pilasters and narrow bands of windows interspersed with decorative panels.

First Methodist Church—built 1920-1922 to replace a previous building at the NE corner of 6<sup>th</sup> and Main. Wonderful example of Neoclassical style.

### **North on Pine**

Point out 1931 Art Deco-style public library building (significantly altered) and the mid-century modern Downtowner Motor Inn.

### **East on 5<sup>th</sup> back to Main**

Talk about Simmons First National Bank on the way back to Main—built in 1929. Simmons National Bank was founded in 1903 and was named after its first president, Dr. John F. Simmons. The bank had at least 2 other locations prior to this building. In 1928 Simmons Bank commissioned Little Rock architect Eugene John Stern to design an 11-story bank building at the SE corner of 5<sup>th</sup> & Main. The building was constructed for about \$450,000 and was completed by January 1930. AP & L agreed to rent three floors, the bank occupied the first 2 floors, and the remainder of the building was rented as office space. In 1969 the bank hired the local architectural firm of Reed, Willis & Burks to remodel the building and give it a more “modern” appearance.

### **East side Main Street, going north**

400 block

NE corner Main & 5<sup>th</sup>—Merrill Civic Center, built 1937 by the WPA and the City of Pine Bluff Parks Commission to replace the 1890 Queen Anne-style Merrill

Institute on this site. The Merrill Institute was a gift to the city from local resident Joseph Merrill, who intended for the building to house the YMCA, which it did. The YMCA especially catered to young railroad employees, providing wholesome recreation and fellowship and a safe place to stay. By 1935 the YMCA building had deteriorated and was demolished. The WPA provided the necessary funds and labor to complete the current building, which opened in 1937.

423-425 Main (the Band Museum)—built 1890 by W. I. Hilliard, who leased the building to G. N. Hart for his drug store. Hart Drug was the first in PB to have an elevator and a soda fountain. This building was later occupied by furniture stores, including Puddephatt Furniture Manufacturing Company, Anchor Furniture Co., and Bulman Furniture Co. (Bulman still in the tile at the entrance).

415-417 Main (2-story building and 3-story building)—both buildings were constructed in 1890, but their facades have been altered. This was Fox Bros. Hardware. Kahn Jewelers was later located in the first floor of the 3-story building.

#### Alley

411-413 Main—1908-Fox-Harris Machine & Supply Co.; 1913-Howell Co., grocers; 1927-AP & L

407-409 Main—built ca. 1910. Was Fox Bros. Hardware's retail space. Their wholesale space was back at 415-417 Main until they built another building for wholesale behind the Merrill Civic Center. By the 1920s, this was Knox-Walker Furniture Co.

401-403 Main—Cleveland-Matthews Hardware. May have been a location of Baim's Dept. Store later??

300 block



329 Main—Senyard Building, 1910. Housed Senyard Company, saloon; C. V. and R. A. Ware, loans; People’s Outfitting Co.; and DeLarios Juanito, barber (1913).

325 Main—In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, this had two storefronts—Peter Picchi, lunch room and Carter Thompson, bicycle repair. By 1913 it was Hasigianis & Gajigianis, restaurant.

321-323 Main—McGaughy Hardware Co., wholesale and retail hardware and farm implements. Note pressed metal cornice.

317-319 Main—Union Furniture Corp. (1908) and Tedstrom Furniture Co. (1913). Missing its pressed metal cornice. Nice arched window openings on 3<sup>rd</sup> floor.

#### Alley

311 or 313 Main—Barre Building, late 19<sup>th</sup> century commercial. Nice Romanesque detailing with row of arched window openings and ocular vents. 1908-The Gem, confectionery; 1927-The Hub Men’s wear.

305-311 Main—ca. 1900 commercial building with great detailing—shaped parapet, terra cotta, and recessed panels. 1908-south side was Murphy-Martin Dry Goods and north side was Voss-Nichol Co., saddlery. Carriages were stored upstairs. 1913-same, but Voss-Nichol was also selling vehicles. 1927-from south to north-Schober-Martin Dry Goods (309-311); Barre’s Dept. Store (307); and E. J. Voss, harness co. (305).

303 Main (now Pop’s Barber Shop)—built ca. 1905. Was a beer warehouse and beer depot until at least 1913. 1927-Joseph Failla, City Fish & Oyster Co.

#### 200 block

Most of the east side of the 200 block was occupied by ornate, 2-story, Italianate-style commercial buildings.

217-219 Main—

219—1908-S. Baim & Co., clothing with Southern Mutual Life Insurance upstairs; 1913-Samuel Baim, clothing with Harry Howell, broker, upstairs; 1927-Buffalo Hatters.

217—1908-Sterne & Levi, clothing with Texas Loan Co. upstairs; 1913-C. A. Green & Co., wholesale liquors with Texas Loan Co. upstairs; 1927-Hooberry's Billiard Parlor.

