

**Arkansas Historic Preservation Program
“Walks Through History”
Tour of Historic Downtown Jonesboro
Begin at Frierson House, 1111 South Main Street
March 11, 2017
By Revis Edmonds**



Intro

Good morning, my name is Revis Edmonds, and I work for the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program. Welcome to our first “Walks through History” tour of 2017 in Historic Downtown Jonesboro. I’d like to thank the Downtown Jonesboro Association for co-sponsoring the tour, and I especially want to recognize Hailey Knight and her staff of the Association for their help. I also want to recognize our new statewide co-sponsor, the Arkansas Humanities Council, for their assistance in helping us promote this series.

For any architects in the audience, this tour is worth 2 hours of HSW continuing education credit through the American Institute of Architects. See me after the tour if you’re interested.

There are a total of twelve Jonesboro properties plus one historic district on the National Register of Historic Places. During our walking tour, we will talk about six NR-listed and six non-NR listed buildings.

About Jonesboro

The Jonesboro area was first inhabited for thousands of years by indigenous peoples. At the time of the first European encounters, historic tribes included the Osage, the Caddo, and the Quapaw. After the United States acquired this territory in the Louisiana Purchase of 1803, Settlers eventually made their way to the area of present-day Jonesboro. They began exploring, hunting, trapping, and trading with the local Indian tribes. A permanent settlement of Jonesboro was set up shortly after 1815.¹

In 1859, land was taken from nearby Greene, Mississippi, and Poinsett counties and was used to form Craighead County, which became the last county created in Arkansas before the Civil War. Jonesboro was designated as the original county seat. As the population increased in the west of the county, Lake City was named as the second seat. In 1859 Jonesboro had 150 residents. It was named after State Senator William A. Jones in recognition of his support for the formation of Craighead County.² Originally spelled Jonesborough, the city name was later shortened to its present-day spelling.

During the late 19th century, the city tried to develop its court system and downtown infrastructure. Shortly after being named county seat, the highest point in Jonesboro was identified and a court house was planned for construction. This was delayed for several years as the locals did not want to ruin their deer hunting. The first court house was finally completed but was destroyed by a fire in 1869. A store across from this site was rented and used as a court house. It was destroyed in an 1876 fire. Another building was constructed on the same site, but it fell to a fire in 1878, a major one that destroyed most of downtown Jonesboro. Soon afterward, another court house was constructed, and it was replaced by the current structure that was completed in 1935.

The St. Louis Southwestern Railway, later known as the Cotton Belt Railroad, was constructed through Jonesboro, with its tracks passing just north of the center of the city. During the first train's journey, it became stuck and supplies had to be carried into town. It connected St. Louis to points in Arkansas and Texas. Other major railways began to construct tracks to and from Jonesboro, including the St. Louis–San Francisco Railway (now Burlington Northern Santa Fe) and the

¹ "History of Jonesboro."

<https://web.archive.org/web/20071228124933/http://www.jonesboro.org/History/History.htm>

² Henry Gannett, *The Origin of Certain Place Names in the United States* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1905), 170.

Missouri Pacific Railroad (now Union Pacific). Some of the rail companies still own and use the tracks that run through Jonesboro.

The city set up the Jonesboro School District in 1899. In 1900, following a malaria epidemic, a group of sisters from the Olivetan Benedictine order established a six-room hospital in Jonesboro called “St. Bernard’s” in honor of St. Bernard Tolomei, founder of the Olivetan Benedictines. In 1904, Woodland College was created, and in 1924, Jonesboro Baptist College was established; both were forced to close within a few years for budgetary reasons. The Grand Leader Department Store, the first department store in the city, was opened in 1900. Two schools within the Jonesboro School District were opened in 1904. The First District Agricultural School (now Arkansas State University) was established in 1909, a year in which the first horseless carriages were driven in the city. The two oldest churches of the city were started in the 1910s; First Baptist Church in 1911, and First United Methodist Church in 1916. Both are still vital, integral parts of downtown.

On September 10, 1931, Governor Harvey Parnell authorized the Arkansas National Guard to be deployed in Jonesboro to quell the Great Jonesboro Church War of 1931, a clash between the followers of Joe Jeffers and Dow H. Heard, the pastor of the First Baptist Church of Jonesboro. Jeffers' supporters also attacked the mayor and police chief, resulting in front page coverage of the incident in *The New York Times*.

During the 20th century, Jonesboro began to diversify its economy, with industrial businesses that allowed it to grow beyond the cotton culture. In 1910, a group of area farmers decided to try growing rice in the fields outside of town. Their success led to the creation in 1930 of what was at the time the largest rice mill in the world, operated by Riceland Foods, Inc. The rice industry continues to be one of Jonesboro’s leading businesses, along with the cotton and soybean industries. On May 31, 1958, the Nettleton community voted 699–76 in favor of a proposed annexation to join the city of Jonesboro. The growth of Arkansas State University, especially after it gained University status in 1967, has attracted a large professional core of residents, who have in turn contributed heavily to the growth and prosperity of Jonesboro.

Jonesboro made national news because of deadly tornadoes in 1968 and 1973, as well as a tragic school shooting at its Westside Middle School on March 24, 1998. The Mall at Turtle Creek, which opened in 2006, was a \$100 million project that is now the largest mall in northeast Arkansas. Nearby cities such as Bono, Brookland, and Paragould have become virtual bedroom communities, as many people come to Jonesboro daily to work. A significant Hispanic population has also been attracted to the city by employment opportunities in construction, agriculture, and food processing. The current population is 73,907.

1. Frierson House- 1112 South Main

The Frierson House is a two story wood frame structure, with a hip roof pierced by gabled dormers. The main facade is covered by a two-story porch with Ionic columns, with a single-story porch on the side with Doric columns. The main entrance is flanked by sidelight windows and topped by a multi-light transom, and is set in a recessed paneled entry framed by pilasters. Its construction date is uncertain, but is placed between 1870 and 1910 based on architectural evidence. It is a well-preserved example of a post-Civil War "town house."³

The house is a large two story frame house with a hipped roof and three dormers (windows that project vertically from a sloping roof), a two story gallery on the west or front side with a one story gallery along the north and east sides of the house. The front two story gallery is supported on four ionic style columns with a balustrade rail (a railing supported by balusters, especially an ornamental parapet on a balcony, bridge, or terrace) of *turned individual balusters on both first and second floors, with a third balustrade crowning the flat roof of the gallery.* The one story gallery on the side and back of the house is supported on simple Roman Doric style columns, also with a balustrade railing.⁴

The Frierson House is important to the people of the city of Jonesboro.⁵ It is an important link with their past, which exists in a city that rapid population and economic growth and a growing State University is rapidly changing. Historically its significance also lies in the residency of Governor Francis Cherry in the home. According to the *Encyclopedia of Arkansas*, Cherry, a native of Texas who was raised in Oklahoma, majored in prelaw at Oklahoma State University, but the Great Depression delayed his law school plans. After a series of odd jobs, he settled in 1932 in Fayetteville and entered law school at the University of Arkansas in 1933. There, he met Margaret Frierson, a native of Jonesboro and the 1933 campus homecoming queen. She studied English and music while he studied law. Mrs. Cherry was involved in civic activities through much of her life. Cherry graduated in 1936. His first job out of law school was in the office of Leffel Gentry in Little Rock (Pulaski County). He married Frierson on November 10, 1937, and they then moved to Jonesboro, where he entered private practice with Marcus Feitz. He and his wife had three children. In 1939, Judge Thomas C. Trimble appointed him U.S. Commissioner for the Jonesboro Division of the Eastern District; in 1940, Governor Carl E. Bailey appointed him as a referee to the Workers' Compensation Commission.

³ National Register of Historic Places nomination, "Frierson House." April 24, 1973.

<http://www.arkansaspreservation.com/National-Register-Listings/PDF/CG0010.nr.pdf>

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Ibid.