Burt's Men's Store (209 Main?)—Robert Longley's barber shop in early 20<sup>th</sup> century. In recent memory, it was Burt's Men's Store, run by Clark Woodrow "Pinky" Curry and his son, Tommy Curry (Pinky had red hair). The store was called Burt's because the Currys bought it from Burt Schlosberg.

Pinky & Tommy's (205-207 Main?)—In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Henry Marx was in one of these storefronts. Later Charles Levi clothing and in the 1920s, Siegel's Cut-Price store? and Federal Clothing Store. In recent memory, it was Cohen's Department Store, which was divided down the middle with women's clothing on the right and men's clothing on the left. The shoes were at the back.

Reed Gathwright's Pharmacy (201 Main?)—An earlier 2-story building on this site housed Simmons National Bank and professional offices upstairs. In recent memory, this was Reed's Drugs, run by Reed Gathwright.

### **West on 2<sup>nd</sup> Ave.**

Saenger Theater (NR-listed 1995)

The southeast corner of West Second and Pine has been the focal point of entertainment in Pine Bluff since 1912, when O. C. Hauber converted an old store building on the site into a movie theater, which he dubbed, naturally, "Hauber Theater." In May 1920, Hauber sold the theater to the Bohlinger Amusement Company of New Orleans for \$40,000. The Bohlinger Company in turn sold the theater two months later to the Saenger Amusement Company of New Orleans.

This company, a subsidiary of Paramount, also owned the Best and Orpheo theaters in Pine Bluff. This theater was later renamed "Saenger," and in October 1922, the company announced plans to remodel the theater to accommodate stage performances in addition to movies at a cost of \$30,000. Unfortunately, the theater burned in November 1922, when a plumber left a lighted candle next to a leaky gas meter that he was testing.

After the fire, the Saenger Company asked for assistance from the wealthy Simmons estate and several business firms in Pine Bluff to build a modern theater that could provide the city with "high-class road attractions." Pine Bluff had not really had a facility equipped to accommodate live performances by the many traveling theatrical troupes since the Elks Theater burned in 1915 (Elks Theater was built in 1902 at 308-310 W. 2<sup>nd</sup>; south side of 2<sup>nd</sup> Ave. between Chestnut & Walnut. Was a 3-story building with a theater on the lower floor and Elks Lodge rooms on the upper floors. It burned in February 1915). The Saenger Company secured funding with the help of the Simmons family and the PB Chamber of Commerce.

The Saenger Theater in Pine Bluff is a good example of the Saenger Amusement Company's high style theaters which were constructed in the 1920s throughout the country. It was designed by architect Emile Weil, who was employed by the Saenger Amusement Company. Weil was responsible for, among others, the Saenger Theater in Pensacola, Florida, the Saenger (Perot) Theater in Texarkana, Texas, and the flagship of the chain, the Saenger Theater on Canal Street in New Orleans. The PB Saenger opened in November 1924 and closed in 1975. The building was acquired by Friends of the Saenger (later Old Town Theatres, Inc.) in 1996 and in 2012 was given to the City of PB. The Saenger just received its second HPRG from the AHPP to repair its roof.

People's Bank 1906

Donald W. Reynolds Center at SW corner 2<sup>nd</sup> & Pine (completed 2003)—site of 6-story Citizens Bank building, which was built in 1910. In 1925 it became the

National Bank of Arkansas, which closed during the Depression. The building was henceforth known as the National Building. Fire damaged the building in 1996, and it was demolished.

#### Community Theatre (NR-listed 2004)

The Community Theatre building was originally constructed in August 1889 by builder and contractor William I. Hilliard. It was originally used as a furniture store before it became S. H. Kress & Co., 5, 10, & 25-cent store. It remained the Kress & Co. store until 1922. In 1922 local architect Mitchell Selligman extensively renovated the building and turned it into a theater, which opened on May 19, 1922, as the Un-Named Theater.

In June 1922 the Un-Named Theatre became the Berbig-Community Theatre, and the name was changed again in November to the Community Theatre. From 1922 until 1963 the theater was family-owned and operated by the Bonner family. Disaster struck the building in the early 1950s when, due to the use of nitrate film, a fire began in the projection room and spread into the auditorium. Renovation of the building began in 1951 and was completed in 1953. The theater closed in 1963.

The building was closed for 29 years, and in 1986, William Bettwy bought the Community Theatre from Charles R. Bonner. Restoration of the building began in the spring of 1992. The Community Theatre reopened on February 7, 1995, with a Jazz Band Concert under the direction of "Pinky" Curry. In the winter of 1996, Bettwy deeded the Community Theatre over to the Friends of the Saenger, combining the Community Theatre and the Saenger Theater into the Old Town Theater Centre, Inc., a non-profit organization.

The Community Theatre is currently being restored by Jack Stradley.