Cherry made his first try for elective office in 1942, when he was elected Chancery and Probate Judge of the Twelfth District. His father-in-law, Charles D. Frierson, was the first judge of this circuit. As a judge, Cherry was exempt from military call-up, but after his attempt to volunteer was thwarted, he applied directly to the Navy and received a commission as a lieutenant, junior grade. He served in the Judge Advocate General's Corps in Washington DC. After two years, he returned to his judgeship in 1946. In 1948, Cherry was reelected without opposition. He conducted his successful campaign for Governor in 1952 from the Frierson House. After his defeat in 1954, Cherry was appointed to the subversive activities control board in Washington, D.C.⁶

The Frierson House was placed on the National Register on April 24, 1973.

(Move north two blocks.)

2. First United Methodist Church- 801 South Main

Shortly after the town of Jonesboro was established in 1859, Methodists began to have services in the Court House and the old Bethany Baptist Church. FUMC's first permanent house of worship, known as "The Little White Frame Church", was constructed in 1885. It stood at the Northeast corner of Main and Matthews, where Iberia Bank now stands.

In 1899, a brick building replaced the original church, which was commonly known around town as "The Brick Church."⁷ By the early 1920s, this building, which was built in the English Revival Style, had become outgrown and more space was needed. As the town and congregation grew, the church purchased the land on the southwest corner of Main and Matthews and the building, though incomplete, housed the first service in 1926. The current building was designed by architect John Parks Almand, who was also known for his designs of Little Rock Central High School and the Medical Arts Building and the Couchwood estate (home of Harvey Couch, founder of Arkansas Power & Light Company) in Hot Springs.⁸ On December 26, 1926, First United Methodist Church conducted its first service in the building we are standing in front of. It was designed in the Greek Revival style. Over the years, additions have been made to the buildings as well as to the church's ministries, most notably within the last decade when FUMC acquired the former site of First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ). The church plant is now anchored from the south by

⁶ Kenneth Bridges, "History Minute: Gov. Francis Cherry." *Log Cabin Democrat*, February 6, 2006, 7.

⁷ William M. Wilder, ed. *A History of the First United Methodist Church of Jonesboro* (Jonesboro, FUMC, 1986), 15.

⁸ *Ibid*, 16.

the former FCC sanctuary, which faces Main and the educational wing that faces Union Street, which is now known as the David Puryear Center. In the center are the newest additions, the Atrium and Wesley Hall, both of which mirror the English Revival style of the main worship center.

(Move north one block.)

3. First Baptist Church- 701 South Main

What we know today as First Baptist Church was originally founded in 1854 as Bethany Baptist Church (no relation to the Bethany Baptist Church on East Johnson) which worshipped at the Old Stoddard School House on the north end of Woodsprings Road.⁹ By the mid-1850s, the church met in a building that occupied part of what is now City Cemetery. From 1859-69, the church met in the original Craighead County Courthouse. After a brief time in the former Jonesboro Academy, FBC's first house of worship was built on South Church Street for \$800 (\$13,629 today) and was shared with the local Masonic Lodge. Not only was it the only church building in Jonesboro until 1883, but the building was also shared with the growing congregations that later became First United Methodist Church and First Presbyterian Church. Between 1892 and 1894, on the northeast corner of Main and Jefferson (current parking lot of the Gathings Federal Building) a new sanctuary in the Gothic Revival style was constructed, and it was used by the church until it and most of the church's records were destroyed in a fire in 1909.¹⁰ In 1912, the church moved into the current building on the southwest corner of Main and Jefferson that it currently calls home. The building was constructed in Greek Revival style with some Craftsman influences. The trim along the gable is complemented by intermittent strands of trim of six-sectioned trim. The sanctuary is adorned with a series of eight stained glass windows that depict six stages of the life of Christ as well as the parable of the Good Shepherd and Moses delivering the Ten Commandments from Mount Sinai.¹¹ Like its Methodist neighbor, FBC has constantly expanded its plant within downtown, beginning with the educational building that faces Union Street that was completed in 1950; the educational building and chapel where the Jewish temple once stood in 1969; the Christian Activities Center on Union in 1981 (which is connected with the main building by a skywalk over Union Street), and the new Life Building on property at Main/Union and Matthews where Langford Funeral Home and Broadway Esso once stood that was completed in 2005.¹² The former Emil Williams Ministries Center (named in honor of the church's longtime pastor for almost three decades) at the

⁹ "History of First Baptist Properties," History of First Baptist Church: Remembering the Past-Celebrating the Present," 8.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid., 23-26.

¹² Ibid., 8-9.

northwest corner of Union and Matthews began its life as the Jonesboro Downtown Holiday Inn, but is currently being prepared for demolition.

(Walk east on Jefferson.)

4. Blessed Sacrament Catholic Church- 614 South Church

Blessed Sacrament began worship in Jonesboro in 1885 when Mass was first held in the original church, then known as St. Roman, and then was moved to the Holy Angels Chapel when the church burned down in 1896 after being struck by lightning. Plans were in the works for a new building, however, which came into fruition in 1925 when Father William Joseph Kordsmeier was appointed pastor. Father Kordsmeier, along with the help of the parishioners, raised nearly \$30,000. Work started in 1932 with completion a year later. The church was renamed at the request of Bishop John B. Morris who indicated at the time that no other church in Arkansas was called Blessed Sacrament.¹³ The 1933 sanctuary is constructed in Gothic Revival style, with a one-story porch along the entire front façade.

This property was sold in 2015 to St. Bernards Medical Center and members of Blessed Sacrament Church will soon begin worshipping in a new building next to their new school on Highland Drive. This will be the last church standing on South Church Street.¹⁴

(Walk north ½ block.)

5. Old Post Office and Federal Building- 524 South Church

This historic three-story building was first opened in 1913 and is one of four of its design in the country. "I still have 22 copies of the original building plans that we found," said one-time owner Jennifer Harris. "We know there were four because it says two of four on the plans that we have."¹⁵ It is constructed in the Federal style with the second floor containing Palladium windows aligned vertically in symmetrical rows on all three floors. The building housed the United States Court House, the offices of the U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of Arkansas, and the United States Post office until 1977, when these functions were moved to the now-E.C. "Took" Gathings Federal Building on Main Street.

¹³ Zita Taitano, "Blessed Sacrament reflects on 80 years in church: Historian Sister Henrietta Hockle shares her earliest memories of 'new' church." *Arkansas Catholic*, October 28, 2013. <http://www.arkansas-catholic.org/news/article/3653/Blessed-Sacrament-reflects-on-80-years-in-church>

¹⁴ Aprille Hanson, "Blessed Sacrament relocating to 20-acre property." *Arkansas Catholic*, November 20, 2015. <http://www.arkansas-catholic.org/news/article/4474/Blessed-Sacrament-relocating-to-20-acre-property>

¹⁵ Shaila Creekmore, "Local Flavor." *Jonesboro Occasions* (March 2008), 6.

When the post office moved to another location, the building was renamed the Justice Complex and was used by the Jonesboro Police Department as well as county, city, state and federal offices for a number of years. Among the county and federal offices were the Craighead County Sheriff's office and the Jonesboro Urban Renewal office. The City Police and Courts were also housed here until they relocated to the Justice Complex on West Washington in 1995. When those offices were vacated, the 82-year-old building was auctioned off to the highest bidders, Dr. Brock Harris and Kent Arnold. Left as little more than a storage building for a number of years, Jennifer Harris said she waited until her children were older before beginning the major reconstruction project that the city's residents enjoy the fruits of today.¹⁶ In 2002, Jennifer and her husband, Brock, began renovating the building and transforming it into a space for events and a restaurant. During the renovation, hidden hallways and doorways were found in the building where the postal inspector could go from his office to different parts of the building to check on employees and no one would ever know he had left his office.¹⁷

After the renovation was complete in October 2006, Godsey's Catering moved into the building to run the restaurant and catering services, but has since relocated. In September 2007, Jennifer took over the operation of the entire business, which included operating the restaurant and event planning. The building, now known as Church Street Station, houses Sue's Kitchen.