Oldest commercial block left in PB—bounded by W. 2<sup>nd</sup> Ave., Pine, Chestnut, and Barraque. The Italianate-style buildings facing W. 2<sup>nd</sup> date from the late 1880s and early 1890s, while the buildings facing Barraque were built a bit earlier, dating to

the late 1870s and early 1880s. The buildings housed a variety of businesses, including drug stores, dry goods, cotton factors, groceries, furniture stores, cigar shops, confectioneries, undertakers, and clothing stores.

1909 F. Knox Scull Building—was F. G. Smart Auto Company, which by the mid-1930s had switched from the Ford dealership to a Chevrolet dealership.

U. S. Post Office—built 1909.

Southwestern Telegraph & Telephone Company Building—built 1905-1906

## **Back to Chestnut and north to Barraque**

### **Barraque, going east**

R. M. Knox Building—built in 1879 by wealthy Pine Bluff businessman and Confederate veteran Richard Morris Knox (1838-1915) and retains its 1887 pressed metal front, manufactured by Pullis Bros. of St. Louis. He operated a dry goods store here and was a founder of Citizen's Bank of Pine Bluff and was First Vice President and a director at the time of his death in 1915.

220 Barraque (Dee Herring's building on the corner; High Cotton Event Center)—Built 1883 and housed Delman & McGregor Hardware Store. Was later home to Ralph Robinson Livery, and the horses were kept behind the building in the alley. Ralph Robinson & Son Funeral Home occupied the building next. They used a horse-drawn ambulance in the early days. The company remodeled their building with white glazed brick and stucco in 1931.

214 Barraque—Art Deco

212 Barraque—cast-iron columns stamped "Bocage & Co. Pine Bluff, Ark. 1883."

Thom Brown's building at 208 Barraque—auto repair shop in 1920s. Go inside and get water.

Drive over to Boone-Murphy House and Du Bocage on W. 4<sup>th</sup>--

Boone-Murphy-Moore House (NR-listed 1979)

Local merchant Thomas A. Boone built the house in 1860 at 702 W. 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue (2<sup>nd</sup> & Beech). It is the second oldest home remaining in Pine Bluff. According to several sources, the small Boone-Murphy-Moore house was the second headquarters of the Union Army during its occupation of the town from 1863 to 1865.

In 1871 John P. Murphy bought the house and lots for \$2,900. Murphy married Mary "Mollie" K. Jones at the home of her grandfather by marriage, Creed Taylor of New Gascony, on April 8, 1875, an elaborate affair which included a river excursion on the Steamer "Belle of Texas." As a bridal gift on the eve of his wedding, Murphy deeded the house and lots to his wife. The Murphys lived there until he died on December 16, 1892. He was survived by his wife and two sons. In August, 1894, Mrs. Murphy moved the house to the west side of Lot 2 and constructed a large, 2 ½-story mansion. The small house was used as servants' quarters and later as a storeroom. Mrs. Murphy married Charles F. Moore at St. Joseph's Catholic Church on June 14, 1895.

After acquiring the property from the Murphy family, Trinity Episcopal Church razed the big home and moved the small house to the back of Lot 1 to make room for the construction of a day school. The small house was used as a residence and later, as a school office and library.

In the spring of 1977, the Trinity Episcopal Day School decided to further expand its facilities. The space occupied by the small house was needed, so the Boone-Murphy-Moore House was given to the Pine Bluff Women's Center. The house was moved to an empty lot at 714 W. 4<sup>th</sup> Avenue in June 1977. The house is

currently owned by the City of PB and was recently rehabilitated with the help of CDBG funds. It will house the Pine Bluff Historic District Commission.

#### Du Bocage (NR-listed 1974)

The Du Bocage House was built in 1866 and is a transitional Greek Revival-Queen Anne-style home. It is the third oldest house remaining in Pine Bluff.

Judge Joseph W. Bocage was born on the island of St. Lucia, in the West Indies, on May 8, 1819. He was the son of William Bocage, a sugar planter. Joseph was named after his grandfather, Joseph Isadore Bocage, a Frenchman, who had been the French Consul at New York shortly after the American Revolution. The Bocage family owned a sugar plantation on St. Lucia, but after the Emancipation Act of Great Britain, which freed the West Indian slaves, the Bocage family immigrated to the United States.

He came to Arkansas to practice medicine but ended up practicing law. He became the state's attorney for the second judicial district at Pine Bluff and practiced law there from 1840 until 1853. He was a slave-owning planter and was commissioned as a lieutenant colonel in the Confederate Army during the Civil War. Bocage returned to Pine Bluff after the war and opened a sawmill and other industries. He built this house in 1866 and died in 1898. The Du Bocage was recently restored by MK Distributors to serve as corporate office/event space. In January 2013 MK Distributors was the recipient of the Excellence in Preservation through Restoration award from the Historic Preservation Alliance of Arkansas for this project.