During events, both the upstairs courtroom, now called the ballroom, downstairs restaurant space and second floor boardroom are all available for various size parties. One of the most notable events that have been here was a election gathering that featured future Vice President Mike Pence. Church Street Station currently has multiple events scheduled throughout the year and is one of downtown's most popular meeting places.

(Walk west on Jackson.)

6. Craighead County Courthouse- Western District- 511 South Main

The Craighead County Courthouse is a Depression-era, Art Deco-style building situated on the courthouse square that was listed on the National Register of Historic Places on September 11, 1998.

During the first year after the establishment of Craighead County and the city of Jonesboro in 1859, there was no courthouse for carrying out the

¹⁶ Creekmore, "Local Flavor," 7.

¹⁷ Ibid.

official business of the western part of the county.¹⁸ (Along with Jonesboro, Lake City also acts as a county seat, serving the eastern part of the county.) The Arkansas General Assembly designated the home of William Puryear in Jonesboro as a temporary county seat.

The first permanent courthouse was a two-story frame building erected on the town square in Jonesboro in 1869, and burned the same year, destroying all county records.¹⁹ The townspeople blamed the fire on the state militia, which was stationed at the courthouse the night before the fire. A second courthouse was established in a store west of the square. Sometime around 1876, the store burned, and once again the county records were destroyed. The cause of the fire was determined to be arson. A third courthouse was erected on a lot west of the square. In 1885, it too was destroyed by fire. This fire prompted the townspeople to build a two-story courthouse with fireproof storage vaults for keeping records on the first floor, with a courtroom and jury rooms on the second floor. This fourth courthouse was built with a four-story clock tower and was completed in the summer of 1886 by W. C. Clark, a Little Rock (Pulaski County) contractor, at a cost of \$16,500. It fared far better than its predecessors, surviving an 1889 fire that destroyed several surrounding businesses. During this period, the Eastern District was served by a smaller wood frame courthouse that was built in Lake City in 1883. Within a half-century, it was aging and overcrowded, and the two-story building was demolished in 1933 to make way for the construction of the existing courthouse.

The current building is the fifth courthouse on this site. Construction of the current Craighead County Courthouse began on June 13, 1934, and was completed on March 31, 1935, by the Public Works Administration (PWA) as part of the New Deal. This was one of eleven courthouses in the state built with New Deal aid. The structure is a brick building decorated with vertical limestone panels containing floral patterns and horizontal limestone with carvings of a wing motif at each corner. The courthouse features a flat roof, recessed front porch, and an interior chimney made of cut-stone.

A brick skywalk, constructed in 1995, connects the second story to a four-story courthouse annex on Union Street. The windows installed in the skywalk and the annex match the style of double-hung windows in the main courthouse building.

Various markers and monuments adorn the courthouse lawn, including a sculpture of an American Doughboy named "Over The Top" that was designed by sculptor John Paulding and displayed at the northeastern

¹⁸ Ray and Diane Hanley, *Images of America: Jonesboro and Arkansas' Historic Northeast Corner* (Chicago: Arcadia Publishing, 2002), 84.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 86.

corner of the courthouse lawn. The statue represents one of the first monuments built in the South and is one of the first in America erected to commemorate World War I veterans.²⁰ On the southeastern corner of the lawn is a metal marker commemorating the organization of the county in 1859.

Two significant events took place at the site during the Civil War and Reconstruction era. On August 2, 1862, during the Skirmish at Jonesboro, Federal troops quartered themselves inside the courthouse and in an office building at the southwestern corner of Main and Jackson streets. Confederate troops came out of the woods west of the courthouse and began firing on the courthouse and office building where the Federal troops were positioned. Later, during the Reconstruction period, Ku Klux Klan members were held at the courthouse after a shootout between Klansmen and the state militia at Bucksnot Hill. The event is the only recorded violent incident during Reconstruction in Craighead County.²¹

(Turn across the street on Washington.)

7. Citizens Bank- 100 West Washington

The Citizens Bank building was the product of the vision of Herbert Hall McAdams II, long one of Arkansas's most prominent bankers. McAdams, who had built a string of successful banks in northeastern Arkansas, attained statewide prominence in 1970 with a \$10 million investment in Union National Bank at Little Rock, which at the time was encountering difficulties.²² He was co-founder of Lake City's State Bank, which he later moved to Jonesboro, where he bought Citizens Bank and merged the two in 1950.²³ This building, still the tallest in downtown Jonesboro, was completed in 1957, and is designed in the International style (Flat roofs, Set Flush Metal Casement windows, smooth unornamented wall surfaces, and asymmetrical facades). Before this building was constructed, Arkansas State University conducted its first semester of classes in 1909 on the second floor of the building that previously occupied this site.²⁴ Three floors were added to the building in 1962, The seven story building continued to house Citizens until 1992, when McAdams merged Citizens, along with his little Rock bank holdings, with Boatmen's Bank of St. Louis. Citizens' arch brand symbol, added after the last three stories were added, was removed after the 1992 merger with Boatman's. By the end of the

²⁰ Mark K. Christ, "World War I Markers and Memorials." *The Encyclopedia of Arkansas History and Culture* <http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?entryID=7438>

²¹ Pearl Lentz Sayles, "Craighead County Courthouse, Western District." *The Encyclopedia of Arkansas History and Culture* <http://www.encyclopediaofarkansas.net/encyclopedia/entry-detail.aspx?entryID=7666>

²² "Long-time prominent banker dies at 86 in Little Rock." *Log Cabin Democrat*, November 8, 2001, 4.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Historic marker plate on building.

century, further mergers had created Bank of America, and it vacated the Citizens Building by 2000. Vacant for several years, this building has been a continuous target for preservation and redevelopment efforts, as well as efforts by the City of Jonesboro to resolve this issue of multiple ownership of the land under the building.

(Walk West on Jefferson to Union.)

8. Bank of Jonesboro (Little & Associates)- 501 Union

Feeling the prosperity of Jonesboro at the turn of the century, in 1911 the directors of the Bank of Jonesboro decided to build a more modern home for the bank that had been a part of the city since 1888. This imposing two story Classical Revival marble, stone, and terra cotta structure was built for less than \$35,000, and its grand opening in 1912 coincided with the lighting of the “Great White Way” electric streetlights down South Main. The Bank of Jonesboro was billed in advertising as “The Strong Bank,” but the Great Depression proved stronger than the bank in 1931.²⁵ Once considered the strongest and oldest bank in Jonesboro, its failure left the local citizens without a bank for more than five weeks. It has had other uses since, including as a popular restaurant, but it was restored in recent years and now serves as the home of Little and Associates Architects.

(Turn left and walk south on Union ½ block.)

9. Edward L. Westbrooke Building- 505 Union

The Edward L. Westbrooke Building was constructed in 1899 and placed on the National Register on January 8, 2003. It was built in 1899 to house professional offices on the first level and the local Masonic lodge upstairs. It is a two-story brick masonry building designed in the Romanesque Revival style.²⁶ Located across the street from the Craighead County Courthouse, the building is one of the most visible structures in downtown Jonesboro. Rows of arched windows, a deep entryway, and the tower on the northeast corner of the building all reflect the influence of the Romanesque style of architecture. The tar build-up roof and brick walls rest upon a continuous brick foundation.²⁷

According to the National Register nomination, two major features on this building classify it as Romanesque revival. The first and most dramatic

²⁵ Hanley, *Images of America: Jonesboro and Arkansas' Historic Northeast Corner*, 100.

²⁶ National Register of Historic Places nomination, “Edward L. Westbrooke Building.”

<http://www.arkansaspreservation.com/National-Register-Listings/PDF/CG0080.nr.pdf>

²⁷ Ibid.

feature of the building is the masonry tower which forms the northeast corner of the building. No other commercial building uses this design feature in Jonesboro, and it gives the building a dramatic appearance compared to the other square corners in the area. The second feature is the tall arching windows on the facade, which are set beneath arching masonry lintels that are connected with keystones. You can see that stone lintels run above and stone sills run below the windows and vents along the facade, and also are found below the windows on the north and west elevations. Originally plaster molding ran along the top of the building but it slowly deteriorated over the years and is now entirely gone.²⁸

There have been relatively few changes to the building considering it was built in 1899. The only major changes to the exterior of the building occurred in the 1950s. During this time, the Masons enclosed the outside opening of the building and added an aluminum and glass front door.²⁹ The original door framings and transom remained about 10 feet inside the old recessed entryway, but the doors were discarded. When Donn Mixon purchased the building in April 1991, he replaced the aluminum door with a larger wooden and glass door with an arched in the transom window above the door to make the entryway look more open.

After the Masons left in 1969, the downstairs was used for offices and then dance classes with walls placed and moved repeatedly. The upstairs was used as an apartment and for dance classes. When Mr. Mixon bought the building, law offices were restored downstairs; and the lowered ceiling was removed revealing a pressed tin ceiling.³⁰

(Walk north on Union one block, then turn left on to Monroe and go 1 ½ blocks.)

10. Strand Theatre (Foundation of Arts)- 115 East Monroe

The Strand Theatre opened in 1926, with seating for about 700. The theater features a graceful Neo-Georgian style facade, with four pilasters of light stone over red brick. Over the main entrance is a small pediment with two large windows over it, lighting the lobby. The Strand Theatre was the largest theater in the Jonesboro area for more than 40 years.³¹

It was acquired by the city of Jonesboro in the late-1970s and restored to its original beauty and today hosts live performances and community events, now called the Forum Theatre.

²⁸ National Register of Historic Places nomination, "Edward L. Westbrooke Building."

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ "Forum Theatre." *Cinema Treasures* <http://cinematreasures.org/theaters/8741>

Like many theaters, the Forum Theatre allegedly has its very own ghost, which was nicknamed "Charlie." He has said to have been more mischievous than scary.

The Strand is now occupied by the Foundation of Arts, which is a non-profit organization offering community enrichment through arts education, community theatre, and mission outreach. Located in downtown Jonesboro, the FOA has been serving the city of Jonesboro and surrounding communities since 1986.³²

(Walk back west on Monroe, turn right on Main, and walk north one block.)

11. Mercantile Bank Building- 249 South Main

Constructed in 1890 by the Craighead County Bank, the Classical Revival style distinguishes it from its neighbors. The Mercantile Bank Building played a vital role in building the city of Jonesboro in its early days. It is a good example of a Neoclassical style commercial building in Jonesboro the building functioned as a bank until 1969, until it relocated one block east to the building we now know as the Municipal Center, or City Hall.

According to the National Register nomination, The Jonesboro Trust Company began to occupy the building in 1901, and it soon became known as "The Growing Bank" and later as "That Safe Bank." The Jonesboro Trust Company merged with the American Trust Company in December 1927. After the merger, the board decided to occupy the Jonesboro Trust Company building because it was larger and more up to date than the American Trust building, located two blocks south on Main Street. By the end of 1931, The American Trust Company had fallen victim to the Great Depression and been declared insolvent.³³

The American Trust Company's powerful competition, The Bank of Jonesboro, called "the Strong Bank," and considered the strongest and oldest bank in Jonesboro had closed suddenly on December 11, 1931, leaving the local citizens without a bank for more than five weeks. Alex Berger, the organizer for the American Trust Company, canvassed the city for investors and raised enough capital to charter the Mercantile Bank in

³² The Foundation of Arts, "History: Who We Are and What We Do."

<http://www.foajonesboro.org/about/history/>

³³ National Register of Historic Places nomination, "Mercantile Bank Building," December 3, 2004.

<http://www.arkansaspreservation.com/National-Register-Listings/PDF/CG0223.nr.pdf>

January 1932, and opened for business on January 18. For a time, one bank served a city of approximately 15,000 people.³⁴

In 1969, Mercantile Bank built a new location a block away from their old building. Crowley's Ridge Development Council occupied the building from this time until 2004. During their time in the building, CRDC made many changes to the interior of the building, but did little to the exterior of the structure. The Mercantile Building has since served several functions, but it has always been known as the "Old Mercantile Bank Building." The Stricker Law Firm, after acquiring the building in 2004, chemically stripped the exterior, and replicated the stucco effect. There were missing windows that were missing at that time and they had some replicated so the new owners could match the 1933 detail.³⁵ The architecture was inspired by the World's Fair in St. Louis at the turn of the century. The building was placed on the National Register on January 20, 2005.

(Walk west on Huntington, turn right, and walk ½ block north on Union.)

12.C. A. Struck Lumber Company- 215 Union

The C.A. Stuck and Sons Lumber Mill is a historic industrial complex that consisted of four buildings: an office building, a lumber mill, and two storage sheds. All four buildings are brick structures built about 1890 in the Twentieth Century Commercial Style, although the office building was enlarged and given a new facade in 1905. The Stuck mill, which was established in 1889, is one of the oldest properties associated with the early efforts to deforest Craighead County. C.A. Stuck was an Illinois-based furniture builder who moved to Jonesboro to facilitate the production of lumber for his products.³⁶

According to the National Register nomination, the original office and warehouse building from 1889 was a temporary wood structure, which was replaced about 1890 by the larger brick structure still located at the site. The other three buildings were probably built at the same time the office building was rebuilt. The office building was enlarged around the turn of the century, and the new facade was shown in a 1905 photograph. The lumber mill and two storage sheds were located behind this building.³⁷

³⁴ National Register of Historic Places nomination, "Mercantile Bank Building,"

³⁵ "Historic Restoration Project in Downtown Jonesboro." Region * News, August 2, 2004.

<http://www.kait8.com/story/2122542/historic-restoration-project-in-downtown-jonesboro>

³⁶ Stuck, Charles A. *The Story of Craighead County: A Narrative of People and Events in Northeast Arkansas* (Author as publisher, 1960), 15.

³⁷ National Register of Historic Places nomination, "C.A. Stuck and Sons Lumber Mill." December 22, 2002.

<http://www.arkansaspreservation.com/National-Register-Listings/PDF/CG0210.nr.pdf>

The office building is divided into two sections. The south half of the building is constructed of a brick floor, wooden walls, and a 20-foot high ceiling. Giant arches flank the east and west elevations, and they were used for loading and unloading lumber between the mill and Union Street. An identical entryway was located on the northern end of the office building in a symmetrical fashion, but the arch fronting Union Street was bricked in when Barton Lumber Company re-bricked the facade circa the 1950s. ³⁸Probably at the same time, six garage doors were installed on the south elevation of the building, which slowly deteriorated. The northern half of the office building, near Burke Avenue, is two-story. The top floor and the rear of the first floor were used for storage. The front part was used for offices, displays, and the sales area. The building is covered with a low-pitched roof. There are remnants of the old Stuck advertisement along the south wall of the building that reads "C.A. STUCK & SONS. ALL KINDS OF BUILDING MATERIALS."³⁹

C. A. Struck Lumber Company was placed on the National Register on December 27, 2002.

Again, on behalf of the Arkansas Historic Preservation Program, I want to thank you for joining us this beautiful Saturday in East Arkansas. If you are able, please join us for our next "Walks Through History" tour of 2017 at Keo, as we explore the amazing architecture and history of the Keo Historic Commercial District in Lonoke County. We begin at 11 AM on Saturday, December 10.

And just a reminder, if you are dining out after the tour, be sure to patronize your locally owned establishments. You'll love the taste, and you're building a better Jonesboro!

³⁸ National Register of Historic Places nomination, "C.A. Stuck and Sons Lumber Mill."

³⁹ Observations from site survey.